

NOTES

Archaeological notes on the Kingham's/Lion & Lamb development sites and The Borough sewer trench, Farnham

Site watching during development works in Farnham produced results which largely support the suggestion that the earliest phases of the medieval town are centred in the area of The Borough and the lower half of Castle Street.

Introduction

1985 saw the start of several building projects in and around the centre of the town and members of the Farnham and District Museum Society carried out excavation and observation work on two of these sites – the Kingham's depot development, and a sewer trench through The Borough (fig 1). The third site to be examined, Borelli's Yard, was investigated by an MSC team, as it was felt that the area justified a full time excavation – an operation which was beyond the capacity of the Museum Society. In the event, this decision proved to be correct and a report on the results of this work will be published in due course. This paper therefore, only covers the work carried out on the first two of the sites examined in the year.

The Kingham's/Lion & Lamb development

This development, now the site of the new *Presto* supermarket complex, lies to the north-west of the town (see plan, fig 1) and outside the presumed area of the medieval occupation. The site consisted of the ground covered by the now demolished Kingham's depot and two smaller areas on either side of the northern end of the Lion & Lamb Yard.

At the start of development work a number of small trial trenches were excavated over the site (see plan, fig 2, T1 etc). No archaeological features were found, but it was noticeable that most of the trenches to the east (around T1) produced a few sherds of Roman pottery, whilst those to the south (around T2), ie nearest West Street, produced a moderate amount of medieval pottery. Not surprisingly, a general scatter of Victorian pottery was present over the whole site, as were a number of struck flint flakes, probably of Mesolithic date. It was again noticeable that the pottery tended to become more concentrated to the south of the site, nearest West Street.

No further action was taken at this stage, but the site was subsequently visited after footing trenches had been dug and two sections were drawn. Starting from the north and working southwards these were as follows:

SECTION X-Y (fig 2)

At the end nearest the Hart Extension Car Park the soil profile consisted of a layer of topsoil (1) resting directly on natural yellow clay (5). This no doubt represents the remains of the fields known to have existed here since at least the medieval period. This stratigraphy was interrupted about a third of the way down the section, by a possible field boundary (not visible on the

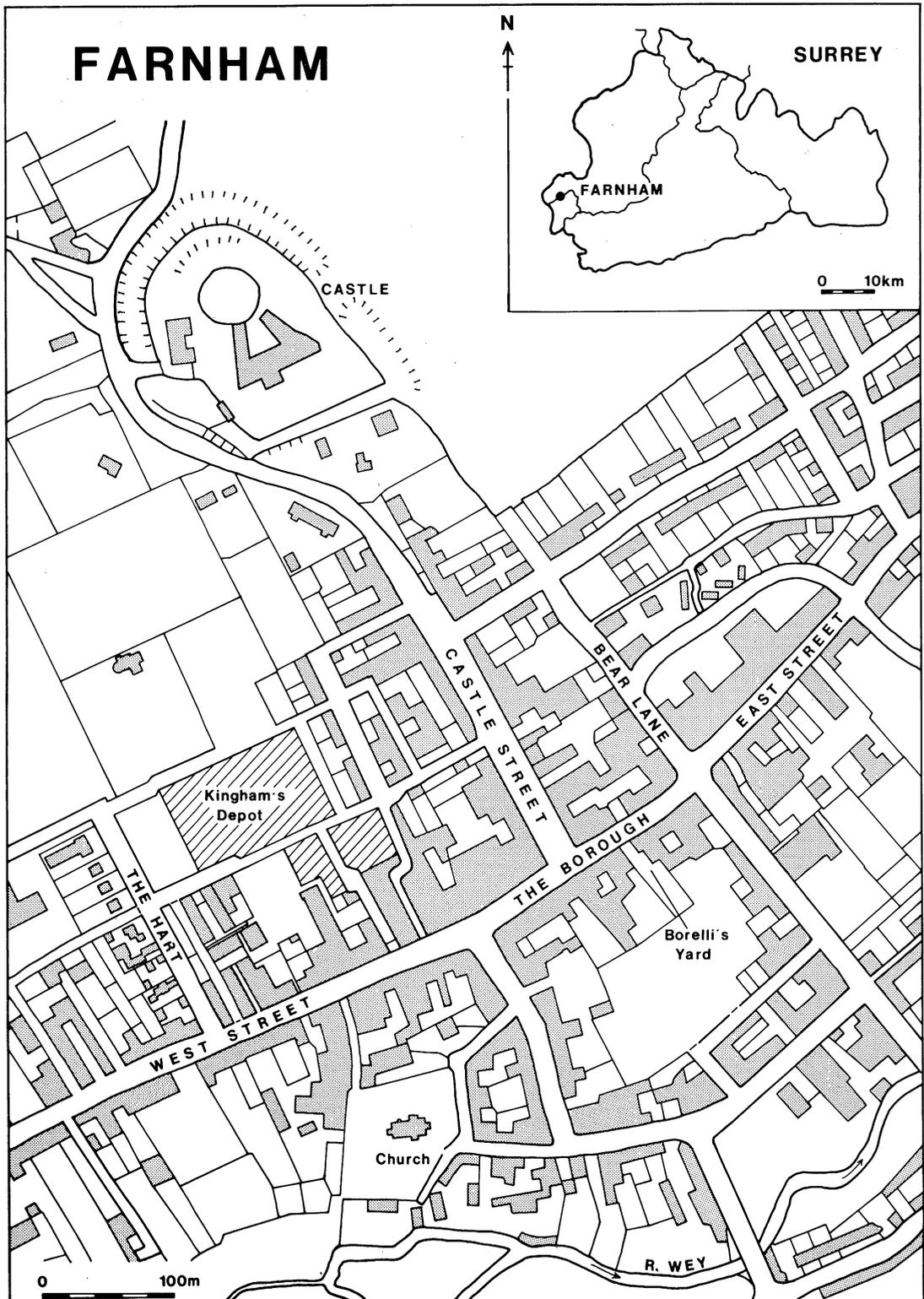


Fig. 1. Farnham, location and town centre plans

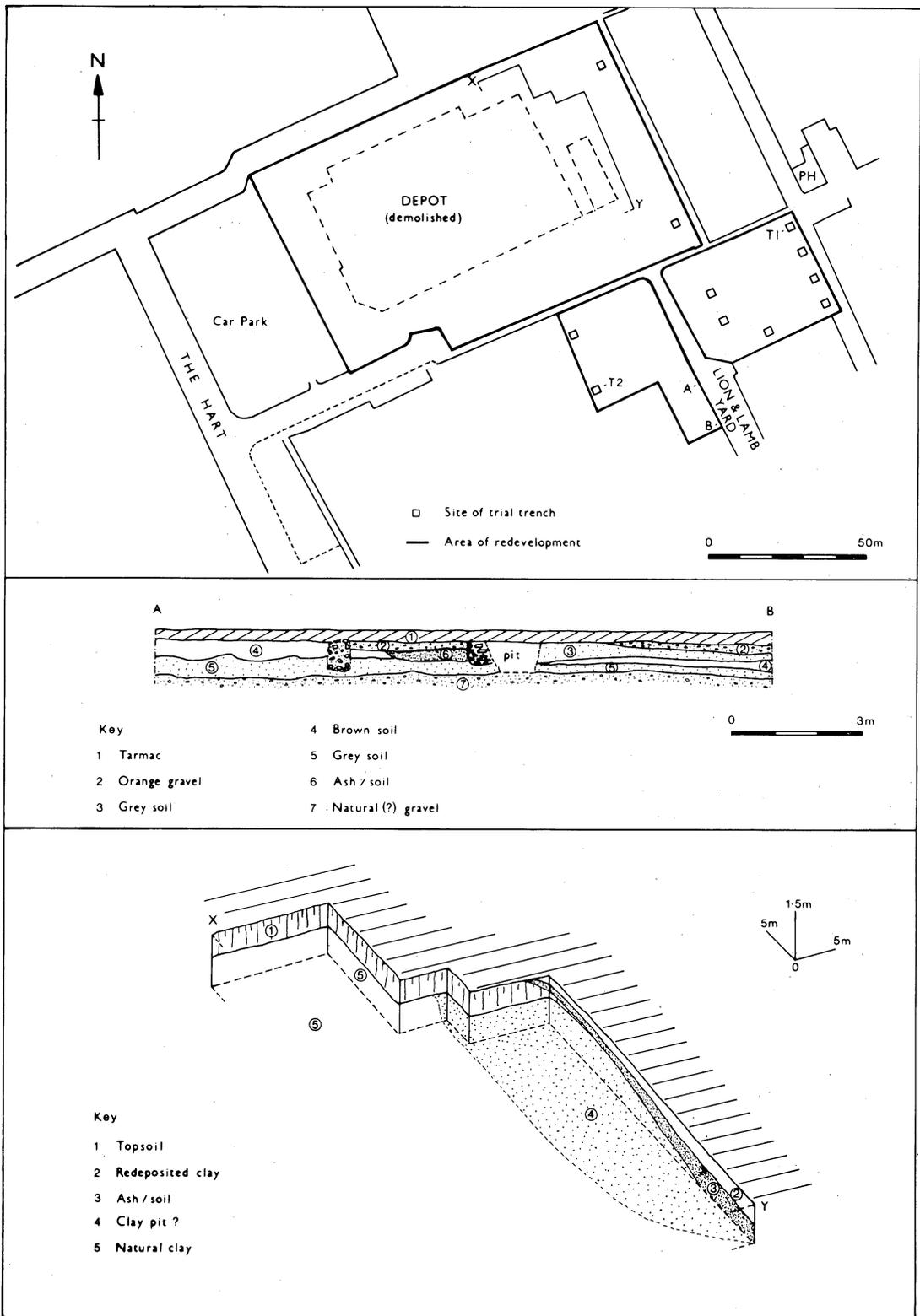


Fig. 2. Kingham's/Lion & Lamb Yard, Farnham, site plan and sections

section). To the south lies a darker deposit of soil, ash and rubbish (3) which thickens towards the town and contains pottery dating from the 17th century onwards. This, in turn, was overlain by a layer of redeposited clay which must have come originally from the footing trenches when Kingham's Depot was built on the site. Underlying layers 1 and 3 and cut into the natural clay was a feature containing mixed clay and soil (4). The edge of this feature extended into the contractor's trench and could be seen curving towards point Y (see fig 2, isometric section). This is likely to be the remains of a filled-in clay pit and, though no datable material was recovered from the fill, it must be earlier than the deposition of layer 3, ie pre-17th century.

SECTION A-B (fig 2)

This section showed that the ground around the Lion & Lamb Yard had been much more heavily disturbed than that further to the north. Underlying the tarmac of the yard itself (1) were the remains of two walls, connected by a band of gravel (2) – presumably a floor. The southern wall had been partially destroyed by a pit, which contained Victorian material. To the south of the pit lay a number of bands of gravel and soil which probably represent earlier surfacings and the associated rubbish accumulations of the yard itself. The lowest level (5) produced pottery ranging in date from the 13th to the 16th centuries. To the north of the building the section resolved itself into two soil layers (4 and 5). These show no apparent relationship to the stratigraphy revealed in section X-Y, further to the north and may have been produced by gardening activity. The date of the building itself is unknown except that it must be earlier than the Victorian pit which partially cuts it. At one point, completely within the contractor's trench, in the corner opposite B in section A-B (see plan, fig 2), the remains of a small cellar were noted, cut into the natural gravel. This structure was brick lined and filled with grey soil and tile, which unfortunately produced no closely datable evidence. It is perhaps also worth recording that the gravel terrace on which Farnham is built extends in this area as far north as the rear wall of the Post Office complex, roughly in line with the L of Lion on the plan. The gravel formed an abrupt east-west junction line with yellow clay lying to the north.

CONCLUSIONS

The sections recorded and finds recovered from this area largely tend to confirm previous assumptions as to the development of this part of the town. The area on which the present Hart Extension car park now stands, appears to have been agricultural land until recent times. The find of a light scatter of Roman pottery, especially to the east of the site, may be the result of manuring operations at that period and it is interesting to note that Major Wade recorded Roman tile from Castle Street. Furthermore, recent examination of material in the Rankine Collection, now in Farnham Museum, showed the presence of a number of sherds of unabraded Roman pottery, labelled as coming from the 'Town Hall site', at the bottom of Castle Street. It begins to seem possible that there is a Roman site underlying the centre of Farnham.

There is then the suggestion of a field boundary running east-west across the Kingham's site, dividing the field soil profile to the north from the layer of ashy soil to the south. This boundary did not show on the section but a slight bank was visible elsewhere on the site. The ash and soil layer probably represents domestic refuse thrown out to the rear of properties facing West Street, in the main from the 17th century onwards. This is made more likely by the fact that the deposit thickens towards the town. This habit however, appears to have its origins at least as far back as the 13th century, given the finds of pottery of this period from the south of the site. Nearer to the town, at the top of the Lion & Lamb development, the section hints at the presence of a garden of some sort. Further south, buildings and yard metalling start to appear, probably dating to the Georgian period.

The presence of a filled in clay pit on the Kingham's site is not really surprising in view of the number of kilns known to have been worked around the town at various times.

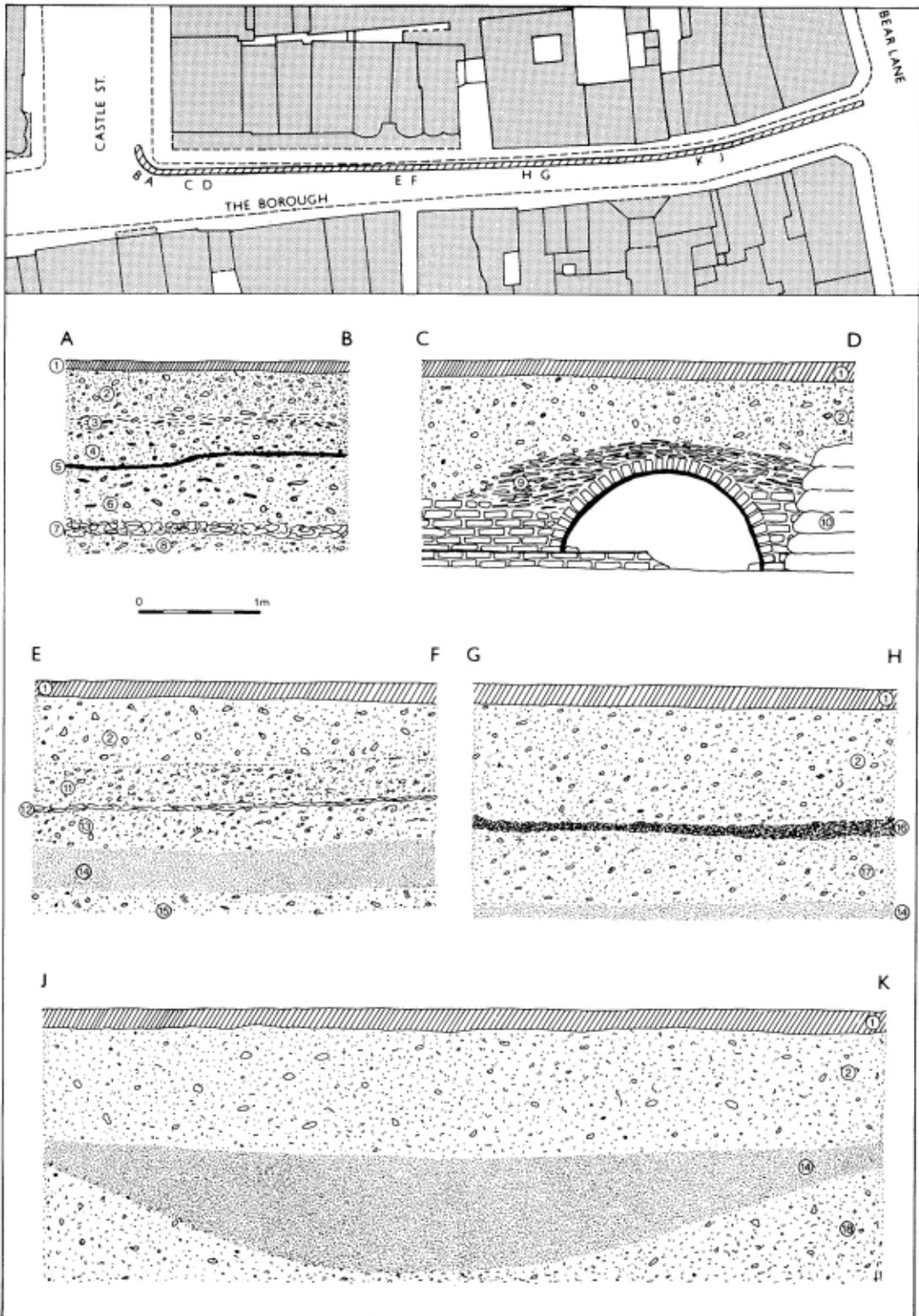


Fig. 3. The Borough, Farnham, sewer trench location plan and sections

The Borough sewer trench

The second major development in the town was the laying of a new sewer pipe along the Borough, between Castle Street and Bear Lane (fig 3). This work was carried out by the local council over a period of about six weeks and started at the same time as the Kingham's development. Members of the Farnham Museum Society's Archaeological Group again kept a watch on the trenching operation, though recording was difficult, because the contractors worked mostly at night, only opened short lengths of trench at a time and backfilled almost immediately. This meant that it was only possible to record short sections and that while they were drawn as accurately as possible, they should not be taken as being correct to the last centimetre.

The positions of the sections recorded can be seen on the location plan (fig 3). Section A–B was taken from the southern face of the trench at the bottom of Castle Street and shows the following successive layers, from the top down:

- the modern tarmac (1);
- yellow gravel (2), presumably earlier road metalling;
- a band of grey soil and roof tile (3), perhaps from the demolition of a nearby building;
- orange gravel road metalling (4);
- a layer of ash (5);
- another layer of metalling consisting of brown gravel (6) interspaced with tile;
- a band of compacted clunch and mortar (7);
- and another band of gravel (8) containing roof tile but no closely datable material.

Section C–D (fig 3) was recorded on the north face of the trench, level with the Nationwide Building Society's office. This section consisted of the modern tarmac (1) and underlying gravel (2), which occur throughout the length of the Borough. Beneath these was a band of tile (9) lying horizontally and covering a brick arched vault and walls. This vault was a substantial structure supported internally on pillars and lined with mortar. The arch itself was not central, the main part of the chamber lying slightly to the east of it. The chamber was partly filled with water and the structure is therefore probably the cistern which served the town water pump on the corner of Castle Street (Temple 1973, 15).

Section E–F (opposite the entrance to Borelli's Yard) again consisted of a number of bands of gravel (2, 11, 13), the latter two being divided by a layer of mortar (12). Underlying the gravel was a deposit of dark peaty soil (14) which in turn overlay a clayey gravel (15), which may have been natural.

Section G–H (fig 3) shows a similar stratigraphy to the previous section with the exception of layer 16 which consisted of a band of ash (which appeared much thicker in the northern section than in the illustrated southern section). Layer 14 appeared to lie slightly deeper than in the previous section.

Section J–K (fig 3; level with the Abbey National Building Society office) again has a similar profile, with the exception that layer 14 appears to thicken downwards at one point as though infilling an underlying ditch or pit, which would have been about 6m wide and have been aligned approximately at right angles to the borough. Unfortunately the orange gravel layer (18) could not be examined closely to confirm this idea, as the contractors were working in the area at the time.

CONCLUSIONS

In general the various levels revealed along the length of the Borough almost certainly represent road metalling with the occasional intrusion of a band of ash or building material. It was noticeable that this disturbance appears to be much deeper at the bottom of Castle Street than elsewhere in the Borough. The peaty soil layer (14) is interesting in that it contained a light scatter of late medieval pottery and appears to be identical to a similar layer noted by Ashton

Booth in a trench between Potter's Gate and Pullingers in West Street in the 1960s (Booth 1970, 1). Mr Booth interpreted the layer as being the product of rubbish thrown into the street and accumulating over a number of centuries. He also suggested that the jumbled nature of the datable pottery was the result of pigs being put out to pasture in the street, a practice which was forbidden in the Court Book of 1608.

The varying convolutions of this layer, most noticeable in Booth's section, may well be the result of subsidence into underlying features such as pits or ditches. This seems particularly probable in the case of section J-K where the slumping may well indicate the course of the eastern section of the medieval town ditch, the southern section of which has now been found in Borelli's Yard (N Riall, pers comm). The general conclusion can only be that there has been a considerable accumulation of material since the late medieval period in this part of the town and that any early remains can be expected to lie at least 2m below the present road level.

Apart from the vault in section C-D, a number of brick wall footings were exposed along the line of the trench, especially from W H Smith eastwards. Whether this means that the road has been widened at some stage is a matter for local historians to decide.

I have written this rather full account of the Archaeological Group's work, in the hopes that the information can one day be put together with excavation results from elsewhere in the town, to form the basis of an early history of Farnham.

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