

# Northolt Manor

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THE MOATED SITE of Northolt Manor lies on a ridge of London Clay within Belvue Park, Northolt, Middlesex. Immediately to the south-west lies St. Mary's Church. Although partly filled-in in 1961, the line of the moat can still be clearly seen (Fig. 1).

Excavation started in 1950 under the joint direction of J. G. Hurst and H. T. Norris. In 1951 work was directed by J. G. Hurst and W. Matthews. From 1952 until 1971 work continued on Saturday afternoons only and was supervised by C. H. Keene and, from the late 1960's until 1971, by G. C. Morgan. From 1971 until 1974 the writer directed the excavation, work taking place on Saturday afternoons and all day Sunday. John Hurst, now Principal Inspector of Ancient Monuments at the Department of the Environment, Directorate of Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings, retains overall direction of the post-excavation work.

The original reason for excavation was to uncover the plan of the manor house and associated outbuildings as, at that time, few plans were available. It soon became apparent, however, that more than one phase of building existed on the site, and that there were three stone manor houses within the moat and

under these, a complex of Saxon and medieval features cutting the natural London Clay. It was therefore decided that, as far as possible, a complete plan of the Saxon and medieval features should be obtained.

The phases of occupation of the site have been divided into six periods:—

## Period I (c.600-1300 A.D.) Fig. 2

Period I consists of a complex of pits, ditches, post-holes, timber slots, pebble and clay floors and hearths, all cutting the natural London Clay. These are the remains of the original Saxon and medieval village of Northolt. The village extended beyond the excavated area so a complete plan has not been obtained.

Only part of the site has so far been published<sup>1</sup> and the sequence for the unpublished area has yet to be worked out. This is an extremely difficult task as many of the features are sterile and those which contain pottery, often only have a handful of sherds. With the difficulties of dating post-Roman pottery interpretation can only be approximate. The earliest features are three graves<sup>2</sup> one of which (A on fig. 2) contained the supine body of a man about thirty years old buried with a broad seax inlaid on the blade with copper which can be dated to the late 7th century.

More difficult to date, but probably 8th century, are the timber slots and post holes of a rectangular wooden hut (B on fig. 2), situated between the two 14th century cellars and cut through by a 12th-13th century ditch complex. This hut, which measures approximately 15 feet wide by at least 17 feet long has a central post hole, gravel floor with a hearth and a probable porch. From one of the post holes came a few sherds of calcined flint-tempered hand-made pottery.

The late Saxon and medieval village was divided by a system of relatively shallow drainage ditches. Between these a number of pits, post-holes, timber slots and other features survive but do not appear to make any coherent pattern, and, as yet, no definite buildings have been distinguished. This is not surprising as for over 700 years the site was occupied and the survival of features is poor.

## Period II (c.1300-1355)

About 1300 the village was cleared and the first moat was dug, measuring some 20 feet wide and 6

1. See J. G. Hurst 'The Kitchen Area of Northolt Manor, Middlesex,' *Medieval Archaeol.* 5 (1961) 199-211.
2. *Ibid.* 225-230.

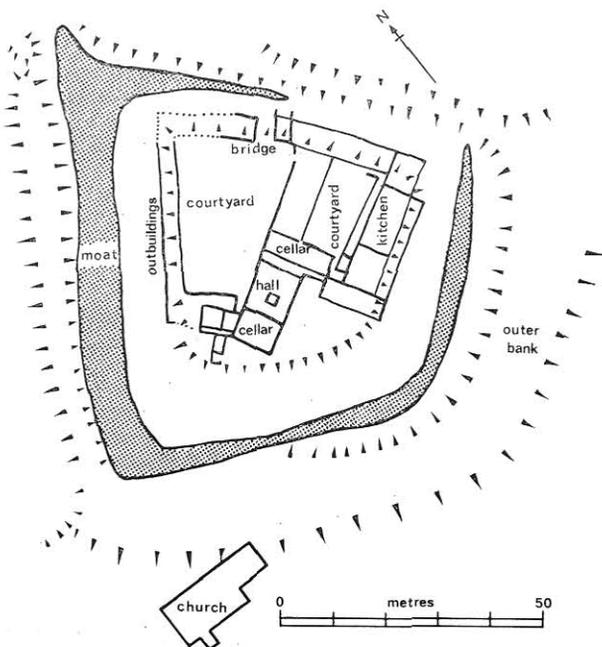


Fig. 1. Period III c. 1355-1370, showing the extent of the later moat.

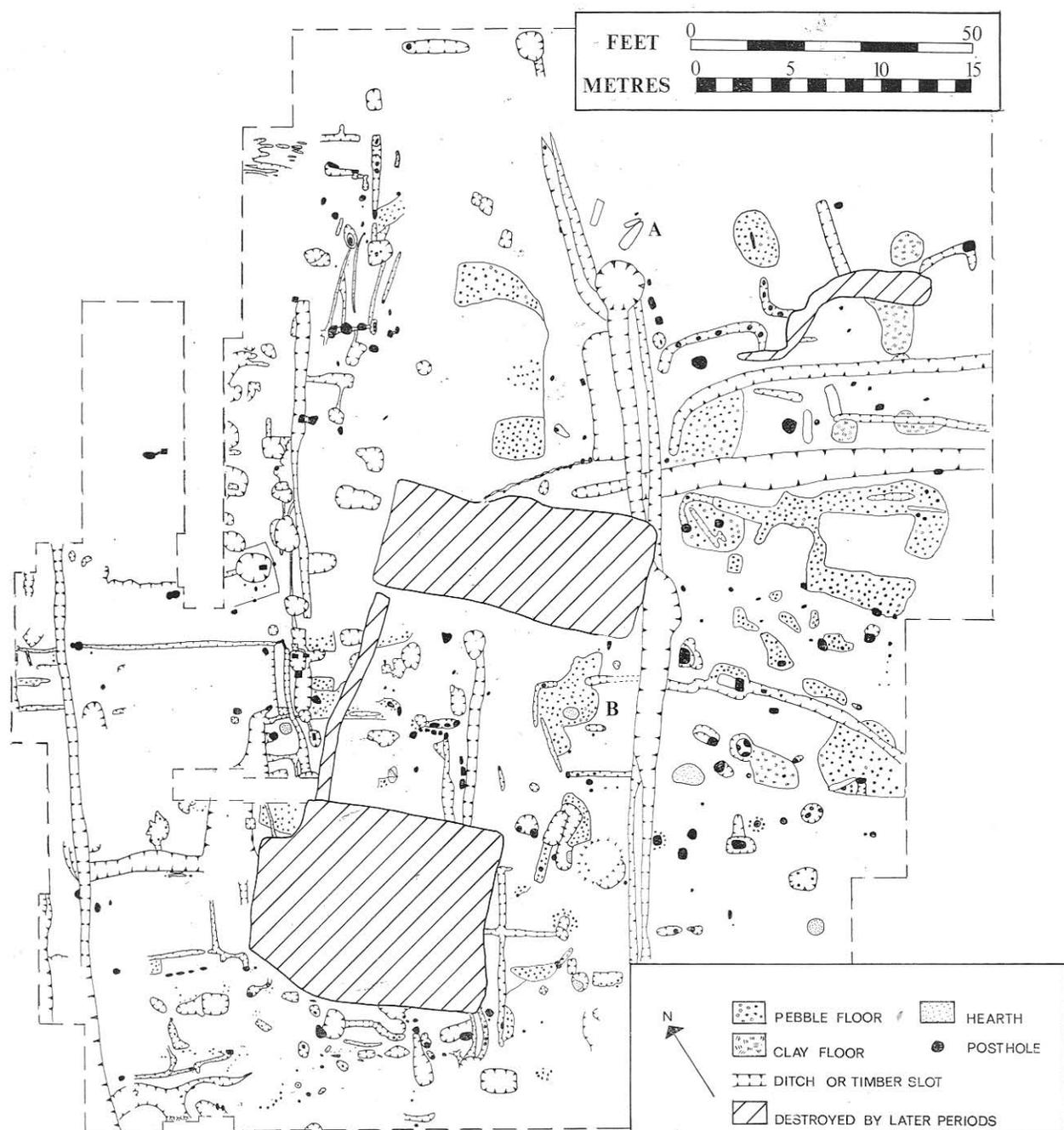


Fig. 2. Plan of Period I c. 600-1300.

feet deep. The first manor house was erected on the old land surface. This building was presumably half timbered on dwarf chalk and flint walls. Much of this first manor house was destroyed by later build-

ings although the plan of the kitchen, which measured 30 feet square, was recovered. There were several wooden outbuildings, indicated by post-holes and timber slots. Apparently the manor had a flint

and chalk perimeter wall which had been extensively robbed before the beginning of Period III.

### Period III (c.1355-1370) Fig. 1

Period II came to an end in the early 1350's when another moat was dug enclosing a slightly larger area. The sticky clay from this moat was spread over the site and the Period III buildings were erected on this platform. This was the stage when the manor reached its largest size. The hall measured approximately 35 feet by 30 feet and had a clay hearth at the centre. There was an elaborate brick chimney and some of the floors were paved with decorated floor tiles made at Penn in Buckinghamshire. There was a cellar at either end of the hall. A series of buildings linked the hall range with the perimeter buildings which included a bridge. The rest of the site was covered by pebble courtyards.

### Period IV (c. 1370-1475)

About 1370 most of the manor was pulled down, the north cellar was filled and the south cellar was halved. The hall was rebuilt on a smaller scale, this time with a tiled hearth. The range of buildings linking the hall with the perimeter were reduced although the perimeter buildings were retained. Penn tiles were still used in the more important rooms and stock bricks were extensively used. Pebble courtyards covered the remainder of the site.

### Period V (1475+)

This is represented by the extensive robbing of the Period IV walls and the deposition of a layer of clay over part of the south east of the site and can be dated to the latter part of the 15th century.

### Period VI (16th century to 18th century)

The only evidence of Period VI occupation within the moat is a scatter of 16th and 17th century pottery in the topsoil. The main evidence comes from immediately north west of the moat where a series of brick walls of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries were excavated. A complete plan was not recovered. In addition in the 17th century, part of the moat was filled in with rubbish to form a causeway.

## The Finds

### Pottery

One of the most important results of this excavation has been the complete stratified sequence of pottery from the 7th century to the 18th century. This unbroken sequence is still unique in the London area. Since the report on the pottery from the Kitchen Area was published, further new groups, particularly of the 12th century, have been recovered. In addition recent work on the post-Roman pottery

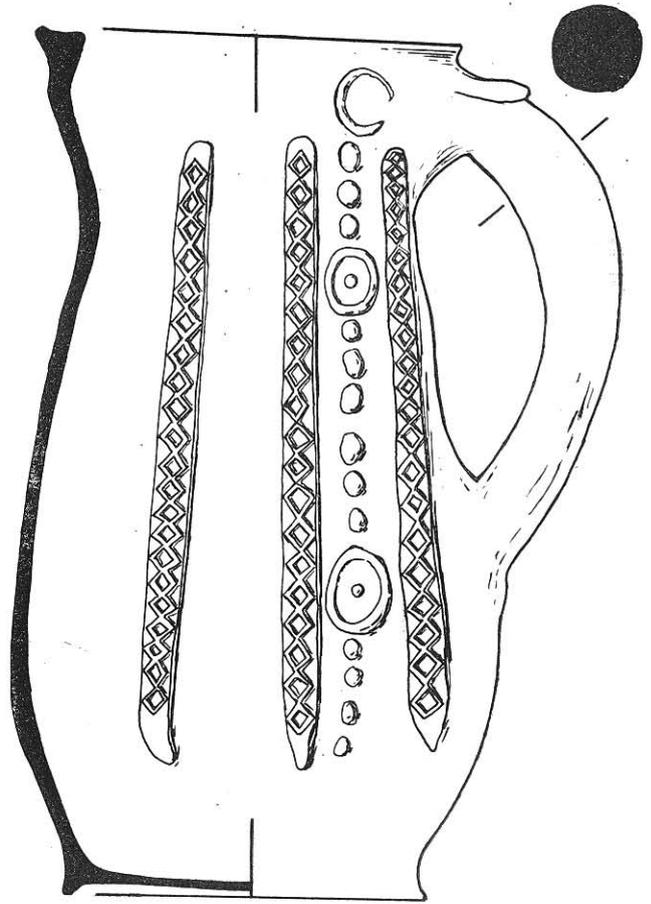


Fig. 3. Restored jug from Rouen. (4)

of the London area has meant reappraisal of some of the statements made in the 1961 report.

Most of the hand-made Saxon pottery was presumably produced locally but by the 10th century some of the pottery (i.e. shell-tempered St. Neots ware) is being imported from the eastern counties. This trend continued through the 11th and 12th centuries with the introduction of the hard sandy early medieval ware. In the 12th and 13th centuries much of the pottery is locally produced, some of it coming from the Hertfordshire group of kilns, although much of the 'Hard Medieval Grey Ware' comes from the recently discovered kiln at Pinner, Middlesex.

From 13th century deposits came a small quantity of sherds from vessels imported from France including a jug (Fig. 3) restored at the Institute of Archaeology, in a light buff fine fabric decorated with panels with applied pellets and applied dot and circle motifs; the panels are separated by applied

vertical strips with diamond notch rouletting and plain panels The rod handle is spurred. The jug has a green glaze except on the panels with the applied pellets where there is a streaky brown glaze. This jug was found in a shallow scoop with sherds of cooking pots and a jug made at the Pinner kiln, half of a large storage vessel decorated with applied vertical thumbed strips from an unknown kiln, and several sherds from two glazed jugs. This deposit presumably dates from the second half of the 13th century.

The 14th and 15th century pottery comes mainly from Surrey and includes a few examples of small biconical jugs with a bib of green glaze on the shoulder from deposits of the first half of the 14th century. Other types of jug, cooking pots and a ?cistern have also been found. There are several imported sherds from 14th century features including several joining sherds from a large triple handled pitcher from Saintonge, south-west France.

The bulk of the coarse pottery of the 16th to 18th centuries was probably made locally. There are many small sherds of tin-glazed earthenware and stonewares including Frechen jugs and ?Fulham products. A large number of slipware sherds, presumably from the Harlow kilns, are represented. Many come from dishes and platters although several jars have been found. 16th and 17th century vessels including pipkins, bowls, platters, etc., from the Surrey and Hampshire kilns were also found<sup>3</sup>.

### Glass

A few fragments of 14th century window glass and the bases of two glass lamps from the 14th century are the only examples of medieval glass found. Much post-medieval glass including wine bottles and window glass has been found in Period VI deposits.

### Building Material

A few fragments of tile came from 13th century features and daub was often found. Most of the building material for the Period II buildings was chalk and flint although some yellow stock brick was used in hearths, etc. Roof tiles were frequent finds, often used in hearths or walls. Period III buildings were mainly of chalk and flint with some Reigate Stone; bricks were frequent finds as were large numbers of roof tile, some complete. The Period IV buildings had Reigate Stone window surrounds, etc. A few fragments have been found with mason's marks. Numbers of stock bricks were also used. During both Period III and IV and to a lesser extent Period II Penn floor tiles were used in the most important rooms. About twelve different designs have been found including tiles with a fleur-de-lis design, a lion, etc. A small number of

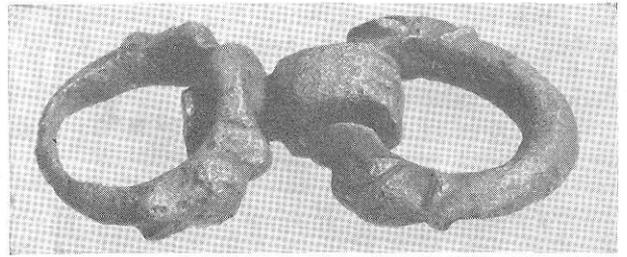


Fig. 4. A 12th century swivel (1/3)

plain green or yellow glazed floor tiles from the 14th century have also been found.

### Metal Objects

Nails were the most common find, the largest number came from Period IV features. Few metal objects were stratified; most came from a layer of grey clay overlying the natural London Clay and sealed by the upcast from the Period III moat. Knives were fairly common finds as were horse-shoes. An outstanding find from a 14th century feature was a fine meat cleaver. Other iron objects include a twelve pointed rowel spur of the 14th century, two sickles, a spade shoe, a few buckles and many unidentifiable fragments.

Bronze objects include a gilded strap end, horse and sheep bells, horse ornaments, a few buckles and two gilded book clasps, one from the ?12th century feature. One very important find was a swivel with animal and bird head decoration and a central pivot in the form of a clenched fist (Fig. 4). This has been dated by John Cherry of the British Museum to the first half of the 12th century. It was found on the Period II ground surface and was therefore sealed by 1355. A few coins were found, including some French jettons of the 14th and 15th centuries.

### Stone Objects

These include a number of hones of various sizes and many fragments of lava querns from Mayen and a few fragments of Purbeck Marble mortars.

### Publication

Work has started on processing the finds for the final report which should be ready for publication within the next few years. Some of the material is displayed at Gunnersbury Park Museum and the remainder is in store. This material is available for study and can be seen by appointment.

3. The writer would like to hear of any recently excavated and/or unpublished groups or unstratified collections of post-Roman pottery from the London area and can be contacted at Gunnersbury Museum, London W3 BLQ. Telephone 01-992 1612 or 01-568 2463 (home number).