

# A NOTE ON A MEDIEVAL AND POST-MEDIEVAL SITE AT 170–174 BURY STREET, RUISLIP, MIDDLESEX

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## SUMMARY

*During the course of redevelopment at 170–174 Bury Street in Ruislip a medieval site and post-medieval structure were located. This has been interpreted as having belonged to an individual toft, one of many which were situated between Bury Street and the medieval hunting park known as Park Wood.*

## INTRODUCTION

This discovery came about due to a planning condition on the site that was within an *Archaeological Priority Area* (NGR:TQ 0870–8850). This required an evaluation and then a subsequent ‘mitigation’ of the development. This work was carried out by Archaeological Services & Consultancy in March 1998 on behalf of Matthew Homes Ltd. A further monitoring and recording phase demonstrated that damage to the archaeology would be minimal.

## SETTING AND TOPOGRAPHY

The site (site code BRP98) comprises an area of 0.38 ha (0.938 acres) situated between Bury Street on the south-west side and Park Wood on its north-east side in the town of Ruislip. The terrain is flat to gently sloping (lying above 50m contour OD). The soils are derived from glacial drift over Tertiary clay (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1:250,000 Soil Map, Lawes Agricultural Trust; Jarvis *et al* 1984).

## HISTORICAL SETTING

According to a mid 16th-century Terrier (Kings College Muniments R 36), the site appears to have lain within a linear arrangement of properties or messuages sandwiched between the ancient thoroughfare of Bury Street and Park Wood, mentioned in The Domesday Survey (Eileen Bowlt pers comm). One of these properties was in the possession of John Flye who held a messuage of 1.75 acres (0.708 ha): assuming that the reconstruction of the Terrier is broadly accurate then this property may be related to the evidence discovered in the evaluation.

According to an Inclosure map of 1806 in Ruislip Local Studies Centre, London Borough of Hillingdon, there was a building on the site in the early 19th century. However, the scale of the map is too small to be absolutely certain on this matter. On the First Series 25" Ordnance Survey map of 1866 the south-western end of no. 174 appears to show several features. One of these is a possible pond and two detached buildings of some description. The eastern side of the site (*ie* no.170) appears to have belonged to a single field (no.416). By 1935, nos 174 and 172 appear to have been sub-divided NW-SE while what is now no.170 was still shown as being part of a field (no.489). By 1961 numbers 174 and 172 are shown as having houses on them. Finally, on the 1998 1:1,250 scale map all the houses (prior to demolition) are shown as being present on the site.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Apart from the usual scatter of historical structures and artefacts in the general vicinity of

170–174 Bury Street (*ie* within a 300m radius) it was thought that there was no direct evidence for the presence of archaeology on the site itself (GLAAS *Sites & Monuments Record*). The site lies about 1 kilometre to the north of the ancient parish church and falls within the general historic core of the medieval village, that is, on ground bordering the ‘*Kings’s Highway*’ between Rickmansworth and Northolt. The site extends back from Bury Street to the edge of an earthwork boundary. This earthwork is believed to mark the boundary of a medieval hunting park (SMR no.050491). Another boundary close by to the south east consists of a double bank and ditch which extends from Bury Street to Eastcote Road (SMR no.050493). These survivals should be seen as relicts from the medieval period which once formed elements in the contemporary landscape.

## METHODOLOGY

Most of the footprint area of each of the proposed buildings was cleared by a mechanical excavator under archaeological supervision. A total of 610.5 sq. metres were exposed *ie* a 16% sample of the site. The only exception to this was the location of Trench 7, which was moved 8m to the north because of the considerable ground disturbance due to the removal of the previous foundations of no.170. The record sheets were supplemented by photographs (black & white and colour film). In Trench 2 it was deemed necessary to undertake further examination of the deposits by hand. During the course of the monitoring/recording phase (mitigation) a further 95 sq m was observed, and some 30m length, of a sewer trench.

## THE RESULTS

Evidence for medieval occupation was limited to Trenches 1 and 2 (see Fig 1). In the case of Trench 1 (*ie* the trench closest to Park Wood) the evidence was limited to a dispersed collection of sherds located within the top-soil (see Finds below).

The principal body of evidence was derived from Trench/Plot 2 (see Fig 1 and Fig 2 inside Fig 1). On the north side of the trench (not illustrated) there were two distinct bands of deposit orientated NE-SW. The most northerly

consisted of a dark organic soil [2] approximately 1.5m wide. This appeared to overlie a parallel band of gravely clay [3]. About 5m from the edge of the trench was another band of greyish clay 0.4m wide [4] which appeared to fade out some 4m to the NW. On the SW edge of the trench (later expanded in order to obtain a wider view of the deposits) was an area of grey clay [5], which extended back under a later dark grey soil [7] (see Fig 2). The deposit of grey silty loam [5] was almost certainly the principal source of medieval pottery from the site, retrieved on the surface after machining had occurred and during manual cleaning. These medieval-rich deposits were covered by a dark organic layer [7] upon which was a linear feature [6 & 8] which in turn was overlaid by a dark grey topsoil [1] to a depth of approximately 0.3m. The linear feature consisted of a single course of hand-made bricks (see below) and a disturbed line of flints. It was at least 7m long and approximately 0.25 to 0.3m wide and orientated NW-SE. It lay parallel with the linear features on the north side of the trench. The archive for this site will be deposited with the Museum of London.

## Finds

The pottery ranged in date from Saxo-Norman to late 17th/early 18th century. Virtually all the pottery was derived from cleaning deposits, though two pieces (the earliest sherds) came from the top fills of the medieval features. The remaining deposits had numerous sherds protruding from the surface. A floor tile was also recovered (see description below) and several clay pipe stems. All the pottery vessel forms have been previously published and are therefore not illustrated (see below).

## DISCUSSION

Out of the seven areas that were examined, five were devoid of any significant archaeological features. The sixth area (Trench 6) revealed a feature which turned out to be a pond. This was confirmed by an examination of mid 19th and early 20th cartographic sources. Although one of the five trenches (Plot 1) yielded medieval pottery there were no features that could be distinguished. The south westernmost trench (Trench/Plot 6) almost certainly had the traces of a clay lined

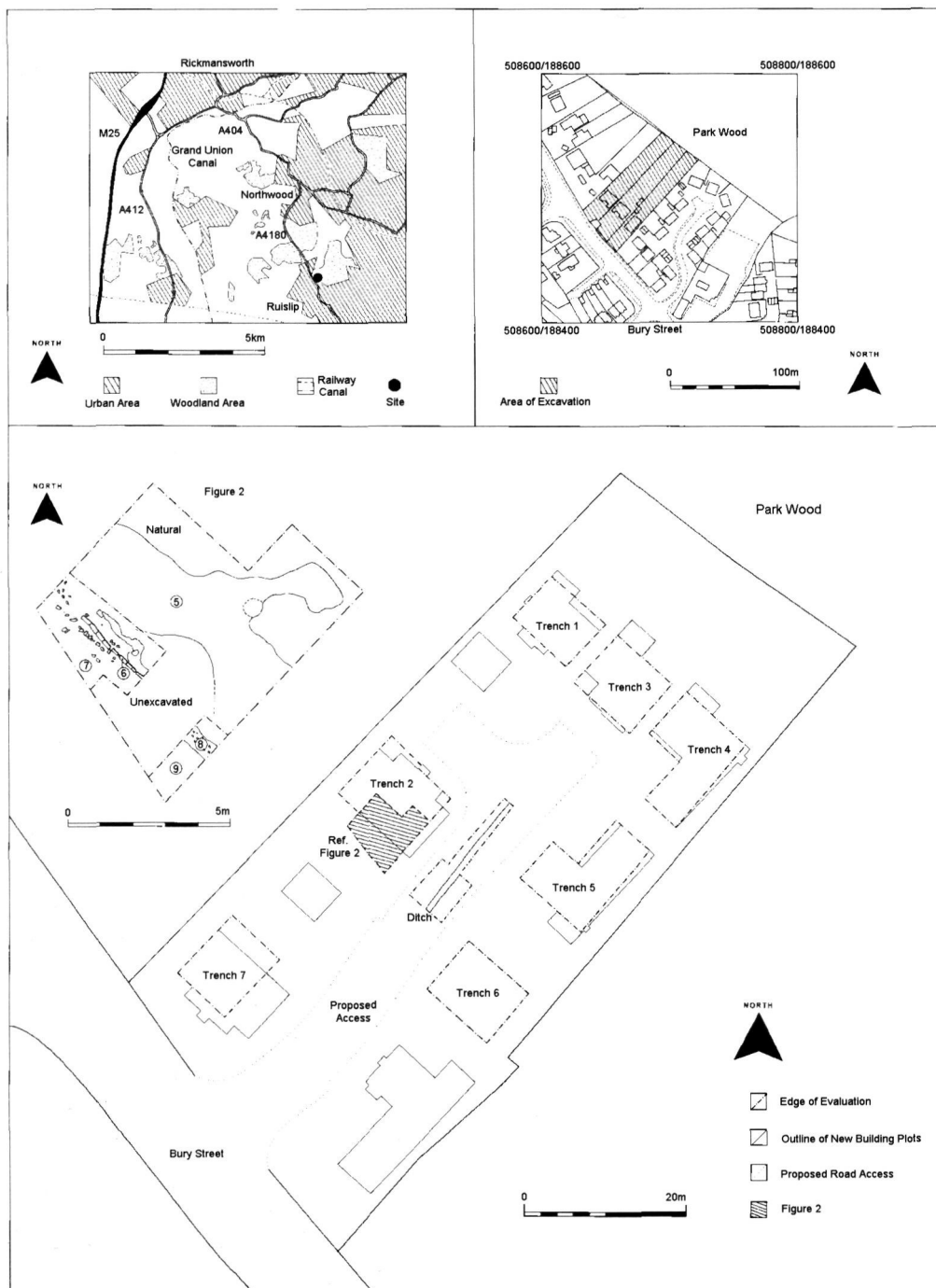


Fig 1. Site location and plan of evaluation/mitigation trenches

pond that was shown on the 1866 and 1935 Ordnance Survey maps. It was presumably in-filled prior to the development shown on the 1961 OS plan.

The most significant discoveries were two, and possibly more, medieval pits and a post-medieval foundation or sill that may have formed the base for a timber building of some description. To

judge from the occupation debris this looked more like a dwelling than a simple barn. The medieval features were almost certainly associated with occupation on the site. The evaluation was only able to establish its presence and approximate character. The mitigation phase located a boundary possibly associated with the site (see Fig 1c), and demonstrated that the impact of the development would be fairly limited. The pottery ranged in date from the early/mid 11th to the late 17th/early 18th century. This evidence appears to relate to the 16th-century Terrier, which mentions a John Flye as occupying one of the messuages (King College Muniments R 36). If so then we can be reasonably certain that occupation continued into the late post medieval period before the area was merged with a property lying to the north west.

## CONCLUSION

The project has revealed a close relationship between the historical and archaeological evidence. 170–172, Bury Street were built on an old field (no.416/489 according to the Ordnance Survey) which, to judge from the soil depth and soil type, may never have been cultivated, let alone occupied. In contrast, 174, Bury Street, appears have been continuously occupied at one point or another since the 11th century.

## THE CERAMIC FINDS

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The 40 sherds (0.7kg) ranged in date from early/mid 11th century to post-medieval 16th and 17th century. All the contexts contained assemblages of a mixed date. The fabrics have been identified with reference to the fabric codes established by the Museum of London (Orton 1988 and Vince 1991).

Trench 1 contained large sherds of mid 13th to mid 14th-century Kingston-type ware (KING). Vessels include a large rounded jug or storage jar represented by a large strap handle with incised line and stabbed decoration and the flat rim of a bowl. One fragment of imported Saintonge jug (SAIM) with mottled copper green glaze dates from the mid 13th to mid 17th century. Two coarse quartz and occasional flint tempered sherds are probably mid 12th to early 13th-

century wares. One sherd of post-medieval fine red earthenware (PMFR) is of 16th or 17th-century date.

The pottery from Trench 2 contained a collection of early medieval coarsely gritted greywares and post-medieval red earthenwares (PMFR). One small globular cooking pot is a typical form in Early Medieval Flinty Ware (EMFL), (see Vince 1991, fig 2.51 no.127). Seven further early medieval greyware sherds have coarse quartz and flint temper, similar to 11th to early 12th century and mid 12th to early 13th-century Hertfordshire Greyware (SHER).

Trench 2 also contained six sherds with coarse quartz and flint temper, likely to be 11th or early 12th-century medieval wares. One coarse greyware and another oxidised ware with coarse quartz and occasional flint are probably sherds of mid 12th to early 13th-century Hertfordshire Greyware (SHER). One sherd from a mid 13th to mid 14th-century Kingston-type Ware (KING) jug has splashed copper green glaze. Post-medieval wares include a sherd of mid 16th to mid 18th-century Surrey Hampshire Border Ware (BORDG) and six sherds of 17th to early 18th-century post-medieval fine red earthenwares (PMFR).

## BUILDING MATERIALS

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A single sample brick was recovered from the remains of the foundation sill discovered in Plot 2 of the proposed development. This consisted of a red (Munsel Colour Chart code: Mun 2.5 YR 5/8) hand-made brick 203mm (8.75 inches) long by 110mm (4 and 3/8 inches) wide by 47mm (1 and 7/8 inches) thick. Lime mortar was present on the brick. The brick is slightly smaller than the standard Tudor brick which measured 9 × 4.5 × 2 inches (Wight 1972, 28).

A single unstratified reddish brown (Mun 2.5 YR 5/4) floor tile was also recovered. This was 215mm × 215mm (8.5 inches sq) and 1 3/8 inches thick.

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