

Summary of field work at Curles Neck Dairy Farm 1993

The main goal at 44He388 for the 1993 season was to expose and define the edges of a brick floor, thought to be a 17th century cellar associated with Thomas Harris the man first credited with patenting the land at Curles in 1635. In addition to a class of ten there were two independent study students, Tom Cuddhy and Greg La Budd. Greg continued mapping and excavating the H-shaped hearth in the 18th century Randolph kitchen, a project begun the previous years excavations. Tom's project assisted us by digging an exploratory trench T 93-1 through the fills laid down to build the Randolph kitchen hoping to uncover more remains of the Harris cellar. There are separate papers from each of these students on their individual excavations.

Three 2.5 meter squares of plowzone were opened at 150N 162.5E, 165E, 167.5E and 162.5N 152.5E. The southwest quadrant in all of these squares was screened. No new features were uncovered by the removal of the plowzone. These were set mainly as a teaching tool and simply expanded the excavated boundaries of the site. The 150N line south of the Bacon cellar had subsoil under the plowzone and fill from graveling operations in the 1970's. The 162.5N 152.5E square uncovered more of the occupation midden south of the Randolph kitchen and the rest of a brick footing Feature 91-27 uncovered in the adjacent square in a previous year.

There was another small area of plowzone removed east of the 1987 test trench that uncovered the cellar floor. There was a 2.5 meter square with plowzone remaining in the northern half 162.5N 172.5E. The southern half including the southwest quadrant had been removed prior to this years excavation. The objective was to try and find the eastern boundary of the brick cellar. The removal of the plowzone in this area revealed a burned area with brick and charcoal. A one by five meter exploratory trench T93-4 through Randolph kitchen midden was dug across 162.5N and 165N. Five postholes probably dating to the 19th century occupation and a portion of a strange "ditch"-like feature were uncovered, mapped and excavated. The extension of the trench into 165N 172.5E did not reveal the northern boundary of the "ditch". Later in the season the trench was extended one meter to the south to fully uncover feature 93-20 for excavation. Due to time constraints this area was left for future excavations.

The majority of this years work was concentrated in Trench 93-1, the excavation of a small C-shaped hearth thought to be associated with the brick cellar and the removal of fill and destruction layers over the cellar.

When we began, the fills south of the Randolph kitchen and north of the Bacon cellar had been already been removed revealing what appeared to be a hearth and the edge of a large filled hole. This "hole" was first discovered in an exploratory trench dug in 1987, the bottom of which contained remnants of an intact brick floor. Excavations were concentrated in 162.5N 162.5E and 162.5N 165E adjacent to the exploratory trench. We began by calling the top layers of destruction fill Feature 91-60 in accordance with the 1991 profile map of the 1987 trench wall. This however proved futile since there were too many wash and destruction lenses to separate. There were remnants of whole burned beams and a brick and stone layer in 162.5N 162.5E that petered out in 162.5N 165E. The destruction layers were removed in two arbitrary designations, Features 91-60 and 91-63, with a separate feature 93-42 given to the ash layer 2 to 5 centimeters above the brick cellar floor. Features 91-60 and 91-63 were actually comprised of many different wash and burn layers that were lumped together for the sake of excavation. Very few domestic artifacts were recovered from these destruction layers. Two cannonballs, an axe head, large hinge, and a hoe were found as well as quite a few locally made pipe bowls and stems. In an early destruction layer under the Randolph kitchen fills a stem with the initials "WH" was recovered along with other locally made rouletted pipe fragments. "WH" possibly refers to William Harris son of Thomas Harris.

Excavation over the hearth area in 162.5N 162.5E , revealed the partial remains of a C- shaped or oval hearth (feature 93-4) with an arched brick fire-box underneath facing east into the brick cellar. At ground level above the cellar (approximately 1 meter) the southern end of the hearth is still intact. One course of unmortared full bricks stood on end to form a curve with a row of cobbles placed in the same configuration to the outside. Down in the cellar there is a short brick wall, feature 93-46 (1 meter) on the north side of and perpendicular to the arched fire box. This feature is currently under a baulk and it is unclear at this time whether it belongs to the fire-box to or remnants of a cross wall. Two small post holes 60 centimeters east of the fire-box are probably for a hearth hood. The general construction and presence of so many cobbles in the brick destruction layer lying adjacent to the hearth suggests a "beehive" type oven. A baulk left along the 165N line prevented complete excavation of this feature.

Clues to the construction of the house were found after the excavation of the destruction layers and subsequent fills in trench 93-1 and excavations in 162.5N 162.5E and 162.5N 165E. Trench 93-1 was excavated to determine the stratigraphy underlying the Randolph kitchen and an attempt to find the northern edge of the brick cellar. Completion of this exploratory trench accomplished both objectives. The Harris cellar extends approximately 3 meters north under the south foundation wall of the 18th century Randolph kitchen. Wall fall comprised of broken or half bricks and stones at the north edge of the brick floor and three post holes spaced approximately 2 meters apart at the southern edge of the brick cellar (162.5N 162.5E, 162.5N 165E) indicate a half-timbered building with "brick nogging" filling in the areas between the posts, much like wattle and daub construction. There was very little mortar present in the destruction layers and none apparent in the nogged wall fall features (feature 93-39,38,44) or the hearth area.