

Excavations at Parham House, Storrington, Nr Pulborough, West Sussex:

An interim report on the August 2009 excavations



Figure 1 Trench R under Excavation

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Summary

The excavations in May and July 2009 established the general area of the parsonage demolished in the 1730s and the existence of a well made track way leading to the east gate of the graveyard. A yard surface possibly belonging to the Parsonage was uncovered, and this showed a marked correlation with the anomaly revealed on the resistivity survey conducted in 2007. It also coincided with the area demarked Glebe Land on the 1848 map.

Over the weekend of 1st/2nd August, 16 members of Worthing Archaeological Society were involved in further excavations to try to establish more closely the southern and eastern limits of the area occupied by the Parsonage. To this end it was planned to dig 3 trenches by hand (see Fig 2).

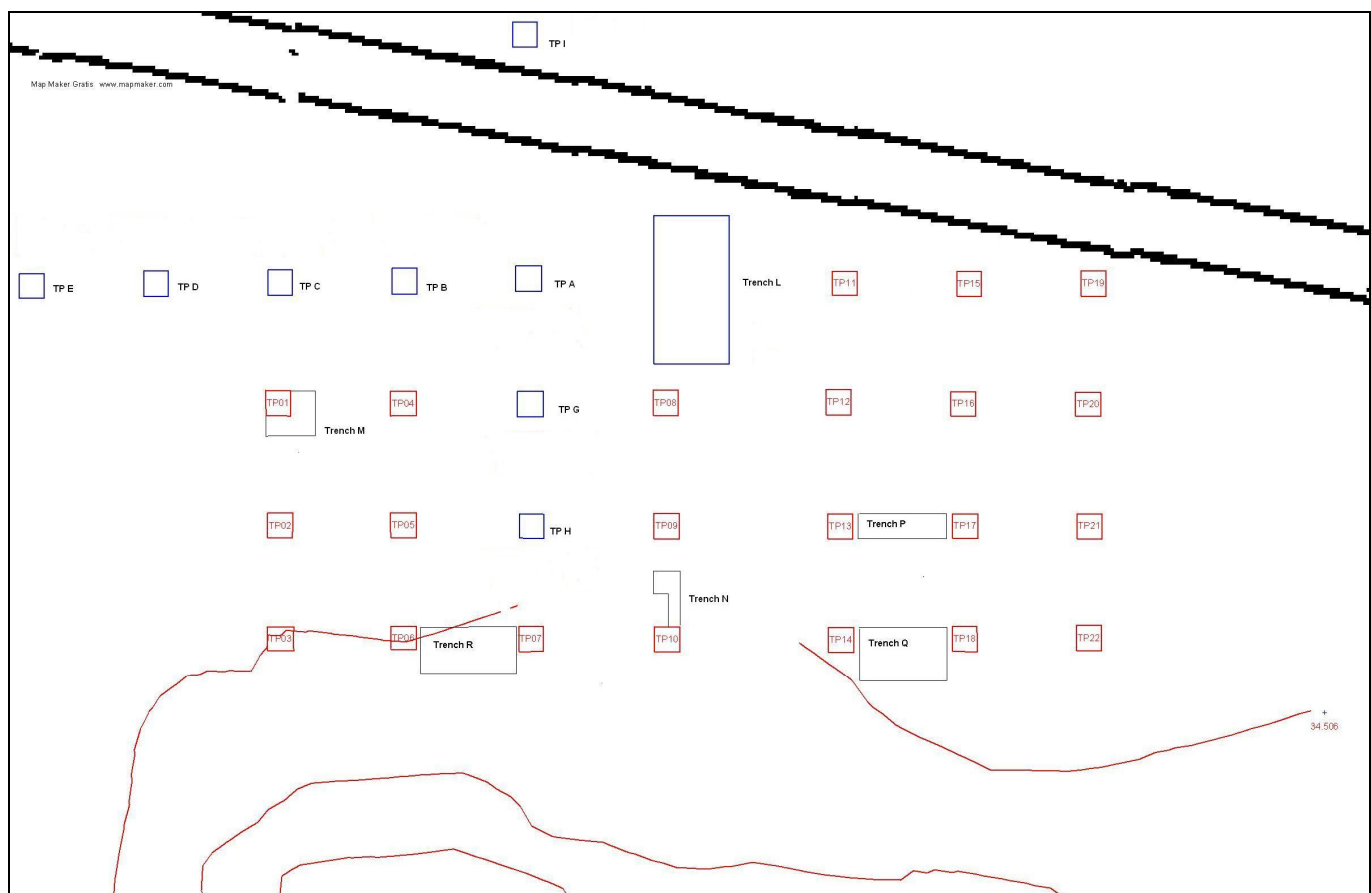


Figure 2: Plan of the site showing August 2009 trenches

Aims and Objectives

The objectives of the excavations in August 2009 were: -

1. To determine the southern extent of the yard surface;
2. To determine the eastern extent of the yard surface;
3. To try to locate the position of the parsonage buildings.

Methodology

On August 1st and 2nd 2009, members of WAS were involved in the excavation of 3 trenches. All were deturfed by hand, and then excavated by trowel or mattock.

The Results

Trench P

Trench P Was situated between Test Pits 13 and 17. Test Pit 13 showed a chalk feature at a depth of 39cm whilst Test Pit 17 showed no archaeological structures. Trench P was located in order to identify the eastern extent of the chalk feature. Unfortunately, the chalk surface extended the length of Trench P, so the eastern limit of it must lie in the 50cm baulk between Trench P and Test Pit 17. Unfortunately there was not enough time to test this.

Trench Q

A 3m by 1m trench was located between Test Pits 14 and 19. Below the top soil was a context that covered the whole trench, [243] that was rich in finds, including what appears to be mortar from the apex of a roof. If this interpretation is correct, we should be able to measure the pitch of the roof of the building it came from.

At a depth of c.30cm below the surface three contexts were encountered as follows:

Context 249 was a packed chalk deposit that extended approximately 2m from the eastern edge of the trench (see Figures 3 & 4). The chalk blocks were of medium size (2 to 10cm maximum diameter) and rounded. Some tile and pottery was pressed into the surface. The chalk itself was very clean, being white in colour (probably Upper Chalk), and the blocks showed indications of crushing and wear.

Context 248 Formed a band running north south across the western end of the trench. It consisted of blocks of Ironstone (up to 20cm maximum diameter), with some smaller, chalk blocks in dark, sandy clay matrix.

Context 250 This was only just present in the original trench, which was therefore extended to the edge of Test Pit 14 (dug in July 2009). This context consisted of angular chalk blocks. The chalk was a dirty cream colour, suggestive of Lower Chalk/Chalk Marl. The chalk here showed no sign of wear.



Figure 3: Plan of Trench Q



Figure 4: Western part of Trench Q, showing a possible wall foundation separating two chalk surfaces

The excavator's current interpretation of these contexts is that [248] represents the foundation of a wall, with [249] being a yard surface outside the building and [250] being the floor foundation inside the building.

Trench R

Originally 3m by 1m, this trench was extended to the south (see Figure.5). In the northern portion of the trench, a well made chalk surface (context [244]) was encountered at a depth of approximately 20cm. The chalk deposit varied between 5 and 10cm thick, and was underlain by a subsoil ([245]), except in the south east corner where a patch of disturbed natural ([251]) was seen. Two post holes (cuts (246) and (252)) were seen in the chalk feature. These were virtually the same size and shape, i.e. oval, 30cm N-S and 25 cm E-W, although (246) was deeper (28cm) than (252) at 17cm. The post holes were 2.25m apart. The chalk extended to the south of the original trench and was bounded to the south by large (up to 30cm) sandstone blocks in a sandy matrix ([254]).

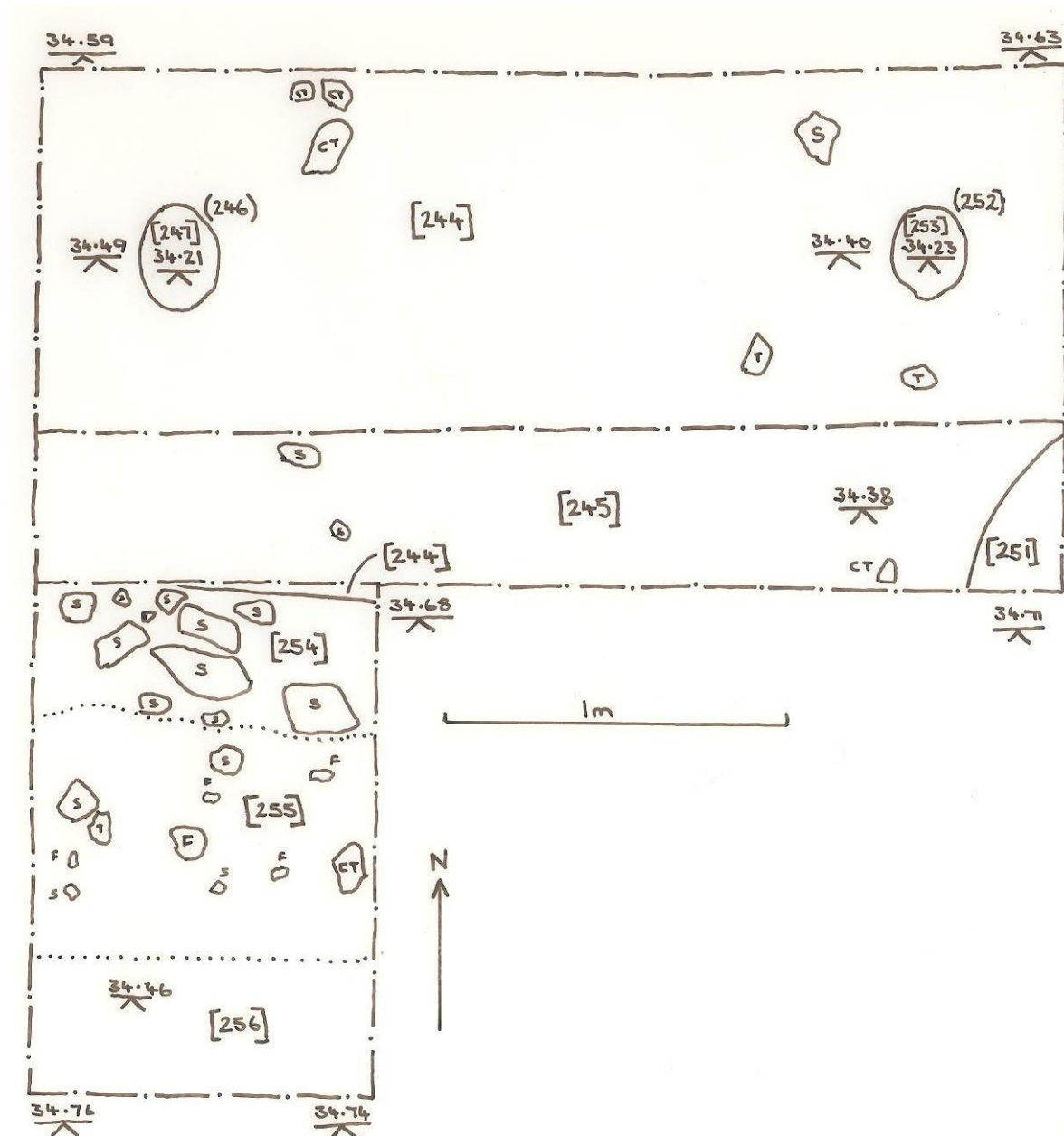


Figure 5: Plan of Trench E



Figure 6: Photograph of Trench R, facing North

To the south of this is a context that was originally divided into two by the excavators ([255] and [256]). However, the current authors feel that these represent one context as it bears a striking resemblance to the upper most context of the path/track way found in Trench J in May 2009.

Trench R helps us to delimit the southern boundary of the built area of the parsonage. The chalk surface (yard surface?) runs to what appears to be a wall beyond which is a track way that leads to the eastern entrance of the graveyard. It is not possible at this point to identify the function of the post holes, though it is possible that they housed the uprights of a timber framed structure.

The Finds

The three trenches produced large numbers of finds including CBM, glass, metalwork, bone and pottery. These are currently undergoing analysis, and a fuller report will be published once this is complete. The pottery record appears to remain consistent with the written record in that there appeared to be no pottery that post dated 1750. Archival research has shown that the Parsonage was demolished in the 1730s. Of the three trenches, Trench P produced the smallest number of finds, Trench Q the greatest number. Notable finds included a very nicely preserved Nuremberg jeton from Trench Q (see Figure 7) and a piece of clay pipe stem with makers mark from trench P. Indeed we now have a large assemblage of clay pipe from the site; these will be the subject of analysis in the near future.



Figure 7: Jetton from Trench Q

Conclusion

Yet again we suffered from bad weather on the Saturday, leading to the loss of half a days digging. Having said that, the objectives of the excavation were partially reached. We now have a firm idea about the southern limit of the built area and its nature. The eastern limit remains elusive, though we are now able to locate it to within 0.5m in one place. This information will enable us to target future works much more accurately.

Acknowledgements

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