

Hunt the Saxons 2006

Test Pit report for Test Pit 16 at 40, Tanners St, Faversham, Kent Grid Reference TR 601100 161320

1 Introduction

Number 40 Tanners St is described by Swaine¹ as a medieval timber framed two storey house, remodelled in the 18th century. It is part of a terrace of old established buildings on the west side of the street, with gardens sloping down to the West Brook. (See reports for TPs 25, 14, 26, 26A, 17). Number 40 is in the same block as number 37 and seems, at least from the 17th century onwards, to have been part of the tanyard estate (see TP25).² Swaine in 1969 says that number 40 was a shop – a sweet shop, according to Stevens.³ It is now a private residence.

2. Location of pit

There is a drop of c 2.5m between the house level and the top of the stream bank. To cope with this drop, the garden is terraced with two steps down, and a final section sloping downwards to the bank which itself then dropped c.1.5m to the surface of the water at the time of excavation. (Fig 2) The terraces gave the likelihood of a mixture of truncation and levelling up, both in the past and recently for the creation of a patio area. The lower part of the garden, however, had a number of large trees. Thus the final choice for location was the middle terrace, where truncation rather than infill was seen as more likely.

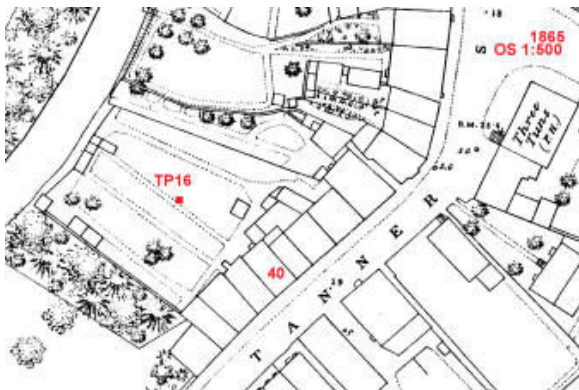


Fig 1: Location of TP16 using 1865 map⁴



Fig 2: Access across the West Brook

¹ Swaine, A 1969 *Faversham Conserved* Maidstone: KCC/ Faversham Borough Council p112

² Deeds of 37 Tanners St, courtesy of Lesley Jamison

³ Stevens, P 2003 A look at Tanners St, Faversham Faversham Society series No 82 Faversham : Faversham Society p29

⁴ OS 1865 Kent Sheet XXXIV.9.10 1: 536

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 house. The pit was then excavated in thirty cm spits (layers), each spit being trowelled out in five cm layers. 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. Special finds were given three dimensional coordinates to pinpoint the exact find spot. Finally, the spoil was put back in, tamped down and watered.

4. The findings

This test pit exhibited no clear features. The friable, grey-brown ash/cinder layer in this case extended into S3, gradually giving way to a firmer clayey loam although this was still darkened by ash content. The penetration of the ash layer suggests a higher degree of churn than is usual in our test pits, but the layer is still clearly identifiable – see fig x.



Fig 3 : TP16 at the maximum depth of 1.2 m, facing west (towards the West Brook, away from the property)

Note the slight change in deposits at the level of the embedded fire grate. Is this suggesting an occupational (garden) surface at this level, undisturbed during the deposition of the topmost layer?

Brick and tile (CBM), especially peg tiles, were distributed throughout the test pit, particularly concentrated in S3. Similarly, mortar and plaster were found overall, but particularly in S4. Much of the mortar contained whole cockle shells. Animal remains of pig, sheep, cattle and chicken, with many butchery marks, were found throughout, with the cattle bones mainly in S4. Ironwork consisted mainly of nails with the notable exception of S2 where fragments of a grate were found: in Fig 3, the presence of an embedded complete firebase is conspicuous. A fair quantity of slag was found, some of it with molten glass and

an early handmade brick partly coated in molten glass was found in S4. Clay pipe fragments were found throughout.



Fig 4: The decorated bone handle as found

Noteworthy small finds also came from S4. These included a rose farthing of Charles 1⁵, a Krauwinkel Nuremburg jetton (1590-1610)⁶ and a decorated bone handle (Fig 4) This latter was of special interest, as its decoration was stylistically late Anglo-Saxon – Norman, but the technology (iron tang

riveted between two bone pieces) was not typical of handles in the early-mid medieval period. This unusual artefact is at the moment being looked at by friendly experts.

Fig 5: The decorated bone handle, separated into constituent pieces



The pottery, as might be expected from the above, was mixed by age. Usually in our research area, 19th century pottery is much less common by S3/4 but in this case S3 had the greatest quantity, and even S4 had some. Earlier pottery, however, markedly increased in relative quantity with depth, with a particularly interesting collection of 16th-17th century pottery (Fig 6) in S3 and S4 which would repay expert study later (much looks imported). It might also be useful to more closely date the 19th century pottery, to see if there is an early/late pattern in distribution which fits in with the layers noted in Fig 3.

5. Interpretation

This is a particularly difficult pit to interpret. A tentative interpretation of the differences in ash layers is that the lower high-ash layer, with the dumped grate apparently *in situ*, represents a former garden surface and the upper layer a levelling deposit to flatten out the terrace. The lowest layer, relatively but not completely ash free does seem to represent a garden deposit being worked over in the 17th/18th /early 19th century period. It may be that the demolition material concentrated in spits 3 & 4 is from the 18th century remodelling

⁵ Mitchell, S & B.Reeds 1997 *Coins of England* London: Seaby (Batsford) p 221

⁶ Fletcher, E 2003 *Tokens and Tallies through the Ages* Witham, Essex: Greenlight Publishing p24

mentioned by Swaine, or that this is from an earlier project: the peg tiles and red, handmade bricks support both of these notions, although the cockle-laden mortar is a puzzle at the moment.

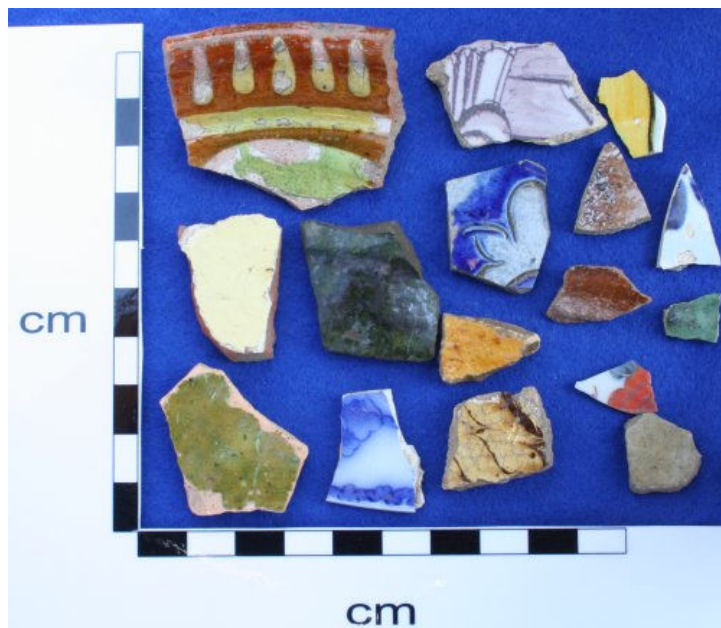


Fig 6: Pottery from S3 and S4

6. Final comments

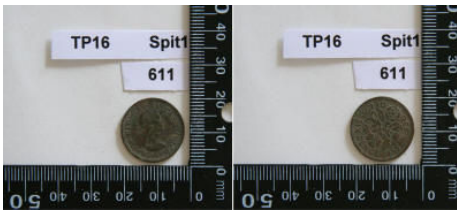
It is ironic that the most interesting find of the season, the decorated knife handle, and some of the most unfamiliar pottery was found in one of the most difficult-to-pin-down test pits. More detailed finds work will follow, including an attempt to date the grate.

7. Acknowledgments

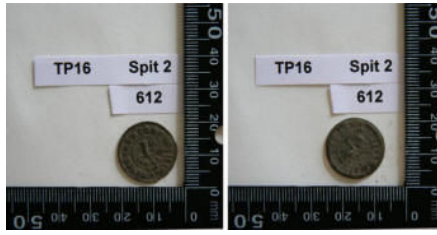
Thanks to Rob and Patti for letting us use their garden, and relax under their patio canopy in the boiling heat. We also appreciated the coolness of the stream.

Pat Reid
November 2006

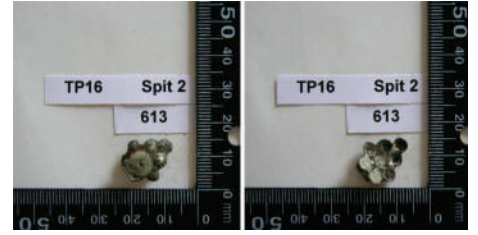
Small Finds



SF611



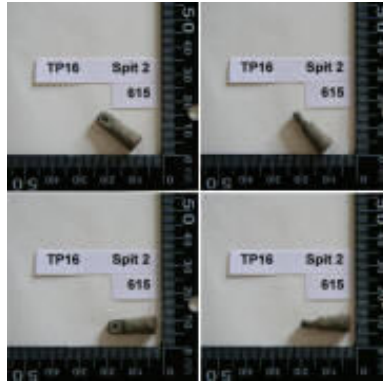
SF612



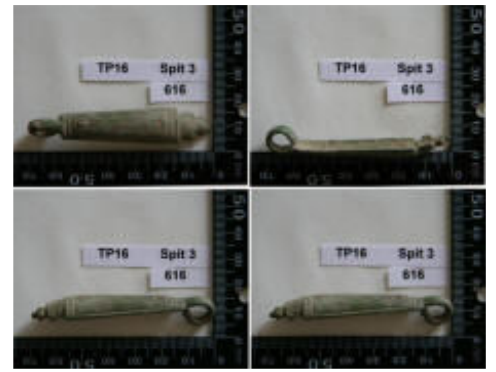
SF613



SF614



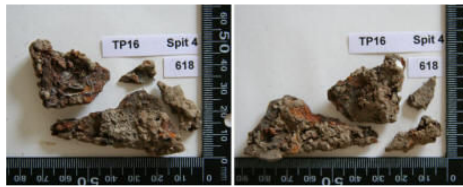
SF615



SF616



SF617



SF618



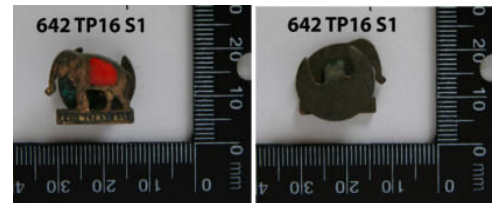
SF619



SF620



SF621



SF642

Small Finds Details

- SF611: Coin. 1955 sixpence; obverse portrait of Elizabeth II; Regina Elizabeth Dei Gratia. Reverse interlocked rose, thistle, shamrock and leek; sixpence 1955 fid def. Tarnished.
- SF612: Token. Small disc, very thin. Obverse has lettering around the edge: FAVERSHAM COOP SOCIETY. In centre of obverse, 1d with indecipherable lettering below. Reverse shows traces of the obverse design in reverse, i.e. effect of stamping. Early 20th century?
- SF613: Earring. Small 20th century 'cheap' earring, small glass paste stones.
- SF614: Coin. Small coin, corroded, and very delicate with a slight crack. Unable to determine any markings as more brushing would cause further damage.
- SF615: Small cylindrical coned top with eye-hole. Traces of iron inside. Unable to define or date.
- SF616: Decorative brass. Moulded CuA, hook at one end, then trapezoidal shape tapering towards hook. Two small iron rivet marks at each end of main body. Decorated with straight lines on trapezoidal body, 'pineapple' effect on projection at non-hook end. Possibly a 17th-18th century drop handle (furniture) but could be horse pendant or a belt fitting (hook down).
- SF617: Knife handle. Found with the two bone pieces sandwiching the iron. Bone: rounded end, curved pieces, tapering towards haft end. Decoration of each: 3 dot in circles, three horizontal double lines dividing the segment into 3 sub segments, hachures within one of these segments. Iron: rounded end, tapered. A-S dec, medieval knife style but identified finally as probably a strip-tanged knife of c 17th century (Arthur MacGregor, pers.comm) 20.09.07: identical knife handle found in Egan 2005: 93 item 403 from the Rosary moat fill, London. This handle is dated to 1530-c1550. The size, shape, decoration and technology is so similar that the Faversham example could come from the same workshop.
- SF618: Saxon(?) knife blade. Four pieces of heavily corroded iron, possibly make blade of knife handle (SF617) as found in same context. Un-shaded area of fig. A may be a different material than rest of blade. More research to be carried out including Xray.
- SF619: Coin. Possibly rose farthing. Extremely worn and corroded. One side cannot be deciphered. Other side: inner circle; design within worn. Around edge: NO can be seen. Ref: Coins of England and the UK 1997 p. 221
- SF620: Token. Nuremburg jetton probably of Hans Krauwinkel (c. 1580-1610). Ref: Tokens and Tallies Through the Ages, Edward Fletcher 2003, p. 24. Warped; edges worn. Obverse severely worn; orb; around edge possible R..PA..13. Reverse: orb surmounted by illegible design within a double tressure of 3 arches and poss. 3 angles.
- SF621: Glazed brick. Fragment of dark red burnt-looking brick with three surfaces coated with irregular greenish glaze. One side completely clear of glaze, remaining sides broken surfaces. Glaze thickest on 'end' of brick - on the other two sides appears as if it has seeped between courses. Handmade brick. Part of lining of glass furnace? Brick probably pre-19th cent (17th?)
- SF642: Button Badge. Fremains Ale Elephant button badge for jacket lapel fixing. Elephant has red enamel blanket on its back. Elephant and logo is 'gilded'. Lapel fixture has H.W. MILLER LTD. B'HAM 18 stamped on its surface. Probably mid 20th century.