

Figs. 1 and 2: site location

Excavations in Church Road, West Drayton, 1979-80

JONATHAN COTTON

FOLLOWING A PROPOSAL by the Greater London Council to sell the site of the Gate House Nurseries in Church Road, West Drayton, to a private developer for residential redevelopment, the Museum of London's Greater London Archaeology Department initiated trial excavations under the direction of Alison Laws. The aims of the preliminary work, and of the subsequent full-scale excavations which were directed by the present writer, were (i) the location of the manor house known to have been built in the area between 1546 and 1549 by the Tudor statesman Sir William Paget, and (ii) the recovery of evidence relating to the earlier occupancy of the site attested in documentary sources.

Location

The Gate House Nurseries site is a sub-rectangular plot of land occupying just over 0.24 hectare (0.6 acre) on the north side of Church Road, West Drayton, Middlesex (TQ 062 795) (Figs. 1, 2, 4 and 6). It is situated on a brickearth-capped eminence of the Lynch Hill terrace of the Thames valley gravels 800m (875 yds) to the east of the Frays river — a tributary of the river Colne — and a similar distance to the south of the Grand Union Canal. The medieval church of St. Martin lies 20m (65½ft) to the north, and the brick-built Tudor gate house which gives the site its name 20m to the east (see cover). The site is enclosed by high brick walls of Tudor and more

recent date, with that on the east side marking the western boundary of the garden belonging to the gate house — now a privately-owned residence.

Historical Background

Little work has yet been undertaken on the considerable numbers of documents relating to the site. The following summary therefore derives largely from published secondary sources such as the relevant volume of the *Victoria County History*¹ and S. A. J. McVeigh's invaluable *Drayton of the Pagets*².

The site of the Gate House Nurseries occupies part of the manorial holding apparently granted to St. Paul's Cathedral by King Athelstan in 939³. St. Paul's appears certainly to have been in possession by the year 1000, and in 1086 the manor was said to comprise 10 hides⁴. The manor and its church were visited by the Dean of St. Paul's, Ralph De Diceto, in January 1181, while a lease granted to John de Chisholle in about 1300 lists a tiled hall some 34ft (10.4m) long, a new chapel, and outbuildings including two barns, of which the smaller was used for tithes.

The manor was one of a number farmed by the Canons of St Paul's for their own benefit, although the ecclesiastical connection was broken in 1525, when it was leased to William Hyll of West Drayton, a layman. His son Robert assigned the lease in 1537 to one William Paget, described as 'Secretarye unto the Quenes grace' (Jane Seymour), and it was Paget who finally acquired the manor outright from the King in 1546. A protégé of Bishop Gardiner, Paget (b 1505/6-d 1563) rose to become a principal Tudor officer of state and widely-travelled diplomat, serving as chief counsellor to the ageing Henry VIII, as confidante to Protector Somerset, and as elder statesman to Queen Mary and the young Queen Elizabeth⁵. Between 1546 and 1549 he built, adjacent to the existing buildings, a large brick mansion containing a great hall, courtyard, gallery and some fifty chambers, and enclosed the whole site of 4-5 acres (1.6 - 2hectares) with a high brick wall. The gate house, which still stands, although much rebuilt (see cover), provided access. West Drayton was his principal residence, often used for official entertaining; from 1548 his London house was Paget Place (formerly Exeter House) in The Strand.

The Paget family, with interruptions, enjoyed the estate for two centuries. William Camden records that the house was altered or extended, perhaps after 1568, by Thomas, 3rd Lord Paget. In 1664 it was rated at 47 hearths, while noted to be "a handsom

old brick Seat . . . much improved within side" in about 1714. The house was finally demolished around 1750-60 by Henry Paget, 2nd Earl of Uxbridge, and the site sold to one Timothy Marshall in 1773. Following the sale of the Manor of West Drayton to a London merchant in 1786, the link with the Paget family was ended, and the estate broken up piecemeal. The original churchyard, which had been granted to, and enclosed by, Sir William Paget in 1550, was restored to the parish in 1856; the Gate House Nurseries, which form the subject of the present account, were laid out in the latter half of the 19th century; while much of the remainder of the area was released for housing developments during the 1920s and 1930s. With the exception of the Tudor gate house and enclosure walls, very little now survives to mark the position of the Paget mansion.

No contemporary views of this house are known, although a late, post-demolition drawing in the Guildhall shows an early Georgian brick frontage with sash windows⁶. The site was surveyed twice, once in the early 18th century, and again, following the house's demolition, in 1777.

The Excavations

As originally drawn, the earlier of these two surveys — that held in the Anglesey Archive (Fig. 3) — shows a large L-shaped building situated to the north and west of the Gate House Nurseries (ie beneath the modern churchyard and private gardens), which site is marked "Court yard". Other buildings shown include the church, the gate house (marked "porters Lodge") and the "Stables and Coach houses" (which survived in a dilapidated condition until the earlier years of this century). Additional details given in the fine copper-plate hand include the positions of the "inner Court" of the house, the "Kitchen yard" and the "Brew house yard".

This survey was useful in establishing the whereabouts of the house in relation to the church, although it seemed clear from its curious ground-plan that the building shown was incomplete. Trial work sought to discover whether the building originally extended south into the area of the Nursery. Following confirmation that this was indeed the case two main areas at the northern end of the Nursery were excavated by hand (Areas I and II), and another two by machine. In addition three hand-dug trenches sought to establish the relationship between the standing Tudor enclosure walls and the rest of the site.

1. *Middlesex* III (London 1962), 187-93.

2. West Drayton and District Local History Society (West Drayton 1970).

3. See M. Gelling *The Early Charters of the Thames Valley* (Leicester Univ. Press 1979), 107 and references therein.

4. J. Morris (ed) *Domesday Book: Middlesex* (Phillimore 1975), 128a, b.

5. S. R. Gammon *Statesman and Schemer: William 1st Lord Paget, Tudor Minister* (David and Charles 1973).

6. Information from Philippa Glanville.

Prehistoric

The earliest phase of activity represented on the site can be dated to the later prehistoric period, and consists of a scatter of worked flints found in later features, and a single shallow pit (113) cut into the natural brickearth subsoil in Area II (Fig. 4). Measuring 1.0m x 1.50m (3ft 3in x 4ft 10in), and with a surviving depth of 0.4m (1ft 4in), this contained some charcoal, struck flint and fragmentary sherds of heavily flint-tempered pottery.

The struck flint from this phase is comparable with other unpublished later Neolithic material collected from local gravel pits by R. Garraway Rice and others⁷. Recognisable tools include a small series of convex scrapers and a possible transverse arrow-head.

Early medieval

The site then appears to have lain undisturbed until the early medieval period, although abraded

7. Information from Jean Macdonald. Further finds are held by the West London Archaeological Field Group.
8. Museum of London Finds Index.

sherds of Roman pottery from later features, including both Samian and coarse wares, suggest the presence of Roman occupation close by. The nearest recorded Roman finds lie several kilometres (c. 1¼ miles) away to the south and west, at Harmondsworth and Larbourne Farm, Buckinghamshire, respectively⁸.

The earliest medieval features found were a group of rubbish-filled pits cut into the brickearth in the north-west corner of Area II (Fig. 4). These features can be dated to the 11th and 12th centuries and include two sub-rectangular pits — the largest (27) measuring 1.50m x 2.00m (4ft 10in x 6ft 6in) and retaining a depth of 0.6m (1ft 11½ins) — which between them contained over 28 kilograms (c. 62lbs) of fired daub and large quantities of charcoal. Much of the daub was well fired, with wattle impressions on one side and a smooth, usually slightly convex, outer surface. It seems likely that this formed part of a domed roof or cowling for an oven or drying-kiln⁹.

9. For recent discussion of the different types of kilns and ovens see G. Beresford, 'Excavation of a Moated House at Wintringham in Huntingdonshire' *Archaeol Journ* 134 (1977), 194-286 (esp. pps. 241-5).

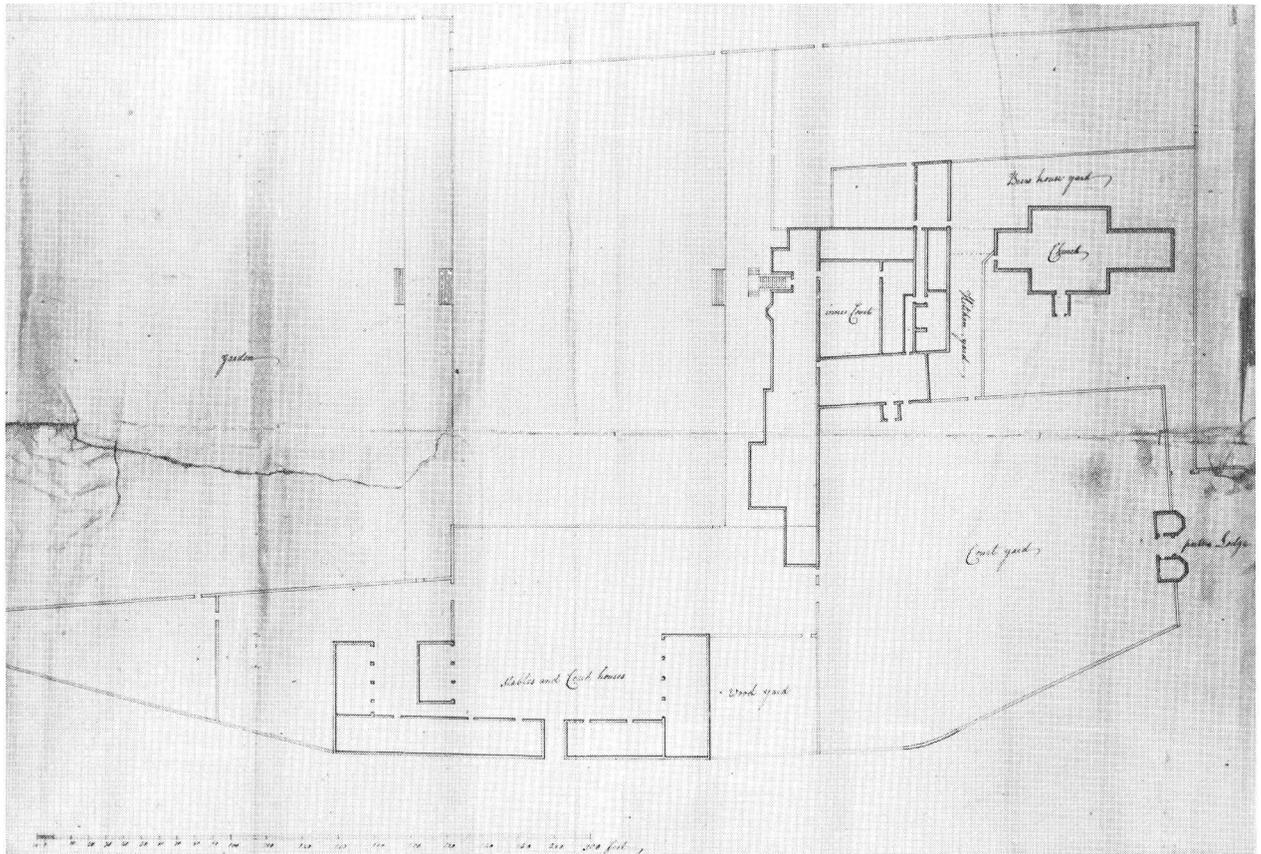


Fig. 3: Early 18th century survey in the Anglesey Archive.

(by permission of R.I.B.A.)

CHURCH ROAD, WEST DRAYTON 1980

MEDIEVAL FEATURES (INSET: TRENCH PLAN)

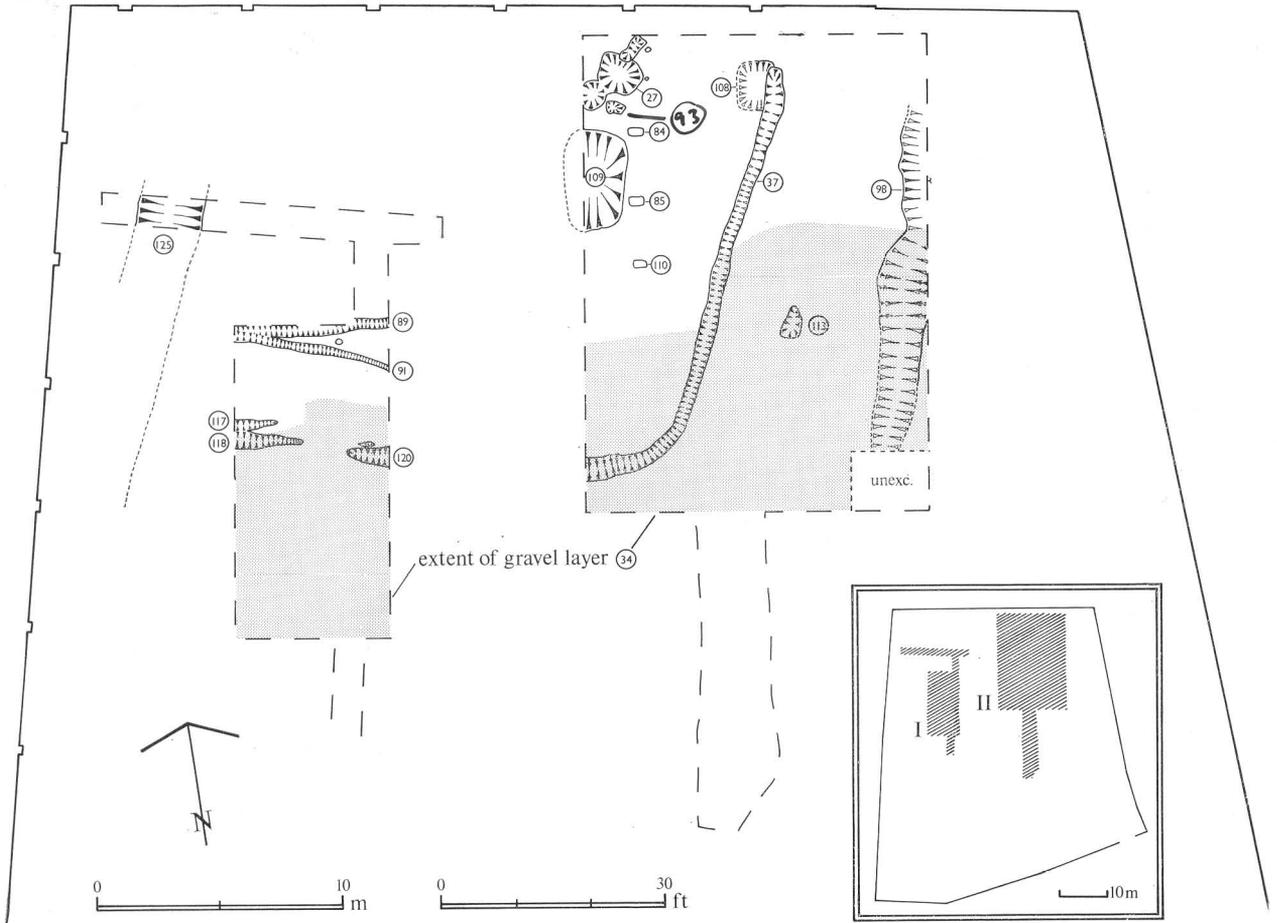


Fig. 4: Prehistoric and medieval features.

although there was no sign of direct heat on the brickearth around the pits themselves. Analysis of the charcoals from the fills is at an early stage, but the species identified so far, which include crop types such as bread wheat (*triticum aestivum* L.), common oat (*avena sativa* L.) and Field cultivated pea (*pisum sativum* (L) Poir) and weed types such as knotgrass (*polygonum aviculare* L.) and stinking mayweed (*anthemis cotula* L.), suggest that some form of crop-processing was taking place in the near vicinity¹⁰. Whether the two pits described above represent the actual drying-kiln itself is, however, open to question.

To judge from its sticky grey-green fill, a third pit (108) 3.5m (11ft 4in) to the east, much disturbed by later features but with a surviving depth of 1.20m (3ft 11ins), functioned as a cess-pit. The acidic nature of the fill has leached away the calcareous temper of the pottery and preserved a group of fragile chicken bones on the floor of the pit. Associated with the bones was part of micaceous schist hone, while higher in the fill was a fine broad-bladed iron arrow-

10. I am particularly grateful to Alison Locker and Dr. Rob Scaife for supplying this information prior to the completion of the analysis.

head with the remains of the wooden shaft surviving in its socket (Fig. 5).

The pits were flanked to east and west by two large ditches with V-shaped profiles running north/south 29m (95ft) apart. The western ditch (125) had a width of 2.70m (8ft 9in) and a surviving depth of 1.10m (3ft 7in), while the eastern (98) was at least 2m (6ft 6in) wide with a surviving depth of 1m (3ft 3ins). Although ditch 98 was disturbed by later intrusions, both appear to have been re-cut several times on the same alignment, and thus presumably represent important boundaries within the settlement complex. The pottery from the ditches is very similar to that from the pits, and consists of a small series of coarse vessels with both simple and expanded rims and sagging bases which can be related to the 'early Medieval' and 'developed early Medieval' groups from Northolt — there dated 1050-1150 and 1100-1200 respectively¹¹. In addition, a few sherds in a coarse sandy fabric with vertical or near-vertical 'combing' can be compared with the so-called 'M40 ware' recognised in south-east Oxfordshire and south Buckinghamshire¹².

The site seems subsequently to have undergone a period of re-organisation and sub-division, perhaps during the 12th-13th centuries, when several small shallow gullies (89 and 91) were cut across Areas I and II (Fig. 4). These probably represent the periodic re-establishment of a minor land boundary within the settlement — a process seen locally (and earlier) at Shepperton¹³. One corner of an apparently rectilinear enclosure was uncovered (37), with a narrow entrance on its southern side which seems to have shifted slightly to the north during a phase of re-alignment. No rubbish pits were found which could be dated to this phase, and the general scarcity of pottery — in particular the Hertfordshire reduced and early Surrey wares — suggests perhaps that the focus of settlement had moved elsewhere within the manorial holding at this date.

Late medieval

The final phases of pre-house activity consist of part of a single large rubbish filled pit (109), an extensive sloping gravelled surface (34), and three large flint packed post-holes (84, 85 and 110) (Fig. 4). Unfortunately, none of these features were stratigraphically related, although the relationship between the pit and the post-holes makes it unlikely

11. J. G. Hurst, 'The Kitchen area of Northolt Manor, Middlesex' *Med Archaeol* 5 (1961), 211-99.
12. D. A. Hinton, 'M40 Ware' in D. A. Hinton and T. Rowley (eds) 'Excavations on the route of the M40' *Oxonienia* 38 (1973), 181-3.
13. R. Canham, 'Excavations at Shepperton Green, 1967 and 1973' *Trans London Middx Archaeol Soc* 30 (1979), 97-124.

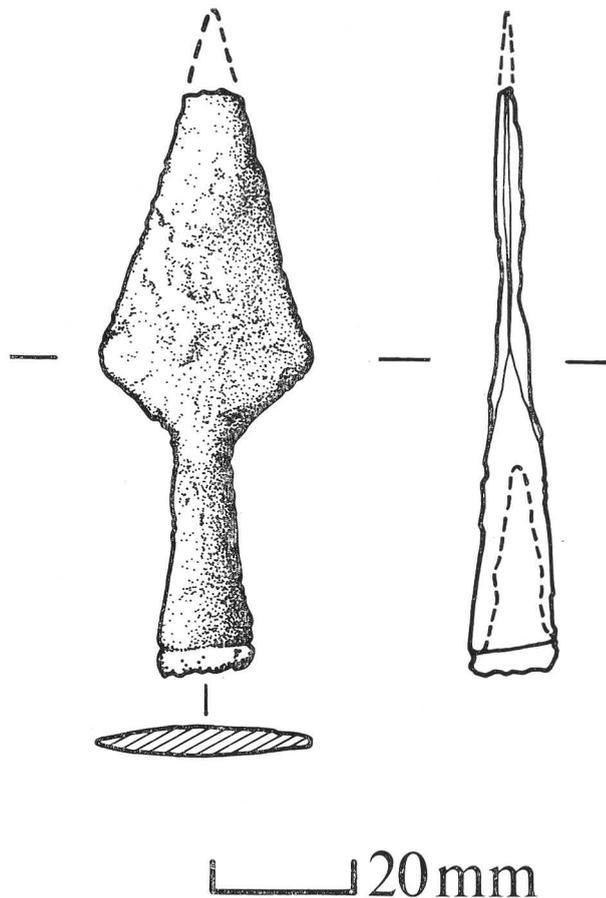


Fig. 5: Broad-bladed iron arrowhead from feature 108.

that they are contemporary with one another.

Measuring over 4.5m by at least 3m (14ft 7in x 9ft 9in) and with a surviving depth of around 1.20m (3ft 11ins), the pit contained a series of dumped layers which produced a group of Surrey white wares¹⁴ and fragments of window glass and window lead. The function of such a large pit is difficult to determine, although the presence of the window glass and of other building debris within the fill may be associated with the renovation or rebuilding of a substantial structure close by. An obvious possibility is the church, just 20m (65ft) to the north, which is known to have been largely rebuilt around the middle of the 15th century¹⁵ — a date not in conflict

14. Clive Orton has pointed out in conversation that the fabric of the majority of the sherds is more consistent with the products of the Farnborough Hill area than with those of Cheam or Kingston (see F. W. Holling, 'A preliminary note on the pottery industry of the Hampshire-Surrey borders' *Surrey Archaeol Collect* 68 (1971), 57-88).
15. A. H. Cox, *St. Martin's Church* (West Drayton 1975), 4.

CHURCH RD.
W. DRAYTON
1979~80

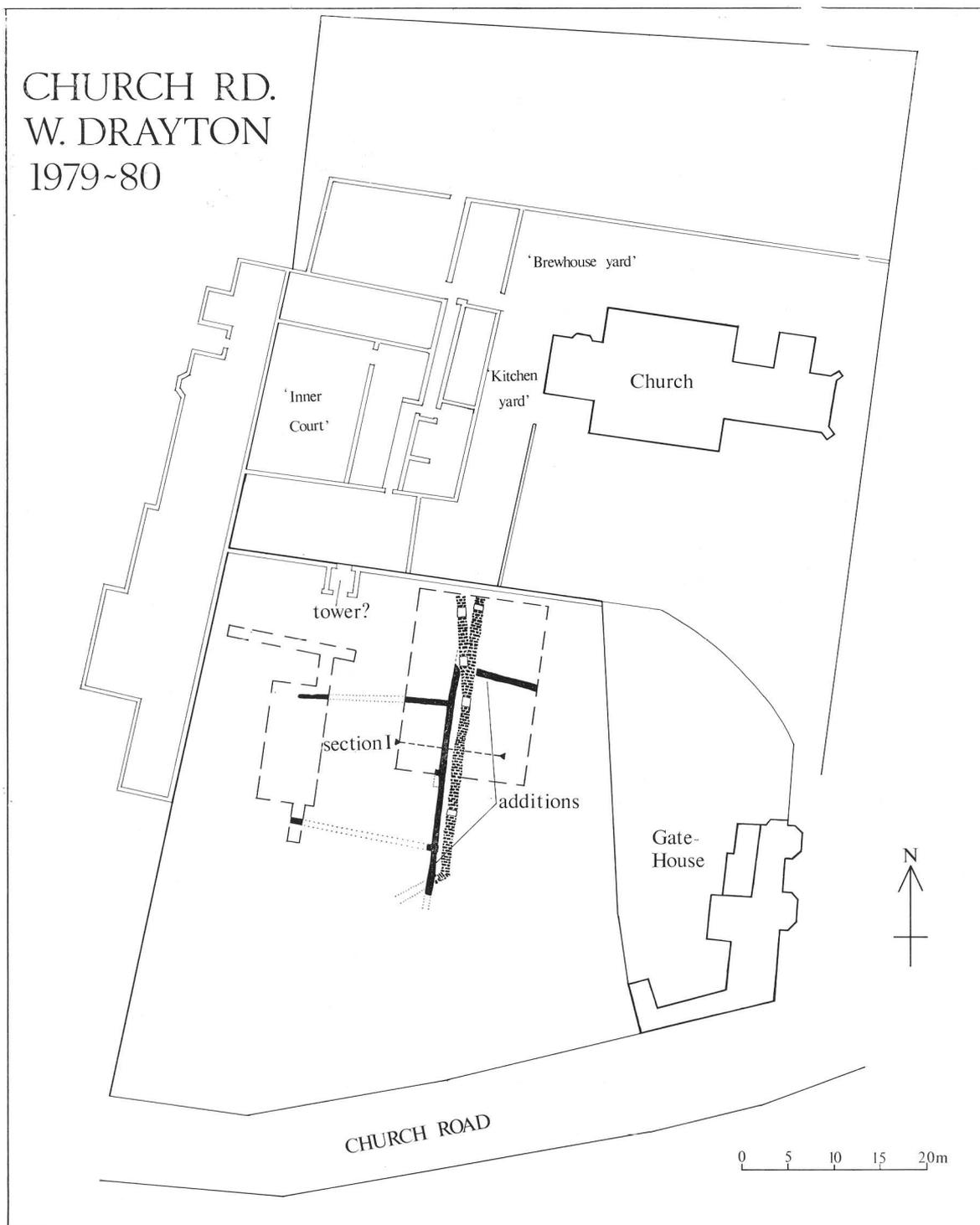


Fig. 6: Plan showing excavated Tudor foundations and culvert and incorporating details from the early 18th century survey.

CHURCH ROAD, WEST DRAYTON 1980

AREA II, SECTION I

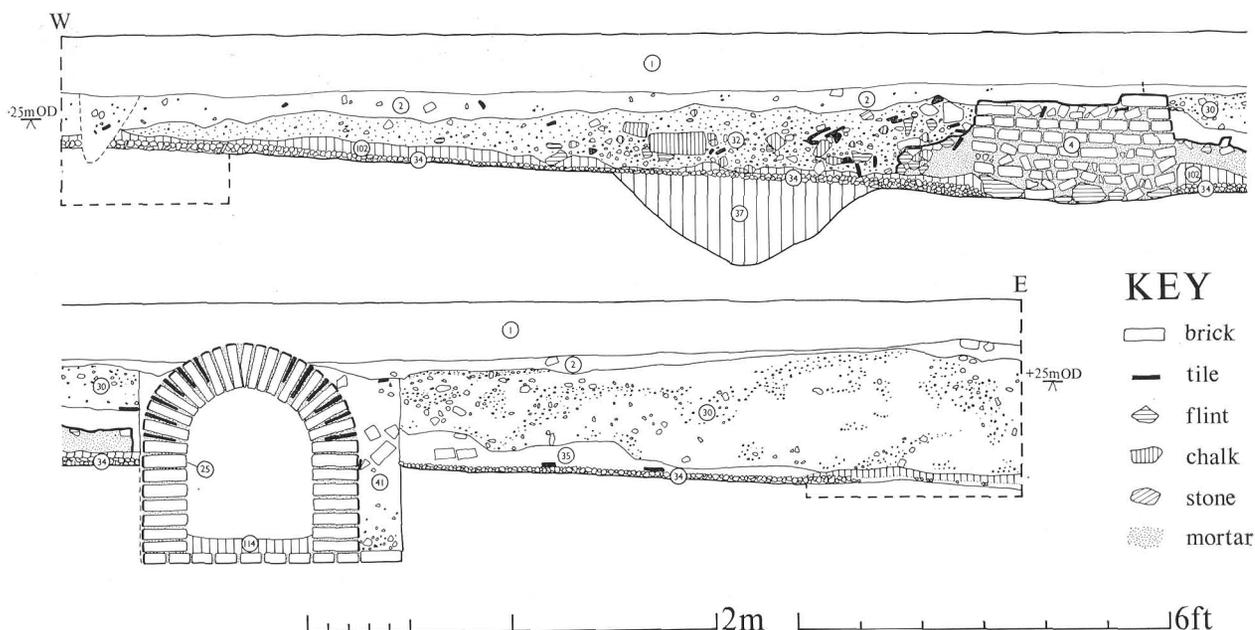


Fig. 7: Section across Area II showing relationships between wall (4), culvert (25), midden deposit (35), the gravel surface (34) and the medieval ditch (37).

with that provided by the pottery from the pit.

Several of the medieval ditches in Area I and the southern part of Area II were sealed by an extensive sloping gravelled surface or hard standing (34), which had been re-surfaced in a number of places. Interpreted as a courtyard, quantities of finds including pottery, bone and metalwork had been trodden into it, and these were particularly numerous in Area I, where a considerable deposit of animal bones had been allowed to accumulate. It seems likely that any contemporary buildings were situated to the north and west, although no traces of these were found unless the three post-holes mentioned above represent the remains of such a building. Pottery from this surface includes a group of stonewares and some sherds of Cistercian ware which can be dated to the later 15th and early 16th centuries, and it is thus perhaps tempting to associate this courtyard surface with the occupancy of the site by William and Robert Hyll and William Paget in the 1520s and 1530s.

Tudor

The foundations for the brick-built Tudor house were laid down directly over this sloping gravelled

surface (Fig. 7). Unfortunately, the preservation of the part of the house available within the excavated area was not as complete as anticipated, for, in addition to the destruction of the floor levels, many internal walls and partitions seem to have been removed. However, it can be suggested that at the time of the 18th century survey only part of the original house was still standing — the remainder having already been demolished—for the excavations revealed the presence of the main walls of a hitherto unsuspected southern wing which had undergone at least one major phase of alteration and extension prior to demolition (Fig. 6). A fine brick-built culvert (25) was installed after the completion of the wing, and its alignment suggests that it drained from the area marked "Kitchen Yard" on the survey. That it continued to function into the second quarter of the 18th century (and therefore probably up until the demolition of the main portion of the house in 1750-60) is

16. M. Bimson, 'The significance of 'Ale Measure' marks' *Post-Med Archaeol* 4 (1970), 165-6; for a useful sequence of post-medieval pottery from west London see R. F. Sheppard, 'Post-Medieval Pottery' in R. Canham *2000 Years of Brentford* (H.M.S.O. 1978), 89-120.

demonstrated by sherds of white salt glazed stone ware, tin glazed earthenware and Chinese porcelain together with a sherd of a stoneware tankard with the WR and crown excise mark¹⁶, which were recovered from the silt (114) on its floor.

A further feature, shown on the survey and located during the machine-work, had somewhat greater architectural merit. Initially assumed to be a small square porch leading into the northern part of the house, its substantial foundations (over 1.00m (3ft 3ins) in width) suggest that it is perhaps more correct to interpret it as a tower. It may thus have originally housed the 16th century blacksmith-made clock which was later installed in the church tower a few metres to the north-east¹⁷.

Although there was little stratigraphy relating to the house itself, it is clear that the builders had had to contend with the problems of a sloping site in laying out their foundations. Where they survived at all, the walls — particularly in the northern part of the site — had very shallow footings, the builders being apparently content to sit them on the surface of the natural brickearth and build the ground up around them. This process was most apparent in the south of Area II, where a rubble and mortar raft was laid down over the late medieval gravel surface, and the foundations for the main east wall (4) were set upon it (Fig. 7). A substantial gravel and brick-earth layer (30) was then dumped to the east to raise the ground level and create a courtyard surface — which became heavily rutted. It was through this dumped layer that the trench for the culvert was subsequently dug (41), although more importantly it sealed a small midden deposit (35) which — from its relationship with the main east wall (4) — post-dates the laying out of the foundations.

The midden contained over a thousand oyster shells, bones of rabbit, fish and bird, together with a small group of pottery, and thus provides an important piece of evidence for the dating of this part of the house. The pottery includes a number of sherds of imported German stoneware mugs — probably products of the Cologne factory¹⁸ — with external brown salt glaze over applied and stamped pads in the form of leaves, tendrils, acorns and petalled flowers (Fig. 8). Relevant published assemblages from the London area are few and far between, although where they occur, they are usually consistently early-mid 16th century in date¹⁹.

The combined evidence provided by the 18th century survey and the excavations thus demon-

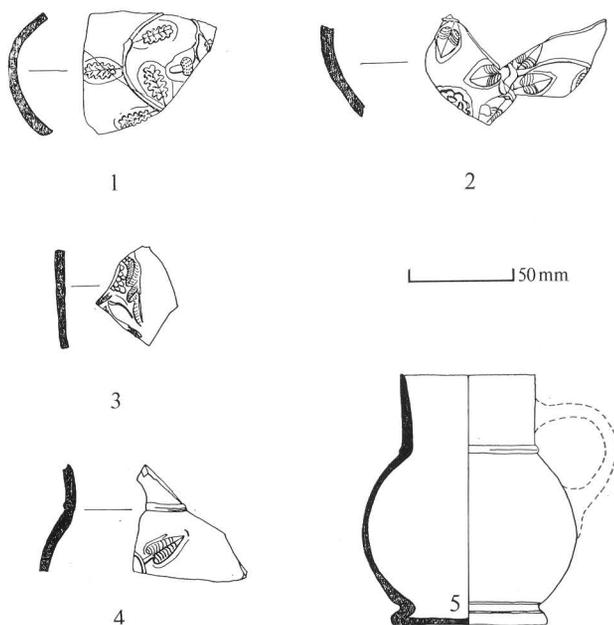


Fig. 8: Mid 16th century German stoneware from the midden deposit (35).

strates the presence of a very substantial building sited close to the church of St. Martin. Although the L-shaped building shown on the survey is probably the result of a number of different constructional phases — now impossible to unravel because of the modern churchyard — the excavations have indicated that parts of the southern wing at least are of mid 16th century date, and therefore arguably the work of William, 1st Lord Paget.

The Cemetery

In addition to the finds outlined above, a total of a minimum of twenty-three undated extended inhumation burials were discovered in the north-east corner of Area II. All were aligned east-west with their heads to the west and are thus presumably Christian. There were no indications to suggest that any of them had been interred in coffins, and only one appears to have been enshrouded. Interestingly, there were no adults present; the burials consisted of infants, children and juveniles.

Given the lack of dating evidence there are two possible explanations to account for their presence, (i) that they represent the original occupants of the grave-yard belonging to the church of St. Martin

17. *op. cit.* in note 15, 6-7.

18. G. Reineking-Von Bock *Steinzeug* (Kunstgewerbemuseum der Stadt Köln 1971).

19. See G. J. Dawson, 'Excavations at Guy's Hospital 1967' *Surrey Archaeol Soc Res Vol 7* (1979), 50, Fig. 11 No. 176; M. J. Hammerson, 'Excavations on the

site of Arundel House in the Strand, WC2. in 1972' *Trans London Middx Archaeol Soc* 26 (1975), 225; and M. Biddle, L. Barfield and A. Millard, 'The excavation of the Manor of the More, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire' *Archaeol Journ* 116 (1959), 169, Fig. 12 No. 12.

which was legally acquired and enclosed by Paget through Act of Parliament in 1550, or perhaps more likely, (ii) that they indicate the consecration and use of this corner of the site as a cemetery following the demolition of the house in the mid 18th century. Little work has yet been done on this particular problem, although if the burials *do* post-date the demolition of the house it may be possible to trace them in the parish records.

Conclusion

The excavations have provided much new information relating not only to the position of the Tudor house, but also to the earlier use of the site by the Canons of St Paul's Cathedral and their lessees. In particular, analysis of the pottery, bones, molluscs, soils and small finds will provide comparative data to set alongside that recovered from the few other excavated sites in this area of old west Middlesex.

However, many questions remain to be answered. What, for instance, was the relationship between the early medieval settlement and the church (first mentioned in 1181, but presumably older)? Where are the tiled hall, chapel and barns recorded in the lease of c. 1300, and the buildings leased from St. Paul's by the Hylls and subsequently Paget in the 1520s and 1530s? The archaeological evidence, such as it is, suggests that the focus of the early medieval settlement and the site of the later medieval buildings lay to the north-west — an area now unfortunately inaccessible.

Just as many problems surround the Tudor house, and its relationship with the church and churchyard, the standing enclosure walls and the burials disco-

vered in Area II, although some at least of these may be solved by work on the documentary sources. Clearly, much remains to be done, but it is intended to publish a full report incorporating further work on the site and its finds in due course.

Acknowledgements

This account supersedes an interim report which appeared in the *West Drayton and District Historian*,²⁰ and in writing it my thanks are due to the developer Mr David Brench and his colleagues and staff for their co-operation; to the Museum of London, Department of the Environment and the Greater London Council for supporting the project; and to Alison Laws and Philippa Glanville, both formerly of the Museum of London, George Chambers and Margaret Wooldridge of the Greater London Archaeology Department, and members of the West London Archaeological Field Group for their collective efforts. Thanks are due to John Harris of the Royal Institute of British Architects for permission to reproduce the survey held in the Anglesey Archive; to Phil Jones, Clive Orton and Dick Sheppard for commenting on the pottery; to Alison Locker (D of E) and Dr. Rob Scaife (Institute of Archaeology) for providing information on the small animal bones and charcoals; and to Archie Cox, Derek Gadd, Maurice Howard and Sheila Richardson for discussing the site with me. Finally, thanks are due to Harvey Sheldon for reading and commenting on the text, and to Clive Orton for his forbearance during its completion. The drawings are the work of Phil Ashby, Sue Wales and the writer.

20. 68 (April 1981), 5-9.

LONDON KILN STUDY GROUP — EIGHTH SEMINAR

Saturday 3rd and Sunday 4th April 1982

MUSEUM OF LONDON, LONDON WALL, EC2

Fee: members £12.00, non-members £12.50

Details from: The Secretary, LKSG, Cuming Museum,
155 Walworth Road, London S.E.17

Including lectures on charcoal and lime burning, salt and grain drying,
and iron, tile and pottery manufacture