

Wirksworth Archaeological Society

Progress Report August 2024

Work continues at Ian Avenue with the kind support of the Beacham family, who own the garden and the slope. We are in the process of digging Test Pit 5 which is located on the slope of their garden, in order to see if it contains a wall under the rubble, which would be an archaeological feature, not a modern one.

We have also opened a further Test Pit (number 7) in the north-west corner of the top garden, six metres from the north boundary and one metre from the west boundary, whose purpose is to look for a gravel layer which may be present here. The archaeological feature (building) we are looking for should contain quite large amounts of gravel, which may make up its terracing. So far there is only gravel in the rubble, although we appear to have reached the original field surface, but this seems to have 1960s heavy breeze blocks and house brick tipped on top of it as well. The amount of rubble here is extreme - making the work very slow.

Finds in the rubble of Test Pit 7 included bits of plastic, bone, stony mortar, handmade nails, modern bolts and a sherd of medieval cooking pot.

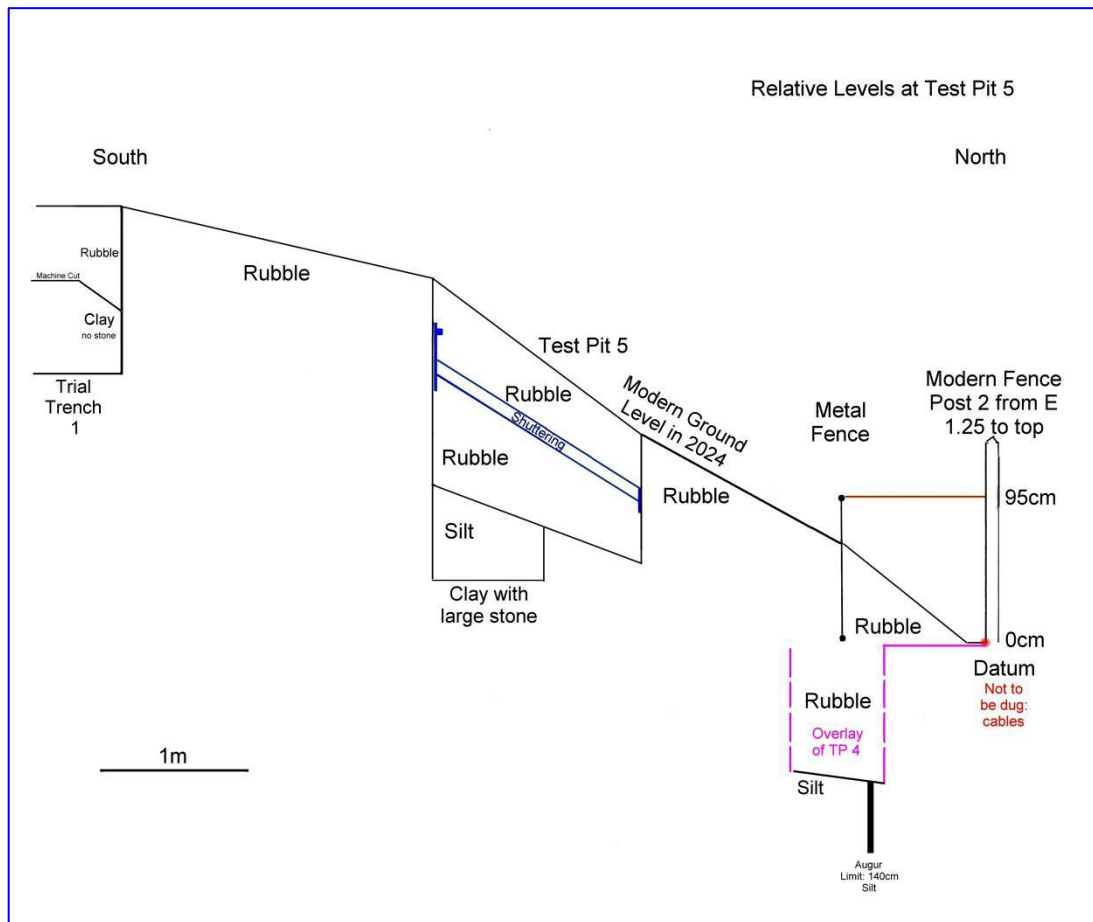


Body sherd of a medieval cooking pot: hard beige outer fabric, pink-orange inner with orange-red interior slip: 1200-1375

Ordinarily we might take the view that these materials in Test Pit 7 are inconsistent with each other, but this context is the result of the builder bulldozing the field and tipping all over it, mixing up whatever was there originally.

We have also mostly cleared Test Pit 5 of rubble and worked our way down to a "clean" context of silt soil which represents the field surface in 1963 before the builder started. Finds from this context reflect what would be expected and include sherds of Victorian and pre 1963 items such as grey quarry tile, plant pot sherds and Derbyshire Stoneware pottery (1750-1900). Also in this context were grey

lime-flecked mortar pieces, handmade nails and post-medieval handmade brick (1500-1750). These finds differ from the materials in the rubble above it.



Sketch of the slope looking west as at 26th August 2024



Test Pit 5: Handmade brick lying in Context 06 (silty soil - original field surface)

Finds in Test Pit 5, on the slope, have all been the result of the builder tipping rubble when the houses were built. It makes our work very difficult, much more difficult than in the Meadows and is making it very slow: we can't get a digger in to remove the rubble, so we're taking it out by hand, rock by rock. By now we had hoped to be finished in this Test Pit, but we have only just got to the original field surface.

The clean silt soil exists in both Test Pit 4 and Test Pit 5, hence our view that this is correctly the field in olden days, before any of the houses. This is important because it finally gets us free of the house builders.

Below this silt soil is clay containing large stone - it is different - we have not found this combination of materials on this site until now. The clay and stone combination also did not occur in Test Pits 1 to 4 and it is therefore something which needs to be looked at more closely.