

Chapter 6: Discussion

INTRODUCTION

The archaeological evidence from the accumulated fieldwork, in addition to the documentary evidence sheds considerable light on the development of the moated manor, from the excavation of the moat, through periods of modernisation to abandonment and demolition towards the end of the 15th century.

The following discussion initially examines the manor's structural development in the light of the archaeological evidence, and with reference where pertinent to the documented manorial history. Consideration follows of the economy and environment of the manor as shown by the artefactual and environmental evidence. The final section considers the archaeological and documentary evidence for the abandonment and eventual demolition of the manor.

STRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Before the moated manor (late 12th – early 13th century) (Fig. 2.1)

Anglo-Saxon pottery sherds and two 9th-century strap ends (Figs 3.8.15–16) recovered from various deposits on the site suggest some Saxon occupation in the vicinity of Harding's Field. However, the sum of material archaeological evidence for pre-Conquest settlement in Chalgrove as a whole remains meagre (see Hind, Chapter 1). The best that can be said is that the material evidence, alongside the inferences drawn from the topographical evolution of the village, tentatively suggest that there was a late Saxon settlement close to the site of the church, which may have extended as far as the area of the excavation.

The earliest definite structural evidence for occupation on the site was represented by the truncated remains of at least one, and possibly three buildings linked by a common yard surface, and sealed by the later moat upcast. The dating for this occupation suggests a brief period in the late 12th- early 13th century.

Ironically, the most completely understood building of this early period (Building P) was constructed of the least durable and identifiable material – cob – and also was heavily disturbed and truncated by later building. The evidence appears to show a large rectangular building with a chalk, flint and clay floor and successive open central hearths close to the west end. No other internal features were identified. The pottery from the few securely dated contexts associated with Building P seemed largely of a domestic nature, supporting the suggestion that the building was possibly a kitchen. A yard surface to the south of the building was also identified.

Cob commonly consists of a mix of clay with flint or gravel and straw. By its very nature it is very difficult to identify once the form of the wall has been lost or destroyed. At the time of the excavation,

only a few examples of cob-walled buildings of the medieval period had been identified in the region. The most complete example was a rectangular three-roomed building of similar date and size (8.5 m by 12.5 m) revealed in the backfilled moat of Wallingford Castle, 8 km to the south of Chalgrove (Webster and Cherry 1973, 159–61). In the years since the excavation, more examples have been found in the region. A line of cob-walled tenements was constructed in Oxford's extra-mural suburb of St Thomas' in the 13th century, possibly as an investment by Osney Abbey (Hardy 1996, 267–70; Roberts 1996, 222–4). Another example is the cob walled structure at Dean Court Farm, Cumnor (Allen 1994, 422), which is perhaps more relevant to the situation at Chalgrove, as it preceded a stone building associated with the moated grange of Dean Court. While it is clear from the examples of cob building found in recent decades that no easy presumption of the status of the building can be made on the basis of the use of cob, it does seem in this instance as though the building was of utilitarian function.

The other structures of this phase (R and S) displayed shallow stone rubble footings, presumably for timber or possibly cob superstructures, although too little of either structure was exposed to give a clear idea of their footprints or their function.

Given the proximity of the putative original core of settlement round the church to the east, could this group of structures merely be early expansion to the west, marginalised when the focus of the settlement shifted to the axis of the High Street, and suppressed by the early 13th-century manor imposition? There is a local example of such expansion at Seacourt, Berkshire (Bruce-Mitford 1940; Biddle 1961–62). However, the absence of archaeological activity detected in fields immediately surrounding the site does not support this idea, and seems to indicate that the occupation was restricted to the Hardings Field site only. Therefore, despite the incomplete excavation of this phase of activity, it is tempting to suggest that the structures may represent elements of an early manor complex, a direct predecessor to the Phase 2 moated manor of the later 13th century. A number of aspects of the evidence support this hypothesis.

While none of the structures discovered showed signs of high status in their fabric, the five 12th-century voussoirs from a doorway, re-used in a later structure, could suggest the presence somewhere in the vicinity of a 12th-century building of some elaboration, although it is accepted that the voussoirs could have come from a building some distance from the site. The presence of wall plaster and some slates in the moat upcast (see below) could also suggest that a building or buildings of some sophistication stood on the site in Phase 1.

The characteristics of the structures, and their apparent linking by a cobbled surface, show similarities

with other sites. Similar associated buildings were found among the pre-moat occupation at Ashwell, Hertfordshire (Hurst and Hurst 1967, 65), and at Northolt Manor, Middlesex (Hurst 1961, 215).

If the site was part of the original curia that was developed by Hugh Malaunay in 1199 and inherited by the Barentin family in 1233 (see Blair Chapter 1), why was the manor complex not more fully developed by the early 13th century? It is important to note that the Phase 1 activity coincides with a period when, although the separation of the manor of Chalgrove into two equal parts was a fact, the tenure of the manor was still unstable. So while a manorial residence may have been established, there may well not have been enough stability of tenure to encourage the investment and commitment required by a major building programme.

If this phase of activity represented a manorial residence, there was no evidence to suggest that it was surrounded by a precursor to the later moat, although the north and east arms of the Phase 2 moat may follow earlier ditched land divisions.

The moated manor (Phase 2 – mid to late 13th century) (Fig. 2.2)

The moats

The evolution of moat building

The phenomenon of moat construction in the context of manorial or sub-manorial residences has been examined in great detail in recent decades, both regionally, nationally (Aberg 1978) and in a north-western European context (Aberg and Brown 1981). Its motivation has been attributed variously to emulation of castle moats (and thereby aggrandisement by association), an embryonic desire for a social separation between the lord and his subjects, a practical response to environmental conditions, a defence, and a source of fish.

Moats served to underline the separateness of the lord's role in the community and would have acted as a psychological barrier (Steane 1985, 59). Moats in the context of manor houses were not great barriers of defence in a practical sense, but they could act as a deterrent against marauders and casual trespassers. The period of popularity of moats coincides with a time, in the 13th and early 14th century, of social and political unrest; the sense of security would almost certainly have been a factor in the excavation of a moat. Moats would protect not only the family and the manor house but also the ancillary buildings and stock which were integral parts of a manor.

The practical benefit of moats should not be overlooked; moats could also be useful for water supply, waste disposal, and as fishponds (Clarke 1984, 56–7), although the latter is generally seen as a later medieval development, particularly in a monastic context. It is unlikely that moats alone could have been used for breeding fish on any significant scale but they could be used to provide occasional pike or bream on feast days.

The dating of the moats at Harding's Field

The dating of the construction of the moat around the building complex is principally determined from the artefactual evidence found within the material dumped as a platform over the north-east part of the site, sealing the demolished buildings of the first phase. Although it cannot be demonstrated unequivocally, it is reasonable to assume that this material derived from the moat excavation – principally of the north and east arms, but also possibly from the widening of the natural watercourse as well.

The excavation of the moat entailed the adaptation of an existing natural water course rather than the creation of a completely new landscape feature surrounding the chosen area. The curving western arm of the moat is formed by the natural stream course, which was widened and deepened. A substitute stream course was excavated to the west (where it survives today) leaving a wide margin of land outside the moat. The northern and eastern moat arms were possibly existing ditch boundaries which were enlarged, although as neither was accessible for detailed archaeological investigation, this remains unconfirmed.

The principal moat was not apparently accompanied by any sort of earthwork, either inside or outside the moat, and furthermore, while the width of the moat is, in places, substantial, its depth is meagre, based upon the sections cut through it (see Fig. 2.7). This would argue against there being a seriously defensive motive in the moat's conception.

The molluscan samples taken from the moat silts indicate that it held free-flowing and well-oxygenated water (see Robinson, Chapter 5). This could mean that the natural water flow was of sufficient quantity and regularity both to provide a constant level of flowing water in the moat, and supply the diverted stream to the south. It would be unusual if a form of water control – a sluice gate – was not utilised, but its location was not identified, and may well have been sited well beyond the excavated area (Bond pers. comm.).

Whether the larger and smaller moats are contemporary is open to question. With no dating evidence recovered from the small moat, and no structural or occupation evidence recovered from the two trenches excavated on the small island, one is forced back to topographical considerations. It could be argued that the diverted stream channel at Harding's Field appears to have been cut to skirt both moated islands, and therefore the small island is part of the original design. An alternative, and equally plausible, scenario has the natural channel diverted in such a way as to provide a margin of land to the west of the large island; only later was the small moat and island created out of the northern part of that margin.

The construction of moated islands containing no buildings is generally accepted as a later phase of the moat building phenomenon, and seems to have had more to do with the elaboration of the sentiment of exclusivity and status, although Clarke suggests

that a number of empty second moats nationally were motivated more by economic aspirations (Clarke 1984, 59). Small moated islands could often be secure enclosures for animals, and the remains of a slight earthwork, possibly a nominal gesture towards increased security, were identified around the edges of the secondary island at Harding's Field. Alternatively, small moated islands could be devoted to orchards or select cultivation, reflecting the evolving interest of the new 'knightly' class in pleasure gardens. It is possibly significant that a document of 1600 records an orchard at the site (see Blair Chapter 1).

The historical context

The documentary evidence indicates that the Barentin family acquired the only manor building in the village when the manor was divided equally between themselves and the de Plessis family in 1233 (see above). The de Plessis manor was probably constructed in the 1240s and is likely to have been moated from its inception. It is not known why the Barentin family decided to replace the earlier structures with a moated complex in *c* 1255 but it is interesting to note that this action followed shortly after the construction of the de Plessis manor.

There are numerous examples of manors being moated around this time and into the 14th century. The 12th-century timber hall at Thorpe Lodge, Ellington, was demolished *c* 1250–1300 and almost immediately replaced by a moated platform (Tebbutt *et al.* 1971, 31). Similarly in Wintringham, a moated hall replaced the late 12th-century building in *c* 1250 (Beresford 1977, 205). The excavation of moats and the replacement of structures would have caused considerable expense and inconvenience and can often be associated with the rise in status of the family, or of the family's decision to use the site as their principal residence, as they became more directly involved with direct or demesne farming from the 13th century.

The shape of the main Harding's Field moat is untypical, dictated as it is by the natural water-courses. The majority of moats appear to be single, quadrilateral enclosures, encompassing an area in the range of 0.3 to 0.8 hectares (0.74 to 1.97 acres) and this shape predominates in Worcestershire and Essex. However, survey work by C C Taylor in Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire has shown that investigation in the field often reveals a more complex pattern of earthworks than may be discernible from a map. Moated sites in eastern England tend to be more complicated, with many more subsidiary features than those in the west, south or south-west Midlands. There is an overwhelming predominance of simple moats in Warwickshire, Worcestershire and Oxfordshire and even fairly straightforward double moats like Harding's Field are very much in the minority (Bond pers. comm.). As has been suggested above, the unusual shape of the Harding's Field moat may be seen as support for

the idea that Phase 1 activity was the original manorial residence.

Access to the island

The evidence of a small bridge spanning the north side of the moat is not conclusive, but at least plausible. With archaeological investigation of either the moat itself at this point or the northern bank denied, confirmation of the hypothesis either in the form of an opposing abutment of rubble limestone, or any evidence of a support in mid-stream was unobtainable. The narrowness of the identified abutment implies that this could only have been a footbridge with a superstructure probably of timber rather than stone. Spanning a channel *c* 10 m wide, it would qualify as a 'short bridge' by the definition used in Rigold's classification of structural types (1975, 56–59).

The purpose of such a bridge is open to some cautious speculation. The position of the bridge appears to correspond with a boundary line between two fields behind the High Street frontage (evident on the 1822 map – Fig.1.2 and Pl.1.3), so a path over the bridge could have led to the main road. Alternatively, the bridge could have led into another enclosure belonging to the manor.

The location of the bridge suggests that it was not the main entrance to the manor, and may well not have survived throughout the manor's life. As no significant excavation was possible along the line of the eastern arm of the moat, only conjecture, based upon the topography of the site, the disposition of the buildings, and the relationship of the manor to the church and the village, can be employed to suggest alternative locations for the manor's main access.

The disposition of the buildings strongly suggests that the most likely position for the main crossing and entrance to the manor complex would have been over the eastern moat arm, between buildings B and C. This would have given access to the central courtyard, and provided the most impressive elevation of the manor house for visitors. Presumably the crossing took the form of a bridge, although whether built of stone or wood (or both) is unknown.

In addition, the contour survey of the moat earthworks identified a possible causeway across the southern corner of the large moat, which could have represented an alternative access to the agricultural buildings and yards at the southern end of the island. Two machine-dug evaluation trenches (Trenches V and VI – see Fig. 1.5), situated close to the southern corner of the moat, did not reveal any significant deposits to clarify this possibility, but the plausibility of a such an access remains.

The mid-13th century manor buildings

The archaeological evidence points to the rebuilding of the manorial complex in the mid 13th century. Support for this date can be seen in the documentary

evidence which records the royal gifts of a total of 19 oaks to Drew Barentin between 1232 and 1256, a strong indicator of a major building programme.

The extant Chalgrove Manor, at the west end of the village, is a timber framed building on stone plinth foundations, built in the 15th century, replacing the original de Plessis manor. Was the 13th century manor at Hardings Field also timber framed?

On the one hand the location of the site is not near any source of building stone. The principal medieval building stone source was some distance to the north and/or west – well beyond Oxford. Timber in the county was not in short supply, and the documentary evidence does highlight the gift of oaks from the King to Drew Barentin in the 13th century. From a general perspective, then, there would have been clear financial advantages in building in wood.

As has been described in Chapter 2, the archaeological evidence of the buildings is almost entirely composed of *in situ* stone footings or, in some instances, the robbed-out foundation trenches that originally contained stone footings. The size and depth of the footings varies considerably – those of the agricultural buildings are generally slight and shallow, those of the main hall and cross-wing much more substantial.

Plinth walls intended for a timber-built superstructure would not need to be much wider than the timber they were supporting. The largest elements of timber framing were typically no more than *c* 0.25 m thick; the slight footings of the agricultural buildings and most of the ancillary domestic buildings could have been, and probably were, for timber-framed structures constructed on stone plinth footings. In contrast, the 1 m wide footings of the main domestic range and cross-wing would seem extravagant for timber-framed superstructures, and surely must have supported stone walls. It appears that, at least as far as the main domestic range was concerned, the inconvenience of the resource was outweighed by the desire to make a clear and public statement of wealth and status.

The disposition and broad orientation of the redesigned manor buildings appears to have been principally influenced by the shape of the island. The main hall was situated towards the northern (and highest and driest) part of the island, with ancillary domestic buildings attached or close by. The central part of the island became an open courtyard, with agricultural buildings and associated structures bordering the south and west sides of the island.

The evolution of medieval domestic planning has been the subject of considerable study in recent years; the results have demonstrated a more convoluted and subtle development than was once accepted. Blair (1993) argues persuasively that the integrated medieval dwelling of the later medieval period, with a cross passage and two service rooms at the lower end of the hall, combined with chambers above, evolved from the earlier arrangement of associated – but physically separate – hall, chamber and service block.

It is clearly possible that there could have been a manorial complex at Harding's Field consisting of separate hall, chamber and services in the late 12th century (Phase 1), but it is by no means demonstrable on the basis of the limited excavated evidence. Not only was the majority of the early stratigraphy left intact and unexposed, but it is also entirely possible that the stone footings of the later hall and cross wing were superimposed on earlier structural footprints.

Further refinement in our understanding of the evolution of later medieval house design has come from Gardiner (2000), who has sought to trace the evolution of further subdivisions, developing the distinct 'service' end of the hall at the opposite end to the private chamber. Thus by the mid 13th century the rectangular hall contained three or four distinct physical and functional spaces. The entrance would be at the middle of a long side, usually giving onto the first space – the cross entry or cross passage which often led to an entrance on the opposite side. On one side of the passage would be the hall, the principal formal and social space within the house, open to the roof and (at least initially) provided with a central hearth. On the opposite side of the passage was the service area, devoted to the storage and preparation of food. In larger houses this area was divided into two and sometimes bisected by a through passage leading to an external kitchen. The fourth space was originally the separate chamber block, which by the 13th century was accommodated within the overall footprint, and situated sometimes beyond the hall on the ground floor, or on the first floor, over the services.

More is comprehensible with regard to the layout of the Phase 2 domestic range, but a degree of caution must still be employed. Building A1 could be seen as a three bay structure, with the eastern bay devoted to the services, the building bisected by a cross passage, and the central and western bay forming the hall. In this scenario the chamber (if an attached part of the whole) must have been over the service end, as the small western chamber A3 is a later addition.

That by the mid 13th century the plan of manorial and sub-manorial houses had become notably standardised is arguably a reflection of the development of a maturing social hierarchy, with a consensus about the use of social space, and a clear separation of the gentry and those who served them (Gardiner 2000, 179).

Building A1

The archaeological evidence for the hall in its first manifestation (Fig. 2.8) is so fragmentary that conclusions about its structural details will be inevitably subject to qualifications. The overall dimensions suggest that it was a three-bayed aisled building, with the middle and western bays forming the great hall and the eastern bay forming the service end. The solar would presumably have been situated over

the eastern service area, accessible by a staircase, although no archaeological evidence survived to directly support this. However, it could be argued that the substantial post-settings later obscured by the rebuilt cross wall (see below) imply an upper storey over the services.

The superstructure

As has been suggested above, the size of the footings implies that the hall was stone-built. Fragments of window glass were found in the debris from the demolition of the west wall (646, 1069). Shutters are perhaps more likely than glass in a window of this date but glass in domestic contexts was beginning to be more widely used during the 13th century (Wood 1965, 351–2). At Cogges Manor Farm, a 13th-century window has pivots for shutters as well as a thickened and pierced central mullion between two lights for security bars (Rowley and Steiner 1996, pl. 7).

The evidence for internal structural elements in the hall was slight but one reasonably convincing aisle postpad (1045) was located 2.0 m out from the side wall and 6.2 m from the west end of the building. This could suggest the presence of an aisle, or conceivably a gallery or staircase giving access to the upper chamber.

The length of the west bay at 6.2 m seems to have been almost standard for this type of building. Aisled halls are common in south-east England, and a local example is timber-framed Lime Tree House, Harwell, which had four bays and measured 13.7 m by 7.6 m with a nave span of 4.6 m (Fletcher and Currie 1979, 182). The Harding's Field hall measured 19.2 m × 10.2 m wide (external) and with posts set 2.0 m out from the walls the nave width would have been narrow at *c.* 3.8 m. As a comparison, the aisled hall of Saxilby, Lincolnshire, measured 15.24 m by 7.62 m externally (Whitwell 1969, 129).

The length of the middle bay can only be inferred because of the later insertion of the wall (819) between the hall and service bay. The two sub-circular pitched stone features (81 and 865) of Phase 3 could represent consolidation over the post-settings or postholes of the original cross wall. The construction of wall 819 would have destroyed any evidence of a spere truss, such as that at Lampetts, Fyfield in Essex (Smith 1975, 34–5). In this example the hall bays were of apparently uneven length owing to the presence of the spere walls. If this was also the case at Harding's Field, the doorways at the opposite ends of the cross-passage would have been approximately 1.5 m to the east of the partition represented in Phase 3/1.

Presumably the hall and service end, with solar above, would have been separated by a cross-passage, with opposing doorways, and from this passage one or two doorways would have given access to the service area or areas.

It is worth considering the likely configuration of the roof of the building at this point. The excavated evidence does not indicate whether the eastern bay

represented a 'cross-wing', which was roofed separately from the hall, or a 'compartment', which was roofed with the hall. It is perhaps more likely that it was enclosed as part of the hall roof since a transverse roof would imply a more substantial divide between the solar block and the hall than there was evidence for. However, a simple pitched roof could have limited the headroom in the solar. At Warnford, Hampshire, this was overcome to some extent by lowering the floor level of the service rooms (Wood 1965, 71), although this was clearly not the case at Harding's Field.

It is difficult to understand the function of the length of wall footing (robber trench 1084 and footing 1135 – Fig. 2.8) in the context of the Phase 2 hall. Perhaps the most likely possibility is that it represents an aborted extension to the east of the hall range.

Building D

A clear interpretation of the function or character of this building (Fig. 2.9) presents problems, not least because the structure was heavily damaged during the topsoil stripping. The shallow stratigraphy within the building, and its relatively short lifespan (when compared to the main range) mean that there is little material evidence surviving to consider in addition to the structural evidence. In addition the situation of the building does not easily fit with conventional manorial layouts.

The dating evidence for the construction of the building is meagre, but in two aspects it is clear that it post-dates the moat construction. The footings were cut into the platform material, and along the northern edge of the building the wall was reinforced by two exterior buttresses on the edge of the moat.

There is some evidence of domestic or craft activities taking place in the building, attested by the presence of two or three open hearths, and the recovery of two fragments of stone mortars from the building's occupation and demolition layers. The indented western end of the building (720) may be the remains of a hearth setting against the wall, as in the 14th-century kitchen at Wintringham, Huntingdonshire (Beresford 1977, 241–245). A similar setting was found in a building at South Witham, Lincolnshire, which was interpreted as a smithy (Mayes 1968, 236–7).

At the site of the medieval manor at Cogges, near Witney, a substantial stone building, of probable 13th century date, is situated north of the west end of the hall. Although in its post-medieval guise it became a dairy, and there is some evidence to suggest it may have been a brewhouse in the late medieval period, the quality and size of the footings examined suggest it was a substantial, two-storey structure. (Rowley and Steiner 1996, 15). This is unlikely to be the case with Building D. In this context it is important to remember that the service rooms at Cogges were at the west end of the hall, not, as at Chalgrove, at the east end.

It is not impossible that Building D could have been a kitchen, or a dairy, although these were

almost always situated close to the service end of the hall (as indeed are the later recognised kitchens at Harding's Field). Perhaps the best suggestion for the function of Building D is a bakehouse or brewhouse, which would require hearths and, furthermore, easy access to water. Its relatively short lifespan would be consistent with the evidence of the later medieval development of the north side of the moat, requiring the removal of utilitarian buildings.

Building E

The excavator's interpretation of this building (Fig. 2.9) was a dovecote, and, primarily because of its shape in plan, such an interpretation is tempting. However, the obvious interpretation is worth a critical examination.

Although there is plenty of evidence for the keeping of doves in the Roman period, there is no evidence that the practice was maintained by the Saxons, and only after the Conquest was the keeping of doves reintroduced, although permission to do so was reserved for manorial lords, monastic houses and parsons. Few failed to exercise this prerogative (Bond 1973, 20); it was a fiercely guarded privilege and a mark of social status that was supported by the threat of severe punishment for those who harmed or raided the birds.

A number of manorial or monastic dovecotes have been excavated, or survive as upstanding structures, and most had (or have) internal diameters of 6.0 m or more. Two standing late medieval Oxfordshire dovecotes, at Duns Tew Manor and Minster Lovell Manor, have internal diameters of 6.0 m or more (Bond 1978b, 72), and another (also probably late medieval) in the grounds of the Old Rectory at Kidlington, Oxon has an internal diameter of 5.6 m (Bond 1982, 103). By comparison the Harding's Field structure has an internal diameter of just 3.1 m. The only surviving stone-built circular medieval dovecotes with an internal diameter under 4.0 m are all in the far west, in Pembrokeshire and Cornwall, and all have the form of a domed corbelled stone roof as is normal in those parts of Britain. The usual midland form is a conical timber-raftered roof with a central lantern, which would be difficult to achieve on a structure this small (Bond, pers. comm.).

Perhaps the closest – in both senses of the word – structural parallel, is the circular dovecote at Dean Court Farm, Cumnor, which had an original internal diameter of *c* 5.0 m, and was later rebuilt, possibly after the collapse of the original, with a diameter of 3.6 m (Allen 1994, 433). The original dovecote was probably constructed in the 14th century, the smaller rebuild is undated.

That doves were eaten (and presumably kept) at Harding's Field is supported by the assemblage of pigeon bones recovered, particularly those from young birds or squabs (birds not yet fledged). However, doubts over the function of Building E remain, chiefly because of its small size.

An alternative explanation of Building E's function may be suggested by a small circular structure at Sydenhams Moat, Warwickshire, which had an internal diameter of *c* 2.5 m and stone walls *c* 0.9 m thick. It was initially interpreted as a dovecote (Perry 1980, 61), but subsequently reinterpreted as a store for malted grain (Smith 1989–90, 51). In this context it may not be a coincidence that Building E is close to the possible bakehouse or brewhouse, Building D.

Buildings N, O, Q and U

Fragmentary remains of the stone footings of a number of buildings (Fig. 2.2) were revealed in the southern part of the large island. None was associated with evidence of domestic occupation. The area was later reorganised and developed as a complex of farm buildings and yards, so it is reasonable to see these four buildings as an earlier phase (or possibly two) of agricultural structures.

It cannot be confirmed beyond question, however, that they necessarily belong with the first phase of activity after the moat construction, as this area lies beyond the extent of the dumped platform material. Very little dating evidence was recovered in association with any of the buildings. The material from a hollow in the floor of building Q, for instance, although dating to between the late 13th and 14th century, could equally derive from activity associated with the later building on the same site. Ultimately therefore, their inclusion in this phase should be accepted with caution.

The modernisation of the manor (Phase 3 – early 14th century) (Fig. 2.3)

The archaeological evidence indicates that early in the 14th century extensive alteration of the buildings and their layout took place.

Although it cannot be definitely proved to be at his instigation, these alterations broadly coincide in date with the acquisition of the manor by Drew Barentin II and such changes as were made would have reflected the increased standards of prestige and comfort that a man of his standing would have expected (see Blair Chapter 1). There is evidence throughout England of a general remodelling of domestic and agricultural buildings in the first decades of the 14th century, in part the result of the success and profitability of demesne farming during the 13th century (Platt 1978, 47).

The main range of the manor at Harding's Field was radically altered. The decision to demolish the entire old service bay, rather than add to it, may to some extent reflect the idea of separateness that was developing with regard to separation of the hall and the chambers or rooms that serviced it. There are examples of other halls being completely rebuilt at this time, as at Brome in Suffolk (West 1970, 95–7) and at Wintringham in Huntingdonshire, where a new house was built *c* 1300 (Beresford 1977, 192).

The plan of the service area at ground level was now typical of many medieval houses of this date with two service rooms (typically a buttery and pantry) divided by a corridor or leading to an external kitchen. At Haddon Hall, Derbyshire, built *c.* 1300, the rooms were of almost identical dimensions to those at Harding's Field and were also in the same position relative to the hall (Faulkner 1975, 107, fig. 28). At Harding's Field the corridor to the kitchen was central and the rooms on either side were unequal in size because the more northerly room extended into the ground floor of the new cross-wing. This was the case at Warnford Manor House, Hampshire (Wood 1965, 36). Two doorways gave access from the hall to the buttery and the pantry and a central door led through the corridor to the kitchen on the east side of the island.

While the interior of the new wing contained little or no construction debris from this rebuilding, a layer of construction debris was noted around the southern corner of the house. The rubble appeared to have been covered with a layer of loam (170 and 228), presumably to create a raised bed, and possibly to give the effect of a raised platform in front of the main elevation of the house.

Room A1

The construction of the dividing wall (819) between the main building (A1, Fig. 2.10) and the cross-wing (Fig. 2.11) would have meant that the bays were of uneven length. It is possible that the opportunity was taken to replace the original roof structure by a base cruck construction. The thrust of the roof, previously taken through aisle posts onto the floor, was thereby transferred to the walls. This may explain the two small buttresses (560 and 895 – see Fig. 2.10), which were added on either side of the hall. The result was that the hall was divided into two equal bays, each of which was the same length as the new service bay. A similar conversion took place at Lime Tree House, Harwell, Oxfordshire, with the construction of a base cruck roof in 1297–8 (Currie 1992, 139–40).

Rooms A9 and A10

The interpretation of the function of the two rooms in the cross-wing service area (Fig. 2.11) was supported by the recovery of several artefacts from the floors of the rooms (although it should be noted that most of the artefacts were found in the later deposits within the buildings). The remains of glass vessels were found in each of the rooms (see Chapter 4). The pottery forms, such as jugs and a bottle, found in the larger room (A9) were not incompatible with those that would be used in a buttery and the large number of small bones included the remains of fish, birds and smaller mammals. Finds from Room A10 included two knives, one of which was possibly a bench knife.

No evidence was found for external doorways in either room, and therefore access must have been

restricted to the doorways leading off from the cross passage, or the two doors accessing the hall. There was also evidence of a threshold providing access from Room A9 into the chamber beyond (A4).

Post-settings in the centre of the two rooms may have supported timbers running lengthways across the bay, from north-west to south-east, in the form of a spine beam. The construction of the corridor walls (354 and 359) would have made use of the timber uprights (in settings 113 and 357) in the middle of the bay and of their cross-beams.

Room A4

The function of the ground floor room A4 (Fig. 2.11) is somewhat unclear. The floor deposits indicate a fair amount of wear, periodically repaired by patches of cobbling. As with other rooms in the domestic range, the potential of the artefactual material recovered to determine the room's function is limited, as most was undiagnostic and found within upper layers or the Phase 5 demolition material.

With no evidence for a hearth, it is unlikely to have served as a parlour or private living room for the lord's family, and more by default than by positive evidence one may suggest that it could have been a store, or a wardrobe. The wardrobe was used as a store for valuable items and was, therefore, often stone-walled to provide a secure, fireproof environment. The proximity of the garderobe (A5 – see below) could have been beneficial, as the likely stench of ammonia from the garderobe would have been a deterrent to moths.

The upper floor

Typically, by the 14th century, the solar was situated over the high end of the hall for convenience, and the rooms above the service bay were used for guests, a son's family or for staff such as a bailiff. Unusually, this does not appear to be the case at Harding's Field and the lord's solar remained over the service end of the hall. The possibility of a grand window behind the high table is one of the advantages and attractions of this alternative arrangement. There are a few other examples, such as the Treasurer's House at Martock in Somerset where this is the case (Wood 1965, fig. 28).

Staircases

The location of the necessary access to the upper floors of A9 and A10 is unclear. The excavator speculated that two spiral staircases were incorporated into wall 819, which separates the hall A1 from the rooms A9 and A10. Footings 81 and 893 were interpreted as footings for the stairs. However, the footings are barely 1.5 m in diameter, implying a stair width of around 0.5 m which is unfeasibly narrow. Contemporary examples of spiral staircases (such as Old Soar, Plaxtol in Kent) were at least 2 m in diameter, and usually situated in a corner to provide extra

structural support (Wood 1965, fig. 26). The footings 81 and 893 are much more likely to represent consolidation over the settings for postholes of the Phase 2 bay division.

A much more likely candidate as a base for a staircase serving the upper floor of the service wing would be the small near-square room A8 (Fig. 2.11), situated in the angle of the north side of Room A1 and the west side of Room A9. Further support for a staircase at this point is indicated by the substantial footings of A8 and the infill of clay and flint, almost devoid of finds, within the structure.

A staircase giving access only from the main hall gives some indication of the function of the upper floors of A9 and A10 (and by implication A4 and A5). The possible external chimney base, which would have served a fireplace, adds further support to the likelihood that the upper floor was a suite of rooms exclusive to the lord of the manor. Thus it is possible that on the first floor counterparts to A9 and A10 were one room – the solar, and A4 represented the bedchamber, with the first floor garderobe beyond to the north.

Room A3

A short bay was added to the high end of the hall A1 (Fig. 2.10). Its position suggests that it was a parlour, a separate room to which the family could retire from the high table. Parlours were commonly converted from what would have been the solar basement but at Harding's Field the solar was at the other, low end of the hall and there was no evidence for a second storey at the high end. The presence of a small central hearth with a base of limestone slabs (796) within the parlour suggests that the room was open to the roof. The demolition of what was originally the high end of the hall would have resulted in the removal of any window, and fragments of window glass were found in the later floor make up of this new room.

There was no evidence of a door between the new room and the main hall, so presumably the opening would have been screened by a curtain when necessary. Parlours or withdrawing rooms were a result of the increasing desire for privacy that developed during the 14th century (Wood 1965, 91). Other examples of this trend exist; at Wintringham, Huntingdonshire, a room called a 'bower' was built c 1300 at the dais end of the hall (Beresford 1977, 224).

Room A5

The evidence (Fig. 2.11) appears to represent the foundations of a garderobe or privy, serving the private chambers of the first floor. No evidence of a latrine pit as such was identified, so it is assumed that there would have been a clearance arch, as at Old Soar, Paxtol in Kent, in the northern wall to allow the waste to run out into the moat (Wood 1965, 380). A stone wall divided the ground plan of the garderobe into two parts, and the ground in the

northern part was cess-stained in a slight pit (935). The southern half was not stained, implying that the actual privy shaft serving the upper chamber was separated from the structural north wall of the ground floor chamber, presumably to prevent seepage back into the lower chamber.

Building A6

The evidence (Fig. 2.10) appears to represent a porch facing onto the courtyard. The side walls were represented by robber trenches slightly shallower than those of the main building. The front of the porch appeared to be open, or have a wooden rather than a stone front, which suggests that the porch was probably not a full two-storey construction with an upper room, as is found in a number of examples, for instance Woodlands Manor, Mere (Wood 1965, plate IX). A small quantity of stone slate was found within the material excavated from the porch, which may indicate the roof covering.

Building A7

The wall footings of a small rectangular building (Fig. 2.14) were attached to the south-east corner of the service block, with a possible linking wall to the west side of Building B. There was little evidence to indicate the character or function of the building, and any internal floor or other deposits were removed by the construction of the later building A11 (see below). It is possible that it was a small storehouse, maybe serving the kitchen. An out-building adjoining the kitchen at Kent's Moat, Sheldon, Warwickshire, was interpreted as a possible coal store (Dornier 1965, 50).

Building W

The evidence (Fig. 2.12) is interpreted as a detached kitchen to the east of the service range, the traditional place for a kitchen in a manorial complex. King John's Hunting Lodge at Writtle, Essex, had a series of kitchens to the east of, and in series with, the hall (Rahtz 1969). At other sites at this time, such as Wintringham, Huntingdonshire (Beresford 1977, 205), kitchens were rearranged, rebuilt or furnished with more formal ovens and hearths. It was still conventional for the kitchen to be detached from the main building range to reduce the risk of fire. The dating of the construction of Building W is less than secure, given the degree of later rebuilding and use. Therefore it is possibly significant to note that the line of the west wall of this building lies directly alongside the eastern end of the extension (1135) to the north wall of Phase 2 Building A1, which could suggest that Building W was built before the construction of the Phase 3 cross-wing.

The wall footings of Building W were slight compared to those of the main range, implying that the building was timber-framed. Although monastic kitchens were usually built of stone by this time,

timber-framed examples in a manorial context were not uncommon. Provided the roof was high and cooking was restricted to a central open hearth, the fire risk was acceptable. Fireplaces incorporated or added to the structure would be brick- or stone-built, with chimneys. Internally Building W was simply arranged, with one large open hearth in the centre, surrounded by a beaten earth floor. There was no evidence of internal ovens or fireplaces at this stage. At Northolt Manor, a large kitchen of 1300–1350 was a timber-framed building, with a central hearth (Steane 1985, 265). Significantly, most of the cooking at Northolt appears to have been done in a cobbled yard outside the kitchen. The same arrangement may have applied at Harding's Field, with the juxtaposition of Building W and Area F (see below).

Area F

The north-east corner of the main island appears to have evolved into a working area (Fig. 2.12), ultimately separated by a fence or wall from the domestic ranges. It is likely that the dimensions of the area were dictated by the east wall of the north-south range and the north wall of Building W, which suggests that it post-dates the major redevelopment of the manor. The dating of the establishment of this area is difficult to fix precisely from the artefactual evidence; a small assemblage of pottery and a few metal objects suggest an early 13th century date, although the open nature of the area throughout its life undoubtedly exacerbated the degree of intrusion by later material. The area eventually contained ovens, a yard surface and possibly a small roofed building. The variations in the construction details of the three ovens suggest that a number of activities may have been undertaken at any one time, possibly a combination of bread-making and malting. A bread oven with similar dimensions to one of the three ovens in Area F (509) was excavated at Penhallam Manor, Cornwall (Beresford 1974, 111–112).

Neither the stratigraphy nor the artefactual assemblage recovered from Area F can elucidate the internal development of the area or indeed its longevity. There is some empirical evidence that the area may have become disused before the rest of the domestic complex in the relative scarcity of later pottery fabrics – for instance Fabrics 60–9 (see Table 3.3) – in comparison to the later kitchen, Building A12. However, this could equally well be a consequence of changing activities within the area.

The water supply to the manor

The source of potable water for the manor requires some consideration at this point. Curiously, no archaeological evidence was found for a well at any point (or in any phase) in the building complex. Are we to assume that they drew water straight from the moat? Most rural sites contain wells or water

pits, which would be a source of water less prone to pollution than a moat (particularly if the moat is, as seems to be the case at Harding's Field, also in use as a sewer).

Given the abbreviated excavation strategy, it is perhaps most prudent to suggest that a well (or wells) may remain undetected under undisturbed deposits on the site.

Building B

The lightly founded three-bay building (Fig. 2.16) to the south of Building W revealed few artefactual clues to its function, and again consideration is centred on its internal layout and relative position in the building complex. It appears to have been a timber-framed building, judging by the insubstantial footings, with a fireplace against one interior wall. The building's proximity to the kitchen and the service area could suggest that it was accommodation for manorial staff. A contemporary parallel is documented at Belchamp St Paul, Essex (Le Patourel 1980, 40–1), which housed manorial servants on the first floor, over a ground floor dairy. There is some evidence that the upper floor of the later dairy at Cogges Manor Farm, Oxfordshire, was fitted out as living quarters (Rowley and Steiner 1996, 74). It is possible that the same combination applied at Harding's Field, although no artefactual evidence for the dairy function was produced.

Building J

The function of building J (Fig. 2.17), set apart from the main domestic buildings, is difficult to determine. The demolition debris from the building (337) included sherds of 14th-century fine tableware, two decorated sherds and a bronze buckle. It is possible that the building was used as accommodation for fairly senior manorial staff. The building overlooks the farmyard which would be a suitable location for the house of the domestic steward or bailiff.

Building I

Building I (Fig. 2.17) was attached to the southern wall of Building J and its function is possibly related. A key element (at least in the building's original guise) must have been the stone-lined pit (341) in the south-west corner of the structure. A larder at Penhallam had a small pit, partly lined with stone, which was interpreted as a cool storage pit (Beresford 1974, 114) and a similar feature in a town house in Lincoln was also interpreted as a larder (Colyer and Jones 1979, 64–65, fig. 5). Another possibility is suggested by two stone-lined tanks recorded in the late 14th- to 15th-century phase of the kitchen at Dean Court Farm (Allen 1994, 430–4). These were interpreted as fish tanks which were important enough for the kitchen to be redesigned around them. It was also considered that they may have been used as part of the brewing process.

However, these tanks were much larger than the Harding's Field example; furthermore, the lack of stone lining on one side of the pit seems to argue against it being water-filled.

Fresh meat was probably less difficult to obtain in the winter than has been previously thought but as a matter of prudence a certain amount of meat would have been kept pickled or salted in most aristocratic or gentry households of the period. Therefore, the likelihood seems to be that building I was a store or larder. The pit in one corner could have been used for storage (or possibly for ice) and could be supervised by the occupant of the adjacent building (J).

The central courtyard

There was no evidence that the courtyard was divided in any way during this phase. The courtyard surface (396) provided a stratigraphic link between buildings B, I, J, the porch A6 and the farm building K, all of which it abutted. The yard also appeared to respect a line between the eastern corner of building J and the western corner of the porch, and another line between the western corner of the porch and building B on the east side of the island. In Phase 4, these lines were marked by walls which probably contained gardens to the north and it is quite likely that walls, or another kind of barrier, existed during this earlier phase. The courtyard was not traced to the edge of the eastern moat immediately south of Building B, although it is not clear whether this was due to later truncation or the presence of a boundary wall along the moat edge. In the southern corner of the island the courtyard surface was lost due to truncation.

The agricultural buildings (Phase 3 – early–mid 14th century)

The irregular scatter of farm buildings in the southern half of the main island were replaced by an orderly arrangement of barns, byres and stables. There are many examples of similar reorganisation, for instance at Sydenham's Moat, Solihull, Warwickshire (Smith 1989–90, 47) and at the Knights Templars moat at South Witham, Lincolnshire (Mayes 1968, 236), and they seem to be a signal of a developing and prospering agricultural organisation.

The overall disposition and phasing of the agricultural buildings

While the overall reorganisation of the southern half of the island at Harding's Field is obvious, the sequence of building is uncertain, and the precise functions of individual buildings are open to question. By their nature archaeological remains of agricultural buildings are usually insubstantial, and contain few datable artefacts. These factors were exacerbated by the limited excavation undertaken over the southern half of the island. Thus the phasing of Building C before the range G and H is

open to some question – there is a suggestion that the north wall of building G originally extended to the east, and was shortened to accommodate Building C. Equally, however one could argue that the logical sequence of building would have been first the two buildings K and C at the south and east edges of the moat, followed by the range G and H, effectively dividing the farmyard into two discrete areas. It is from the interrelationship of the buildings, both to each other and to the entire manorial complex itself, that the most plausible identification for the buildings' functions can be formed.

Building K

The building (Fig. 2.18), measuring nearly 42 m × 7.5 m in plan, was positioned on the edge of the moat, and was almost completely devoid of finds except for small miscellaneous sherds of pottery, an iron staple and strip and a piece of lead from the overlying (demolition?) material. The only clue to its function is the plan of the building itself.

One possible interpretation of Building K is a stable block. The great length of the building appears excessive for the stabling of horses for recreational use or hunting in a relatively modest manorial establishment. Except for the partitions at either end there was no evidence for mangers or drains, or a run of internal partitions, essential in stables. There is also only one entrance which would not be desirable in a stable block of this length. Additionally, if the building had been used as a stable, a more substantial flooring might have been expected, as was found in the pitched limestone flooring in the 15th-century barn of the manorial house at Minster Lovell, Oxfordshire (Bond pers. comm.).

An alternative function for Building K is accommodation for draught animals. Wilson suggests (see Chapter 5) that perhaps 16 oxen would have been required on the manor to supply two plough teams. Again, the lack of evidence of a substantial floor could argue against this use.

It is perhaps more likely that the building was used as a cowshed or a sheepcote, both of which would require less segregation of the animals than in a stable, so few if any partitions would be necessary. Building XII at Waltham Abbey, which had a domestic hall and solar at one end but was otherwise interpreted as 15th-century housing for 32 animals, measured approximately 50 m in length excluding the domestic portion (Huggins 1972). This exceeds the length of building K but most manorial byres or cowsheds were significantly smaller than the Harding's Field building. A new byre was built by Glastonbury Abbey at Street in 1343 with its dimensions recorded as 63 feet by 20 feet (c 19.2 m by 6.1 m) (M Thompson pers. comm.).

Sheepcotes were used during the later medieval period for the overwintering of flocks, for the storage of fodder and as a source of manure, and their considerable length is one of their most distinctive characteristics, varying from 23 m to 65 m in length



Plate 6.1 Artist's reconstruction of Barentin's manor in the late 14th century.

and 6 m to 8 m in width (Dyer 1995, 136–139). They are further identified by having one entrance only and by the close proximity of one long wall to major walls or boundaries such as a moat (*ibid.* 139). They were usually built of timber on stone sill walls and would have had considerable roof space for storage. Sheepcotes were often permanent and substantial structures because of the high income provided by sheep farming during the wool boom of the 13th and 14th centuries.

Building C

A large, lightly founded building interpreted as a barn (Fig. 2.18), with a porch on its western side, was built to the south of Building B, post-dating the laying of the courtyard surface. The remains of the walls suggest that the structure was timber-framed on stone sills. No finds were recovered from the building to assist in dating its construction. Assuming the porch was located in the centre of the building the original length of the barn can be estimated at *c.* 33 m, of which there was archaeological evidence for 30.5 m. One substantial internal post pad (394) was identified indicating that it was an aisled or quasi-aisled structure.

The porch itself measured approximately 4.5 m by 4 m, which would be suitable for a cart porch and is generous in size compared to extant examples attached to medium-sized or small medieval barns elsewhere. The size of the carts able to enter the barn was limited by the width of the doorway and this was 3.2 m to 3.4 m on the four surviving Somerset barns of Glastonbury Abbey (Bond and Weller 1991), 3 m at Shippon and possibly as little as 2.5 m at Tadmarton on the Abingdon Abbey estates (Bond 1979). Even at Great Coxwell the original doorways were only about 3 m wide and these served until the 18th century when larger openings were made in the two gable ends. However, although Building C seems to have been given a generously large porch, the east side of the barn abuts the line of the edge of the moat which would make an opposing doorway and therefore a through passage for carts impossible. Wagons would have had to back out of the barn or be turned inside the barn once they were offloaded. This would not have been an ideal arrangement, and one may speculate that the large porch was an attempt to alleviate this problem by allowing more turning space within the building.

Chalgrove lies within the western limits of the area in which medieval aisled barns are common, such as the larger barn at Great Coxwell, Berkshire, with a width of 11.6 m internally (Bond *pers. comm.*). The estimated length of the Harding's Field barn (33 m) places it well within the 'middle-sized' range of medieval barns so characteristic of manorial sites, as distinct from the large barns on monastic granges which would store grain from several manors. Monastic barns were typically more than 40 m in length and 'small' barns less than 25 m (*cf.* Bond and Weller 1991). The Harding's Field barn compares in

length with two surviving manorial barns on the Glastonbury Abbey estates, at Pilton (33 m by 8.4 m internally) and Doulling (29 m by 8.2 m), both of which are narrower because they have cruck roofs. Arguably arable production on a midland open-field manor such as Harding's Field would probably have been greater than in the rather mixed economy of Somerset and therefore it may not be unusual that the Harding's Field barn was of substantial size.

The western side of the main island

The topsoil stripping and the evaluation trenches excavated along the western edge of the main island (Fig. 2.19) did not reveal any structural evidence, and it is considered that this area was maintained as an open area – possibly pasture. The probable pond (320) located by Trench II, could also suggest that poultry were kept here. A scatter of material (319), including 42 sherds of pottery and a circular iron buckle, was identified *c.* 20 m to the north-west of building J, close to the edge of the moat. In conjunction with the oyster shell dump located close to the western side of Structure T, it suggests that the area (or parts of it) was also occasionally used as a midden.

Later structural development

(Phase 4 – late 14th century) (Fig. 2.4)

The central theme of the various structural developments in the manor complex is the adaptation of the existing buildings to suit the changing aspirations of the knightly class, especially the desire for a clearer separation of the lord's living quarters from the areas devoted to service or work.

Building A11

Although the building (Fig. 2.14) overlay the footprint of the Phase 3 Building A7, such is the difference in the nature of the surviving footings that it seems unlikely that the two had the same function. Internal deposits associated with Building A11 suggest that the floor was raised, which might explain why no evidence of an entrance threshold was identified. The only recovered artefacts that may give a clue to the building's function were a few fragments of encaustic inlaid floor tiles (see Chapter 4). Such tiles are ubiquitous in monastic contexts, particularly in claustral buildings such as the chapter house. While their presence in deposits within building A11 is by no means conclusive proof that they were originally laid there, it is suggested that this evidence, albeit meagre, could mean that A11 was a private chapel.

An episcopal licence was issued during Thomas Barentin II's lifetime, confirming the presence of an oratory on the site in 1370 (see Blair above) and the situation of Building A11 is the most likely location, given that the lord's chambers were above the service wing. The chapel at Charney Bassett Manor House, Oxfordshire, is attached to the solar in the

same way as at Harding's Field with the access at first-floor level (Wood 1965, fig. 69).

In the 14th century there was a preference for two-staged or first-floor chapels, although ground floor chapels, such as the mid 14th-century ground floor chapel at Stonor House, Oxfordshire (Wood 1965, 245), are known. A 15th-century development was to have a chapel on the ground floor with a chancel the height of two floors (*ibid.*, 237). An example of this arrangement can be found at Champs Chapel, East Hendred, Berkshire, and could have been the arrangement for Harding's Field. Thus the lord would enter the chapel from his first floor chamber above Room A10, while the manorial staff would enter from the ground floor. This fitted in with the separation of the lord and his family from his servants which had already occurred in the separation of the parlour from the hall. The lord and his servants would worship in the same building, but separately.

Room A1

The post-setting (618) in the centre of the hall (A1, Fig. 2.10) is a possible indication that efforts were made to update the hall itself. The post would have supported a crossbeam bearing a floor jettied out over almost the whole of the eastern part of the hall. This could be seen as an attempt to modernise an old house by reducing the roof space, without the expense of inserting a chimney and a fireplace. By flooring over part of the hall, an extra first-floor chamber was created while the roof space was reduced effectively to a large smoke bay. A number of standing examples of this alteration have been examined, particularly in Kent (Pearson 1994) and there is an example in a house dating from *c.* 1500 in Watlington, Oxfordshire (J Steane, pers. comm.).

The curving feature (865), leading from the post-setting 618 to the north wall is difficult to explain. Though it has similarities with a drain, it is difficult to see why a drain would be needed at this point, let alone a curving one. Just possibly it was a slot to secure the lower edge of a lightweight screen or curtain, suspended from the jettied floor described above.

There are several alternative interpretations for the three postholes (862, 867, 868) on the north side of the hall. Their spacing makes it unlikely that they represent the foundations for a gallery providing access from the hall to a first floor room in A3. There is no evidence that a first floor was inserted within A3, since the central hearth was never replaced by a wall fireplace. An alternative interpretation is that they supported a staircase that led to the first floor room inserted into the eastern bay of the hall. Clearly a staircase in this position would only have been possible if the side bench of the hall had gone out of use by this time. Another theory is that the posts may have represented some sort of elaborate canopy over the bench especially as medieval furniture was commonly built into a room, rather than being free-standing.

It is possible that the step or dais in front of the opening into Room A3 was renewed at this time (622), with evidence of a tile-on-edge revetment (799) found to the north-west of the hearth.

Hearth development

A plinth of limestone flags (885) was placed against the south-east side of a new hearth (563) and was perhaps used as a stand for vessels, to keep food warm or to stack wood ready for the fire. One of the stones in the plinth had a conical hole worked through it and this, together with the burning on the underside of the stone, suggests that it may have originally been a tuyère block from a smelting hearth. A hearth of similar dimensions was excavated within the Manor of the More, Hertfordshire (Biddle *et al.* 1959, pl. XIXA).

Building A12

A further development of the sophistication of the services of the manor is implied by the rebuilding of the kitchen (A12, Fig. 2.13). Although this new kitchen had similar dimensions (9.0 m by 6.0 m) to its predecessor (Building W), it was attached to the hall by a corridor or pentice (18, 114) which would have provided covered access to the corridor between the buttery and pantry. Such pentices were characteristic of the growing conglomeration of medieval manorial and palatial buildings (Wood 1965, 336). They ensured that moving between buildings was in relative comfort and (where necessary) privacy. There is an order in the Liberate Rolls to make an aisle between Queen Eleanor's new chapel and chamber at Woodstock 'so that she may go and return from the chapel with a dry foot'. A passageway with open sides led from the hall to the kitchen at Weoley Castle and a number are known to have connected the rambling buildings of the royal palace of Clarendon, Wiltshire.

The interior of the new kitchen was more complex, the main cooking area containing a series of stone-lined ovens or fireplaces against the east wall, augmenting the large central hearth. The concentration of ovens and hearths in such a small area suggests that the rebuilt kitchen may have been stone-built, unlike its predecessor, although it is clear that the building's foundations were not appreciably deeper. The northern part of the building was separated by a partition wall, and possibly served as a woodstore, judging by the socketed axe-head (SF95) found within it.

The distribution of animal bones (see Wilson, Chapter 5) indicate that, although the cooking appeared to take place in Building A12, the preparation of the cooked meat for the table tended to take place in Room A9.

Other artefacts found within the main part of the kitchen included copper alloy cauldron and vessel feet, and a cauldron handle (SFs 472, 474, 478 and 7). However, although it is quite likely that cauldrons

were used in the kitchen, it should be noted that they had been partially melted down and they may instead have been associated with the later metal-working on the site (see below).

Courtyards and gardens (Figs 2.19–20)

The fashion for ornamental pleasure gardens for relaxation and entertainment, paralleled by an aesthetic interest in plants, grew during the 14th century and complemented the development of comfortable houses (Steane 1985, 213–4; Harvey 1981, 94). The precise conventions surrounding this fashion would not evolve for another century or two, and the example at Harding's Field should be seen in the context of Steane's observation (*ibid.*, 214) that these developments are manifestations of impulsive and unplanned acquisitiveness, reflecting an emerging leisured middle class but not yet a social code to go with it.

Traces of a curtain or garden wall were identified (692), extending north from the western end of the main domestic range, and following the northern moat edge to the western side of the garderobe A5, thus enclosing a large area over the footprint of the demolished Phase 2 buildings D and E. The enclosed area was bisected by a lightly founded structure (A13 – see below)

Medieval gardens were commonly walled and could also include timber rails, turf seats, gravel paths and water features (Harvey 1981). The Harding's Field walled garden contained an area of gravel and flint courtyard (732) and a small rectangular enclosure (572) which could represent a raised flowerbed. These were common features in gardens of this date (McLean 1981, 160).

Structure A13

The insubstantial structure bisecting the garden area north of the main range (Fig. 2.20) is best interpreted as a pentice, or open-sided walkway. The structure incorporated a mortar floor forming the bedding for decorated floor tiles, two of which survived *in situ*. The tiles had been laid in a diagonal pattern and comprised four different designs (see Chapter 4). The pentice enclosed a small cloister-like courtyard of gravel and flint which may have been a small-scale emulation of a monastic cloister (Wood 1965, 336). The courtyard was probably entered from a doorway in the north-east facing wall of the pentice, which may help to explain the lack of evidence for a wall at that point.

Structure A14

A small rectangular structure (Fig. 2.20) was constructed against the west end of Room A3, incorporating the garden wall (670) to form its south side. No evidence of a doorway was found between A14 and A3, and no material was found within A14 to explain its function. Structure A14 itself was augmented by a further small extension to the west, and one

may surmise that both of these structures were utilitarian buildings – possibly store sheds relating to the garden.

Structure T

The very lightly founded Structure T (Fig. 2.19), situated between building J and the garden wall to the north was possibly an enclosure rather than a roofed building. Artefactual evidence was scarce – two horseshoes and an arrowhead were recovered from deposits within the structure, but these do not necessarily give a clear indication of the structure's function. It could represent a small paddock or pen, possibly for poultry, with the moat and the possible pond (320) situated close by to the west.

The agricultural buildings

The increase in the number of farm buildings was clearly dictated by the changing economic requirements of the estate. Either the estate was increasing in size and needed further farm buildings or, as is perhaps more likely, there was a changeover to a dominance of animal husbandry. The division of the farmyard would have benefited stock control. Greater profits could be made from stock rearing and the buoyant market in English wool made sheep rearing commercially attractive, in suitable parts of the country, like Oxfordshire (Steane 1985, 180).

Buildings G and H

These two buildings (Fig. 2.18) were constructed, apparently as a pair, effectively dividing the farmyard into inner and outer yards. The gap between the two buildings had a well-metalled surface which was edged on one side by a limestone kerb.

The narrow footings of building G would probably have supported a timber framed superstructure. Although smaller than building K, G still appears too large to be stables and no evidence was found for internal partitions, which would be expected in stables. Its proximity to the barn, convenient for the supply of threshed straw as feed and litter suggests that it may have been a cattle byre. The pitched stone hardstanding in front of the building may have had a role in the watering and feeding of cattle.

Building H seems to have been an altogether more substantial stone building, probably with a tiled roof, judging by the number of fragmentary tiles in the overlying deposits. Its north-western end was partly partitioned and drained and therefore it is possible that at least some of the building functioned as stables. The south-eastern end of the range comprised open-fronted bays and it may have served as a carhouse, as did one of the buildings at Cuxham (Harvey 1981, 36). Another example was the carhouse built in 1343 onto the end of the byre at Street, Somerset, measuring 30 feet by 20 feet (M Thompson pers. comm.).

Thus it seems likely that the function of the range G and H would have been linked to activities at least partially involving the lord and his family – for instance stables. The more utilitarian activities – grain storage or sheep and cattle shelters would be ‘out of sight’ to the south of the central range, accommodated by buildings C and K respectively. In addition, animal access to the open area along the west side of the island, or across the possible bridge or causeway in the southern corner of the island would be easy from the yard in front of Building K.

Building I

The construction of Building H seemed to prompt the refitting of Building I (Fig. 2.17); the stone-lined pit in the south-west corner appears to have been infilled. A new floor was laid and a small central hearth was constructed. Although the building may have been modified during this period, it was still likely to be functionally linked to Building J.

The abandonment of the manor (Phase 5 – mid to late 15th century)

The documentary evidence reveals that Reynold Barentin inherited the Oxfordshire manor of Haseley Court, Little Haseley, from his wealthy uncle Drew Barentin in 1415. By the middle of the 15th century Haseley Court had replaced the manor house at Harding’s Field as the main Barentin residence (see Blair Chapter 1). Corroborative archaeological evidence for the date of the abandonment of the site as a residence was provided by the coinage, none of which was deposited later than the 15th century. However, this does not imply that either the domestic ranges, or the agricultural complex were necessarily deserted by the middle of the century.

It was certainly not unusual for a moated manor site to be abandoned by the owner at this time. By the 16th century moated manors were no longer constructed and many were abandoned (Platt 1978, 196; Steane 1985, 61). It was not uncommon for the residence to be moved elsewhere and the moated site retained for agricultural use, as at Harding’s Field and also at Brome, Suffolk and at Cogges, Oxfordshire (Wilson and Hurst 1968, 103; Rowley and Steiner 1996, 46). The hall at Brome was possibly reduced in status to become a bakehouse or brewhouse (West 1970, 100). The 15th and 16th century also witnessed the extinction of some family lines, through confiscation or death, as was the case at Brome and at other sites, including Ellington (Tebbutt *et al.* 1971, 33), and Moat Hill, Anlaby near Hull (Thompson 1956–58, 70).

The demolition of the manor

It is difficult to be precise about the date of the demolition of the manor, or indeed how long that process lasted. The documentary evidence offers

some persuasive evidence that it was a somewhat drawn-out affair. Blair argues that the manor house was finally demolished on completion, in 1485, of the transfer of the property from the financially troubled John Barentin II to the newly endowed Magdalen College, via Bishop Wayflete’s agent Thomas Danvers. Furthermore, the apparent dispute with Abingdon Abbey in the 1480s over the sale of timber and roof tiles suggests that the superstructure of at least some of the buildings at Harding’s Field was intact well into the last quarter of the century. However, by the middle of the 15th century the evidence suggests that Haseley Court had become the family’s principal residence, although Blair suggests that there is some evidence of services being held in the Harding’s Field chapel as late as 1451, which implies at least the occasional presence in Chalgrove of members of the family.

There is no archaeological evidence to contradict these documentary inferences, and it seems perfectly plausible for the manorial complex to have survived until the late 15th century as a working agricultural centre, even if the domestic range was gently decaying through neglect.

Once the process of demolition began in earnest, the buildings would have been swiftly stripped of usable building materials and fittings, leaving derelict shells standing. These shells would have their own uses to locals. Evidence, principally in the form of layers of charcoal and some ash, was found for some small-scale metalworking on the site in the form of a hearth or furnace constructed within the garderobe chamber (A5), presumably to recycle the lead recovered from the demolished window fittings. The lack of ash associated with the charcoal suggests that the material was brought into the room as charcoal and not as firewood. Fragments of furnace lining material and ironworking slag were also found in the immediate vicinity. The location of the furnace suggests that the walls were still standing to a height suitable for a sheltered furnace. The charcoal, some of which had spread into the derelict Room A4, was all beech, derived from trees aged 12 and 14 years which may suggest management by coppicing but are more likely to represent lopping of felled standards or clearance (see Robinson, Chapter 5).

The agricultural buildings

The farm buildings may have continued in use for some time after the demolition of the manor house. A rectangular timber-framed structure (Building M) was constructed on the demolition debris of Building H and probably reused the stone sill foundations. This may be the culver house or dovecote referred to in a document of 1520 (see Blair Chapter 1), although no archaeological evidence was found to support this hypothesis. A 1520 document records that John Quartermain owed rent for the site of a former manor and for a barn, in addition to the culver house mentioned above. The most likely candidate for the

barn in this document is building C, the demolition of which certainly post-dated that of buildings G and H. The two buildings are still extant in a document of 1600 but are not mentioned in a document of 1675, suggesting that they had by then been demolished.

The moats

There is no evidence that the moats were backfilled once the site was abandoned. They appear to have been allowed to silt up naturally, which does not suggest that the abandoned site was in great demand for re-use in the early post-medieval period. The small assemblage of 16th-century material recovered from the upper fills of the moat attests to the low level of activity in the area at the time. By 1822 the moats appear to be no longer visible as significant earthworks, to judge by the estate map (see Pl.1.3)

THE MATERIAL CULTURE OF THE MANOR

In general the degree by which understanding of the manor's development and how it operated is enhanced by the artefactual and environmental evidence is disappointing. The reasons for this are various. As detailed in Chapter 1, the nature of the excavation and the necessary strategy played a part; their details will not be reiterated here. However, given the character of the site, it is arguable whether a more thorough excavation covering the same area would have produced much more in the way of sealed – or in other ways viable – environmental or artefactual assemblages. Manors were similar to monasteries – by their nature they were (usually) organised and efficient complexes of buildings linked by open spaces. Rubbish and occupational debris – both within the buildings and in external areas – would be disposed of away from the occupied area for health and aesthetic reasons. Such material remaining would inevitably be at risk of repeated redeposition, reducing its value both as a dating mechanism and as an indicator of function. Nevertheless, some conclusions regarding the manor's origin, development and demise can be tentatively deduced by considering aspects of the material culture against the background of the structural development.

The pottery

The few sherds predating the moat construction give little indication of high status, although as most came from what is suggested to be a kitchen, or cooking area, this lack of exotic wares may be misleading. As Page and Tremolet say, much of the pottery from Phase 3 contexts, particularly those within the main domestic buildings, was recovered from dumped make up layers, and therefore cannot be considered as accurate indicators of the activities at any one place or time. However, one may suggest that if there is any general trend, it is that the manor looked to the south and west (to Wallingford,

Abingdon and Nettlebed) rather than north and west to Oxford for its local pottery source. The occurrence of rare French pottery in the 14th-century phases of activity is a reflection of the lord's status or at least contacts with import centres like London.

The metalwork and other small finds

The overall assemblage has produced few surprising or unexpected items. The general picture is one of a community lifestyle encompassing typical farm-related activities such as leather and woodworking, animal husbandry, and latterly, dairying. A considerable quantity of horse equipment was also recovered suggesting an emphasis on the role the horse played in the life of the manor, although this is more likely to have been as much for high status transport or recreation as general traction.

The personal items are typical in a manorial family context, with notable items such as the 12th- or 13th-century enamelled figure of a saint, and the two bone chess pieces. A notable assemblage of vessel glass reinforces the suggestion given by the continental pottery that there was a strong personal connection with London.

Artefactual use and distribution in the hall and service ranges in the 14th century

Following the structural changes of Phase 3, little evidence was found for the use of room A3 prior to its demolition. As with the other rooms, and at other sites (Hurst 1971, 99), constant cleaning left scarce evidence for floors and associated occupation debris and the artefacts that did survive were mixed in date. Few sherds of pottery were recovered but these included a high proportion of Tudor type tablewares, as might be expected from a lord's dining room. Similar pottery was also found in the demolition layers of the room in addition to numerous copper alloy pins, fragments of glazed window glass and plaster.

The hall (A1) itself yielded an assemblage of material that could be construed as indicative of its more public and formal role in the life of the manor, principally a number of coins, buckles and utilitarian dress objects such as lace tags. The presence of the large hearth was not an indication of its routine use as a cooking area.

Rooms A4 and A5 similarly contained thin, fragmentary layers from this period but their date range was even wider than that for room A3 and covered a period from Phase 3/1 to Phase 5. At least some of the layers within these two chambers belonged to the early part of Phase 5 during which time it is likely that metalworking took place (see below). The evidence for the cleaning out of the domestic rooms was particularly apparent within room A4 where it had resulted in a definite depression in the centre of the room. This effectively meant that the thin stratigraphy could not be traced across the chamber but survived as discrete islands against the walls.

Fragmentary patches of mortar (600/10, 1071, 1022/6) may have been part of a mortar floor associated with a layer of occupation debris (600/11, 600/9, 1022/5). However, all of the subsequent layers above the mortar were much more reminiscent of construction debris (507, 599, 600/2, 600/4, 1021, 1023). This would suggest either that the floor layers had been completely lost or that the construction debris was simply trodden down into the underlying surface and used as a floor. The occupation layers within the latrine A5 were even less informative. The pottery included material which may have been contemporary with that of Phase 2. Two cooking pots, a shallow dish and an abraded face mask, typical of types found in London, were also recovered. It is quite possible that the cooking pots had a secondary use as chamber pots.

The building materials

It is not surprising that the quantities of worked stone recovered from the site were disappointingly small. It is assumed that once the buildings were demolished, the usable stone – whether mouldings, plain ashlar blocks, or rubble was sold or scavenged. Although Haseley Court has a medieval core (Sherwood and Pevsner 1974, 685–7), there is no evidence on the basis of existing knowledge that the Harding's Field buildings were 'cannibalised' to provide architectural features for the inherited property. Therefore, it does appear that, aside from evidence of fairly plain gothic doorways and windows, the manor complex was never over-embellished with architectural elaboration.

Other architectural material suggests that most, if not all the main range, and some of the outlying buildings, were roofed with clay tile – possibly, in some cases, a replacement for stone slate. Little can be deduced about the internal decoration of the manor house. Evidence suggests that the main rooms were plastered, and in some cases this was painted, although no details of the design were identifiable. Curiously, the floor of the hall (Room A1) seems never to have been given a solid floor of flagstones or tiles. Indeed, the evidence for even a mortar floor beyond the immediate surrounds of the successive central hearths is inconclusive. One could suggest that it reflects on the increasingly marginalised role played by the hall in the lifestyle of a manorial lord, in his formal, private or leisured role. This contrasts significantly with the evidence of the tiled flooring of the possible chapel (A11) and the pentice (A13), the one signalling the continued strong role played by active religious worship, and the other reflecting the growing appreciation of leisure – aesthetically and as a statement of position in society.

The animal bone

While the animal bone assemblage is also constrained by the same circumstantial factors from providing a secure and complete assemblage for

analysis, it is sizeable, and has allowed a number of lines of enquiry, providing possibly the best avenue by which to consider the manor, in its economic and environmental context (see Wilson – Chapter 5). The salient points are briefly rehearsed here.

Unsurprisingly, the three main domestic animals were prevalent, although pig is far more common than sheep or cattle. Pigs were bred for meat, whereas the cattle were mainly bred for traction or, increasingly in the late 14th century, for dairy products. Sheep were bred for their wool. This general regime accords with known (and documented) manors like Cuxham, Oxfordshire, or the archaeological evidence from the manorial areas of the Benedictine Grange at Dean Court Farm (Allen 1994, 440–2). Other bones suggest a wide diversity of diet, including geese and ducks, and pigeons, which were certainly kept, even if the identity of the medieval dovecote is uncertain. Imports to the manor included a wide variety of dietary supplements, including marine fish, oysters and crabs. Oysters are fairly ubiquitous over medieval sites, surviving as background scatters in general deposits – particularly in an urban or monastic context. Occasionally, as seems to be the case at Harding's Field, they are found as discrete dumps, apparently the refuse from a single feast (Hardy *et al.* 2003, 431).

Exports from the manor of Harding's Field are, of course, difficult to demonstrate archaeologically, but are implied by the make up of the animal bone assemblage in conjunction with the documented holdings of pasture in relation to arable land. Trade appears to have centred around secondary animal products and grain. Latterly there are signs of increasing proportions of sheep and cattle at the expense of pig, and an increase in the killing off of calves. This reflects the increasing regional specialisation of sheep farming (for wool) and dairying in the 14th and 15th centuries (Steane 1985, 180).

Reasons for the abandonment of the manor

Some aspects of the process of the abandonment of the manor have been touched upon above; the motivation for its demise is a more speculative area, although some areas of the archaeological evidence may help to eliminate some factors and suggest others.

It is accepted that the climate in England began to deteriorate significantly from the late 13th century (Steane 1985, 174–6), with lower temperatures and increasing rainfall. However, there is no evidence that living conditions in the manor at Harding's Field were materially affected. The moats were never particularly deep, and show no signs of being enlarged to accommodate more water; nor is there any evidence that the building platform was raised or protected by increased barriers. If waterlogging was becoming a problem through the latter part of the 14th century, one might expect evidence of the construction of extra drainage around the buildings, which was not the case. The documentary history

indicates that the manor at Haseley was inherited by Reynold Barentin in 1415, yet it was not until 1485 that his great-grandson John Barentin II sold the Harding's Field property. Until that time, even though successive lords were living at least part of the time at Haseley, the Barentin manor at Chalgrove appeared to be still functioning as a working farm.

Overall, a good case can be made that the seeds of the manor's demise lie in the increasing difficulty of reconciling the topographical restraints of the site to the sophisticated domestic demands of the late medieval period. While the manorial home and the working farm were one and the same unit, the confines of the moat were acceptable. As the desire for a physical separation of the two elements grew, coupled with aspirations for more internal and external leisure areas for the lord and his family, so the restrictions of the moat would have become more and more apparent. Blair suggests that financial problems added a spur to break the link between the Barentins and Chalgrove. The opportunity provided by the inherited (and unmoated) house at Haseley would have been welcomed as a simple solution to both problems. A few years after the final sale of the Chalgrove manor, John Leland admired 'the right fair mansion place' at Haseley 'and marvellous fair walkes, topiarii operis, and orchardes and pools' (see Blair Chapter 1). Clearly these features, so popular among the emerging landed middle class, would have been very difficult to achieve on the moated site at Harding's Field without major redevelopment of the whole complex.

CONCLUSION

Inevitably the perspective on the archaeological study of moated medieval manors has evolved since

the excavations at Harding's Field. The excavators were faced with problems and uncertainties, in the context of an 'old fashioned' rescue dig, which nowadays (hopefully!) would be accommodated and addressed before the excavation began. Within the context of what was possible at the time, the emphasis on recovering an overall building plan of as much of the main island as appeared to be developed was the only worthwhile approach that could be taken, and in the light of that, it is undeniable that the excavations at Chalgrove, despite the circumstantial constraints, produced a valuable body of information on a moated manorial site.

The value of such a project lies as much in the information not recovered as in the data collected. Although the project in Harding's Field has shown (principally by the structural remains) the development over two centuries of a manorial complex, and how that complex reflected the evolution of a 'knightly' class and their evolving aspirations, the value of the evidence relating to the understanding of how the manor operated, and in what sort of environment, both physical and economic, should not be overestimated. It has demonstrated – as other excavations, particularly on monastic sites have also demonstrated – that ideally the scope of excavation should be much wider than the footprints or immediate vicinities of the buildings, to encompass the peripheries of the occupied area and the potential areas of occupational debris deposition. Furthermore, the use of geophysical survey, fieldwalking and – in controlled circumstances – metal detecting can add significantly to the wider picture. In other words, understanding of manorial sites requires a much wider scope of investigation than can be achieved by close examination of just the principal buildings.