

PEELING BACK THE LAYERS A COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT AT UNDER WHITLE, SHEEN

A report on the metalwork recovered during excavations from 20th June 2016 to 9th July 2016

on behalf of The Tudor Farming Interpretation Group for Peeling Back the Layers
Community Archaeology Project

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	2
Figures and Tables	4
1.0 SUMMARY	5
1.1	5
1.2	5
1.3	6
1.4	6
2.0 INTRODUCTION	7
2.1 Site Location.....	7
2.2 Trenches	7
2.2.1 Trench 1	7
2.2.2 Trench 2	9
2.2.2 Trench 3	9
2.2.3 Trench 4	10
3.0 RESULTS	11
3.1 Trench 1	12
3.1.2 The Nails.....	12
3.1.3 Fittings and fastenings	12
3.1.4 Other finds	13
3.2 Trench 2	13
3.2.1 The Nails.....	13
3.2.2 Fittings and fastenings	14
3.2.3 Containers	16
3.2.4 Other finds	17
3.3 Trench 3	19
3.4 Trench 4	19

3.5 Dating and Use.....	19
4.0 DISCUSSION.....	21
4.1 Iron smithing.....	21
4.2 The Fireplace	22
4.3 Cellar.....	22
4.4 Other points to consider	23
5.0 CONCLUSION	24
6.0 Acknowledgements.....	25
7.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY	26
8.0 APPENDICES.....	27
8.1 Appendix 1 – Nail types.....	27

FIGURES AND TABLES

Fig. 2.1: Location of Under Whittle Farm in the Staffordshire Moorlands	8
Fig. 2.2: Detail from 1845 tithe map	10
Table 3.1: Nail types: types and descriptions are devised on those found at Under Whittle.....	11
Fig. 3.1a and 3.1b: (SF49)	13
Fig. 3.2: Bar/bracket (SF1200)	14
Fig. 3.3: Grate (SF1461)	15
Fig. 3.4: Harrow (SF1486).....	15
Fig. 3.5: Chain (SF1497).....	15
Fig. 3.6: Talcum powder tin (SF1468)	16
Fig. 3.7: Irish Stew tin (SF1471).....	16
Fig. 3.8: Possible cocoa powder tin (SF1479)	16
Fig. 3.9: "Players" cigarettes tin (SF1488).....	17
Fig. 3.10: Possible "Colman's Mustard" tin (SF1493)	17
Fig. 3.11: Window lead (SF1229).....	18
Fig. 3.12: Buttons (SF1450a&b).....	18
Fig. 3.13: Toy (SF1475)	18
Fig. 3.14: Horseshoe (SF2075).....	19
Table 8.1 Nail types: types and descriptions are devised on those found at Under Whittle.....	27
Fig. 8.1: Type 1 (SF102)	28
Fig. 8.2: Type 2 (SF1035)	28
Fig. 8.3: Type 4 (SF1453 top)	28
Fig. 8.4: Type 5 (SF1448)	28
Fig. 8.5: Type 6 poss or type 7. (SF118)	28
Fig. 8.6: Type 8 (SF1213)	28
Fig. 8.7: Type 10 (SF1231)	28
Fig. 8.8: Type 11 (SF1449)	28
Fig. 8.9: Type 12 (SF2060a) top left.....	28

1.0 SUMMARY

1.1

During the archaeological excavations, commissioned by the Tudor Farming Interpretation Group (TFIG) to explore the archaeology of Under Whitle and provide an opportunity for local people to gain training and participatory experience in a community based project, a number of metal objects were recovered. The processing of the metal objects was undertaken over the summer of 2016 by a number of volunteers. A more detailed analysis of the metal objects was undertaken in early November 2016.

1.2

These metal objects were hand collected according to 'Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials' (Parker Heath, 2016). The analysis of the metal objects was undertaken with reference to a number of relevant publications: Moorhouse, S. (1971) 'Finds from Basing House, Hampshire (1540-1645), in *Journal of Post Medieval Archaeology*, vol5 pp35-51; Mayes, P & Lawrence, B (1983), *Sandal Castle Excavations 1964-1973*, pp279-281; Historical Metallurgy Society, (2008), *Metals and Metalworking: a research framework for archaeometallurgy*, HMS Occasional Publication 6.London: HMS; Historic England (2015), *Archaeometallurgy: Guidelines for Best Practice*, Historic England. The aims of the excavation were to recover dating evidence from the archaeological features highlighted as suitable for excavation by earlier site surveys, find out what various features were, how they were used, how this use may have changed through time, and whether some of the features could be identified with properties and peoples identified through the historical research. It was also hoped that aims of both the East Midlands and West Midlands Heritage strategies could be addressed, including the medieval and post-medieval ceramics industries and add to our understanding of the development of manorial estates and the nature of rural settlements. Despite the incomplete nature of the record, it is believed the metal objects have indeed added to our understanding of these aims, in particular the nature of rural settlements, through providing a cross section of the various items used and deposited, and therefore activities that took place at Under Whitle from the post-medieval and modern periods.

1.3

Due to time and budget constraints, it is believed that many metal objects, like many other artefacts, still lie undiscovered. This is especially true of the cellar (Trench 2). In light of this, the record of metal objects presented here is necessarily incomplete.

1.4

The metal objects recorded and analysed in this report includes all items that can be determined to be made of metal of any kind. This has resulted in a wide range of object types from nails to toys. It has been stated that the potential of using the “archaeometallurgical resource” has not been used as fully as it could be “in pursuit of the past and its people” (HMS 2008, p67) and it is hope that this short report on the metal finds from Under Whittle go some way to rectifying this.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Site Location

The project is based at Under Whittle Farm, which lies in the valley of the River Dove between the villages of Sheen and Longnor, Staffordshire, centred on NGR SK 10772 64001 at a height of c. 260m OD (Fig. 2.1). The site is located on deposits of Bowland Shale Formation (Mudstone, Siltstone, and Sandstone) and this sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 313–335 million years ago in the Carboniferous period. No superficial deposits are recorded on the valley slopes (British Geological Survey). Topographically the site lays immediately to the northeast of the current farmhouse and the Dove Valley Activity Centre. The property displays significant topographical variation across the area of c.2.5ha and within this area four areas were initially targeted for excavation as the result of various archaeological surveys including geophysical surveys carried out by Trent & Peak Archaeology (TPA) and documentary evidence, as these demonstrated the presence of a number of potential buried archaeological features.

2.2 Trenches

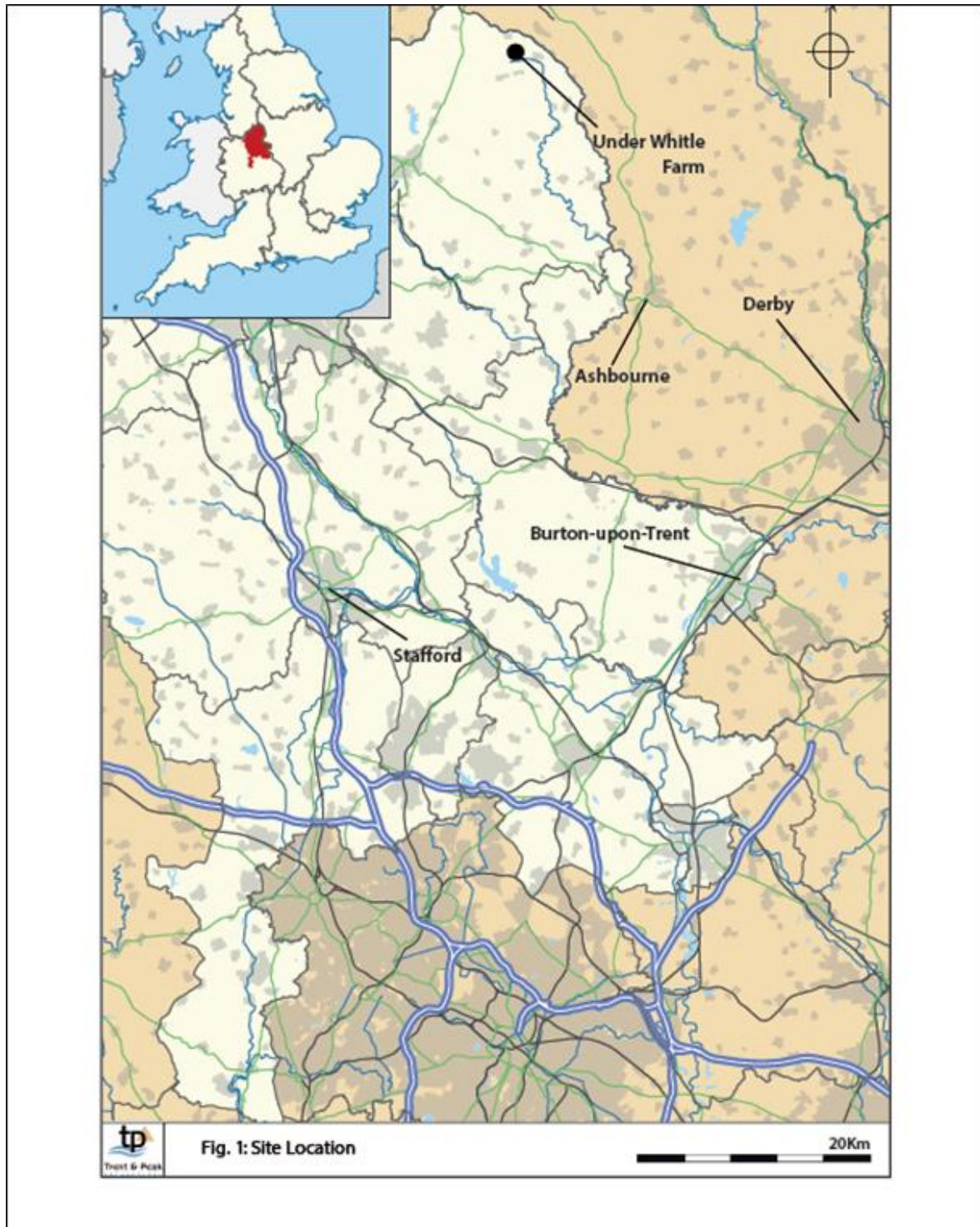
Objects made of metal were recovered from each of the 4 areas: Trench 1, 2, 3 & 4. The excavation of Trench 1, the south side of Trench 2, Trench 3 and Trench 4 were undertaken by Dr Ian Parker Heath and the reports can be found here: (Parker Heath 2016a [Report on the excavations at Under Whittle](#) and here Parker Heath 2016b [Report on the extension to Trench 3 7th-16th September 2016](#) . Excavation of Trench 2 (north side of the cellar and the cellar itself) was undertaken by Trent and Peak Archaeology and the results of this excavation can be found in their report (Malone 2016 [Report on the Excavations of Trench 2](#)).

2.2.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 was the site of a possible building, shown on the 1845 tithe map and described in the schedule as 'Barn Field' (see fig. 2.2 field no.52). The building is not present on the Ordnance Survey map surveyed in 1879 and published 1884. Following excavation, it became clear that a building had stood on this site, although not all walls could be identified. Due to the name of the field on the tithe map of 1845

and the nature of the finds (including the metalwork as presented here) the identification of this building as a barn is a sensible one.

Fig. 2.1: Location of Under Whittle Farm in the Staffordshire Moorlands



2.2.2 Trench 2

Trench 2 was the location of a house, indicated on the tithe map of 1845 (see fig. 2.2 field no.45) and by an extant cellar. Like the building described above, on the later Ordnance Survey map (1884), the house is no longer present. Indeed, census surveys show that the house was inhabited in 1841 but no longer by 1851 when it is described as uninhabited.

The excavation of Trench 2, map evidence, and the evidence from historical documents such as the census records (see Harris 2016 for the [Final Report on the Historical Research](#)) make it clear that the cellar must have had at least three 'phases'. The first phase was when the cellar was an integral part of the house from the time the house was first built in the late 17th Century (Malone 2016). At this time, it would, in all likelihood, have been roofed by the wooden floor of the room above. The second phase was after the house was abandoned and it collapsed or was demolished. At this time, it appears that the cellar was re-roofed with a vaulted ceiling, which is visible today, and probably used as a root vegetable store. This happened sometime between 1845 and 1879. Finally, the cellar was no longer used as a store but as a depository for rubbish. From the analysis of the artefacts recovered, including the metal objects, this seems to have happened after the turn of the 20th century and continued until the property was purchased by the current owners, Paul and Elspeth Walker, in 1982, who have assured me they have never use it for any other purpose than as a 'cave' for their adventurous children (which suggests a fourth phase).

2.2.2 Trench 3

Trench 3 was positioned on the site of a probable house platform (Rylatt 2005, No.13, p. 8). After initial excavation in June and July 2016, it was decided further excavation would be fruitful and an extension to the original Trench 3 was excavated from 7th – 16th September, 2016. Whilst no structural evidence was uncovered, apart from ephemeral possible evidence of daub, small post holes and burnt wood that has been dated to 1350 +/- 30 years (Parker Heath, 2016b), artefactual evidence largely in the form of pottery has proved promising (see Goodwin, 2016).

2.2.3 Trench 4

Trench 4 crossed the end of a bank and a possible opening in this bank which was interpreted as a possible field boundary and ditch by Rylatt (2005, No.16, p.9) Only 1 metal object was recovered – a metal rod from the top soil.

Fig. 2.2: Detail from 1845 tithe map



3.0 RESULTS

Below, the finds are set out according to Trench and type. All finds can be found in the 'Catalogue of metal objects', accompanying this document (available as pdf and excel document). See also 'Appendix 1: Nail types', where images of each type can be found.

Table 3.1: Nail types: types and descriptions are devised on those found at Under Whittle

Nail Type	Description	Total no.	Date
1	Small nail, round head, used for woodworking/carpentry Length 21-37mm, head 6-10mm, shank 3-6mm	18 (11 poss)	C19 th
2	Small nail, side head, used for woodworking/carpentry Length 28-47mm, head 8-15mm, shank 4-10mm	13 (5 poss)	C19 th
3	As Type 1 but wider, longer, 'heavier duty', round head, used for woodworking/carpentry Length 46.5-48mm, head 13-18mm, shank 6-8mm	5 (3 poss)	C19 th
4	Heavy duty, square head, stud, woodworking/carpentry Length 60-85mm, head 14-27mm, 5-10mm	5 (3 poss)	C19 th
5	Long nail, for gates Length 96-137mm, head 15-19.9mm, shank 5-10mm	4 (2 poss)	C19 th
6	Horse shoe nail. Head that tapers down into shank Length 62.5, head 9mm, shank 5mm	2 poss	C19 th
7	As Type 4 but shorter Length 53.1mm, head 17.4mm, 9mm	1	C19 th
8	As for Type 2 but larger Length 54-80mm, head 15-29, shank 13mm	2 (1 poss)	C19 th
9	Long nail, elongated head, square shank, bent Length 130, head 35, shank 8mm	1	C19 th
10	Long nail, domed oblong head, similar to 9 but shorter head, similar to 5. Length 135mm, head 16mm, shank 6mm	1	C19 th
11	Round head, galvanized, 20 th C Length 81mm, head 12mm, shank 6mm	1	C20 th
12	As for Type 1 but longer, thinner than Type 3 Length 65mm, head 9mm, shank 5	1	C19 th

3.1 Trench 1

39 of a total of 98 metal finds came from Trench 1. Of these, 30 are nails. Nail types 1-9 are represented (see Table 3.1). The remaining metal finds are fittings and fastenings (5 - described as 'bracket' (SF50), 'bracket/hinge/handle' (SF72), 'hinge' (SF69a), 'bar/bracket'(SF74) and 'fitting/fastening'(SF49)), 1 'pin' (SF128), 1 'possible spur' (SF69b), 1 'blade' (SF38) and 1 'waste' (SF90).

3.1.2 *The Nails*

The nails come from contexts (001), (002) and (003) – all the contexts that produced finds of any kind - with 9 from (001), 8 from (002), 8 from (003). For 5 of the nails it is currently unknown which of the 3 contexts they came from, although it is likely they came from (003). This will be ascertained from theodolite readings as soon as possible.

Context (001) is topsoil. 2 of the nails from here were of Type 1 (SF36, SF37); 2 of Type 2 (SF16, SF52); 3 of Type 3 (SF32, SF34, SF53); 1 of Type 5 (SF54, SF68a); and 1 of Type 8 (SF33). Context (002) is described as subsoil. Of the 8 that came from here, only 1 was definitely of Type 1 (SF102) with a further 2 being possibly Type 1 or 2 (SF85), and possibly Type 1-3 (SF79). Apart from the two just mentioned no others are of Type 2 and likewise for Type 3. Of the remainder, 2 were of Type 4 (SF92, SF122); 2 possibly Type 5 (SF68A, SF68b); and 1 possibly of Type 9 (SF80). Context (003) is described as a possible demolition layer. From here 8 nails were definitely recovered. It is likely that the nails for which the context is unknown came from here also. These will be therefore taken together here: 7 nails of Type 1 came from here (SF89b-e, SF117, SF123, SF124); 2 possibly of Type 2 (SF89a, SF125); 1 of Type 3 (SF126); 2 possibly of Type 6 (SF88, SF127); and 1 of Type 7 (SF118).

3.1.3 *Fittings and fastenings*

Fittings and fastenings are those items which were possibly integral to the building that once stood here. From Context (001), only 1 'bracket' was recovered (SF50). From Context (002), 1 fastening in two pieces with 2 curled ends (SF49 see Fig. 3.1a & 3.1b) was originally thought to be a horse bit, but after consultation with the 'Museum of the Horse' it is not. 1 bracket/hinge handle (SF72) came from this context, 1 possible hinge (SF69a) and 1 possible bar/bracket (SF74).

Fig. 3.1a and 3.1b: (SF49)



3.1.4 Other finds

The 'blade' (SF38) thought to be part of a sickle or possibly a plough coulter came from (001). The possible 'spur' or part of a spur (SF69b) came from (002) as did what could be possible waste or hammerscale (SF90). And the 'pin' (SF128), too thin to be a nail, most likely came from (003) the possible demolition layer.

3.2 Trench 2

The largest amount of metal objects, 45, was recovered from Trench 2 including the north, south and the cellar. Of these, 13 are nails. Nail types 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 10 & 11 are represented here (see Table 3.1 for descriptions of types). Of the other metal objects, 12 can be described as fittings and fastenings: 4 bar/brackets (SF1200, SF1480, SF1485, SF1490); 2 'pegs' (SF1243, SF1232); 1 chain (SF1497); 1 hook (SF1498); 1 grate (SF1461); and 3 simply fittings and/or fastenings (SF1496, SF1494, SF1495). 5 are containers of some sort (SF1468, SF1471, SF1479, SF1488, SF1493); 2 are toys (SF1032, SF1475); 3 buttons (SF1446, SF1450) ; 5 'other' (SF1410, SF1418, SF1487, SF1491, SF1492); 2 examples of window lead (SF1229, SF1451); 1 piece off a harrow (SF1486) 1 waste (SF1464) and 1 undiagnostic find (BF1024).

3.2.1 The Nails

In Trench 2, 7 came from Context (101) the topsoil at the southern end of Trench 2, 1 from (104) subsoil at the north end, 2 from (110), 1 from (112); and 1 from (115), a rubble and mortar layer.

Of the 7 nails which were recovered from (101), 2 are Type1 (SF1130, SF1159), 2 are Type 2 (SF1134b, SF1035), 1 of Type 4 (SF1075a), 1 of Type 5 (SF1448) and 1 of Type 8 (SF1075b). See Table 3.1 for details of types.

3.2.2 Fittings and fastenings

Like for Trench 1, fittings and fastenings are those objects that could have once been integral to the house that once stood at the site of Trench 2.

The bars/brackets (SF1200 see Fig. 3.2, SF1480, SF1485, SF1490,) were all found in Context (120), the fill of the ash pit in fire place. 1 of the so named fittings, SF1494, was also found in (120) and the grate (SF1461 see Fig. 3.3) was found in Context (123) another layer in the fill of the ash pit. Also found in this context (123) was found the piece off a harrow (SF1486 see Fig. 3.4). Initially, this was thought to be a trivet or stand used in the preparation food but, after consultation with local farmers, has been re-interpreted. Another fitting (SF1494), the chain (SF1497 see Fig.3.5) and the hook, were all found in Context (121), the fill of the cellar. Finally, 1 peg (SF1243) was found in Context (104) and the other (SF1232) in Context (115).

Fig. 3.2: Bar/bracket (SF1200)



Fig. 3.3: Grate (SF1461)



Fig. 3.4: Harrow (SF1486)



Fig. 3.5: Chain (SF1497)



3.2.3 Containers

The 5 containers all came from the fill of the cellar, context (121), and are tins that once contained talcum powder (SF1468 see Fig. 3.6), Irish stew (SF1471 see Fig. 3.7), possibly cocoa (SF1479 see Fig. 3.8), Players' cigarettes (SF1488 see Fig. 3.9) and possibly mustard (SF1493 see Fig. 3.10). These are all examples of the rubbish that was dumped in the cellar dating from the mid-late 20th Century.

Fig. 3.6: Talcum powder tin (SF1468)

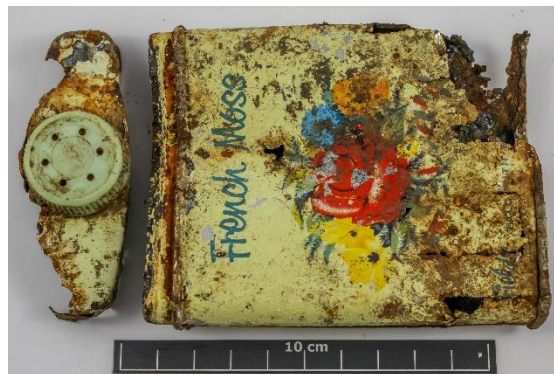


Fig. 3.7: Irish Stew tin (SF1471)



Fig. 3.8: Possible cocoa powder tin (SF1479)



Fig. 3.9: "Players" cigarettes tin (SF1488)



Fig. 3.10: Possible "Colman's Mustard" tin (SF1493)



3.2.4 Other finds

The window lead (SF1229 see Fig. 3.11, SF1451) was found in 2 different contexts (112), (114) respectively. 1 button, SF1446, was found in the topsoil (101), and the other 2 buttons, SF1450a&b (see Fig. 3.12), were found in (110). The toys were also found in different contexts with 1 (SF1032) from the topsoil (101) and the other, (SF1475 see Fig. 3.13) from the fill for the cellar (121). The pipe (SF1492) and the wick holder (SF1487) were also from the cellar (121). The waste material was from

(123) the fill of the ash pit and the 'undiagnostic' lumps of corroded iron were found in context (110).

Fig. 3.11: Window lead (SF1229)



Fig. 3.12: Buttons (SF1450a&b)



Fig. 3.13: Toy (SF1475)



3.3 Trench 3

13 of the metal finds came from Trench 3, during both the initial excavation and the extension. Of these, 10 are nails or possible nails representing Types 1, 2 and 12. Finds SF2071a & SF2098 are only possibly nails due to their very corroded nature. They all came from context (201) the topsoil except for one of the possible nails, 2098, that came from (202) the subsoil. Of the 3 remaining finds, 2 are undiagnostic and come from (202) and (206), and the other is a horseshoe of probable 18th – 19th century date (SF2075 see Fig. 3.14).

Fig. 3.14: Horseshoe (SF2075)



3.4 Trench 4

Only 1 metal find came from trench 4 and this was a metal rod from the topsoil (301). It is difficult to know what this was used for but it is possibly from a farm machine.

3.5 Dating and Use

The nails proved difficult to date by Type alone, due to their very corroded nature and the assigning of a type, in many cases, was done only tentatively. However, many of the nails appeared to be hand-made and could have been made on site. Only 1 nail of Type 11 appeared to be mid-later 20th Century and machine made.

Dating according to context also proved difficult as many of the metal finds were from disturbed contexts such as topsoil and subsoil. However, the pottery also found from these contexts can give some suggestion of date and point to the 19th century. The metal containers could be dated by style, type and content, such as the Colman's mustard tin (SF1493).

4.0 DISCUSSION

4.1 Iron smithing

It is possible that iron smithing, at least on a small scale may have taken place at the barn, for which some evidence was found in Trench 1. In the first place there is the evidence of the relatively large number of nails and possible hammerscale (90). In addition, a number of contexts (005), (008), (014) show evidence of burning and might indicate the hearths needed for small scale smithing on site.

Whilst the limited amount of evidence and its tentative nature might urge caution, to support this idea is the fact that secondary smithing, the act of shaping workable iron into useable objects, did take place in many rural settlements (Historic England, 2015 p.5) and whilst 'industrial' sites can be immediately identifiable as such, small scale activity, such as might be expected at Under Whittle, would be difficult to identify with certainty anyway (*ibid* p6). For example, hammerscale, of which there appears to be only one piece of evidence, is notoriously difficult to spot whilst excavating, often only being recoverable through wet sieving. In addition, in anticipation of the lack of smithing tools being used as argument against a suggestion of blacksmithing, Young (2012) states that tools are "rarely associated with place of work" and so we should not be surprised at their absence.

Most important for blacksmithing is the hearth and there are a number of possibilities for this in Trench 1. But even without this evidence of burning, the place could still be a possible smithing site. For example, if a hearth was above ground, as they tended to be from the 19th century onwards, if not before, they would not necessarily leave any trace (Historic England, 2015 p11) and the position may only be determined by remains e.g. hammerscale, of which, admittedly we have little evidence but, as already stated, can be very small and easily missed during excavation (above and *ibid* p12).

Other finds that might be expected would be an anvil and the remains of charcoal coke and/or coal. The latter was present but not the former and whilst the former would be convincing evidence of smithing, the presence of charcoal and coke is not. In addition, the results of the magnetometry survey may have been expected to show greater readings at this point, but revealed very little at all. In fact, looking at

the magnetometry in isolation would have given little reason to open Trench 1 at all. All of this urges caution but we can certainly suggest that smithing did take place. Of course, it would not be possible to call the barn a forge only that, on occasion, metal objects that were needed around the farm were made here. These would be objects such as the nails already mentioned, that may then have been used in the building and maintenance of the barn itself. Likewise possible repairs could be made to ploughs or sickles of which the 'blade' (38) may be an example. Many of the nails found in the demolition layer (003), could have been made on site before being used in the building itself. In respect of horse shoes and their nails, however, there is only one example of a horse shoe (2075) and this from trench 3 and only 2 possible horse shoe nails (88 & 127) from Trench 1 itself. It is also known that there was an established farrier at Crowdecote throughout much of the period under investigation.

4.2 The Fireplace

Other contexts associated with metal finds that prove interesting are (120) and (123). These two make up the fill of (119) the ash pit in the fireplace. The metal finds can be readily identified with the fittings that would be expected around a hearth, including brackets, bars, various other fittings and a grate. Whilst these might have been replaced over the years that the house was lived in (from the late-17th Century to the mid-19th century), we can be sure they come from the life of the house and not from dumping debris afterwards although they could have entered the fire pit, shortly before and after the collapse or demolition of the house. The piece of a harrow, used in ploughing, was initially thought to be a trivet or stand used during food preparation, but has been reinterpreted after consultation with local farmers. However, there is no reason why such an item could not have been reused as a trivet or stand which would explain why it ended up in the ash-pit (123).

4.3 Cellar

The metal finds from the cellar complement the pottery and glass bottle finds and support the idea that the cellar began to be used as a depository for rubbish sometime after the turn of the 20th century, in an increasingly consumerist society where objects of all kinds can be purchased. The majority of the metal objects here can be readily dated to the mid-20th century and later.

4.4 Other points to consider

The contexts in which the window lead was found makes sense. The finds of window lead, SF1229 and SF1451 came from (112) and (114) respectively, which are interpreted as demolition and rubble deposits.

5.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the metal objects from Under Whittle add to the growing picture of the ebb and flow of rural life. During the 19th century and possibly the 18th century, the people who lived here may have used their barn to undertake small scale blacksmithing. The results of this work are perhaps not just found at trench 2: the finds of nails found at the other trenches may have been a result of this activity too.

The metalwork adds to our knowledge of the end of the 'cellar' house, with the fixtures and fastenings associated with the fireplace and hearth ending their useful life in the ash-pit, and the examples of window lead being found along with smashed window glass in the rubble and demolition debris. The metalwork also adds to the picture of the people who lived and used this fireplace when the house was lived in by a family during the late 17th, 18th and 19th centuries when we can imagine a time before this destruction and everything was still in place and playing a vital part in the lives of those who lived here.

The metal objects in the cellar complement the glass bottles and pottery finds from here, confirming what other sources say about this later stage of Under Whittle. Sometime during the mid to late 19th C the house collapsed or was demolished and the cellar was reroofed to become a store. After the beginning of 20th century, the cellar changed from a store to a rubbish dump. The metal finds suggest this was well underway by the mid-20th century, but as the later 20th Century approaches the metal finds peter out. As with the glass bottles this is probably due to organized refuse collection.

6.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank everyone who has been involved in the project, especially all the volunteers who have worked so hard on processing the finds including the metal objects. You all know who you are. Without you the project wouldn't exist. Thank you.

Catherine Parker Heath

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8.0 APPENDICES

8.1 Appendix 1 – Nail types

Table 8.1 Nail types: types and descriptions are devised on those found at Under White

Nail Type	Description	Total no.	Date
1	Small nail, round head, used for woodworking/carpentry Length 21-37mm, head 6-10mm, shank 3-6mm	18 (11 poss)	C19 th
2	Small nail, side head, used for woodworking/carpentry Length 28-47mm, head 8-15mm, shank 4-10mm	13 (5 poss)	C19 th
3	As Type 1 but wider, longer, 'heavier duty', round head, used for woodworking/carpentry Length 46.5-48mm, head 13-18mm, shank 6-8mm	5 (3 poss)	C19 th
4	Heavy duty, square head, stud, woodworking/carpentry Length 60-85mm, head 14-27mm, 5-10mm	5 (3 poss)	C19 th
5	Long nail, for gates Length 96-137mm, head 15-19.9mm, shank 5-10mm	4 (2 poss)	C19 th
6	Horse shoe nail. Head that tapers down into shank Length 62.5, head 9mm, shank 5mm	2 poss	C19 th
7	As Type 4 but shorter Length 53.1mm, head 17.4mm, 9mm	1	C19 th
8	As for Type 2 but larger Length 54-80mm, head 15-29, shank 13mm	2 (1 poss)	C19 th
9	Long nail, elongated head, square shank, bent Length 130, head 35, shank 8mm	1	C19 th
10	Long nail, domed oblong head, similar to 9 but shorter head, similar to 5. Length 135mm, head 16mm, shank 6mm	1	C19 th
11	Round head, galvanized, 20 th C Length 81mm, head 12mm, shank 6mm	1	C20 th
12	As for Type 1 but longer, thinner than Type 3 Length 65mm, head 9mm, shank 5	1	C19 th

Fig. 8.1: Type 1 (SF102)



Fig. 8.5: Type 6 poss or type 7. (SF118)



Fig. 8.2: Type 2 (SF1035)



Fig. 8.6: Type 8 (SF1213)



Fig. 8.3: Type 4 (SF1453 top)



Fig. 8.7: Type 10 (SF1231)



Fig. 8.4: Type 5 (SF1448)



Fig. 8.8: Type 11 (SF1449)



Fig. 8.9: Type 12 (SF2060a) top left

