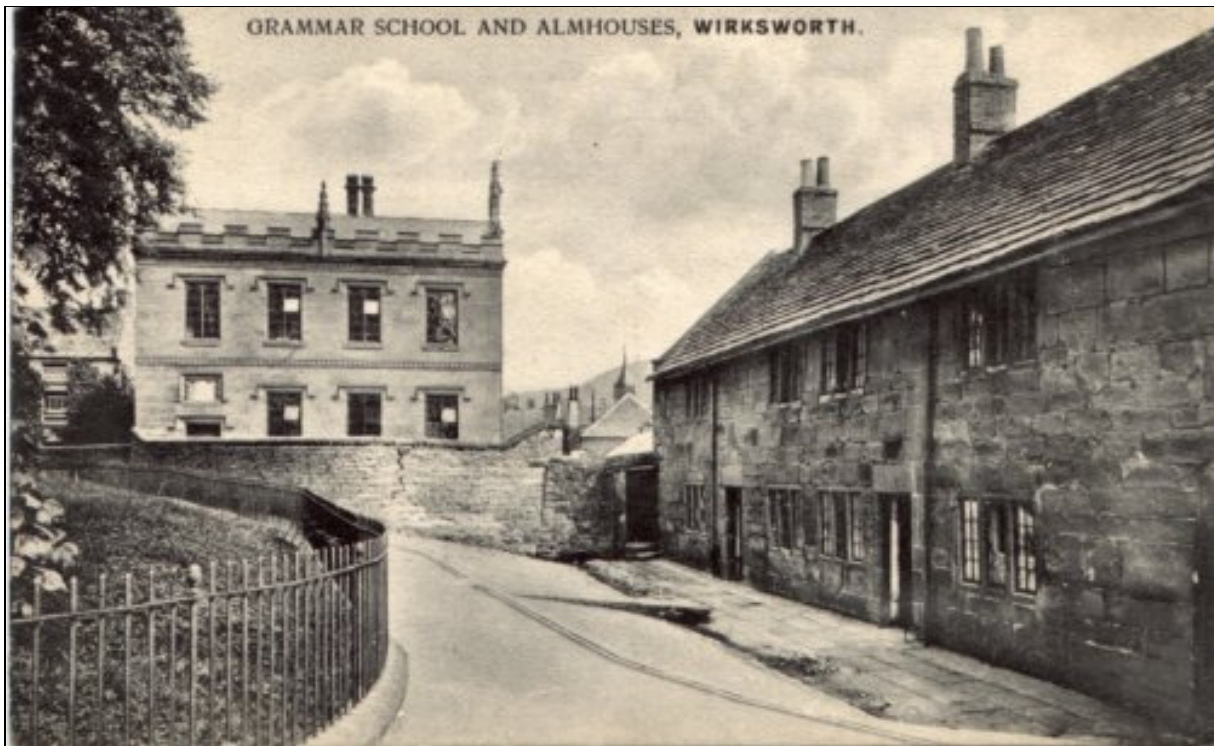


August 2017 Update

## Wirksworth Almshouses Garden Test Pit 2



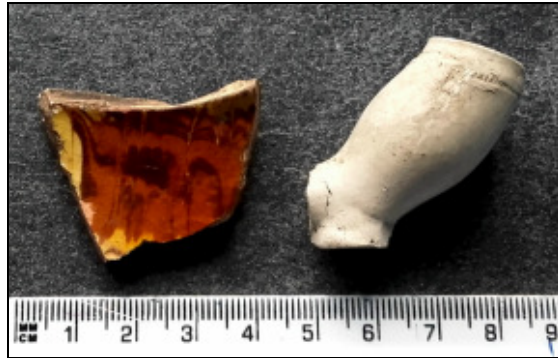
Wirksworth Almshouses (RH side of picture) in 1907 looking north.  
Test Pit 2 was behind the gate in the centre of the picture.

In our July report we referred to work on a first Test Pit in the garden of the Anthony Gell Almshouses in Wirksworth churchyard. This Test Pit wasn't particularly instructive, given that the oldest item found was post-mediaeval, yet the Almshouses themselves date from the 1580s. This being the case, we asked the Almshouses Trust for permission to put in a second Test Pit to see if the first had been giving a correct reading, so to speak.

Test Pit 2 was put in 10 metres west of Test Pit 1, 2 metres from the west boundary wall and 2 metres from the north boundary wall on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> of August 2017.

Test Pit 2 was startlingly different from Test Pit 1 and it contained over 100 shards of pottery and other small finds, the most items we have ever had out of a single Test Pit anywhere in Wirksworth.

In addition to the astonishing number of items was the range of dating of them. Starting at the top we have modern items and working gradually back in time, with one or two exceptions (due to the garden being dug over and the context horizons being diffuse) we find older materials. For example, context 6 was not continuous but appears to have been dug through during gardening activities and turned over, leading to materials which might have been below that context being above it and vice-versa.



Slipware 1650-1700; Clay pipe bowl 1650-1680.

The range of materials included pottery of all periods also glassware, clay pipe shards and bowls (in the upper contexts), oyster shell, canine teeth and animal bone, metalworking slag and an ear scraper. In this respect the contents were remarkably wide-ranging.



Shard of Bellarmine ware 1600-1700

The various contexts in Test Pit 2 were interesting, in so far as there were eight contexts from the topsoil down to the natural substrate which is here limestone rubble (solifluction) at 1 metre 10 cm depth, though this does not explain why Test Pit 1, only 10 metres away, had no such limestone rubble substrate to a greater dig depth of one and half metres: the current ground level does not slope.

Contexts and materials.

Context 1 (To 25cm depth)

This is the topsoil of the current garden which is a dark soft loamy soil with a wide variety of largely (though not entirely) post mediaeval pottery and other small finds. This is diffuse with:

Context 2. (To 50cm depth)

A slightly greyer loamy soil with bits of charcoal and some animal bone and canine teeth also with largely (though not entirely) post mediaeval pottery and other small finds. The lower part of this context, overlaying context 3, contained slipwares, clay pipe shards, some mediaeval Hartshorn ware and Bellarmine ware (Bags 1-2 from contexts 1 and 2).

Context 3. (To 60cm depth)

A layer of small limestone pieces which may represent a modern gardening horizon with some gritstone demolition items including a flat shaped small smooth octagonal gritstone and part of a large ball finial such as one might find on top of gatepost or as a finial on the end of a house ridge line (Bag 3)



Smoothed gritstone (LH) and part of Ball Finial (RH)  
These items were interspersed with some slipwares (1660-1690)

Context 4 (To 70cm depth)

Drier, greyer friable soil with some limestone pieces with lots of bits of mortar, charcoal, small coal (“slack”) and bits of small gritstone. The small finds included green glazed shelly ware, midland purple wares and part of a Pipkin Handle (1300-1400) (Chris Cumberpatch pers comm) as well as an ear scraper (Bag 4).



TP2C4 Pipkin Handle



Example of a Pipkin (handle broken)

Context 5 (To 80cm depth)

Similar to above but also containing chert, far fewer finds - much less pottery, only a little metalworking slag, buff gritty ware and other gritty wares (tending to be mediaeval) (Bag 5)



Metalworking slag

Context 6 (Between 80cm and 90cm depth)

A layer of partly continuous, but partly dug through, small limestone pieces 5-10 cm in size, predominantly in the SE corner of the test pit, also less obviously and continuously on the east side of the test pit.

Context 7 (to 1m depth)

Similar soil layer to Context 5 no further finds.

Context 8 (At 1m and to 1.10metre depth)

Random limestone pieces 5-10 cm in a layer on the west side of the test pit within fawn clay also containing some spot glazed ware, shelly ware, a shard of purple ware, below which were several pieces of a hard red-orange ceramic building material. (Bags 6 and 6a).



Hard red-orange ceramic building material (CBM)

The ceramic is unusually consistent in colour and fabric

Three pieces found fit together and appear to be brick sized or a corner of a thick tile.

Finally, at 1.10 metre depth, limestone solifluction, which we take to be the natural substrate N1. This differs from Test Pit 1 only 10 metres away.

Provisional finds list:

Ref	Description	No of shards	Date range	Type	Comments / Provisional Opinion
	<b>Bag 1</b>				
1.	Metal belt buckle end		Probably Modern		Modern and extremely rusted.
2	Glassware		Modern		5 items
3	Button		Modern		
4	Clay pipe stem shards		1700-1920		4 items
5	Oyster shell				1 item
6	China shards and flakes	6	Modern	Body	
7	Blue and white china	5	1800 to present	Body	
8	Tin glazed earthenware	1	1600-1800	Body	Surface cracking and faint blue

	china				pattern
9	China	1	Modern	Handle	
10	Salt glazed stoneware	4	1690-1790	Body	Shiny brown
11	Salt glazed stoneware	2	1690-1790	Base shards	Shiny brown
12	Salt glazed stoneware	1	1690-1790	Handle	Shiny brown
13	Brown glazed earthenware	6	1690-1890	Body	“Coarse blackware”
14	Blackware	1	1720-1740	Body	Staffordshire or Wirksworth Blackware.
15	Cistercian ware or Midland blackware	1	1475-1700 or 1650-1800	Handle	Red fabric black lead glaze, may be later, as a blackware development
16	Mottled ware	2	1680-1800	Body	1 flake possibly slipware though
17	Bellarmino ware	1	1450-1720	Body	Apparently a later example of German mottled salt glazed stoneware
18	Midland yellow ware	3	1450-1700	Body	
19	Pink Gritty Ware	2	1300-1500	Rim and base	Hartshorn
20	CBM flake	1			May be a pottery flake
21	Oxidised gritty ware	1	1300-1500	Body	Very small shard
22	CBM	1			Brick shard
	<b>Bag 2</b>				
23	China	2	Modern	Body	
24	Glassware		Modern		Large shard has “orth” presumably “Wirksworth”
25	Clay pipe bowl	1	1690-1750		Decorated small green circle, pronounced small foot.
26	Salt glazed stoneware	4	1690-1790	Body	Shiny brown
27	Brown glazed earthenware	4	1690-Victorian	Body	“Coarse blackware”?
28	Mottled ware	2	1680-1800	Body	Small shards
29	Blackware	1	1720-1740	Body	Embossing
30	Lead glazed Midland purple ware type	1	1650-1700	Body	
31	Midland yellow ware	2	1450-1700	Body	1 might be slipware
32	Slip Trailed ware	4	1650-1800	Body	
33	Feather Trailed slipware	1	1650-1800	Body	
34	Slipware	1	1650-1800	Body	Cream on black ground.
35	Purple bodied blackware	1	1650-1800	Body	
36	Bellarmino ware	1	1450-1720	Body	German mottled salt glazed stoneware
	<b>Bag 3</b>				
37	Blue and white china	1	Victorian	Body	
38	Clay pipe stem	1	1650-1680		Associate with 39
39	Clay pipe bowl	1	1650-1680		
40	Cistercian ware	2	1475-1700	Body	Red fabric black lead glaze
41	Blackware	1	1720-1740	Body	Staffordshire or Wirksworth Blackware
42	Feather Trailed	1	1650-1800	Body	

	slipware				
43	Midland yellow ware	2	1450-1700	Body	Rouletting
44	Cistercian ware	1	1475-1700	Body	Or burned gritty ware
	<b>Bag 4</b>				
45	Slip Trailed ware	2	1650-1800	Body	
46	Cistercian ware	5	1475-1700	Body	Various
47	Midland yellow ware	2	1450-1700	Body / Rim	
48	Midland purple ware	1	1450-1500	Body	
49	Hartshorn type ware	2	1300-1500	Body	
50	Splash glazed ware	1	1300-1400	Handle	Pipkin
51	Green glazed grey shelly	1	Referred		
51A	Ear scraper	1	Referred	Complete	Fell out when TP side being brushed to tidy.
	<b>Bag 5</b>				
52	Glassware	1			Appears to be painted
53	Metalworking slag				Ferrous
54	Burnt fineware	1	1720-1740	Rim	Unknown perhaps blackware
55	Midland purple ware	2	1450-1500	Body	
56	Buff gritty ware	1	Referred	Rim	
57	Orange oxidised ware	1 in 2 parts	To be referred	Body	
58	Gritty ware	2		Body	Small shards/ flakes
58	Green glazed grey shelly ware	1	Referred		
	<b>Bags 6 and 6a</b>				
59	Pale green glazed gritty ware	1	1075-1225	Body	
60	Oxidised shard grey fabric ware	1	To be referred	Body	
61	Purple Ware	1	Referred	Base shard	
62	Shelly Ware	1	Referred	Body	Abraded
63	Greyware	1	Referred	Base	Extremely abraded
64	Red-orange ceramic	3	To be referred	Heavy tile	

### Summary and key issues

Test Pit 2 has been (for its size) extremely interesting, this intensity of finds, their high quality and the breadth far exceeds anything we normally find within one test pit, and the comparison with Test Pit 1 is startling. Indeed Test Pit 2 has much more in common with Trench C of our Hannages work, which we undertook in 2008, than anything else. These two features are quite close, perhaps no more than 50 metres apart, yet between them lies Test Pit 1 in which we did not obviously find the natural substrate. We cannot and must not draw the evidence beyond a point which it would naturally reach, but it is possible that the absence of the natural in Test Pit 1, whilst such natural exists in Test Pit 2 and Hannages C, may imply the presence of a ditch which we failed to identify because of the depth.

Finally, it is significant to note that there were no human remains in Test Pit 2 despite it being within 10 metres of the churchyard and there being anecdotal evidence of such remains being found during drainage work associated with the path at the east end of the churchyard, only 5 metres away.

We have, I think, in relation to this year's work in general, some more thinking to do about what Wirksworth churchyard and its environs actually represent.