

**ENFIELD ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY
SUPPLEMENTARY ARCHIVE REPORT: SCHOOL
ENGAGEMENT PROJECT**

AT OAKWOOD PARK, ENFIELD. AUGUST- NOVEMBER 2022.

**“THINGS PEOPLE MADE, USED AND
LEFT BEHIND”**

An Adventure in Archaeology with the Pupils of Year 6, Eversley School, Enfield.



by
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Introduction

In August 2022, Enfield Archaeological Society carried out monitoring and recording at a wetland creation scheme in Oakwood Park, Enfield. The works were carried out by contractors on behalf of The London Borough of Enfield Watercourses Team, Redevelopment and Environmental Works, Place Department. For full details of this main project see:

Dearne, M. J., 2022. *Archaeological Evaluation at Oakwood Park, Enfield, August 2022*.
Enfield Archaeological Society unpublished archive report.

Following the success of a similar project at Albany Park, Enfield in 2020-21, part of the brief for this project was that there should be an educational content involving a local school.

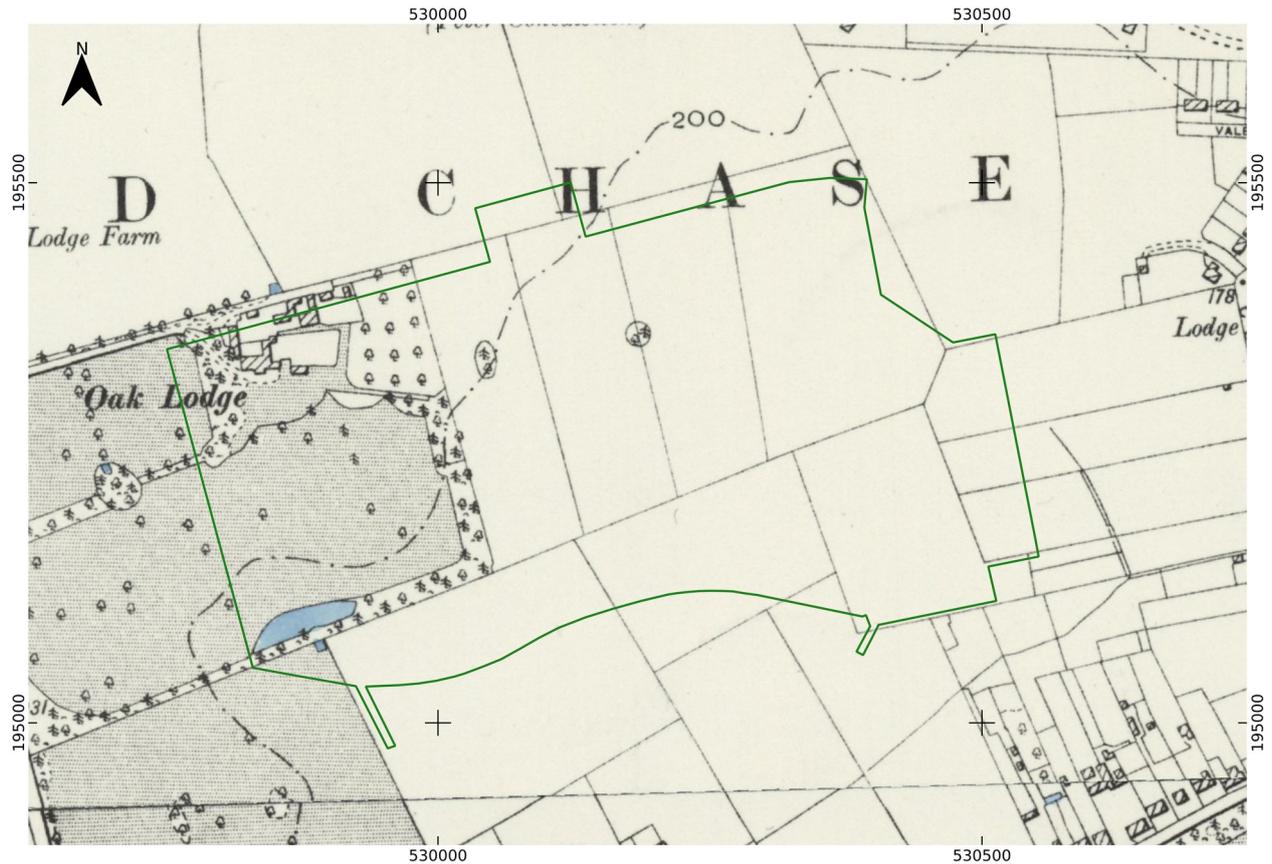
Eversley School, in Chaseville Park Road, N21 is the nearest school to Oakwood Park, with easy access to the park via the entrance in Oakwood Crescent. The school has also taken part in two previous projects with Enfield Archaeological Society and was ideally suited to this project. Assistant Head Ms. Joanna Heiler was contacted by email in Spring 2022 and confirmed that the school was enthusiastic to take part.

Unfortunately, the project has had to take place against the background of a resurgence of Covid 19 virus in the form of the Omicron variant. This has affected both pupils and staff and has meant that EAS involvement has had to be remote, rather than the face-to-face approach which we would have much preferred.

Learning Objectives.

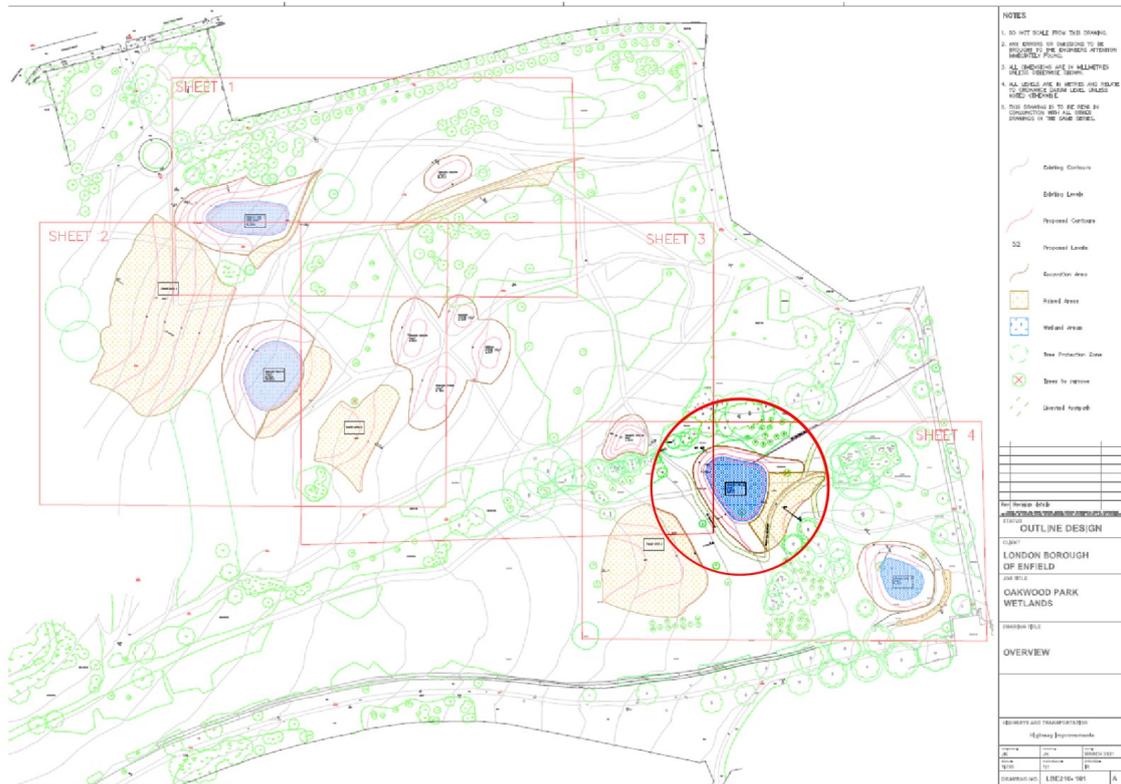
A desktop study carried out by Enfield Archaeological Society (EAS), in advance of the work on site, established that Oakwood Park was formed in 1927 by Southgate Urban District Council. The Council bought and combined land from the estate of Oakwood Lodge and agricultural fields owned by the Vicar of Enfield (Dearne -2022).

Broadly, the estate of Oakwood Lodge formed the western part of the park whilst the fields formed the eastern part.



An essential part of the success of previous projects with schools has been allowing pupils to handle and process artefacts discovered on the site. Finds washing, study and reporting have been key in engaging pupils interest. It is not always easy to come by a suitable collection of objects. In this case, the best opportunity seemed to be if there was sufficient material from night soil manuring of the fields now forming the eastern part of the park

Accordingly, during the archaeological monitoring of cell No.3 on the eastern side of the park, members of EAS also collected nineteenth and early twentieth century artefacts which would usually have only been noted as present. This paid off in the form of nearly 100 items collected, comprising transfer decorated Victorian pottery, clay tobacco pipe fragments, building materials and metal work.



Wetland cell No.3 (ringed)

This provided enough material for finds washing sessions for the year 6 pupils who, it was agreed, would take part in the project.



Night soil manuring finds from wetland cell 3

This agricultural evidence from the area of wetland cell 3, in this eastern part of the park, fitted very well with the second objective of the school, to examine the agricultural use of this area of the park in World War II.

Learning Support.

To support these learning objectives, Enfield Archaeological Society provided three sets of written guidelines:

- 1). Oakwood Park Wetland Scheme 2022: An Introduction for Teachers.
- 2). Hints on how to process archaeological finds.
- 3). Where did the Oakwood Park finds come from? Organic Manuring
- 4). Where did the Oakwood Park finds come from? Farming in World War II.

For the full text of all these, see Appendices below.



Where did the Oakwood Park finds come from? Organic Manuring.

Having understood, the principle of night soil manuring and how this also served as the rubbish collection of the day, the pupils were keen to begin to wash the finds from wet cell 3, and begin to see what was left behind.

The type of find which began to emerge from the washing was pottery sherds and most numerous of these were transfer decorated whiteware. Most of these were the well known blue and white type although a few green and white sherds included the fluted rim of a large tureen. Many of the sherds were rim sherds, some fluted, and foot rims from bases were also found.



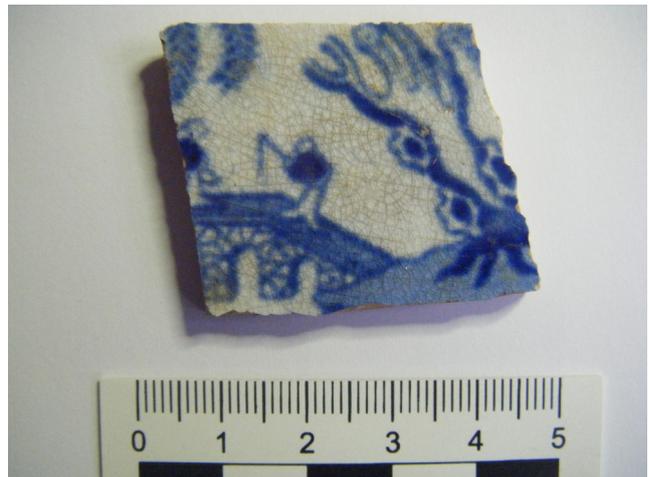


Most interesting amongst these small sherds was one from the underside of a vessel made by "T. Till & Son", with a cartouche surrounding the name "Fibre". Thomas Till was a manufacturer of transfer decorated earthenware at the Sytch pottery near Burslem between c.1850 and 1929. Initially, his wares were marked "& Son" (singular) but changed to "& Sons" (plural, in 1861). This meant that we could tell the pupils that what they had found dated to between 1850 and 1861 and thus provided a broad date for the remainder of the transfer printed wares. The name "Fibre" is that given to this particular design range. (www.thepotteries.org/mark/t/till.html accessed Nov.2022).



Also interesting amongst these sherds was one readily recognisable as being of the well known Willow Pattern design. From the 1780s British potteries had begun to imitate the pastoral scenes on imported Chinese porcelain. By 1783, the designer Thomas Minton was working for the potter Josiah Spode and produced a series of decorative schemes in the Chinese style. Amongst these was the first version of the Willow Pattern. It is hard to say why this particular design "took off" in such a big way but this was probably to do with the romantic stories which grew up around the subject matter. By the mid 19th Century, Willow Pattern was at the height of fashion, but the pupils, like many other people, were surprised to learn that it is not Chinese, but a British invention.

(<https://vgm.liverpool.ac.uk/blog/2021/willowpattern> accessed Nov. 2022).



Another type of Victorian pottery in evidence was embossed earthenware. Decorated in relief, this was glazed plain off-white or ivory. Two joining sherds formed a fluted rim, possibly at the junction of a rim and the pouring spout of a jug. Jugs of this type were in production by the potters William Brownfield at Cobridge, North Staffs. from c.1837-1890, which accords well with the dating of the other sherds.

(www.thepotteries.org/ware/brownfield/index.htm accessed Nov.2022)



A possible earlier component to the pottery was a few sherds of London Region Post-Medieval Redware. With a wide period of production (c. 1580-1900), this material is difficult to date, but at least probably predates the formation of the park.



Clay tobacco pipe stem fragments were common in the sample but only one fragment from a pipe bowl was found. This had rib decoration with swags around the bowl and an exaggerated imitation stitched seam at the front. Ribbed designs were common in the late 18th. and throughout the 19th. Centuries, (Atkinson & Oswald 1969. Fig. 6 &7).



Ironwork associated with horse-and-cart transport consisted of a horseshoe fragment, two coach bolts and possibly two square-shanked nails. Photographs of agricultural activity in the wartime years, show mechanised transport and it seems likely and these articles predate the establishment of the park.



Building material was limited to a few fragments of slate roof tile and *terra-cotta* peg roof tiles. It was rather surprising not to encounter any glass or animal bone.



Where did the Oakwood Park finds come from? Farming in World War II.

By 1939 and the outbreak of World War II, improved public hygiene and refuse collection had made night soil manuring largely a thing of the past and it was expected that there should be fewer finds from this period than earlier times.

Whilst most evidence for agricultural activity in the Park was photographic, there were a few finds which gave supporting evidence. The Photographs (see Appendix 3) show tractors, a threshing machine and mechanised trucks in use. A vintage spanner was found which would be just the sort of tool needed for field maintenance. A possible broken pitch fork would have been the means of lifting sheaves of cereal up to the threshing machine and bails of straw onto the trucks.



A brooch consisting of a pressed copper chrome plated image of a dog mounted on an oval Bakelite backing could have been worn either by the Land Girl workers or the children, invited by the local press, who had come to help with the wheat harvest. The fixing pin on the reverse had become detached and the brooch lost.



A broken land drain, leading from the area of wetland cell 3 south eastward towards the stream of Houndsden Gutter, may have been a provision to drain and improve soil quality in this area for the growing of cereals in the park through the wartime years. The pupils were certainly fascinated by the elephant trade mark on the pipe sections.



Conclusion.

As with previous projects of this kind, school staff have told us how well the pupils respond to being able to handle and process real historical artefacts in the form of archaeological finds, and the trust which that implies. The local nature of these finds produces an enhanced level of engagement with the subject, which is particularly noticeable in students who sometimes struggle to engage with more academic lessons.

Neither is this a one-way process. Our chosen title for this report: "Things People Made, Used and Left Behind" is a quotation from one of the written pieces of work generated by the project. It is a simple, moving view of what Archaeology is all about and reminds us why we do it.

Archaeology is the study of things that people made, used and left behind. It is also digging old things, at the study of a precious piece.

Towards the end of the project, the pupils were able to make a site visit, delayed by the Omicron variant of the Covid 19 virus. On 17th October 2022, they helped the charity Thames 21 to plant wetland plants and were able to search the surface of wetland cell 3 for more finds. The blue and white transfer printed pottery found was highly treasured!



Appendices.

(1). Oakwood Park Wetland Scheme, 2022: An Introduction for Teachers.

Enfield Archaeological Society

Oakwood Park Wetland Scheme, 2022

Introductory Notes for Teachers

Oakwood Park was opened in 1929 following the purchase by Southgate Urban District Council, in 1927, of the estate belonging to a house called Oak Lodge, and fields belonging to the Vicar of Enfield. The Oak Lodge grounds formed the western part of the park, and downslope the former fields formed the eastern part. The dividing line between the two parts is clear throughout the map regression sequence (O/S 1870 -present).

Oak Lodge was built by the millinery merchant Samuel Sugden (1798-1896). Originally from Leeds, by 1851 Sugden was living in Crouch End (1851 census). Some time between then and 1855, he bought Oak Farm on Enfield Chase; building Oak Lodge on the site as his new residence. An approach driveway connected the house to Chase Road N14 ,with the entrance controlled by a small lodge.

Following Sugden's death, Oak Lodge was sold at auction but who became the new owner is not clear. The house was demolished in 1919.

The 1870 O/S shows that Oak Lodge was equipped with its own gasometer, probably to provide lighting. The only surviving structure from the house outbuilding complex is a brick built ice well situated in the north west corner of the park.

In 1932 the western end of the park was lost to the northern extension of London Transport's Piccadilly Line. This destroyed the centre section of the driveway, leaving the lodge stranded on the western side of the railway line.

Overlaying of the map regression sequence shows that any buried remains of Oak Lodge are either in the rear gardens of houses on the south side of Sheringham Avenue, or beneath the three existing tennis courts in the park.

By the outbreak of WWII a mock-Georgian tea pavilion had been built close to the site of Oak Lodge. Along the western edge, a tarmac surfaced children's playground led downslope to a square cast concrete yachting pond. Downslope again to the south, the original small lake and landscaping of Oak Lodge were retained. These latter features are the only ones of any note within the area of the proposed wetland scheme.

An air raid shelter was erected behind the tea pavilion. This was of the surface brick built type with thick flat concrete slab roof and is said to survive (Ian Jones pers. comm.). Post-war, three tennis courts were provided on the site of Oak Lodge. From online photographs, it is not clear whether a brick built tennis "house" and store is a new build, or a conversion of the shelter by replacement of the concrete slab roof with a pitched roof.

During WWII, the former fields of the eastern area of the farm were ploughed under for the growing of cereal crops including wheat and barley.

Laterly, this area of the park has been laid out as a "pitch and putt" golf course.

In 1937, a grove of poplars was planted to commemorate the coronation of King George VI. From 1945, an avenue of red oaks has been formed by the annual planting of single trees by successive mayors.

(2). Hints on how to process archaeological finds from Oakwood Park site

Equipment needed

Small brushes, such as toothbrushes or nailbrushes

Containers for water – washing up type bowls or freezer tubs or similar.

Space to put the washed material to dry, on newspaper or paper towels or anything absorbent

'Technique'

Brush hard enough to get dirt off without removing any glaze or decoration from pottery. It's OK to dip most items into the water, but probably avoid soaking them, unless they look pretty robust.

Edges of pottery fragments need to be cleaned as well as other surfaces, and sometimes get forgotten. There's a lot of debate as to whether or not to wash metals, but perhaps brush them with a wet brush but don't dip into water. Take care, but don't worry if some items, especially pieces of iron, start to fall apart! After washing, lay the finds out to dry, reasonably spaced out if possible.

The water can be warm or cold.

Sharp edges

Some of the pieces may have sharpish edges, so kids will need to take care. Perhaps tip the entire bag out on to a surface, before starting to wash, rather than dip fingers in to pick things out.

What material is there?

There is a mixture of items, the majority dating probably to the period 1850-61. The Victorian material may relate to the common practice, in the era before proper sewage installations, of transporting human waste, often mixed with rubbish, from city areas to the surrounding countryside to be used as manure on farmland. A few objects, notably a spanner, a bakelite dog brooch and a broken tine from a pitchfork, may date from the 1940s and be related to the growing of wheat and barley in Oakwood Park during the Second World War. The material includes pottery fragments, broken pieces of roof slates and tiles, glass, clay smoking pipe fragments (from the stems), and iron objects.

Things to do after washing and drying

It would be great if the class could help us to classify, count and begin to identify the material, which are the next steps in the process for archaeologists. I suggest the following categories: metals: clay pipes: glass: slates and roof tiles: pottery could have several sub-categories, for example white, red, decorated. If the class want to create more categories after looking at the material, they can, providing everyone sticks to the same ones. After separating the items into categories, it would be great if the class could count how many there are in each category. They could also have a go at identifying some of the objects and how they might have been used. For example, with a piece of pottery, is it a rim, or the bottom of something, is it a teacup or a handle?

The class could also draw some of the items. And they could think and discuss what these objects tell us about how people lived in the Victorian period and worked during World War 2. All this will be very helpful to us. Perhaps the class would like to draw their research etc together into an illustrated report for us and/or prepare an exhibition about their findings and the site for the rest of the school.

(3). Where did the Oakwood Park finds come from? Organic Manuring?

Where did the Oakwood Park Finds come from? Organic Manure?

As archaeologists, we first of all try to identify our finds - to decide what they are - and then we try to work out how they got to the place where we found them. Many of the artefacts found at Oakwood Park – pottery, clay pipe stems, roof tiles and slates and pieces of iron – probably date from 1850 to 1860, in the Victorian period. At that time the area we now know as Oakwood Park was part of a farm which from around that time belonged to a house called Oak Lodge. Some of the artefacts may have come from rubbish thrown out by people living at the house or farm (there were no regular rubbish collections in those days), while some may have come from ‘night soil manuring’. ‘Night soil’ was a ‘polite’ way of talking about human waste from toilets, which had to be disposed of in the days before the flushing toilets and sewer pipes we have today. That was a big problem in places where a lot of people lived, for example in London, or Enfield. Night soil men collected the waste from the ‘privies’ or toilets behind people’s houses at night and took it outside the towns to the countryside. There it was spread on fields to make crops - such as wheat, barley or vegetables - grow better. It was often mixed with household rubbish. Some night soil was brought from London by boat along the Lea Valley and then by horse and cart from Enfield to the surrounding farms. The job of a night soil man must have been very unpleasant and they often became ill.

By the 1870s, modern sewers began to be built to take human waste away from houses in towns, both in London and in Enfield, so night soil manuring became less common. In some more remote areas of the UK, though, night soil men were still working in the 1950s.

Today there is new interest in using human waste to fertilise farmland, for example by our own local water provider Thames Water. Nowadays, of course, the ‘biosolids’ are very carefully treated to be pure and safe and don’t have household rubbish mixed in like they did in the past. So there are no artefacts to tell archaeologists of the future about our lives!

Links:

<https://thegardenstrust.blog/2015/07/11/night-soil-and-other-euphemisms/>

<https://www.thameswater.co.uk/about-us/responsibility/managing-sewage-sludge>

<https://historyhouse.co.uk/articles/nightman.html>



Collecting night soil, Walsall, about 1910

<http://www.search.staffspasttrack.org.uk/engine/resource/?resource=15963>



Night Soil collectors emptying their carts – © Hull City Council, Hull Public Health Department Photograph



Night soil men, Newark, about 1900: <http://www.ournottinghamshire.org.uk/>



Biosolids being spread as fertiliser today, Thames Water

(4). Where did the Oakwood Park finds come from? Farming in World War II?

Where did the Oakwood Park Finds come from? Farming in World War II?

A few of the finds from Oakwood Park may have been dropped or lost there during the Second World War (1939-45). During that time, food was very scarce, because it was very difficult and dangerous for us to buy it from other countries such as Canada and America. So there was a big effort to grow more food here. The men who worked in farming before the war had joined the army, navy and air force, so many of their jobs were taken by women.

The Women's Land Army was formed in 1940 to do farm work all over the country. From 1941, conscription meant that all unmarried women between the ages of 19 and 43 had to do war work. They chose whether to join the armed services, work in industry or in farming. Many of the women hadn't done this kind of work before and their life in the Land Army was very different from what they'd been used to. Women in the Land Army did all sorts of work on farms. They looked after animals, such as horses, cows, sheep and pigs, they drove tractors and grew vegetables and other crops in the fields. Some lived at home, but others stayed in hostels away from home, as they could be sent anywhere in the country to work. The work was hard and they could be outside in all weathers. They had a special uniform. They worked for 50 hours a week in summer and 48 in winter, earning a wage which was less than men doing the same work. But most of them liked the work, made friends, learned to do new things and had happy memories.

During the war, parks were used as well as farms to grow crops. In Enfield various parks were used, including Forty Hall and Oakwood Park. In Oakwood Park wheat and barley were grown by the Women's Land Army, with help from others. In the winter, they broke up the ground using a plough pulled by a tractor and then sowed seed in the soft earth.

In late summer, the wheat and barley had grown and it was time to cut and harvest it. They didn't have a big harvesting machine like we sometimes see on farms today, so they needed a lot of extra people to help. They put an advertisement in the local newspaper and many people volunteered, including a lot of local children. The wheat and barley were cut by a small machine pulled by a tractor, then put in small bundles or 'sheaves' and stacked to dry before the grain was separated from the straw using a threshing machine. After that the grain was put in sacks to go to a mill, such as Wright's in Ponder's End, to be ground into flour to make bread.



Women's Land Army in Hertfordshire, 1940s
www.hertsmemories.org.uk





Cutting barley in Oakwood Park, 1940s



Driving a tractor in Oakwood Park, 1940s



Gathering sheaves to build 'stacks', Oakwood Park, 1940s



Gathering sheaves, with stacks in the background, Oakwood Park, 1940s



Harvesting in Oakwood Park, 1940



Threshing in Oakwood Park, 1940s



Checking the grain, Oakwood Park, 1940s

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/what-was-the-womens-land-army>

<https://www.stmarysenfield.co.uk/ckfinder/userfiles/files/Home-Learning/Year-2/WEEK%204/FRIDAY%20WEEK%204%20HISTORY%20ENFIELD%20WW2%20School%20Pack-compressed.pdf>

G Gillam and I K Jones 2019 *Enfield at War 1939-1945* Enfield Archaeological Society

Acknowledgements.

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