

## Excavation at Waynefflete's Tower, Esher: 18th century alterations by William Kent

PETER HARP

*A salvage excavation within the footprint of a 20th century garage block at Waynefflete's Tower, Esher, the former gatehouse of the 15th century Palace of Esher built by William Waynefflete, Bishop of Winchester, was undertaken by Surrey Archaeological Society in 2007. The results revealed a series of cellar rooms associated with one of the wings added to the gatehouse by William Kent in the 18th century. Documentary evidence suggests these wings were built by Kent in the early 1730s, and subsequently demolished around 1805. The excavation demonstrated that the basement rooms mirrored the layout of the ground floor recorded in 1744 in a plan by John Vardy.*

### Introduction

In June 2007 Penny Rainbow (now Jackson), the owner of Waynefflete's Tower, invited Surrey Archaeological Society (hereafter 'the Society') to carry out an excavation within the footprint of a garage built in 1956 that had stood 3.6m to the south of the surviving 15th century gatehouse. The garage was to be demolished to make way for a 'modernist' glass extension abutting the south wall of the gatehouse. Although the extension had been approved by both English Heritage and Elmbridge Borough Council with Listed Building Consent, no archaeological conditions had been imposed – presumably on the assumption that a single-storey glass structure would require minimal foundations. However, the proximity of the site to the river Mole (the tower is 45m east of the present course of the river) led the borough council building control officers to insist that the new building had 11m-deep piled foundations (this was subsequently amended following the archaeological excavation to a solid concrete foundation overlying the exposed archaeology). It was in the light of the potential archaeological damage to the site by the proposed piling that the excavation was initiated. This archaeological work was undertaken by the Society, under the direction of the author, over the course of the first two weeks in July 2007, immediately prior to the commencement of building work on the site and following the demolition of the garage.

Waynefflete's Tower was, at the time of the investigation, a Grade I listed building (centred on TQ 13080 65100; fig 1). From 1961 to 1989 it had also been a Scheduled Monument (Surrey no 212), having been removed from the schedule when it returned to domestic use. The site lies on a lens of sand within the Kempton Park Gravel formation and at a height of 14m OD. At the time of the excavation the former 15th century gatehouse, the sole extant above-ground structure associated with the Palace of Esher, built by William Waynefflete, Bishop of Winchester, was the family home of the owner. The owner's interest in the history of the site had led to an archaeological excavation in the grounds carried out by Channel 4's *Time Team* in September 2005 (Thompson & Birbeck 2010; Wessex Archaeology 2006).

The trench excavated by the Society measured 5.5 x 5.9m, comparable in area to the combined size of the eight trenches previously opened by *Time Team*. The investigation demonstrated a close correlation between the previously unknown layout of Kent's basement-level rooms and the known layout of the ground floor in the mid-18th century, together with detail regarding 18th century arrangements for dealing with the locally high water table. It also possibly challenges the previous interpretation of the site resulting from an earlier excavation on the northern side of the gatehouse in 1912 (Floyer 1920).

The archive and artefacts will be retained by the owner of Waynefflete's Tower.

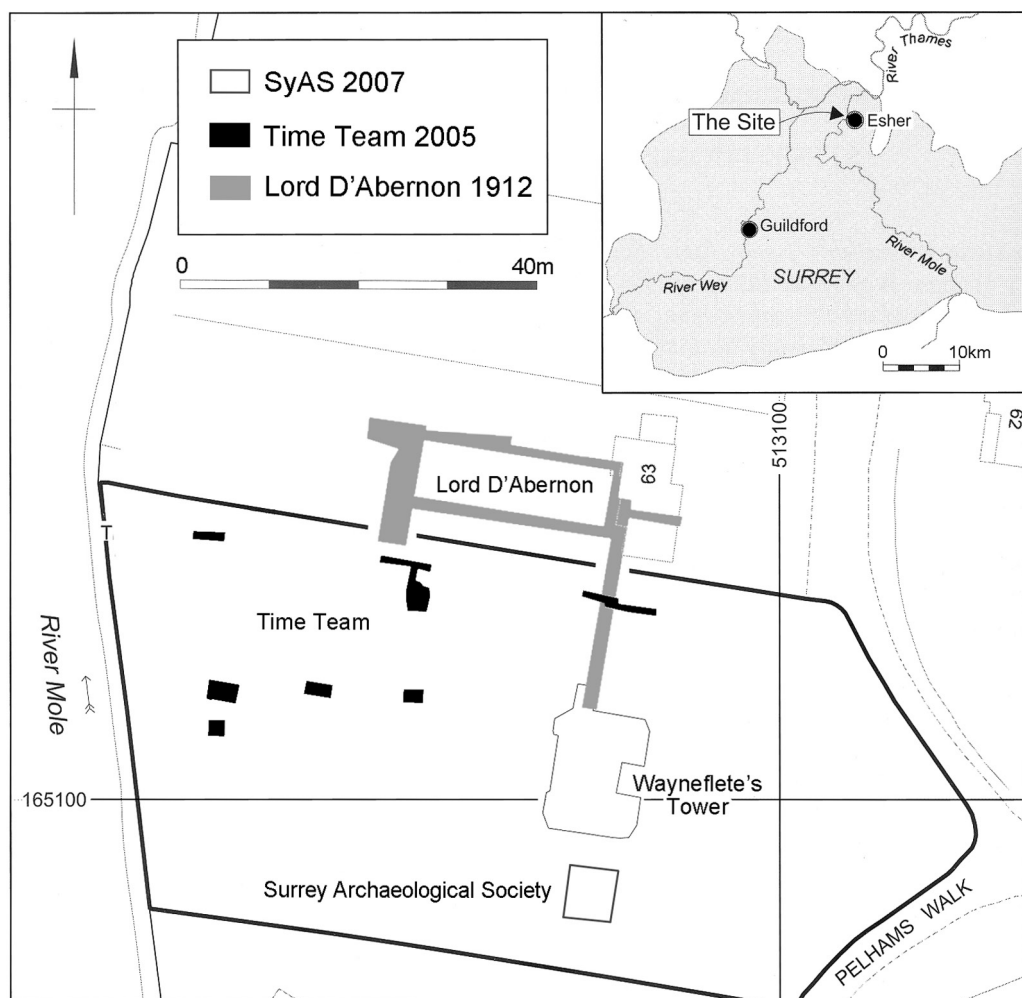


Fig 1 Waynefleete's Tower, Esher. Location of the site showing position of the excavation by Surrey Archaeological Society (SyAS) within the footprint of the former detached garage, together with the location of earlier excavations by *Time Team* in 2005 and Lord D'Abernon in 1912. (© Crown copyright Ordnance Survey. All rights reserved)

## Historical background

The historical background to the site has recently been summarised in the *Collections* (Thompson & Birbeck 2010, 259–64), while a book chiefly concerning the history of the site from the 15th century to the present (Rainbow 2010) also includes a review of the history specifically relating to structures potentially within the footprint of the Society's excavation.

Although the manor of Esher is possibly recorded as early as 1005 (*ibid.*, 199; Thompson & Birbeck 2010, 259), the earliest recorded substantial buildings on the site appear to have been a lodge and chapel dating to the mid–late 13th century (Thompson & Birbeck 2010, 259), subsequently enlarged some time between 1323 and 1333 and also having the addition of a manor house around 1331 (*ibid.*, 261). The manor had been bought by Peter des Roches, Bishop of Winchester (1205–38) from the Abbey of Croix St Leufroy, and was subsequently gifted by des Roches to the Place of St Edward Abbey at Netley (Wessex Archaeology 2006, 6). In 1245 William Raleigh, Bishop of Winchester bought the manor from the Abbot of Netley, and as the manor provided a conveniently located property for journeys between the

bishop's palaces at Winchester and Southwark, this probably gave sufficient reason to carry out significant building works on the site (Thompson & Birbeck 2010, 259).

William Wayneflete became Bishop of Winchester in 1447 and began a programme of extensive building work at Esher. This work was generally thought to have taken place between c1475 and 1480 (Brodie 1994, 2), although a date derived from dendro-chronological examination of several timber beams in the gatehouse carried out by Oxford Dendrochronology Laboratory for *Time Team* suggests a felling range date of 1462–72 (Thompson & Birbeck 2010, 264). The extent of the complex built by Wayneflete is apparent on a map of 1606 by Ralph Treswell (*ibid*, fig 2; Rainbow 2010, fig 172). The Treswell map shows that adjoining the surviving gatehouse to the south, in the area of the Society's excavation, there was a two-storey building with a large central window on the upper floor facing east. A narrow three-storey tower or chimney abuts this building in turn on its south side, followed by a crenellated curtain wall continuing south. This is perhaps more clearly apparent in *Time Team*'s computer-generated image based on the Treswell map (Rainbow 2010, fig 221). A sketch plan in the Bodleian Library of the complex of buildings on the site by John Aubrey in 1673 shows, *inter alia*, a crenellated wall extending north from the north-east corner of the gatehouse, labelled 'terrace', but fails to give any detail to possible structures that might have been on the south side of the gatehouse (Rainbow 2010, fig 175; Thompson & Birbeck 2010, fig 3).

By 1707, Wayneflete's buildings had been significantly altered (Knyff & Kip 1707; reproduced in Rainbow 2010, fig 65; Wessex Archaeology 2006, fig 4). The Knyff/Kip engraving shows that the two-storey wing with chimney/tower on the south side of the gatehouse shown by Treswell had been replaced by a three-storey Jacobean block with rectangular windows and a flat roof. This rebuilding is likely to have taken place while the site was owned by either Sir Thomas Lynch, who bought the property in 1677, or subsequently by his daughter Philadelphia, who inherited the property in August 1684 following Sir

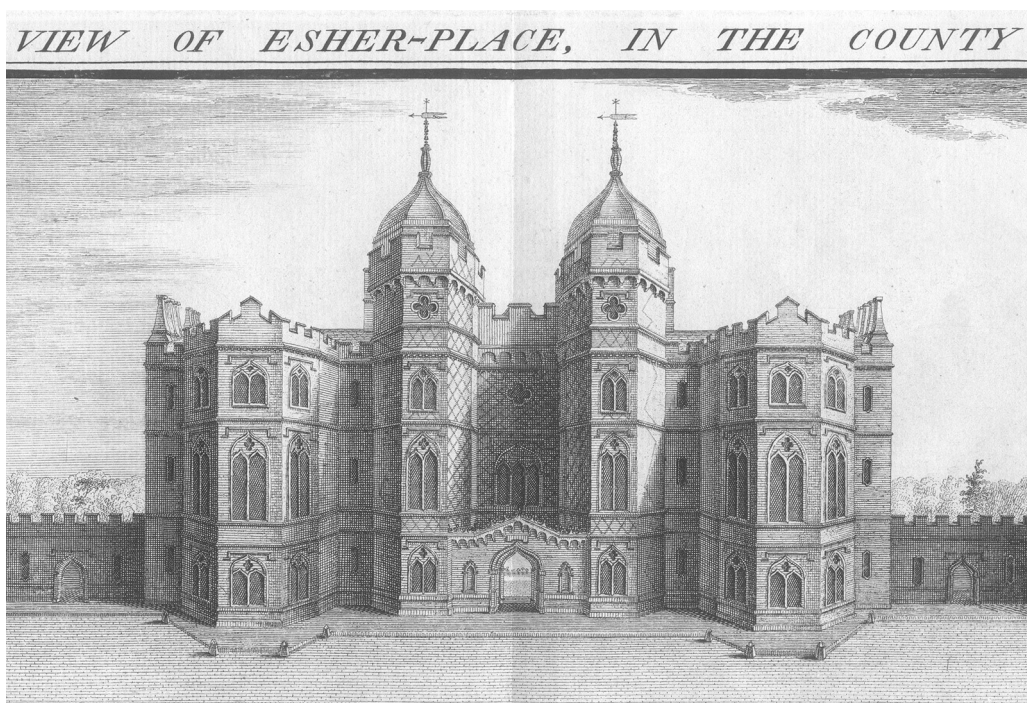


Fig 2 Wayneflete's Tower, Esher. Detail from an engraving entitled 'The East View of Esher-Place, in the County of Surry' dated 15 March 1737 (Buck & Buck 1737)

Thomas's death in Jamaica. Lynch had been Lieutenant Governor of Jamaica from 1663, returning to England in 1670, and was reappointed Lieutenant Governor in 1682, having lived at Esher for only 5 years (Rainbow 2010, 110–14, 215).

In 1730 the property, by then known as Esher Place, was bought by Henry Pelham (later First Lord Commissioner of the Treasury), who engaged William Kent, the noted architect and landscape architect, to remodel the buildings and grounds (Hutchins 2001, 33 and pl 19; Rainbow 2010, 119–58 & 216–37; Symes 1998a, 19; 1998b; Thompson & Birbeck 2010, 262). Kent began landscaping the grounds in Esher Park in 1733 (Rainbow 2010, 135) and the design for a new gothick porch to Esher Place is also dated to 1733 (*ibid*, 224). By 1737, the remodelled Esher Place appears to be essentially complete, in gothick style, as shown in an engraving by John Rocque (Rainbow 2010, fig 80; Rocque 1737). A similar engraving by the Buck brothers of the east front of Esher Place was also published on 25 March 1737 (fig 2; Buck & Buck 1737; Rainbow 2010, fig 73) and several similar engravings of the early 18th century exist (eg an unattributed engraving shown in Wessex Archaeology 2006, fig 5).

A large number of Kent's drawings for the proposed alterations at Esher exist, mainly now in the Victoria & Albert Museum (Harris 1959; Rainbow 2010, 136), and these demonstrate the various alternative designs for the project. However, it was unclear with the remodelling of the Jacobean wings to the gatehouse whether this was achieved structurally by a complete rebuild or merely a gothickisation of the existing structures, as occurred with the gatehouse itself (Rainbow 2010, 226). Thompson and Birbeck (2010, 262) suggest that Kent demolished the Jacobean wings before rebuilding in the gothick style while Nevill suggests they were merely remodelled (Nevill 1880, 218). It is unknown whether the Jacobean wings had a basement or cellar level, and Vardy's plan of 1744 (fig 3) of Kent's gothick reworking of Esher Place gives no indication of cellars apart from a staircase shown both descending and ascending from the ground floor. Significantly, while there is a staircase shown in the

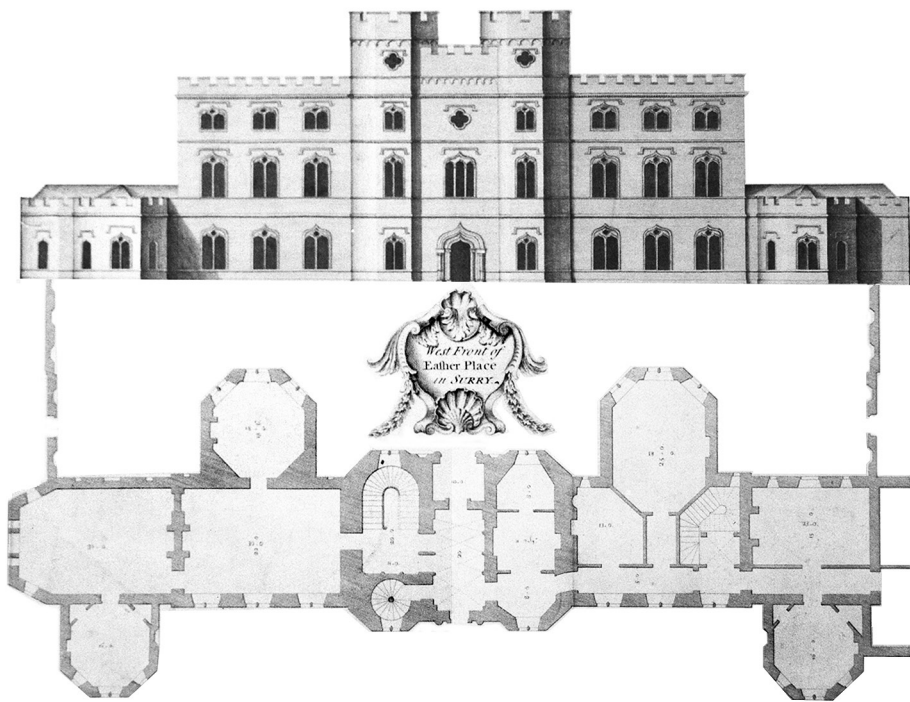


Fig 3 Wayneflete's Tower, Esher. 'West Front of Easher Place in Surry', plan by John Vardy, 1744 (Courtesy of Mundays Solicitors)

south wing, none is shown in the north wing. This might be because the Wayneflete-period staircase in the central gatehouse is itself situated in the north-west corner of the gatehouse, adjacent to the north wing. Excavations under the north wing in 1912 did not report any cellars (Floyer 1920).

In 1805 Esher Place was sold to John Spicer, a London stockbroker. The sale particulars record specifically: 'IN THE SOUTH WING IS – A Breakfast Room, A Bed Chamber and Two Dressing Rooms.' This does not fully account for the number of rooms shown in the south wing in the Vardy plan, and some of the other rooms listed without precise location in the sale particulars might also be in the south wing; for example: 'THE DOMESTIC OFFICES are judiciously placed, possessing every requisite Accommodation, and consist of A Housekeeper's Room, Steward's Room, an excellent spacious and lofty Kitchen, Scullery, Bake House, Larder, Dairy and Servants Hall, Wash House, Laundry, Brew House, and several apartments for Servants. A Range of Arched Vaults and Bottle Rails, And excellent Cellaring' (Rainbow 2010, fig 104). Spicer demolished most of Kent's work, including the wings to the gatehouse (Floyer 1920, 77), re-using much of the building material in a new building in neo-Palladian style, also called Esher Place, about 500m to the south-east of the gatehouse. Edward Lapidge, the architect of Spicer's new building, provided a valuation in April 1806 of £5528 for the 'Old Materials [...] worth to carry from the premises' demolished from the original Esher Place (excluding the central gatehouse, which was left standing). These were considered worth re-using in the neo-Palladian replacement, albeit there was also a cost of £652 for the 'expense of taking down, cleaning and sorting' the building materials salvaged from Kent's wings to the gatehouse (Rainbow 2010, 239).

From about 1806 onwards, the Wayneflete-period gatehouse was a free-standing, rather lonely, structure without the wings or other attached buildings that had adjoined it since the late 15th century (Havell 1827; Rainbow 2010, figs 208 & 209). Minor works, such as the insubstantial and ineffective brick buttress, were added to the south wall in the 20th century (removed in 2007), and a detached brick garage (site of the Society's excavation) some 3.6m to the south of the gatehouse was built in 1956 (Rainbow 2010, 263; shown in Thompson & Birbeck 2010, fig 1). In 2007, following the Society's excavation, the trench was backfilled with reinforced concrete and a modernist glass and timber-clad single-storey structure built on the footprint of the garage. This was connected to the gatehouse by a glass-enclosed passageway, re-opening one of the doorways in the gatehouse cut by Kent – or possibly earlier for the Jacobean wings – that had been bricked up by Spicer.

The earliest known archaeological investigation at the site was an excavation by the then owners, the D'Abernons, in 1912, recorded by the Reverend J K Floyer (Floyer 1920). Floyer's report includes a plan (Floyer 1920, fig 2; reproduced by Thompson & Birbeck 2010, fig 4) showing structures to the north and north-west of the gatehouse. Excavation was also carried out in front of the gatehouse to the east to seek, unsuccessfully, evidence of a moat (Floyer 1920, 69), but no excavation was recorded to the south of the gatehouse.

A series of eight trenches in the vicinity was excavated by *Time Team*, together with other investigations, in 2005 and the main focus of these works was to investigate the 15th century structures and deposits on the site (Rainbow 2010, 251–62; Thomson & Birbeck 2010; Wessex Archaeology 2006).

## Excavation

The Society's excavation, carried out between 1 and 15 July 2007, measured 5.5 x 5.9m (18 x 19ft), reached a maximum depth of 2.1m (7ft), and was entirely dug by hand. The lowest 1m of excavation required pumping as it was below the water table. Sixty-one cubic metres of wet sand, rubble and earth were dug out, not including the running sand beneath the water table at the deepest parts of the excavation, which was redeposited within the trench to maintain trench stability rather than removed. This trench was almost as large in area as the combined size of the trenches dug by *Time Team* in 2005, but significantly greater in volume.

The excavation, within the footprint of the demolished 1956 garage, initially revealed two courses of modern brickwork (101) defining all the excavation edges except for the south side (where the garage doors had been). This double course of bricks was resting on a poured concrete foundation, 0.41m thick (102), being presumably the 1956 garage foundation, following the outline of the garage. Within the footprint, the surface level had already been reduced to 0.05m (13.95m OD) below exterior ground level during the demolition of the garage (possibly removing the modern floor). The first stratigraphic context (104) removed from inside the garage was a 0.25m layer of brown soil containing many 20th century bricks and a complete glass milk bottle (dating to *c* 1950s–80s).

At a depth of 0.3m, the mid-20th century deposit rested on a grey/brown alluvial soil deposit (106). Into this layer a rectangular pit, 1.0 x 0.75m in area and 0.6m in depth (ie from 0.3 to 0.9m below modern surface level) had been cut, some 5.2m south of the standing gatehouse. An indistinct channel leading north to the gatehouse was also visible. The fill (105) of this pit was primarily composed of modern fletton bricks and glass ‘Martini’ bottles, and interpreted as a small soakaway for the gatehouse, dating to the 1950s and just pre-dating the construction of the garage. The grey/brown alluvial soil (106) was 0.3m thick and extended across two-thirds of the excavation from the eastern edge. Finds within it included mid-19th century glass (such as a fragment of a Hamilton bottle), but also a piece of Bakelite, dating the deposit to the early 20th century. On the western third of the excavation were two further orange clayey deposits (108 & 109), running parallel north–south, interpreted as levelling layers during the construction of the garage, and also suggesting that the cut for the garage foundation had been widened to the west before the 1956 concrete had been laid.

Beneath the 20th century deposits (106, 108 & 109), a grey/brown alluvial soil deposit (111) including a large quantity of brick and tile rubble, was reached at a depth of 0.6m (13.4m OD). This extended across two-thirds of the trench from the north edge, where it met a pale grey/brown soil deposit (112). The northern deposit (111), nearer to the gatehouse, included numerous fragments of green roofing slate, glazed bricks, decorated and plain window glass. This is interpreted as unwanted building material resulting from the demolition by John Spicer of Kent’s wings in about 1805/6. However, this deposit also contained some domestic waste, such as numerous sherds of pottery in a variety of fabrics (shell-tempered, Surrey whiteware, creamware, redware, stoneware, spongeware and tin-glazed) and much butchered animal bone and oyster shell. The presence of two pieces of struck Mesolithic flintwork in this deposit suggests it is probably a mixture of demolition rubble and soil, the soil probably of local origin. The pottery, again, suggests the inclusion of soil was from elsewhere on the site – the shell-tempered ware dating to between the 11th and mid-13th centuries – although most is post-medieval. One of the most interesting finds from this deposit (111) was a coin weight (Rainbow 2010, fig 252), made in Antwerp in the late 16th or early 17th century. The southerly deposit (112) contained no obvious demolition rubble, but there was one complete 18th century brick, together with 18th century pottery, porcelain, glass and a clay pipe. No complete bricks had been found in the demolition deposit (111), with apparently complete bricks having been salvaged for re-use in the construction of the neo-Palladian Esher Place by Spicer. The demolition deposit (111) is therefore early 19th century, while the adjacent deposit (112) may represent an 18th century garden soil used to backfill the *c* 1805 demolition. The deposition of both is likely to be near contemporary, about 1805, and both extended from 0.6 to 0.85m (13.4–13.15m OD) in depth.

Underlying the dump deposits (111 & 112), were two clayey layers: a deposit (116) of orange/brown clay 0.10m in thickness (13.15–13.05m OD) containing a small amount of building material (moulded plaster, clay floor tile and some flint-tempered building mortar) together with some domestic waste (redware and pearlware pottery and butchered animal bones). There was also half a lead shot and a complete lead ball shot. Deposit 116, in turn, rested on another clay deposit (117) but grey in colour and resembling London Clay. This grey clay, 0.05m in thickness (ie from 0.95 to 1.0m below ground surface, 13.13–13.05m OD), contained several brick and tile fragments, grey roofing slate, window lead, a clay pipe stem and

several pottery sherds (stoneware, whiteware, tin-glazed, and brown glazed Rockinghamware dating to *c* 1800–*c* 1900). These deposits (116 & 117) are also both interpreted as dumps of material associated with the *c* 1805/6 demolition of the gatehouse wings.

At a depth of 1–1.2m (13–12.8m OD), beneath the four dump layers (111, 112, 116 & 117) likely to relate to the *c* 1805/6 demolition, a 0.3m deposit of cockleshells (118) was found (Rainbow 2010, fig 253). Artefacts recovered from the cockleshell layer included a lead musket ball, several pieces of bottle glass, a butchered animal bone and tooth, an almost complete brick, five tile fragments and two iron nails. Although the deposit consisted almost entirely of cockleshells, small numbers of oyster, whelk, mussel and clam shells were also present. Several interpretations for this deposit are possible and are considered below (see *Discussion*).

Under the cockleshells (118), in the south-east corner of the trench, there was a thin (0.05m) layer (119) of brick rubble in a matrix of grey clay that contained a single sherd of Red Borderware (dated 1580–1800). This was resting at a depth of 1.25m (12.75m OD) on a mortar and mortared brick surface (120) in the south-east quadrant of the excavation, interpreted as the brick base of an open-well staircase, corresponding to the location of a staircase shown on the Vardy plan of 1744 (fig 3). In the remainder of the excavation, the cockleshells (118) rested on a waterlogged grey sandy layer (121) at a depth of 1.30m (12.7m OD), this being the height of the water table.

A mortared brick wall (fig 4), 0.46m wide, extended north-west, towards the centre of the excavation, from the staircase base (120). The top of this wall was at a depth of *c* 1.30m (12.7m OD). From near the centre of the excavation, the brick wall divided, one wall running north towards the gatehouse, and one wall running west. Both these walls contained openings *c* 0.98m wide, effectively separating the excavation into four areas (fig 5): a partial staircase base (Area 1) in the south-east measuring *c* 2.6 x 1.8m, a partial sub-square or sub-



Fig 4 Wayneflete's Tower, Esher. View of the excavation, looking north towards the gatehouse, showing Areas 1–4 and their dividing walls. (Photograph courtesy of Andrew Norris)

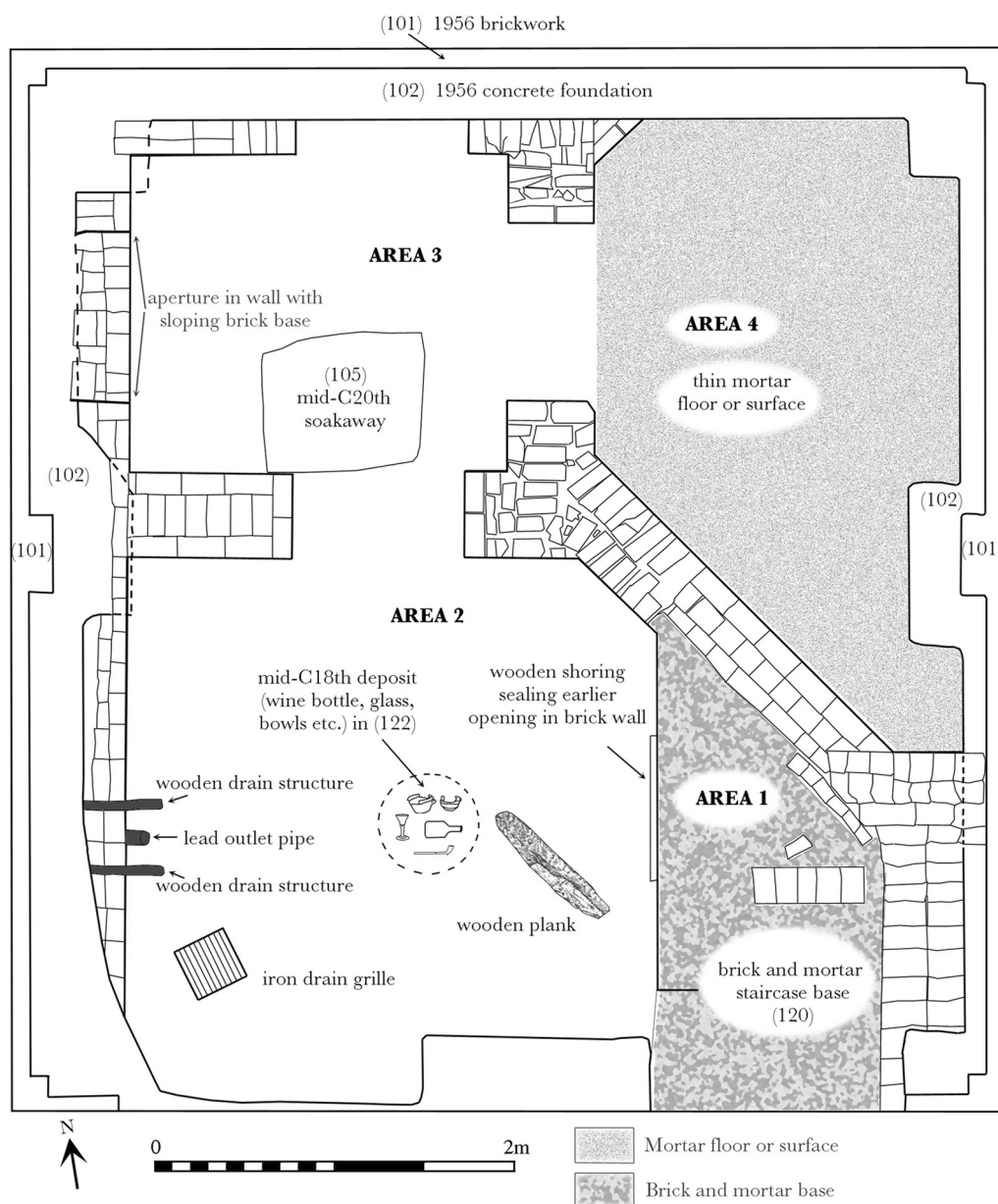


Fig 5 Waynefleete's Tower, Esher. Phase plan of the Society's excavation.

rectangular room (Area 2) in the south-west measuring  $c 3 \times 3$  m, a complete sub-square room (Area 3) in the north-west measuring  $1.8 \times 2.1$  m, and a partial, probably octagonal, room (Area 4) in the north-east. The northern excavation baulk, nearest the gatehouse, in the north-west quadrant was found to coincide with a similar brick wall, which continued and also formed the western baulk of the excavation at this depth. The tops of all these walls, or wall foundations, were found at around or just below the water table.

Excavation in Area 1, the staircase base, stopped on reaching the top of the structure. In Area 2, underneath the cockshells (118), two parallel deposits were found: a band of grey silt (121) running north-south, 0.6 m wide and adjacent to the staircase Area 1, and

a larger deposit to its west – a wet, dark grey or black, fine or silty deposit (122), the top being at a depth of 1.45m (12.55m OD) and about 0.10m thick. The deposit nearer the staircase base (121) contained a clay pipe stem at a depth within it of 0.5m (1.55m deep, 12.45m OD) and the bottom of this deposit was not determined despite augering. The western deposit (122) contained a large proportion of coal dust, together with several clay pipes (one still containing tobacco), a complete wine bottle, and several sherds of ceramic bowls (mainly from just two vessels – a Red Borderware porringer (dating to 1580–1800) and a stoneware bowl (Rainbow 2010, figs 254–5)), glass bottle fragments and a broken 18th century wine glass. The lack of ribbing on the porringer suggests a later, rather than earlier, date (Pearce 1992, 16). One of the clay pipes (Rainbow 2010, fig 251) can be dated to 1700–70 from Weybridge, while the glass wine bottle (fig 6; Rainbow 2010, fig 256) dates to c1740–60 (Dumbrell 1983, 92). The fragmentary wine glass was of drawn trumpet form, plain stemmed with a single bead inclusion on a conical foot, dating to the mid-18th century. In Area 2, underneath this black coal dust deposit (122), excavation continued rapidly, with continuous pumping, in the running sand (130), to a final depth of 2.1m (11.9m OD). At the bottom of the excavation in Area 2, several complete bricks were retrieved lying randomly at the base of the sand (130), together with a corroded iron block which, after the removal of 8kg of accreted rust and sand, was revealed as a grille or drain cover, measuring 0.29m (1ft) square, with nine parallel rectangular-section bars, weight 3.5kg. It was not possible in the very mobile conditions at this point to determine exactly what sort of surface, if any, these complete bricks and grille were resting on, if indeed it was a discrete surface at all, but from probing in the fluid sand it appeared to represent a deposit of brick rubble (132) at a depth of 2.1m (11.9m OD). Although this rubble might have suggested an artificial horizon, perhaps coinciding with the base depth of the original foundations cut, it could also have been an effect of hydrogeological movement within the sand below the water table. On the upper surface of the sand in Area 2 a poorly preserved timber plank, 0.8 x 0.15m, rested at a



Fig 6 Wayneflete's Tower, Esher. Glass wine bottle, dating to 1740–60, from context 122 (Photograph by Direct Design, Esher, courtesy of Penny Rainbow)

depth of 1.24m (12.27m OD) – slightly below the height of the water table. This plank had clearly become detached from an area of timber shoring (fig 7) blocking an opening from Area 2 eastwards into Area 1, occupied by the staircase foundation. Excavation of the sand in Area 2 also revealed, attached to the brick wall forming the west baulk of the excavation, a wooden structure (123),  $\approx 0.36\text{m}$  wide with a surviving height of 0.6m, interpreted as a sump or drain (fig 8; Rainbow 2010, fig 247), at the base of which was a lead outlet pipe,  $\approx 0.15\text{m}$  in diameter. The wooden structure survived in the waterlogged conditions to a minimum depth of 1.2m (12.8m OD), while the lead pipe was at a depth of 1.75m (12.25m OD). Prior to the excavation, dowsing had indicated a possible watercourse or conduit running from the location of the lead pipe westwards towards the river. It seems likely that the iron grille recovered from under the waterlogged sand in Area 2 had formerly been a drain grille or cover possibly positioned on the top of the wooden sump structure, and had moved and sunk in the waterlogged running sand. The grille was recovered about 0.5m north-east of the wooden structure (123). The sandy deposit (131) enclosed within the wooden sump (123) contained a worked Mesolithic flint and a clay pipe (Kingston manufacture, 1700–70), the clay pipe being 0.25m above the lead outlet pipe.

Area 3 (fig 9; Rainbow 2010, fig 246), the complete sub-square room in the north-west of the excavation, revealed three doorway-sized openings: a 1.0m aperture eastwards into Area 4, the octagonal room; a 0.96m opening south into Area 2, the sub-square room with the drain; and a 0.96m doorway in the wall forming the northern baulk of the excavation, exactly opposite the southerly opening into Area 2, giving access towards the gatehouse. In the middle of the western wall in Area 3, forming the west baulk of the excavation, the base of an aperture formed of sloping bricks was revealed. The baulk was deliberately slightly over-cut here (excavating an artificial arch in the overlying demolition deposits) to reveal the extent of this aperture that appeared to pass through the thickness of the wall. This was



Fig 7 Wayneflete's Tower, Esher. Photograph of Area 1, the staircase foundation, taken from Area 2, looking east. Showing timber shoring blocking off an opening between Areas 1 and 2 prior to the filling of Area 1 for its use interpreted as a staircase foundation.



Fig 8 Wayneflete's Tower, Esher. Wood-lined sump or drain with lead outlet pipe on the western wall of Area 2. (Photograph courtesy of Alfie Hines)

interpreted at the time as probably the base of a 'chute' from the floor above, but was possibly an opening into an adjoining basement room beyond the excavation to the west. The bricks forming the sloping base were not excessively abraded, suggesting that if this was a chute it was not for coal, but could have been for domestic ash, rubbish or laundry. If it was not the base of a chute, it might have been a narrow ramped opening into an adjoining cellar space. The aperture narrowed slightly as it entered the brick wall forming the baulk westwards, being 0.9m wide at the face of the wall and narrowing to 0.86m wide. This opening is reflected or replicated by an opening immediately above it on the ground floor shown on the Vardy plan between a small room and corridor (fig 3). The base of this sloping brick aperture was at a depth of 1.4m (12.6m OD), and coincided with a change to the quality of the finish of the mortar joints in the adjoining brick walls: below this level the mortar joints were crudely pointed, suggesting that the base of the sloping bricks was around the original intended floor height of the cellar rooms, about 0.1m below the level of the water table.

The fill (129) below the water table within the square room Area 3, was a grey sand, similar to the sand (130) in the adjacent room to the south (Area 2). This included a small number of fragments of building material (slate, floor tile, mortar, moulded plaster), together with a clay pipe (1700–70), Red Borderware pottery (1580–1800), and the base of a Raeren (east Belgian) stoneware cup (c 1480–1550). There was also a sawn plank (Rainbow 2010, fig 250), 1.2m long with a tapered sawn end, possibly used for shoring.

Area 4, the partial octagonal room revealed in the north-east quadrant of the excavation, contained a mortar surface (133) – either a floor, or more likely the base for a robbed-out



Fig 9 Wayneflete's Tower, Esher. Area 3, the complete sub-square room. Photograph taken looking west towards the aperture with base of sloping bricks. The aperture is 0.9m wide, with the pump showing to its right (north). (Photograph courtesy of Andrew Norris)

floor – at a depth of 1.20–1.30m (12.8–12.7m OD). This mortar surface stopped in line with the doorway between this room and the square room Area 3 to the east. The thin layer of mortar rested on sand (134). No further excavation was carried out in this room.

On completion of the excavation, sufficient sand was backfilled into the trench to stabilise the excavation and the water table was allowed to return to its original level (fig 10). Following the backfilling, it was decided that deep piling for the new glass wing would no longer be required, but instead approximately 60m<sup>3</sup> of reinforced concrete was poured into the excavation, resting upon the 18th century brick foundations.

## Discussion

The excavation revealed a layout of brick walls and foundations corresponding precisely with the 1744 Vardy plan of the ground floor of Esher Place with the wings built by William Kent. These walls had generally been demolished and robbed out to the approximate depth of the water table. Historical evidence suggests these wings were built by William Kent around 1733, and demolished by John Spicer around 1805.

Although the finish of the mortar courses on the brickwork where it survives on the north and west walls of Area 3 suggests that the cellar levels were intended to be used from the outset, rather than being simply foundations, it is unclear what the initial access to the basement rooms would have been. The open-well staircase shown by Vardy in 1744 certainly corresponds to a staircase foundation (Area 1) in the excavation (fig 11). However, this staircase foundation is a later addition to the original construction, involving the crude wooden shoring up of an opening. It is possible that the original foundation to a staircase, if indeed it existed on this spot, was found to be either not sufficiently substantial, or needed to be raised. The walls for the octagonal room (Area 4) – clearly a part of Kent's



Fig 10 Wayneflete's Tower, Esher. Photomontage of view of the excavation after reinstatement of some of the sand and allowing the water table to stabilise, showing location of the excavation in relation to the standing south wall of the gatehouse. Photograph looking north from the top of the spoil heap.

gothick additions – do not appear to be well bonded into the brick walls of the square room (Area 3), which leaves open the possibility that Kent gothickised the existing Jacobean wings rather than opting for a total rebuild. Unfortunately, comparison of the brick sizes on the site was inconclusive, the bricks used in the medieval diaper work surviving on the gatehouse exterior being the same size as both the bricks in Kent's gothick octagonal room and the bricks in the rest of the structure. In fact the brick size was the same even for the 1956 bricks in the garage (although these were distinguishable – presumably but untested – by their frogs and greater uniformity).

The deposit (122) found in Area 2 perhaps represents the residue from a single meal, being essentially two bowls, a wine bottle and drinking glass, a clay pipe and an unidentifiable coin. The date for this deposit is likely to be approximately the middle of the 18th century (c1740–70) – too late for the build by Kent and too early for demolition by Spicer. The presence of a large quantity of coal dust and several lumps of coal in this deposit suggests that around this time the room may have been a coal store. Although there are several glass bottle fragments in the deposit, the fact that the wine bottle was undamaged, and the two pottery bowls, although fragmentary, were largely complete, suggest that the deposit was not

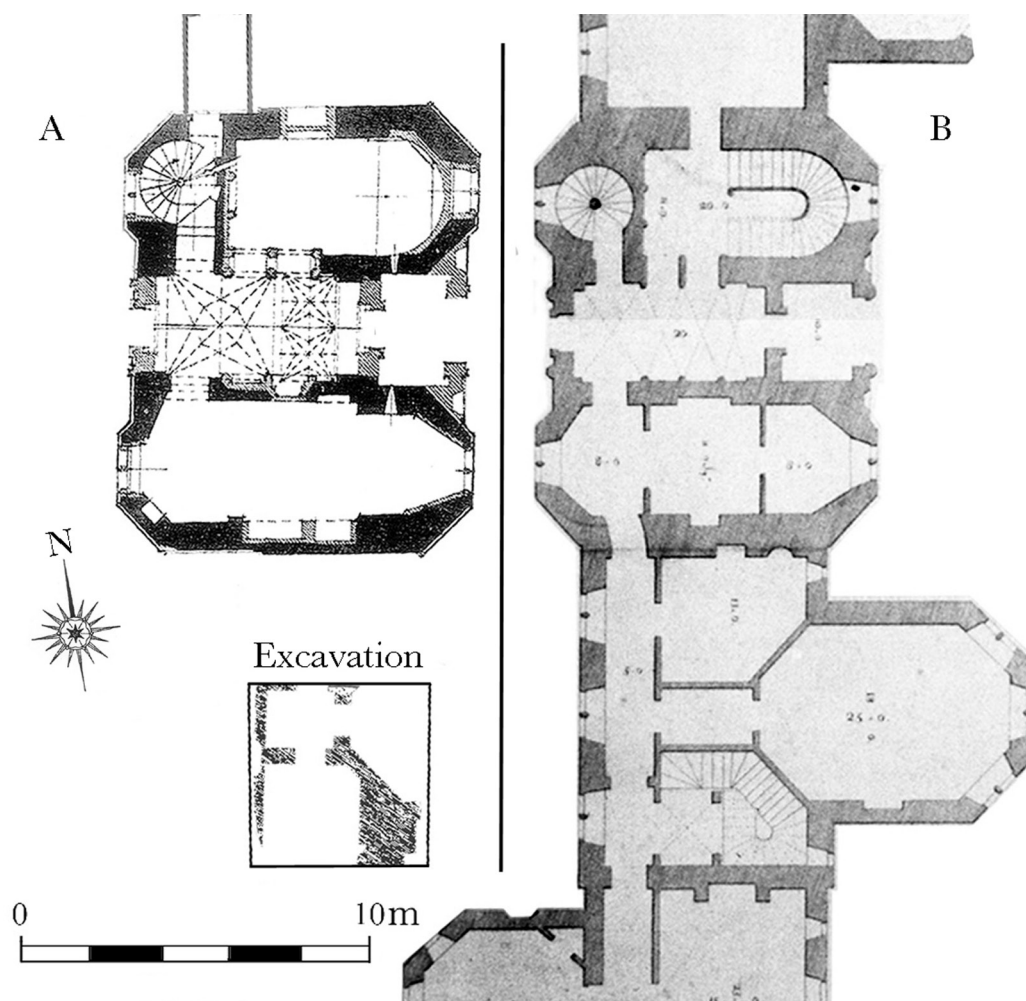


Fig 11 Wayneflete's Tower, Esher. Comparison of modern plan of the ground floor of the standing gatehouse (based on a 1939 plan by J W L Forge (after Rainbow 2010, fig 192)) with the addition of a boiler-house abutting the north wall and location and structures of the 2007 excavation (A), with John Vardy's ground floor plan of Esher Place in 1744 (B).

crushed by repeated use of the room as a coal store. It is tempting to suggest these represent a meal by one of the servants. One possibility is that the deposit is connected to the shoring up of the earlier aperture into the adjacent area (Area 1) forming the late staircase foundation. The deposit may have been left under a floor level, partially protected by floor tiles or planks. Similarly, the coal might have pre-dated the possible meal residue into which the rubbish was dumped, or the coal could have rested on an overlying floor and become mixed with the deposit when the floor was robbed out.

Perhaps the most unexpected discovery in the excavation was the 0.3m-thick layer of cockleshells (118). The fact that these overlay the mid-18th century deposit (122) suggests that these may have been a late insertion into the basement level while the building was standing, possibly as an under-floor damp course and to aid the flow of water into the wood-lined sump draining into the river via the lead pipe. However, the cockleshells were quite disturbed, particularly in the room containing the 'meal' deposit (122). It is possible that the shells had been moved and restored in this room – perhaps when the staircase foundation

was constructed. The shells, as a waste by-product from the London fishmarkets, would have been easy to transport by river to the site. However, when exactly they were brought to the site is unclear. The Knyff & Kip engraving of 1707 appears to show the grounds of Esher Place containing four large flowerbeds or parterres between the gatehouse and the river. These were all swept away by Kent when he landscaped the grounds in a less formal manner: it seems likely the cockleshells originated as late 17th or early 18th century parterre surfacings. Did Kent decide to re-use the shells as a damp course below the cellar floors in around 1733, or were they piled up somewhere and used later when the problems associated with the high water table became apparent? A third possibility is that the shells were the first deposit dumped into the robbed-out cellars after their demolition around 1805 or 1806. According to the owner, a similar deposit of mussel shells was discovered at depth while digging in a nearby garden, but again the same issues regarding date and function apply, although it is suggestive of former parterre coverings being re-used.

After the 1805/6 demolition of the wings built by Kent, the basement was filled with a series of deposits, incorporating soil presumably dug out from elsewhere in the grounds. These deposits included a number of Mesolithic worked flints, dating to about 10,000 years ago, some early medieval shelly-ware pottery (dating to around the 11th century), the base of a 14th century jug, together with very large quantities of demolition material such as brick fragments, mortar, moulded plaster, window glass and window leading. The building material was notable as being only fragmentary and unsuitable for re-use in the new neo-Palladian Esher Place.

In 1912, the owners of the gatehouse, the D'Abernon family, carried out a series of excavations to the east, north and north-west of the gatehouse, later reported by the Reverend Floyer. Floyer (1920, fig 2; Thomson & Birbeck 2010, fig 4) had shown a substantial brick wall foundation, running north from the north-west corner of the gatehouse, c1.6m (5ft) wide and at a depth of 'over 6 ft' (over 1.8m), which he interpreted as belonging to the Wayneflete phase (late 15th century) of the site. This seems to have been identified with the curtain wall shown on both the 1606 Treswell map (Thomson & Birbeck 2010, fig 2), and the crenellated curtain wall shown in the 1673 Aubrey sketch (*ibid*, fig 3). However, in both 17th century plans the curtain wall is shown as extending from the north-east corner of the gatehouse, while the wall foundation in Floyer's plan extends from a position nearer the north-west corner. It seems possible that Floyer's wall might be the rear (western) foundation of Aubrey's 'terrace' or curtain wall, but it is by no means definite; certainly neither 17th century plan shows a structure precisely where Floyer showed this wall. Interestingly, Floyer makes no mention of any other foundations abutting the northern side of the gatehouse. The absence of a staircase in the 1744 Vardy plan of Kent's north wing might suggest that whereas the south wing had basement levels, the north wing did not. It seems unlikely that any basements or cellars under the south wing would have connected to similar rooms under the north wing via access under the gatehouse itself. Floyer records no foundations associated with Kent's north wing nor any foundations associated with the Jacobean Lynchera wings that preceded it, although he indicates Kent's alterations to the main structure of the gatehouse itself. Floyer seems unaware of this building phase on the site and it could be, therefore, that the Floyer wall represents either a late 17th or early 18th century building phase, although the width of the wall might suggest it is indeed possibly late 15th century, albeit not directly supported by documentary sources.

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