A MEDIEVAL GARDEN AT THE BELGRAVE MOAT, CHESHIRE

by R. C. Turner, C. B. Sale and J. A. Axworthy Rutter

Following the clearance of a plantation of dead elm trees, the size and complexity of the earthworks of the Belgrave Moat, just south of Chester, were revealed for the first time in perhaps 400 years (NGR SJ 390 605).[1] This led to a detailed survey of the site and its environs and a trial excavation to answer specific questions raised during the survey. The site is very well-preserved and has a short and unusual history of occupation. What seems to survive, surrounding a large moated platform, are the earthwork structures of a medieval garden. The documentary evidence links Belgrave and probably this moated site to a prominent servant of Edward I, thereby suggesting that the garden may date from *c.* 1300.

The history of the site

The medieval manor of Belgrave was only small and lay within the parish of Eccleston. The name Belgrave, or as it was originally Belgreve, first appears as late as *c.* 1290,[2] and the estate seems to have been created by grant, lease or purchase from the surrounding manors. This was probably the work of Richard the Engineer (or Lenginour), one of Edward I's leading military engineers and a prominent figure in the life of Chester for at least fifty years.[3] The Eaton charters provide details of Richard the Engineer's local acquisitions, which began with a grant of land in Eccleston in 1284.[4] In 1295, he obtained two grants of land in Pulford and one in Eccleston, and as early as 1294, he was able to give the town of Eaton and two messuages in Bridge Street, for a term of years, as part of a marriage settlement to Richard de Pulford and his daughter Agnes.[5] Thereafter there were several transactions between Hugh de Venables and Richard the Engineer and his wife. An undated charter among the Venables papers, from the time of Reginald de Grey, justice of Chester, 1281-1299/1300, records a grant by Richard the Engineer to Hugh of all his lands in Eccleston, with the implication

[1] The Eaton Estate office invited the authors to make comments on the best way to preserve the site's archaeological and ecological interest. The site is not scheduled.
[2] J. McN. Dodgson, *Place-Names of Cheshire*, vol. 4, 1972, pp. 149-50.
[3] J. Harvey, *English Medieval Architects*, 1952, pp. 164-5.
[4] W. Beamont, *The Calendar of the Eaton Charters*, 1862, p. 19.
[5] Ibid., p. 19; *Schedule of Deeds and Documents in the Muniment Room at Eaton*, p. 49 (copy in Chester City Record Office).

that this was for services to Richard.[6] Presumably after this, between 1298 and 1300, Hugh made several grants and leases to Richard of land and waste in Eccleston.[7]

Out of all this trading in land comes the first mention of the house at Belgrave, in a charter of Edward II dated 6th April 1309. In this Egidius, son of Master Richard Lenginour, citizen of Chester was given 'all the messuage called Belegreve in the vill of Eccleston', with all its adjacent lands and tenements, by his father, Richard, and his mother, Agnes, for an annual rent of £10 during his parents' lives.[8] At the same date Richard gave Eaton to Agnes his daughter, wife of Richard de Pulford, so dividing up his rural holdings amongst his family. Richard the Engineer died in 1314/15 and his town house which stood in Lower Bridge Street was sold by his son, Almaricus, about five years later.[9] Belgrave seems to have passed through the hands of the de Pulfords to the de Belgreves in 1340, and is again mentioned in a charter of 1378.[10]

By 1403, the manor was held by Sir Richard Venables of Kinnerton but soon after this date it was forfeited to Henry IV following an attainder for treason. It passed to another branch of the Venables family. At the end of the 15th century and into the 16th century, the Grosvenors and the Leghs leased the manor but not without dispute between them.[11] None of these families would seem to have had their principal residence at Belgrave, as they were well established nearby. The buildings on the moat could have become ruinous. By the early 17th century, Belgrave had become part of the expanding Eaton Estate and its use and condition can be followed on a series of maps stored at the estate office.

The earliest is the Williams Map,[12] probably dating to the early or mid 17th century. It shows the moated site as a small field with boundaries including the maximum extent of the site. It is called Belgreve Coppice and has the size of 2 acres ¼ rood given. To the west is Belgreve Wood and to the south, the large Milne Field. On Thomas Badeslade's map of 1737, the main ditch of the moat is shown with a border of trees, much as it appears today. Some of the large stag's head oaks still to be found on the site may be old enough to be of this date. The Tithe Map of 1839 shows little change in the field pattern or the condition of the platform. The earliest Ordnance Survey map of the 1870's shows the whole of the moated site planted with trees, and the first substantial buildings near to the site, the present Belgrave Moat Farm. Successive plantings of trees led to clearance in 1985, and plans for replanting with widely spaced, native, broad-leaved trees.

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[6] Cheshire Record Office, DVE 1/E1/1.
[7] Ibid. DVE 1/E/3, DVE 1/E/14; Beamont, *Cal. Eaton Charts.* p. 19.
[8] Beamont, *Cal. Eaton Charts.* p. 20. Thanks are due to Chester City Record Office for providing details of the original.
[9] *Cheshire Sheaf,* 3rd series, 19 (1922), pp. 72-3.
[10] Beamont, *Cal. Eaton Charts.,* pp. 21-2.
[11] G. Ormerod, *History of Cheshire,* 2nd edition (ed. T. Helsby), 1882, vol. 1, p. 826.
[12] These maps are stored in the Eaton Estate Office, but this example is undated.
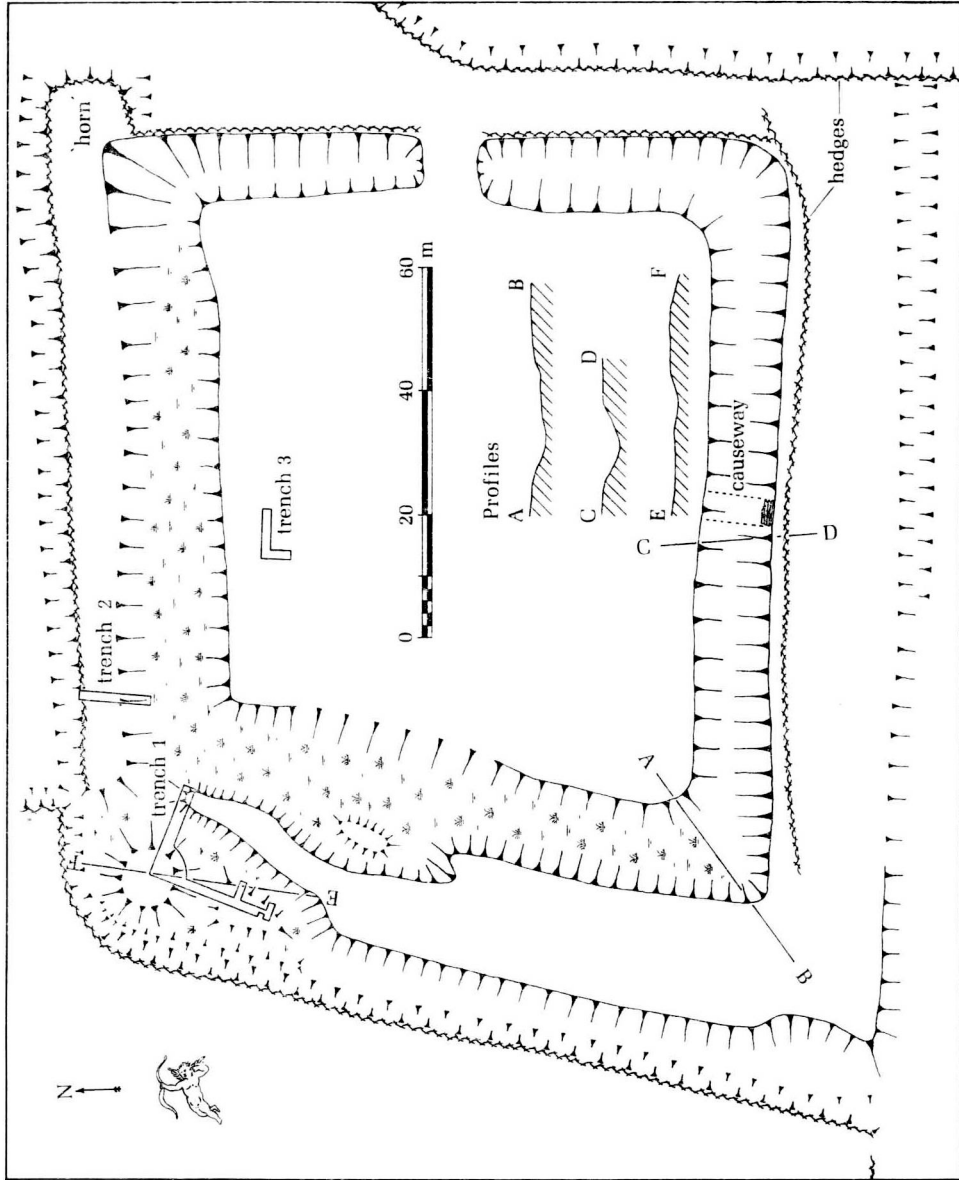
Fig. 1 — Plan of the Belgrave Moat and position of the excavated trenches

In sum, the medieval manor of Belgrave was almost certainly put together by Richard the Engineer at the end of the 13th century, as part of his dealings in land in Eccleston and Pulford. By 1309, there was a messuage and adjacent lands which he was able to rent to his son at £10 per annum. Belgrave was small yet it contained a large and complex moated site. Richard's income came not from farming, but from payments for his military work and his operation, under lease from Edward I, of the Dee Mills and fisheries in Chester.[13] He was responsible for mustering the large numbers of craftsmen, eg. diggers, masons, smiths, and carpenters needed for work on the Welsh Castles at the end of the 13th century and early 14th century. Richard the Engineer had the money, the workforce and the land to build the Belgrave moat. It passed to the family of his daughter by marriage, but by the end of the 14th century the site may have been abandoned as a residence and the land farmed by a local family. From then on, and certainly from the beginning of the 17th century, it has not been occupied and was principally used as a coppice woodland.

The survey

A detailed tacheometric survey was carried out in September 1985. It showed that the moat was trapezoidal and enclosed a platform 6750 sq. m. ($1\frac{2}{3}$ acres) in size (Fig. 1). No features were visible on the platform, except some disturbance where stumps had been uprooted and a general shelving off at the centre of the western side. The southern and eastern arms of the moat had been dredged to their original profile by a Hy-Mac under archaeological supervision. The Eaton Estate wished to create some open water as an additional habitat on the site. Though there was unease at the potential archaeological damage of this operation, it was calmed when the lower fill produced two beer bottles and two marmalade jars. The moat had clearly been dredged in modern times, probably in the 1920's when the last replanting of trees had taken place. The profile of the ditch which was revealed was V-shaped, 12.0 m. wide and up to 2.5 m. deep. No stream is available to be diverted to fill this moat which must have relied on natural drainage. Some months after the dredging the moat had filled to a depth of 1.5 m.

Modern access to the site is across an earthen causeway in the centre of the eastern side. This seems to have been in continuous use in recent times and is shown on Badeslade's map of 1737. The dredging of the southern arm revealed remains of another causeway. This survives only against the outer slope of the ditch and has a corduroy wooden road on a clay base, dipping with the profile of the ditch. It is insubstantial and unlikely to be original to the site

What makes this moat unusual, apart from its size, are the lesser earthworks which surround the main ditch on three sides. These are complex in the north-western corner, but the general impression is of a broad berm. On the southern

[13] R. M. Morris, *Chester in the Plantagenet and Tudor Reigns*, 1894, p. 574.

side it is flat and extends out into the modern field. The outer ditch has silted up and become flattened and the ridge and furrow begins immediately it is crossed. Along the northern side, there is a similar, narrower but better defined, linear bank. It is 12 m. wide and raised by upcast, and is planted with trees. This bank projects at the north-eastern corner to form a 'horn', which is clearly visible on the 17th-century estate map. Its outer ditch is still maintained as a field boundary.

The complex in the north-west is dominated at the corner by a substantial, nearly circular mound, standing 1.8 m. high and surrounded by a silted-up ditch 3 m. wide. The top is flat and 11 m. in diameter; the whole mound is 16 m. in diameter around the base. Just to the south, and appearing to relate to this mound, is a lower triangular earthwork. These earthworks are cut out of the berm forming the western side of the site and the ditches that surround them are connected to the main moat ditch. The outer boundary ditch of this side is flatter and broader than those on the northern and southern side. Towards the centre of the western side of the main ditch is another isolated but irregular mound. It is opposite the lowest point of the moated platform, and it could be that this was the site of the original bridge across the moat, the mound carrying a pier or abutment.

To understand the purpose of these lesser earthworks surrounding the moat, the key would seem to be the function of the circular mound. Several possibilities came to mind as the survey progressed.

1. A mound, perhaps carrying a summerhouse, to view a formal garden within the moat, and to look out across the estate.
2. A windmill mound for an early postmill. The 17th-century Williams estate map gives the name of the field to the south of the moat as Milne Field, and it shows such a post-mill on its mound, nearer the site of the old Eaton Hall.
3. A mound for a dovecote, protected from predators by a ditch.
4. A well-preserved Bronze Age barrow incorporated into the layout of the moat.

It was to answer these and related questions that a small excavation was **planned.**

The excavation

The excavation took place in March 1986. Three trenches were dug to answer specific questions. Their position can be seen on fig. 1 and they will be dealt with in turn.

TRENCH 1:

This was designed to investigate the surface of the top of the circular mound, its structure and the nature of the ditches surrounding it, and its relationship to the triangular mound. When planned in detail the mound proved to be exactly circular except where the uprooting of trees had changed its outline. A quadrant of the flat top was opened up and only the thinnest layer of topsoil had to be removed
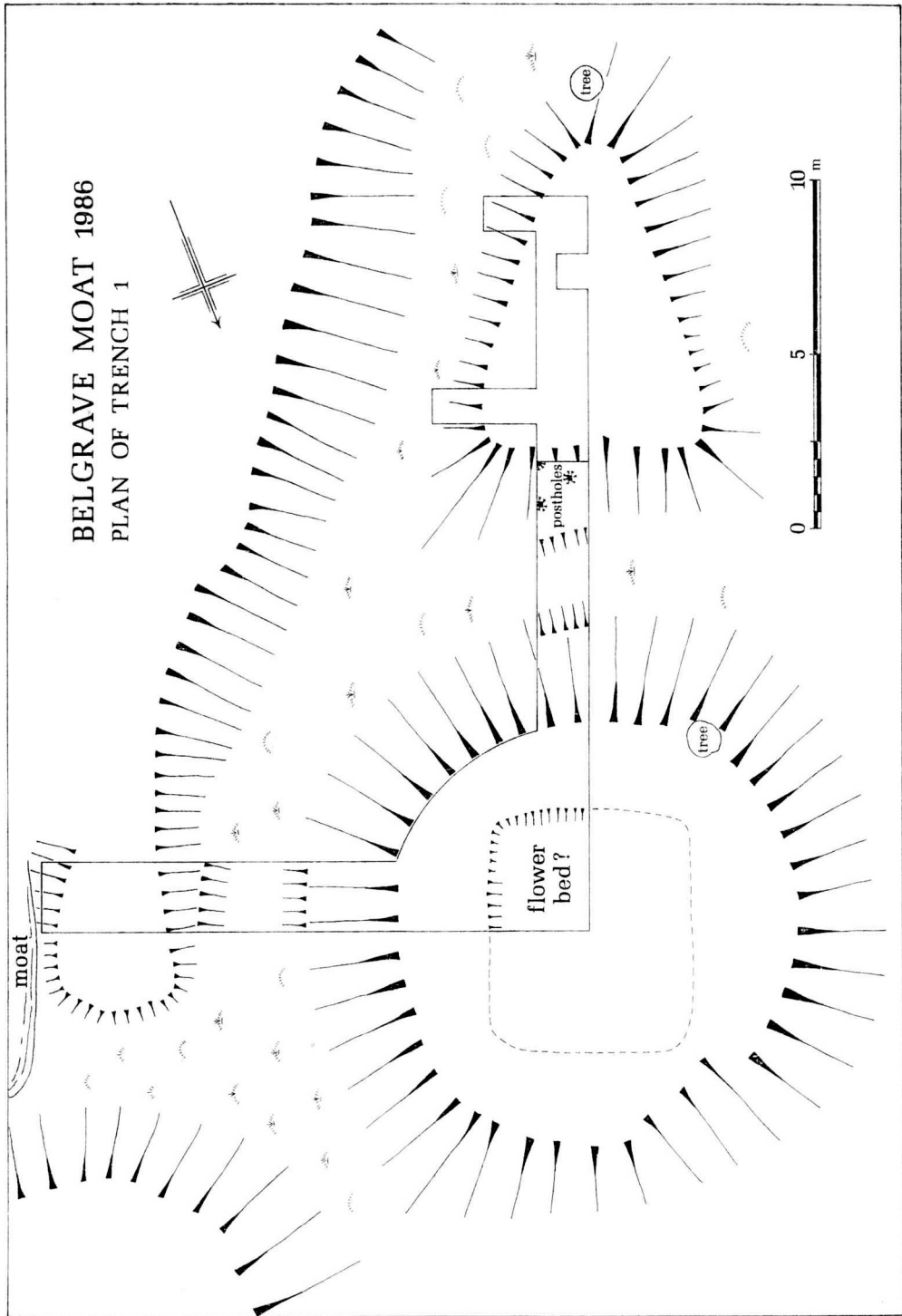
BELGRAVE MOAT 1986
PLAN OF TRENCH 1

tree

tree

moat

postholes

flower
bed ?

0   5   10 m

Fig. 2 — Detailed plan of Trench 1

N. section of Trench 1

6
7
1
8
16 17
19
23
old
ground surface

flowerbed

circular mound

28
22 21
2
3
9

E. section of Trench 2

4
old
ground surface
19

outer
ditch

main
moat

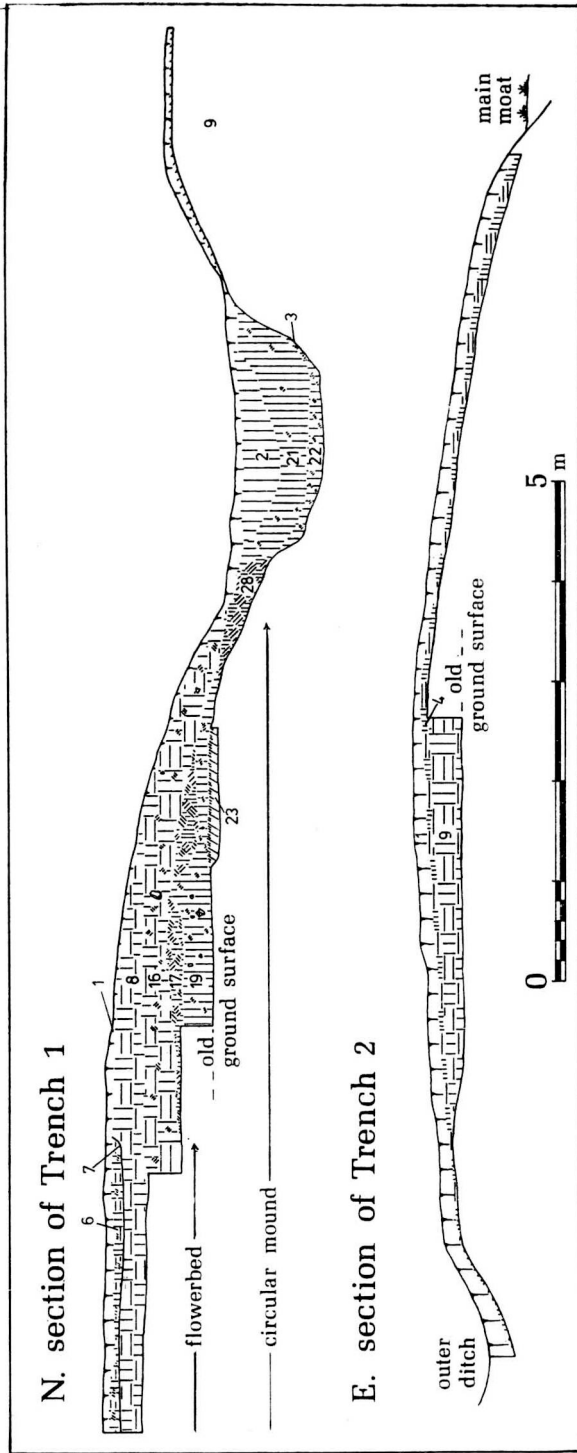0   5
                     m

Fig. 3 — Section of the two major trenches at the Belgrave Moat

to reveal the clay cap of the mound. Apart from two animal burrows and a spread of charcoal from a recent bonfire, there were no modern intrusions. Cut into the cap was a single feature (context 007). This was a quarter of a rectangular intrusion with a rounded corner. It was apparently placed centrally on the mound, flat bottomed, with curving sides and up to 12 cm. deep (Figs. 2 and 3). It was filled with a mixture of brown loam and the red clay of the mound capping (006). The few finds consisted of parts of three medieval pots (but no later pottery) and some bone and pieces of coal (below).

This feature could have carried no structure and was not deep enough to be a pit. Its central position on the top of the mound and the date of the finds suggest it was part of the original design. Rather mundanely, it can be best interpreted as a flower bed.

A section was cut along the northern edge of this trench to investigate the structure of the mound (Fig. 2). Successive layers of clay, presumably dug from the surrounding ditches, were piled onto the old ground surface. No turf line was visible in section, for the turf may have been stripped for later re-use. The stiffest and cleanest red clay (004) was used as a deliberate capping for the mound and laid to give it its final shape. A small ball of clay (028) was replaced on the side of the ditch in this section, presumably to make the circular plan exact.

The section through the mound was continued across the ditch. When dug, the ditch had a maximum width of 3.8 m., but when the capping was in position this was reduced to 3.0 m. It was nearly flat bottomed with a width of 1.72 m. and a depth of 1.16 m. below the line of the old ground surface. The difference in height between the top of the mound and bottom of the ditch is 2.20 m. The ditch was filled with a silty clay of decreasing compaction which was divided, rather arbitrarily into three contexts, 022, 021 and 002. This silty clay was either washed off the side of the mounds or deposited by the water in the ditch. There were no finds except a sheep bone at the bottom of the ditch and some tiny flecks of burnt daub as a coarse component of the upper levels. When allowed to stand for a few days, this ditch section would naturally fill with water.

The section was extended to reveal the surface of the long mound which curves around the eastern side of the circular mound. This appeared to be made of upcast clay and its surface had no features present. Its structure was not investigated.

A ditch section was also dug along the western edge of this trench. This section was orientated in the hope that the remains of any bridge or causeway spanning the triangular and circular mound would be encountered. The profile was different having stepped sides. The edges of the mounds had been either dug away by later recutting or the capping layers had not covered the whole of the mound. It was 4 m. wide at the previous ground surface and 2 m. across the bottom of the ditch. It was shallower at 0.64 m below previous ground surface but was filled with a similar sequence of fills as encountered above, except for an

intrusive sheep burial (018). In the short length exposed, the ditch was seen to curve around the circular mound.

The previous ground surface (023) was unlike any old ground surface encountered elsewhere on the site, It was a black silt with a maximum depth of 0.20 m. and underlay both mounds. Its high humic content suggested that it may have been waterlaid. When the triangular mound was cut back to investigate this layer, in the small area revealed, this previous ground surface was removed to reveal three postholes (025, 026 and 027) (Fig. 2). All these were filled with a similar material to context 023 and with no evidence for the decay of the posts in situ. They varied in size from 0.15 by 0.25 m. to 0.30 by 0.35 m. at the surface and from 0.25 to 0.35 m. deep. Context 025 may have held a post at an angle towards the circular mound. The conical nature of the cut for the postholes suggested they may have been removed deliberately. The whole structure was not uncovered and its function remains unknown. However it implies that the complex of mounds at this corner of the site may be of more than one period or may have been constructed in an already existing feature.

TRENCH 2:

A trench 1.5 m. wide was dug across the linear mound which forms the northern edge of the site. Its width and position were governed by the mature trees which were growing there. The section was 12 m. long and was not extended to include the ditch profiles. The archaeology was very simple. On removing the topsoil and root disturbed upper surface a dump of red clay was revealed (divided into 004 and 009). It had smoothly sloping sides and rose to 0.38 m. above the original ground surface. This surface was not visible in plan and was only traced with difficulty in section (Fig. 3). It appears that all the humic levels, including any turf, were carefully removed before the clay was dumped, and perhaps immediately re-used as a new surface layer. There was a small amount of medieval pottery, some coal and a piece of pipe stem. The last item may be intrusive in the many rootholes penetrating this area.

TRENCH 3:

A small trench was opened on the moated platform. This was to investigate the depth of stratigraphy to be found there and assess the impact of further tree planting. The position of the trench was determined by modern factors. It lay outside the area of the platform covered by the spoil from the recent ditch cleaning and in an area free from tree stumps. Again the stratigraphy was straightforward. After the topsoil was removed and the surface cleaned (014) a thick layer of buff silt was found in the whole trench (015). This layer had a mixture of finds from a flint scraper to post-medieval pottery (below). What was well represented were pieces of fired or burnt clay.

The larger and more highly fired pieces have been identified as pieces of medieval

hearth tile.[14] They and a quantity of iron nails provide some idea of the nature of the buildings on the platform. No features were found cut into the surface of the subsoil. The layer above, with its mixture of finds yet homogenous nature, must represent an earlier dredging of the moat with the spoil spread over the interior.

Conclusions and parallels

Several interpretations of the earthworks around the three sides of the moated platform were suggested by the survey. In the absence of any buildings, the best would seem to be that they represent the structures of a garden. The finds from this area are all of the first half of the 14th century which would confirm the documentary evidence that the site was laid out by Richard the Engineer around 1300 and occupied by his descendants for some of the rest of the 14th century. This accident of history has probably left us with a most unusual survival, the garden of a royal servant at the time the medieval English garden began to flower.

Our knowledge of gardens of this period is almost entirely documentary and reflects the personality and interests of Edward I and his queen, Eleanor. In the middle of the 13th century, his father Henry III had been the regular employer of master gardeners at the Royal Palaces. It was during Edward I's return from the Crusades, passing through Italy and France, that he heard of his father's death. This soon led to a change in policy towards the royal gardens, perhaps inspired by the continental examples he had seen.[15] There was an immediate investment in gardens at the Tower of London and the Palace of Westminster. This involved the creation of herbers, enclosed lawned areas with flower and herb beds, in which fruit trees and vines could be incorporated. The turf was specially cut and brought from the marshes alongside the Thames. Walls and seats were also covered with turf. Albertus (1206-1280), a German Dominican friar, wrote a treatise 'On Vegetables and Plants' in which he describes how best to make a lawn when the scythe was the only method of mowing. After insisting on rich and firm soil, cleared of weeds and sterilised by boiling water, he goes on:

'Then the whole plot is to be covered with rich turf of flourishing grass, the turves beaten down with broad, wooden mallets and the plants of grass trodden into the ground until they cannot be seen or scarcely anything of them perceived. For then little by little, they may spring forth closely and cover the surface like a green cloth.'[16]

As Edward I's attention turned to Chester and his campaigns in North Wales, the evidence for gardens in this region becomes more common. Apart from a reference of c.1190 by Ranulph, 6th earl of Chester, to the keeping of his garden and orchard at his house in Chester and making a garden in the ditch of Chester

[14] Kindly identified by Richard Coleman-Smith, Newcastle University, quoting C. Platt & R. Coleman-Smith, *Excavations in Medieval Southampton, 1953-69*, vol. 2, 1975, p. 202.
[15] This section relies very heavily on J. H. Harvey, *Medieval Gardens*, 1981.
[16] Harvey, *ibid.*, 6.

Castle,[17] the bulk of the evidence begins in Edward's reign. When the new chamber was being built for Queen Eleanor at Conway Castle in 1283, a new herber was made with turves shipped up the river. It was fenced with the staves of an empty wine tun and on a July evening it was watered by one of the queen's esquires.[18] Harvey draws other references together:

'At Chester, . . . 200 plants of apples and pears were bought in 1287, and the gardener's obligation in 1290 was to find worts *(caules)* from Michaelmas to Lent and leeks throughout Lent. In 1302 the gardener, 'T' and his mate *(socio)* were digging and carrying away turves and making three herbers in Chester Castle with them. There was already a King's Garden, ditched and hedged, at Caernarvon Castle by 1295.'[19]

Richard the Engineer had been closely involved with all these sites at the dates mentioned and was probably responsible for organising the workmen. It must have been these gardens which inspired his work at Belgrave.

Gardens lower down the social scale than the royal castles or palaces are even less well known. They are most commonly referred to in monastic records where we find not only vegetable and herb gardens, but pleasure gardens as well. In 1302, the abbot of Peterborough 'had made a beautiful herber next to the Derby Yard, and surrounded it with double moats, with bridges and pear trees and very lovely plants costing £25'.[20] This garden survived on a map of 1721 and it has been possible to reconstruct the plan.[21] Also the abbot was active in extending and improving the garden at his manor house of Eye.

Only recently has field evidence for medieval gardens associated with manor houses been recognised. The work of the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England in Northamptonshire, Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire has identified a number of examples. Basing himself on some of this evidence, Taylor comments:

'Where the main moat covered only by a small area and this was mostly occupied by buildings, the gardens apparently lay outside and were themselves often surrounded by water-filled ditches'.[22]

He particularly draws attention to secondary moats associated with the principal platform. Excavation of these sites often yields no structural evidence and no adequate explanation has been offered. They would appear in many cases to be gardens. There are local examples. Of these the nearest and the best is Eaton itself. The Williams estate plan of the 17th century shows a double moat, one containing the house and a small formal garden, and the other, a small island

[17] Harvey, *ibid.*
[18] R. A. Brown, *English Castles*, 1979, p. 210.
[19] Harvey. *Medieval Gardens*, p. 84.
[20] Harvey, *ibid.*, p. 13.
[21] Harvey, *ibid.*, p. 85.
[22] C. C. Taylor, *Archaeology of Gardens*, 1983, p. 36.

in a wide moat carrying a summerhouse.[23] There was mention of gardens at another house of the Grosvenor family in 1429. This was at Hulme Hall, Allostock, where the moated manor survives. Joan, wife of Thomas le Grosvenor, was given part of the house and its associated buildings and 'le Vyne Yorde, le Night gale Erber, with le Lytell Erber, and free access across the bridge'.[24] Closer in design to Belgrave are the remains of a garden at Nettleham, Lincolnshire, one of the palaces of the medieval bishops of Lincoln.[25] Outside a great courtyard of buildings associated with the palace is a small enclosed garden, 60 m. long, enclosed by the remains of a stone wall. This consists a linear terrace, 13 m. wide, which projects a little beyond the southern end of the palace.

With this outline in mind, it is possible to imagine what the garden at Belgrave may have looked like. It is clear that the mounds were designed to be surrounded by water. Though no direct evidence was found, they must have been connected by bridges, to allow a circulation around the garden. The mounds are raised and capped with the red clay subsoil. This would have provided the firm and weed free base for the lawns of the individual herbers. As medieval paintings show, carpets of meadow flowers would have been encouraged through the turf. All these features would have appeared to have been turf covered; no pathways seem to be present. A single flowerbed was discovered on the top of the circular mound and others might be expected. The planting of these herbers seems to have been a mixture of the decorative and functional, with fruit trees, vines and herbs being mixed with flowering plants. The garden could have been surrounded by hedges, paling fences or walls. Flimsy trellises and tunnel-arbours are implied by documentary sources for sites of this date but more substantial structures are not commonly mentioned until later in the 14th century.[26]

The individual elements of raised circular mounds and linear terraces survived and became more elaborate in Tudor and Elizabethan times.[27] The circular mound evolved into the true prospect mound, which was conical or even spiral in shape, and gave a view out over the estate and back towards the house and garden. This may have been the function of the circular mound and the 'horn' at the north-east corner of the Belgrave Moat. The linear mounds became allees and were places to promenade or walk with friends; the fine weather equivalents of the long galleries to be found in the great houses of Elizabeth and James I's reigns. The herbers were outdoor rooms in which much of the action of high medieval poetry and the scenes of high medieval paintings were set. As with all gardens which preceded the revolution of the landscape gardeners of the 18th century, the garden was a planned extension of the house.

[23] I. Laurie, 'Landscape Gardeners at Eaton Park, Chester, I', *Garden History*, 12, 1984, pp. 40-1.
[24] Ormerod, *Hist. of Ches.*, vol. 3, p. 149.
[25] Taylor, *Arch. of Gardens*. pp. 37-8.
[26] Harvey, *Medieval Gardens*.
[27] R. Strong, *The Renaissance Garden in England*, 1979.

FLINT CASTLE

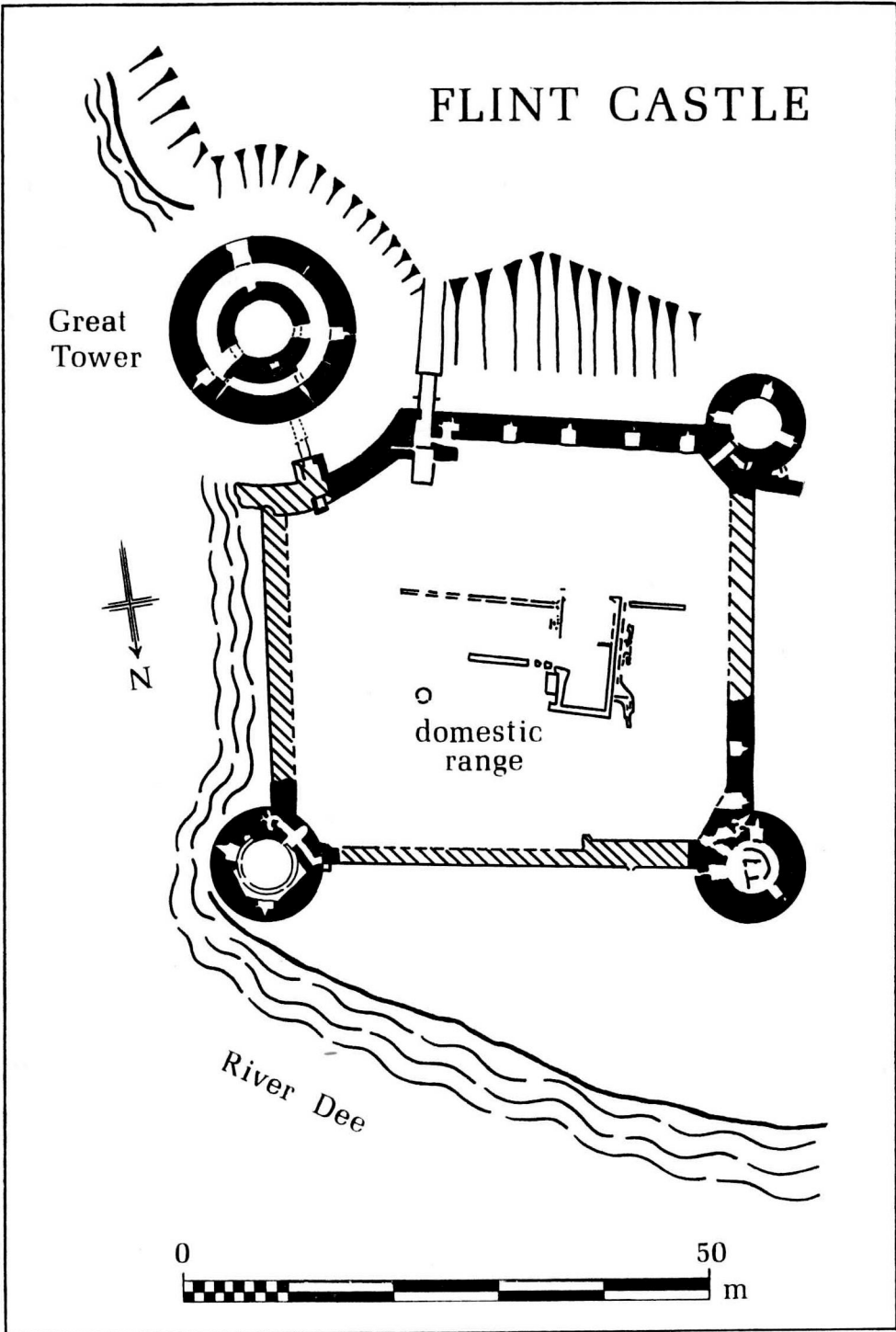Great Tower

domestic range

N

River Dee

0   50
     m

Fig. 4 — The plan of Flint Castle, orientated to show the similarity with the plan of the Belgrave Moat (after HMSO)

It is possible to speculate on the inspiration of the plan of the whole site. Richard the Engineer was a designer and builder of castles. If the ditches at the Belgrave moat are imagined as walls, it makes a most convincing castle. This works particularly well for Flint Castle,[28] where Richard began his work on the Welsh campaigns, and the position of the Great Tower corresponds with that of the circular mound (Fig. 4). This suggestion may not be so fanciful as it first appears. Central to the *Roman de la Rose,* a highly influential 13th-century French poem of courtly love, is the symbolic Castle of Roses.[29] An early English translation of this poem, partly undertaken by Chaucer, describes the castle as follows:

> "The tour was rounde, maad in compas:
> In al this world no richer was,
> Ne better ordeigned therwithal,
> Aboute the tour was maad a wall,
> So that, bitwixt that and the tour,
> Rosers were set of swete savour,
> With many roses that they bere".[30]

A possible confirmation is that Sir John Pultney was given permission to crenellate his mansion in the City of London in 1341. This incorporated a battlemented tower visible on a view of 1550. The house was called the Manor of the Rose.[31]

As for the details of any layout of the interior of the moated platform, and the nature and position of the buildings, little is known. No structures were found in the survey or in the small trench excavated, though this did produce a quantity of burnt daub and medieval tile. The site is sealed by one or two layers of silt, which come from post-medieval dredgings of the moat but in the small trench excavated, there was no appreciable medieval stratigraphy. Four hundred years or more of tree planting and management must have damaged the stratigraphy but the importance of the site as a whole cannot be denied.

The manor and moated manor house of Belgrave was the creation of Richard the Engineer. It is worth speculating on the meaning of the name. Dodgson interprets the elements as *bel,* 'a fire or beacon', and *graefe,* 'a grove, copse or thicket'.[32] This does not fit the topography, which, being almost flat, is unsuitable for a beacon. In documents Richard's surname appears variously as Lenginour or Ingeniator betraying a possible French origin. Surely Belgreve, as it is originally

[28] R. A. Brown, H. M. Colvin & A. J. Taylor, *History of the King's Works,* vol. 1, 1966, pp. 308-18.
[29] Apart from Dante's Inferno, more copies of the *Roman de la Rose* survive from the medieval period than any other poetic work. See the caption to the copy on display in the British Library.
[30] G. Skeat, *The Complete Works of Chaucer,* 1976, p. 43.
[31] J. Schofield, *The Building of London, from the Conquest of the Great Fire,* 1984, p. 81.
[32] Dodgson, *P.-N. Ches.,* vol. 4, p. 149.

spelt, is similar to such place-names as Beaumaris (Anglesey), Beaudesert (Warwickshire), Beaulieu (Hampshire), Beaupre (Glamorgan), and Belvoir (Leicestershire). All these sites are associated with important castles or abbeys of the period from the Conquest to the late 13th century. Belgrave is also to be found in Staffordshire near Tamworth. A simpler explanation is that the name means beautiful grove. The estate, house and gardens at Belgrave perhaps should be seen as the country retreat of a busy and successful senior civil servant, where he and his family could relax, a few miles from his duties and businesses in Chester.

FINDS FROM THE EXCAVATION

by J. A. Axworthy Rutter

A small number of artefacts comprising fragments of pottery vessels, tile, wood, metalwork and clay tobacco pipes were recovered from the site during the course of the excavation.

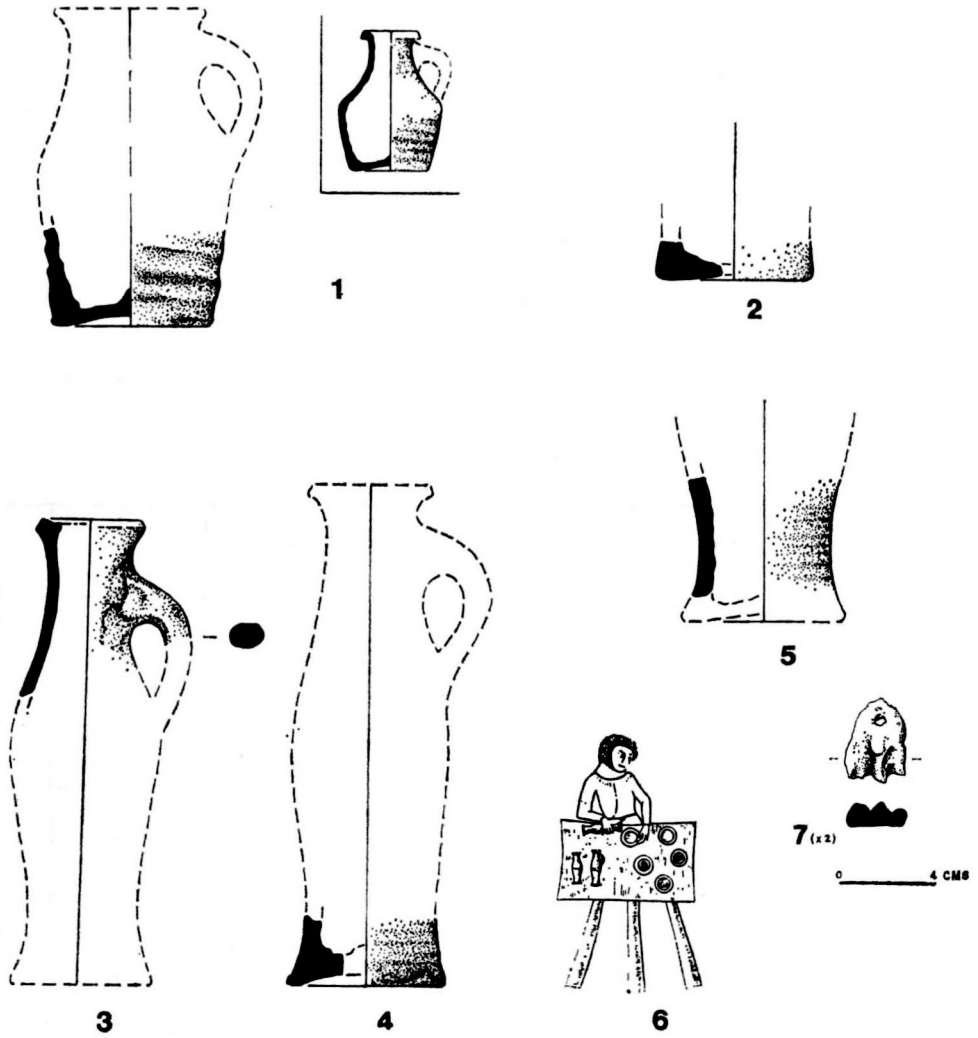| Context | Medieval pottery Chester Fabric nos. Sherds : vessels | | | | 18th — early 19th cent. wares | | | | | Clay Tobacco Pipes | | Fired clay fragments | Iron | Wood |
	94	485	255	496	Slipware	Black-br. gl. wares	White salt gl. stoneware	Brown salt gl. stoneware	Creamware	Bowl	Stem			
001				1	3:2v	3:2v		2:1v						
004			2:2v											
006	13:2-3v	1												1
009	2:1v										1x 5/64″			
010												1		
013												18: 14g	1:5g	
014						1			1	1				
014/ 015						2:2v	3:2v					2: 3.5g	2.3g	
015												6:4g		
017	1												1:3g	
029			1										3:2g	

Fig. 5
(Pottery drawn by J.A.R. at ⅓ lifesize; wood by C.B.S.)

Catalogue of Illustrations (Fig. 5)

1 Jug base, coarsely sanded, overfired grey-brown unglazed body; Chester Fabric 255.[33] Context 001. Close in both fabric and form to spoilt and discarded 'waster' material found at Ewloe near Buckley, Clwyd.[34] The vessel is a common type in Chester and the form here reconstructed is based on a small jug found in Bridge Street in 1901.[35] A similar though smaller sized jug is in the assemblage from 11 Watergate Street,[36] and a common variant in rim and neck profile is shown alongside the Belgrave vessel.[37]

2 Jug base, body as above though pink-brown and less highly fired; Chester Fabric 255. Context 004. A smaller footed vessel and closer in form to nos. 3, 4 and 5.

3 Jug rim and handle, soft, fine grained light brown fabric and partially clear glazed; Chester Fabric 94. Context 006. The form is paralleled by the Upper Northgate Street hoard pot, deposited *c.* 1361 on the basis of the surviving pieces of pre-Treaty coinage.[38] Also, some thirty similar bottle-like vessels contained in a pit group, on the Old Market Hall excavation (1967/70).[39]

4 Jug base, fine grained largely grey body, rather denser and harder than no. 3; Chester Fabric 485. Context 006. Comments as for no. 3 above. A sample of this base was ground down and treated with various solvents including hexane, chloroform, propanol and water, in order to extract any trace of former contents remaining in the body of the vessel. To reduce the volume of each small sample, the extracts were evaporated under reduced pressure at *c.* 60°C and each examined by both infra-red spectroscopy and chromatography. Only the hexane extract gave a positive result and the material detected was bees wax. The residue was probably carried into the body in an aqueous substance, perhaps a food sweetened or preserved with honey (see Fig. 5, 6). The examination demonstrated a notable absence of substances such as antimony or mercury and inorganic salts such as sodium and potassium. Starch, oily compounds and fats were also absent. This rules out salty or salt preserved foods, a variety of medieval ointments or fatty sub-

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[33] Fabric numbers referred to here relate to an open-ended ceramic reference series housed in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester. It comprises Roman to recent material and is largely representative of wares found locally.

[34] H. M. Harrison and P. J. Davey, 'Ewloe Kiln', in P. J. Davey ed., *Medieval Pottery from Excavations in the North West*, 1977, pp. 92-9.

[35] R. Newstead, 'A descriptive account of Roman and other objects recovered from various sites in Chester and District 1898-1901', *J.C.A.S.*, n.s. 8 (1901), pp. 104-5, fig. 9.

[36] Fig, 2, no. 6 in, J. A. Rutter, 'Lifestyle in the Rows', *J.C.A.S.*, 67 (1985), 55-75, figs. 1-5, pl. 1-3.

[37] Two narrow necked jugs are illustrated in: D. Johnson, 'Higher Whitley SJ 619801', *Ches. Archaeol. Bull.*, 5 (1977), pp. 51-2, fig. 20, and D. E. M. Morgan, '25 Northgate Street, Chester', *Ches. Archaeol. Bull.*, 3 (1975), p. 61, fig. 25.

[38] Only the base of one of these bottle-like jugs was recovered with the hoard: J. A. Rutter, 'Chester: Upper Northgate Street hoard pot', in P. J. Davey ed., *Med. Pottery*, pp. 22-3, and J. A. Rutter, '457. Chester (Northgate Street), Cheshire, 1901', in M. M. Archibald, 'Medieval and Modern Hoards,' *Coin Hoards*, vol. 2, 1976, p. 118.

[39] *See* J. A. Rutter, 'Chester: Old Market Hall (1967-70) pit group', in P. J. Davey ed., *Med. Pottery*, pp. 18-21.

stances which would certainly have left traces, had the small bottle contained them.[40]

5   Jug wall, soft, fine grained light brown body, partially clear glazed; Chester Fabric 94. Context 009. A slightly broader profile but essentially the same form as nos. 3 and 4. Comments as for no. 3.

6   Detail at the base of a folio in the Luttrell Psalter, painted AD 1335-1340, depicting a kitchen scene.[41] Note the small bottles on the table, possibly metal cruets but close in shape to nos. 3, 4 and 5.

7   Wooden object (drawn twice lifesize by C. B. Sale). Context 006. The fragment may be a naturally formed knot, but it resembles a carved animals foot.[42]

Discussion

The small bottles are a widespread jug form, from the thirteenth, throughout the fourteenth and into the fifteenth century.[43] Locally, the types represented by nos. 1 and 2, and nos. 3 to 5 are contemporary and paralleled in the material recovered in Ewloe.[44] Pink/white bodied wares produced from Coal Measure clays are more common, however, than the glacial clay, red/grey coloured fabrics (e.g. no. 4).

All the softer bodied, lower fired fragments of medieval jugs show varying degrees of abrasion (e.g. nos. 2 and 3), and there is a high proportion of very small fragments. The one small sherd, presumed to be of a jug in Chester Fabric 496 (clear glazed; not illustrated), is otherwise unidentifiable. The fragments of hearth tile, fired at no more than *c.* 700°C are particularly weathered.[45] This suggests that the material may have been recovered from secondary deposits on the site, the pottery initially perhaps being thrown on to a midden and then transported with **manure.**

[40] I am extremely grateful to John Evans of the North East London Polytechnic for carrying out the analysis.
[41] British Library, Harleian MS. Additions 42130, f. 207v. (miniature at foot of folio — cooks). I am grateful to the British Library for permission to publish this copy 'after' the original.
[42] R. C. Turner, pers. comm.
[43] J. C. Thorn, 'Two medieval pots from Friday Street', *London Archaeol.*, vol. 2 no. 3 (1973), pp. 62-3, and P. Mayes and C. Hayfield, 'A late medieval pottery kiln at Holme-upon Spalding Moor', in P. Armstrong, *Excavations in Scale Lane/Lowgate 1974*, Hull Old Town Report Series No. 4 (1980), pp. 99-111.
[44] See note 34.
[45] I am very grateful to Richard Coleman-Smith for experimentally refiring a sample of the tile. This demonstrated the approximate original firing temperature below 1000°C. All the tile material came from the same local clay source.

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