

Update December 2016

The next Test Pit (Test Pit 5) was put in on the 26th of November and 3rd of December within the main garden of the Manor House, over a crop mark feature, 22 metres north of the house's NE corner.

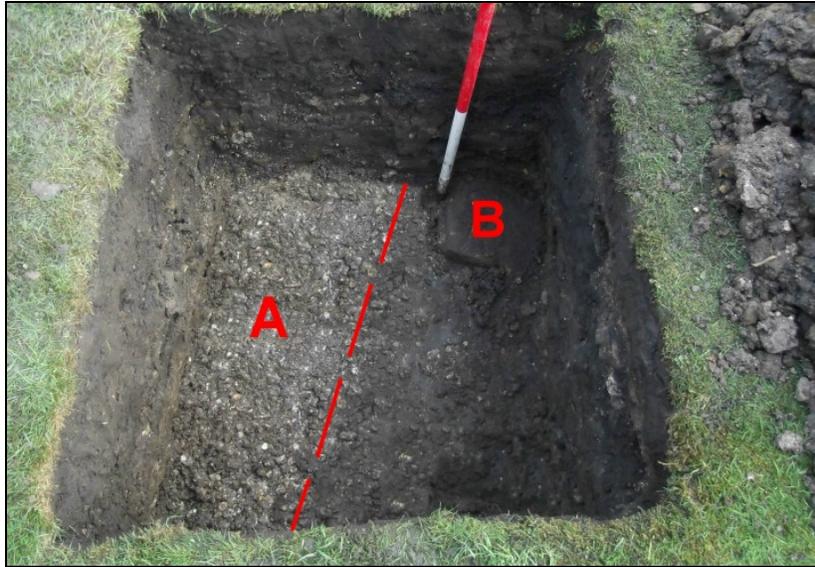


Location overlay of Old Manor House on the 1836 map
Manor House in turquoise; Vegetable garden in yellow
Main garden in pink; Lower garden in blue
Former Tennis Court in green
(Boundaries are a bit thick due to the 1836 map design)

We found that the crop mark in the main garden (which is quite uneven) was a badly made, apparently circular stone and ash path which may have encompassed a feature or a tree in the late Victorian or Edwardian age. Below that are several layers of various fill, including clay apparently modern down to 45 cm where there is a colour change to a fawny stony soil and then more dark clay. At the 45cm interface to these two layers (contexts) was a single shard of mottled ware (1670-1750). Note that although we always make reasonable attempts to date pottery, because it hangs around after being bought or used, it might not have been lost until well after the date of its making.

The very heavy brown clay contains decayed roots and no finds but is full of small gritstone and charcoal overlaying another stone layer (4cm size flat stones and occasional large pebble, perhaps a further yard surface or path), followed by 5-7cm of browner fawn clay with odd bits of small gritstone, then a layer of limestone chatter (limestone dust) beginning at 75 cm which contained a single badly abraded sherd of what appears to be Cistercian ware (1475-1700). The limestone chatter is 15cm deep with a bevelled edge with much of the upper element heavily mixed with organic soil. Below this down to 105 cm depth and adjacent to it is a dark brown clayey soil with no finds except animal bone then approx 10 cm of increasingly hard very stony shaley black material with what appears to be tiny rust spots. Shale bedrock lies at 115cm.

East



Test Pit 5. A is the limestone chatter; B is the flat worked stone.
The dashed line marks the top of the edge of the chatter.

The limestone chatter might present a conundrum, because we tend to associate limestone chatter as being a “modern” material (it is still used for garden and countryside paths today), but in fact we had this same problem in the garden of number 32 St John’s Street, where the limestone chatter was, with certainty, a context between the post-mediaeval and the mediaeval of the garden there. Conceptually, then, the limestone chatter represents a path or yard surface and its edge runs through the test pit in an east-west direction. Adjacent to the edge and apparently related to it was a single worked square flat gritstone. A variety of conclusions might be considered about this, but the easiest would perhaps be that this is a limestone path edged at intervals with flat stones upon which one might place flowerpots or features ornamental to the path.

In so far as the earliest item from this Test Pit was the sherd of possible Cistercian Ware, we have no reason to suppose that the garden was anything other than an enclosure during the mediaeval period and was then very heavily built up in later years. The Dean of Lincoln’s Manor was created in 1272 but we have no way of knowing from the finds whether there was a Manor House on this site prior to the current building of about 1630. However, absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.

In summary, then, of the Test Pits so far, the most interesting range of finds and the earliest have come from Test Pit 4 in the vegetable garden. For this reason, our next work will return there.

end.