

Update April 2017

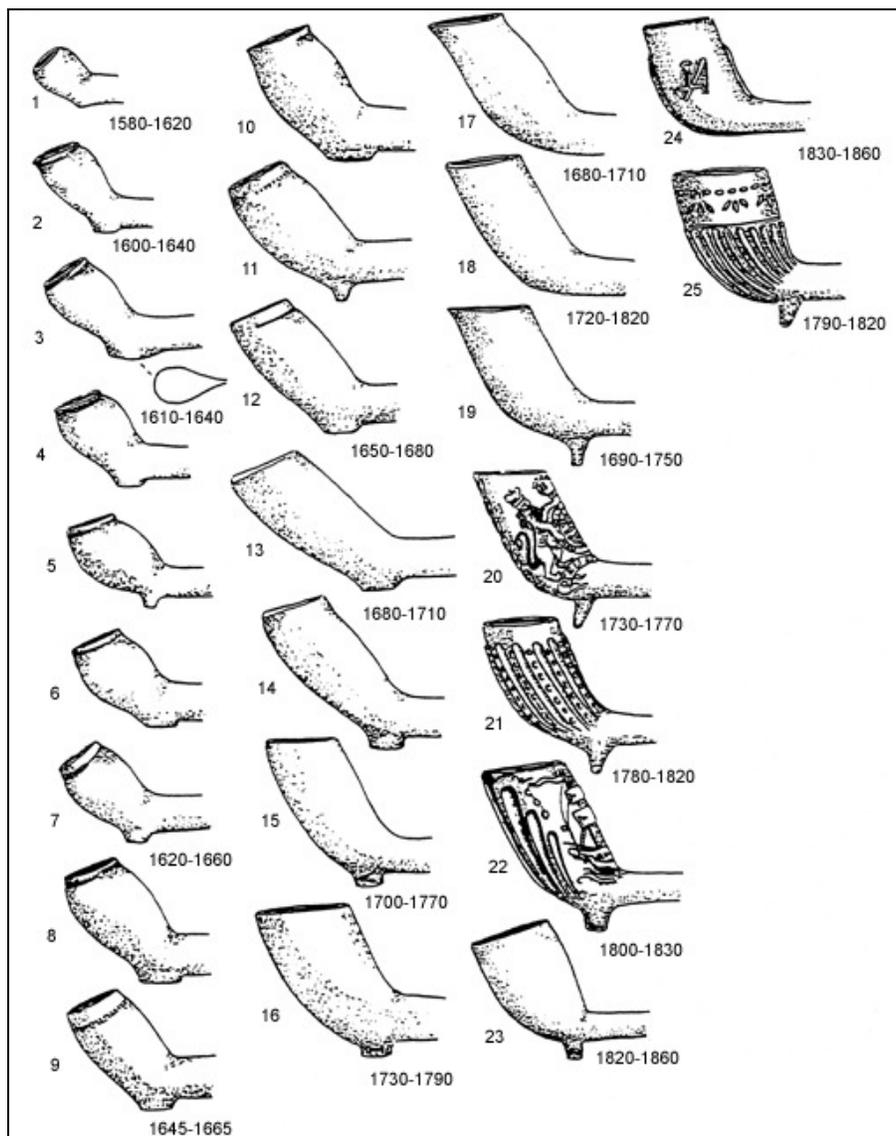
After the winter break during which we have caught up on some reporting and revision work relating to The Street (the Roman road from Buxton to Wirksworth) we returned to the garden of the Old Manor House in Wirksworth on the 23rd of April to put in a further test pit in the vegetable garden.



Test Pit 6: 2 metres from the south boundary wall of the vegetable garden and 7 metres from the west boundary wall, in process of being examined.

The test pit is similar to previous test pit number 4, but a little further up the embankment of the garden and more on the south side. The materials are similar: 0-15 cm of fine topsoil; then at 15-30 cm more modern topsoil with a little ash, then at 30-40cm a darker more organic soil layer containing a little stone and mortar, then the fawn streaky clay substrate, which progressively hardens as you get deeper, a sondage took this down to the maximum achieved depth of 80cm with no change in the context. In the SE corner over the clay were a few discontinuous limestone pieces some up to 10 cm size overlaid with some metal slag, but this appears to be the action of random dumping - it did not present itself as (for example) the corner of a hearth.

In the top two contexts of “modern” topsoil were a wide range of post mediaeval wares, salt glazed ware, willow pattern china and modern plant pot shards, also clay pipe shards and a clay pipe bowl which we can identify as an almost exact likeness to example 14 below, with a date range of 1700 to 1770.



Examples of clay pipes and date ranges

Also in this layer towards the bottom was a little oyster shell. In the more organic layer containing a little small stone and mortar was metalworking (iron) slag, plus some further post mediaeval pottery also bits of brick and broken tile. This layer and in particular the upper more friable parts of the clay contain a wide range of interesting mediaeval shards, including some splash glazed ware 1075-1225; some incised and green glazed ware perhaps 1200-1400; a rim shard of perhaps Hartshorne ware 1200-1300 and a curious range of unglazed coarse wares which I cannot date.



Some of the shards from the clay context

1. Rim shard of a slipped coarseware resembling Hadham red-slipped ware, possibly Roman
2. Rim shard of unknown gritty cream ware
3. Body shard of fawn hard glazed rouletted / incised ware, probably medieval
4. Body shard of fawn cream gritty unglazed wheelthrown coarseware, possibly Roman
5. Body shard / flake of a fine hard ware with a red/brown apparently decorated slipware.

In all the above cases expert assessment is needed.

and finally...

St John's Street

In relation to the question of a conceptual mediaeval hospital on St John's Street in Wirksworth perhaps in the plot south of Bannister's Yard occupied by the Wheatsheaf and some houses: my attention has been drawn to the similar situation of St John's Street at Ashbourne, where an un-located mediaeval hospital of St John is known from a document allocating it the Toll of Bushels from the town to provide for its upkeep in 1273. It is a strange oddity that the Ashbourne mediaeval hospital was maintained by a toll on bushels of wheat and that the hostelry in Wirksworth where we feel a location of Wirksworth's mediaeval hospital should best be considered, is called the Wheatsheaf.