

# A MEDIAEVAL HOMESTEAD AT PARK WOOD, BRADENHAM, BUCKS.

ANNE COOKSON

*A mediaeval homestead at Bradenham, Bucks, is surveyed and associated surface finds dating from the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries A.D. are described. A possible park enclosure in the vicinity of the site is discussed, and the documentary evidence assessed.*

## *Introduction and Acknowledgements*

In 1976 Mr. D. Barker reported discovery of the earthworks, house platforms and associated surface finds of a mediaeval homestead at Bradenham, Bucks. (NGR SU 8265 9815, County Antiquities Survey [CAS] nos. 2435 and 2515). Further field-work brought to light a body of pottery and other finds, probably dating from the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries, which are described in the present report. These are now in the Buckinghamshire County Museum at Aylesbury. Earthworks (CAS 2435) enclosing the area in which the site lies can be shown by documentary sources to date from at least the early post-mediaeval period.

Thanks are due to the National Trust for permitting a survey of the site, to Mr. C. Reid and Mr. and Mrs. D. Miller of the Buckinghamshire County Museum Archaeological Group for their help in the field, to Mrs. B. Hurman for advice on the pottery, and to Mr. M.E. Farley, County Field Archaeologist, for continued help and support during the project.

## *Situation*

The site lies on the dip slope of the Chiltern hills, between the 500 and 600 foot contours, one kilometre north of the village of Bradenham (see Figs. 1 and 2). It is situated on the Upper Chalk, just below the crest of the Clay with Flints plateau, on slopes immediately overlooking the steep drop to a side branch of the dry valley running south from Princes Risborough.

Under a managed high forest cover of beech, with more recent plantations of larch and other conifer, and ground cover of brambles, the soil beneath the thick beech litter on the plateau consists of a well-drained dark brown flinty clay loam, probably forming part of the Winchester Brown Earth series, hard to work, but productive when cleared for cereal cultivation if manured and chalked (Avery 1964). The present woodland on the site is mainly post-eighteenth century in origin, large areas of the plateau and adjacent slopes being shown as under arable cultivation in the second half of that century by Langley (1797, frontispiece map).

## *The Earthworks*

The surviving earthworks cover an area approximately 100 m. east-west and 150 m. north-south (see Fig. 3). The gently sloping crest of the plateau begins to fall more

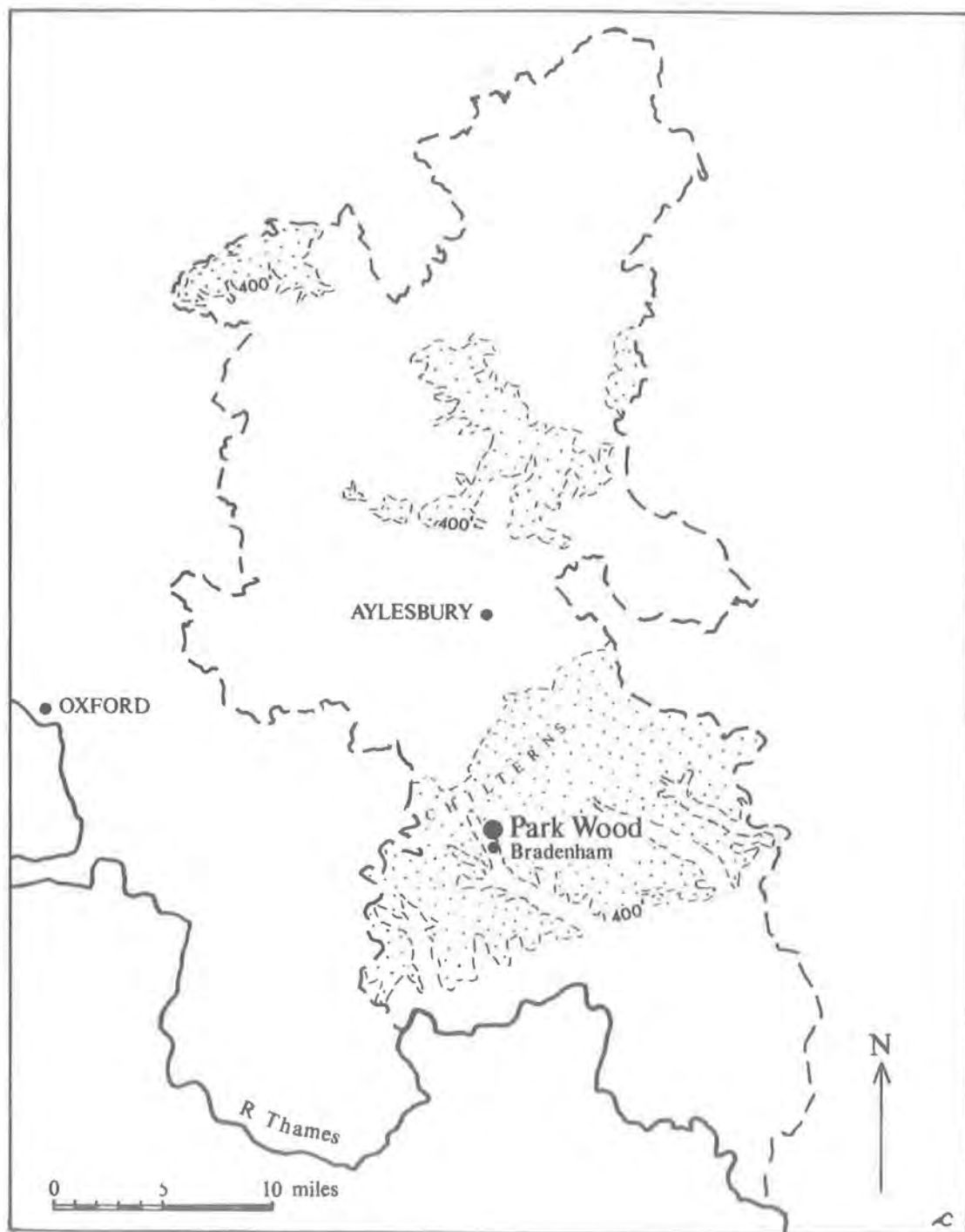
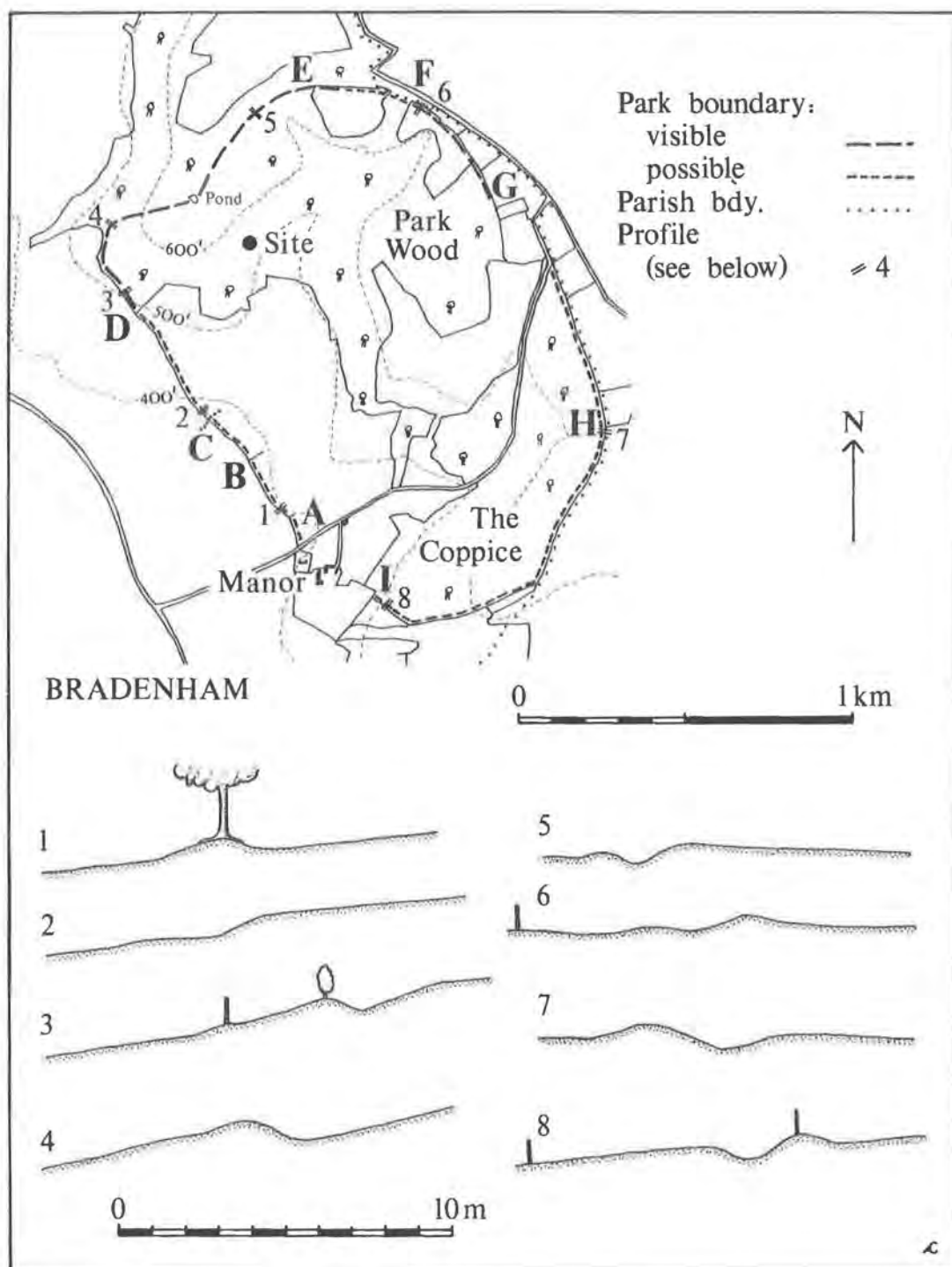


Fig. 1. Park Wood, Bradenham: location.



steeply at a break of slope running NE to SW. The very slight lynchet here (a on Fig. 3) may result from former cultivation of the higher ground on the crest, which, as mentioned above, is depicted as partly arable on Jeffrey's map of 1788, and Langley's of 1797. This feature continues beyond the northern limit of the survey, but fades out near the southern end of the site.

At the northern edge of the site, a small bank, with a ditch to its north-east (b) runs downhill at right-angles to this break of slope already described. The bank is a mere 0.30 m. high and 2 m. in width, the ditch of similar dimensions. These features fade out about 8 m. from the foot of this slope, below which point the ground drops away much more sharply to the dry valley nearly 100 feet below.

The gap (c) between the end of the bank and the edge of the slope may be one entrance to the site, as cart ruts have been observed to the NE, possibly marking a former track which came through this gap.

A slight bank of flint rubble (d) runs in a curving alignment approximately SW along the hillside from near the gap (c), becoming a scarp cut into the hillside after 20 m., and reverting to a bank again after a further 60 m. This feature continues a further 35 m. beyond the surveyed area, fading into the hillside at its southern end, its total length being about 150 m. The northern part of this feature may form one side of a terraceway along which the above-mentioned track may have continued, turning then uphill to pass out of the SW corner of the site. However no surface traces are visible apart from the ruts already mentioned.

Below the terraceway an area (e) has been levelled out of the hillside above the steep drop to the valley. The remains of two probable structures lie within this levelled enclosure. To the north is a circular mound of flint rubble (f)  $\frac{1}{2}$  m. high, with two irregular sandstone blocks 0.15 m. across and fragments of 'peghole' roofing tiles. The scale of the remains suggests that this can have been only a small outbuilding.

At the southern end of the levelled terrace are the remains of a raised rectangular house (g). Mounds of flint rubble 1 m. high, probably the collapsed remains of substantial walls, delineate a sunken rectangular centre. The width is about 5 m., and the length 9.5 m. On the north-western side and leading on to the terrace is the probable entrance, a break in the rubble 4 m. from the NW corner, slightly north of the centre of the long side. The rubble at the ends of the structure is slightly higher than the sides, by about 0.20 m., possibly representing the remains of collapsed gables.

Associated with this structure were the finds described below, some of which were found on or in the immediate vicinity of the building, others immediately below it on the steep slope, presumably carried down from the building, which is perched right on the edge of the terrace (see Profile XY, Fig. 3). No finds other than 'peghole' roof tiles have yet come to light elsewhere on the site.

The two buildings in their levelled yard area seem to form a discrete group south of bank d.

To the north of this lie further, apparently more heterogeneous, features. Higher up the slope is a pit 1 m. deep and 7 m. long, with a mound 0.75 m. high upcast on its downslope lip (h). This the local gamekeeper explained as a Second World War anti-aircraft gun emplacement, of which there are several in the woods, associated with the nearby RAF establishment.

At the north end of bank d a steep-sided semicircular depression 1 m. deep, (i), has

been quarried back into the hillside. Some of the spoil from this may form the low irregular mound (j) of flint rubble and earth SE of this on the top of the steep slope.

Further south along bank d are two features, k and l. These are also cut back into the hillside, up to 1 m. deep, and appear to have flat bottoms. They may have been building platforms, though no traces now remain of any stone structure.

At the south end of the site, abutting bank d, is a shallow circular mound with central depression, (m), which might be the remains of a well or dewpond. Some such feature would have been a necessity for an upland settlement situated high above the water table. A second, very shallow, circular depression (n) adjoins the first.

The steep-sided sub-rectangular pit (o), 2 m. long, 5 m. wide and 1 m. deep, with flint exposed in the sides, is similar to other post-mediaeval sawpits visible elsewhere on the hillside, and appears to be another example of this class of feature.

Next to the sawpit is another shallow-sided scoop (p), 1 m. deep, again with the local flints of the subsoil exposed in the sides. It has a curved profile which may, however, be the natural resting plane of eroded material. It is noticeable that the lowest point of the interior lies nearer to the north-east side, but no reason is apparent for this.

The largest feature at the south end of the site is the presumed house platform, (q), which is partly quarried into the hillside at its western end, with material piled up to 1.5 m. above the surrounding ground level at the eastern end. This results in a levelled area 7 m. across and 16 m. long. No surface finds or other features are visible, except a subsidiary area quarried out as an extension to the north side of the platform. This might have formed a sloping entrance way leading to the track previously postulated.

Running uphill immediately west of platform q is a slight bank (s), 0.30 m. high, with a ditch to its north of a similar depth. These fade into the hillside after a short distance. They do not appear to continue on the slope east of platform q, but seem to end at its western edge.

Adjacent to the large house platform is a circular mound of flint rubble (r) with a central depression, and two breaks in the circuit of rubble, one of which may have been an entrance. This feature may have been a small building, roofed with the peghole tile still to be found on the mound. Its circular outline might suggest a dovecote, which would imply a high social status for the site as a whole. This would not be totally out of keeping with the size of the house platform q, the substantial nature of the remains of building g, or the quality of some of the finds from the site, described below.

### *The Finds*

A group of surface finds was located by Mr. Barker in the immediate vicinity of the house g on Fig. 3. The majority were found on the steep slopes below it, where they had presumably been either carried by erosion or thrown out as rubbish from the building during its use. They comprise a variety of materials, described in the following sections.

#### (a) POTTERY (Figs. 4 and 5)

##### *(i) Fabrics*

The pottery was analysed by fabric, using methods described by Mellor (1976) and Haldon (1977). The weight and sherd count for each fabric is given, and an estimate of the minimum number of vessels, based in most cases on the rim count. A more detailed

Park Wood  
**BRADENHAM**

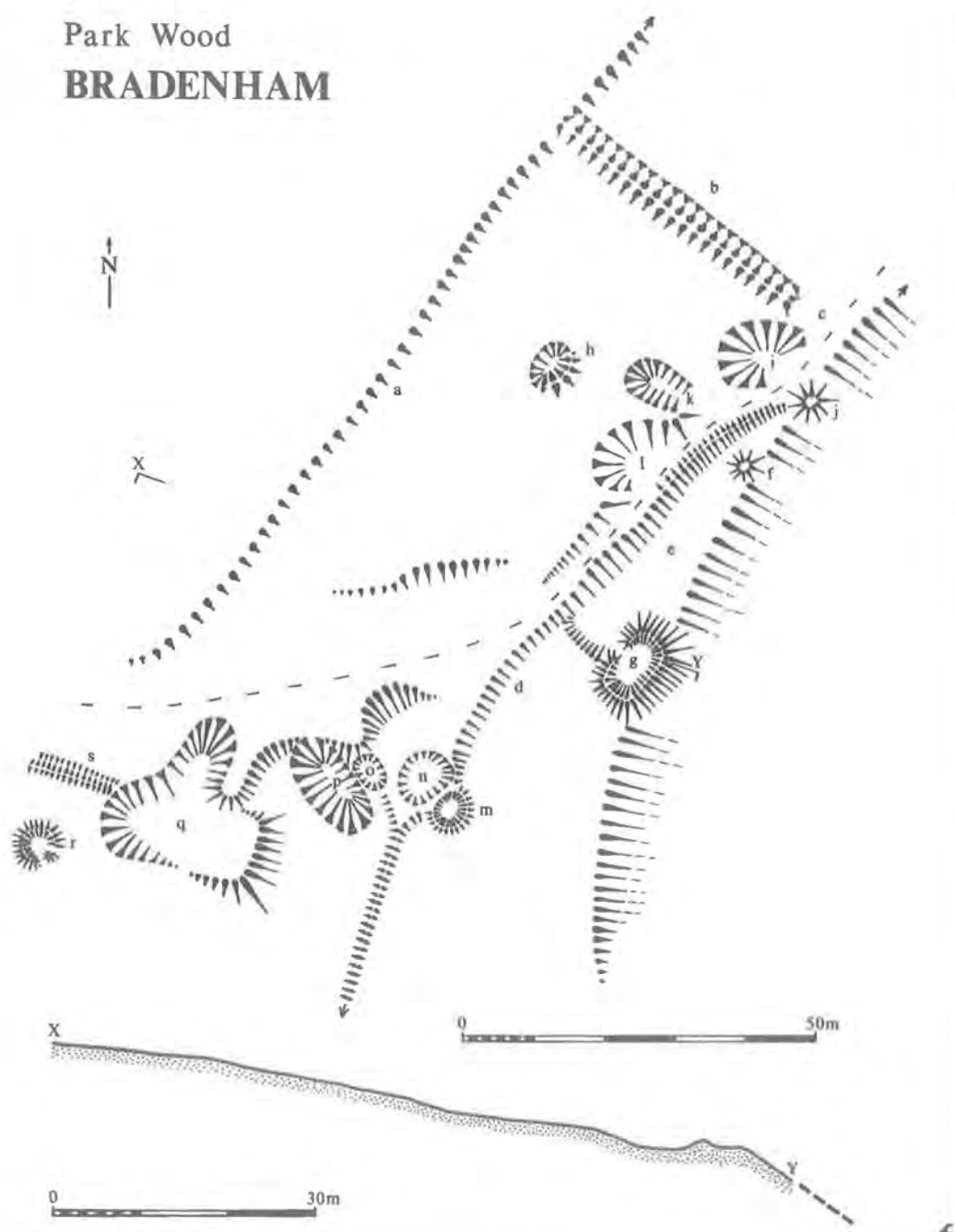


Fig. 3. Mediaeval homestead in Park Wood, Bradenham: survey.



description of the fabric inclusions is available in the Museum archive, and an abbreviated description only is given here.

The 920 sherds divide into 10 fabrics, but the majority (783) fall into one of these fabrics (A). In all there are 4 coarse and 6 fine fabrics, the latter (fabrics E - J) being represented, however, by only 38 sherds. The bulk of the pottery is of a coarse sandy nature, the exception being 1 sherd (fabric G) which has curved plate-like voids representing shelly inclusions destroyed on firing. All fabrics are of iron-rich clays, except fabric E, a fine creamy-white ware similar to Surrey white wares. The only kiln source which has definitely been identified is that for the three sherds of fabric I, which came from the mediaeval kilns at Brill. The majority of the rest would seem to be of local origin.

The fabric descriptions include references to the illustrated vessels. These constitute a representative selection of the types of form and decoration observed.

#### *(ii) Forms*

Only one complete profile occurs, 75% of the pottery being body sherds, 13% rims and 10% bases, with a few handles making up the total. Most vessels are of the cooking-pot, bowl or jar type, supplemented by jugs, often of the thumb-base variety. Most of the finer vessels may well have been jugs. A single example each occurs of a bung-hole pitcher and a shallow dish, possibly a 'fish dish' (Fig. 5, nos. 13 and 27).

#### *(iii) Finish*

21% of the pottery is glazed or carries some form of decoration. A wide range of decorative techniques is encountered, which are described under each fabric heading. Green glazes of varying types occur in all fabrics except B and H. White slips are restricted to fabrics A and H. Applied, incised, combed, rouletted or impressed decoration occurs in all fabrics, and a representative range has been illustrated.

#### *(iv) Discussion*

The assemblage as a whole is of typical mediaeval character in fabrics, manufacturing techniques, forms and finishes. In Oxford, sandy wares occur from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries A.D., after which they decline in frequency. The forms and decorative techniques encountered in this pottery from Park Wood are generally consistent with the latter part of this date range. A typical example is the vessel illustrated in Fig. 4, no. 15, which is reminiscent of the late twelfth - early thirteenth century cooking pots made in Elstree, Hertfordshire. The examples in Fig. 5, nos. 35 - 37, possibly of Surrey white ware, may extend the date range of the site to the late thirteenth or the fourteenth centuries. These and the other fine fabrics, while constituting but a small proportion of the assemblage, indicate some refinement, even touches of luxury, in the lives of the occupants of the settlement.

#### *(v) Fabric Descriptions*

*Fabric A.* Coarse red earthenware. (Fig. 4, nos. 1 - 22, Fig. 5, nos. 1 - 15)

Weight 8699g.; Total number of sherds 783; Body sherds 589; Rim sherds 106; Base sherds 83; Handle sherds 7; Bung-hole sherds 1; Decorated sherds 62; Glazed sherds 70.

Abundant sandy inclusions. 4-7 mm. thick. Core pale grey or pink, int. and ext. ranging from grey, buff or orange to red-brown or dark-brown. Hard, rough.

There is a wide range within this fabric group, the inclusions varying in frequency. The two extremes in variation are one group of sherds with more pink-toned exteriors, the inclusions comprising more quartz, more soft red and fewer soft black grains; and another more grey-toned group with less clear quartz and soft red grains, and more soft black inclusions and buff quartz. Between these two extremes, however, lies a continuous spectrum difficult to subdivide without considerable further study and thin-section analysis, beyond the scope of the present work.

Forms	Minimum No. of Vessels
Bowl (Fig. 4, nos. 1 - 5), cooking-pot, jar (Fig. 4, nos. 6 - 22)	98
Bunghole pitcher (Fig. 5, no. 13)	1
Jugs (Fig. 5, nos. 1 - 7, 14 - 15)	6
Handles (Fig. 5, nos. 4 - 7)	6
Unidentified (not illustrated)	1

Finish: Interior and exterior throwing grooves; wire marks; exterior wipe marks.

Decoration:

1. Thumbing or other indentations on base (Fig. 5, no. 15; Fig. 4, no. 21), on upper surface of rim, (Fig. 4, nos. 2 and 8) or on body (Fig. 5 no. 12).
2. Horizontal linear incisions or grooves, sometimes several parallel rows (Fig. 4, nos. 15, 20, 22; Fig. 5, no. 3).
3. Stabbing, notches or incisions, sometimes diamond or leaf-shaped (Fig. 5, nos. 3 - 7, 10 - 11).
4. Applied white slip, sometimes underglaze, continuous or in narrow bands, on exterior only (Fig. 5, no. 9).
5. Applied cordons, strips or scales (Fig. 4, no. 15; Fig. 5, nos. 8-9), sometimes pinched or rouletted, straight, at right-angles or in chevron pattern.
6. Rouletting, in single or double (lattice) rows (Fig. 4, no. 18; Fig. 5, no. 9).

Glazes (often very poorly preserved):

1. Light yellow-green, ext. only.
2. Dark yellow-green, occasional brown and dark green flecks, ext. only.
3. Mottled mid-green, ext. only.
4. Dark green, ext. only.

*Fabric B.* Fairly coarse red earthenware. (Fig. 5, nos. 16 - 20).

Weight 160 g.; Total no. of sherds 27; Body sherds 18; Rim sherds 3; Base sherds 6; Decorated sherds 1.

Moderately frequent sandy inclusions. 7 mm. thick. Core red, occasionally grey. Surfaces red or brown, smooth, with few large quartz inclusions standing proud.

Forms	Minimum No. of Vessels
Cooking pot, jar (Fig. 5, nos. 16 - 19), bowl (Fig. 5, no. 20)	3



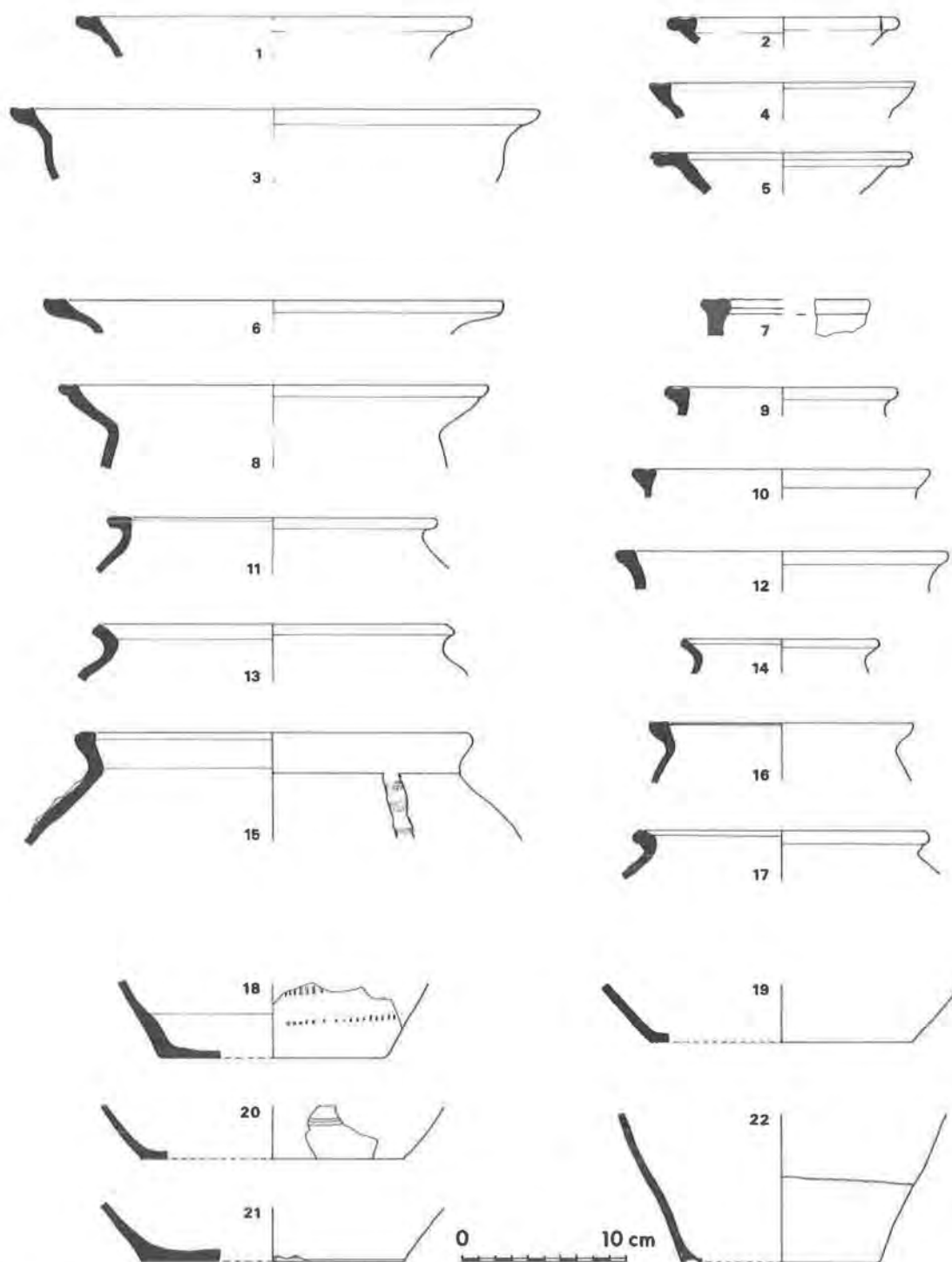


Fig. 4. Park Wood, Bradenham: pottery, fabric A. ( $\frac{1}{4}$  scale)

Finish: Interior throwing grooves.

Decoration: Pair of parallel grooves, 12 mm. apart.

*Fabric C.* Coarse red earthenware. (Fig. 5, nos. 21 - 30).

Weight 594 g.; Total no. of sherds 57; Body sherds 30; Rim sherds 14; Base sherds 8; Decorated sherds 2; Glazed sherds 5.

Abundant sandy inclusions, almost entirely of quartz. 7 mm. thick. Core, int. and ext. dark grey (occasionally orange ext.). Hard. Fairly rough.

Forms	Minimum No. of Vessels
Cooking pot, jar (Fig. 5, nos. 21 - 2, 25, 28 - 30), bowl (Fig. 5, nos. 23 - 4, 26)	14
Jug	1
Shallow dish (? fish dish), (Fig. 5, no. 27)	1

Finish: Internal throwing grooves.

Decoration:

1. Thumbed jug base.

2. Thumb-impressed outer edge of rim (Fig. 5, no. 26).

Glaze: Light yellow-green, condition varying, partial on ext. only.

*Fabric D.* Coarse red earthenware. (Fig. 5, 31 - 32)

Weight 122 g.; Total no. of sherds 9; Body sherds 7; Rim sherds 2; Decorated sherds possibly 1; Glazed sherds 1.

Abundant sandy inclusions, mostly black. 5 mm. thick, sometimes more. Core and both surfaces grey, sometimes heavily mottled with dark grains. Fairly rough. Hard.

Forms	Minimum No. of Vessels
Cooking pot, bowl, jar (Fig. 5, no. 31 - 32)	2

Decoration: Notch and line incised across 1 rim, possibly accidentally, before firing.

Glaze: Light yellow green, good condition, on part of ext. only.

*Fabric E.* Fine white earthenware. (Fig. 5, nos. 35 - 37)

Weight 200 g.; Total no. of sherds 15; Body sherds 13; Rim sherds 1; Base sherds 1; Decorated sherds 7; Glazed sherds 9.

Moderately frequent sandy inclusions. 5 mm. thick. Core and both surfaces creamy-white. Fairly smooth. Hard.

Forms	Minimum No. of Vessels
Cooking pot, bowl, jar	1

Finish: Sooting on ext. of two pieces.

Decoration: Vertical applied raised cordons, 3 mm. wide, 20 - 35 mm. apart, sometimes firing dark grey (Fig. 5, no. 36).

Glaze: Mid-green, with yellow-brown flecks, partial on ext. only, good condition.



*Fabric F.* Fine red earthenware (Fig. 5, no. 33)

Weight 98 g.; Total no. of sherds 13; Body sherds 12; Handle sherd 1; Decorated sherds 4; Glazed sherds 13.

Moderately frequent sandy inclusions. 5 mm. thick. Core and both surfaces pale pink, with creamy-white patches. Hard. Fairly smooth.

Form: ?Jug; Minimum No. of Vessels 1.

Finish: Interior throwing grooves.

Decoration:

1. Finger-impressed and combed edges, central diagonally-slashed groove on handle.
2. Applied lattice-rouletted narrow cordons, 15 mm. apart, in parallel rows.

Glaze: Mid-dark green, some dark green or brown mottling, partial on ext. only, good condition.

*Fabric G.* Fine red earthenware. (Not illustrated).

Weight 10g.; Total no. of sherds 1; Body sherds 1; Decorated sherds 1; Glazed sherds 1.

Few chalky inclusions, frequent fine curved plate-like voids. 5 mm. thick. Core and int. grey, ext. orange. Hard, smooth. This is the only sherd identified as of a non-sandy fabric.

Form: ?Jug, bowl?; Minimum no of vessels 1.

Finish: Interior throwing grooves.

Decoration: Horizontal groove 3 mm. wide.

Glaze: Light yellow-green, int. only, good condition.

*Fabric H.* Fine red earthenware. (Not illustrated).

Weight 5 g.; Total no. of sherds 1; Body sherds 1; Decorated sherds 1.

Few sandy inclusions, amongst them possibly grog. 4 mm. thick. Core and both surfaces red. Hard, smooth.

Form: ?Jug; Minimum No. of Vessels 1.

Decoration: Patchy white slip.

*Fabric I.* Fairly fine red earthenware. (Fig. 5, no. 34).

Weight 37 g.; Total no. of sherds 3; Body sherds 2; Handles 1; Decorated sherds 1; Glazed sherds 3.

Frequent sandy inclusions, very little quartz. 4 - 6 mm. thick. Core and ext. grey, int. buff. Hard, smooth.

Form: Jug; Minimum No. of Vessels 1.

Finish: Interior throwing grooves.

Decoration: Incised grooves framing, diagonal slashes in centre of handle.

Glaze: Dark yellow-brown, partial on ext. only, very good condition.

This fabric was probably manufactured at the mediaeval pottery kilns at Brill/Boarstall, Bucks. (Information from Mr. M.E. Farley; see Jope 1953).

*Fabric J.* Fine red earthenware. (Not illustrated).

Weight 13 g.; Total no. of sherds 5; Body sherds 5; Decorated sherds 5; Glazed sherds 4.

Few sandy inclusions. 4 mm. thick. Core dark grey with red margins, int. and ext. dark grey. Hard, smooth.

Form: Jug; Minimum No. of Vessels 1;

Decoration: grooving.

Glaze: Pale green, ext. and int. of three sherds.

## (b) OTHER FINDS

### (i) *Stone:*

Fine dark grey whetstone, 44 x 10 x 6 mm., wear on one surface. Fig. 6, no. 4.

### (ii) *Flint:*

1 piece, unworked, but traces of burning on one surface. Not illustrated.

### (iii) *Tile:*

Not illustrated. Three fabrics present among the sample collected, as follows:—

1. Orange, with quartz, red and shelly inclusions. 1 piece has dark brown glaze on one surface, another has round peghole 15 mm. from one edge, 12 mm. diameter. Thickness 12 mm.
2. Yellow sandy clay, sparse orange and white inclusions. Thickness 14 mm.
3. Rougher red sandy fabric, fine white and gross flint inclusions. Thickness 12 mm. Round peghole 12 mm. diameter.

### (iv) *Iron:*

Wrought iron object, 12 cm. long, possibly a handle, much disintegrated. X-rays show it to be a single object, with no trace of rivets or holes for rivets. It may therefore have been attached by welding in the original state. (Fig. 6, no. 5).

Two horsehoe nails 32 mm. long, roughly rounded section to shank, head of characteristic 'fiddle-key' type of nail used with early mediaeval horseshoes with counter-sunk nailholes. (Fig. 6, no. 6 - 7). cf. Durham 1977, Fig. 29, 66.

One nail, 60 mm. long, rectangular section to shaft, flat head. (Fig. 6, no. 8).

### (v) *Copper Alloy:*

Circular pan from weighing scales, 43 mm. diameter, slightly concave, 3 holes 1.5 mm. diameter pierced at regular intervals near edge, from which pan would have been suspended. (Fig. 6, no. 1).

Fragment of thin sheet, bent, size 45 mm. x 35 mm., edges broken. (Fig. 6, no. 2).

A circular brooch and small silvered bell or button were also found, but were not available for description.

### (vi) *Lead:*

Roughly flat, subcircular object, possibly a seal from a water pump or similar, 40 mm. diameter, 50 mm. long, 12 mm. thick, with groove or channel inset round

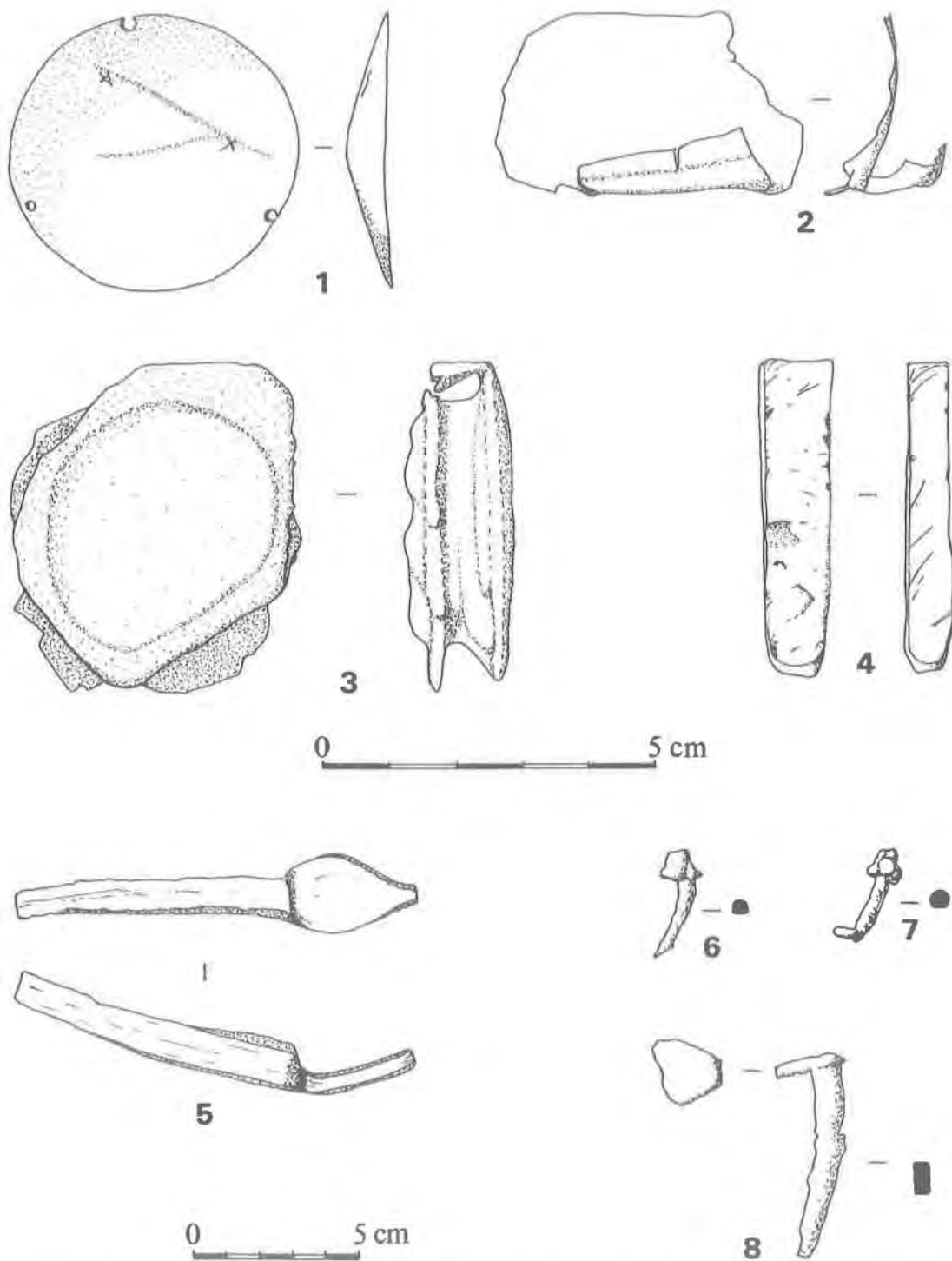


Fig. 6. Park Wood, Bradenham: finds: copper alloy (1 - 2); lead (3); stone (4) (all 1:1); iron (5 - 8) ( $\frac{1}{2}$  scale).



outer edge, between two projecting rims. One outer surface has central area slightly 'dished' or concave, with smoother finish. Opposite surface slightly convex and rough textured. (Fig. 6, no. 3)

*(vii) Slag/clinker:*

7 pieces, weighing a total of 628 g.

*(viii) Animal Bone:*

28 small fragments, unidentified, weighing 100 g.

*(ix) Molluscs:*

8 oyster shells, weighing 130 g.

*(x) Discussion of Finds*

The 'fiddle-key' horseshoe nails corroborate the mediaeval date for occupation on the site, confirmed also by a coin of 1205 or soon after. The finds as a whole suggest a varied range of diet and activities, and some degree of luxury in the life of the inhabitants. Few organic remains survive among the surface finds; the animal bone, together with the mollusc shells, are presumably food waste. The presence of the slag or clinker might suggest metal-working on site, and objects such as the balance-pan, brooch and small silvered bell or button convey an impression of comfort and some refinement.

*The Possible Park Enclosure (see Fig. 2)*

The name 'Park Wood' and the adjacent 'Park Farm' suggest the possible former existence of a park enclosure of the area in which the site is situated. A bank-and-ditch earthwork near the northern edge of the wood was reported by Mr. Barker, and its course and possible extension is discussed in the following section.

The best stretch of the earthwork, a ditch inside a bank, both of moderately small dimensions, runs between points D and E on Figure 2 (see profiles 3 - 5), where it has been preserved in the woodland on the plateau shoulder. On the cultivated ground south to the manor house, the field boundaries suggest the line of a possible continuation of the circuit. Little trace remains on the ground, however. A small hedge bank runs from point A to B (see profile 1), and the track now on its north-east may run in the line of a former ditch within this bank. Pasture changes to arable at point B, and from here to point D the same track is accompanied merely by a slight lynchet (see profile 2). This is more likely to be attributable to plough build-up on these sloping fields than to the former presence of a bank or ditch, though the latter cannot be ruled out without excavation. At point C the modern track crosses the lynchet and runs below it from here northwards to the edge of the wood at point D.

At the north of this wood the bank and ditch already described are clearly visible beyond point E continuing for some distance within the military precincts now occupying the area between points E and F. There (on the parish boundary) a small bank is visible, with the slight suggestion of a possible former ditch on its inside (see profile 6), but this fades out completely by point G, where the foundations of a former Second World War building are succeeded by modern housing. This is the site of earlier brick-

making claypits and workings for the sandstone sarsens formerly used for road paving. No trace remains of an enclosure along the line of the parish boundary until point H is reached, at the southern end of the modern housing development and a pig farm.

Here we reach a more problematical section of the circuit. A bank and ditch, comparable in scale to those at the north of Park Wood, stretch continuously from point H, to reach the walled precinct of the manor again at point I (see profiles 7 and 8). Part of this line is also that of the parish boundary, which then diverges to run on southwards. The crest of the bank is occupied by an old post-and-rail fenceline, but also, along part of its length, by a very much overgrown hedge, whose antiquity it may be possible to establish by botanical hedge-dating methods. This bank and ditch form a convincing completion to the postulated park circuit, and no other such line is in evidence elsewhere on the hillsides between point G and the manor, the presumed completion of any circuit.

The major objection to this line as a continuation of the park circuit arises from the fact that the ditch here lies *outside* the bank, contrary to the arrangement along the north half of the circuit, more normal in deerpark enclosures elsewhere. However, considerable variation is in fact found in the form of such enclosures, including double banks, double ditches, or (as here) a ditch *outside* a bank (see Crawford 1953). Nevertheless it seems anomalous for the same enclosure to consist of two earthworks of differing character.

Apart from this, the area of the enclosure conforms in several ways to the usual attributes of mediaeval parks (see Cantor and Hatherly 1977). Such parks are often elliptical or oval in shape, and most Chilterns parks are in excess of 100 acres in area. They often lie on the edges of manors, and the parish boundary frequently coincides with part of their perimeter, as here. Parks were often enclosed from unimproved parts of the demesne land, well wooded to provide shelter and grazing for the deer which stocked their enclosures as a hunting reserve. This timber also constituted the only other exploitable resource of park areas, the land often being, as here, on steep ground more difficult to cultivate. Most parks were enclosed between 1200 and 1350 A.D., and this is the likely period of occupation of the settlement site described above, situated in a commanding position in the northern half of the possible park area, as if to counterbalance the manor to the south.

This suggests a possible interpretation of the site as a park lodge. Mediaeval parks often had a keeper or parker, to superintend the fencing and the winter feeding of the deer (see Crawford 1953). They lived in a lodge in or near the park, and were of some social consequence, a characteristic of which we have seen hints in the examination of both earthworks and finds of the present site.

It has proved difficult, however, to find any documentary corroboration of the mediaeval date of the park. Maps by Saxton (1574), Speed (1610) and Blaeu and Blome (seventeenth century) show a park at Bradenham. Langley claims that 'the greater part of the parish was formerly imparked', (1797, p. 67), and Shirley refers to 'the site (at Bradenham) of an ancient park existing in the early part of the seventeenth century and marked on the ancient maps' (1867, 129). A search of both public and local archives has produced no earlier reference than these, however. Records of park enclosures before 1200 A.D. may not survive, but an official licence to empark would have been necessary in mediaeval times, as all deer were the king's property,

and his permission was needed to keep deer or other animals from straying by enclosing them. At Domesday the manor was held of the king by Suertin and Harding, as two hides. The earliest reference to the manor of Bradenham after Domesday comes in 1263, when it became the subject of a dispute on the death of John de Plessey, Earl of Warwick (*Cal. Close* 1261 - 4, 264, 310 - 11; *Cal. IPM* I, 169). No mention occurs here of a park in the manor, nor in 1333, when the 'capital messuage and 100 acres' were held by Simon de Falvesle and his wife Alice of the lord of Daventry, by service of a pair of gloves price 1½d. at Easter (*Cal. Close* 1333 - 7, 60; *Cal. IPM* VII, 361). In 1506 John Scott of Dorney, the elder, was seized in fee of the manor, 'a messuage, 60 acres arable, 40 acres pasture, 40 acres wood and 2 acres of meadow . . . worth 100s. held of Edward, Duke of Buckingham, Earl of Hereford, in socage', (*Cal. IPM*, Henry VII, III, 141). Earlier, in 1272, there was a grant of the right of free warren in the demesne lands to Robert son of Walter of Daventry (*Cal. Charter*, II, 183), but no mention has been found of a park at Bradenham before 1574. The small scale of the earthwork enclosure as described above would also be more consonant with a post-mediaeval date.

Whatever the foundation date of the postulated park, by the time of Thomas Langley at the end of the eighteenth century, he could refer to it being 'formerly imparked', as we have seen, and describe the parish as 'at present divided into farms', which is how it is represented on the same author's map (Langley 1797, 67 and frontispiece). It was in the eighteenth century that increased enclosure for agricultural purposes took place in the Chilterns (Avery 1964), and later the beech forest cover began to be exploited for the furniture industry. These may have been the factors which caused the almost complete obliteration of the former park as a landscape feature today.

### *Conclusion*

The absence to date of any early pottery associated with the site does not enable a link at present to be made between the homestead at Park Wood and the second Domesday holding. The site in Park Wood, Bradenham is not an elaborate one, but the quality of structural remains and finds is above that generally found on mediaeval farms (cf. Chambers 1973). It is true that the broken nature of the Chiltern countryside encouraged irregular settlement patterns in the mediaeval period, and small dispersed settlement units or satellite farmsteads were founded on the heavier soils of the ridge tops and the plateau, in situations such as that at Park Wood. The presence of a probable windmill mound on the plateau crest nearby (County Museum reference CAS 2436) might corroborate the interpretation of the site as a farmstead. However, the area was enclosed as a park at least in the early post-mediaeval period, if not before, and the possibility that this site was an associated park or hunting lodge cannot be totally dismissed.

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