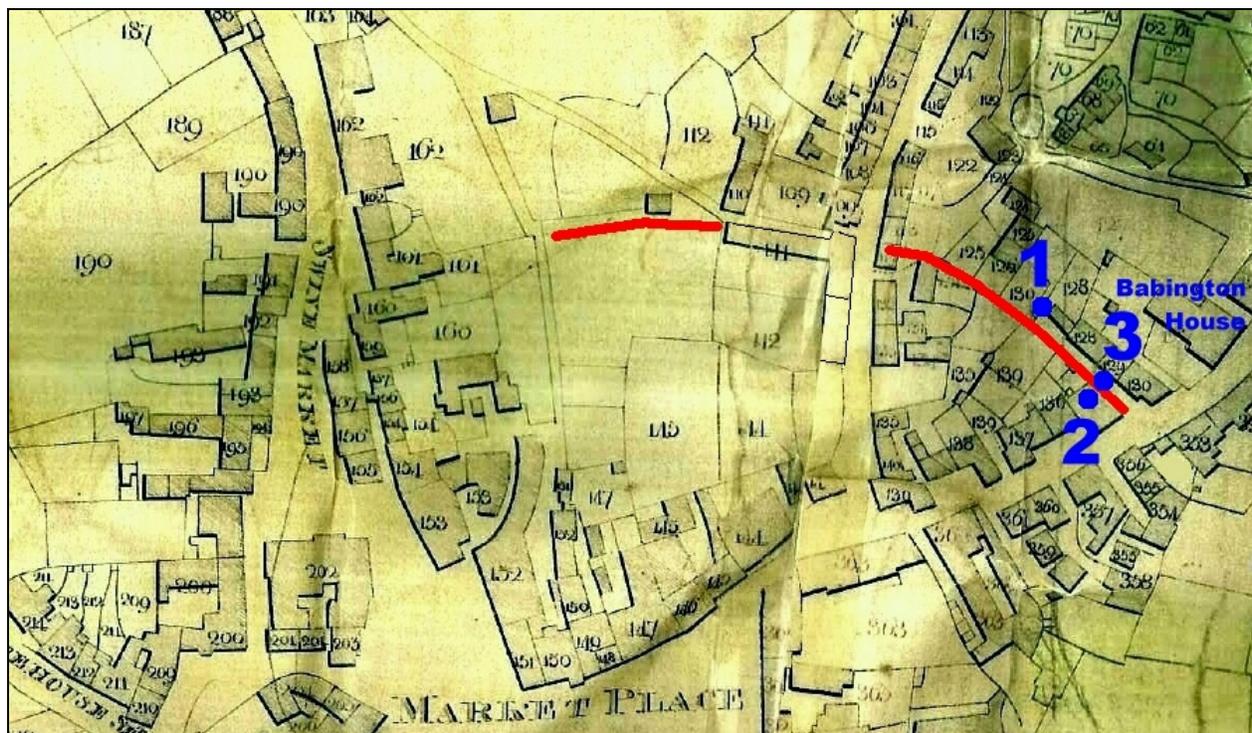


Update July 2016: Test Pits at Greenhill

Three Test Pits have been put in close to Babbington House on Greenhill at Wirksworth with the kind permission of David Grattidge, to whom our grateful thanks.

The purpose of this year's work is to see if we can find any evidence of Wirksworth being fortified. On the west side of Wirksworth a terraced boundary runs between Greenhill and the Dale and a continuation of it runs below Bowling Green Lane. This is the boundary which we are investigating to see if it might constitute the line of a rampart.

West



Extract of the 1821 map of Wirksworth showing the line of terracing (in red)

Test Pit results

Test Pit 1, in the garden of number 28 Greenhill was comprised of garden earth, ashy earth and small stone with exclusively post-medieval finds of blue and white china, brown glazed pottery, clay pipe shards and nineteenth century medicine bottles (Babbington House, originally called Greenhill House, having been the town's cottage hospital, being adjacent).

Test Pit 2 in the car parking space next to number 19 was composed of mud, broken brick, a lot of small rubble with iron slag, oyster shell, clay pipe shards, detritus etc. Compared to Test Pit 1 finds were of much less china, but far more brown glazed wares including Nottingham Brown Salt Glazed Earthenware (1690-1790) for example. Towards the 1 metre depth some of our old friend Staffordshire Blackware (1720-1740) and other post-mediaeval shards such as mottled ware (1690-1750). It was not possible to achieve a greater depth than 1 metre due to flooding.

Test Pit 3 by the side of the path which leads to number 28 (see picture) contained no pottery whatsoever after the first 10cm (and that in the top 10cm being two small shards of modern china), and was composed wholly of clean friable earth and medium-large 10-20cm limestone rubble for the entire achievable depth. There were no finds in this material and no brick or other ceramic materials were present.



None of these Test Pit would cause us raised eyebrows. Test Pit 2 in particular is typical of Wirksworth and once again demonstrates our frequent inability to get to even mediaeval levels without greater depths than we can normally achieve in Test Pits.



Sample pottery finds from TP2

1. Coarse black ware, possibly the rim of a chamber pot 1650-1700
2. Blackware (Staffordshire or Ticknell) 1720-1740 or wider date range
3. Mottled ware 1690-1750
4. Nottingham Brown Salt Glazed Earthenware (1690-1790)
5. Blue and white earthenware (Date? Eighteenth century)
6. Unknown, perhaps a mottled ware, but has a black layered fabric, possibly due to overfiring.

Commentary

These things said, Test Pit 3 is a curiosity, in so far as it is wholly find free and not bedrock. We are looking for evidence of Wirksworth having been fortified and the boundary on which this path lies is as good a candidate as any we have seen. Indeed the drop from the line of the path down the wall to the terrace below is greater than the height of a house: you look down on house roofs. In addition it appears to run through all the properties between Greenhill and the Dale (implying that it pre-dates them), and a continuation exists in the garden of the house below Bowling Green Lane. I think then, this line of a possible boundary deserves our further attention, and further investigation on the line of the terrace to see if the materials in TP3 recur.