

PRELIMINARY RESULTS AND ANALYSIS - TEST PIT EXCAVATION 8-12 OCT 21

1. **Site Details.** Fane Road Allotments cover an area of almost 9 acres, divided into approximately 100 plots. An area in the northeast of the allotments is, in the main, uncultivated.

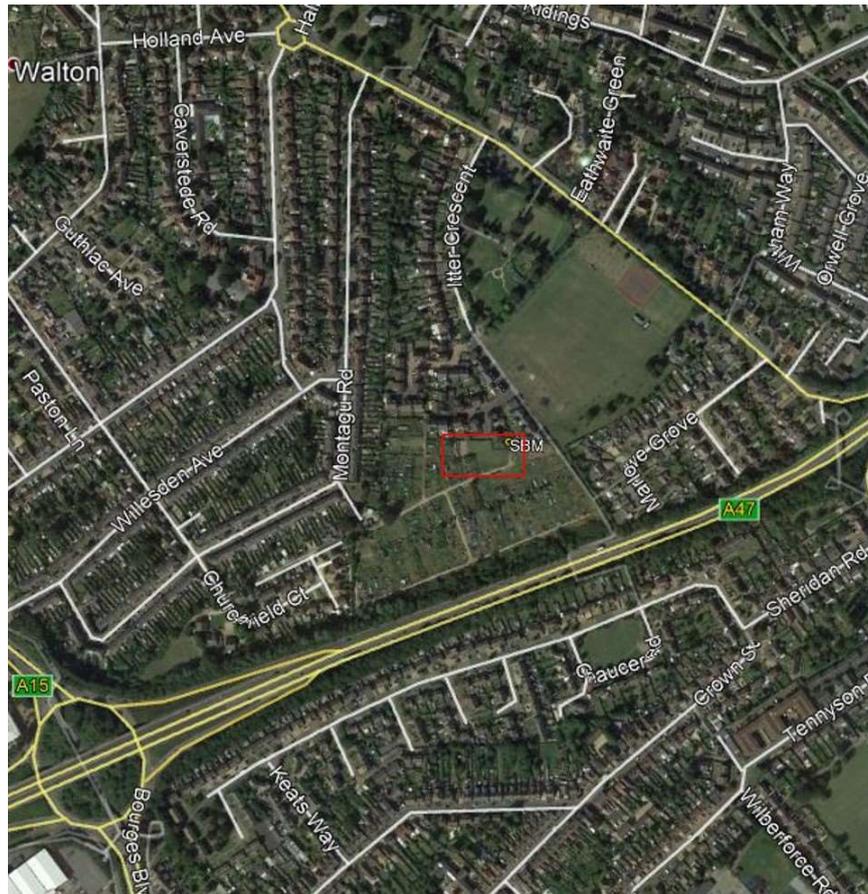


Figure 1 - Site Location

2. **Land Use.** Domestic cultivation for the growing of home produce and small scale livestock husbandry.

3. **Historical Background.** The boundaries of the two fields that were to become Fane Road allotments are historic and pre-date 1885. The land was agricultural, with the indication of two due ponds on OS maps from 1885 until at least 1955 suggesting pasture rather than arable. Between 1955 and 1993 the area was converted to allotment gardens. In 2005 the northern third of the allotments was identified for housing development which received planning approval in 2011 (*Peterborough Telegraph*, 2011). As a consequence, and in advance of the residential construction, archaeological evaluation and excavation was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology East (OA East) in 2011 and 2012 which revealed evidence of both Iron Age settlement and a Roman villa. This resulted in a community excavation coordinated by OA East undertaken in May - Jun 2014 (Fairbairn, 2015: 8). A series of test pit excavations was also undertaken by an OA

East outreach programme in 2012 - 2015, and subsequently by Fane Road Archaeology Group (FRAG) in 2016, within the bounds of the surviving allotments.

4. The site is known to have formed part of, or been otherwise associated with, the late Iron Age site previously identified to the immediate north and the subsequent Romano-British villa that replaced it (Fairbairn, 2015: 13).

5. **Aims and Objectives.** Aims and objectives were two-fold. Firstly, to determine the east and north extents of the wall revealed in test pit 1 of the May 19 excavation and whether there are any returns (north or south) and/or any intermediate wall junctions. Secondly, attempt to locate the east Iron-Age boundary ditch revealed by the 2012 commercial excavation to extend into the allotments east of the track that terminates on the north fence-line.

6. **Method.** Three 3m x 2m test pits were marked out as indicated in Figure 2. Test pits were sequentially numbered following on from the 2019 season (Hill and Redgate, 2020: 7). Test pit 3 was aligned east-west, test pit 4 was aligned north-south and test pit 5 was also aligned east-west.



Figure 2 - Test Pit Locations

7. Results.

a. **Test Pit 3.** Wall collapse context [3003] was exposed at the north wall of the test pit; at the west end was a probable stone door hinge socket. A small group of wall collapse stones context [3002], in herringbone overlap, was exposed at the west wall of the test pit. Compacted clay surfaces were revealed in the northwest corner context [3006] - associated with the probable hinge socket, in the northeast corner context [3005], and in the southeast corner context towards the centre of the east wall of the test pit [3004]. Finds were predominantly Romano-British CBM and pottery sherds. A significant find was a small copper/copper-alloy object that appears to be an adornment rather than a fastener; approximately 2cm in diameter, with possible patterning on the convex surface, with fixing point (detached but in the concave 'bowl').



Figure 3 - Test Pit 3 looking north; wall collapse [3003] with probable hinge at top of image.

b. **Test Pit 4.** The north end revealed a pit context [4002] previously excavated in the 2014 community excavation. Immediately east of this was a band of building rubble (dressed stone and CBM) context [4004] that was mistakenly identified as a wall in the 2014 community excavation. Another pit context [4003] was also excavated east of the building rubble and up to the east wall of the test pit. Removal of the band of building rubble revealed a single cut context [4001], rather than two pits. A circular feature context [4005] was revealed in the centre of the test pit with a higher concentration of limestone context [4006] than the surrounding natural cornbrash. The remainder of the test pit was excavated to the natural cornbrash, with no other archaeological features noted. Other than the aforementioned building rubble, there were few other finds of note.



Figure 4 - Test Pit 4 looking west; the single cut is at right of image.

c. **Test Pit 5.** The south 1m width only was excavated, which came down to the natural cornbrash. Finds were minimal, although there were several exceptional sharp edged sherds of Nene Valley Colour Coated ware that were probably from the same vessel.

8. Analysis.

a. **Test Pit 3.** The wall collapse [3003] is on a direct alignment with the east-west wall revealed in test-pit 1 during the 2019 season and is considered to be an eastward continuation of that wall. The probable stone door hinge socket is highly suggestive of a doorway between the two sections of wall. The compacted clay surfaces [3003], [3004] and [3005] were at a similar level suggesting an interior floor surface; the discolouration in various shades of mid- to dark-orangey and blackening indicates they were exposed to high heat and/or fire.

b. **Test Pit 4.** The linear cut [4001] along the north wall of the test-pit redefines the interpretation of context 107 from the 2014 community excavation. The nature of this east-west cut is indeterminate, although, as it extends beyond the test-pit in both directions, a robbed-out wall should not be discounted. Whether the circular feature [4005] and [4006] was naturally occurring, a packed natural depression, or a deliberate cut/pit with packing is indeterminate.

c. **Test Pit 5.** No archaeological features were revealed, suggesting that the Iron Age boundary ditch, if it does extend south into the allotments, does so further to the east.

9. **Summary.** This proved to be another successful excavation for FRAG. The aim of determining an eastward continuation of the east-west wall in test pit 1 of the 2019 excavation was achieved in test pit 3. Evidence of a north-south wall was not achieved in test pit 4 (if there is a north-south wall, it is suspected to lay underneath the gooseberry bushes and fruit trees that form the east boundary of the adjacent allotment); however, a feature from the 2014 community excavation was redefined. Evidence of the Iron Age boundary ditch was also not achieved in test pit 5, which suggests, that if it does extend into the allotments, it does so further to the east of test pit 5. The excavation provided a field archaeology experience to thirteen members of FRAG; most were regular participants, with five members participating for the first time. The excavation also hosted twelve children and six leaders from the Fenland Young Archaeologists Club (YAC) on the Saturday afternoon who, thanks to the continued practice of carrying out a set-up day

prior to the programmed excavation days, enabled them to excavate in archaeological contexts. The YAC children were also given basic excavation instruction and participated in finds cleaning. Much interest was also expressed by a number of allotment holders. Overall, the excavation was a rewarding few days for all those who participated.

Bibliography

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