



Bradford-on-Avon Museum Research Group

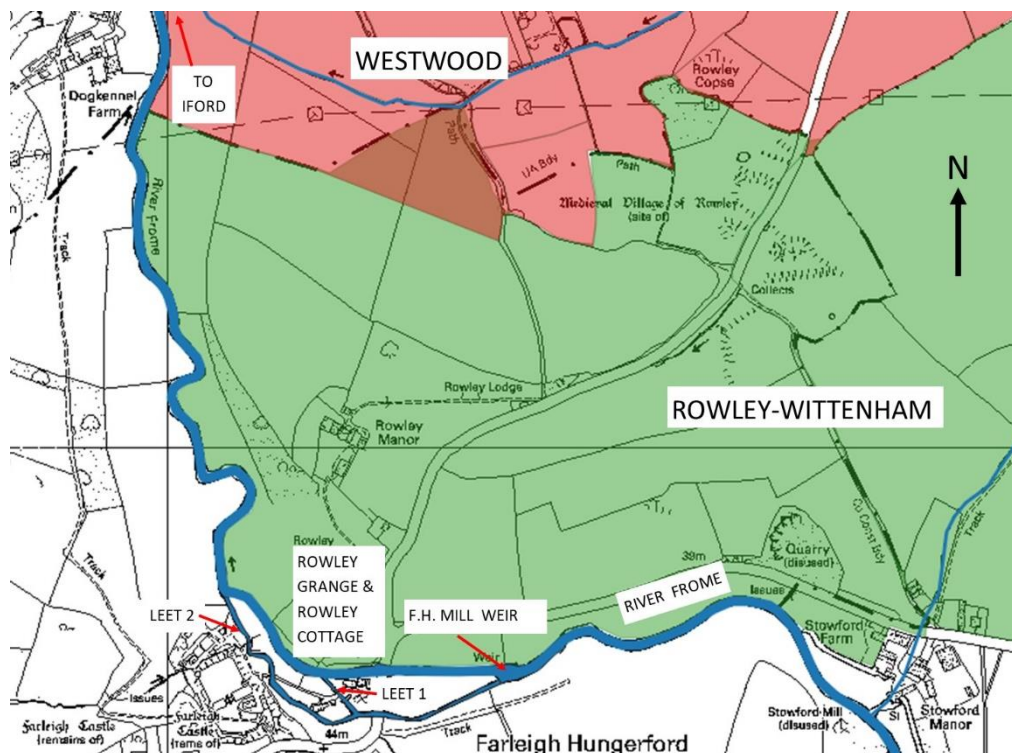
### Rowley-Wittenham Water Mill Report

The Research Group's Interactive Landscapes Project aims to discover or confirm archaeological features in the landscape through the use of LIDAR images, field walking, geophysics and excavation in order to add to the existing knowledge of the history and archaeology of the Bradford Hundred.

#### Introduction

The sites of Domesday mills in the Bradford Hundred at Bradford on Avon, Avoncliff, Chalfield, Broughton Gifford and Wingfield are generally accepted but the site of the Domesday mill in the lost tithing of Rowley-Wittenham (or Rowley alias Wittenham ) has never been identified. This project's aim was to propose a site for the mill and if possible to find physical evidence for it.

A Charter of 987 granted the combined area of Westwood and Rowley-Wittenham to Leofwine, the king's huntsman<sup>1</sup>. The extent of Rowley-Wittenham parish can be deduced by subtracting the parish of Westwood from the area described by the charter as proposed by Jefferson<sup>2</sup>. The south-western and western boundaries of the parish are defined in the second element of the boundary description 'from Stowford along the stream to Iford'. The stream is the River Frome. The area is shown in figure 1 with the deserted medieval village of Rowley being located above the Rowley-Wittenham label.



© Crown copyright and database rights 2022 Ordnance Survey 917065

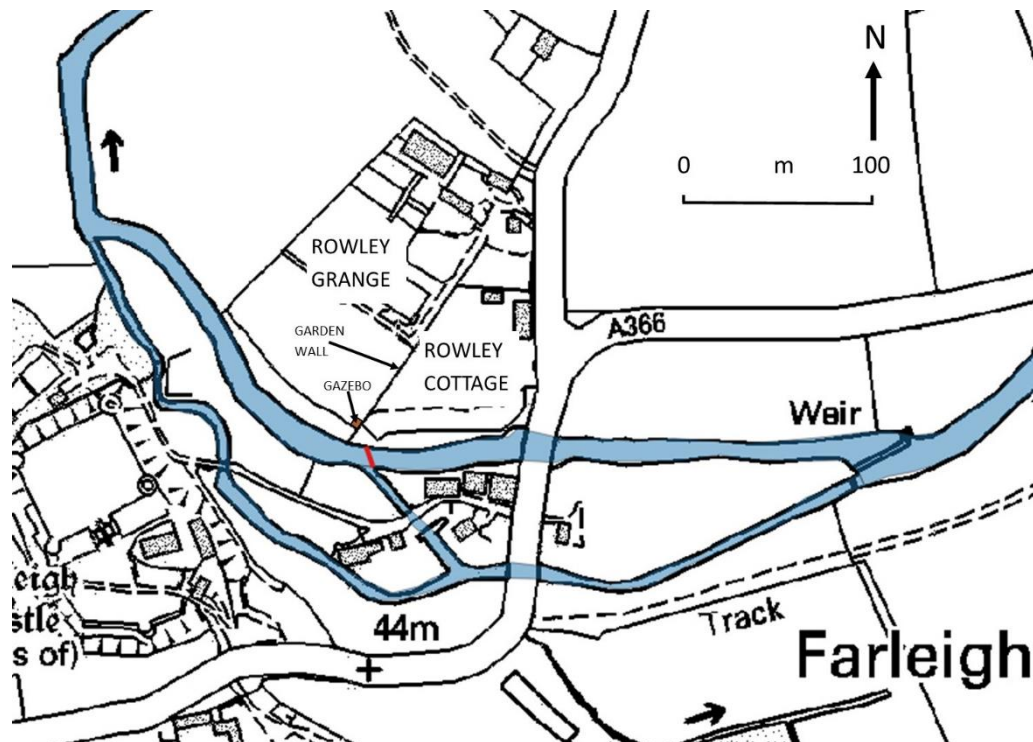
Fig 1. Western part of Rowley-Wittenham parish

Wittenham had a mill at Domesday valued at 12s 6d<sup>3</sup>. Farleigh Hungerford did not have a mill at Domesday but there was a mill by 1268<sup>4</sup> and there were two mills on the site in 1718<sup>5</sup>. The name Mulleward (Miller) is seen in Rowley's Lay Subsidy roll (Poll Tax) of 1379<sup>6</sup> and again in Hungerford manorial accounts of 1447<sup>7</sup>. The mill was valued at 3s 4d in 1430<sup>8</sup>. The lower valuation of the mill in 1430 may be because of the reduced flow of the River Frome after the construction of Farleigh Hungerford's weir. A miller named William Sewey from the combined tithings of Westwood and Rowley was fined at the Bradford Hundred Court of 1439<sup>9</sup>. A William Sewy was recorded in the Rowley Lay Subsidy roll of 1379<sup>10</sup> suggesting that the Sewey family lived in Rowley rather than Westwood. Rowley-Wittenham mill may well have been brought back into use during the woollen cloth boom of the 1500's if David Tukker, who leased lands in Rowley in 1544<sup>11</sup>, was following the trade implied by his name, Tucker or Fuller. The mill building still existed in 1633 when there were two tenants at the mill paying 6d each in rent<sup>12</sup>. It must be assumed from these low rents that by then the mill was no longer functioning.

The water mill would have been on the River Frome as the other waterways in the tithing are too small to power a mill. It would have to be located downstream of Wingfield's mill at Stowford valued at 20s<sup>13</sup> and Farleigh Hungerford mill's later weir which fed two mill leets. There is only a small fall in height in the river between Farleigh Hungerford and Iford with the water level in Farleigh Hungerford being set by the weir at Iford. This would dictate that any mill site would be between the Farleigh Hungerford weir and Farleigh Hungerford mill leet 1's discharge point (fig 1). Leet 1 would have entered the river below Rowley-Wittenham's mill weir in order to maximise the available head. Leet 1 now powers a turbine generating electricity.

The river and riverbank to the east of the bridge do not show any signs of a weir or leet. The area west of the bridge, between the bridge and Leet 1, now contains the garden of Rowley Cottage, with Rowley Grange cottage adjoining it (fig 2). Permission to look for any remains of the mill was

obtained from the owners. There were no visible remains but the owner of Rowley Cottage reported that a line of large stones running diagonally across the riverbed (marked in red in fig 2) had been found when a water main was put in in the 1990s. These stones still form a mound in the riverbed upstream of a deeper section and they are located immediately upstream of the discharge point of leet 1 on the Farleigh Hungerford bank (see fig 3). These stones are therefore likely to be the remains of the Rowley-Wittenham weir.



© Crown copyright and database rights 2022 Ordnance Survey 917065

Fig 2. Location of remains of probable weir shown in red.

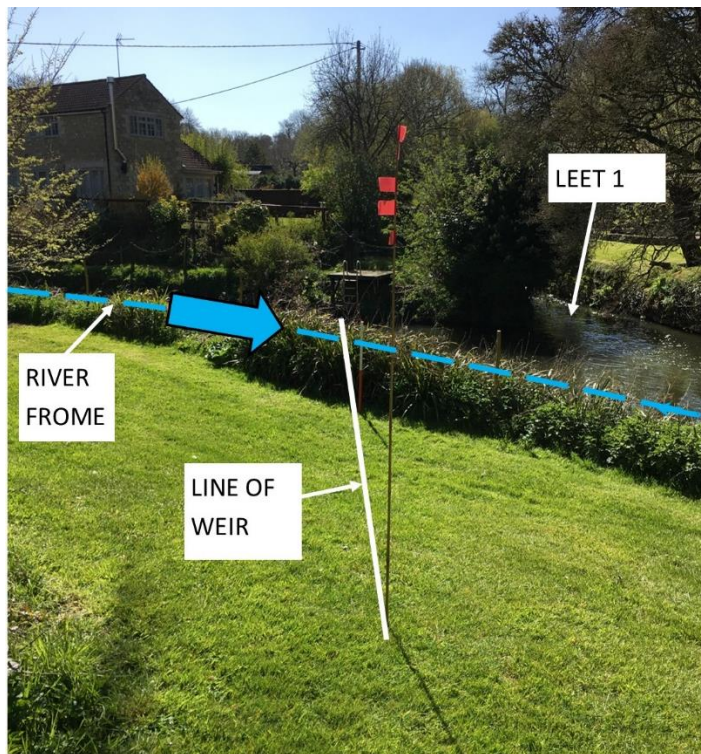
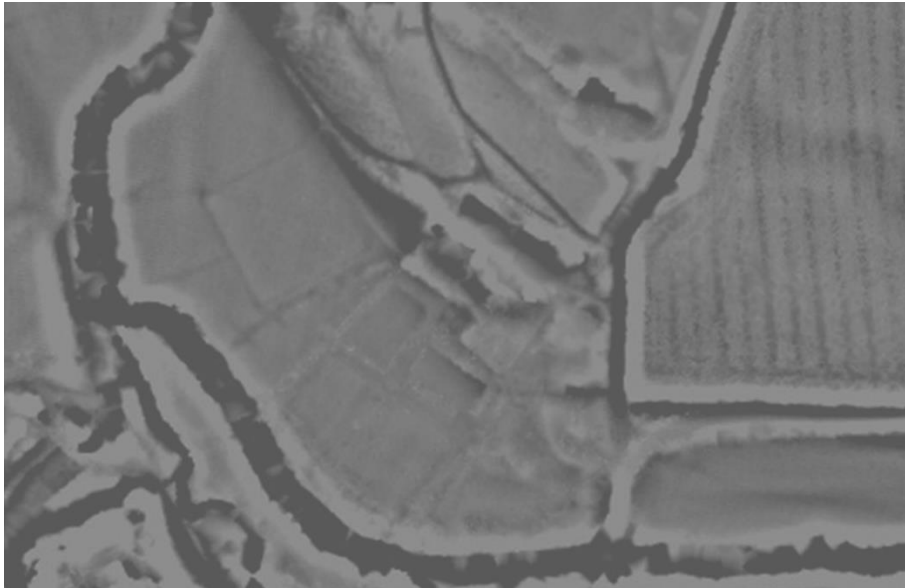


Fig 3. View along line of weir from north bank

A LiDAR image of the area (fig 4) did not show a leet running from the end of the weir through Rowley Grange garden indicating that the mill may have been at the end of the weir.



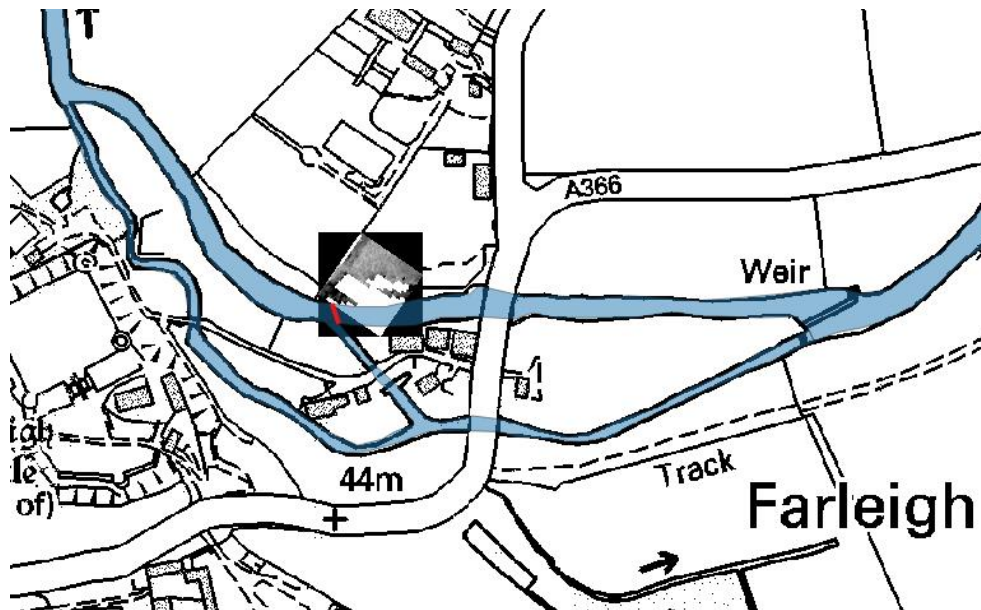
Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence V3.0 © Crown copyright and database rights 2022  
Ordnance Survey 917065

Fig 4. LiDAR image of Rowley Grange and Rowley Cottage area

### Resistance Surveys

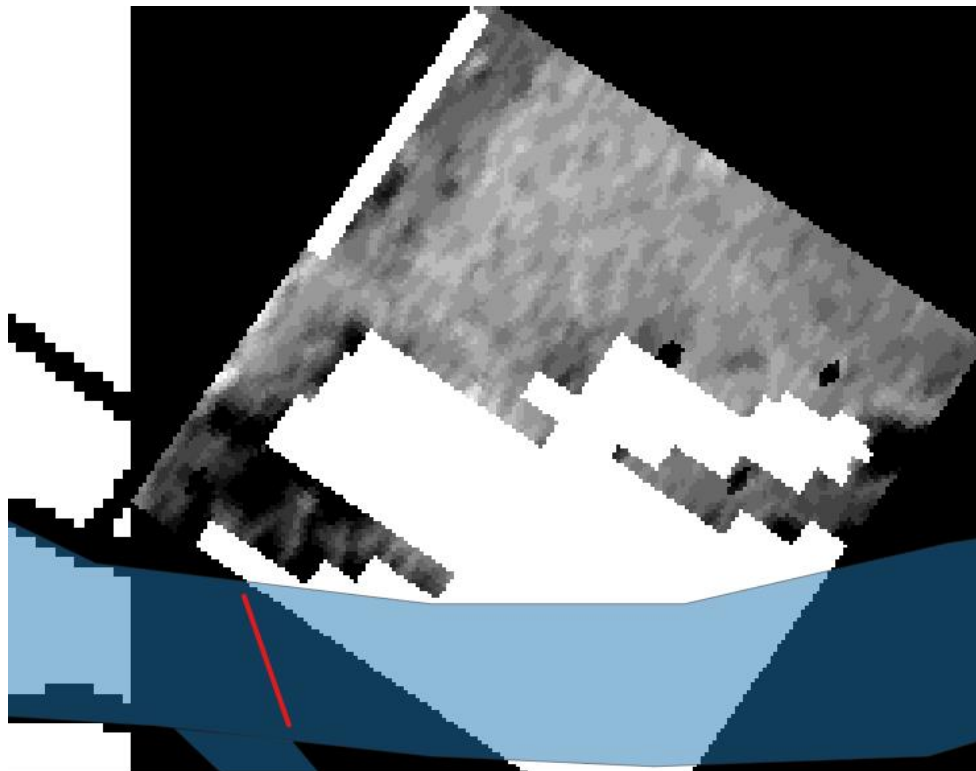
Permission to carry out a survey of the Rowley Cottage riverbank at the northern end of the weir was sought in April 2020 from the owner and agreed with the tenant. A survey area of two 20m by 20m squares was surveyed using probes with 0.5 metre spacing with two readings per metre being

taken in one direction and one reading per metre in the other. An identical survey of the Rowley Grange riverbank was completed in June 2022. The data was analysed using Snuffler software and printed with black indicating high resistance. The extent of the surveys is shown in figures 5, 6 and 7.



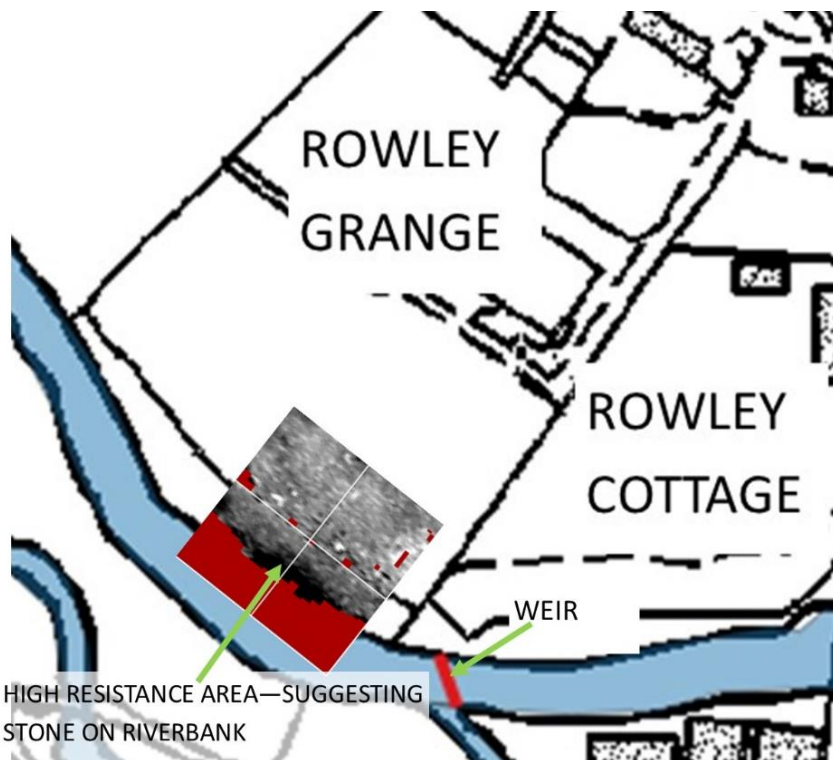
© Crown copyright and database rights 2022 Ordnance Survey 917065

Fig 5. Rowley Cottage Resistance Survey location



© Crown copyright and database rights 2021 Ordnance Survey 917065

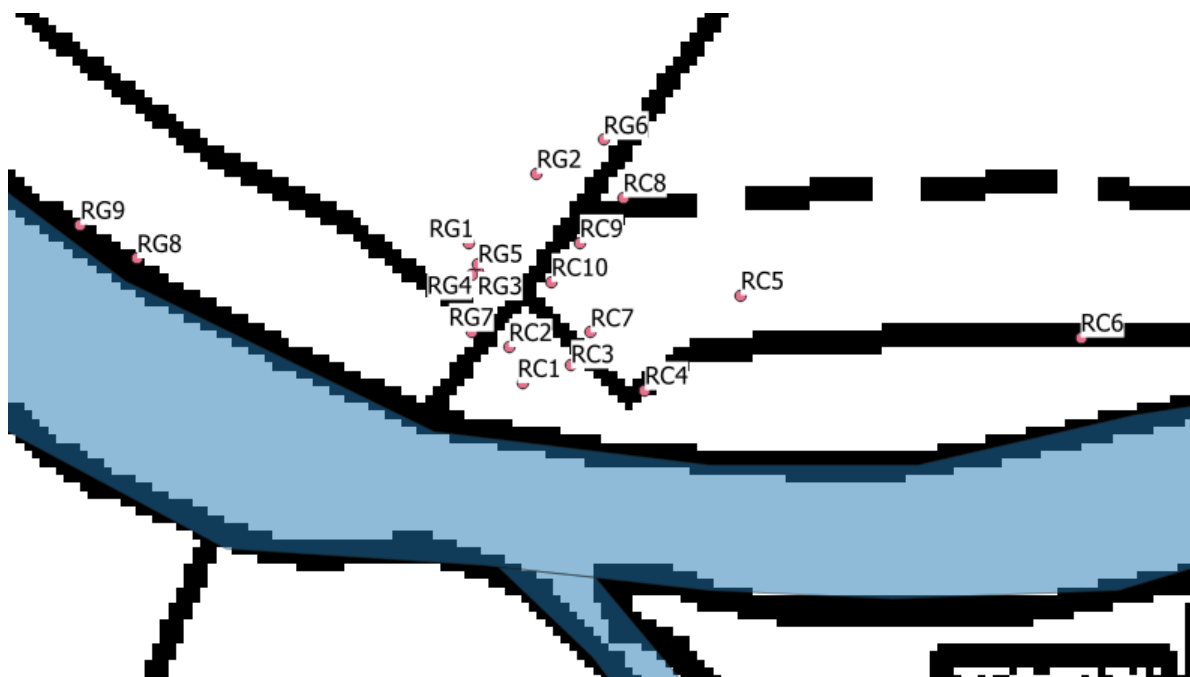
Fig 6. Rowley Cottage Resistance Survey detail



© Crown copyright and database rights 2022 Ordnance Survey 917065

Fig 7. Rowley Grange Resistance survey

No obvious structures were visible in either survey and permission was obtained to dig test pits in areas of high resistance to see if these contained any evidence of a building. The locations of these test pits are shown in figure 8.



© Crown copyright and database rights 2021 Ordnance Survey 917065

Fig 8. Test Pit Locations RC-Rowley Cottage, RG-Rowley Grange

Test pits RC2, RG1,3,4,5 and 7 were located near the gazebo shown in Fig. 9.



Fig 9. Gazebo in Rowley Grange garden with garden wall dividing Rowley Cottage and Rowley Grange.

#### Test Pit Findings

These have been summarised in Table 1.

TEST PITS - ROWLEY ORCHARD & ROWLEY COTTAGE			
NAME	SIZE m	DEPTH mm	SIGNIFICANT FINDS
RC1	2.0 x 0.5	860	20th C building rubble
RC2	1.0 x 0.5	400	Natural at 350 mm
RC3	1.0 x 0.5	350	Limestone rubble. Cotswold slate x 1
RC4	1.5 x 0.5	500	Soil continuing below 500 mm
RC5	0.3 x 0.3	400	Natural at 200 mm
RC6	1.0 x 0.5	400	Dry stone wall rubble
RC7	0.3 x 0.3	300	None
RC8	0.8 x 0.7	250	Cotswold slate x1, mortar x 1
RC9	0.6 x 0.6	250	Limestone fragments. Natural at 250 mm
RC10	0.7 x 0.6	250	Limestone fragments. Natural at 250 mm
RG1	0.4 x 0.3	350	Mortar x 1. Natural at 350
RG2	1.1 x 0.6	300	Stone < 125 mm. Natural at 300 mm
RG3	0.5 x 0.3	400	Demolition rubble. Natural at 400 mm
RG4	0.8 x 0.6	400	Mortar x 2. Natural at 400 mm
RG5	1.0 x 0.6	780	Worked stone x 1. Natural at 400 mm
RG6	0.3 x 0.2	320	Natural at 300 mm
RG7	0.4 x 0.3	570	Possible building stone x 1
RG8	0.4 x 0.4	850	Limestone. Modern cement
RG9	0.6 x 0.7	900	None

## Table 1: Test Pit Findings

### Discussion of Test Pit Findings

Rowley Cottage test pit RC1 nearest the riverbank and RG8 contained 20<sup>th</sup> century building spoil indicating that the riverbank had been built up. RG8 contained limestone, cement and two large pebbles (fig. 10). The high resistance measured where RG8 and RG9 were dug was due to very dry loose soil, not underlying stone, as the stone found in RG8 was below 500 mm depth and RG9 showed the same high resistance but no stone was found.



Fig 10. Stones from RG8

Pottery found in the surface layers was all post 1800. A collapsed wall was found in Test pit RC6 confirming the wall shown on the OS map (fig. 8). RC8, 9 and 10 all showed building materials but these could have come from the building of the garden wall or the gazebo. Rowley Grange test pits RG1, 4, 5 and 7 all contained mortar or worked stone and RG3 contained demolition rubble. The mortar was pre-industrial with embedded charcoal particles (fig 11). This was identical to the mortar in the garden wall and gazebo making it less likely to have come from the demolition of an earlier building.

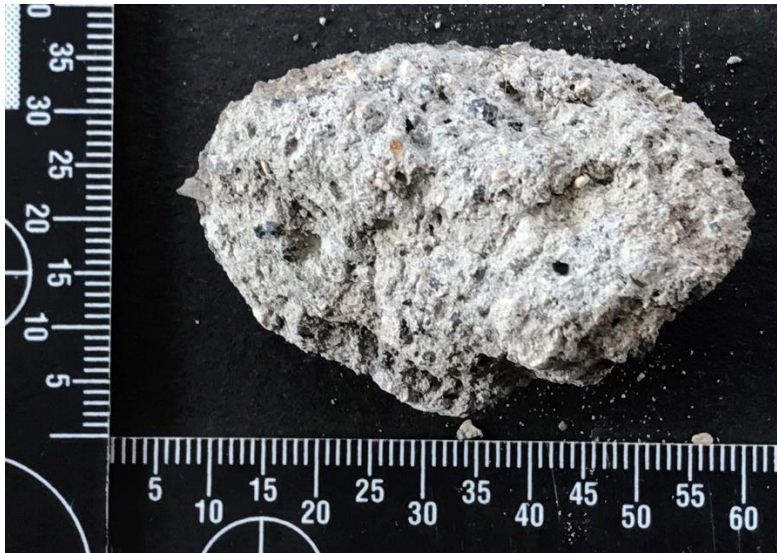


Fig 11. Pre-industrial mortar

The lack of significant amounts of demolition material, or millstone fragments which would be expected to be found even if the mill was a wooden structure, probably indicate that the mill was not in the vicinity of the gazebo and compost heaps. In addition medieval pottery would be expected to be found near a medieval building, with broken vessels being put on a rubbish heap which was then spread locally. No medieval pottery was found under the 7.6 square metres area excavated.

#### Conclusion

The position of the line of stones in the riverbed and the lower level of riverbed downstream strongly suggest that the line of stones is a weir foundation and that therefore the mill was near this location. The lack of any millstone fragments or medieval pottery in the zone at the end of the weir may indicate that the mill was further from the riverbank and did not show up in the resistance survey of Rowley Grange garden. Alternatively it may have been further downstream at the end of a leet, with the leet being filled in and levelled when the riverbank was built-up.

#### Acknowledgements

Thanks to Ian MacLaurin for allowing access to Rowley Grange garden and to Rupert King and David Robertson for allowing access to Rowley Cottage garden. Thanks to Judith Patterson, Rick Buettner and Janet Slack for digging the test pits.

Rob Arkell

6-10-22

#### References

- 1 P. H. Sawyer: *1968 Anglo-Saxon Charters: An Annotated List*, cat. no. 867
- 2 J. Jefferson: *Wittenham: a lost parish of Wiltshire*, University of Bristol, 1997, 33
3. C. & F. Thorn: *Wiltshire Domesday*, section 5,2
4. *Crown Pleas of the Wiltshire Eyre 1268*, Wiltshire Record Society, vol 65
5. South-West Heritage Centre DD\SAS\C/82/6

- 
6. C. Fenwick (ed), *The Poll taxes of 1377,1379 & 1381*, Part 3
  7. National Archives Special Collections 6/1062/18
  8. National Archives Special Collections 6/1062/15
  9. Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine vol 13, 118
  10. C. Fenwick (ed), *The Poll taxes of 1377,1379 & 1381*, Part 3
  11. National Archives Letters and Patents (L&P) Hen VIII vol XIX, 504
  12. Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre 490/1530
  13. C. & F. Thorn, *Wiltshire Domesday*, section 5,3