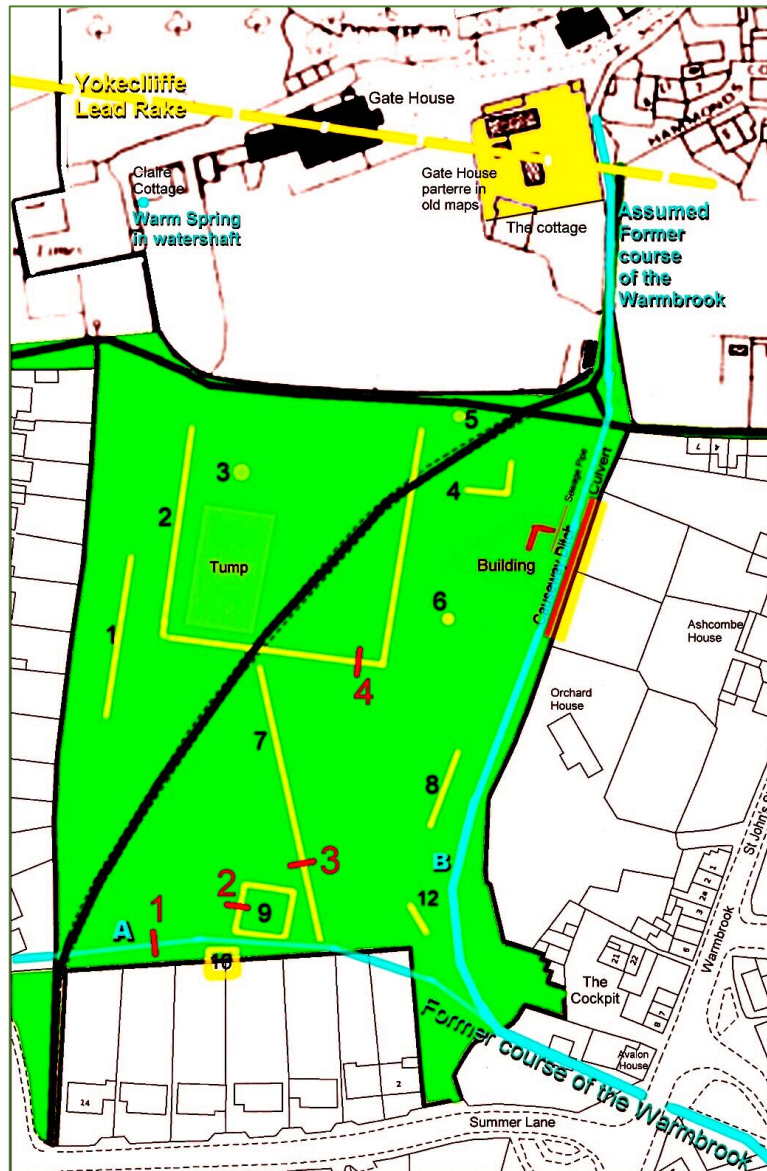


Progress Report November 2022

The Meadows central path

This is our final progress report for archaeological work in the Meadows. The last item to be ticked off our list was a summary investigation of the central path, which runs north-east to south-west through the Meadow Croft field, connecting Hammonds Court and Foggs Entry with Summer Lane at its junction with Yokecliffe Drive and Pillar Butts.



Map of Meadow Croft field and its surroundings

We also had hoped to identify the course of the former Yokecliffe (Meadows) stream which is annotated as "A" in the above map, however, on investigation today, we believe the course of the stream is actually within the lower gardens of the row of houses shown on the map above, that is to say a little further south than the map shows, and this will be corrected when we do the final report.

To return to the investigation of the central path, it is 272 metres from Foggs Entry to Summer Lane along the path, which is 2.7 metres (3 yards) wide and is composed of limestone chatter (dusty gravel) over small limestone. There is no obvious kerb. This construction and width would be capable of carrying a horse and

cart. We have not sectioned the path (it is in use and very busy) so we cannot say if it overlies anything else (noting the discussion which follows). In terms of the surrounding archaeology we know the path runs over an east-west ditch which one of our prior investigations considered to be medieval.



The Meadows Path showing the full width of the path's top dressing, which is capable of accommodating a horse and cart. Two gentlemen of the Society admire it.



**A photograph kindly sent by Mr Charles Butlin of the little bridge over the Meadows stream in the 1950s
Was this the bridge at the south-west corner of the Meadows where the path now comes up to Summer lane?**

We have, in the course of our various reports and works, in the last three years, touched on various issues about the path. The path is first mapped on the 1837 Tithe Map of Wirksworth and does not occur in any maps before that (1709, 1806, 1821 or 1836 - but it is a path so its presence or absence on these maps is not necessarily decisive). In the 1837 map, apart from a slight kink at Summer Lane, it appears to provide a route

between the Meadows and Mill Houses, that is to say via what is now Arkwright Street to the Broadmeadow ("Kingsfield" Cricket Ground) and finally to the junction of Wapentake Lane (wrongly Miller's Green on modern street signs) and Cinder Lane near Speedwell Mill. The implication of this destination is that it was a route from the Meadows to the manorial corn mill (Speedwell Mill).

The route of the path which is mapped in 1837 may therefore represent the relict of this lane, called Broadmeadow Lane in a court case of 1558, against John Wigley who had blocked the lane by building a wall over it. Although a lane in those times might not have been much more than a beaten way. We cannot date the origins of "Broadmeadow Lane", because if it did indeed give access from the meadow fields to the mill, we don't know if the mill existed before it is first recorded in the 1306 Derbyshire Assize Rolls (Cameron, 1959). Watermills were, however, a technological discovery made in antiquity and were already in use before Roman times and by the time of Domesday book there were ubiquitous throughout Britain.

Speedwell Mill has not been archaeologically investigated and the only known archaeological discovery closely adjacent to it was of Roman pottery in April 2021.

In summary, then, the modern path through the Meadow Croft field may possibly have had its origins in a lost medieval field lane used to take corn (wheat) or other grain to the manorial mill at Millhouses, now called Speedwell Mill, for making into flour. It survives as a shortcut from the estates around Summer Lane to the town centre.

The overall report for our work in the Meadows during the last three years will take some time to prepare and is not expected before the spring of next year.

References

- Anon, 1806, Wirksworth Enclosure Map, Derbyshire Record Office, Q/RI/107
- Anon, 1821, Duchy of Lancaster Map of Wirksworth, The National Archive, (Lost due to incorrect cataloguing).
- Anon, 1836, Wirksworth Local Board: Map of Township of Wirksworth, Derbyshire Record Office, D2962/UL
- Anon, 1837, Wirksworth Tithe Map, Derbyshire Record Office, D2223A/PI 32
- Cameron, K. 1959, The Place-names of Derbyshire, Cambridge, University Press, Part II, pp413-421
- Council for British Archaeology (CBA). Speedwell Mill. CBA Industrial Archaeology Report Card.
- Court Leet of Wirksworth, 1558, Four cases of Gell vs Wigley, Derbyshire Record Office, D3287/49/11/2 (III)
- Fowkes, D. 1997, Derbyshire Industrial Archaeology. A Gazetteer of Sites. Part IV. Derbyshire Dales
- Hutchinson, S. 1709, Draft map of the Gell Estate in Wirksworth, Derbyshire Record Office, D258/18/6/1-20
- Ordnance Survey (OS), 1880, OS County Series, 1st edition, scale 1:2500. Sheet XXXIX.2.NW
- Wirksworth Archaeological Society, 2021, Note on some Roman pottery found at Miller's Green, Wirksworth, WAS, May 2021.
- Wirksworth Archaeological Society, 2020, Note on the history of Speedwell Mill and Miller's Green, Wirksworth, WAS, August 2020