

Let's start with a quick refresher of where we have got to with our building examination in the Meadows:



North wall looking west

The dimensions of the building, as evidenced by the surviving north and west walls, is approximately 4 metres by 5 metres. Much of the east side had been dug away by a Victorian sewage pipe. There appeared to be the vestiges of a south wall but these are rather fleeting. Overall, the building would have been about the size of a big modern living room. It has stone walls, judging from the extant remains and spread of fallen material as well as a clay floor, in a clay which has almost got a greenish tinge to it.

The building has been dated from associated pottery, which runs from approximately 950 AD to 1250 or a little later, but does not appear to stretch beyond 1300. The pottery suggests that the building originated in the late Saxon period and continued to the early medieval, a date range approximately 150 years either side of the Norman Conquest.

This brings us to the real eye-opener about the building. It has a water supply. Running down the west side of the building is a stone-lined channel that serves a little covered culvert on the inside of the building's north wall. The extraordinary word here is "inside". This is quite astonishing for its time and suggests that the building was not domestic. Indeed, in the late Saxon age most stone buildings were built by the church, even the Lord of Manor would only have had a timber hall, this implies that our building is in some way church-related, although it is not itself a church as far as we can tell so far.



West wall and water channel looking south

In addition to the building, late in the last dig season we found a laid (imbricated) yard on the west side of the water channel and work early this season in exposing the edges of the yard suggest the yard runs off in a north-westerly direction and we have not yet found its full extent.



Yard looking north west

The work we have done today was to attempt to find the extent of the yard, this is very difficult due to the presence of a number of intertwined heavy tree roots, which we do not wish to disturb, meaning we are having to work in keyholes between the roots. The yard so far does continue in the north west direction under and beyond the tree you can see in the picture above. Hopefully it will end beyond the tree throw, enabling us to complete the picture of how big the yard is and whether it meets anything else.

While one part of the team was looking through keyholes, the other part of the team was extending the main dig section southward to try to identify what the water channel did, for example to continue or to turn elsewhere. Within a metre of the point at which we halted last year, the channel lining stops at the two large stones you can see in the picture below.



Water channel revetment stones at the south end of the channel walling

These two stones feel, how can I say, rather definite. They are both huge pieces of dressed stone, they are essentially opposite each other and they are levelled to the same height. In the rest of the channel there are other dressed stones, but they are randomly laid amongst the rough hewn or quarried stone of the channel sides. At the point at which these two stones appear to denote the south end of the built channel, it is not yet clear what happens, but it may be that the lining stops and the channel simply becomes an open leet. In addition, we have remarked on finding re-used dressed stone in this building on previous occasions and in so far as we take the view that our building dates from around the Norman conquest, starting a little earlier, the several re-used heavy dressed stones in it must come from a previous

better-made building or structure nearby that we have not yet found and may not find. We cannot date un-inscribed stones so I cannot say if such a stone-robbled building were Roman, for example.

Today's pottery haul, apart from the inevitable modern items in the topsoil, was quite modest, only four sherds of earlier medieval wares, but one being a small rim sherd of orange gritty ware and one a small body sherd of decorated Burley Hill ware with an orange pink fabric and an olive-green glaze on the decorated outside. This pottery is all of a piece with the other pottery finds from the site in the same contexts.

I would particularly like to thank everyone in today's surprisingly large turnout for their contributions.

The next dig date is provisionally Sunday the 22<sup>nd</sup> May.