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Cambridge Archaeology Field Group: *Three Earthwork Surveys*
(Vol. LXXXI, pp. 39-49)

Paul E. Firman was the author of the drawings for the report.
The Field Group wishes to thank him, and also the late Kenneth Kenham
for his contribution to the documentary research.

Archaeological Investigations at the White Hart, Ely 1991–2

Alex Jones

with contributions from Lisa Moffett & Stephanie Ratkai

Introduction

The following report presents the results of an archaeological excavation and watching brief undertaken in 1991–2, in advance of the construction of three new shop units to the rear of the former White Hart Public House, Market Street, Ely, Cambridgeshire (centred on TL543804; Figs 1A, 1B). The work was carried out by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit on behalf of the developers, Raglan Property Trust PLC and later Crown Life Pensions Ltd. The project initially involved a desk-top assessment of the archaeological potential of the proposed development zone¹ and of areas outside the final development scheme. A small-scale, two-week-long, excavation in August 1991 was followed by a watching brief during construction groundworks in February and March 1992. The fabric of the White Hart itself is considered in detail elsewhere² and only a summary is presented below.

The excavation defined early medieval burgage plot ditches succeeded by a phase of cultivation. Later occupation was represented by small clay-lined ovens of the fourteenth to

fifteenth centuries. Mortar-mixing pits were constructed when the site became a stonemason's yard in the sixteenth century.

Historical and archaeological background

The urban nucleus of Ely expanded from the higher ground on the west bank of the River Ouse onto the low-lying land to the east, adjoining the river (Fig. 1B). Although the presence of the monastic community, in combination with the market established here in the ninth or tenth century, will have provided an economic stimulus to the growth of an urban community based on trade, the Domesday Book entry suggests that Ely had retained an essentially rural character,³ and this character was maintained into the medieval period.

The presence of a Benedictine monastery (established c. 970 AD), the construction of the present Cathedral from 1081 AD, and the creation of a Bishopric in the City, all provided an initial stimulus for expansion of the town. Growth was led at first by the influx of tradesmen to work on the Cathedral; continued prosperity was a result of monastic and episcopal administration and economic control. A market was established and set out to the north of the Abbey precinct. Examination of the town plan reveals that the present market place defines the eastern end of the elongated medieval market area, which extended to the west as far as The Gallery/Lynn Road. By 1251 an inquisition recorded that Ely had grown at least three-fold since

1 I.M. Ferris and P.J. Leach, 'Ely city centre development: the archaeological implications', BUFAU Report 79 (1989).

2 For example N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Cambridgeshire*, 2nd ed. (Harmondsworth 1975) p.383; Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, 'The White Hart, Ely' (unpubl. report 86271, 1991); Hirst Conservation, 'White Hart and 1 and 2 Market Street, Ely: report on recommended conservation to wall painting (unpubl. 1991); Hirst Conservation, 'White Hart and 1 and 2 Market Street, Ely: survey report on examination of wall plaster for evidence of painted decoration (unpubl. 1991).

3 A. Rumble (ed.), *Domesday Book: Cambridgeshire* (Chichester 1981) p.5.



Figure 1. A) *East Anglia*; B) *Ely and the site*; C) *the site and its setting*.

1086;⁴ the variety of trades referred to in that document, and the description of much assarted land, suggest that Ely still exhibited the semi-rural, semi-urban characteristics common in the period. Continued economic growth into the fourteenth century is suggested by the ranking of Ely as the 29th wealthiest town in England in the 1334 taxation.⁵ By the early-fifteenth century, the city included 520 households, of which 262 were tenants of the Bishop and 195 of the Prior.

By the fifteenth century Ely was in economic decline, and by 1524–5, the city was no longer sufficiently successful to be included in a list of the most prosperous 43 towns in the country.⁶ Further economic decline resulted from the Dissolution, which caused the demolition and sale of much monastic property. Speed's map of 1610 show that some new development had occurred by the early seventeenth century alongside the major routes on the city's outskirts, and in the centre, in the form of infilling of the medieval market place. In the succeeding two centuries, however, the picture is one of stagnation. The draining of the fens in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the arrival of the railway in the following century enhanced Ely's role as a centre for the marketing of agricultural produce.

The White Hart

The White Hart Inn (Fig. 2) is a late-fifteenth-century, jettied, two-storied timber-framed building of quality. The surviving brick kitchen block, built in the seventeenth century in the northeastern corner of the site, is now linked to the front range by a nineteenth century range,⁷ which may have replaced a seventeenth century linking range. Fragments of seventeenth-century wall paintings survive in the west gable wall.⁸ The front and western ranges of the White Hart were rebuilt in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and again during the

nineteenth century.⁹ The western boundary of the inn's rear yard is defined by a range of now derelict brick outbuildings, and the northern boundary by a brick wall incorporating ashlar blocks which may have been robbed from the Cathedral precinct. The White Hart was converted to a coaching inn in the eighteenth century, with the outbuildings being used as stables and gig sheds.

Assessment and potential of the development site

The initial desk-top assessment¹⁰ provided a research design that highlighted the enormous archaeological and academic potential offered by the opportunity to examine the area of the rear tenement plots behind the White Hart. Excavation could provide data on the urban environment and, given the proximity of this area to the market place and its position within the commercial quarter, evidence for craft or industrial processes. Such data had the potential to add to our understanding of the development and economy of Ely, and to contribute to the wider study of urban archaeology in East Anglia.

Site investigations

Initial site investigations took the form of the excavation of two trenches in the yard to the rear of the White Hart Inn, over an 11-day period (Fig. 2). Trench I measured approximately four metres by four metres, and was positioned to investigate the possible continuation of medieval and post-medieval structures to the north of the White Hart. Trench II was L-shaped, comprising two arms 15 m. and 6 m. long, and was located to coincide with the line of two proposed new exterior wall foundation trenches in the medieval backplot area, where evidence of land-division, rubbish disposal and industrial activity was sought.

The upper 0.5 m. of deposits in each trench, comprising post-medieval levelling-up soils and cobbled yard surfaces under the modern tarmac (equivalent to Phase 6 and part of Phase 5), were excavated by mechanical excavator under archaeological supervision, and recorded from the cleaned trench sections. Earlier archaeological features and deposits (equivalent to Phases 1–4 and part

4 Victoria History of the Counties of England, *Cambridgeshire*. Vol. 4, ed. by R.B. Pugh (London 1953) p.37.

5 J. Patten, *English Towns 1500–1700* (Folkestone 1978) p.42.

6 *Ibid.* p.42.

7 Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, 'The White Hart, Ely'.

8 Hirst Conservation, 'White Hart . . . conservation to wall painting' and 'White Hart . . . evidence of painted decoration'.

9 Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, 'The White Hart, Ely'.

10 Ferris and Leach, *op. cit.*

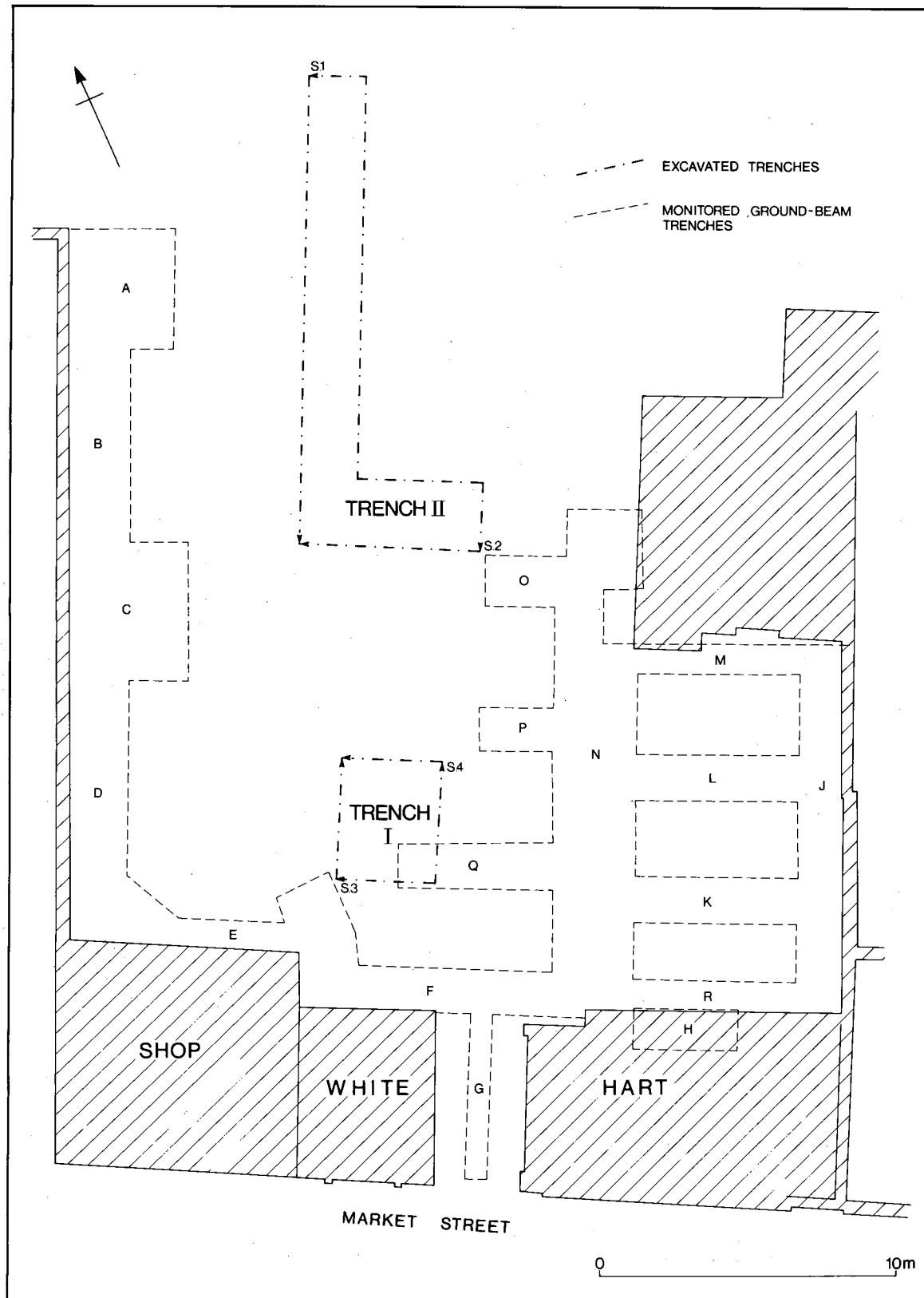


Figure 2. Location of excavations and areas monitored during watching brief.

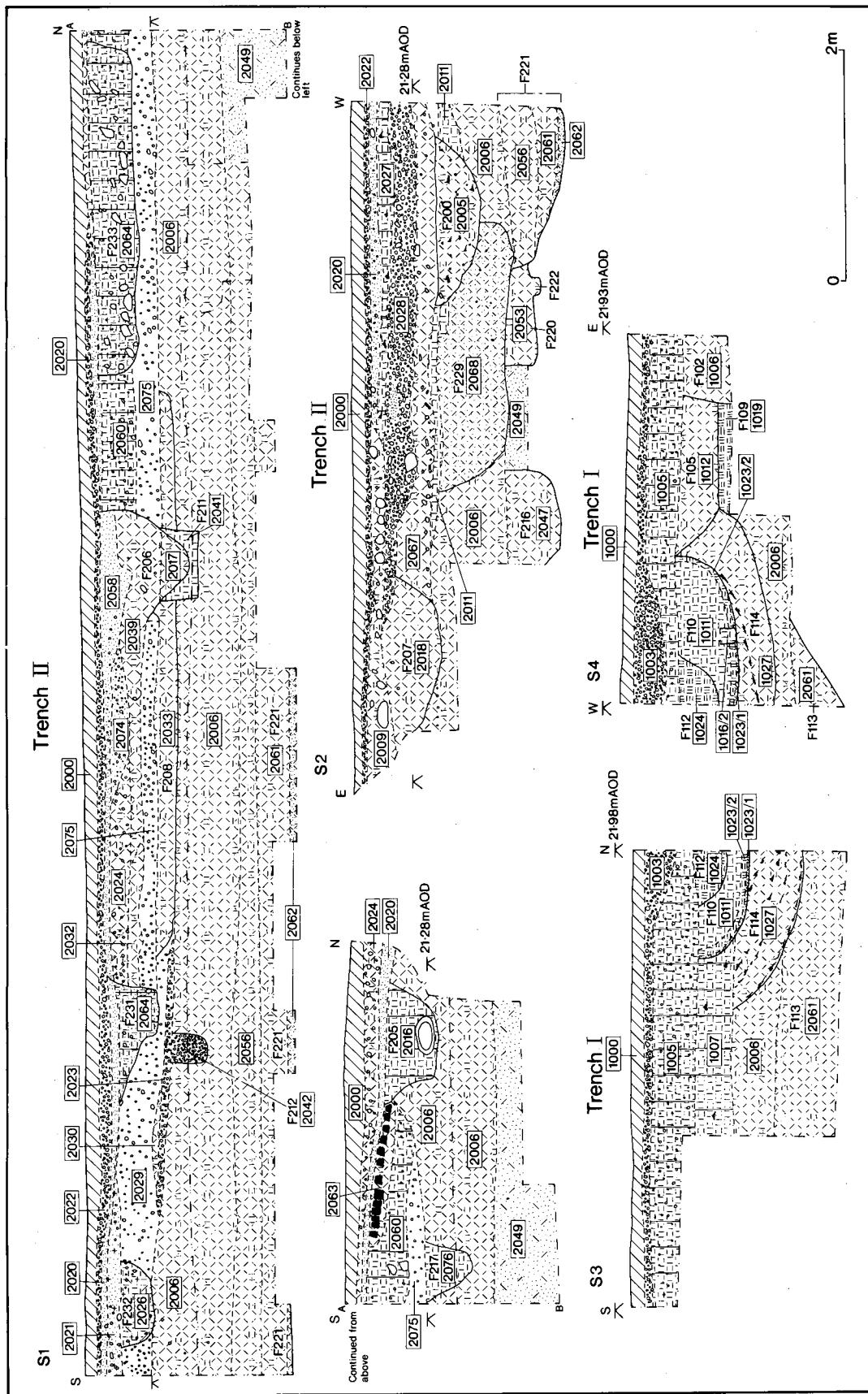


Figure 3. Trench I and II main baulk sections.

of Phase 5) were systematically excavated by hand until the natural subsoil was reached.

An intermittent watching brief, which was maintained over a total of five days during the construction groundworks, targeted areas away from the excavated trenches (Fig. 2). The information obtained from the watching brief is integrated, where possible, with the results of excavation.

Organisation of report and deposition of archive

An integrated description of the archaeological results by phase is followed by description and analysis of the medieval and post-medieval pottery and plant remains. The report concludes with a discussion that attempts to set the excavated evidence in its wider urban context by examining site function and economy, using the available historical, cartographic and archaeological evidence. Finally, a model of the site in its medieval and post-medieval urban setting is presented.

The excavation archive, including the finds, is stored at Ely Museum. The paper records have been copied onto microfilm by the National Archaeological Record of the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments: one copy is kept with the records themselves.

The Excavated Sequence

Elements of six distinct phases of activity were identified within Trenches I and II, and during the watching brief; the integrated phasing, based on archaeological stratigraphy (summarised in Table 1), is defined as follows:

- Phase 1: Early-medieval cultivation. 12th–13th century
 - Phase 2: Early-medieval occupation and boundaries. 12th–13th century
 - Phase 3: Later-medieval cultivation and ground clearance. 14th–15th century
 - Phase 4: Later-medieval activity. 14th–15th century
 - Phase 5: Early-post-medieval activity. 16th century
 - Phase 6: Later-post-medieval-modern activity. 18th century–present
- Features and contexts recorded during the watching brief that could not be related to this phasing sequence are summarised in the archive. Features and contexts that occur in both trenches, recorded separately at

excavation, have been given a single number in the following account. A concordance is provided in the archive.

Phase 1: Early medieval cultivation. 12th–13th century (Fig. 3)

Borehole investigations to the west of the site revealed a sticky, water-lain, organic blue-green clay beneath the greensand subsoil; the subsoil contained occasional weathered fragments of sandstone. The upper horizon of this subsoil was exposed by hand excavation at a depth of 1.80 m. below the modern yard surface. It was overlain by a homogenous layer of cultivation soil (2049) 0.30 m. deep, which was found throughout the trenches and was composed of buff-orange silt-sand, disturbed by root action.

The few abraded sherds of pottery from this layer suggest a *terminus* in the twelfth or early-thirteenth century for this cultivation.

Phase 2: Early medieval occupation and boundaries. 12th–13th century (Figs 3–6)

The end of the Phase 1 cultivation episode was marked by boundary ditches and other negative features, cut into the Phase 1 cultivation soil and through into the subsoil below.

The earliest features belonging to this post-agricultural phase, defined in Trench II, were two shallow, circular post-holes (F223, F224), and a flat-based trench (F220), possibly of a foundation trench, with sloping sides. The trench was truncated to the west by a later feature. Slight traces of a beam-slot (F222) of rectangular section, which ran into the southern baulk of the trench, and a well-defined post-hole (F226), were exposed within the possible foundation trench. These features might define one side of a timber-framed structure, but no evidence of the other walls was noted. There was no indication that the vertical and horizontal timber beams of this structure rotted *in situ*, and it is probable that they were removed at the time of the dismantling of the building. The trench F220 was backfilled with a mid-brown clay-silt (2053).

Following dismantling, a boundary ditch (F221) was dug on a north-south alignment, clipping the western edges of the now-backfilled post-holes and beam-slot. Although its full width was not seen, the ditch appeared to be U-shaped in profile, and was 0.65 m. deep. It either terminated to the north in a

Table 1. Simplified outline of site development.

Phase	Activity/Main features	Dating	Main feature/ context nos.	
			Trs I-II	Watching Brief
1	Early medieval cultivation	12th-13th cent. 2049		
2	Early medieval occupation and boundaries Post-holes Foundation trench with beam-slot and post-hole Boundary ditches aligned north-south	12th-13th cent.	F223,F224 F220 F222,F226 F221,F113, F216	F302
3	Later medieval cultivation and ground clearance	14th-15th cent. 2006		
4	Later medieval occupation Rubbish pit Clay-lined ovens Similarly lined ovens	14th-15th cent.	F114 F110,F107 F112,F109	F312,F314, F315-F319
5	Early post-medieval activity Gulleys aligned N-S and associated cut Mortar-mixing pits lined with clay ? associated post-holes Pits Rubbish pits Pit Disturbances	16th-cent.	F208,F209 F227 F211 F214,F218, F219 F213-44 F200,F229 F108 F103-4	F321
6	Later post-medieval-modern activity Cut, on-line with F211 Other disturbances/ services Soakaway and drain Make-up level Brick footings Service trench Cobble yard	18th-cent.-present	F206 F231-3 F201,F207 1005 F100,F101 F111,F102 2009,1003	

rounded butt-end, or turned to run east-west at this point. The northern butt-end of a further ditch (F216) was found to the east of ditch F221. The extreme eastern edge of a third, shallow ditch (F113), located in Trench I and following a similar alignment to ditch F221, but slightly to the east, was dug. A fourth ditch, dug on the same alignment (F302, not illustrated), 6.50 m. to the west of ditch F221, was recorded during the watching brief in trenches A and C (Fig.2).

The primary fill of ditch F221 was a mottled buff-brown sand-silt (2062); the upper fill comprised banded light brown clay-silts (2056, 2061) which had accumulated gradually after abandonment of the boundary. The fills of the remaining ditches (F113, F216, F302), also suggested gradual infilling after abandonment.

The pottery contained within the fills of these ditches suggests a terminus for their abandonment in the twelfth or thirteenth

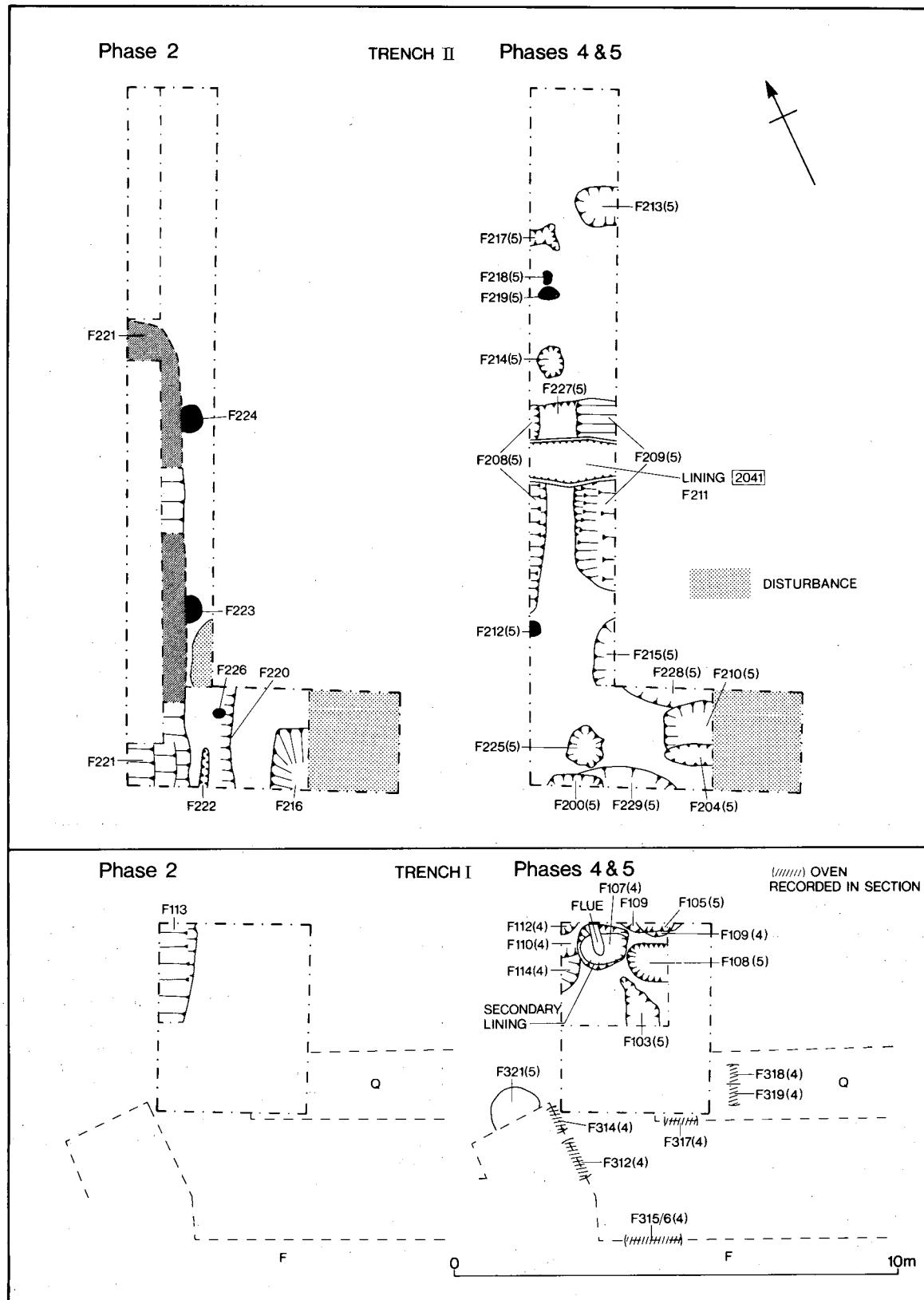


Figure 4. Simplified plan of main features: Phases 2, 4–5.

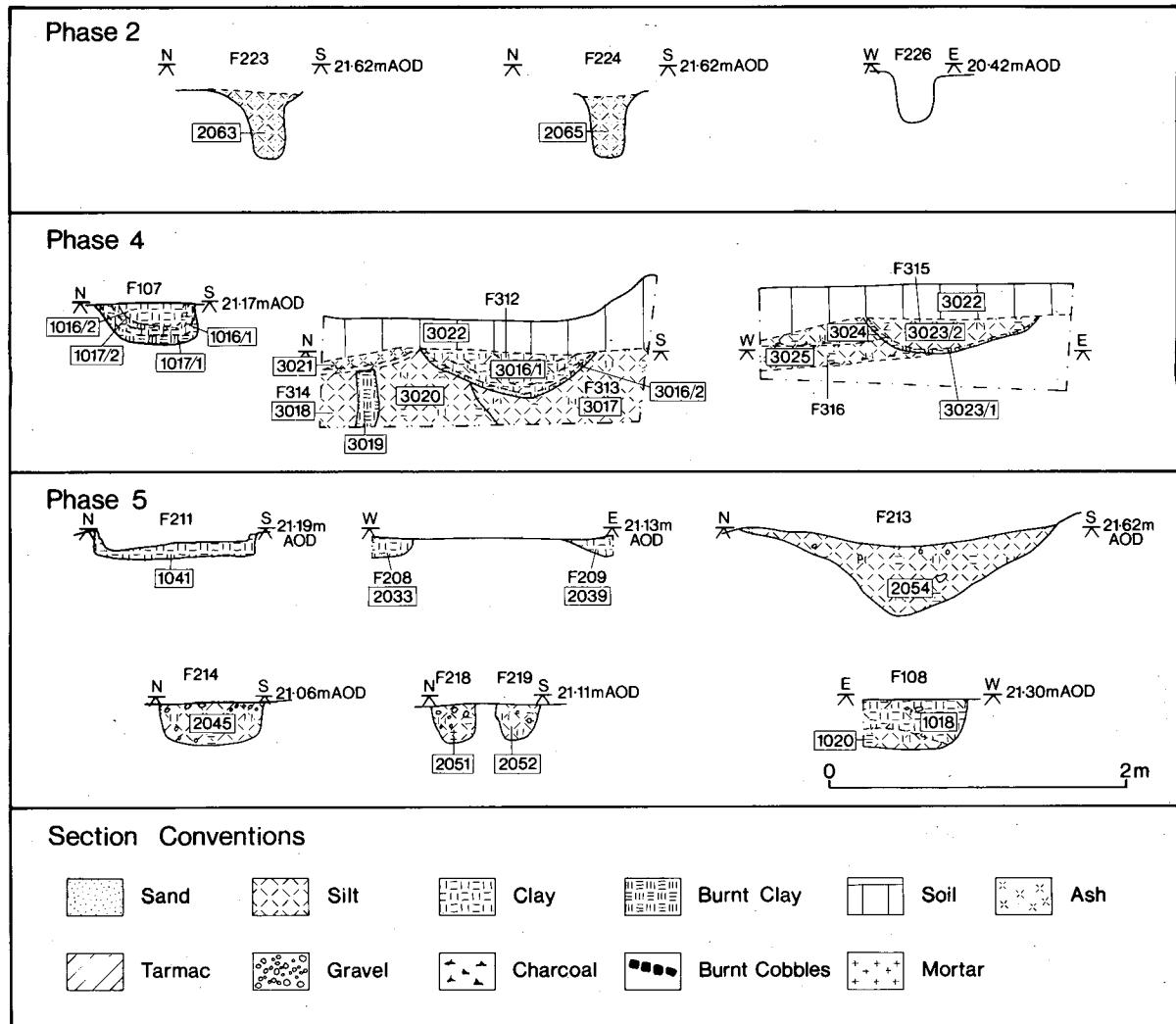


Figure 5. Other sections and section conventions.

centuries. The backfills of ditches F221 and F216 contained seeds of bread wheat and barley, and stem fragments of the great fen sedge were found in ditch F216.

Phase 3: Later medieval cultivation and ground clearance. 14th–15th century (Fig. 3)

The infilled Phase 2 features in Trenches I and II were all sealed by a layer of mid-brown clay-silt (2006), up to 0.50 m. deep, which was recorded in both trenches. This homogenous, stone-free layer might have formed during a second cultivation episode, and contained pottery, animal bone and fragments of iron nails. The large numbers of sherds present might indicate that some domestic refuse was mixed with this cultivation soil, possibly during manuring. The

relatively unabraded nature of the pottery recovered suggests that this area was not ploughed, but this evidence does not exclude the use of the area for small-scale market gardening. The carbonised seeds recovered from this layer include cereals, weed species, fragments of the great fen sedge and, unusually, a single seed of pot marigold, a garden plant.

The pottery from this layer provides a terminus of the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries for this phase.

Phase 4: Later medieval activity. 14th–15th century (Figs 3–5 and 8)

The end of the Phase 3 cultivation episode is marked initially by a rubbish pit (which was excavated); later, during perhaps the most intensive medieval exploitation of this



Figure 6. Trench II, west-east arm, looking north.

backplot area, the area was used for small-scale industrial activity.

The earliest feature in this phase, a small rubbish pit (F114) dug into the Phase 3 soil, was excavated. This U-shaped pit was backfilled with charcoal, sealed by tipped layers of mid-brown clay-silt (1027), banded with charcoal.

A change in the use of the backplot area is marked by a group of small ovens, in places cutting the infilled rubbish pit (F114). One complete oven, and three incomplete examples, were excavated in Trench I, and seven further ovens or possible ovens were recorded during the watching brief, although these last cannot be related to the main stratigraphic sequence.

Pit F114 was sealed by a layer of rake-out material (1007) and cut by oven F110, probably the earliest of the excavated group. The oven was exposed in the extreme north-western corner of Trench I, but its full shape and profile could not be defined. The base of the oven contained a lens of dark red coarse sand-silt (1023/1), possibly the remains of an oven lining, which was sealed by a second oven lining (1023/2). This second lining was a compact orange-red clay burned *in situ*, which extended up to the rim of the

oven. Above this secondary lining, a compact grey-green clay (1011) was backfilled into the remaining hollow of the feature. This latter deposit contained pockets of redeposited burnt oven lining, charcoal and crushed, possibly limestone, fragments.

After the disuse and backfill of oven F110, a second oven (F107: Fig. 8), roughly oval in plan, was constructed slightly to the south-east partially truncating F110. The primary lining of oven F107, a red-orange clay (1017/1) burned *in situ*, was sealed by a compact, mottled grey-green clay (1016/1), overlain by a secondary lining of red-orange clay (1017/2). This secondary lining was, in turn, truncated by a narrow flue, aligned north-south and placed off-centre within the feature. This flue ran from the northern edge of the oven and continued into the northern baulk of Trench I. The flue and the bowl of the feature were backfilled with a compact deposit of grey-green clay (1016/2), which contained patches of soft black charcoal and redeposited burnt red clay oven lining.

Two other incomplete ovens (F109, F112) of similar form and fills were recorded in Trench I. Oven F112 was cut into the infilled oven F110, and could have been contemporary with

oven F107. Oven F109, located just inside the northern baulk of the trench, was heavily truncated by a later disturbance, and could not be related stratigraphically to the other excavated examples.

Further ovens were recorded in salvage conditions during the watching brief, in trenches F and Q (F312, F314-9; Fig.2). These features were concentrated to the east and south of Trench I, within approximately 5.0 m. of the main group.

Where stratigraphic relationships could be observed, the ovens appeared to be cut into infilled negative features and into disturbed clay-silt horizons, which possibly represented the cultivation soils of Phases 1 and 3. Although no dating evidence was recovered from the features that were recorded during the watching brief, the similarity in form and the close clustering of all of the identified ovens might indicate a focus of broadly contemporary domestic or industrial activity. The oven backfills contained charred seeds of barley, wheat, oat grains and fragments of the great fen sedge and hazel nut shells, and pottery with a *terminus* in the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries, but the pottery from the intercutting features could not be distinguished chronologically.



Figure 7. Trench II, north-south arm, looking south.



Figure 8. Trench I, oven F107, looking north.

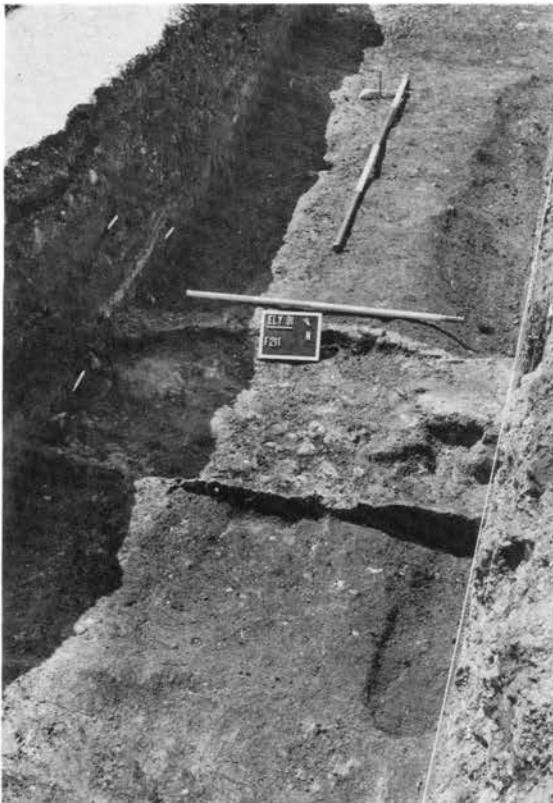


Figure 9. Trench II, mortar-mixing pit F211, and gulleys F208, F209, looking northeast.

No evidence of contemporary activity was found in Trench II.

Phase 5: Early post-medieval activity. 16th century (Figs 3–5, 9–10)

The main focus of activity in Phase 5 was located in the rear of the backplot area (in Trench II) where a group of associated gulleys, a mortar-mixing pit and a number of post-holes were dug into the Phase 3 cultivation soil.

The return to the active use of the rear backplot area was marked by a single post-hole (F212). This infilled post-hole was sealed by deposits of gravel and crushed stone (2023, 2029, 2030), possibly derived from stone-dressing.

Then a shallow, flat-based gully (F208), was cut into the gravel layer (2029). The gully was aligned north-south and continued beyond the west baulk of Trench II. A second gully (F209), parallel with F208, was partly exposed just inside the eastern baulk of the trench. A shallow, flat-based cut (F227) linked the two gulleys. Although these features were not stratigraphically related, except

by their fills, their alignment and positioning suggest that they might have been in contemporary use. Cut F227 was backfilled with a mixed yellow-green clay (2038), much compacted by trampling. Gulleys F208 and F209 were backfilled with mixed mid-brown clay-silt (2033 in F208; 2039 in F209) containing patches of orange clay, with an increasing quantity of crushed sandstone fragments recorded towards the top of the fills. An irregularly-shaped gully (F217), exposed in the north of the trench, might have been in contemporary use with the southern group of gulleys.

A flat-based feature, which has been interpreted as a mortar-mixing pit (F211), was then cut into the now-infilled gulleys. The pit had vertically-cut sides, which in plan curved slightly outwards in the centre of the trench (forming a 'boat-like' shape), and extended beyond the east and west baulks of the trench. The base and the sides of the pit were lined with sticky blue-green clay (2041), forming a lip slightly raised above and just beyond the upper edge of the pit cut. This feature was filled with a deposit of buff-white mortar (2033). The blue-green clay lining (3031) of a second possible mortar-mixing pit (F321) was located to the south of Trench I during the watching brief. Its original shape could not be identified because of machine disturbance, but its lining appeared to be similar to the excavated example.

A shallow layer of sticky clay (2003, 2011), recorded patchily over both arms of Trench II and sealing the Phase 3 soil, might have been deliberately laid in an attempt to provide a working platform surrounding the mortar-mixing pit. This clay layer was cut in the north of the trench by three stone-packed post-holes (F214, F218, F219) and two post-holes or small pits (F213, F214), which might have formerly belonged to a structure possibly associated and contemporary either with the use of the mortar mixing pit, or with the earlier gulleys. In the south of the trench two rubbish pits (F229, F200) were dug through the clay layer (2003, 2011). The backfills of pit F229 contained seeds of partially germinated bread wheat and barley which might have been discarded damp.

Successive stony deposits (2075, 2024, 2060, 2074) were dumped over the Phase 3 soil in the north of Trench II, sealing the infilled post-holes and pits. A yard surface (2063), formed of burnt rectangular sandstone fragments, was exposed to the north of the trench. The stony deposits might derive



Figure 10. Trench II, detail of mortar-mixing pit F211, after excavation, looking southeast.

from the use of the mortar-mixing pit, although the precise stratigraphic relationship between the mortar-mixing pit (F211) and these stony layers had been destroyed by a later disturbance.

Following the abandonment of the ovens, the next event recorded in the south of the backplot area (Trench I) was the construction of a small rubbish pit (F108). An irregularly-shaped cut in the north of the trench (F105), and two shallow, ill-defined disturbances (F103, F104: not illustrated), in the south of the trench also belonged to this phase.

The fills of the Phase 5 features in both trenches contained pottery with a *terminus* in the sixteenth century; the majority of the dating evidence came from Trench II.

Phase 6: Later post-medieval-modern activity. 18th century-present (Fig.3)

In Trench II, disturbances cut from the upper horizon of the Phase 5 stone debris were recorded in section. The most substantial of these (F206) was dug east-west in the approximate position of the mortar-mixing

pit and aligned with the east-west wall of an outbuilding (not illustrated), located to the west of the trench. Other disturbances (F205, F207, F231-F233) related to the laying of services and the dumping of stone debris (F233). Above were successive layers of make-up material for the cobbled yard (2009) of the coaching inn, overlain by the modern tarmac yard (2000). To the east of the White Hart Inn yard, a brick soakaway (F201), now demolished, was constructed adjoining the west wall of an outbuilding.

The final episode of activity in Trench I was represented by the deposition of a levelling-up soil (1005), 0.25 m. deep, as a foundation for the cobbled yard surface (1003) and laid beneath the modern tarmac yard (1000). Brick footings (F100, F101) for the walls of outbuildings and a service trench (F111) were cut into this make-up level.

The dating evidence from both trenches comprised residual medieval wares and some sherds of eighteenth- to nineteenth-century material.

The Pottery

Stephanie Ratkai

Introduction

The two trenches produced 658 sherds: 293 from Trench I and 365 from Trench II. The pottery was examined under x20 magnification and divided into 27 fabric groups, and the post-medieval pottery was separated out. Most of the fabric groups could subsequently be discerned macroscopically (Tables 2, 3). In addition the pottery was checked for cross-joining sherds.

The Pottery Fabrics

(1) Calcareous Wares: Fabrics A1, B2 and B3.

None of these wares is well represented. Fabric A1 occurs only in context 1006, Phase 5. It contains numerous ooliths and is overfired to the point of fusion, presumably as a result of industrial activity in the area. The sherds are certainly residual.

Fabric B2 (?Lyveden), has a fine matrix with sparse shell and sparse ooliths and ferruginous inclusions. It is oxidised to an orange-red colour with a pale grey core. There are two form sherds, one from a jug with a carinated neck and with a yellowish green

Table 2. Pottery fabrics, source and dating.

Fabric	Date	Source/common name
A1	?	?local
B1	12th-?late 14th century	local
B2	late 12th-14th century	?Lyveden
B3	10th-12th century	E. Midlands
C2	12th-?late 14th century	local (variant of B1?)
C3	?13th-15th century	?local
C4	14th-15th century	Grey ware
C5	(13th)14th-15th century	Grimston Ware (mainly highly decorated)
C6	13th-15th century	?
C7	?12th-14th century	?
C9	late medieval	Reduced ware
D1	(?earlier)?13th-14th century	not local
D2	14th-16th century	Orange Sandy ware
D3	12th-13th century	?Nottingham
D4	15th-16th century	?local
D6	late 15th-16th century	Cistercian Ware
D7	15th-16th century	'Tudor Green'
D8	14th-15th century	E. Midlands
D9	?14th-15th century	?
D10	?13th-15th century	?
D11	13th-14th(?15th century)	?E. Midlands
D12	late 13th-early 14th century	Taynton All Saints
D13	14th century	

glaze applied over a white slip, the other from a cooking pot/jar with a sharply modelled ledge rim. Fabric B3 contains moderate to abundant ooliths, crushed limestone and fossil shell with some ferruginous inclusions. Sherds are reduced to browns, greys and blacks. This fabric is possibly Saxo-Norman, and occurs only residually on site.

(2) *Sandy Wares with some calcareous inclusions: Fabrics B1, C2-C4, C6, D10 and D12.*

Fabric B1 is the dominant local fabric. It contains varying amounts of ill-sorted, rounded and sub-angular quartz grains and sparse-moderate irregular pieces of limestone and ooliths. Sometimes the limestone has burnt out from the matrix. It is generally a hand-made fabric although many vessels show traces of wheel finishing. Surfaces are generally light brown or occasionally reddish. The core is dark grey or black. There are rare ferruginous inclusions and sometimes lumps of chert are visible. About 35% of B1 sherds are glazed (Fabric B1 (G)). The glaze is often pimply or had a pitted orange-peel texture.

B1 Forms

Cooking pot/jars with rounded bodies and fairly flat bases. Some have stumpy curved rims (Fig.11.1) rising from the shoulder, sometimes with an internal bevel. Another vessel has a more marked neck and a horizontal rim. There are other 'necked' rims (Fig.11.2-3) and one 'nail head' rim (Fig.11.4). The diameters range from 14 cm.-19 cm. There is one example of a simple curved rim, diameter 14 cm. The rim form and small diameter might suggest a Saxo-Norman date. One cooking pot/jar has irregular stabbing on the outside of the rim. One sherd has traces of a thumbed vertical strip.

Bowls are generally sloping-sided with simple rims often with internal and/or external thickening (Fig.11.5). Other forms represented are bowls with a stubby horizontal rim (Fig.11.6), the most frequently occurring type, and bowls with an up-sloping flange. Bowls with a horizontal rim, sometimes internally-thickened, are decorated with incised or combed wavy lines (Fig.11.7-8). There are two examples of sloping-sided bowls with a thickened rim undercut internally and externally. One sloping-sided bowl (Fig.11.9) has a thickened, everted rim. A

Table 3. Pottery fabrics by phase.

TRENCH PHASE	II 1	I 2	II 2	II 3	I 4	I 5	II 5	I 6	II 6	TOTAL
Fabric										
B1	2	18	15	33	17	74	45	22	9	235
B1(G)	1	2	8	16	2	10	26	7	1	73
B3	-	2	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	4
C2	-	1	3	-	4	25	-	3	-	36
D1	-	1	1	-	1	1	5	1	-	10
C3	-	-	1	9	-	11	6	-	-	27
C7	-	-	1	-	-	4	-	2	-	7
C6	-	-	1	-	-	1	18	-	-	20
C5	-	-	-	8	1	2	15	2	1	29
C9	-	-	-	9	1	2	9	-	-	-
D3	-	-	-	1	-	1	2	2	1	7
D4	-	-	-	2	-	7	34	10	6	59
D10	-	-	-	1	-	-	4	-	1	6
D6	-	-	-	1	-	6	3	3	1	14
R	-	-	1	7	1	3	11	5	2	30
D2	-	-	-	3	-	1	4	6	-	14
E1/E2	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	2
D12	-	-	-	12	-	-	1	-	-	13
B2	-	-	-	-	1	3	-	1	-	5
C4	-	-	-	-	1	-	2	-	2	5
D8	-	-	2	-	-	-	5	-	-	7
D11	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	1	7
X01	-	-	-	-	-	3	1	-	-	4
D9	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
D13	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
A1	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	6
D7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
PM	-	-	-	-	-	8	-	4	2	14
TOTAL	3	24	33	94	28	168	190	70	27	658

small section of bowl rim from Phase 1 has a simple, everted rim.

There are two thick-walled rim-neck sherds from jugs. One has a plain rim and part of a strap handle with a stabbed design (Fig. 11.10), the other has a horizontal rim decorated with a cross stamp (Fig. 11.11). Both jugs are unglazed and the handles simply luted into place. There was a rather more complete jug profile from context 2048 (Fig. 11.12). There are some shallow finger impressions internally at the junction of handle with neck and body. The upper half, i.e. shoulder-neck, is glazed. There is another rim from a similar jug but the rim is marked with a groove. There are both strap handles (Fig. 11.13) and rod handles. Externally glazed sherds indicate that jugs are decorated with incised horizontal lines and hori-

zontal and wavy combing.

Many sherds of all forms show evidence of knife trimming, particularly towards the base.

Fabric C2 is a coarse, hand-made, fabric with large angular and sub-angular quartz (the quartz is often red), red ferruginous inclusions, black mineral inclusions, possible clay pellets and sparse shell and limestone. It has orange-brown surfaces with a grey core.

C2 Forms

Cooking pot/jars with a rounded profile with a flattened 'S'-shaped rim (Fig. 11.14) with random stabbing on the outside of the rim.

The only indication of jugs is a large crude

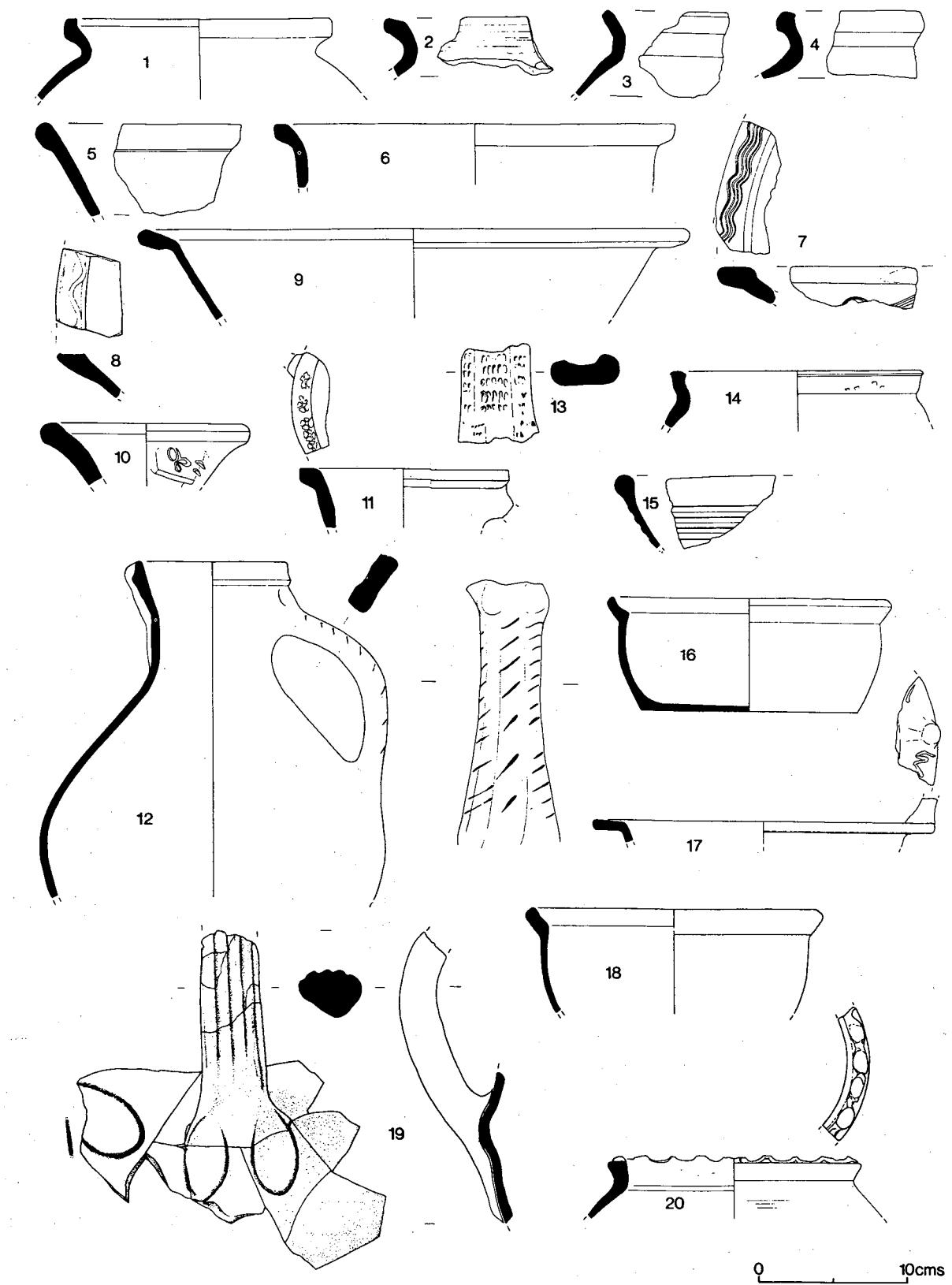


Figure 11. *The pottery.*

blackened strap handle decorated with finger impressions along the edges and stabbing down the centre.

Fabric C3 is a medium sandy fabric with very rare limestone, organic and ferruginous inclusions. It has pale brown surfaces and a grey core.

C3 Forms

There are two types of bowl. One is sloping-sided with a large bead rim with an internal groove, the other has a more rounded profile with a large bead rim and marked rilling on the external surface (Fig. 11.15). Both types are glazed internally with a patchy light olive glaze.

Fabric C4 has a very fine sandy matrix, with sparse ooliths and limestone fragments and some ferruginous inclusions. Surfaces are grey or brown with a dark grey core.

C4 Forms

Bowl with sloping sides and thickened, everted rim. There are traces of knife trimming on some sherds.

Fabric C6 has a fine sandy matrix with sparse red and grey angular and sub-angular quartz and rare calcareous inclusions. It has oxidised orange surfaces with a light orange or grey core.

C6 Forms

Bowl with a rounded body, flat base and thickened, everted rim with internal groove or lid seating (Fig. 11.16).

Rim of chafing dish (Fig. 11.17). Traces of internal tan glaze.

Fabric D10 has a sandy matrix with numerous small quartz grains and sparse to moderate sub-angular grey and clear quartz grains, sparse ferruginous inclusions, sparse possible grog and sparse irregular voids. It has oxidised orange surfaces and a grey core.

D10 Forms

Bowl with a rounded profile and an everted rim with a slightly concave internal face (Fig. 11.18). There is also a sherd with a thin dull olive glaze, which presumably came from a jug.

Fabric D12 (possibly from Taynton All Saints) contains moderate rounded and sub-angular grey and clear quartz grains, sparse ferruginous inclusions and sparse voids and calcareous inclusions.

D12 Forms

There is only one vessel in this fabric: a large jug with a thick, grooved strap-handle and applied curvilinear design in a red clay or slip. The glaze has disintegrated to a dull pale yellow. The jug is badly abraded. (Fig. 11.19).

(3) Sandy Wares: Fabrics C5, C7, C9, D1-D4, D6-D9, D13

Fabric C5 (Grimston Ware) is a grey sandy ware often with a pale grey margin below an external glazed surface.

C5 Forms

The most common form from this site is the highly decorated jug. However, there are no profiles, only glazed and decorated body sherds. The decoration usually consists of iron oxide applied to the body of the pot or to applied pellets, strips and scales before glazing. There is one example of a base angle with spaced finger impressions. There is a twisted handle and a ridged handle with three pronounced thumb impressions where the bottom on the handle joins the body of the pot. This handle type represents a later phase of production of Grimston Ware.¹¹ There is also a pipkin, with traces of glaze and with horizontal combing. Only handle and body sherds survive.

Fabric C7 contains moderate, sub-angular quartz grains, which are often red or yellow. It has a hard, rough feel and is reduced to greys and blacks.

Fabric C9 is a fine sandy reduced ware with moderate to abundant fine sand. There are only a few sherds, mainly undiagnostic body sherds. There is a single rim from context 2006. It is everted with a thickened terminal. The upper face of the rim has been combed. Two other body sherds are decorated with

¹¹ H. Clarke and A. Carter, 'Excavations in King's Lynn 1963-1970'. *Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology Monograph Series 7* (1977) pp. 183-285.

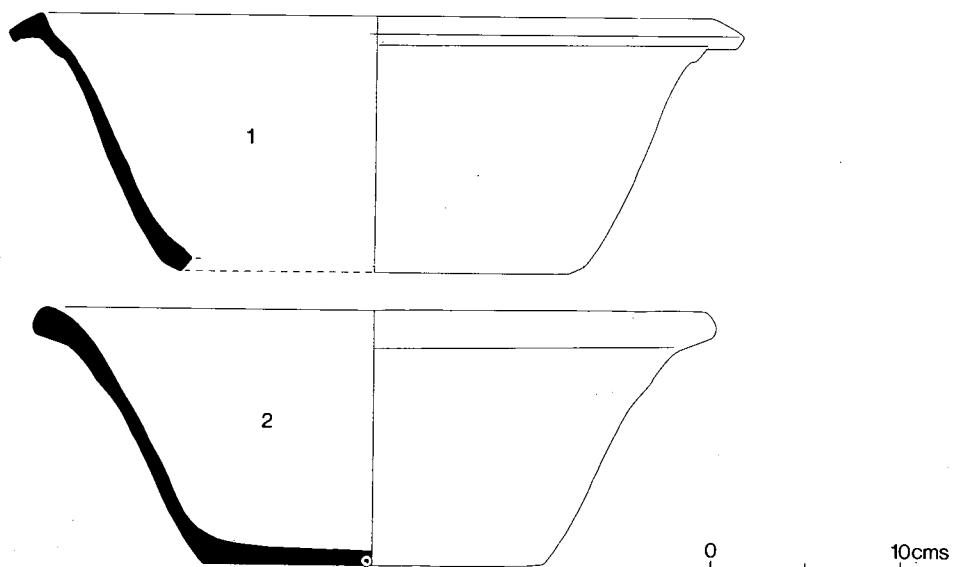


Figure 12. *The pottery.*

incised horizontal lines. This fabric is similar to late medieval reduced wares in the East Midlands, described by Moorhouse.¹²

Fabric D1 has a very fine sandy matrix with abundant microscopic quartz grains and sparse ferruginous inclusions. Mica is visible on the surface. It generally has light brown or pale orange surfaces with a grey core.

D1 Forms

Jugs. One jug has an horizontal rim with a patchy pale green glaze. The handle was attached by pushing the body through into the handle and filling the resulting hollow with a plug of clay. There is also a ledge rim with a spot of olive glaze. Some body sherds are decorated with vertical combing and underglaze iron oxide or red slip bands. One sherd has a vertical, slashed applied strip and applied red pellets. The applied strip might have been part of a limb from an applied figure.

Fabric D2 ('Orange Sandy Ware') contains abundant small quartz grains with occasional larger grains. It is oxidised orange-red throughout. The surfaces appear to have been wiped or to have had a thin wash applied over them. The glaze is a clear lead glaze.

12 S. Moorhouse, 'A distinctive type of late medieval pottery in the East Midlands', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society* 65 (1971) pp.46-59.

D2 Forms

Chafing dish with an internal glaze and incised wavy line around the rim. There is also a rim which might be from a jar or pipkin.

Fabric D3 (possibly Nottingham Ware) has moderate angular and sub-angular quartz, sparse ferruginous inclusions and sparse black, possibly ferruginous, inclusions. It is light orange or buff throughout.

D3 Forms

Jug with carination below the rim and a yellow-green splash glaze. There are some sherds decorated with iron oxide beneath the glaze or with red slip.

Fabric D4 has a fine sandy matrix with sparse, large ferruginous inclusions. It is generally orange throughout but there are some reduced examples or some with a grey core. Glazes are in the olive, tan, brown range.

D4 Forms

Cistern: a similar form is paralleled at Denny Abbey.¹³ There is a possible pipkin/cooking

13 G. Coppock, 'Medieval and post-medieval pottery', in P.M. Christie and J.G. Coad, 'Excavations at Denny Abbey', *Archaeological Journal* 137 (1980) pp.223-52, no.177.

pot/jar with a rounded body with a rim everted from the shoulder and an applied thumbed strip along the top of the rim. The rim is covered with an olive glaze (Fig. 11.20).

Bowls with sloping sides and flange rims and internal glaze (Fig. 12.1–2). One bowl (Fig. 12.2) is overfired and in places the surfaces have started to blister. There is also a bowl sherd with external incised wavy lines.

Jugs are only represented by body sherds, some of which are decorated with incised horizontal lines. Two of these sherds, apparently from the same vessel, are badly distorted. These sherds may be wasters or may be from a jug sold as a 'second'. In either case it argues for fairly local production of this ware. However, included in this group are two joining sherds with an external dark green glaze and an internal yellowish glaze. Pottery glazed in this way has been found at Denny Abbey where it is described as 'Tattershall Ware'.¹⁴

Fabric D6 (Cistercian Ware). This fabric is represented by body sherds and one rim sherd from cups. One sherd has applied white clay pellets beneath the glaze.

Fabric D7 (Surrey White Ware). This fabric is represented by a single sherd, glazed internally and externally with a rich copper-green glaze.

Fabric D8 is a buff sandy ware with moderate to abundant small quartz grains with sparse larger sub-angular grains and sparse to moderate red ferruginous inclusions. Surfaces are buff or pale grey with a grey core. The clay might be derived from the coal measure clays of the Midlands.

D8 Forms

There are no rim sherds from jugs. There is a flaring base and a strap handle, possibly overfired. One body sherd has a smooth, glazed external surface whilst the interior is deeply grooved. It is possible that a former of some kind was used in its manufacture.

Fabric D9 has a fine, sandy matrix with sparse small red quartz grains and sparse red ferruginous inclusions. Surfaces are buff with an orange core. This fabric bears a superficial resemblance to Brill Wares from Buckinghamshire.

Fabric D11 is a buff/white ware with buff or pale grey surfaces and a distinct 'sand-

wich' grey core. It contains moderate amounts of rounded quartz grains and sparse red ferruginous and black, possibly ferruginous, inclusions. This fabric, too, might be derived from coal measure clays. All of the sherds are from one vessel, which was probably a cooking pot/jar.

Fabric D13 is a fine, sandy pale orange fabric represented by a single sherd. It resembles fabrics D2 and D10 but the match between D13 and D2 and D10 is not exact. The sherd in fabric D13 comes from a jug with a plain rim. The neck was decorated with a 'wheel' stamp and glazed with a thick dark-green glaze. The decoration and glaze are matched by a sherd from Denny Abbey in smooth red ware.¹⁵

Fabric E1 and E2 (Stamford Ware). Fabric E1 is represented by a single strap handle in a white-pale grey finely sandy fabric with a speckled apple-green glaze and broken combing along the edges of the handle. Fabric E2 is also represented by a single sherd with a dense paste-like cream fabric with a thin external yellow glaze.

Dating and chronology

The dominant fabric at the White Hart, Ely is fabric B1, which forms about 45% of the total assemblage and a much higher proportion in Phases 1–2, Trench 1 and Phase 2, Trench II. It is difficult to decide at what point fabric B1 ceased to be used. A jug (Fig. 11.12) from Phase 4, with its sparse glaze, undecorated form and simple slashed handle would appear to be a fourteenth century type. Fabric B1 appears to be similar to the 'brown gritty ware' from Denny Abbey¹⁶ and some of the B1 forms can be paralleled there. Although Coppack gives no quantification and offers no date range of the fabrics from Denny Abbey, brown gritty ware seems to have gone out of use by the mid-fourteenth century. Further west, the sandy calcareous ware, fabric T2, in Northampton, is not in use beyond 1400 and in Bedford¹⁷ the calcareous wares do not generally extend into the fourteenth century. It would seem reasonable, therefore, to give a *terminus ante quem* of about 1350 for fabric B1.

15 *Ibid.* no. 27.

16 *Ibid.* no. 224.

17 E. Baker and J. Hassall, 'The finds', in D. Baker and J. Hassall, 'Excavations in Bedford 1967–1977', *Bedfordshire Archaeological Journal* 13 (1979) pp. 147–293.

The pottery from Phase 1, Trench II, contains a splash-glazed sherd, fabric B1(G), which is unlikely to be earlier than the twelfth century. However, there are some residual sherds (e.g. fabric B3, and fabric E2) and forms (e.g. the narrow diameter cooking pots with simple everted rims) which might indicate some Saxo-Norman activity. However, if this activity had been intense, a greater amount of calcareous wares might have been expected. Earlier material of this nature from the White Hart probably indicates stray sherds rather than early occupation. On balance, it would seem that the sherds from Phase 1 do reflect the earliest occupation in the area, i.e. twelfth- to early thirteenth-century.

There are some examples of datable pottery from the Ely assemblage. Decorated Grimston ware, fabric C5, can be paralleled by material from Kings Lynn¹⁸ and dates to the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries. The Taynton All Saints jug, fabric D12, can be paralleled by vessels from kiln 1, about late thirteenth century.¹⁹ This jug was much abraded and is presumed residual in Phase 3 context 2006.

The orange sandy ware, fabric D2, is paralleled at Denny Abbey where it occurs during the later medieval period e.g. possible mid-fourteenth to fifteenth centuries and beyond. A similar pattern is apparent at Ely, with sandy oxidised wares becoming increasingly common from Phase 5 onwards.

Other datable pottery types are fabric D6, Cistercian Ware, late fifteenth to sixteenth century and imported Rhenish stoneware, fabric X01, sixteenth century.

Conclusion

The pottery from the White Hart, Ely is parochial in character with few obvious imports from outside the immediate locale, the only reasonably well-represented import being Grimston Ware. It might have been expected that a busy market centre like Ely would have shown a greater variety in the pottery. Why it does not is a matter for speculation. It is possible that the small area excavated has produced an assemblage atypical of the pottery in wider use, and that evidence of the more sophisticated types might be found elsewhere. The possible industrial activity in the area might indicate the residence of

artisans whose spare capital was not invested in exotic pottery, although the presence of a chafing-dish rim (context 1006, Phase 5) suggests some attempt at refinement. It might be that the residents in the area were sufficiently wealthy to eschew pottery in favour of metal vessels.

Further work is now necessary to determine the range of pottery in Ely and to improve the pottery chronology for the early-medieval (post-Conquest-1350) phase.

Other Finds

Details of the other finds, including tile and metalwork are tabulated in the archive. None of this material is deemed to be sufficiently significant to be published.

The Plant Remains

Lisa Moffett

Introduction

Soil samples for charred plant remains were taken during excavation at the archaeologists' discretion. The contexts chosen for sampling were those that seemed most likely to produce material and were mainly oven fills and fills of rubbish pits and ditches that contained datable artefacts. The 21 samples were processed by flotation in a York sieving machine, with the resulting flots retrieved on stacked 1 mm. and 0.5 mm. sieves. When dry, the flots were examined under a binocular microscope.

A preliminary check of the samples suggested that they would not produce abundant amounts of material. The presence of pot marigold (*Calendula officinalis*) was noted in one of the samples, however, and this is of interest since garden species are generally rarely preserved in archaeological material. It was decided that it would not be worth sorting the samples since they were unlikely to produce material that could be meaningfully quantified. However, a record of the species present was desirable. The flots were therefore scanned, without removing any items, and the species present noted without any attempt at quantification. This method was much faster than sorting, but it meant that there is a greater possibility that items were overlooked in the samples. The possibility of error in identification is also greater since most identifications were made with only a brief examination.

¹⁸ Clarke and Carter, *op. cit.*

¹⁹ M.R. McCarthy and C.M. Brooks, *Medieval Pottery in Britain AD 900-1600* (Leicester 1988) fig. 150.

Table 4. The plant remains.

	Phases 1-2 12C-13C	Phases 3-4 14C-15C	Phase 5 16C
Cultivated Plants			
<i>Triticum aestivum</i> rachis nodes	+	-	+
<i>Triticum</i> sp. free-threshing	-	-	+
<i>Triticum</i> sp.	+	+	+
<i>Secale cereale</i>	-	-	+
<i>Hordeum/Secale</i> rachis nodes	-	+	-
<i>Hordeum vulgare</i> rachis nodes	+	-	-
<i>Hordeum vulgare</i>	+	+	+
<i>Avena</i> sp.	-	+	+
Cereal indet.	+	+	+
<i>Coleoptiles</i>	-	+	-
<i>Vicia/Pisum</i>	-	-	+
<i>Vicia/Pisum/Lathyrus</i>	-	+	+
c.f. <i>Armoracia rusticana</i>	+	-	-
<i>Calendula officinalis</i>	-	+	-
Wild Plants			
<i>Ranunculus acris/repens/bulbosus</i>	-	-	+
<i>Ranunculus sardous</i>	-	-	+
<i>Brassica nigra/rapa</i>	+	-	+
<i>Brassica/Sinapis</i> mineralised	-	-	+
<i>Reseda lutea</i>	-	+	-
<i>Agrostemma githago</i> calyx tip	-	+	-
<i>Chenopodium album</i> type	-	-	+
<i>Vicia tetrasperma</i>	-	-	+
<i>Vicia tetrasperma/hirsuta</i> immature	-	-	+
<i>Vicia/Lathyrus</i>	+	+	+
<i>Medicago lupulina</i>	-	-	+
<i>Trifolium</i> type	+	+	+
<i>Corylus avellana</i>	-	+	-
<i>Rumex</i> sp.	-	-	+
? <i>Primula</i> sp.	-	-	+
<i>Galium aparine</i>	-	-	+
<i>Galium</i> sp.	-	+	+
<i>Anthemis cotula</i>	+	+	+
<i>Cladum mariscus</i>	+	+	+
c.f. <i>Cladum mariscus</i> stem fragments	+	-	+
<i>Eleocharis palustris/uniglumis</i>	-	+	-
<i>Carex</i> sp.	-	+	+
<i>Phleum pratense</i>	-	-	+
Gramineae indet.	+	+	+
Unidentified tuber top	-	+	-
Unidentified seeds	-	-	+

Discussion

Table 4 gives a list of all the species found as charred material. A few uncharred seeds were also noted in the samples, but it is

possible that these are modern contaminants. Small quantities of bone, abraded shell and fish scales were present in the samples but only the presence of fish scale was consistently noted. Notes on which items were found,

sample by sample, are held in the archive. Most of the plant species in the sample were represented by fewer than five seeds and many were present only as single seeds. Where items were more abundant, this is mentioned in the notes.

There were four samples from Phases 1 and 2 (twelfth to thirteenth centuries), seven from Phases 3 and 4 (thirteenth to fourteenth centuries) and ten from Phase 5 (sixteenth century). The small number of samples and relatively small amount of material in them would make it impossible to determine reliably if there were any changes through time, even if there had been apparent differences in the species present. There was, in fact, little difference between the species present in the early phase and those in the later phase. The plant remains from all the phases, therefore, are discussed together.

Bread wheat (*Triticum aestivum s.l.*) was identified from a couple of rachis nodes. Wheat grains were present in many of the samples. No attempt was made to identify the wheat grains to species as this would have been time-consuming and unreliable. Barley (*Hordeum vulgare*) was also common in the samples. Rye (*Secale cereale*) was found in only one sample. A few oat grains (*Avena sp.*) were present, but since oats cannot be identified to species on the grains alone, it was not clear whether these were from a crop or represented wild oats growing as a weed. A few large legumes were present which could be either bean or pea (*Vicia/Pisum*).

Many of the wild plant remains probably represent weeds associated with crops. These include plant such as corncockle (*Agrostemma githago*) and stinking mayweed (*Anthemis cotula*), which are common weeds in medieval cereal assemblages. Fragments of hazel nut shell (*Corylus avellana*) might represent food remains.

Cladium mariscus, the great fen sedge, is a tall species from the wet fens which might have been collected deliberately for thatch, bedding or strewing on floors. Seeds of this species were fairly common in the samples. Stem fragments closely resembling those of *Cladium mariscus* were found in the backfill of Phase 2 ditch F216 and were abundant in one of the Phase 5 rubbish pits (F108). It is possible that the great fen sedge was common locally and was collected for use as thatch,²⁰ throughout most of the period

that the site was occupied.

Another Phase 5 rubbish pit (F229) contained a moderately abundant amount of wheat grains, some of which were distorted in shape and/or germinated. This suggests that the grain might have been damp and deliberately disposed of, because it was spoiled.

Pot marigold is not native to Britain, but it probably has an ancient history of use. It is mentioned in Aelfric's list of the tenth century.²¹ The flowers were widely used in the medieval period to add colour and flavour to various dishes and it was also important medicinally.²² Pot marigold has been found mostly in late medieval and post-medieval sites such as fifteenth- to sixteenth-century Hull,²³ sixteenth-century Hill Hall in Essex,²⁴ Leicester,²⁵ and seventeenth-century Dudley Castle.²⁶ Other remains in this context (2006) included cereals, weeds and *Cladium mariscus*, as well as bone, shell and fish scales. This suggests reworked rubbish or midden material, including perhaps hearth cleanings or rubbish burning mixed with other material. The single charred marigold seed is not proof that the 'cultivation soil' was used for gardening since the source of the rubbish is not known.

Possible evidence of another garden plant was a single seed that resembled horseradish (*Armoracia rusticana*). The seed was well-preserved and closely resembled the modern comparative material available. It is, however, unusual for horseradish to set seed²⁷ and no reported archaeobotanical finds of this species are known. Further comparisons with other populations of modern comparative material are needed, as it is possible that the reference material used has been erroneously identified. The seed came from a Phase 2 boundary ditch (F221) and appears to be associated with small amounts of residual cereal remains.

20 H.C. Darby, *The Medieval Fenland* (Newton Abbot 1940) p.32.

- 21 J. Harvey, *Medieval Gardens* (London 1981) p.174.
- 22 T. McLean, *Medieval English Gardens* (London 1981) pp.141–2.
- 23 D. Williams, 'The plant macrofossil contents of medieval pits at Sewer Lane, Hull', in P. Armstrong, 'Excavations in Sewer Lane, Hull', *East Riding Archaeology* 3 (1978) pp.18–32.
- 24 P. Murphy and R. Scaife, *Garden Archaeology (CBA Research Report 78)* (London 1991) pp.93–9.
- 25 Lisa Moffett, *in preparation*.
- 26 Lisa Moffett, 'Fruits, vegetables, herbs and other plants from the latrine at Dudley Castle in Central England, used by the royal garrison during the Civil War', *Review of Palaeobotany and Palynology* 73 (1992) pp.271–86.
- 27 C. Stace, *New Flora of the British Isles* (Cambridge 1991) p.314.

Discussion

Introduction

Despite the limited extent of the trenching at the White Hart site, which has necessarily placed restrictions on our understanding of the overall layout of the backplot area, it has been possible to define a largely coherent and complementary datable sequence of activity from the two excavated trenches. This dating has been made feasible because of the relatively well-preserved stratified deposits encountered, and the quantity of datable pottery recovered. The value of these data has been enriched by observations made during the watching brief, which provided an important opportunity to record, albeit under salvage conditions, more widely within the backplot area and also immediately to the rear of the White Hart building itself. A disappointment was the inability to relate the information obtained from recording the trenches to that obtained beneath the White Hart itself, and thus to integrate the sequence of building activity²⁸ within the overall archaeological sequence. The rich documentary sources for Ely, such as the survey of 1417²⁹ can provide an historical framework for the physical development of the town, while specific later changes in plot layout can be assessed against the cartographic evidence.

Dating, sequence and function

The earliest artefactual evidence comprises a number of stray sherds of possible Saxon-Norman date (Fabrics B3, E2), which occur as residual material in Phase 1 deposit, and do not derive from occupation *in situ*. The higher ground on the west bank of the Ouse might have been the main focus for Saxon settlement, although traces of Saxon activity have also been found near the Cathedral.³⁰ Settlement in Ely was recorded to have retained an essentially rural character in the Domesday Book.³¹

The earliest recorded activity (Phase 1) was the cultivation of the area, dated by a

group of abraded sherds to the twelfth or early thirteenth centuries. The ecofactual evidence suggests that the crops grown included bread wheat and other cereals. The site would have lain to the north of a large market place established to the north of the Abbey, perhaps during Phase 1.

The Phase 2 evidence indicates the abandonment of this early cultivation activity, and the laying out of ditched plots with boundaries aligned north-south, perpendicular to Market Street, during the twelfth or thirteenth centuries. The re-definition of an established alignment, possibly first represented by post-holes (F223-4) and later by a ditch (F221), is perhaps suggested by the similarity both of the alignment and the positioning of these features. These ditches, and the western ditch (F302) cut on a similar alignment, probably defined separate burgage plots. The close proximity of ditches F221 and F216 might suggest that they were not contemporary, or that the latter was not a major boundary. The possible identification of the northern butt-end of ditch F221 could define the northernmost extent of the burgage plots, although the butt-end of ditch F216, recorded to the south, could equally define the northernmost contemporary plot limit.

These excavated features define boundaries that remain identifiable on nineteenth-century maps, and in many cases are perpetuated by present-day property boundaries. The ditched boundaries (F113, F221) exposed in Trenches I and II are approximately on a line with the surviving property boundary between the west wall of the White Hart and 1-2 Market Street to the west, and the westernmost ditched boundary (F302) is on a line with the west wall of 1-2 Market Street (Figs 1C, 2).

The evidence for activity within the rear burgage plots is slight. The excavated sequence from Trench I suggests that there were no structures sited to the north of the White Hart in Phase 2, although only a small area here was available for examination. The only structural evidence (in Trench II) comprised a short length of a foundation trench, containing a slot for a beam and a single post-hole for a timber upright. The foundation trench was dug slightly to the east of the infilled plot boundary ditch (F221) and probably defined the west wall of a small timber outbuilding; there was no evidence of the position of the other walls.

There was no evidence of rubbish disposal in this period. The recovery of a number of bowl sherds with traces of internal limescale

²⁸ Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, 'The White Hart, Ely; '1-2 Market Street, Ely', (unpubl. report 86285, 1991).

²⁹ Public Record Office, Calendar of Patent Rolls 1418: Survey of Ely 1417.

³⁰ A. Holton-Krayenbuhl, 'Ely Cathedral precinct', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society* 80 (1992) p.121.

³¹ Rumble, *op. cit.* p.5.

is the only indicator of possible industrial or commercial activity occurring on or near the site. The pottery found from this phase was dominated by bowls, and includes examples that were heavily sooted on the inside. The recovery of charred seeds of wheat and other cereals from the backfills of Phase 2 ditches suggests that such crops were grown or processed in the near vicinity.

These ditched burgage plots will have been laid out after the establishment of the market place, and reflect the need to promote and expand the market. Further development resulted in the establishment of Newnham Lane, to the west of the site. The excavated boundaries pre-date the White Hart and have been dated by a recent fabric survey to the late fifteenth century,³² and were probably associated with earlier buildings on the street frontage.

After the abandonment and obliteration of the Phase 2 features, the area remained open and might have returned to cultivation during the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries. The plant remains recovered from the Phase 3 cultivation soil include wheat, barley, other cereals, remains of the great fen sedge, possibly used for thatch, and a single seed of pot marigold. The relatively unabraded nature of the sherds recovered from this layer suggests that, as one would expect in the town centre, cultivation took the form of small garden plots. This cultivation might have been established to serve the needs of the adjoining market. Cultivation so close to the urban core was characteristic of later medieval urbanism.³³

The area continued to receive large quantities of pottery, presumably dumped with domestic rubbish and derived from the continued occupation of properties on the street frontage. The Phase 3 pottery assemblage was dominated by jug forms; most of the bowl and cooking pot jar sherds recovered were sooted, and one vessel contained limescale. The pottery and charred seeds were probably mixed into the cultivation soil during the continued dumping of domestic refuse from dwellings on the street frontage.

In the post-cultivation Phase 4, activity appeared to be concentrated in the south of the backplot area, close to the White Hart building itself. The use of clay-lined possible bread ovens in this phase is dated by

pottery from their backfills to the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries, a similar time-span to that defined for the later cultivation episode (Phase 3). Accordingly, it is possible that Phases 3 and 4 were largely contemporary, or that they at least overlapped. Thus the Phase 4 'industrial' activity immediately to the rear of the White Hart might have been broadly contemporary with the cultivation of land further to the rear of the backplot area. Analysis of the oven backfills reveals that they received a quantity of charred seeds of wheat, barley and oats, but this material might derive from the use of the ovens, or from crop processing activites, such as grain parching, carried out nearby.

The resumption of activity towards the rear of the backplot area, after the end of Phase 3 cultivation, is marked by the evidence from Phase 5 in Trench II. While it is difficult to interpret the functions of the early Phase 5 gulleys (F208–9), it is clear that at this time the area was being used as a stonemason's yard. During stoneworking a considerable depth of stone debris accumulated, both before and after the use of the mortar-mixing pit. An example of Saxon date from Northampton provided a parallel feature.³⁴ The excavated mortar pit and the further pit that was tentatively identified during the watching brief, reflect building activity in the near vicinity, possibly on the street frontage, although no traces of mortared walls of this date survive within the White Hart or the immediately adjoining buildings.³⁵ This phase of activity is dated by the pottery to the sixteenth century. Rubbish pits were also excavated in the backplot area during this phase and these, like their earlier counterparts, contained traces of charred seeds.

The differing nature of the two pottery assemblages from Trenches I and II further defines the differing functions of these respective areas. Most sherds from Trench I, in the area of domestic rubbish disposal, are from cooking pots/jars, while the majority of the material from the stonemason's yard area (Trench II) comprises bowls.

The final phase of activity, Phase 6, is dated from the eighteenth century to the present. During this period, brick outbuildings were constructed to the rear of the White

32 Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, 'The White Hart, Ely'.

33 C. Platt, *The English Medieval Town* (London 1976) p.15.

34 M.R. McCarthy, 'The pottery', in J.H. Williams, *St Peter's Street, Northampton: Excavations 1973–6* (Northampton 1979) pp.151–242.

35 Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, 'The White Hart, Ely': '1–2 Market Street, Ely'.

Hart and to the west of the east range, and services were laid. Further stoneworking activity, found in the north of Trench II, might be related to the construction of outhouses to the rear of the White Hart. The laying of cobble and later tarmac yards to the rear of the White Hart completes the story.

Nineteenth-century maps record the pattern of outhouses to the rear of the White Hart,³⁶ which were revealed by excavation. These brick outhouses were probably contemporary with the brick east range of the White Hart, constructed in the nineteenth century.³⁷

Conclusion

The establishment of the market might have provided the stimulus for the early medieval cultivation of the White Hart site, which was followed by the laying out of burgage plots to the rear of the newly-created Market Street. Later, in the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries, the backplot area returned to cultivation, and the area closer to the street frontage was occupied by a group of ovens, but whether these activities were undertaken to fulfil domestic needs, or to provide produce for resale, cannot be determined. The stonemason's yard established here might have provided stone for the refurbishment of buildings on the street frontage, or possibly even for the refurbishment of the monastic buildings recorded around 1500 AD. The next historically attested events on this site re-

late to the establishment of a coaching inn in the post-medieval period.

The archaeological sequence at the White Hart mirrors the emergence of Ely as a prosperous market centre, the establishment of an urban core, and its rise and fall in economic prosperity. The decline in the city's economy, already evident in the fifteenth century, will have been accentuated by the loss of ecclesiastical patronage after the dissolution of the monasteries. This economic decline is in stark contrast to the continued prosperity of other East Anglian towns, such as King's Lynn, Norwich, Ipswich and Bury, which advanced in status at this period.³⁸

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36 Ordnance Survey 1888, 25 inches:mile.

37 Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, 'The White Hart, Ely'.

38 Patten, *op. cit.* p.42.

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