

Faversham Society Archaeological Research Society

Hunt the Saxons 2006

Test Pit report for Test Pit 11 at Temperance Villa, Tanners St, Faversham, Kent

Grid Reference TR 601170 161385

1 Introduction

Temperance Villa lies on the eastern side of Tanners St, where it rises southward towards the junction with Napleton Rd. The house, shown on the OS map for 1969 is late 19th/early 20th century, single fronted and detached.¹ It is built of yellow Kentish Stock brick with a slate roof, bay window to the ground floor and a tiny front garden. The rear has a summerhouse, thought once to have been a washhouse. Temperance Villa stands in the grounds of the old Napleton Hospital (almshouses). This open area in front of the Hospital is thought to be the place formerly known as Tanners Green or Yeldhall Green, the main medieval market site in Faversham.²

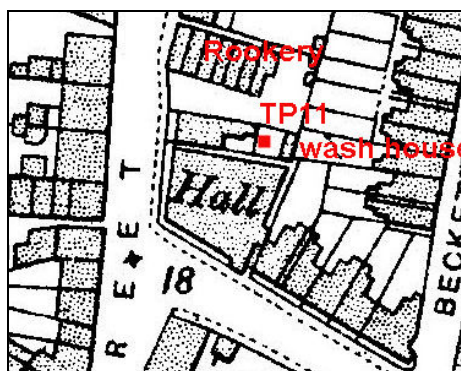


Fig 1: 1907 OS map showing Temperance Villa and the Gospel Mission Hall, both still extant.³ The Rookery was demolished in the 1950s.⁶

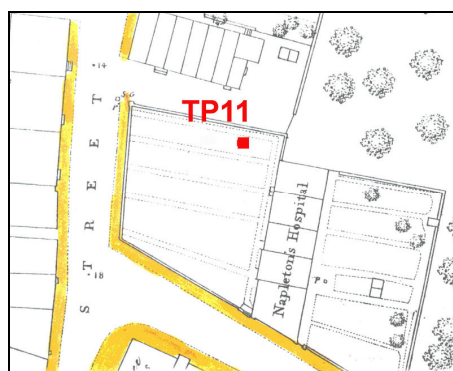


Fig 2: 1865 OS map showing the Napleton Hospital and 'Tanners Green'.⁴ Hospital built 1723.⁵

¹ Swaine 1969 *Faversham Conserved* Maidstone: KCC/ Faversham Borough Council

² Jacobs 1774 *History of Faversham* p15, repub. 1974 Faversham: Faversham Society

³ OS 1907 Kent Sheet XXXIV.9 1:2500

⁴ OS 1865 (repub) 1904 Kent Sheet XXXIV.9.10 1:536

⁵ Stevens 2003 *A look at Tanners St, Faversham* Faversham Papers Series No 82 Faversham: Faversham Society p 16

⁶ Stevens 2003 op cit. p 11

2. Location of pit



Space is very limited. There is decking between the house and summer house, also a raised bed and one metre wide path, then a very steep drop to the house level. The Test Pit was sited in the only available space, under the Astro-turf as shown in Fig 3. Possible hazards included a well, site unknown but see above about basement flooding.

Fig 3: TP11's problematic location

3. The procedures

The Astro-turf was removed and a one metre square pegged out using the planning square. The area delineated was marked with string. The position of the square was recorded by measuring to mapped corners of the house. The pit was then excavated in thirty cm spits (layers), each spit being trowelled out in five cm layers. With TP11, digging was abandoned after one spit as the second spit turned out after 5 cm to be a layer of yellow-brown clay with large flints. The NW corner continued down with ash content and some small amounts of pottery and brick. The clay layer had no finds. All excavated soil was sieved meticulously, and the spoil heap scanned using a metal detector. Finds were set aside for each spit in the original pit and there were no Small Finds. Finally, the spoil was put back in, tamped down, watered and the Astro-turf replaced.

4. The findings

Spit 1 fell into two categories: high ash content (loose coarse grained greyish brown) to start and lower down heavy clay (yellowish brown, fine grained, soft, compact). In both types, flint and brick accounted for 10% of the bulk.

The ash layer contained much rubble, including 4 pieces of a kitchen sink and much burnt animal bone. At 20cm down, large flints began to emerge, mixed with brick at first (see fig 4, right) but quickly becoming flint only and what seemed to be natural clay.



Fig 4: Lower surface of S1

Finds were those of a late 19th/ early 20th century occupational dump – late 19th century pottery (including some bone china), vessel glass, clay pipe fragments. The animal bone showed clear butchery marks and was seen as evidence for recent domestic dumping.



Fig 5: Unsorted finds from S1

5. Interpretation

‘Tanners Green’ between the Hospital and Tanners St (see fig 2) must have sloped steeply down towards the present street line, and the building of Temperance Villa and the Gospel Mission Hall must have necessitated

considerable excavation of the hillside to create building platforms. The excavation for the Mission Hall must have involved the removal of a particularly large amount of material, possibly dumped to the north side (roads to south and west). This material may be the raw flint and clay encountered at the beginning of S2: certainly the contents of S1 seemed to be related only to the occupation of the Villa itself. Significantly, this is the only test pit, out of 19 excavations in the Tanners St area, that did not produce any medieval pottery, or indeed any that can be assigned with complete confidence to earlier than the late 19th century.

6. Final comments

It is unfortunate, from the archaeologist’s point of view, that only one spit’s investigation was possible, in part due to the unyielding nature of Spit 2 but also because of the limited amount of space available. As this was the only location available in this corner of Tanners St and Napleton Rd, the possible medieval market site remains uninvestigated. It is fair to say, though, that the steep slope of the former landscape here argues against a market on this precise site – perhaps it occupied the area between the foot of the slope and the West Brook, now mostly occupied by the street itself. Further documentary research will be carried out on this.

7. Acknowledgments

Our warm thanks go to Mr and Mrs Stephens for permission to dig in their garden.

Eve Hurst
November 2006