

Community Archaeological Excavation

Whitburn

South Tyneside



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August 2022

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Summary

This report describes the methodology and results of a community archaeological excavation led by Tees Archaeology at Whitburn, South Tyneside. The site is centred on National Grid Reference (NZ 406 618). The fieldwork was undertaken between 8th and 12th August 2022 as part of the Heritage Lottery Funded, Seascape, Tyne to Tees, Shores and Seas project.

The project involved test pits in four gardens with a larger trench in the Rookery. The test pits recovered evidence of the 19th century use of the properties, but were unable to go to sufficient depth to recover medieval material.

The trench in the Rookery identified the remains of a medieval long house with a drain. This was sited on a platform significantly higher than the land to the south and indicated that medieval buildings were sited along the frontage in the area of the present front wall to the Rookery. The medieval deposits were at a significant depth and this has resulted in a good level of preservation.

The archives and finds are currently held by Tees Archaeology under the site code of WBV22.

Acknowledgements

Tees Archaeology would like to thank all of the twenty volunteers who took part the project and made it such a success. The test pits could not have taken place without the willing permission of the landowners and we would like to thank Miles Atkinson, Dorothy and Allen Alder, Bill Daniels and Mr Oliver for making us welcome. We would also like to thank John Shield and the other joint owners of the Rookery for giving permission for the excavation to take place and to John Shield thanks also for allowing us to use his shed to store tools and facilitating the use of the Church vestry as a base.

The project was part of the Seascape, Tyne to Tees Shores to Seas project, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and we would like to thank Karen Daghish, Seascape Project Manager and Vicky Ward, Seascape Volunteer Co-ordinator for their help and support. Sophie Laidler of the Tyne and Wear Historic Environment Record kindly provided HER information and support.

1. Introduction

A community archaeology project was carried out in Whitburn, North Tyneside between the 8th and 12th August 2022 as part of the Heritage Lottery funded Seascape; Tyne to Tees Shores to Seas Project. The project was led by Robin Daniels of Tees Archaeology, helped by Janice Adams and Lauren Walker, and involved twenty two volunteers from Whitburn and the region.

The village of Whitburn as it stands today is in origin a medieval planned village set out sometime after the Norman Conquest of the north of England and probably dates to the period between 1100 and 1150 AD when many such villages were established.

The programme of work was designed to investigate the medieval and later history of the village through the excavation of 1 metre square test pits in people's gardens and through the excavation of a larger trench in the Rookery, an area of overgrown woodland in the heart of the village.

2. Location and Geology

The sites are located in the village of Whitburn (NZ 406 618) within back gardens and on the frontage of the medieval village at the Rookery (Figures 1 & 2). The superficial deposits comprise glacial sand and gravels which overlie Roker Dolomite.

The southern side of the village lies at 25m above sea level, however the north side is significantly higher at 32m OD.

Whitburn is a two row settlement at its core, but from the 19th century it has expanded to the north and east. This project was focussed on its historic two row core.

3. Historical Background

There have been finds of prehistoric and Roman material in the area of the village and its fields, however the village itself is of medieval origin (Tyne & Wear (TW henceforth) HER No 108). The layout of the settlement with two rows of properties either side of the village green (TW HER No 12506) is typical of those planned by the Normans in the 12th century following their subjugation of the north of England. In 1380, 30 properties are recorded for the village.

The communal activities of the village would have focussed on the green and Cross House (TW HER NO 12507) which was probably constructed on the site of communal facilities such as a pound and bakehouse. It is in the vicinity of a well on the green (TW HER No 9503) that would have been a major source of water for the villagers. Apart from the plan form of the village, the only major medieval survival is the Parish Church (TW HER No 882). The present building is probably of early 13th century date with later alterations and its position to the rear of the village is slightly unusual.

The church has a number of medieval grave slabs built into its exterior on the south and

east corners (TW HER No 12212) and there is a stone coffin (TW HER No 12213) of probable medieval date just outside the south wall. The church is also notable in having two medieval bells (TW HER NO 12214) in a medieval frame, a rare survival. There is also a further grave slab of disputed date in the tower (TW HER No 12215) and this could date from the 10th to the 12th century.

The village would have sat in the middle of its fields and there are documentary records of south, east and west fields (TW HER No 887). It is known that there was medieval ridge and furrow around the village but much of this has been lost to development and other activity.

In the 14th century, a combination of poor harvests, the plague and Scottish raids had a major impact on the economy of the area and many settlements were partially or fully deserted. Population loss in the area was probably in the vicinity of 60% and more.

In the post-medieval period the village was dominated by Whitburn Hall, sited on the south side of the green (TW HER No 8470). The construction of this in the 17th century occupied the former position of a number of medieval farmsteads. The hall had outbuildings of various types, gardens and orchards as part of the extensive complex and the Tithe Barn (TW HER No 881) was sited in this area as was the large Rectory of the late 19th century.

The current housing in the village dates from the 18th century onwards and the village expanded considerably to the north and later to the east as industrial activity developed in the surrounding area.

4. Aims and Objectives

There were three primary aims of the project:-

- To better understand the medieval and later history of the village and whether it reduced in size by the end of the medieval period.

- To determine if there were significant archaeological remains at the Rookery

- To engage local people and volunteers with the project

The results of the project will form part of a permanent archive of the site. The archive will be deposited with Tyne and Wear Museum Service under the site code WBV22.

5. Methodology

Five trenches were excavated by hand in the locations shown in Figure 2. These comprised four 1m square test pits in gardens and Trench A which measured 8.5m x 1.5m. The four test pits were each excavated in 100mm spits and recorded using the University of Cambridge 'Access Archaeology' recording pro forma.

Trench A was sited in the 'Rookery' and excavated and recorded in the normal way using the methodology set out in Tees Archaeology field work recording manual. Sections within each trench were drawn at a scale of 1:10 or 1:20 as appropriate and plans were drawn at a scale of 1:20.

Deposits in Trench A were recorded using pro forma context recording sheets. A photographic record of the investigations was compiled using digital cameras. All photographs include a graduated metric scale. The photographic record forms part of the project archive. A temporary benchmark was established on the site using established survey information.

6. Results

6.1 Test Pits by Lauren Walker (Figure 2)

The excavation of four test pits was carried out in Whitburn, from 8th - 12th August 2022. All of the test pits were located in gardens to either side of Front Street, an area that would have been at the centre of the medieval village. The test pits were opened by hand in hot and dry conditions, and 2-3 volunteers were assigned to each trench.

Test Pit 1 (Figure 2 - 4)

Test pit 1 was located to the front of 20 Front Street, Whitburn – offset from the gatekeeper’s house in the grounds of the old Whitburn Hall. This trench was situated relatively close to the current residential buildings which appear to date from the mid-19th century, and thus the pit was expected to produce a range of Victorian and modern domestic waste.

Stratigraphy:

In TP1, the underlying natural stratigraphy (06) was a fine and compacted sand – exposed at a depth of 0.60m. Above this, the layer was characterised by a dark brown/black silt which continued through the overlying context (05). It is significant that the finds from this layer (06) are broadly consistent with the overlying (05), particularly in terms of pottery and several of the sherds from these layers were from the same pot.

Context (05) was excavated at a depth of 0.40m – 0.50m and comprised of a dark brown/black silt with frequent stone inclusions. This layer produced the highest number of pot sherds in TP1. It is worth noting that the majority of the fragments recovered from (05) were large and many fit together, suggesting that the trench disturbed a primary context. Sherds from at least 5 different pots of 19th century date were found including glazed stone and earthenware.

Context (04) was excavated at a depth of 0.30m – 0.40m and was different in terms of colour and composition: the bulk of the soil removed from (04) was a lighter and more finely grained silty sand than that of the underlying layers, though patches of darker brown/black silt and yellow sand were apparent in plan. In particular, a small area of blackened soil in the northeast corner may represent a burning event and this may link to the industrial waste recovered from the overlying context (03). Layer (04) produced relatively few finds. Five fragments of CBM, a periwinkle shell, and a flat, arrow shaped piece of wrought iron which appears to be a bracket, hinge, or a finial associated with an iron fence or railings.

Context (03) was assigned to the depth of 0.20m – 0.30m and comprised a mid-brown and in parts orange, compacted silty clay. The composition of the deposit included frequent and irregular small stone inclusions – as well as larger chunks of mortar, CBM, and industrial waste. It is also worth noting that the areas of blackened earth present in the underlying layer (04) were also present in the lower portion of context (03).

Context (02) was excavated at a depth of 0.10m – 0.20m and was a compacted orange/brown silty clay with frequent stone and limestone inclusions. This level had heavy root damage and produced a range of finds which date from the late 19th – early 20th century.

Context (01) was excavated at a depth of 0.0m – 0.10m and encompassed the modern turf line atop a mid-brown loamy soil.

Finds:

The finds are set out below by context. This is, followed by a more detailed analysis of the pottery recovered – including the dating, quantification, and set out by total number of fabric type in the trench. The description of each fabric type is set out at the end of the test pit section.

Context	Depth (meters)	Pot	CBM	Glass	Metal	Bone	Other
01	0.0 – 0.10	7	-	6	-	-	-
02	0.10 – 0.20	24	7	15	3 (Fe)	-	4 clay pipe fragments 7 shell fragments 1 flint 1 slag
03	0.20 – 0.30	4	11	-	1 (Fe)	-	1 mussel shell 5 slags 1 mortar 1 slate
04	0.30 – 0.40	-	5	-	1 (Fe)	-	1 winkle shell
05	0.40 – 0.50	35 (mainly large sherds)	14	-	1 (Fe)	-	2 clay pipe fragments 4 limpet shell fragments
06	0.50 – 0.60	11	2	-	-	3	1 shell

Table 1: Test Pit 1, finds by context

Fabric	Date (Century)	Sherds	Sherd %	Vessels	Vessels %
1	19 th	33	41.8	7	18.4
2	Post Med	3	3.8	3	7.9

Fabric	Date (Century)	Sherds	Sherd %	Vessels	Vessels %
4	17/18 th	1	1.2	1	2.6
5	19 th	2	2.6	2	5.3
6	18 -20 th	10	12.6	8	21
7	Late 18 th – Early 20 th	3	3.8	3	7.9
9	18 -20 th	20	25.3	9	23.7
10	19 th	5	6.3	3	7.9
11	19/20 th	2	2.6	2	5.3
	Totals	79	100	38	100

Table 2: Pottery by fabric type

The finds are indicative of general domestic activity but it is worth noting the presence of seashells, which were undoubtedly used for food.

The pottery indicates activity from at least the mid to late 18th century and may hint at activity extending into the 17th century. There is, however, nothing to indicate medieval activity although these levels may not have been reached in the test pit.

The most common type of pottery encountered was the typical kitchen earthenwares of the 19th century (fabric 1), the next most common were the creamwares of the 19th century (fabrics 9 and 10). There are about equal number of kitchen and table wares and this is typical of domestic usage of the 19th century.

General Discussion

The layers suggested that the site was in the proximity of late 18th/19th century activity involving burning, although this was probably domestic rather than industrial in character.

Test Pit 2 (Figures 2 & 5)

Test pit 2 was located to the rear of 34 Front Street, Whitburn. This trench was set back considerably from the present dwellings, adjacent to old outhouses and a coal shed. Consequently, material associated with TP2 is likely to reflect different activities and different levels of activity than can be observed in trenches that are closer to domestic areas.

Stratigraphy:

Due to time constraints, it was not possible to excavate to natural in TP2. The earliest exposed layer (05) was at a depth of 0.50m and included an area of stones and mortar, which represents the remains of a wall. To the west of this line of stones was a layer of ash and cinder, while to the east there was a dark brown compacted silty sand. The owner indicated that there had been a coal shed in this area and the trench seems to have exposed part of this.

Context (04) was excavated at a depth of 0.30m – 0.40m and comprised a dark brown soil with limestone inclusions (<10%). The base of the pit at 0.40m featured a pronounced area of ash within a series of large stones to the north and east. This feature may be

linked to some of the larger stones noted in the underlying layer (05) and when taken alongside the concentrations of ash observed, it provides indisputable evidence for in situ burning

Context (03) was excavated at a depth of 0.20m – 0.30m and the composition was broadly comparable to that of the underlying layer (04) in that the soil was a friable dark brown with poorly sorted stone and limestone inclusions (<10%). Context (03) also produced a number of pot and glass fragments which are largely diagnostic of a late 19th – early 20th century date.

Context (02) was assigned to the spit below the modern turf line at a depth of 0.10m – 0.20m and comprised a dark brown soil with infrequent stone and limestone inclusions. The pottery recovered from context (02) was also of the same type as the underlying layer (03).

The uppermost and most recent layer excavated was the turf line (0.0m – 0.10m) (01).

Finds:

The finds are set out below by context, followed by the pottery set out by total number of fabric type in the trench. The description of each fabric type is set out at the end of the test pit section.

Context	Depth (meters)	Pottery	CBM	Glass	Metal	Bone	Other
01	0.0 – 0.10	2	-	1	-	-	-
02	0.10 – 0.20	11	1	3	-	-	-
03	0.20 – 0.30	7	2	5	3 (2 Fe & 1 Pb)	-	-
04	0.30 – 0.40	20	2	2	-	1 (animal tooth)	2 clay pipe fragments 1 shell
05	0.40 – 0.50	27	4	7	1 (Fe)	-	3 clay pipe fragments 1 burnt flint 3 slags 2 burnt slate

Table 3: Test Pit 2, finds by context

Fabric	Date (Century)	Sherds	Sherd %	Vessels	Vessels %
1	19th	6	9.4	6	10.5
3	20th	1	1.6	1	1.8
5	19th	3	4.6	3	5.3
6	18-20th	27	42.2	22	38.4
7	Late 18 th – Early 20th	1	1.6	1	1.8

Fabric	Date (Century)	Sherds	Sherd %	Vessels	Vessels %
8	19/20th	1	1.6	1	1.8
9	18 - 20th	21	32.7	19	33.3
10	19th	1	1.6	1	1.8
11	19/20th	2	3.1	2	3.5
12	14 – 16 th	1	1.6	1	1.8
	Totals	64	100	57	100

Table 4: Pottery by fabric type

The finds are indicative of general domestic activity dating from the 19th and 20th centuries. There is a single sherd indicating activity in the 14th century or later. This may indicate that there are medieval deposits at a deeper level.

The most common type of pottery encountered was the 19th century creamwares (fabrics 6 and 9) and while kitchen ware (fabric 1) was present it was outnumbered by the nicer pottery.

General Discussion

This test pit seems to have found the site of a former coal shed of probable 19th century date and it is clear that deposits continue beyond this point.

Test Pit 3 (Figures 2 & 6)

Test pit 3 was located to the rear of 3A Orchard Gardens, Whitburn. As with test pit 2 this was well to the rear of the medieval properties in an area that has had infill buildings in the post war period. According to the owner there was probably a structure in this location in the 1960s and this was demolished and the area landscaped.

Stratigraphy:

Due to time constraints, it was not possible to excavate to the underlying natural soil in TP3. The earliest exposed layer (05) was at a depth of 0.50m and included a number of concrete slabs which place the deposit firmly within the 20th century. The colour and composition of the soil was a dark brown silty sand with frequent stone and coal inclusions.

Context (04) was excavated at a depth of 0.30m – 0.40m and comprised largely of a dark brown silty sand. The inclusions at this level were again a combination of concrete, small stones, and coal; additionally, a large timber plank also protruded out of the trench wall in the northwest corner.

Context (03) was assigned to the depth of 0.20m – 0.30m and had the same composition as the underlying levels – a dark brown silty sand with fragments of concrete and frequent stone and coal inclusions. It is also of note that the uppermost part of this level (03) had a higher clay content (around 10%) and this relates to the composition of the overlying level (02).

Context (02) incorporated all finds from the depth of 0.10m – 0.20m and the matrix was visibly different in both colour and composition. This layer (02) was a densely compacted grey/brown clay up to around 0.16m from the modern turf line – though the boundary between the clay and the underlying soil was diffuse throughout. Furthermore, based on the uniformity of the clay layer in section, context (02) likely represents a deliberate levelling event following the deposition of building rubble.

Context (01) was excavated at a depth of 0.0m – 0.10m and comprised of fine mid-brown loam and turf. This layer (01) was heavily rooted and produced a small amount of 20th century glass and pottery.

Finds:

The finds are set out below by context, followed by the pottery set out by total number of fabric type in the trench. The description of each fabric type is set out at the end of the test pit section.

Context	Depth (meters)	Pottery	CBM	Glass	Metal	Bone	Other
01	0.0 – 0.10	7	8	15	-	-	-
02	0.10 – 0.20	7	2	19	-	-	1 slag 1 mortar
03	0.20 – 0.30	8	1	42	2 (Fe & Zn)	1	1 clay pipe fragment 1 flint 1 coal 1 slate
04	0.30 – 0.40	36	8	18	-	1	3 clay pipe fragments 3 slags 2 pieces of wood (inc. large plank) 1 worked stone
05	0.40 – 0.50	52	10	36	8 (6 Fe & 2 Pb)	5 (inc. animal tooth & butchered long bone)	2 clay pipe fragments 6 shell fragments 1 piece of wood 3 concrete slabs

Table 5: Test Pit 3, finds by context

Fabric	Date (Century)	Sherds	Sherd %	Vessels	Vessels %
1	19th	11	11.6	10	16.9
2	Post Med	3	3.2	3	5.1
3	19th	1	1	1	1.7
5	19th	1	1	1	1.7
6	18-20th	25	26.3	20	33.9

Fabric	Date (Century)	Sherds	Sherd %	Vessels	Vessels %
7	Late 18 th – Early 20 th	5	5.3	3	5.1
9	18 - 20 th	39	41.1	16	27.1
10	19 th	3	3.2	2	3.4
11	19/20 th	6	6.3	2	3.4
13	13/14 th	1	1	1	1.7
		95	100	59	100

Table 6: Pottery by fabric type

The finds are again indicative of general domestic activity dating from the 19th and 20th centuries. Clay pipes are present in this pit as they are in all the pits, they are a common find on sites dating from the 17th to 19th centuries. Their popularity declined with the advent of the cigarette. There is a single sherd indicating activity in the 13/14th century and as with test pit 2 this may indicate medieval deposits at a greater depth.

The most common type of pottery encountered were the 19th century creamwares (fabrics 6 and 9) and while the kitchen ware (fabric 1) was present it was outnumbered by the tableware.

General Discussion

The main activity that was encountered was related to relatively modern buildings, but natural was not reached and further material may lie at a greater depth.

Test Pit 4 (Figures 2 & 7)

Test pit 4 was located to the rear of 37 Front Street, Whitburn.

Stratigraphy:

Due to time constraints, it was not possible to excavate to the underlying natural soil in TP4. The base of the pit (05) was recorded at a depth of 0.50m and included three large stones which appear to form part of a single course wall – potentially building foundations. Moreover, the composition of context (05) was an orange/brown silty sand with frequent small stone inclusions.

Context (04) was excavated at a depth of 0.30m – 0.40m and comprised a dark brown/grey silty clay soil with frequent stone inclusions (c. 30%) which graduated into a lighter, orange/brown silty sand towards the base. Differences in the colour and composition of (04) may be explained in relation to the underlying stone feature which began protruding from the base of the pit at a depth of around 0.36m. In section, it was apparent that the boundary between the darker and lighter soils was linked to the stones, and it seems that the lighter, sandy material may have been used as infill to support the foundations. Based on the range of pottery produced from context (04) – a mixture of creamware, pearlware and whiteware, as well as two fragments of clay pipe, it is likely that the stones were covered over in the mid-19th century.

Context (03) was assigned to the depth of 0.20m – 0.30m and largely comprised of the same dark brown/grey silty clay as the upper part of the underlying context (04). Context (03) however included far fewer stone inclusions (<3%) as well as flecks of sand and mortar.

Context (02) was excavated at a depth of 0.10m – 0.20m and the soil again was made up of a dark greyish brown silty clay. A very small amount of mortar was also present (<1%) and this likely relates to the content and composition of the underlying (03) and (04).

The uppermost layer excavated (01) comprised the modern turf line to a depth of 0.10m and it may be significant that no finds were recorded from this spit.

Finds:

The finds are set out below by context, followed by the pottery set out by total number of fabric type in the trench. The description of each fabric type is set out at the end of the test pit section.

Context	Depth (meters)	Pottery	CBM	Glass	Metal	Bone	Other
01	0.0 – 0.10	-	-	-	-	-	-
02	0.10 – 0.20	-	2	1	3 (Fe)	-	-
03	0.20 – 0.30	1	4	-	1 (Fe)	-	1 coal
04	0.30 – 0.40	6	8	1	-	-	2 clay pipe fragments 1 mortar 5 charcoal
05	0.40 – 0.50	1	7	1	-	-	1 mortar 1 stone with mortar 9 charcoal

Table 7: Test Pit 4, finds by context

Fabric	Date (Century)	Sherds	Sherd %	Vessels	Vessels %
2	Post Med	1	12.5	1	12.5
6	18-20th	2	25	2	25
9	18 - 20th	3	37.5	3	37.5
10	19th	2	25	2	25
	Totals	8	100	8	100

Table 8: Pottery by fabric type

There were relatively few finds from this trench but those that were all date from the post-medieval period.

General Discussion

The deepest part of this test pit seems to have encountered a stone based feature of some description but it would require a wider trench to be able to interpret it fully, although it may have been the base for a wall.

Pottery from the Test Pits by Lauren Walker

Thirteen different fabrics were identified from the test pits and these are set out below. A range of post-medieval material was recovered from the test pits, as well as two medieval fabrics. The distribution of fabric by trench is shown in the report on each test pit.

Fabric 1: Coarse orange/red fabric with mica and small gritty inclusions. Often associated with internal white slip and cream glaze; also feathered or speckled brown decoration. Some examples also have an external 'treacle brown' or 'iron red' glaze and/or plain cream interior. Characteristic of 19th century utilitarian kitchenwares.

Fabric 2: Hard red fabric – significantly finer than the above, with irregular inclusions and iron red or black slip and glaze on both sides. One example with partial green glaze was also identified in TP3(2) and may further indicate an early, post-medieval date.

Fabric 3: Hard unglazed red fabric (terracotta). Likely represents late Victorian/early 20th century plant pots.

Fabric 4: Hard black-burnished fabric. 17th/18th? (TP1 – context 6)

Fabric 5: Pale earthenwares with buff or black glaze and tiny black inclusions. 19th?

Fabric 6: Various stone and ceramic glazed transfer-printed wares – diagnostic of the 19th and 20th centuries. Several examples have a blue-tinted or lustre glaze which would be indicative of the late 18th/early 19th century.

Fabric 7: Hard light grey fabric with irregular grits. Some are salt-glazed and may date to as early as the late 18th century – though associated vessels were common throughout the Victorian period. This type represents stonewares with dates broadly ranging from the late 18th – early 20th century.

Fabric 8: Coarse, unglazed dark grey fabric. 19th – 20th century stoneware, not likely used as kitchenware.

Fabric 9: Coarse white/off-white fabric with variable porosity and a clear glaze inside and out. Some sherds are further decorated with coloured enamel or feathering. This type represents stone and ceramic-based whitewares of the 19th – 20th century.

Fabric 10: Coarse white/off-white fabric with cream glaze inside and out. There is some variation in the hues represented in the assemblage – and some sherds also have moulded, or painted enamel decoration. This type represents creamwares of a Victorian date.

Fabric 11: Hard white fabric with irregular black and grey inclusions. A glass-like glaze is evident on both sides and some sherds also show signs of blue-transfer and moulded relief. This type is compatible with bone china or porcelain and indicates a 19th – 20th century date.

Fabric 12: Hard grey fabric, external face is badly spalled. Regional reduced ware 14th to 16th century (TP2)

Fabric 13: Sandy buff/pink fabric with external splashed green glaze 13th to 14th century (TP3)

Test Pits Discussion

All four test pits revealed evidence of 19th century and later activity and there were a significant number of finds of pottery in a number of them indicating relatively intense activity in their vicinity.

There was a limited amount of medieval material recovered. It was clear that there was a considerable depth of post medieval deposits over most of the sites and it is very possible that medieval material lay at a lower level, particularly in test pits 2 and 3.

6.2 Trench A by Robin Daniels (Figures 2, 8 – 18)

Trench A was sited in 'The Rookery', an area of neglected woodland on the east side of Church lane on the south side of Whitburn Village. This area is bounded by high stone walls to the north and west and the position of the north wall, fronting on to the village green is likely to represent the frontage of any medieval farmstead that might have occupied the site. A north - south trench was therefore placed as close as possible to this wall to look for evidence of medieval buildings in this area.

The possibility of medieval activity was possibly indicated by a substantial slope from north to south which it was thought might be indicative of a house platform. The trench was 8.5m long by 1.5m wide and set 0.9m south of the north boundary wall. It was angled slightly to the west to avoid a fallen tree and its stump.

Overlying the whole trench was a grey/brown sandy and friable topsoil (100), 0.20m deep with extensive root damage. This overlay (101) which was also a friable grey/brown soil 0.20m to 0.40m deep, but this included a significant number of limestone fragments, probably derived from the construction or maintenance of the boundary wall to the north. (102) also overlay the whole trench and comprised a sandy brown/grey soil. The horizons between these three layers were clearly visible. (102) sealed a number of archaeological features. (104/105) was a mixed light grey/yellow clay surface which had pieces of charcoal and coal mixed into it. The layer was separated by drain (103), that part to the north being numbered as (104) and to the south (105). (104/105) abutted the sides of the drain, there was no sign of a construction cut and it is possible that these features were all laid down at the same time, alternatively the cut could have been completely taken up by the drain. (104/105) was not excavated, however the bottom of the drain sat on a different layer (109) at 0.12m below the top of 104/105, giving a maximum depth for this layer.

Drain (103) was seen for a length of 1.35m, running from north-west to south-east and disappearing into both sides of the trench. It was 0.33m – 0.35m wide from side to side, had an internal width between the side stones of 0.20m – 0.25m and had a maximum depth of 0.12m. There was a fall of 0.08m from the western end to the eastern. The sides comprised small rough pieces of limestone, there was no evidence of a capping. The fill (106) was a very loose brown/grey soil.

A layer of grey/brown clay (109) underlay the drain and extended beneath (104/105) although the horizon was not clear.

There was an area of heavy disturbance of (105) about 3m in from the north edge of the trench (c. 4m from the boundary wall). This had the appearance of stone holes and there was evidence of stones beneath the area of disturbance. At this point the layers sloped steeply to the south and it seems probable that this represents a former wall line c. 1.0m – 1.2m wide.

At the bottom of the steep slope (102) was not bottomed and there was clearly a large build-up of soil. The area at the bottom of the slope was, however, distinct in that there was a significant number of stones and for this reason it was given a separate context number (107). These stones may represent tumble from the wall represented by (108).

Discussion

The information recovered from this trench has been interpreted as indicating a medieval building, running from west to east and parallel to the frontage. It was probably at least 4m wide, its length is not known. The building appears to have stone footings for its walls. The drain is, however, particularly interesting this may well suggest that this was a long house, with a byre at one end and living quarters at the other, separated by a cross passage.

The drain falls from north-west to south-east, this suggests that it was running from inside the byre to outside the building. This in turn can be interpreted as indicating the living quarters were further west as it is extremely unlikely that the drain would have been built to discharge into the area of the entrance to the building.

The stratigraphy makes it clear that there was no significant activity on the site following the abandonment of building and that 'The Rookery' as an area of open ground may well date from the late medieval period.

Trench A Finds

Introduction

The site was wholly dug by hand and the spoil heap then comprehensively checked with a metal detector and to recover non-metallic material. There is a complete catalogue of finds in the archive.

Pottery

A significant amount of medieval pottery was found, reinforcing the suggestion that the structure encountered was medieval. This pottery seemed to present an unbroken sequence from the late 12th / early 13th century to the 16th century and suggests that occupation in the property did not finish until the 16th / 17th century.

The site is notable for the range of fabrics encountered in a very limited excavation. The medieval pottery follows a normal regional pattern starting with both unglazed and splash glazed early gritty and sandy wares, moving on to glazed wares and the transition

to reduced wares that occurs from the mid 14th century. The presence of hand made as opposed to wholly wheel thrown wares is also typical for the region.

The transition in vessel form is also well documented, commencing with large storage vessels, either jars or jugs and moving on to a wider range of vessels of different functions.

Catalogue of Fabrics

Fabrics were numbered as they were identified, but for ease of reference they have been grouped by period below.

18th to 20th century Fabrics

Fabric 1: Earthenware, hard red/brown fabric with mica and small dark grey grit inclusions. This is decorated with an internal cream slip with clear glaze. The glaze is usually confined to the rim and upper body externally. These are frequently large vessels and is an earthenware commonly used for cooking and storage duties in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Fabric 2: Creamware, hard white / off white fabric with a clear glaze all over and frequently with blue and other colour transfers. Often known as willow pattern ware this covers a wide range of cream wares produced mainly from the late 18th century and still available today. The deposits here are primarily late 18th to early 20th century. This is the table ware of the period.

Fabric 3: Stoneware, hard light grey fabric with small grey grits, this is frequently of a brown colour and can be slipped or clear glazed. This was used for storage and beer bottles.

Fabric 4: Plant Pot, hard dark red fabric with a few small quartz grits.

Fabric 5: Plant Pot, hard orange fabric. Plant pots.

Fabric 6: Redware, hard red/brown fabric with all over glaze and some moulded details. These are decorative redware of the type used for teapots.

16th to 18th century Fabrics

Fabric 7: Hard red/brown fabric with a white slip and clear/yellow glaze. The rim is decorated with indentations and there is a horizontal brown slipped band below the rim. This is a probable decorative dish or plate of probable 17th century date.

Fabric 13: Orange fabric with few grits, it has a partial white slip and good mid green glaze. 16th to 17th century

Fabric 14: Orange / red fabric with small white grits, all over clear glaze, giving brown colour. Post-medieval redware, 17th to 18th century.

Fabric 19: Fine, thin, hard, smooth fabric with small dark grits. Fired buff internally and externally light grey. This has a speckled brown glaze and external rilling to the body. Possible Bellarmine, 16th to 17th century.

14th to 16th century fabrics

Fabric 11: Hard grey fabric with an external yellow/green glaze and moulded decoration on the handle. Large vessel, 15th to 16th century.

Fabric 12: Orange fabric with small white quartz grits, this has a yellow glaze all over and

horizontal grooves incised on the body. 15th to 16th century.

Fabric 15: Grey fabric with mica inclusion, it has an external dark green glaze with incised horizontal bands. Regional reduced ware of 14th and 15th century date.

Fabric 16: Coarse orange/buff fabric with numerous internal burn out holes. It has an all over white slip with a yellow/orange glaze, 15th to 16th century.

Fabric 21: Fine, thin, hard light grey fabric with dark grey glaze internally and externally. Late medieval

12th to 14th century fabrics

Fabric 8: Hard, white to light grey sandy fabric with some large gaps where organic matter has burnt out. A few small pieces of grog and quartz. The exterior has been smoothed and there are a few splashes of glaze. Large wheel thrown vessel, 13th to 14th century

Fabric 9: Hard fabric, reduced internally and oxidised externally, it has a splashed green glaze and there is thumbing on the base. Large wheel thrown vessel, 13th to 14th century

Fabric 10: Light grey /buff fabric. Gritty with evidence of burnt out vegetation. Clearly visible dark grits and quartz. There is no evidence of glaze or decoration, one of the pieces found is very distorted and could be a waster. Large wheel thrown vessel, 13th to 14th century but could be as early as late 12th.

Fabric 17: Hard slightly gritty fabric with many small dark inclusions. Fabric is fired to light grey internally and buff externally. Wheel thrown and with an external splashed green glaze. 13th to 14th century.

Fabric 18: Hard sandy fabric with small grits and grog. Externally fired buff/orange, while the core is reduced. Handmade and has a splashed green glaze. 13th to 14th century.

Fabric 20: Sandy, soft fabric with small dark grits and pieces of grog. Yellow/buff colour. Medieval.

Discussion

The table below sets out the frequency of fabrics by period, the few contexts make it pointless to examine individual contexts and all have a mix of dated material. The plant pots (fabrics 4 and 5) have been excluded as they do not relate to domestic activity.

Date	Fabrics	No of Sherds	Weight of Sherds	Minimum Number of Vessels
18 th to 20 th Century	1	15	383	9
	2	57	353	20
	3	6	429	6
	6	2	10	2
	Totals	80	1175	37
16 th to 18 th Century	7	1	5	1
	13	1	5	1
	14	9	55	3
	19	1	15	1
	Totals	12	80	6
14 th to 16 th Century	11	2	19	1
	12	2	17	2

Date	Fabrics	No of Sherds	Weight of Sherds	Minimum Number of Vessels
	15	4	74	2
	16	4	38	4
	21	1	4	1
	Totals	13	152	10
12 th to 14 th Century	8	1	26	1
	9	4	50	2
	10	6	67	2
	17	6	50	1
	18	10	92	2
	20	1	6	1
	Totals	28	291	9

Table 9: Trench A Pottery by period

The preponderance of later material is to be expected, material was produced and discarded in much greater quantities from the 18th century onwards. This should be regarded as general discard, there is no reason to suggest it relates to the encountered in the excavation. Indeed none of the material can really be regarded as securely stratified given the amount of mixing by context.

The evidence suggest fairly continuous activity, probably from the late 12th century. Many rural medieval sites have a hiatus from the mid-14th century when the impact of bad harvests, the plague and Scottish wars devastated the rural population. There is little evidence of this here. Admittedly it can change from plot to plot but on this evidence the occupiers of this plot came through the 14th century reasonably well.

Clay Pipes

While a number of fragments of clay pipe were recovered, there was nothing distinctive about these and they are all 19th century in date (see table below).

Context	Bowl (frags)	Stem (frags)	Minimum No of Pipes	Description
U/S	2	5	2	No Decoration
100	2	6	3	one bowl with ribs
102	1	5	1	No Decoration
103	0	3	1	No Decoration

Table 10: Trench A Clay Pipes

Clay Burnt Material

Pieces of handmade brick and pan tile were recovered, neither in sufficient quantity to be interpreted as anything other than discard.

Context	Quantity	Weight (grams)	Date	Description
U/S	9	349	18/19th	9 pieces red pan tile
100	15	666	18/19th	3 pieces handmade brick; 1 piece grey pan tile; 11 piece red clay pan tile
102	16	402	19/20th	10 pieces handmade brick; 2 pieces grey pan tile; 1 piece cream fabric with exterior speckled brown glaze, drain; 3 pieces orange tile
103	1	23	18/19th	1 piece red pan tile
104	2	189	18/19th	2 pieces red pan tile

Table 11: Trench A CBM

Glass

Both window and bottle glass were found. A green tinged window glass which was slightly opaque was found in contexts 100, 102, 103 and 104. The quality and quantity of the glass suggests it probably came from a greenhouse.

Bottles

Pieces from around twenty four bottles were found and these ranged in date from late 18th century wine bottles to a milk bottle with printed lettering ' S & D Creamery', 'This bottle is the property of Sunderland & District Creamery', 'Please do not destroy, rinse and return 1pt 568ml'. These are all catalogued in the site archive.

Metalwork

Iron

Nails, square section iron nails were recovered from the spoilheap (17) using a metal detector and contexts 100 (11) and a single nail from 103. Square section nails were handmade and have been found in deposits from the Roman period to the 19th century in modern times they were replaced with round nails. These are probably 19th century in date and couple with the large amount of window glass may point to a wooden framed greenhouse in the vicinity.

Iron spike, 310mm long and 25mm in diameter at its widest, this was quite heavily corroded. It is likely to be 19th or 20th century in date and its purpose is uncertain. Trench A, 100.

Cast iron fitting, a curved triangular shaped cast iron fitting, possibly part of the suspension system for a large cast iron vessel. 130mm long and 70mm wide at its widest. Trench A, 102.

Cast iron fragment, a single fragment of cast iron, possibly from a vessel, roughly rectangular, 80mm by 68mm. Trench A, U/S.

Iron tube, with one end flattened as if for attachment, the other end is broken, 142mm long, 12mm diameter, possible handle? Trench A, 103.

Lead

Token, 12mm diameter with relief designs. One face has a fouled anchor the other three parallel lines, the two lower ones are longer the top one shorter. Trench A, U/S, small find 1. Post medieval (Figure 15).

Token, 20mm diameter, with relief decoration on both faces, one has fouled anchor the other a geometric design. Trench A, U/S, small find 2. Late Medieval (Figure 16).

Lead tokens of this type were provided to farm labourers as a receipt for works carried out, they would then be exchanged for goods or money.

Rod with 'branch' part of toy? 25mm long, 4mm diameter. 19th century. Trench A, U/S, small find 4.

Pistol ball with moulding seam clearly visible. 10mm diameter. Trench A, U/S, small find 5. 17th to 19th century.

Flat rectangular weight, 25mm at top and 30mm at base, 5mm thick with hole 4mm diameter at the top. Trench A, 102. Date uncertain (Figure 17).

Copper Alloy

Penny of George III, 1806, Trench A, 102, small find 6.

Penny of George V, 1912, Trench A, U/S

Penny of George V, 1916, Trench A, U/S

Penny of George V, 1935, Trench A, U/S

Five pence piece of Elizabeth II, 1979. Trench A, U/S

Struck token or coin. 12mm diameter, design on one side seems to have three people, the other side is unclear. Worn. This has been tentatively identified as Greco-Roman but no clear parallel has been found. Possibly a souvenir brought back from travel abroad. Trench A, U/S. Date Uncertain

Cartridges, three fired .22 cartridges. Trench A, U/S.

Cartridge, fired 9mm shotgun cartridge. This and the .22 cartridges were probably expended firing at birds in the 'Rookery'. Trench A, U/S.

Dome headed button with attachment loop on rear. Not clear if surface is decorated. 15mm diameter. Trench A, 100. 18th/19th century

Drawer handle, 32mm diameter, this has a sun burst pattern. 19th century. Trench A, U/S

Nail, one copper alloy nail. 19th century. Trench A, U/S

Replica roman coin mounted with a plain back with a loop, probably as a button. Trench A, U/S.

Stone

Part of stone object, 72mm long with rectangular cross section, 14mm wide. It tapers from 3mm to 10mm and the top and one side appear broken. There are drilled indentations 4mm in diameter on both side as though an attempt has been made to drill a hole through. Such a hole may be the reason for the break at the top. Possible whetstone. Trench A, 102. Date uncertain, possibly medieval (Figure 18).

Coal

Coal was found noted in contexts 100, 102 and 104. Coal is found as fuel on sites from the medieval period onwards and there is no particular inference to be drawn from this.

Slate

Slate was widely used for roofing from the mid- 19th century onwards, replacing pan tile and the pieces found were all from roofing slates. Two types of slate were noted a green slate, which probably originated from the Lake District and a grey slate which is more typical of Welsh material. Slate was noted in contexts 100, 103 and 104.

Bone and Shell

A few pieces of oyster, winkle and limpet shell were found, insufficient to draw any conclusions, these were spread through all contexts apart from 101.

Animal bone was found in all contexts but 101 and 105. Evidence of cow, sheep and chicken were seen. The cattle remains only comprised few teeth and sheep was much more prevalent with clear evidence of butchery and marrow extraction on a significant number of the bones.

The bones from the site suggest that sheep was the principle source of meat, but the bones were all relatively small pieces and does not suggest that butchery was taking place in the vicinity. The bones are all catalogued in the archive.

7. Discussion

Test Pits

The test pits were remarkable in demonstrating the depth of 19th century material and later that has accumulated in the village. They were successful in recovering the standard pottery types of the 19th century as both the earthenwares of the kitchen and creamwares of the table were recovered.

While it was disappointing not to provide insight into the medieval settlement, it does hint that medieval material may lie at further depth and as a result may be reasonably well protected. It should also be noted that Test Pits 2 and 3 were in positions that were well to the back of the medieval plots in areas that are not as likely to have had intensive medieval activity.

Trench A

Trench A was successful in demonstrating the good survival of medieval deposits and clearly identified a structure of medieval date. This has been interpreted as a long house, but it would require further investigation along the frontage to confirm this interpretation for certain.

As with the test pits the notable thing about the site was the overlying depth of soil, which does indicate that medieval deposits should be reasonably well preserved. Understandably there was significant interference from tree roots and this will be a problem across this site but the depth of the medieval material means that it is below the main level of root disturbance.

8. Bibliography and Sources

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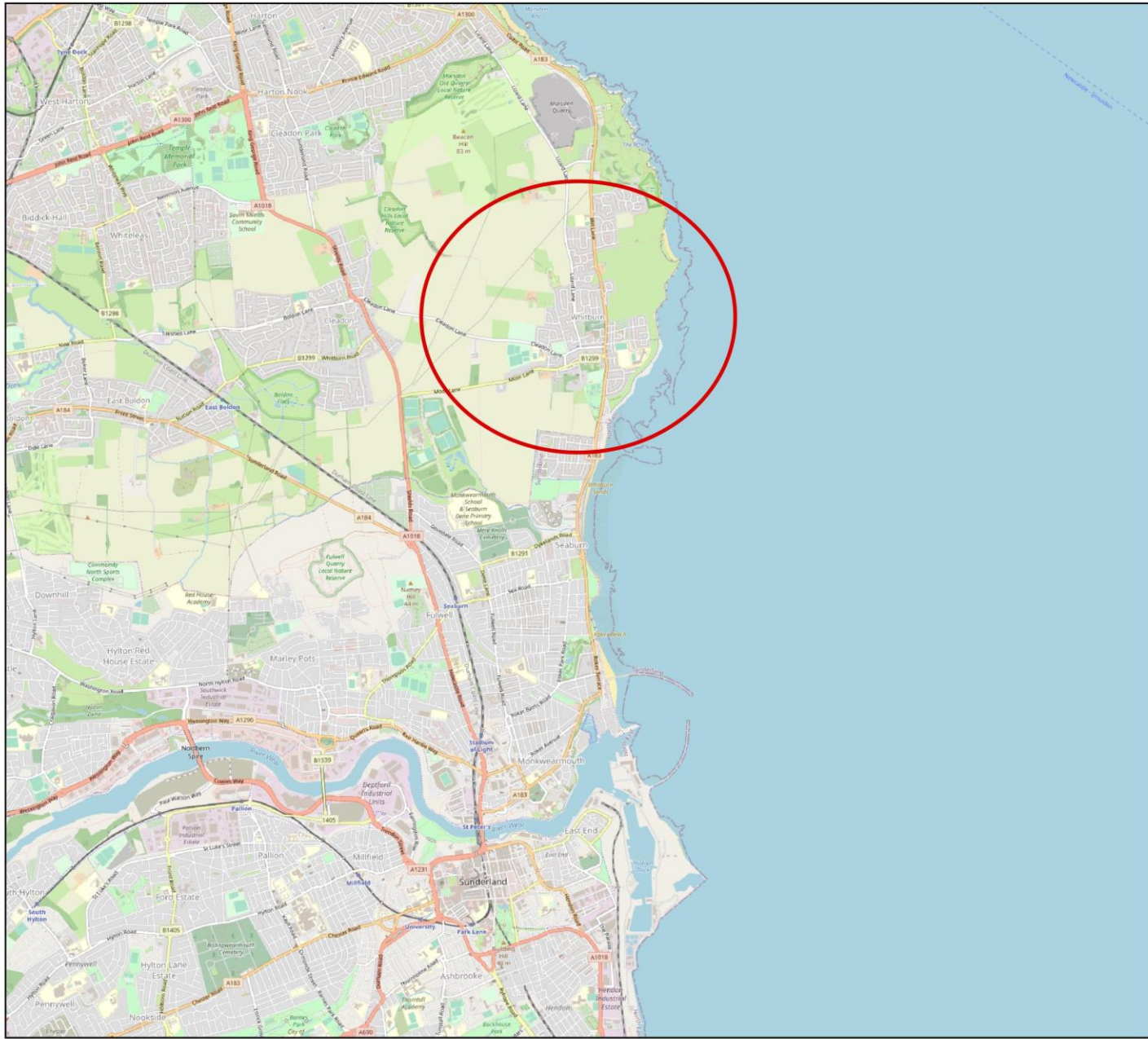
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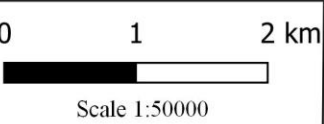
Tees Archaeology
 Sir William Gray House
 Clarence Road
 Hartlepool TS24 8BT

Tel: 01429 523455

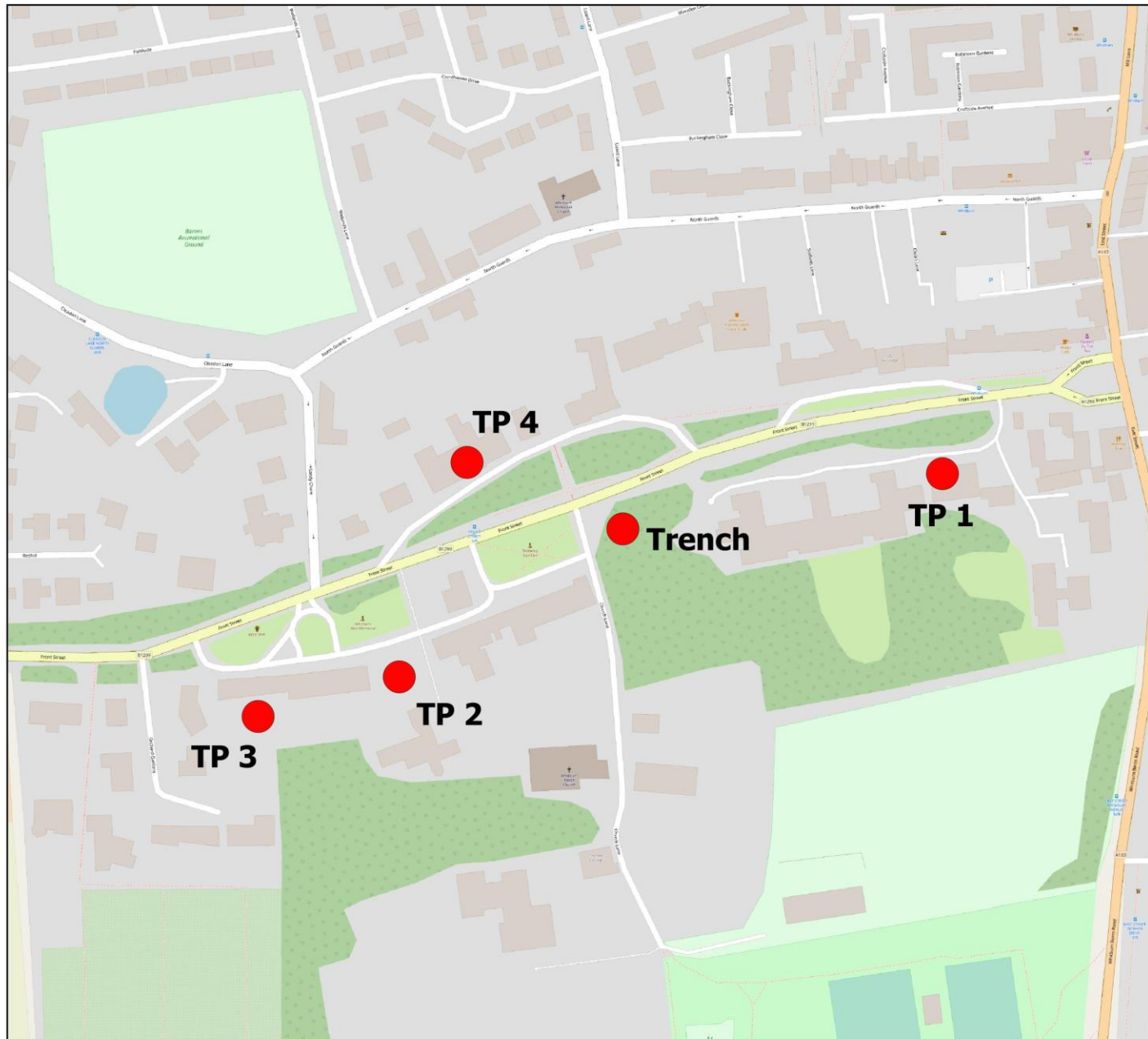
www.teesarchaeology.com

Figure 1: Location map

Whitburn Village 



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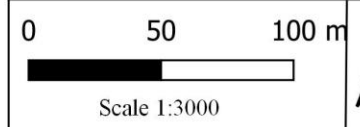
Tees Archaeology
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Tel: 01429 523455

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Figure 2: Test pit and trench location map

TP & Trench ●



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Figure 3: Site of Test Pit 1



Figure 4: Test Pit 1, maximum depth



Figure 5: Test Pit 2, showing cinder and ash, former wall line and exterior surface



Figure 6: Test Pit 3, deepest extent



Figure 7: Test Pit 4, deepest extent



Figure 8: Trench A in the 'Rookery' under excavation, looking north

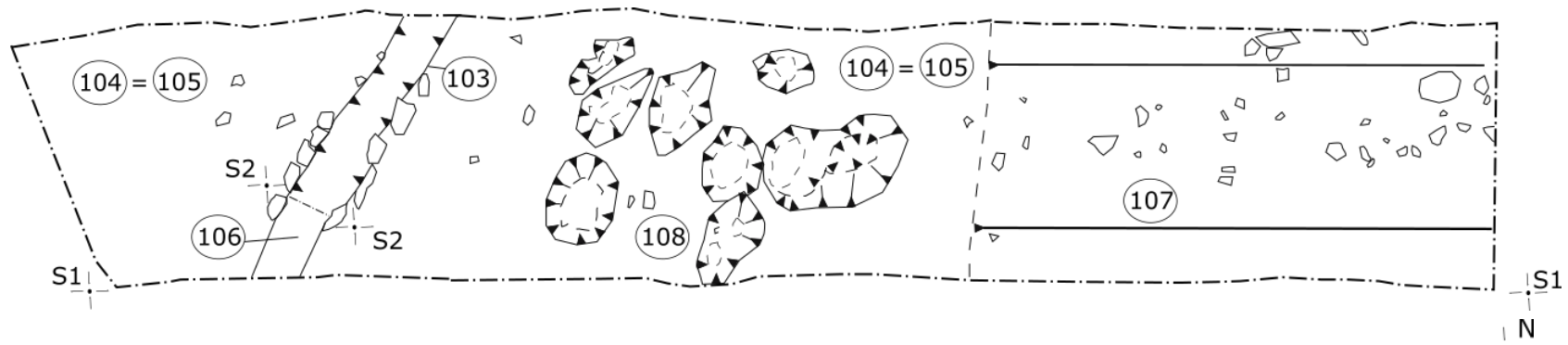


Figure 9: Plan of Trench A

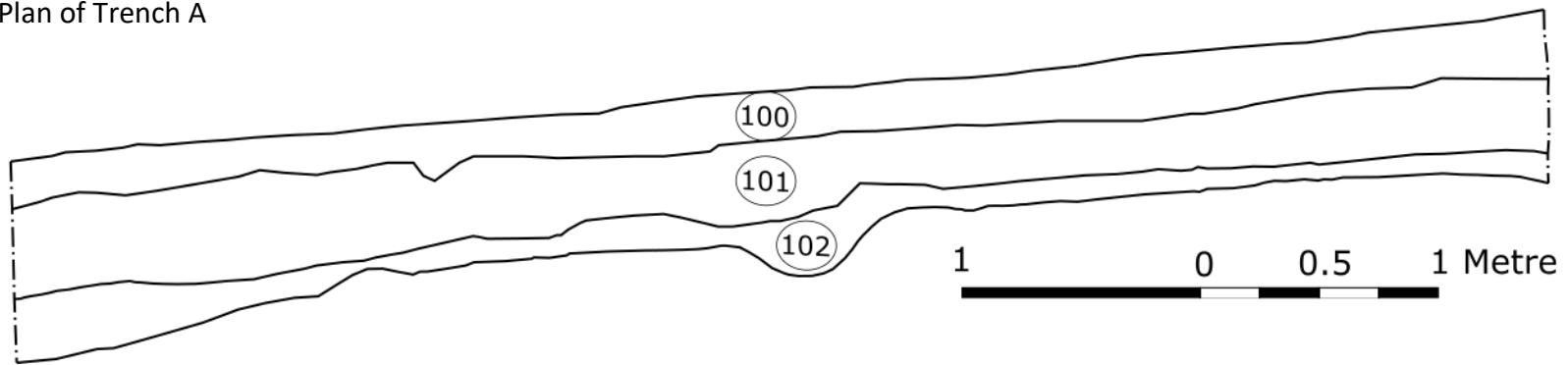


Figure 10: Trench section, Section 1

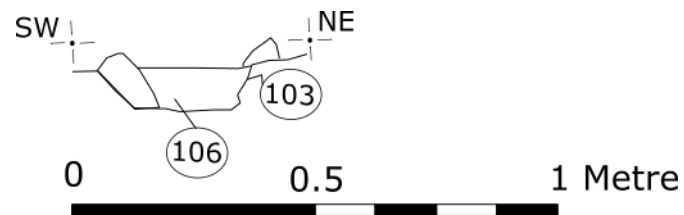


Figure 11: Section 2 across drain 103



Figure 12: Trench A looking south, showing the drain, area of stones (horizontal ranging rod) and steep slope from building platform



Figure 13: Trench A, Detail of drain looking from north west to south east



Figure 14: Trench A looking north, showing steep slope, area of stones and drain



Figure 15: Lead Token, Trench A Small Find 1



Figure 16: Lead Token, Trench A Small Find 2



Figure 17: Trench A, Lead Weight



Figure 18: Trench A, broken whetstone



SeaScapes
Tyne to Tees, shores and seas

