

Chapter 7 - Wroughton Mead Interpretation

B2 stone phase - Cutting 4
B3 - Cutting 4

Building 2

The Mound

When it was decided a stone footed building would replace the timber B2, further soil clearance was necessary and the obvious place was to dump this spoil was the mound. This second phase of levelling was reflected in the material from the upper layer of the mound, which included several broken iron fragments (GF235) and horseshoe and structural nails, as well as a heckle tooth (GF237), an iron rectangular staple (GF460), a chain link (GF328), an iron perforated strap and sheet fragments (GF339 & GF404; TWA,7), an iron strip object, and a white metal plated perforated fitting (TWA, 11). This layer also included a bronze finger ring (GF232), which can be compared with a 13th century example from Salisbury (TWA, 1), and a copper alloy annular brooch, dating from between the 12th and 14th centuries (GF275). The accumulation of this layer continued into the later part of the 13th century (GF259; MG sherds) and even after the mid-14th century (GF259; horseshoe nails, type 3).

When the timber building (Phase II) was replaced by the stone footed one (Phase III), not only would further levelling have been necessary to take the walls of the larger building but a new floor area would have been cleared. The upper layer of the mound thus represented material which was cleared up from the floor level of the timber-phase of B2 as the ground was being prepared. It therefore contained items, such as the ring and bracelet, dropped and lost by its occupants and provides a clear *terminus post quem* for Phase III.

By examining this material, it is apparent that Phase II was a timber building requiring structural nails, which, along with the post-holes in the floor level of B2, suggests a substantial wooden structure. Although it is unclear what the iron fragments were used for originally, it seems likely that sheep were tethered there - it was not for cattle as a drain would have been essential. The ring and bracelet, suggest women were involved in the work in Building 2 during its timber phase.

B2 Phase III - The Stone Phase

Walls & roof

The timber building at B2 (see pXXX) was replaced by a stone-footed building, probably with a cruck roof based on sleeper beams, as the walls were no more than three courses high when complete. This second building used the filled trenches of the previous one as an outline onto which low stone walls were built. The ground was also levelled further north and

south of the previous structure to allow the construction of a building 11.4m (38ft.) in length by 5.1m (17ft.) in width; a floor area of about 58m².

As the walls did not slump into the trenches, the trenches must have already been filled in deliberately prior to the walls being built. Furthermore, as the walls were built over the silted up hollows of the trenches, it suggests that they were either not recognisable and, consequently, that the builders were unaware of an earlier phase (which seems unlikely), or that the building was constrained by the levelled area; *i.e.* it was more sensible to rebuild in an already level place with the enclosure entrance nearby.

Entrances

Two post-holes were uncovered in the trench at the E entrance and, being near the entrance to the stone phase at B2, were probably associated with the eastern entrance to the stone-footed building. In addition, the remains of a possible door jamb were revealed when clearing the flinty layer at the north side of the western entrance and a large nail, of a type used for doors (GF293), was found just outside this entrance.

Pit 7

A sub-rectangular pit (Pit 7), cut and partially deliberately filled, was uncovered at floor level in B2. The clay and charcoal fill at the bottom of this pit had been levelled and towards the lip several large flints and stones were apparent. Although the precise function of this pit is unclear, the presence of numerous sherds from cooking pots (X-Fit 10), coupled with the presence of charcoal and a possible stone covering, suggest it was a cooking or storage pit. It is not known whether this pit was associated with Phase II and/or Phase III of B2.

A sherd from a cooking-pot uncovered in this pit is from the same vessel as one from the black soil overlying the hard-packed flint occupation layer in Recess 3 of B1 North (Xfit 3). This indicates that B1 North and South, as this southern part of Recess 3 is part of the southern wall of the partition, and B2 were contemporary.

B2 Phases II & III - Discussion

The relatively few C13th sherds recovered from the humic layer inside B2 (45 sherds) as opposed to the large quantity of sherds outside the SE and SW corners of B2 (GF312 & GF313), indicates that B2 was kept fairly well-swept. With no hearth, but a possible cooking-pit (see Pit 7, *above*) and a large quantity of pottery, it is possible B2 (Phases II & III) was inhabited. However, the animal bones (GF252 & GF264), including whole skeletons (GF236), found inside B2, along with the several horseshoes and horseshoe nails and possible horse equipment (GF317), as well as an oxshoe, suggest the building was more likely to have been used as a stable and for stalling animals.

The sherds from a decorated glazed jug (Xfit 5: TWA, 20) found amongst the tumbled wall stones of B2 (Phase III) and amongst the wall stones of Building M/N, demonstrate contemporaneity between these two structures.

Analysis of the metal finds from B2 points to a date ranging from the second half of the 13th to the early 14th century for its use*, although the area received visitors later in the 14th century, after B2's abandonment, as the buckle, thimble and buttons show **.

The sequence at B2 thus indicates a timber building of the early to mid-thirteenth century replaced by a stone-footed one in the latter half of that century or early in the fourteenth [see Gomeldon, WAM 80, 140]. Both Phase II and Phase III structures seem to have been animal shelters, although one or both buildings experienced some activity associated with burning, possibly cooking (Pit 7).

B2 - Post-utilisation phase

B2 appears to have been abandoned at a similar time to B1 (N & S), B3 and the oven, *i.e.* the early to mid 14th century. The material overlying B2, especially the ceramic evidence, is surprisingly varied and other finds were numerous in comparison to Buildings 1 and 4. As noted below, someone broke a Martincamp stoneware flask here in the late 15th century and its remains were subsequently spread across the disintegrated remains of B2 (XFit 11, TWA, 20). In the 15th or 16th century another visitor left the remains of a beer mug, originally from the Rhineland (GF309, TWA, 20) and further activity is evident in the 17th and 18th centuries and probably later (GFs241, 246, 248 & 289).

Hearth ?

A circular patch of darker soil uncovered up against the wall in the NE corner of B2 was flecked with charcoal and red earth, indicating there had clearly been a small fire here at one time. When sectioned, however, it was clear it did not rest on the house floor and therefore could not be a hearth associated with either phases of B2. On the other hand, as several stones from the wall of B2 lay on top of the burnt area, the fire had to have been started while the wall in the NE corner of B2 remained standing. Further investigation uncovered a possible cupboard in the N wall, though whether this was related to B2 or the building of the fire is not clear.

Numerous pieces of glass were also found in this area, under the tumble from the wall stones but not down to the floor level. The sherds of a Martincamp stoneware flask, dating to the late 15th century, from this area, as well as from PH1E, clearly point to activity in the area of B2 in the late 1400s. Could it possibly be at this date that the fire in the remains of the NE corner of B2 was built, with posthole 1E sunk or reused to support a temporary shelter? Indeed, is there any association between the button found in the 'cupboard' (GF273), the button (GF284) found with much glass outside the NE wall, the button - with cover (GF298) - in the NE corner of B2 above the floor, PH1E and the broken remains of a flask which, although spread across the B2 area, were found in a concentration in the NE corner?

Building 3

At first, a line of sarsens which appeared to the N of B2 was thought to be the side of a trackway entering the settlement area from the NE. Further investigation revealed it to be the W wall of a further building; Building 3. In the W, the wall was found to be one or two courses high and 0.6m in thickness. Very little remained of the E wall, if ever there had been one, though a wall-line was observable by the dished effect at floor level. It was also possible to perceive these courses from a marked edge to the brown soil over the interior. The line of the E wall was also suggested by several flat sarsens resting on a step cut back into the clay subsoil, which had been subsequently covered by flinty humus from above. The middle section of the S wall of B3 joined the N wall of B2, which explained the peculiar thickening observed at the N end of B2. Due to the curvature of the SE corner of B3, however, the SE corner of B3 was not integral with the rest of the N wall of B3. The S wall of B3 deviated from the line of the N wall of B2 to a width of c.60cm at the far SE end. Thus only two wall corners, NW and SE, remained in anything like completeness, so perhaps B3 was substantially robbed, possibly for other building within the settlement (see below & Cutting 10 M/N3 and O3). On the other hand, the scarp cut into the Chalk in the E may have formed sufficient revetement without necessitating stone courses.

The building was trapezoid in plan, with an internal width of 3.3m (11ft), though in length it measured 7.8m (26ft) from internal wall to internal wall in the W and 6.6m (22ft) in the E, giving a total internal floor area of approximately 24m². Buildings 2 and 3 lay on a N-S axis and were not parallel to B1, with B3 situated c.8.4m to the east of B1.

The entrance was probably through the southern half of the W wall, where two large sarsens may have provided a form of door jamb. As the stone walls were possibly only two courses high originally, the rest of the wall may well have consisted of turf. The decomposition of such a turf wall and thatch roof could explain why a thick layer of brown, clayey humus covered the flinty floor. The flint and clay of the floor level sloped towards the centre of the building, which may have been a simple, central drain.

Structure SW of B3 - pit / garde-robe

1.8m W of the SW corner of B3 was an oval pit 1.5m (E-W) by 1.2m (N-S) and 45cm deep into the Clay-with-Flints. Some of the stones from NW wall of B2 had fallen into the S side of this pit. A large patch of charcoal was found in the black, sticky pit filling (GF444). Stake-holes were uncovered to the E and holes with fills of orange clay were noted to the W.

The stake-holes would suggest some sort of wooden structure over the pit [WAM, vol 58, 111], with the absence of walling in the SW corner of B3 showing how this pit was reached, that is to say from within B3. The amount of hazel and ash charcoal from this pit (TWA Finds/27) suggests the structure associated with this pit consisted of hazel panels on an ash frame, which subsequently burnt down. The pit is likely to be a toilet, with the stake-holes supporting a seat or a wind-break.

B3 - Discussion

The precise function of B3 is uncertain, although several items associated with horses suggest it was predominantly used for storing horse equipment***, which would have necessitated shutters and a door****. Pottery and metal analyses indicates a utilisation phase similar to that of Buildings 1 and 2 (Phase 2), *i.e.* 13th century. Of the *c.* 150 sherds recovered from the B3 area, only 4 were medieval glazed (later 13th C) and 3 were post-medieval; the vast majority were CW38 of 13th century date.

Other objects, again possibly associated with harnessing, indicate activity in this area in the 15th century. For example, a bronze buckle plate, dating from *c.* 1400 to 1450 (GF507, TWA, 1) came from the post-utilisation phase of B3. An 18th century copper alloy shoe buckle (GF545) was noted on archive drawing 218 as on the wall stones of S wall B3 (*ie.* N wall B2). This could be associated with the objects of a similar post medieval date recovered from the humic layer over B2, *ie.* pottery: GF223, GF241 & GF246 retrieved from inside B2, near the entrances. A rectangular collar of copper alloy (GF347 TWA, 2) dating from 1100 to 1400, though possibly post-medieval, was uncovered between the topsoil and flints. An iron buckle (GF363 TWA, 8/9) from below the topsoil, outside the NW of B3 is typical of long usage through mediaeval times, but fell out of use before the late 15th century.

The remains of a 13th century cooking-pot were found in the utilisation layer over B3 (GF459), to the S of B2 in flinty soil (*e.g.* GF845) and on top of or outside the wall of B4 in the NE (GFs305 & 348 - Xfit 7). This indicates that this area of B4, was in use, even if partially, at the same time as B3.

Evidence of a relationship between the B2/3 area and Cutting 10 (M/N3) is demonstrated by the fact that the cross-fitting sherds of a later-13th century lead glazed jug (XFit 5) were found at the NW corner of B2 (GF332-3 sherds) and in the wall foundations at Cutting 10 - Area M/N3 (GF314-16 sherds). As the majority of the sherds came from 10/MN3, it is therefore likely the jug was broken in this area and some sherds were carried to the B2/3 area. As the sherds were found in the wall foundations of Area 10, it would be likely that this feature was also constructed during the 13th century.

The three armour-piercing arrowheads from B3 and B4 (GF199, GF506, GF599) and three hunting ones from Enclosure B (GFs 2F/G, 818 & 837) are of particular interest as they point to some sort of hunting and military activity within the vicinity. The proximity of the Knights Templar at Rockley and their landholdings in adjacent Lockeridge could explain these unusual finds. Although the evidence is inconclusive, the number of high status horse and military-related items indicate that B3 acted as a storage depot for the equipment of the Knights Templar, although, less glamorously, they could easily have been picked up by the inhabitants of Wroughton Mead whilst out shepherding.

* GF514; 12th-14th century copper alloy annular brooch; GFs296 & 320, two Transitional horseshoe nails.

** later in the 14th century buckle, GF221; post-medieval thimble, GF606; buttons, GFs 273, 284 & 298.

*** incomplete prick spur (GF559) comparable to an example from Portchester Castle 13th-14th century (TWA, 9); one complete archetype found in the 'garde-robe' (GF422 - late 13th to 14th centuries, although there is a possibility it dates from between 1080 and 1150 - TWA, 9); military arrowhead, designed to pierce armour, dated 11th to 14th C (GF506- TWA, 10); horseshoe fragments (Transitional GF510), plus approx. 3 (see AWC218) unassignable horseshoes (GF501); approx. 9 horseshoe nails (GF445, GF475, GF544); copper alloy piece which may be a decorative fitting, possibly a harness ornament for a horse (GF482 - TWA, 2).

**** iron hinge pivot (GF506) for supporting a door or shutter; latch rest (GF544 - TWA, 6); GF484, a latch not in TWA Report recorded to W outside B3; 3 perforated strap fragments (GF390, 485 & 552) found in the topsoil above the floor of B3; possibly from caskets or chests although, the large example (GF390) is more representative of a hinge (TWA, 6); pinned hinge (GF492).