

Archaeological monitoring of pipeline works in Farnham Park, December 2020

Background: This note covers the results of archaeological monitoring of a pipeline trench excavated between the Hawthorne Pavilion in Farnham Park and the northern end of Upper South Park View in Farnham (see plan and photograph). For the first, northern, two-thirds of the line, the trench was 25cm wide and 40cm deep, but from a point about halfway down the slope south of the Avenue and marked by the construction of an inspection pit, the line continued at the same width but at a depth of 1.20m.



It was not possible to examine all sections of the line particularly the final, southern 30m or so (dotted line on plan), but the works were visited several times, and the spoil checked for metal objects.

The Results: The stratigraphy exposed along the northern two-thirds of the trench consisted of a 20cm layer of topsoil overlying a 20cm deposit of dirty gravel (see photograph), which continued below the bottom of the trench to an unknown depth. With two exceptions, the gravel showed no signs of having been disturbed and no finds were recovered from it, apart from two tiny fragments of tile or brick from near the top of the gravel.

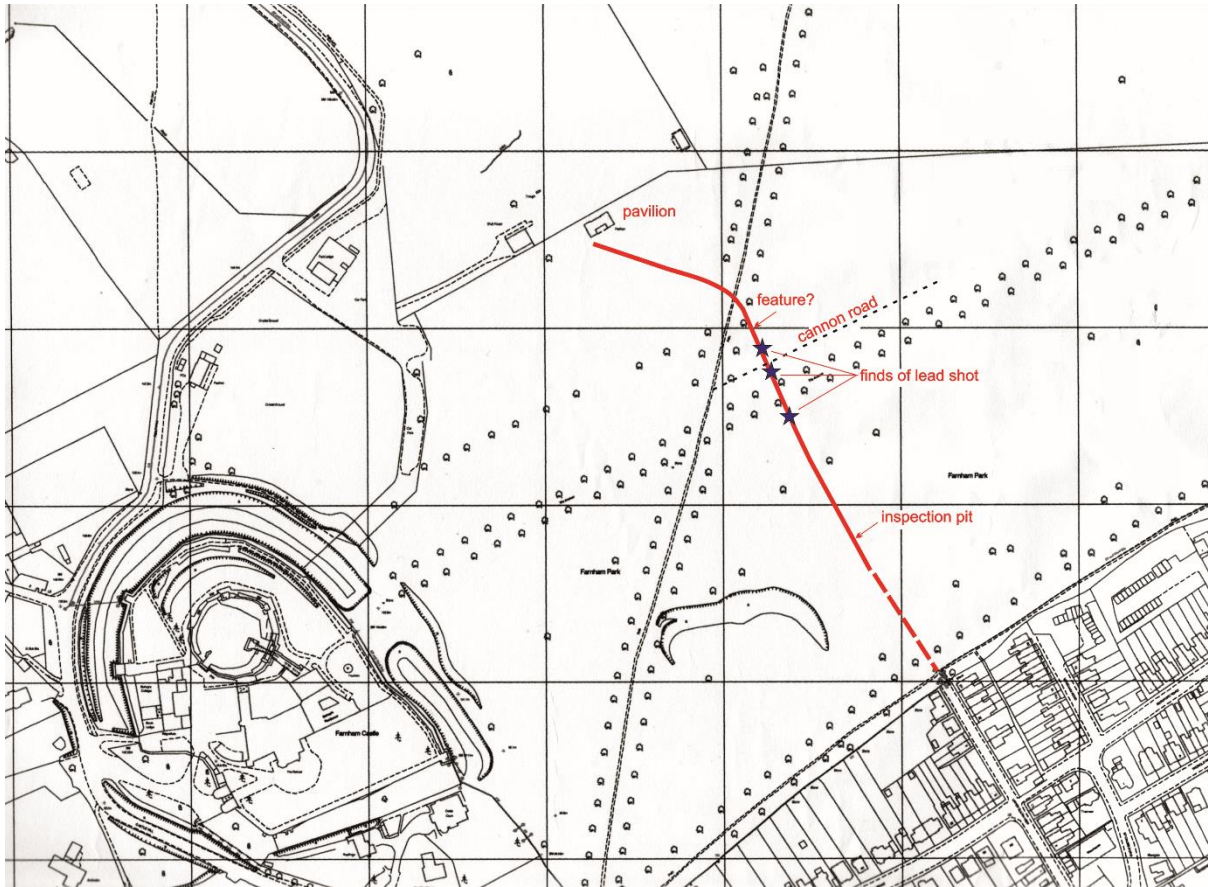


The first of these exceptions was a 1.6m-wide sloping-sided feature (location shown on the plan). This was very indistinct and only marked by the gravel fill being softer than the surrounding deposit. It contained no finds or ash and may well have a natural rather than man made origin, but could conceivably be a ditch or pit running across the line of the modern trench.

The second exception was where the pipeline crossed the 17th century (and earlier) 'cannon' road, which at this point runs parallel to and slightly to the north of the Avenue and consists of a low raised bank leading to the Castle (Graham 1998, 12–15). There was no sign of a roadside ditch to the north (nearer the castle there is one known on the south side of the line) and the camber of the road was made up of a raised layer of gravel, presumably acquired from the immediate area.

Halfway down the slope, from the newly constructed inspection pit onwards, the deeper trench exposed the same 20cm layer of topsoil overlying a 1m-thick layer of gravel mixed with a much greater volume of soil, at the base of which the upper level of the underlying natural chalk was just visible. The soil/gravel layer presumably is a result of hillwash, exacerbated by the fact that this part of the Park was, at one stage, part of a ridge-and-furrow medieval field system (*ibid*, fig 3). Once again, no finds came from this layer.

The Finds: Surprisingly no pot sherds were recovered, nor was there any sign of ash or charcoal. Most of the finds came from the topsoil layer and were made by Mr Barry Wood with a metal detector. Passing over the numerous ring pulls and bottle tops from around the football pitch, the most significant finds were that of three lead balls of different sizes, two pistol and one possible carbine shot (see appendix), probably 17th century in date and connected with the Parliamentary garrison at the Castle and perhaps with the fighting in the Park in 1643 (Spring and Hall 2002, 16–18). There was also one scrap of lead. These finds were recovered from the spoil heap, but probably came from the surface of the gravel layer as other finds of shot in the Park have done.



Otherwise, there was a scatter of coins - a 1925 sixpence, a threepenny piece, several farthings, a few more modern coins and a number of buttons – some of which looked military, in one case naval, and may date to either or both of the World Wars. The one oddity was a Victorian lead head of a Minié bullet from a small bore gun – perhaps a pistol. The lead shot will be placed in the Museum of Farnham to be stored with other shot found in the Park and the remainder of the finds have been retained by the Park Ranger for educational use.

Overall finds and features were remarkably few, considering previous finds from the general area and the history of the Park.

Acknowledgements: I am grateful to Mr N Macfarlane (the Park Ranger) for his encouragement and support; to Mr B Wood for his several visits to metal detect over the spoil heaps and to the contractors whose staff were invariably friendly and helpful. I am also grateful to my wife for preparing the site plan and commenting on the text.

David Graham FSA
January 2021

References

- Graham, D, 1998 *Farnham Park, Landscape Survey and Archaeological Excavations* (online at <https://www.surreyarchaeology.org.uk/content/farnham-park-survey-1998>)
Spring, L and Hall, D, 2002 *Farnham in the Civil War and the Commonwealth*, Farnham & District Museum Society

Appendix: Details of the lead shot

1. No. 271, dia. 15mm, weight 20g, SU 84056 47434 carbine
2. No. 272, dia. 17mm, weight 27g. SU 84056 47431 pistol
3. No. 275, dia. 10mm, weight 5 g. SU 84020 47501 pistol