

**WYEFORD FARM**  
**Pamber**  
**Hampshire**

**Level 2 Archaeological Survey**

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PAMBER**

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION REPORT SERIES  
AI/5/2003

County: Hampshire  
District: Basingstoke and Deane  
Parish: Pamber, Tadley  
NGR: SU 600 590  
NMR No: SU 55 NE 8

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Report: Mark Bowden  
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## INTRODUCTION

Wyeford Farm is situated at SU 600 590, 2km to the south of Tadley and about 1km north-west of Pamber Priory (Fig 1).

An archaeological investigation of earthworks surrounding Wyeford Farm (SU 55 NE 8) was requested by English Heritage's South-Eastern Region. The principal reason for this survey was to inform conservation and management needs but it was also recognised that such survey would address the academic understanding of the site. This is particularly important as there has been no previous archaeological investigation, except by the Ordnance Survey (OS) Archaeology Division, and little is known of the history of the site. The earthworks were recorded as a moat, and a series of ponds and watercourses.

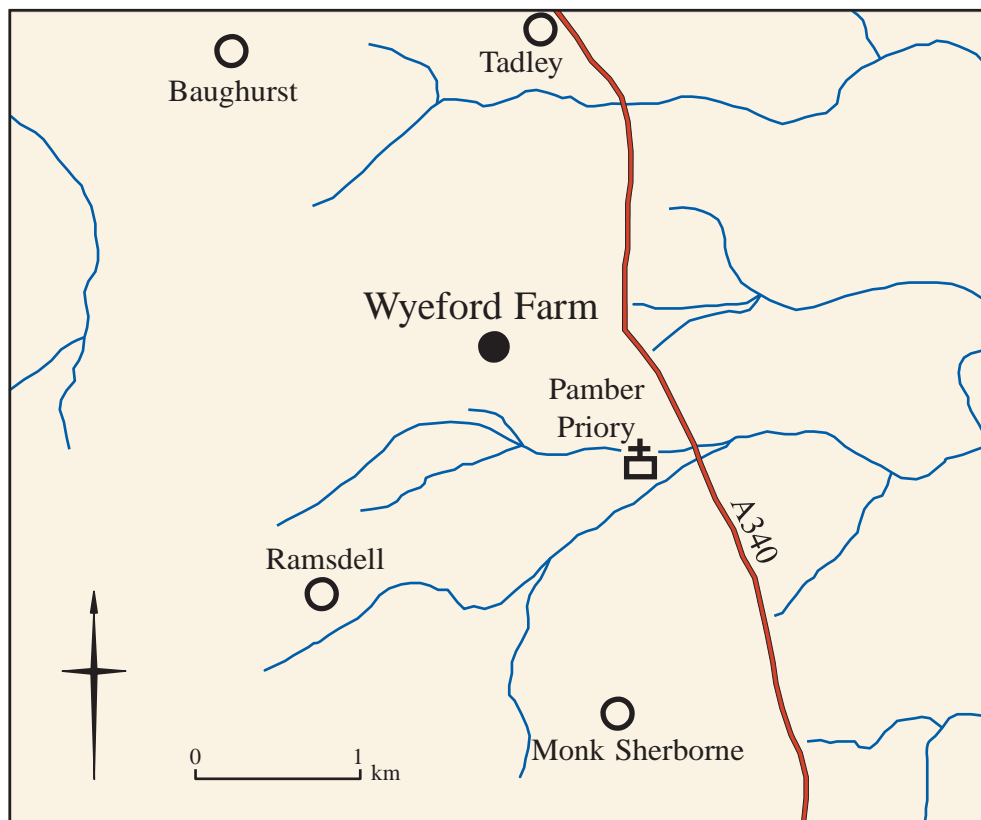


Fig 1. Location map

The investigation, at Level 2 (RCHME 1999), was carried out over four days during December 2002, based on a rapid map-based (1:2500) assessment of the entire site and an earthwork survey of a group of ponds to the south-east of the moat at 1:500.

### *Topography*

Wyeford Farm lies at about 90m OD on Lower Bagshot Sands overlying London Clay. The whole site slopes very gently to the east and it is, typically of the area, well-watered. Many early writers commented unfavourably upon the wetness of the area (Stamper 1983, 41).

### *History*

As stated above, little is known of the history of this site. The Victoria County History (VCH) gives a few details of the descent of the manor of Withford or Wyford, previously known as the manor of Tadley (1911, 219-20, 435). Between the 11<sup>th</sup> and the 14<sup>th</sup> centuries Wyeford lay within

the bounds of Pamber Forest (Stamper 1983). The house itself, Wyeford Farm (Fig 2), is of 17<sup>th</sup>-century date with a major extension dated to 1931 (Pevsner & Lloyd 1967, 370; DOE 1984, 155-6; NMR SU 55 NE 8, Authority 3).

*Fig 2 Wyeford farmhouse from the south; the back of the 20th-century extension can be seen to the left*



The earthworks have previously been recorded, by the OS and – following them – the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, as the remains of a medieval moat and fishponds, and have been scheduled as such by English Heritage (No 12061).

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE EARTHWORKS**

Features noted in the course of the survey are listed here, numbered in the sequence in which they were encountered in the field. For location see Fig 3.

- 1 A track shown by the OS is now grassed over but still visible as a slight causeway, 0.3m high.
- 2 The former boundary of the cottage garden shows as a slight earthwork, with some surviving planting.
- 3 Some slight disturbance – a trench-like earthwork – looks recent.
- 4 A relict hedge stands on a slight bank up to 0.3m high and 2m wide with a very slight gully either side. (Further to the north, the gully on the east side is more prominent.)
- 5 There are some gentle undulations in this field, trending east-west – not necessarily ridge-and-furrow, though they might be. At the northern corner of the field (outside survey area) are some slightly stronger scarps.
- 6 Slight irregular traces of ridge-and-furrow – ridges *c*3m to *c*7m wide and only 0.2-0.3m high at most – show no discernible curvature. Some of the furrows have possibly been recut as more recent drainage gullies.
- 7 The boundary of Charcoal Gully wood, inside the current fence, is an earthwork – a ditch with an intermittent slight bank on the inside (i.e. south and west). The ditch is up to 0.8m deep externally, 0.4-0.5m internally. The bank, where present, is no more than 0.2-0.3m high. The overall width of the earthwork is 3.4m. For part of its length this feature forms the parish boundary, but this is not indicated by any difference in its form. The earthwork turns to exclude the parcel of land in the north-west corner of the current wood (see 8). No trace of charcoal burning platforms was seen in Charcoal Gully.

8 This is a continuation of 7, a ditch with a slight bank, here on the external (western) side. The overall width of the earthwork is 4.8m. The ditch is 0.8m deep externally, 0.3-0.4m deep internally, the bank 0.2-0.3m high.

9 A low sub-circular mound, 0.3-0.4m high, stands adjacent to and possibly overlying the bank of 8. It is flat-topped and shows no sign of structure. It is positioned half-way along 8.

10 The return arm of 8 is slightly different in character, though similar in that the face of the ditch external to the wood is steep (this is also true of 7). The overall width of the earthwork is c5.5m. The slight bank on the north side is 0.1-0.2m high. The ditch is 0.8m deep and at the time of survey was water-filled. At its western end the ditch, in its current form, cuts the boundary bank 11. At its eastern end, beyond 8, the ditch narrows and continues as channel 16.

11 A boundary bank, between the wood and the bridleway to the west, is 6m wide and 0.5m high.

12 A brick-built reservoir, not shown by the OS, is partly buried in a mound and measures 4.7×3.6m.

13 A continuation of 11, here has a distinct external ditch. The overall width of the earthwork is 5.3m. The ditch is 0.8m deep and the bank 0.4-0.5m high.

14 A linear depression, possibly a hollow way, behind 13 and partly formed by its bank, branches off from the bridleway. It is 2m wide or less, and up to 0.5m deep.

15 The current track is slightly hollowed at its western end, no more than 0.5m deep. It possibly cuts through 11/13. As it curves, 60m to the east of the gate, it is embanked on either side.

16 Drainage channel – not accurately surveyed. Water was flowing along it at the time of survey.

17 A hollow, c0.5m deep, is overlain by 13. Though it looks like a hollow way at its western end, further east it is clearly a water feature. It has intermittent banks, up to 0.4m high, on either side for much of its length. It collects water from 16 and to the east of this point is 1.6m deep, steep-sided and only 2m wide. To the east of 31 the bank on its south side is enlarged and forms part of dam 41.

18 Traces of other possible hollow ways, with elevation of no more than 0.2-0.3m, lie between 15 and 17.

19 A wide, flat-topped bank has a slight ditch to either side. The overall width of the earthwork is 7.6m. The bank, which is up to 0.5m high at most, is steep-sided to the west, shallow to the east.

20 A brick-built bridge.

21 A water-filled channel, feeding the ditch of 7, is 0.6m deep and 2.2m wide. There are other, slighter, channels in this area (not surveyed).

22 Main water channel, contains a black plastic pipe.

23 A water channel, similar to 21; all the channels in this area appear to be recent, perhaps put in when Charcoal Gully was planted.

24 A water channel, 2.7m wide and 0.8m deep and wet at the time of survey, runs from a brick-built reservoir to the southern end of 19 and feeds pond 25.

25 A large, deep pond is surrounded by a massive bank or dam, up to 10m thick and 2m high. The area was densely overgrown at the time of survey and it was not possible to check the OS depiction satisfactorily. The pond, with the exception of the arm extending in a north-westerly direction from the southern corner, held water at the time of the survey.



- 26 An irregular oval mound up to 0.5m high may be spoil from the adjacent small pond 27.
- 27 A pond; the area was so overgrown at the time of survey that it was not possible to check the OS depiction (but see 28).
- 28 A water channel, as shown by the OS, is 1.8m wide and 0.3m deep. It enters pond 27 closer to mound 26 than the OS depiction suggests, so the pond may be larger than shown.
- 29 A broad channel extending to the south from 27 for some distance – the end could not be located in dense vegetation. The channel is about 5m wide and 1m deep, with a slight intermittent bank, about 2m wide, to the east.
- 30 A scarp, up to 0.5m high, is probably a continuation of 28 (and see 34) but could also be the side of a return arm of 29.
- 31 This marks the point at which the bank on the southern side of channel 17 is enlarged to form one side of the massive dam 41.
- 32 A large sub-rectangular mound, up to 1.5m high, has had a large tree planted in the centre, of which only traces of a stump now remain.
- 33 A slight indistinct scarp is 0.3-0.4m high.
- 34 A drain, 2m wide and 0.2m deep, is a continuation of 28 and is led through the dam 41. There are other drains in this area running more-or-less parallel to 34 (not surveyed).
- 35 A sub-circular mound, up to 1.2m high, its top much disturbed, lies precisely in the centre of the area defined by the side walls of dam 41. The area immediately to its south was heavily overgrown at the time of survey and no matching mound for 32 could be found.
- 36 A drainage ditch, 1.7m wide, 0.8m deep to the north, 0.4m deep to the south, runs along the south side of this fence. Water was flowing along it at the time of survey.
- 37 This is labelled as a track by the OS but it now looks like a hedge bank with a small ditch on its west side.
- 38 There are some gentle undulations in this pasture field, some of which could represent ridge-and-furrow.
- 39 A dam holds back an extant pond, which is the top of a flight of ponds with less distinct dams leading down into The Pits. These ponds are formally shaped, and are therefore presumably part of the garden, while those in The Pits appear to be the result of surface quarrying, for sand or clay. From here the water from the gardens drains into the stream which flows past Pamber Priory.
- 40 This wooded area is seamed with small drains but no other earthworks were apparent at the time of survey.
- 41 A large dam, up to 1.6m high internally and 2.5-3.0m high externally, would have held back a sheet of water possibly more than 1 hectare (2.4 acres) in extent and rectangular or trapezoidal in shape. The mounds 32 and 35 might have formed islands within this basin but its north-western side cannot be certainly identified.
- 42 The canals and moat are as depicted by the OS. The moat, which was dry by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, was re-flooded in the 1960s. Most of the canals are also wet.



43 A bank, about 0.4m high, has apparently been cut by the canal extending the western side of the moat. Its line is continued to the south by the existing field boundary and feature 44.

44 An outward-facing scarp continues the line of 43 and swings to the east. Though it is mostly a very slight feature, at its eastern end it is up to 1.0m high and has traces of a ditch to its south. It is cut by a track.

45 The ice-house, measuring about 9×6m, is a brick-built tunnel vault, more than half buried in a mound which stands about 1.5m above the surrounding ground level.

46 This narrow compartment is bounded by a slight bank, no more than 0.2m high, alongside the canal on its west side. There is also a possible walk alongside the moat, bounded by a slight scarp, also about 0.2m high.

47 A substantial hedge bank, from 0.4m to 0.7m high, planted with holly and other species, continues the line of 36, but does not have a drainage ditch alongside it.

48 A hedge and fence has a drainage ditch, 2m wide and 0.5m deep, to its east.

49 A hedge bank with a ditch (a continuation of 48) to its north.

50 A substantial ditch, with water (from the trough at the end of 4?) flowing in it at the time of survey, is approximately 2m wide and 0.5m deep. The bank on the south side is a continuation of 49.

51 A hedge with no earthwork.

52 A very slight gully marks the south side of a shelter belt.

53 A more substantial gully marks the end and south side of a shelter belt.

54 There are new greenhouses, etc, in this area.

55 A large ditch, up to 2.4 m wide, had water (from 36?) flowing in it at the time of survey.

56 The footings of a small building depicted by the OS survive.



*Fig 4 16th-century cottage*

57 A broad dam forms the end of a series of ponds fed by 55. These ponds have been cleared and re-flooded recently.

58 A slight scarp, up to 0.3m high, is the only trace of the former riding school.

59 Stabling – extant building.

60 Cart shed(?) – extant building.

61 Pig styes – demolished.

62 Cottage (Fig 4) – extant building of 16<sup>th</sup>-century origin, with later extensions, is described briefly in the DOE *List* for Basingstoke and Deane (1984, 156).

63 Other extant farm buildings.

64 Wyeford Farm House occupies the eastern corner of the moat. It has been described by Pevsner & Lloyd (1967, 370) and in the DOE *List* for Basingstoke and Deane (1984, 155-6). There is no apparent agreement on its date of construction – Pevsner and Lloyd suggest that it is later 17<sup>th</sup>-century while the List says early 17<sup>th</sup>-century – and little is known of its subsequent history. Its brickwork is very fine, including terracotta Ionic capitals to its pilasters (Fig 5), and it may be significant that bricks were made at Tadley Common (VCH 1911, 219). The early 20<sup>th</sup>-century extension has been dated to 1931 (NMR no SU 55 NE 8, Authority 3) but the architect is not known. The house has never been subject to detailed architectural investigation.



Fig 5. Pilaster capital

65 A small pond below the moat dam occupies a formerly larger ponded area. It was waterlogged at the time of survey.

66 A long pond flanks the north side of the entrance drive.

67 A group of ponds flanking the south side of the entrance drive was surveyed at 1:500 scale (Fig 6). There is a main pond containing two islands, each of which holds its own smaller pond. The overall shape of the complex is not a true rectangle, as it is wider at the western end, while the northern half is shorter than the southern; no doubt this is a deliberate part of the design. It almost reflects the slightly trapezoidal shape of the large pond formed by dam 41. Part of the main pond was flooded at the time of survey.

The southern island is regular and formed of sharply cornered rectangles while the northern one is shorter and more irregular in shape with more rounded corners. Nevertheless, it seems clear that both are part of a single design. The southern island stands 1.2 m above the main pond while its internal pond is only 0.5m deep; the northern island stands 1.7m high and its internal pond is nearly as deep. If the pond within the southern island was indeed water-filled, the whole system may have been filled almost to the level of this island, so that it would have appeared as a walk almost flush with the water. The highest point in the complex is at the northernmost point of the northern island, where it broadens out to a wide platform. Unfortunately this was completely inaccessible due to the state of the vegetation at the time of survey.

The southern island has been breached through both its long sides at a later date, presumably in an effort to drain its central pond. There are now outflow channels at the southern and eastern corners of the complex. Although recut, either or both of these might be original. This is the lowest point in the garden, except for the area above The Pits, and water drains from here away from Wyeford to the south. There are two slight, elongated mounds in the base of the main pond at its eastern end. These probably result from the clearing out of drainage gullies leading to the outlet in this corner.

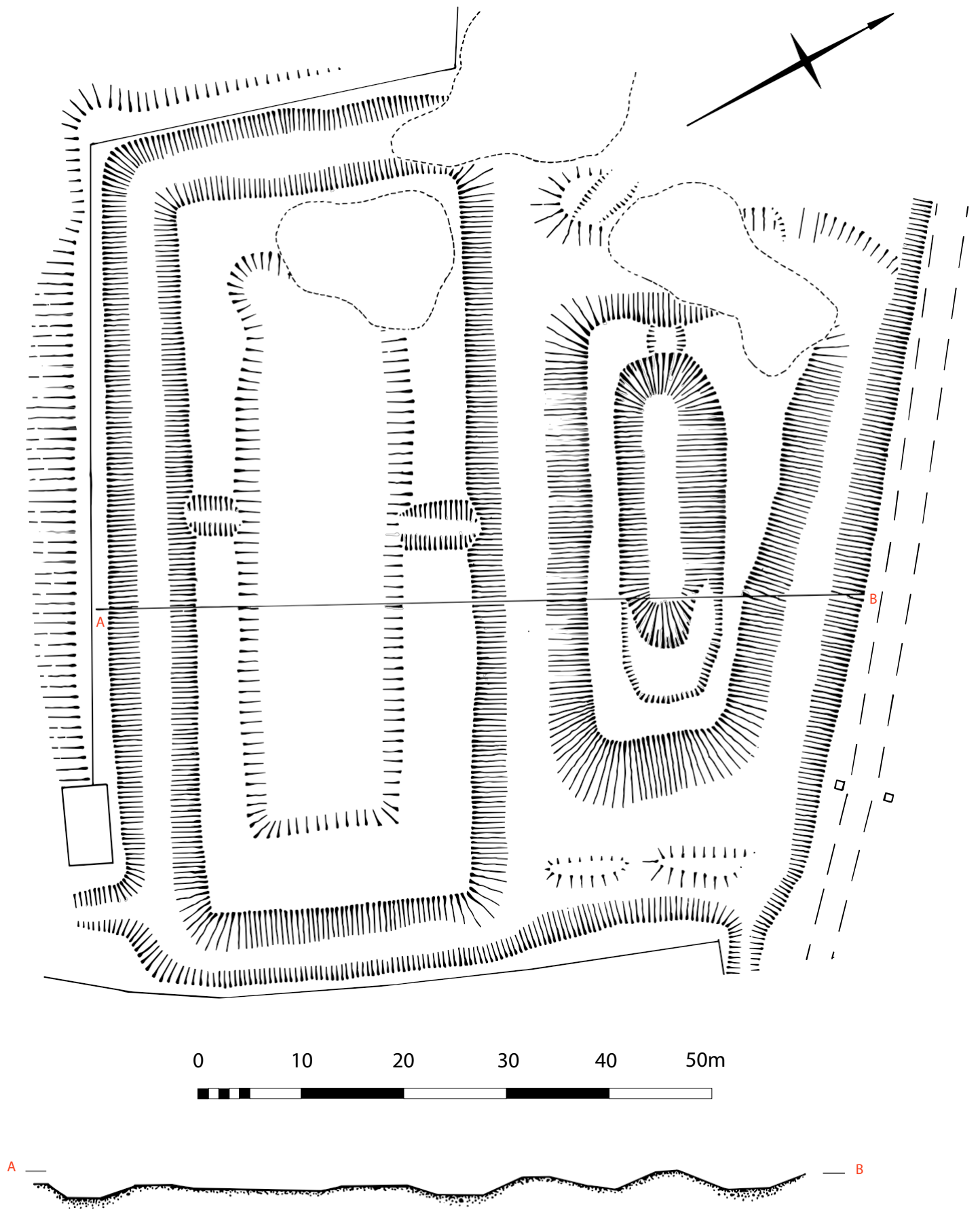


Fig 6 Earthwork plan and profile of ponds 67; areas of dense vegetation marked by pecked lines

## DISCUSSION

The earthworks at Wyford Farm have been seen traditionally as a medieval moat and fishponds. However, though the moat might be medieval in origin, it is clear that the earthworks now to be seen represent a formal garden, probably of 17<sup>th</sup>-century date and broadly contemporary with the house.

The ponds in their present form constitute a very elaborate formal water garden, coherent and purposeful in design (Fig 7). Such gardens are not unusual adjuncts to 17<sup>th</sup>-century houses (see,

for example, Whittle & Taylor 1994). One outstanding feature at Wyford is the extremely large rectangular dam 41, which could have contained a sheet of water approximately 1 hectare (2.4 acres) in extent. This seems to be part of the original design. Gardens of this sort were ornamental but also had other uses. Wildfowling was one but angling was also a popular gentlemanly pastime of the period, so it may be that these ponds and canals were well stocked with fish, even if they were not fishponds in the traditional sense. Such gardens also usually contained an element of 'wilderness' planting. Here that could have occupied area 40, for instance, to one side of the large pond. Its southern and western boundaries are not defined, the fence separating it from field 38 being modern with no trace of an earthwork predecessor.

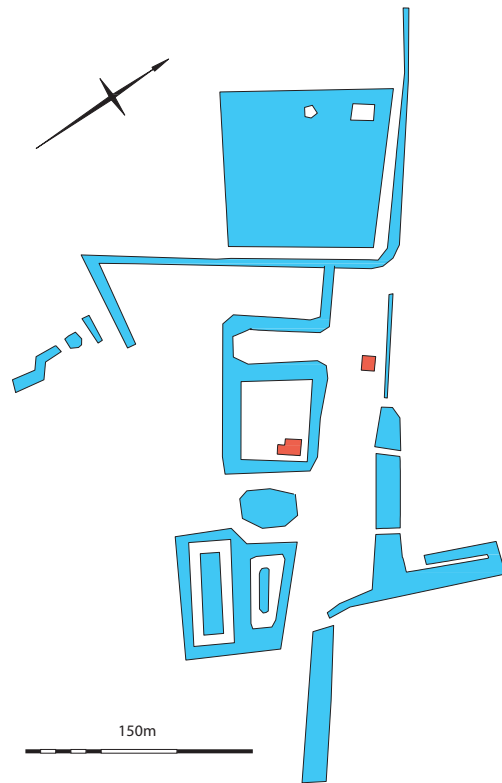


Fig 7 Diagram of suggested 17<sup>th</sup>-century water features

This phase of 17<sup>th</sup>-century gardening therefore accounts for features 32, 35, 39, 40, 41, 42, 46, 57, 65, 66 and 67, and possibly also for 7, 8, 9, 10, 17, 19, 29, 47 and 55. Several questions remain. It is suggested above that mounds 32 and 35 were islands surrounded by water. They might, alternatively, have been pillow mounds, as might 26 – Sir Edmund Ludlow obtained

right of 'free warren' in his manor of Wyford in 1617 (VCH 1911, 220) but this was a legal title that had nothing to do with rabbit farming specifically. The explanation of these mounds as features in a water garden should probably be preferred. Another question concerns the house which, though very well built with elaborate brickwork in the 'Artisan Mannerist' style, is small (especially in relation to the gardens), and occupies only one corner of the moat platform. The stylish façades are designed to be seen from the south and east, presumably the intended approaches (Fig 8). Its date of building is uncertain, with suggestions ranging across the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and therefore it is impossible to identify the probable builder. According to the VCH (*ibid*) Sir Edmund Ludlow held the manor from 1580 until 1625. His son Henry held it until 1639 and was succeeded by his son, Edmund, who conveyed the manor to Joseph Blagrave, the astrologer, in 1641. Thereafter the ownership is obscure but Charles Wither was the owner in 1697 and it then descended as a dependent farm of the Hall Place (or Oakley Hall) estate until 1924. Several 'Artisan Mannerist' houses of the 1650s were built for prominent supporters of the Commonwealth (Summerson 1953, 95-6) so the Ludlow/Blagrave connection here may be significant. Joseph Blagrave was a close relative – possibly a brother – of Daniel Blagrave, Edmund Ludlow's fellow regicide. It is almost certain that the present house had a predecessor, presumably the manor house of Wyford, but the present house seems too small to be a principal residence. It may therefore have been built as a retreat and this might be supported by the water gardens, if the emphasis was on religious contemplation and quietism. The significance of angling in the 17<sup>th</sup> century might be relevant here

(Everson & Williamson 1999, 147-50). However, the 17<sup>th</sup>-century house could be in effect a new cross wing added to an existing hall-and-cross wing medieval house, or even a cladding of an existing timber-framed cross wing.



Fig 8 The house from the east

One feature which is probably later than the 17<sup>th</sup> century, is pond 25. This pond has a massive dam, relative to its size. Its position suggests that it might have been a header tank for the whole system but its more naturalistic shape suggests that it is not part of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century works. It is a pond and not a flooded quarry, because the amount of material in the surrounding banks must be approximately equivalent to the amount of material excavated – little, if anything, has been taken away. However, the context in which this pond may have been created is unknown.

One feature is possibly of earlier date than anything else presently visible on the site. This is the bank 43/44, which runs across the paddock to the south of the moat and through the wood above The Pits, turning and being cut by the track to the east. This feature appears to be cut by the moat, or its westerly extension, and is on a slightly different alignment from the moat and the garden earthworks. It may, therefore, be two sides of a pre-existing enclosure, but of what date or purpose is unknown.

The ridge-and-furrow seen at 6 and suggested possibly at 5 and 38, might be relics of the medieval landscape surviving to either side of the later gardens. However, they are not distinctively ‘medieval’ in form and no chronological relationship is present, so they might equally be contemporary with the gardens or even later. For what it is worth, the ridge-and-furrow at 6 appears to share its alignment with the gardens.

In summary, most of the earthworks on the site seem to form a coherent single-phase entity, suggesting a relatively brief *floruit* in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, with the house thereafter rapidly declining in status to a tenanted farm and the gardens being left as a fossil.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Much further research is clearly required:

Architectural investigation of the house to establish date of construction; any earlier surviving fragments; identity of the architect of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century extension.

Documentary research to establish ownership in the later-17<sup>th</sup> century; any possible historical context(s) for the construction of pond 25 and the 1931 extension to the house.

Geophysical survey of the moat platform to identify the footprint of any demolished buildings; the paddock to the south to investigate the possible earlier enclosure; garden compartments, e.g. 46, to identify any structural elements.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The overall plan (Fig 3) was surveyed by graphical methods into existing OS detail at 1:2500 scale. The plan of the complex of ponds to the south-east of the house (Fig 6) was surveyed at 1:500 using a plane table and self-reducing alidade, and tape-and-offset.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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