

## Wirksworth Archaeological Society

### Progress Report September 2024

This month we have carried on excavating Test Pit 5 where we hoped to find the wall we have been looking for all summer and which so far has evaded us. We have excavated down to what is regarded as the underlying natural clay substrate and there is no wall in the test pit, after all this work and effort.



Test Pit 5 looking down into it

On the other hand this isn't as simple as it seems. Firstly, there is a massive amount of tipped stone of all kinds overlaying everything (there should be none - this was a field). For example, the two stones you can see lying on top of the clay in the bottom of the test pit both appear to be dressed sandstone. One of them gives every impression of being a Voussoir, that is to say a dressed stone used to build a door arch. At the moment I can't say where this has come from, but remember we are looking for the remains of a building. Secondly, we are no more than two metres from Trial Trench 1 in the top garden and there is a 2 metre height difference between the clay in that and the clay in this. This leads us to suspect that the wall may exist under a big Laurel hedge. This possibility may be supported by the fact that Trial Trench 1 contains gravel

(so it should be behind the wall we're looking for) and Test Pit 5 has no gravel (so it should be in front of the wall). In short, we may have missed the wall by inches and not know about it because we can't dig out any more of the slope - a totally typical archaeological problem. We can't use electronic means to search for the wall because of the slope and the tons of rubble on top of it.



Test Pit 5 showing stratification (layers)

We have a further task to do in Test Pit 5 as well as try and work up the slope towards the hedge This is to core sample the clay at the bottom of the Test Pit, we need to know if this clay is natural or has been put there by people. If it is natural then I would expect (as in the Meadows) for it to run down to about 80cm before changing to shale bedrock. We will do this next time with the auger.

Finally, there were two pottery sherds in the soil overlaying the clay. One of these is common Brown Glazed Ware (1750-1900) maybe from a milking bowl and the other was a piece of Manganese Glazed Slipware, from the bottom of a beer tankard (1690 to 1750). Someone could have been sat here on a sunny day 300 years ago drinking their beer.