

# SAXO-NORMAN BUILDINGS IN KENSINGTON

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## SUMMARY

*Excavations at Earls Terrace, Kensington High Street, in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea revealed Roman, Saxo-Norman, and medieval features and artefacts. A ditch and residual pottery suggest Roman period activity in the vicinity, possibly associated with a Roman road presumed to be aligned along Kensington High Street. During the late Saxon/early Norman period the site was occupied by buildings, perhaps representing a farmstead or part of a larger manorial complex. The discovery of two timber buildings associated with this occupation is of regional importance. Arable farming and stock rearing appear to be activities associated with this rural settlement in both the Saxo-Norman and medieval periods. Pottery and quernstones provided evidence for trade with London and the Continent. The site appeared to have been largely abandoned during the late medieval and early post-medieval periods but may have been used for pasture. By the 18th century it may have been exploited for market gardening. In 1811 the site was developed residentially with the construction of Earls Terrace, which still stands today.*

## INTRODUCTION

An archaeological excavation was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd at Earls Terrace, Kensington High Street, in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, London W8. The excavation was carried out in two phases, the first in December 1997 and the second in January and February 1998. Prior to excavation the site had been subject to an archaeological evaluation, also undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd, in August 1997. CgMs Ltd, on behalf of

Earls Terrace Properties Ltd, commissioned both the evaluation and the excavation. The archaeological investigations were carried out in advance of the construction of an underground car park beneath the road and gardens between Earls Terrace and Kensington High Street. The site is bounded to the north-east by Kensington High Street and on all other sides by Earls Terrace itself (Fig 1). The central National Grid Reference is TQ 2496 7920.

The evaluation comprised four trial trenches each measuring approximately 6m by 4m. The trenches were spread out within the garden area to achieve maximum coverage of the proposed area of development impact. Trench 1, to the west, revealed alluvial deposits at least 0.65m deep indicating a stream, which may have been active during the medieval period. Trench 2 had to be abandoned for logistical reasons. A post-medieval ditch was recorded in Trench 3 in the centre of the site, and in Trench 4, located at the east end, was a ditch running parallel to the alignment of Kensington High Street. Medieval plough soil sealed this feature.

The subsequent excavation trench incorporated the area of evaluation Trench 3 and an area under the road (Earls Terrace). For logistical reasons the work was carried out in two phases, during which the site was divided into a northern and southern area, equating to the areas under the garden and road respectively (Fig 1). The excavation covered an area of approximately 675m<sup>2</sup>. Features were recorded according to a site grid, assuming Kensington High Street to lie to the north and this use is retained throughout

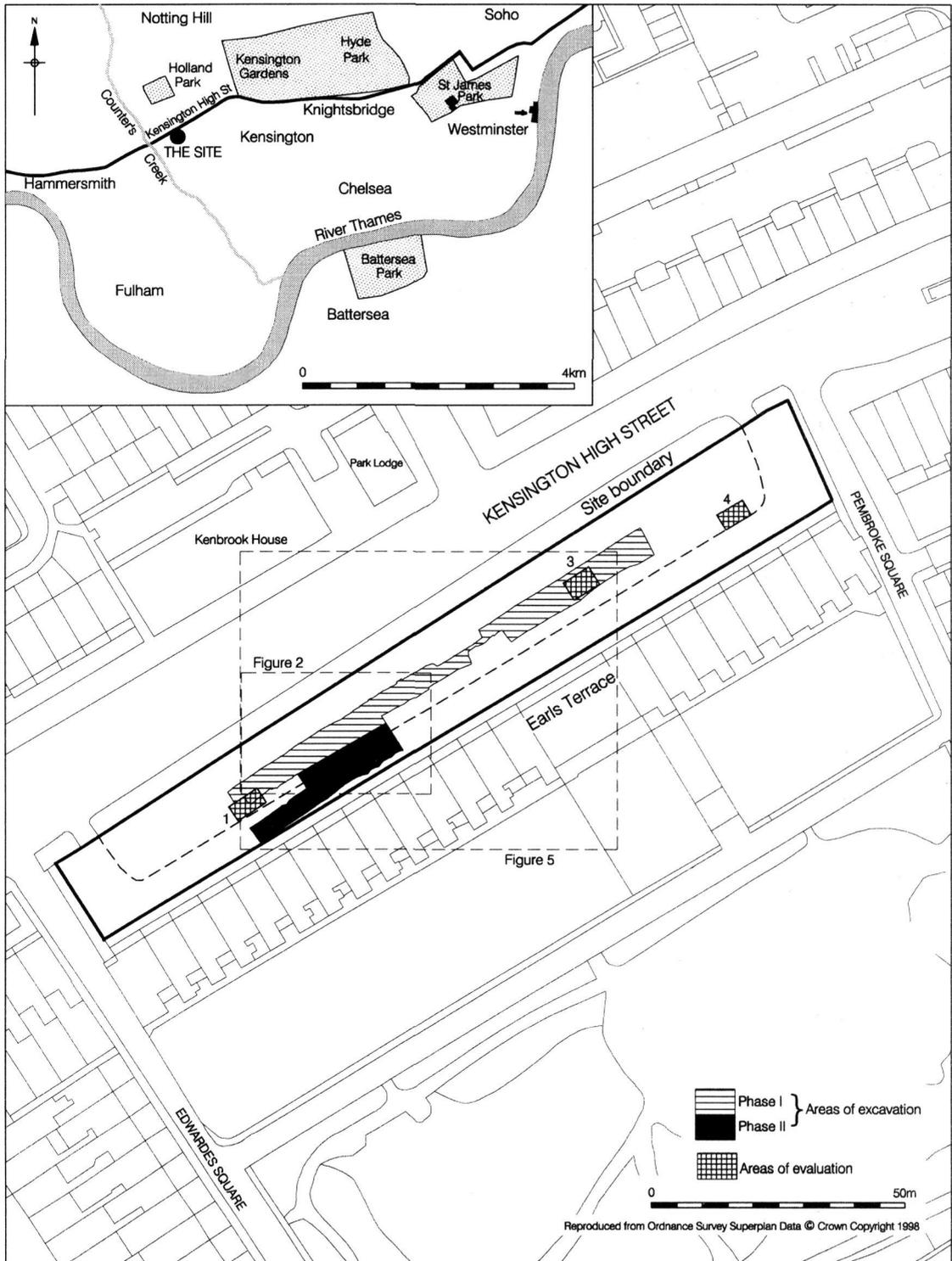


Fig 1. Site and trench location

this paper for ease of discussion. The site records, finds, and the full results of specialist analyses will be archived with the London Archaeological Archive Research Centre (Site code ETR 97).

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The site is situated on an east–west ridge of rising ground, part of the Kempton Park gravel terrace, above the River Thames flood plain to the south (British Geological Survey 1998). Modern ground level on the site sloped down from a maximum height of 9.95m OD to the north-east to a minimum of 9.31m OD in the south-west, reflecting the underlying natural drift geology, composed of alluvial brickearth, which sloped from 7.48m OD to 6.48m OD. The site is thus situated just below the 10m contour line, with the ground behind rising fairly sharply to a height of 35m OD less than 1km to the north, levelling out to the south down towards the valley of the former Counter's Creek. The course of this, now 'lost', river is reflected in the modern borough boundary between Kensington and Chelsea to the east and Hammersmith and Fulham to the west.

The name Counter's Creek apparently originates from 'Counters Bridge', which crossed the stream *c.*400m to the south-west at present-day Olympia and is recorded as *Contessesbregge* in 1421 (Barton 1962, 38). The source of the stream was close to Kensal Green cemetery to the north-west and it passed *c.*400m to the south-west of the site, running south-east towards the River Thames. Thus the site would have been situated at the base of a slope, yet elevated above the floodplain, with good grazing land and watering available for livestock in close proximity. The damp nature of the valley in more recent times is well attested in an early 20th-century medical account, in which the environment is described as being likely to aggravate rheumatism (Clippingdale 1909). Clippingdale records that the condition was very common either side of the Creek, from Shepherd's Bush to Chelsea, and the land was so moist as to be 'very suitable for the growth of vegetables but not so suitable for human beings'.

The Thames flood plain was an environment rich in resources such as fish, wild fowl, and sedge, ideal for seasonal grazing. Although the area of the site, which was located on higher and better drained land overlooking the river valley,

would have been an obvious focus for activity or settlement for early populations, no prehistoric finds have been recovered from the immediate vicinity.

Two Roman roads running westwards from the City of London (*Londinium*) are thought to have traversed the Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. One left the City at Newgate and is represented by the course of Oxford Street, Notting Hill, Holland Park Avenue, and Goldhawk Road. The other road passed through Ludgate and is thought to be aligned with the Strand, Kensington Road, and then Hammersmith to Chiswick. The latter road may be adjacent to the site on the same alignment as the present-day Kensington High Street. At Chiswick both roads are thought to have converged to form the Silchester road (Margary 1955).

Until recently there was no excavated evidence for Roman occupation within the Borough. However an excavation at St Mary Abbot Hospital located a possible farmstead and at 6–16 Old Church Street Roman agricultural activity, evidenced by field boundary ditches, was uncovered (Howe 1995; Farid 2001).

There is no excavated Saxon archaeological activity in the immediate vicinity of the site, though the presence of a Saxon settlement is suggested by place name evidence. The name Kensington may derive from 'Cynesige's farm' – 'Cynesige' being an early form which could easily be assigned a Middle Saxon date. The settlement is variously recorded as *Chenesiton* in Domesday Book, *Kensiton* (1221–30) and *Kensington* from 1235 onwards (Gover *et al* 1942, 128). An early medieval church is known to have occupied the site of St Mary Abbots church, at the junction of Kensington Church Street and Kensington High Street, approximately 500m to the north-east of the site. It is uncertain when this church was built, but it was probably in existence before 1100 and it seems likely that any early medieval settlement would have been centred on the church (Whipp 1975).

Cartographic evidence from the mid 18th century shows buildings clustered around St Mary Abbots church (Rocque 1747). The land adjacent to the road west of the church, including the area of the site, is shown to be largely open fields and gardens. Residential development of the site occurred in 1811 when speculative developer Louis Changeur built a terrace of town

houses immediately to the south, which still stand today (Hobhouse 1986, 248–57).

## THE EXCAVATION

### Roman

The evaluation revealed a 2.6m stretch of a ditch, aligned roughly east–west and at least 0.52m wide and 0.25m deep, to the north-east of the excavation area in Trench 4 (Fig 1). Although no cultural material was recovered from this feature, its alignment, parallel to a presumed Roman road, and its stratigraphic position suggest that it may be of Roman origin. Unfortunately this ‘road-side’ ditch did not extend into the area of excavation. Indeed no features uncovered during the excavation could be attributed to the Roman period. However, the presence of residual Roman pottery, possibly introduced onto the site by manuring, indicates Roman activity in the vicinity.

### Saxo-Norman I

A small pit, a single plough mark, and postholes were the earliest features recorded during the excavation phase of work. All the features were cut into the natural brickearth and contained fills of a more leached out appearance, being a paler hue in colour, than the deposits from later phases, and most were also stratigraphically earlier than the features associated with the Saxo-Norman buildings. Only one of these features produced dating evidence – a posthole containing a small, possibly intrusive, sherd of Early medieval shelly ware dated 1050–1150. Their attribution to this period is therefore uncertain.

The plough mark was aligned north–south and measured 2.10m by 0.10m by 0.05m deep. To the south were two post pits, which are considered to have been associated. A posthole was located to the west and north of the post pits. A further 6m to the west, two putative postholes were aligned north–south and set 1.2m apart. Both were rectangular in shape, with vertical sides and flat bases, and were filled with pale grey clay. These are thought to have been associated with each other. To the south of these features was a linear cut aligned east–west. It measured 2.4m long, 0.22m wide, and 0.05m deep. Its function is uncertain.

### Saxo-Norman II

A second phase of activity during the Saxo-Norman period was also identified. The remains of at least two timber buildings were recorded (Buildings A and B, Fig 2), their plans outlined by the position of slots and postholes. Associated with the buildings were features recorded as drainage gullies, ditches, and pits. Other postholes may have represented fence lines possibly used for livestock control (Fig 2). To the east of the buildings was a north–south aligned ditch that may have marked the boundary to the settlement.

In the southern part of the trench, deposits were recorded which were thought to represent a soil horizon that had survived later agricultural/horticultural activity, including ploughing. The soil, up to 0.2m thick, was composed of mottled grey-red/brown silty sandy clay with inclusions of daub fragments and charcoal flecks, and covered approximately 140m<sup>2</sup>. Fourteen sherds of pottery were recovered from these deposits, the latest dated fabric being AD 1000–1150.

### Building A

In the north-west of the site was a group of postholes which represented the foundations for a structure (Fig 3). These foundations employed both ‘earthfast’ vertical posts set in individual postholes and ‘post in trench’ construction techniques. Frequent instances of both methods have been employed within the same structure have been reported in the City of London (Horsman *et al* 1988, 71). The building was rectangular in plan and measured 9m in length and c.4.5m in width. It was a two-bay building with the distance between main load-bearing posts being 2.5m from centre to centre.

All the postholes had vertical or near vertical sides and flat bases and were filled by a similar mid grey to mid brown clayey silt sand with occasional charcoal flecks.

The eastern end wall of Building A was represented by a 4.8m long line of five postholes, comprising two pairs of closely set, similar, ovoid pits, 1.2m apart, separated by a smaller, circular cut. Three postholes aligned east–west and spaced 2.5m apart represented the principle timber uprights for the southern wall.

A posthole and an east–west aligned trench may have represented the principal timber uprights for the northern wall. The posthole was

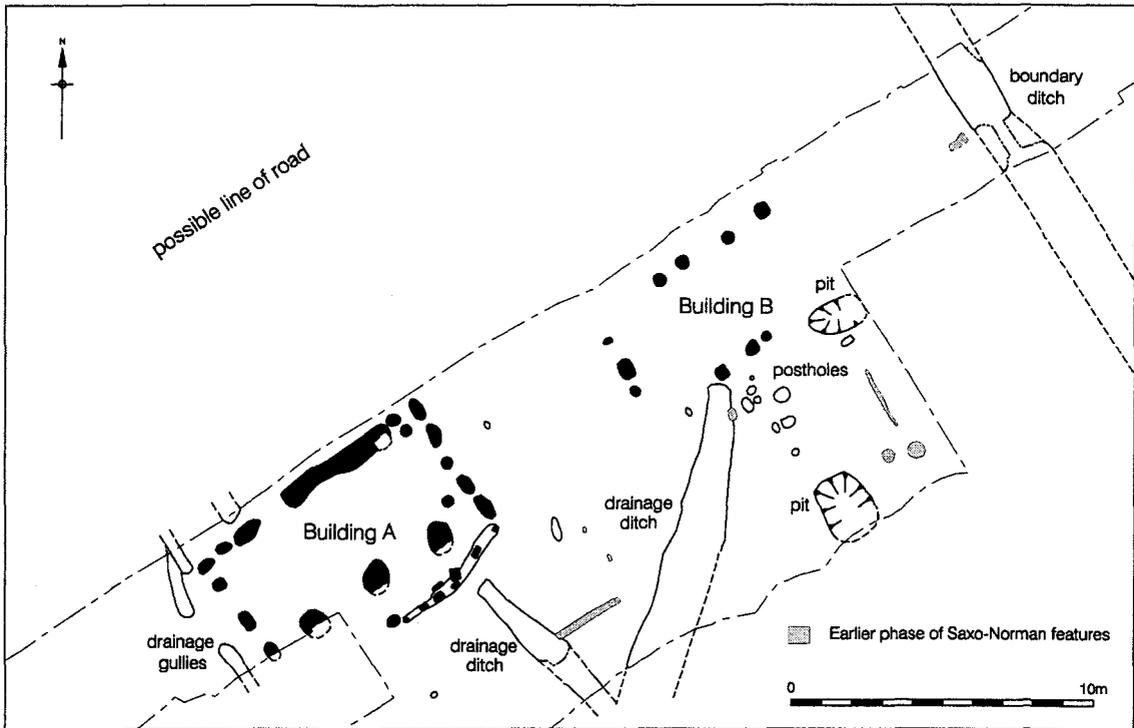


Fig 2. Plan of Saxo-Norman features

directly opposite a similar feature to the south whilst the trench probably held posts that were opposite their counterparts to the south.

The main posts described above would have supported the wall and the roof and would have been joined at eaves level by a tie-beam. The bay divisions are the points at which the building was tied together across its span.

Two postholes set at either end of the north wall and a further two in the south-east and north-east corners of the building probably reflect the position of timber uprights. These do not, however, appear to have been the principal load-bearing timbers, that role being fulfilled by the more substantial elements of the northern and southern walls.

The west wall of the structure was represented by two pairs of postholes, approximately 0.5m apart. A gap of approximately 1m between the two pairs may indicate the entrance to the building. Entrances in the gable wall are known from numerous buildings of 9th-, 10th-, and early 11th-century date, including examples found in London, Lincoln, Dublin, and Rhuddlan (Horsman *et al* 1988, 68).

Approximately 1m beyond the southern wall of Building A was an east-west linear cut 4.4m long, varying in width from 0.4m to 0.2m and in depth from 0.3m at the east end to 0.1m in the west. This may have been a foundation trench for a timber-and-wattle wall. Cutting into the base of this trench were six postholes, which may have represented the location of planks set vertically within the trench. The postholes had vertical sides falling to a flat base and were regularly spaced 1m apart. The exception was the circular cut at the west end that was characterised by steeply sloping sides and a concave base. All the postholes were filled with mid grey sandy silt, with inclusions of charcoal and daub flecks and fragments. The latest date for three pottery sherds recovered from the trench was AD 900–1150. Cutting into the fill of the foundation trench were eight stakeholes, all of which contained grey-brown, sandy clay silt. These stakeholes possibly represented wattling which may have infilled the gaps between the timber uprights set within the foundation trench.

The foundation trench itself appeared to have truncated a rectangular posthole with near



*Fig 3. View of Building A, looking east*

vertical sides and a flat base, although this posthole may have been contemporary with the timber-and-wattle wall. Immediately to the west was a sub-circular posthole, which is also thought to be associated with this wall. The foundation trench fill was also truncated by a square posthole, which may represent a repair to the wall.

Although there were no surviving wall remains to indicate the type of construction employed, fragments of daub found in the fills of the cut features may indicate a wattle-and-daub infilling between the posts. Other possible building techniques for walls include bulwark construction, *ie* with timber planks of cleft oak or beech, which was common in the City of London in the 10th and 11th centuries (Goodburn 1997). The remnants of another wall to the south may have been an outer wall to the building and the space between the inner and outer walls may have been packed with turf (as shown in the suggested reconstruction, Fig 4). The use of turfs in

conjunction with wattle is one of many early medieval wall construction types recorded in London (Goodburn 1997) and elsewhere (*eg* Besteman 1988). At Goltho, where a Saxo-Norman manorial site has been excavated, it was suggested that the posts could have been encased in clay, which formed the walls and protected the timbers from rotting (Clarke 1984, 37). The clay walls of similar buildings excavated at Goltho were estimated to be between 0.46m and 0.50m thick (Beresford 1987, 27). A wall plate is likely to have topped the opposed long walls in order to spread the weight along its length and to prevent it sinking into the wall material (*ibid*). It is thought that the tie beams would have been secured under the plate. This method of 'reversed assembly' is still very common in old, standing timber-framed buildings in North-West Europe.

The roofing material, in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, may have been thatch. The use of lighter timbers in the construction of

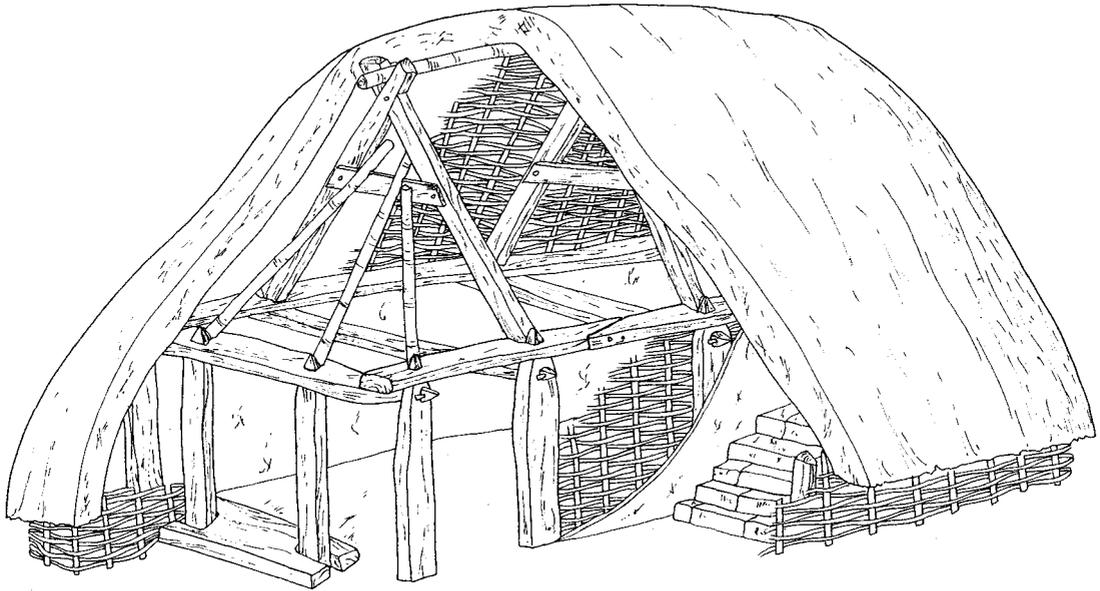


Fig 4. A possible reconstruction of Building A

the walls at the gable ends, suggested by the smaller postholes, may indicate that the roof was hipped. This form of roof construction effectively maximises the length of the two-bay building. Four cut features to the north-west and west of the structure have been interpreted as drainage gullies, which would have taken away the run-off water from the roof of the building.

Evidence for floor surfaces was absent, having been destroyed by later ploughing. However the most common floors in comparable Saxo-Norman timber buildings excavated in the City of London were of beaten earth and it seems likely that this type of flooring would have been used here (Horsman *et al* 1988, 85).

#### *Building B*

To the east of Building A was an arrangement of postholes which appeared to be the remnants of a second timber building (Building B). Unfortunately the posthole evidence for this structure only partially survived and was less convincing. This building would have been at least 7m long and 4m wide (Fig 2). The postholes were characterised by vertical or steeply sloping sides with flat or concave bases.

The west wall of Building B was represented

by two shallow sub-circular postholes set either side of a deeper and larger rectangular posthole, this alignment covering a distance of approximately 2.0m. Four postholes, set out over a distance of 4.5m, represented part of the north wall of the building, whilst the southern element was represented by an east-west alignment of three postholes, spanning 2.3m. There was no evidence for the east wall of Building B, but this may be accounted for by later activities, in particular a later medieval ditch, having destroyed any such evidence. It is considered that this building would have employed similar construction techniques to Building A.

Approximately 7m to the east of Building B was a steep-sided linear cut at least 4.60m long, 1.56m wide, and 0.60m deep, inclined from the north down to the south. The latest dated pot fabric, twelve sherds of which were recovered, was in the range 1080–1350. This feature may have been a boundary ditch to the settlement represented by Buildings A and B to the west.

To the south of the buildings was a series of drainage ditches, which presumably took excess ground water away from the structures. In addition to several pits there was also a series of postholes, some of which formed obvious alignments, probably fence lines to control livestock. Isolated postholes were recorded which

had no apparent association with any of the posthole alignments already mentioned and their function is uncertain.

Stakes and posts driven directly into the brickearth were recorded over a wide area to the west of the 'boundary ditch'. Their distribution pattern did not show obvious alignments so interpretation is difficult. However the distribution of the stakeholes was not random for they were clustered together, some in pairs, others in triangles, irregular rectangles, circles, and semi-circles, while others formed definite right angles. The stakeholes are thought to represent the repetitive construction of possibly temporary and/or moveable structures, perhaps fence lines or frames intended for a horticultural function. These features were characterised by a similar grey fill and a 'V'-shape to their profile. The diameter of the stakeholes was up to 0.1m and the posts had a maximum diameter of 0.2m, but the cuts are likely to have been enlarged during their extraction. While these stakes and posts were phased to the Saxo-Norman period they were not all necessarily contemporary with the buildings.

The majority of pottery in this phase dated to the late 11th to mid 12th century. However, the largest amount of pottery from this assemblage consisted of Early medieval sandy ware dated 970–1100 (32 sherds or 25% of the fabrics). Late Saxon shelly ware (LSS) could not be identified in this phase and its absence in London from deposits dated after *c.*1050 (Vince and Jenner 1991) would seem to imply that activity in this phase began in the third quarter of the 11th century. The presence of Early medieval shelly ware (EMSH), Early medieval sand and shell ware (EMSS), and Early Surrey ware (ESUR), the latter dating after *c.*1050, would appear to further confirm this date for the beginning of this phase of activity on the site. The presence of later London-type ware (LOND) and its coarse version (LCOAR) would seem to imply that occupation continued until the late 11th or 12th century (see Table 1).

The forms present included bowls, and the spout of a pitcher, in Early medieval sandy ware (EMS), although the main forms were shouldered jars with upright rims, some of which were externally sooted and used as cooking pots. Decoration, when present on the pottery, was confined to applied strips of clay with thumb impressions.

Table 1. Pottery codes and date ranges

Pottery type	Fabric code	Date Range
Early medieval sandy ware	EMS	970–1100
Early medieval shelly ware	EMSH	1050–1150
Early medieval sand and shell ware	EMSS	1000–1150
Early Surrey ware	ESUR	1050–1150
Coarse London-type ware	LCOAR	1080–1200
London-type ware	LOND	1080–1350
Late Saxon shelly ware	LSS	900–1050
Stamford ware	STAM	1050–1150

## Medieval

The Saxo-Norman buildings had fallen into decay or had been deliberately dismantled by the late 12th century. The boundary ditch to the earlier settlement was allowed to silt up or may have been infilled. However, the site was not abandoned but appears to have been given over to agriculture and a mixed farming economy continued to dominate the landscape. Plough soil, field ditches, possible plough marks, drainage ditches, as well as rubbish pitting, were all recorded for this period of activity (Fig 5).

Plough soil sealed the southern part of Building A. It was composed of charcoal flecked, mid brown-grey, silty clay sand and covered 15.50m east–west by 3.36m north–south, and was 0.07m thick. The layer sloped gently from east to west. Of the nine sherds of pottery recovered from it the latest dated to 1080–1350.

In the north-east of the trench was a series of ditches, all of which sloped in a roughly north to south direction following the slope of the hill. The most westerly of these features measured at least 6.90m north–south, 1.10m east–west, by 0.43m in depth, but continued north and south beyond the edge of excavation. The fill of light grey-brown, silty sandy clay, contained 35 pottery sherds of which the latest dated to 1150–1300. Cutting into the sides of the ditch were two postholes set opposite each other which may represent the position of a crossing point.

Approximately 4m to the east there was a second north–south ditch, which measured 4.06m north–south, 0.90m east–west, by 0.23m in depth, and sloped from north to south. It was filled by grey-brown sandy silt and of the eight pot sherds recovered from this deposit the latest

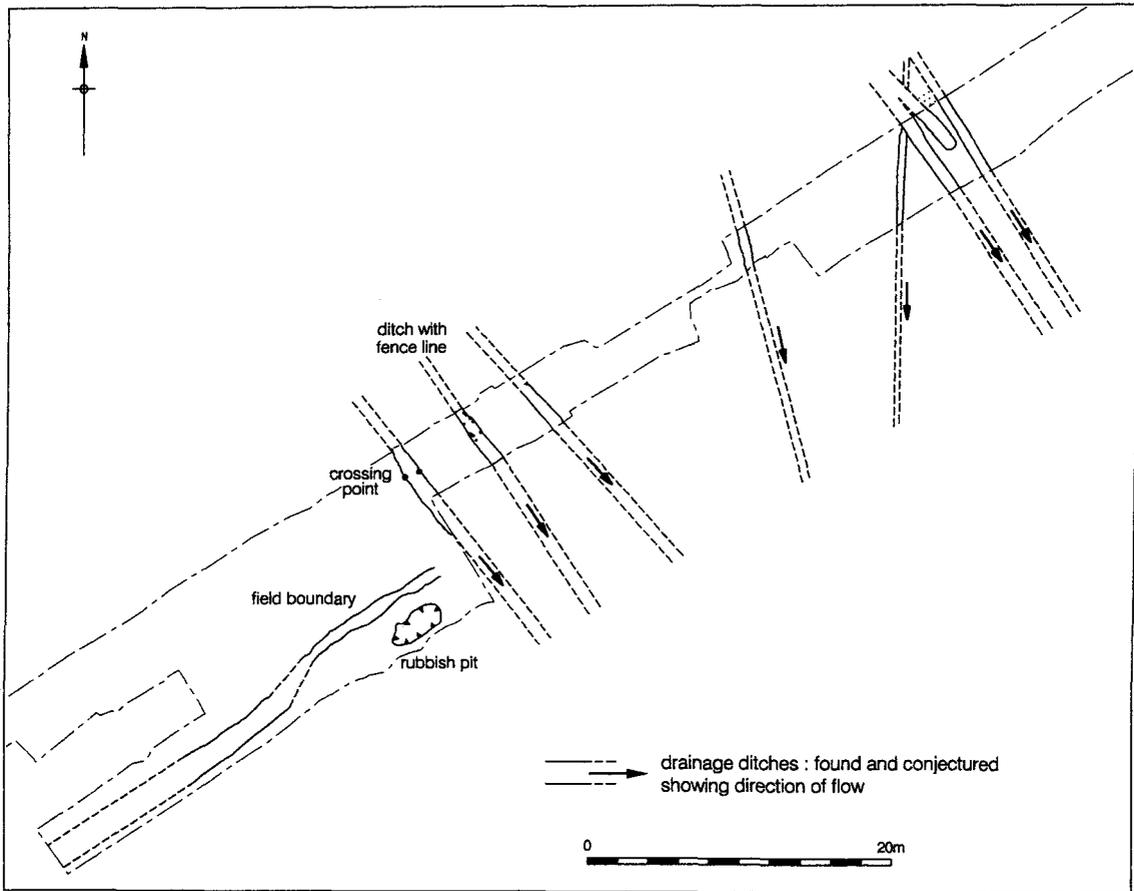


Fig 5. Plan of medieval features

was dated to 1000–1150. Along both sides of the ditch was a row of stakeholes, five on each side, filled with sandy silt similar to that in the ditch. These were interpreted as possible fence lines. Sited 4m to the east was a third north–south ditch, which measured 3.52m north–south, 0.88m east–west, and was 0.24m deep. Its profile showed rounded sides at the top sloping to a flat base. Between the two ditches were four possible plough marks orientated south–west–north–east. To the east and south–west were further ditches, gullies, and a rubbish pit. The rubbish pit contained a piece of a Basaltic lava quern stone imported from the Rhineland. The pottery from these features dated from 1000–1200.

Ploughing activity in this phase resulted in most of the pottery assemblage being residual, largely consisting of EMS by sherd count, along with sherds of EMSH, EMSS, ESUR, and a single sherd of yellow-glazed Stamford ware

(STAM). With LOND and LCOAR also present late 10th- to 12th-century activity was indicated. The latest pottery included three sherds of South Hertfordshire greywares (SHER) and a white slipped London-type ware jug, which is dated to between *c.*1240 and 1350, indicating continuing agricultural land-use into the 13th and presumably 14th century at least.

### Post-medieval

During the post-medieval period, but prior to the construction of Earls Terrace, the site appears to have continued to be used for agricultural/horticultural purposes. Archaeological features from this period included a fence line, drainage gullies, and a deeper cut probably a field boundary, all on a north–south alignment, and a hedgerow and ploughmarks on an east–west

alignment. These features all indicated continued agricultural land-use, while pottery recovered from a plough soil layer indicated that this activity continued into the late 18th century.

A later phase of post-medieval activity was probably associated with the houses on Earls Terrace which were constructed in *c.*1811. Their construction would have required the southern slope to the site to be terraced with the excavated soil being deposited in front of the buildings. This would account for the deep overburden of dumped material that covered the excavation area. It was of course necessary to construct a retaining wall between the gardens and Kensington High Street. Features and deposits grouped into this phase only existed in the northern part of the trench and comprised planting holes, bedding trenches, and horticultural soils.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

No trace was found of the Silchester to London Roman road which probably lies below the modern High Street. Nevertheless, Roman activity in the vicinity of the site was confirmed and the excavation at Earls Terrace, along with the excavations at Old Church Street and Cheyne Hospital and at St Mary's Hospital, continues to add to the growing archaeological evidence for the Roman presence in the area (Farid 2001).

The natural geology of river gravels capped by brickearth would have been fertile, well-drained, and easy to work (Bird 1996). Roman agricultural exploitation of the area is therefore likely. The recovery of Roman pottery and roof tile (*tegula* and *imbrex* fragments), although residual, does suggest Roman activity at or near the site. The presence of a ditch that respected the alignment of the presumed road (if not a 'road-side' ditch then a field boundary) suggests that the land was being managed. The emerging picture is a familiar one for the Thames river basin, of a cultivated countryside with rural settlements scattered throughout (Vince 1990).

The presence on the site of two Saxo-Norman timber buildings is an important find. They were built on the same alignment as the modern road, possibly indicating the continued use of the Roman road. Indeed The Strand, a continuation of this road closer to London, was being referred

to as Akemanestraete (the Bath Road) in AD 1002 (MoLAS 2000, 184).

Soil conditions on the site were hostile to the preservation of organic remains and ensured that the timber elements of the buildings had decayed. Therefore the only evidence for the superstructure was in the form of slots and postholes marking the position of removed or rotted wood, and quantities of daub recovered from the backfilling of postholes and the overlying ploughsoil. However, sufficient information was retrieved to render possible reconstruction of the buildings. The below ground elements of early medieval timber buildings can be classified and dated as readily as their superstructures (Addeyman & Hill 1979). In this case the earth-fast type of foundation used in both buildings was commonly in use from the late 9th to the early 11th century (Horseman *et al* 1988).

The construction materials for the buildings were probably those readily available in the locality – clay tempered with straw to make the walls and oak for the timbers. However, if the timbers were encased in clay to protect them from the damp, insects, and wood-rotting fungi then other 'inferior' species such as ash could have been employed (Beresford 1987, 26). Thatch for the roof could have been straw, sedge, or reeds.

The use of earth-fast posts to ensure structural stability and support the weight and thrust of the roof was a much simpler method than the 'true' timber-framed houses that would be developed subsequently (Milne 1992, 103–5). An obvious advantage of this construction technique would have been the employment of local and unspecialised labour.

The structural stability and permanence of the buildings should be considered in order to establish their longevity. Horsman estimated that isolated buildings could survive 80–100 years (Horsman *et al* 1988, 110). In this case the precise dates of construction and destruction are not known, although analysis of the latest ceramics recovered from the structural features of the buildings has confirmed that both are Saxo-Norman in origin. If the pottery date of 1080–1150 reflects the time the buildings were abandoned, then they may have been built *c.*1000–1070. Whatever the life span of such buildings they would have had to be replaced from time to time. The large dimensions of the postholes that represented the north and south walls of Building A are a little surprising but

their size was perhaps the result of the digging out of the timber uprights, which may be an indication that the structure was, at least in part, rebuilt or deliberately dismantled. It is important to note that these were the load-bearing timbers and that they would have had to be maintained if the building's structural integrity was to be ensured. At Goltho, for instance, posts were frequently dug out to clear the site for another building (Beresford 1987, 26). Of course, subsequent replacement of the whole building would not necessarily have been on the same spot. In this instance the two buildings may not have necessarily been contemporary, one may have superseded the other.

Caution should be exercised in trying to estimate the size of a post from the dimensions of the posthole/pit. Wide post pits do not necessarily imply that posts were of that size since a wide pit is easier to dig and allows the adjustment of the post to a precise location (Beresford 1987, 75). If the posts were removed, normal weathering would quickly change the shape of the pits. It may be that the timber uprights would have tapered out towards the bottom reflecting the original shape of the tree, a technique commonly used during this period, and one which would have given increased stability to the post (pers comm Damian Goodburn).

To what use may the buildings have been put? They could represent cots (dwellings of the poorest members of the peasant community). They conform to the dimensions and plans of buildings previously interpreted as such, for example at Goltho and Barton Blount, where cots were rectangular in shape with a maximum width of 5m and a length no greater than 10m (Clarke 1984, 33). However, if the buildings had been for domestic habitation then an open hearth, usually positioned roughly in the centre of the living area, would be expected (*ibid*, 39). In London it was common for a domestic building of this type and period to have a brickearth slab hearth (Horsman *et al* 1988, 97). No such hearths were discernible, though it may be that any such feature was destroyed by later activity such as ploughing, particularly as the floors did not survive. Other possible non-domestic uses may have been as byres for animals, although the lack of any drainage feature to take animal waste out of the buildings makes this unlikely, or as storerooms for crops and/or seed corn.

If these buildings were barns or storerooms then they might have been part of a larger complex of buildings. The excavation could not determine whether they represented an isolated farmstead or part of a larger Saxo-Norman manorial estate. However, if there was a settlement, as is suspected, centred on St Mary Abbots church then the present site could represent the linear development of that, possibly consisting of a street composed of an orderly succession of the tofts and crofts of the peasants (Clarke 1984, 31). The toft was a small rectilinear enclosure, which contained a dwelling and associated out-buildings. The croft was the continuation of the enclosure as far as the village boundary. The 'boundary ditch' may have defined one such 'toft'. The village was not only the centre for ecclesiastical organisation in the countryside but also of local manorial administration, so it is also possible for the settlement to have been part of a manorial estate in the neighbourhood (Bond 1985).

It is perhaps of interest that the 'boundary ditch' identified ran at right angles to the presumed line of the Roman road, suggesting that the road was still in existence at this time and exerting its influence on the developing land divisions and settlement layout.

The likely function, trade contacts, and relative status of the settlement should be considered. It seems likely that the settlement would have undertaken both arable and pastoral agriculture. Plough marks of earlier and later date indicate that the land was suitable for arable farming. Quernstone fragments from hand querns indicate domestic grinding. The fence lines identified may indicate that at least some form of animal husbandry was undertaken, further suggested by the recovery of animal bone including that of cattle, horse, sheep/goat, and pig.

The stakeholes that were phased to the Saxo-Norman period were thought to have represented temporary fence lines or other structures, perhaps for a horticultural purpose. The seasonal pattern of horticulture and the relatively flimsy nature of the structures might necessitate continual rebuilding and realignment, which would account for the plethora of these features in parts of the trench. However planting with a digging stick might also produce features similar to stakeholes. Certainly, most peasants grew vegetables and fruit in an enclosure at the back of the house and farm buildings (Dyer 1994, 116). Dyer maintains that the peasants valued their gardens

and would have surrounded them with fences, hedges, and ditches. There is documentary evidence for viticulture with a reference in the Domesday Book to three arpents of vines in the property of Aubrey de Vere (Farid 2001). A ready market for any surplus garden produce would have been easily accessible in the City of London.

The fragments of Mayen lava querns retrieved from deposits dated to the Saxo-Norman and medieval periods dominate the assemblage of stone items recovered from the site. These finds certainly demonstrate the trade link to London. Mayen lava querns from quarries in the Eifel region of Germany were first imported into Britain as part of the standard equipment of the invading Roman army in AD 43. Rapidly gaining in popularity in the domestic market the trade continued throughout the Roman period. The trade had certainly been re-established by the 7th century in Southampton (Addyman & Hill 1979, 79). By the late Saxon period it was flourishing in southern and eastern England, coming from entrepôts such as Dorestad as either finished or roughly shaped blocks (Parkhouse 1977). London was almost certainly the main port of entry into England, and a large deposit of unfinished querns of 10th- or 11th-century date came from Thames Exchange, Upper Thames Street, in the City of London (Freshwater 1996). Substantial fragments of broken querns were often used as building material while small fragments were a useful source of rubble (Buckley & Major 1988, 36). Of the pieces recovered from the site only one is of any size, and only this one retains a dressed surface, in this case an edge.

The disproportionate representation of horse within the animal bone assemblage for the Saxo-Norman and early medieval periods may be an indication of the relative prosperity of the inhabitants. This is supported by the recovery of fragments of horseshoe, indicating that at least some of these animals were shod (Crabtree 1989, 26). In comparison, the frequency of the horse component in the animal bone assemblage from the deserted medieval village of Thrislington in County Durham showed higher proportions of horse from the higher status manor than the lower status toft areas of the site (Rackham 1989, 151–4). There is evidence that the presence of horse increased in importance from the 11th century onwards when it became progressively more common among all ranks of society (Serjeantson *et al* 1992, 12–13). In the case of Earls Terrace 5.7% of the animal bone recovered

from the Saxo-Norman phase was horse, increasing to 9.5% in the subsequent medieval phase.

In the City of London horse bones rarely account for more than 1% of the identified bones from archaeological excavation (Clark 1995, 20). The recovered quantity of horse bone and the location of the site may not be coincidental but rather a reflection of the differences in urban and rural life and perhaps more particularly differences in the disposal of horse carcasses as opposed to other waste. Other explanations for the significance of the equine remains should also be considered. Horsemeat was not normally for human consumption, the more usual fate for the old or mortally sick horse was to be buried where it died, or slaughtered for its hide (Clark 1995, 19–20). This would suggest that the horses were on site prior to their disposal, or had been brought in specifically to be discarded. Unfortunately the animal bone assemblage was too small and badly preserved to be able to confirm or contradict this. It should be noted that the skinning and burial of horses was prohibited within the City walls and carcasses were usually removed from the City for disposal.

The site in the 11th century may have been either part of a manorial estate or an isolated farmstead, but it was certainly practising both arable farming and stock rearing. By the 13th or 14th century the buildings were no longer standing and the boundary ditch to the earlier settlement was allowed to silt up or had been deliberately infilled. This may be an indication that property boundaries had altered. However the site was not abandoned but in the area of the excavations appears to have been given over to agriculture. The presence of agriculturally worked soils, field ditches, and plough marks indicates that arable farming was being carried out. The continued recovery of animal bone and the discovery of rubbish pits suggest that domestic habitation was still continuing in close proximity to the site.

There is a break in the archaeological record for the site between the 14th and 18th centuries. This may reflect the collapse in the population from the early 14th century (Daniell 1997, 191–2), which following the arrival of plague in the winter of 1348 may have declined by as much as a third (Fossier 1986, 53). This apparent abandonment of the site may indicate that the linear medieval village was contracting towards St Mary Abbots church, although the limited

size of the excavation area leaves this possibility uncertain.

In the 18th century the presence of postholes, stakeholes, pitting, and fence lines indicates a reoccupation of the site and agricultural/horticultural activity being undertaken. The establishment of a hedgerow may be an indication of enclosing the land and the shift towards market gardening. This archaeological evidence is consistent with the cartographic sources showing the fields and gardens of the neighbourhood and buildings clustered around St Mary Abbots church (Rocque 1747).

The speculative development of Earls Terrace at the beginning of the 19th century transformed the site from part of a rural parish to a fashionable suburb of the metropolis.

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