WOOD HALL MOATED MANOR PROJECT

Interim Report

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Background

The Wood Hall Moated Manor Project was conceived in the mid-1980s in discussions between North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) and the then Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB).

The moated site known as Wood Hall, Womersley (SE536 206), clearly marked as such on Ordnance Survey maps of the area, lay close to the southern boundary of the Gale Common Ash Disposal Facility and would be destroyed by its third stage, scheduled for the first decade of the twenty-first century. The CEGB had acquired the land known as Gale Common, plus Wood Hall Farm, in the 1960's as a waste disposal site for the ash produced by the coal-fired power stations at Eggborough and Ferrybridge.

The Wood Hall Moated Manor Project was conceived as a ten year excavation project with a further two years' funding for post-excavation. The intention was to undertake the total excavation of the site at Wood Hall ahead of its destruction; to survey and study in detail the landscape immediately surrounding it; and to put it into its national and regional context by a study of its hinterland, focused on the parish of Womersley. The Project was intended to be deeply rooted within the local community, involving local people and businesses; education and training at all levels was a major part of the project design. The participation of University Departments, particularly in the fields of research and the development of techniques, was actively encouraged from the outset.

The CEGB, later National Power plc, then Innogy, was the Project's major sponsor from its beginning in 1987/88. The results of a two-year assessment programme (under the direction of David Heslop) were so promising that the Project continued on a rolling programme, reviewed every three years, from 1990 under the direction of Vivienne Metcalf. A total of eleven years' excavation (including the assessment) was undertaken on approximately 3/5ths of the site. During this time the Project was administered by North Yorkshire County Council.

In October 1998, anticipating a shortfall in both time and funding for post-excavation work, responsibility for the Project was transferred to the Wood Hall Archaeological Trust Ltd, a charitable company, in order to facilitate fundraising and to allow more time for the preparation of the final publication.

This interim report has been published to mark the end of Innogy's sponsorship of the Wood Hall Moated Manor Project, on March 31st 2001. The date of the final publication has not been set, as the post-excavation work, particularly the specialists' reports, has not all been completed. It is hoped to issue the main publication volume as soon as possible.

Fig 1: Aerial photograph showing Cow Lane approaching Wood Hall (foreground); Stages 1 and 2 of the Gale Common Ash Disposal Site; and Eggborough Power Station (top right).

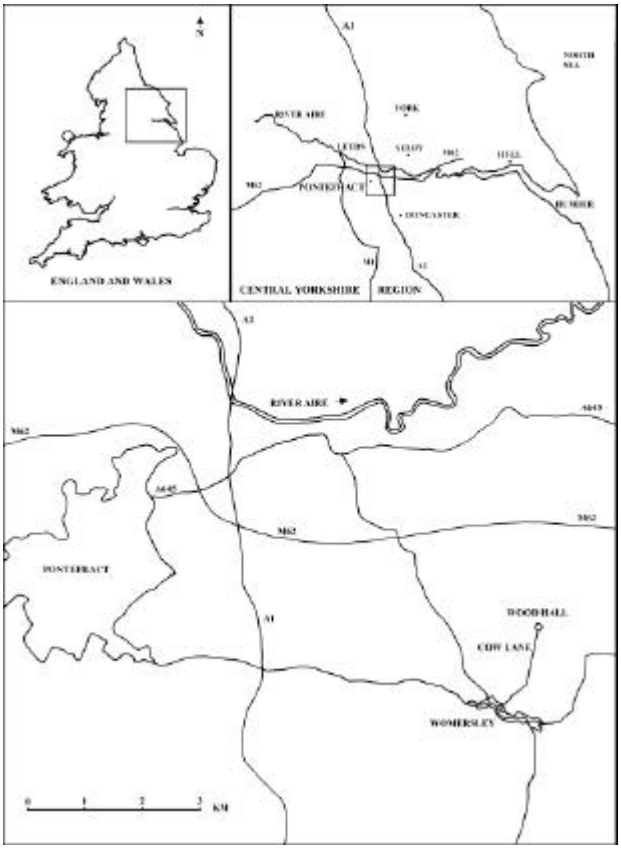


Fig 2: Wood Hall: Location Map

Site and Situation

The site now known as Wood Hall lies approximately three miles (5km) south of the River Aire and one mile (1.6km) to the north of the village of Womersley, itself situated at the foot of the Magnesian limestone escarpment which formed the shore of the post-glacial Lake Humber at this point. Wood Hall is situated on a small sand island surrounded by the sands and clays of the former bed of Lake Humber, which more or less corresponds to the present Vale of York. This has always been a rich agricultural area and continues so to the present day. Human usage of the limestone uplands dates from the Late Mesolithic, with settlements and farming known from the Iron Age and Romano-British periods.

The area immediately surrounding Wood Hall is low-lying (nowhere more than 7m above sea level) and very wet, requiring drainage to keep it suitable for agricultural use. The water table is seldom more than 2m below the present ground surface, even in the driest summer. Within living memory there were natural springs immediately to the west of the site, which fed the moat. There is no native stone, or even gravel, at Wood Hall; every fragment of stone found at the site has been imported.

Fig 3: Wood Hall, showing the moated platform under excavation, with the unploughed pasture 'annexe' to the north.

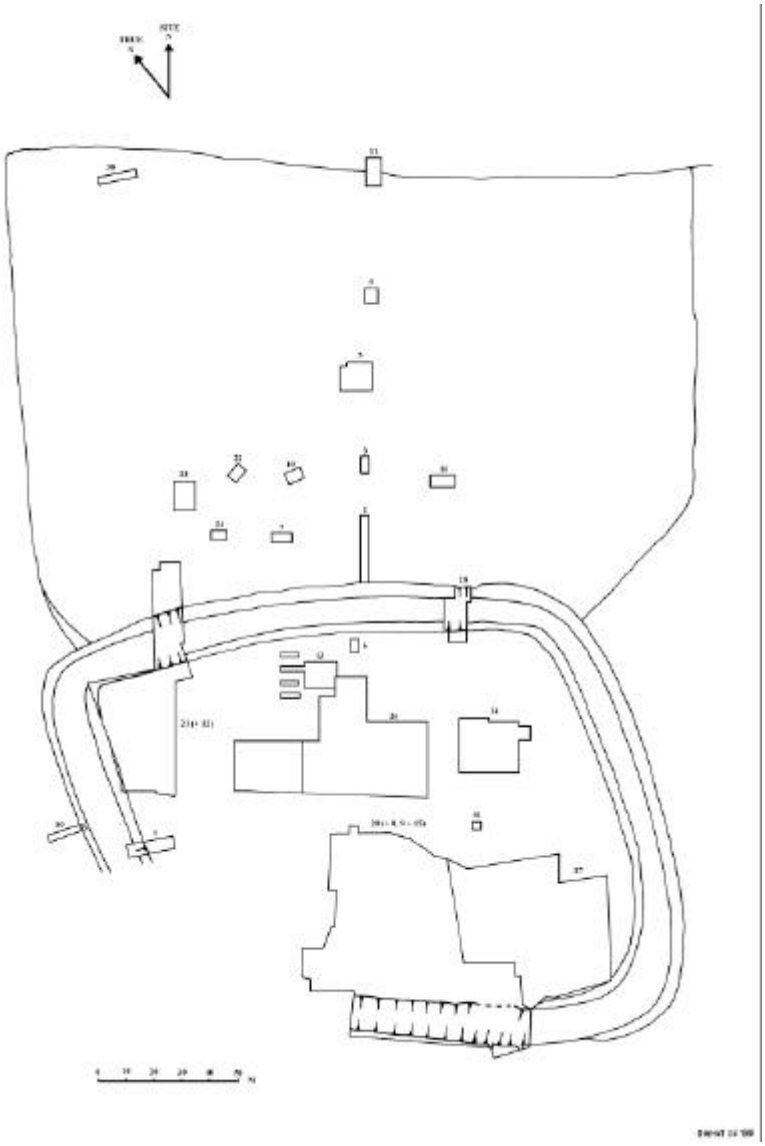


Fig 4: Wood Hall: Moat and Annexe - location of excavated areas.

Phases I and II - the Prehistoric and Romano-British Periods

The prehistoric and Romano-British populations of the area seem always to have made use of the rich resources of the former lake bed, which by c 6000BC was a seasonal wetland teeming with wildlife and food plants and well-supplied with raw materials such as willow and reeds.

Phase I - Mesolithic and Neolithic

Fig 5: Artist's impression of prehistoric hunter-gatherers at Wood Hall.
(Copyright Wakefield MDC Museums and Arts)

Finds of flint tools and waste from the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods from all areas of the excavations at Wood Hall suggest intermittent but regular use of the slightly raised, drier 'island' (which later became the moated site), with its springs of fresh water, as a base during hunting or gathering expeditions. A fragment of a Neolithic saddle quern was recovered, in association with flint artefacts, from a small excavation in the field ('annexe') immediately north of the moat. No evidence of hearths or structures was found in the excavated areas, suggesting that Wood Hall was not a major settlement site at this time.

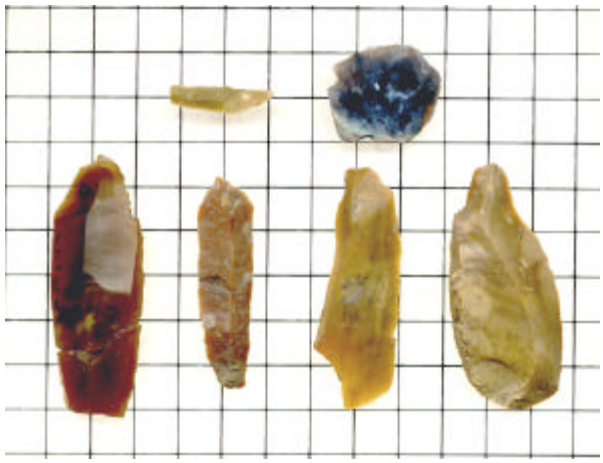


Fig 6: Prehistoric flint tools excavated at Wood Hall (1cm grid)

Phase II - Iron Age and Romano-British

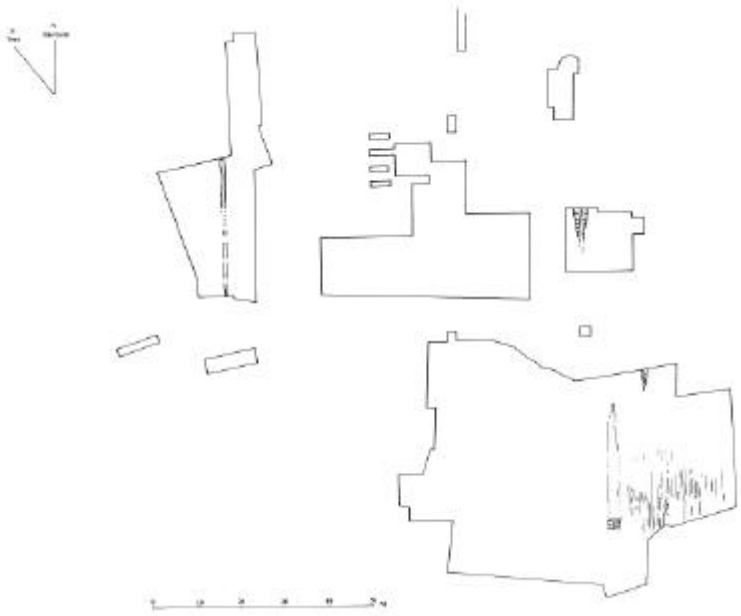


Fig 7: Iron Age and Romano-British features.

An early attempt at land management at Wood Hall in the first century BC/AD is suggested by the presence of a small drainage/boundary ditch running north/south across the western part of the site, which contained seven sherds of two small coarse crucible-shaped vessels (though with no sign of use as such) which have been dated to the first century BC/AD (*T G Manby pers comm*.).

A similarly aligned ditch, approximately 25m length surviving, lay c 100m. further east and south, forming the western boundary of a small area of ard-point 'plough' marks, covering an area approximately 17m x 16m. The longest of these ard 'grooves' was more than 15m long. The group of more than 50 ard marks can be dated to the Romano-British period on stratigraphic and artefactual grounds, and seem to represent part of the western edge of a Romano-British arable field. The field had been `ploughed' in a north-south direction with no evidence for cross-ploughing.

A small quantity of neolithic flint was present in the undisturbed pre-settlement subsoil surface of the 'field', and had also been scattered during the ploughing. A scatter of weathered Romano-British pottery sherds of 2nd and 3rd century date, found in and presumably contemporary with both the cultivated tilth and the marks themselves, is probably evidence for the manuring of the field with domestic waste sourced from a local settlement. The whole was sealed by the pre-Medieval topsoil, kitchen demolition debris and moat upcast (see below Phase IV). Though possibly Anglo-Saxon in date, a total absence of other finds from that period suggests that the Romano-British period is the most likely date for the ard-marks and their associated soils.

The nearest known Romano-British farming settlements to Wood Hall lay 2.5km away on the Magnesian limestone escarpment to the south-west (Buckland, Yorkshire Archaeological Journal 1967). In addition, aerial photographic survey has revealed square to rectangular fields surrounded by ditches on the lowlands to the north and east of Wood Hall, close to Cridling Stubbs and Fulham, which are believed to be Romano-British in date.

Fig 8: Aerial photograph showing field systems, believed to be Roman-British in date, at Fulham, less than 1 mile east of Wood Hall.
(Photograph courtesy of NYCC - ref NY SE544 DNR 9861/6 11.7.76)

It would appear therefore that there was intensive arable exploitation on parts of the upper Humberhead levels in the Roman period. Markets for the agricultural products would have been available in Doncaster (Danum), Castleford (Lagentium) and York (Eboracum), all of which were accessible by the connected deep water rivers Don, Aire and Ouse.

Fig 9: Artist's impression of the landscape at Wood Hall in Romano-British times, looking south towards the settlements on the Magnesian limestone escarpment.
(Copyright Wakefield MDC Museums and Arts)

Other finds at Wood Hall from this period include sherds of Samian, colour-coated and local (Doncaster region) coarse wares, a fragment of rim and neck from a square blue glass bottle, and a coin of Constantine dated AD 330 - 335.

Phases III to V - c 1150 to 1403

The first major settlement at the site that became known as Wood Hall was not constructed until the early medieval period. Lying approximately one mile north of the village of Womersley**,** beyond the village fields and in an area that would respond well to drainage, Wood Hall was an ideal site to choose as the focus for land clearance, farming (in this case stock rearing) and hunting.

Phase III - the Pre-moat Phase

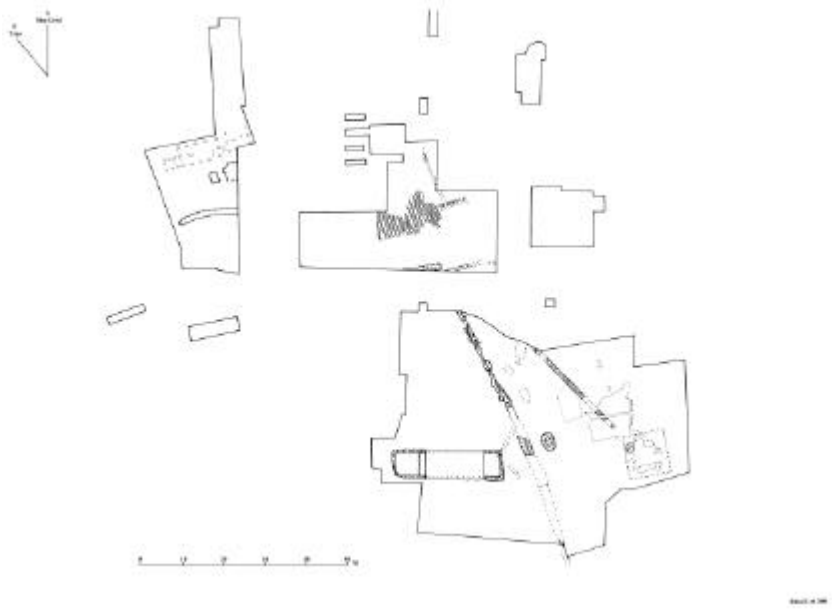


Fig 10: Wood Hall: features associated with the pre-moat settlement.

Womersley is recorded as a thriving settlement at Domesday, with a priest and a church, eighteen families, and a total of eleven ploughs. By the mid-twelfth century, held from the de Laceys at Pontefract by Otes de Tilley, the village had begun to expand its territory into the wetland to the north, draining the landscape in great curvilinear 'bites' marked by wide and deep ditches (dykes) which may represent human enhancement of earlier water courses. The flow of drainage is southwards into the Went/Don/Trent complex.

The land drainage process may have begun in the pre-Conquest period, as one of the massive drainage dykes is referred to as the 'Smalehaccedich' - another, the 'Holdepersondich', gives some indication of the scale of these features. These names come from a document of 1253, which records an agreement between the de Warennes and de Newmarches, for the maintenance of existing drains and the creation of a new one, and implies organisation and planning on a large scale between neighbouring landholders.

In the twelfth century a causewayed track, flanked on each side by deep ditches, was built, crossing two of the major dykes as it ran straight north almost a mile (I.6km) from Womersley church to the slightly raised, drier sand island that offered the first chance for settlement construction. This track, still in use and known as 'Cow Lane', seems to be the 'upgrading' of a pre-existing track leading northwards via the highest points on the seasonal wetland to a slight east-west ridge almost two miles (3.2kms) to the north. This ridge seems always to have been a natural routeway, originally between the pre-Domesday settlements of Knottingley, Whitley and Eggborough, and later the 12th - 13th century settlements at Cobcroft and Cridling.

Fig 11: The track leading from Womersley village to Wood Hall (now known as Cow Lane) was deliberately causewayed in the early medieval period.

Part of the western causeway ditch has been excavated where it crosses the site at Wood Hall. Its course was first of all marked out by digging a simple shallow trench, one spade-width wide. A number of pits were then dug close together along this line, and the barriers between them removed and the ditch profile shaped as the final action in the sequence. Ditch construction (possibly of an extension to an existing feature) was abruptly abandoned, with half-dug pits at the northern end of the feature being backfilled, in the mid-thirteenth century.

The first small settlement at Wood Hall dates to the mid/late twelfth century, and consisted of a hall, on stone footings if not constructed entirely of stone, with a timber kitchen some 60m to the south-east. This separation of kitchen and hall was deliberate, in order to eliminate the risk of a fire in the kitchen engulfing the hall as well. The buildings were linked by a well-constructed stone path, which may have been a true pentice way, an open corridor with a light roof, although no good evidence was found for more than two or three post settings along its length.

Fig 12:
Wood Hall: showing the stone 'pentice' path leading from the early kitchen (top left) to the first hall (unexcavated, bottom right). Other features are later.

Unfortunately the hall was not available for excavation. All that could be investigated was a portion of the construction trench for its north wall, which lay at the very south of Area 26. This was 15m long by 0.5m wide by 0.7mm in depth. Although the wall had been completely robbed out, and it cannot be said for certain that the trench had contained stone wall footings rather than timbers, the very dimensions of the robbed-out footings suggest a massive stone foundation capable of taking the weight of a two-storey building with walls constructed entirely of stone. Limestone roof slabs were recovered from the rob, together with a significant quantity of the flaggy Magnesian limestone quarried from the adjacent escarpment.

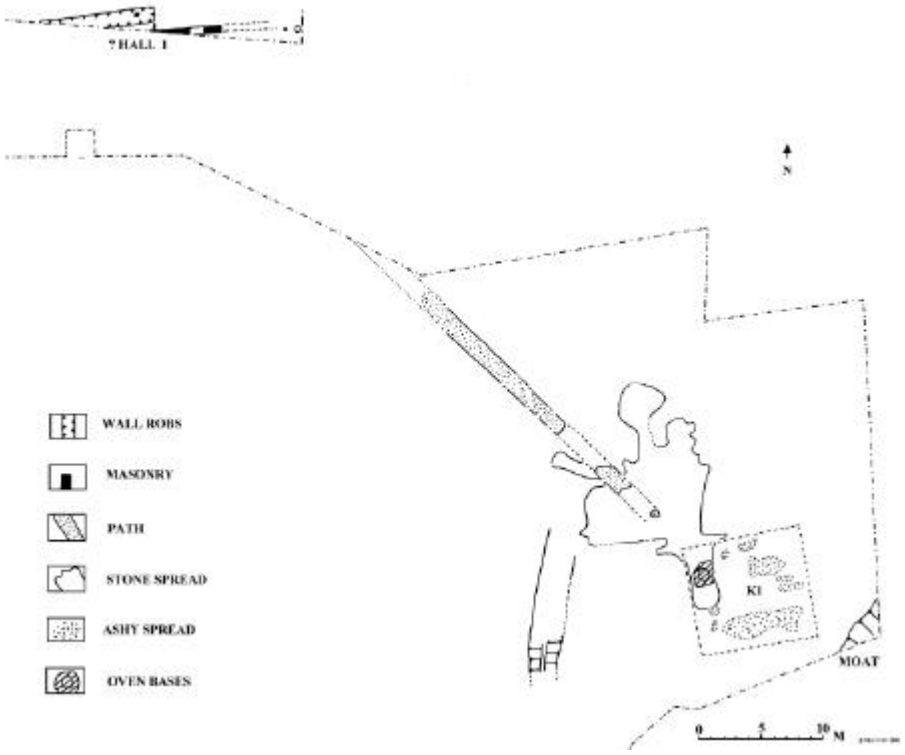


Fig 13: Plan showing the early kitchen (K1) and the stone 'pentice' path leading to the early hall.

Extrapolating from the alignment of the supposed pentice way, and taking into consideration where the hall does not appear, its location, size and internal arrangements can be postulated. The pentice way would have led directly from the kitchen to the service end of the hall, fixing the position of the pantry and buttery at the east end of the building and placing the dais and private quarters to the west. No trace of any related foundations occurred in Areas 14 or 20, leaving an area some 30m long and 6m wide, aligned northeast to southwest, in which to fit the hall, facing south with a direct view down the causewayed track.

An arable field lay immediately to the north of the hall, flanked on the west by adjacent timber buildings constructed on groundfast posts. The full ground plan of one of these ancillary timber buildings was recovered. Having a total length of approx. 15m, it consisted of a main room 10m long and 4m wide, with a small porch or store-room construction on the west end. A patch of charcoal located towards the west end of the main room suggested the position of a brazier, while three fragments of roof tile suggested a (reed?) thatched roof with a tiled smokehole.

Fig 14: Members of the excavation team standing in for the posts of the pre-moat timber building.

Contemporary with this group of buildings was a number of rubbish pits and a small east-west ditch, all of which contained pottery belonging to the Doncaster Hallgate and Pennine Gritty Ware traditions, and dating to the late twelfth/mid thirteenth century.

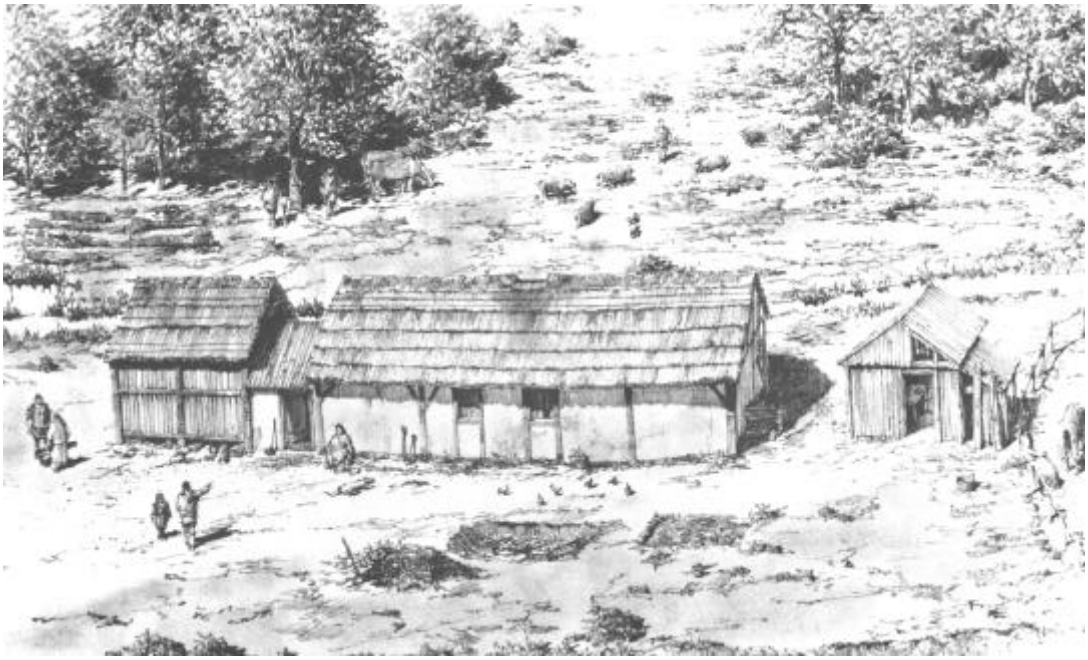


Fig 15: Artist's reconstruction of the pre-moat timber building from the south.
(Artist - Peter Scholefield)

Also belonging to the pre-moat phase was a water-filled linear feature, a pool, approx 26m long, 6m wide and 1m deep, running approx. east/west at the south of the site. It had a rich water-logged organic fill, and was replenished with water from a wooden gutter or spout at the north-east corner, part of which had broken off and fallen into the pool. This gutter may have led surplus water from the western causeway ditch into the pool. Marks caused by turbulence from a vigorous fall of water could be seen around the broken fragment.

Figs 16 (above) and 17 (right):
The linear pool belonging to the pre-moat phase.

Fig 16:
Shows the broken gutter/spout at the north-east corner.

It has been suggested that this pool may have been a 'stew-pond' for storing live fish (an important part of the medieval diet). Analysis of the fills should help to clarify this. A deposit of pottery, including the upper, still cylindrical parts of a number of broken jugs, lay against the west end of the feature. Animal bone was also recovered, including two articulated limbs, one bovine, one of deer.

Fig 18:
An almost complete jug recovered from the linear pool.

Phase IV – 1183 to 1248

It is tempting to associate the sudden change of plan apparent in the archaeological record at Wood Hall with the change of ownership which took place in 1183, when Otes de Tilley's heiress, Dionysia, was married into the de Newmarch family, who had extensive land holdings around Askern and Doncaster. However, it seems likely that the original land clearance and settlement, possibly begun under de Tilley, was completed under de Newmarch ownership. Documentary evidence suggests that it was not until the mid thirteenth century, after Adam de Newmarch had reached his majority, that some of the buildings at Wood Hall were deliberately demolished, the pits, 'stew-pond' and half-completed drainage ditch filled in, and a moat dug around the site.

Phase V – 1248 to 1403
The Moated Site: i) de Newmarch

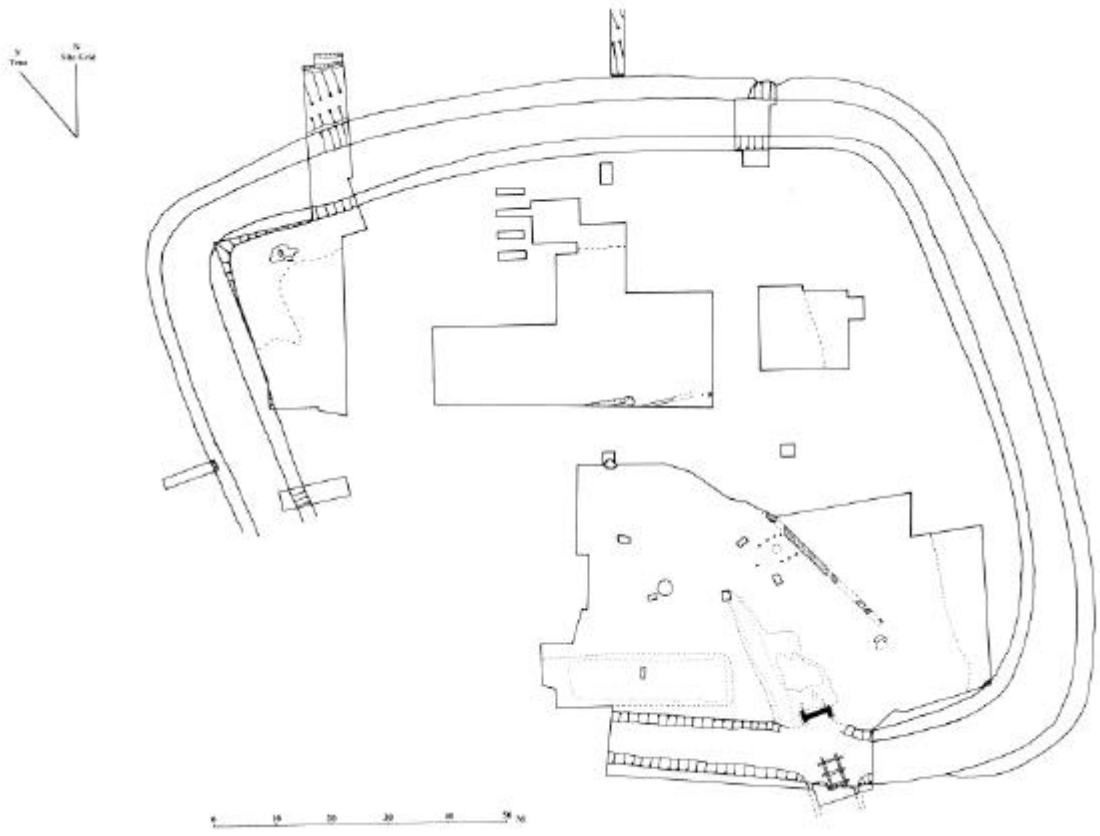


Fig 19: Wood Hall: the de Newmarch phase, 1248 – c 1440

The moat at Wood Hall is not a particularly large one, varying between 10m and 13m in width, and enclosing an area of approx. 3.5 acres. It varies in depth between 1.5m and 2m, and is bottomed on the thick, impermeable, grey lacustrine clay. The material dug out of the moat was spread around the edges of the interior platform, forming a slight levee at the moat edge in order to prevent the interior of the platform from flooding. At the northwest corner of the moat a number of stone hearths and spreads of heat-affected cobbles were found, interleaved among the layers of upcast from the moat - possibly representing the medieval workmen's equivalent of 'tea-breaks' during wet and muddy work.

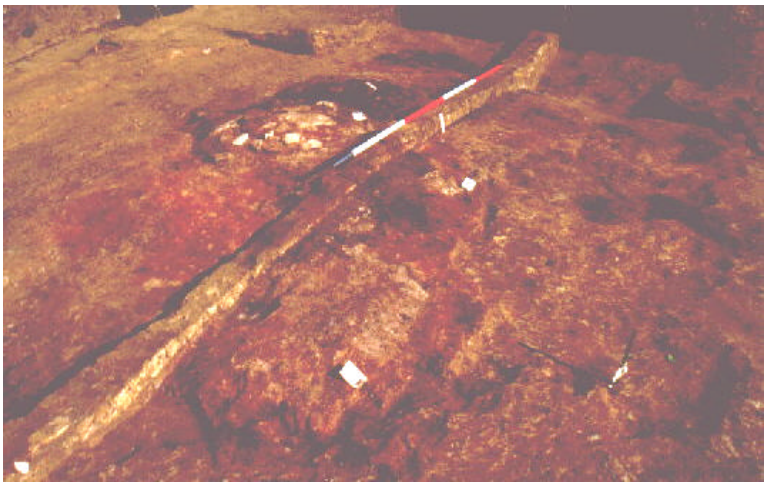


Fig 20: Two of the hearths within the upcast from the digging of the moat.

The moat, which is fed by springs to the north-west, is linked into the surrounding land drainage system via the ditch on the east side of the causewayed approach track. The junction between ditch and moat had a simple system of sluices for controlling water-levels, which would also have assisted in draining the moat if required. A similar system may exist for the western ditch; the area has not yet been investigated.

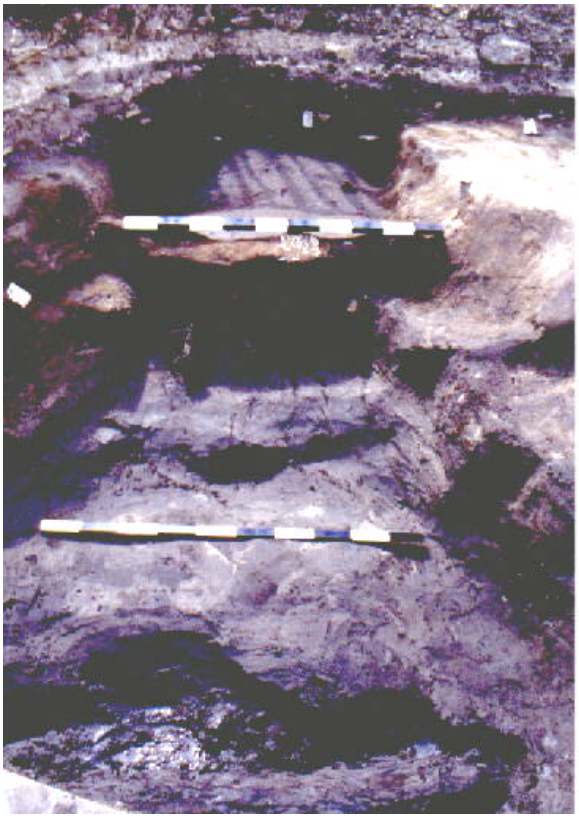


Fig 21:
The overflow/sluice system between the moat and the eastern causeway ditch.

The earliest of a sequence of four phases of timber bridge discovered at Wood Hall belongs to the de Newmarch period. Unfortunately it has proved impossible to date this bridge by dendrochronology, since the oak trees from which it was constructed, growing in optimum conditions, achieved a diameter from heartwood to bark of approx 43cm in only 48 years, and would not fit into any known dating

curve. However, a length of structural timber of similar dimensions, abandoned in the moat close to this bridge after it had been damaged as a mortice joint was being cut, had a dendrochronological date of 1247AD. This lies within the date-range of the pottery associated with the moat construction, and also corresponds with co-operative drainage works being carried out by the de Newmarches and de Warennes at this time. It seems likely that the bridge was constructed at the same time.

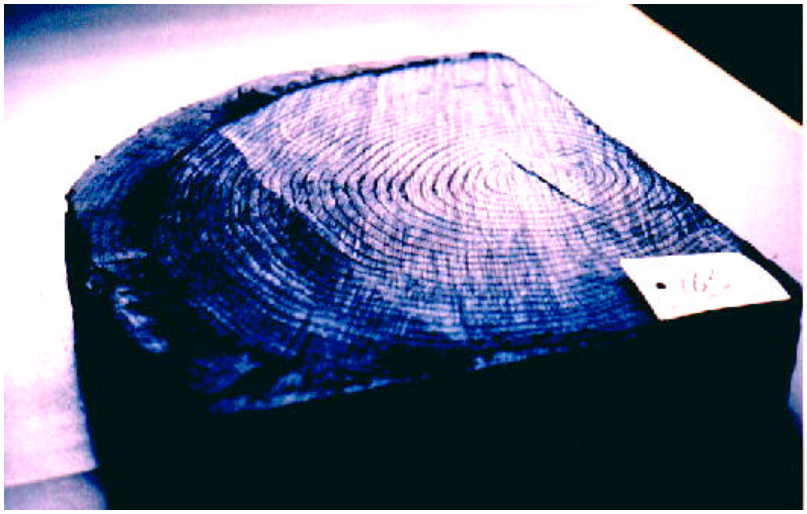


Fig 22: A dendrochronological sample cut from the earliest bridge at Wood Hall.
The sample has 48 rings from heartwood to bark.

All that remains of this early bridge are the massive timbers, which formed the base of the box-frame construction for the fixed portion of a drawbridge, extending 7m into the moat. Three transverse soleplates lay upon the bottom of the moat, supporting two longitudinal soleplates connected by halving joints. These five timbers formed the substructure for three upright trestles, connected to the base by mortice and tenon joints, which supported the upper decking.

Fig 23:
The lowest timbers of the earliest bridge remained in situ.

A gap of 3.5m, from the surviving structure to a contemporary revetment wall at the north bank, remains to be bridged. No timbers corresponding to this phase have been found in the northern half of the moat, from where they had probably been removed by later activity. Nor was there any trace on the north bank of the moat of any structure suitable for lifting a drawbridge. However, it is quite possible for the lifting mechanism to have been supported on the bridge itself, or on the stone revetment wall. The solid box-frame construction of the southern portion of the bridge suggests a drawbridge as the most likely option.

Although some of the earliest buildings at Wood Hall were deliberately dismantled to make way for the digging of the moat, the original pre-moat hall continued in use. The land immediately north of it remained in agricultural or horticultural cultivation. The digging of the south eastern corner of the new moat caused the abandonment of the first kitchen, the remains of which were sealed under the upcast, and the construction of a second kitchen a few metres to the west. A paved area immediately to the north of this building, contemporary with the first kitchen, continued to serve as a yard; the pentice path remained in use.

Fig 24: The paved area to the north of kitchen 2, cut by later features.

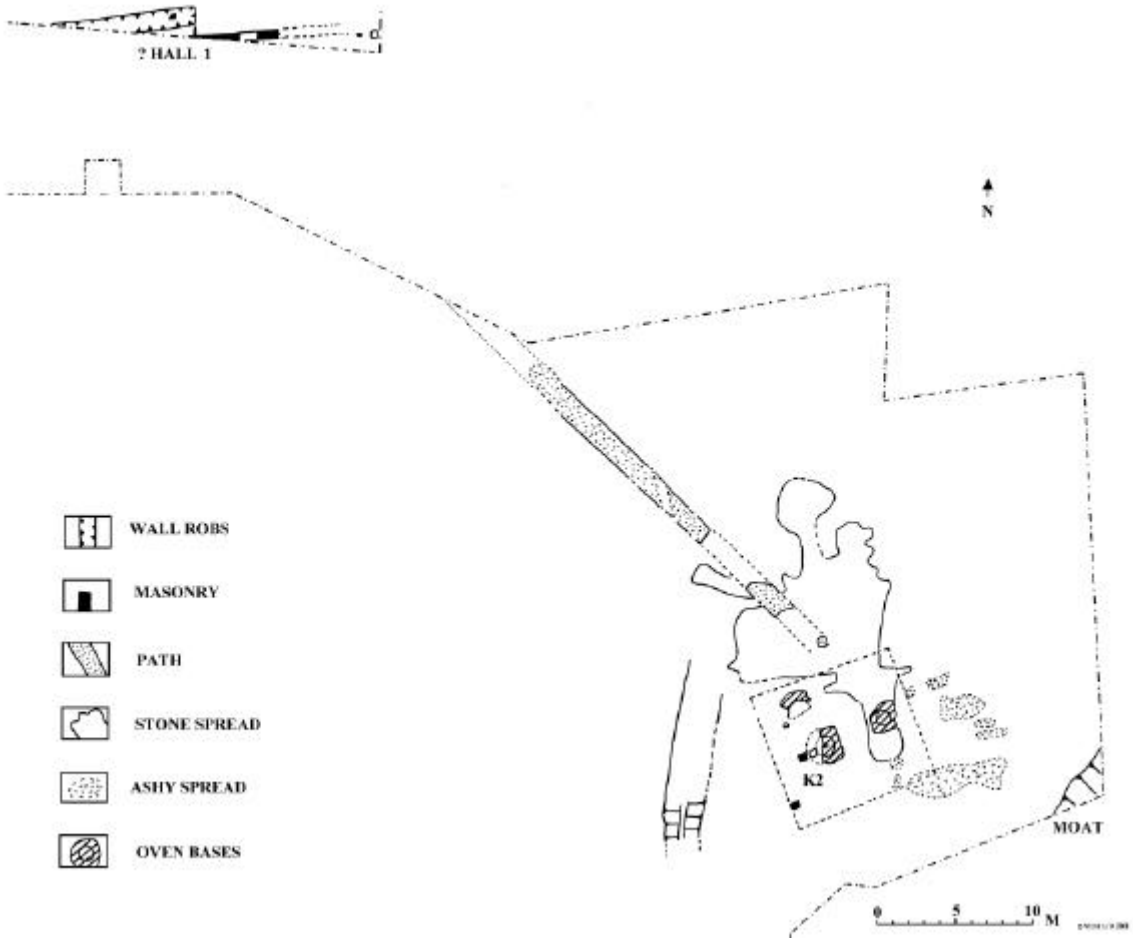


Fig 25: Plan showing kitchen 2. Kitchen 1 was removed to make way for the moat; the 'pentice' path and stone 'paved' area remained in use.

To the south of the hall and west of the pentice path a number of limestone rubble spreads, post-holes, and a hearth suggest at least one insubstantial building. This was surrounded by several rectangular pits, all with water-logged organic lower fills, which seem likely to have had an 'industrial' function, though it is possible they were used for storage. One had a stone lining still 'in situ', and the nature of the primary erosion in the others makes it likely that they too were originally stone-lined. Analysis of the fills may help to establish their function.

One outstanding feature belonging to the de Newmarch sequence was a large circular pit, 3.3m in diameter by 1.3m deep, lying centrally within the excavated area. The pit had been lined with timber stakes and a clay lining, and was probably a tank or cistern for holding water for use in the adjacent industrial process. It contained a number of wooden fragments, debris from the conversion of tree-logs to usable timber. Its final use was as a dump for brash from the clearance or pruning of shrubs - immediately identifiable species included rose, holly, birch, hawthorn or blackthorn, goat willow, sallow willow and oak.

Artefacts found in the pit included a tooled leather knife scabbard with a pattern of waves and fishes, and two fine lathe-turned wooden bowls. A brass mirror case was actually within the clay lining. Other finds from the de Newmarch phase include, among quantities of Hallgate, Northern Gritty and early Humber wares, part of a Saintonge polychrome wine jug, and a fragment of a Romanesque ivory carving of Samson and the Lion.

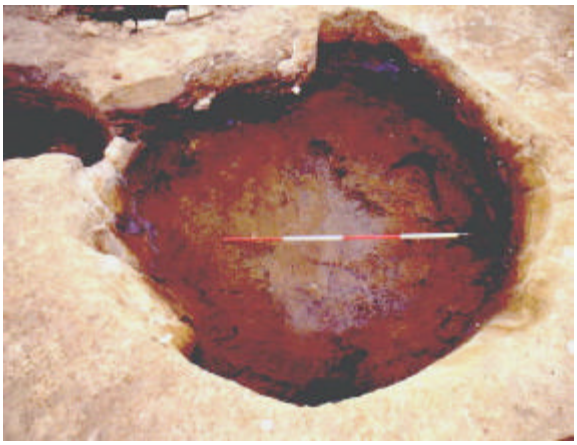



Fig 26 and 27: The large circular 'cistern' belonging to the de Newmarch period.
Fig 26: Shows the excavation of the brash dumped in at the end of its use.
Fig 27: Shows the feature after excavation

The assessment of the environmental evidence from water-logged features belonging to this phase indicates a pastoral use for the land surrounding Wood Hall, with little evidence for cereal production (though both wheat and barley were grown on the moated platform, on the 'field' immediately to the north of the hall), or of grain-associated insects that might indicate extensive arable farming. Instead, dung beetles were present in quantity, suggesting animal husbandry. This evidence, taken in conjunction with large quantities of cattle bone and the presence of dairy-type pottery utensils, seems to suggest cattle farming, with high production of cheese and butter, meat and hides. Significant quantities of deer bones suggest that hunting was an important part of the economy at this period; and bird bones (eg waterfowl) were also present.

Although a significant proportion of the evidence remains unexcavated, the results so far seem to suggest that de Newmarch Wood Hall was a busy and productive place, functioning as a food/resource supplier, but nevertheless being of sufficiently high status to have fine pottery, treen and artistic work among the possessions of its people.

Fig 28: Artist's impression of fifteenth century Wood Hall showing craftsmen at work.
(Artist - Peter Scholefield)

Phase VI - 1403 to c 1440

The de Newmarch period at Wood Hall probably came to an end, in fact if not in name, in 1403, when Ralph de Newmarch was killed at the battle of Shrewsbury. The Womersley/Wood Hall succession then becomes unclear, until the marriage of Elizabeth de Newmarch, Ralph's grand-daughter, to John Neville of Oversley in Lincolnshire. The date of this marriage is not certain but is probably in the early 1440s.

The archaeological record at Wood Hall would suggest a short period of neglect during the fifteenth century - again, it is very tempting to associate this with the lack of an obvious de Newmarch heir. By the 1450s, however, attention was once more being paid to the site. Certainly the overgrown hedges and shrubs were pruned back hard, and the prunings used as one of the final layers of backfill in the large cistern in the centre of the site (see above Phase IV).

Phase VII - c 1440 - April 15 1482

The Moated Site ii) Neville

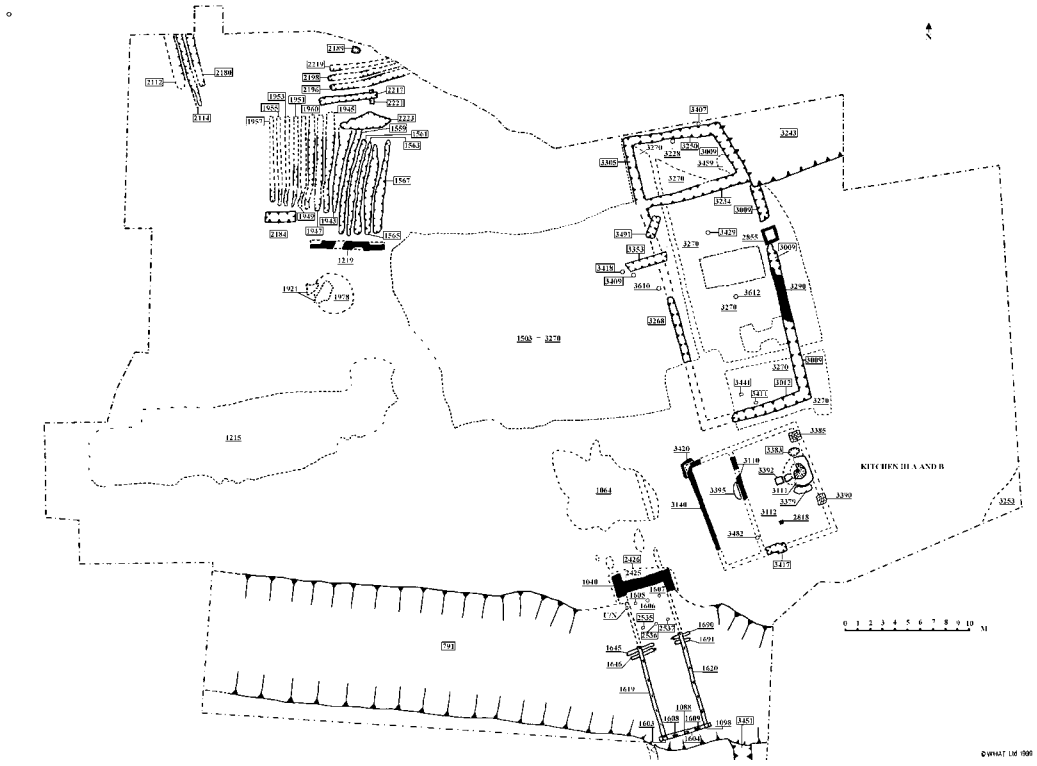


Fig 29: Wood Hall: the Neville/early Gascoigne phase.

In 1457/58 (dendrochronological date) the old drawbridge was demolished to its foundations, and a new bridge constructed, making use of the old sturdy timbers as part of the base for two longitudinal soleplates, each originally c 13m long, which stretched from the timber revetment at the southern bank of the moat to the earlier stone revetment wall against the north bank. A minimum of seven trestles (mortices surviving) supported what is assumed to have been an uninterrupted superstructure. However, no evidence for the northern portion of this bridge was recovered, and it is possible that it too was a drawbridge, again with the lifting mechanism supported on the bridge itself, or on the revetment wall. There is no evidence of an appropriate structure on the northern bank.

Fig 30: The bridge of 1457/58, truncated by the later gatehouse.

Between 1457/58 and the early 1490s a complete refurbishment seems to have taken place at Wood Hall. The area in the centre south of the site (Area 20) was cleared and levelled in order to make a garden. Rubbish - building rubble, animal bone and household debris - seems to have been gathered from every corner of the site, and was laid down as a lawn base on the south of the area, running down to the moat. North of this, separated by a stone seat, were the narrow beds of a formal garden.

Among the debris the pottery associated with the levelling operation, which contained fragments of a number of Humber Ware drinking jugs (formerly known as Skipton on Swale jugs) but no Cistercian Ware, suggests a date in the mid- rather than late-fifteenth century.

Sometime during the second half of the fifteenth century the old hall was probably renovated; John Neville also added to the accommodation at Wood Hall by constructing a new hall in the south eastern portion of the site.

Excavations in 1996 have identified this hall and its kitchen, situated immediately to the east of the entrance.

John Neville's Hall was in its original phase a simple late Medieval hall, with stone wall footings (later extensively robbed) supporting a timber superstructure, and a beaten clay floor. A stone-lined garderobe pit lay against the east (rear) wall at the north end of the building, presumably associated with a first-floor chamber or solar above the ground floor private quarters. A cross-wing ran east from this end of the building; though this was completely robbed out in the eighteenth century, it may be the location of a chapel mentioned in the documentary record from the sixteenth century.

The private quarters and dais area occupied the two northernmost bays of the building; the next two bays formed the open communal hall, with a hearth (and presumably a smoke-hood) against the west wall. The main door and cross-passage were at the south end of the open hall, with the pantry and buttery occupying the final bay to the south.

A new kitchen was constructed approx. 1.5m to the south of the new hall. A re-used millstone formed the central oven base within a room showing signs of strong heat affectation. To the east of this, on the site of kitchen 2, a small rectangular hedged garden was created, with bedding trenches orientated

east-west. The main 'kitchen' garden continued towards the north, situated between the rear of the hall and the east limb of the moat. It may be that debris from the garderobe pit was recycled into the soils of the kitchen garden.

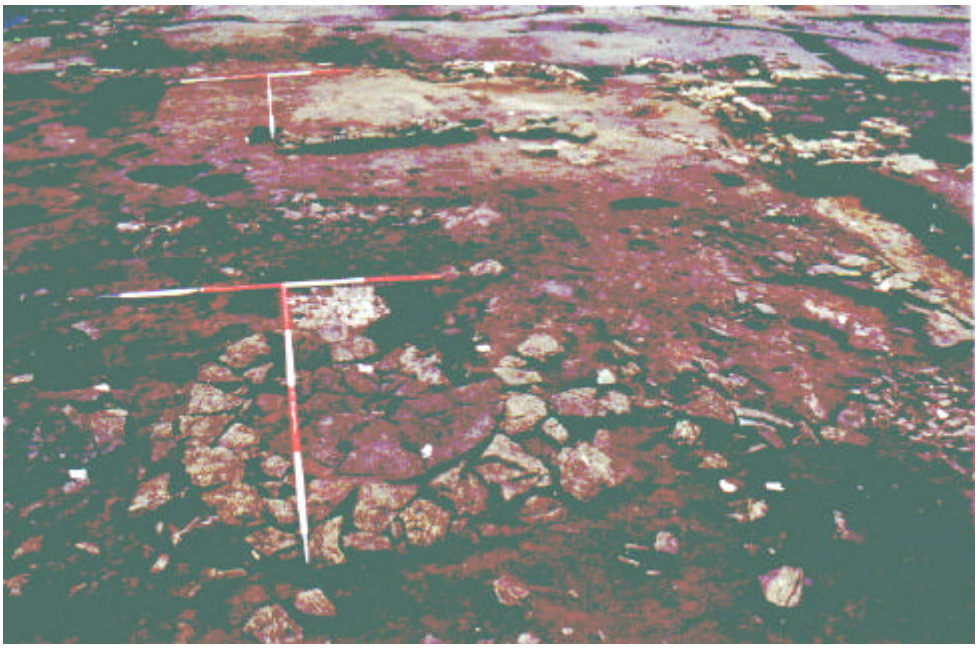


Fig 31: The third kitchen showing the millstone oven base

Phase VIII - 1482 to c 1557

The Moated Site iii) Gascoigne

John and Elizabeth Neville's daughter Joan was married to Sir William Gascoigne of Cusworth, Harewood and Lotherton, and it was through her that the Gascoignes inherited Wood Hall and Womersley on John Neville's death in 1482. They continued with the improvements at Wood Hall.

Although John Neville's new bridge was only about 35 years old, in 1493 Sir William Gascoigne began the remodelling of the entrance to Wood Hall, constructing an impressive gatehouse and drawbridge, presumably to reflect his status. It may be no coincidence that he was upgrading this relatively minor property only two years before he was High Sheriff of Yorkshire (in 1495).

Fig 32: Artist's impression of the Gascoigne gatehouse (P Scholefield)

The new gatehouse was based on two rectangular tower foundations, constructed actually in the moat, the west one in effect free-standing, while the east tower walls were tied in to the bank. The bases, standing on shallow stone platforms, which may possibly have belonged to an earlier structure, were constructed of massive limestone ashlar blocks, probably from the quarries at Stapleton or Tadcaster.

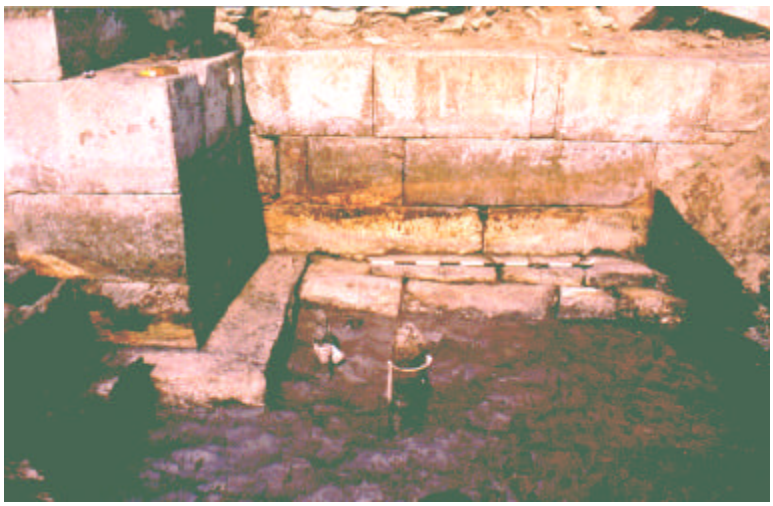
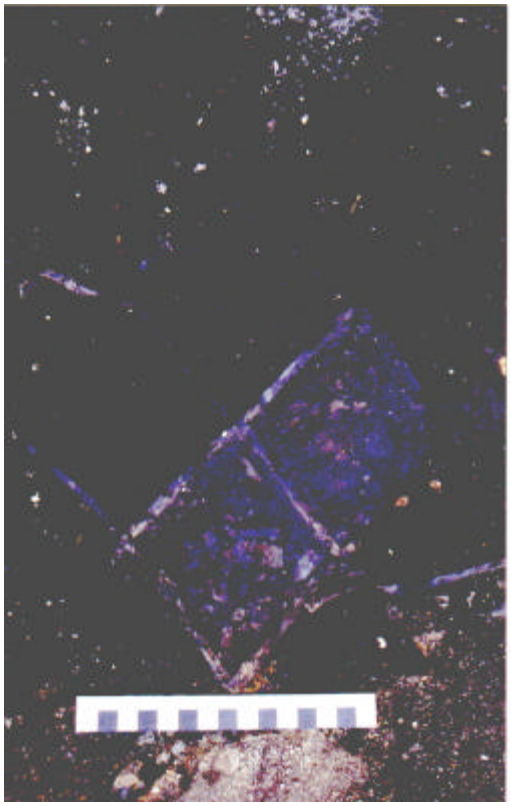


Fig 33:
The tower bases for the Gascoigne gatehouse butted against the earlier revetment wall

Chamfered plinths supported the superstructure, built of the more flaggy local limestone, which was also used to make the roof slabs. It is likely that these upper walls were rendered with a lime-based plaster, though no evidence for this was recovered. The room above the gatehouse arch, which seems, from evidence of food items and utensils found in the moat immediately in front of it, to have been used as a banqueting room, had windows with leaded diamond-shaped glass panes. A limestone chimney cap found in the moat suggests a fireplace in the room. Externally, the chimney at one end of the pitched roof was balanced with a limestone ball finial at the other.



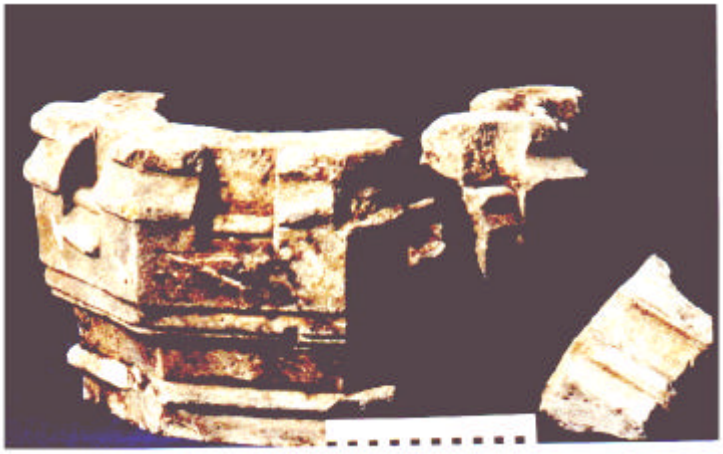


Fig 34:
A window-pane from the gatehouse, found in the moat.

Fig 35:
Limestone chimney cap from the Gascoigne gatehouse

The gatehouse would have been visible for the full mile of the journey from Womersley, and must have been very impressive - though less so from the rear, which seems to have been supported on above ground timber sleeper beams, as there is no trace of more substantial foundations. The suggested reconstruction (figs 32 and 42) has the first floor jettied to the rear, to allow adequate space for the upper room, which would have housed the drawbridge winding mechanism as well as any other function.

The Neville period bridge was demolished during this building phase, and its longitudinal soleplates reduced in length to make way for the tower bases. The remaining timber was left in place, chocked for stability using timbers from a demolished building. A box-frame with four soleplates was constructed on the remains of the earlier bridges to form the fixed platform at the south side of the moat. At the north side, a similar fixed platform was constructed between the towers, leaving a distance of 3.5m to be crossed by the drawbridge, which pivoted on extensions of the towers' inner walls.

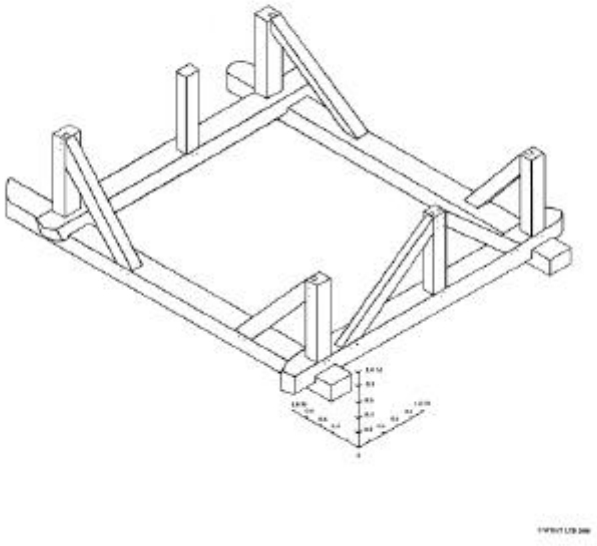


Fig 36:
Plan of the Gascoigne bridge
1493 AD

In the original construction of the southern fixed platform, the superstructure was braced by beams angled from the base soleplates into the uprights of the trestles. This was found to be unsatisfactory, probably because of the length of the unbraced span of the superstructure, and in 1560/61 a remodelling was carried out. This involved shortening the distance of the span by relocating one of the transverse soleplates and bracing from the uprights directly into the superstructure. This version of the bridge survived into the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century.

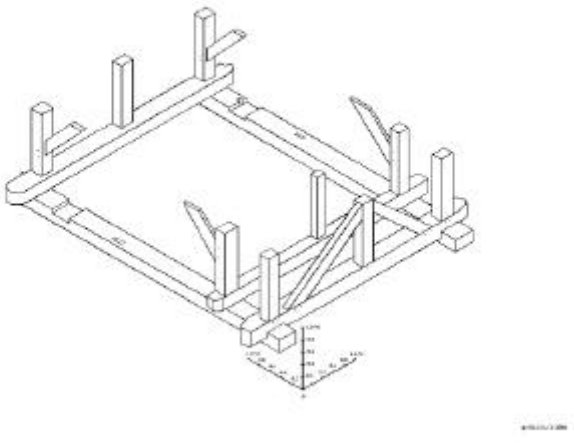


Fig 37:
Plan of the Gascoigne bridge after
alterations in 1560/61 AD

Fig 38: The bridge of 1560/61 under excavation

As part of the same upgrading of Wood Hall, Sir William Gascoigne also added modern features to John Neville's Hall. This hall was originally constructed as a timber-framed building supported on dwarf walls. The kitchen lay immediately to the south of the hall - in full view of anyone approaching the site from Womersley. Sir William Gascoigne had the kitchen demolished, and constructed a new facade, probably entirely in stone, to the south gable-end wall and the western front of the house. The new build on the west front had been almost entirely robbed at a later date, but probably incorporated the most up-to-date windows. At the south-west corner of the house, as an integral part of the new facade, a rectangular stone tower of at least three storeys was constructed. This tower would have effectively blocked the original doorway into the screens passage. A new doorway seems to have been included in the new west facade, immediately to the north of the main hearth.

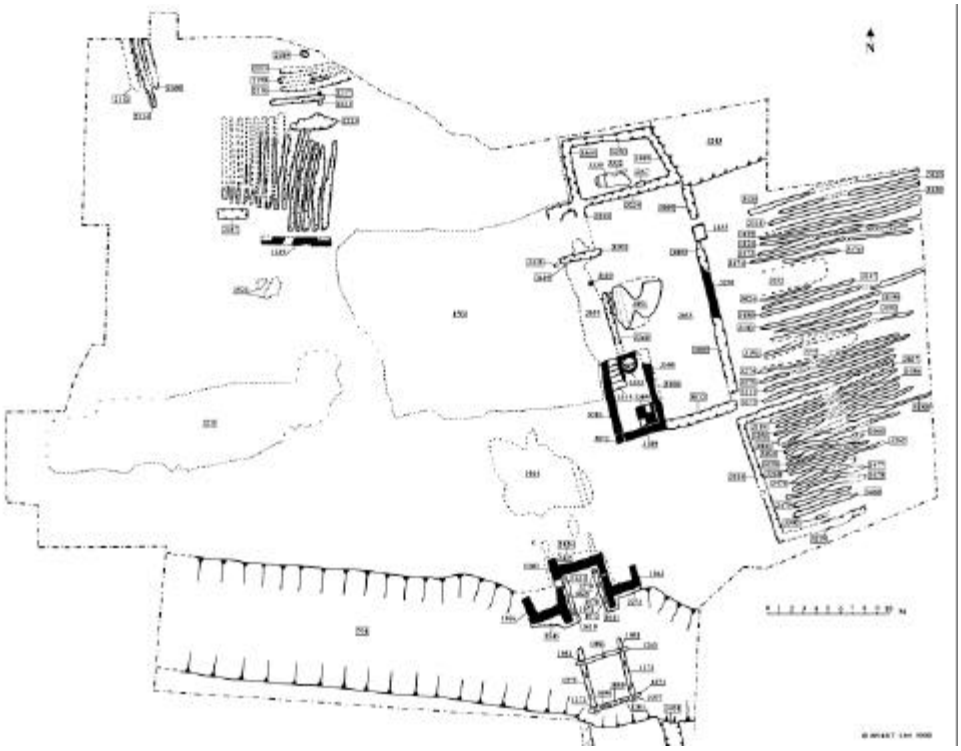


Fig 39: Gascoigne period 1482-c 1557

The tower, which was rectangular in plan, was tied in to the original building at the south-west corner. Its upper storeys seem to have been approached via the original western service room. Its lowest floor was a half-cellar, extending 1.4m below ground level, which was probably used as a cool buttery. This room was approached from its north side, through an external door and down a flight of stone steps. Its roof was probably vaulted to allow working head-room. Immediately east of the steps, and partly covered by them, was a stone-lined well which housed the base of a wooden pump. In the south-east corner a solid block of masonry held two small niches, possibly for lamps. This block was 1.4m by 1.35m in plan, and could have formed the base for a spiral staircase leading from the service room in the main house to the upper floors of the tower.

Fig 40:
The base of Sir William Gascoigne's tower was a sunken buttery

The pump base from the buttery was formed from a squared cone of oak, measuring 0.35m x 0.29m at the base and tapering to a height of 0.6m. A cylinder 0.09m in diameter had been bored out of its core to a depth of 0.33m. A channel 50mm in diameter had been drilled from each of the four corners into the central cylinder. The external opening of each of these channels was covered with a perforated plate of white metal, presumably to sieve any large impurities from the water. The water would then have been led, through a system of leather valves, to a potential height of 7m - possibly to a new kitchen on the first floor of the tower. No sign of a kitchen to replace that immediately south of John Neville's Hall has been found elsewhere in the excavated area.

Fig 41:
The wooden pump base from the buttery.

The combined effect of the alterations to the house, the tower and the fine new gatehouse was designed to impress the visitor making his way down the full mile of straight causewayed track from Womersley village to Wood Hall. In the interests of economy, however, this new grandeur was not carried on where it was out of sight - eg at the rear of the hall. Certainly all the building activity at Wood Hall in the mid and late fifteenth century seems to have left its mark in the local memory. It was probably the bright whiteness of the freshly-quarried limestone and render used for the gatehouse and facade that resulted in the description 'Wood Hall alias White Hall alias New Hall' found in a document of the early seventeenth century, more than 100 years later.

The assessment of the environmental evidence from the Gascoigne phase suggests that Wood Hall was still for the most part a working farm, with the emphasis on cattle and animal husbandry, though the north part of the moated platform continued to have a horticultural or agricultural use. The kitchen garden at the rear of the hall continued in use. Elsewhere on the site, however, things had changed. Evidence from the artefacts suggests a more leisured and pleasurable lifestyle.

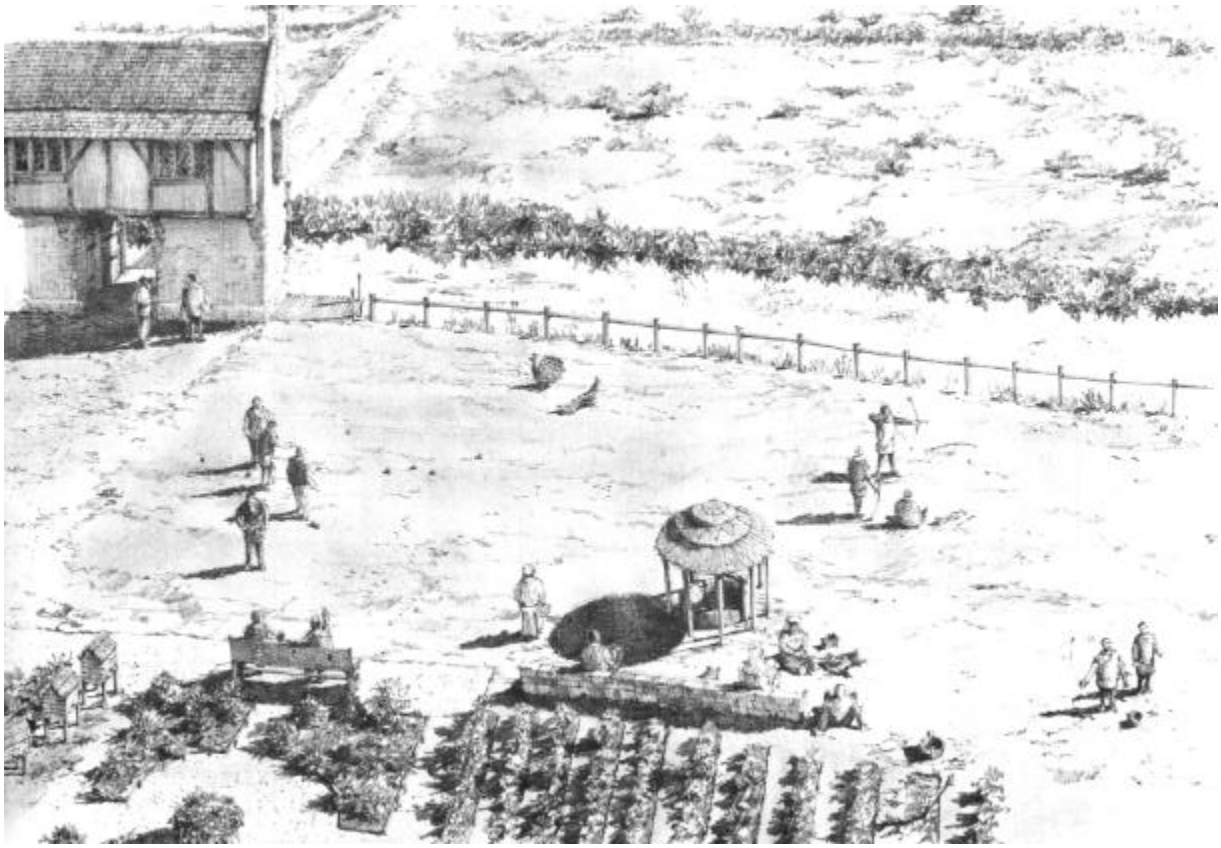


Fig 42: Leisure activities in the garden at Wood Hall (P Scholefield)

Hawking and hunting were still practised, as well as archery, and peacocks graced the lawns at Wood Hall as well as (presumably) the dining table. Gaming counters have been found, and the tuning peg from a musical instrument. Most impressive is the glassware - three fine drinking vessels, one at least of possible Bohemian origin, had apparently been dropped out of the first floor window of the gatehouse into the moat below. One had originally borne the gilded inscription 'Iesu Maria' - interesting wording on an item seemingly deliberately discarded in late sixteenth century Protestant England.

Fig 43:
An enamelled and gilded glass goblet, possibly from Bohemia, recovered from the moat.

Documentary evidence from this period tells of a marriage in 1548, of Sir William Gascoigne (the third at Wood Hall) to his second wife, Margaret Wright. The wedding took place in 'a decent and honest chapel in the side of the hall at Wood Hall', and was described in detail as part of the evidence in a later inheritance dispute. Young Margaret, daughter of a family living at Cusworth, was actually the god-daughter of Sir William's first wife, Margaret Fitzwilliam, and had been part of the household since her teens. On the day that the first Margaret died, the second Margaret was being 'churched' at Womersley, and her baby (Sir William's child) baptised. The inheritance dispute hinged on whether the second marriage was legal - or, indeed, had ever taken place. It was, and it had (by Archbishop of Canterbury's licence), and Wood Hall, with lands totalling approximately 300 acres, was left to Alice, daughter of Sir William and (probably) the first Lady Margaret (nee Fitzwilliam), on Sir William's death in 1557.

Fig 44. Wood Hall: The Gascoigne wedding party, 1548 (P Scholefield)

Phase IX - 1558 to 1725
The Moated Site 4) Post-Medieval

Fig 45: Wood Hall in the seventeenth century

The widowed Margaret Gascoigne was left the use of Wood Hall during her life, though the property remained with the Gascoigne family, having been left to young Alice Gascoigne, who was probably the first Lady Margaret's youngest daughter. The second Lady Margaret held in her own right from Sir William, property in Womersley and the surrounding area, as her widow's portion.

It was only about a year later, in 1557, that she was married for the second time, to Peter Stanley, to whom her property was then transferred. He is a mysterious figure who may well have been in Sir William Gascoigne's service. Whatever his origins, he made his mark on the County, becoming a Justice of the Peace, and earning a reference from the Archbishop of York as 'a great fornicator . . . . a man of none account . . .'. He was involved in a number of legal disputes with, among others, members of the Gascoigne family, over property (including Wood Hall) and tithes. It was, however, finally established that Wood Hall belonged to Alice and not to her step-mother Margaret, and it was through Alice, and her daughter Alice Hazelwood's marriage to Christopher Twistleton in 1600, that Wood Hall became the property of the Twistleton family.

The Twistleton family seems to come to prominence in the local area in the sixteenth century. Most of their Yorkshire property lies further east, around Drax and Snaith, with Wood Hall as an outlier. The first Twistleton known to have lived at Wood Hall is George, a cousin of Alice's Christopher, who married Prothesia Gascoigne, herself a cousin of the Wood Hall Gascoignes, in 1611.

The Wood Hall that George and Prothesia enjoyed had been transformed from a late medieval hall into a two-storey house at the very end of the sixteenth century. A staircase was built opposite the main door, leading to an upper floor which must have been inserted at this time, on the same level as the

existing solar. One side of the stair was fixed into the timber framing of the bay; the other side was enclosed with stoothing. The floor beneath the stair was dug out to a depth of 0.47m and partly flagged with stone, creating a cool cupboard. The existence of shelves can be deduced from the fact that only the centre of the space was stone-flagged. There was no need to extend the flagging to an area protected from wear by shelving.

The construction of the staircase effectively changed the dais area and the open hall into two ground floor rooms; that to the north of the staircase may have added to the original private apartments, retaining the hearth. The room south of the staircase, containing the original main hearth, may have become a kitchen, with the service rooms to the south.

At least one of the newly created rooms, either on the ground floor or a first floor chamber, had intricate plaster friezes above wood panelling, and a very decorative ceiling with curved floral ribs and bosses in the shape of rope-edged lozenges, lions' heads and cones. Parts of two friezes were recovered, but it is not unknown for parts of two different patterns to be used in the same room. The frieze motifs included lions and gryphons supporting blank discs, grapes, flowers, acorns and holly. All these motifs, from the same moulds, were used at other places in the West Riding of Yorkshire, including Tickhill Castle House near Doncaster. Those recovered from Wood Hall should date to the last decade of the sixteenth century - c 1595 (David Bostwick *pers. comm*.).

Fig 46:
Part of a plaster frieze under excavation

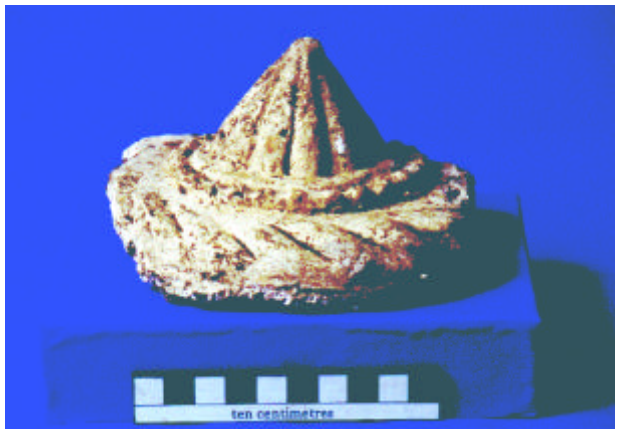


Fig 47:
Motifs from the decorative plaster ceiling

Fragments of a slightly later plaster panel, with heraldic-type strapwork, were also recovered from the excavations, dating to the mid-1630s. This panel probably belonged to an over-mantel, and may have been installed when the smoke hood above the hearth in the west wall was renewed.

By this time Wood Hall was already showing signs of a gentle decline. At some time in the first quarter of the seventeenth century the gatehouse collapsed, its western tower slipping forward and tilting towards the south. This caused the roof and part of the upper storey to cascade into the moat. The gatehouse was patched up but never completely rebuilt, though one of the tower bases was probably used as a 'porter's lodge'; the drawbridge was probably no longer functional but the bridge itself continued in use.

The final major addition to the house took place in c1670, when a substantial brick chimney was inserted into the house, almost within the old screens passage and offset to the east of the roof ridge. Hearth Tax returns for Womersley suggest that this alteration took place between 1665/6, when Mr Strangeways, who seems to have been tenant at Wood Hall since the Civil War (possibly c 1643), had 4 hearths, and 1672/4, when the then tenant Mr Foster, who had married Prothesia Twistleton (a grand-daughter of George and Prothesia), is listed as having 6 hearths.

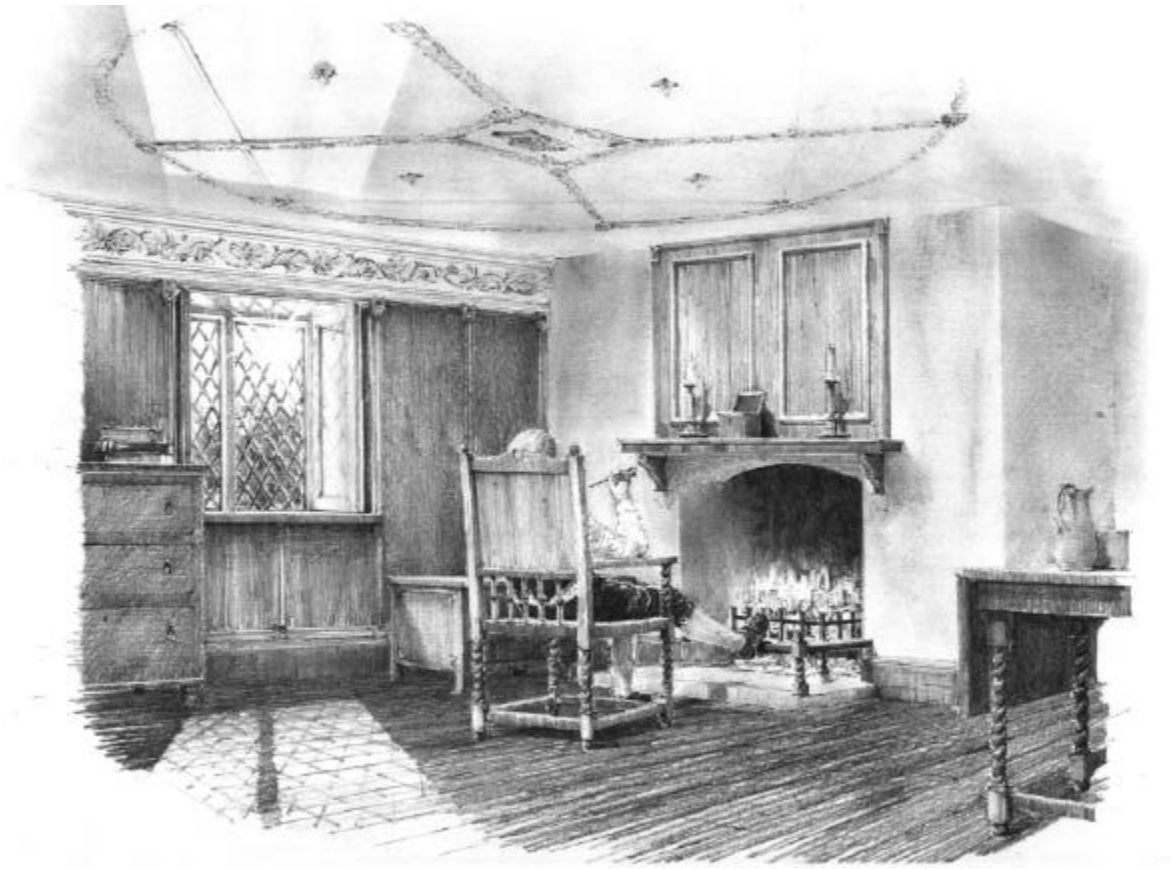


Fig 48: Wood Hall c 1674. Mr Foster benefits from his new brick chimney.
(P Scholefield)

The bricks for the chimney were made on site at Wood Hall, in a simple clamp kiln located in the pasture annexe north of the moat. Clay was dug from a pond close by, and sand may have been obtained from Area 14, a contemporary garden whose bedding trenches contained significant quantities of burnt material, as if ash and fire debris had been deliberately deposited in pre-existing trenches. Archaeo-magnetic dating places the firing in the middle of the seventeenth century, while clay tobacco pipes recovered from the kiln agree with a date c.1670. A crossing was constructed over the north arm of the moat to bring the cartloads of brick from the annexe to the house. Most were used in the construction of the chimney, but some were used to line a well in the rectangular garden bed that replaced some of the linear beds in the Gascoigne's pleasure garden, sometime in the seventeenth century.

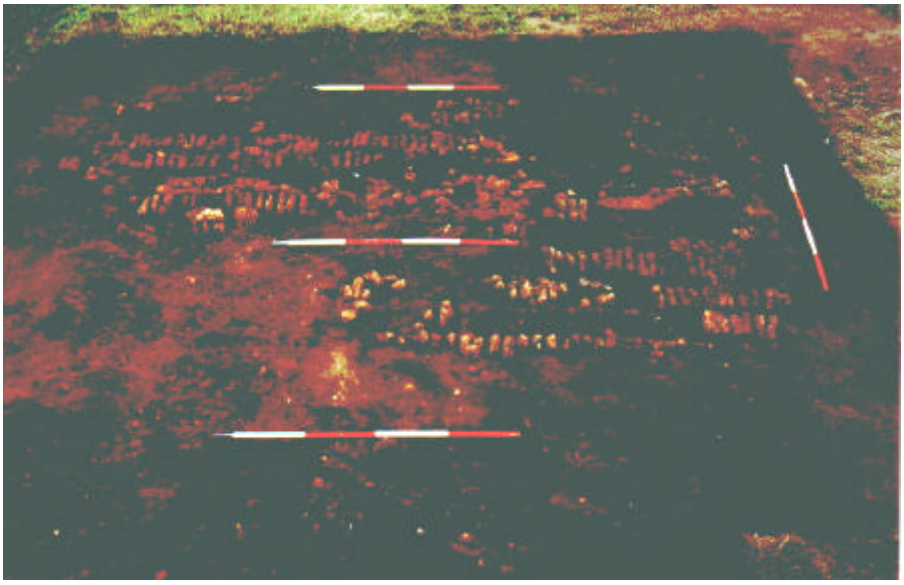


Fig 49: The seventeenth century brick kiln in the pasture annexe north of the moated platform

The last suggestion of any repairs to the house at Wood Hall comes from window leading bearing the stamp 'EW 1687' (or 1681). After that Wood Hall seems to have gone into a gradual decline. Two Quaker families, the Dickinsons and the Masons, are recorded at the site for 10 years - c 1690 to 1700 - followed by a tenant named Dennis from c 1700 to 1720/25. According to correspondence dated c1707, during Dennis' tenancy two families were dependant on Wood Hall. It may be, however, that the site remained unoccupied for some time after c 1710.

The house that had been built in the fifteenth century as John Neville's hall was demolished in the second or third decade of the eighteenth century. The entire building, as well as the remnants of the gatehouse, was carefully demolished and as much re-usable material as possible was salvaged. Of the stonework, everything was removed to ground level at least, and most was robbed out entirely. The house site was cleared completely and levelled, and part at least of the salvaged building material removed from the site. It seems likely that other buildings on the site, including the early hall, suffered the same fate.

To allow the passage of heavy carts loaded with stone and timbers, the old bridge was stripped of its decking, and the base used as the foundation for a causeway built up of small rubble and demolition debris under a corduroy of cut birch boughs. This was held down at either side by salvaged baulks of timber, and surfaced with a layer of 'picked over' sand and mortar from which the larger stone had been removed. Quantities of household debris - pottery, treen, glassware and leather goods - were used partly in the causeway and partly to back-fill the sunken buttery. Sherds of the same pottery vessels, found in both the causeway makeup and in the buttery fill, show that these layers were deposited at the same time.

Fig 50: The corduroy of birch boughs supported the road surface of the causeway which replaced the bridge in the early eighteenth century.

There does, however, seem to have been a slight difference in time between the demolition of the tower and of the rest of the house. This is demonstrated by the fact that the entire interior area of the house was covered with crushed plaster debris, but there was none actually in the buttery fill. This seems to suggest that the tower was taken down at least to buttery vault level, and the buttery void backfilled, before the rest of the house was carefully demolished. Probably all the roofs and the top of the chimney were removed first, and then the upper floors of the tower. Good timbers, windows and the staircase would be next as the walls were lowered, and lastly the wooden panelling from the ground floor rooms. The smashed plasterwork was carefully swept into the hollow of the under-stairs cupboard, and the remnants of laths and timbers burnt on the hearth base at the north of the building. There was no longer a dwelling-house at Wood Hall.

The descent of Wood Hall through the seventeenth century is complicated by the confusion of the Civil War period and the Commonwealth. George Twistleton and Prothesia lived there after their marriage in 1611. George seems to have owned the property, probably as a gift from his father, George Twistleton of Barlow, to whom it had come through Christopher's marriage to Alice. Prothesia's George is recorded as having lived at Wood Hall for 48 years or more.

George and Prothesia had four children, John, George, Alice and William. John seems to have died childless, so Wood Hall apparently descends through George's line. The property is inherited in 1647, at the eldest George's death, by a George Twistleton who should be the son of the second George, and should have been born in 1644/5. Unfortunately there is no surviving record of his birth. However, in c 1669 Cecil Twistleton, the daughter of John Twistleton of Barlow, marries George Twistleton of Wood Hall, who ought to be the grandson of George and Prothesia recorded as 'of Wood Hall' in 1683 - and, incidentally, Cecil's second cousin.

Cecil and George seem to have been a somewhat profligate pair. Writing his will in 1679, John Twistleton more or less disinherits his daughter, who he says has been 'very disobedient', and married against his and her mother's consent. John has taken out mortgages on Wood Hall to pay George's debts, paying out more money than Cecil might have expected to inherit from him, and so he secures Wood Hall for her son, his grandson, Fiennes Twistleton, by putting the boy and the estate under the supervision of trustees. George and Cecil survived into the early part of the eighteenth

century, and it was not until after his mother's death in 1723 that Fiennes sold Wood Hall to the Harvey family, who had purchased the Womersley estate in the 1670s.

Tobiah Harvey, the grandson of a Yorkshireman and son of a London vintner, was a prominent lawyer in the late seventeenth century. He was a barrister of the Inner Temple, and may well have known the sons of Yorkshire families such as the Gascoignes, Hazelwoods, Jacksons and Twistletons. He bought the Womersley estate in the 1670s, although he does not appear to have lived there until the early eighteenth century. He was very conscious of his rights and dues as Lord of the Manor, and entered in to a long correspondence reviving Peter Stanley's old dispute regarding tithes due from Wood Hall and the use of Gale Common. It is from this correspondence and associated legal documents, some now preserved in the archives at Birr Castle, County Offaly, Eire, the home of the Earls of Rosse (descendants of the Harveys), as well as from material housed in the Borthwick Institute at York, that much of the complicated seventeenth century history of Wood Hall can be deduced. It was after Tobiah's death that his son William was able to return Wood Hall to the Womersley estate.

Phase X - 1725 to 1988

At some time in the period 1725 to 1775 a new farmhouse was built at Wood Hall. During this period the property was sold by William Harvey, Tobiah's son, to Henry Brown in 1739, and bought back by Stanhope Harvey in 1754. Jeffrey's map of Yorkshire (1775) shows a rectangular building aligned east-west on the internal edge of the south arm of the moat, looking south across the open agricultural landscape to Womersley and the limestone escarpment. A further rectangular building, possibly a barn, is shown lying at right angles to and to the east of the main house.

Fig 51: Jeffrey's map of 1775 showing Wood Hall

The farmhouse and its associated buildings had been demolished and almost completely removed in the mid-1980's, but a combination of archaeological, documentary, photographic and oral evidence has enabled at least some of the history to be pieced together.

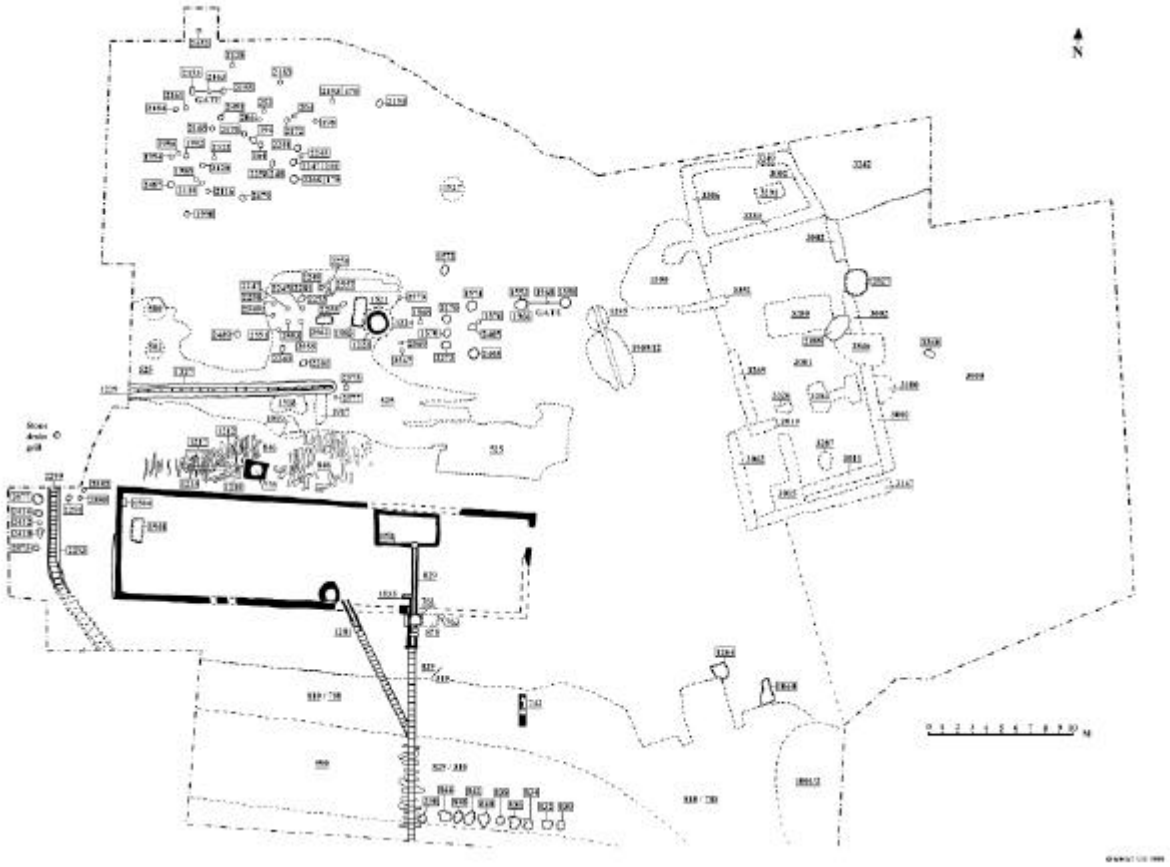


Fig 52: Early farm features - 18th - early 19th century

The new Georgian building was constructed on the northern edge of the south arm of the moat, approximately 4 ms from the edge. It was of simple rectangular construction on shallow foundations, built in the main of the local flaggy Magnesian limestone, with fragments of earlier masonry re-used throughout. One late Medieval doorway or fireplace architrave, broken in two, was used as the foundation at the north-east corner of the core building. Most of this re-used masonry probably originated from the de Newmarch and Neville buildings demolished earlier in the eighteenth century, though the bulk of the demolition material seems to have been removed from the site - possibly for building works at the Harvey's main house in Womersley, Womersley Park.

Fig 53:
The moat looking east, clearly showing the eighteenth century re-cut at the bottom of the picture. The dumps of rubble closer to the causeway date to the early nineteenth century

The proximity to the by now stagnant moat, blocked by the replacement of the bridge by a solid causeway in the early eighteenth century, proved to be a problem to the inhabitants of the new house. The moat was re-cut once in the eighteenth century; by c.1810, however, it had been filled in - an operation accompanied by another general dump of rubbish including leather and glass, as well as every type of eighteenth century pottery from Nottingham stonewares, Yorkshire Blackwares and Slipwares, through Staffordshire Saltglaze stonewares and early Wedgwood Queensware, to Chinese porcelain. Pottery from kilns at Leeds and Castleford, and from the 'Wedgewood' factory at Ferrybridge, was also present, suggesting a date of deposition in the first decade of the nineteenth century. Topsoil was imported and the moat area was levelled up and made into a garden.

Fig 54:
Pottery from the 'Wedgewood' factory at Ferrybridge

Very little of the original phase of the core building - that shown on Jeffrey's map of 1775 - could be identified archaeologically, except for an internal well, which lay close against the south wall approximately half-way along its length. It also seems reasonable to assume that the main door on the south of the building, located approximately 6m from the east end, was an original feature. A sale document of 1781, following the eviction of the tenant, Howith, for non-payment of rent, and the seizure of his goods, lists the contents of the various rooms, which existed at that time. The rooms mentioned are the kitchen, the parlours and the chamber; even though a barrel, a cask and a brewing tub were sold, no mention is made of a cellar or dairy at this time.

Given the evidence of the sale documents, it seems likely that a small back-filled cellar or cool-room, constructed against the inside of the north wall, was a secondary feature within the building. The cellar measured 4.3m E-W by 2.0m N-S, and was 0.6m deep. Access was via three stone steps downwards in the south-west corner. The whole structure was constructed of brick and stone walls butted against the north wall of the farmhouse, and continued well below the foundations of this external wall. The floor was of flagstones (one fragment remained in situ) laid on a bedding of sand.

The cellar had originally been drained by a square section slab-lined brick-sided culvert, 0.75m wide by 0.65m deep, and over 24m long. It ran southwards below the external wall and into the garden area where it was joined from the north-west by a similar culvert which drained from the interior of the building adjacent to the well. Once the two were united the culvert line had continued below the garden and into Moat Croft meadow beyond. The cross-sectioned area of the culvert (0.39m sq.) would have allowed the discharge of large volumes of water.

Fig 55:
The culvert draining from the farmhouse

The suggestion that the cellar and culvert system were secondary features is reinforced stratigraphically by the slab-lined culverts, which crossed the moat into the meadow to the south. These were cut through the backfill of the moat, which contained quantities of pottery (as stated above) dating at the latest to the first decade of the nineteenth century.

The first cellar or cool-room was eventually backfilled with a mass of wall and ceiling plaster and mortar, possibly from its own superstructure or perhaps from a larger refurbishment. It was replaced by another, very similar structure lying 1.8m to the east, in the north-east corner of the farmhouse, which had been almost completely removed by the demolition in the 1980s.

Fig 56: Wood Hall farmhouse - the second cellar

The second cellar was remarkably like its predecessor, with a Magnesian limestone rubble wall butted against the north and east external wall of the house. White-washed plaster survived on the interior surfaces of the walls forming the north-west corner. The sunken floor was of unbonded flat bricks and measured 4.0m E-W by 1.70m N-S. Three brick piers had supported a work surface of Elland flagstones, the remains of which had fallen between the piers. Two sandstone steps led down eastwards into the cellar from the south-west corner. The brick floor sloped gently into the north-west corner, where a drain had been cut through the wall and the backfill of the earlier cellar, curving through 90 degrees to join the original culvert. The drain was protected from blockage by a perforated slate filter plate, placed at its exit from the new cellar.

It is probable that these sunken-floored 'cool' rooms had functioned as successive dairies rather than being solely for the storage of perishables. Large volumes of water would have been used daily in cheese and butter-making, in order to sluice down containers and work surfaces. The large cross-sectional area (0.39m sq.) of the culvert would have allowed for the discharge of this while the slate filter-plate would have prevented debris from settling out onto the culvert bed and fouling the atmosphere in the rooms above. The culvert had been capped with flagstones as part of the farmhouse floor which had been taken up for re-use prior to the final demolition.

The main nineteenth century phase of the farmhouse seems to have had a scullery and kitchen at the western end, then two living rooms, with the dairy at the extreme east. The internal well was eventually back-filled, with quantities of plaster and mortar suggesting a major refurbishment of the building, and replaced with a new one, capped with an iron pump, located outside the south wall of the building adjacent to a new kitchen door. The pump may have eventually discharged directly into a water-tank and thence to a copper in the scullery, as described in a sale document of the 1930's:

> " A Commodious Brick and Stone-built and Stuccoed FARMHOUSE
> (at one time a Moated Grange) with tiled roof and having
> a garden in front, and containing: Two Sitting Rooms; Dairy;
> Cellar; cupboard under stairs; Kitchen with two cupboards;
> Larder; and Scullery with fireplace sink and copper with water
> supply from tank outside, which is supplied from a Well in
> front with a Pump;.....Outside: Wash-house with two coppers;
> Coal Place; Closet and Ashpit and Garden. "

The dairy mentioned in the paragraph above was the last in the sequence, lying east of the main farmhouse block and butted against the external wall. This room, also with a brick sunken floor, was entered via an internal door knocked through from the second phase cellar/dairy to the west. Four brick piers built against the east wall supported a stone working surface, and the internal wall surfaces had been white-washed. These two rooms functioned together for some time, and became redundant together. The doorway between the two was blocked with brick, and the internal cellar backfilled with rubble and capped with concrete to the same level as the adjacent floors. The external room was demolished and the area levelled up with the resulting material. Photographic evidence suggests that this took place in the 1940's.

Fig 57: The last farmhouse looking west. The third and final dairy lies at the bottom of the photo. The cobbled fold yard is on the night.

Other alterations to the farmhouse included the addition and then removal of a number of small rectangular rooms (function unknown - possibly animal pens?) at the west end of the building, and the conversion of either the scullery itself, or a building on the same site, into a stallion box, where the 'gentleman horse' (*pers. comm*, unnamed source) could keep an eye on his 'ladies' in the main barn. A cobbled ramp was constructed to ease his passage into the fold yard between them. Photographic evidence shows that this area too was demolished in the 1940's, shortening the building and leaving a former internal wall forming the end of the house.

Fig 58: The last farmhouse looking east, showing part of the yard to the left.

It is difficult to assign a date to the various phases of alterations to the original farmhouse building, but at least some are probably contemporary with the addition of a range of barns to the rear of the house, with an enclosed fold yard between. This construction work, which seems to have taken place in the first decade of the nineteenth century, reflects a phase of modernisation undertaken on all the farms on the Womersley estate, using the same plan with only minor variations from site to site. The main range of barns, for instance, is almost identical at Wood Hall, at Spring Lodge a mile away, and at Home Farm in Womersley.

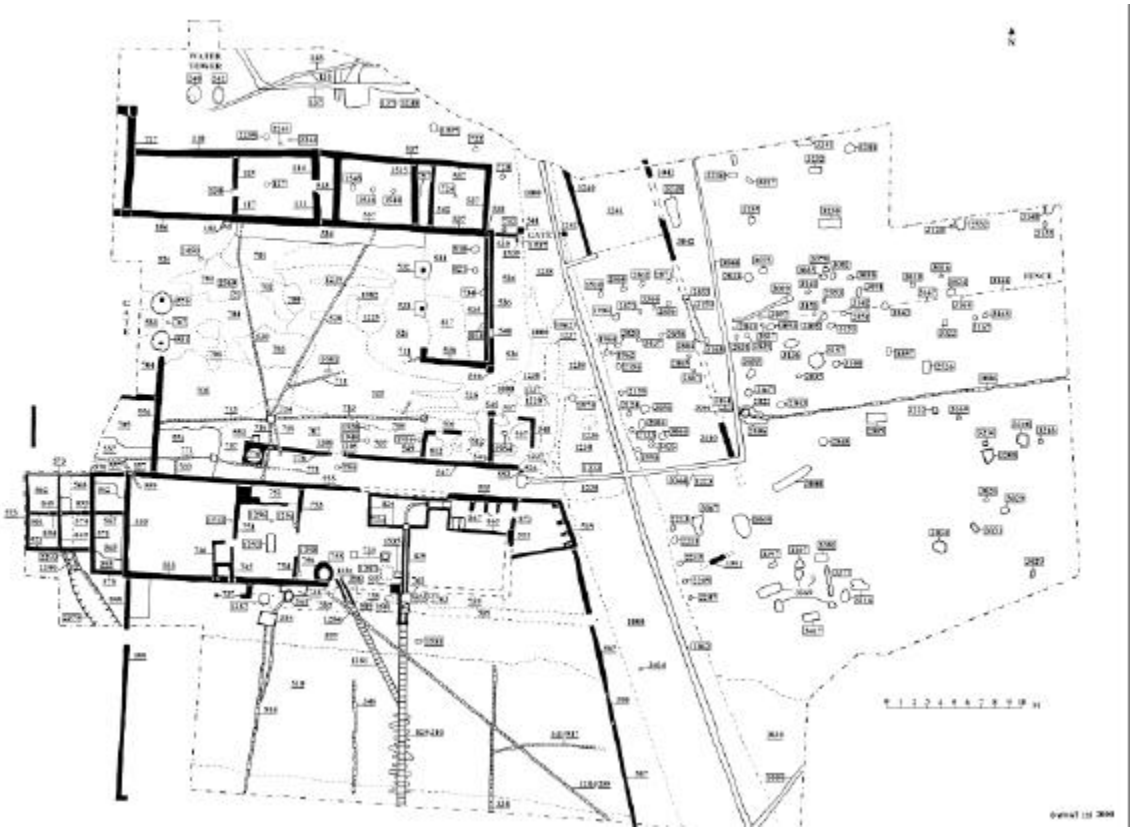


Fig 59: The later farm. Late 19th and 20th century

The barn range at Wood Hall was a three-part construction. The highest, central barn, with doors big enough to admit a loaded wagon, was built first, the flanking buildings being butted against it. It is not suggested, however, that there was any great time lag between the construction of any of the three sections. The yard between the rear of the house and the new barns was cobbled, flanked at the east by an open-fronted cart-shed next to substantial limestone gate-posts. A similar gateway lay on the west side of the cobbled yard. It is not known if any buildings enclosed this side of the yard, as the area has not been excavated, but the presence of drains within the yard and to the west suggest that other structures existed.

At the south of the yard a wall separated the fold yard from the path leading to the back door of the farmhouse. Two small buildings on the yard side of this wall were once the coal place and the wash house (*pers. comm*, unnamed source) as mentioned in the 1930's sale document. A well at the west end of this path served the yard and farm buildings in the nineteenth century, replacing an earlier one more central to the yard area. The final water supply to the farmyard was pumped from a twentieth-century brick well in the pasture annexe to the north of the moated platform.

Fig 60: Wood Hall farm some 5 years before demolition

In the 1950s the fold yard was concreted over and new sectional buildings were constructed. These were the last alterations at Wood Hall. The farm and parts of the farmland were acquired by the Central Electricity Generating Board in 1963 to form part of the Gale Common Ash Disposal Site. Farming continued, but because the farm had no long-term future it was never modernised, which in fact probably saved the archaeological remains from being bulldozed. The last tenants left in 1980, and in 1982, partly because of vandalism and partly because the buildings were in a dangerous state, the last dwelling at Wood Hall was demolished.

Phase XI - 1988 to 2001

The Wood Hall Moated Manor Project began in 1988. In the thirteen years from then until its closure in 2001 more than 500 people, mostly trainees and interested 'amateurs', took part in the excavations; more than 100 schools took advantage of the educational resource provided, either by site visits or on Work Experience Schemes; and literally thousands of people from all corners of the globe visited the excavations. The Project received two certificates in the British Archaeological Awards for the presentation of the site to the public, and National Power received four similar certificates for their continued sponsorship.

Thanks are due to the British Academy, Sheffield Environmental Facility, and the Universities of Bradford, Cardiff, Durham and Sheffield, the Environmental Archaeology Unit at York, and the York Archaeological Trust Conservation section, for their continued support of and participation in the Project. Among many individuals too numerous to name who have taken an interest in the Project, the contributions of Mrs Ann Hind (documentary evidence) and Stephen Moorhouse (medieval pottery and much good advice) deserve special recognition.

The Project has always enjoyed the greatest support from local people. Among the businesses that have contributed to its success are Eggborough Power Ltd, Rendell Palmer and Tritton, Hickson of Castleford, Shepherd Construction, Hewden Stewart, Neil Tools, Crossley Tordoff of Pontefract, Greenacres Vermin Control and Stapleton Venison and Game. Heartfelt thanks are due to the people of Womersley for their unfailing support and forbearance; but the greatest acknowledgement must go to the excavation staff (Simon Tomson, John McIlwaine, Dan Ferguson, Barbara Lowe, Jane Dawson and Brian Minhinnick) and of course the 'diggers' - without whom none of it would have been possible.

This interim report is a synthesis of the work of many individuals; all mistakes, however, are the author's own.

The Future

Wood Hall now belongs to Eggborough Power Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of British Energy plc, and will be safeguarded, for its wildlife as well as its archaeology, as part of the Integrated Land Management Plan for the Gale Common Ash Disposal Site. There are no plans to excavate the remainder of the site. The Wood Hall archive is housed at the Yorkshire Museum, Museum Gardens, York YO1 7FR.

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