



# Archaeological Desk-based Assessment of land situated at Standard Key, Abbey Road, Faversham, Kent

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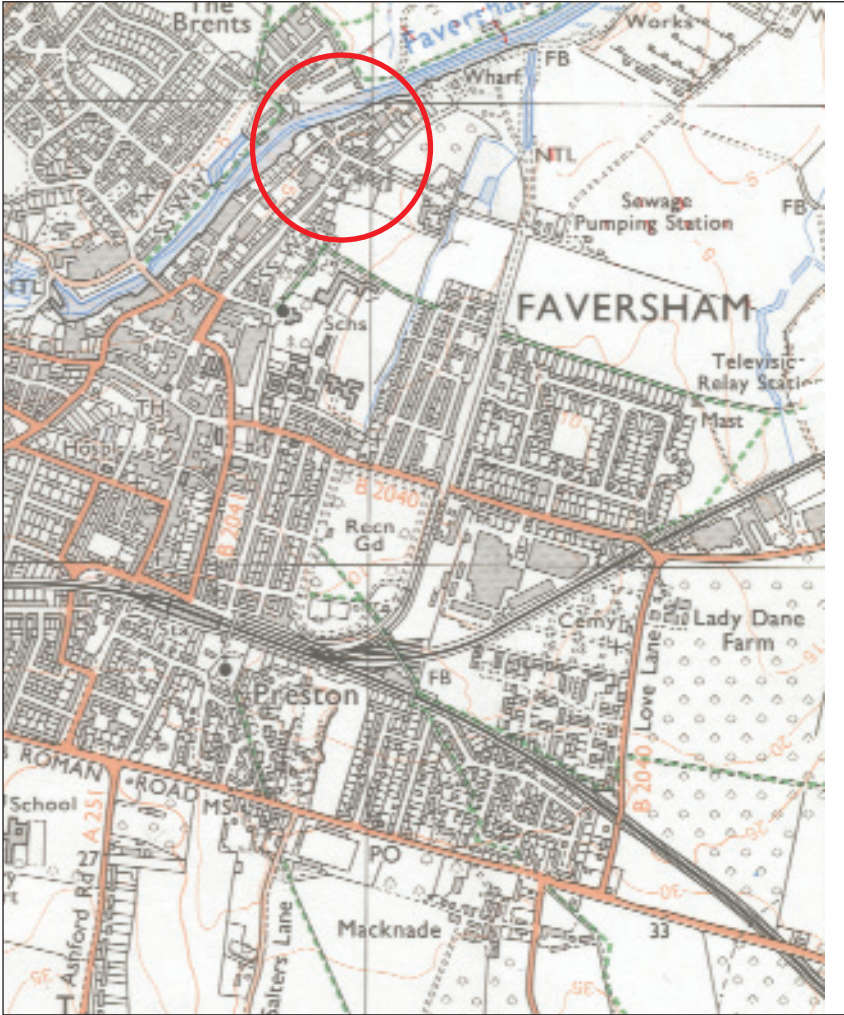


Fig. 01. The site plan of the proposed development is to the north of Abbey Road (above). There were various modern industrial buildings standing on the Abbey Road frontage of the site. Medieval shipyards were located in the north-west corner of the

Development Site, and Iron-Age and Roman field boundaries are likely to be found in the area of Abbey Road. The road itself should have the great stone-built sewer of the Abbey running along it to empty in the vicinity of Standard Key to the west.



## Plans and Figures

Fig. 01. General location plan of the site

Fig. 02. Location of the site on the 1795 O.S. surveyors map

Fig. 03-15. Regressive map analysis

Front cover map shows the Development Site on the early 19th century map of Faversham

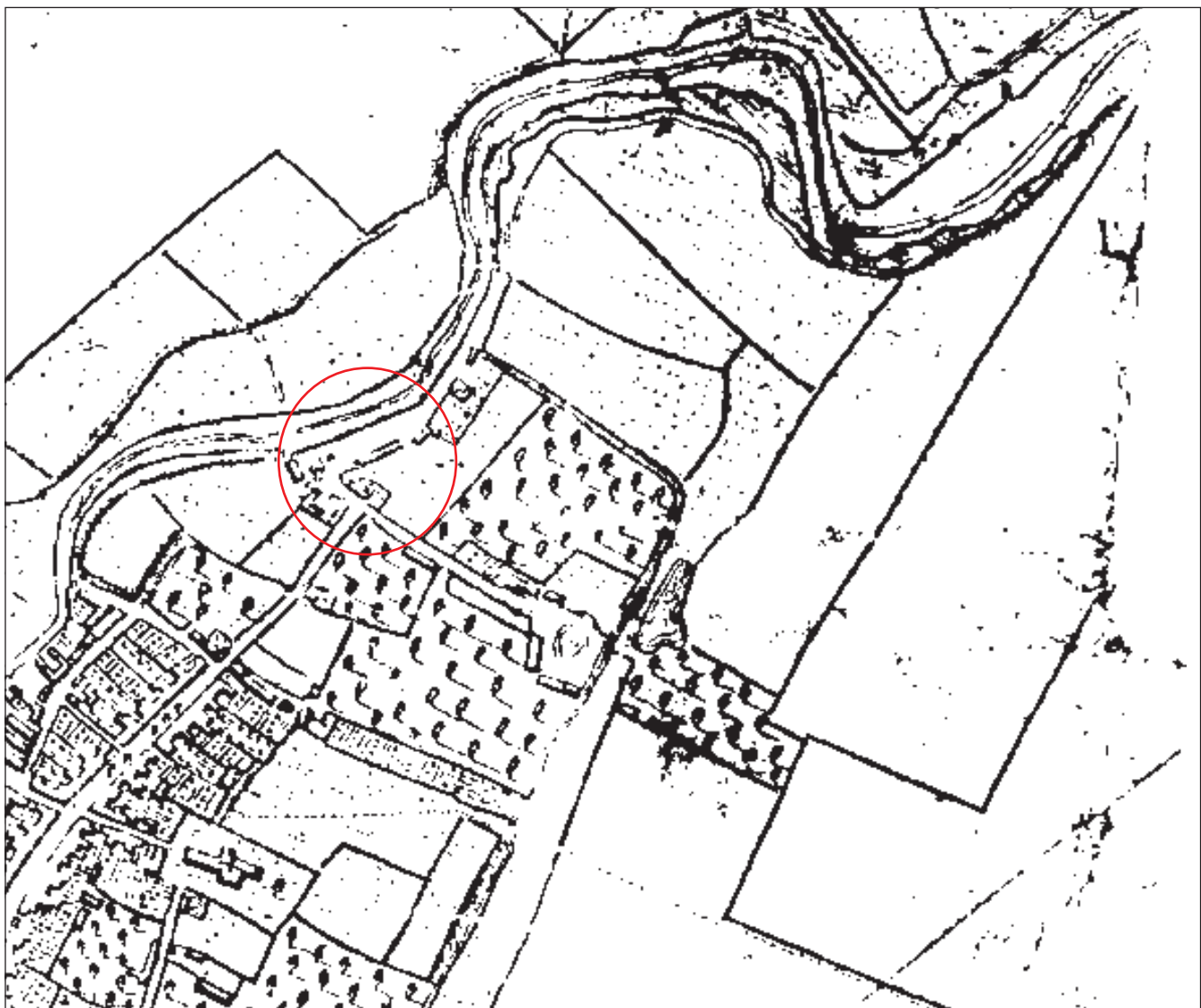


Fig. 02. The map from the British Library (*above*) is the Ordnance Survey surveyors drawing of Faversham. The drawing, at a scale of six inches to the mile was the first scientific survey in Britain and commissioned in 1795.

It shows in some detail all the field systems and rural and urban development of Faversham at the very beginning of the Industrial Revolution. The Development Site is highlighted in red, situated to the north on the edge of the marshes.

## Summary

An Archaeological Desk Based Assessment has been carried out to assess the archaeological potential of land at Standard Key, off Abbey Road, Faversham, Kent, prior to development.

The following gives a summary of the baseline archaeological conditions associated with the site.

### **Prehistoric Periods**

Before glaciation the Thames flowed to the north of London through the Vale of St Albans but when glaciers blocked the river's path the Thames migrated southwards towards its present position. At times of low sea-level both the Thames and Rhine met in an area of the southern North Sea and together flowed south-westwards through the English Channel to the Atlantic Ocean.

The terrace deposits associated with the River Thames and its tributaries have been found to be rich in Upper Palaeolithic evidence, with large collections of artifacts and fossils from many sites.

### **Mesolithic (to 4,000 BC)**

Numerous find spots of Mesolithic material are known largely from recent field-walking and records made during the 19th and early 20th centuries (Swale Survey 1999).

These find spots are scattered throughout the immediate area but there is a concentration around Oare Creek, to the west of the development site and Nagden to the north-east, also along the southern edge of the Swale marshes and inland headlands leading south of Watling Street. Sea levels were much lower during the Mesolithic period and large areas of the Swale estuary would have been available for exploitation.

### **Neolithic (4,000-2,000 BC)**

Data on possible settlements of Neolithic and early Bronze Age data in the area have been collected from numerous flint scatters. (Swale Survey 1999). During the Neolithic period we find the first evidence for the domestication of plant and animal species, although it is likely that Neolithic communities still relied heavily on wild food resources which would have been widely available in the estuary area. The dryland/estuary margin in the vicinity of the development site spans a range of ecological zones and is the key to our understanding of the Neolithic communities in the Swale District. With its light soils, access to fresh water, the dryland/estuary margin at the development site is ideally suited for simple farming and Neolithic flint scatters at Abbey Farm, Oare, Nagden, Clapgate, School Farm, and Harty Ferry all confirm this hypothesis.

### **Iron Age (700BC-AD50)**

An late Iron Age farm was located by Mr Philp about 150 metres south-east of the development site (Philp 1968). Initially, a rectangular enclosure enclosing domestic huts covered an area of about 200 square metres. A later ditch system, dated by the excavator to about AD 10-20 seems to have been part of an extensive field system which had become filled with silt and rubbish by about AD 50 (Philp 1968). Further Iron Age activity is known about south of the development site.

### **The Roman Period (55BC to AD410)**

A Roman villa was found built partially over the Iron Age ditches and the earliest construction is said to date from AD 70-100 (Philp 1968).

The villa doubled in size, probably between AD 100-150, and a substantial wing added about AD 150-200. The villa was almost certainly the centre of a farming estate, the boundaries of which have survived as the Anglo-Saxon boundaries of the town of Faversham.

Only half the villa was excavated, but it shows features which indicate a Roman villa estate overlaying a Belgic farmstead. Some of the rooms were decorated with painted plaster. However, none of the floors survived in situ, but enough tessellation debris suggests some of the floors were decorated with mosaics of at least five colours.

## Summary/2

The plan of the Roman villa shows a house with overall dimensions of 22 by 33 metres (72 by 108 ft); clearly more rooms, and probably another wing, lay to the north beyond the excavated area. and close to the Development Site. Built during the 2nd century, this villa estate appears to have continued in use until the late 4th century (Detsicas, 1987).

Field-walking to the east and north of the Roman villa retrieved numerous Roman building ceramics, and Roman pottery, 42 sherds, having a date range from the late 1st to early 3rd centuries. The amount of Roman material found suggests that more Roman buildings are to be found in this area, both to the east and north in the area of the Development Site.

The Roman villa estate looked to the Springhead stream, rather than Faversham Creek, for its water supply and transport. The topography and Roman finds at the springhead itself suggest the stream was wider and deeper during the Roman period, and this was confirmed by an auger profile taken of the existing stream (Swale Survey 1999).

Access to Watling Street, about 1.2 km to the south, was probably by Roman road leading to the Roman and later Medieval port of Thorne. This road, at right angles to Watling Street, runs in a dead straight line to the Medieval port and passes through the Development Site. This boundary, noted in Anglo-Saxon charters from AD 699, is also mentioned in a perambulation of 1209. Field-walking at the port of Thorne, just to the north of the Development Site, itself almost an island at high tide, retrieved 13 sherds of late Iron Age pottery, nine sherds of Roman and numerous sherds of Medieval



**Fig. 03. The map of 1520 shows the medieval port of Faversham which is situated just to the north of the Development Site. However, the possible Roman**

**buildings (above, right) about the Development Site on the north-east boundary and may suggest Roman port facilities may be located in the archaeological investigation.**

pottery. Also retrieved were two fragments of Dressel 20 amphora. A map dating from about 1520 (see above) shows medieval warehouses and port facilities at Thorne, and just to the south, but still on Thorne Island, and close to the Development Site large roofless red brick buildings. Brick in 1520 was used in few buildings. In fact, on this particular map, these roofless ruins are the only buildings of brick. It is suggested these red brick roofless buildings could in fact be Roman port buildings in ruins. Field-walking has retrieved large quantities of Roman building ceramics from the locality. To the east of this possible Roman road is Clapgate Fleet, the Anglo-Saxon name of which is *Maere-fleot* which means boundary waterway, and first mentioned in AD 699. It reinforces the hypothesis that this is the extent of the Roman villa estate at Faversham.

To the south the estate is bounded by Watling Street (called in AD 1209 'Key Street') and to the west by Faversham Creek. To the north beyond Thorne Key further marshland which may have been available to the Roman estate. The area thus defined is some 1,580 acres (639 hectares).

## Summary/3

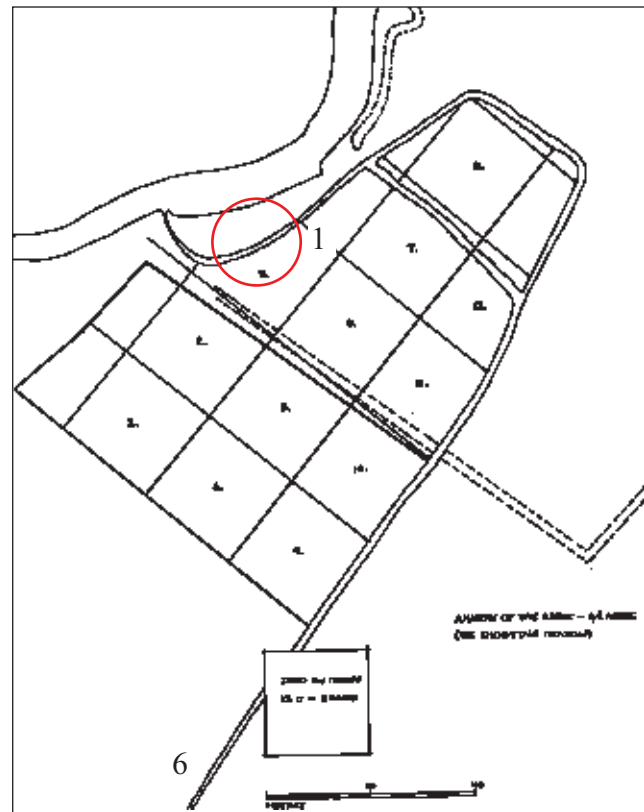
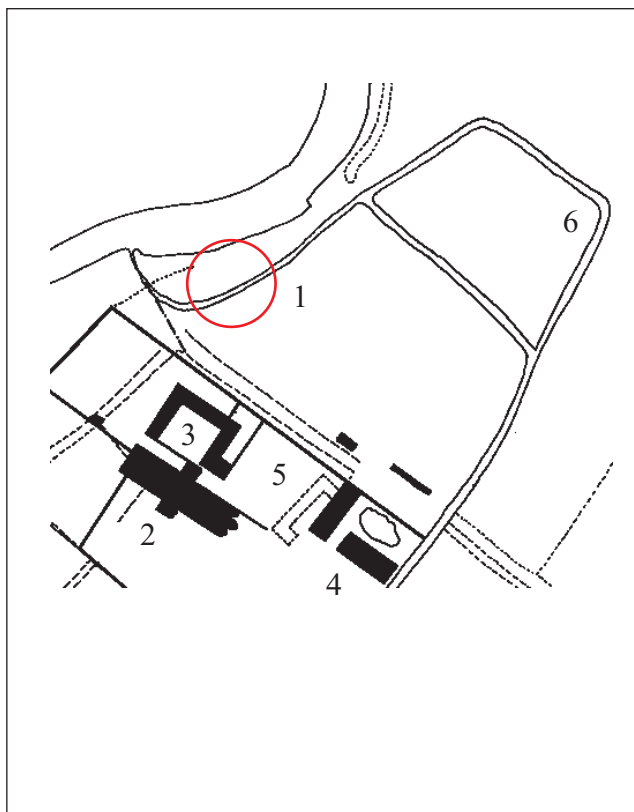
### Saxon and Medieval

The first written reference to the port of Faversham was in AD 699 when King Wihtred called his Council together at a place called Cilling, possibly downstream (at Clapgate) from the Development Site, and to the east of Faversham town. Cilling was a Saxon port of some importance. Another charter of 812 says: “*Strata antiqua quae jacet ad portum quae dicitur Cilling*” (“The ancient street which leads to the port named Cilling”). This street may still survive as a feature in the landscape, and pass through the Development Site.

Cilling was probably a Royal port belonging to the King. The grass pastures to the east are called “*Cynincges Cua Lond*” (“The King’s cattle pastures”). Cilling, which possibly means “gully stream” (Gelling, pers. corres. 1995), would possibly have been a muddy foreshore, laid with a bed of branches to serve as a hard. Vessels would have been moored to hitching posts at high tide and then unloaded at low water.

### King Stephen’s Abbey

Faversham received a huge economic injection when in 1147 King Stephen decided to build an Abbey and castle at Faversham. The site chosen for the Abbey was probably the place where Stephen had landed after sailing from Boulogne to take possession of the Crown, the castle is just south of the possible Roman fort at Syndale. The Development Site is within the precinct of the Abbey (*see below*).



**Fig. 04.** The map (above left) shows the topography and historical remains around the Development Site (1). The map is based on the Town Map of Edward Jacob drawn about 1745. The extent of the Abbey (2) has been transposed on the map, and the cloisters can be seen to the north of the main Abbey building (3). The still-standing Grange Barns and associated Medieval farm buildings (4) can be seen to the south-east of the

Development Site whilst the Roman villa and Iron Age farm (5) sit under the Medieval Farm complex. The freshwater spring which served the various period farms can be seen following a rather strange course (6) but the area enclosed is the exact area of the Abbey precinct as itemised in the AD 1276 survey. The Development Site is situated within the area of the Abbey precinct (1).



## Summary/4

### **Medieval waterfront development**

With the Thorne Quay rebuilt, the Abbey established, a ribbon development of merchant's houses was built along the spine of the Thorne peninsula and called the "new town". Storage of goods was either in the cellars of the houses or in newly built warehouses on the medieval waterfronts close to the west side of the Development Site.

### **17th-century waterfront development**

By a Special Commission of the Exchequer in 1676, two legal quays were assigned to the port of Faversham. Standard Quay or Key (to the west of the Development Site), owned by the Earl of Faversham but occupied by Gilbert Wheeler, was one, and the other was the Town Quay, owned by the town of Faversham but occupied by Marke Trowts, gentleman. Standard Quay, "*being in length two hundred and eighty foot or thereabouts, beginning that length at a post placed or fixed opposite to the East and by North end of the warehouse.... And directly along the said place Key or wharf west and by south to the end of the Key where one other post is also placed or fixed as the extent and limits of the said Key*", abutted and bounded with several warehouses belonging to the right honourable the Earle of Faversham " Standard Quay was downstream from the Town Quay which, "*being in length seventy-nine foot or thereabouts beginning that length at a post placed or fixed at the North East End of the said Key. And so directly along the Key to the South West end of the Key where one other post is fixed. The extent and limits of the said Key abut and are bounded by the town warehouses towards the South East and the River or haven toward the North West.*" Faversham was considered a fully-fledged Customs Port, with two legal quays for the unloading of foreign merchandise. Standard Quay wharf had by now superseded that at Thorne. In 1999 archaeological investigation by the KAFS behind Standard Key and abutting the Development Site located various Roman buildings which may be associated with the development of Standard Key prior to the Medieval period.

### **The description of the quays in 1703**

Legal documents of 1703 indicate that as the tonnage of shipping increased, quays upstream were no longer accessible: "*There are large vessels that used to come to Kings Head Key that are now at the Standard, but it is difficult getting through what is called the Narrows to the Kings Head Key but the hoymen went to the Standard Key not only as being more commodious but to be all together. The Standard Key has been used for many years, formally for the weighing of wool. The storehouses there were raised from the ruins of the Abbey.*" The same deposition goes on to say:

*"That the Corporation have no wharf or Key of their own within the said town, nor ever had one neither are they entitled to any wharfage for any goods shipped or unshipped within the town and port of Faversham other than the said droits. There is a small Key or port on the estate of the said Hatch, (Lady Amcottes wharf); but it lies so high up and in so narrow a part of the creek, that no vessels except now and then a small lighter, ever came up so high so that no corn or wood is ever shipped or unshipped "*.

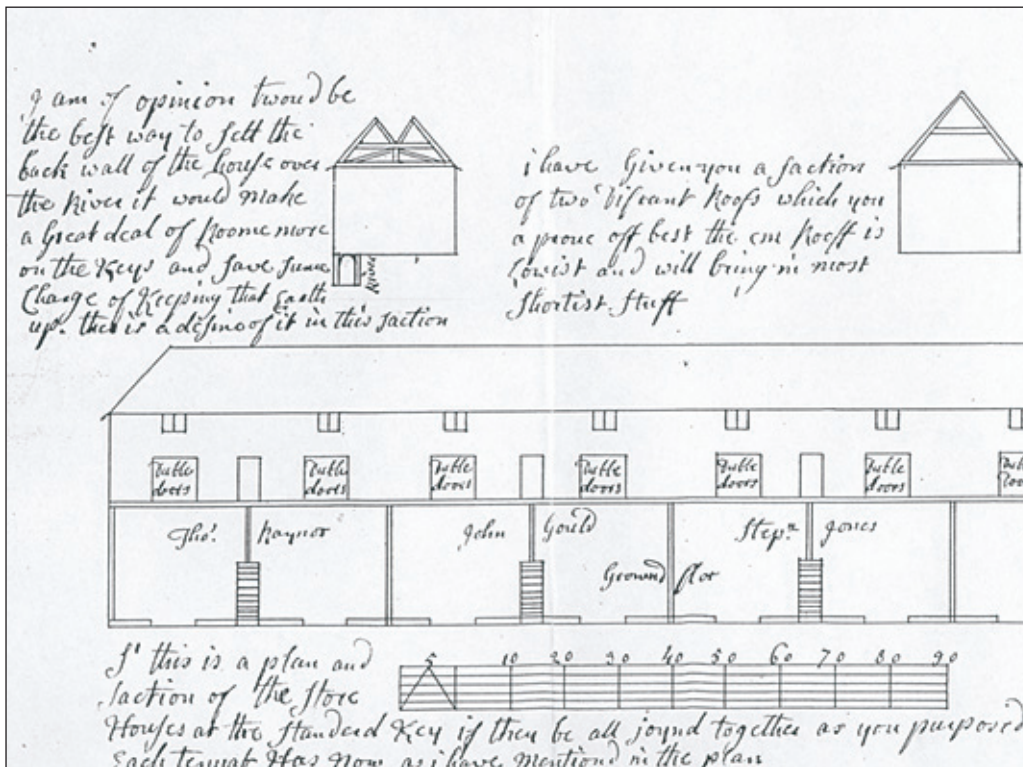
*There was formally a wharf at a place called Thorne within the Liberty of the Town: but it lied down the said creek near a mile below the said town. It was formally part of the lands belonging to the Abbey of Faversham; but hath for many years been washed away by the tide and never rebuilt. There is another wharf higher up the said creek at the North east and of the said town belonging to Lord Sondes also formerly part of the said Abbey Lands called the Standard from which all or near all the corn or goods are shipped and unshipped. The carriages to go to this wharf pass over the whole length of the pavement of the town. And there are several other wharfs higher up the creek: the first above the Standard is called the Kings Head Key, which is used for the coal trade, the next is the Wool Key and used for shipping of wool; the White Hart is the next, which is used in the coal trade, and the*

next is that of Hatch also used in the coal trade. It is very rare that any other goods or merchandise are shipped or unshipped at those Keys: and the coal goods fruit or other merchandise are laden or unladen above the Kings Head Key and are brought up or down the creek in lighters, no other boat or vessel being to be got up there on account of the want of water, the creek being very shallow and narrow there except in the time of Spring tides”.

### Standard Key (or Quay)

Lord Sondes, the Earl of Faversham, acquired Standard Quay in 1677, at a time when the port-trade was expanding. At the same time additional warehousing was built from timber and stones taken out of the Abbey ruins. Gillets Warehouse, formally known as Provender Mill, is a timber-framed building of considerable length (49m by 6.5m). It can be divided into three distinct building phases: the main range, the chamber block and the Victorian bay. The main range is 12 bays long and divided into 2 lofts of 6 bays each; the form of construction indicates a 17th-century date. The chamber block is a 3-bay building with a steeper pitched roof. The wall timbers are in staggered panels and the brick infill is used decoratively. The timbers used in the chamber block are of a size and quality that indicate they would have originated in the Frater building of the Abbey (Wade, 1986: 15).

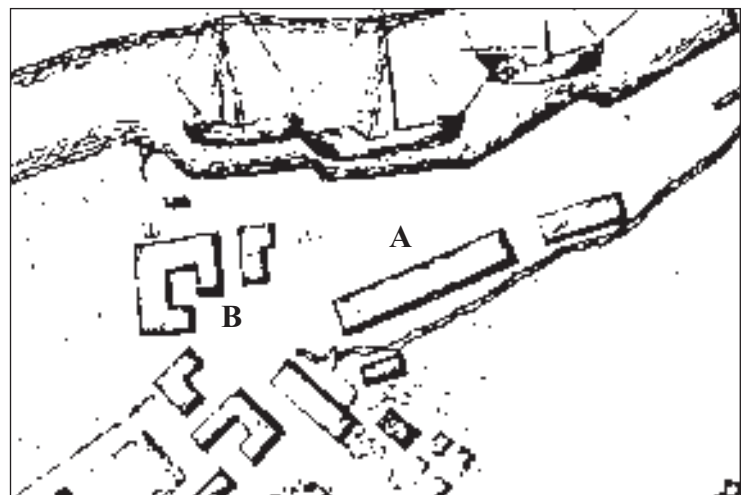
In the Watson Collection of Sondes papers at Rockingham Castle is the original estimate and plan for rebuilding the warehouses on Standard Quay (below), dating from the late 17th century. The builder had annotated the plan (Fig. 5) and section of the new warehouse as follows:



“Sir, this is a plan and section of the store houses at the Standard Key if they be all joined together as you purposed: with the same length each tenant has now as I have mentioned on the plan.”

The three tenants named on the plan are Stephen Jones, who has four bays, John Gould and Thomas Raynor, who both have two bays. Stephen Jones was Mayor of Faversham in 1698 and his grandson, Stephen Jones, held the same office in 1773.

On Edward Jacobs’ 1745 map (right) of the town the detail showing the warehouses (A) are shown “joined up”. It is likely that a pivotal point for construction - from separate warehouses to one complete unit - would be late 17th or early 18th century. The estimate by William Thurston, carpenter, for taking down and rebuilding the old storehouses at the Standard Quay came to £211 4s 9d. Immediately west and upstream but attached to Standard Quay a miller called John Downe of Wye, Kent, leased some land from Lord Sondes, and in 1761 built a watercorn mill. (B)





The previous mill building (B) is shown on the contemporary plan of Abbey Farm drawn by Elias Allen (below). The stream (C) which drove the mill rose in the shooting meadow and, in flowing north, passed the town “rope walk” where no doubt rope and cordage were made for Faversham’s maritime and agricultural needs.



Fig. 06. This is a section of a map drawn in the early 17th century by Elias Allen for the estate of Abbey Farm. Drawn some 150 years before the Town Map by Edward Jacob the map shows Faversham Abbey and its environs some fifty years after its removal by Henry VIII.

The surviving fabric of the abbey is shown in some detail. The two abbey gatehouses and the medieval development outside the gates and parts of the abbey precinct are drawn. Apart from the water mill (B) there are no buildings shown in the area of Standard Key which is circled in red.

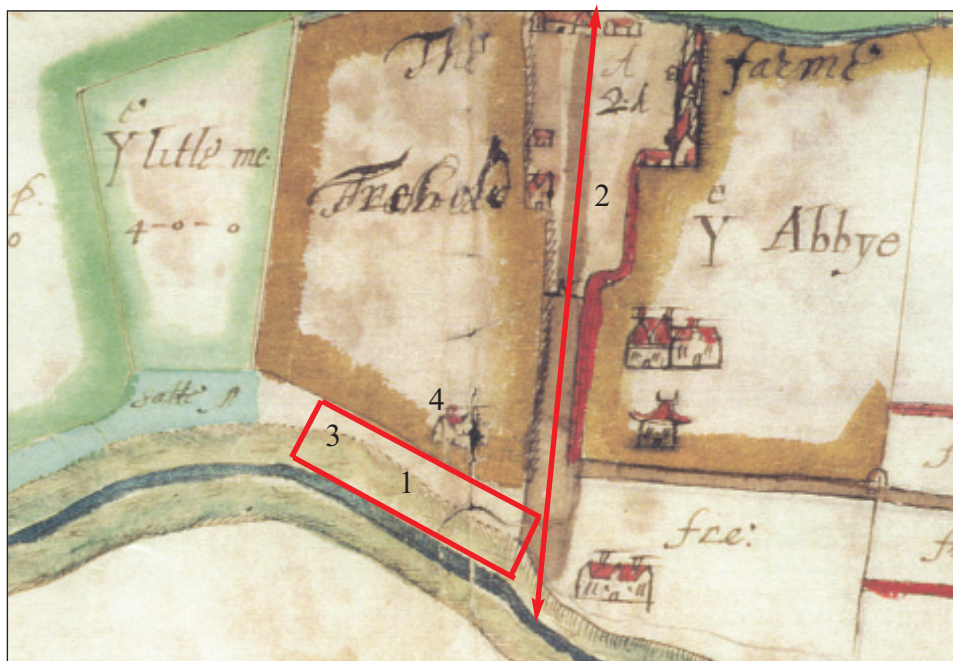


Fig. 07. Archaeological investigation around the Development Site (1) indicates the main stone coffered sewer (2) of the abbey runs along Abbey Road parallel to the frontage of the Development Site. Medieval timber-framed buildings front the south side of the Site (4). A Medieval shipyard is known to be situated at (3), dating from 1260 it continued in operation to the 18th century.



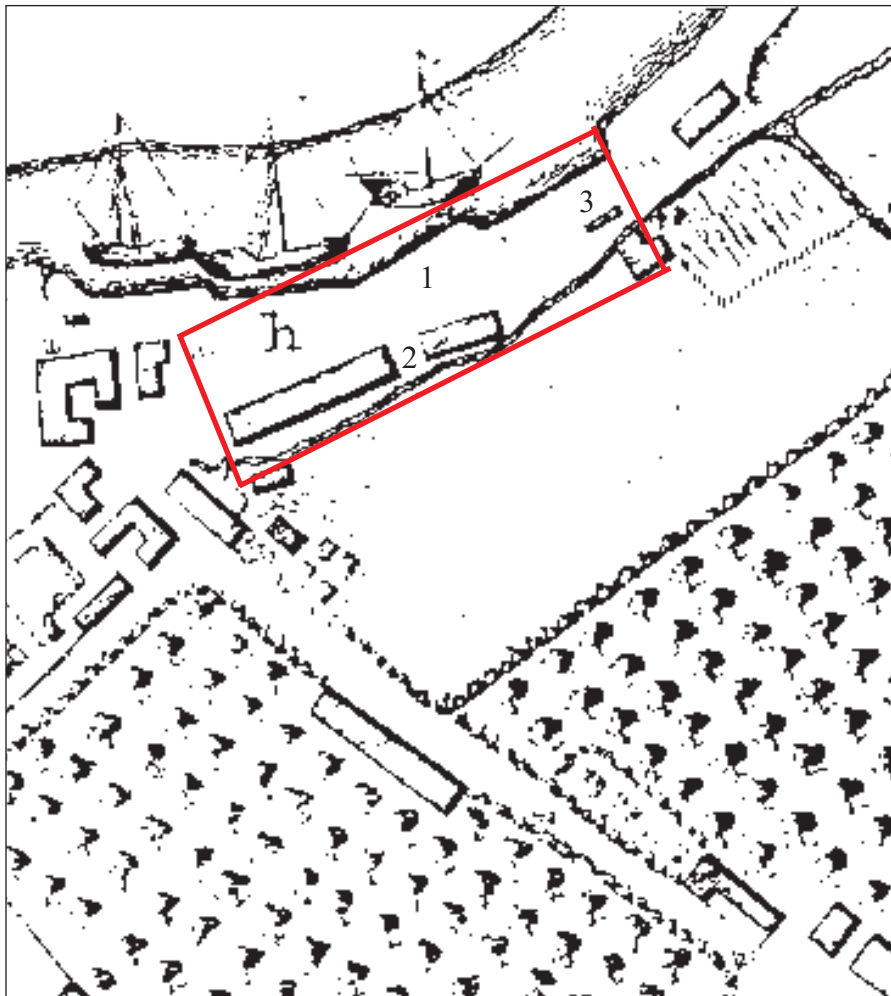


Fig. 08. The original coloured map was drawn by Edward Jacob in c. 1745 (above) with a wealth of detail around the Development Site (1). It shows the position of the warehouses on Standard Key (2), the shipyard inside the development area (3) and the location of the water mill (4).

The engraved map (left) was published in 1774 and no doubt used the coloured painting above as its reference. The Development Site (1) is shown outlined in red. The medieval buildings fronting the site on the south side on the 17th century map are still there, as is the shipyard (3) shown with sawpits and timber drying in the open yard to the north-east of the Site.

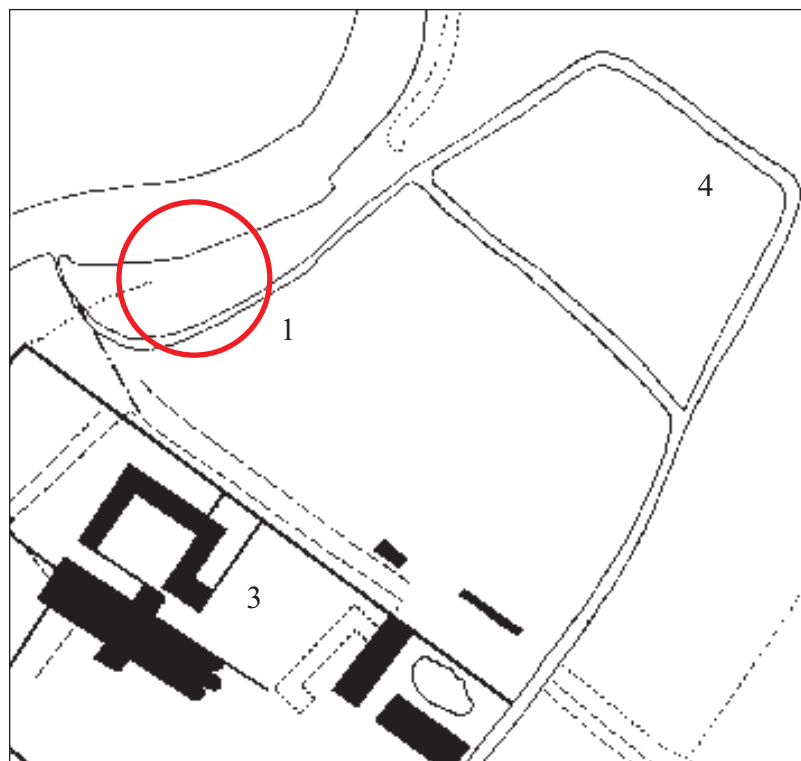


Fig. 09. The first Ordnance Survey of Kent was organised by General William Roy in 1787, and once the principal triangulation had been established William Mudge and Isaac Dalby surveyed north Kent. The Faversham drawings (above) show in some clarity details of the Development Site (1). The shipyard is still indicated as are the orchards to the south of the Development Site. The wagon road (2) to Thorne Key is still indicated by a hedge. The archaeological location of the abbey (3) and the unusual route of the waterway (4) which forms the southern boundary of the site is shown in some detail on the map (left).



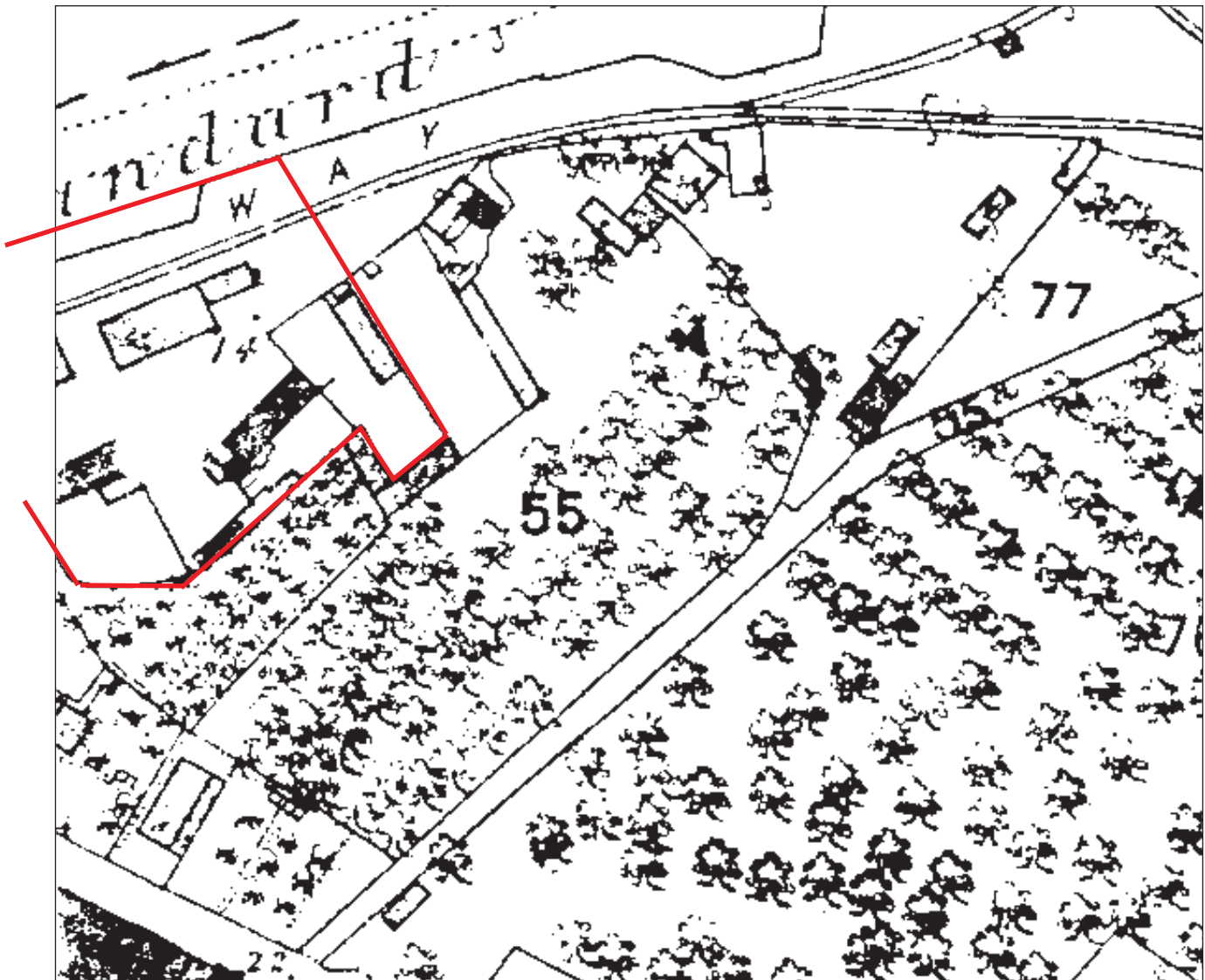


Fig. 10. In 1855 the railway came to Faversham and a branch line was constructed to a newly built coal wharf just the north of the Development Site (above at 77). Because some of the area was prone to flooding the area along the creek on the north-east area of the Development Site was built up with rubbish from London to facilitate construction of the railway through the Creek frontage of the Development Site. The shipyard in the north-east corner of the site continued to function and further buildings were erected. Both Ordnance Survey maps date from 1858.

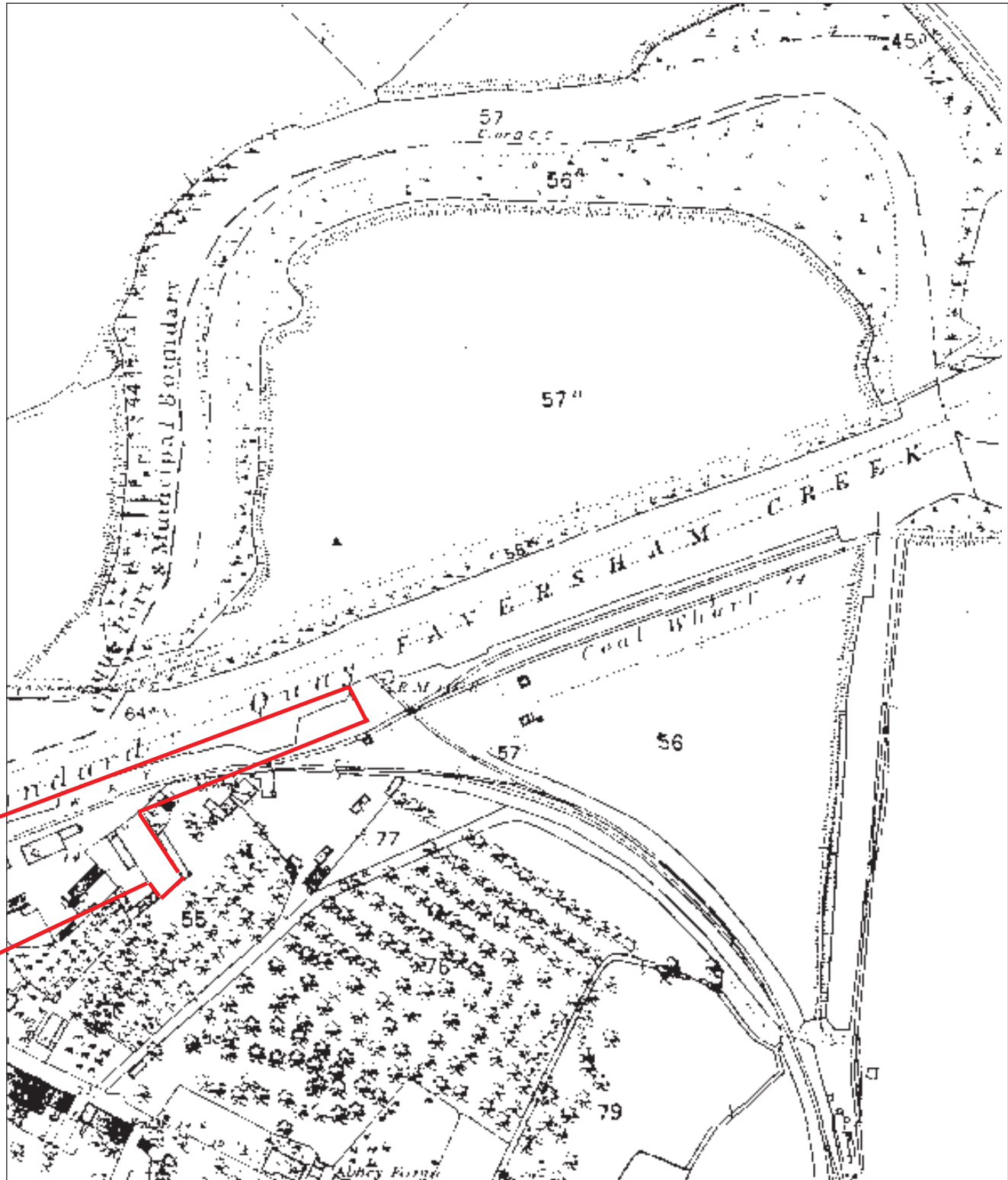


Fig. 11. The O.S. map of 1872 shows the improvements carried out to the channel of Faversham Creek. The bend of the creek, known as Powder Monkey Bay was cut across and as can be seen above, no longer utilised. A massive building programme was started on the east bank of the creek and a large Coal Wharf constructed. At the same time Standard Key was enlarged and additional buildings added to the water

frontage. The railway lines can be seen curving around to the north of the Development Site (55). The medieval wagon way through the site was enlarged and used for road traffic from Abbey Road to the Coal Wharf. The medieval orchards in the Development Site seem to have survived and may suggest this part of the area was not built up with London rubbish delivered by barge to the brickfields to the north east.

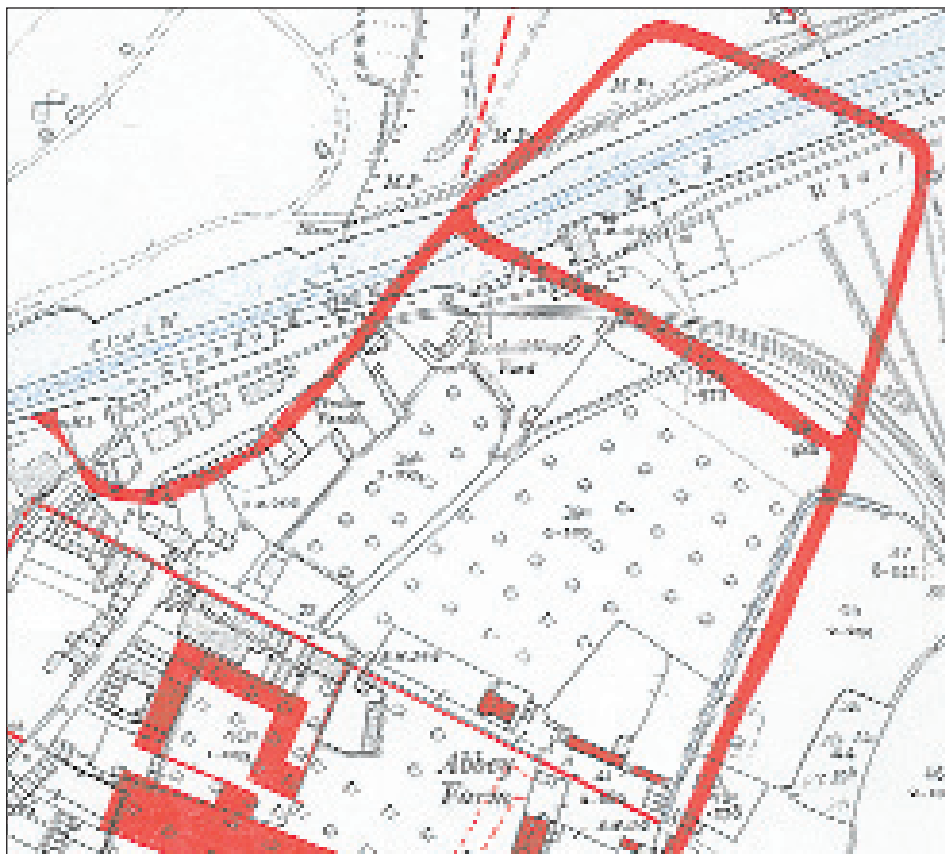
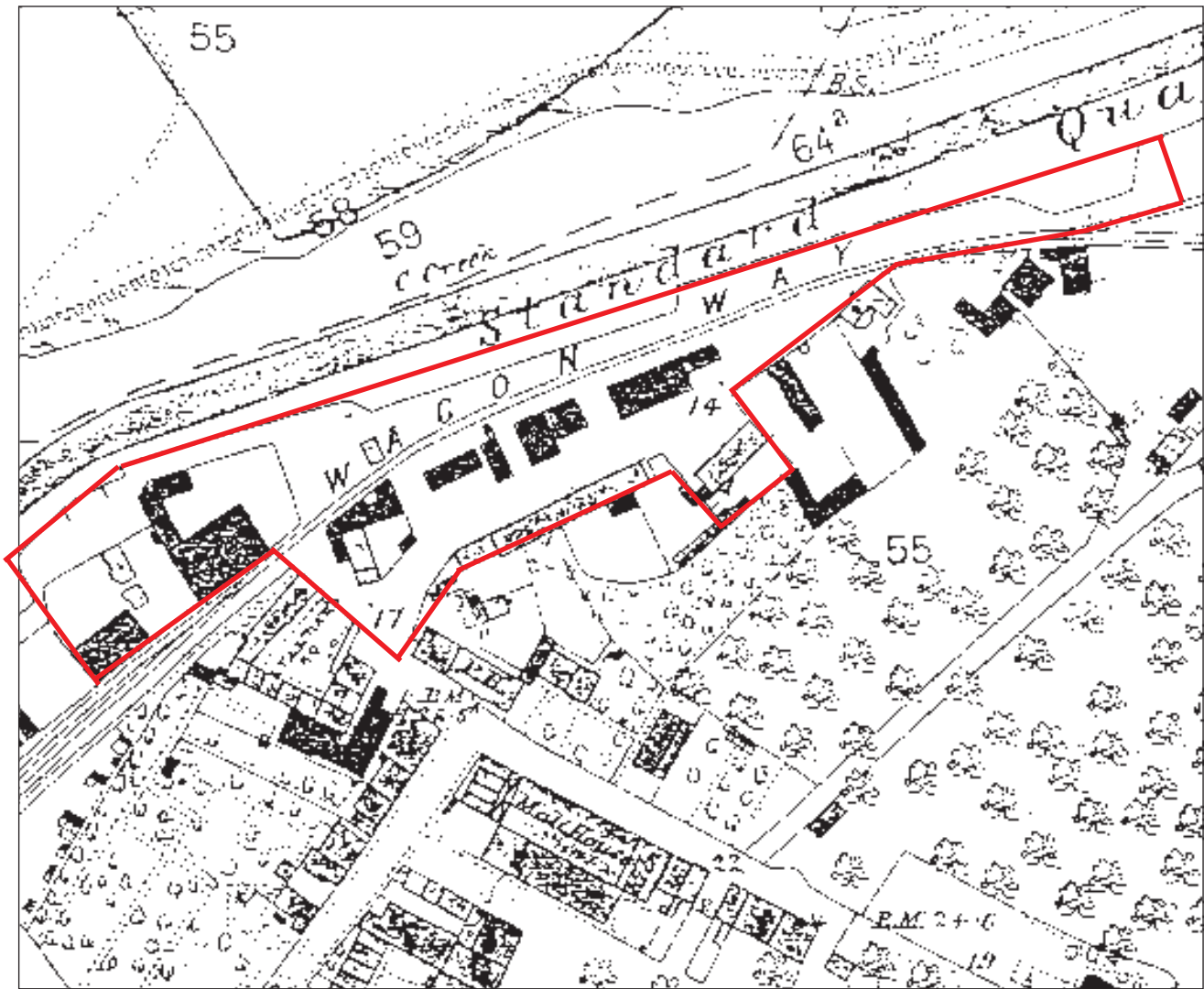


Fig. 12. The 1884 OS map (above) shows further development on the Site with the building of timber and corrugated sheds along the quay. By 1907 (Fig. 13. left) The shipyard was still in operation and had expanded to the extent it has now acquired its own map label "Boatbuilding Yard" alongside "Timber Yards". Overlaid in red on this map are the archaeological remains of the adjacent abbey and the watercourse seen in the Jacob map of 1745.





Fig. 14. The O.S. map of 1956 (above) shows all of the buildings indicated on the 1906 O.S. map with no additions.

Fig. 15. The photograph (left) shows Standard Key in its late 19th century hey-day with both a steam locomotive- seen in front of the house and a Thames sailing barge to the left with a double topsail schooner moored at Standard key. The ketch is seen sailing downstream propelled by the prevailing wind.

### 3. Summary of the Site and Geology

The site is located about 1 km north east of Faversham at NGR TR 0161 0261-0262.

The site is an area of semi-derelict structures on concrete hard-standing with maritime workshops, approximately 270m by 35m in plan.

According to the 1:50,000 British Geological Survey map (Sheet 273, 1974) of the area, the downward succession for most of the site is Head Brickearth over Thanet Beds over Upper Chalk.

In the north-east corner of the site, Alluvium overlies the Thanet Beds.

This general sequence was confirmed by the soil investigation on the adjacent site to the south in 1997 by Soil Mechanics Ltd. Report No. 7554/36/2.

#### **Ground Profile**

The downward succession to the adjacent site is summarised below:

#### **Made Ground**

Ranges from topsoil and paving material to slightly sandy clay to clayey sandy gravel. The depth to the base of the stratum is 0.38m to 1.30m. The thickness of the stratum is 0.38m to 1.30m.

#### **Alluvium**

Firm green brown slightly fine sandy to fine sandy very silty organic clay with occasional shell fragments. The depth to the base of the stratum is 2.10m. The thickness of the stratum is 0.90m.

#### **Head Brickearth**

Generally a firm orange brown slightly fine sandy clay, locally a sandy clay and with occasional flint gravel. Within this stratum becoming a dense orange brown very clayey sandy flint gravel. The stratum was only penetrated in four boreholes. The depth to the base of the stratum is 4.70m to 5.80m. The thickness of the stratum is 2.60m to 4.65m.

#### **Thanet Beds**

Stiff green grey slightly fine sandy very silty clay. Not fully penetrated.

The ground level of the site varies from 6.7m OD adjacent to Abbey Road to 4.3m OD in the northern corner.

## 4. Summary of Potential Discoveries and Impacts

### **Prehistoric**

Medium: No discoveries have been made in the area of the Development Site but it is acknowledged that the location and topography favour prehistoric activity.

### **Roman Period**

High: The location of a Roman villa and late Iron Age farm, some 150 metres from the development site indicate that further discoveries are likely.

It is probable that although the Roman villa faced south-east the creek would have been utilised by Roman shipping with a landing place or wharf in the area of Standard Key.

### **Medieval Period**

High: The proximity of the site to Faversham Abbey and within its precinct suggest that further discoveries may be made.

According to 17th century plans (see page 8) the freshwater waterway which surrounded the Abbey precinct is enclosed in a stone conduit under Provinder Mill and along the southern boundary of the Development Site.

There is a known shipyard with saw-pits and slipways dating from the 13th century within the Development Site, with medieval buildings and structures on the west and south edge of the site.

### **Post-Medieval**

Medium: Although all the evidence is peripheral, there is enough within close proximity to the site to suggest that discoveries may be made.



## 5. Conclusions

5.1 Overall, the archaeological potential of the proposed development at Standard Key, Abbey Road, Faversham is medium to high and there is enough evidence present to suggest an archaeological sensitivity through the following:

5.2 The proximity of Prehistoric sites.

5.3 The late Iron Age farm, the Roman villa and associated buildings in the near vicinity..

5.4 The known existence of the Medieval Abbey, farm and shipbuilding yard.

5.5 A geophysical survey is unlikely to be helpful since the ground of the site has been disturbed by modern dumping which tends to prevent sufficient data being collected using this technique.

5.6 Trial trenching is to be the most appropriate form of investigation of the site. These trenches should be targeted to areas of particular interest identified by Desk-Top Study. Archaeological investigations are likely to be phased according to the construction programme.

5.7 It is recommended that a historic building and environment survey is undertaken.

5.8 A full specification for the work and location of trenches, in consultation with Kent County Council Heritage should be defined and the work undertaken by an appropriate archaeological unit.

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Dr Paul Wilkinson  
Director, SWAT. Archaeology.



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