

Archaeological Watching Brief at 62 Castle Street, Farnham

Introduction: 62 Castle Street (SU 83932 47021) is a large and imposing brick built 18th century house with later additions, situated approximately half way up and on the east side of Castle Street (Fig 1). The rear is accessed by a cobbled driveway (Fig 3) on the south side of the house, which leads past a brick built barn (Fig 4) to a large rear garden. The property lies within the boundary of the medieval town and is mentioned on a rental list in 1775 (Parks 1985, 116) and the house is shown in a painting of 1818 by G Shepherd (Temple 1973, 51).

In 2013 planning consent (WA/2013/0962) was granted to demolish and replace the existing conservatory to the rear of the house. The authors were asked to carry out an archaeological watching brief on the works and visited the site on two occasions in November 2013. On the first occasion the existing structure had been demolished and the ground surface cleared but there was no trace of any material earlier than the 19th century.

On the second visit the footing trench had been cut for the northern wall of the new conservatory but not yet for the remaining two sides. Because of other commitments, no further visits were possible before concrete was due to be poured, so this report only relates to that one section of the trenches.

Results: The open section of footing trench extended eastwards for 5m from the northeast corner of the house (Figs 1 and 5). Though narrow, the two faces of the trench were quite different and the line must mark some form of demarcation - probably the northern edge of a building, though there was no sign of a wall line along the floor nor in the end of the trench.

The north face of the footings (Fig 2) showed an upper layer of soil and brick and tile rubble cut in one place by a pit filled with wood ash (pit 1). The rubble level lay on the natural yellow clay that underlies this section of Castle Street. Two further pits (pits 2 and 3) underlay the rubble and were cut into the upper surface of the clay. Unfortunately, there were no datable finds in any of the pits other than the occasional fragment of brick and tile though sequentially pits 2 and 3 are obviously earlier than pit 1.

The south face of the footing trench was rather different. Up against the house the flint footing to the existing brick built dormer structure was exposed. This had been cut into a deep deposit of dark soil which, in turn, had been cut into the natural clay to a depth of 1.5m below the level of the original garden soil. This dark soil deposit continued just over 2.3m away from the house, lay cleanly on the natural clay and was contained on the east side by a brick and mortar wall 25cm thick (wall 1).

To the east of wall 1 there was a deposit of light grey soil and tile again lying on the natural clay to a depth of 1.5m. To the east of that and 1.6m further on, was a second brick wall (wall 2) parallel to the first and constructed of virtually similar bricks (2" thick and 4" wide). Given the similar alignments, depths and constructions, it seems probable that these form one building of which wall 2 was the eastern end, albeit there was no sign of any floor level connecting the two walls. Both walls and part of the dark soil fill were sealed by an irregular layer of soil, brick and mortar. Taken together, the infilled cuts and walls (Figs 2 and 6) are perhaps the remains of part of an undercroft or cellar, which was earlier than the existing rear of the house and must have been demolished by the time of its construction. In any event they do not appear related to the recently demolished conservatory.

Beyond wall 2, in the small section exposed, the natural clay rose up slightly but was truncated by pit 3 which extended in this direction. Again this implies that whatever the structure was, it was cut into the natural clay and wall 2 formed its eastern end. The fact that wall 2 cut pit 3 means that the latter, and perhaps pit 2, are the earliest features visible in this part of the site. The sequence therefore seems to be various pits dug into the natural clay, followed by the construction of the building represented by the two walls forming a possible cellar, which in turn is demolished to make way for the existing house in the mid/late 18th century. Alternatively, the demolition could have followed the construction of a rear extension to the house. This is not shown on the tithe map of 1843 but is on the OS map of 1897 and must therefore date from some time between the two. Whether the walls represent part of an earlier house or merely an outbuilding to the rear of such a house is uncertain.

There must, however, have been a house on the site before the current house was constructed in the mid/late 18th century. Unfortunately, there were no datable finds in any of the features other than the brick and tile, which would indicate a probable late 17th/early 18th century date for the walls. The various pits contained nothing but soil, ash and occasional tile and are therefore only broadly datable. More surprising is the complete lack of any medieval or Tudor pottery from the site. This perhaps indicates that all earlier remains were destroyed in the 18th century at least in this section of the property. Certainly other sites nearby have produced quantities of earlier pottery and, as already mentioned, no. 62 lies well within the boundary of the medieval town.

References

- Parks, P, 1998 The town ditch and the early development of Farnham town and *borough, Surrey Archaeol Collect*, **85**, 114-118
Temple, N, 1973 *Farnham Buildings and People*, Phillimore

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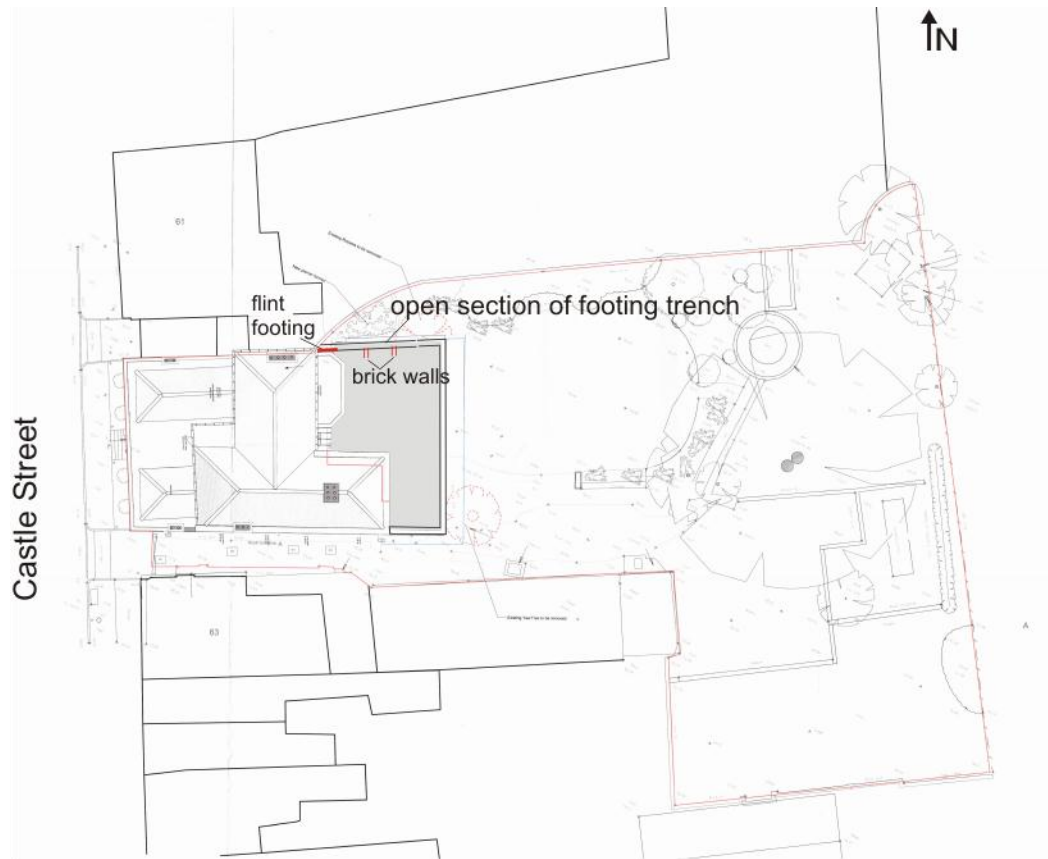


Fig 1 62 Castle Street, Farnham. Site plan showing rear extension (grey tone) based on site plan by Stedman Blower.

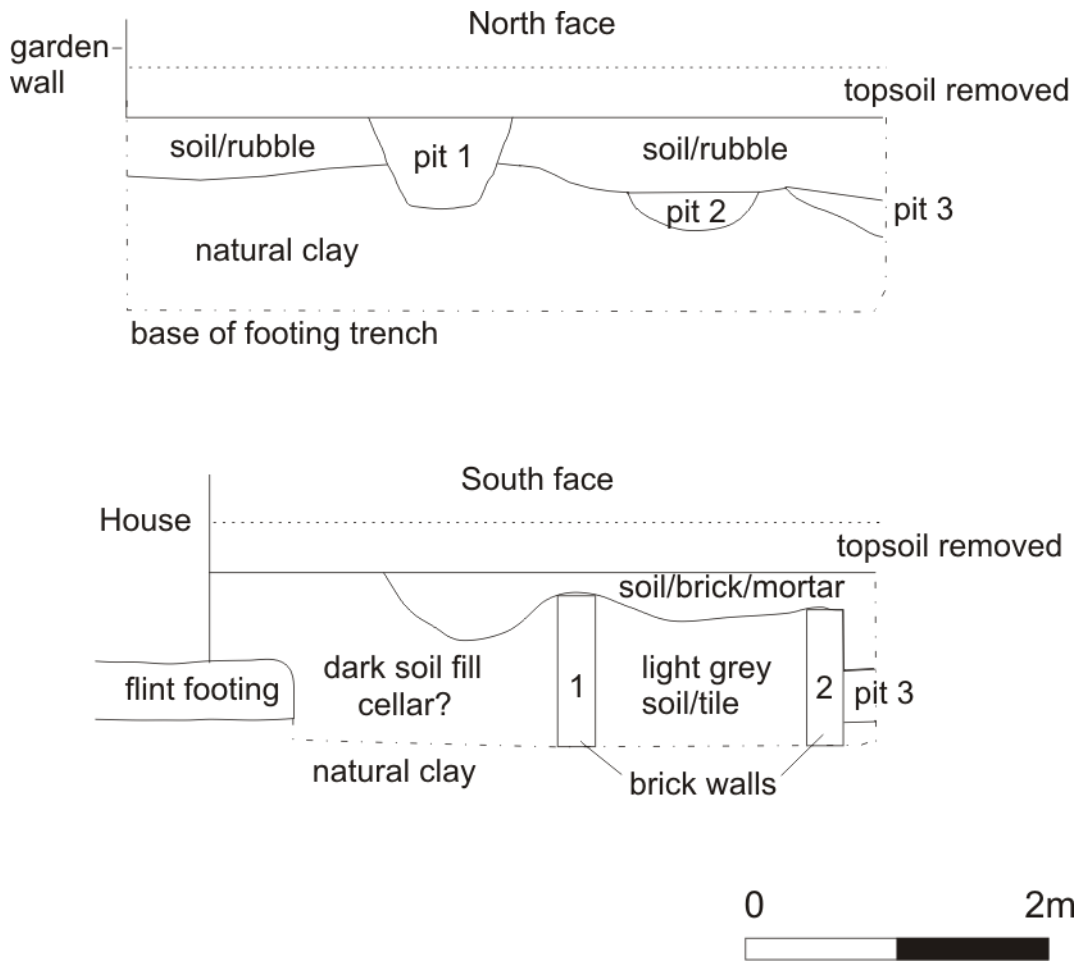


Fig 2 North and south facing sections.



Fig 3 Cobbled access drive, looking towards Castle Street.



Fig 4 Barn on south side of property.



Fig 5 Open footing trench.



Fig 6 Section, south face showing wall 1 and dark soil fill to right and grey soil/rubble to left.