

## A DOUBLE-MOATED SITE AT BECKENHAM

By LILIAN THORNHILL

### INTRODUCTION

LAND used for the sewage farm was acquired piecemeal by the Corporation of Croydon from 1862 onward, the last acquisition being as late as May, 1951, though over 150 acres were purchased in the first four years, in Woodside, Elmer's End and Penge. The sewage works was closed in 1967, and the area is now to be developed, the reason for its archaeological investigation. The sewage farm was never a successful project, for the subsoil is London Clay and the wet sewage would stand in the fields for months without draining away.<sup>1</sup> The problem was aggravated by the fact that the land is low-lying in comparison with its surroundings, the Forest Ridge of Claygate Beds to the north, Addington Hills of Blackheath Pebble Beds to the south, and the ridge plateau of Croydon, the Boyne Terrace, to the west. Drainage is to the north-north-east into the tributaries of the river Ravensbourne. The Chaffinch and another stream to the south flow through the area (Fig. 1).

The Ordnance Survey 25 in. map of 1861 showed a double-moated site at N.G.R. TQ 354684, standing between 300 and 400 yards east of the county boundary, and the same site is clearly featured on the Estate Map of Thomas Motley, dated 1736, and on another dated 1836. Beckenham Central Library produced a copy of the Field Names Map of Beckenham on a scale six inches to the mile prepared from all then available sources in 1951 by Mr. Edmund K. Roberts in collaboration with Mr. Geoffrey W. Tookey. So far as concerned the moated site, this Field Names map was based on the estate map of Thomas Motley and therefore added nothing further except as regards the relationship of the site to surrounding fields. On the Thomas Motley map the site was called La Motes, and this name suggested a possible eighteenth-century ornamental feature, though this seemed unlikely since the owner's house and garden stood about a mile and a half away in Beckenham High Street. No other information was available before excavation commenced. Very little study had apparently been done of the area because it was 'border country' between Surrey and Kent. The Archaeology Section of Croydon Natural History

<sup>1</sup> Information from Mr. J. Lloyd, retired foreman.

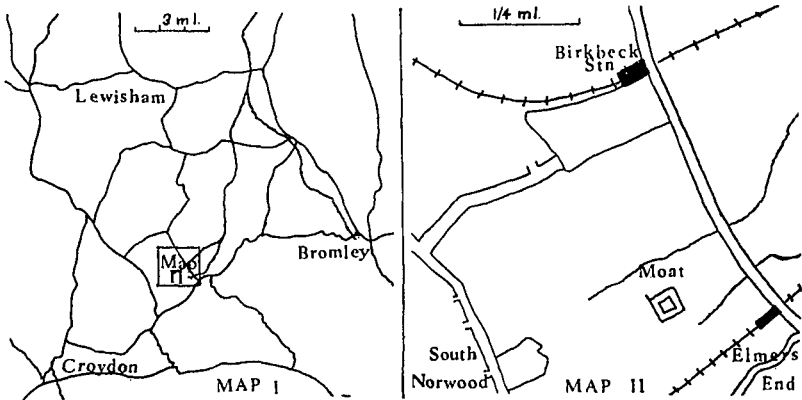


FIG. 1.

and Scientific Society therefore carried out a limited excavation between 1st July and October 1972.

The factors affecting the success of the sewage farm also affected this excavation for the London Clay demanded shoring and the water needed pumps, neither of which could be procured from funds available. Other hazards were, (a) the risk of lead poisoning from the heavy pollution which was present in places though probably not too concentrated where we were working since the Public Health Officer for Croydon advised safeguards but did not forbid it, and the field in which the site lay was a storm-water reservoir,<sup>1</sup> and, (b) the open nature of the site which meant anyone could visit and damage. Fencing was put up but eventually abandoned after it was repeatedly thrown into the trench and the posts used to lever out the trench sides.

### THE EXCAVATION

Yellow clay had been visible a few inches from the top of the drainage channels which covered the whole farm, and it had been thought that when the topsoil was removed, the plan of the moats would be revealed; so two long scrapes were made using a Drott machine. While trying to remove all the topsoil, the machine broke through the yellow clay in one place, revealing a buried land surface beneath. The Drott was of limited use, running into difficulties in dealing with the moats, but we were able to establish their position.

The first scrape of about 45 yards in length, had out across the corner of the outer moat and Trench I, 10 by 1 m., was set out here. The second scrape, about 75 yards long, at an acute angle to the first, cut across both moats at an angle that later proved to be 96 degrees. Trench II, 10 by 1 m., was laid across the inner moat (Fig. 2).

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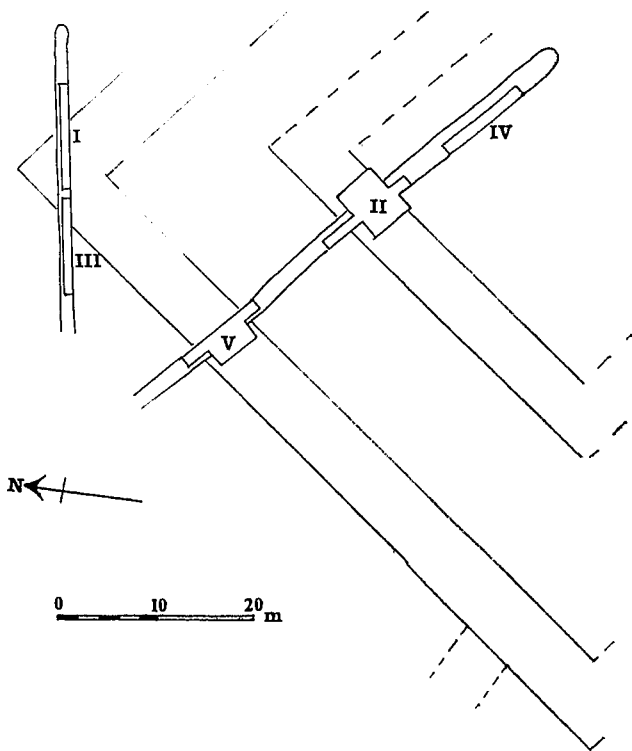


FIG. 2.

Trench I was found not to contain the whole of the outer moat and Trench III was dug 1 m. distant to the west and in a straight line with it. The upper line of the natural infill of the moat was met immediately below the yellow clay. This was of black silt containing many half-decayed leaves, mainly oak, but there were some hazel and willow. A clay tobacco pipe bowl dated by style 1680-1730, was found in this layer, but other than this very little clay-pipe material occurred on the site.

Below the black silt was a thick layer of brown peat, containing only leaves and the shells of acorns. These two trenches were abandoned because it became obvious that the profile they were yielding would be of little value, being shallow and very wide since it was across the corner of the outer moat and missed the deepest part of it. It was, however, possible to line up the outer lip of the outer moat in the second scrape and confirm the line of this.

Trench II across the inner moat yielded a truer picture of the width of the moat. Lying upside down in the peat was the remains of a wide

tin pan, from its handles, probably a preserving pan. As layers below the peat were reached, trouble developed with the top yellow clay sliding on the wet peat into the trench, and when cracks appeared, 'tell tales' were placed where necessary, and threatening sides taken down.

On the 1861 Ordnance Survey map and on the 1736 Estate map, the moated site is shown set out as a plantation of trees. The roots and sawn-off stumps of some of these were found in all trenches, so that what turned out to be the top of a decayed plank was thrown on the spoil heap as a rotting root. Oaken beams were uncovered at a depth of 2.47 m., three in association, and later several more which have been identified by Mr. S. E. Rigold as forming part of the base-frame of a medieval bridge (Plate I).

It was hoped to uncover the whole structure and the trench was extended in several directions. Because of the large amount of earth to be moved to reach the timbers, and the need to keep them damp and protected, they became more and more at risk, for the site was open to vandalism. Advice was sought from the Department of the Environment, and we were recommended to cover the timbers with wet clay and back-fill, and the site is to be scheduled. This was done and the trenches were not completed.

Trench IV was dug on the same line as Trench II, 5 m. to the south, 10 by 1 m., in the hope of tracing evidence of occupation in the enclosed area of the moat. Under the topsoil was a thick layer of clay with chalk crumbs, and below this, undisturbed London Clay. There is no evidence of the old land surface visible in the other trenches.

Trench V, 10 by 1 m. across the outer moat, was dug on the same line as Trenches II and IV. The same sequence of upper layers was met but no gravel spill, and it was not taken down lower than layer 10b, at the base of which two planks were found lying obliquely on their sides, which could indicate the position of a timber bridge across that moat too. The two bridges would be in line with each other. However, Mr. R. W. Savage is of the opinion that they indicate timber lacing. Medieval sherds were found in association with these timbers also.

## THE SECTIONS

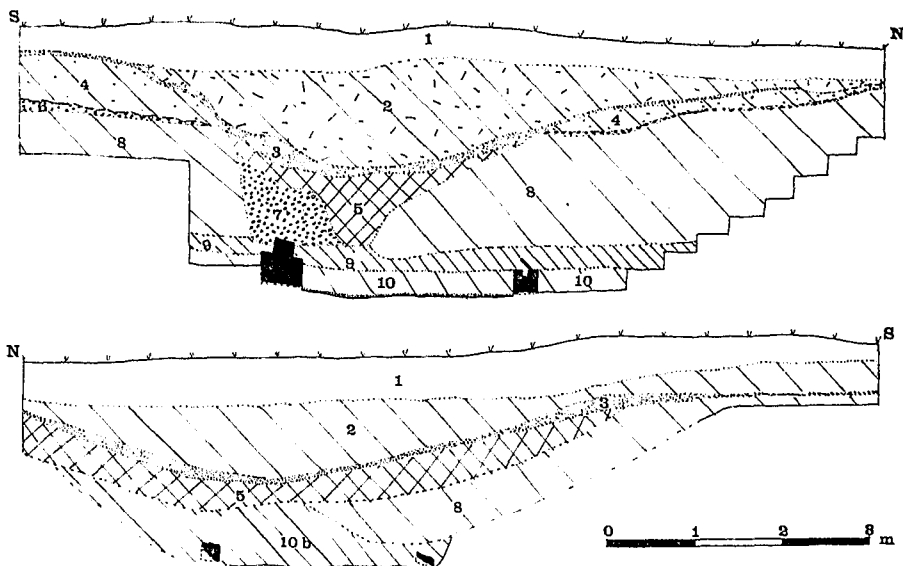
### Trench II. Figs. 3a and b

Section A is composite owing to collapsing sides. The water-logged nature of the trench and heavy clay made trowelling well nigh impossible. The lowest layers suffered some degree of churning during the necessary bailing out periods. Layer 9 may not have extended so far north, but the step was always crumbling and seemed of the same material. Layer 11 must represent the earliest deposit of silt after the



Timbers

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FIGS. 3A and B. Sections

cutting of the moat and the building of the bridge. Since the timbers were left *in situ*, it is not known if they rested on the natural London Clay, or not. Layer 10 was only distinguishable from the natural by the presence of sherds, building stone fragments and pieces of tile. Consequently, it is difficult to establish where it ended. Like the natural it turned yellow on exposure to air. Layer 9 was only slightly different in colour from Layers 8 and 10, but less glutinous in texture. These three layers must represent the slow silting up of the medieval period of the moat. Layer 8 was greeny-grey until exposed, and only distinguishable from the undisturbed London Clay by the tile fragments it contained. It must be the result of considerable subsidence into the moat, probably at the time when the lacing of the moat gave way. No direct evidence of lacing was found, but it would have been impossible to keep the moat open at all without some strengthening of its sides. Layer 7, gravel, represents an appreciable spill, found only on the inner side of the inner moat. If it had come from the road to the bridge, it should appear against both sides. It could be the result of levelling the inner mound and suggests the interior was capped with gravel (see Discussion). Layer 6 is probably the remains of the road to the bridge. Layer 5 must be the first deposit in a re-cut moat. Apart from three body sherds of dark grey ware with interior dark green glaze, nothing was found in it. Layer 4 is the result of the tree planting

episode. Layer 3 is the final natural infilling of the moat before the site was levelled completely for the sewage works, using clay containing nineteenth-century material—Layer 2 to fill in the moats. Layer 1, topsoil, has formed during use since the 1860s.

#### Trench V

Section B gives a much simpler picture. The two timbers were nearer the surface and the moat appears never to have been so deep. The natural was not reached except in a deeper sounding, cut after the section was drawn, to the south of the more southerly timber. Mr. R. W. Savage asserts that the timbers were lying on the subsoil. The only distinction between Layer 10b and the natural being the presence of sherds in the former, there is no certainty without further excavation.

To the north of the more northerly timbers in Trench II was an area of hard clay pieces where the hot sun had baked and cracked the exposed surface during the construction of the inner moat.

#### THE POTTERY (Figs. 4-7)

Trenches II and V were the only ones in which sherds were found and these were all medieval. At least 33 vessels are represented, 11 of which are jugs of various kinds, one a fine wide bowl and the rest mainly cooking-pots.

No shell nor calcined grit-tempered wares were found. The pottery was mainly grit-tempered but some sand-tempered and some Surrey ware also occurred.

The earliest is probably represented by the square flanged rims, nos. 16 and 17 (Fig. 5), similar to some found at Addington, Surrey, a style developing about the middle of the thirteenth century. Not much different in date is the baluster jug no. 13 (Fig. 5). These jugs appear to have been made in differing sizes; this example is estimated to be 6 in. in height and similar to two found at Friday Street, London, in the mid-nineteenth century, together with coins (now lost) of Henry III and Edward I.<sup>2</sup> One was recovered from a medieval site in Henley Wood, Chelsham, Surrey, excavated by this Society in 1911.<sup>3</sup> A rather larger version of the same shape was found at Blossoms Inn, London, together with a thirteenth-century jetton.<sup>4</sup> Sometimes these jugs show glazing but no. 13 has none. It exhibits tooling marks where the exterior of the handle was smoothed down, but the interior

<sup>2</sup> *Arch. Journ.*, lix (1902), 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Report on the Earthworks at Henley Wood, Chelsham, Croydon Nat. Hist. and Sc. Soc.*, (1912), 10.

<sup>4</sup> *Antiq. Journ.*, xii (1889), 178.

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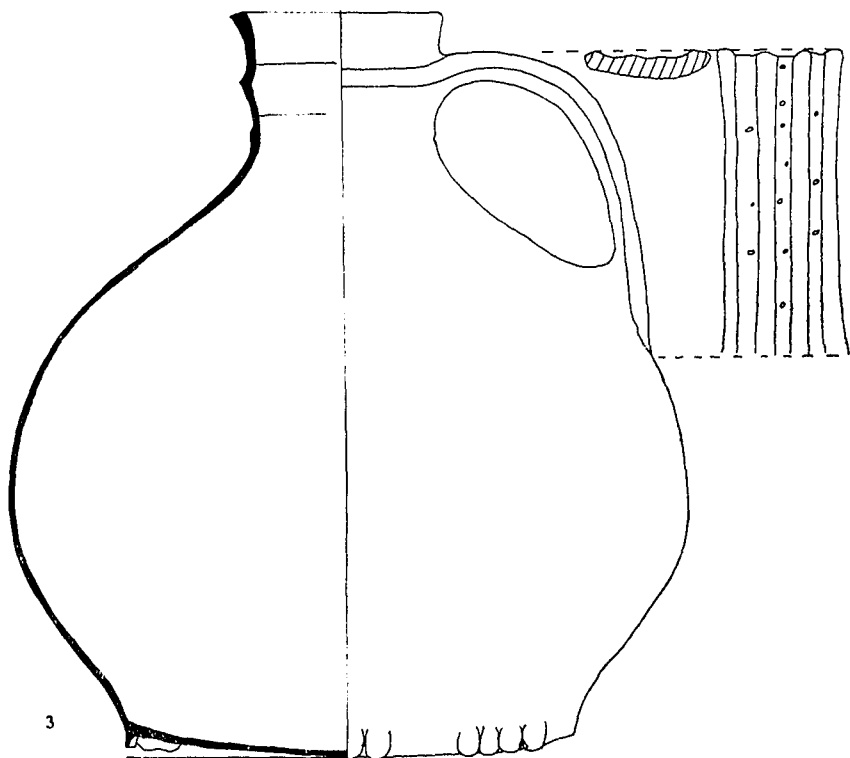


FIG. 4 (Scale:  $\frac{1}{2}$ ).

shows how the handle was pushed through the walls of the jug and left rough here because of the small diameter.

The latest pottery is fifteenth century and represented by no. 29 (Fig. 7), a jug with gently swelling body and rod handle paralleled by vessels in the Guildhall Museum. A late medieval bowl, no. 5 (Fig. 5) has a well-developed flanged rim, almost "T" in section, in Surrey ware with glazed lower interior. A complete bowl in the Guildhall Museum from Salters Hall, Wallbrook site, pit 64, provides an exact parallel.

Much of two fine jugs was recovered, nos. 3 (Fig. 4) and 11 (Fig. 5), both globular, of thin red ware, both with sagging bases and sets of finger impressions at the base of the walls to form a primitive foot-ring, no. 3 the larger, having five sets and no. 11 three sets. No. 3 has a small pinched spout, absent in the smaller jug. No. 11 is decorated with applied strips forming oblique cordons over the body which is thus divided into panels, alternately painted red and green glazed. It has been suggested because of the clear line between the colours that the



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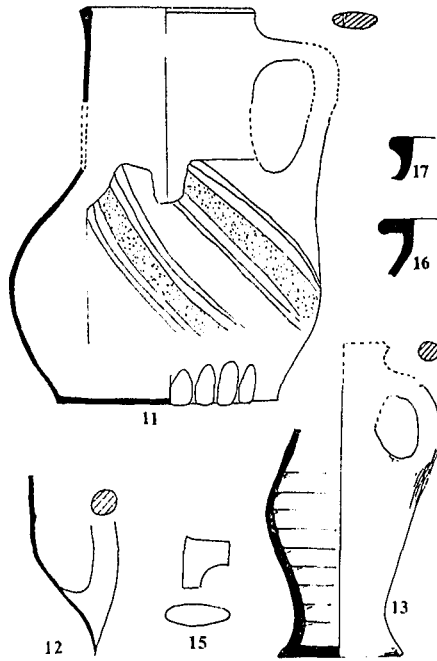


FIG. 5 (Scale:  $\frac{1}{2}$ ).

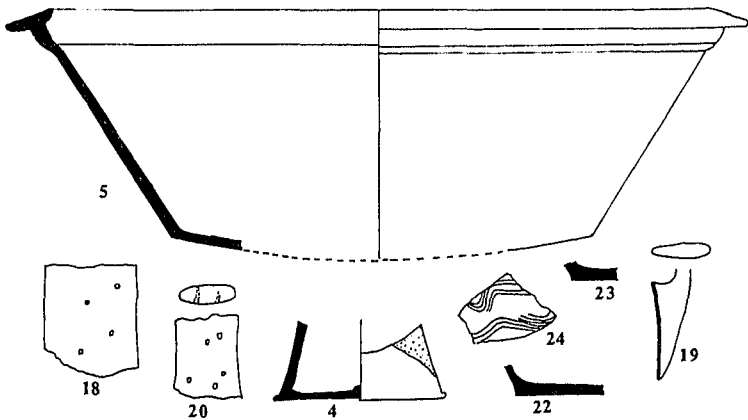


FIG. 6 (Scale:  $\frac{1}{2}$ ).

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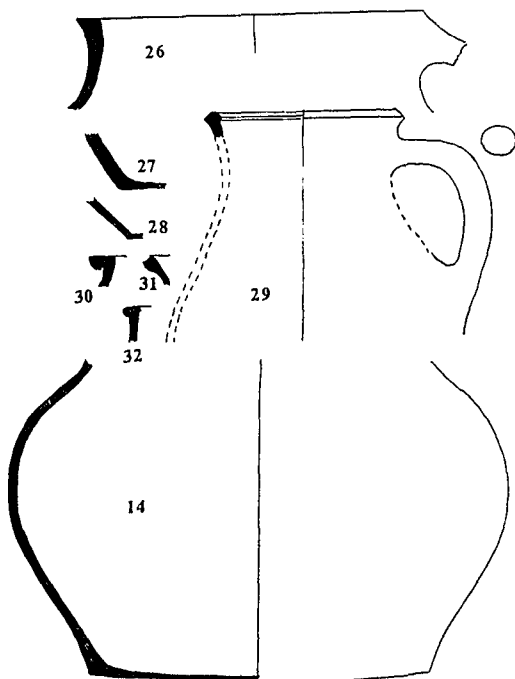


FIG. 7 (Scale:  $\frac{1}{4}$ ).

red slip was applied first, and when dried, it was waxed before dipping into the green glaze, to avoid the colours running. The red is unglazed and flaking badly. No. 3 is almost complete and has a wide strap-handle, pricked for firing. The fabric has a dark core, giving a sandwich effect. The jug was first given a cream slip, then a green glaze which did not penetrate below the handle. A whole group of similar pots, ER 1076 C, were recovered from Guildhall Car Park during excavations and are now in Guildhall Museum.

All the culinary jugs had strap-handles, pricked so as often to leave pimples of clay on the underside. One unusually wide-mouthed jug, no. 26, had red hæmatite adhering to the inside, the rim and the handle, and was possibly used for storing hæmatite, small flecks of which occurred accidentally on one or two body sherds.

Apart from nos. 4, a French pedestal jug with green glaze, and 13, the jugs are all globular, and five of the eleven are glazed.

Three sherds show incised linear decoration, no. 24 (Fig. 6) having combed sets of wavy lines.

Other pottery sherds illustrated are jugs, nos. 12, 15, 18-20, mostly gritted ware; cooking pots 22-23, and 27-28, all gritted ware,

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and rims, no. 30, gritted ware, no. 31, hard grey ware and no. 32, off/white ware.

The pottery indicates thirteenth- to fifteenth-century manufacture.

### THE TIMBERS (Fig. 8a)

These were lettered as found and were on the whole remarkably well preserved. Some show signs of re-use as the bridge had been rebuilt at least once. Although the beams forming the base-frame were *in situ*, others must have belonged to the fallen superstructure. It is possible that all the still existing beams in Trench II were not found (two more were uncovered during cleaning up operations for photography, before back-filling), and that more remain to be found in Trench V. Furthermore, several of those forming the final base-frame have mortices which were clearly out of use in this phase and were therefore re-used. Three contained oblong-sectioned 'pegs' and another was found loose. Only one tenon was preserved. Any attempt at reconstruction is very problematic.

Two empty mortices faced each other on opposing plates as though they were complementary. The remains of two uprights were found, but were not in very good condition and one was destroyed by intruders. A well-cut groove ran the length of beam D and the remains of a plank were set in clay above it, suggesting it might once have stood in the groove. Another piece of planking came to light on the southern side of A on the last day, but it is not known if this also had a grooved timber below it. Timbers A-E were articulated. B was split and massive at the west end; F and L had a mortice each in their northern faces (Fig. 8b). All the timbers were of oak.

### BUILDING MATERIAL

At the bases of Trenches II and V were found pieces of micaceous sandstone and gritstone, some showing tooling and mainly dressed. Four blocks of gritstone had a curved surface and one had mortar adhering on all sides at one end.

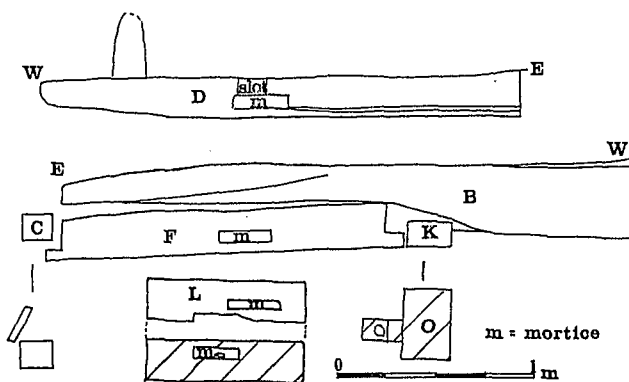
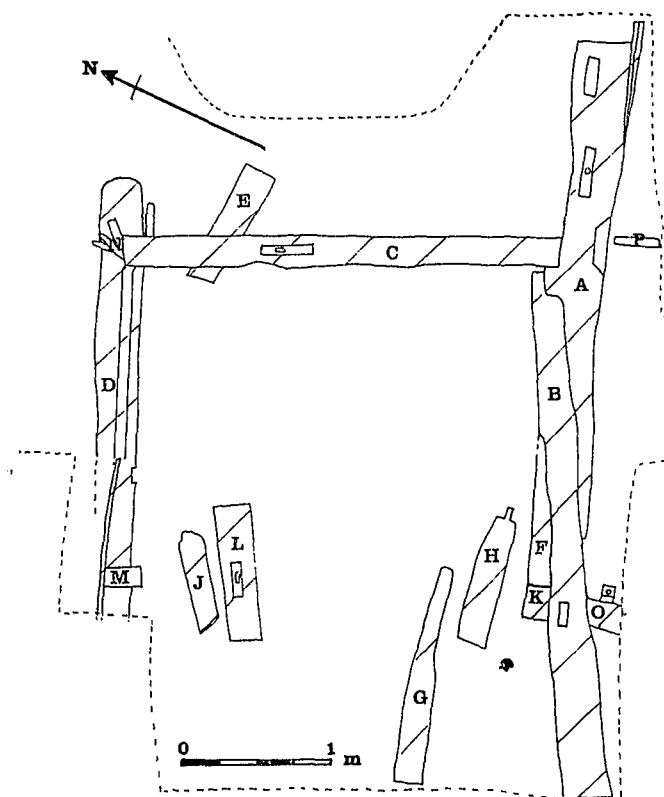
Tiles were numerous in both moats. All were hand-made, mainly flat or very slightly curved. The two round holes were not always the same distance apart nor equidistant from the top.

Decayed daub was found in Trench II and also a part of an iron window catch.

### SMALL FINDS

1. Clay tobacco pipe bowl, initials 'R.G.' unidentified, on spur. Trench I, layer 3.

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Figs. 8A and B. Timbers

2. Whetstone, slightly curved. Trench II, layer 3. The following note has been supplied by Mr. S. E. Ellis, of the Department of Mineralogy, British Museum.

'This is a "Schist hone" of the common medieval type, i.e. a mica-quartz-schist mullion. These have been traced to Eidsborg, Telemark, Central Southern Norway. This particular specimen is not quite typical of the Eidsborg hones, as it lacks two of their distinctive minor mineral constituents, namely calcite and a uniaxial positive green chlorite, but these are not invariably present. The micas are quite characteristic.'

#### ORGANIC FINDS

Only three fragments of bone were recovered, one from Trench II and two from Trench V.

A few oyster shells were also found in the inner moat.

The peat contained oak, hazel and willow leaves, shells of hazel nuts and acorns.

#### DISCUSSION

The original topography of the area would appear to have been destroyed by the measures taken in the 1860s to provide level surfaces for the sewage farm. As stated in the introduction, gravel beds are found on the hills to the north, south and west.

Anerley Hill has a very interesting profile and drops down towards the south in five stages, separated from each other by rises. If these were river terraces, the stages would be separated by flat surfaces not inclines. It is suggested that these stages were the result of successive falls from the original heights of the Forest Ridge in geological times. This ridge is of London Clay capped by gravel of the Claygate Beds, and if each fall had carried its own capping, this would account for the persistence of the inclines. The fifth drop terminates in the neighbouring cemetery. Patches of Blackheath Pebble Beds are found bordering Long Lane to the south, so that gravel could have occurred on the site associated with either of these sources.

The field names shown on the eighteenth-century map as drawn by Roberts suggest a gently rolling landscape, for several fields are called hursts which can mean a wooded hill, and another adjacent to the moat is called Wade Slade, slade meaning a little glen. This combined with the gravel spill on the inner lip of the inner moat, and the preference for dry footings for a dwelling, make it a reasonable inference that the manor house was built on a slight mound capped with gravel. Levelling would remove any trace of gravel still remaining and with it traces of the house.

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From the position of the gravel spill within the moat, it must have fallen or been pushed in soon after the abandonment of the medieval dwelling. At some later time, probably in the seventeenth century after considerable subsidence had occurred, the moats were recut, rather smaller and shallower, and a plantation of oak-trees set out in rows over the whole area. These were cut down and the moats infilled in the eighteen-sixties, but the field was still known to the workmen as 'The Moats' although the memory of them was lost.

The manor house itself would appear to have been fairly substantial, judging by the building stone found within the moat, and was tiled. The fine ware vessels, one of which was made in France,<sup>5</sup> suggest a family of importance, and these are in marked contrast to the dearth of fine ware found in Lodge Lane, Addington, Surrey,<sup>6</sup> a nearby site of the same period. Some of the pottery from both sites is similar, for instance, nos. 16-19.

The finer pottery was most probably made in London, judging by the parallels to be seen in the Guildhall Museum. Charcoal was produced in the woods to the north and taken to the London markets, and traders would not return empty-handed.

All the available evidence points to an origin for the manor house in the second half of the thirteenth century. Rectangular moats are widely attested at least from the late thirteenth century,<sup>7</sup> and the documents support this date. The pottery ranges from mid-thirteenth to early-fifteenth century, but the documentary evidence suggests an abandonment sometime in the fourteenth century. The bowl of Surrey ware cannot be earlier than the beginning of the fifteenth century on the basis of its rim form, and it may be that the house decreased in importance in the fourteenth century but was occupied by a tenant farmer until its final abandonment. A deed of 1467 mentions gardens and motes but no house.

The only indication noted of repair to the bridge, which would have been necessary if the occupation lasted for nearly two hundred years, was the re-use of some of the timbers at a time of reconstruction.

The hone found shows signs of much wear and did not get into the moat until after the re-cutting. Although not in a medieval layer, it was most certainly manufactured in that period.

The aims of the excavation were to establish the date of the original moat and to determine whether the outer moat had served any purpose other than that of a folly. The name of the site in the eighteenth century was 'The La Motes' which sounded ornamental rather than practical. Since both moats contained only medieval material in the lowest

<sup>5</sup> Verbal information from Mr. J. G. Hurst, F.S.A.

<sup>6</sup> *Proc. Croydon Nat. Hist. and Sc. Soc.*, xiv (1975), 509 ff.

<sup>7</sup> *Arch. Cant.*, lxxii (1962), 29.

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layers, both date from that period. The outer moat was dug later than the inner moat, probably at the onset of worsening weather conditions. It is most likely the impossibility of satisfactorily draining the site which led to abandonment.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all must come the writer's thanks to the co-director, Mr. Richard W. Savage, B.A. The directors wish to thank, on behalf of Croydon Natural History and Scientific Society, all who helped in the investigation; the Greater London Borough of Croydon for permission to excavate, and for help in site clearance; Mr. Geoffrey Morris, of the Department of Public Services and Works, for his kind encouragement and assistance, and the Parks Department for the loan of fencing. Acknowledgement is due to Mr. P. Glover, of Croydon Public Reference Library, for help with maps and documents on neighbouring lands; to Bromley and Beckenham libraries and the County Archives at Maidstone for help given. The Society is indebted to Mr. S. E. Rigold, M.A., F.S.A., and Mr. Anthony Flemming for their valuable assistance and advice on two visits to the site to inspect the timbers, to Mr. Rigold for his notes and illustration, and to Mr. Jack Bowyer, of the Sussex Archaeological Society, for help with surveying the timbers. Advice on the site was also received from Mr. P. L. Drewett, B.Sc. Thanks are due to Mr. Brian Spencer of the London Museum, the Guildhall Museum and to Mr. Jeremy Haslam for help with the pottery; to Mr. S. E. Ellis and Dr. A. R. Woolley of the Mineralogy Department, British Museum, for inspection of the hone. The writer is deeply grateful to Mr. Geoffrey W. Tookey for researching into and producing notes on the documentary history of the area. The directors wish to thank the local residents who stored tools, and all the volunteers who helped with the digging. Lastly, the writer must thank Mr. A. P. Detsicas, M.A., F.S.A., for guidance in preparing this report for publication.

## APPENDIX A

### THE STRUCTURE OF THE BRIDGE

By S. E. RIGOLD, M.A., F.S.A., F.R.Hist.S.

Timber bridges across moats may be generally classified thus: those with earth-fast posts; those where the posts form trestles with separate transverse sole-plates; and those with the posts on a rigid

quadrilateral base-frame, which may be strong enough to absorb the shock of a falling drawbridge. Though it is not axial to the moat, it is difficult to regard the structure at Elmer's End (South Norwood) as anything else than the support of a bridge (it is certainly not a sluice) and, in so far as it fits any of the above three classes, it belongs to the last. But it is anomalous in many points: first, it is deficient in mortices and those found are empty, suggesting the possibility of re-used timbers, yet with few 'operative' mortices in their place; secondly, there are no secure lap-joints or proper halvings—where the timbers intersect they are usually not trenched but merely rebated and so easily pushed out of joint, and this appears to apply to the seatings of posts, too—they are neither earth-fast nor tenoned; thirdly, there are apparently no proper pegs or dowels, but some of the otherwise empty mortices contain flattened 'pegs', shaped like the 'keys' used to secure early scarf-joints, driven through the mortices to anchor the timbers to the soil, but too small and solid to be the remains of tenons. In the age of over-cautious and over-articulated carpentry (as in such early barns as Cressing Temple and Great Coxwell) it looks an incredibly bad piece of work, depending on gravity and friction like a child's building-bricks. It may be contrasted with the splendid, purely industrial, and roughly contemporary timber mill-race found by Mr. D. W. Crossley at Chingley Forge in the Bewl valley.<sup>8</sup> Admitting the possibility of these defects, it remains to describe the structure, (a) as found and (b) on the assumption that this was a 'patch-up' and that the basal timbers are *in situ* and were articulated with the empty mortices and slots in use.

In a normal rigid frame the transverse plates are halved, either both over or both under the longitudinal ones. In this case, as found, the longitudinal plate C, ran over the forward transverse, D, and under two baulks, A and B, clumsily abutted as though to make an inner transverse plate, thus mastering the slope of the ditch. That this was the intention might appear from a 'peg' in one of the mortices in A, securing it to the sloping bottom. A also contained an empty mortice for an upright, or possibly for a sole-brace to a post that stood, half-lapped over it at the point of crossing (a bad position used in the most archaic rigid-frame bridge, at West Derby, Lancs.)<sup>9</sup>: B had an empty mortice for an upright (? H). Some planking may have shored the thing up at the crossing of A.

If A and B are removed at least something consistent and regular can be described, consisting of the short transverse members F and D, the longitudinal C (in which we may assume the 'peg' in the empty

<sup>8</sup> *Med. Arch.*, xix (1975), forthcoming.

<sup>9</sup> *Univ. of Liverpool Annals of Archæology and Anthropology*, xv (1928), 47-55.



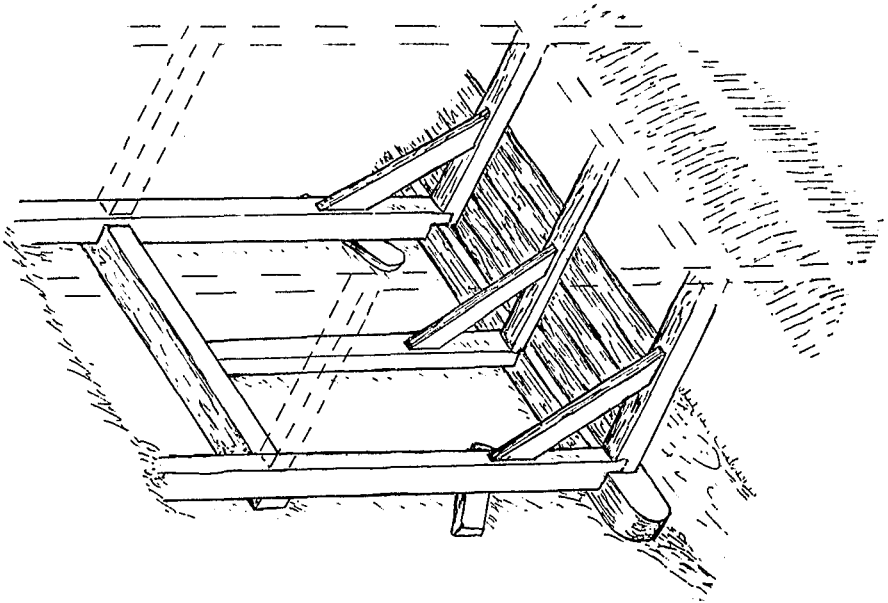


FIG. 9. Reconstruction Plan.

mortice was put in at the same time as that in A), a corresponding longitudinal, later cut out but represented by fragments K, O (?) and perhaps L (shifted and 'pegged' in the next phase), and a totally removed intermediate longitudinal (X) between the opposite mortices in the middle of D and F. The 'wedging-pieces', E and J, quite usual under such sole-plates, may be primary or forced in later. Posts, apparently crudely lapped over the horizontals in rebates or slots, stood on D at the entries of C, X and the member represented by K, namely, N, Y, and M. Probably there were similar posts on F. Horizontal planks, as at Eynsford,<sup>10</sup> of which the lowest was set in a groove along the top of D, provided some lateral binding to the posts. A possible groove on the inner face is inexplicable. The mortices in C, L (?) and perhaps in X could have taken shores or sole-braces to the posts. There are details that might belie this reconstruction (Fig. 9)—a lateral mortice in L, not matched in C, and a possible dowel-hole near the central mortice in F that might indicate that it had a mortice on its lower side and had been reversed, but if it is generally valid it soon proved not only insecure but too narrow and seems to have been replaced by the wider bridge represented by A and B, of which the other longitudinal plate must remain buried. The same clumsy techniques were used as before.

<sup>10</sup> *Arch. Cant.*, lxxxviii (1973), 87-116.

## APPENDIX B

## HISTORICAL NOTE

By GEOFFREY W. TOOKEY

The double moated site which is the subject of the foregoing account is well identified on the Thomas Motley estate map of 1736 under the name 'La Motes'. The extent of the site is given as 18 ac. 3 r. 17 p. On an earlier estate map of Peter Burrell (reproduced in Borrowman's *Beckenham Past and Present*, 1910, opposite page 272), the land is indicated as adjoining 'Sturts Land' and is there given the name 'Lame Oates' which is obviously a phonetic corruption of 'La Motes'.

Working backwards in time, the same land can be identified under the name 'Leweland' in two deeds of 1467 now in the Kent County Archives Office. The boundaries are given as the King's Highway leading to Croydon on the east, the field of Richard at Cherte called 'Pygenottes' on the north, the land of Thomas Warham on the west and the Shire Ditch on the south. There is no reference to a house but there is express reference in each of the deeds to 'gardens and motes' being associated with the land. The area is given as twenty acres. The deeds relate to a mortgage transaction between Richard at Cherte on the one part and Stephen and John Fabian of London on the other part, and it is recited that Richard at Cherte derived his title to the land from William Woley and Ralph Langley of Beckenham and John Bernes of Bromley. Woley and Langley were extensive land-owners in Beckenham, but they had their main estates away from the area of Leweland, and therefore were probably not resident there. John Bernes' other interests are not known.

The absence of a house standing on the site at about this period of time, i.e. latter part of the fifteenth century, is corroborated by the wording of a deed dated 1494 (Kent Archives). This deed relates to some dealing in several parcels of property in the Elmer's End area including (translation from the Latin) 'a house called Aylmersende, another house with a small meadow called Olyvers Mead containing by estimation one acre, land called Lewmote containing by estimation twenty acres, three crofts called Herstcroft, Wyldereden, and Le Wyldde', etc.

Going further back in time, there is a gap in the available records until one reaches the period at the end of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth century, but this is the period which appears to be of most interest in seeking the origins of the double moated site. Assuming that the nature of the various objects found

indicates the existence of a thirteenth to fourteenth-century house of some importance, then the evidence seems to point to Lord Robert de Retford as having been the principal owner. He was one of the King's itinerant judges, known to be active as such between the years 1295-1318, and he exercised his functions in various parts of the country. (See Foss's *Lives of the Judges*, 552.) His connection with Beckenham is disclosed by a series of nine deeds contained in the Harleian Collection at the British Museum.

The first of these deeds bears no date but is of the time of Henry III or Edward I. It relates to the grant of a house and twenty acres of land in Beckenham from John at Lude to Robert de Retford, clerk. The position of the house and land is not positively identified, but there is a reference to a right of ingress and egress which is not commonly found in similar deeds of the same period, and this suggests that the property was away from a main road. This fits the case of the Leweland. That some importance was attached to the transaction may be deduced from the fact that the first witness was not a neighbouring owner but Lord Robert de Camwell of Westerham and Edenbridge. He was a judge's son, and also son-in-law of Hamo Crevequer who was the owner of many fees in Kent. Other witnesses were John and Peter de Pouton and Richard at Lewe, all of whom were owners of land in the neighbourhood of Leweland. The name Richard at Lewe suggests a close association with the site. There is no other site in Beckenham to which this particular deed could more appropriately relate, and indeed most of the other houses of note in Beckenham can be identified at this time with other owners. Leweland was not the main Elmer's End estate since this was associated with members of the Elmer or Aylmer family and was clearly a distinct property on the main road from Beckenham to Croydon. The evidence in favour of Leweland being associated with Robert de Retford is reinforced by the circumstances of his other acquisitions of land in the immediately surrounding area. These acquisitions are set out in eight deeds witnessed by various Beckenham men from the locality. Two of these relate to land in the Stert, or Sturt, which bounded Leweland on the western side, and in one of these deeds a reference is made to the 'lane which runs from Lewe to the King's highway'. This could be the track which still runs from the moated site along the boundary of what was The Stert (now Beckenham cemetery) to Elmer's End Road opposite Beck Lane. The lane is indicated on the Burrell 1723 and Motley 1736 maps. The two latest of this series of deeds are dated 1309 and no further documentary evidence has been found in connection with Robert de Retford's interests in Beckenham. The name Retford does not appear on the Kent Lay Subsidy Roll of 1334/5 (Kent Records, Vol. XVIII), and although many entries on the roll can be identified with particular

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estates, no such identification can be made with an owner of Leweland. It would seem that for some reason the house did not survive or at least became much diminished in value. As already mentioned, the available records next in time, that is to say of the fifteenth century, make no mention of a house on the land, although emphasizing the presence of gardens and moats.

The low-lying position of the site with streams flowing through it leads one to consider whether natural phenomena had something to do with the failure of the house to survive. Now it so happens that the years 1315 to 1317 were remarkable for the severity of the floods which swept the country and these dates fit in very well between the last known acquisition of land in Beckenham by Robert de Retford in 1309 and the absence of a relevant entry on the Lay Subsidy Roll of 1344. According to Dr. D. J. Schove, F.R.G.S., who has supplied this information about the weather of the times, it was consequent upon the floods of 1315 to 1317 that rebuilding on higher land, for example by monasteries, was undertaken. Here then may be the answer to the question as to what was the fate of Retford's house at Leweland and why there are no later historical references to what had at one time been an important building on that site.

A Calendar of Beckenham Deeds including all the deeds mentioned above is kept at Beckenham Central Library (ref. B.8.091(A)). In the same library are photographic copies of certain of the British Museum deeds relating to transactions involving Robert de Retford (Harl. 111 G.52, 112 B.10, 112 B.35, 112 C.16) (ref. B.8.091) and photographs of the Leweland deeds of 1467 and 1494 from the Kent Archives at Maidstone (Photos No. 510A, 514A and 518).

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