

Progress Report July 2021

Our dig in the Meadow Croft field continues to produce surprises and we have been working at the site on most Saturdays during July. I am most grateful to all who have attended to help with the dig and others for their advice and insight.



The site showing the north wall foundations of the building, looking west on the 31st July.

The two major steps forward this month have been, firstly, that the north wall of the building turned out to be much longer than we had previously thought, the interior measurement being originally 2.2 metres with walls about 80cm wide, however, the actual width of the wall was disguised by a tree throw (that is to say a slightly disturbed place where a tree had been) and the wall continued below more collapsed stone. The north wall length now measures 4.3 metres internally and we are not certain this is yet the final outcome.



Recording taking place using a metre grid as basis for drawing the collapse

Secondly, the same may apply to the length of the west wall which, until this week, disappeared under its own collapsed stones. These fallen stones, along with the rest of the excavation have to be carefully recorded before being removed and the picture above shows this recording. The picture below shows the collapse, this is essentially where the walls and the stone roof of the building have fallen down on top of its foundations and over the interior which is a clay floor. What we thought last month was a south wall was more collapsed stones.



The west wall hidden under collapsed stonework, looking north



The west wall revealed, looking south, interior on the left.

The west wall is accompanied by both a small drainage channel and a small revetment wall which runs parallel to it. At the moment, we are still uncertain how long the west wall really is, because what originally appeared to be its corner turn at the south end transpired to be more fallen stone: we need to consider whether this was something else and whether the wall continues - it currently appears to run into the side of the dig. Our working idea has been that this was a small medieval building, but our view continues to evolve the more we find of it.

So far we have theorised that this is a domestic building, but we have struggled to reconcile it with what, from pottery finds, appears to be an early date for a domestic building with a stone roof - some of the pottery is late Saxon 850-1150 (technically Saxo-Norman). There are really only a very few buildings of that age which might be constructed of stone - castles: its not a castle; churches: its not a church; forges or smithies (because they would easily catch fire if timber), but the finds don't really support this apart from a single later horseshoe; some kind of church or chapel related building (a small monastic grange maybe) or even a bath house (contrary to popular myth, even the Saxons and Norman's bathed but not in pools like the Romans and we do). At the moment we still don't know and it currently seems to early to be domestic.

We will schedule another members dig day shortly and this is, of course, dependant on the Covid situation as well as summer holidays and unpredictable British summer weather.