



## Understanding Ospringe

### Report for Keyhole 45 38, Ospringe St, Ospringe, Kent Grid Reference TR 60940 00270

#### 1 Introduction

Number 38 Ospringe St is a two storey terraced house with a dormer window, situated on the north side of the A2. It was built of brick around 1840 and has a colour washed imitation stone finish. The house has top vented replacement windows and a concrete tiled roof. <sup>1</sup>The house is divided into two flats. Nearby number 34 was a public house, the Lion, first recorded around 1800 when an infantry barracks was built on land behind the pub which had previously been a bowling green. <sup>2</sup>The gardens to the rear of the properties are accessed by a right of way path from Lion Yard. To gain access to the upper flat garden, passage through the garden of the lower flat is necessary.

#### 2. Location of pit

The pit was located as close as possible to the rear garden wall, the lower part of which may originally have been part of the officer's accommodation within the Napoleonic barracks (see Fig 1a) and b)

#### 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. The keyhole was excavated to the maximum safety depth of 1.2 metres. 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 was put back in, tamped down, watered and the turf replaced.

#### 4. The findings

Contexts [01] and [02] (later merged) were excavated to a depth of twenty three centimetres. They consisted of ashy soil with fragmentary inclusions of cinder, building material and lime mortar. Small fragments of pottery, glass, iron nails and shell were mixed in with this. The pottery was mainly red wares and glazed china of 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century date. A double D shaped iron buckle minus its tines was recovered – although medieval in style its good preservation suggested a more recent date. A lump of bright blue material, possibly compressed pigment, was recovered: we have found this material in other gardens and it is something of a mystery.

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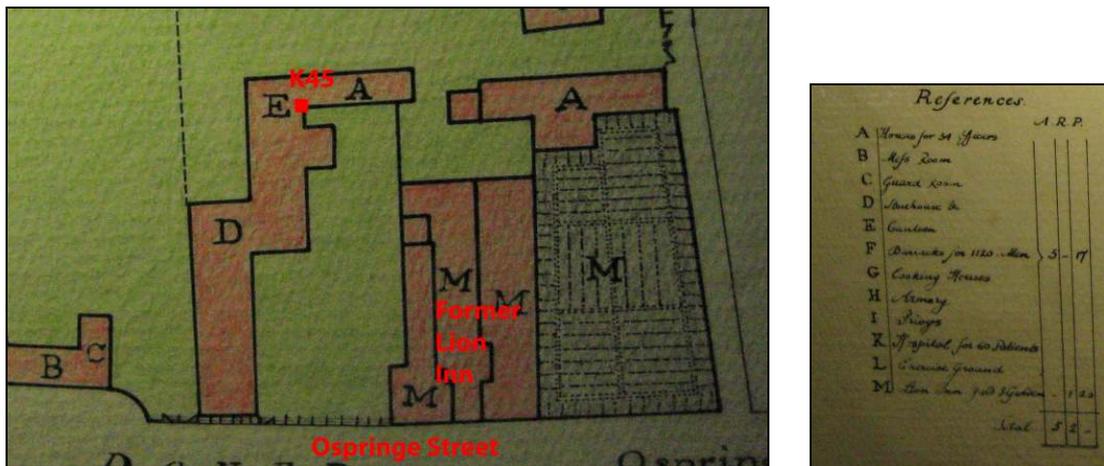
<sup>1</sup> Swale Borough Council c1990 *Townscape survey: Ospringe Village*

<sup>2</sup> 1803 Ospringe Barracks Kent County Records office

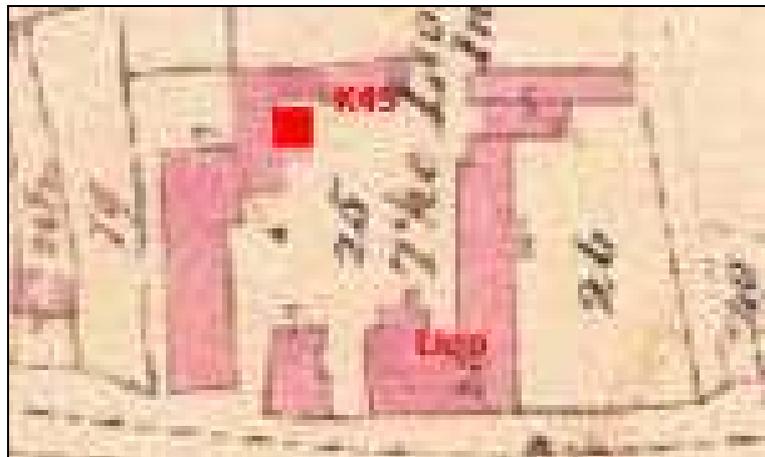
Context 3 was a mid-brown layer almost free of ash and was excavated to a depth of 47cm. There were few inclusions other than small pieces of brick, tile, chalk and iron. Ceramic finds closely mirrored those from [01] and [02].

**Fig 1: Four maps to show the change over time of the location of K45**

**a) The Napoleonic barracks around 1803<sup>3</sup>**



**b) The tithe map of 1840<sup>4</sup>**



**c) OS map of 1865<sup>5</sup>**

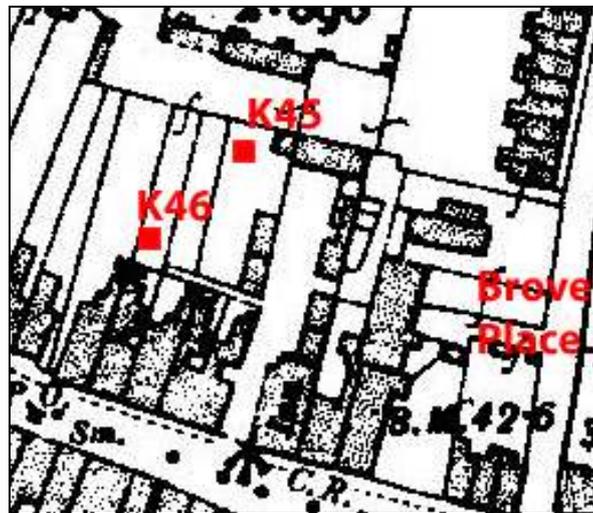
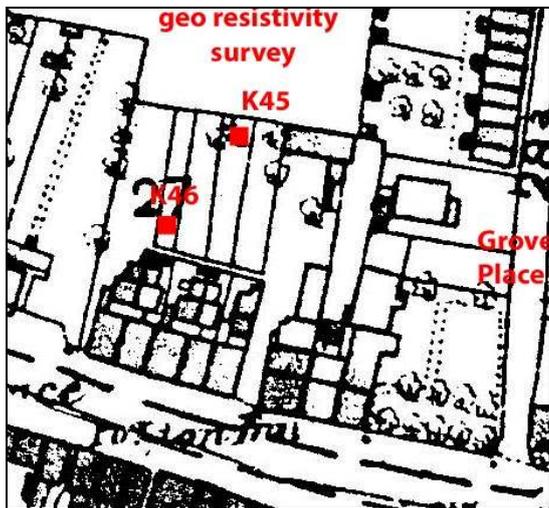
**d) OS map 1906<sup>6</sup>**

<sup>3</sup> 1803 Ospringe Barracks Kent County Records office

<sup>4</sup> 1840 Tithe Map for Faversham Kent County Records Office

<sup>5</sup> OS 1st edition 1865 Sheet XXXIV 1:2500

<sup>6</sup> OS 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 1906 Kent Sheet 34.09 1:2500



Context [04] was a yellowish brick earth surface at around 66cm. Dug into it against the eastern baulk was an apparent cut with an infill of red and yellow brick fragments [05]. The cut had a sharply defined western edge. As the infill was removed, a solid brick ‘foundation’ was revealed [06]. These bricks rested upon a mortar bed which itself was laid directly on the brick earth [07]. Very small scale investigation eastwards showed that the brick feature stopped only three centimetres eastwards, suggesting a thirty three centimetre wide wall foundation rather than the edge of a brick floor.



deposit with slot.

Finally, a slot sunk into the bright yellow deposit [07] which showed no inclusions

### 5. Interpretation

Reference to the 1803 barracks map and the 1840 title map suggest that the foundation feature is a remainder of the Napoleonic barracks, probably a wall to the storehouse or canteen. The barracks, which covered over five acres had accommodation for 1120 men and their officers. The lack of small finds and the relatively small quantities of pottery, glass, bone, shell etc reinforce the view that there was very little habitation in this spot prior to the barracks from around 1790 onwards. The bright yellow brick earth into which the wall foundation was set could be either the natural deposit or an earlier artificial layer, perhaps the floor of the parade ground. The depth of the natural at around seventy centimetres is quite appropriate in this less developed area.

**Fig 2: Brick foundation and rectangular posthole**

A rectangular posthole 22.5cm x 10 cm 08/09 was located adjacent to the brick feature to the west and seems to be an associated feature. [04] itself yielded five sherds of Roman pottery and a small amount of abraded medieval.



**Fig 3: Bright yellow base**

underlying whatsoever.

## **6. Final comments**

This keyhole has given a glimpse of a mostly forgotten ephemeral feature of the landscape of early 19<sup>th</sup> century Ospringe. The barracks lay on the main road between the naval dockyard at Chatham to the east and Dover and hostile France to the west. It was located close enough to the centre of gunpowder manufacture at Faversham to provide protection if required.

## **7. Acknowledgments**

Great thanks to Marnie Tennant who gave use permission to dig and showed so much interest and encouragement and kept us refreshed.

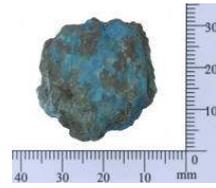
**Keith Robinson**

**December 2008**

## Small Finds



SF18



SF19

### Small Finds Details

SF18: This item is a D shaped buckle with missing tine(s). No decoration is visible. The form is the same as D shaped single looped buckles AD 1250-1650 (Whitehead, 2003 pp16-18). There is, however, a relative lack of corrosion implying a shorter period in the ground.

SF19: This is a lump of bright blue material, possibly a compressed powder. Traces of a similar material have been found in a number of other gardens.