

# MEDIEVAL PLOTS ALONG SUTTON ROAD, GREAT BOWDEN, LEICESTERSHIRE

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Two arrangements of medieval ditches formed the boundaries of plots that had once fronted onto Sutton Road. They indicate a possible domestic frontage originating from the tenth or eleventh centuries, leaving it uncertain whether this was a pre- or post-Conquest occupation focus. However, there was a fundamental reorganisation evident in this part of the Norman manor towards the end of the twelfth century, when the boundaries were realigned to form narrow plots, and a medieval fish pond was backfilled with midden waste. From the mid-fifteenth century there was a rough cobbled yard, and post-medieval ditches showed a rearrangement of boundaries supplanting the late medieval plots and subdividing the area into two parts.

## INTRODUCTION

Archaeological fieldwork by Northamptonshire Archaeology in December 2005 was carried out to fulfil a planning condition at 24–26 Langton Road, Great Bowden, Leicestershire (Fig. 1, NGR SP 7448 8896). The work was conducted according to a Project Design produced by CgMs Consulting Ltd (Dawson 2005) and was monitored by the Senior Planning Archaeologist with Leicestershire County Council.

The archaeological works comprised excavation and a watching brief of the three principal building footprints of the new development. This publication is based on a planning report (Brown 2008), which provides the full synthesis of results for the archaeological programme. The full report is available from the county Historic Environment Record, and online through the Archaeology Data Service (ADS), OASIS/ADS No. 59297. This summary version contains a slight change in the chronology, as it recognises that the small quantities of tenth- and eleventh-century pottery suggest the possibility of a pre-Conquest origin.

## BACKGROUND

### **Historical background**

Great Bowden is listed in the Domesday survey of 1086 as the central place of a large soke that included lands in 12 other Leicestershire villages (Lee and

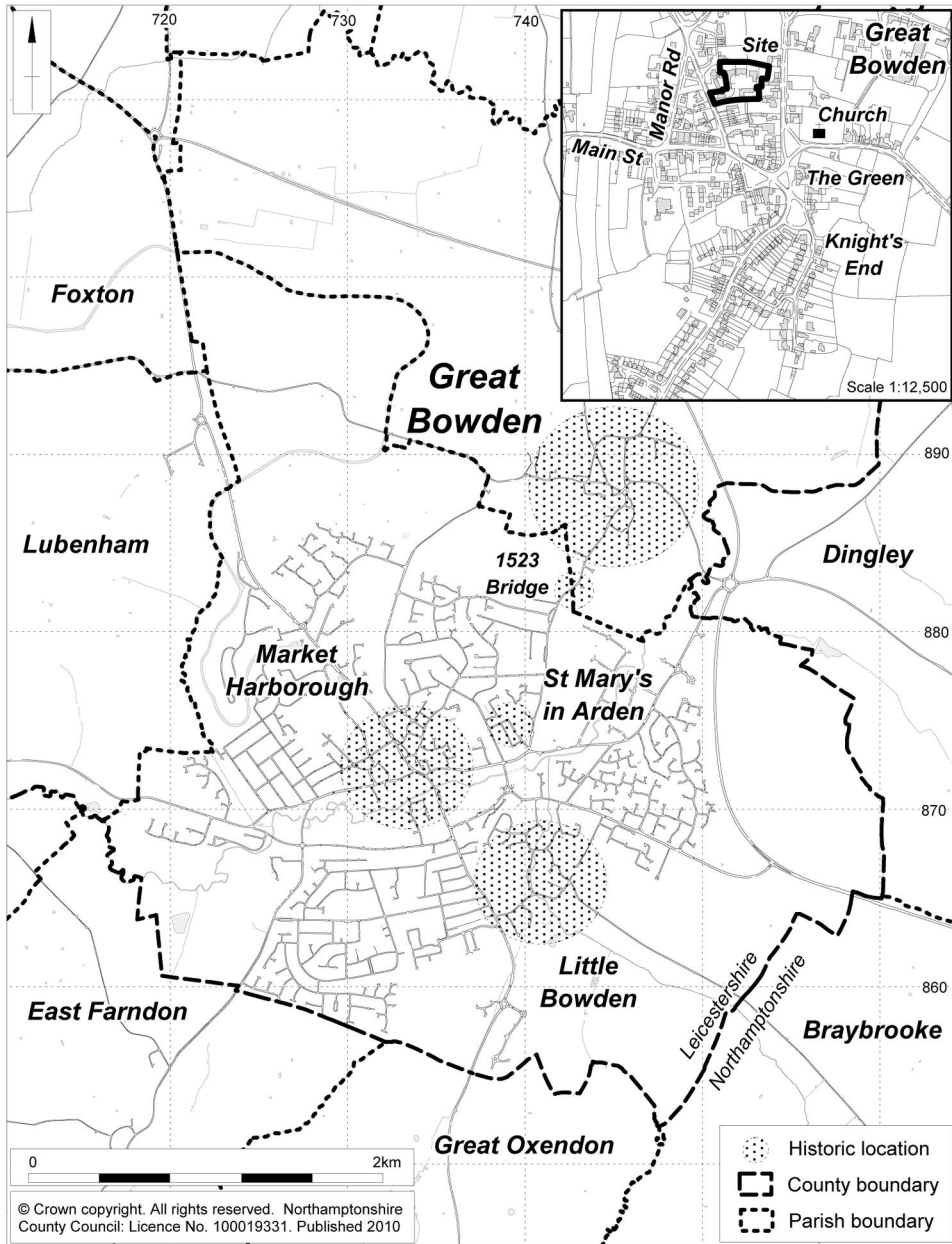


Fig. 1. The site within its parochial landscape.

McKinley 1964, 308; Roffe 1996, 107–20). The ancient parish originally comprised both Great and Little Bowden, but at Domesday Little Bowden, which lies on the south side of the River Welland, was listed under Northamptonshire. Bowden has two dependent chapelries – St Mary in Arden and Market Harborough – neither of which ever formed separate civil units (Fig. 1). Manorial administration was divided between them. St Mary's included dispersed houses and their attached lands in Little Bowden. Changes in manorial tenure are known to have been common along the Welland Valley from 1086 onwards, probably continuing a legacy borne from the variety of ways in which the late tenth-century shrieval system defined land tenure (Roffe 1996, 111–13). Minor rearrangements in jurisdiction or the annexation of smaller land units into larger ones was a convenient way to overcome undesirable complications or conflicts of interest between courts, and to bring order to an otherwise fragmentary arrangement of estates.

Market Harborough was a separate commercial township that seems to have been deliberately planted within Great Bowden parish, although from its inception it was administered independently for civil purposes (Farnham 1929–33, 221). It is clear from the extensive transcript of manorial exchanges listed by the *Victoria County History* that the manors of Great Bowden and Harborough were generally held jointly, and that, although between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries they were granted out by and returned to the Crown on many occasions, they were never granted as separate entities (Lee and McKinley 1964). Market Harborough was officiated by Royal Charter in 1203, an arrangement that benefited the surrounding settlements and simplified their administration. Its deliberate creation as a place for commerce was probably recognition of a less formal arrangement, already in existence, for tax purposes. As an individual manor its affairs would have been focused on commerce, whereas the manorial court of Great Bowden would have dealt with a multitude of other matters of a different kind – Harborough's separation freeing it to develop into a thriving market town.

Roffe has examined the ecclesiastical and civil arrangements within the wapentake of Gartree and has found they do not reliably support the claim that the Bowden soke represents the legacy of an earlier Saxon *regio* (Roffe 1996, 110, fig. 2). Ultimately the soke comprised jurisdiction within manors scattered in close proximity, although not necessarily adjacent, and coincidental with the wapentake, a demonstration that the constitution of the lands of the soke were fluid and prone to change. The origin of the soke is not known: it was certainly in existence at the time of Edward the Confessor and is mentioned in the 1173 *Pipe Rolls*. Although the lands outside Great Bowden parish ceased to have any connection with the manor by 1200, Great Bowden itself was still ancient Royal Demesne in 1247 (*Book of Fees* 1393).

The medieval layout of the settlement can be seen in the morphology of the roads, and may be indicated by names such as 'Knights End' and 'Stocks Green'. The present-day church of Saints Peter and Paul, which dates from the second half of the thirteenth century, is located close to the central green, a large irregularly-shaped open space, intersected by roads which divide it into several subsidiary

greens (Fig. 1). The village is linked to Northamptonshire by a bridge which is known to have existed by 1523 (Market Harborough Parish Records, 222). Most of the buildings in Great Bowden that predate the seventeenth century are located either by The Green or along Manor Road and Main Street.

Parliament passed the Act for the enclosure of Great Bowden in 1776. The agrarian lifestyle remained dominant throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, over which time it became known for horse breeding (Lee and McKinley 1964, 308). This era brought new transportation links. The Grand Union Canal served a local brickyard operating in 1809, before being superseded by the railway in 1850. In 1881, Market Harborough became a separate civil parish (Lee and McKinley 1964, 188).

The Ordnance Survey map of 1891 shows our development site to have been an undeveloped area of enclosed ground populated with trees. The land was divided into three enclosures, much as it was prior to development (Figs 3–4), lying immediately to the south-east of a smithy at 28 Langton Road.

### Topography and geology

Great Bowden is situated in the upper reaches of the Welland valley. The underlying geology consists of Jurassic and Cretaceous middle and lower lias clays, upon which the poorly drained Denchworth soils have developed (LAT 1983; BGS 1969). During the wet winter weather the site became waterlogged (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Area 2 excavation conditions following rainfall.

The development site lies in the north of the historic core of Great Bowden, occupying 0.42ha of land between the properties of 24–26 Langton Road and 7–9 Sutton Road (Figs 3–4). The ground is fairly level at 81m above Ordnance Datum, sloping down slightly to the south-west. Prior to development the land comprised two separate areas. The northern part was pasture, whilst the southern part was a garden.

## THE EXCAVATED EVIDENCE

### Objectives and methodology

With little known about the area other than its central location in the historic core of Great Bowden, the excavation sought to examine the archaeological potential of the site in relation to the medieval origins of the village.

A total area of 1,286 sq. m. was stripped under archaeological supervision in the south-west and north (Fig. 3, Area 1 and Area 2), while a third area to the south, Area 3, was observed during preparation of the building foundations. No further work could be undertaken within Area 3, as the footings cut deeply stratified post-medieval levelling layers and were flooded in excess of 1.2m deep.

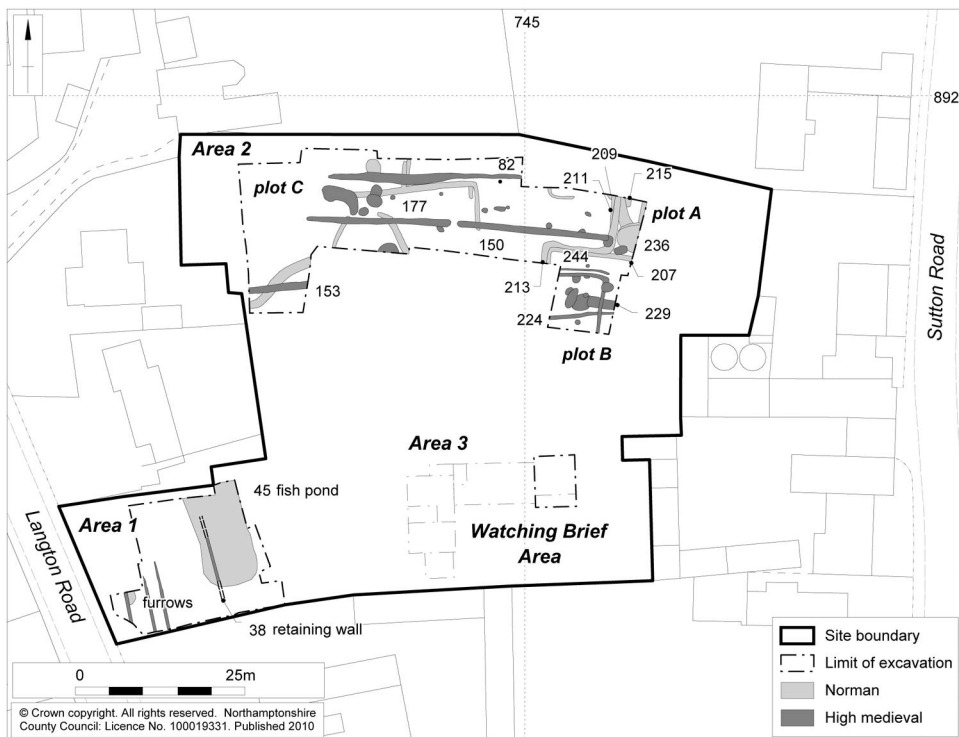


Fig. 3. Saxo-Norman and medieval features.



Fig. 4. Post-medieval and modern features.

Ground clearance was conducted using a tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. Modern surfaces and underlying non-structural post-medieval and modern layers were removed by machine, along with deep homogeneous garden soils. Mechanical excavation stopped at the surface of the archaeological horizon and hand excavation was employed for the remainder of the works. Potential archaeological features were hand-cleaned and a sample section was excavated from each.

### Site development

The sequence of development is briefly tabulated below (Table 1), and is then described in detail.

#### Saxo-Norman manorial organisation (tenth/eleventh–twelfth centuries)

##### BOUNDARIES ALONG SUTTON ROAD

The date at which the first boundary system was established has not been determined. The pottery assemblage shows that there was a very low level of late Saxon and Saxo-Norman activity (tenth to eleventh centuries), which does raise

Period	Description
Saxo-Norman (tenth/eleventh to twelfth centuries)	Medieval boundaries established along Sutton Road. Possible fish pond in Area 1.
High medieval (thirteenth to fourteenth centuries)	Boundaries rearranged. Fish pond filled in and terrace built above.
Early post-medieval (fifteenth to late seventeenth centuries)	Minor track dividing land in two. Small yard with a cobbled entrance. Cob wall in Area 1.
Late post-medieval to modern (eighteenth century to present)	Boundary ditch and two animal burials in Area 1.

Table 1. Summary of the site chronology.

the possibility that the boundaries were laid out pre-Conquest. The earliest boundary ditches lay at the east end of Area 2. They defined two adjoining plots fronting onto Sutton Road to the east (Fig. 3, A and B). The northernmost plot was apparently slightly shorter and the full extent of both lay beyond the excavated area. To the west there was a less formal arrangement of ditches.

Plot A was bounded on the west side by ditch [211], 1.2m wide by 0.6m deep. Extending from it was ditch [215], 2.1m wide by 0.5m deep, which may have channelled water into a large oval pit [236]. Ditch [207] bounded the south side of plot A and was 0.7m wide by 0.35m deep, separating it from plot B. There were no features in plot B. All of these early ditches were cut by ditch [213], which redefined the west boundary of both plots as a single unit. Soil samples from its fill contained large quantities of charcoal and a higher than average quantity of cereal grains and associated weeds. This, together with an associated pit or disturbance, [209], in the side of the ditch, produced the single largest pottery group from the site, including a number of vessels that could be partially reconstructed (see Fig. 6). The pottery dates the ditch backfill to the early part of the twelfth century.

Oval pit [236] was 4.3m wide by 1.6m deep, with steep sides and a broad flattish base. Firm dark greyish-blue gravelly clay (235) filled the base and was truncated by a secondary cut [234], 1.3m deep, showing that the pit had been cleaned out on at least one occasion. The recut was filled with similar homogeneous sediment, comprising firm mid-bluish-grey clay (233) and containing occasional lumps of ironstone. There was no evidence that it functioned as a cesspit, but it certainly pooled water.

The early ditches and pit [236] were sealed by a layer of firm bluish-grey silty clay (232). This may have accumulated as sediment within an area of ground that continued to be wet and boggy, collecting standing water above the pit. A period of disuse followed and the land may have been incorporated into a larger area of open ground.

Within the area to the west, plot C, there were contemporary ditches with a less regular layout. Ditch [177] was the most substantial, 0.94m wide by 0.2m

deep, and formed an L-shape, perhaps two sides of a pen or small enclosure. Shallow curvilinear ditches to the south extended beyond the excavated area.

#### THE FISH POND

A large spread of medieval deposits lay across the eastern half of Area 1 (Fig. 3). The accumulated material filled a possible fish pond [45], 8m wide and in excess of 15m long and over 2m deep, which lay at the lowest point of the natural slope. The top edge of the cut had a gentle 30° slope, which gradually became steeper and then dropped sharply at a 70° angle. A trench that was hand-excavated to a depth of 2m did not reach the natural.

The earliest deposit comprised soft dark greyish-black organic silty clay (48). This was covered by a layer of large rounded stones (47). Above this there was a 0.6m thick layer of firm dark bluish-grey silty clay (44), containing rotted tree branches. The layers above were deliberate infills, comprising 0.24m of mottled soft mid-grey and orange silty clay (43), and 0.35m of soft mottled greyish brown clayey silt (41). These backfill deposits were dated to the thirteenth century and it is likely that the fish pond was in use during the twelfth century.

### High medieval reorganisation (thirteenth to fourteenth centuries)

#### THE LATER MEDIEVAL BOUNDARIES

Fresh development took place at the turn of the thirteenth century, reflecting a general pattern of economic growth for the period. A series of new boundaries were aligned east to west and were set approximately 7m apart (Fig. 3).

Most of these ditches were extremely shallow. Ditch [82], to the north, was 0.20m deep and was disturbed at several points. Ditch [150] was better preserved, but was still only 0.20m deep. Ditches [224] and [244] were even shallower, at 0.10m and 0.18m deep. A broader drainage channel, [229], cut across ditch [244].

Poorly defined and irregular pits within these areas comprised hollows with diffuse dark patches burrowed into the natural-forming occasional small voids that contained assorted natural stones and a few pottery sherds. They may have been created by vegetation; perhaps planted shrubs or fruit trees (Fig. 3).

#### AN ARTIFICIAL TERRACE BEHIND A RETAINING WALL

On top of the backfilled fish pond in Area 1, there was a dry-stone rubble retaining wall [38], which comprised eight courses in sandstone, faced only on the west side, 0.6m wide by 0.8m high and over 15m long (Fig. 3). The wall retained levelling layers that had been dumped above the pond to raise the surface level equivalent to the ground in the east of the site. Pottery from these layers, (30) and (32), dates from the thirteenth century.

#### RIDGE AND FURROW

To the west of retaining wall [38] were three furrows, aligned north to south, remnants of medieval cultivation.



### Early post-medieval redevelopment (fifteenth to late seventeenth centuries)

#### A YARD AREA AND COBBLED SURFACE

Around the mid-fifteenth century a new arrangement of ditches was introduced on a north to south alignment (Fig. 4). To the east, a trackway was bounded by ditches [102], 0.86m wide by 0.28m deep, and [85], 0.5m wide by 0.45m deep. Both ditches were recut, with the recut [144] on the west side being 2.0m wide by 0.43m deep. The alignment of ditch [85] may be respected by the present-day field boundary to the north, a field that contains ridge and furrow.

Two other ditches appeared to have been contemporary. Ditch [249] was also aligned north to south, and was 1.6m wide by 0.29m deep. It terminated to the north, where there was a linear group of six post-holes [245], each square, approximately 300mm by 300mm, and up to 60mm deep. They may have formed a fence perhaps incorporating a gateway, set across the 8.5m wide gap between the terminal of ditch [249] and the terminal of ditch [155], which was aligned south-west to north-east. Adjacent to the post-holes, there was an oval pit [247], 1.6m wide by 0.28m deep. The greyish-brown silty clay fill (246) contained charcoal, carbonised cereal grains, wild seeds and pottery of mid-fifteenth to seventeenth-century date, including Midland Purple ware with heavily vitrified glaze.

Subsequently, a cobbled surface [104] was laid across this area, sealing the ditch terminal, the post-holes and the pit. The densely packed stones were rounded, 80–100mm in diameter, and compacted into the top of the natural clay



Fig. 5. Area 2, cobbled surface [104].

(Fig. 5). Pottery from between the cobbles was of mid-fifteenth to late seventeenth century in date. Overlying the cobbles was a firm mid-brownish-grey mottled clayey silt spread (105), up to 110mm thick, probably the result of trampling.

#### A COB WALL

Within Area 1, to the south-west, the medieval retaining wall [38] and levelling layers were sealed by further levelling deposits. Set into these was a stone foundation for wall [28], 0.40m wide, which was built using a cob mix (Fig. 4). The stones comprised roughly-shaped flat sandstone fragments, 100–400mm long and usually no more than 80mm thick. A high proportion of cob material lay amongst the upper stones of the wall and was also distributed throughout the surrounding layers.

Cob was a mixture of clay, dung and straw, often sealed with a protective coat of lime wash. It was generally used as a cheap alternative to stone and timber in the construction of poor dwellings, outhouses and agricultural buildings. It was used throughout the medieval and post-medieval periods, and even into the nineteenth century.

#### Late post-medieval and modern disturbances (eighteenth century to present)

##### A DITCH PARALLEL TO LANGTON ROAD

In Area 1, ditch [40] was aligned north to south and positioned 18m east of Langton Road. It is mapped on the 1891 Ordnance Survey as a rear plot boundary. The ditch was 1.5m wide by 0.6m deep, and the fill contained late post-medieval earthenwares. It was sealed by a layer of soft mid-brownish grey clayey silt (34), 0.3m thick. Above this was a layer of similar clayey silt (33), 0.27m thick, mixed with fragmented brick and roof tile. This activity was contemporary with the modern overburden noted during the watching brief in Area 3, to the east. The spread was confined to an area corresponding to a former garden along Langton Road.

##### ANIMAL BURIALS

In Area 1, pits of early twentieth-century origin contained the remains of a dog and a pig, both buried at the back of a former garden.

## THE FINDS

### Worked flint (*Yvonne Wolfram-Murray*)

Four pieces of flint are residual finds in medieval contexts. There are two unutilised flakes, a flake roughly retouched down one edge and a large end scraper manufactured on a natural flake. None are closely diagnostic datable pieces.

*Pottery (Paul Blinkhorn)*

The pottery assemblage comprised 347 sherds with a total weight of 7,031g. The estimated vessel equivalent (EVE), by summation of surviving rimsherd circumference, was 3.90. This assemblage is typical of rural sites in the region, although a fairly wide range of local and regional sources are represented. The pottery indicates fairly low-level activity at the site from the Norman Conquest to the present day, and the range of vessel types was always basic, with only the most utilitarian vessel forms in use. The more substantial quantity of material from the twelfth century appears to represent a single, anomalous, episode relating to the backfill of pits and ditches in the north-east of the site.

FABRIC

Where appropriate, the pottery was recorded using the conventions of the Leicestershire County Type Series (CTS) (Sawday 1994):

F205: ST	Stamford ware, 900–1150. 46 sherds, 625g, EVE = 0.66.
F301: PM	Potters Marston ware, 1100–1300. 22 sherds, 363g, EVE = 0.28.
F303: CC2	Chilvers Coton 'C' ware, 1200–1475. 4 sherds, 80g, EVE = 0.11.
F331: ST2	Developed Stamford ware, 1150–1250. 3 sherds, 25g, EVE = 0.
F320: LY3	Lyveden/Stanion 'B' ware, 1200–1400. 40 sherds, 450g, EVE = 0.23.
F330: SHL	Shelly wares, 1100–1400. 62 sherds, 2063g, EVE = 1.29.
F403: MP1	Midland Purple ware, 1375–1550. 36 sherds, 949g, EVE = 0.11.
F404: CW2	Cistercian ware, 1475–1550. 8 sherds, 56g, EVE = 0.
F426: EA6	Post-medieval blackwares, late seventeenth century onwards. 8 sherds, 217g.

The following, not in the published Leicestershire CTS, were also noted. Comparison of the St Neots ware types T1(1) and T1(2) were made with the work of Denham (1985), and those examples of Lyveden/Stanion 'A' ware with McCarthy (1979).

F100: SN1	St Neots ware type T1(1), <i>c.</i> 900–1100. 3 sherds, 25g, EVE = 0.09.
F200: SN2	St Neots ware type T1(2), 1000–1200. 3 sherds, 23g, EVE = 0.07.
F207: OOL	South Lincs Oolitic ware, late tenth to early thirteenth century. 64 sherds, 1080g, EVE = 0.89.
F319: LA	Lyveden/Stanion 'A' ware, 1150–1400. 9 sherds, 123g, EVE = 0.10.
F322: LD	Lyveden/Stanion 'A' ware, 1350–1500. 2 sherds, 21g, EVE = 0.03.
F401: LMO	Late medieval oxidized ware, <i>c.</i> 1450–1550. 14 sherds, 327g, EVE = 0.04.
F436: SS	Staffordshire slip-trailed earthenware, 1650–1750. 1 sherd, 10g.
F1000: WE	Mass-produced late eighteenth-, nineteenth- and twentieth-century earthenwares. 22 sherds, 594g.

The South Lincolnshire Oolitic ware, F207, is slow-wheel made. It is a fairly hard, dark blue-grey fabric, with moderate sub-rounded whitish-pink and grey quartzite up to 1mm. It has moderate to dense calcareous material, including ooliths, up to 2mm, and rare occurrences of haematite up to 1mm. The source is unknown, but the distribution and fabric suggests south Lincolnshire or north-east Northamptonshire is the most likely source. It was first identified at West Cotton, Northamptonshire (Blinkhorn 2010).

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is recorded in the archive. The medieval pottery assemblage is typical of those from sites in the Welland valley and its hinterland. A medieval tenement at Deene End, Weldon, produced a large assemblage of medieval pottery, comprising largely Oolitic Ware and Lyveden/Stanion products, along with Stamford and Shelly wares (Blinkhorn 2003). Deene End was slightly later than this site, with the bulk of the pottery dating from the thirteenth century or later. Great Bowden is also further from Lyveden and Stanion, which would account for the higher occurrence of Stamford ware and Shelly coarseware here. Similar arguments apply to the Potters Marston ware, which was not noted at Weldon. The presence of a large assemblage of Oolitic ware here is unusual. It was the third most common medieval type at Weldon, and is the second most common here, adding credence to a source on the Oolitic Limestone geology of south Lincolnshire or north-east Northamptonshire.

#### CHRONOLOGY

Each stratified pottery assemblage was given a seriated date, based on the range of wares and forms present, as shown in Table 2. It shows that there was a very low level of late Saxon and Saxo-Norman activity at the site, followed by deposition throughout the medieval and post-medieval periods. The largest period-specific assemblage was CP3, with most of the pottery coming from pit [209] and ditch [213]. These produced a total of 3,458g of pottery (117 sherds, EVE = 2.61), nearly half of the pottery from the entire site, and 97.8 per cent of the pottery from

Phase	Chronology (centuries)	Defining wares	No.	Weight (g)	EVE	Mean wt
CP1	tenth	ST, SN1	2	40	0.08	20.0
CP2	eleventh	SN2, OOL	4	54	0	13.5
CP3	twelfth to mid-twelfth	PM, LY4	129	3,536	2.78	27.4
CP4	mid-twelfth to thirteenth	LA, ST2	9	47	0.03	5.2
CP5	thirteenth to late fourteenth	LY3, CC2	58	569	0.60	9.8
CP6	late fourteenth to mid fifteenth	MP1, LD	29	340	0.17	11.7
CP7	mid fifteenth to late seventeenth	LMO, CW2	84	1,606	0.24	19.1
CP8	late seventeenth to late eighteenth	EA6	5	143	0	28.6
CP9	late eighteenth +	WE	27	696	0	25.8
		<b>Total</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>7,031</b>	<b>3.90</b>	

Table 2. Ceramic Phase dating and pottery occurrence per phase.

CP3. A number of cross-fits from several vessels were made between the two features, indicating that they were probably back-filled using material from the same source, most likely a domestic midden. A number of vessels from the two features were reconstructed to a full profile (Fig. 6).

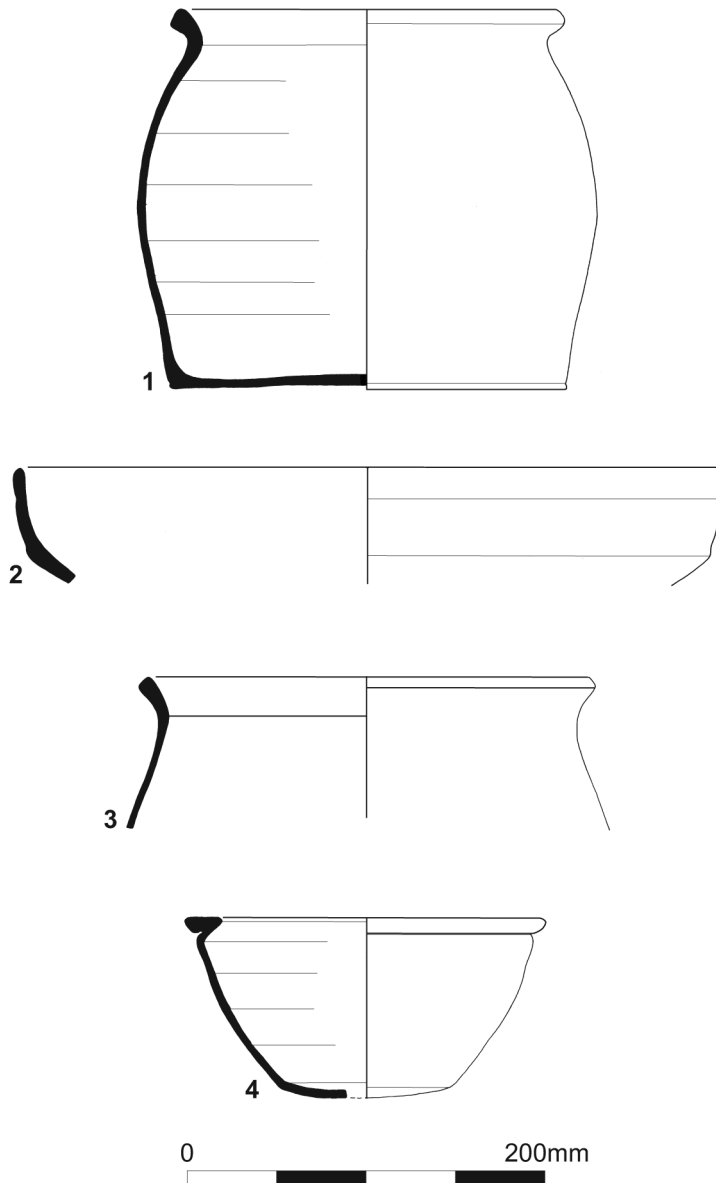


Fig. 6. The pottery.

A similar picture was seen at West Cotton, Raunds, Northamptonshire, where a Saxo-Norman ditch was backfilled in the twelfth century with a large dump of domestic material that included a number of near-complete pots. In the case of Great Bowden, this may represent back plots for properties on Sutton Road being extended in the twelfth century, or possibly even a temporary disuse of that area of land. Only nine sherds of pottery (47g) were dateable to the 50 years following this period. Pottery deposition was at generally low levels for the rest of the medieval period; 171 sherds occurred in the next two ceramic phases over a period of nearly four centuries. Residuality was quite high in the late medieval and early post-medieval assemblages, as they came from mixed deposits associated with soils above a cobbled surface. Evidence from West Cotton indicated that, in the medieval period, such areas contained middens of domestic refuse that were periodically carted away and used as material for filling and levelling ground.

The pattern is generally what would be expected, although the data for CP4 is unreliable due to the small assemblage size. Residuality is generally low throughout the medieval period, until CP6, where around 30 per cent of the pottery is residual earlier medieval wares, as is around 25 per cent of the material from CP7. There is no residual pottery from the latest two phases.

#### THE ASSEMBLAGES

##### CP1 (tenth century)

Both the sherds from this phase were Stamford ware, with the fabrics and glazes suggesting that they are late Saxon types. It seems likely therefore that the village has its origins in the late Saxon period.

##### CP2 (eleventh century)

This small group of sherds is typical of the eleventh-century pottery of the region, with three of the sherds being Stamford ware and the other in Saxo-Norman T1(2) St Neots ware. The sherds all appear to be from secure contexts.

Phase	SN1	ST	SN2	OOL	PM	LY4	LA	LY3	MP1	LMO	EA6	WE	Total wt (g)
CP1	0	100%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	40
CP2	0	87.0	13.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	54
CP3	0.7	0	14.6	29.2	7.6	47.9	-	-	-	-	-	-	3,536
CP4	0	4.3	0	23.4	4.3	12.8	55.3	-	-	-	-	-	47
CP5	0	1.2	2.8	4.6	5.3	33.6	8.8	40.8	-	-	-	-	569
CP6	0	1.8	0	0	14.4	10.9	2.6	39.1	31.2	-	-	-	340
CP7	0	0.4	0	0.7	0.9	8.4	2.4	5.3	52.5	20.4	-	-	1,606
CP8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	87.4	-	143
CP9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13.2	85.3	696

Table 3. Pottery occurrence for major wares expressed as a percentage of the phase assemblage.

**CP3 (twelfth to mid-twelfth century)**

Half the pottery from the site came from this phase, with the most occurring in pit [209] and ditch [213]. A number of cross-fits were made, indicating that they came from a common source, most likely a domestic midden.

The assemblage is dominated by three vessels which were reconstructed to full profiles; a jar and bowl (Fig. 6, 1–2), both Shelly ware, and a Stamford ware bowl (Fig. 6, 4). All three vessels showed clear signs of heating, and were sooted on the outer surface, with the jar also lime-scaled on the inner surface. There were eight fairly large rimsherds from Oolitic ware jars, along with a single fairly large rimsherd from a Potters Marston jar (Fig. 6, 3). An Oolitic ware bodysherd with combed decoration was also present.

There were two small Shelly ware rimsherds, one from a jar and another from a bowl. A fragment of a Stamford ware pitcher handle was also present. It is an assemblage that is very typical of the twelfth-century regional pottery, and appears wholly domestic in nature. The range of wares is worthy of note, with the village being supplied with pottery from the north (Potters Marston), south (Shelly ware) and east (Stamford ware, Oolitic ware). This is indicative that the villagers had access to a major market centre.

**CP4 (mid-twelfth to thirteenth century)**

The paucity of pottery from this phase is in marked contrast to the preceding one. The small assemblage comprises entirely bodysherds, except for a single small Oolitic ware jar rimsherd.

**CP5 (thirteenth to late fourteenth century)**

This assemblage is somewhat larger and in better condition, comprising 58 sherds deposited over two centuries. It is dominated by the products of the Lyveden and Stanion kilns, which comprise nearly half the pottery, and Shelly wares, which make up a third of the group. The rest consists of small amounts of Oolitic, Stamford, Potters Marston and St Neots ware, most of which are likely to be residual. A Chilvers Coton jug rimsherd was noted, along with two rims from Lyveden/Stanon jugs. There were four jar rims, three from Shelly ware vessels and one from a Lyveden/Stanon 'A' ware example, along with two small and residual T1(2) St Neots ware bowls. The rest of the assemblage consists of plain bodysherds, including a single piece of glazed Developed Stamford ware jug. All the sherds are in reasonably good condition and residuality is quite low.

**CP6 (late fourteenth to mid-fifteenth century)**

This assemblage is quite small when the length of the phase is considered. The introduction of Midland Purple wares, probably from the Nuneaton area, sees the start of what can be regarded as the late medieval tradition, with pottery of this type making up a third of the assemblage. Lyveden/Stanon wares were still quite important, comprising over 40 per cent of the phase group, but Shelly wares and Potters Marston ware represent around a quarter of the assemblage, with most, if

not all, of this material residual. Three rimsherds were noted, all from jars, one each of Shelly ware, Lyveden/Stanion 'A' ware and Potters Marston ware.

#### **CP7 (mid-fifteenth to late seventeenth century)**

This phase represents over 200 years of activity at the site and comprises a small group of large, well-preserved sherds. The contemporary pottery is largely Midland Purple ware (52.5 per cent), along with Late medieval oxidized ware (20.4 per cent), three sherds of late Chilvers Coton ware, three sherds of Cistercian ware and two sherds of Lyveden 'D' ware, although the last-named is residual. As is typical of the period in rural settlements it is largely utilitarian, with display pottery such as Tingle glazed Earthenware and Slipwares entirely absent. Four rimsherds were noted: one from Chilvers Coton and one in Midland Purple; both are from jars or cisterns, and two from jugs, one Lyveden 'D' and the other in late medieval oxidized ware.

#### **CP8 and CP9 (late seventeenth to twentieth century)**

These two phases produced a total of 32 sherds of pottery with a total weight of 839g. They were made up mainly of utilitarian earthenwares, with no display or table pottery noted.

#### **THE ILLUSTRATED POTTERY (Fig. 6)**

- 1 Full profile of jar, Shelly ware. Grey fabric with brown surfaces. Outer surface thickly and evenly sooted, inner surface lime-scaled, inner base-pad burnt. Pit [209] and ditch [213].
- 2 Full profile of bowl, Shelly ware. Grey fabric with dark brown surfaces. Outer surface evenly sooted. Pit [209] and ditch [213].
- 3 Rimsherd from a jar, Potters Marston ware. Grey fabric with brown surfaces. Outer surface sooted. Ditch [213].
- 4 Full profile of bowl, Stamford ware. Pale grey fabric with light pinkish-orange surfaces. Outer surface of base and lower body very evenly sooted. Pit [209] and ditch [213].

#### **Building materials (*Pat Chapman*)**

A complete brick, from layer (21) overlying wall [28], is 215mm long by 100mm wide by 50mm thick ( $8\frac{1}{2} \times 4 \times 2$  inches). The fabric is fine clay, not uniformly well-mixed, with some grog and occasional ironstone and gravel inclusions. It is pale pinkish-brown in colour with cream-coloured streaks mixed with slightly darker grog, giving an attractive appearance on the worn surface. This is a handmade brick in a fabric typical of the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries.

A fragment of ceramic roof tile, 13mm thick, from layer (105) overlying cobbled surface [104], has both a nib and a peghole, which is 8mm square, narrowing to 4mm on the rough side of the tile. The nib is a separate piece of clay that has been attached to the top of the tile. The fabric contains fine crushed shell and occasional larger fragments, and is a slightly mauve brown colour. The under surface is sandy either from a mould or the drying area.



### **Metalworking debris** (*Andy Chapman*)

A small quantity of metalworking debris, weighing 79g, came from ditch [181]. It comprises eight irregular small pieces of undiagnostic ferrous slag as a residue from metalworking, perhaps secondary smithing.

### **Other finds** (*Tora Hylton*)

The majority of the finds, 27 out of 34, were recovered from the cobbled yard surface [104] and the overlying layers, which date between the late fourteenth and seventeenth centuries. The remaining seven finds, which date from the mid-twelfth to seventeenth centuries, were recovered from ditches, pits and gullies.

The iron fittings were all from the cobbled surface [104]. The structural fittings comprise a hinge pivot, an eyed spike and a hinge or bracket fitting, which are all likely to have come from a building close by. Items associated with the use of locks include a key for use with a mounted lock, which is stylistically post-medieval; a lock plate from the rotary mechanism of a fixed 'stock lock' (mounted lock), with a U-shaped key hole, like examples from Norwich (Goodall 1993, fig. 116, 1249–50); and a hasp in a 'figure of eight' form. There are also 15 nails: 14 from the cobbled surface and overlying deposits and one from gully [85]. Nine are complete and four head types are present; five are square, two are flat sub-circular, one is L-shaped and one has no distinct head. All types would have been used in carpentry.

Other objects worthy of note include a post-medieval thimble, with machine knurled indentations from gully [89], and a clay tobacco-pipe bowl, Oswald Type G17, dated *c.* 1640–70 from the same feature (Oswald 1975, 37–41). There are undiagnostic fragments of pale-blue vessel glass from ditch [249] and sheet lead from ditch [213].

## FAUNAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

### **Animal bone** (*Karen Deighton*)

A total of 18.5kg of animal bone was recovered by hand. This material was analysed using standard zooarchaeological methods and is dated on the basis of the pottery. The assemblage consists of the common domesticates for all periods (Table 4). Bodypart analysis cannot be undertaken, so the nature of the assemblage is unclear as to whether it comprises primary butchery or consumption waste. Fluctuations can be seen in the presence or absence of minor species and the predominance of species, but contemporary comparisons are not viable due to the small amount of material recovered.

### PRESERVATION

Fragmentation is high, with only three long bones still complete; bone cylinders were the most common form of fragment, comprising 17.8 per cent of the

Species	Common name	Mid-twelfth to fourteenth centuries	Fifteenth to late seventeenth centuries	Late seventeenth century to present
<i>Bos</i>	Cattle	14 (35%)	8 (28.6%)	2 (12.5%)
<i>Ovicaprid</i>	Sheep/goat	10 (25%)	13 (46.4%)	7 (43.75%)
<i>Sus</i>	Pig	3 (7.5%)		5 (31.25%)
<i>Equus</i>	Horse	6 (15%)	3 (10.7%)	2 (12.5%)
<i>Canid</i>	Dog	1 (2.5%)		
<i>Oriictolagus</i>	Rabbit	4 (10%)	2 (7.1%)	
<i>Gallus</i>	Chicken		2 (7.1%)	
<i>Anser</i>	Goose	2 (5%)		
<b>Totals</b>		<b>40</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>16</b>

Table 4. Species by period (relative percentages in brackets).

assemblage. Only two fresh breaks are present, which, along with the lack of butchery evidence, could possibly imply that fragmentation was the result of trampling or compaction in the soil. Surface abrasion is low, although two instances of flaking were noted. Nineteen instances of canid gnawing are present, fairly high, comprising 22.6 per cent of the identified bone, and could suggest it was midden waste prior to burial. Evidence of burning is restricted to two calcined bone fragments, which suggest this was not a preferred method of disposal. Three examples of butchery are present: two of chopping and one of filleting.

#### ARTICULATED REMAINS

A partial calf skeleton was recovered from ditch [224]. The morphology, unfused epiphyses and surface condition of the bones suggest a neonate. The remains consist of skull fragments, some ribs, vertebra and front legs.

#### Environmental evidence (*Karen Deighton*)

Eight soil samples, comprising 40 litres each, were collected from medieval and post-medieval features. The samples were processed using a siraf tank fitted with 500 $\mu$  mesh and flot sieve. The resultant flots were dried and examined using a microscope at 10 $\times$  magnification. One litre of sub-samples were taken from waterlogged samples and washed through a series of stacked sieves with 500 $\mu$ , 1mm and 3.5mm apertures. The retents were examined under a microscope. Identifications were made where possible with the aid of the author's reference collection, a seed atlas and the Ohio university seed workshop website (Schoch *et al.* 1988; [www.scri.ac.uk](http://www.scri.ac.uk); [www.oardc.ohio.state.edu](http://www.oardc.ohio.state.edu)).

#### PRESERVATION BY CHARRING AND WATERLOGGING

Cereals present included breadwheat (*Triticum aestivum*), hulled barley (*Hordeum vulgare*), naked barley (*H. vulgare* var *nudum*) and possibly spelt (*Triticum spelta*). The status of oat (*Avena* sp.) is problematic as it is unknown if the grains represent the wild or the cultivated variety, and consequently whether it was a minor crop or a contaminant. The presence of pea (*Pisum sativa*) in the late

Fill	Feature	Charcoal fragments	Cereal grains	Wild seed grains	Chaff
(45)	Waterlogged pit	present	–	3	–
(48)	Layer	present	–	–	–
(152)	Ditch [153]	1,000+	c. 410	3	–
(212)	Ditch [213]	1,000+	31	8	–
(246)	Pit [247]	20–30	3	3	–
(179)	Ditch [181]	20–30	c. 970	c. 64	–
(248)	Ditch [249]	100–200	210	2	1
(233)	Pit [234]	present	1	–	–

Table 5. Ecofacts present in each sample.

fourteenth- to seventeenth-century period could suggest maslins, mixed crops of cereal and edible pulses grown together. Wild plant or weed taxon included fat hen (*Chenopodium album*) and sheep sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*), both of which are common crop weeds.

#### CONCLUSIONS

The plant material exhibits the range of crops utilised at the site and their associated weeds. The lack of chaff and low proportions of wild plant or weed seeds suggests a late stage in crop processing for all periods. An increase in bread wheat and naked barley was matched with a decrease in hulled barley over time. However, there is little use in predicting site status due to the low concentrations in some samples.

The samples from ditch [213], pit [247] and pit [234] represent the general background of plant material, and not any specific activity. The samples from ditches [153], [181] and [249] are likely to be the result of rubbish disposal, and may be midden waste.

#### DISCUSSION

It has been noted by Blinkhorn that there are small quantities of pottery dating to the tenth and eleventh centuries, and this may suggest a pre-Conquest origin for the establishment of the earliest boundary ditches. The bulk of the evidence is from the early twelfth century, associated with the backfill of the early boundary system, and continuing through the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries with a new arrangement of boundaries. There was also activity during the early post-medieval period and occasional late post-medieval or modern disturbances. The site appeared to have always formed an open area with a changing pattern of ditches, at least some of which probably formed the boundaries of plots extending west from Sutton Road. Pottery provided good datable evidence and strongly suggested that much of the material was from middens. Assemblages of animal bone and carbonised seed confirmed that fairly typical livestock and crop species were farmed, but the quantities and the nature of midden material limited further statements for all finds.

During the mid-twelfth century a large fish pond dominated the south-west of the site, and further west there were remnants of the medieval ridge and furrow field system. In the north of the site a sequence of ditches and associated pits may have defined the west end of plots fronting onto Sutton Road. These plots lay close to the core of Great Bowden, a short distance from The Green. Other parts of the village at Knight's End, Nether Green and Upper Green form outlying groups of habitation belonging to a dispersed pattern of satellites around this core. In antiquity, a dispersed settlement may have been separated by substantial areas of open land, with the dwellings either widely scattered or confined to nucleated groups. It is likely that nucleation of the settlement around manorial foci consolidated as the result of administrative need and the convenient juxtaposition of dwellings. Whether the reorganisation that was evident along Sutton Road took place as a single event throughout the whole of the township, or even the ancient parish, is unknown and probably unlikely.

The rearrangement of the ditch systems indicates that a fundamental change in the organisation of this part of the medieval manor occurred towards the end of the twelfth century. It came at a time when the traditional soke of Great Bowden had been dismantled and Market Harborough was granted its Royal Charter (1203). This coincided with a national trend towards economic success, particularly in areas that benefited from powerful estates and lordships with Royal or ecclesiastical patronage. The narrow spacing of the ditches, at 7m apart, may denote the presence of multiple separate tenement plots running west from Sutton Road. At the same time the fish pond became redundant. The ground was levelled up behind a retaining wall, which formed a boundary between the plots to the east and agricultural land to the west.

In the mid-fifteenth to late seventeenth centuries new ditch systems subdivided the area between east and west, with an access track between the two. There was a possible gated entrance from the west into a possible yard, and this was consolidated by an extensive roughly cobbled surface. The accumulation of mixed soils above the cobbles contained midden debris and iron fittings from nearby buildings. To the south a cob wall may have been a post-medieval boundary or the surviving fragment of a small building, such as a cottage or ancillary barn.

Late post-medieval and modern activity was limited to minor disturbances, dumps of material filling some of the later ditches, two animal burials at the rear of a former twentieth-century garden and a fairly substantial ditch parallel to Langton Road. In more recent years the area was used for grazing and horticulture, and mature trees are shown on the 1891 Ordnance Survey map.

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