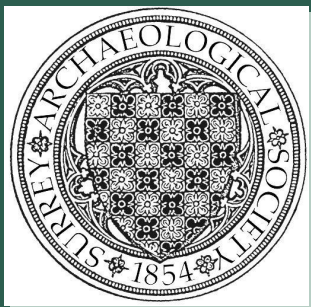




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Test pitting at Albury Park in 2023

By Anne Sassin

Summary

The original medieval settlement and manor of Albury, in Albury Park, is well-known for its displacement by the local lord of the manor in the later 18th and early 19th century and re-location a kilometre away, to the present-day village, formerly the manor of Weston. Little is known of its earlier history, including its precise extent and any evidence of medieval activity beyond its Domesday 'Old Saxon' church and mill along the banks of the Tillingbourne. Equally uncertain is the layout and extent of the former cottages and structures within the park of early modern date, which were almost entirely demolished by the early-mid 19th century.

A community archaeology project, run by Surrey Archaeological Society, began in 2023 which would assess historic documents for the area and conduct a geophysical survey of the site which, alongside assessment of features visible from LiDAR, would inform an updated mapped plan of the historic site. The project would also undertake a controlled test pitting project of the site in order to date and potentially characterise its settlement over time.

Although few features of note were identified from the magnetometry survey, traces of the cottages were revealed through electrical resistance which coincided with their apparent locations on historic maps. 18 test pits in total were excavated in the first season across the meadow area north of the modern drive. The results were variable, but included the foundations of one of the larger, probable 16th or 17th-century cottages in Brewhouse Meadow and in situ medieval levels at the manor's western end.

The full detailed report will shortly be available on the Society's website under 'Recent fieldwork'.

Background

Albury Park, situated both within the parishes of Albury and Shere, is approximately 7km east of the centre of Guildford, in between the modern village of Albury (1km to the west) and Shere (Fig 1). The site is a Grade I-registered park and garden of c130

hectares managed by the Albury Estate. The now redundant parish church of St Peter and St Paul (Grade I listed) lies to the north-west of Albury Park Mansion, the latter which has 16th-century origins but is thought to lie on older foundations.

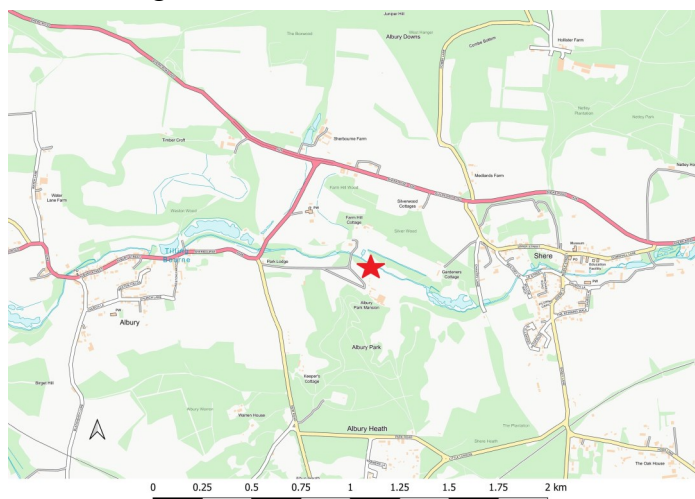


Fig 1 Map of Albury Park, with the star on the location of the 'Old Saxon Church' (OS Open Data)

The east-west flowing Tillingbourne stream, which has an elevation of 63m (metres) above OD, runs through the centre of the park, with the land to both sides rising, including the slope of the North Downs scarp to the north. The geology across the park is variable, lying on Hythe Formation sandstone with superficial deposits of clay, silt, sand and gravel near to the stream.

Little is known of Albury's pre-Norman origins beyond its Domesday record of 1086, being held by Azor from Edward the Confessor and granted after the Conquest to Richard de Tonbridge, with the church and a mill amongst its values, along with eleven villagers (Morris 1975, 19,36). The site is designated as a former medieval settlement (Surrey HER Monument 380), whose manor house is assumed to have been sited near the current mansion. However, beyond the church's medieval fabric which cannot be assuredly dated before the 12th century, a handful of 13th-century pottery sherds recovered from fieldwalking at nearby Home Farm (HER 6947) are amongst the only medieval finds for the site to date.

Grange Cottage to the north of the Tillingbourne, dendro-dated to 1544 and at one time the Little George Inn (HER 5852), is the only extant standing cottage of the dozen or so which are known to have formed the settlement at the time of the 18th-century historic estate maps. The present house, Albury Park, also has 16th-century origins, but was rebuilt by John and George Evelyn in the 17th century. The wooded pleasure grounds and park are likely to have been planted in the 15th or 16th centuries, and the terraced gardens, designed by Evelyn in 1667, are still largely intact, including the crypta on the upper terrace, although the former canals have since been drained (HER 3700).

In 1784/5, Captain William Clement Finch obtained a magistrates' order to close the road that ran eastwards to Shere through the park and past the manor house, as well as divert the road that ran northwards past the Little George Inn to join the Dorking/Guildford road (now the A25). Captain Finch also enclosed the village green and annexed the corner of the churchyard to extend his grounds. Harassment of the villagers continued under the later owner Charles Wall (1811-19), who demolished the cottages and moved their occupants to new cottages at the hamlet of Weston Street, to the west. The present road from Albury Heath to the A25 was built by Henry Drummond c1842, replacing the original road from the heath, Dog Kennel Lane (Malden 1911).

Known archaeology within the immediate area is not extensive with very few previous interventions or findspots. Historic maps for the site extend back to the early 18th century, including the 1701 estate map of Albury by Abraham Walter and William Clement Finch's later estate map of c1782 (Fig 2). Some of the cottages can still be seen as late as the Tithe map of 1839 (Fig 3). The old road is very prominent in LiDAR (see Fig 6), as well as aerial photos, and foundations of former cottages were disturbed when main services were being laid through the parkland in 1970 (HER 380).

Geophysical survey

Over the course of 10 days between March and July 2023, a small team of volunteers undertook a geophysical magnetometry and electrical resistance survey across an area which totals c24,689m² (2.46 hectares). The survey area was the area of parkland between the Tillingbourne and main drive through



Fig 2 Extract of a survey of Estates belonging to the Hon. William Clement Finch by Thomas Wedge, 1782 (courtesy of the Albury Estate)

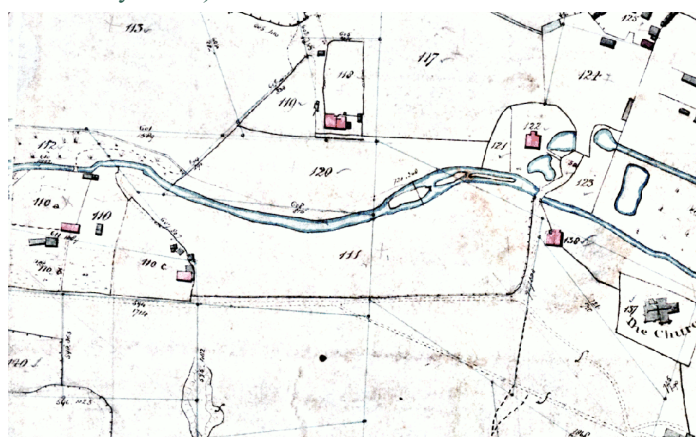


Fig 3 Albury Tithe map of 1839 (courtesy of Surrey History Centre)

the park, largely consisting of open meadow and lawn, though with several veteran trees which limited access in places. The electrical resistance survey took place across select smaller areas, covering c10,917m² in total (1.09 ha).

The magnetic gradiometer survey was carried out using the Society's Bartington Grad601 gradiometer. The data was collected in zig-zag mode at 0.25 centres along traverses 1m apart, with 4 readings per metre along the traverses. The electrical resistance survey, conducted with a RM Frobisher TAR-3 Resistance Meter, used a sampling interval of data collected every 0.5m along traverses 1m apart.

As was expected for the site, there was a large amount of magnetic disturbance and strong bipolar readings which affected the data, in particular the service pipes which frequent the park and run through the meadow. Only a small number of features of potential archaeological interest were apparent in the magnetometry (Fig 4), with the majority either natural in origin or the result of modern disturbance. This included a series of faint

sinuous linears running roughly N-S and downslope towards the river, presumable springs or palaeochannels, and a small number of negative linears which are likely to represent the banks of raised terraces and, in the case of one, a stretch of the former road as it crosses the Tillingbourne.

Areas with signs of magnetic debris, which might reflect spreads of material such as brick, were investigated further with electrical resistance, as likely locations for cottage foundations. Few features of interest were apparent in the resistance survey (Fig 5), some of which, e.g. the banked edges of terraces and line of the former road, are also obvious on the ground. However, rectilinear areas formed from linears of high resistance, which are depicted as white on the survey maps, are likely to indicate buried walls and building foundations, indicating the potential layout and plan of the demolished structures.

Test pitting

Between June and September, a series of 1m² test pits were placed to target potential features and sample the stratigraphy from different areas of the park utilising the CORS (Current Occupied Rural Settlement) methodology. All test pits followed the same excavation and recording procedure of soil being removed in a series of 10cm spits and sieved, with finds from each spit recorded separately. Eighteen pits total (Fig 6) were dug over the course of three weeks which, though only a small number for the total area, have provided an indicative picture of the settlement in this area of the site.

Test pits (TPs) 1 and 2 were plotted near to the church, with TP 2 in particular comparatively barren and reaching natural sand after only two spits, implying little former occupation in this area of the site. TPs 7 and 14 were sited closer to the church

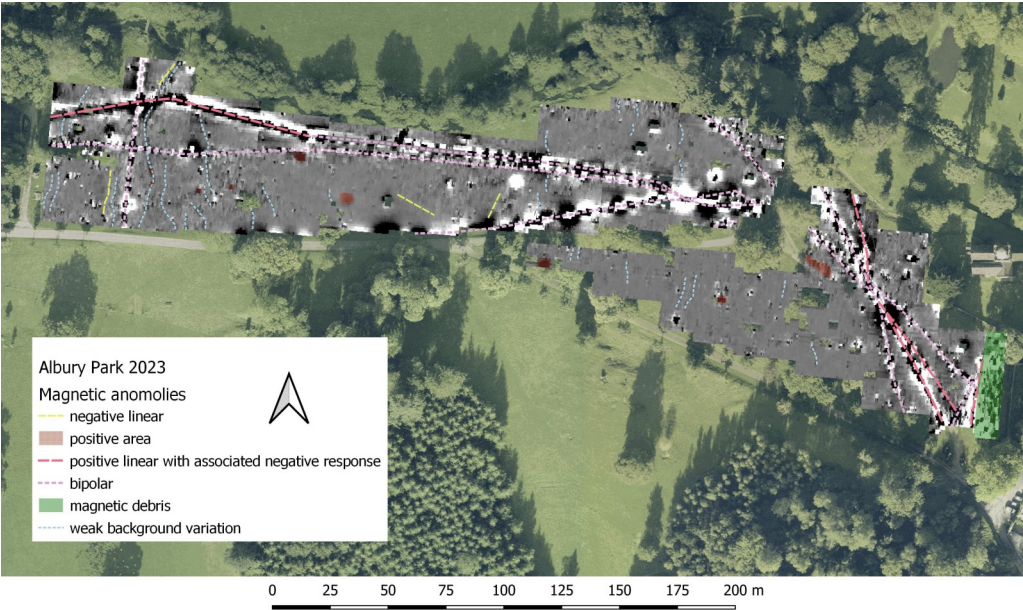


Fig 4 Map of the 2023 magnetometry survey of Albury Park and associated anomalies, including likely springs/palaeochannels (light blue dashed lines) and stretches of bank (yellow lines)

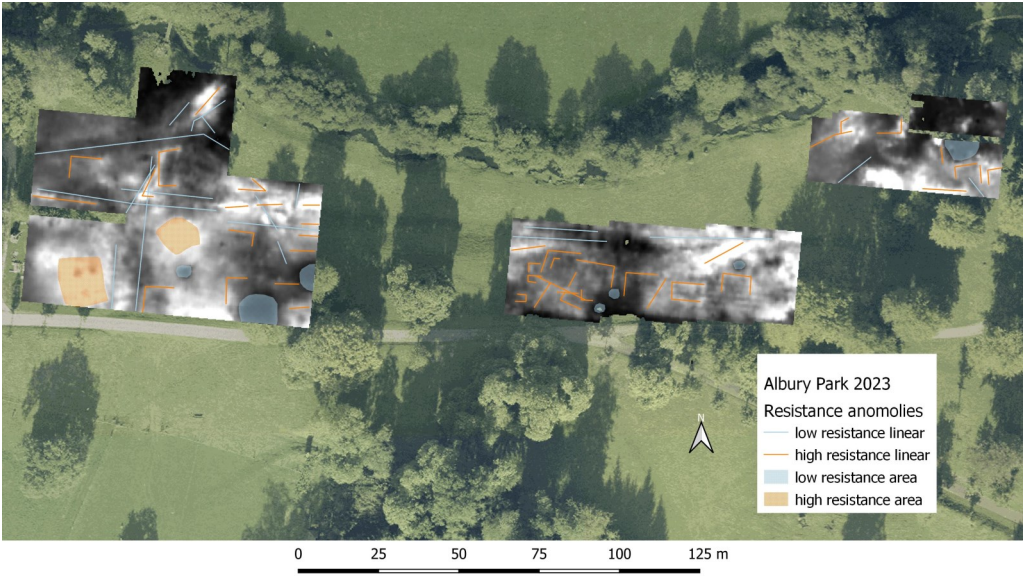


Fig 5 Map of the 2023 resistivity survey of Albury, with high resistance linears (shown in orange) likely to represent the outline of former structures

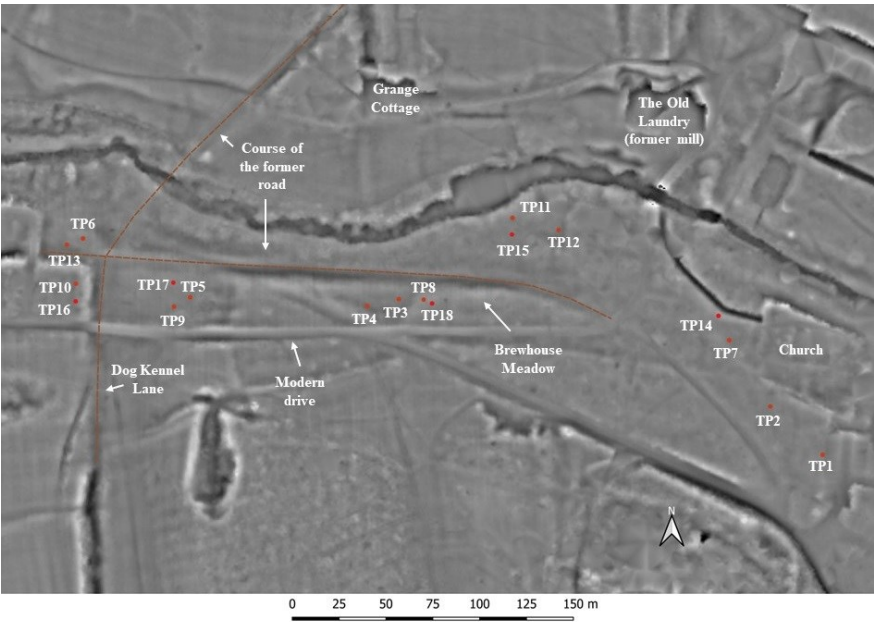


Fig 6 Location map of 2023 test pits, overlying the Local Relief Model LiDAR 1m visualisation (© Environment Agency, visualised by PTS Consultancy)

Fig 7 (below top) View of TP3 and its east-west flint-built wall

Fig 8 (below bottom) View of TP4 and its flagstone foundations

entrance and may have uncovered former chalk surfaces or pathways leading from the road and what is noted as a carpenter’s shop and forge on the early 19th-century maps.

Tps 11, 12 and 15 were plotted around former cottages at the eastern end of Brewhouse Meadow and near to the bridge which would have crossed over to the Little George Inn: ‘two tenement cottages’ and ‘a cottage’ to its west, which were last apparent on the Anthony Browne map of 1813. Not surprisingly for an area heavily affected by services, a substantial amount of building debris (both brick and tile) was uncovered, though with no *in situ* foundations. TP11, closest to the river, came down onto a thick layer of dark clayey sand which is a likely medieval context, with 12th/14th-century pottery in its fill, but had to be stopped at 0.8m due to conditions and time constraints.

Tps 3, 4, 8 and 18 were plotted to locate the large cottage immediately south of the old road in Brewhouse Meadow, possibly denoted as the cottage of ‘T Egerton’ on the 1813 map. By the time of the Tithe map, it has been demolished and is likely one heavily disturbed by later services, although Tps 3 and 4 were the only two pits which were to come down onto certain building foundations. In TP3 (Fig 7), an unmortared flint wall c0.5m wide and overlain by building demolition (including glazed Tudor-era bricks) appeared at c0.7m depth, possibly an east-west wall of the cottage itself, although the lack of mortar makes this questionable. TP4 to its west uncovered the edge of a flagstone surface at



0.9m, presumably associated with the floor (and possible wall cill?) of the cottage. Finds in the lower spits of the latter included large quantities of peg tile of likely 17th-century date. Although a much larger area would need to be opened in order to investigate this area, the implied scale and details from the survey and test pits suggest a structure of note.

TPs 5, 9 and 15 were plotted to locate buildings at the western end of the field, including the 'Keepers Cottage', kennel and carpenter's shop southeast of the junction of Dog Kennel Lane, which were likely outbuildings by the time of the Tithe map for the cottage of Edward Gates. Despite more recent 19th-century household items, little building material was uncovered. TPs 6 and 13 were sited northwest of the junction, another likely outbuilding belonging to Edward Bolton at the time of the Tithe award. TP13 reached the natural sand at 0.7m, with mixed material in the upper levels, including a jetton (Moor's Head type, 1350-1425; SUR-4A74F6).

TPs 10 and 16 were placed to the southwest of the junction, an area which was originally part of Weston manor, rather than Albury, and still arable field at the time of John Rocque's map of 1768. The ground at this part of the field suggests terracing at its edges which coincide with 19th-century parcel boundaries, and a building is apparent on the 1813 map ('Peryer cottage fronting West Godshall') though has disappeared subsequently; it is not depicted on earlier estate maps as it is presumably just outside its bounds. The test pits finds indicate *in situ* medieval levels from the fourth spit, with 92 sherds (973g) of pottery spanning the 11th to 14th century, some of which were sizable jug and bowl pieces. Another jetton (Edward II, 1310-27; SUR-4A3570; Fig 9) and copper alloy heraldic mount of similar date (Fig 10) were also recovered, the latter which is likely associated with the Beauchamps, the earls of Warwick who had familial associations with nearby Shere (SUR-542253). The concentration of medieval artefacts and pottery is notable at this western end of the site, not coincidentally along the line of Dog Kennel Lane, although further work would be needed to determine its extent.

As an initial season, the 2023 test pitting was rewarding both as an outreach and research project. We look forward to further work this coming year which will no doubt enhance our understanding of medieval Albury and its development over time.

Acknowledgements

The fieldwork at Albury Park relied on the dedication of an incredible volunteer team, all of whom were invaluable to the work undertaken. In addition to all those helping with the excavation, this included the finds team, in particular Sylvia Solarski, Anne Vallis, Ann Morrison and Janet Wilson; Sylvia, David Wilkinson, Rosemary Carter, James Little and Andrew Broadbent for their help with the survey; Lyn Spencer and the Medieval and Roman Pottery team for assessment of the pottery; Lyn, Christine Pittman and Mary Knight for their help with the open day; Simon Maslin, Mairi Sargent, Andrew Barr, Anne McLaughlin and Ann Russell for work on the small finds, metalwork and clay pipe; and Andrew Norris and Chris Gummer for their support and local expertise.

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Figs 9 & 10 English sterling head jetton of Edward II 1310-27 (SUR-4A3570) (left) and copper alloy heraldic mount (SUR-542253; right) of the Beauchamps, c1250-1400, possibly for a harness or carriage (Photos courtesy of Surrey County Council – note images not to scale)