

AN EXCAVATION AT LATIMER PARK FARM, LATIMER, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

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with contributions from

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An archaeological investigation on land at Latimer Park Farm, Latimer, Buckinghamshire, north-east of Latimer Roman Villa, revealed a series of pits, postholes and linear features, most of which were probably associated with landscaping of the area for a garden in the post-medieval period. One pit contained the articulated skeleton of a large horse; radiocarbon dating confirmed this is of late medieval to early post-medieval date. The excavation also identified the remains of deep foundations filled with flint nodules. These were undated, but could plausibly have been of Romano-British date and associated with the villa located a short distance to the south-west. The site yielded large quantities of abraded Romano-British pottery and ceramic building materials, probably also associated with the villa, and post-medieval building materials, probably associated with the redevelopment of the site in the 18th and 19th centuries.

INTRODUCTION

In September 2005, Archaeological Solutions Ltd (AS) carried out an archaeological excavation on land at Latimer Park House, Latimer, Buckinghamshire (NGR SP 9986 9856; Figs. 1 & 2). The excavation was preceded by a desk-based assessment (Grant 2003), a geophysical survey (Brook 2003) and a trial-trench evaluation (Crank and Grant 2003). The geophysical survey revealed linear and irregular anomalies, which excavation confirmed were of recent origin. The evaluation revealed medieval pits and linear features, as well as evidence of landscaping/levelling associated with the creation of lawned gardens in the 19th and early 20th centuries. A small quantity of abraded Roman pottery was recovered. One structure might be associated with the villa (located to the south-west), although there was no direct dating evidence

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Site location, topography, geology and soils

Latimer Park House lies on level ground at the bottom of the Chess Valley (c. 79m OD), south of

the river itself. Alluvial deposits are recorded close to the River Chess, but the geology of the site itself is chalky drift and chalk, overlain by Coombe 1 association soils (SSEW 1983). The site lies c. 500m south-west of the hamlet of Latimer, within the grounds of the Grade II listed Latimer Park. The excavation site was situated in the eastern part of the farm complex, adjacent to a recently demolished building, with lawned gardens extending to the east and north.

Archaeological and historical background

Early activity in the fertile Chess Valley is attested by finds of flints dating from the Palaeolithic onwards. The valley attracted extensive settlement in the Romano-British period, with at least five 2nd century and later villas known (Branigan 1970a). One of these, Latimer Villa, lies just 30m to the south-west of the excavation site (Fig. 2). It has been subject to periodic excavations throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, with the main phase of excavation taking place between 1964 and 1971. These investigations established that the earliest dwelling was probably a timber structure, erected and occupied by 'Belgic farmers' and abandoned some 30 to 40 years before the construction of the

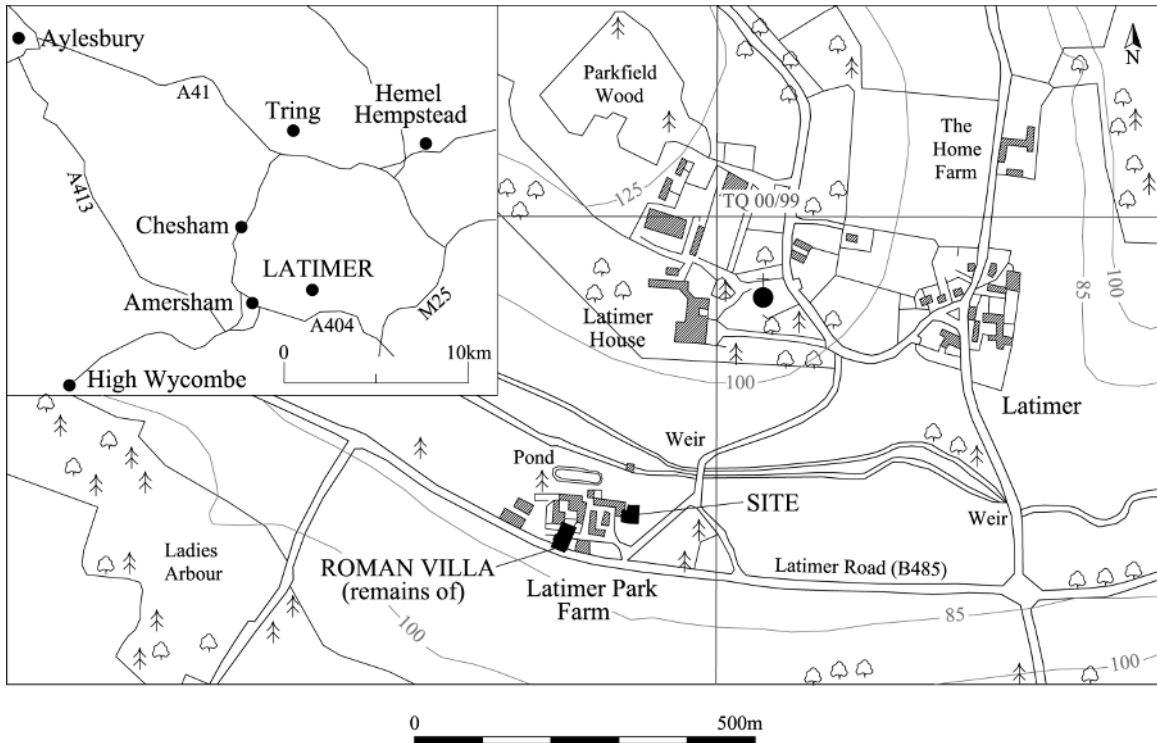


FIGURE 1 Latimer Park House: site location.

first Romanised villa (Branigan 1971). The latter was a substantial courtyard-type villa with associated buildings. The excavations revealed six distinct phases of occupation and construction and it is postulated that the villa controlled some 450 to 500 acres of land, divided between arable and pasture (sheep and cattle) (Branigan 1970a). The villa fell into partial disrepair during the mid 4th century AD, although attempts to repair its walls and floors at this time may indicate that it was not abandoned until the late 5th century (Branigan 1971; 1970b). Sub-Roman occupation is suggested by later timber buildings, possibly indicating that the villa was granted to Germanic mercenaries in the late Romano-British period (Johnston 1994), although this remains speculative. The projected line of a Roman road, leading to *Verulamium*, ran to the north of the site (Milford 1978).

In 1331, Edward III granted the Latimer estate (now Latimer Park) to William and Elizabeth Latimer (Sheahan 1862). The first definite refer-

ence to Latimer Park Farm dates to the later 15th century; by 1555, it was occupied by William Dell and became known as Dell's Farm (Forwood and Armitage 1981). In 1735, a survey listed the farm as comprising 190 acres, with a brick and timber farmstead with a tiled roof. Thatched outbuildings included two barns, a stable and a carthouse. The map accompanying the survey shows the farmhouse as an L-shaped structure, located in approximately the same position as the present farm building (Baines and Thomas 1971). The farm was the centre of the Latimer estate and a range of crafts – from blacksmithing to carpentry – were carried out alongside agricultural production.

The present Latimer Park dates from the mid 18th century. Latimer Road originally ran north of the site, but was diverted to the south of the farm in 1834 (English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens). In 1843, Dell Farm was purchased by the Cavendish family, who later changed its name to Home Farm. In the early 20th century, the farm was

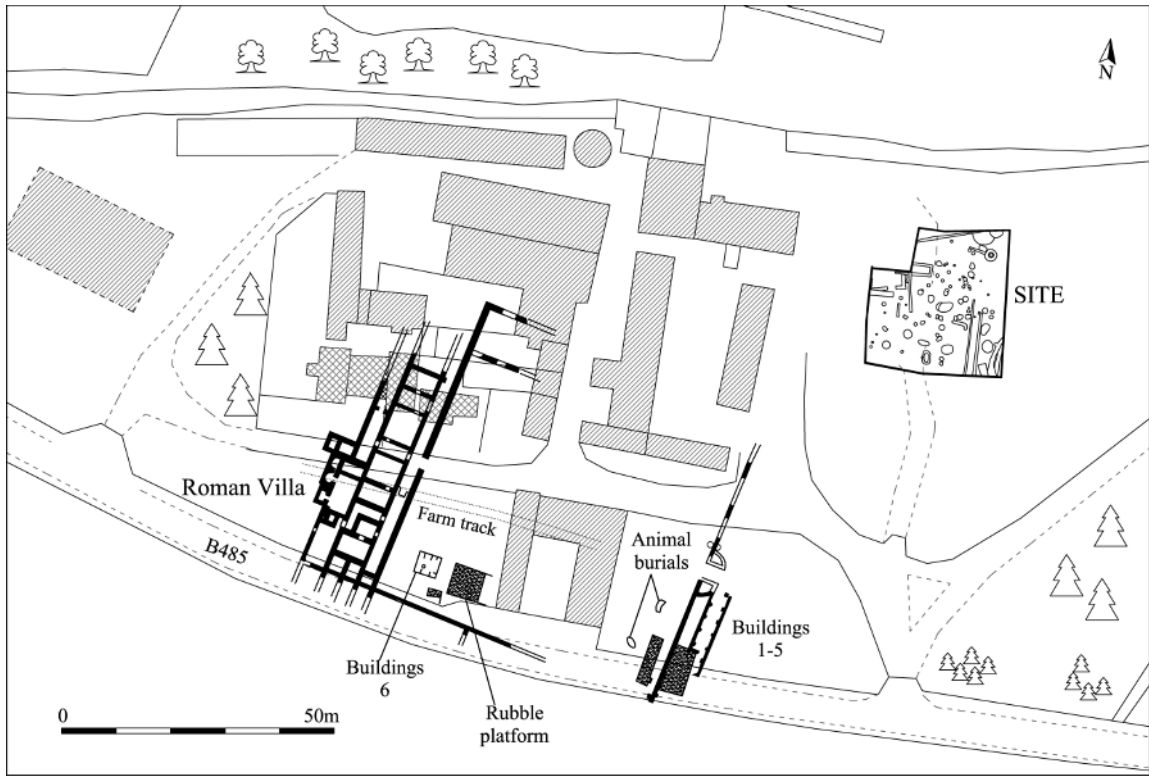


FIGURE 2 Latimer Park House: detailed site location.

still the working centre of the estate, producing turnips, barley and wheat, alongside sheep and pig rearing. The associated buildings included a gas plant, dairy sheds, laundry and a stable for 41 working horses and two donkeys, in addition to buildings used by blacksmiths, sawyers, carpenters and bricklayers (Forwood and Armitage 1981). The farm was renamed Latimer Park Farm in 1954 after purchase by Mr P.F. Cansdale (Branigan 1971).

THE EXCAVATION

Methodology

The excavation site was stripped of overburden under close archaeological supervision, using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. Exposed surfaces were cleaned by hand and all further excavation was undertaken manually. Deposits were recorded using pro-forma recording sheets and photographed as appropriate.

All feature sections were drawn to scale and the site was planned using a total station theodolite. In addition, the excavation area and the spoil were checked and scanned for finds with a metal detector. Pits and postholes were half sectioned, while linear features were excavated in slots providing a minimum of 10–20% coverage. Slots were positioned for optimal determination of inter-feature relationships. Structural features and articulated animal remains were 100% excavated.

Summary of results (Figs. 2–5)

Activity on the site has been divided into four phases (Fig. 3) on the basis of finds evidence, stratigraphy and spatial relationships between features. Phase 1 dates to the Romano-British period and comprised a foundation cut and scattered Roman pottery and building materials. Phase 2 broadly dates to the 15th to 17th century and comprised the majority of the features on the site, including two gullies, a foundation cut and 32 pits

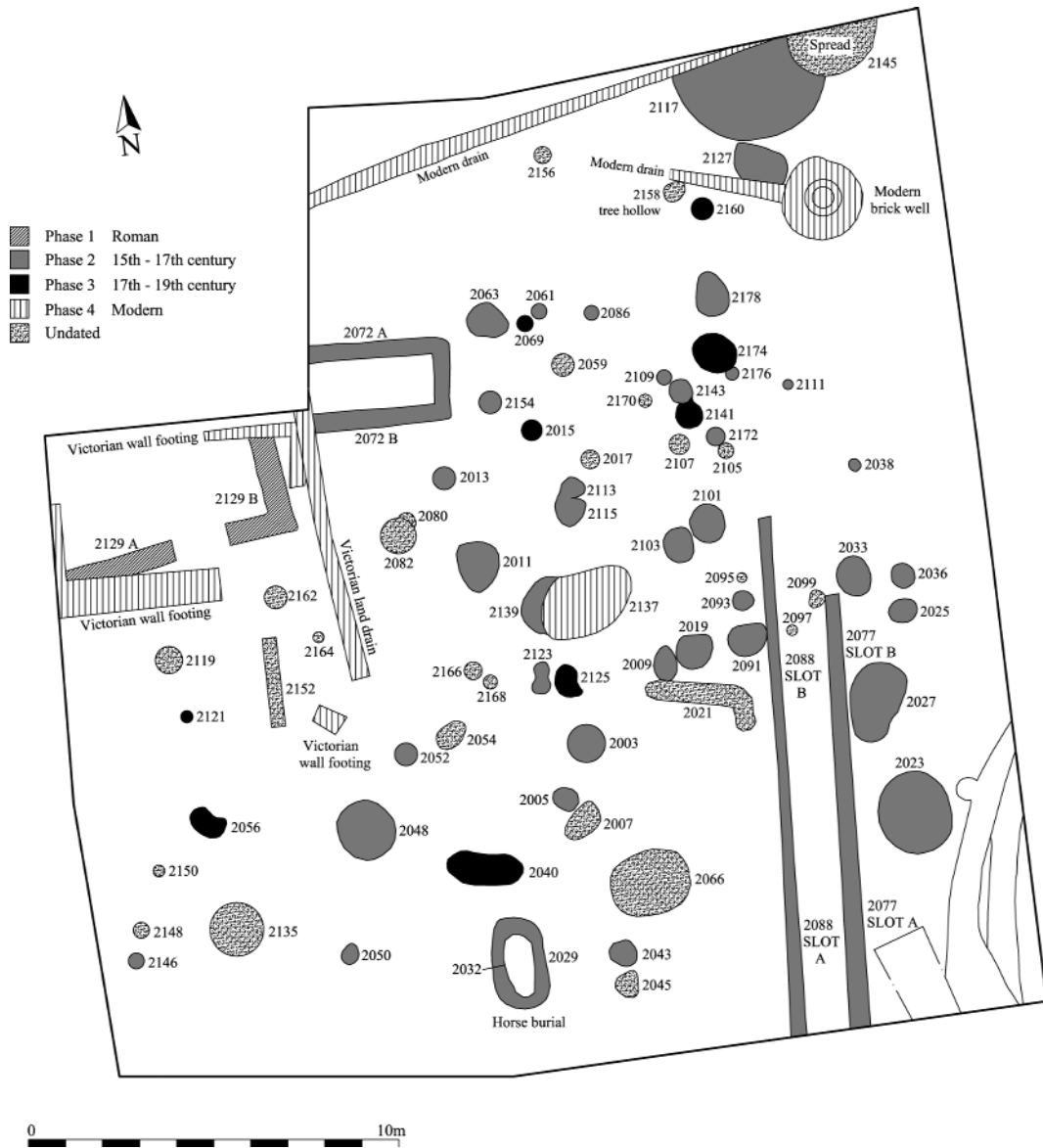


FIGURE 3 Phase plan.

and postholes. Phase 3 features comprised nine pits and postholes, which contained pottery and ceramic building materials dating from the 17th to 19th century. Phase 4 features were modern and comprised the footings of a building, a drainage ditch and a brick well. A number of features remain undated. Detailed descriptions of all features and

contexts can be found in the interim report (Hallybone and Nicholson 2005).

Phase 1: Romano-British activity

At the western edge of the site, foundation cut F2129 (Figs. 3 & 4) was the corner of a building with a possible entrance on its south side. It meas-

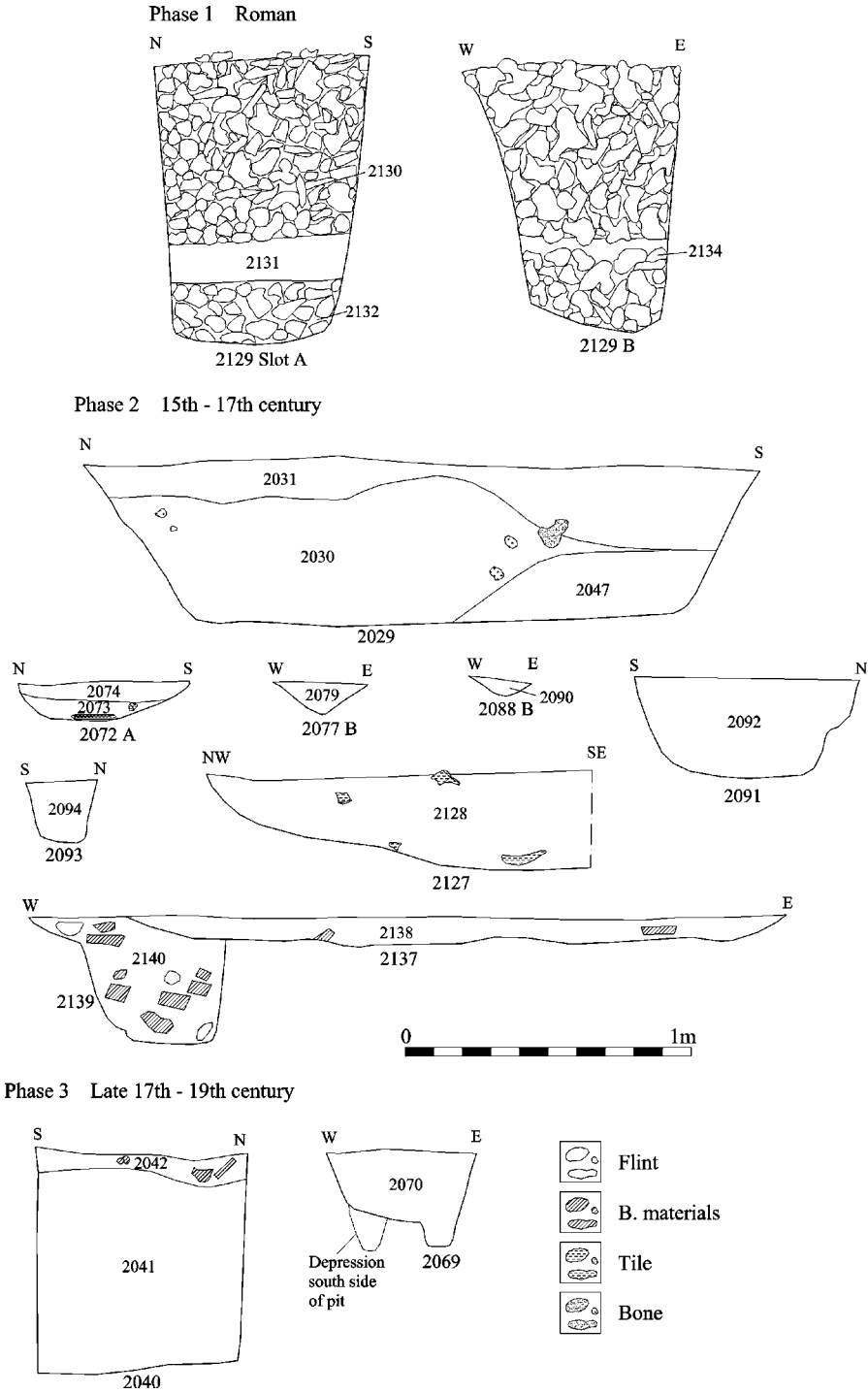


FIGURE 4 Sample sections.

ured *c.* 1m deep and was filled with densely-packed flint nodules, some of which were burnt. Segment F2129A contained a secondary fill of redeposited natural chalk (L2131). Though speculative, it seems likely that these footings were Romano-British; they were very similar to foundations of outbuildings excavated at the adjacent Roman villa.

Fragments of Roman pottery and/or ceramic building materials were recovered from 11 further features, indicating activity of this date in the vicinity of the site. However, these were in poor condition and were frequently present as residual material alongside post-medieval finds. There were tegula roof tile fragments in pit F2127, in the north-east of the site, but this was not a Roman context (Peachey, this report) and the tiles could have been salvaged and reused during a later period.

Phase 2: 15th to 17th century

Most of the dated features have been assigned to Phase 2 (see Fig. 3). These comprised 23 pits, 10 postholes, two linear features and a foundation cut.

Two parallel linear features, F2077 and F2088, separated by a gap of *c.* 1.20m, ran north to south for 14m, continuing southwards beyond the excavation area. Although only F2077 yielded finds, both contained compact chalky fills and had similar profiles and squared northern termini. Their shallowness (Fig. 4) may indicate that they had suffered significant truncation. Their function is not certain, but they may have been associated with drainage or with landscaping of a garden in the area east of the farmhouse.

Nine metres to the north-west, right-angled gully F2072 is tentatively interpreted as the construction cut for a building. It formed the north, east and south sides of a small rectangular structure (internal dimensions 3.4m+ x 1.4m). No floor layers were identified, but the shallow profile of F2072 (Fig. 4) suggests that the building may have been truncated. The small size of this possible structure and apparent lack of a floor suggest that it was not used for occupation, although it could have been a box room or annexe associated with a larger building located to the west of the excavation area. Alternatively, it could have been associated with agricultural activity, perhaps forming a holding pen for livestock or a store.

There were 23 pits, typically oval and on average 1.08m long x 0.92m wide x 0.26m deep, with

varied profiles. The pits contained 15th – 18th century pottery, ceramic building materials and sparse fragments of animal bone. Pit F2139, which was truncated by pit F2137, contained two floor bricks with worn upper surfaces, and pits F2103 and F2101 contained relatively large quantities of brick (46 fragments (12kg) and 15 fragments (2.3kg), respectively). A spherical flint recovered from pit F2033 may have been collected as a curio (Crummy, this report). The material in these features is probably associated with the levelling of the site.

Ten postholes were present; these were circular and an average of 0.50m wide x 0.38m deep. There were no clear spatial arrangements to indicate the presence of structures. All contained small quantities of ceramic building materials; one (F2109) yielded pottery. Postholes F2036 and F2063 contained possible flint packing material.

Pit F2029 (Figs. 3 – 5), in the south of the site, contained a horse burial. The basal fill of the pit was devoid of finds. The skeleton (L2032) lay within the secondary fill (L2030), which also contained five sherds (35g) of later Romano-British pottery and a nail fragment. The uppermost fill (L2031) yielded 95 fragments of highly-abraded ceramic building materials (2878g), including Romano-British imbrex and roof tile, as well as 16th to mid-17th century pottery. The mixed dates of the finds suggested that the burial was post-medieval or modern rather than Romano-British. This dating is supported by the considerable size of the horse, which is larger than other examples from the Romano-British and medieval periods, although if the farm was of sufficient status to have utilised ‘great’ horses, a medieval date would have been plausible (Phillips, this report). A radiocarbon date on a sample of bone confirmed that the horse was of late medieval/ early post-medieval date (Beta Analytic/ Woolhouse, this report).

Phase 3: late 17th to 19th century

Phase 3 features comprised pits F2040, F2056, F2069, F2125, F2141 and F2174 and postholes F2015, F2121 and F2160. Features F2015, F2069, F2141, F2160 and F2174 were in a cluster to the east of construction cut F2072. Although recorded on site as pits, the forms of F2056 and F2069 (Fig. 4) may indicate that they were postholes. Posthole F2015 yielded a fragment of clay pipe and oyster shell, F2056 produced an iron binding strip (Fig. 6)

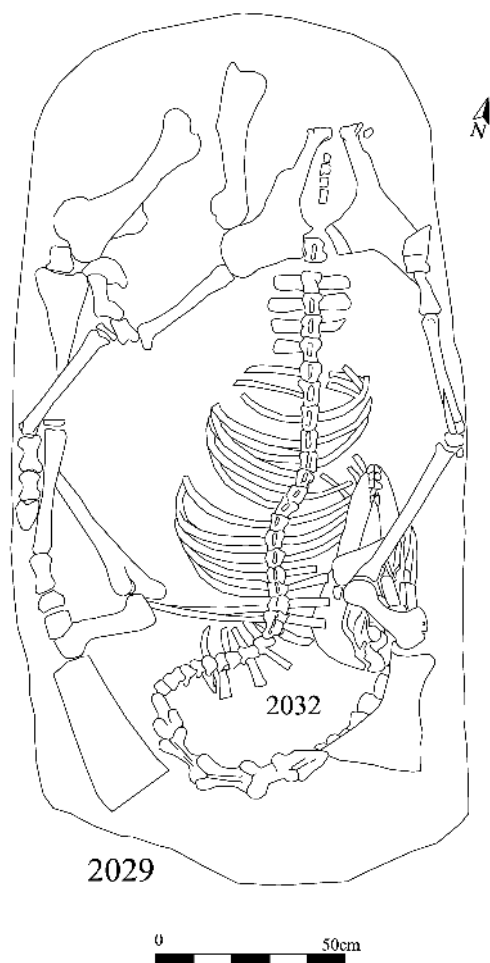


FIGURE 5 Horse burial.

and a horse bone, and F2141 and F2069 contained small fragments of glass.

Pit F2040 (Fig. 4), just north of the Phase 2 horse burial (F2029) noted above, was roughly rectangular and contained two fills. The lower fill (L2041) contained residual Roman and 15th to 17th century pottery and the upper fill (L2042) predominantly 17th to 20th century pottery, post-medieval ceramic building materials and cattle bone.

Phase 4: Modern

Pit F2137, in the centre of the site, produced a Victorian half penny (AD 1862). Although comparatively large in plan, it was only 0.11m deep.

Despite this, the pit produced 40 fragments (7kg) of ceramic building materials, although some of these may have derived from the Phase 2 pit (F2139) which it truncated.

The remaining Phase 4 features comprised wall footings, drains and a well, dated on the basis of the building materials used in their construction and their orientation in relation to extant buildings in the vicinity. The wall footings and associated land drain, in the west of the site, were constructed of frogged bricks and were on the same alignment as an extant Victorian stable block, now used as an office. The footings truncated the remains of an earlier structure, possibly of Romano-British date (F2129; see above). A modern brick-built well was excavated in the north east corner of the site.

Undated features

Well F2135, in the south-west of the site, was lined with flint nodules. F2135 was exposed by the mechanical excavator as a hollow, flint-lined shaft, indicating that it had not silted up or been back-filled at any point. Although the diameter of this feature was 1.12m, its flint lining narrowed it substantially and it was not possible to fully excavate it safely. Other undated features (mainly pits, postholes and tree hollows) are likely to be associated with the late medieval to modern activity recorded elsewhere on the site. An 'L'-shaped gully, F2021, may have been the fragmentary remains of a small structure.

SPECIALIST REPORTS

The Romano-British pottery

By Andrew Peachey

The excavations produced 32 sherds (302g) of Romano-British pottery from eight contexts: F2013 (L2014), F2029 (L2030), F2040 (L2041), F2048 (L2049), F2050 (L2051), F2123 (L2124), F2127 (L2128) and F2143 (L2144). The bulk of this assemblage comprises local sandy grey wares. Romanising/Black-surfaced grey ware, Harrold shell-tempered ware and other fabrics (Hadham oxidised ware, Oxfordshire red-slipped ware, Swanpool colour-coated ware and samian ware) are present in smaller quantities. The limited quantity and highly abraded condition of the pottery prohibits further comment. A catalogue of the pottery is available in the site archive.

The later medieval and post-medieval pottery

By Peter Thompson

The excavation produced 110 late medieval transitional and post-medieval sherds, weighing 1.047kg. The assemblage is not in good condition, consisting mainly of small abraded sherds with few diagnostic forms. The wares present have been tabulated below by date range, sherd number and fabric weight (Table 1).

Sixty-nine percent of this assemblage comprises transitional late medieval redwares and early post-medieval red earthenwares, dating to *c.* 1450–1650. These are generally in poor condition, consisting predominantly of small undiagnostic body sherds, many with some abrasion. Pit F2040 (L2041) contained a small triangular rim from a jug or pitcher, typical of a transitional red ware from outside London. A similarly dated larger pitcher rim, the fabric of which is not local and probably comes from the Midlands (Berni Sudds, pers. comm.), was also found in L2041. Some of these transitional wares could be residual: an abraded sherd in pit F2174 (L2175) appears with a post-medieval glazed red earthenware in good condition, while a baluster jug body sherd from pit F2015 (L2016) was encountered with clay pipe (commonly in use from *c.* 1600).

Most of the remaining pottery (27%) comprises undiagnostic post-medieval red earthenwares, datable to between *c.* 1580/1600 and 1900. These are in better condition, generally being larger and less-abraded pieces. Pit F2160 (L2161) contained four large sherds (256g), including a rim from a large pancheon or dish and the base of a jar or deep bowl. Other than the possible Midlands late medieval transitional rim from F2040 (L2041), the only other ‘imports’ are three sherds of Surrey

Border ware in green or brown glaze, of late 16th to 17th century date. Forms include a flanged dish rim and part of a drinking jug. One tiny unstratified grey sandy sherd, weighing less than 1g, is probably medieval.

The ceramic building materials

By Andrew Peachey

The excavation produced 551 fragments (57,964g) of ceramic building materials, from 49 features (Table 2). The bulk of the brick and tile is of 15th to 18th century date, with low quantities of residual Romano-British ceramic building materials. It is very poorly-preserved and extremely fragmented.

Romano-British ceramic building material (CBM) is sparsely distributed and mixed with post-medieval material, except in horse burial pit F2029 and pit F2127. The horse burial pit (F2029 L2031) contained 95 fragments (2878g) of CBM including rare fragments of discernable imbrex and tegula roof tile; however, 93.68% of the fragments are so highly abraded and fragmented that they cannot be assigned a definite type or phase. It is highly probable that these fragments derive from Romano-British CBM, but this cannot be stated with absolute certainty. The Romano-British fragments in pit F2127 (L2128) are from two large fragments of tegula, each possibly accounting for approximately 40% of the original complete tile. Both fragments are abraded to a far higher degree than the Romano-British CBM in F2029 and that which occurs residually elsewhere; they also bear traces of burning. Their large size and abraded state, along with a single post-medieval fragment in the feature, may indicate that they were salvaged and reused, possibly as lining, in the 15th century or later.

TABLE 1 Wares by date, sherd number and fabric weight

<i>Ware code</i>	<i>Ware</i>	<i>Date range</i>	<i>Sherd count</i>	<i>Fabric weight (g)</i>
MGW	Medieval grey ware	1200–1500	1	1
TRE	Transitional Red Earthenware	1400–1600	54	370
EMPRE	Early post-medieval red earthenware	1500–1650	22	18
BORDG	Green Glazed Border Ware	1550–1700	1	3
PMBRE	Post-medieval black glazed red earthenware	1580–1800/1900	4	21
PMRE	Post-medieval red earthenware	1580–1900	26	622
BORDB	Brown Glazed Border Ware	1620–1700	2	12

The post-medieval CBM was recovered almost entirely from pits. The most diagnostic type of post-medieval CBM comprises fragments of wall brick with relatively consistent dimensions of ? x 95 x 50mm. Bricks of similar dimensions were common from the Tudor period through to the early 18th century. There are scarce fragments with dimensions of up to ? x 115 x 60mm, which are probably minor variations in structural or dress types of brick, rather than being of later date. High concentrations of brick occurred in pits F2103 (L2104), F2137 (L2138) and F2139 (L2140). The CBM in pit F2139 (L2140) also includes substantial fragments of post-medieval floor brick/tile (30mm thick) which have had their upper surfaces heavily worn and smoothed through wear.

The most frequently occurring type of post-medieval CBM is fragmented flat roof tile (15–18mm thick), with high concentrations in pit F2056 (L2057) and pit F2125 (L2126). Apart from thickness, the fragments of flat roof tile are too fragmented for further diagnostic dimensions to be measured, although several fragments include circular nail holes (10mm wide), which taper towards the base.

The metal and stone objects

By Nina Crummy

Six features yielded metal objects, predominantly fragments of iron nails. The exception is an iron binding strip from pit F2056. A single stone object was recovered during the excavation, a naturally-occurring flint sphere, which may have been collected as a curio.

Catalogue

Fig. 6 L2057 F2056. Pit fill. Iron binding strip, one arm tongue-ended, the other damaged. One nail for attachment is set at the end of the complete arm and there is a

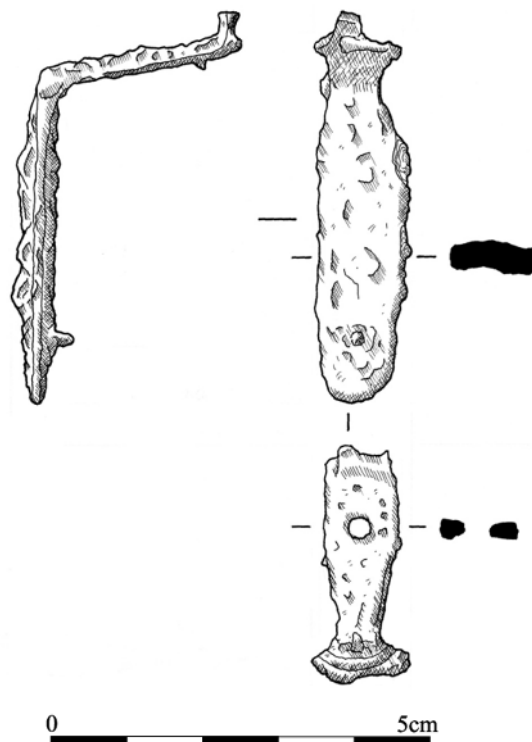


FIGURE 6 Small Find.

nail hole in the centre of the damaged arm. Arm lengths 89 and 52mm, maximum widths 22 and 21mm.

L2012 F2011. Pit fill. Tongue-ended iron strip, probably part of a hinge or strap-fitting, as above. Length 71mm, width 21mm.

L2078 F2077. Fill of gully. Iron shank with one end formed into a short hook. Length 89mm.

TABLE 2 Quantification of ceramic building materials in post-medieval feature types by frequency (f) and weight (w; in grams)

Feature type	No. of features	Post-medieval flat roof tile		Post-medieval wall brick		?Post-medieval floor brick		Miscellaneous and residual	
		f	w	f	w	f	w	f	w
Pit	44	290	11621	147	33890	17	2846	43	7006
Posthole/Pit	3	18	758	0	0	0	0	1	94
Other	2	22	1152	1	121	0	0	12	476
Total	49	330	13531	148	34011	17	2846	56	7576

L2004 F2003. Pit fill. Iron nail shank. Length 79mm.

L2030 F2029. Fill of horse burial pit. Iron nail, tip missing. Length 37mm.

L2087 F2086. Fill of pit/posthole. Iron nail with narrow rectangular or oval head; the tip of the shank is missing. Length 31mm. The type first appears in the medieval period.

L2034 F2033. Pit fill. Naturally-occurring flint sphere, possibly collected as a curio. Maximum diameter 33mm.

The animal bone

By Carina Phillips

Introduction

Animal bone was present in 17 contexts. A total of 215 fragments of bone were recovered, of which 188 were from an articulated horse skeleton in pit F2029 (L2030). The other 27 fragments of animal bone came from features dated to the 15th – 18th century. Preservation of the bone is good, although some fragile bones were fractured during excavation.

Method

Bones were identified and recorded to species and element when possible. The category sheep/goat has been used due to the difficulties in clearly identifying the species sheep (*Ovis sp.*) or goat (*Capra sp.*). It was not possible to record tooth wear for any species other than horse. Tooth-wear ageing for horses follows Farbenfabriken (1994), Levine

(1982) and Silver (1969). Measurements were taken when viable following the methods of Jones et al. (1976) and von den Driesch (1976), and are contained in the site archive. Withers heights for horses were calculated following Kiesewalter in Driesch & Bosseneck (1974); it was not possible to calculate heights for other species. When available, the fusion state of identifiable bones was also recorded and ages were assessed following Silver (1969). Fragments that could not be identified to a particular species were recorded under the categories of 'large-sized', consisting of cattle (*Bos sp.*), large deer and horse (*Equus sp.*), 'medium-sized fragments' and 'small-sized', consisting of sheep/goat, pig (*Sus sp.*) and dog (*Canis familiaris*) sized bone fragments. The unidentifiable bone fragments were recorded. Evidence of burning, sawing, chopping, knife-cutting and gnawing was recorded, as was deliberately smashed bone.

Results

The bulk of the assemblage is accounted for by a horse skeleton from pit F2029 (L2030). The remains are substantially complete and well-preserved, although fragmentation of some of the skeleton, particularly fragile bones such as the skull, has occurred. Ageing of the horse was possible using teeth wear and bone fusion, indicating the horse was approximately 4½ years old at time of death. The presence of both upper and lower canines suggests that it was probably male; canines are usually absent or rudimentary in females, but very occasionally are present in mares (Sisson and

TABLE 3 Number of Identified Specimens/ fragments per species for each phase

	<i>Phase 2</i>	<i>Phase 3</i>	<i>Phase 4</i>	<i>Undated</i>	<i>Total</i>
Cattle	1	0	6	0	7
Sheep/goat	1	1	0	0	2
Pig	1	0	0	0	1
Dog	1	0	0		1
Horse	0	1	0	1skeleton (NISP=188)	1+ horse skeleton
Roe Deer	1	0	0	0	1
Large sized	2	0	0	1	3
Small sized	4	1	1	0	5
Unidentifiable	4	0	1	0	5
<i>Total</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>1+horse skeleton</i>	<i>27+horse skeleton L2032</i>

Grossman 1953). The congenital development of a small first premolar in the right maxillae was noted. The horse bones indicate a heavily-built animal; measurements of the long bones give a withers height estimation of 169.4cm, equivalent to 16.7 hands (following Clutton-Brock 1974). There is no evidence of butchery on any of the horse bones.

An ossified haematoma is present on the lateral shaft of the right metacarpal and adjoining lateral splint bone (R. Jones, pers. comm.). An ossified haematoma is the result of some form of blunt impact causing injury and resulting in a subperiosteal haemorrhage. The swelling caused from the injury is then gradually replaced by a smooth bone swelling (Baker and Brothwell 1980, 83). Periosteal bone growth of the haematoma was active at time of death (R. Jones, pers. comm.).

Apart from the horse skeleton, only 27 bone fragments were recovered, which include cattle, sheep/goat, pig, dog, horse and deer. Roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) was the only wild species to be identified. A breakdown of the identified bones by phase is presented in Table 3. Butchery is evident on 10 fragments (37%). There are five chop marks indicative of butchery, three cut marks suggestive of skinning and filleting and two smashed bone fragments, suggesting utilisation of the bone marrow.

Discussion

Detailed discussion of most of the assemblage is not possible due to the small number of fragments present. The large size of the horse from pit F2029 would have been unusual in the Romano-British and medieval periods, when the great majority of horses were less than 15 hands in height (Rackham 1995, 29). A horse of this size, however, would not have been impossible in the medieval period, as evidence suggests that medieval war horses (described as 'Great Horses') were 15–16 hands in withers height (Rackham 1995). Some authors even speculate a 17–18 hand animal (Davis 1989, 88). In the medieval period, this horse would have been an exceptionally large animal and would have been valuable. Radiocarbon dating of the bone indicates a late medieval or early post-medieval date for the horse (Beta Analytic/Woolhouse, this report). Horses of this size become more common in the early post-medieval period.

The shell

By Carina Phillips

Oyster shell (*Ostrea edulis*) was recovered from five contexts. Three contexts were datable to between the 15th and 18th centuries. Only seven fragments of oyster shell were recovered in total, coming from a minimum of five individuals. Shellfish were a popular food in the medieval and post-medieval periods, and were transported in water tanks to inland sites (Wilson 1991).

Radiocarbon dating

Beta Analytic/Thomas Woolhouse

One sample of bone was submitted to Beta Analytic Inc., Miami, Florida, for radiocarbon dating analysis (Table 4) in order to provide an absolute date for the articulated horse skeleton (L2032) found in Pit F2029.

Sampling strategy

The animal bone assemblage was sub-sampled for material for radiocarbon dating at the post-excavation stage. Sampling was based on the potential significance of the articulated horse skeleton (L2032) from pit F2029. The pottery from the pit suggested an early post-medieval date (16th to mid-17th century), but moderate quantities of Roman finds were also present, leading to some uncertainty over the date of the pit and the associated horse skeleton. At 16.7 hands (Phillips, this report), the horse would have been an exceptionally large animal in the Roman or medieval period, so it was considered important to establish whether the skeleton belonged to either of these periods.

Method

Calibrated date ranges (Table 4) were based on the internationally recognised maximum intercept method (Stuiver and Pearson 1986). This calibration curve is generally agreed back to c. 2500 BC, thus covering the period in question. Calibrations were compiled using a recent calibration database (Stuiver & van der Plicht 1998; Stuiver *et al.* 1998; Talma & Vogel 1993). The samples were not known to have been disturbed by later archaeological activity.

Results

Based on the pottery from pit F2029, it was anticipated that the horse skeleton would date to the 16th to mid-17th century. The sample provided a radio-

carbon date range of AD 1450 to 1650 (500 to 300 cal. BP), confirming the date range indicated by the ceramic evidence. The horse was therefore a late medieval/early post-medieval specimen. By this time, horses of 16 to 17 hands **were** probably becoming more common on farms than in the earlier medieval period. Nevertheless, it would still have been a valuable animal.

DISCUSSION

The excavations at Latimer Park House revealed a series of pits and postholes, linear features, a horse burial, two wells and structural remains. Many of the features produced late medieval to post-medieval finds, including a large quantity of ceramic building materials which may represent a deliberate attempt to level the site prior to building or landscaping.

The site also produced abraded Romano-British material, probably residual. Some of the ceramic building materials may have been retrieved from the nearby villa and reused for building or for ground levelling (e.g. the assemblage from pit F2127). The remains may also represent manuring in this area during the Romano-British period, or material that has been washed down slope from the villa site to the south-west.

A possible Romano-British building (F2129)

Structure F2129 lay underneath the remains of the Victorian building, which was demolished prior to

the excavation. Given its location, it would be reasonable to assume that it represents the post-medieval L-shaped structure recorded in 1793, thought to occupy approximately the same position as the modern house (Baines and Thomas 1971, 199). A 1735 description of the farmstead states that the house was of brick and timber with a tiled roof. The ancillary buildings, which comprised at least two barns, a stable and a carthouse, were all thatched. In 1802, the farmhouse is described as being '*very ordinary... with a granary, three barns, two stables, a cowhouse, two carthouses and pigsties, of old construction, timber and tile, with a suckling house thatched*' (*ibid.*, 199).

However, the foundations of F2129 were substantial, measuring up to c.1m deep. Foundations on this scale suggest a building of considerable size, perhaps larger than the house and outbuildings described in the 18th and 19th century surveys. Furthermore, it seems unlikely that a brick and timber building, as described in the surveys, would have used foundations packed with flint nodules. Flint nodule foundations are, however, often recorded in Roman buildings (de la Bédoyère 2006, 196; Moore 1988, 45). The use of foundations filled with clean 'loose' (i.e. un-mortared) flint was also recorded during the excavations at the adjacent villa (Branigan 1971, 63). Branigan suggests that the flints used were collected from the surrounding fields. The villa walls were constructed from mortared flint and were of the same width as the foundations recorded during the

TABLE 4 Calibration of radiocarbon age to calendar years

Laboratory number (Beta-)	AS sample number	Analysis	Conventional radiocarbon age	Calibrated results: 2 sigma calibration (95% probability)	Calibrated results: 1 sigma calibration (68% probability)	Intercept of radiocarbon age with calibration curve
233836 L2032	AS743/ standard delivery (collagen analysis) (with alkali)	Radiometric	340 +/- 40BP	Cal AD 1450 to 1650 (Cal BP 500 to 300)	Cal AD 1470 to 1640 (Cal BP 480 to 310)	Cal AD 1520 (Cal BP 430) and Cal AD 1590 (Cal BP 360) and Cal AD 1620 (Cal BP 330)

current excavation, measuring between 0.50m and 1.00m (*ibid.*).

It is possible that F2129 is a structure contemporary with the villa, perhaps some form of ancillary agricultural building. However, this supposition is not well supported by the highly-abraded condition of the later Romano-British pottery and ceramic building materials recovered from the site, so the question remains open.

The flint-lined well, F2135, which was thought on site to be contemporary with F2129, had not silted up and is unlikely to be of Roman date.

Later medieval, post-medieval and early modern activity

Inception of activity on the site in the 15th century corresponds well with the first documentary evidence for the farm, which dates to the later part of that century (see above). In the mid-16th century, the dwelling and certain lands were held by William Dell. A rental from 1572 states that '*the lessee doth covenant to build a new chimney of brikes and other stones with lyme and sand within three years next after the date of the indenture*'. Although the alterations were small, they do represent an early example of the 'great wave of rebuilding and improvements which was to mark the 16th century' (Baines and Thomas 1971, 196).

The levelling noted during the excavation might also be associated with the landscaping for Latimer Park in the mid-18th century. From the mid-16th century onwards, there was a substantial increase in the popularity of private parks and gardens, many of which were created on a large scale and often had a major impact on the surrounding settlements (Whyte 1999, 272). Many of the buildings in the village of Latimer were demolished when the park was created and it continued to influence the layout of the surviving settlement (Forwood and Armitage 1981). However, this activity appears to have been more widespread on the north bank of the river Chess and it is unlikely that the farm complex was much affected by this phase of landscaping.

The cartographic evidence reveals that between 1802 and 1839, the farm complex was extensively developed, possibly in response to a survey that noted that the house needed heavy repairs (Baines and Thomas 1971, 199). It is possible, therefore, that much of the building material used for levelling on the excavation site derived from the demolition of the existing structures in the early 19th

century.

The cartographic sources also reveal that the land to the east of the farm complex, which encompasses the site, was free from development and it was probably always a garden. It is likely that the pits, postholes and linear features recorded on the site are associated with this.

Horse burial

The circumstances describing the dating of this burial have been discussed above. A late medieval/early post-medieval date (AD 1450 – 1650) was confirmed by radiocarbon dating of a bone sample from the skeleton. This is consistent with the documentary evidence, which shows that horses were present on the farm from at least 1735. A government survey from the 1790s lists eight horses, three wagons and four carts; only one other farm in the parish had more (Baines and Thomas 1971, 199). Until relatively recently, horses were an important part of agriculture on Latimer Park Farm and by the 20th century, it had sufficient stabling for 41 horses. Analysis of the skeleton indicates that the horse was a heavily-built animal and stood at 16.7 hands high (Phillips, this report), within the parameters for a shire horse (Website 1).

The skeletal remains do not reveal how or why the horse died; it was only approximately 4½ years old at the time of death and, given time, should have recovered from the injury on its right metacarpal (Phillips, pers. comm.). No other horse burials are recorded in the area and carcasses were often utilised for glue making or animal feed. The deliberate burial of the horse, in what was probably the garden, may indicate an animal to which the owners had significant sentimental attachment. The careful burial of horses in gardens during the post-medieval and early modern periods is attested elsewhere. Examples include the remains of a draught horse, dating to the early 20th century, and located in a pit in the cobbled garden of Chomley's House, Whitby Abbey (North Yorkshire). This skeleton exhibited a series of pathologies (Website 2), suggesting it was older than the one at Latimer Park Farm. A probable post-medieval pit containing a horse skeleton has also been identified in a garden area at the Thremhall Priory site (Essex) (Williamson 2006). Like the horse burial at Latimer Park Farm, these probably represent the deposition of animals to which the owners were particularly attached.

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