
Lives of the Medieval Common People in

Castleton and Hope



Who Were the Common People?

Who were Castleton and Hope's ordinary people between the Norman Conquest and the English Civil War? What did they do and where did they live?

Domesday, 1086 AD

Hope was the centre of a vast Anglo-Saxon royal estate, which included Ashford, Tideswell and Chapel-en-le-Frith. Castleton appears under the Saxon name for Peak Cavern - Pechesers - Peak's Arse. Peasants in both areas grew crops and pastured livestock on meadows. In Hope, a priest looked after their souls, while a miller ground flour from their crops.



A Hard Day's Work

Most people were farmers who did some lead mining too. In 1381, carpenters, blacksmiths, wool shearers, weavers and servants as well as a miller, shepherd, swineherd, cobbler, glover, dyer, skinner and tailor all lived in the Castleton area.



Left: Peveril Castle was built as a Norman stronghold by William Peverel to control and administer the people of the High Peak. Photo: Bill Bevan.



Castleton and Hope had Medieval watermills which may have looked like this. Image: © The British Library.

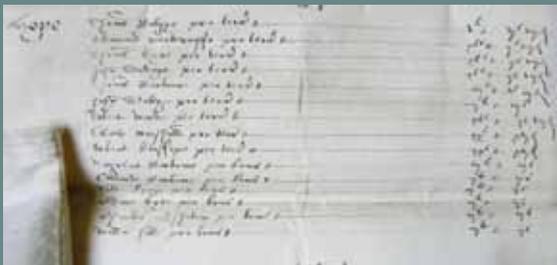


Local Outlaws

Derby's Medieval court for common pleas records some of Hope and Castleton's crimes. Alan le Seriant of Hope killed a man and then hid in the church. He left England forever in return for his life. Another murderer was Castleton's miller, Ellis le Cupere, who fled the scene of the crime as an outlaw.

What's in a Name?

Until the 1400s, ordinary people's surnames often came from their occupations. After this, we generally inherited our names. Le Coupere of Castleton probably made barrels. Margareta Walker may have been a fuller who washed wool. Was Henry Webster a weaver? Richard Chapman a merchant?



Left: A list of head of households in Hope in 1581 with how much they had to pay as 'Lay Subsidy', a tax on land, goods or income. Photo: Kay Harrison, courtesy of Derbyshire Record Office.

Farmers

Until the 20th century most people in the two villages were tenant farmers.

Growing Crops

Domesday mentions teams of oxen-drawn ploughs in 1086. They ploughed the common fields located on lower-lying land around each village. These were divided into strips where commoners grew their crops. In some places you can still see the low, curving, parallel ridges created as the plough teams went back and forth along each strip.

Over time, each common field was rented out and divided among tenants, who built boundaries to enclose small fields. The curving lines of hedges and walls preserve the pattern of these earlier strips to this day. Even some Medieval common field names survive. Mamsitch derives from “le Mamsecheyfylde” – sitch being a local word for stream.



***Above:** Ridge and furrow reveals the arable strips of the Medieval common fields behind Hope Valley College.
Photo: Ann Price.*

***Below:** Curving boundaries of narrow fields fossilise medieval strips in common fields. Photo: Di Curtis.*



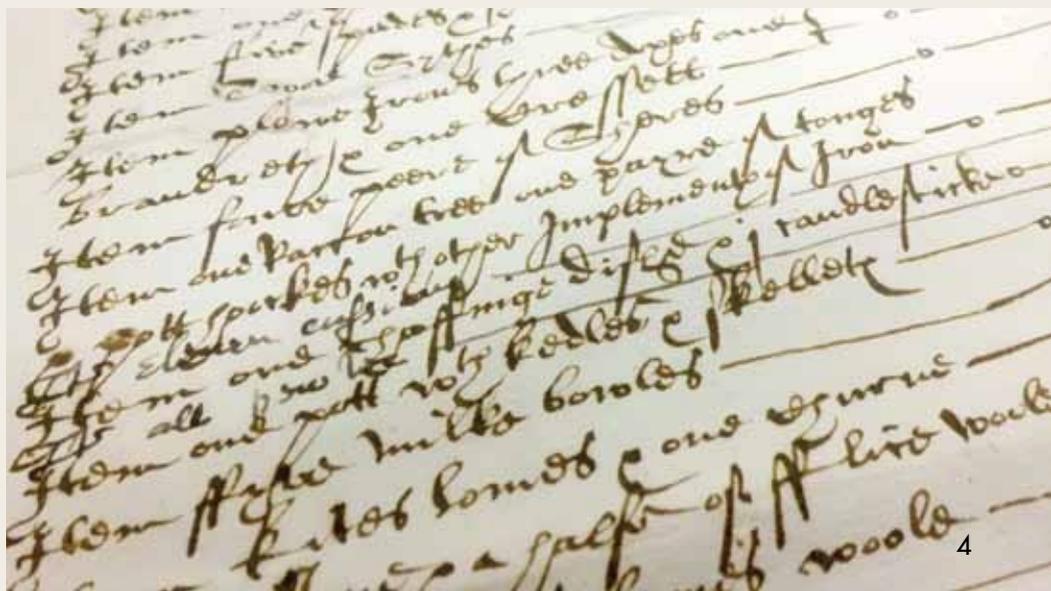


Raising Livestock

The valley sides and ridges beyond were used to graze cattle and sheep. The animals were brought onto the common fields over winter. Many farmers had cattle, oxen, sheep, horses and poultry in the 1500s and 1600s. Pigs were rare in the valley. Some farmers made their own butter or had spinning wheels to make yarn from wool, flax or hemp.

Farming tools are recorded in wills from the 1500s and 1600s. As well as ploughs, farmers had harrows to break up the ploughed soil. They also owned scythes and sickles – both used for harvesting crops and cutting hay.

Below: A harrow, plough, irons and an axe are listed in Thomas Bocking of Hope's inventory in 1635. Photo: Bill Bevan, courtesy of Lichfield Record Office.



Lead Miners

Many families living on or near the Limestone Plateau were farmers first and lead miners second. They worked the lead veins during slack times in the farming year.

Miners' Assistance

Mining supported many other common people. Woodcutters supplied smelting fuel and mine props, while chandlers made candles to light the mines. Smelters turned the ore into lead. Packhorse carriers transported the ore and lead, with the help of horse masters and rope makers.

The Miners' Lot

Anyone could search for lead on open ground. If they found it, they paid a dish of ore to the Crown for the right to mine 32 yards (29 metres) along the rake. Then they paid nearly 20 per cent of their hard-earned ore as a 'lot' to the Crown and tithes to the Church.

Wealth from the Ground

Lead veins, known as rakes, run along the ground surface. Miners sunk shafts into the deeper rakes. Now, long swathes of lumpy, disturbed ground crossing the limestone reveal old lead-mining sites.

Odin Mine and Dirtlow Rake

Well-known Hope Valley mines are Dirtlow Rake and Odin Mine. Castleton's Odin Mine was in use below Mam Tor by 1280. Dirtlow Rake was being mined by 1538.



Above: Odin Mine has been worked since at least the Medieval period. Photo: Ann Price.

A Person from the Past

We excavated part of the skeleton of one individual in a Castleton test pit.

The Body in the Pit

Excavators digging a garden test pit beside Peakshole Water under the shadow of Peveril Castle found part of the jaw and other bones of a person.

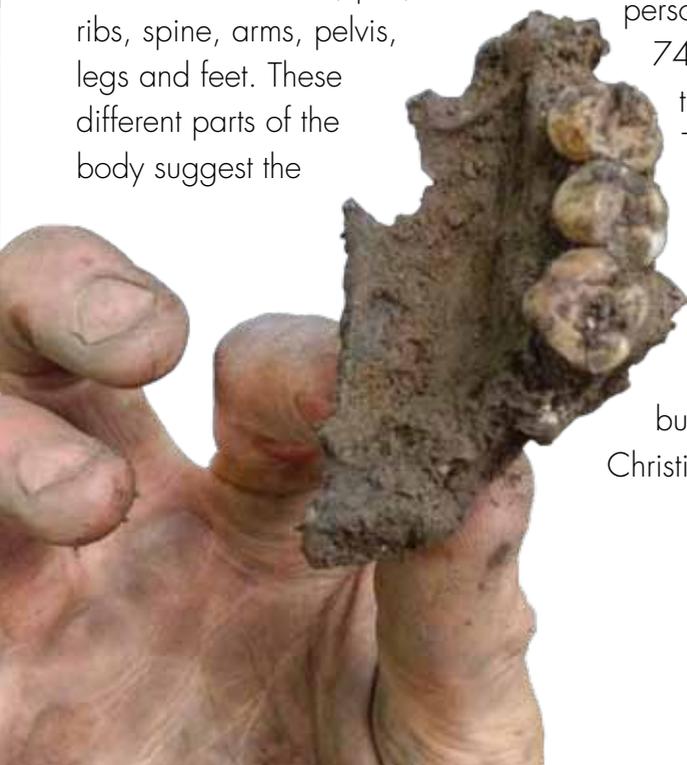
We found a small number of bones from the skull, jaw, ribs, spine, arms, pelvis, legs and feet. These different parts of the body suggest the

bones represent a burial that had been disturbed by later activity.

They are part of a young adult, about 18 - 20 years old. We estimated this by the condition of the teeth. Moderate wear on two molars and absolutely no wear on the wisdom tooth suggests someone of this age.

Time of Their Life

The body is radio-carbon dated to the early medieval period. The person died sometime between 741 and 939 AD, before the Norman Conquest. This was when Castleton was a smaller settlement, possibly in front of Peak Cavern, before the castle and town ditch were built. This also implies a burial ground nearby, either Christian or pagan.



Left: The jaw and teeth of a Castleton teenager who died between 741 and 939 AD.
Photo: Kay Harrison.

Routes

Ancient routes were used to transport goods by packhorse or cart, give farmers access to fields, bring peat down from the moors and even carry the dead to be buried in graveyards.

Transport

Ponies, horses and walking were the main ways of getting around in the Middle Ages. Farmers had two-wheeled carts or four-wheeled wagons to transport produce. Some people used sleds and carts to bring down moorland peat for their fires.



Connecting Villages

Castleton Upper Road is part of the route connecting the two villages which lies along higher ground north of the valley. Was this a Medieval packhorse route? Nearer to Hope, one short stretch known as Emma Croft Road survives as a wide holloway possibly created by packhorses. Has the rest of its line been ploughed away, or was it only ever the footpath that the more recent squeezer stiles suggest?

Another likely Medieval route is the Pindale Road along the south side of the valley. It runs between the edge of the Medieval common field and the steeper valley side.



Edale Coffin Path

Until Edale got its own church in 1634, mourners struggled over Hollins Bank to bury their dead in Castleton churchyard. The coffin path ran along Hollowford Lane and passed through the building that stood where the Rose Café is today. It entered the churchyard by the gennel opposite.

Left: The deeply-incised coffin path as it enters enclosed farmland below Hollins Cross. Photo: David Sissons.

Below: The wide holloway of 'Emma Croft Road' north of Hope. Photo: Di Curtis.

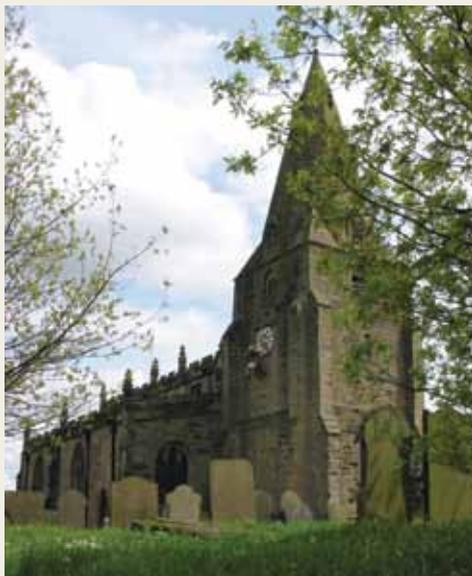


Churches

Castleton and Hope's churches are only 1½ miles apart but their origins are completely different.

Hope's Saxon Ministry

Hope already had a church and priest in 1086 AD. Anglo-Saxon Christian missionaries may have founded St Peter's while converting the local pagans.



Above: St Peter's Church, Hope is probably on the site of the original Saxon church. Photo: David Price. **Below:** St Edmund's Church, Castleton with its 14th Century tower. Photo: Alan Darlington.





Above: Medieval grave slabs behind the Norman font in Hope church. They are carved with swords, arrows and hunting horns suggesting the dead were Foresters in Peak Forest. Photo: Ann Price.

Castleton's Norman Legacy

St Edmund's Church was built in 1100 AD, possibly on the site of an earlier church, by the Norman baron William Peverel. You can still see an original Norman arch, font and piscina inside the church.

Churches and Commoners

The churches had a profound influence over the lives – and deaths – of ordinary people. Church bells marked the passing of the day. Everyone had to attend services, held in incomprehensible Latin, during the Middle Ages. Parishioners handed over one tenth of their produce or earnings as tithes to pay for the clergy.

People were baptised, married and buried at church, and these stages of life were recorded in parish registers from 1538. Hope's register records one disaster to fall on the local population in 1636.

“beganne the great death of many children and others by a contagious disease called the children pocke: & Purple Pocke: & whyte hives with blisters.”

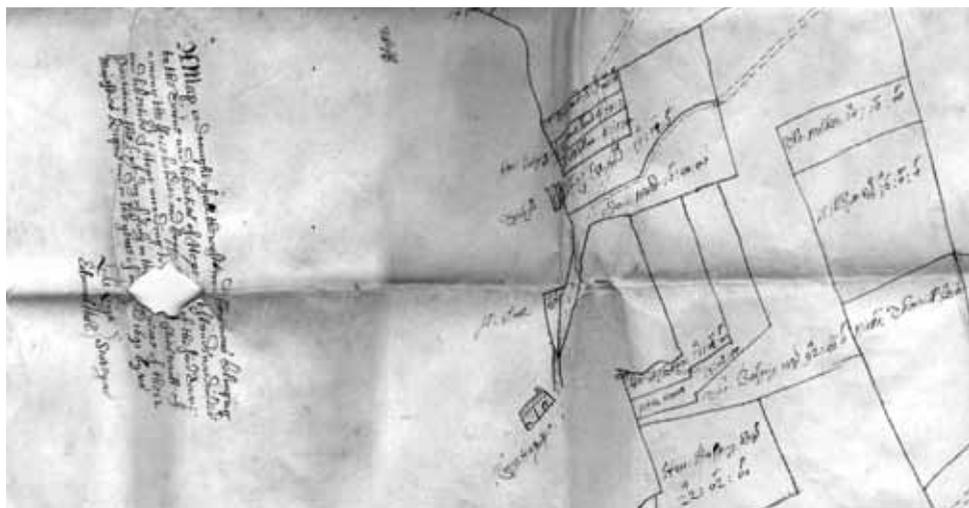
Churches also provided most village celebrations. Over forty feast and holy days every year provided breaks from the daily grind.

Houses

There are houses in Hope and Castleton where generations of families have lived on the same spot for at least 500 years. Some retain features from before the English Civil War.

To the Manor Born

When we think of historic houses, we often picture castles and the manor houses of the rich. Peveril Castle's 12th century stone keep towering above Castleton is the grandest example. Others include Hope's Old Hall, home of the landowning Balguy family, and New Hall in Castleton, where the Savage family lived until losing their estates during the Civil War.



Above: The oldest depictions of houses are on 17th century maps and plans, and are not accurate architectural drawings. This is the 1691 Map of the Waste Land in Hope showing Twytchill and Kingshague. Courtesy of Derbyshire Record Office.



Left: Diamond Oak Mullioned window, probably 16th century, at Doone Cottage, Castleton. This would have been the house of a yeoman. Photo: Andrew Bower.

Architectural Fragments

Greaves Cottage, Orlecar Cottage, The Spar and Townhead Cottage in Hope, along with Biddock Fold and Cryer House in Castleton are just some buildings with features from the 1600s. These include mullioned windows, doorways, roof and ceiling beams, and even a chimney.

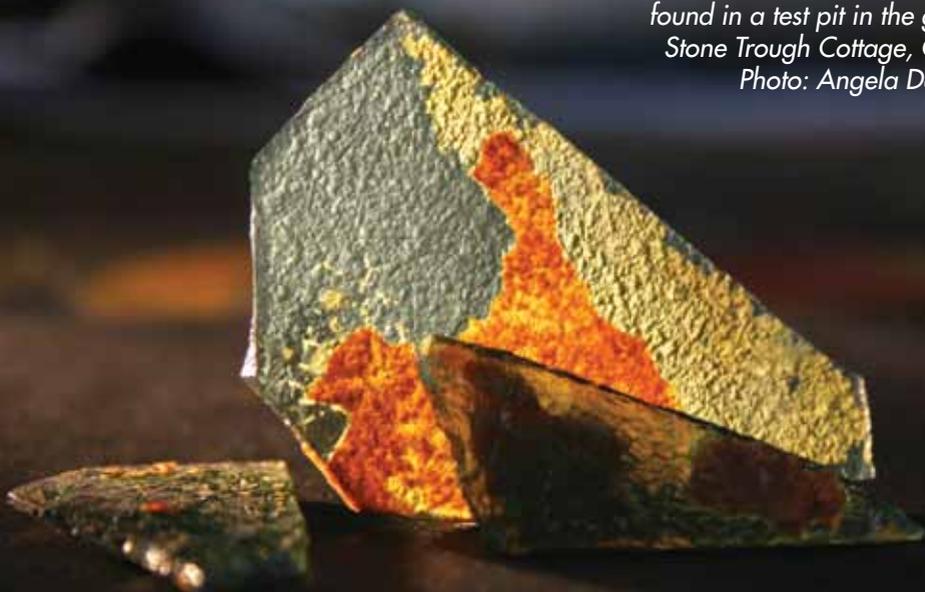
Fragments of curved timber crucks are even older. They held up the roofs of Lodge Cottage and Toll Bar Cottage, Castleton when the Tudors were on the throne during the 1500s. Another was found in Dagers House, Hope.

Looking through the Middle Ages

Small, fragile sherds of green window glass were found in the test pit at Stone Trough Cottage, Castleton.

The distinctive colour and bubbles showed they were made during the 1300s or 1400s. Could they have glazed the small, diamond-shaped windows still found in the house today?

*Sherds of Medieval window glass found in a test pit in the garden of Stone Trough Cottage, Castleton.
Photo: Angela Darlington.*



Everyday Objects

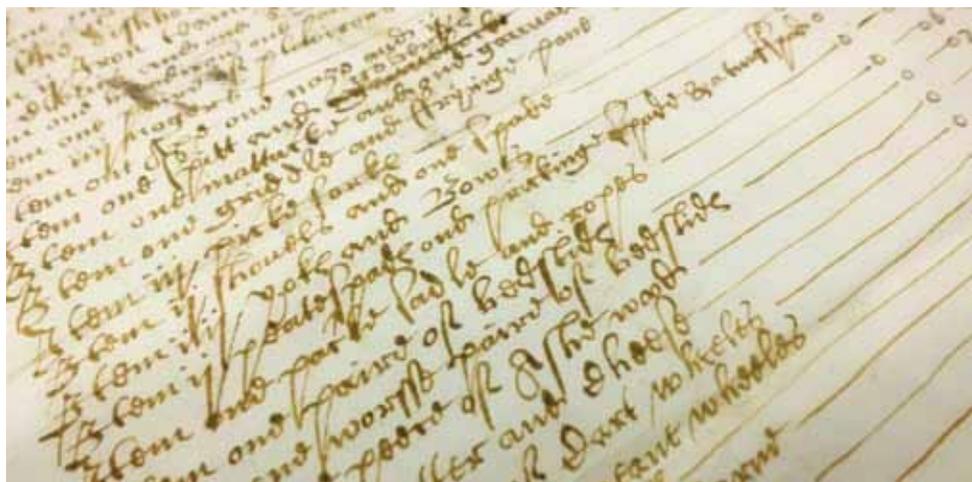
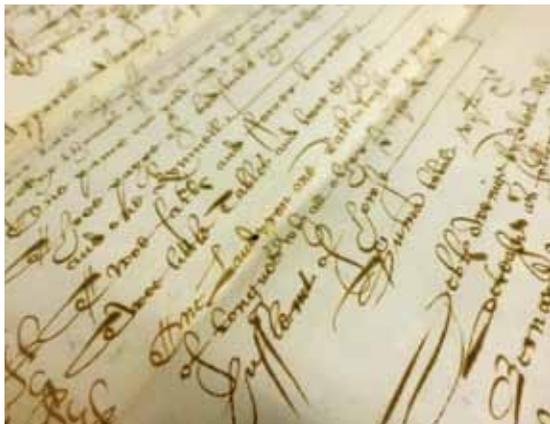
We can furnish the homes of ordinary people thanks to their wills and the things they lost in the ground.

Where There's a Will

Between 1529 and 1782 in England and Wales an inventory had to be made of any dead person's goods. These lists of furniture, household objects, tools and other 'stuff' are an invaluable source for historians. The earliest Castleton and Hope inventories date from 1547.

Below: Can you spot the griddle, frying pan, bowls butter and cheese amongst this inventory of Francis Barber's goods? He died in Castleton in 1633. Photo: Bill Bevan, courtesy of Lichfield Record Office.

Below: Thomas Tym left little tables on his death. Listed below the tables are a land iron (to support wood in a fire) and a racketail an (iron bar for hanging a pot over a fire). Photo: Bill Bevan, courtesy of Lichfield Record Office.



Beds, Tables and Chairs

You can tell a person's wealth from their beds, tables and seats. Did they have a nice feather bed or just a mattress stuffed with straw? More people had wooden boards supported on trestles than could afford tables. People sat on chairs, stools or benches, but only the wealthier softened their seat with a cushion.

Cooking and Crockery

Most containers and tablewares were pewter or wood until the 1700s. Only 6 per cent of the pottery excavated in the test pits dates from before then. We found fragments of dishes, plates, bowls, cups, jars and jugs. Two inventories list Ticknall ware, a slipware made in south Derbyshire. We found sherds of a similar slipware in some test pits, though they could be later or from other potteries.

Families cooked in frying pans, skillets or pots. Iron bars and tripods known as rackentails and brandreths held the pots over the fires. Joints of meat were roasted on iron spits.



Sherds of Medieval pottery from garden test pits. Photo: Charles Curtis.

Consumer Goods

Finds from test pits show the increase in consumer goods and changes in manufacturing from the 1700s to the 1900s.

Rise of the Potteries

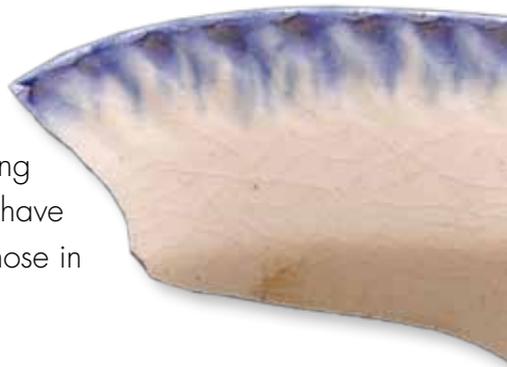
Small rural potteries produced many of the tablewares found in the villages until the 1800s. The range of wares suggest travelling salesmen brought in pots, plates, bowls and jugs from numerous such potteries outside the Peak District. These decreased during the 1800s as people chose the cheaper and more attractive tablewares of the urban industrial potteries. The factory-made wares first appear about 1720. These potteries began marketing new ranges of products to 'fashion-conscious' customers. As in other parts of the country, residents of the two villages often preferred these fancy products.



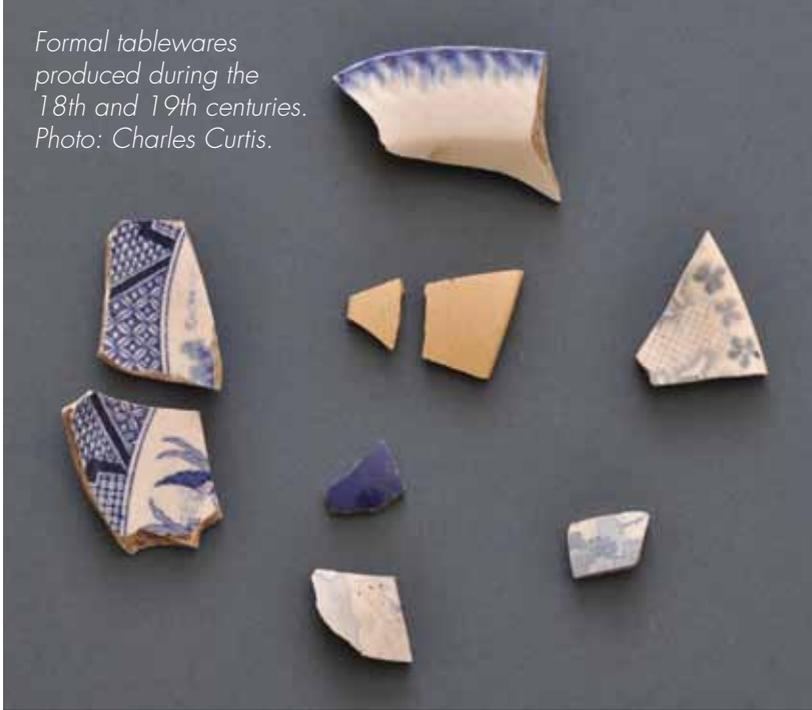
*This page: Vernacular tablewares including slipwares and slip-coated wares, dating from the 18th century.
Photo: Charles Curtis.*

Georgian Tipples of Choice

The earliest bottles found in the test pits were handmade in thick, dark glass during the late 1700s. Hope residents seem to have preferred beer and champagne, while those in Castleton took to wine.



*Formal tablewares produced during the 18th and 19th centuries.
Photo: Charles Curtis.*



A Window on the World

Small amounts of Georgian window glass were found in the two villages. These were made using the cylinder technique, where a glass cylinder was scored and then flattened in an oven. Some shards of this window glass contain large numbers of bubbles, and are tinted green by impurities in the glass mix.



A Whiff of Tobacco

Tobacco was commonly smoked in clay pipes from the 1580s until the early 20th century.

Pieces of Pipes

We found hundreds of fragments of pipe stems and 33 pieces of bowls when excavating the test pits. They range in date from approximately 1610 to 1920.

The earliest pipes date from between 1610 and 1660. Village residents may have taken up tobacco smoking as early as 30 years or less after it became popular in England. One almost complete small, plain bowl found in Castleton was made sometime between 1690 and 1740

Decorated Bowls

Three decorated bowls were found in Hope. They were made around the end of the 1700s and beginning of the 1800s. One with a stag's head was possibly made in Doncaster. Another has the letters P and R ornately moulded in relief. The third has letters around its rim which appear to form the words ROBINSON and LINCOLN. Robinson was a well-known Lincolnshire piper maker.

Rotherham Pipe Makers

Two pipe stems are marked with the letters of 18th century Rotherham pipe makers. One is inscribed with THO WILD for Thomas Wild, c.1740-1790; the other with TT for Thomas Thompson, c.1720 - 1760.



*Three decorated clay pipe bowls from Hope and a reconstructed plain pipe bowl from Castleton.
Photo: Alan Darlington.*

Find Out More

Online

Visit www.castletonhistorical.co.uk to discover more project results, including a downloadable self-guided trail and audio tour between Castleton and Hope, and the archaeological and historical reports.

Historical Societies

If you are interested in the history of the villages why not join the local historical societies?

Castleton Historical Society –
Maura Ward 01433 623227.

Hope Historical Society – Ann
Price 01433 621642.

Castleton Museum

See some of the finds from the project as well as displays on local history in Castleton Museum, Castleton Visitor Centre.

Call 01629 816572 for opening times.



Discover Hope Trail

"Discover Hope" is a guided tour of the village. It is available from the Visitor Centre and Hope Post Office, price £2.00.

Searching for the Common People

Local people, rather than professional archaeologists or historians, discovered what you see in this leaflet.

Below: Research into deeds, wills and other historical documents has shed light on many aspects of life in Hope and Castleton. Photo: Bill Bevan.

Documenting the Past

We scoured documents in local and national archives for ordinary people. We found them lurking in Medieval land deeds, court rolls and poll taxes, and in later wills, inventories and charters stored in Lichfield, Matlock, Sheffield and London. Sometimes commoners are mentioned by name, but often their lives can be inferred from records of what the government, Church and landowners were doing. Many early records were in Latin and needed translating.





Above: Members of Hope's test pit team. Photo: David Price.

Digging the Dirt

We excavated 55 test pits in gardens and at the edges of fields in Hope and Castleton. Each was a metre-square hole sunk deep into the past. We sifted through soil for fragments of pottery, glass, clay pipes, metalwork and animal bones. Parts of a human body and Medieval window glass were excavated in Castleton. In Hope, we found a lime pit, a cistern and evidence for local farming practice.



Walking the Routeways

We walked the lines of three routes we thought had Medieval origins. We recorded and photographed features and structures along the ways and in adjacent fields, to see which might hint at the routes' origins and use.

Left: Surveying part of a grown-out hedge, behind which cultivation moved soil downslope to build up behind the boundary. This build-up of soil provides clues to the lines of old boundaries, after hedges and walls have been removed. Photo: Ann Price.

Acknowledgements

Steering Group

Di Curtis, Angela Darlington, Alan Darlington, Kay Harrison, Ann Price, Sheila Reynolds and Bill Bevan.

Researchers

Holly Bee, Debs Bennett, Josh Bennett, Catherine Blake, Robin Blake, Andrew Bower, Valerie Burgess, Bob Campbell, Sal Cave, Dom Cisolowicz, Liam Clarke, Joan Clough, Chas Curtis, Di Curtis, Jenny Dalton, Alan Darlington, Angela Darlington, Ellis Fisher, Oliver Fisher, Sue Fitzpatrick, Leah Fleetwood, Jayne Fox, Steve Fox, Caroline Garwes, David Garwes, Pat Gillatt, Gil Glen, Kay Harrison, Jeanette Holmes, Ian Holmes, Valerie Johnson, Gwyneth Jones, Helen Jones, Maria Kenyon, Richard Ledingham, Jacky Marshall, Sheila Martin, Mick Mattia, Richard Meredith, Patricia Miles, Moira Monteith, Richard Monteith, Tom Nash, Stuart Nunn, Christine Ord, Chris Perkins, Sandra Pillans, Ann Price, David Price, Ros Reid, Liz Rigney, Jill Robson, Doreen Sedgewick, Graham Sedgewick, David Sissons, Eileen Spotswood, Esme Talbot, John Talbot, and Nicky Woods.

Archaeology students from the University of Sheffield helped to dig some test pits.

Test Pit Supervisors

Pauline Ashmore, Di Curtis, Laura Enns, Eileen Parker, Alex Schmidt and Arthur Wilson.

Garden owners - Castleton

Jean Adamson, Tim Alderson, Mary Allen, Robin and Catherine Blake, Paul Borland, Jean Bowman, Jane Bramwell, Steve and Jill Briggs, Alan and Val Brown, Peter and Ann Harrison, Mick and Pat Mattia, Brian and Rita Moorhouse, Michelle and Pete Morris, Lesley Moses, Ros Reid, Sheila Reynolds, Neil Spooner, Les and Fiona Saxon, June Sidebottom, Joy and Barry Wainwright.

Garden owners - Hope

Alan and Lisa Beard, Mark and Cathy Bramley, Petra and Eric Brigstock, James and Phyllis Burton, Di and Charles Curtis, Roger and Norma

Elliott, Ann Evans, Sue and Bernard Fitzpatrick, Sue Hargreaves and Helen Lilley, Jill Harrison, Valerie and David Johnson, Judith Lane, Ted and Annette Noon, Christine and Ian Ord, Margaret Peel and neighbours, Chris and Helen Perkins, Mark Priestley, Ian and Jill Randles, Liz and Martin Rigney, Jill Robson, Andrew Sedgewick, Gary Shirt, John and Esme Talbot, Robert and Hazel Watson, Hope Junior School, Hope Valley College.

Outside advice

Jenny Bland, Chris Cumberpatch, Pat Cullum, David Hey and Colin Merrony. Ron Weston and members of the Yeadsley Medieval Latin Group.

Archaeological finds analysis

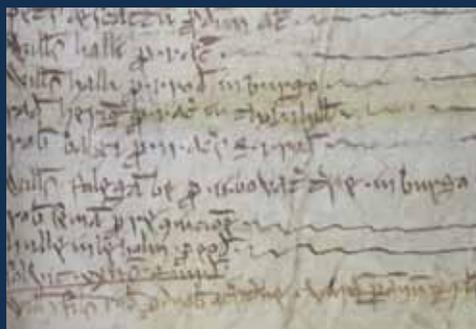
Umberto Albarella, Anna Bloxam, Evelyne Browaeys, Chris Cumberpatch, Claire Finn, Jim Rylatt, Susie White and Emily Zimmermann. Radio Carbon dating by SUERC Radiocarbon Dating Laboratory, East Kilbride.

Thank you to Ken Smith of the Peak District National Park Authority for funding the clay pipe analysis.

Below: Project members conduct historical research at Lichfield Record Office. Photo: Bill Bevan.



Between January 2012 and July 2013, Castleton and Hope Historical Societies searched for the ordinary people who lived in their villages between the Norman Conquest of 1066 AD and the end of the English Civil War in 1651.



What did people do and what were their names? What goods did they have and what taxes did they pay? How did the churches influence their lives?

The time span covers the Medieval period, also known as the Middle Ages, the Tudors and the Stuarts. We have searched archives, excavated in gardens and fields, and surveyed old routes looking for the people

who don't usually end up in history books – the farmers, lead miners, millers and their families. Our test pits produced hundreds of finds, dating from prehistory to the 20th century. We even found the remains of one individual.

This booklet is one result of our work. Inside you can find out about the names, jobs, houses and crimes of these common people.

The project and this booklet have been funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund

