

# Unidentified brick structure found at Cranford Park, Middlesex

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## Background

THE MANOR of Cranford was divided in the 1230s, and the two halves became known as Cranford le Mote, the property of Thame Abbey until the Reformation, and Cranford St. John, owned by the Knights Templar from 1242 to 1308 and by the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem from 1338 to 1540. They were reunited in 1542 when they were granted to Andrew, Lord Windsor. Elizabeth, the widow of Sir Thomas Berkeley, bought both manors in 1618, and the Berkeley family remained in possession until 1932, when Cranford House and Park were sold to Hayes and Harlington Urban District Council. Middlesex County Council bought them in 1935 and leased them back to the UDC to be used as public open space. The house was demolished in 1945, but the stables and cellars remain. The medi-

eval church of St. Dunstan, which contains Berkeley family monuments, stands just to the east of the house site. Since 1965 the area has been divided between the Boroughs of Hillingdon and Hounslow.

## Berkeleys and Fitzhardinges

Frederick Augustus, 5th Earl of Berkeley (died 1810), allegedly married the same lady twice, secretly in 1785 and publicly in 1796. Because the earlier marriage could not be proved, the older offspring of the union were declared illegitimate and the earldom passed to Thomas Moreton Fitzhardinge Berkeley, the first son born after the public ceremony. Mary, Countess of Berkeley, had a life interest in the Cranford estate and lived there during her widowhood. She was buried in St.

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ity, Aldgate (c. 1108); Merton (1117) and St. Bartholomew's (1123), were later to overshadow St. Marie Overie, Southwark.

The involvement of William Giffard, Bishop of Winchester, probably sometime in the 1120's, and perhaps in association with Pont de l'Arche, who was now an important curial in Henry's administration, brought a series of changes to the priory. Giffard might, as he did at Taunton in 1127, have instigated a change in rule and therefore a change in priory layout to accommodate communal structures essential to regular, monastic life. As at St. Frideswide's, Oxford, this may not have happened immediately, but over the next few decades.

These developments also heralded other developments within the priory during the latter part of the 12th century. Parts of the nave, east end, and cloister were rebuilt, using the French-influenced styles of the 'Canterbury School'. This period, perhaps, also witnessed alterations to the chapter house (Fig. 6).

It is perhaps during this period that St. Marie Overie priory had its *floruit*—with the building of a hospital and the bishop's palace, and its church extended and decorated in the latest continental style. Unfortunately, prolonged flooding, a destructive fire in 1212, a period of stagnation during its subsequent rebuilding, and the growing importance of its sister houses across the river meant that its potential to become one of medieval London's most influential and prosperous houses was, to an extent, largely unfulfilled.

## Acknowledgements

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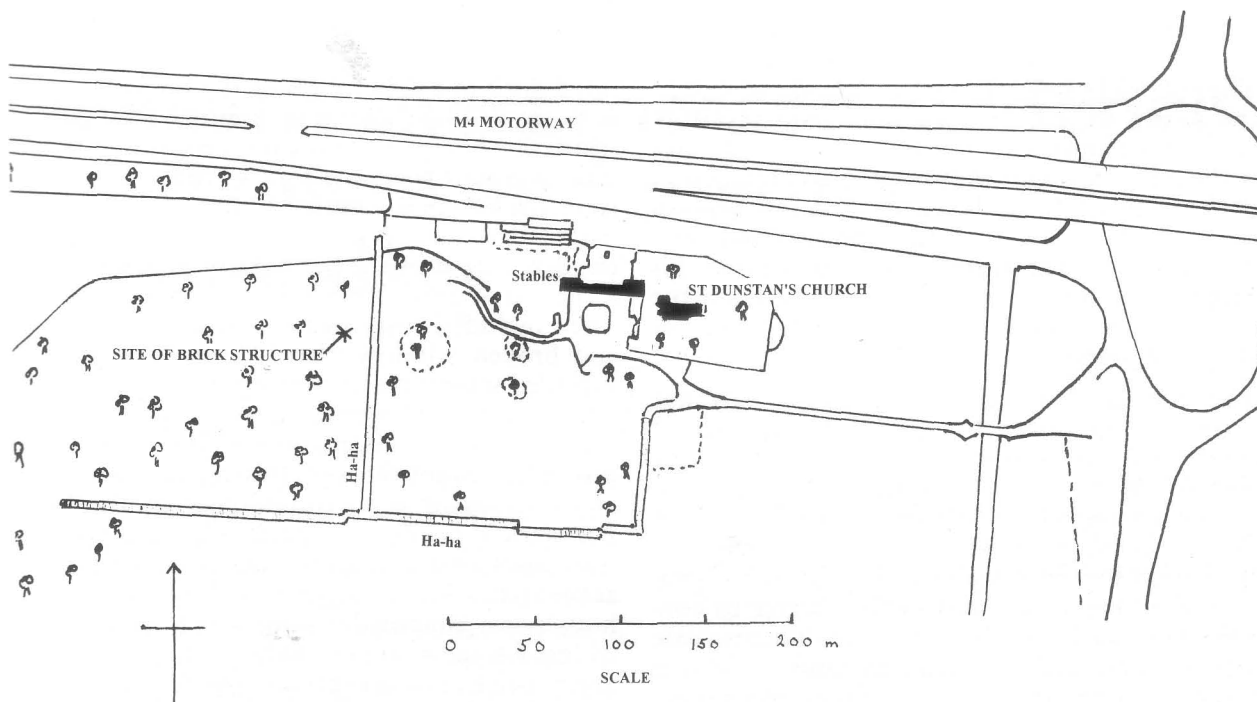


Fig. 1: plan of site in Cranford Park.

Dunstan's, the parish church beside the house, in 1844. Cranford then devolved upon her eldest illegitimate son, who had been created Earl Fitzhardinge in 1841. He died in 1857 and his next brother inherited the estate. He became the first Baron Fitzhardinge and died in 1867<sup>1</sup>. The house was left empty after the third Baron Fitzhardinge died in 1916. Ownership passed back to the Earl of Berkeley's line. That earldom has been extinct since 1942.

### Manor houses

The original Cranford Manor House perhaps stood within Cranford le Mote. The moat was about 1/4 mile north-east of St. Dunstan's church. Documentary evidence<sup>2</sup> supports the presence of a house there from 1603 to 1797 when, according to Lysons, it was pulled down, but archaeological finds from a trial excavation carried out in June 1973 included pottery ranging from the late 12th to the late 18th century<sup>3</sup>, pointing to earlier occupation as well. The woodland around the moat was called Moat House Wood in 1843<sup>4</sup>. This part of the estate now lies on the north side of the M4. The moat where the trial dig took place was largely destroyed by the building of *The Parkway* in the 1960s, and the finds came from the western remnant of it.

So far as the manor of Cranford St. John is concerned, the hall of the Knights Templar appears to

have stood north of St. Dunstan's, as the early manor house of Cranford St. John called a 'Temple House' is mentioned in that position in documents from 1664 to 1746<sup>5</sup>.

However, there are also references to another mansion house over the same period, lying just west of the church. James, third Earl of Berkeley and Lord High Admiral, rebuilt it before his death in 1736. Known as Cranford House, it stood (with added bow windows) until 1945. It remained unoccupied from the time of the First World War. The stables contain a small exhibition relating to the history of the house and estate, largely put together by interested amateurs and volunteers. Estate maps show an ice house situated south-west of the house from 1820 to the 1860s<sup>6</sup>. The position can still be seen in the park.

### The brick structure

Gardens with a ha-ha lie west of the stable block; in February 1998 unauthorised digging for old bottles in this area revealed a brick structure about 0.3m below the surface and 13m west of the ha-ha (Fig. 1). Before this intrusion was backfilled, the site was tidied up and the 19th/20th-century infill was removed to a depth of about 1.5m in an effort to establish the nature of the structure (Fig. 2). We were only able to view the structure through a protective wire covering.

1. *Burke's Extinct Peerage*.

2. *VCH Middlesex*, vol. IV, 179-81.

3. R. Lancaster 'A moated site at Cranford' *London Archaeol* 2, no. 8 (1974) 200-1.

4. LMA: Acc 867/6.

5. *Op cit* fn 2.

6. LMA: Acc 867/4, 10.

The red bricks appeared earlier than those used in the nearby ha-ha retaining wall, and probably earlier than most other remaining brick structures in the area, and might well date to the construction of the mansion house by the third Earl Berkeley in the early 18th century. Initial inspection suggests a well, but certain features seem not to support this supposition, not least that its distance from the former house would have made it an inconvenient supply of water.

The internal diameter of the circular part was 1.73m, and the internal width of the rectangular part was 0.55m. At about 0.45m depth from the surface there are three equally-spaced slightly arched openings (one is shown in Fig. 2). The top of another opening was just visible at a depth of 1.5m (maximum extent of removal of infill). Such openings would have allowed surface water to contaminate a well. The distinctive box-like structure was brick-floored and seems an unusual feature for a well. The end wall of this structure was only a single brick thick (c0.11m), and later inspection of the photographs suggests that it was not keyed into the side walls. Was this the blocked end of a former culvert? The thick wall of the circular part (c0.81m) suggests that it carried a superstructure.

### Conclusion

Whatever this feature was, it does not appear on estate maps dating from 1820 to 1989<sup>7</sup>, nor is it

mentioned in a description of the house and gardens by William Keane in *Beauties of Middlesex* (1850). The best guess at the moment is that it was built at about the same time as the 18th-century reconstruction of Cranford House, and was finally filled in with rubbish and soil at the time of the demolition of the building in 1945, or during its period of decay after the First World War. The infill included rusty items such as garden tools, and broken window glass. The broken pottery included several pieces bearing a coronet and the letter F, presumably relating to the occupation of the house by the Fitzhardinges. The finds are in private hands at Cranford. It is impossible to draw any conclusion as to the purpose of the brick structure. It has been suggested that it is possibly the base of a garden feature connected with water, as the arches seem to suggest conduits; a second ice house; or a gunpowder store which enabled cartridges for sporting guns to be made on the estate and which had to be kept cool. The feature appears to predate the ha-ha.

### Acknowledgements

We wish to thank Frank Wheaton for alerting us to this site and for providing the photographs, and to Rob Whytehead (GLAAS) for discussion and providing the diameter measurement. Other measurements were derived from the photographs.

7. LMA: Acc 867/4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12.



Fig. 2: the partially-excavated structure in Cranford Park, Middlesex, looking west, February 1998 (photo: Frank Wheaton)