Community Archaeology North CIC (CANCIC): Test Pit CHAP TP1

Location of Test Pit: Back garden of Kirkstyle, South Park, Hexham
Owner:
Date of Excavation: Sat 19th July 2025 and Sun 20th July 2025
Area of Excavation: 1.0m x 1.0m
Weather conditions: Overcast, with heavy rain from 1400 (Sat). Bright, sunny intervals (Sun).
Excavators: Sara Wyatt (Sat only); Angela Speed, Kath Whitfield, Matt Whitfield, Kelly Marshall, William Marshall, Lois Whitelaw (metal detection),
Report: Malcolm Thomas
GPS location and height above sea-level, mOD: centroid: 393844, 563455; 83.25mOD

Introduction
Kirkstyle is a large semi-detached house. It doesn't appear on the 1st series OS map of 1860-61(1) and does appear on the 2nd series map of 1894-97(1). Since the excavation, the owners have seen a document owned by thier neighbours that confirms the house was built in 1879. They have also discovered that Kirkstyle was home to the Charlesworth family for a period in the 20th Century and notably to Dorothy Charlesworth(2). Dorothy was a career archaeologist who served as (the only female) Inspector of Ancient Monuments, was an expert on ancient glass(3) and directed excavations including one in Carlisle that fixed the exact location of *Luguvalium* Roman Fort for the first time(4).

South Park is a low density residential cul-de-sac. It turns NE off a road running uphill to the SE out of Hexham, called "Gallows Hill Rd.". There appears to be no definite historical evidence of a location for any gallows. The 1890s map shows a quarry in Gallowshill Wood, lacking on the 1860-61 map, implying a late Victorian date for its operation. It lies c. 300m from the test pit and seems unlikely to be relevant to the archaeology.

The 1st series OS map shows the land now comprising South Park, and to the north, being set out as fields. Below the 1st and 2nd series OS 6-inch maps with Kirkstyle outlined in red.

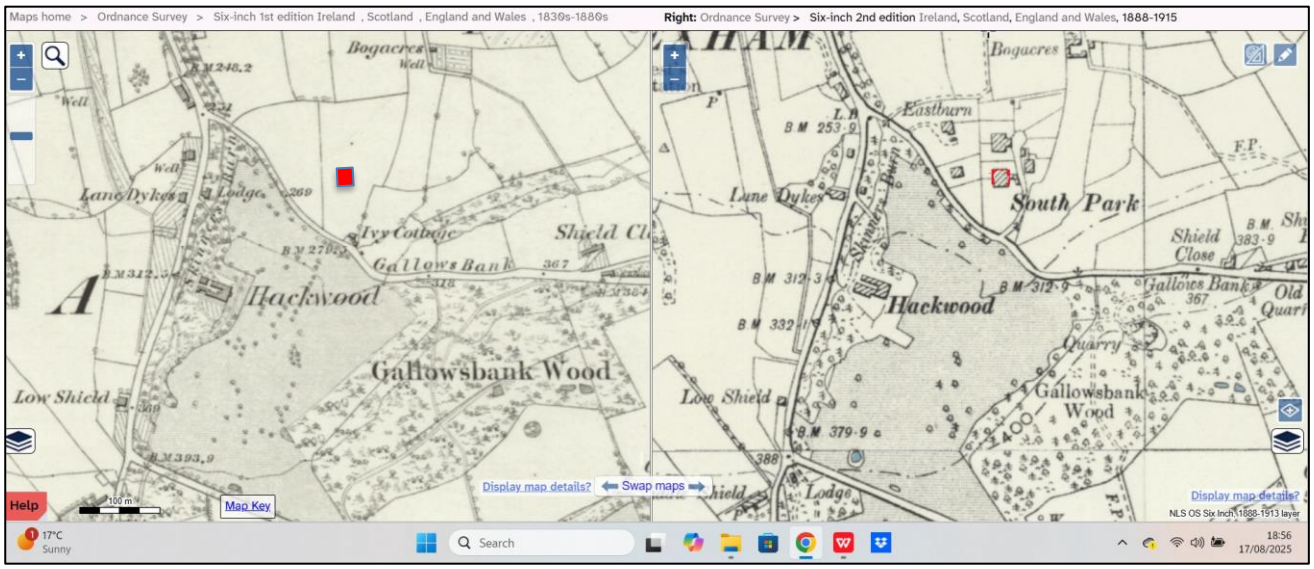


Fig. 1: OS 6-inch maps. Left - Series 1 (1860-61). Right - Series 2 (1894-97)

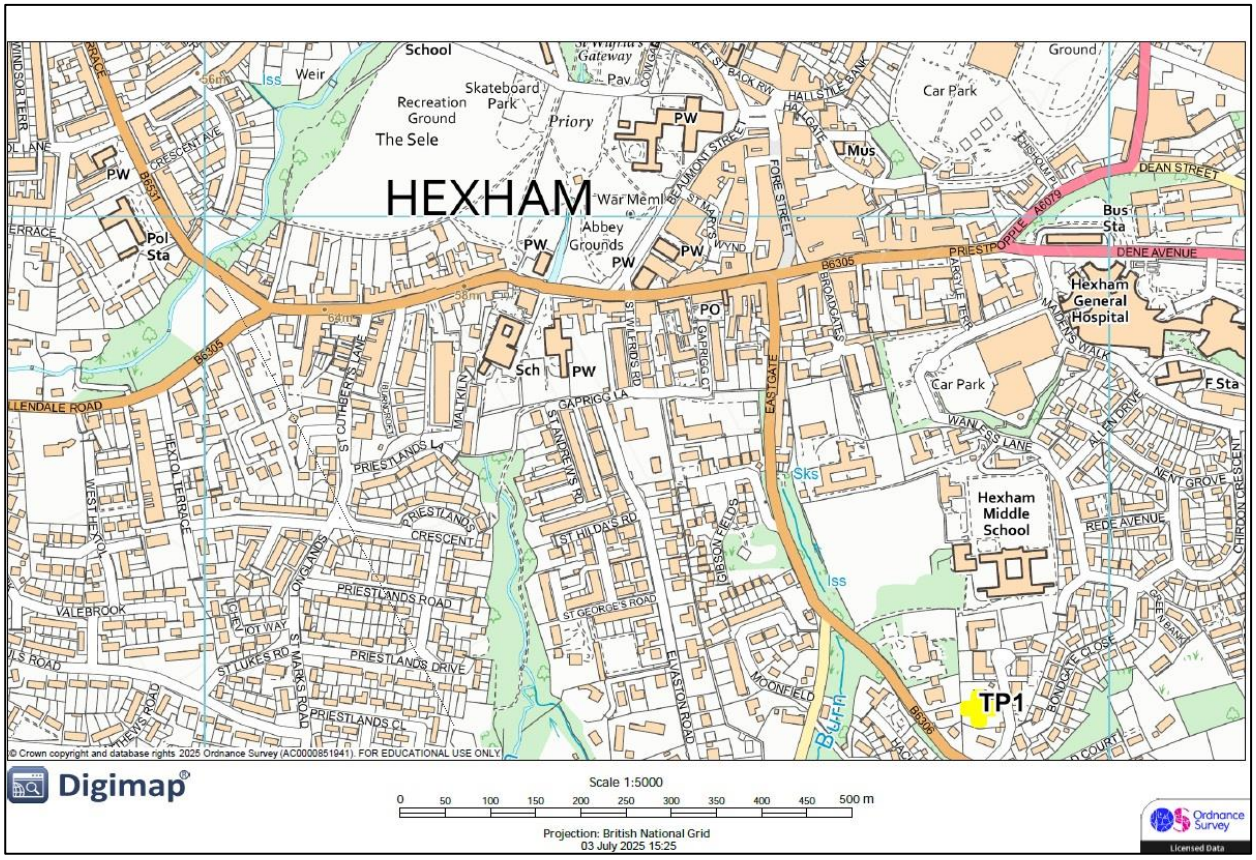


Fig. 2: location of TP1

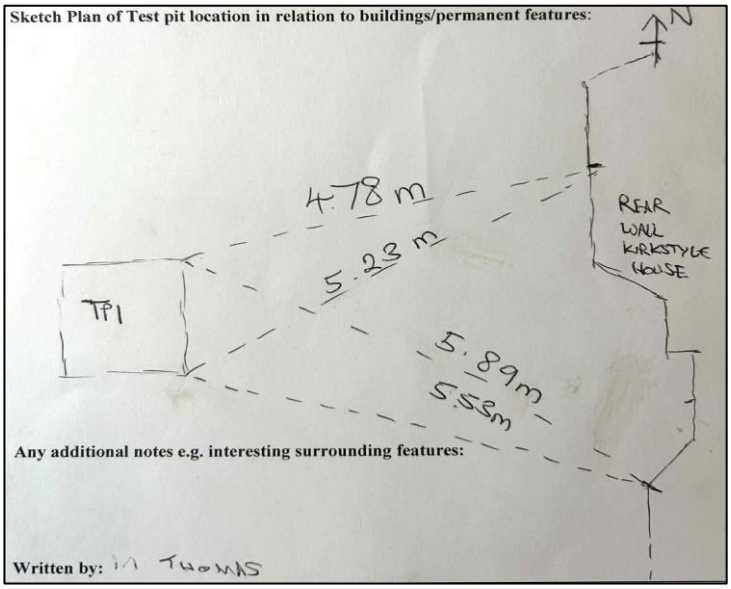


Fig. 3: Measured sketch of TP1 in the garden of Kirkstyle

Excavation Summary

The test pit was de-turfed, cleaned up and initially dug in 100mm spits. At the bottom of spit 101 a clay layer was encountered (160-200mm). This was investigated with a half-section initially, then complete removal of spit 102. On removal of spit 103 it was concluded that this material

represented natural geology, likely glacial till. After a sondage (104) reinforced this interpretation, excavation was terminated. All four final sections were sketched.

All soil was sieved. Finds were frequent in spits 100 and 101, petering out as we excavated the clay layer (102 and 103). They were washed on site and seemed largely consistent with a late Victorian date. Pottery sherds, glass shards and clay pipe fragments were the main classes of find. One sherd of pottery was probably medieval in date. The garden was metal detected.

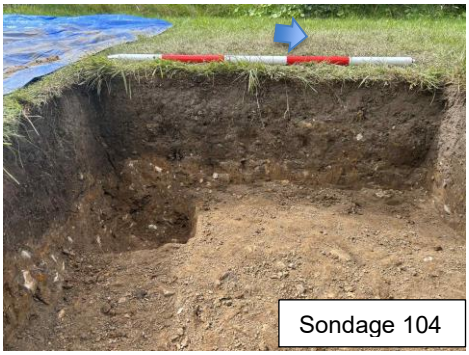
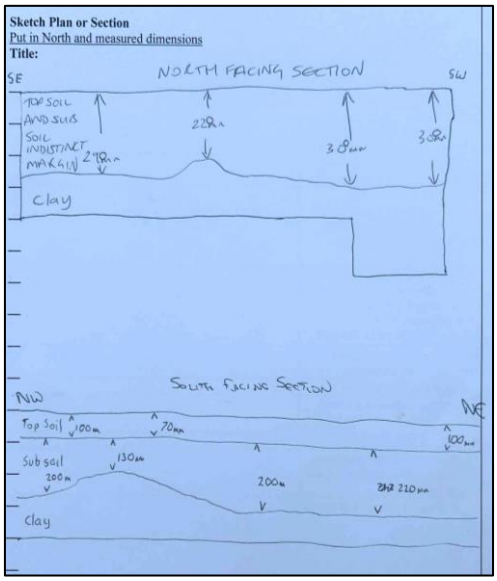
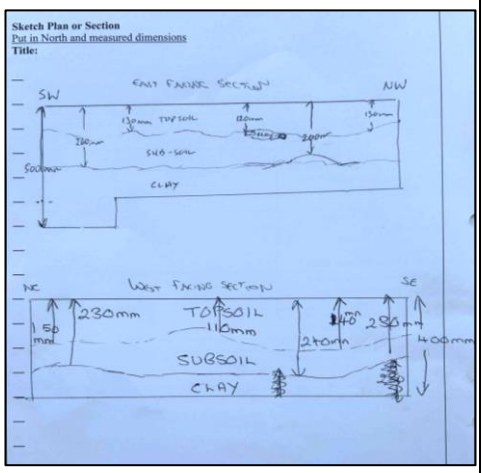
Conclusion

The range and age of the finds were consistent with a late Victorian date. Given the nature of the finds; the (expected) lack of archaeological features and the relatively shallow depth at which a geological stratum was encountered, one plausible scenario is that the majority of finds represented discards from the time of the construction of the property (late 1870s) We could picture workmen standing on site, taking refreshments and smoking their clay pipes!

Results

Spit	Type of deposit	Description	Comments and photo
(100)	spit	**Soil:** Loose/friable; mid greyish brown; sandy silt 45:55 **Inclusions:** Pebbles 1-2%, typically 15-20mm diameter, subangular. Occasional coal. **Contamination:** Worms; grass roots - thin and mostly in uppermost portion **Finds:** Pottery (14 sherds); Glass (6 shards); CBM x 1; Mortar x 2; Fe object x 1 **Special finds:** Nil **Distance from top of context:** 100-120mm **How excavated:** De-turfed with spades, cleaned with trowels and hand-shovels	Turf and topsoil 
(101)	spit	**Soil:** Loose/friable; mid greyish brown; sandy silt 45:55 with 2 “fist sized” lumps of clay **Inclusions:** 5-10% stones, typically sub-angular ranging 45x50mm - 60x70mm Coal 1% - more frequent than in (100) **Contamination:** A few rootlets; a few worms **Finds:** Pottery (19 sherds); Slate (2 shards); Glass (6 shards); Clay pipe fragments (6); Bone (1); Fe object; CBM; Slag **Special finds:** Nil **Distance from top of context:** 160-200mm **How excavated:** Trowels and hand shovels	Sub-soil; indistinct horizon c topsoil 
(102) **South half**	Half spit	**Soil:** Firm; mid greyish orange; clay 100% **Inclusions:** 20% stones, sub-angular to rounded	Clay layer. Initial impression possibly redeposited - final interpretation = glacial till

		Coal 2% **Contamination:** V rare roots only **Finds:** Pottery; Glass; Slate shards; Fe objects; teeth; CBM; clay pipe fragments **Special finds:** Nil **Distance from top of context:** 300mm **How excavated:** Trowels; mini mattock; hand shovels	
(102) **North half**	Half spit	**Soil:** Very firm; mid greyish brown; clay 100% **Inclusions:** 15% stones; mostly sub-angular with few rounded pebbles Coal - rare but more than (100) & (101) **Contamination:** Frog, slug, some fine grass roots **Finds:** Pottery; slate shards; glass; clay pipe fragments; CBM; tooth x1; Fe objects **Special finds:** Nil **Distance from top of context:** 290-300mm **How excavated:** Trowels; mini mattock; hand shovels	Clay layer. Initial impression possibly redeposited - final interpretation = glacial till 
(103)	spit	**Soil:** Very firm; brownish orange; clay 100% **Inclusions:** 40% sub-rounded pebbles typical diameter 15mm 20% larger pebbles/cobbles of a range 50mm x 60mm to 80mm x 120mm Coal - one single fragment **Contamination:** NO active roots; more worms than higher levels **Finds:** Pottery (1 sherd); CBM (3 fragments); Slate (1 shard) **Special finds:** Nil **Distance from top of context:** 390-400mm **How excavated:** Mini mattock; spade; trowels; hand shovels	Same clay layer, now clearly glacial till ("Boulder clay") NB change in nature of inclusions 
(104)	Sond	**Soil:** Very firm; brownish orange; clay 100%	The sondage confirmed the clay

S'dage	-age	**Inclusions:** 40% sub-rounded pebbles typcial diameter = 15mm 20% larger pebbles/cobbles of a range 50mm x 60mm to 80mm x 120mm **Contamination:** Rare worms **Finds:** None **Special finds:** Nil **Distance from top of context:** not measured - by eye estimate c. 440mm **Dimensions:** 280mm N-S; 250mm E-W **How excavated:** Mini mattock; spade; trowels; hand shovels	was a geological layer of glacial till  Sondage 104
End	Secti-ons	End excavation sketch of N and S facing sections  	End excavation sketch of E and W facing sections 

Metal detection in garden

Lois Whitelaw metal detected the whole garden with the following finds (all considered C20): Flat lead strips (2); tent peg (1); metal bangle (1980s?) (1); small padlock (pre-1990?); wire (1); machined metal disc c 2 holes (1); belt buckle c 3-leaf clover design (1); metal bottle top (1)

Personnel



Saturday volunteers



Sunday volunteers



Finds washing

Bibliography

1. https://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/#zoom=5.0&lat=56.00000&lon=-4.00000&layers=6&b=ESRIWorld&o=100 accessed 01 Sep 2025
2. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dorothy_Charlesworth#cite_note-14 accessed 30 Aug 2025
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4. Charlesworth, D. “Roman Carlisle”; *Archaeological Journal;* 135 (1978); 115–37.