# Kidpile: a medieval moated site in Earlswood, Solihull

Solihull Archaeological Group

**CONTENTS**

## ILLUSTRATIONS List of figures



## List of Plates



**LIST OF TABLES**

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## SUMMARY

The site lies in one of the densest clusters of medieval moats in England, ten lying within a 3-mile radius of our site. This density of moats in the Forest of Arden is partly as a result of assarting by the Earls of Warwick, renting out parcels of newly assarted land from as early as the late 11th century. Roberts tells us that 'Arden, first documented in the eleventh century was an extensive tract of woodland' and suggests 'that within Arden pre-twelfth century colonization took a form which was to develop into open fields, with intermixed strip holdings, open one to the other' (Roberts 1968, 101,104).

Early in the 11th and 12th century there was a significant size variation in parcels of land granted by the Earls of Warwick, the first Earl created *c* 1088. Grantees were prominent, often already wealthy members of society, whom the Earl chose to reward for service or loyalty. These tracts of land in turn could be sub-infeudated creating greater wealth for the grantees. From the 13th to 14th centuries some of the larger farmsteads were moated, clearly having property or livestock to protect — or as a symbol of status.

The clearance of forest for farming or habitation (the wood itself a valuable commodity) could also create heathland, often more suited to grazing animals. The area of the old Forest of Arden has numerous heaths — that of Forshaw Heath and Fulford Heath being very close to Kidpile. Some of these heaths may have developed by the Bronze Age and, as the report will demonstrate, there was clearly activity in the area during the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods.

Our aim was to find evidence of occupation in the form of building remains and artefacts, and whether this site in Forshaw may have been a sub-manor of Solihull, in the possession of William de Odingseles and later Nicholas, his younger son. The manor of Solihull was centred in Olton, to the north-north-east of Kidpile, at Hobs Moat (SP 147825), just 5½ miles from Kidpile.

## INTRODUCTION

We have followed Aston and Rowley (1974, 151, fig 44) in naming the site Kidpile. Historically, Kidpile Lane ran to the north-west of the site and Kidpile Farm lies 222 metres along Rumbush Lane to the north; this is a partly timber-framed construction. Kidpile is clearly a name used in the locality.

Kidpile Moat lies in Solihull parish — SP 096744 at 153m OD, north of Clowes Wood (Warwickshire Wildlife Trust), bordered northwards by Rumbush Lane, north-east of Earlswood station, within the old forest of Arden. A Roman road, 'Ryknild Street', runs north-east to south-west,4km west, and Berry Mound, an Iron Age hillfort, 3.2km north (Figs 1,2,3).

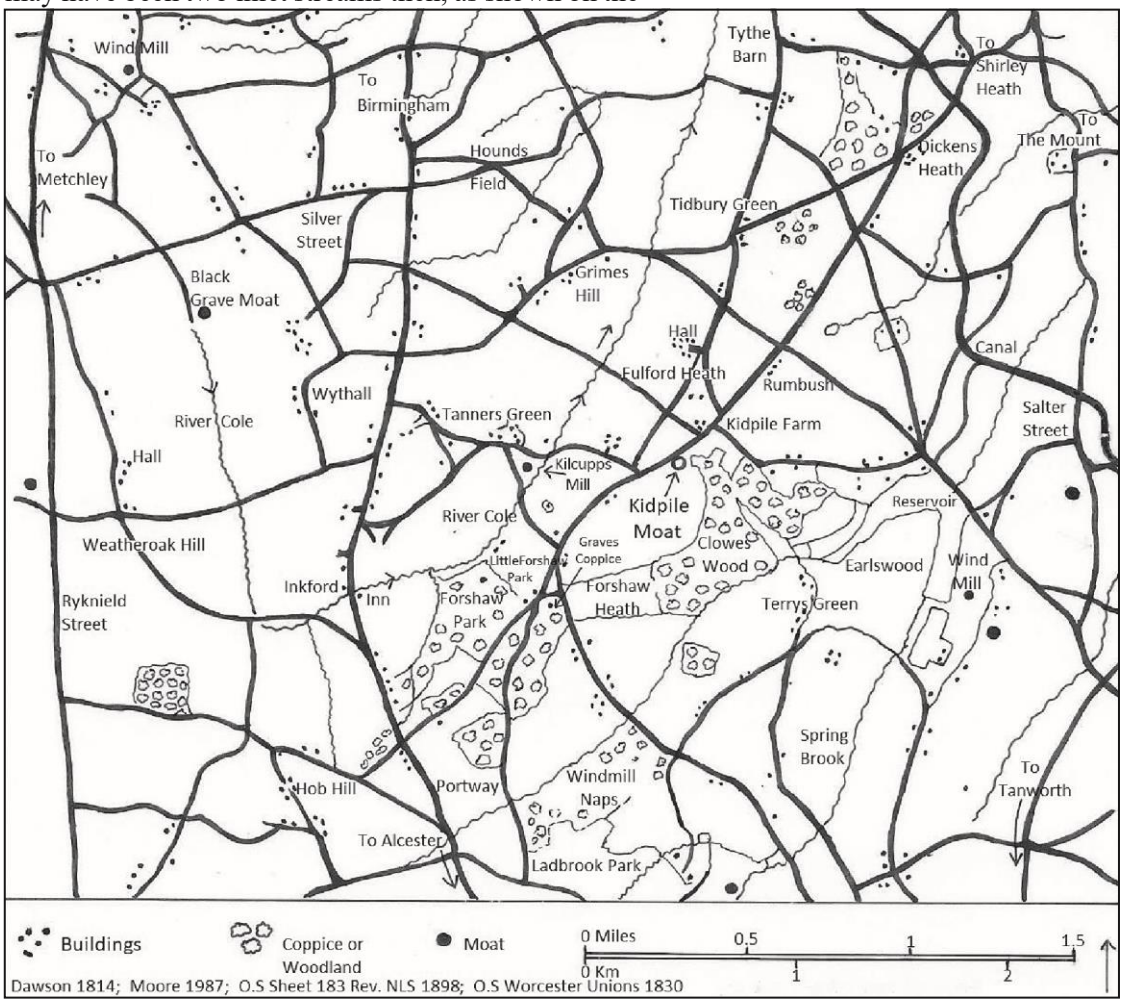
The bedrock geology is 'Mercia Mudstone group — Mudstone'. Superficial deposits — 'Till. Mid Pleistocene — Diamicton' (British Geological Survey). There are remains of dissected sheets of sands, clays and river-rounded gravels, with scattered deposits of sandstone, grey or brown in colour (Jones 1955, 80). During excavation we found the 'natural' in this area is yellow clay and stiff red clay. This produces heavy waterlogged soils, poorly drained, even on the platform, hard to cultivate, but good for puddling the moat sides, if need be.

The soil description by LandIs is as follows: Soilscape 17 — 'Slowly permeable seasonally wet, acid loamy and clayey soils. Texture: loamy and clayey. Drainage: impeded drainage. Fertility: low. Landcover: Grassland with some arable and forestry. Habitats: seasonally wet pastures and woodlands. Carbon: medium. Drains to: Stream network' (LandIs 2024).

The site is hidden by trees, the causeway obliterated by the dumping of spoil from the moat deepening in 1973, while sandstone blocks as revetments to the causeway were rumoured to have been removed in living memory. The platform was covered in brambles, contained a small, shallow rabbit warren and many shallow-rooted trees, mainly hawthorn and oak, causing problems for trenches and resistivity survey (Pls I and II).

The moat was largely intact, though the south-west and south-east arms were heavily silted, but reacted readily to rainfall. The north-west and north-east arms had been deepened to a depth of over 2m — the original depth possibly — to make a fishpond in 1973. The upcast was dumped at the entrance and on the adjacent fields. The moat sides were surprisingly well preserved, especially the south-west and south-east at 40–50 degrees of slope. A pond feeder stream *c* 120m downslope to the east could have provided water for domestic purposes, the moat itself being unfit. A

cistern could well have been in use for convenient storage of rainwater and fresh ground water as there may have been two inlet streams then, as shown on the 1883 OS map and to date. Inlets from the north-west and



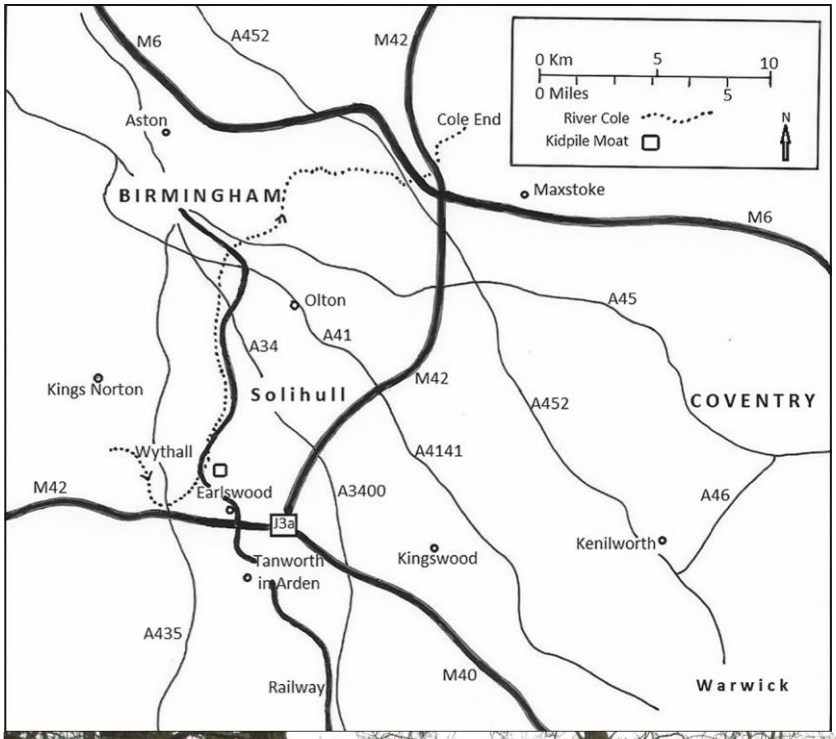



*Fig 1 Location map*

*Fig 2 The site and its environs in the 19th century Plate I*
*Kidpile Moat: northern corner of moat, looking north*

*Plate II* *Kidpile Moat: looking north-east towards Clowes Wood*

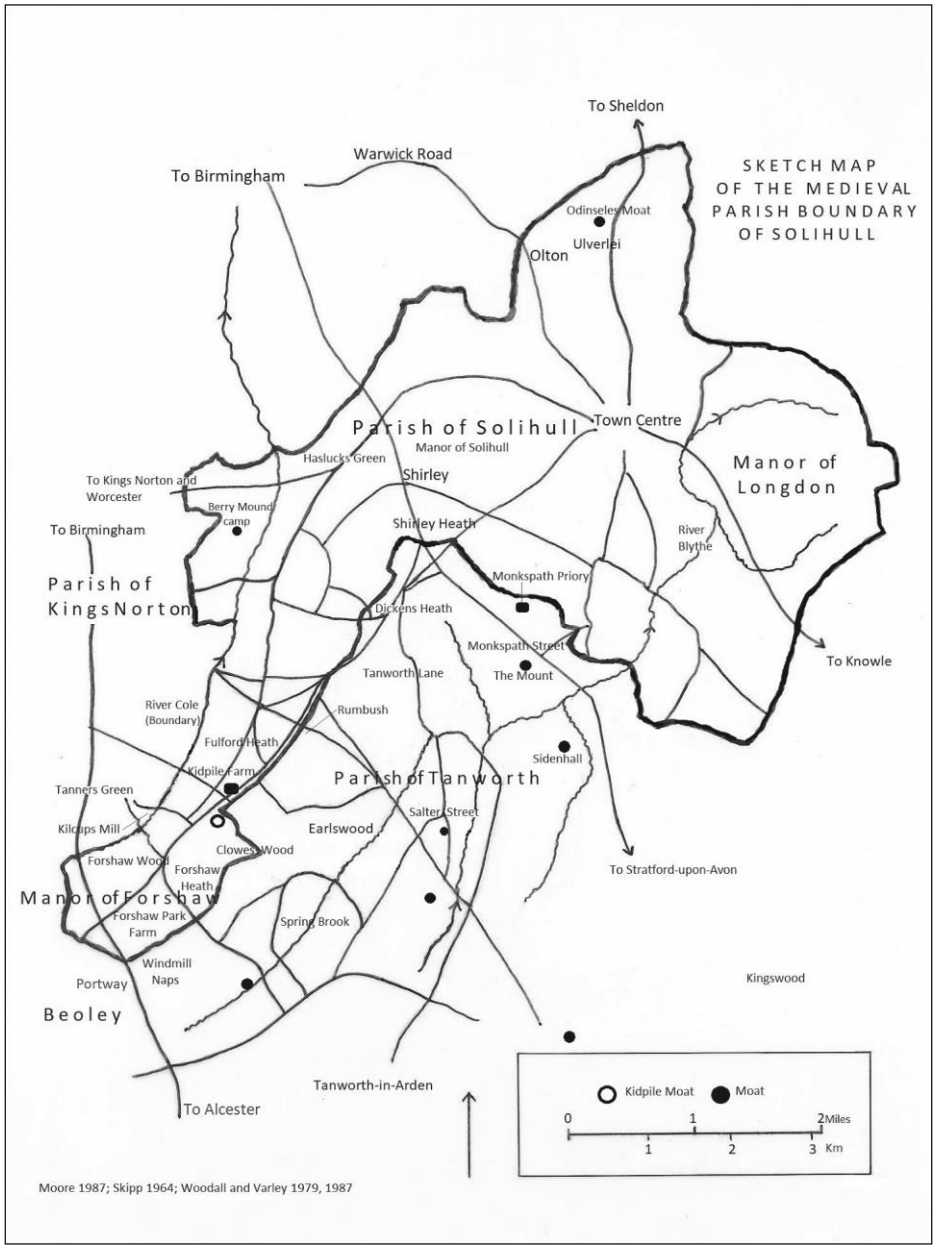



*Fig 3 Sketch map of the medieval parish boundary of Solihull*

south-west of the platform fed into the moat. Two arms of the moat at Kidpile still contain a substantial amount of water. Currently, the water feeding into the moat appears to be from a natural spring in the same position, at the north-west, as shown on the 1883 map (see below). Natural seepage eastwards from the moat (and evaporation in warmer weather) would maintain a regular level, seemingly, and a deep drainage ditch, now dry, runs alongside the public footpath adjacent to the moat. The water inlet on the south-west corner is now in a slightly different position from that seen on the 1883 map (below). The inlet runs from the drainage ditch, nearer to the entrance of the footpath, over to the centre of the western arm, not apparent on inspection but is recorded on the current OS map for the locality (NHLE). This may be below the ground surface as a land drain.

As to the platform, it is of the raised class, material dug from the moat being used to raise it above the surrounding land to produce a drier site and for improved defence; excavation showed it was up to 1m above. The surface was saucer-shaped and thus poorly drained, dropping away north-eastwards, which raises the question as to whether it was ever finished. The platforms dimensions are 22x24m, relatively small compared to Sydenhams Moat (SP 144757), about 8km south of Solihull, which is 27x30m, which is itself one of the smallest of around 20 local sites.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

(Ref: *Victoria County History of Warwickshire*)

It is unlikely that the Kidpile site was the capital messuage of the sub-manor of Solihull, known as

Forshaw, but a farmstead or possibly barns within the sub-manor. In 1656 Dugdale described the site that he identified as the manor-house 'but there is no more memoriall of the Mannour-house, than a double old moate of a large extent, a coppice-wood now growing where the house stood' (Dugdale 1656, 693). Kidpile is a single moat and the HER record for it MSI3108 (Timetrail MWA 7557) states that our site is too small to be high status and therefore more likely to be the nearby Forshaw Park (Warwickshire HER MWA 4989), a double-moated site at SP 085736 and the only other moated site in the Manor of Forshaw.

Placing the site and Manor in an historical context we look at Domesday Book. 'Ulverleii' was held of the Crown by Cristina, sister of Edgar Atheling. Together with other lands held by Cristina, Ulverleii was passed to the de Limesi family who were Norman barons. In 1213 John de Limesi died and his possessions were divided between his two sisters, Basile and Eleanor; the former was the wife of Hugh de Odingseles (*VCH Warwickshire IV* 1947, 214-19).

The Odingseles had held the Manor of Ulverleii from the 12th century and according to Historic England most probably resided at Hobs Moat (NHLE 1014043) at SP 146825. Around 1242, Ulverleii Manor, by this time known as Solihull Manor, was in the possession of William de Odingseles. Ulverleii had become the 'Old town' (Olton) whilst Solihull developed into a successful market town under the control of the de Odingseles, '….in whose time was Solihull out of the ruines of Wulverle, grown to be a town of some note' (Dugdale 1656, 687); Forshaw was the southern part of the growing manor of Solihull. Around 1271 there is a reference to Nicholas being given Forshaw submanor of Solihull; this may suggest it was around this time when the Kidpile site was established. We may surmise, however, our site on the edge of the parish could already have been constructed before this date, being already within the sub-manor.

Of Forshaw manor, Dugdale (1656, 693) tells us: 'This being within the territories of Solihull and anciently a member thereof, was towards the later end of H.$_{3.}$or beginning of E.$_{1.}$ time, given by William de Odingseles unto Nicholas his younger son and his heirs' This date would be *c* 1272 when Edward 1 became King and William de Odingseles died *c* 1271. The term 'given' suggests it was just prior to William's death rather than as an inheritance, thus ensuring that the manor of Solihull would be held by his eldest son — also William — and Forshaw sub-manor by Nicholas. A sentence refers to the 'grant' and a description of the adjoining lands; Nicholas was also granted a CourtLeet for Forshaw at the same time.

By 1309 a later William de Odingseles, a descendant of Nicholas, was Lord of the sub-manor of Forshaw (*VCH Warwickshire IV* 1947, 214–19). A grant of 3rd May 1310 is as follows, this grant of land may have included Kidpile moat.

> (Warw.) B. 3642. Grant by William de Oddinsele, Lord of Fossawe, to Robert de Folewood of Toneworth, of land and wood called 'le clos' of Fossawe, reaching from the grantor's field called 'le Closfeld' to the Earl of Warwick's wood. Witnesses; – Sir Roger de Heywode, steward of Solehul, and others (named: Sunday the feast of the Invention of Holy Cross, 3 Edward 11 (Lyte 1894, 421–31).

We cannot be certain whether the grant of land and wood called 'Le Clos of Fossawe' would also have included the moated site. The 'Foshawe Close' marked on a Roberts map of the adjoining Tanworth parish in *c* 1350 is very likely to be 'Le Closfeld' (Roberts 1968, 111, fig IV). On this map the woodland is seen spread ing to the moated site of Kidpile. If only the land and woodland adjacent to the moated site was granted to de Folewood of Toneworth in 1310, the site would have been left in isolation. We are speculating here, but it is probable that the moated farmstead or barns would have been included in the grant; however, the site being strategically constructed on the edge of the parish boundary may have been retained by the de Odingseles.

Dugdale tells us of a descendant of Nicholas who was 'another, Nicholas, Lord thereof in 10 R.$_{2.}$ who bore for his Armes the ancient coat of Odingsells of Solihull' (Dugdale 1656, 693). So, *c* 1387 some family had survived the Black Death of the mid-14th century; Margaret, daughter of Nicholas, inherited the sub-manor of Forshaw, on or around this date.

## THE SITE NAME

We may speculate that the name 'Kidpile' may derive from the family and personal name Katherine Pile (nee Clowes) whose 'pet-name' may have been 'Kit-pile'. There is an entry for a Katherine Clowes in Solihull parish registers for a burial in 1602 (Woodall & Varley

1979, 6; Ancestry, source). This lady may have been Katherine Pile's mother.

The lady's place of abode was Lea Greene on the edge of King's Norton parish, adjacent to Grimes Hill. The marriage records for her daughter include this name in her personal title Katherine Grimes Clowes (*c*1604) marrying Richard Pile of Hampshire, in London *c*1625. This helps us place the correct family and locations (London Metropolitan Archives BMB 1538–1812).

Clowes Wood was mentioned in a survey of Forshaw Manor in 1641 (Woodall & Varley 1979, 6). It is reasonable to suggest that Clowes Wood, now only around 130m from our moated site (and historically adjacent to the Earls Wood) was named after this prominent family and held by them. The current Kidpile Farm in Rumbush Lane and the moated site may have been owned by the Clowes family and later Katherine Pile.

## OBSERVATIONS FROM THE 1883 MAP

(Fig 4)

This is the earliest detailed depiction of the site and provides information about the moat itself and its context beyond the area of excavation.

The moat seems to contain water throughout, not just the two arms, at present. The entrance is remarkably wide, around 6m — is this a cartographic error or has the south-west arm of the moat silted up? The interior seems treeless; it was possibly used for grazing, giving easier access, as it was in the 1950s and 60s and perhaps on and off in the past centuries. There seems to be two feeder streams: are these on the approximate line of original sources of water for the moat?

A pond is present at the edge of Clowes Wood, about 120m east, once larger than at present. This may have been used as a fishpond, as part of the medieval site, providing fish for the obligatory 'fish days' in Catholic England.

Interestingly, the site lies approximately 12m inside Solihull parish boundary, marked by a line of dots and dashes; the adjacent parish is Tanworth-in Arden. A


*Fig 4 Extract from the 1883 OS six-inch map Worcestershire XVII NW*

parish edge location is not an uncommon character of moated sites. The moated Blackgreves Farm (SP 066755) in the old King's Norton parish was similarly on the boundary with Alvechurch parish. Hodder observed in his study of settlements around Sutton

Chase that 'several sites, both moated and non-moated are on the edge of their parish' (Hodder1988, 265). astates that in this part of Warwickshire, moated sites can be found in remote areas of their parish (Roberts1962a, 36–7).

The form of the site now is different from the 1883 map owing to alterations made in 1973 described above. Soil was dumped initially in at least three mounds: one, 2m high, on the platform entrance, others on and around the causeway, which until then had given access to cattle. It is also possible that some was deposited on the platform itself, which would explain the concreted clay we occasionally encountered. The remaining spoil, with pottery etc, was disposed of across the fields near Clowes Wood, much to the delight of local treasure-hunters and metal detectorists. The east and south-west arms of the moat remain intact.

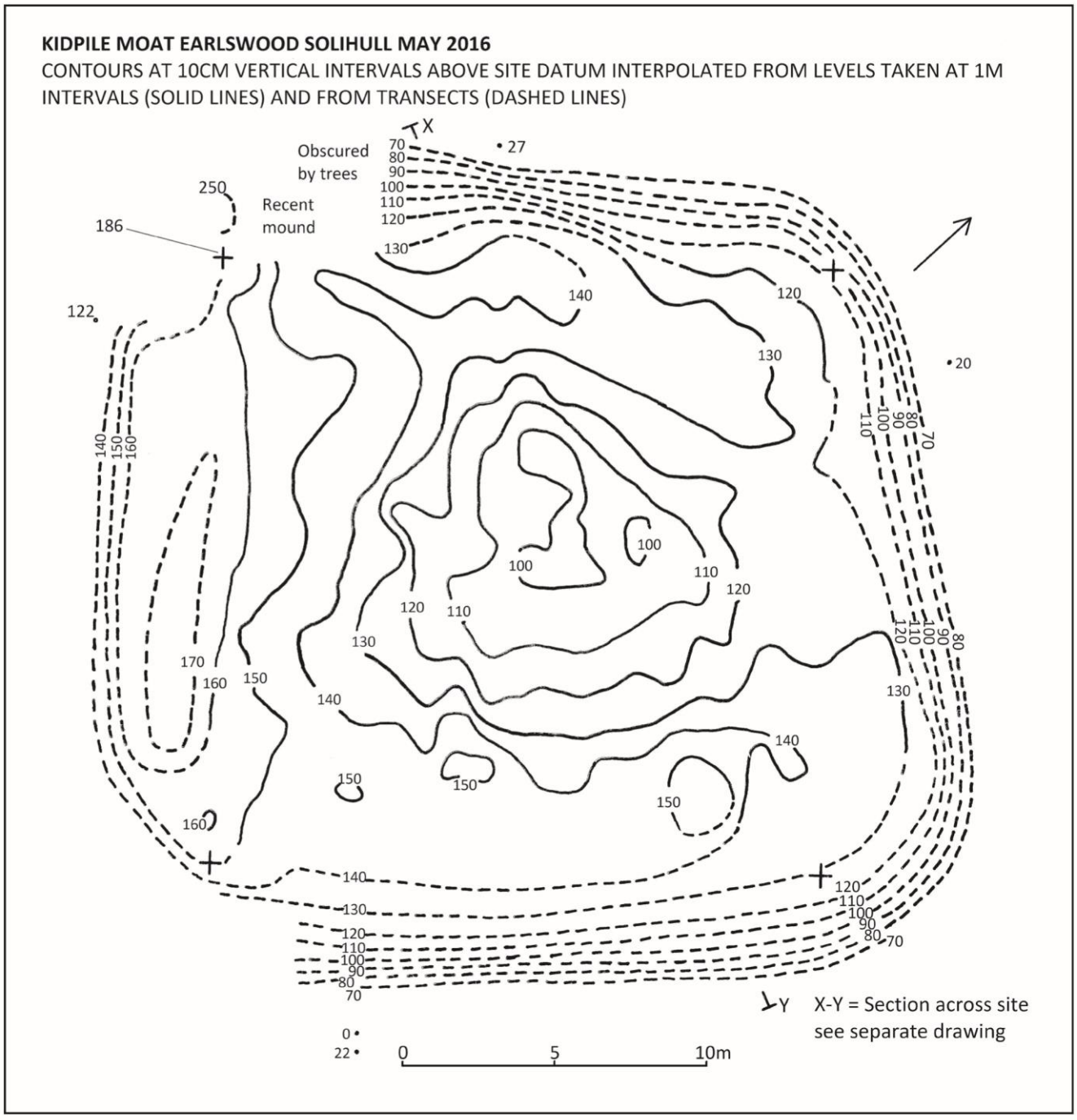



*Fig 5 Contour plan*

## SURVEYS AND METHOD OF EXCAVATION

A contour survey was carried out and clearly showed a dished profile (Fig 5).

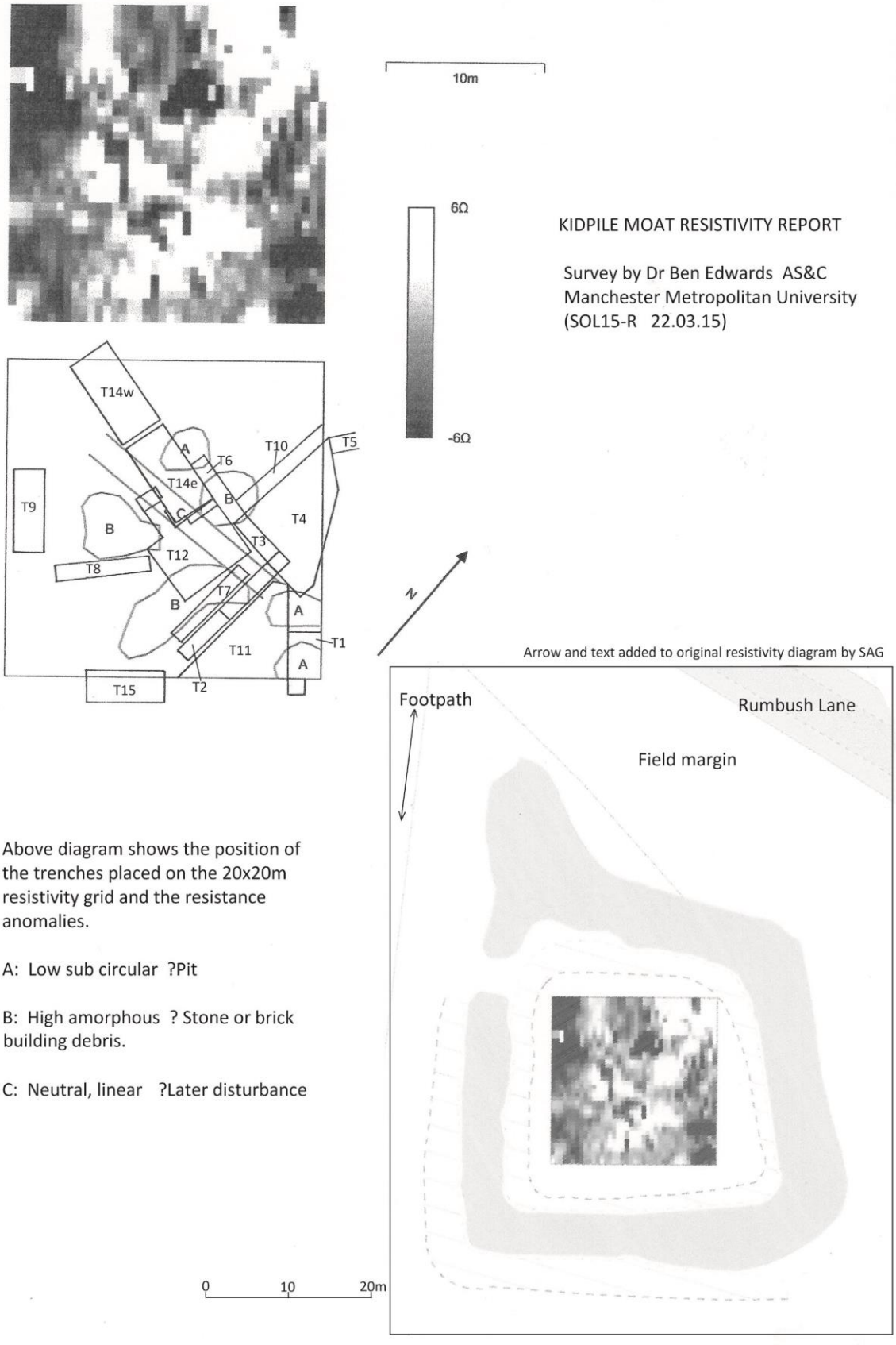



*Fig 6 Resistivity and interpretation*

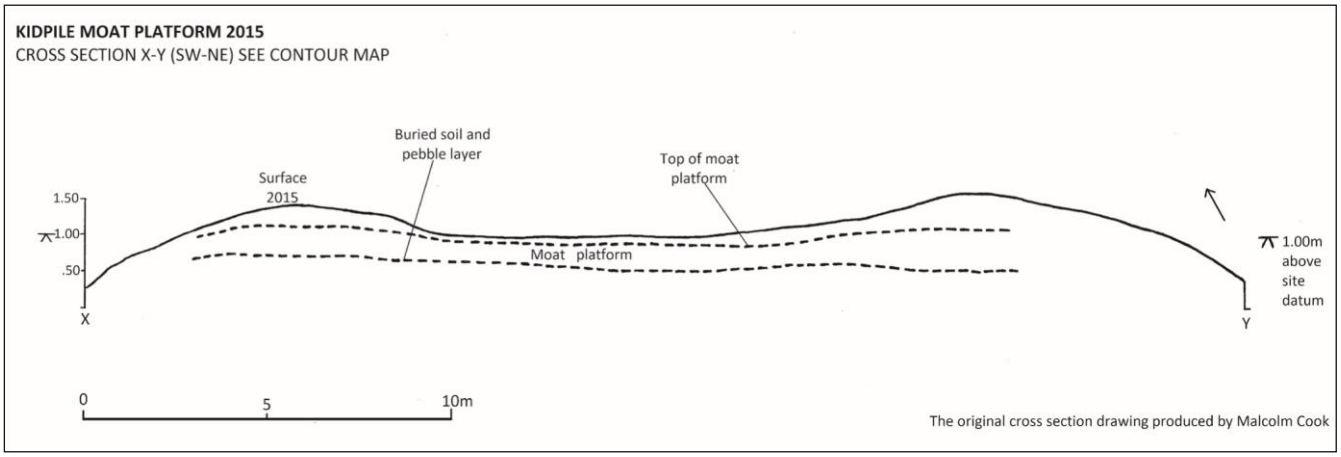



*Fig 7 Moat platform cross-section*

A Resistivity survey undertaken by Dr Ben Edwards (Fig 6) produced the following results.

A: A series of sub-circular low-resistance anomalies all approximately 3m in width, average response 10Ω

These anomalies may represent large pits on the site, potentially associated with storage or the foundation of buildings.

B: A series of amorphous high resistance anomalies, varying in size and width, in the range 6–15Ω.

These anomalies probably represent areas of building rubble or other stony material. It should be noted that these high resistance areas correspond with a series of small but visible sub-rectangular features, some 0.2m in height.

C: A linear band of average resistance (*c* 5Ω), notable because of its alignment regularity and the fact that it cuts through the centre of the site, which is otherwise marked by variations in earth-resistance readings.

The identification of this 'anomaly' is unknown, but it could represent a later modification to the centre of the site, as it appears to cut through anomalies A and B.

All trenches were hand-dug and excavated down to the top of the moat platform only, except in areas 12, 14, and 15 where the moat platform was wholly or partly removed to expose the pre-platform surface. The western area of the platform was avoided, containing a clear trench-line and other obvious disturbances left by a previous unpublished sampling excavation by others.

Another factor was the oak trees, which though of no great age — post 1970? — were present west of Trench 10, north of Trench 6 and also between Trenches 7 and 8. These were avoided following the experience in Trench 1 of large, horizontal, shallow roots from a mature ash tree on the platform edge. Initial excavation consisted of trenches targeted on geophysical anomalies accompanied by sondages.

A typical soil profile below the surface was dark friable humus-rich topsoil below which was a pebble layer 'medieval' surface and below that dense heavy clay moat-spoil platform. Subsequent sondages revealed a pre-moat surface below the moat platform overlying a pebble cobbled deposit (Fig 7).

On the digs in 2015 and 2016 all trenches had been dug to a depth of 25–30cm, down to the top of the moat spoil, at which depth medieval pottery had been found, accompanied by many more 'Victorian' sherds, etc. Thus digging deeper into the dense moat-spoil might have seemed illogical, but in 2015, however, Sondage 2, looking for a possible 'pathway' indicated by resistivity, had found medieval pottery on a deeper cobbled surface below the spoil. So it was decided to dig down to find the 'natural' pre-platform surface, hinted at by three sondages.

In 2015, a sondage in Trench 3 (S1) was dug and in Trench 12, S2 was opened looking for a possible 'pathway' indicated by resistivity. This found medieval pottery on a deeper cobbled surface, dug at 10m towards the entrance. At 30cm down was found a cobbled surface and five sherds of medieval pottery (analysis found this to be buff-whiteware hard fired, mid-13th–14th century). Sondage 3 was located at the south end of Trench 9 and Sondage 4 was excavated in T11; see 'Description by Phase — Phase 1'.

## PHASING SUMMARY (Pls III and IV) Phase 1

(Fig 9)

Undated features sealed by the moat platform include a buried soil overlying a natural pebble layer (partly gleyed), a gulley, a ditch and a shallow pit.

Worked flints (awls and blades) and a Neolithic arrowhead were found in the upcast from the moat. Some sherds of Roman pottery were discovered in the buried soil and construction of the moat platform.

Rátkai states in her pottery analysis (see pottery report below), 'The likelihood is that occupation on the site began in the 13th century'. The medieval pottery sealed by the moat platform was largely abraded, some of which was 12th century, a few 12th–13th century, but mostly early 13th–14th century.

### Phase 2 (Fig 10)

This Phase is the moat construction and use. Material dug from the moat created the moat platform up to 50cm thick, composed of clay and pebbles.

The construction and use is shown by poorly defined features. There were pebble surfaces, a possible beam slot and numerous postholes and stake holes of varying sizes, with some in lines and clusters. Some clusters of stake holes would have formed quite firm fencing as they were in a triple formation — one behind a pair. There were many medieval roof-tile fragments but no obvious pattern of building.

During excavation over 100 sherds of 12th–16th century pottery were found with only a few pieces representing the post-medieval period.

### Phase 3 (Fig 11)

This is post-medieval, 19th century and recent history.

There is clear evidence of agriculture or market gardening in the form of cultivation ridges. Small stake holes in the upper levels are likely to represent plant or vegetable supports or small fences.

A Victorian ceramic field drain cut across midplatform, SW–NE, bringing medieval pot sherds to the surface and cutting a Phase 2 pit. An unidentified lozenge-shaped feature was found; this continued into Trench 14. A large sub-rectangular clay pad was discovered which may have belonged to the foundation of a small building.

It is quite likely that the numerous small sherds of pottery from the 19th century may have been contained within night soil, brought in from urban areas to be used as fertilizer. Early 20th-century pottery was represented, but in small amounts.

Prior to our investigations, dredging and deposition at the west end of the moat altered the modern entrance to the site.

The platform has been used for farming, cattle pasture, camping and as a meeting place for many years; all these activities might well have resulted in intrusive pottery such as a Mottled Ware sherd being found in Phase 1.

## DESCRIPTION BY PHASE Phase 1

(BURIED SOIL) LOWER PEBBLES. GLEY AND SILTY SOIL ABOVE. MOAT CONSTRUCTION AND PRE-MOAT PLATFORM

In 2015 trenches had been dug down to *c* 30cm to a layer of pebbles, which sealed the new clay of the moat upcast and found above it the medieval occupation layer. In 2016, digging down twice this depth to the natural fluvo-glacial pebbles, medieval pottery was found throughout the horizon. There were some slight signs of possible pre-moat activity but clearer evidence of this was found in 2017.

In Trench 3 a Sondage was dug (S1) down to 50cm, finding two distinctive soil horizons, below which was a clearly different deposit, which was thought to be the original land surface.

Sondage 3 at the south end of Trench 9 found similar horizons to S1 in Trench 3, including the distinctively different horizon at the bottom.

In Trench 11 Sondage 4 was dug through the tile/pebble layer and into the heavy yellow-orange moat spoil to a smear of dark grey silt onto a dense pebble/cobble base. A similar profile was found in S1 in Trench 3 (2015) though here deeper at 70cm compared to 50cm, being on the higher edge of the platform.

The area of Trench 12 measured 4m east–west, by 5m north–south, and was excavated down to 50–70cm. It is the lowest part of the saucer-shaped platform, noticeably prone to flooding. The dark surface soil

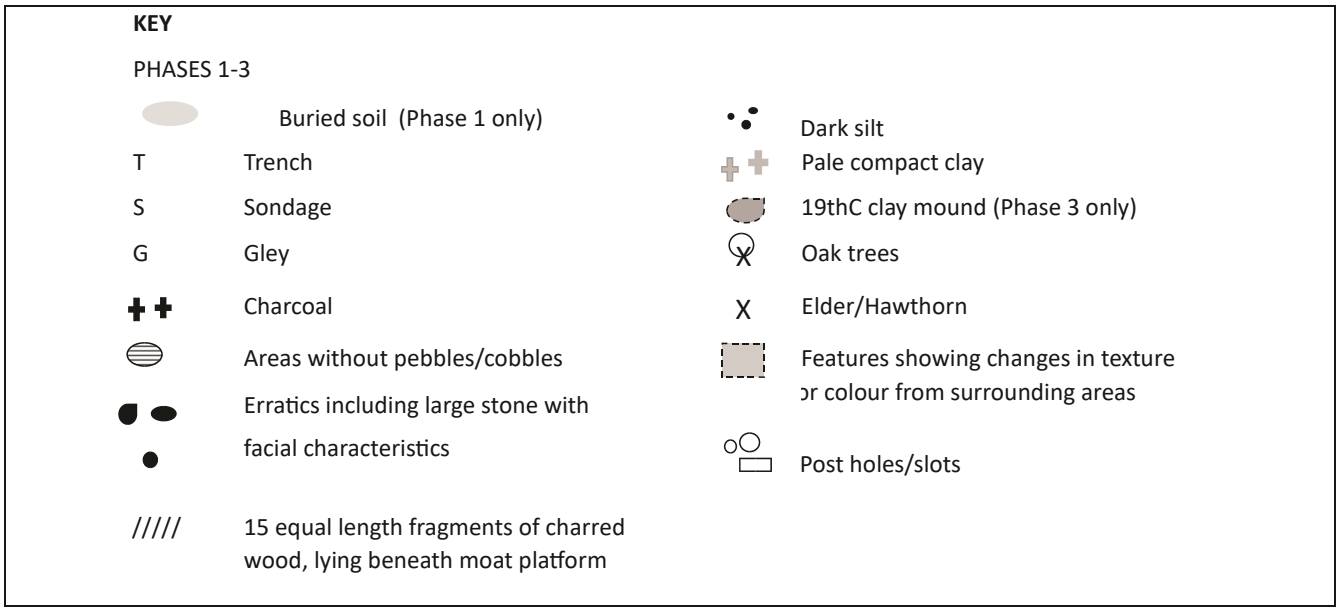



*Fig 8 Key to phase plans*

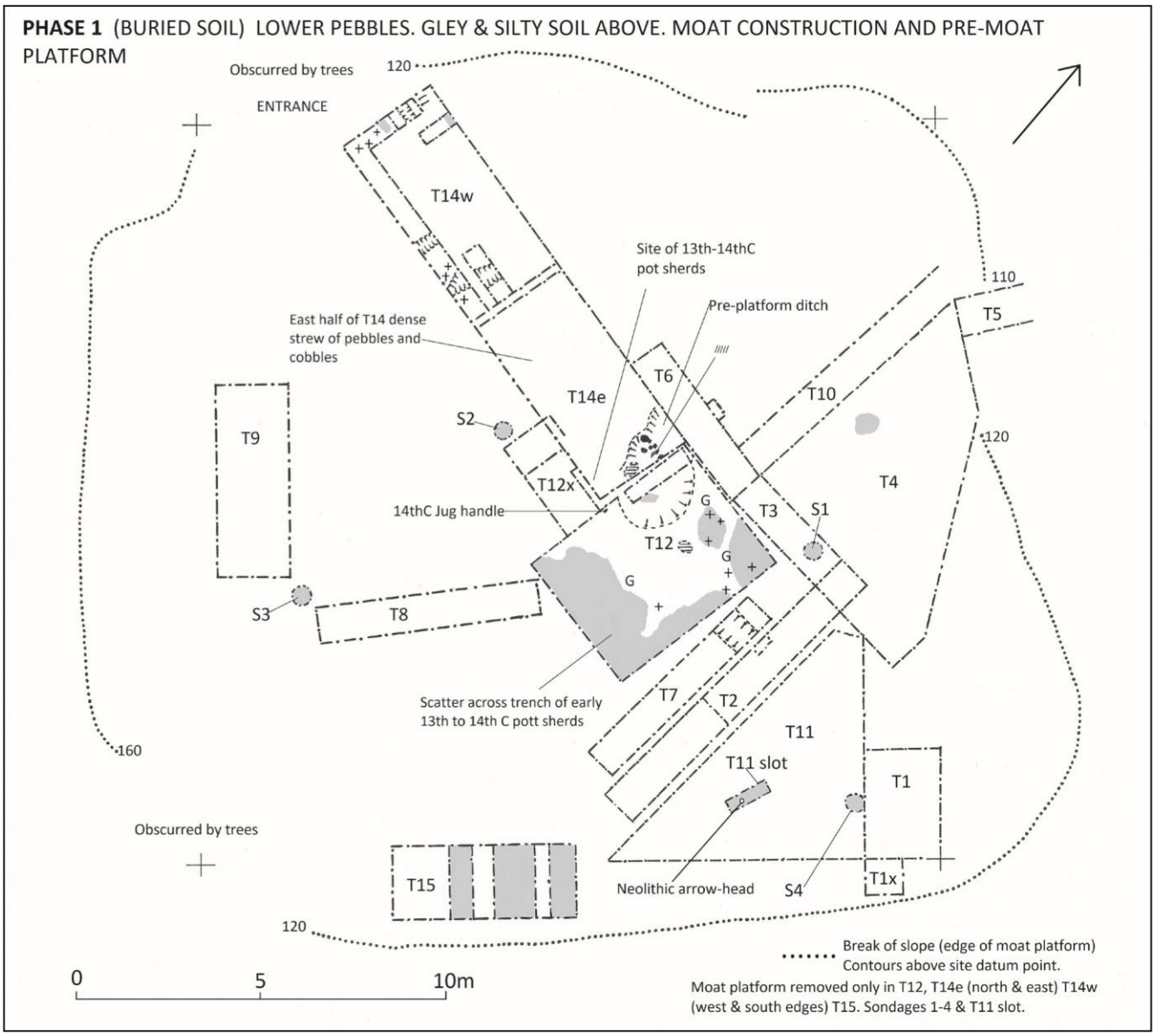



*Fig 9 Phase 1: Features sealed by moat platform*

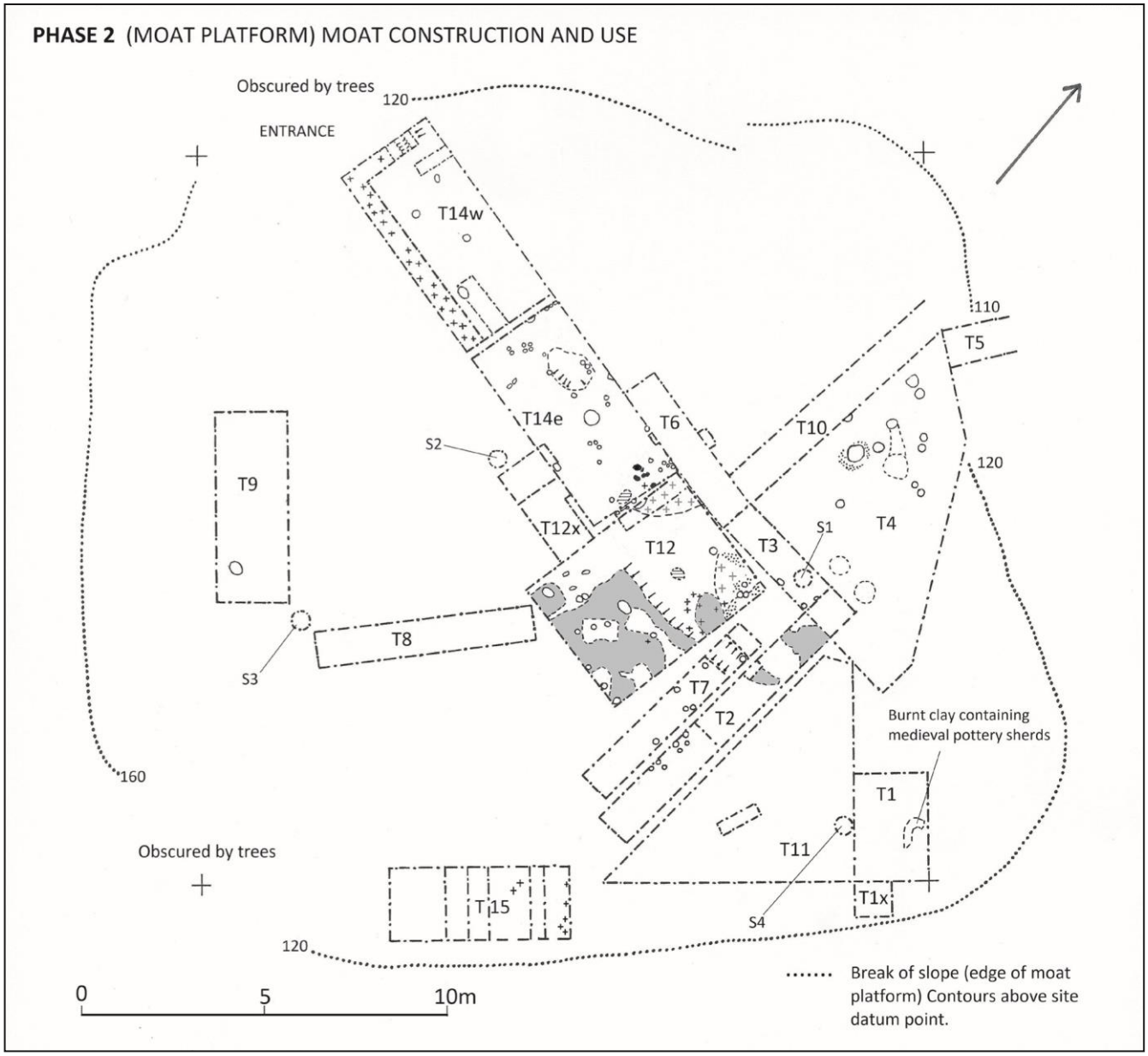



*Fig 10 Phase 2: Moat construction and use*

was thicker in places than usual, accumulating from the higher southern slope. It overlay the dense, heavy, moat-spoil platform below which was the layer of smooth grey silt. The profile below this was gleyed smooth grey silty clay, lying above a thin smear of blue-grey organic silt, possibly a buried soil (Pl IV). Finally was an irregular pebble/cobble surface — preplatform fluvo-glacial natural. The pebble surface varied greatly in both the size of the pebbles and their distribution, mostly concentrated in the centre and the south, sparser in the east and west. It seems a random natural pattern of deposition, except for a short east–west line of roughly placed cobbles, beside which was a small, shallow circular feature and two small slots, presumably dug before the platform was built up, though with no obvious purpose. These features, together with fragments of early pottery Mudstone-tempered ware 12th–13th century, Reduced Deritend ware 1200–1325 century and Worcester – type 12th–13th century, suggest some kind of activity and occupation before the moat was dug and the platform raised.

The trench 12 pottery was mostly small fragments, very degraded. A possibility for the concentration and depth of pottery sherds is that there was a midden site nearby the presumed habitation.

A good quality jug handle (Chilvers Coton A/C, dated

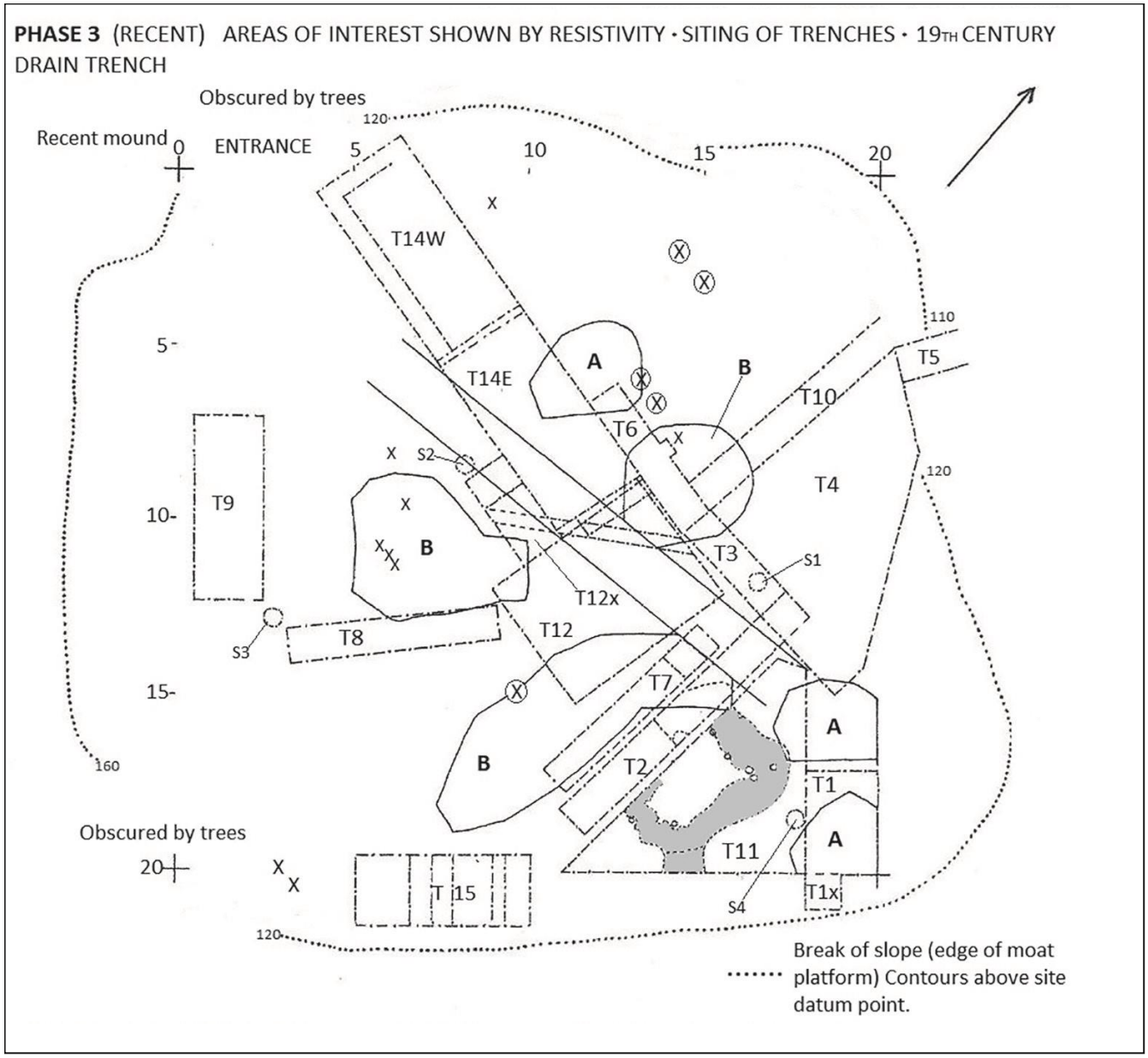



*Fig 11 Phase 3: Resistivity anomalies and post-medieval features*

to the 14th century, see Rátkai below) was found on a cluster of pebbles on the edge of the western-extension trench of T12. It was not clear within the area excavated whether the pebble cluster pre-dated the moat platform or was on the surface of the platform, this would then be Phase 2. The jug handle was originally thought to be a Phase 1 find but considering the layering of consolidating pebbles on the platform, during the medieval period, a more secure phasing for this sherd is Phase 2. Trench 12 was the wettest area of the site and would have required some maintenance over the periods of occupation. The find site was also within 40cm of the Victorian drain trench; this caused considerable mixing of contexts and therefore makes interpretation more challenging.

Continuing from a very narrow baulk from Trench 12 (2016), Trench 14 was the largest area attempted, running westwards from the lowest point of the platform and rising gently towards the now-obscured entrance. The western part of the trench was dug down to about 25cm, having encountered a concreted clay surface, so a narrow trench was excavated to the natural along the western and southern sides only. In the north-west corner was a feature, possibly cut through the pebble layer, with a sandy and loose pebbly fill, with two larger pebbles, purpose unclear, possibly natural, as perhaps was a narrow, shallow

'ditch' exposed for a metre, which could have been fluvial in origin, or pre-moat running northwards.
A group of features which were difficult to define were found in the north-east corner of T14 extending into the corner of T12; these included a ditch or pit with a line of stake holes to the south. These were undated but overlain by a group of stones, one an erratic of unusual appearance, having facial characteristics. This large stone was accompanied by another, beneath which was found a tile fragment. A sherd of pottery, adjacent to this, was dated to mid-13th to 14th century, placing the deposition of the stones in Phase 2. A small cluster of wood fragments, all of similar size, was found in a Phase 1 context, to the south of the group of stones, tile and pot sherd.

Trench 15 was cut 5mx2m down to 70cm, in three slots. The soil profile mirrored that in T12, but the buried soil was much more obvious, as a largely continuous thin, black, clayey layer. Was this partly to do with charcoal, as might be expected with forest clearance? Finds of tile or pottery were very few, but on the natural pebble layer was a possible Neolithic flint or chert scraper (context 69) and taken with the 2016 Neolithic arrowhead, context 2 (found in the moat up-cast of the T11 slot) this implies the presence here of a hunting party, or even temporary occupation, as does a small chert or flint borer (Trench 14) for making holes in hide.

Context 78 in Trench 15 was a buried soil surface, containing charcoal and patches and lenses of red clay, two CBM fragments came from one lens.

## PHASE 2

### MOAT PLATFORM — CONSTRUCTION AND USE

The spoil from the excavation of the moat was dumped on the interior to form the platform up to 50cm thick; the platform consisted predominantly of clay and glacial pebbles (Pls IV and V).

In Trench 1 the litter-humus loamy layer was surprisingly thin, 3–4cm only; below was the top of the moat platform which was a compact surface of orangebrown clay, with loose irregularly spaced pebbles, especially at the north-east end among which were fragments of tile, two sherds of medieval pottery and a scatter of charcoal, as well as the ubiquitous Victorian pottery and pipe-stems.

Cut into the moat platform were the following features which were undated. Halfway along was a very shallow, 1–2cm circular depression *c* 12cm across, a probable but inconclusive posthole, while at about 1.5m along was a confused sub-rectangular, L-shaped feature of re-deposited red clay, (natural), with no obvious function, neither hearth nor furnace. The possible resistivity features were not present.

To test the presence of the pathway, (identified in the Geophysical survey and which was not found to reach Trench 2), a 1m x 1m sondage (S2) was dug at 10m towards the entrance and found, 30cm down, a cobbled path and five sherds of medieval pottery, one on top of the path, which is aligned east–west. These sherds came from a buff-whiteware jug, dated mid-13th to 14th century (see Stephanie Rátkai's report)

Unlike T1, which was a flat surface, T2 rose slowly southwards, loose dark loam overlying the more compact orange-brown moat platform and loosely pebbled occupation layer by about 20cm. Then, at about 4m, an irregular dome of dense, concreted clay with random larger pebbles, 1–12cm long, rose over the lower horizon by about 35cm before subsiding. This dome was removed to reveal the occupation surface as before and suggests possible later dumping, in the 1970s. The trench was extended to the platform edge and, as a whole, produced the most finds. The eleven pottery sherds were the most varied in type and greatest in number, occurring throughout the trench, while in the southern half was the largest concentration of roof-tile fragments, the largest 7x9cm, included a nib and finger and thumb-prints made when the clay was still soft. The diagonal pathway from the entrance did not reach this trench.

Area 4 included Trench 3 and Trench 10. Although this was a much larger area than Trench 2, it produced less medieval pottery. The top horizon was the usual dark friable loam with many bramble roots, down to *c* 25cm to a yellow-brown, more compact horizon. The distribution of pebbles and their size varied, with more and larger in the northern and southern thirds, (5–9cm), smaller and sparser in the centre and southwest. Apart from a small rabbit warren, tile fragments and Victoriana were found and the odd piece of possible slag, as elsewhere in the dig, but nowhere concentrated to suggest a metal-working site. There were however other signs of activity in the form of postholes and beam-slots.

Trench 7, like Trench 2, rises southwards towards the platform edge, the surface depth starting at 30cm, reducing to 20cm, with a random scatter of larger pebbles. There is a clear break of slope, starting 1m in, continuing westwards to Trench 8. It is here emphasized by a shallow gully, tapering to finish in Trench 2. This was thought to be a timber foundation slot, but it tapers and has a semi-circular section, rather than square, and contains dark soil rather than clay. It could possibly be part of a drainage channel. The trench contained several medium-sized roof tiles, though fewer than in Trench 2, the possible implication being that a roofed structure — with a clay floor? — may have been present around this part of the site, with a gully lower down the slope for drainage.

In Trench 8 there was a clear break of slope at 2m, a scatter of pebbles and a few finds except at the northern end, where there was a broken piece of whetstone.

Trench 9, the nearest trench to the entrance and on the edge of the platform where it is distinctly higher than the centre. It measured 2x6m and went down to 25cm to the usual compact yellow/orange clay, with a scatter of pebbles in no clear pattern.

In Trench 6, the surface of the moat platform was about 20–30cm down, with a loose scatter of pebbles along the yellow-brown clay and confirmed by one piece of pottery, with a thumbed strip and carbonized deposit. Following Stephanie Rátkai's analysis, this sherd was found to be from a Worcester Type cooking pot of 12th–13th century date. Towards the western end of Trench 6 the ground was higher and seemed disturbed, possibly by the previous dig. The clay here was very heavily compacted and progress was halted, both westwards and northwards. On the medieval layer at the west end was an area of randomly distributed cobbles, similar in size to those on the pathway but in no clear pattern, while in the end baulk, above the occupation layer, was a similar scatter: was this again disturbance caused by later dumping, or from the previous dig?

Trench 11 was a triangular area on the southern edge of the platform, 5x5x7m, connecting trenches 1 and 2 from 2015, the latter having produced the most finds for its size. The depth through the top-soil to the 'medieval layer' i.e. the top of the moat platform, as last year, was 20–30cm, defined by a layer of pebbles laid down to seal the glutinous clay of the moat spoil. In the centre, however at a shallower depth, was a dome of clay spoil, post-medieval and thought to be Phase 3. The post-medieval dome was removed to reveal a dense strew of pebbles, up to 8cm long, upon which was a heavy concentration of medieval roof-tile fragments, numbering over 130 cf about 80 last season from all the trenches combined. There was a probable red sandstone post-pad, *c* 20x9x5cm, and thirteen nails. (Reusable materials, including timber, would probably have been removed at some stage.)

Digging deeper in part of the trench found the pebbles more aligned, suggesting a possible pathway — to a dwelling? No 'personal' finds were present, apart from pottery and a whetstone. Wooden items would have decayed, and probably the only metal items, e.g. knives and belt buckles, would have left the site with the people, assuming that they lived here. The site had been subjected to metal detectorist activity for very many years, as were the surrounding fields.

At the east end of T14 a group of stones placed over the fill of a ditch, which was a probable Phase 1 feature was found to be Phase 2.

## Phase 3

(RECENT) TOP SOIL AND 19TH-CENTURY DRAIN TRENCH

Trench 2 rose slowly southwards and, at about 4m from the north end, there was an irregular dome of dense, concreted clay with random larger pebbles, 1–12cm long. This dome rose over the lower horizon by about 35cm before subsiding. When removed it revealed the occupation surface (Phase 2) as before and suggests later dumping — in the 1970s? This was related to the Trench 11 dome.

In the centre of Trench 11, at a shallower depth than the 20–30cm medieval layer (Phase 2), was a dome of clay spoil, with a sub-rectangular depression cut into it; its sides were *c* 2.5–3m long (Pl VI). There were small irregular postholes along its sides, on the inner and outer edges, 4–5cm wide, and it was level at the base. It contained no finds and had no obvious function — not strong enough for animals, a possibility for poultry? Poultry would have provided a useful fertilizer for market gardening activities on site. The mound may have previously been the base for a small garden shed/summer house, as for example the structures (mostly of which are 19th century) at Hill

Close Gardens Trust, Warwick (Hodgetts 2017). Four of these structures are Grade II listed, for example the Pavilion at NGR 42780 26480. The gardens are now designated as a site of Special Historic Interest, Grade II* listed. The mound showed clear mattock marks and when removed it revealed a dense strew of pebbles (Phase 2), up to 8cm long upon which was a heavy concentration of medieval roof-tile fragments.


*Plate III* *Kidpile Moat: a south-east-facing section of Trench 15 showing general site stratigraphy and phasing, consisting of a thin buried soil at base of section overlain by moat upcast forming platform, with cultivated soil on top*

*Plate IV* *Kidpile Moat: the south-east corner of Trench 12, showing gleyed buried soil overlain by moat upcast forming platform, with cultivated soil on top*

*Plate V  K idpile Moat: Trench 15 looking north-east, showing section through moat platform with unexcavated platform beyond, and the south and north-east arms of moat*

*Plate VI  Kidpile Moat: Trench 11 looking south, showing clay base of a phase 3 timber structure*

Trench 14, the largest to be investigated, measured 3mx12m and was divided by a baulk at 5m westward. In this baulk could be seen three furrows of dark soil cut from the surface into the moat upcast. Two furrows were 'V' shaped, one roughly rectangular, confirming agricultural activity by plough or hand, either medieval or Victorian, or both.

A Victorian drain was found in 2016 which cut diagonally through the medieval layer, across Trench 12. This activity may help to explain the downward spread and mixing of pottery in this trench, if similarly ploughed to Trench 14. Furthermore, in the north-west baulk of Trench 12 could be seen spade cuts of an asymmetric profile, at regular intervals, north to south; these were cut from a Phase 3 level but deep enough to enter the moat platform.

In the north-west corner of the eastern part of Trench 14, was a sub-rectangular area with a possible trenchshape beyond it, both with darker soil and dug slightly into the natural. These were possibly a test pit and short trench left from the 1973 sample dig, the latter parallel to the 2015 Trench 6. In the centre of the eastern half was an undated 50cm-wide circular pit, dug into the moat platform and tapering down to 30cm, containing no pottery, charcoal or packing stones. It seemed too small for a storage pit, but could have been a posthole.

Across the site were found large quantities of Victorian pottery and slate, glass and clay pipes. Night soil, from middens, may have been brought in (containing any of these) as fertilizer to enrich the soil.

At about half way along Trench 6 were two features, the first clearly a fireplace with lots of charcoal, continuing under the young oak tree, which had obviously grown since. It was a regular rectangular shape — spade cut? — but no more than 1–2cm into the medieval surface. It was too shallow to be medieval in origin and this was confirmed by some of the contents, which appeared to be small burnt fragments of 'modern' material, possibly asbestos. The second feature, about 1m from the fireplace, was a fused jumble of corroded metal with circular parts to it, dug into the medieval surface.

At the south eastern end of Trench 9 was a large posthole *c* 40cm across and 12cm deep, but containing a fragment of Victorian glass in the silty, stony fill. It was thus felt not to be medieval in origin, although there was medieval pottery in the trench. A circular cluster of stake holes at the east end of Trench 3, gave the appearance of the remains of a plant support and has been attributed to Phase .3

## THE FINDS Prehistoric to Roman

The finds indicate thousands of years of activity **a**nd occupation on the site and in the locality.

A Neolithic leaf-shaped arrowhead was found on the platform, derived from the deeper levels of the upcast from the moat. The arrowhead was dated to 4000–2150BC (PAS ID: WMID – 83AE73). Worked flints, including blades of Mesolithic type, were found across the platform, reinforcing the idea that the site may have been the scene of hunting parties or temporary settlements. The area was ideally located between the River Cole valley and streams to the west, south and to the east in lower-lying land. The River Blythe runs north to south a few kilometres to the east.

Excavations by Worcester Archaeology at Lowbrook Farm, Tidbury Green (SP 0976), 1.35km to the north, found evidence of a 'prehistoric cooking pit and associated post-holes … dated to the late Neolithic/ early Bronze Age'. Late Bronze Age to late Iron Age features were also excavated and there were small quantities of Roman pottery found (Mann 2018). Within New Fallings Coppice at SP 1074 there is a Bronze Age burnt mound (Timetrail MWA 6353).

At Kidpile, two sherds of Severn Valley ware were discovered on site, in pre-platform levels (Phase 1); one of the sherds was from a tankard handle. Three other fragments, probably Roman, were also found in pre-platform levels. Two sherds of Roman greyware were found during field walking a small area to the east and north of the moat.

The most equivocal find on site (its position attributed to Phase 2) was a large 6kg erratic with almost human facial characteristics (L23cm x W18cm x D12cm). The stone was placed 'facing' south-east above what was an undated but pre-platform ditch; it was adjacent to other smaller erratics and is likely they were all part of the platform construction. Undated postholes and a further curved feature were found southwards and eastwards of this earlier ditch. A jug/jar fragment of buff-whiteware pottery (mid-13th–14th century) was

found between the stones. There was a tile shard and charcoal fragments beneath one of the smaller stones, adjacent to the large erratic, and a further tile fragment 40cm east. A cluster of charred wood fragments were discovered to the east of the stone formation, again in platform construction levels. The erratic's unusual similarity to a head, although natural, may have been the reason for its use at this point, to 'end, seal or close down' an historically older ditch which was going to lay beneath their new moated farmhouse. To the 13th-century rural labourers, was its purpose apotropaic?

## THE POTTERY

*By Stephanie Rátkai*

### Introduction and methodology

The excavated pottery was examined season by season (2015–17). Limited resources were available for this work but the condition of the pottery and the nature of the site, where no closed groups were found, meant that detailed work on the pottery was not necessary. Accordingly, the pottery was divided into fabrics, after examination under x20 magnification, and unless recognized without recourse to a published type series, assigned a generic name. The pottery was quantified by sherd count and weight and rim count. These data along with context details, date, vessel form and general comments were also recorded. All the data were entered onto Excel data sheets and form part of the site's digital archive. This brief report has been created from notes never intended for publication, some four or five years after the pottery was examined.

### The pottery (Table 1)

Several fabrics were identified. The earliest were Roman, consisting of Severn Valley ware, including a tankard handle, and one sherd of greyware, probably a jar. Both types were in use for most of the Roman occupation and, with small sherds such as these, close dating is not possible.

Some medieval fabrics could definitely be ascribed to source. These included Reduced Deritend ware and Deritend cooking pot from Birmingham (Rátkai 2009) and Worcester-type cooking pot ware (Hurst & Rees 1992) for which no kiln sites have been identified, although there are likely to be several. Other identifiable fabrics were Chilvers Coton A/C (a transitional type between the A and C fabrics) and C (Mayes & Scott 1984). A single sherd could have been Coventry A ware (Redknap 1985).

**Table 1 Quantification of all the pottery discovered during excavation**

| Fabric/Ware | count | weight |
|---|---|---|
| Roman grey ware | 2 | 6 |
| Seven Valley ware | 2 | 17 |
| Roman? | 3 | 12 |
| Coventry-type ware? | 1 | 9 |
| Reduced Deritend ware | 7 | 63 |
| Deritend cooking pot | 15 | 117 |
| Worcester-type cooking pot | 2 | 31 |
| Chilvers Coton A/C | 2 | 91 |
| Chilvers Coton C streaky | 4 | 34 |
| Mudstone-tempered ware | 2 | 16 |
| Cooking pot 1 (sandstone temper) | 2 | 13 |
| Cooking pot 2 | 17 | 159 |
| Cooking pot 3 | 1 | 8 |
| Cooking pot 4 | 2 | 9 |
| Buff-whiteware | 1 | 4 |
| Buff-whiteware (hard-fired) | 36 | 250 |
| Buff-whiteware I | 1 | 6 |
| Midlands Purple ware | 1 | 19 |
| Mottled ware | 1 | 4 |
| Modern? | 1 | 5 |
| Daub | 2 | 14 |
| Fired clay | 1 | 10 |
| Uncertain | 8 | 6 |
| **Total Result** | **114** | **903** |

Mudstone-tempered ware is again commonly found in central and northern Warwickshire and is likely to have been made in several places.

Cooking Pot 1 (sandstone-tempered) does not appear to have an exact parallel in other type series and is likely to be fairly local.

Cooking Pot 2 (brown, sandy, micaceous) may be Deritend cooking pot ware variant (but the sherds are in such poor condition that it is difficult to be certain. This fabric belongs to the Sq05 group in the Warwickshire County Pottery Type Series (Soden & Ratkai 1998) and is found in central and north-western Warwickshire.

Cooking Pot 3 was represented by a single black sherd of unknown source or date.

Cooking Pot 4 is possibly paralleled by Bullring fabric cpji2-14 (Rátkai 2009) which dates from the ?late 12th to mid-13th century.

A similar fabric is known from Redditch (pers inspection by the author).

A number of iron-poor wares were identified:

Hard-fired buff-whiteware, which may be the same as Birmingham Bullring fabric WW2 (Ratkai 2009). It is quite distinctive and is definitely not a product of the Chilvers Coton (Nuneaton) kilns, a major supplier of whiteware in the second half of the 13th century and early 14th century.

At least one of hard-fired buff-whiteware vessels was a 'Red-Painted Whiteware', a sub-group found mainly in south Staffordshire and less commonly in north-west Warwickshire. The sherd from Earlswood is on the very edge of the Red-Painted Whiteware distribution.

A second light-bodied fabric (buff-whiteware 1) is less hard fired and contains iron-stained pink/red quartz. Again this is not typical of Chilvers Coton products. Buff-whiteware 2 was not hard fired and contained grey quartz.

A Midlands Purple ware sherd was the only late medieval pottery (15th–16th century) and there was a single post-medieval sherd f rom a mottled ware drinking vessel (later 17th–18th century).

## Conclusion

The date range of the pottery is 12th–16th century but with most of the pottery dating to the 13th–14th century. The likelihood is that occupation on the site began in the 13th century.

Other than the hard-fired buff ware (and even these often had iron-staining within the fabric), the sherds were in very poor condition, with heavy abrasion and surface loss; Cooking Pot 2 fabric was particularly badly affected.

Pottery groups from this area of Warwickshire are few, so, despite the small size of the assemblage, it does help to expand our knowledge. Looking at the bigger picture, this small assemblage seems to fit with pottery from Solihull, Minworth Greaves, Coleshill and Birmingham. There seems to be little similarity with pottery from Bordesley Abbey apart from the presence of Reduced Deritend ware but the unpublished site of the Quadrant, Redditch (pers inspection by the author) does seem to have similarities with the pottery from Earlswood also, as would be expected given its proximity.

Thus the ceramics in use at Earlswood seem to be in keeping with the trend for north-west Warwickshire and north-east Worcestershire.

## OTHER FINDS Clay pipes

Clay pipe fragments were found in all areas in the upper layers (Phase 3); there were 33 part bowls and 183 stem fragments. Most bore diameters were around 2mm wide and we considered most fragments to be 19th century. No complete pipes or even complete bowls were found and only one had lettering on the heel.

Date suggestions are based on the development of bowl shapes and bore diameters. With regional variations, overlaps in evolving design forms, and incomplete bowls and stems, they can only be estimates.

Trench 9, on the south side of the platform, produced two interesting pipe fragments, of probably similar date, late 17th to the first half of the 18th century. One stem fragment had a tapered elongated flat heel and was thick near to where it would have joined the bowl. The stem bore measured 3mm, which often means an early date (Higgins 2017). The same trench gave us our smallest partial bowl, a short spur and the remains of a stem bore, which was again approximately 3mm width. There was sufficient bowl remaining to suggest a bowl cavity measurement of 9.5–10 mm diameter, which indicates a date post-1640. By the mid-18th century this had widened to 16mm; the part bowl sloped forward and had no maker's mark. From 1640 bowl sizes were small, originally bulbous; our example here was not bulbous, therefore later. There was not enough bowl rim to tell if it had been milled; in the 17th century some were milled but most were not, with milling less common after 1730 and generally bowls were plain (Higgins *ibid*). For a short while. pointed spurs and heeled pipes co-existed but spurs replaced heeled varieties. These styles continued for about 60 years. By 1700 the interior width of the bowl increased to 13mm but the bore diameter was still large at 2.4–3mm width (Cambridge Archaeology Field Group, 2012).

From T2 a more elongated upright bowl fragment was discovered, where the bowl swept into a long pointed spur and there was evidence of possible rim rouletting or just a simple lined edge. The edge was difficult to see with any clarity as it had been abraded in the soil; the bore diameter was almost 3mm. The top edge seemed to have been trimmed parallel to the stem so this would probably take the date from the mid-18th century (Hammond 2018). There was insufficient

bowl remaining to estimate a date but it is similar to an illustration (Davey 1979, 259, fig 3, 14e; 261, fig 4, 19h) with a date range of 1670–1720 or possibly slightly later in the case of 19h. Comparisons in Davey's text were made with pipes from Atherstone and Packington, or at least a Midland maker.

The only lettering found on any of the pipe fragments was on a smooth, plain, elongated bowl; it had a gentle rise to the rim which was parallel to the stem. It had the remains of a bore of 2mm and a vertical milled edge. The squared-off spur showed a J on the one side (bowl pointing left) and a G on the other; the lettering was in relief; the surname initial had serifs. The bowl seam had been trimmed and smoothed. This description places the pipe post from 1700 but closer to the mid18th century (Hammond 2018). A similar illustrated pipe has a flatter heel (Cambridge Archaeology Field Group 2012, 2, photo 4) and is described as post 1700; our pipe had a short spur.

Other part bowls were found — one with an acorn design around the stem base, an upright bowl with the rim parallel to the stem. The design was ill-defined and worn with a small acorn-shaped spur, probably mid-19th century, and no lettering present. An upright short bowl, without spur, heel or lettering, was excavated in the upper levels of T4, datable to the second half of the 19th century and similar to a drawing in Davey (Davey 1979, 266, fig 7, 32d).

## Metal

Metal finds were mostly in the form of iron nails of which there were 82, all heavily corroded. The forms of the 12 'metal objects' were often not recognizable. Most metal was found in Phase 3.

Knives were perhaps most clearly identified: a curved blade around 11cm long including the remains of a possible tang was found in context 38, Phase 3. A large heavily corroded forged knife was found in context 35, again Phase 3 T14, with a complete blade length of 16cm, including the tang, and a blade width of 19mm. A smaller, narrow forged iron knife was found in the upper levels of T2, measuring 11cm, and a 7cm heavily corroded knife blade discovered in context 45, Phase 2; this was 3mm deep but corrosion made the measurement approximate. An iron hook, resembling a hoof pick, was excavated in T11, but it was flattened forged iron.

Many substantial large-headed nails were mostly from the upper levels, all corroded 11–16cm long and one from context 62, Phase 3, was heavy with a large rectangular head and a flattened length of 9cm.

There was a larger quantity of nails in T11, in the far east of the platform. From the same context as the small early pipe bowl in T9, came a short iron nail, corroded, but which bears similarity to a hob nail. T1 produced a small iron stud, or the top section of a pin with a small shaped almost rectangular head; similar in form to a knot, it was an incomplete length (as there was no point present) at 13mm.

A collection of compressed corroded cans were found, probably dating to the 1950s or 1960s. Perhaps the end result of a scout encampment, burying their rubbish, as was more acceptable at the time and not leaving it on the surface. Unfortunately, the cans had been buried deep, reaching the medieval layer. A small non-ferrous flowered brooch was discovered, the remains of hand painting still visible; made from cast tin or white metal it would have been inexpensive costume jewellery, dating widely between the 1930s–1950s.

## Whetstones

In T11, a fragment of medieval whetstone was found made of sandstone, roughly rectangular shape in section; it measured 4x3cm and was 7cm long. On one side there were a number of blade marks scored into the stone where knife points had been sharpened. The other side seems to have been used to sharpen larger items such as scythes with one edge worn. Two other fragments of sub-circular section whetstones were discovered in different areas, clearly worn. The geology of the three stones were all different; these latter two were of a harder material and difficult to date accurately. Having compared them with other whetstones on www. finds.org.uk, they are very likely to be post-medieval. Very similar examples are referred to as scythe stone fragments (Whitehead 2013, 28–33) and are cylindrical in shape, with a suggested date range 1750–1950 AD. The Whetstone from Cxt 63 was found on a clay surface below disturbed layers, which included a medieval rim sherd (Cooking pot 2, 13th to early 14th century), a fragment of medieval tile and some Victorian pottery; there was evidence of rabbit activity.

### Glass, bone and wood

Glass fragments were largely window glass at 85 and Vessel glass at 52 sherds. A further 20 shards were of indeterminate age and unrecognizable form. Virtually all of the glass was discovered in Phase 3 contexts with the exception of five fragments; two in Phase 1 were from vessels, three modern in Phase 2 (one melted). The five fragments were considered intrusions into these phases due to the continual movement of soils through human and rodent activity on the site, particularly over the last 150 years.

Bone did not withstand the wet and acidic environment and only five fragments were found four of which were heated and calcified. The heated bone came from the same context as two 12th–13th-century pottery sherds.

Lastly, fifteen fragments of hard, heated wood (not blackened) were found in a cluster including some charcoal flecks, in context 76, T14. This was below the level of the large erratic (Phase 1) and places them as pre-platform. The longest was 16mm and the rest between 7 and 14mm; five of them were more rectangular. These wood fragments were very different in character from the very small amount of wood found, often in higher levels, which was mostly friable and degraded. The presence of these exceptionally hard wood pieces may have held some significance for the platform constructors. During the excavation we considered this area of the junction of T14 and T12 to have had pre-platform activity.

Kidpile, with its multi-use activities, placed in a landscape stretching back many thousands of years, produced an assortment of finds: fossils to tent-peg string, a Neolithic arrow-head and flint tools, to a simple slate pencil. The variety of finds attests to the life and length of activity on the platform.

## TILE, DAUB AND BRICK

No complete tiles were found at Kidpile, only fragments, of which there were 320.

Many tiles were found with a single nib and some with a corner intact so it was possible to calculate the length of the short side. A sherd found in T11 was such an example; we calculated a measurement of 17cm (total 6¾ inches) width for the short side. This particular fragment showed no evidence of a stick support, often used in the manufacture of pushed-out nibs. Only single nibs were found which perhaps ties in with the proposed date of the construction of the dwelling as mid to third quarter of the 13th century. Most nibs found had been pushed out with the tiler's thumb alone.

A round section stick was used to help form the nib of a tile fragment found in T12 and another fragment demonstrated the use of a straight stick to aid the formation of the nib. The stick would have been held as a support on the one side of the tile near to the edge as the tiler pushed the soft clay towards the stick, in so doing forming the nib. A couple of fragments of a very red-orange fired clay were found which contained small angular quartzite inclusions and was thought to have been an earlier example of local CBM. One fragment was just 13mm thick.

There were variations in the thickness of tiles but most lay between 13–16mm. The tile fragments which were 10–13mm thick, of which there were a few examples, were thought to be possibly ridge tiles, thinner to reduce the weight carried on the ridge of the roof. There were variations in colour, due to different firing conditions, times or the position in a particular part of the kiln.

A longer firing time or a hotter kiln produced tiles with a more greyish buff colour and some fragments were misshapen, some of these were of the thickest examples.

One fragment was quite fine and could have been a ridge tile: one side had a smoother finish and was a pale buff colour. Two others had distinct multiple finger marks as the damp clay was stretched and shaped, most probably on a 'former' for regularity and speed. A 'former' was a frame or support, usually of wood but also of ceramic, used as a template on which the damp clay could be placed and shaped to ensure the new tile was of the same size and angle as those previously made. At least two fragments of ridge tile had a slight curve and one was just 10mm thick. At least two more ridge-tile fragments were discovered with nail holes, one with a markedly oblique hole. This latter tile was thinner at 11–12mm and care had been taken with its firing; it was orangey in colour and it had an irregular thickness throughout, where it had been shaped on the former with a distinct line of finger marks where the clay had been stretched.

There were two examples of yellowish, glassy glaze splashed on the surface of plain tile fragments; they did not seem to be either fully glazed or deliberately glazed. These tiles may have been present in a kiln where fully glazed tiles were fired. Two of the fragments were a buff-coloured clay but of a greater thickness at 15–16mm, so thicker than those we suspected of being ridge tiles. It is always possible that they may have carried a decoration which has since been destroyed and belonged to a more significant part of the roof. It is very likely that the ridge line was decorated with varying buff-coloured tiles and those which were partially or completely glazed. No decorated, crested ridge tiles, or finials were found. Any complete flat, decorated or glazed ridge tiles, which were reusable, would have been taken from the dwelling once abandoned. We also have to consider that roofs and ridges may have been repaired or replaced over scores of years and any broken tiles may have been used to consolidate wet areas on site. So, of the fragments we found some may have been from a couple of different re-tiling periods over a couple of generations. The number of fragments was not enough for a full roof so clearly good reusable tiles were removed for other buildings on the estate, or pilfered from the abandoned building — depending on its fate. Most of the roof-tile fragments came from the eastern and central trenches.

An anomaly was the thirteen floor-tile fragments, one with a thickness of 25mm from Trench 4. The thirteen fragments would not have made even two or three complete tiles so they may or may not have been used on site — complete tiles of that thickness would have been salvaged.

A few pieces of daub were found. These may have come from the tiled, roofed house as infill between the wattle and wood structure or from another less significant building. Without being completely certain of the architectural sequence, there could well have been an earlier dwelling or shelter on the site, prior to the platform construction, as a small number of 12th–13th-century pottery sherds were discovered. Such a small number of these early sherds suggest that there may have been some animal husbandry or agricultural activities on the land, requiring them to cook food, as several sherds show evidence of external soot, or at least bring pottery vessels containing food with them. As mentioned previously, the later moated platform was too small for a sub-manor of any status but certainly large enough for a farmstead or barns — hence the large quantity of roof-tile fragments.

At the 13th-century moated site at Hunningham, Warwickshire (SP 371680), evidence found during excavation suggested a Dutch barn-type structure, with vertical timber planks on sandstone blocks and a timber and clay-tiled roof (Radcliffe 1980).

At Kidpile, brick was not found in any great quantity; it was classified as 71 fragments of CBM, the form not being recognizable, and modern brick or tile just six fragments.

Sydenhams Moat (Phase 1 being c 1240) is larger, but perhaps a little earlier than Kidpile and a distance of only 4.7km across land separates the two sites. Here riven roof tiles were found in Phase 1 (mid-13th century) but in Phase 2 (late 13th century) ceramic tiles were found in quantity. Very few whole tiles were found at Sydenhams; those discovered were measured at 310x170mm and 330x185mm, all used two nail holes and a single nib. Glaze was found on tiles in Phases 2–4 and many floor-tile fragments were found, thickness varied between 33–47mm thick which is a sizable difference to the floor fragments we found at Kidpile measuring 25mm thickness. At Sydenhams a small number of ridge tiles were found which were thin and some were glazed and all mid–late 13th century (Smith 1989–90, 66–7).

There are many similarities with the recent archaeological investigation at The Lodge site, Sutton Park, Birmingham. As would be expected there are variations in tile colour, due to different firing conditions, as at Kidpile. The sizes of the tiles were similar, just slightly thicker at 16–17mm thick, some 12mm and the thickest 20mm, generally the tiles were *c* 175mm wide at the short edge. All of the tiles found at The Lodge were single nibbed and these were all formed as seems usual for hand-made tiles of the medieval period; a straight stick or rounded stick to aid the forming of the pushed-out thumbed nib (White *et al* 2021, 14).

The pottery showed that the The Lodge site, was occupied during the 15th–17th centuries, a little later in date than Kidpile is thought to be, but evidently the technique of forming hand-made tiles altered very little in hundreds of years because it was clearly the best method of manufacture.

## CHARCOAL

In Phase 1 levels there were fragments of charcoal across the site, in some areas such as Trench 12 there were more noticeable deposits.

The spread in Trench 12 was likely to be part of the moat construction overlying Phase 1. Charcoal at the interface of these phases created ambiguity as to which phasing the charcoal could be attributed. Disturbance during the moat construction stage, Phase 1, could incorporate charcoal from pre-moat clearance of scrub. In the north-east corner, Context 6 was the moat platform construction; below in Context 7 was clayey silt with charcoal flecks and lumps of grey clay throughout. Below Context 7 a very thin line of black silt sitting on pebbles on top of a grey silty clay with iron flecks. The pebbles, Context 9, were at 70cm depth.

Continuing Phase 1, T14, in the western half of the trench, varying 50–68cm below the surface of top soil for the length of the south baulk, there were many charcoal fragments. Some were very fine flakes, these found in the compacted red clay and variations of dark silts. In context 67, at 68cm down and 1.4m west of centre baulk, there was a black silty layer containing fragments of charcoal on a hard compacted grey clay and, within this, some embedded pebbles. At the western end of the trench and into the west baulk there was an increase in charcoal and reddish clays in Context 68 being 55cm from the surface.

The charcoal was found with buried soil and silts and amongst compacted clays or burnt clay as in T15 context 78. The buried soil here was a largely continuous thin black clayey layer found at 60cm and up to 10cm thick above a silty clay with charcoal and lenses of red-brown clay and CBM fragments.

In Phase 2 of T12 we found a spread of charcoal flakes scattered mainly across the eastern half. No hearth was discovered in either pre-moat or moated levels but this trench had the greatest spread at different depths; this may, therefore, have been close to the hearth/ fire source. On the southern central side, postholes 4 and 6, in Phase 2, contained charcoal fragments within silty loams. In the north-east corner there were two postholes (Phase 2) in a pebble-strewn area with reddish clay and fragments of tiles on their edge showing signs of burning — closer to the hearth?

Trench 4, in an earlier season, was not excavated below the medieval layer but a feature, considered to be a large posthole, was investigated. A compacted, circular clay pad of 34cm diameter was found below the top and sub-soil, Context 1A: it had a gritty texture showing some evidence of burning. The posthole was 75cm width in total. Around the edge of the clay pad was a black silty deposit containing flakes of charcoal, 10cm below the base of the sub-soil. Two stake slots nearby, when cleaned, contained a dark, granular silt which may have had charcoal within. As stake holes they may not have had a posthole cut but may have been pushed into the ground resulting in the hardedged rectangular appearance of the stake hole — especially if charred beforehand.

These last descriptions may suggest charring of the building or agricultural posts to aid preservation of the wood. The slight saucer shape of the platform may have resulted in it being damp, as it is now. Charring the bottom of posts would have helped to prevent wood-rot and give resistance to insect attack, as the soft outer layer would be hardened by this practice. This technique is still carried out today by those unwilling to use chemical protection on their posts. Post-charring may account for the presence of charcoal flakes and fragments and the preponderance of blackened deposits within and around postholes. A conclusion which was reached during the dig was that these earlier widespread charcoal residues were attributed to land clearance with burning of scrub, prior to the construction of the platform. This would also mean that when creating a post-cut the lower deposits would contain the burnt material from land clearance bought to the surface, as in Context 1A.

There was no evidence for conflagration on a large scale.

## NIGHT SOIL

During excavation on the Kidpile platform we found well over 400 fragments of Victorian and early 20thcentury pottery in Phase 3, but unfortunately also at lower levels, due to disturbance by later horticultural activity. Evidence for this activity was in the form of furrows, a circular pattern of stake holes, higher level stake cuts and a possible garden building.

We finally concluded that the pottery was coming onto the platform in the form of night soil, possibly from areas of high population and purchased by the farmers to enrich their fields; consequently a small amount was used on the platform. Solihull, the village, was surrounded by fields and interlaced lanes and Kidpile Moat, on Rumbush Lane, was encircled by many farms.

Post-excavation work found that night soil had been sent to Solihull via the canal network from The Roundhouse at the Corporation Wharf, Birmingham (Gillian Carmichael pers comm 2022). The Wharf was at the junction of Sheepcote Street and St Vincent Street on the Mainline Canal. Not built until 1874, the Round House was a canal-side stores and warehouse and a stable block for around 40 horses which worked the canal system from the growing town. The Wharf was owned by the Birmingham Corporation Works Department (roundhousebirmingham.org.uk). Clearly, an obvious addition to the night soil would have been some of the copious amounts of manure produced by the large number of working horses at Corporation Wharf

Leaving Birmingham, the route of the Worcester and Birmingham Canal continued to King's Norton Junction, where a separate branch became the Stratfordon-Avon Canal, travelling south-east and later joining up again with the Grand Union at Lapworth/Kingswood Junction.

This rich fertilizer, available for purchase by farmers, may have arrived at, for example, Three May Poles Wharf (SP 113769). The Wharf and others along this stretch of canal would have been suited to re-distribute the manured night soil to local farms; the route from Three May Poles to the farms adjacent to Kidpile Moat would have been a distance of around 3.5km. The journey by cart from Wharf Farm (SP 115767) is a straight run down through the old hamlet of Dickens Heath and onto Rumbush Lane — a quicker route. In addition, Warings Green Wharf (SP 128743) would also have been accessible at much the same distance.

As an agricultural area there would have been access to manure and middens from the local hamlets, farms and Solihull itself. Birmingham night soil, because of the large quantities, may have been less expensive than buying in locally.

## COMPARISON SITES

As mentioned previously, Kidpile Moat lies in the Arden, a part of Warwickshire which has one of the densest concentrations of moated sites in the country; other concentrations are in the east of England such as Suffolk and Essex (Aberg 1978, 1–4). The average size of a moat platform in the Arden is 2232m$^2$ (Smyth 1994, 58). The Kidpile site is the smallest in a cluster of moated sites in the Arden being just 22x24m (528m$^2$). In a 10x10km square with Sydenhams at the centre there are a further 28 moats; a few have been investigated. In a diagram of moat outlines 'Sydenhams is seen to be among the smallest of this local sample of 20 moats' (Smith 1989–90, 29–31) and Kidpile (not shown) is clearly smaller.

Only a few of the sites in south-west Warwickshire and the Arden have been investigated; Sydenhams Moat, Salter Street and Tilehouse Green Farm have similarities with Kidpile moat.

Three aspects from our excavation results will be briefly compared with evidence from a sample of other Arden moats, namely pre-moat activity, construction of the moat platform and structures on the platform surface.

At Sydenhams Moat the entire moat platform surface was excavated, but pre-platform deposits were not investigated (Smith 1989–90, 52, 29). At Kidpile, the moat platform sealed a charcoal rich buried soil containing a small quantity of abraded Roman pottery sherds and prehistoric worked flints; the platform upcast contained a Neolithic arrowhead.

The evidence of structures on the moat platform at Kidpile consisted of roof tile, postholes, beam slots and consolidating areas of pebbles. Sandstone blocks and a couple of sandstone pads to support timbers were found but no substantial postholes. In T12 south and the western half of T14, there were sub-circular crumbly, clayey loam patches in the trowelled surface. Three of these, just 5cm deep, may have been the impressions of postpads. At Sydenhams, postholes and padstones had been used.

Smith states in his report on Sydenhams Moat 'that a living surface may be no more than a strew of stones'. 'There were no substantial postholes and no sets of postholes outlining whole buildings. The postholes found are interpreted as holes for minor freestanding

posts, such as those for gates and fences…. Some were posts in internal partitions.' '…. if they were on timber sills level with the ground, even with stone packing or a slight plinth, the archaeological evidence might reveal nothing' (Smith 1989–90, 29–31, 41–47). These seem to echo the findings at Kidpile.

At the Moat House, Salter Street, Tanworth-in-Arden (SP 122742), during work for the extension to the 17th–19th-century house in 2005, a pebbled layer was found of medieval date; it was thought to be an external yard surface. On top of the layer were found 12th–15th-century pottery sherds (Gethin & Rann 2006).

A small excavation in the 1980s at Tilehouse Green Moat, Knowle (SP 167769), showed that it was occupied during the 13th–14th centuries. Sandstone blocks and clay tiles were found across the platform and medieval pottery was discovered beneath the 0.5m-thick platform so clearly there was activity or occupation before it was raised. The platform at Kidpile was found to be up to 40cm thick. Tilehouse Moat seems to have been deserted in the post-medieval period (Andrews 1982, 149–52).

Kent's Moat, Sheldon (SP143862), was a sub-rectangular site, with a dwelling, which was very much larger than Kidpile, but shows similar building methods. An excavation at Kent's Moat was led by Ann Dornier in 1964 for the Ministry of Works. Upcast from the moat had created a small bank on the platform's west and south sides but it was not possible to say if the buildings were there before the moat was dug. The entrance was believed to have incorporated stone blocks which is our understanding about the entrance way and bridge at Kidpile.

The platform was 78x54m with many intact cobbled surfaces and evidence of re-cobbling. The moat itself was 9x3.3m deep, the depth similar to Kidpile but not the width, which was much wider. At Kent's Moat, the moat seemed to be spring-fed or filled from ground water (Dornier 1967, 45–57). The moat water inlet at Kidpile was different in that it was fed by small streams.

Dornier's excavation was limited by the requirements of the site building developers, so her trenches were no more than 1ft deep (30cm) which was to the top of the natural sub-soil, with the exception of T7. In this latter trench, cobbles were found from an earlier occupation and the only three postholes found across the site were within the cobbles, suggesting earthfast posts. The excavation found that building timbers rested on a variety of foundations — clay, clay and sandstone chips and sandstone blocks. In addition, there may have been sleeper beams but evidence of these was long gone; valuable building materials having been robbed soon after abandonment. An interesting finding made at Kent's Moat was that the south-east corner was roughly cobbled and seemed to drain into a hollow. At Kidpile we had an undated, circular pit in T14 which had no apparent use other than as a substantial posthole amongst the stones or was intended for storage, but this too may have been for drainage purposes. There appears not to have been any further building from the medieval period and the land could have been simply left waste (Dornier 1967, 45–57).

A clear sequence of buildings was not able to be found but pottery and other finds indicated a date range of 12th to 15th centuries. 'The incompleteness of the excavation in terms of area and depth, the complexity of structures and the potential invisibility of timber buildings once their stone footings are removed make it difficult to reassess the site' (Hodder 2004, 108).

Further afield at Gannow Green (SO 984784) earth was dug out and piled up to create a platform 40x60m, sealing a ground surface and forming the moat, 3–4m deep. Several trenches at Kidpile showed evidence of a buried soil and some areas were charcoal rich, so the platform was created in the same manner. At Kidpile there are undated pre-platform features which are sealed by the moat platform.

Sandstone blocks have been used at various sites either as walls or at entrance ways. Local knowledge indicated that blocks had been found in the last 30–40 years near the modern entrance at Kidpile, but had been removed. At Gannow Green, sandstone had been used to support building timbers and there was clear evidence for a wooden structure with a clay-tiled roof (Roberts 1962b, 26–37). Two probable beam slots had been found at Kidpile and, in addition, a couple of pebbled surfaces seem to have been deformed slightly by what may have been by heavy weight, such as horizontal supports for timbers.

At Hawksley Farm moat (SP 017775), there were possible sandstone walls and horizontal beams set in trenches and used for a base for timber-framed walls (Oswald 1960, 36–50). Kidpile had no evidence of sandstone walls, but a couple of pieces of sandstone were discovered, suggesting they were using them as bases, or the sandstone pads were resting on top of clay to support the wooden posts, as suggested above in T12 and T14.

## DISCUSSION

The wider area around Kidpile, within the Forest of Arden, contains evidence of both prehistoric and Roman activity, supported by our own finds and those of other excavations. An example of this activity, from the late Neolithic to the late Iron Age, was found at Lowbrook Farm, Tidbury Green (Mann 2018; see 'The Finds' above). At Lowbrook Farm Mann states that the residual Roman pottery 'hints at low level activity in the vicinity'. Three Roman coins were discovered by detectorists (MSI 1433) in the adjacent field south of Kidpile, so clearly this area saw Roman life at some level and Ryknield Street is just over 4km to the west. Ryknield Street ran south-west to north-east, from the Fosse Way through the Roman settlement of Alcester and up to Metchley fort in Edgbaston, Birmingham, and further north.

The land unit that later became the sub-manor of Forshaw with its abundant supply of water, having the river to the west and streams to the east, and probably woodland, would have appealed first to huntergatherers and then to early farmers. In the medieval period ponds on the parish boundary *c* 250m to the east, were created in this naturally wet environment; this may have provided fish for the sub-manor. Today this area is a wet meadow.

We might expect a network of lanes or footpaths around the moated site which would have given some ease of movement to other areas of occupation nearby. Rumbush Lane runs directly past the site and 8km northwards is the manor of Solihull, held by the first William de Odingseles. In 1242 William was granted a Royal Charter for a weekly Wednesday market and a three-day fair in April (Woodall & Varley 1979, 30). The market and fair would have been a point of trade for William's tenants, for goods, animals and for hiring labour. Rumbush Lane is on a route which led from Solihull through Forshaw Heath to Forshaw Park — the double moated site mentioned previously (Warwickshire HER MWA 4989). Adjacent parishes included Tanworth-in-Arden and Earlswood to the east and south-east, and to the west, Wythall and King's Norton, a berewick of Bromsgrove in the 13th century.

The Forshaw Heath woodland within Solihull parish boundary, later to become known as Clowes Wood (Fig 2), would potentially have been a valuable source of income for its owners or tenants. The woodland is shown by Roberts to extend up to the edge of the moated site (Roberts 1968, 111 fig 4). 'Clowes Wood is ancient woodland and has probably been wooded since the last Ice Age, though it was almost cleared of trees in the early 1900's' (Warwickshire Wildlife Trust) and 'While individual trees are not old, the site has never been cultivated' (Hooke 1998, 148).

Since wood was the main source of fuel for heating and cooking and the main building material in the medieval period, Clowes Wood would have provided a valuable commodity. Forshaw manor within which Kidpile moat lies would have required a secure, weatherproof storage for timber, cut coppiced poles and agricultural produce. As part of the woodland, just to the northeast, there is New Fallings Coppice, a post-medieval name perhaps, but this may suggest that coppicing could have occurred in the locality. 'Normally a large house had dependencies. Of these the most likely to be moated was the orchard or garden. These had a cash value….' (Aberg 1978). A storage facility like the Dutch barn interpreted from the excavated evidence at Hunningham, Warwickshire (Radcliffe 1980), might have been essential, together with an accompanying dwelling.

As to Kidpile's purpose we can only speculate, based on documentary and excavated evidence, but we are confident that if it was a farmstead it would not have been high status and not the principal building of the sub-manor of Forshaw. The main reason for this is its size, the platform being just too small (Solihull HER MSI 3108). However, as it was sited in such a prominent position on the route to the manor-house at Forshaw Park, it may have been intended to be visible. Perhaps it was a statement of ownership on the boundary of Forshaw as visitors passed by and entered the sub-manor. There were no finds which would have helped us to ascertain the status. Based on the excavated evidence and the site's 13th-century

context, we believe that, if not a substantial barn-type building, it would have provided accommodation for a farmer of moderate status who may have been assarting adjoining land, or an estate worker.

The woodland, heath and farmland of Forshaw manor would have required effective land management and protection from theft. Whether Kidpile moat enclosed a farmhouse on cleared land, a house for a farm bailiff, parker or forester or any of these at any time, we cannot be certain. If Kidpile had been a dwelling and not a storage facility, it was probably a relatively small farmhouse with pens and structures. Based on our interpretation of the resistivity survey results and the excavated evidence of features, degraded pottery sherds and charcoal, the dwelling at Kidpile was most likely south of the centre of the platform, which would be around T12 (Fig 10) and south-east of this trench. When we compare the size of the platform with that at Sydenhams Moat and the interpretation of the buildings on it, Kidpile could have accommodated a two-bay great hall with a single wing. At Sydenhams Moat, Smith interpreted the excavated evidence as representing a base-cruck great hall of two and a half bays, together with service rooms and solar. His interpretative sketch suggests a building layout for Sydenhams which may have been similar at Kidpile; however, the platform at Sydenhams was larger at 27x30m (Smith 1989–1990).The scanty remains of structures at Kidpile are consistent with those found at Sydenhams and other 13th–14th-century moated sites, mentioned above.

Kidpile moat could well have penned animals — as it did in the 1950s. Le Patourel and Roberts remind us that '…moats lack obvious clear-cut purposes or firm social contexts and are … not susceptible to tidy classification'). They also point out that moated farmsteads could have been dwellings for families and, although the prime concern was unlikely to be the prevention of children and animals falling into the moat, it would serve as that 'humble function' and not to lose sight of this simple reason (Le Patourel & Roberts 1978, 46).

The higher level around the perimeter of the platform at Kidpile may have been topped by a hedge or fence but in the small area excavated there was no evidence of posts; a dead hedge, which would have left no archaeological trace, is also a possibility. A barrier of dense vegetation, in addition to the moat, would have kept children and animals safely inside, protected possessions and food from animals and interlopers from outside. There were no remains of sandstone blocks, creating a wall or revetment, along the edge of the moat as was discovered at Hunningham (Radcliffe 1980) and Gannow Green (Roberts 1964) nor were there any sandstone blocks near the present entrance causeway which might have been the remains of a bridge across the moat. This modern entrance at Kidpile may have always been the main access, as it lies on a public footpath to Clowes Wood which may well have been a pathway from Rumbush Lane, whose significance has been discussed above, in the 13th century.

Pottery indicates that the site was occupied by the mid-13th century and that the moat platform was constructed no earlier than the late 13th century. Small quantities of 15th- to 18th-century pottery fragments were found. The platform could have been abandoned in or by the 15th century. At this point in time, occupation may have begun at the present Kidpile Farm, just over 220 metres to the north along Rumbush Lane. The moat platform was cultivated in the 19th century and fertilized with night soil.

## Future potential

The excavation demonstrated that the surface of the platform was relatively undisturbed by post-medieval activity. Only a third of the moated area was excavated and much of it only to the platform surface. With hindsight, magnetometry would have provided us with additional information to the resistivity survey.

Further, more extensive, excavation may reveal clearer structural remains. In addition, the platform was shown to seal a buried soil surface and other pre-moat features, but only part was investigated; further excavation may recover datable evidence from these features. The buried soil could contain palaeo-environmental data which would provide information about the landscape at the time of construction — and before. Similarly, the moat, which is damp and partially filled with water, has high potential for survival of palaeo-enviromental data (other than the previously dredged sections); it would certainly contain artefactual material. During this excavation the moat was not investigated or sampled as much of the water-free stretches were unstable beneath the surface.

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