

Fig. 1: the trench locations at the Harts Hospital site with the position of some of previously existing buildings.

# Harts Hospital; from farm to country house: a preliminary report

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HARTS HOSPITAL is located in Woodford Green in the London Borough of Redbridge, in metropolitan Essex. An archaeological assessment and rescue excavations were carried out on the estate by a team from the Passmore Edwards Museum during 1991.

## The assessment

During 1991, before the site started to be split up into small house plots, it measured 12 hectares (30 acres). In order to maximise the effectiveness of our excavations extensive geophysical surveys and archive searches were carried out. The former consisted of ground probing radar, magnetometer and resistivity evaluations. Principally as a result of this, only three out of the twenty-one

trenches excavated did not have associated features (Fig. 1). Admittedly not all were of great antiquity; nevertheless the approach did clearly enhance the effectiveness of the assessment work.

The most successful techniques used at the site were ground probing radar, for which a SIR Ground Probing Radar System with 500MHZ and 120MHZ antenna units was used<sup>1</sup>, and resistivity employing an RM15 Basic Resistance Meter with a PAI Twin Electrode Probe Array. 1. The Ground probing radar survey was carried out by Subsurface Geotechnical of London.

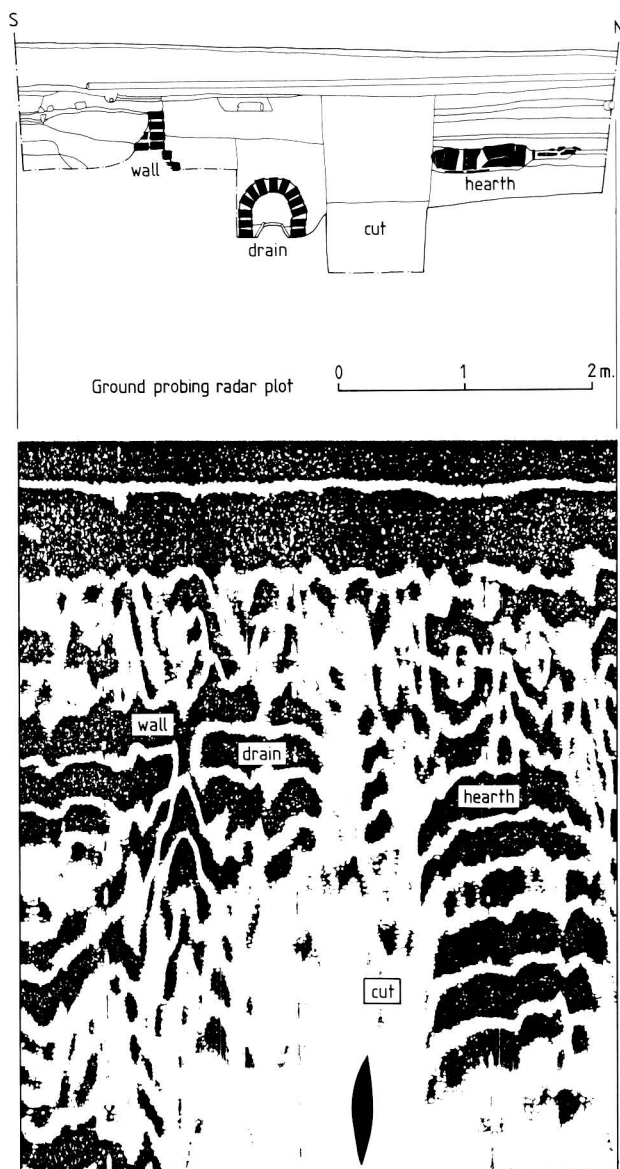


Fig. 2: comparison between a recorded section and the corresponding ground probing radar plot.

Radar was adequate for defining areas containing features and deposits of a man made nature (Fig. 2). The signal was not sufficiently explicit to define specific features as to precise nature or depth of target. Combined with the test pit results it succeeded in isolating the areas with surviving archaeological remains in the places capped by hard surfaces such as tarmac or concrete. Resistivity results were notably effective in distinguishing buried ditches and wall remains at depths between 0.40m and 1.3m (1ft 4in and 4ft) below ground surface in the spaces with grass to low scrub cover.

### The documentary evidence

The earliest references to the site date to 1235 from a survey by the lords of the manor, in which the Marshalls

tenement is referred to<sup>2</sup> and 1270 when Richard Hert, who held the copyhold of the Hart property, and his wife, are mentioned in the court rolls<sup>3</sup>. His wife was charged with breaking the assize of ale. The property was part of copyhold lands held by the manor of Woodford.

Until the 16th century the lands involved appear to be held by a succession of tenant farmers working the holdings. Land-use appears to have favoured agriculture, pasture and woodland management.

Local developments are likely to have followed the general trend for the period with a rising population for the 12th and 13th centuries resulting in denser settlement around the common, followed by the demographic and economic collapse of the 14th century.

The location of the site, outside the unhealthy city itself and yet close to London would have made it a desirable residence for well to do city merchants. It seems that the property first becomes associated with the London merchant classes during the 16th century.

Richard Reynolds citizen and mercer of London, his wife Blanch and a John Ashford acquire the copyhold of part of the site in 1527. During the second half of the 16th century Roland Elrington, a haberdasher and merchant, becomes associated with the property. It is with him that the London merchant classes get firmly established at the site, until the onset of the 20th century.

A substantial house was constructed early in the 17th century, and certainly had been completed by 1619. The building of the house and the importance of water for the site can be gleaned from the fact that during 1617 Sir Humphrey Handford, of the Grocers Company and Alderman of the city of London, was fined for digging sawpits on the common and diverting its water course<sup>4</sup>.

On his death the lease passed to his wife Ann and when she passed on, in 1645, the property was sold to John Handford, Humphrey Handford's son, who by 1647 sold it to Thomas Colwall a scrivener.

At the time of the civil war the troubles do not appear to have directly affected the property, no battles were fought nearby nor was the area raided. Liquidity difficulties would have been an issue however, as is attested by the will of Dame Anne Handford, dated to 1645<sup>5</sup>, in which she repeatedly stresses that certain financial bequests are to be made "as soone as it (money) can conveniently be gotten in these disturbed tymes".

It remained property of the Colwall family until 1707. It then, through marriage, became the home of Foot Onslow, a former MP and, at the time, first Commissioner of Excises. After his demise in 1717 it was sold to John Sherman, a linen draper<sup>6</sup>. In 1723 the estate was bought by Mary Sly, widow of a city banker and goldsmith whose son, Richard Warner, became copyholder in 1742. Rich-

2. British Library Cotton Mss Tiberius c ix f.205.

3. Public Records Office: SC 2/173/30.

4. Essex Record Office D/DCw M19.

5. Public Record Office PROB 11/193/279RH-282LH 90 Rivers.

6. Guildford Muniment Room 97/13/876.

ard Warner was considered independently wealthy, and he was a director of the Hon. East India Company. It was during his period of residence at the site that it acquired a reputation as a botanic garden<sup>7</sup>.

The outline of the estate as in 1991 was largely formed by the end of the 18th century by Sir Robert Preston. Harts itself was made up of the properties of the former medieval tenements of Marshalls, Harts and Dandyvilles and a part of the former common enclosed between 1600 and 1617. Amalgamated with them was property held by the Archer and Cambell families in the 17th and 18th centuries and the Brewhouse and Icehouse plots.

The earliest reference to the Brewhouse, a tenement with adjoining land, is in 1539 when the copyhold was surrendered to John Holmes, who at this time was also in possession of Harts itself<sup>8</sup>. A direct association of this property with brewing cannot be proven. There are 17th century references to beer brewers in the Woodford area supplying beer to unlicensed alehouses<sup>9</sup>. The Brewhouse with its proximity to the water sources around the common would have been a good location to brew. It should be stated that it would have been common for people to do a lot of their own brewing around this time and certainly for the larger houses to have reasonably sizeable brewing facilities.

By 1719 this plot had been enlarged and a new house built, possibly by Sir George Caswall. The ice house which can be found on the north-eastern boundary of the present Harts site seems likely to date to this period and be associated with the Brewhouse plot. Further additions occurred during the 19th century by enclosures of common land by the Mellish family.

The principal property and its contents is detailed in two indexes indicating the dramatic changes and increase in size of the main house between the early 17th and the early 18th centuries. The first schedule details the predecessor to the Handford house, the second essentially the Handford house although it may well include alterations and additions.

In a schedule attached to an indenture document, dated 1617, between William Elrington and Humphrey Handford the house is stated to consist of a hall, two parlours, two chambers, two servants chambers, a buttery, a kitchen, a backhouse (bakehouse), a wet larder, a cheese loft, a coal house, an apple house, a kitchen yard and a pump yard<sup>10</sup> (a total of 6 rooms, a hall and 7 utility rooms and kitchens).

In a schedule with a probate document of John Sherman, dated 1723, the property is described as having an attic and closet, a servants attic, four rooms, four chambers a dining room, three parlours, a hall, a kitchen, a laundry, and a butler's room. Outside the house there were an

outhouse, barn and a yard<sup>11</sup> (a total of 15 rooms, a hall and 4 utility rooms and kitchens).

To recapitulate, the history of the site shows a variously contracting and expanding area which initially comes under the Manor of Woodford. It gradually grows into a sizeable estate. Originally it was farmed by tenant farmers to become the country house of well-to-do London merchants.

### The archaeological remains

The greatest depth of archaeological remains was found in the area immediately surrounding the current Harts House itself. This location from the archival material appears to be the one closely associated with the predecessors of Harts.

### Trench 16

Trench 16 had the longest stratigraphic sequence (Fig. 1). The earliest finds dated to the 13/14th centuries. They consisted of Mill Green type wares (MGC and MGF), Surrey White wares (SWW), Medieval Sandy wares (MS), Medieval Grey Sandy wares (MGREY) (Fig. 4.2) and Essex Redwares (HARR), London wares (LOND) (Fig. 4.1) and were mostly residual in contexts dating to the 16th and 17th centuries. There were some layers which were cut by 16th century features, where 13th and 14th century pottery constituted by far the highest proportion of the ceramic material. These assemblages did however include a few isolated pieces of 16th century material.

The earliest structural elements were a pitched tile hearth with a tile base and surrounds mostly consisting of peg tiles, and 16th-century foundation footings (Fig. 3).

The associated pottery was Post-medieval Black Glazed Earthenwares (PMBL), Guys type wares (GUYS), London wares (LOND), Tudor Brown wares (TUDB), MGC/MGF, Cistercian ware (CSTN), Early Post Medieval Glazed ware (EPMG) (Fig. 4.3), Raeren Stoneware (RAER) (Fig. 4.4) and fragments of a type 1 Martincamp flask (MART) (Fig. 4.5)<sup>12</sup>.

The fill from a rubbish pit of the same phase contained fragments of TUDB, GUYS, Langerwehe/Raeren stoneware (LANR) and a very small piece of a tinglazed ware. The latter may well be, because of the character of the blue, a Liguria Berettino type, a 16th century Italian import<sup>13</sup>.

These particular features are likely to be associated with the occupation of Harts by John Coresby and his wife Joan, Thomas Ripton, Richard Reynolds his wife and John Asherwoode or by Roland Elrington<sup>14</sup>, who in succession held the property during this period. It is of interest to note the relatively low quantities of high status artefacts and indeed the absence of exotics in the animal bone record for this initial period in which Harts is the property of the merchant classes.

7. S. Eames *Harts & Flowers* (1989) published privately by author.

8. Essex Record Office D/DCw M16.

9. Essex Record Office Q/SR 313/(51/52/69) and Q/SR 429/129.

10. Guildford Muniment Room 97/13/849.

11. Public Record Office PROB 31/13/302.

12. J. G. Hurst, D. S. Neal, and H. J. E. van Beuningen Pottery produced and traded in North-West Europe 1350-1650 *Rotterdam Papers* 6 (1986) 102-104.

13. *Ibid* 27-9.

14. Essex Record Office D/DCw M16.

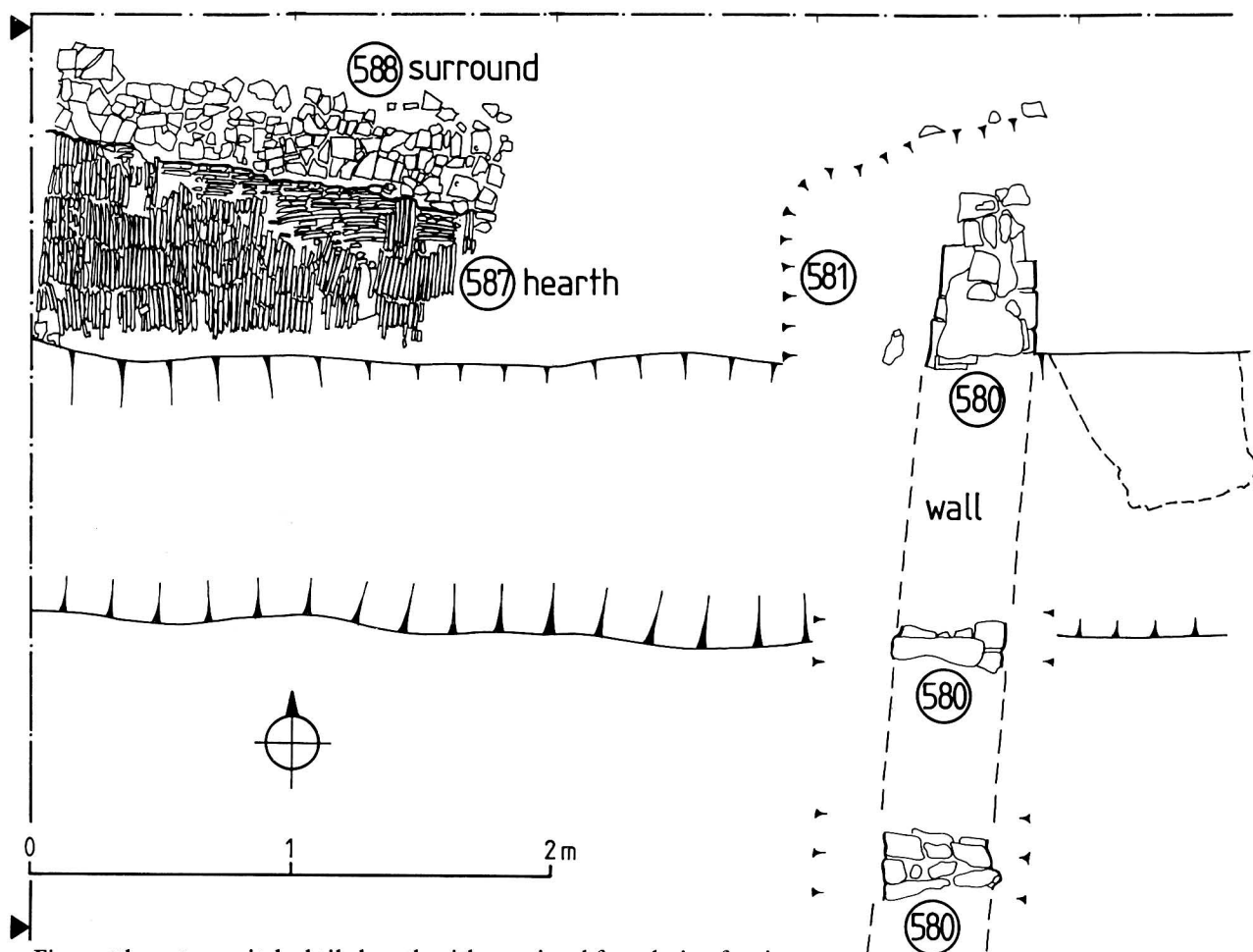


Fig. 3: 16th century pitched tile hearth with associated foundation footings.

The pitched tile hearth (587) (Fig. 3) is another matter. Its original dimensions were truncated to 1.70m by 0.65m (5ft 7in by 2ft 2in) by later intrusions. From the surviving remains it is unclear whether it was positioned against a wall or not. It seems to have been open on the north side, with a floor running north from it, and with wall footings (580) surviving to the east, on a north-south alignment. This wall continued south, well beyond the limit the fire place could possibly have extended to. It seems likely to have backed up against either an internal partition wall, or an exterior wall, just before this made a 90° turn. The former seems the more likely, as the trench cut which truncated the hearth to the south, had radically different looking sides. If a physical barrier was present here, it would explain a difference in accumulated material on either side of it.

A hearth floor of this quality does go well with the quality of building likely to have been associated with the London merchant class. If the 1617 schedule<sup>15</sup> relates to the house to which these structural remains belonged, and indeed if it is accurate enough, then there

are three possible locations for the feature, in "the little Parlor", "the Kitchen" or in "the Backhouse" (this should probably read Bakehouse).

Found amongst the debris of the demolition of this structure was a small gilded buckle, with fragments of the leather strap still attached (Fig. 5.3). This buckle appears to date to the first half of the 17th century<sup>16</sup>.

The following phases, of 17th century date, appear to be connected to the house constructed by Sir Humphrey Handford between 1617 and 1619. These contexts have comparatively large quantities of residual pottery dating from the 13th through to the 16th centuries. The 17th century ceramic component of the fills and layers consists mainly of post medieval red wares (PMR), late border wares (BORD), local tinglazed wares (TGCP), London stone ware (LONS) and some tobacco pipe fragments (dated c 1640-1670).

The features consist of a series of culverts and drains, the foundation of the North facade of the house and part of its cellar (Fig. 6). The features showed evidence of

15. Guildford Muniment Room 97/13/849.

16. T. North *pers. comm.*



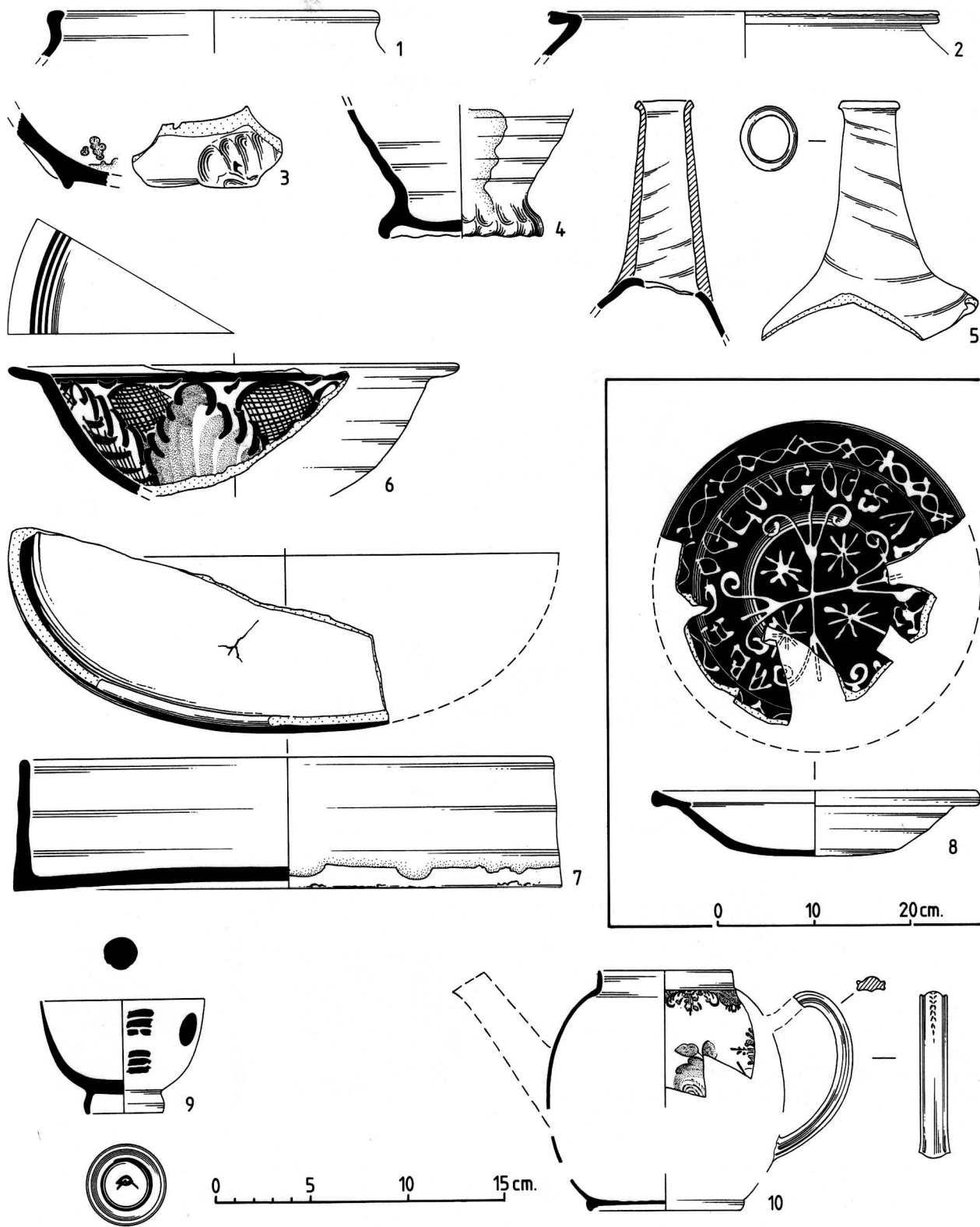


Fig. 4: a selection of pottery dating from the 13th to the end of the 18th centuries.

frequent alterations and additions. The drains and culverts in particular, showed evidence of at least four phases of major changes during the 17th century.

The main drains were constructed of brick vaults on flat tile bases and were of high quality. The earliest one (576) ran on a north-west to south-east alignment (Fig. 6). The direction of the flow was to the south-east, the rear of the property, the same as the land's natural drainage. Its base (456) consisted of a tile on either side, set on edge at an angle, leaning against each other at the apex, thus creating a small channel running parallel to each side of the drain. The reason for this type of basal construction may relate to water flow regulation. By constricting the

width of the channel when water pressure was low the rate of flow would be increased, at the same time maintaining a large bore drain for times when enhanced drainage was required. Its interior measurements were 0.3m (1ft) wide by 0.4m (1ft 4in) high.

A small drain (571) on a north-south alignment came out of the cellar wall (523), of the Handford house. It entered the top of the vault of the earliest drain (576). It was made of bricks set in mortar, capped with bricks and on a tile base (Fig. 6). A second vaulted drain (553) was joined onto (576) at right angles, running on a north-west by south-east orientation. This drain fed into (576) (Fig. 6). A German jetton from Nuremberg, made by

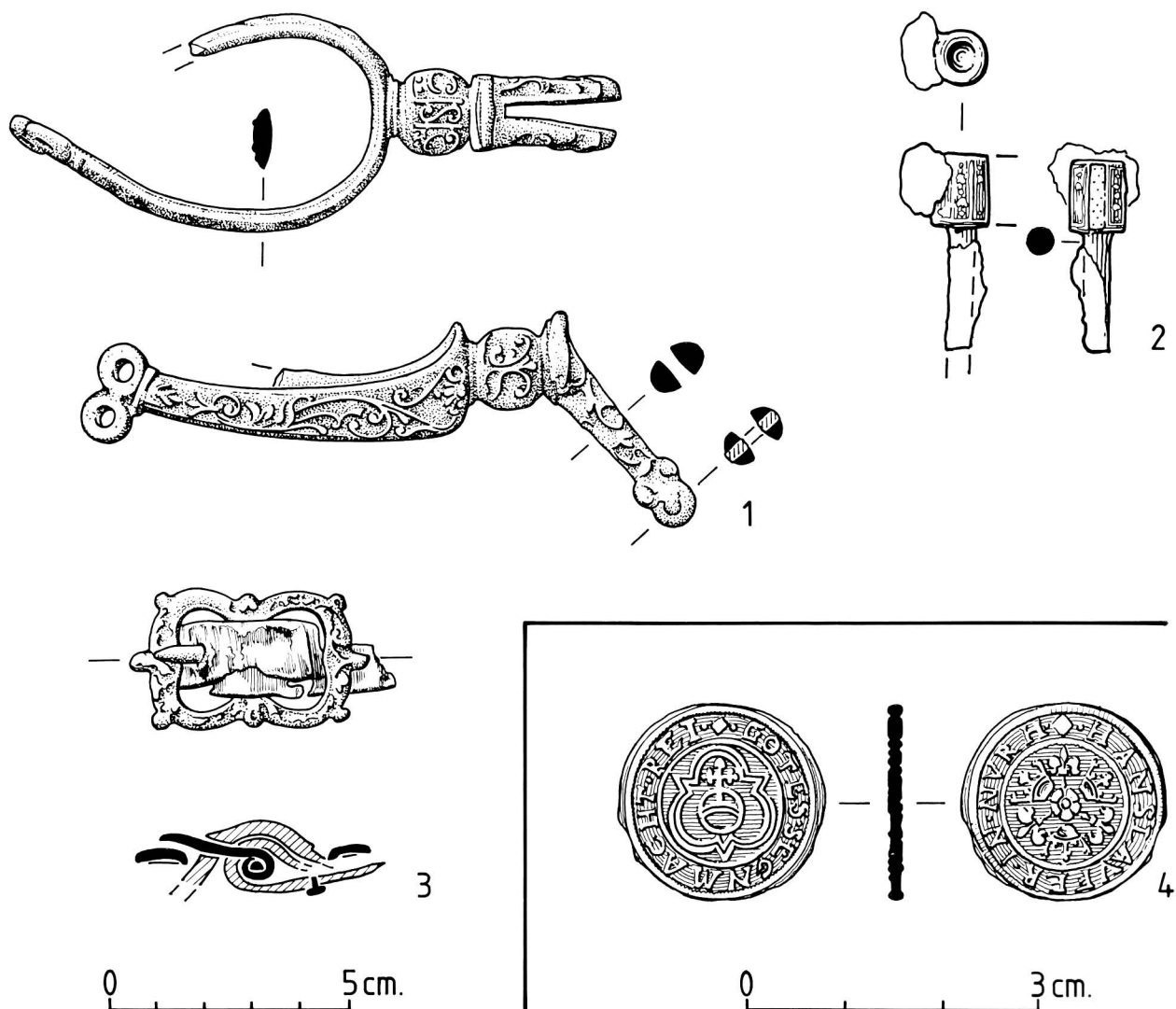


Fig. 5: a selection of metal finds dating to the 17th century.

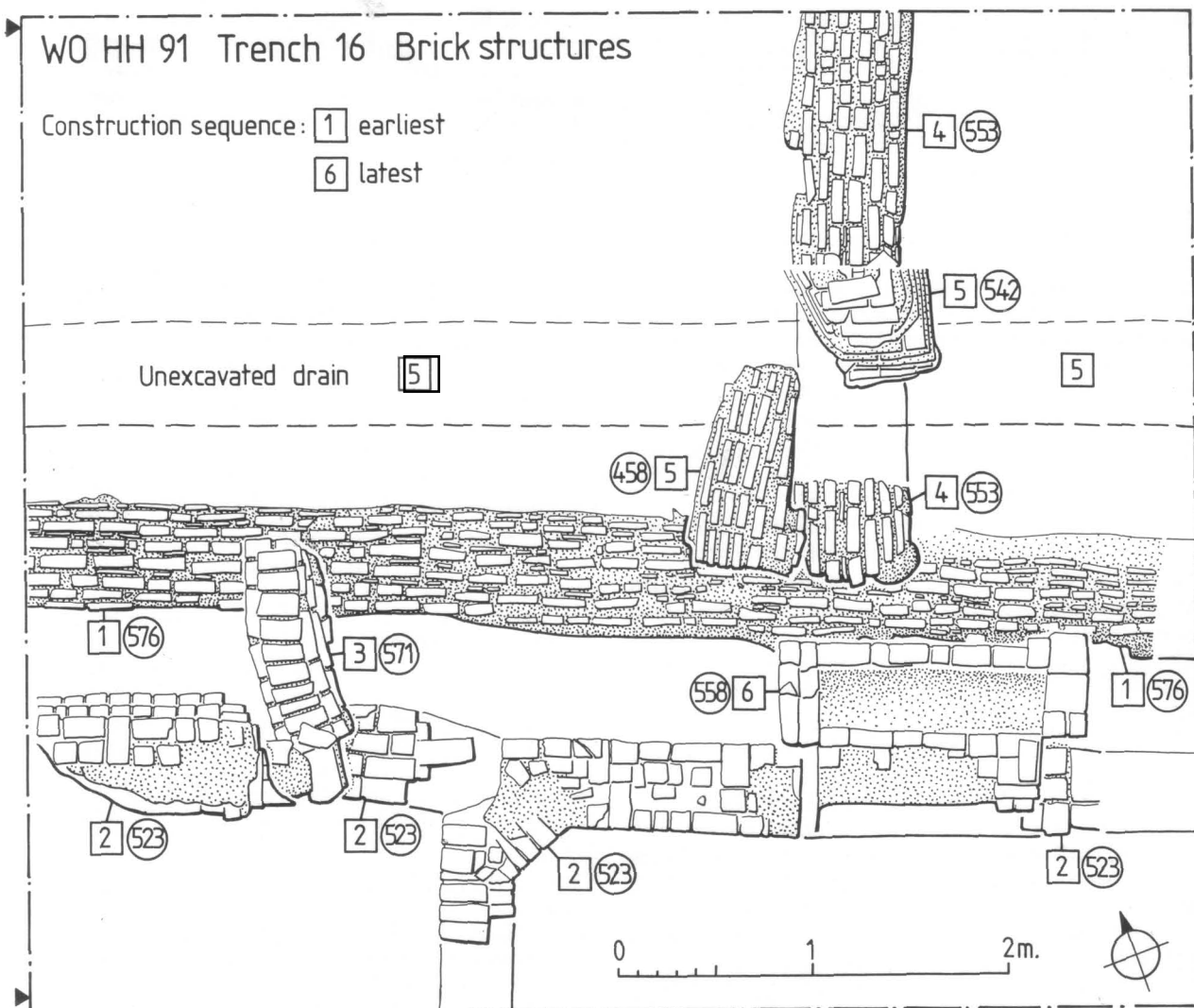


Fig. 6: multiphase 17th century brick structures.

Hans Lauffer (c 1607-1645)<sup>17</sup>, was recovered from the contexts associated with this addition (Fig. 5.4).

A large trench was excavated to insert a further vaulted drain (unexcavated) running parallel to the first one at a lower level. It cut (553), one of its broken ends being capped with bricks (561), the other end (542) being diverted into the unexcavated drain. This new drain appears to have taken over part of the function of (576), as a diversion (458) was inserted into the top of the new (unexcavated) one. The continuation of (576) to the south-east was plugged with bricks (Fig. 6).

The many alterations and additions may at least in part have been due to a recurring silting-up problem. Clearing them would not have been easy, as water pressure would not have been great considering the gentle slope of the drains, and their size did not allow for easy access. The removal of major blockages would therefore have involved digging them up. These frequent excavations also explain the high degree of residuality in the associated contexts.

The insertion of (553) suggests either that further structures needing drainage had been built to the north-east, or that problems requiring the building of drains had developed, possibly as a result of alterations to the site's natural drainage caused by the construction of the Handford house. The first proposition seems the more likely as there would have been a need for stables and other outbuildings requiring drainage near the house.

A cellar, backfilled with large amounts of pottery and porcelain as well as small amounts of window and bottle glass was probably related to the demolition of the Handford House by William Mellish in 1815. The assemblage is of interest for a variety of reasons. It appears to have been dumped over a short period of time as is indicated by the comparative reconstructability of the vessels represented. The wares found cover a relatively long time span however. Present were large quantities of PMR wares and Creamwares (CREA) with smaller amounts

17. F. P. Barnard *The Casting-Counter and the Counting Board* (1981) 70, 208-209, 222; plate XXXIII.

of PMBL, METS, local tinglazed wares (TGCP, TGCW, TGEb and TGEp), Border wares (BORD and BORDb) (Fig. 4.7), early Transfer Printed wares (TPW), Pearl ware (PEAR) (Fig. 4.10) and imported Chinese Kangxi porcelain. One of the latter pieces was comparatively early, dating to the mid 17th century, and of a type not usually thought of as having been produced for export<sup>18</sup> (Fig. 4.9).

### Trench 1

A backfilled drainage ditch unearthed in trench 1 contained a mixture of pottery, tobacco pipes, iron fragments and demolition debris. Among the metal was one piece which appears to be part of a knife handle, iron inlaid with silver, manufactured in London and dating to the 1620s (Fig. 5.2). The pottery mainly consisted of post medieval red wares, Metropolitan slip wares (METS) (Fig. 4.8), post medieval black-glazed earthen wares (PMBL) and small amounts of local tinglazed wares (Fig. 4.6) and late Border wares. Much of this material fitted together and it had clearly been dumped over a short period of time. Based on the pottery and tobacco pipe remains this feature was dated to 1640-60.

This part of the site at one time was associated with the Marshalls property, which at the time the feature dates to had been amalgamated with the Harts site proper<sup>19</sup>. The date range covers the end of the Handford occupation of the site and the start of the Colwall presence. This find could therefore be related to clearing out and alterations by the Colwall household.

### Trench 17

Trench 17 was situated on the former Brewhouse plot. The remains found here were a sequence of drainage features, both ditches and brick-built drains. The earliest feature consisted of a drainage ditch which contained significant quantities of mid-17th-century material. The pottery consisted of local tinglazed wares, PMBL, Frechen stoneware (FREC), and Border wares. Peg tile fragments and broken tobacco pipes were also found, the latter dating between 1640 and 1670. Oyster shell, a whetstone fragment, ironwork, including a barrel-padlock key and a broken elaborately decorated gilded rowel spur, were also recovered. The latter was made of a cast copper alloy, with a figure of eight terminal, fairly straight arms, and a short shank. This is joined to the rear part of the arms by a ball-shaped element, unfortunately the rowel is missing. The decoration is in relief and consists of a continuous scrolling motif (Fig. 5.1). The spur appears to date to the second quarter of the 17th century and to be of English manufacture<sup>20</sup>.

For most of first half of the 17th century the Holmes family occupied the Brewhouse site. A variety of people held the property for the second half of the century. The one case where the owner's occupation is clear is that of Kellam or Kenelm White, a merchant tailor<sup>21</sup>.

The animal bone recovered from the various plots and relating to the various periods consists of cattle, sheep/

goat, pig, horse, cat, dog, deer, fox, chicken, mallard and pheasant. The assemblages are therefore notable for the absence of exotics from the contexts related to the occupation of the site by the affluent merchant class. Does this reflect a conservative taste on their part?

### Conclusions

As the detailed analysis of the finds from the Harts site is continuing the conclusions must remain tentative. The earliest occupation remains recovered coincide with the documentary evidence. It is however likely that there was earlier human presence. The evidence suggests a gradual transition from tenant farming to country estate, with meagre evidence for the 14th and 15th centuries. The latter would agree with the agricultural collapse during the 14th century.

At the Harts plot itself, the structural remains of the 16th century indicate the existence of a substantial house, but the associated finds do not appear to reflect the presence at the site of particularly well-to-do people.

Clearly the assemblages from the Harts, Brewhouse and Marshalls properties dating to the 17th centuries reflect prosperous households, as indicated by the gilded buckle, the gilded spur, and the silver inlaid knife fragment found in the excavations on each of these plots. A distinction in this collection is the significant amount of Metropolitan slipware which is absent from the contemporary assemblages from the other two plots. Marshalls at this time was part of the Harts property proper. It may be that the presence of the METS with relatively large amounts of kitchen and cooking pottery reflects the source of the debris as being a kitchen and utility area.

The fact that the high quality metal artefacts recovered with one exception appear to pre-date the contexts they derive from by one or two decades is probably a reflection of their value. These items would not be disposed of unless they were broken or lost.

The picture remains similar for the 18th and 19th centuries with increasing quantities of imported wares and increasing variety in the pottery assemblages.

### Acknowledgements

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18. R. Kerr *pers. comm.*

19. Essex Record Office D/DCw M19; Guildford Muniment Room 97/13/857.

20. C. de Lacy Lacy 'The History of the Spur' *The Connoisseur*.

21. Essex Record Office D/DCw M26 p65-6; Essex Record Office D/DCw M20 f5v.