



Understanding Ospringe

Report for Keyhole K64 Manor Pound Field Grid Reference: TR 00081 60460

1. Introduction

The location of Keyhole Pit (K) 64 corresponds to a level above the former Westbrook along which a marked concentration of prehistoric settlement has been found during the *Understanding Ospringe* project.¹ The site lies midway between the church and K61 (Dawson's Row) where a Bronze Age flint manufacturing site is currently being excavated. The adjacent cottages are a recent conversion from a barn belonging to Queen Court Farm, this barn having been used in the 20th century as a farm stable.²

Field walking of the Manor Pound Field had previously taken place. (Report: Reid forthcoming, website 2010).

Fig 1: Location of K64, converted barn cottages in background. Viewing north.



¹ See FSARG website [www.community-archaeology.org.uk/projects/Understanding Ospringe](http://www.community-archaeology.org.uk/projects/Understanding%20Ospringe)

² Gerald Hadley, former farm manager, pers. comm.

2. Location of Pit

K64 was sited in the uncultivated northern margin of Manor Pound Field, near the fence line at the back of the cottages. The pit was aligned to bisect the fence line that separated the two cottages. The northern edge of the pit was 2.6 metres from the fence line the eastern edge of the pit was 25.75 metres from the road fence line. The site height has not been levelled; from the map contours and spot heights it is estimated to be between 16 and 18 metres.

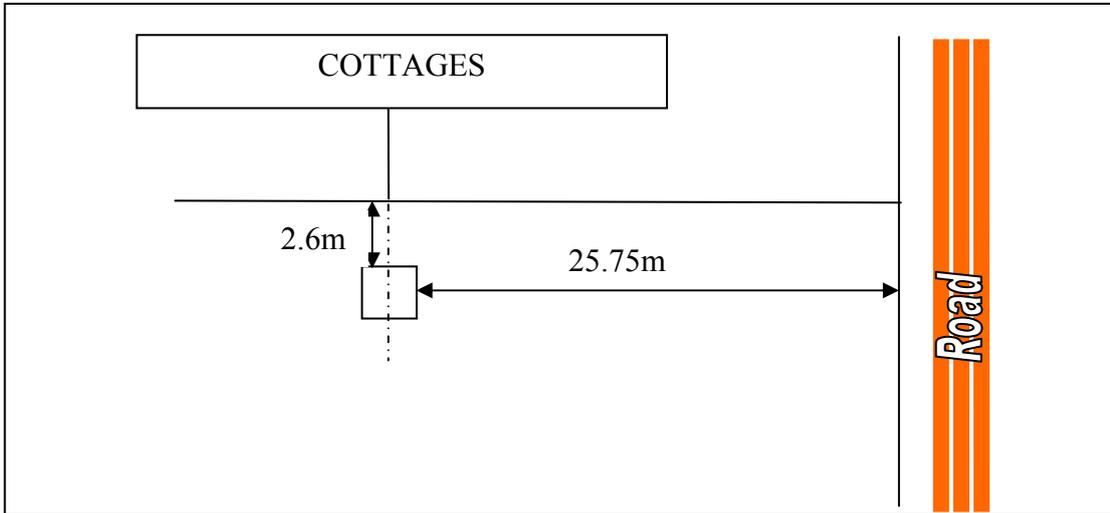
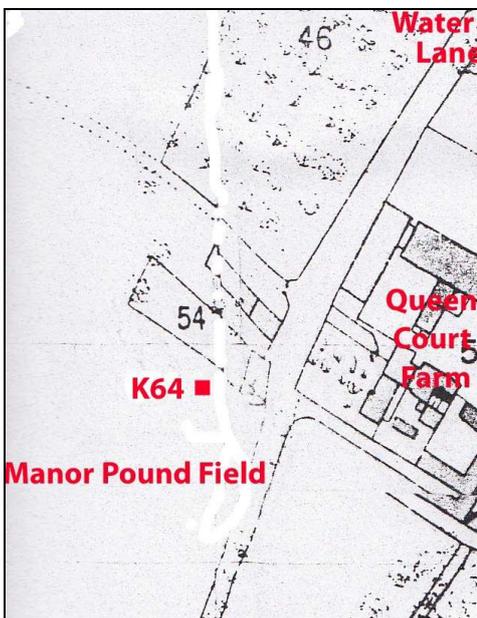
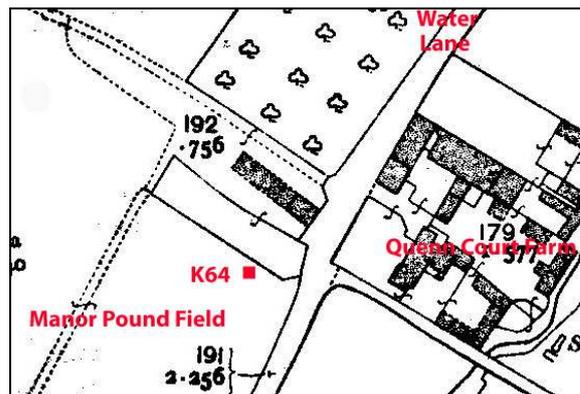


Fig 2: Location of K64



a) 1865³



b) 1907⁴

The geology on this western side of the Westbrook valley is Head Brickearth overlying the Upper Chalk with possibly a Thanet Sands layer sandwiched between, (as it is at the Syndale hilltop nearby).

³ OS 1865 (1904 reprint) Sheet XXXIV Scale 1:2500

⁴ OS 1907 Sheet XXXIV Scale 1:2500

3. The procedures

The 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 the fence-line of the houses to the north and the fence-line of the road. The pit was then hand excavated using single contexts. Due to the short time available for the excavation and the nature of the material excavated, much of the work was performed using heavy hand tools, trowelling only being used when a change of context became apparent. The excavated material was sieved or hand sorted (when it consisted of flints too large to sieve). Finds were set aside for each context. Flints were examined for evidence of working. The spoil was returned to the pit.

4. The findings

From ground level down to 350 to 400mm [01], the context consisted of plough soil that could only be broken up with vigorous pick axing. This consisted of weakly cemented, soft, greyish-brown, well sorted, silty-clay, containing occasional flints which were small to medium, sub angular, sub rounded and angular. Small quantities of brick and tile were found, along with several pieces of plastic and oyster shells and one piece each of glass, bone, animal tooth, clay pipe stem, mortar and 19th century pottery.

Fig 3: View down to [4] and [5], showing changes in colour through [1], [2] and [3]. Note the characteristic bright 'ginger' of brickearth emerging.



At 350/400mm the soil colour changed to a more yellow-brown (context 02) and became strongly cemented, soft, light yellow-brown, well sorted sandy clay. This contained occasional flints which were small to medium and sub angular or angular. There were small and infrequent inclusions of chalk, bone, clay pipe, iron, coal and charcoal and several small and very small pieces of brick and tile.

At 600mm the deposits became lighter yellow with greyer brown patches. (Context 03). The colour darkened if left for a while (oxidisation). This was a weakly cemented soft/firm yellow-brown, moderately sorted clayey sand, with occasional small flints and one piece of brick.

At 680mm [4] a layer of flints was encountered right across eastern side of pit, set in a soil matrix that was much darker than the contexts above. The North West corner of pit did not show any flints initially.

Fig 4: Surface of [04] flint layer





When, however, this quadrant was removed [5] the material consisted of large flints with clayey sand and gritty clayey sand/shingle, with no artefactual content at all.

Fig 5: After removal of [05] in the northwest corner of the keyhole

5. Interpretation

Context [1] and [2] contained finds that were attributable to agricultural activity of the last two centuries. No evidence of any prehistoric activity was found, although all flint items in [03] and [04] were carefully examined. Interestingly, no medieval 'midden scatter' type abraded pottery sherds were found either, a fact which is true for the whole of Manor Pound Field examined during the field walking activity in 2008 and 2009. This implies that this part of the Westbrook valley was not under ploughed cultivation until the 18th century. Medieval midden scatter type deposits have been found further north down Water Lane.⁵

6. Final Comments

This was a hard and discouraging pit to dig, but the findings were well worth recording. A negative result is not as exciting as a positive one, to put it mildly, but is just as important scientifically.

7. Acknowledgements

Thanks to the Brays of Ham Farm (tenants) and to Shepherd Neame (land owners) for allowing us to dig in this location. Sorry we didn't find anything exciting, but archaeologically this was the right place to dig!

John and Caroline Clarkstone

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⁵ See FSARG Website op.cit. Ks 54, 55