

## The Archaeology of Passenham parish

Passenham village lies immediately north of the River Great Ouse, 1.5km south-west of Stony Stratford (SP 780 395). The modern settlement is comprised of a church, manor house, farm, rectory, mill and a few houses all standing west of a small lane leading to bridging point over the river.

Any review of the archaeology of Passenham must begin with the definition of its spatial bounds since the ecclesiastical parish no longer exists. The former parish has been totally subsumed by the modern civil parishes of Deanshanger and Old Stratford. The boundary of Deanshanger is, with the exception of its south-eastern quarter, coterminus with Passenham, and lies wholly within this former parish. Similarly those parts of Passenham lying outside Deanshanger are now entirely contained within Old Stratford parish, but the latter now encompasses areas to the east of Watling Street (A5) which formerly lay within the parishes of Cosgrove and Furtho. These parts of the new parish are not considered here.

Beginning at the point where Watling Street crosses the Great Ouse, the southern part of the former parish extends to, and follows, the river upstream over a distance of some 2.5km. The boundary then turns sharply north-west following a dog-legged course across fields to the Buckingham Road (A422) before following an anciently formed hedgeline, winding north to meet King's Brook immediately west of Deanshanger. The boundary then turns west-north-west to follow this water course again for nearly 2.5km. The extreme north-western part of the parish forms a thin salient in country, today and formerly, dominated by woodland. Indeed the parish boundary follows some of the internal divisions of Whittlewood Forest, notably east along the southern extent of The Ridges and thence along the northern and eastern limits of Redmore Copse. From here the parish boundary follows the road system, with small deviations to a point north of Puxley, where it dives south for over 1km before returning north and then east to rejoin Watling Street which it follows south-east to its origin.

The line of the boundary, and the features which it respects, provide clues to its origins. Clearly the most dominant elements are natural, the Great Ouse itself, and its major tributary, King's Brook. Elsewhere, however, the coincidence of the boundary with man-made features raises the question of precedence. Were these features in existence and thus followed by the boundary, or is the position of these features dictated by the already established boundary? These elements include:

- the dog-legged section dividing Passenham from Wicken parish – does this suggest a boundary following furlong boundaries?
- the sinuous course following the ancient hedgeline north of the Buckingham Road – is this an old enclosure or a woodland boundary?
- the banks and ditches of the Whittlewood copses in the north-west of the parish
- the road system north of Puxley – is this respecting the detached portion of Cosgrove parish named Browne's Wood Common on the c. 1608 Whittlewood map?
- Watling Street itself

A major source for the chronological development of this territorial arrangement is the contested Deanshanger Charter dated 937. This records the grant of land by Aethelstan to Sigulf at *Niwantune*. Previously thought to relate to Hackthorn, Lincolnshire, the charter has also been linked with Deanshanger and has been accepted so to do by Riden in his forthcoming VCH volume.<sup>1</sup> He follows the interpretation given by Brown and Roberts, who in turn follow that given by Gover *et al.*<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> VCH Northamptonshire 6

<sup>2</sup> Brown, O.F. and Roberts, G.J. 1973 *Passenham. The history of a forest village* (Phillimore, Chichester) following Gover, J.E.B., Allen Mawer, and Stenton, F.M., *The Place Names of Northamptonshire* EPNS 10 (1933). Brown and Roberts' translation reads: 'The boundaries run from stanweg along the slaed to the foul rod, thence along the slaed to Dinneshangran, and out through Dengyth's grove to the hawthorn, thence to the hloew and

'From Watling Street through Shrob Woods to a clearing, then turning left down by the Hayes to Deanshanger, across the Buckingham Road to the Brook next to Drinall, and by this to the Ouse; thence by the River and the old South Field to the boundary with Wicken Parish, sharp right turn to follow this to the edge of Whittlewood. Thence following the edge of the wood to Puxley and Brownswood and then by the kink in the Parish boundary returning to the Watling Street.'

This version was critically examined by Green who identified various problems.<sup>3</sup> The first is the association of Watling Street with *stanweg*, noting that in other charter boundary clauses, for example that for Church Stowe dated 944, Watling Street is specifically named (*Watlingstraet*). Green argues that *stanweg* must, therefore, refer to another metalled road of Roman origin. Secondly, Green is uneasy with the translation of *Branteswyrth* with Brownswood, suggesting as better alternatives either 'Brant's enclosure' or more likely 'burnt-out byre or homestead'. He then provides another account of the boundary which can be precised thus. Starting 300 yards north of the A422, at a point where Margary identified a section of metalled road (*stanweg*) in a ditch cut, he follows the current parish boundary north towards Dovehouse Farm in the south-west of the village of Deanshanger. From here the boundary follows the road, towards a mound located on the site of the Roman villa below the modern school (first *hloew*). From thence, the boundary continues to the elbow of the unstraightened Buckingham Road before descending to the Ouse at the point where another prominent mound (second *hloew*) can be located on the ground (SP 777 393).<sup>4</sup> Here the boundary follows the river upstream, around South Field,<sup>5</sup> to the Wicken parish boundary. It turns sharply away from the river (*wyrtwalu*) to Winterbrook (*withy* – literally 'willow', often an osier willow and thus closely linked with water) where it takes a second sharp turn (second *wyrtwalu*) passing *Branteswyrth* before completing its circuit. Green associates *Branteswyrth* with a patch of dark earth immediately to the west of the current parish boundary close to the Grand Union canal (SP 763 385).

Whilst Brown and Roberts' interpretation of the boundary describes an area more closely linked to the later parish of Deanshanger, it is highly conjectural and, at the very least, employs creative interpretation of the topographical features mentioned. That Deanshanger parish is a twentieth-century creation with no historic precedents further weaken their argument. Green's interpretation, on the other hand, is more compact, accounting for each element in turn, and crucially linking these with physical features that still survive in the modern landscape. On balance, therefore, Green's bounds appear to recommend themselves more than those of Brown and Roberts, particularly when viewed from an archaeological rather than historical perspective.

If the charter can be shown conclusively to relate to Deanshanger, and if the boundaries can be firmly located on the ground, then the charter provides valuable information relating to the tenth-century landscape.<sup>6</sup> Notable is the reference to South Field (*suthfeld*) suggesting the existence of common **fields** by this point (why identify it as South Field if this was the only field?), and suggesting that the kinks in the boundary separating this estate from Wicken might indeed be furlong limits. It is interesting to note, however, that this boundary is in places not coterminus with furlongs visible from aerial photographs. Both interpretations

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so to the elder-tree and to the bank of the Ouse by Aelferth's hloew, thence to suthfeld and so by the wyrtwalu to the efsan, thence to the withy and so by the wyrtwalu to the boundary-thorn on the east side of Branteswyrth and thence to the stanweg.'

<sup>3</sup> Green, C. 'The Dark Ages: a commentary', *Wolverton and District Archaeological Journal* 2 (1969), 25-31.

<sup>4</sup> This mound is described by RCHM(E): 'The mound is circular, 3m in diam. And less than 1m high. No date or function can be assigned to it.' RCHM(E) *South-West Northamptonshire*, 110.

<sup>5</sup> South Field is so named on the c. 1608 map of Whittlewood Forest (NRO 4120)

<sup>6</sup> *A critical task for the project must be to establish the authenticity of this charter boundary clause and the claim made for its association with Deanshanger. We might like to try and rewalk the various suggested bounds in an effort to achieve this.*

would appear to suggest that the modern parish boundary to the south was established by 937 at the latest and that the open fields predate its creation. It can also be remarked that woodland elements do not feature strongly in the text. Dengyth's grove suggests an isolated wooded stand, whilst other elements such as the hawthorn and elder tree can only have been distinct landscape markers in a non-wooded context.<sup>7</sup> Again, this probably places the bounds south of Whittlewood forest rather than incorporating large parts of it as Brown and Roberts' interpretation insists.

Of the archaeology of Passenham, little systematic research has been undertaken. The parish remains to be surveyed thoroughly by the Whittlewood Project and only small parts of the extreme north-east of the parish have been fieldwalked by Brikbeck College. This brief survey of the current state of archaeological knowledge, which covers the period c. 500BC - c. 1500AD, is treated chronologically, but long-term trends and inter-period associations will be noted as and when they occur. Emphasis is placed on archaeological information which might potentially help to explain observed medieval patterns of settlement and landuse. Less attention is given to single, often poorly accounted, chance finds.

Evidence for the occupation of Passenham in the Iron Age is restricted to the identification of three firmly established, and one probable, settlement sites. Three lie in the extreme north-west of the parish, within the narrow salient. The first (SP 7370 4178), which produced quantities of pottery, lies immediately north of current limit of East Ashwells Copse on the Wakefield Lodge Estate.<sup>8</sup> The site would have formerly lain within the medieval copse. The second (SP 7291 4204) is located 850m north-west of the first by Briary Wood,<sup>9</sup> whilst the third was discovered north-east of Forest Farm (SP 743 414). All three are in areas later colonised by woodland as depicted on the c. 1608 Whittlewood map. The fourth (SP 770 396), immediately south-east of Deanshanger, comprises a circular post-holed structure with associated pottery.<sup>10</sup> The RCHM(E) survey of south-west Northamptonshire also suggests a ditched trackway of probable prehistoric origin north of Shrob Lodge Farm (SP 770 417) running north-east to Watling Street over a distance of 300m and identifiable from aerial photographs.<sup>11</sup> This is certainly, however, surviving evidence for copse ditches relating to blocks of woodland named Old and Young Castle Coppices shown on the c. 1608 Whittlewood map. Nevertheless, there is an outside possibility that the positioning of this later arrangement may have been dictated by an earlier feature.

Whilst the evidence is sparse, Mynard accepts that finds of small quantities of both hand-made and turned pottery of this date do probably indicate settlement sites rather than less-permanent occupation or chance losses.<sup>12</sup> His more regional survey of North Buckinghamshire showed settlement at this period exhibiting a preference for the low fertile river valleys, as is the case for the Deanshanger site, but this is tempered by an imbalance in archaeological research in these areas in advance of gravel extraction. Importantly, he also noted a class of settlement on higher clay-dominated ground. East Ashwells, Briary Wood, and Forest Farm are all located on the Great Ouse-Tove watershed on Boulder Clay. This limited information, in combination with data from neighbouring parishes (for example sites

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<sup>7</sup> The tree species encountered in this boundary clause are some of the most regularly occurring in the whole corpus of Anglo-Saxon and Welsh charters. Rackham notes the following frequencies of occurrence described as percentages: Thorn, 38.7% (the most common); Willow, 7.6%; and Elder 7.0%. These species are, therefore, unremarkable and do not appear to have been identified for their rarity value. This must add weight to the argument that they only noteworthy because they stand in isolation along the boundary in question. Indeed Rackham notes that Thorn and Elder are especially associated with lack of woodland and are most abundant on downland and amongst open fields. Rackham, O. *The History of the Countryside*, 211-12. (1986, London).

<sup>8</sup> RCHM(E) *South-West Northamptonshire*, 41.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, 41.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, 41.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, 108.

<sup>12</sup> Mynard, D. 'Archaeology of North Bucks', *Wolverton and District Archaeological Society Journal* **2**, 18-23.

north of Knotwood Farm, Potterspurly immediately east of Watling Street and Old Tun Copse, Whittlebury, suggest a fairly densely populated zone in the late Iron Age, with exploitation of both light and heavy soils alike. The regularity of settlement might also suggest a landscape cleared in part of woodland to provide the space for the arable fields which must have been associated with these individual settlements, but no evidence for prehistoric field systems has been found, either from fieldwork or from study of aerial photographs.

There appears to be evidence for two cases of continuity of settlement from the Iron Age to the Roman period. At Briary Wood (SP 7291 4204), a settlement area of 30m x 90m, containing a number of floor surfaces, was identified and quantities of coarse and samian wares, stone, ash, wall-plaster and coins were recovered. Adjacent to the site, heaps of worked limestone blocks, apparently cleared from its surface to avoid unnecessary damage to the plough, were observed during the Whittlewood Project's woodland survey. It has been suggested that this collection of crude buildings may have been the *casae* of native workers servicing more important Roman buildings at Bradlem Pond and Wakefield Lodge, both within 2km of this site.<sup>13</sup> Similarly at Deanshanger the Iron Age material was found in association with later Roman occupation.<sup>14</sup> Here the parts of the ground plan of a stone-built corridor villa, and other buildings grouped around a 75m x 60m courtyard have been discovered. The pottery evidence suggests continuous occupation from the first century through to the third century, although later evidence suggest a more agricultural/industrial function for the site as attested by corn-drying ovens, metal-working hearths and a large barn measuring 13m x 21m. Another settlement site is suggested just south-east of Passenham (SP 783 393) but the material was found in dredging detritus and cannot be securely located.<sup>15</sup> But Roman activity in or near Passenham itself is further suggested by the discovery of an important hoard located in Windmill Field immediately north of the village.<sup>16</sup> Two other concentrations of Roman material may be noted with the parish: the first at Puxley (SP 744 415 - 777 414) was identified during pipelaying and should probably be linked with a nearby settlement site;<sup>17</sup> the second is a collection of coins and other metal artefacts apparently purposely deposited at Holywell (SP 7605 4206), which might be best interpreted as a religious site.<sup>18</sup> Further Roman sites are known immediately east of Watling Street in Old Stratford parish, at Firs Farm (SP 781 412), Knotwood Farm (SP 772 442) and Dogsmouth Bridge (SP 779 416), and at Mount Mill Farm, Wicken (SP 764 377) but these lie outside the scope of this discussion.

The rise in the number of settlement sites during the Roman period, when compared with the earlier period, probably accurately mirrors a rise in population at this point. This may have been accompanied by more intensive exploitation of the landscape. Certainly the ubiquitous discovery of low-density pottery scatters dating to this period suggests large areas under cultivation, even in areas that were later to be wooded. Fieldwalking at Forest Farm by the Whittlewood Project produced Roman material but no medieval artefacts in an area that is depicted on the c. 1608 Whittlewood map as part of the copse system. Whether Roman material should be related only to agricultural practice or can be linked with industrial activity remains to be answered. Of the known settlement sites, however, there is clear evidence for a rural hierarchy, with villa sites served by communities of native workers in secondary settlements as at Briary Wood. The apparent simple continuity of settlement pattern, however, is more complicated than it first seems. High-status Roman buildings only appear to occupy earlier sites where these lie on the lighter soils. So at Deanshanger, the villa and Iron Age structures are located on river gravels. Similarly the buildings at Wakefield Lodge and Bradlem Pond, immediately north of Passenham, are both located on limestone outcrops. At Briary Wood, however, on Boulder Clay, the Roman settlement is of lower status. This preference for different geologies has been further borne out by fieldwork undertaken by the Whittlewood Project in other parts of the wider study area. In Leckhampstead and

<sup>13</sup> Green, C. 'Upper Ouse Valley: the Roman scene', *Wolverton Historical Journal* 1970, 55-58.

<sup>14</sup> RCHM(E) *op. cit.*, 41.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, 109.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, 108.

<sup>17</sup> *Northamptonshire Archaeology*, date and page nos.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, date and page nos.

Lillingstone Lovell, other Romano-British farmstead sites, producing both fine and coarse Roman wares but without building materials (suggesting wooden superstructures), have been identified on the Boulder Clays, but to date no evidence for high-status occupation has been encountered.

Generalised assumptions relating to the whole of the study area in the Roman period, taken from the example of Passenham, are fraught with danger. Passenham need not be representative. Indeed the proximity to Watling Street almost certainly makes it different from parishes more distant from this major artery. The Watling Street corridor is certainly likely to have attracted more intense occupation than those areas away from this access route, so calculations of population size and settlement density might overstate the overall picture. The type of occupation might also be different, perhaps linked more closely with the small Roman town of Towcester (Lactodorum) and the urban economy than to exploitation of the countryside. Nevertheless, the image of Roman Whittlewood, and Passenham in particular, appears to be one of a large population, living in close proximity, but in settlements of varying and ordered rank, served by a network of major and minor routes, in a landscape largely clear of woodland with most available space exploited for arable return. It was this type of infrastructure on which later generations would have built.

Early medieval evidence is restricted with one exception to chance finds, for example a silver penny of Eadgar, issued 973-5 from the Northampton mint found close to the Briary Wood site (SP 729 419),<sup>19</sup> and an unlocated find of two sherds of St Neots ware and a primary *sceat* of Porcupine type dated c. 690-725.<sup>20</sup> Saxon material is also said to have come from Puxley, found during the laying of a pipeline (SP 744 425 – 777 414).<sup>21</sup> The exception, however, is an important one. In three places in and around Passenham village skeletons of early medieval date have been found.<sup>22</sup> Seven skeletons were discovered during building work at the Rectory, south of the church. Further human remains are reported to have been found 400m north of the church and a further fifty were found when a vault was prepared within the church itself. Whilst dating is difficult, some burials have been found in association with fifth-century pottery.

The current state of archaeological research in Passenham, therefore, does not inform on the landscape and settlement pattern of this period. The three principal settlements within the parish do, however, all carry names which imply early medieval foundation – Passenham (Passa's *hamm*), Deanshanger (Dyne's *hangra*), and Puxley (Pucca's or Goblin's *leah*).<sup>23</sup> All three occupy the best soils.<sup>24</sup> The geology of Passenham is dominated by heavy Boulder Clays. This covers the whole of the north-western part of the parish and much of the central region around Puxley Grange Farm to Old Stratford. The lighter esturine soils are restricted to the Great Ouse floodplain, whilst tributaries to this river such as King's Brook and an unnamed stream passing through Puxley to Dogsmouth Brook have exposed areas of underlying limestone and outcrops of sands and gravels. Passenham sits on first terrace soils above the alluvium of the flood zone. Deanshanger occupies a central position within a large outcrop of Blisworth and Upper Esturine limestone, whilst parts of the modern dispersed settlement of Puxley are found similarly on Blisworth limestone.

This correlation between geology and early medieval settlement pattern is clearly of note. Neighbouring settlements exhibit the same preference for better soils – Potterspurty and Wicken are both located on limestone, whilst the lodge at Shrob is similarly associated with a

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<sup>19</sup> *Northamptonshire Archaeology* date and page nos.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Northamptonshire Archaeology* date and page nos.

<sup>22</sup> RCHM(E) *op. cit.*, 109-110

<sup>23</sup> Gover, J.E.B. *et al.*, *op. cit.*, 101 ff. First mentions and forms of names are as follows: Passenham – Passanhamme, 925; Deanshanger – Dinneshangra, c. 937; Puxley – Pocheslei, 1086.

<sup>24</sup> British Geological Survey One-Inch Series, Sheet No. 202 *Towcester* 1969. It should be noted that the southern part of Deanshanger parish is included on Sheet No. 219 which is in draft but has not been published.

small finger of exposed limestone. Early medieval settlements, therefore, occupy the same soils as their high-status Roman predecessors. The question of continuity, however, remains unanswered. That these sites occupy the same area need not suggest continuity between periods. Rather it might be argued that the pattern is dictated more by the geology rather than constant occupation. Indeed, occupation, lengthy abandonment, and then recolonisation of similar soils would produce the same pattern. The juxtaposition of villa and medieval village may thus be a product of independent decision making by generations of settlers unaware of previous practice. On the other hand, it might indeed suggest that the infrastructure left by the Romans was to influence later settlement patterns.

Further evidence for pre-conquest settlement and landuse is elusive. The church, for example, which may preserve late Saxon fabric, does not in this instance. At Passenham, the church dedication to St Guthlac, an eighth-century saint whose popularity rose in the tenth and eleventh centuries,<sup>25</sup> may allude to settlement and the establishment of a church at this date, as does Edward the Elder's decision to stay at Passenham during the refortification of Towcester in 925 as described in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.<sup>26</sup> But a survey of the church reveals no early work. In the nave, parts of the north wall, including a dressed stone course and the piscina, are thought to belong to the earliest stone-built church, probably constructed during the twelfth century and it is suggested that the south wall too may belong to this structure. Around 1300 Early English windows appear to have been inserted into the north and south walls. A further one hundred years later, the windows in the south wall were replaced by others in the Decorated style, and further storeys were added to the tower at the west end.<sup>27</sup> This is all that remains of the medieval fabric since the church was later to undergo substantial changes in the seventeenth century, particularly in the chancel,<sup>28</sup> and the nave roof required rebuilding after the collapse of the spire capping the tower at the west end.

The church does, however, offer an insight into later medieval Passenham. There appears to be no evidence, for example of the lengthening of the nave which might accompany major population expansion. Nor, with the exception of the piecemeal replacement of windows to the fashions of the time, is there any evidence for a substantial growth of wealth, although some of the changes can be associated with changes in lordship, notably in the seventeenth century. The limited evidence to be gleaned from the church thus suggests a stable community at Passenham, whose fortunes and size changed little over the medieval centuries.

Stability in population, however, is not mirrored by a continuity in the form of the settlement. The current manor house lies immediately to the north of the church. The oldest parts of this building appear to date from the seventeenth century and should probably be linked with the reorganisation of the estate undertaken by Sir Robert Banastre.<sup>29</sup> The c. 1608 map of Whittlewood forest depicts a house on this site but this is dwarfed by both the rectory to the south of the church and another building lying east north-east of the mill and should not be seen as the principal seat. This, in all probability, is the second house noted above, standing alone to the east of the village. This appears to be positioned adjacent to an earlier manorial site surrounded by a rectangular moat (SP 7825 3940). This is still visible on aerial photographs. The site was partially excavated in 1967, revealing good-quality building materials, and pottery said to date from the second half of the thirteenth century.<sup>30</sup> That no post-medieval structures were encountered, and that no post-medieval artefacts were recovered, suggests that the building shown on the c. 1608 map was established outside the

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<sup>25</sup> Fletcher, R. *Who's Who in Roman Britain and Anglo-Saxon England*, 67-8 (1989, Exeter).

<sup>26</sup> *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Whitlock, D. ed.), 66, quoted in *VCH Northamptonshire* 6.

<sup>27</sup> Brown, O.F. 'The nave at Passenham', *Wolverton and District Archaeological Society Journal* 1 (1968), 36-42.

<sup>28</sup> Brown, O.F. 'The chancel at Passenham', *Wolverton and District Archaeological Society Newsletter* 11 (1967), 34-40.

<sup>29</sup> *VCH Northamptonshire* 6.

<sup>30</sup> Mynard, D. 'Passenham', *Wolverton and District Archaeological Society Journal* 1 (1967), 12-13. Cited in RCHM(E) *op. cit.*, 110.

moated area, although its precise location remains ambiguous from simply the cartographic evidence alone. The house is shown standing back from the lane leading to the bridging point over the Great Ouse, very close to the moated site. It might be suggested that the late medieval building stood immediately south of the moat, itself forming part of the gardens associated with the later structure.<sup>31</sup>

Today, all the houses in the village of Passenham lie to the south-west of the lane. There is evidence, however, for the location of a further seven buildings on the opposite side running from the current Manor House past the church towards the mill. These are defined by low banks or scarps, together with limited traces of former closes backing onto the ridge and furrow of the former open fields.<sup>32</sup> The Royal Commission survey also suggested that further house platforms might be observed in the gardens east of the Manor House, south-east of the road, but the location of this is not shown on their earthwork survey of the village.

Settlement evidence for Deanshanger and Puxley is less forthcoming. Whilst at Deanshanger the green around which the early settlement appears to have been founded is visible in the modern road pattern, domestic and industrial infilling and suburban expansion have masked almost all evidence of earlier arrangements. It is possible, however, to identify some of the subdivision of plots, notably north of the green, with parcels shown on the c. 1608 Whittlewood map. Whether these have medieval origins, however, remains open to question. Chance finds from the village, whilst of interest, are unable to further elucidate on the origins and development of Deanshanger.<sup>33</sup> Puxley, too, has frustratingly little known archaeology and it is difficult to establish the origins or nature of the settlement although it is presumed that Puxley was, and remained, a relatively small dispersed forest-edge settlement with no obvious centre. Certainly no earthwork remains have been discovered on the ground and study of aerial photographs has been unable to identify house platforms or other features associated with settlement.<sup>34</sup>

A large area to the east of Green Farm, Puxley, was fieldwalked by Birkbeck College as part of its Towcester Hinterland project. No medieval pottery was recovered although a scattern of limestone, tentatively suggested as a former house platform was observed at SP 7613 4195, just south of the stream draining into Dogsmouth Brook.<sup>35</sup> This lies central to an area of early irregular enclosures shown on the c. 1608 Whittlewood map. At this point there is a curious kink in one of the field boundaries, although the map does not show any building here. The field immediately south-east of the moated site (SP 764 423) on Watling Street was also surveyed. This field is now crossed between Potterspurty and Deanshanger parish boundary. One hundred metres south-west of the moated site (SP 763 422) a concentration of 200g of medieval pottery was recovered perhaps suggesting a settlement associated with the high-status site. A further two bags of medieval pottery from this area (SP 761 421 and SP 762 421) are housed in the Central Museum, Northampton although the circumstances of their discovery are unknown.<sup>36</sup>

The moated site, itself, now in Potterspurty parish, is not easily understood. This area was not mapped on the c. 1608 Whittlewood map, apparently being part of Browne's Wood Green, a

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<sup>31</sup> *I am trying to establish where the material recovered from this excavation may now be housed. It seems likely that the late thirteenth-century date is based on the presence of Potterspurty wares but this needs to be checked. The short notice of excavation, which records little more than has been presented here, suggests that the structures lie just below the surface. If this is the case, geophysics might produce a good ground plan of any surviving structures within the moat, and should also detect the footprint of the building shown on the Whittlewood map.*

<sup>32</sup> RCHM(E) *op. cit.* 109-10

<sup>33</sup> These include a lead seal matrix presented at the Whittlebury open day.

<sup>34</sup> RCHM(E) *op. cit.* 41.

<sup>35</sup> Pers. Comm. Pat Lawrence. *A summary of the archaeological fieldwork conducted in the parishes of Deanshanger, Furtho & Potterspurty by students of Birkbeck College, University of London between 1994-1998.*

<sup>36</sup> Central Museum, Northampton, temporary accession nos. F149 and F150.

detached part of Cosgrove parish. Later maps, however, suggest that the Cosgrove portion was defined by the loop of the modern road system and did not include the wedge-shaped parcel lying south of the road and north of the stream within which the moated site is located. The area is not part of Passenham at the time of the Tithe map, nor is it part of the estate of Potterspury mapped in 1727. It is unlikely that the area was extra-parochial, thus the more likely explanation is that it was either part of the non-titheable part of Passenham, later to be transferred to Potterspury, or that it was indeed part of Cosgrove and that this had contracted before the eighteenth-century? map was drawn up. If the former, there is an outside chance that this moated site should be associated with Puxley, and may have been one of its manorial centres. Indeed it may have been the location of the lodge linked with the office of steward of the royal forest, later transferred to Wakefield. Several forest or hunting lodges are known to have been moated, for instance King John's lodge at Writtle, Essex.<sup>37</sup>

Archaeological evidence for the open fields of Passenham, Deanshanger and Puxley is limited. Modern ploughing and gravel extraction along the Great Ouse floodplain have removed large areas of ridge and furrow. Survival in Deanshanger's South Field is piecemeal, with the major survivals lying either side of the Grand Union Canal (SP 763 391 and SP 768 393) directly south of the village and towards the river (SP 773 383). Eight individual furlongs can be made out. Only small fragments of ridge and furrow can be discerned in Deanshanger Field (SP 757 398) at the extreme southern extents of Kings Hill Field (SP 774 400) and North Field (SP 773 397) where two interlocking furlongs set at right angles to each other occupy the bend in old Buckingham Road. South of this road into Breach Field, the furlongs survive well (SP 773 396). Again eight furlongs can be identified, all of which appear to be orientated to drain into water courses. Ridge and furrow extends, according to the RCHM(E) survey of the village into Kiln Piece immediately north-west of the village. In the eastern half of Little Stow Field, there is evidence for at least five interlocking furlongs (centred on SP 781 398), but no survival in the western half bounding the Buckingham Road. The furlongs again, appear to drain towards the meadowland on the banks of the Great Ouse. Indeed the interface between meadow and open field is clearly demarked and follows the bounds of the field named on the Tithe, and depicted on the c. 1608 Whittlewood Map, as 'Shoulder of Mutton'. Ridge and Furrow also extends into Robins Leys to the backs of the closes associated with the string of house platforms lying north-east of the lane through Passenham (SP 782 394). Even less survives of the Puxley field system, with only one area now, lost to ploughing, south of Grange Farm showing on aerial photographs (SP 759 413).

Whilst the archaeological evidence from the parish is far from extensive, the general organisation of Passenham, Deanshanger and Puxley in the later middle ages, together with their fields, meadow and woodland resources, can begin to be established. More work is certainly required to understand fully the nature of the settlement at Puxley and to identify its common fields. Further work in Deanshanger is also vital if a reconstruction of the village is to be undertaken. In all cases, there appears to be reasonable evidence for a reconstruction of the Roman infrastructure but there is little evidence to help establish the chronology of both landscape and settlement development. Both Puxley and Passenham offer the opportunity for focused archaeological fieldwork designed to answer some of these questions and would be useful foci for research in the second phase of the project.

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<sup>37</sup> *This paragraph is entire supposition but I would value discussion of the suggestions at the Board Meeting.*