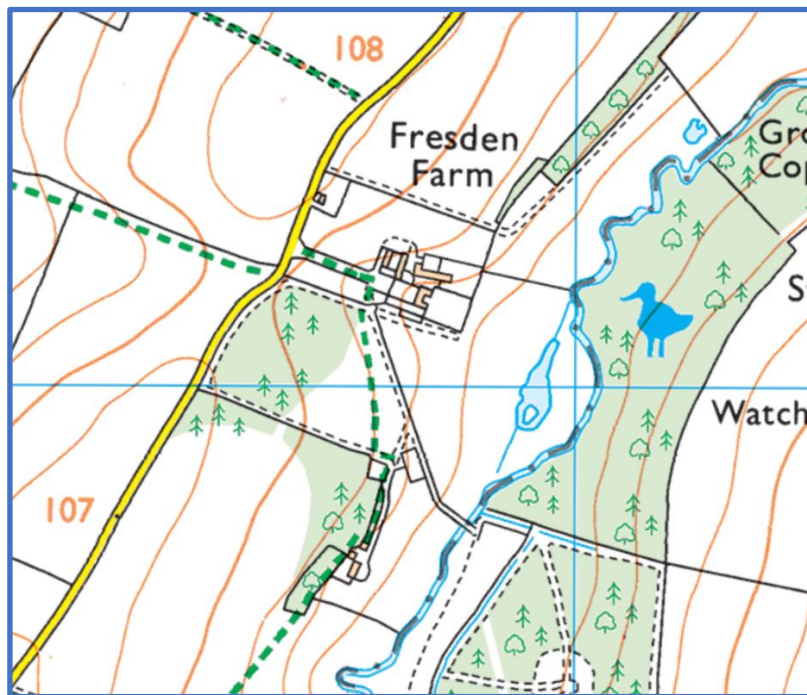


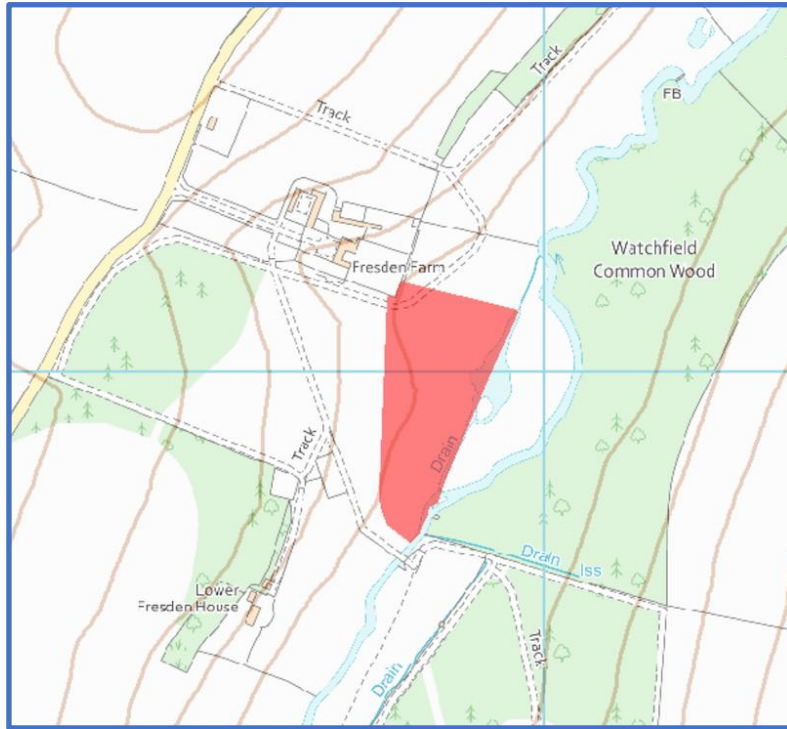
Maggot Mill Farm & Maggot Mill

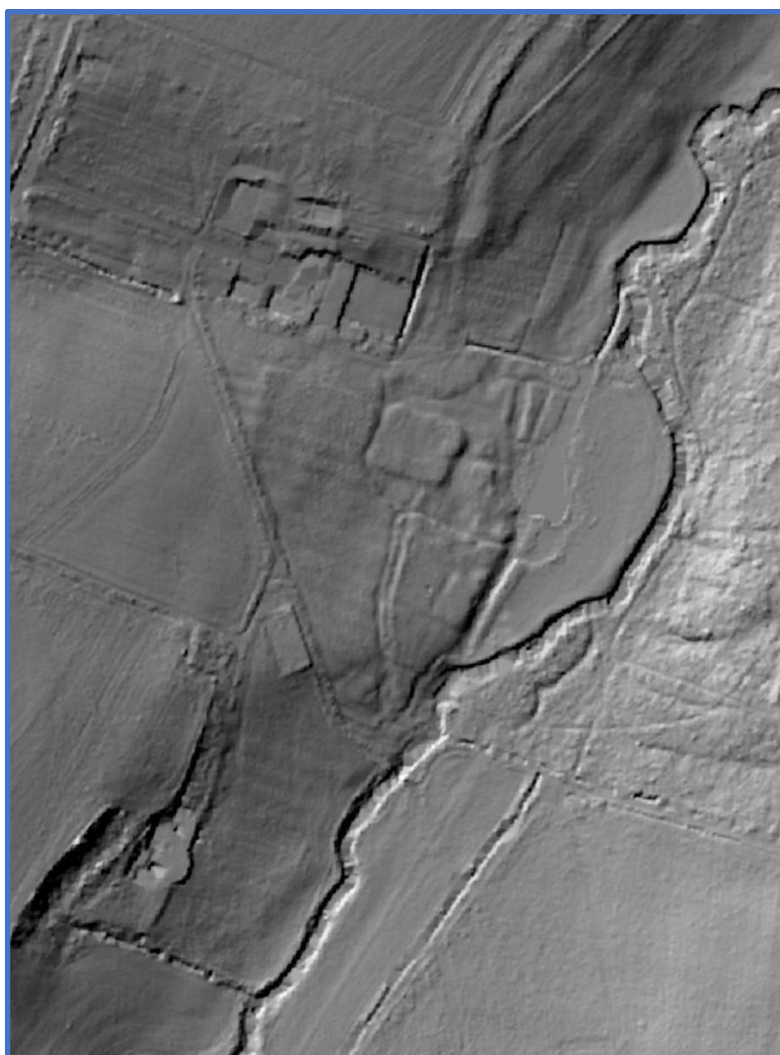
By Neil B. Maw

When identified on a map, it becomes clear that Fresden is not a village but rather a location (below). But marks in the ground to the east of the farm have been mooted as far back as the 1950s to have been the remains of a mediaeval village. Indeed, the site is listed by Historic England as an ancient monument and has legal protection accordingly. (below). But when we look at the same site through the medium that is Lidar, a clearer picture emerges (below). And upon delving deeper into the archives a surprising origin opens.

Today, (2026) the only property at the site is Fresden Farm, and even that name is somewhat misleading as it is no longer a farm but a private property that has been turned into a beautiful country home and gardens called Fresden House. So how does the unflattering name of Maggot Mill fit in? The trail starts 800 years ago!





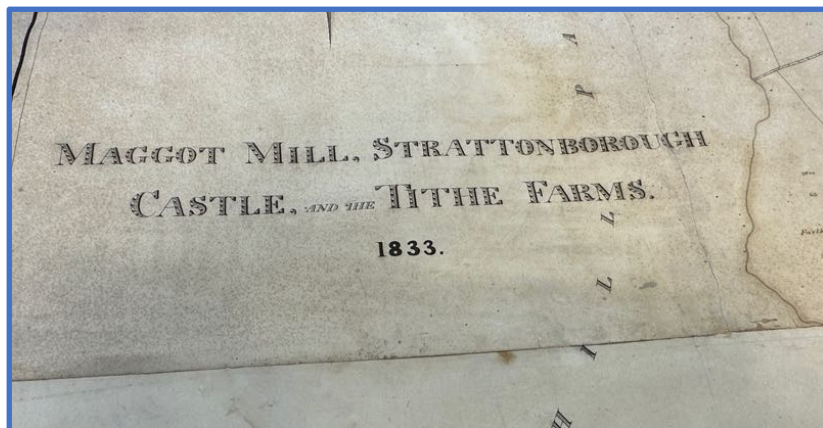


The book called '*Accounts and Surveys of the Wiltshire Lands of Adam de Stratton,*' researched and written by Michael W. Farr, has been very useful for solving the enigma that is the name Fresdon. Although compiled in 1950s it is a superb piece of historical research. The accounts of Adam de Stratton and for Sevenhampton when combined, cover the period from 1269 to 1288. There are regular entries made for payments from Henry le Tyeys, for his lands in *Fersdon, Fersesdon, Fersedon*. There is also an entry for Nicholaus Wardebek of the same place. It seems likely that it's these entries that have led historians to name the place as Fresden that exists today. But why in that location? There are marks in the ground alongside the River Cole that have thought to be the remains of a mediaeval village. The Lidar images above show clearly

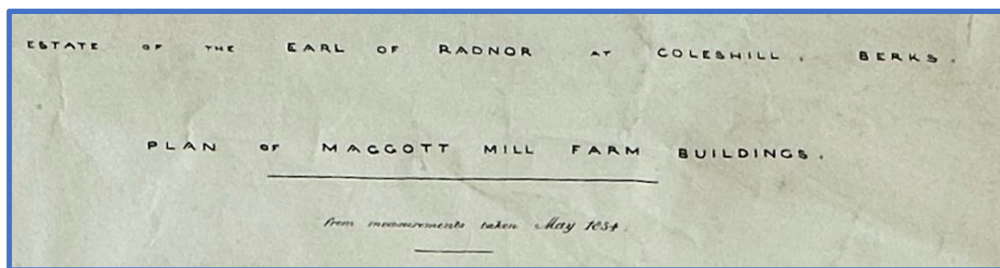
that the marks are clustered around the area that was the mill identified by the bow in the river. The value of the land that was being held by Henry le Tyeys was listed in the Sevenhampton accounts as 100 shillings. When comparisons are made of other known settlements, it's clear that there simply is nothing large enough at Fresden site that would have been able to generate that amount of money. So where were the lands of Henry le Tyeys located? The only name that is any way familiar to it is modern day Faringdon (Ferendone). The Tyeys family were a minor baronial family and Henry le Tyeys (c1268 - 1307) is the best documented member. They had land holdings in Oxon, Berks & Wilts, and Faringdon is consistent with their regional estate cluster. Henry was not just a landholder but was active in royal service becoming Baron Tyeys.

The location of the mill would strongly suggest that it was independent and operating outside of the manorial system. It's origins almost certainly date from the late 12th or early 13th century and owned by the family called Magot or similar, the name French in origin. The Lidar picture above clearly shows the layout with the original course of the River Cole on the right, and a straight cut, or Leet, across the wide bow in the river. The rest of the earthworks are very conducive of activity associated with a mill; platform for workers cottages, barns, drying sheds, stables, yards etc. There is clearly no sign of an organised street network for a medieval village. Hopefully, archaeology in the future will confirm exactly what was there.

In the Royal Berkshire Archives (RBA) there are two files that give more information. One of the maps clearly shows the farm and the brook with the mill cut across the bow still in place (below. D/EPB/P45). However, there are no mill buildings whatsoever. The title of the map (below) gives the date as 1833. We draw from this that the mill must have ceased working and the buildings cleared away by that date.



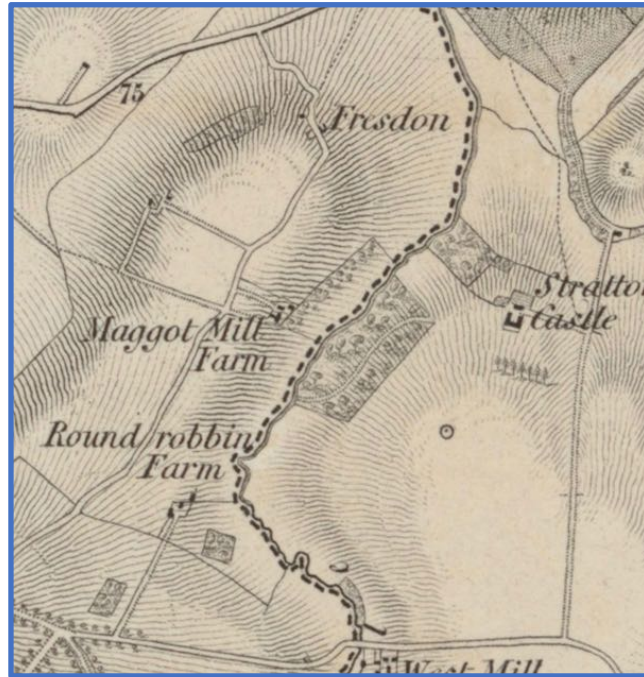
Another document is a plan of what today is called 'Fresden House.' (below). The head of the plan shows that it belonged to the Radnor Estate and bears the date of 1834 (below. D/EPB/P94/1).



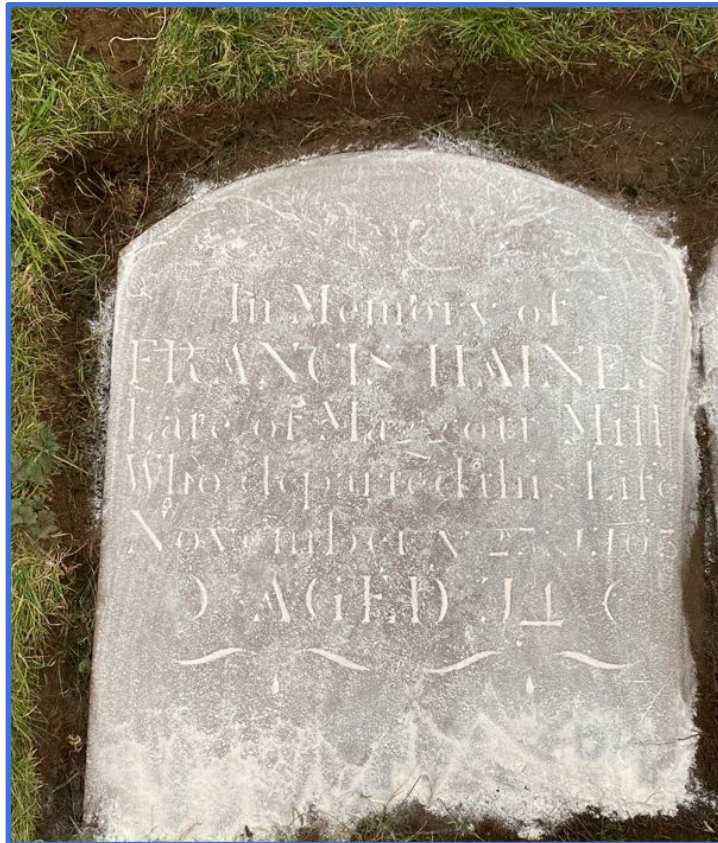
Until more documentary evidence is discovered, we can only assume that some event occurred within the Radnor Estate in the early 1830s that created a change. Evidence is available for the names of occupiers. However, to identify when the mill came out of use it's not clear if the reference is to Maggot Mill or Maggot Mill Farm. The two lines of profession were historically known to be separate - farming or milling. For instance, in 1656, married in Highworth were Francis Hide of Highworth and Katherine Andrews of Maggot Mill. Francis was a Cordwainer, (shoemaker). Without more information we are left to decide if Katherine was the daughter of Andrew's the Miller or Andrew's the farmer. However, further documentary provides another date by when the mill had gone out of use. John Roque's map of 1761, known and lauded for accuracy, shows 'Magot Mill River' and the farm buildings but no mill. (below). A later map of Shrivenham dated from 1770 shows and labels it 'Magot River Farm' (below). We have seen the estate map above from the 1830s that shows only the name 'Maggot

Mill' and it's not until we reach an 1860s Ordnance Survey map that the name 'Fresden' appears, but to the north of the mill (below).





A century later in 1761, Mary Pullen from Coleshill married Michael Haines of Maggot Mill, Highworth. There is no mention of the word Fresden. Various children are recorded as being born at Maggot Mill, but with the baptism of John Haines in 1762, his father Michael is recorded as being a 'Farmer.' Daughters Ann & Mary baptised in 1765 & 1767, their father Michael is recorded as being a 'Yeoman' of Maggot Mill. This supports the theory that the mill had gone out of use by this time. Another member of the family Francis, died in 1765 and was buried in St Andrew's churchyard, Shrivenham on the 8th November. His memorial stone recorded that he was from Maggot Mill, aged 74 (below). But five years later, Michael Hains had clearly been a very sick man as he too was buried at Shrivenham on 5th September 1770, aged 41 (below) and on his stone are the words; *Afflictions fore long time I bore, Physicians skill was all in vain, Till Christ was pleased my breath to cease, And eased me of my pain.*



The Hains tenure came to an end within the decade of the 1770s when recorded is the birth of Mary Peek the daughter of Robert and Mary Peek of Maggot Mill. He is described as a Yeoman, therefore reasonable to assume that it's the farm and not a mill. The following year William Peek is born to John and Elizabeth Peek, also a Yeoman. On 29th March 1804, Charlotte Richins is born to John and Mary Richins. They are described as of Maggot Mill but John is a Labourer, so he's likely living in a farm cottage. Christopher and Sarah Pineger welcomed son John to the family on 21st September 1807 and more children arrived through to 1818 when the tenure of the farm changed to the Rickards.

William Henry Rickards married Ann Gerring at All Saints church at Coleshill on the 18th April 1808. Their tenure of Maggot Mill Farm would be a long one and they produced many children. The census of 1851 showed that the farm was 430 acres and had 28 labourers working there. Their tenure came to an end in 1851 when William died. An advertisement in a newspaper confirmed that all the farm stock was sold off.

(Below - Wilts & Glos Standard 25th September 1852).

MAGGOT HILL FARM,
Three miles from Highworth and Four from Farington.

TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION,
By Messrs. FIDEL and DYKE,
On Wednesday, September 29th, 1852, on the Premises,
at Maggot Mill Farm, without any reserve,—

THE following Valuable **FARMING STOCK,**
including 450 Southdown Sheep, 8 Fat Cows, 5
fresh Grazers, 3 Cart Horses, nearly 100 Pigs, Double
and Single-barrel Guns, a few Implements, and other
Effects, by order of the Executors of the late Mr. W.
H. Rickards:—Comprising more particularly, 144 two-
tooth wether sheep, 20 two-tooth ewes, 14 four and six-
tooth ewes, 24 full-mouthed ditto, 146 wether lambs, and
39 ewe ditto, a fine Hampshire down ram, and a superior
Southdown ditto, 44 half-bred ewes, 7 fat cows and heifers,
fit for the butcher; 2 cart horses and 1 cart mare, 4 ex-
cellent sows and pigs, and 50 strong stores; also, about
50 lots of implement utensils, and household furniture.

Catalogues may be had one week before the Sale, at
the Auctioneers' Offices, Farington and Swindon, or at
Rickett's Printing Office, Highworth. Refreshments
will be provided.

The business of the sale will commence most punctually
at half-past one o'clock. [819]

The next person to take it on was Charles Edmonds. The census of 1861 described that the farm was 400 acres and employed on it were 16 men and 5 boys. By the time we get to the 1871 census, the name changed from Maggot Mill to Fresden Farm and this is the time when the name Fresden becomes more widely used. A sale advertisement in 1877 (Wilts & Glos Stand 3rd March) provided the information that Charles Edmonds was leaving the farm at Michaelmas next (29th Sept).

Soon after Charles Edmonds left, the tenancy of the farm went to Edward Westell. We don't have an exact date but a newspaper clip confirmed that he was certainly there in 1882. (Wilts & Glos Std 10th June p.1). The census recordings confirm that he was still there in 1901 and his wife Eliza passed away on the 12th May 1904. Unfortunately, only two weeks later, Edward also passed away on 2nd June.

A newspaper advertisement confirmed that the farm was still in the ownership of the Hon. Duncombe Pleydell Bouverie of Coleshill, when live and dead stock was being offered for sale – the farm being let. (Faringdon Adver 18th Aug 1906). The person who took it over was Arthur Weeks. We know little about him but can confirm by a newspaper clip that he was at the farm in 1914, the start of the great war. We have no further evidence of what happened to him or where he went but we do know that by the census of 1921, in charge of the farm was Capt. Nigel Kennedy Worthington, who originally was from Pendleton in Lancashire, aged 36 and had a wife called Sibyl who was from Brazil. He was still there in 1932 when during that summer a fire threatened to destroy 80 tons of hay. Stirling work by the Fire Brigade saved a good portion of it. (Faringdon Adver 19th Aug 1932). A strange advertisement appeared in a local newspaper announcing that Captain Worthington was giving up farming and recommended William Bastard as a Bailiff. (Western Gazette Sept 30, 1932 p.8). To what intent and purpose is somewhat enigmatic. But straight away 29th Sept, traditional Michaelmas, the new tenant was a Miss E.R. Cochrane. She made an impact on the local County Court when a claim was made against her for nonpayment of wages. Her appearance seemed to confuse the judge's eyesight. (Below - NW Gaz & Herald 20th Oct 1933).

**SWINDON COUNTY
COURT.**

**Highworth Woman's
Successful Claim.**

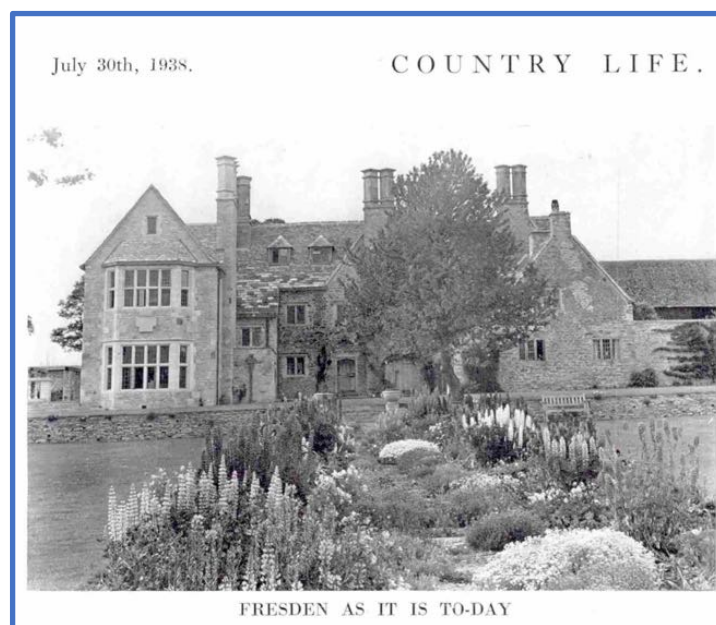
PLUCKING CHICKENS.

At the Swindon County Court on Wednesday, before Judge Gwynne James, Mrs. Adeline Mary Lay, a widow, of 24, Park avenue, Highworth, claimed £1 5s. 9d. for work done from Miss Cockran, farmer, of Fresden Farm, Highworth.

Miss Cockran was wearing a tailored suit with mannish shirt and tie and was without a hat. She has Eton cropped hair and wears glasses. Her name was given as "Miss Cockran," but when she had taken her stand in the place allotted for the defendant, the Judge addressed her as Mr. Cockran. She corrected him, saying: "No, Miss Cockran." He paused and looked at her and exclaimed: "Lord bless me—good gracious."

Mrs. Lay said that she and Miss Col-

Miss Cochran continued to make her mark around the neighbourhood and had plenty to say on her ideas concerning farming. In 1938 she managed to get a mention of Fresden House in the Country Life magazine and a picture of it appeared with an article that was very general in content to the area. (Below). She even appeared as a speaker at a conference at Aylesbury in 1946. (Below - The Adv & Gazette 1st Nov).



BUCKS WAR AGRICULTURAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

INVITE DAIRY FARMERS
— TO —
A ONE-DAY CONFERENCE
— ON —
THE MANAGEMENT OF GRASS ON THE DAIRY FARM

to be held at the
COUNTY FARM, AYLESBURY,
On Thursday, November 14th,
from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

11 a.m. **THE PRODUCTIVITY OF TEMPORARY AND PERMANENT PASTURE:**
Professor E. J. Roberts, of Bangor University.

12 a.m. **MANURIAL TREATMENT OF TEMPORARY AND PERMANENT PASTURE, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE USE OF NITROGEN:**
G. T. Ward, Esq., one of the foremost authorities on his subject, with a wide experience of farming conditions over the whole country.

1 p.m. **LUNCHEON INTERVAL**

2 p.m. **GRASS AND THE DAIRY COW:**
Miss E. R. Cochrane, of Fresden, Wilts (author of "The Milch Cow in England").

3 p.m. **MANAGEMENT OF GRASS ON A TYPICAL DAIRY FARM:**
The three speakers will interview Mr. R. Trehane, of Manor Farm, Ham Preston, Wimborne, who has practised controlled grazing on his farm over a number of years.

4 p.m. **TEA.**

CONFERENCE ENDS

Farmers are requested to book luncheon in advance by sending a postcard to the Technical Officer, B.W.A.E.C., 5, Church Street, Aylesbury. Last date for reservation, November 11th.

The 1946 conference is the last piece of information that can be found at the moment on the knowledgeable Miss E.R. Cochrane, and we don't know when she left Fresden Farm and who took it over immediately after. A newspaper article from 1992 explained what happened after Mrs Audrey Barrie-Brown, the owner at that time, left the farmhouse to the Wiltshire-based Roman Research Trust. We don't know when she took over the farm and presently have no details of what the archaeological trust did with it.

WESTERN DAILY PRESS, TUESDAY, APRIL 28, 1992 — 11

Widow snubs heritage chiefs over £1m legacy

FEAR OF FOX HUNTING BAN DECIDES FATE OF MANSION

WEALTHY widow Audrey Barrie-Brown has snubbed heritage chiefs by leaving her 17th century manor house and its 165-acre grounds to local history buffs.

Mrs Barrie-Brown, who was 84, decided not to leave her £1 million estate to Britain's heritage guardians, the National Trust, because she feared they would ban fox-hunting there.

Instead, she left it to the Wiltshire-based Roman Research Trust after becoming passionately interested in archaeology in her last few years.

She hoped the group, which has around 1,000 members, would use stately Fresden Manor, near Highworth, as their UK headquarters.



Fresden Manor in all its stately glory

Trust after excavating a Before his death Mrs

PATIENTS 'ARE BEING TURNED AWAY'

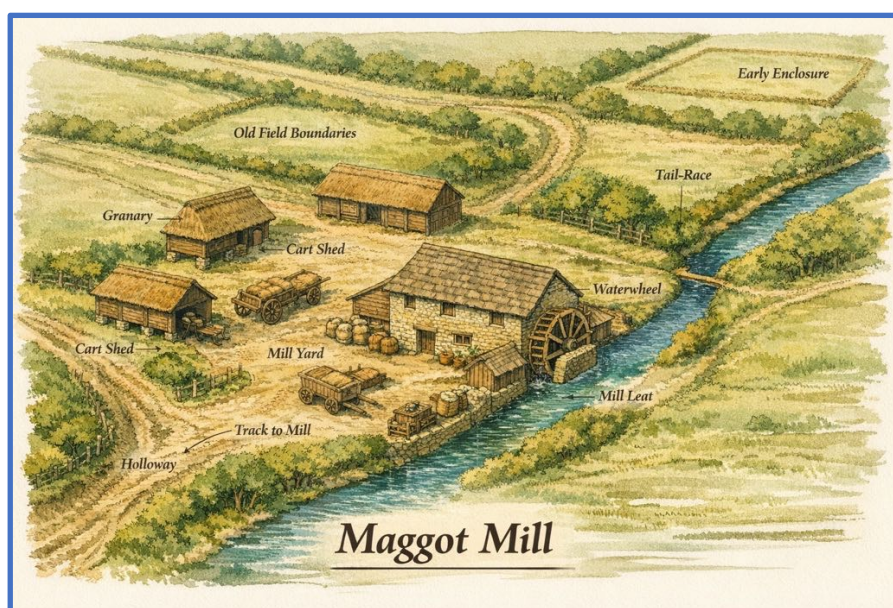


The newspaper article above promoted the house to the status of Manor House and further added that it dates from the 17th century. We have shown from the documentary evidence above that this is not completely accurate. Furthermore, we have also confirmed that the name Fresden was not in use until the latter part of the 19th century.

In conclusion. Below is a probable timeline for the site. Also, a computer-generated AI drawing to give an indication of how it may have looked when the mill was in operation.

Summary Timeline

Phase	Date	What Happens
1. Foundation	1180–1250	Small independent mill built by Magot family
2. Working Mill	13 th –15 th c.	Full operation; leat, wheelpit, yard established
3. Expansion	15 th –17 th c.	Outbuildings added; becomes a small farmstead
4. Decline	1650–1750	Milling ceases; leat silts; wheel removed
5. Farm Conversion	1700–1850	Farmhouse built; name becomes “Maggot Mill Farm”
6. Agricultural Use	19 th –20 th c.	Standard farm; mill traces fade
7. Archaeological Phase	21 st c.	Mill revealed again by LiDAR



If you can add or if necessary correct any of the information given in this study please contact us info@shrivenhamheritagesociety.co.uk



Both photos by Neil B. Maw