

Chapter 20

Medieval Settlements at Nether Hambleton and Whitwell

Tim Clough

Following the acquisition of land for the construction of Rutland Water in the early 1970s, a programme of archaeological fieldwalking was begun by the newly-formed Rutland Field Research Group for Archaeology and History, based at the Rutland County Museum. At Nether Hambleton this revealed earthworks which seem not to have been noticed previously, centred on OS plot no 177 (National Grid reference SK 894067), part of the land to be inundated; these were identified as the site of a medieval settlement. The earthworks continued into two small adjoining fields, a total extent of less than ten acres. The area was flanked to the north-west and south-east by four farmhouses and six cottages, five of which were thatched. These were all examined prior to their demolition.

It was decided in 1972 that a training excavation on a 'rescue' basis should be attempted, to be continued until reservoir construction and flooding precluded any further work. Permission was given by Mrs Gregory, the sitting tenant of the small farm at Woodbine House overlooking the site, to excavate a small area which appeared to enclose one house platform. Archaeologist Christine Mahany of Stamford agreed to supervise the work, which began in early 1973. The professional guidance and direction given helped considerably to expand the limited experience of Group members and to maintain their enthusiasm. The Group's Chairman was Les Emmerson, the excavation was led by Sqn Ldr Fred Adams, and the main participants were Jo Ecob, Jack and Maureen Dodds, and Olive Adams. Additional assistance was provided by staff and pupils of schools in the area and staff and men from Ashwell Prison near Oakham. Eventually, the rising level of Rutland Water meant that the excavation, which had continued part-time for three years, had to end, and the Group's activities continued elsewhere. A summary of the results of this work, identifying a medieval house site that went through several phases of development, was published in a multi-disciplinary volume covering many aspects of research carried out during the construction of Rutland Water (Adams *et al* 1982, 64 and fig 5). A programme of historical research was also initiated, using the resources of Leicester University Library, the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester & Rutland, and Lincolnshire Archives.

Several years on, in 1976, the construction of the reservoir was nearing completion, and action had been taken to clear higher ground south of Whitwell village for the building of the planned Fishing Lodge, Rescue Centre and other buildings. Part of the work included bull-dozing land adjacent to Whitwell Old Hall, OS plot nos 47 and 58 (National Grid reference SK 924087), where a proposal to erect cottages for reservoir staff south of a dividing hedge led to some turf and soil clearance. The exposure of large

stone building blocks led to postponement of the work and called for a full archaeological investigation, which took place with the permission of Mrs Senior and Captain Cavenagh, who then owned the Old Hall building complex and adjoining paddocks.

Members of the Rutland Field Research Group and others were transferred from assisting on the Romano-British site which had been discovered on the Whitwell peninsula (*see* Chapter 18 – Brooches, Bathhouses and Bones – Archaeology in the Gwash Valley) and set to work on the new area, at first under the direction of Malcolm Todd of Nottingham University. It became clear that the paddock west of the Old Hall was the site of medieval buildings at the southern end of Whitwell village, lying between the Old Hall and Bull Brig (Brigg) Lane, which led to Edith Weston. The exposed stonework was interpreted as part of a substantial complex; excavation of its remains, again led by Fred Adams, continued part-time and was later extended into the adjacent field. However, only part of the complex could be investigated with the limited resources available and the results were less well defined than at Nether Hambleton.



Members of the project team on site at Nether Hambleton in August 1975, with Allen Chinnery of Leicestershire Museums (seated) looking on (Fred Adams)

Neither excavation could have taken place without the permission and generous assistance of Anglian Water Authority and the respective landowners. The Group's willing volunteers not only gave their time in the field but also spent many hours on the mundane washing and labelling of thousands of sherds of pottery and small finds; thanks are due to them, to Fred Adams, on whose excavation records this chapter has drawn so extensively, and to those who provided the specialist reports which form the basis of the accounts that follow. The full excavation records are retained by the Rutland Local History & Record Society, with which the Group subsequently merged, and the finds are housed at the Rutland County Museum.

The Nether Hambleton Excavation

Nether Hambleton lay on clayey soil in the valley bottom at a height of some 75m OD, about 3km to the east of Oakham. The larger village of Great or Upper Hambleton lies about 1km to the north on a spur which now forms a large promontory projecting into Rutland Water, with the subsidiary settlement of Middle Hambleton lying on the hillside between them

The shrunken medieval village site at Nether Hambleton, looking east, in July 1975, showing the green way running between two lines of house platforms; the excavation site is inside the paling fence
(Tim Clough)



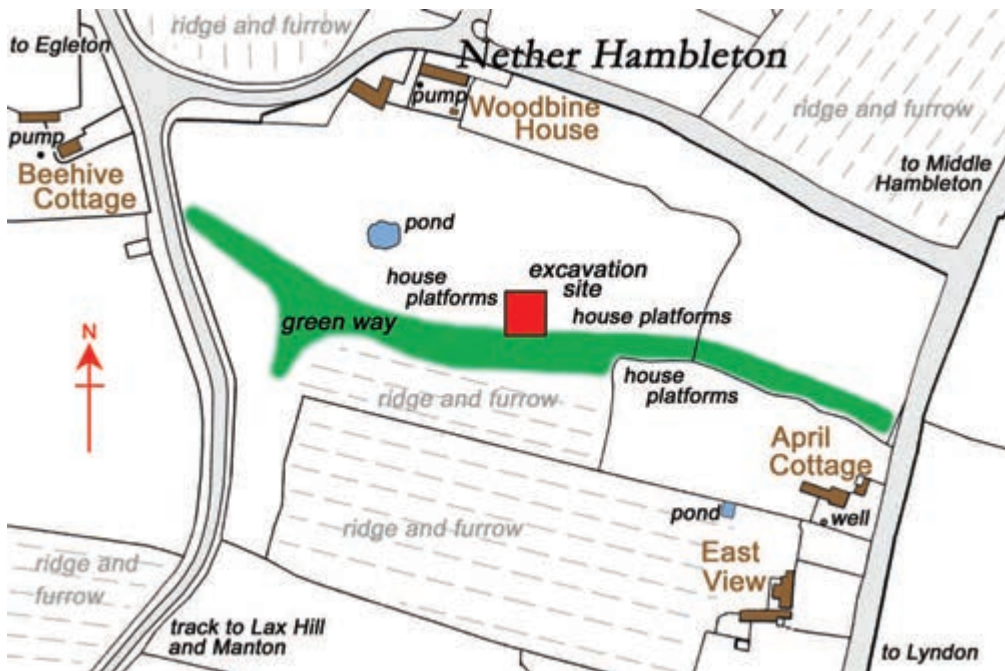
Tim Clough, Curator of Rutland County Museum (left), and Fred Adams, project leader (right), inspecting an old lemonade bottle found in a well at Nether Hambleton (Stamford Mercury)

The village earthworks were visibly associated with a green way running from east to west, parallel to the lane to Eggleton and at right angles to an old track leading to Lax Hill and Manton. An area of apparent tofts or individual properties was bounded on the east by the road from Hambleton to Lyndon and Edith Weston. The south side of the green way showed ridge and furrow, and on the small hill were two dwellings, East View and April Cottage. In the hedge in this area there appeared to be a semi-circular ridge which could have been the tail-post walkway of a windmill but which was not investigated further. Between the green way and Woodbine House was a large pond which at one point exceeded 2m in depth, and there was also an old well nearby, from which was recovered an unopened early twentieth century lemonade bottle – presumably dangled on a string to cool and accidentally dropped!

The most promising of six visible house platforms to the north of the green way was selected for excavation and an area some 15m square was marked out. This was later extended to 17 x 20m to include a section of the green way and signs of an earlier building foundation on the northern side. The excavation proceeded in 1m strips running the full width of the site from the edge of the green way to the northern site boundary. Artefacts were found on the



removal of the first turf in the south-western corner, and the site continued to produce an abundance of pottery sherds – over 4,500 in all – and small finds throughout the three years that followed. Overburden and stone rubble were removed in layers varying from 10 to 15cm. As work progressed across the site, medieval house walls were revealed, with some sections still standing up to six courses in height. It was notable that wall junctions contained, in most cases, very large padstone boulder pebbles up to 70cm in length and up to 40cm in width, possibly providing foundation supports for a timber cruck type of superstructure. The walls in the southern half of the site were substantial and mostly continuous, while the north-west area showed considerable robbing of wall stone. A large number of nails found on the floor of the building suggested where roof beams had collapsed. All the evidence indicated that this was a solid building.



The location of Nether Hambleton excavation site (RO)



Remains of the medieval house exposed at Nether Hambleton (Fred Adams)

The main rectangular structure appeared to contain two rooms separated by a light-weight partition, near the centre of which was a post-hole, implying a substantial support for the partition and roof. In the smaller northern room a well-paved hearth was revealed, floored with iron ore/limestone blocks, with an adjacent pebble area perhaps for cooking utensils. Two coins found by the hearth proved to be a penny of Edward III (1327-77) and an early fifteenth century Venetian soldino. On the east side of the hearth, close to the main wall and partition, was a raised stone and clay platform suggesting a work area or sleeping bay. In the north-east corner of this smaller room large deposits of ash and charcoal led to the discovery of a substantial corner oven. Although most of the pottery sherds found in the building area were of twelfth and thirteenth century date, they are interpreted as evidence of a phase of occupation earlier than that represented by the remains of the building.

Investigation of a raised stone and clay feature in the south-west corner of the larger room suggested another work area. This contained most of the pieces of a large thirteenth-century Lyveden ware jug decorated with a green and yellow slip pattern. The floors inside the building were mainly of sandy gravel. Outside the main west wall at this point were signs of a substantial eaves drain and a thick deposit of soft grey soapy clay overlying an orange/brown clay floor. This 'west yard' contained an area partly paved with boulder pebbles, and a path from the robbed wall area of the house and stone on the site edge may have led to adjacent buildings. The yard surface contained many larger pot sherds of fourteenth/fifteenth century date.



Above: A medieval hearth found at Nether Hambleton (Fred Adams)



Right: A thirteenth-century Lyveden/Stanion Ware jug found at Nether Hambleton, as reconstructed (RCM)

Towards the northern edge of the site a later wall of poorly bonded stones, possibly a late repair or reconstruction, adjoined the remains of the corner oven. Beyond this wall was a large flat area with foundations of earlier walls containing wide well-worn limestone slabs, but it was not possible to extend the site northwards to investigate what was probably an earlier building.

Following the decision to investigate the southern end of the building and the associated green way or 'street', an earth and stone bank was removed. The main east and west walls were found to continue to the edge of the road metalling and suggested a 'lean-to' extension of the building. A section 1m wide through the edge of the road revealed no wall foundations but showed three levels of road surfacing. A small group of six thirteenth-century Long Cross coins was found by one of the walls.

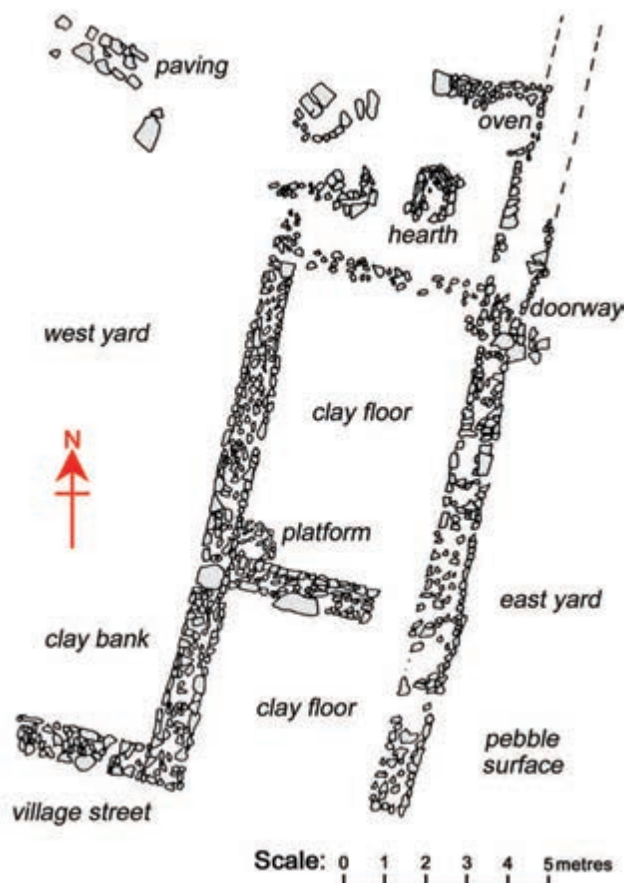
Besides coins, the many small finds from the site included a large variety of iron objects, mostly in poor condition, some copper alloy artefacts, fragments of lead, and stone artefacts including many whetstones. These and the many animal bones recovered were submitted to specialists for detailed examination.

Medieval Animal Bones

Many animal bones and teeth were found during the excavations at Nether Hambleton, and these were identified by Ian L Baxter. His report shows that they comprised the remains of approximately five cattle, some immature; three small horses, some immature; five or six pigs; and a number of sheep and goats. Butchery marks, evidence of cutting and chopping the carcasses, were found on some of the horse, cattle and sheep/goat bones. At least two domestic fowl were represented, along with probably two geese. Bones from dog, possible wolf, brown hare, cat and rat were also found.

Most medieval occupation sites produce similar selections of bones from animals, birds and fish, providing valuable evidence for the varied diet of their inhabitants. Although wild and farm animals are usually also present, the great majority represent kitchen debris – one area of the Whitwell site too produced cooked butchered bones – but bones were also used productively for making household items and in many other different ways. Worked bone items from Nether Hambleton included an awl from a pig's ulna, a fragment of knife handle, and several circular lathe-turned beads or buttons.

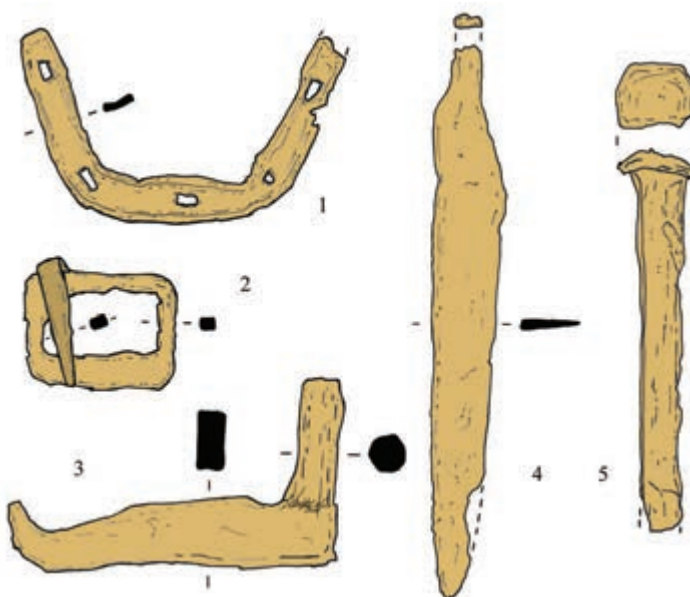
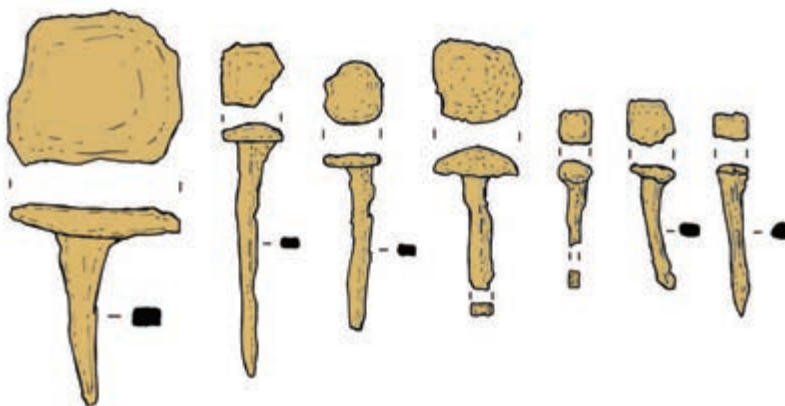
A plan of the late fourteenth/early fifteenth century house excavated at Nether Hambleton (Fred Adams)



Small Finds from Nether Hambleton

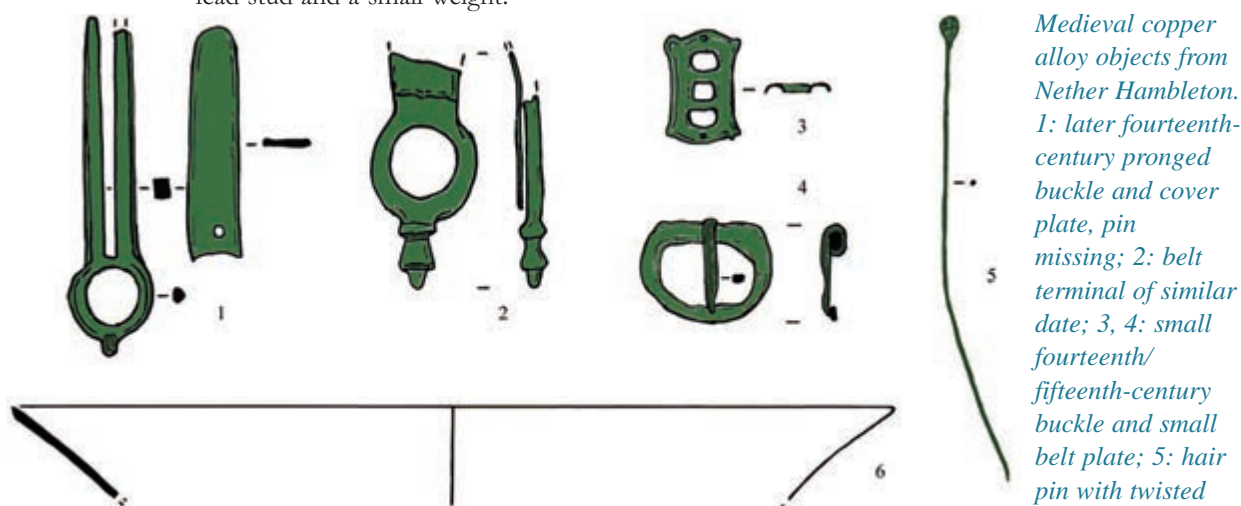
The small finds from Nether Hambleton were examined by Patrick Clay of the then Leicestershire Archaeological Unit. The majority were ferrous nails, hinge pins, pegs and hooks, horseshoe fragments and horseshoe nails; these iron finds were mostly in poor condition. A total of 258 nails were recovered; the most common type was a small variety, the '*brodde*' [brad], a basic headless or lost-head woodworking nail, followed by various sizes of small square-headed carpentry nail and a few large-headed stud nails of the type used to strengthen doors, as well as the horseshoe nails. There were also several buckles including one probably fifteenth century in date, knife blades, a mason's chisel, two hinge pivots used for hanging a door or shutter, an awl fragment, a decorative strip of unknown purpose, fifteenth/sixteenth century heavy horseshoe fragments, and a possible thirteenth-century tanged arrowhead.

Medieval nails from Nether Hambleton. Left to right: stud nail used to strengthen doors; square-headed nail; nail with offset square head; small stud nail; two small square-headed nails; plain nail – a 'brodde' or basic woodworking nail (after Patrick Clay)



*Medieval iron objects from Nether Hambleton.
1: protective or decorative strip, purpose unknown; 2: buckle, perhaps fifteenth century; 3: hinge pivot; 4: knife blade; 5: chisel with burred-over head (after Patrick Clay)*

Copper alloy items included several buckles and belt decorations; one of the buckles was of a later fourteenth century type that would have been attached to the name belts in fashion at that time, and a contemporary forked terminal possibly from the same belt was also found. Other copper alloy finds included a finger ring fragment, a twisted wire hairpin, and a cast bowl or skillet fragment encrusted with soot, suggesting its use as a cooking vessel. Most of these are consistent with a fourteenth century date, central to the occupation period of the site. Lead and lead alloy objects included a pewter button, probably post-medieval, a small double-headed decorative lead stud and a small weight.



Medieval copper alloy objects from Nether Hambleton. 1: later fourteenth-century pronged buckle and cover plate, pin missing; 2: belt terminal of similar date; 3, 4: small fourteenth/fifteenth-century buckle and small belt plate; 5: hair pin with twisted wire knot; 6: rim fragment from a cast bowl (after Patrick Clay)

Stone objects included small sandstone spindle whorls and a fragment of a small mortar made of Lincolnshire Oolitic limestone. Although samples of gritstone, pebble grinders and iron ore were also collected, the main items of interest were an unusually large group of well-used stone hones or whetstones, mostly either of sandstone, probably originating from the English Coal Measures, or of imported Norwegian Ragstone. There was also one fine-grained siltstone pebble, described as a black cherty stone with vugs of quartz and secondary silica, which, intriguingly, was identified as a possible touchstone, used for testing objects to see if they were gold (Moore & Oddy 1985, 77, no 21, fig. 11d).

Stone Hones from Nether Hambleton

Twenty-six stone hones or whetstones from the Nether Hambleton excavations were examined by microscopic thin section by David Moore of the Natural History Museum. Seven were identified as Norwegian Ragstone, and at least fourteen – mostly coarse muscovite-bearing lithic and/or feldspathic sandstones – probably originated from the English Coal Measures. The others were respectively one muscovite-quartz grit (possibly also from the Coal Measures), one chlorite-biotite-muscovite lithic sandstone, one feldspathic sandstone, one acidic igneous rock (not unlike Mount Sorrel granite from Leicestershire), and one Mesozoic limestone.

All the hones were well used and none was intact. Those made of Norwegian Ragstone, a well-known source of sharpening stones, must have been imported in the medieval period, whilst the typical sandstone examples will have been obtained through more local trade. It is however quite unusual to find so many hones or whetstones in a single building, and this raises questions about the occupations of the people who once lived there and why they appear to have had so many blades that needed sharpening.



Three of the medieval hones found at Nether Hambleton and now in the Rutland County Museum (not to scale) (RO)

Coins Found at Nether Hambleton

Six mid thirteenth century Long Cross coins (so-called because of the long cross which dominates the reverse design) were found close together in heavy clay near the foot of a wall of the excavated house (Archibald & Woodhead 1976, 115, no 452). No purse or other container was found, so we cannot say why or how they came to be there. One of the coins was a complete penny, though broken, but the other five were halfpennies – literally pennies cut in half, common practice at a time when no coins smaller than the penny were issued. As a group the coins must be later than 1256 because one of the moneyers whose names appear on them, Robert of the Canterbury mint, was appointed in that year. The total face value of the coins is $3\frac{1}{2}d$, which might then have paid for three hens and a dozen eggs.

These coins were as follows:

1. Cut halfpenny by the moneyer Nicole of Canterbury.
2. Cut halfpenny by the moneyer Robert of Canterbury (broken into two pieces).
3. Cut halfpenny of the Canterbury mint, moneyer unknown.
4. Complete penny, perhaps by the moneyer Ricard of the Durham mint (broken into five pieces).
5. Cut halfpenny of the London mint, moneyer unknown.
6. Cut halfpenny, illegible (turned over and struck twice between the dies).

Four other medieval coins were found, two by the hearth and one each in the east and west yards:

1. Short Cross cut halfpenny (late twelfth/early thirteenth century), illegible, though the moneyer may be Ricard.
2. Penny of Edward III (1327-77) from the York mint.
3. Soldino or 'galley halfpenny' of Doge Michele Steno of Venice (1400-13).
4. Sterling of Erik VII/XIII of Pomerania (Denmark, Sweden and Norway) (1412-39), minted at Lund in southern Sweden.



A silver sterling of Erik VII/XIII of Pomerania (1412-39) found at Nether Hambleton (RCM)

The earliest coin is the Short Cross cut halfpenny. Its condition is too poor for it to be identified closely, but the type was current from 1180 to 1240, just before the Long Cross series. The penny of Edward III found by the hearth, again in very poor condition, probably dates from the 1360s, during Archbishop Thoresby's tenancy of the See of York. The two foreign coins, kindly identified by the Department of Coins and Medals, British Museum, are the latest from the site and date from the first half of the fifteenth century. With the other coins, identified by Tim Clough, they suggest that the site was in use at least from the late twelfth to the mid fifteenth century. The presence of foreign coins illustrates the possibility of far-flung contacts, fortuitous and at several removes though they might be, even in small rural communities like Nether Hambleton. Coins of the flourishing trading state of Venice, like the soldino found by the hearth, occur sporadically in England to the extent of having a nickname. They were made of inferior silver and passed as halfpence, but were intrinsically worthless. Scandinavian coins are less common, at least on excavated sites. We may conjecture that the sterling of Erik VII/XIII results from Baltic trade with east coast ports like Boston and Spalding in Lincolnshire or Lynn in Norfolk, all of which would have served merchants for example in the flourishing medieval town of Stamford (Lincolnshire), only a short distance to the east of Hambleton.



A mid thirteenth century Long Cross cut halfpenny by the moneyer Robert of Canterbury found at Nether Hambleton (RCM)

The Whitwell Excavation

This site faced Whitwell Old Hall on the western slope of the Whitwell stream at a height of around 100m OD, and geologically appeared to be below the upper limit of the Upper Lias clay of the Gwash valley. Above the clay were layers of ironstone, soil and turf. The higher valley slopes contain limestone strata much used for building construction and exploited for cement manufacture at nearby Ketton.



Sketch plan of the village and medieval earthworks of Whitwell (after Hartley 1983, 48)

Material removed by machine before archaeological work began was deposited near the stream to form a substantial bank. A search of this deposit yielded a large collection of pottery which included some Roman material but was mainly twelfth to seventeenth century in date. Traces of charcoal and clinker suggested possible ironworking on the site. The machine-scraped area revealed two charcoal features and indications of a coarsely-built wall and ditch. Following surface examination of the building area and the ground slope to the south, which produced a similarly wide variety of pottery, a flint arrowhead and a number of small finds, work was concentrated on an area some 10 x 30m in extent.

Removal of loose soil and stone debris in approximately 5m strips across the site from north to south revealed what was obviously a stone-spread yard bounded by stone walls on the west and south. To ascertain the size and

An aerial view of Whitwell taken in 1968, before Rutland Water works began (Anglian Water)

construction of these walls a trench 1m deep was dug on what seemed to be the outside; this produced a well-constructed wall face. As the yard was cleared several other features appeared, including a narrow stone drain and a line of large flat stone slabs. These were interpreted as padstones for a short wall. Nearby were an area of large laid pebbles and a line of blue clay running west to east. Crossing the site were the remains of a later surface drain which had been cut through a line of large stone blocks, while further east were another small stone drain and a stone scatter. This work yielded a considerable quantity and variety of pottery, and removal of soil from the late drain produced sherds of Stamford, Midland Purple and other medieval wares.

A paved area in the Whitwell medieval building complex excavated by the Rutland Field Research Group (Fred Adams)



The area further east and at a lower level had been abraded by the leveling machine but many large worked blocks of limestone, up to about 70cm square, were still visible *in situ*. These were found to be covers for a system of stone-lined drains, in which earlier medieval pottery was found; later it became obvious that in most cases the drains formed the foundations of the major walls of the buildings.

Trenches outside the main west wall and the south wall showed that these walls were built above packed Upper Lias clay. The west wall appeared to have been repaired or re-laid at some stage. The lower courses were of larger and heavier material; some of the upper courses had slipped outwards and had been shored up. The southern end proved to form a well-built corner with the south wall, which stood on blue clay for about 13m, at which point a further cross-wall foundation, running northwards, was discovered overlying a stone-lined drain which obviously continued into the adjoining paddock.

The eastern end of the south wall was also built over a stone-lined drain of considerable size, again with limestone covers up to 70cm square, which proceeded in a shallow arc in an easterly direction for over 10m. From this point eastwards and downhill either the drain had been destroyed or the area reverted to natural drainage towards the stream below in the Old Hall garden. It is possible that the stream entered a large millpond – traces of a long dam wall crossed the stream about 100m south of the site and the stream

had a well-built stone wall sluice still *in situ* up to the time the reservoir was filled. The sluice walls were about 2m high above the stream bottom but covered by brambles and nettles.

Excavation of the area around the large stone blocks revealed that the underlying drain was misaligned and that the stones were inclined at some 30° to horizontal. The eastern end of the line of blocks ended on a semi-circular block obviously burned brown. The presence of charcoal, ash and brown clay suggested a hearth or burning area. Potsherds found were mostly blackened early Stamford wares.

Clearance of the yard area continued eastwards to a point where the south wall appeared to join the heavy wall-and-drain system. The yard appeared to terminate at this point; the removal of further debris and soil revealed a further wall-and-drain system, overlaid by three courses of wall stone, extending into the site boundary hedge. The underlying 'V' drain consisted of flat limestone slabs approximately 60 x 30cm in size. The junction of this wall-and-drain with the first system revealed a square stone-lined 'socket' some 40cm square, thought to be a support for a large corner upright.

Permission was obtained to extend the excavation into the adjoining paddock, and a second area of some 20 x 40m was enclosed, down to the fence along the Old Hall approach road. Again, this was investigated in strips approximately 5m wide, quite a formidable task as the whole area was covered in deep turf, all of which had to be removed carefully and by hand since it was known that several features passed under the dividing hedge and that early results could be expected. The first strip revealed the possible continuation of the main west wall and a line of large pebbles which continued beyond the limit of excavation, perhaps a boundary line or late pathway from a further house platform to the north-west. This area produced the only coin found during the excavations, a silver circular halfpenny of Edward I[-III]. Coins of this type were introduced in Edward I's great recoinage of 1279-80, and successive issues continued until the mid-fourteenth century during the reign of Edward III. Iron nails and pegs, fragments of knife blades, sherds of Cistercian, Midland Purple and other wares were also recovered, as well as cooked butchered bones.

The stone fall and scatter over the yard area varied in depth from 1m at the western end to about 90cm at the highest point, and contained sherds of twelfth to fifteenth century pottery and several iron nails. Other finds from the new area included bone, nails, a lead strip 100 x 10 x 15mm, a buckle or brooch, sherds of glazed and unglazed gritty ware, Cistercian and Midland Purple ware and a glazed stoneware base.



*Olive Adams
inspecting
progress at the
Whitwell
medieval site
(Fred Adams)*

Further clearance revealed large stones which formed a substantial corner of two walls, one E-W and the other N-S, well laid with several courses surviving above stone rubble foundations. The identification of two other foundation layers suggested rebuilding on at least two occasions, and lines of stone footings containing drainage channels found at a lower level may represent secondary lean-to structures. An area of yard between two of the walls revealed a large burning area dotted with iron lumps up to 2kg in weight, suggesting that if iron had been extracted from local ironstone here the practice had been abandoned, possibly in the Tudor period.

In contrast to Nether Hambleton, a considerable number of medieval ridge tile fragments were recovered. These were mostly of Bourne ware, with some of Lyveden/Stanion ware; all were evidently glazed, often with white slip decoration under the glaze. In the main they date from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Four worn fragments of glazed floor tile were also found, two with white slip decoration and two with white clay inlay. All the evidence suggests that, even though no complete picture could emerge, the buildings on this site were more substantial and to a higher specification than that at Nether Hambleton, and certainly incorporated an unusual technique in placing walls over foundation drains.

Pottery from the Nether Hambleton and Whitwell Excavations

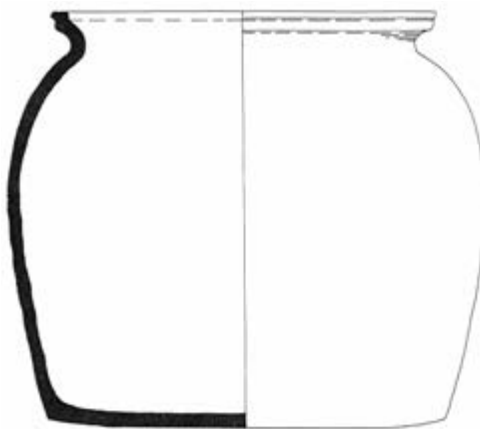
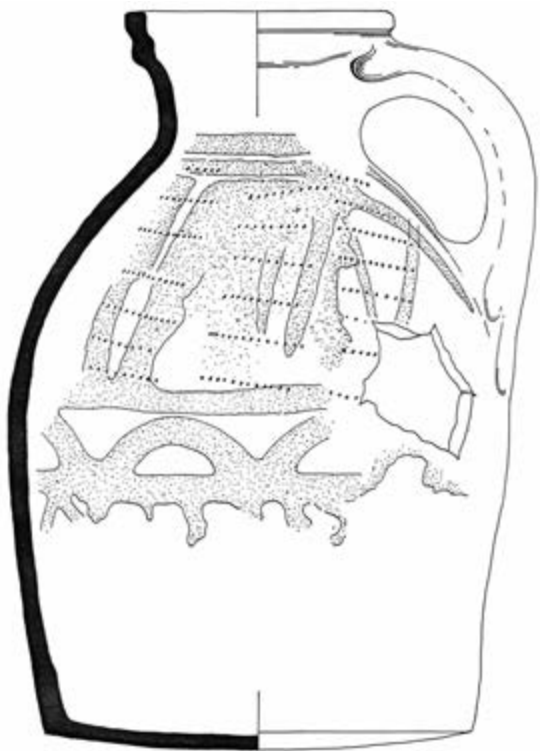
Leaving aside the residual Romano-British pottery from Whitwell, the pottery from the two sites ranged from Saxo-Norman to late post-medieval, but in each case was concentrated in the medieval period. The pottery from Nether Hambleton was examined by Rosemary Woodland, who looked at every sherd using a binocular microscope at x35 magnification to identify the pottery type and build a chronology of the whole assemblage. That from Whitwell was examined by Deborah Sawday using a x20 binocular microscope and catalogued by fabric and context with reference to the University of Leicester Archaeological Services Fabric Series for Leicestershire and Rutland. Vessel form identification was, in most cases, limited to the basic class of vessel, such as jug, bowl or cistern, by the presence of diagnostic features including rims, handles and spouts. Here we record a summary of their findings.

The earliest pieces, from Nether Hambleton, were a single sherd from a light grey hand-made vessel, which would have had a spout and handle and a lug each side, identified as Saxon, perhaps *Ipswich Ware*, with a possible date of AD 650-850, and a fragment perhaps of imported *Pingsdorf/Badorf Ware*, AD 650-1000.

One of the most significant groups of pottery from each site originated from the Saxo-Norman pottery industry of *Stamford*, only some 12km to the east. At Nether Hambleton there were the remains of over 270 wheel-thrown vessels, and there were nearly 900 sherds from Whitwell. Stamford ware was often decorated with incised grooves, rouletting or finger impressions, and some was glazed. Vessel forms ranged from spouted pitchers and

collared vessels to bowls and other forms; cooking pots, storage jars and bowls were the most common forms at both sites. The fabric can be divided into three categories, coarse, fine and developed. In the developed Stamford ware from Whitwell, twelve sherds were covered with copper glaze and represent fine table wares. Five of them were also decorated with applied thumbed clay strips under the glaze, all but one with the addition of combing or comb streaking along the strips. These may all represent jugs or tubular spouted pitchers, which were often highly decorated.

Another important medieval production centre from which the inhabitants of both sites obtained pottery was that of *Lyveden and Stanion*, in Northamptonshire, which was especially active throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Many examples of this pottery were found, all hand- or coil-built. Three fabric groups, all fairly soft-fired but of different textures, can be identified; all have calcareous inclusions, iron ore, quartz and grog are often present, and one type is often glazed. One fabric, with a smooth, slightly soapy, surface texture and ranging in surface colour from orange/red to buff, was particularly used to produce jugs; these may be decorated with lines of stabbing, applied bands of white slip or incised patterns, and often have a patchy glaze in various shades of green. Applied white clay pads with grid stamps are also commonly found. Stabbed and slashed strap handles and plain, grooved and ribbed rod handles occur, the latter made out of three or four strands of clay twisted together. The handles are generally dowelled into the neck of the vessel; occasionally the lower wall is pushed out into the handle base. The only virtually complete jug recovered, from Hambleton, is of this fabric.



Above: Thirteenth-century Lyveden/Stanian Ware cooking pot from Nether Hambleton (David Carlin)

Left: Thirteenth-century Lyveden/Stanian Ware jug from Nether Hambleton (David Carlin)

A little later, Bourne in Lincolnshire became an important pottery centre. There were over 900 sherds of *Bourne Ware* at Whitwell and it was also well represented at Nether Hambleton. The fabrics have been divided into two groups, the earlier being a generally wheel-thrown fabric with a rough sandy surface texture and the later a finer sandy wheel-thrown late medieval/early post-medieval fabric which can be paralleled at the kiln site.

Examples of the earlier fabric from Whitwell included internally glazed bowl rims; another vessel, probably a bowl, was decorated with a zigzag pattern in a trailed slip on the exterior, and glazed both internally and externally. Some, but not all, of the eight jugs identified showed evidence of external glazing. The handles were either rod or strap, the latter often being stabbed or slashed. At least some of the jug handles were dowelled into the top of the neck of the vessel. Five cistern rim fragments and a hand-built dripping dish rim were also recorded. At Nether Hambleton, most vessels were too fragmentary to identify form but jugs and bowls were certainly present, including jugs decorated externally with white slip patches, with green glaze over the slip and incised decoration on the neck or body under the glaze, and bowls decorated with rilling on the interior of the rim, covered with green glaze.

Many vessel forms were identified in the later Bourne fabric at Whitwell: a cooking pot/storage jar, bowls, and jug fragments. Many of the jugs were decorated with white slip under the glaze, which varied in colour between an apple green and yellow and brown, and had ridged strap handles. Also present were single rims representing a jar, a bottle and a cistern. Similarly, at Nether Hambleton, this fabric is mostly represented by jug fragments, although again much of the material is too fragmentary to identify vessel type. Decoration on the jugs consists of applied slip patches on the exterior, with dark green glaze over, on both the body and handles, but rare on the base. Two bases have the impression of the rim of another vessel, seemingly a jug, suggesting that the vessels were fired upside-down, since the glaze has run downwards onto the base from the rim of the vessel above.

Several other medieval pottery industries were represented on both sites by smaller numbers of sherds. The most important of these was *Nottingham Ware*, a fairly hard-fired sandy wheel-thrown fabric, often glazed externally, of which there was more at Whitwell than at Nether Hambleton. Most of the sherds probably come from jugs, one or two with decorative rilling, cordons or under-glaze decoration. The underside of one jug base shows evidence of how it was stacked in the kiln. At Whitwell, there was a single sherd of *Lincoln/Lincolnshire Shelly Ware*, a wheel-thrown cooking pot rim, and another in a reduced and wheel-thrown sandy ware in the *Torksey* tradition.

A few shelly ware sherds of uncertain provenance may represent a *Lincolnshire* kiln. Some sherds from Whitwell in oxidised and reduced sandy ware may originate from *Nottingham* or *Bourne*; others may be from sources including *Lincoln* or *Ticknall* in Derbyshire. A few white-bodied sherds in a sandy wheel-thrown fabric, externally glazed olive green, probably came from the *Chilvers Coton* kilns in Warwickshire. At Nether Hambleton, three vessels including a jug, the base and body of which remains, were identified in a fabric described as *Local Sandy Ware*, possibly from a kiln in the *Leicester* area.

Midland Purple, with its rough surface texture and purple or orange colouring, is a well-known late medieval fabric, and there were numerous examples at both sites. Many are highly fired and vitrified, some less so, and they vary considerably in hardness. The softer-fired vessels may reflect a transitional period of manufacture between medieval sandy wares and true *Midland Purple* wares. Vessels from Whitwell included four wide-mouthed bowl rims, five jugs and some sixteen cisterns, some with evidence of internal glazing, and a range of other forms. At Nether Hambleton too, jugs decorated with cordons or incised parallel lines running around to the neck or shoulder, and cisterns with a variety of decorative techniques were found; one complete cistern profile, no bigger than a cooking pot/storage jar, could be reconstructed. At least two sources are suggested. Many of the vessel forms, and those features associated with the cisterns in particular, can be paralleled at the Austin Friars site in Leicester (Woodland 1981). One likely source for this pottery is *Ticknall* in Derbyshire, but some of the sherds in this group may be very highly fired products of the *Bourne* kilns.

Cistercian Ware is another hard-fired vitrified purple fabric with smooth surface texture, and there is a related ware which is less highly fired and more red than purple in colour. The Nether Hambleton material was fragmentary, but cups, posset pots or jugs may be represented, since one handle was found – this was only patchily glazed, and thus not true *Cistercian* ware. White applied slip decoration occurs on the exterior of several sherds; this appears yellow when covered with glaze. At Whitwell there were 200 sherds of two more or less indistinguishable fine, glazed, wheel-thrown, sandy fabrics in this tradition. Typologically the identifiable vessels, represented by the fragments of approximately 21 cup rims, all appear to be late medieval in form, and hence may be *Cistercian* rather than *Midland Black Ware*. They may also originate from *Ticknall*.

Two *Tudor Green Ware* vessels were represented at Nether Hambleton; neither is of identifiable form and the kiln source is unknown. From each site there was a little fragmentary sixteenth or possibly seventeenth century *Midland Yellow Ware*, a wheel-thrown, lead-glazed pottery which fires yellow over the pale buff fabric. The vessels included hollow forms such as jug or mugs rather than flat wares such as wide-mouthed bowls. At Whitwell, there were sherds of various post-medieval *earthenwares* or *pancheon wares*, some of which may have replaced *Midland Purple* during the early post-medieval period, and a few of *brown-glazed stoneware*.

Seventeenth and eighteenth century *stonewares*, characterised by the very fine nature of the fabric, highly fired and in many cases vitrified, derive from a variety of sources. Fragments of three small wheel-thrown and glazed stoneware drinking jugs or mugs in a dark grey body with a glossy brown glaze, imported from the Rhineland and probably originating from either *Raeren* or *Frechen*, were found at Whitwell, while the one imported stoneware vessel at Nether Hambleton is a salt-glazed *Westernwald* jug or mug, which has multiple incised horizontal lines on the neck, with cobalt painted in some of the depressions. Local stonewares are similar in fabric and decoration; the latter consists of incised horizontal or wavy lines on the exterior surface, and the salt glaze appears brown over the fabric. No vessel forms could be

identified for these hard-fired totally glazed fabrics; they may be from *Nottingham* or *Derby* or possibly from another more local source. The final group of late stoneware from Nether Hambleton may be from *Staffordshire*; the only vessel form identified is a plate, which has panels of basket-weave decoration interspersed with scrolling and grids on the rim.

The largest group of vessels from amongst the post-medieval pottery from Nether Hambleton was in the fabric termed, perhaps inaccurately, *manganese-glazed earthenware*. The fabric is fairly hard-fired, occasionally vitrified, with smooth surface texture; the core is mainly purple, but streaked with white and orange as a result of bad mixing and preparation of clay. The vessels in this group are thick-walled, with glaze usually on the interior. Two large bowls or pancheons were identified. The source may have been fairly local, although many centres may have been producing such coarse and probably relatively cheap vessels. A seventeenth to nineteenth century date is suggested, although it is possible that production of such vessels began earlier than the seventeenth century.

The remaining fabrics from the site are all seventeenth to nineteenth century in date, and mostly derive from the *Staffordshire* or related industries. They include very hard-fired vitrified white *bone china*, hard-fired smooth white *creamware*, and tin-glazed, slip-decorated cream-glazed and brown-glazed *earthenwares*. In no case do more than six vessels occur in any group; most sherds were too fragmentary to enable identification of form.

Interpretation and Dating of the Sites

Any attempt to understand how sites such as these developed and changed over the centuries relies on the stratigraphy of the excavated structures and on the relationship of finds to those structures, as well as on any historical information that can be brought to bear. At Nether Hambleton, we have the benefit of a well-defined archaeological structure, a series of small finds complemented by a definitive range of pottery, and some relevant documentary sources. At Whitwell, the structures are harder to understand, there are fewer datable small finds, and at present there are no historical pointers; despite the absence of clear chronological grouping of pottery from individual features, it is the pottery from the site which adds most to our knowledge.

Not surprisingly, given that Hambleton and Whitwell are adjacent parishes, the two pottery groups are very similar. The two sites lie so close to Stamford that it would be remarkable if they did not receive at least some of the products of its high-quality pottery industry, which operated from about AD 850-1250 and was one of the most important in the east midlands during this period (Kilmurray 1980, Leach 1987). At Nether Hambleton, the quantity of Stamford ware, the vessel forms and the range of decoration indicate that this connection extended back into the tenth century and continued into the early part of the thirteenth, while at Whitwell the date range of pottery associated with the drains, yard and some of the walls suggests occupation on the site from at least the Saxo-Norman period. Trade in Stamford ware to other sites in Rutland, such as Oakham Castle (Gathercole

1958) and Alstoe Mount (Dunning 1936), is well attested, and the Nether Hambleton and Whitwell assemblages emphasise its importance. The sites are well within the distribution radius of even the largest vessels, the most difficult to transport.

During the twelfth century, however, the status of Stamford as a supplier of pottery evidently declined, with the Lyveden/Stanion industry in north Northamptonshire (22km to the south) becoming a major new source, indicating a shift in supply from the east to the south. This is shown by the appearance of new fabrics, chiefly in the form of bowls and cooking pots or jars. During the thirteenth century, highly decorated Lyveden/Stanion vessels become important amongst the glazed wares, perhaps continuing into the fourteenth and even the fifteenth century. Another shift takes place when the Bourne kilns (also lying some 20km away, but to the north-east in Lincolnshire, not the south) also became a major source of pottery. Cooking pots or jars, jugs, many bowls, a dripping dish and a new later medieval pottery form, the cistern, for storage of liquids and equipped with a bung-hole, occur in this fabric. Later Bourne products such as bottles and jars dating from the fifteenth century are also present.

Previous excavations in the area produced varying quantities of material of the period, and more or less limited ranges of fabrics. At least one Lyveden jug sherd was found at Oakham Castle, and it is possible that more Lyveden type wares were recovered there, but included under St Neots ware, since the existence of the Lyveden kilns was unknown when that report (Gathercole 1958) was published. Bourne ware may also be present but there seems to be a distinct lack of what might be termed medieval sandy fabrics at Oakham Castle, although post-medieval fine and coarse wares were well represented. The range of fabrics at our sites is thus far more complete than that from either Oakham Castle or Alstoe Mount, or indeed Martinsthorpe (Wacher 1963-64), and can therefore be used to fill in gaps in our knowledge of the trade and distribution of pottery during the medieval period.



The major sources (shown in red) of pottery found at Nether Hambleton and Whitwell (RO)

Little of the pottery from any of these sites, or indeed from field-walking in the area, derives from sources to the west, certainly in the medieval period, though Nottingham (47km to the north-west) soon becomes a significant source, primarily for jugs. The presence of Nottingham ware is interesting, since it might be thought to be too distant for any of its products to be traded here. However, this is by no means unusual, since it occurs at a number of other sites in the area.

The origins and trade patterns of much of the pottery of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, including local sandy wares but notably Midland Purple and Cistercian ware, remain uncertain, though typologically quite a high proportion seems to originate from the Ticknall kilns, 60km to the west, in Derbyshire. Typically, Midland Purple vessel forms are predominantly cisterns, with jugs, bowls, and bottles or jars also occurring. The number of fine cup forms in Cistercian ware is also of interest. The presence of Midland Yellow, perhaps Midland Black ware, and certain earthenware products shows that Ticknall continued as the major supplier of pottery in the early post-medieval period.

At Nether Hambleton, it was possible to show the relationship between pottery groups and the house structure in a way that could not be done at Whitwell. Plans showing the pottery distribution within floor surfaces over the site revealed that most of the Stamford, Lyveden, Nottingham and earlier Bourne wares were randomly distributed over the whole site, both inside and outside the house structure. However, in the case of the later Bourne, Local Sandy and Midland Purple wares, very little was found within the house, the majority being found in fairly specific deposits to its north-west and east; both were located near doorways to the structure, and are suggested as midden areas, where disposal of broken vessels and other household rubbish took place during the occupation of the house. The distinction of these two pottery groups is crucial to our understanding of the history of the site.

The absence from the middens of earlier fabrics, together with their presence in some quantity within the house, as well as over the yard area, is suggestive. It is highly unlikely that the occupants of the house would have allowed so much broken pottery to accumulate on the floor of their dwelling without making some attempt to clear it, especially in view of the small amount of later pottery that is found within the structure. It is more likely that the early fabrics accumulated during the construction of the house platform, either carried here from other parts of the village and spread over the site or, as perhaps in the case of the nearly complete Lyveden ware jug, deriving from an earlier structure on the same site. Thus the Stamford, Lyveden, Nottingham and earlier Bourne wares may reflect pottery usage within the village, and possibly within this area of the settlement, at a period prior to the life and use of the excavated house; the later Bourne, Local Sandy, and Midland Purple wares from the two middens represent vessels in use in the building itself – joining sherds of vessels in both Bourne and Midland Purple occur in both middens.

The Cistercian and later fabrics do not occur within the midden material, but derive mostly from the upper layers of the excavation. Their

distribution shows no pattern, the number of vessels is very small, and they are not considered relevant to the dating of the excavated building.

The predominance of early medieval wares at Nether Hambleton suggests that substantial occupation of the settlement as a whole was perhaps more concentrated during the Saxo-Norman and early medieval periods, from c1100 or even earlier on the evidence of the Stamford ware, than in the later medieval and post-medieval periods. Before that, mid to late Saxon activity in the vicinity is hinted at by the sherds of possible Ipswich and Pingsdorf/Badorf ware. The importance of Hambleton, with its Saxon place-name, as a manorial and ecclesiastical centre in the Saxo-Norman period – at least as important, it seems, as Oakham – is well attested historically (*see* Chapter 8 – Hambleton: The Settlement on the Crooked Hill), and it seems likely that Nether Hambleton was one of the seven outlying berewicks or hamlets ascribed to it in Domesday Book in 1086 (Phythian-Adams 1977).

It is estimated that the house platform had been occupied from early medieval times until at least the mid fifteenth century – mid thirteenth century activity is attested by the group of Long Cross coins – but the evidence of the groupings of earlier and later pottery types noted above suggests that this occupation may not have been continuous. The lifespan of the excavated structure itself does not seem to have been a long one; a date range centred on c1400-1450 is suggested on the evidence of the pottery from the middens, a date which is in accord with what can be adduced from the small finds and coins. Thus the pottery distribution pattern implies that there were two distinct phases of occupation.

If there was indeed such a hiatus, documentary evidence may provide an explanation. In the 1330s the manor of Hambleton was in the hands of Giles de Badlesmere, heir of the Umfraville family. He died in 1337-8, and his *inquisition post mortem* (a report into the affairs of a deceased person) mentions a number of field names in Hambleton, including Sundermedow and Lampolmedow. The former may be the same as Cinder Meadow at the eastern end of the Burley Fishponds, and the latter seems certain to be Lampleys at Nether Hambleton; both field names are well attested in later documents. By the 1340s Hambleton had passed to Giles's sister Elizabeth and her husband William de Bohun, Earl of Northampton. When he died in 1360-61, his *inquisition post mortem* recorded untenanted ruinous buildings and eleven tofts and eleven virgates of land in his hands which had brought an income of £11 yearly 'before the pestilence' – that is to say, the Black Death of 1349-50. Again, the proof of age of one John Basynges of Hambleton in 1362-63 says that he had been eight years old and more at the time of the same pestilence.

The Black Death was not such a significant reason as was once thought for the mass desertion or reduction of medieval villages, major changes in land use such as the introduction of intensive sheep farming being but one other. However, the combination of this documentary evidence with that of the pottery sequence and its relationship with the archaeological stratigraphy does make it more than likely that the excavated house was erected on the site of one which had been rendered vacant by that plague, perhaps after an

Below: The map of Lower Hambleton in 1797 (ROLLR DG 7/4/27) shows that land in the immediate vicinity of the 1970s archaeological excavation was uninhabited at that time

A hand-drawn map of Lower Chumbuldon. The map shows a central area labeled "archaeological excavation site" with a red square. Surrounding this area are several buildings and landmarks:

- Top Left:** A building labeled "Roberts" with the number "3" next to it.
- Top Center:** A building labeled "Thompson" with the number "4" next to it.
- Top Right:** A building labeled "Redham" with the number "5" next to it, and another building labeled "M. Redham" with the number "6" next to it.
- Center:** A building labeled "Thompson" with a cross symbol and the number "7" next to it.
- Bottom Left:** A building labeled "Thompson" with the number "2" next to it.
- Bottom Center:** A building labeled "Thompson" with the number "8" next to it.
- Bottom Right:** A building labeled "Thompson" with the number "9" next to it.
- Far Right:** A building labeled "Thompson" with the number "10" next to it.
- Far Left:** A building labeled "Thompson" with the number "1" next to it.

A red arrow points towards the top left corner of the map. The map is titled "Lower Chumbuldon" at the top.

The position at Whitwell is rather different. Here, whilst there is a significant quantity of Saxo-Norman pottery, including the earliest coarse Stamford fabric dating from the tenth and eleventh centuries, there are relatively higher proportions of the later medieval and early post-medieval fabrics, Midland Purple, Cistercian/Midland Black ware and Midland Yellow. Even the sherds of imported Rhenish ware are not out of place: 'from about 1485 until 1550 the classic type of small Raeren jug was very widely exported and arrived in Britain in such large quantities that it became a type fossil of this period on every site ranging from royal palace to peasant house' (Hurst *et al* 1986). Whilst Whitwell may not have been a site of high status, however, the presence of ridge and floor tile – materials which were absent from Nether Hambleton – suggests that there was at least one building of some quality in the vicinity.

At Whitwell, much of the material covered a wide date range and was clearly residual, suggesting that it had been redeposited, possibly as make-up levels in later phases. The archaeological levels may have been further disturbed by subsequent agricultural activity, such as ploughing, after the abandonment of the site. However, it does seem that occupation continued here into the sixteenth if not the seventeenth century, rather later than can be deduced for the Nether Hambleton house.

Both sites produced pottery assemblages typical of the period and locality in terms of the vessel forms and fabrics present, the latter reflecting the essentially local, or at most regional, nature of most of the medieval and early post-medieval pottery distribution patterns. The pottery is mainly domestic in character, but the predominance of bowls and jugs may reflect the importance of dairy processing in the agrarian economy. The absence of cooking pots or jars in the later wares and the appearance of cisterns reflect not only the introduction of metal cooking vessels during the later medieval period, but also changing drinking fashions.

There is much information still to be obtained, both from new material brought to light through fieldwalking or excavation, and, perhaps just as importantly, from material from earlier sites already examined and described. Many sites which were excavated and written up before the discovery of the Lyveden and Bourne kiln groups may have yielded material from both these sources which has yet to be identified. In this context, therefore, the Nether Hambleton and Whitwell assemblages add considerably to our knowledge of the trade and usage of medieval ceramics in this area of the county in the medieval and early post-medieval periods. Future work will no doubt amplify what has been undertaken so far, and enhance our understanding of the history and development of these two settlements. For the moment, though, if not for always, intriguing questions remain unanswered.