

The Archbishop of York's Battersea Mansion

Duncan Hawkins

with Alistair Douglas, Andrew Harris and Victoria Ridgeway

Introduction and summary

IN OCTOBER 1996 and April 1998 two phases of archaeological field evaluation were undertaken at Prices Candle Factory, York Road, Battersea, London SW11 (Fig. 1). The site was documented to be the location of a late medieval and early post-medieval property of the Archbishops of York, known variously as *Sylverton*, *Bridge Court*, *York Place* and *York House*. The evaluations identified the substantial remains of 17th- and 18th-century buildings beneath the existing factory. The area around the factory, formerly occupied by factory buildings and now redeveloped for housing, was identified as having consisted of gardens, with some ancillary buildings and a pond.

Geology and topography

The area of the site is mapped by the British Geological Survey (BGS) as Terrace 1 gravels overlain by river brickearths all of quaternary age¹. Some of these gravels may have been deposited by the Falcon Brook (Battersea Creek) which formerly ran along the northern boundary of the site².

Although the site is now broadly level (between 3.80 and 4.87m OD), it is thought that the centre of the site was formerly a headland of high gravel at the confluence of the Thames and the Falcon Brook.

Historical background

The Manor of Sylverton, or Bridge Court, extended over a part of Battersea called *Brugges* or *Bridges* and was a sub-Manor held of the Manor of Battersea. Hence it has been identified with a tenement in Bridges held of Ricard de Dol in 1225³, but there is no definite proof that these holdings were the same. The lands called *Brugges* lay between the mouths of the River Wandle to the west and the Falcon Brook to the east.

1. British Geological Survey of Great Britain, South London Sheet 270 1:50,000 series. Ordnance Survey.

2. N. Barton *The Lost Rivers of London* (1982) 41.

3. *VCH Surrey* Vol IV ed. H. E. Malden, London (1912) 12-13.

4. British Library Add MS 6167 f.54; see also W. E. Brayley *A Topographical History of Surrey*, Vol III revised and edited by E. Walford, London, 174-5; also M. Thompson *Medieval Bishops Houses in England and Wales* (1998) 72.

Bridge Court was held by the Abbot and Convent of Westminster as Lords of Battersea Manor in 1444, when the rents due to the 'Manor of Bridgecourt' were accounted for separately by the farmer and steward of Battersea Manor. During the 1450s the property was part of the estate of Lord Stanley, which he conveyed to trustees, perhaps in order to avoid confiscation. In 1460 these trustees transferred the property to Lawrence Booth, Bishop of Durham, and in 1461 the grant was confirmed by Lord Stanley.

Despite this the Manor of Bridgecourt was seized by King Edward IV in 1471 because John Stanley had assigned these lands and tenements in trust to the Abbot of Westminster, in contravention of the statute of Mortmain, which forbade the unlicensed transfer of land to ecclesiastical bodies.

Bishop Booth found it necessary to apply to the King, and having paid £700, the Manor of Bridgecourt and other lands forfeited by Stanley were granted to him on the 10th July 1471. Booth appears to have built the first house on the site shortly afterwards⁴. In 1474, Booth received the

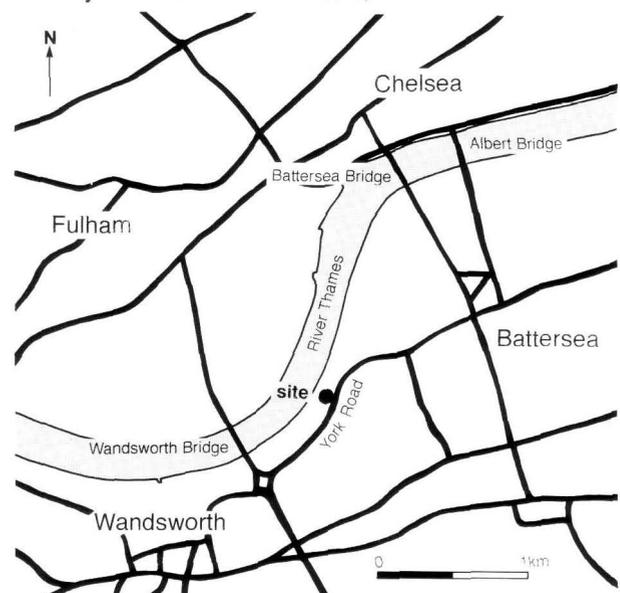


Fig. 1: location plan

King's licence to enclose his newly built Mansion House at Battersea called Bridgecourt.

“Grant, of special grace, and in consideration of good service, to Laurence, Bishop of Durham, and his assigns, that they may make walls and towers with stone, lime and sand about and in their mansion called Bryggecourt in the parish of BATERESEY, co. Surrey and so enclose the said mansion, and furnish the said walls and towers with turrets, battlements, crenellations and machicolations, and so hold the said mansion to him and his assigns without impediment from the king or his heirs or any other; and that the said bishop and his assigns may impark all their lands and woods in BATERESEY and elsewhere in the said county and enclose them with palings and hedges and make a park or parks of them; and that they shall have free warren and free chace in all their lands and woods aforesaid”⁵.

Bishop Booth was translated to the See of York in 1476, and remained Archbishop until his death in 1480. He bequeathed his estate in Battersea to the See of York for the maintenance of chantries he had founded, on condition that a lodging in the Mansion House should be reserved for the Archbishop whenever needed⁶. It appears to have been customary for the successive Archbishops to lease out the Mansion House. The Dean and Chapter of York received the rents and profits during vacancies of the See.

When Queen Mary deprived Archbishop Holgate of his See in 1554 the Mansion House was broken into and plundered. In 1580 Archbishop Sandys lent *Bridgecourt* to the Lords of the Council as a prison for obstinate papists.

During the Commonwealth, the Mansion House complex and its appurtenances were sold by the trustees for the sale of Bishops' lands on 28th June 1648. The purchasers were Sir Allen Apsley and a Colonel Hutchinson, his brother in law; and the purchase price £1,806 3s 6d. The indenture covering this sale survives in the Borthwick Institute of the University of York⁷ and provides the earliest detailed description of the Mansion House complex; at this time it consisted of a:

“Manor House, 3 wash houses, 3 stables, three coach houses, five gardens and 1 orchard”

The property was divided into a:
“Manor House and two other messages”

The lease covered:

“all chambers and rooms over the said washhouses, stables and coach houses and all those five fish ponds within the said orchards and gardens or some of them and all the brick walls mounds ditches and fences of the premises and the sale of them together with the stairs

5. PRO Calendar of Charter Rolls 1427-1516

6. British Library Lansdowne MS 29 f.38

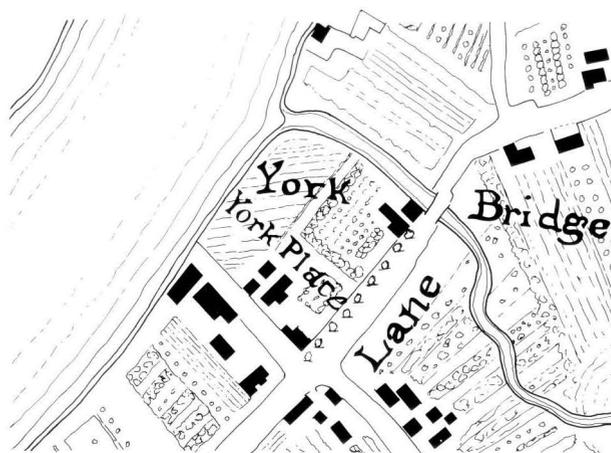


Fig. 2: Rocque's map

called the waterstairs . . . and all other houses, edifices, buildings, stairs, gardens, orchards and fishponds and all courts, curtilages, yards, backsides, waste ground, wharves, waters, watercourses . . . common ways.

... the whole by estimation 6 acres be the same more or less and are encompassed with a brick wall and bounded as follows with . . . On the NW upon the River Thames on the NE upon a common sewer [Falcon Brook or Battersea Creek; Author], on the SE upon a highway [York Road; Author] and on the SW upon a way leading from the said highway to the said River of Thames [Cotton Row; Author].”

Bridgecourt and its lands were returned to the Archbishop of York at the Restoration in 1660. The next description of the property comes from an inspection report by the Archbishop of York's Surveyor dated 20 May 1743⁸. At this time the Mansion House was clearly in a poor state of repair.

“... the old house now divided into two by the demolition of the middle part tho not done lately – the shell of the house seems to be of (a) building in Queen Elizabeth's time, old and crazy, . . . the garden and outhouses very ruinous. Your graces servant Mrs Gordon and her husband live in the better part and let out the other to one Mr Bell.”

However, two new houses had been constructed.

“... I was also in the new houses . . . these two houses have a large yard on one side with stables and delicate gardens to the Thames and would be worth much more were there not a great distiller next to them who keeps in different stores a thousand hogs.”

The lease of the Manor was sold again on 3rd September 1745. Again the indenture survives in the Borthwick Institute⁹. At this time the property consisted of a:

7. Borthwick Institute File cc Ab 9/s.

8. *Op cit* fn 7.



Fig. 3: York House c. 1790

“Mansion House, Capital. Message or tenement called Bridge Court . . . and two new created messages or tenements . . . together with all edifices, buildings and appurtenances with the mote and precinct of the said Manor.”

The indenture states that the tenants were to make: “all needful and necessary reparations and should make, keep and scour from thence-forth all the Bridges, Hedges, Ditches and Watercourses.”

and concludes with the following report.

“Messrs Kingscolt and Walters in order to make the premises convenient to themselves have pulled down the Coach Houses, Stables, Brewhouses and other out-buildings and also part of the Mansion House or so much of it as suited with their own convenience . . . and have erected a Laboratory in the yard or garden fronting the said Mansion House for their use as druggists . . . By which the Gardens and Mansion House . . . formerly a Palace of the Archbishop of York is now entirely changed from the original order and condition.”

Five years later (23 May 1750) a further report was appended to the original document.

“That part of the said mansion house had been pulled down at the south west end in front next the yard 17 feet and ten feet deep . . . This building consisting of cellar, ground floor, one pair of stairs and garrets, and that a wash house was likewise pulled down adjoining to the end of the said building 15 feet in front and 26 feet deep, also a green house 13 feet 9 inches in front and 16 feet deep, and also a brewhouse 10 feet by 12 feet . . .

That there had been erected in the garden facing the said mansion house a long brick building 200 feet 0 inches long and 15 feet 10 inches wide and about 6 high up to the wall plates and covered with pan tiles . . . That the public house adjoining to the late coach house was proposed to be pulled down and not rebuilt . . .”

9. *Op cit* fn 7.

10. Letter of H Gordon to the Archbishop of York, February 20th 1762; see fn 7.

John Rocque’s map (Fig. 2) is broadly contemporary with these descriptions though predating the construction of the 200ft-long brick building. Rocque’s map shows six distinct buildings or complexes of buildings on the site. From later maps we know that the two buildings on the north-east of the site by the bridge over the Falcon Brook were a mill complex which survived until the 1880s.

The large building with offset central block shown in Rocque’s map is the Mansion House (as identified in early-19th-century plans) and the two buildings towards the Thames are probably the two new houses recorded in 1743. At the southern tip of the site in Rocque’s map, on the basis of later maps, is a complex of buildings including stables.

In 1762 the leaseholder¹⁰ was to report to the Archbishop that:

“Tired out with expenses and losses he could not afford any longer to repair the buildings so that the great part of them fell down themselves about 8 or 9 years ago.”

By 1753 the pioneering Battersea enamel works had been established on the site, though the works appears to have passed out of use by c. 1756.

Towards the end of the 18th century the property appears to have passed out of the ownership of the Archbishops.

By the early 19th century the Mansion House had been heavily remodelled¹¹.

“The mansion house has been considerably altered by Joseph Benwall Esq, the present occupier who has taken down many of the old rooms. One of them called the painted chamber had a dome ceiling.”

Benwall had then constructed a number of new rooms within the old shell of the house.

There is apparently only one surviving late-18th-century illustration of *York House* (as it was then known), an engraving which dates from the 1790s¹² (Fig. 3). In this illustration the Mansion House is shown as a building of apparently early- to mid-18th-century date. The building is shown as a two-storey structure with two-bay hipped ranges, flanking a five-bay centre with central pediments and porch of the Tuscan order. Two prominent stacks are shown at each end of the central range. The stacks appear to sit astride the ridge line. However, the sides appear to have a depth greater than one bay. Hipped ends to the rear of the side ranges and the octagonal cupola that rises from behind the front ridge suggests that the building had an open court. The octagonal cupola may be the Dome

11. O. Manning and W. Bray *The History and Antiquities of the County of Surrey* Vol III (1804/14) 332-4.

12. E. Walford *Old and New London* Vol VI, 468-70.

referred to as being demolished by Joseph Benwell (above). It is therefore possible that the *York House* of *c.* 1790 was in origin part of the late medieval Mansion House which had been extensively remodelled.

The Battersea tithe map, of 1838 (Fig. 4) and indenture plans of 1850 (Fig. 5)¹³ and 1851 provide the first detailed surveys of the site.

In the Tithe map the mill complex shown in Rocque is clearly visible on the north-east of the site, while on the north-west the properties shown as 208 and 209 seem to correspond with the two new houses first recorded in 1743. South of the properties recorded as 208 and 209, the Mansion House is shown. This fronts an area of garden surrounded by a sub circular path (labelled as 206) with the side of the Mansion House facing York Road. The Mansion House is shown as sub-square and irregular in plan. An undated but broadly contemporary illustration (apparently a view from the York Road) indicates a complex, multi-period structure (Fig. 6). The illustration provides information on the architectural detailing of the side

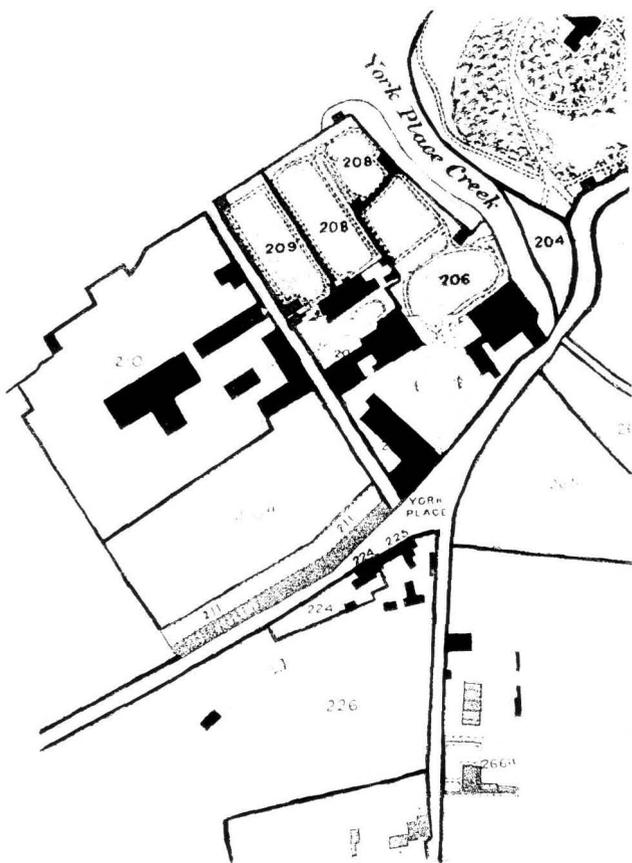


Fig. 4: Battersea Tithe Map

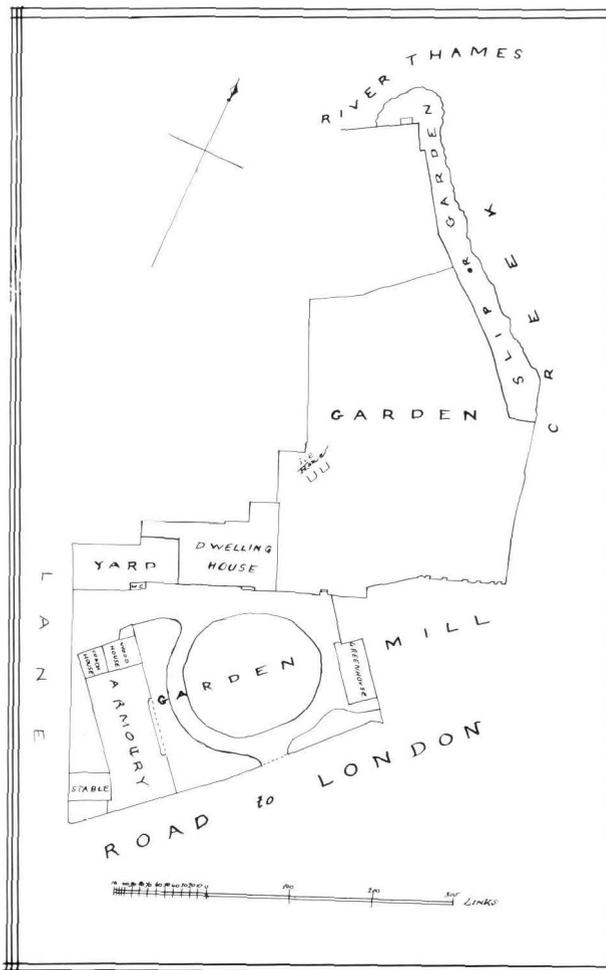


Fig. 5: Indenture plan 1850

elevation. This comprised a two-storey seven-bay front set back behind the principal façade with a porch located on the angle. The central stack appears to be supported by stays.

The illustration of the front façade differs significantly from that of *c.* 1790. The 19th-century illustration clearly shows a tall three-storey front of about five bays with a lower two-storey range beyond. The flank elevations are blind with prominent angle pilasters. The roof is hipped. These discrepancies can not be explained other than suggesting substantial modification or even total rebuilding of the structures depicted in 1790, perhaps this was the work recorded by Manning and Bray as carried out by Joseph Benwall.

A further large building is shown in the 1838 map south of the probable mansion house position, a building recorded as the 'Armoury, Coach House

13. Prices Patent Candle Company Ltd (PPCCL) Archive, York Road, Wandsworth. "Lease of a slip of ground adjoining York House, John Parkin to PPCCL 1850"; PPCCL/1/5/5

and Wood House' in the indenture plans (Fig. 5). The function of the 'Armoury' is unknown. At the date of the indentures (1850) the Armoury does not seem to have been part of the York House property.

In its final form as recorded in the early 19th century¹⁴ the Mansion House consisted of:

Front Attic	Basement Knife and Store Room
Back Attic Left Hand	Store Room
Landing	Store room
Two Pair Story Left Hand	Beer Cellar
Back Room Left Hand	Small Cellar
Back Room Right Hand	
Dressing Room	Wash House or Brewhouse
Landing	Yard
Stair Case	Stable
One Pair Story Front Left Hand	Greenhouse
Dressing Room	Garden
Back Room Left Hand	
Large Bedroom	Ground Floor Store Room
Lobby	Laundry
Back room Right Hand	Breakfast Room
Closet	School Room
Drawing Room	Hall
Back Room	Butler's Room
Dining Room	Butler's Pantry
Staircase Landing	Servants' Hall
Closet	Kitchen
Inner Landing	Scullery
Larder	
Dairy	

In 1845 George William Hollingsworth of Godstone, Surrey, was the freeholder of the York House Estate. In that year he leased the estate to John Parkin, Surgeon, and John Van Millingen. At this date the estate included the Mill complex. In June 1848 the Mill was sublet by Parkin to John Denny. At this time it is described as a:

"Steam Corn Mill, granaries, kiln and appurtenances; part of one of the granaries had been converted to a dwelling house; the mill was powered by a '12hp high pressured and condensing steam engine'".

On Van Milligen's death in 1849 Parkin appears to have lived in York House. In August 1850 Parkin sublet the estate to Eliza and Charlotte Lush.

In 1851 Prices Patent Candle Company Limited entered into articles of agreement with the devisees of G. W. Hollingsworth's will to purchase the freehold of the site. Prices were successful in acquiring the freehold but it was not until 1856 that all existing leasehold interests were surrendered to the company. It is clear from the records that prices acquisition of the York House estate was piecemeal and opportunist and that York House itself

14. *Op cit* 13. Lease of 1850 John Parkin to Eliza and Charlotte Lush PPCL/1/5/5.

15. *Ground probing Radar Survey at Prices Candle Factory site, Wandsworth, London SW11*. P. P. Barker, Stratascan, October 1996 unpublished report.



Fig. 6: York House, early 19th century cannot have been demolished before the end of 1856.

The archaeological evaluations

In October 1996 six evaluation trenches (trenches 1 to 6) were excavated and recorded; trenches 1 to 5 were within then standing buildings. During April and May 1998 a further four evaluation trenches were excavated and recorded (trenches 7 to 10). None were within standing buildings. As part of the 1996 evaluation, a ground probing radar survey was undertaken¹⁵, and the results have been included in this report (Fig. 7).

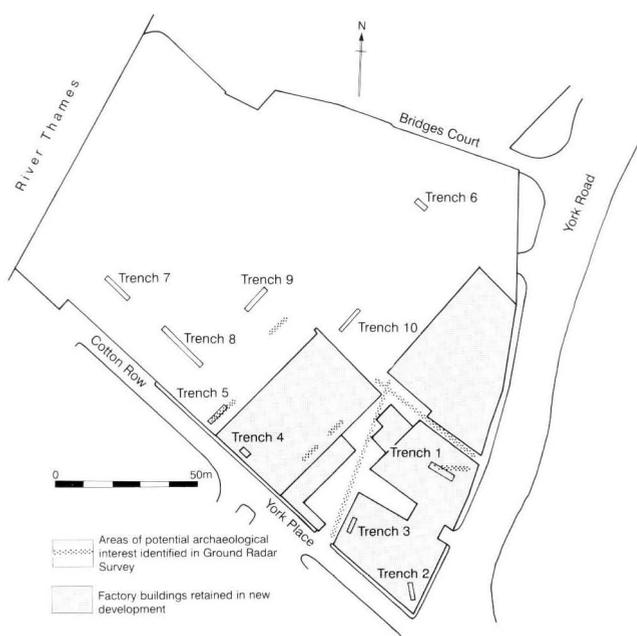


Fig. 7: trial trenches

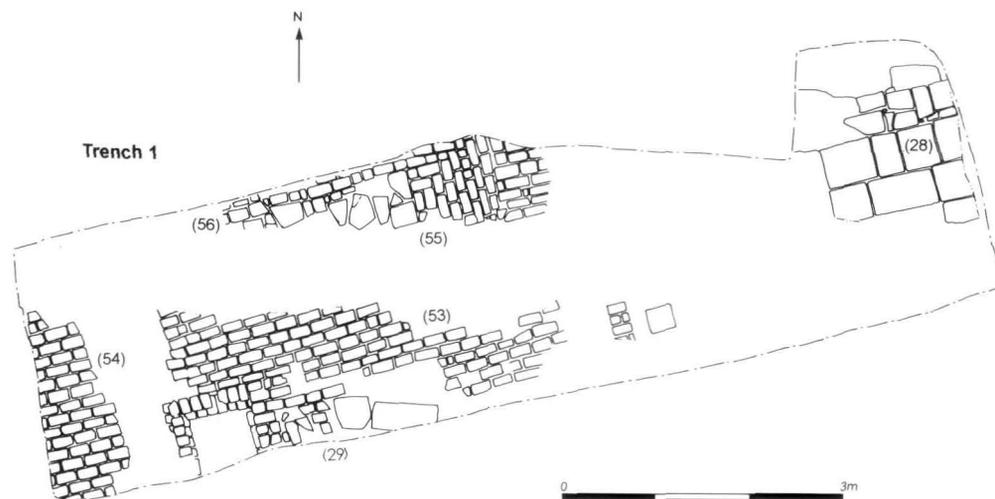


Fig. 8: building, Trench 1

Description of Trenches

Trench 1

Above a natural alluvial clay soil lay the remains of a large building of mid-18th-century date was represented by a drain and soakaway, together with a tiled floor and a stone-flagged floor (Fig. 8 and Fig. 9). Lead piping indicated an integral water supply. No edges were identified to this building within the trench and the ground probing radar survey indicated that the tiled floor continued to the north and that associated wall foundations were present in this area.

The building remained in use for some time, both the tiled and flagged floors showed evidence of repair, the former being also heavily worn. The only 'occupation' deposit in the building was a charcoal-rich silt built up over the tiled floor.

The building was sealed by an extensive demolition deposit of unfrogged red brick fragments and mortar. Over them lay a thick soil deposit, sealed by a gravel surface of early-19th-century date; probably part of the driveway of York House (Fig. 5). This was in turn sealed by deposits associated with the Candle Factory.

Trench 2

The remains of a substantial early-17th-century brick building were identified, subdivided into a number of rooms by brick partition walls (Fig. 10). Initially floored in square Flemish tiles (Fig. 11), the building was refloored later in the 17th century with small cream-coloured Dutch bricks laid in a herringbone pattern. The indenture maps (Fig. 5) indicate this building was part of the 'Armoury, coach house and woodhouse', which survived until c. 1856.

Trench 3

No deposits pre-dating the late 19th century were identified in this trench.



Fig. 9: building, Trench 1

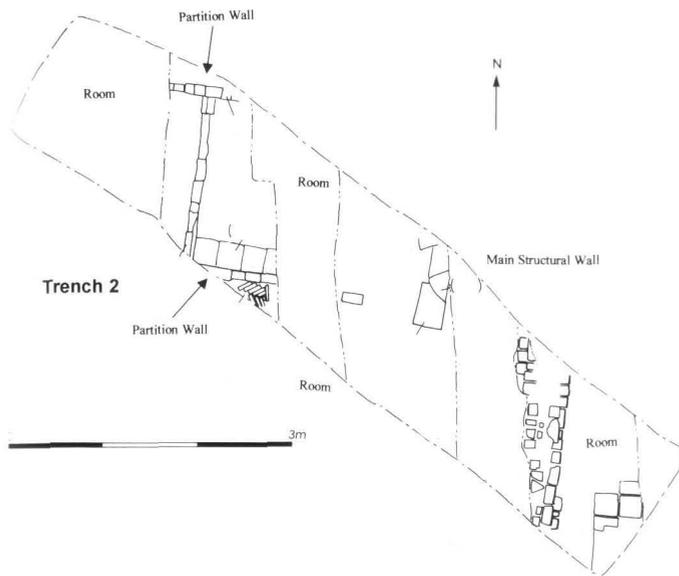


Fig. 10: building, Trench 2

Trench 4

The earliest deposit excavated was a disturbed alluvial soil which was cut by a short length of brick wall abutted by a brick floor, probably both early-17th-century. They were sealed by demolition rubble associated with a robber trench.

The latter was post-dated by a truncated length of late-18th-century walling, a robber trench and a small pit. They were sealed by levelling deposits of demolition rubble, which was capped by the steel plates of the existing Candle Factory floor. Later maps (Figs. 4 and 5) suggest these walls and floors represent an ancillary range at the rear of the Mansion House.

Trench 5

The earliest deposit recorded was a silty sand of alluvial origin. It was sealed by levelling deposits, comprised of demolition residues mixed with soil. These were cut by three fragmentary brick walls of c. 1800, one associated with a mortar spread. Again, map evidence suggests these walls may be associated with an ancillary range at the rear of the Mansion House.

Trench 6

Trench 6 lay on the north of the site, within what is now known as *Bridges Court* and was found to be entirely within the former Battersea Creek and very heavily disturbed by the footings of the Candle factory.

Trench 7

The earliest deposits recorded in this trench were sandy silts of alluvial origin which were truncated by plant beds. Isolated from these features was a



Fig. 11: building, Trench 2

brick-lined cess pit of late-18th-century date, cut by features associated with the Candle Factory.

Trench 8

Natural soil of alluvial origin was sealed by clean garden soils or levelling deposits. They were in turn sealed by make-up layers associated with the Candle Factory.

Trench 9

Natural sandy silts of alluvial origin were cut by a fragmentary red brick wall of 18th-century date. This was sealed by levelling deposits, associated with the Candle Factory. This wall may represent a part of the two houses built c. 1743.

Trench 10

The bulk of this trench was occupied by a cut feature thought to be of early post-medieval date. The feature appears to have been water-filled and it was recut on at least one occasion.

Following a period of silting the cut feature was deliberately backfilled with demolition deposits

including early-17th-century floor tiles; the latter being identical to those in the first phase floor identified in trench 2. Over these demolition residues was laid a mixed levelling deposit, and a garden soil. This was cut by features associated with the Candle Factory.

Radar survey

A ground probing radar survey was undertaken to supplement the 1996 evaluation trenches. It was carried out in October 1996 by Stratascan. At the time of the survey the factory was fully functional and only limited traverses were possible. The results of the radar survey indicated that the building recorded in Trench 1 extended beyond the trench, to the north.

Discussion

The natural gravel was reached only in Trenches 2, 4 and 10. A rise in gravels from the southern and eastern edges to the site centre, before falling again on the north and west, suggests that the centre of the site may be located upon a gravel headland.

No trace of any buildings or features of the late medieval Mansion complex was identified *in situ*. However, virtually every levelling, make-up or dump deposit identified in Trenches 1 to 5, and the demolition deposits in Trench 10, contained a very high proportion of crushed or broken chalk rubble (the highest concentration was in Trench 2). From Trench 5 a single squared flint block (*c.* 5cm x 10cm) was recovered from a 19th-century context. All of this material is likely to have originated from late medieval or very early post-medieval buildings. Documentary evidence suggests that the demolition of the outbuildings of the late medieval Mansion complex and at least some of the main Mansion House was comprehensive, though carried out over a period of nearly two hundred years.

The evidence from Trench 2 and to a lesser extent Trench 4, suggests the construction of high quality buildings in the south-eastern quarter of the site in the early 17th century. However the use of tile and brick floors in the structures suggest that in both cases these were ancillary buildings or part of ancillary ranges rather than parts of the main residence, and this is consistent with the later map evidence.

The large mid-18th-century building identified in Trench 1 is an enigma as it does not appear on any of the maps of the site. The integral water supply, drainage, tile and flag stone floors might suggest a washhouse complex. However, the extensive charcoal deposit seems to indicate an industrial function. Perhaps this was the 200ft-long brick build-

ing erected prior to 1750 'facing the . . . Mansion House' and/or the short-lived enamel works. The building had clearly been demolished by the close of the 18th century, and soil dumped to form a new garden on its site.

The absence of medieval or early post-medieval structural features *in situ* in Trenches 5, 7, 8, 9 or 10 suggests that these trenches were located within the gardens of the late medieval and post-medieval Mansion House complex. The large cut feature identified in Trench 10 may perhaps have been a pond, possibly one of the many fishponds recorded in the documentary evidence.

The 18th-century walls recorded in Trenches 5 and 9 and the cess pit in Trench 7 probably relate to the two new houses recorded as being built in the gardens in *c.* 1743.

Conclusions

The evaluations provided confirmation of the post-medieval development of the site recorded in the documentary and cartographic evidence. Evidence for the comprehensive demolition of medieval buildings, substantial development in the early post-medieval period and continued redevelopment in the late 18th and early 19th century, was identified.

The archaeological, cartographic and documentary evidence suggests a concentration of residential and ancillary building remains (including the certain location of the post-medieval Mansion House and probably of the medieval Mansion House) beneath the existing buildings of Prices Candle Factory. This area may also contain the remains of the short-lived but important Battersea enamel works.

Acknowledgements

The archaeological investigations were funded by Fairview New Homes Plc to whom grateful thanks are given. Thanks are also due to Prices Patent Candle Company Ltd for their help and assistance. The archaeological fieldwork was undertaken by Pre Construct Archaeology and the Radar Survey by Stratascan.

The authors would in addition like to thank Alison Kain for preparing the illustrations and Jon Newman and Dr Christopher Philpotts for undertaking additional documentary research in the British Library and Prices Patent Candle Company Ltd Archives and for their comments on the text. Thanks are also due to Myk Flitcroft and Ken Whittaker, formerly of English Heritage, both for their comments on the text and their assistance throughout the project.