



## East Midlands Community Archaeology News

### Digging at the Heart of Sherwood Forest

Archaeologists find the medieval boundary ditch of the royal palace at the heart of Sherwood Forest (see page 4)

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*Photograph: King John's Palace and (inset) the excavated medieval boundary ditch*



### 18<sup>th</sup> Century Kiln Excavation (see page 3)

Mercian and the Ticknall Archaeological Research Group excavate a regionally important kiln site in Leicestershire...



*Photograph: Community Archaeology at Heath End*

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- The Sherwood Forest Archaeology Project
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# Welcome to the East Midlands Community Archaeology Newsletter



Mercian Archaeological Services CIC would like to welcome you to the first edition of our newsletter.

In this edition we showcase some of our ongoing projects and work. The newsletter forms part of our community archaeology outreach through which we aim to disseminate our work to the widest possible audience. Our outreach also includes our websites, social media, academic papers, and archaeological reports which are submitted on completion to the relevant Local Authority Historic Environment Record.

We are a community archaeology company undertaking research in the East Midlands and we work with communities and groups to allow people access to their heritage.

As a Community Interest Company we seek to re-invest profits in project development and public outreach.

We really hope you enjoy our first newsletter. If you are interested in learning more please see our website: [www.mercian-as.co.uk](http://www.mercian-as.co.uk)

## Codnor Castle, Derbyshire Stone recording and surveying

Codnor Castle in Derbyshire was home to the de Gray family throughout the medieval period.

The de Grays were at the forefront of medieval society from the 13<sup>th</sup> century until the end of the Wars of the Roses, and were involved in all the major conflicts of the time including fighting at the Battle of Agincourt in 1415.

In 1272 Reginald de Gray was Constable of Nottingham Castle, and Keeper of Sherwood Forest when he was involved in the capture of Roger Godberg an outlaw who had been causing disorder and robbing people in Charnwood Forest, Duffield Frith and in Sherwood Forest.

Roger had been sheltered during this time by Richard Foliot at Jordan's Castle in Wellow.

Mercian have been working with the Codnor Castle Heritage Trust recently including undertaking a stone recording and surveying session of the castle and surrounding buildings.



[www.codnorcastle.co.uk](http://www.codnorcastle.co.uk)



*Photographs: (left) Codnor Castle ruins, and (right) recording masonry.*

## Out and About with Mercian - Open days, tours and events...

Mercian have been very busy at many events over the summer months meeting the community we serve, including:

- Radcliffe Carnival with the Radcliffe-on-Trent Local History Society,
- Codnor Castle Heritage Trust Open Day,
- Newark and Sherwood District Council Historic Heath Lands of Sherwood Forest Day... including providing heritage interpretation,
- The Rufford Abbey Charities Awareness Day,
- Vicar Water Fun Day for the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust alongside our friends the *Jolly Bodgers of Sherwood Forest* and the *Friends of Thynghowe*.

We also gave a guided tour of the Robin Hood Festival to members and staff of the Southwell Care Project as part of their heritage project for Adults with Learning Disabilities...



*Photographs: (top right) Andy and members of the Radcliffe-on-Trent History Society, and (bottom right) Sean at the Rufford Abbey Charities Awareness day.*

# 18<sup>th</sup> Century Kiln Excavation

Mercian archaeologists and the Ticknall Archaeological Research Group excavate a regionally important kiln site in Heath End, Leicestershire.



*Photograph: TARG members excavating at Heath End.*

Ticknall in South Derbyshire was home to an extensive and long lived ceramics industry, producing pots from at least the late medieval period until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and supplying customers throughout the East Midlands region. The Ticknall Archaeological Research Group (TARG) has been researching the industry since 2010 with the help of a Heritage Lottery Fund 'Your Heritage' grant.

TARG's research has shown that the Ticknall industry was not just constrained to the village centre, with production occurring at various scattered outliers within and around the parish.

One of these is Heath End, a tiny settlement occupying the point at which three parishes meet and spanning the county boundary between Derbyshire and Leicestershire. Ley Farm is on the Leicestershire side of the settlement.

Henry Tetley (1637 – 1684) is the first of the Tetley family who can with certainty be linked to Ley Farm. In addition to being one of the wealthier farmers in the area he was also a potter. When he died his estate included two wheels, 117 boards, a large quantity of lead, clay weathering on the common and £1 worth of unfired pots.

Clay rents and other sources indicate the Tetley family continued potting at Ley Farm throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century, while a 1735 map depicts a circular structure in the middle of the yard. An 1802 lease suggests the family had abandoned potting by this time.

A geophysical survey of the yard identified three areas of enhanced magnetic response, interpreted as kilns. Over six days in May (2013) volunteers from TARG, directed by Mercian Archaeological Services CIC, excavated part of the central anomaly which was considered most likely to represent the 1735 structure.

The excavations proved the anomaly represented a kiln. The kiln had been heavily truncated by ploughing, but enough remained to recover the plan, which was similar to a broadly contemporary kiln at Old Hall Street, Hanley. The Ticknall kiln was of brick and clay construction and coal fired. The internal diameter of the firing chamber was 6ft (1.83m). The spacing of the surviving flues suggested there were originally seven or eight.

Around the kiln were the remains of a metallised surface, a retaining wall (possibly for a coal storage area), a dump of kiln furniture and wasters and a single large posthole.

The main products of the kiln were mottled ware (particularly cylindrical mugs with reeding), which were fired in saggars, and large flared bowls and cylindrical jars in oxidised iron-rich earthenware with internal red slip and lead glaze. The fabric of some of the saggars included pieces of mottled ware used as grog.

After the kiln had been razed a land drain was cut across the site, the fill of which yielded a complete 18<sup>th</sup> century glass bottle.

Work is continuing on the assemblage. When complete, the full report will be available through our free online document store: <http://mercian-as.academie.edu/mercianarchaeologicalservicescic>



*Photographs: (Left) TARG members recording archaeological features, and (right) 18<sup>th</sup> century blackware jars and kiln furniture excavated at Heath End.*



# Digging at the Heart of Sherwood Forest

## Archaeologists find the medieval boundary ditch of the royal palace at the heart of Sherwood Forest (front cover story)

King John's Palace in Kings Clipstone was known as the King's Houses in the Medieval period and was an extensive royal palace with adjacent deer park, located at the heart of Sherwood Forest.

The palace was favoured by the crown and visited by all eight monarchs from Henry II to Richard II from the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century until the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The site was used as a royal retreat, for entertaining foreign royalty, and even for housing Parliament in 1290.

Recent archaeological research by Mercian and James Wright as well as landscape investigation by Andy Gaunt has helped to reveal the true scale of the palace site. It has shown that the King's Houses was a substantial Royal Palace which was the heart of Sherwood Forest in the medieval Period.

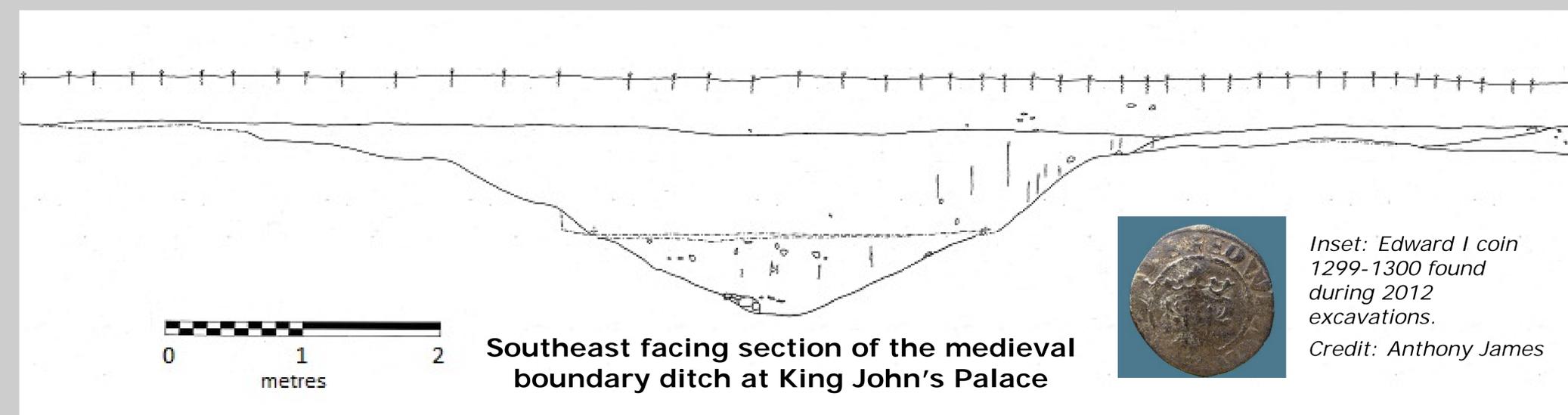
A geophysical survey in 2010 by Andy Gaunt detected a large anomaly that was interpreted through historic mapping as being the western boundary of the palace.

A subsequent excavation in the summer of 2012 led by James Wright (independent consultant) and Andy Gaunt, along with Sean Crossley and David Budge (the latter three now Mercian) investigated the anomaly and proved it was the medieval boundary ditch of the complex. The ditch contained 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century pottery sherds. Excavation also found the remains of an internal bank associated with the ditch. This was truncated and would originally have been surmounted by a palisade as recorded in the written records. The bank contained pottery sherds from the 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century which dated the construction of bank and ditch. The 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century was the period when the site was at its most popular and extensive, according to historic documents. The site is now recognised as covering over seven acres.

A subsequent community archaeology test-pitting project by Mercian in August 2013 has helped to confirm the western boundary of the site by excavating in the fields outside the palace. Here abraded medieval pottery sherds were discovered in a medieval plough soil. The area excavated was probably an area of royal demesne land set aside for the palace from the wider Open Fields to the west.



*Pictures: (above) the medieval ditch at King John's Palace, (below) Part of section drawing of the boundary ditch.*



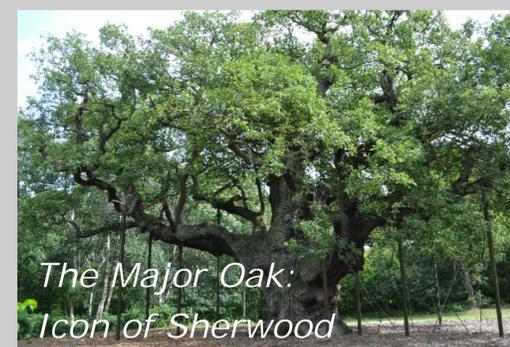
*Inset: Edward I coin 1299-1300 found during 2012 excavations. Credit: Anthony James*



## The Sherwood Forest Archaeology Project

### Promoting the heritage of Sherwood Forest

Mercian Archaeological Services CIC are proud to announce we are running *The Sherwood Forest Archaeology Project*, a project combining community archaeology, research and outreach work- that promotes the archaeology, history and heritage of the wider Sherwood Forest, its landscape and people.



The project aims to support new and ongoing archaeological investigations and research in Sherwood Forest, as well as allowing the widest possible public engagement and involvement in archaeology and heritage.

The project also provides an outlet for all of Mercian's archaeological work and research in the Sherwood Forest area.

Alongside this the project supports and promotes the work of individuals and groups (often voluntary) who undertake heritage work in Sherwood Forest. The project aims to raise the profile of this work to the widest possible audience, and promote the heritage of Sherwood Forest in general. For more information and to learn about the history of Sherwood Forest please see the project websites:

[www.sherwoodforesthistor.com](http://www.sherwoodforesthistor.com) & [www.facebook.com/Sherwoodforesthistor](https://www.facebook.com/Sherwoodforesthistor)

The project currently has over 3,200 followers on Facebook, over 500 followers on Twitter and the project website has had over 120,000 visitors from all over the world.

# The Kings Clipstone Village Project 2013

## Investigating settlement development in Sherwood Forest

Early in 2013 volunteers and villagers of Clipstone in Nottinghamshire braved the freezing conditions to undertake a community archaeology test-pitting project to investigate how the village developed in the medieval period.

Understanding the development of settlements and landscape in the region is one of Mercian's long term research aims. The village of Clipstone is a nucleated settlement at the confluence of the River Maun and Vicar Water. The project was designed to see if part of the village was a 13<sup>th</sup> century planned settlement.



*Photographs: (above) One of Mercian's volunteers digging a test pit. (Centre) Villagers and volunteers discussing their discoveries, and (left) dedicated volunteers brave the freezing weather on day one.*

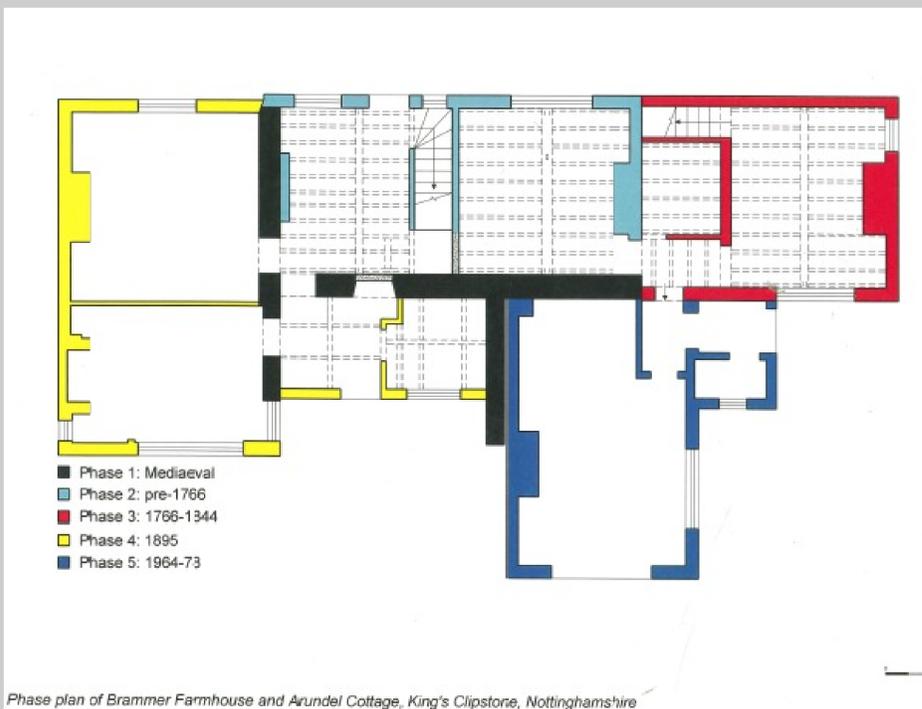


The project was a great success with excavations taking place at 15 locations throughout the village. Preliminary results show that much of the village was 'scalped' during the construction of the Duke of Portland's Water Meadows System in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

13<sup>th</sup> century pottery was found during the excavations, but more information is required to fully understand the settlement development. Mercian will be returning to Clipstone in the near future and will also be searching for 'Clippa's Tun' the original Viking settlement in phase two.

# Medieval Palace Gatehouse Discovered in Sherwood Forest

## Kings Clipstone standing building survey 2013



In March 2013 Mercian contracted James Wright-Standing Buildings and Archaeological expert as a private consultant to undertake a building survey of Brammer and Arundel Cottages on Main Street, Clipstone.

The cottages are situated on the south side of main street within what was part of the medieval Palace of the Kings Houses, now known as King John's Palace.

*Pictures: (Left) Phase plan of the building survey (medieval walls in black), (centre) James Wright at King John's Palace, (bottom right) Brammer and Arundel Cottages, Clipstone.*



James's survey recorded in situ medieval walls interpreted as the gatehouse to the medieval palace complex, and a hidden window which may indicate the presence of a guardhouse within the structure. The full report is available from the Nottinghamshire County Council Historic Environment Record, or alternatively at our free online document store:

[mercian-as.academia.edu/mercianarchaeologicalservices](http://mercian-as.academia.edu/mercianarchaeologicalservices)

James runs the highly popular and informative website *Archaeology and History of Kings Clipstone*: [www.facebook.com/ArchaeologyHistoryKingsClipstone](http://www.facebook.com/ArchaeologyHistoryKingsClipstone)



# Spotlight on Community Groups - Promoting the Work of Others

## This issue's featured group: the 'Friends of Thynghowe'



Mercian would like to congratulate the Friends of Thynghowe Group on the successful completion of their Heritage Lottery funded project in Thynghowe and Birklands. The group have been inspirational in their passion and enthusiasm, and have worked tirelessly to investigate and promote the heritage of Birklands and the wider landscape of Sherwood Forest.

Their work on Thynghowe has helped to recognise the importance of this ancient meeting site, and has raised the profile of the site to an international and academic audience, and Mercian are very proud to have been part of this project.

Please see their websites at: [www.thynghowe.org.uk](http://www.thynghowe.org.uk) and [www.facebook.com/thynghowe](https://www.facebook.com/thynghowe)

They have produced guided tours, a book *Thynghowe and Birklands: Stories from the past of Sherwood Forest retold along the route of two perambulations of an ancient boundary*, published an academic paper in the Transactions of the Thoroton Society: *Community Archaeology at Thynghowe, Birklands, Sherwood Forest* by Lynda Mallett, Stuart Reddish (both of the Friends of Thynghowe), John Baker, Stuart Brookes (both the University of Central London) and Andy Gaunt (now Mercian Archaeological Services CIC), and also organised the hugely successful 'Viking Spring Thing' Festival at the Forestry Commission Sherwood Pines.

### Also:

Mercian would like to welcome the recent formation of *The Battle of Hatfield Investigation Society*, and congratulate the group on everything they have achieved so far. We are really proud and excited to be working alongside this group and we hope to have some news for you soon.

Please see their website at:

[www.battleofhatfield.webs.com](http://www.battleofhatfield.webs.com)



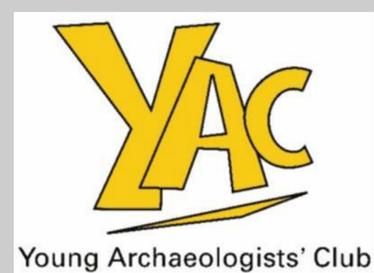
Photograph: The Friends of Thynghowe surveying in Birklands.

## Mercian and the Next Generation...

### 'Meet the Archaeologists Day' with the Young Archaeologists Club

Mercian had a great day recently working with the Nottinghamshire Young Archaeologists Club. Members brought along finds for identification by Mercian's experts. Finds included pottery, fossils, metal work and even complete vases from Ancient Rome!

Mercian are proud to announce that they will be working in partnership with the Young Archaeology Club on future projects... Please see their website if you are interested in joining: [www.yac-uk.org](http://www.yac-uk.org)



Photograph: Young Volunteers washing finds at Clipstone.

### Mercian Schools Outreach Program

Mercian are continuing with our schools outreach program around the region.

Over the course of the last few months we have visited schools around the East Midlands working with children and young people from year 3 through to year 10, showing how archaeology can be integrated with the curriculum.

Now that schools are settling into the new school term we will be returning to classrooms for more finds identification sessions, talks and presentations, as well as opportunities for further archaeological experiences.

If you would like more information about our schools outreach and what we can offer please email us at: [info@mercian-as.co.uk](mailto:info@mercian-as.co.uk)



# Hilton Village Project

## Development of a South Derbyshire village



Hilton today appears to be little more than a large, mostly modern, dormitory village in south Derbyshire serving as a base for employees of nearby companies Toyota and Rolls Royce. The settlement lacks a medieval church and aside from two early post medieval timber framed houses there is little of obvious antiquity. No archaeological work had ever taken place there.

However, when a local resident was digging in her garden she uncovered a cobbled surface and a range of pottery from the 19<sup>th</sup> century back to the Saxo-Norman period!

To investigate this exciting discovery further, Dove Valley Community Archaeology (DVCA) commissioned Mercian to investigate the settlement further as a community archaeology project, with test-pits being dug throughout the village.

Place name and cartographic evidence suggested the possibility that the village originally consisted of a number of early settlement foci, that later grew together into a nucleated village. The subsequent nucleated village had many classic medieval features including a main street, back lanes, and linear tofts and crofts. Research suggests that such features sometimes form part of deliberate planned zones of expansion during one or more phases in the medieval period.

The results mainly confirmed our theories with early finds and structural evidence being found at one of the early settlement foci, there was also no evidence of occupation in the 'zones of expansion' until the medieval period. A wealth of evidence relating to the fortunes and development of the village in the post medieval and modern periods was also discovered.

*Photographs: (Above) Volunteers excavating a test pit in Hilton Village, and (below) The Hilton Village Test Pit cake made by a member of the Dove Valley Community Archaeology Group to celebrate the project.*



# Ticknall - Burton Road Community Archaeology Excavation

## The earliest documented pottery site in Ticknall



Mercian and TARG undertook a community archaeological excavation at a site on Burton Road in Ticknall in advance of development. As the site was on part of a known pottery production site the Council Planning Authority imposed a condition on the planning consent requiring the developer to undertake archaeological work before the development could go ahead. Mercian were contracted to undertake the work and, through the kind agreement and co-operation of the developer and planning archaeologist it was possible to do some of the work as a community archaeology training excavation.

The excavation revealed domestic activity on site from at least the 13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> century. The site saw heavy industrial activity in the late medieval and early post medieval period when, in addition to pottery manufacture, iron was smelted from iron ore.

Industrial activity had probably moved away from this part of the site by the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when a large quantity of domestic waste, probably a clearance group, was dumped in one go. Clearance groups can arise as a result of a house clearance perhaps occasioned by the death of the owner or could represent worn out or unfashionable property being dumped to make way for the latest fashion. The occupants of the site seem to have been of above average wealth at this time as the dump contained pieces of a fine glass pedestal beaker with horizontal trailed decoration.

The wealth of the occupants continued into the 18<sup>th</sup> century as finds of this period show they were able to purchase (and smash!) almost all of the most fashionable new pottery types being made in the mid and late 18<sup>th</sup> century. A dizzying array of wares and fancy decoration types were found, including Chinese porcelain, Agate ware, red, black, brown and white stoneware (the latter with scratch blue and enamelled decoration), lots of early creamware (including pieces of melon, cauliflower and pineapple shaped tea pots and tea cups), enamelled creamware and decorated pearlware.



*Photographs: (above) 17th century cup and candlestick, and (below) trays of newly washed finds.*

*All finds are from the excavations at Burton Road, Ticknall.*



# Talks and Presentations

Mercian also give talks, lectures, presentations and training seminars to groups including historical and archaeological societies, schools, and adult education groups. If you would like a presentation for your group then please get in touch at [info@mercian-as.co.uk](mailto:info@mercian-as.co.uk). We can offer any of the example talks below or tailor the event to suit your requirements.

Example talks include:

- Surviving Medieval England (Medieval East Midlands)
- Archaeology at Kings Clipstone and King John's Palace
- Archaeology and Sherwood Forest
- Introduction to Medieval Sherwood Forest
- Pottery training seminars
- Flint identification workshops
- Finds identification
- and many more...



*Pictures: (left) King John's Palace in the snow, and (right) Midland Purple saggur for firing Cistercian Wares, excavated at Burton Road, Ticknall in 2013.*

## Also in the News....

- A paper by Mercian's Andy Gaunt and Museum of London's James Wright: *'A palace for our kings' – A decade of research into a royal residence in the heart of Sherwood Forest at Kings Clipstone, Nottinghamshire*, has recently been accepted by the Castles Studies Group and will be appearing in their forthcoming national journal. <http://www.castlestudiesgroup.org.uk/>
- Our Heath End kiln excavation is the cover story on the latest Derbyshire Archaeological Society Newsletter. Please have a look at their website: <http://www.derbyshireas.org.uk/NLJul2013.pdf>
- Mercian have now launched an 'Occasional Papers' series. These papers will be drawn from our ongoing research.

The first two papers are available for download via our free online document store at: <http://mercian-as.academia.edu/mercianarchaeologicalservicescic>

Gaunt, A. 2013. *A case for the 13<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup> century northern boundary of Clipstone Park in Sherwood Forest*. Mercian Occasional Paper 1.

Wright, J. 2013. *The Kings Houses - A palace or a mere hunting Lodge? The story of the 20<sup>th</sup> century misidentification of a royal palace in Sherwood Forest*. Mercian Occasional Paper 2.

## Contact

**For more information, to join our mailing list, or to find out how we can help you to access your heritage**

**Email: [info@mercian-as.co.uk](mailto:info@mercian-as.co.uk)**

**or visit our websites:**

**[www.mercian-as.co.uk](http://www.mercian-as.co.uk)**

**[www.facebook.com/MercianArch](https://www.facebook.com/MercianArch)**

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