



Hunt the Saxons 2007

Test Pit report for Test Pit 37 17, East St, Faversham, Kent Grid Reference TR 6017 1613

1 Introduction

Number 17 is situated on the north side of East St, the most westerly property of a terrace of three and next to the Royal India restaurant (formerly the Recreation Tavern). Deeds in the Rigden Archive dated 1719 mention 'three small tenements or stone houses tyled adjoining Cooks Ditch'.¹ The deeds further mention that these properties were demolished around 1815 and replaced by three brick and slated structures: maps of 1774 and 1865 show these developments. The former Recreation Tavern is a late medieval timber framed building.²

The selection of the gardens at the rear of numbers 17-19 East St for investigation was due to their closeness to the site of the discovery of an Anglo Saxon loom weight during the construction of the nearby Post Office (1954 – loom weight currently on display in Maidstone Museum).³ This is the only evidence for Anglo Saxon occupation (as opposed to burial) found in Faversham before the *Hunt the Saxons* project. The garden area behind 17-19 East St was the only undisturbed land anywhere near this find site, hence the request to investigate. This account of TP37 should be seen in conjunction with the report for TP36, dug further east in the same garden

2. Location of pit

TP37 was located on the raised lawn to the rear of the property. Care was taken to avoid the sites of possible earlier buildings (outhouses shown on the 1965 and 1907 maps) and the run of the drains.

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. Turf was removed carefully from the square, rolled and set aside in plastic bags. 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 and each context for the extensions. Special finds were given three dimensional coordinates to pinpoint the exact find spot. Finally, the spoil was put back in, tamped down, watered and the turf replaced.

¹ Rigden Archive, 281/40/40-1 Box L. Centre for Kentish Studies, Maidstone.

² Swaine, Anthony, 1970, "*Faversham Conserved*", report for KCC & Faversham Borough Council, K.C.C., Maidstone, p62

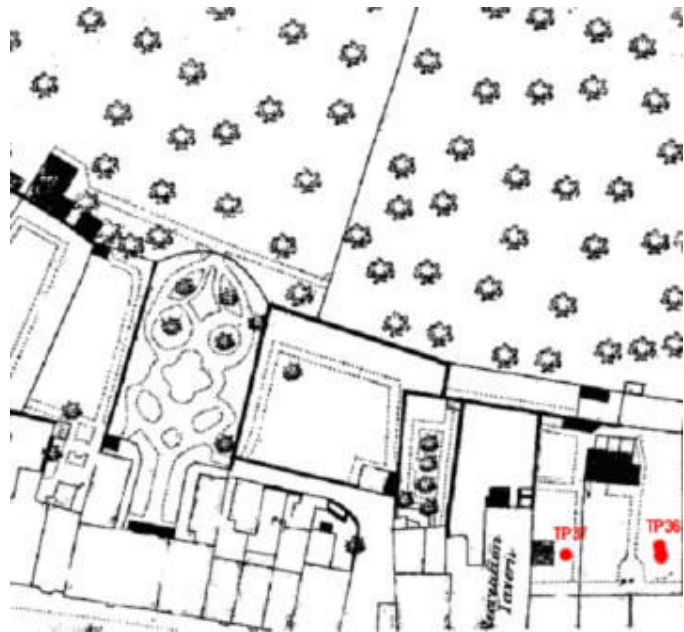
³ Maidstone Museum Accession Number 116/1954: HER No TR06 SW33 MKE 4159

Fig 1: This map sequence shows that until the late 19th century the land north of the garden being investigated was open land. By the second half of the 20th century it was entirely built up, with Crescent Road being bulldozed through in the 1960s.

a) 1774⁴



b) 1865⁵



c) 1907⁶



⁴ Edward Jacobs 1774 Map of Faversham from *History of Faversham* Repub. Faversham Society 1974

⁵ OS 1865 (1904 reprint) Sheet XXXIV Scale 1:536

⁶ OS 1907 Sheet XXXIV Scale: 1:2500

4. The findings

Spit 1 (down to 30cm) consisted of fine grained soft brown soil, well sorted with small inclusions of CBM, glass, pottery, iron and coal/charcoal. It was trowelled for 10cm, then; it being judged to be infill used to form the raised lawn level, the remaining 20cm was carefully hacked out. Trowelling was resumed for Spit 2 which was of similar composition to Spit 1 but more compacted with larger inclusions of flint and chalk. At the bottom of the spit a surface of chalk, flint and pebbles was exposed – north to south, 45 cm wide from the western edge of the pit. This feature was seen to line-up directly with the back door of No 17, probably being the footpath from the house to a privy at the end of the garden (no longer in existence) (Fig 2)



Fig 2: Bottom of Spit 2, western elevation
Chalk, flint and pebble ‘privy path’



Fig 3: Bottom of Spit 4, northern elevation
Path in mid-elevation, burrow at centre and chalk fill to lower right

Trowelling to the side of the ‘privy path’ showed its depth to be 35mm. There was a distinct variation in compaction between the path and the non-path area, probably due to cultivation of the latter. Removal of the path revealed a post hole 9cm diameter and 75cm down from the surface. At this level a semicircular arrangement of four large flints was revealed. Spit 4 consisted of a number of domestic waste pits dug into what seemed to be the natural brick earth. A probable animal burrow exposed in S3 appeared to connect the waste pits. There was an area of chalk fill in the NE corner and a burnt area in the North West corner. (Fig 3)

Fig 4: Roman bone die
SF710



Though animal bones (chicken, sheep, pig, cattle, and fish) and shell (oyster, whelk, and mussel) were found in all spits, the larger examples and greatest concentrations were in spits 3 & 4. Remarkable numbers of pins were found in spits 2 (13 heads) and 3 (19 heads). A wire binding used to secure numbers of pins (SF769) and an 18th century thimble (SF710)⁷ were also found. Other metal Small Finds included a possible pistol ball (SF703), a lead weight (SF704) and a Jacobean shoe buckle (SF708)⁸. Non metal finds included a large number of clay pipe fragments, varying in bore size for 8 to 3/64ths (1580-19th century)⁹ with the larger bores in the lower spits, and also a Roman bone gaming counter and die.¹⁰ (Fig 4)

Ceramic finds included Saxo-Norman shelly ware, medieval and Stuart to the 20th century. Above S4, most pottery fragments were small and abraded but those in the middle of S4 were substantial with some near complete specimens. In the North West corner of the pit interspersed with tile fragments were found the remains of three 17th century plates. These included a Delft earthenware plate with blue on white banded design and three dark red coloured 'daisies' with blue leaves in the centre; a delft plate blue on white design with nature based geometric decoration: a terracotta plate. (Fig 5)



5. Interpretation

Apart from S1 which was infill material used to create the raised lawn, the ground exposed by the pit appeared to be relatively undisturbed. The positioning of the path suggests a date post the 1815 construction of the present terrace. The semi circle of flints (S3) has been judged of little archaeological significance. The complex of rubbish pits at the lowest levels, contained household debris dating mostly to the mid 17th century – i.e. TP37 'bottomed out' just below the probable back yard level in around 1650- 1700AD. The quality of the pottery, which was genuine Dutch Delft rather than the cheap and cheerful English imitation Early English Delft suggests a degree of affluence here which is surprising given the modest

⁷ Bailey G 1993 *Detector Finds* 2 p14

⁸ Whitehead, R 2003 *Buckles 1220-1750* p97-8

⁹ Walker, I 1967 'Statistical Methods of dating clay pipe fragments'. *Post Medieval Archaeology* 1967 p91

¹⁰ www.ourpasthistory.com/tag/roman-dice

character of these cottages. Perhaps these were debris from the much larger property next door, now occupied by the Royal India restaurant.

The presence of large numbers of pins, a thimble and pin binder may indicate that at one time a seamstress or tailor lived on this site. It was noticeable that a high proportion of the pins were bent. Pins accidentally bent would probably have been straightened in view of their value. Pins 'bent double' were, however, an accepted means of protection against certain elements of witchcraft. Three women, Joane Walliford, Joan Camden and Jane Holt were hanged as witches at Faversham in 1645.¹¹ Very few pin fragments (4) were found in S4, however, from which the two 17th century Delft plates were excavated.

6. Final comments

We had hoped, for reasons discussed earlier, to find evidence for Saxon occupation here. As is so often the case in Faversham, especially in plots close to long-established house sites, our maximum 1.2 metre depth took us back only to the 17th century. The few items of earlier date (shelly ware and the Roman gaming items) must be considered residual, incorporated with younger materials through interventions over the years. If there is Saxon occupational evidence here (and TP37 does suggest undisturbed deposits around 1.2 m down), it is still buried and must be left to a later date.

7. Acknowledgments

Our grateful thanks to Joyce Hadlow for her interest, encouragement and cups of tea.

Keith Robinson
March 2008

¹¹ Winzar, P 1996 'Witchcraft counter spells in Charing' *Arch. Cant.* Vol CXV pp 23-28

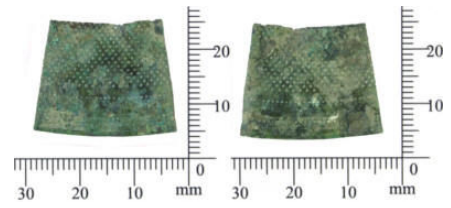
6
Small Finds



SF703



SF704



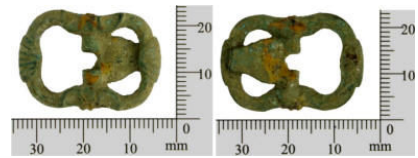
SF705



SF706



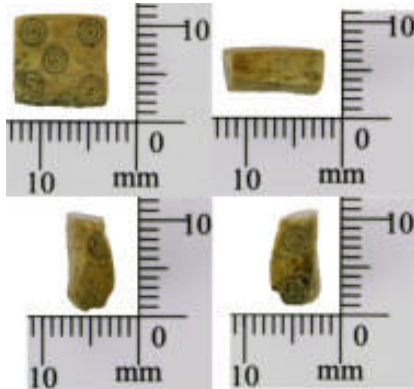
SF707



SF708



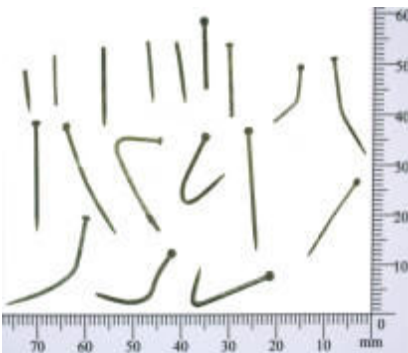
SF709



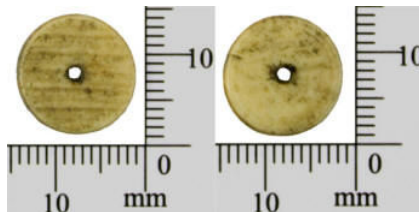
SF710



SF744



SF745



SF747



SF750



SF769



SF796

Small Finds Details

SF703: Lead ball, possibly for pistol.

SF704: Weight. Conical weight, probably bad hook or hook at wide end. Used for steelyard?

SF705: Thimble. Copper alloy thimble, probably 18th century. Flattened. No top present - possibly made this way, or may have been clipped. Bands of indentations appear mechanically produced - very regular and fine. Decorative banding at base, but no obvious rim. No visible iron staining (some thimbles were made with steel tops).

SF706: Pin. Copper alloy pin with a flattened spherical head. Head appears to be either formed from a twisted piece of metal, or has a spiral decoration (see photograph).

SF707: Metal Strip. Strip of cu-alloy, bent. Corroded. ?part of tweezers.

SF708: Buckle. Jacobean Shoe Buckles C1660-1720 Trapezoidal frame, rounded end and concave side, probably used for buckling shoes. Possible stud chape as many are recovered with stud missing. Spindle missing as is stud - probably iron as there is some iron staining. Decorated with moulded oblique grooves on the outer edge of each loop. Knops either end of spindle. R Whitehead 2003 page 97,99.

SF709: Metal fragment.

SF710: Die. One third to one half of bone die. Main facet with 5 concentric, bullseye circles/dots. First "side" facet with one dot; second facet with 2 dots; third facet blank; fourth facet damaged - abraded on one edge.

SF744: Top of Watch Key. Small copper alloy ring which could possibly be the top of an 18th or 19th Century watch key. For illustrations see Detector Finds 2 - Gordon Bailey - page 27.

SF745: Pins. 5 fragments - pointed ends (a-e). 3 fragments - head ends (f-h) (f) roundhead, (g) flathead, (h) rounded head. 10 whole pins (i - r). (i) fine wire, flat head, bent. (j) flat head. (k) blob head, slightly bent. (l) flat head, bent. (m) round head, u bent. (n) round head. (o) blob head, fine wire. (p) flat head, bent, corroded. (q) round head, bent. (r) round, grooved head, bent. Detector finds 3 - Gordon Bailey.

SF747: Roman gaming counter. Small round bone disc with a small hole in the centre. Probably a Roman gaming counter. Note this was found in association with SF710, part of bone die which could be Roman.

SF750: Pip. Small cream-coloured pip. Too small for cherry?

SF769: Wire. Fragment of fine twisted (2-core) wire.

SF796: Part of whetstone. Small piece of whetstone with smooth curved edge. Possibly broken off corner of larger piece.