

**Archaeological Watching Brief
Site of The Old Forge
Upper Church Lane
Farnham**

Introduction

The site of The Old Forge (SU 83924 46729) lies adjacent to the corner of Upper and Middle Church Lanes in Farnham. The site is archaeologically sensitive, being close to the Parish Church and in the likely area of any Saxon settlement. The planning application for the site (WA/2011/0037) refers to 'internal and external alterations...' - in fact the building was demolished. Because of the wording of the planning application, no archaeological condition had been placed on the consent and this report is the result of an emergency visit made at short notice, arranged by County and District Officers.

Unfortunately, the only deep cut trench on the site had been filled with concrete just prior to the visit despite the date and purpose of the visit being known to both the architect and contractor. It was therefore impossible to carry out anything approaching a proper inspection of the underlying stratigraphy.

Observations

The upper level of the concrete filled trench (no 2 on plan and photo) lay below the removed floor at the front section of the Old Forge buildings. The level was black with ash and contained 19th century pottery and the section showed evidence for a brick wall footing and associated brick floor. This obviously pre-dates the recently removed floor and probably relates to an earlier building on the site. This sequence of buildings would be entirely consistent with the pattern noted on a nearby site in Middle Church Lane (Graham FMS Newsletter Vol. 5, No 6, pp. 97-103 June 1979).

A second trench (no3 on plan and photo) was about 35cm deep, though, not being filled with concrete, was open to inspection to its full depth. The photograph (3) shows, on the right, the footing trench associated with the eastern boundary wall, to the left of which is a section of brownish soil cut by a pit filled with ashy soil and late 18th/19th century pottery.

Conclusions

Such stratigraphy as could be seen shows occupation of the site pre-dating the construction of the Old Forge. No earlier pottery was found, though that is not surprising under the circumstances. The builders had collected 'willow pattern' sherds and pieces of ginger beer bottles from the site, but again had not recovered any earlier pottery - either because it was not present or, more likely, because it would have been less obvious to them. Neither had they seen any sign of bones when the deeper trench was cut. Given the proximity of the site to the medieval and later graveyard the presence of earlier burials extending in this direction seemed possible. However, on the verbal evidence of the builders, this does not seem to have happened.

Because of the circumstances, it proved impossible to draw much in the way of conclusions from the site visit. Given the sensitive location of the site, there should have been an evaluation trench in advance of any earthmoving.

David Graham
13 November 2012



Photo 2.



Photo 3.