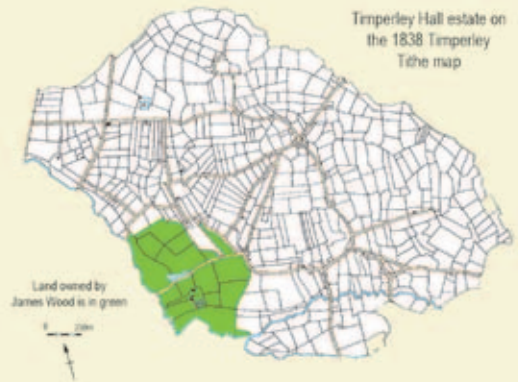
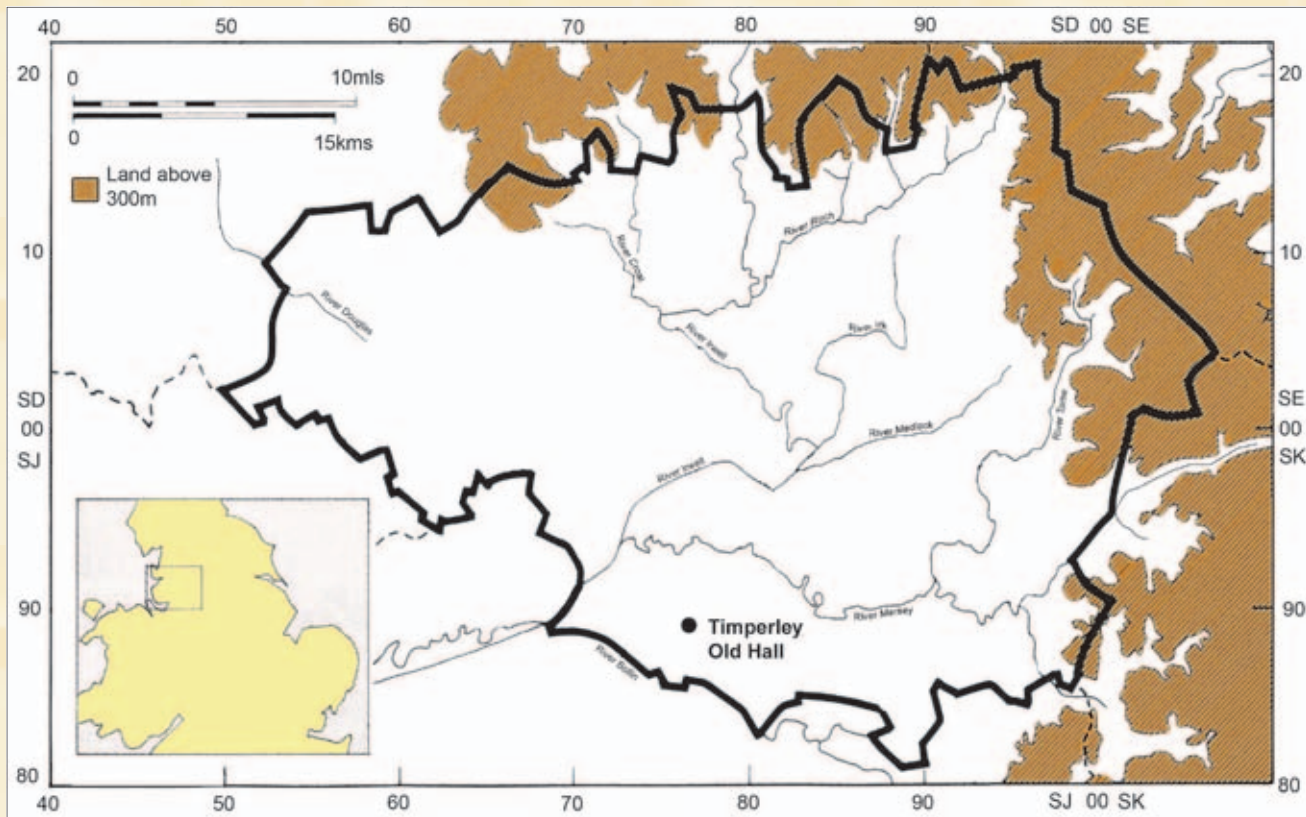


**GREATER
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· 8 ·



TIMPERLEY OLD HALL
THE EXCAVATION OF THE MOATED PLATFORM



The location of Timperley Old Hall

FOREWORD

The South Trafford Archaeological Group (STAG) is one of Greater Manchester's longest established archaeology societies. Over the years they have undertaken dozens of interesting archaeological projects in Trafford Borough and north Cheshire. Undoubtedly their flagship project has been the excavation of Timperley Old Hall moat. Commencing in 1989, this lengthy and detailed investigation of a medieval moated platform has transformed our understanding of the history and evolution of this ancient site; it has also made a significant contribution to the growing corpus of research into moated sites across Greater Manchester and the wider region.

This booklet sets out the results of the excavations and includes a review of the fascinating, and regionally important, finds collection. STAG are to be congratulated on completing such a long-running, ambitious project which has culminated in the moated platform being landscaped and interpreted, and the moat restored, whilst the finds are displayed in the adjacent STAG headquarters building. In the process of accomplishing all of this, STAG have provided the opportunity for hundreds of adults and children to take part in the excavations and learn about archaeological techniques – another important legacy of the project.

Spreading the word about Greater Manchester's fascinating but relatively unrecognised archaeology is challenging. One of the ways to do this is through publication in the form of 'popular' booklets. I have considerable pleasure, therefore, in introducing you to this publication, which is Volume 8 in a series covering the archaeology of the whole of the Greater Manchester area: Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford, and Wigan. This series is called 'Greater Manchester's Past Revealed' and provides a format for publishing significant archaeology from developer-funded research or community projects in an attractive, easy-to-read, and well-illustrated style.

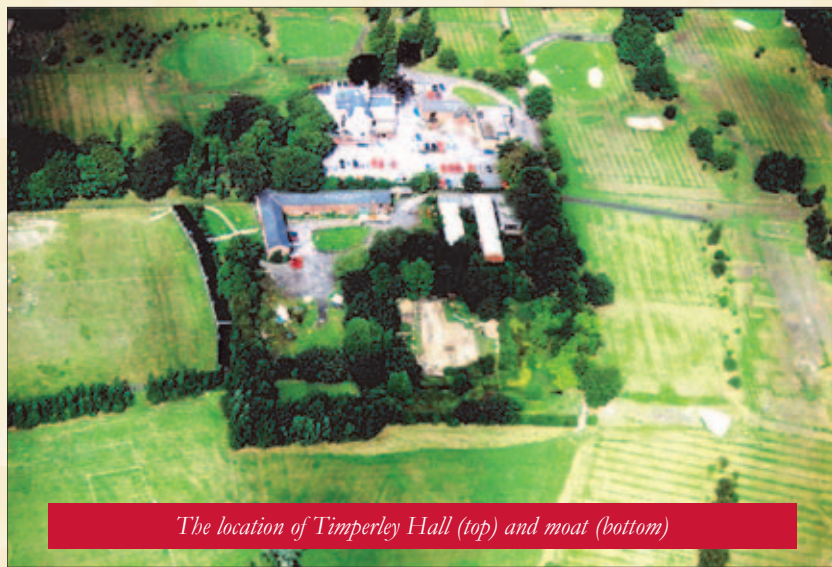
NORMAN REDHEAD, Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service

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INTRODUCTION

The South Trafford Archaeological Group (STAG) was founded in 1979, and amongst the first sites the society investigated was the moated platform on Altrincham golf course. In the early 1980s the moated site was an overgrown, weed-ridden platform, surrounded by a ruinous wall. The moat was choked with fallen trees and rubbish, which hid the archaeological potential of the site. STAG sought backing from Trafford Council to excavate the site. Permission was obtained from the council to locate a timber Head Quarters building (a donation by Lankro Chemicals (UK) Ltd of Eccles, opened in 1986) on land next to the moat in exchange for carrying out archaeological excavation and restoration work on the historic site. This first phase of investigation ran from 1989 to 1997 and proved that the moated platform was the site of the original manor house of Timperley: the first Timperley Old Hall.



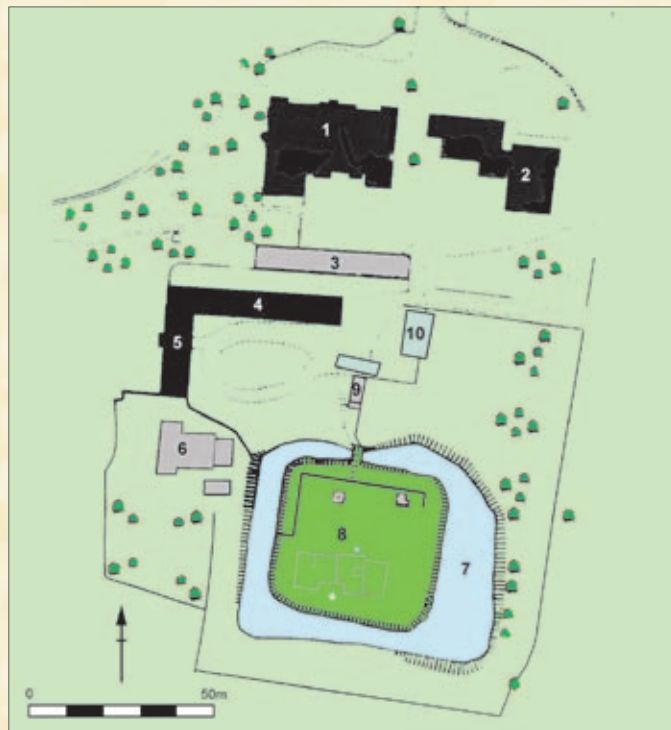
The location of Timperley Hall (top) and moat (bottom)

Sixth Form students from neighbouring schools, Manchester University archaeology students, and local volunteers, supervised by a full-time archaeologist, helped in the area excavation of 700 square metres of the moated platform. This involved the removal of 1300 tons of spoil by hand, bucket, and

wheelbarrow. After 1997 the site was used for several seasons as a summer training excavation for schools, whilst the 1500kg of finds were being cleaned, sorted, and evaluated, and a report finished.

In 1992, a tree blew down destroying the 18th century bridge that gave access to the site. The Group replaced it with a plank and trestle one, but in 2004 this had to be removed as it had become unsafe. This left the site isolated from the surrounding landscape, the Group, and the public. To solve this access problem STAG applied, successfully, for a Heritage Lottery Fund grant to enable them, with the assistance

of Trafford Council, to restore the moat and its platform for the benefit of the local community. The grant enabled the Group to install a new bridge, clean and raise the level of the moat, restore the old garden wall, and to create a physic (herb) garden on the moated platform. But first, another phase of archaeological investigation was undertaken, from 2009 to 2011, to complete the investigation of the old hall. This booklet is thus the culmination of nearly 30 years of research and conservation at Timperley Old



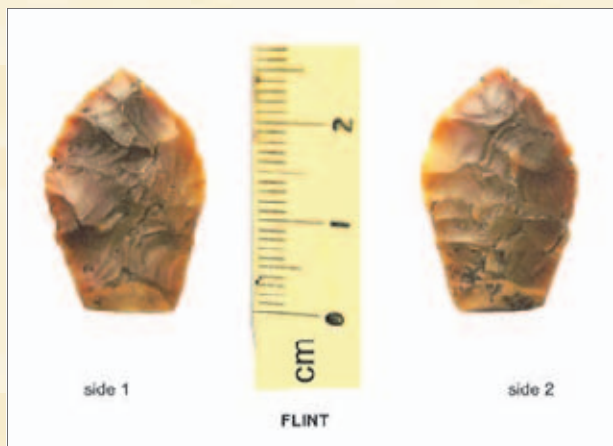
The Timperley Old Hall complex. Key: 1) 1790s hall; 2) 19th century farm buildings; 3) barn range site; 4) shippon; 5) threshing barn; 6) farmhouse site; 7) moat; 8) old hall site; 9) bothy site; 10) stables site

THE EARLY HISTORY OF TIMPERLEY HALL

The Timperley Old Hall moated site (NGR SJ 7765 8810) is situated 0.7km to the east of Altrincham in the borough of Trafford, Greater Manchester. The site lies on a clay ridge, aligned west to east, 1km at its widest and 1.5km long, and rising to 30m above sea level. The former Hale mossland lies against this ridge to the south, along with Timperley Brook, which also marks the western end of the ridge. The eastern end is defined by a small chine making access from the east difficult until recent times. The Timperley Old Hall area was thus a landscape defined by wetlands and streams.

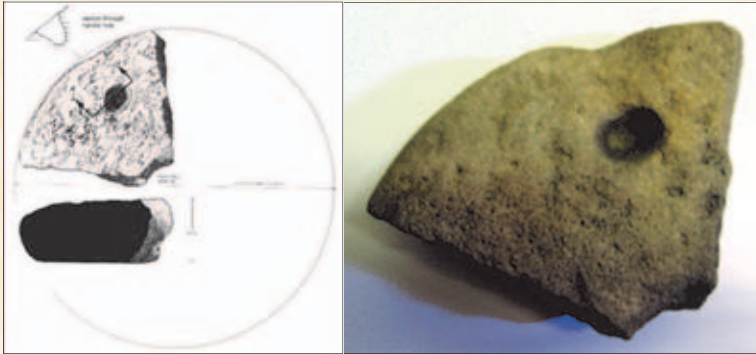
The earliest activity on the site goes back to the Neolithic and Early Bronze Ages (roughly 3500 to 1500 years BC), when the site of the later moat was a shallow, south-facing, clay slope overlooking a small tributary of Timperley Brook. The evidence for this activity is in the form of flint tools, and the debris from their manufacture. The presence

Leaf-shaped Neolithic flint arrowhead from Timperley Old Hall



of different types of tools from two periods suggests re-use of the site, and not just a single day's activity. This may represent summer hunting along the ridge to the north of Hale Moss and Timperley Brook.

The flints included fine examples of projectile points in addition to knives, scrapers, and boring points, many showing signs of wear and re-tooling. Three pot boilers, stones that had

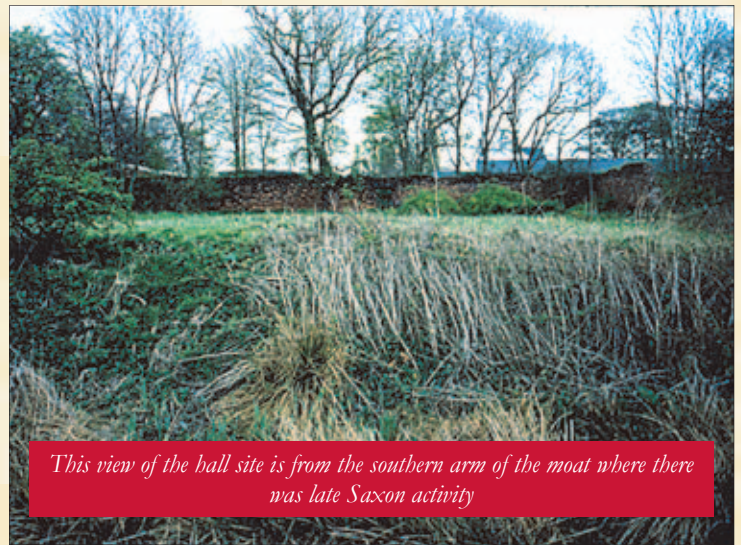


The late-Saxon-style rotary quern

been heated and then dropped into water-filled pits or containers to boil the liquid, were also recovered from the site and probably belong to the late prehistoric era.

The next period of occupation was revealed when a large hearth, one metre in diameter, was excavated. Charcoal from this bonfire gave a radio-carbon date centred on 840 AD (780-900 calendar years AD; Lab Code Beta-63539). This suggests that the feature belonged to the late Saxon period, and therefore pre-dated the construction of the moat.

Further evidence of this phase of activity came from a fragment of worked red sandstone. This was re-used as part of the primary stone foundations of the hall and was identified as a section of a rotary quern stone. Its style suggests that this is also of Saxon origin. The complete quern would have been 300mm (12



This view of the hall site is from the southern arm of the moat where there was late Saxon activity

inches) in diameter, giving a full weight of 14lbs (6.35kg) or one stone in our pre-metric table of imperial weights.

Other features associated with this late Saxon activity included three north-to-south, shallow ditches either side of the hearth. These were roughly 4m to 5m apart, up to 0.5m deep, and c. 25m to 30m long. The western-most ditch appeared to have been truncated at its northern end by the later digging of the moat. The southern edges of these

The late-Saxon hearth during excavation in 1993

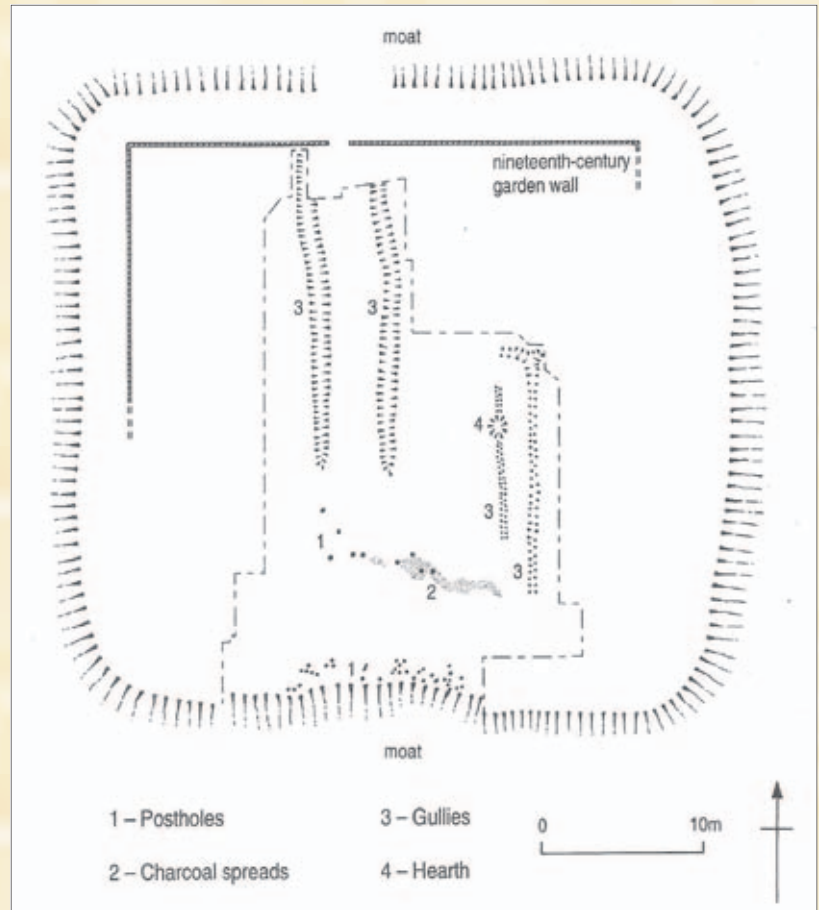


ditches were defined by the small stream running east to west into the nearby Timperley Brook. Along the northern bank of this stream a series of post holes suggested that there was some form of palisading along this edge and there was also a charcoal spread in this area.

This activity, which probably represented land-use associated with a nearby farmstead, was ended by a period of flooding across the south-eastern half of

the site in the form of a silty-sand deposit up to 0.3m thick. Organic matter from the top of this layer, and immediately beneath the first hall levels, was dated to the period 1180-1300 AD (1240 ± 60 calendar years AD, Lab Code Beta-66753).

The manor of Timperley is not mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086. This is a taxation and land-holding record compiled for William I in 1085-86 and included many but not all of the settlements in England. Yet, the archaeological record clearly shows settlement activity in and around the moated site in the mid-Saxon period. Such evidence is a reminder that just because a community is not mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086 it does not mean that the landscape was uninhabited.



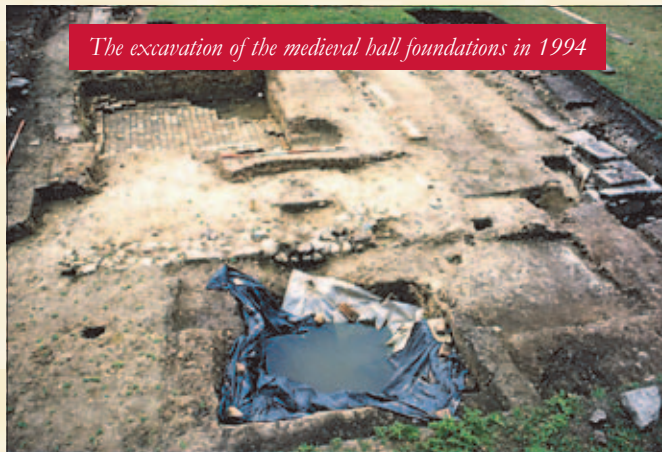
The late-Saxon activity at Timperley Old Hall

MEDIEVAL AND LATER HISTORY

The earliest documentary evidence for Timperley occurs in two deeds of land transfer from the years 1211 to 1234, witnessed by Walter de Timperlie. These documents date to the middle of the period of the radio-carbon-dated organic material found immediately beneath the first phase of the hall structure. The 'de Timperleigh' estate is next mentioned in the Black Prince's Register of 1361. When Sir Hamon de Mascy of 'Tymperleigh' died in 1349, his son Henry de Mascy was just ten years old and deemed to be too young to administer the Timperley estate. Henry was made a ward of the Black Prince and was able to prove he was of sound mind and the legitimate heir to the estate



The stone and wooden revetting in the south moat



The excavation of the medieval hall foundations in 1994

when he came of age in 1360. The last direct descendants of the de Mascy's of Timperley died in 1402.

By marriage the estate passed to the Chadderton family until 1420, the Radcliffes until 1476, then the Ardernes until 1584. The Breretons then inherited the Timperley Old Hall estate which in

1634 passed to the Merediths. Neither of the latter two families lived at Timperley Old Hall, which was not their main home. Instead, the property was let.

The property was purchased by George Johnson, a businessman, soon after his marriage in 1754. Johnson lived at Timperley, building a 'modern and handsome mansion of brick' in the Georgian style to replace the old hall. The estate was inherited by his son Croxton Johnson



The 14th century timber-lined well during excavation in 1992



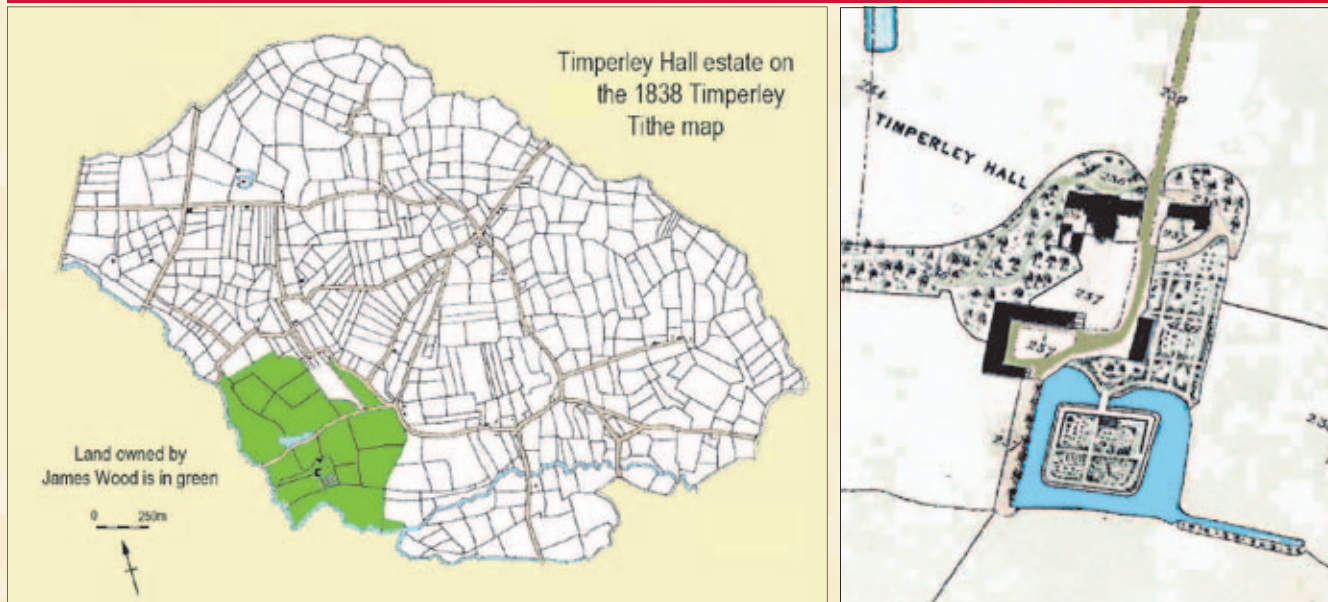
Left, Charles Arderne (1425) and right, John (Massey) de Timperleigh (1270)

in 1795, who rebuilt the hall farm. Croxton seems to have spent little time at Timperley, being vicar of Wilmslow parish where he was later buried, so the new Timperley Hall was rented to tenants. It was also during Croxton's time that the old hall was demolished. The hall demolition layer is associated with pottery and coins from the end of the 18th century, whilst a letter in 1809 offering the new Timperley Hall to the Earl of Stamford does not mention the old hall in its description of the estate.

The estate was finally sold in 1810 to James Wood as “a country residence for the family’s recreation in summer time”. By this date the new hall was surrounded by “pleasure grounds, plantations and also....outbuildings consisting of coach houses, four stables... two shippons...an extensive granary, two barns...”

When James Wood died in 1849 Samuel Brookes, a Manchester banker, purchased the Timperley Hall Estate to add to his other properties around Timperley, which amounted to a holding of 845 acres when he died in 1864. During this time further improvements were made to the estate. A larger farmhouse was built, as well as a dairy, and a bothy for up to eight itinerant farm labourers.

The Timperley Hall estate (left, shaded green) and (right) Timperley Hall and its outbuildings on the 1838 Timperley tithe map

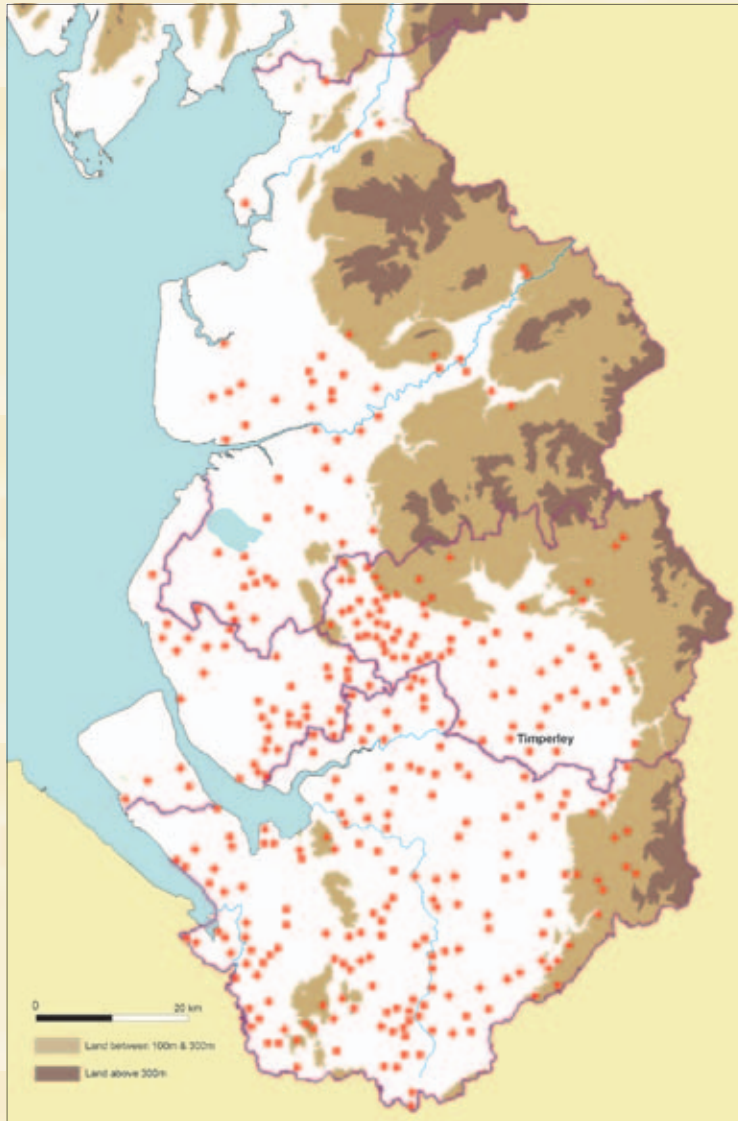


The mid-18th century Timperley Hall around 1900



The Timperley Hall estate was held in trust for Brookes' third son, Thomas, and it was during this period that a nine-hole golf links was built, in 1893. In 1920 the estate was purchased by Frederick Alfred Tomlinson, who in turn sold the lands at half the going market rate to Altrincham Borough Council in 1934, "for the benefit and recreation of the People of Altrincham". Around 1948 most of the farm buildings were demolished. The estate remains in public ownership, through Trafford Council. Timperley Hall is now a pub-cum-restaurant, still surrounded by 'pleasure grounds' (the golf course and moated garden), and the site can be approached along a tree-lined drive dating back to the Johnsons' era.

TIMPERLEY OLD HALL MOAT



The distribution of moated sites in southern North West England

The moated site at Timperley Old Hall is one of over 6000 such monuments known in England. Most of these are thought to have been dug between the 12th and 15th centuries. 500 of these moated sites are recorded in North West England, although there are far fewer in Cumbria than anywhere else within the region, most being located in Cheshire and historic southern Lancashire.

Such moats are usually found as isolated sites. They were part of a dispersed settlement pattern comprising farmsteads and hamlets, as at Timperley. Within the region most moated sites lie below 150m above sea level, normally on poorly drained boulder clay soils such as the lands around Warrington and eastern Cheshire. 92% of these

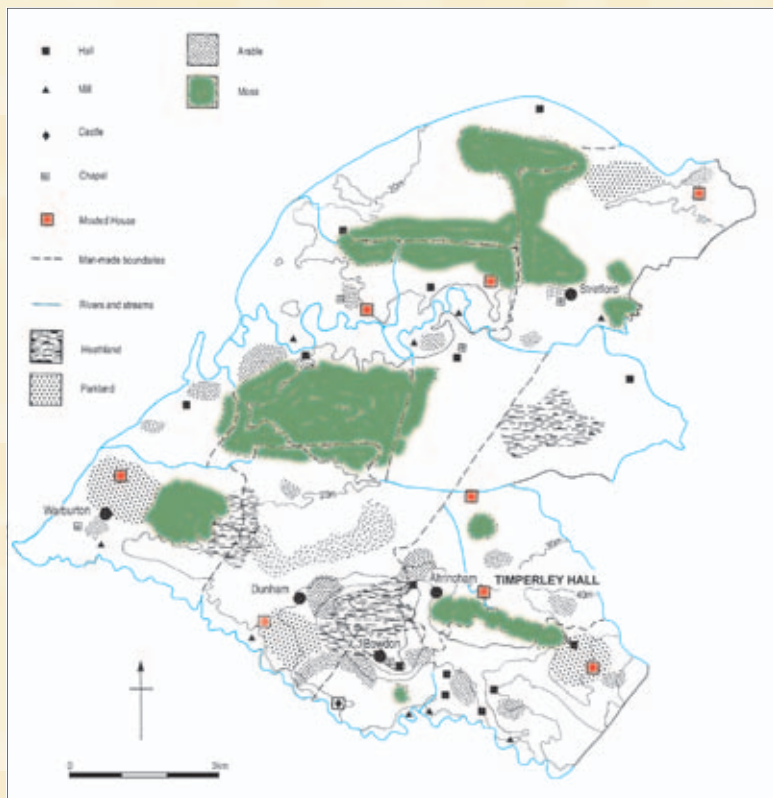
moats have a single ditch, but only 8% have more than one enclosure or an elaborate complex of platforms and associated ditches, as could once be found at Dunham Hall. 84% of the moats in North West England have evidence for domestic buildings on the platform. Many moats incorporated fishponds as a bulge in the line of the moat, which may be the case at Timperley, whilst other recorded features included leats, bridges, gate-houses, chapels, and farm buildings.

Since the mid-20th century 69 moats have been excavated in North West England. This work has ranged from small-scale evaluations and watching briefs as at Little Moreton Hall in Cheshire and Speke Hall in Liverpool, to extensive open area excavations as at Bewsey Old Hall near Warrington and Hopecarr Hall in Wigan. Within Greater Manchester 63 certain and 22 possible moated sites are known, of which several have been excavated including: Buttery House Farm, Denton Hall, Old Hall Moat, Ordsall Hall, and Timperley Old Hall.

The distribution of moated sites within the Manchester city region conforms closely to the national distribution, with a marked preference for low-lying areas on wet soils such as clay. Eight moated

Excavations in 2006 of the moat at Ordsall Hall, Salford, a medieval and post-medieval manor house





The medieval manors and churches of Trafford showing the moated sites (in red)

sites lie within the Trafford area. However, at only three of these sites can moat-remains be seen: Buttery House Farm, Riddings Hall, and Timperley Old Hall. At the other sites (Dunham Hall - originally a motte and bailey castle where the moated features appear to be Tudor in origin, New Croft Hall, Shaw Hall, Trafford Old Hall, and Warburton Park Farm) there are no physical remains of the moat. In most cases documentary and photographic evidence implies their presence.

As in other parts of the country the moated sites of the Manchester region were an expression of wealth and social prestige. The status of these sites would appear to fall into two categories. Firstly, some were the manor houses of the lesser gentry, as at Timperley Old Hall where the first hall was a winged timber-framed building of the 13th century on stone foundations. Such sites are usually assumed to have been the primary settlement within a medieval manor. Secondly, and more commonly, were those moats that were the homes of wealthy

freemen. These represented later settlement and woodland clearance in the manorial landscape. In Trafford most of the certain and possible moated sites are associated with manorial sites. The exceptions are Riddings Hall in Timperley, Shaw Hall in Davyhulme, and New Croft Hall in Urmston, which were all owned by wealthy freemen.

Occasionally, moated sites were used as farmland structures or parkland features. Such a site appears to have been Buttery House Farm in Hale. This moated site was excavated between 1977 and 1980 by the Extra-Mural Department at Manchester University, and again by GMAU in 1986. Medieval activity on the site took the form of a scatter of post-holes and three drainage gullies, all of which may have been related to the moat's possible use as a hunting lodge (similar to that at Lyme Park) within the medieval Sunderland Park.

During the 16th and 17th centuries many moats became redundant and partially filled. Some survived as overgrown ditches, as their hall buildings declined in status to that of a tenanted farm. These run-down buildings were then demolished and replaced by a nearby new hall in the latest fashion: this appears to have been the fate of Timperley Old Hall.

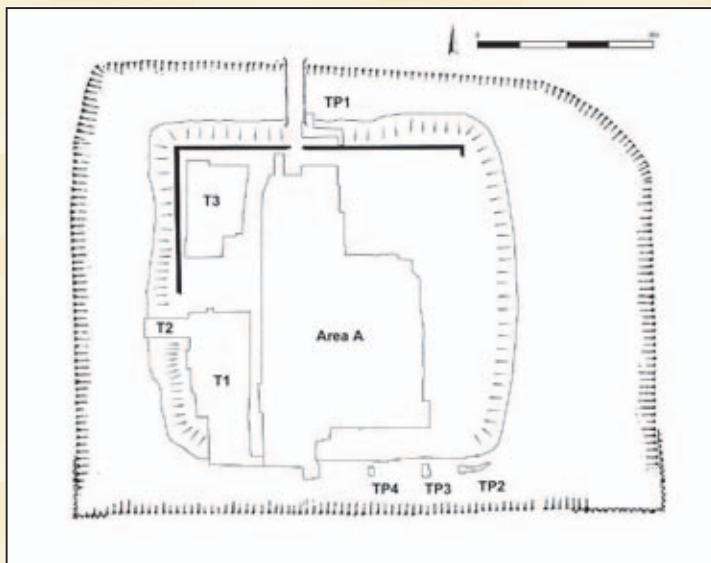


The excavations in 1993 of the double-moated Hopecarr Hall, Wigan (GMAAS)

DIGGING TIMPERLEY OLD HALL

The large-scale excavation of a moated site in North West England is rare, yet the late 20th century saw three moats investigated in this way. The research excavations at Buttery House Farm, Hale, Trafford, in 1977-80 and 1986, investigated approximately 50% of the moat interior. The research and developer-funded excavations at Bewsey Old Hall, Warrington, in 1977-81 and 1983-5, examined the standing building and more than half of the surrounding moated platform. Finally, the developer-funded project at Old Abbey Farm, which ran from 1990 until 1995, involved the controlled demolition and recording of the farmhouse and its barn, and the excavation of large open areas across and around the moat, as well as the almost complete excavation of the platform. The first phase of the research excavation at Timperley Old Hall thus belongs to a period when the large-

The trenches excavated at Timperley Old Hall, 1989-2011

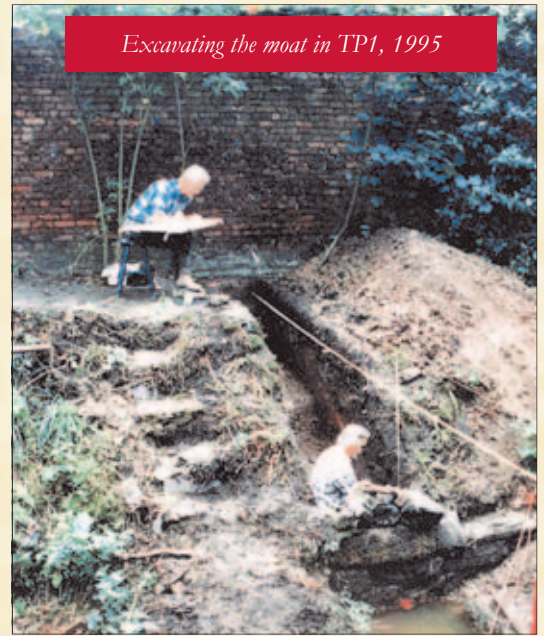


scale investigation of moated sites in the southern part of North West England was at its height.

That first STAG investigation ran from 1989 to 1996 and took the form of a single open area excavation of the centre of the platform (Area A), and some test pits to the north of the moat and along the edge of the southern arm of the moat. This work revealed, uniquely, deposits going back

to the late Saxon and prehistoric periods, although most of the material uncovered related to the eastern end of the medieval and post-medieval hall.

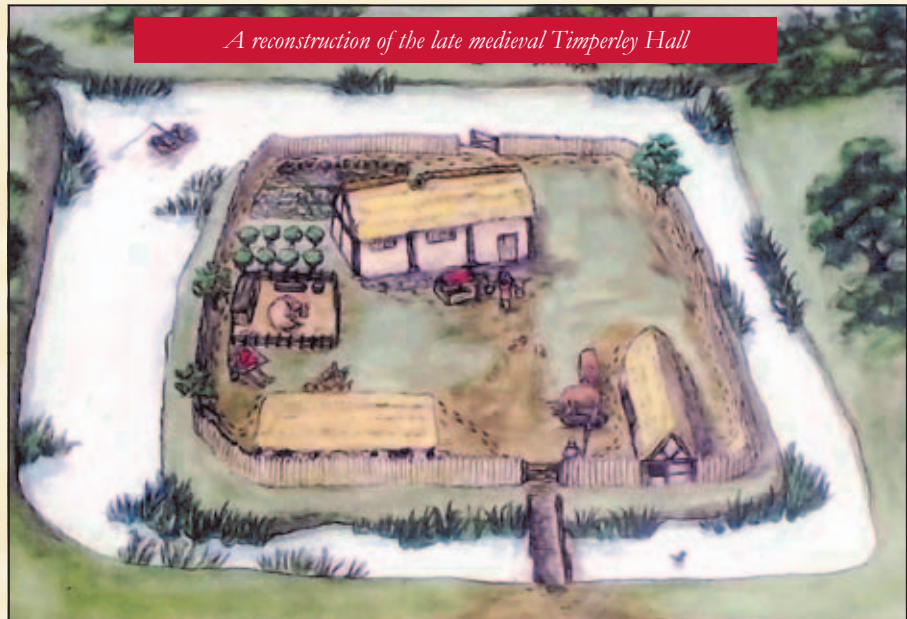
A second series of research excavations, funded by the HLF, ran from 2009 to 2011. The archaeological aims of this later work were to record the full extent of the western end of the hall; to determine the original extent of the western arm of the moat prior to its landscaping after the demolition of the hall; and to evaluate the garden archaeology of the site in the 19th century. Three trenches were excavated as part of the second phase of works. Trench 1

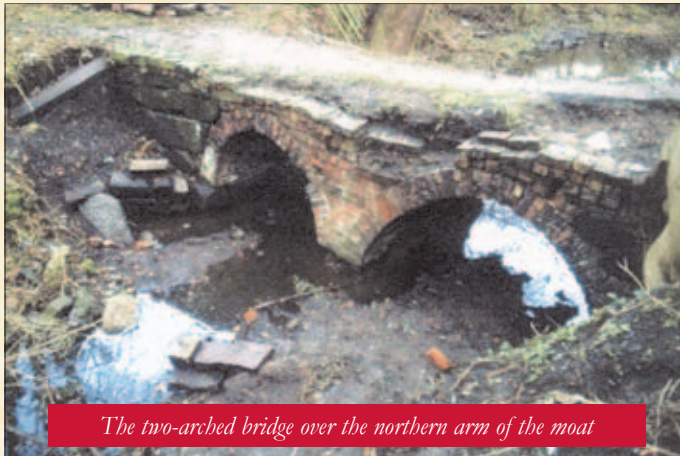


extended from the revetment wall of the southern moat to approximately 2m north of the known northern wall of the Old Hall. Trench 2 ran from the western edge of Trench 1 and sectioned the edge of the western moat. Trench 3 was located in the north-western corner of the platform, in the angle of the two surviving garden walls. In this way, approximately two thirds of the moated platform was excavated between 1989 and 2011.

The results of these excavations revealed details about the construction of the moat, the floor plan of the medieval hall, the 17th century brick rebuilding, and the use of the rest of the platform. It also provided information about the demolition of the hall and the establishment of the 19th century garden.

The moat and its retaining wall were investigated in the 1990s and in the years 2009-11. In Area A, a 10m section of the northern edge of the southern arm of the moat was excavated. This revealed three phases of revetment. An initial revetment was formed by a line of small post holes cut into the silt at the edge of the platform. A second substantial timber revetment lay roughly 2m to the south and was formed by large, closely set posts. Inserted between the two was a sandstone revetment comprising three courses of blocks, set on a projecting plinth. Behind and to the north of this wall the sloping edge of the medieval platform had been levelled with dumps of animal bone, bricks, cobbles, broken sandstone blocks, late-medieval ridge tiles, roofing flags, glass, and pottery spanning the 14th to the 17th centuries. The southern arm of the moat was originally 10.4m wide but by the late 17th century the moat had been narrowed to 8m. The edge of the western arm of the moat was examined in Trench 2. The primary moat cut truncated the natural clay although no stone or wooden revetments were located. Above this a levelling-up layer was found. This was similar to that seen in the southern arm of the moat, and was a red/brown clay deposit up to





The two-arched bridge over the northern arm of the moat

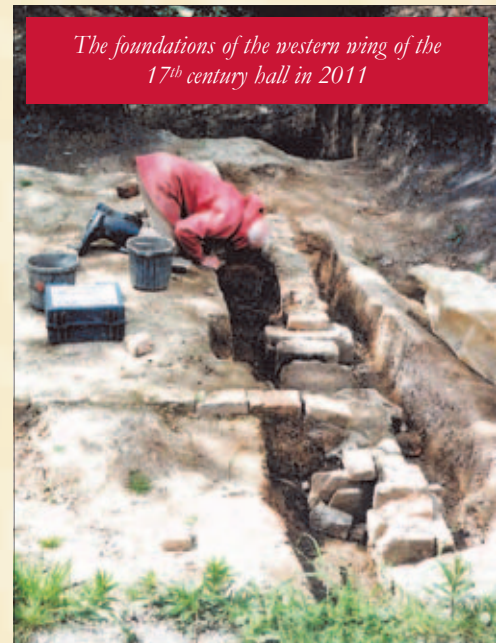
c. 0.8m deep dating from the 17th century. All this activity coincided with the building of the new brick hall and represented a substantial modification of the southern and western sides of the platform during this period.

The bridge across the northern arm of the moat was recorded in the early 1990s before a falling tree destroyed the structure in early 1994. The twin brick arches of the bridge rested on sandstone bases, although there was no indication that they had ever been mortared in place. The brick sizes suggested an 18th century date for this phase, with perhaps an earlier bridge represented by the sandstone bases. The fabric above the arches showed extensive signs of having been repaired and patched on many occasions, and the northern end of the bridge included a section of sandstone walling in the western elevation.

On the platform only fragmentary remains of the earliest hall were uncovered. A rectangular clay floor, aligned east-west and c. 5m wide and roughly 10m long, was excavated in Area A. The western wing of this hall was found in Trench 1, where two beam slots with post holes running along the northern and southern sides of the clay floor were excavated. This first hall was roughly 5m by 15m in plan, and lay close to the southern arm of the moat. It had a thatched roof, with glazed ridge tiles, remains of which were

found in the mid-17th century demolition layers across the site and in the demolition deposits on the edge of the southern arm of the moat. Internally, the clay floor produced late medieval pottery. It is unclear what this timber-framed hall looked like, whether it was box-framed or a cruck structure for instance, but it seems highly likely that this was probably the hall built and occupied by the de Mascy family. The demolition layers in the moat and across Area A show that the medieval timber hall was completely rebuilt in the mid-17th century. In Trench 1 the demolition spread contained a large quantity of iron glazed pottery, c. 1650-1680.

This new hall had stone and brick foundations and in plan had a central hall with a cross-passage, and two cross-wings. The eastern cross-wing, excavated in Area A, contained four rooms on the ground floor divided by a central passageway running west to east. A brick-lined half-cellar in one of the northern rooms, and a large burnt clay spread representing the base of a fireplace in another, suggested that this was probably the service end of the hall. The foundations of the central hall were excavated in both Area A and Trench 1. This was on the site of the medieval hall and was roughly 10m long with a cross-passage at its eastern end marking the division with the eastern wing. The foundations of the western cross-wing in





The excavation of the mid-17th century western wing in 2010

Trench 1 were stone and brick and the western wall of the wing projected over the edge of the original moat line, requiring the moat to be partially filled in before the wing could be built. Internally, brick foundations suggested the presence of an east-to-west central passageway with several rooms on either side, each with stone flag flooring. There was also some

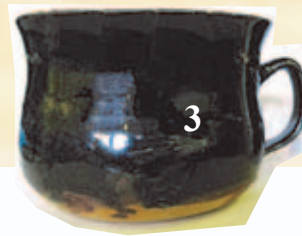
evidence for phasing internally, with a doorway off the passageway showing signs of having been blocked by later bricks. This rebuilding work was probably undertaken by the Meredith family who inherited the estate in 1634. It is this hall which was described in 1666 as a newly built brick structure, and “obviously a gentleman’s residence”.

The excavations also revealed how the rest of the platform was used during the medieval and post-medieval periods. A square-plan, timber-lined well was located in Area A to the north of the medieval timber hall. This was 1.5m by 1.5m in plan and was excavated to a depth of 3.4m. It was built using corner posts which supported a series of split oak planks laid horizontally. These were fixed behind the upright timbers by hand-forged iron nails. Dendro-dating suggested that the oak timbers had been cut down in the late 13th or



1

The brick foundations of the western wing of the 17th century hall in 2011



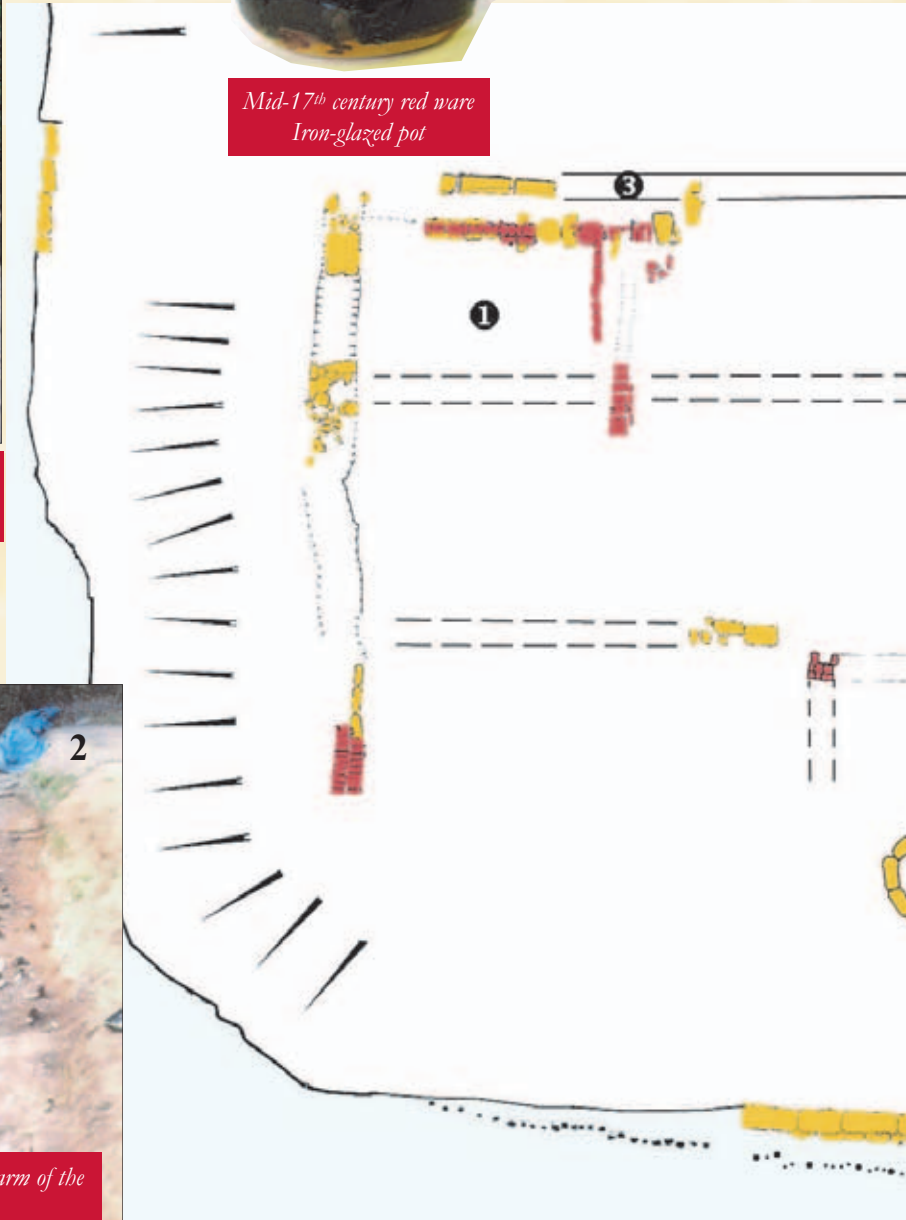
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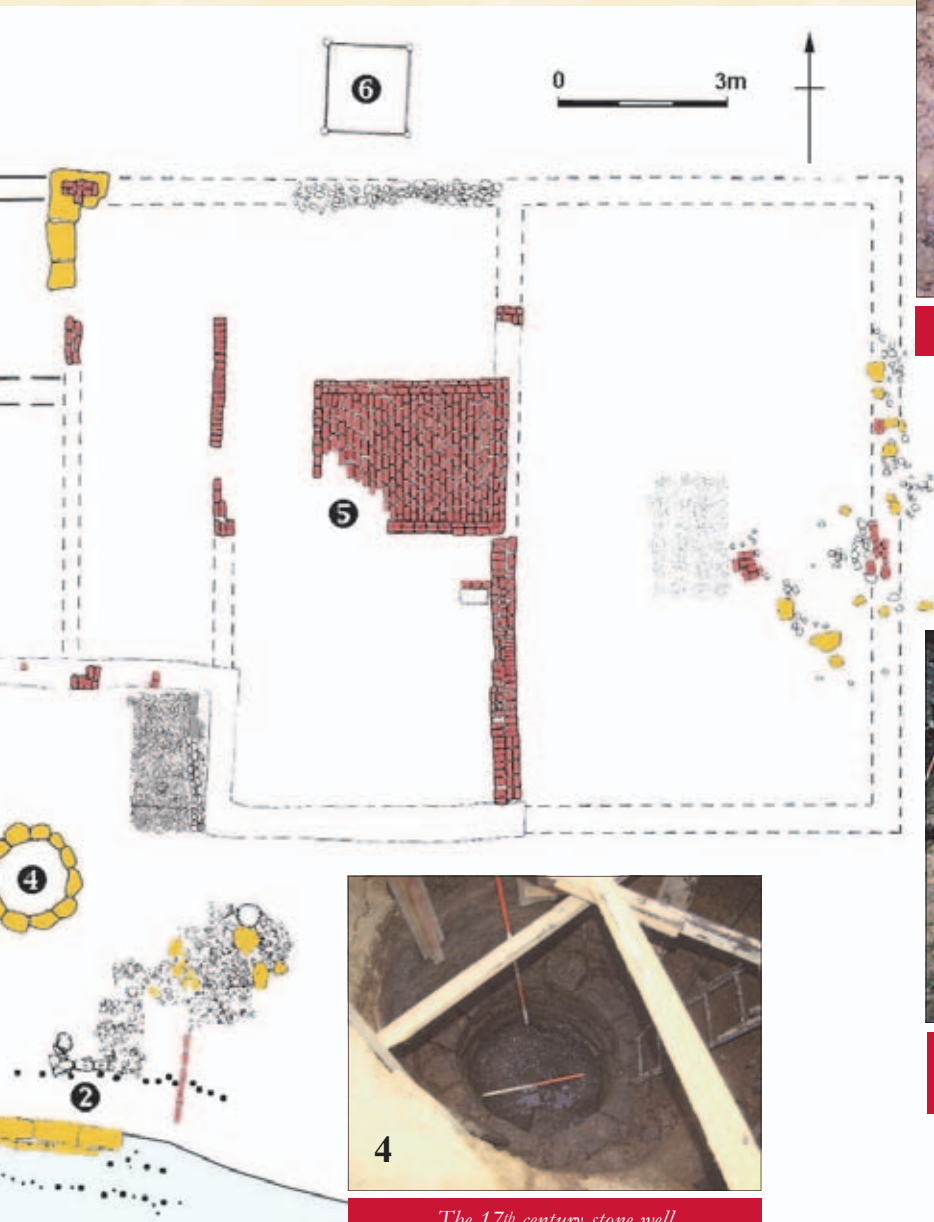
*Mid-17th century red ware
Iron-glazed pot*



2

The successive medieval revetments in the southern arm of the moat, Area A





The 14th century timber well



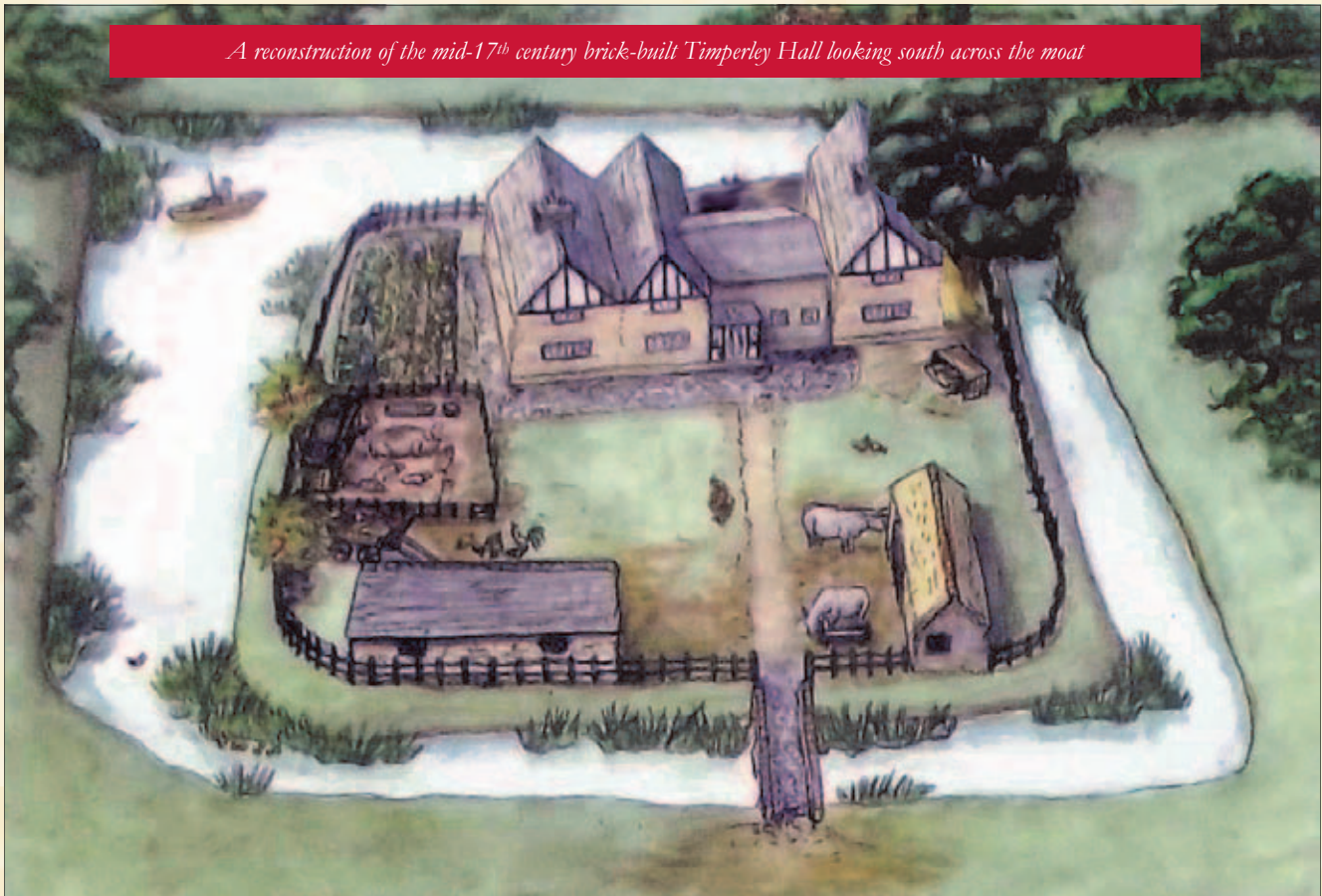
The stone and brick foundations of the eastern wing of the 17th century ball looking south

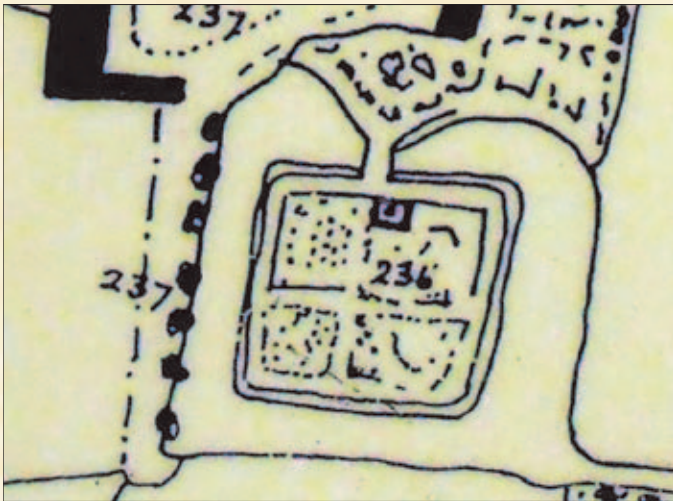


The 17th century stone well

early 14th century to build the well. Mortice holes in some of the upright timbers showed that they had been re-used from an earlier timber structure, perhaps the first hall to be built on the site. The silty well-fills produced a number of finds including an adze, a deer antler, three medieval spindle whorls, and 13th to 14th century medieval green-glazed pottery. The well had been sealed with a clay cap, perhaps when the brick hall was built.

A reconstruction of the mid-17th century brick-built Timperley Hall looking south across the moat





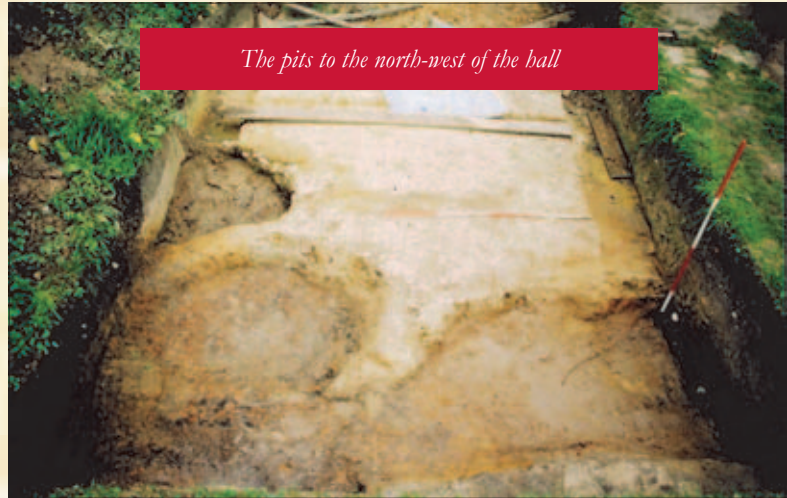
The hall was demolished and replaced by a walled garden at the beginning of the 19th century, shown here on the 1838 tithe map

Its replacement was a circular well, excavated roughly 2m to the south of the brick hall on the edge of the southern arm of the moat. It was 3.6m deep, almost 2m in diameter and was lined with bricks on a sandstone block foundation, although the bricks had been robbed out for re-use elsewhere. It had been backfilled with hall demolition material including bricks and stone roofing slabs. A number of 17th and 18th century cobbled pathways were also excavated.

A narrow pathway ran along the northern elevation of the hall, whilst a 2m wide cobbled path ran from the middle of the southern elevation of the hall past the circular well to the edge of the southern arm of the moat.

Trench 3, in the north-western corner of the platform, revealed intensive activity associated with rubbish dumping in a complex sequence of 16 pits spanning the 14th century to the 20th century. One of the earliest pit features, Pit 447, in the north-western corner of Area A, contained medieval pottery fragments, iron hand-forged nails, cobblestone, and animal bone. A pig jaw bone from this assemblage gave a radio-carbon date centred on 1330 AD (1258-1436 calendar years AD, Lab Code Beta 60502). This pit cut three earlier pits, suggesting that activity in this area might go back to

the early 13th century. Another medieval pit on the eastern edge of Trench 1, 1.42m deep, contained burnt bone and an iron prick spur. Two of the latest pits contained several pike fish skeletons laid parallel. The demolition of the brick hall around 1800 was recorded in Area A and in Trenches 1 and 2. In Trench 1

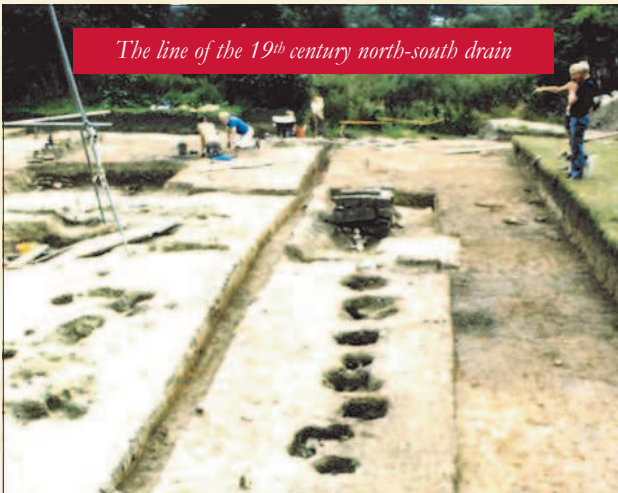


patches of grey sand-lime mortar indicated the edges of the demolition area by the house platform. In Trench 2 a demolition spread up to 0.8m thick contained brick fragments, mortar, and 18th century pottery, and ran westwards to the edge of the western moat arm. Finally, Trench 3 contained several pits filled with brick fragments and broken sandstone and cobbles sealed by a later garden soil.

The latest archaeology on the moated platform was associated with the garden laid out in the early 19th century. This was briefly described in the 1810 sale notice which mentioned 'a walled garden and pleasure grounds'. The 1838 tithe map showed some detail of this garden: a wall wrapped around the northern half of the platform, with a square structure on the inner side of the wall to the east of the entrance into the garden. The garden itself was divided into four plots by two paths, and there was an outer path that ran around the inner edge of the moat.

The excavations revealed some of these garden features. A black sandy loam layer up to 0.3m thick, above the late 18th century hall demolition, was found in Area A and Trench 3. This represented an old garden soil that had been imported on to the site as part of the landscaping of the garden. In Trench 1, a four inch wide land drain running west to east was located one metre from the northern baulk. It terminated at its western end in a 1m square cinder filled soak-away. A second drain 10m to the east in Area A was found running north to south across the full width of the platform. These features appeared to be part of the garden drainage system. The central pathway, c. 1m wide, was also located running southwards from the walled garden entrance.

This formal walled garden with its paths and huts was shown on the Ordnance Survey map of the area in 1898, but by the 1910 Ordnance Survey map for Timperley it had disappeared, and the platform was empty apart from the wall. During the Second World



War it was used as an allotment, and afterwards as a garden for rose propagation. The latest activity on the site was a rubbish pit in Trench 1 (Pit 34), 0.74m deep. This was back-filled with early 20th century car parts: wheels, engine block and sump cover (unfortunately stolen before detailed study). The garden and moat were abandoned in the early 1980s and became overgrown until rediscovered by STAG's investigations after 1989.

THE MEDIEVAL AND POST-MEDIEVAL FINDS

One of the ways in which archaeologists interpret the past is through the examination of objects such as bone, glass, pottery, and stone. These types of finds can tell us about how past societies adapted their landscape, exploited the local resources, expressed wealth and status, ate, fought, slept, and died.

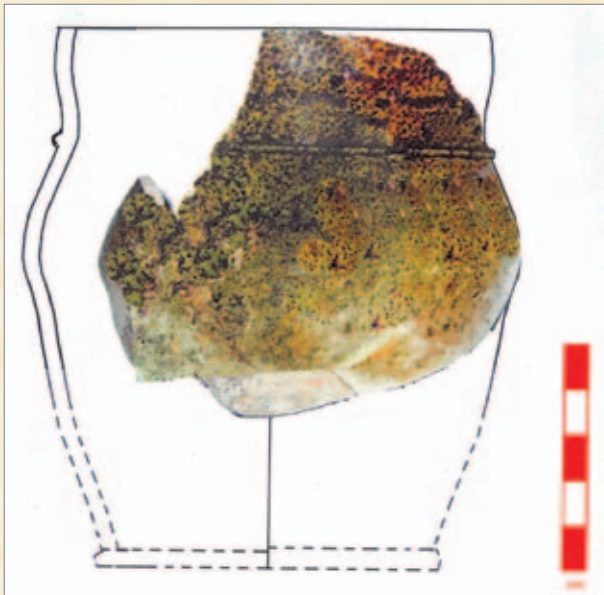
The excavations at Timperley Old Hall have produced a large grouping of such finds, spanning the prehistoric era (see earlier in the book) to the 20th century. Amongst hundreds of excavated objects, the largest groups by date came from the medieval and post-medieval periods, covering the life of the hall from the 13th century to its demolition around 1800. Most of the pottery came from three groups of deposits in Area 1 and Trench 1: rubbish fills on the edge of the moat; a mid-17th century demolition layer associated with the dismantling of the medieval hall; and demolition deposits associated with the brick hall around 1800. The size and range of this material makes it regionally important for interpreting how life in such a manorial hall evolved over these centuries.



The known and likely sources of ceramic products found at Timperley

Medieval Pottery and Other Finds

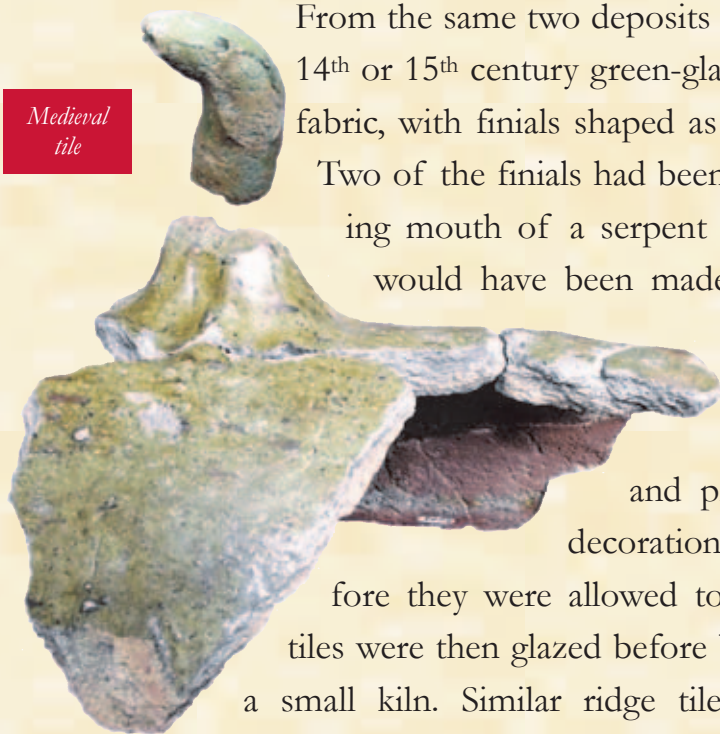
More than a thousand sherds of pottery from the medieval period were excavated from the platform and the moat fills. Few medieval kilns have been excavated in North West England, and none from Greater Manchester, although there is a 13th century reference to a pottery kiln at Wigan. It is therefore unclear where much of this material was manufactured, although it is likely that this pottery would have been made locally, and some of the fabrics are reminiscent of material found in the kilns from the Rainford area in south-west Lancashire or even the recently discovered kiln at Samlesbury.



A 13th to 14th century green-glazed pot from Timperley

The earliest sherds at Timperley Old Hall were green-glazed ware pots from the 13th to 14th century (left). These included jugs or beakers in an oxidised pink fabric with green glaze applied externally in a haphazard style. However, most of the medieval pottery belonged to types from the 14th and 15th centuries, such as a large storage pot with a sagging base, that had a pink-buff fabric and a yellow-brown external glaze with applied clay strip decoration below a narrow rim.

*Medieval
tile*



From the same two deposits came fragments of more than two dozen 14th or 15th century green-glazed ridge tiles, made from a coarse gritty fabric, with finials shaped as conical crests projecting from the ridge.

Two of the finials had been decorated with the eyes, nose, and smiling mouth of a serpent to ward off evil spirits (left). Such tiles would have been made locally by itinerant craftsmen, as they

were too fragile to travel any distance.

Slabs of flattened clay would have been laid over an A-shaped wooden mould

and pressed into the required shape and the

decoration added be-

fore they were allowed to air-dry. The

tiles were then glazed before being fired in

a small kiln. Similar ridge tiles have been

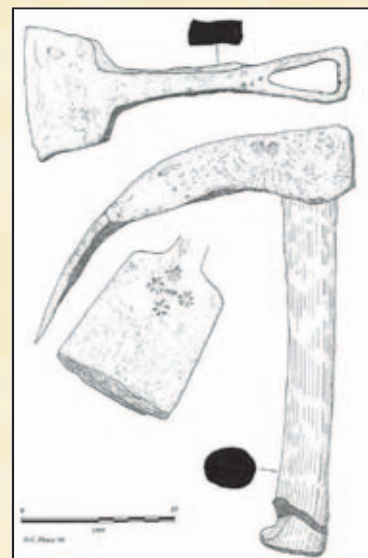
excavated at Norton Priory, and the absence of

flat clay tiles at Timperley may indicate that the medieval hall

was thatched, apart from the ridge. The location of a kiln that

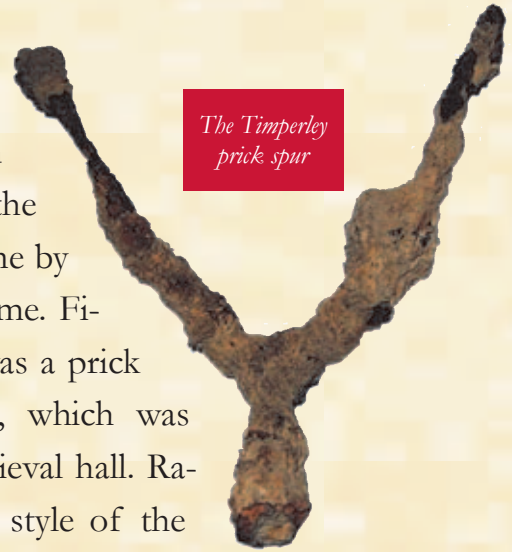
might have supplied Timperley Old Hall remains unknown.

Other medieval finds included a hand-forged adze, newly sharpened and complete with handle (right), recovered from the timber well shaft. Also from the well and the rubbish



Axe and handle from the timber well

deposit in the southern moat edge came three spindle whorls: lead-cast circular discs with a hole in the middle and decorated with raised dots. These were used with a wooden spindle through the hole for the drop-spinning of wool. Such work was traditionally done by girls and unmarried women, known as spinsters, at home. Finally, a piece of horse-gear was also excavated. This was a prick spur for a right foot, hand-forged in wrought iron, which was found in a rubbish pit to the north-west of the medieval hall. Radio-carbon dating of associated animal bone and the style of the spur suggested a date of around 1320 for its manufacture. Spurs of this type would have cost 6d a pair to make.



*The Timperley
prick spur*

Transitional Pottery Wares

From the late 15th century onwards, new developments in kiln technology and fashion led to an increasingly regionalised pattern of pottery production with new types of ware being manufactured over much of England and a more regionalised market. Amongst the new types was Cistercian ware, made in the north Midlands and characterised by shades of a fine red fabric and dark brown iron glaze. 14 examples, some almost complete, covered single and double handled drinking pots and a storage jar. These sherds were found in the rubbish deposits in the southern moat, others in the mid-17th century



Cistercian Ware jug and tig from Timperley

demolition layer over the hall. Some of the types are not those seen from the Rainford kilns and may come from the eastern Midlands kilns in southern Derbyshire or less likely Cambridgeshire, although a more local manufacturing source is also possible.

Everyday
coarseware

pottery was also uncovered. Such highly fired, mainly unglazed, pottery had a very hard fabric of red to purple/grey colour typical of Midland Purple wares of the late 15th to mid-16th centuries, which were made in the north Midlands. However, it is possible there was a more local kiln, as a mis-shapen pot of this style, perhaps a waster, has been recently excavated from 16th century deposits off Chapel Street, Salford. Amongst the vessels represented at Timperley were twelve nearly complete water cisterns (with a bung hole at the base), storage pots, and jars. Many sherds came from a rubbish deposit on the edge of the eastern and southern arms of the moat. However, a large number were also found in rubble



MidlandPurple Ware

from the old hall, which was demolished in the mid-17th century.



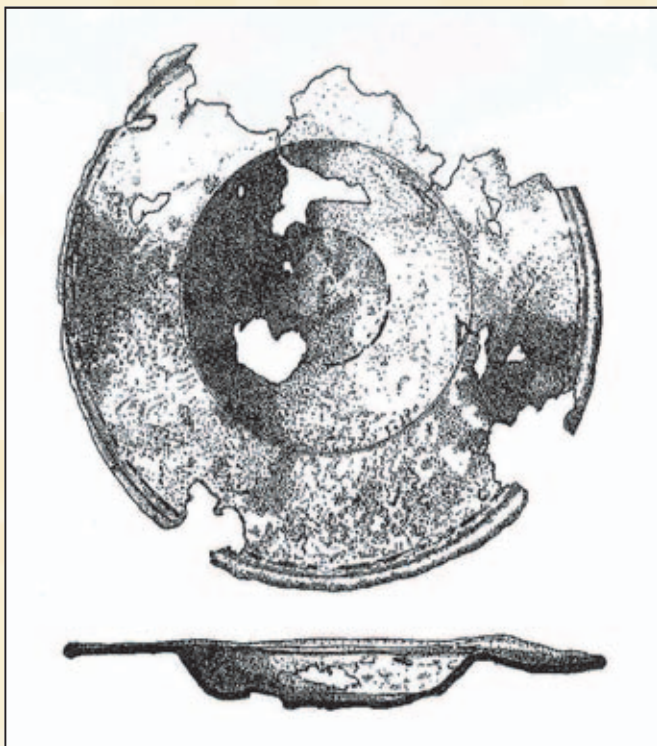
Yellow Ware vessel

Also from the hall demolition level were more than 20 Yellow Ware vessels (left), some in types found at the Rainford kilns. Jewelled and trailed Midland Yellow slipware, made around Stoke in Staffordshire, also came from the same demolition deposit. In addition a collection of 15 mid-17th century pottery vessels was recovered from the backfill of a construction trench for the northern wall of the old hall in Trench 1, as part of the demolition ahead of the construction of the brick hall. Found in one group were

sherds of iron-glazed slipware vessels, with an internal and external good quality dark iron glaze. The forms represented included cups and bowls and at least one chamber pot, and are typical of the regionally made fabrics from this period.

Post-Medieval Pottery and Other Finds

Advances in pottery production techniques in the period 1680-1740 gave rise to new mass-produced and regionally marketed pottery types. Some 70 different pots have been identified at Timperley from this period, which, although a large number, contained types



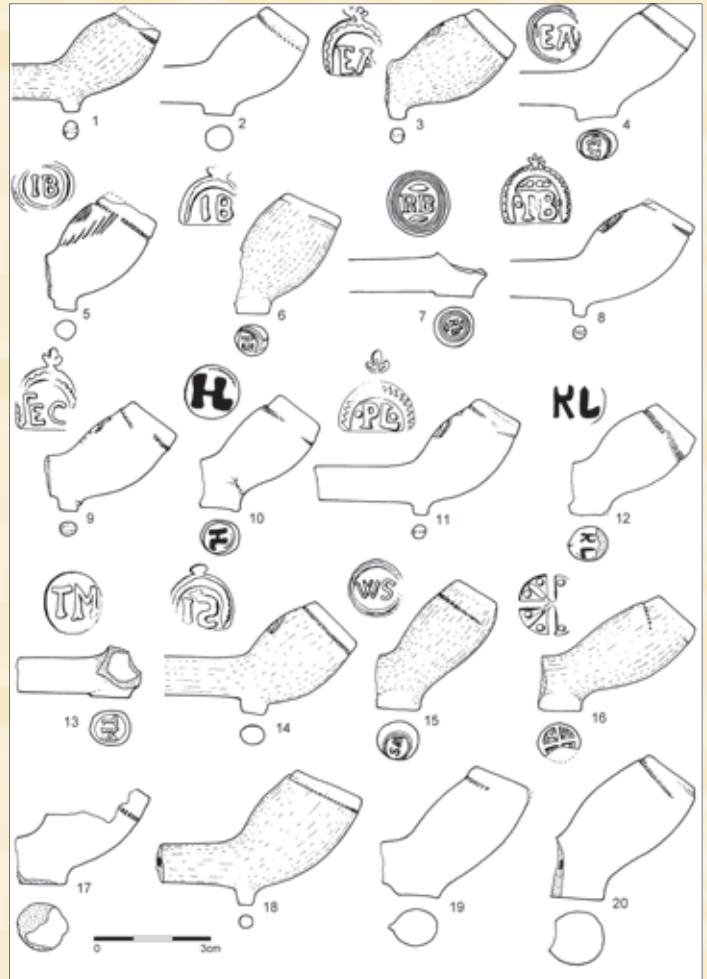
Pewter plate from the ball demolition

typical of the period and found on other rural hall sites excavated in the region such as Norton Priory, Old Abbey Farm, and Risley. These included manganese stained wares, succeeded by slip-decorated wares (usually yellow or black or red backgrounds) depicting leaf or flower patterns. Trencher plates were noted, being press moulded with pie crust edges. From the 18th century came cream wares with transfer prints in blue, green, and black designs on a white background for general household use. In the kitchen and dairy areas storage jars of Buckley type, with a red fabric and heavy black iron glaze, were common and included a number of near-complete vessels.

Amongst the other finds from this period were 34kg of glass. Much of this was hand-blown, diamond-shaped glass pieces held together by lead strips, probably dating to the mid-17th century rebuild. Onion-shaped green glass wine bottles were also recovered, including from the southern arm of the moat a pair of blue glass flagons, with dark and light stripes on the body. Both had been discarded complete but after they sank they were squashed flat by the build-up of mud and discarded rubbish thrown into the moat.

Eleven single and double loop buckles for use on breeches or shoes, made from a cast copper alloy, were also excavated, covering the 16th to the mid-18th centuries. One pewter button and three brass military buttons of 18th century date were also recovered from above the 17th century hall demolition material. A pewter plate was recovered from the moat that probably dated to the 17th century.

A large number of clay pipe fragments were found from the layers associated with the brick hall: at least 85 bowls and 460 stem fragments. The chronological spread of this material (the pipe bowls covered the period 1600 to 1850) coincided with the introduction of tobacco at the beginning of the 17th century and the rise in pipe smoking after the early-18th century, when tobacco imports from American plantations became more plentiful and cheaper. The bowl types at Timperley Old Hall were dominated by Rainford products. Other examples have been



A selection of clay pipe bowl-types excavated from Timperley



19th century transfer print teacup

identified from the kilns at Chester, Shropshire, and the Potteries. Four bowls were made from a fine white clay imported from the south-west of England, although they were manufactured in the Midlands and the North West in the late 18th century. Large quantities of animal bones were excavated from the moat deposits and the rubbish pits to the north-west of the hall. These ranged

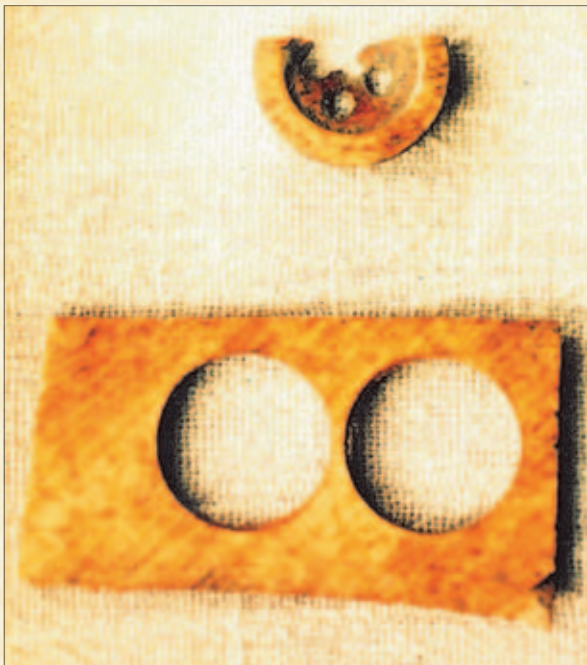
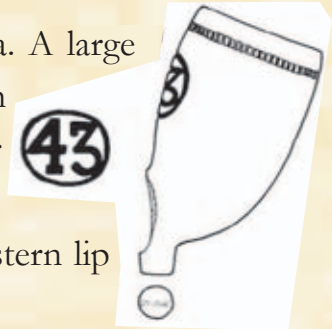
from cattle, horse, pig and sheep to cat, dog and rodent. Many of the bones showed knife marks or were broken as part of a culinary process. The cropping of boar tusks suggests domestication. A study of the metacarpal and metatarsal cattle bones indicated smaller animal sizes than the more modern breeds with a predominance of cows, suggesting that a dairy herd played a large part in the farm economy. One in five cattle had been slaughtered before maturity when culling was the norm because of scarcity of food for the animals during the winter months.

Post-Hall Finds

After the demolition of the hall the moated platform was turned into a walled garden with formal paths and planting. From the cultivated garden soil came many fragments of clay pipe. One 19th century pipe had the number '43' in a circle on the bowl (right), a reference to Daniel O'Connor's campaign for Irish independence which led to his arrest in 1843.

However, not all of this new garden was as ordered as the maps might suggest. The north-western corner of the platform continued to be used into the early 20th century as a rubbish area. A large amount of pottery was excavated from these pits, including cream ware dishes, plates and teacups and saucers with blue transfer print decoration. These domestic wares may have been thrown away by the families living in the farmhouse, which sat on the western lip of the moat.

19th century clay pipe bowl



19th century button blanks

Amongst the most interesting activity from this period was a series of rubbish pits. Some of these contained waste material from bone button manufacture, a 'cottage industry' being carried out on the site. All component stages, from sections of leg bones and sawn slivers to drilled out sections and broken button blanks, were recognised. Button sizes ranged from 10mm to 25mm ($\frac{3}{8}$ " to 1") diameter. No other physical remains of this industry survive at the Old Hall nor elsewhere in Timperley, although the census returns from the mid-19th century do record a number of button makers in the township.

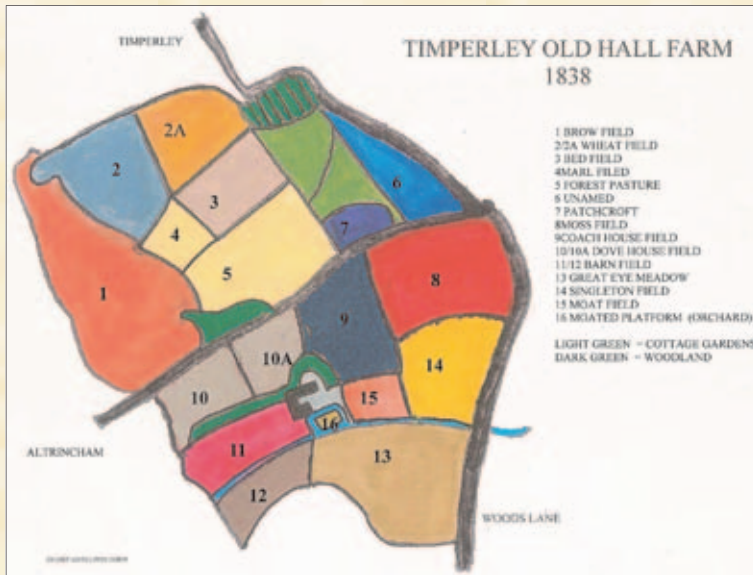
LIFE AT TIMPERLEY OLD HALL FARM

Like many manor houses, Timperley Hall had its own farm from which the surrounding fields were managed. The earliest description of this demesne estate is from 1584, on the death of William Arderne, which lists “8 messuages, 80 [Cheshire] acres of land, 40 of meadow [east of the hall], 50 of pasture, 8 of wood, 300 of heath and 100 of turbary [the right to cut peat such as on Timperley Moss]”. A survey of 1726 for Sir William Meredith listed the fields around the hall by name, including a ‘Dove House Field’ east of the hall, although the dove house has long gone. It described the hall complex as including the “Hall, Barnyard, Garden, Moat and Out-offices”.

A more detailed description of the farm was given in the sale catalogue of 1810. This described the outbuildings as comprising ‘the coach houses, four stables, containing

The southern elevation of the late 18th century cow house or shippon at Timperley Old Hall





Fields farmed by Timperley Old Hall Farm on the 1838 tithe apportionment

fourteen stalls, two shippens capable of accommodating sixteen cows, an extensive granary, two barns and other erections thereunto belonging..’

Two farm buildings survive on the site that were mentioned in this list: a threshing barn and a cow house (known locally as a shippon). Both appear to be late 18th century in date. As the shippon abuts the threshing barn, this would appear to be the later building. The cowhouse contained at ground level six bays, which would have accommodated up to 40 cows. The first floor hayloft was divided into three bays, which were well ventilated and would have kept the hay dry and in good condition. The eastern two bays of the shippon were added in the mid-19th century as an open cart shed. The threshing barn was three bays long, with a pair of centrally placed opposing doors in each of the main elevations. The threshing area was floored with large stone flags, and was where the wheat or oat crops would have been beaten to recover the grain. Ventilation holes in the bays either side of the threshing area show that these were used to store the resulting straw and grain. These two buildings indicate that Timperley was a mixed farm, with cattle for milking, crops to

process, and a shed for a cart and horse to move the produce around and off the farm. A lot of this produce would be sent to the growing industrial city of Manchester and locally to Altrincham, using the local turnpike road (Stockport Road) and the wharf at Broadheath on the Bridgewater Canal. Timperley Old Hall Farm was lucky in this



The 19th century bothy used by itinerant farm labourers

respect as transport links throughout much of the country were poor and farmers could only sell their produce locally in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

The farm labour was done by either itinerant workers or local villagers; local farmers had a vested interest in helping the poor in the villages nearby as they would provide a healthy workforce when needed and farmers were amongst the first to realise that a well-fed workforce worked harder. Such labourers lived in what was called a bothy. This was a small one or two-roomed cottage. At Timperley this building was located at the eastern end of the farmyard and immediately north of the moated site. It had two rooms with a small kitchen area, including a fireplace, at its northern end and a larger room for sleeping eight workers at the southern end. Excavation of the bothy in 2004, after demolition the

year before, recovered bricks stamped with the makers' name 'Jabez Thompsons Northwich', a firm operating in the third quarter of the 19th century. This suggests that the bothy was built during this period.

Although the hall was tenanted for much of the 16th, 17th and early 18th centuries, it is not until the 19th century that we know the names of the families farming the demesne lands.

*John Woodcock (1844-1914), gardener
at Timperley Hall*



In 1834 Thomas Carr is named as being at Timperley Hall Farm, and on the 1838 Timperley Tithe schedule he was farming 146 acres of land with access to Hale Moss and meadows along the Timperley Brook during the summer. The Carr family are recorded by the Census as being at the farm in 1841 and 1851. In 1861 the Nixon family were resident, John Nixon farming 200 acres and employing 11 men and boys. This family is mentioned in 1871 and again in 1881 when John was farming 158 acres with eight men and two boys. From around 1884 until c. 1902 George Thompson, his wife Sarah, and their nine children lived at the farm.

Victorian improvements in transport links, especially the arrival of the railways which reached Timperley in 1849, brought an end once and for all to the cycles of food shortages that had been caused for hundreds of years by local weather



An early 20th century view of the southern elevation of the farmhouse at Timperley Old Hall

patterns. Now, if a crop failed food could be brought in from somewhere else in the country. Thus, the mid-19th century was the golden age of farming in England, especially for grain production, but from the early 1870s cheap grain imports from north America undercut the prices at which British farmers could sell wheat, and refrigerated ships also undercut the meat market. During the late 19th century many farms went bankrupt. Timperley Farm was not one of

these, since dairy farming was not badly affected, even though some of the Timperley estate land was given over to market gardening.

By 1911 the Bradbury family had taken over the tenancy of the farm. Hugh Bradbury kept around 16 horses; three for the plough, two or three black horses which were kept for pulling hearses, one for general use, and the others to pull milk carts and traps for his local milk round. Prior to the First World War the farm also supplied horses to the army to haul gun carriages. At this time the cattle were Irish short-horns and milking was done by hand. During the Second World War the milk deliveries were done by land army girls.

Two generations of the family lived in the farmhouse, which was rebuilt in the 19th century, but parts of which were much older. Mr B Bradbury recalled his childhood at the farm and the arrangement of the house. This was a two-storey structure with a dou-

ble-depth, central staircase, plan. Entered through a porch there was a hallway with stairs at the far end. To the immediate left and right of the hall were a dining room and front parlour, adjacent to which was a small room used as an office. A cellar for cold storage was accessed from beneath the stairs. Beyond the hallway were a large kitchen and scullery, both with stone-flagged floors. The kitchen contained a walk-in fireplace (inglenook) alongside which was a stone bench. This was the oldest part of the farmhouse and was at least 18th century in origin. Next to the dining room was a dairy. On the first floor there were five bedrooms, with the largest one over the kitchen accommodating the ‘milk boys’, who had come from homes in the village of Styal, c. 10km to the east.

Around 1948, most of the farm buildings were demolished. This included the dairy, piggeries, the most northerly of the two shippens, a stable block, the bothy, and a Dutch barn. However, a 19th century threshing barn survives, in use as a golf driving range, and the adjoining Napoleonic-period shippen, or cow byre, still with its original fixtures and fittings, has also survived. This gives a hint of how the farmyard would have looked in the time of the Carr and Nixon families, but the

The early 19th century threshing barn at Timperley Old Hall



RESTORATION AND FUTURE



Lowering the new bridge over the moat into position in 2011

During 2011-12 this important heritage site was restored by the South Trafford Archaeological Group with money from the Heritage Lottery Fund. As part of the landscaping the foundations of the hall were indicated in a new garden. The moat was cleared of rubbish and leaf-litter, and at the same time the water outlet to the moat was raised, re-flooding the earthwork.

The inspiration for this restoration was the earliest map of the site, dating from 1838, which shows walls, paths, and formal beds on the platform, which was surrounded by a water-filled moat. Thus, the restoration of the platform included formal pathways, lawns, and a 'herb and phisik' Jubilee garden commemorating the 60th anniversary of the reign of Queen Elizabeth II in 2012. 'Wordsworth' daffodils, English primroses, and English bluebells from Guernsey are now growing on site, whilst the local Altrincham public have donated herbs and other plants including a fig tree. Rare apple and pear tree species have been introduced, and some of these varieties may well have been cultivated on site after 1800. Finally, the raised water level of the moat has encouraged the return of semi-aquatic wildlife and plant species. This work culminated in 2012 with the award of a Royal Horticultural Society certificate for "a developing site".

Timperley Old Hall moat was formally reopened on 25th May, 2012 by the Worshipful Mayor of Trafford, Councillor Patricia Young, in the presence of M.P. Mr Graham Brady and other guests, and handed over to Trafford Council to conserve and maintain for the future enjoyment of the people of Trafford. With help from Trafford Council, the future of the site is one of maintenance that could be an undertaking for a 'Friends' group. Some half-a-dozen garden plots are available for development, one of which is already being cultivated by enthusiasts from the Altrincham and Sale MENCAP Society. As an educational resource, the regenerated site provides a safe area for student study of animal and plant life. There is also the STAG Display Centre next door, where an array of artefacts from the digs gives an understanding of times past, telling the story of 5000 years of human activity at the site.

Timperley Old Hall is now the only medieval moated hall site in Trafford open to the public, and one of the few with public access within Greater Manchester. The restored walled garden thus provides a secluded haven from the bustle of 21st century living, as well as a reminder of times past.

Landscaping the restored walled garden in early 2012



FURTHER READING

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All of the historical maps and images used in this booklet can be found at the Trafford Local Studies Library, Sale

Historical images can also be viewed at <http://www.trafford.gov.uk/content/tca>

Publications in the Greater Manchester's Past Revealed series are available from GMAAS at the University of Salford

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This booklet is the result of a Heritage Lottery Fund project to record and display the history of Timperley Old Hall moat. It was a community archaeology project run by the South Trafford Archaeological Group. The project was supported by many organisations and individuals, but in particular by Trafford MBC. The first excavations at Timperley Old Hall were carried out between 1989 and 1996 by a team from STAG under the direction of Paul Reynolds and later Derek Pierce and Pat Faulkner. That led to a publication on the history of the manor of Timperley in 2005. Fieldwork continued in and around the moated site after 1996, including the survey of the Bothy building and its subsequent excavation, and further work on the moat and the platform. The current project began in 2010 under the direction of Derek Pierce. The historical images of Timperley Old Hall have been reproduced through the courtesy of the Trafford Local Studies Library in Sale.

Other books in the *Greater Manchester's Past Revealed* series are:

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An Industrial Art: The Archaeology of Calico Printing in the Irwell Valley - 6
Newton Hall: Rediscovering a Manorial Complex - 7

This book is dedicated to the memory of Paul Reynolds (1944 to 2013)

The text was prepared by Derek Pierce, Peter North & Dr Michael Nevell.

Design and illustrations by Dr Michael Nevell, CfAA,
University of Salford, & Brian Burton, STAG.

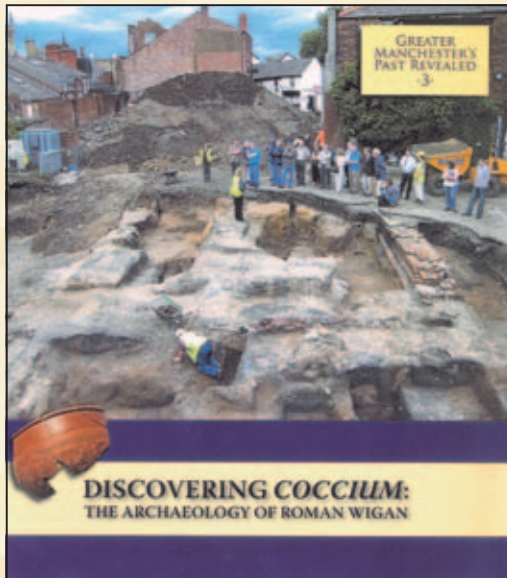
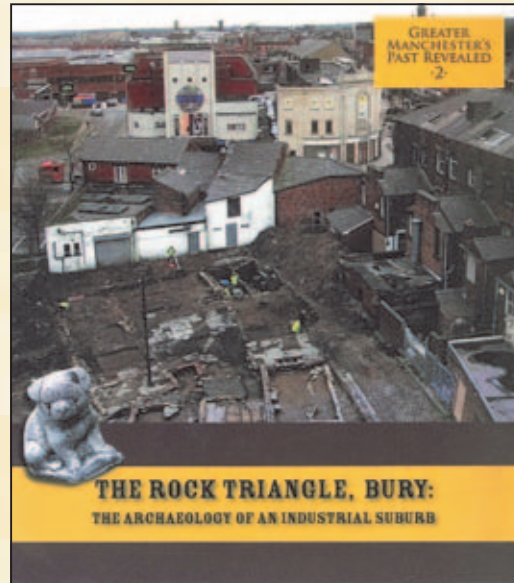
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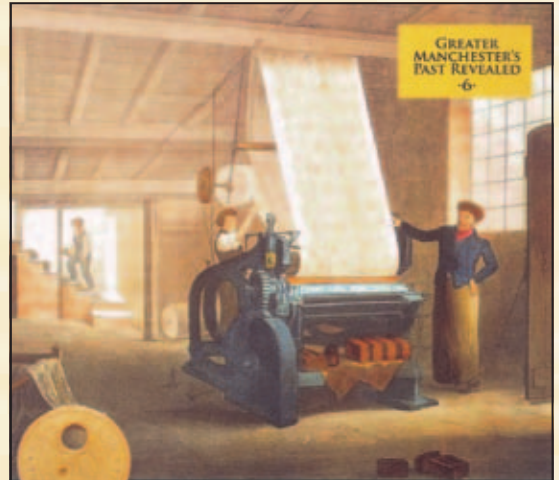
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THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF CALICO PRINTING IN THE IRWELL VALLEY



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MANCHESTER'S
PAST REVEALED
-7-



NEWTON HALL
REDISCOVERING A MANORIAL COMPLEX



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-8-

TIMPERLEY OLD HALL
THE EXCAVATION OF THE MOATED PLATFORM



Timperley Old Hall moat is one of the oldest inhabited places in Trafford. Stone tools indicate prehistoric activity in the Neolithic and early Bronze Ages. The site was re-used again, briefly, in the mid-Saxon period. From the 13th to the 18th centuries it was the home of the de Timperleigh, de Mascy, and Brereton families. It fell into decay during the 18th century and was demolished by 1800. Between 1989 and 1996 excavations revealed thousands of medieval artefacts, the foundations for the hall, and a timber-lined well. In 2010 a community archaeology project, led by the South Trafford Archaeological Group, set out to rediscover the ancient manorial site and to make the remains accessible to the general public. This booklet records the progress of that project as the 21st century inhabitants of Timperley explored the archaeology of the old hall and the history of some of its occupants, making this ancient site available to a wider public.

Front cover: aerial view of Timperley Old Hall moat, and the New Hall c. 1995. Inset: Medieval spindle whorl.
Back cover: The excavation of the medieval timber-lined well adjacent to the old hall.



£5.00

