Community Archaeology North CIC (CANCIC): Test Pit CHAP25 TP6

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: Steve Turner, Linda Turner, Ally Grant, Norman Grant, Evie Grant, Toby Urqhart, Hannah Urqhart, Malcolm McCallum, Richard Parker, Steve Cunningham
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).

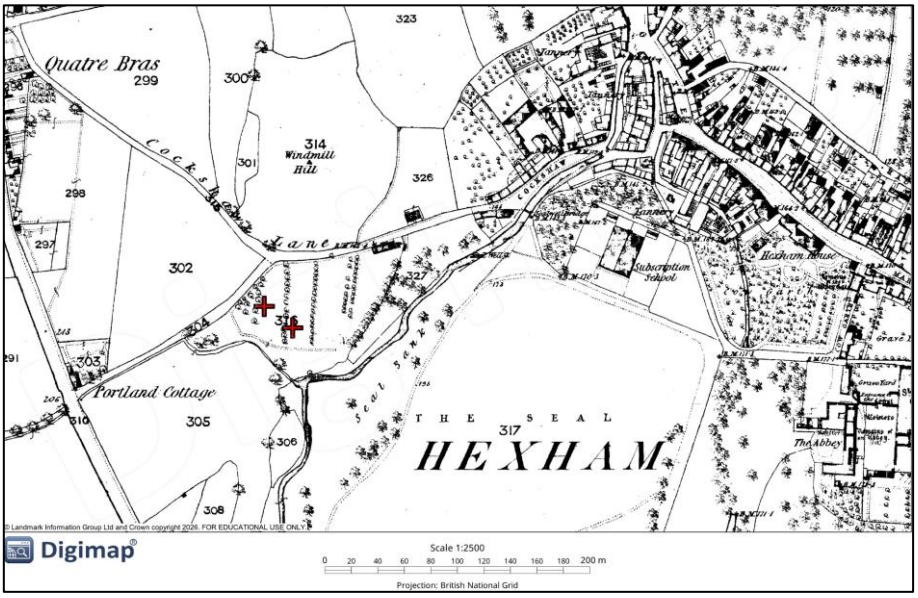


Figure 1 Location of TP5 and TP6, 15 Pearsons Terrace, 1860s OS map series

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.

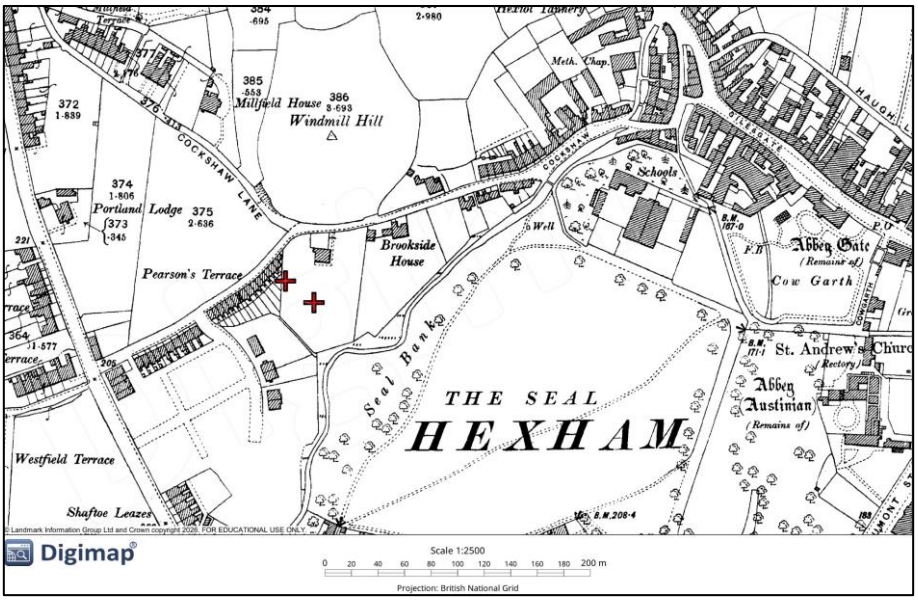


Figure 2 Pearsons Terrace 1890s OS map series

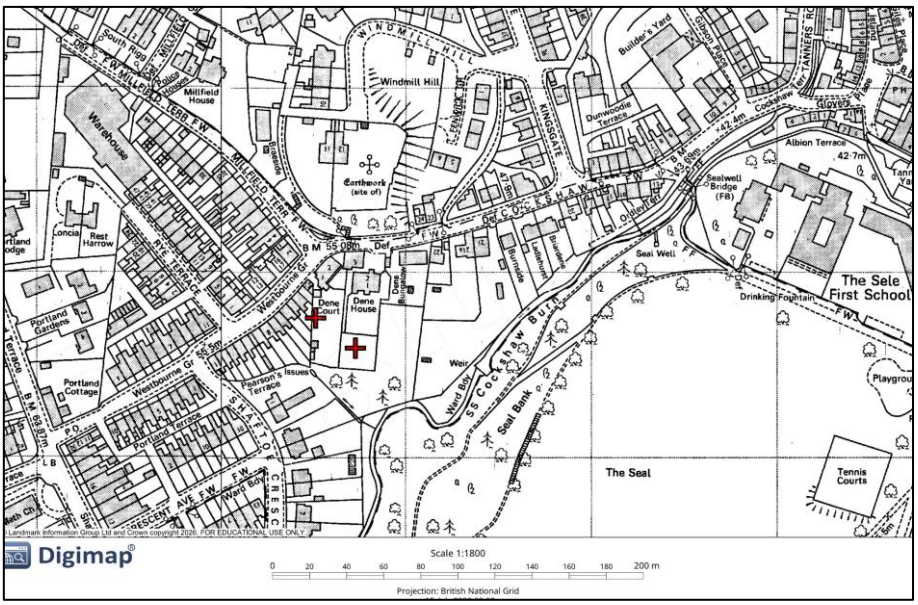


Figure 3 Pearsons Terrace 1980s OS map series

Test pit 6 was excavated in the rear of the garden, surrounded by hedges and woodland. It had possibly been in use as a fruit or vegetable garden as adjacent areas showed signs of recent vegetable production (Figure 4).

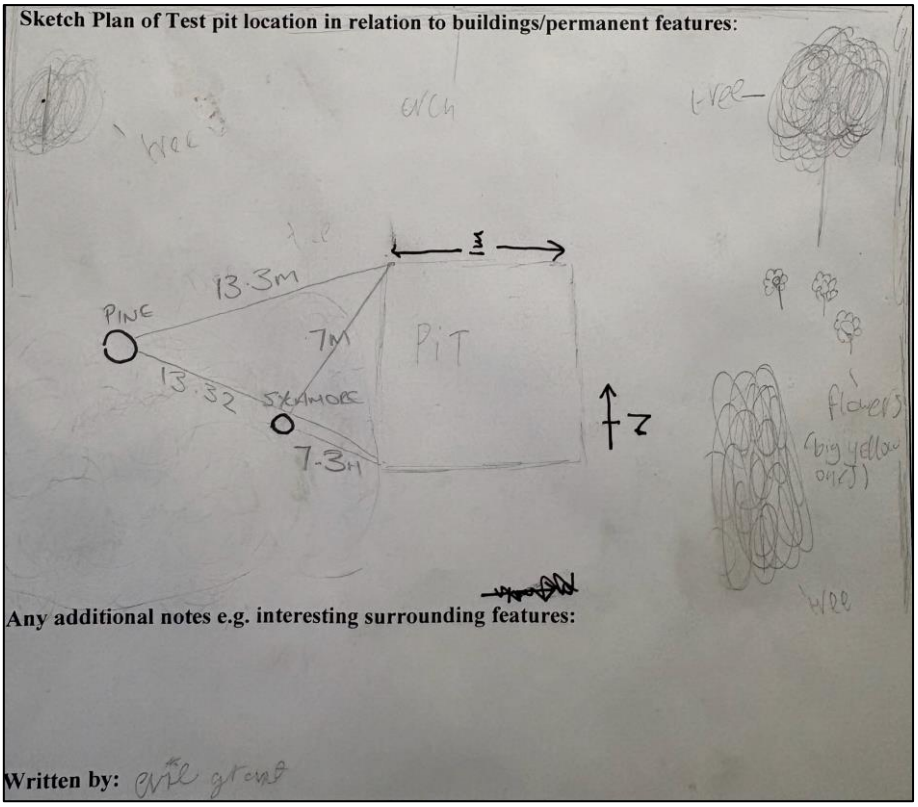


Figure 4 Measured location of TP6, 15 Pearsons Terrace

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, dark-blackish brown organic silty soil consistent with a mature garden. Frequent fine roots from the turf above, frequent worms, infrequent small pebbles, infrequent larger pebbles (20mm) and charcoal flecks and pieces, occasional coal.. Finds included clay pipe stems; animal bone fragments; pottery fragments, glass fragments and an Fe object.

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 very similar to spit (100) and included clay pipe stems; animal bone fragments; pottery fragments, glass fragments and Fe objects.

Spit (102) was mid blackish brown sandy silty (20:80). Stones were slightly larger and more angular than previous spits (100mm-150mm) but fewer in number (<5%). Finds were of similar composition to earlier spits.

In spit (103), there was a clear difference in colour, becoming lighter brown with depth. Charcoal was abundant and stones larger and more angular than previous spits. Finds were noticeably fewer.

In spit (104), a concentration of larger stones was visible in the south-east corner, finds were limited to sherds of glazed and unglazed pottery, the latter suggestive of earlier medieval activity.

Owing to time constraints the text pit was half sectioned north-south and the eastern half removed in spits (105) and (106) to a final depth of 650-7000mm to explore the concentration of stones. These included larger river-rolled cobbles and smaller sub-rounded stones. The stones extended across most of the base of the spit, but had no obvious orientation of coherent structure. There was insufficient evidence to determine whether these were a possible deliberate deposit to form a surface or whether they were a natural inclusion in the glacial till.

Conclusion

The finds from TP6, a range of pottery, glass and pipe stems, with some animal bone are suggestive of nearby domestic activity. Map evidence suggests this was likely in the grounds of Dene House during prior to the early 20th centuries, and predating the acquisition of the land by 15 Pearson's Terrace.

The presence of unglazed pottery may indicate earlier medieval activity, and suggests that this may be an area which would benefit from further investigation.

Results

Spit	Type of deposit	Description	Comments and photos
(100)	Spit	**Soil:** Damp, becoming dryer friable; dark blackish brown; silt **Inclusions:** infrequent small pebbles, infrequent 20mm pebbles; charcoal flecks and pieces **Contamination:** frequent fine and medium roots, worms **How dug:** spade for turf removal, trowel **Finds**: clay pipe stems; animal bone; fe objects x1; pottery sherds; glass fragments **Special finds**: none **Distance from top of context:** 100mm	Hummic soil below turf, consistent with cultivated garden area.  Base of spit (100), looking north
(101)	Spit	**Soil:** Friable; dark blackish brown; gritty sandy-silt (10:90) **Inclusions:** infrequent small sub-rounded stones <5% (30mm); charcoal flecks and pieces <5% **Contamination:** fine grass roots **How dug:** trowel **Finds**: 1 x button; clay pipe stems; glass fragments; Fe items; pottery sherds **Special finds**: None **Distance from top of context:** 200mm	Hummic soil from cultivated  Base of spit (101), looking north
(102)	Spit	**Soil:** Friable, mid blackish brown sandy silt (20:80) **Inclusions:** infrequent sub-angular stones <10% (100-150mm); charcoal pieces **Contamination:** infrequent fine roots, worms **How dug:** trowel **Finds**: clay pipe; pottery sherds; fe object; animal bone fragments; glass fragments **Special finds**: none **Distance from top of context:** 300mm	Increasingly clean fill, moving below deposits of slag  Base of spit (102), looking north
(103)	Spit	**Soil:** Mid orangey brown sandy silt (30:70), lighter with depth **Inclusions:** frequent sub-angular and sub-rounded stones (larger than previous spits); frequent charcoal pieces 25%	Clear change in colour form earlier spits, abundant charcoal, fewer finds

		Contamination: infrequent medium roots; **How dug:** trowel **Finds**: pottery sherds; clay pipe stems; CBM **Special finds**: none **Distance from top of context:** 400mm	 Spit (103) looking north
(104)	Feature	**Soil:** Friable, light brownish orange sandy silt **Inclusions:** sub angular stones 15%; rounded cobbles 3%; frequent charcoal **Contamination:** medium and large tree roots **How dug:** trowel **Finds**: glazed and unglazed pot sherds **Special finds**: none **Distance from top of context:** 500mm	Concentration of stones in south-east  Spit (104) looking east
(105)	Spit	**Soil:** Friable, firmer in places, Mid-orangey grey sandy silt (30-70) **Inclusions:** sub rounded stones <30% (10-160mm); charcoal flakes **Contamination:** fine roots, worms **How dug:** trowel **Finds**: 1 x pottery sherd **Special finds**: none **Distance from top of context:** 600mm in half section	TP6 half sectioned N-S and eastern half removed  Spit (105), looking south
(106)	Spit	**Soil:** Friable, firmer in places, Mid-orangey brown sandy silt (30-70) **Inclusions:** sub rounded stones <30% (10-160mm); charcoal flakes **Contamination:** infrequent fine roots **How dug:** trowel **Finds**: none **Special finds**: none **Distance from top of context:** 650-700mm in half section	TP6 half sectioned N-S and eastern half removed, stone concentration revealed  Spit (105), looking north-east



Figure 5 TP6 under excavation



Figure 6 Recording TP6



Figure 7 TP6 under excavation



Figure 8 The Pearson's Terrace Team