



**King's Clipstone Village Project, 2013,
Community Archaeology Test Pitting Project,
King's Clipstone, Nottinghamshire.**

Interim Report

6/01/2014



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King's Clipstone SK603 646

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Clipstone Village (SK603 646)

Much attention has recently been directed towards the site known as King John's Palace in the village of King's Clipstone (eg Gaunt and Wright 2013; Wright and Gaunt 2014). However, other than those parts of the village falling within the palace complex (eg the cottages containing the remains of the palace's medieval gatehouse on the south side of the main street, Wright 2013), the village itself had never been studied archaeologically.

The village nestles around the north and west sides of the palace complex. Construction of the 4th Duke of Portland's water meadows along the north side of the village in the early 19th century (which obliterated a number of plots at the east end of the village) and the subsequent remodelling of the settlement this necessitated; make the present settlement difficult to read, but maps pre-dating construction of the water meadows reveal a more typical Nottinghamshire nucleated 'medieval' looking settlement, with regular linear tofts and crofts extending at right angles from a main street.

As part of the Sherwood Forest Archaeology Project local volunteers, directed by Mercian Archaeological Services CIC, undertook a preliminary phase of archaeological test pitting within the village. 15 pits were excavated over the course of 9 days in February 2013.

This phase of work was designed to see what archaeological evidence for the development of the apparently 'medieval' central part of the settlement could be found.

Some of the test pits were not fully excavated to geology as they encountered archaeological deposits that were too complex to be understood within the confines of a 1x1m test pit. It was deemed that the destruction of such deposits or features in the desire to find what was underneath on a site not immediately threatened with development was not archaeologically justifiable. These test pits were therefore fully recorded then backfilled with the complex deposits left intact, with the potential for them to be investigated in future in a more appropriate manner should this become possible.

A number of key results from this phase can be offered. They were:

- The early 19th century construction of the water meadows, which removed between 70 and 100% of the tofts behind the plots on the north side of the road, in concert with the broadly contemporary remodelling of the settlement, resulted in almost total destruction of earlier occupation layers within surviving parts of the surviving plots in the village.
- On the south side of Mansfield Road, in the part of the settlement situated within the boundary of the palace complex, medieval pottery was extremely abundant. None pre-dated the mid 12th century. The deep stratigraphy encountered in one pit suggested this area was

virgin ground until the construction of the palace began in the second half of the 12th century, it then saw intensive activity throughout the medieval period until an early post medieval demolition layer sealed the deposits. The area was left abandoned until early in the 19th century, with the archaeological evidence for renewed activity being corroborated by cartographic evidence demonstrating the gardens of properties on Mansfield Road were extended further southwards into the former palace grounds around this time.

- In the plots north of the road (outside the palace boundary) medieval pottery of all periods was very scarce with no more than one or two sherds from most test pits. No medieval contexts were encountered. The 19th century truncation may, however, be a significant factor in this. Only at the far western edge of the area examined, close to where modern Gorsethorpe Road meets Mansfield Road, did the archaeology yield reasonable evidence to suggest the possibility of medieval occupation in the vicinity.
- None of the pottery from the village sites outside the palace boundary apparently pre-dated the 13th century.
- Further west of the central section of the village, two test pits on the sports field south of Squire's Lane suggested this area had been part of the medieval open fields of Clipstone.

One test pit also revealed evidence of early 'recycling' of palace material by a resident of the village. Here a small, early post medieval, pit was found dug into the natural sands. A quantity of medieval window glass had been dumped in the pit before it was backfilled. The majority of the glass was plain and included some largely complete quarries (with very neatly grozed edges), but a small quantity of painted glass was also present. Both cylinder and crown techniques of manufacture were present and more than one phase of glazing, or more than one window seems likely to be represented. It seems probable that the villager living on this plot 'liberated' a window or two from the palace as it was falling into disrepair in the early post medieval period with the aim of harvesting the lead. Perhaps not possessing the technology to recycle glass or not having easy access to a market for it, they dug a hole in order to conceal the evidence of their crime!

Though analysis of the results is at a preliminary stage and it is hoped further phases of fieldwork will be undertaken, the provisional conclusions from this phase of work were:

- The central section of the village that was examined, with its linear tofts and crofts as depicted on pre 19th century maps, outside of the palace boundary, yielded no evidence for activity prior to the 13th century.
- No evidence for the Domesday settlement of Clipstone was encountered in the area examined.

- Activity on the northern part of the palace site (now included within the area of the modern village) appears to have started (at least in the areas examined) no earlier than the mid 12th century, contemporary with the earliest documentary references to the palace.
- Further work is required to locate the pre-palace village, with the results of this phase suggesting that the noticeably sheltered area around the junction of Squires Lane, Gorsethorpe Road and Mansfield Road on the western side of the village should be a prime target, along with the area to the east around the 'Dog and Duck' public house which was close to the location of the medieval water mills.

Full details of the work and location of test pits will be included in the site report, which will be available from <http://www.mercian-as.co.uk> when complete, in addition to copies being submitted for inclusion in the Nottinghamshire HER.

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