

EARLY MEDIEVAL SETTLEMENT AT FAR LEYS, HANNINGTON, BASINGSTOKE

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ABSTRACT

This watching brief uncovered the remains of a domestic site, elements of a rural small-holding (gullies, pits and postholes), the majority of which date from the late 11th to late 12th centuries, with just a hint of Late Saxon activity on the site. The site appears to have been occupied for only a short time, and the absence of later features, in such a central location in the village, just 100m south-east of the church, is something of a mystery.

INTRODUCTION

Planning permission was granted by the Borough of Basingstoke and Deane for the construction of five new houses at Far Leys, Hannington, Basingstoke, Hampshire (SU 53927 55398) (Fig. 1), subject to a condition which required an archaeological watching brief. This was carried out by Thames Valley Archaeological Services in January and February 2003.

Little archaeological work has taken place in Hannington, however the site lies within the presumed core of the historic village just 100m south-east of the church, looking out on the green, on flat ground at 201m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology is clay-with-flints over chalk (BGS 1981). The name Hannington is from the Old English haninguntun meaning ‘Hana’s farm’. The village is mentioned in Domesday Book as being held by the Bishop of Winchester ‘for the sustenance of the monks’ (Williams & Martin 2002, 100; 124). There were 24 villagers and four slaves on the Bishop’s land, and a further three villagers and three slaves on a small portion held by Leofwine, the King’s thegn.

Interestingly the Bishop’s land was valued at £8 but was farmed out at £15. Such farming out of a manor was commonplace, and this increase in value is a notable feature of the process: the larger landholders would sell a temporary lease on land to the highest bidder, the firmarius would then sublet to tenants and keep any profits (a practice singled out for complaint by the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles; Swanton 2000, 218; Loyn 1991, 338). For the land to return almost double its worth, the firmarius would have to be oppressively ruthless with tenants. In Hampshire alone, some 57 manors were overvalued in this way in 1086 (Lennard 1959, 155–6). The church is also mentioned in Domesday Book and has Anglo-Saxon origins with later 12th and 13th century additions.

THE WATCHING BRIEF

The whole site was stripped to a depth of approximately 1m. Archaeological features were revealed at the horizon between the subsoil and the natural clay. A surprising number of archaeological deposits were uncovered across the entire site (Fig. 2), including gullies, post-holes and pits, almost all of which contained medieval pottery. Only two stratigraphic relationships existed: 16 cut 17, 39 cut 36. Phasing is therefore based almost wholly on ceramic dating. A single sherd of Roman pottery from pit 38 is probably redeposited but may suggest earlier activity in the near vicinity.

Phase 1: 11th century

Two pits (10 and 36) contained pottery of Cotswolds-type wares which may be as early

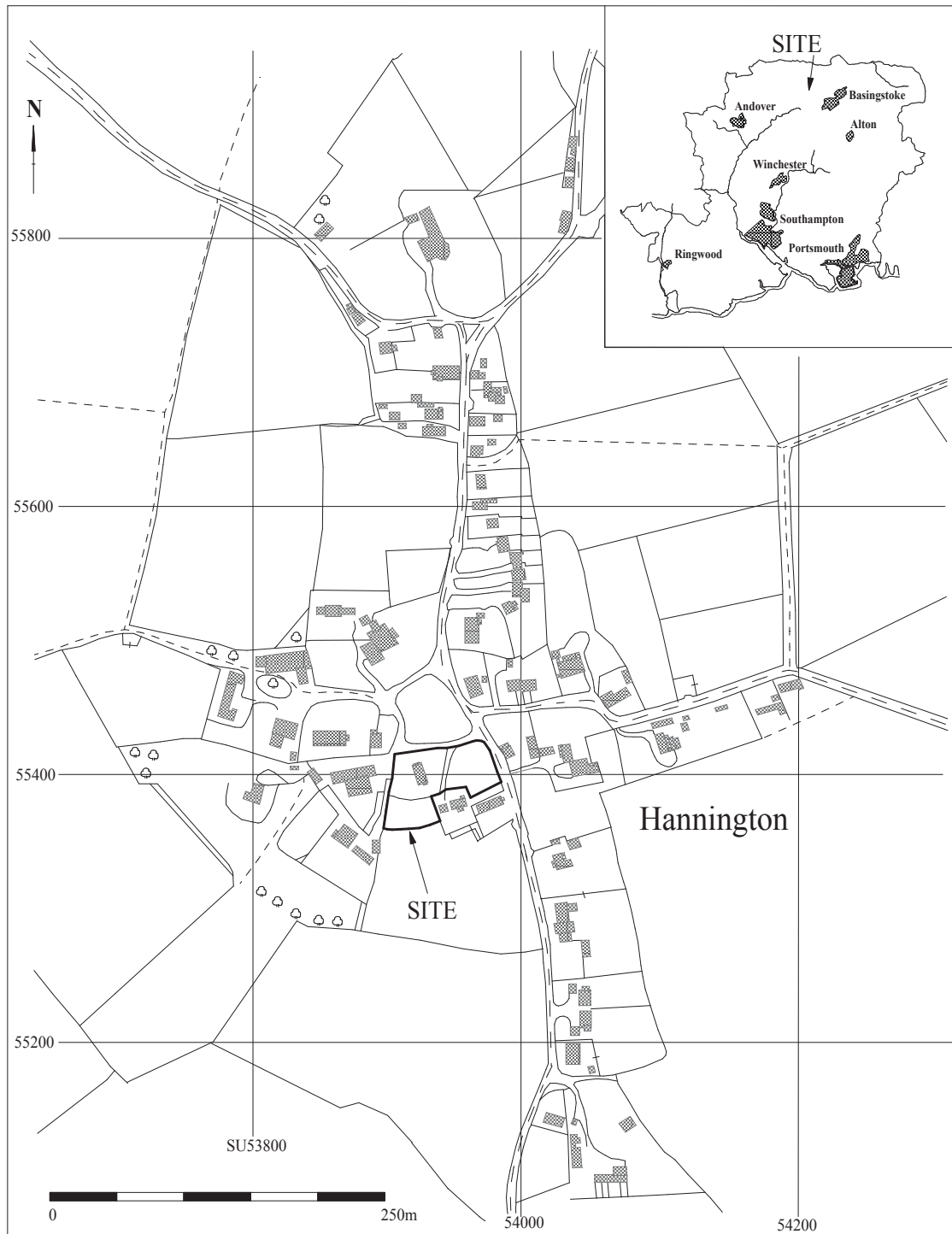


Fig 1 Far Leys, Hannington, Site location

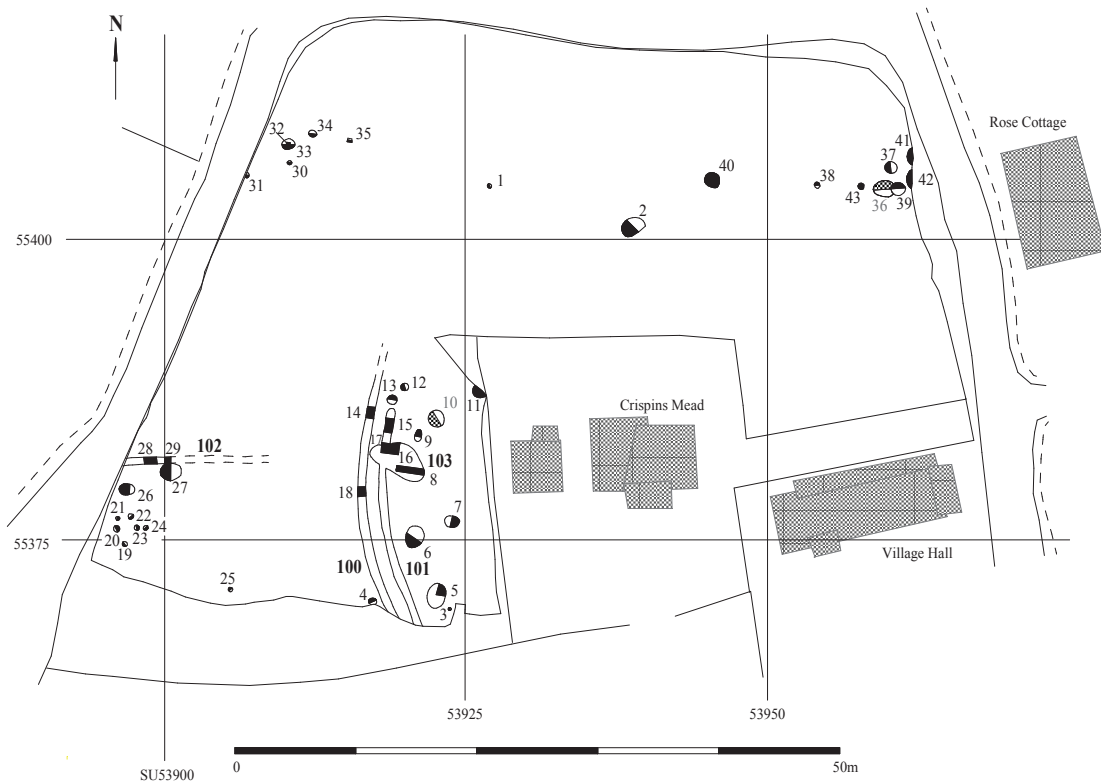


Fig 2 Far Leys, Hannington, Plan of features excavated

as the 10th century, but generally date from the early 11th century. The two pits mustered just three sherds between them, but all three are large. Pottery of this date also occurred in Phase 2 features.

Phase 2: Late 11th – late 12th century

Most of the site's features can be placed in this phase. Pits 3–9, 11, 13, 27 and 33–5 were either circular or oval in plan and varied from 1.00m to 3.00m in diameter and from 0.1m to 1.00m deep. Almost all of the pits contained a dark grey-brown sandy silt, with a high density of charcoal. Pit 39 did not contain any pottery; however its stratigraphic relationship places it in this period or later. Pit 103 possibly belongs to this period (but see below).

Pit 4 was circular, smaller than the others at just 0.6m in diameter, 0.2m deep and was filled with a dark brown/black silty clay (53) that

contained large amounts of charcoal. Scorched clay at the base of the cut suggests that this pit was burnt at some stage possibly at the time of its filling, which included twelve pieces of pottery and five pieces of iron including a knife blade. This pit lay just outside the enclosure marked by gullies 100 and 101.

Gully 102 was aligned east–west and was 0.5m wide and never more than 0.05m deep, petering out eastwards so that its precise path could not be determined. Six sherds of pottery provide its dating.

Ten post-holes contained pottery from this period although none of these formed clear building plans. Post-holes 19 to 24 were tightly clustered; almost any four of these could form a small square structure of some sort, but more probably they were part of something larger located off to the west. Similarly, a cluster of post holes at the north-western corner almost certainly represents a building in this location,

but its plan was not clear during the investigation. In this area, two very regular square post-holes (32 and 35) 0.2m across and 0.3m deep, contained a high proportion of charcoal suggesting that the posts may have been burnt *in situ*. Post-hole 32 also contained 24 sherds of pottery and several stones (some of these also burnt) used as post packing. A small number of undated pits and postholes most probably belong to the same broad phase of activity as the dated features.

Phase 3: Late 12th – 13th century

Gullies 100 and 101 were parallel to one another, 1m apart, aligned broadly north–south and curving slightly to the east. They were exposed for 25m and were between 0.2m and 0.3m deep. Both had a concave base with a U-shaped profile. Gully 100 has been assigned to this phase on the basis of it containing glazed Newbury ‘C’ Ware: the two gullies were almost certainly contemporary although it is possible one replaced the other. It is a little odd that the fairly clear division of landuse either side of the gullies (pits clustering to the east, and largely open space to the west) appears to be earlier than the gullies. Possibly these are later markings of an earlier boundary, or the latest pottery in the gullies accumulated after they had gone out of use. A later phase of activity is perhaps also represented by pit 103, which may have truncated gully 101, but this relationship was far from clear and all the pottery in pit 103 belongs to Phase 2. Pit 12 appears to be the latest feature on the site, on the basis of one sherd of Kingston ware (c.1250–1450). It also contained three sherds of Newbury ‘A’ ware, so it is possible it belongs with the earlier pits and the single small Kingston ware sherd is intrusive.

FINDS

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn (Fig. 3)

The pottery assemblage comprised 156 sherds with a total weight of 2.183kg (Table 1). The estimated vessel equivalent (EVE), by summation of surviving rimsherd circumference was 1.84. The entire stratified assemblage

is medieval with the exception of a single sherd of abraded Roman greyware. The majority of the medieval material dated to the later 11th or 12th century, although one context may be of pre-Conquest date (Table 2). The terminology used is that of MPRG (1998) and the analysis follows the standards of MPRG (2001). The entire assemblage was examined for cross-fits, but none were made, indicating that each deposit was the result of a discrete action.

Fabrics

The following fabrics were noted:

F1: Newbury ‘A’ ware, late 11th–12th century (Mephram 1997, 46–51). 103 sherds, 1233g, EVE = 1.14.

F2: Newbury ‘C’ ware, late 11th–13th century; tripod pitchers late 12th–13th century (Mephram 1997, 52–4). 35 sherds, 713g, EVE = 0.19.

F3: Cotswolds-type ware, OXAC (Mellor 1994, 44). Oolitic limestone tempered ware. 10th–14th century. 15 sherds, 216g, EVE = 0.51.

F4: Kingston Ware (Pearce & Vince 1988). c. 1250–1450. 1 sherd, 5g, EVE = 0.

F10: Post-medieval Red Earthenware. Fine ware with few visible inclusions. 16th–19th century? 1 unstratified sherd, 3g, EVE = 0.

F1001: Roman Greyware. 1 sherd, 13g.

Most of the fabrics are well-known in the region, although the presence of the Cotswolds ware is worthy of comment. This material is common in Gloucestershire and north and west Oxfordshire (Mellor 1994, fig. 23), but is rare in the south and east of the county, and at sites south of the Thames. However, Minety ware, a later 12th century ware that is from a similar Cotswolds source, has been noted in Newbury (Mephram 1997, 59). The Cotswolds ware noted here is in the earliest features, so it may be that it was being imported into the region until the Newbury wares, presumably from a more local source, came into production in the later 11th century.

The pottery occurrence per ceramic phase is shown in Table 3. The complete lack of Cotswolds-type wares (F3) from any contexts later than CP2 would support the idea that the material was replaced by local wares in the later phases.

Table 1 Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

Group	Cut	Deposit	F1001		F1		F2		F3		F4		F10	
			No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt
		unstrat					1	6					1	3
	3	52			3	20			1	2				
	4	53			17	154			1	6				
	5	54			5	23	2	24	2	20				
	6	55			6	116			1	6				
	6	56			2	17	1	12	1	27				
	7	57			14	182	1	42						
103	8	58			1	30								
103	8	59			2	25								
	9	60			1	12								
	10	62							2	33				
	11	63			4	48								
	12	64			3	23					1	5		
	13	65			2	11	2	35						
100	14	67			6	34	1	8						
101	15	68			2	15	2	6						
103	16	69			1	30			1	2				
101	17	70					2	14						
100	18	71			10	196								
	19	72			1	10								
	20	73			1	6								
	21	74			1	2			1	2				
	22	75			1	9								
	24	77							1	25				
	27	80			6	141	6	36	3	10				
102	28	82			2	40								
	30	84			2	16								
	32	86			1	5	17	530						
	33	87			6	48								
	34	88			2	18								
	35	89			1	2								
	36	90							1	83				
	38	94	1	13										
	Total		1	13	103	1233	35	713	15	216	1	5	1	3

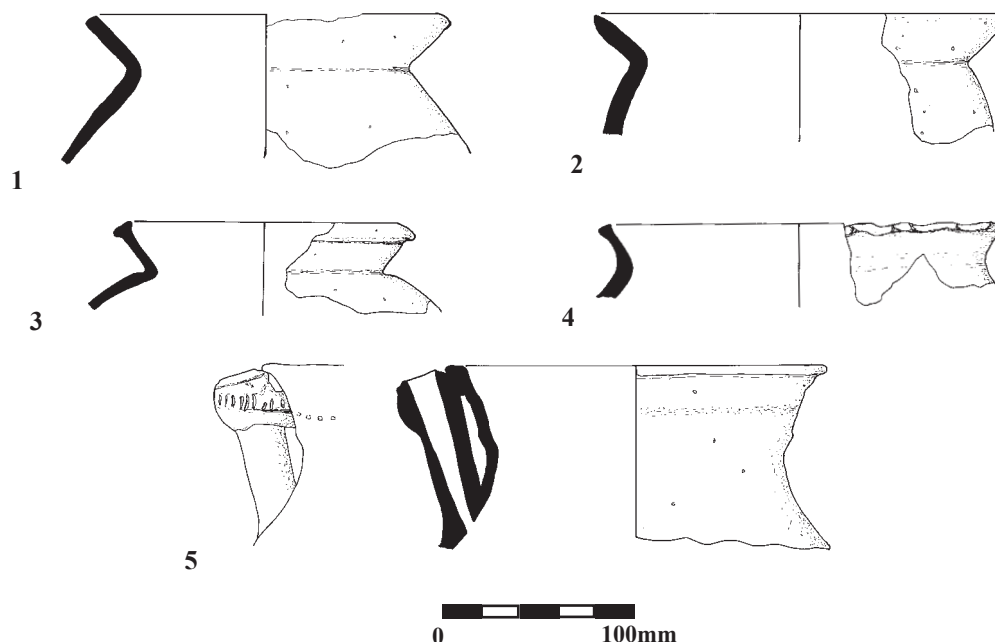


Fig 3 Far Leys, Hannington, pottery (see text for details)

Fig. 3.1 Pit 36, fill 90, F3. Upper part of jar. Pale grey fabric with patchy grey, orange and dark brown outer surface.

Fig. 3.2 Pit 27, fill 80, F1. Jar rim. Coarse, hand-built fabric flint with inclusions up to 3mm. Dark grey fabric with patchy orange and black surfaces.

Fig. 3.3 Pit 28, fill 82, F1. Jar rim. Light grey fabric with dark brown outer surface, orange inner.

Fig. 3.4 Pit 7, fill 57, F1. Jar rim. Uniform dark grey fabric.

Fig. 3.5 Post-hole 32, fill 86, F2. Fragmented

tripod pitcher. Grey fabric with patchy pale orange and grey surfaces. Patchy, poor quality and incompletely vitrified green glaze on outer surface. Glaze has areas with angular white flint up to 5mm adhering to it.

Discussion

Other than the presence of the Cotswolds wares, the pottery generally displays a similar pattern in both forms and fabrics to that at Bartholomew Street, Newbury (Mephram 1997,

Table 2 Ceramic Phase Chronology and Pottery Occurrence per Phase

Phase	Date (Century AD)	Defining Wares	No	Wt (g)	EVE
CP1	11th?	F3	3	116	0.25
CP2	Late 11th–Late 12th	F1, F2	119	1426	1.49
CP3	Late 12th–Mid 13th	F2 glazed	27	591	0.10
CP4	Mid 13th–Early 14th	F4	4	28	0
Total			153	2161	1.84

Table 3 Pottery Occurrence per Ceramic Phase by Fabric, expressed as a percentage of the Phase Assemblage (by weight)

<i>Phase</i>	<i>F1</i>	<i>F2</i>	<i>F3</i>	<i>F4</i>	<i>Total</i>
CP1	0	0	100%	0	116g
CP2	82.1%	10.9%	7.0%	0	1426g
CP3	6.6%	93.4%	0	0	591g
CP4	82.1%	0	0	17.9%	28g
Total	1233g	707g	216g	5g	2161g

fig. 26) and is typical of medieval assemblages generally. The high proportion of F1 in CP4 is almost certainly due to the small assemblage size (CP4 is a single feature dated by a single sherd). Vessel types were limited to jars (100% of the CP1 and CP2 forms) and tripod pitchers (100% of CP3 forms). This assemblage suggests that Hannington was supplied by the same market system which supplied Newbury. The range of wares present indicates that activity at the site may have begun in the pre-Conquest period, and continued until around the middle of the 13th century. The assemblage appears to have been entirely domestic.

Metalwork by Richard Oram

Sixteen iron objects weighing 575g were recovered from the site. These include seven nail fragments from two pits. Three flat plates of iron, roughly 30 mm square, one of which is rusted to a base sherd of pottery and one which appears to have saw-like serrations along one edge, were recovered along with a knife blade from pit 4. A curved blade, possibly from a sickle was found in pit 13 and a handle in pit 6. These have been dated by associated pottery finds to the late 11th to late 12th century.

Other finds by Richard Oram

Eighteen pieces of burnt clay weighing a total of 113g were recovered from five features (4, 7, 8, 27 and 29). No showed any feature such as wattle impressions to indicate source/function. Ten pieces of brick and tile (280g) came from seven features (11, 17, 22, 29, 33, 38 and 41). Almost all were roof tiles but no pieces had

any form of hole or marking and all were small and abraded. Just 11 pieces of animal bone were recovered. These represent the expected range of domesticated animals and the details are in archive.

CONCLUSION

Domesday Book, along with the close proximity of the 11th-century church, indicates that the area was occupied in the Late Saxon and Early Saxo-Norman period. It is of no surprise therefore that this watching brief recovered archaeological remains of this date: gullies, pits and postholes, the majority of which date from the late 11th to late 12th centuries were discovered, in addition to some slight evidence of Late Saxon activity. The remains clearly represent a domestic site, probably elements of two rural small-holdings, and may have been part of the village recorded by the compilers of Domesday Book. The boundary marked by gullies 100 and 101 may have been either side of a bank or a hedge (although these could as easily be subdivisions within a single land holding

The layout of Hannington today (Figure 1) is essentially that mapped in the early 19th century and can, in broad terms, probably be projected back to the medieval period. The village is not much larger than when it was recorded in Domesday Book, and in 1086 it had been much larger than in 1840. There may have been two foci corresponding to the two manors of Domesday Book, one at the north end centred on a manor house and road junction, and one centred on the church and a green located at another road junction to the south, but in fact

occupation seems to straggle along the roads rather than cluster on any focus. The absence of obvious building remains on this site by the green, and the apparently early abandonment, suggest a model of development which moves us away from viewing the village green as a focus in terms of layout (Wrathmell 1994, 184 and fig. 2b; *cf.* Jones & Page 2006). There cannot have been much pressure on land for this relatively large central plot to have remained empty for so long. Even if the gullies represent a plot boundary, it was short-lived.

The site appears to have been occupied for only a short time, and the absence of later features, in such a central location in the village, is something of a mystery; the plot is still shown as vacant on the 1840 Tithe map. It may be that we should simply remember not to equate 'no new subsoil features were created' with 'the site was abandoned'. Nonetheless, the 13th and subsequent centuries should have seen just as many pits being dug as previously, if the site had seen *the same sort of use*. Contraction (or changes of use) within otherwise successful villages, even before the 14th-century crises,

can in fact be attested in many places (*cf.* Jones & Page 2006, 203–220) and further work in Hannington may be able to shed more light on the development of the layout.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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