

Test pit excavation within currently occupied rural settlements – results of the University of Cambridge CORS project in 2011

By Carenza Lewis¹

2011 saw the seventh year of test pit excavation within currently occupied rural settlements (CORS) in East Anglia carried out under the supervision of Access Cambridge Archaeology (ACA) directed by Dr Carenza Lewis at the University of Cambridge. As in previous years, this archaeological activity combines education and university outreach (particularly within the secondary school sector) with the archaeological investigation of currently occupied rural settlements (CORS). Short summaries of the results of the University of Cambridge CORS excavations are published annually in *Medieval Settlement Research* (Lewis 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010), and online at <http://www.arch.cam.ac.uk/aca/excavationreports.html>. This website also includes pottery reports from each site and maps showing the distribution of pottery period by period from the prehistoric to the modern era for every settlement where test pit excavations have been carried out by ACA since 2005. Anyone wishing to fully appreciate the summaries in this paper is advised to visit the website and read the text in conjunction with viewing the maps.

2011

In 2011, test pit excavation was carried out under ACA direction within twenty parishes in eastern England (Fig. 1). Eight of these were new additions to the ACA programme, with work in the others building on that carried out and reported on previously.

2011 was a very busy year for the ACA CORS project, as positive feedback about the test pit digging programme generated opportunities for new communities to become involved. Nearly 300 test pits were excavated in 2011, 119 of which were dug by members of the public during community test pit digging events with the rest excavated by secondary school pupils taking part in the Higher Education Field Academy (HEFA) programme which aims to raise academic aspirations. Some places included in the ACA CORS test pitting programme in previous years were not included in the 2011 season, but may be returned to in future years.

A summary review of the results of the ACA CORS test pit excavations in 2011 is presented below. Sites are listed in alphabetical order by county and then by parish. In the case of those places previously visited by the ACA CORS programme, and reported on in earlier *Annual Report* of the Medieval Settlement Research Group (Lewis 2006; 2007) or its successor, *Medieval Settlement Research* (Lewis 2008; 2009, 2010), the account presented here provides an update to earlier reports. Introductions to each settlement are only included when reporting on that place for the first time.

Archive reports are have been prepared for each settlement investigated by ACA in 2011 and data passed to HERs in each county. Fuller formal publication will take place at a later stage in the project. The aims and methods of the HEFA CORS project have been outlined elsewhere (Lewis 2007b) and on the website (<http://www.arch.cam.ac.uk/aca/cors.html>).

Sharnbrook, Bedfordshire (NGR SP 995595)

Sixteen test pits were excavated in Sharnbrook in 2011 (Fig. 2), bringing the total to date to fifty-nine. These included six excavated as a community project following on from HEFA excavations. New areas excavated in 2011 included the western side of the present village (pits SHA/11/07–SHA/11/10, SHA/11/16 and SHA/11/17 along Loring Road and Lodge Road) and the southern extremity of the village (pits SHA/11/02–SHA/11/04, SHA/11/14 and SHA/11/15). The excavations were enlivened by the discovery of an entire bicycle c. 20cm below the surface of SHA/11/06. This unfortunately prevented any further excavation on this site.

Of greater antiquity was pottery of Roman date, recovered from SHA/11/02 and SHA/11/03, both from gardens within a modern housing estate adjacent to arable fields on the very southern-most edge of the present village. Very little Romano-British pottery has previously been found in ACA test pits in Sharnbrook, so this was an interesting discovery. SHA/11/03 produced four Romano-British sherds in total and also a large sherd of Iron Age pottery: furthermore, it seems likely that undisturbed deposits of this date survive in the area, and plausible that a LPRIA/RB settlement may have been present in this area. SHA/11/03 also produced a very small sherd (1g) of St Neots Ware, with the overall distribution of material of late Anglo-Saxon date now suggesting that this area was on, or beyond, the edge of the settlement at this time.

Considering the marginal location of many of the 2011 pits in relation to the pre-20th century settlement, a surprisingly large number of the pits produced pottery of high medieval date (mid 11th–mid 14th century AD). Both pits on the southern edge of the village yielding Roman material also produced high medieval pottery, as did nearby SHA/11/14, a little to the north-west along Manor Farm Way. Each produced 2–4 sherds. Although this area appears today to be one solely of 20th century expansion, sufficient material has now been found to suggest the likelihood of activity of some sort in this area in the 11th–14th century AD. The quantities are insufficient to confidently ascribe this to habitation, but frequent enough to make this a possibility which should not be dismissed out of hand. SHA/11/07 and SHA/11/10 produced similar volumes of high medieval pottery, from gardens not far from the circular earthwork

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Figure 1 Map of Eastern England showing the locations of the CORS investigated by the HEFA project in East Anglia in 2011.

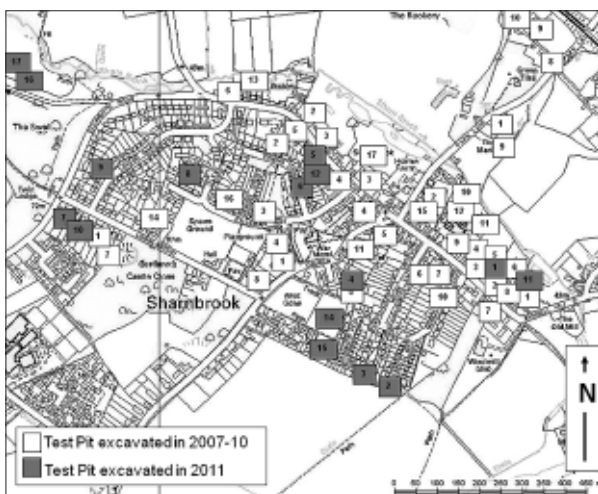


Figure 2 Sharnbrook, Bedfordshire, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits.

in Castle Copse, presumed to be a medieval ringwork or manorial structure.

In contrast, SHA/11/17 produced one of the largest volumes of pottery from any of the University of Cambridge CORS pits since the project began in 2005: 118 sherds of medieval shelly ware of 12th–13th century date, weighing 403g in total, were all found close together between c. 8–20cm below the present ground surface, near the present entrance to Colworth Science Park. The layer also contained locally-derived stone occurring naturally in the subsoil, extensively used for building, and was overlaid by a layer of topsoil (possibly imported) devoid of any stone, pottery or other finds. Excavation was halted at 20cm, in order to preserve any further evidence for possible future larger-scale excavation. Analysis indicated that most of the sherds

derived from a single jar, the commonest vessel type for this period. Although the sherds were found at a very shallow level, nothing was observed to indicate that it had been deposited there recently, and does appear to represent deposition in the medieval period. It seems most likely to indicate settlement in the vicinity, this perhaps taking the form of a farmstead, hamlet or other dispersed element of the settlement pattern. Excavation of a larger area would however be required to clarify the exact nature of this deposit.

Only one of the pits excavated in Sharnbrook in 2011 which yielded high medieval pottery produced any material dating to the later medieval period (mid 14th–mid 16th century AD) (SHA/11/10). It seems as if most of these sites, which came into use as settlement and attendant activity expanded in the high medieval period, declined in use in the later period. Overall, late medieval settlement contraction is not as marked at Sharnbrook as at many of the other University of Cambridge CORS settlements, but it does seem that some contraction may have taken place, impacting particularly on the recently-expanded peripheries.

Castor, Cambridgeshire (NGR TL 125985)

Eight test pits were excavated in Castor in 2011, bringing the total to twenty-three (Fig. 3). Pits were sited on the north side of the existing village, and just outside it in the grounds of Hill House, on higher ground to the south-east of the village. Much less Romano-British pottery was found than in previous years, suggesting that the northern limits of the Roman settlement may have been reached just a little north of Church Street (which runs east-west immediately north of the church).

Small amounts of Stamford ware from CTR/11/07 and CTR/11/08 (1 sherd weighing less than 5g from each pit) suggest that the settlement indicated by finds of

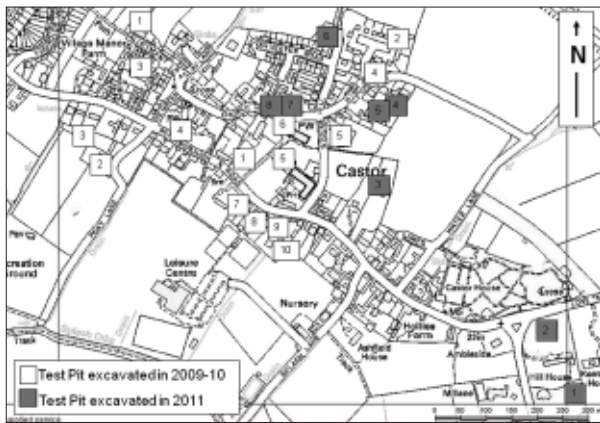


Figure 3 Castor, Cambridgeshire, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits.

larger amounts of pottery west of the church and along High Street in 2009 and 2010 may represent the remains of two discrete, smaller areas of settlement, rather than a continuous large village. Alternatively, this variation may be due to the inclusion of this part of the present village within the precinct of the nunnery in this area in the 7th–11th century (Lewis 2009, 44). Little material of high medieval date was found in the 2011 pits, and even less of late medieval date, reflecting the impression established from 2009 and 2010 excavations of marked decline in the later medieval period. In possible contrast, two moderately sized (5g) sherds of Bourne ‘D’ Ware (dating to 1450–1637) from SHA/11/01, south of Hill House, from a pit which produced no other material of Anglo-Saxon or medieval date, may indicate that some sort of activity in this area commenced here in the late medieval period.

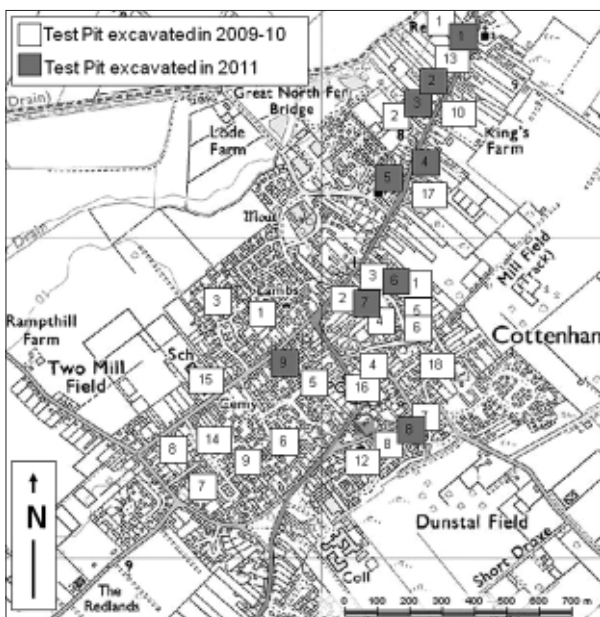


Figure 4 Cottenham, Cambridgeshire, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits.

Cottenham, Cambridgeshire (NGR TL 455675)

Nine more test pits were excavated in Cottenham in 2010 bringing the total to thirty-four (Fig. 4). The 2011 test pits were sited throughout the present village, sited to fill gaps between previous excavation sites.

COT/11/06, on Rooks Street in the centre of the present village, revealed part of a mortar floor and associated features of Romano-British date. Roman and Victorian pottery were both recovered, suggesting a lot of disturbance, but it seems likely that part of a robbed-out stone wall was associated with remnants of a mortar floor and a small post hole, although no finds were found in the latter. These all appear to be part of a Roman building, constructed on the site of earlier Iron Age activity. Test pits along Rooks Street and adjacent Margett Street have consistently produced evidence for occupation throughout the later prehistoric, Roman, Anglo-Saxon and medieval periods, and so it is particularly interesting to find evidence for *in situ* features which may relate to one of these early undocumented periods of Cottenham’s past development.

Little new material of 9th–11th century AD date was found in 2011, and while several pits produced pottery of high medieval date, only one (COT/11/08) produced any dating to the late medieval period. These findings reinforce the impression from earlier test pit excavations that Cottenham experienced severe contraction at the end of the high medieval period, when the northern end of the village (near the present site of the church) may even have been abandoned, while settlement in the centre was much reduced in size and intensity. However, all parts of the existing settlement seem to have experienced considerable post-medieval regeneration.

Great Shelford, Cambridgeshire (NGR TL 458518)

Five more test pits were excavated in Great Shelford in 2010 (Fig. 5) by university students, bringing the total to forty-one. Only one (GTS/11/01, on High Green) produced material of medieval date in quantities

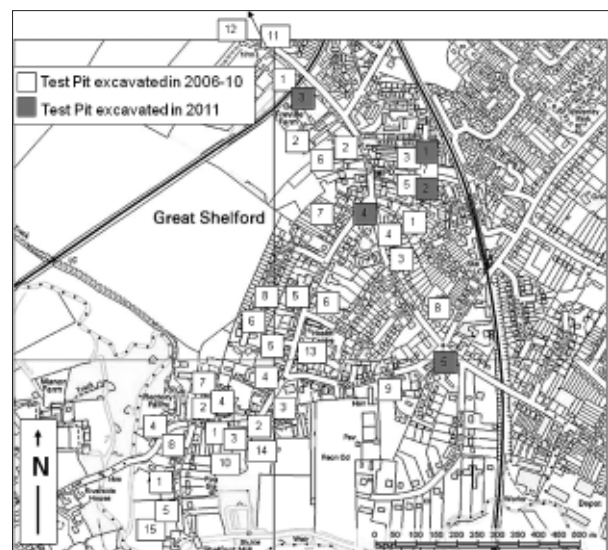


Figure 5 Great Shelford, Cambridgeshire, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits.

sufficient to indicate settlement in the vicinity, and as in previous years, nothing of medieval date was found here post-dating c. 1350 AD. Unusually, GTS/11/03, north of De Freville Farm near the present railway line, produced some of the very few finds of late medieval pottery recovered from any of the ACA CORS test pits in Great Shelford. The four sherds of late medieval transitional ware actually exceeded the number of sherds from the high medieval period from this pit, and this provides a striking contrast with the evidence of contraction and abandonment found in most of the other pits excavated in the village to date.

Isleham, Cambridgeshire (NGR TL 640737)

Isleham is sited on the edge of the Cambridgeshire fens about twenty miles north-east of Cambridge and ten miles south-east of Ely. It is today a small nucleated village, of mostly recent housing, laid out along a series of streets arranged at right-angles to each other to give a gridded appearance to this small settlement. A more dispersed earlier layout is hinted at by a small cluster of settlement on the east of the present village, called East End. Another now-lost dispersed element of the settlement pattern can be identified from historical records which record the settlement of Little Isleham, including a small chapel (Wareham and Wright, 2002, 420–427).

In Isleham itself, Newnham Street runs parallel with West Street on the west side of the present village and its name, first documented in 1360, suggests it may represent a new extension to the settlement at this time. The area it occupies was named Little London by 1700, possibly as in ironic comment on its small size and isolation. Isleham remained an isolated community throughout the pre-modern era, but had good water-borne communications. Sue Oosthuizen (1995) has identified it as an inland fenland port whose planned layout was determined by the position of a fen-edge quay area with three hythes used for loading and unloading vessels bringing goods to and from the settlement, on the north (fenland) side of the present village. The layout of the village streets are thus determined by the need to provide access to the quays, requiring a main east-west orientated street running parallel to the main waterway and a series of streets running at right angles north from this street to provide access to the quays.

It has been suggested that an Anglo-Saxon settlement at Isleham lay beyond the western limits of the present village, sited west of Hall Farm near the site of a Roman villa (Oosthuizen 1995 and *op. cit.*). No archaeological evidence has yet been provided to test this hypothesis. The area between Hall Farm and the parish church was mostly occupied by a priory founded in the late 11th century, of which the disused church still stands adjacent to associated earthwork remains including fishponds. It has been suggested that settlement at Isleham shifted east in the medieval period, to occupy the area around the present parish church. The presence of a second late Anglo-Saxon settlement is thought to have lain around the triangular area north of ISL/11/08, thought to be the site of one of the medieval quays (*ibid.*). The area in the centre of the present village, in front of the priory church, may have been a green, traces of which survive on an estate map of c.1800.

Thirteen test pits were excavated in Isleham in 2011 (Fig. 6), by pupils from the nearby secondary school in Mildenhall as part of a scheme piloting the feasibility of GCSE students successfully making a historic medieval settlement the focus of study for part of their History GCSE. Nine of the pits excavated in 2011 were sited in the centre of the present village, with the other four in a field about a mile to the south-west, on a location identified by an amateur local historian as the site of Little Isleham (pers. comm. Rev C Goodwins, 2009, 2011). The University of Cambridge CORS project generally focuses on excavating within presently inhabited settlements, not deserted ones, but as a programme which works both in and with living communities, it is crucial to involve community members in jointly making decisions about test pit site selection, and pits ISL/11/10–ISL/11/13 were accordingly sited in response to high levels of local commitment to excavating on the putative Little Isleham site.

The earliest excavated finds from Isleham in 2011 came from ISL/11/01 (in Little London), which produced four sherds each of pottery of Iron Age and Romano-British date, providing evidence that settlement of this date extended into this area. No Anglo-Saxon pottery was found, however, and only three sherds of medieval date, of which two dated to post-1400 AD, so the extent to which settlement continued after the Roman period is unclear.

Test pits ISL/11/06 and ISL/11/07, sited nearest to the second hythe identified by Oosthuizen, both produced pottery of late Anglo-Saxon (in ISL/11/06) and high medieval (in both pits) date, giving some support to the suggestion of a hythe in this area, although the numbers of sherds in both instances were fewer than would normally be considered likely to indicate intensive activity in the vicinity.

The test pits in the field south-west of the village (ISL/11/10–13) all produced pottery of high medieval date, providing strong support for the suggestion that this was the site of Little Isleham. None of the pottery recovered from the pits pre-dated c. 1100 AD, although four of the twenty-nine sherds collected from the surface

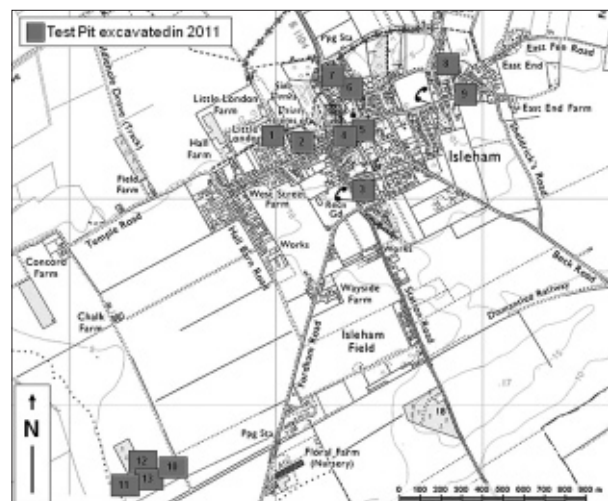


Figure 6 Isleham, Cambridgeshire, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits.

during a pre-excavation reconnaissance dated to the Roman period. None of the pottery from the test pits post-dated 1350 AD, when the area appears to have been abandoned. Settlement contraction is also hinted at in the test pits in the present village, although with only a small number excavated so far, this is difficult to assess: four pits produced a total of twelve sherds of high medieval date, while only two pits produced pottery of post-14th century medieval date, each yielding just a single sherd. Notably, ISL/11/06 (north of the church) produced a continuous sequence of pottery from the late Anglo-Saxon period onwards (albeit in very small amounts). Excavation of ISL/11/08 (nearest the other putative hythe), was unfortunately terminated early when an early modern concrete floor surface was encountered, so assessment of the buried archaeology in this area has not yet been possible.

Manuden, Essex (NGR TL 495265)

Manuden is a small nucleated village about four miles north of Bishop's Stortford in Essex, lying at about 70m OD on the west side of the valley of the upper reaches of the River Stort. The existing settlement is arranged either side of lanes running approximately north-west to south-east along the valley bottom, with some clustering of settlement at the point where these roads meet others crossing the valley. Around 500m north-west of the church an additional area of settlement is of mostly modern origin. At the centre of the present village, near the church, the road system diverges markedly from its linear valley-side route, kinking towards the river, possibly to access a ford or bridge or possibly to respect the site of the church and/or associated earlier complex. Although small, Manuden is the largest focus of settlement in the parish, which extends west from the river valley and includes a number of dispersed elements, including a number with 'end' place-names (Little Croft, Mallows Green, Upend, Maggots End), most of which today survive as single farms with occasional tiny hamlets of three or four cottages. The area has a number of woods, and several 'ley' place names attest to the area having been even more wooded in the past.

Seven test pits were excavated in Manuden in 2011, all within c. 300m of the church (Fig. 7), four to the north in gardens along The Street, the others to the south. No material pre-dating the high medieval was found in any of the pits, with the earliest dateable finds being Essex Grey Ware of 12th–14th century date. Just three sherds were recovered, all from pits MAN/11/05 and MAN/11/06. A single very small sherd (3g) of slightly later Mill Green Ware (c. 1250–1350 AD) was recovered north of the church from MAN/11/02. Although the volume of finds is very small, overall it is enough to suggest that there was indeed a settlement near the church in the high medieval period. Pottery of later medieval date was found in similar quantities, including a 12g sherd from a possibly undisturbed deposit 80cm below the surface of MAN/11/04 (time constraints unfortunately prevented this site from being excavated any further). There thus appears to be no evidence for a late medieval decline in activity, although the small number of pits excavated is not at present sufficient to give statistical validity to any such observations.

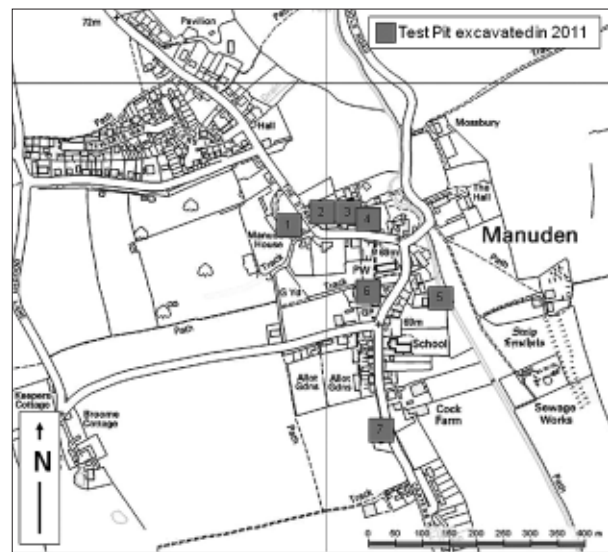


Figure 7 Manuden, Essex, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits.

In contrast to the paucity of medieval material, nearly all the excavated pits produced pottery of 17th and 18th century date, including a number of non-local wares imported from Staffordshire and Germany. The finds from pits MAN/11/01–MAN/11/04, all sited along The Street, strongly suggest that this area became prominent and well-to-do at this time, an inference which is reflected also in the above-ground evidence, as several timber-framed jettied buildings of probable 17th/18th century date survive along this street.

Mount Bures, Essex (NGR TL 905325)

Mount Bures is a very small village about seven miles south of Sudbury and nine miles north-west of Colchester. The settlement lies at about 45m OD on a spur of land overlooking the Cambridge Brook, which flows into the River Stour about a mile north of the village. The Stour here follows the county boundary between Essex and Suffolk, and Mount Bures thus lies close to this boundary, although not directly overlooking it. Straddling the river is a larger settlement which has formed from the coalescence of Bures Hamlet (on the Essex side) and Bures St Mary (in Suffolk), which lies about two miles north of Mount Bures. Although Mount Bures is distinguished from the riverside settlement by being on higher ground, the settlement gains the 'mount' element of its name from the large artificial conical earthen mound at its centre, which is sited immediately north of the parish church. This mound may be of prehistoric origin but adapted in the medieval period to function as a manorial castle motte (Lewis and Ranson 2012). Recent excavation (ibid.) revealed no evidence for habitative structures on its summit, and it seems most likely to have functioned as a combined status symbol and lookout post. The village today lies at the intersection between roads running along and across the spur and contains around twenty-five houses, most of which are of 20th century construction. The parish is thinly settled with a markedly dispersed scatter of farms, and the area has a generally woodland character with small irregular fields.

Eight test pits were excavated in Mount Bures in 2011 (Fig. 8), as part of a community excavation funded by the heritage Lottery Fund with the aim of providing information about the archaeology of the settlement to complement that derived from simultaneous excavations on and around the castle mound. Four of the pits were sited close to the church and mound, with the other four located in gardens in the village. The earliest pottery was found in the pit closest to the church, MBU/11/08 (excavated close to the graveyard wall south of the church), which produced a 10g sherd of Ipswich Thetford-type Ware (mid 9th–late 11th century). This could date to before or after the Norman Conquest, but as it was associated with nearly forty sherds of Early Medieval Sandy coarsewares (12th–14th century), it seems probable that it belongs to the early post-conquest period, although the possibility that it represents pre-Conquest activity cannot be ruled out. Part of a cut feature, probably a large post hole but possibly one end of a beam slot, was revealed in one corner of MBU/11/08 and confirmed the presence of a medieval structure in the immediate vicinity of the church. The only other site to produce material possibly of this early a date was MBU/11/04, sited in the garden of Herd’s Pasture, a late- or early post-medieval timber-framed house outside the present village, some 500m east of the church, which yielded a single small sherd of Thetford Ware.

Away from the church/motte complex, MBU/11/04 and MBU/11/06 (sited near the present railway crossing) produced pottery of high medieval date in sufficient quantities to confidently infer settlement in the immediate vicinity. These sites are some distance from the church/motte and from each other. Although it is impossible to make many firm inferences based on such a small number of excavated sites, there does seem to be evidence that a dispersed pattern of settlement extended beyond the present settlement core in the high medieval period. None of the pits around the church/motte produced any pottery of later medieval date, although small quantities (three sherds) were recovered from MBU/11/04 and MBU/11/06.

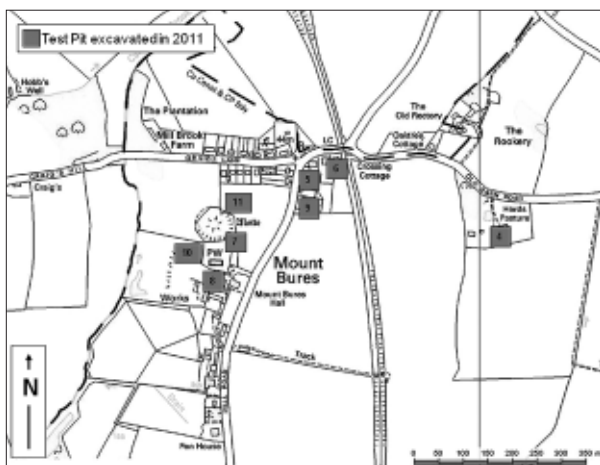


Figure 8 Mount Bures, Essex, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits.

Writtle, Essex (NGR TL 675065)

Thirteen test pits were excavated in Writtle in 2011 (Fig. 9), bringing the total to twenty-seven. Excavation in 2011 targeted sites throughout the present settlement, with two pits sited to investigate Skeggs Farm, just outside Writtle east of the River Wid. Test pit WRI/11/13 produced new evidence for activity of Roman date on the southern fringes of the present settlement, with the village now looking as if there may have been more than one focus of activity here at this time. A single sherd of Thetford Ware from WRI/11/03 doubled the number of finds of this date from a settlement which has to date produced remarkably little material of 9th–11th century date. This provides tentative evidence to suggest that the Bridge Street area, where no pits have previously been excavated, might repay closer targeting in order to see if more material of this date might be found here. Skeggs Farm produced little material of any antiquity, although a couple of sherds of Essex Grey Ware (12th–14th century) points to the possibility of contemporary settlement in the vicinity, although nothing of later medieval date.

Ashwell, Hertfordshire (NGR TL 265395)

Ashwell is today a large nucleated village located about twelve miles north of Stevenage in Hertfordshire. It lies on chalk at 50–60m OD, adjacent to the site of a spring which is the source of the River Rhee. The settlement today has a very regular plan, with the High Street running south-west to north-east flanked by parallel streets and others perpendicular to these to give a distinctly gridded appearance. The parish church is dedicated to St Mary and lies within the north side of the present settlement, a little isolated from the commercial centre of the present settlement. The church is renowned for its medieval graffiti, including several on the wall of the tower which refer to the devastation wreaked by the plagues and adverse meteorological events of the 14th century. Ashwell Bury and a moat near Farrows Farm lie on the edges of the present village. Beyond the village, the hillfort of Arbury Banks lies a mile to the south-west,

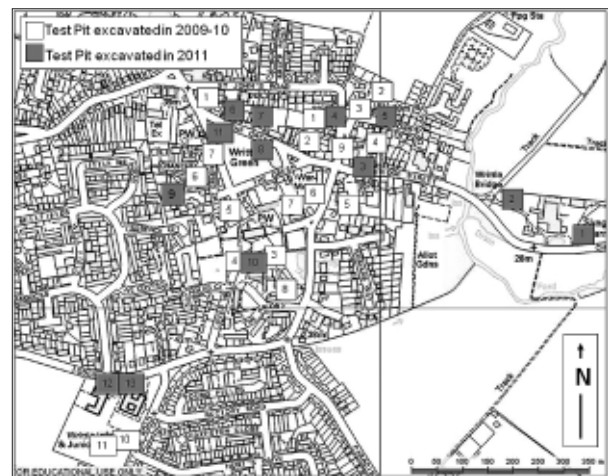


Figure 9 Writtle, Essex, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits.

while several moats and the presence of Ashwell End west of the village hint at a medieval settlement pattern that may not have been exclusively nucleated.

Thirty-three test pits were excavated in Ashwell over just one day in 2011 (Fig. 10), a remarkable achievement by mostly local residents who were participating as part of a programme of community excavations supervised by ACA. These were part of the 'On Landguard Point' project, funded by the Arts Council as part of the 'Artists Taking the Lead' element of the Cultural Olympiad accompanying the London 2012 Olympic Games.

Rather unexpectedly, the 2011 excavations at Ashwell produced only small amounts of pottery of Roman from this site which was thought likely to produce more. Just four pits (ASH/11/21; 24; 27 and 30) produced a total of six sherds, none of which came from pits in the centre of the present village. Even more unexpected was a dearth of finds of 9th–11th AD century date, as Domesday Book records three entries for Ashwell, the largest of which included fourteen burgesses. The presence of burgesses would indicate a settlement of some size and importance which would normally be defined as a town. The holding was assessed at 6 hides and its valuation at £22 during the reign of Edward the Confessor (before the Norman Conquest), and only slightly lower at £20 in 1086, suggests it was then a thriving, bustling settlement. However, in the excavations, the only find of Anglo-Saxon date was a single sherd of hand-made pottery of mid 5th to late 7th century AD date. Not a single sherd dating to the 9th–11th centuries AD was found in any of the excavated pits. Further excavation is clearly needed at Ashwell to establish whether the Anglo-Saxon settlement was in fact present underneath the existing village, or if it is indeed simply not present in this area.

More certainty was encountered in the high medieval period, as seventeen of the pits produced pottery of this date. These indicated that occupation was widespread throughout the area of the present settlement. The absence of pottery of this date from several pits nearer the church may be explained by the depth of later deposits encountered, which may have prevented earlier levels being reached. It is possible, therefore, that the apparent absence of late Anglo-Saxon material may also be explained in this way: the earlier deposits were simply not reached during the excavations.

There is evidence for a considerable degree of contraction of activity in the later medieval period, as many fewer pits (just ten) produced ceramic material

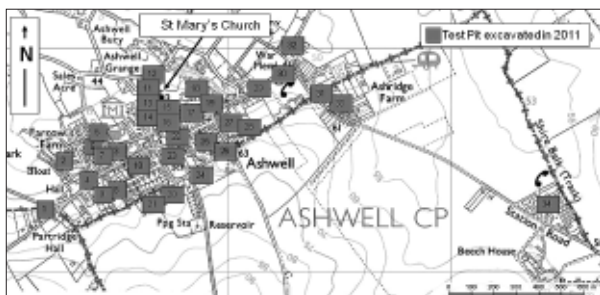


Figure 10 Ashwell, Hertfordshire, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits.

of this date, and these mostly produced only small numbers/weights of sherds. Overall, the percentage of pits producing 2 or more sherds drops from nearly 40% to just over 10%. This seems to bear out the evidence from the church graffiti, which refers to the severity of the impact of the plagues of the 14th century on the community. The south and west fringes of the settlement seem to be particularly affected by this contraction.

Pirton, Hertfordshire (NGR TL 145315)

Twenty-one pits were excavated at Pirton in 2011 (Fig. 11), most (as in previous years) by local residents, especially motivated in 2011 by a desire to get the total number of pits excavated into three Figures. The enthusiastic commitment that has been given to this project meant that no-one was surprised, although everyone was impressed, when 100th pit was duly excavated in summer 2011. However, not being a group of people inclined to rest for long on their laurels, work continued, and by the end of the year, the total number of pits excavated in the village had reached a remarkable 104.

The 2011 excavations filled in a number of gaps, including one area immediately west of the Toot Hill medieval motte, where little excavation had previously been carried out. This clearly confirmed previous observations that this part of the settlement came into existence at or shortly after the time when the castle was built. Interestingly, in a settlement which has evidence of severe later medieval contraction, this area seems to be less affected than much of the rest of the village.

Acle, Norfolk (NGR TG 405105)

Six test pits were excavated in Acle in 2011 (Fig. 12), bringing the total to twenty-six. The most remarkable site was ACL/11/04, which produced Thetford ware from five of the ten excavated 10cm spits, along with sandy wares dating to 1100–1400 AD. Prior to this, the only find of material of 11th century date had been single sherd found in ACL/10/06. Interestingly, the 2011 findspot is in the same part of the settlement as

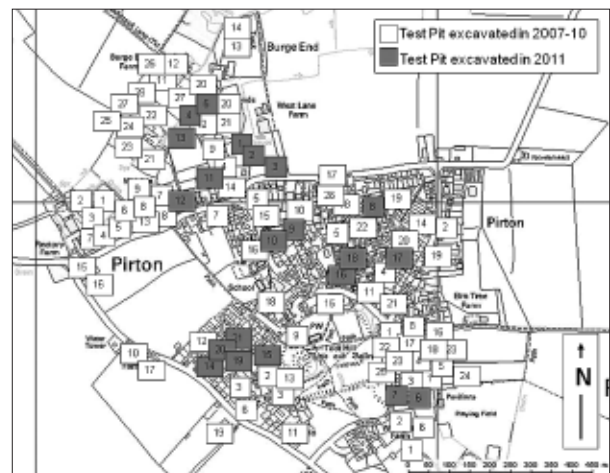


Figure 11 Pirton, Hertfordshire, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits.

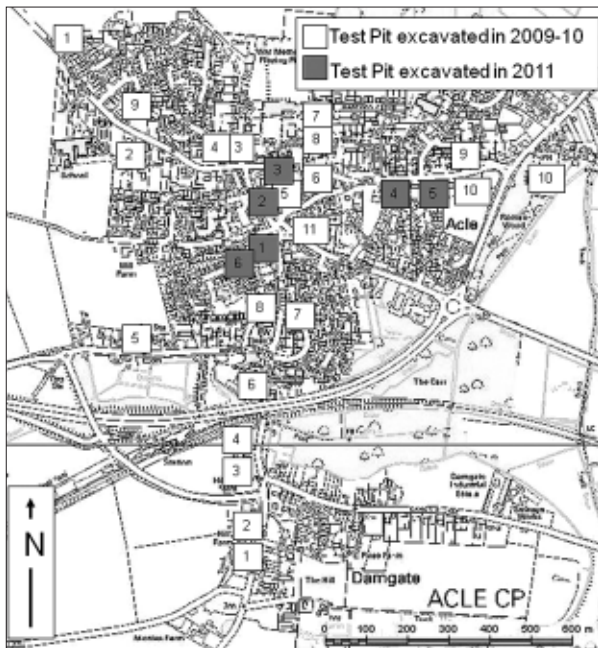


Figure 12 Acle, Norfolk, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits.

ACL/10/06, in the north of the present settlement. This area is accessed by Bridewell Street and the apparently rather aptly-named Old Road: it seems likely on present evidence that this is indeed the earliest part of Acle. This settlement expanded considerably in the high medieval period, when the area alongside north-south-orientated The Street appears to have come into existence, as indicated by ceramic finds of this date from test pits ACL/11/02, ACL/11/03 and ACL/11/06. In the later medieval period, while the central part of the present settlement seems to have fared well, areas either side of The Street and south of the western end of Old Street (the easternmost part of the present settlement) seem to have been severely impacted, with the excavated evidence possibly suggesting complete disuse of this part of the settlement in the later 14th–later 16th centuries.

Binham, Norfolk (NGR TF 981396)

Four test pits were excavated in Binham in 2011 (Fig. 13) by local residents during a weekend of community excavation inspired by previous excavations by HEFA pupils in the village. This brought the total number of pits excavated in Binham to thirty-three. Although the number of pits excavated was small, they included two (BIN/11/01 and BIN/11/02) which produced large volumes of finds, notably including several sherds of pottery of early and middle Anglo-Saxon date. This clearly indicates a focus of activity dating to the mid 6th–mid 9th century between the Warham Road and the upper reaches of the River Stiffkey, c. 250m north-west of the priory church. This is also c. 250m from find-spots of pottery and structures of middle Anglo-Saxon date south-west of the church in previous test pit excavations: it is unclear at present whether the 2011 finds indicate that there was very large settlement here (c. 500m

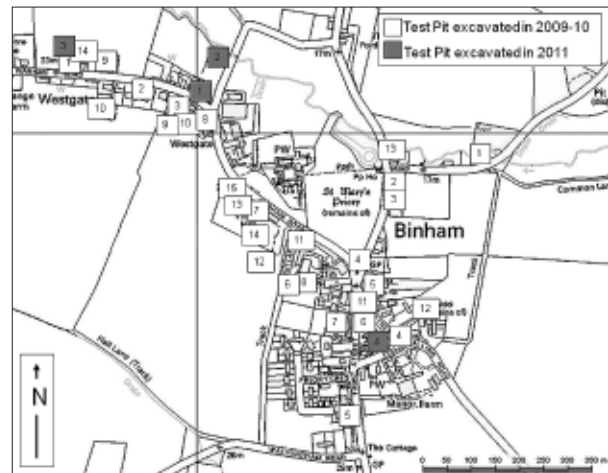


Figure 13 Binham, Norfolk, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits.

long), or two separate foci of activity. Either way, the finds clearly underline the importance of this area in the middle Anglo-Saxon period.

Carleton Rode, Norfolk (NGR TM 115925)

Seven test pits were excavated in Carleton Rode (Fig. 14) in 2011, bringing the total to fifty-seven. As in recent years in this area of dispersed settlement, the 2011 pits extended the HEFA excavations far out into the landscape, with new areas under investigation for the first time including three sites in the west of the parish along or near Uppgate Street, one at Grove Farm in the north of the parish and two in the Hargate area in the south of the parish.

Echoing the pattern in previous years, no pottery of Roman date was found in any of the 2011 pits, although a large fragment of puddingstone beehive quern was found in a pit dug in a field at CRO/11/06 which may be or prehistoric or Roman date. A small fragment (2g) of prehistoric pottery of Bronze Age date was found 40cm

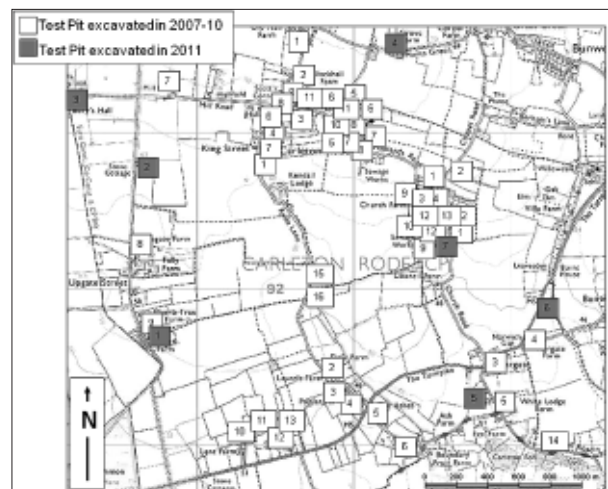


Figure 14 Carleton Rode, Norfolk, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits.

below the surface at Bury's Hall. Pits CRO/11/01 (South Farm Upgate Street) and CRO/11/04 (Grove Farm) both produced sherds of both high and late medieval date which, although relatively low in number, may possibly be indicative of settlement in the vicinity. Interestingly, in both cases similar numbers of sherds were found for the late medieval period as for the 11th–14th century, possibly suggesting that some of the outlying areas were less characterised by the decline in activity that the most intensively-occupied area of Flaxlands.

Garboldisham, Norfolk (NGR TM 005815)

Garboldisham is today a small nucleated village about nine miles east of Thetford, straddling the present A1066 main road from Thetford to Diss. Garboldisham contains two churches: in the north of the village, the former church of All Saints, disused since the 18th century, is ruinous with only part of the tower still upstanding, while the existing parish church of St John the Baptist lies 250m to the south. Settlement at Garboldisham is today mostly arranged along three streets: Back Street, which runs north–south to the west of the remains of All Saints church; Church Road, which joins the southern end of Back Street and runs south-east to the A1066; and Hopton Road, which continues in a southerly direction south of the A1066. In addition, Water Lane runs east from a point midway along Back Lane to join Manor Road, forming the basis for a gridded arrangement of lanes, most of which have no evidence for settlement alongside. Settlement in the surrounding area is thinly spread and scattered in a predominantly dispersed pattern, with a large area of common land surviving immediately south of Garboldisham village. To the north of the present village core, settlement continues sporadically along Manor Road towards the next parish of Harling, with Garboldisham Manor identifiable as a separate hamlet/manorial site. Despite the irregular form of the settlements, there is a rectilinear regularity to the arrangement of fields, lanes and footpaths which hints at a regularly planned landscape.

Twelve test pits were dug in Garboldisham in 2011 (Fig. 15), half of them north of the main road and the other half to its south. GAR/11/05, immediately east of the existing church revealed a compacted surface composed mostly of broken brick, which was interpreted as the remains of a yard or green or a route-way past the church. Overall, the distribution of pottery from the excavated pits showed some distinctive and interesting patterns. Pottery pre-dating the mid 11th century AD was found exclusively in the area north of the present main road. This included one small sherd of Bronze Age pottery from GAR/11/03 (c. 150m north of All Saints Church), from a layer which also included a sherd of Thetford Ware but no later material. Three small sherds of Roman pottery were recovered, two from GAR/11/04 and one from GAR/11/11, both pits located in the area between All Saints church and the A1066. The significance of such a small amount of Roman pottery is difficult to assess without further excavation, but it is enough to suggest that the area was in some sort of use in the Roman period, although at present this certainly does not seem likely to have been characterised by a settlement of any size.



Figure 15 Garboldisham, Norfolk, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits.

Test pit GAR/11/03 produced the only evidence for early/middle Anglo-Saxon activity in the area, a single small (2g) sherd dating to 450–700 AD. Three pits (GAR/11/01, GAR/11/02 and GAR/11/04) produced a total of thirteen sherds dating to 850–1100 AD, ranging in size from 2–29g. It thus seems highly likely that this area, near All Saints Church, was inhabited at this time, with this settlement possibly growing from a pre-existing middle Anglo-Saxon nucleus. The high medieval period sees activity extend southwards, with GAR/11/04 and GAR/11/09 both producing several sherds of pottery of 12th to mid 14th century date. However, the pattern does not seem to be simply one of expansion, as the northern part of the settlement sees a marked decrease in activity, with GAR/11/01, GAR/11/02, GAR/11/03 and GAR/11/12 producing only single small sherds of this date (although the latter did also produce a fragment of a double-sided bone comb of probable high medieval date). The later medieval period also presents a mixed picture, with a decline in the volume of pottery from the southernmost pits, but an increase in two of the northerly ones.

Gaywood, Norfolk (NGR TF 636210)

Twenty-two pits were excavated in Gaywood in 2011 (Fig. 16), a year which saw two Higher Education Field Academies (HEFA) run in the village and brought the total number of pits excavated up to twenty-eight. The first find of Romano-British pottery was made, recovered from GAY/11/11, the northern-most excavated pit. This only amounted to a single sherd, however, and no other material of this date has been recovered from any of the pits to date. Roman activity in the Gaywood area, if present at any significant level, does not therefore appear to focus on the area excavated to date.

As in 2011, a large number of sherds of middle Anglo-Saxon Ipswich Ware (AD 720–850) were found from pits in the north of the present settlement, between Gaywood River and the present Wootton Road, with GAY/11/01 in particular producing twenty sherds of this. This same area also produced significant quantities of later Anglo-Saxon

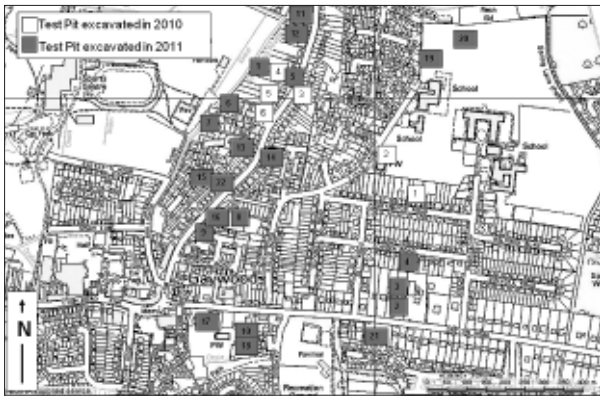


Figure 16 Gaywood, Norfolk, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits.

material, with the settlement possibly arranged as two separate nodes of activity or as interrupted row. Nearly all of the pits along Wootton Road produced pottery of high medieval date, suggesting that the settlement expanded and aggregated in this period into a nucleated double row village. Overall, seventeen of the excavated pits have produced pottery of high medieval date.

In striking contrast, however, is the impression of later medieval settlement contraction, noted in 2010, which was strongly reinforced by the excavations in 2011: overall, only four of the test pits have produced any ceramic material of this date, and none of them more than a single sherd.

Chediston, Suffolk (NGR TM 355775)

Eight pits were excavated in Chediston in 2011 (Fig. 17), bringing the total since 2006 to forty-seven. Areas investigated for the first time included Grove Farm, on the western fringes of Chediston Green, and Upper Farm, located c. 1km west of Chediston on the north side of the stream valley at c. 35m OD.

Grove Farm produced seven sherds of high medieval date (CHE/11/08), but only a single tiny sherd (1g) of later medieval material, making it one of the few sites in the parish where late medieval contraction is indicated. Overall, the pattern of pottery retrieval

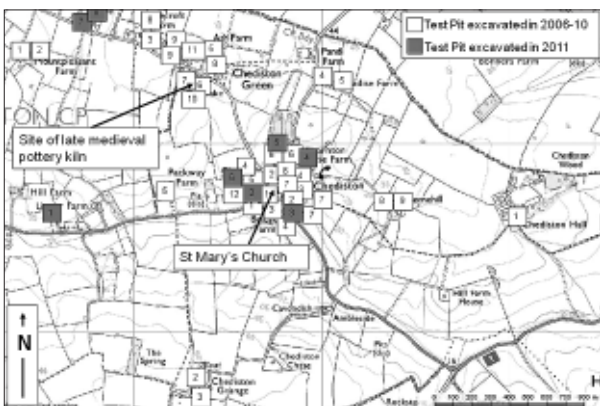


Figure 17 Chediston, Suffolk, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits.

suggests a pattern of dispersed settlement, possibly predominantly characterised by farmsteads, in the late Anglo-Saxon period, with a greater degree of clustering of settlement apparent in the high medieval period with activity focussing around the church and, most notably, at Chediston Green, which appears to come into existence at this time. Numerous outlying farms also yielded pottery for the first time in this period. In the later medieval period, there is no evidence for reduction in activity in most of the outlying farms, and the area around the church produces significantly more pottery than in the preceding period. However, there is a discernable decline in the volume of pottery recovered from Chediston Green at this time, even more extreme if the finds from the three pits excavated in the area immediately around the late medieval kiln site are disregarded (on the grounds that these may be indicative of production rather than settlement).

Clare, Suffolk (NGR TL 770456)

Clare is today a small town located midway between Ipswich and Cambridge, about 25km south of Bury St Edmunds. It lies on the north side of the valley of the River Stour, which marks the county boundary between Suffolk and Essex for much of its length. Clare today is centred on three streets, High Street, Church Street and Market Street, which together define a rectangular area which appears to be an in-filled former market place. The imposing parish church of St Peter and St Paul lies within the northern end of this area, while three other streets connect the market place with roads linking Clare with neighbouring villages and towns: Callis Street runs north from the church, Cavendish Road runs east from Church Street and Nethergate Street extends south-west from the southern end of the High Street. Callis Street and Nethergate Street are both noticeably wide and appear also to have been market areas.

On the south of the town, immediately adjacent to the river, is the site of Clare Castle, a major monument with a large class 1 motte, two baileys and ponds all preserved as earthworks and the remains of a medieval stone tower extant on top of the motte. The area enclosed by the baileys also included the lost church of St John the Baptist. The summit of the motte provides a commanding view of the town, overlooking the former market area and the church. The remains of an Augustinian priory lie c. 300m south-west of the castle, on the other side of the river. The multi-period prehistoric, Romano-British and medieval earthwork enclosure of Clare Camp (also known as Erbury) lies on the northern edge of Clare, just west of Callis Street as it continues north into Bridewell Street.

Thirty-three test pits were excavated in Clare in 2011 (Fig. 18), over a four-day period of community excavations carried out as part of the Managing a Masterpiece scheme funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Little prehistoric material was found, with just a single sherd of Bronze Age pottery recovered from CLA/11/27, north of Nethergate Street, although a flint scraper was also found in CLA/11/30, immediately north of Clare Camp. This pit also produced pottery of Romano-British date, which was also found in CLA/11/02, CLA/11/18 and CLA/11/34, all in the south

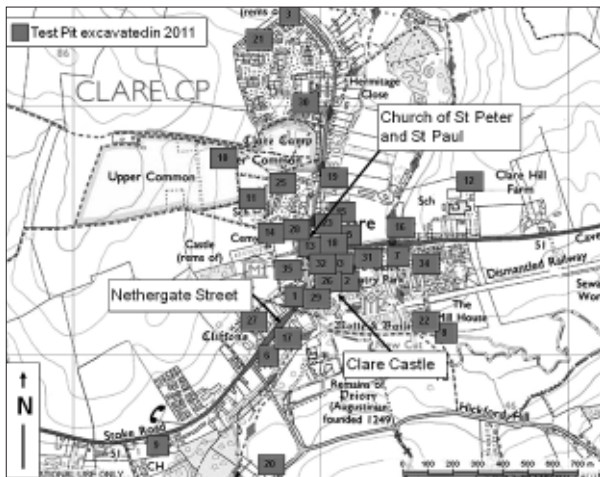


Figure 18 Clare, Suffolk, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits.

of the present settlement. However, only four sherds were found in total, suggesting that the excavated sites are unlikely to have seen significant settlement in the Roman period. There is then a break in the sequence of recovered pottery until the mid-8th century, with two pits (CLA/11/13 and CLA/11/14) in the centre of the town each producing a small sherd of Ipswich Ware. Although only a limited volume of material was found, in both cases the sherds were recovered from well-stratified levels with no recent disturbance, and the additional fact that these pits are both in the same part of the town (near the present church on the western side of the infilled market), does suggest that this evidence is meaningful and that there is likely to have been some sort of activity here at this time, perhaps a small pre-village nucleus.

A much larger number of pits produced sherds of Thetford Ware, indicating that the settlement was either founded as, or evolved into, a nucleated settlement sometime between the mid 9th and late 11th centuries AD. Domesday Book includes reference to a market, with 43 burgesses (unusually, it also records the church), suggesting that the settlement could be defined as a town by the mid-11th century. The distribution of Thetford Ware clearly shows that the settlement area defined by High Street, Church Street and Market Street was in existence at this time, and it seems probable that the settlement here was laid out with a large regularly-planned market place defined by these three streets at this time. This re-planning probably pre-dates the Norman Conquest, although it is possible that it may have occurred in the last decades of the 11th century, after the Clare holding was granted to Richard Fitz Gilbert following the Norman Conquest. It is clear that this settlement also extended beyond the church/market area, as on two pits on Nethergate Street (CLA/11/17 and CLA/11/27) produced Thetford ware, with the latter in particular yielding twenty-seven sherds weighing nearly 60g in total. It is interesting to note that the Scandinavian street name does seem to be reflected in the date of the pottery recovered.

The pottery evidence clearly indicates that area covered by the settlement expanded in the high medieval period. This seems to have taken the form of a northerly

planned extension to the town, with several test pits along Callis Street in particular producing pottery of this date, but little or no earlier material. Callis Street may have been deliberately laid out as a wide thoroughfare to facilitate market trading. This may also have been the period when the earlier market place around the parish church began to be infilled, as the volume of pottery from this area increases at this time. In addition, all three pits to the westerly end of Nethergate Street (another wide street characteristic of market sites) produced significant volumes of pottery dating to 1100–1300 AD. However, it is interesting to note that the eastern end of Nethergate Street is the only part of the town to show a decline in both the volume of pottery and in the number of pits producing pottery at this time. It is inferred that this may be linked to the construction of the castle, first documented in 1090, as this area lies immediately west of the castle site: it is possible that in the late 11th century the area was cleared of pre-existing settlement in order to create an open area for, and/or immediately around, the castle.

Considerably less pottery of late 14th–mid 16th century date was recovered from the test pits at Clare, suggesting significant contraction in settlement and economic activity after the 14th century. In particular, the northern (Callis Street) area seems to see considerable contraction, with this part of the town possibly abandoned. There is also tentative evidence for a southerly shift in the core area around the church/in-filled market place, with several of the pits near the church producing little or no late medieval pottery, while most of those to the south, in the area west of the castle, produced more than in the earlier period. The decline appears clearly to be reversed in the post-medieval period, with nearly all pits producing copious amounts of material of this date.

Coddenham, Suffolk (NGR TM 133545)

Ten more pits were excavated in Coddenham in 2011 bringing the total to date to fifty-nine. Most pits were sited to fill gaps in previous excavation sites, but three were located in Coddenham Green, c. 2km north of the existing nucleated village where test pitting has previously focussed (Fig. 19). Settlement in Coddenham Green today is very sparse, comprising an intermittent string of farms interspersed with occasional clusters of two or three cottages along a lane which climbs northwards, out of a small east-west orientated tributary valley of the River Gipping, to run along the top of a natural ridge. COD/11/07 was sited adjacent to a cottage c. 200m from the stream valley, with COD/1108 and COD/11/09 sited well out of the valley, on high, dry land at c. 62m OD. (This contrasts with the settlement around Coddenham Church which mostly lies adjacent to the stream valley at between 28–35m OD.)

Two of the pits excavated in 2011 produced Bronze Age pottery, effectively doubling the number of pits from Coddenham to have produced material of this date. COD/11/06 produced two sherds, both from levels with no evidence of modern disturbance, and can be interpreted alongside evidence from previous years to infer, with increased confidence, activity near the stream at this time. COD/11/07 also produced one sherd of

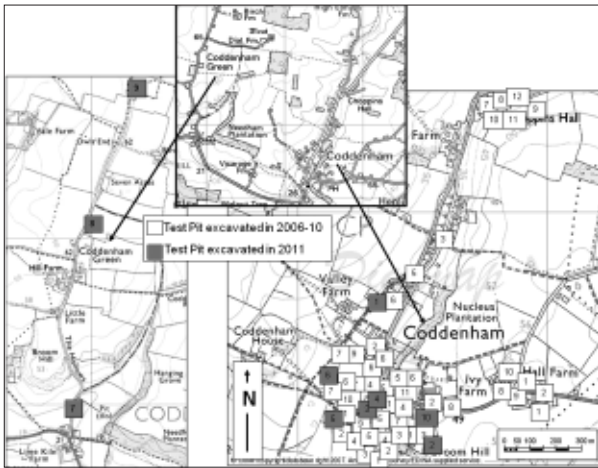


Figure 19 Coddendam, Suffolk, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits.

Bronze Age pottery: although this was very small (1g), it was found just above the natural, in a layer with no evidence of any more recent disturbance, and may indeed indicate settlement, or more probably some lower-intensity agricultural or funerary activity, in the area. This same pit also produced five sherds of pottery of Roman date, all from the same 10cm spit. Coddendam lies in an area of known Roman activity, with the small town of Combretovium about 3km south-west of the present village while the present A140 road just 0.5km west of Coddendam Green follows the line of a Roman road. It seems likely that COD/11/07 was located on or near the site of a farm or other small settlement of Roman date.

COD/11/07 produced no post-Roman ceramics, but COD/11/08, c. 1km to its north, produced a sherd of hand-made Anglo-Saxon pottery (7g) dating to sometime between 450 and 700 AD. Although six pits in Coddendam itself have produced similar material, in general it is rare in excavations generally compared to later material, and has only occasionally turned up in test pit excavations in the eastern region, so its appearance at Coddendam Green must be considered significant, and likely to indicate contemporary activity, probably settlement, in the vicinity. This was a remarkable find from an area which, before excavation, was considered most likely to have originated in either the 12th-13th centuries or the post-medieval period. Although the site produced no evidence of middle Anglo-Saxon date, it did yield a reasonably-sized sherd of Thetford Ware (5g) suggesting it was in use in the period between the mid 9th and late 11th century, probably as settlement as manuring is rarely carried out at this time. COD/11/08 also produced a total of fourteen sherds of 12th-14th century pottery, clear evidence for settlement in the vicinity at this time. A similar number of sherds of this date were found at COD/11/09, the other ridge-top pit dug at Coddendam Green in 2011, c. 1km north of COD/11/08. It seems that the Coddendam Green area, despite its superficially unattractive location, on high, dry land, was in fairly continuous use from the Roman period onwards, perhaps with arable fields sporadically punctuated by small settlements.

The origins of the present Coddendam Green road, along which all three pits excavated in 2011 were sited, is

unknown, but it is notable that it is very deeply hollowed at its southern end where it climbs out of the valley, and so it may well be of some antiquity, and a Roman or even prehistoric origin cannot be ruled out. Intermittent settlement along this road has been present since the late Anglo-Saxon period, when the village at Coddendam was growing and new sites appeared at Choppins, to its north. Settlement activity at Coddendam Green appears to have increased in the high medieval period, with a new settlement at COD/11/09. This would be contemporary with the first evidence for outlying settlement on more elevated land near Coddendam itself, at Ivy Farm and Hill Farm.

It seems likely that Coddendam Green declined in the late medieval period, as all three pits between them yielded just one small sherd (2g) of pottery dating to the late 14th-mid 16th century (from COD/11/08). This echoes the pattern noted at the other outlying farm sites (Choppins, Ivy Farm and Hill Farm), none of which produced any ceramic material of late 14th-late 16th century date. It seems that these outlying sites, even more than the village itself, struggled in the later medieval period. Unlike the village and the farms immediately on its edge, however, the settlements at Coddendam Green show no evidence for revival in the post-medieval period: between them, the three pits at Coddendam Green produced just two sherds of pottery dating to the early 17th-late 18th century, one weighing 3g, the other just 1g.

Ipswich (Maidenhall), Suffolk (NGR TM 161425)

Maidenhall lies on the south side of Ipswich, west of the River Orwell, now in an area divided by a railway line and dominated by wharfs and container parks. The Maidenhall area lay within the medieval parish of Stoke, but the medieval church of St Mary at Stoke, the only one this side of the river, lies more than 1km to the north of Maidenhall today. The location of a second medieval church, dedicated to St Augustine, is not known, but no medieval settlement is known in the Maidenhall area. With the exception of the former isolated Maiden Hall residence, the Maidenhall area is depicted as devoid of settlement on 19th century Ordnance Survey maps, when it is shown as an area of fields traversed by the Colchester stretch of the Great Eastern Railway line. The first known housing in the Maidenhall area dates to the post-World War Two era, when a council estate was built and the present street pattern established. A Baptist church was founded in June 1955 on Halifax Road. Although Maidenhall is close to the important Anglo-Saxon settlement of Ipswich, archaeological finds from the area are predominantly of Palaeolithic date, mostly derived from the Stoke bone bed, where excavations have produced faunal remains including mammoth, along with a small number of worked flints (inf. ex. Suffolk HER MSF4967). The only archaeological evidence of medieval date from the area is a man's bronze finger ring dating to the 13th-14th century AD, from a garden on Maidenhall Approach (inf. ex. Suffolk HER MSF5030).

Seven test pits were excavated in Maidenhall in 2011, all in an area of community allotment gardens (Fig. 20) as part of a programme of community excavations supervised by ACA and funded by the Arts Council



Figure 20 Ipswich (Maidenhall), Suffolk, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits.

as part of the ‘Artists Taking the Lead’ element of the Cultural Olympiad accompanying the London 2012 Olympic Games. The location was chosen by the arts company responsible for devising and delivering ‘On Landguard Point’, the ‘Artists Taking the Lead’ project for the eastern region of England.

The excavation of such a small number of pits in an area with little evidence for historic settlement might have been expected to produce little of interest, but this was not in fact the outcome, and a number of observations can be made of the retrieved data. Other than a single sherd of Iron Age pottery (found in IPS/11/06), the earliest ceramic material was Thetford Ware, dating to the mid-9th to late 11th century, four sherds of which were recovered from the lowest excavated spits of IPS/11/02. Thetford ware was made in Ipswich from c. 850 AD, so it might be expected to turn up in larger numbers than might be expected on sites further from its site of manufacture, but nonetheless the discovery of this number of sherds from an apparently undisturbed deposit does hint at the presence of settlement, or at least some fairly intensive activity, in the vicinity at this time.

Even more notable was the discovery of pottery of 12th–14th century date, which was found in all of the excavated Maidenhall test pits, with a significant number derived from layers with no evidence of recent disturbance. None of the pits produced very large amounts of pottery of this date, but IPS/11/03 and IPS/11/06 produced slightly more than others (seven and four sherds respectively), possibly hinting at an increase in intensity towards the west of the excavated area. Overall, it is difficult to dismiss this volume of pottery as likely to derive simply from medieval manuring, and so it is deemed likely to indicate some more intensive activity, possibly settlement, at this date in the vicinity. It is possible this relates to the area around an antecedent of the now destroyed Maiden Hall which lay less than 500m to the north-west of the excavated area. No evidence has to date been found to link this to the site of the lost medieval church of St Augustine.

As in the case with many of the sites where test pitting has been carried out in the eastern region, the Maidenhall pits display a sharp decline in the volume of post-14th century pottery recovered – sharper indeed, than most: just one sherd of this date was recovered from the allotment pits, from IPS/11/04, on the eastern side of the allotments. Whatever activity was causing pottery to be

discarded on this site in the 12th–14th centuries seems to cease, probably entirely, in the later period. Although the sherd count picks up a little in the late 16th–18th centuries, it remains low, with very little glazed redwares and just a few sherds of finewares suggesting the area is not in intensive use at this time. Only in the 19th century does the picture begin to change, with larger numbers of sherds recovered. These are doubtless a consequence of the rapid expansion of the area once the nearby railway depot was established.

Long Melford, Suffolk (NGR TL 865455)

Long Melford lives up to its name, as it is indeed a very long settlement – today extending as a linear row for nearly 2 miles from one end to the other, it is one of the longest villages in England. It is located c. 25 km west of Ipswich, mostly on the eastern bank of the River Stour, which marks the county boundary between Suffolk and Essex. The parish church, dedicated to the Holy Trinity, lies at the very northern end of the present settlement, in an area somewhat cut off from the rest of the village by open land around Melford Hall and a large triangular village green. The church is nearly 1km from the River Stour, and this part of the settlement does not sit within the valley, rather occupies a spur of higher land between two smaller valleys to its north. Settlement in this area is today predominantly arranged along Westgate Street (running in a westerly direction south of the church) and around the west side of the green. South of Melford Hall, the pre 20th century settlement is arranged as a double row either side of a north-south orientated street which is notably wide for most of its length, for around c. 750m south from the point at which it meets Bull Lane (which runs out of the village in an easterly direction south of Melford Hall).

Thirty-seven test pits were excavated at Long Melford in 2011 (Fig. 21) during a community excavation project

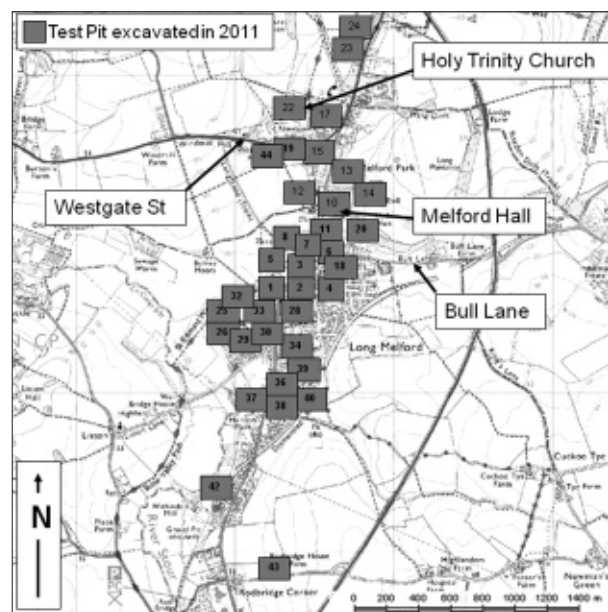


Figure 21 Long Melford, Suffolk, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits.

undertaken as part of the BBC TV documentary *'The Great British Story'* (broadcast date summer 2012), a follow up to *'Story of England'* broadcast in 2010 during which ACA supervised test pit excavations in Kibworth Harcourt (Lewis 2009, 51–3).

The vast majority of the pottery recovered from Long Melford in 2011 was of Roman-British date, providing clear evidence for a major settlement of urban status. Romano-British pottery was found throughout the present settlement, but was particularly concentrated in the area south of Melford Hall. No pottery of identifiably 2nd–4th century date was found north of Bull Lane. In the south of the present village, LME/11/36 revealed the metalled surface of a road dated by pottery to 1st–3rd century AD.

This large Romano-British settlement does not seem to have survived the end of the Roman period: not a single sherd dating to c. 400–850 AD was recovered from any of the pits excavated in Long Melford in 2011. This picture seems to change in the later Anglo-Saxon period as three pits (LME/11/01, LME/11/05 and LME/11/03) produced sherds of Thetford Ware. However, in only one case did this amount to more than one small, single sherd. It is nonetheless interesting to note that these three pits are all located in the same part of the landscape, just south of the midpoint of the present settlement, and it seems likely that they do represent some slightly more intensive activity in this area in the late Anglo-Saxon period, most likely to be settlement. No material of this date was recovered from any of the pits in the northern part of the village around the church and green.

The volume of pottery recovered increases significantly in the post-Conquest period, although it is by no means consistently high: pits LME/11/36, LME/11/37 and LME/11/39 produce volumes indicative of settlement in the southernmost part of the present village, with little evidence for intensive activity until LME/11/01, LME/11/05 and LME/11/08 clustered together c. 500m to the north produce copious quantities of 12th–14th century ceramics. North of this, two distinct foci are apparent, one south of the church (LME/11/19) and the other nearly 0.5km north of the church along the northern extent of the High Street (LME/11/23 and LME/11/24). Although the number of excavated pits is still small, given the vast extent of the village footprint, it is nonetheless worth noting that the evidence to date does not point incontestably to the presence of a large nucleated village in this area at this time, rather, perhaps to a succession of smaller settlements strung out along the river valley road.

The most notable pattern observable in the data from Long Melford, however, is that of the 15th and 16th centuries: the volume of pottery of this recovered is extremely high, from all parts of the present village. All but eight of the excavated pits produced material of this date, many more than in the 12th–14th century, and in nearly all of the pits, considerable quantities of pottery was recovered. This is in stark contrast to nearly all other University of Cambridge CORS in the eastern region where test pitting has been carried out, where the pattern is more commonly of a considerable drop in the volume of pottery recovered. In the later medieval period, Long Melford really does seem to have been as

long as it is today. It is well known that Long Melford was somewhere which derived considerable wealth from the cloth-making industry in the later medieval period, but to see this prosperity reflected so very strongly in the excavated data, which reveals a vibrantly thriving and expanding settlement, is striking – especially as this trajectory appears to be so very different to most other rural communities in the eastern region of England. Certainly, no similar late medieval surge is evident in Long Melford's nearest neighbour in the University of Cambridge test pitting project, the nearby small town of Clare.

Conclusion

As in previous years, University of Cambridge test pit excavations in 2011 focussed on consolidating work in settlements where test pitting has also taken place in previous years, but a number of opportunities arose to carry out work in new settlements not previously included in the project. Many of these were run as community excavations where participants were mostly local residents of all ages, rather than Higher Education Field Academies where most excavation is carried out by secondary school pupils. No matter who carried out the excavations, exactly the same methods were used, with the same instruction manuals and recording proformas given to every team.

Archive reports have been prepared for each test pit excavated in each settlement and are held by ACA at the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, University of Cambridge. Details of the HEFA 2011 test pit sites and the pottery reports for each of the sites investigated have been sent to county heritage curators and are available to view at <http://www.arch.cam.ac.uk/aca/excavationreports.html>.

By the end of 2011, the total number of pits excavated under the aegis of University of Cambridge since 2005 topped 1,000. As the number of excavated pits has gradually built up, both within individual settlements and across the region, the value and potential of the data for advancing knowledge and understanding of the history of the medieval period has increased correspondingly. Not only are the CORS excavations revealing new developmental histories for individual settlements, they are increasingly gaining in potential to illuminate much wider patterns in the history of the region and the development of the historic landscape. The results will have implications for a much wider area. Extended exploration of these issues is beyond the scope of the annual review of the excavated evidence presented in this paper, but will form part of ongoing research in the future.

Test pit excavation in CORS settlements in the eastern region will continue in 2012, probably at a reduced level as 2011 was the last year that Aimhigher funding the Higher Education Field Academy (HEFA) scheme for secondary pupils was available, as Aimhigher was scrapped by the coalition government, with effect from July 2011. From 2012–13, the HEFA programme will be funded from the University of Cambridge Widening Participation project fund. It is hoped that opportunities for community test pit excavation programmes will also continue to arise. The results of all test pit excavations

carried out in 2012 as part of the University of Cambridge CORS project will be reported in the next volume of *Medieval Settlement Research*.

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