

EXCAVATIONS IN ENFIELD 1977–1979

JAMES DINN AND SUSAN REYNOLDS

SUMMARY

Excavations in Enfield Town from 1977 to 1979 produced traces of medieval activity in the area to the south of Church Street, while a small site in Lincoln Road revealed Roman features.

INTRODUCTION

Excavations took place in Enfield Town from 1977 to 1979 in advance of the construction of a shopping precinct to the south of Church Street. They were carried out at first by the Enfield Archaeological Society and later, over the winter of 1978–79, by a small professional team, directed by G. Williams, with the assistance of the authors. Three sites were excavated in the town centre (Fig. 1); all produced evidence of medieval activity, although no definite traces of the Palace which stood in the area from 1552 to 1927 were found. A full report on the sites excavated has been prepared and is lodged with the finds, site records and plans in Forty Hall Museum, Enfield¹. Copies of the report are available at the British Museum and at the Guildhall Library, London.

PALACE GARDENS

A preliminary report on this site has already appeared². Further work on the site has, however, led to some modification of the published conclusions. The 1978–79 programme concentrated on a reassessment and renumbering of the work carried out in 1977–78 (although the original feature numbers are retained here for convenience of reference to the published report), and on detailed recording of the stokehole, Feature 1 (Fig. 2), which was shown to have been a more complex structure than was formerly supposed. The northern and central sections of the east wall were the earliest parts of the structure and could possibly have been connected with the Tudor Palace; while the other walls and floors were added during the course of the 17th and 18th-centuries, although no precise dating was possible. None of the features on the site could definitely be attributed to the period of the Palace. Features 2, 3 and 4 were dated to the 17th or 18th-centuries. Feature 5 (originally interpreted as a 16th-century raised pathway), Feature 6 (small pit with Tudor pottery) and Feature 7 (16th-century construction trench) all contained post-medieval or modern finds. There was no evidence to suggest that Feature 8 was a gravel floor, although it did appear to be medieval. Feature 9 may have been medieval; one layer within it, which contained post-medieval pottery, may represent an unrecorded later feature.

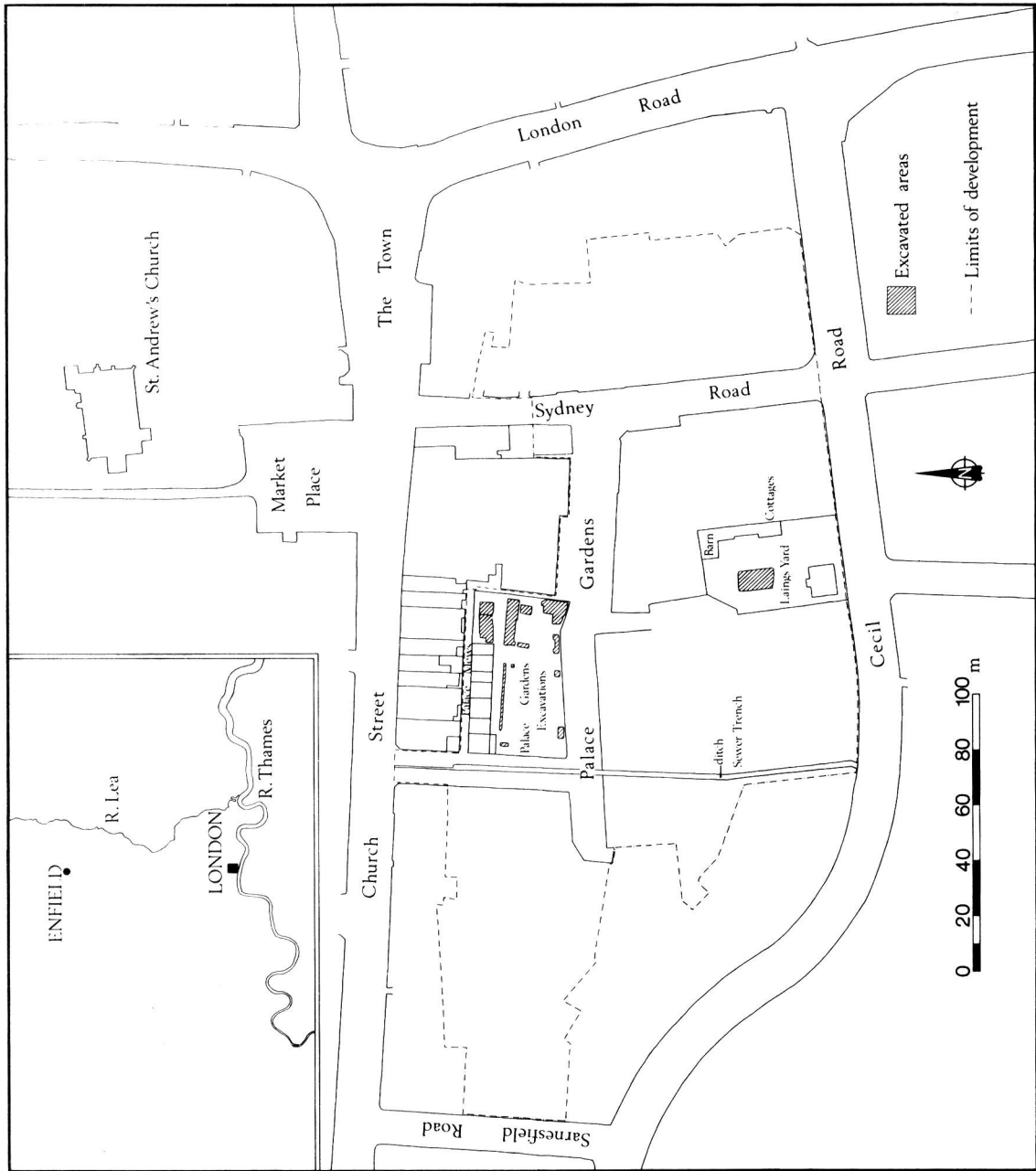


Fig. 1. Enfield: Location of town sites.

PALACE MEWS EXCAVATION

A small area of six by four metres immediately north of the Palace Gardens 1977 site was excavated. The floor and foundations of the Mews Buildings (erected in 1897) were removed by machine, as unfortunately were most of the features, only the deepest surviving. The site was disturbed by several modern features which were connected with the Mews buildings.

At the west end of the site a shallow Ditch 4, cut by a large Pit 39 containing medieval pottery of the hard, grey, quartz gritted south Hertfordshire type, was excavated. An extension of one square metre in the south-west corner of the site was dug, to find the limits of the Pit 39. This proved useful as Pit 39 was cutting a small shallow Pit 38, which contained one sherd of medieval pottery. Pit 38 cut a small squarish pit/posthole (37). Pits 37, 38 and 39 all cut 28 which was only in the extension and was the main fill of a large U-shaped ditch (40), 1.20m deep.

The purpose of Ditches 4 and 40 is not known but they could have been associated with the medieval Manor House which is said to have been in this area. Feature 37 was probably connected with a structure built after Ditch 40 had been filled in. After 37 fell into disuse, Pit 38 was dug through it as a rubbish pit and Pit 39 cut 38 for the same use. These are likely to date from the late 12th to early 13th century.

LAING'S YARD (Fig. 3)

An area of 12×7m was excavated in Laing's Yard, off the north side of Cecil Road, about 100m to the south of the Palace Gardens sites. The site was adjacent to an 18th-century barn and 19th-century cottages. Measured plans of these were made by the Enfield Preservation Society prior to their demolition.

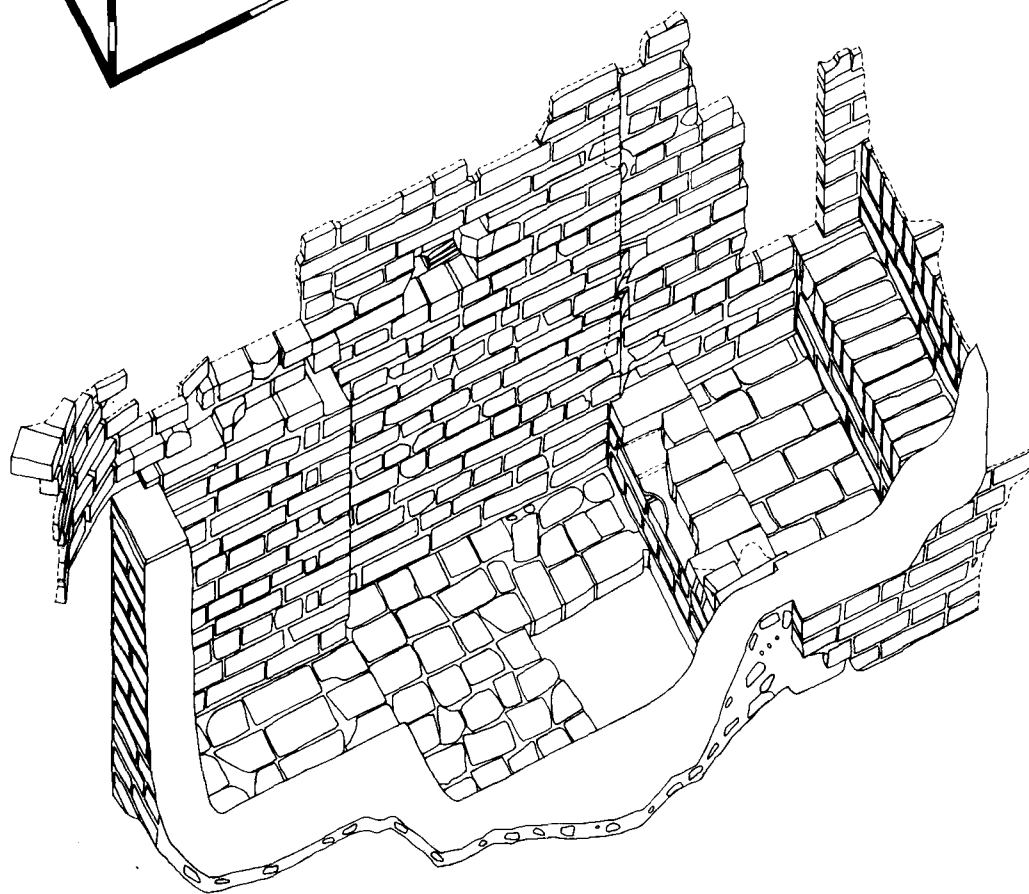
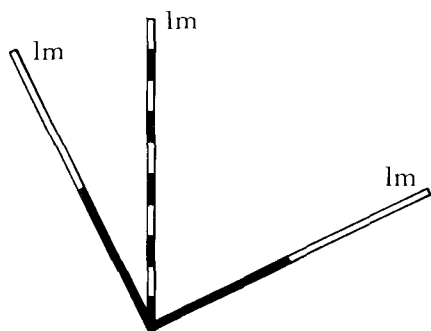
Modern features included a number of small postholes which may be interpreted as footings for a barn which is known to have stood on the site. Features 49 and 56 which ran diagonally across the site appear to have been an 18th-century boundary ditch.

The remaining features were probably all medieval and roughly contemporary. Most of them produced medieval pottery, which was largely of the south Hertfordshire type and is usually dated to the 12th or 13th centuries. Some, however, produced pottery which is probably 14th century. In the south-eastern corner of the site were a number of long narrow pits, mostly comparatively shallow and running on a south-west to north-east alignment. These were Features 12, 14, 16, 20, 22, 24, 47 and 71 and perhaps also 74, 77, 108 and 110; only small parts of the latter came within the limits of the site.

The short parallel ditches—Features 60, 81, 86, 90, 95, 112 and 121, which occupied the rest of the site, were on the same alignment as these pits and were very probably contemporary with them. Nos 81, 86 and 121 did contain single sherds of later pottery but it is suggested that this may be attributed to root disturbance which affected parts of the site. A small Pit 83 was cut by 56; while two larger and deeper pits, 72 and 130, were cut by most of the ditches,

PALACE GARDENS ENFIELD 1977

Feature 1 Axonometric



Mens. + Delt. J. L. Dixon 1979

Fig. 2. Enfield: Palace Gardens, 'The Stokehole'.

although 130 did cut 90. It became clear during the excavation that not all of the ditches were dug at exactly the same time; 86 cut 112, while 81 cut both 112 and 121. In addition, several of the features, including all of the ditches, contained tips of clean orange sandy gravel, indicating that they had been left open long enough to allow some weathering of the sides. The use of the circular pits is uncertain but the purpose of the ditches and the long pits was probably agricultural. They may have been dug as a means of increasing the depth of the topsoil. If so it can be assumed that some sort of intensive farming, such as market gardening, was carried on in this area.

LAING'S YARD, ENFIELD. 1979

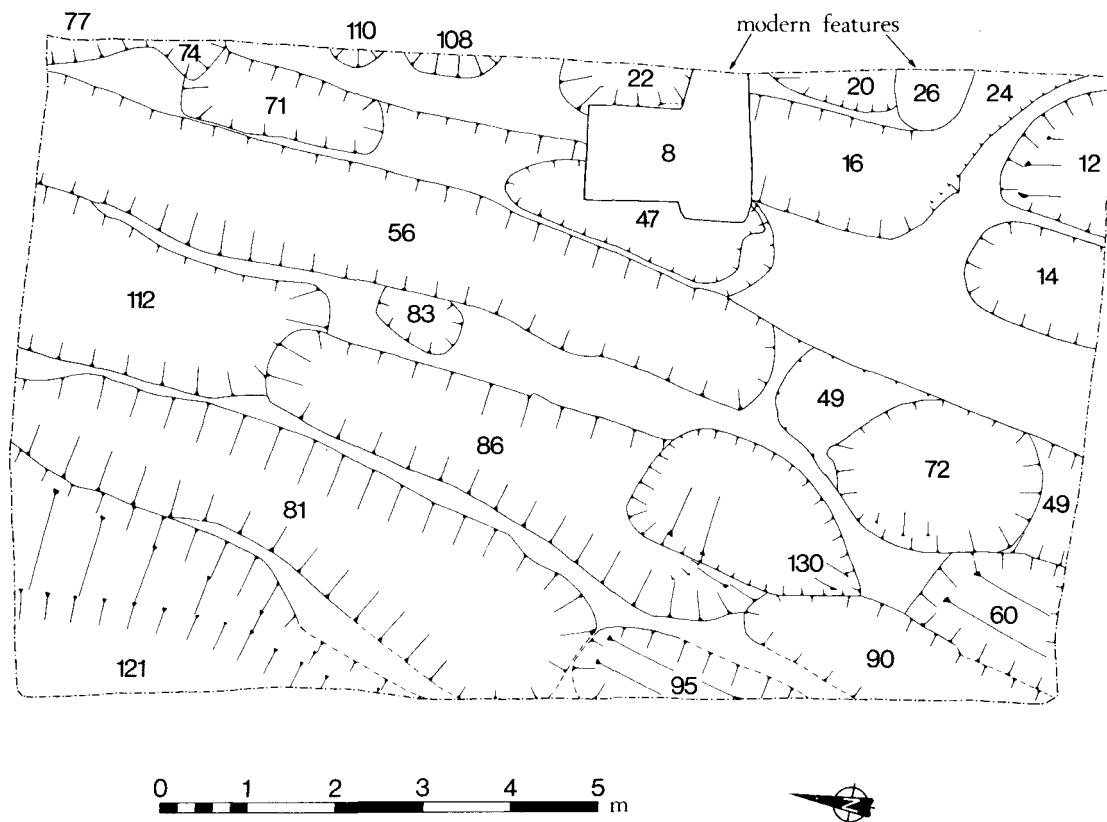


Fig. 3. Enfield: Laing's Yard, site plan.

MEDIEVAL POTTERY FROM LAING'S YARD

The medieval unglazed pottery from the Laing's Yard excavation is of the south Hertfordshire type³. It is comparable to material from Arkley, Elstree⁴, Otterspool⁵ and Rickmansworth⁶. It is of a hard, grey fabric with inclusions of mainly white quartz grits. The forms are largely those of wide based cooking

pots, although a few jugs and open bowls are represented. No decorated sherds or handles were found. The nearest known kiln sites are those near Brimsdown Station, Enfield and at Arkley, Barnet. The date of the pottery is probably late 12th to mid 13th century.

The amount of glazed and slipped pottery is very small—only 50 sherds. The fabric colours vary from grey to orange to buff. Some have inclusions of fine, white quartz grits and some have sandy fabrics. The glazes vary from light greenish-yellow with darker green mottling to mid-green. Fourteen sherds have slip decoration consisting of either stripes of white slip or overall white slip. Glaze has been applied over the slip. Three glazed strap handle sherds decorated with small holes were found. The forms are those of bulbous jugs of several different sizes. The centre of production is not yet known but these sherds can probably be dated to the 13th century.

LINCOLN ROAD

A small excavation was carried out over four days in Lincoln Road, Enfield, in November, 1978, just to the north-west of the 1974–76 excavations,⁷ where road straightening works were taking place. A ditch, possibly a field boundary and a number of small pits were found, as well as a cobbled area—perhaps a yard. Finds from the ditch and the cobbled spread indicated a date in the 3rd or 4th centuries AD. Finds and records are at Forty Hall Museum, Enfield and a full report on the site is to be found together with that from the Enfield Town sites.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to Enfield Borough Council and Norwich Union Insurance Societies, who generously financed the 1978–79 programme of excavations, to A. H. Nicholls, the Contractors at Lincoln Road, to Clive Orton, Trevor Hurst and John Schofield, of the Department of Urban Archaeology, Museum of London, and to the members of the Enfield Archaeological Society—notably John Ivens, who was largely responsible for organising the excavations, Richard Burton, who worked full-time through the early months of 1979, and Roger Dormer.

NOTES

1. J. Dinn and S. Reynolds *Excavations in Enfield 1977–1979* (1979).
2. P. Armitage and J. Ivens 'Excavations at Palace Gardens, Enfield 1977' *London Archaeol.* No. 6 (1979) 143–148.
3. D. F. Renn *Potters and Kilns in Medieval Hertfordshire* (Hertfordshire Local History Council 1964).
4. M. Biddle 'Medieval Pottery from Elstree' *Trans. St.*

Albans Arch. Archaeol. Soc. (1961) 65–69.

5. M. Biddle 'Medieval Pottery from a site at Otterspool, Nr. Watford, Herts' *ibid.* 70–76.
6. M. Biddle, L. Barfield and A. Millard 'The Excavation of the Manor of the More, Rickmansworth, Herts' *Archaeol. J.* 117 (1959) 161.
7. A. Gentry, J. Ivens and H. McClean 'Excavations at Lincoln Road, Enfield, 1974–76' *Trans. London Middlesex Archaeol. Soc.* 28 (1977) 101–189.