Community Archaeology North CIC (CANCIC): Test Pit CHAP25 TP5

Location of Test Pit: 15 Pearsons Terrace, Hexham, NE46 3DZ
Owner:
Date of Excavation: 19-20 July 2025
Area of Excavation: 1.0m x 1.0m
Weather conditions: Overcast, occasional showers; heavy rain during 20 July
Excavators: Kitty Lowe, Jamiee Lowe, Jill Watson, Colin Watson, Ben Bolton-Baker, Joshua Bolton-Baker, Steve Cunningham, Jane Farrell, Hannah Urquhart, Andrew Urquhart, Toby Urquhart, Will Urquhart, Lee Robertson
Report: SM with Team, additional photography by Mike Ward
Grid reference and height above sea-level (mOD): NY 92958 63708, c.74mOD

Introduction

Two test pits (TP5 and TP6) were excavated at 15 Pearson's Terrace, a brick-built end of terrace property dating from around the late 1800s at the junction of Cockshaw, Westbourne Grove and Kingsgate Terrace in Hexham. The route west towards Quatre Bras along Cockshaw and Kingsgate is recorded as Cockshaw 'Loaning' on 19th century maps, referencing a droveway or route to a place where cattle were grazed or collected for milking. The open land around this routeway can be seen from the earliest 1860s series OS maps (Figure 1).

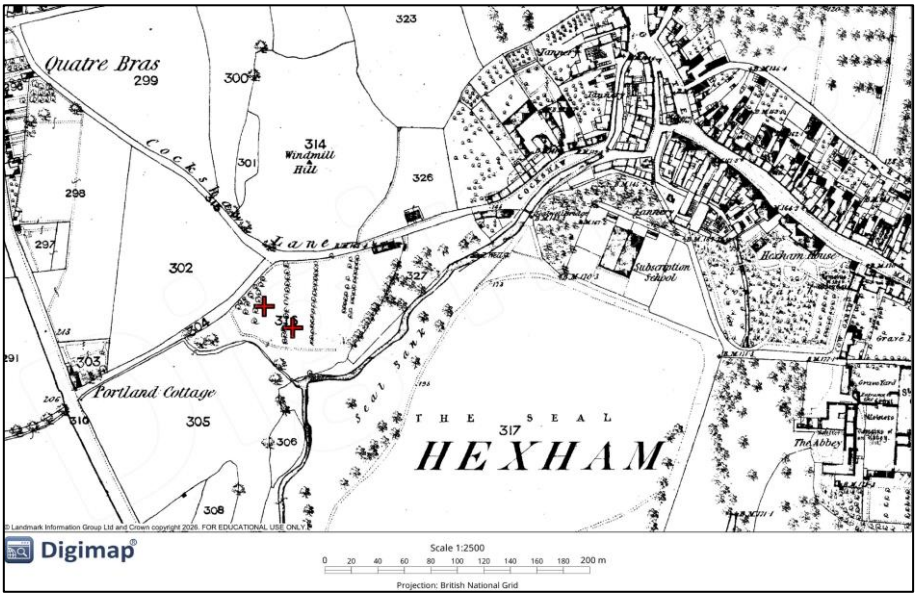


Figure 1 Location of TP5 and TP6, 15 Pearsons Terrace, 1860s OS map series

By the 1890s housing infill was advanced, with Pearsons Terrace among the earliest developments in the area, along with the adjacent Dene House within large gardens (Figure 2). These gardens have been subdivided with further building development, and parts now form the gardens of 15 Pearson's Terrace (Figure 3). The land backs on to wooded land on the western bank of Cockshaw Burn which skirts the western side of the open park of the Sele.

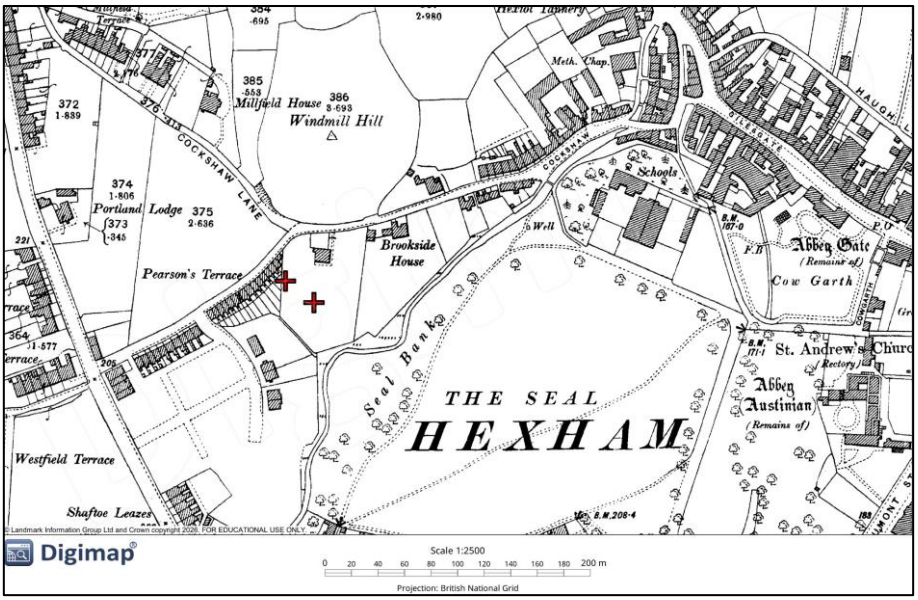


Figure 2 Pearsons Terrace 1890s OS map series

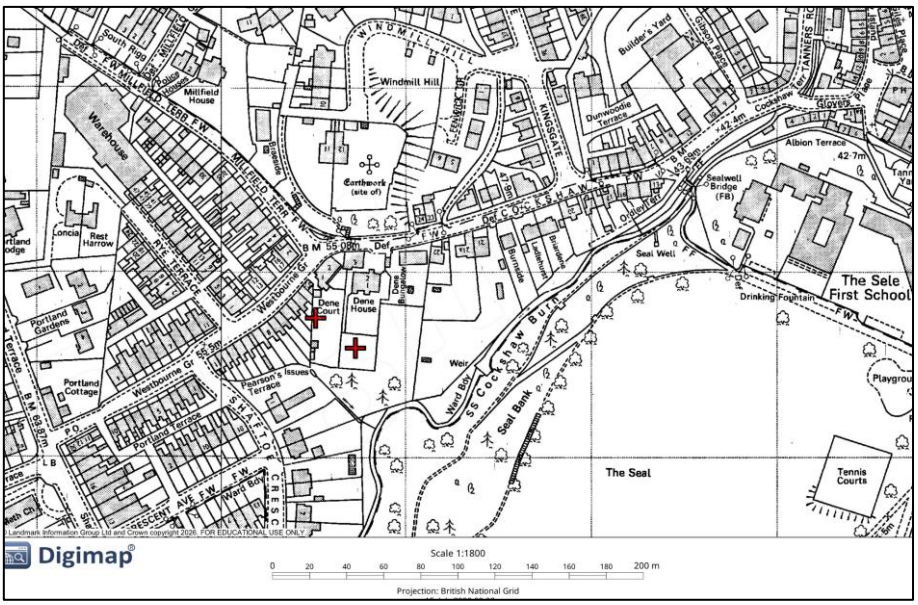


Figure 3 Pearsons Terrace 1980s OS map series

Test pit 5 was excavated in the rear garden within view of the house, on an uncultivated grassy area between fruit trees and close to the property's western boundary (Figure 4).

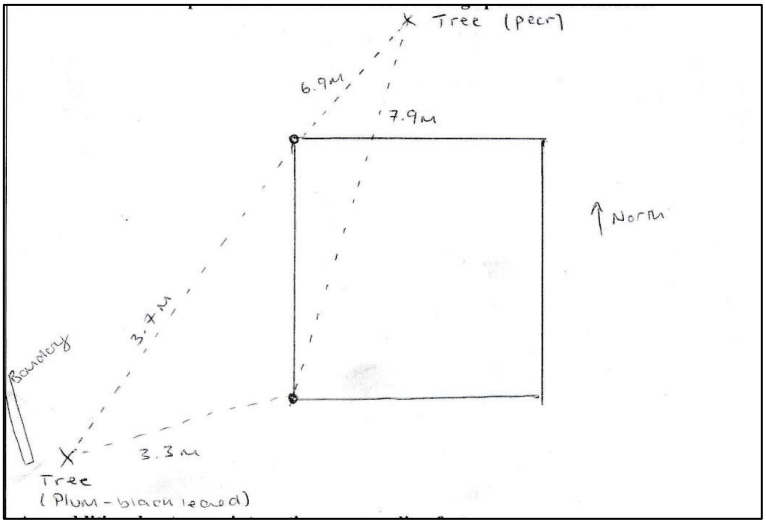


Figure 4 Measured location of TP5, 15 Pearsons Terrace

Excavation Summary

The test pit was hand de-turfed and excavated in 100mm spits. All spoil was 100% hand-sorted or sieved, and all finds recorded.

Spit (100) was friable, firm in places, mid-blackish brown clayey silt consistent with a mature garden. Frequent fine roots from the turf above, infrequent (<10%) small sub-rounded stones (10-100mm) and charcoal were present. Finds were plentiful, including clay pipe stems; animal bone fragments; glazed pottery fragments, a button and CBM. In addition, a range of finds were indicative of metal working having occurred close to the test pit, namely a hearth bottom, iron objects, and a quantity of slag - both light and aerated and molten and vitrified.

The soil in spit (101) was increasingly sandy with depth, containing frequent <15% sub-rounded stones (10-70mm), larger flattened stones (100-120mm) and charcoal pieces. A large tree root ran north-south across the test pit. Finds were most plentiful in this spit, with animal bone pieces; more than 50 pottery sherds - white, salt glazed and coloured glazed; a thimble; a button; mortar; CBM and glass fragments. The suggestion of proximity to a working area was further supported by plentiful slag (aerated and vitrified), molten metal droplets, molten glass and more than 20 broken fragments of clay pipe stem.

Spit (102) consisted of friable, compact in places, yellowish-brown clayey silt. Stones were slightly larger than previous spits (100mm-120mm) but fewer in number (<5%). Finds were

fewer but along with charcoal pieces were still indicative of light metal working – slag, iron nails and clay pipe stems, along with brown glazed pottery sherds and glass fragments.

In spit (103), further tree roots running horizontally across the test pit area were in soil that become firmer and contained more clay and sand with depth. Frequent flattened sub-rounded stones were present (c.30%) from a depth of 320-360mm, along with a discrete deposit of charcoal in the east. The stones may have been a deliberate rough cobbling or levelling layer. Glazed pottery and glass fragments were present, as was globular slag, metalwork debris and clay pipe (including a decorated pipe bowl) although in lower quantities than previous spits. Burnt bone fragments and burnt stone were found among the charcoal deposit.

Owing to time constraints, the test pit was half-sectioned east-west and the northern half excavated, spit (104), as this had been the area with the greatest quantity of finds. The silty soil was increasingly sandy (50:50) with clay lenses. Sub-rounded stones made up around 30% of the spoil removed, mostly below the tree roots. Only one find – a clay pipe stem was present.

Time permitted a further half-section of the northern half of the pit with excavation to a depth of 500mm in the north-west quadrant, the location of the pipe stem in the previous spit. No further finds were located, and the soil contained frequent (c.50%) gravel and small sub-rounded stones (10-80mm). It was concluded that naturally deposited glacial till had been reached.

Conclusion

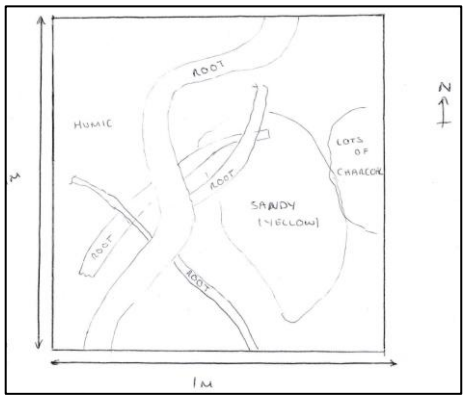
The finds from TP5, including a hearth bottom and a large quantity and variety of slag indicates nearby small-scale metal working. The quantity of clay pipe stems plus domestic debris (although little animal bone) suggest a workshop area. The concentration of these finds in two or three spits implies a discrete period of such activity, perhaps in a yard or structure which had rough cobbled flooring. This was likely in the grounds of Dene House during the late 19th to early 20th centuries, and predating the acquisition of the land by 15 Pearson's Terrace. It may have predated the construction of the Terrace itself given the proximity to the land boundary.

The presence of the large tree roots running horizontally through the test pit are also suggestive of the presence of a solid surface that could not be penetrated supporting the suggestions of a cobbled yard. These roots made excavation challenging and necessitated care work by the TP5 volunteers.

Results

Spit	Type of deposit	Description	Comments and photos
(100)	Spit	**Soil:** Friable, firmer in places; mid blackish brown; smooth clayey silt (10:90) **Inclusions:** infrequent small sub-rounded stones <10% (10-80mm) , rare charcoal pieces <5% **Contamination:** occasional fine and medium roots **How dug:** spade for turf removal, trowel **Finds**: clay pipe stem x4; animal bone x2; fe objects x4; glazed pottery sherds; button x1; glass fragments; mortar; quantity slag (light & aerated, molten & vitrified); hearth bottom; CBM **Special finds**: none **Distance from top of context:** 100mm	Hummic soil below turf, consistent with cultivated garden area, hearth bottom and quantity and variety of slag indicates nearby metal working.  Base of spit (100), looking north
(101)	Spit	**Soil:** Friable, firmer in places; mid blackish brown; smooth clayey silt (10:90), mid yellow brown increasingly sandy with depth **Inclusions:** frequent small sub-rounded stones <15% (10-70mm), flattened sub-rounded stones 100-120mm; charcoal pieces <5% **Contamination:** fine grass roots, large tree root north-south **How dug:** trowel **Finds**: clay pipe stem x22; animal bone pieces x14; fe nail x1; white glazed pottery sherds x9; salt glazed pot sherds x30; coloured glazed pot sherds x20; thimble x1; button x1; glass fragments x9; molten glass; molten metal droplets; mortar; quantity slag (light & aerated, molten & vitrified); CBM; slate **Special finds**: None **Distance from top of context:** 200mm	Metal working debris and quantity of clay pipe stems plus domestic debris suggest waste disposal from a nearby workshop area.  Base of spit (101), looking east  Spit (101) under excavation
(102)	Spit	**Soil:** Friable, compact in places, light yellowish brown clayey silt (20:80)	Increasingly clean fill, moving below deposits of slag and

		Inclusions: rare sub-rounded stones <5% (100-120mm); charcoal pieces **Contamination:** large tree root north-south **How dug:** trowel **Finds**: clay pipe; slag; fe nail; brown glazed pottery sherds; glass fragments **Special finds**: none **Distance from top of context:** 300mm	charcoal-rich deposits from depth of approx. 250mm.  Base of spit (102), looking north west  Spit (102) under excavation
(103)	Feature	**Soil:** Friable, firm in places, mid-yellowish brown clayey silt (40:60) with sandy clay lenses **Inclusions:** frequent flattened sub-rounded stones <30%; frequent charcoal pieces **Contamination:** frequent medium roots; large tree root **How dug:** trowel **Finds**: globular slag; blue glazed pottery sherds x7; glass fragments x3; clay pipe stem x2; clay pipe bowl decorated x1; brown glazed pottery sherds; metalwork debris; burnt bone fragments; burnt stone **Special finds**: none **Distance from top of context:** 400mm	From 320-360mm a concentration of larger, flat stones – possible levelling layer, discrete charcoal deposit in east. Continued reduction in quantity of slag.  Spit (103) looking north 

			Spit (103) under excavation  Spit (103) post-excavation
(104)	Feature	**Soil:** Friable, firm in clay rich areas; mid-yellowish brown sandy silt (50:50) clay lenses **Inclusions:** frequent sub rounded stones <30%; greater frequency of larger stones **Contamination:** medium and large tree roots **How dug:** trowel and shovel **Finds**: clay pipe stem x1 **Special finds**: none **Distance from top of context:** 450mm in half section	Test pit half-sectioned east-west and northern half excavated to explore area associated with greater finds.  Spit (104) looking east  Spit (104), looking south-west
(105)	Spit	**Soil:** Friable, firm in clay rich areas; mid-yellowish brown sandy silt (50:50) clay lenses **Inclusions:** frequent gravel and small sub rounded stones <50% (10-80mm); **Contamination:** medium and large tree roots **How dug:** trowel **Finds**: none **Special finds**: none **Distance from top of context:** 500mm in quarter section	Northern half of pit half-sectioned and north-west quadrant removed, location of single pipe stem from previous spit.

			 Spit (105) at base, looking north



Figure 5 Finds sorting and cleaning



Figure 6 A trench-eye view of excavation



Figure 7 Enthusiastic backfilling in the rain



Figure 8 The Pearsons Terrace Team