Excavation at The Manor House, Pirbright, 1996–7

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with contributions by
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Archaeological assessment preceding the construction of a swimming pool on the eastern side of The Manor House, Pirbright, anticipated the discovery of evidence relating to the medieval and subsequent phases of structural development at the site. Some features of this period were identified, but their relationship to the documented former east wing of The Manor House remains uncertain. The work was rewarded by the discovery of a small quantity of Neolithic flintwork together with features of Bronze Age and Iron Age origin. The features discovered consist of pits, postholes and ditches, and are of particular interest as comparable remains of this period have not previously been discovered in the vicinity.

Introduction

A proposal to construct a new wing, intended to house a swimming pool, on the eastern side of The Manor House, Pirbright (fig 1; SU 9426 5562) aroused archaeological interest. The potential of the site was outlined in a report prepared by the Surrey County Archaeological Unit (SCAU), and this indicated that evidence of the documented former east wing of the building might be destroyed by the redevelopment (Poulton 1996). The report also suggested that the house was situated on ground that might have been raised by piling the spoil produced when the moat was constructed; the possibility of pre-moat remains, perhaps associated with the origin of The Manor House, was also raised.

As a result of this proposal, SCAU carried out a field evaluation of the site between 13 and 18 June 1996. This led to the discovery of features of late medieval and post-medieval date and, more interestingly perhaps, to the identification of features thought to be of Iron Age and/or early Roman date (Hayman 1996). The evaluation enabled recommendations to be made for the complete archaeological excavation of the threatened area prior to the commencement of the redevelopment. This duly took place between 11 and 19 February 1997. The results of the evaluation have been incorporated into this report, but the features examined in its two trial trenches can be recognised on figures 3 and 4, as having numbers below 100. The small strip of ground lying between the excavation and the house (fig 2) was included within the proposed redevelopment area, but this could not be examined as this might have threatened the structural stability of the building.

The finds archive is in the possession of Fiona Lees, The Manor House, Pirbright, while all other archival materials are held by the Surrey County Archaeological Unit, Surrey History Centre, Woking.

Methodology and site clearance (figs 2–4)

The trial trenches of the evaluation were opened using a JCB mechanical excavator. This revealed features of late medieval and post-medieval date beneath the topsoil, while the Iron Age features were discovered beneath a subsoil deposit which was clearly cut by those of later date. The area for full excavation was cleared of topsoil using a tracked mechanical excavator. Part of the underlying subsoil layer (101) at the northern end of the site was also removed by this machine, but elsewhere this was excavated by hand. The topsoil (100) was found to be between 0.40 and 0.60m thick and was largely undifferentiated throughout, though in places the lowest 0.10m appeared slightly paler in colour. Occasional fragments of pottery, brick and tile of post-medieval and later date were recovered from this layer.
Fig 1 Pirbright Manor: location of the site. (The map of Iron Age Surrey is after Poulton 2004, fig 4.1). © Crown copyright Ordnance Survey. All rights reserved.
Contexts 11 and 12, both relatively modern rainwater drains (the former consisting of sections of salt-glazed pipe, and the latter constructed using large U-shaped ‘tiles’), were removed within the topsoil. They have been omitted from the site plans for ease of illustration, but can be seen in section 1 (figs 3 and 5). The site was divided into northern and southern areas by a concrete encased sewer pipe, 15, which was still in use at the time of the excavation, leading to a septic tank to the east of the site. Running almost parallel to the northern side of this was a large brick-built sewer in a substantial trench (109). This was sampled during the evaluation (20 and 58) and revealed a gently curving course of ‘frogged’ bricks of 19th or 20th century date. No excavation could take place beneath 15 and no further excavation of 109 was attempted as a trench of this depth would have destroyed all ancient deposits in its path (fig 5, section 1). Between the time of the evaluation and the full excavation, a large machine-cut pit was dug by the developers to allow the inspection of the site geology. This pit, 110, thought to have been c 3.5m deep, was not re-excavated.

Trial trench 2 was found to follow more or less the same course as an ancient feature, ditch 67, along most of its length. This was unfortunate because 67 occupied much of the width of the trench, and it resulted in the over-machining of the trench by approximately 0.15m before the significance of the feature was realised. The over-machining also affected both feature 62 and ditch 149 (which was not recognised at the time). During the machining for the main excavation, trial trench 2 became largely infilled as a result of the activities of the mechanical excavator. In order to save time and the unnecessary removal of spoil by hand, the trench was re-machined at this time, but this led to a further 0.05–0.20m being lost from the base of the trench (most of this depth being scooped out from the northern end adjacent to sewer pipe 15). The projected widths and depths of the features involved are recorded in the text below and are indicated on the accompanying illustrations.

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**Fig 2** Pirbright Manor: plan showing the area covered by the excavation and the location of the evaluation trenches.
Stage 1 results (fig 3)

The removal of the topsoil revealed a number of features that cut the subsoil layer 101. These were either wholly excavated or were sampled (51, 52 and 104 were not bottomed) to allow finds that would date them to be recovered. The majority of these features (13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 24, 51, 52, 59, 60, 63, 70, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 111, 112, 115, 116, 117, 118, 142, 143 and 144) contained dark fills similar to or identical with the topsoil, but five (22, 61, 66, 113 and 114) produced lighter fills that were clearly sealed by the topsoil. Most of these features were either pits or postholes, although 66 was a brick-built feature of uncertain function (see below), 70 was a short shallow linear feature, and 108 contained a modern metal (probably water) pipe.

Most of the features that contained fills of dark soil produced occasional finds, usually fragments of medieval or later roof tile and sometimes of pottery, glass or bone. The majority of the features that produced datable finds were found to be of post-medieval or later date, and there is little doubt that those which did not produce diagnostic material, or produced only material of earlier origin, are contemporary with these. One noteworthy find recovered from pit 104 was part of a small plate which bore the printed legends ‘Sloth Like Rust Consumes Fast’ and ‘God Helps Them That Help Themselves’, and was embossed around the rim with the letters of the alphabet – no doubt these were important lessons to be learned by the privileged Victorian child! No relationships were established between these features where they were intercutting (for example between 104 and 105) because of the undifferentiated nature of the fills encountered. As these features are not considered to be of particular archaeological interest they are not discussed in detail here, though although a list giving their type, size and the finds recovered is produced as an Appendix to the main report (see Endnote).

Pit 22 was partially examined during the evaluation but was not bottomed at this time because it was found to be too deep and the sides of the trench were potentially unstable. This work showed the feature to contain various layers of fill, some of which were slump deposits (22A–22H) from the natural sand through which it was cut. It was the intention at the time that the original east-facing section would be completed later, but the digging of the developer’s inspection pit (110) meant that this could not be done. In order to complete the sampling of this feature a west-facing section was established and excavated, and the base of the feature was reached. Only layers A, G and H were recognised here, although some additional slump deposits were observed within layer H. The wet ground was less favourable for excavation at this time and the bottom 0.50m of the feature had to be dug and recorded quickly before the section collapsed. Ground water seeped into the lowest part of the feature during the final stages of its excavation. The results of the evaluation and of the later work have been combined in section 1 (fig 5).

Pit 22 produced a variety of finds consisting of pottery sherds, frequent fragments of medieval or later roof tile, and several items of metalwork. Twenty-one sherds of pottery were recovered from the four main deposits excavated, 22A, 22B, 22D and 22H, and the majority of these were whitewares of 16th century date. One redware sherd of 16th or 17th century date was discovered from the uppermost fill deposit 22A, and a whiteware sherd of late 15th or early 16th century date was recovered, together with an Iron Age sherd, from 22H. It seems most likely that this feature is of 16th century origin. The purpose of the pit is uncertain. Its large size (c. 2.25m across x 1.30m deep) and contents suggest that it is unlikely to have been dug simply to be used as a rubbish pit (layer 22D was typical of a domestic rubbish deposit, but this probably reflects a change of use later in the life of the feature), and the absence of a lining would have prevented it from being ‘open’ for any great length of time as the sides would surely have collapsed. One possible function for this feature is that it was used to extract sand for building purposes.

Feature 61 (fig 3) measured approximately 0.60m across x 0.32m deep and was either a small pit, or, perhaps more likely, a large posthole. It contained a fill of mottled grey sandy
Fig 3 Pirbright Manor: features discovered during Stage 1 of the excavation. The toned features are those of medieval or early post-medieval rather than later date.
soil, which was only marginally darker in colour than layer 101 through which it was cut. The fill produced two pieces of struck flint and three pieces of calcined flint that suggest the feature is of prehistoric date. However, this cannot be the case, as this feature was found directly above the Iron Age ditch 67 (fig 4), which elsewhere was sealed by 101. Feature 61 cut through the upper part of 67, which probably contributed to the pale colour of its fill and may have been the source of the finds recovered. This said, however, feature 61 had nothing in common with any of the features found to be of post-medieval or later date, so there can be little doubt that it pre-dates the 17th century when what are otherwise the earliest of these features might have been dug.

The presence of a large block of stone and some brick rubble in the eastern side of trench 2 led to the trench being extended eastwards and resulted in the discovery of feature 66. The upper fill of this feature, layer 64, was sealed by the topsoil and consisted of dark brown sandy soil, which produced pottery (including one almost complete vessel with a pale green internal glaze) of late 16th and/or 17th century date, fragments of brick and tile, large pieces of building stone, bone, a lead window came with glass, and a copper-alloy pin. The removal of this fill revealed a mortared brick wall almost immediately on the southern side, and similar walling to the north and east lower down. The western wall, assumed to exist beyond the section line indicated on figure 3, was not revealed at this stage, but was later partially exposed during the excavation of segment 136 of ditch 67 which it cut. Below layer 64 the fill changed to a pale grey/brown sandy soil (65); this appeared at the same level as the northern and eastern walls. Layer 65 produced one sherd of 13th or 14th century pottery and several fragments of roof tile; its removal revealed that the feature had a floor of roof tiles laid flat on top of natural sand. This floor was soon covered by rising ground water. Initially it was thought possible that the brick-lined pit might have been a garderobe, but it is probably too small to have served this function. Other suggestions for its possible usage are not forthcoming at present, but it is worth noting that the feature lies at right angles to the building and it is possible that it was once positioned adjacent to either the inside or outside of the eastern wall of the documented wing (Poulton 1996). The best indication of the date of the feature is provided by the bricks used in its construction, which are most probably of late medieval or early post-medieval (Tudor) origin; the sherd recovered from layer 65 must have been residual. Layer 64 represents the final infilling of the feature in the 17th century and was probably associated with the robbing of bricks from the northern and eastern walls. The cut edge shown on plan on the outer side of these walls was entirely filled by layer 64.

The two sub-rectangular pits 113 and 114 were found side by side just to the west of pit 22 and they extended beyond the limits of the excavation. Both contained homogeneous fills of mid–dark grey/brown sandy soil with occasional flecks of charcoal, and both measured approximately 1.1m wide, although 113 was shallower than 114, being 0.50m deep, while the latter was 0.82m deep (fig 5, section 2). Each feature produced frequent fragments of medieval or post-medieval roof tile and occasional pieces of bone, and 114 produced a single (large) sherd of late 15th or early 16th century pottery, which probably dates both features.

**Stage 2 results** (fig 4)

On completion of the work described above, the silvery grey/grey/brown sandy subsoil layer 101 was removed to reveal various features sealed beneath it that cut natural yellow/white sand (fig 4). Context 101 measured between 0.10 and 0.35m deep and its removal produced quite frequent pieces of calcined flint (often an indicator of primitive cooking practices), several pieces of struck flint, occasional fragments of medieval or post-medieval roof tile, and two sherds of pottery. One of the sherds was probably of late 15th or early 16th century date while the other was of earlier medieval date. The sherds of pottery and most of the fragments of tile were recovered from the top 0.15m of this layer (where it was deeper than this) while the struck and calcined flint occurred throughout.
Fig 4 Pirbright Manor: features discovered during Stage 2 of the excavation.
22A  Dark grey/brown soil flecked with charcoal & patches of yellow sand
22B  Yellow sand with some dark grey soil
22C  Patch of mortar in sandy soil
22D  Dark grey/black sandy soil with frequent flecks of charcoal
22E  Grey sand similar to 25
22F  Orange/yellow sand (slump deposit)
22G  Layer of greensand (slump deposit)
22H  Mid-brown sandy soil with lenses of slumped sand

Fig 5  Pirbright Manor: a selection of sections from the excavation.
Feature 26 was a stakehole measuring approximately 0.15m in diameter x 0.55m deep. It produced no finds, but it was found beneath the position later occupied by feature 13, and stratigraphically was sealed by layer 101, indicating that it was of earlier origin. Features 62, 130 and 131 were all substantial postholes located at the southern end of the site. Feature 62 measured c.0.55m across x 0.33m deep (an additional 0.10–0.15m of depth was lost during the machining of trial trench 2) and contained a fill of dark grey sandy soil. The excavation of this feature produced a flint core and several pieces of calcined flint; regrettably these finds were later lost. Features 130 and 131 both contained fills of medium grey sandy soil, but neither produced any finds. These features were slightly smaller in diameter than 62 and were 0.37 and 0.40m deep respectively.

Features 121, 128 and 140 were most probably pits of some kind although their functions are not known. Feature 121 was cut by feature 112 (fig 3) and ditch segment 120, and contained an undifferentiated fill of pale grey, almost white, sand that produced two pieces of struck flint and several pieces of calcined flint. Its shape was somewhat irregular and its base sloped downwards from the east, where it was 0.27m deep, to the west, where it was c.0.48m deep; this irregularity suggested that 121 might have been an ancient tree clearance feature. Feature 128 was a much larger feature than 121, measuring up to 2.10m across at the widest point excavated, by 0.60m deep, and was also irregularly shaped; it was cut by sewer trench 109. The main fill of this feature was a pale silvery sand. Below this, at the southern end, the lower fill had a greenish tint, though this was simply because there were bands of green sand within the natural deposit through which the feature was cut. The uppermost 0.10–0.15m of the feature was slightly browner in colour due to material permeating downwards from layer 101 (fig 5, section 7). Several pieces of struck flint and five sherds of pottery were recovered from this feature, and pieces of calcined flint were observed throughout the fill though these were more frequent towards the north. Four of the sherds are of Bronze Age date, while the fifth, an abraded scrap from the surface of the fill, which is not thought to belong to the feature, was of Iron Age origin. Feature 140 measured approximately 1.1m across x 0.25m deep and contained a fill of mid-grey sandy soil. This feature produced no finds.

The remaining features discovered were all ditches. The removal of layer 101 from the northern half of the site revealed a wide area of grey-coloured fill (119), part of which was assumed to be a continuation of 67 found in trial trench 2, although the width of 119 indicated that more than one feature was present here; 119 was clearly cut by sewer trench 109. Three trenches were excavated to sample 119; a fourth would have been desirable but was prevented by the presence of inspection pit 110. The northernmost of these trenches revealed the presence of four converging ditch cuts, 145–148, the excavated segments of which were numbered 132–135. The fill of the deepest of these, 132, was divided into two layers: 132A, which was mid-grey in colour, and 132B, which was pale green/grey in colour and was slightly silty in texture. Layer 132 appeared to have been cut by 133 which had a similar fill to 132A, (a relationship suggested by a line of iron-pan common to the two), and, to the west, 134 was clearly cut by the mid–dark grey fill of 135; no relationship was established between 133 and 134, the fills of which were similar (fig 5, section 6). Ditch cut 147 (134) appeared to terminate close to the northern edge of the site, but the other ditch cuts all continued beyond this. Three sherds of Iron Age pottery were recovered from 132 (two from 132B), two sherds of Late Iron Age pottery were recovered from 133, and a further sherd of Iron Age pottery was recovered from 135.

Just to the south of this, the same four ditch cuts were encountered again in a second trench where segments 124–127 were excavated (fig 4). The fills here were similar to those previously described, although segment 127 was found to contain a single deposit of fill in contrast to its counterpart 132. The relationship between ditch cuts 145 and 146 was confirmed as segment 126 cut 127, and 125 appeared to cut 126; no relationship was observed between 124 and 125 (fig 5, section 4). Pieces of calcined flint were present in each of the segments excavated, but beyond this the only finds encountered were a piece of struck flint in 125, and a further piece of struck flint and a small abraded sherd of Iron Age pottery in 127. Just
to the south of 127 a partial segment, 120, was excavated to examine the relationship between ditch cut 145 and feature 121. The fill of 120 was similar to that of 127 and clearly cut 121; it produced one sherd of Iron Age pottery.

In the southernmost trench through 119 the situation was less clear. Here the fill was an homogeneous mid-grey sandy soil (122). Once this had been removed variations in the basal profile were distinguished by the letters A–C (fig 5, section 3) of which A and B belong to ditch cuts 145 and 146 (though not necessarily in respective order as these features may well have crossed over by this point) and C belongs to ditch cuts 147 and 148. Occasional pieces of struck and calcined flint were present throughout the fill of 122, and two sherds of Late Iron Age pottery were recovered from the top 0.10–0.15m of the central area and could have been associated with any of the ditch cuts. Three further sherds of similarly dated pottery were also recovered from the surface of 119.

Given the course of the four ditch cuts through the northern half of the site and that the profiles of 145 and 146 were V-shaped, with a narrow flat base, while those of 147 and 148 were U-shaped, there seems little doubt that ditch 67 to the south was a continuation of 145 or 146; no direct link could be made between 67 and either of these contexts owing to the intrusion of sewer trench 109, so this ditch has therefore retained its original nomenclature. The course and projected width of the feature, allowing for the over-machining noted above, suggests that it is more likely to be a part of 145.

Ditch 67 was sampled by the excavation of five segments: 68, 71, 136, 137 and 139. The terminal segment, 136, was cut by feature 66 (fig 3). Segments 68 and 71 both contained undifferentiated fills of mid-grey sand, while the fills of 136, 137 and 139 were basically similar, although that of 136 was slightly darker towards the base, and the bottom c 0.10m of 137 (137B) and 139 (139B) was green/grey in colour. Allowing for the over-machining of trial trench 2, this feature probably measured around 1.40m in width x 0.65m in depth (comparable with 145). Pieces of calcined flint were recovered from each of the segments excavated. Features 68, 71 and 137 produced several pieces of struck flint, and 68, 71 and 139 each produced one or two sherds of Iron Age pottery. The sherd from 139, a complete vessel base, was recovered from the basal fill of the feature and seems likely to be a secure indicator of its date. There was a suggestion in section (a minor variation in colour that might have been misleading) that 139 could have cut 141 (fig 5, section 5), but this seems unlikely to be correct if 141 were part of 146 and 67 were the same as 145, as this would be contrary to the relationships noted further to the north.

Purely on the evidence provided by the projection of their courses it is possible to suggest tentatively that 145 and 146 did cross each other within 122, so that 122A probably belongs to 146 and 122B to 145. If so, 72, a slither of fill excavated between 15 and 58, might belong to 146, and 141 might be its terminal. Layer 72 produced three sherds of Iron Age pottery, a struck flint scraper, and several pieces of calcined flint. When first examined in trial trench 2, 141 was thought to have been two small pits, 73 and 74 (Hayman 1996), but these were difficult to excavate because of the presence of sewer pipe 15 and pit 51. Considering the presence of 72 and the evidence provided by the full excavation of the site, this earlier suggestion now seems unlikely. Alternatively, it is possible that 73 was the terminal of 146 and 74 was an unconnected small pit. Feature 73 produced two sherds of Late Iron Age pottery, 74 produced two sherds of Late Iron Age pottery, one sherd of Bronze Age pottery, and three pieces of struck flint, and 141 produced one sherd of Late Iron Age pottery. One of the sherds from 73 joined one of those from 74, which might also indicate that both were part of a single feature.

Ditch 149 was discovered on the western side of 67, but as it had been partially removed by the machining of trial trench 2 the relationship of 149 to 67 could not be established. Excavation of the terminal segment 129 and of the remaining fill of 138 indicated that this feature measured approximately 0.65m wide and up to 0.38m deep: in this respect it is most comparable with 147 to the north. Segment 129 contained an homogeneous fill of pale to mid-grey sandy soil, while the upper fill of 138 (138A) was slightly browner in colour owing
to the presence of material that had permeated through the soil from layer 101; its lower fill, 138B, was similar to that of 129. A base sherd from a pottery vessel of Late Iron Age date was recovered from 129; three sherds of Late Iron Age pottery came from 138A; two sherds of Iron Age pottery were recovered from 138B, and pieces of calcined flint were present in both 138A and 138B. Assuming that 147 and 149 were part of the same cut rather than 148 (which was wider than 147 and 149 but had a similar profile to both) and 149, then the exact point at which 148 terminated is not known, though this seems likely to have been in the vicinity of 109.

**Pottery, by Phil Jones**

**INTRODUCTION**

One hundred and thirty-two sherds (3.8kg) of pottery were recovered. These include six of probable Middle–Late Bronze Age date; at least one belonging to the transitional Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age; 33 or fewer of late pre-Roman Iron Age date; three belonging to the late 11th or 12th centuries; one of 13th or 14th century date; eighteen that belong to the late 15th or early 16th centuries, and the remainder of post-medieval date.

The pottery is described in chronological order and tables 1 and 2 (see Endnote) list the number of sherds and their weight for each layer and cut feature that was sampled. All the featured sherds of prehistoric pottery have been drawn (fig 6, nos 1–12), as have a select few of post-medieval date (fig 6, nos 13–17). Each drawing has a printed figure number and its provenance, fabric and surface treatment is also provided (CALC – calcined flint, Q – quartz sand, B – burnished, EXT – external, INT – internal, DEC – decoration). The numbers outside the rims of pots 7 and 8 indicate their diameters, and OU above the rim of pot 1 implies that its orientation is uncertain.

**Bronze Age**

The Bronze Age pottery consisted of six sherds (45g), all of a fabric tempered only with frequent and relatively large crushed fragments of calcined flint (CALC), and all fairly thick in section (between 10 and 12mm). Four sherds from pit 128 (33g) were the only ones from that feature except for a grog-tempered sherd in a higher part of its fill. Single small sherds were also recovered from Late Iron Age contexts 74 and 119, where they were probably residual, but not certainly so. Late Iron Age calcined flint-gritted pottery has been recognised at other sites in north-west Surrey (Thorpe Lea Nurseries (Jones 1998a) and Tongham Nurseries (Jones in prep)), but the thickness of these two sherds suggests a similar date to those from pit 128.

The associations of the sherds in pit 128 are with a few calcined flints and a few struck flint flakes, so there are no reasons to suppose them to be other than domestic rubbish, even though the purpose of digging the feature remains unclear.

Occupation sites of Bronze Age date are almost unknown from the Tertiary heathland of north-west Surrey, whereas funerary monuments and cemeteries are, if anything, over-represented. The only other possible settlements include one in a tributary valley of the Bourne Stream at Chobham Park Farm, where some surviving sherds from a larger collection that has since been dispersed look more like settlement debris than broken-up burial urns (Gardner 1924, 16–17 and pl V).

**Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age**

A finger-impressed rim sherd from a round-shouldered jar (fig 6, no 1) is the only artefact in the collection that can, with reasonable certainty, be ascribed either to the transitional ‘decorated’ phase of Barrett’s Thames Valley scheme for the chronology of Bronze Age
pottery (Barrett 1980), or to the succeeding Early Iron Age. It is tempered with coarsely comminuted fragments of grog, but so are two very similar sherds found in association with later Iron Age pottery, and thought to have been contemporary. Sherds from both Early and Late Iron Age grog-tempered traditions are probably represented in the collection, making it difficult to be certain of the date of the four other grog-tempered sherds.

No other sherds from decorated or plain-shouldered jars are in the collection, and neither are any other forms or form elements of Early and Middle Iron Age ceramics.

Late pre-Roman Iron Age

Despite the presence of only 32 sherds in the sampled collection of this period, there can be no doubt about its importance. The pottery is of 'Atrébatique' type in both fabric and form variability with: at least three beaded-rimmed jars (fig 6, nos 7, 8 and 9); a multiply cordoned jar (fig 6, no 5); burnished decoration (fig 6, nos 2, 3, 6, 7 and 10); a mixture of sand, grog and flint-tempered fabrics. All but four sherds came from the fills of the intercutting ditch series, but since the stratigraphical sequence of these remains unresolved, and as there are no discernible differences between the ceramics of each, they may be discussed as a single collection. Of the four sherds from later contexts, one was from the probable subsidence hollow over Bronze Age pit 128, one from the over-digging of pit 51, and one from the section in trench 58 that was cut into underlying ditch deposits. Only one sherd, from pit 22, was from any later context, including those of the subsoil 101.

Six of the sherds contain calcined flint, but in only two is this as common as other inclusions. The only sherd in a fabric tempered with frequent amounts of calcined flint and grog is a beaded rim of a handmade jar with a groove at the neck and external burnish (fig 6, no 4). Calcined flint is also as common as quartz sand in another fabric represented by only one sherd: the neck and shoulder of a handmade jar with two shallow horizontal grooves and two burnished diagonal lines (fig 6, no 3). In addition there are three sherds of a fabric predominantly tempered with sub-rounded quartz sand (c. 0.4–0.8mm) and sparse crushed calcined flint, and another that is similar but with coarser sand (c. 0.6–1.2mm). Some sherds may be wheel thrown but this could not be established with certainty.

Seven body sherds are tempered with grog, in addition to the Early Iron Age rim sherd mentioned previously. All but one have no inclusions other than the comminuted angular fragments of crushed baked clay (not pot), and all appear to be from handmade vessels. One bears part of a pattern of combed burnishing and is probably from a storage jar. A single small sherd has roughly equal quantities of grog and quartz sand.

The rest of the Late Iron Age sherds are tempered only with quartz sand, except one that has a profusion of rounded grains of glauconite (c. 0.1–0.4mm), and another that has roughly equal proportions of quartz sand and burnt organic material; probably grass, chaff or dung.

One sherd, a complete handmade base plate, is in a fabric tempered only with relatively large grains (c. 0.6–1.2mm) of sub-rounded quartz sand (fig 6, no 11); two others have a finer temper of sand (c. 0.2–0.4mm). One of the latter is the wheel-thrown base of a jar or beaker in an orange/brown fabric (fig 6, no 12).

Of fourteen sherds of the standard sand-tempered fabric (c. 0.4–0.8mm), some are from wheel-thrown vessels and others from handmade types, but for most it is difficult to be certain. One fragment of a triangular beaded rim is certainly from a wheel-thrown vessel (fig 6, no 8), but two similar jars with round beaded rims may have been handmade (fig 6, nos 7 and 9). All three are burnished externally and one has part of a wavy line burnished on the shoulder (fig 6, no 7). Two other vessels represented are cordon-necked jars. One is a wheel-thrown rim sherd with an additional cordon half-way up the neck, burnished externally (fig 6, no 5); the other is from the shoulder of a larger jar with an additional cordon on the shoulder (fig 6, no 6). Between the two cordons is a burnished scheme of spirals within pairs of diagonal lines. Another decorated sherd is a handmade base with the ends of two parallel burnished lines on the lower body wall (fig 6, no 10).
Fig 6  Pirbright Manor: prehistoric pottery (nos 1–12), and post-medieval pottery (nos 13–17). Scale 1:3 (nos 1–12) and 1:4 (nos 13–17).
All the above sherds could belong to a single period of occupation in the Late pre-Roman Iron Age, and the mixture of fabric types is of great interest. The flint-tempered types are probably variants of the Late Iron Age and early Roman ceramic tradition that was more popular further west, and which includes Silchester ware and similar types (Timby 1985); the grog-tempered sherds belong to a tradition that was ubiquitous across south-east England at that time. Some of the sandy ware sherds are close in fabric, form and manufacture to some made in the earlier kilns of the Alice Holt/Farnham Roman potteries, such as bead-rimmed jars, but there are, as yet, no local parallels for the multiply cordoned jar neck, or the ‘Celtic’ decoration of the larger jar. A date in the first half of the 1st century AD is suggested, and, despite the relatively high proportion of decorated vessels represented, the assemblage seems likely to have been domestic refuse.

**Earlier medieval**

Only four sherds of pottery belong to the period between the end of the Iron Age and the late 15th or early 16th centuries. Three are of 12th or early 13th century date and one belongs to the later 13th or 14th centuries.

IQ Ironstone sandy ware (known as Early Surrey Ware in London; Jenner & Vince 1991) is represented by two sherds: one residual in a post-medieval feature, the other being the only sherd found in posthole 116. In London, supply of the ware declines in the early 12th century, but in west Surrey and north-east Hampshire – the district where it was probably made – it seems to have continued in production during the remainder of the century (Jones 1998b, 219–20).

A sherd of GBQ Grey/Brown Sandy Ware recovered from a post-medieval feature is the only representative of a ceramic tradition that was widespread across most of Surrey in the later 12th and early 13th centuries. It was replaced by whitewares (and other coarsewares) during the second half of the 13th century, and a rilled neck sherd from a green-glazed jug, the only representative of such early whitewares, dates to the late 13th or 14th centuries.

**Late medieval or early post-medieval**

At least sixteen sherds of late 15th or early 16th century pottery were positively identified, and most were from pits of that date. Almost all are of whiteware or near whiteware variants including one of WW1A ‘Coarse Border’ type, two of its less coarse variant WW1B, one of finer WW2, ten (or eleven) from fine ‘Tudor Green’ mugs, and at least two sherds of the hybrid RWW type with salmon pink core and buff surfaces. Two sherds of late medieval or Tudor early redware are also present, as is a sherd from the frilled base angle of a late 15th or early 16th century Raeren drinking mug.

The only sherd of WW2 is unglazed and was the only sherd from pit 60, and one of two sherds of WW1B, a flat base plate with internal pale green glaze, was the only sherd in pit 114. The other sherd of WW1B is unglazed and from the 16th century assemblage of pit 22, where it is accompanied by one unglazed sherd of WW1A, ten from ‘Tudor Green’ mugs, two of transitional redware, including the upper spring of the handle of a drinking jug with external green glaze and a clear-glazed neck sherd, and six of the hybrid RWW ware including one with no glaze, and five joining sherds from a drinking-jug with a cordoned funnel neck and canary yellow glaze (fig 6, no 17).

Pit 24 might also have been of early 16th century date since it contained a transitional redware sherd with internal green glaze, the rim of a small jar or beaker in a fine fabric with some grog, and an external brown self-slip (fig 6, no 15). This is more likely to be from an early post-medieval vessel than one of earlier or later date. The pit is, however, regarded as of late post-medieval date by the excavator (see above).
Layer 101 was the subsoil that sealed the Iron Age and earlier features described above, and contained: the rim of a ‘Tudor Green’ mug; a sherd from a redware plate with internal brown glaze; five sherds of RWW ware, including a base angle and two other unglazed sherds; the rim of a bowl with internal canary yellow glaze; and another glazed sherd. It is of some interest that in this layer and the topsoil layer 100, only one sherd earlier than the later medieval transitional period was recovered (a tiny 2g sherd of IQ ware in context 101). If there had been any deposition or accumulation of layers in the excavated area during the early centuries of the moated manor, then they have been removed.

Ten later post-medieval features containing potsherds cut layer 101. One provided a small but useful 17th century assemblage, most others belong to the late 18th century, and at least one is of early 19th century date.

The 17th century group is from the fills of a rectangular brick-lined and tile-floored subsurface feature, 66. Whatever its original purpose, sherds from its infills suggest that its latest use was as a repository for rubbish. Many large joining sherds from three vessels suggest that they might have been dumped at the same time, as might the other vessels represented by fewer sherds. There are many sherds of a WW3 fine whiteware (Border ware) chamber pot with a cordon on the shoulder, a flaring flange rim, and an internal pale yellow/green glaze (fig 6, no 14); several others from the upper part of a redware storage jar with internal green glaze (fig 6, no 13), and many from a squat stoneware drinking-mug with a straight collar, beaded rim, globular body and ‘machine-turned’ beaded base angle (fig 6, no 16). This last vessel has the shape, and also the style of applied decoration, of drinking-mugs known to have been made in Cologne during the 16th century, but the *poincons* of a grotesque beaded male face on the collar and of a heraldic device on the shoulder, suggests a later, possibly late 16th or early 17th century date, and not necessarily a Cologne provenance rather than one elsewhere in the Rhineland. The same infill contained three more sherds of contemporary whiteware, including the rim of a bead-rimmed bowl with internal pale green glaze, and two rilled body sherds, probably from skillets, with internal yellow/brown glaze (not illustrated). Another small sherd is from a WW1A rilled-neck jug, and is presumed to have been redeposited here.

Single sherds of 17th or 18th century redware were recovered from pits 52 and 112 and small later 18th century assemblages were recovered from pits 50, 51 and 111. These include some creamware; Staffordshire white salt-glazed stoneware, and some redware and whiteware. It should be noted that some, and perhaps all, of the redware in these 18th century groups could have been made in Pirbright, since a ‘Pot House’, an outlier of the Border Ware potting industry (Pearce 1992), was then in operation 500m further south-west along Mill Lane on the site of Pirbright Lodge (Cawthorn & Curtis 1931). A small fragment that was also found in pit 50 has embossed decoration and a plum glaze and might be from a *jardinière*.

Early 19th century sherds were included in the fills of pits 59 and 104, a sherd from a flowerpot was recovered from the pipe drain 12, and mixtures of Tudor to 19th century pottery were found in the sewer backfill 109, and the topsoil 100.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The low numbers and small size of the Bronze Age sherds belies their importance within the region, since their mere presence as probable occupation debris indicates a more intensive penetration of the heaths of north-west Surrey than was previously thought. This is true also of the collection of Late Iron Age pottery, which has an additional importance on account of the rarity of such groups within Surrey, and the absence of any Roman material.

Apart from the surprising rarity of medieval sherds, there is little else to be said about the later material except that it is possible that much of the post-medieval redware, and perhaps also, some of the whiteware and ‘red/whiteware’, might have been made in Pirbright, either
further along Mill Road or at other potteries known from documentary sources to have
operated in the parish during the 17th and 18th centuries.

**Flintwork**, by Nick Marples
A full listing of the flintwork by context may be found in the archive.

**RAW MATERIAL AND CONDITION**
Most of the flintwork recovered is mottled pale grey, with occasional darker ‘chert-like’ streaks. Cortical surfaces, which are sometimes white and unabraded, suggest a primary or secondary chalk exposure as the likely source; little river gravel appeared to be represented among the sample. Edges are generally quite sharp, with none of the material displaying any signs of rolling, indicating minimal post-depositional disturbance.

**TECHNOLOGY**
Although flakes are the predominant waste product represented, there is a significant blade component (35 and 15 unmodified examples of each respectively). The presence of a double platform blade core and a core rejuvenation flake are further indications of earlier prehistoric technology. Hard hammer percussion would appear to be the principal mode of blank removal.

**CHRONOLOGY**
Only two chronologically diagnostic pieces were noted: a flake from a polished implement (probably an axe), and a serrated flake, both of which can be attributed to the Neolithic period. Most, if not all, of the waste products and miscellaneous utilised and retouched items are likely to be of similar date.

**Other finds**, by Nicola Hembrey
Few of the remaining finds from the site are of medieval or earlier date, and these are very fragmentary and of no intrinsic interest. The post-medieval other finds are more plentiful, and more readily identifiable, but again yield little that is of particular interest. All that need be noted here is that context 64, of 17th century date, produced a triangular section of leaded window, as well as some glass fragments, and these could be of medieval origin.

**METALWORK (SF = small find no)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Item Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12A</td>
<td>Copper-alloy vessel fragment. (SF 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22A</td>
<td>Lead window came fragment, length 50mm. (SF 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22D</td>
<td>Two lead window came fragments, lengths 85mm and 90mm. (SF 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>Triangular section of leaded window; three came holding a fragment of fragile discoloured glass. (SF4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>Copper-alloy pin. (SF 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20A</td>
<td>Iron tanged knife blade fragment, possibly modern, length 105mm. (SF 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22D</td>
<td>Two iron nails, both headed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Iron nail, headed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>Iron nail, small and squat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>Iron awl/punch, round in section, broken top, length 75mm. (SF 7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
64  Iron nail, headed
51  Iron spike, bent at one end, approximate length 300mm. (SF 8)
52  Circular fragment of iron, diameter 75mm. Obviously the base of a vessel, the fragment has raised edges to indicate an original cylindrical shape. (SF 9)
106 Iron knife blade fragment, broken at base, length 80mm. (SF 10)
106 Iron wire fragment. (SF 11)

All these contexts are of late or post-medieval date and, as would be expected on such a site, all the metalwork is structural or domestic in nature, corresponding with the presence of building material.

BUILDING MATERIALS
A total of 18,871g, comprising 147 fragments, of brick and tile were collected (see archive for listing of contexts). These fragments were all of medieval/post-medieval date. The tiles are thin in section and quite lightweight, and often display peg holes, and several examples show complete widths of 160 or 180mm; these features are typical of medieval style. A brick from context 66 shows dimensions of 220 x 100 x 50mm, and 2006g weight. It is very important to note that only a sample of diagnostic pieces was collected, so the quantity listed above is not a true reflection of the amount of building material at the site.

Other building material finds include a fragment of mortar, 258g, from context 22A; a ?shaped sandstone fragment, 124g, from context 10; a small unworked greensand fragment, 27g, from context 68; and a sewer pipe fragment, 68g, from context 50.

GLASS
Apart from the fragment listed above in the metalwork section, only a few other pieces of glass were found. Context 12A contained a fragment of modern window glass, clear pale green, 18g. Context 12B contained a small, curved, also modern, vessel fragment, clear and colourless, 4g. However, the only fragments of interest were found in context 64, likely to have been deposited in the 17th century (see above, small find number 4). Two fragments of window glass were collected from this context; one small fragment is discoloured black with fairly severe surface decomposition, the other slightly larger fragment is pale green with some surface decomposition. These latter fragments are likely to be the only ones of medieval date.

SHELL
Shell fragments are often associated with medieval and early post medieval occupation. Nineteen shell fragments, totalling 196g, were recovered from several contexts: 16, 22A, 22B, 22D, 24, 51, 55, and 58. These shells were mainly oyster, although two contexts, 22B and 22D, also contained mussel shell.

BONE
Seventeen contexts contained bone fragments (see archive for full listing of contexts). Pieces varied from tiny fragments to large mandibles.

MISCELLANEOUS
Several tiny fragments of charcoal, totalling 32g, were found.

Baked clay was also present, in prehistoric contexts 128 and 141, in weight 132g. Owing to the paucity of the examples, their use on the site is unknown.
One fragment of frit/chalk was found, 63g, in context 22D. One fragment of quern of Niedermendig lava was recovered from context 20A. It has a shaped outside edge and weighs 843g.

Four clay pipe fragments were collected. Context 20A contained a stem fragment, 50mm in length and weighing 2g. Context 51 contained a 20mm-long fragment. Context 117 contained a highly decorated stem fragment, 35mm in length, and probably of late date. The only datable fragment came from context 105, the stem and part of a decorated bowl with small spur, total length 65mm, c AD1840–80.

Conclusions

At the start of the Pirbright Manor House project it seemed likely that medieval features and structural remains relating to earlier phases of its occupation might be discovered. In this respect the excavation was a disappointment as only four of the features found might be of medieval date, and one of these (61) could not be dated with certainty, while another (22) either belongs to the end of this period or is of early post-medieval date. Features 113 and 114, dated only by a single sherd of late 15th or early 16th century pottery from 114, seem likely to be of late medieval origin, however. It was also surprising that very few residual or unstratified finds of medieval date were recovered during the excavation. The absence of any trace of walls belonging to the postulated former eastern wing of the manor house suggests that its construction cannot have been based on substantial foundations, and the virtual absence of demolition material within or beneath the topsoil suggests that when this wing was demolished in the mid-18th century, the demolition was thorough and tidy. The only surviving feature that might relate directly to the former wing is the enigmatic context 66, which, as suggested above, may once have been positioned against a wall of the wing.

Another question addressed by the project was the possibility that elements of the manor house might have been built on a raised platform of soil piled from the construction of the moat. The work revealed no direct evidence of this, although the depth of topsoil encountered at the site was, in places, double the 0.30m typically found in rural locations in the county and there can be little doubt that this must have been deliberately piled. While it is possible that this additional topsoil came from the moat, the limited information available suggests that this is not the case and that this material was probably deposited relatively recently. There are four main reasons for this opinion:

1 The topsoil layer was uniformly dark, save for an area of marginally paler topsoil recorded in section (fig 5, section 1) at the southern end of trench 1. There was no buried turf horizon and no trace of redeposited natural sand as might be expected if material from the moat had been dumped prior to construction. Even if certain practices employed by Victorian gardeners (double-depth digging for example) are cited as a reason for the uniformity of this deposit, it is doubtful that this would have destroyed all traces of a redeposited layer.

2 The marginally paler topsoil mentioned is cut by the U-shaped drainage feature, 12, which is of post-medieval date and seems most likely to have been an ‘open’ channel. It seems probable that the paler material was the contemporary topsoil, and that the darker material which sealed this and the feature was dumped subsequently.

3 Assuming that reason 2 (above) is correct, section 1 shows that the paler topsoil partially overlay the 19th or 20th century sewer trench, 20, and therefore suggests that the darker topsoil above was deposited after the construction of the sewer.

4 The topsoil clearly sealed the 16th century pit 22 and fill layer 64 of pit 66, which produced pottery of 17th century date, and was indistinguishable from the fill of the majority of features examined during the first stage of the excavation work; most of these features are of 17th century or later date. Assuming that double digging or some similar activity has not obscured the evidence, the dumping of the additional soil cannot pre-
date the final infilling of pit 66, and most probably post-dates the demolition of the eastern wing (the floor level of which was presumably at a considerably lower level than the present ground surface, in keeping with floor levels still to be found within the earlier elements of the existing building).

If this line of reasoning is accepted, it seems most likely that the original house was built on an elevated natural spur of similar height to the land to the north of it. What happened to the spoil from the moat remains uncertain, though it is possible that the spreading of it might explain the origin of layer 101, up to 300mm thick, which seals the prehistoric features.

The paucity of medieval remains was compensated for by the unexpected discovery of finds (but no certain features) of Neolithic date and features of Bronze Age and Iron Age date, even though many of these could not be dated precisely. The pottery and struck flint recovered from 128 indicate that this is a Bronze Age feature, and 121 and 62 may well be contemporaneous with this (121 certainly pre-dates ditch 145) though both produced few finds and it is possible that these were present residually. Feature 62 was probably contemporary with the nearby postholes 130 and 131, which yielded no finds, but were of similar size and depth. Features 26 and 140 could not be dated, but their stratigraphic position beneath layer 101 means that they must pre-date feature 114, apparently the earliest feature to cut 101, so they are most probably of Bronze Age or Iron Age origin.

The four ditch cuts 145–148 all run in a similar north–south direction and might all represent attempts to establish and re-establish the same important boundary. It is possible that their convergence is a coincidence, but it does seem likely that the eastern and western pairs, the individual elements of which had comparable V-shaped or U-shaped profiles, were cut along the same course even if that of each pair was not the same. Finds were not recovered in great quantity from any of these features, but the evidence available suggests that all are of Late pre-Roman Iron Age date. Although these amounts are not large in absolute terms, they are greater than would be expected of, say, a remote field boundary ditch. This, together with the repeated recutting, suggests that the exposed lengths of ditch might have been part of a settlement enclosure or were located close to an area of occupation.

The evidence shows that the area was occupied at various times in the prehistoric period and especially in the Late pre-Roman Iron Age, and contemporary features probably survive beneath The Manor House and in the field to the north of it. The elevated position of the house, which would afford protection from flooding, may well have attracted the use in previous periods. The prehistoric remains discovered at Pirbright are unusual for this area (fig 1), and this gives them an importance that belies their limited quantity.

Endnote

The appendix and tables listed below are available on the Archaeology Data Service website (http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/library/syac/v94.cfm). Copies of this material will also be deposited with the Society’s library at Guildford and the Historic Environment Record, Woking. Photocopies can also be supplied by post – enquiries should be addressed to the Hon Editors, Surrey Archaeological Society, Castle Arch, Guildford GU1 3SX.

APPENDIX

Catalogue of post-medieval and modern features not discussed in the main text

TABLES

1 Number of sherds of pottery by fabric and context
2 Weight of sherds of pottery by fabric and context
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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