

At Ian Avenue, with the kind permission of David Beacham, we have been working on a Trial Trench at the north end of his garden. The photograph below shows the location before Ian Avenue was built.



Postcard: Frith's Ltd: "General View Wirksworth" (1963)

Approximate survey location shown as red x next to the curved banking in the picture.

The principal problem with the location here is that the houses were built in 1964 and the builder levelled the gardens by bulldozing his rubble and other arisings across the slope to make them level, except for the section at the north end of the garden which falls quite steeply down to the rear of Ecclesbourne Close, but this slope is also overlain by at least half a metre of similar detritus and rubble particularly at the centre and west end of the slope.

In working the trial trench it was found, under the grass, that the topsoil contained material older than the rubble under it. This is most probably because the house builder would have first stripped the original soil off and kept it to relay after they had finished building. In those days builders didn't bring in new topsoil if it was there already. This topsoil contains both medieval and later pottery and this pottery is probably indigenous to the site.

There was then more than a tonne of rubble comprised of brick, clay, gravel, stone, ash, bits of tarmac and everything from bone to nails to clay pipe sherds to roof tiles, all mixed up. This had to be removed to reveal anything prior to 1964, which is a context of sandy mid-brown clay containing charcoal flecks (so

not natural - its made ground). This clay material has a machine levelled cut and a slope downwards from south to north, as can be seen in the photograph below.

WEST

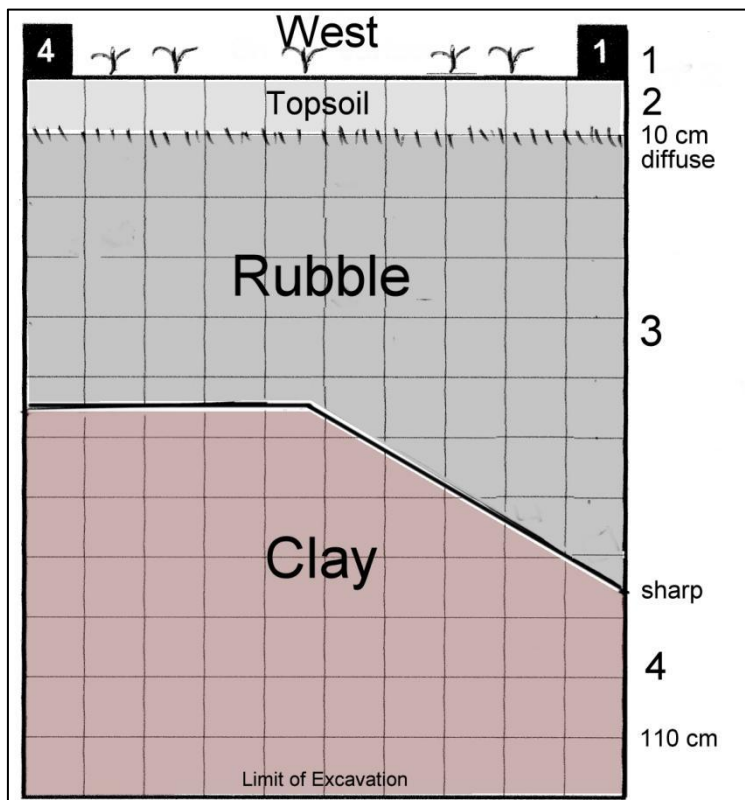


Trial Trench 1 looking west, showing the trench cleared of rubble and the two metre pole indicating the depth of the slope on the north side (85cm)

The materials in Trial Trench 1 can be contrasted with Test Pit 1, 30 metres away to the east, which had, under some general garden tipping of the last 60 years, a Victorian field surface, a medieval field surface then natural light brown (fawn) Clay Till containing small flat pebbles - which we would have expected to find in this part of the town, for example in the Meadows 200 metres to the north west.

Although it might be possible to regard the overburden of rubble in the Trial Trench to be the result of various contexts of activities (for example there are patches of redeposited clay, stone, gravel etc,) to do

so would be unsafe because these could all together be the result of a single afternoon activity of levelling with a bulldozer and there is realistically nothing to differentiate one part of the rubble from another in terms of separate dating. For this reason all the rubble layer has been classed as one context.



Section diagram of the contexts of Trial Trench 1 looking at the west side  
The grid is in 10cm squares. The garden is grassed (so a context) whereas there was no grass in Test Pit 1, just leaf mould diffuse to the topsoil.

**List of contexts:**

**Context 1:** Grass

**Context 2:** Topsoil containing the following pottery finds.



Left: Rim Sherd of a bowl of Midland Yellow Ware 1550-1675

Right: Sherd of Wirksworth Gritty Colour Coated Ware 1100-1250

**Context 3:** Builders rubble including all kinds of building materials with household building things including artefacts such a modern nails, bits of ferrous items, redeposited clay patches, cement gravel,

stone (some rough large limestone and some dressed gritstone), ash, bits of tarmac and everything from petrified sheep bone with a metallic encrustation (the result of scraping the impurities off the top of molten metal during smelting, for example unknown date but certainly pre-modern) and hand made nails to eighteenth century clay pipe sherds and 1964 Marley roof tiles, modern and handmade brick, post medieval stoneware pottery, china, glass, old foil milk bottle tops, oyster shell and plastic.



Left: Sherd of Midland Light Bodied Slipware  
1680-1800  
Right: Pre-industrial handmade rosehead nail  
1800-1850



Left: Sherd of Marley Roof Tile  
1964  
Right: Petrified metallic encrusted sheepbone -  
from pre-industrial metal smelting - undated



Specific finds from the Rubble context:

1. Neck of twentieth century beer bottle
2. Neck of 1960s milk bottle
3. Sherd of salt glazed eighteenth century stoneware
4. Rim sherd of salt glazed stoneware, probably Victorian
5. Sherd of Victorian / modern pipeclay drain pipe
6. Sherd of 1960s brown kitchen tile
7. Clay pipe stem sherd 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century
8. Sherd of modern white china, twentieth century
9. Sherd of transfer printed china eighteenth to twentieth century
10. As 9.

Samples of the brick, tile, tarmac and other materials have been retained.

**Context 4:** The entire Trial Trench has a context of redeposited mid-brown clay containing pronounced charcoal flecks and patches of less compacted clay which are more friable and slightly soilier than the rest. There were no finds from this material. A sondage (small exploratory hole) was put in at the west end of the trench to test the depth and no change was found in the material, even though we should expect to find shale bedrock here.

## Discussion

There are significant differences between the materials in Test Pit 1 and Trial Trench 1. The Test Pit has the distinction of retaining its medieval and Victorian field surfaces on top of its clay substrate. On the other hand the Trial Trench has been stripped of these by building activities and contains what appears to be the remains of the curved banking, represented by the redeposited clay, which can be seen in the postcard picture of Ian Avenue from 1963, shown below:



Extract from postcard: Frith's Ltd: "General View Wirksworth" (1963)

Curved banking highlighted in yellow

Given the purpose of this examination at Ian Avenue is to identify whether the curved banking and associated features in photographs, prior to the development of the site, are archaeological, further work needs to be done and we continue to examine the site.

## References

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## Appendix: Pottery Finds from Trial Trench WIA23-2

Ref No	Context	Type	No of sherds	Weight grams	Part	Form	Decoration	Date Range	Notes, fabric etc.	Inclusions
WIA23-2 /2/1	2	Midland Yellow Ware	1	47	Rim	Bowl	Clear yellow interior glaze	1550-1650 or 1700	Heavy fabric Cream 10YR/8/3	
WIA23-2 /2/2	2	Wirksworth Gritty Colour Coated Ware	1	5	Body	Jar	Orange-red exterior slip	1100-1250	Light fabric Buff 2.5YR/7/8	Grit

### Notes:

1. All pottery assessment is subject to professional views, the list is our initial assessment.
2. The colour codings (e.g. 5YR/2.5/1) are references for Munsell Colour Charts.
3. Pottery from the rubble context has not been listed but is retained and photographed (see above report)

### Munsell Colour Charts:

<https://munsell.com/about-munsell-color/how-color-notation-works/how-to-read-color-chart/>