Community Archaeology North CIC Test Pit: CHAP 25 TP9

Location: 6, Park Avenue, Hexham, Northumberland. NE46 3EN.

Owner / contact:

Dates of excavation: 13 -14 September 2025.

Area of excavation: 1.0m x 1.0m.

Weather conditions: Cool, damp on surface, mostly sunny, occasionally overcast with slight drizzle.
Excavators: Charlie McCarthy, Angela Speed, Cath Whitfield, Matt Whitfield (Both days). Peter Lowe, Jaimee Lowe and Neil Irving (Sat). Jane Brantom (Sun).
Report by: CMcC, based on team record sheets.

Location and OD: 392969, 564496, 63mOD

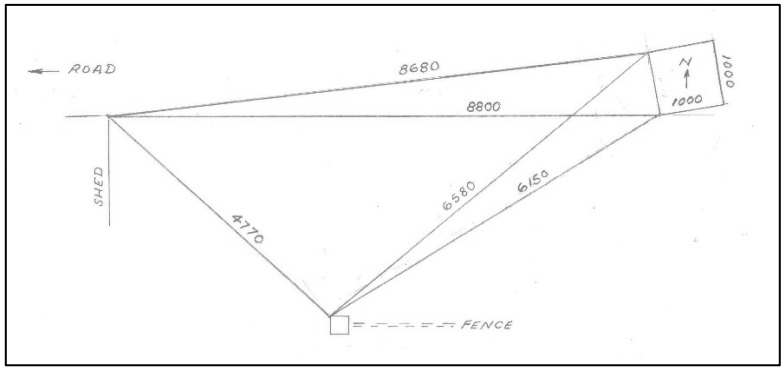


Figure 1: Location of TP9 in garden.

Introduction

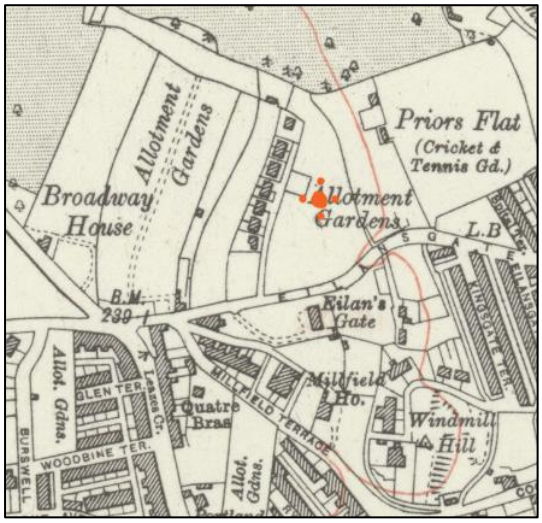




Fig 2: Location of TP9 1920 (NLS 1920). **Fig 3: Location of TP9 2025, (GM)**

Excavation Summary

Test Pit TP9 was dug in the lawn of a mature garden (Fig 3) at one of the early 19C. properties in Park Avenue. The area is shown on the 1920, 6" O.S. map (Fig 2) as being allotment gardens but earlier 6" series OS maps did not record the use of the land.



Fig 4: Section at eastern wall to a depth of 600mm

A gradual transition from the humic, friable, blackish brown sandy silt of the upper spits began around 360mm deep where a loosely laid stony layer of rounded cobbles appeared. Below this, the spoil became lighter and sandier with less stone. A second loosely deposited cobbled / stony layer appeared around 500mm. Apparently natural sandy earth, yellowish brown in colour, with dispersed, angular stones occurs below about 550mm deep.

The first spit (100), that included the turf, was typical of a lawn/garden site: it contained less than 5% of small angular stones, traces of charcoal, coal and CBM, and fine roots. 11 pottery sherds, 6 nails, a single broken pipe stem and a glass sherd. One ceramic piece had a feature.

Spit (101) appeared to be a continuation of (100) with less than 5% small stone, Inclusions comprised CBM x3, mortar x13, possible stone tile (or local laminated limestone?) x7, a possible piece of clinker and two pieces of bone. The types of find were similar to (100) but greater in quantity, i.e. 65 pottery sherds, glass x11, pipe stems x9 and 13 Fe nails. Significant finds comprised two coins, a single glass bead / droplet and a ceramic with a possible feature.

Spit (102) developed into a lighter, sandier material with 5 to 10% small, rounded stones. The range of inclusions was similar to the spits above; namely, a trace of charcoal, CBM x13, mortar x1, tile / limestone x2, one bone fragment and a single tooth. The types of finds were similar also; pottery sherds x35, glass x5, 11 pipe stems and 3 bowls. Nine Fe items were also recovered.

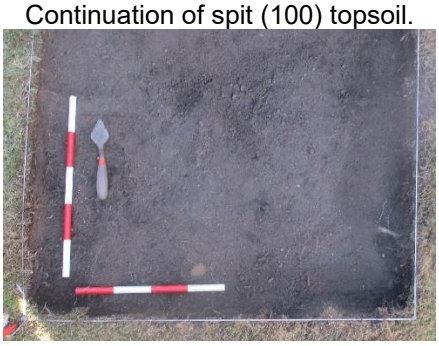
Spit (103) was similar to (102) with a loose layer of rounded stone, about 10% volume, again, there were traces of coal, CBM and clinker, about 200g of mortar, one with a feature, and a fragment of bone. The finds comprised; nine pottery sherds, glass x1, eight pipe stems, three broken pipe bowls, a single coin and a button.

The spoil from spit (104) resembled that of (103) with a loosely laid cobbled layer, comprising about 15 litres (15%) of rounded stones at the (104)-(105) interface, about 0.5 kg of tile / limestone and traces of coal. There were fewer finds, namely, pottery x2, three pipe stems and a bowl, two bone fragments, one with a possible butcher's mark. This spit yielded a small sherd of green Tudor ware and a piece of broken pottery rim, possibly Roman.

The top of spit (105) was a continuation of (104) down to a depth of around 550mm where it gave way to the lighter yellowish brown, sandier structure with well distributed sub-angular stones (~10%), apparently undisturbed. There were no 'finds' other than 8 pieces of limestone laminae / tiles. The excavation terminated at 600mm deep.

All of the spoil was 100% sieved and was regularly checked with a hand-held *Sunpow* metal detector.

Results

Context	Description	Comments
(100) Spit	**Soil:** dry, friable, uniform. Dark blackish brown. Sandy silt (50-50). **Inclusions:** Small sub-angular limestone < 5% (< 20mm), Traces of charcoal, coal and CBM. **Contamination:** fine roots, worms. **How dug:** Spade for turf, heavy trowel. **Finds**: Pottery x11, glass x1, pipe stem x1, nails x6. **Special finds**: Possible ceramic with feature. **Distance from top of context:** Ground level.	Compacted topsoil with very few well distributed small stones.
(101) Spit	**Soil:** dry, friable, uniform. Dark blackish brown. Sandy silt (50-50). **Inclusions:** Small sub-angular stone <5% (<20mm), Traces of charcoal, mortar x13, tile (limestone laminae?) x7, CBM x3, possible clinker x1. **Contamination:** fine roots, worms. **How dug:** Heavy trowel. **Finds**: pottery x65, glass x11, bone x2, clay pipe stem x9, nails x13. **Special finds**: coin x2, glass droplet x1, ceramic with feature? **Distance from top of context:** 100mm.	Continuation of spit (100) topsoil.  Fig 101: Base of spit (101).
(102) Spit	**Soil:** Friable, uniform, dry. Mid blackish brown. Sandy silt (60-40). **Inclusions:** Small sub-angular stone 5-10% (<20mm), Traces of charcoal, CBM x13, mortar trace, stone tile? **Contamination:** fine roots. **How dug:** Heavy trowel. **Finds**: Pottery x35, glass x5, Pipe stem x11 pipe bowl x3, metal (Fe) objects x9, Bone x1, tooth x1. **Special finds**: None. **Distance from top of context:** 200mm.	Continuation of topsoil but sandier.  Fig 102: Base of spit (102).
(103) Spit	**Soil:** Friable, uniform, dry. Mid blackish brown. Sandy silt (60-40). **Inclusions:** Small sub-angular stone 5-10% (<20mm), Traces of coal, CBM, mortar ~200g, and clinker. **Contamination:** fine roots. **How dug:** Heavy trowel. **Finds**: pottery sherd x9, glass x1, pipe stem x8 bowl x3, bone x1, button x1 burnt stone x1. **Special finds**: Coin x1, mortar with feature? **Distance from top of context:** 300mm.	Similar to (102), start of cobbled layer at base.  Fig 103: Base of spit (103).

(104) Spit	**Soil:** Friable, uniform, dry. Mid blackish brown. Sandy silt (60-40). **Inclusions:** Rounded stone layering 15%, traces of charcoal, clinker. Laminated limestone / tile? x500g. **Contamination:** fine roots. **How dug:** Heavy trowel. **Finds**: pottery sherd x2, pipe stem x3, pipe bowl x1. **Special finds**: Tudor green pottery sherd x1, pottery rim fragment x1 – Roman? Bone with butchery mark? **Distance from top of context:** 400mm.  Fig 104, rounded stone from layer.	 Fig 104a: Base of spit (104).
(105) Spit	**Soil:** Friable, dry. Light brown becoming yellowish, natural sandy silt (60-40). **Inclusions:** Rounded stone layer at top (10-15%), traces of charcoal. Small distributed sub angular stone (< 40mm) at base. **Contamination:** fine roots. **How dug:** Heavy trowel. **Finds**: None. **Special finds**: None. **Distance from top of context:** 500mm.  Fig 105. Rounded stone from layer	Natural yellowish brown soil with sub angular stone at about 550mm deep.  Fig 105a: Base of spit (105).

Conclusions

The character of the spoil and the finds unearthed from the top spits were typical of a mature garden/allotment area. Below this, around 360mm, there was a loosely laid layer of cobbles, interpreted as hard-standing for a paddock or an open work-yard: note the charcoal, nails, possible clinker, datable pipe bowls and coins. A second loosely cobbled layer appeared at about 500mm, and in the spoil between the cobbled layers a medieval pottery sherd and a possible Roman sherd was found. No artifacts were recovered from below about 500mm.

To summarise: before use as allotments, the area probably had two occupation phases as open work-yards. One was likely to be medieval, suggesting a hitherto unknown farm of the period.

Bibliography

GM 2025, Google Maps, Available on-line. Accessed 5 Oct 2025.

NLS 1920. O.S. 6” Series, Northumberland Sheet nXCI, Rev 1920, Pub 1924. Available on-line at: https://maps.nls.uk/os/6inch-england-and-wales/counties.html Accessed 5 Oct 2025.