

Hunt the Saxons 2005

Test Pit report for Test Pit 9 at 3, Tanners St, Faversham, Kent Grid Reference: TR 0161 601180 161425

1 Introduction

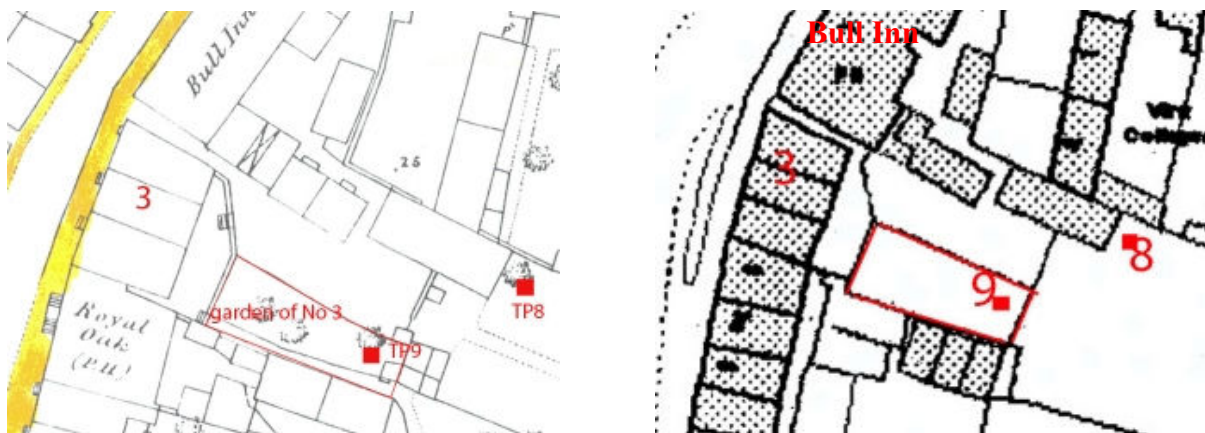
3, Tanners St is part of a mid-19th century terrace in the lower (northern) part of Tanners St on the east side¹. Road widening in the post war period has made the front entrance unusable, so the property and its neighbours now face onto a passageway at the rear. Number 3 possesses a curious garden plot, raised around 2 metres above the level of the rear passageway, accessed by steps and surrounded by walls.

To the east, the garden is bounded by the old-established flint and brick wall which runs from north to south all the way down the east side of Tanners St. It adjoins to the north the land of the Bull Inn and formerly (see 1865 map below) adjoined to the south the land of the Royal Oak. The Royal Oak became a lodging house, the Holly Bush, and was demolished around 1960 being replaced by new residential units exactly matching the rest of the terrace in style. The garden and outhouses of the Royal Oak, which must themselves have been stepped up to the level of the Number 3 garden, have been replaced by garden plots and garages with an open space in front of them. Meanwhile, the walled garden of Number 3 has remained unchanged, a secret garden in the heart of Faversham.

2. Location of pit

To avoid large tree roots, TP9 was placed towards the rear of the garden, as shown in Fig 1.

Fig 1: Below left, 1865 map showing TP9 and also TP8 in the Bull Inn garden, which was excavated later in the project. To right, a 2005 version of the same area.



¹ Swaine, A. 1969 *Faversham Conserved* Maidstone: KCC p110

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. Turf was removed carefully from the square, rolled and set aside in plastic bags. The pit was then excavated in 30 cm spits (layers), each spit being trowelled out in 5 cm layers. Because of pressure of time, only half of Spit 4 (90 – 120 cm) was removed. 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

TP9 showed no sharply defined layers. The matrix shaded from friable and ashy in Spit 1 to orange-brown silty clay in spit 2 and mid brown clay in Spit 3. Large flints were found in Spit 4. At the bottom of Spit 1, a pet burial became visible: this proved to be the remains of a kitten. This undisturbed feature, set into a ground surface 25 cm below the present surface, implied a lack of deep digging in the recent past. Yet Spit 1 above it contained material ranging from the medieval (a lead token SF54 and 7 sherds of Tyler Hill pottery) to the 20th century (a 1930s toothpaste tube SF60), with large amounts of 19th century pottery and clay pipes as well as the usual animal bone, shells and brick/tile/mortar/nails demolition material.

Fig 2: The pet burial before and after excavation



In Spit 2, 16th - 18th century pottery became important, and the clay pipes (CP 30, 161) were of an 17th/18th century form. A startling discovery at this stage was of two pieces of early pottery, later identified as Romano-British, probably 2nd century AD. Spit 2 also contained small amounts of medieval local Tyler Hill pottery.

In Spit 3 more chunks of Romano-British pottery were found, including a large pot base. A fragment of a Mayen lava quern stone (SF33) was also found, though this could be Roman, medieval or even Saxon in origin (the 10th century Graveney boat, found nearby, had two

unfinished Mayen lava querns on board)². Spit 3 also contained 9 sherds of medieval Tyler Hill pottery and two earlier pieces of shelly ware (c AD1200).

Fig 3: Two sherds of Romano-British pottery from TP9



The portion of Spit 4 excavated was less productive, mainly because of being crowded with large flints, but did produce one more Roman sherd: It also had a small amount of 19th and 17th century pottery which just shows the complexities of churned garden deposits.

5. Interpretation

The Roman finds should not have been as unexpected as they were. On the other side of Stonebridge pond a Roman cremation burial site was identified in 1841³. The main Roman settlement throughout the occupation, Durolevum, was on Watling Street to the south of Faversham near Ospringe, shown by an extensive cemetery⁴ and other archaeological evidence⁵. It is reasonable to suppose that there was some settlement during the Roman occupation down by the creek itself, linked to Durolevum by what is now the Ospringe road. The interventions of the gunpowder industry in the valley of the West Brook have probably destroyed any chance of following this further.

I suspect, however, that the walled garden was created at the time of construction of the mid-19th century terrace containing Number 3. Jacobs's 1774 map⁶ shows a string of houses in this spot – presumably these were demolished to build the present terrace. What is potentially important, however, is the terracing of the hillside to receive the mid-19th century block and to create a terrace which was itself tunnelled into to provide cellarage. This process would have involved both the cutting in at the foot of the bank, some kind of revetting and the throwing up of material to infill and level the top.

The walled garden would have been created on top of the upcast, the upcast containing a jumble of material from lower down the bank. This material then remains locked into the

² Leahy, K. 2003 *Anglo-Saxon Crafts* Stroud: Tempus p50

³ See, for example, OS TR 0161 NW 1958. Also KCC SMR

⁴ Whiting, W 1920 'A Roman Cemetery discovered at Ospringe in 1920' *Cantiana* XXXV

⁵ Many studies, e.g. Ward, A. 1997 'The Roman site at Ospringe, Kent' *Kent Archaeological Review* 129 p 199-205

⁶ Jacob's Map of Faversham 1774.

walled garden, receiving only input from Number 3. The eastern boundary of this plot, the brick and flint wall certainly precedes the building of the present terrace, and presumably formed a boundary to the alterations in the bank.

There is, of course, a chance that the Romano-British settlement lies underneath the Bull Inn plot, overlooking the fording point (see Fig 4)/wharf/ beach market. . This is the same logic that was used to define the zone of Saxon settlement⁷.

Fig 4: The Romans in the Stonebridge area (1960s map)



Final Comments

⁷ Kent Archaeological Service. 2003 *Kent Historic Towns Survey: Faversham* KCC/English Heritage Map 14

TP9 raised many questions about the early history of this location, which overlooks the fording point of the West Brook/ Creek. Because of this, the opportunity to dig only 5 metres away in the Bull Inn garden was eagerly seized: read the report for TP8.

7. Acknowledgments

Many thanks to Adrian Quinnell who arranged for us to dig in this hidden garden.

Small Finds Record



SF24



SF25



SF 33



SF54



SF60

Small Finds Details

- SF24: Copper Alloy Coin. Heavily corroded. More on one side than the other. Unidentifiable.
- SF25: Buckle. Could be buckle for use with ribbon. Traces of copper, especially central strip.
- SF33: Quern Stone Fragment. Grey uneven surface with grooves. Could be Roman or Saxon. Much damaged. Ref. Leahy, 2003 page 50: Mayen querns in Graveney boat.
- SF54: Lead Token. Small thick disc. Design on obverse, plain reverse. Very slight lipping around reverse. Design involves 5+ pellets and what could be letter 'H', slightly off-centre (see sketch). Almost certainly medieval token, though does not appear to match the designs in Fletcher 2003 P 29-32. N.B. later tokens seem to be all double-sided.
- SF60: Tube. Colgate perfumed toothpaste tube with metal cap. Early 20 century - 1930s? Soft metal tube.