

# **An Archaeological Evaluation of Holly Hayes Farm, Whitwick, Coalville, Leicestershire**

**Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: SK443154**

## **FIRST INTERIM REPORT**

**JUNE 2008**

### ***Summary***

*At the request of the Friends of Holly Hayes Wood \* ( FHHW ), Witan Archaeology visited the site of Holly Hayes Farm to examine the demolished buildings therein. After consultation with members of the FHHW, Witan Archaeology submitted a proposal in April 2008 to evaluate the site using archaeological techniques. Witan Archaeology has also offered to undertake partial conservation of the remnant structures at Holly Hayes Farm.*

*\* The Friends of Holly Hayes Wood are a community group comprising of local residents, who aim to set-up a social enterprise to maintain and improve Holly Hayes Wood, Coalville Meadows and Forest Rock Wood.*

## **1 Introduction**

- a) The archaeological evaluation was carried out under the supervision of Stephen and Paul Saunders, ( Witan Archaeology ). Witan Archaeology has the responsibility for recording both archaeological features and associated finds. Witan Archaeology will also undertake post excavation analysis if required.
- b) Interim reports will be produced after each phase of the evaluation is completed and submitted to the FHHW.
- c) The evaluation is being carried out in phases as described below.
- d) All finds including ceramic and metal objects will be recorded and processed by Witan Archaeology and returned to the FHHW, ( the landowner ).
- e) By arrangement with the FHHW, all results of the proposed evaluations will be notified to the Leicestershire Heritage and Environment Record.

## **2 Location and Topography**

The site lies approximately one kilometre south east of Whitwick village, situated at the eastern edge of Holly Hayes Wood. The mean height of the site is c.180 metres OD.

## **3 Geology**

The geological substratum is a dark orange to light yellow sandy glacial clay with frequent granite boulders.

## 4 Historical Background ( See Figure 1 )

Holly Hayes Wood has been in existence at least since the early medieval period. Apart from occasional mentions in charters and rent lists, little is known about its historical and ecological development.

### Historical Timeline ( source: Internet and Whitwick Historical Society )

- 1240** Holly Hayes Wood is recorded on a list of the medieval woods of Charnwood Forest.
- 1433** **HaleHay** is mentioned in a record of rent payments.
- 1609** **Hawley Hays** is mentioned in a list of various woods and hills in Whitwick.
- 1777** Holly Hayes appears as an area of unnamed woodland on Priors map.
- 1805** Holly Hayes was already enclosed before the Enclosure Act of Whitwick.
- 1835** **Holly Hayes Farm** and associated cottages are shown on the first Ordnance Survey Map. A Thomas Jesson is listed as owning four acres at Holly Hayes.
- c.1860** John College rents Holly Hayes Wood from Thomas Jesson. John College lived in the house later called *Fish Pond House* and he replanted woodland, establishing a tree nursery on adjoining land.
- c.1866** The road now called Leicester Road ( northern boundary of the Holly Hayes wood ), was known as Nursery Lane on title deeds.
- 1877** James Henshaw is listed as a farmer living at **Holly Ayes**.
- 1889** Thomas Williamson was the farmer living at Holly Hayes, and was still listed as resident there in 1899.
- 1908** William Berrington was listed as living at Holly Hayes until 1928.
- 1920** Whitwick Quarry advertised trees for sale from this wood. During the 1920's, the quarry dammed the brook and created a pond. This was also to provide a supply of water for the quarry. A pumping station was also built nearby.
- 1948** The Electoral list shows the Roberts family at Holly Hayes Cottage, the Tomlinson Family at Fishpond Cottage and John Waley at Holly Hayes Farm.
- 1963** Mr Danvers is resident at Holly Hayes Farm.

During the 1960's, Holly Hayes Farm became derelict, later demolished by the quarry. In 2008, Holly Hayes Wood was purchased from Hanson plc by the FHHW.

## 5 Aims and Methods

Each area of archaeological prospection was excavated by hand and recorded both as drawings and digital photographs. Each area was cleaned by trowel and recorded before features were sectioned and recorded. The topsoil and subsoil, where present, is being removed in spits, under constant archaeological supervision until either archaeological features, or the natural geological substratum is revealed.

The aims are:

- 1) To establish the nature, character and extent of any archaeological deposits within the area.
- 2) To establish a date range for any archaeological deposits located.
- 3) To define the state of preservation of any such deposits.
- 4) To ascertain the function, date and chronology of the archaeological deposits present.
- 5) To locate and record any structural elements associated with these deposits.

## 6 Objectives

The objectives are:

- 1) To identify, date and record the earliest phases of construction at Holly Hayes Farm.
- 2) To identify and record archaeological deposits within the Holly Hayes Farm site.
- 3) To provide the FHHW with a comprehensive report on the archaeological resource at Holly Hayes Farm.
- 4) To provide guidance and assistance with the conservation of designated features within the Holly Hayes site.

## 7 The Evaluation Phases ( as outlined in the April 2008 Proposal )

### Phase 1

- a) The clearance of undergrowth around the eastern side of Holly Hayes Farm. This will reveal more of the structure possibly containing brickwork dating from the late 18<sup>th</sup> / early 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- b) Test pits will be excavated in the eastern enclosures to record any archaeological deposits and to recover finds for dating purposes. Completion of this phase will allow stacking of brick and granite boulders to take place during Phase 2.

### Phase 2

- a) The demolition rubble around the eastern end of the farm will be cleared with granite boulders and bricks being sorted and stacked for later use.
- b) External and internal walls will be cleaned and recorded.
- c) Further test pits may be excavated to investigate areas identified as earlier phases of the farm.

### Phase 3

- a) Designated structural features will be conserved *in situ*.
- b) All materials used and restoration work undertaken will be appropriate to the original construction of these features.
- c) Witan Archaeology, ( with the support of the FHHW ), will bid for funding in order to provision equipment and materials for this phase.

## 8 The Excavations ( See Figure 1 )

### Test Pit 1 East enclosure 27.04.08

A 1 X 1 metre test pit was excavated six metres north east of the farm building. The topsoil consisted of a black to dark grey clay loam down to a depth of c.20cms. This soil contained numerous fragments of flint and granite, ranging from 2mm to 5mm in size. A small number of 19<sup>th</sup> / 20<sup>th</sup> century ceramic and brick fragments were also present. At a depth of c.20cms., the soil graded to a dark brown to dark grey clay loam with numerous charcoal flecks and fragments of granite and flint. This soil lies directly above a sandy clay subsoil, which contains several granite boulders.

### Test Pit 2 North east enclosure 04.05.08

A 1 X 1 metre test pit was excavated two metres east of the west wall of this enclosure. The topsoil consisted of a black to dark grey humic clay loam down to a depth of c.20cms. This soil contained fragments of granite, ranging from 5mm to 10cms. in size. A small number of 19<sup>th</sup> / 20<sup>th</sup> century ceramic and brick fragments were also present. At a depth of c.20cms., traces of the underlying glacial clay subsoil were revealed. At this point, the test pit became waterlogged and the test pit was backfilled.

### **Test Pit 3 North west enclosure 04.05.08**

A 1 X 1 metre test pit was excavated three and half metres south of the north boundary wall. This trench was cut near several rusted components of farm machinery, some of which may date to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The topsoil consisted of a black to dark grey humic clay loam down to a depth of c.30cms. This soil contained fragments of granite ranging from 5mm to 10cms. in size. A small number of 19<sup>th</sup> / 20<sup>th</sup> century ceramic and brick fragments were also present. At a depth of c.30cms., a dark yellow sandy boulder clay subsoil was revealed.

### **Test Pit 4 East enclosure 04.05.08 – 01.06.08**

#### **04.05.08**

A 1 X 1 metre test pit was cut four metres north east of the main farm building. The topsoil consisted of a black humic clay loam, which graded down to dark grey clay loam at a depth of c.15cms. This soil contained fragments of granite ranging from 5mm to 10cms. in size. Along with fragments of 'rosemary' roof tile and brick, several fragments of late 19<sup>th</sup> / early 20<sup>th</sup> century ceramic and glass finds were also recovered.

#### **11.05.08 -18.05.08**

The test pit was extended by one metre north and east. The rib cage and two vertebrae of a dog were uncovered. This was at a depth of c.35cms.

#### **01.06.2008**

The skeleton appears to have been a medium sized dog with no skull present in the trench. This may have been removed by later digging or truncation by the passage of heavy machinery. A skull and neck bones of a mature cat was also found within this trench. It is likely that this area was used as a burial ground for family pets. The ceramic and glass finds from this trench range in date from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century to the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. Many of the ceramic finds are small and abraded suggesting this part of the enclosure was dug over on a frequent basis. Water logging of the trench prevented further examination of the skeleton.

### **Test Pit 5 External east wall of the farm East enclosure 01.06.08 ( See Figure 2 )**

A 2 metre X 50 cms. wide section was cleared of demolition rubble along the external east wall of the farm. A trench was then excavated to reveal the foundation wall of the farm below the level of its concrete cladding. The topsoil consisted of a black to dark grey clay loam down to depth of c 50cms. A moderate quantity of 19<sup>th</sup> / 20<sup>th</sup> century ceramic, glass and brick fragments were recovered from this soil. Notable among the ceramic finds were sherds from an early / mid 19<sup>th</sup> century milk pan.

The construction of the wall appears to be quite rough with no clear style of brick bonding. The bricks are hand made and a number of the thin, course examples may have been re-used following the demolition of an earlier building. The re-use of brick, stone and timber appears to have been a common feature of house construction in Whitwick during the late 18<sup>th</sup> / early 19<sup>th</sup> century. A small culvert at the base of the wall has an opening that extends into the building for at least 50cm. This culvert filled with water when excavated. An unmortared brick was observed blocking the entrance to this culvert. Further excavation is planned in this area.

A drainage pipe of late 19<sup>th</sup> / early 20<sup>th</sup> century date runs at an angle from the building through the north end of the trench. The excavation of the trench to accommodate this pipe would have severely truncated archaeological features at the north end of Test Pit 5.

## 9 Conclusion

During the medieval period, Holly Hayes Wood would have been an excellent resource. Woodland provided, besides land to be assarted and added to the cultivated area, extensive pasture for cattle and other animals. Revenue for landowners would be generated by local farmers, landlords, and peasants, paying *agistment* fees to put horses, cattle, and pigs in these pastures. The trees and undergrowth provided the vitally important medieval raw material, wood, and, equally important, wood fuel.

Although no medieval archaeology has yet been recorded at Holly Hayes Wood, there is potential for this given the large area of woodland still to be investigated.

In 1829, the Enclosure Act for Whitwick was finally signed after twenty years of legal contention. Stable grain prices and improved agricultural practices gave local landowners the incentive to enclose wasteland and establish new farms.\* An expanding population in Whitwick parish, ( 817 people in 1801 to 1552 in 1831 ), coupled with the rise of the coal mining industry, ( 1820's ), would have increased demand for cereal and dairy produce. It is possible the buildings and enclosures at Holly Hayes, recorded on the 1835 Ordnance Survey map, were 'new builds'. Also on the of 1835 map , Holly Hayes Farm is linked by a track to another house located on Leicester Road. This house still exists and its history may shed light on the development of Holly Hayes Farm. Also on this map there are cottages located due north of the farm.

One of the key events to affect Holly Hayes Farm would have been the commencement of stone quarrying at Peldar Tor to the north in 1893. As the quarrying extended across the road, the water table would have risen significantly. The quarry owners,( also acting as landowners ), had to take considerable measures to drain and store excess water.

Flooding seriously hampered excavation of the evaluation test pits described above and water logging of the surrounding land is quite evident. How this impacted on the agricultural practices of the farm can only be told by those who lived there. It is hoped that those people with memories of living and working at Holly Hayes Farm will come forward to fill in the many gaps of our knowledge.

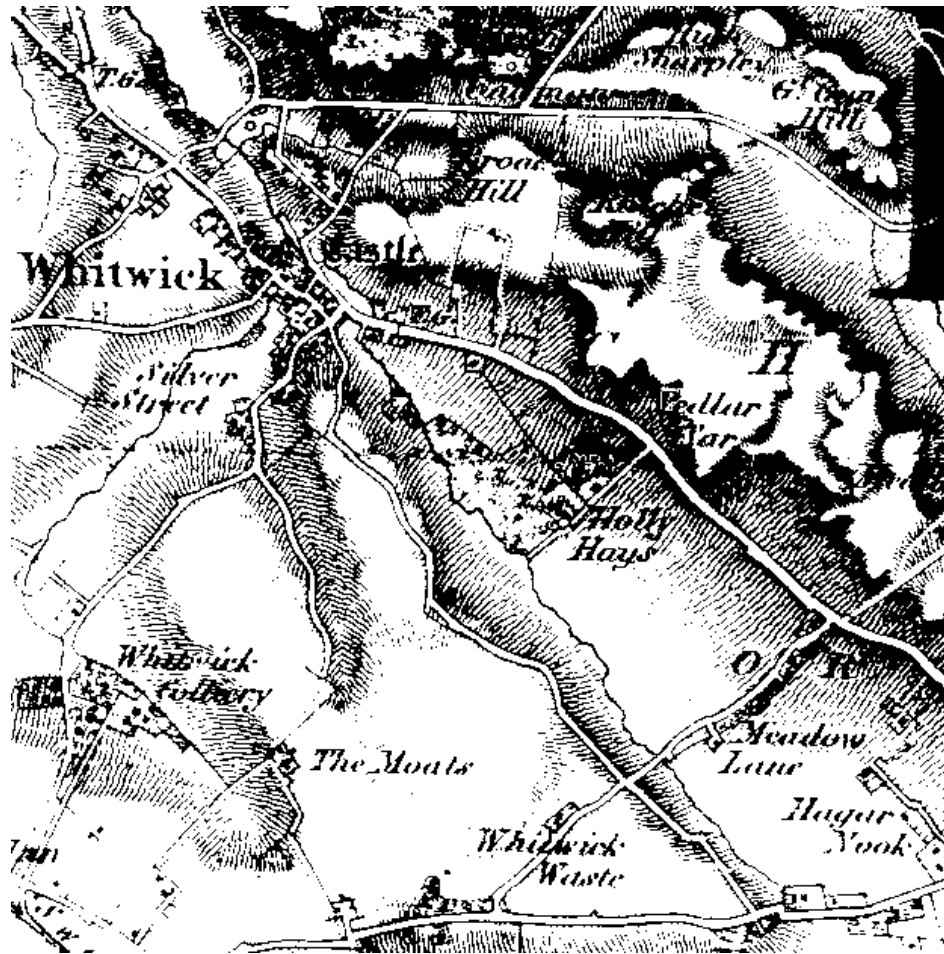
\*Encouragement to do this in Charnwood Forest had been forthcoming from the Board of Agriculture as early as 1793.

( source: Internet and Whitwick Historical Society )

## 10 Acknowledgements

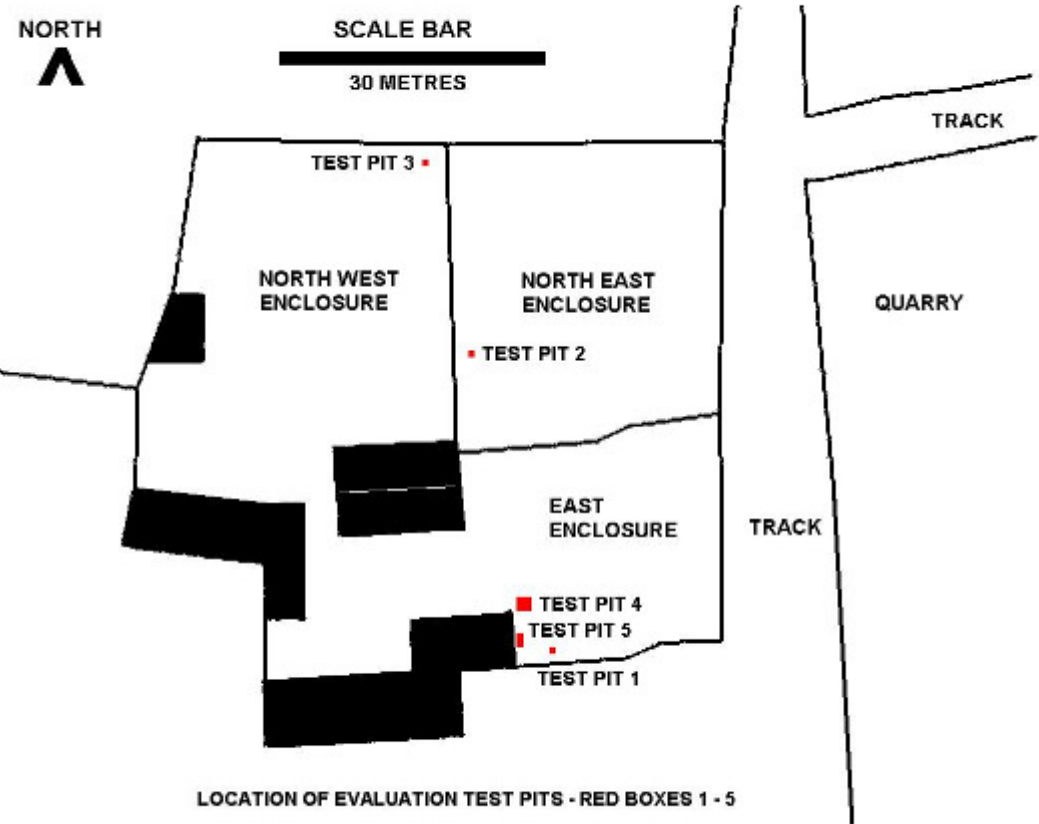
Witan Archaeology would like to thank Adam Raine, Peter, Timothy, Hannah, Judith, Alex, Roger and Fluffy.

FIGURE 1



1835 ORDNANCE SURVEY MAP HOLLY HAYES FARM

HOLLY HAYES FARM c.1960 BASED ON ORDNANCE SURVEY MAP



SITE PLAN OF HOLLY HAYES FARM BASED ON c.1960 ORDNANCE SURVEY MAP

MAPS COPYRIGHT ORDNANCE SURVEY

**FIGURE 2**



**TEST PIT 5 VIEW WEST SHOWING THE FOUNDATION WALL OF HOLLY HAYES FARM HOUSE**