

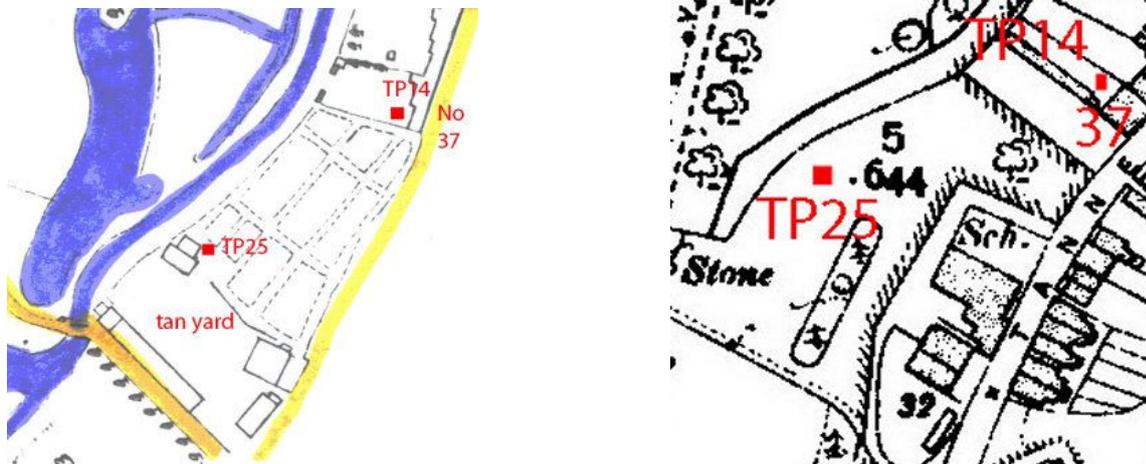
Hunt the Saxons 2005

Test Pit report for Test Pit 14 at Tanners Cottage, 37 Tanners St, Faversham, Kent Grid Reference TR 0161 601100 161320

1 Introduction

Tanners Cottage is a two storey 17th century cottage with a tiled roof, on the western side of Tanners Street towards the northern (upper) end.¹ There is some internal evidence that the structure may be in some parts older than the 17th century². The lengthy title deeds to this property trace ownership back to the 17th century, where it was part of the large tan yard estate which dominated the north end of Tanners Street. In 1751 it was sold along with other messuages to William Gilbert (see report for Test Pit 25). The left map in Fig 1 shows the situation in 1781, the marked out area between 37, Tanners Street and the tan yard being thought to be a market garden³. By 1906, both tan yard and market garden have disappeared, and are replaced by open space/parkland (right map in Fig 1).

Fig 1: 1781⁴ (left) and 1906⁵ (right) showing this test pit TP14 and that of TP25.



2. Location of pit

The garden at 37, Tanners St is long and narrow, sloping down to the West Brook, with a final steep 1 metre drop to the present water level. Near the rear of the house is a small terrace. The Test Pit was located in the lawn area just below this terrace: any further down the

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

² Lesley Jameson, pers. comm..

³ Title deeds for 37, Tanner St, summarised by Arthur Percival

⁴ Map for Royal Gunpowder Works, 1781

⁵ OS Faversham (SW) and Ospringe 1906 Kent Sheet 34.09

garden would have been impracticable due to large tree roots. The location is shown as TP14 in Fig 1.

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 30 cm spits (layers), each spit being trowelled out in 5 cm layers. From Spit 3 downwards, excavation took into account a stone feature. This feature was later removed and Spit 4 taken down to a total depth of 110cm. 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

Spit 1 was mostly occupied by a 20cm thick layer of sand, crushed brick and tile with flints to either side: this was interpreted as a path running down the garden and removed. Beneath this feature was a dark grey brown loamy topsoil matrix with small chalk inclusions and the usual ash and clinker. Spits 1 and 2 contained a great deal of fragmentary brick (both red and yellow) and pink peg tiles.

At the bottom of Spit 2, a cluster of large stones was revealed at the eastern end of the pit (Fig 2)

Fig 2: Bottom of Spit 2



These stones, which included flint, granite and haematite packed into a chalk matrix, clearly represented a feature. For the time being, they were left mostly in situ and the rest of Spits 3 (Fig3) and 4 (Fig 4) removed around them, to a total depth of 110 cm.

Fig 3: Bottom of Spit 3



Fig 4: Bottom of Spit 4 (110 cm down)

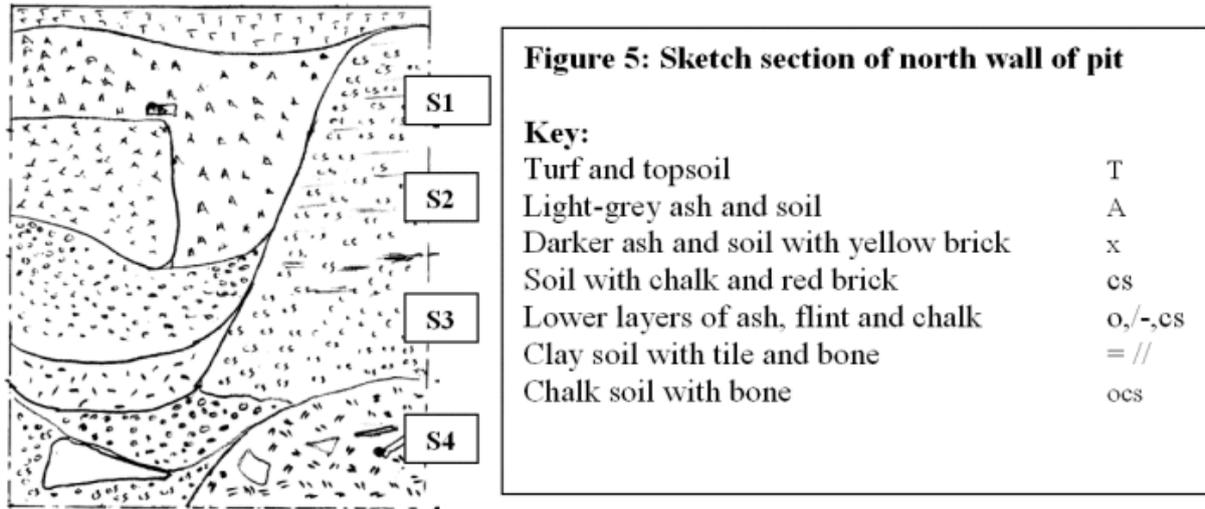


Lastly, the rest of the stones were removed and the column of deposits beneath them removed carefully, with finds bagged separately for different contextual layers. The matrix for these lower two spits was much less ashy, but still with high amounts of brick and tile (though no yellow brick at this stage). In the top two spits, large amounts of iron (mostly nails but with some shoe cleats and a horseshoe fragment) had been found but iron was far less common deeper down. What did increase enormously in Spit 4 was animal bone, as shown in the following table:

Table 1: Animal bone in TP14

Spit	Weight in grms
1	42
2	294
3	404
4	3696
Total for TP14	4336

The Spit 4 total includes bone from under the stone feature. The animal bone from the upper 3 spits was in small fragments and nearly all pig or sheep but Spit 4 contained at least 3 horn cores along with cow skull fragments, as well as a multitude of small sheep and pig bones. This bone was concentrated in the northern side of the pit.



Once the stone feature and its underpinnings had been removed, it became clear from the section exposed on the north side of TP14 (Fig 5) that a pit or bank with a series of dumps had formerly existed in the northern part of the excavated area.

TP14 produced by far the largest amount of medieval pottery found in a Test Pit in the 2005 season. Nearly all of it was in Spit 4, closely associated with the stone feature i.e. directly below or just beyond it: the complete medieval assemblage from Spit 4 is shown in fig 7 (at the end of this report). Spit 1 and 2 were dominated by 19th century pottery and there were small amounts of 16th-18th century pottery, in Spits 2 and 3. (See fig 6).

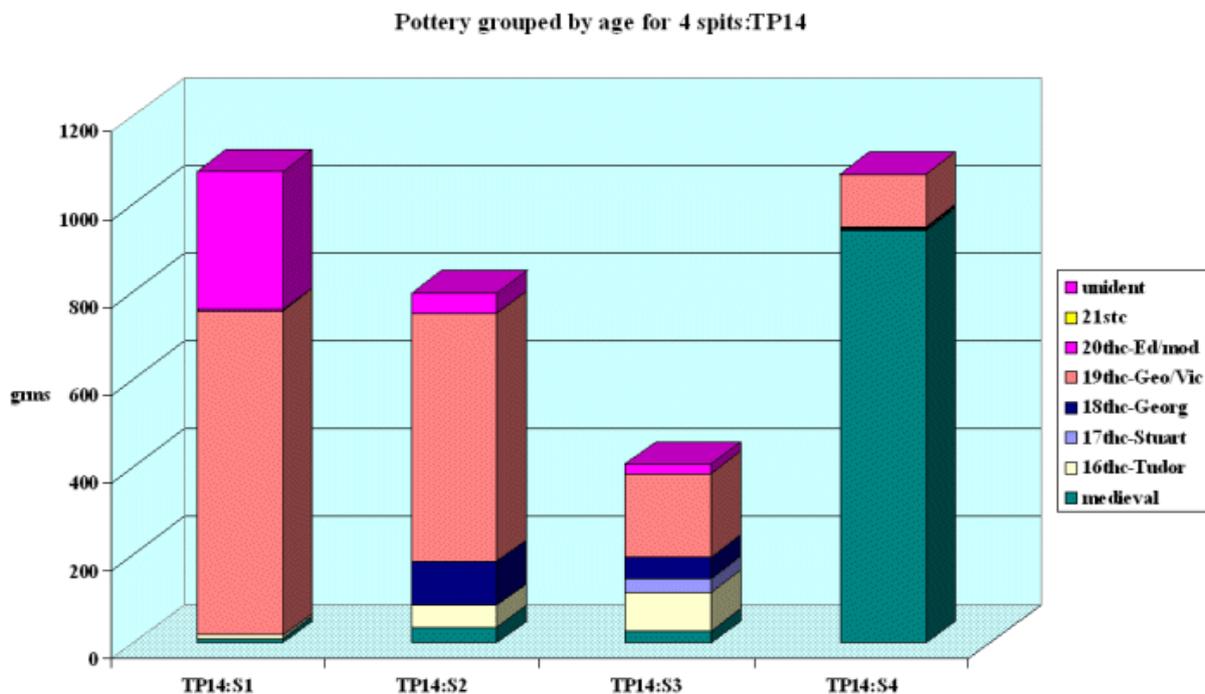


Fig 6: Pottery grouped by age for TP14

5. Interpretation

Early maps (see fig 1: 1906) show outbuildings against the south wall of Number 37's garden, which are not present today. The demolition of these probably explains the large amounts of brick and tile in the upper part of TP14. Spit 2 contained at least two frogged bricks, which implies an at-earliest mid 19th century date for whatever building was built of these. The brick and tile further down was more fragmentary and all dark red and crudely handmade: the one measurable fragment had a depth of 5 cm, implying an earlier origin than the frogged bricks (6.2 cm depth).

In Spit 4 a bone dump with horn cores and a quantity of medieval pottery strongly suggests a tannery here in the medieval period. The few tiny sherds of 19th century pottery and two small pieces of clay pipe stem could be looked on as having drifted into the Spit 4 assemblage from the sides of the pit but a complete stoneware salt glazed inkwell from Spit 4 is less easy to explain away, though possibly associated with the pit dump revealed in the section (fig 5).

The stone feature remains an enigma. The size of the exotic stones suggests they may have come to Faversham as ship's ballast, but what is the structure for? It seems too irregular to be a surface but not mortared enough to be a wall foundation.

6. Final comments

TP14 was the fourth test pit dug in the 2005 season and the first to take three full days to dig. Its complexities highlighted the limitations of the spit method for recording. A determined attempt was made to switch to a partial contextual approach, but the problems with this showed up at the post excavational stage. Identifying the stone feature has been very challenging, because of the small exposure. We will be using TP14 as a case study in the training of experienced volunteers before the 2006 season, and will develop a more coherent strategy for this kind of situation. We will also be carrying out a more detailed study of the medieval pottery in the autumn of 2006, at the end of the *Hunt the Saxons* project. In the meantime, any helpful suggestions will be gratefully received.

7. Acknowledgments

Many thanks to Lesley Jameson for her hospitality – which included Hobnobs and carpets to rest on whilst excavating- and her unfailing interest and support.

Small Finds



SF55



SF66

Small Finds Details

SF55: Pin. Straight Copper alloy pin with a spherical terminal

SF66: Marble. Ceramic (or wooden?) marble with line pattern.