

Excavations at Christchurch Paddock, Dingley Road, Great Bowden

26-27TH June 2010

Grid Reference: SP748887

Leics. HER Ref: MLE18150, MLE18151, SLE3023

Site History & Location



Fig. 1 The paddock shown on the 1891 Ordnance Survey map



Fig 2. Google Earth view showing the paddock in 2011.

Christchurch Paddock is currently owned by Jeremy Heygate and rented out for grazing. We are grateful for his permission to carry out the excavation. It was renamed Christchurch Paddock by the Greville-Heygate family because it had been previously owned by Christchurch College Oxford.

The paddock lies east of the village of Great Bowden and just over 100 metres from the parish church. The site is recorded on Leicestershire County Council's Historic Environment Record as earthworks, south of the church.

The early history of the area is unknown. However, in 1776 half the paddock (which probably extended further west than today) was owned by Maunsell Hill and exchanged with Henry Shuttleworth. At this time it was occupied by Elizabeth Clarke, known as Clarke's Closes and amounted to about 2 acres. Ownership of the other half of the paddock at this date is unknown.

In 1800 Clarke's Closes, containing 4 acres and 5 perches (this was the whole paddock), was left in Henry Shuttleworth's will to his trustees. The land was divided into 3 closes at this time and a barn was mentioned in Shuttleworth's will in one of the closes.

A map dated 1862 and part of the Deeds of the Cemetery Field shows at least part of the area was owned by the Dean and Chapter of Christchurch. Further evidence of the Dean and Chapter's ownership comes in a Poor Rate return of 1888 and it was purchased by the Greville-Heygate family in 1926.

The present day paddock (2010) is bordered on the east by Great Bowden cemetery, in the north by Dingley Road and in the south by the Gunnsbrook. The western boundary includes The Strip, a long narrow field extending to the Village Green and the Village Hall and the gardens of houses in The Green and Knights End Road. The 17th century gateposts at the end of The Strip currently give the main access to the paddock. These gateposts are also listed on the Historic Environment Record. Historically this area has always been paddocks or closes and not ploughed. There is no sign of ridge and furrow.



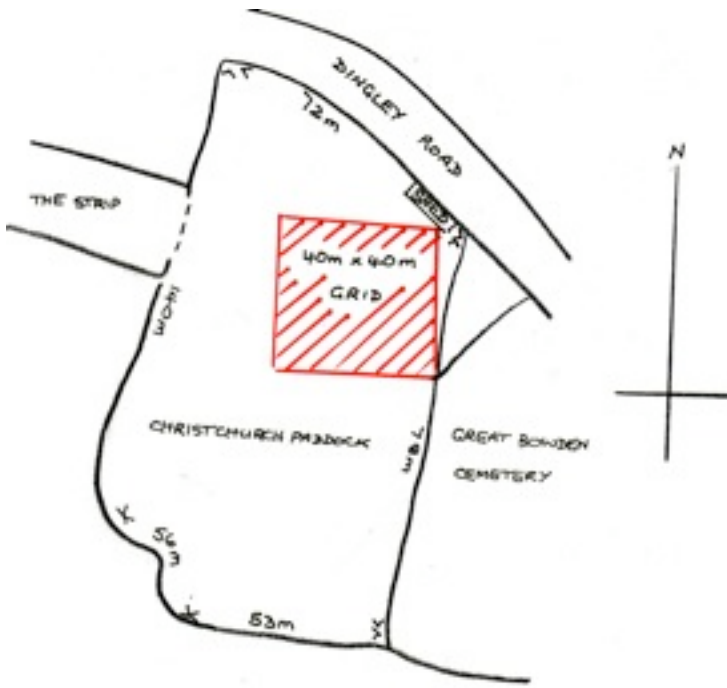
Fig 3 View of Pit 1 location

The paddock has visible earthworks, principally the ditch or depression which extends south from Dingley Road and then turns sharp left towards the cemetery wall. The land to the right and left of this dip is raised. The south part of the field nearer to the Gunnsbrook is liable to flooding.

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There is no sign of any buildings in the paddock on early maps. There is a tradition in the village that this was the site of fishponds but this seemed unlikely to the Heritage Group as there is no visible sign of a water source and the paddock is uphill both from the brook and the river. The earthworks had more the appearance of a hollow way with house platforms possibly on both sides but more likely in the crook of the elbow formed by the ditch in the north-east section of the paddock. This would account for the bend in the hollow way. This area was investigated in Pit 1.

The excavation was limited to a 40 metre x 40 metre area encompassing the earthworks as it was carried out completely with manual tools and with only metal rods to probe the surface.



The one feature on the surface of the ground was a single stone on the bank above the hollow way towards the west of the area under investigation. This would form the basis of Pit 2. Further test pits were dug in association with Pit 2. (Pits 3 and 6)

Further investigation was carried out in the depression to establish whether this was a ditch or a track or road. (Pits 4 and 5)

Fig. 4 All excavation and probing was carried out within the grid 40 metres x 40 metres enclosing the area of investigation.

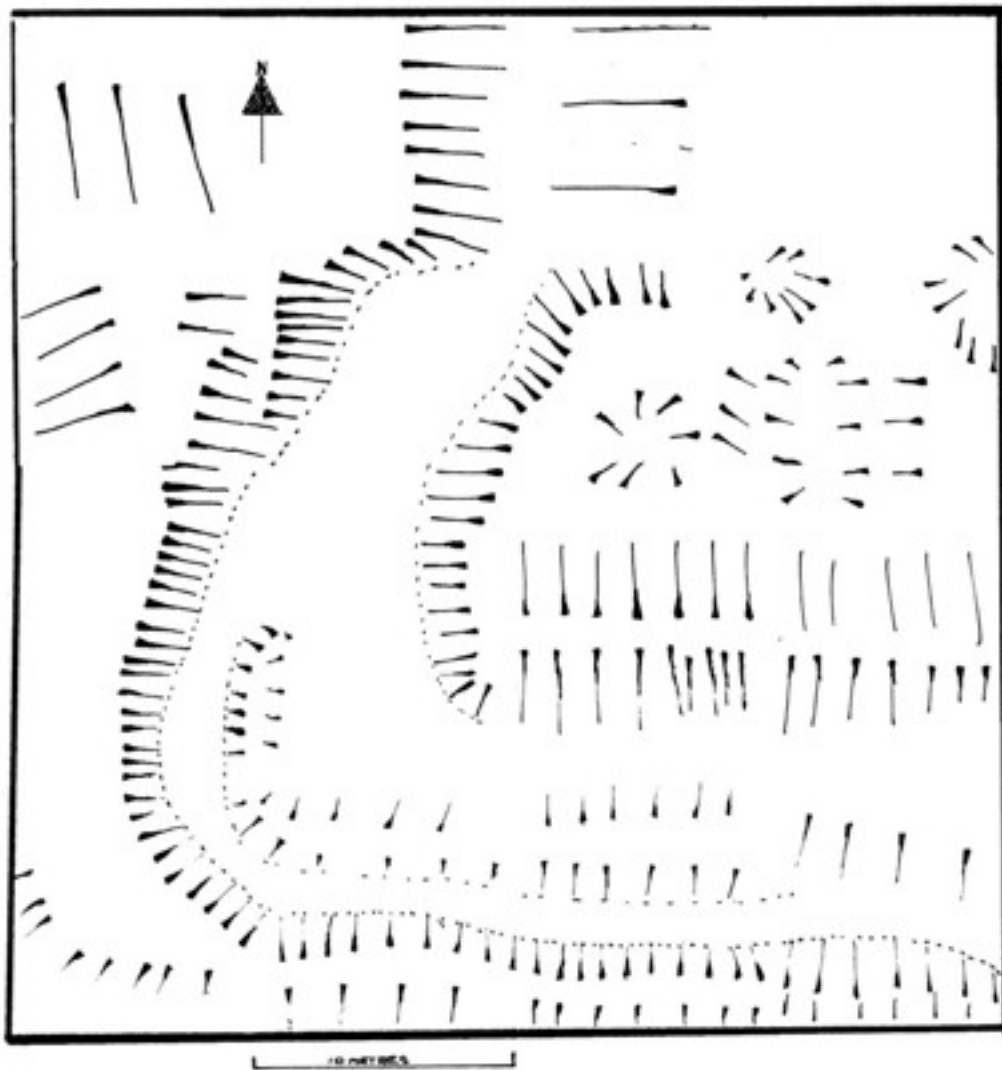


Fig. 5 Drawing showing the surface undulation of the site under investigation.

Excavation

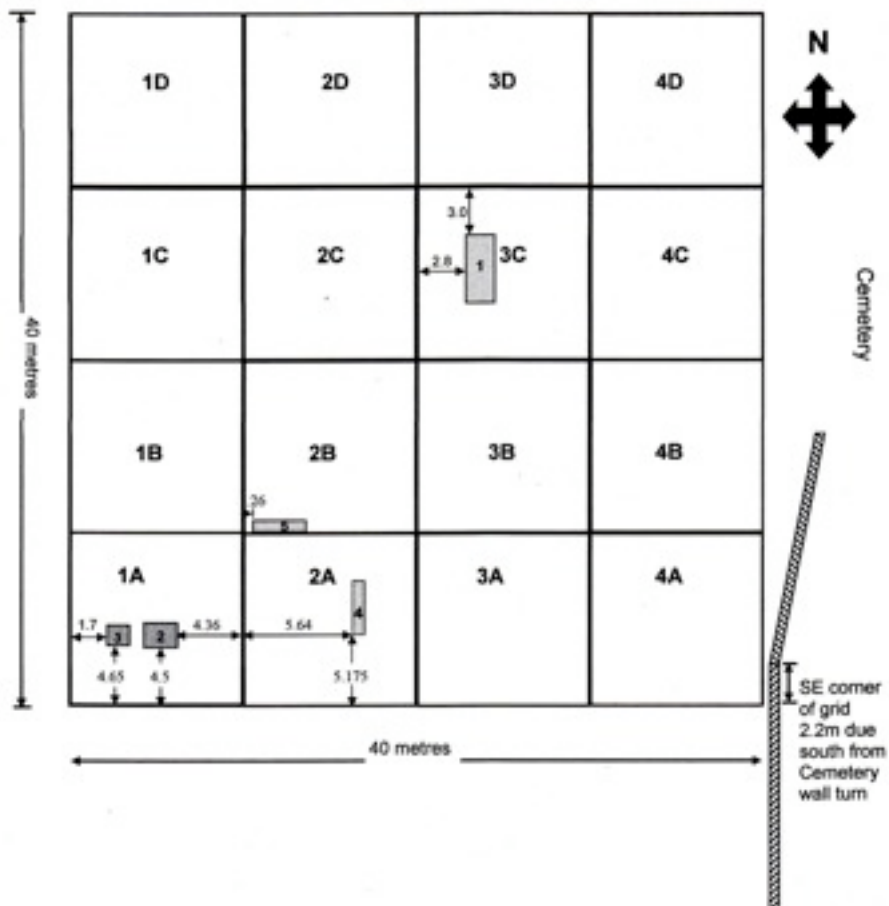


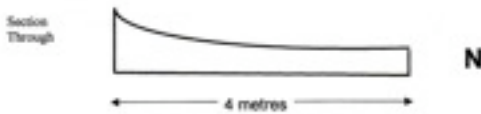
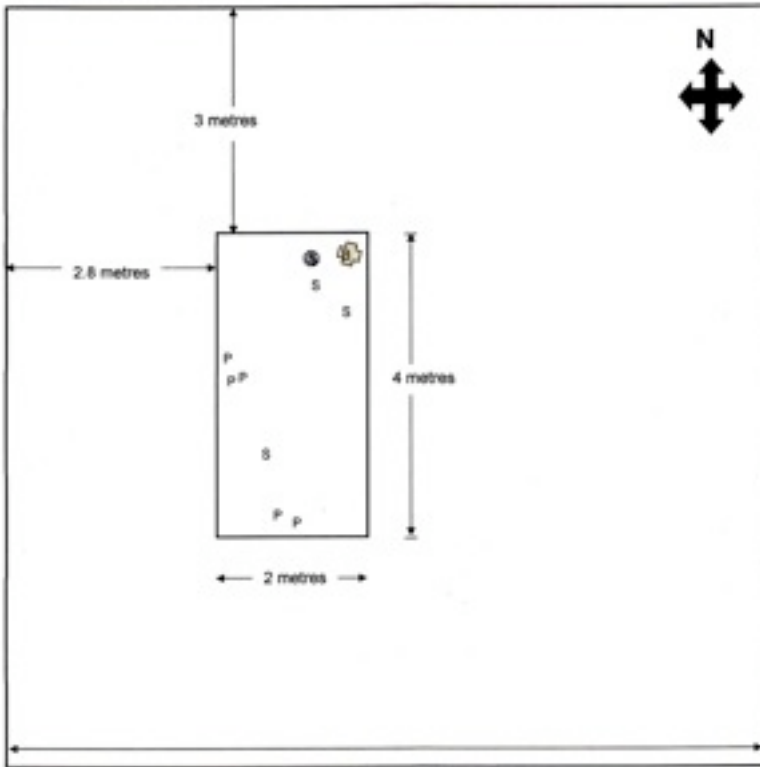
Fig. 6 Grid showing Pits 1-5. 40 m square comprising 16 10x x 10m squares. Scale 1:250

Fig 7 Pit 1 after the first context.



Pit 1 Context 1 Grid Ref : 3 C

Scale 1 : 50



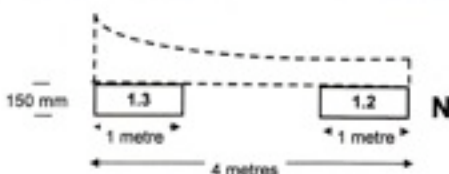
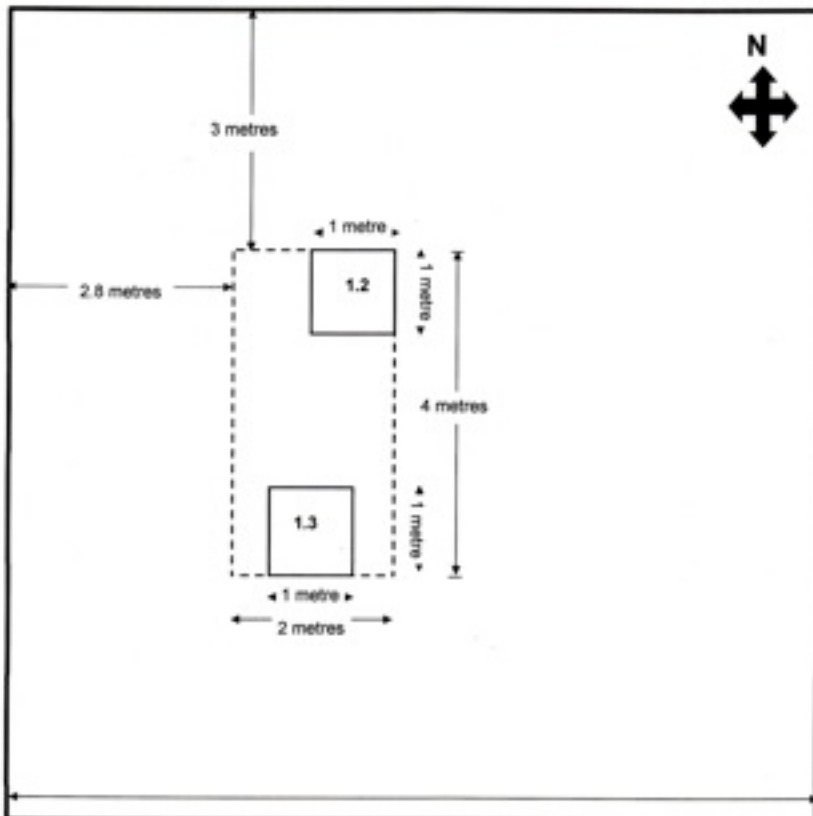
Pit one. Context 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3

Context 1.1 (Fig.8)

This pit was excavated on the raised ground in section 3C of the grid in a flat area away from the small tree (in 2C) to avoid its roots. The drawings give all the dimensions. A compacted earth surface was found at a depth of 23 cm at the north end and 12 cm at the south end. The soil to this point had been medium brown, friable clay based loam under turf. There were very few stones with the exception of four large flat ironstone pieces found in the north-east corner of the pit. Close to these was a large butchered animal bone. Pottery sherds were mostly medieval with one or two sherds from post medieval and modern and a large bore clay pipe stem.

Pit 1 Context 2 and 3, Grid Ref : 3 C

Scale 1 : 50



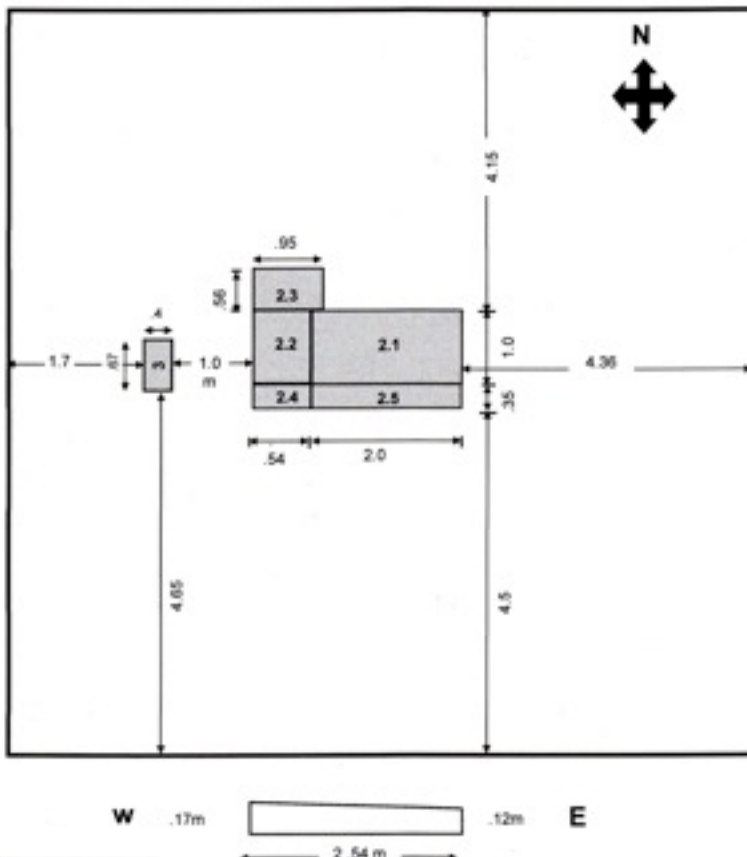
Context 1.2 (Fig.9)

A further 1 metre x 1 metre test pit was excavated to a depth of approximately 15 cm in the north-east corner of Pit 1. A further medieval pottery sherd and two pieces of limestone building material were recovered but it was decided not to excavate deeper due to the compaction of the clay.

Context 1.3 (Fig.9)

A further 1 metre x 1 metre test pit was excavated to a depth of 15 cm in the centre of the southern edge of Pit 1. A large bore clay pipe stem, animal teeth and building material including a tile were found. A metal probe was hammered in to a depth of 90 cm. No resistance was found and no further excavation done on this pit.

Pit 1 was backfilled and the turf replaced.



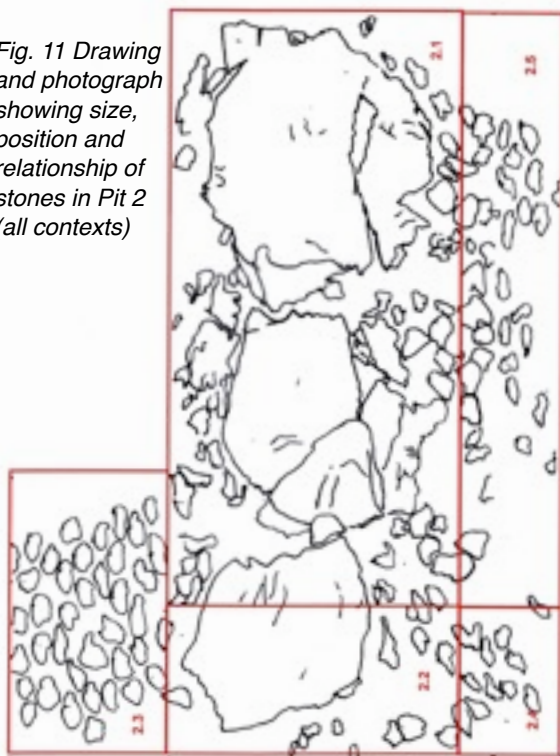
Pits 2 and 3 (Fig.10)

Contexts 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, and 2.5
 The starting point for Pit 2 was the large flat piece of limestone lying exposed on the surface of the ground. This measured approximately 50 cm x 40 cm as exposed. The turf was removed around this stone to a depth of about 10 cm and the pit extended to 2 m x 1 m. The ground was sloping slightly down towards the east.

The first stone proved to be the central point of three large flat limestone stones lying in a straight line approximately east/west. They were possibly the foundation of a wall. The large stones were not removed but a slight undercut was made and soil removed to see whether there were further stones underneath. Nothing was found.

However with the extension of the pit into contexts 2.2, 2.3 2.4 and 2.5 evidence of cobbled surfaces were found. The cobbles on the southern side were slightly higher than those on the north side and also more organised forming a surface. All contexts in this pit were excavated to an average depth of 15 cm. Any cobbles moved during the excavation and cleaning process were returned to the pit.

Fig. 11 Drawing and photograph showing size, position and relationship of stones in Pit 2 (all contexts)



The cobbles and large stones seemed to end abruptly at the eastern end of 2.1 suggesting the end of the structure. There was a similar lack of stones at the western end of 2.2.

A number of finds were made in this pit. The pottery was all Midland Purple or Cistercian ware with one sherd of pantheon (see verified list). Pot was found in contexts 2.1, 2.3 and 2.5. Clinker type industrial waste was also found in contexts 2.1, 2.3 and 2.5.

Pit 3

Metal probes were hammered in to the east and west of Pit 2 along the same alignment to see if the line of stone continued. Stone was found 1 metre west of the centre of Pit 2 (2.2) and a small test pit (Pit 3) was dug. One random stone was found but no continuation of the large stone line or the cobbled surface. Pit 3 was backfilled.

Pit 6

Metal probes were again used to locate any stones to the north of Pit 2. Stone was found at 7.2 metres north of the centre of Pit 2 and a small pit dug to 20 cm depth in section 1B of the grid. Again no significant layer or deposit of stones was found and the small pit was backfilled.

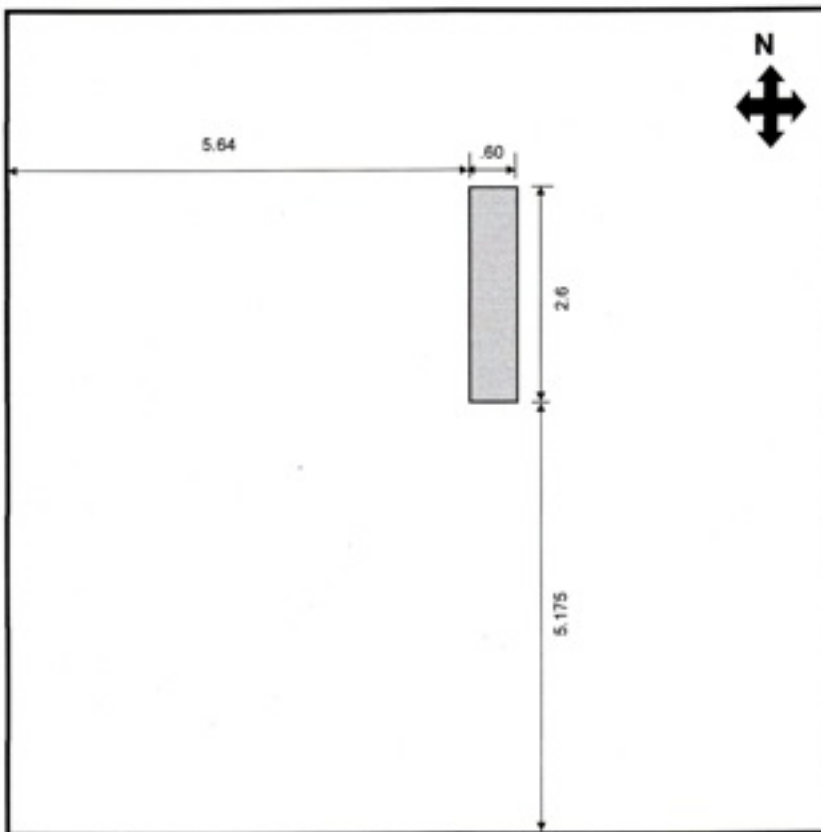
Pit 4

Context 4.1 (Fig. 12 Drawing & photograph of pit 4)

The ground was probed with metal rods in several places where there were distinctive features. The deepest part of the hollow way showed no resistance to the rods and at a depth of about 40 cm the ground remained soft.

Pit 4. Context 1 Grid Ref : 2A

Scale 1 : 50



However, in grid 2A 10 metres east of Pit 2, a line of resistance suggesting a hard surface was found in the slightly higher part of the hollow way. This area was measured to be about 2.6 metres wide. A narrow pit was dug and a hard surface of small pebbles including granite, flint and crushed limestone was found at a depth of 20 cm.

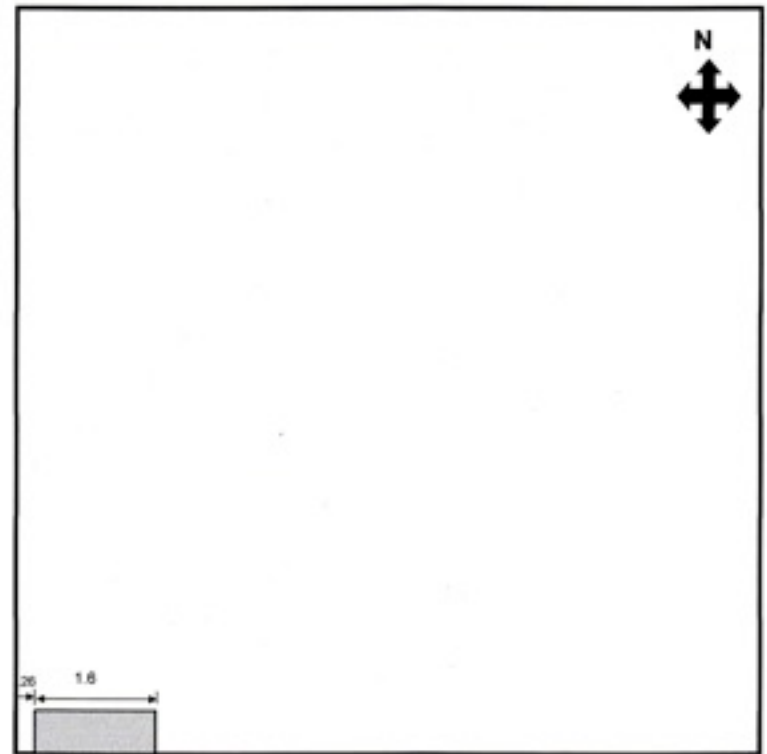


The centre of the pit was very slightly raised above the sides and could suggest a camber of a small cart track or similar, the wheels having caused the sides to sink.

Two sherds of pottery found here are pancheon ware. The pit was photographed and backfilled.

Pit 5 (Fig. 13)**Context 5.1**

Further probing with metal rods produced a similar result to that found in Pit 4 in grid 2B where the hollow way had turned towards Dingley Road. A further narrow pit was dug with dimensions of 60 cm x 1.60 metres and again at about 25 cm depth a similar surface to that in Pit 4 was discovered, again it was slightly raised in the centre. A small piece of decorative lead was found. The small pit was photographed and backfilled.



Further probing suggested that this track followed the same contour towards Dingley Road and in the other direction it was found to follow the line of the hollow way towards the wall of the cemetery.

A metal detecting sweep was carried out within the gridded area. Nearly all the finds were found in Grids 1D and 2D underneath the mature trees and included fragments of cast iron, part of a plough blade and fragments of lead and copper. No dateable metal finds were found.

Conclusion

There are a number of features of this site which must be considered before an interpretation can be attempted. These are principally, the location of the paddock within the present and past village framework, the topography of the site, the age of the dateable finds, and the documentation on the ownership and use of this paddock in the past.

It is possible and could even be argued, probable, that there were more dwellings to the east of the parish church in the past than there are today. If the village extended eastwards it would have put the parish church at the heart of the village instead of on the eastern edge as it appears today.

Christchurch Paddock is in an area where the built village could have been in the past. It is close to the church (about 100 metres distant) and above the flood plain of the River Welland. In the 1770s it was part of a series of closes and we saw no evidence that it has ever been ploughed. The will of Henry Shuttleworth in 1800 states that the closes were 'occupied' by Elizabeth Clarke. This opens the possibility that she had a dwelling in the close.

The hollow way with its simple stony surface appears to go nowhere. It would be a pointless diversion on Dingley Road as the flooding problem occurs much nearer to the river. There is also no sign remaining in the fields that it continues eastwards to ford the river to the right of the present bridge. Another purpose could be as an access track to a single property or several dwellings situated either side of the hollow way in the present paddock.

The hollow way or track appears to head back towards the present Dingley Road but it is not clear whereabouts it meets the present road. A further bend in the track round the mature tree standing up on the bank would bring the track out opposite the present drive to The Grange. This tree is of some considerable age being 4 metres in circumference around the trunk at about a metre from the ground. This measurement was taken below the major tuberousness of the trunk.

There are further earthworks in the paddocks to the north of Dingley Road and directly opposite where the hollow way may meet the road. There is what appears to be a semi-circular ditch which begins and ends at Dingley Road. This could be associated with the hollows in Christchurch Paddock. Together these areas would form a large approximately oval area enclosed by these ditch features.

No firm evidence was found during the excavation for a dwelling although the flat compacted earth surface just below the turf in Pit 1 was unusual. One would not have expected to find this kind of smooth compaction in field soil undisturbed for centuries. Normally the soil would be of the same consistency as that below the turf and contain increasingly more clay with decreasing amounts of humous the deeper the pit was dug. The majority of dateable finds at this pit were medieval with one or two stray finds from a later date. This has to suggest nearby domestic activity in the medieval period.

The stones in Pit 2 form part of the possible foundation of a building. From the evidence of cobbled surfaces on both sides of the stones it would seem to be more likely a barn with a cobbled stone floor and yard, rather than a dwelling house. A barn is mentioned in the 1800 will of Henry Shuttleworth but it is not clear in which close it was situated. Pottery was found close to the principal stones. This pottery is all Midland Purple type and needs to be accurately dated. Pottery of this type could date from 1350 until 1500 with later type of the same pottery being made until about 1750. The presence of large bore, early clay pipe stems suggest this may be post medieval rather than earlier.

A geo-physical resistivity meter survey of the paddock would show areas of stone and construction and the entire route of the track. This we were unable to achieve using the occasional metal rod probe. Great Bowden Heritage hope to be able to carry out this survey work in the future.

Rosemary Culkin
1st July 2010

Update September 2017, see below after the Finds Report.



VERIFIED FINDS REPORT

ORGANISATION: Great Bowden Heritage & Archaeology

DETAILS: Excavation of earthworks in paddock with permission of the owner.

DATE: 26-27th June 2010

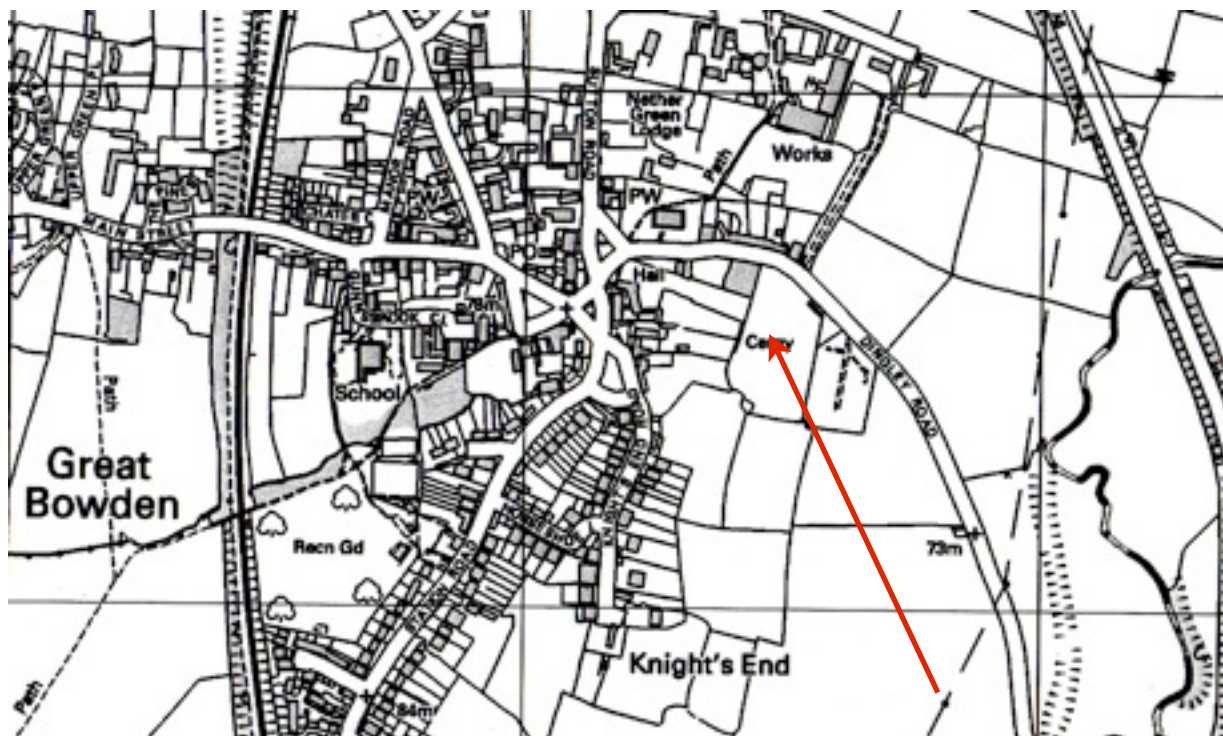
DESCRIPTION: See report. SITE CODE: GBH CC

LOCATION: Christchurch Paddock, Dingley Road, Great Bowden, Leicestershire

GRID REF: SP748887 CIVIL PARISH: Great Bowden

ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS: Various Terriers, Will of Henry Shuttleworth, 1888 Poor Rate return (Pam Aucott research) 1862 Deeds of Cemetery Field (Jeremy Heygate)

MAP:
(Fig. 14)



FINDS - Pit excavations 26-27th June 2010

Pit 1

- GBH CC 1.1 Prehistoric. 1 x flint flake
- GBH CC 1.1 Medieval. 7 x Lyveden Stanion oolitic limestone ware
- GBH CC 1.1 Medieval. 3 x sherds with shell inclusions 12th/13th century
- GBH CC 1.1 Medieval. 2 x sherds with grit inclusions 12th/13th century
- GBH CC 1.1 Post medieval. 1 x mottled ware
- GBH CC 1.1 Post medieval 1 x clay pipe stem (thick stem, large bore)
- GBH CC 1.1 Modern. 2 x glazed sherds
- GBH CC 1.1 Modern. 1 x small clear glass fragment
- GBH CC 1.1 4 x large ironstone pieces (building material)
- GBH CC 1.1 4 x fragments of chalk
- GBH CC 1.1 4 x fragments of brick
- GBH CC 1.1 5 x animal bone including teeth
- GBH CC 1.1 1 small metal keep plate (modern)
- GBH CC 1.1 1 x small mild steel strap
- GBH CC 1.1 2 x nails (corroded)



Fig. 15 Medieval pottery from Pit 1.1

- GBH CC 1.2 Medieval 1 x Lyveden Stanion type pottery
- GBH CC 1.2 2 x limestone building material
- GBH CC 1.3 Post medieval. 1 x clay pipe stem (quite thick and large bore)
- GBH CC 1.3 3 x animal bone and teeth
- GBH CC 1.3 2 x small pieces building stone (1 medieval ribbed roof tile, 1 shelly limestone)

Pit 2

- GBH CC 2.1 Medieval/post medieval. 2 x Midland Purple or late Cistercian

GBH CC 2.1 1 x clay pipe stem (large bore hole)
 GBH CC 2.1 1 x small piece of metal possibly part of blade
 GBH CC 2.1 2 x floor tile fragments
 GBH CC 2.1 1 x clinker type industrial waste
 GBH CC 2.1 7 fragments of burnt bone

GBH CC 2.3 Medieval/post medieval. 5 x Midland Purple or Cistercian.
 GBH CC 2.3 Post medieval. 1 x pancheon ware
 GBH CC 2.3 5 x clinker type industrial waste
 GBH CC 2.3 1 x floor tile, 1 x part of brick
 GBH CC 2.3 1 x large animal molar

GBH CC 2.5 Medieval 2 x Midland Purple
 GBH CC 2.5 Post medieval 1 x Cistercian ware
 GBH CC 2.5 6 x clinker type industrial waste

Pit 4

GBH CC 4.1 Post medieval. 2 x earthenware, possibly EA2
 GBH CC 4.1 2 x animal bone



Fig 16 Midland Purple and Cistercian ware from Pit 2

Pit 5

GBH CC 5.1 2 x brick fragments
 GBH CC 5.1 1 x moulded decorative lead

No finds were recorded from Pits 3 and 6.

Comments from the excavation team June 2010

“Well, it’s all a bit of a mystery. We hope to go back one day and use geo-physics to find out what is really there.”
 “It’s a road, but to where? Where is the road to the village? Not sure if the stones are a wall or not.”
 “I like the big stones but they seem to be too high in the ground for the foundations of a building.”
 “Nothing very definite but the road surface may connect with the drive to The Grange. I’ve no idea what the stone feature is.”
 “Stones used in the gateway may have been robbed from here”
 “The cobbles next to the big stones are bigger and form a yard surface compared to the small stones of the road surface. There seems no connection between the two areas.”
 “Wonder if it was a form of roadway. There must have been a barn here or something.”
 “Definitely a road surface which has been buried - not medieval because of the granite found.”
 “Stones were probably a building and a cobbled yard.”
 “The cobbles around the big stones suggest a surface of some kind. Size and function are not determined.”
 “The footings for something - definitely something.”
 “If it’s a building, it’s odd there is only this bit left.”
 “It’s a cart track worn down at the sides.”



Update September 2017

Much has happened to this paddock since the excavation in 2010 including a planning application for housing, still undecided in September 2017, and extensive archaeological survey work by University of Leicester Archaeological Services. The paddock has been designated an Important Open Space and of Historical Environmental Significance by the Parish Council in the draft Great Bowden Neighbourhood Plan (2017), www.greatbowdenparishcouncil.org.uk

See HER extract from Supporting Information below:



Fig.20 Paddock from Dingley Road showing ditch

Baker, Steve, 2016, *An archaeological desk-based assessment for land at Dingley Road, Great Bowden, Leicestershire* (Unpublished document). SLE5191. Aerial photographic analysis and a site visit of the area south of the road were carried out in 2016.

Beamish, Matthew, 2016, *An archaeological earthwork survey by LiDAR study for land off Dingley Road, Great Bowden, Leicestershire* (Unpublished document). SLE5192. LiDAR analysis was carried out in 2016 using 2009 data. North of the road various enclosures were recorded. South of the road the main feature was the south-west corner of a ditch and bank surrounded enclosure measuring 50m x 40m. Other banks/ditches were noted west and south of this. South of this area ridge and furrow was recorded.