



**“Digging the Demense”, Community Archaeology Test Pitting Project,  
At Waterfield Farm,  
King’s Clipstone, Nottinghamshire**

**Interim Report**

6/01/2014



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**King’s Clipstone SK603 646**

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Title:	<b>“Digging the Demense”, Community Archaeology Test Pitting Project, at Waterfield Farm, King’s Clipstone, Nottinghamshire, Interim Report.</b>
Author:	David Budge
Derivation:	-
Date of Origin:	30/12/2013
Version Number:	1.0
Date of Last Revision:	06/01/2014
Revisers:	APG,DJB
Status:	Final
Summary of Changes:	Editorial changes
Mercian Project Identifier:	GAU13003
Client:	Mr and Mrs Bradley
Checked / Approved for Release by:	Andy Gaunt, Director MAS, 06/01/2014

## **King John's Palace, Clipstone (SK603 646)**

Recent work at King John's Palace, Clipstone, identified a geophysical anomaly (Gaunt 2011) which was demonstrated by excavation to have been constructed in the 13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> century and which probably formed the western boundary of the palace complex at this time (Gaunt and Wright et al 2013). The boundary is depicted on a 17<sup>th</sup> century map with the land to the northeast marked as "Manor Garth" and that to the southwest as "Waterfield" (1630 map by William Senior (NAO, CS/1/S)).

As part of the Sherwood Forest Archaeology Project, local volunteers supervised by Mercian Archaeological Services CIC excavated six 1m square test pits to the west of the boundary ditch, within the northern part of Waterfield, over four days in August 2013. The purpose of the investigation was to determine if there was any difference in the nature and character of archaeological deposits to the southwest of the boundary ditch and those encountered in previous interventions to the northeast, in Manor Garth. Due to the light sandy soils and the approximate 10m decrease in elevation from west to east of the field, the test pits were additionally intended to assess the potential for survival of archaeological deposits at the top, middle and near the bottom of the slope.

Topographical survey of the field undertaken at the same time as the test pitting (to be reported on later) identified a previously unrecognised east – west terrace midway down the field. Two test pits were therefore located on the terrace, with two located upslope of it and two more downslope. Full details of the test pit locations will be included in the detailed report on the work when completed.

A similar basic stratigraphy was encountered in all but one of the test pits. A modern ploughsoil overlay an earlier ploughsoil that in turn overlay the natural sands and gravels. The modern ploughsoil contained a range of artefacts including fire cracked pebbles and pottery of Roman, medieval, post medieval and modern date. The buried soil was heavily leached and contained fire cracked pebbles, Roman and medieval pottery. For the most part the assemblages from it appeared to be 13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> century in date, though in two test pits single sherds of late 15<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> century date were also present.

Only one test pit revealed a stratigraphy where the modern ploughsoil directly overlay geological deposits with no buried soil present. Position on the hillside did not appear to have any effect on the survival of deposits and colluviation did not appear to have played a significant role in the preservation or otherwise of deposits.

A single cut feature was encountered in one test pit, a stake hole containing an unabraded sherd of possible Roman pottery.

Though it has not yet been subject to specialist analysis the medieval pottery appears to come from a similar range of sources to that previously seen on

the palace site (primarily industries in Lincolnshire, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire and eastern Derbyshire). However, in comparison with material from excavations within the palace complex, the condition of the sherds from Waterfield was noticeably different. In the main, the medieval pottery consisted of small and heavily abraded sherds. As a result it is suggested that the land to the southwest of the boundary ditch, indicated as Waterfield on the 17<sup>th</sup> century map, was probably always outside the palace complex and functioned as arable land throughout the medieval period.

The test pit located furthest to the east and towards the top of the field yielded significantly higher quantities of fire cracked pebbles in all contexts compared to the other test pits, suggesting proximity to an activity focus.

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#### Bibliography:

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1630 map by William Senior (NAO, CS/1/S).