

Fig. 1: site location plan

A post-medieval house at the Old Kingston Bridge

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IN ADVANCE of development works by Crest Homes (Southern) Ltd., Pre-Construct Archaeology investigated a site at Old Bridge Street, Hampton Wick in the London Borough of Richmond (site codes OET95 and OLB96). The site lay approximately 35m west of the River Thames, just to the north of Kingston Bridge (Fig. 1). Two phases of

archaeological work were carried out. The first, conducted between June and July 1995, investigated the western area of the site fronting onto the High Street, while the second, in May 1996, concentrated on the area to the east (Fig. 2). The most important find was the discovery of a post-medieval house which may have served a purpose related to its proximity to the Old Kingston Bridge.

Hampton Wick

A settlement may have existed at Hampton Wick since the Saxon period. On the opposite bank of the Thames, Kingston is recorded as the scene of a synod in AD 838 and of series of Saxon coronations from AD 925.¹ The Domesday Book records the manor of *Hamntone* as being held by the Norman Baron Walter de St Valery.² It is thought to have been located at the site of Hampton Court.³

The earliest cartographic source is Ogilby and dates from 1682. It shows a moderately sized settlement at Hampton Wick. In the 17th century it seems probable that Park Lane included the present Park Road, High Street and Sandy Lane. The area to the north of Kingston Bridge, including buildings and fields, covered only about a hundred acres. The main group of buildings, gardens and crofts probably covered about fifteen acres.

Rocque's map of 1746 shows the size of the settlement and also indicates buildings along both sides of Old Bridge Street. The White Hart Inn was established by the 17th century. From the same time there was also a second inn, the *Kings Head*; this stood near the bridge, but its exact location is not known. The Manor Court Books of 1752 speak of a house 'formerly known by the Name of the Kings Head...in Hampton Wick'.⁴

The Hampton Enclosure map of 1818 shows a number of properties fronting onto both the High Street and Old Bridge Street. One of these would have been the White Hart Inn, known to have been present on the site by 1851. The medieval bridge was abandoned in 1828 when the present bridge was opened to the east. The 1864 Ordnance

Survey map shows the site was occupied by two blocks of buildings separated by a narrow alley. The western plot, adjacent to the Phase I site, contained two buildings; the one near the alley being the public house. By 1898 the White Hart Inn appears to have been rebuilt and enlarged, and between 1898 and 1914 two adjacent narrow buildings had been raised.

Old Kingston Bridge

The exact construction date of the Old Kingston Bridge is unknown, but repairs to it were documented in 1193; there is also a dendrochronological date of *c.* 1170 for one of the timbers of its early phase.⁵ The bridge was situated offset from the centre of medieval Kingston, probably reflecting topographical features at the time. At this time it was an important crossing point, approached via Old Bridge Street. No other bridge existed further east until one reached London Bridge, 17 miles downstream. There are documentary references to flood damage to the bridge throughout the medieval period. A major structural repair took place in the 1590s, and as a result of a further flood in 1822 a new stone bridge was built on the present site.⁶

Archaeological excavations of the Old Bridge have taken place at the Kingston side of the river.⁷ The Department of Greater London Archaeology (DGLA) excavations here revealed a large ditch some 6m south of, and parallel to, the Old Bridge Street. Probably dating from the 12th century, this was tentatively interpreted as a boundary ditch.⁸ Further DGLA excavations in Kingston have provided dendrochronological dating of the bridge and a number of rebuilds. There was also evidence of buildings on the approach road including a

1. D. Hawkins 'Anglo Saxon Kingston: a shifting pattern of settlement' *London Archaeol* 8 no 10 (1998) 272.
2. A. Urwin *Hampton and Teddington in 1086 -- an analysis of the entry in the Domesday Book* (u/d).
3. *Hampton and Teddington*, Borough of Twickenham Local History Society Occasional Papers No 2 (u/d).
4. B. Garside 'The Manor Lordship and Great Parks of Hampton Court during the 16th and 17th centuries with a description of Hampton Wick Fields and the Thames Island' in *Between the Walls, Hampton Wick and the Meadow Fringes of Home Park* (1951) Chapter IV.
5. G. Potter 'The medieval bridge and waterfront at Kingston-upon-Thames' CBA Research Report No. 74 (1991), *Waterfront Archaeology Proceedings of the third international conference, Bristol* (1988) 137-149.
6. J. Wakeford *Kingston's Past Rediscovered* Kingston upon Thames Archaeological Society (1990).
7. J. Cherry (ed) 'Post-Medieval Britain in 1972' *Post-Medieval Archaeol* 7 (1973) 100-17; S. Nelson 'Recent work at the Old Bridge at Kingston' *London Archaeol* 4 no 13 (1983) 339-44.
8. S.M. Youngs, J. Clark and T. B. Barry (eds) 'Medieval Britain and Ireland in 1985' *Medieval Archaeol* 30 (1986) 142.

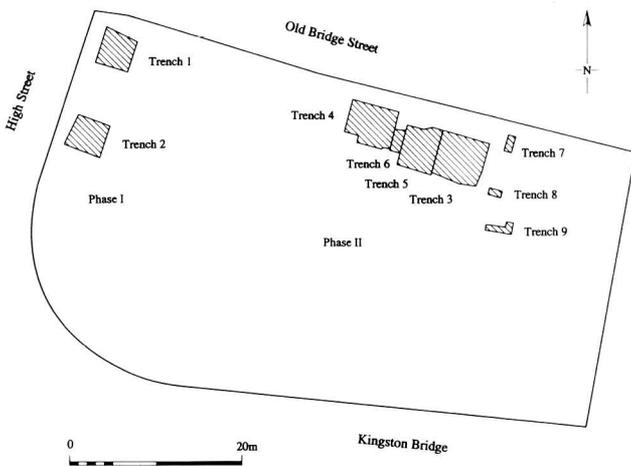


Fig. 2: plan of trenches

vaulted chalk undercroft (AD 1300-1350) and other timber framed structures dating from the 14th century to c. 1700.⁹ It is most probable that houses and commercial premises soon became established along both sides of the street approaching the bridge (Old Bridge Street).

The archaeological investigations

Phase I consisted of two trenches fronting onto the High Street and Phase II of seven trenches mostly located along Old Bridge Street (Fig. 2). A sequence of building, demolition and re-building from the medieval period to the 19th century was indicated. Archaeological deposits survived to a depth of 2m, probably due to the amount of ground raising material dumped to minimise flooding risk.

The investigations showed a marked difference in character of the eastern and western parts of the site. To the east (Phase II) artefacts and features were still evident at a depth of c. 4.9 m OD. Here the earliest occupation appears to have begun first in the late medieval and early post-medieval periods. This was in contrast with the western part (Phase I) where medieval levels, including structures, were discovered at a height of c. 5.6 m OD. This could be due to either post-medieval truncation or the proximity to the river, making this part of the site unsuitable for settlement in the earlier medieval period.

The medieval remains

Overlying the subsoil in Trenches 1 and 2 was a thick deposit of agricultural soil containing abraded pottery dating from AD 1270 to 1500. Two abraded sherds of residual Saxo-Norman pottery (AD 1000-1200) were recovered from later medieval contexts. The next phase, also with a medieval to late medieval date range, consisted of large amounts of material presumably dumped to raise the ground fronting onto the High Street. This dumped material also backfilled a large cut interpreted as a 'hollow-way', running east-west through Trench 1. The cut, which had a depth of 0.85m, fronted onto the route heading west from Old Kingston Bridge and was possibly caused by erosion due to the traffic to and from the bridge. On the Kingston side, a similar feature in a comparable location has been interpreted as a possible boundary ditch.¹⁰

Late medieval/early post-medieval activities

On the eastern part of the site, in Trenches 4 and 6, a layer of greenish brown clay with few finds indicated that the area was open ground in the late

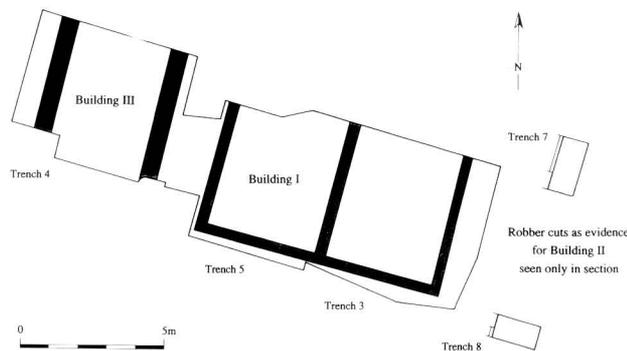


Fig. 3: foundation remains of buildings I, II and III.

medieval period. This layer contained pottery datable to the late 15th or early 16th century, and may represent an agricultural horizon. It may, however, also be the result of flooding.

Closer to the bridge, in Trench 3, there were traces of industrial activities dating from the same period. Here an occupation surface contained waste suggestive of a smithy. This may have been related either to the traffic across the bridge or to the numerous bridge repairs documented in the historical sources.

Post-medieval buildings

The investigation of the eastern part of the site revealed the remains of at least three post-medieval buildings. Building I, in Trenches 3-5, was the most significant feature excavated on the site, originating in the 17th century. Remnants of Building II (Trenches 7-8) could be dated to the late 18th/early 19th century. Building III (Trench 4) dated from the late 19th century. Trench 9 revealed a small group of 19th-century masonry features including two large stone steps which survived until the demolition of buildings in recent times.

Building I

Building I marks the first major construction development on the site. It consisted of a substantial brick structure, measuring c. 9.1 m east-west and c. 9 m north-south, with walls surviving to a height of 6.67m OD. An internal wall running north-south suggests a building with a ground plan divided into two rooms (Fig. 3). Over the course of three hundred years this building underwent many changes.

The excavated remains of the building comprised the east, south and west walls with masonry features including doorways and windows. The north wall lay outside the investigated area; however the

9. G. Potter *op. cit.* fn 5.

10. G. Potter *op. cit.* fn 5.

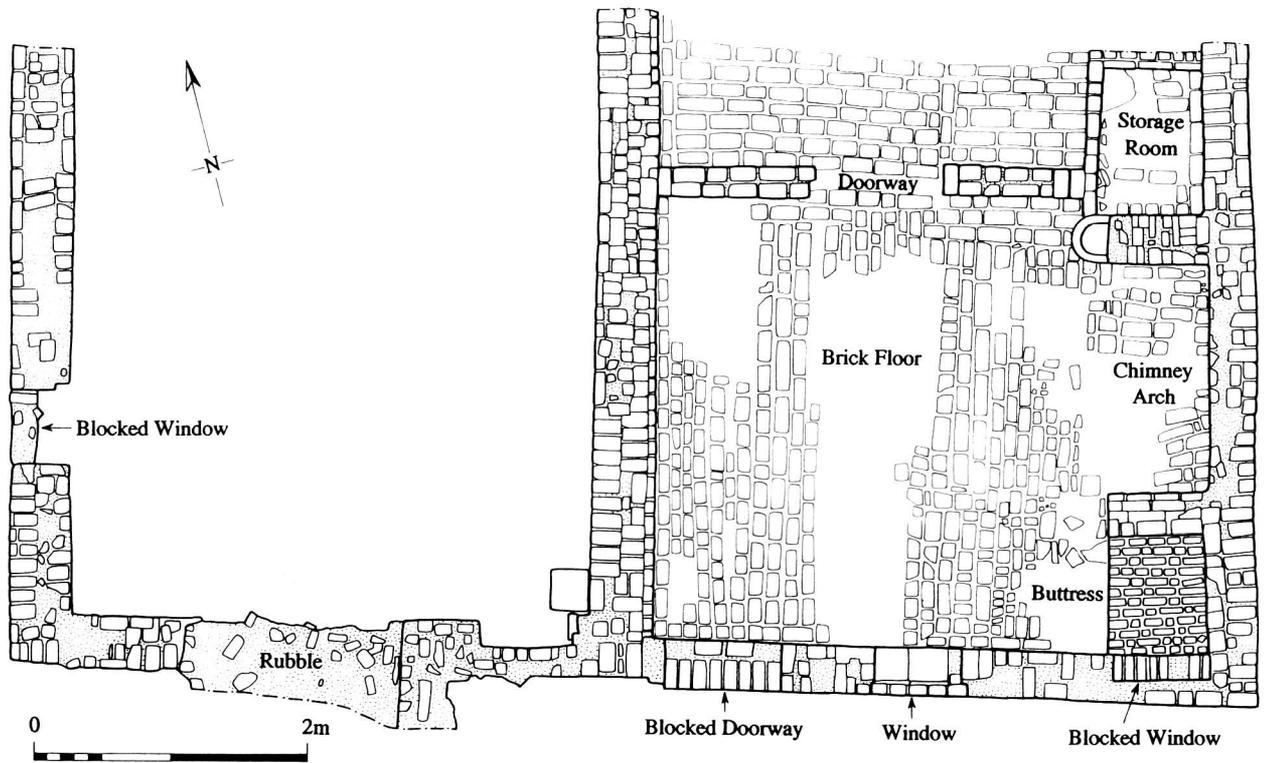


Fig. 4: Building I -- plan of brick cellar and brick floor

building here almost certainly fronted onto Old Bridge Street. Part of the original brick floor was *in situ* (Fig. 4). On the eastern wall an archway construction appears to have been part of the original 17th-century fireplace. The initial use of these rooms is likely to have been as a small ground-floor parlour (Fig. 5).

18th-century changes to the eastern room included the construction of a small storage room to the north of the fireplace and a bench to the south. The insertion of water drainage holes in the south wall suggest that the room at this time served as a kitchen or wash room (Fig. 6).

During the 19th century a buttress was built against the south side of the fireplace. The need to support the fireplace was probably caused by alterations higher up in the building, creating an increased load on the arch (Fig. 7, 8). Further modifications of the building were the bricking-up of the doorway and windows and the insertion of a new, small window. These changes were associated with a change of the originally free-standing structure to its use as a basement; at this time the ground level had been raised by *c.* 1.3 m (Fig. 8). The backfill and cartographic evidence¹¹ suggest that the building

was demolished in the second half of the 20th century.

Building I has a ground plan that conforms to a vernacular building constructed in the late 17th century. This is suggested by the absence both of the traditional asymmetrical plan, with a hall and a solar at either end of the hall, still used among the gentry in the early 17th century, and the classical symmetrical form which was fashionable in the late 17th century. Timber framing would have been acceptable in a house of gentry status early in the century. The extensive use of brickwork in this house, however, confirms a later 17th century date. The size of the building indicates that it would have required a double-ridged roof, a type pioneered among the gentry in the early 1700s with the 'double pile' plan.¹²

The two rooms revealed by the excavations would have provided an awkward ground floor plan, as the eastern room, which is likely to have been the kitchen, takes up most of the space, with a narrower western parlour. It is likely that Old Bridge Street, which the building would have fronted onto, was elevated where it approached the bridge; the first floor would therefore have acted as a

11. OS map.

12. A. Quiney *The Traditional Buildings of England* (1990) 115-17.

raised ground floor with the lower ground floor functioning as a basement.

The arrangement of a half-sunken basement containing the kitchen and other service rooms with the main living accommodation on the upper stories, although present in many earlier houses, was established as the fashion in England around 1650 by Sir Roger Pratt at Coleshill.¹³ By the late 17th century it was much copied, becoming an almost compulsory feature of the 18th-century English Palladian classicism. The subsequent accentuation in Building I of the basement, by the raising of the ground level around it, therefore responded not only to a need to minimise flooding but also to the pressures of fashion.

Building II

Trenches 7 and 8 showed a sequence of demolition and levelling before the construction of a late-18th- or early-19th-century building. The evidence suggests that earlier brick-built structures stood on the far eastern side of the site prior to the construction of Building II (Fig. 3).

Building III

The earliest structural evidence located in Trench 4 consisted of a small, flimsy east-west wall which dated from the late 19th century. The ground level had been raised by c. 0.65 m prior to the next phase of construction of which only a small north-south wall remained. After a phase of demolition and deliberate levelling, two substantial parallel north-south aligned walls were constructed on concrete foundations, approximately 0.8 m wide and 0.5 m deep (Building III) (Fig. 3). The type of brick and the use of concrete date the building to the 20th

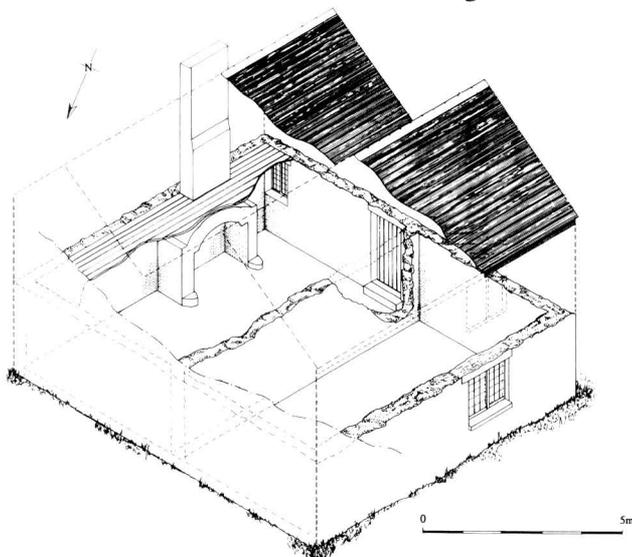


Fig. 5: reconstruction of Building I, late 17th century

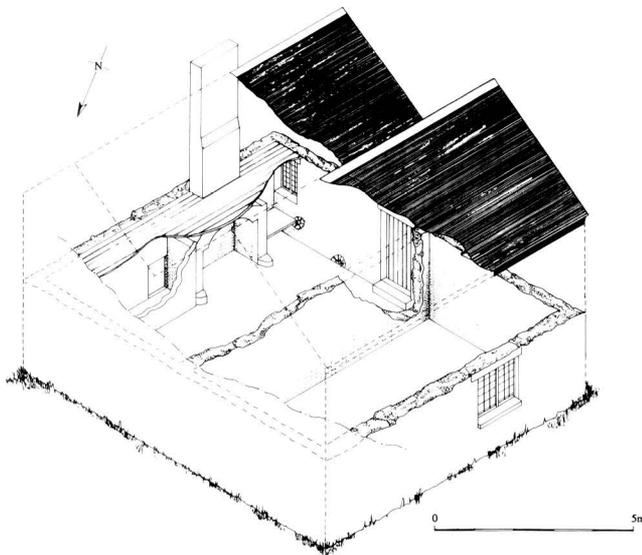


Fig. 6: reconstruction of Building I, 18th century

century. Examination of the historical maps suggests that these remains relate to the *White Hart Inn*.

Conclusions

The area preferred for settlement in the medieval period was clearly to the west, as indicated in the excavations along the High Street frontage. It is thought that the historic ground surface sloped down from west to east towards the Thames. The demonstrated lack of medieval survival over the eastern part of the site indicates that this area was not used for habitation during the medieval period. This lower-lying ground is likely to have been prone to flooding, rendering it less attractive for construction purposes.

The archaeological evidence suggests the eastern part of the site, along Old Bridge Street, was marginal land up to the late 15th or early 16th century when industrial activities, possibly related to a smithy, took place. The dating of some of the earlier levels was difficult because of the lack of finds, suggesting the area remained open ground up to the construction, in the 17th century, of the building found in Trenches 3 and 5.

In the 17th century, the layout of Building I indicates a raised road level to its front and a first floor that functioned as a ground floor, an effective adaptation of the building to the local ground configuration. This is further reflected in the structural changes which took place during the 200 to 250 years of its use. Substantial modifica-

13. M. Girouard *Life in the English Country House* (1978) 122.



Fig. 7: Building I – note brick floor, arch and supporting buttress

tions to the upper floors are suggested by the insertion of a buttress to support the chimney arch at its base to bear increased loading. The focus of the building on the road and the bridge make it likely that the activities of its occupants were related to the traffic making its way past the house.

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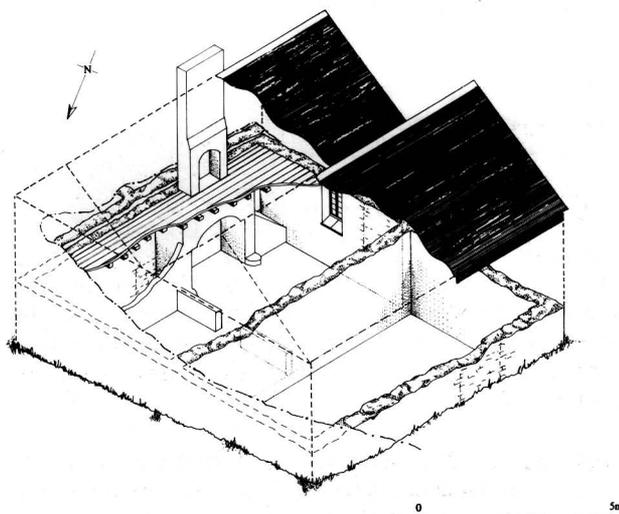


Fig. 8: reconstruction of Building I, 19th century