

Hunt the Saxons 2005

Test Pit report for Test Pit 8 at the Bull Inn, 1, Tanners St, Faversham, Kent Grid Reference TR 601190 61435

1 Introduction

The Bull Inn is situated on east side of Tanners St, at an angle across the corner of Tanners St and West St, and faces the crossing point of the West Brook. This crossing point has been important for a very long time, carrying the important east-west lower road which ran from Blean across the creek heads in North Kent: records show a stone bridge existed at this point in 1570, which later fell into disuse, being rebuilt in 1773.¹

The Bull itself is probably the oldest public house in the town and has an early 15th century timber frame. The first floor is jettied and Swaine describes the building as forming ‘an attractive and prominent element in the landscape’.² Local tradition claims that Henry VIII stayed here as he passed through the town.³ Behind the main building are a number of outbuildings of uncertain date, used in the past as lodging house, forge, brew house and stables.⁴ The garden area, tucked away behind the old properties along the south side of West St, seems to have been part of the inn premises for a long time, at least back to 1852 although Jacobs’s map of 1774 is surprisingly unhelpful (see below).

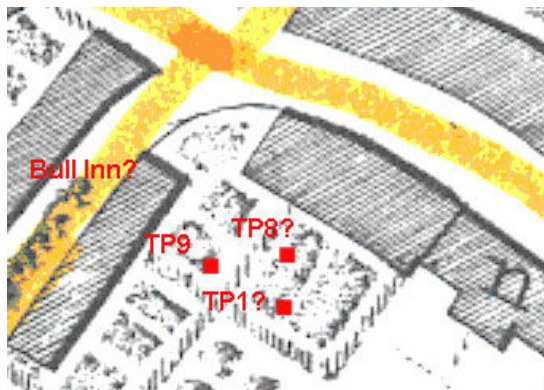


Fig 1: Bull Inn area in 1774⁵

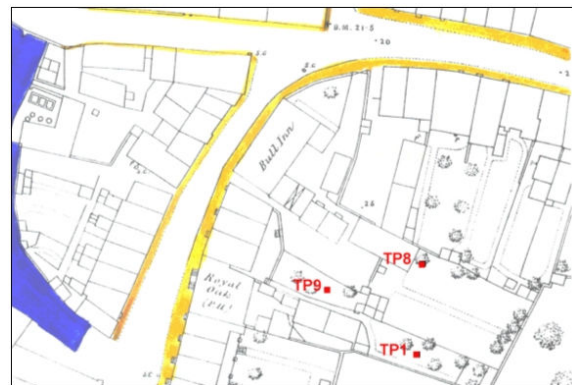


Fig 2: Bull Inn area in 1865⁶

¹ 1936 *Guide to Faversham* Faversham Borough Council

² Swaine, A. 1969 *Faversham Conserved* Maidstone: KCC/ FBC p112

³ 1936 *Guide to Faversham* op.cit.

⁴ Haley, F 1982 *The Inns and Taverns of Faversham* Faversham Paper No 19. Faversham: Faversham Society

⁵ Jacob, E 1774 in *History of Faversham* Reprint 1974 Faversham Society

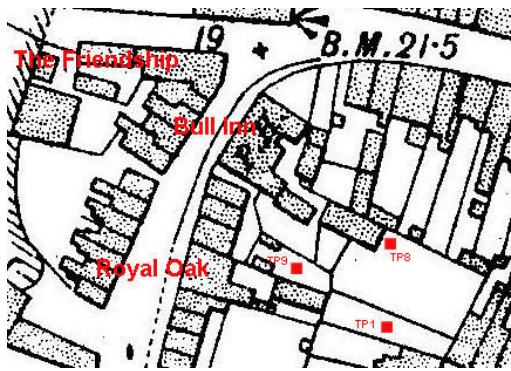


Fig 3: Bull Inn area in 1907⁷

2. Location of pit

The garden of the Bull Inn is spacious and level. Because storage space and part of the garden at the eastern end was used as the FSARG base during the season, the Test Pit was located in the North West corner of the garden to minimise further disturbance to customers.

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 an outbuilding. 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, with special finds being given three dimensional coordinates to pinpoint the exact find spot. Finally, the spoil was put back in, tamped down, watered and the turf replaced.

4. The findings

This test pit was cut mainly through a homogenous soil, friable and well sorted with few inclusions other than ash and cinder in the top 40 cm. Apart from some small clay pockets, this brown loamy soil continued down to about 90 cm where a dispersed band of large flints was found in the western side of the pit (i.e. the side nearest to the outbuilding).

Below these flints there were few finds. An undisturbed cat burial was, however, found at a depth of around 30cm.



Fig 4: A cat burial emerging at the base of Spit 1



Fig 5: The cat skeleton cleaned and reassembled on site

⁶ OS 1865 (rev 1904) Sheet XXXIV.9.10 1: 536

⁷ OS 1907 Kent Sheet XXXIV.9 1:2500

TP8 contained a large quantity of finds of an occupational type. Spit 2 (30-60cm) contained large amounts of animal bone and spit 3 & 4 large quantities of shell, especially oyster shell. Glass finds were dominated by green bottle shards. Small finds included two Faversham Cooperative tokens (SF30: S1, SF32: S2). Clay pipe remains were abundant, exceeded only by the amount from Test Pit 9: where dateable, they seemed to be 19th century, with a few late 18th century examples. One pipe bowl had a harp motif decoration.

Large amounts of pottery were found, much of it as substantial unabraded sherds. Most of the pottery was of two types – mass-produced white/cream glazed 19th century plates and bowls (Fig 6) or coarse red wares with thick brown black-flecked glazes (Fig 7). This latter type is difficult to date with any certainty, and could be as early as 16th century but is more likely to be 18th-early 19th century. Besides this were many small sherds of high quality pottery, such as bone china with gilt bands and even a small piece of blue and white early English Delft. There were also a few shards of imported wares such as German stoneware, and in spits 2-4 a few small highly abraded medieval sherds.



Fig 6: Cream/white pottery from S4



Fig 7: Red wares from S4

5. Interpretation

The quantities of material especially in Spits 2 and 3 do suggest an occupational dump, although the test pit did not show any signs of edges to a rubbish pit. If the flint layer is the remains of a former surface, then the material above it perhaps arrived as part of a make-up of ground above this surface, or as a rubbish heap that was later covered over. The size of pottery and glass fragments and their sharply broken edges do imply that there has been minimal disturbance since deposition. The cat bones in the undisturbed burial were very well preserved, suggesting a relatively recent burial event, since when the ground has been undisturbed.

This does seem to be a typical ‘hospitality’ deposit, dominated by food remains, crockery, bottles and clay pipes. Most of the dateable material was late 18th-19th century. The quantity of crockery was similar to that from TP22, another ‘pub yard’

6. Final comments

The team had had high hopes of TP8, given that TP9, only 5m away in another garden plot on the same level as TP8 (see Figs 1-3) had produced Roman and Medieval pottery. Apart from a few highly abraded sherds of medieval midden-scatter type, TP8 produced only material from the last three centuries, mostly from the 19th century. Later excavations, notably TP1, next door to the Bull garden have produced much early material even in spit 1, so it is not sufficient to say that TP8 simply did not go deep enough. Some kind of rubbish heap or pit interpretation seems most plausible.

7. Acknowledgments

Great thanks to Martin and Sara Apps for letting us dig in their pretty garden, as well as giving us an ideal spot for our base during the 2005 and 2006 seasons.

Pat Reid
November 2006

Small Finds



SF29



SF30



SF31



SF32



SF34



SF35



SF40

Small Finds Details

- SF29: Coin. Both sides indecipherable; hint of letters on one side.
- SF30: Token. Faversham Co-op Society. 2D token. Corroded but still legible.
- SF31: Token. Bent almost in half. Heavily corroded. Light. 'Chewed' edge. Thin
- SF32: Token. Stamped token with design through to reverse
- SF34: Coin. Heavily corroded, verdigris. Some bronze-coloured parts. Robin farthing (?)
- SF35: Coin / Token. Heavily corroded. Uneven edge.
- SF40: Bead. Pale, creamy bead with blue / grey markings, shiny / silvery. No discernible pattern.