

whittlewoodproject

Report on Test Pits in and around Whittlebury village:
June-August 2002

RLCJ
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The following is a gazetteer of test pits dug in and around Whittlebury in the summer of 2002. Each entry carries the following information:

- Location
- Research questions
- Table of pottery by spit/feature (italized entries represent undisturbed medieval or earlier deposits; shaded entries identify early medieval pottery)
- Individual conclusions and issues raised by the results

The location of all test pits is indicated on the accompanying map.

The pottery was recorded in Dbase IV format using the coding system and chronology of the Northamptonshire County type-series. For the material from Buckinghamshire, the equivalent codes of the Milton Keynes late Saxon and medieval type-series (where they exist) are in parentheses (prefixed 'MK'). The early and middle Saxon wares have no equivalent codes.

F1: Early/Middle Saxon chaff-tempered

F2: Early-middle Saxon Handmade wares, AD450-850.

F95: Ipswich Ware, c.AD725-850.

F100 (MK SNC1): T1(1) type St. Neots Ware, AD850-1100. F200:

F200 (MK SNC1): T1 (2) type St. Neots Ware, AD1000-1200.

F207 (MK MSC1): Cotswolds-type Oolitic ware, AD975-1150

F330 (MK MC1): Shelly Coarseware, AD1100-1400

F345 (-) Early Medieval Oxford ware, late 11th – 14th century

F360 (MK MS3 etc): Miscellaneous Sandy Coarsewares, AD1100-1400

F324 (MK MC9): Brill/Boarstall Ware, AD1200-1600

F320 (MK MSC4) Lyveden/Stanion 'B' Ware c. AD1225-?1400.

F329 (MK MC6): Potterspury ware, AD1250-1600

F364 (MK MS29): East Wiltshire ware, Early 12th – early 15th century

F365 (MK TLMS3): Late Medieval Reduced ware, AD1400-?1500

F371 (-) Unprovenanced medieval glazed ware

F401 (MK TLMS18): Late Medieval Oxidized ware, ?AD1450-?1500

F403 (MK PM14) Midland Purple ware, AD1450-1600

F404 (MK PM15): Cistercian ware, AD1470-1550

F406 (MK PM38): Midland Yellow wares, AD1550-1700

F407 (MK TLMS12): Red Earthenwares, AD1500+

F408 (MK PM29): Rhenish Stonewares, AD1450+

F410 (MK) Tin-glazed earthenware, 17thC

F411 (MK PM16): Midland Blackware, c AD1550-1700.

F413 (MK) Staffs Manganese Glazed ware, 1680 – 1760

F420 (MK) Westerwald/Cologne stoneware, 17thC +

F425 (MK PM2): Staffs trailed slipware, L17th – 18thC.

F426 (MK) Iron-glazed earthenware, L17th – 19thC

F429 (MK PM22): Staffordshire Salt-Glazed Stoneware, 18thC

F451 (MK PM18): Border Ware, late 15th/early 16th century

F1000: Miscellaneous 18th -19th century wares: Late English Stoneware, Iron-glazed Earthenware, Staffs Manganese wares, etc.

F1001: All Romano-British wares

Most of the medieval sandy wares have been grouped together as one code (F360), as they are all broadly dateable AD1100-1400, and have very similar petrological compositions. They were also made at numerous unknown sources in the region, and so it is considered that individual identification of such wares, which would be extremely time-consuming, would impart little information which would be of use at this stage of the project.

Gazetteer of Test Pits

WH TP 19

7, The Crescent

The crescent lies north-east of the area of settlement depicted on the 1608 Whittlewood map. Other TPs in this general area of the village have failed to produce occupational material. The results of this TP would be reviewed in this light.

<i>Spit/Feature</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>No. of Sherds</i>
1	1000	3
2	329	2
2	407	2
3	407	1
3	1001	2

Low levels of both medieval and Romano-British wares suggest ploughland manuring at these periods rather than occupation, a conclusion that is consistent with the location of the TP away from the known medieval occupation zones. In other parts of the project area, the coincidence of ploughlands of both periods is a familiar phenomenon.

WH TP 20

Brackenfield, Lodge Park

Two TPs were sunk in the garden of this property. Whilst the property now stands back from the main street, the garden fronts onto this arterial route. The property lies at the extreme southern edge of the village or just outside as depicted on the 1608 Whittlewood map.

<i>Spit/Feature</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>No. of Sherds</i>
1	1000	6
2	329	1
2	407	6
2	1000	38
F1	1000	14

The assemblages from both WH TP 20 and 21 were dominated by modern and post-medieval wares. Only two sherds of medieval pottery were recovered. Again this is consistent with the low-density spreads of pottery that might be encountered within the arable fields at this period. Certainly the levels do not appear to suggest close proximity to settlement. The garden formerly lay within the gardens of Whittlebury Lodge (whence the road name). A significant amount of landscaping is known to have taken place and this may have affected medieval or older deposits. Nothing from these TPs was indicative of proximity to a Roman building, reported to have stood on the lodge site.

WH TP 21

Brackenfield, Lodge Park

See WH TP 20

<i>Spit/Feature</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>No. of Sherds</i>
1	425	1
1	1000	8
2	329	1
2	1000	11
3	403	6

3	413	3
3	1000	37
4	407	9
4	413	2
4	425	2
5	404	4
5	407	3
F1	407	10
F1	1000	19

See WH TP 20

WH TP 22

Whittlebury church

Seven TPs were excavated in the field lying immediately south-west of the lane leading from the Silverstone road to the church. Six TPs were arranged in a T shape extending south-westwards to the edge of a levelled area at the top of the hill. A seventh was located close to the church. Indications from topographic analysis of the current village morphology, aerial survey and fieldwork suggest that these TPs may lie within an oval enclosure whose extent may be delimited by the current loop in the Silverstone road and the edge of the levelled hilltop.

<i>Spit/Feature</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>No. of Sherds</i>
1	1000	36
2	404	3
2	407	9
2	408	1
2	1000	26
3	330	1
3	360	4
3	403	3
3	404	1
3	407	14
3	411	2
3	413	2
3	425	3
3	429	1
3	1000	7
4	329	5
4	330	2
4	360	3
4	403	3
4	404	1
4	406	1
4	407	21
4	410	1
4	425	2
4	1001	1
5	324	3
5	328	1
5	329	12
5	330	11
5	360	44
5	407	9
6	329	1

6	330	2
6	360	10
6	407	1
6	411	1
6	425	1
6	1002	6
7	1002	1

Whilst the seven TPs excavated in this field might be considered together, the assemblages vary significantly and will be dealt with separately. The upper deposits of this TP contained significant amounts of early modern material, possibly deriving from alms houses known to have stood close to this location. The absence of this material from other TPs might suggest that these avoided the area of disturbance. Only the lowest layer (no. 7) can be thought to have been unaffected by these buildings and contained a single sherd of Iron Age pottery. In isolation little can be deciphered from this assemblage, however, in association with the other six TPs a complex story emerges.

WH TP 23

Whittlebury church

See WH TP 22

<i>Spit/Feature</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>No. of Sherds</i>
1	1000	7
2	407	2
2	1000	8
3	360	2
4	2	1
4	329	4
4	330	7
4	360	1
4	407	1
4	1002	2

This TP was again affect by post-medieval activity, but not to the extent of WH TP 22. The assemblage contains medieval pottery indicative of proximity to settlement but not location directly above such. A single sherd of Early/Middle Saxon handmade pottery is of significance.

WH TP 24

Whittlebury church

See WH TP 22

<i>Spit/Feature</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>No. of Sherds</i>
1	1000	3
1	1001	2
2	329	3
2	360	2
2	1000	2
3	329	1
3	1000	1
3	1001	1
3	1002	2
4	329	1
4	330	1

The lowest levels of this TP produced medieval pottery demonstrating that the Romano-British and Iron Age pottery was not recovered in situ. However the presence of both types of pottery may indicate continuity of use, whilst the recovery of early medieval material from the adjacent TP might indicate further continuity right through to the end of the medieval period.

WH TP 25

Whittlebury church

See WH TP 22

<i>Spit/Feature</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>No. of Sherds</i>
1	329	3
1	1000	1
1	1001	1
2	330	1
2	360	4
2	1002	2
3	329	6
3	360	12
3	1001	5
4	330	1
4	1001	1
4	1002	1
5	1001	1

The make-up of this assemblage is closely paralleled with WH TP 24, although here the lowest deposits, containing Romano-British pottery and Iron Age pottery exclusively suggest that these have not been affected by later activity. The levels of medieval pottery area approaching that expected from an occupation zone of this period. This TP was very close to the church. Features cut into the natural were recovered, although these produced no datable finds, but since they underlay the Roman/Iron Age deposits, they should be contemporary with or pre-date these periods.

WH TP 26

Whittlebury church

See WH TP 22

<i>Spit/Feature</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>No. of Sherds</i>
1	329	3
1	404	1
1	1000	22
2	407	4
2	426	1
2	1000	23
2	1001	1
2	329	2
3	360	3
3	407	2
3	425	1
3	1000	3
3	1002	3
4	360	6
4	404	1
4	407	1

5	329	1
5	360	4
5	426	1
5	1002	6
6	1002	2

Significant amounts of medieval pottery were recovered from this test pit, all from disturbed layers. Importantly, 11 sherds of Iron Age pottery were recovered. This must represent occupation at this period. This is further suggested by the discovery of features cut into the natural.

WH TP 27

Whittlebury church

See WH TP 22

<i>Spit/Feature</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>No. of Sherds</i>
1	329	1
1	330	2
1	360	5
1	407	1
1	1000	7
2	330	5
2	360	1
2	403	1
2	1001	7
2	1002	5
3	330	4
3	360	5
3	1000	2
3	1002	1
5	95	1
5	330	19
5	360	17
5	371	1
5	1002	1
6	1002	22
7	1	1
7	1001	3
7	1002	23
F2	2	1
F2	1001	7
F2	1002	3

This TP was the most productive of the seven excavated in this area. A complete ceramic sequence was recovered stretching from the Iron Age through to the early modern period. Four sherds of early medieval pottery indicate intensive use of this space at this period, and the recovery of 50 sherds of Iron Age pottery place this above occupation. Again negative features cut into the natural were encountered producing Iron Age, Romano-British and early medieval pottery.

WH TP 28

Whittlebury church

See WH TP 22

<i>Spit/Feature</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>No. of Sherds</i>
1	329	3
1	1000	9
1	1002	1
2	1000	5
2	1001	1
2	1002	1
4	207	1
4	330	7
4	360	24
4	1002	3

The full ceramic sequence was found from WH TP 28, located at the edge of the level hilltop. A dirty layer of redeposited clay (unfortunately containing no datable material) was encountered lying above the natural. This might be interpreted as the last remnant of a ploughed out bank, the clay deriving from the lower levels of an associated ditch. Geologically, this clay lies below the fluvio-glacial sands and gravels which make up the undisturbed natural across this site.

WH TP 29

Lancaster House, 24 Church Way

The garden lies at the northern edge of the modern village, within an area of early enclosure depicted on the 1608 Whittlewood map. The assemblage from this TP can be viewed against that obtained from WH TP 10 and 35. The TP was designed to address the origins of these enclosures which can be shown elsewhere within the parish – for instance at Lady Nether End, Lords field Farm and Monkbarne – to represent medieval settlement zones.

<i>Spit/Feature</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>No. of Sherds</i>
1	200	1
1	360	1
1	1000	2
2	329	3
2	360	2
3	324	1
3	360	4
4	330	4
4	360	2

The stratigraphic sequences in this TP suggest that they have generally remained undisturbed since the medieval period. The levels of medieval pottery a indicative or proximity to occupation although the case for occupation at this precise location cannot be proven. More likely, this TP lay within intensively farmed arable land which received more manuring than outlying furlongs, thus skewing the ceramic record. Alone, little can be postulated to explain the recovery of a sherd of early medieval pottery, however, a similar piece recovered from WH TP 35 might together be used as evidence for significant activity if not occupation in this area east of the main enclosure around the first millennium.

WH TP 30

34 High Street

Located at the centre of the southern extension of the village, to the west of the main street, this TP occupies a critical position linking TPs located in the north of the village with those in the extreme south. TPs excavated in 2001 (such as WH TP 15, 1, 2, 7 and 8) all indicated that medieval occupation arrives late (post-1250) in this part of the village. This TP was designed to test the validity of this conclusion.

<i>Spit/Feature</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>No. of Sherds</i>
1	1000	41
2	320	1
2	1000	31
3	329	1
3	407	4
3	1000	9
4	403	1
4	404	2
4	407	5
4	413	3
4	425	1
4	426	6
4	1000	98
5	329	4
5	407	4
5	411	1
5	413	6
5	425	2
5	429	1
5	1000	15
6	324	1
6	329	15
6	360	1
6	407	3
6	413	4
7	329	7
7	360	1
7	404	1
7	407	1

WH TP 32

Owlwood, High Street

Three TPs were excavated on this extensive property. Two were placed in the paddock to behind the main occupied zone. The third was located at the front of the property. The latter is located at the northern tip of the occupied zone depicted by the 1608 Whittlewood map, those in the paddock behind the occupied zone. Both occupation material and agricultural evidence might be expected from these TPs dependent upon location.

<i>Spit/Feature</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>No. of Sherds</i>
1	1000	1
2	329	2
2	413	3

Located at the back of the paddock, the presence of two sherds of medieval pottery suggest that this area lay under Whittlebury's fields during the medieval period.

WH TP 33

7 Kingsfield Piece

Kingsfield Piece is a modern close constructed over part of the central part of the village, but behind the plots shown of the 1608 Whittlewood map. The TP was designed to address

questions relating to the extent of the occupied zone and the proximity of arable production close to the medieval village.

<i>Spit/Feature</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>No. of Sherds</i>
1	1000	6
2	1000	4
3	1000	1
3	1002	1
4	324	1
4	329	3
4	360	2
4	1001	3
F1	1000	2

Undisturbed medieval deposits were encountered in this TP. Residual Romano-British and Iron Age pottery was also recovered. It is likely therefore that this area lay under the village fields and the presence of ridge and furrow in the neighbouring orchard prove this conclusion. The recovery of significant amounts of Romano-British pottery from WH TP 40, however, indicate that this TP may lie at the edge of an earlier occupation.

WH TP 34

Owlwood, High Street

See WH TP 32

<i>Spit/Feature</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>No. of Sherds</i>
1	1000	3
2	1000	4
3	1000	3
4	1000	1
5	1000	11

Unfortunately, despite the location of this TP close to the street frontage, the deposits have been severely disturbed in recent times. The total absence of any material of any antiquity, however, may suggest that this part of the village was only reached fairly recently and that certainly during the medieval period lay beyond the occupied zone.

WH TP 35

Kings Lodge, Church Way

WH TP 35 lies due south of WH TP 29 to the west of the supposed enclosure around the church. This TP lies in an area of early enclosure as shown on the 1608 Whittlewood map. Again the TP was designed to address the origins of these early enclosures and to establish the extent of medieval settlement or other activity in this area.

<i>Spit/Feature</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>No. of Sherds</i>
2	200	1
2	329	1
2	360	1

The archaeological layers within this TP were sealed under a service road which formerly serviced the Rectory. Despite the paucity of finds, the assemblage mirrors that found in WH TP 29 and might be interpreted similarly.

WH TP 36

Dollys Cottage, 8 High Street

Excavation at the back of the cottages fronting the small green located at the junction of the Silverstone and Towcester roads in 2001 produced a wealth of material of Roman and medieval date. WH TP 36, positioned between previous TPs was located to provide more information concerning this part of the village.

<i>Spit/Feature</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>No. of Sherds</i>
1	1000	4
2	1000	1
3	329	2
3	1000	10
3	1001	2
4	329	5
4	360	2
5	329	1
5	330	1
F1	324	1
F1	360	1

Once again, the area west of the triangular green provided quantities of material of medieval and Romano-British date, very similar to deposits found in 2001. This strengthens the argument for arable use during these periods.

WH TP 38

14 Lodge Park

Lodge Park lies at the southern end of the modern village, beyond the extent shown on the 1608 Whittlewood map. It might be expected that the two TPs located in this garden would produce little in the way of medieval material, but would act as a control against which other more centrally located TPs could be contrasted. As with all TPs in the village, each TP carries the potential of revealing information which could not be predicted from simple analysis of the earliest cartographic sources.

<i>Spit/Feature</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>No. of Sherds</i>
2	2	1
2	1000	1

Whilst WH TP 37 failed to produce any ceramic material, the single sherd of early medieval pottery from this TP is interesting. It lies away from the medieval village zone and might tentatively be used to suggest a pre-village focus.

WH TP 39

Willow Bank, High Street

Opportunities to investigate the frontage of the main street have been few and far between. Willow Bank offered another opportunity. A second TP was located in the back garden of this property. Both probably lay just outside the medieval village zone, but valuable data might be expected concerning the exploitation of this part of the village territory.

<i>Spit/Feature</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>No. of Sherds</i>
1	1000	13
2	329	2
2	1000	1
4	329	1
4	407	5

4	1000	9
5	329	1
5	411	1
5	1000	5

Like WH TP 34, the deposits in this TP were heavily disturbed. Residual medieval pottery was recovered, however, indicative of light manure spreading on arable fields.

WH TP 40

8 Kingsfield Piece

WH TP 40 was located in the adjacent property to WH TP 33 and designed to address similar issues.

<i>Spit/Feature</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>No. of Sherds</i>
1	1000	10
2	329	9
2	360	1
2	407	6
3	2	1
3	329	10
3	1001	3
4	2?	1
4	1001	23
F1	1001	18

The recovery of 44 sherds of Romano-British pottery suggests intensive activity at this period. Indeed, a small gully was located which produced nearly half of this assemblage. The function of this ditch could not be ascertained from the small section excavated, but the amount of material with and above it suggests that it was more than a simple field boundary. Of great interest is the juxtaposition here of both Romano-British pottery and early/middle Saxon handmade wares which might indicate continuity of settlement and might again tentatively be suggested as a pre-village nucleation focus.

WH TP 41

Willow Bank, High Street

See WH TP 39

<i>Spit/Feature</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>No. of Sherds</i>
1	1000	1
2	1000	3

The deposits in this TP were heavily disturbed and produced not archaeological significant finds.

WH TP 42

Kingsfield Piece

The location of TPs on the main street frontage in 2001 proved vital to our understanding of the chronology of development in various parts of the village. Further TPs were located on the frontage in the 2002 season, all to the east of the street. WH TP 42, however, is located to the west of the street, again within metres of the current road line. Designed to assess whether this part of the village had been settled from the medieval period, the results can be contrasted with the results from TPs such as WH TPs 15, 17, 20, 34 and 39.

<i>Spit/Feature</i>	<i>Fabric</i>	<i>No. of Sherds</i>
2	329	3
2	407	1
2	1000	1
3	329	9
3	330	1
3	360	3
3	404	1
3	1000	2
3	1001	2
4	324	2
4	329	16
4	330	1
4	360	1
4	1001	1
5	360	1
6	329	4
6	360	1
6	1000	6
6	1001	1

The presence of such a large population of medieval pottery from this TP indicates occupation. Residual Romano-British pottery was found in association with this material. The assemblage is consistent with other such as WH TP 30 and WH TP 15 and can be dated to the later medieval period.

Conclusions

1444 sherds of pottery of all periods were recovered from the 24 TPs excavated in 2002. These are detailed in the table below. The assemblage is swamped by modern fabrics as might be expected from working in such close proximity to modern properties. Approximately 28% of the assemblage is made up of medieval fabrics, 6% by Romano-British fabrics and 6% by Iron Age sherds. 10 sherds of early medieval pottery were also recovered. The relatively large number of Iron Age sherds came from a select number of TPs, in particular around Whittlebury church, where Roman finds were also extensive. With the exception of the Iron Age material, the rest of the assemblage remains consistent with that found in 2001.

<i>Fabric</i>	<i>No. of Sherds</i>	<i>% Total</i>
1	1	0.07
2	5	0.3
95	1	0.07
200	2	0.15
207	1	0.07
320	1	0.07
324	9	0.6
328	1	0.07
329	149	10.3
330	70	4.8
360	169	11.7
371	1	0.07
403	14	1.1
404	17	1.2
406	1	0.07
407	125	8.7
408	1	0.07
410	1	0.07
411	3	0.2
413	21	1.5
425	7	0.5
426	8	0.6
429	1	0.07
1000	662	45.8
1001	86	6.0
1002	86	6.0
	1444	

Taking evidence from 2002 together with that from 2001 (a total of 42 test pits), the following developmental model for the village may be presented:

- There is now definitive proof for the occupation of the hilltop around the church from the Iron Age period. This adds credence to the idea that the oval enclosure suggested by the modern road pattern and aerial photographs dates from this period. The site may be categorized as a small hillfort, and it is the presence of this banked and ditched enclosure which gives Whittlebury its second name element *burh*, a fortified place
- There is enough evidence to suggest that the enclosure was occupied into the Romano-British period although the nature of this occupation might be questioned and the likelihood of the hillfort retaining its original function is remote. Evidence from Kingsfield Piece points to further occupation in the Roman period away from the enclosure.
- The location of finds of early/middle Saxon handmade pottery from the south of the village (Lodge Park) and from Kingsfield Piece, as well as from the enclosure might indicate a dispersed pattern of settlement now subsumed beneath the extent of the modern village. At Kingsfield Piece the possibility of continuity of occupation from the

Roman to the early medieval period is intriguing and uncommon in the Whittlewood area as a whole.

- Early medieval pottery found within the enclosure points to the reuse of the Iron Age hillfort as a *burh*, the probable location of the *witan* or council held by King Aethelstan in 930.
- Imported wares of pre-conquest date (St Neots Ware) may point to an organic development outside the *burh* to the east, in the area of early enclosure as identified on the 1608 map of the village, which spreads eventually to cover the northern part of the modern village
- To the south of the village, however, the absence of material dating between 1000-1250 and the ubiquity of pottery dating thereafter clearly indicates that this extension to the village appears to have taken place from the mid-thirteenth century and may well have been planned and undertaken in a single phase
- The test pits have shown that the plan of the village depicted on the 1608 map of Whittlewood represents the final stage of development at the end of the medieval period.