

Hunt the Saxons 2005

Test Pit report for Test Pit 12 at Hollyhocks, 17, Tanners St Grid Reference TR 0161 601175 161310

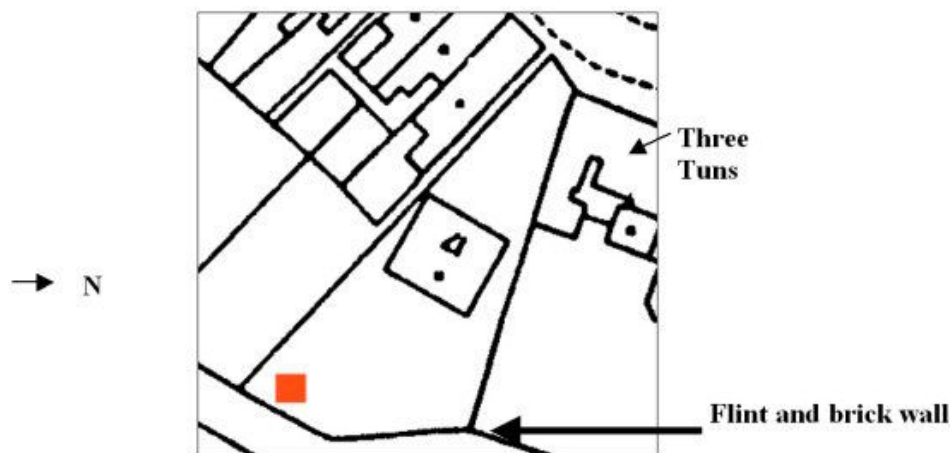
1. Introduction

Hollyhocks is a late 18th century painted brick, slate-roofed house on the east side of the street, next to the Three Tuns pub¹. It is located unusually far back from the road on a wedge shaped plot, with a narrow frontage on Tanners St. The rear boundary is the old established flint and brick wall which runs north-south parallel to Tanners St (see TP19, 8, 9). This boundary is present on the 1774 Jacob's map, although the Hollyhocks plot is not. The plot slopes up from the street and the rear of the plot is towards the top of the bank overlooking the West Brook.

2. Location of pit

The pit was located in the most remote corner of the garden, as far as possible from the street, and only 3 metres from the flint and brick wall (Fig 1). No previous structures had been found near this spot on the available historic maps.

Fig 1: Location of Test Pit 12



3. The procedures

A one metre square was pegged out using the planning square and the area delineated marked with string. The position of the square was recorded by measuring to mapped corners of the garden walls. The pit was then excavated in 30 cm spits (layers), each spit being trowelled out in 5 cm layers. With this pit, a definite change in deposits at around 45 cm down was carefully recorded. At c 60 cm depth, the natural soil seemed to have been reached and this was confirmed by excavating a small east-west sondage (slot) in the floor of the pit. All excavated soil was sieved meticulously, and the spoil heap scanned using a metal detector.

¹ Swaine, A. 1969 *Faversham Conserved* Maidstone: KCC p112

Finds were set aside for each spit, with special finds being given three dimensional coordinates to pinpoint the exact find spot. Finally, the spoil was put back in, tamped down and watered.

4. The findings

The top layer consisted of a dark brown loam with a wide range of artefactual inclusions. Charcoal and coal/clinker patches indicated previous use of this garden corner for bonfires and grate content dumping. From 45 cm down, however, the character of the deposit changed. A layer of clods of orange-brown clay mixed with the dark loam topsoil gave way to an orange-brown clay deposit, which itself dipped down to give a north-south channel across the pit. (For details see fig 2 at the end of this report). The mixed layer contained a number of abraded pottery fragments of medieval date. The upper 5 cm of the solid clay had inclusions of oyster shell and charcoal but below 5 cm was free of inclusions.

In Spit 1, 18th-19th century pottery dominated which accords with the building date of Hollyhocks. Decorated clay pipes dated to the 18th century onwards were also found in Spit 1, along with slate, brick and tile fragments, animal bone (mostly very fragmentary), oyster shell and iron objects (mostly nails but with 3 horseshoe pieces). There were, however, some medieval Tyler Hill ware sherds and one piece of Saxo-Norman shelly ware even at this shallow depth.

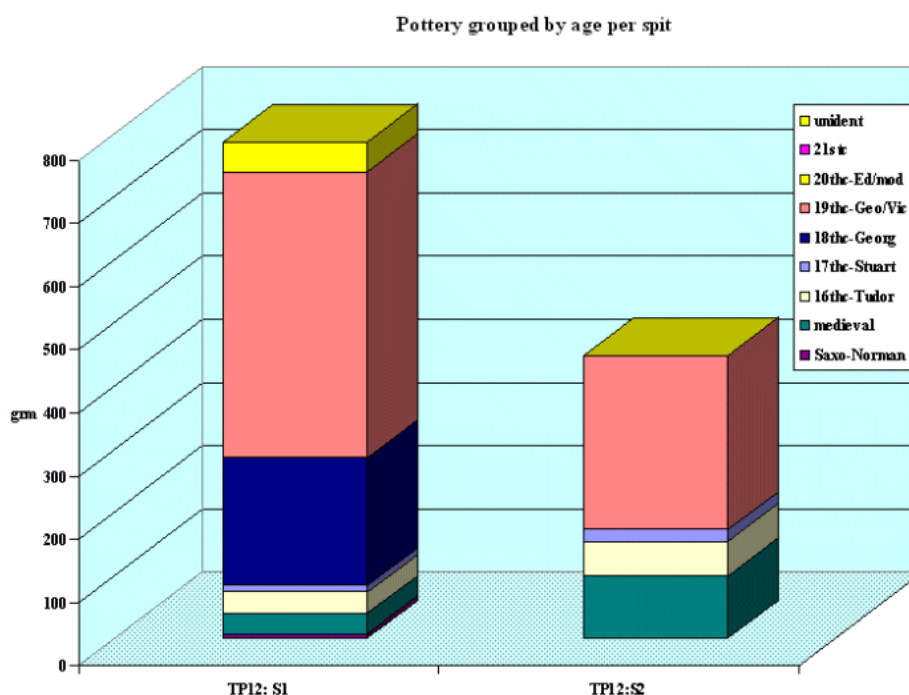


Fig 3: Pottery by age for two spits in TP12

In the upper part of Spit 2 the dark loam continued with finds as in Spit 1. In the mixed loam/clay clods layer, a relatively large number of sherds of medieval pottery was found, mostly Tyler Hill but also Surrey whiteware. A sherd of glazed red ware with a white decorative strip was found on the solid clay surface. Some 19th century pottery was also found, however, demonstrating a degree of churn down to the solid clay level. The clay itself, below the 5 cm point, was free of artefactual inclusions.

**Fig 4: Below, possible long-term midden scatter (13th-16th century)
To right, shard from clay/disturbed clay interface.**



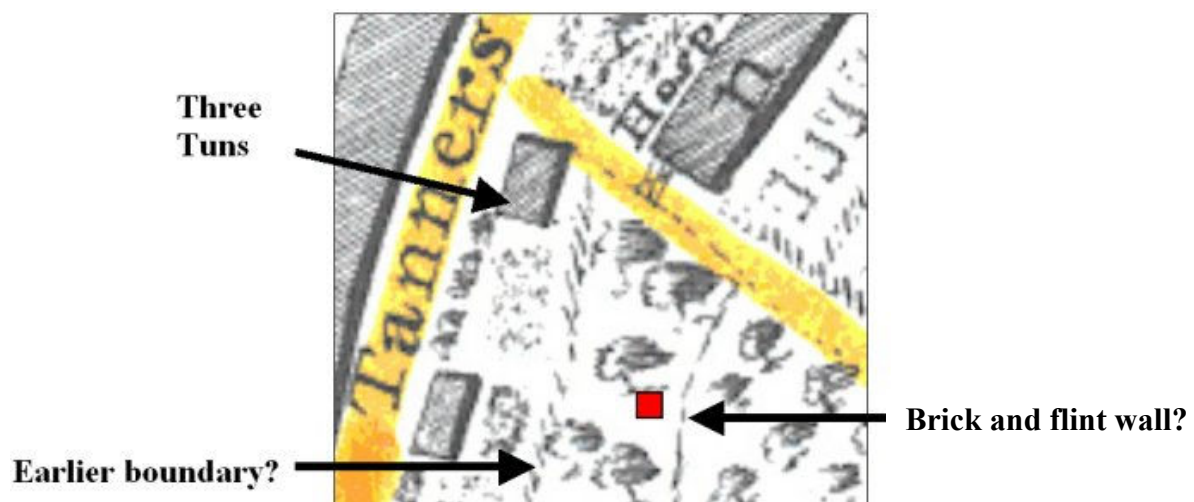
5. Interpretation

The upper two thirds of this pit can be seen as the occupational debris of the existing house, accumulated since the late 18th century. The lower third, though, is composed of a disturbed surface shading into the natural (Head Brickearth). The north-south trench in this rough surface could be seen as corresponding to a ridge and furrow ploughed surface (it is on the right scale) with the small abraded shards of medieval pottery being derived from field midden scatter over a long period (AD 1000- 1550?). This ‘furrow’ could, however, be a footpath, boundary marker or even a beam slot: in such a small window as this test pit, features are hard to interpret.

6. Final comments

Although the smallest of the pits in terms of excavated material and lacking in showy finds, this is one of the most informative of the 2005 pits. It suggests that the upper part of the bank was under cultivation from the middle medieval period at the latest and on until the 16th century. Perhaps such usage was curtailed by the building of the flint and brick wall – the wall certainly needs tracing back as far as possible. The 1774 map shows a sketchy boundary closer to the road – perhaps this is the earlier medieval message boundary, with land uphill from this used for cultivation until the building of the flint/brick wall? (Fig 5)

Fig 5: Enlargement of plot area from Jacob’s 1774 map of Faversham



Comparison with Test Pit 19, which is the most similar in location, will be particularly interesting.

7. Acknowledgements

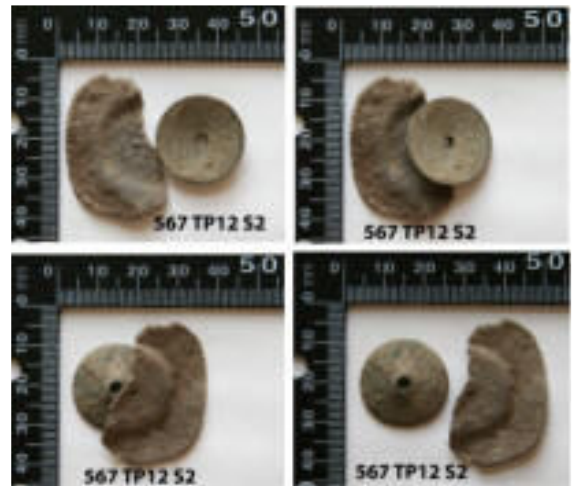
Great thanks to Mr and Mrs Phillips for letting us dig in their garden and for their hospitality and interest. We will never forget Bertie!



Small Finds



SF63



SF67

Small Finds Details

- SF63: Metal Object. CuA tube with two fixings to attach to something. One end shaped like whistle mouthpiece - but not a whistle. Carefully made and decorative in style, but function yet to be determined.
- SF67: Metal Fragments. 1. Disc of copper alloy. Concave, with central hole. Button?