New Avenues for the Investigation of Currently Occupied Medieval Rural Settlement: Preliminary Observations from the Higher Education Field Academy

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WITHIN THE FIELD of medieval rural settlement studies, especially those involving excavation, currently occupied rural settlements (CORS) have to date been largely neglected in favour of the minority of rural settlements which have become deserted or substantially shrunken. This project aims to help redress that balance in favour of the still-inhabited majority. Small-scale ‘test pit’ excavations within thirteen CORS in eastern England were carried out in 2005 and 2006 as part of an ongoing widening participation and outreach scheme — the Higher Education Field Academy — of the Department of Archaeology of the University of Cambridge. The project combines existing methods with new approaches to reveal a considerable quantity of new evidence for the development of medieval rural settlement. Presented results from three of the most investigated settlements identify new foci of occupation, and new ideas about their development are proposed. They also highlight the extent to which undisturbed medieval levels can survive within CORS.

Rural settlement has long been an important area of research for medieval archaeology,1 notably since the pioneering work of W. G. Hoskins, Maurice Beresford and John Hurst in the 1940s and 1950s.2 Until recently, however, attention has focused largely on deserted and extensively shrunken nucleated villages; in most parts of the UK, many such sites have been the subject of archaeological investigation. The scope of this has ranged widely,3 from detailed

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1 The history of the study of medieval archaeology has most recently been summarised in C. Gerrard, Medieval Archaeology: Understanding Traditions and Contemporary Approaches (London, 2003), which includes discussion of the development of rural settlement studies in each chapter. For a summary account of the development of medieval rural settlement studies, see C. Lewis, P. Mitchell Fox and C. C. Dyer, Village, Hamlet and Field (Manchester, 1997), 5–21.


excavation of single settlements such as Wharram Percy (Yorkshire), to field-walking often covering whole parishes, such as Brixworth (Northamptonshire) and Loddon, Hales and Heckingham (Norfolk), to topographical and cartographic survey of the remains of former settlement occasionally completed across entire counties. This work has informed, underpinned and advanced academic debate regarding the origins and development of medieval settlement.

However, currently occupied rural settlements (CORS), filled with the housing and other appurtenances of living secular communities — the villages, hamlets and small towns of today — have until recently been largely neglected in such debates. Despite the presence of historical and architectural indicators of medieval occupation, it is only over the last decade that currently inhabited sites have even begun to be included on most Site and Monument Records (SMRs)/Historic Environment Records (HERs) as medieval settlements. Very few regions have seen any systematic research-driven primary investigation aimed at CORS, and most of that which has taken place has been of a top-down or survey-based nature not involving targeted excavation. While such an approach has its merits, Chris Taylor’s work on Whittlesford (Cambridgeshire) perhaps best demonstrates the potential problems, where new discoveries, particularly from excavation, showed an unsettling tendency to contradict theories about the settlement development based on topographical plan analysis. In general, however, archaeological excavation within continuing settlements has been reactive rather than research-oriented, limited in most cases to observations or minor explorations carried out in advance of small-scale development. A significant number fail to record any evidence for medieval activity.


7 Lewis et al., op. cit. in note 1, 1–30; R. Jones and M. Page, Medieval Villages in an English Landscape (Macclesfield, 2006), xv–xviii, 1–15.

8 SMR reviews I carried out in 1992–4 (Lewis et al., op. cit. in note 1) and 1996 (C. Lewis, Medieval Settlement in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight (unpubl. rep. for RCHME, 1997)) quantified the extent of this problem in the counties of Leicestershire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Leicestershire, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.


11 These appear every year in large numbers in the Discovery and Excavation section of the Annual Report of the Medieval Settlement Research Group, the Medieval Britain and Ireland section of this journal and in many county archaeological journals.
Only since the late 1980s has academic archaeological attention, driven, at least in part, from disciplines other than archaeology, such as economic history and historical geography, begun seriously to encompass CORS. Of particular note in this regard is research in Shapwick parish (Somerset) and across twelve parishes in the Whittlewood area on the borders of Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire. Such investigations, characterised by their multidisciplinary range, imaginative use of different techniques and energetic penetration into even the smallest plots of private land, are opening up new areas for debate and beginning to call into question established theories about the development of rural settlement in the historic period.

However, despite this recent intellectual expansion of rural settlement studies to encompass the study of CORS, it remains true that deserted and shrunken medieval settlements have received more detailed archaeological attention than CORS. Because the majority of our evidence is therefore derived from one minority subset that we can reasonably suspect may be atypical of the majority of medieval settlement (because they are deserted), this impedes and compromises our ability to understand the development of rural settlement in the Middle Ages. But there is also an even wider problem: on archaeological distribution maps of all periods most land occupied by CORS — a significant part of the country — is largely blank.

The reasons for the historic bias in medieval rural settlement investigation towards abandoned sites are many and various, but two main factors are particularly significant. First is the easy appeal of deserted sites, with their lure of mystery, intrigue and tragedy eloquently expressed in the very words used so often to describe those ‘lost’, ‘vanished’, ‘abandoned’ or ‘ghost’ villages. This first attracted serious study to the subject of medieval rural settlement, and it retains a strong pull for many, both professional and amateur. CORS are, of course, also capable of generating considerable interest, in particular amongst those who live in them, as the presence of local history groups in so many villages attests; rarely, however, does this lead to excavation within these settlements. The second factor involves a very much more practical consideration: multiple private ownership and variable use (gardens, yards, drives, playgrounds and so on) make obtaining permission to excavate more difficult in a CORS than in than the quiet swards of a deserted village site.

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However, research projects like Shapwick and Whittlewood have developed strategies for tackling this second impediment to the study of CORS, in particular by carrying out small-scale ‘test-pit’ investigations. This paper reports on work by the University of Cambridge Department of Archaeology Higher Education Field Academy (HEFA) where research into CORS is now expanding across six East Anglian counties as part of a unique motivational education project involving test-pit excavation.

AIMS

The HEFA project is unusual in that it has at its core two quite distinct aims which do not have an immediate and obvious connection, but which have achieved a high level of synergy in the investigation of CORS.

The first aim, as contextualised above, is to advance knowledge and understanding of the medieval development of CORS by expanding the corpus of sites that have seen detailed research-driven archaeological investigation. This is not a quickly or easily achievable feat but, equally, it is clear that progress requires a systematic programme of carefully targeted excavation and analysis within and across a substantial number of inhabited medieval settlements.

The second aim is to provide a high-quality structured educational activity for school-age learners that will build confidence and motivation, provide chances to learn a range of new and transferable skills, and raise educational aspirations, particularly regarding progression to university. Activities need to:

- take place sufficiently near to the learners’ homes to render attendance attractive and logistically simple, followed up in more distant higher education institutions (HEI) to provide participants with an insight into university life;
- be open to all by requiring no previous expertise and should place all learners on an equal initial footing;
- create challenges while still being achievable and structured to allow progression.

It is particularly important that learners completing the course should have achieved something enduring and unique, and of value both for themselves and for a wider constituency.

HEFA’s origins lie in a widening participation programme I have generated from the Department of Archaeology in the University of Cambridge since 2004. This aims to raise awareness of, and interest in, the university, and in archaeology, among groups of school-age learners currently under-represented in the university. Feedback demonstrated success but we soon recognised that the programme had the potential to broaden its remit. We needed a robust and sustained programme to give participants the chance to do more than simply increase their enthusiasm for education at higher levels — a programme that would develop the skills, experience and confidence they needed. We wanted participants to complete, from start to finish, a piece of independent original
work, of a type completely new to them, which would involve the learning of new skills, employing a range of different learning methods, including practical, technical and analytical skills, and culminate in a formally-assessed written element providing enduring and tangible evidence of achievement. We also considered it vital that such work should have real academic value, to allow participants to develop confidence in their abilities to cope and contribute at higher educational levels.

Archaeology is very well placed, perhaps uniquely so, to provide such programmes and it was apparent to me that the requirements detailed above could be met perfectly in the systematic excavation of archaeological test pits within CORS. Experience of previous test-pitting investigations has demonstrated that members of the public could, if provided with appropriate instructions, carry out test-pit excavations that would yield archaeologically useful results, and that two or three undergraduates could complete a 1 sq m test pit in a day with archaeological supervision. I therefore concluded that, with appropriate instruction and supervision, it should be possible for school pupils to carry out effectively and usefully their own test-pit excavation, including every stage from measuring out to writing up, thus matching the demanding educational requirements of the widening participation programme with the archaeological need for systematic excavation within continuing settlements.

METHODOLOGY

Setting up and running the HEFA scheme requires us to meet a number of different educational, archaeological and logistical goals:

- selection and recruitment of pupils to HEFA courses;
- assembly of a team with suitable archaeological expertise and communication skills;
- development of an appropriate excavation and recording strategy;
- preparation of effective instructional material to convey this strategy in a variety of media;
- identification of sites for excavation, and arrangement of access, within specific areas where progression to higher education is low and archaeological interest is high (it is helpful that the latter category, of course, includes nearly all CORS with evidence of medieval antecedence).

Our partner in this project, Aimhigher (Cambridgeshire and East Anglia Region) did most of the liaison with target schools. It has a network of established contacts and can identify pupils of high academic ability whose progression to higher education is doubtful or raises concerns. The University

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15 See Whittlewood project reports in note 12 above.
of Cambridge developed the archaeological team, strategy and instructional material. This includes a handbook and record booklet, a powerpoint presentation given to the participants by the course leader, and laminated copies of worked examples for pupils to refer to.16

The identification of settlements, and sites for test pits within them, is both the most complex and the most simple of the operational goals of HEFA, and involves our third partner, the wider rural community, and in particular local museums and rural historical or archaeological societies. Individuals within these have consistently proved enthusiastically willing and able to engineer access for excavation to the 15 to 30 separate sites within each settlement that need to be available for test-pitting over two or three years in order to provide an adequate number of samples for broader analysis. The first of the criteria for settlement selection is entirely non-archaeological: Aimhigher identify geographical zones, and schools within these areas, where progression to university is low. HEFA then works through contacts both within and beyond the archaeological profession to identify a resident of a CORS within that zone who is willing and able to arrange access for excavation within a number of different properties in the settlement. Such a selection process does not follow conventional scientific methods but, in fact, it does have more of the characteristics of a stratified random sampling strategy than might be expected.17 The random element, introduced by the nature of the primary criteria for selection does potentially eliminate some other selection biases that a specific research agenda might generate. Ultimately, given that there are a very large number of CORS, any of which could usefully be investigated by test-pitting, any methodical and competently recorded work on such sites will be of value.

Once the setting-up of a HEFA is complete and pupils have arrived on site, they follow a standardised procedure to excavate their test pit. Following an initial instruction session, they work in teams of three or four, with an adult supervisor (usually a member of school staff or a student ambassador from a local HEI) using standard HEFA instruction and recording material. Excavation takes place over two days, during which each test-pit team measures out a single sq m, makes a measured survey plan to record its location within the plot it occupies, removes any turf, and then excavates to a maximum depth of 1.2 m in a series of 0.1 m spits or contexts. Pupils sieve for finds using a 10 mm mesh (with the exception of very heavy clay soils that are hand-searched). Experts who are on site for the duration of the HEFA, and visit the test pits regularly, identify pottery and most other finds promptly. At the same time, they can provide advice and check that the excavation and recording meets the required standards. Once each test-pit excavation is completed, the pupils draw sections,

16 For the first HEFA the booklet provided by Time Team for Big Dig was used with little alteration due to constraints in preparation time, but the instruction and recording booklets were refined for use in the particular circumstances of the HEFAs after each of the four academies held in 2005 and finally printed early in 2006. Further information about the process of test-pit investigation on HEFA courses, with accompanying images, is available at <www.arch.cam.ac.uk/aca/fa/testpits.html> [accessed 30 April 2007].
Investigation of medieval rural settlement

They complete most test pits on reaching natural or the maximum safe depth of 1.2 m. A minority will stop on encountering a feature (ancient or modern) which the supervisors deem inadvisable or impossible to remove, or they may sometimes have to finish at a level above natural due to time constraints. Teams completing their test pit with more than a few hours to spare (usually because they encounter natural close to the surface) dig another site.

After the excavation, we send pupils copies of the records they made for their test pit, maps, photographs and a report on the pottery, to enable them to produce a written report recording and analysing their excavation. They submit this during a follow-up day in the University of Cambridge, when they collate and assess the results of all the test pits dug in the course of their HEFA, and also visit and dine in one of the university colleges. We copy, assess and return the originals to them with comments and a certificate to mark their achievement in completing the course. We retain the archaeological records, finds and phosphate samples at the University of Cambridge for analysis, reporting, archiving and submission to SMRs/HERs, publication and ongoing research into the origins and development of rural settlement.

Pottery quantification and interpretation

Much of the analysis of the archaeological implications of the HEFA 2005–6 investigations derives from inferences regarding the quantity, character and distribution (horizontal and vertical) of the recovered ceramic assemblages. Assessing the reliability of any inferences based on ceramic material derived from a sample as small as a 1 sq m is inevitably an inexact science. The most fundamental unknowns are the extent to which the excavated sample is representative of the past activity in the vicinity and the factors that have affected deposition, movement and preservation of ceramic material. Analysis of the HEFA evidence has largely followed established precedents, but with some additional elaborations. It is well known that pottery from some periods is less common than others, and that similar sherd counts/weights from different periods may in some circumstances correctly be regarded as of widely differing significance. Hence, one or two sherds of relatively rare and/or fragile Anglo-Saxon pottery may reasonably be interpreted (if with caution) as evidence for occupation of that date in the vicinity, while for the later Middle Ages, when pottery was more widely used and is more taphonomically durable, larger numbers/weights of sherds may be required to draw the same inference. It is neither desirable nor possible to establish standard formulae for assessment of

The University of Cambridge retains the finds unless the property owners request their return (no such requests to date), in which case we return them following completion of post-excavation and analysis.

Martin Millett suggests that for the Anglo-Saxon Period a yield of one sherd, averaging 3 gr in weight per cu m of excavated material, could be considered evidence of occupation, while for the Roman Period 75 sherd would be required to draw the same inference: M. Millet, ‘Field survey calibration: a contribution’, 31–8 in C. Haselgrove, M. Millett and I. Smith (eds.), Archaeology from the Ploughsoil (Sheffield, 1985).
the implications of any assemblage, as informed professional judgement always needs to bear in mind specific, local and contextual factors. However, we can note some general, flexibly applied patterns in the drawing of inferences involving late-medieval pottery (dating from the mid-11th century to the mid-15th century) in recent test-pitting research projects. At both Shapwick and Whittlewood, the excavators considered yields of later medieval pottery of less than five sherds per test pit (with test pits averaging 1 cu m of excavated material) unlikely to be evidence of occupation and more probably to be the result of manuring or other non-intensive and/or relocation activity (either of contemporary date or later). They interpreted assemblages of more than ten sherds per test pit as generally likely to indicate occupation in the vicinity, with increasing size/weight of assemblages taken to indicate a greater likelihood or proximity of intensive activity. Assemblages of between five and ten sherds per test pit are sometimes considered likely to indicate intensive activity nearby, and sometimes not, depending on site-specific and test-pit-specific factors. Sherd size and condition is an important factor used to assess the sort of activity the recovered assemblage is most likely to represent (applying the principle that smaller, abraded sherds are more likely to have been moved from their original deposition site by activities such as manuring or ploughing). Within the HEFA CORS project, individual sherd size over 5 gr is generally considered of greater potential significance for occupation than smaller sherds, with those under 3 gr regarded as likely to be less significant, particularly if the latter are discovered in very small numbers. We also consider that small test-pit assemblages of later medieval pottery (i.e. of nine sherds or less, or even, depending on context, assemblages of less than five sherds) are potential indicators of intensive activity nearby if all the sherds derive from any combination of the following:

- a restricted number of 0.1 m layers (usually just one or two) within the test pit, rather than being scattered vertically throughout the test pit;
- a layer or layers within the test pit which contains no identifiably later material;
- a layer within the test pit containing high phosphate levels.

We also take the general appearance of the fill of each layer into consideration. All of the above principles have been borne in mind in combination with due professional judgement when interpreting the results and implications of the pottery from the 2005–6 HEFA excavations.

RESULTS

We have excavated a series of 1 sq m test pits within the gardens and open spaces of thirteen CORS located in a range of different landscapes across East Anglia, spanning a region measuring nearly 100 sq miles (Fig. 1). To date, HEFA

has involved around 500 pupils, mostly aged 14–16, and around 100 school staff, in two days each of primary archaeological investigation and research, excavating nearly 150 test pits in total. To indicate the potential of this approach, this paper reports on the methods used and the results obtained from the three settlements investigated in Cambridgeshire in both 2005 and 2006, where more work has been carried out than on the remaining HEFA sites which have, to date, hosted only one Field Academy. Over these two seasons, each of these settlements has had enough test pits excavated within it to provide pointers towards interpretation, and some firm conclusions. For each settlement, an outline background is included to provide a context for the results of the test-pit excavations, but inclusion of detailed cartographic and historical research lies beyond the scope of this paper.

HOUGHTON AND WYTON (NGR: TL 281 271)

Local residents still recognise Houghton and Wyton as two distinct settlements, but to the casual observer they now appear to be a single, moderately sized, nucleated village, as was also the case in the 19th century (Fig. 2). This
effectively polyfocal settlement is sited on alluvial gravel between 5 m and 10 m O.D., close to the northern banks of the River Ouse, 4 km east of Huntingdon (Cambridgeshire). Prior to HEFA investigations the area had received no significant archaeological attention, although a Romano-British cemetery lies a little to the north of the village on Houghton Hill.\textsuperscript{21} The history of both Houghton and Wyton is very similar.\textsuperscript{22} The two manors were granted together to the abbey of Ramsey in the 10th century and were held together thereafter, sharing a court and a priest for much of their history.\textsuperscript{23} Domesday Book records them as separate manors but of very similar size and value; it also records churches in both manors, but only Wyton has a priest.\textsuperscript{24} Houghton is valued slightly

\textsuperscript{23} Page et al., op. cit. in note 21, 235.
\textsuperscript{24} Houghton is specifically recorded as having ‘a church, no priest’: J. Morris (ed.), \textit{Domesday Book} (Chichester, 1975), 6, 8.
higher than Wyton, no doubt reflecting its access to wood pasture, greater extents of meadow, more valuable mill and greater numbers of ploughs. The two churches are of almost identical size and proportions.

The two surviving medieval churches (one out of use since 1974) are physical evidence for this twin-like history. In the absence of archaeological evidence, it would be reasonable to suggest that occupation originated as two discrete settlements near the two churches and only later coalesced as the settlement expanded along the road between the settlements. One local historian has noted the rectilinear street plan, which has been interpreted as possible evidence of a planned phase of development at both sites, instigated by the abbot of Ramsey in the 11th or 12th century in the wake of the creation of the nearby planned town of St Ives, also held by the abbey. Such an interpretation draws attention to the N./S. oriented roads through the village, which link the 17th-century mill sites (both manors are recorded as possessing mills at Domesday although the sites of these have not been archaeologically proven) via the churches to the E./W. routes between the larger medieval settlements of Huntingdon and St Ives. Some local residents have suggested to me (pers. comm.) that these plans are likely to have included an open green to the north of the church. This is certainly plausible in Houghton where such a feature survives today, although now somewhat encroached upon by buildings of 16th-century and later date.

In September 2005 and March 2006 more than 50 HEFA pupils, around 10 school staff members and several dozen primary school children excavated nineteen test pits (Fig. 3). Figure 4 (plans a–f) shows the distribution of finds of pre-medieval, medieval and post-medieval date.

A small quantity of prehistoric material was revealed: four of the test pits produced one or two flint fragments of prehistoric date, either worked or burnt, or both, the earliest of which was mesolithic. These all derived from test pits just about the modern flood plain. Small quantities of Roman pottery was found in four test pits, all lying between the edge of the flood plain and the present E./W. road (Huntingdon Road) which dog-legs through the village around The Green. The owners of test-pit sites 05/07 and 05/08 discovered other Roman finds under the kitchen floor of their late-medieval cottage. These came from the same zone, and the linear pattern of these finds in relation to the road and the flood-plain possibly suggests that the present road may follow the approximate route of a Roman precursor, flanked on the south by contemporary activity of some sort (the small numbers of sherds found so far make this relatively unlikely to be settlement).

We recovered no early or middle Anglo-Saxon pottery, despite the East Anglian region having a well-recognised continuous sequence of post-Roman

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25 Houghton is valued at £8 compared to £7 for Wyton: ibid.
26 Page et al., op. cit. in note 21, 253. Such similarity in size and proportions hints at the possibility that the churches may have founded contemporaneously and under the auspices of the same authority, i.e. the Abbey of Ramsey (a question not investigated during the present HEFA research).
28 An informal account of the 2005 test-pit excavations at Houghton and Wyton by one of the residents of the village can be found at <www.hwlhs.org.uk/bigdig2005.php> [accessed 30 April 2007].
pottery. On the other hand, pottery of late Anglo-Saxon date was recovered from five test pits: three in Houghton, one in Wyton and one midway between the two. One additional large sherd (32 gr) of Thetford Ware (dating to A.D. 950–1100) discovered during the 2005 HEFA was derived from a 1 m by 1.2 m pit dug by a contractor investigating a leak in a water pipe under Chapel Lane immediately south-west of The Green. The distribution of sites producing late Saxon/early post-Conquest ceramic material suggests that occupation at both Houghton and Wyton at this date existed in the vicinity of the churches, perhaps primarily to their north and, at Houghton, probably arranged around a small green. Three sherds of Stamford Ware (dating to A.D. 900–1200) from test pits 06/2 and 06/3, along the Huntingdon Road which links the two settlements, are potentially significant. All are of a reasonable size (averaging 5 gr in weight) and not extensively abraded, and were recovered from context 4 of their respective test pits (i.e. 0.3–0.4 m below the present ground surface), the level at which Victorian pottery ceases in both pits. If these can be taken as evidence of occupation (and this cannot be regarded as certain), then they would throw doubt on the model of medieval Houghton and Wyton evolving as spatially discrete settlements for any significant period of time. Rather, it would suggest that even at this early date they were not separated by open space but that the area between them was already occupied, or fairly intensively exploited. Notably, this pattern
Houghton and Wyton showing distribution of pottery by period. Pits producing pottery for each period are shaded black. a. Roman period; b. mid-9th to mid-11th century; c. mid-11th to late 14th century; d. early 15th to mid-16th century; e. mid-16th to late 18th century; f. 19th century.
has some similarities with that of the Roman evidence, which indicates a linear pattern of activity expressed along an E./W. axis, rather than two separate nodes.

Furthermore, the pattern indicated by the HEFA test pits suggests that the zone of occupation in the period between the mid-11th century and the mid-14th century remained almost entirely south of, or closely adjacent to, Huntingdon Road and its easterly continuation (Thicket Road). It is notable that the areas closest to the churches consistently produced the highest quantities of pottery of medieval date, in contrast with the three test pits east of the N.-S. route (St Ives Road/Mill Street) leading to the 17th-century mill site in Houghton, which between them produced only one sherd of medieval pottery (from test pit 05/3) which although of reasonable size (7 gr in weight) was heavily abraded. We can tentatively infer that this eastern area was predominantly field rather than settlement in medieval times. This may allow the further inference that the site of 05/4 in east Houghton, which produced 5 sherds (38 gr in total) from just 0.5 cu m of excavated spoil, may have been an outlying property separated from the area around The Green and the church, rather than part of a continuous spread of the village. The area north of Huntingdon Road also appears likely to have been largely arable until recently, as 06/5 revealed an arable ploughsoil directly on top of gravel natural and yielded only Victorian and later pottery.

It is also notable that while most of the test pits in Houghton and Wyton produced pottery of mid-11th to mid-14th century date, and of post-medieval date, only six produced any pottery of early 15th- to mid-16th-century date, with only four of those yielding more than a single sherd. Although we must always exercise caution in drawing inferences based on negative evidence from a relatively small number of test pits, and for a period when less pottery may have been in use, this is nonetheless striking. It is plausible that it may be evidence of a reduction in population at Houghton and Wyton in the later Middle Ages, a situation apparently sustained for some time, given the similar paucity of evidence from the mid-16th to late 18th centuries.

TERRINGTON ST CLEMENT (ngr: TL 180 320)

Terrington St Clement is today a large, irregular, sprawling village, formerly very dispersed across more than 2 km (Fig. 5). It lies 8 km west of

29 Test pit 05/2 produced 6 sherds/62 gr; 05/3 10 sherds/102 gr; 05/7 and 05/8 (dug to a shallow depth in the same garden owing to a pipe being encountered in 05/7) together produced 3 sherds/15 gr; 05/P 44 sherds/294 gr; 05/A 13 sherds/91 gr; 06/1 2 sherds/11 gr; 06/2 6 sherds/39 gr; 06/3 16 sherds/106 gr; 06/7 11 sherds/57 gr; 06/8 25 sherds/116 gr.

30 This was identified as ‘early medieval sandy ware’, dating to A.D. 1100–1400. NB. the use of the term ‘early medieval’ with reference to this widely recognised ware derives from use of a different period-naming convention to that used in this journal.

31 05/4 produced 5 sherds/38 gr total. Other pottery spanning the same medieval dates, and also Roman sherds, has been recovered by the property owners.

32 Test pit 06/3 produced 10 sherds/208 gr and test pit 06/6 30 sherds/244 gr, considered likely to indicate settlement in the vicinity. Test pit 05/P produced just 2 sherds/6 gr; while 05/5, 06/7 and 06/8 each produced only a single sherd weighing between 4 gr and 8 gr. None of these could reasonably be considered likely to indicate intensive pottery-using activity of early 15th–mid-16th-century date nearby.
King’s Lynn on alluvial and marine deposits in the fenland region of west Norfolk at around 3 m O.D. A sea bank known (misleadingly) as Roman Bank, 33 1 km N. of the church, now protects it from inundation. It is one of an arc of settlements fringing the area of Norfolk known as Marshland. 34 Terrington St Clement has to date been the subject of limited published historical research although local histories mention four manors and give a date of 1229 for the commencement of the sea defences. 35 A low-assessed value of Terrington in Domesday Book contrasts with the magnificence of the church, the surviving structure of which is mostly perpendicular, but has traces of Norman build and Saxon stonework. 36 Terrington St Clement was the highest returning of the Marshland vills in 1291 and 1334. 37 Salt-making was a major industry in

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33 Although this name is in common usage, it is widely acknowledged that a Roman date for this bank is not possible as the Roman land surface in this area lies up to 2 m below the current land surface.
35 B. Howling, Terrington St Clement — A History (unpubl., King’s Lynn Museum); Terrington St Clement History Group, A History of Terrington St Clement (Kings Lynn, 2005).
late-medieval Terrington: twelve salt houses are recorded in Domesday Book for Terrington and numerous saltern mounds survive on the western side of the village around Orange Row. Other archaeological investigation has most notably included fieldwalking as part of the Fenland Survey.\(^{38}\) This resulted in the discovery of an extensive area of middle Anglo-Saxon settlement along a roddon (silt ridge) at Hay Green 1.5 km south of Terrington St Clement, excavated as part of the Fenland Management Project and interpreted as a succession of short-lived farms, shifting in location over four centuries along the length of the roddon.\(^{39}\)

Elsewhere, however, difficulties of access resulted in Terrington St Clement being less intensively fieldwalked than other Marshland parishes.\(^{40}\) Furthermore, this activity was, of course, only possible at all in areas under cultivation, and even some of these were not accessible. Architectural investigation has shown that the earliest standing buildings other than the church are Lovell’s Hall (16th-century) and Emorsgate Farm (probably 17th-century).\(^{41}\)

The results of the Fenland Survey in Terrington St Clement suggested a change in settlement form from a scatter of farms along the Hay Green roddon in the Middle Anglo-Saxon Period to a more northerly focus in the area around the church in later Saxon times, where occupation ranged along a network of small lanes and green margins.\(^{42}\) Settlement in the form of isolated farms on the roddon may have continued in some places into the Late Saxon Period.

Such inferences are of necessity based on surmise as ‘modern development has obscured nearly all traces’ of evidence.\(^{43}\)

In July 2005 and April 2006, nearly 50 HEFA pupils and around ten teachers, plus a number of primary school children, excavated sixteen test pits in different parts of the present village (Fig. 6). Figure 7 (a–f) shows the distribution of finds of pre-medieval, medieval and post-medieval date.

One of the most striking observations was the extent of intact and undisturbed medieval horizons, which the HEFA excavations revealed in nine of the sixteen test pits, two of which contained actual features of medieval date.\(^{44}\) Test pit 05/7, sited immediately west of the church in a small garden between the churchyard and the N./S.-oriented Church Street, revealed a ground or floor surface 0.7 m below the surface, cut by a possible posthole. The only pottery recovered from the layer immediately overlying this was eight sherds of Grimston Ware (date range between a.d. 1080 and 1400). The absence of any pottery of later date suggests that the surface is likely to be of 13th-century date.

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\(^{38}\) Ibid.


\(^{40}\) Silvester, op. cit. in note 37, 36–7.

\(^{41}\) Information taken from Norfolk HER. I am also grateful to Edwin Rose for his comments on the dates of standing buildings in Terrington St Clement.

\(^{42}\) Silvester, op. cit. in note 37, 37–8.

\(^{43}\) Ibid., 38.

\(^{44}\) Undisturbed medieval layers were detected in test pits 05/4, 05/5, 05/7, 05/8, 05/50, 06/2, 06/4, 06/5 and 06/11. A medieval floor surface was revealed in 05/7, and a 14th-century brick kiln in 06/5 (see above).
or earlier, most probably the floor of a building or yard, and that later activity has not disturbed it. Three test pits (05/4, 05/5 and 05/8) in a small paddock north of the church all produced pottery of exclusively pre-c. 1700 date from levels below c. 0.4 m. Ceramic material recovered from these contexts ranged in each case back as early as c. A.D. 950. The quantity and quality of the recovered pottery, which included numerous, mostly large, sherds of Grimston Ware from the lower layers (30 sherds totalling 252 gr in weight from the three test pits) suggest that medieval activity in this area is likely to have been settlement rather than agriculture. The lack of evidence for later disturbance suggests that features associated with this may potentially survive up to a metre below the present land surface.

The discoveries from these test pits are likely to relate to the 10th-century date of the construction of the Roman Bank sea defences inferred from previous investigations. Although a test pit on the bank itself produced nothing earlier than 19th century, the likely presence of settlement of late-Saxon date north

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45 Crowson et al., op. cit. in note 39; Rippon, op. cit. in note 34.
46 This related exclusively to occupation of the nearby Victorian cottage on top of the bank within the garden of which this test pit was sited.
Terrington St Clement showing distribution of pottery by period. Pits producing pottery for each period are shaded black. a. Roman period; b. mid-9th to mid-11th century; c. mid-11th to late 14th century; d. early 15th to mid-16th century; e. mid-16th to late 18th century; f. 19th century.
investigation of medieval rural settlement

of the church correlates well with the earliest recorded reference to the church itself in the 10th century. This also suggests that a settlement developed here at this time, protected from inundation by the construction of the sea bank. This supports the observation from the Hay Green area excavations that an observed change in the ditch deposits from estuarine tidal creek in the Middle Saxon Period to much lower salinity in the Late Saxon Period probably related to the construction of the sea bank.\textsuperscript{47} The nature of the material recovered from the top four contexts of the HEFA test pits in the paddock north of the church reinforces the importance of the sea bank for occupation in Terrington St Clement. In each case we recovered only a few sherds of post-A.D. 1600 date (not enough to indicate occupation at this date). This area thus appears to have been abandoned in the early Post-Medieval Period, probably some time shortly after 1550, as Redware, produced from around 1550 to the 19th century, vanishes or declines sharply from the excavated test pits.\textsuperscript{48} The successive impact of serious flooding documented in 1564 and 1613 may have affected the perceived viability of occupation in this area of the settlement.\textsuperscript{49}

Further evidence as to the nature and layout of medieval settlement at Terrington St Clement came from test pit 06/2. This lies within a small rectangular field measuring c. 25 m by c. 35 m that local residents consider to be a moated site, although no historical references exist to support this and no internal earthwork features are visible. Although a ditch does indeed define the field on all four sides, only those on the north and west have the wide and relatively shallow (although now dry), profile expected of a moated site, while those on the south and east are deep, sharply cut, water-filled, narrow features typical of other ditches in the area. Test pit 06/2 produced negligible quantities of post-medieval pottery (just three sherds — 24 gr — Victorian wares and 1 sherd — 4 gr — Redware), derived solely from the top four contexts suggesting no occupation from that period. However, we recovered much larger quantities of pre-A.D. 1400 pottery (24 sherds/129 gr in total).\textsuperscript{50} These came mostly from levels below 0.3 m, and were accompanied with fragments of animal bone (mostly cow and sheep) which was contrastingly entirely absent from the top three contexts. Half of all the pre-A.D. 1400 sherds recovered were Thetford Ware, Stamford Ware or St Neots Ware, all dating to before A.D. 1100. The presence of large, unabraded pottery sherds combined with the faunal remains suggests that this is an occupation site, dating to the period c. A.D. 900–1200. It may be the site of one of the ‘lost’ medieval manors of Terrington. On existing evidence it is plausible that the surrounding ditch is indeed a moat.

\textsuperscript{47} See Crowson et al., op. cit. in note 39, 147–70.
\textsuperscript{48} Test pit 05/4 produced 67 sherds/448 gr of Redware dating to post-1550 and a total of 16 sherds/28 gr of post-A.D. 1600 wares [Slipware/Delft Ware/Staffordshire Slipware/White Stoneware]; test pit 03/5 produced 11 sherds/37 gr of Redware and 1 sherd/1 gr of White Stoneware; test pit 8 produced 55 sherds/266 gr redware and 7 sherds/12 gr of post-1600 wares from all excavated contexts.
\textsuperscript{49} Terrington St Clement History Group, op. cit. in note 37, 87.
\textsuperscript{50} We retrieved just three sherds of 19th-century pottery and one of Redware from the top 0.4 m of 06/2. Below this, 10th–13th century wares mostly comprised large (5 gr+), unabraded sherds including one fragment of Thetford Ware weighing 34 gr from context 4, and three of the same ware from context 5 weighing 39 gr in total.
contemporary with the later phase of occupation evidenced by the pottery, but
only further investigation can prove this. Attested late-Saxon occupation on this
site is further evidence for the development of this part of Terrington at this
time, possibly as part of a dispersed pattern of settlement, as it is set some
distance away from the church and present road. Interestingly, two test pits
immediately south of the church (05/3 and 05/6) both produced no pottery
predating 1800, suggesting this area may not have been occupied by settlement
in the past.

Further south, we excavated two test pits around the standing 16th-century
house at Lovell’s (another possible manorial site in Terrington). Test pit 06/11
produced a small assemblage of 37 sherds (109 gr), of which all but six were
Redware, which correlates well with the house datestone of 1543. Test pit 06/7,
however, yielded a couple of earlier sherds — one large fragment of Grimston
Ware (40 gr) and another of Stamford Ware (4 gr) — suggesting that the site
has been in use since the Late Saxon Period. On this evidence, we cannot
assume this usage to have been settlement, although the large size of the Grim-
ston Ware sherd suggests it has not spent long in ploughsoil. Intriguingly, Lovell’s
Hall (test pit 06/11) also produced one of only two HEFA finds of Roman pot-
ttery in Terrington St Clement. The other is from some distance away (test pit
06/4), on top of one of the saltern mounds. Both sherds are moderately sized
(4 gr and 2 gr respectively) and their presence, especially in such very small
numbers would not, for the Roman Period, generally be taken as a likely indica-
tor of settlement. However, both sherds were found at a reasonable depth
(0.4–0.5 m and 0.2–0.3 m below the surface) in contexts which produced no
Victorian or modern pottery, suggesting they are unlikely to have been extract-
ed and redeposited during recent activity, although this possibility cannot be
excluded. Convention has previously held that the Roman levels at Terrington
have been covered with up to 3 m of silt, but these two finds of Roman pottery
in very different parts of Terrington do provide just a hint that this period may
not be quite as irretrievable as has previously been thought. Test pit 06/11 at
Lovell’s held one other surprise — the head of an adult human femur. Research
so far has revealed no conventional historical context for this — most obviously
there is no record of any monastic site or church here, and the site is more than
1 km from the parish boundary. Assuming that a ‘sinister’ explanation involving
murder or concealed burial is statistically unlikely, we must assume the bone
most likely either to derive from a Christian burial associated with a lost church,
or to date to the pre-Christian era (i.e. pagan Anglo-Saxon, Roman or prehis-
toric). Given the presence of the Roman pottery from this location, it is
plausible that pottery and femur together represent fragmentary evidence for a
previously disturbed Roman burial.

Other test pits at Terrington proved unexpectedly illuminating of aspects
of the industrial history of the medieval settlement. Test pit 06/4 produced an
assemblage with a date range of A.D. 950–1400 from contexts 0.3–0.5 m below
the surface (with no later material from any layers). This provides the first

51 Silvester, op. cit. in note 37, 37; Terrington St Clement History Group, op. cit. in note 37.
evidence for medieval activity on one of the numerous saltern mounds on the western side of the village (see above), although possibly used for other purposes such as dairying in the Medieval Period. The single Roman sherd (discussed above) from 0.5 m below the surface may conceivably be evidence of earlier activity on this site, possibly also associated with the salt industry. Test pit 06/5 in Popes Lane on the W. side of the village was sited over the location of a series of brick kilns, known from previous development on the site and identified from photographic evidence as of 18th- or 19th-century date. The test pit duly revealed a succession of mounded layers of ash, charcoal and other burnt material cleared out from one of the arched kilns, along with the first evidence for numerous brick wasters. The olive-green glaze on several of these indicated that they were in fact of 14th- to 16th-century date. The only sherd of pottery found that predated the 19th century was a large (41 gr) sherd of Grimston Ware, suggesting that a date earlier in the 14th- to 16th-century range is likely. The only other record of brick kilns of medieval date in the whole of West Norfolk is also at Terrington St Clement — a field at Hay Green (NGR: TF 5423 1822) located during fieldwalking. This is too far away to be the same site unearthed in the HEFA test pit and suggests the area is the focus of a significant but otherwise unknown medieval industry.

Ufford (NGR: TF 094 040)

Ufford today is now, as it was in the 19th century (Fig. 8), a small nucleated village sited on limestone at between 21 m and 46 m O.D., approximately 10 km north-west of Peterborough in Cambridgeshire. Prior to HEFA, Ufford had seen no formal archaeological investigation, the only finds of note being of Roman date, including a silver spoon and tile discovered casually in a field south-west of the church. An early volume of the Victoria County History reviews the history of Ufford, concentrating primarily on the descent of the various manors of the parish and, more recently, a local resident has focused primarily on recent history. Ufford is currently a linear settlement arranged either side of a N./S. oriented road which turns east at the southern end of the village: a 20th-century extension to the village lies along this south-eastern road (cf. Figs. 8 and 9). The church of St Andrew lies at this southern, more elevated, end of the settlement: its earliest fabric is of late-13th-century date, although


53 Pers. comm., Edwin Rose and Bryan Howling.

54 I am grateful to Elizabeth James for visiting Terrington St Clement during the HEFA and dating the bricks found in 06/5.

55 Recorded in the county SMR.


57 F. Gosling, Our Ufford Heritage (Stamford, 2000).

58 Ibid., 4.
some reused fragments of early-12th-century worked stone exist and there is a record of a priest sometime between 1145 and 1153. The church lies close to a farm now called The Roost, but formerly known as Newport Farm, around which the present road through Ufford curves as it turns east (although a field boundary to the south hints at an earlier southern continuation of the N./S. road). Extending north from this, settlement currently flanks most of both sides of the road. The field west of the road and immediately north of the church is presently under pasture but contains earthworks suggestive of former settlement.

59 Serjeanston and Adkins, op. cit. in note 56, 536.
60 Gosling, op. cit. in note 57, 45.
Earthworks also exist in a second pasture field east of the road and opposite Ufford Hall, itself of 18th-century date but considered to occupy the site of the documented earlier manor of Uphall which can be traced back to 1335.\textsuperscript{61} Several buildings date to the 17th or 18th centuries, with the rectory considered to be of 14th-century date.\textsuperscript{62}

On the basis of previously available evidence, it would have been reasonable to suggest that the earliest medieval nucleus of settlement at Ufford probably lay at the southern end of the present settlement, near the church and area of Roman occupation, with subsequent expansion taking place in the 11th to

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 25–6; Serjeanston and Adkins, op. cit, in note 55, 533–5.

\textsuperscript{62} Gosling, op. cit. in note 57; details available in county SMR; Serjeanston and Adkins, op. cit, in note 55, 533.
13th centuries as a regularly planned, double row extending north as far as Ufford Farm, possibly in association with the development of the Uphall manor. We might have surmised that contraction (and possible subsequent engrossment) followed this expansion sometime in the period between the late 14th century and the 17th century, which left the two earthwork fields unoccupied. The construction of the present Ufford Hall in the 17th century would have seemed a likely catalyst for post-medieval shrinkage in the northernmost earthwork field.

In September 2005 and April 2006, 65 pupils and around 10 members of school staff excavated 23 test pits in Ufford (Fig. 9). Figure 10 (a–f) shows the distribution of finds of pre-medieval, medieval and post-medieval date.

The text-pit excavation supported the initial inference, based on summary settlement plan analysis, that the area around the church, rectory and The Roost represented a likely locus of settlement in the Late Saxon Period: a sherd of St Neots Ware (10 gr) was found in context 2 of test pit 05/12 and two sherds of Stamford Ware (totalling 8 gr) in context 6 of test pit 06/6. The revelation during the two days of the HEFA project that the occupiers of The Roost had found 130 sherds of pre-Victorian pottery in the course of non-archaeological digging in their garden, of which 23 sherds (total weight 185 gr) proved on examination to be Stamford Ware, gives additional weight to presence of a late-Saxon nucleus in S. Ufford. The presence of Roman pottery in test pits 05/12 (four sherds/12 gr), 05/13 (five sherds/31 gr) and 06/6 (one sherd/10 gr) (plus one additional further sherd in the collection from The Roost) must relate to the previously attested Roman site to the south-west. The Roman pottery included Nene Valley Colour-Coat Ware and Oxford Ware, dating nearby occupation to the 3rd and 4th century A.D., and raised the question of the likelihood of continuity of occupation from the Roman to Anglo-Saxon Period. However, this might be questioned by the absence, from any of the test pits, of any pottery of early or middle Anglo-Saxon date.

More unexpected was the discovery of significant quantities of Anglo-Saxon pottery at the far northern end of the village, in the garden of Ufford Farm. The eponymous farm name could have hinted at a possible early presence, but could also have been indicative of a new foundation at or around the period of enclosure; a datestone shows the present farm buildings to be of 18th-century date. Within the farm complex, three test pits between them produced five sherds of Stamford Ware (two sherds weighing 9 gr in total from 05/7; one sherd/3 gr from 06/1 and one sherd/10 gr sherd from 06/8) with that in 06/1 coming from the apparently undisturbed lowest excavated context (5). Test pit 05/7 contained a stone feature at the lower levels that was interpreted as possibly structural, while test pit 06/1 exposed a well-built wall of which at least three courses survive. Despite being close to the existing farmhouse, the alignment of this wall does not correspond with any existing buildings. The lowest context in 06/1 produced no pottery later than Grimston Ware, suggesting that the wall, which

63 This latter context produced no finds of any later date suggesting archaeological evidence at this point and depth is likely to be undisturbed.
Ufford showing distribution of pottery by period. Pits producing pottery for each period are shaded black.

a. Roman period; b. mid-9th to mid-11th century; c. mid-11th to late 14th century; d. early 15th to mid-16th century; e. mid-16th to late 18th century; f. 19th century.
this context abuts, dates to no later than A.D. 1400. Given the quantity of Stamford Ware and the quality of the wall construction, it seems that Ufford Farm is a better candidate than Ufford Hall for the site of Uphall manor (although this may alternatively have been outside the present village), and that the site was in any case in existence in some form in the late Pre-Conquest Period.

The discovery of the Stamford Ware at Ufford Farm might reasonably have led us to conclude a more firm date around the 10th century for the northernwards expansion of Ufford, placing the appearance of a planned village extending from the church to Ufford Farm at the earlier end of the proposed chronological ‘window’. However, test pits in the intervening part of the present village forced a more radical revision of ideas about the medieval settlement at Ufford. Perhaps most striking was the lack of finds from the four test pits excavated in the earthwork field east of Ufford Hall. Here the presence of linear banks at right angles to the road, interspersed with terraced hollows and platforms and backing onto the clear remains of ridge and furrow, was all superficially suggestive of the previous presence of planned settlement laid out between the road and medieval fields. However, we found no medieval pottery in any of the test pits in this field. There were correspondingly few non-ceramic finds (three fragments of clay roof tile and a few nail fragments from test pit 05/14) other than slag, which appeared in all the test pits in this field, with 30 fragments, some up to 50 mm across, in a single context in test pit 16. In each of these test pits, we encountered natural between 0.3–0.5 m below the surface. Excavation in test pit 6 continued through this to a depth of 1.2 m to examine whether limestone deposits encountered below the top soil might be redeposited material overlying earlier occupation horizons, to test the hypothesis that construction of Ufford Hall precipitated the removal of settlement on the site. In fact, the limestone overlay increasingly sandy undisturbed deposits with clay encountered at 0.95 m below the surface. Phosphate readings were consistently very low, all indicative of low levels of phosphate deposition assessed as incompatible with settlement. Far from being the site of medieval shrinkage, the presence of any domestic settlement in this field in the past must now be considered highly unlikely. In fact, none of the ten test pits excavated between 05/4 and Ufford Farm produced any pottery predating the late 17th century. Arguments based on negative evidence from excavations as small as 1 sq m must be constructed with caution, but the low quantity and consistent pattern of the evidence from the ten test pits in the centre of Ufford does seem a reasonable basis on which to suggest that this part of the present village was not occupied in the Middle Ages.

64 Lewis et al., op. cit. in note 1, 235–8; Jones and Page, 2006, op. cit. in note 7, 79–104.
65 The recovery of a few sherds of pottery (one of Staffordshire manganese ware, one white salt-glazed stoneware and two of Victorian wares) indicated that the absence of medieval material could not be attributed to lack of skill or diligence during excavation.
66 Contexts 1–3 in test pit 6 recorded phosphate levels of 268, 142 and 168 respectively per 100 gr dried soil in laboratory tested samples: contexts 1–3 in test pit 14 recorded levels of 230, 238 and 202 per 100 gr dried soil.
In summary, our evidence suggests that, rather than developing as regular planned settlement in the Medieval Period from an earlier single core in the Late Saxon Period, Ufford is more likely to have existed as two separate small foci by the Norman Conquest (one around the church and the other around Ufford Farm). Indeed, the small size of assemblages of mid-11th to late-14th-century date, and of early 15th- to mid-16th-century date from most of the Ufford test pits, suggest that the settlement was very small until at least the 18th century. Rather than suffering from contraction in the late Middle Ages or Post-Medieval Period, it seems more probable that the settlement expanded to its present linear form in the 17th or 18th century and may not have acquired its present regular form until that date or even later.

Another characteristic of Ufford was the quantity of animal bone recovered. The unusually large amounts of probable post-medieval butchered animal bone from Ufford Farm, mainly sheep and pig and possibly deliberately pot-sized, and a fragment of probable wild boar bone with butchery marks along the shaft from context 6 of test pit 05/11 at The Roost, may hint at a relatively high-status level of occupation (although at different times).

CONCLUSIONS

There are a number of important observations to offer from the HEFA investigations of CORS outlined above. First, we examined a number of methodological and technical issues during the first test-pitting season in 2005, including the use of phosphate sampling and analysis as part of the process of archaeological investigation by test-pit excavation, which was trialled at Ufford. Although this can represent a significant extra cost if samples from every 0.1 m context are fully analysed, it does seem to provide effective and valuable complementary evidence allowing a more confident assessment of the likely nature and intensity of past activity within excavated contexts. We retained this for the 2006 season. In addition, we also considered the nature and extent of useful information we could gain from faunal remains found in test pits. Although these, like the ceramic material, are rarely found in conventionally ‘stratified’ contexts such as cut features, assessment of the 2005 HEFA faunal material from Ufford and Houghton and Wyton showed a strong correlation between layers yielding earlier (i.e. pre-A.D. 1550) ceramics (and often also lacking any later pottery) and larger assemblages of animal bone. In some cases, as at the possible moated site in Terrington and The Roost in Ufford, we can tentatively propose observations regarding status or changing patterns of consumption, particularly where faunal material derived from undisturbed contexts. We will give further consideration to the analysis of faunal material in future HEFA investigations.

More generally, it is particularly notable that the analysis of the test-pit excavations within CORS has demonstrated a considerable capacity to

67 Numerous fragments of sheep, cow and pig bone, mostly ribs, were sawn to lengths of between 50 mm and 70 mm.

68 This discussion will not encompass assessment of the success with which the HEFA programme fulfilled its educational remit (C. Lewis, in prep.).
challenge and revise existing ideas about the pattern of medieval settlement plan growth and development. Although the excavation of larger numbers of test pits would evidently enable firmer conclusions to be drawn, the excavation of a couple of dozen or so test pits in the CORS discussed above has proved capable of providing significant new observations and conclusions. In particular, the investigations presented above clearly have the capacity to reveal hitherto unknown foci of medieval settlement, as at the northern end of Ufford, or in the possibly moated square field south of Terrington church. The test-pitting has also enabled previously known but little-understood elements of settlements to be examined and dated with more accuracy, as in the case of the brick kilns and the saltern mounds at Terrington, both shown by analysis of HEFA test pits to be in use in the Late Middle Ages.

Another notable observation from HEFA in 2005–6 is the capacity of test pits sited within areas of earthwork remains to overturn prior assessments of their date and character based on surface examination. The field east of Ufford Hall cogently demonstrated this. Other investigators have occasionally noted similar findings elsewhere.69 This observation may repay further consideration, given the number of earthwork sites that are currently classified and dated solely by surface examination or topographical survey.

Perhaps one of the most important revelations of the HEFA test pitting, which is here systematically and metrically demonstrable, is the frequency with which we encounter within CORS useful archaeological evidence, often uncontaminated by later material and not infrequently including features. Around one in nine test pits revealed a pre-modern archaeological feature, while at two of the settlements (Terrington St Clement and Houghton and Wyton) around half of the test pits revealed undisturbed medieval levels which contained pottery of medieval and/or earlier date but no later material.70 This incidence can clearly vary, as only one of the test pits at Ufford revealed any undisturbed medieval levels, and local factors provide some explanation for this.71 A sharp fall-off in the quantity of Victorian pottery at depths of around 0.3–0.5 m was very widely observed, noted in all but a handful of the excavated test pits including almost all of those that produced medieval evidence. Detailed research into the factors affecting intact preservation of early levels within CORS will need to await availability of a larger sample size that further work in 2006–8 will provide.72 However, preliminary correlation of the evidence from the HEFA 2005–6 test pits against current land use (the most obvious and easily identifiable factor likely to affect the preservation of intact early levels) shows

69 Taylor, op. cit. in note 14, 48–52.
70 Nine of the 16 test pits dug in Terrington St Clement contained lower levels which were uncontaminated by any datable post-medieval material, as did eight of the 19 excavated at Houghton and Wyton.
71 The low incidence of preserved medieval layers in Ufford is evidently due in part to the apparently low levels of occupation generally in most of the village in the Medieval Period. Those test pits which were not excavated to natural (05/7, 05/11, 06/1, 06/6 and 06/7) all showed potential for undisturbed unexcavated lower deposits, as later pottery decreased markedly in quantity in the lowest excavated layers.
72 We will investigate intra-site variability in the survival and identification of undisturbed medieval and earlier levels further in 2006–8 when the HEFA project continues on a larger number of settlements in the East Anglia region.
that although test pits sited in fields are slightly more likely to have undisturbed medieval levels than garden-sited test pits, as many as 25–50% of the latter do also contain undisturbed medieval levels. Future HEFA work will provide an opportunity to consider this in more detail and look for any patterning in the distribution of undisturbed archaeological deposits in CORS. However, even from the HEFA test pitting to date, it does seem apparent that CORS are likely to contain much more extensive reserves of undisturbed pre-modern archaeology than currently anticipated or recognised. This must potentially have implications for the way we should approach archaeological investigations of such sites, including those carried out in advance of development, in the future.

A further important observation relates to pre-medieval material. To date, around one test pit in five has yielded archaeological evidence dating to the Roman Period or earlier, although in only one location (S. Ufford) was it retrieved in quantities indicative of settlement. Even here, where we know a villa-type structure existed within c. 50 m, the assemblages are smaller than the threshold conventionally required for such an interpretation. This is all of particular interest given that the history of areas currently occupied by rural settlement is in most cases unknown for any period, including Roman and pre-historic. While the significance of the discovery of previously unknown evidence for pre-medieval activity in these places (or even the demonstration of its apparent absence) is beyond the scope of this paper, it is thought-provoking to consider the impact that such evidence could potentially have on our understanding of pre-medieval settlement and landscape, and the degree of continuity between the pre-Medieval and the Medieval Periods.

Final observations from the work in Houghton and Wyton, Terrington and Ufford relate to the social impact of HEFA test-pit excavations carried out in numerous private properties within inhabited medieval settlements. Notably, this often encouraged the general public to reveal previously unreported finds. In addition, the HEFA project has also demonstrated that previously inexperienced people can, if given appropriate instruction and support, effectively carry out simple independent excavations that produce new, valid and useful archaeological evidence, particularly if this is incorporated within a wider research programme. Finally, it can here be noted (although will not here be discussed in detail) that HEFA does seem to succeed in significantly raising the interest of those involved in applying to university (up by c. 65%), and more than doubles the numbers of those interested in applying to the host university.  

In conclusion, it seems clear that a better knowledge and understanding of the past, and in particular that of rural settlement evolution over the last millennium or so, can be arrived at by strategic and research-oriented archaeological investigation being carried out as widely as possible within CORS.

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73 Statistics and other feedback on participant attitudes have been collected pre- and post-HEFA and collated and analysed in Report on Aimhigher-funded Field Academies in Cambridgeshire, 2005 (unpubl. report, University of Cambridge Department of Archaeology, 2005) and Report on Aimhigher-funded Field Academies in East Anglia, 2006 (unpubl. report, University of Cambridge Department of Archaeology, 2006).
This has the potential to transform not only our understanding of patterns and processes of change in the past, but also to enhance our knowledge of the extent of the surviving archaeological evidence. The vast scope of such an endeavour clearly indicates the need for active involvement of large numbers of individuals and groups outside the archaeological profession, such as is occurring in the University of Cambridge HEFA project involving school pupils, residents of CORS, and other interested individuals in planning, excavating, recording and analysing test-pit excavations within CORS. Within the HEFA model this works to the benefit of all concerned, whether within or outside the archaeological profession, and whether interested in their own personal development, local history or wider issues surrounding the development and management of the historic landscape. With regard to the latter, the continuation and expansion of HEFA-style investigation into CORS should ultimately yield a sufficient corpus of methodically acquired, professionally assessed archaeological evidence to inform, develop, and perhaps substantially to challenge, existing notions regarding the past patterns of occupation and exploitation in areas currently occupied by rural settlement.

Acknowledgements

Jack Hunt School, John Mansfield School, Neale Wade Community College, Ramsey Abbey School, St Peter’s School, Stanground School, St Neots Community College, Walton High School and Queen’s School, Wisbech. Thanks are also due to the owners of each and every plot of land on which a test pit was excavated, many of whom provided support and hospitality well beyond the call of duty. Special thanks must go to Gerry Feake, Bryan Howling and Sandy Yatteau for arranging access to numerous test-pit sites in ‘their’ respective villages. Paul Blinkhorn is the pottery consultant for the project and his knowledge, support and enthusiasm have been invaluable. Thanks are also due to Catherine Ranson, David Crawford-White, Richard Jones, Andrew Rogerson, Jon Clynch, Ben Robinson and Nisha Doshi for the archaeological expertise they brought to the project. Paul Middleton carried out the phosphate testing at Ufford and Chris Morris assessed the 2005 faunal remains. I am also grateful to Christopher Dyer for his much-appreciated comments on the penultimate version of this paper. David McOmish, as ever, provided vital support, expertise and encouragement. While this paper has benefited hugely from discussions with all those named (and many unnamed) above, any errors remain entirely my responsibility.