

Evaluation trench to the rear of the Garden Gallery, Museum of Farnham (SU 83625 46626)

Introduction

At the request of Mrs Anne Jones, Keeper of the Museum, a small team from Surrey Archaeological Society and the Farnham & District Museum Society excavated an evaluation trench to the south of the Garden Gallery on 9 July 2006. The aim of the excavation was to test for the presence of archaeological material prior to the construction of a replacement building for the existing Gallery. Previous excavations in the garden, closer to the Museum, had revealed extensive archaeological deposits dating from the 12th century onwards (*Surrey Archaeological Collections*, 84, 169-180).

The excavation

The trench was 2m x 1.5m and its south-west corner was positioned 5.5m east of the western garden wall and 14.82m north of the southern garden wall. In effect, the trench was roughly central between the garden walls and about 2m south of the Gallery building.

A modern brick-filled soakaway was encountered in the north-east corner of the trench, just below the turf line and this area was abandoned. The western half of the trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.09m to the surface of the natural gravel of the underlying river terrace. The majority of the stratigraphy, from the surface to a depth of 95cm, consisted of a homogenous deposit of dark grey topsoil, which contained a range of finds of various dates. These were randomly distributed throughout the deposit with relatively modern material, dating to around 1900, coming from all levels. Underlying this deposit was a 14cm layer of lighter brown soil which lay directly on top of the natural gravel and contained a light scatter of 13th/14th century pottery sherds.



Western face of trench

Conclusions

It would appear that a large quantity of topsoil was brought into this section of the garden somewhere around 1900, presumably to level up the southern end of the site. This was probably necessary because it is known that the southern half of the garden area was terraced in the 13th century (see *Surrey Archaeological Collections*, 84). While the northern section, the formal Georgian garden, was brought up to its present level in the 18th century, it would appear

that the bottom end of the garden was left at its medieval level, presumably behind a wall that retained the higher section of the garden. It was probably to produce a continuous level surface that soil was imported and deposited at the lower end of the garden.

The light scatter of medieval pottery in the lowest soil level probably represents nothing more than either a manuring scatter or perhaps more likely rubbish from the known medieval occupation site fronting West Street. No traces of any structures were found, nor any indication that such existed in the immediate vicinity. While it seems likely that the postulated retaining wall between the two levels still exists somewhere north of the trench, the exact position of this is unknown. Accordingly, no further archaeological work appears necessary at this time, though a watching brief on any footing trenches is recommended.

David Graham, FSA

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