

Test pit excavation within currently occupied rural settlements – Results of the HEFA CORS project in 2010

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This paper reports on the sixth year of the University of Cambridge Higher Education Field Academy (HEFA) project run by Access Cambridge Archaeology (ACA). As in previous years, this combines education and university outreach (particularly within the secondary school sector) with the archaeological investigation of currently occupied rural settlements (CORS). The main method used for this is the excavation of 1-metre square test pits in open spaces within existing rural villages and hamlets. Accounts of the results of the HEFA CORS excavations are published annually in *Medieval Settlement Research* (Lewis 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009), and can also be viewed on the ACA website (www.arch.cam.ac.uk/access/) under 'excavation reports'. The website also includes the pottery reports from each site, and distribution maps showing the distribution of pottery period by period from the prehistoric to the modern era for every site where test pits excavations have been carried out by ACA since 2005.

In many instances, especially in settlements where test pit excavation has now been carried out for several years, activity has moved out from initial foci of settlement nearer the parish church to more dispersed elements of the settlement pattern, including outlying hamlets and farms. In detailing the number of places investigated by ACA test pit excavation, it has therefore become more useful to refer to the number of parishes within which test pitting has taken place than the number of individual settlements. This is not to imply that the project aims to carry out complete archaeological surveys of entire parishes, as the focus remains firmly on extending knowledge and understanding of the currently occupied elements of the settlement pattern.

2010

In 2010, test pit excavation was carried out under ACA direction within seventeen parishes in eastern England (fig 1). Two of these were new additions to the ACA programme, with work in the others building on that carried out and reported on *Medieval Settlement Research* in earlier years.

A total of 178 test pits were excavated during ACA HEFA CORS activities in 2010, 36 of which were

dug by members of the public, mostly residents, of the settlements under investigation, working either on organised community test pit digging weekend events or alongside the secondary school pupils who carried out most of the rest of the test pit excavations. In some places where community test pit excavation events have been overseen by ACA over several years, enough experience of test pit excavation now exists that it is not always necessary for ACA Staff to be present to supervise the excavations. A number of places which have previously been included in the ACA CORS test pitting programme were not included in the 2010, mostly for logistical reasons. Some of these may be included for further test pit excavation in future years.

This paper provides a summary review of the results of the HEFA CORS test pit excavations in 2010. Sites are listed in alphabetical order by county and then by the name of the main settlement. In the case of those places previously visited by the HEFA CORS programme, and reported on in earlier Annual Reports of the Medieval Settlement Research Group (Lewis 2006; 2007) or its successor, *Medieval Settlement Research* (Lewis 2008; 2009), the accounts presented here provide an update to earlier reports. Introductions to each settlement are only included when reporting on that place for the first time. Introductions and reports from earlier years can be viewed on the relevant pages of the ACA website (<http://www.arch.cam.ac.uk/aca/excavationreports.html>).

Archive reports have been prepared for each settlement investigated by Access Cambridge Archaeology in 2010 and data passed to HERs in each county. Fuller formal publication will take place at a later stage in the project. The aims and methods of the HEFA CORS project have been outlined elsewhere (Lewis 2007b) and are on the website (<http://www.arch.cam.ac.uk/aca/cors.html>) and will not be repeated here.

Sharnbrook, Bedfordshire (NGR SP 995595)

Seventeen test pits were excavated in Sharnbrook in 2010 (fig 2), bringing the total to date to forty-three. New sites excavated in 2010 included several on the south-western side of the High Street, and west of the church.

Two test pit excavations in 2010 produced the first datable material of Roman date, although only single sherds were recovered from either pit. SHA/11/02 was in a part of the north of the present village where no test pitting had previously been carried out and produced a 10g sherd derived from a context 50-60cm below the surface which contained no recent material, but did also yield a sherd of medieval pottery. This layer was just above the natural which was encountered at 70cm. This does not seem to indicate any significant Roman activity in the area, although it is possible that more extensive material of Roman date may exist in the unexplored area to the west of this test pit. SHA/11/06 yielded a much smaller sherd (3g), from a similar depth, also with a medieval sherd. However, this pit was not excavated to natural, so further material of early date may survive in lower levels.

This second find of Roman material would be easy to dismiss also as being too small and disturbed to be significant, but it is noteworthy because the same pit, along with another one nearby (SHA/11/07) both produced the first finds from test pitting in Sharnbrook of pottery of early Anglo-Saxon date (AD450-700). Both early Anglo-Saxon sherds are small (3g and 2g respectively), but given their proximity to each other, they can be interpreted as likely to indicate activity of some sort in this area in the earlier Anglo-Saxon period, and given the limited volume of pottery of this date normally found, it is reasonable to infer in these circumstances that this is likely to derive from some sort of settlement in this area. As excavation has not yet taken place in the gardens of adjacent properties, it is impossible to say how far this settlement may have extended, but given that several pits have been excavated immediately to the north and produced no pottery of this date, it seems unlikely that the settlement extended north of the present village street in the 5th – 7th century. No pottery of definite middle Anglo-Saxon date, such as Ipswich Ware, was found in either of pits SHA/11/02 or SHA/11/06, indeed, no material of this date has to date been found in any of the test pits in Sharnbrook. As in previous years, it seems that later Anglo-Saxon settlement occupied the area west and north of the church, and this does not appear on current evidence to have been very extensive or very compactly nucleated. It is in the period between 1100 and 1300 that the settlement seems to grow most markedly, and it is then that the eastern part of present village seems to come into existence, perhaps as a new planned extension along the High Street. As in previous years, there remains no evidence of significant post-fourteenth century contraction, with areas including the outlying sites of Manor Farm and Barleycroft in use before this time also continuing in use

afterwards. There is, however, a possibility that the settlement may be shifting around at this time, with some plots coming into use and others declining.

Castor, Cambridgeshire (NGR TL 125985)

Ten test pits were excavated in Castor in 2010, bringing the total to fifteen (Fig 3). As in 2009, Roman pottery was found widely, now from a total of six pits. No further finds of early or middle Anglo-Saxon date were made, but several pits produced ceramic material of later Anglo-Saxon date. This has now been found in all parts of the present village except for the sites east and south of the church. The pattern at present is thus of two discrete areas of activity, one along the present Peterborough Road and the second in the very north of the present village, in an area of predominantly 20th century housing north of the High Street. Nearly all the test pits have produced material of early 12th to mid-14th century date, but there is considerably less evidence for activity in later 14th to 16th centuries, hinting at a significant decline in the settlement at this time. Interestingly, those sites which do produce material of this date seem to do so in larger quantities than for previous centuries. Manor Farm remains notable as the only site to produce ceramic material for all periods from the Roman onwards, including early and middle Anglo-Saxon ceramics.

Cottenham, Cambridgeshire (NGR TL 455675)

Seven more test pits were excavated in Cottenham in 2010 bringing the total to twenty-five (Fig 4). Most of the 2010 test pits were sited to fill in gaps in previous work, including several in the south of the village and two in the northern part of the settlement in the area of long narrow plots, possibly laid out over ridge and furrow.

Test pit COT/10/4 produced several sherds of pottery of Bronze Age date, in the same area which produced Roman material in 2009. No further pottery of early or middle Anglo-Saxon date (450–850AD) was found, reinforcing the impression that settlement in this period was limited to the area in the centre of the present village, immediately south-west of Rooks Street and east of Lambs Row. A couple of sherds of later Anglo-Saxon date from COT/10/4 similarly supported the inference from test pitting in 2009, that the settlement at this time extended along the High Street, probably taking the form of a nucleated village at this time. It is interesting to note that most of pits in the Rooks Street/Denmark Road/High Street area have produced pottery of high medieval date, suggesting that the village expanded significantly at this time. It is plausible to suggest that the rectilinear street plan visible today in this area may therefore be of 12th or 13th century date.

Girton, Cambridgeshire (NGR TL 410615)

Five test pits were excavated in Girton in 2009 (Fig 5), by pupils attending a residential HEFA course who stayed in the nearby university college. The 2010 test pits were sited in the south of the present village, south-east of Girton College, c. 1.5km from the parish church. They were thus in a quite different part of the present village to the 2009 test pits. GIR/10/3, GIR/10/4 and GIR/10/5 all produced pottery of Roman date, and it is notable in this context that these pits were in gardens alongside the Roman Road from Cambridge to Godmanchester. Pits GIR/10/3 and GIR/10/4 only produced single sherds, indicating non-intensive use, but GIR/10/5 produced more than 20 sherds, clearly indicating some sort of contemporary roadside settlement in the near vicinity.

The same test pit (GIR/10/5) was also the only one excavated in 2010 to produce more than a single sherd of medieval pottery. However, with only three sherds, it is impossible to be confident whether this relates to medieval settlement nearby or less intensive use of the site. The only other find of medieval date from the 2010 pits was a single sherd of Hedingham Ware from GIR/10/2, immediately east of the college grounds. No material of later medieval date (post 14th century) was found in any of the excavated pits in 2010.

Although only a small number of pits have yet been excavated within what is today a large village, it is striking that there has been hardly any later medieval pottery found. The two areas of the village which have revealed pottery of high medieval date have both notably produced no post 14th century material at all. This supports the tentative inference previously made (Lewis 2009) that the village may have suffered serious late medieval contraction.

Great Shelford, Cambridgeshire (NGR TL 458518)

Five new test pits were excavated in Great Shelford in 2010 (fig 6) by university students, bringing the total to thirty-six. Three sherds of Roman pottery found from GTS/10/5 (along Mill Lane) suggested that activity at this time extended further south than had previously been attested. No new material of Anglo-Saxon date was found from any of the 2010 pits. Finds of medieval pottery, notably at GTS/10/2, GTS/10/3 and GTS/10/5 all reinforced the pattern noted from previous test pit excavations in the village (Lewis 2007), of growth in the high medieval period, with Mill Lane and High Green appearing to be new extensions to the village at this time, followed by severe contraction post-

fourteenth century, when these relatively recent settlements extensions in particular seem to have been almost completely depopulated.

Thorney, Cambridgeshire (NGR TF 283042)

Eleven test pits were dug by HEFA in Thorney in 2010 (fig 7), adding to the twenty-two excavated up to 2008 and bringing the total to thirty-three. As well as filling in gaps in previous coverage, four new sites were excavated for the first time, each with two test pits, at Abbey House (immediately west of the abbey church); Park House (300m east of the abbey church); Thorneycroft House (just beyond the southern margin of the present village) and at Toneham House (c. 1.5km south of the village of Thorney).

As in previous years, no material predating the late Anglo-Saxon period was found from any of the excavated test pits. Test pit THO/10/11 in the area between Church Street and Whittlesey Road produced a single sherd of Stamford Ware, and although this was small (2g) it is notable that all the test pits excavated in this area have produced last Anglo-Saxon pottery, supporting the inference that this was the site of a settlement associated with Thorney Abbey, probably a small extra-mural village, possibly planned, outside the abbey precinct but near its gate. Both pits dug in the garden of Abbey House produced late Anglo-Saxon pottery, suggesting that activity at this date extended west of the present north-south road past the church. It is unclear whether this area lay within the Anglo-Saxon abbey precinct or beyond it. Test pit THO/10/6 in the garden around Abbey House also produced a small sherd of Stamford Ware; from an area which almost certainly did lie within the abbey precinct (this find adds a small amount of weight to that suggestion).

The two pits at Thorneycroft between them produced only a single small sherd of high medieval pottery, suggesting that this area may have been arable fields rather than settlement at this date. The pits at Toneham together produced seven sherds of pottery dating to 1150-1400 (Lyveden/Stanion 'A' Ware and Bourne 'A' Ware), suggesting that activity in this area intensified in this period, most likely in the thirteenth century. It is plausible to suggest that this activity did represent settlement: although the volume of pottery is a little low to be entirely confident in this interpretation, digging in very dry conditions meant that neither pit reached natural, therefore the seven sherds may not represent the totality of material from these pits which might have been recovered had they gone deeper. Pit THO/10/1, in particular, produced five sherds from the lowest excavated levels with no evidence of recent disturbance. As in earlier years, nearly all excavated sites, including all the new sites,

produced later medieval (post-fourteenth century) pottery in significant volumes, most yielding more material of this date than of high medieval date, supporting the inference made previously (Lewis 2008) that Thorney was thriving in the later medieval period. This growth appears to have continued at all the excavated sites in the post-medieval, post-Dissolution period.

Little Hallingbury, Essex (NGR TL 503175)

Ten test pits were excavated in 2010 in Little Hallingbury (fig 8), bringing the total to fifty-four. Most of the 2010 sites were sited in order to fill gaps in between previously excavated areas, with several in the northern part of the present village along the main road. Two test pits in the area east of Wallbury fort have now produced a small number of sherds (three in total) of high medieval date, and it may be that this area was the focus of some sort of activity at this time, possibly relating to settlement of limited extent and intensity. It is clear however, that the period at which this area came into more intensive occupation was later, probably around 1700 AD or later. This probably relates to the development of the north-south road from Bishop's Stortford to Chelmsford. As in previous years, no pottery of late Anglo-Saxon date was found in any of the 2010 test pits: it seems increasingly clear that later Anglo-Saxon period activity in the area occupied by the present village was minimal or non-existent. Settlement in the high medieval period (eleventh to fourteenth century) was clearly of a dispersed form, arranged as perhaps seven or so thinly scattered small hamlets or farmsteads which probably developed as a result of assorting in a woodland area which had been largely uninhabited since the Roman period. Two test pits in 2010 near the church produced very little pottery of medieval date found, supporting the inference that the medieval church was not immediately adjacent to any area of contemporary intensive settlement. The later medieval period (mid 14th to mid 16th century) appears to see little significant contraction of settlement, although there is a certain amount of shift between the various elements of the dispersed settlement, some of which appear to be depopulated while others produce pottery for the first time. This is also the period which seems to see the first signs of a shift of focus towards the area between the church and the main road, with all of the pits in this area producing pottery of later medieval date, albeit only in small quantities in some instances. The overall effect is, however, of a nucleated settlement in this area where previously the settlement pattern had been much more diffuse.

West Mersea, Essex (NGR TM 009125)

Ten test pits were excavated in West Mersea in 2010 (fig 9), bringing the total to fifty-eight. These were sited to fill gaps not previously excavated, and also to focus on the northerly parts of the present village which had seen less test pitting in previous years. Somewhat unexpectedly, half of the 2010 pits produced Roman pottery, and the overall picture consequently now seems to be one of widespread activity at this date across the central and easterly part of the present settlement, with no pottery of this date retrieved from the western extent of the present village.

As in earlier years, none of the 2010 pits produced any material of late Anglo-Saxon date. The western area of the present village seems to come into intensive use for the first time in the high medieval period, at which time overall settlement was probably arranged in a dispersed pattern, both along the coast and inland. In the later medieval period settlement seems to focus more exclusively along the coastline. There is little convincing evidence for later medieval contraction, but considerable expansion in activity (as represented by pottery finds) in the post-medieval period

Writtle, Essex (NGR 675065)

Eleven test pits were excavated in Writtle in 2010 (Fig 10) bringing the total to seventeen, focussing in particular on the area east of Writtle Green where few pits were excavated in 2009. The easternmost of the 2010 pits (WRI/10/2) produced the only find of Romano-British date, no doubt relating to the presence of Roman settlement to the east of the present village. None of the 2010 pits produced any pottery of Anglo-Saxon date, but two (WRI/10/1 and WRI/10/4) did produce several sherds of high medieval date. The former also produced a sherd of decorated medieval floor tile, presumed to be related to the nearby site of King John's Hunting Lodge.

The suggestion tentatively made previously (Lewis 2009) that the area north of Writtle Green and west of St John's Green might have been more severely affected by late medieval contraction was to some extent refuted by WRI/10/9 which produced a large volume of late medieval transitional ware (26 sherds weighing 204g in total). It is intriguing that this pit was sited on the St Johns Green, while others in gardens around this green produced hardly any later medieval pottery (just a single small sherd from one of the 2009 pits).

Pirton, Hertfordshire (NGR TL 145315)

Pirton continued its domination of the HEFA league tables with twenty-seven test pits excavated in 2010 (fig 12), many by local residents, bringing the total since 2007 to eighty-three. The 2010 excavations

focussed in particular on the north-west of north-east of the present village, especially around the farms on the northerly margins of the present village. Most of these yielded significant volumes of Romano-British pottery, showing the contemporary settlement along the southern side of the stream valley here to have been quite extensive and densely populated. However, none of the pits in this northerly part of the present village have produced so much as a single sherd of pottery of early or middle Anglo-Saxon date, clearly indicating that this settlement did not continue into the post-Roman period. The excavated evidence shows that this area did come back into use as settlement in the later Anglo-Saxon period, but at this date it seems to be more limited in extent and arranged as discrete small sites, perhaps farms, rather than as a large continuous village. A majority of pits in the 300m square area north of the church and along the High Street have produced significant volumes of late Anglo-Saxon pottery, and it is apparent that this part of the village came into existence at this time.

As noted before, the western part of the present village appears to be a creation of the high medieval period when the motte and bailey castle was constructed, and when the village appears to be intensively and extensively occupied as a nucleated settlement. The impression of very significant late medieval contraction in settlement size and intensity continues to be clearly evident, although the farms in the north of the village where test pitting took place in 2010 seem to have suffered less at this time than the core of the village. Post-medieval recovery is also less marked at these sites.

Acle, Norfolk (NGR TG 405105)

Ten test pits were excavated in Acle in 2010 (Fig 13), bringing the total to date to twenty. These focussed on the north of the present village, where less excavation was carried out in 2009. Two adjacent sites (ACL/10/3 and ACL/10/4) each produced several sherds of Roman pottery, hinting at the presence of a previously unknown Roman settlement of some sort on this area, more than 500m from the known Roman site immediately east of the present village. For the first time, pottery of Anglo-Saxon date was found (ACL/10/6), and although only a single sherd of Thetford Ware (in production between 850 and 1100AD) was found, this was a large sherd (20g) found in a sealed late medieval rubbish pit. It is likely that, although disturbed in antiquity, it does derive from a site nearby and therefore hints at the presence of late Anglo-Saxon settlement in the area.

More of the 2010 test pits produced pottery of high medieval date that did so in 2009, suggesting that

the medieval settlement at Acle may have been predominantly in the northern part of the present village. Notably less material of later medieval date was produced, possibly hinting at a degree of contraction at this time.

Binham, Norfolk (NGR TF 981396)

Fourteen test pits were excavated in Binham in 2010 (Fig 14) bringing the total to twenty-nine, sited to infill gaps in the coverage of 2009. As in 2009, pits in the area south of the Priory church produced Roman pottery, as did BIN/10/9, a little to the north. None of these test pits produced any early Anglo-Saxon pottery, suggesting occupation was not continuous after the end of the Roman period. BIN/10/7 and BIN/10/13 between them produced three sherds of Ipswich Ware, both close to the site of the middle Anglo-Saxon beam slot found in 2009. Both of these pits also produced single sherd of Roman pottery, and the area in general is close to area where the pits producing most Roman material are clustered. However, without early Anglo-Saxon material, this does not seem to constitute evidence for continuity of occupation on the site.

The late Anglo-Saxon period seems to see another break, with the area of the middle Saxon activity noticeably devoid of this while sites to its north and south have produced pottery of this date. Binham seems to see considerable growth in the high medieval period, focussed on the roads leading past the Priory. There is notably less pottery produced from the core of the present village to the south of the Priory. The impression of a marked contraction in the later medieval period which was noted in 2009 was supported by the excavations of 2010, when little material of this date was found.

Carleton Rode, Norfolk (NGR TM 115925)

Sixteen test pits were excavated in Carleton Rode (fig 15) in 2009, bringing the total to fifty. These extended the HEFA excavations far out into the landscape, with new areas under investigation for the first time including Hargate, c. 1km south of the church, Uppgate Street, nearly 2km west of the church and several farms along Rode Lane and The Turnpike, respectively c. 1 and 2kms south-west of the church.

As in previous years, virtually no pottery of Roman date was found (just a single sherd, 3g in weight, from CRO/10/3 at Hargate). The first evidence for any activity of early/middle Anglo-Saxon date was, however, found, from CRO/10/6, just south of the cross-roads in Flaxlands. It is interesting to note that this is one part of the landscape which has consistently produced material of later Anglo-Saxon

date, so the 2010 find may hint at an earlier precursor for settlement on this site. Continuous occupation is not presently evidenced, as there is a gap of at least 150 years in the pottery sequence, although of course any argument based on negative evidence from test pit excavations must be regarded with extreme caution.

The 2010 test pits also produced clear evidence for the origins of Uppgate Street in the high medieval period, where both pits produced several sherds of pottery. All three pits at Hargate also produced medieval pottery, although with only one or two sherds from each pit, it is difficult to be certain whether this relates to settlement or some less intensive use of the landscape. Both Uppgate and Hargate seem to have been less badly affected by late medieval shrinkage than the main area of late Anglo-Saxon and high medieval settlements at Flaxlands which, as noted before (Lewis 2008, 2009) saw a considerable reduction in activity as represented by pottery finds,

Gaywood, Norfolk (NGR TF 636210)

Gaywood is today a small community which is effectively a suburb of Kings Lynn, lying on this town's east side. The medieval community of Gaywood seems always to have been small, but hosted two hospitals, including a leper hospital founded in 1145 (British History Online, www.british-history.ac.uk/ last accessed July 2011). Settlement at Gaywood today is arranged along three main roads. Gayton Road runs east-west from Kings Lynn to Gayton, with the parish church of St Faith 50m to its south, near its junction with Lynn Road (running west to Kings Lynn) and Wootton Road, which runs in a north-easterly direction on the east side of the Lynn River. Housing along these roads is mostly late Victorian, with twentieth century estates infilling the surrounding area. Test pit digging by HEFA teams took place in 2010 in response to the discovery of substantial quantities of middle Anglo-Saxon Ipswich Ware (produced 720 – 850 AD) in the garden of one resident of Wootton Road, which was reported to Andrew Rogerson at Norfolk Landscape Archaeology.

Six test pits were excavated in Gaywood in 2010 (fig 16), one in the garden the Ipswich Ware had been found in (GAY/10/4), two in adjacent gardens (GAY/10/5 and GAY/10/6), another in a garden on the opposite side of the road (GAY/10/3), and two more at some distance to the east in areas of twentieth century housing. GAY/10/4 produced eleven sherds of Ipswich Ware, including five from a cut feature in an undisturbed deposit with no later material at all. The significant conclusion which could be drawn from the excavation of the test pit

was that the Ipswich Ware previously found during gardening did derive from intensive activity of middle Anglo-Saxon date on this site, and not from material recently imported from elsewhere. Test pits in the gardens immediately adjacent also produced copious quantities of Ipswich Ware, mostly from contexts with no later material, indicating that the settlement extended some way to the south of the original find-spot. Rather unexpectedly, the two more distant pits each also produced Ipswich Ware. Although these yielded only a single sherd each, they nonetheless suggested that middle Anglo-Saxon activity extended over a wide area.

All of the 2010 pits also produced Thetford Ware (850-1100 AD), although in the case of the Wootton Road pits this was in smaller quantities than for the Ipswich Ware, with only a single sherd being found in GAY/10/6. GAY/10/3, on the opposite side of Wootton Road, produced five sherds of Thetford Ware, and the hypothesis was tentatively advanced that in the later Anglo-Saxon period the focus of activity moved from the riverside to a precursor of the present road. GAY/10/3 also produced disarticulated human bone, giving support to the suggestion advanced by local residents that the leper hospital had been in this area. However, the assertion also made that the garden where this test pit was dug had been subject to much disturbance within living memory, with human bone found in the back garden re-deposited in the front garden (where the 2010 test pit was located) made it difficult to be entirely confident about this material. The spits containing the bone also produced Thetford Ware and small amounts of Grimston Ware.

All the pits but GAY/10/2 produced high medieval pottery (mid eleventh to mid fourteenth century date), mostly Grimston Ware, but mostly in modest quantities (2-4 sherds). Hardly any pottery of later medieval date was found. Further test pitting will be carried out in Gaywood in 2011.

Chediston, Suffolk (NGR TM 355775)

Nine test pits were excavated in Chediston in 2010 (fig 17), bringing the total since 2006 to thirty-nine. As in 2008, test pitting in 2010 focussed mostly on dispersed sites away from the present village core around the church and the settlement along the edge of Chediston Green. Most attention in 2010 focussed on present-day farm sites where test pitting had not previously been carried out, with CHE/10/1 CHE/10/2 at Mountpleasant Farm, 2km west of Chediston church; CHE/10/3 and CHE/10/4 at Paradise Farm, c. 0.75km north of the church and CHE/10/8 and CHE/10/9 at Hernehill, some 1km from the church if travelling along existing roads, but less than 0.5 km distant from it if travelling along a footpath.

With the exception of one test pit at Hernehill which produced a small sherd of Roman pottery (possibly indicating the extent of the Roman arable), none of the 2010 pits around Chediston yielded any material predating c. 1100 AD. At Mountpleasant Farm, medieval sandy wares dating to 1100-1400 AD were produced in sufficient quantities (nine and twelve sherds respectively from four largely undisturbed spits) to indicate settlement in the near vicinity in the high medieval period. Two sherds of the same ware from each of the pits at Hernehill may possibly also be indicative of contemporary settlement, although less securely so. Both pits at Paradise Farm produced a single sherd of medieval sandy ware, which would not normally be considered sufficient to infer settlement, but more likely to indicate manuring associated with arable cultivation. However, excavating to greater depth (neither pit was excavated to natural due to time constraints) might have revealed additional material which would change this interpretation as in both pits the medieval sherds were found in the lowest excavated spits. However, it is also interesting to note that the three sites excavated for the first time in 2010, Paradise Farm was the only one where there was any significant drop in the amount of activity represented by the pottery on the later (post fourteenth century) medieval period. Overall, the picture at Chediston seems to be one of a dispersed landscape, developing in a dynamic manner in the later Anglo-Saxon and high medieval periods, with many new elements of the settlement pattern appearing in these centuries, mostly probably taking the form of farms, with little late medieval contraction.

Coddenham, Suffolk (NGR TM 133545)

Seven pits were excavated in Coddenham in 2010 (fig 18), bringing the total to date to forty-nine. None of the 2010 test pits produced any additional pottery of early or middle Anglo-Saxon date, suggesting that the early Anglo-Saxon settlement was restricted to an area no more than 100m in extent immediately around the site of the later church, with settlement in the middle Anglo-Saxon period in the same general area but limited to the zone north of the present road past the church. The majority of the 2010 test pits produced Thetford Ware of later Anglo-Saxon date, supporting the evidence for a nucleated settlement perhaps 200m long along the present road past the church, with other new areas coming into existence between the tenth and twelfth centuries, including outlying sites at Ivy Farm, Hall Farm and Choppins Hall.

Conclusion

HEFA test pitting in 2010 focussed on consolidating work in settlements where test pitting has also taken place in previous years. As in 2009, in places where HEFA excavations have been taking place for several years, attention has also been given to expanding out from existing settlement cores to examine outlying more dispersed elements of the present settlement pattern, including excavating on the sites of several farms.

The HEFA CORS excavations to date are continuing to show that many elements of the dispersed settlement pattern appear to be of late Anglo-Saxon or high medieval origin. There is increasingly convincing evidence for a sharp decline in the quantities of pottery of later medieval date recovered from many of the sites, indicating a much more profound contraction of settlement than has previously been apparent. There are hints of regional distinctions in these patterns, however, with Fenland seemingly less affected by late medieval contraction.

Archive reports (held by the ACA at the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, University of Cambridge) have been prepared for each settlement, and details of the HEFA 2010 test pit sites and the pottery reports for each of the sites investigated have been sent to local curators and are available on www.arch.cam.ac.uk/aca/fatpf/evidence.html.

Test pit excavation in most of the HEFA CORS settlements excavated in 2010 will be continued in 2011. The results of these excavations, and those on any other sites investigated as part of the University of Cambridge CORS project will be reported in the next issue of *Medieval Settlement Research*.

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