

August Update 2018

Wigwell Green Potters Yard.

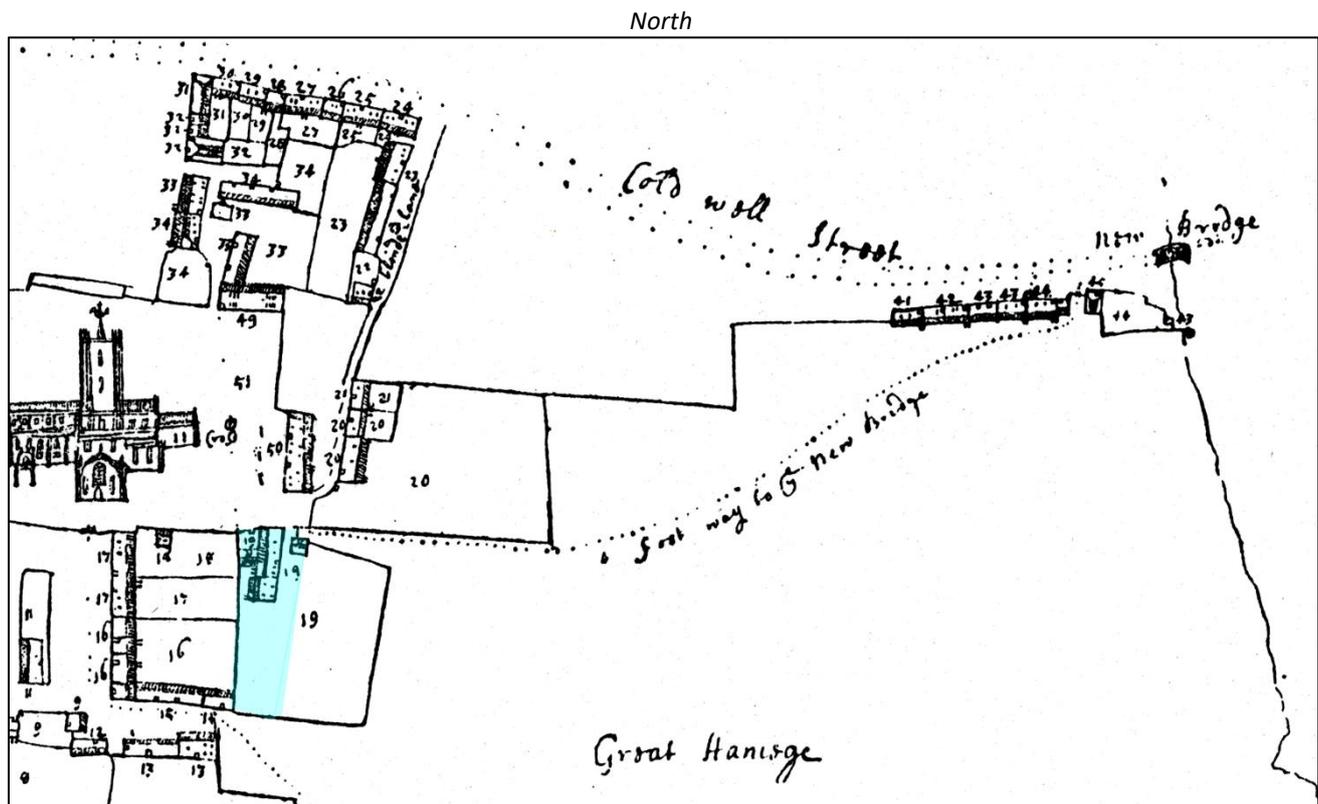
I have been in contact with Mr Geoff Cooper who owns the wood next to Potter's Yard at Wigwell Green, where we believe there are a number of medieval kilns. I am arranging to go and meet Mr Cooper to walk the wood and see if he is happy for us to examine one of the possible kilns. If this is successful and Mr Cooper is happy for us to proceed, I will pencil in some dates and prepare a Method Statement for us.

Some documents.

In terms of documents we happened to review one the the Gell papers from the Derbyshire Record Office D258/8/6 which deals with the sale of some land from Sir John Gell to William Wingfield (spelt Wingfeild) in 1681. It is in English but its script is tricky to read and it is full of the legal terms of its day. A summary of it (stripping out the said this and said that) reads in modern English:

For £16 Bargain and Sale Sir John Gell to William Wingfield 1681. All that piece of land 95 yards long and 17 and a half yards wide, laid to orchard and garden of William Wingfield.

Extending itself in the upper end: adjoining to Blind Lane, from the house end of the lane, tenanted by William Rowley. Northwards to William Wingfield's house, tenanted by Thomas Leving. In the nether end: southward from the hedge of the Hannages, adjoining to a small garden, tenanted by Elizabeth Wilson, to the utmost corner of the new wall of the orchard into the Hannages and shooting down from Blind Lane along the side of William Wingfield's house into the Hannages together with a small cottage and a stable standing off the upper end and adjoining Blind Lane, tenanted by William Wingfield.



Extract of the map of the Gell estate in 1709

In the map, the piece of land sold in 1681 (in blue) would be part of plot 19 shown in 1709. Although we might expect the boundary to be recited in a clockwise direction, the boundary statement jumps around and seems to repeat itself, as if the writer had not seen the plot. Several things seem apparent. First, that the boundary shown at the south end of plot 20 above must in 1681 have been a hedge boundary of the Hannages, it is now a wall. Secondly, plot 20 tells us

that if Wirksworth Hall existed in 1709 (we have no evidence of this) it occupied a smaller plot to the north of plot 20 than it did in its Victorian years. Wirksworth Hall presents a special problem, it is not directly recorded before 1779 except that its gates (which survive at Henley Hall in Shropshire) have been attributed by English Heritage as the work of Robert Bakewell of his style of 1725. Thirdly, that by 1709 plot 19 had been extended eastwards into the Hannages and had become the house of John Shallcross with "Bowling Greens" (the 1709 map has a list of tenants attached to it). Fourthly, the 1681 document gives us the names of some local tenants, William Wingfield himself, also William Rowley and Elizabeth Wilson. The name Thomas Leving is difficult to decipher it might read E. Thomas Leving (so, for example, Edward Thomas Leving). None of these tenants of John Gell in 1681 are listed as Phillip Gell's tenants by 1709. An oddity of the 1681 document is that in 1709 the land is still in the hands of the Gells, so the sale was probably not executed. A similar occurrence takes place in 1689 where a document (Wolley Charters xi 124) suggests a sale by Phillip and Francis Gell of the Over and Nether Hannage to Thomasin Somers (widow), in the tenure of William Wingfield (gentleman) for 5 shillings for 6 months. This sale was certainly not executed.

Pottery notes from the Almshouses dig.

I am most grateful to Chris Cumberpatch for looking at the pottery assemblage for Test Pit 2 at the Almshouses and for confirming the dating of the large amount of shards we found. In summary the upper contexts contain a large amount of pottery from the last 400 years and then moving back in time (more or less) to the lower contexts (4-8) which contain shards dating back as far as the eleventh century, perhaps as early as 1050. At the very bottom of the test pit were three parts of a fine heavy orange tile, and I am looking for a comparator for this at the moment. Chris also kindly looked at some other finds and there were two shards of pottery from the building spoil heap at Lilac Cottage (next to the suspected medieval hospital site at the Wheatsheaf pub) which date to the 13th and 14th century and finally also the large number of medieval shards from the garden of the Old Manor House on Coldwell Street which date to the 12th to 14th centuries. I will do a summary of the dating of pottery around our various Wirksworth digs shortly.