F·S·A·R·G The Faversham Society Archaeological Research Group

Community Archaeology

Hunt the Saxons 2006

Test Pit report for Test Pit 26
46 Tanners St, Faversham, Kent

Grid Reference TR 01103 61367

NB this report should be considered in conjunction with that for TP 26A.

1. Introduction

Number 46 is situated on the west side of Tanners St, with an unusually large plot sloping down to the West Brook. This plot includes land previously occupied by numbers 43, 44 and 45 Tanners St. Swaine[1] describes number 46 in 1969 as an early 17th century timber framed two storey house with a ground floor rebuilt in brick and 'unfortunately in a very poor condition'. This condition has since been remedied, and number 46 has a new wing, in keeping with its character, occupying the site of number 45 and part of 44.

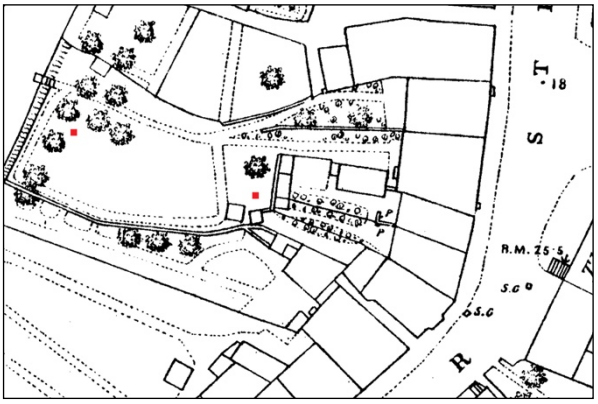


Fig 1: 1865 map of the plot.[2] TP26 is the red square closest to the stream, the other is 26A.

Stevens[3] believes that numbers 43 - 45 were demolished in the 1950s, but an OS map of the 1960s shows 44 and 45 surviving. The west (stream) end of the garden is shown as an open space in 1865, belonging to number 46. It was much as it is now except for a strip to the north, now fenced off to form a long, narrow garden for number 47. TP26 is in this relatively unchanged area. Closer to the house, however, the situation is very complex with many boundary shifts accompanying the demolitions of numbers 43 - 45, and a sequence of outbuildings, few of which have survived. This part of the house plot is covered in the TP26A report.

[1] Swaine, A 1969 *Faversham Conserved* Maidstone: KCC/ Faversham Borough Council
[2] OS 1865 (reprint 1904) Sheet XXXIV.9.10 1:536
[3] Stevens, P 2003 *A look at Tanners St, Faversham* Faversham Society Series No **82** Faversham: Faversham Society

2. Location of pit

The unusual spaciousness of this garden meant that it was possible to locate TP26 closer to the stream than any other HSX test pits, yet away from the large trees which border the stream. Even so, some large roots were encountered, as can be seen in **Fig 2**.

Fig 2: Bottom of S2.

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), spits 1 - 3 being trowelled out in 5cm layers. In Spit 4, a flint with brick surface was exposed: the fill around this was removed down to 1.2m, and then the surfaces themselves were removed with records kept of the different material in and beneath these surfaces. All excavated soil was sieved meticulously, and the spoil heap scanned using a metal detector. Finds were set aside for each spit. Small 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.

4. The findings

Down to the flint features in S4, the deposits were well churned. Down to 40cm the ash and cinder content was high (around 15%), giving way to a yellow-brown well sorted clayey silt below 40cm (see **Fig 2**). This became wetter, yellower and more clay like towards the base of S3 (90cm down). In S4, an area of flint with some small red brick fragments appeared in the SW corner (**Fig 3**).

Fig 3: Flint surface exposed in corner.

Fig 4: Surface material after removal.

The deposit in the rest of S4 was removed, and was homogenous with the yellowish clay deposits above until the base of S4 when patches of greenish-grey silt deposits began to appear. Finally, the flint layer was removed (**Fig 4**): immediately beneath it were some shell and three pottery sherds (**Fig 5** see below for discussion).

A wide range of animal bone was found throughout, including sheep, cattle, horse, pig and dog. In S4, the bone was unusually fragmented and degraded. Shellfish were similarly diverse, with the largest amount in S4. Nails dominated the iron finds, with the greatest amount in S2 / S3: in the lower half of the

pit, an appreciable amount of iron slag was found. Building material, especially tile, was found throughout, but mostly in S3 with S4 having by far the largest amount of mortar and plaster.

One unusual find was of large amounts of substantial lumps of chalk in S3 to S4. Small lumps (around 1.5cm x 1.5cm) are found distributed evenly though most of the garden soils we have encountered, but these chalk pieces were much larger and more irregular.

Fig 5: Pottery sherds from under flint layer.

Pottery in S1 was dominated by 19th wares, but even S1 contained some small abraded medieval sherds. Below S2, however, the 19th century pottery had almost entirely disappeared. Medieval pottery was found at all levels, and a small sherd from S2 was possibly Iron Age. The large rim sherd in **Fig 5** is Roman, possibly Nene valley ware (white fabric, brown slip), probably from a flanged bowl or mortaria. As with TP16, many of the colourful 16th - 17th century sherds would repay further examination, as some of the specimens seem to be from imported wares.

Fig 6: Yet another reminder of Faversham's maritime links: an early 19th century clay pipe bowl from S2, in the shape of a ship's figurehead.

5. Interpretation

Starting at the base of the pit, the greenish deposits which were just beginning to be revealed were probably flood silts, as mentioned by Best et al in the nearby excavations on the Gas Works site in 1992.[4] The yellow-brown bands in the rest of S4 are probably of similar origin. The TP26 was the closest excavation to the West Brook, and the lowest lying one in Tanners St. The flint feature can be seen as an attempt to create a firm surface, perhaps part of a mini-wharf. The fact that the flints immediately overlay unabraded Roman pottery has to be significant, but the surface itself is undateable – the brick could be a later infill / repair.

Above the flint and brick surface was a partial demolition layer, with the plaster layer underlying the tile. This material and the chalk found at this level needs to be seen in association with the finds in TP26A further up the garden, where a very substantial chalk platform was found. If the flint surface was a stream-side structure, then it may have been the dumping of this demolition material that filled in the stream bed around the 'wharf' and, in effect, pushed the bank away.

Above the demolition layer was a well-churned garden layer with lots of grate deposits in the top 40cm. Although overwhelmingly dominated by 19th century material, earlier material was distributed through it, such as medieval pot sherds. Two highly corroded possibly medieval coins (SFs 601,602) were found in S1.

[4] Allen T, Ward A & J.Cotter 1992 Evaluation exercise at Faversham Gasworks Canterbury: CAT pp5-6

6. Final comments

This was the first test pit dug in the 2006 season and already the spit method was proving too inflexible for the excavation i.e. it was not respecting what were seen as meaningful changes and contrasts in the pit's contents. This led to an awkward hybrid of contextual excavation and spit excavation. Although the records were sufficiently detailed to interpret these complexities, issues were raised that will be followed through in the next season.

7. Acknowledgments

Great thanks to Anna and Tim who made us so welcome, showed so much interest and kept us going with tea, cherries and biscuits: to George who helped by collecting material from the flower beds and Catherine who helped finish off the backfilling.

Pat Reid
November 2006

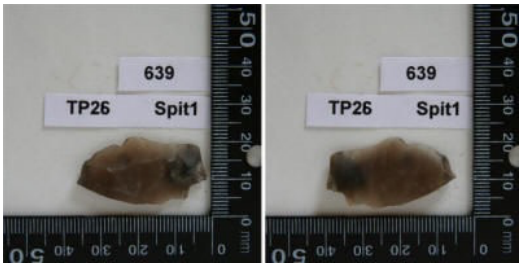
Small Finds

SF601

SF602

SF603

SF638



SF639

SF640

Small Finds Details.

SF601: Coin. Small circular coin slightly bent with a hole in the middle. Heavily corroded but some markings are more obvious on the obverse side. Nothing discernable on the reverse. Possible early medieval coin.

SF602: Coin. Small disc with some small nicks in the rim. Slightly bent. Very thin. Inset circle design visible on part of obverse. Nothing discernable on reverse. Possibly a medieval coin (circle design) but hard to tell due to condition.

SF603: Watch Key(?). CuA ring looped through pivot hole, but welded to body by corrosion of Fe body. Detailed form of body not discernable, but generally cylindrical with projection lower down on one side. Mid 19th - early 20th c.

SF638: Worked flint. Worked flint. Abandoned, unfinished?

SF639: Worked flint. Worked Flint. Abandoned, unfinished?

SF640: Brooch. Heart shaped brooch or badge with cross and anchor design. Lacks fastening but small marks of attachment on reverse. Typical 'sentimental brooch' , 1880-1920. Bailey 1993: 22 (text)