

A Historic Analysis of a Dwelling house  
situated at  
The Firs, Deans Hill Road, Bredgar,  
Sittingbourne, Kent

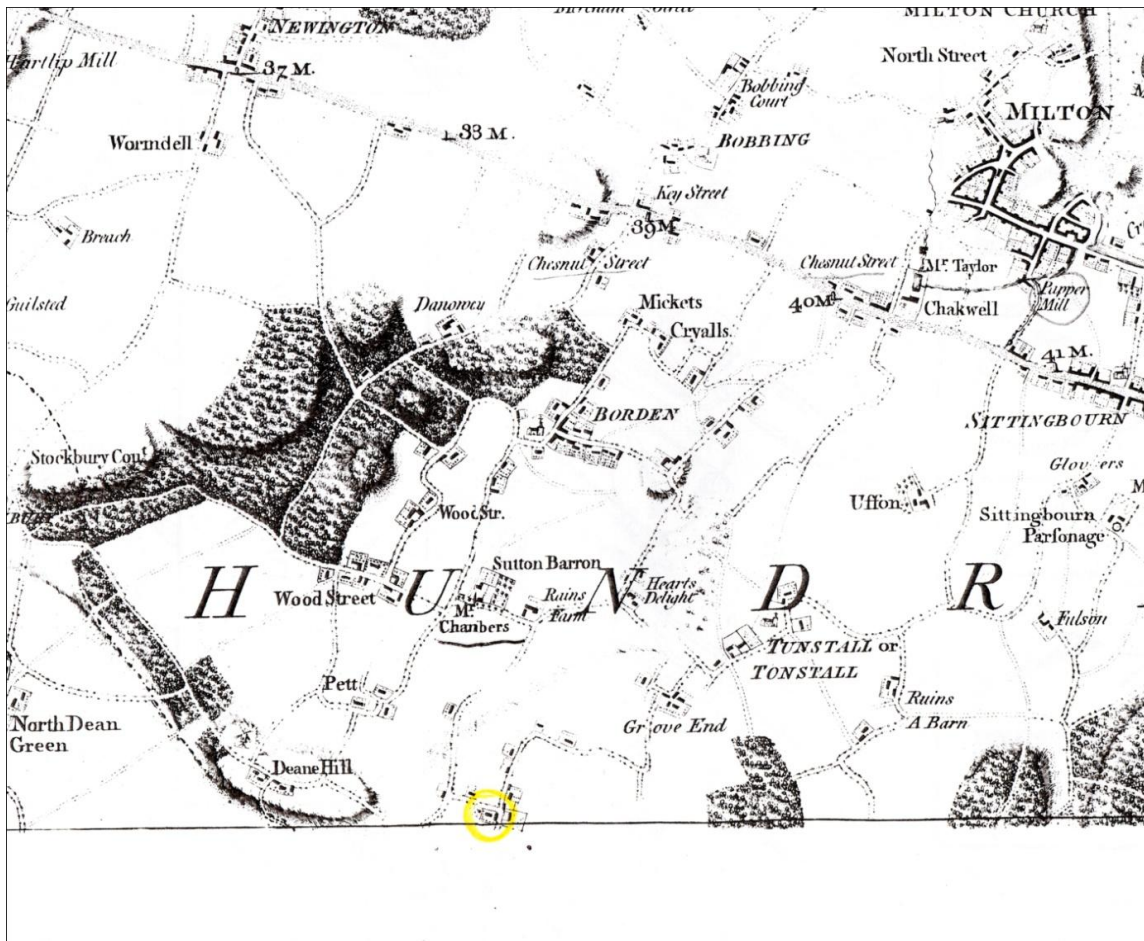
NGR 8743 6020



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## Historic Map Analysis

1. The earliest map we have of this area (above) is the 'Topographical Map of the County of Kent in twenty five sheets, on a scale of two inches to a mile by Andrews, and Dury, and Herbert' dated January 1769.
2. The Firs Farm can be seen on this map (ringed in yellow). Caution must be exercised with this map as the survey methods used were in their infancy and the exact location of sites is somewhat fluid.
3. However, it is proof that the farm and dwelling house in question did exist in the 1760's.



4. The next available map for study is the excellent series of Ordnance Survey original Surveyors Drawings dating from 1798. The map (above) shows The Firs Farm, and importantly the building under question coloured red which denotes it was a dwelling house for people and not animals.

5. This map is the first accurate map to be drawn of Kent since the Roman period (of which none survive). A theodolite was used to measure the angles of a remote point from each end of a steel chain. The triangle formed by the known length of the chain and the two sight lines enabled the precise distance of the far point to be calculated by trigonometry. The theodolite, specially built by Jesse Ramsden, was a formidable instrument, almost a metre in diameter and weighing over ninety kilos. A four-wheeled sprung carriage pulled by two horses was needed to move it from place to place.

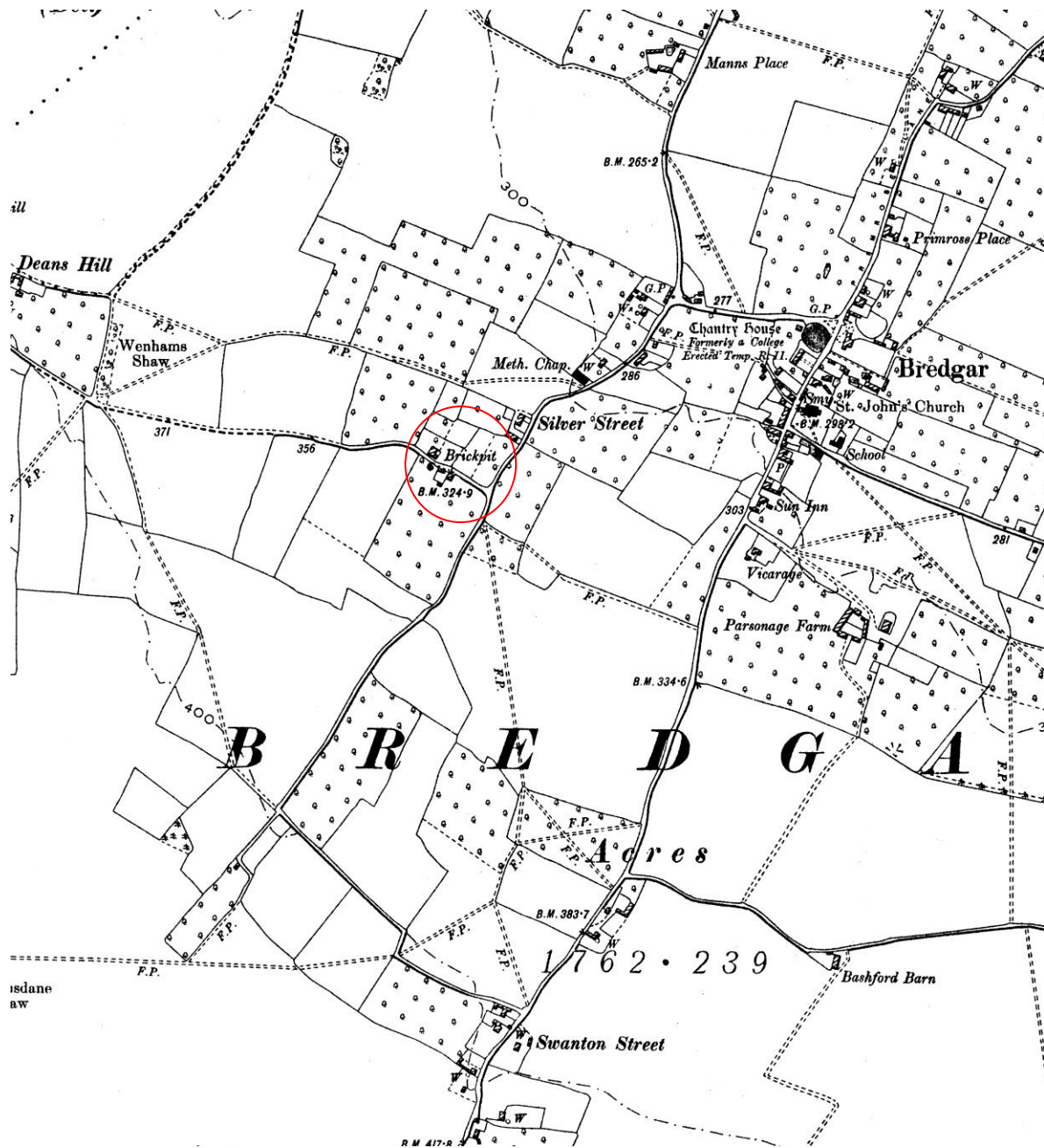
6. The survey of Kent was first to go ahead. It began in 1795 under the direction of the Board's chief draftsman, William Gardner. Critical communication routes such as roads and rivers were to be shown clearly and accurately. Attention was paid to woods that could provide cover for ambush,

and elaborate shading was used to depict the contours of terrain that might offer tactical advantage in battle.

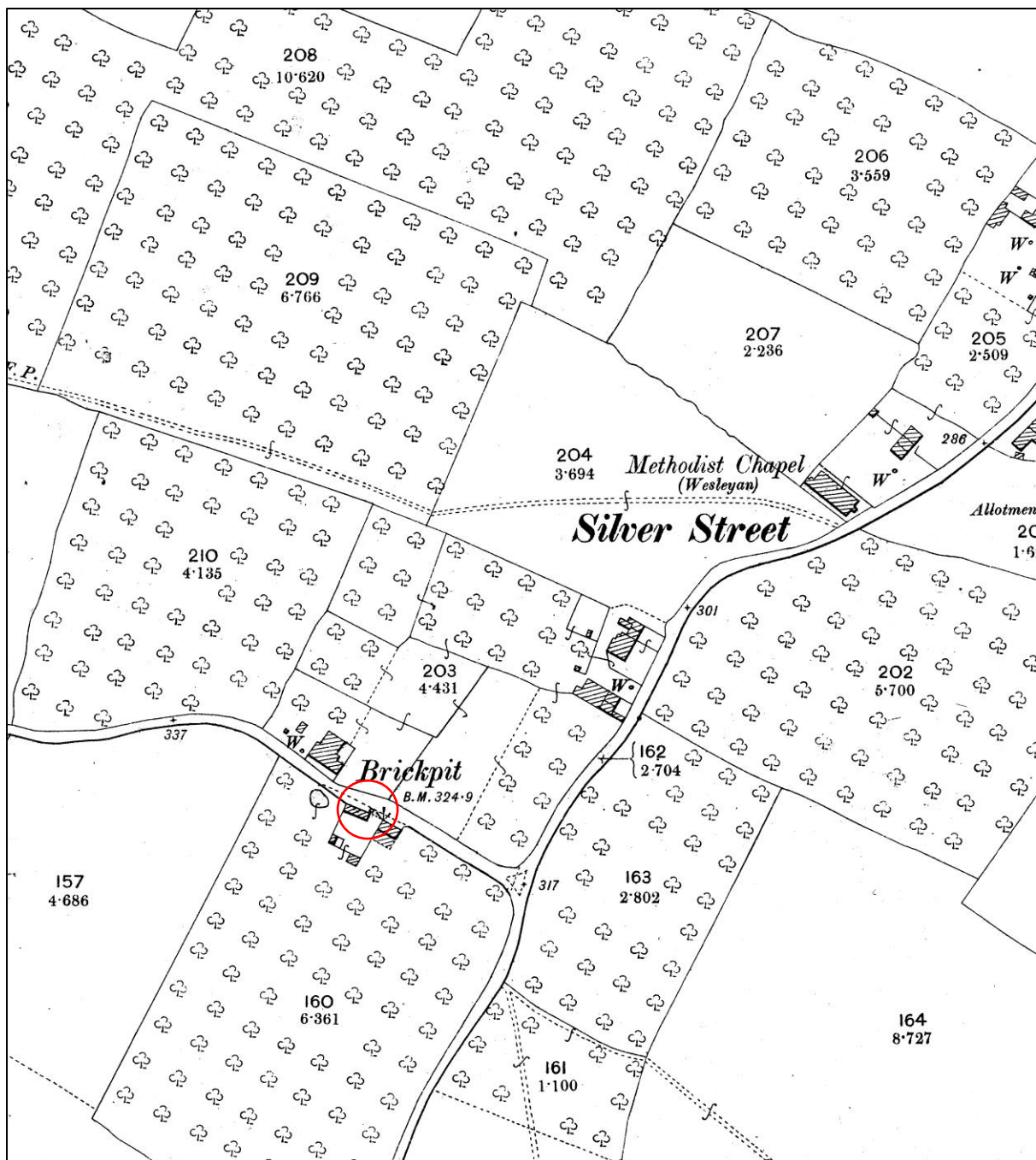
7. Two sets of preliminary drawings in pencil and crayon (above and below) were made at scales from six inches to the mile, for areas of particular military significance, down to two inches to the mile elsewhere. Back in the Drawing Room at the Tower of London, fair copies of the drawings were prepared at the reduced scale of one inch to the mile. From these, copper plates were engraved for printing. The map of Kent was published in 1801, and Essex soon followed.

8. Being significantly larger in scale, the preliminary drawings show much more detail than the printed maps. Together, they present a picture of Regency England and Wales unparalleled in its accuracy. The picture is not one of military significance alone: the recording of archaeological features betrays the surveyors' antiquarian interests, and the delineation of mountains reflects the new desire to see majesty in Nature.





9. This map is the 25inch to the mile, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition published in 1898 (above) and shows Firs Farm with some clarity. The dwelling house is shown in some detail, although this appears to be a replacement of the original building but on the same footprint.



10. The map regression exercise has shown that the building was originally constructed as a domestic house and was identified as such by the Ordnance Survey surveyors as early as 1798. Subsequent maps (above c.1911) show the building to have been replaced by a later house which is consistent with the current footprint.”

11. Inspection of the existing building confirms that this contains evidence of domestic habitation with plastered ceilings and a fireplace with fittings for a range (**See Photo 1**). The ceilings show evidence of lathe and plaster with hand-made nails (**see Photo 2**). Although the windows and staircase are later additions as are the concrete stalls on the ground floor the evidence is that the building was built as a farm workers cottage and that this has not been lost. Graffiti on the timbers listing tenants going back to 1800 suggests occupation of the building back to this date (**see Photo 3**).

Dr Paul Wilkinson MifA



Photo 1.



Photo 2.



TENANTS  
PAST AND PRESENT

C. WEDD WOOD 1800  
P. PACK 1895  
C. ROOTS 1900  
H. GOODHEW 1907  
E. REYNOLDS 1909  
J. ROBERTS 1933  
P. WOODMAN OCT 1948  
A. HINGE + SONS 1972

Photo 3.