

**Test Pit Results from Wicken (formerly Wyke Hamon and Wyke Dyve), Northamptonshire  
June-July 2004**

**R.L.C. Jones  
University of Leicester**

**September 2004**

## Introduction

During June and July 2004, 34 test pits measuring 1 x 1 m, and excavated to natural, were opened in and around Wicken (formerly Wyke Hamon and Wyke Dyve), Northamptonshire. This more than doubled the number of test pits previously excavated in the village in 2003, producing what is now considered to be a statistically significant sample. Important gaps do still remain in the distribution of these test pits across the village, so whilst a 'total' history of the origins and development of the two villages is presented here, there is the possibility that further investigation will reveal new insights which might force a revision of the current picture. Despite these lacunae, the recovery of quantities of pottery dating from the Iron Age (600BC-43AD) through to the present day, together with the identification of a number of historic features including walls and floors, provides the basis on which a reconstruction of the changing morphology of the two villages can be made. In addition to this work, the open area excavation of features previously identified through test pitting in 2003 at Glebe Cottage, Leckhampstead Road, provides additional contextual evidence for an important stage in the development of Wyke Hamon. The results from this excavation will be reported separately, but their implications for our understanding of the village as a whole are included here in the conclusion. Earthwork surveys and geophysical surveys were also carried out in *The Warren*, Wyke Dyve, and in *The Pasture* opposite Home Farm, Wyke Hamon. In both areas the results of these surveys were investigated through test pitting.

## Acknowledgements

It is perhaps unusual to begin by acknowledging the help that has been forthcoming which has allowed this work to take place. However, this research has caused significant disruption to many since it has had to be undertaken for the most part within privately-owned gardens. The project team would therefore like to thank all those who opened their properties to investigation, without which none of the work would have been possible. Furthermore we would like to thank the Merchant Venturers and Mr Edmondson for their permission to survey and excavate within *The Pasture* opposite Home Farm. Final thanks are reserved for the diggers themselves, students of the universities of Leicester, Southampton and Sheffield, for all their hard work. We hope that the results presented here are of interest and in some way act as a recompense for the disturbance caused.

## Metadata

Archaeological research is based on the recovery, analysis and interpretation of physical evidence lost, discarded or abandoned by past societies. At best the archaeological evidence provides a fragmentary record of this earlier activity. Materials were reused or recycled and thus did not enter the record; other artefacts will not have survived deposition, for example objects made of organic matter such as wood or bone if conditions are not appropriate. This partial view of the past is further exaggerated by decisions made to investigate some areas and not others, decisions which may be imposed upon the excavator due to current conditions. This is particularly the case when investigating living villages. Those very areas where evidence for past activity is to be sought are those areas which are presently occupied by the houses and gardens of the latest generation of village inhabitants. Valuable evidence will remain buried and inaccessible below these houses, other evidence will have been destroyed by their construction. Access will be granted to some areas of the village and not others. And the need to respect private property dictates the use of a sampling method rather than the investigation of extensive areas. There are, then, severe limitations to the archaeological evidence. It is thus important to establish the quality and quantity of the information on which any interpretation will be based. This is the metadata, to adopt modern jargon, the database of information on which the grander broad brush hypotheses are founded.

The following pottery was recovered from the test pits in 2004.

<b>Period</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>No. of Sherds</b>
Iron Age	600BC-43-AD	4
Romano-British	43-400AD	6
Early Medieval	400-1100AD	4
Medieval	1100-1400AD	563
Late Medieval	1400-1550AD	63
Post-Medieval	1550-1700AD	170
Modern	1700-present	995
<b>Total</b>		<b>1805</b>

This can be further broken down into individual fabric types:

<b>Period</b>	<b>Fabric</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>No. of Sherds n=1805)</b>
Iron Age Wares	All	600BC-43AD	4
Romano-British Wares	All	43-400AD	6
Early Medieval Wares	St Neots Type 1	850-1100	1
	Stamford Ware	900-1200	1
	Cotswold-type Oolitic Ware	975-1100	2
Medieval Wares	Shelly Wares	1100-1400	136
	Sandy Wares	1100-1400	83
	Brill/Boarstall Ware	1200-1600	7
	Potterspurty Ware	1250-1600	337
Late Medieval Wares	Late Medieval Reduced Ware	1400-1550	1
	Midland Purple Ware	1450-1600	7
	Cistercian Ware	1470-1550	55
Post-Medieval Wares	Midland Yellow Wares	1550-1700	2
	Red Earthenwares	1500+	153
	German (Rhenish) Stonewares	1450+	3
	Tin-glazed Earthenwares	17 <sup>th</sup>	3
Modern Wares	Midland Black Ware	1550-1700	9
	Staffordshire Manganese-glazed Ware	1680-1760	13
	Staffordshire Trailed Slipware	Late 17 <sup>th</sup> -19 <sup>th</sup>	15
	Iron-glazed Earthenware	Late 17 <sup>th</sup> -19 <sup>th</sup>	79
	Staffordshire Salt-glazed Stoneware	18 <sup>th</sup>	5
	Misc. 18 <sup>th</sup> -20 <sup>th</sup> ceramics	18 <sup>th</sup> -20 <sup>th</sup>	883

Any analysis of this ceramic material relies on its distribution across the village. Pottery of various periods and individual fabric types were found in the following number of test pits.

<b>Period</b>	<b>Fabric</b>	<b>No. of TPs (n=34)</b>
<b>Iron Age</b>		<b>3</b>
<b>Romano-British</b>		<b>5</b>
<b>Early Medieval</b>		<b>3</b>
	St Neots Type 1	1
	Stamford Ware	1
	Cotswold-type Oolitic Ware	1
<b>Medieval</b>		<b>31</b>
	Shelly Wares	21
	Sandy Wares	15
	Brill/Boarstall Ware	5
	Potterspurty Ware	25
<b>Late Medieval</b>		<b>11</b>
	Late Medieval Reduced Ware	1
	Midland Purple Ware	5
	Cistercian Ware	7
<b>Post-Medieval</b>		<b>22</b>
	Midland Yellow Wares	2
	Red Earthenwares	20
	German (Rhenish) Stonewares	3
	Tin-glazed Earthenware	2
	Midland Blackware	5
<b>Modern</b>		<b>25</b>
	Staffordshire Manganese-glazed Ware	1
	Staffordshire Trailed Slipware	4
	Iron-glazed Earthenware	14

	Staffordshire Salt-glazed Stoneware	2
	Misc. 18 <sup>th</sup> -20 <sup>th</sup> ceramics	23

#### Description of Test pits in Wyke Hamon and Wyke Dyve

The location of each test pit is named after the modern property name or street number. Test pits that were located in the open space south of the church and opposite Home Farm are named after the field name appearing on the 1717 estate map. Each entry begins with the questions each test pit sought to address. A description of the actual results follows. Distribution maps of early to late medieval pottery finds, including those results from 2003, are appended to the end of the report.

#### WI TP 25 The Warren

*In 2003 a series of 8 test pits was excavated around the perimeter of the eastern half of The Warren. These test pits produced the most remarkable set of ceramics dating from c. 850AD and extending into the late medieval period. In 2004 the series was extended first into the western half of The Warren, to explore the total extent of medieval occupation and the nature of the earthworks which survive here, and secondly, to revisit parts of the eastern half which had previously been neglected. 10 test pits were excavated.*

This test pit was located within a depression lying between the current house and what is interpreted as the remains of a medieval fishpond. No features were found during the excavation of this test, the stratigraphy made up of fairly heavy clay loam. A single sherd of Brill/Boarstall ware, dated to the thirteenth century was found, proving that the ground had been disturbed, but no explanation for this activity can be surmised from such limited evidence.

#### WI TP 26 The Warren

*The rationale for excavating this test pit follows WI TP 25.*

This test pit lay some 20m south-east of WI TP 26 on more elevated ground. The excavation was terminated when natural limestone was encountered at 440mm below the current ground level. Above this lay clay loam containing a number of pottery sherds, including Potterspury Ware, Cistercian Ware, and Midland Blackware. Activity here, then appears to have been restricted to the late medieval period running into the late sixteenth century. The recovery of a large part of a single late fifteenth century vessel is of some interest. The level of pottery and preservation suggest that this test pit lies on or close to an area of domestic occupation.

#### WI TP 27 The Warren

*The rationale for excavating this test pit follows WI TP 25.*

This test pit lay 20m south of WI TP 25. Again no features were identified during excavation, with those anthropogenic layers, distinguished by the presence of pottery, overlying natural clay. The pottery assemblage recovered was small, comprising only three sherds of Shelly and Sandy Ware, all datable to the twelfth century. The chronological differential between this test pit and that of WI TP 26 is peculiar given their proximity to one another. Together they extend the date range over which this part of The Warren appears to have been used, and might suggest zoning to this activity, with emphasis shifting over time. The number of sherds remains below the threshold for that expected to derive from overlying occupation, suggesting that this test pit lies outside any intensively occupied area.

#### WI TP 28 The Warren

*The rationale for excavating this test pit follows WI TP 25.*

WI TP 28 represents the fourth of the series of test pits located in the northernmost part of The Warren. As with the other three test pits, no features were identified and the pottery assemblage remained small. Here it was comprised of 8 sherds covering a date range from the mid-thirteenth century, represented by a single

sherd of Potterspurry Ware in the lowest and apparently undisturbed layer, to the mid-sixteenth century. As such it accords well with the findings made in other test pits in this part of the paddock, indicating some use of the site over a period of approximately three hundred years. The absence of more recent finds indicated that by c. 1550 whatever activity was taking place here had ceased and the site abandoned.

WI TP 29  
The Warren

*The rationale for excavating this test pit follows WI TP 25.*

WI TP 29 was located on top of a large platform on the extreme western side of The Warren. Just below the turfline a rough limestone surface was encountered, indicating that this feature may have been designed for some function other than a garden feature (its interpretation from the earthwork survey). With exception of a single sherd of German (Rhenish) Stoneware, the majority of the rest of the sizeable ceramic assemblage sealed below this limestone surface, was of twelfth to fourteenth century in date. 23 sherds were recovered, a density which seems to imply occupation. If the sherd of Stoneware is used to date the surface, then a fifteenth century date must be placed on this feature, although the construction of the earthen platform on which it was laid appears to have been a couple of centuries old by this time. Included within the assemblage were two sherds of Cotswold-type Oolitic Ware of tenth or eleventh century date. These sherds appear to be residue, having been disturbed in the building of the platform. However, it is unlikely that they have been moved far from their original deposition site. They provide valuable evidence for occupation of this part of the village during its earliest phase of development.

WI TP 30  
The Warren

*The rationale for excavating this test pit follows WI TP 25.*

WI TP 30 contained a large pottery assemblage comprising 53 sherds. This was made up for the most part of shelly and sandy wares indicating a deposition date between 1100 and 1250. The presence of Potterspurry Ware, however, even in the lowest strata means that a date around the middle of the thirteenth century is more plausible. A section of a gully remained in tact, encountered at a depth of 840mm, in all probability sealed below the earth platform. This contained a single sherd of Sandy Ware, consistent with a twelfth century date. This provides useful evidence for the reorganisation of the site, perhaps reflecting a change of function or status at some point in the thirteenth century, and indicates that the surviving earthworks may not represent the earliest activity on the site, but represent a later phase.

WI TP 31  
The Warren

*The rationale for excavating this test pit follows WI TP 25.*

This test pit lay off the platform close to the modern road, and represents a continuation of the transect of test pits excavated in 2003 which revealed definitive evidence for early occupation. Once again, this test pit produced evidence for pre-Conquest activity in the form of a single sherd of Stamford Ware. This was recovered from a deeply stratified limestone surface, although the presence of both Shelly Ware and Potterspurry Ware within its matrix points to a thirteenth century date. Despite being out of context, the Stamford Ware clearly has not moved far from its original location and is further evidence for early occupation within the Warren. The rest of the assemblage comprised a total of 42 sherds. All modern pottery was found above the limestone, whilst sealed below it was only medieval pottery, predominantly Shelly and Sandy Wares although a smattering of Potterspurry Ware was also present. This then is consistent with the finds from the limestone surface, which must represent some feature, probably a rough floor, associated with a domestic dwelling.

WI TP 32  
The Warren

*The rationale for excavating this test pit follows WI TP 25.*

A prominent roughly circular upstanding earthwork occupies the north-eastern corner of the western paddock. This test pit, located on its crest, revealed a section of a curving wall made up of faced limestone blocks. At least seven courses of stonework were present, surviving from foundation level to a height of 1.1m. Emanating from below the wall was a stone filled gully which appears to have acted as a drain from the interior of the stone structure. Projecting the arc of the wall as found, and tracing its course by association with the earthwork, it is clear that it represents a short section of what must be a circular structure. An early thirteenth century date for the construction of this structure can be suggested by the pottery found from the earth build up around its base, and by the fact that it appears to seal deposits of twelfth century date. Residual amongst the disturbed layers was a single sherd of St Neots type 1 Ware of probable late ninth or tenth century date, an indicator of much earlier occupation of the site. With such a limited amount of wall revealed, and no opportunity to investigate the internal space contained within it, it is difficult to provide a definitive function for the structure. On the grounds of typology, size, position, and by association with other structures found elsewhere in the village, it is highly likely to represent a dovecote associated with the capital message of Wyke Dyve. If so, then it may be one of the two dovecotes mentioned in an Inquisition Post-Mortem dated to 1246.



WI TP 33  
The Warren

*The rationale for excavating this test pit follows WI TP 25.*

This test pit was located on the prominent earthwork which runs through the centre of the eastern part of The Warren parallel to the course of Cross Tree Road and perpendicular to Church Lane. This bank appears to be of two phases. The first bank appears to have been made up of earth, and from the pottery contained within it a twelfth century construction date can be posited. During the mid-thirteenth century, however, the bank was heightened by the addition of a stone capping of rough limestone. The function of the bank during these two periods is uncertain, however given the presence of occupation immediately to the south, it may well have functioned as a back boundary to very shallow plots fronting the current Cross Tree Road. A boundary function for domestic dwellings is further suggested by the quantity of pottery contained within it, an assemblage comprising 93 sherds.

WI TP 34  
2 Church Lane

*Previous test pitting shows that the northern side of Cross Tree Road fails to produce as much medieval pottery as the south side. This test pit was designed to extend sampling here to verify or contradict the initial findings of the survey. Furthermore, the extension of the test pitting sample westwards towards the principal finds zone in The Warren, sought to establish whether this settlement core extended across Church Lane.*

The shallow soil deposits overlying natural limestone bedrock encountered at 400mm below current ground level produced no pottery earlier than the mid-sixteenth century, and this only a single sherd. Both the failure of soil to build up and the lack of finds suggests one of two formation processes. The first and most likely, that the area lay outside any occupation zone until quite recently. Secondly, that any build up had been removed due to landscaping at some point in the nineteenth century. Given the consistency of the results from this test pit with test pits in the neighbouring garden excavated in 2003 which also failed to produce many finds, the impression gained is that this side of Cross Tree Road was developed and occupied much later than the south side.

WI TP 35  
Allotments (Cross Tree Road south)

*Test pitting in 2003 established that the south side of Cross Tree Road appears to have been laid out and occupied en bloc from c. 1100. It represents a major extension of the village which appears to have been carefully planned and executed. Nevertheless, a number of gaps remained in the sampling distribution. This, and other test pits on this side of the road, were designed to fill these gaps and to provide greater definition of the development of the village of Wyke Dyve here. There remains the possibility, that data might be forthcoming which might stand in opposition to the current assumptions.*

Ten sherds of medieval pottery together with single sherds of mid-sixteenth century, Romano-British and Iron Age date were recovered. Only the lower strata of this test pit appear to have remained undisturbed, perhaps unsurprising given the use of the land as an allotment, layers which can be dated to the mid-thirteenth century. The Romano-British and Iron Age sherds were found within mixed contexts, although their presence provides evidence for some level of pre-village activity, in the Roman period probably the manuring of fields, given the spread of other such finds made across the village. The Iron Age sherd's derivation, whether from manuring or nearby settlement is more difficult to discern.

WI TP 36  
The Old Forge, 46 Cross Tree Road

*The rationale for excavating this test pit follows WI TP 35. It complements two test pits that had previously been excavated at this property. The opportunity was taken to excavate closer to the house than had previously been possible in order to contrast the nature and quality of the three related pottery assemblages.*

The surface of the majority of this test pit was taken up with a recent garden path. This was retained, allowing excavation to any depth only on one side of the test pit. The deposits here were all mixed, perhaps associated with the laying of the path, with nineteenth-century pottery found at the lower levels. A single sherd of Shelly Ware was recovered.

WI TP 37  
The Warren

*The rationale for excavating this test pit follows WI TP 25.*

A dump of limestone, probably deposited some time in the nineteenth-century on the grounds of the pottery contained within it, has clearly affected earlier deposits here. The limestone overlay a clay loam, but this contained no dating material. It would appear from the negative evidence that this part of The Warren lay outside the area of occupation, and that unlike Cross Tree Road which was clearly an axis along which dwellings were located, no such development had taken place along the west side of Church Lane at this point.

WI TP 38

Redstack, Leckhampstead Road

*Few test pits were able to be excavated in Wyke Hamon in 2003. The opportunity to increase the sample in 2004 was proactively sought. The current plan of the village here shows little sign of planning, although a number of properties appear to contain architectural features which might suggest their building pre-1700. All test pits along the Leckhampstead Road, to both east and west, sought to establish the nature of occupation here, when it was established, and how it developed into the modern village plan. They were also designed to complement those test pits that had been excavated in the back paddock of Glebe Cottage in 2003 which had revealed structures which appeared in quality to represent more than simply peasant dwellings or ancillary buildings.*

This test pit lay to the back of Redstack, close to the current fence line with the fields beyond. Fifteen sherds of medieval pottery, comprising Shelly Ware, Potterspurty Ware and Brill/Boarstall Ware, were recovered from this test pit. Only the lower deposits appear undisturbed and appear to date from the middle of the thirteenth century. A single sherds of Iron Age and Romano-British pottery appear to be residual as they were found in mixed deposits. The size of the assemblage is more than would be expected from a normal field assemblage but perhaps falls under the threshold expected for an area of occupation. The most likely positioning of this test pit then is either within a manured field close to occupation, or at the extreme edge of occupation. The single sherd of Shelly Ware may derive from a manure scatter laid down whilst this area was open field before the principal settlement developed.

WI TP 39

Redstack, Leckhampstead Road

*The rationale for excavating this test pit follows WI TP 38.*

This test pit lay to the southern side of the large 'paddock' lying on the opposite side of the road to Redstack. The upper deposits were clearly disturbed, containing much modern ceramics. Below this, however, lay undisturbed layers of a heavy and compact clay containing quantities of medieval pottery. This included 27 sherds of Potterspurty, together with a sherd of Romano-British pottery and two sherds of Iron Age pottery. This level of pottery deposition is consistent with occupation in close proximity to the excavation and suggests that this part of the village was developing from the mid-thirteenth century. The Roman and Iron Age finds attest to pre-village activity, but the nature of this can only be guessed at. It is interesting to note their dual presence both here and in WI TP 39, and whilst on the present evidence it cannot be proven, by the same token it is impossible to rule out the possibility of some localized Iron Age settlement nearby. This may have then shifted or transmogrified into the small Romano-British site which is known to lie only 300m to the south.

WI TP 40

6 Church Lane

*The rationale for excavating this test pit follows WI TP 34.*

49 sherds of medieval pottery, dating from the twelfth century through to the late fifteenth century were recovered from mixed deposits within this test pit. This level of pottery density marks the site of medieval occupation. As such it is the only proper evidence currently available from the north side of Cross Tree Road (with the exception of WI TP 58 below) that indicates that this part of the village contained dwellings pre-dating the properties that now stand or that were depicted on the 1717 estate map. The make up of the assemblage is top heavy, showing a mid to late thirteenth century flourish of activity, but continued use of the space through the middle of the fifteenth century. There then appears to be a break in activity, before a renewed phase dating from the nineteenth century, almost certainly associated with the current house.

WI TP 41

29 Leckhampstead Road

*The rationale for excavating this test pit follows WI TP 42.*

The lowest deposits in this test pit date to the middle of the seventeenth century and are almost certainly contemporary with the current house. Only six sherds of Potterspurty Ware were contained within the assemblage and all from mixed contexts. They imply some activity beginning no earlier than the mid-thirteenth century, although the nature of this activity or the process of their deposition is unknown. They are consistent with other findings across this part of Wyke Hamon which indicate an intensification of activity



around this date. This is one of the rare example of a test pit reflecting the whole history of the house within whose curtilage it is located. It is unlikely that this house replaced an earlier dwelling.

WI TP 42  
The Pasture

*Earthworks preserved under grass in The Pasture clearly indicate that the area immediately to the east of Leckhampstead Road was formerly occupied. The earthworks take the form of distinct platforms and terraces together with a number of irregular depressions. This complex is backed by a single linear bank or step, which delimits the area of cultivation, surviving as ridge and furrow, from the zone of occupation. A series of 6 test pits were excavated in the latter area, all designed to support the idea that the earthworks represent building platforms, and to provide a chronological framework for the development and demise of this part of Wyke Hamon.*

WI TP 42 lay to the back of the occupation zone and off the visible house platforms. Despite, or perhaps because of this, the assemblage of pottery was one of the most coherent of all the test pits excavated in the village during 2004. It comprised 18 sherds of pottery, dominated by Potterspurly Ware accompanied by Brill/Boarstall Ware pointing to an intensification of activity in the mid to late thirteenth century. An earlier start date is perhaps suggested, however, by the presence of sherds of both Shelly and Sandy Wares. No features were identified.

WI TP 43  
The Pasture

*The rationale for excavating this test pit follows WI TP 42.*

WI TP 43, like WI TP 42 was located away from the road frontage and on a lower terrace of the field close to the brook. It yielded a much smaller group of pottery than its neighbour, a total of 8 sherds. But this was again dominated by Potterspurly Ware with only a single sherd of Shelly Ware present. It is therefore consistent with an activity zenith in the mid to late thirteenth or fourteenth century. No feature were encountered.

WI TP 44  
The Pasture

*The rationale for excavating this test pit follows WI TP 42.*

The stratigraphy of this test pit was extremely shallow, bottoming onto the natural limestone bedrock. It was one of a series of four test pits located towards the front of the field. Despite the lack of soil deposits, the pottery recovery rate was exceptional, the test pit producing 55 sherds of Potterspurly Ware. These rates signify occupation of the site in the post-1250 period. The lack of both earlier or later evidence is intriguing and may point to a rare short period during which this site was used.

WI TP 45  
The Pasture

*The rationale for excavating this test pit follows WI TP 42.*

This test pit also bottomed onto limestone bedrock only 200mm below the modern ground surface. The pottery assemblage was mixed, including only three sherds of Potterspurly Ware, the rest made up of eighteenth-century wares. Geophysical survey in advance of excavation had suggested the presence of a structure and this was proved by the discovery of a single small wooden sill beam laid onto the natural limestone. Too small to represent a load-bearing wall, this was in all probability a remnant survival of an internal partition wall. These findings, however, do not accord exactly with the depiction of a single house with The Pasture in 1717, so they may represent a later dwelling constructed after the drafting of the map.

WI TP 46  
The Pasture

*The rationale for excavating this test pit follows WI TP 42.*

The pottery assemblage from this test pit, located to the north of WI TP 47 was made up of mid-seventeenth and early eighteenth century fabrics. Interspersed amongst these deposits, and clearly residual were 15 sherds of medieval pottery, 14 of which were Potterspurry Ware. The majority of these came from a small masonry wall foundation lying on the nature bedrock and present the earliest feature on this site, to be associated with later thirteenth and fourteenth century houses. The site may not have survived in continual use into the post-medieval period, but may have been reconstructed around 1650. This is almost certainly part of the structure that is depicted on the 1717 map.

WI TP 47  
The Pasture

*The rationale for excavating this test pit follows WI TP 42.*

The final in the series of test pits set at the front of the paddock, adjacent to the Leckhampstead Road, this test pit was also extremely shallow, with little build up of soil over the natural limestone bedrock. Despite this, the pottery assemblage was rich, made up of 34 sherds of medieval pottery. 32 sherds were Potterspurry Ware, with single sherds of Shelly Ware represented a phase of occupation, whilst a residual sherd of Shelly Ware may derive from agricultural use of this area before development in the mid to late thirteenth century. The only other sherd was of Brill/Boarstall fabric, contemporary with the Potterspurry Ware.

WI TP 48  
21 Leckhampstead Road

*The rationale for excavating this test pit follows WI TP 38*

The upper parts of this test pit were severely disturbed and contained modern ceramics. Only the lower part remained intact. Here a gully cut into the clay natural had survived, containing a number of sherds of medieval pottery, including Shelly and Sandy Wares but dominated by Potterspurry Ware. A mid-thirteenth century date can therefore be placed on the gully fill, implying an earlier construction date. Little residual medieval material was recovered from the upper strata, however the presence of a gully feature is indicative of permanent settlement. Given the proximity of this test pit to the open area excavation which revealed masonry structures of the same date, it must be considered that this gully is part of that complex although its precise function cannot be ascertained from such a small section.

WI TP 49  
23 Leckhampstead Road

*The rationale for excavating this test pit follows WI TP 38*

The whole of this sequence within this test pit contained modern pottery indicating significant disturbance. But some pottery was present, exclusively Potterspurry Ware, consistent with the results from nearby WI TP 48 and other test pits in this part of Wyke Hamon. No features were observed.

WI TP 50  
The Old Bakehouse, Cross Tree Road

*The rationale for excavating this test pit follows WI TP 35.*

This test pit was located towards the back of the plot behind WI TP 50. It contained a rich collection of medieval pottery, comprising 4 sherds of Potterspurry Ware, 18 sherds of Shelly Ware, 21 sherds of Sandy Ware and 3 sherds of Brill/Boarstall Ware. This ratio of pottery fabrics indicates a flourish of activity in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries with some continued activity through to 1400. The absence of later material until the nineteenth century might mark a break in occupation or a change of usage from domestic to non-domestic use of the site.

WI TP 51  
The Old Bakehouse, Cross Tree Road

*The rationale for excavating this test pit follows WI TP 35.*

This test pit was located close to Cross Tree Road, to the east of the Old Bakehouse. By contrast to WI TP 50, this test pit contained very little medieval pottery, supporting the idea that the back of medieval house plots are richer in evidence than the building area itself. The assemblage was dominated by post-medieval wares, including a complete mid-sixteenth century bowl. This, together with other late medieval stray finds appears to suggest some use at a late date, whilst its sister test pit records earlier phases of activity. On the balance of the evidence, it would appear, then, that this plot has been in continuous use from the twelfth century, although the nature of its use can be questioned.

#### WI TP 52

The Folly, Deanshanger Road

*The Folly stands to the north of the back road leading from Deanshanger to Wyke Hurst (modern Hurst Farm), divorced from the main village by some distance. The excavation of three test pits here provided the opportunity to look beyond the development of the village, and to seek to establish a chronology for the foundation of one of Wicken's dispersed settlement elements. A map of Whittlewood Forest drawn up around 1608 appears to indicate the existence of a property on or near the site of the current house. Ceramic evidence was therefore sought to elucidate when this property might have been built and provide a context for its construction.*

This test pit was located outside the main garden in a small orchard on the opposite side of the road. No medieval finds were made, the whole ceramic assemblage comprising fabrics no earlier than the nineteenth century. This appears, then, to be a late addition to the pertaining to the current property.

#### WI TP 53

The Folly, Deanshanger Road

As with WI TP 52, no medieval finds were made, although a single sherd of late medieval pottery was made. This amongst more modern disturbance. No features were identified. The presence of even a single sherd of pottery here is of significance, suggesting perhaps that this plot may have been established around the end of the fifteenth century. This is corroborated by similar finds from WI TP 54. The levels of pottery are so low, however, to suggest that the plot was not occupied at this date, but may have been cleared and used for some agricultural purpose, the pottery arriving on the plot in manure. If so, this might indicate that this property began as a small assart and only later was a house built upon it.

#### WI TP 54

The Folly, Deanshanger Road

The stratigraphy of this test pit was extremely bulversed by modern disturbance. Nevertheless, amongst the debris, a single sherd of Potterspurry Ware and a single sherd of 403 were recovered. Whilst the evidence is not overpowering, these results together with those made in WI TP 53 do appear to complement one another, indicating the start of some activity here at the very end of the Middle Ages.

#### WI TP 55

26 Cross Tree Road

*The rationale for excavating this test pit follows WI TP 35.*

Only the lowest level within this test pit appears to be medieval, with a single sherd of Sandy Ware indicating a twelfth-century deposit date. Above this the layers are mixed, with a range of eighteenth and nineteenth century fabrics present in abundance. Intercalated with these, however, are a few sherds of medieval pottery including Potterspurry Ware and Sandy Ware. Whilst the quantity remains smaller than might be expected from occupation, later disturbance may account for some loss. If taken together with WI TP 56, a stronger case can be made for occupation.

#### WI TP 56

The Old Bakehouse, Cross Tree Road

*The rationale for excavating this test pit follows WI TP 35.*

The lowest levels within this test pit on the basis of the recovered pottery can be dated to the eighteenth century. A single sherd of 403 and four sherds of Shelly Ware attest to earlier activity although nothing has survived later disturbance. The date range covered by these two fabrics, from the twelfth century through to

the fifteenth century imply the use of this plot over a three hundred year period. Taken together with WI TP 55 which shares the same historic croft, occupation here appears to be continuous.

WI TP 57

The Old Bakehouse, Cross Tree Road

*The rationale for excavating this test pit follows WI TP 35.*

13 sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from this test pit. The normal fabrics, those of Shelly, Sandy and Potterspurty Ware were all present, the latter dominating the scene. It is unlikely that any activity other than occupation would account for such numbers, although they do remain on the small side to be confident that they represent the site of a medieval croft. On balance, and considering the position of this test pit, together with finds from those test pits to either side, it is probably safe to conclude occupation. An absence of later medieval finds or pre-1700 finds is interesting and might suggest some hiatus or change of activity for this particular part of Cross Tree Road.

WI TP 58

9 Church Close

*No previous investigation has been made of the area occupied now by Church Close. The 1717 map of the village, however, indicates that at some point tofts (peasant holdings) had been laid out over this area. But the cartographic evidence remains ambiguous as to whether these tofts are a continuation of those which front Cross Tree Road to the north, or whether they represent a series of properties fronting modern St John's Road. The actual location of this test pit, lying directly behind the village pub, might also lie within the confines of similar properties which fronted onto Deanshanger Road. Any data forthcoming from this test pit would provide valuable evidence for the use of the whole space over time.*

The medieval pottery assemblage from this test pit was made up of 20 sherds of pottery. Of these 17 were Potterspurty Ware, with only a single sherd of Shelly Ware and two sherds of Sandy Ware present. These were recovered from a fairly shallow soil deposit overlying natural limestone bedrock. Despite the apparent lack of deposit build up, the density of finds appears to suggest that this test pit is located within a medieval croft, perhaps established in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century but which saw its most intense activity a century or so later. This is quite an unexpected find in the light of the failure of many other test pits to the north of Cross Tree Road to produce assemblages of the same quality or quantity. The question remains, to what property these sherds belong. Do they relate to properties on the north side of Cross Tree Road, to the south side of St John's Road, or to the west of Deanshanger Road. On balance, however, it might be suggested that the third option is the more likely. Nothing in the modern morphology of the village helps to elucidate this matter.

The Development of Wyke Hamon and Wyke Dyve.

Wicken is one of six modern villages (seven medieval villages) within the Whittlewood Project area which have been investigated by test pitting. The others are Akeley, Leckhampstead, Lillingstone Lovell, Silverstone and Whittlebury. The history of an eighth, Lillingstone Dayrell, has been revealed by fieldwalking (the systematic collection of surface artefacts from modern ploughsoil), so too parts of Lamport in Stowe, and the hamlets of Elm Green and Dagnall (both in Wicken). This extensive research has provided not only a basic framework of regional settlement development, but detailed biographies of individual settlement establishment and growth.

With a total of 58 test pits, Wicken has the third highest sample size, only exceeded by Leckhampstead and Silverstone. Both these latter settlements are comprised of a number of dispersed settlement foci necessitating a larger number of test pits to be dug in order to test adequately all the potential medieval occupation zones. As a more nucleated settlement, modern Wicken has now received more attention than other morphologically-comparable villages in the area. The distribution of the Wicken test pits remains uneven, with important areas, particularly in Wyke Hamon immediately south of the brook and to the west of the Leckhampstead Road, still uninvestigated. It should be stressed at the outset then that further excavation in and around Wicken would almost certainly clarify the model presented here for the two villages' development, although it is improbable that this would lead to major revision. Such confidence in the results to date only emerges because of the coherency of the current distributions, and the fact that the work undertaken in 2004 in Wyke Dyve served to reinforce the developmental trajectory traced in 2003. Critically,

however, with greater numbers of test pits now sunk in Wyke Hamon, the growth of Wyke Dyve can be compared directly to that of its neighbouring settlement for the first time. As will become clear, the two villages developed in very different ways.

The name Wicken is of significance. It is the plural form of the Old English root *Wic*, interpreted in rural contexts to mean a farm with a specialist function. These farms almost certainly serviced an estate centre elsewhere. Place-name scholars argue that the archaic forms of Wicken imply that in fact it began as a single farm. Its function is unclear but a pastoral basis is perhaps more likely: a dairying centre or horse stud are possibilities, although the nearby presence of large tracts of woodland may mean that its economy may have been arboreal. Passenham, with attested royal connections and an early dedication of its church to the royal prince saint Guthlac, is the prime candidate for the main estate centre within whose orbit Wicken lay. A tentative early dedication of Wyke Dyve Church to St Kenelm, another Mercian royal saint, dedications to St Bartholemew at Furtho, often associated with St Guthlac, and to Saints Peter and Paul at Cosgrove, might suggest an extensive estate occupying most of the interfluvium between the Tove and the Great Ouse in the tenth century if not before. Wicken shares its eastern boundary with Passenham (now Deanshanger). The later parish boundaries of Wyke Dyve and Wyke Hamon appear in this instance to be the same as the secular manors based on these two settlements. Taken as a whole, the addition of the two Wicken parishes to Passenham parish form a coherent block of land that could once have been one estate. It would appear then, that the manors of the two Wykes were carved from this larger entity on its break up. The archaeological evidence provides some clues to the chronology of this estate fission and the location of the earliest focus of nucleation.

### *Wyke Dyve to 1550*

The earliest pottery recovered from the test pits in Wyke Dyve dates from 850AD. This is imported St Neots Ware made near the town from which it takes its name on the Bedfordshire-Cambridgeshire boundary. Other early pottery derives from Stamford and south-westwards towards the Cotswolds. Both these fabrics predate the end of the first millennium. Finds of this date have been found exclusively within The Warren immediately south of the church. This must be the original nucleus of Wyke Dyve and may represent the location of the pre-village farm. Development continued within and around this kernel for the next two centuries. Finds of Oxford Ware and Newbury A and B Ware, both late eleventh century fabrics are again found within The Warren, the only outlier being a single sherd found at Glebe Cottage, Wyke Hamon.

From 1100, however, the village experienced outward growth along the south side of Cross Tree Road. Here the ubiquity of Shelly Ware in particular, supplemented by the contemporary Sandy Ware, coupled with the regularity of the plots, indicates that a long row of peasant tofts and crofts was laid out in a single moment of development. Wyke Dyve lacks the profile of a settlement which grew slowly over time but exhibits all the signs of being carefully planned. Some of the impetus for this shift in settlement focus may have been the creation of a manorial enclosure around the church. If this was the case, then original tofts that occupied The Warren may have been forcibly removed and their occupants relocated immediately to the east. Certainly the earthwork evidence points towards a redesign of The Warren at some point after 1100 and perhaps closer to 1200 or 1250. That this formed part of a manorial complex is proven by the discovery of the dovecote in The Warren, a structure often associated with the seigniorial residence, and certainly beyond the means of the peasantry to construct. A few peasant tofts may, however, have been preserved in the south-east corner of The Warren and there are indications that the occupation zone may have been extended to the eastern side of Church Lane and perhaps the western side of Deanshanger Road. If so, this is the origin of the two tangential roads springing from the earlier single row development

The introduction of the locally-produced Potterspurty Ware after 1250 immediately swamped the ceramic assemblage and almost certainly acted as a barrier to the importation of the more distantly-sourced Shelly and Sandy Wares. The distribution of Potterspurty Ware follows closely that of the earlier fabrics, although it appears to show an intensification of activity to the north of Cross Tree Road. Nevertheless, it would appear that by 1250, the village of Wyke Dyve had reached its greatest extent. By the late medieval period (1400+), the village was in decline. Only a fraction of those plots which produced the earlier fabrics, have produced Midland Purple Ware, Cistercian Ware or the late medieval oxidized and reduced wares of the period. One reason for their absence from the record may be the continued use of Potterspurty Ware up to 1600 in the village. If so, the level of shrinkage may in reality have been less dramatic than the non-Potterspurty wares imply.

The development of Wyke Dyve follows a trajectory seen in a number of settlements. The work of the Whittlewood Project has begun to identify what have been termed 'pre-village nuclei', from which the later

village developed. Similar concentrations of the earliest pre-Conquest pottery fabrics have been found close to the churches of Lillingstone Lovell, Leckhampstead, Akeley and Whittlebury. Outward growth is then experienced by all these villages, although the precise chronology for this expansion varies from one to another. In places this growth appears to have occurred organically, charting demographic rises, but in others, for example both Whittlebury and Lillingstone Lovell, new areas were added to the original core in an ordered manner indicating a level of planning. At Lillingstone Lovell, this phase of development can also be associated with the construction of a manorial *curia* or enclosure, paralleling what may have taken place at Wyke Dyve. Wyke Dyve, of course, was not the only settlement within the manor. Any consideration of its development must necessarily consider what was happening elsewhere. At Dagnall, a hamlet appears to have developed from an original farm, experiencing substantial growth in the period after 1100 and surviving seemingly through to the end of the medieval period. Two settlements could therefore be supported by the resources found within the parish and could apparently flourish.

#### *Wyke Hamon to 1550*

The development of Wyke Hamon appears to be very different to that of its neighbour Wyke Dyve. The first obvious contrast is the total lack of pre-Conquest pottery recovered from south of the brook, the dividing line between the two parishes and manors. That said, Wyke Hamon existed in some form in 1086 to be recorded in Domesday Book, so the possibility remains that the original core of the village lies outside those areas surveyed by test pits. The obvious location might be west of Leckhampstead Road, north of Home Farm. This would place the core close to the church (now dismantled). Certainly, on the slim evidence that has been recovered, it would appear that the earliest pottery, almost exclusively post-1100 in date, lies in and around the Home Farm area. Shelly Wares, for instance, have been found disturbed by hedge planting on the road frontage. The lack of equivalent material from the rest of Wyke Hamon, both in The Pasture, and further southwest along the Leckhampstead Road suggests that before 1250 Wyke Hamon remained much smaller than its neighbour.

Like Wyke Dyve, there was a second settlement centre in Wyke Hamon, this located approximately one and a half miles south of the modern village, and known as Elm Green after the name given to this area on the 1717 estate map of Wicken. Here, a fairly sizeable and rambling settlement has been identified, with quantities of pottery of the period 1100-1250. There is a strong possibility, therefore, that the principal settlement area in Wyke Hamon before 1250 was here in the southern part of the parish and manor. Elm Green certainly survives beyond 1250, although an abandonment date before 1400 is highly probable on the basis of the ceramics that have been recovered here. The demise of Elm Green may have begun with the migration of its population to Wyke Hamon around the middle of the thirteenth century. Certainly it is at this period that an expansion can be mapped at Wyke Hamon, with the first real evidence for occupation in The Pasture. It is also the moment when occupation appears to take place along the Leckhampstead Road, but this appears to be very different in nature.

Open area excavation at Glebe Cottage followed the discovery in 2003 of faced masonry associated with medieval pottery in one of the two excavated test pits. Subsequent geophysical survey (undertaken by Jonathan Gudgeon) revealed the partial floor plans of a number of structures. In 2004 these were investigated more extensively. These excavations identified a well-made dovecote and an area containing floors, hearths and robbed out walls. This building or buildings have been interpreted as a brewhouse or bakehouse. A dovecote is mentioned in an Inquisition Post Mortem dated to 1246, in all probability the structure unearthed. The ceramic evidence firmly dates the start of occupation here to around the middle of the thirteenth century, continuing for a further two hundred years before abandonment in the mid-fifteenth century. Dovecotes and brewhouses/bakehouses were almost always associated with seigniorial residences of some sort, a conclusion further supported here by what appear to be the remains of two fishponds shown on the Wicken Tithe Map of 1841. Whether it was a capital messuage (i.e. a manor house) or a hunting lodge cannot currently be established. On the basis of the pottery dates, and other circumstantial evidence, the architect of the complex in Wyke Hamon must have been William Hamon. He held the manor from the last decade of the twelfth century through to his death in 1246 (the IPM that mentions the dovecote). He was succeeded by another William who died the same year, the manor descending to one John, a minor. It is difficult to disassociate this site with the deer park which lay immediately to the south west. The precise date of the enclosing of the park is not known, but a reference to its re-enclosure in 1289 specifically states that it had fallen into disrepair whilst held in dower by the mother of John, Isabelle. This implies, therefore, that the park must have been in existence before 1246, and since few private parks were licenced before 1200, this again points to William Hamon.

Wyke Hamon then is a fine example of a landscape of lordship, every element conceived and executed to display the power and wealth of its patron. Nothing is known of the principal residence or its location, although it cannot have stood far from the other symbols of seigniorial status, the church, the fishponds, the dovecote and the other ancillary buildings. The emparkment of much of the manor deprived the peasantry of useful agricultural land and access to pasture within the woodland. Thus the privatization of the landscape, as well as the buildings themselves, must have been a potent reminder of the social standing of its owner. The enlargement of the village too must also have been undertaken under strict lordly control. To what end the village was engrossed is not known, but one of the immediate results may have been the clearing of the countryside of more dispersed settlements. Perhaps they were moved to make way for the park itself. Perhaps the displacement also involved the abandonment of settlements beyond the park pale, removed to improve the aesthetics of the park setting. If so, then Elm Green might have been a victim of the re-emparkment of the late thirteenth century. It is a story that might be supported by the ceramic evidence.

The floruit of Wyke Hamon thus lies between 1250 and 1450, for after this period, perhaps directly associated with the sale of the manor, the seigniorial complex appears to have been abandoned. Parts of the village survived, but it was not until the former manorial site was re-colonized by the very buildings which now line Leckhampstead Road that Wyke Hamon adopted the shape and form that we recognise today.