Archaeological Investigation at Cuckney, Nottinghamshire.

Bassetlaw, Nottinghamshire.
End of Project Report.

David Budge
Mercian Archaeological Services CIC
Report MAS049
01/06/2019

The Sherwood Forest Archaeology Project

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Mercian Archaeological Services CIC

Archaeological Investigation at Cuckney, Nottinghamshire.

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Front cover Illustration: Trench 01 under excavation; pebble feature in Trench 02: Trench 01 at a later stage of excavation; late Saxon pottery sherds from Trench 01.

Contents:

List of Figures:

List of Tables:

List of Plates:

Non-Technical Summary:

The Battle of Hatfield Investigation Society's 'Warriors through the landscape' project was funded by a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. As part of the project Mercian Archaeological Services CIC were contracted to undertake archaeological investigation at Cuckney.

The Battle of Hatfield Society seeks to investigate possible links between Cuckney and the Battle of Hatfield, a battle that took place in 633AD between the Mercians and their allies against the Northumbrians. A link between Cuckney and the battle was first proposed by Stanley Revill in the 1970s. Revill considered that a number of bodies that had been discovered under the church during non-archaeological work in the 1950s could have been casualties of the battle, rather than the dead from an unrecorded 12th century Anarchy period battle as had been suggested by Barley who originally reported the discovery in 1951.

The archaeological investigations were designed to contribute to this research by examining the development of the settlement of Cuckney. Was there a settlement at Cuckney at the time of the battle? Or did the location of battle or place of burial of the dead from the battle on a virgin site attract some form of religious or cult centre to commemorate the dead and did this act as the seed around which the settlement of Cuckney later grew? If the bodies under the church are indeed Saxon, as Reville proposed, then the juxtaposition of church and bodies would seem to suggest some kind of continuity of settlement or local memory.

In addition to specific aims, the investigation was also designed to feed into regional research objectives being pursued by Mercian Archaeological Services CIC, including investigation of the development of settlements in the Sherwood Forest area and investigation of the distribution and sources of medieval ceramics in Nottinghamshire.

The archaeological investigations consisted of the excavation of two trenches to the west of earthworks that are Scheduled as an adulterine motte and bailey castle, along with the excavation of five test pits on open ground to the south of the church.

The trenches were excavated to investigate a geophysical anomaly identified in 2015 that had the potential to be a burial and to investigate and date an earthwork bank (trench 2); and to investigate whether a chance find of late Saxon pottery in a mole hill in 2015 came from imported soil or was an indication that extremely rare archaeological evidence for in-situ late Saxon activity could be found in the vicinity (trench 1).

The geophysical anomaly excavated in trench 2 proved to be a spread of rounded quartzite cobbles. They were closely packed and had a few small sherds of medieval pottery pressed down between the stones along with an animal bone trodden into the surface nearby. They may have been surfacing at the threshold of a timber structure, to prevent erosion of the soft sandy soil where passage of traffic was concentrated, or could have been hard standing, for example for a post placed on the ground surface to stop it sinking in, though there was no evidence that the pebbles had been pressed down by such a post: Alternatively it may represent no more than a random dump of two buckets full of pebbles. The metalling of the threshold of a timber structure seems the most plausible explanation, but a larger area would have needed to be excavated to confirm this - the ephemeral remains of medieval timber structures, which, if well preserved, may consist of little more than a pebble spread at the threshold, a couple of lines of post holes, beam slots or just pad-stones to support the structural posts placed upon the ground surface, a gully or two, and perhaps an area of slightly darker soil on the inside of the building, do not lend themselves well to recognition in small excavations. The pebble spread contained two small sherds of medieval pottery between, and not under, the stones, but it is possible these may have been residual and were scraped up with the pebbles when the latter were gathered; at the very least the pebble spread was stratified over the fill of a Saxon or medieval ditch and medieval palisade or beam

slot so was medieval or later in date. Additionally, it was sealed beneath a topsoil that appears to have been present by the early 19th century, so is earlier than this.

The earthwork bank identified in the 2015 topographic survey also fell within trench 2. It had not been dug out of the ditch that was found on the western side and partially under the bank; the natural deposits through which the ditch were cut were almost devoid of pebbles while the bank itself was full of them. The ditch was interpreted as an earlier feature: a single large fresh sherd of possible early, middle or late Saxon pottery may suggest the ditch was of this date but the evidence was, unfortunately, ambiguous, and it may instead have been medieval. When this ditch was filled in, a narrow beam or palisade slot was dug on a similar alignment. The bank, visible as an earthwork, appears to have been constructed from imported soil mounded against the eastern side of this possible palisade.

Within the bank associated with the 'palisade' and on the ground surface under it there was a range of medieval pottery, including joining and fresh sherds which had seen little disturbance and which may provide fairly reliable dating. The majority of the pottery was cooking vessels; serving utensils were notable by their absence. A range of types were present with the majority made in Lincoln and Lincolnshire, but also a few local types. The dates ranged from Saxo-Norman to 14th century. If the pottery was all contemporary, which was by no means certain, then the date ranges of the various ware types would overlap in just one small window in the middle of the 12th century. If this was the case, it might be possible for the palisade to be related in some way to a castle that was documented at Cuckney during the Anarchy of Stephen and Matilda. If, alternatively, they represent material that was lying around on the surface at the time the bank was constructed, then they would simply indicate that it is probably a medieval feature that could not be earlier than the mid 12th century but may be later.

Trench 1 encountered stratified Saxo-Norman deposits beneath significant depths of re-deposited soil and post medieval cultivation soils. The main Saxo-Norman deposit was a cultivation soil. This contained a large assemblage of late Saxon pottery of the main Lincolnshire types current in the 10th to mid 11th century, along with some Lincolnshire and some more local types from the post Norman conquest to early 12th century period. The size and condition of the sherds indicated that cultivation of this piece of land ceased very soon after the latest of the late 11th - early 12th century pottery was deposited. The presence of ironwork and mould fragments for casting metal, along with the quantity of late Saxon pottery, suggested that the cultivation soil was either a result of ploughing a former area of occupation in the area of the trench, or that late Saxon occupation was very close by, in the immediate vicinity of the trench. Sealed by the cultivation soil, the excavation revealed part of a cut feature, perhaps the edge of a pit, well, or large post hole, which contained only late Saxon pottery. Though mostly in abraded condition, this is a very significant assemblage for Bassetlaw; only one other assemblage of late Saxon pottery is known to the writer from the whole of the District and archaeological evidence for activity of this period as a whole is very scarce to the north of the Trent.

The results of the excavation, along with other finds made during the previous project in 2015, indicated that the Church of St Mary was not always so isolated as it now appears. In late Saxon times (10th - 11th century) it is likely that occupation stretched all the way along the south bank of the River Poulter where the church and graveyard now sit. Intriguingly, the results from trench 1 seem to indicate a re-organisation of the settlement, with cultivation of formerly occupied land in the former heart of the settlement being abandoned in the early 12th century. It is tempting to want to see links between a reorganisation of the settlement at this time and the documentary evidence that Thomas de Cuckney had a castle at Cuckney in the Anarchy period, though other explanations could also be advanced.

The test pits were excavated to determine if the late Saxon occupation around the church also extended to its south. Had this area in the heart of the settlement adjacent to the medieval church and with a pattern of historic boundaries that look like medieval tofts and crofts, once been settled and then abandoned? Or, perhaps less likely, had this area to the south of the church always been open?

Surprisingly, the test pits indicated that there had been no settlement on this ground to the south of the church. The lowest archaeological deposits in each of the test pits was a cultivation soil of Saxo-Norman date, yielding a handful of pottery of the period. The other deposits confirmed that this piece of ground had remained in agricultural use after this. However, medieval finds including pottery and a whetstone, increased in quantity close to the present block of settlement at the Norton Lane / A616 junction (to the south).

The evidence allowed a number of theories regarding the development of Cuckney to be investigated. Aside from the occasional find, such as an early Bronze Age flint knife fragment, there seems to have been no significant activity at Cuckney until around the middle of the 10th century. At this point, activities or occupation seem to have been concentrated on the south bank of the River Poulter in the bend of the river; more or less the area now occupied by St Mary's and its churchyard, and the higher ground to the west. The ground to the south of the present church was cultivated, presumably as the fields of the late Saxon settlement. It is not possible on present evidence to suggest whether this represented the whole of the settlement of Cuckney, or whether the settlement was polyfocal and other activity and occupation foci exist elsewhere in the parish.

During the early to early / mid 12th century something occurred that caused a change in land use. The change was significant as a formerly cultivated area in close proximity to settlement was abandoned and not re-occupied in any form that had any impact upon it until the 18th century. Though this may have been for a variety of reasons, it is tempting to suggest such a major change as most likely due to an event of significant impact, such as the documented holding, and presumably construction, of a castle at Cuckney at this time. Construction of a castle in the heart of a settlement may have been an event of significant impact if the military needs of the caste caused it to be imposed within an existing settlement (for example, if it was to control a river crossing then existing dwelling plots by that crossing may be destroyed by the imposition of the castle). If this was the case, to avoid losing his rents from displaced tenants, it might be expected that the displaced would be resettled elsewhere in the settlement. If their new holdings were more favourable than the old, or investment of effort had been expended in constructing the new holdings, there may then be no incentive to re-occupy the former holdings once the castle was gone. However, this is all speculation that would require testing by further work, not least to identify where the castle actually was and then, when identified, if late Saxon occupation was present under it.

While the presently open area to the immediate south of the church was cultivated land from late Saxon times onwards, that further south again, where dwellings still exist today, appears likely to have been occupied throughout the medieval period. It is not impossible that this block of settlement could have been an area that peasants displaced from near the church by the putative building of a castle in the 12th century were re-settled to. This is possible as none of the late 11th to early / mid 12th century pottery types seen in trench 1 were found here; the earliest material (other than that in the late Saxon cultivation soil) was of mid to late 12th century date. However, the test pits only caught the 'overspill' of waste from the edge of this possible area of occupation; further excavation within the putative area of occupation would be required to test this theory. While the idea that this area was where displaced peasants were moved to is 'nice and neat' and fits with the documentary and archaeological evidence as it currently is known, and makes for a very nice story, it is entirely possible that further excavation within, rather than at the edge of, this putative area of occupation could well reveal older material and that settlement here began as another late Saxon activity foci within a polyfocal landscape.

Additionally, the results of the excavations along with new data including the 2015 earthwork survey and 2018 high resolution LiDAR data, allowed the evidence relating to Cuckney castle and the nature of the earthworks around and to the west of the church to be reviewed. All the evidence indicates that the site is not a motte and bailey castle: suggestions that a natural ridge at the western end of the churchyard are a motte can be seen as untenable. The contention raised by a number of castle scholars that St Mary's church may once have been situated within the castle is also demonstrated to be based on a misinterpretation of the earthworks: the high resolution LiDAR data in particular indicates that there are no signs that

the earthwork enclosure to the west of the church ever extended eastwards to enclose the church.

Whatever the case, the archaeological investigations were highly successful, involving many people in the archaeological process. They achieved their archaeological aims and produced a very important assemblage of late Saxon finds from Bassetlaw, a district where only scant archaeological evidence for Saxon occupation has been found to date. They have aided the understanding of the development and layout of Cuckney,

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Site Location and Geology:

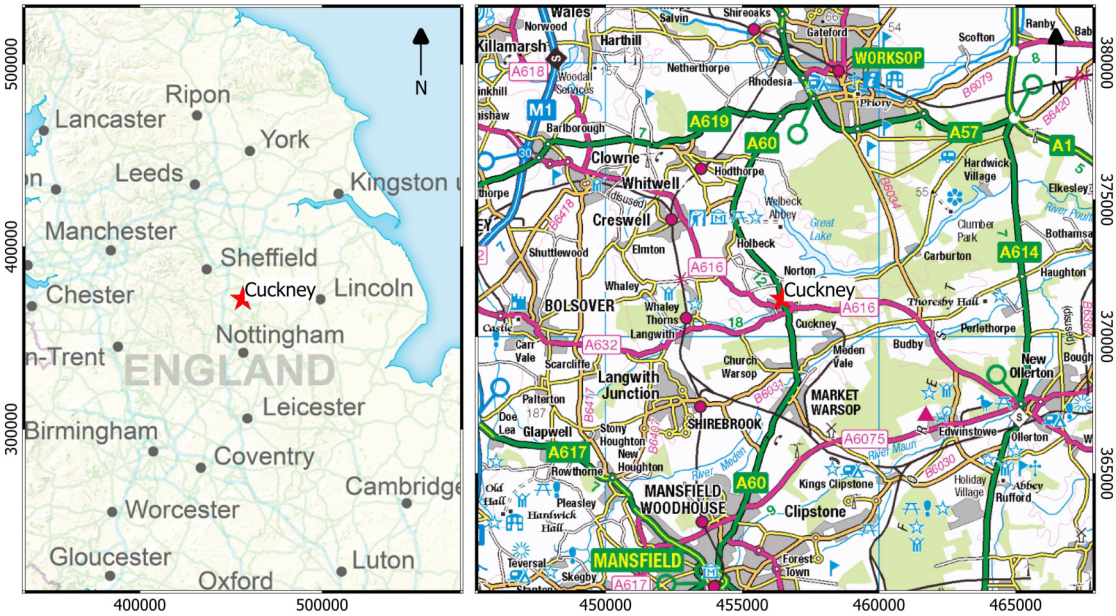

Figure 01 - 1a (left), Location of Cuckney (red star) in England. 1b (right), location of Cuckney (red star) in local region.

Location:

Cuckney is located in Nottinghamshire (Figure 01a). It is located in the west of Nottinghamshire, close to the Derbyshire border. The present settlement is approximately half way between the large settlements of Mansfield, to the south, and Worksop, to the north (Figure 01b). Cuckney is situated within the District of Bassetlaw. This was also the case in medieval times, but Bassetlaw District was subdivided into smaller units; Cuckney was in the Hatfield division of Bassetlaw District.

Topography:

Cuckney is situated on the southern bank of the River Poulter. The church and 'castle' are today somewhat isolated, located as they are to the north of the present settlement (Figure 02). They sit on the inside of a meander of the River Poulter at an elevation of between 49m AOD and 56m AOD; the latter being the highest point within the graveyard extension to the south west of the church. The heart of the modern settlement of Cuckney occupies the higher land to the south of the church, with much of the historic core of the settlement at an elevation of approximately 58m AOD and higher (Figure 03).

Geology:

The site is situated on the Lenton Sandstone Formation. This is 'a sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 246 to 271 million years ago in the Triassic and Permian Periods. At this time the local environment was previously dominated by rivers. These rocks were formed from rivers depositing mainly sand and gravel detrital material in channels to form river terrace deposits, with fine silt and clay from overbank floods forming floodplain alluvium, and some bogs depositing peat; includes estuarine and coastal plain deposits mapped as alluvium' (BGS 2019). The channel and floodplain of the River Poulter are mapped as Alluvium - Clay, Silt, Sand And Gravel. These are 'superficial deposits formed up to 2 million years ago in the Quaternary Period. Local environment previously dominated by rivers. These rocks were formed from rivers depositing mainly sand and gravel detrital material in channels

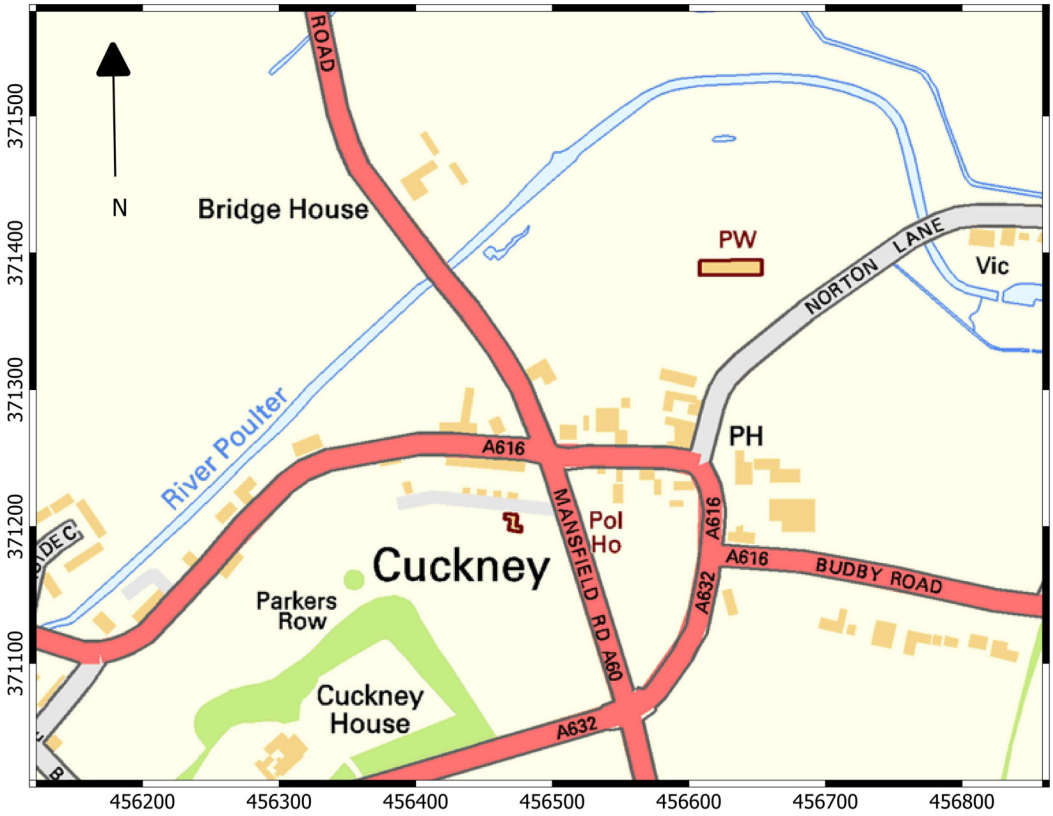

Figure 02 - The modern settlement of Cuckney as mapped by the Ordnance Survey, showing the currently isolated position of the church (marked 'PW') in the bend of the River Poulter, to the north of the main settlement.

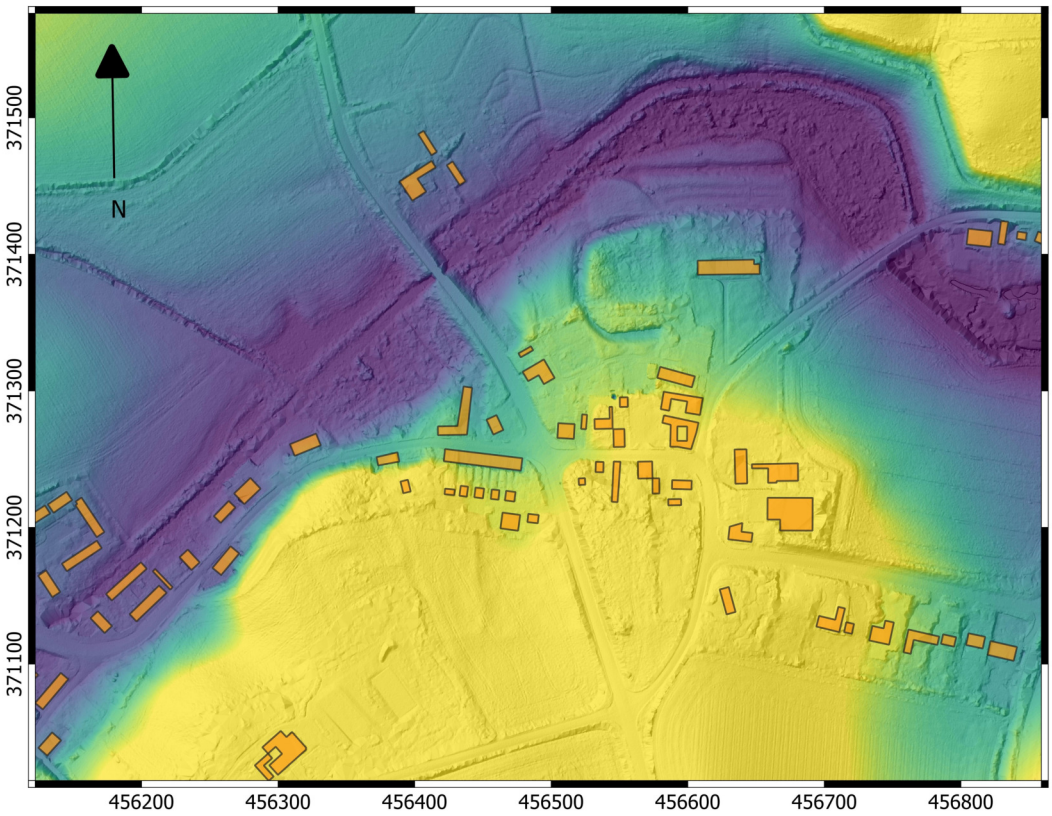

Figure 03 - Topography of settlement of Cuckney; same area as Figure 2. Settlement overlain on a coloured hillshade model. Yellow = land over c.58m OD; Pale yellow = land around c.56m OD; Turquoise = land c54m OD; Sky blue = land c.52m OD; Purple = land c.49m OD and lower

to form river terrace deposits, with fine silt and clay from overbank floods forming floodplain alluvium, and some bogs depositing peat; includes estuarine and coastal plain deposits mapped as alluvium' (BGS 2019).

Historical and Archaeological Background:

The English Place Names Society volume for Nottinghamshire gives the derivation of Cuckney as 'the second element is e.g. 'island of marshy land.' The first is ... probably the personal name Cuca or Cwica, a pet form of such a name as [old English] Cwichelm (Glover et al 1940 75). It lists the earliest appearances in the forms: Cuchenai 1086 Domesday Book, Cucheneia c.1150, Cuckeneya 1159-81, Cuckeneie c 1179, "and frequently in Inquisitions Post Mortem to 1295 with variant spellings Kuk- and -eye, eia, -aie, -aye, -ee." Chugeneia 1185, Chugeneia 1187, Quikenea 1195, Kuyekeney c.1245, Cokeneye 1221, Cokkene 1393, Cokkenaye 1548, Coknay 1510, Cookney 1542, Cowkenay 1548, Cuckney 1684 (ibid).

A settlement was undoubtedly here at the time of the Norman Conquest. The Domesday Book records land held at Cuckney by two overlords, Roger de Busli and Hugh fitz Baldric. The Domesday entries recorded the following details:

'The Land of Roger de Busli. Bassetlaw Wapentake. In CUCKNEY Alric and Wulfsige had 1 carucate of lands to geld. [There is] land for 2 ploughs. There Geoffrey, Roger's man, has 1 plough, and 9 villains having 3 ploughs. [There is] woodland pasture 2 furlongs long and 2 broad. TRE* worth 20s; now 2s less.' (Williams & Martin 2003, 764-766).

'The Land of Hugh fitz Baldric. In Cuckney Swein had 2 carucates of land to the geld. [There is] land for 4 ploughs. Richard holds it of Hugh, and has there 2 ploughs in demense; and 3 sokeman on 2 bovates of land and 10 villains and 5 bordars having 2 ploughs. There is a priest and a church, and 2 mills [rendering] 8s [and] woodland pasture 4 furlongs long and 4 furlongs broad. TRE, as now, worth 30s.' (Williams & Martin, 2003, 779).

*TRE - Tempore Regis Edwardi (time of King Edward the Confessor). Refers to the value of the holdings at the time of the Norman Conquest, 1066. The second value relates to the value at the time of the Domesday survey in 1086.

These two separate entries suggest that there were three late Saxon land holders at Cuckney. It is however worth noting that the nearby village of Norton is not mentioned in Domesday. Norton is situated approximately 0.6km north east of St Mary's church at Cuckney and historically has been part of Cuckney parish. Historic mapping indicates that Norton has a plan form that looks like a typical medieval Nottinghamshire nucleated settlement, with regular tofts and crofts stretching back either side of a main street. It is possible that Norton was a village that was established after the Norman conquest, but alternatively it may be that one of the Domesday entries for Cuckney could be referring to what we now know as Norton.

Either way, the land formerly belonging to Swein and given to Hugh son of Baldric after the conquest can certainly be equated with the modern settlement of Cuckney as it contained a church and priest, which Norton does not.

The Church of St Mary as currently existing consists of a tower, nave, chancel and north aisle. The list description suggests the tower is 12th century and was heightened in the 13th century, with an ashlar upper stage with twin lancet plate tracery openings. The nave has a 12th century south door. The north arcade is considered to be Transitional work (Pevsner hints to this effect without specifically naming the period, while Barley seems to be in no doubt (Barley 1951). The south porch is 13th century. The church contains a number of re-set fragments of stonework, including a late 11th - 12th century engaged capital and a fragment of moulding with dogtooth decoration that can be closely paralleled in the late 12th century masonry of Worksop Priory. The north arcade bears significant remains of the original painted decorative scheme from c.1200 (Budge 2018).

National Heritage List for England entry no 1010909 is listed as 'Cuckney motte and bailey castle'. A castle at Cuckney was first mentioned in print by Dr Thoroton in 1677. In his entry for Cuckney Thoroton observed that: 'the said Thomas [de Cuckney] was nourished in the kings court, and after the death of Richard his father, held that land [at Cuckney] by the service aforesaid of the said king well and in peace until the old war: and then he made himself a castle in the said land of Cukeney; for this Thomas was a warlike man (or souldier) in the whole war.— And after the said war, the kingdom of England being pacified, and king Henry the second reigning, he founded the abby of Welbeck' (Throsby 1796, 371-7). This is, as noted by Barley, the only documentary reference to there being a castle at Cuckney, of which he states that 'indeed we are fortunate to know as much of an adulterine castle' (Barley 1951, 27).

Writing in 1896 MacKenzie noted that Cuckney castle was 'non-existent' and regurgitated Thoroton's documentary information with no new additions (MacKenzie 1896, 447-8).

However, the Ordnance Survey County Series map sheets, surveyed and first published in the late 19th century and subsequently revised and re-published at intervals from then until the middle of the 20th century show a ditch around the churchyard and label it as 'moat', labelling the site as 'Castle hill'. In addition to the moat, which can be equated to the ditch and ha-ha surrounding the modern graveyard extension on its north, west and east sides, the Ordnance Survey show the raised ground in the west of the site as a linear bank, appearing to be similar in form to a rampart on the inside edge of the western part of the moat. They also suggest an internal division, with hachures indicating a north south aligned scarp, bank or the surviving side of a ditch to the west of the church tower.

It is unclear how long the epithet 'Castle Hill' had been applied to this area; It is not picked up on by the English Place Name Society volume on Nottinghamshire (Gover Mawer and Stenton 1940, 75, 302). This may indicate the name is of no great antiquity but could alternatively indicate that there are simply no extant records of an old name.

It seems that Oswald may have been the first to associate earthworks at Cuckney with the documented castle in a 1930s paper in the Transactions of the Thoroton Society (Davis 2017). The discovery of some bones under the church during underpinning in the 1950s caused renewed interest. Barley visited the church as workmen had reported finding mass burials, placed in trenches with the bodies aligned east-west and with the bones being of men only, during underpinning work. Barley was forced to rely on the reports of the workmen as at the time he visited the site no mass graves were apparent in the trenches. As a result of what he had been told, he speculated that the find could represent bodies from a skirmish or battle during the Anarchy period in the reign of Stephen and Matilda, associated with the castle (Barley 1951, 28-29). The site was Scheduled soon after, in 1953.

Barley's interpretation of the site broadly followed that of the Ordnance Survey. He stated that: 'The motte is at the western end of the churchyard. The north boundary of the churchyard follows an earth bank' He also appears to have been the first to suggest that the site had an inner and outer bailey: 'a bank in the churchyard, running south from the northern boundary and west of the church tower may have divided the inner and outer bailey' (Barley 1951, 28). Figure 04 shows the 'original' supposed layout of the castle based on the Ordnance Survey mapping and Barley's written description. It should be noted that there are some discrepancies: The Ordnance Survey depicted the feature at the west of the churchyard as a linear bank rather than the motte that it was interpreted as by Barley. Additionally, Barley does not appear to have considered the ha-ha around the south side of the churchyard as being part of the castle; he stated 'there are no signs of the limits of the castle on the east side, nor on the south side, where the ground rises towards the village of Cuckney' (Barley 1951, 28).

Historic England has a very different interpretation of the castle. The Scheduling description states: 'Cuckney motte and bailey castle is a reasonably well-preserved example of an adulterine fort built to command a river valley. Although the motte and inner bailey are partially disturbed by modern burials, a sufficient amount remains intact for the structure of the motte to be preserved and also the relationship between these areas and the outer bailey.

The outer bailey itself has suffered little disturbance and so will retain the archaeological remains of ancillary features such as garrison buildings and corrals for stock and horses. The defensive earthworks associated with both the inner and outer baileys also survive well' (EH).

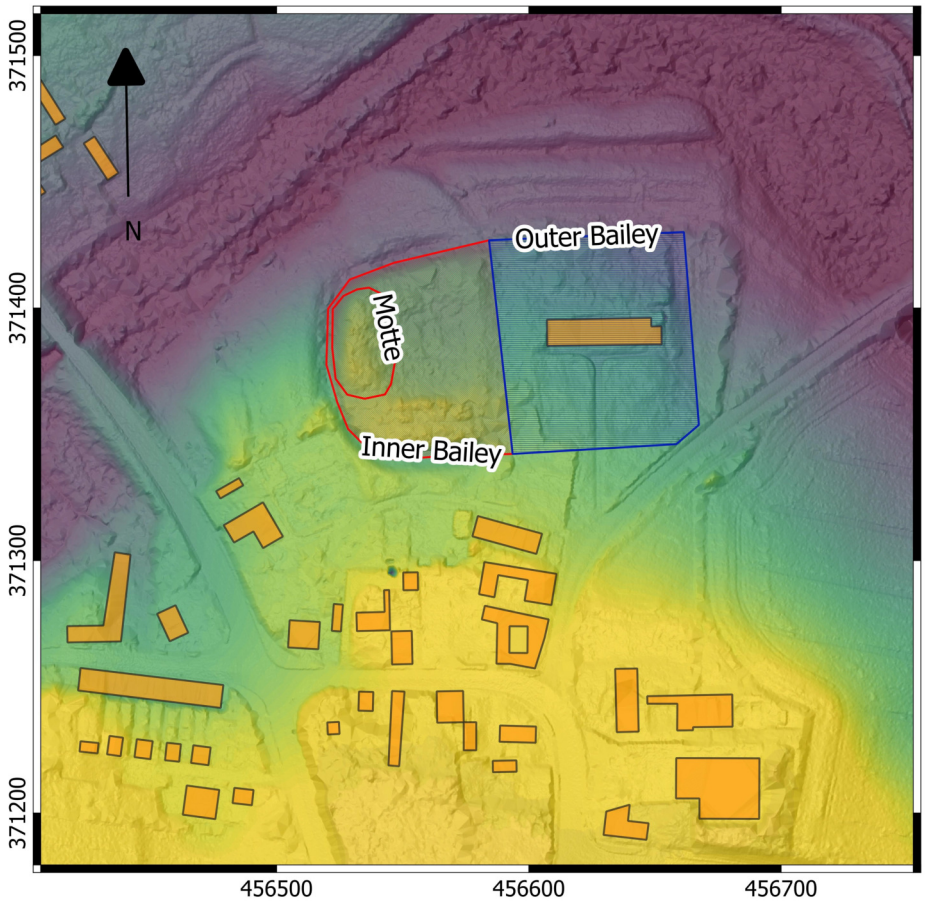

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Figure 04 - Suggested layout of original definition of Cuckney castle based on late 19th century Ordnance Survey mapping and Barley 1951. Data overlain on relief model of the terrain from LiDAR data acquired by Bluesky.

Describing the site, the Scheduling states: 'The inner bailey is a sub-rectangular platform orientated east to west. It measures 90m from north to south and 150m east to west. Only the western 80m are included in the scheduling. The motte occupies the north-west corner of the inner bailey and consists of a flat-topped oval mound, 4m high and measuring 45m from north to south by 20m east to west.'

It continues: 'The perimeter wall of the graveyard occupies the inner edge of a 10m wide ditch that encircles the west side of the motte and encloses the inner bailey on the north side. Originally, it would also have enclosed the south side of the bailey but has been filled-in to the south of the church so that, on this side, only the area south of the motte remains open. The remainder will survive as a buried feature in the unscheduled part of the inner bailey. The ditch does not appear to have extended along the east side of the inner bailey, which also lies in the unscheduled area. This indicates that the original entrance would have occupied this side'.

'Encircling the inner bailey on the north and west sides is a 40m wide ribbon of open ground which functioned as an outer bailey. This is partially encircled by a double bank and ditch which lies roughly parallel with the River Poulter and is approximately 15m wide. The river would have formed another line of defence on this side and, in addition, could be commanded from the castle'.

The layout of the 'castle' as suggested by the Scheduling is shown in Figure 05. The extent of the 'outer bailey' on the west side is marked by an arbitrary line 40m west of the churchyard

boundary as there are no obvious earthworks on this side to give an indication of why the outer bailey was considered to extend here.

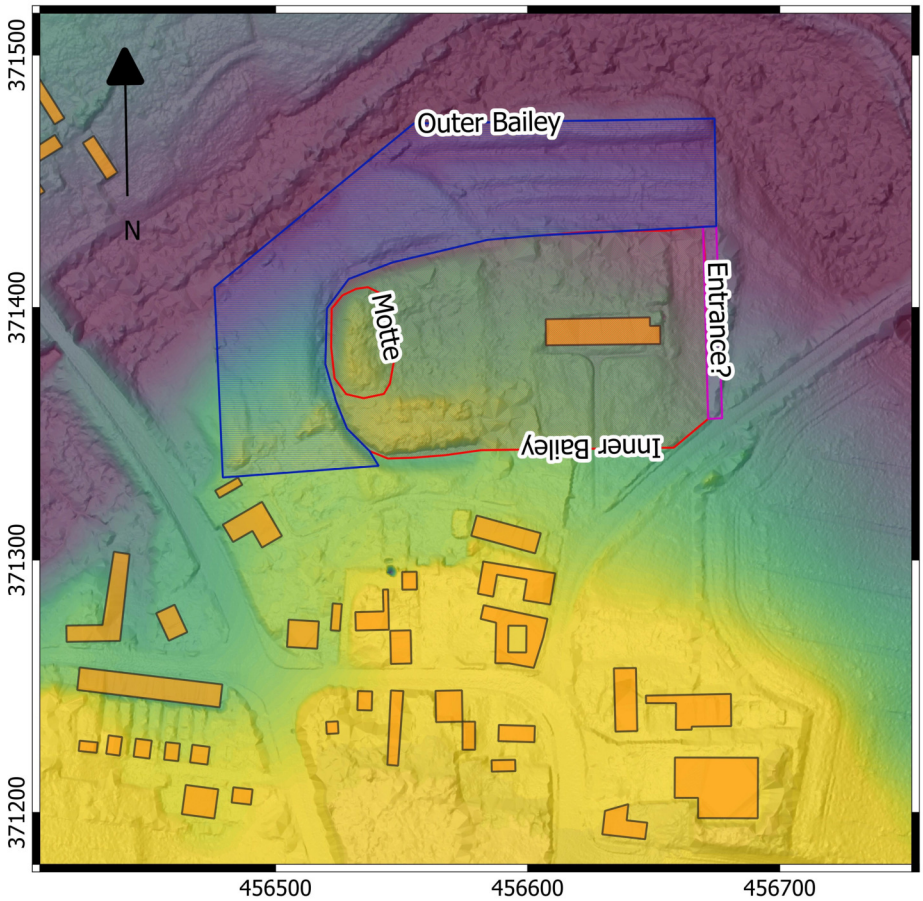

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Figure 05 - Layout of Cuckney castle according to the Scheduling Description Data overlain on relief model of the terrain from LiDAR data acquired by Bluesky.

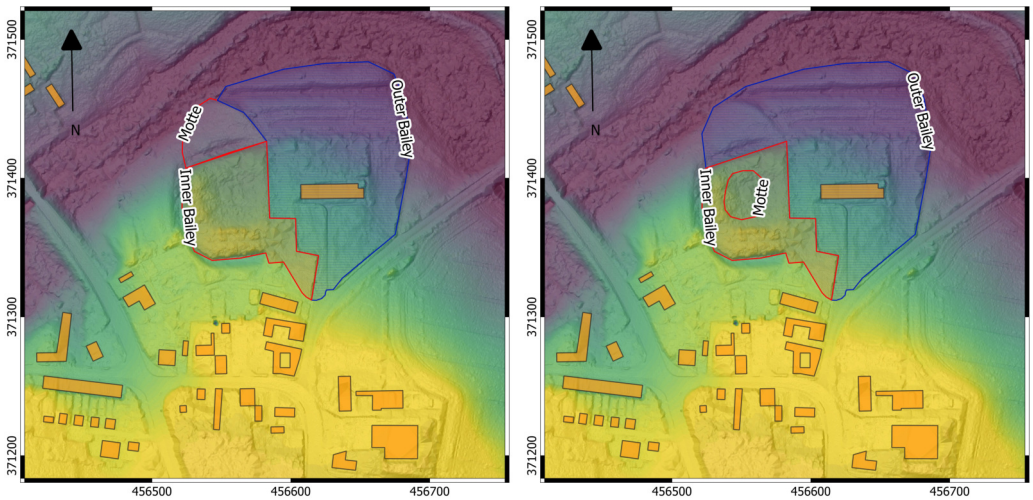

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Figure 06 - Possible layouts of Cuckney castle based on Creighton 1997. 06a, left, based on the written description and visible earthworks assuming the D shaped platform to the west of the churchyard was interpreted as the remains of the motte. 06b, right, layout as suggested in Creighton 1997 fig 6.7 and the written description. Layouts overlain on relief model of the terrain from LiDAR data acquired by Bluesky.

Speight and Creighton are the most recent scholars to examine the site. Speight appears to have favoured Barley's interpretation but shied away from describing the earthworks of the site in any detail (Speight 1994, 66-7). While Creighton's written description is at odds in

certain internal details and at odds with his map, he offers a third possible interpretation of the layout of the site (Figure 06). This appears to offer a combination of Barley and the O.S. layout with part of the larger site as seen by Historic England. In accordance with Barley, Creighton sees the inner bailey as the small squarish enclosure defined by the ditches around the churchyard, but from part of the written description he appears to locate the motte to the north of this inner bailey ('an inner bailey adjoins [the motte] to the south' Creighton 1997, 477). This layout is shown in Figure 06a. This motte position however does not accord with the description of the motte as 'occupying the west end of the present churchyard' which, along with the description of the size, would place it in the same place as Barley and HE (Creighton 1997, 477). However, the direction of slope indicated by the hachures on Creighton's map suggests that he saw the motte as a mound, largely destroyed on the eastern side, located to the east of the O.S. location and probably originally occupying most of the 'inner bailey' (Creighton 1997, 166, fig 6.7) (Figure 6b). His outer bailey includes St Mary's church and, in the written description extends as far as Historic England's bank and ditch parallel to the River Poulter. The strange southwards extension of the inner and outer baileys in the Figures are based on Creighton's shaded area in his figure 6.7: it is however not clear whether he considered this to be the boundary of the castle or just the present area currently occupied by the church.

Previous Archaeological Investigation:

Prior to the current project no archaeological investigation of the earthworks or any other part of the site has ever taken place and no archaeological evidence for the presence of a castle on the site has been recovered. The non-archaeological works undertaken during underpinning of the church in the 1950s found evidence for an earlier nave wall than that currently existing and evidence that there had been burials under the church (Barley 1951). These excavations were non-archaeological in nature and revealed nothing that could be related to a castle, or any dating evidence other than that they were earlier than the present nave wall (of circa 1200AD). Similarly, there are no reports of any finds from grave digging or other activities in the churchyard (until the Battle of Hatfield Society instigated investigations in 2015 - see below).

Other than the bodies under the church, the only other archaeological find from Cuckney within a 2km radius of the church was a 3rd century Roman coin recorded on the Nottinghamshire Historic Environment Record (HER) (Gaunt and Crossley 2016, 11).

In 2015 the Battle of Hatfield Investigation Society undertook a Heritage Lottery Funded Project 'Does the Heritage of the Welbeck Estate include a King Killed at Cuckney?'. This project saw Mercian Archaeological Services CIC contracted to undertake the first archaeological investigations of Cuckney in the 21st century. The project included geophysical survey of the church, churchyard and surrounding area by techniques including ground penetrating radar and magnetometry; topographical survey of the churchyard and surroundings; and gravestone recording in the church yard (Gaunt and Crossley 2016, 7). It also resulted in a detailed recording and reconstruction of the medieval wall paintings noted in the church of St Mary (Budge 2018).

The ground penetrating radar (GPR) survey undertaken by RSK geophysics was designed primarily to locate, if possible, the burial pits under the church that the bodies reported by Barley (1951) were originally placed in, and to attempt to locate the pit in which they were re-interred in the churchyard following their discovery. The brief for this work required the GPR survey to highlight any anomalies that could possibly represent burials or charnel pits. As well as being successful in detecting anomalies that were likely to represent the original burial trenches and the re-interment pit (in Gaunt and Crossley 2016), a number of other features were highlighted as indicative of disturbance that might represent possible burials or charnel pits, including two areas of disturbed ground that may indicate the presence of buried obstructions or a burial pit (RSK 2016 table 2).

The topographical survey looked at the shape of the ground within and around the churchyard. The topographic survey (Gaunt and Crossley 2016, 51-54) suggested that the so called 'motte' was the same height as the ground immediately to the east and was probably a

natural feature, simply the end of the natural promontory, bounded by loop of the River Poulter, that had been cut off from the rest of the promontory on which the present village sits by the construction of the ditch around the modern churchyard extension.

This conclusion was backed up by the observation that the significant quantities of spoil upcast by burrowing rabbits in the side of the supposed motte was entirely devoid of finds pre-dating the later 19th century, and that the nature of the soil from which the mound was 'constructed', being red sand, was very different to that seen in a grave excavated to the east of the church (which consisted of gravel and yellow sand) and the spoil around the churchyard that was encountered where the digging of moles cast up the subsoil (again, yellow to red sand with frequent quartzite pebbles). This suggested that the supposed 'motte' did not consist of material dug or scraped up from the surrounding geological deposits; the discrepancy in basic formational material suggested that the 'motte' was much more likely to represent a stratigraphically higher deposit that had been laid down by natural processes within the local geological substratum and consequently eroded into its present form by natural processes (e.g. the formation of the valley of the River Poulter in late glacial / post glacial times) (Budge 2016, 138-9) rather than being humanly modified.

However, the topographic survey was unable to determine whether the ha-ha like ditch with stone wall that presently bounds the northern, western and southern sides of the 19th and 20th century churchyard extension was part of a medieval castle bailey, as asserted by previous academics, which simply provided a convenient area into which the graveyard could be expanded in the modern period; or whether the ha-ha and ditch itself it was actually a much more recent feature that was placed around the graveyard extension to act as a boundary to the new graveyard while, at the same time, minimising the visual impact of such a boundary on views across the valley of the Poulter from the village.

The project also discovered the first archaeological evidence for late Saxon activity at Cuckney. This consisted of two sherds of Torksey type ware, one from the spoil out of a freshly dug grave to the east of the church and the other from a mole hill close to the flood plain of the River Poulter to the west of the churchyard, just east of the point that the A60 Worksop Road crosses the River Poulter. It also recovered a rim sherd of a hand made jar of 12th to mid 13th century date from mole spoil in the churchyard, to the west of the church tower (Budge 2016, 136-7).

Project Scope and Objectives:

The scope of the project was the excavation of two trenches and five test pits. The work was undertaken in two phases. The trenches were excavated first, followed by the test pits. The locations of the archaeological interventions are shown in relation to the earthworks and the modern settlement of Cuckney in Figure 07. The trenches were located to the west of the churchyard, outside the area of the Scheduled Monument. The test pits were excavated in open ground on the east side of Norton Lane, to the south of the church.

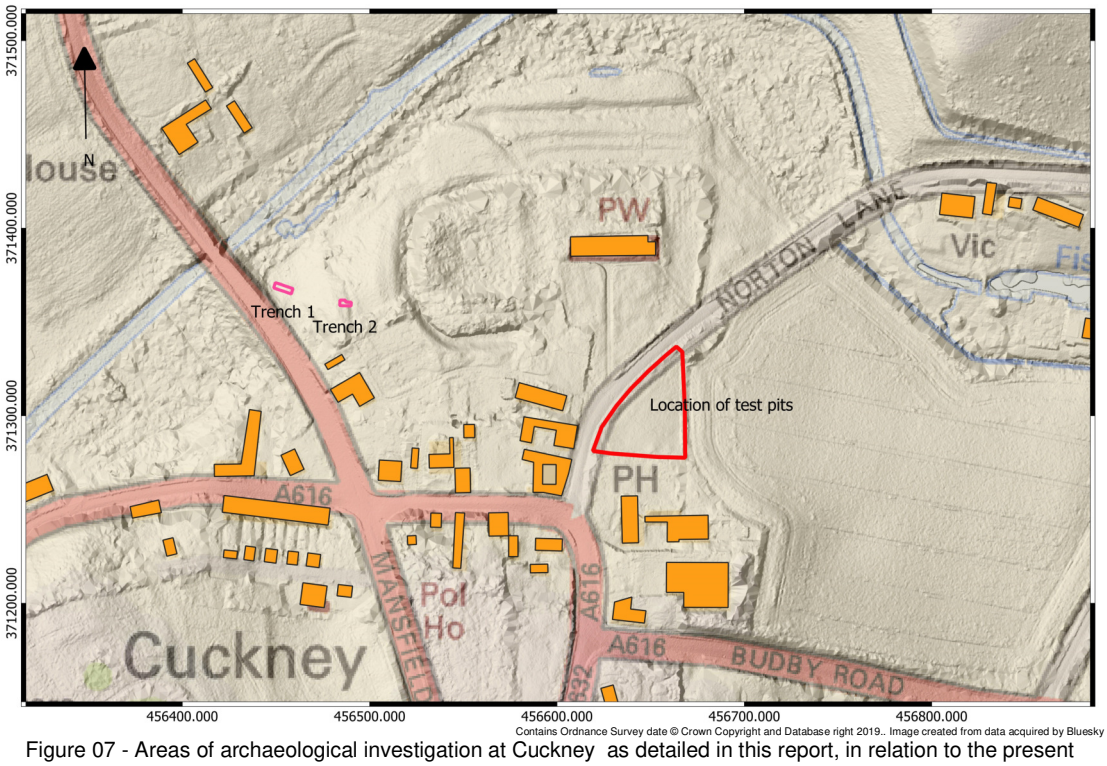

Figure 07 - Areas of archaeological investigation at Cuckney as detailed in this report, in relation to the present settlement and the earthworks. See Figure 09 for individual test pit locations. Basemap combines hillshade and relief models of the topography produced from LiDAR data acquired by Bluesky.

Trench 01 was 30m², being 10m long and 3m wide. This trench was sited for two reasons:
1 - to investigate the find spot of late Saxon Torksey type ware discovered in a mole hill in 2015 during topographic survey (Budge 2016, 136-7). The intent was to determine if the single sherd of pottery was an isolated occurrence, or whether it was with other sherds of a similar date and, if so, attempt to determine the chronology and distinguish the nature of the activity they represented.
2 - to investigate the topography of this location, which consists of a terrace and slope that looks man-made, revealed by the 2015 topographic survey.

The trench was sited over the 2015 find spot, and placed to take in part of the terrace at its east end, running west down slope towards the floodplain of the river. The location of the trench is shown in Figure 08

Trench 02 investigated an area of 15m². It was initially 6m long and 2m wide, orientated east - west. An extension measuring 3m (west - east) by 1m (north - south) was dug on the north west end to investigate the full extent of the pebble spread (205). The trench was sited at the top of the hill. It was excavated to address two objectives:
1 - determine the nature of a geophysical anomaly discovered by GPR survey in 2015 (RSK Environmental 2015, table 2)
2 - to investigate a bank visible as a low earthwork running broadly north - south and identified in the 2015 topographic survey (feature 11, Gaunt and Crossley 2016, 105-6), to

test whether the bank had an associated ditch, and if possible to recover artefact evidence to date these features.
The location of trench 02 is shown in Figure 08 in relation to the earthworks.

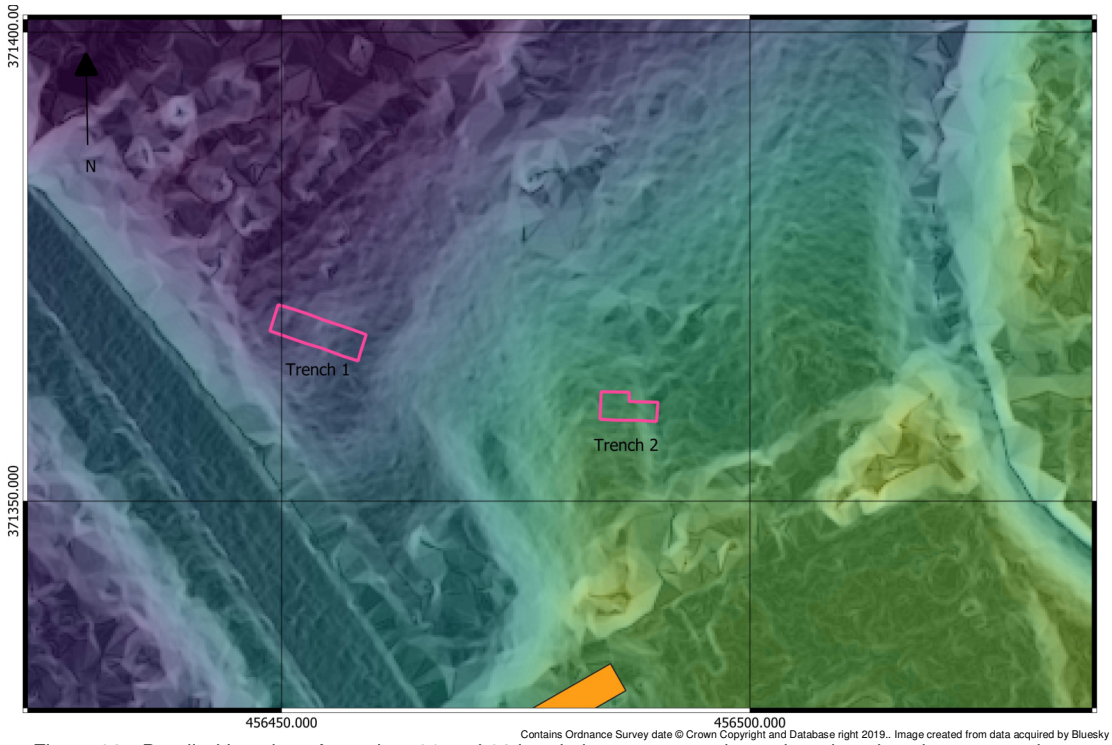

Figure 08 - Detailed location of trenches 01 and 02 in relation to topography and earthworks, shown on a slope model generated from LiDAR data acquired by Bluesky.

The test pits were excavated in a paddock to the south of the Church of St Mary. At this point historic mapping suggests that a series of linear, west east aligned, land divisions were present on both sides of Norton Lane. Additionally, the LiDAR data and historic mapping evidence provides some indication that the present line of Norton Lane, with its gentle curve to the east, may be a diversion; previously it may have continued in a straight line right up to the south porch of the church, and certainly on the west side the linear tofts and crofts extended much further north, towards the church, than they do today. The paddock in which the test pits were excavated therefore provided the opportunity to examine an area in the heart of the medieval settlement that has escaped modern agricultural cultivation and building works, suggesting high potential for the survival of archaeological deposits. It also allowed the opportunity to test whether the hypothesis derived from settlement planform analysis that Norton Lane may have formed a street along which tofts and crofts were aligned, extending southwards from the church and being a candidate for part of the medieval village of Cuckney.

The test pits were excavated on a grid established parallel to the southern boundary of the land parcel. They were sited so as to give good coverage of the land parcel and to take in the road frontage (test pit 01), middle of the putative plots (test pits 02, 04 and 05) and a slight earthwork hollow that could have represented a hollow way / back lane at the back of the plot (test pit 03). As well as taking in front, middle and back of the putative plots, the test pits were also spread from north to south with the purpose of taking in more than one plot based on the apparent width of the tofts on the western side of Norton Lane. Theoretically test pits 01 to 03 would be located in one plot, test pit 04 in another, and test pit 05 in another again.

Figure 09 - Location of test pits within the paddock to the east of Norton Lane, displayed on a slope model generated from LiDAR data acquired by Bluesky. Note particularly the circular feature approximately 12 metres in diameter immediately to the east of TP04. The linear feature running diagonally across the land parcel to the west of TP04 and TP05 is a modern service.

The project was also designed to address the Updated Research Agenda and Strategy for the Historic Environment of the East Midlands.

6.7 HIGH MEDIEVAL (1066 – 1485): UPDATED RESEARCH AGENDA

7.2 Rural settlement

7.2.4. Can we clarify further the processes of settlement desertion and shrinkage, especially within zones of dispersed settlement?

7.4 Castles, military sites and country houses

7.4.2. What was the date and function of currently undated minor motte and bailey castles?
7.4.3. How many castle sites have been lost within the region?
7.4.5. What local resources were used for building and maintenance and what was the environmental context and economic impact of these buildings?
7.4.6. How should battlefield sites be further investigated?

Methodology:

The excavation and recording were undertaken in line with current archaeological best practice and standards and guidance.

The position of the geophysical anomaly was marked out on the ground using coordinates taken from the GPR survey report plotted by differential GPS. The position of the casual find of Torksey type ware to the west of this was marked on the ground using the same method.

The boundary of the Scheduled monument was also marked out by the same method, using GIS polygons supplied by Historic England via the East Midlands regional Inspector of Monuments, Tim Allen.

The trenches were set out in relation to these points, being aligned so as to cut across the earthworks to be examined at as close to a 90 degree angle as possible. The laying out of the Scheduled monument boundary ensured that trench 02 did not encroach into the Scheduled monument and also ensured compliance with the Historic England regional inspector's suggested buffer around the monument.

The test pits were laid out on a grid established parallel to the southern boundary of the land parcel in which they were to be dug. They were sited so as to give good coverage of the land parcel and to take in the road frontage (test pit 01), middle of the putative plots (test pits 02, 04 and 05) and a slight earthwork hollow that could have represented a hollow way / back lane at the back of the plot (test pit 03). As well as taking in front, middle and back of the putative plots, the test pits were also spread from north to south with the purpose of taking in more than one plot based on the apparent width of the tofts on the western side of Norton Lane. Theoretically test pits 01 to 03 would be located in one plot, test pit 04 in another, and test pit 05 in another again.

The trenches and test pits were all excavated by hand, using mattocks and trowels.

Excavation was by archaeological context. Within contexts that were homogenous in nature, or that were deeper than 0.05m, excavation was undertaken in spits. The spits were arbitrary units of approximately 0.05m thickness. However, if a change of context was detected before the maximum depth of a spit was reached, the context always took precedent.

Finds were bagged by context and, where appropriate, by spit.

All excavated soil was sieved (100% sieving). The sieve mesh was a maximum of 10mm.

All humanly modified artefacts were retained. All natural objects that were not un-modified rounded quartzite pebbles were examined for traces of use and / or modification.

Trenches and test pits were recorded by drawn and written record and by photography.

Following excavation the trenches and test pits were backfilled and the turf replaced.

Results:

The trenches were excavated in July 2018. The weather was extremely hot and dry during the period of the excavation with very strong sunshine on most days. This necessitated constant spraying of the trenches with water to make the sometimes extremely subtle colour changes of the contexts visible. There was also extensive evidence of bioturbation throughout the entire excavated soil profile. This took the form of worm burrows, roots and rootlets, and mole burrows. The latter included multiple examples of fresh burrows that collapsed leaving voids during excavation as well as the older fully silted examples that could be seen to have resulted in some mixing of deposits (e.g. see Plate 12).

Trench 01:

Trench 01 was 3 metres wide by 10 metres long. Definite geological substratum was not encountered in this trench. The intractable nature of the modern, machine compacted, deposits at the east end of the excavation and the presence of a large service trench cutting obliquely through the western half of the excavation reduced the original 10m long area available for excavation down to just 3 metres at a depth of 0.5m below present ground level. The south facing section of this trench as excavated is presented in Figure 10.

The most recent context in trench 1 was a mid brown silty sand topsoil and turf (100). It contained a high proportion of coal and charcoal fragments. Deposit (100) was approximately 0.1m to 0.11m thick. It extended for the whole length of the trench, except in the northernmost (down slope) corner. Here, the turf overlay a dark greyish brown silty sand (101). This was notably more silty than (100). It later proved likely to be the final fill of service pipe trench [106] which appeared to have been cut from present ground level.

Also at the west end of the trench were features (131) and (105); these were modern in date, (131) contained a very fresh piece of timber at its base.

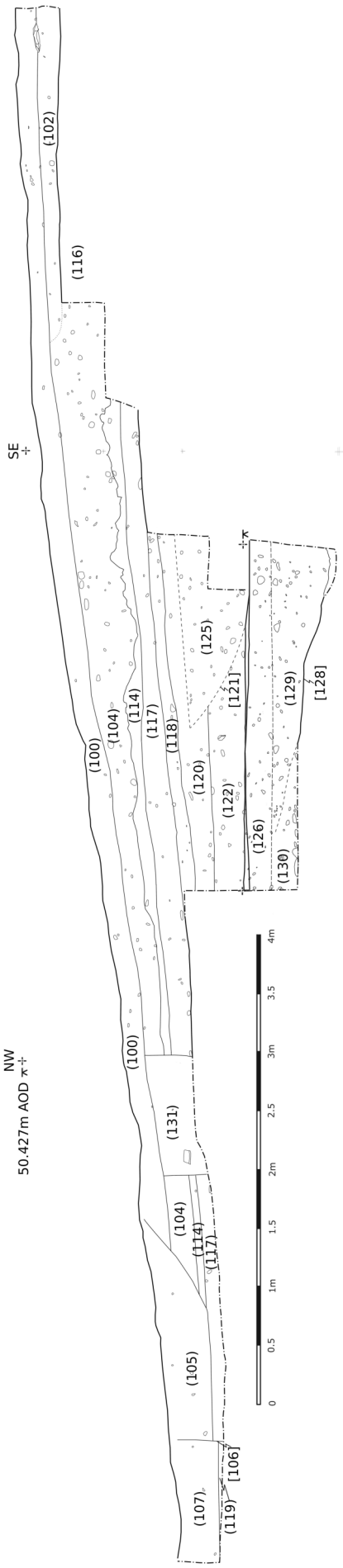

Figure 10 - South facing section of trench 01 (section 1a and 1b). Drawing conventions as used in sections and plans are as follows: Dot dash line - edge of intervention. Solid line - sharp boundary between contexts. Dashed line - diffuse boundary between contexts. Dotted line - context boundary uncertain and position of line on drawing inferred using a range of evidence. Greyed out dashed line - context fully excavated and not present in section; line of context extrapolated from sides of trench or from a parallel section. Context number of fills and layers shown in (rounded) brackets; cuts in [square] brackets. If the document is printed in A4 without scaling the drawings should be at the scale described in the caption, but due to differences between manufacturers of software and printing devices pages may not be reproduced at the intended size: the reader should not rely on the verbal scale description.

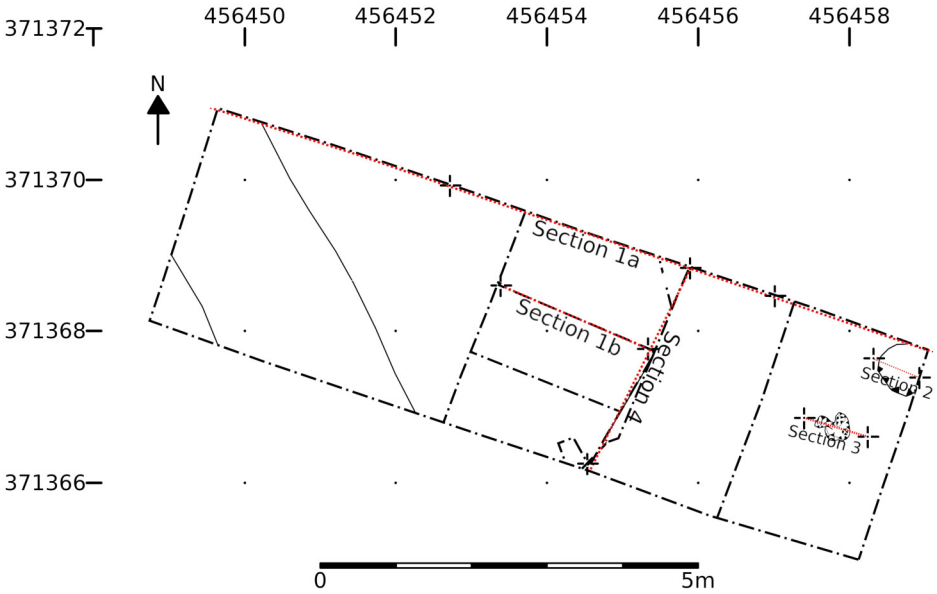

Figure 11 - Plan of trench 01 as excavated showing location of sections shown in this document.

Plate 01 - Eastern end of Trench 01 looking south at upper surface of (102) with broken fragments of land drain pushed into upper surface. Scale bar divisions = 0.5m.

Context (100) sealed a mottled brown and reddish brown silty sand with occasional sub angular light red sandstone lumps (102) on the terrace at the east end of the trench (Plate 01), and (100) sealed a deposit that consisted of mixed lumps of mid brown silty sand and reddish brown silty sand (104) down slope (west) of the terrace. (102) proved on excavation to be equivalent to (104), deriving from the same depositional event. but (104) was distinguished by containing much less reddish brown silty sand.

Plate 02 - Eastern end of trench 01 showing context (102) at c.0.2m BGL. Note wooden planks and rusted box padlock located just to the north west of the westernmost plank. Looking south. Scale bar divisions = 0.5m

The interface between (100) and (102) was sharp, but the proportion of brown silty sand in the mottled brown and reddish brown silty sand diminished with depth, meaning (102) became almost entirely reddish brown silty sand with lumps of red sandstone after a spit.

Plate 03 - Eastern end of trench 01 at c.0.25m BGL showing timbers and feature [108] prior to excavation. Looking north. Scale bar divisions = 0.5m

Between about 0.13 to 0.2m below present ground level in (102) a number of wooden planks were encountered (Plate 02). These varied in size. The widest was c. 0.21m, two others were approximately 0.18m wide, and the others, at around 0.1m and less in width, appeared to be broken fragments. The long axes of the planks were all lying within 15° of horizontal and their long axes were orientated broadly north east - south west. The majority (four planks) extended beyond the southern section of the trench so their full length could not be measured, with only one plank and a splinter from another falling entirely within the excavated area. The more complete plank had a present length of approximately 1.35m. No evidence of

nails could be seen in the planks and, though the timber was quite decayed, there were no obvious signs of joint holes or other signs of fixing or former use. Close to the northern end of the most complete of the planks part of a rusted iron padlock was found (Plate 02). Other than the fact it shared the same stratigraphic position and was in close proximity to one of the planks there was no indication that the planks and padlock were related. Padlocks with hinged shackles operated by a revolving key were introduced in the late medieval period and became particularly popular in the post medieval (Goodall 2011, 234); the same type of padlock is still offered today, for example by Henry Squire and Sons Ltd of Wolverhampton (https://www.squirelocks.co.uk/securityproducts/product/220). It is probable, in consideration of context and finds, that the Cuckney example is of later 18th to 20th century date.

Plate 04 - Eastern end of trench 01 showing features [108] (foreground) and [110] (behind, adjacent to north facing section) following sectioning. Looking north. Scale bar length 0.5m

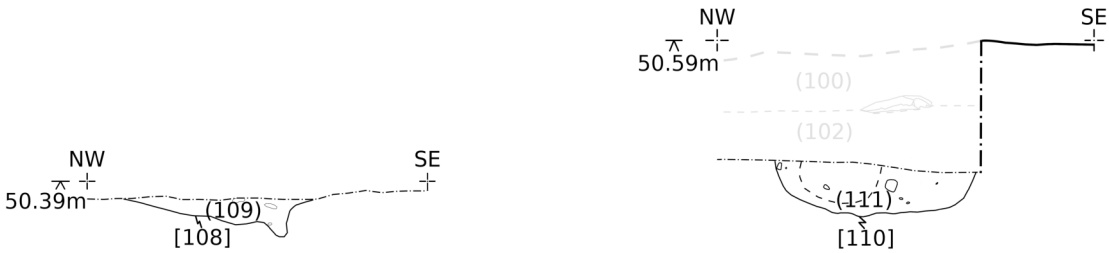

Figure 12 - South west facing sections of feature [108] (section 3) (left) and [110] (section 2) (right). Scale = 1:20

As the brown mottling of (102) disappeared with excavation of another spit, a number of features appeared cut into (102) (Plate 03). In plan these were broadly circular, appearing, prior to excavation, similar in appearance to pits, post holes and stake holes. They included [108], with fill (109), a small circular feature towards the eastern end of the trench, and [110], with fill (111), a larger circular pit like feature in the north east corner of the trench. [110] was approximately 0.6m in diameter. On excavation (Plate 04) the most promising of these features proved to be amorphous in profile and [108] at least was clearly the result of natural processes (most likely animal burrowing combined with root action) The fill (111) of feature [110] contained fragments of 19th century glass and an iron nail; the somewhat more regular shape of [110] suggested it was slightly more likely to be a product of human activity than [108] but it too seemed more likely to have been an animal burrow, particularly given the near circular patch of darker fill that appeared to be leading into it and seen in its section (Figure 12).

Finds were notably scarce in spit 2 of (102); more so than in spit 1. The deposit also became firmer and more compact with depth and lumps of red sandstone occurred with increasing frequency (see Plate 04). At approximately 0.2m below present ground level all traces of brown mottling were gone, finds and fragments of coal and charcoal were extremely scarce (those where the precise find spot could be determined being found in worm holes, so likely to have moved down the soil profile from above rather than deriving from the surrounding context). Attempted removal of a spit of this firmer material at the western end of the trench revealed it to be an extremely compacted deposit of red sandstone lumps and sand of the same colour (derived from decayed sandstone) that was devoid of finds, though it did contain the occasional quartzite pebble. This deposit was given the context number (116). The compacted nature of the deposit and the lack of finds lead to the initial interpretation of the context as the (disturbed) upper surface of the expected sandstone bedrock. In plan it had a very sharp edge, running diagonally across the excavation, where it met context (114) (Plate 06). Initially this sharp edge was interpreted as a cut, [115], but further excavation was unable to demonstrate this and it more likely that it formed as a result of the way the contemporary deposits (114) and (116) had been formed. As a result of the incredibly compact nature of (116), being so firm that it was extremely difficult to excavate even using mattocks, at a depth of c.0.2m below present ground level further excavation of (116) was abandoned. Consequently, excavation of the easternmost 2m of the trench (see Figure 10) ceased at this depth.

In the central and western part of the trench, coming off the side of the terrace and moving down slope, a mixed deposit of reddish brown silty sand and brown silty sand, context (104), underlay the topsoil (100) and proved to be the equivalent of (102). (104) was a maximum of 0.3m thick and consisted of similar components to (102) (a mix of brown silty sand 'topsoil', reddish brown 'subsoil' and red sand from the geological substratum), but, in contrast to (102), it contained noticeably less red sand and a lower proportion of reddish brown silty sand (e.g. compare Plate 01, (102), with Plate 05, (104)).

Both (100) and (102) / (104) yielded post medieval and modern finds and small but significant quantities of late Saxon and Saxo-Norman pottery, some in fresh condition, and including Torksey (and Torskey type) ware, Stamford type ware and shell tempered wares including Lincoln Kiln Type ware, Lincoln Late Saxon Shelly Ware and Lincoln Fine Shelled Ware. Plastic and other mid 20th century or later finds in these layers indicated that (102) and (104) had been re-deposited in their present location in the latter half of the 20th century. They indicated that significant disturbance of the ground had taken place over parts of the site, including excavation down to the level of, and into, bedrock in places. This disturbance probably occurred relatively recently.

A linear feature, with fill that was mid brown in colour, silty sand in texture and with around 5% gravel, context (107), became apparent once the upper surface of (104) was fully exposed. The line of the cut, [106], was, at this point, very difficult to discern due to the similarity of the fill (107) to the brown patches present in (104). However, the feature appeared to be running diagonally across the south western part of the trench in a broadly north west to south easterly direction. The fill (107) contained plastic and other modern material. At this level it was ephemeral, with the apparent line of the feature being scraped away after a few centimetres of excavation.

In the centre of the trench close to the southern section, probably cut by the service trench [106], a somewhat circular feature [112] / fill (113) was seen apparently cutting into (104) (Plate 05). It was approximately 1m in diameter and distinguished by its brown silty sand fill against the mottled reddish brown silty sand of (104). It proved extremely difficult to follow the edges of the feature, while the presence of brown silty sand context (114), initially believed to be a fill of [112] but later realised to be a layer underneath (104), lead to [112] being overcut into the underlying deposit (114) (Plate 05). It is unclear if [112] was indeed a deliberately excavated pit that was just of extremely shallow depth, or if it was simply a lens of brown silty sand amongst the generally reddish brown silty sand of re-deposited context (104). The latter seems most likely as there was no indication of the presence of a pit in the unexcavated half when the remains of (104) had been stripped to expose the upper surface of (114) and there was additionally no sign of a cut in the north facing section when the trench was fully

excavated. Either way, the stratigraphic position of the feature indicates it was of mid 20th century date at the earliest.

Plate 05 - 'Feature' [112] in the central section of trench 01, cut through (104). Looking north. Large scale bar divisions = 0.5m; small scale bar is 0.5m in length.

Plate 06 - Layer (114), containing drainage pipes, to the west and layer (116), red sand and sandstone, to the east. Looking north. Large scale bars 1m in length, short (vertical) scale bar 0.5m in length.

Re-deposited layer (104) overlay a soil (114), which was encountered at approximately 0.42m below present ground level in the central part of the trench (Plate 06). (114) consisted of a brown silty sand with reddish brown silty sand mottling. At the interface with (104) there was some mixing of deposits and patches of (104) appeared to have been pressed into the surface of (114). There were also very thin lenses of light grey sand no more than c. 0.01m thick at the interface between the two contexts. A series of circular ceramic land drainage pipes were either pushed into (114) from the overlying (104) or protruded from the surface of (114) into the overlying (104). The drainage pipes had been made in one piece by extrusion indicating a later 19th or 20th century date. Their find spots appeared to form a line running broadly north-east to south west (Figure 13). However, they lay at a variety of different orientations and inclinations and there were scattered too sparsely along the putative line to suggest that they were once part of a continuous drain, even allowing for disturbance and dragging as might be expected if an in-situ land drain were to be disturbed by one or two

ploughing events: like the planks in (102) they seem best interpreted as having been dumped in this location and fortuitously formed what appears to be an alignment. In support of this interpretation is the fact that there were also pieces of land drain included within deposits (102) (e.g. Plate 01) and (104) and also a modern brick in line with the circular drainage pipes in (114).

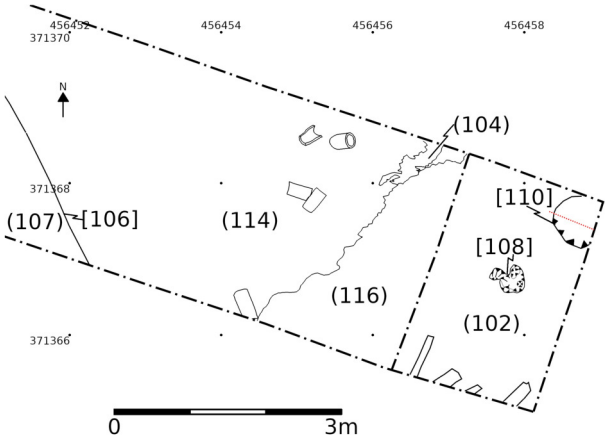

Figure 13 - Plan of central part of Trench 01 showing (116); drainage pipes in (114); and cut [106] at c.0.42m BGL; and planks and features [108] and [110] at a higher stratigraphic level at the east end of the trench.

Plate 07 - West end of trench 01 looking south. Service trench [106] with fill (119) is grey area to west. Scale bar divisions 0.5m except small vertical scale bar which is 0.5m in length.

(114) was variable in thickness, at a maximum being approximately 0.11m thick. It contained a range of 17th to 20th century artefacts, mainly pottery, along with a very small quantity of medieval sherds. Unlike (100) and (102) / (104), late Saxon and Saxo-Norman pottery was notable by its absence. (114) included silver foil and burnt plastic amongst the finds, suggesting it had not been buried until the second half of the 20th century at the earliest. The fact that the drainage pipes crossed the context boundary between (114) and (104) suggests there was some contemporaneity.

There are two possible interpretations for (114). It may have been a re-deposited 'topsoil' that was dumped on the existing ground surface (117) at the time of the large scale earthmoving

activities that also deposited (102) and (104). Alternatively, it may have been an existing soil that was heavily disturbed and churned up (for example by the tracks of heavy earth moving machinery) during the earthmoving activities that dumped (102) and (104). Certainly the sharp and undulating boundary between (114) and (104) and the presence of the drainage pipes crossing the context boundaries suggests the disturbance of (114) and deposition of (104) must have been virtually contemporary activities.

At about 0.53m below current ground surface (in the middle of the trench) a brown silty sand with occasional yellowish brown mottles was encountered. This was assigned the context number (117). (117) was thin, reaching a maximum of 0.17m thick at the thickest point, but being considerably thinner in other places, such as against the south facing section of the trench where it averaged little more than 0.04m thick.

Beneath (117) was a mid reddish brown silty sand with brown mottling (118) (Plate ABB07). In plan this context was distinguished by the colour and the presence of between c.5 - 10% rounded to sub-rounded quartzite pebbles, moderately sorted and sized under c.40 mm; this was in distinct contrast to the very sparse quartzite pebble content of (117) and a similarly low quantity of stone in the underlying (120). The stone content in (118) varied however and quartzite pebbles were not particularly noticeable in the drawn south facing section; the true nature of this deposit as recorded was more accurately shown in section, for example, in the north facing section (see Plate 12). Though (118) was also a silty sand, the texture differed noticeably from both (117) above and (120) below. The difference in texture is clearly visible in the photographs of the sections where (118) appears as a much smoother band in the section compared to the more granular textures of the other contexts. While the whole context contained lighter mottling there was some indication that more or less horizontal patches of lighter silty sand were present at the upper interface of (118) with (117). It is not impossible that these may represent a former turf line.

When excavation exposed the top of layer (118) at approximately 0.5m below present ground level, a linear fill consisting of crushed limestone, limestone dust and occasional crushed quartzite pebbles, (119). also became apparent (Plate ABB07, ABB08). This feature was interpreted as the deliberate backfill of a service trench, possibly a sewer, of modern date and likely still active. The cut of the trench [106], which had been hinted at by earlier fills, was finally clearly distinguishable at this level. It was on the same alignment, but wider than, the potential cut that had been suggested by fill (107) seen at a higher level. It is likely that the cut [106] was dug from at, or close to, the modern ground surface as seemed apparent in the sections of the trench: this would also account for the more silty dark brown silty sand (101) seen after turf removal at the western end of the trench if the service trench was backfilled with a mix of topsoil including some from the floodplain a few metres to the north. These deposits produced few finds of note. Service trench [106] was around 1.8 - 1.9m wide and in section appeared to be more or less vertical sided; both the width and profile of the trench would not be at all out of character with what might be expected in a trench cut by a mechanical excavator using a 6 foot ditching bucket in soils of this type. A modern date is also indicated by the compacted fill of (119), crushed limestone consisting of fines to around 60mm (2 1/2") (in practice the larger lumps were up to around 100mm at Cuckney). Exactly such a fill is specified in some modern building regulations, which for example state that crushed limestone of fines to 2.5" lumps 'has just the right balance of aggregate sizes and square shaped aggregate to ensure interlocking of the particles which will ultimately maximize density, strength, and resist future settlement'. Larger or smaller sizes of aggregate are not considered to offer the same degree of compaction resistance, may become waterlogged due to large interstitial spaces or have other non-optimal characteristics (Anonymous, no date). The crushed limestone backfill suggests that construction of this service may have been somewhat over specified: such optimum techniques of compacted backfill are recommended where service trenches are excavated beneath pavements when more than a few mm of subsidence are not welcome

Plate 08 - Layer (120) in foreground in reduced area of excavation in trench 01. Looking east. Scale bar divisions = 0.5m

Plate 09 - Layer (122). The fill (125) of feature [121] is just visible as the pinker soil in the north east corner of the excavation. Feature [123] is visible in the west facing section. Looking east. Scale bar divisions = 0.5m

Once the line of the service trench became clear, to avoid potential damage to the service pipe within it, no further excavation of [106] was conducted. Additionally, [106] crossed the trench diagonally. To have attempted to excavate the deposits to the side of it, through which it was cut, would have resulted in the area of excavation assuming an awkward triangular shape. Consequently, excavation of the western end of the trench ceased at this depth. With excavation of the western 4m of the trench stopped by the presence of the service trench and excavation of the eastern 3.8m stopped by the intractable deposit (116) this left only the

central section of the trench to be excavated further. This area was approximately 2.3m west to east and the full width (3m) of the trench north to south.
Context (118) was discovered to seal a layer of brown silty sand (120). While of similar colour this was clearly and obviously distinguished from (118) above by the presence of large quantities of coal fragments in its upper layer; these were in the main well sorted and under 10mm in size, comprising up to c.5% of the deposit. The samples of these black inclusions that have been examined microscopically from this deposit have all proven to be coal; the charcoal and clinker that form a significant proportion of the 'black stuff' in the stratigraphically later deposits appear to be almost entirely absent from the investigated samples of such material from context (120). In addition to the presence of coal, context (120) was noted to be softer than (118). Context (120) was a maximum of 0.2m thick.

Context (120) yielded a range of mainly small and abraded pottery sherds. These were predominantly 18th century and included Nottingham (and possibly Derbyshire / Crich) brown salt glazed stoneware (including mugs with forms belonging to the 2nd half of the 18th century and bowls (probably for slops or sugar) of more general 18th century date), black and brown glazed earthenwares, thrown slipwares, Staffordshire / Bristol type mottled ware (though more likely made in Ticknall, Derbyshire), slip-coated ware, creamware plates and dishes (mostly with moulded rims) and also occasional hollow wares, the latter with under-glaze blue hand painted designs; and early pearlwares, mostly plates / dishes with moulded rim decoration but also occasional under glaze blue hand painted chinoiserie designs. Forms, where identifiable, are plates and dishes with occasional hollow wares (the latter probably related to liquid consumption (e.g. tea)) in the refined earthenwares, along with bowls, possible chamber pots and perhaps food serving vessels. The majority suggested a date in the second half of the 18th century. There does not seem to be much, if any, reason to believe, based on the finds, that deposition of waste continued beyond the final decade of the 18th century or the first decade of the 19th century at the latest.

Plate 10 - Feature [121] cut through (122) and partially sectioned. Looking north east. Scale bar divisions = 0.5m

Only just within the area of excavation was feature [123] (Plate 09). It was mainly encountered in the west facing section of the reduced area of excavation and the bulk of this feature clearly fell outside the excavated area. The fill (124) consisted of around 50% red sandstone lumps and c.5% poorly sorted rounded quartzite pebbles in a brown silty sand matrix. The linear edge of the feature that appeared in plan was aligned broadly north east to south west. The feature had a minimum length of c.2.2m within the trench, but only c.0.15m of its width was present. The base was undulating and the feature had a maximum depth of just under 0.4m. Stratigraphically it was sealed by (118) and was cut into (120). As so little of the feature was exposed in the trench there was insufficient evidence to allow a satisfactory explanation or interpretation to be advanced.

The interface between context (120) and the underlying context (122) was diffuse. Context (120) gradually lightened and the shade changed from brown and mottled reddish brown until, in context (122), the silty sand was a distinct brownish red (Plate 09). It contained around 1% charcoal which was well sorted with particles ranging to approximately 5mm and occasional rounded to sub rounded quartzite pebbles of sizes ranging up to 70mm across their widest dimension.

A feature aligned broadly west - east began to be discerned after a 0.05m spit of (120) had been removed. At this depth it was ill defined, appearing as less than 1% mottling of pinkish clayey sand (125) at the north eastern corner of the excavated area (Plate 09). It was initially unclear which deposit, (122) or (125), represented fill and which was the older deposit through which [121] was cut. Ultimately it was determined that [121] was a shallow wide feature with a 'U' shaped base, aligned broadly east to west, tongue shaped, and cut through (122), the reddish brown silty sand. The fill (125) of feature [121] was particularly notable due to the presence of pink clayey sand mottling (Plate 10). This was not present in the underlying or overlying deposits within the trench so their origin was uncertain and it seems most likely they derive from whatever use to which the gully was put, rather than coming from the surrounding deposits. The cut, [121], was wide and broad based, being a maximum of 0.7m wide and extending at least 2.1m within the trench (Plate 11). In depth the base of the cut showed little gradient; it varied between 49.10m AOD at the western end to 49.14m AOD at the eastern section. It ended with a rounded terminal (Figure 14). This could have represented an actual terminal to the feature but it seems more likely that the way the more or less horizontal feature 'feathered out' at the western end was a result of it being ploughed out or otherwise truncated in deposits that sloped broadly from east to west.

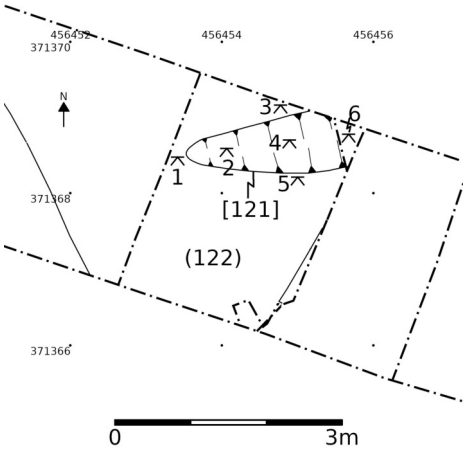

Figure 14 - Plan of feature [121] in central section of trench 01. Levels indicated on the plan are as follows, rounded to two decimal places and are all in metres above Ordnance Datum: 1:49.12m; 2:49.11m; 3:49.16m; 4:49.14m; 5:49.21m; 6: 49.26m

Plate 11 - Feature [121] fully excavated. Looking north. Scale bar divisions = 0.5m.

Finds from the fill (125) included several sherds of a black glazed earthenware vessel with splashes of glaze of probable post medieval date - fragments of this vessel also occur in the overlying contexts. In addition to the sherd links to a later context, the stratigraphic

relationship of [121] indicated that it was dug from near the top of (122). This, and the nature of the pottery itself, all demonstrate that feature [121] is of post medieval date.

Layer (122) produced a sizable assemblage of late Saxon and Saxo-Norman ceramics. This material was abraded and included many small crumbs under 1g in weight, but also larger fragments. All the main Lincolnshire late Saxon types were present. These were, in the main, small abraded fragments. Larger pieces were of post Norman conquest date; they included several sherds, some joining and some non joining but from the same vessel, of a Stamford ware pitcher, and the full profile in joining and non-joining sherds of a jar from an unknown (probably local) pottery industry. The pottery, particularly the post Norman conquest sherds, were found in the upper spits of (122); the quantity of pottery decreased with depth. The less abraded vessels featuring joining sherds were located in the uppermost spits.

There was some contamination of this context, particularly in spit 1 towards its surface at the upper interface with (120), and under the cut of gully [121], in the form of clay tobacco pipe stems and small fragments of creamware and pearlware of later 18th to early 19th century date.

Plate 12 - Intrusive clay tobacco pipe stem in early medieval context (122). Note the brown fill of the animal burrow (probably mole hole) in which the stem is located. Looking south. Larger divisions of scale bar = 0.1m

Context (122) provided evidence for the degree of bioturbation of layers and consequent mixing of finds, particularly in terms of the intrusion of later finds from overlying contexts into earlier contexts. Key examples of this were provided by the abundant rootlet and worm holes and rodent burrows seen in (122) (Plate 12). Not only were anachronistic fragments of nylon tights found in the lowest spits of (122) (just under the base of [121]), which are likely to have been brought down as nesting material in the burrows of rats, or more generally by accident by other rodents, but fragments of 17th - 18th century clay tobacco pipe stem were found in otherwise quite secure late Saxon - Saxo-Norman contexts 1.03m below present ground level. Careful excavation allowed the context of the latter find to be examined: the pipe stem was securely located within an animal burrow of approximately 70mm diameter (most likely a mole). This must also account for the intrusive flakes of the splash glazed brown glazed earthenware vessel found below the lowest detectable level of the cut of feature [121]; they were notably found only under the base of gully [121] and, like the tights, are most plausibly interpreted as intrusive in the contexts they were found in. Additionally the source of these intrusive materials, indicated by joining sherds or flakes from individual vessels, generally from the context immediately overlying that in which the intrusive material was found, and the mode of intrusion (in the form of clearly visible worm, root and animal burrows such as Plate 12) clearly signposts the origin of these anachronistic finds as being intrusive from later layers higher in the stratigraphic sequence.

At this point in order to comply with the health and safety risk assessment for the site, it was necessary to step in the sides of the trench (Plate 13). This resulted in a slit of c.1m width and c.2.26m length remaining to be excavated. The small size thus available for further excavation made interpretation of the features and deposits encountered difficult.

Plate 13 - Layer (126) exposed in the slot in the centre of the trench. Looking north. Scale bar divisions = 0.5m

At the base of (122) was (126) (Plate 13). This layer was similar to but slightly darker in colour, and very similar in texture and inclusions to (122) but was distinguished by the presence of sparse pinkish silty sand mottling. It sealed the underlying deposits and had a sharp interface with the overlying deposit (122). It was approximately 0.15m thick.

After three spits of (126) it became apparent that a feature, [128], was present in the eastern end of the sondage. It was only partially exposed in the trench. The fill, (129), was a very wet reddish brown silty sand. Due to the dampness it was not possible to sieve 100% of this deposit and it is consequently possible that smaller fragments of pottery, had they been

present, may not have been detected. Finds were sparse, and were limited to small sherds of late Saxon shell tempered pottery.

Feature [128] proved to dip towards the east and towards the north, with shallow sides, becoming steeper to the east (Plate 14; ABB16; Figure 15), but the trench exposed too little of the feature for there to be any certainty about what it might have represented. It could have been a relatively discreet feature such as a post hole, or the trench may have only clipped the edge of a much larger feature such as a pit, well, or a backfilled natural hollow. Given the shallow sides of the feature it seems unlikely it was a post hole, but insufficient evidence was revealed in the trench for certainty. At the deepest point, the base of the feature cut into a very damp light grey silty clay sand, with a high proportion of rounded quartzite pebbles. This deposit was interpreted as a natural deposit (probably of Holocene date and of fluvial origin).

Plate 14 - Feature [128] prior to excavation of (130). Looking north. Scale bar = 0.5m

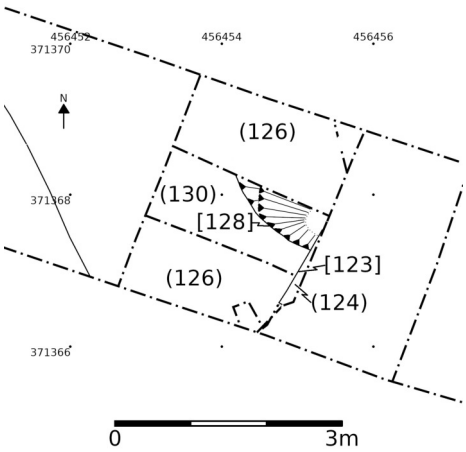

Figure 15 - Post excavation plan of trench 01 sondage showing feature [128] and [123]

The layer (130) into which the feature [128] was cut was a very wet brown silty sand. It contained only very sparse late Saxon pottery (all of which was very small sherds) and a number of pot boiler stones. It was not possible to fully excavate this deposit to the geological substratum exposed in the deepest part of the cut feature. It probably represented the remains of a pre-late Saxon period ?soil, with the pot boiler stones perhaps having rolled

down as a result of colluviation from activity further up the hill, such as that possibly represented in trench 02. There are reasonable grounds to suspect that the few pottery sherds found in the deposit were intrusive, having been introduced from the overlying layers by bioturbation. Thus, though it was not conclusively proven by the excavation, it is suggested that the soil (130) into which the feature [128] was cut had developed on the 'natural', probably fluvially deposited, grey sands and gravels. It included some cultural material (the pot boilers) but the late Saxon material was probably incorporated as a result of animal action. It was the deposit into which the late Saxon features were cut.

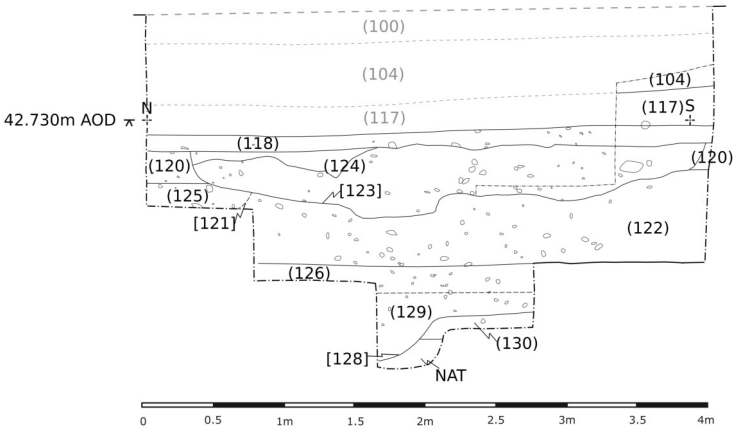

Figure 16 - West facing section of trench 01 (section 4) showing feature [128] and other features.

Trench 02:

The most recent context was brown silty sand turf / topsoil (200). This was thinnest over the apex of bank (202) and thickest either side of it.

The earthwork feature detected in the 2015 topographic survey was shown to be a bank. This consisted of a reddish brown silty sand (202), sealed by (200). On the eastern side of the bank modern intrusions [220] and [221], with fills (206) and (204) respectively, cut into the (202). These appeared to have been cut into the eastern side of the bank. They contained 20th century artefacts, including fragments of barbed wire and spent blank cartridge cases. At the base of (202) the component of rounded quartzite pebbles increased, with a noticeable band of large quartzite pebbles at the bottom of (202). Under (202) was a very thin layer of yellowish brown silty sand (215). This overlay a yellowish brown silty sand (212). Both (212) and (215) had a lower pebble component to (202). (212) overlay a pale yellow silty sand (216). (216) contained a few small rounded quartzite pebbles. (216) overlay banded yellow silty sands (217) which constituted the geological substratum at this point.

To the west of the bank (202), a reddish brown silty sand (203) appeared to lap up against bank (202).

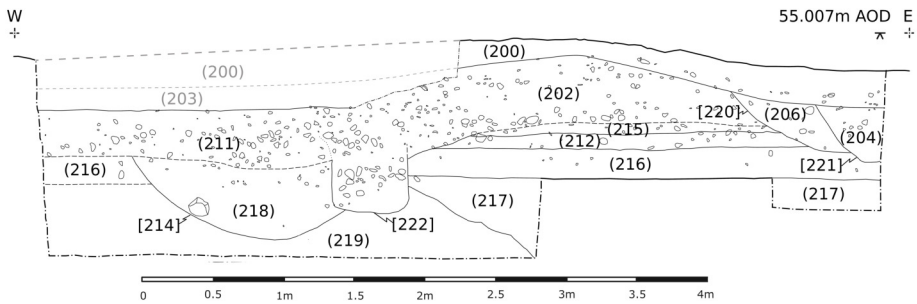

Figure 17 - South facing section of trench 02.

Feature (205) was encountered in the west of the trench, west of bank (202). It consisted of a spread of quartzite cobbles (Plate 15). It was initially encountered at the extreme western end of the trench; consequently the trench was expanded to take in as much of the feature as possible. The feature comprised a layer of rounded quartzite pebbles that appeared to have been dumped on a ground surface (Figure 18). The deposit also included a single piece of metalworking slag, presumably incorporated accidentally with the pebbles, and a very decayed animal bone. A few small pieces of pottery were found between the stones. They included a medieval splash glazed whiteware and some sherds of an oxidised gritty ware: the latter was very similar in fabric to Roman Derbyshire Ware but is perhaps more likely to be related to the medieval Northern Gritty Wares (Vince and Young 2008) of Yorkshire. The pottery was in the form of small fragments but in relatively fresh condition and from its position it may have been dropped on the stones and trodden into the spaces between them while the surface was in use. However, it is possible that the pottery was accidentally incorporated into the feature, having been accidentally scraped up from wherever the pebbles were gathered from. In this context it is notable that the pottery was all encountered in a vertical plane between the stones, not horizontally under them, which does seem more likely to occur with material pressed down between the stones during rather than accidentally incorporated material, which would most likely occur at various attitudes and in various locations, including under the stones. A section dug through (205) (Plate 16) indicated that the pebbles were a single layer. There was no indication of any depression or compaction of the pebble surface caused, for example, by the weight of a post built structure pressing into the pebbles, and no signs of post holes or other cut features associated with the pebble spread. As can be noted from Plate 15 though, the surface on which the pebbles had been placed, or were trodden into, dipped to the east.

Plate 15 - Feature (205) looking west. The surrounding deposit has been taken down a spit to ensure that no pebbles placed, for example, on an undulating surface, or other features such as post holes or beam slots, remained hidden, making (205) appear as though it is on a pedestal. Scale bar divisions = 0.5m

At the same stratigraphic layer as (205) and located just to the north east of the main bulk of cobbles was a large rounded fragment of stone described as 'sandstone' on the plan (Figure 18). It was pale yellow in colour and slightly reddened at some of the edges as though it had been burnt. The photographs, colour and description suggest that this was probably a water rounded example of the local dolostone. This was widely used for building stone in the region and includes the well known Mansfield White stone, though there are more local outcrops in the Cadeby Formation to the west of Cuckney, including some formerly oolitic facies between Mansfield and Creswell (Parry and Lott 2013, no page numbers). This stone is not native to the site, which is situated on the Lenton Sandstone Formation; however the British Geological

Survey maps the Cadeby Formation dolostone as occurring around 1.5km west, at the closest to the church at Cuckney, along with an outcrop of Brotherton Formation Dolomitic Limestone around 2km north west. The rounded surfaces of the dolostone from (205) indicate it was not quarried as building material; it likely arrived in or near Cuckney as a result of glacial, or post glacial fluvial, activity. It may have been deliberately selected from locally available material (e.g. gravel deposits exposed by the river) as the biggest of the locally available stone without having to spend money on buying quarried stones. The fact that it has a relatively flat surface may be of interest in this context; that this flat surface was lying more or less horizontal and at the same level as the upper part of the cobble spread is potentially even more so. This may all be no more than coincidence, but there is the possibility that this stone might represent, for example, a post pad, with its relatively small size for such a purpose perhaps being explained by use in a peasant dwelling where the materials available were limited to those that could be sourced locally.

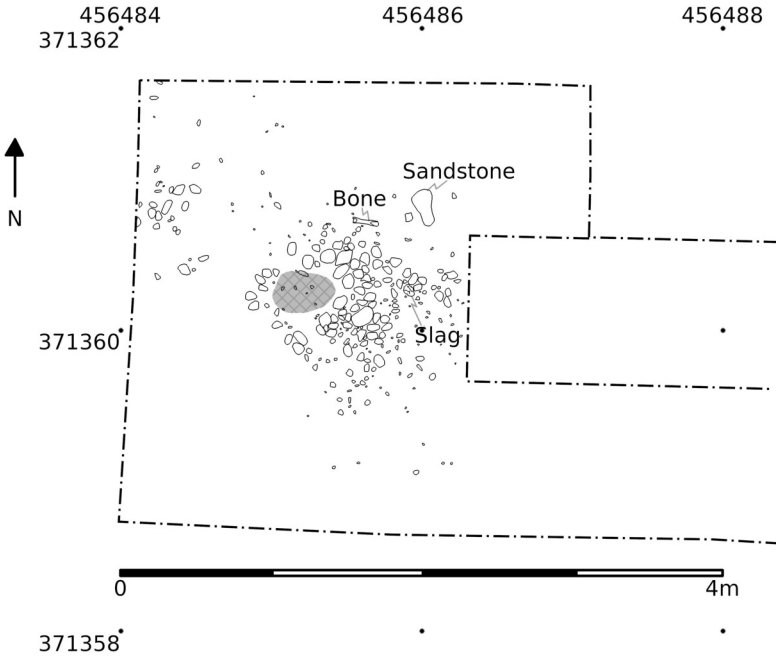

Figure 18 - Plan of feature (105) at western end of Trench 02. Hatched area indicates area of disturbance of pebbles. Grid coordinates relate to Ordnance Survey British National Grid. Scale 1 to 50.

Plate 16 - Section through feature (205). Looking south east. The hole at the eastern end of the section is a modern animal burrow (mole). Scale bar divisions = 0.5m

The geological substratum in trench 02 consisted of horizontally banded sands and silty and clayey sands (Plate 17). The older of these, (219) were red in colour and largely devoid of quartzite pebbles. (217) was in contrast yellow and, from the shape of the interface between the two, may represent deposits laid down in a channel cutting through (219). The interface

between the two was sharp and there were a few rounded quartzite pebbles at the interface. This may suggest that high energy fluvial activity cut a channel through (219), leaving behind a few of the larger clasts, and was followed by a lower energy environment that deposited the sands and silts. The yellow colour of the sands in (217) is likely to be due to the different oxidation state of the iron in the sand and might suggest a different depositional environment to (219); though the direction of flow (broadly north - south, across the mainly east - west Holocene drainage pattern that locally includes the valley of the River Poulter) at least suggests this is a pre-Holocene channel: it is reasonable to suggest it is the remains of a Permian or Triassic palaeochannel. Of relevance to the interpretation of the archaeological features, it was notable that there were less than 1% rounded quartzite pebbles in both geological deposits.

Plate 17 - Geological substratum in trench 02: yellow and yellowish brown sands overlying red and red brown sands. Note the sparse rounded quartzite pebbles at interface between the two. Looking north east. Sondage c.1m wide.

Cut into the geological substratum were two features, [214] and [222]. [214] was the earlier of the two, being approximately 2.5m wide and about 0.6m deep (as surviving). On excavation it appeared to be of shallow and wide based form most closely approximating to a 'u' shape (Plate 18). There was some uncertainty about the precise edges of the cut due to the mobility of iron and clay in the local sandy soils; percolating groundwater has been demonstrated to deposit such materials in the shape of the ditch cut / cuts that look like an original edge but that are actually a natural post burial phenomenon that, depending on soil conditions, may result in the edge of the original cut appearing to be some distance inside, or some distance outside, the actual cut. Consequently, on conclusion of excavation, a sondage was excavated into the geological substratum. This confirmed that the lowest fills of ditch [214], that had been considered questionable during excavation due to the lack of finds and the close visual and textural similarity of the fill to the 'natural' deposits on the site, were indeed the fill of a cut feature, since the cut as inferred during excavation could be seen in the sondage to interrupt the banding of the geologically deposited sands in (219); the latter continued either side of the cut of [214].

Cut [222] was only identified as a separate feature to [214] once they had been excavated. During the excavation it was noted that eastern edge of [214] had an unusually vertical edge to the cut (Plate 18). However, it was only when the section was examined closely that [222] was recognised as a separate feature due to the greater proportion of larger quartzite pebbles in the fill and the slightly darker brown colour of the matrix around these pebbles.

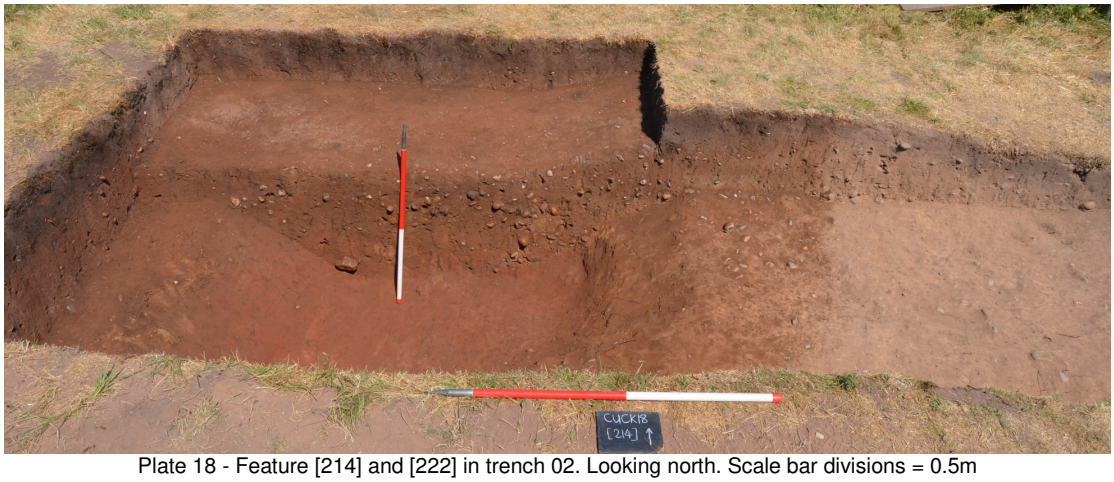

Plate 18 - Feature [214] and [222] in trench 02. Looking north. Scale bar divisions = 0.5m

[222] was approximately 0.5m wide; in profile the sides appeared to be vertical, though in the south facing section there appeared to be some distortion of this profile including undercutting to the east, almost as though something stuck in this trench had been had been removed by loosening it by rocking it back and forth (west to east) before withdrawing it. [222] cut the geological substratum (217) and feature [214].

As these two features ([214] and [222]) were not isolated until the excavation was complete, their fills were removed in one unit (though, of course, in 0.05m spits within that unit). Finds were scarce, with the majority being pot boiler stones. Other finds included a large relatively fresh sherd from a coil built and probably kiln fired vessel of possible early, middle or late Saxon date, an amorphous blob of spilt formerly molten lead of reasonable size (though grams not kg) and sherds of identifiable individual vessels of medieval date of which sherds were also present in (212) / (215) / (202). The fill of [214] contained few pebbles; that of [222] was conspicuous in section by the quantity of pebbles present. The lower fills of [214] were given the context number (218).

Plate 19 - Western end of trench 02 after excavation of the sondage into natural, showing features [214] and [220]. Looking north. Scale bar divisions = 0.5m

Test pitting:

The stratigraphic sequence in most of the test pits was the same (Plate 22; Plate 24): the lowest stratigraphic unit was a very leached yellow silty sand. This contained sparse examples of moderately abraded sherds of late Saxon pottery, including half of the spout of a Torksey Ware spouted pitcher or spouted bowl from one test pit. There was at least one sherd of this period from this layer in each test pit. The deposit is interpreted as a cultivation soil of late Saxon date.

The layers above this represented successive cultivation layers.

Features were encountered in three test pits. In the northernmost test pit, test pit 05, (Plate 25) the leached yellow silty sand was much thicker than in any of the other test pits; it was not bottomed and was still producing the occasional pot boiler stone at the maximum permissible excavation depth, though only in the uppermost levels of this deposit was late Saxon pottery encountered. It appears most likely that this deposit was the fill of a feature that was larger than the test pit. Whether it was a man made feature or a natural feature such as a stream channel or glacial run off channel is unknown. In the test pit in close proximity to the boundary between the area of investigation and the adjacent property to the south (test pit 01), a U shaped ditch was encountered (Plate 20; Plate 21). Only the north side of this feature was seen; it appeared to run west - east as far as could be determined. It may have been a boundary ditch (it was on the expected alignment for toft and croft boundaries from the historic mapping) or edge of a holloway. The final feature encountered was a relatively modern brick wall on stone foundation in test pit 03 (Plate 23), though the fill of the construction cut produced a large fresh sherd of a 13th-14th century jug of Nottingham type.

Plate 20 - Test pit 01 at maximum excavation depth of c.1.15m at the south eastern corner; showing profile of feature [103]. Looking east. Scale bar divisions = 0.5m

Plate 21 - Test pit 01. Looking north east. Scale bar divisions = 0.5m

Plate 22 - Test pit 02. Looking north at completed excavation at a depth of 0.85m. Scale bar divisions = 0.5m

Plate 23 - Test pit 03. Looking north. Scale bar divisions = 0.5m

Plate 24 - Test pit 04. Looking east at 0.61m depth.
Scale bar divisions = 0.5m

Plate 25 - Test pit 05. Looking east at 1.1m depth.
Scale bar divisions = 0.5m

Medieval pottery was relatively scarce with only a few sherds recovered from some of the test pits. It became notably more common in the southern part of the site, close to the modern boundary with the adjacent property, with most sherds being found in test pits 1, 2, and 3. It included a large fresh base sherd of a jug in Nottingham Green Glazed ware of 13th - 14th century, Brackenfield wares of probably broadly similar date. A small rim sherd of mid / late 12th century Skegby splashed ware was significant for the understanding of the distribution of the products of this industry. Later pottery included German stoneware.

Finds:

There were a wide range of finds from the trenches and test pits. Most significantly, there was a large assemblage of late Saxon pottery. This came mainly from stratified Saxo-Norman deposits in trench 01, with other sherds occurring residually in other contexts in this trench. There were smaller quantities from trench 02, where it was all residual in later features. The test pits also yielded small quantities of material of this date, including examples stratified within what was interpreted to be a contemporary cultivation soil. The bulk, if not possibly the entirety, of this material was Lincoln and Lincolnshire types. The cultivation soil contained quartz tempered wares such as Stamford type ware (kilns producing this type of ware are known in Stamford, Lincolnshire and Pontefract, Yorkshire, with production in other centres also suspected) and Torksey and Torksey type wares. A range of different Stamford fabrics is present, with the majority being glazed table wares. Identifiable forms are predominately pitchers or collared jars, some certainly of collared forms datable to the late 11th - early 12th century. Torksey and Torksey type wares are, where identifiable, jars. Rim forms are similar to those from kiln 6 at Torksey where they were produced alongside bowls with thumbed rims. There are also a few sherds of reduced (grey) sandy wares and fewer sherds of reduced (grey) gritty ware. However, the majority of the pottery is shell tempered wares or shell and quartz tempered wares. Some of the shell tempered wares were certainly wheel thrown, while others appear to have been hand made. They include Lincoln Fine Shelled ware, Lincoln Late Saxon Shelly ware and Lincoln Kiln Type ware. The shell tempered wares include jars and bowls. A sample of the late Saxon sherds can be seen in Plate 26.

Out of the whole assemblage of late Saxon - Saxo-Norman pottery found in the excavation decoration was rare, and was limited to square roller stamping on the shoulders of jars in both quartz and shell tempered wares, and glazing on some of the Stamford type wares.

The range of ware types, forms and decoration suggest the main period of activity on site began in the 10th century; most probably the latter half. There is little to suggest an earlier start to activity in the area, though a few sherds may be earlier and it is possible that the start of activity here could be pushed back into the first half of the 10th century or the late 9th.

Plate 26. Selection of Saxo-Norman pottery from the excavations. Actual size.

Alongside the late Saxon pottery, other finds that may be contemporary included a fragment of a quern stone that had been burnt and possibly deliberately broken (Plate 27). The grinding face was worn quite smooth; it had been pecked with a chisel possibly not long before destruction, possibly to increase its efficiency. Rotary querns have a long history as they were produced from the Iron Age onwards. However, their use dropped off in the medieval period.

With the arrival of the Normans there were prohibitions against private ownership and use of querns.

Querns are durable artefacts that are unlikely to have been accidentally broken or lost. As they are large lumps of stone they were also not usually thrown away; they often had an 'afterlife' since they make convenient lumps of building stone. They are also sometimes found on archaeological sites having been re-used as hearth stones. The Cuckney quern has a sooted and burnt upper surface. This could indicate it was used as a hearth stone or an oven lining after it was no longer able to be used for grinding; alternatively it may have been deliberately burnt in order to make it easier to destroy. It came from the Saxo-Norman deposit in trench 01.

The range of artefacts (including a burnt gritstone quern fragment, various currently unidentified iron objects (some nails, some certainly not nails), a lead fragment, and quantities of burnt clay that appear to be metalworking mould fragments) suggest occupation or similar activity in the immediate vicinity of trench 01 in the latter part of the 10th and in the 11th century. This may have continued beyond the Norman conquest but does not seem to have continued into the 13th century, and probably ended before or not far into the 12th century (Nottingham, Skegby and other Splashed wares are absent, for example). The later medieval sherds may be intrusive, but could also provide dating for when these deposits were subject to later cultivation.

0 10 20 30mm

Plate 27 - Quern fragment from trench 01 context (126). Actual size.

Medieval pottery was less common than late Saxon. The largest assemblage came from trench 02, in the bank. It comprised hand made shell tempered wares, which included Lincoln Early Medieval shell tempered ware and Lincoln Fine Shelled ware, alongside North Nottinghamshire quartz and shell tempered ware, along with sandy wares from an unknown manufacturing site. A selection of these sherds are shown in figure 28. The Lincolnshire types have the best known date ranges, which include late 10th to mid / late 12th century for the Lincoln Fine Shelled Ware, mid 12th - early / mid 13th century for the Lincoln Early Medieval shell tempered ware. The date range for the other wares is less well established, with NNQS having been found from 12th to 14th century and the local sand tempered oxidised ware not previously recognised on any other site: the thin walls of this jar suggest it is more likely to be 12th century than 13th or 14th century.

There were a few small sherds in amongst the other material that may be early or middle Saxon in date. These could suggest there was some continuity of activity at Cuckney from early or middle Saxon times and on. However, they are too small and abraded for the identification to be definite. Additionally one large and relatively unabraded sherd came from ditch [214] or [222]. This was part of a coil built vessel, probably a jar or pitcher. It had very slight possible traces of burnishing to the exterior. Saxon pottery specialist Jane Young tentatively suggested it could be an early to middle Saxon type. However, it appears to have been well fired, with an oxidised core and reduced surfaces and margins, as well as reduction

over a break following the edge of one of the coils. Such even and regular firing is far more in keeping with what would be seen in a kiln firing rather than the bonfire firings of early and middle Saxon times and standard bonfire firings are not usually held at a high enough temperature for long enough to burn out all the carbon within the clay across the full thickness of the sherd. It also seems unlikely that a bonfire would have continuously oxidising conditions for long enough to fully oxidise the sherd followed by reducing conditions at the end of the firing to reduce the surfaces (though the latter could be achieved by smothering the bonfire). If the sherd is kiln fired, it would not be earlier than the re-introduction of the pottery kiln in late Saxon times. The dating of this sherd must therefore remain in some doubt.

The test pits yielded a more or less complete hone (sharpening stone) in a quartz mica schist (see back cover). This stone is also known as Norwegian ragstone and comes from Eidsborg, near Telemark, in Norway. The superior quality of Norwegian ragstone was recognised from an early period and the stone was exported in large quantities for the manufacture of hones. The trade in the stone seems initially to have some linkage with the Vikings as Norweigian ragstone starts to appear on a large scale around the same time as the Viking expansion began, and Norwegian ragstone is found distributed across the whole of the Viking world. Despite more local alternatives being available, Norwegian ragstone forms a significant proportion of all hones and sharpening stones on English sites from late Saxon to medieval times. Production continued even beyond this; Norwegian ragstone was written about by 'economic geologists' in the 19th century and the last quarry in Eidsborg only closed in the second half of the 20th century.

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Plate 28 - Pottery from bank (208). Left: four sherds of oxidised sandy jar with external sooting to lower body. Top right: inside of North Nottinghamshire Quartz and Shell tempered ware jar showing finger marks. Lower right: five joining sherds of the rim and shoulder of a Lincoln Early Medieval Shell tempered ware ridged shouldered jar.

Earlier finds were represented by pot boiler stones (MDA 1997), used for heating liquids. In the absence of scientific dating methods they are un-datable, but are most likely to be prehistoric to Roman. They suggest earlier activity at Cuckney that probably involved cooking. An absence of Roman finds may suggest they are prehistoric. Indeed, they might belong with a fragment of a late Neolithic / early Bronze Age invasively flaked knife. This was the only datable fragment of fint found, although there were also a few pieces of hard hammer struck flint waste that might be contemporary but which could not be more closely dated. The few flint items indicate that during the great span of the prehistoric period people did occasionally pass through what became Cuckney, but the small quantity of finds do not suggest that there was any sustained or large scale prehistoric activity in the immediate vicinity of the trenches.

There were almost no Roman finds aside from a fragment of Roman brick. If the brick came from a Roman settlement at Cuckney it would be expected that there would be a lot of other Roman finds: Roman pottery for example is abundant on most types of Roman site. It is therefore probable that the brick has been brought here from a Roman settlement elsewhere after the Roman period. Both the early church in Saxon times and then the Norman elite following the Norman conquest sought out and re-used Roman building materials in their stone buildings. This has been seen as an attempt by these essentially new institutions to portray themselves to the English people as the natural successors of the Roman Empire, and to acquire legitimacy and kudos for themselves by appropriating the memory of Roman civilisation (Eaton, 2000). Roman brick and tile can still be seen incorporated into the herringbone masonry of a number of early Norman churches in Nottinghamshire, such as St Peter's, Laneham, St Nicholas, Sturton le Steeple, and St John the Evangelist, Carlton in Lindrick. In all of these buildings the Roman material serves no obvious structural purpose and so it is likely to have been incorporated for symbolic reasons. It is most probable that the Roman brick at Cuckney was brought in for use in building works on either the Saxon or early Norman church at Cuckney, although it can be admitted that the find spot is some distance from the present church.

Post medieval finds were particularly common in the upper cultivation layers in Trench 01 and from the test pits. The test pits yielded part of the base of a Cologne or Frechen stoneware jug probably of Bartmann type. The form of the foot suggested it was early in currency of this vessel type, being paralleled on examples of late 16th century date and having been replaced by a a less elaborate cut off base on the typical Frechen Bartmann of the 17th century.

Context 120 yielded a fragment of a drinking glass. This had optic blown bosses of somewhat amorphous elongated diamond shape, apparently in offset rows producing a diamond pattern to the bosses. Slight surface decay including minor pitting of parts of surface, but no obvious patina (this is likely to have flaked off in the soil).

This fragment is part of a vessel in 'forest glass' or potash glass (though no scientific analysis has been undertaken to confirm the composition of the metal). Such bosses were a decorative feature applied to several of the various types of drinking vessel current in the late 16th and 17th centuries and are found on goblets, pedestal beakers, squat beakers and cylindrical beakers. Willmott notes that optic blown bosses were a decorative style of the Low Countries (Wilmott 2002, 48, 69); cylindrical beakers with optic blown bosses were almost certainly produced there (Henkes 1994, 137-38 in Wilmott 2002, 38).

At its earliest this type of decoration appears on pedestal goblets of the late 16th century (Willmott 2002, 69), but is more prevalent in the 17th. It occurs on the different forms of beaker in the first half of the 17th century, and Willmott notes it may continue into the second half of the 17th century in the case of cylindrical beakers and certainly into the second half of the 17th for squat cylindrical beakers (Willmott 2002 fig 148, fig 150).

The Cuckney fragment is too small to allow accurate assessment of the type of vessel from which it is likely to have come. However, the spacing of the bosses relative to their size on the Cuckney fragment is more closely similar to the decoration on pedestal goblets, pedestal beakers and cylindrical beakers; squat cylindrical beakers have bosses much more widely spaced in relation to the size of the bosses.

Willmott states that this form of decoration does not appear to have been reproduced in potash glass; all his examples are described as colourless (Willmott 2002, 38, 44, 48, 69) and pedestal beakers with optic blown bosses are stated to be 'always made from better quality metal' (Willmott 2002, 48). However, an example of such decoration in green 'forest glass' was found at Church Street, Bawtry, on the border between South Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire. A rim from a beaker with mould blown bosses was described as 'typical of domestic "forest glass" production of the late 16th and early 17th centuries' (Courtney 1996, 138).

Such glass is not common on rural sites, most examples being found in urban or high status contexts (Willmott 2002). Glass in this period was a symbol of status and of disposable wealth, being extremely fragile and prone to breakage, and unable to be upgraded as fashions changed. The glass is also of a rather earlier date of manufacture (probably first half of 17th century) than the date of deposition; the other artefacts in it suggest context 120 may have been forming from the later 17th century.

The presence of more 'valuable' (whether in terms of monetary value, levels of craftsmanship, perceived significance (i.e., memento / heirloom) items in deposits considerably later than their manufacture is not uncommon. The Cuckney fragment may have been in circulation for at least 50 years and possibly more, before being broken and discarded

Glass drinking vessels of the 17th century do however sometimes occur on apparently low status 'rural' sites. At Ticknall in South Derbyshire a pedestal beaker with horizontal trails made in the first half of the 17th century was found in a mid to mid / late 17th century rubbish pit on a site known to have been occupied by farmer / potters. Such a site would usually seem to be a low status rural site, but extensive documentary research undertaken by Janet Spavold and Sue Brown indicated that in the 17th century one of the potter's sons ended up at Repton school then Cambridge, suggesting that the household may at this point have had the means, contacts and social pressure / aspiration to acquire at least one drinking glass vessel (or perhaps it was simply a gift of a curiosity from his new life from son to parents?) (Budge 2017, 129).

A similar level of documentary and historical research would be necessary to try to place the Cuckney vessel in its local historical context, though any such attempts may be hampered by the fact that the vessel was recovered from what was probably agricultural land that may have received waste from multiple households, rather than a pit that can be associated with a specific land holder.

Clay tobacco pipes were also recovered, particularly from Trench 01. One notable example of a late 17th century pipe had a heel stamp with the intials 'TB'.

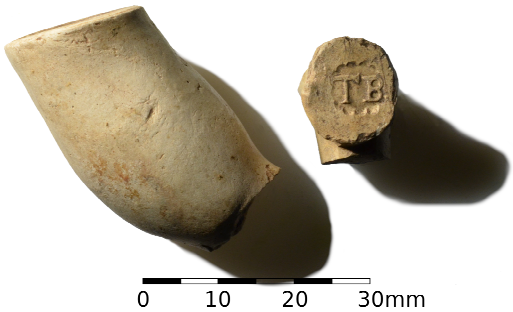

Plate 29 - Clay tobacco pipes of the 17th century from trench 01. Left - bowl; right underside of heel with TB stamp.

The stamp shows serifed letters in lobed border. The serifs are large and prominent, with those on the arms of the T being triangular. The upper bosom of the B is larger than the lower. It is notable that the horizontal arm of the T and the bosoms of the B are rather pressed into the adjacent lobes of the border. The border itself, though having curved sides, is rather more rectangular than circular.

The TB heel stamp should give a good indication of the likely source of Cuckney pipes. However, while parallels can be found for the stamp itself, identifying the maker is much more difficult.

Pipes with very similar stamps are occasionally found in Yorkshire. Examples include a pipe described as 'very finely burnished' from The Bedern in York (White 2004, 110.14) and one in Rotherham museum found at Stone (White 2004, 131.7). These allow the Cuckney pipe to be dated, with the Bedern example occurring on the heel of a bowl dated c.1660-1680 and the Stone example on a pipe of very closely similar form dated to 1680-1710 (White 2004, 334, 392). These pipes have stamps of a serifed TB in lobed border that are very similar to the Cuckney example, but do not appear to have been made with the same stamp. These stamps have the same number of lobes and the somewhat rectangular, rather than circular, form, but there is much more space between the 'B' and the lobed border on both. Additionally, the stem of the 'T' is not parallel sided on either, the upper bosom of the B is smaller than the lower on the Bedern pipe and the serifs on the arms of the T appear to be below the arms on

the Stone stamp, rather than the triangular form seen at Cuckney. However, there are very strong similarities between all three, and it is possible that the differences seen in the Stone and Bedern stamps are a product of poor quality illustration rather than actual differences in the stamps.

While TB pipes occur in Yorkshire, they are not common (White 2004), and the form of the stamp with its lobed border is not typical of Yorkshire stamps (White 2004). In describing the TB pipe from The Bedern, White also noted that it was 'possibly not a Yorkshire form' (White 2004, 334). Documented instances of makers with the initials 'TB' are also hard to come by, with no makers having these initials found in the published lists of makers from Derbyshire or Nottinghamshire. A Thomas Bateman was, however, apprenticed to Thomas Cooke in Hull in 1688 (White 2004, 166). It is unknown if he went into business for himself after his apprenticeship or when he might have worked, and it is possible that his dates may be too late (while an apprentice he would most likely be stamping TC on the pipes he made, and would have been apprenticed for a number of years).

Given that the Rotherham TB pipe was found at Stone, not many kilometres north of Cuckney, it may be that the TB pipes were manufactured locally. It could be, for example, that they were made in Worksop, as the nearest major settlement. However, more research is required to investigate this possibility.

Other finds of note included two coins. One, from trench 01, was a contemporary forgery of a George III 1811 three shilling bank token. These were issued by the Bank of England and were supposed to be made of silver: that from Cuckney was copper alloy or copper with the remnants of a silver wash. The other, from test pit 3, was a Danish 5 øre of 1966.

Military related artefacts included a French gunflint from trench 02, probably of late 18th or early 19th century date, a Sherwood Foresters regiment cap badge from trench 01 and a number of spent cartridge cases from trench 02. The spent cartridge cases were found in and around trench 02, where the bank had been cut back during World War II to form a defensive position which was used for training. Microscopic examination of the unique marks left by the firing pins of the rifles indicated that two different weapons had been in use, with all of the cartridge cases bearing marks from being struck by one or the other of these (Plate 30). Mapping the spatial distribution of the cartridge cases fired by each rifle allowed the relative positions of the soldiers using them to be determined. This indicated that just two soldiers had been firing blanks from this position The headstamps on the cartridge cases state that they are mark VII .303 rounds, manufactured in 1943 by Crompton Parkinson Ltd of Guiseley, Yorkshire.

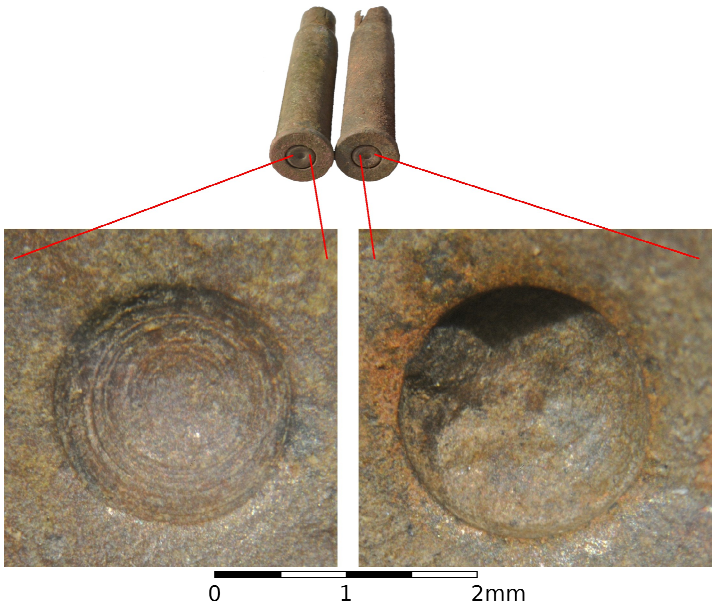

Plate 30 - Photomicrographs of the impressions left by the two different firing pins detected in the assemblage of cartridge cases at Cuckney. That on the left has concentric rings, while that on the right has a distinctive notch out of the side of the pin (seen in the impression at about 10'o'clock.

Part of a jug that was made in Skegby, Sutton in Ashfield, in the mid to late 12th century was found in test pit 1. The kiln producing this ware was discovered in 2010 by a builder (Budge 2010). The main significance of this sherd lies in its contribution to the understanding of the Skegby industry: it confirms the writer's theories that the pottery was producing commercially for a limited period in the mid to late 12th century and marketing probably through Mansfield. The rim is also a new type, not seen on the kiln site, though sufficiently similar to the kiln waste to be considered a variant of the known types.

Discussion:

Trench 01:

The trench achieved its objectives. The late Saxon sherd found in a mole hill in 2015 was proven not to be an isolated occurrence. While the mole hill sherd probably came from re-deposited soil, the excavation demonstrated the presence of in-situ late Saxon and Saxo-Norman deposits and features and recovered a sample of these wares and associated artefacts. It further indicated that the re-deposited soil (and the artefacts it contains) is probably derived from the site itself, rather than being a lorry load of waste dumped here from another site, which, had this been the case, might potentially not even have been in Nottinghamshire.

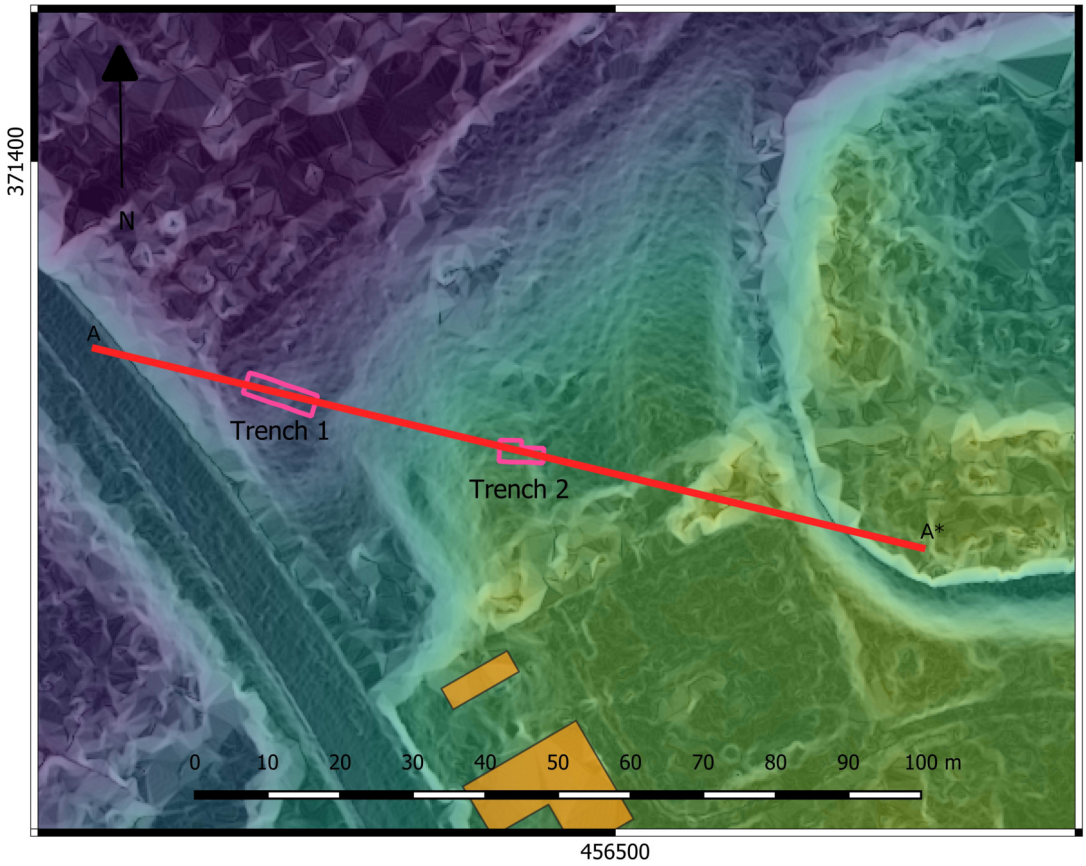

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Figure 19 - Location of profile (Figure 20) in relation to the topography and trenches at Cuckney. Digital hill slope model generated from LiDAR data captured by Bluesky

It also determined the nature of the earthwork feature that it was positioned to excavate. The terrace appears to have been sculpted recently, in the later 20th century, by substantial earth moving activity. The re-deposited material suggests that the landscaping was severe and had in places cut into the underlying sandstone, though this may not have been within the trench itself, where the deposits appeared to have been buried by re-deposited material, rather than cut into. The shape of the ground surface in the vicinity of the trench almost certainly does not reflect the shape of the land prior to this landscaping work: it seems likely that the slope above was cut back to some degree and the land down slope raised to produce the terrace. The terrace appears to lead to the garden to the south. It may perhaps have been a track used to get plant to the river.

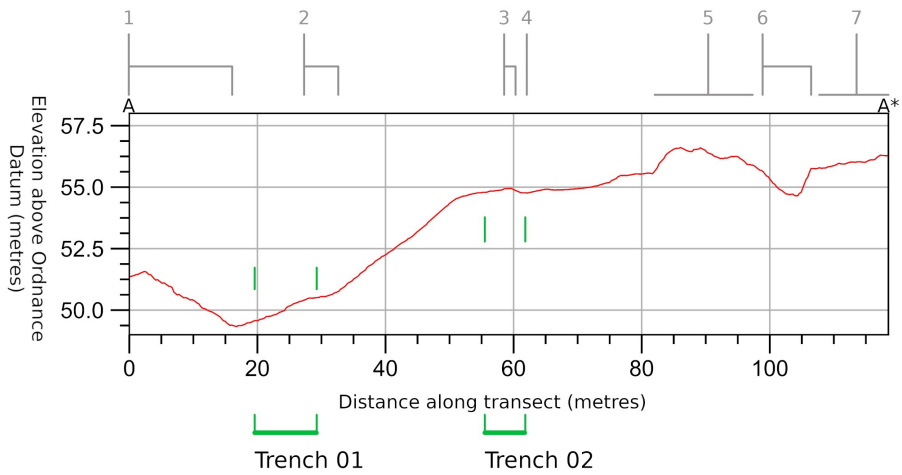


Figure 20 - Profile of the present ground surface from LiDAR data captured by Bluesky displayed in relation to the excavated trenches and highlighting relevant features.
Features as numbered are: 1 - A60 road embankment; 2 - terrace; 3 - bank; 4 - WWII trench; 5 - area of dense vegetation / brambles; 6 - ha-ha ditch around churchyard; 7 - interior of churchyard.

There may have been occupation and / or industrial activity in the immediate vicinity of trench 01; the abraded nature of most of the late Saxon pottery suggests this included agricultural cultivation. The range of ware types, rim forms and decoration suggest that activity probably began in the second half of the 10th century rather than earlier.

Only a few sherds were larger and less abraded; they included several joining and non-joining sherds of a Stamford Ware spouted pitcher and almost the full profile of a jar of unknown manufacture (Plate 31); the collared rim of the pitcher dates it to the late 11th to early 12th century (Young, Vince and Nailor 2005, 93-5) while the jar is also post-Conquest. Being thin walled and fragile, had these vessels been in a plough soil for more than a few seasons it would be likely that they should have been more dispersed. The presence of multiple sherds from identifiable individual vessels is worthy of comment: it was also a feature of the late Saxon material; though joining sherds were less frequent. If spread as manure on a ploughed field, having been used and broken elsewhere, individual sherds would be rather mixed up and while larger sherds might fragment down and thus allow discovery of the occasional example of one or two small sherds from a given vessel. Many examples would not however be anticipated. This might suggest the cultivated land was not large; the degree of abrasion on the pottery does seem to suggest ploughing or other violent activity rather than spade digging however. It may be that ploughing was occasionally cutting into underlying deposits that were a source of large pieces of pottery which were then incorporated into the plough soil, but which were not extensively disturbed and spread beyond this, perhaps as a result of colluviation (down slope movement of soil) increasing the depth of the soil and consequently protecting the sherds, once disturbed a few times, below future plough depth. This can perhaps be argued against as the later pottery was found in the upper spits of the cultivation soil and also that feature [128], which was not rich in pottery, contained only late Saxon material, which was in the form of small sherds (though these were possibly slightly less abraded). It therefore seems most likely that the post Conquest sherds were being added in to an existing soil. The most likely model to explain this would be a cultivated soil to which pottery and other finds were being added as manure; as cultivation continued over time the older pottery became more abraded and churned up, while the fresher sherds were more recently added. Cultivation must have ceased around the time of the deposition of the vessels in Plate 31.

Whether the soil in the trench was cultivated from the start, with the pottery and other finds being deposited in the soil as manure, or whether the pottery and other finds existed in the ground, perhaps having been deposited in features and layers relating to occupation activity in the late Saxon period, which then were ploughed up as a result of a change of landuse in the settlement, either later in the late Saxon period or after the Norman conquest, is uncertain. The presence of feature [128] might hint at the latter, unless it was the edge of a plough furrow; its orientation makes this seem unlikely given the local topography. As the

quantities of pottery were high, this may also argue more for occupation than manuring, especially given the results from the test pitting, where quantities of late Saxon pottery in the cultivation soil there were quite low. This may also be suggested by the presence of occasional unabraded late Saxon sherd in the 20th century re-deposited soils, suggesting that the 20th century earthmoving disturbed previously undisturbed late Saxon features.

The pottery from the cut feature [128] was similar to that from the overlying cultivation deposit, but consisted almost entirely of shell tempered wares. The number of sherds was smaller, meaning any conclusions drawn must be more tentative, but 11th century (and later) wares such as Stamford and Torksey were absent. As such it is not impossible that the feature was filled with material in the 10th century or the early 11th. In other words, the feature may be of late Saxon date.

The evidence appears to indicate that agricultural cultivation in the vicinity of trench 1 was receiving input of waste but suddenly ceased in the later 11th to early / mid 12th century and was not resumed until the 17th century.

Plate 31 - Sherds of Stamford ware pitcher (left) and local early medieval jar (right) from trench 01, along with two other glazed post Conquest Stamford ware sherds from trench 01. Actual size.

The later, pre-20th century deposits, were also cultivation soils. They contained mostly late 17th to early 19th century pottery, clay tobacco pipe and late Saxon, Saxo-Norman, and a few sherds of medieval pottery. The clay tobacco pipe was predominantly late 17th to early 18th century in date, with a few later fragments. It appears to have been receiving domestic refuse, presumably as manure, from the late 17th century until the very late 18th or early 19th century. Some of the waste, including Chinese Porcelain, enamel decorated creamware and a fragment of drinking glass of 17th century date, along with other fragments of drinking glass of 18th century date, suggests that the household or households that supplied the waste had means and aspirations to somewhat refined living.

Trench 02:

The north south linear earthwork detected in the topographic survey in 2015 (feature 11, Gaunt and Crossley 2016, 105-6) and seen in the Bluesky LiDAR data captured for the present project (Figure 20) was demonstrated on excavation to be a bank consisting of (202),

(215) and (212). The bank was not constructed of material dug out of ditch [214]: for a start [214] is entirely filled in with no sign of survival as an earthwork while (202) etc still survives as a fairly substantial feature (therefore there is a larger volume of soil in the bank than came out of the ditch); this could be explained if ditch [214] had been filled in with soil scraped from the surrounding area, leaving the bank intact (admittedly a somewhat unlikely scenario). However, the very stony soil used for both the bank and for the fill of [222] argue strongly against this: the sondage through the 'natural' deposits (217) and (219) indicated that these contained very few pebbles in marked contrast to the very stony fills of [222] and (202); these pebbles, at the least, are highly unlikely to have been dug out with the soil that was removed when ditch [214] was dug. This, together with the apparently greater volume of soil present in the bank, suggest that some material, the quartzite stones at least and perhaps also the soil they were brought in with, has been imported to this location from elsewhere. It is not possible to suggest whether the soil was brought in from some distance away, such as down on the floodplain of the Poulter where quartzite pebbles are abundant, or whether it was scraped up from the immediate locality. In the latter scenario, the pebbles might have originated as surfacing of paths, yards, floors or other surfaces. The evidence for probable occupation of late Saxon to early Norman date in the vicinity of trench 01 certainly does not exclude the possibility of such features being present in the immediate area. This could also explain the presence of much of the pottery, particularly the slightly more abraded late Saxon and early medieval sherds in the bank.

That the earthwork bank partially overlies the fill of [214] also argues against a direct association, though had there been excessive slumping this may be possible.

To summarise:
1 - the geological substratum has very few quartzite pebbled while the bank has lots of them, so at least some of this material (certainly the pebbles; possibly also the soil they are in) has been brought from elsewhere;
2 - ditch [214] is completely filled in and does not exist as an earthwork, while bank (202) etc stands as a relatively substantial earthwork;
3 - bank (202) etc overlies the fills of ditch [214] yet retains an inverted bell shape, suggesting this is not due to slump.

It therefore appears most likely that ditch [214], with its relatively stone free fill was an earlier feature that was, in the main, not associated with either bank (202) etc or with slot [222]. Ditch [214] had more or less filled in before slot [222] was excavated and the bank constructed. (212) could be a trace of the original bank associated with [214] but, from the yellow colour of this deposit it is perhaps more likely to represent a spread of the original material dug out of slot [222]; the ditch [214] cuts mainly through red sands while [222] impinges on the area of yellow sand. It is tempting to assign the large, relatively fresh sherd of possible early middle or late Saxon date to ditch [214] and the medieval sherds to slot [222], but as the two features were not recognised as such until they had been excavated it is not possible to do so with certainty.

The shape of slot [222] indicates that it was probably intended to contain something, rather than being for drainage or land division. The most likely scenario seems to be that it was a palisade slot. If this were so it would also be easy to account for the imported soil of the bank; a palisade may have been constructed and soil scraped up from the surrounding area, or collected from elsewhere, and was mounded behind it to produce a small rampart, which may perhaps have, to some extent, offset the otherwise rather shallow depth of the slot. Upon removal of the palisade (which the south facing section of trench 02 suggested was done by loosening the timbers by pulling them outwards / westwards, distorting the slot) some of the soil mounded behind, no longer supported, could fall into the void in the slot left by removal of the timbers. Such scenario would account for why there was no differentiation between the fill of the slot [222] and the bank material; the shape of the cut of [222] and the presence of sherds of vessels also seen in (208) and (202) in [222]. It would also explain how the bank (202) could overlie the ditch [214] without the necessity of creating mostly unlikely scenarios to explain how the ditch could be completely filled in while the bank survived as a substantial feature and at the same time migrated on top of the filled in ditch. Had [222] been a beam slot for a structure, rather than a palisade slot, the additional soil forming a bank and appearing to

be intimately associated with it would be hard to explain. Assuming the bank and slot are associated the dating of the pottery from the bank suggests the slot is medieval; if the pottery is all contemporary then the dating only overlaps at one point, which would indicate that the slot would be mid 12th century in date. However, this is not established, and the slot and bank could be later in the medieval period if the earlier pottery is residual.

It was unfortunate that the separate nature of features [222] and [214] were not recognised until seen in section after excavation. In a perfect world all archaeological deposits would be immediately recognised in plan, along with their relative phasing so each could be treated in turn; however such a clear cut scenario is rarely seen on the ground, especially in the rapidly leached and bioturbated sands of the Sherwood Forest area where it can be difficult to immediately distinguish subtle context changes. This means that the finds from the fill, excavated as a single unit, cannot be assigned to one or other feature to aid the question of dating of the earlier ditch [214]. It is tempting to see the single, fresh sherd of possible Saxon pottery as being a find from the fill of [214] and the fresh medieval pottery as finds from the slot [222]; the latter contemporary with the pottery in the bank associated with [222]. Indeed, it would be easy to modify the records so that the possible Saxon sherd came from ditch [214] and the medieval from [222]. It would be nice to be lauded for discovering a Saxon ditch (particularly in the Bassetlaw District of Nottinghamshire where very little pre-Conquest archaeology has ever been discovered and in a location where evidence that might suggest an early settlement could have implications for the site of a documented Saxon battle) which was later filled in and replaced by an early / mid 12th century adulterine castle palisade; one could come up with various theories to explain this which, if presented with sufficient conviction, could become a staple of the archaeological text books for a generation. To do so would, however, be to falsify the evidence. If the falsified evidence were finally tested and found wanting, the one who originally stated them may have moved on into a different field, or may be dead - but their short term falsification of results in the pursuit of accolades and personal gain from having made such significant discoveries having set back the knowledge of the site in question, or of archaeology more generally, by considerable amounts.

While we are well aware that there are certain individuals active in the East Midlands who are prepared to do exactly this sort of thing, for personal gain and to enhance their standing, to do so hampers, not advances knowledge and is not part of the scientific method. Mercian Archaeological Services CIC will not do this. So as not to falsify the record it is important to record that there is uncertainty over which features the finds from [214] and [222] came from. However, it is also important to record that there is the possibility that [214] might be a Saxon ditch and that evidence to date it as such may be present in its fills; particularly given the scarcity of early to middle Saxon archaeology in Bassetlaw this possibility should be tested if any future work occurs on the site.

The ditch seen on the east side of the bank (Figure 20 feature 4) contained 20th century material. It appears to be a military feature, probably a defensive trench overlooking the valley of the River Poulter to the west. It may be that it deliberately re-used the existing earthwork and it does not appear to have been a deep feature, more a shallow scrape to provide cover behind the earthwork bank. This trench was used for military practice in 1943 or later and at least two soldiers were firing blank .303 rounds in the vicinity of the trench. A cap badge of the Sherwood Foresters regiment, discovered in trench 01 could perhaps indicate the unit that was practicing here, though there was no direct association between the cap badge and the other military features.

The feature (205), consisting of a cobble spread, was almost certainly the feature detected by the GPR survey, being of approximately the right size and shape. Assigning a function to this feature is difficult: there was no indication that it was a surviving fragment of a once larger spread of cobbles that may have represented a metalled surface; there was no indication of any subsidence or compression that would be likely to have occurred if it was hard standing for a post of a post built structure or cobbling ; there was no trace of burning to suggest it was a hearth setting. Indeed, as was noted by some of the excavators, there is no reason why it may not simply have been a bucket load of pebbles just dumped on the ground. However, human nature is such that things are not normally done without purpose and it is hard to envisage why someone would collect up about two modern buckets worth of pebbles, carry

them up a hill then dump them! The traces of medieval occupation are often ephemeral, with peasant timber buildings often only represented by an orientation of pad stones, some metalling around the outside, or sometimes only at the thresholds, and perhaps a gully or two (e.g. Barton Blount, Derbyshire, Beresford 1975, 19-20). It is a fair observation that such subtle and ephemeral traces can only realistically be detected when a large enough area is opened up: the area of excavation in trench 2 at Cuckney was too small for such traces to have been detected if they were present. There is thus the possibility that the pebble spread represents the metalling at, for example, the threshold of a timber structure. The fact that it was some kind of surface near which people were undertaking activities that generated waste could be suggested by the bone, apparently trodden into the surface beside the cobbles, and the fragments of pottery pushed between (but not under) the stones. This does, however, assume that these finds were dropped while the surface was in use, rather than having been scraped up with the cobbles from wherever they were collected.

Dating was similarly difficult. Feature (205) overlay the fill of ditch [214] and this, together with the pottery found in it, suggest it cannot have been earlier than the 12th or 13th century. If the pottery between the stones was contemporary with the feature, then a medieval date would be appropriate. However, this was not certain, and it is not impossible that the pottery was simply lying around in the area from which the cobbles were gathered, as is likely for the metalworking slag. The dating cannot therefore be fixed at present any more closely than medieval to pre-19th century.

Test Pitting:

The finds filled the gaps in the chronology of the settlement that were absent from the trenches to the west of the church (see above): though quantities were relatively small the pottery covered the full span from late Saxon to late medieval. Particularly notable was a rim sherd of a jug of new form (though similar to the kiln material) of Skegby Splashed Ware (Budge 2010, 2017). In addition to being very closely datable to the mid - late 12th century, this sherd provides valuable evidence regarding the distribution of this ware type, study of which is ongoing. Also notable was the fact that the number of sherds of medieval pottery became greater and the degree of abrasion became less the further south the test pits were dug in the area of investigation.

It can therefore be concluded that the area of investigation was not occupied before the Norman Conquest though it does appear to have received the input of waste, probably as manure on cultivated land, at this time. Whatever factors caused cultivation to the west of the church to cease by around the middle of the 12th century do not seem to have affected the land to its south, and waste continued to be spread here. The area of investigation also did not produce any evidence that it was occupied in the medieval period, though an increase in quantity and condition of medieval pottery in the southern part, along with the probable east - west ditch, may suggest that the land immediately south of the area of investigation was occupied throughout the medieval period.

Castle:

From the starting point of Dr Thoroton's 17th century mention of an Anarchy period castle at Cuckney based on a passing reference in the foundation charter of Welbeck Abbey (Throsby 1796, 371-7), and MacKenzie's late 19th century note that 'Cuckney castle is non existent' (MacKenzie 1896, 447-8), in the 20th century Cuckney castle became a motte and bailey of around 1.2ha with surviving earthworks (Barley 1951), expanded to become a 'relatively well preserved' adulterine motte and bailey castle of around 2.4ha (HE 2019), gained a longer life, being suggested to most likely have been built before the Anarchy, not necessarily be adulterine, and possibly have continued in occupation after the Anarchy (Speight 1994, 67) and has provided key evidence for understanding and interpreting the relationship between castle and church in early medieval England (e.g. Barley 1951, 28; Speight 1994, 67; Creighton 1997, 167-9)). However, this dramatic increase in the state of knowledge and understanding of Cuckney has not been accompanied by a commensurate increase in the actual evidence base. Indeed, it has all been achieved without a single shred of additional evidence: aside from the discovery of some undated bones under the church in the 1950s

that drew Barley's attention to the site, none of these interpretations have arisen as a result of new evidence; no archaeological excavations, earthwork surveys, geophysical surveys or other investigations have taken place on the site and no casual finds of pottery or other finds either of the right period to suggest occupation, or that might indicate military activity, have guided them.

This is not necessarily a problem; archaeology advanced significantly as a discipline through the course of the 20th century and new interpretations, theoretical frameworks and ways of looking at old data can yield new insight. For any such new insight to be valid, however, the basic data and assumptions upon which these interpretations are based have to be reliable. If the basic data is flawed, then any consequent discussion taking these flawed premises as its starting point cannot also itself avoid being flawed.

At Cuckney there are several suppositions that have appeared in print and which have become the orthodox view on Cuckney. They are:
1 - There is a documentary reference that there was a castle at Cuckney built or held by Thomas de Cuckney in the time of King Stephen;
2 - There are earthworks around the church and churchyard at Cuckney;
3 - The earthworks at Cuckney are the remains of the castle documented as having been built or held by Thomas during the reign of King Stephen;
4 - The castle is of motte and bailey type.
Those writers producing synthetic works or those producing works for a non-specialist audience (such as Wright 2008) accept the orthodox position without question; more academic studies by specialists who examine the earthworks and attempt interpretation, rather than relying on previously published data, tend to be more critical. Creighton for example notes that 'the motte is barely recognisable, being severely denuded and overgrown, whilst the bailey earthworks are weak and confused' (Creighton 1998 477). However, it is thus far only Speight who has been willing to seriously question any part of the orthodox view: she considered that the presence of a motte made construction during the Anarchy unlikely (Speight 1994, 69).

These four statements thus are taken, generally without much question, to be the established base level of data from which all subsequent interpretation flows.

There is certainly no reason to question the veracity of statements 1 and 2 as they are based on observable and provable evidence; the transcription of the foundation charter of Welbeck can be read and earthworks do exist around the church and churchyard at Cuckney; these are observable phenomena that can be recorded and quantified using techniques such as photography, topographic survey and excavation; their form and layout plotted and mapped.

Barley, who may well have been the first to propose them in print, had absolutely no reservations about statements 3 and 4 similarly being fact: 'It now remains to try to assess the significance of these facts. It is plain that the church was built within the confines of an adulterine castle dating from the anarchy of the mid-twelfth century.' (Barley 1951, 28). Statement 3 appears to be a reasonable inference: it is unlikely that there would be two separate castles constructed at a relatively insignificant place, in terms of strategic position and lordship, such as Cuckney; and if there were two it is perhaps unlikely that only one of them would be documented. Therefore it is reasonable to associate the physical remains of a castle at Cuckney with the documentary reference to a castle at Cuckney and to equate the two as being one and the same. This inference is reasonable, but is only valid if the underlying and rather more important assumption, that the earthworks are the remains of a castle, is correct.

Statement 4 takes things a stage further: the remains are those of a particular type of castle, a motte and bailey. The Scheduling description states that 'Cuckney motte and bailey castle is a reasonably well-preserved example of an adulterine fort built to command a river valley. Although the motte and inner bailey are partially disturbed by modern burials, a sufficient amount remains intact for the structure of the motte to be preserved and also the relationship between these areas and the outer bailey. The outer bailey itself has suffered little disturbance and so will retain the archaeological remains of ancillary features such as

garrison buildings and corrals for stock and horses. The defensive earthworks associated with both the inner and outer baileys also survive well' (HE). Given this level of preservation it would seem that 'fact' 4 is also plausible, though it does throw up issues of interpretation. Speight for example noted that 'The evidence at Cuckney is insufficient to judge between an immediate post-Conquest and a mid-12th century date for the castle. ... The vast bulk of castles used during the civil war were structures that had existed for the previous fifty years or more, and had developed as part of the settlement process. Very few genuine 'adulterine' civil war castles can be detected - and most of these are the humblest of earthworks, soon dismantled. Such castles would not be expected to have a motte.' (Speight 1994, 67), continuing: 'the effort involved in building a motte makes it unlikely that the castle would have been merely a product of the Anarchy' (Speight 1994, 69). In direct contrast, Creighton states that 'the [documentary] reference remains unusual in linking the foundation (as opposed to the *re*-fortification) of a motte and bailey firmly to the political turbulence of the Anarchy' (Creighton 1997, 167). This lack of consensus between scholars is not limited to interpretations placing the site in its wider context: an inability to agree on which parts of the castle the various earthworks represent is also a hallmark of the study of Cuckney. Given the supposed good degree of preservation of the site and the well studied nature of the motte and bailey castle as a national monument type, it having been said that 'there are standard formats that recur again and again in castle design that can be used in the assessment of a monument' (Speight 2008), this inability of scholars to agree on even basic facts like how big the castle was and how it was laid out, offers grounds for suspicion.

Some reconstructions of the plan of the 'castle' from published sources have been presented in the Historical and Archaeological Background section, above (see Figures 04, 05 and 06), but it is perhaps worth here reiterating the main differences of opinion. It is also worth noting that none of the authorities have published a map of the site with lines on the ground showing precisely where they believe the various features to be; Figures 04 - 06 are indications only and were produced using the descriptions and the positions of earthworks easily visible on the ground in drawing lines on the maps.

The earliest interpretations, including the Ordnance Survey and Barley. have taken the ha-ha ditch around the churchyard as a starting point (Figure 04). The Ordnance Survey depicted the feature at the west end of the churchyard as a linear bank, looking much more like a rampart than the motte that it was interpreted as by Barley. In Barley's defence, when the bank is viewed from within the churchyard, standing near the church, or from outside the churchyard to the west it does look like a rounded mound. Additionally, while he considered it to be part of the castle on the north and west sides Barley does not seem to have believed that the continuation of the ha-ha on the south side of the churchyard was part of the castle; he stated 'there are no signs of the limits of the castle on the east side, nor on the south side, where the ground rises towards the village of Cuckney' (Barley 1951, 28).

Historic England's interpretation of the earthworks produced a very different and much larger castle (Figure 05). The primary difference between this and earlier descriptions is that 'encircling the inner bailey on the north and west sides is a 40m wide ribbon of open ground which functioned as an outer bailey. This is partially encircled by a double bank and ditch which lies roughly parallel with the River Poulter and is approximately 15m wide. The river would have formed another line of defence on this side and, in addition, could be commanded from the castle' (HE). It is easy to see the earthworks on the north side, but their absence on the west makes it rather harder to see why the outer bailey was also considered to enclose a 40m wide strip to the west of the churchyard.

According to the Scheduling description the church of St Mary is located in the inner bailey. Both Barley and Creighton see the church as occupying the outer bailey (Barley 1951, 28; Creighton 1997, 167); both however may differ in their interpretation of where the inner bailey actually is and its relation to the other parts of the 'castle'. The Scheduling places the 'motte' at the western end of the inner bailey; this inner bailey is considered to extend eastwards to include the church of St Mary and terminate in an undefended (or at least much more weakly defended) eastern side which was apparently the entrance. The outer bailey is stated to enclose a c.40m wide strip of ground extending both to the north and to the west of the inner bailey. Barley concurs in the location of the 'motte' within the inner bailey, which he saw as

extending eastwards from the motte, but differs in placing the outer bailey to the east of the inner (Barley 1951, 28). In contrast Creighton interprets the inner bailey as being located to the south of the motte in his written description. This is probably a mistake as, if he was interpreting the linear ridge of ground at the western side of the churchyard as the motte (following Barley and Historic England), then his statement that the 'inner bailey adjoins [the motte] to the south ... [the inner bailey] measuring c.90m north-south' would put his inner bailey as extending under the Greendale Oak car park and almost as far as the modern A616 road under modern Cuckney village. There are no obvious earthworks here, and as he sees his inner bailey as a 'smaller, squarish inner bailey' (Creighton 1997, 167) it seems most likely that he is referring to the western end of the present churchyard. However, if Creighton was interpreting the D shaped platform to the north of the churchyard as the site of the motte then his description would work with the earthworks and be much less at odds with both Barley's and Historic England's reading of the site; the churchyard adjoins the south side of this platform and measures approximately 80m north to south at this point; putting an inner bailey here Creighton's description of the outer bailey being east of the inner and 'enclosing the parish church to the east' (Creighton 1998, 477) also works better, though a simple continuation of the churchyard ha-ha ditch to the south of the church would not allow for his description of the outer bailey as being 'larger than the inner' (Creighton 1997, 167) (Figure 6b). Creighton's own fig 6.7 suggests the verbal description may be confused but suggests a different layout again, similar to Barley but with a larger outer bailey and apparently moving the motte eastwards.

From the forgoing it can be seen that the identification of the earthworks at Cuckney as a castle is not a clear cut case: the lack of consensus on what part of a castle the various earthworks represent indicate that the morphology of the earthworks cannot easily be reconciled with the expected layout of a motte and bailey castle. The 12th century documentary reference to a castle, and perhaps the fact the earthworks are Scheduled as such, seems to lead scholars to give more credence to the interpretation than they perhaps ought and there is little desire to question the orthodoxy, despite the additional problems of interpretation this throws up. Creighton clearly had difficulty in interpreting the layout of the site, but appears to have rationalised this as being a product of the fact that 'the motte is barely recognisable, being severely denuded and overgrown, whilst the bailey earthworks are weak and confused' (Creighton 1998, 477), Speight similarly noted the poor preservation of the supposed motte, 'of which there are scant remains, is just about recognisable, revetted by a stone wall in front of a deep ditch' (Speight 1994, 67). This appears at odds with the Scheduling description's assertion that 'though the motte and inner bailey are partially disturbed by modern burials, a sufficient amount remains intact for the structure of the motte to be preserved and also the relationship between these areas and the outer bailey. The outer bailey itself has suffered little disturbance ... The defensive earthworks associated with both the inner and outer baileys also survive well' (HE).

A few other inconsistencies regarding the plan of the site can be mentioned: Barley saw no sign of a southern boundary to his castle while Historic England considered it to be represented by the southern ha-ha boundary of the modern graveyard extension. They stated 'it would also have enclosed the south side of the bailey but has been filled-in to the south of the church so that, on this side, only the area south of the motte remains open. The remainder will survive as a buried feature in the unscheduled part of the inner bailey ' (HE). They noted that 'the ditch does not appear to have extended along the east side of the inner bailey,...This indicates that the original entrance would have occupied this side' (HE). Quite why such effort would be expended on making a wide ditch all around the site to then leave the whole eastern side as an undefended entrance seems hard to rationalise. An alternative theorem to explain the lack of a full defensive circuit around the church was put forward by one of the English Heritage field investigators in 1974, who suggested 'there is no trace of the bailey ditch to the east suggesting the possibility that the work was never completed' (https://www.pastscape.org.uk/hob.aspx?hob_id=318423).

The fact that all scholars who attempt to fit the earthworks at Cuckney into the expected template of a motte and bailey castle arrive at such widely differing interpretations of even the most basic facts about the layout of the site, such as where the inner bailey is and where the outer bailey is, does not seem to be the hallmark of a relatively well preserved castle site. The

earthworks must indeed be weak and confused as Creighton suggests, otherwise some consensus could be reached. Of course, the simplest and most logical explanation for these disagreements is also one that does not appear to have been suggested. What if it is so difficult to make the surviving earthworks fit into the expected template of a motte and bailey castle not because the preservation is poor, or that there is no complete defensive circuit of earthworks around the church not because the eastern side was left open as an entrance or the castle was never completed, but actually because the earthworks are not the remains of a motte and bailey castle?

Just because there is a documentary reference to a castle, constructed at an unknown location in Cuckney, held by Thomas de Cuckney (our 'fact 1' above), it does not necessarily follow that some extant earthworks that happen to have survived in the settlement of Cuckney (our 'fact 2') are the remains of that documented castle. Indeed, the lack of consensus amongst the scholars who have examined the earthworks strongly suggests that 'supposition 4' - the earthworks are the remains of a motte and bailey castle - is questionable and far from an established fact. If supposition 4 is then viewed not as a fact, but as the unsubstantiated theory that it is, then supposition 3, that the earthworks of the castle are the castle mentioned in the documents, must also be regarded as unsubstantiated: if the earthworks are not actually a castle then they cannot be the castle mentioned in the documents!

As Speight noted, 'in the absence of archaeological evidence ... it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions about the castles of Nottinghamshire ... One of the major problems to beset castle studies in general is a lack of modern, scientific information' (Speight 1994, 68). In Cuckney's case what is required to progress knowledge is a critical examination of the site that is not bound to the concept that, as there is a documentary reference to a castle at Cuckney, it follows that any earthworks at Cuckney must be part of that castle, and that as the site is published and Scheduled as a motte and bailey castle, the earthworks must be those of a motte and bailey castle.

Such a study was begun with the Heritage Lottery funded 2015 Battle of Hatfield Society project. The 2015 topographical survey looked at the shape of the ground within the churchyard, as previous workers examining the 'castle' have, but for the first time also examined the ground around the churchyard. It indicated for the first time that the supposed motte may not be a deliberately raised mound of earth but simply the end of a natural promontory, bounded by loop of the River Poulter, that had been cut off from the rest of the promontory on which the present village sits by the construction of the ditch around the modern churchyard extension. It indicated that, in contrast to the way the ridge appears as a raised mound when viewed from within the churchyard, the top of the ridge is actually at the same elevation as the ground immediately to its south (Gaunt and Crossley 2016, 51-54). However, visual comprehension of this fact by the visitor to the churchyard is prevented by the internal boundary hedge in the churchyard.

The 2015 survey suggested that the identification of the natural ridge in the western part of the churchyard as a deliberately constructed motte, as posited by workers from Barley onwards, was improbable. However, the topographic survey was unable to determine whether the ha-ha like ditch with stone wall that presently bounds the northern, western and southern sides of the 19th and 20th century churchyard extension was part of a medieval castle bailey, as asserted by previous workers, which simply provided a convenient area into which the graveyard could be expanded in the modern period, or whether the ha-ha and ditch itself it was actually a much more recent feature that was placed around the graveyard extension to act as a boundary to the new graveyard while, at the same time, minimising the visual impact of such a boundary on views across the valley of the Poulter from the village.

Geophysical survey carried out as part of the 2015 project attempted, but was unable, to locate any buried ditch on the line of the posited continuation of the ha-ha ditch to the south of the church. It was unclear however if this was due to there not being a buried ditch here, or whether the fill was not conducive to discovery by the type of geophysical prospection utilised (magnetometry), it was too deeply buried, or too disturbed by burials to be seen (Gaunt and Crossley 2016, 103-4).

The 2015 work also revealed the first archaeological evidence to allow provisional dating of activity on the site: two sherds of late Saxon pottery were found, one immediately east of the church, the other towards the floodplain of the Poulter to the west of the churchyard, along with a single sherd of a 12th to mid 13th century jar from within the churchyard, to the west of the church tower.

The Battle of Hatfield Investigation Society's 2018 Heritage Lottery funded project 'Warriors Through the Landscape' produced further evidence. This included capture of high resolution (0.25m) LiDAR data of the site, analysis of these data by Mercian Archaeological Services CIC, and the excavations reported on here. What then has this research revealed about the 'castle'?

Firstly, the analysis of the high resolution LiDAR data combines with the 2015 topographic survey to suggest that the interpretation of the ridge in the north western part of the churchyard as a motte is, at best, flawed and far from certain.

THE MOTTE AT CUCKNEY CASTLE:

The definition of a motte given by Historic England is that: 'They comprise a large conical mound of earth or rubble, the motte, surmounted by a palisade and a stone or timber tower' (HE 2019). Speight is slightly more specific about construction methods: 'the motte was a pudding shaped hill, either an entirely artificial construction of alternating layers of turf, earth, sand, gravel, rubble, wood, clay, or a part natural hillock or promontory that could be scarped to provide the required shape. It was surrounded by a dry ditch or very occasionally a wet moat' (Speight 2008). The ridge in the western part of the churchyard is, at present, only really visible from within the churchyard near the church when looking west and, to some extent (it is very overgrown), from the ground to the north and west outside the churchyard. There is significant screening of parts of the site, such as the higher ground to the south, by trees and hedges from these vantage points, and when viewed from these locations the ridge does look very much like a conical mound. This may perhaps explain how the belief that it is a motte has come about.

To understand the nature of the 'motte' a series of cross sections were produced from the 25cm LiDAR data captured by Bluesky as part of the project. The general location of the sections can be seen in Figure 21.

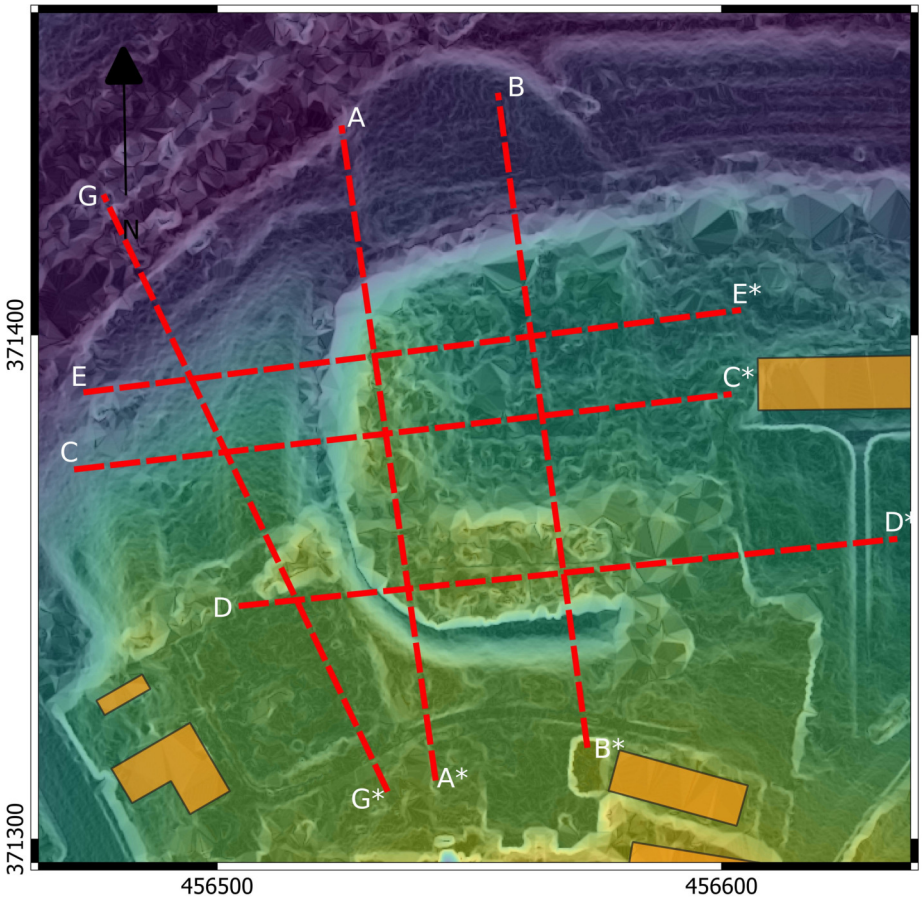


Figure 21 - Location of cross sections of topographic features

Cross section A - A* (Figure 22) shows how the platform at the top of the 'motte' is, broadly, at the same level as the ground in the 20th century graveyard extension to the south, and also the land on the outside of the ha-ha further to the south.

Cross section B - B* (Figure 23) is taken parallel to A-A*. It again shows how the ground in the 20th century graveyard extension is at the same level as the ground outside the ha-ha to the south, and indicates the drop off of the ground towards the floodplain of the River Poulter to the north.

Cross section E - E* (Figure 26) and C - C* (Figure 24) both show west to east cross sections across the 'motte' and indicate how insignificant its platform is. It is notable that both cross sections clearly show the largely filled in and flattened north - south bank and ditch crossing the churchyard.

Cross section D - D* (Figure 25) is parallel to E - E* and C - C* but in the modern graveyard extension. It can be seen that the ground level here is consistently at the same elevation as the highest point of the supposed 'motte' just 28m north on cross section C - C*.. Unfortunately the presence of vegetation and ground disturbance and probable rubble spread associated with a former dwelling renders detection of a continuation of the filled in north south ditch and bank impossible on this cross section.

Cross section G - G* (Figure 27) provides an indication of the topography outside the churchyard. The alignment of the cross section was intended to have been established perpendicular to the lie of the land in order to make as comparable a cross section to A - A* as possible. While the ground included in this cross section has also been subject to human modification, it perhaps provides the closest indication of what the ground surface within the churchyard may have looked like before it was modified by construction of the earthworks.

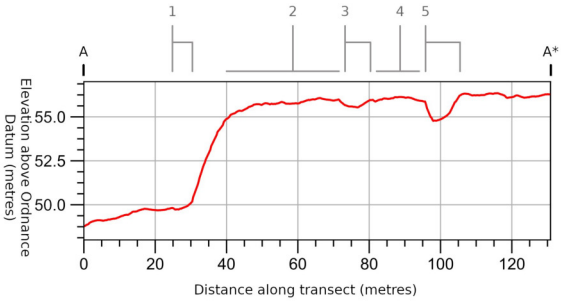


Figure 22 - Profile A - A*.

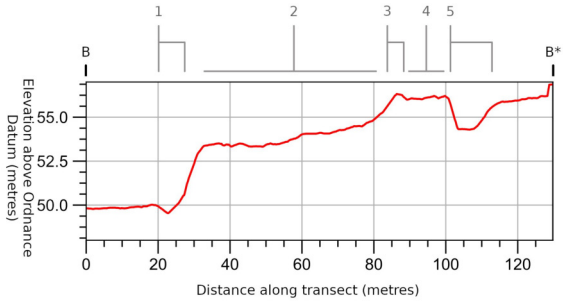


Figure 23 - Profile B - B*.

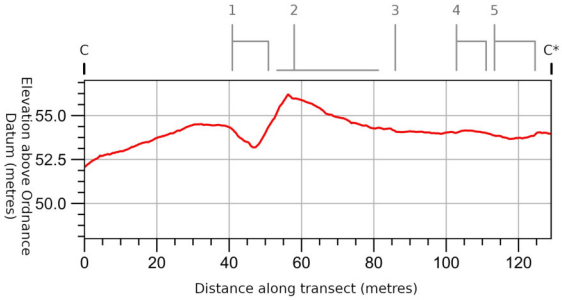


Figure 24 - Profile C - C*.

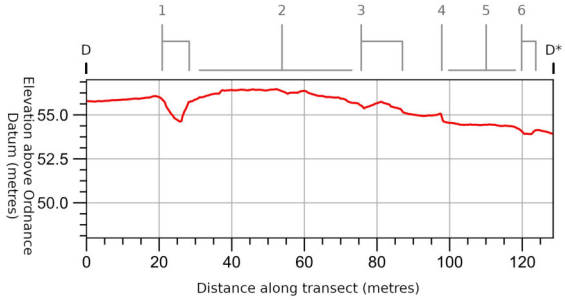


Figure 25 - Profile D - D*.

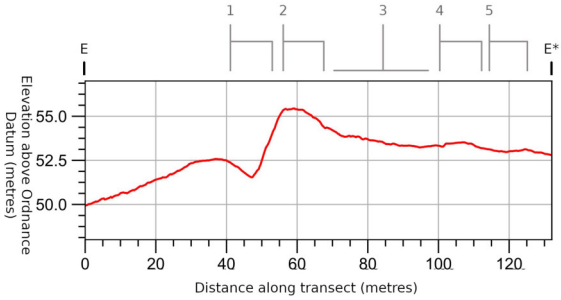


Figure 26 - Profile E - E*.

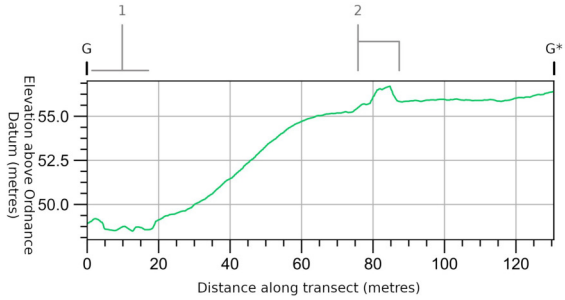


Figure 27 - Profile G - G*.

See Table 01 for details of features and areas identified by the numbers above each cross section

	Feature 1	Feature 2	Feature 3	Feature 4	Feature 5	Feature 6
Figure:						
22	Northern ha-ha	'motte'	boundary between 19th and 20th century graveyards	20th century graveyard extension	southern ha-ha	-
23	Northern ha-ha	graveyard	boundary between 19th and 20th century graveyards	20th century graveyard extension	southern ha-ha	-
24	Western ha-ha	'motte'	graveyard	denuded bank	filled ditch	-
25	Western ha-ha	20th century graveyard extension	entrance to graveyard, shrubs and trees	wall of former dwelling now forming churchyard wall	old churchyard to south of church	path to south porch of St Mary's
26	Western ha-ha	'motte'	graveyard	denuded bank	filled ditch	-
27	Floodplain	Shrubs and bushes	-	-	-	-

Table 01 - Explanation of feature numbers in Figures 22 to 27

Cross section origin	Easting	Northing
A	456524.716	371440.955
A*	456543.238	371312.226
B	456555.741	371447.438
B*	456573.337	371318.708
C	456472.211	371373.383
C*	456601.404	371388.201
D	456504.856	371346.295
D*	456634.28	371359.492
E	456474.063	371388.664
E*	456603.256	371404.871
G	456477.667	371427.314
G*	456533.566	371309.945

Table 02 - Coordinates of cross section origins

In order to indicate the possible degree of human modification of the 'motte', north south cross sections A - A* and B - B* were overlaid on one another and the cross section of the topography outside the ha-ha (G-G*) was also overlain. The results can be seen in Figure 28. While cross section G-G* cannot be taken to directly reflect the shape of the ground prior to the construction of the earthworks, examination of the general trend of the topology around Cuckney (Figure 29) suggests that cross section G-G* is a reasonable proxy for the probable topographic situation prior to construction of the earthworks. This is to some extent confirmed by section B-B*. The cross sections confirm the impression that the site is situated on the edge of a natural promontory which, to the south of the southern ha-ha, has an elevation of about 56m AOD. This elevation continues into the 'defensive circuit', being predominant across the 20th century graveyard extension. To the north of this extension the ground falls away northwards, towards the floodplain of the River Poulter. These profiles suggest that there may have been some, albeit fairly limited, modification of the ground surface within the churchyard. Due to the canalisation of the River Poulter during the creation of the mid 19th century flood meadows (Hillman and Cook 2016, 88) or during earlier works relating to exploitation of the potential of the river for water power, it is not clear to what degree the glacial or post glacial course of (what is now) the River Poulter cut into the geological deposits on which Cuckney sits. It seems likely that the bluff on the south side of the river valley was cut by the river during an earlier, higher energy phase of its existence (i.e. at the 'end' of the most recent ice age). Profile G-G* (and F-F*; not illustrated) suggest that any such erosion had been followed by significant periods of stabilisation where any sharp bluffs caused by erosion into the geological deposits had weathered off to produce a relatively shallow gradient, not the steep slopes seen for example in profiles A-A* and B-B*. Looking at the profiles (e.g. Figure 28) it is easy to interpret the steep edge to the northern boundary of the churchyard and the levelling of the ground surface within it as little more than deposition of the upcast from the excavation of the ha-ha ditch being deposited behind the retaining wall of the ha-ha: at the most basic level such work could entirely account for the modification of the ground surface seen in the LiDAR data.

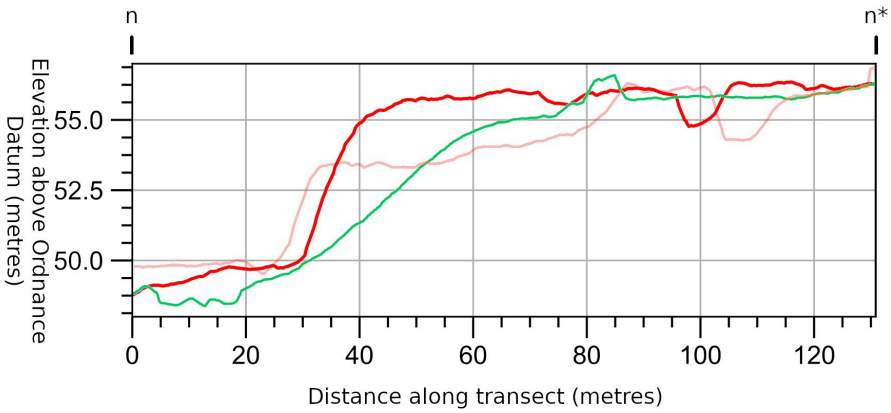


Figure 28 - Cross sections A-A* (red line); B-B* (light red line) and G-G* (green line) overlain.

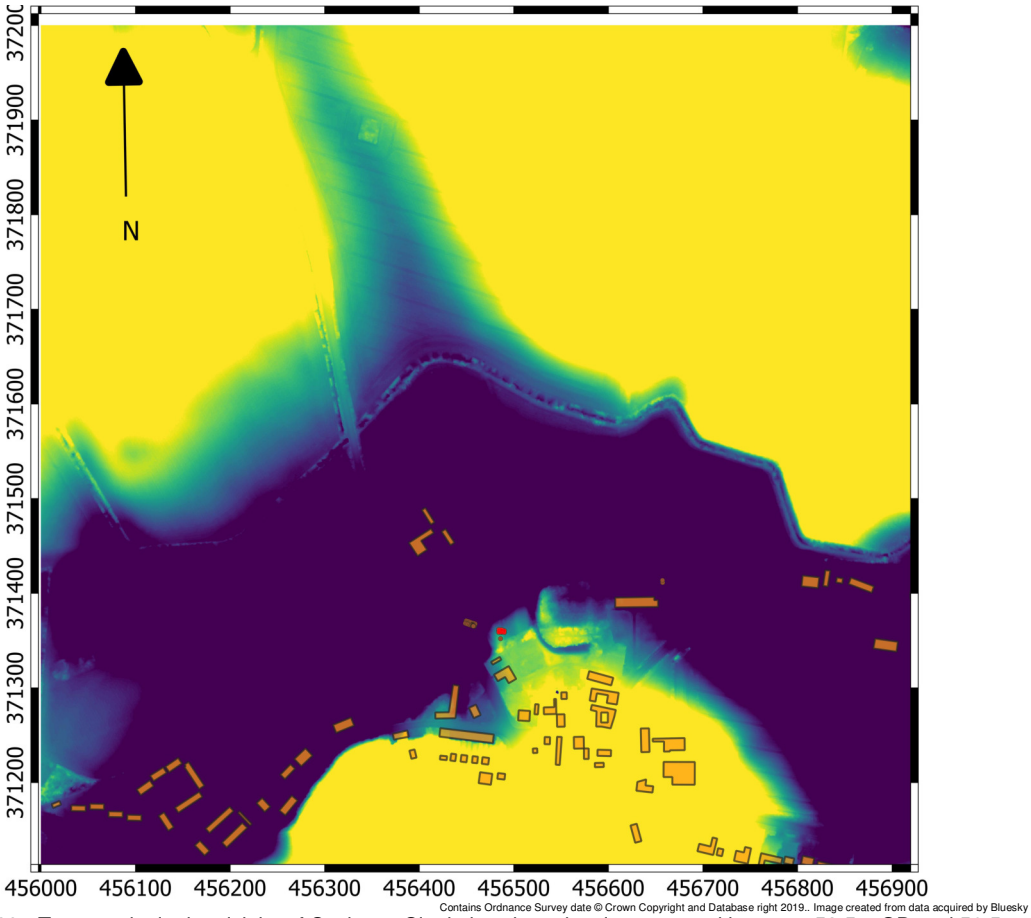


Figure 29 - Topography in the vicinity of Cuckney. Single band psudocolour cropped between 53.5m OD and 56.5m OD; land at elevations below 53.5m OD shown as purple; land over 56.5m OD as yellow; land between shown in intermediate shades.

The narrow north - south ridge previously interpreted as a motte does seem to be a more likely candidate for human modification, especially in consideration of Figure 28 and Figure 29. Both appear to indicate that the ridge may have been deliberately enhanced, both in that the ridge projects slightly further north than the contours of the natural promontory on which Cuckney sits suggest it is likely to have done naturally (Figure 29), and as the steep slope at its northern edge (Figure 28) is unlikely to occur naturally unless the geological substratum consists of well consolidated material, such as sandstone (though given the geology this is entirely possible).

It may be that this ridge was left as part of a natural sandstone ridge, eroded on the west and north by the (proto) River Poulter and subsequently quarried to the east for sand for building material; the evidence of rabbit burrows (pers obs) suggests that this is a sand devoid of larger inclusions which may be desirable, due to not having to remove quartzite pebbles, for building operations (e.g. to make mortar). This might mean that this ridge was shaped by quarrying for sand, particularly for example in building campaigns at the church. It is possible to see two very slight lobes in the LiDAR data intruding into the body of the ridge on the eastern side which could support this. However, the evidence is extremely slight and tenuous and could alternatively be explained by grave digging.

If the ridge was deliberately enhanced the modification may have been relatively insubstantial with at most perhaps around 2-3m in height of additional material being deposited; the evidence suggests that this putative additional material was also only deposited as a thin linear ridge of no more than 20 metres width (west to east) at the base and only, at most, 5-6 metres wide at the top. Either this represents a very heavily truncated motte, or a feature like a rampart, as it indeed appears to have been mapped by the Ordnance Survey back in the late 19th century.

These observations reinforce the suggestion from the 2015 topographic survey that the ridge is unlikely to be the remains of a motte, it appears much more akin to a rampart than a deliberately constructed conical mound (e.g. a motte).

If the ridge is actually a motte in the sense of either a deliberately constructed mound or a natural promontory scarped to form a mound, its location leaves several difficult questions unanswered. If it is assumed that the ha-ha around the churchyard is a defensive earthwork enclosure, then one might wonder why the builders chose to site a motte in the north western corner of this, where the ground level is at an elevation of around 54m AOD rather than the south western corner, just c.30m south, where the ground level is around 56m AOD; for the same effort of building a 2m high mound the higher starting ground level would permit a much more impressive appearing motte to have been constructed. As it is, the top of the c.2m high 'motte' is at the same level as the adjacent ground to the south. While a slight motte in the north western corner of the churchyard might seem more impressive from the river crossing at the Poulter to the north west (though probably only from the crossing itself, not from the higher ground of the approach to this crossing), there would seem to be little advantage from any other direction of approach to constructing a slight motte at one of the low points of the site, and then only constructing it to the level of the immediately adjacent land, both within and without the supposed defensive enclosure.

There is also the problem of the shape of the 'motte', which at present has a more or less flat platform measuring a little over 25 metres north to south and maximum 6 metres west to east which is no higher than the immediately adjacent land in the inner bailey to the south. These dimensions seem inadequate for placing any of the normal structures expected on a motte or even to allow for a tower such as at South Mimms. The latter, in comparison, had a motte c.9m high and 35m in diameter at the base (Scheduling Description). To explain this one could invoke suggestions that perhaps the motte was unfinished and only one side was constructed; this would not work in terms of the usual construction methods of mottes which were raised in layers. Alternatively, it may be necessary to suggest that the motte was completed but was later partially razed; or the material from which it was built was quarried. If the motte was deliberately razed, then why was this destruction only partial, leaving part of the motte standing as the ridge in the western part of the churchyard, and more importantly, why was the top of this remaining fragment reduced and levelled off so precisely to within a few tens of centimetres of the height of the ground to the south (see 22), rather than just being abandoned at a random, and probably uneven, elevation, as would be expected if the demolition were abandoned part way through, or the 'motte' had been quarried? If what would have been a substantial 'motte' had been demolished, why cease demolition with so little of the structure left when to go the extra mile and remove the final vestiges to ground level on the west and east would have allowed the land to be returned to occupation or cultivation or other use? Furthermore, if a putative 'motte' was destroyed to such an extent that its form can no longer be reliably reconstructed (Speight 1994, 67; Creighton 1997, 477), how is it possible to explain why the 'defensive ditches' of the inner and outer baileys were left open, largely untouched, and even the subtle earthwork banks on the inside of these ditches have remained, to be clearly visible in the LiDAR data, while all traces of the central and eastern parts of the motte were completely eradicated?

There is also absolutely no trace of a ditch surrounding the mound, except for the ha-ha on the western side. The lack of ditch surrounding the mound at Aslockton has been proposed as the primary factor that 'casts doubt upon its interpretation as a castle' (Speight 2008). This also seems reasonable at Cuckney. Either we interpret the mound at Cuckney as the vestigial traces of a large motte that formerly occupied the whole of Barley's inner bailey enclosure, having a rather rectangular planform and measuring around 60m x 70m at the base, with the churchyard ha-ha forming the ditch around the motte on the north, west and south sides and Barley's north south inner / outer bailey ditch as the ditch on the east side, or we accept that the mound was not surrounded by a ditch and is therefore unlikely to be a motte. In favour of the latter is the fact that there are still slight earthworks of banks on the inside of the ditches, including the filled in north south ditch between Barley's inner and outer baileys (e.g. Figure 23 and 25 features no 4); these would not have survived if the motte had been constructed and then demolished, unless the ditches were re-cut after it had been demolished.

Additionally, a very large motte would require a very large ditch to extract all the material for it and there is no indication at all to suggest that significant excavations, in the form of a large ditch or the general reduction of ground surface over a large area, were ever undertaken to yield material from which a substantial motte could be built. It may be that construction was begun, with ditches being excavated around the intended footprint of the motte, but that construction was abandoned at this stage. Such a scenario appears unlikely given the shape of the ditches; mottes are not usually rectangular; and the size; Egmanton is around 43m in diameter at the base, Laxton about 48m, for example, though larger is not impossible. There is also the question of the western ridge, it would be sensible to include this in the core of the structure to reduce the quantities of material and effort required to construct the motte, but if this was intended why was the ridge likely enhanced to raise it slightly and give it a level platform at its surface? Perhaps this might have been a temporary feature or later response, once the construction of the motte had been abandoned, or while it was underway, the ridge could have been used as a temporary rampart to defend the eastern side.

THERE IS NO MOTTE AT CUCKNEY.

On the whole, the 2015 topographic survey and 2018 LiDAR data and subsequent analysis of this evidence undertaken by Mercian Archaeological Services CIC for the Battle of Hatfield Investigation Society's project suggests there is only really one plausible conclusion to be reached about the earthworks at Cuckney: Cuckney is not a motte and bailey castle. More specifically, the interpretation of the ridge of land at the western end of the churchyard as a motte has been shown to be untenable, or at best highly unlikely, by the new data captured during the recent projects. To argue for the traces of a motte seems to require too many jumps of intuition and faith for it to be likely: the alternatives, that the ridge is part of a naturally slightly harder sandstone eroded by natural processes (and perhaps human activity) or that the ridge was humanly modified to create a rampart to strengthen the site on the western side not only fit far better into the observable and quantifiable evidence but are also far more plausible.

Once the ridge in the western part of the churchyard is recognised as a natural ridge (albeit possibly deliberately enhanced) and removed from consideration as a motte, a number of the issues reported in interpreting the site by the serious castle scholars are removed: the difficulties that scholars have had reported in recognising the remains of the motte (e.g. Speight 1994, 67; Creighton 1997, 477) can be explained by realising that the feature they were looking at is not a motte and it is no longer necessary to invoke some kind of implausible process that resulted in an extensive, but partial, destruction of the body of the motte but left most of the far less substantial 'bailey' ditches and banks surviving as even very subtle earthworks around it. The recognition that the site has no motte also removes Speight's main objection to an Anarchy period dating of the castle, as she considers it unlikely that the expense and effort of constructing a motte would be employed in an anarchy period castle (Speight 1994, 69).

SO IS THERE STILL A CASTLE AT CUCKNEY?

While suggestions of the presence of a motte at Cuckney appear to be untenable, there is no question that there are earthworks at Cuckney, some of which form an enclosure, and a question remains about their nature and dating. There is also no question that there is a passing documentary reference to a castle at Cuckney. We also have the artefactual evidence for at least limited late Saxon activity to the west and the east of the church and the results of the archaeological investigations of the two 2018 trenches and the test pitting project. Trench 01 suggested that there was fairly intensive late Saxon (probably mostly mid 10th century and later) activity or possibly occupation to the west of the churchyard and that at least in the post conquest period this land had been cultivated. Some significant event appears to have resulted in a major change of land use in this part of the settlement in the early to early / mid 12th century: at the very least deposition of waste stopped at this time. The change was clearly significant and lasting as occupation never returned to this vicinity and cultivation and deposition of waste did not resume until the later 17th century.

Trench 02 suggested the presence of a palisade or rampart set back from the edge of the hill. If all factors aligned it is not impossible that the artefacts within the bank or rampart associated with the palisade slot could be contemporary in date and if so a mid 12th century date would be the only one possible for the construction of this feature. However, if the earlier and slightly abraded sherds are residual a date anywhere between the 12th and 14th century would be possible.

The archaeology suggests that there was late Saxon activity or settlement on the south bank of the River Poulter around the site of the present church of St Mary and that this activity probably encompassed the whole south bank within the meander of the river. Some kind of significant disturbance to the settlement pattern occurred in the early to mid 12th century, causing formerly cultivated land to be abandoned. It seems improbable that natural internal processes, such as population shrinkage, would be responsible for the abandonment of formerly occupied then cultivated land so close to the heart of the settlement and, that it was not re-occupied at a later date. It is more probable that larger, possibly external factors, caused a fundamental change in the settlement that resulted in the abandonment of the land in the vicinity of trench 01 and prevented its re-occupation. The documented construction of a castle offers a tempting explanation. This might produce a major disruption if siting requirements (for example, if it needed to be adjacent to a river crossing) caused it to be imposed on the existing settlement: if the lord moved those tenants displaced by the construction into a new area of settlement (for example to the south of the church) in order to avoid losing the income of their rents this could account for why there was no drive to reoccupy the land that had been cleared for the castle: the former occupants had new plots and new dwellings. While this does provide a neat explanation for what was obviously a major change to the settlement layout, explains the archaeological evidence as it presently stands, and ties it in to the documentary evidence for a castle, it is not the only possible explanation. There may be a range of other equally significant factors that could also cause a change in land use but which, unlike the castle, are not documented. These could include deliberate re-planning by the lord for reasons entirely unrelated to castle building. Indeed, there are tentative signs that this had happened once already, when the probably formerly occupied land was cultivated around the time of the Norman conquest. This again is a major historical event, but whether it had anything to do with this first change of land use is impossible to say.

A palisade or rampart such as that possibly encountered in trench 02 is a feature more often encountered in a military / elite context than on a low status 'peasant' domestic site. Could this have been part of the castle documented in the foundation charter of Welbeck Abbey? It would certainly seem to be slight and would easily fit within Speight's description of Anarchy period fortifications as 'the humblest of earthworks, soon dismantled.' (Speight 1994, 67). However, until full analysis of the finds is complete it is impossible to be certain whether all the finds are contemporary, and therefore the feature was constructed in the correct time frame to support an Anarchy period dating, or if some are likely to be residual (evidenced by the degree of abrasion, amongst other factors) and thus indicate that the feature is post Anarchy in date of construction.

If the possible palisade / rampart does prove to be of the correct period how does this relate to the ha-ha ditch around the churchyard that has been taken to be the inner bailey of a castle? Concentric castles were a product of the later middle ages, so it would seem unlikely that the excavated palisade / rampart was an outer defence.

There is at present very little dating evidence for the ha-ha boundaries around the churchyard. They have been referred to as ha-ha ditches throughout this report as this is how they currently appear. A ha-ha is described as a 'recessed landscape design element that creates a vertical barrier while preserving an uninterrupted view of the landscape beyond The design includes a turfed incline which slopes downward to a sharply vertical face (typically a masonry retaining wall).' (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ha-ha#cite_note-1).

The ha-ha was a French innovation of the later 17th century: they were mentioned in English literature by the early 18th century (https://ipfs.io/ipfs/QmXoypizjW3WknFiJnKLwHCnL72vedxjQkDDP1mXWo6uco/wiki/John_James_(architect).html and were certainly widely established by the late 18th century. While

they are often associated with the prospects immediately surrounding the great estates of the upper echelons of society they were, for example, also used to ensure livestock did not encroach into churchyards, such as an 18th century example found at the Abbey of Iona (Hamlin 1987, 17).

The shape and appearance of the ditches around the churchyard at Cuckney is very much like a typical ha-ha. Even if the banks and ditches of the 12th century castle survived until the churchyard was extended into this area in the 19th century, it seems likely that they were most likely modified to create their present, ha-ha, shape, more recently. The stone revetment contains no obvious medieval masonry, though it has not been recorded or examined in detail by any of the recent projects. The only dating evidence seen thus far was noted in an early stage of the survey in 2015 where there was an exposure of the bank soil revealed by an earlier collapse of part of the ha-ha wall on the north side of the churchyard. This was within the circuit highlighted by Barley as part of the inner bailey. Where the wall had fallen away it revealed the brown silty sand soil that it was retaining; this was seen to be containing a number of fragments of clear glass bottles that were of 19th century date. They were still in situ and were at least a metre below present ground level inside the churchyard. As these were both within the bounds of a Scheduled monument and as their potential significance for dating was not appreciated at this early stage of the project, they were not collected or formally recorded. They may not date the construction of the ha-has; they might just be waste that was dumped down the back of a crack that had formed as the revetment wall was starting to slump away from the bank behind, leaving a gap which was either a convenient place to deposit the standard graveyard waste (i.e. dead flowers, broken vases / other flower containers, grass clippings etc) in the late 19th century, or was deliberately backfilled with waste, though it might be expected that this latter would make the wall face more likely to fall outwards. Alternatively, it may be that the glass was waste that was deposited during the construction of the ha-ha, and therefore that the ha-has were recently constructed when they were first mapped on the First Edition Ordnance Survey County Series maps in the late 19th century. Against this, one has to question whether the OS surveyors would be so easily deceived in labelling a newly constructed earthwork as an ancient site and indeed whether Barley, writing in the early 1950s, would not have recognised the ha-ha as such, or was not at least told that it was a ha-ha by one of the older residents who might have seen it built within living memory.

Cuckney was part of the holdings of the Earl Bathurst but came into possession of the Welbeck estate with the sale of Cuckney from Earl Bathurst to the 4th Duke of Portland in 1844 (Hillman and Cook 2016, 88). It was thus part of a large county estate belonging to one of the major noble families at this time; following the dissolution of the monasteries Welbeck passed, via a few inconsequential owners, to the Dukes of Newcastle and subsequently the Dukes of Portland. The tenure of the latter may provide a context for the work at Cuckney: the 4th Duke spent much money in improving the agriculture of his estate and had the water meadows at Cuckney constructed in 1849-50 (Hillman and Cook 2016, 88) and his successor, the 5th Duke, also lavished money on works on the estate.

It is not impossible that the construction of the ha-ha around the churchyard at Cuckney was instigated by, and part of the works of, one of the Dukes of Portland once Cuckney came into their hands in the middle of the 19th century. The driver for the work may have been the requirement for the extension of the graveyard of St Mary's; perhaps for whatever reason the landowner preferred that a less visually intrusive boundary than a large wall should be constructed around the extension: one reason could perhaps be that this was intended to prevent the views of the water meadows being obstructed from the village of Cuckney. Certainly water meadows were something that those who had them constructed were proud of and sought to publicise; the system at Clipstone was also described as the 'Pride of Nottinghamshire' in 1854 (Hillman and Cook 2016, 82).

Morphologically it seems reasonable to assign the earthworks, at least as they currently exist, to the 18th or 19th century, whether they were established on the line of earlier features or were completely new creations. There is at this time both the motive, in the form of a resident landowner of high enough social status with sufficient funding and an apparent desire to

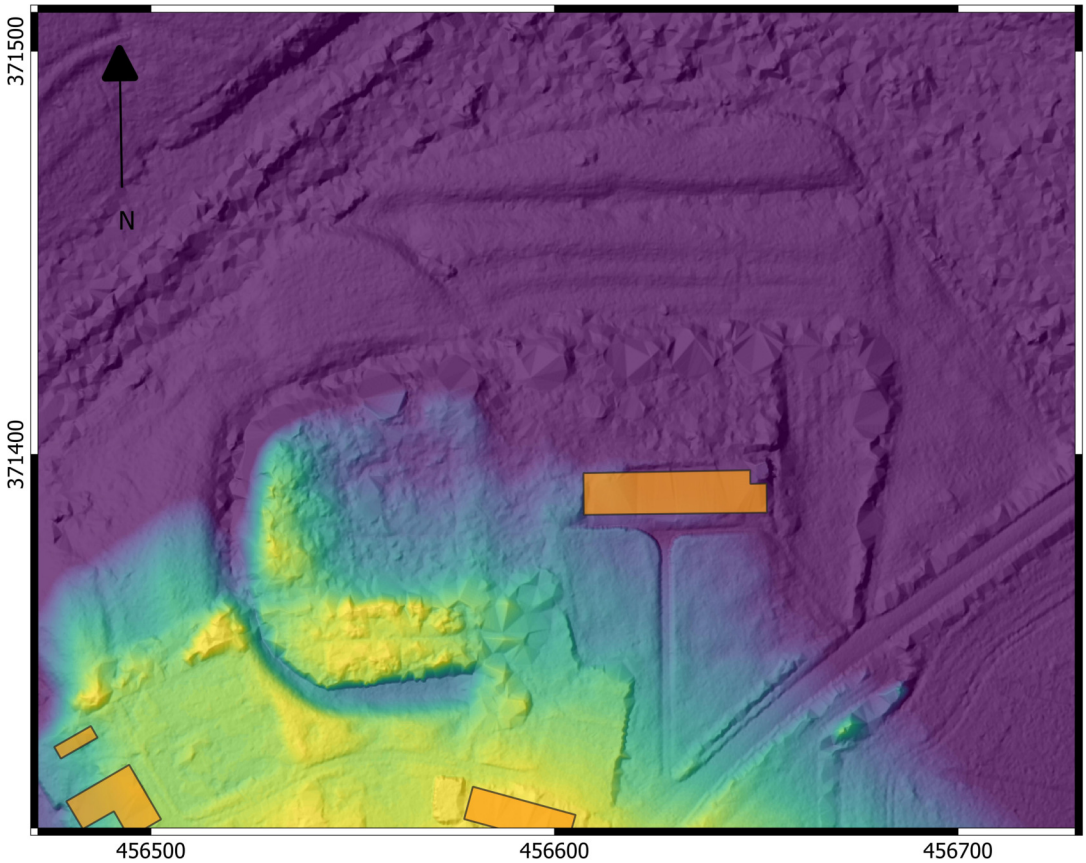
provide work creation schemes on his estate, and the need, in terms of the expansion of the churchyard.

The 2015 find of a thumb impressed rim of a 12th to mid 13th century hand made jar found in a mole hill in proximity to the north-south churchyard ditch is the only medieval artefact yet recovered from within the 'inner bailey'. This suggests activity in the vicinity of the church at this time but it is impossible to suggest on the basis of a single unstratified find whether this relates to use of the church, which was present at this time, or whether it has any relationship to the earthworks. The only other dating evidence is several 19th century glass bottles seen well below ground level in the soil behind the stone wall of the ha-ha on the north side. As the context of these finds was not investigated they too cannot provide dating evidence for the construction of the ha-ha; while they could well be contemporary with it they might have been tipped in later to fill a gap that had opened up. It may also be of note that Barley recorded that 'no finds have come from graves dug there' referring to the graveyard extension in the south of the inner bailey (Barley 1951, 28). A similar lack of finds was noted in 2015, where the surface of mole hills were examined in the churchyard, as were the surfaces of the extensive down slope debris fan of spoil from the rabbit warren on the western side of the western ridge (the 'motte'). Particularly on the 'motte' there was a relatively large volume of spoil visible and this was well spread out by its down slope movement: not a single artefact was present (Budge 2016, 138-9).

While all this does rather seem to suggest that there is little cause to believe that the earthworks around the churchyard to the west of the church are of any great antiquity, the 2015 topographic survey and 2018 LiDAR data do provide one clue. The north south ditch, first highlighted by Barley as the possible division between his inner and outer baileys (Barley 1951, 28), was detected by the 2015 topographic survey as a fairly substantial feature (feature 3, Gaunt and Crossley 2016, 105-6) which can be seen from the LiDAR data to be approximately 12 - 14m in width. While this is quite wide, it is not impossible that it could be represent the western boundary of the churchyard prior to its 19th century extension, or be this boundary with a hollow way running alongside it. However, when examined in the LiDAR data it can be seen that there is the remains of a bank, surviving up to c.0.25m in height and being around 10m wide, located on the western side of the ditch. The width of this ditch is closely comparable with the width of the ha-ha ditches. It also rather neatly closes the circuit formed by the ha-has on the southern, western and probably northern side of the churchyard.

This in itself may suggest that the ha-has were dug into existing earthworks that, while silted up, were still visible at the surface when the ha-has were constructed. These earthworks most likely enclosed a rectangular area that was seen by Barley as representing the inner bailey of a castle.

There is no evidence for a continuation of the southern ha-ha ditch eastwards, to the south of St Mary's, in either the geophysical surveys or in the LiDAR data. It seems most plausible to suggest that this is not because it once continued into this area but has been completely filled in and levelled to the south of the church, or that a defensive circuit was begun but not completed, but rather that, if there was a banked and ditched enclosure (defensive or otherwise) it was wholly located to the west of the church. This would account for there apparently being four sides to a banked and ditched enclosure in this area, while no trace of a continuation of the southern ditch can be seen to the south of the church, no trace of ditches can be seen to the east of the church and why, while there is some terracing at the northern boundary of the churchyard to the north of the church, there is also no continuation of a ditch into this area. It is not necessary to invoke complete backfilling and levelling to obliterate all traces of a buried feature in just one part of the site, when there is no evidence of such in any other part of the site, or to suggest that one side of the 'castle' was left open and undefended as an entrance, or that it was begun but not completed, to account for a lack of detectable evidence for ditches. It is simply necessary to accept that there may not be any traces of ditches around the church because there may never have been any.



Contains Ordnance Survey date © Crown Copyright and Database right 2019.. Image created from data acquired by Bluesky

Figure 30 - Hillshade model of the LiDAR data showing the earthworks around the churchyard.

The earthworks to the north of the churchyard seem to represent a range of features. Historic England considered them to be an outer bailey and described a 'double bank and ditch following the line of the River Poulter' as the northern boundary. It is not entirely clear which earthwork features are being referred to in this description; immediately north of the churchyard there is what appears to be an area of medieval cultivation containing two ridges and two furrows. The LiDAR shows at least the southern example to have a curving western end and there are hints of the sinuous profile typical of medieval ridge and furrow. They appear to have been crammed in to space between the churchyard wall, to the south, an east west channel to the north, and the ditch of a D shaped enclosure to the west. The ridge and furrow could perhaps be the 'double bank and ditch'. Alternatively, to the north of the ridge and furrow there is a substantial ditch, or channel, aligned west - east. North of this, the ground drops towards the floodplain of the Poulter. At the edge of the floodplain there is possibly another ditch cut into the bank. This could alternatively be a former channel of the Poulter: the floodplain is at its lowest on the southern side of the floodplain (being around 47.7m AOD) suggesting that prior to its canalisation it may well have flowed immediately against the southern bank of its floodplain. While the east - west channel is quite substantial, it is more difficult to see that features here could be interpreted as a double bank and ditch. It has been suggested that the east west channel may be a water management feature, such as a mill leat (Gaunt pers comm). Hillman and Cook note that there is extensive evidence of substantial modification of the Poulter for water power (Hillman and Cook 2016, 86). Much of this may be of 18th and 19th century date, but Cuckney is recorded as having had two mills and Domesday. If the ridges to the south of the channel are correctly interpreted as ridge and furrow and if the inference that they are therefore most likely to be medieval in date is correct, then they suggest that the channel is likely to be medieval or earlier in date.

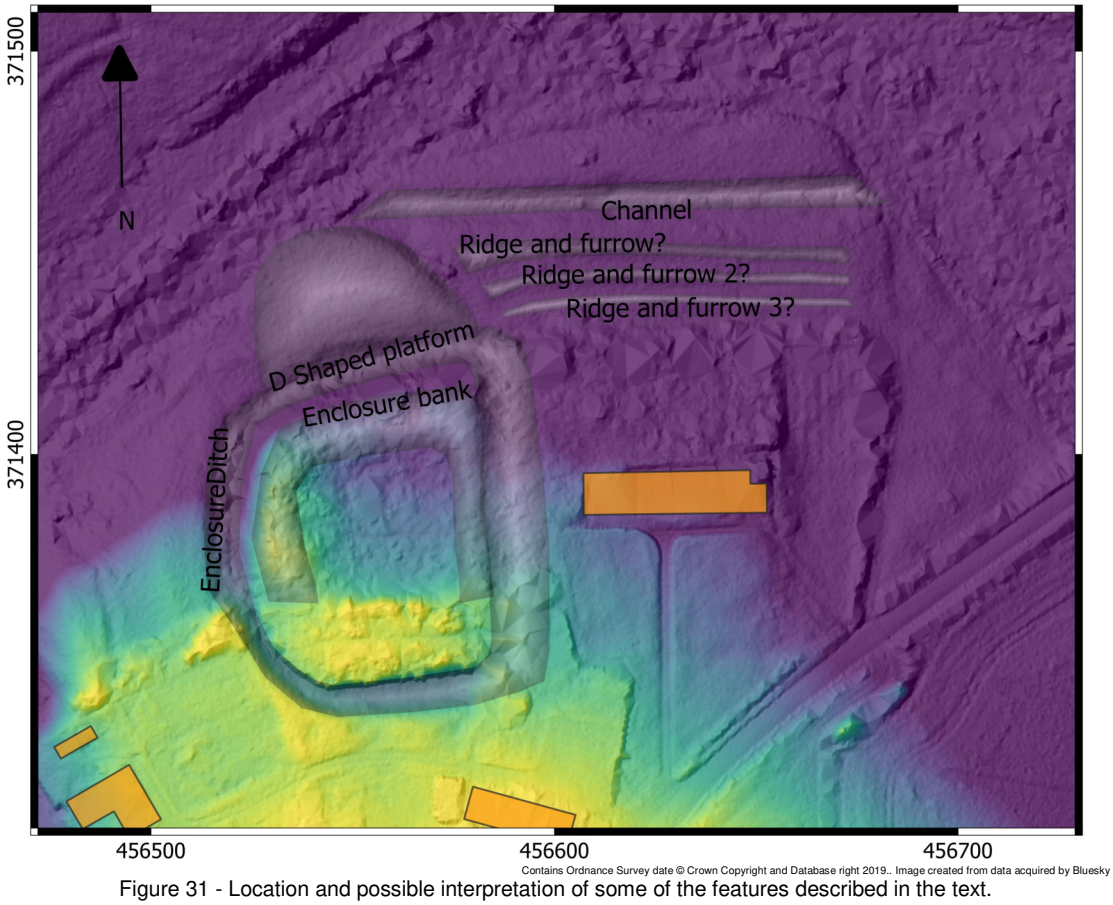


Figure 31 - Location and possible interpretation of some of the features described in the text.

For the same reason, a similar date would also be suggested for the D shaped platform. As was noted in 2015, the eastern ditch of this platform is directly in line with the north-south ditch in the churchyard (feature 8, Gaunt and Crossley 2016, 106), although it is not as wide. It is unclear whether this platform is contemporary with the rectangular enclosure to its south, is earlier, or is a later addition. The LiDAR does at least suggest that the ha-ha ditch on the north side of the churchyard cuts through the platform. This may however be expected if the ha-ha is a recut of an earlier ditch.

An apparent lack of entrances through the circuit of ditches around the enclosure may be a product of the later re-profiling of the ditches to construct the ha-ha. However, the width of the ditch does appear to narrow towards the south west corner of the enclosure. This narrowing more or less coincides with a hollow in the earthworks on the inside of the ditch (feature 3 on Figure 22). It might just be possible that these two features together could suggest a possibility for an entrance in this area. If this were the case, it would be on the side with the largest earthwork bank and it might be relevant that the palisade or rampart of the excavation is also on this side. As, however, the contemporaneity of these features are not established, this is speculation.

There is an intriguing possibility given the evidence for late Saxon occupation, that may have included metal working and other craft activities to the west of the enclosure in the vicinity of Trench 01: suggestion has been made that this may be a Saxon thegnal site that was adapted as a Norman castle (Davis 2017). However, this suggestion was probably made on the basis of the church being located within the castle; it is also worth considering that Creighton is fairly adamant that the 'association of lordly residence and church may have been entirely post-Conquest in origin' (Creighton 1997, 177).

CASTLE SUMMARY:

At this stage there are still too many factors that remain unknown to be able to offer a definitive statement on Cuckney castle and on the earthworks in and around the churchyard. It is, however, at least possible to state that the earthworks are almost certainly not the

remains of a motte and bailey castle. It is, however, possible that the enclosure to the west of the church, which appears to have had a substantial ditch around it, could be a ringwork castle. There are, however, other possible explanations for it, and to equate it with the documentary reference to an Anarchy period castle at Cuckney on the present evidence would be unwise.

It is also possible to state that there does not appear to be any evidence to support the assertions that St Mary's church was included within the fortifications, as suggested by previous academics (Barley 1951, 28; Speight 1994, 67; Creighton 1997, 167-9). There is no archaeological evidence for any kind of defensive circuit, whether incomplete or filled in and buried, that continues the lines of the ditches of the enclosure to the west of the church and encloses the church. The church and the ditched enclosure to its west appear, archaeologically, to be separate entities. Of course, it is always possible that the church might have been enclosed within a weaker enclosure. It might for example have been enclosed within a palisade with no ditches, which might not be detectable without excavation. However, making such arguments would be wholly speculative and could, on the present evidence, only be justified on the grounds that earlier scholars, working without the benefit of LiDAR and detailed topographic surveys, had suggested that the church was situated within the castle. The archaeological evidence as currently understood suggests it was not (assuming that the enclosure to the west of the church is indeed a castle).

Conclusion:

The project has yielded significant archaeological information. It has revealed regionally significant archaeological evidence for late Saxon activity on the south bank of the River Poulter around the present church of St Mary; archaeological evidence of late Saxon activity is extremely scarce in Bassetlaw district. This and other information from the excavation has allowed an interpretation of the settlement of Cuckney to be developed. This too has a wider significance to aid understanding of the development of settlements in the Sherwood Forest region.

It has also allowed some of the myths surrounding Cuckney castle to be dispelled and has, for the first time, revealed archaeological features that may belong to the castle, along with capturing detailed LiDAR data that can form the basis for further work on interpreting the earthworks.

It also revealed crucial information to feed in to ongoing study of the medieval ceramics of Nottinghamshire, producing evidence of particular significance for the understanding of the Skegby pottery industry.

Most importantly, the successful project saw the involvement of many people, including locals and those from a much wider area, and their engagement in the local heritage of Cuckney.

Archive:

Following completion of post excavation finds analysis and reporting, the archive from the project is to be deposited at Bassetlaw Museum. The museum does not issue accession numbers prior to deposition; the archive will be deposited under the site codes CUCK18 for the excavation, and CTP18 for the test pitting. The archive will be created and packaged in line with archaeological best practice and guidance.

It consists of a copy of this report, a print out of the MS Access database entries for the pottery finds and the physical archive of artefacts that were retained.

The archive should prove stable if stored within standard limits and it is not anticipated that the pottery will provide any long term storage problems as long as it is not subjected to abnormal levels of damp, abrasion (eg if removed from bags and placed in drawers that are regularly opened or closed) or other adverse conditions.

The iron is unstable and will actively corrode if not kept in an environment of low humidity. It is currently packed in an airtight Stewart plastics box with silica gel. The humidity indicator card on the front of the box should be checked at regular intervals, no more than two months, and the silica gel replaced with dry silica gel as necessary.

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Disclaimer:

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