

## CHAPTER 2: ARCHAEOLOGY AND EARLY HISTORY

*For this chapter, contributions were invited from four writers, all experts in their own fields of research. Their four accounts were written independently and, inevitably, there are places where information overlaps or even appears to contradict. Rather than attempt to correlate or iron out discrepancies, the editors have decided to present each article as it stands, thus challenging you, the reader, to sift through the evidence presented. Much of this information is new; there are still unresolved questions and further research will answer some of them. But this is the story so far: we are sure that it will whet your appetite.*

### EDITORIAL NOTE

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTRODUCTION

TONY BROWN

Archaeological fieldwork and excavation have shown just how effectively the Nene Valley has been exploited in the remote past. In the Roman period, for example, there were major villas, the centres of big estates, at Stanwick and Cotterstock, and small roadside settlements, analogous to our small country towns, at Oundle and Titchmarsh, along important roads and at significant road junctions. The bulk of the countryside was worked from small farms, presumably linked by tracks whose ditches are occasionally seen from the air. Wadenhoe had at least two sites like this within its boundaries - there is an area of dark soil which produces Roman pottery in the ploughed land formed by the triangle of roads immediately to the west of the village, and more Roman pottery has been discovered, again in ploughed land, to the right of the road to Aldwincle, just before the parish boundary<sup>1</sup>. Aerial photography has revealed ditches and a sub-rectangular enclosure at the first site, and also traces of pit alignments - rows of pits which were carefully dug to form boundaries, of Iron Age date - close to the second. Determined walking of the ploughed fields of the parish would certainly reveal a good deal more than this, and would almost certainly take the story back into the Iron Age (with finds of pottery for example), and earlier still, with finds of worked flints. Sites which produced the black gritty pottery of the early and middle Saxon periods would be of particular interest, since they would form a link between the Roman period and the settlement pattern of the early Middle Ages, which is basically the one we still have. Whether the earthworks in Castle Close have prehistoric origins is as yet unknown - only archaeological excavation will determine this.

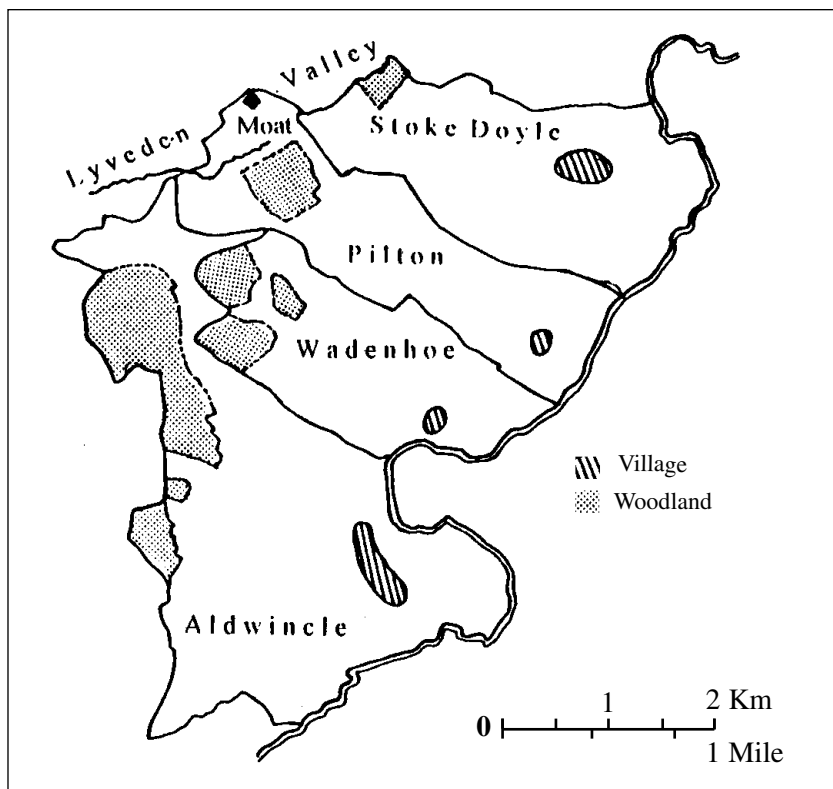
<sup>1</sup> The National Grid References for the two Roman sites are TL 009 837 and TL 003 834: information from the Sites and Monuments Record, Northamptonshire Heritage, and from the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, *An inventory of archaeological sites in north-west Northamptonshire*, Vol.1, 1975, pp. 101-2.

It is not possible to write a connected account of the history of Wadenhoe in the Middle Ages - the documents do not exist to enable this to be done, and if they did, it would be a task of many years. Instead, I would like to address just two or three topics about which it might be possible to say something, using the evidence of maps, and aerial photography, along with a fairly limited number of accessible historical documents.

## The size of Wadenhoe Parish

The first question concerns the size of the parish of Wadenhoe. Why is Wadenhoe smaller than its neighbours? Stoke Doyle and Pilton are much the same size, 1570 and 1406 acres respectively, and the two Aldwincles together amount to 2886, but Wadenhoe is decidedly inferior at only 1199 acres. The physical reason for the disparity is clear from the map (*Fig. 1*) - whereas all the other parishes cross the wooded ridge which runs along the western side of the Nene Valley and take in land which lies in the Lyveden Valley beyond, Wadenhoe does not do this and its western boundary stops pretty well on the crest of the ridge a few yards from Lyveden New Building.

*Fig. 1*  
Wadenhoe and its  
neighbouring parishes



At first sight this pattern is even more curious given the way Wadenhoe is referred to in Domesday Book (1086). Here it has three entries. There is an estate rated at  $2\frac{5}{8}$  hides (a Saxon unit used for the taxation assessment of estates), held by Aubrey de Vere of the Bishop of Coutances; a second estate held by the same man of the same

overlord, but held at the time of the Norman Conquest by the important thegn Burgred, who held vast estates in Northamptonshire, and rated now at  $2\frac{1}{8}$  hides; and a small estate ( $\frac{3}{8}$  hide) held of the Abbey of Peterborough by a knight called Roger, which contained one bordar (a smallholder or cottager) with what is described as half a plough, with two acres of meadow. Added up, these Wadenhoe entries have a bigger hidage total than either Pilton or Stoke Doyle (although not the two Aldwincles).

In the Northamptonshire Survey, a 12th century document which records the changes in landownership of estates since the time of Domesday, and also their current hidage assessments, Wadenhoe makes an even stronger showing. Neither Pilton nor Stoke Doyle appear by name in this document, but Wadenhoe has no less than five entries:

1. Aubrey de Vere  $2\frac{1}{4}$  hides of the fee of King David (i.e. the lordship once exercised by the Bishop of Coutances had now passed to the King of Scotland).
2. Wymunt de Stoke  $\frac{1}{4}$  hide of the fee of the Abbot of Peterborough.
3. Roger Infans  $\frac{1}{5}$  hide of the same fee.
4. Vivien of Churchfield  $\frac{1}{2}$  hide of the same fee.
5. Geoffrey de Gunthorpe 2 hides of the same fee.

Can any sense be made of all this, and in particular do these entries have any bearing on the matter of the relative sizes of the parishes around Wadenhoe? I am inclined to think that some points can be explained, while some matters remain unresolved. First of all, many years ago the great Domesday scholar J. H. Round showed quite conclusively that the first Wadenhoe entry in Domesday, the  $2\frac{5}{8}$  hides of Aubrey de Vere, did not relate to Wadenhoe at all but to Wold, sixteen miles away to the west; there was simply an error in the place the estate was assigned to in the record of the Domesday survey<sup>1</sup>. Secondly, the  $2\frac{1}{8}$  hides held by Aubrey de Vere at Domesday is the  $2\frac{1}{4}$  hides of the Northamptonshire Survey - this *is* the manor of Wadenhoe and there was only ever one of them. Thirdly, the small ( $\frac{3}{8}$  hide) holding held by Roger as a tenant of the Abbot of Peterborough at the time of Domesday was not in Wadenhoe but at Lyveden and its site probably now lies in the parish of Pilton. I say this because the Roger of the Wadenhoe Domesday entry was almost certainly the Roger who held the manor of Pilton from the Abbot of Peterborough at Domesday; he was the ancestor of the Torpel family, a knightly family which also held land of Peterborough Abbey in Maxey, Ufford, Cotterstock and Glapthorn. Roger's successor was the Roger *Infans* of the Northamptonshire Survey, and I am inclined to think that the  $\frac{1}{5}$  hide he had then is the same as the  $\frac{3}{8}$  hide attributed to his father in 1086. Now we know that a minor family calling themselves the de Piltons held land as tenants of the Torpels and it may well be that this little holding is the one they had; we also know that they sometimes referred to themselves as de Liveden, which locates it there. One of the de Piltons or de Livedens is found referring to himself as a knight in

the late 13th century, and so we may be looking at the moated site which still exists in ploughed land at the northern corner of Pilton parish as the place where this family lived. But not the border of Domesday, one imagines; the two acres of meadow land assigned to this holding in Domesday points to the Lyveden valley bottom, near the stream, and it is surely significant that the archaeological excavations there in the 1970s did uncover evidence for activity there just before or round about the time of the Norman Conquest, associated as it happens with the smelting of iron<sup>2</sup>.

The other estates attributed to Wadenhoe in the Northamptonshire Survey were almost certainly nothing to do with Wadenhoe at all, but they do share certain common characteristics which might account for the way they are made to appear as if they did. The half hide of Vivien of Churchfield lay in the Lyveden Valley, where the place-name Churchfield preserves the memory of the village of that name to the present day. The other two holdings represent parts of the Domesday estates of Stoke Doyle, and these also may have incorporated land in the Lyveden Valley. So the Northamptonshire Survey may well only have included small holdings in the Lyveden Valley, or larger estates with land there, which fell under the overlordship of the Abbey of Peterborough. They were placed under Wadenhoe in the Northamptonshire Survey because it was under Wadenhoe that the only Peterborough Abbey estate in the Lyveden Valley recorded in Domesday Book, Roger's  $\frac{3}{8}$  hide, was listed.

But why was Roger's holding said to be in Wadenhoe in the first place? The answer probably lies in the fact that the Lyveden Valley settlements were relatively new when Domesday was compiled and represent the taking in of fresh land - there were no boundaries in the Lyveden Valley at this early date and Roger's little estate was included in Wadenhoe because this simply was the nearest place. It apparently had no value in 1066. But development was rapid in the 12th century, as we know from the archaeological excavations, with the growth of a complicated settlement pattern based on agriculture, with of course the manufacture of pottery and tiles as well. In due course decisions would have had to be made about the apportionment of tithes from these new farms and hence the assignation of land to the neighbouring well-established parishes and their churches. Now all the land in the Lyveden Valley up to the Brigstock parish boundary fell under the feudal overlordship of Peterborough Abbey, as Pilton, Stoke Doyle and Aldwinckle St Peter's already did. The parochial attribution of the Lyveden Valley estates was therefore made to follow their secular ownership, and since Wadenhoe was in no way connected with Peterborough Abbey it received no tithe from the Lyveden Valley and had no rights to land in it.

## **The layout of Wadenhoe village**

The second question concerns the layout of Wadenhoe itself, and in particular the oft-commented fact that the church and the village are separated, with Castle Close, which is clearly an early fortified site, as the earthworks show, in between. Now it may be that there are reasons connected with early religious practice which led to the construction of



the church in that particular place. But it is possible that there could be a perfectly simple explanation. It is very common in England to find church and manor house going together, the church having been founded by the manorial lord almost as one of the appurtenances of the estate and so in a sense his property. Perhaps therefore the earthworks on Castle Close do represent an early manorial site, if not something earlier still - they are quite undated and the defensive enclosure around the hill could be of almost any period. It is hard to resist the notion that this hill was indeed the spur of land (*hoh*) which belonged to the Wada who gave his name to the place. The earliest part of the church is the tower, of the late 12th century, but this does not mean that there had not been a church before then.

At Domesday Wadenhoe was quite definitely a manor, in the sense that there was a demesne worked by slaves (four of them) for the benefit of the lord, as well as nine villeins who also performed various duties for him as a condition of their tenancy. It is not necessary to suppose that they lived near the manor house and church. It is very probable that Castle Close and other land in its vicinity was the lord's property and formed an inner core of demesne land. It would not be unusual to find the houses of the tenants on the edge of this, and this may be what has happened at Wadenhoe. Now this particular piece of demesne land was never given over to houses, as quite often seems to have happened elsewhere when the population grew in the 12th and 13th centuries; it was constricted, and the position of the manor house was clearly chosen for reasons of defence - and the way it was treated in the Middle Ages prevented the growth of housing on it.

As with so many places in the Middle Ages, the owner of the manor and his requirements were to have profound effects on the way in which Wadenhoe developed. In the early 13th century Wadenhoe belonged to a trusted servant of Henry III, John de Lacy, Earl of Lincoln. In 1236 we find the king ordering John de Nevill, justiciar of the forest, to see to it that *J comiti Linc* received, as a gift from the king, seven oaks from *Gatel* and eight oaks from the royal park of Brigstock, so that he could maintain himself (*ad se hospitandum*) at his manor of Wadenhoe<sup>3</sup>. So we know that the earl actually visited the place, probably in attendance on the king during hunting expeditions in Rockingham forest. In 1249 his short-lived son Edmund received a grant of free warren, i.e. the right to hunt small animals over his manor, foxes, badgers, rabbits but particularly hares, again a suggestion of a personal interest in the place. From 1254 Wadenhoe was held by Roger de Quincy, Earl of Winchester, who died in 1264: the *inquisitio post mortem* (description of his estates, for the purposes of feudal taxation) drawn up then describes the manor house as a capital messuage worth, with the herbage of its garden, its meadow and ditches, half a mark (a mark was equivalent to 13 shillings 4d); the dovehouse was worth two shillings<sup>4</sup>.

Wadenhoe went back to the de Lacys. In 1298 Edmund's son Henry, also Earl of Lincoln and a figure of considerable importance during the reign of Edward 1, received from the king permission 'to

enclose with a wall a plot of land pertaining to the manor of Wadenham.... so that he may make a park there'<sup>5</sup>. The area of the enclosure was given as 30 acres. It has been suggested that this park is the area of land with a continuous curved hedge boundary around it set against the river Nene and marked as 'Warren' on maps of 1793 and 1822<sup>6</sup> (Fig.2). It contains 32<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> acres, a very reasonable agreement with the clearly rounded medieval figure; note how its northern boundary has been made to cut through one of the ridge-and-furrow furlongs of

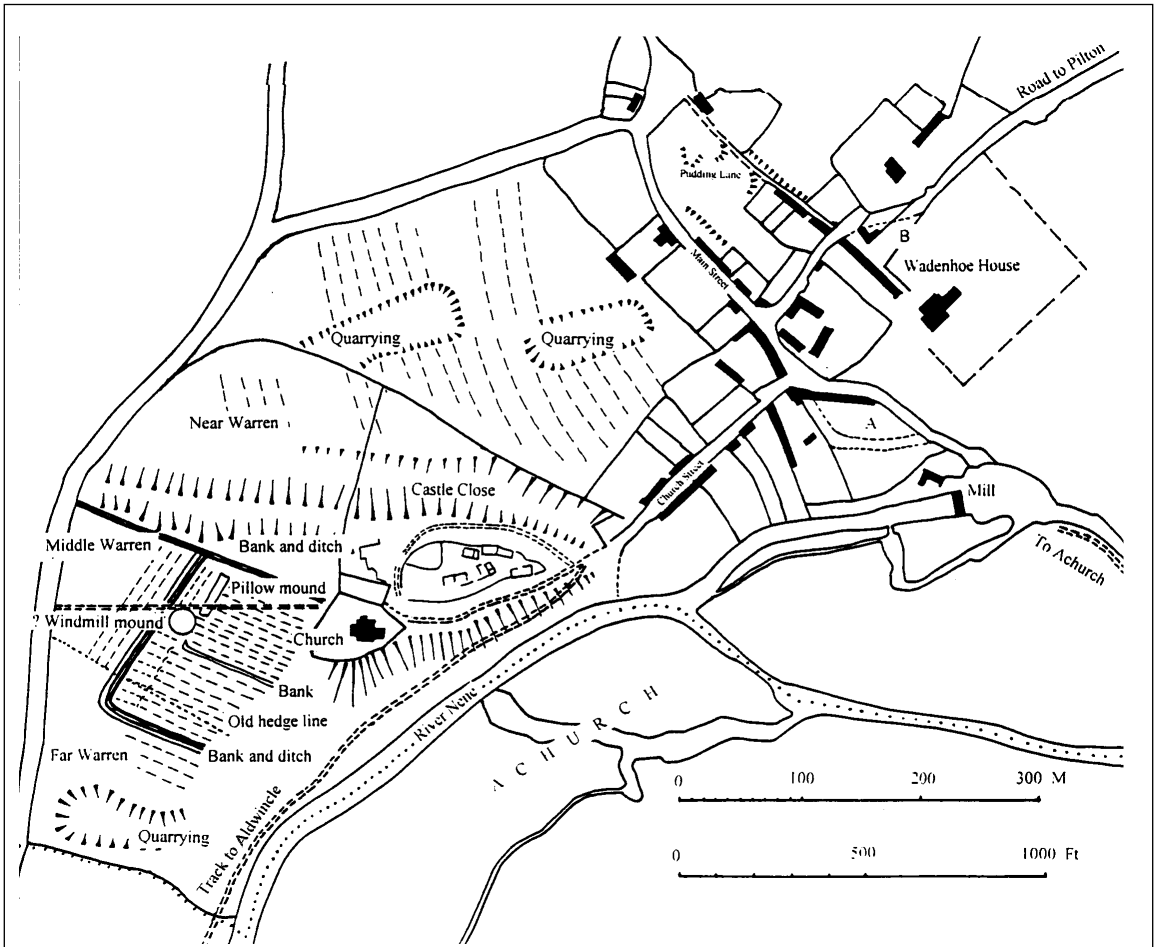


Fig. 2:  
Map of Wadenhoe with  
archaeological features  
explained

the common fields - the lord wanted to make sure that the stream which ran to the north of the church was well within his park. The church, with Castle Close and its earthworks, sits inside it. If this identification is correct, and it probably is given the equivalence in acreage, and if the earthworks are indeed the remains of a lordly establishment, as seems certain given the recent surveys, then we have a situation well worthy of comment. Most medieval parks, for the enclosure of deer, were created in wooded land usually at a distance from settlements, towards the edge of the parishes which contained them. The one at Wadenhoe is not like this and would have had more in common with the parks around the country houses of a later period, designed to set off the house of the great man and so emphasise his importance. An impressive and possibly fortified manor house next to a church, on a

a church, on a hill fronting a river, in an enclosure with a wall around it rather than the more usual wooden paling, would have been an entirely appropriate setting for an earl who acted as the king's ambassador more than once and who commanded with success armies against the Scots and Welsh.

Earl Henry died in 1312 and his widow Alice obtained some of his estates, including Wadenhoe. An extent (survey) of Wadenhoe, made in 1328 after her marriage to Sir Ebulo Lestrangle in 1324, provides valuable information about the manor house<sup>7</sup>. It was described as a hall with two chambers (*duabus cameris*), a chapel with two other chambers, along with a certain other house (*domus*) necessary for the visits of the lord. The officers of the manor took in a suitable piece of land grubbed up from the woodland (*ex stocibus*) to provide straw and roofing for this 'other house'. This building, with the fruit and herbage of the manorial garden, dovehouse and fishpond, had a net annual value of thirteen shillings and fourpence. This document is of great importance for the interpretation of the Castle Close site, because it is clearly providing a description of what was there - a hall from which the business of the manor was conducted, and another building used from time to time by the lord during his visits. Now the geophysical surveys recently carried out (see below) show precisely this - a hall and what seems to be have been a tower, nine metres square, and so a substantial structure - just the kind of impressive (and impressively sited) building which a great man would have required as, say, a hunting lodge.

The manor house (capital messuage) is mentioned again in later surveys, but with declining value - in 1335 with its garden and curtilage it was worth six and eightpence (the dovehouse nothing); in 1356 the 'site of the manor,' the dovehouse and garden had an annual value of twelve shillings<sup>8</sup>. All this may be symptomatic of a declining personal interest in Wadenhoe by its lords. Certainly by 1542 there was no resident lord and a survey taken then for Sir Charles Blount, Lord Mountjoy, appears to show the demesne arable land broken up into various parcels (hall lands) and let out; Castle Yard Close and Conygrie Close (i.e. the warren) are also in the hands of tenants. Evidently the building near the church was no longer used and quite possibly by now had largely gone, with, however, the field name quite an accurate indicator of what had once been there.

The surveys also have things to tell us about other appurtenances of the demesne. All of them mention two water mills. Most refer to a fishery, which in this case meant defined fishing rights in the river Nene. There was a separate pasture whose area varies in the documents from 11 to 20 acres - this would probably have been one of the enclosed fields in the western part of the parish (*Fig. 3*). The wood is always mentioned, although its size as given varies (40 acres in 1328, 20 acres in 1356); it was not worth very much since the tenants had the right to take wood to repair their houses and fences, and was apparently worth nothing at all in years when the lord came. The park receives no mention after 1298.

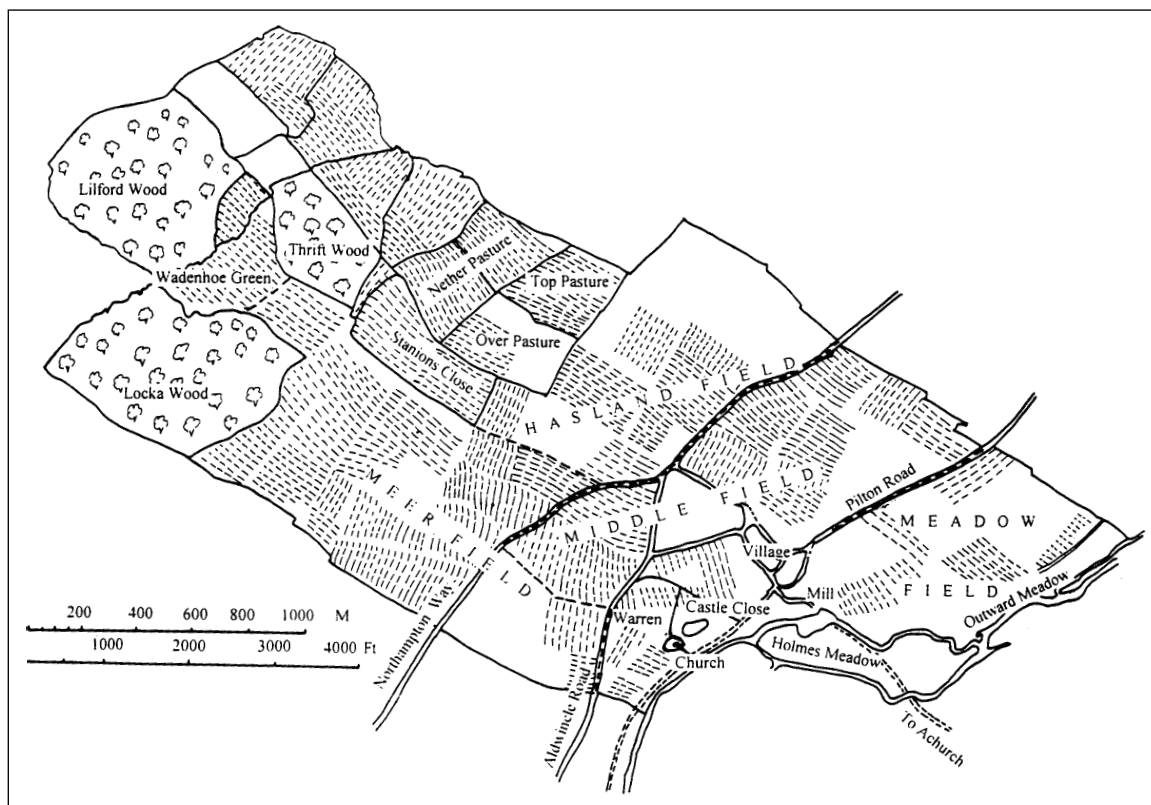
The rabbit warren does not appear in the 14th century surveys,

but had clearly been brought into existence by the time of the survey of 1542, when it had been let to a Mr Edward Chapman (as Conygrie Close, ten acres). At this point it might be possible to relate earthwork field remains still to be seen in the fields of Wadenhoe to the historical documentation. To the west of the church, within the area of the pair of hedged fields marked as Far Warren and Middle Warren on the map of 1822 (*Fig. 2*), are two ridge-and-furrow furlongs, one running north-east/south-west, the other north-west/south-east. These had had placed upon them a rectangular mound (a pillow mound) about 38 yards long and 7 yards wide - this was the actual rabbit warren. This sat inside a rectangular banked and ditched enclosure. The ridge-and-furrow shows that part of this enclosure at least continued to be ploughed, sometimes up to the edge of the surrounding bank and sometimes not. A circular mound about ten yards across, which overlay the boundary bank, may have been a windmill mound, but the plough ridges override it and so ploughing continued after it had been thrown up; a plough ridge was scarped to form an internal boundary bank within the enclosure immediately to the south of it. It looks rather as if whoever took over the warren area was trying to exploit it in various ways after it had ceased to be used for rabbits. All this activity had stopped by the time of the enclosure of Wadenhoe in 1793, when the map made then shows two hedged fields here - the Far and Middle Warren of the map of 1822. Their boundaries cut through the enclosure boundary bank and the ridge-and-furrow, showing that all had by now gone out of use - the low bank and ditch of one of these hedges, and traces of the other, still remain.

None of the medieval surveys refer to a windmill but Wadenhoe certainly had one at some point. The circular mound just described might have been the site of one - its relationship with the bank shows it to have been a relatively late feature of the landscape and it has apparently produced 18th century bricks. It is just possible that the (Wind) mill Furlong name on the other side of the road to Aldwincle referred to it, although a name rather closer to the thing described would have been expected. There might have been the site of another windmill north of the road to Pilton (references to Mill Way Furlong in glebe terriers and to Stump Close on the map of 1822). Post mills could change their sites from time to time and could on occasion be moved around as complete structures, and so field names indicating more than one mill site in a parish are not all that uncommon.

## **The open field system**

It is clear from the various inquisitions that Wadenhoe probably had a three-field system in operation in the 14th century if not before. In the inquisitions of 1264 and 1335 the demesne is given as 300 acres (actually 310 in 1264) but in the extent of 1328 it appears as only 200 acres - the reason for the difference would be the fact that one-third of the arable was then fallow, worth nothing and so omitted from the valuation. It is possible to attempt a reconstruction of the field system as it was before its abolition by enclosure in 1793, using the Enclosure Award and the glebe terriers (description of land belonging to the church), of which there are many of 17th and 18th century date (*Fig.3*).



At this relatively late date, however, there were not three fields but four, as follows (the measurements are taken from those given on the enclosure map):

Fig. 3:  
Pre-enclosure Wadenhoe.  
Map of medieval field  
system

Meadow Field	114 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub> acres
Middle Field	156 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub> acres
Meer Field	237 acres
Hasland Field	140 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub> acres
Total	648 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub> acres

It is not really possible to group these fields into three roughly equal blocks, as the classic three-field open-field system requires - for the system to work properly all the farmers had to have an equal amount of land in each of the fields, one of which lay fallow each year.

It may be that what we have at Wadenhoe is a late variation of the system brought about by piecemeal enclosure. On the map the various enclosed fields marked 'Pasture' and also Stanions Close look rather as if they had been formed out of a once much larger Hasland Field - clearly they have at some time been ploughed using the ridge-and-furrow technique. If this is accepted, then we get quite a different picture, with three fields forming the expected pattern:

Hasland Field	140 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub>	}	247 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub> acres
Stanions Close	28 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub>		
The Pastures	77 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub>		
Middle Field	156 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub>	}	271 acres
Meadow Field	114 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub>		
Meer Field			237 acres
Total			755 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub> acres

The land of the individual farmers was scattered throughout these fields by means of the familiar plough ridges which used to be such a common sight in the grass fields of Northamptonshire. These ridges (called ‘lands’) had definite areas assigned to them, half acres or roods (quarter acres). These are the sizes accorded to them in the open-field terriers (description of a farm) which survive - to find out the size of a man’s farm, one adds up the total acreage of the lands the terrier says that he had (along with any pieces of meadowland, etc. which he might also have possessed). A number of the Wadenhoe glebe terriers are of interest because in addition to giving the generally accepted conventional size for each of the plough ridges owned by the church (half an acre, a rood, three roods, etc.), the documents also give the measured acreage for the ridges, a quite different matter, shown in acres, roods and perches (one fortieth of a rood) - obviously most ridges would be found to vary somewhat in size from their neighbours when measured up with a surveyor’s chain. Some examples from Meer Field, from a glebe terrier of 1720, are given in **Table 1**:

**Table 1:**

Furlong Name	No. of Lands	Quantity by estimation (i.e. the conventional size)	Quantity by survey (i.e. measured)
Eldern Stump Furlong	1	2 roods (i.e. 1/2 acre)	1 rood 10 perches
Huddington Furlong	A headland	2 roods	1 rood 21 perches
Standgate Hedg Furlong	1	2 roods	1 rood 1 perch
Mill Furlong	1	2 roods	1 rood 35 perches
Meer Furlong	2	3 roods	2 roods 34 perches
Meer Furlong	2	3 roods	2 roods 16 perches

In practically all cases the measured acreage is less than the conventional one; in fact the overall proportion is of the order of <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub>.

We have seen that it is possible that the size of the common fields in the Middle Ages was 755<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> acres - to this could be added the 32<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> acres of the Warren, as part of the demesne, giving a total of 788 statute acres. Using the factor just described, this would give a conventional size for the open fields of 900<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> acres. It is just possible that this was the size of the fields at Domesday. Domesday Book tells us that Wadenhoe had land for six ploughs, of which two were in demesne and two and a half belonged to nine villeins, three bordars and one sokeman. Now these were not really ploughs at all, but statements about *areas* under the plough - and the fact that Domesday appears to be one and a half short may simply mean that these ‘ploughs’ were there, but belonged to freemen or rent payers - it was the figure six which counted. According to the surveys the medieval acreage for the demesne was 300. These will be conventional, by estimation, acres. So two Domesday ploughs will be the equivalent of

300 acres and six therefore 900 acres, almost exactly the same as the figure arrived at above (on the assumption that the demesne did not expand in the earlier Middle Ages). But we know that expansion of the area under the plough did take place - the drawing (*Fig. 3*) (done from air photographs<sup>9</sup>) shows that ridge-and-furrow once covered quite substantial areas of the wooded ridge above the village, showing clearance of woodland in the Middle Ages. Even Wadenhoe Green, a cowpasture in the 18th century, had at one time been ploughed.

The ridge-and-furrow drawing is of interest also in that it affords clues about other aspects of the landscape. For example, note the way in which both the Northampton Way and the Aldwincle Way of the Enclosure Award appear to cut through pre-existing blocks of ridge-and-furrow at an angle. These roads were an addition to the landscape, made at an unknown date (this phenomenon is not noticeable north of the junction of these two roads - there may be good reasons for this). The original road to Aldwincle was the path which runs alongside the River Nene, past the church and manor house and up the hill to what might have been an oval area, which would have been the core of the original peasant settlement; note also how the alignment of the road to Pilton is the same as that of Church Street. Just what shape this zone originally had is unclear, because the growth of the private grounds of Wadenhoe House, which presumably came to take the place of the manorial centre near the church, has caused the displacement of the road system outwards - at 'A' and 'B' on *Fig. 2* an attempt has been made to show the roads as they had been in 1793; 'A' had been pushed southwards to its present position (the dashed lines) by 1822. The area alongside Pudding Lane and Main Street, and also between them, could also have been a zone of early settlement, or incorporate some later expansion - this elongated zone is there because it followed the line of a track which went down to a ford over the River Nene somewhere in the area of the mill. It was the crossing of this track and the ancient way to Aldwincle which really fixed where the peasant farmers of Wadenhoe came to live. The regularly set-out tenements on both sides of Church Street look like medieval expansion between the original peasant settlement and the manor house, but it is not possible to say precisely when these properties were brought into being. We know that there was a tremendous increase in the population generally in the early Middle Ages, and in the specific case of Wadenhoe the inquisitions show that the number of villein tenements doubled from 16 in 1328 to 33 in 1335, but it is not possible to say just where these people actually lived - the information in the documents cannot be linked to anything on a map. One way in which these necessarily speculative notions about the topographical development of Wadenhoe could be tested would be to collect ancient pottery from gardens and small disturbances of the soil around the village.

- Sources**
- <sup>1</sup> J.H.Round (1902) The Northamptonshire survey. In *Victoria County History, Northamptonshire*, Vol. 1, p.362.
  - <sup>2</sup> Steane, J.M. & Bryant G. (1975).  
Excavations at the deserted medieval settlement at Lyveden.  
*Journal of the Northampton Museums and Art Gallery*, 12.  
The various medieval estates referred to are to be found in the appropriate parochial entries in the *Victoria County History, Northamptonshire*, Vol.3, 1970.
  - <sup>3</sup> *Calendar of Close Rolls* 1234-37 p.300.
  - <sup>4</sup> Public Record Office, C 132, 31.
  - <sup>5</sup> *Calendar of Close Rolls*, 1296-1302, p.164.
  - <sup>6</sup> Northamptonshire Record Office, Maps 4037 and 4525.
  - <sup>7</sup> Public Record Office, C145, 108.
  - <sup>8</sup> Public Record Office, C 145, 43; C 135, 130.
  - <sup>9</sup> In the National Monuments Record, Swindon.

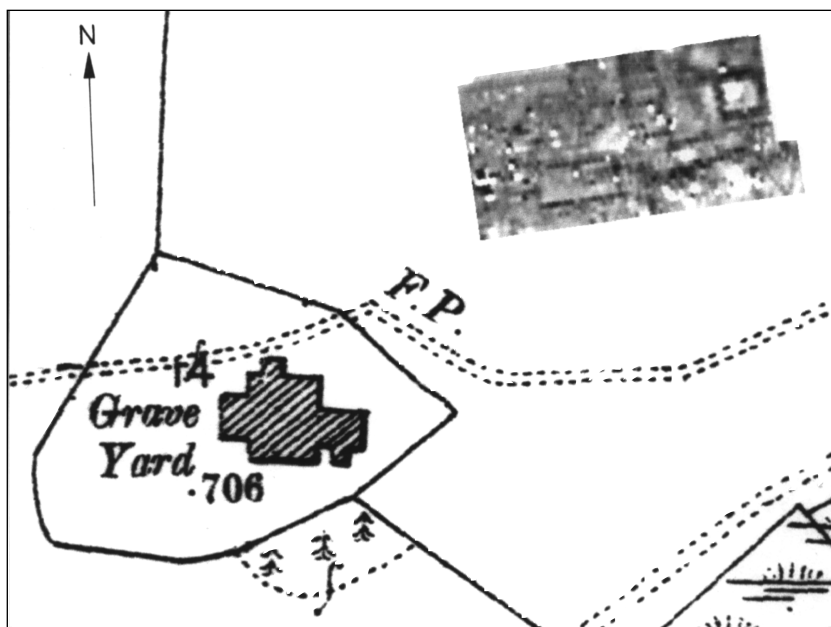


## CHURCH HILL: the geophysical survey

ADRIAN  
CHALLANDS

It is well known that the irregular earthworks, situated on a limestone promontory known as Church Hill, have been the subject of varying interpretations, ranging from disused quarries to Iron Age Hill Fort. The Royal Commission on Historical Monuments reduced the speculation to a more factual basis by instituting an earthworks survey. This recorded a series of house platforms within, and occasionally cutting, a rampart surrounding the natural spur<sup>1</sup>.

Due to continuing speculation relating to the occupation and use of the land at Church Hill, the Wadenhoe History Group commissioned an archaeological geophysical survey. Its brief was to detect the location of archaeological features and, more specifically, the possible presence of building remains. The survey was undertaken during the last two weeks of September 1997, and was carried out using two different geophysical techniques: soil resistivity and magnetometry. Surveying was systematically carried out within a grid constructed from interlinking 10-m squares, the precise location determined by sighting on the nearby Church of St Michael and All Angels (*Fig. 4*).

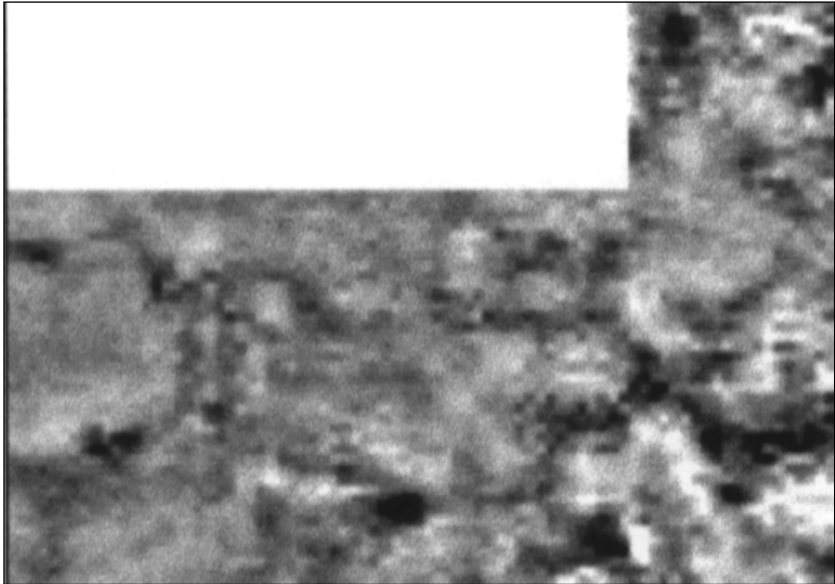


*Fig. 4:*  
Location of magnetic survey  
on Church Hill

Briefly, resistivity survey consists of measuring the variations of electrical resistance to the passage through the soil of an alternating electrical current. Movable steel probes are positioned at different locations in a systematic manner to obtain a grid pattern of resistance values. The values of resistance vary according to the type of feature encountered: dry soils or stonework produce a high value, whilst more moist features, such as infilled ditches and trenches, record a low value.

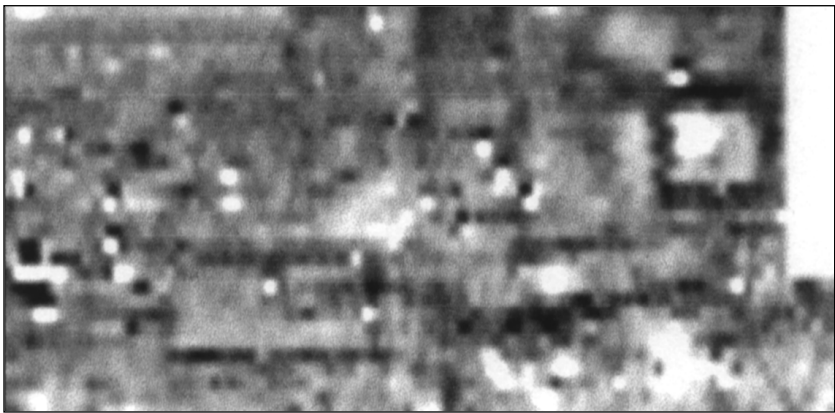
All of the resistivity values at Wadenhoe, 3,600 readings, were

*Fig. 5a:*  
Grey scale plot of resistivity  
survey



processed mathematically. Figure 5a displays the features located as varying scales of grey. The drier areas of stonework or infilled trenches are shown as dark grey or black and represent where walls were once situated. The lighter shaded areas are damper zones, which in some areas are a moist filling within stone-robbing trenches or possibly loose damp material contained within the remaining walls or foundations.

*Fig. 5b:*  
Grey scale plot of magnetic  
survey



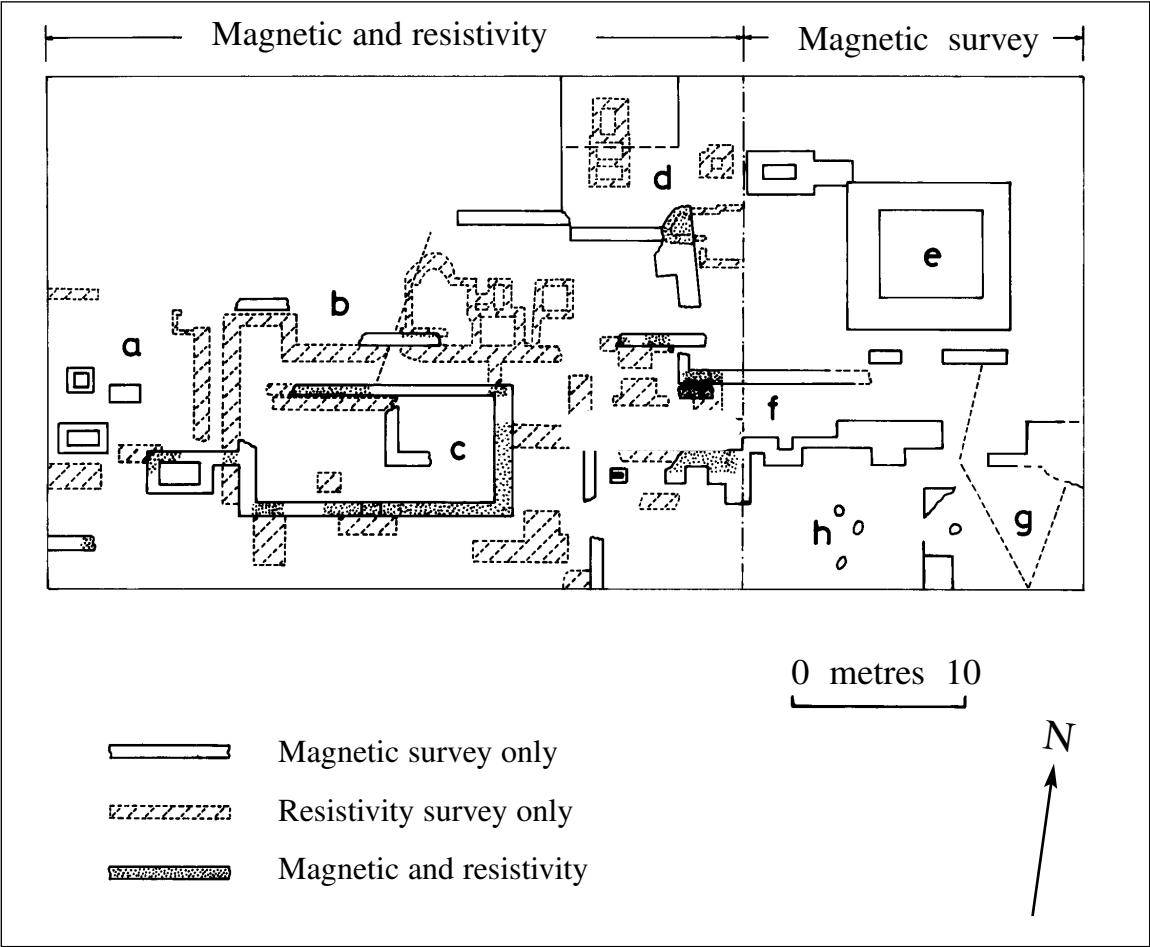
Magnetic survey detects small changes in the earth's magnetic field induced by features cut into the natural subsoil. The changes are recorded particularly strongly when the cut features are filled with magnetically enhanced soils. In the case of burnt clay structures such as hearths and ovens, very strong magnetic values are registered. Figure 5b displays the 17,000 logged magnetic values as shades of grey.

Infilled trenches are displayed as dark shading, areas of burnt material as lighter shading, and occasionally, for a variety of reasons, dark and light shading are combined indicating positive and negative polarity in one feature. It should be noted that magnetic anomalies do not lie directly below where the maximum reading is obtained; there is

normally a northwards shift. The amount of the northwards displacement depends on the burial depth of the magnetic anomaly. With deeply buried magnetic anomalies the shift may be up to 0.5 metres to the north.

The plotted geophysical data display variations in the immediate geology as well as an indeterminate sequence of human activities. Also, geophysical survey cannot normally discriminate between the dates of the archaeological features or the construction phases of building remains. Bearing these factors in mind, the prodigious quantity of data from the Wadenhoe surveys was extensively analysed to identify the most significant archaeological features.

Fig. 6:  
Interpretation diagram of the magnetic and resistivity survey data, showing the identified structures, lettered



Area (a) appears to have suffered more depredation than any of the other surveyed areas. But fragments of walls have been identified and if a west wall once existed outside the survey area, they would form a rectangular building or buildings, dimensionally more than 9 metres (E - W) by 11.5 metres (N - S). The building aligns with buildings (b) and (c). The east, N-S orientated, wall of (a), and the west wall of (b) together form a narrow passage. As the fragmentary walls in area (a) are slightly offset, separate buildings may be represented. It is likely that the building/s (a) are service apartments, incorporating a kitchen area deliberately separated from structure (b) by the narrow passage, suggesting that hazardous activities may have been taking place in (a).

**Interpretation of survey data**

Very high magnetic values were recorded in the western half of area (a). Activities indicated by a high magnetic value normally involve the extensive use of fire, which fits in well for the location of the kitchen. The magnetically detected square and rectangular features may even be cooking hearths. To the east of the possible kitchen area, another separate building may be the site of a buttery and pantry, lying adjacent to the narrow passage between (a) and (b). The L-shaped structure located at the northwest corner of the east wall of (a) may be the remains of an external staircase providing access to a possible solar, constructed above, and to the pantry and buttery.

The main structure (b) detected by resistivity is a rectangular building 15.75 metres long by 9.80 metres wide that may be identified as a medieval hall. Its dimensions are similar to the 13th century unaisled halls at the Old Deanery, Salisbury (15.24 by 9.60 metres) and Stokesay Castle, Shropshire (15.85 by 9.75 metres)

The hall (b) has its long axis orientated E - W, with a 5.8 by 5.4 metres, approximately square, building attached to the east wall. This square building forms an easterly extension to the hall from the north-east corner of the major structural east wall. A similarly approximately square (5.5 by 5.2 metres) building is attached to the east wall of the hall of the 13th century Manor House at Charney Bassett, Berkshire. At Charney Bassett the square building is an upperfloor domestic chapel. The square structure at Wadenhoe may also be a chapel or a first floor solar, having storage areas below and access via a stairway. There is a good case for a stairway located in a 2 metres square building within a complex of structures situated against the north wall of the hall and the square extension building. Amongst the buildings built against the north wall, a 1.25 by 0.5 metre structure may be interpreted as a garderobe, and a 4 metres square building is possibly a room with a north-facing oriel. A 2 metres square building of unknown use is attached to the north wall of the square "chapel or solar" by a 1.5 metres length of wall.

It is difficult to decide from the geophysical information if structure (b) is an aisled or open hall. The north wall of structure (c) was strongly detected by magnetic, and weakly by resistivity, survey. Consequently, the north wall of (c) may form the foundations for a line of columns supporting the roof. The north wall of (c) lies at a location of a quarter the width of hall (b), which is proportionally the correct position for roof-supporting columns. However, no indications of any column foundations forming a southern aisle could be discerned. On balance the geophysical information tends to indicate that structure (b) is an open hall, and further that the roof span of 9.8 metres would not require internal supports.

A very high magnetic anomaly is situated centrally within hall (b), and is likely to be the location of a central hearth. Another strong magnetic feature is located almost midway along, and lying across, the south wall at a position where resistivity has detected a wider section of the wall. This high-value magnetic feature together with the resistivity feature may be the location of a fireplace relating to hall (b) or hall (c) or to both building phases.

Structure (c) was mainly detected by magnetic survey and forms a 15.75 metres long by 7.30 m wide hall. Allowing for magnetic shift, the south, east and west walls are common with hall (b), whilst the north wall is situated 2.5 metres to the south of the north wall of hall (b). It may be that hall (c) is a smaller, earlier building, than hall (b). That hall (c) is earlier than hall (b) is further confirmed by the presence of an external drain running from the north wall of hall (c), which lies below the floor and north wall of hall (b).

The location within the south wall of (c) of a roughly central fireplace has been referred to in section (b) above.

Hall (c) has a 3.75 metres long by 2.50 metres wide rectangular structure connected to the west wall by a 1.50 metres long length of walling. This rectangular building may have provided external storage facilities and fallen out of use when hall (c) was remodelled into the larger hall (b). That the rectangular building fell out of use is shown by a minor section of structure (a) which is built over one corner of the building.

The disconnected patches of high resistance within both halls are possibly the remnants of tile or slabbed floors.

A group of small buildings (d), detected by resistivity survey, may relate to the hall as service buildings. It is possible that these external buildings fulfilled variable functions such as laundry, brewhouse, etc. A case for the buildings relating to the hall is strengthened by the fact that all of the small buildings lie parallel to the overall geometry of the hall and its offices.

Structure (e) was detected by magnetic survey and forms a substantial, externally 9 metres square, building. The (robbed-out) walls are nearly 2 metres thick, indicating more than a single storey building. This square building may be interpreted as a tower, dimensionally identical to the early 14th century Longthorpe Tower, near Peterborough, Cambridgeshire<sup>2</sup>. If the Wadenhoe Tower is similar to Longthorpe Tower, it would have been of three storeys and classed as a domestic solar tower. At Longthorpe Tower the highly decorated first-floor chamber is located over a vaulted undercroft, whilst the top-floor chamber contains a garderobe. It is most likely that the Wadenhoe tower would have also contained a garderobe as a drain (g) leads away from the south-east corner.

Substantial, E - W orientated, walls (f) were detected by both magnetic and resistivity survey, and fit in with the general site geometry. The walls, although discontinuous, tend to form corridor-like rooms, varying in width between 2 and 3.5 metres. It is not possible to suggest how these fit in with the manorial site, although such smaller rooms were often devoted to a multiplicity of domestic offices and accommodation for senior retainers. Higher resistivity values between the walls at the western end of the "building range" may indicate that some of the area was paved.

Area (g) marks the location of linear, presumably stone-built, drains which fall towards the southern edge of the natural spur and the River Nene.

Area (h) has possibly approximately 0.75 metre diameter pits or postholes which form a semicircle and may relate to earlier occupation of the limestone promontory.

## Conclusions

The survey has proved that the irregular group of mounds is not the result of quarrying, but relates to systematic stone robbing of medieval buildings. Archaeological geophysics has detected a complex series of stone-robbled buildings. The dimensions and plans of the buildings have been compared against other well-dated examples from lowland Britain and an example of an extensive, predominantly 13th century, manorial settlement has been deduced. The layout of the buildings at Wadenhoe has a number of reasonably close parallels, a typical example being the arrangement of the, albeit larger, hall and services range at Bishop's Waltham Palace, Hampshire<sup>3</sup>. It is entirely possible that the manorial buildings located by geophysical survey are those described in the documentary evidence as belonging to the Earls of Lincoln and Winchester.

At Church Hill, Wadenhoe, all of the elements of a rich medieval manor are represented. A pen picture of Wadenhoe at the end of the 13th century or the early 14th century may be attempted (*Fig.7*). The view when approaching the steep promontory from the east would have been of a series of long stone buildings, dominating the southern edge of the plateau. Smoke would be seen issuing from the roof openings and perhaps from a chimney on the hall. Most of the smoke would be seen coming from the kitchen at the western end of the range of buildings. Other smaller buildings to the north of the main range would fulfil such functions as laundry and brewhouse and be shrouded in steam. The complex of mostly single-storey buildings would be dominated by a solidly built, three-storey square stone tower. Occasional long thin windows would be seen showing the location of the first and upper floors; external stone-built stairs would lead to a single first-floor entrance.

*Fig. 7*



Wood, M.E. (1965). *The English Medieval House*. London.

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<sup>1</sup> RCHM (1975) *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the County of Northampton: Vol. 1, Archaeological Sites in North-East Northamptonshire*. HMSO, London.

<sup>2</sup> VCH (1906) *Victoria History of the Counties of England. Northamptonshire, Vol.2*.

<sup>3</sup> Hare, J.N. (1988) Bishop's Waltham Palace, Hampshire - William of Wakeham, Henry Beaufort and the Transformation of a Medieval Episcopal Palace. *Archaeological Journal*, **145**, London.

In the early days of settlement, the hill historically referred to as Castle Close could have provided an excellent defensive site. A group of Saxon tribesmen under their presumed leader, Wada, may have found the site to their liking, and it became known as Wadenhoe, 'Wada's spur of land' - a reference to the hill overlooking the river Nene (but see an alternative interpretation of the name in Chapter 1). It may also be significant that the personal name 'Wada' was itself a hallowed name, being associated with a sea-giant hero revered by Anglo-Saxon tribes, who brought with them tales of his exploits which would have been passed down through successive generations here. The tales have almost all long disappeared, but the name lingers on at various sites with stone ruins (from an earlier age), and Roman roads such as Wade's Causeway in Yorkshire.

The first reference to a landowner in Wadenhoe was during the reign of Edward the Confessor (1042-66), when it was held by one 'Burred'. In William I's reign, it passed to the Bishop of Coutances, in the Domesday survey the largest area of his land consisted of two hides (a hide being between 60 and 120 acres) and half a virgate (15 acres). Four servants, nine villeins, three cottagers, and one sokeman had two and a half carucates (about 300 acres). A water mill was recorded at a rent of 13 shillings and 4 pence, with 65 eels. It was mentioned again in 1356, with a 'free fishery', continuing to work on the site where it can be seen today. Here it would grind corn for several centuries to come. During the reign of William II, the lands passed to King David of Scotland and then to 'Albericus', i.e. Aubrey de Vere whose family were to claim overlordship of the manor (as Earls of Oxford) until 1449, though the last of the de Vere family to hold the manor in name was Henry, who died in 1229.

In 1180, a prosperous tenant, Peter de Grenton, soon became the subject of a sheriff's enquiry into 'waste', i.e. felling timber illegally, which had been committed 'on the houses, woods, gardens and tenants of the manor of Wadenhoe'. However, the jury found that he was innocent, since 'the forty oaks and other trees' he had cut down in the woods of the manor had been for the common good, with five oaks being felled 'according to custom', and given to the tenants 'for their firing' at Christmas.

During the time of the Norman Conquest, a number of commissioners had been sent throughout the kingdom by William I to ascertain the best parts of the country for hunting purposes. These areas were then deemed to be 'forests', i.e. areas of land - not necessarily wooded - which were placed under special administration of Forest Law, using the continental Carolingian system, which forbade the hunting of certain beasts (deer and boar), and the felling of timber, except by royal favour. This was seldom granted, even to those barons who had been given land in return for their help in the invasion, meaning in effect that they could not do as they pleased on their own land. Wadenhoe therefore became part of Rockingham Forest. At first, offenders could suffer severe punishment - the loss of a limb, or



have their eyes gouged out - but this changed to imprisonment, heavy fines, and even exile, during the reigns of successive monarchs.

A forest village was also duty-bound under Forest Law to assist the forester in the apprehension of any miscreant. In 1245, Wadenhoe was summoned by a group of foresters including Henry de Senlis, to give assistance when 'evildoers' were spotted. The village failed to respond ('refused to come') and four representatives were put into prison, with the rest of the village deemed to be 'in grievous mercy', i.e. liable to punishment or a heavy fine. This was further compounded when they failed to turn up at an inquest to give any information they might have. (Under Forest Law, representatives of the four nearest 'townships' to the scene of a crime had to give evidence, or notification of anything suspicious). The evildoers in question went to the lodge of William, son of William the reaper of Wadenhoe, who refused to give evidence and was forced to find pledges for his subsequent court appearances. These were given, but because he did not turn up, the pledges given by two other villagers, Robert Newbond and Robert Stannard, were forfeited. The sheriff was brought in, and forced William to appear. This proved successful but the defendant still refused to give any information and was imprisoned. It is not known what the outcome was!

On another occasion, in 1249, Roger, son of Lawrence of Wadenhoe, was found carrying a bow and arrows in the forest, arrested, and taken to prison in Northampton. This was unusual, since local offenders were charged and pledged locally to appear. Bearing in mind what had happened on earlier occasions, Wadenhoe could not be trusted, and so other measures had to be taken!

Shortly after Henry de Vere died in 1229, the manor passed to John de Lacy, Earl of Lincoln. He was succeeded by his son, Edmund, who in 1249 was granted 'free warren' (rights to hunt) around Wadenhoe. After Edmund, the manor was held for ten years, 1254-64, by Roger de Quinci (Earl of Winchester) before reverting back to the de Lacy family again. In 1298, Henry de Lacy was granted a royal licence to have a deer park of about 30 acres. A licence for this was subject to the strict condition that the area was well enclosed by hedge, fence or wall, and regularly maintained. Failure to do so resulted in the forfeit of the park, a heavy fine and a reversion to Forest Law. However, in the following year a great 'perambulation' took place, as a result of pressure on Edward I from the nobles, desperate for freedom from Forest Law, which saw the establishment of new, shrunken boundaries of Rockingham Forest, and Wadenhoe, like many surrounding settlements, was omitted.

The villagers would have been mainly engaged in farming and traces of medieval ridge-and-furrow ploughing can still be seen on the hill, close to the church. Their dwellings would have been impermanent, needing constant rebuilding with their fragile wattle and daub walls, and earthen floors. They had no glass windows, and could only be locked from the inside, hence it was easy for anyone to enter from outside. Bedding would have been straw or rough woollen

material, and lighting would have been rush lights, made of peeled rushes drenched in animal fat. Their food would have consisted of poor-quality barley or rye loaves, cheese, onion, a daily thick vegetable soup, or 'pottage' and perhaps an occasional fish from the Nene or bird (meat being a rare treat), with rook especially popular. The main drink for everyone would have been ale. The washing-up was done using dry grass!

If the original settlement stood here, it must at some time have moved to its present site below, for reasons which are at present uncertain. It was definitely not as a result of the Black Death which hit this country in 1348-49 and drastically reduced the population. The only village severely hit by this epidemic was Hale, which stood close to Apethorpe. It has also been said that it could have been another plague which hit the village, possibly the Great Plague of 1665, but there is no evidence to substantiate this. What may well be the reason, however, is the creation of the deer park. There are several cases where 'estate expansion' (such as at Pipewell, Boughton, Kirby and Lyveden) led to the removal (in these cases), or resiting, of an existing settlement. Whatever the reason, the relocation of the village to a more sheltered spot below would have been more beneficial against the ravages of inclement weather.

The villagers of Wadenhoe, like those in many other forest settlements, continued to enjoy privileges not usually experienced by those outside the area, namely better and longer-lasting rights of commons-pasturing, grazing and the gathering of the naturally fallen wood for fuel, repair or construction purposes. Like those villages which were still 'forest' it would not have been affected by 'enclosure' - the practice of converting arable land to more profitable sheep farming - which began in the 14th century and continued for many years to come, causing misery, deprivation and vagrancy among the peasantry around the country.

When Henry de Lacy died in 1312, the manor passed to the last of the line, Alice, who was later married, to Ebulo Le Strange, with whose family it was to remain for some generations. In 1330, Ebulo claimed the right of free warren that Edmund de Lacy had previously enjoyed, and the view of frankpledge (i.e. to hold a court for ensuring that all the villagers who were tithed were accountable for each other's behaviour), together with the overseeing of punishments by tumbrel (ducking stool) and pillory. In addition he claimed the right to 'waifs' (control of any land that became ownerless in the parish), and jurisdiction over the Assize of Bread and Ale. It was also during this century that the first windmill may have appeared in the village on a site to the west of the Church.

During the reign of Henry V (1413-22) the Le Strange family were involved in an inter-family feud with the Truffels of Warmington, at church in London, when a dispute arose over whether Lady Constance Le Strange should be seated, the latter expecting some kind of priority. A violent *melée* ensued, during which blows were dealt, and some individuals were killed or wounded. The Le Stranges were held responsible for the affray, and so Richard Le Strange was

made to walk 'bareheaded' with a lighted taper from St Paul's to St Dunstan's and to give a piece of silver (worth approximately £5 in today's money) to the altar of the church. His wife had to accompany him barefooted, fill the vessels of the church with cold water, and also make an offering to the altar, in this case, an ornament (about £10 in value).

In 1513, the manor passed to the Stanley family, then to Sir Walter Powlett, and subsequently to the Crown until 1551, when it was acquired by Sir Walter Mildmay who had just come into possession of nearby Woodnewton, and the year before, of Apethorpe, Nassington and Yarwell. His descendants continued (through intermarriage, as the Earls of Westmorland) to hold the manor until it was sold in 1668 to John Stanyon, who after 16 years sold it to Brooke Bridges. His great nephew, the renowned historian John Bridges, succeeded him as Lord of the Manor in 1702.

In 1538, Thomas Cromwell, minister of Henry VIII, was suppressing and dissolving the monasteries, as part of the Reformation. That year he also ordered every parish to keep a record of all baptisms, marriages and deaths for each year. Many villages and towns were slow to comply (there was no rigid enforcement at first) though Wadenhoe (and Pilton) was one of the first in the area to do so, commencing its register in 1559. (Stoke Doyle commenced in the following year, with Lilford.) However, Thorpe Achurch only began its register in 1591, Oundle in 1625, and Aldwincle St Peter in 1653!

Several family names appear in the early register, which would prevail in the village for many generations. Two family names in particular are worth taking a brief look at.

Thomas Heighton (Heaydon) was a maltster who was born in the village in 1550, the son of the village miller (also named Thomas). He accumulated a great deal of wealth, and played a leading role as churchwarden. His will of 1621 shows him bequeathing a house and its appurtenances to his wife, and son Jeffrey, together with an annual sum of 20 shillings to another son, John, for the regular repair and maintenance of the house. In addition he had two other dwellings. Succeeding generations continued to prosper, some as millers. One of them, John, became a founding deacon of the Aldwincle Baptist Chapel in the 1770s. He was also the father of William, who ran a grocery shop (at what is now 28 Church Street), which continued via descendants, including sisters Rebecca and (then) Elizabeth, until the 1870s.

The other family of note is Holdich. (The name is believed to originate from settlements in Devon and Staffordshire, close to or on a former Roman road - a reference to the way such roads were built and appeared, hence a homestead built 'out by the old ditch'). The first recorded reference to the family appears in the Lay Subsidy roll of Navisford Hundred in 1525. This was a list of taxation on anyone over the age of 16 earning £1 or more annually (4d tax per pound) or owning goods in excess of £1 (6d tax per pound). Johannes Holdysse, husbandman (i.e. farmer) was taxed at 12d for goods valued at 40 shillings, therefore he was obviously prosperous. In a

1542 manorial survey, Johannes (John) and his wife Sythe are recorded as having as many as six dwellings and several outbuildings.

‘John Holdiche holds freely one tenement in which John Weldon lives, one cottage with appurtenances now in tenure of Joan Jasper, one cottage with appurtenances in which William Kempford lives, one cottage with appurtenances in which William Strikland lives, one tenement lately of Thomas Sturby and one cottage with appurtenances in which John Holdiche lives.’

His grandson (also John), matriculated from Cambridge University before he was 14 years old! He married a local girl, Joanne, in 1566, and their son Jeffrie (who himself had 13 children) is recorded as being ‘buried in the box tomb with his tow first wifes’ (*sic*) just outside the door of the church.

The Holdiches continued to flourish, not just in Wadenhoe but in Pilton, Stoke Doyle and Thorpe Achurch, but by the end of the 17th century only Wadenhoe had representatives of the family, many of whom provided churchwardens. One of them, Benjamin (1658-1707), tragically drowned ‘in ye river (Nene) ye 6th November at night’. Another member of the family, Francis, gave £30 as a charity in 1789 for the poor of the village, as a plaque testifies inside the church. In the 19th century the family had disappeared, moving on to Thrapston, Elton and Peterborough. One member, G.M. Holditch (1837-94), went to Uppingham School, and later became renowned as an organ builder both locally and outside the area, where his masterpiece was the organ at Lichfield Cathedral.

In the 17th century, the village was relatively untouched by the Civil War, though like many other settlements it may not have escaped the ravages of the Great Plague of 1665. In nearby Oundle, an estimated 400 died.

The Tresham family were long-famed for the connection with the north of the county, mainly through the beliefs, unfinished buildings and follies of Thomas Tresham (1545-1605) and his son, Francis, who was one of the conspirators of the Gunpowder Plot. A cadet branch of the family, headed by Maurice Tresham, moved to Pilton from Newton near Geddington in 1645. The manor in which they lived is still there, and with other nearby buildings is the subject of many ‘unfounded rumours of secret underground passages’. Such stories are also told of the Manor Farm at Wadenhoe. Rumour and controversy seem to have followed this ill-fated family, who had also been involved in a bloody massacre of peasants at Newton in 1607 following an enclosure riot.

One of the unfinished buildings of Thomas Tresham, incidentally, is Lyveden New Bield near Oundle. It lies close to a fascinating cluster of now deserted medieval settlements containing the name Lyveden (which were the centre of an important pottery-making complex) one of which was cleared to make room for the grounds of the great house.

When John Bridges became Lord of the Manor, his stays in the village were infrequent, since he was busily employed as a barrister, and in government service in London, where he was engaged in

collecting revenue. At some time before 1714, he transferred the manor to Sir Edward Ward, Chief Baron of the Exchequer. Throughout most of the 18th century, however, the family connection with the village continued, with members (including his brother Nathaniel) acting as Rectors of St Giles. Whenever he was in Northamptonshire, Bridges amassed material for the remarkable two-volume history of the county (compiled mainly between 1718 and 1722) but he died in 1724 and was buried in St Botolph's Church, Barton Seagrave, near Kettering, where there is a memorial tablet dedicated to him. The work was only completed and published posthumously some years later, in 1791. He stated that there were 'nearly fifty houses' in Wadenhoe. This was a time when the village was beginning to expand, with a population of around 220 inhabitants engaged in a variety of occupations. Before trade directories and detailed population census, Militia Lists provided valuable information about these occupations (though only of able-bodied men liable for military service, aged 18-45). Thus other occupations would have been carried on by those under, or above, this age band. There are Militia Lists available for the years 1762, 1777 and 1781. In 1777, farming was still the predominant occupation, with at least three farmers and 12 farm labourers. The Militia List for that year gave the names of all able-bodied men between the ages of 16 and 45 who were liable for military duty at a time of war. On this list there were two butchers, four carpenters and an apprentice, two tailors, two cordwainers (leather workers), two masons, a smith, a shepherd, and seven 'servants'.

The river was always a dangerous place to negotiate, and accidents were fairly common. On one such occasion, 22 June 1764, John Stevens, a labourer from the village, drowned in the Nene between Lilford and Pilton, and was hastily buried in the churchyard next day, 'in sheep's wool'. Another incident of note, which occurred in July 1763, was the 'performance of penance' before the congregation of the Church by John Weekley and his wife Sarah, after they had both been found guilty of 'fornication before marriage'. How times have changed!

When the Lord of the Manor Edward Ward died, he was succeeded by his daughter Jane, who had married Thomas Hunt of Shropshire. Members of the Ward Hunt family were to remain Lords of the Manor well into the 20th century (*see Chapter 6*).

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*Archaeological dowsing is a similar process to the more familiar practice of dowsing for water. It uses simple metal rods which can help to locate and identify structures once present in the landscape. The reasons for this are not fully understood, but dowsers hope to determine the detailed structure, and even date buildings now completely hidden under the ground.*

**EDITORIAL NOTE**

## **CHURCH HILL: THE DOWSING SURVEY**

**BETH DAVIS**

The survey by dowsing methods of the Wadenhoe hilltop site ran concurrently with a resistivity and magnetometry survey described above. The very disturbed site possibly has occupational remains from at least the Roman period. It was proposed to survey by dowsing the buildings of the late 13th century as in 1298 Henry, Earl of Lincoln, was granted permission to enclose 30 acres of land in Wadenhoe for a deer park. If the deer park enclosed the hilltop site, and there is evidence of the boundary ditches to the west of the church, there could be buildings associated with the Earl of Lincoln on the survey site.

The hilltop site shows the remains of building platforms, and irregular areas of quarried surfaces or debris from building materials. Detailed survey drawings of these depressions have been published in the RCHM NE Northants Inventory<sup>1</sup>. Using these as a reference an area was marked out in 10 m squares identified by marker posts 1-15. The dowsing survey was started near the grid marker post 1 and lay within marker posts 1-9. The walls of a large masonry building were identified nearby and checked by a number of dowsers, and then marked out with pegs. The plan was found of a wide rectangular building with an undercroft on the west side which coincided with a depression in the present ground level and which appeared as a crosswing projecting to the east. The crosswing flanked the open ground floor hall which had a cross-passage at the north end. The two cross-passage doorways were identified and two other doorways in the north wall which may have led out to the service range. Also inside the building was a chimney with a hearth facing the hall which backed onto a staircase that possibly led to a chamber over the undercroft of the crosswing. The chamber may have been a solar, with wonderful views over the river valley. The hall had three pairs of arcade posts that formed the trusses supporting the roof and the structure for the screen of the cross-passage. Each post was about 20 cm square; the masonry walls were all about 40-45 cm thick. Window positions were plotted along the lines of the walls. This building has been titled the 'Hall' on the measured drawing (Fig. 8).

A building to the north of the hall was then discovered approximately 4 m away from the north gable of the hall range. It had a long narrow plan divided into three rooms. The room to the west had a chimney and may have been a kitchen which backed onto a room with a raised shelf deep enough for storing barrels; it is possible that

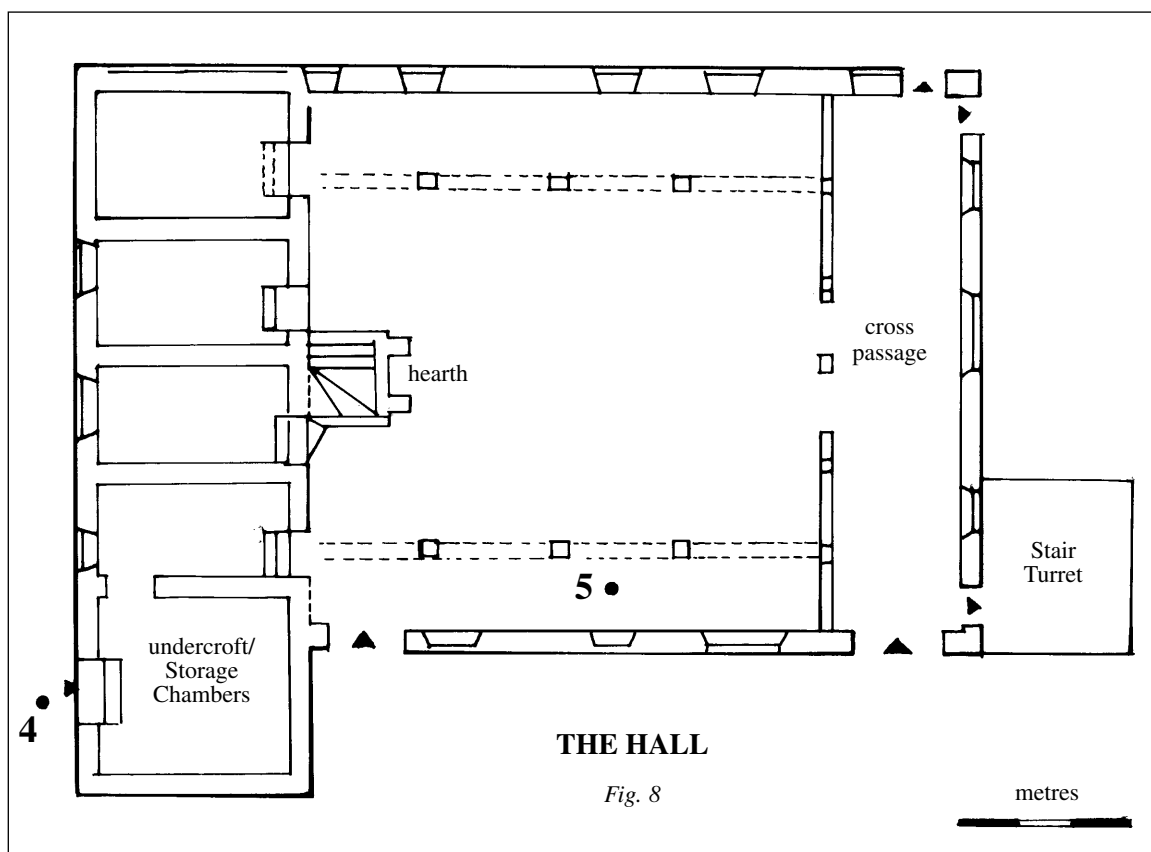


Fig. 8

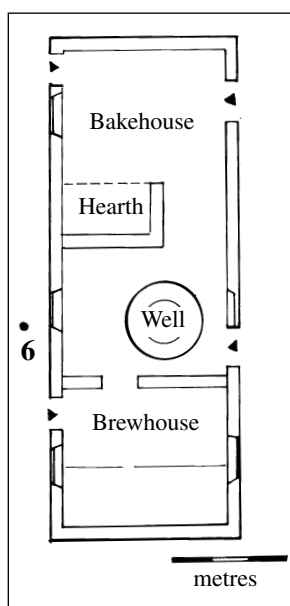


Fig. 9:  
Service range

this room was the brewhouse and bakehouse. The position of this building on the north side of the hall which had a well and a large hearth suggests that this was a service range. This building has been titled the 'service range' on the plan (Fig. 9).

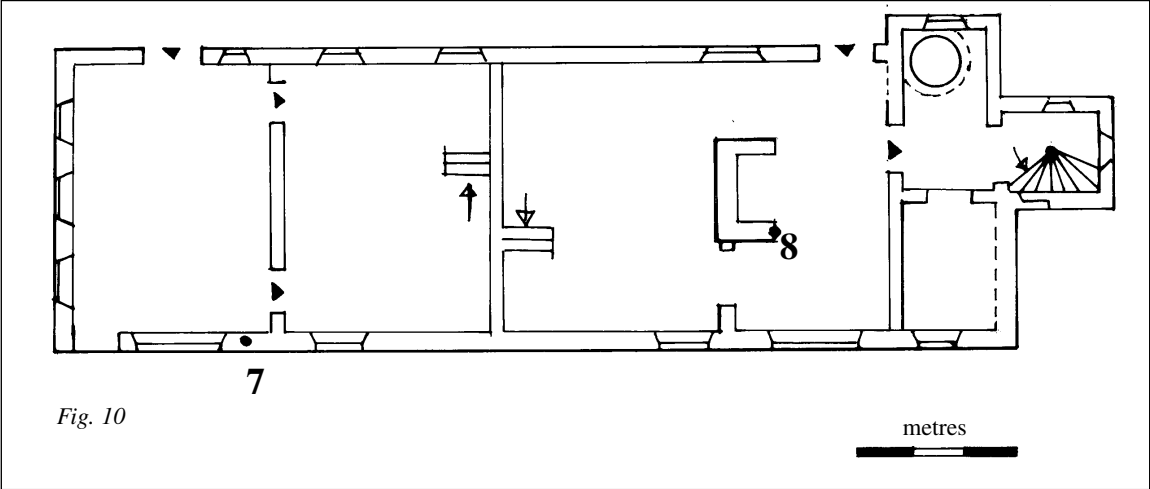
At the end of the dowsing survey on the first day a small rectangular tower was identified on the north-east corner of the hall. Such towers are commonly seen in buildings of this period as staircase turrets or small private rooms with specific functions. This is shown as a single-line outline on the hall plan, and has not been included in the reconstruction drawing.

The project for the following day of dowsing was to find the main entrance to the site that would have been in contemporary use with the hall and service range, and to define an area that was a courtyard to the hall and other associated buildings. Along the south boundary there was a rectangular building with an archway. However, apart from identifying it as a masonry structure and the possibility that it was a fortified entrance it was not surveyed as it was outside the survey area.

The inner courtyard was no more than a wide passageway of about 5 m between the hall and the nearest building next to be identified. This building was narrow and long, divided into four compartments with two small extensions to the north-west corner, one housing a staircase as in a stair turret, and the other a circular well. We found two other staircases on either side of a common party wall inside the building and also a chimney and hearth which faced the room



nearest the well. The stair turret associated with a two-storey building could infer that it gave access to a separated part of the building which had the form of a tower. This building by its room divisions and narrow plan may have been a lodging house (Fig. 10).



The three buildings together (Fig. 11) give enough evidence from the dowsing survey of a form of building type that was commonplace throughout the country in the medieval period. Margaret Wood's *The English Mediaeval House*<sup>2</sup> has a number of examples of fortified manor houses, the most notable of which are Longthorpe Tower, Northamptonshire, and Northborough Manor, near Peterborough. The large and imposing tower of Longthorpe Tower was built in the 13th century against the existing manor house and was self-contained above the first floor. It has a very fine series of wall paintings. The great hall at Northborough Manor, built in about 1340, is a good example where a crosswing combines both the service/storage rooms with a solar above it. The gatehouse set in the boundary walls of the Northborough Manor site may be similar to the gatehouse at Wadenhoe. There are other equally good examples of manor houses from this period in the RCHM NE Northants, which have great halls, solar crosswings, with service ranges which are either attached or separated from them.

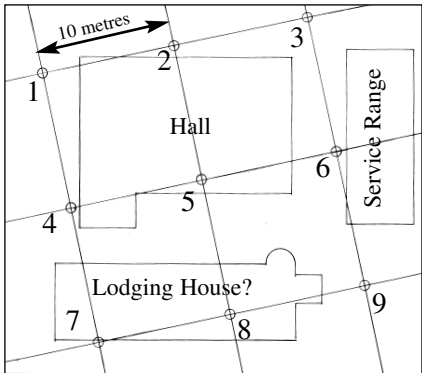


Fig. 11:  
Showing the three buildings  
grouped on a 10 metre  
square grid.

It is very tantalising to have to speculate on buildings that may survive only fragmentarily below the surface; dowsing can give a fairly complete answer, but is dependent on the skill and knowledge of the dowser. The group of dowsers from the village of Wadenhoe were able to check the survey as it unfolded, they dowsed certain features for themselves and because of this could authenticate the results. On this occasion there was only time to dowse the area that was covered for the late medieval period and is the beginning of what should be a full survey of the whole area. The results of this and future dowsing surveys and their comparison with the resistivity and magnetometry surveys, and also the examples of existing medieval buildings, may substantiate in part the 'Castle site at Wadenhoe' mentioned in Bridges' *History of Northamptonshire*, published in 1791<sup>3</sup>.

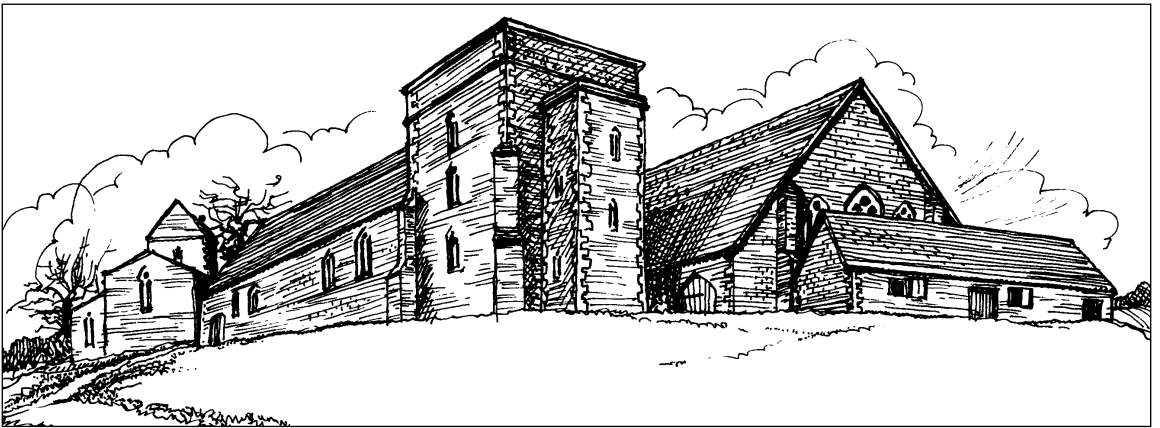


Fig. 12:

## Sources

<sup>1</sup> RCHM (1975) *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in County of Northampton: Vol 1, Archaeological Sites in North-East Northamptonshire*. HMSO, London.

<sup>2</sup> Wood, M. E. (1965) *The English Mediaeval House*.

<sup>3</sup> Bridges, John (1791) *History of Northamptonshire*.