

# CHESHAM BOIS MANOR, HOME TO THE CHEYNE FAMILY FOR 350 YEARS. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

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*This report describes investigations undertaken at Chesham Bois House by Chess Valley Archaeological and Historical Society (CVAHS) between 2005 and 2007 and includes results from collaborative work with Time Team/Wessex Archaeology during a week in May 2006. Investigations were prompted by local historians Roy and Anne Paton who collected documentary evidence defining this as the site of the medieval manor of Chesham Bois. Geophysical surveys around the existing house identified a number of anomalies suggestive of buried features. Three trenches were opened in the first phase of investigation. One exposed a large pit filled with demolition rubble comprising handmade bricks and tiles. Another revealed an 18<sup>th</sup> century path which included in its make-up reused brick 'specials', such as moulded mullion window bricks, consistent with the presence of a high status building in the past. The third, contained compacted chalk floors, a medieval hearth and smithying pit and sherds of 12<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century pottery. Identical radiocarbon dates were obtained for four charcoal specimens from the smithying pit; this date coincided with two calibration peaks at 1500 and 1600. The position of a silver groat, dating to 1422–27, relative to the pit fill surface favours the earlier calibration date. The third trench lay within the footprint of the manor house as shown on a Bedford Estate map of 1735. Extension of this trench uncovered a second, later medieval hearth, inset into a chimney breast. In the early post-medieval period, this chimney breast had been partly demolished and rebuilt, to provide a more sophisticated, compartmented oven above the original hearth. Two further trenches, which also lay within the footprint of the old manor, were opened to the west of the present house. In both cases there were clear signs of post-medieval terracing and rebuilding which may have truncated and destroyed earlier structures. In one of these trenches a long, well-built wall with 'specials' incorporated into the brickwork was uncovered. Built probably in the 17<sup>th</sup> century this structure could possibly have been part of an arcade or gallery, although it clearly acted as a retaining wall for some of its length. An earlier pit, containing 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century pottery and animal bones, was discovered running beneath the wall. Various topographic features and geophysical anomalies were also detected in Church Field, which lies adjacent to Chesham Bois house and appears on the 1735 map as part of the manor grounds. The most significant anomaly proved to be a large ditch running across the field and through the eastern gardens. It is possible that this is a manorial enclosure boundary but a prehistoric date cannot be excluded.*

## INTRODUCTION

Chesham Bois House (NGR SU 968 997) and gardens lie close to the crest of the ridge between the Chess and Misbourne Valleys at 155m OD and overlook the Chess Valley to the east and northeast. The present house was built in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and has gardens covering around 1.2 hectares (3 acres) including formal flower beds, orchards, lawns and uncultivated grassland. The Bedford Estate map of 1735 (Fig 1A) shows an older, much larger house on this site surrounded by ornamental gardens, a bowling green and canal. The present house is about one sixth of the size of the old manor house. It seems likely that this location formed part of one of the manorial estates of middle Saxon Chesham (Baines and Thomas 1971) which by the 13<sup>th</sup> century was the site of Chesham Bois manor house, as described below.

The CVAHS Field Group was invited by the owner Julia Plaistowe to undertake an investigation of the history, chronology and development of the house and environs. This report describes work done between 2005 and 2007. For five days in May 2006 Time Team/Wessex Archaeology worked with CVAHS and the findings made during that visit are included in this report. Our major objectives were i) to establish how long the site of Chesham Bois House had been occupied; ii) to explore the structure of the house and how it changed over time; iii) to determine the nature of the earthworks in Church Field and decide whether they were associated with Chesham Bois manor.

The understanding of the development of Chesham Bois manor was much aided by historical research carried out by Anne Paton and summarised below. Results based on surveys, excavations and finds analysis follow in separate sections.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### 11th to 14th centuries

Prior to the archaeological work described in this paper all that was known of the history of the site of Chesham Bois House came from documentary sources. The earliest record is in the Domesday Survey (1086: Williams and Martin 2002), where among the entries for Chesham is a small unnamed unit of one and a half hides (180 acres), held directly by Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, William the

Conqueror's half brother. One hide was demesne land with a plough to work it; the remaining sixty acres were divided among two villeins and three bordars, with two ploughs between them. There were in addition two slaves, two mills and enough meadow to support oxen for all three ploughs. In 1066 this small Saxon manor, valued then and at Domesday at sixty shillings, was held by two men who owed allegiance to the dominant Godwinson family, one to Earl Harold, the other to Earl Leofwin. The manor can be identified as that later known as Chesham Bois from its connection with Odo of Bayeux and the later feudal history of Chesham Bois in the Honour of Leicester and the Duchy of Lancaster (Page 1925). No other holding in Chesham shares this history. It is not possible from Domesday to be sure of the location of farmland and dwellings, though the mills must have been by the Chess.

A record in the Feet of Fines (Page 1925), together with a surviving chapel, identifies the approximate site of the manor house in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century. The aspirations of William de Bois, then lord of the manor, led him to make an agreement in 1213 with the Abbot of Leicester Abbey, securing the right to nominate a chaplain for his chapel. This is now the chancel of St Leonard's Church, Chesham Bois. The house which it served would have been nearby. Before the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century the de Bois family had gone, leaving their name (Page 1925) and their chapel behind.

A succession of families recorded in the Feet of Fines, Inquisitions Post Mortem, Close Rolls, Patent Rolls, the de Banco Rolls and various other archives appear in the descent of the manor given in the Victoria County History (Page 1925). For example, it is noted that Sir Bartholomew Brianzon was granted free warren in 1281. In 1340, when Edward III swept back from France to surprise Sir John Moleyns in his illicit possession of caches of armour and treasure, Chesham Bois was one of Moleyns' manors (Elvey 1972). Briefly held by William de Hanampstede, a grocer and citizen of London, the manor then passed to Peter de Braoze, who complained in 1351 that his "houses in Chesham Bois had been broken into". Forty years later a certain John Winslow of Chesham Bois presented to the church.

The manor seems to have prospered during the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. A nave was added to the chapel, which was later re-roofed, and by the 15<sup>th</sup>



FIGURE 1 Above: Part of the Duke of Bedford Estate Map of 1735 showing the manor house and ornamental gardens. The church, now St Lawrence church, is also shown. *By kind permission of the Duke of Bedford and the Trustees of the Bedford Estate*.

Below: Part of the 1795 Tithe Map. At this date the manor house had been demolished although its previous existence is still marked by the field name 'Mansion House Farm'.

century Chesham Bois had acquired rights of burial and was becoming more independent of the mother church of St Mary's Chesham (Page 1925). Of the manor house and other dwellings and their inhabitants which existed during this period, nothing is known.

### **Cheyne at Chesham Bois and Chenies in the 15th century**

Early in the 15<sup>th</sup> century Chesham Bois was drawn into the powerful interest being built up by Sir John Cheyne of Drayton Beauchamp and Thomas, his younger brother (Smith BCRL). Thomas was using Sir John's manor of Grove, opposite Chesham Bois over the Chess. Both men were known Lollards and were imprisoned in the Tower in 1414. In 1431 they were briefly re-incarcerated, accused of violent lawlessness and intimidation: both Drayton Beauchamp and Grove were searched by the Sheriff. In 1434, along with others they were required to taken an oath not to support peace-breakers.

By 1433, and possibly earlier, Thomas Cheyne had acquired Chesham Bois manor and soon after Blackwell Hall and Mordaunts, which lay in the Chess Valley below Grove and Chesham Bois. Ten years later Thomas purchased the important manor of Chenies (Smith BCRL) further along the valley, transferring it to Sir John in 1445. Thomas's younger son acquired the manor of Shardeloes in the Misbourne valley in 1476, and his grandson, who inherited Chesham Bois in 1459, married the widowed daughter of Edmund Brundell of Raans, his immediate neighbour on the hilltop (Smith BCRL).

While no written record has yet been uncovered describing the evolution of Chesham Bois manor under the Cheynes, there is evidence of substantial expenditure and development at Chenies and Grove. Sir John Cheyne began to rebuild the manor house at Chenies in brick about 1460: this work survives at the core of the present house (Pevsner and Williamson 1994). At a similar period, impressive flint and stone towers were built flanking the entrance to Grove (Harman 1999).

At Chesham Bois, we know only that Thomas died about 1446, and his son and heir to the manor, John, died in 1459. John was followed at Chesham Bois by his son, who in his turn died in 1466, leaving the manor to his infant son, another John, only eight weeks old, who also inherited Drayton

Beauchamp and Grove in 1494. Chenies was bequeathed outside the family.

### **Cheyne at Chesham Bois during the 16th and 17th centuries**

The Cheynes made Chesham Bois their home during the 16<sup>th</sup> century and much of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Many of them chose to be buried in the chancel of St Leonard's Church, although their forbears were buried at Drayton Beauchamp. Robert Cheyne, who inherited Chesham Bois in 1535, marked his prosperity and status with a fine brass for his first wife in the chancel. A tiny chrysom brass for Benedict Lee may record the burial of a grandson, while another brass commemorates Robert's own death in 1552. His heir John founded a number of small Buckinghamshire charities, recorded on a delicate carved memorial over an impressive unnamed altar tomb.

Robert, John and their successors developed Chesham Bois from a medieval manor into a modern estate. Like many of his contemporaries, Robert became a prosperous sheep farmer, running large flocks of sheep at Grove, where Cheyne sheep bells have been found (Harman 1999). Without accounts or other estate records, precise dating is difficult, but by the early 17<sup>th</sup> century the farmland at Chesham Bois had been divided between tenanted farms. Each had a brick and timber farmhouse and outbuildings, and there were a few scattered cottages and mill buildings. What the Cheynes did with their own house is not known.

By the time Elizabeth I died in 1603 the Cheynes of Chesham Bois were a well established Buckinghamshire family. Three had held office as Sheriff in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, as well as two others before the Civil War broke out (Viney 1965). They would have needed a house suitable for the conduct of county business. Francis Cheyne, who inherited from his uncle in 1620, made a prudent marriage with local new money, the Fleetwoods of Missenden Abbey. He had the resources to develop his house and gardens at Chesham Bois, and some of the features on later maps may date from this time.

Anne Cheyne, Francis's wife, left a fragmentary glimpse of life in the manor house in her household notebook for April and May 1630 (Ellesmere Papers EL 10753). She appears to have been a busy, diligent Stuart lady of the manor. Mother of three small boys, she was the centre of a large

active household receiving and recording supplies, planning meals and providing for the poor. Large quantities of meat were roasted or boiled, particularly chickens, rabbits and pigeons, which were kept in hutches and coops. Pigs' trotters were regularly served, as were apple pies made using last season's fruit. Bread of various grades was baked for the whole household on a large scale: 67 loaves were baked on a single day in April. Anne's busy life was cut abruptly short. A week after her last entry in the notebook she was buried in the chancel of the church, on the same day as her new-born son John was baptized. Francis Cheyne remained active in the county, serving as Sheriff in 1633. He died in 1644 during the first Civil War, and was succeeded by his eighteen-year old son Charles, two older boys having died.

Charles Cheyne was a committed Royalist whose ambition and interests eventually took him into the ranks of the nobility and away from Chesham Bois. He made a brilliant love match with Lady Jane Cavendish, daughter of the Marquess of Newcastle (Worsley 2007). Famous for her defence of Welbeck during the Civil War, Jane was a great heiress, allowing Charles to purchase the manor of Chelsea in 1657 where they made their home.

Several times a Tory member of Parliament, Charles enjoyed Royal favour, holding the office of Commissioner of Customs amongst others, and was created Viscount Newhaven in 1681 (Concise Dictionary of National Biography 1992). The busy fashionable village of Chelsea, within easy reach of the Court, engaged the Cheynes' energies in their house, gardens and charities (Bryan G 1869). The famous Mr Winstanley was employed to install waterworks in the gardens, described as "very surprising and extraordinary" by John Evelyn. No evidence of work on the house and gardens at Chesham Bois at this time has been found. Charles Cheyne died in 1698 and was buried in Chelsea (Bryan G 1869). Here too is the superb memorial, commissioned from Bernini, on the death of his beloved Jane, perhaps the best evidence of how he saw himself.

### **Declining years of 18th and 19th centuries**

William, 2<sup>nd</sup> Viscount Newhaven, who inherited from his father Charles in 1698, was the last of the line. Deeply involved in Buckinghamshire affairs (Kent Clark 2004), he was a major player in the battles between Whigs and Tories to control seats in

parliament. He was MP for Amersham three times, held a county seat twice and was Lord Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire from 1712–1714 (Concise Dictionary of National Biography 1992). At this time Chesham Bois manor house was used for political entertaining and, soon after William inherited the estate, a party was entertained for three days to ensure their votes: those who refused their vote were turned out (note in Records of Buckinghamshire 1945). Some years later William wrote to Lord Fermanagh at Claydon to invite him to stay and to support their cause. "*Bois and myself shall be at your service, with a warm bedd and hearty Welcome*" (Verney 1930). Whether William developed the house and gardens to meet the needs of lavish hospitality is not known. He is last person who might have done so.

William sold Chelsea manor to Sir Hans Sloane in 1712, but continued to administer the affairs at Drayton Beauchamp (Ellesmere Papers EL IO798-823), and when he died in 1728 was buried there alongside the founders of his line. When his widow died in 1732, Chesham Bois was inherited by her niece and later sold to John, 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Bedford, in 1735 (Russell Papers. Box 267). As soon as the Duke of Bedford gained possession, the whole estate of Chesham Bois was surveyed and mapped with full written details in an accompanying Field Book (Russell Papers. Survey R1/93). The map, together with the Field Book, indicate a large rambling house (Fig 1A) as the focal point of wide rides cut through the woods, giving views of the surrounding landscape, with outbuildings, a kitchen garden and an orchard. In addition there was a bowling green, pleasure grounds with clipped evergreens, a pheasant ground for ornamental fowl and a canal in a long avenue, features that show the Cheynes had kept up with 17<sup>th</sup>-century fashion. However, the Duke's surveyor, John Davis from Chenies, was not impressed. "*The Manor House is not like to be lett and will be of no more service than to be pulled down to Repair the Rest of the Estate*" (Russell Papers. Leases Box 274 and 275). He succeeded in letting it twice to respectable gentlemen but from 1759, when the second lease fell in, the demesne was managed from Chenies (Russell Papers. John Davis' Account Book) and eventually absorbed into a new farm. The manor house disappears from the record.

It is difficult to be sure when the old manor house was pulled down, but a date in the late 18<sup>th</sup>

or early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries is most likely. In the 1880s the Rev. C H Evelyn White tried to collect information from local people about the old house, with little success. He was told of “traces of old buildings” found when digging the garden, and an older generation recalled that it was “very large”. Mr George Weller of the Amersham Brewery recalled that materials from the old house were purchased by his grandfather, seventy or eighty years earlier, for use in his new house being built on Amersham Common (White Evelyn C H 1889). The Tithe Map of 1795 (Fig 1B) shows a space where the manor house had been, although two separate buildings shown on the 1735 map remain. These are described as a modest villa and small house, later run as a dairy (BCRO PR 45/27/1). By then Chesham Bois was in the hands of a number of landowners, as the Duke of Bedford had sold the land out of the manor at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (BCRO C D/CH/A449). After the coming of the railway to Chesham (1889) and Amersham (1892) a group of houses was built on the manor farm land, some distance from the church. They soon became known as ‘the village’, and the past history of Chesham Bois was rapidly overlaid.

#### TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

Within the garden of Chesham Bois House the natural slope appears to have been at least partly terraced. A number of possible rectilinear earthworks in the adjoining Church Field may also indicate terracing of some form. The underlying geology comprises Cretaceous upper Chalk, covered by a variable thickness of clay with flints (BGS 1990), comprising a mass of brown loamy clay with frequent angular flint inclusions.

A raised area, which was a bowling green in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, is now a natural meadow. In the eastern section of the grounds, two banks 30-40cm high cross rough grassland, running approximately northwest towards St Leonard’s Church. Historically this area was joined to the field east of the church, and both are shown as “House Platt” (*platt* Middle English; collateral form plot of ground) on the 1735 Bedford Estate map (Fig 1A). The use of the term “platt” might imply that the ground was unploughed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

#### GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY

Geophysical survey was undertaken in the area to the southeast of the church and in the gardens around the present house. CVAHS carried out a resistivity survey (TR/CIA resistance meter) in areas around the gardens and across Church Field. Processed data were tied to National Grid 1:5000 maps (Fig 2). During the Time Team visit the same areas were re-investigated, together with areas near to the bowling green and in the garden of an adjacent house. These surveys were a combination of resistance survey (Geoscan RM15 resistance meter), Ground Penetrating Radar (Pulse EKKO 1000 GPR) and magnetic survey (Bartington Grad 601-2 gradiometer) (Fig 3).

The resistivity data derived by CVAHS and Time Team/Wessex Archaeology were essentially the same where they overlapped and are considered together (Figs 2 and 3). A trench number is indicated in those instances where anomalies were further investigated by excavation.

Resistivity surveys in three areas revealed anomalies mapping within, or close to, the footprint of the former manor house shown on the 1735 map (Figs 2 and 3). Roughly 4m south of the present house under the lawn a series of linear features indicating possible walls and other structures were identified (Trenches 1 and 11). A very high resistance anomaly, rectangular in shape, was identified c.10m west of the present house (Trench 6), and further high resistance signals, also consistent with the presence of walls were discovered c.25-30m west of the house (Trench 2).

Resistivity anomalies were also encountered outside the footprint of the original manor house. Under the lawn to the east, two ovoid, high amplitude anomalies were detected (Trench 12). The former bowling green area showed strong linear features which may be associated with part of the boundary of the green and hexagonal anomalies consistent with formal garden structures. These features possibly postdate the bowling green and were not investigated further (Fig 2). Other survey areas gave little archaeological response, except for low amplitude linear anomalies in the kitchen and “House Platt” fields, which might be associated with former buildings or enclosure boundaries.

In Church Field a large, wide northeast-southwest trending low resistance anomaly was recorded by resistivity survey (Fig 4). This feature was

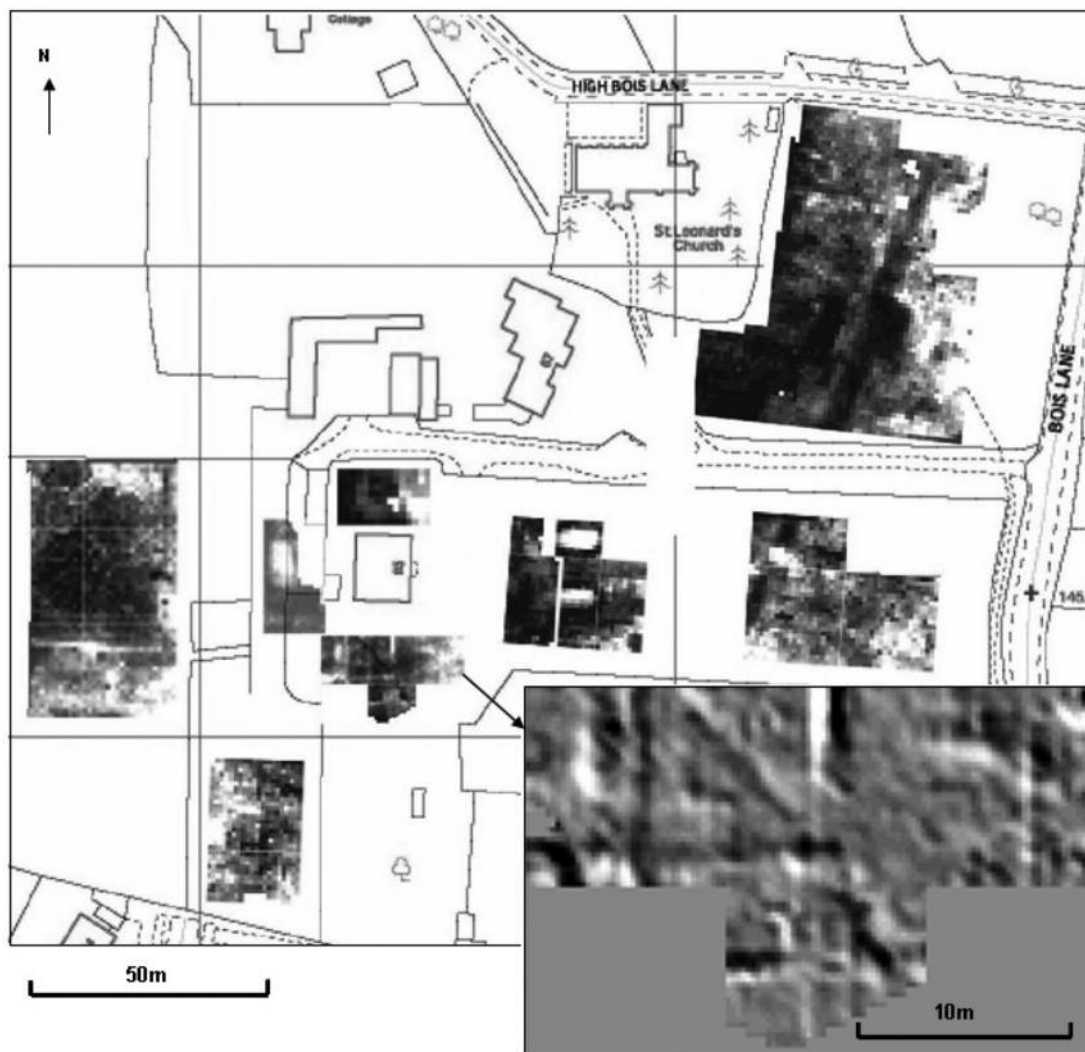


FIGURE 2 Resistivity results from the gardens of Chesham Bois House and Church Field. An area south of the present house is expanded to show detail of linear anomalies.

closely associated with a surface bank running along one side on the same course and which extends into the “house platt” gardens south of the drive (Trench 5). A number of narrow low amplitude east west linear anomalies were detected (Fig 3) extending to the present cemetery boundary (Trenches 4 and 7). The gradiometer survey response across the same area was weak, but identified a low amplitude ditch-type feature running east west (Trench 4).

## EXCAVATIONS

Excavations carried out between 2005 and 2007 are described below. Trenches dug by CVAHS were opened and dug by hand. Trenches dug by Time Team were stripped using a mechanical digger and dug by hand. Trench sections and feature sections were recorded and plan drawings made as necessary. Context numbers which include the prefix TT refer to contexts excavated with Time Team and



FIGURE 3 Summary diagram of geophysics data obtained by Time Team/Wessex Archaeology including additional areas to the west of present house. *Digital maps reproduced from Ordnance Survey data@ Crown Copyright 2007.*

Wessex Archaeology (archive: Wessex Archaeology March 2007) during May 2006. The positions of all trenches are shown in Fig. 5; those dug within the gardens are considered first, followed by those in Church Field.

### Garden trenches

#### *Trench 1*

This trench, 3.5m east-west and 2.5m north-south was positioned on the south lawn with the purpose of exploring two parallel, high resistance linear features crossing the lawn in a north-south direction (Fig 2). At about 20cm depth below the surface a linear feature (1-002) made up of brick, tile and flint demolition rubble, sitting on a clay base 4cm deep, was encountered. The feature ran approximately north-south and continued under the baulks. There was no evidence for compaction of the material or surfacing as was seen in Trench 11, associated with a garden path feature. The function of the poorly built structure in Trench 1 is puzzling, but

one reasonable idea is that it was an attempt to terrace this area of the garden which naturally slopes from west to east.

The deposit (1-001) surrounding this terrace was rich in scattered deposits of charcoal and mortar, and contained 18<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> century domestic rubbish including oyster shells, nails, bottle bases, pipe stems, white china, stoneware, earthenware, clay pipes and Staffordshire ware. A handful of artefacts were earlier, probably 17<sup>th</sup> century, including a pipe bowl, fragments of a glazed mug and a dark grey unglazed rim from a medieval pot.

The crude rubble feature was removed and further excavation led to the uncovering of several significant structures at different levels below the surface. These are described below and shown in a scale diagram (Fig 6A and B) illustrating their spatial relationship.

#### *i) Pitch tile hearth in the centre of Trench 1*

At c.40cm depth a crumbly yellow grey/white, chalk rich deposit (1.006) was evident, occupying



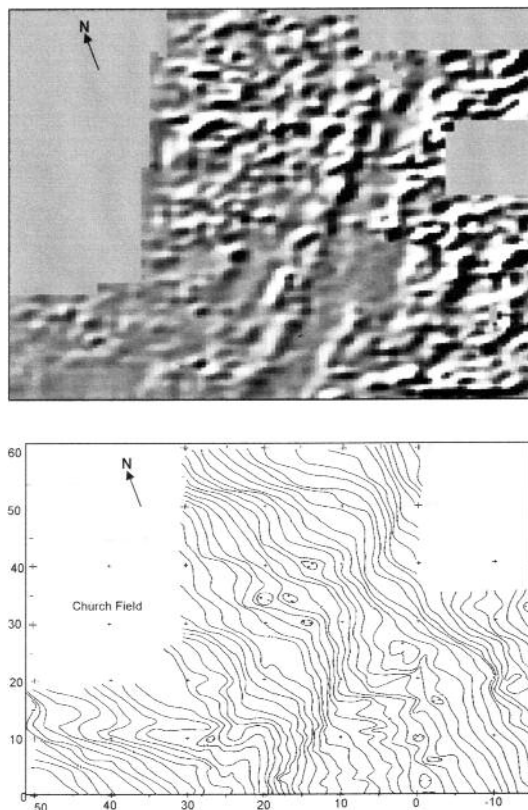


FIGURE 4 Church Field geophysics (top) and topographic (bottom) survey results. Note the significant northeast-southwest trending feature.

most of the central area of the trench. Thickness varied from 0.5 – 3.0cm, with scattered charcoal patches. This appeared to be a partly aggraded chalk floor. Beneath this layer lay a pitch tile hearth (1.007) made up of closely laid end-on clay tiles, and measuring 1.8m east-west by 0.8m north-south. This remarkable, well-made structure measured approximately  $1 \times 2$ m and was built using clay tiles packed together on edge. It showed considerable evidence for burning with some small fragments of charcoal caught between the tiles.

Because of the slope on the ground the hearth was 50cm below the surface at its west end and 35cm below at its east end. The hearth appeared to be set into a second chalk floor (1.008) underlying the first. The south side appeared lie against a wall or partition. It is difficult to be certain how the rear wall was constructed, since it was marked only by

a line of compacted mortar and one or two inset limestone blocks and tiles. However, during excavation the remnant mortar line was visible for at least 20cm before exposure of the tile hearth. The concept of some kind of back wall is supported by the pattern of tile burning and destruction: the northern half of the hearth showed a semicircle of intense burning and the northerly “front” edge was uneven and worn. In contrast, the line of the tiles at the back (southern) edge was straight and unworn. At the east end of the “back wall” a substantial post hole (1.017) for a large upright timber was found, which might have provided support for a partition (Fig 6 A and B). If there had been a matching timber at the west end, this would have been destroyed during later alterations in this area. A striking feature of the chalk floors and hearth surfaces was the lack of finds: the whole appears to

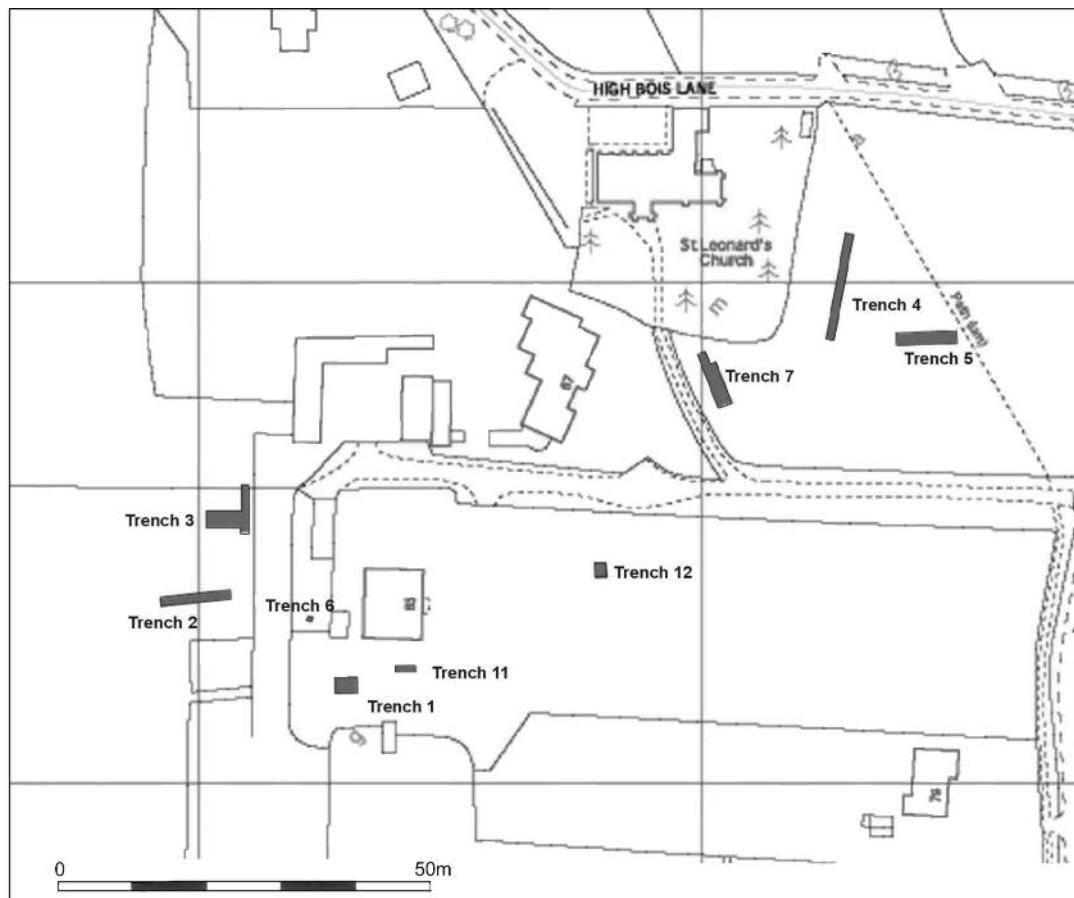


FIGURE 5 Map showing trenches dug between 2005–2007. *Digital maps reproduced from Ordnance Survey data@ Crown Copyright 2007.*

have been deliberately swept clean, perhaps associated with abandonment.

Pitch tile hearths are common features of medieval and post-medieval houses. Several have been found in Bucks, varying in presumed date from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but none have been dated directly. Most are not as large or well built as at Chesham Bois House: for example, the hearths excavated during the restoration of Amer-sham Museum. However, the 12<sup>th</sup>-century hearth at Great Missenden Abbey (Bucks Archaeological Services unpubl 1988) and a hearth at Bier-ton (Allen 1986) are of similar proportions.

*ii) Smithying waste pit at east end of Trench 1*

A decision was made to preserve the pitch tile hearth *in situ*. At the east end of the hearth there were signs of significant disruption, with the edge broken down and loose tiles lying at various angles. In the southeast quadrant there was evidence of a replacement, make-shift, surface, made up of patches of flints/pebbles compressed into clay and broken handmade brick. Bricks were not widely available until the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, thus the evidently re-used bricks indicate that this episode of destruction occurred later than this. The earlier chalk floor (1.008) was only apparent as patches in the northeast quadrant and here two large curving smears of charcoal (1.029) emerged, mixed

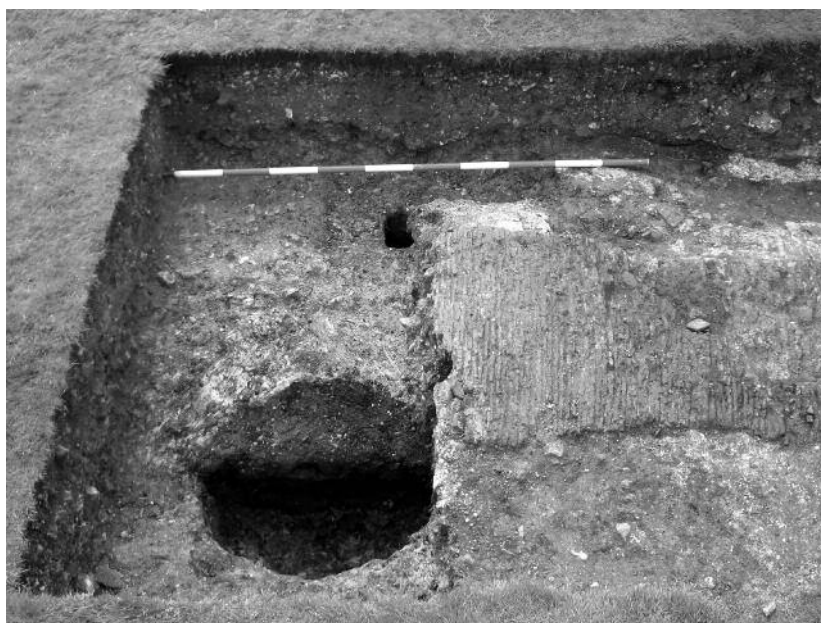
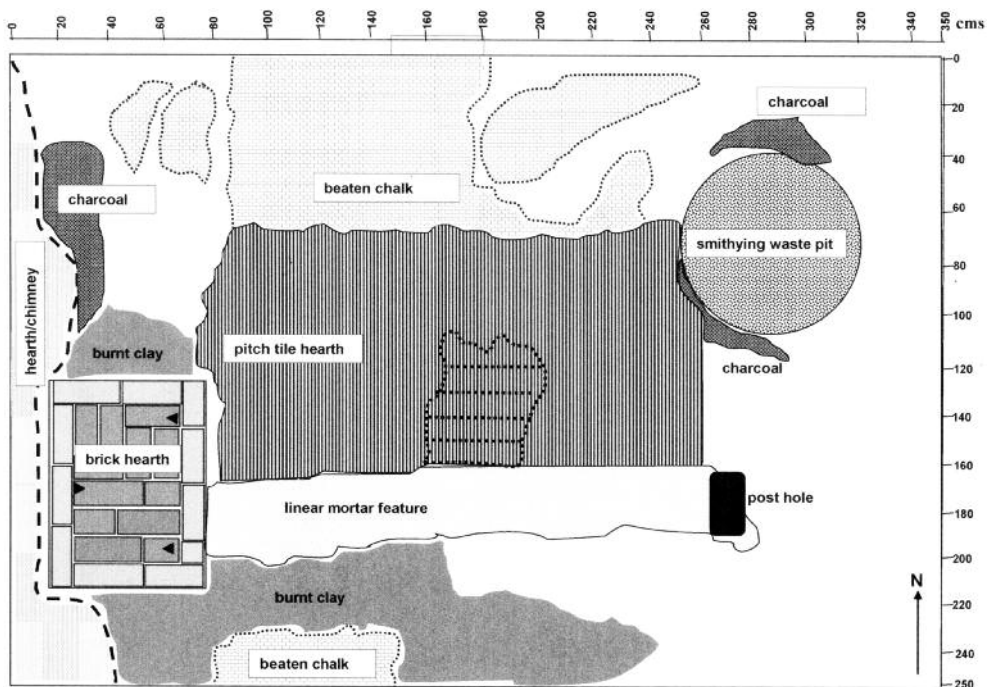


FIGURE 6. (upper) Diagram showing main features in eastern half of Trench 1. Beaten chalk floors and the linear mortar feature were at the same level as the pitch tile hearth. The tile hearth had been cut into by a rectangular brick flue. The smithing pit was cut into natural clay which lay below the tile hearth. (lower) View of Trench 1 from the north side, showing the smithing pit, tile hearth and posthole.

with the remains of the chalk floor just outside the north east corner of the hearth. Adjacent to one of these a silver long-cross groat dating to Henry VI 1422–1427 was found at 38cm depth and *c.*15cm from the hearth edge. The charcoal smears were contiguous with a circular deposit of charcoal which was uncovered 15cm below. This proved to be a pit (1.021), *c.*1m in diameter and *c.*0.75m deep (Figs 6 A and B), dug into natural clay. Its fill (1.022) comprised layers of burnt charcoal and numerous bowl-shaped pieces of smithying slag. Similar pits have been found on medieval sites, close to but outside metal-forging workshops (T Rehren, Institute of Archaeology UCL *pers. comm.*).

It was difficult to determine the sequence of events in this area. The pit edge, where it was dug into natural clay, was well defined, and this surface level was lower than the tile hearth. However, disturbed charcoal from this pit also occurred on the level of the chalk floor, and might represent all that remains of the upper levels of the pit. Judging from its position, the silver groat appears to be associated with the destruction event, and may provide an earliest possible date for this event, although it should be borne in mind that coins stay in circulation for long periods of time. It could also imply an earlier date for the pitch tile hearth. However, at this stage the possibility that the smithying pit was dug during or after the episode of demolition and reorganisation in this area could not be excluded.

### *iii) Brick flue*

The west end of the pitch tile hearth had been cut into by the base of a rectangular brick structure (1-020), measuring 90 × 60cm and standing three courses high on a brick floor (Fig 6 A and B). The bricks were hand made, unfroged and laid with soft crumbly cream mortar. A groove ran vertically down the west wall, perhaps to provide a draught of air, and three symmetrically placed indentations were cut into the brick floor, as though a trivet had been used. Several centimetres depth of ash lined the base. In a half brick space in one wall was concealed a sawn distal end of an unfused cow radius, presumably placed here in memory of an excellent dinner. Local memories of old greenhouses/outhouses in this area of the garden suggest that this brick flue was part of a heating system, perhaps for an early 19<sup>th</sup> century building of this type.

### *iv) Tile, mortar and sand feature at west end of trench.*

Cleaning down the east-facing baulk surface behind the rectangular brick flue (1-020) revealed a complex construction running north south across the trench. This feature was made up of horizontal layers of broken roof tiles and mortar (1-013, 1-015, 1-016, 1-018, 1-0190) supported on a bed of uniform fine-grained sand and a final base layer of burnt clay (see next section Fig. 7B). The uppermost layer was encountered at *c.*35cm below the surface and overlaid by occasional burnt bricks (1-013). The entire structure showed considerable evidence of burning. The basal sand layer was at the same level as the pitch-tile hearth (1-007) described in section (i) above. The multi-layered feature, which protruded a few centimetres from the baulk in an uneven fashion, appeared to continue under the baulk to the west and south. Further excavations were carried out to establish the nature of this structure and its function (section (v), below).

### *v) Chimney base and oven at the west end of Trench 1*

Trench 1 was extended by 2m at its western end. Excavation revealed the base of a chimney breast with a hearth aligned approximately north-south and an angled return to the east at its northern end. The complex series of deposits were explained by phases of rebuilding during the history of the chimney breast/hearth, and are most readily understood by considering them from the base to the surface.

The earliest deposits in the Trench 1 extension comprised a thin occupation deposit, directly overlying heat-affected natural clay and flints. This was on a level with the pitch-tile hearth (1.007) described above (i). An environmental sample taken from this deposit produced no charred plant remains and only fragments of wood charcoal, most probably oak. To the east, this deposit was sealed below the remains of the chalky mortar floor (TT116), which produced a single sherd of medieval sandy ware pottery. This appeared to be a continuation of the same floor that overlaid the pitch-tile hearth (1-006). To the west, the deposit lay beneath a sand bedding layer (TT108). Five sherds of local 13<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup>-century pottery were recovered from the junction between the occupation deposit and the sandy layer, along with a small

quantity of animal bone and oyster shell.

The sand bedding layer formed the base of a second pitch-tile hearth (TT106), which was placed at right angles to the first (section (i) above) and within a chimney breast (TT110). The laying of the adjacent chalk floor seems to have been broadly contemporary with the construction of mortar and tile footings (TT110), presumably as foundations of the chimney breast and to raise the hearth. The tiles which made up the second pitch-tile hearth were set at a *c.*45° angle to the vertical and bonded with sandy lime mortar, which also formed the surface of the hearth. The main body of this hearth and its chimney was aligned approximately north-south, with a well-built tile and mortar wing, angled at 45° to the east, at the northern end (Figs 7A and B). It seems likely that when first built, a matching angled return was made at the south end so that the whole structure had a symmetrical angular, crescent shape.

Only two small deposits associated with the original use of this chimney breast were encountered during the excavation; a thin silty clay loam occupation deposit (TT109), from which a copper alloy pin with wire-wound head, of late medieval date, was recovered, and an accumulation of ashy material and animal bones (TT113) partially overlapping the north end of the structure. The bones recovered from this deposit included goose and passerines, along with cattle, sheep/goat and pig. Although only dated on the basis of pottery finds, this appears to represent the hearth/chimney breast of part of a late medieval, possibly 14<sup>th</sup> century, structure. The more sophisticated structure indicates that this hearth postdates that of the pitch-tile hearth 1-007.

Following the construction of hearth TT106, the chimney breast was rebuilt; the upper part was removed and a new chimney breast (TT103) was constructed of re-used brick and tile and bonded with lime mortar. This new chimney breast was constructed partially above hearth TT106 and its narrow dividing walls, two bricks wide, appear to split the hearth into at least four small bays varying between 40-50cm in width (Fig 7A and B). A single sherd of post-medieval pottery was recovered from within the mortar bonding.

The sub-turf deposits in this area produced the same range of 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century domestic waste as noted previously, with a concentration of animal bones to the west of the chimney breast structure.

Fig. 7A shows a diagram of the chimney breast/hearth upper surface as it appeared before preservation *in situ*. Overall this structure was 3.5m long north-south and was considerably wider, *c.*1.0m back to front, at the southern end. This confirmed that part of the chimney breast/hearth front had been destroyed when the later brick-built rectangular flue (1-020) was inserted on its eastern side. However, the entire eastern edge of the chimney breast/hearth was disturbed and apparently incomplete. Similarly, the most southerly edge was incomplete and appears to have been cut into. Notably, the angled tiled wing uncovered (Fig. 7A) at the north end was not apparently matched by a similar structure at the south end. It either never existed, or possibly was destroyed or incorporated during later modification of the chimney place.

In summary, it appears that the area exposed in Trench 1 was for much of its history the kitchen area of a large house. The kitchen facilities seem to have been modified sequentially over a period of two to three centuries, presumably as the grandeur of the house increased.

## **Trench 2**

### *i) Terrace wall and outbuildings*

The earliest deposit recorded in Trench 2 comprised a 0.35m thick deposit of mid greyish brown silty clay, which was confined to an area between two brick walls (TT215 and TT207). This silty clay was interrupted by the construction cut for wall TT215, whereas it was heaped against wall TT207, indicating that the latter was the earlier of the two. The small assemblage of pottery recovered from the basal deposit included post-medieval white salt-glazed ware, tin glazed earthenware and red-wares, along with clay tobacco pipe fragments and green wine bottles in either globular 'onion' or more cylindrical 'mallet' forms of later 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup>-century date, and diamond-shaped quarries from leaded windows in pale greenish glass. These finds appeared to be broadly contemporary with the earliest wall in this trench, TT207. The level of the clay and flint natural substrata to the west of this wall was approximately 1m higher than the level to the east, indicating that it was built as a retaining wall, probably at the same time as the ground level was reduced to form a terrace.

All other features and deposits in Trench 2 post-dated wall TT207. The remains of wall TT215 were partly overlain by a well-laid brick floor (TT217)

which was in turn cut by the construction cut for another wall, TT219, running on a north-south alignment. The function and date of the substantial ditch (TT228), which ran parallel to wall (TT207), close to the upper edge of the terrace, is uncertain, although it was probably to intercept and divert ground water that may otherwise have accumulated on the negative terrace. The basal fill appeared to represent gradual silting caused by the gentle erosion of the sides of the feature. This was overlain by a thick deposit of clay with common flint inclusions, probably the result of deliberate back-filling. Following this a thin capping of chalk rubble was laid above the backfilled ditch, possibly to provide a roughly metalled surface. The only finds recovered from this feature comprised a small assemblage of tile fragments from an upper fill (TT211). However, the final filling and capping appears to have occurred following the demolition of the oldest wall, suggesting that the functions of the two features may be related. All later features and deposit recorded in Trench 2 appear to be of 19th or 20<sup>th</sup>-century date, and probably relate to

use of the gardens of the present Chesham Bois House.

The structures in Trench 2 seem likely to represent outbuildings, perhaps for storage or stabling, built into/against a retaining terrace wall.

### **Trench 3**

#### *i) Well constructed wall*

Similar deposits to those found in Trench 2 were seen in Trench 3. The construction cut for a wall (TT313) running on an east-west alignment had been cut into an earlier surface (TT312), from which a small assemblage of animal bone and a single sherd of tin glazed earthenware pottery, probably of late 17<sup>th</sup> or early 18<sup>th</sup>-century date, were recovered.

The wall found in this trench was at least c.60cm wide at its base, more substantial than any uncovered in Trench 2. It ran for at least 7.5m without obvious signs of a return (Fig 8A). It was of interest that while the base of the south face of the wall was well built and finished, the base of the north face was very irregular, indicating it was not



FIGURE 7 A View of the north end of these structures, showing the tiled wing, the complex stratigraphy which comprises the footings for the chimney breast and the top mortared surface with brick partitions.

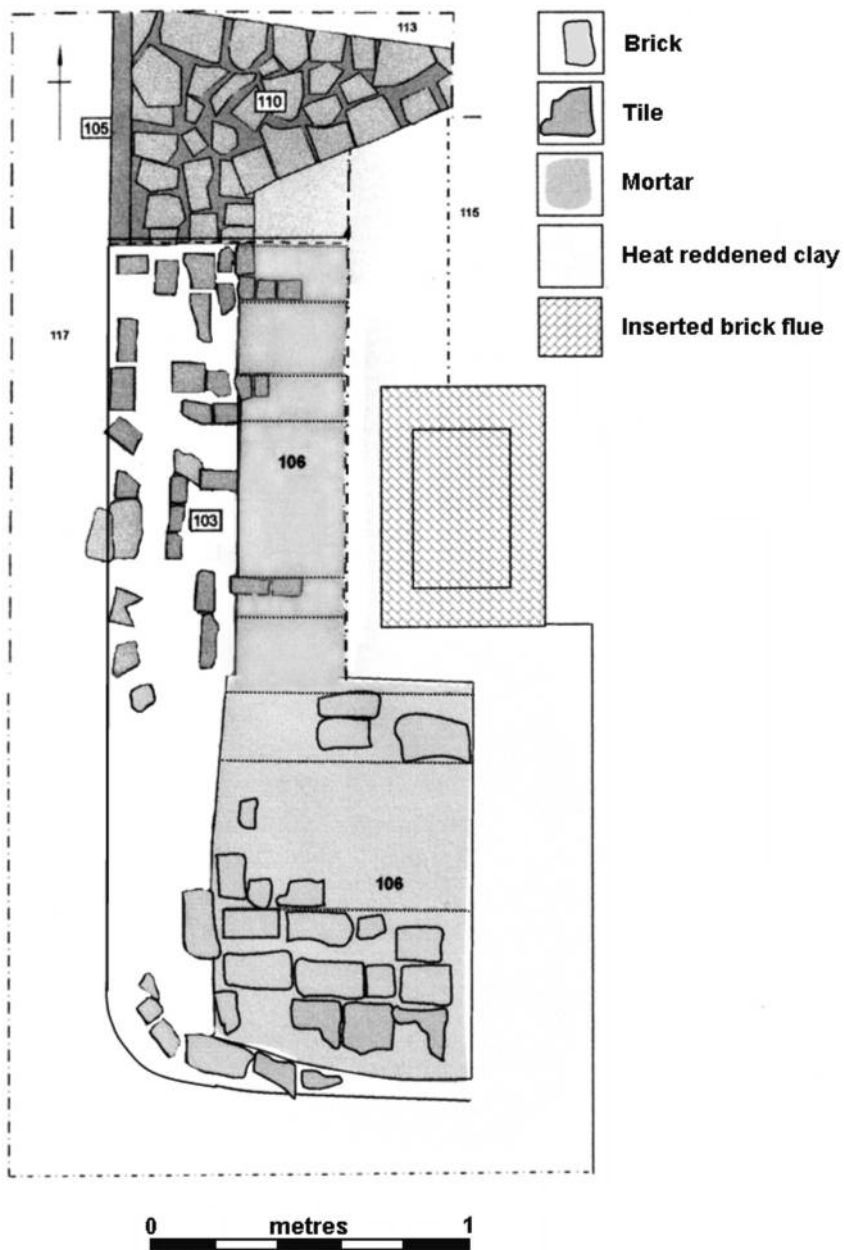


FIGURE 7 B Trench 1. Plan of post-medieval hearth/chimney breast structure. The position of the brick partitions is indicated with dotted lines. The angled tile wing to the right is part of an earlier late medieval tile hearth which was later modified and rebuilt. The position of the later brick flue which was cut into these structures is shown.

to be seen. The level of the natural substrata to the north was *c.*0.50m higher than the level to the south, indicating that the function of the lower level was partly as a retaining wall. It can be speculated that this wall, together with wall TT207 formed parts of the northern and western sides of a large negative terrace, probably constructed in the late 17th century. However, the level of the land to the north is not particularly high, and the scale of this wall indicates it stood originally to some height and was perhaps put to some grander use, for example as an arcaded walkway, orangery or gallery. Whatever the case, the building of such a structure and terracing work is likely to have removed, or at least truncated, any earlier remains in this area to the west of the present Chesham Bois House.

Two re-used moulded bricks, possibly from window mullions, were incorporated into the wall (Fig. 8A); their presence suggests a level of architectural sophistication consistent with a high-status manorial building of the early post-medieval period (16th/17th century). Although the function of the

terrace represented by walls TT207 and TT313 is uncertain, the reuse of such materials suggests that this may have been associated with alterations to the earlier manor house.

The truncated footings of a fourth wall (TT314), on a similar north-south alignment to two of the walls in Trench 2, were located in Trench 3. The function of these north-south aligned walls is uncertain. They could represent a building which was progressively widened, or internal walls within an existing structure, as represented by walls TT207 and TT313. Thick silty clay *c.*0.20m deep had accumulated over wall TT313, and above this an episode of rebuilding was noted.

#### *ii) Domestic waste pit*

The other features and deposits encountered in Trench 3 post-dated wall TT313, with one exception. During cleaning down to the base of the wall the surface of what appeared to be a pit (3-020) extending beneath the wall was exposed. An area 1.5 × 1.0m was further excavated in order to explore this feature. It became clear that the “pit”



FIGURE 8 A View along the post-medieval wall uncovered in Trench 3. Note the moulded brick special, probably part of a mullion window, incorporated into this structure. The surface of medieval pit can be seen protruding from under the wall and marked by the cluster of animal bones protruding from the surface.



was associated with a narrow ditch (3-022) passing under the wall and running approximately north-south (Fig. 8B). The pit edges were not distinct but it seems likely to have been dug into the ditch fill since its contents, which contained many small fragments of charcoal, was notably darker than the ditch fill, which comprised heavy grey silt with mortar, chalk flecks and tile fragments. The depth of the pit was 45-50cm below the base of the wall, and the stratigraphy suggested deposits made over a period of time.

Many animal bone fragments including, cattle,

deer and pig with several boar tusks were recovered, some from the pit edges and several were scattered either side of the ditch edge, suggesting that both features had been disturbed when the foundations of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century wall were built. Twenty-nine pieces of well-preserved medieval pot were recovered from the fill, including one large unworn sherd of a Hertfordshire greyware lid-seated jar, dating to 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 9 – 1). Overall, the date for the ditch and pit fill was estimated as late 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century, based on pottery types.

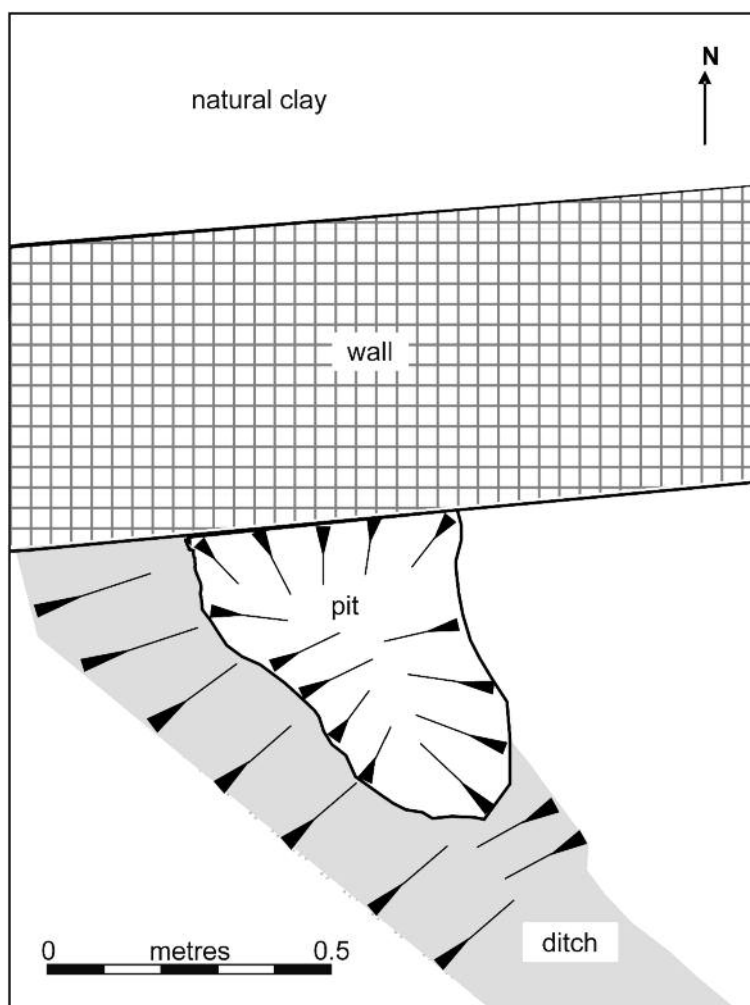


FIGURE 8 B Scale plan showing the position of the pit relative to the early ditch and later wall.

**Trench 6***Cellar dump.*

Geophysical survey located a roughly rectangular strong high resistance signal close to western outbuildings of the present Chesham Bois House and a single 1 × 1m hand dug test pit was excavated to examine this. Immediately below the topsoil and subsoil was a deposit of modern and post-medieval building rubble (TT603), comprising loose brick and flint rubble with frequent voids. This was excavated to a depth of 1m, but was not bottomed. Ground Penetrating Radar survey suggested that this deposit is approximately 2m deep and seems likely to represent a former cellar, backfilled with rubble that may come from the demolition of the manorial buildings in the late 18th or early 19th century.

**Trench 11***i) Garden path*

A 3 × 1m trench was excavated across the position of a strong linear resistivity feature running in a south-north direction on the east side of the south lawn (Figs 2 and 5). Large quantities of post-medieval tile, pot and glass fragments were found together with a small number of animal bones, largely sheep and cow, in the sub-turf deposit to a depth of 18cm. A linear feature made up of compressed pebbles and gravel and overlying building rubble and supported on a bed of clay (11-004) was uncovered at 20cm. This structure was judged to be an 18<sup>th</sup>-century garden path, c.1m wide and 35cm deep from its top surface to the clay base. The path ran north-south across the trench, continuing under the baulk in both directions, in a position and orientation corresponding to the strong geophysics anomaly. Excavations down to 90cm failed to detect further structures.

The building rubble making up the path surface included re-used hand made bricks and brick specials, including a coping stone and part of a mullion window. This is rubble from building demolition, dating to the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> century as judged from the form and fabric of the moulded brick, which is identical to others recovered from Trench 3.

**Trench 12***i) Large oval pit*

This trench, 1 × 3m, was dug on the east lawn south of the house, and was positioned over a strong high

resistance signal (Figs 2 and 5), oval in shape and approximately 6m long and 4m wide. An identical anomaly was detected a few metres to the south.

Within 11cm of the surface large quantities of rubble were uncovered including peg tiles, faced-flints and bricks of various fabrics, mostly hand-made and all with mortar adhering to them. There were also occasional pieces of post-medieval bottle glass, white china and earthenware. One terracotta fragment was from a large garden urn. As excavation proceeded it became clear that the oval structure was a pit dug down into the natural clay and entirely filled with demolition rubble, randomly packed and uncompressed. The pit appeared to narrow towards the base. Filling was removed to a depth of c.1.5m and, since the fill seemed to represent one event, a halt was called to further excavation. Amongst the rubble, at 1.3m depth, a well-preserved Victorian bun halfpenny dated 1862 was found. This provides a rough date for the filling of the pit, though rubble and pit are both probably earlier.

It is possible that the pit had originally served some other purpose before it became a dump. It is notable that this part of the garden had been outside the boundary of land associated with Chesham Bois House at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and it seems possible that the two pits were part of the Dairy Farm, shown on the 1897 tithe map, and used for water storage, an important asset in this ridge-top location.

**Church Field Trenches**

Three machine-dug trenches were excavated in the Church Field (Fig 5).

**Trench 5***i) Boundary ditch*

A single substantial ditch was discovered in Trench 5 (TT 504). The ditch was over 8.2m wide and 2.2m deep with a steeply sloping, convex western side and a more gently sloping, irregular eastern side and a concave base. The basal fills appeared to be the result of gradual silting, caused by the gentle erosion of the sides of the feature. This was overlain by a thick deposit of clay with common flint inclusions (TT503), probably the result of deliberate backfilling. The only dating evidence comprised a single sherd of post-medieval red ware and a small assemblage of tile fragments recovered from the uppermost fill. Although this ditch was

deliberately backfilled in the post-medieval period, it would have taken many years for the lower, silting fills, which were up to 0.8m thick, to form, and a medieval date for the construction of this ditch is likely.

Aligned approximately north-south across Church Field, this boundary is visible as a linear surface bank and depression, and can be traced across the southern end of Chesham Bois House gardens. It seems to represent a substantial property boundary, perhaps around the medieval manorial complex, although an earlier, perhaps prehistoric date is not out of the question, especially in this ridge-top location. A boundary bank and ditch has also been noted to the north west of the bowling green, although there are no clues to its date.

#### **Trench 4**

Two intercutting ditches were excavated in Trench 4. The earlier of the two (TT414), was a broad, shallow feature aligned approximately north-west to south-east and approximately 2.1m wide and up to 0.4m deep with moderately steep, concave sides and a concave base. The later ditch, TT404, was east-west aligned, 1.50m wide and 0.95m deep with steep, straight sides and a concave base. Dating is problematic, since only a few fragments of peg tile and one sherd of grey ware pottery were found in the later ditch. The peg tiles could be of medieval or post-medieval date. The sherd had been overfired and could not be identified. Six other residual fragments tentatively identified as Romano-British were found elsewhere in the trench (Seager Smith and West, *St Albans DC Archaeology pers. comm.*). Both ditches were sealed below re-deposited clay and flint substrata, which appeared to form a series of roughly rectangular terraces on the gentle north-east facing slope. A small assemblage of residual medieval pottery was recovered from the subsoil and overlying topsoil deposits.

The only other features encountered in Trench 4 comprised a shallow, irregular gully (TT406) aligned approximately east-west, and two small irregular features which could be of natural origin, such as tree root disturbance.

#### **Trench 7**

##### *i) Holloway*

Apart from a modern service trench, the only feature recorded in Trench 7 comprised a broad,

shallow linear hollow (TT704), aligned approximately east-west. This was 3.9m wide and 0.13m deep, with gently sloping sides and a concave base. The basal fill (TT703) comprised a 0.03m thick layer of small (>30mm), angular flint gravel, rammed or trampled into the natural clay and flints in the base of the cut. This probably represents a metallated surface within a small sunken track or hollow way. This feature was completely filled with silty clay loam (TT702), from which a large key of post-medieval type was recovered, along with a small assemblage of post-medieval brick and tile fragments. A single sherd of medieval pottery was recovered from the topsoil, together with a few sherds of post-medieval red-ware.

#### **FINDS**

Table 1 provides a general summary of finds from the excavations excluding bone and pottery which appear in Tables 3 and 4.

#### **Ceramic Building Material**

A large quantity of Ceramic Building Material (CBM) was recovered from the site, including brick, roof tile and floor tile. Large dumps were found in the cellar void uncovered in Trench 6, and in the large pit uncovered in Trench 12 to the east of the present house.

#### **Brick**

Some bricks were *in situ* structural elements, while other fragments were recovered as re-deposited material in other contexts and as deliberate dumps. Bricks from four separate contexts were compared. These were:

- i) wall/chimney footing in Trench 1 (kitchen area);
- ii) wall and brick surface in Trench 2 (stable/outhouse area),
- iii) subsoil in Trench 6 (cellar dump) and
- iv) path foundations in Trench 11 (garden feature).

These are fairly consistent in size, lengths ranging from 210 – 220mm, widths from 100 – 105mm, and thicknesses from 50 – 60mm. All are handmade and unfrogged, and fragments of other standard bricks indicate that they were of similar manufacture. Several fragments derive from bricks vitrified on ends and/or faces. Bricks are notoriously difficult to date (and are in any case frequently reused), but the

TABLE 1 Summary of finds with number of specimens and weight in grams. Weights for metal objects were not recorded. Details of brick 'special', pottery and faunal taxa are shown in later Tables

<i>Finds</i>	<i>number/weight g</i>									
	<i>Tr 1</i>	<i>Tr 2</i>	<i>Tr 3</i>	<i>Tr 4</i>	<i>Tr 5</i>	<i>Tr 6</i>	<i>Tr 7</i>	<i>Tr 11</i>	<i>Tr 12</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
Worked Stone		3/448								3/448
Glass	94/987	41/1076	26/1098			12/99		57/303	4/127	
234/3690										
Metalwork objects	100	19	50	15		3	4	20	5	216
<i>Copper alloy</i>	2									2
<i>Iron</i>	85	16	42	15		2	4	20	5	189
<i>Lead</i>	12	3	8			1				23
<i>Pewter</i>	1									
Clay Pipe	14/40	2/8	1/5					6/15		23/78
Worked Flint	9/78		7/45					3/35	1/10	20/168
Shell										
(oyster/mussel)	51/330	1/1	44/263					3/75	2/20	
101/689										

TABLE 2 Details of moulded brick 'specials' from various trenches.

<i>Brick specials</i>	<i>Tr 2 rubble</i>	<i>Tr 3 in wall</i>	<i>Tr 6 pit fill</i>	<i>Tr 11 sub-turf</i>	<i>Tr 12 rubble</i>
<b>Shape</b>					
Half-rounded moulding	1		2 joining pieces	1	
Coping stone				1	1
Ovolo		1 complete			1
Complex moulding		2			
Chamfered	1	2			

TABLE 3 Details of pottery ware type, number (no) and weight (wt) in grams.

<i>material</i>	<i>period</i>	<i>no/wt</i>										
		<i>Tr1</i>	<i>Tr2</i>	<i>Tr3</i>	<i>Tr4</i>	<i>Tr5</i>	<i>Tr6</i>	<i>Tr7</i>	<i>Tr11</i>	<i>Tr12</i>	<i>total</i>	<i>total</i>
white ware	early modern	82/597		3/25			89/425	1/2	25/165	2/2	202	1216
Staffs slipware	18th C	3/55		5/65							8	120
tin glazed	post-medieval	4/55	10/65	1/10					1/2	1/10	17	142
salt glaze	post-medieval		3/25								3	25
orange/red earthenware	post-medieval	91/1347	15/560	12/810		1/60	14/515	4/90	38/1410	11/537	186	5329
stoneware	post-medieval	8/175		1/15			4/115	1/20	1/5		15	330
orange/red earthenware	medieval	9/60		6/170	4/225			1/2			20	457
grey ware	medieval	8/80		25/195	1/45						34	320
Brill/Boarstall	medieval	1/45		1/2							2	47
orange/red sandy ware	Romano-British				8/50						8	50
orange/red sandy ware	Prehistoric/RB	1/5									1	5
											<b>495</b>	<b>8041</b>

TABLE 4 Inventory of faunal remains from Chesham Bois House. Identified specimens are shown as number (NS) and as percentage of total (% NS). Bones that could not be identified to species/family are listed by size. Weight is shown as grams and as percentage.

<i>taxa</i>	<i>Trench 1</i>				<i>Trench 3</i>				<i>Trench 3 Pit</i>			
	<i>NS</i>	<i>NS%</i>	<i>wt g</i>	<i>wt g</i>	<i>NS</i>	<i>NS%</i>	<i>wt g</i>	<i>wt g</i>	<i>NS</i>	<i>NS%</i>	<i>wt g</i>	<i>wt g</i>
horse	3	1.3	30	3.5	2	4.0	318	9.7	0	0	0	0
cow	9	3.9	193.9	22.4	10	20.0	710	21.8	73	24.4	1935	73.7
cow sz	10	4.3	96	11.1	22	44.0	140	4.3	11	0	0	0
pig	5	2.2	31.9	3.7	7	14.0	38	1.2	10	3.3	79.3	3.0
sheep	30	13.0	224	25.8	4	8.0	32	1.0	10	3.3	572.7	21.8
shp sz	127	55.0	238	27.4	5	10.0	26	0.8	131	0	0	0
dog	3	1.3	4.6	0.5	0	0	0	0	3	1.0	12.6	0.5
dog sz	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0	7	0	0	0
cat	1	0.4	2.2	0.3	0	0	0	0	3	1.0	4.2	0.2
hare/rabbit	4	1.7	7.5	0.9	0	0	0	0	2	0.7	2.3	0.1
goose	1	0.5	0.9	0.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
duck	1	0.5	1.1	0.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
domestic fowl	1	0.4	4	0.5	0	0	0	0	7	2.3	5.9	0.2
bird small/ medium	29	11.7	20	2.9	0	0	0	0	6	2.0	4.3	0.2
small mammal	1	0.4	0.3	0.0	0	0	0	0	36	12.0	10.9	0.4
fish	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	2	0.7	0.1	0
uid	8	3.5	11	1.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>total</b>	<b>233</b>		<b>865.4</b>		<b>50</b>		<b>1264</b>		<b>301</b>		<b>2627</b>	

dimensions of the complete examples suggest a date no later than the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Of particular interest amongst the bricks are a small number of cut or moulded 'specials'. There were thirteen examples from five contexts, comprising mainly incomplete window mullion mouldings, chamfered bricks and a coping-stone (Table 2). All were either re-deposited or reused. For example, a coping stone and an ovolo window moulding were incorporated into the footings for the path uncovered in Trench 11, and chamfered, ovolo and complex moulded bricks were reused in the 17<sup>th</sup> century wall uncovered in Trench 3. Such 'specials' are consistent with the one-time presence of a high status manorial building of the early post-medieval period (16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> century).

### Roof Tile

Three fragments of chimney pot were recovered from Trench 3 along with fragments of peg tiles. Three tile fragments from Trench 2 (stable/outhouse) joined to form an almost complete tile (265 × 175mm), but no other complete tiles were

found. A significant proportion of the tile fragments are in fairly coarse, sandy fabrics, less well fired, and potentially medieval in date; the remainder are post-medieval, more evenly fired and in finer fabrics. Like bricks, tiles can often be reused, and in this instance tile fragments were identified in various walls and other structures. More complete tiles had been used to create the pitch tile hearth structures in Trench 1. The tiles were almost certainly made locally. The Chilterns have large deposits of suitable clay, and records of active local tileries cover the period from the 13<sup>th</sup> century to the post-medieval period (Green 2003).

### Other CBM

One plain, glazed floor tile of late medieval or early post-medieval date was found in Trench 3. It is worth noting here that prior to formal archaeological exploration of this site, two glazed tiles approximately 11cm square were dug up in the garden. The location was not recorded but the tiles were subsequently identified as 14<sup>th</sup> century Penn tiles (Green 2003).

Part of a medieval stone mortar, internal diameter 26cm and 2cm thick at the rim (Fig. 10), made of Purbeck Marble, was found in a reworked context in Trench 1 (kitchen area). When complete it would have been sub-square in shape with four equi-spaced lugs. Such Purbeck marble mortars are found on medieval domestic sites all over England.

Three pieces of moulded plaster, probably wall plaster, were also recovered from Trench 1, all from fairly superficial reworked contexts. One of the best preserved pieces, 5 × 2.5cm, was shaped to provide longitudinal flanged sides with a channel between.

### Pottery

Pottery was recovered from all trenches, and the assemblage included sherds of medieval and post-medieval date. Brief descriptions of pot recovered from each trench are given below and summarised by ware type in Table 3. In total 495 sherds with a total weight of 8.04kg were recovered. Condition was good with sherds relatively unabraded and with an average weight per sherd of 16.2g. The following sections describe the types of fabrics and vessels found in each trench, context by context, and the data are summarised in Table 3. Drawings of a selection of sherds are shown in Fig. 9 and are referred to in the text by numbers in square parentheses.

### Trench 1 (kitchen area)

Pottery sherds from reworked contexts (ctx1-000, 1-002) included post-medieval and modern examples including white wares, stonewares, orange earthenwares, both glazed and unglazed, and yellow glazed 18<sup>th</sup>-century Staffordshire slipware. From the medieval period there were two fragments of tygs (mug with multiple handles) one with a rich chocolate brown glaze, a neck fragment of a 13<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup>-century jug with iron-rich glaze and a handle fragment from a 14<sup>th</sup>-century Brill flagon. There were also two rim fragments of 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup>-century jars, one of which was Late Hertfordshire Grey ware [Fig 9. – 2] and another of an unidentified dark grey ware [Fig. 9 – 4]. In addition sherds of 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup>-century local sandy wares and grey wares were recovered as well as one sherd of a black shelly ware of Romano-British or late prehistoric date.

Six sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from the undisturbed construction layers which formed the base of the 16<sup>th</sup>-century chimney-breast/hearth and are approximately on a level with the earlier pitch-tile hearth. These included one sherd of sandy ware and five sherds of 13<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup>-century local unglazed reduced ware (LUR) (1-015;TT108).

### Trench 2 (terrace/outbuildings area)

The assemblage of pottery from this trench was all

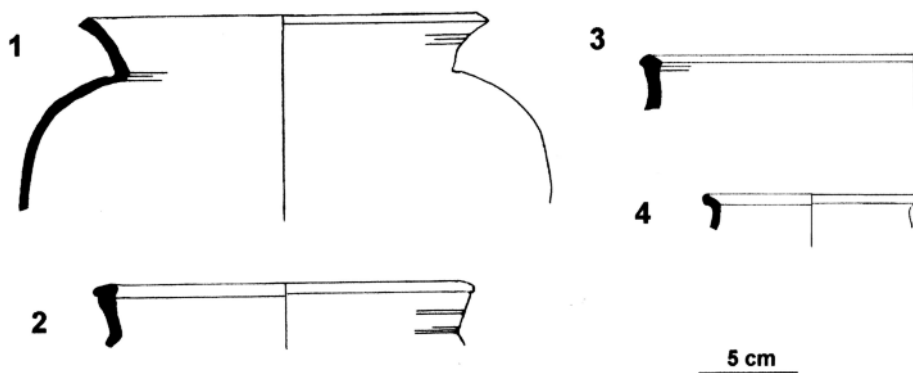


FIGURE 9 Examples of medieval pottery recovered from Trench 1 and Trench 3. 1. Large body sherd with rim of a lid-seated Late Herts grey ware jar dating to 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century from the pit in Trench 3. 2. Rim fragment of 12<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century Late Hertfordshire Grey ware (Trench 1). 3. Rim fragment of South Herts grey ware (Trench 3 pit). 4. Rim fragment of 12<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century unidentified dark grey ware (Trench 1).

post medieval and re-deposited. It comprised orange earthenwares internally glazed with a brown iron glaze, white salt glaze wares and tin glaze wares (Table 3), representing a variety of dishes, jars and platters with some early 18<sup>th</sup>-century specimens. From the topsoil associated with this trench came a modern white ceramic egg used to encourage hens to lay.

***Trench 3 (17<sup>th</sup> century wall and waste pit/ditch)***

Small numbers of pottery sherds were recovered from the topsoil (TT301) and a thin rubble deposit (TT309) which may have been associated with demolition of the upper part of the wall. These included orange earthenware sherds internally glazed with an iron glaze, orange unglazed late medieval sherds and 18<sup>th</sup>-century Staffordshire slipware with a yellow internal glaze and brown feathered line decoration. Three fragments,

including one sherd of 18<sup>th</sup>-century tin glaze and two sherds of medieval date, were recovered from a surface (TT312) which lay directly above natural substrata and was cut by the wall construction cut (TT317) and the pit cut (3-021).

Excavation of a pit/ditch feature, which had been cut into the natural substrata and was sealed below the wall, led to the recovery of twenty-nine sherds of medieval pottery. Amongst these were a single sherd of green glazed Brill/Boarstall pottery; two sherds of late 12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup>-century non calcareous grey ware (LUR); six sherds of 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup>-century calcareous grey ware and seventeen sherds of South Herts grey ware, dating to the late 12<sup>th</sup> to early 14<sup>th</sup> century [Fig 9. – 3]. In addition, three sherds of Late Herts grey ware, of a pinky orange fabric, were recovered, including one large unworn sherd of a lid-seated jar dating to 13<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century [Fig 9. – 1].

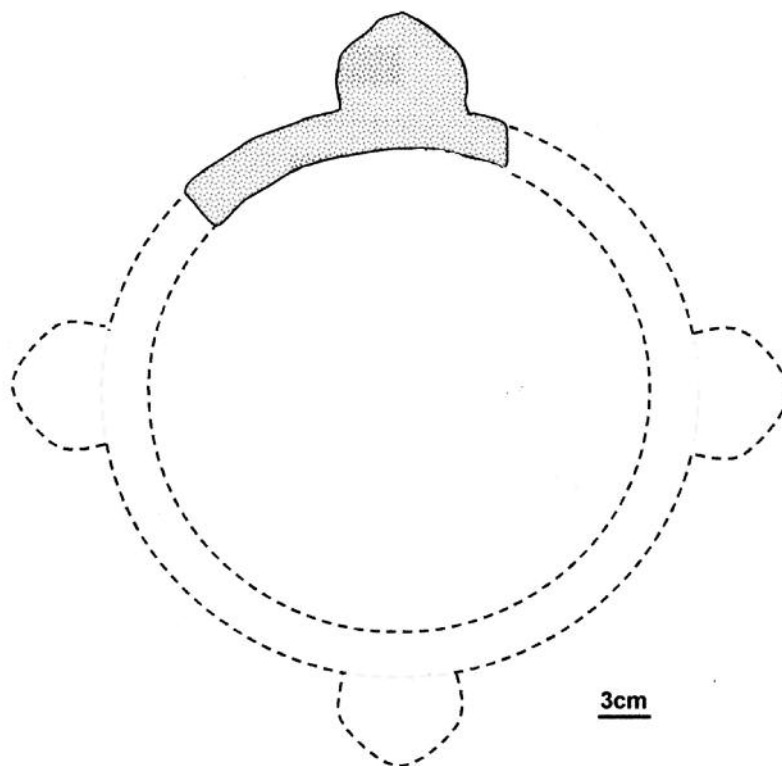


FIGURE 10 Drawing of a fragment of a medieval stone mortar made of Purbeck Marble found in Trench 1.

**Trench 6 (Cellar dump)**

The pottery from this trench was a mix of post-medieval and modern. Modern white wares made up more than 80% of the total, while the remainder comprised stoneware and post medieval orange earthenware, of which some sherds were internally glazed with a brown iron glaze.

**Trench 11 (Path area)**

The pottery in this trench (Table 3) was all re-deposited and consisted mainly of modern white wares and post-medieval orange earthenwares with some stoneware. Amongst the white wares was one sherd of 18<sup>th</sup>-century tin glaze and another of 18<sup>th</sup>-century Staffordshire buff slipware with a yellow internal glaze and brown-feathered line decoration. The earthenware, some of which was glazed with a brown iron glaze, was mainly locally made, dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. These fragments represented domestic vessels such as mugs, platters, chamber pots, ink-pots and dishes. Several fragments of late 18<sup>th</sup>-century Brill/Boarstall ware were also recovered.

**Trench 12 (large pit – east of house)**

Here pottery was all of a post-medieval date and re-deposited, comprising two white ware sherds and eleven orange earthenware sherds, some of which were glazed internally. Several of the earthenware sherds appear to have come from a large ornamental garden urn.

**Church Field Trenches****Trench 4**

The pottery from this trench was sparse, but comprised a mixed assemblage of sherds of Romano-British and medieval date. These included eight orange earthenware sherds, probably from Romano-British Ver ware flagons or jars, a single orange earthenware sherd from a medieval flash-glazed vessel and two sherds of late medieval orange sandy ware, retrieved from the topsoil and subsoil (ctxTT401, 402). A single sherd from the base of a grey ware jar was found in the basal layer (ctxTT403) of a ditch crossing Trench 4. Unfortunately this was not safely dateable, and could be either of Romano-British or medieval date.

**Trench 5**

A single post-medieval sherd of orange earthen-

ware internally glazed with a brown iron glaze was recovered in the reworked upper fill during excavation of this deep ditch.

**Trench 7**

The small assemblage from this trench included post-medieval orange earthenware sherds with a brown internal iron glaze, one stoneware sherd and one sherd of a local unglazed grey ware of medieval or Romano-British date. All were recovered from topsoil.

**Summary**

Amongst the total pottery assemblage, 40.8% of sherds were early modern, 46.4% post-medieval, 11.3% medieval and 1.6% Romano-British. The medieval sherds are all in sandy fabrics. The coarser specimens, including one with a slip decoration, have a probable date range of 12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century while finer, oxidised sherds probably date to the 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. More than 50% of the medieval sherds came from the undisturbed pit/ditch excavated beneath the wall in Trench 3 and 32% from Trench 1, although in this case the majority were residual. Much of the medieval pottery is likely to be of local manufacture. The closest known source is at Great Missenden at Potter Row (Bucks County Museum Archaeological Group 1978) and at Ley Hill, (Farley and Lawson 1990) both less than 5 miles distant. By the post-medieval period pottery was being produced not only at Ley Hill but at other nearby potteries such as Emmanuel Church, Chesham (Cauvain and Cauvain 1992)

**Glass**

All the glass was post-medieval and included vessel glass and window glass, most appearing to fall within a date range of 17<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century. Fragments of window and vessel glass were found in all trenches excavated in the area of the house. Distinctive bases of post-medieval hand-blown wine bottles came from Trenches 1, 2 and 3. These bases have diameters of 110mm and 128mm with high kicks, and are believed to be of the mallet form, dating from the period 1730–1770 (Dumbrell 1983; Hume 2001). Some of the bottle sherds are highly patinated and may be of an earlier date. 19<sup>th</sup>-century vessel pieces include a nearly complete bottle of smelling salts with contents, an elaborate stopper possibly for a decanter and the rim, neck



and stopper of what could be an imported mineral water bottle.

While much of the other flat glass is obviously modern, there are many fragments of diamond shaped quarry glass from leaded windows. Some are pale green, highly oxidised and actively laminating. It is difficult to date this material, though the aggrandising of a manor house in the late 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries would certainly have included glass windows, with glass made in England or imported from France (Platt 1994).

### **Worked Flint**

Worked flints were found in five of the nine trenches. Amongst these were four microliths characteristic of the Mesolithic period (9.5kya-4.3kyaBP). The remainder were relatively crude waste flakes of indeterminate age. All were clearly residual, as might be expected in an area occupied for many centuries by buildings and ornamental gardens. Nevertheless, these artefacts indicate a background of activity along this plateau in prehistoric times.

### **Metalwork**

The recovered metalwork included items of iron, copper, copper alloy, lead and pewter. The ironwork consisted mostly of nails and other structural items such as staples. Most are flat headed but a small number have round heads. A few of the nails, all from Trench 4 topsoil, have the 'fiddle head' or expanded heads typical of medieval type, but otherwise these objects are not chronologically distinctive. Other iron items included a window latch from Trench 3, a broken pin, part of a door hinge and a large key with the head missing of post-medieval type which came from Trench 7.

There was one item of copper consisting of a narrow piece of tubing. The only copper alloy object consisted of a pin with a wire-wound head, late medieval or early post-medieval in date from Trench 1. The lead comprised a short length of heavy pipe or tube (Trench 2), a small-flattened tube and a weight (Trench 6), and various pieces of window came fragments. A funnel shaped fragment of extensively decorated pewter was found in topsoil of Trench 3. None of the metal items were found in their original context and none were dateable.

### **Clay Pipes**

A total of 23 fragments of clay pipe stems were recovered from all areas. In addition there were two partially complete bowls, one with an indecipherable stamp on the base of the heel.

Pieces which date from the late 17<sup>th</sup> to early 18<sup>th</sup> century were all in residual contexts.

### **Animal Bone**

Animal bone was collected by hand. Small amounts of material were recovered from Trenches 6 (number of specimens; ns=10) and 11 (ns=9) and judged to be entirely re-deposited. A larger assemblage came from Trench 1 (ns=233), much of which is residual. In Trench 3 a large number of bone fragments (ns=301) was recovered from a pit fill sealed by the overlying wall foundations and the surface deposit contemporary with the building of the wall. An inventory of the taxa present in Trenches 1 and 3 is shown in Table 4. All bones in these assemblages are judged to be post-medieval apart from those in the domestic waste pit at the base of Trench 3, which appear to be to be late medieval, possibly contemporary with the building of the second pitch tile hearth in Trench 1.

Fragmentation prevented the unequivocal assignment of many fragments to species/family. In these cases specimens were recorded as cattle size, sheep size, etc, or were consigned to the unidentified category. Small mammals and passerine birds await identification. The extent of mechanical or chemical attrition to the bone surface was recorded, using a graded system with 1 indicating poor condition and 5 excellent. The taphonomic history of the bones was recorded including evidence for burning, gnawing and butchery.

### **Condition and preservation**

The depositional history of the bones seems to have been variable, with some well-weathered specimens characteristic of periods of exposure to the open air while others were well preserved, showing little sign of surface deterioration. Most of the material was very fragmented. Dog bones were recovered from Trench 1 and the waste pit in Trench 3: several of these showed evidence for gnawing by dogs. There was also scattered evidence of rodent gnawing, indicating that bones had been accessible to this scavenger at some stage. Burnt bones are absent, although a proportion of those recovered from the waste pit in

Trench 3 were stained with a sooty deposit. With the exception of the material from the waste pit in Trench 3, there was an absence of loose but matching epiphyses or articulating bones. This indicates that a good part of the assemblage was reworked, probably during demolition of the manor in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

### ***Species inventory***

The assemblages are dominated by sheep/goat and cattle, supplemented by smaller proportions of pig and horse (Table 4). It is likely that the majority of fragments categorised as sheep size and cattle size represent sheep and cattle. It is noteworthy that when the assemblages from kitchen area Trench 1 and those from the waste pit in Trench 3 are compared the proportion of cattle in the undisturbed pit fill assemblage is greater than in the reworked Trench 1 assemblage, perhaps pointing to a change in farming emphasis between the late medieval and post-medieval periods. Besides the usual domesticates, the assemblages contained the remains of hare/rabbit, chicken and goose. In Trench 1 medium sized duck was also identified, which may derive from a domestic or wild bird. It is likely that chicken and geese were kept on site to provide eggs and a ready source of meat.

All the bone assemblages contained a small proportion of elements from juvenile cattle and sheep, suggesting that lamb and veal were, on occasion, eaten by the inhabitants of the manor. The presence of rabbit/hare bones in the relatively early domestic waste pit (13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century) aligns with the historical record that one of the manor's owners, Sir Bartholomew Brianzon, received grant of free warren in 1286. Overall the diversity of faunal evidence points to a relatively high domestic status for the occupants of this site in the late medieval and post-medieval periods.

### ***Butchery***

All the body parts of the major domesticates, sheep and cattle, were represented. The presence of ribs and vertebrae indicate that almost complete carcasses were arriving on site. However, the relatively low numbers of phalanges, loose teeth, mandibles and maxillae tend to suggest that the immediate vicinity of the manor was not the primary butchery location, and that heads and feet were removed elsewhere. There are hints that this pattern of carcase management may have been

different in earlier periods, most notably for the pig. In the Trench 3 late medieval pit, loose teeth and mandibles with teeth were the dominant elements recovered, suggesting that pigs might have been bred on site at this time.

About 6% of the fragments from Trench 1 and the non-pit contexts of Trench 3 showed signs of dismemberment and jointing, including both chopped and sawn surfaces. Some of the sawn bones, for example a cattle tibia and ulna from Trench 3 and rib and scapula fragments from Trench 6, seem to represent relatively modern butchery practices using a saw to portion the bones (the tibia in particular resembles a soup bone). However, the rib fragment is reminiscent of the waste produced when sawing out a rib plate as raw material for combs, or panels/strips for caskets, etc. Butchery chop marks were present on 6% of the bones from the Trench 3 pit assemblage, but none of the bones were sawn.

### ***Worked bone***

Seven pieces of worked bone were identified, from contexts in Trenches 3 and 6. Trench 3 topsoil produced two worked pieces of bone. The more recognisable one is a cattle rib sawn both vertically and horizontally, exposing the cancellous bone. The second piece is possibly a polished piece of red deer antler transformed into a thin plate. At one end the piece has broken across a rivet hole, and there is a small semicircular indentation on one edge. It might be the side plate of a composite comb. The absence of other wild deer elements make it likely that antler was brought into the site specifically as raw material.

### ***Marine shell***

Shells were found in over half of the trenches opened, including 80 oyster shells together with a smaller number of mussel shells. The majority were found in Trench 1 (kitchen area) and Trench 3 (16<sup>th</sup>-century wall and medieval pit area). In Trench 1 many shells were found in relatively undisturbed contexts such as on the surface of the beaten chalk floor in which the early hearth was laid, the occupation layer above this hearth and the sand foundation/bedding layer of the 16<sup>th</sup>-century hearth. In Trench 3 all shell finds were recovered from the waste pit sealed below the later brick wall. Oysters were popular with rich and poor alike in the medieval period (Blair and Ramsay 2001), so it is

not surprising to find them in locations associated with cooking and waste disposal.

## DATING

The early pitch tile hearth and the smithying pit provided opportunities for acquiring solid dates for these levels. This was particularly important, as very few dateable medieval artefacts had been found, with the important exception of several fragments of 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup>-century pottery, and the silver groat (1422–27AD). In addition, dates for pitch tile hearths are scarce. Two dating methods were used; archaeomagnetic dating for the pitch-tile hearth and radiocarbon dating for charcoal from the smithying pit. Archaeomagnetic dating (Van Hoof *et al* 1997) could potentially provide a firm date for the last use of the hearth and a *terminus ante quem* for its construction.

Bradford University undertook the archaeomagnetic dating. Tile samples taken from various areas of the hearth (ns=16) were analysed. The results were disappointing; measurements of remanent magnetisation were widely scattered and even after stepwise demagnetisation of the samples, it was found that the residual magnetic directions for each sample were stable but different. After running a number of tests it was concluded that the wide scatter and low inclination values were due to the high haematite concentration in the tiles leading to magnetic anisotropy, *i.e.* the haematite crystals themselves influence/disturb the magnetic alignment.

Radiocarbon dating was applied to charcoal samples from the smithying pit. Four pieces identified as ringwood and sapwood from oak (*Quercus*) and beech (*Fagus*), were selected for dating. Radiocarbon dating was carried out at the Scottish Universities Environmental Research Centre, using accelerated mass spectrometry. Calibration was calculated using datasets published by Reimer *et al* (2004), using OxCal v3.10. The samples gave radiocarbon dates within 10 years of each other. However, this C<sup>14</sup> date coincided with two peaks in the tree ring calibration curve, one of which centres on 1500+/-30 and the other on 1600+/-40. While this is unfortunate, the relative position of the silver groat dating to 1422–27 points in favour of the earlier calibrated date for the pit.

## DISCUSSION

The investigations at Chesham Bois House have provided insights into the developmental chronology of the manor. The Bedford Estate 1735 map showed a manor ground plan suggestive of gradual evolution of the building over time and increased the likelihood that medieval as well as post-medieval features would be uncovered by excavation. Evidence for medieval occupation of the site was recorded in several trenches, although few features could be dated earlier than the 15<sup>th</sup> century with certainty. However, the pottery finds together with historical data provide evidence for occupation earlier than this.

The remains recorded in Trench 1 appear to represent part of a kitchen or bakehouse, within the southern range of the contemporary manor house, as indicated on the 1735 map (Fig. 11). Here, there was evidence of pre 15<sup>th</sup>-century presence in the kitchen area in the form of medieval sherds of 13<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup>-century date, at the level of the earliest floor, as well as residual sherds of the same period. In addition, pottery recovered from the undisturbed medieval pit, underlying the wall in Trench 3, also represents kitchen/household waste dating roughly to 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Documentary sources from 1213, when William de Bois held the manor, support the idea that a manor house was present on this site at least by the 13<sup>th</sup> century. We also know from historical records that the manor prospered during the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, raising the possibility that the earliest tile hearth in Trench 1 is of that period. If correct, this would support the tentative proposal that the late 15<sup>th</sup> to early 16<sup>th</sup>-century smithying pit was part of the episode of demolition and reorganisation of the earlier kitchen area. One scenario is that the pit was dug into the reworked surface on which the silver groat dated 1422–27 had been deposited. The smithying pit is likely to have been outside in an ancillary/temporary building rather than within the manor buildings of the time, and it is possible that the earliest kitchen was similarly not part of the main house.

In the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century the manor was acquired by Thomas Cheyne, and his descendants made Chesham Bois their home until the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Judging by the contemporary improvement works undertaken by this family at Chenies, in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century it seems likely that the

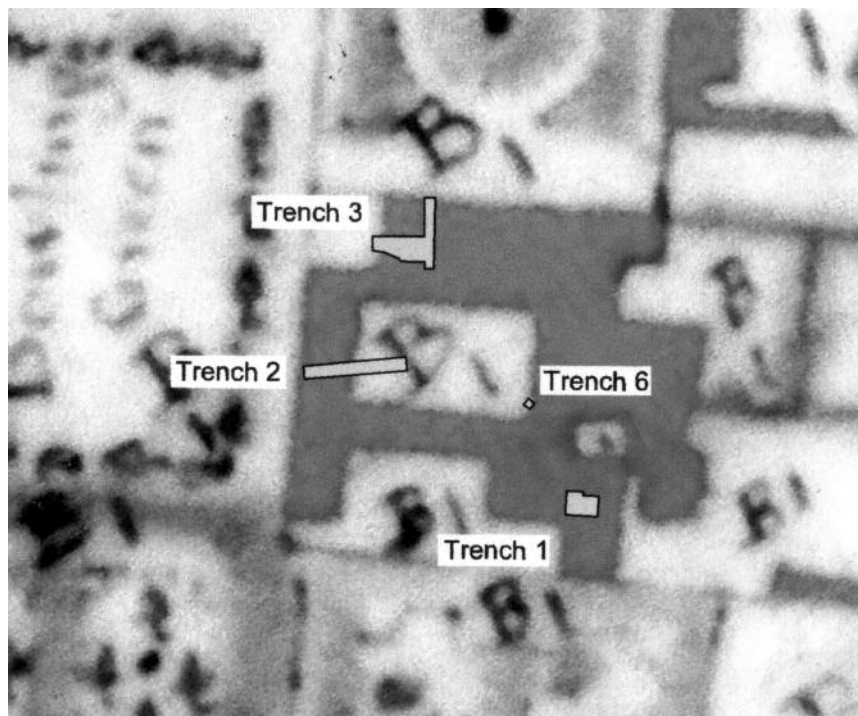


FIGURE 11 Part of the Duke of Bedford Estate Map of 1735 showing the manor house footprint and the positions of Trenches 1–3 and 6. *By kind permission of the Duke of Bedford and the Trustees of the Bedford Estate*

house and gardens at Chesham Bois would have been similarly reorganised and improved during this period. The major changes made in the kitchen/bakehouse, which involved building a new raised, pitch-tile, hearth within a winged chimney breast, was presumably part of this development. This structure was itself later partly demolished and the hearth rebuilt to provide a sophisticated partitioned oven. The frequent re-use of building material hampered any close dating of these structures: nevertheless, it seems reasonable to propose that the partitioned oven was in place by the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. Anne Cheyne's household notebook adds weight to this proposal, recording that 63 loaves were baked on a single day in 1630, presumably in an oven built for the task. The kitchen was probably incorporated into the main manor complex by this time.

The scattered finds of special moulded bricks are significant. Apart from window mullions, such 'specials' could have been used in string courses,

window cills or cornices, and are consistent with the one-time presence of a high status manorial building of the early post-medieval period (16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> century). Similar decorative brickwork is known from Chenies Manor, which was almost totally rebuilt for Sir John Russell from 1538 (Foyle 2002), and from other grand manors of the time including Hill Hall, Essex, which was remodelled in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century by the Tudor courtier Sir Thomas Smith (Drury 2009).

The wall foundations recorded in Trenches 2 and 3 lie within the buildings depicted in 1735, although they appear too narrow. While this may be due to vagaries of 18<sup>th</sup>-century surveying, the late 17<sup>th</sup>-century wall in Trench 3 seems too wide and well made to be simply a retaining wall. It may represent the northern wall of a building, for which joining walls have not yet been uncovered, or could even be the remnant of a structure such as an arcaded walkway or orangery. However any earlier features and surfaces, apart from the basal layer

into which the medieval ditch and waste pit had been dug, have been lost. The only other surfaces encountered in Trench 3 comprised rough gravel surfaces related to garden use in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Overall the structures in Trench 2 are suggestive of outhouses or supply stores, rather than domestic quarters. Finds from the basal layer of Trench 2, which included several wine bottle fragments, indicate a 17<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup>-century date.

The nature of the earthworks in Church Field remain uncertain. Several of the minor features appear to have been constructed in the post-medieval period. One suggestion based on resistivity and topographic data was the presence of small medieval enclosures associated with a settlement. The residual medieval pottery recovered from Trench 4 suggests medieval activity in the area, and evidence for terracing was noted which might have been associated with small scale agriculture: there was no other evidence for settlement in Church Field.

The most significant feature in Church Field is the large ditch excavated in Trench 5. This runs across the field, then south of the house and perhaps reappears along the northern edge of the Bowling Green. This feature is not marked on the 1735 Bedford Estate map and was presumably backfilled by the time it was drawn. No material was recovered in our excavations which could provide a date for what appears to be a major property boundary. One possibility is that it was a boundary to the medieval manorial complex. However, it is worth bearing in mind that the ditch had an internal bank and the situation is elevated giving a good view of the Chess Valley, so a much earlier, perhaps prehistoric date cannot be ruled out.

Despite various improvements and additions which continued to take place during the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, including the wall uncovered in Trench 3, it seems that by 1735, when it came into the ownership of the Duke of Bedford, the old house was not considered worth redeveloping, and was demolished before the end of the century. The present house was built in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century on part of the footprint of the old manor, and no further development has taken place since then.

#### Acknowledgements

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Finally, we also owe a great debt of gratitude to Roy Paton, local historian, for drawing our attention to this important site, and we were deeply sorry that Roy died before the excavations began.

#### Appendix

The description 'manor house' has been associated with two other sites in Chesham Bois. In the 1930's a house facing the common in North Road was called 'The Manor House'. This house dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, although parts are earlier and belong to the time when this was the farmhouse of the manor farm. The other site is on the road built from Chesham to Amersham in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, very close to the boundary with Chesham. In 1903 Mr J W Garrett-Pegge, who had built a striking house there, persuaded the Duke of Bedford to allow him to purchase the lordship of the manor of Chesham Bois (Page 1925). Having done so he renamed his house Chesham Bois Manor. It was the last manor house of Chesham Bois and still stands under that name.

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