

# Great Bowden Heritage & Archaeology



## Two excavations at 12 The Ridgeway, Market Harborough, Leicestershire in 2005 (Excavations on 16th April 2005 and 9th July 2005)

### History of the Site

The Ridgeway forms part of the extensive post World War II residential development built on the southern slopes of the long flat-topped hill that today separates the town of Market Harborough from the present village of Great Bowden. In the past the area was within the open fields of Great Bowden until its absorption into Market Harborough in the 1920s. It is now just outside the new parish of Great Bowden which was created in 1995.

Houses on The Ridgeway are built on the hill-top and there are extensive views over the Welland valley and the Langton Brook valley floor. Before the modern houses were built the extensive views would have extended to the south as well and an early settlement would have held a strategic position.

Local people have been discovering Roman and Iron Age sherds and coins in their gardens for many years and an extensive collection was made when the houses were built in the 1960s. Between numbers 2 and 32 The Ridgeway over 700 sherds of pottery have been identified by the Museum Service. (see later in report) This indicates something larger than a single villa and is being described as a Roman township.

In June 2004 Great Bowden Heritage Group held a collecting day for archaeological finds and a large sweet jar full of Roman pottery sherds was handed in. This was found in a garden at the eastern end of The Ridgeway, 2 doors away from the dig site, and also included 14 pottery sherds dating from the Iron Age.

The family at No.12 had been finding Roman pottery in their garden. A selection of these were identified by Leicestershire Heritage Services at the 2004 collecting day. They had also unearthed an area of flat stones towards the rear of the garden along with more finds and Roman pottery.



*Pottery, metal and bone  
previously excavated  
from pit 2 area.*

The archaeologists at the County Council thought these stones could be a floor or collapsed wall. The family had excavated a shallow pit, approximately 30 cms deep, and just over 3 metres x 2 metres, to expose some stones. A large quantity of finds was collected. As the family wished to develop this part of the garden the Heritage Group undertook an excavation to record the extent of the stonework and to retrieve any further finds.

The first excavation undertaken by the Heritage Group was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund under *Bowden Before the Conquest* project. The second excavation in July was part of Channel 4's Time Team's Big Roman Dig and received additional funding from them.

## Update 2018

Since 2005 further archaeological investigation has revealed much more about the early history of the area, particularly during the Iron Age and Roman periods.

### University of Leicester Archaeological Services

An Archaeological Evaluation at Land north of Waterfield Place, Market Harborough, Leicestershire by James Harvey ULAS Report No 2011- 097 (SP735883) Extensive Iron Age finds about 480 metres from site.

[http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archiveDS/archiveDownload?t=arch-416-1/dissemination/pdf/universi1-103173\\_1.pdf](http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archiveDS/archiveDownload?t=arch-416-1/dissemination/pdf/universi1-103173_1.pdf)

Desk based Assessment of Land off Burnmill Road, Market Harborough, Leicestershire by Leon Hunt and Vicki Score ULAS Report No. 2017-111 (SP73019 88637) including Geophysical Survey (Sumo) 2017 Extensive, as yet unexcavated, earthworks (2018) detected by geo phys. 950 metres from site.

**Great Bowden Heritage & Archaeology** - 2 nearby test pits under Bowden Ridge Research project.

[http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archiveDS/archiveDownload?t=arch-3141-1/dissemination/pdf/greatbow1-300833\\_1.pdf](http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archiveDS/archiveDownload?t=arch-3141-1/dissemination/pdf/greatbow1-300833_1.pdf)

Test pitting Bowden Ridge 66 metres from site.

[http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archiveDS/archiveDownload?t=arch-3141-1/dissemination/pdf/greatbow1-300834\\_1.pdf](http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archiveDS/archiveDownload?t=arch-3141-1/dissemination/pdf/greatbow1-300834_1.pdf)

Test pitting The Ridgeway 165 metres from site

Field walking by Heritage Group

Greens Hill, 390 metres distant, Wymonds Hill, 680 metres distant, Chaters Hill 800 metres distant and Russell Seeds 720 metres from site. Reports are on the OASIS grey literature site.

<http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/greylit/browse.cfm?unit=Great%20Bowden%20Heritage>

## Geology

British Geological Survey map shows this property to be in the area of glacial till. However, unlike later test pit excavations in this area the natural clay was reached at approximately 60 cms with no sign of the gritty, sandy mix found in other nearby test pits.

## Topography

The property lies in the older part of The Ridgeway 110 metres west of Great Bowden Road, close to the northern extent of housing in Market Harborough. Bounded to the south, east and west by housing and to the north by the access road to houses on Bowden Ridge, with an altitude of 107 metres on the flat top of the lower end of the hill which rises to a height of 129 metres further west. The River Welland is 520 metres distant at its nearest point and the centre of Market Harborough is 1100 metres away.

## Method

**Test pit 12R1 pit 1**, towards the rear of the garden, measured 1 metre x 1 metre and was excavated in contexts 10 cms deep until the natural was reached at 60 cms. Finds were photographed and weighed and are listed below by context.

### GBH/12R1/1.1

metal, cast iron rim, weight 136g,  
(1cm thick at widest)  
metal, thin strip, 7 cm long, weight 1 gram.  
modern, building material, weight 20 grams.



### GBH/12R1/1.2

Roman, **Mancetter & Harts Hill** possibly mortarium (MO4) 140-370 AD, (1 sherd) weight 9grams.  
Roman, **Dorset ware**, hand made, 170-370AD, (1 sherd), weight 3 grams.  
Roman, **Greyware**, (1 sherd), weight 2 grams.  
Early medieval, **Stamford ware** (1 sherd), weight 1 gram.  
Post medieval, **pancheon type**, 1 **pancheon rim** (2 sherds), weight 52 grams.  
Metal, nail, weight 3 grams.



### GBH/12R1/1.3

LIA/early Roman, **hard grogged ware**, (1 sherd), weight 9 grams.  
Roman, Oxidised ware, (1 sherd), 6 grams.  
Medieval, Lyveden-Stanion shellyware,



LY4(1 sherd) weight 36 grams

#### GBH/12R1/1.4

Early Roman, 1C-2C AD **Grog tempered ware**

(2 sherds), weight 22 grams.

Roman, **White ware**, rim, (1 sherd), weight 4 grams.

Roman **Greyware** rim, (1 sherd) 12 grams.

**Anglo-Saxon**, early-mid., (1 sherd), weight 3 grams.

Medieval, **Lyveden-Stanion oolitic limestone ware**, (1 sherd), 14 grams

Post medieval, **pancheon type**, (1 sherd), weight 1 gram.

Modern, field drain, weight 25 grams

**GBH12R1/1.5** No finds

#### GBH12R1/1.6

Roman, **Greyware**, (1 sherd) weight 5 grams

Undated, bone bead, weight 1 gram

Post medieval, **Midland Black**, (1 sherd), weight 7 grams

Post medieval, **Mottled ware**, EA3, (1 sherd), weight 7grams



12R pit 1 Context 6

## GBH/12R1/2.1 Large pit 2 (previously partly excavated)

An area approximately 3 metres x 2 metres and 30 cms deep had been excavated previously by the family, exposing some large stones. Roman pottery was found on top of the stones. The excavation continued to expose the stones and collect the finds, mostly Roman. The mixture of finds suggested the ground had been disturbed. The stones were rough and not level and it was felt unlikely to be a floor. However the stones appeared to be in rows and not randomly dropped and it was felt more likely to be a collapsed wall.

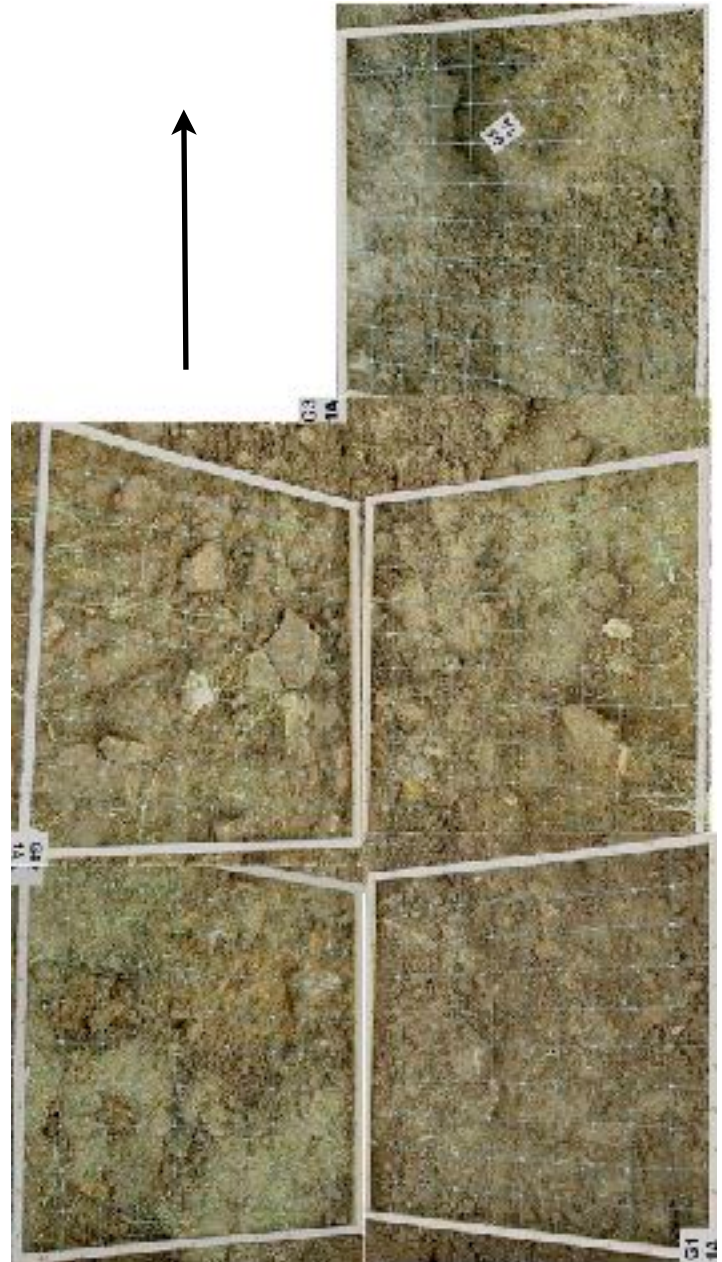
The stone surface was photographed and then removed revealing a layer of clay with no finds. This could have been the natural clay or a clay floor.

In the north-east corner of the pit a possible posthole was visible. In the north-west corner of the pit was a circular feature containing organic matter for which a microscopic examination was made. (see report below)

*Pit 2 photographed using 1m x 1m grids.  
North is at the top of the photograph*



*Pit 2 Clay surface revealed when the stones were removed.*



*Pit 2 Excavating north-east corner*








## 12R1 Pit 2 Finds

### Ceramic



*All hands on deck to wash finds*

<p><b>12R1 pit 2</b> <b>Calcite gritted ware</b> probably from local source. Late Iron Age /early Roman jar. The combed grooves were not used after 1st C AD. Ref: CG1A (2 sherds), weight 33 grams.</p>	
<p><b>Northamptonshire grogged ware</b> jars, made of local clay 50 years before Roman conquest up to 1st C AD. (grog is broken up tile and pot used as filler) Ref: WW1 (5 sherds), weight 63 grams.</p>	
<p><b>Fine grog-tempered ware</b> from Late Iron Age or early Roman period. Refer to Iron Age burial vessel, Market Harborough, carinated bowl. (1 sherd) GT 1-2, weight 1 gram.</p>	

**Roman Greyware.** Common Roman pottery used from the 1st C to late 4th C or early 5thC. Mostly jars, deep bowls and vessels with necks. (39 sherds), weight 231 grams.

Ref: GW

*Greyware with scored decoration*



**Roman Lower Nene Valley Greyware.**

Made from Oxford clay, pale greyware. Same sort of vessels as greyware. 2nd-3rd C Ad. (10 sherds), weight 125 grams. Ref: LNVDW








**Roman Samian ware**, including Samian cup Ref: Drag.33, small foot ring from mid to late 2nd C. Probably manufactured in central Gaul by Lesoux. Has maker's mark. Samian small bowl or dish, mid 2nd C, Ref: Drag.18/31. Samian mortarium, made after 160 AD, probably late 2nd or early 3rd century. An unusual find. This mortarium would have been used at the table to ensure freshness of food. The slip has been rubbed off in use. (4 sherds), weight total 16 grams. Ref: S













**Roman Lower Nene Valley colour-coated ware.** Six sherds from a large necked beaker with dark brown slip, mid 3rd C to 4th C AD. Also kitchen ware from late 2nd C to 4th C, shallow bowl with little foot and beaker; red-brown and dark brown slips. (18 sherds total), weight 133 grams. LNVCC



<p><b>Roman Oxfordshire mortarium</b> with quartz grits, mid 3rd C - 4th C in our region (1 sherd), weight 9 grams.</p>	<p>Roman Oxon Mortarium (MO1 white ware)</p> 
<p><b>Roman Oxfordshire ware</b> - red colour-coated with stamped decoration, late 3rd C (1 sherd), weight 4 grams.</p>	<p>Roman Oxon red Colour coat (C13)</p> 
<p><b>Roman Mancetter/Harts Hill mortarium</b> (Warwickshire). Large enough to cradle in arms, White vessel painted with red-brown stripes on flange, 3rdC- 4th C AD (2 sherds), weight 7 grams.</p>	<p>Roman Mancetter- Hartshill mortarium (MO4)</p> 
<p><b>Late Roman buff ware</b> (coarse gritted ware, identified as <b>Porchester D</b>), uncut base (1 sherd), weight 8 grams.</p>	<p>Late Roman Porchester "D"</p> 
<p><b>Roman Redware</b>, wheel thrown plate, with two grooves on rim. This sherd is unusual. It could be a copy of a late Iron Age Gallo-Belgic plate or even a North African import. Also, <b>oxidised Roman red ware</b>, probably locally produced. Burnished band for decoration. (2 sherds), both photographed as oxidised ware, weight 13 grams</p>	<p>Roman Oxidised ware</p> 
<p><b>Late Roman Shellyware</b>, from 4th C into 5th century. Note the sharp angular turns in the construction of the rim. Only known kiln is at Harrold in Bedfordshire. The two rims are from different vessels (6 sherds), weight 58 grams.</p>	<p>Late Roman shellyware (CG1B)</p> 



<p><b>Anglo-Saxon rock tempered pottery, bonfired, (1 sherd), weight 13 grams.</b></p>	<p>Early Anglo-Saxon rock tempered</p> 
<p><b>Medieval Lyveden/Stanion ware, oolitic limestone and shellyware, bonfired, (4 oolitic and 2 shellyware sherds), weight 59 grams.</b></p>	<p>Medieval Lyveden Stanion oolitic &amp; shelly LY1:LY4</p> 
	<p>Medieval Lyveden Stanion</p> 
<p><b>Medieval Sandyware, (1 sherd), weight 12 grams.</b></p>	<p>Medieval Sandy ware (MS)</p> 
<p><b>Late medieval Midland Purple, (3 sherds), weight 32 grams.</b></p>	<p>Late Medieval Midland Purple</p> 
<p><b>Post medieval 1 possibly Cistercian ware, (1 sherd), weight 10 grams brown stoneware (1 sherd), weight 1 gram. pancheon type 2 sherds, weight 6 grams</b></p>	<p>LISTERLIAN WARE</p> 

<p><b>Brown stoneware</b> (1 sherd), weight 1 gram. <b>pancheon type 2</b> sherds, weight 6 grams</p>	
<p><b>Building material:</b> <b>Roman tegula and imbrex roof tiles</b> (5 sherds), weight: 380 grams</p>	
<p><b>Roman combed hypocaust flue tile</b> (1 sherd), weight 67grams</p>	
<p><b>Animal Bone:</b> Assemblage of animal bone and teeth excavated from 12R1 Pit 2</p> <p>Includes possibly cattle and horse bone and pig ribs.</p>	
<p>Butchery marks on the bone</p>	

Animal horn from 12R1 pit 2



### Microscopic Examination of Soil Sample

From 12R Pit 2. Grid Area 6 (North west corner of pit)

By Josh Allsopp, age 11

After close inspection of the soil sample found in the main pit; on the first observation a bit of moisture got in the way. But on the second glance it revealed some surprising results.

It contained:-

Charcoal (possibly rotting wood, not burned)

Soil (obviously)

Clay (which gave the colour)

Pollen



12R pit 2  
Grid 6

There was a tiny pollen sample in the sample as a whole. Tiny particles of wind blown pollen, seen magnified at 900x, being small and wind blown it would have been from field plants.

Unfortunately I could not see tree pollen.

It was hard to dry out without contaminating it, but to ensure that it was not contaminated I only took a small sample.



(not to scale)

It is very hard to be extremely accurate when testing for pollen samples because of worms or beetles bringing down leaves with pollen on. But I have managed to be as accurate as possible and have eliminated any faults or possible mistakes.

Field plant pollen - sample contains mainly:-

- Grass Buttercups )
- Cow parsley ) more likely to have been found.
- Clover )
- Thistle )
- Wild flowers - bluebell, foxgloves



## Second Excavation 9th July 2005 (12R2)

The second excavation took place in conjunction with Channel 4 and Time Team's Big Roman Dig whose main aim was to discover and understand the Roman expansion and activities in Britain.

### Methodology

The back garden was located in a relatively quiet area of The Ridgeway with no urban structures to disturb the site. It was decided to open a 1 metre square pit half way down the garden towards in the eastern fence, and south of pit 1 excavated in April 2005. This was an area of rough grass.

This pit (Pit 1) was then extended by a further square metre on the western side (Pit 1A). No finds were recorded from test pit 1A. The excavation took place manually, using mattocks, shovels and hand trowels and a metal detector was used from time to time as deeper contexts were reached. Both pits were dug as one context to a depth of approximately 60 cms.

Both pits showed evidence of disturbance in the past either through ploughing or when the house was built. The soil was predominantly dark brown loam with a small percentage of pebbles and some specks of charcoal.

A further test pit (Test Pit 2) was dug near the western fence of the garden to a depth of approximately 60 cms. No finds were recorded.

**12R2 lawn area** Finds were picked up or retrieved through shallow scraping (5-1-cm depth) in an area of approximately 4 metre diameter around the test pits above. Recorded in one context as Pit or lawn area 3.

*Left, test pits 1 and 1A*

*Far left, Test pit 2*





### Finds 12R2 pit 1

Flint - 1 x scraper, weight 36 grams, Late Neolithic-Early Bronze Age.

1 x struck fragment (thickest piece)

Retouched flint, not necessarily a flake, could be accidental (thinnest piece)

LIA/Early Roman up to 2nd century. Rim of **Hard grogged white ware** (WW1), weight 16 grams

Late Iron Age, (150BC-42AD) **Grog tempered ware**, possibly fine bowl, (2 sherds), weight 12 grams.

Roman, **White Ware**, LIA- early 3rd C, (1 sherd) weight 5 grams

Roman, **Greyware**, (2 sherds), weight 15 grams

Roman, **Samian ware**, (1 sherd), weight >1 gram

Roman, **Lower Nene Valley colour-coated ware**, bowl rim (1 sherd) weight 1 gram

Late Roman, **Shellyware** CG1B, (1 sherd), weight 3 grams

**12R2 pit1**  
Red Deer Antler



(ID University of Leicester)

**12R2 pit 1A**  
No finds

**12R2 pit 2**  
No finds



**GBH/12R2 lawn area**

LIA/early Roman, **Calcite gritted ware**, jar base, (1 sherd), weight 22 grams.

Roman, **Lower Nene Valley Colour coated ware**, (1 sherd), weight 2 grams

Roman, **Lower Nene Valley Grey ware** (2 sherds), weight 13 grams

Roman, **Oxfordshire ware** rim, (1 sherd), weight 9 grams

Roman, **Northants. White ware** (WW1), (1 sherd), weight 12 grams

No date, tusk, weight 16 grams

Post medieval, clay pipe stem, weight 1 gram

Post medieval, **Mottled ware**, EA3, (1 sherd), weight 3 grams

Modern, field drain, weight 21 grams

Modern, flower pot (2 sherds) weight 7 grams



## **Roman pottery from the Ridgeway identified May 1985 by Dr Richard Pollard of Leicestershire County Council**

The finds were probably collected by residents from their gardens and donated to the Harborough Historical Society. These were placed in the Harborough Museum when it opened in 1983 and were accessioned under the reference LEIMH100.1983.

*Looking on an old OS map the finds seem to come from the first area of development along The Ridgeway ie from 2-34 and some were handed over to the Historical Society in the late 1950s and early 1960s when the houses were first built. There may have been further collecting of finds about the time of the opening of Harborough Museum in 1983.*

3 The Ridgeway Small bronze coin of Valens AD 364-378 SP1408 3305 (?) *possibly SP74088805*

17 The Ridgeway Small bronze coin of Crispus (*became a Caesar in AD 317 executed by his father Constantine I in AD326*)

2 The Ridgeway Fragments of greyware found 2' deep under layer of broken stone.

6 The Ridgeway Follis of Constantine I (*AD 306-337*) Small bronze coin Vileutihan (*could be Vitellius AD69 or more likely because of date Valentinian I or II (AD364-392)*)

10 The Ridgeway Bronze coin of Allectus (*AD 293-296*)

22 The Ridgeway 113 Roman sherds (mostly late grog tempered ware), 2 medieval and post medieval

24 The Ridgeway 2 sherds Roman pottery

30 The Ridgeway 123 sherds Roman, 11 medieval, 2 post medieval, 2 tessera and a coin

32 The Ridgeway 88 Roman sherds, 1 tessera, 1 late Iron Age, 12 medieval, 4 post medieval.

34 The Ridgeway Roman sherds and an area of cobbled floor

56 The Ridgeway bronze coin Constantine II (*AD317-340*), 32 Roman sherds and 2 medieval

47 Great Bowden Road sherds Roman (1 geyware, 1 shelly , 1 colour coated) + coin of Magnus Maximus (*AD383-388*)

97 Great Bowden Road 35 Roman sherds, 7 late Iron Age, 9 medieval, 5 post medieval.

99 Great Bowden Road 2 sherds greyware and 1 shellyware.

White Lodge, Great Bowden Road sparse scatter of Roman (inc greyware and samian), tessera and oyster shells

Great Bowden Hill A substantial rim sherd of a vessel decorated by scoring and finger decoration, but no exact location.

*Ignoring the coin from possibly 69AD the period covered by evidence of Roman occupation is mostly 4th century (293-392 AD) which would fit the late grog tempered ware from 22 The Ridgeway. (R Culkin 2016) 2016 additions in italics.*

**Leicestershire County Council Environment and Heritage Services**

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**Identification Service Report**

**EN No. 7050**

Identifications are supplied free of charge. The following report represents the opinion of a member of staff and we cannot guarantee its accuracy. **It should not be regarded as a certificate of authentication.**

<i>Report by</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Date</i>
Richard Pollard	Assistant Keeper Archaeology	16.09.2005

Fieldwork details

Parish	Market Harborough	NGR	
Field name	Rear garden of 12, The Ridgeway	SMR	
Method	Test pit excavations	Date	16.04.2005, 09.07.2005
Enquirer, Fieldwork Group	Rosemary Cukin, Greta Bowden Heritage Group	EN form no.	7050

Test Pit 1 of 16.04.2005 was dug in six spits each of 100mm. The pottery was completely mixed by date and depth, Roman and post-medieval being found in both top and bottom spits. The assemblage is therefore summarised here without reference to depth.

Test Pit 1 of 09.07.2005 was dug to c. 600mm as a single context. No finds were recorded from Test Pit 2 of 09.07.2005. No finds or report were submitted concerning the third test pit dug on 09.07.2005.

The Lawn: 'material excavated in approx. 4 metre diameter circular area of lawn around excavated area of 09.07.2005. Depth of about 5-10cm. Treated as one context.'

Parish	Market Harborough	NGR	
Field name	Rear garden of 12. The Ridgeway	SMR	
Method	Test pit excavations	Date	16.04.2005, 09.07.2005
Enquirer, Fieldwork Group	Rosemary Culkin, Greta Bowden Heritage Group	EN form no.	7050

Note: report from verbal identification by R Pollard on finds from area 3m x 2m previously excavated by the landowners, and on 16.04.2005 by the Group as "Large Pit 2" appears in the Group's site report on the excavation of 16.04.2005. Summarised here.

"?" denotes uncertainty as to identification, not as to quantity.

**The Flint** (identified by Richard Knox, Assistant Keeper Archaeology)

Scraper, Late Neolithic-Early Bronze Age

Struck fragment (thickest piece)

Retouched flint, not necessarily a flake, could be accidental (thinnest piece)

Artefact (pottery unless stated, with LCCEHS codes in brackets) (excludes iron, unworked bone and horn, clinker, coal, charcoal, stone)	TP1 16.04	Large Pit 2	TP1 09.07	The Lawn	<b>Total (period totals underlined)</b>
<b>Flint</b>			3		
<b>Late Iron Age – early (1c AD) Roman</b>					<u>10</u>
Shelly (CG1A)		2			<u>2</u>
Shelly (CG3A) Vessel with splayed foot Mid or Late IA?				1	<u>1</u>
Grog tempered (GT1-2)	3 (1 MAY be A-S organic tempered)	1	2		<u>6</u>
Hard grogged (WW1) <b>LIA-2c AD Roman</b>	1	7	1		<u>9</u>
					<u>103</u>
Samian, 2c-E3c		4	1		<u>5</u>
LNV CC (C NV)		19	1	1	<u>21</u>



Oxon red CC (C13)		1			1
Oxon mortarium (MO1 white ware?)		1			1
Mancetter-Hartshill mortarium (MO4)	1	2			3
Northants white ware (WW3)		1			1
White ware (WW)	1?		1		2
Buff sandy, late Roman coarse (cf. 'Portchester "D"')		1			1
Oxidised wares	1	2			3
Grey ware (GW)	3	40	3	1	47
Grey ware, pale (cf. LNV GW)		8		2	10
Black burnished ware (BE1)		1			1
Shelly (CG1B), Late Roman		6	1 (late?)		7
<b>Early Anglo-Saxon</b>					<b>2</b>
Rock tempered		1			1
Fabric unspecified		1			1
<b>Early Medieval</b>					<b>9</b>
Stamford Ware (ST)	1?				1
Lyveden-Stanton oolitic and shelly (e.g. LY1, LY4)	2	5			7
Medieval Sandy (MS)		1?			1
<b>Late Medieval</b>		2			<b>2</b>
Midland Purple					
<b>Post Medieval</b>					<b>25</b>
Brown stoneware		1			1
Mottled ware (EA3)	1			1	2
Misc (pancheon etc)	3	9		2	14
Fied drain	1	2		1	4
Misc CBM	1	1	1		3
Clay tobacco pipe				1	1
<b>Undated</b>					
Worked bone	1		1		2
Misc CBM (post medieval?)	not quantified				?

