

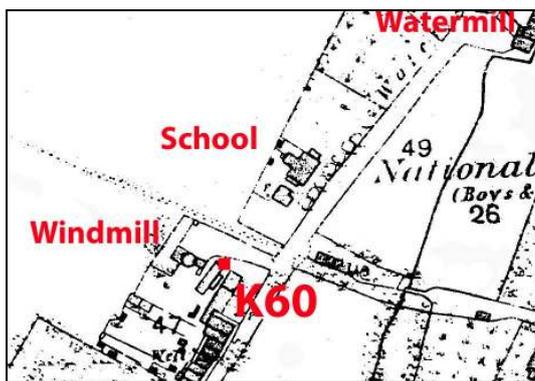


## Understanding Ospringe

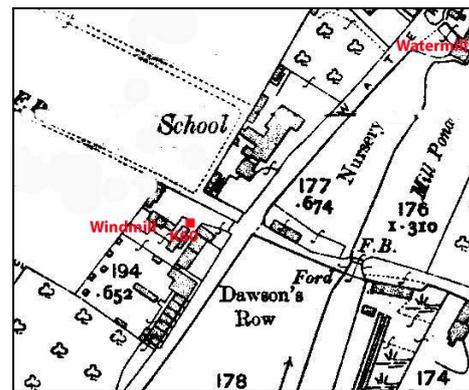
### Report for Keyhole 60 'Arbory', Water Lane, Ospringe Grid Reference TR 00200 60653

#### 1 Introduction

'Arbory' is a handsome mid 19th century (around 1870) detached house with a modern extension.<sup>1</sup> It forms one of a pair on this site, the other property lying along the western edge of the plot. Between c1796 and 1915, this plot was occupied by a smock type windmill, perched on top of an unusually high three-storey base, presumably because of its valley floor position.<sup>2</sup> The earliest houses on the plot were a pair of thatched cottages (17th century) which still adjoin to the south of Arbory. Arbory and its partner Millers House were presumably built with the profits from the mill. The buildings associated with the mill itself have disappeared and any archaeology of the mill base itself has been largely wiped out by a recent extension to Millers House.



a) Site in 1865<sup>3</sup>



b) Site in 1906<sup>4</sup>



c) Site in 1960<sup>5</sup>

**Fig 1: Maps**

<sup>1</sup> Swale Borough Council c 1990 *Townscape Survey: Ospringe Village*

<sup>2</sup> Viner, J. 1982 *Lost Windmills of Faversham* Faversham Paper No 21 Faversham Society pp 30-7

<sup>3</sup> OS 1865 (1904 reprint) Sheet XXXIV Scale 1:2500

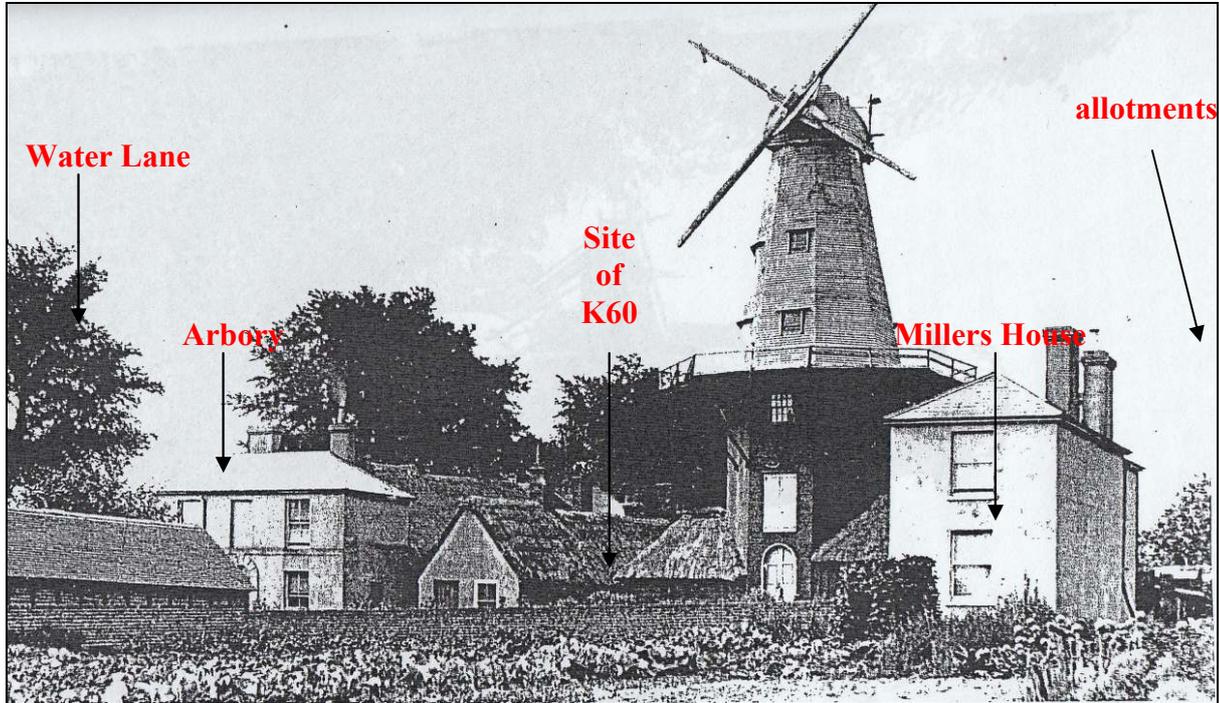
<sup>4</sup> OS 1907 Sheet XXXIV Scale: 1:2500

<sup>5</sup> OS 1960 Sheet XXXIV Scale 1:2,500

## 2. Location of pit

This is a very small garden so choice of location was highly constrained. The pit was located towards the back of the garden so that it would be underneath the former outbuildings of the mill.

**Fig 2: The windmill plot in around 1910.<sup>6</sup>**



## 3. The procedures

A one metre square was pegged out using the planning square and the area delineated marked with string. The position of the square was recorded by measuring to mapped corners of the house. Turf was removed carefully from the square, rolled and set aside in plastic bags. The pit was then hand excavated using single contexts, each of which was fully recorded. This keyhole contained an exceptionally bulky dump of builders rubble, and the pit was extended westwards by 0.5 m to give more scope for excavation. All excavated soil was sieved meticulously, and the spoil heap scanned using a metal detector. Finds were set aside for each context and special finds were given three dimensional coordinates to pinpoint the exact find spot. Any features revealed were carefully recorded. Finally, the spoil plus some extra soil was put back in, tamped down and watered and the turf replaced. Most of the builder's rubble was removed to the local waste dump, after recording.

<sup>6</sup> Viner, J 1982 op.cit p 33. With permission of Faversham Society

#### 4. The findings

Removing the initial turf and topsoil layer revealed a large amount of builders rubble, which included concrete slabs, bricks, rolls of flex and a water pump housing. [02] [03] Mixed in with this were some domestic discards, including a green plaster frog which was a clue to the nature of the curiously shaped hole in which the rubbish had been dumped.



On removal of the material, a blue plastic liner became visible, fitted around what was obviously part of an ornamental garden pond. The pond excavation went down to a depth of 1.3 metres (see fig x).

**Fig 3: K60 after the removal of the builders rubble [02]**

Because of the pond in the east side of the trench, the trench was extended 0.5m westwards, and excavation started again from the top. In the newly exposed area, around 0.3 m down was a level shingle layer [05]. Above the shingle was a typical soft dark brown garden soil layer [04] which contained abraded fragments of soft red brick and peg tile, vessel glass, animal bone and 19th century pottery, this material being well sorted. Just below the shingle layer in the North West corner of the pit was a lens of flint and shingle debris, in a shallow hole. [07] [08]. All of these contexts were dominated by 19th century domestic rubbish and highly fragmented demolition material (brick, tile, mortar, plaster and nails).

**Fig 4: Shingle layer [05]. Pond hole to the right.**

The rest of the pit from the shingle layer down consisted of a more compact dark brown soil [06] with abundant small pottery sherds, animal bone, and shell, all very abraded and well sorted. Around 60% of the pottery was medieval, with some substantial chunks of North Kent Shelly ware (early medieval), and 20% was Roman. [06] gave way at a depth of around 0.6m to a soft brownish-yellow soil with little artefactual content, just some tiny specks of shell and bone. [09] By depth of 0.9m, the yellow deposit was devoid of artefactual content. This matched with the deposit at the base of the pond, so this was interpreted as the natural soil and excavation stopped.

Two interesting very small finds were unstratified. A late 17th- early 18th century silver thimble<sup>7</sup> (SF69) and a small early Neolithic arrow head<sup>8</sup> were found through sieving, both of them by Thabet, son of the householders. Obviously a natural archaeologist - we are grateful for his keen eye.



<sup>7</sup> Bailey, G 1993 *Detector Finds 2* Witham: Greenlight Publishing

<sup>8</sup> Butler, C 2005 *Prehistoric Flintwork* Stroud: Tempus Publishing p123 type 3B

**Fig 5: Early Neolithic arrowhead**  
**This was made around 5,000 years ago**



## 5. Interpretation

The shingle layer [05] probably corresponds to the floor of the out buildings shown in the photograph in Fig 2. It does seem too flimsy to be a floor in itself and the number of nails within [05] and in [04] the layer above suggests that perhaps there were floorboards which were taken up at the time of demolition. This would date the shingle layer to late 18th century. The flint and shingle feature also belongs to this period, though its purpose is uncertain.

The layer [06] in many ways looks like a straightforward medieval midden scatter, related to use of this land for agriculture from the early medieval period onwards (AD1050-1550). The sherds of Roman pottery would be residual, but still significant: the area immediately to the north west of Arbory is well known for Roman settlement and cemetery remains<sup>9</sup> but no burials or settlement remains have been reported from Water Lane itself before now. The small amount of post medieval pottery and a few tiny clay pipe fragments in [06] must date from the post medieval period before the building of the windmill, as does the silver thimble, and are well churned in with the earlier material.

The origin of the topsoil with the Neolithic arrowhead is uncertain. It might have been brought in from elsewhere to cover up the builders rubble dump but may have come from the spoil created by the excavation of the pond. Recent work by FSARG in Water Lane is showing that in prehistoric times settlement was to be found all the way along the banks of the Westbrook stream, and this nice prehistoric find fits in well.<sup>10</sup>

## 6. Final comments

This was a tricky pit to dig to begin with because of the unexpected and forbidding builders dump, and the pond excavation. hole. Once this had been sorted, however, it was relatively straightforward, and only rain was a problem.

## 7. Acknowledgments

Many thanks to Fawzi Kimili and Jeannette Dean-Kimili for allowing us to take over their little garden to dig this very useful pit - and special thanks to Thabet for his sharp eyes.

**Pat Reid**

**November 2009**

<sup>9</sup> See for example Whiting, W 1921 'A Roman Cemetery discovered at Ospringe' *Archaeologia Cantiana* Vol XXXV pp1-16

<sup>10</sup> see reports for K59, K61 and K55, for example. [www.community-archaeology.org.uk/projects](http://www.community-archaeology.org.uk/projects)

**Fig 6: Coping with rain**  
**Looking eastwards towards Arbory. Note the rubble in the pit.**



## Small Finds



### Small Finds Details

SF69: A small thimble with a waffle-shaped pattern on its crown and a side pattern of spiralling pits with knurled indentations. It is cast in one piece with a rim at its base, it is smooth inside and has no manufacturing marks. It is green ion colour. It is possibly a "lofting" type of thimble made specifically for children, which is an exact replica of an adult thimble.

See: [ukdfd.co.uk/pages/thimble](http://ukdfd.co.uk/pages/thimble)

Bailey, G 1993. *Detector Finds 2* p14.