

A Moated Site at Cranford

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TRIAL EXCAVATION on the eastern of the two moated enclosures at Cranford took place continuously for three weeks between 11th June and 1st July 1973. The site lies within Cranford Park, which is jointly owned by the London Boroughs of Hounslow and Hillingdon, some 40 metres north of the M4 and immediately west of The Parkway (the A312). The eastern enclosure, which lies next to the remains of the western enclosure, was probably originally square but about half was destroyed when The Parkway was built. Today only the western part of the moat surrounding this enclosure and some 1,200 square metres of the interior remain undamaged. Possibly this is the earlier of the two enclosures, but as excavation only took place within the eastern enclosure it is unwise to speculate further.

The western enclosure was also originally approximately square and enclosed an area of about 2,470 square metres. Unfortunately the western arm of the moat was cut away when the River Crane was redirected and canalised during construction of the M4. The southern arm of the moat was filled in at about the same time.

Both enclosures are on brickearth at about 30 metres above O.D. and are extensively overgrown with thick undergrowth and a number of large trees, including some yews.

Documentary Evidence

Due to pressure of other work little research has been carried out on the documentary evidence. However, from a preliminary investigation of the published records it is clear that there was some occupation during the 13th century. At the moment it is impossible to say which of the two moated enclosures the records refer to, but there was certainly a house on one of the enclosures in 1603, when Sir William Fleetwood lived there. In 1740 the site is described as having half an acre of courtyards and gardens within the moat. The house was pulled down in 1780 and it is interesting to note that the pottery sequence recovered ends at about this date.

The Excavation

Due to inclement weather and a small labour force it was only possible to excavate an area of 32 square metres and of this, only approximately 6 square metres were excavated down to natural brickearth. The earliest 'feature' was a 5 to 7 cm thick layer of dirty brown clay textured soil with pebble. This contained a small amount of charcoal, fragments of daub that became very abundant to the north and a few

sherds of late 12th or 13 century date. Possibly this is a buried soil.

Cutting this layer was a narrow U-sectioned gully (I) (fig. 1) running east-west. The width varied from 60 to 68 cms, the depth was a fairly uniform 23 cms. The primary fill was a brown soil with abundant pebble; the depth was approximately 3 cms. The remainder of the fill was similar but had less pebble. From this filling came a quantity of broken roof tile and a few sherds of 13th to early (?) 14th century date including a thumbed jug base in hard medieval grey ware¹ and a body sherd from a Surrey ware jug with vertical strip decoration. The purpose of this gully is uncertain, it may be for drainage or possibly it is a timber slot. With such a small portion it is unwise to pursue either hypothesis further.

Also cutting the buried soil and the natural brickearth was a small stakehole (II) about 3.70 metres north of gully I. This stakehole was 9 by 7 cms and 10 cms deep. The fill consisted of brown soil and pebble. No dating evidence was found in the filling. As this part of the site was not excavated to natural brickearth it is possible that further stake or post-holes exist.

Both features were sealed by a layer of dark brown soil with patches of pebble. The pottery from this layer dates from the (?) late 12th century to the 14th and includes a relatively large amount of Surrey Ware. One interesting sherd is from the shoulder of a Surrey ware jug and is decorated with applied vertical strips and whorls of clay. Also from this layer came a very corroded iron buckle and a small portion of green glazed floor tile in a buff sandy fabric. The tile is about 1.6 cms thick.

A small gully running north-south apparently cut the lower part of this layer. This gully (III) was c. 10 cms deep at the southern end and tapered away after 1.8 metres. There were two Surrey sherds in the fill. A square pit (IV) cut the southern part of this gully. The pit was c. 60 cms square and at least 10 cms deep. The lower fill was a hard clay textured grey-brown soil with abundant pebble; the upper fill was mixed clay and soil.

All the above layers and features were sealed by a layer of dark brown gritty soil with flint pebble that became very abundant towards the northern edge of the trench. The thickness varied between 20 and 25 cms. A relatively large amount of pottery and

1. Northolt group k — see 'The Kitchen Area of Northolt Manor' by J. G. Hurst, *Medieval Archaeol.* 5 (1961) 267-270.

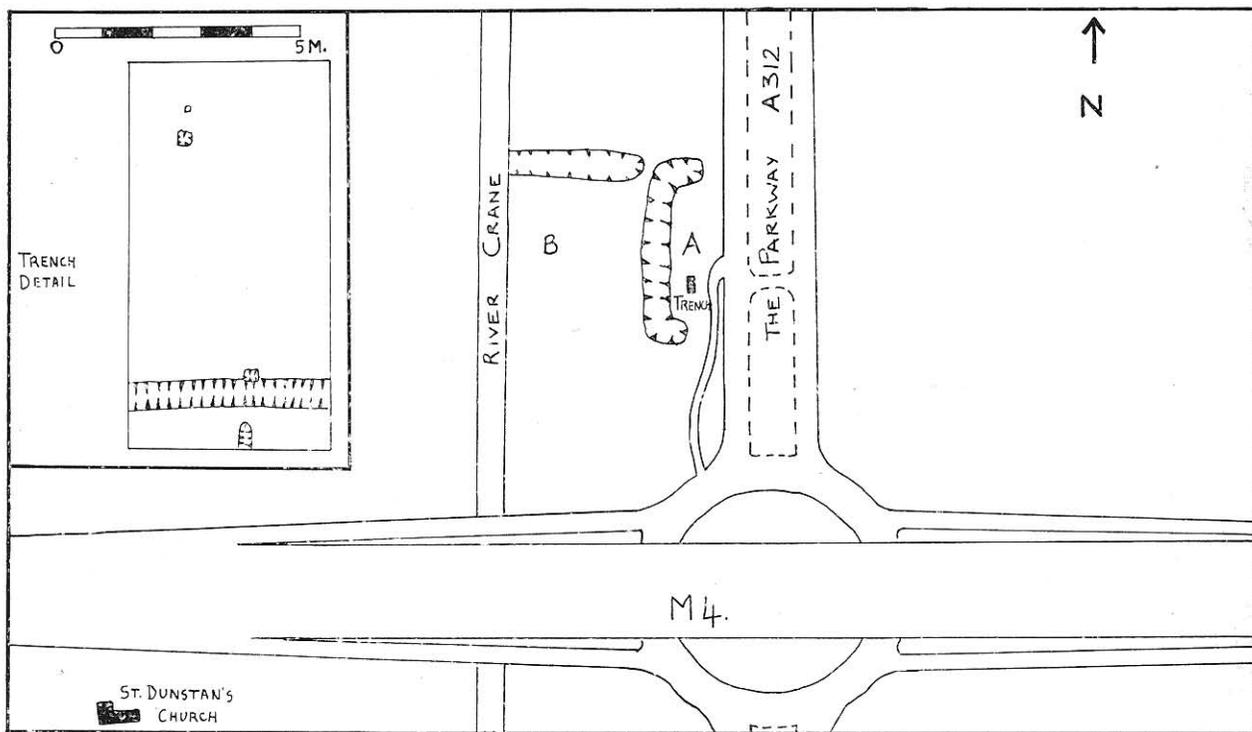


Fig. 1. Location map with site plan inset.

other material was recovered. The pottery ranges in date from the late 12th to the late 18th century and includes much Surrey ware, various types of stoneware, medieval and post-medieval coarse wares, including a few sherds of East Anglian red wares of the 15th century. The glass includes both window and vessel glass. Clay tobacco pipes were not as abundant as might be expected and the majority date from the 18th century with remarkably few earlier examples.

Two pits cut through this and earlier layers. Pit V was lozenge shaped, 2.2 metres by 1.3 metres and c. 25 cms deep. The lower fill consisted of a gritty brown soil with some pebble; a few pipe stems and a small fragment of tin-glazed earthenware came from this level. This layer merged into a similar soil but with a few lumps of clay and some small fragments of chalk, charcoal and coal. The final fill was again similar but had a larger amount of clay.

Pit VI was rectangular with rounded corners, it measured 1.5 metres by 1 metre and was 60 cm deep. The lower fill, c. 25 cms thick, consisted of a mixture of sand, gravel and gritty soil. A single sherd of early 17th century date was the only find. Above this was a layer of brown pebbly soil with a few pipe stems and two Surrey sherds. The final fill consisted of a soft dark brown soil with lumps of clay.

All features were sealed by a mixture of top soil and rubble which was extremely difficult and time-consuming to remove. This material was probably dumped on the site when The Parkway was constructed.

Conclusions

This small excavation has shown that medieval and later features survive on at least one of the enclosures. No concrete evidence was found for substantial buildings in the area excavated, although the fragment of glazed floor tile hints at possible buildings within the enclosure. The only other evidence for a possible (timber) building is the shallow east-west gully (I), which contained 14th century sherds, and the quantity of daub in the buried soil cut by the gully. The finds are deposited at Gunnersbury Park Museum.

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