

THE 2013 DIG – TAYNE FIELD

Dr Gabor and his team returned for the second year to Tayne Field. The trench excavated was north of the trench dug the previous year.

Excavation site
(Photograph © John Piddock)



Archaeologists on site
(Photograph © John Piddock)



Summary of what was found

Three timber halls were excavated, as well as two sunken-featured buildings and three very large and unusual early Saxon pits and the corner of a fourth timber hall in the extension trench. There was the unusual feature of a partition wall that was discovered in the largest timber hall. This hall also had enormous doorway pits and a huge pit across the threshold.

In cleaning back a portion of the wall trench, it revealed rows of wall planks that were placed within the wall trenches on construction of the buildings. Part of a skeleton of a horse, including its head, was discovered during the dig. Archaeologists would have to wait until 2014 before the remainder could be found.



Some of the items discovered during the dig
(Photograph © John Piddock)



Reporting in *the Guardian* on 22 November 2013, Maev Kennedy wrote about the 7th Century game board piece that was found during the excavations and was the first discovery of its kind for 130 years.

“It would have been a very expensive toy, expertly crafted and imported across the Channel – and archaeologists say it provides a glimpse of the luxurious life of Anglo-Saxon nobles in 7th-Century Kent.

“This little gaming piece is the only one discovered at an Anglo-Saxon habitation site, although many cruder examples have been found in graves. It is the first piece of such quality found since the excavation of a princely grave in Buckinghamshire in the 1880s....

“Gaming pieces made from simple chunks of bone or wood were common, but this was a special toy, made from a hollow piece of bone closed with delicately wooden caps, held in place with a bronze pin.”



The Gaming Piece
(Photograph © John Piddock)

Dr Gabor Thomas suggested that the piece was *“very probably a stray loss ... perhaps cast away in disgust by a king with a reputation for being a bad loser.”*

The gaming piece was found during the excavation of one of the halls that adjoined the large hall. Also found on the site were quantities of pottery, animal bone and glass.

Further Information and Reading:

Anglo-Saxon Lyminge: Excavations in 2013 published by the Lyminge Historical Society in its publication, *Lyminge a history, Part 6*. **Please contact the Society if you would like to buy a copy.**

The Guardian, 22 November 2013, *Gambling of high-living Anglo-Saxons revealed by Archaeology find*

The Times, 22 November 2013, *Drink and draughts – how Saxons played.*