

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

Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: SK443154

## SECOND INTERIM REPORT

JULY 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. A first interim report, ( June 2008 ), focused on the farm and associated enclosures. This report describes work undertaken at the site of the cottages, which are located north east of the 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 Figures 1 & 2 )

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. A revised historical timeline focusing on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century occupancy can be viewed in Figure 2.

## 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 providing the opportunity to examine the brickwork of the farmhouse.
- 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 3 )**

### **Test Pit 1 Demolition mound - west side - garden, porch and threshold**

**22.06.2008**

A 3 X 1 metre test pit was excavated approximately three metres due west of a large mound of stone and building debris within the Holly Hayes Cottages enclosure. The topsoil consisted of a black to dark grey clay loam down to a depth of c.40.cms. This soil contained numerous large fragments of concrete floor surface , ( white, friable fabric with crushed fired clay in its matrix ), brick, granite boulders and welsh roof slate. Numerous finds were recovered from the garden soil dating from 1830's to the mid 1950's. The bricks varied in size and quality. Some were very thin and course whilst others represented machine made bricks produced locally in the late 19<sup>th</sup> / 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. At the north end of the trench, a late 19<sup>th</sup> / early 20<sup>th</sup> century ceramic drain runs at a diagonal across the trench.

**04.07.2008**

The trench was extended east by 3.5 metres into the mound. A kerb of bricks delineated a concrete apron which had a pattern of diagonal lines scored into its surface. On its south edge, a square opening to the drain was revealed. This is a rain water drain with the scoring in the concrete apron acting as a run off. Abutting this apron, along an irregular line, a tarmac surface extends east to a concrete base with three square postholes. This is the foundation of a porch. Adjacent to the porch is the stone wall of the cottage with the surviving courses of a red brick doorway. The door threshold was made of dark grey firebricks. Remnants of wood and red painted plaster still adhere to the inside of the doorway. Beyond the threshold, a floor made of red quarry tiles was visible. Beneath the garden soil, a dark brown to light grey sandy loam was present containing numerous fragments / flecks deriving from bricks, floor tile, glass, domestic pottery, coal slack and charcoal. This soil is c.15cms. in depth and lay above the dark orange / light yellow clay subsoil.

### **Test Pit 2 Demolition mound – vicinity of east enclosure wall 04.07.2008**

On all of the Ordnance Survey maps, the cottages are shown abutting the east enclosure wall. Demolition and undergrowth has made it impossible to clearly see where the cottages join the wall. A trench was placed as close as possible to the junction of the cottages and the southern enclosure wall. After clearing the brick and stone demolition material, it was found that birch tree roots had considerably disturbed the building and its interface with the enclosure wall. A line of unmortared stones found within the roots suggests a wall once linked the cottages to the enclosure wall. To the east, a large number of mortared bricks suggest a building existed against the enclosure wall. Finds from this area included mid 20<sup>th</sup> century milk bottles, flowerpots, rosemary tiles and corroded ironwork. It is possible this building was used for storage. A small area of hardened ash and coal slack was found beneath the brick rubble. This suggests the floor of this building was composed of compacted earth or coal ash.

### **Test Pit 3 Demolition mound – east side of cottages 13.07.2008**

A 3 metre X 1 metre wide trench was cut into the eastern side of mound to determine the width of the cottages, ( in relation to the doorway and wall found in TP 1 ). After removal of the demolition rubble, the mortared face of a granite stone wall was revealed. The granite stone within the wall was bonded by a friable sandy lime mortar varying from light yellow to cream in colour. No bricks or other building material was seen within the walls matrix. At a depth of c.55 cms., a drain made of hard fired clay pipe was revealed. This probably dated from the early / mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. The trench was later backfilled with a mixture of garden soil, rubble and redeposited clay subsoil. Pottery sherds, domestic glass, brick and slate fragments were found within this trench.

#### **Test Pit 4 Demolition mound – north end of cottages 13.07.2008**

A 2.10 metre X 1.60 metre trench was cut into the north end of the demolition mound to determine the northern limit of the cottages. After removal of the rubble, a surface of red clay floor tiles was revealed on the western side of the trench\*. These tiles bordered the foundation of a wall, which appears to have been the north wall of a room. To the north of the wall, two brick plinths were revealed surrounded by a concert apron and compacted coke. It appears that these plinths were supporting a water tank or basin. The coke surface would allow liquids to drain away. No sign of the stone wall was revealed, ( as in TP 1 ). There were, however, loose mortared stones and patches of mortar visible on the south side of the trench. It is possible this area of the cottages represents a rebuild or extension in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. Only a small number of ceramic finds were present in this trench and these could not be dated accurately. Corroded metal work from a gutter was present within the demolition rubble.

\* These tiles were modern 1-inch thick press moulded products made to imitate earlier 'quarry' tiles.

## **9 Conclusion**

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'. \*

After demolition in the 1960's, the cottages remained concealed beneath a mound of rubble and dense undergrowth until the current excavation. During the work described above, passing local residents commented on their visits to the cottages during the 1950's and 60's. The cottages appear to have been a single block divided internally with possibly an outbuilding on its south side. The diversity of building materials suggests that rebuilding and extensions to the cottages took place from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century through to the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. The cottages sit within a rectangular walled enclosure, which appears to have been repaired infrequently. The field and garden surrounding the cottages were kept in good condition with a few trees within its boundary. Birch trees and bramble have since overgrown much of the mound above the cottages.

Dating evidence for the cottages comes from the rear garden. Pipe bowls and sherds of copper lustre ware suggest an early 19<sup>th</sup> century for their construction. Domestic pottery and glass indicate a cessation of occupation in the mid / late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Holly Hayes cottages would have provided housing for agricultural labourers. Later occupants of the cottages were employed in professions such as hosiery and quarrying. The day-to-day activities within the enclosure would have focused in part on self-sufficiency, i.e. the growing of vegetables and the husbandry of pigs and fowl. Water would have come from wells and storage tanks. Ceramic insulators found in the demolition rubble indicate a power supply was installed sometime in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Figure 2 is a revised timeline for occupancy of the farm and cottages during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. This timeline is far from complete and requires further research, in particular for the early 19<sup>th</sup> and mid 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

\* *Census records 1831 – 1861 Rise in the number of households in Whitwick Parish from 717 to 1388.*

( **source: Internet and Whitwick Historical Society** )

## **10 Acknowledgements**

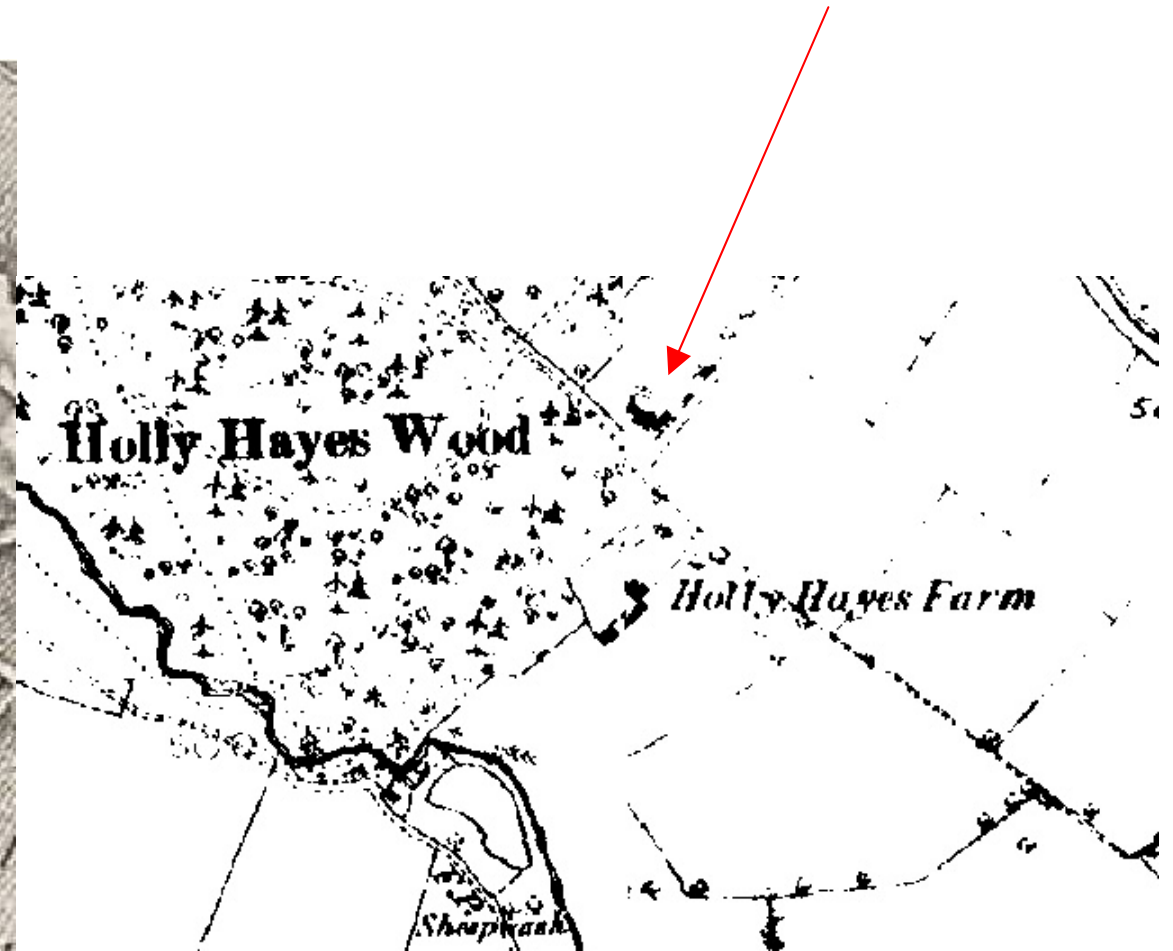
Witan Archaeology would like to thank Adam, Peter, Hannah, Judith, Roger and Tim. Thanks also to the local residents who stopped by to chat about the cottages and our excavation.

FIGURE 1

1835 ORDNANCE SURVEY MAP



1884 ORDNANCE SURVEY MAP LOCATION OF HOLLY HAYES COTTAGES



MAPS COPYRIGHT ORDNANCE SURVEY

FIGURE 2

19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY TIMELINE HOLLY HAYES FARM AND COTTAGES WHITWICK

( source: Internet and Whitwick Historical Society )

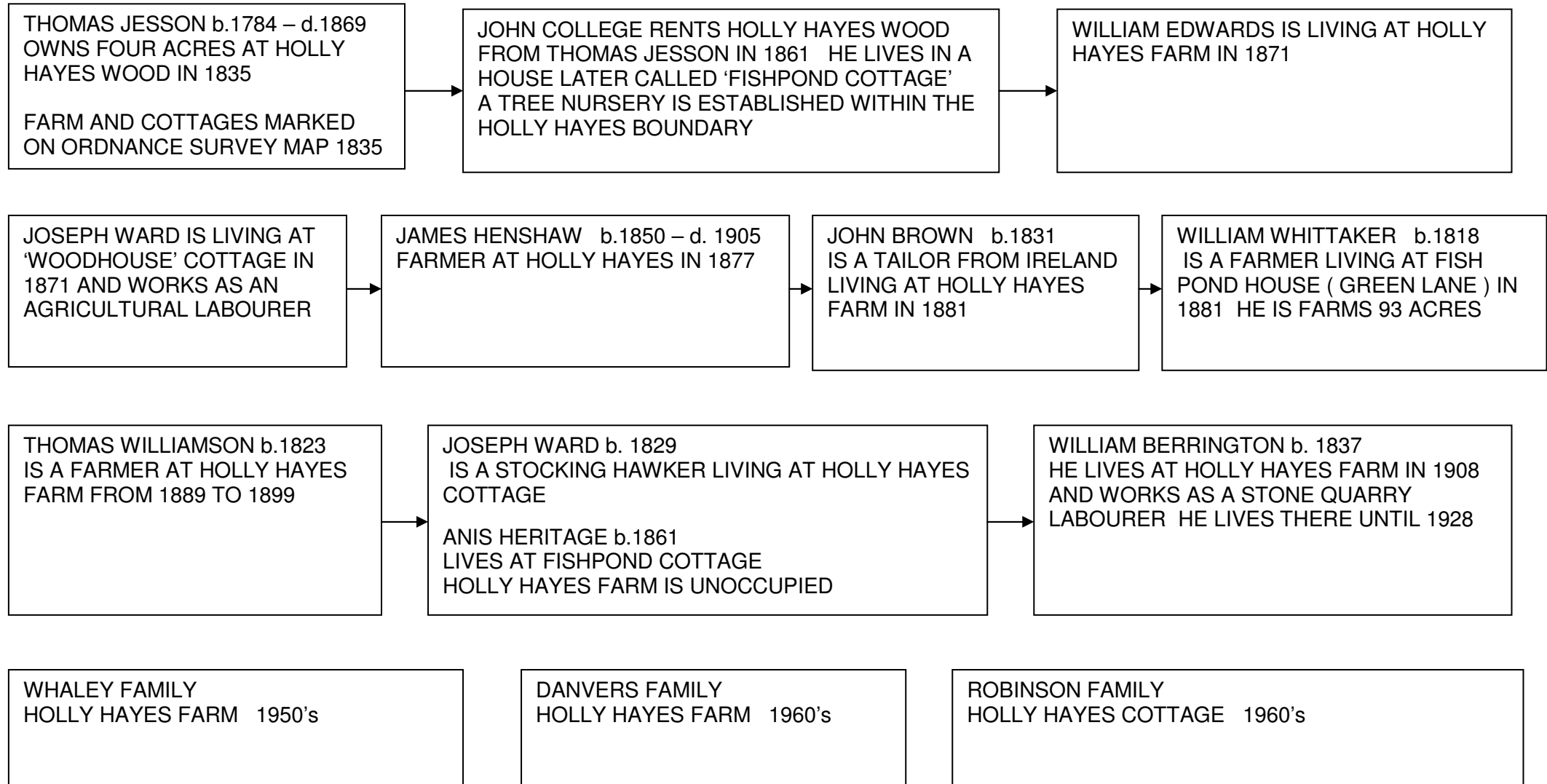


FIGURE 3



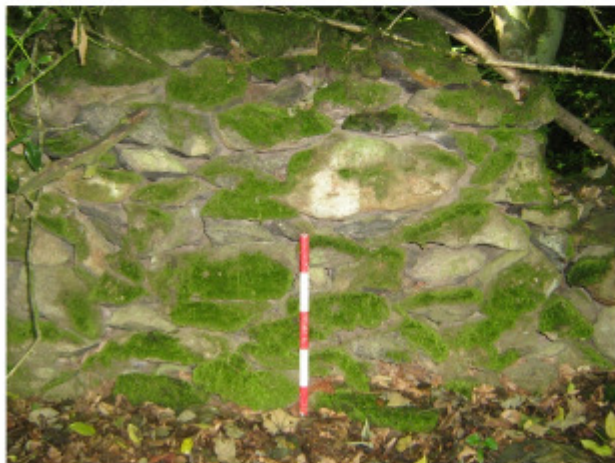
HH COTTAGES T1 DRAIN & APRON JUNE 2008



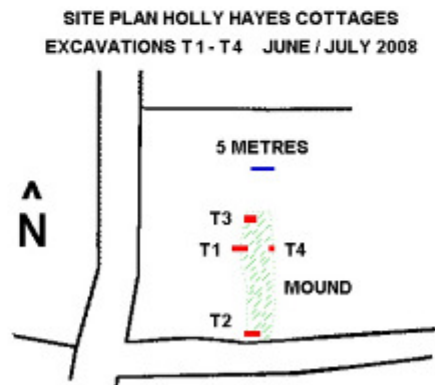
HH COTTAGES T1 WEST DOOR PORCH JUNE 2008



HOLLY HAYES COTTAGES T3 PLINTH AND NORTH WALL JULY 2008



SECTION OF SOUTH ENCLOSURE WALL HH COTTAGES JUNE 2008



HOLLY HAYES COTTAGES T4 EAST WALL AND DRAIN JULY 2008