



A brief guide for residents and visitors.

Covington is a parish of some 1294 acres situated at the highest point in Huntingdonshire, overlooking the Kym valley. The soil is fertile and there is a ready water supply from springs appearing between the Oxford and chalky boulder clay layers. There have been good communications in the area for centuries, via a network of north-south tracks linking east-west trunk roads, while, in the past, the river systems of the Nene to the west and the Ouse to the east provided access to other parts of the region and even the coast. Nearby Raunds and other East Northamptonshire villages were mineral-rich. All these advantages made the parish a desirable place to settle – well evidently people have thought so for at least the last 2000 years and still do today!

To date, the following phases of occupation in the parish have been identified: Iron Age, Roman, Saxon, Medieval, Post Medieval and (of course) Modern. We have been using a variety of archaeological techniques (e.g fieldwalking, magnetometry, surveying, testpitting, interpretation of aerial photographs, landscape and map analysis) to find out about the people who lived here in earlier times, what they did and how they helped shape the village as we know it today.

Prehistoric - Roman

Although prehistoric activity is known in the locality, we currently have no evidence of settlement prior to the Iron Age, with the exception of this



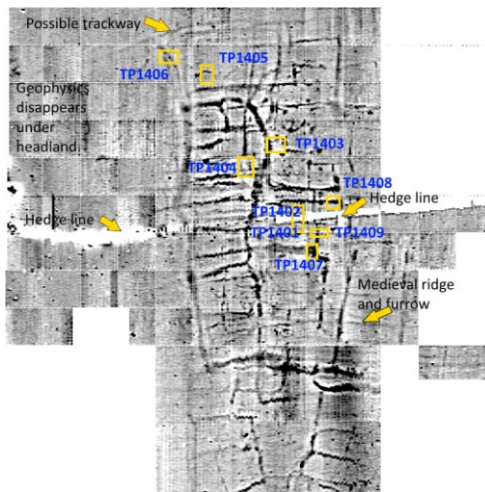
beautiful early Bronze Age barbed and tanged arrowhead (which was found on a property near the church) and one known Bronze Age pottery sherd. However, there are at least four Romano- British (50BD-100AD) sites, of different sizes and locations.

This is the magnetometry survey of the largest site. It appears to be a typical 'ladder' settlement, from the arrangement of a string of enclosures N-S with continuous boundaries to the west and to the east. The western boundary is thought to be a trackway and the eastern a substantial ditch which still drains the field today.

The northern part of the site seems to be the oldest, although pottery from the first century AD was also found in TP1401 (see plot) on the hedge line.

Roundhouses and their enclosures can be seen in the upper half of the plot.

Somewhere, there is a slightly better status Roman farmhouse (rectangular, wattle and daub) as sherds of Samian and other fine pottery (eg Colour coated ware from the potteries of Durobrivae, near Peterborough) have been found. There is a curious and as yet unexplained arrangement of paddocks at the bottom of this plot.



Finds include: pottery, daub, bone tools, butchered and cat/dog chewed bone, fragment of quern stone. We even found some poo!



Saxon-Medieval

Occupation of the Roman site appears to have ended relatively suddenly: we don't know why but perhaps the wetter climate of the 4th-5th centuries made



the land difficult to work? Recent discoveries of Early to Middle Saxon (5th-9th century) pottery and associated slag, in a different part of the parish, show that the area was not completely abandoned. This site has yet to be fully investigated, but fieldwalking has already produced a significant quantity of Saxon pottery, in particular, one of the largest assemblages of Ipswich Ware in the immediate area.

Medieval pottery is found in many modern fields surrounding the village,

thought to be due to the then practice of spreading household midden as fertiliser. There are also well documented moats. The historic pages on Google Earth reveal large areas of ridge and furrow and furlong boundaries, but little of these is visible today. The church dates from at least 1120 and

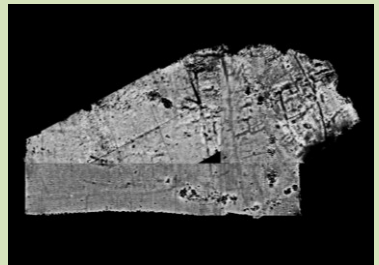


large amounts of pottery (much from East Northamptonshire and other local potteries) contemporary with this period have been found in garden testpits south of Cross Street. A stretch of medieval tenements east of Keyston Road (relating to the ten tofts, ten gardens referred to in manorial documents*) have been the focus of our medieval investigations. One property in particular has produced large amounts of Lyveden/Stanion sherds, with other pottery kilns such as Brill/Boarstall and Potterspury well represented. There is also a potential stone surface, associated with the datable pot.

MEDIEVAL POTTERY FOUND IN COVINGTON



A Training Dig., organised by Jigsaw Cambridgeshire, will be investigating features shown on this geophysical survey, carried out near the garden pit mentioned above.



Methodology

Fieldwalking:

A reference point was determined and a 20m x 20m grid set out and mapped. A sampling process was used: each participant had 20 minutes to collect what they could from their square. At the end of the time, another square was started. Finds from each square were put into labelled bags.

Magnetometry:

A reference point was determined and a 20m x 20m or a 40m x 40m grid set out and mapped. The machine used was a FM256 kindly loaned by Jigsaw (Cambridgeshire). Data was processed using Snuffler Geophysics software.



Testpitting:

Targets were selected from the geophysics data. 2m x 1m pits were laid out. The turf was removed and set aside. The pits were dug in contexts (layers or features). Finds were collected, bagged and labelled. Plan and section drawings were made and photographs taken. Pits were usually closed when natural geology (chalky boulder clay) was reached but on occasion there were other reasons e.g. weather and lack of time.

Finds processing:



Finds were washed, dried and rebagged. After training sessions with experts, the group spent several winter afternoons sorting, identifying, weighing, counting and recording. This data was then entered onto a spreadsheet and analysed using pivot charts.

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