

SNIPPETS FROM THE TRENCH

2017 SUMMARY OF THE HISTORICAL RESEARCH GROUP OF SITTINGBOURNE (HRGS) FIELD UNIT

It has had been an exciting year for finds for the HRGS Field Unit last year and now it is the start of the new year we can reflect on what we have discovered.

Rose Hill has been one of our community-focused projects for the last three years; where we have worked with various partners to uncover the 'mysterious house in the woods'. The dig is supported by documentary research being carried out by the group, enabling HRGS to publish a 28-page booklet on the history of Rose Hill (On sale at £4 in the Heritage Hub, if you would like a copy – see fig 1).

Fieldwork carried out in June 2017 told us much more about the dwelling and gave us an insight into how the building evolved over various phases of construction.

The rear portion of the main building and the west side servants wing were recorded and drawn, and over during 2018, we hope to have them added to the archaeological plan (see fig 2) by Andrew Mayfield from KCC.

Bredhurst has been an ongoing project over the last seven years which has told us much more about the site than we could have ever imagined. Indeed, we can say that HRGS has uncovered the physical evidence to prove the Anglo-Saxons lived at Bredhurst. Up

RIGHT Fig 1 - Front page photo Rose Hill booklet

to now, it was just the Anglo-Saxon name that gave the connection (Bredhurst means Broad Wood in Anglo-Saxon). Last year we had uncovered a new flint structure in the paddock in Trench 34 (see fig 3), together with a ditch that had been in-filled. The ditch we revealed last year is probably a continuation of the ditch found in 2013.

As far as significant finds within the ditch, we found sherds of pottery and a corroded knife. The pottery rim (located in the context of the flint structure)

and fragments of pottery. Nigel MacPherson-Grant has assessed the pottery found in the infill of the ditch; his initial

Historical Research Group of Sittingbourne

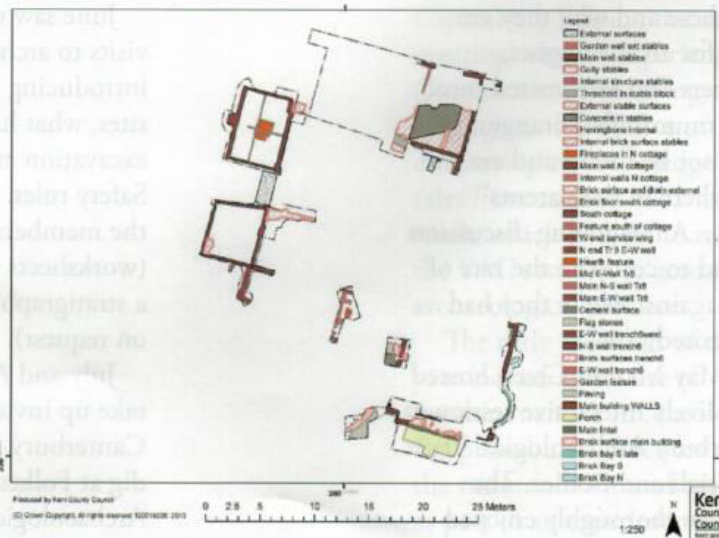
Rose Hill House

The building, its owners, and those who lived there.



Bringing History Alive

RIGHT Fig 2 - KCC Rose Hill plan





ABOVE Fig 3 -
Bredhurst Trench 34
- flint wall

assessment is that it could be late Saxon - early Norman.

The pottery we had found in 2013 in another portion of the ditch, had previously been dated as late Anglo Saxon which is consistent with 2017's finds. The interesting fact is that the corroded knife was found lower, within a secure context, than the sherds of Late-Saxon – early Norman pottery, which means it is either contemporary with or older than the pottery. The knife was x-rayed by Dana Goodburn-Brown from CSI and

BELOW Fig 4 -
Knife blade x-ray



can be seen below (see fig 4). When using a typological chart of Anglo-Saxon blades as a comparison, the drawings of (seax) knives resemble the Bredhurst knife (see fig 5 - Page 44).

Within the context of the new flint structure, we found five examples of early medieval brick. They were a dirty yellow or pink/red, approximately 10" x 5" X 2" in size (see fig 6 - Page 45). 'A History of English Brickwork' by Nathaniel Lloyd, suggests a similar brick was

found at Salmestone Grange near Margate. The Grange has been dated as 13th Century which is contemporary with some of our earlier finds and research.

It is hypothesised that the new structure(s) in the paddock maybe pre-1200 because little roof tile has been found in or around its location, while the buildings in the wooded area were probably later due to the mass of roof tile debris found surrounding the structure. The possible pre-1200 structure may have been an ancillary building to the main Bredhurst Manor House, though, until definitive dating evidence becomes available, we cannot be sure of this early date or probable function.

However, just to show that nothing in archaeology is as straightforward as it is on 'Time Team'. We also found a sherd of Roman tegula (roof tile). This may be explained, in that it may have been part of a 'recycling' process, utilising old ceramic building material. Crushed broken tile can be seen within the red coloured early medieval brick we had found near the flint structure. It may



ABOVE Fig 5 -
Probable medieval
brick

have been that they were making bricks on-site and putting old tile into the grog (wet clay mix) to temper the brick during firing and to colour it.

While on the subject of heating and firing, we uncovered evidence of intensely heated and scorched clay and what appears to be an oven or a small kiln adjacent to the flint structure (see fig 7). Such an oven would probably have had a wicker frame and coated in mud. Once made, a fire would have been lit inside, and whatever needed to be 'cooked' then sealed within.

And...finally Gerald Cramp, President of KAS, popped up to see the site and even dug with us on our last dig day at Bredhurst for 2017. At the bottom of the ditch, he found clumps of compressed clay, clinker and charcoal. As this would seem to be our earliest deposit in the ditch, then it would seem logical to have it scientifically examined using radiocarbon dating. This would give a reasonably accurate date for the commencement of the ditch. Now all I have to do is write some grant applications forms,

as this type of scientific research is not cheap! But, hopefully, it will tell us much more about the age of our ditch and the site. On the last excavation day, two members of Wessex Archaeology visited following a meeting that Mike Barry and I had with them the week before; they were intrigued enough to view the site.

BELOW Fig 7 -
Bredhurst Trench 34
aerial view; the
scorched clay area
can be see at the
top of the trench

In conclusion, 2017 was a fascinating year...we went some way to meeting the archaeological objectives we set ourselves at both sites.



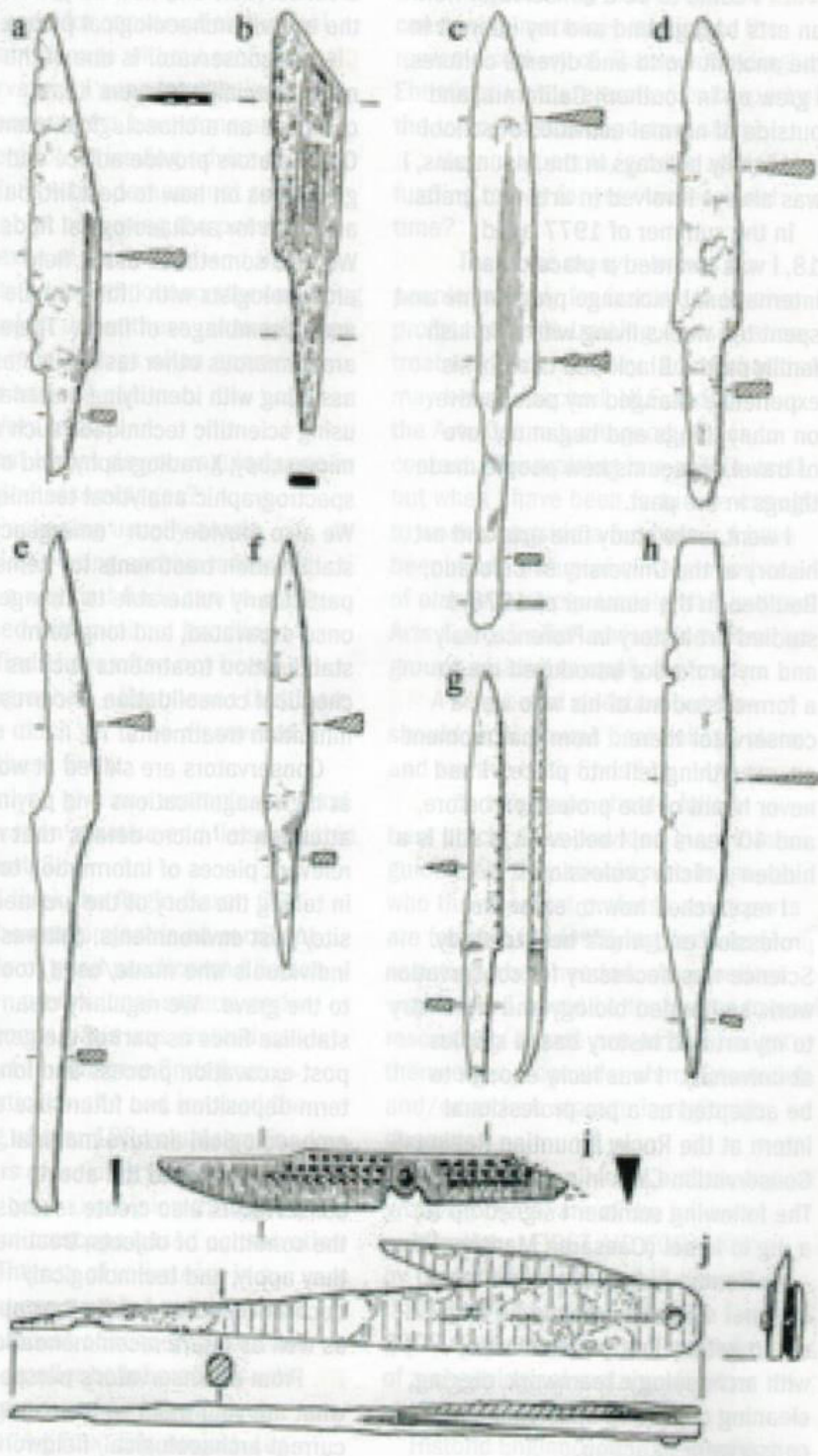
Bredhurst:

- Can archaeology indicate the earliest occupation of the site?
- Was this the original site of the medieval Bredhurst Town?
- Was this the site of a medieval Manor House?
- If so, why and what caused the site to fall into disrepair?

Rose Hill:

- To inspire the community to become involved in Archaeology.
- To see what has been left in the landscape.
- Establish if there is evidence of earlier occupation.

I would like to personally thank all of those involved in the digs whether by participating in the excavation, site recording, writing the booklet, using technology or finds processing...without their enthusiasm and energy, much of this significant local history would lay unrecorded. If you would like to be involved this year...(Day membership £5 or annual membership £20)



ABOVE Fig 6
 Typography Mid-Late
 Saxon Knives - P
 Ottaway

References

Typological knives diagram (see fig 4), courtesy of Ottaway, P. The products of the blacksmith in mid-late Anglo-Saxon England - [www.pioarchaeology.co.uk]

Lloyd, N. A History of English Brickwork - Antique Collectors Club.

Drone aerial photo courtesy of Dave Leigh

Rose Hill Plan - courtesy KCC

All other photos were taken by Richard Emmett