

EXTENSIVE URBAN SURVEY
of
SURREY

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EXTENSIVE URBAN SURVEY STAINES

INTRODUCTION

Extensive Urban Surveys have been undertaken or are presently being undertaken in a number of English counties as part of a wide ranging English Heritage initiative (English Heritage 1992). Surrey, in common with many other counties, had a survey of its historic towns carried out some twenty years ago (O'Connell 1977), as a result of an initiative by the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments (then part of the Department of the Environment). This survey has formed a basis and background for archaeological work in towns throughout the ensuing period, but is now in urgent need of replacement to reflect current knowledge and planning concerns (Poulton & Bird 1998).

The present survey is intended to provide an up-to-date view of the archaeological resource in each of the towns studied and consists of three phases: data collection, data assessment and strategy. The first stage, data collection, incorporates the acquisition of new data and its amalgamation with existing knowledge of the history and archaeology of the town. The data is acquired in a form suitable for its incorporation into the Surrey Sites and Monuments Record. The data assessment phase of the survey leads to the production of this report which presents a history of the town, an analysis of the plan of the town, an assessment of the archaeological and buildings data and the state of modern development resulting in the identification of areas of archaeological importance. Information about the development of the town through the ages, including analysis of its plan and the identified areas of archaeological importance, is also presented in a series of maps at the end of the report. The Strategy phase of the survey, uses the information presented in the Data Assessment combined with current statutory and non-statutory constraints, and present and future planning policy to make recommendations for policies regarding the historic environment. The policies may be incorporated into Local and Unitary Development Plans, non-statutory policies, supplementary guidance and for use within development control (Hampshire County Council 1997, 1).

The project faced a clear difficulty in knowing which towns to include, as there seems to be no agreed definition. Historically, towns in Surrey have always been small because of the proximity of London and the generally poor quality of the County's land for agriculture. This fact is masked now by the considerable expansion of many towns and villages following the coming of the railway in the later 19th century. The main problem, in the absence of an absolute measure, is in deciding where to draw the line. This ought, in principle, to be established by comparing the evidence from towns, as defined by O'Connell (1977), and that from other large settlements or villages.

Unfortunately archaeological investigation of Surrey's towns has been relatively limited in scope, and villages have been even less well served. In these circumstances comparisons are rather hard to draw. The evidence from the villages is consistent with that of the towns in suggesting that their development belongs to the period from the 12th/13th century onwards. Surrey's towns are not, generally, greatly different from the villages in the quantity of evidence they produce and this is undoubtedly because they differ little in size. The town, with its market, had an economic status denied to the village, but in Surrey all the inhabitants of both lived in immediate proximity to their fields. There was probably the same lack of distinction between town and village in the medieval period as there is in their excavated evidence or plans revealed today.

In these circumstances it seemed best to adopt an inclusive approach and deal with all the more substantial medieval settlements which have indications of nucleation ('nucleated' settlements have houses run together and signs of developed backlands). This is clearly the case with Staines, which had a market before 1218, and it has an additional claim on attention as the site of a small Roman town, with evidence of Saxon occupation.

The study area is that of the Roman and medieval 'town island', together with the adjacent 'Binbury island' which saw significant related activity in the both periods, and the

area along London Road to the east which may have been a suburb in both periods, as shown on figs 3, 5 and 6. Finds of interest and importance are known from the near vicinity, and have been taken account of, but are not thought to relate to the nucleated settlement of any date.

General note on maps and mapping

A standard set of historic maps was normally consulted in compiling all reports for the Surrey EUS, but Staines, as the only town in old Middlesex, had a slightly different treatment. The Rocque map, and all enclosure, tithe, and historic Ordnance Survey maps were examined in copies made for an earlier project of maps held in the collections of the London Metropolitan Archives. Further references are not given for these maps where they are mentioned below. Where other maps are referred to a reference is given.

All map bases for the maps used in the figures are those of the modern Ordnance Survey, unless otherwise stated, and the data forms a GIS overlay to the Ordnance Survey maps.

Abbreviations used

EUS	Extensive Urban Survey
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
OS	Ordnance Survey
SCAU	Surrey County Archaeological Unit
SMR	Sites and Monuments Record
SHS	Surrey History Service
<i>SyAC</i>	<i>Surrey Archaeological Collections</i>
<i>SyAS Bull</i>	<i>Surrey Archaeological Society's Bulletin</i>
<i>VCH</i>	<i>Victoria County History of Surrey</i>

LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHY

Sheet 269 of the IGS Geological Survey shows Staines High Street on a broad strip of Floodplain Gravels with 'brickearth' cover that extends from Stanwell Moor in the north (TQ 040 743), to near Savory's Weir in the south (TQ 035 698), and with alluvium of the rivers Colne and Thames encroaching upon its western edge. The southern part of this terrace remnant is shown with overbank alluvium from Sweeps Ditch, another watercourse, which flows into the Thames at Penton Hook (TQ 045 695), along its eastern edge. The map implies that the source of Sweeps Ditch is to the south-east of the town and close to the railway station.

This mapping of the drift deposits around Staines was based on too few exposures, however, since archaeological work has demonstrated its inaccuracy in many details. The area upon which the parish church stands to the north of the town and on the other side of the main stream of the river Colne, is correctly shown as an outlier of the Floodplain Gravel terrace surrounded by alluvium, but another such island was that of the High Street itself. Parts of the south, north, east and western shore-lines of this island have been uncovered in archaeological excavations of the last thirty years.

Three watercourses shaped the High Street island until relatively recently. The river Colne still flows north/south to meet with the Thames at its west end. The buried river channel that defined the south-east of the island carried Thames waters either into an ox-bow or, more likely, into the Sweeps Ditch watercourse. This did not have a source close to the town, as implied by the IGS map, but was yet another of the many braided streams of Colne waters, and the one that detached the High Street island from the rest of the Floodplain Gravel terrace. Another stretch of water called Sweeps Ditch delineates the northern edge of the island and this, too, has been found to overlie a palaeochannel that probably also carried Colne waters. A recent programme of archaeological work in the area north of Sweeps Ditch (Wessex 1996) has shown clearly the low lying alluvial deposits present to the immediate north.

The High Street and Binbury islands were probably created during the late glacial period by high energy outwashes that carved braided channels through the fringes of older gravel terraces. As elsewhere along the Thames and Colne floodplains, alluvium subsequently accumulated, partly as a result of a rising sea-level that caused lowland rivers to back-up and flood larger areas than before, but also as a result of an increasingly temperate climate. Later accumulations of alluvium were probably also caused by drainage improvements made for agricultural purposes within the Thames catchment.

The shape of the High Street island was prone to modification by floods, reclamation schemes, and the re-routing and management of watercourses until relatively recently. It is not possible, therefore, to say how large the island may have been before the Roman Conquest, although it has been assumed that it was never much larger than is shown in fig 2.

Staines is located 8km west of Windsor, c33km east of London and 4km north of Chertsey.

PAST WORK AND THE NATURE OF THE EVIDENCE

Staines is a small town for which there is a surprisingly large body of archaeological and historical information. The purpose of the present section of the report is to provide a summary of the scope and character of that evidence, and to indicate something of its strengths and weaknesses, prior to the attempt in the ensuing section to use this data to create an account of the development of Staines. The detailed information is confined to that directly relevant to the study area (fig 5) of the settlement, but material from the general vicinity is referred to as necessary.

Archaeology

The earliest known reference to Staines as a site of Roman settlement is by Camden in his *Britannia* (Camden 1695, 366). He named it as *Pontes* and this name was also used by Stukeley (1726, 205) in referring to the town, which he described as “fenced round with a ditch”.

These statements had little or no archaeological substance until the 19th century, when a boom in property development in the High Street enabled Thomas Ashby to form an interesting collection of Roman antiquities. These included Roman coins and pottery, and some sort of tessellated pavement on the site of the Angel Inn, in the High Street. These finds were listed by Sharpe (1913, 74), who subsequently revised and extended his list of finds, and included in it mention of the discovery of several groups of complete pottery vessels, perhaps indicating the site of a Roman cemetery, to the east of the town (Sharpe 1932, 115).

The earliest formal archaeological work in the town took place in 1969, and between then and 1973 Mrs M Rendell undertook work on nine separate sites. Most of the work was on a relatively small scale, and all of it awaits full publication (for some brief details of each of the sites see Crouch 1976, 74-6). One find of particular interest was that of part of a cheek-piece of a military helmet, found at the Barclays Bank site. This site did, in fact, produce a wide variety of material, especially of Roman date. There was clearly also a complex stratigraphic sequence, although the details of this remain unclear. This is, unfortunately, the case with regard to a number of these early investigations, although for several of the sites more recent work in their near vicinity has helped clarify understanding.

In 1974 K Crouch was appointed as the first permanent Archaeological Field Officer for Staines, in response to the complexity and quality of the archaeological material revealed by the earlier investigations, and in view of the threat to deposits within the town from a number of proposed developments. The excavations and monitoring programmes which he undertook between 1974 and 1979 were mainly along the south side of the High Street (Crouch 1976; Crouch 1978; Crouch & Shanks 1980; Crouch & Shanks 1984). These revealed evidence of Roman settlement that existed from cAD65/70 until the 4th century.

Saxon material of early date was also revealed, but little of late Saxon date. Scant evidence of medieval buildings was found in these early excavations, though it is suspected from the many pits and wells of the backlands that such structures had lain along most of the

southern street frontage from the late 12th or early 13th century. They had probably been destroyed by later developments or the machined removal of 'overburden' from the excavated trenches.

Seven excavations were undertaken in Staines during the 1980s. R Poulton dug a small area excavation towards the west of the town island on the County Sports site in 1981, and found a deeply stratified sequence of early to late Roman floors that included part of a circular 1st century building and a 4th century hearth or oven. In the near-backlands zone of that site a late 2nd or early 3rd century shaft contained the skeletons of sixteen dogs, and other finds that may suggest a votive purpose for the feature (Chapman & Smith 1988). Several other pits and midden deposits were also found. The excavation also sampled the best stratified series of 13th to 16th century deposits that have so far been found within the town, associated with a series of buildings, probably shops, that had fronted onto the High Street.

In 1987/88, Nick Shephard and Phil Jones co-directed archaeological work on the Johnson and Clark site to the south and east of R Poulton's excavations. Here, a succession of Roman, Saxon and medieval riverbanks were found, and evidence that substantial 2nd century buildings had probably stood nearby. Two medieval buildings were also found.

In the year between March 1988 and March 1989, archaeological work took place on three development sites in Staines High Street; the Mackay Securities site, the Prudential site, and the Percy Harrisons site. A substantial body of Roman and, to a lesser extent Saxon and medieval occupation evidence was again found.

Surprisingly little archaeological work was undertaken in the town centre during the early 1990s. Excavations at the Lloyd's Bank and Abbey National sites were both quite small scale, but revealed evidence of Roman buildings and stratigraphy, although medieval material was largely absent due to later truncation. At the Town Hall site limited excavation and monitoring of development in 1993 revealed Roman and medieval near-shore deposits and piles. There was evidence of land reclamation, associated with a new road and the establishment of a Market Hall in the 16th century.

In 1995 redevelopment of the Tesco site at 2-8 High Street provided the first opportunity to look closely at a site north of the High Street, at the west end of the town. An Iron Age feature was identified, followed by evidence of intensive early Roman occupation. Medieval stratigraphy was also well preserved, with a 13th century chalk-lined well and at least three late medieval tile-on-edge hearths.

More substantial work was undertaken in 1998 and 1997, with some later continuation up to present (Nov 99), in relation to development of the Central Trading Estate, north of the High Street. Detailed excavation of a town centre site revealed what seems to have been a very similar sequence of occupation to that revealed at the adjacent Prudential site.

Some mention needs also to be made of archaeological work in the areas surrounding the High Street island. In 1987, two small areas were excavated at the Courage's Brewery site north-west of the river Colne on the other island ('Binbury') of Staines revealing interesting evidence of Roman, Saxon and medieval settlement. At Duncroft, in 1998, the Saxon and earlier medieval archaeology was particularly important, but both prehistoric and Roman evidence was uncovered.

A number of recent (1996-2000) investigations have looked at the area to the east of the town island, alongside London Road, which follows the Roman road to London. They exhibit a pattern showing occupation in the Neolithic and Bronze Age, what may be a Late Roman suburb laid out with regular plot boundaries, and similar evidence for the earlier medieval period. Some inhumations and cremations are of Roman date, complementing the 1930s evidence for cremations, but a much greater number of burials form part of a Late-Saxon execution cemetery

Documents

Staines is referred to as *Pontibus*, meaning "the bridges" (Rivet & Smith 1979, 441) in the document known as the Antonine Itinerary, but there are no other documents of Roman or

early Saxon date. The later importance of Staines is better documented. Staines is mentioned as a crossing place of the Thames in 10th century and 11th century documents, and was the site of pre-conquest Minster church. Staines was a possession of Westminster Abbey and therefore periodically held by the Crown during vacancies. As a result there is a considerable body of documentary evidence in monastic and royal records, especially from the 13th century onwards, the principal components of which have received detailed examination for the Victoria County History of Middlesex (Reynolds 1962), and been given further consideration in relation to the emerging archaeological evidence by Jones (1982, 191-3).

Cartography

The cartographic evidence, which steadily becomes more detailed through the post-medieval period, suggests that there was little expansion outside of the medieval extent of the town until the mid-late 19th century. A map of 1705 (Surrey History Centre, ref K30/9/2) shows the plan of the town with buildings on either side of the High Street and along Church Street. The Rocque map of about 1754 (fig 2) reveals a similar basic plan of the town, but a much better source is the map of uncertain date but before 1830 which shows the town at a much larger scale, but apparently still with the same basic layout. Shortly afterwards the bridge was moved upstream, involving the creation of new roads, and thereafter development was quite rapid. This is already apparent on the enclosure map of 1845, and even more so on the 1st edition OS 25 inch map of 1870.

Buildings

Staines has undergone a tremendous amount of rebuilding in the 20th century, including much of the core of the town along the High St. A few 18th century brick houses survive there, but nothing earlier, and this is largely true also of the area around.

General studies

General accounts of the Roman development of Staines have been prepared on several occasions. The most widely used (Crouch 1976; Crouch and Shanks 1984), and also a more recent synthesis (Burnham & Wachter 1990, 306), are outdated or misleading, and the only general review of the Saxon and Norman periods (Jones 1982) is also now badly in need of updating. There has been no recent publication that looks at both the archaeological and documentary evidence for medieval Staines. A project approaching completion for English Heritage provides not only for publication of a number of detailed excavation reports on work between 1976 and 1990, but also provides an overview of the development of Staines from prehistoric times onwards, taking account of all earlier work (especially where the more recent excavation provides a basis for reviewing and reinterpreting) and of later work up to 1999, where the information is available. The following report draws heavily on this work (Jones & Poulton forthcoming).

THE HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF STAINES

The broad scope of the resources available for an account of the history of Staines have been indicated by the preceding section. The following narrative should be read with the limitations of those resources in mind. It is concerned essentially with the area of the Roman and medieval town ('town island') and its related areas of occupation on 'Binbury island' and along the London Rd to the east, but the more detailed analysis of the town plan and its development is reserved for the next section.

Prehistoric

The evidence from excavations over the last 25 years makes it clear that the town island had been used through most of prehistory, but that *in-situ* survival of pre-Roman habitation and usage is rare because of the intensity of later settlement and the damage wrought by flooding. There is one outstanding gap in the cultural sequence in later prehistoric times, however, spanning, perhaps, both the Middle and Late Iron Age periods. There are no sherds of the

glaucous wares and saucepan pots as found at nearby Thorpe Lea Nurseries (Hayman 1998), and what Atrebatian-type pottery there is seems to be of late styles more usually associated with early Roman pottery.

Of the other islands of the Colne delta, Binbury, north-west of the town, has provided some evidence of earlier and later prehistoric occupation at Duncroft (Robertson 1997), although the amount of definitely Iron Age material is small. Between Binbury and the High Street Island another small island has recently been identified (Wessex 1996), and has revealed Bronze Age material. The higher, periodically drier, ground around London Road, at the east end of the town, has also revealed Neolithic and Bronze Age material, but with an absence of Iron Age material, perhaps due to flooding (Poulton 1999). On the Yeoveney Island, north-west of Binbury, at Church Lammas, Late Upper Palaeolithic flintwork was recovered from *in situ* stratigraphy, a Middle Bronze rectilinear enclosure was excavated and later prehistoric flintwork scatters and features were identified (Jones, 1997, 1). The Middle Bronze Age site was claimed as of ritual origin (Hayman 1991). A Neolithic causewayed camp was excavated at Yeoveney in 1961 by Robertson-MacKay some 500m to the north-west of Church Lammas and a mile north of the parish church between two arms of the River Colne. It lies on slightly elevated ground on another gravel island (Jones 1982, 190). The close proximity of these prehistoric sites may indicate that the area remained one of ritual significance in the latter part of the prehistoric era (Hayman 1991). The evidence fits in with the broad pattern of favoured use of drier areas which is emerging with particular clarity from work in the local area at the confluences of the River Thames with the Colne and Wey, for example at Abbey Meads, Chertsey (Jones forthcoming); Brooklands, Weybridge (Hanworth and Tomalin 1977, Hayman in prep); Lower Mill Farm (Jones and Poulton 1987, 1-10); Thorpe Lea Nurseries (Hayman, 1998); and Wey Manor Farm (Hayman in prep). In each case fairly minor topographic differences have been seen to influence the precise location of settlement at different periods

It might be that the High Street island became even more vulnerable to flooding in the centuries before the Conquest, and, perhaps, that all prehistoric usage had been intermittent. The evidence from the adjacent islands may tend to support this. Iron Age material is absent from the London Road area, where flooding seems fairly certain at that time, and very rare on the Binbury Island. This may imply extensive flooding on the lower Colne delta, near the confluence with the Thames, at this period.

Roman

Roman settlement at Staines began in the pre-Flavian period, though how close to the Conquest is uncertain, and had assumed an urban character by early Flavian times. How and why this happened has been a source of some speculation, with the favoured explanation most clearly expressed by Bird (1987):

“It seems that at least by AD50 the first of the great roads to London were being laid out; for us those to Silchester and Chichester (‘Stane Street’) are of interest. Roman practice was to police a newly conquered area with chains of military posts set out along roads, and it may be that the so-called ‘posting stations’ [of which Staines, from its inclusion in the Antonine itinerary was one] were first established for this reason at this time”

Hind (1989) has suggested that the Claudian invasion force followed a route which included a crossing of the Thames at Staines: such a crossing would, perhaps, have led to the construction of a bridge. Bird’s (1999 and 2000) consideration of this issue, while not agreeing in detail with Hines, also comes to the conclusion that a major early crossing at Staines is likely, both in relation to the movements of the Conquest army, and the necessary provision of a major route between Silchester and Colchester, in the period before the establishment of London after AD50.

The concept of a network of forts in the south-east during the early post-Conquest period has become unfashionable and there is no present evidence for one at Staines. Some early features remain enigmatic, however, and could have been created by the army or else, perhaps, by civilian road engineers in its pay, while a cheekpiece from a military helmet

(Crouch 1976) points to the presence of soldiers in the town, if nothing more. It may be best to retain an open mind with regard to the possible military origins of Staines.

The earliest buildings positively identified in the town lay at both ends of the island, and, elsewhere, the near-frontage zone remained as dumping grounds until the end of the 1st century. For a few generations during the 2nd century the town thrived as it was never to again during the Roman period, or until the peak of growth in the early 14th century. There was a rapid development along both sides of the highway during the early decades of the century, and the ribbon of ordered settlement continued to prosper through the middle of the century, perhaps largely from the services that such a distribution centre could offer. All buildings so far identified in the late 1st and 2nd century town had been timber structures, usually with prepared clay floors. Some that had rooms with more sophisticated flooring have been identified only from re-deposited debris, although part of an *opus signinum* floor and laid tiles might have been *in situ* at the Elmsleigh Centre. It has become clear, however, that such 'Romanised' elements as painted wall plaster, tessellated or *opus signinum* flooring and window glass were only adopted after c120/130, but, perhaps, at several locations within the town.

The thriving life of the town faltered towards the end of the 2nd century and went into a period of decline that lasted for, perhaps, all of the 3rd. Some parts of the backlands ceased to be used for pit digging and were abandoned or else cultivated, and, towards the end of the 3rd century there was an abandonment of some parts of the highway frontage that were previously densely occupied. Why this should have been so has probably more to do with a general recession across the south-east of the country than with local factors, but this may have been exacerbated in Staines by renewed episodes of flooding.

On the Binbury island there was a building at the Courages Brewery site (Jones 1987) and a few miscellaneous features and finds at Duncroft (Robertson 1999). It is difficult to be certain of the significance of this, largely because of the comparatively limited areas that have been examined. East of the town, where the present London Road follows the Roman highway (fig 5), a clearer picture has emerged from a series of excavations in recent years. Several inhumation burials have been identified which are probably of Roman date, as well as more secure evidence for cremation, especially a *bustum* at the Staines Police Station site (Hunt *et al* 2002, 80). This complements the 19th century finds of complete pots from this vicinity (Sharpe 1932, 115). The area, just beyond the limits of the town, had clearly been used as a cemetery, although no areas of intensive burial were identified. Such a use was wholly or partially superseded in the later 3rd century when a series of plot boundaries were dug to form a suburb of the town at a period when the town island seems to be in decline. This may suggest its partial desertion in favour of the London road area, perhaps in response to the problems caused by flooding.

The evidence for late Roman settlement in Staines is difficult to assess. Many sites show evidence of a 'dark earth', sealing many earlier features and structures. It seems reasonable to accept that there was a widespread change in the character of occupation in Staines, beginning, perhaps, in the late 3rd century, and certainly widely demonstrated in the 4th century. Thereafter, and until the early medieval period, over most of the area, 'black earth' layers continued to accumulate or, at least, were not affected by settlement activities. In the Late Roman period there is comparatively sparse evidence for buildings but there is, apparently, a rather greater spread and variety of other features. Most sites have produced a few miscellaneous features (hollows, small pits, potholes and gullies), suggesting widespread but not intensive activity. Perhaps the most important feature of the Staines High Street area for the late Roman period and long after is the constant presence of the highway itself, since it may be regarded as unlikely that it was ever abandoned.

From *Pontibus* to Staines

From around the end of the 4th century through to around the 7th century the evidence for occupation is very hard to interpret. The town island has yielded only a few features and finds which probably belong to this period. They are enough to suggest a limited survival of

occupation into the early Saxon period, and perhaps no more could be expected, given that much of the economic basis for the town must effectively have disappeared with the end of the Roman market economy. The identified features include river defences, which are unusual earthworks for the period, and seem most probably aimed at protecting the settlement from flooding.

This may well have been an important factor in stimulating the transfer of the focus of settlement to the Binbury island in the mid to late Saxon period, for which there is both archaeological and documentary evidence. The best archaeological evidence comes from the Duncroft site, where most of Saxon features were identified furthest from Duncroft House, providing a possible focus of activity towards the southern end of Binbury island, although Saxon sherds were previously recovered from the Courage brewery to the south-east (Jones 1987). Exploration of comparative evidence in the region shows that the best parallels for the range of features at Duncroft are at Wraysbury (Astill & Lobb 1982) and Shepperton Green (Canham 1979, Poulton forthcoming), in both cases believed to be sites of small mid-late Saxon settlements, possibly regularly organised as 'villages'. Domesday Book records 94 villeins, cottars, bordars, and serfs (as well as 46 burgesses, on which see below) for the manor. This represents the households in the entire manor, but such a substantial number is likely to imply a relatively large main settlement.

A grant by charter of land at Staines that purports to be of this period is dated 969, but was written much later, although some details suggest that its scribes had access to earlier and more contemporary sources. This charter of King Edgar confirmed *Stana* and other estates to the Abbot of Westminster, and states that Staines had once been the site of a religious house (*cenobium quod Stana vocatur*) (Reynolds 1962, 27). The Domesday Book entry for East Burnham in Buckinghamshire refers to the *monasterium* of *Stanes* (Jones 1982, 191-2).

The area served by this Late Saxon minster may be deduced from earlier charters and the Domesday Book. In 1086 the manor and its four berewicks were confirmed to the Abbot of Westminster. The soke referred to in 1053 can be identified from within Spelthorne Hundred as Staines and its berewicks (probably the holdings of Teddington, Halliford, Feltham and Ashford mentioned in the 969 charter), and other estates with jurisdiction from Staines, including two in Laleham, one in Charlton and another Ashford property. The assessed Domesday hideage equals that of the 35 hide sokeland of 1053 (Jones 1982, 192).

The minster is most likely to have occupied the site of the parish church of St Mary's, still standing on a pronounced knoll. A church is first mentioned in 1179, and there is an early record of "'Saxon' (ie probably Norman), work in the old church, which has since been pulled down" (Reynolds (1962, 27). The continued existence of its chapelries of Ashford, Laleham and Teddington into the early middle ages seem to confirm continuity with the pre-conquest minster (*cf* the examples and general discussion in Blair 1991, 91-107). The church is close to Duncroft House, an important 17th century house where folk tradition claimed that the Bishops and Barons stayed before travelling to Runnymede for the sealing of Magna Carta in 1215 (Richardson 1968, 147). This might be a pointer to the site of the Abbot of Westminster's demesne manor for Staines (Jones 1982, 190), which is otherwise unknown, except that a small enclosure (83ft by 28ft) in Binbury was granted with the manor in 1613 (Reynolds 1962, 18).

The association of the manor house, minster church, and a substantial settlement on Binbury clearly point to a central place of some importance. The discovery of a Late Saxon execution site alongside London Road (Hayman 2001) offers a further dimension to this. Reynolds (2001) has argued that such sites need to be viewed in a context where, from the 7th century onwards, 'organised judicial machinery also lay at the heart of maintaining royal power', leading to the close association of execution sites with *burhs*, and the very strong possibility that Staines should be regarded as such. This, in turn, may indicate that the 46 burgesses of Staines identified in Domesday Book were resident there, within a settlement that was larger and more important than has hitherto been appreciated. The alternative interpretation (Maitland 1897, 181) that the burgesses were resident in Staines' London property, the *staningahagae*, that is probably identical with the medieval parish of St Mary

Staining (Jones 1982, 192), has been generally accepted. Reynolds (1962, 24), however, was rightly cautious, pointing out that no other manor had so large a number of burgesses in London. Even if true, the numbers would suggest that Staines was a wealthy and important manor, having the privilege granted to only a few rural estates of holding land within London.

The development of Staines as an important central place and its probable emergence as a *burh* is difficult to date with any precision. In general terms the development of towns in southern England is strongly associated with Alfred and his successors as Kings of Wessex during the later 9th and 10th centuries. The greatest impetus to this development lay in the need to respond to the Scandinavian invasion, and the Thames valley was clearly of strategic importance in this. On one occasion in 893, a Danish force crossed the river 'where there was no ford', and set up defences on Thorney, an island 2km north of Staines (Jones 1982, 192-3). The value of Staines as a crossing point of the Thames ought to have been appreciated at an early date, but on this point historical sources are silent, while the archaeological evidence is too imprecise. A date for one of the execution burials of AD 694-879 at 1 sigma is, however, a strong indicator that an important settlement with judicial functions existed when the creation of the Wessex *burh* system was begun.

11th and 12th century pottery sherds were uncommon at Duncroft (Jones 1999, 34) and Courages Brewery, suggesting that Binbury may have been in decline at the same time as archaeological evidence suggests the fortunes of the town island were rising. Almost all the town island sites have revealed evidence of this period, although the quantity and associated features are greatest at the west end where there may have been a crossing of the Thames. The occupation in the 11th and earlier 12th century is, though, less intense than it was subsequently, and it is possible that for a century or so Staines was of less importance than it was before and after, with Binbury in decline and the town island in the early stages of redevelopment.

Not much later in the 12th century, however, significant changes in the infrastructure created a very different situation. Timber abutments and the metalling of the approach road to the bridge across the Thames were found at the Mackay Securities Site, on the west side of Market Square, and shows that the bridge first documented in a grant by the King of a Windsor Forest tree for its repair in 1222 (Turner 1926, 14; Reynolds 1962, 13) could have been constructed up to 50 years earlier. Wardens were responsible for its maintenance from as early as 1228, and a series of documents relating to tolls and repairs make it clear that the bridge was primarily the responsibility of the men of Staines. The situation is confused by the association of the bridge with the causeway on the south side of the river, which runs from The Hythe to Egham. They are frequently mentioned together in medieval documents. Thomas de Oxenford had been credited with the construction of the causeway during the 13th century, but frequent attempts were made to shift the burden of repair onto the Abbot of Chertsey (*VCH* 3, 420). By the middle of the 14th century, however, Chertsey disputed any liability for its repair, and also claimed that Thomas had built the bridge (Turner 1926, 15). In the 15th century repairs of both the bridge and causeway were paid for from the proceeds of 'pontage' on the bridge (Reynolds 1962, 13). The inability to trace its history before the 13th century may indicate that there had been no earlier bridge across the Thames since the Roman period.

There is also evidence from many parts of the town for an intensification of settlement, and it seems clear from the archaeological evidence that Staines had been established as a new town by the late 12th century, which fits well with the record of a change of market day in 1218 (Reynolds 1962, 20). The decision to bridge the Thames from the town island had created the conditions by which a new focus of settlement and commerce to replace that of Binbury, could be built over the old Roman town.

Some years earlier (after 1135) Chertsey Abbey had established a new town in Chertsey (Poulton 1998a, esp 8 and 45). A ferry, rather than a bridge, served the approach road to Chertsey across the Thames. It may be speculated that the success of this new town was viewed enviously by the Abbots of Westminster especially as it affected the prosperity of their nearby manor at Staines, where the archaeological evidence may tentatively be read as

indicating a decline in the fortunes of Binbury at this period. The decision to themselves establish a town, with the added advantage of a bridge across the Thames, was intended to regain the commercial advantage. The one uncertain factor in all this is how or why Chertsey Abbey agreed to the bridge, one side of which lay in its territory.

Staines, then, may be comfortably fitted into the pattern of 12th and 13th century development of new towns recently defined for Surrey (Poulton 1998b). Like all of them, it is comparatively small, and the earliest maps (fig 2) show the High Street widening where it meets the bridge approach, just below the junction with Church Road. This was the market area.

The established medieval town

By the mid 13th century the town island seems to have been occupied by a ribbon of buildings along both sides of the High Street, very similar to that which had prevailed in the early 2nd century, even with the distinction between frontage buildings and backlands features and middens. It may even have been as large and populous as the Roman town at its peak. The street frontage buildings suffered badly from post-medieval rebuilding, however, and no coherent plans were able to be recorded in excavation. The town flourished until the mid 14th century, in contrast, perhaps, with Chertsey, which may have stagnated because of its failure to establish a bridge over the Thames, leaving Staines to take the principal share of the regional trade.

There was a marked decline in the fortunes of the town from the mid 14th century, including diminished receipts from market tolls (Reynolds 1962, 24), and through most of the backlands 'dark earth' again began to form. In contrast, occupation continued at the County Sports site close to the bridge, with the laying of new floors and hearths; and Penny Lane continued to be re-metalled, with its buildings to either side remaining in use. For a century or more the town may have contracted to a core around the bridgehead and market.

It is less clear how Binbury developed during this period. That name is first recorded in 1336, and the population in this area around the church seems to have been quite numerous, and continued to be so through the 15th century (Reynolds 1962, 16), but there is little archaeological evidence to supplement the historical record. The reverse situation applies to the London Road area, where no historical evidence is yet known, but a series of archaeological excavations have revealed that there seems to be a gap in occupation from the late Roman period until the 11th or 12th century. Several parallel ditches of that date at right angles to London Road seem to be plot boundaries, and there are also pits and other features. There is evidence of a similar character for settlement until the 13th and 14th centuries. It would seem that the development of the medieval town of Staines, on the same site as the Roman town, was followed by a parallel development of the surrounding land. Shortly after intensive occupation of the town island began again, the pressures of development, and perhaps population expansion, led to settlement in this area outside the town. When the main town declined in the late 14th century, there was decline here also: indeed the settlement was abandoned, and reverted to agricultural use until the 18th century

Post-medieval

The situation of Staines on the main road to the south west from London must always have led to a large amount of through traffic, but this became particularly prominent in the post-medieval period. By 1589 the town had the duty of providing horses for the government postal service, and references to the post and postmasters are common thereafter (Reynolds 1962, 15). This may have been one of the reasons why in the later 16th century there was a comprehensive redevelopment of the west side of the Bridge approach road. This provided the inns (including the forerunners of the noted 18th century hostelries the Bush and the Red Lion:) which were required to serve the needs of increasing numbers of longer distance travellers. This was the first stage in the extension of the town beyond the limitations of the gravel island which it occupied, but the next and much more dramatic stage did not come until 1832 when the present Staines bridge was built upstream of the old bridge, involving the

laying out of Bridge St and Clarence St. The old distinction between the Binbury and town islands became of much less significance, and the two gradually merged as an occupied area. Between 1871 and 1880 the new town hall was built, and this involved widening and considerable alteration of the old bridge approach road, alongside which the great coaching inns at the Bush and the Red Lion had become redundant.

Some ribbon development around Staines was already apparent in the 18th century, including along the London Rd (turnpiked 1727) and Kingston Rd (turnpiked 1773) to the east. The coming of the railway in 1848 stimulated the development of new industry and growth of the town, leading to considerable new building around the historic core. Population figures reflect this with growth from around 1750 in 1801 to 2750 in 1861 and 12000 in 1951.

THE ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOWN PLAN

Topographic divisions

The detailed analysis of the topographic development of Staines is presented in the sections of the report following this one. The analysis has enabled the definition of a number of distinct elements within the plan, which are shown on fig 5, and summarised below. Cross-reference to them is given as TD1 etc in the text that follows. It should be stressed that the precise extent of a number of these elements is not known.

1 The line of the Roman Road from London to Silchester was later to become the High Street of the medieval town (1a). A road must have continued along the approximate line of Church Street, in order to access Roman occupation on Binbury island, but it may also have been the main highway (1b). Church Street is likely to have been a route maintained in use from the Roman period until it became the chief link between the church and associated settlement (nos. 7-10) and the medieval planned town (no. 4). Bridge Street (1c) is an alternative candidate for the line of the main Roman road and its definite existence dates from the establishment of the bridge in the late 12th century.

2 The habitable extent of the Roman town depended on the flood level, and this shows the minimum extent in the 2nd century.

3 This is the maximum area of the Roman town.

4 This shows the probable original extent of the late 12th century planned town. Long narrow plots had buildings at their High Street end, with the backlands used for a variety of domestic and minor industrial uses. Gates controlled entry at the main access points (4a and 4b or 4c), and the High Street (1a) widened where it joined Bridge Street (1c) to form a market place (4d).

5 The marshy ground to either side of Bridge Street was reclaimed for habitation, perhaps gradually, but certainly by the end of the 16th century. Part of the additional area was used for a market house (partly beneath the present town hall), and on the north-west side large coaching inns were established from the late 16th century.

6 Thames Street was probably created in the 13th century. It has been considerably widened in the modern era.

7 The church and graveyard must have occupied their present sites by the time of Domesday Book, and this is almost certainly the site of the late Saxon minster, but there is no evidence as to how much earlier church provision was made here.

8 Duncroft was a substantial house from the 17th century, but it may have been the site of the manor-house of Staines from a much earlier date.

9 Some settlement around the area of the church prior to the establishment of the planned town is *a priori* likely, but there is only limited evidence for its extent, from excavations in the grounds of Duncroft. The area shown here is a very speculative suggestion for the greatest extent of late Saxon settlement.

10 The extent of medieval settlement may have been less than in the late – Saxon period, but its precise extent is unknown.

11 Excavations have indicated planned Roman and medieval settlement at a number of locations along London Road. The limits suggested here are very tentative.

12 Tentative area of Roman cemetery.

13 Area of late – Saxon execution cemetery.

Pre-Roman

The essential factor in determining the location of settlement in this area was the higher, drier ground provided by gravel islands, raised above the level of the Thames floodplain. Staines enjoyed this factor with many other locations along the Thames, and prior to the establishment of the Roman road and bridge did not enjoy any distinct advantage over these others. Indeed, the quantity of excavated prehistoric material from the town island is rather less than from some others, and, in particular, there is very little Iron Age material. The development of the Roman town, then, owed much to nature but seems to have been little influenced by earlier human activity.

Roman

It has been argued that a major early crossing point of the Thames at Staines is likely, both in relation to the movements of the Conquest army, and the necessary provision of a major route between Silchester and Colchester, in the period before the establishment of London after AD50. Again, though, while such arguments may lead to the conclusion that a crossing and bridge somewhere in the Staines area was necessary, as it does even more certainly once, soon after AD50, the link to London was established, they do not provide an explanation of why this precise location was chosen. The answer to that must lie in the practicalities of the situation as perceived by the early Roman engineers.

It was Sharpe (1913) who first suggested that Staines had been chosen as the Thames bridging point because of a unique narrowing of the gap between the firm gravels of the north and south banks that occurred there, in the vicinity of the medieval bridge. Excavation has shown, however, that the distance that would have to have been bridged at the west end of the High Street was much greater (at over 230m) than would appear from the geological maps. No evidence for any Roman bridge across the Thames at this point has yet been found. Any other crossing place in the vicinity would, in all probability, have had just as far to bridge, but an alternative location is hinted at by some features of the archaeological evidence which suggest the possibility that the Roman road followed the High Street (TD1a) only as far as Church Street, and then turned to follow that road (TD1b). The road may in effect, have ‘hopped’ from one island to the next, crossing the Thames from the Binbury island. The gap between the gravel terrace edges on both sides of the Thames next to the medieval bridging point is only c30m less than the distance shown on the geological survey map between the gravels of the Binbury island and those that lie nearest on the south side of the Thames. Lying in between however, is Church Island, which may be yet another remnant of the terrace, despite the geological survey showing it to be of alluvium.

Whatever the doubts about the precise location of the bridge, it is clear that the London to Silchester road was the key factor in determining the topography of the Roman town, with buildings fronting onto it, and backlands to their rear, which were in turn delimited

by the edge of the gravel island, sometimes marked by a watercourse, and sometimes by marshy ground subject to regular flooding (TD2 and TD3).

A feature type sometimes found in excavations of the near-backlands is possible plot boundary ditches, usually set out at right angles to the line of the High Street. It would seem that, at least in some parts of the town, this near backlands zone was separated from a far backlands area, much more prone to flooding, by a ditch, presumably accompanied by a bank, and intended to protect the main habitation area from flooding. Elsewhere there was no ditch, but the distinction was still maintained, with the far backlands not used for pit digging or similar activities.

It is fairly clear that this tripartite division persisted throughout the period of Roman settlement on the town island, although the precise extent of the habitable area changed in response to flooding, and the exact degree of habitation also changed through time. No other substantive divisions of the area, such as internal streets, are presently known.

Only the bare existence of Roman settlement on Binbury island is known, and nothing of its topography, beyond the simple fact that a road must have headed for the island on approximately the alignment of the present Church St (TD1b), irrespective of whether that was the main Roman highway. Along London Rd the existence of a number of plot boundaries parallel to it suggests that settlement here may have taken the form of a planned suburb (TD11). There has, however, as yet, been little analysis of what the excavated evidence suggests about the internal organisation of the settlement. The planned suburb seems to have replaced use of part, at least, of the area as a cemetery in the early 3rd century (TD12).

Saxon and Saxo-Norman

It is clear that the main Roman road, if not the bridge, remained in use through this period. Occupation continued through the period on the town island, but little can be said about its organisation or topography. On Binbury island the church (TD7) was established by the late Saxon period, but what occupation may have been associated with it is less certain, although the indications are that a regularly organised, village-like, settlement may have existed (TD9). Along London Rd there is no evidence of settlement at this date but a late Saxon execution cemetery has been identified (TD13).

Medieval and post-medieval

Developments up until the new bridge was built in 1832 are included in this section, as it may be argued that until then changes took place essentially within the framework of the medieval town. Later changes, strongly stimulated by the arrival of the railway in 1848, are considered in the following section. Unless otherwise indicated the sub-headings refer to the main town island, where, as the earlier discussion has indicated, a planned new town was established in the late 12th century.

THE ROADS, THE GATES AND THE BRIDGES

The Roman road formed the spine of the new town and became the High St (TD1a), and was extended or renewed through the present Market Square (formerly Bridge St, TD1c) to cross the Thames on the new bridge built in the late 12th century. A West Bar and an East Bar mentioned in the late 13th century (Reynolds 1962, 16) probably controlled access at each end of the town island, and would have been best placed west of the High Street crossing of Sweeps Ditch, and by the Thames bridge (Jones 1982, 188). They may also have been placed at the limits of the town's privileges, marking the border of the original planned town.

The limits of the town to the north and south of the High St were effectively determined by the extent of land free from regular flooding (TD4). On the south side of the town, in particular, excavation has shown that substantial areas of land were reclaimed for habitation use in the late 13th or early 14th century. This permanent extension of dry land

may also coincide with the construction of Thames Street (TD6) which was laid across the line of the southern watercourse around Staines island. This must have been by way of a causeway since all the documented bridges of the medieval town are accounted for. It cannot have been in place much earlier since extensive flood deposits from the Thames continued to form to the east of its line up until at least the 12th century. The Thames Street causeway (if proven) may have formed part of a single engineering operation to improve the roads in and out of Staines in the 13th century. Thomas de Oxenford was probably responsible for the repair or construction of the Egham causeway at this time. This led away to the west from the Surrey bank of Staines Bridge, and similar works could have been undertaken through Longford on Church Street, the Shortwood Common/River Ash marshland on the London Road, and the southern watercourse on Thames Street. This must remain conjecture but such a scheme would have served the purposes of the principal landholders in Staines, Westminster Abbey, who were encouraging a growth of revenue from their small towns such as here and at Chelmsford at this time.

Apart from the streets in the town and tracks across the fields and moors, there were few roads in the parish before the 19th century. Of these the Kingston Road was turnpiked in 1773. The course of the Wraysbury Road was moved a little northwards in 1841-2, and Moor Lane was straightened in 1891. The roads laid out at the enclosure in 1845 were soon surrounded by others set around them for building. There were anciently three lesser bridges in Staines: just below the point where the two branches of the Colne which worked the Staines mills join together before flowing into the Thames, they are crossed by a bridge in Church Street which was once known as Longford Bridge. It was mentioned in 1502, and in 1826 was said to have formerly taken foot-passengers only, while carriages had used a ford beside it. Hale Street forms a bridge over the more westerly of these two mill-streams, which is now known as the Wyrardisbury River. This was probably the bridge referred to in 1503 as Moor Bridge. The River Ash, formerly known as Littleton Brook, flows out of the River Colne and under the London Road; in 1826 the bridge here was brick and had been built in 1822.

Binbury is first mentioned in 1336 and Binbury Street soon after: the former seems to have been applied to the higher ground round the church, which was apparently then populous. It was also known as Church End. The name Binbury Street or Row later became particularly attached to what is now the north-west end of Church Street, and Church Street and Church Lane are also mentioned in the Middle Ages.

THE MARKET AND MARKET PLACE

In 1218 the Sheriff of Middlesex was ordered to see that Staines market was henceforward held on Friday, instead of Sunday. The Friday market continued until the early 19th century and the market rights and tolls belonged to the lords of the manor. The market place was where the High Street widens where it meets the bridge approach, just below the junction with Church Street. The marshy ground to either side of Bridge Street was reclaimed for habitation, perhaps gradually, but certainly by the end of the 16th century (TD5). The market-house was in existence in 1662. By the 19th century, and apparently by 1723, it was a small brick building of two stories, with a spire, and stood in the then main road, where the present Old Town Hall stands. The market declined in the 19th century and was discontinued by 1862. In 1872, following a vestry resolution, an Act was obtained under which the market-house and neighbouring buildings were demolished, the Town Hall was erected, and a market was established. This widened the street to form the Market Square and provided the site on which the Memorial Gardens were laid out in 1897.

BURGAGE PLOTS

On either side of the High Street plot boundaries run back at right angles. There is some suggestion of regular size to them, and the likelihood is that they are burgage plots laid out at the foundation of the town, divided, altered and amalgamated to an uncertain extent. This element of formal planning may be confirmed by the way in which boundaries often seem to

line through to either side of the High Street. Parallel ditches of early medieval date have been found on the north side of the High St which are likely to represent plot boundaries. Three ditches have been identified, running parallel to each other, but at a slightly oblique angle to the high St line, and about 8m apart, with the possibility that the central one is a later subdivision. They are found to the rear of the plots, but do not seem to have extended to the front. Dating details are not yet available (Wessex 1999).

CHURCH AND CHAPELS (details from Reynolds 1962, 13-33)

The church of St Mary (TD7) was built in 1828-9, but incorporates the tower of the former church. The old church comprised chancel, nave, a north chapel under a separate gable, and a west tower, and was built of stone with brick additions and alterations. The chancel apparently embodied pre-13th-century work, and the font may also have been of the same date. In the rest of the church, most of the windows, if not the fabric, were a good deal later.

The church of St Peter, which stands on the river bank by Laleham Road, was built and consecrated in 1894, and replaced a succession of mission chapels. The National school in the London Road seems to have been sometimes used as a chapel, and in 1873 a short lived building called St Peter's mission chapel was opened on the site of Wyatt Road School. It was sold to the school board in 1895, having been replaced in 1885 by an iron building in Edgell Road, which has continued to be used for general church purposes since the permanent church was built.

A meeting-house in Staines, which may have been Presbyterian, was registered in 1690, and there was a Presbyterian meeting-house by the market-house in 1716. The Presbyterians were said to have a meeting-house in 1778, but they are not referred to after this.

By 1676 there were Quakers in Staines who met every fortnight in the house of one of their number. A meeting-house was built in 1712 in the lane behind the market-house (later Quaker's Lane or Blackboy Lane). In 1765 the meeting also acquired a burial ground behind Church Street. In 1844 a new meeting-house was built to the south of the High Street, nearly on the site of the present one. It was a classical building designed by Samuel Danvers (see plate facing p.30). The old meeting-house was later used as a school and was demolished when the area was cleared for the Town Hall, or shortly before.

By 1865, and probably twenty years before, the Wesleyan chapel stood on the site of the present Salvation Army fortress in the Kingston Road. This chapel was replaced in 1890 by the present building in the Gothic style on the other side of the road. The Salvation Army bought the former Wesleyan chapel in Kingston Road in 1891, and used it until 1952, when it was replaced by a new building on the same site.

There was said to be a Baptist meeting-house in 1778 and 1810. Three successive pastors served it before the congregation declined and it was closed. It was reopened in 1824 and the church was formed and a resident pastor was appointed in the following year. This meeting-house stood in or near Church Street and was replaced in 1837 by the present building in Bridge Street. The church had some 60 members in 1860, c.1873, and 1957. Another Baptist church, the Bethel Church in Church Street, was in existence in 1853. It had been closed by 1866.

MANOR HOUSE

The site of the manor house of Staines is not known with certainty, but Duncroft (TD8), an important 17th century house where folk tradition claimed that the Bishops and Barons stayed before travelling to Runnymede for the sealing of Magna Carta in 1215, is a strong candidate for its location.

SCHOOLS

A schoolmaster at Staines is mentioned in 1353 and at various dates between 1580 and 1673. The first regular school to be established was the boys' British school, which was founded in 1808. It was later said to be in Church Street, but it may in fact have been the building just

round the corner in Hale Street which is now the Hale Street Mission Room. It consisted of one schoolroom and had one master.

National schools had meanwhile been opened. The boys' school was established in 1823 or 1824 in Thames Street, a little way south of the Congregational church. It was moved in 1863 to a new building in the London Road, which was later St. Mary's Church Hall and then a dress factory.

MILLS

Domesday Book mentions six mills in Staines. This total probably included the mills in the berewicks of the manor, and there are unlikely to have been more than two mills in Staines itself. Certainly, later in the Middle Ages there seem to have been two separate mills at Staines, though each consisted of several sets of machinery and was therefore sometimes referred to as several mills. One or more of these mills could be related to those known recently as Hale Mill (first attested in the 13th century) and Pound Mill (first attested in the 17th century), north of the main town island, where recent work (Wessex 1999) has shown that modern development has totally obliterated them.

PRISON

At the Johnson & Clark site, on the south side of the High street, excavations revealed a structure which seems to have been constructed in the late 12th or early 13th century as a building of three bays with massive rubble foundations. The only building in the town that could have been of such massive proportions, may have stood close to the market and bridge in the heart of the town, and may have been constructed in a series of small bays, was a gaol that was mentioned in 1274. Its identification with that of the foundations found on J&C must remain highly speculative however.

OTHER BUILDINGS

Church Street, which contains a number of 17th and 18th-century houses and cottages, is almost all that remains from the town as it was before 1828. Nos 22 and 24 Church Street, which are timber-framed, are probably the oldest houses in the parish. On the outskirts of the town, Duncroft House (TD8), now an approved school, was originally built in 1631, though it has been much altered and enlarged.

ASSESSMENT

Staines has produced a considerable quantity of archaeological and historical information, enabling a strong interpretive framework to be established for its history, but, as plentiful evidence commonly does, also leading to a number of areas of uncertainty or controversy.

The importance of the natural topography can scarcely be stressed too greatly, since the distinction between the gravel 'islands' and the surrounding flood-prone alluvium is fundamental to an understanding of settlement development in the Thames floodplain (fig 4).

The main 'town island' seems to have been intermittently used in the prehistoric period, but rather more and better evidence has come from other nearby islands, including Binbury and along the London Road. This may be partly due to intensive later settlement eroding evidence, but it does seem probable that there was little later Iron Age settlement, and hence little prehistoric impact on the topographic development of the Roman town.

The broad contours of Roman settlement, as a small town, possibly with the status of a *mansio* (posting station), are clear. Properties on the town island fronted onto the main street and behind them were the backlands, the further parts of which were prone to flooding and not used for intensive activity. Periodically, flooding also penetrated further into the core of the town, especially on the southern side. There was a link to Binbury at the west end, where there was settlement of uncertain scope and status, and the main highway (the London to Silchester road) is followed by the present London Road to the east, where there is evidence for planned Late Roman occupation and, less clearly, use of the area as a cemetery.

The position at either end of the period is much less well defined. The existence of a bridge across the Thames was clearly fundamental to the development of Staines, which was named *Pontibus* for that reason. There is, however, no certainty at present as to the location of the bridge. A theory that a fort at the bridgehead was the stimulus to development of the town is not supported by clear evidence, although there are some hints of military links with the town.

In the late Roman period the nature of occupation was transformed, with apparently fewer buildings separated by cultivated areas ('dark earth'). How long this settlement survived is a matter of uncertainty, but there is evidence for early Saxon activity in the town, including work on river defences. It does seem, however, that the focus of middle to later Saxon activity shifted to the Binbury island, where the parish church was established, initially as a minster prior to the Norman conquest.

The supremacy of the town island was, though, re-asserted when, in the late 12th century, a planned town was established, in which the High St was again the focus of occupation. Fundamental to this development was the building of a bridge across the Thames, reached by an approach road where the Old Town Hall presently stands (fig 5).

There seems to have been further settlement along the London Road from soon after the establishment of the new town. This disappeared at the same time as there was a considerable decline in the fortunes of the town proper. The evidence for this, as for the prosperity of the medieval town generally, is not very strong and needs more detailed analysis.

The town was again flourishing by the 16th century, but it was not until the bridge was moved to its present location in 1832 that there was any fundamental alteration of the medieval pattern. The ultimate consequence of this has been the obliteration of the distinctions between the gravel islands, and an amorphous spread of occupation around the early core of Staines. Although the High St survives, little of the physical fabric of the 18th century or earlier town remains.

EXISTING PROTECTION (FIG 6)

1 There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments in the area, but much of the area is defined as an area of high archaeological potential (AHAP)

2 Only the Binbury island falls within the Staines Conservation Area, and the main part of the Roman and medieval town lies outside.

3 There are a number of listed buildings within the study area, but comparatively few fall within the town island, and a high proportion are in Church St and Clarence St, where they reflect the 19th century expansion of the town.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL POTENTIAL

General comment

A large part of the area of greatest archaeological interest has undergone piecemeal redevelopment in the last century. Much of the archaeological evidence we have results from excavation and observation during that process. It would, however, be unwise to assume that all archaeological evidence has been destroyed in such areas, except where deep excavation from basements, foundations or such-like has taken place, as recent experience along the London Rd has demonstrated.

A proportion of the area of greatest archaeological interest falls within the Staines Conservation Area, within which large-scale redevelopment is relatively unlikely, but the key High St area is not so protected, and neither is the London Rd area, where major redevelopment is occurring.. Opportunities for both large-scale and small-scale work may occur, and should be grasped wherever possible, since major issues and fine detail still need to be resolved. It will be of some importance that adequate arrangements are made for the publication of any such work. Many earlier investigations still await adequate publication,

although a good start has been made with the recent completion of a draft account of all work up to 1990.

The investigation and publication of research into the historical sources has been fairly thorough, with the relatively recent publication of the Victoria County History volume (Reynolds 1962), although there remains plenty of scope for detailed analysis relating to specialised themes and specific locations.

The quantity of historical and archaeological research carried out on Staines has been sufficiently extensive to enable a number of relatively precise questions to be posed for future investigations to answer, and these are itemised below.

Specific issues

ROMAN

- Where was the bridge (or bridges) sited?
- Was there a military establishment which preceded the development of the town?
- What is the significance of the apparent contrast between the character of occupation in the earlier and the later Roman town?
- In particular, do the 'dark earth' deposits of the later Roman period mark a cessation of truly urban character?
- If so, how is the apparent expansion in the Late Roman period along London Road to be explained?
- Is there a proper cemetery (as opposed to the scattered evidence so far recovered) to be identified in the London Road/Kingston Road area?
- What was the character of Roman settlement in the Binbury area?

SAXON

- Can a genuine continuity from the Roman period be demonstrated?
- Can the suggestion of Saxon river defence works be substantiated?
- Can the existence, date of origin, and extent of later Saxon settlement around St Mary's church be identified?

MEDIEVAL

- What was the extent of the late 12th century planned town?
- Were regular plots laid out, and what was their size?
- What was the intensity and character of backlands use, as it may be defined from evidence already recovered, and can this lead to the definition of more specific issues for subsequent research to address?
- Was the medieval settlement along London Road a planned 'suburb'?
- What was the character of medieval and early post-medieval settlement around St Mary's church?

APPENDIX: SMR AND SITES LISTING

1 The town island

SMR No	Description
782,	TQ 03490 71570
2418	'near the Angel Inn'. Salvaged in 19th century. Bronze sword and Roman coins and pottery.
1275,	TQ 03600 71650
2426	Perrings. Excavation 1971. Roman and medieval pottery.
and	
2915	
2870-4	TQ 03480 71520 Johnson and Clarks. Excavations and monitoring 1970, 1979, 1985/6, Roman buildings and backlands features including river frontage. Mid-Saxon ditch. Medieval buildings - warehouse close to waterfront, possible jail foundations; late medieval buildings along High Street and Penny Lane. 12th century ditch below the metallings of Penny Lane waterfront features. Tudor pit with preserved shoes and wooden objects.
2875-9	TQ 03700 71600 Elmsleigh Centre. Excavations 1976/7. Roman buildings including one with colonnade along the highway. Roman pits, wells, boundary ditches. Medieval and post-medieval pits. Saxon ditch. Medieval ditches.
2880-6	TQ 03590 71520 Friends Burial Ground. Excavation 1975-6. Bronze Age foreshore and cow skeleton. Roman backlands features, buildings, enclosure, and river frontage. Saxon ditch. Medieval buildings and pits and ditches.
2887-9	TQ 03641 71549 Elmsleigh House. Excavation 1974/5. Roman building. Saxon ditches, slip-way and river bank. Medieval boundary ditches and pits. 16th century building.
2890-2	TQ 03370 71460 Day Centre. Monitoring and salvage 1978. Post-medieval, and possibly medieval, wharfage or revetment.
2893-4	TQ 03420 71530 County Sports site. Excavation 1981. Roman buildings including round houses. Late Roman ritual shaft. Abandonment by 3rd century AD. Re-occupation in late 11th century. Medieval buildings. 16th century building.
2895-7	TQ 03410 71500 Conservative Club. Excavation 1970. Roman and medieval foreshore features.
2898-	TQ 03390 71530
2900	Market Square. Monitoring and salvage 1975. Metallings of medieval and possibly Roman road.
2901	TQ 03370 71460 Town Hall Museum. Excavation 1979. Post-medieval foreshore.
2902-4	TQ 03730 71690 Mumford and Lobb. Excavation 1972. Roman and medieval pottery and features.
2905-6	TQ 03390 71530 Reeves and Halifax Building Society. Excavations 1971. Roman and medieval pottery. Post-medieval hearth or oven.
2907-9	TQ 03610 71600 Barclays Bank. Monitoring and salvage 1969. Roman buildings and pits. 1st century AD cavalry cheek-piece.
2916-7	TQ 003590 71580 National Westminster Bank. Excavation and monitoring 1976. Roman buildings and well. Medieval pits.
2918-20	TQ 03620 71450 Thames Street. Excavation of six trenches to water table. Roman road claimed, but all contexts have medieval or post-medieval pottery. Large (6m wide) ditch of 17th century or earlier date, and other medieval or post-medieval ditches.
2923	TQ 03338 71488 Medieval? Wharf, Post-medieval Buildings
3274-78	TQ 03360 71550

SMR Description
No

- Market Square site. Excavations and monitoring 1989. Buried channel of River Colne until 16th century. Roman ditch with leather-working debris. Saxon-Norman gully and piles. Medieval occupation. Late 12th century revetted bridge approach road. Foundations of the 16th century Bush Inn, Red Lion and Bush Tap.
- 3279-83 TQ 03650 71700
The Courtyard formerly the Prudential. Excavations 1989. Bronze Age ditch and burnt mound. Buried river channels of prehistoric, Roman and medieval date. Roman boundary ditch. Roman buildings and backlands features. Saxon pits. Medieval buildings, wells and pits. Medieval ditches and tethering ground. 16th century buildings. 17th century slaughter-house.
- 3284-7 TQ 03613 71603
Lloyds Bank formerly Percy Harrison's. Excavation 1989. Roman buildings and backlands features. Medieval buildings.
- A TQ 03373 71478
Town Hall. Excavation and monitoring 1993. Roman near-shore deposits and piles. Medieval near-shore deposits and pile rows. 16th century reclamation, road metalling and Market Hall foundations.
- B TQ 03524 71620
Abbey National Building Society. Monitoring and recording 1994. Late Roman tiled hearth. 18th century soakaway.
- C TQ 03626 71605
Lloyds Bank. Excavation 1992. Roman buildings and backland deposits.
- D TQ 03435 71578
Tesco's. Evaluation and excavation 1995. Finds include a late Bronze Age feature, and a complex stratigraphy of Roman and medieval deposits.
- E TQ 03526 71739
#Central Trading Estate. Evaluation and excavation 1996-7. Excavation on the town island showed a complex sequence of Roman and medieval deposits, comparable to the nearby PS. The area to the north was generally low lying with little settlement activity at any date, but a small topographic high within it yielded Bronze Age evidence.
- F TQ 03642 71538
West of the Elmsleigh Centre. Two trenches revealed little of direct archaeological interest, but undoubtedly lay off the gravel island on which the town lies.

2 Sites in the London Road area

SMR Description
No

- 768 TQ 04300 71700 Roman pottery
- 2913 TQ 04070 71670 Neolithic pit and pottery. Part excavation 1985. Neolithic pit, Late Bronze Age pottery
- 2914 TQ03950 71710 Roman ditches and levelled surface. Excavated features 2/3rd century 1981/82
- 2992 TQ 04550 71600 Roman coin c. 320
- 3119 TQ 04640 71700
- 3727 TQ0728 7308 London Silchester Roman Road
This road was the most important thoroughfare from London to the western parts of the Province. It left the city at Newgate, passed just to the north of the Thames at Brentford, through Hounslow, to enter the modern county of Surrey at East Bedfont. From East Bedfont to Staines the route is closely followed by the modern road. The road crossed the Thames at Staines, the name for the settlement then being Pontibus, "The Bridges". The position of the Bridges and the course of the road are not precisely known through Egham on the south side of the Thames. The road leaves the modern county just before the Bagshot-Bracknell road, at SU 9105 6486. The road alignment then alters to almost due west, which it follows rigidly for the remaining 17 miles to Silchester.
- 3794 TQ0399 7368 Roman pot sherds and possible Roman ditch
The excavation at the development site of Richmond House, Kingston Road, was carried out by the Spelthorne Archaeological Field Group. c.1992 No evidence of the Roman ditch, which had been found previously on a site on the other side of George street (see Antiq. 2914) was noted. A

SMR Description**No**

number of Roman pot sherds were found. Area B, was taken down to a gravel surface, where a few animal bones were found, similar to a feature found on the George Street site. The area was then excavated to the "silt" deposits, which produced a feature, which may have been the Roman ditch. The area had been partially excavated and work was to be continued at the site by J. Chapman and the Spelthorne Archaeological Group, until November 1992. The site was due to be destroyed by the development of an underground car park.

3800 TQ0399 7368 Prehistoric flints

A few Prehistoric flints were found in trench A of an excavation at the development site of Richmond House, Kingston Road. The excavation was carried out by the Spelthorne Archaeological Field Group c. 1992

3801 TQ 0399-7368

A late medieval roof tile and a few sherds of pottery were found during excavation of area B, at the development site at Richmond House, Kingston Road. The excavation was carried out by the Spelthorne Archaeological Field Group c.1992.

G TQ 04068 71777

18-32 London Road Staines). A small area excavation in April 1998 revealed a surprising quantity of archaeological material. There was a variety of prehistoric finds and one feature, a Bronze Age ditch. Two inhumations were present, one with evidence for hobnailed boots; evidence, perhaps, for use of the area as a cemetery in the early Roman period. A number of later Roman ditches must have lain just outside the nearby occupation sites. Settlement was renewed in the 12th century, and ditches, pits and postholes belong to the 12-14th centuries. There are no obvious historical records of this settlement, perhaps because occupation ceased before documentation becomes plentiful.

H TQ 04138 17816

42-54 London Road Staines Evidence for prehistoric, Roman and medieval settlement was revealed, together with a late Saxon execution cemetery (see *SyAS Bulletin* 331)

I TQ 04249 71856

Bus Garage Staines

J TQ 04005 71758

Old Police Station and 10-16 London Road (TQ 0399 7175). Excavation July and August 2000 (with follow up work in January 2001): The latest in a series of excavations in the London Road area of Staines revealed evidence of Roman ritual activity, including human inhumations and cremations, and an animal burial, and pits and ditches which may belong to later, 4th century, settlement. Interpretation is tentative as work is in progress, and no finds analysis has taken place. Continuation of work in 2000 in January: revealed evidence of Roman ritual activity, including human inhumations and cremations, and an animal burial, and pits and ditches which may belong to later, 4th century, settlement

K TQ 03979 71616

New Police Station Staines. Excavation in 1996 produced no Roman material, but did show a series of intercutting ditches of 13th to 16th century date. The ditches may have provided flood protection for this low lying area or have served a dual purpose of both roadside drainage and property boundaries alongside Kingston Road.

L TQ 03939 71783

Staines House, Staines House (158-162 High Street) (TQ 0399 7178). Evaluation in April and July 1998, was followed by an excavation in August and a watching brief in December. Two graves, one with two inhumations, were identified, both of probable Roman date. Three parallel Roman ditches seem to be plot boundaries at right angles to the adjacent London-Silchester Roman road. A number of 13th/14th century features were also identified, including probable plot boundary ditches.

3 Sites in the Binbury area**SMR Description****No**

2910 TQ 03230 71740

Roman building excavated features

SMR	Description
No	
2911	TQ 03230 71740 Saxon pottery
2912	TQ 03230 71740 Medieval ditch and pits
M	TQ 03214 71970 Duncroft, important 17 th century building and possible site of medieval manor house.

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FIGURES

- 1 Extensive Urban Survey of Surrey. **Top:** Staunes, showing the area of the parish and manor. The principal routeways, as shown on 18th century maps, are also shown. **Bottom:** parishes (about 1823) and drift geology.
- 2 The Rocque map of about 1754, showing the area of Staines manor.
- Fig 3 Sites and Monuments Records and other archaeological information for Staines: Town island, Binbury & London Road
- 4 Topography of the area near Staines, showing the location of the execution cemetery relative to some of the key features of the Post-Roman settlement pattern. The High Street lies on the town island, the principal focus of settlement in the Roman and medieval periods, but Binbury was of greater importance in the Saxon period. Only the areas of higher ground were free from seasonal flooding and suitable for settlement in antiquity.
- 5 Roman and Medieval Staines: street system and settlement components
- Fig 6 Staines: constraints map (AHAP and Conservation Area)