



# Woking Palace and its Park

## Woking Palace excavations 2013

Three trenches were opened up in 2013. There remains quite a lot of work to do on the finds from them and the other information obtained before a final report can be prepared, but it is already clear that some very important results have been obtained.

### Trench 17

Trench 17 was opened in an important position next to the river where the water from the moat (now completely silted up) left the Palace site. This corner is the lowest part of the sand island and was the least suitable for occupation activities. The moat was created around 1200AD but there were only a few finds in this area, including a nice jetton of Edward I, to suggest activity before the late 15<sup>th</sup> Century.

In the late 15<sup>th</sup> Century a substantial rectangular brick building was created. It may have been well appointed as Valencian tiles were found in the demolition rubble. Its side walls are relatively narrow which indicates that they were sill walls for a timber framed building. Two wider and thicker brick pads were found set against the moat, perhaps forming a more substantial looking show front, with the objective of presenting an impressive façade to river traffic arriving at the site.

Further isolated brick walls project into the moat and seem to be elements of jetty arrangements (originally linked by long decayed timber elements) for landing barges that handled both goods and people. All the evidence points to this being a water gate controlling access by river to the site. On the land side a large brick wall was butted against the building and is the moat revetment wall.

The next phase of development was not until 1574/6 when Elizabeth I had a new gallery built. The wall facing the inner courtyard was found to have a continuous brick foundation whereas the wall facing the river was built off a series of separate piers – these would have been linked by arches enabling the view across the Wey and its flood plain whilst being an effective means of dealing with the difficult soil conditions adjacent to the river. The building was primarily for leisure and recreation and was linked directly to the Queen's apartments to the east, ensuring a social division from anyone crossing the courtyard.

### Trench 18

The excavations here explored the large medieval kitchen, parts of which had been previously examined. It appears that an early set of hearths were in the central area of the kitchen. When these were taken out of use they were covered by a clay floor, and the replacement hearths were set against the north wall. Archaeomagnetic dating has indicated that this change happened in the later 13th century, suggesting that the original kitchen belongs to the earliest phase of occupation on the site. The reorganisation of the kitchen may be associated with the creation, to the south, of a new stone-built set of Privy lodgings grand enough to continue in use as part of the Tudor royal palace.





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The new hearths were very distinctive, including a black rectangular hearth likely to have been used for spit roasting, with next to it the base of a large oven. The kitchen was square and probably half-timbered with low stone walls surmounted by timber framing and a central louvre to extract smoke. It was detached from the main buildings because of fear of fire. This kitchen would have prepared all meals for the household and could get very busy as it would be catering for hundreds.

The square kitchen was taken out of use in the period 1375-1450, on the basis of archaeomagnetic dating. This probably occurred when a substantial stone wall, the greensand base of which survived although most stone had been robbed from it, was built on the east side of the kitchen. It must have formed part of substantial further structures linking to the Privy Lodgings, perhaps contemporary with the construction of the present standing stone building. A new kitchen may have been built at that time to the east, where evidence of burning and tile-on-edge hearths has been found in small scale excavations.

## Trench 19

Trench 19 examined a portion of the huge new Tudor kitchen that was built as part of the major reorganisation under Lady Margaret Beaufort between 1485 and 1503. The remains proved to have been badly robbed out but a large rectangular area filled with demolition rubble was clearly an example of the deep pits dug to create brick piers placed at intervals along the line of the walls, and then linked by arches to support the continuous walls above. The pier in this location formed one end of an outshot chimney/hearth, and beyond this it was possible to trace the line of the north wall to the point at which it turned to form the end (west) wall of the kitchen, where a little brick survived *in situ*.

Medieval evidence was not particularly expected in this trench, but a number of medieval coins and jettons were found in the area, and at the end of the dig a rather sophisticated stone and tile hearth was revealed. This was not in alignment with the Tudor walls, but aligned with stone sill walls discovered nearby, which suggests that a significant medieval structure stood here, perhaps lodgings for leading followers of the Lord of the Manor.

