



Hunt the Saxons 2005

Test Pit report for Test Pit 22 75 West Street, Faversham.

Grid Reference TR 01235 61484

1. Introduction

75 West Street is a mid 15th century timber framed house with a tiled roof, formerly part of the Castle Inn. It has retained its jetty.¹ The house is two storied at the front but has an additional lower storey at the back which occupies about half of the lower ground floor area. 75 West Street is a very interesting house, worth further study, and is the oldest actual property in whose garden a Test Pit was dug in the 2005 season.

2. Location of pit

The narrowness of the garden limited choice of Test Pit (TP) location. The spot chosen was as far from the house and former buildings as possible (**Fig 1**). The difference in height of this plot compared with Number 74 to the west was striking, 75's garden surface being at least 0.5m higher up than the one next door.

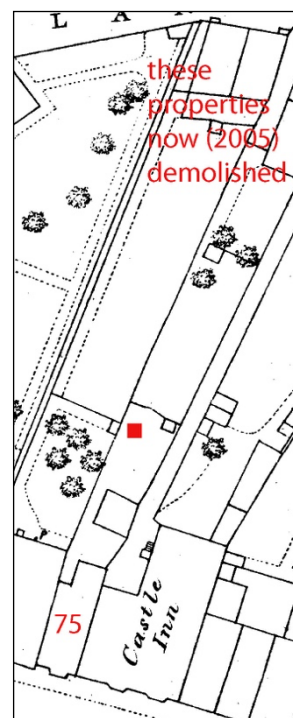
3. The procedures

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 30cm spits (layers), each spit being trowelled out in 5cm 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

The topmost two spits in this pit (down to 60cm) were packed with ash, cinders, large quantities of red and yellow brick, red tile, mortar and plaster and enormous quantities of iron artefacts, set in a grey loam topsoil matrix. The iron was mainly nails of every size, but with many other domestic type fittings such as window latches, handles and brackets. In Spit 2, three horseshoe fragments were found. This material continued down into Spit 3 in the SW corner and by this stage included iron sheets, strips, wire and rods.

Fig 1: Location using the 1865 OS map.²



¹ Swaine, A. 1969 *Faversham Conserved* Maidstone: KCC p123

² OS 1865 (reprint 1904) Sheet XXXIV.9.10 1:536

Some of these were embedded in the baulk, meaning that great care had to be taken in excavation for safety reasons.



Fig 2: TP22 to the maximum depth, photo taken with back to the house.

Beneath this jumbled layer, the matrix became more clay-like, yellow-brown in colour with flecks of charcoal and large pieces of shell. Along the eastern side of the pit, a brick feature (path?) emerged at 65cm down. Most of it was in the baulk, with only a single brick width exposed. This feature was not removed, but left in place for the rest of the excavation. The clay continued down to the bottom of spit 4.

TP22 had an abundance of clay pipes, with 23 whole or part bowls and many stem fragments. Associated with the brick feature was an 18th century pipe and, even more usefully, a token with the initials 'AB HIA' and the date 1740 on one side (SF42). All three of the pipe bowls found in Spit 4 (CP 99, 106 and 137) were early, probably 17th century. On the floor of Spit 4, i.e. 120cm down, a Nuremburg jetton was found (SF46), bearing the legend 'Hans Krauwinkel' on the obverse, enabling a dating to 1580-1610.³

A great deal of pottery was found in TP22. In spits 1 and 2, this occurred as a multitude of small sherds, mostly 19th century and showing a great range of styles. Further down beneath the iron-laden layer, the pottery sherds were much more substantial and included an abundance of 16th century red ware with brown glaze. A large part of a 16th century chafing dish, found in Spit 4, was particularly impressive. Finally at the lowest levels were a number of medieval sherds, mostly Tyler Hill local ware but with three earlier shelly ware sherds (c 1200) and a piece of Surrey whiteware (c 1400).

³ Fletcher, E. 2003 *Tokens and Tallies Through the Ages* Witham: Greenlight Publishing p 24

Fig 3: Pottery grouped by age for four Spits: TP22.

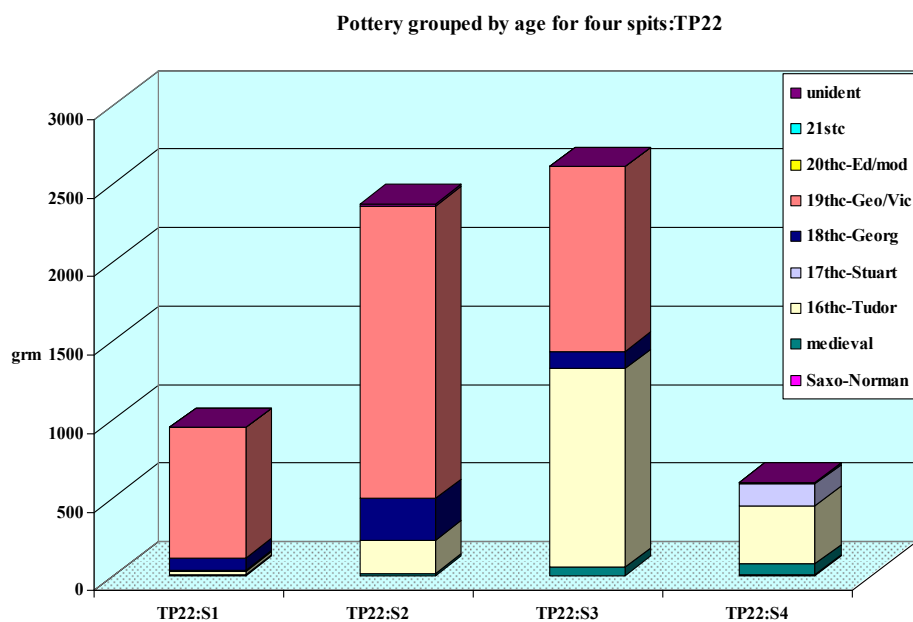


Fig 4: Left, 16th century chafing dish; right, 13th century shelly ware.



5. Interpretation

This was by far the most finds-rich pit dug in the 2005 season, producing more pottery and tokens / coins than any other pit, to say nothing of the iron finds. The upper two spits were dominated by material coming perhaps from the demolition of the buildings to the north in around 1960 (see **Fig 1**), but the overall abundance of pottery and pipes is perhaps related to the previous hospitality function of 75 West St. In terms of types and quantities of artefacts, the most similar 2005 pit was TP8, in the garden of the 15th century Bull Inn.

How far back does the history of use as an inn go for 75 West Street? Once again, the archaeological finds need to be looked at in conjunction with a careful study of documentary evidence such as title deeds. There was no evidence of a water-silt layer with subsequent levelling up, as is suggested by Allen et al in their Gasworks evaluation⁴, which in turn suggests that the location of TP22 stood above the flood plain level in the 18th century. The finding of a small quantity of 13th century pottery is an interesting pointer here.

⁴ Allen T, A. Ward & J. Cotter 1992 *Evaluation of Faversham Gasworks* Canterbury: CAT report

6. Final comments

This was a difficult pit to dig. The metal debris meant that the excavators had to be most ingenious and wary in getting at the lower levels. It was however, very worthwhile and took us further in understanding the age-old relationship between West Street and the Creek.



7. Acknowledgments

Many thanks to Oliver Smith and his family for making us so welcome.