

A BRIDGE FRAMEWORK FROM CAMLET MOAT, TRENT PARK, ENFIELD

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Midway along its length, the ridgeway between Enfield and Hadley curves round a homestead moat at the northern boundary of Trent Park (National Grid Reference TQ 987282). The site consists of a rhombic 'island' 200 feet across, surrounded by a wide moat filled by surface water from a thin layer of gravel overlying the clay; there is an overflow ditch on the south side. The eastern limb of the moat has been partly filled in, and there is a broad bank on the north counterscarp.

Some random excavations by the younger members of the Bevan family, in June 1923, revealed thick foundations of clunch, flint and tile, together with deer antlers and leather shoes, a dagger and a fingertip thimble, coins of Edward IV and glazed floortiles bearing the design of a knight on horseback (now lost), together with a wooden framework in the bed of the western limb of the moat⁽¹⁾. The latter was dragged out and a measured drawing made (*Fig. 1*) but only a few fragments remained when the site was first visited by the writer in 1949. The oak timbers were of one foot square scantling, with halving joints at the crossings and mitred and pegged extensions to the main bearers. Five of the many mortice holes still contained the tenons of uprights (shown in solid black on the

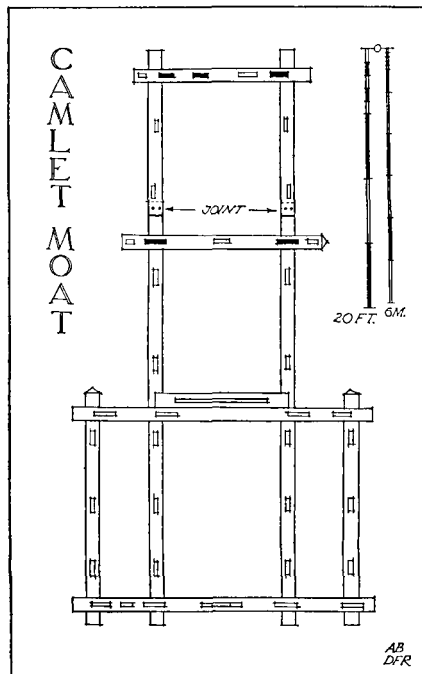


Fig. 1

drawing) and it is clear that the framework had been sunk in the bed of the moat to support braced posts carrying a planked carriageway above water level. The 'island' end of the bridge was widened and strengthened, probably to allow for the raising of the central span in time of need.

The careful carpentry at once proclaim the framework as mediaeval or later, but close parallels are hard to find. A somewhat similar bridge was suggested (on slender evidence) for the twelfth-century reconstruction (Period IIIb) of the Husterknupp near Cologne⁽²⁾. At Leckhampton Moat near Cheltenham, the entrance was marked by stone abutments. Across the gap (and partly under the outer abutment) lay a simple rectangular frame of split logs with halving joints at the crossings, morticed, and with traces of an upright. A fourteenth-century pot was found under the logs, together with some remains of planking⁽³⁾. A similar frame, but of squared timber, was excavated at West Derby castle, Liverpool, a motte and bailey reconstructed in the fourteenth century⁽⁴⁾. These were single-span bridges; that at Camlet Moat had three bays, and so was intermediate between them and the series of elaborate multi-span bridges found recently at Caerlaverock Castle, the earliest dating from shortly before 1300 and the latest being in use up to 1640⁽⁵⁾. At Bushwood Hall, Lapworth (Warwickshire), the central stone bridge-pier was sandwiched between oak trestles, with a freestanding trestle on each side, that on the 'island' side being doubled and braced into a groundframe, possibly strengthening for a drawbridge mentioned in a building contract of 1313⁽⁶⁾. A further development can be seen in the bridges of Bodiam Castle (where a licence to crenellate was granted in 1386) where there were no main bearers to the groundframe, each trestle standing separately on a single beam⁽⁷⁾. Stylistically, a fourteenth century date appears reasonable for the Camlet Moat framework.

The broad bank on the counterscarp suggests that the moat was dug around an existing house. Humfrey de Bohun had licence to crenellate (that is, to fortify) his manor houses including Enfield in 1347, and the mason William Ramsey bought property in Enfield in the following year⁽⁸⁾. This does not necessarily mean work at Camlet Moat, but in 1440 the materials from the demolished manor of Camelot were sold to pay for repairs to Hertford Castle⁽⁹⁾. This reference, a generation before Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, may mean that the site had even then acquired a legendary origin. But William Ramsey had been engaged in 1344 on the Round Table building at Windsor for Edward III's new order of chivalry⁽¹⁰⁾, and the moat, and the knights on the glazed tiles, may be expressions of the same romantic feeling.

NOTES

- 1 Mrs. N. H. Webster, *Spacious Days* (London, 1949), p. 29; *Enfield Weekly Herald*, June 1923. I owe these references to Mr. G. R. Gillam.
- 2 A. Herrnbrodtt, *Der Husterknupp* (Cologne, 1958), p. 59 abb. 35.
- 3 *Brist. & Glos. Arch. Soc. T.*, LV (1933), pp. 235-48.
- 4 *Liverpool Ann. Arch. & Anth.*, XV (1928), pp. 47-55.
- 5 Described to the Council for British Archaeology by Mr. Stewart Cruden on 13 January 1961. Preliminary note in *Medieval Archaeology* IV (1960), p. 147.
- 6 *Medieval Archaeology* VI/VII (1962-3), pp. 336-7.
- 7 Lord Curzon, *Bodiam Castle* (London, 1926).
- 8 Patent Roll 21 Edward III, m.4; Hardy and Page, *Feet of Fines for London and Middlesex*, I, p. 150.
- 9 Public Record Office, DL 42/18, f.148b; Warrants for Issues E 404/59/217, cited in *The History of the King's Works*, II (London, 1963), p. 680, n. 5.
- 10 W. H. St. J. Hope, *Windsor Castle* (London, 1913) I, p. 114.