

September 2016 Update

During September we have been undertaking some preliminary test pitting in the grounds of the Old Manor House, Coldwell Street, Wirksworth. This is to determine if there is anything enlightening to be found, for example there should at least be some interesting pottery in the grounds of such an old building. This is at an early stage however, and so far nothing substantial has been identified.



Test Pit 1 in the Manor House garden

Separately, we visited 194 Ashbourne Road, Turnditch at the kind invitation of Geoff and Ken Cowley on Saturday 1st Oct to record a quernstone (topstone) which has been in the garden since the current owners moved in, in 1939. Quernstones were used from the Iron Age right through the Roman period until Saxon times and this is a Hunsbury type Beehive quernstone, that is to say it's a conical rotary top quernstone with a hole through it to insert the handle and a central hopper for the grain. This type is typical to the Midlands and many are of Peak District gritstone. This is a well worked example.



Late Iron Age Beehive Quern Stone
(Picture Ian Smith)



Beehive Quernstone: 25 cm high; 28 cm diameter

These are common in our area and some are noted by our esteemed colleagues Alan Palfreyman and Sue Ebbins found at Gorses Farm at Belper Lane End (Derbyshire Archaeological Journal 2011, page 171; see also 2007 page 33). It is difficult to date but it may perhaps on balance be considered to be late Iron Age. The most recent work on them suggests a date between 400BC and 100Ad, after which the design changed, something reflected at the Roman quern making site at Blackbrook about 3 miles away which provided many examples of a flatter grooved type of stone.