

# Great Bowden Heritage Archaeology



**Mud barn and paddock, Sutton Road,**

**Great Bowden LE16 7HW**

**Grid Reference SP 745889**

**Archaeological Test Pit Excavations and other investigations**

**2002-2014**

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*Fig 1 Aerial view of the small paddock with the barn in the south-west corner, taken in 2006*



## 2002 Farming Within Living Memory Exhibition

In 2002 the barn was cleaned and its features recorded by members of Great Bowden Heritage Group prior to an exhibition of "Farming within Living Memory" which took place there between 1st-3rd June 2002 to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee.

The debris on the floor was a foot deep in places and contained much of the mud from the original walls, replaced by brick in the case of all walls except the one facing the road. The mud contained much animal hair, mixed in. There were reeds, probably used in the ceiling and harnesses, metal hinges and other door furniture from a variety of periods. The floor when revealed was mostly laid brick with cobbles in some places.

We understood that the barn had been used for milking some 40-45 years ago by a Mr Allen, the farmer. The cows grazed in the home paddock outside the barn. On the walls were several inscriptions in pencil giving the cow's name and yield of milk. We think they originated from the 1960s and 1970s.

The Heritage Group held a feast in the barn at the end of the exhibition



*Fig 2, left. showing the remaining mud wall of the barn from the road.*

*Fig 3 below showing the old hinges, harnesses etc. found on the barn floor during cleaning.*





*Fig.4 left, showing equipment used in a milking parlour in the 1940s.*

*Fig. 5 below, further displays and showing the excellent condition of the barn floor constructed with brick and cobbles.*



## **Great Bowden Heritage & Archaeology**

**Festival of British Archaeology 2009**

**Test Pit at Mud Barn Paddock, Sutton Road,**

**Great Bowden, LE16 7HW**

**Date 25-26th July 2009**

**Grid Reference: SP745889**



### **History**

This small paddock was once part of the farm at Rectory House. A building appears on this site on the earliest maps available from the early 19th century, although there is no documentary evidence of a dwelling on the site in the past. The barn was used until the 1960s by the farmer probably for milking as pencil markings on the whitewashed walls of the barn indicate milk yields from named cows. The whole area including Rectory House and land to the north of the church is considered the likely, although unproven, site for the Anglo-Saxon and Medieval Royal manor enclosure in Great Bowden.

Henry VIII gave this land to Christchurch Oxford in 1546 and it remained in their ownership until 1926 when it was finally sold.



*Fig 6. The paddock, looking east, the barn is to the right out of the picture and Rectory House can be seen beyond the hedge.*

## **Method and Results**

A 1 metre x 1 metre test pit was dug to see if anything of interest was buried on the site as little of its early history is known. The south-west corner of the pit was 11 metres from the rear of the barn and 3.1 metres from the southern boundary fence. Top soil was removed to a depth of 10 cm., (Context 1).

A further 10 cm was excavated (Context 2) with mainly loamy soil. In this context only a few small stones were found with some small roots. Finds were post medieval, see detailed list. A metal detector scan was made.

Context 3 was dug to a depth of 30 cm on completion. Again the earth was very loamy and still dark in colour with part clay mix at the bottom of the context. Post medieval finds are listed separately. Again a metal detector scan was made.

At the bottom of this context the possible level of the old mud barn yard was uncovered. This narrow layer consisted of tile, pot and stone and dried straw different to elsewhere in the pit and it could have constituted an attempt to create a simple yard surface close to the existing mud barn.



*Fig. 7 Photograph taken at the completion of Context 3 at a depth from the surface of 30 cms. The level of the possible mud barn yard can be clearly seen around bottom edge of context. Some ceramic white tile fragments and small fragments of terracotta were also found in this context. Soil starting to include more clay mixed with the loam.*



*Fig. 8 Photograph of context 4 clearly showing the transition from loamy earth to soil/clay mix. You can clearly see the barn yard floor level halfway down the cut. Surprisingly few finds had been found at this stage in the dig.*



*Fig. 9 Photograph shows context 5 completed. As very little had been found in dig it was decided to extend the smaller corner pit to probe if anything lay between context 5 and the natural.*

Context 6 (small area) was dug to a further depth of 50 cms (1 metre from the surface). We came across what seemed to be a stone surface. A metal detector scan of the small corner pit showed there to be a metal object under the stone surface. At this point it was not clear how far this stone surface extended.

Context 7 was dug to a depth of 1 metre from the surface. The full 1 metre x 1 metre was exposed and it was found that the stone surface covered the whole area and beyond. The metal detector signal obtained at bottom of small corner pit was investigated and found to be what looks like part of an old horse shoe. This was under the top surface of the floor. Once the whole pit was cleaned another metal detector scan was carried out and two further signals heard once again for objects within the floor. On investigation a very fine piece of copper band was found.



*Fig. 10 The floor surface, Context 7, can be clearly seen in this photograph. The positions of the three finds can be seen. A small hole was made in the floor to see the depth it extended down. This was found to be 23 cms with natural below.*

*Clearly further investigation, possibly using geo-physics, is needed to make sense of the stone surface and if possible to find the extent of it before further excavation is attempted.*

David French &  
John Panter  
July 2009

## Observation

There is the possibility that this surface is the floor of Great Bowden's Tithe Barn. The tithe barn was on land belonging to Christchurch College, Oxford, as this site was, and permission was sought and granted in 1837 for the barn to be demolished. The tithe barn's location is not given but it was described as being some distance from the 'estate' (the arable fields) and in an area of pasture. Permission was sought and eventually granted in 1846 for a replacement barn to be built, as a proper building, as a substitute for the old tithe barn. The existing mud barn may date from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century when mud was used extensively in the village for building. The pit was remarkably dry even at a metre depth unusual in this part of the village where the cellars of Rectory House were known to flood and the paddock to the north of the excavation site is also very damp



*Fig. 11 Visitors to the Festival of ARchaeology viewing the pit.  
The brick wall section of the barn can be seen in the background.*



## Finds extracted from test pit in Mud Barn Paddock - July 2009

- Context 1** No finds
- Context 2** Pottery, post medieval 6 x modern china/pot  
post medieval 1 x pancheon (EA6)  
3 x bone fragments  
2 x brick fragments  
2 x green bottle glass
- Context 3** Pottery, post medieval 2 x Staffordshire Metropolitan ware  
post medieval 1 x pancheon, (EA6)

1 x brick fragment  
ceramic white tile fragments  
terracotta fragments

Context 4 3 x corroded nails  
1 x thin glass (flat window glass)  
1 x bone fragment

Context 5 1 x brick fragment  
1 x bone fragment  
1 x glass

Context 6 No finds

Context 7 (within stone/floor surface)  
1 x part of horseshoe  
1 x fragment of copper sheet  
Possibly copper plate but no  
holes present)  
1 x small fragment of clear  
glass

## **Dowsing Survey - Mud Barn Paddock, 2009**

The mini excavation in the Mud Barn Paddock in July 2009 revealed an interesting stone floor at a depth of 1 metre. It was not possible for the group to excavate further to determine the extent of this floor and we tried unsuccessfully to get a geo-phys survey done by another organisation.

We therefore contacted the East Midlands Dowsing Group who had some experience and success in archaeological dowsing. The dowzers arrived and gave a quick lesson to members of the group, who had some success. The dowzers then carried out a survey of the whole paddock. They picked up signals of several small buildings in the paddock including one around the area where we did the test pit. (Plan A Fig. 12) We had not told them where this was. Details of their findings can be found on the first plan.

They then carried out further dowsing looking for earth energy lines. A strong line was found crossing the paddock and illustrated in the second plan below. (Plan B Fig.13) They thought it was pointing towards the village church and described it as a holy site. Although we were very close to the church it was out of sight behind high hedges and not in that direction. We said, ask for Church of England, the the rods swung round immediately in the exact direction of the church. The line they found seems to point towards Bowden Ridge and we asked them to identify the age of this holy site. They counted backwards in time and the rods crossed at 'pre celtic'. We have yet to follow this up.





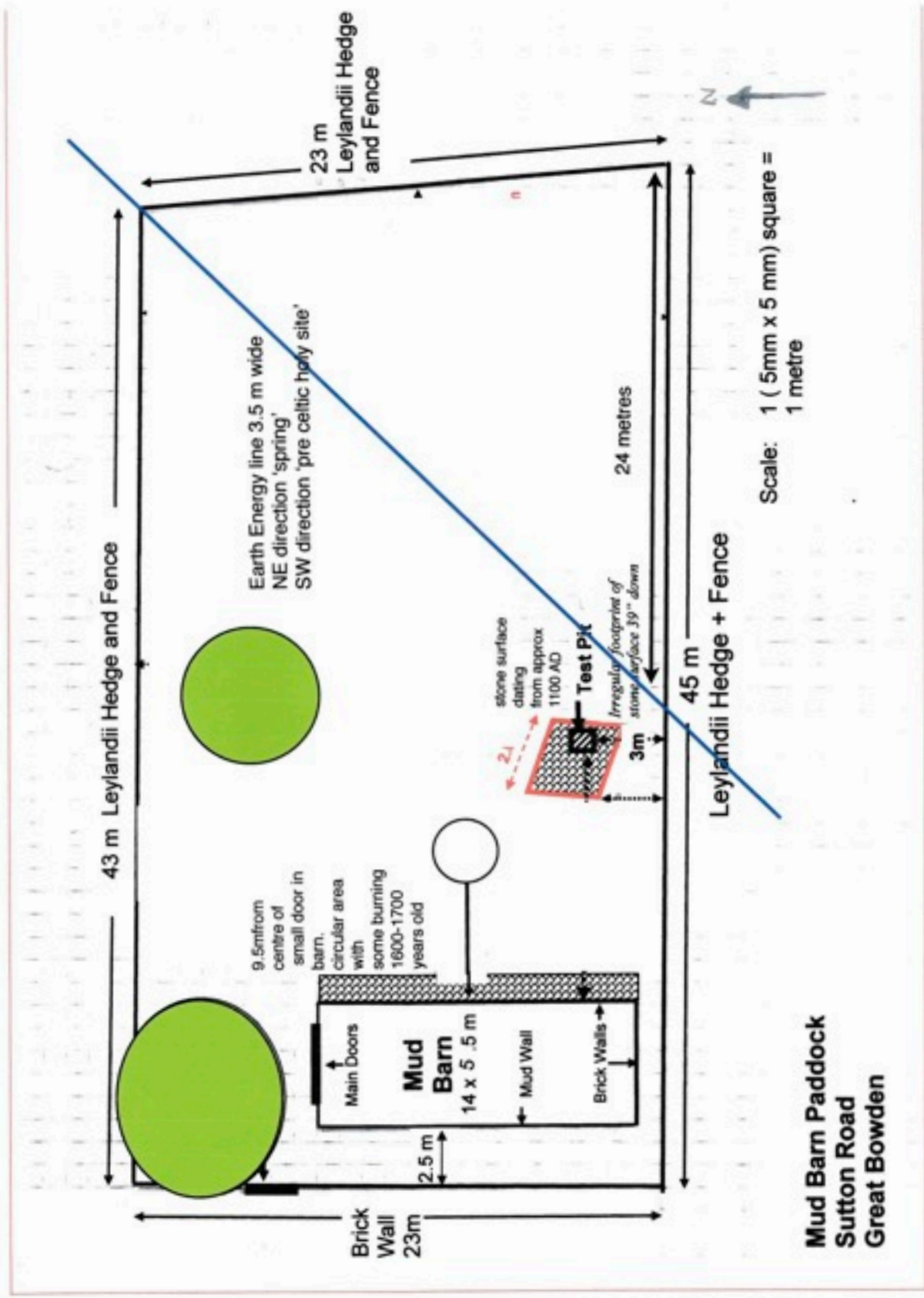


Fig. 13 Plan B Dowsing indicated a strong earth energy line as illustrated. This line points approximately south-west towards the high ground on Bowden Ridge.

We hope that eventually a geo-phys survey of this paddock with our own equipment may be possible but the floor was very deep and may not show up on the readings. This paddock is a possible contender for the location of the village tithe barn. The small buildings indicated by dowsing do not match the dimensions of a large barn.

## **CORS Project - Access Cambridge Archaeology/Great Bowden Heritage & Archaeology**

ACS's report of this test pit can be found under the following reference:

Lewis, C and Ranson, C (2014) Archaeological Test Pit Excavations in Great Bowden, Leicestershire, 2013 and 2014. McDonald Institute of Archaeological Research, University of Cambridge: Access Cambridge Archaeology <https://doi.org/10.5284/1034489>

Great Bowden Heritage & Archaeology's own report is included below

### **CORS Project - Test Pit 17 (GBO/14/17)**

**Grid Reference SP7460 8896**

**Leics. Museums Accession No. X.A50.2014**

**Date of excavation: 15th March 2014**



Mud Barn Paddock is a small paddock whose name derives from a currently unused brick/slate and timber barn whose west elevation is of mud construction, and which, until mid 20th century, was used to house cattle. It is north of Rectory House, and the Parish Church, in that part of the village thought to be the land referred to in Domesday Book as held by the king. The paddock is pasture formerly part of the adjacent Rectory House home farm.

In 1546 Henry VIII gave the church of Great Bowden including the advowson, tithes and glebe land to the Dean and Chapter of his newly formed college Christ Church Oxford. Upon Enclosure more land was added, in lieu of tithes, to form Rectory House Estate. The estate was sold off in lots in 1926. Sale particulars include Rectory House, coal house, store barn and cow house, paddocks surrounding Rectory House; substantial pasture in other parts of the parish, in Little Bowden and nearby Welham.

*Fig.14 External mud wall of barn*

Subsequent owners of Rectory House portioned off and sold Mud Barn Paddock to raise funds for Rectory House repairs.

The paddock is now again for sale with outline planning permission for a single storey dwelling incorporating the barn.

The current barn is thought to date from the 19th century when mud was used extensively in the village for building. The paddock is one of several contenders for the site of the original tithe barn, known to have been on Christchurch pasture land. Permission is known to have been sought in 1837 for the tithe barn to be demolished and for replacement cattle sheds to be built in 1846, but the site of the original tithe barn and its replacement remains unclear.

In 2009 as part of the Festival of British Archaeology, Great Bowden Heritage & Archaeology excavated a test pit some 11 metres east of the barn. The very few dateable finds were all post medieval, but at one metre depth a stone surface was discovered, suggestive of a barn floor. There was no associated dateable evidence. <http://greatbowdenheritage.btck.co.uk/ExcavationReports/MudBarnPaddockEx>

**Test Pit 17** was located towards the North east corner of the paddock diametrically opposite to the earlier pit, in an area known to dry out in summer, evidence of which can be seen from satellite view, with corresponding dry areas in Rectory House paddock beyond.

The first 2 contexts revealed brown loam with many local stone fragments, a quantity of lime plaster/mortar fragments, brick/tile pieces, 2 clay pipe stems and coal. The only two pottery sherds were of post medieval date.



*Fig 15 Wall foundation at 20cm depth*

At the 20 cm depth evidence of a stony feature emerged diagonally SE to NW across the pit, which, when excavated, revealed a line of randomly laid stone, with one straighter edge formed by 2 larger pieces of local "iron" stone. The rest comprised limestone, some worked, cobble, two large pieces of clay floor tile with evidence of a glaze, and smaller fragments of ironstone, brick/tile, lime mortar and rubble.

No pottery was found in this context. At most the feature was 9cm or one stone deep, and

finished just above the start of context 4. Unlike the "floor" found in 2009 it was not set in the ground in any structured way.

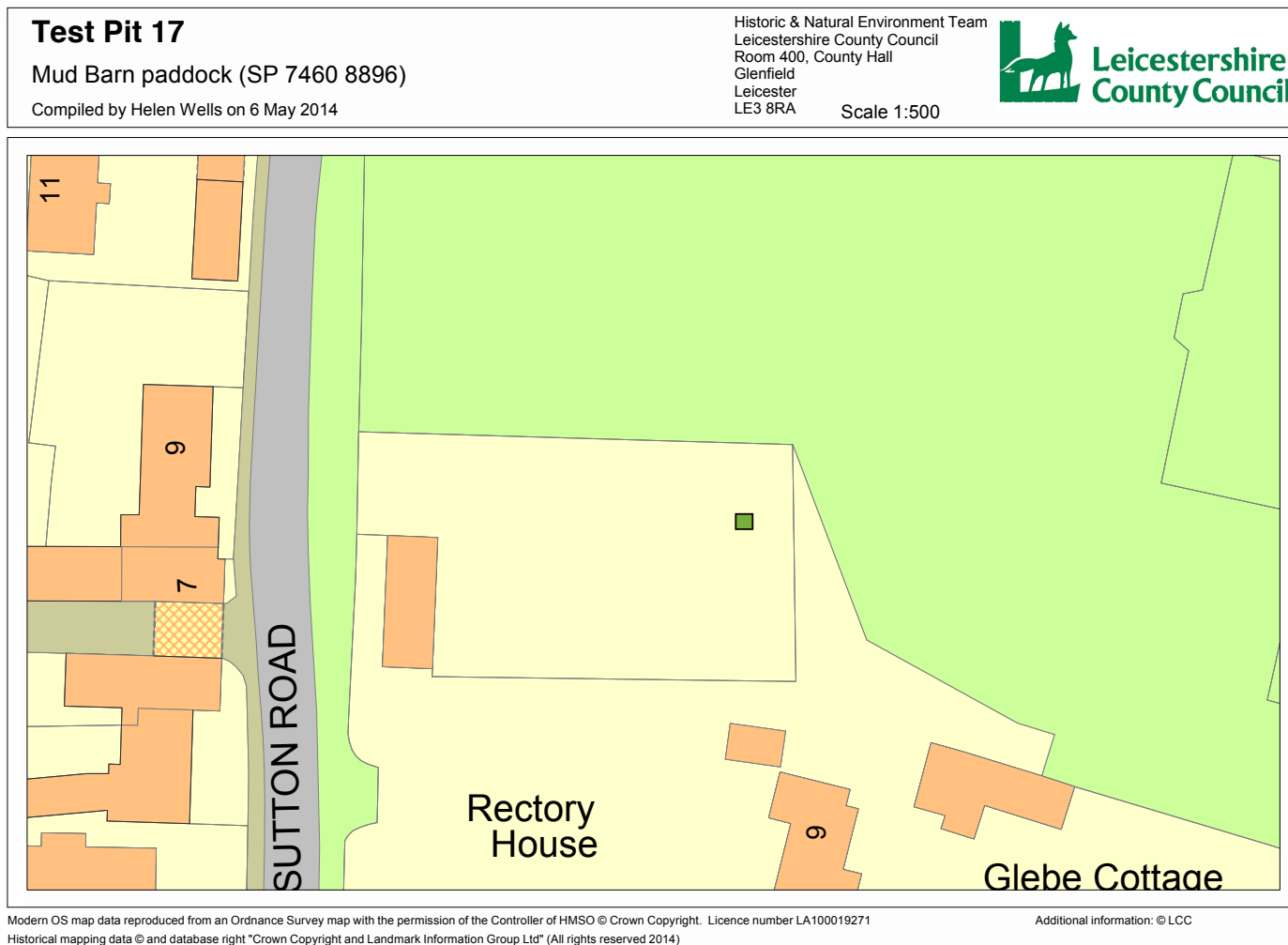
One typical limestone piece, two floor tiles and associated fragments were retained, the rest returned to the pit at back fill.

Below the feature all contexts were largely devoid of building fragments and stone, but an increasing number of medieval and early medieval pottery sherds emerged, including Lyveden Stanion and Stamford ware. Other early sherds have yet to be identified.

Natural clay was reached initially at 80 cm with evidence of a diagonal cut of brown loam in the northern half of the context. This was excavated to reach a lower level of clay at 1 metre, and continued to produce pottery sherds of an early date.

A remaining 30 cm x 30 cm dark patch at the NW corner was further excavated to a total depth of 1.2 m but quickly filled with water and produced no features or finds.

A site map is included and detailed tables showing pottery and other finds.



*Fig. 16 Map of paddock showing test pit location*

Other finds from Great Bowden Test Pit GBO/14/17

| TEST PIT 17 | Ceramic excluding pottery                         | Animal Bone                         | Worked stone & Flint                    | Metal & Metal working | Glass            | All Other Finds   |
|-------------|---|-------------------------------------|---|-----------------------|------------------|---|
| C1          | 1 x brick = 2.1g                                  | 2 x bone = 11.85g                   |   |                       | 2 x glass = 1.4g | 1 x slate = 0.45g<br>black plastic fragment = 0g                            |
| C2          | 7 x brick = 23.7g<br>3 x clay pipe pieces = 5.15g | 1 x bone = 4.35g                    | 1 x flint = 6.25g<br>2 x stone = 112.6g | 1 x nail = 1.9g       |                  | 37 x lime plaster/render = 154.85g<br>1 x slag = 16.05g<br>9 x coal = 25.5g |
| C3          | 2 x brick = 19.75g                                | 2 x bone = 6.8g                     |   | 1 x button = 1.75g    |                  | 4 x oyster shell = 10.6g<br>13 x lime render = 51g                          |
| C3A         | 2 x tile = 825g<br>14 x brick = 438g              | 1 x bone = 4.15g                    | 1 x stone = 365g (sample)               |                       |                  | 1 x slag = 47.15g<br>lime render = 95g                                      |
| C4          | 3 x brick = 6g                                    | 3 x bone = 17.9g                    |   |                       |                  |   |
| C5          |   | 3 x bone = 23.5g                    | 1 x worked flint? = 6g                  |                       |                  | 1 x coal = 3.2g   |
| C6          |   | 3 x bone = 24g<br>1 x tooth = 11.4g |   |                       |                  | 3 x daub or fired clay? = 9.3g  |
| C7          |   | 15 x bone = 86.6g<br>tooth x 1 =    | 1 x flint = 37g                         | 1 x nail = 9.4g       |                  | 6 x daub or fired clay? = 13.5g   |
| C8          |   | 5 x bone/teeth = 21.2g              | 2 x worked stone? = 993g                |                       |                  | 12 x daub or fired clay? = 16.25g   |
| C9          |   | 6 x bone = 60g                      |   |                       |                  | 2 x daub or fired clay? = 5.6g  |
| C10         |   |                                     |   |                       |                  | 1 x daub or fired clay? = 5g  |

### GBO/14/17 Test Pit 17 Pottery analysis Paul Blinkhorn

| TP | Context | SN |    | STAM |    | OOL |    | SHC |    | LA |    | PM |     | LB |    | MP |    | SMW |    | VIC |    | Date Range |
|----|---------|----|----|------|----|-----|----|-----|----|----|----|----|-----|----|----|----|----|-----|----|-----|----|------------|
|    |         | No | Wt | No   | Wt | No  | Wt | No  | Wt | No | Wt | No | Wt  | No | Wt | No | Wt | No  | Wt | No  | Wt |            |
| 17 | 2       |    |    |      |    |     |    |     |    |    |    |    |     |    |    |    |    | 2   | 42 | 1   | 5  | 1680-1900  |
| 17 | 3       |    |    | 1    | 4  |     |    |     |    |    |    |    |     |    |    |    |    |     |    |     |    | 1000-1100  |
| 17 | 3A      |    |    | 1    | 2  |     |    |     |    |    |    |    |     |    |    |    |    |     |    |     |    | 900-1100   |
| 17 | 4       |    |    | 3    | 10 |     |    | 7   | 38 | 7  | 33 | 2  | 29  | 6  | 64 | 3  | 30 |     |    |     |    | 1000-1600  |
| 17 | 5       | 2  | 7  | 2    | 15 | 1   | 8  |     |    | 1  | 3  | 1  | 5   | 1  | 10 |    |    |     |    |     |    | 900-1350   |
| 17 | 6       | 1  | 5  | 3    | 8  | 1   | 1  | 2   | 4  |    |    | 1  | 6   |    |    |    |    |     |    |     |    | 900-1200   |
| 17 | 7       | 2  | 5  | 10   | 34 | 2   | 3  | 6   | 22 |    |    | 2  | 18  |    |    |    |    |     |    |     |    | 900-1200   |
| 17 | 8       | 4  | 18 | 423  |    |     |    | 7   | 82 |    |    | 17 | 135 |    |    |    |    |     |    |     |    | 900-1200   |
| 17 | 9       | 1  | 8  |      |    | 1   | 4  | 1   | 22 |    |    | 3  | 27  | 1  | 22 |    |    |     |    |     |    | 900-1350   |
| 17 | 10      | 2  | 8  | 2    | 9  |     |    |     |    |    |    |    |     |    |    |    |    |     |    |     |    | 1000-1100  |

The large quantities of late Saxon and medieval pottery from this test-pit show that people lived at the site from the 10<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries. It then appears to have gone into rapid decline, and has been more or less abandoned ever since. Some of the sherds, such as the PM from context 8, are all from the same pot.

SN: St Neots Ware.

STAM: Stamford Ware.

OOL: South Lincs Oolitic Ware, mid 10th – mid 13th century.

SHC: Medieval Shelly Ware. AD1100-1400.

LA: Lyveden/Stanion 'A' Ware. c. AD1150-?1400.

PM Potters Marston ware

LB: Lyveden/Stanion 'B' Ware. c AD1200 - 1400.

MP: Midland Purple ware. Made and used between AD1450-1600.

SMW: Manganese Ware, late 17th – 18th century.

VIC: 1800 onwards

## Mud Barn Photographs

Extensive repairs were carried out to the roof in the 1992.

*Fig. 17 From the road showing the corrugated iron roof and mud wall.*





*Fig 18. From the road showing the remains of the thatched roof below the corrugated iron.*



*Fig 19. From the paddock, roof timbers exposed after thatch removed. Old thatch piled up below.*



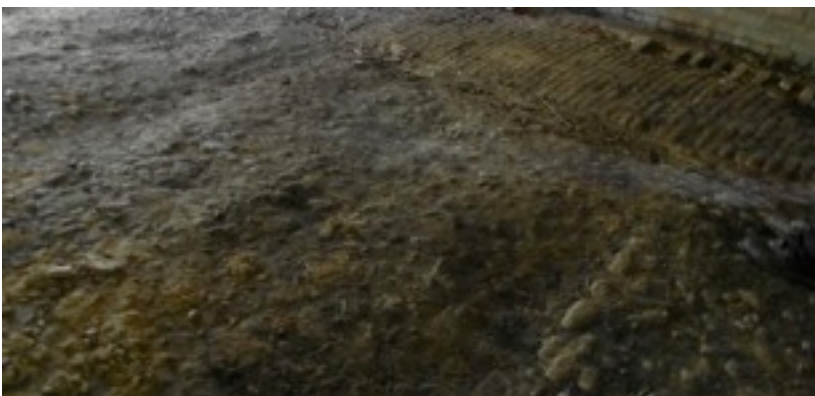
*Fig. 20 From the road showing the thatch removed and the original roof timbers exposed (most of these were replaced).*



*Fig. 21. The 1992 repair work nearing completion*



*Fig. 21. Barn interior March 2014*



*Fig. 21. Barn floor photographed March 2014*





*Fig. 22 Demolition of the barn for development December 2015.*



*Fig. 23. Redeveloped site October 2017*

*RC  
October 2017*