Community Archaeology North CIC (CANCIC): Test Pit CHAP25 TP10

Location of Test Pit: 30 Hallstile Bank, Hexham
Owner:
Date of Excavation: 13-14 September 2025
Area of Excavation: 1m^2
Weather conditions: sunny with showers
Excavators: Ally Dunn, Norman Grant, Evie Grant, Mallory Grant; Emily Davey; finds washing: Jean Blaycock, Mark Benjamin and Neil Irving
Report: JH and the team
GPS location and height above sea-level, mOD: 393750, 564164; 37.5mOD

Introduction
Two test pits (TPs 10 and 11) were excavated in the rear garden of 30 Hallstile Bank (fig. 1). On the 1826 map (fig. 2) Hall Stile is shown with several buildings including what appears to be no. 30, with extensive nurseries in place to the east, and fields to the north and north-west. The buildings on the bank are well-located to take goods out across the bridge to the north. The house is present on the 1860s OS map (fig. 3), with the large Hall Orchard to the east on the ground now covered by the Wentworth car park.

The test pits were located in the slightly raised rear lawn area of the property. TP11 was closer to the rear of the house to the NE and TP10 to the SW closer to the end of the garden.

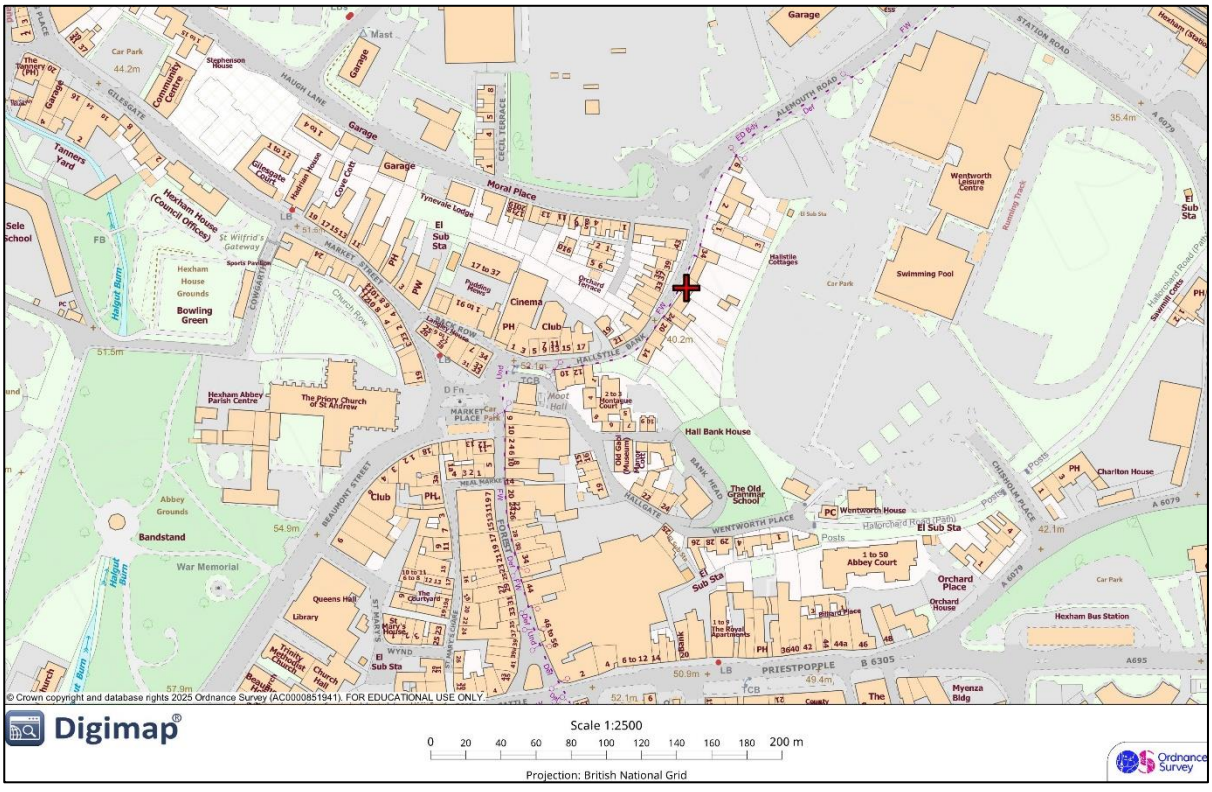


Fig. 1: location of TP10

Excavation Summary
Neither test pit could be excavated fully to natural because of the extensive layers of demolition and house clearance that had built up to the rear of the property. TP10 was excavated to 0.5m depth through the humic, silty

layers containing considerable amounts of building material, glass, toys and bone and pottery. The animal bone and pottery, which were more concentrated in the lower spits, indicated earlier layers of midden or rubbish deposition, probably as far back as the 17C, mixed in with the more recent material. The remains of an outside surface or path at 300mm depth sealed layers with far fewer modern finds. Photographs from the 19070s indicated the level of remodelling and disturbance that occurred at that time at the rear of the Hallstile Bank properties at the lower end of the bank. TP10 in particular reflected those events.

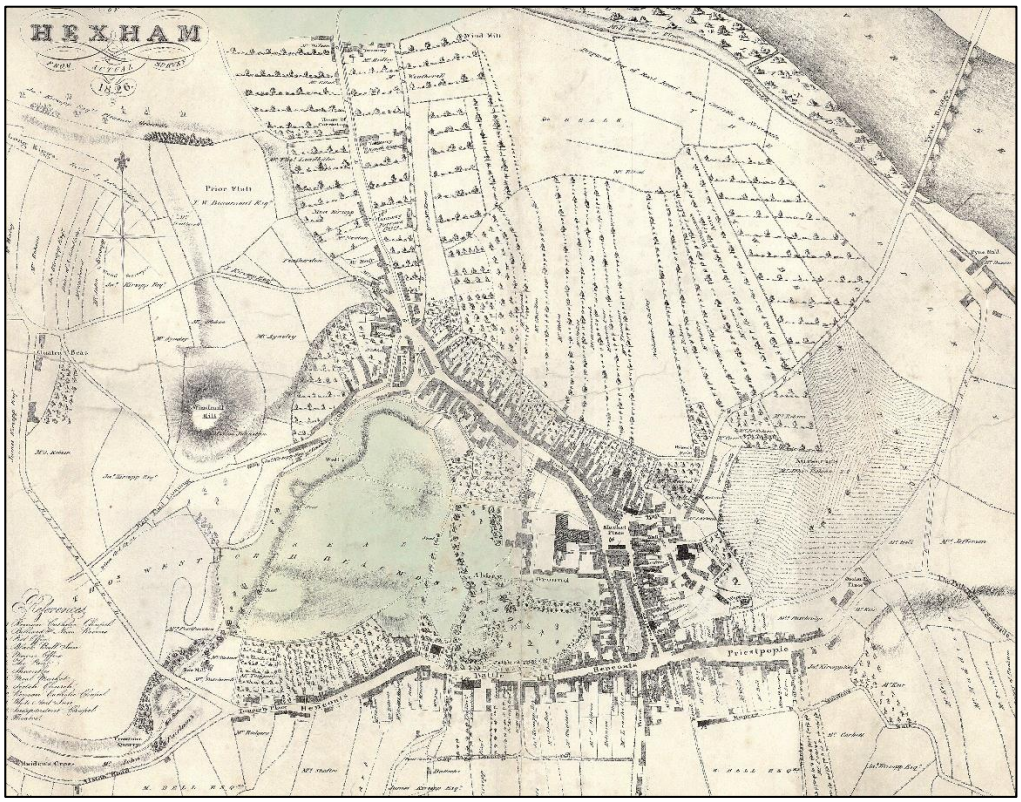
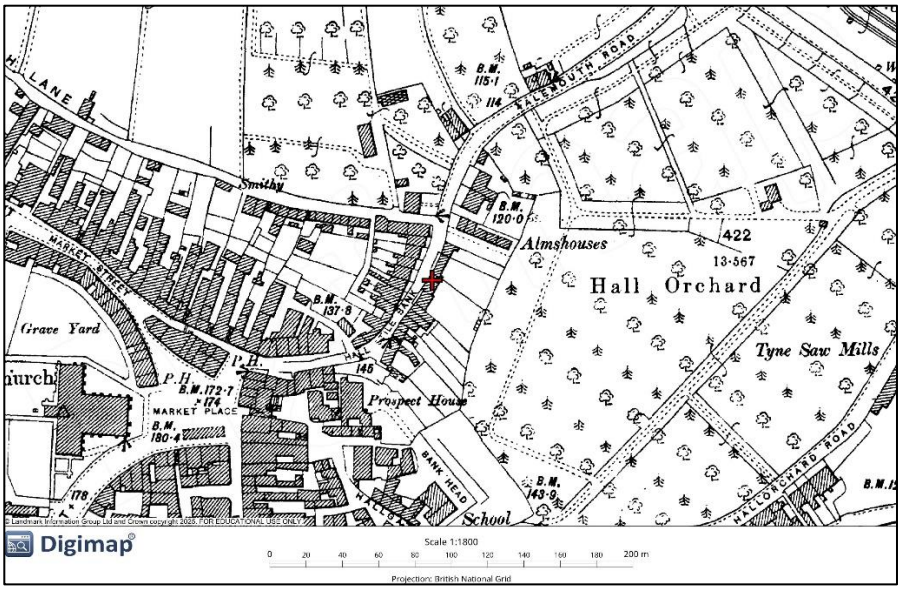


Fig. 2: 1826 map from Hexham extensive urban Survey fig. 7



Hall Stile Bank in 1860

Conclusion

The sherds of 17C and 18C pottery suggested that there had been buildings on the site before the present house is reported to have been constructed. However, the houses in this stretch of Hallstile Bank are clearly multiple

phases of building and the current structure may encompass earlier elements. The deep, disturbed layers relating to demolition, landscaping and house reconfiguration only underlined the longstanding significance of the lower-lying land to the north and east of the centre of Hexham itself, perched up above on the spur. Here industry – especially the tanning industry – agriculture and horticulture have flourished on the flatter close to the river.

Results

Spit	Type of deposit	Description	Comments and photo
(100)	spit	**Soil:** damp friable, mid greyish black humic slightly sandy silt (10:90) **Inclusions:** pebbles and grit; occasional small cobbles c 5%; occasional charcoal: c 1% **Contamination:** roots and worms **Finds:** pottery; CBM; mortar; Fe artefacts incl. nails; flint; bone fragments; wood; thin plastic **Special finds:** none **Distance from top of context:** 0-100mm **How excavated:** trowel Garden topsoil	 **Bottom of (100)**
(101)	spit	**Soil:** dry friable, mid greyish black; sandy silt (10:90) **Inclusions:** more pebbles and grit, 5-10%, unevenly distributed; occasional charcoal **Contamination:** fine roots **Finds:** pottery; CBM incl. brick; mortar and cement; glass; bone; plastic toys; Fe nails; metal spring; wood; fibreglass **Special finds:** none **Distance from top of context:** 100-200mm **How excavated:** trowel More garden topsoil: the SE corner was siltier and contained more of the finds; the wood was in the NE corner	 **Bottom of (101)**
(102)	spit	**Soil:** a little less friable, dry otherwise same as before **Inclusions:** more pebbles and grit: 20% and occasional cobbles **Contamination:** worms and fine roots **Finds:** plastic; metal; CBM incl. brick and tile; electric wires; pottery; glass; bone; nails and mortar and cement **Special finds:** none **Distance from top of context:** 200-300mm **How excavated:** trowel Subsoil still humic but with considerable amount of demolition and house clearance rubbish. Waste shallow buried before landscaping probably later than the 1970s; results of major works to house and surrounds. Stone concentrated in SE corner and mortar across the northern part of the TP; occasional dressed stone fragment	 **Under excavation**
(103)	spit	**Soil:** compact esp. in N, damp, humic mid greyish black with yellowish white mortar lenses, gritty sandy silt (15:85) **Inclusions:** pebbles and grit: 15-20% unevenly distributed; some cobbles; some charcoal **Contamination:** roots and worms (lots) **Finds:** slate; glass; pottery; mortar; wood **Special finds:** none **Distance from top of context:** 300-400mm	

		How excavated: trowel; spades and mattocks A layer of mortar was found in the north of the TP at 300mm: possible old surface/path? Then less modern material; small sherds of domestic pottery	**Bottom of (103)**
(104)	spit	**Soil:** compact black, very humic slightly sandy silt (5:95) **Inclusions:** pebbles and grit: c 10% **Contamination:** none **Finds:** glass; pottery; clay pipe fragment; nails; wool; oyster shell **Special finds:** **Distance from top of context:** 400-500mm **How excavated:** trowel The TP was half-sectioned at this level north-south with the western half being excavated to 500mm. The mortar layer in the spit above marked a notable change with much less modern material and much less demolition/building waste. The deposits are clearly very deep in this area of Hexham, which is partly due to the industrial, character of many of the buildings and activity until relatively recently	  **End of excavation**



TP10 under excavation




Backfilling TP10



TP10 and TP11 teams