From Roman Villa to Saxo-Norman Village. An Archaeological Evaluation at the Cedars, Castor

Gavin Lucas BA, PhD
with contributions by
Chris Stevens, Lorraine Higbee, Natasha Dodwell, Cassian Hall and David Hall

Cambridge Archaeological Unit
University of Cambridge
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Contents

Introduction

Background to the Project

This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation in the orchard/back garden attached to Cedar House which lies at the centre of the historic village of Castor (TL 1239 9853). Situated within a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 93), the area around the Church of St. Kyneburgh is famous for its Roman and Saxon remains (fig.1). The fieldwork followed a geophysical survey (Challands 1997) and a desk-based assessment which included a summary of previous work in the area (Lucas 1997). The project was conducted on behalf of the Castor Parochial Church Council in advance of a proposed construction of a Church Benefice Centre and associated groundworks.

Geology and Topography

At *c.* 14m OD, the area is situated on a southward facing slope which runs down to the River Nene. Roman Terracing on three levels has altered the topography, although much of this has been subsequently smoothed out. The underlying geology is a succession of strata of the Great Oolite Series (Jurassic Period), the site of the Cedars lying on Blisworth Limestone.

Aims and Methods

The aim of the evaluation was to determine the nature and extent of archaeological remains within the proposed development area. Two trenches were de-turfed and the garden soil machine excavated to a depth of *c.* 0.8m; Trench 1 was *c.* 3.5m long, extending east from Trench 2 which was *c.* 21m across the length orchard (figs. 1 & 2). Both trenches were *c.* 1.5m wide. Stepped in within Trench 2, a deeper sondage was hand-excavated at the northern end to reach the lower deposits, and was *c.* 0.4m wide and extended for *c.* 3.5m. Within the trenches, all features were planned at 1:20 with sections at 1:10, were sample excavated, and fully recorded using the Unit-modified Museum of London system. Few features were appropriate for environmental sampling but some were taken from post-Roman pits/postholes.

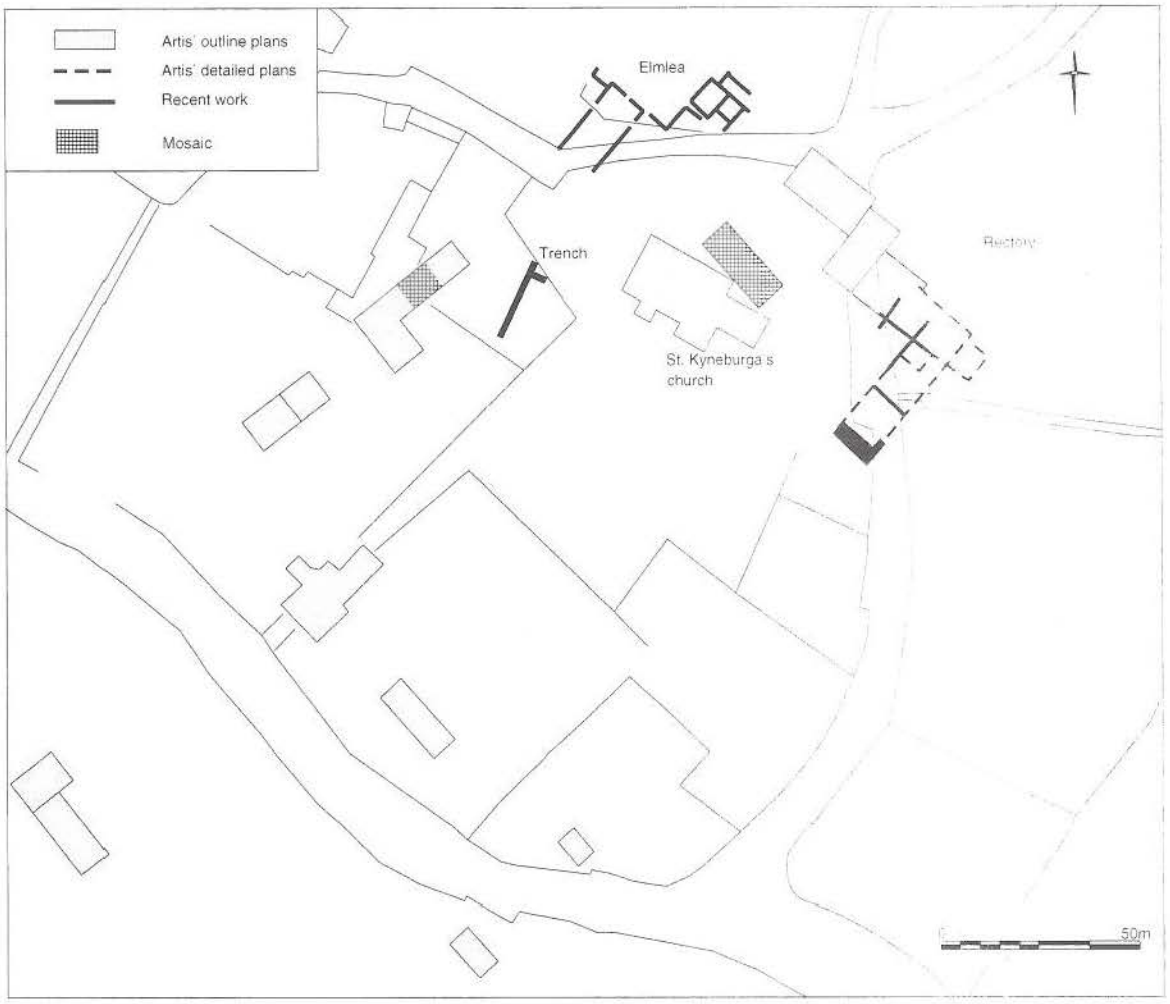


Figure 1 Location plan with known villa buildings

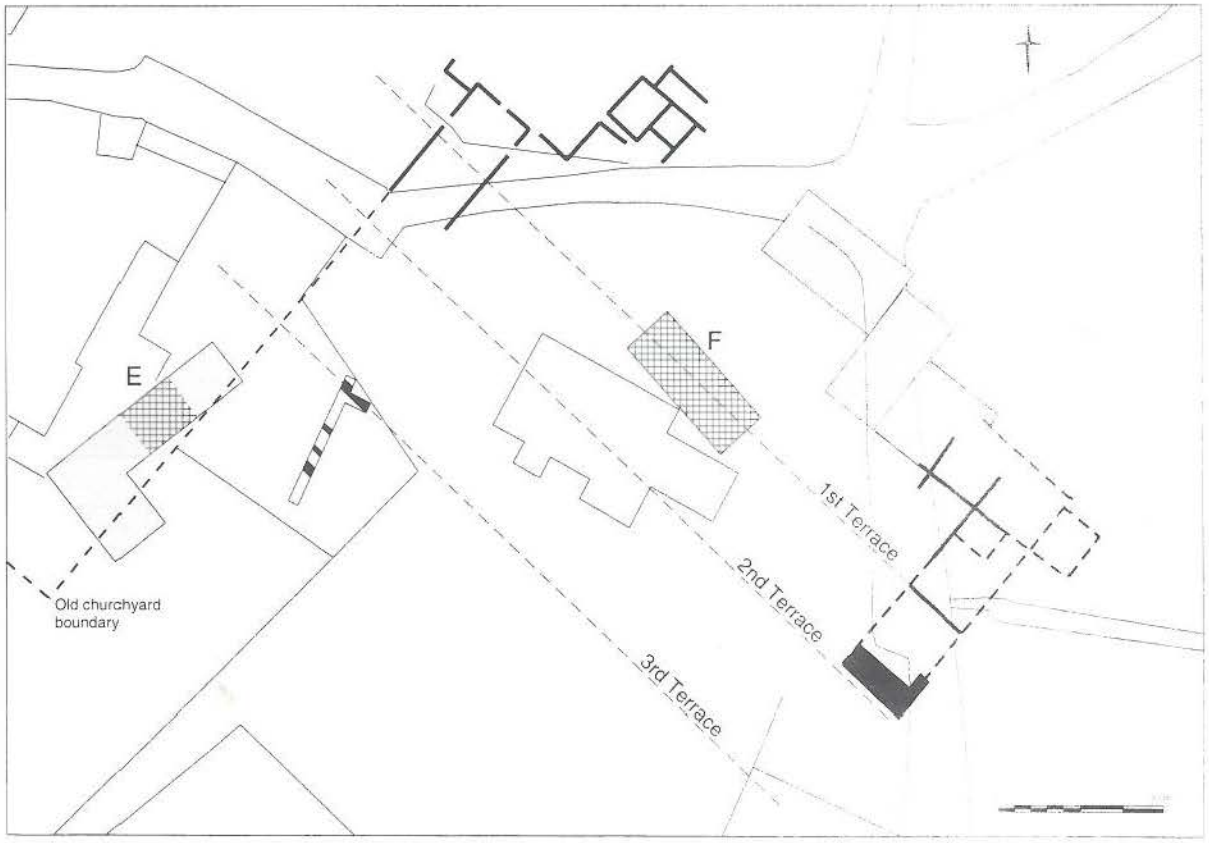


Figure 2 Detail

size 27
24 x 24

Excavation Results

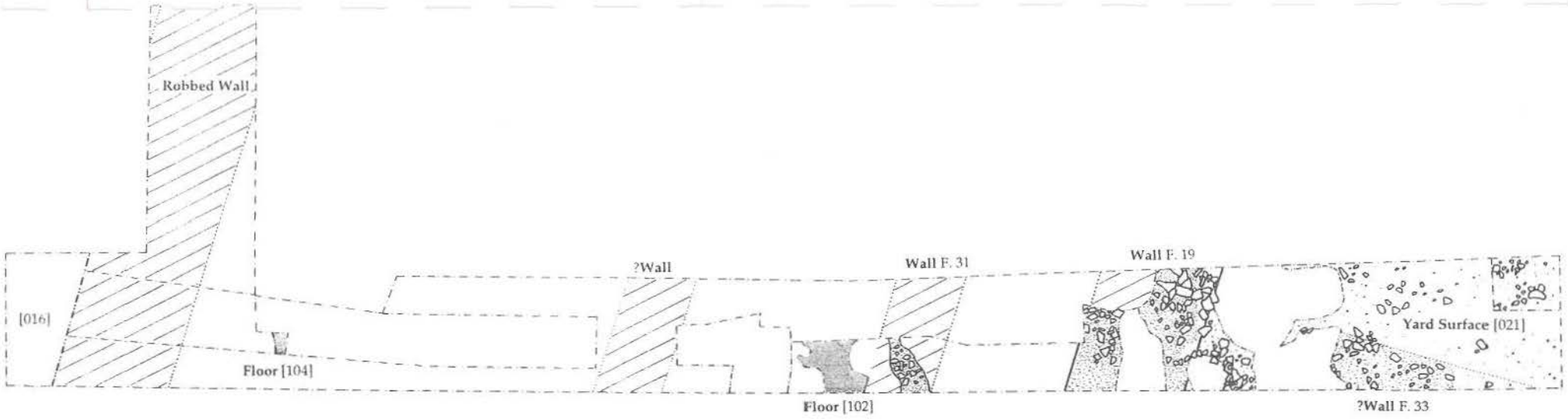
Phase I Late Roman (3rd-5th century AD)

The earliest phase of activity identified on the site was the remains of a building or buildings with exterior yard dating to the late Roman period. These appear to have been laid directly onto the natural limestone and sands geology which had probably been previously terraced. The chief evidence for this lies in the fact that the ground was clearly levelled to the natural subsoil during the construction of the building. This phase can be divided into two sub-phases: primary construction (**I.i**) and secondary/tertiary reflooring with timber post-settings (**I.ii**).

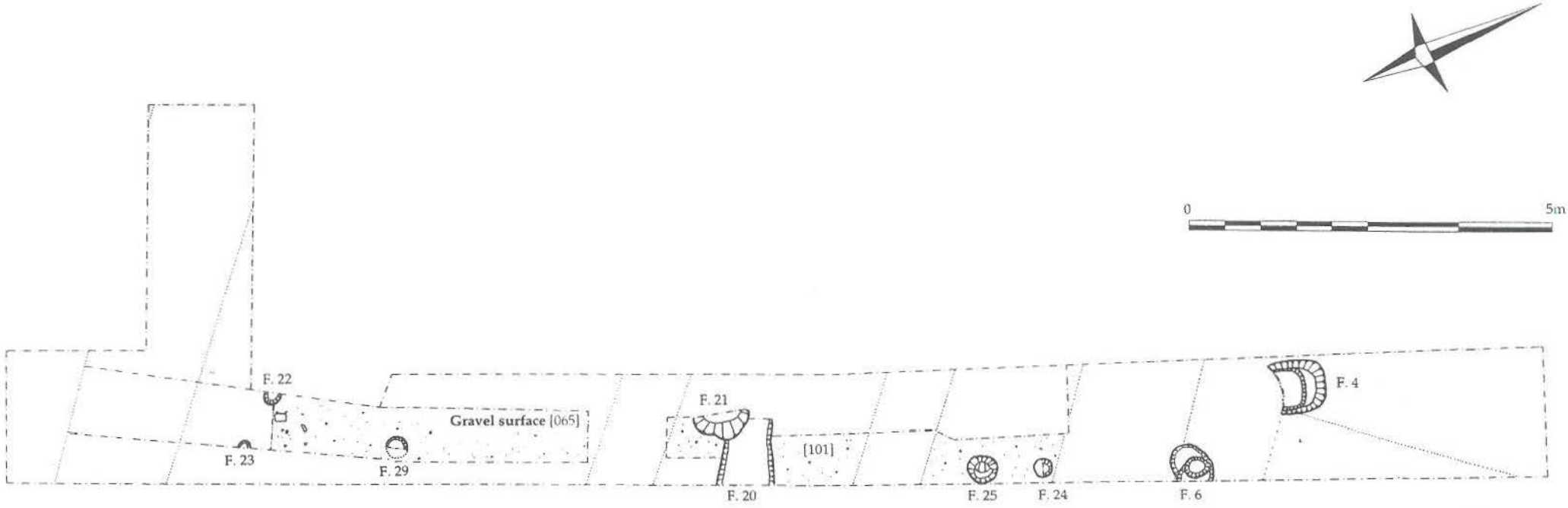
I.i *The Roman Building*

Remnants of at least two wall footings and primary floors survived at the base of Trench 2, along with a further two possible ghost walls indicated by robber trenches of a later date (fig.3). Two buildings - or at least two levels of a building - are represented. At the southern end of the trench a 1.8m wide base of a wall (**F. 19** [092]) survived, truncated in several places by later pitting but aligned northwest-southeast. The wall was constructed of irregularly coursed, unshaped limestone fragments (100-250mm in size) set in a hard gritty, pale yellowish-pink sandy mortar with occasional inclusions of limestone gravel. It does not seem to have been sunk with deep foundations, but rested on the natural subsoil only *c.* 0.2m below its associated floor surface. This floor (**F. 30** [102]) was patchy but survived in a substantial part in the middle of the trench at a thickness of 3mm and was composed of a very hard, slightly off-white mortar with a few gravel inclusions. Directly associated with this was the remants of another, smaller wall base (**F. 31** [103]) *c.* 2m north of, on the same alignment as and of a similar construction to F. 19 but only 0.41m wide and 0.09m deep.

At the northern end of Trench 2, another floor [104] was exposed, of similar composition and only 2mm thick; this lay however *c.* 0.5m higher and if part of the same surface must have been sloping quite substantially or stepped, probably beneath [052], where another wall may also be concealed (see section, fig.4). It certainly appears to have been associated with a wall to its north although this was subsequently robbed out in a later period (F. 1/F. 8, Phase III). Given the size of the robber trench, the former wall appears fairly substantial, *c.* 2m wide. Its foundations again were not deep, at most *c.* 0.2m below the level of the associated floor given the depth of the robber trench. However, on the north side, it may have backed up against the natural to a depth of at least 0.5m which was cut down as part of the general levelling. It thus doubled as a major terrace edge wall and the back wall of a building, the drop between the two levels being *c.* 0.5m. The size of the other, more speculative wall under [052] would be much smaller, less than 0.5m wide, making it comparable to F. 31.



Phase I



Phase II

Figure 3. Phase Plans (I & II)

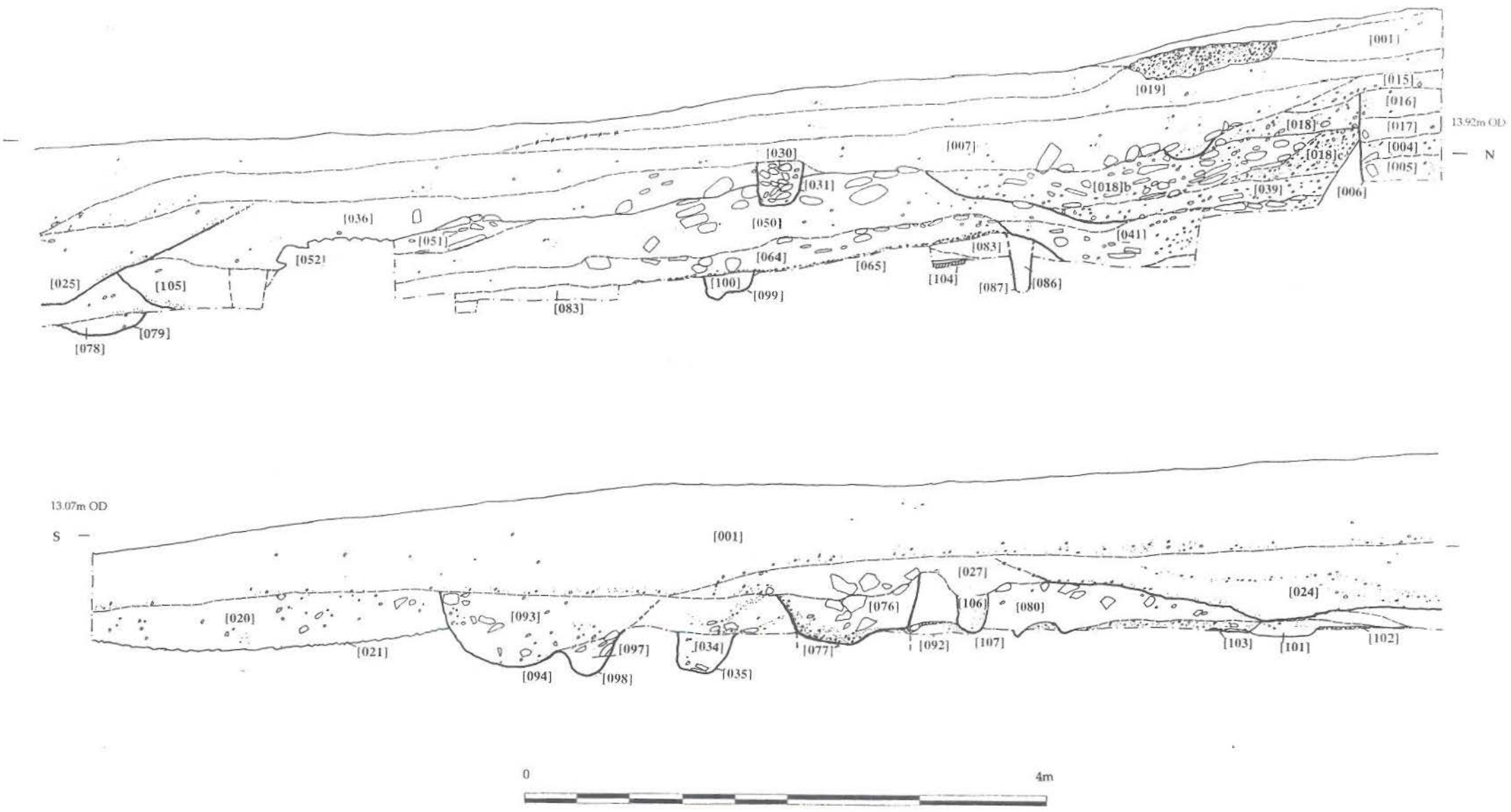


Figure 4. East Facing Section (Trench 2)

On the northern side of the robbed terrace wall, a series of four layers appear to have built up against it (from bottom to top):

Layer	*Description*	*Thickness*
[005]	mixed, crushed limestone and blue-grey clay	0.2m
[004]	mid brown sandy silt with occasional limestone fragments and tile	0.15m
[017]	mid brown sandy silt loam with occasional pebble, limestone fragments, bone and ?mortar	0.17m
[016]	mid brown sandy silt with limestone and mortar fragments, bone and blue-grey clay patches.	0.2m

These possibly represent cumulative build up, except for the basal [005] which is probably a levelling/terracing dump. Both this and [004] were associated with 2nd/3rd century Roman Pottery. At the very southern end of Trench 2 is a gravelled/cobbled surface [021], later re-used in Phase II (see below) and associated with 2nd/3rd century as well as early Saxon pottery. A linear spread of mortared limestone cobbles with pea grit on its surface (**F. 33**) may be the base of another wall; it lay at right-angles to F. 19 and if not a return, forms a T-junction with it.

I.ii *Re-surfacing of the Building*

A second phase of the building, at least at the northern end, is marked by a raising of the floor level, but still within the confines of the robbed wall. Sealing the primary mortared floor [104] was a make-up layer 100-180mm thick and extending for at least 4.4m down the trench with an associated surface of similar mortar composition but much more patchy [083]. The main make-up deposit consisted of a pale beige-orange brown slightly clayey silt with inclusions of brick/tile, gravel and limestone fragments (upto 100x150x60mm).

Phase II Early Saxon (5th-mid 7th century AD)

II.i *Re-occupation*

Associated with Early Saxon material, a group of features appear to indicate re-use of the Roman building, utilising the Roman surfaces but with possibly some levelling of the walls, in particular F. 19 and F. 31 (fig.3). The major terrace edge/building wall at the north was however, probably still standing. Over the floor at the southern end was [101], a 3-10mm thick layer of pale orange-brown slightly silty sand with inclusions of mortar and gravel, which probably represents an demolition/construction layer. Several postholes and a bedding trench indicate a possible timber structure; **F. 21** was a pit/large posthole with a well-defined circular cut [082], steep, slightly concave sides and rounded base, 0.84m in diameter and 0.43m deep. It was filled by a pale

to mid grey brown firm silt with moderate pebbles, bone, tesserae and tile [081]. Cutting this was a linear slot **F. 20** running northwest-southeast with near vertical sides and a flat base, 0.67m wide and 0.15m deep [079]. This may be a bedding trench for a timber sill beam which has subsequently rotted; the fill was a pale brown quite loose silt with occasional bone, tile, Roman and early Saxon pottery, *opus signinum* floor fragments and small-medium sized pebbles [078]. To the south of this lay two postholes, **F. 24** and **F. 25**, both filled by a compact mid-dark grey brown sandy silt with occasional to moderate gravel and pea grit; the larger of the two (F. 25) also had limestone fragments and charcoal flecks near the top as well as a decorated sherd of early Saxon pottery.

Posthole	*cut*	*fill*	*diameter (m)*	*depth (m)*
F. 24	[089]	[088]	0.21	0.17
F. 25	[091]	[090]	0.40	0.22

At the northern end of the trench, cutting through the floor [083], were three postholes, **F. 22**, **F. 23** and **F. 29**. All shared a similar fill of a mid grey-brown clay silt with occasional gravel inclusions, but while two were fairly shallow (F. 22 and F. 29), one (F. 23) was much deeper. This posthole was also that closest to the robbed wall and may have served a major structural function.

Posthole	*cut*	*fill*	*diameter (m)*	*depth (m)*
F. 22	[084]	[085]	0.25	0.11
F. 23	[086]	[087]	0.16	0.45
F. 29	[099]	[100]	0.32	0.18

Probably closely contemporary with these post-settings is a re-surfacing of the floor but with a much coarser mid brown silty gravel layer [065], associated with early Saxon pottery and *c.* 60mm thick at the north, thinning out to the south.

Given the small area of investigation, no pattern could be discerned in the postholes layout but they probably represent post-settings of a timber structure set within the shell of the Roman masonry building. To the south of the main Roman wall F. 19 was a gravelled/cobbled surface [021], which was probably an external area. It consisted of a compacted layer of limestone rubble, gravel and tile set in a mottled mid-dark brown silty clay loam. While probably contemporary with the building, it continued in use throughout its lifetime and into the early Saxon period as revealed by the pottery retrieved from its upper surface. Two large oval/sub-rectangular postholes cut through it, **F. 4** and **F. 6**; both had vertical sides and flat bases and were filled by a mid-dark brownish grey loose silt with occasional-moderate small-medium sized fragments of limestone as well as early Saxon pottery, bone and tile.

Posthole	*cut*	*fill*	*diameter (m)*	*depth (m)*
F. 4	[029]	[028]	0.70x0.60	0.65
F. 6	[035]	[034]	0.72x0.51	0.49

II.ii *Abandonment*

Sealing the gravelled floor at the northern end was a *c.* 0.16m thick deposit [064], thinning out to the south; it comprised a mid-pale orange brown silt with moderate amounts of limestone rubble and contained both Roman and early Saxon pottery. It is probably contemporary with [080] which sealed the features to the south; this was a possible slopewash layer *c.* 0.3m thick, consisting of a firm pale-mid grey brown sandy silt with occasional small pebbles and finds including Roman and early Saxon pottery, bone, tesserae and tile.

Phase III Middle Saxon (mid 7th-mid 9th century)

After the abandonment in the early Saxon period, there was a major reworking of the site. This appears to consist of a robbing of the back terrace/building wall acompanied by some subsequent infilling to stabilise the terrace edge (fig.5). This putative northern wall which had accumulated some demolition material up against its southern side was robbed completely. The robber trench for this is ambiguous; the southern, inner side was recorded as **F. 8** [042] and sloped to a depth of 0.35m displaying gently sloping sides and a rounded base; the northern edge, given the dangerous depth of the trench, was never fully exposed but it could in fact be **F. 1** [006], originally interpreted as cutting the other way and part of another robber cut continuing beyond the limit of excavation. Yet in retrospect, given that the cut was vertical, that natural was never reached and its fill consisted of a series of very horizontally bedded layers, F. 1 may in fact be the other side of F. 8 (its 'fill' now being layers abutting the robbed wall). This makes the robber trench a northwest-southeast cut *c.* 2m wide and *c.* 0.35m-1.35m deep; given the lack of weathering along this back edge, the trench was probably backfilled fairly rapidly, with the material compactly dumped against the exposed section (see fig.4).

The lowest layer of this backfilling was a mid greenish brown silty sand with frequent inclusions of Roman and Middle Saxon pottery, tesserae, tile, a coin, bone, oyster shell and limestone fragments [041]. The next, [039], was a pale-mid brown loose sand and gravel with limestone fragments and large quantities of finds including Roman and Middle Saxon pottery, bone, tile, painted plaster fragments, tesserae, oyster shell and charcoal. Overlying this was a series of three layers [018a-c] of similar composition, a pale brown gravelly sand with limestone. Probably associated with these were the series of layers excavated in Trench 1 (from bottom to top):

Layer	*Description*	*Thickness*
[048]	pale-mid brown coarse sand with occasional pebbles	unknown
[047]	mid brown silty sand with occasional gravel	0.11m
[044]	pale-mid grey brown fairly loose silt with frequent medium-large sized limestone fragments	0.15m

[046]	mid-dark grey brown gritty silt with frequent gravel and pea grit	0.14m
[043]	pale-mid grey brown silt with occasional small-medium sized pebbles	0.28m
[045]	mid-dark grey brown silt with moderate small-medium sized limestone fragments	0.21m

These layers contained both Roman and Middle Saxon pottery but also some later 13th century sherds, which are probably intrusive. Contemporary with the backfilling of F. 1/F. 8 is layer [050] 0.5-0.3m thick and lensing into the upper fills of the robber trench. This was a mid brown clayey silt with rare limestone fragments (up to 150x100x60mm) and occasional smaller pebbles and gravel but with the same range of inclusions. It probably represents a widespread infilling continuous with [018a-b] and extends down as far as [051/052]. These are rubble deposits overlying [050] and mask what may be another robber cut [105] which was only seen in section (see fig.4). If so it, it adds support to the fact that the Roman floors at the north and southern ends of Trench 2 were not continuous but separated by a wall with the floor levels stepped down by *c.* 0.5m.

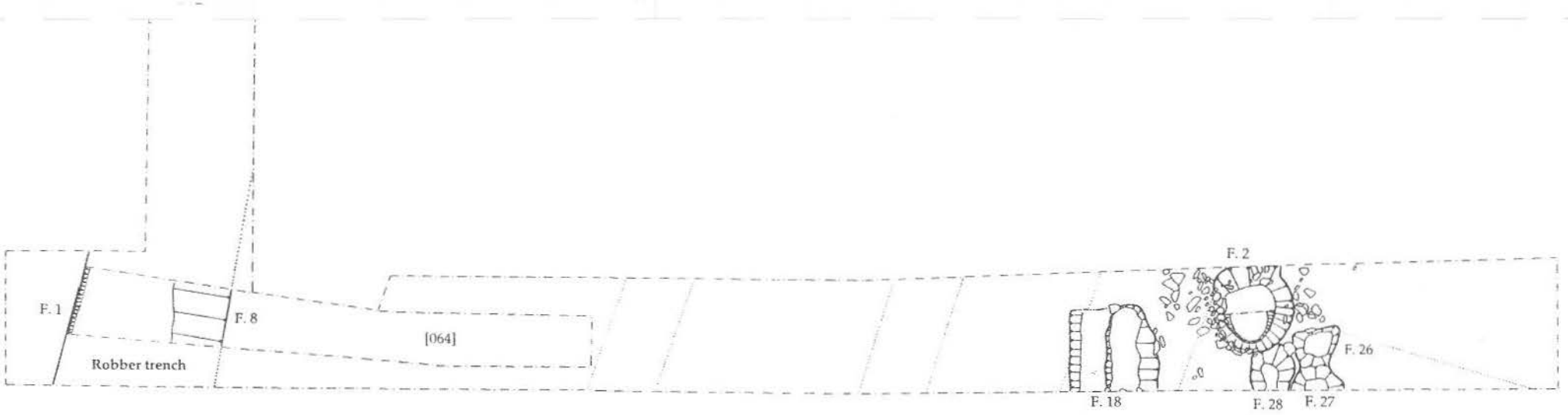
At the southern end of the trench was a cluster of pits (**F. 2, F. 18, F. 26, F. 27, F. 28**) dug through the Roman cobbled surface [021] and wall F. 19, possibly to retrieve or prospect for more stone although little must have actually been recovered. Most appear to be sub-circular with steep sides and a flat base and have been backfilled fairly rapidly after digging with a mid-dark grey brown sandy clay silt with frequent pea grit, moderate gravel and occasional larger fragments of limestone (up to 400x300x200mm) as well as occasional amounts of tile, bone and Roman, early, middle and late Saxon pottery:

Pit	*cut*	*fill*	*diameter (m)*	*depth (m)*
F. 2	[014]	[013/012]	1.30x1.10	0.55
F. 18	[077]	[076]	1.60x1.10+	0.50
F. 26	[094]	[093]	0.75x0.33	0.55
F. 27	[096]	[095]	0.65x0.51	0.55
F. 28	[098]	[097]	0.60x0.60+	0.55

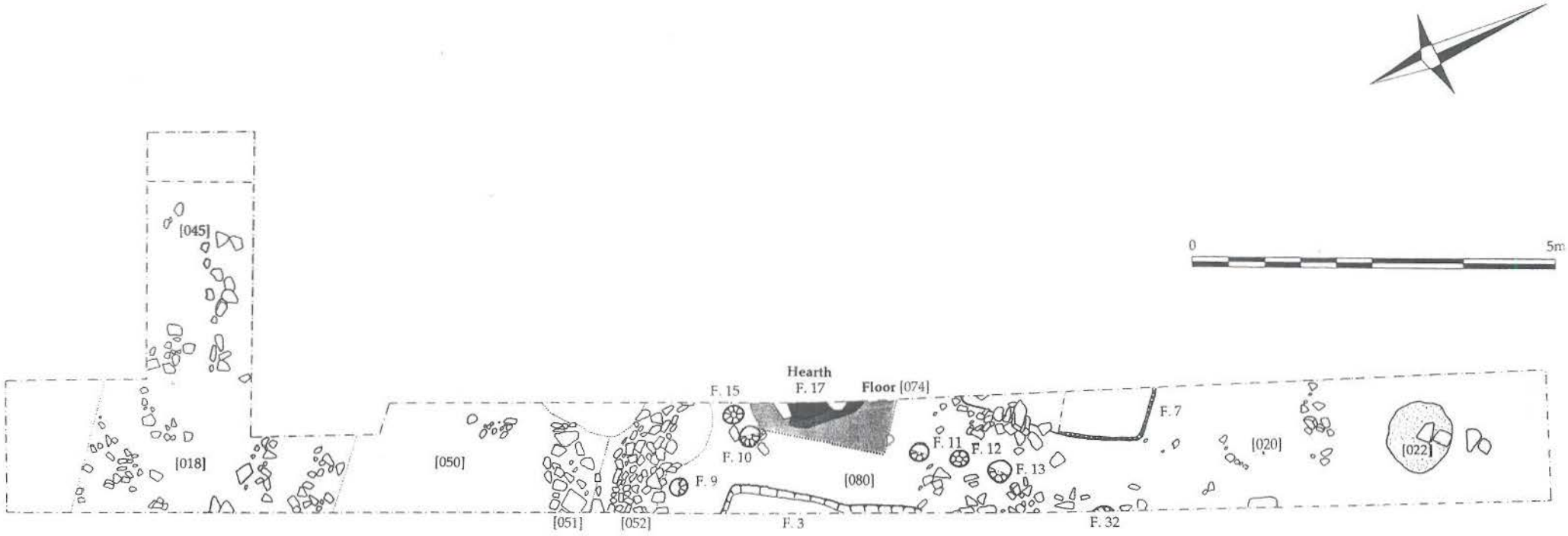
Phase IV Late Saxon-Saxo-Norman (mid 9th-13th century)

IV.i *Occupation*

The robbing and levelling operations were followed by re-occupation of the southern half of the site with the remains of a substantial timber building with associated floor and hearth surviving *in situ* (fig.5). A group of four postholes (**F. 11, F. 12, F. 13 & F. 15**) ran northeast-southwest, at right angles to the Roman terracing/buildings thus continuing the same alignment. All were of similar dimensions and shape with circular cuts and steeply sloping sides tapering to a narrower rounded base; all were filled by a fairly loose mid-dark grey brown silt with (variously) occasional fragments of limestone, tile, bone,



Phase III



Phase IV

Figure 5. Phase Plans (III & IV)

charcoal, daub and pebbles. Only one (F. 15) contained pottery which dated from the 9th-12th century.

Posthole	*cut*	*fill*	*diameter (m)*	*depth (m)*
F. 11	[058]	[057]	0.29	0.26
F. 12	[060]	[059]	0.29	0.26
F. 13	[063]	[062]	0.32	0.36
F. 15	[033]	[032]	0.32	0.39

A further posthole (**F. 32**) seen in section and cut from the same level, also falls on this alignment, *c.* 2m south of F. 13. It is 0.26m in diameter and 0.32m deep [107] filled by a loose mottled orange brown silty sand with occasional pea grit [106]. In addition two further postholes were excavated; **F. 10** lay beside F. 15 and may be a later post replacement and it had a similar fill [053] and shape but much deeper ([054] 0.39m in diameter, 0.63m deep). **F. 9** lay off this line to the west but again had the same fill [055] and shape [056] (0.28m in diameter, 0.25m deep).

While F. 11-13 were equally spaced *c.* 0.15m apart, F. 15 though on the same line, lay on the other side of a floor surface [074]. The edge was traceable as a distinct line running on the same alignment as the postholes and compacted into the top of [080] to a depth of *c.* 90mm. The floor/surface extended for 1.8m northeast-southwest (filling the gap between postholes F. 11 and F. 15) and at least 0.9m northwest-southeast and consisted of a pale brown silty sand with occasional small pebbles. In the middle of this floor and continuing into the section was a hearth **F. 17**; [073] represents the burnt floor [074], turned a dark reddish hue, while over this lay a friable, very pale grey ashy deposit 10-30mm thick [072], probably the hearth rake-out. Collapsed over this were patches of the hearth sides, similar in composition to the floor but burnt orange red [070] and black [071] and associated with an ashlar limestone block (290x140x10mm) burnt on one side [075].

Taken together, the postholes, floor and hearth reveal a building in a very good state preservation. It is unlikely the floor delimits the size of the building as the postholes extend well beyond it; rather it suggests that within the building, the area around the hearth received special treatment. A more ambiguous issue however is whether the main axis of the building runs (approximately) north-south or east-west; given the limited area of excavation, this cannot be resolved, but if east-west, then it suggests a building *c.* 5.5 m wide.

Two pits to the west and south of the building respect its position and alignment suggesting they are close contemporaries. **F. 3** was a sub-rectangular cut *c.* 2.8m long and at least 0.4m wide, which just emerged from the limit of excavation to a depth of *c.* 0.2m [025]. It was filled by a dark grey sandy silt with occasional fragments of limestone, tile, bone and a mixture of Roman, Saxon and 12th-13th century pottery [024]. **F. 7** was also sub-rectangular, *c.* 2m long and at least 0.8m wide but much more substantial extending to a depth of 1.15m with vertical sides and a flat base [038]. It was

filled by a compact, mid-dark grey brown sandy clay silt with moderate large fragments of limestone and occasional tile, as well as frequent redeposited Roman and 12th-13th century pottery and bone [037]; snail shells were also in some number in the lower part of the pit. Environmental evidence from the lower fill of this feature suggests it contained much food refuse including cereals, nuts, legumes, and rotting fish (Stevens, Appendix 1), pointing to the backfill as being general domestic rubbish.

Settling into the top of this backfill was [040], a compact-friable pale yellow brown silty sand, very mottled with flecks/small fragments of mortar and larger fragments of limestone. This mortar-rich fill may be associated with a spread of mortar [022] to the south which could be the remains of an *in situ* surface as it also had two large limestone slabs and a Roman tile laid on bed. [022] was a sub-circular patch *c.* 1.0x0.9m in size and 50mm thick composed of fragmented mortar (*c.* 80%) and a dark brown loamy clay silt. Beneath it was a thin layer of the same soil matrix [023] associated with Roman, Saxon and Saxo-Norman pottery. This probably therefore reflects a surface contemporary with the timber building, representing the re-use of the Roman gravelled/cobbled surface [021] beneath.

IV.ii *Abandonment*

Sealing the building and spreading to the north was a dump of burnt material, [026], consisting of a dark grey ashy sandy silt with frequent burnt daub fragments along with the occasional fragment of limestone, tile, Roman, Saxon and 12th-13th century pottery and bone as well as oyster shell. This probably represents a partial demolition layer signalling the abandonment/collapse of the structure. The basal layers of the Garden soil are also probably of a similar date but were insufficiently distinct from the upper profile and have probably been subject to some mixing as they contain later pottery (see Phase IV).

Phase V Medieval-Post-Medieval (13th-20th century)

The final phase covers a long period but is here grouped together because in effect the site does not appear to have undergone any definite change in use since the 13th century. The only possible exception is as the margins of the early churchyard before it was redefined by the present garden wall, but this is equivocal. As a possibility however, it is subdivided from the main use of the site as a garden plot.

V.i *Churchyard*

Not long after the abandonment of the timber building, a grave **F. 14** was cut aligned northwest-southeast (possibly with the present church), the head

pointing northwest. On the surface it was 0.47m wide and extended into the trench by 0.49m [067]; the fill [066] was a moderately firm mid-dark grey brown silt with occasional charcoal flecks and small pebbles with some fragments of burnt daub as well as 12th-13th century pottery. This feature was not excavated but an upper arm (left humerus) and part of a neck and jaw were exposed, the latter being identified as belonging to an old, arthritic (probable) man (N. Dodwell, Appendix 3).

Adjacent to the grave and cut from about the same level was a posthole **F. 16**; this also cut through the hearth F. 17 associated with the timber building of phase III. It had a well defined circular cut 0.32m in diameter and steep/near vertical sides breaking onto a flat base at a depth of 0.36m [069]. It was filled by [068], a mid brown moderately loose silt with several large fragments of limestone and occasional other finds of pottery, bone, tile and tesserae.

It is difficult to be certain what the single grave located signifies; its alignment and proximity to the present churchyard boundary (less than 15m to the east) might suggest that the original/earlier churchyard was more extensive and has subsequently shrunk. If so, the site may hold more burials, particularly to the east of the trench; alternatively, this could be an external burial and therefore an isolated occurrence. Early map evidence showing the boundaries of the Cedars/churchyard tends to support the former interpretation however (see below).

V.ii *Garden*

The subsequent activity on the site is marked solely by a thick layer of rich garden soil, a dark brown silty loam, with occasional-moderate inclusions of gravel, pottery (of all dates), tile, bone and limestone fragments among other less common finds. In general, the lower part had much greater inclusions, especially large fragments of limestone (some ashlared) which mark the general abandonment of the site as settlement.

lower cleaning layers	*upper cleaning layers*
[020] [023] [027] [036] [003] [015]	[011] [010] [009] [008] [007] [019] [045] [002] [001]

The great depth of garden soil covering the area (*c.* 0.8m) is possibly the result of importation rather than build-up; however, if the churchyard did extend into the Cedars, then this may have contributed to its mass. Certainly more human bone was found in the garden soil [036] (N. Dodwell, Appendix 3).

Few later features occurred in this garden soil except a very recent gravel path and an earlier drain cut. The path follows the line of the present back/northern wall and kerbstones, also located in the geophysical survey where it forms part of a rectilinear circuit around the back garden (Challands 1997). The drain **F. 5** is a little older but follows the same line; aligned

northwest-southeast, it cuts through the middle of the garden soil [036] to a depth of 0.4m and is 0.5m wide [030]. Within this cut were a jumble of loosely set limestone fragments (up to 200x200x70mm), some upright but mostly collapsed [031]. This feature too can be discerned on the geophysical plot and may return along the eastern wall; as such, it is therefore probably contemporary with the garden walls, and being set back *c.* 6m, may relate to horticultural drainage/irrigation.

The upstanding garden walls themselves were also visually assessed. The northern wall runs for *c.*32m along the back of the garden before turning north where it stops at the junction with Church Hill road. It stands to a height of 2.9m and is constructed of weathered ashlar limestone blocks in two sizes, the larger (A) generally being much less weathered.

Size	*length*	*thickness*	*breadth*
A	250-350mm	110-140mm	unknown
B	80-300mm	50-50mm	unknown

The bonding varies; the basal courses are of the larger size A blocks, then there are three courses of size B followed by one course of size A; in places, this sequence of ABBB is repeated but most of the upper coursing is of size B blocks with some identifiable rebuilds. The top was capped by irregular fragments of limestone laid on end. The cornerstones or quoins of the wall where it turns north are all the larger limestone blocks with one near the base having the carved initials WB in Roman typeface. The mortar consists of a hard, pink sandy material with crushed tile and ?clinker inclusions.

The eastern garden wall runs all the way down to The Peterborough Road A47 (*c.* 112m), although only that section in back garden of the Cedars was examined and it may not be a continuous build. The section investigated stood to a height of 2.1m and was *c.* 0.35m wide; it was constructed of the same material as the northern wall and at the northeast corner, the lower courses appear to emulate it although the wall abuts rather than is bonded into it. Most of the wall is coursed in small blocks of limestone (200-350mm long by 60-100mm thick) set in a friable pink/buff-yellow sandy mortar with occasional inclusions of chalk and /clinker. The top was capped by a header course of grey engineering bricks laid on bed.

Clearly the two walls have been subject to rebuilding but the most signifcant aspect is however, that the original coursing pattern on the northern wall of three small to one large limestone blocks can also be seen the construction of the south front of the Cedars house. This probably dates to *c.* 1800 (RCHM 1969: 67), and is a strong piece of evidence for dating the garden walls. Additional confirmation of a late date also comes from the foundations of the back northern wall which were investigated in a small 0.2m wide slot. This revealed that the foundation cut for the wall was only 0.4m deep, probably cut from the same level as the drain F. 5 if not even higher; it was backfilled with a compact pale yellow-brown silty clay with frequent sand and

occasional pea grit and larger pebbles, and the lowest course of the wall only extends 0.25m into this and below the present surface. Further cartographic information also supports a late date (see below).

Discussion

The Roman Building

The remains of floors and walls uncovered at the Cedars undoubtedly belong to a substantial building, the main outer walls being nearly 2m thick; moreover, its association is clearly with the villa complex known since the early nineteenth century. Originally described by Artis as a *Praetorium*, (the residence of a very high ranking Roman official, a *praetor*), the villa certainly covers a large area (*c.* 3.75 ha) and no doubt served a very wealthy and high status individual or family (Mackreth 1984). Artis conducted many large scale excavations in and around Castor which were published in 1828 as a series of plates (without text) entitled *The Durobrivae of Antoninus*. and these included an L-shaped building with mosaic floor in the Cedars (Building E, plates XII-XIII)[1]. His plan shows it lying to the southwest of the trench and partially under the south front of the Cedars house (see fig.2); subsequent work has shown that the alignment of his complex is slightly off and should be turned a little to the northwest/southeast. The present evaluation confirms this re-alignment also adding yet another piece to the plan. It also confirmed the line of the third terrace, previously unknown but postulated to run along the old churchyard boundary (Mackreth 1984: 22).

Given the proximity of Artis' building E to the present structure, and correcting for the new alignment, there is strong grounds for arguing that the two were connected, the present structure perhaps forming a northern return wing for Artis' building. However, the limited nature of the evidence and the fact that such a large complex may have had more than one phase of construction (Green *et al.* 1988; but *cf.* Wild 1978: 69), means that the development of this important site is still more or less unknown. All we can do, for the present, is attempt to understand a little further what the present building was used for and how this might relate to Artis' building E.

The building exposed in the evaluation trench lies northwest-southeast and is *c.* 15m wide as defined by F. 19 and the robbed northern wall. In between, two internal partition walls run along the same axis, leaving two narrow corridors (1.5m and 2.5 wide) to the south and a larger room (5.5m wide) at the

[1]William Le Queux who lived at the Cedars at one point, also excavated there in 1902 but where exactly is unknown. It is described as lying in the southern part of the lawn where he found an excellently preserved red tiled floor and part of a building (Holmes 1904). This could be either the building found by Artis south of E (unlettered), the 'bathhouse', or yet another previously unrecorded one.

northern end, which is also raised 0.5m higher. In addition, a possible wall (F. 33) may run south returning from or conjoining with F. 19; to the east of this was an exterior cobbled/gravelled surface [021], but if F. 33 is indeed another wall, then it must certainly link up with the eastern wall of Artis' building. When all these elements are placed together with his plan, it produces a very different picture, suggesing that the famous mosaic building may be part of a much larger structure (fig. 2).

The presence of tesserae and painted plaster in post-Roman robbing contexts and the re-use of the building - despite none of these things being found *in situ* - strongly suggests that the rooms once possessed highly elaborate interiors comparable to that found by Artis in his building E with tesselated floors and painted walls and ceilings (Hall, Appendix 5). It argues for the building being one of quite high status within the villa complex itself - not associated with an ancillary or service function but rather having an important, possibly public use. The lesser presence of materials associated with hypocaust system (box tile, bessalis), may be incidental, but the possibility that some of the building may have had raised floors for underfloor heating also cannot be totally discounted, which would make the plain mortared floors recovered at the Cedars the hypocaust floor and not the main floor.

Dating the structure is difficult since there were no firmly sealed deposits beneath it nor any pottery associated with its construction. Nonetheless, associated with the make-up of the yard [021] was a late 2nd/early-mid 3rd century vessel form while with the lower layers abutting the robbed northern wall, a small group of pottery occurred which could suggest a late 2nd century date (Lucas, Appendix 4). These are potentially significant because they may push the founding of the villa complex back into the late 2nd century rather than starting in the mid-3rd has been previously suggested (Mackreth 1984). Another building excavated in the 1950s and found to the southeast has been tentatively dated to earlier 2nd century (Green *et al.* 1988, Site III) which adds to this complexity. One possibility is that the villa might actually move upslope through time as it expands/develops, either gradually or with a major rebuild in the mid-3rd century. However, the evidence is not strong enough to endorse this view which only further work can resolve. The end of the villa is similarly hard to fix but the presence of redeposited 4th century pottery in post-Roman features confirms its continued use through to the end of the Roman period; more interesting is the early Saxon re-occupation which suggests even greater continuity than previously thought (see below).

Early Saxon occupation

The re-use of the Roman building in the early Saxon period is demonstrative of continuity; there is no evidence of major destruction or demolition at this point, rather the shell of the building may have been incoporated within or

remodelled with a timber post structure. No evidence for a fire causing the demise of the villa was identified at this site (*cf.* Wild 1978: 69), indeed, the very converse appears to be the case. Nonetheless, we cannot know how 5th-mid-7th century occupation of one part of the Roman complex fits in with the rest of the site; most other Saxon occupation in Castor has been attributed to Middle Saxon date - *Grubenhauser* and a cess-pit at Elmlea (Dallas 1973; Green *et al.* 1988), and other sunken floored buildings and pits south of the Churchyard (Green *et al.* 1988; Dallas 1973: 17; RCHM 1969: 26). However, some of the pottery from these may be earlier than cited (i.e. handmade shelly ware; see Hall, this report, Appendix 6), indeed 5th century pottery was recovered but described as residual. At the latter site, the structures were also associated with a clearance of the demolition material infilling the Roman building down to its floor level which might suggest reuse of the building as interpreted in the present site, although this is not explicitly stated in the text (Green *et al.* 1988: 125).

Middle Saxon robbing

All the features associated with Middle Saxon activity on the site appear to be related to wall/stone robbing, unlike the evidence found elsewhere in Castor of this date (see above). The broad contemporaneity of this with the alleged foundation of the nunnery of St. Kyneburgha (or Cyneburh) may not be coincidental and possibly the stone was being taken for this purpose, perhaps however, more for the construction of a church rather than the nunnery as a whole. Yet it must be re-iterated that no archaeological evidence exists for the nunnery (or a Saxon church); it entered written records through John of Tynemouth, a 14th century monk who collated earlier material on English saints (see Sparke 1723: 33). In it, mention is made of the place called *Dormundescastre*, renamed *Kyneburgecastrum*, where a monastery was founded ('ubi monasterio aedificato') by St. Kyneburga, daughter of the (heathen) King Penda (Peada) of Mercia and sister of Wulfhere, Penda's successor (Dallas 1973; Gough 1963: 99). A date of 669 AD has also been given for this foundation although it is not referenced (see Trollope 1873: 127). Certainly, a date before AD 654 (i.e. Penda's death) is unlikley (Dallas 1973).

Early monastic foundations (late 6th-8th century) were almost always double houses, i.e. communities of men and women living under a monastic rule and presided over by an Abbot/Abbess (Gilchrist 1994: 25). The 'nunnery' of St. Kyneburgha was therefore probably mixed in the sense that both Christian men and women were living there under St. Kyneburgha, although the extent to which they actually lived together or were separate is not known. The Middle Saxon structures so far recovered at the Cedars are indicative of nothing extraordinary beyond, perhaps, the fact that they extend over the same area as the villa (Dallas 1973: 17; Green *et al.* 1988: 144). Nevertheless, that large parts of Roman walls were still standing in Artis' day must be considered in relation to earlier uses of the villa complex, and if buildings were being re-used in early Saxon times, the possibility must be conceived

that the same practice could have occurred in the Middle Saxon period. The nunnery need not have been a planned complex comparable to later monastic foundations but simply a Christian retreat/settlement. At present, unfortunately, we have too little evidence of *any* settlement pattern for this period, monastic or otherwise, to understand the post-Roman status of the villa site.

Late Saxon/Saxo-Norman occupation and subsequent use

The first firm evidence of re-occupation at the Cedars recurs in the late Saxon/Saxo-Norman period and indeed this may have followed on fairly soon after the robbing. The re-occupation here is in the form of a substantial timber building with prepared floor and hearth dating to sometime after the mid-9th century and probably no later than the 11th century. It is especially significant because occupation of such date has not been previously found in Castor and continuity has only been inferred from chance finds (Green *et al.* 1988: 145). The mid-9th century (*c.* 870 AD) ostensibly saw Viking raids in the area which destroyed the nunnery according to Hugh Candidus, a 12th century monk from Peterborough (Mellows 1949: 50-51), but this is not very reliable and there is certainly no evidence from this site to suggest any destructive activity. However, the field system at Castor was recorded in the Doomsday survey as duodecimal, that is based on 12 ploughlands rather than the usual 5 or 10, which has been taken to suggest Scandinavian influence (Le Queux 1906). Viking settlement may therefore have taken place in the 9th (or second 11th century wave), although it need not have had violent consequences.

Nevertheless, most of the early foundations in the country went into decline in the 9th century (probably through a combination of Viking raiding and internal decline), and it was only in the following century that widespread reformation and revival occurred (Gilchrist 1994: 31-32). It was during this time that exclusive/single houses became the norm and the Benedictine rule was widely established (Glichrist 1994: 32; Greene 1992: 3). As recorded in the *Anglo-Saxon Chonicles* for AD 963, the bodies of St. Kyneburgha and her sister, St. Kyneswytha, were moved to Peterborough Abbey, possibly to safeguard them against the threat of a second wave of Viking raids which occurred somewhat later *c.* 1010/1013 (Gough 1963: 99). This however may have been more of a political move to consolidate Peterborough Abbey as a major centre during the 10th century reformations than anything else.

No references to a monastery at Castor occur in any of the Saxon charters of the 11th/12th century, although there is a reference to Peterborough Abbey being granted privileges at Castor (Birch 1885: 22a; translated in Hart 1966: 110-112). Nor is there any mention in the Doomsday Survey of 1086. If the nunnery was still extant in the 10th century, it is hard to see why the bodies would have been moved, nor why there are no closely contemporary documentary sources pertaining to it. In all likelihood, the monastery

therefore probably dissolved in the 9th century amid the widespread decline of other double houses. The timber building uncovered at the Cedars is thus unlikely to be related to the nunnery.

The site continued to be occupied until the 12th century, whereafter it was probably incorporated into the churchyard. This certainly fits well with the known date for the construction of the present church in 1124, and it is not unlikely that the consecration and construction of the church could have seen a major re-establishment of the churchyard boundary too. The site was part of the churchyard possibly up until the early nineteenth century; the first house at the Cedars is dated to *c.* 1700, but the present eastern garden wall is much later. On Artis' scale map of 1828, this boundary is shown as much closer to the main house running down from the dog-leg of the northern boundary wall which abuts Church Hill (Artis 1828, reprinted in Mackreth 1980, fig.11; also see fig.2). The archaeological and architectural survey confirmed that the walls were quite recent, the northern wall being earlier than the eastern one which abuts it. This northern wall is probably closely contemporary with the front part of the house which dates to *c.* 1800 while the eastern wall was probably constructed sometime between 1828 (Artis' map) and 1885 (1st edition OS map).

Conclusions

The archaeological evaluation of the Cedars has demonstrated an excellent, more or less continuous stratigraphic sequence for the Roman and Saxon periods, one not seemingly encountered elsewhere in Castor. And yet while many new aspects to the development of the site from its foundation as a major villa complex have been unearthed, there is a greater sense of how *little* is really known, especially when trying to relate the archaeology at the Cedars with that elsewhere in the village. To a large extent, the villa has tended to dominate the archaeology of the village, over-shadowing our understanding of the Saxon period and its monastic associations. The two may be very closely related however, and work at the Cedars has shown that there is great potential for understanding more about this relationship.

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Appendices

1. **Plant Remains** (C. Stevens)

A total of three samples were taken for the extraction of charred/mineralised plant remains from F. 2 [014], F. 7 [038], and F. 13 [063]. The samples were floated using a 100 mm mesh to collect the residue and a 0.5 mm mesh size to collect the flot. The flots were then dried and sorted using a stereo-binocular microscope at x 10 magnification. The remains were identified where possible and are shown in Table 1.

Results

All three samples produced carbonised remains, mainly of free-threshing wheat, *Triticum aestivum* senso lato, fish bones (probably all freshwater fish) and shells of land molluscs. In addition the sample from F. 7 [038] also produces mineralised remains of insect larvae, fly pupae and insects themselves, as well as mineralised seeds of elder, *Sambucus nigra*; black horehound, *Ballota nigra*; and goosefoots, Chenopodiaceae. Whilst F. 2 produced two possible mineralised seeds of *Prunus* sp., although the specimens were too degraded for a positive identification to be made.

In terms of cereals only free-threshing wheats, rye, *Secale cereale* and possibly oats, *Avena sativa* were represented in the samples, although in the case of the latter no floret bases were recovered to allow a positive identification. Possible remains of plum/sloe etc., *Prunus* sp. and bean/pea/ tubers, *Vicia faba/Pisum sativum*, were also recovered although preservation was far too poor for any certain identification to be made and in the case of the former the remains could represent wild rather than domesticated resources. Of the other wild food plants represented, hazelnut, *Corylus avellana* is commonly recovered from samples of this and a somewhat later date (Greig 1991). Elder, *Sambucus nigra*, too is commonly recovered from late Saxon and Medieval samples, but although a possible food resource is also a common component of hedges and scrubland.

Most of the remaining wild species are probably crop weeds; for example, fathen, *Chenopodium album*; dock, *Rumex crispus*; vetch/tare/ wild pea, *Vicia/Lathyrus* sp.; corn gromwell, *Lithospermum arvense*; knapweed, *Centaurea* sp.; spikerush, *Eleocharis palustris*; and sedge, *Carex* sp.

The fish bones were most probably from freshwater fish, and included eel type bones, i.e. two neural canals. In addition several mineralised remains of fly pupae and insects were also found in F. 7 [038], along with those of mineralised seeds. The conditions leading to mineralisation are unknown, but are probably via Calcium phosphate which came from either rotting fish remains and/or cess material.

Mollusc shells were also present in the samples, although never in high numbers. All the samples had a mixture of shells of sheltered and open conditions. With a notably larger number of sheltered/woodland type shells in F. 7.

Interpretation

The sample from F. 2 [014] would seem to represent the waste from food preparation. There is little evidence to suggest much in the way of processing, and it may be that the waste therefore derived from cereal remains (rye, wheat and probably oats) which were ready for final food preparation. The presence of fish remains would seem to add to this interpretation, whilst the presence of some mineralised material, including fly pupae may also suggest the

Feature Context Species	Common Name	Habitat	F.2 [014]	F.13 [063]	F.7 [038]
Corylus avellana L. (nut fragments)	hazelnut	scrub, open woodland, hedges	-	-	2
Chenopodiaceae (mineralised)	goosefoot family	manure, wasteland, arable	-	-	2
Chenopodium album L.	fat-hen	manure, wasteland, arable	-	-	1
Rumex cf. crispus L.	curled-dock	grassy wasteland, arable	-	-	1
Vicia sp. L.	vetch	grassy wasteland, arable	-	1	-
Vicia/Lathyrus sp. L./L.	vetch/pea	grassy wasteland, arable	-	-	1
Prunus sp. (mineralised)	cherry/plum /sloe etc.	scrub, hedges, domesticate	2	-	-
Prunus sp. L.	cherry/plum /sloe etc.	scrub, hedges, domesticate	-	-	1
Ballota nigra L. (mineralised seeds)	black horehound	roadsides, hedgebanks	-	-	15
Lithospermum arvense L.	corn gromwell	arable/waste	-	-	1
Galium aparine L.	cleavers	arable, wasteland	1	-	-
Sambucus nigra L.	elder	scrub, open woodland, hedges	-	-	1
Sambucus nigra L. (mineralised seeds)	elder	scrub, open woodland, hedges	-	-	126
Centaurea sp. L.	knapweed	arable, wasteland, grassland	-	-	1
Eleocharis sp. R. Br.	spike-rush	wet grassland, marsh, ?arable	-	-	1
Carex sp. L.	sedge	wet grassland, marsh, ?arable	-	-	1
Poaceae indet. (Melica, darnel, fescue etc.)	grasses	woodland, grassland, arable	-	-	1
Avena sp. L (large cf. cultivated ?).	oats	arable, cultivars ?	3	-	4
Avena sp. L.	oats	arable	-	1	2
Cereals					
Secale cereale (grains)	rye	cultivars	1	1	-
Triticum aestivum senso lato (rachis)	free-threshing wheat	cultivars	-	-	1
Triticum aestivum senso lato (grain)	free-threshing wheat	cultivars	28	11	64
Cereals undiff. (grains)	cereal grain	cultivars	4	-	-
Cereals undiff. (rachis)	cereal rachis	cultivars	1	-	-
Parenchyma/Vicia faba/Pisum sativum	tuber, bean, pea	wild/ domestic tuber, cultivars	-	-	8
Molluscs					
Vallonia costata (Müller)		open short grassland/walls	1	-	-
Vallonia excentrica (Sterki)/pulchella (Müller)		open grassland	-	-	3
Carychium minimum (Müller) / tridentatum (Risso)		woods, sheltered locals			
Cochlicopa lubricella (Porro)/lubricata (Müller)		damp marsh/wood/grassland	1	-	-
Helicella itala (Linne)		open short turf grassland	-	-	1
Discus rotundatus (Müller)		moist sheltered habitats			
Helix aspersa (Müller)		gardens, rocks, hedges etc.	-	2	-
Pupilla muscorum (Linne)		open disturbed/bare soils	-	1	-
Aegopinella pura (Alder)		ground litter woods	-	-	5
Oxychilus alliarius (Miller)		woods, fields, rocks etc.	-	-	1
Other					
fly pupae		rotting vegetation etc.	4	-	++
insect casts			-	-	+
fish bones		riverine	25	18	42
fish bones (cf. eel type)		riverine	-	4	-
bone fish/mammal indet.			+++	-	-
shell fragments (whelk/oyster ?)		possibly marine riverine	-	++	-

Table 1

presence of rooting fish, vegetation and/or cess. F. 13 [063] was similar to F. 2 in containing evidence for both cereal (fire) waste and fishbones, but contained little evidence to suggest rooting matter and/or cess.

F. 7 [038] was perhaps the most informative of the samples. As with the previous samples there is some evidence for waste from domestic activities. This includes fire waste containing evidence for cereals, with probably both remains from final grain preparation prior to milling/cooking and earlier stages of processing and other possible food items hazelnut and pea/bean/tuber as well as remains of freshwater fish and eel. The sample also contained good evidence for rotting fish and/or cess. The mineralised seeds which resulted from this are mainly hedge species, elder and white horehound. The former is another possible food resource, but combined with the seeds of white horehound and the shells of woodland or molluscan species of shade would seem to indicate that the midden material may have accumulated in a shaded, scrub or hedge environment. In addition the charred seeds accompanying the cereal remains, *Eleocharis* sp. and *Lithospermum arvense*, if interpreted as weeds of the crop, would suggest the growing of possibly oats, rye and/or wheat upon wet, calcareous soils.

The samples in terms of plant remains compare well to similar sites of this date within the region. At both Cottingham and Bury grains of rye, free-threshing wheats and oats were all recovered from the former with free-threshing wheat recovered from the latter. However, unlike Bury, there is no indication of the storage of crops in the sheaf at Castor and unlike Cottingham the evidence for the earlier stages of cereal processing is very poor. Also unlike these sites their is no evidence at Castor for the cultivation of clay soils, although given the low number of seeds from wild species in the samples such a result may not be significant. The samples would then seem to indicate midden and possibly even cess material, but with no indication of high-status material which might have been expected on the site.

2. **Animal Bone** (L. Higbee)

A relatively large assemblage (table 1) of animal bone was recovered from hand excavated deposits, unfortunately much of this material is redeposited in later features or was recovered from the overlying garden soil whilst surface cleaning. No bone was recovered from Roman deposits.

Phase	No. Fragments
Early Saxon	149
Middle Saxon	664
Saxo-Norman	246
Medieval/Post-Medieval	830
TOTAL	**1889**

Table 1 Number of bone fragments by phase.

The condition of the assemblage is good suggesting that it had not been exposed to sub aerial weathering prior to deposition. Some bones exhibit gnaw marks made by dogs, whilst this has not effected identification, it may have effaced butchery marks and biased the sample by eliminating the fragile bones of immature animals. Physical and chemical weathering within the soil matrix has only caused minor root etching and surface exfoliation to a limited number of specimens.

The species range is limited to domesticates with the rare exception of isolated finds of toad [008] and rodent [050]. The assemblage in all phases is dominated by the three common food animals, that is sheep/goat, cattle and pig. The bones of sheep/goat occur most frequently, particularly in the Middle Saxon phase. All portions of the mutton, beef and pork carcass are represented in the assemblage however, the meatiest portions of the beef carcass are more heavily fragmented. This is probably a result of the necessity to reduce large carcasses into

more manageable joints either for transportation, storage, preparation or consumption. One cattle scapula recovered from [041] the backfill of a Middle Saxon robber trench, was observed with a "hook hole" on the blade close to the spinus process, this probably results from hanging the joint for processing (e.g. smoking or salting).

Other domestic species identified include horse, dog, chicken (Gallus gallus) and goose (Anser anser). Chicken is present in all phases and is the most frequently occurring species after the three common food animals. The humerus, femur and tibio-tarsus (i.e. the wing and leg) are the most frequently occurring skeletal elements for this species. No butchery marks were observed on the bones of this species or those of goose however, small carcasses such as these require little dismemberment in order to provide a manageable serving. Butchery marks in the form of heavy chops were observed on some of the horse bones in the samples from both the Early and Middle Saxon phases. The degree of fragmentation observed on these specimens is not as extensive as that seen on the bones of similarly sized animals (i.e cattle).

3. **Human Bone** (N. Dodwell)

F. 14 [066]
Portion of the left mandible. All three molars and the 2nd premolar are present and exhibit heavy ware. There is a small caries (3mm) on the occlusal surface of the 3rd molar and deposits of calculus (mineralised plaque) on the lingual aspects of each of the surviving teeth which could suggest poor oral hygiene. The morphology of the jaw and the degree of dental attrition suggest a mature (45+) adult ?male.

The left portion of the 2nd cervical vertebra (axis). The morphology of the inferior fact is severely altered both by osteophytes, porosity and eburnation. These changes are characteristic of degenerative joint disease of the spine or neck.

[027]
The left temporal bone of an adult ?male. Its possibly from the same individual as grave F14.

[036]
Poorly preserved and fragmentary adult femoral head (unsided).

4. **Roman Pottery** (G. Lucas)

The quantity of Romano-British pottery recovered was relatively small compared with the post-Roman material, and most of this was redeposited in later features. However, what there was, was comparatively unabraded suggesting that the pottery had not been lying exposed for any appreciable length of time. Unsurprisingly, the assemblage was dominated by Nene Valley products, both greywares and colour-coated types. Vessel forms included the funnel-neck beaker, Castor box, wide-mouthed and narrow-mouthed jars, flagon, dog dish, flanged bowl and mortarium. Imports included a sherd from a south Spanish amphora ([003]; probably Dressel 20) and two sherds of Samian, one from South Gaul ([023]) and another probably from East Gaul ([004]). Also a red-slipped rouletted bowl/dish, probably from Oxfordshire, occurred [076]. Sandy greywares and shell-tempered fabrics made up the remaining part of the assemblage, although it must be said that often the shell-tempered fabrics are macroscopically indistinuishable from the Saxo-Norman types (e.g. St. Neots) when only small sherds are present. There must, therefore, remain some ambiguity over the some of the attributions, a critical factor in particular with [004] and [005] which were re-

interpreted as *in situ* Roman layers rather then the backfill of another, much later cut (F. 1; see main text).

The date of the group is on the whole late and yet there was a sufficient quantity of Nene Valley greywares to indicate activity as early as the late 2nd/early 3rd century. The most diagnostically early vessel form was an incipent flanged bowl in greyware which dates to *c.* AD190-240. This came from the make up of the gravelled/cobbled yard surface [021] and was in a very fresh state, with large sherds and unabraded edges; it is the closest associated dating we have for the construction of the building found at the Cedars - although the yard and the building may not of course be contemporary. Most of the pottery was however much later, dating to the 4th century, in particular the redeposited group in the robber trench F. 8 which was mixed with Early and Middle Saxon pottery. In this feature was the base of a beaker which had been trimmed to form a little cup [041], while in another feature associated with early Saxon material a beaker base had been trimmed low and perforated to form a spindle whorl [026]. Such examples are very common on sites with late Roman to early Saxon pottery.

In general, the paucity of Roman pottery is not unexpected given the nature of the Roman features encountered - buildings. These would have probably been kept clean, rubbish such as broken pottery being taken out of the main complex and dumped elsewhere. What material there is was either incoporated into the construction matrix such as the wall foundations and yard make-up, or represents continued 'post-Roman' use of late Roman pottery.

5. **Roman Building Material** (C. Hall)

Tesserae

100 individual tesserae were recovered from the evaluation trenches. The assemblage derives from a variety of contexts, only one securely Roman, all secondary in nature. Considering the many phases of the site and the possible Saxon re-use of Roman layers this mixing is unsurprising. The similarity of the assemblage as a whole, however, may suggests a single source. It is possible that the building uncovered in phase I may have had a tessellated floor, the thin patchy mortar surface identified as the floor surface could be the remnants of the bedding mortar. The author has had ample opportunity to observe in Ostia, how quickly tesserae can be kicked from their mortar bed once the integrity of the floor as a whole has been compromised. If this building were subject to use in to the late Roman or early Saxon period without constant repair the floor would soon be reduced to a mortar spread.

The majority of the recovered tesserae have traces of the bedding mortar clinging to the sides and to the base, which is a uniform creamy white lime mortar with traces of tiny fragments of crushed pot, creating a weak variety of *Opus Signinum*. Of the 100 pieces, 82 are light limestone and 18 are tile. Many of the tesserae are quite roughly cut, having a rectangular or sub-rectangular upper surface that tapers slightly towards its base, allowing closer tessellation. The tesserae produced from tile are particularly irregular, tile being rather more unpredictable in the way in which it will break.

The majority have a surface area of between 20x20mm and 25x30mm, and have a depth of around 15/16mm. There are some larger and some smaller, the largest surface area being 42x38mm. The smaller tesserae which are approximately 10x10mm are likely to belong to a finer mosaic arrangement. They consist of 3 small grey limestone pieces, 1 creamy white limestone and one small tile piece.

The main tessellated floor would have comprised predominantly of the light buff/grey limestone tesserae, interspersed with red tile tesserae, possibly in geometric patterns which

was common throughout the Roman period. It is also possible that a finer mosaic could have formed the centre piece for this tessellated floor, as a cheaper option than having a full mosaic. It is still indicative of some value and status being placed upon this building. Obviously much is speculation without having in-situ remains, however further excavation may reveal corners of the building, and it is often in corners that remains of mosaic and tessellated floors are to be found.

Painted Wall Plaster

Altogether 20 fragments of painted wall plaster were recovered from four separate contexts, all secondary.

Five different types of wall plaster are represented in this group:
1. Creamy/yellow lime plaster with sand and fine gravel aggregate.
2. Very slightly pinky cream lime plaster with fine sand and crushed pot aggregate.
3. Creamy lime mortar with frequent course sand and moderate gravel aggregate
4. Creamy Pink lime mortar with frequent crushed pot aggregate.
5. Slightly pinky/cream lime mortar with sand, fine gravel and crushed pot aggregate.

From this one can see that Opus Signinum is being utilised for wall rendering, its hydraulic properties obviously being deemed necessary; "The Romans used hydraulic mortars or plasters...extensively in damp positions where it was important to prevent penetration of moisture, for example for rendering basement and retaining walls...especially in bath-houses". (Davey and Ling 1982, 53). We can not discount the possibility that damp may have been a problem combated by the use of hydraulic plaster, but it is also an interesting possibility that the hydraulic wall plaster here may have derived from the interior of a bath house in the near vicinity.

The finish on the wall plaster that was applied before painting also varies within this sample, from a thin whitewash of 0.5mm, to a lime plaster skim of 2mm. It is possible in the latter instance that this technique was also accompanied by the fresco painting technique (painting on to wet plaster), although microscopic/chemical analysis would be needed to verify this.

12 fragments were painted in a deep purpley red colour, the striations of the brush clearly visible. One of these has a hint of a green/blue paint having been painted over, although a design can not be distinguished. Another has the hint of a pale white design on it, but again it is too abraded to yield any detail. 2 fragments have a pale green colouring, while one has a plainer dark red colour. 4 fragments have a pale blue background. Two of these have the remnants of a purpley red brush stroke crossing it. Another of these preserves the junction between the blue and the purpley red colouring, on this piece the course grains of darker blue are observable on the surface, indicative of the use of blue frit, or Egyptian blue (Davey and Ling 1982, 62).

These are tantalising fragments, that although unrevealing in terms of design, point to the use and expense of an *atelier* (wall painter). This indicates the status of rooms or buildings within the vicinity of these evaluation trenches.

Tile and Brick

Due to time constraints the brick and tile assemblage has received only a cursory visual inspection, but a brief summary is possible. In total 538 fragments were collected, weighing *c.* 52.5 kg; the majority of the assemblage is very fragmented, indicative of the secondary context of the deposits, and therefore the size of most of the bricks can not be established. However, one large fragment of brick preserves a complete side of length 210mm, which

makes this a reasonable size for a *bessalis* (Brodribb 1987, 150). This makes it a good candidate for use within a *pilae*, or small brick pier to support a *suspensura* floor, within a hypocaust under-floor heating system. Other evidence for the existence of a hypocaust come from the fragments of box tile. There are two definite fragments of box tile that preserve their profile, and the single combed face, for the application of plaster. Numerous other fragments of tile display similar combing and could well be fragments of box tile. These would have been employed as vertical flues extending from under the floor, up the walls to outlets at roof-top level. The two good examples also display sooty blackening on the interior surface.

There are also many fragments of tegulae, of differing profiles and depth of flange, and are thus likely to represent different episodes of roof construction within the vicinity. Curiously, one large fragment of tegula has combing on its upper surface. This could perhaps suggest that tegulae were employed in wall-flue construction. Other treatment of tegulae in this assemblage includes, decorative swirling motif on the upper surface, too shallow to be a 'key', the partial removal of the flange prior to firing, the possible removal of flange after firing and the chipping of fired tegulae into small triangular pieces, where the triangle protrudes from the base of the flange. The fact that pieces are trimmed prior to firing (this also includes one of the box-tile pieces) suggests that there is tile production in the near vicinity, it is likely that the villa had its own tile kiln. One piece that appears to have had the flange removed after firing is also triangular in shape, and preserves part of a peg hole. The author has observed tegulae trimmed into triangular shapes, employed in wall construction in central Italy, here it is regarded as an early practice of the 1st and 2nd centuries AD (A. Claridge *pers comm*). However, these were usually larger fragments, often employing the whole length of the tegula. Given the diminutive nature of the Castor pieces, perhaps they were employed in smaller constructions, such as *pilae*.

What emerges from the evidence, is a picture of great activity. Despite the secondary nature of the contexts, there is still ample evidence for tessellated floors, possible mosaics, painted walls, hypocaust systems, and sturdy tiled roofs. Given these structural entities and the presence of the *opus signinum* , the case for the existence of a bath-building is strengthened. Certainly these are the products of wealth and status, associated with an impressive villa complex. The evidence raises many questions, and if further excavation could reveal the remains of primary contexts we may hope to be able to answer some of these questions, in terms of the nature of specific structures and the building techniques employed.

6. **Saxon and Medieval Pottery** (D. Hall)

The material (738 sherds, *c.* 10 kg) covers the whole of the period from late Roman to the early Middle Ages with only a very few sherds of the 15th century and post-medieval centuries, most of them probably being intrusive. The Roman pottery is dealt with separately (see above).

The early Saxon sherds consist of some vegetable-tempered fabrics, with mostly hard fabrics containing igneous and white shelly limestone-temper. One black sherd was decorated with linear motifs. There were also a few Middle Saxon Ipswich Wares and shelly wares of possible Maxey Ware. Some of the hand-made sherds could not be distinguished as either Early or Middle Saxon date. Late Saxon sherds are represented by all three Saxo-Norman fabrics of Stamford, Thetford and St Neots Wares, some of the Stamford Ware being reduced. Shelly wares were predominant, some possible Maxey Ware and others probably being early precursors of Lyveden types. The Saxo-Norman fabrics continue into the 12th century and become superseded by Lyveden wares, both plain and decorated. There are also a few sherds of Grimston Ware jugs. Most of the medieval sherds are no later than the early 14th century. The pottery group, although small, is of considerable importance because it spans the whole of the Saxon period and so forms a local type series. It justifies further analysis and any

additional excavation at the Castor site needs a significant ceramic budget. The pottery and the site are of great importance in view of their relation to the early phases of Peterborough Saxon monastery and to other large Saxon sites in Castor parish.

7. Saxo-Norman Building Material

A small quantity of fired daub was recovered from the excavations and associated with the Saxo-Norman structure in Phase IV. The greatest quantity came from [026], the abandonment deposit sealing the building of which a sample was collected. Smaller quantities came from a posthole F. 11 and the pit F. 7, the remainder being redeposited in later garden soil horizons ([008] & [009]). All the fragments have a soft buff-pink/orange fabric with moderate poorly sorted chalk inclusions and the occasional coarser rounded pebble and have been abundantly tempered with grass/vegetable matter. Many pieces exhibit wattle impressions, generally in two sizes (20mm and 40mm diameter stakes), some with both vertical and horizontal directions present, the two sizes being transversely arranged. Several smoothed faces were noted, some having what appeared to be a thin lime-wash on the surface.

The association of these fragments with the rectilinear posthole structure and floor suggests that together they formed part of a common type of timber-frame building with wattle and daub walling between the structural posts. The survival of the daub is due to its fortuitous firing which may suggest that the structure burnt down, although the floor did not exhibit extensive burning except for the hearth area. Such firing may therefore have happened subsequent to its demolition.

Context	No. Fragments	Weight (g)
[008]	10	180
[009]	5	63
[026]	25	833
[037]	1	6
[057]	2	33

Table 1. Quantities of fired daub

8. Small Finds

Bone Objects (L. Higbee)

Five bone objects were recovered from the excavation the are described below by context.

[007] Pig fibula pin
The natural shape of the fibula of this species recommends itself for use as a pin, it has a natural expanded head (proximal end) and a thin shaft. The expanded end has been trimmed to a squarish outline and has a perforation drilled through it, this may have been for a retaining cord since the pin was likely to have been used as a dress fastening. Pins of this type are fairly common, particularly in the Early Christian period.

[008] Brush
The head and neck of a ?compound brush with perforations on one side for the bristles linked on the reverse side to grooves which would have accommodated the wires which anchored the tufts of bristles. Green staining from copper salts on the surface of the perforated side indicate that the tufts were fine wire. Bone brushes are known from the 17th century

onwards, the company records from one manufacturer, Messrs Kent of London indicate that over 9,000 were produced weekly in the 1870's. This example is similar to one recovered from Ospringe, Kent (Smith, 1979).

[009] Pin Beater
A weaving tool with a point at one end and a flat chisel-like butt at the other end. The chisel end would have been used across the top of the warp rather than between individual threads like the pointed end. The natural characteristics of bone make it a preferred material for tools used in the manufacture of textiles. It acquires an ever-increasing smoothness with use and therefore becomes progressively less likely to pick up fibres. The high degree of polish observed on this example testifies to this.

[026] ?"Cigar-shaped" pin beater
One half of this object was recovered (broken in antiquity) it represents a tool used in weaving but differs from that described above. It is oval in cross section and tapers to a point (?at both ends), the whole object has a high degree of surface polish. This type of pin beater is common from Roman through to Early Medieval periods, and numerous Anglo-Saxon examples exist.

[026] ?Spoon
A simple spoon form with a tapering square section handle combined with a dished, circular bowl, the two join without any distinction in level between the them. A high degree of surface polish was observed.

Metalwork

Several items of metalwork were recovered, mostly from the garden soil/spoil through the use of a metal-detector. The majority consist of iron nails and other fragments but there were also a few copper alloy objects and some of lead and aluminium. The most interesting of these unstratified finds include half an unidentified coin/token and a cruciform-shaped object which may be a brooch, but awaits x-ray for clearer identification. Of the stratified finds, an iron nail came from pit F. 7 (Phase IV), a bronze barbarous radiate dating to the last quarter of the 3rd century came from [041], the Middle Saxon backfill of the robber trench F. 8 along with other iron fragments from [050] (Phase III) and an iron object and a fragment of slag from the layer above the gravelled floor [064] and metal pin from posthole F. 25 (Phase II).

Context	Description
unstratified	2 Cu alloy buttons, 1 plate, half a coin/token
	25 iron nails, 1 cruciform object, 19 other fragments
	4 aluminium sheet fragments
	2 lead fragments
[003]	1 iron nail
[008]	1 iron nail
[009]	1 iron chain loop, 1 plate fragment
[037]	1 iron nail
[041]	1 bronze coin (Roman)
[050]	2 iron objects
[064]	1 iron object, 1 piece of slag
[090]	1 iron rod (+ crumbs)

Table 1. List of metalwork finds

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