

**BARENTIN'S MANOR**  
**Excavations of the Moated Manor at Harding's Field,**  
**Chalgrove, Oxfordshire 1976–9**

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Dedicated to the memory of Jean Mary Cook FSA



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## Summary

Archaeological investigations at Harding's Field, Chalgrove, revealed the remains of one of the most complete examples of a moated medieval manor yet excavated in England. Evidence of a pre-moat occupation dating from the first half of the 13th century, which may not have been seigneurial, was succeeded in the mid 13th century by the construction of the moated manor house. The documentary evidence indicates that this house belonged to the Barentins, a prominent Oxfordshire family.

The manor underwent considerable alterations and improvements during the following 200 years,

particularly during the early part of the 14th century and, to a lesser extent, in the late 14th to early 15th century. It passed out of the hands of the Barentin family shortly before it was demolished in the late 15th century.

The artefacts included an assemblage of pottery that contained many fine wares and some examples of continental imports. Decorated floor tiles, coins, objects of metal, bone, ivory and stone, together with vessel and window glass and some slags were also recovered. A significant bone assemblage was recovered, including mammal, bird and fish remains.

## Zusammenfassung

Bei Untersuchungen in Harding's Field, Chalgrove, stießen Archäologen auf Überreste einer der komplettesten mittelalterlichen Wasserburgen, die bislang in England ausgegraben wurden. Vor dem Ausheben des Grabens bestand in der ersten Hälfte des 13. Jh. eine möglicherweise nicht feudalherrschaftliche Siedlung, die Mitte des 13. Jh. durch den Bau der Wasserburg abgelöst wurde. Urkundliche Belege deuten darauf hin, dass das Gebäude den Barentins gehörte, einer angesehenen Familie aus Oxfordshire.

In den folgenden 200 Jahren wurden an dem Bau beträchtliche Änderungen und Verbesserungen vorgenommen, besonders im frühen 14. Jh. und – in

geringerem Ausmaß – im späten 14. und frühen 15. Jh. Die Wasserburg ging kurz vor ihrer Zerstörung im späten 15. Jh. von der Familie Barentin in andere Hände über.

Unter den gefundenen Artefakten befand sich eine Keramiksammlung mit viel Feinware und einigen kontinentaleuropäischen Importen. Außerdem wurden verzierte Fußbodenziegel, Münzen, Gegenstände aus Metall, Knochen, Elfenbein und Stein, Hohlgläser und Fensterglas sowie einige Schlacken geborgen. Auch beachtliche Knochenfunde waren zu verzeichnen, etwa von Säugetieren, Vögeln und Fischen.

## Résumé

Des recherches archéologiques à Harding's Field, Chalgrove, ont révélé les vestiges d'un manoir médiéval à douves, un des exemples les plus complets jusqu'alors fouillé en Angleterre. Des indices d'une occupation antérieure à la construction des douves et datant de la première moitié du XIII<sup>ème</sup> siècle, qui n'était peut-être pas seigneuriale, fut remplacée vers le milieu du XIII<sup>ème</sup> siècle par la construction d'un manoir à douves. Les témoignages documentaires indiquent que la demeure appartenait aux Barentins, une famille influente d'Oxfordshire.

Le manoir fut l'objet d'altérations et d'améliorations considérables aux cours des 200 ans qui suivirent, en particulier durant la première partie

du XIV<sup>ème</sup> siècle et, dans une moindre mesure, vers la fin du XIV<sup>ème</sup> et début du XV<sup>ème</sup> siècles. Il échappa aux mains de la famille Barentin peu de temps avant sa destruction vers la fin du XV<sup>ème</sup> siècle.

Les artefacts retrouvés sur le site comprenaient un ensemble de poterie, qui contenait nombre de productions fines et quelques exemples d'imports continentaux. Des carreaux de pavés décorés, des pièces de monnaie, des objets métalliques, de l'os, de l'ivoire et de la pierre, ainsi que des récipients en verre, du verre de vitrage et des scories furent également découverts. Un ensemble significatif d'ossements animaux fut mis au jour, y compris des restes de mammifères, d'oiseaux et de poissons.



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