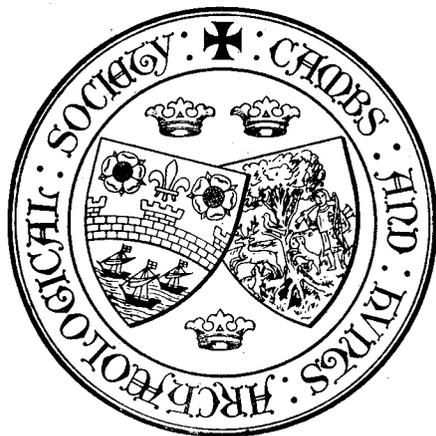


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EDITED BY THE REV. E. H. VIGERS, M.A.
RECTOR OF ABBOTS RIPTON WITH LITTLE STUKELEY, HUNTS.

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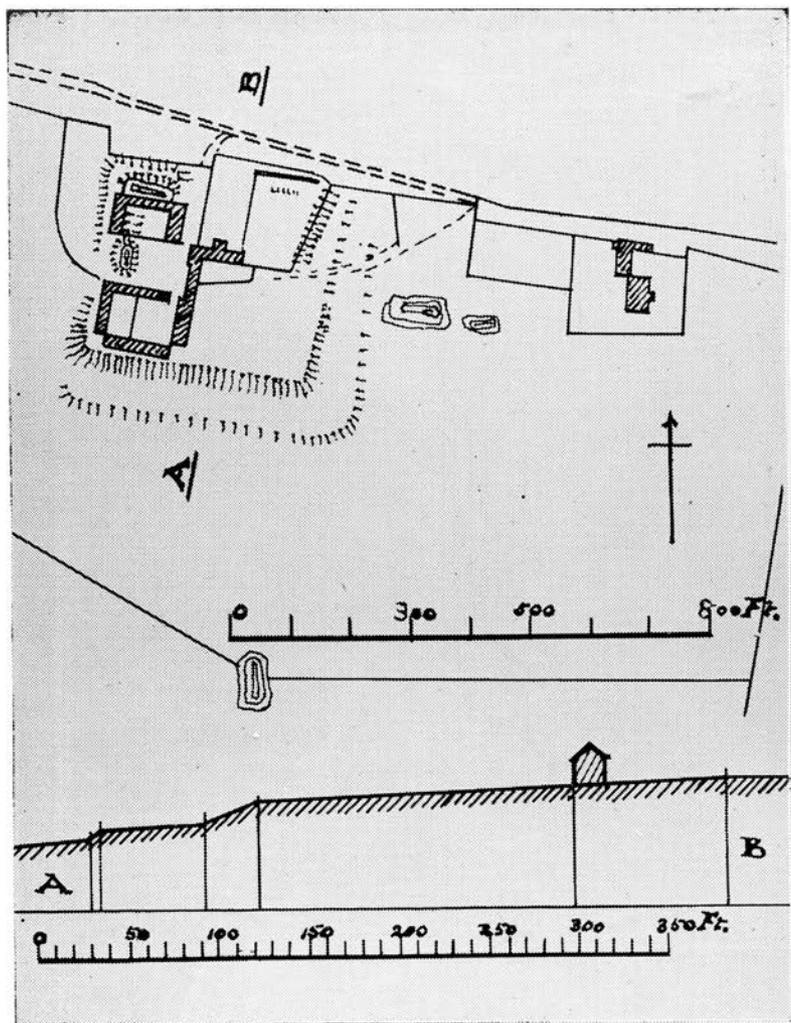
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WEYBRIDGE, ALCONBURY.

WEYBRIDGE, ALCONBURY.

BY J. R. GARROOD, M.D.

This site lies on a hill top, $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles SSW. of Alconbury Church. There are three houses of this name,—the modern farm house called Weybridge Park, the old house nearby, and Weybridge Lodge on the next hill to the NW. It is near the second of these that I made my excavations. It is a timber framed house and probably built late in the sixteenth century.¹

The earliest form of the name is Wardeberg, 1107-13; it means wold hill or forest hill.²

There is evidence that the old house was protected by a moat on the north, while to the south a platform had been formed on the sloping hillside, on which stand the house and farm buildings.³

Weybridge was one of the three Royal Estates which were already Forests when, in 1155, Henry II afforested the whole of the Woods in Huntingdonshire, and which remained Forests when Edward I, in 1300, disafforested the rest of the County. The other two Royal Forests were Harthay and Sapley.⁴

Both Weybridge and Sapley were called Forests as late as 1542, but from as early as 1614 Weybridge is described in Royal Charters as a Forest or Park, but was more informally called a Park.

When Weybridge and Sapley were leased to Sir Richard Cromwell in 1542, he had to keep up 100 deer (does).⁵

The custody of the Park was granted to Oliver Cromwell and Henry Cromwell in 1614, and the custody of the House in 1616. In 1627 the Cromwells surrendered these rights in Weybridge, and they were granted to Edward, Viscount Mandeville, with a covenant on the part of the grantee to keep 600 bucks and does in the Park. In 1660, Edward, then Earl of Manchester, was released from this covenant.⁶

The platform in front of the house ends to the south in a steep slope 11 feet high, it is 60 feet from N. to S. and 130 feet from E. to W. There is a ditch at its foot and to the south of this another platform extending about 55 feet; there is no ditch beyond this.

To the east and west the platforms merge into the hillside, to the north the hill rises above the level of the platform.

In 1924 I cut two trenches into the upper platform, cleared

1. Inventory of Historical Monuments of Huntingdonshire, p. 10.

2. Place Names of Huntingdonshire, Mawer & Stenton, p. 232.

3. Victoria County Hist., Hunts., I, p. 309.

4. Cart: Mon: Rameseia, II, 299-307.

5. Victoria County Hist., Hunts., II, p. 173.

6. Dr. T. P. Fernie's MS. notes from the Muniment Room at Kimbolton Castle, penes S. Inskip Ladds.

a portion of the ditch at its foot and cut another trench across the lower platform.

TRENCH I. This was 87 feet west of the east end of the platform and cut the ditch and bank at right angles, it extended from the end of the lower platform to the top of the main platform. The ditch was full of black earth and the bank consisted of moved soil. A round bullet was found 8 inches from the surface about the middle of the lower platform. The ditch at the foot of the upper main platform was of V section 4 feet deep, and its contents were much the same as those of other parts, viz :—roof and floor tiles, mediaeval and more recent pottery, mortar, burnt clay and stones, animal bones (pig, ox and sheep), oyster and snail shells.

TRENCH II. This was in the line of the ditch not far from the centre of the south edge of the platform, 140 feet from its east end and was 4 feet deep. As this section seems typical the list of finds is given in full.

1st foot:—Red and yellow roof tiles, burnt clay, red and yellow brick, pottery—some glazed inside and out, some inside only, some unglazed red, a tobacco pipe stem, bone—sawn across, tooth of sheep, oyster shells, iron staple, nail.

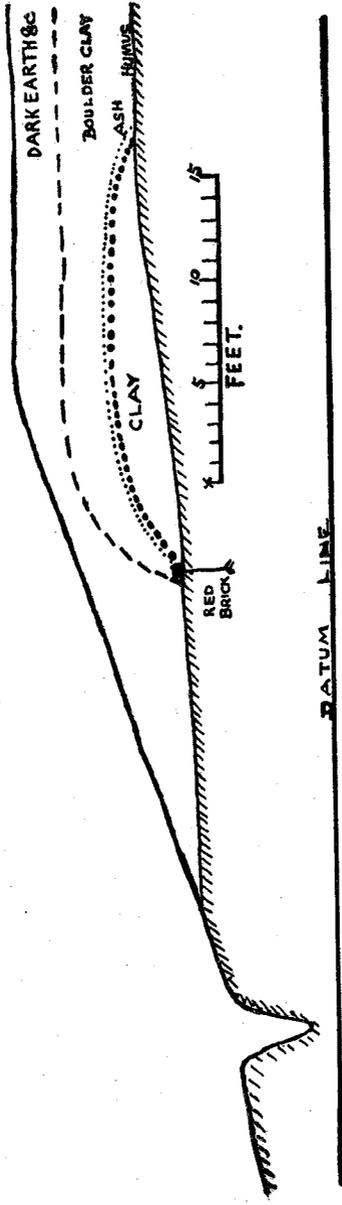
2nd foot:—Roof tiles, burnt clay, brick, burnt stones, a tobacco pipe, red unglazed pottery, part of a skeleton of a dog, deer antlers, oyster shells, snail shells, small nail.

3rd foot:—Red and yellow roof tiles, stone tiles, brick, mortar, burnt clay, red pottery—glazed and unglazed, part of skeleton of a dog, jaw of sheep, various limb bones, antlers.

4th foot:—Tiles, brick, burnt clay, burnt stone, red unglazed pottery, large leg bone—broken, leg and thigh of dog, numerous antlers on the bottom of the ditch, with red brick under some of them.

TRENCH III. A north to south trench across the lower platform, 15 feet long by 2 ft. 6 ins deep; it contained a small quantity of brick rubbish and bones, principally near the lower edge where it was more made-up on the slope of the field. Unmoved clay appeared at 2 feet. The bullet already referred to was .6 inch in diameter.

TRENCH IV. This was a section into the main platform, in the same direction as the others, it was 27 feet long and situated 90 feet from the east end of the platform; it commenced at the south edge of it. This trench showed that the platform was a composite structure, the lowest land surface carried-on the general slope of the field; the surface was of a purple chocolate colour and easily distinguishable. Above this was a bank of clay 22 feet wide covered by a layer of ash and other rubbish and above this was a made-up platform of local boulder clay which extended north to the end of the trench, above this, again, was a layer of dark



WEYBRIDGE, ALCONBURY.
SECTION THROUGH TRENCH IV.

earth, brick, tile and other rubbish. The height of the platform at the edge was about 7 feet from the old surface, a red brick was found on this old surface at the foot of the bank and just behind the front edge of the clay platform.

Contents.—1st foot:—Mediaeval pottery including part of a pinched-out base with dark green glaze,—this is a thirteenth century feature which reappears in the fifteenth century but was probably put there when the ground was made up; red brick,—one shows a thickness of rather less than $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches, this is probably sixteenth century or earlier; animal bones, including horse; a modern type of horseshoe; bottle, glass and oyster shells.

2nd foot:—Similar but fallow deer antlers, and part of a Tyg or small handled vessel probably sixteenth to seventeenth century.

3rd foot:—Much the same; some more of the Tyg and green glazed floor tile.

4th foot:—No antlers, but carbonised wood and animal bones of dark colour, due I suppose to the action of water.

TRENCH V. This was dug into the platform 70 feet from its edge and in the same general direction as the others. Unmoved yellow clay was found 3 feet from the surface; tile, burnt clay or brick, antlers, bones and oyster shells were found in small amounts.

SUMMARY.

I think the evidence shows that there was a house here as early as, or earlier than, the sixteenth century; that at one time it was protected on the south by a bank; later the bank and land to the north was raised with material possibly obtained from the large ponds nearby, together with builders' rubbish including red brick which is probably sixteenth century.

Fallow deer antlers were found everywhere; some have been cut off indicating venison, others are shed antlers. Oyster shells were numerous as well as a few sea mussels, probably both were conveyed by the river Ouse which is not far away.

These finds indicate, as its history shows, that Weybridge was a Deer Park, if not a Forest, in the sixteenth century.

The house and its yard and out-buildings stood on the present platform surrounded by a fence and further protected on the south by a wet ditch, the same on the north with extensions down the sides, though the ditch must have been dry about the centre.

I hope that the excavation will help to confirm and expand the history of Weybridge as already known.

I am indebted to Mr. Aubrey for permission to dig, and to Mr. S. Inskip Ladds for the plan and for the particulars of the history.