

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT IVY HOUSE, 45 OLD REDBRIDGE ROAD, REDBRIDGE, SOUTHAMPTON

By M P SMITH

ABSTRACT

Ivy House, a Grade II Listed Building, was subject to building recording followed by excavation in the surrounding grounds. The first evidence for the medieval village of Redbridge was obtained. The plot had first been occupied in the Saxo-Norman period, but the main phase of settlement was of the late 13th–14th century, when a post-in-trench building was erected. The site appeared to have been abandoned in the late-medieval period, but was re-occupied in the first half of the 17th century when a timber-framed barn was built. This still survives. The barn was floored in and converted to domestic use in the 18th century, when a brick built house was added to its north end.

INTRODUCTION

The Southampton City Council Archaeology Unit carried out an archaeological excavation and recording at 45 Old Redbridge Road, Southampton (NGR SU 371136) on behalf of Warwick Developments and Construction Ltd in May 2001. The project was lead by MP Smith BA MIFA. The pottery was identified by DH Brown BA MIFA. Investigations in 1996 had identified the timber-framed structure as a counting house and had demonstrated that archaeological deposits survived beneath the semi-derelict building (SOU 749; Higgins and Whitehead 1996).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGIES

The work was carried out to a scheme of investigation agreed between Warwick Construction and the City Council. The first stage, prior to any building work, consisted of evaluation trenches (site code

SOU 1123) excavated to the west of the standing building. These trenches revealed medieval and later deposits, and the planning authority requested the archaeological excavation of part of the footings for the new flats. Overburden and the post-medieval plough soil were removed by mechanical excavator, after which exposed features were excavated by hand. A watching brief was then held on further groundworks during the construction phase.

The timber-framed building required extensive work and a drawn and photographic record (site code SOU 1131) was made to level 4 of the RCHME brief; the later brick elements being recorded to level 3. The site archives of both projects are deposited with Southampton City Council. These include detailed archive reports (Smith 2001a and b), drawings and photographs.

SITE LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHY

Redbridge is located about 5km north-west of the medieval town of Southampton on the east bank of the river Test. The Test at this point is open water at the head of the estuary, whereas north of the bridge, although still tidal, it flows through marsh and reed beds. The Ivy House plot lies on the south side of Old Redbridge Road within the historic village about 110m south-east of the medieval bridge that crossed the Test (fig 1). The land at this point is the flood plain of the Test and the ground was fairly level. The plot was originally much closer to the shore, but encroachment by the 17th century shipyard, the 19th century railway, and the establishment of the LSWR Permanent Way works (Moody 1992, 88) have resulted in it now being some 50m from the water.

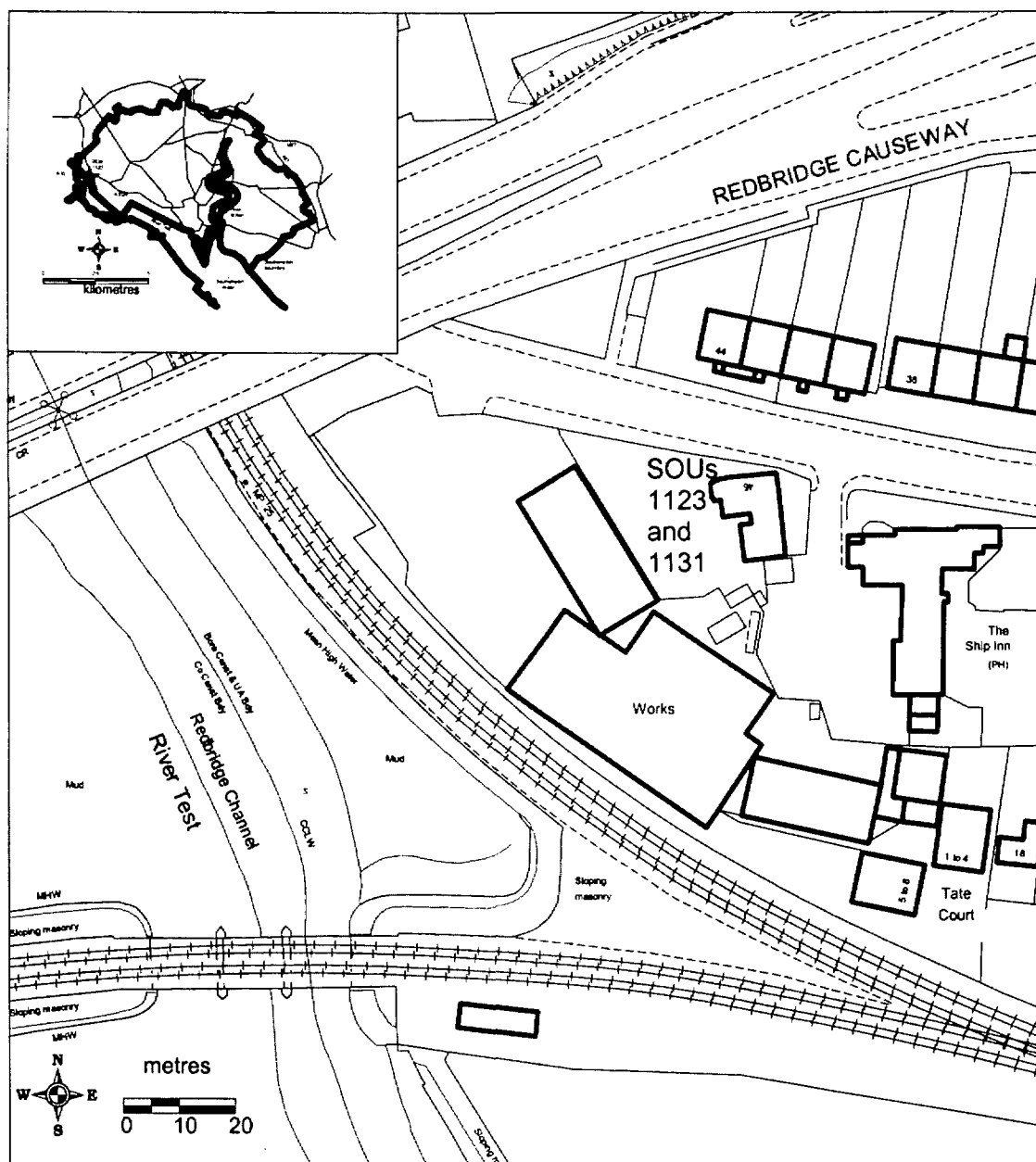


Fig. 1 Site location plan (based on the Ordnance Survey's 2001 map with the permission of the Controller of her Majesty's Stationery Office, Crown Copyright Reserved. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Southampton City Council License No 079340)

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The lower Test valley has evidence for settlement that began in the Bronze Age and continued through the Iron Age and into the Roman period (Rees 1994). Much of that evidence has been found to the north of Redbridge in the Nursling area (Brown *et al* 1996; Adam *et al* 1997).

Bede, writing before AD735, mentions an incident that occurred in AD686 at a monastery at *Hreutford* or Reedford (VCH 1900, 380). This has been thought to refer either to a minster at Eling to the south-west, or to the monastery at Nursling, about 3km to the north. The settlement of Redbridge probably lay within either Millbrook or Nursling at that period. The first reference to the bridge is the use of the name *Hreodbrycg* in a charter of AD956 (VCH 1908, 430) defining the boundaries of the adjacent Buddlesgate hundred. Redbridge itself was in its own hundred, which was mostly situated on the opposite bank of the Test. The change of name from Reedford to Redbridge, and the layout of the hundreds, suggest that the bridge was in existence by the mid-10th century (Hill 1981, 45). Redbridge appears in the Domesday Book in 1086 as *Rodbrige*, a small settlement with four villagers, one smallholder, and two mills.

A bridge certainly existed by the 13th century, when an inquisition of Edward III recorded that a rich merchant had paid for its rebuilding, presumably long enough ago for the benefactor's name to have been forgotten. The fact that the bridge was a gift of charity (see Cook 1998, 14) coupled with the position of the bridge on the boundary between the Buddlesgate and Redbridge hundreds resulted in the refusal by either Hundred to maintain it, and the Crown had by 1276 awarded pontage to the people of Redbridge. This was not apparently successful as the burgesses of Southampton in their appeal to the King for relief on their fee farm gave the high cost of maintaining the bridge at Redbridge as one of the grounds for a rebate. Collection of tolls by the locals was not without drawbacks, in 1362 Robert Tots and Alexander de Bampton, who lived near the bridge, absconded with the tolls (VCH). Apart from references to the bridge itself the lack of documentary references to the village in the medieval period suggests it was never a large settlement.

By the 15th century Redbridge was fixed as the upper limit of the jurisdiction of the port of Southampton (Davies 1883, 261), although the admiralty proceedings throw little light on the settlement at this time because Redbridge was accounted for as part of Millbrook (Welch 1968). The site of the late Saxon and medieval bridges is not known, they perhaps lay adjacent to the existing stone bridge, dated to the 17th century by Pevsner and Lloyd (1967, 569).

The riverside seems to have been certainly developed by the late 17th century, when Celia Fiennes visited the area and recorded ship-building (Morris 1949, 53), Defoe recorded the same activity in 1724, Cox again in 1738, and Brooke in 1815. The yard probably existed on the construction of merchant vessels, the need for naval ships fluctuating in line with the political situation. Sir Samuel Bentham, inspector-general of navy works, tried out experimental designs at Redbridge in the years after 1795 (Temple-Patterson 1966, 109). In the 18th and 19th century the small port seems to have been significant for local transshipment of goods such as coal and iron up the Test Valley and to the New Forest (Oxley 1838, 221), helped by the construction of a canal in 1796, which ran from Southampton to Redbridge, and then turned north up the Test valley, with branches to Salisbury and Andover (Welch 1966 *passim*). A river lock at Redbridge gave direct access to the canal from Southampton water.

The venture was never a commercial success; the Salisbury branch went bankrupt by 1802, and that to Southampton went out of use shortly after. The Andover Canal continued in use until at least the late 1830s (Oxley 1838, 221), but carried little cargo until it was sold to the railway company in the later 19th century. The 1840 tithe map of Millbrook shows the line of the canal as still running to the east of the village.

The map of Hampshire produced by the Ordnance Survey in 1808 showed the settlement of Redbridge as straddling the road leading to the bridge. A dock is marked by the Test, probably the 'ship yard' shown more clearly on the tithe map.

The tithe map of 1840 showed little change from 1808, with the village aligned along the road that led to the bridge (fig 2). The majority of the

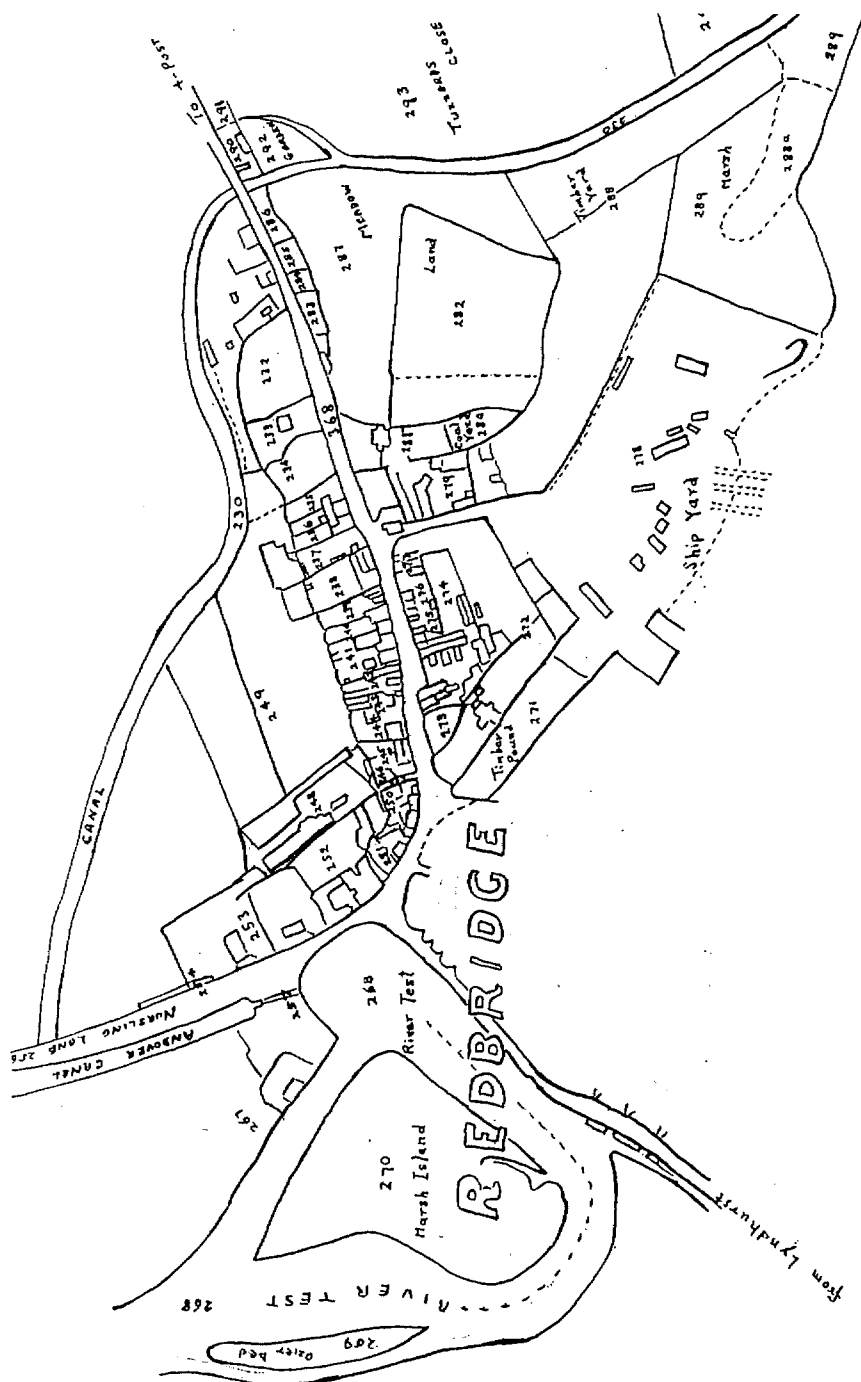


Fig. 2 Extract from the Millbrook tithe map of 1840 (traced by T Pook).

house plots were shown on the north side of the Road, within a regularly planned area. To the south of the road lay larger, less regimented plots, with a way between them that led to the shipyard. The tithe schedule described 26 plots as containing at least one house or tenement. Trades included a brewery, malthouse, slaughterhouse, smithy, shop, and two inns. The largest inn, at present 'The Ship', lay to the south of the road, to the west of the shipyard entrance.

The area of the archaeological works was then a roughly triangular plot, number 273 on the tithe map. The schedule listed it as 'house and garden'. The plot to the west, 271 was described as a timber pound. The landward side of the timber pound may reflect the position of the medieval waterfront. To the south and east was a large plot described as 'ship yard and warves'. The map showed three slips and a dock. A house is shown between the 273 plot and the timber pound 271. This property was labelled as 'Ivy House' on the 1868 Ordnance survey map.

Redbridge's access to the water was severely restricted in 1847 when the London and South Western Railway opened the Southampton to Dorchester railway. The line ran along the waterfront before crossing the Test south of the old bridge (Cox 1975, 23). Redbridge's maritime connections were further weakened in 1880 when the LSWR acquired Redbridge Wharf in order to construct the Permanent Way Works. The construction of the line involved the demolition of the Ivy House shown on the 1868 map, and its name appears to have transferred to the present building nearer the street. The vacant areas along the street frontages of Old Redbridge Road were filled in with housing during the 19th century, and the surrounding fields were built on during the second half of the 20th century.

RESULTS OF THE EXCAVATION

Prehistoric

Twelve prehistoric flints dating from the Palaeolithic to the Mesolithic periods were found in later levels, suggesting intermittent occupation.

Saxo-Norman

Residual Saxo-Norman pottery was recovered, and one small sub-rectangular pit that contained five sherds of Saxo-Norman pottery may have been of that period.

High-medieval (late 13th–14th century) (fig 3)

The earliest certain structural evidence was dated to the high-medieval period, and consisted of a 1100mm wide and 200mm deep foundation-trench. In the base of the trench were a 300mm diameter post-hole, packed with limestone and flint cobbles, associated stake-holes and a slab of limestone, possibly a post-pad. High-medieval pottery was found in the post-hole. To the east of the foundation was a gravel layer 200mm thick, interpreted as an internal floor surface. The gravel included high-medieval pottery, and West Country roof slate, used as roofing in southern Hampshire throughout the medieval period. It is unclear whether the structure was a dwelling or an ancillary building, but its crude, earthfast construction points to the later. It perhaps served a house closer to the road.

Garden soils found to the west of the building produced a large quantity of high-medieval pottery, most of which is paralleled in Southampton. The most common fabric, including a near complete cooking pot, was Southampton Coarseware, fabric 1123 (Brown 2002). Other fabrics of note were Southampton Sandy ware (fabric 1150), and South Hampshire Redware (fabric 1248). The dominance of these pottery fabrics suggests that Redbridge looked to Southampton for its pottery rather than the Test Valley where for instance the Laverstock industry is well represented (A Russel pers. comm.). Of interest is the notable absence of imported pottery, which is found on all sites in Southampton of this period. Instead of Saintonge jugs the people of Redbridge used only locally-produced vessels. The presence of both glazed jugs and imported roof slates suggests that despite not having access to imported finewares the inhabitants of this site were not at the bottom of the social scale.

Late Medieval

Late medieval pottery was scarce and this suggests

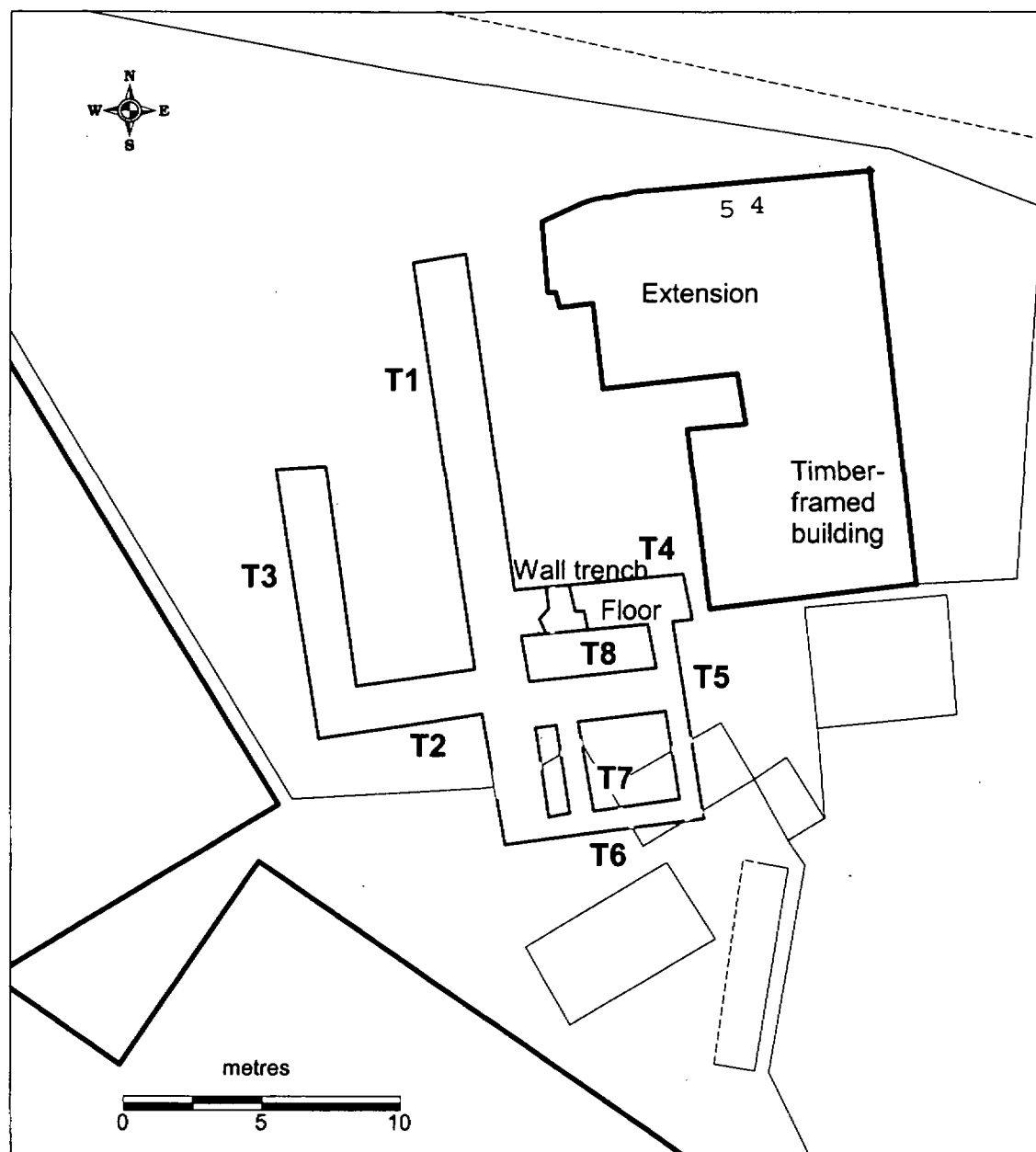


Fig. 3 Trench location plan (based on the Ordnance Survey's 2001 map with the permission of the Controller of her Majesty's Stationery Office, Crown Copyright Reserved. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Southampton City Council License No 079340).



Fig. 4 Ivy House prior to restoration seen from the rear. The timber-framed structure is contained within the projecting wing to the right.

that there was a hiatus in occupation before 1350. The French raids on the south coast in 1338, followed by the economic and demographic decline of the mid 14th century left Southampton considerably impoverished, it is no surprise that Redbridge reflects the same trends.

17th century

Occupation resumed in the post-medieval period with the construction of a timber-framed building to the north east of the high-medieval building (fig 4). The building was a barn-like structure aligned roughly north to south at right angles to the road. It consisted of two bays of unequal length with three main trusses, one at each end, and a third slightly to the south of the centre. There was originally a door

of domestic proportions in the east wall, and a row of diamond mullioned windows in the north gable. Most of the west wall had been removed, so it was not possible to tell if there had originally been a door in that wall as well. The building internally was open to the roof. It presumably stood on the east side of a plot that contained other buildings, together with a house on the street front. The purpose of this structure is not known, but the proximity to the shipyard, first mentioned in this period, and the large window in the north wall, could mean it was a workshop or store rather than an agricultural building.

Activity resumed to the south-west of the new building, on the site of the medieval structure. An irregular line of post-holes roughly in line with the north end of the new building seemed to define a change in land use, with the area to the south

becoming a garden, whilst to the north may have been an open yard.

The pottery recovered included Frechen stone-ware jugs of Bartmann type, and an early piece of English stoneware, perhaps dating to the 1670s. The most common pottery type in this period was that from Verwood, and Redbridge must have been on the main route by which Verwood was distributed into the Southampton area.

18th century

The timber-framed building was altered in this period. A first floor was inserted, with a timber staircase erected on the north side of the central truss. Small lean-to extensions were added to the south and west to provide domestic offices, and a brick-built oven and copper base were built in the west extension. This seems to have been a conversion to domestic use, and may have been associated with the construction of the two-storey brick house to the north, which is 18th century in date. This brick house was aligned roughly east to west, parallel with the road, and probably replaced an earlier structure, although it was not possible to excavate to check this theory. The wooden bow window on its west end may have been a later

addition. The timber-framed structure was clad in brick, either at the same time as the brick house was built, or later. Few 18th century finds were recovered, suggesting that domestic rubbish was removed from the site for disposal elsewhere.

CONCLUSIONS

There is a possibility of prehistoric occupation in the Redbridge area. The modern village was found by the 10th century AD, and there was very slight evidence for activity of this date on SOU 1123. The high-medieval evidence might suggest expansion of the settlement associated with the contemporary growth in the national population, and ties in with documentary evidence for the importance of the bridge. The apparent contraction of the village by the late-medieval period may have resulted from depopulation, presumably associated with the Black Death and the economic decline of that period. The 17th century barn could be associated with demographic and economic growth at that time, and is perhaps to be associated with the rise of the naval shipbuilding industry, which boosted activity at many small ports on the south coast. The property was expanded in the 18th century, and converted to a domestic dwelling.

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