

New Light on the Origins and Development of Settlement: Shovel Test Pits in Akeley and Whittlebury

It is perhaps worth beginning by reminding ourselves how the Whittlewood Area came to be chosen for study. Our work emanates from the Leverhulme Medieval Settlements and Landscapes Project which covered the four counties of Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire and Leicestershire (including Rutland), the results of which are familiar to us all from the ensuing monograph *Village, Hamlet and Field* originally published in 1997 and republished in paperback last year. An important outcome of this research, undertaken by Carenza Lewis and Patrick Mitchell-Fox (again under the direction of Chris Dyer), was the identification of fourteen individual parishes or groups of parishes which, it was considered, would repay more detailed investigation. The identification of these fourteen areas, of which Whittlewood was one, relied on four principal criteria:

- First, that area should be one where nucleated villages were not the only form of medieval settlement. In other words, the area should contain both nucleated and dispersed settlement
- Secondly, that area should be large enough to set settlement evidence within its broader landscape context
- Thirdly, that the project area should encompass a range of settlements, including those which have been deserted completely and those which have shrunk, as well as those which are still occupied
- Finally, that the area should provide the opportunity to set medieval settlement evolution against a long chronological background, notably against settlement development in the later prehistoric and Romano-British periods.

The observable settlement pattern of Whittlewood, and our subsequent experience over the last eighteen months, has demonstrated that the project area does indeed fit all these criteria and that it provides the perfect opportunity to address many of the outstanding questions relating to medieval rural settlement formation and its subsequent development.

From two perspectives, the settlement pattern of Whittlewood can be thought of as anomalous. Against the three-province model proposed by Roberts and Wrathmell, Whittlewood, with a high concentration of dispersed settlement, lies uneasily within their Central Province, whose dominant settlement pattern is characterized by the nucleated village and its associated field systems. Indeed Roberts and Wrathmell do identify the Whittlewood as an area of higher than average dispersion, a sub-region of their East Midlands sub-province, more akin to nearby areas such as Rockingham Forest and further afield North or High Leicestershire than the settlement patterns seen in the Vale of Aylesbury or Central Northamptonshire. This high level of dispersion might, however, be predictable given the landscape history of the Whittlewood, a former royal forest. Thus conversely, it is the presence of nucleated rather than dispersed settlements which might be considered to be the anomalous elements. Roberts and Wrathmell mention this phenomenon.

'The relationships between the areas dominated by nucleations and the 'woodland' local regions should be noted: it was expected that these latter would stand out as areas dominated by dispersion amid landscapes dominated by villages, but in general, this has not been proved to be the case. The woodland zones support a density of dispersion which differs little from that found in the village areas; what does differ is the concentration of nucleations present and detailed study has already shown us that these are lower in areas where woodlands were present in and before 1086.'

We should, however, be mindful of the datasets used to establish these general trends. Roberts and Wrathmell base their zonal characterization on the Ordnance Survey Old Series one inch to one mile maps drawn up in the nineteenth century. Can we have confidence in transposing this late settlement pattern into earlier periods? In identifying areas for further research, Lewis and Mitchell-Fox exploited a variety of sources of data. Nevertheless they drew most heavily upon modern Ordnance Survey maps, early nineteenth century county

maps, and field records contained with the National Archaeological Record (now National Monuments Record), the county Sites and Monuments Records, and the archives of the Medieval Settlement Research Group. Again, the map evidence is late, and the field observations restricted to surviving earthworks of both shrunken and deserted settlements. Again, we might question again how far back in time we can confidently trace this later pattern of dispersed and nucleated settlement in the Whittlewood area.

Archaeological fieldwork undertaken over the last eighteen months has gone some way to answering these questions. Fieldwalking at Lillingstone Dayrell, for example, has revealed for the first time the general morphology of the now deserted village. At Leckhampstead, additional elements of the medieval settlement plan now lost to the plough can be identified by pottery scatters. In both case, artefactual evidence has been recovered that might also suggest the chronology of settlement formation, a theme which I wish to revisit at the end of this paper. But perhaps the most important evidence has come from our campaign of Shovel Test Pitting in the surviving villages of Akeley, Buckinghamshire and Whittlebury, Northamptonshire. It is this aspect of our research on which I should like to concentrate today.

A word must be said about our methodology, since the term Shovel Test Pit (hereafter STP) is currently used to cover a multitude of approaches. The term originated in the United States where the technique is widely deployed. STPs are used to sample large areas for archaeological features and artefacts. No standard methodology is followed. STPs may range from 300mm-1m in diameter, they may be round or square, and they may be restricted simply to ploughsoil sampling, the approach adopted at Puxton, Somerset, where STPs were excavated along transects running away from the village in pasture fields, or involve stratigraphic excavation to natural. During systematic surveys, STPs might be placed anywhere from 5-50m apart. In all instances, however, the spoil is sieved or screened to enhance artefact recovery. Combinations of approach can be adopted. For example, STPs have been used during the South Cadbury Environs Project to test results from fieldwalking. Initially 30 litres and later 60 litres of soil was sieved through a 10mm mesh from STPs located every 20m along transects set 20m apart. In addition a further 19 STPs measuring 1 x 1m were excavated to natural as controls.

Our methodology, however, follows that adopted by the Shapwick Project. Each STP is 1 x 1m in dimension and is excavated by spit (generally 100mm) unless archaeological stratification or features are identified. Then the STPs is excavated sequentially. The STP is excavated to natural wherever possible. All spoil is sieved (through 13mm mesh). All artefacts are recorded by spit or feature. All features are recorded in plan. After excavation all four faces of the STP are recorded in section. The location of the STPs is largely governed by access to private property within the villages in question. Within open spaces, more systematic STP positioning has been possible. However, the current location and distribution of STPs around are villages may be considered haphazard. Within this random patterning, however, some attempt has been made to located STPs in areas which will provide a general sample for the whole of the area covered by the modern village, and some of the STPs have been purposefully located to test various working hypotheses.

Our sample size remains small. 42 STPs have been excavated: 24 in and around Akeley; 18 in and around Whittlebury. A further campaign is currently being planned for next summer, with addition STPs planned for these two villages, and a major new extension of the methodology into the village of Leckhampstead. For Leckhampstead, our initial approach will be the same as that used in Akeley and Whittlebury, namely the haphazard location of STP dictated by access permission in all parts of the village. In returning to Akeley and Whittlebury, however, our work will be predominantly focused upon areas already identified as of interest, but with a continued random location to act as a control.

Very briefly then, I wish to outline the main findings of this work in the two villages. We shall start with Akeley.

STPs 1 and 13 were located to the north of the Leckhampstead Road in the south-east corner of the present village. STP1 produced 12 sherds of medieval pottery (sandy coarseware, 1100-1400) and a single sherd of Romano-British ware. STP 13 produced a single sherd of medieval shelly ware (1100-1400). In neither case were features nor stratigraphy identifiable. In interpreting these deposits, three additional pieces of information can be brought to bear. First, aerial photographs prior to the construction of the modern houses clearly show two building platforms immediately to the east of STP1. Proximity to former occupation probably explains the size of the medieval sherd count from STP1. Secondly, further work in the garden undertaken by an owner now versed in medieval pottery identification, produced a significant assemblage of large unabraded sherds of medieval pottery again from the back garden, further evidence for the fact that this plot was formerly occupied. The lack of sherd count in STP13, however, reflects its location away from occupation, and is perhaps best explained by the third piece of information, the presence at the back of the garden of residual ridge and furrow. Certainly the deep humic stratigraphy (500mm) suggests that this area had been heavily cultivated. Together the STP evidence and the aerial photograph evidence points towards an isolated medieval toft and croft bound on one side at least by unoccupied but cultivated ground. There is no evidence to suggest that this site was occupied before 1100.

I now turn to a sequence of 5 STPs located in the centre of the village, again north of the Leckhampstead Road. A systematic pattern of STPs was created, each set 5m from its neighbour. STP8 lay closest to the road, STP12 sited nearest the centre of the field. The sherd counts for each STP are revealing. STP8 produced 34 sherds of medieval pottery (shelly wares, sandy wares and Potterspurty wares). STP9, 4 sherds; STP10, 11 sherds; STP11, 18 sherds (all Potterspurty wares), and STP12, 4 sherds of medieval pottery and a single sherd of Romano-British ware. Again then, the sherd count is relatively rich, with a general observable drop off in number with distance from the road. The sherd count suggests occupation fronting onto the Leckhampstead Road. Ridge and furrow identifiable on aerial photographs, but now entirely ploughed out point to the area away from the roadside corridor being cultivated in the medieval period.

STPs 2, 3, 4 and 5 were all located in the central part of the village, within the school grounds, playing fields and meadow. These were all unproductive. STPs 3 and 5 produced no pottery, and STP4 a single sherd of Potterspurty ware. The negative evidence suggests that this area was not intensively exploited during the medieval period. STP2, located close to Church Hill, the road which connects the Main Street with Leckhampstead Road, produced a single sherd of St Neots ware (type 2, 1000-1200). Little can be asserted from this chance find, particularly since the stratigraphy was much disturbed, probably as a result of landscaping associated with the construction of the school.

Two STPs were excavated at the back of Duck End. These lay on a headland associated with ridge and furrow to the north-east surviving within an old nursery. The archaeological deposits in STPs 21 and 22 were very similar, made up of a hard clay loam. Both contained significant quantities of medieval and Romano-British pottery with no modern inclusions. STP21 produced 11 sherds of medieval pottery (sandy coarsewares and Potterspurty wares) and 12 sherds of Romano-British wares. STP22 produced 16 sherds of Potterspurty wares and 16 sherds of Romano-British wares. These were stratigraphically mixed throughout, suggesting disturbance of Romano-British deposits during medieval ploughing. Nevertheless, the amount of Romano-British material might point towards either intensive agricultural activity at this date, or more likely, proximity to an occupation site. Likewise, the medieval sherd count would appear to be high for purely agricultural activity and may reflect proximity to medieval settlement beyond the headland within Duck End itself. Alternatively, medieval material may have accumulated on the headland as a result of manuring practices. Was manure dumped initially on the headland, from whence it was spread on the furlong? Due to the compact nature of the deposits, it was impossible to excavate to natural, despite excavating to a depth of 0.7m.

STPs 6, 7, 14 and 15 were located close to the modern centre of the village. STP6 produced 3 sherds of medieval pottery, STP7 none at all. STP14 produced 4 sherds of medieval

pottery and STP15 a single sherd. Taken together, the results from these 4 STPs suggests that this area of the village was not occupied during the medieval period. Thus the modern focus of the village, the square, does not appear to have been the focus for the medieval village. These findings, however, contrast with the results from STPs 16 and 23, sunk at the back of houses fronting the main street opposite the church. STP16 produced 7 sherds of medieval pottery, although the deposits had been heavily disturbed with the laying of a sewage pipe. STP23 produced a remarkable 72 sherds of medieval pottery, no Romano-British pottery, but a single sherd of Stamford ware (900-1200). Again the deposits were disturbed by pipe laying, but their organic content and depth (820mm +) suggests that this was a midden deposit associated with adjacent occupation. A slight earthwork to the east appears to be the original back boundary of a medieval croft fronting the main street, beyond which ridge and furrow was visible. The pottery evidence suggests that this site was occupied throughout the post-conquest period. The associated sherd of Stamford ware may even point to a pre-conquest foundation date, although it is dangerous to make such an assertion from a single unstratified sherd.

STPs 17, 18 and 19 were specifically located on or close to the curving northern boundary of the churchyard. STP17 produced 9 sherds of medieval pottery and no modern inclusions. STP18 produced 6 sherds of medieval pottery lying over and below a feature identified as an earlier garden path, suggesting significant disturbance of deposits. A single sherd of Romano-British ware came from the lower strata. In addition a single sherd of St Neots ware (type 2, 1000-1200) and a single sherd of Cotswold Type Oolithic ware (975-1150) were recovered from below the level of the path. STP19 was located on the boundary itself. A stone rubble deposit was identified forming the boundary itself. This contained a large amount of medieval material, 14 sherds of pottery and 4 sherds of Romano-British pottery. Overlying these deposits, and disturbed by tree roots, more medieval pottery was recovered and a single sherd of Cotswold-type Oolithic ware. When the stone bank was removed, a feature interpreted as a post-hole was revealed containing a single sherd of Romano-British ware.

STP20, positioned on the line of a small back lane running along the parish boundary to the south of the village, and STP24 located south of Pottery Farm to the north of the village, were excavated as controls for the STPs located within the village. Both failed to produce material earlier than post-medieval in date.

In interpreting these results, we must be aware of the small sample size, however, the following points may be raised, to be tested with further work in the future.

Whilst modern Akeley appears as a tight nucleated settlement, our work suggests a much looser arrangement of buildings in the medieval period. Evidence for occupation comes from the area opposite the churchyard, the church being an obvious settlement focus, and from various locations both north and south of the Leckhampstead Road. In addition to the house platforms close to STP 1, others can be distinguished at the T junction of Church Hill with the Leckhampstead Road. Together with pottery evidence from STP8, we might propose that the road formed an important axis for the development of the village in the post-conquest period. Occupation appears, however, to be sporadic rather than continuous along this line, more akin to settlement patterns classified as 'interrupted rows'. Further evidence from fieldwalking south of the Leckhampstead Road (the lack of medieval pottery) and name evidence from the 1794 Enclosure Map (marking the back lane 'Assart Lane) are indicators for the presence of medieval woodland here. The regular closes, with their isolated building platforms to the south of the Leckhampstead Road may well have their origins in the clearance of small plots of woodland during the expansion of the village. In the north of the village, the pottery evidence also points towards expansion in Duck End. The evidence for occupation may be set against the negative evidence from the STPs. The lack of material from around The Square and within the playing fields suggests that the elements of the settlement need not have been contiguous, but were rather separated by an open space, perhaps in origin a large green. Certainly, there are indications that originally the Leckhampstead Road may have forked at Willows Farm, continuing westwards along the current line of the road, but also heading north-west to meet Chapel Lane south of the sewage works. This would form a large

eye-shaped loop, perhaps in origin a large green, only later brought into the open field system. We might also note that the main road to Buckingham has also moved, the original line identified by the line of the current footpath.

Medieval Akeley therefore appears small and dispersed. The limited chronological evidence we have suggests the establishment of a small community in the vicinity of the churchyard in the century or so before the Norman Conquest, with piecemeal expansion in the centuries following. The focus of this nascent medieval settlement may well have been an existing small enclosure, later to be used as the churchyard, which may have been established by the end of the Romano-British period. The dispersed settlement morphology and the Old English *-leah* place-name element point towards a community carving its living from a wooded landscape at this date. The coincidence of three other indicators suggests that Akeley was in fact a secondary rather than primary settlement. Mark will argue that a reference to the subordination of Akeley church to Leckhampstead suggests that these two parishes should be considered as a single early estate, Leckhampstead being the principal settlement. The absence of pre-tenth century pottery suggests its late foundation. Whilst it has been argued elsewhere that green-side settlement morphology is often to be associated with secondary rather than primary settlement. Indeed within the project area we have another example of this relationship and settlement morphology, at Deanshanger founded from Passenham.

We now turn to Whittlebury. Once again STPs were purposefully spread around the village, and indeed outside it (STP11 – which proved negative). I shall begin the analysis of results in the southern part of the village. Three STPs, nos. 7, 8 and 9 were excavated west of the main street, the Towcester to Buckingham road. STP7 produced 3 sherds of medieval pottery, STP8 none, and STP9 a single sherd. All four sherds were Brill/Boarstall ware (1200-1600). The sum of the information therefore suggests very limited activity during the medieval period in the part of the village.

To the east of the main street, another 3 STPs were excavated, nos. 1, 2, and 15. STP1 was much disturbed, and probably located on a Victorian dump (over 300 sherds of post-medieval and modern pottery). Only two sherds of Potterspury ware were recovered from disturbed spits. Five sherds of medieval pottery came from STP2. Again, the location of the STP, above a post-medieval garden wall reduced the opportunity to recover earlier material. Again, therefore, the evidence points to this area being outside the main focus of the settlement. In contrast, only 100m further north, STP15 was highly productive. 50 sherd of medieval pottery were recovered, together with in-situ medieval features, including a probably floor, with possible associated stakeholes. The STP was dug towards the front on the modern plot, and it appears likely that it was located on the site of a medieval structure. Of interest was the absence, despite the size of the assemblage, of material pre-dating 1200, the majority being Potterpurys wares post-1250.

In the northern part of the village 4 widely separated STPs were dug. STP10 lay at the northernmost periphery of the modern village. Natural was encountered 1m below the present surface. 4 sherds of medieval pottery were recovered, with no modern inclusions. The dark humic quality of the soil, and the close proximity of ridge and furrow in the pasture field adjacent to the garden suggests that this was formerly part of the open fields of the Whittlebury and not the focus of early settlement. Likewise to the north-east, in STP 13, 6 sherds of medieval pottery were recovered. Again, this assemblage should probably be associated with field manuring rather than settlement. Indeed, a post-medieval plough rut proves that this area lay under arable fields before the expansion of the village. STPs 12 and 13 were dug on a small open area within the village. Whilst no features were encountered indicative of occupation, STP12 produced no less than 27 sherds of medieval pottery and STP13 19 sherds. Such counts place these STPs close to medieval occupation or within heavily manured infields. Their location close to the line of the main road, and close to the natural centre of the village, around the junction of the road from Silverstone with the main Towcester to Buckingham road probably suggest the former.

Most of our activity, however focused on the area around the T junction. Perhaps surprisingly, STP5 only produced 6 sherds of medieval pottery, but excavation here was

hampered by the discovery of a live electricity cable and so natural was never reached. STP 6 was also unproductive, with only 3 sherds of medieval date being identified. However, here a cobbled floor of post-medieval date was revealed at 0.5m depth, suggesting that the ground here may have been levelled at a late date and any earlier material removed. In the paddocks behind the cottages facing the junction, however, 3 STPs proved very productive. STP3 produced 34 sherds of medieval pottery and a single sherd of Romano-British ware. This included shelly coarseware which was absent from the STPs in the south of the village. STP 4 revealed no features, but again produced quantities of medieval material (39 sherds, 5 fabric types), whilst STP18 contained 24 sherds of medieval pottery and 2 sherds of Romano-British pottery (disturbed, being found with medieval material at the same level). All three assemblages point to an intensity of medieval activity indicative of settlement.

To the east of the road, a further 2 STPs were excavated, STP16 producing 16 sherds of medieval and a single sherd of Romano-British ware, whilst STP17, excavated on the verge of the road, and close to a pre-Christian burial site, produced 18 sherds of medieval wares, 3 sherds of Romano-British wares and a single sherd of Cotswold-type Oolithic ware.

There can be little doubt, therefore that the main focus of medieval settlement was around the major road junction, on both the east and west of the Towcester-Buckingham road. The area of settlement appears small, with significant and rapid drop-off of sherd count with distance from this node. Two important differences can be discerned in the assemblages from these northern STP with those from the south: first, the range of fabrics is greater in the north than in the south; secondly, and importantly, the chronological range for the fabrics is longer in the north than the south, indicating that this area was occupied before the southern end. The current village morphology, and the evidence from the pottery recovered, both point, therefore to a planned extension of the village southwards along the main artery at some time after 1200 from a tightly clustered settlement around the T junction. We might also note in passing the presence of Romano-British wares in the north and their absence in the south, although it is known that a major Roman building formerly stood below the new development of Park Lodge in the southernmost part of the village.

In order to fully understand the significance of these results, other evidence needs to be integrated. First, the 1608 Whittlewood map depicts the village of Whittlebury very much as it appears today, with the exception of infilling to the north and its modern extension to the south. The current village morphology was thus established by the early modern period. This map also identifies a series of closes north-west of the village called Lady Nether End. On the ground it is possible to identify an important holloway running through these closes and the suggestion of house platforms to the south-west. To the north-east, limestone scatters currently being ploughed out mark the site of further buildings. Lady Nether End is almost certainly a deserted medieval hamlet, although no dating evidence is available for either its foundation or abandonment. A further dispersed settlement element of probable medieval date is the moated site at Lords Field Farm, north of the village, whilst other closes to the north-east might mark the site of an as yet unidentified fourth settlement within the parish. Thus, viewed as a whole, it would appear that settlement in Whittlebury is dispersed in nature and not broadly nucleated as it now appears (and indeed how it appears on nineteenth-century maps).

Secondly, there is compelling field evidence to suggest the existence of a major oval enclosure around the church to the north-west of the village. One half of this enclosure is followed by the road to Silverstone, turning abruptly north as it approaches the church and following a curving line towards Six Oaks Farm. This shape is mirrored by an earthwork visible in the pasture field to the south of the church which may represent the southern extent of the enclosure. This site occupies the highest point of the parish with extensive views to the south and west. It is possible that it is this enclosure which gives Whittlebury its name. Whether this feature is an early medieval *burh* or an earlier enclosure must await further archaeological survey. Nevertheless, its existence explains the remote location of the church away from the focus of medieval settlement, placing this immediately outside its perimeter.

A chronological development can therefore be suggested, to be tested through further work. One, the establishment of the *burh*. Two, the creation of the medieval settlement immediately outside the earlier village focus. And three, the late planned expansion of the village south along the main street after 1200. The relationship between the growth of Whittlebury and the failure of other dispersed settlement elements is currently not understood. Was Lady Nether End abandoned and the population relocated to the southern part of Whittlebury for example? Or are their settlement histories entirely independent?

Our experience in both Akeley and Whittlebury has revealed a complexity of settlement origin and development invisible from modern Ordnance Survey maps or indeed from earlier cartographic sources. In both instances, the two villages appear to have been established well before the Norman Conquest. In both instances, the seemingly nucleated modern appearance of the settlements masks an earlier more dispersed morphology. Clearly this has important implications, not only for our understanding of how our settlements within the project area developed, but also for our reading of Roberts and Wrathmell's three province identification. In fact, far from being a project area which contains both nucleated and dispersed settlement, we are faced with the possibility that in origin all our settlements are broadly dispersed. Are we perhaps looking at that classic dispersed settlement pattern so often associated with heavily wooded areas?

So I wish to conclude with a couple of remarks regarding settlement pattern within the project area as a whole, and the possible origins of this pattern. We can identify dispersed settlement elements in all our parishes. In Wicken, for example, we have a double settlement, Wicken Dyve and Wicken Hamon, with satellite hamlets, single farmsteads or moated sites at Elm Green and Dagnall. In Stowe, we have four townships, those of Stowe itself, Lamport, Boycott (formerly a detached part of Oxfordshire) and Dadford. In the former parish of Passenham, we have the secondary sites of Deanshanger and Puxley. In Potterpurty we have the deserted sites of Furtho and Temple End. The morphology of these sites remains to be fully understood, but it remains quite possible that even apparently nucleated settlements will reveal an earlier dispersed origin as in the case of Akeley and Whittlebury.

Of the origins of this settlement pattern, three main points may be raised. First, the medieval settlement pattern appears to bear little relationship with the Romano-British settlement pattern, although we may note that major Roman buildings are to be found on the peripheries of both Whittlebury and Deanshanger. Our evidence points to very dispersed settlement at this period, fieldwalking identifying small 'farmstead' sites on average every 800m across the whole landscape. Their contemporaneity has yet to be established, so attempts to estimate Romano-British population density would be unwise. This dispersed settlement pattern, however, does not appear to have influenced the early medieval settlement pattern. In no instances has early-middle Saxon pottery been found on top of, or adjacent to, the lesser Romano-British settlement sites. Indeed, the vast majority of sherds of this date come from close to later settlement nodes. In Leckhampstead, for example, early-middle Saxon pottery has been recovered from under three later medieval occupation sites, whilst further sherds were recovered from below later Lillingstone Dayrell. Passenham sits on top of an early-middle Saxon cemetery. The almost total absence of pottery dating 450-800AD away from later settlement is of great interest. Whether such a pattern suggests continuity of occupation and a stability of settlement pattern is difficult to ascertain. It is quite possible that sherds of friable handmade vessels would disintegrate quickly in areas subject to the attrition of the medieval plough, but survive under later buildings away from it, thus skewing our distribution. However, there is a coincidence also of pottery dated 800-1100 with these later settlement sites and again a dearth of evidence outside them. We can cite as examples, Leckhampstead, Akeley, Whittlebury, and Lillingstone Dayrell. We might propose, therefore, that the major settlement elements of the medieval period, lie on top of a late early medieval settlement pattern, established at least by 1000 if not earlier. These findings suggest that the dispersed settlement pattern of Whittlewood was established prior to the Norman Conquest, and is not the result of later assarting and woodland clearance. Clearly there are example of later dispersed settlement elements being intercalated amongst this established pattern. Moated sites may be one of these later additions, whilst sites such as Dagnall in Wicken

appear to have been imposed upon an earlier field furlong. The well-documented establishment of Stockholt manor from Akeley in the first half of the thirteenth century is another good example, whilst lodges at Shrob and Hanger in Deanshanger may well relate to the post-conquest management of the royal forest.

The combination of fieldwalking, the identification of earthworks, and notably Shovel Test Pitting, is thus beginning to reveal a complex pattern of dispersed settlement across the whole project area whose origins might largely be traced to the pre-conquest period. Our work on the landuse of Whittlewood sets this settlement formation within a changing, but still poorly understood, landscape history. Much more work needs to be done, but I hope this paper has at least hinted at how far we have come in eighteen months.