

Bowden Ridge Research - Test Pit 1 (BRR/16/1)

Burnmill Road, Market Harborough LE16 7JG

Leics County Council Accession No.X.A46.2016

Grid Reference: SP733 884

Date of excavation: 11 June 2016



Fig 1. Location map of BRR/16/1

This test pit excavation was carried out by Great Bowden Heritage & Archaeology on 11th June 2016 in the back garden of a house at the summit of Burnmill Road approximately at the centre of the Bowden Ridge area of study. The immediate area is rich in artefacts recovered through excavation or field walking and covering all historic periods from prehistoric to post medieval. The south-east corner of the pit was measured 9.07 metres from the northern corner of the house and 13.26 metres from the southern corner of the house.

Topography

The site lies on the northern limit of residential development in Market Harborough approximately 1Km from the town centre at an altitude of approximately 123 metre. The highest point of the ridge lies 450 metre to the north-west, altitude 130 metre. The front garden of the property slopes steeply downwards to Burnmill Road and the back garden has a gradual slope upwards and westwards. The area of the lawn where the test pit was dug was level and probably has remained untouched since the house was built in 1962.

The property is bounded on the northern side by an access lane to the farm and the reservoir and to the south-east and south by residential development.



Fig 2 Profile of the hill at Burnmill Road - property is at the summit (J.Culkin)

Geology

Below approximately 25cm of topsoil the overlying geology of glacial till was revealed. This concurs with the British Geological Survey's maps for the area and their description as follows:

Description: *Till, Mid Pleistocene - Diamicton. Superficial Deposits formed up to 2 million years ago in the Quaternary Period. Local environment previously dominated by ice age conditions.*

Setting: *ice age conditions. These rocks were formed in cold periods with Ice Age glaciers scouring the landscape and depositing moraines of till with outwash sand and gravel deposits from seasonal and post glacial meltwaters.*

The pit was dug to a depth of 60 cm and as no finds had been recovered beyond a depth of 40 cm the excavation was halted. The underlying bedrock geology had not been reached. This is described by BGS as:

Description: *Dyrham Formation - Siltstone And Mudstone, Interbedded. Sedimentary Bedrock formed approximately 183 to 190 million years ago in the Jurassic Period. Local environment previously dominated by shallow seas.*

Setting: *shallow seas. These rocks were formed in shallow seas with mainly siliciclastic sediments (comprising of fragments or clasts of silicate minerals) deposited as mud, silt, sand and gravel.*

The glacial till was compressed hard clay with numerous inclusions of flints of a variety of colours and lumps of chalk ranging from small fragments to nodules of approximately 15 cm long. There were many very small flint flakes, showing no sign of knapping but possibly broken up as a result of the violent glacial action by the ice in the past.



Fig 3 Sample of small flints found throughout the excavation

History

Before Enclosure in 1776 this area would have been part of the West field of the Open Fields of Great Bowden. Although the map at Enclosure has been lost we are attempting to identify the furlong names in the West field. Currently there is no furlong name that can be confidently attached to this area.

Origin of name Bowden

Bourne, Jill, 2003, *Understanding Leicestershire & Rutland Place Names*, p48 (Bibliographic reference). SLE220.

Known as Buggedone in 1086 (Domesday Book). Bucga (OE female personal name) + OE dun 'a hill, a flat-topped hill, an open upland expanse'. 'The open upland country associated with Bucga'. OE dun is the modern word 'downs', the 'down' of Great Bowden can be clearly seen on the road that leads into Bowden from the A6 to the north of Market Harborough. It is a typical dun with a fairly level extensive summit. The name Bucga is of particular interest as it is a woman's name used in a place-name, one of only two in Leicestershire; the other one is Witherley. At the time of Domesday Bowden was a major Anglo-Saxon royal centre held by King Edward the Confessor.



Fig 4. Central part of Bowden Ridge, looking South. Excavation site is situated further right of the photograph (R.Culkin)

The site is 240 metre north-west of Waterfield Place MLE19107 a mid to late Iron Age settlement excavated by ULAS in 2011. The Roman township at the eastern end of The Ridgeway is approximately 720 metre away with numerous Roman finds under MLE1948, and MLE16380, MLE16564, MLE16561, MLE16562 (all with Grid Ref.SP740881). The arable fields to the north and north-east have been field walked by Great Bowden Heritage. Finds in the following fields range from prehistoric to post-medieval. Chater's Hill, 200 metre north, Webbs Meadow 330 metre north-west MLE17042, Russell Seeds, 480 metre north, MLE17040, MLE17041, MLE1999, (Lower) Green's Hill, 400 metre north-east, MLE 19892, MLE19893, MLE19894. Summaries of these field walking

surveys can be found on the Heritage Groups website, www.greatbowdenheritage.btck.co.uk and on the Historic Environment Record for Leicestershire.

Historically the area was part of Great Bowden until it was incorporated into Market Harborough. The parish of Great Bowden regained its status as an independent parish in 1995 but this area remained under the authority of the town of Market Harborough.

Method

A test pit, 1 metre x 1 metre was dug in 10 cm contexts in the lawn in the back garden. The pit was photographed before the start of each context and the spoil was sieved or broken up into small pieces to extract any finds. When it was considered that the natural had been reached the sections were photographed and the pit was backfilled replacing the soil in the correct order and finally replacing the turf. The finds have been photographed, and identification of the pottery verified by an expert before being returned to the safe-keeping of the property owners. A documentary archive will be placed in the care of Leicestershire County Council and data passed to the Historic Environment Record.

Results

Context 1 was dug to a depth of 10 cm and consisted of a mid brown friable loam with a few finds including modern pottery, and small fragments of brick, glass and coal. Small unworked flint was already appearing.

Context 2 was dug to a depth of 15 cm from the surface and continue to be mid brown loam but with an increased number of small stones. Roman and late medieval pottery sherds were found, with some clinker, sooted stone and coal and further tiny unworked flint pieces.

Context 3 was dug to a depth of 30 cm from the surface. The soil in this context changed from the loam to a more sticky clay and contained a mixture of Roman and modern pottery and a hand made pot rim possibly from the early Roman period, proving this area was disturbed, possibly when the house was built and the garden laid out in the 1960s. Finds included pottery, modern glass, clay pipe stems, clinker brick and burnt stone.

Context 4 confirmed the disturbed nature of this pit with Victorian pottery alongside glass, a nail brick and coal.

The finds from contexts 5 and 6 were natural flint and fossils.

The heavy compacted clay and chalk with numerous stones was increasingly difficult to excavate by hand and the excavation was halted at the top of context 7 and the pit backfilled. It was assumed that the soil in the last three contexts was the glacial till and was natural as no finds were excavated.



Fig.5 Section photograph at 60 cm showing geology.



Bowden Ridge Research Pottery extracted from BRR/16/1(Verified)

CONTEXT	EARLY ROMAN		ROMAN		EST		VIC/MOD		
1							2	1g	1800-1900
2			1	1g			1	2g	100-1550
3	1	8g	1	<1g			1	1g	1-200 AD
4							4	3g	

KEY

EARLY ROMAN - In this case an oxidised sandy fabric with visible quartz and tiny black grit inclusions, bead rim jar. Late 1st - early 2nd C.

ROMAN - Smooth grey fabric, probably abraded, with grey fabric and white clay pellets/grog and black iron fragments. Late 1st - 2nd C, probably both sherds from same vessel.

VIC/MOD - Wide range of mass produced wares, white and blue and white glazes. Sherd from Context 3 may be stoneware.

These pottery sherds were verified by University of Leicester Archaeological Services.



*Fig.6 Roman , grey pottery
C2 and 3*



Fig. 7 Oxidised sandy ware pottery. Bead rim jar with quartz & tiny black grit inclusions - Early Roman (late 1st - early 2nd C) - C3



Bowden Ridge Research

Other Finds Recorded from Test Pit - BRR/16/1

Test Pit 1	Ceramic excluding pottery	Worked stone & flint	Metal & metal working	Glass	All other finds
C1	Brick or tile x 2 = 2g			clear glass x 1 = <1g	coal x 2 = 1g oyster shell x 1 = <1g
C2		sooted stone x 1 = 6g	clinker (many air holes & silver shine) x 3 = 10g		coal x 2 = 2g
C3	clay pipe stems (narrow bore) x 2 = 2g brick x 4 = 59g	burnt stone x 1 = 9g flint core x 1 (tiny removals) = 9g	clinker x 1 = 2g	fine glass x 1 = <1g	coal x 1 = <1g
C4	brick x 6 = 7g		nail ? no head) x 1 = 4g	glass x 2 (1 modern clear, 1 old slightly opaque) = 1g	coal x 3 = 2g

Retain and Discard of Finds

Very few finds were recorded from this test pit and consequently nothing was discarded.