

Hopwood Millers House Dig Winter 2019 – 2020

This was our second winter dig at the millers house. The good weather up to the end of the year and into January allowed us to get a useful amount of work done. We even went digging on Christmas Eve, New Years Eve and New Years Day. The heavy rain, hail and especially the high winds presented safety problems and several digging days were lost.

Much of the work during the winter has been directed towards an investigation of the drainage systems. The house and surrounding area must have been very damp.

Many of the drains were installed to prevent water entering the house. There are many surface water drains and land drains alongside the north and south walls of the house. A drain had been built below the living room floor in an effort to keep the room dry. Later drains constructed from modern ceramic sewer pipes took waste water from the kitchen area on the south side of the house and from the room at the east end of the house. This room had originally been temporary accommodation for workers at the mill but the closure of the mill and the introduction of drains towards the end of the 19th century suggests a change of use. Possibly to a laundry? The drains were frequently modified and replaced and provided us with a challenge to our understanding of how the system had developed over the years.



Up to Christmas work continued in areas A and E at the western end of the site.

A surface water drain runs for 5 metres eastwards and parallel to the north wall of the house. At the western end it terminates at vent fitted to the deep drain which is part of the under floor drainage system for house. It is at present not clear if the surface drain feeds into the deep drain. This is something which we need to investigate once we resume digging.

At the eastern end of the site a new trench area F had been opened. This was located opposite the east gable and close to the Trub Brook where a shallow depression suggested a collapsed drain.

Excavation revealed two drains. The later of these was the outlet of the ceramic sewer pipe in area C. The final two sections of the sewer pipe had been removed creating the depression in the ground surface. An earlier drain constructed of brick had gone out of use by the time the sewer pipe was installed. It is probable that the earlier drain is the outlet for the drain found in area C and described later.



During the excavation of area F it was discovered that the river bank had been raised and reinforced with layers of clay, cinder and broken stone. We haven't yet identified how far it extends or the reason for its construction. The removal of some of the topsoil revealed an area of neatly laid small cobbles a few centimetres below the present ground surface. We were also able to identify the land drain outlet a few metres to the east of the sewer pipe outlet. It was interesting to observe that over 70 years after the house was demolished the land drain was still functioning.



Land drain outlet



A great deal of work still needs to be done in area C. The upper levels have been recorded and some of them now needed to be removed to investigate the earlier features.

Removal of a late deposit in the north-east corner revealed another drain. This like many of the drains was constructed with a flagstone base and capstone and the sides from brick. Only a 1 metre section remained within the trench. The southern end having been truncated by a later drain and at the northern end it is crossed by a 20th century ceramic sewer pipe. We think that the continuation of this drain is in area F which was described earlier in this update.

In the previous update (7) we reported the discovery of a large drain capstone in area C. In order to investigate this feature it was necessary to remove a large part of the yard surface and a deep fill of sand, gravel and cobbles. This enabled us to reveal the full size of the capstone (1 metre by 1 metre). To the north there was another slightly smaller capstone and a third protruding from the northern edge of the trench.

The drain is constructed entirely from stone and internally is 18 cm deep and 41 cm wide. It is orientated south-east to north-west.

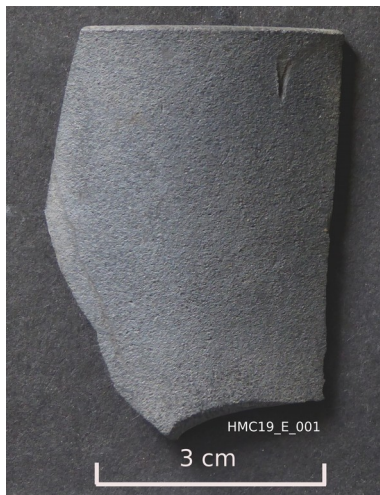
There is uncertainty regarding the direction of flow. We would expect that it would discharge into the brook 12 metres to the north-west but there are indications that it is running away from the brook. If this is confirmed then it may be a conduit rather than a drain. The investigation will continue once the dig restarts.



The winter season ended in March with a great improvement in the weather and plenty of interesting archaeology to start the summer season in April.

It is unfortunate that coronavirus has intervened and at present it seems unlikely that we will be able to resume digging until July at the earliest. Let us hope that we can return before the start of a new Winter season.

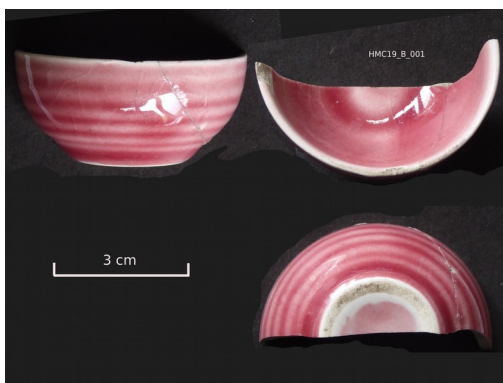
Small Finds



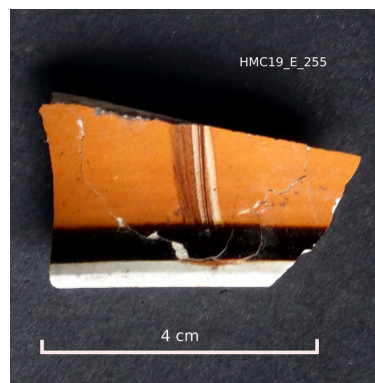
“Black Basalt” Stoneware developed by Wedgwood as an improvement on a popular stained black earthenware known as “Egyptian Black”. Production was started in 1768 and became very popular. It was copied by other manufactures.

The rim sherd on the left is probably from a vase of late 18th century date and possibly Wedgwood.

The teapot spout on the right is 19th century and almost certainly not produced by Wedgwood.



Small bowl or cup possibly part of a miniature tea set. Probably early 20th century.



Industrial Slipware thought to have been fan decorated. These were produced using a circular slip cup divided into segments which could be filled with different colours of slip. When placed vertically the slip would run to form a tail. The end of the tail is visible on this base sherd. Produced between about 1805 and 1840.



A remarkably intact ornament showing a woodland scene with Red Riding Hood and the Wolf.

It had been painted and traces of red on the cape, brown on the wolf and a greenish-blue on the foliage are still visible.

It stands upright and could have been displayed on mantle shelf, cupboard or table.

It probably dates to the late 19th or early 20th centuries.



Hammer scale produced by iron smithing found in a 19th century context.

It is likely that a blacksmith would have been needed from time to time to make or repair iron parts for the house and the mill.

Diggers

This year five of us were involved in the winter dig. My thanks to all those who took part. In the light of coronavirus the work done during the winter has carried the dig forwards at a time when a large part of the summer season will probably be lost.



Charlotte and Lucy enjoying a cold, damp January day in Hopwood.



Lucy (5ft. 7Inches) testing if there was room for a body under the freshly revealed stones and taking advantage of the early Spring sunshine.