

South East Tower Test Pit



Our community-based dig turned over less than one metre of earth but rewarded us with much more than a heap of gravel and soil.

Patricia Day
Project Leader



South East Tower Test Pit

Why?

We wanted the excavation to ...

Highlight Local History - and in doing so offer a sense of belonging and place

Skill Sharing - in preparation for study or the workplace

Increase Engagement with Culture - participation with arts and heritage improves well being

Encourage Social Inclusion - to develop a sense of community

Support Learning - increased knowledge is enriching

Getting Started

In early summer 2019 Great Yarmouth Preservation Trust (GYPT) invited members of the Young History and Archaeology Club (YHAC) to lead an archaeological excavation close to the South East Tower of the town's historic walls. Funding for the test pit was provided by the Coastal Revival Fund and forms part of a wider project being undertaken by GYPT to repair, conserve and interpret the town's mediaeval defensive structures. YHAC is the junior branch of the Great Yarmouth Local History and Archaeological Society and is supported by Norfolk Museum Service and Historic England.

This report shows what we did, how we did it and what we learnt. We would like to share it with you.

We wanted to dig close to the South East Tower

Q: Would it be safe?

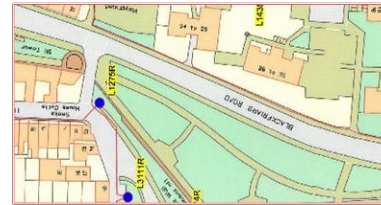
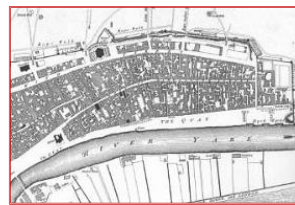
A: A utilities check confirmed there were no underground services.

Q: Will it be interesting?

A: Examination of historic maps and archaeological records suggested the area had historic value.

Q: Would it be productive?

A: Visual check revealed no obvious signs of modern disruption.



Engagement

Groups and members of the local community were invited to join us by either helping to prepare the ground or by booking 15-minute timed slots to excavate the pit.

How did we get our message out there?

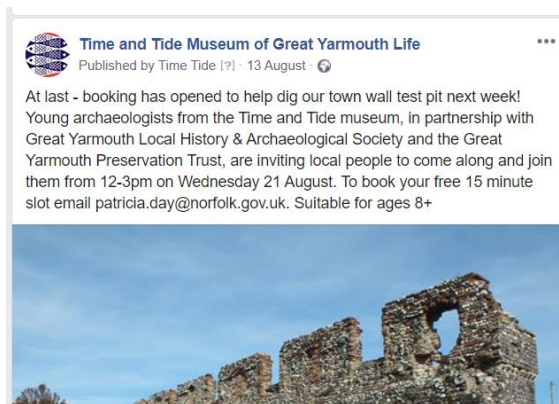
- YHAC members were interviewed on local BBC Radio
- Details of the test pit were added to local listing sites
- An article appeared in the local history journal
- Messages and posts were sent out by Facebook
- We told people about it

7 volunteers from Herring House Trust helped prepare the ground

All 20 public time slots were booked

“I’m looking forward to digging...and finding some amazing stuff!”

Oliver, aged 9 - interviewed on Radio Norfolk



On the Day

Community volunteers, along with young people and leaders from the YHAC, surveyed the area around the South East Tower and marked a one metre square area ready for excavation. The test pit was dug in layers of 10cm.

37

volunteers joined us
for the dig

5-81

volunteers' ages

117

volunteer hours

12

passersby joined us on
the day



Spoil from the dig was sifted, washed, recorded and objects placed into carefully marked finds bags.

On the Day



3

pages of history
notes about the wall
were shared with
the public

174

objects found

1

tonne of brick and
soil excavated
(approx.)

32

find bags filled and
labelled

What did we find?

Layer 1

Mainly grass and roots



Layer 2

Debris from a metal drinks can, remains of a crisp packet fragments of yellow plastic



Layer 3

Several pieces of building material and fixings. Glass and pottery shards including two medieval fragments



Layer 4

Victorian glazed fireplace tiles, numerous glazing fragments, 1933 halfpenny, Bren Gun bullet casing, two mid 19C gilt buttons



Layer 5

Bullet casing from Lee Enfield rifle, lots of roof tile fragments and building rubble



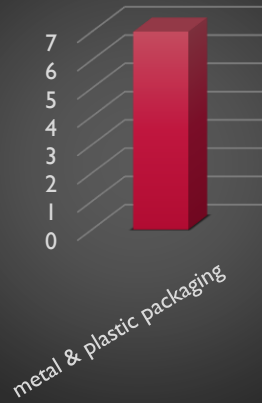
Layer 6

Intact Georgian bricks built into a wall revealing a void underneath, green painted wood fragment, clay pipe spout

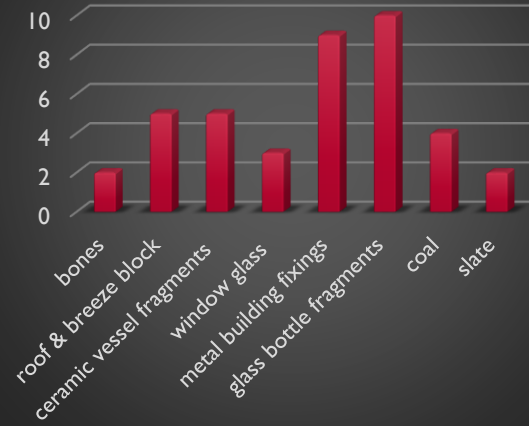


A record of our discoveries

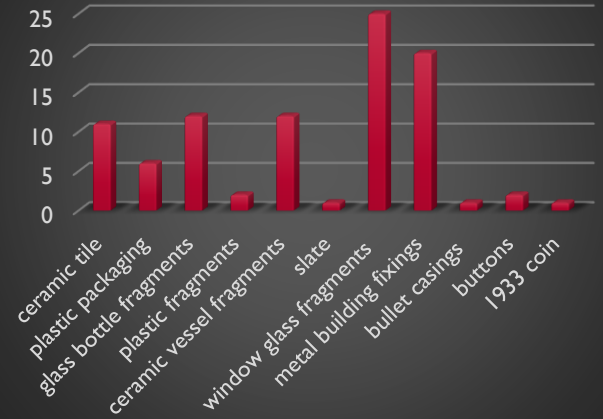
Layer 2



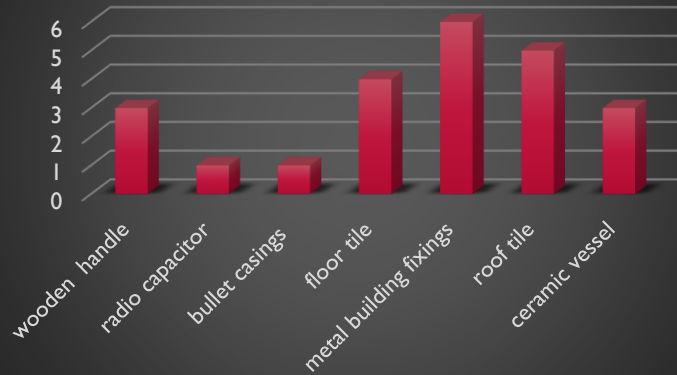
Layer 3



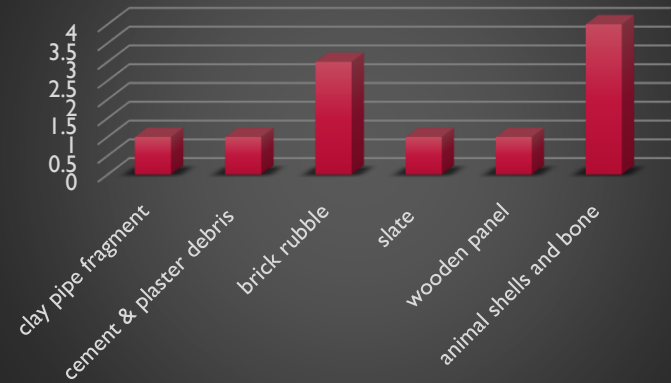
Layer 4



Layer 5



Layer 6



Some finds gave us a snapshot of everyday living...



Metal fixings



Animal bone
and shell



Painted wooden panel



'triple gilt'
buttons



George IV coin



Ceramic fragments



Clay pipe
fragment



Radio capacitor

Other finds gave us more questions than answers!



Q1: Why was there a cavity under the brick walls?



Q2: Who warmed themselves by this fireplace?



Q3: Why were there so many fragments of window glass?



Q4: Why were there two types of bullet casing in the house?



Q5: Why were medieval pot sherds found amongst Victorian/Georgian deposits in layer 3?

We found some interesting objects from the years around WWII

We found out a lot more about Great Yarmouth in WWII when local historian Neil Storey visited our YHAC session and showed us original artefacts and equipment from the war.



Further investigation

Both the young people from YHAC and the members of the public who joined the dig wanted to find out more. Staff and volunteers from the Great Yarmouth library helped to investigate archived documents relating to the area and further research was carried out at the Time and Tide Museum.

Our primary resources included:

- 1880, 1928 & 1953 Ordnance Survey map of Great Yarmouth
- Cooks Trade Directory
- Kelly's Trade Directories 1900 to 1953
- Census Entries
- Parish Baptism, Marriage and Burial Registers
- Minutes from Great Yarmouth Borough Council
- Council war damage records
- Time and Tide Archive Collection
- Google Maps
- England and Wales Deaths 1837 - 2007

87 (so far!)
research hours

15
volunteer researchers

10
categories of
evidence

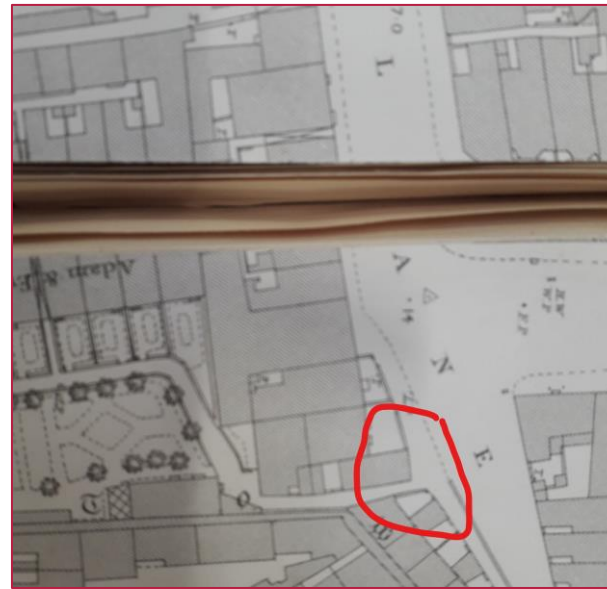
3
research venues



What we discovered about the building...



1) 2011



2) 1880



3) 1928



4) 1953

- Map 1 shows the town wall, Friar's Lane and the location of the test pit
- Maps 2 & 3 shows houses which stood close to our test pit location in 1880 & 1928
- Map 4 reveals that by 1953 these buildings had been demolished: Friar's Lane starts at no. 7
- Because the other buildings can be identified this suggests that the bricks and rubble which we excavated came from 1, 3 or 5

With the help of local archivists, we found two photographs of the area around the test pit location. The first image shows a view looking north towards the tower. The second image shows a view looking south from the tower. We compared these images to the floor plans shown in the maps and concluded that the walls in our test pit belonged to...

I Friar's Lane

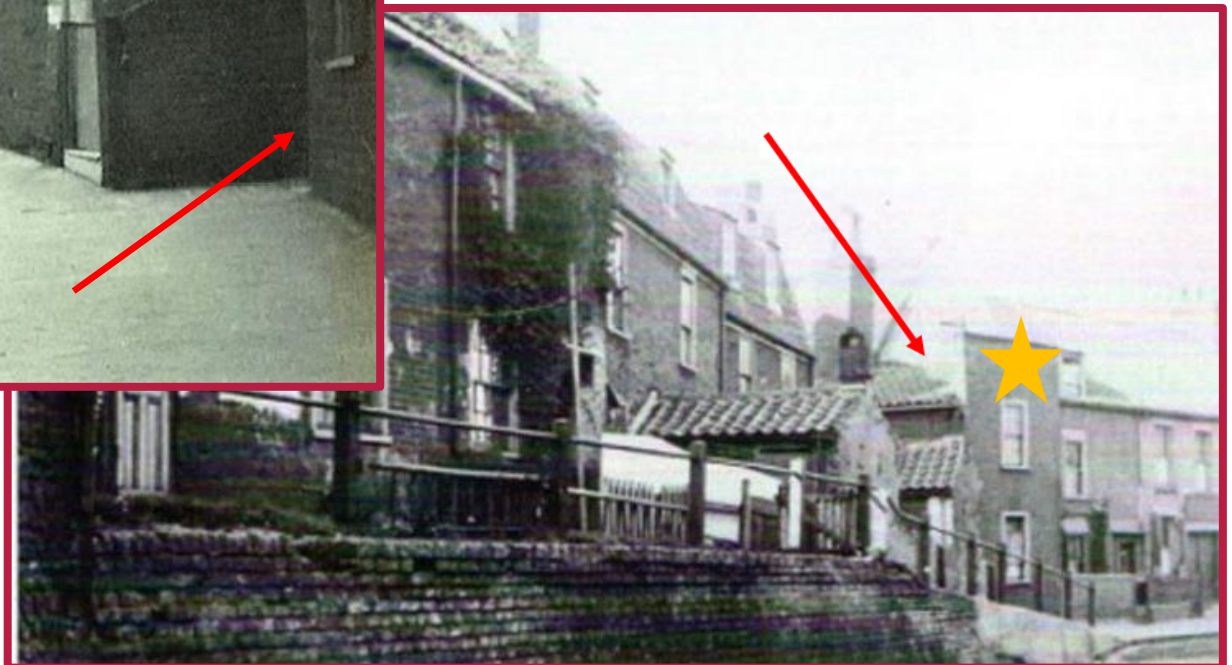
We thought this because:

- The porches of the houses leading up to the I Friar's Lane can be seen in the map plans
- The front wall of I Friar's Lane overreaches the building line. This distinctive floor plan can also be seen in the maps



- The red arrow shows the opening to Adam and Eve Gardens
- The gold star marks I Friar's Lane.

See maps for more information



I Friar's Lane was occupied by the Algar family from 1897 and M E Algar was still resident in 1952

Birth date 03
Baptism date 29 May 1897
Person forename Bertie George
Person sex M
Father forename George
Mother forename Maria Elizabeth
Father surname ALGAR
Person abode 1 Friar's Lane
Father occupation Shoemaker

road.
FRIARS LANE.
From Trinity place to South quay.
North side.
.....here is King st.....
1 Algar Mrs. M. E
... here is Middlegate st ...
South side.
..... here is Garden la
12 Johnson Hy. Edwd
12a to 16 Bird Stanley,
basket mkr. (office &
works)
17 Gedge Gregory, saddler

There was no significant bomb damage during WW2 but superficial damage noted to window glass in 1941



The council agreed to reconstruct the area in 1952 at a cost of £2,241

422 9th January, 1952
HIGHWAYS & PUBLIC LIGHTS
reconstruction of the footpath on the west side of King Street between King Street and Friar's Lane and on the north side of Friar's Lane between King Street and Quay and stated that the works should be carried out in conjunction at the southern end of No. 1 Reconstruction Area.
RESOLVED: That such Scheme and estimate be approved and that the Finance and Law Committee be recommended to authorise application for consent to a loan of £2,241 for such purpose.

Address of Property		1, FRIARS LANE.		Description of Property	Dwelling House.	£9
Name and Address of Owner		Mrs. Algar.				
Name of Occupier		Algar.				
Summary No.	Date	Details of Damage			Remarks	
56	8.4.41.	Sides - wall damaged. 3 ridge tiles. Beilings cracked & plaster down. 100 sqs. of glass in shop. 8 med. sqs. glass. <i>Type D</i>			W.D.C. doc. N. 2:26/1-45 File no. 4/1/1896. see folder Foreman report 10727 Ref to W.D.C. 1.5.46	

Plans in 1953 to renumber Friar's Lane 'were necessitated by new housing development' No 1 no longer appears

13. RE-NUMBERING OF FRIARS LANE.—The Borough Engineer submitted a Scheme for the re-numbering of Friars Lane necessitated by new housing development.
RESOLVED: That the Scheme be approved and that the Borough Engineer be authorised to serve the requisite notices.

What we discovered about who lived in I Friar's Lane...

year	source	Information
1858	Parish Baptism, Marriage & Burials register	George Algar: born to John (a bootmaker) and Ann. Living at Row 17
1871	Census	George Algar: errand boy, living with three brothers and sisters at Says Corner, Great Yarmouth
1873	Parish Baptism, Marriage & Burials register	George Algar: living in Row 17, baptised at St Nicholas Church with brother John
1894	Parish Baptism, Marriage & Burials register	George Algar: a bachelor bootmaker, from 82 King Street married Maria Elizabeth Russell
1894	Cook's Directory Gt Yarmouth	Algar G Bootmaker trading at Friar's Lane
1906	Parish Baptism, Marriage & Burials register	William Algar: born at I Friar's Lane to Maria and George Algar
1934	England and Scotland Cemetery Registers	George Algar, I Friars Lane, died aged 76, buried in Caister Cemetery
1939	Census	Maria E Algar (unpaid domestic duties) and William Algar (a bootmaker) living at I Friar's Lane
1939-45	Bomb map	Superficial bomb damage to Friars' lane
1938	Kellys Directory	Wiliam Algar living at I Friar's Lane with ME Algar
1955	Kellys directory	No number 1 listed
1978	England and Wales Deaths	William Algar died

Conclusions

Our research and investigations led us to many discoveries and made us think carefully about the questions which were raised early on: Here are some of our answers:

Q1: Why was there a cavity under the house?

we believe that a cellar was located somewhere underneath our excavation site. It was likely used for storage.

Q2: Who warmed themselves by this fireplace?

George Algar
William Algar
Marie E Algar

Q3: Why were there so many fragments of window glass?

There were so many fragments of window glass because a bomb hit it!

Q4: Why were there two types of bullet casing in the house?

The bullet cases were found in the house because one of the algars (the people who lived in Number 181) was in the home guard and he most likely brought the bullets home to show his wife.

Q5: Why were medieval pot sherds found amongst Victorian/Georgian deposits in layer 3?

There was ^{medieval} pot in layer 3 because the ground had been churned up and piled against the wall during the Elizabethan era, and so pottery that would be in the ground then was brought closer to the surface.

Outcomes & Achievements

Fifty Seven people, aged from **five to eighty one** from the Great Yarmouth took part in the excavation and subsequent research; they gave **174** volunteers hours to the project. Between them they learnt many skills, visited new places, and found out more about the community in which they live, visit or work. **Two** have joined a local history group, **five** have continued to volunteer at the Time and Tide Museum and **two** of the families have already visited a Time and Tide public event. **100%** of feedback responses *strongly agreed* that they 'had a great time' and **100%** *agreed or strongly agreed* that the activity increased their pride in the town.

Other responses (sized
in order of frequency)
record what people
enjoyed and felt about
their experience



A word cloud of feedback responses. The words are arranged in a circular pattern, with 'making up own mind' at the bottom, 'useful' in the center, 'people' and 'optimistic' on the right, 'thank you' at the top, 'relaxed' and 'thinking' on the left, and 'everything', 'exploring', and 'thanks' at the bottom left. The words are in various shades of red and orange.

thank you
relaxed
thinking
everything
exploring
thanks
people
optimistic
useful
making up own mind

“I enjoyed... the
people coming
together, the
finds and the
knowledge.
Thank you”

Sharon, NR30

The South East Tower Test Pit turned over less than a cubic metre of earth of but rewarded us with much more than a heap of gravel and soil.

Q: What did we reveal?

A: Our neighbourhood historians transformed a patch of grass, close to the town walls, into an artefact of living history and revealed a family home whose occupants lived through periods of great social change.

Q: What did we like?

A: Local people enjoyed coming together to find out about the walls and explore their heritage while follow-on research gave a shared sense of place as we learnt about Great Yarmouth's past.

Q: What did we learn?

A: New skills were discovered and shared as the community photographed, documented, conserved and researched the excavated artefacts.

Q: What next?

A: Several of the team have continued to pursue their interest in history and the research continues...



Thanks to volunteers:

Glenda Wells & Una Watson for leading the YHAC, the HSU team at Herring House Trust for their support, David Tubby and Tony Batley from Great Yarmouth Library for guiding our research, numismatist Dr Adrian Marsden and WW2 historian Neil Storey for object identification and to our funders for making this project happen.



**Report compiled by
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Jan 2020**

