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(incorporating the Cambs and Hunts Archaeological Society)

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(incorporating the Cambs and Hunts Archaeological Society)

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for 2005**

Editor Alison Taylor

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Editorial

These Proceedings take us on the usual chronological tour of Cambridgeshire's past, from scant traces of Neolithic occupation at Fenstanton to the impact of 19th century entrepreneurship and 20th century planning on Cambridge's Victorian New Town. As ever, we aim to bring you the most significant results of the latest archaeological excavations, together with the Society's parallel interest in historical and landscape studies. Residents of Cambridge should feel especially well served by the painstaking work represented both in Philomena Guillebaud's reconstruction of the events and effects of enclosure of the West Fields, and Bryan and Wise's analysis of one area of post-enclosure development — as they say, a microcosm of development quite typical of Cambridge in an exceptionally dynamic age. Anthea Jones literally lets the past speak for itself, through the letters of the wife of an Ely bishop, whose domestic concerns were little affected by her husband's daunting ecclesiastical responsibilities.

Outside the normal running of an active local society, CAS has been involved in a peripheral but deeply concerned way with the heritage service (including archaeology, archives and museums) of the County Council. Regular readers will be aware of the concerns we have expressed over the years at what we have seen as a general failure to support excellent staff by providing the right resources. This spring, financial matters became significantly worse, and CAS joined a substantial body of protest which at least postponed for one year one tranche of cuts (worth £100,000). This cut will however go ahead in 2006, leaving Heritage Services to face a 30% budget reduction from £927,000 to £650,000, even though Cambridgeshire is already well below neighbouring counties in funding these services. A consultants' (Kentwood Associates) discussion paper notes among other things that one decision that has caused most damage to the Council's reputation is the abolition of the post of the County Museums Officer, and CAS knows how much John Goldsmith, a vastly effective supporter of local museums since 1975, would be missed (August 2005). They note too that proposed cuts will require far-reaching policy decisions to withdraw from non-statutory services which would have 'a major impact, both for the public directly and on the ability of those services to lever additional — and often substantial — funding from external sources'.

The consultants are particularly flattering about archaeology. 'We believe this to be an outstanding example of a County Council Archaeology Service. Its archaeology and countryside advice services are held in high regard by planners, developers, other local authorities, and regional and national organisations. The service has an enviable track record in obtaining external funding... The outreach programme — particularly work with schools — is exemplary.' The report is concerned that such work is not put at risk, and it is critical of the current short opening hours of the County Record Office, of the County's failure to provide public access to historic buildings information since 2002, and the loss (August 2005) of a valued mentor for small museums. It is also worried that, if a proposed new Historical Resource & Cultural Centre is built with PFI money, there would not be funding to staff it adequately for the hours the public would reasonably expect.

There are clearly frightening times ahead, not least for our small, mostly voluntary, museums. This is very sad at a time when there is so much public enthusiasm for the past and so many new sources that can be tapped if the right support and advice are available. CAS has already filled some gaps, for example by taking responsibility for *Conduit* and publishing 'Recent Fieldwork' without grant support, and we are hoping to reinstate some financial support for local archaeological groups. We will continue of course to co-operate with the County Council through advice, by offering joint working and by fruitful liaison with their over-worked staff. We hope this coming year will see some solutions rather than additional problems, and a better atmosphere of hope and confidence. CAS is certainly willing to give all the support it can.

Just as these *Proceedings* were going to press, we heard the sad news that Rev Prof William Frend had died, at the age of 89. His had been a long and distinguished career (or perhaps series of careers, as theologian, soldier, priest and archaeologist), and he did outstanding work on early Christianity. In his later years in Cambridgeshire he impressed and worried us in turn with his continuing excavations, which were fruitful to the last. He has already submitted the results of this work to CAS for publication, and I am guilty in not having yet edited them for publication. The next *Proceedings* (2006) will include a full obituary for William, with his excavations at Great Wilbraham and accounts of Christian artefacts from Roman Cambridgeshire.

Alison Taylor
Editor

Medieval deposits and a cockpit at St Ives, Cambridgeshire

Kate Nicholson

with contributions by Mary Carter, Peter Thompson, Nina Crummy,
Jane Cowgill, Tom McDonald, Val Fryer and Carina Phillips

Evidence was found for activity during the medieval, post-medieval and modern periods, with a hiatus during the 15th and 16th centuries. Significant features included 13th to 14th century plot boundary ditches and a 17th to early 18th century cockfighting ring.

Introduction

In 2003, Archaeological Solutions Ltd (AS, formerly HAT) carried out an archaeological excavation at the former Permanex site, Ramsey Road, St Ives (centred NGR TL 3108 7154) (Wilkins and Roberts 2003) (Fig. 1). A full account and specialists' finds and environmental reports can be found in the archive publication report (Nicholson 2004).

The excavated site was approximately 1390m², located on the gravel terraces of the Great Ouse, within St Ives' medieval core. The site is bounded to the south by properties fronting The Waits, beyond which lies the 'Back Water' (a small channel of the Great Ouse) and the marshy island of the Holt. The 12th century parish church of All Saints lies to the west and the medieval market place to the east (Fig. 1). The Permanex site had been the culmination of the industrial development of this land during the 20th century. Prior to open area excavation the site had been subjected to a desk based assessment and trial trench evaluation (Keir *et al* 2003).

The site lies outside of the area affected by a serious fire in St Ives in 1689, but is close enough to the river to have been affected by flooding; substantial flooding in St Ives was recorded in 1726 (Pettis survey) and in 1797 (Little and Werba 1975, 18).

The archaeological evidence

Datable archaeological features were of medieval (11th to 14th century) and post-medieval (17th and 18th century) date (Fig. 4). Modern features were also identified, but will not be discussed here. Despite the presence of residual finds, no pre-medieval features

were identified. All features are fully described in the site interim report (Wilkins and Roberts 2003).

Medieval plot boundary markers

Five plot boundary ditches could be divided into two distinct phases: the earlier group (F2259, F2275 and double ditch F2143/ F2145) were aligned north-north-east to south-south-west; F2259 was cut by both of the later ditches (F2261 and F2302), which were aligned perpendicular to it (Fig. 4). Plot boundary ditches were linear, though the later group were more regular than the earlier. With the exception of double Ditch F2143/ F2145, the ditches had steep straight sides and flat bases (Fig. 5); they measured between 0.65 and 1.02m in width and between 0.12 and 0.49m in depth. Ditch F2259 contained a significant amount of medieval pottery of Ely-type, Lyveden and reduced sandy wares.

Medieval pits

Thirty three medieval pits were identified (Fig. 4). Eight of these may be more accurately identified as post holes, forming two possible fence lines, one in the southeast (F2016, F2009, F2012 and F2014) and one in the southwest (F2180, F2178, F2176 and F2246) of the site (Fig. 4). Finds from the pits/post holes of the two fence lines comprised small quantities of pottery, tile and animal bone; a polishing stone and an iron nail were also recovered from F2012.

Finds assemblages from the remaining medieval pits are generally consistent use for waste disposal. The animal bone assemblage suggests domestic and butchery waste, and environmental samples from two pits indicate disposal of crop processing debris. A small number of pits contained more unusual finds.

Small Pit F2304 contained a fragment of the upper part of a (probably raised) copper alloy working hearth; as this was the only medieval feature to have contained evidence for metalworking, it is thought that this activity was not carried out at the site. Pit F2196 contained over 100 sherds of pottery, the largest feature assemblage from the site. Sherds of a Grimston ware jug with incised decoration and iron

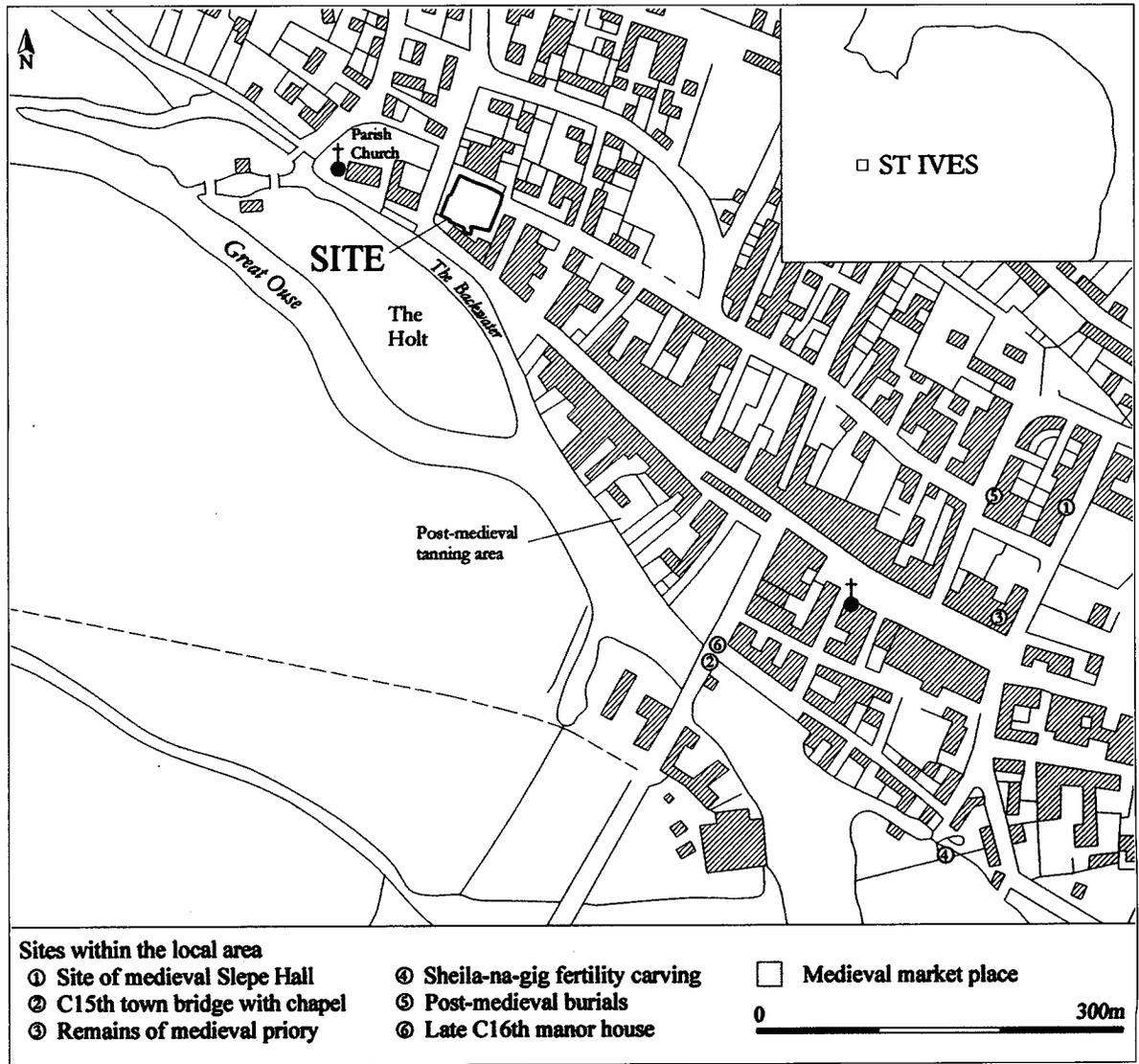


Figure 1. Site location.

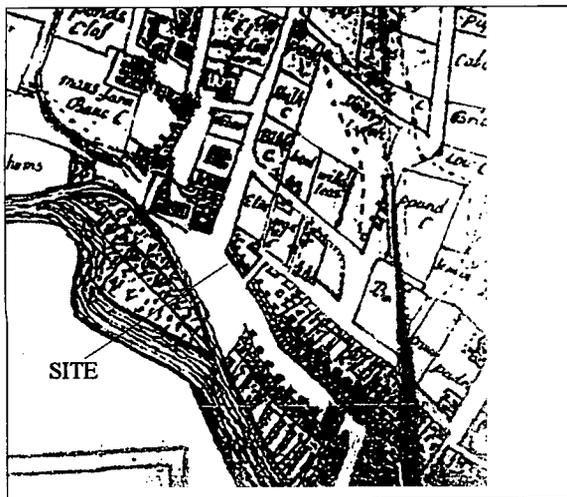


Figure 2. Pettis map of St Ives, 1728.

slip trail decoration (Fig. 6.7) were recovered from Pit F2106, along with a copper alloy buckle with a folded belt plate and a plain copper alloy ring. The pottery assemblage from Pit F2220 included a minimum of three cooking pots, as well as conjoining fragments of a jug from the upper and basal fills (indicating that this pit was filled over a short period of time).

Pit F2023 contained the cut-marked skull of a dog, and the articulated but footless skeleton of a cat with cut marks indicative of skinning on its cranium and mandible was recovered from Pit F2237. This latter pit also contained pottery, including an Ely-type Curfew, an Ely-type cup and a Bourne Ware glazed tripod pitcher and (Figs 6.5, 6.6 and 6.10), a small copper alloy scale pan (Fig. 7.5), and a round counter or pot lid made from tile (Fig. 7.1). An environmental sample taken from its basal fill contained crop processing debris and fragments of hazelnut shell.

Immediately north of F2237 were two large pits (F2257 and F2232) linked by a gully, with a second short



Figure 4. Phase plan.

cess pit, but environmental sampling has provided no corroborative evidence for this; a copper alloy lace end and Nuremberg jeton was among the finds recovered from this feature.

Other significant finds from rubbish pits included a copper alloy bowl (Fig. 7.4) from Pit F2187, which also contained two near complete post-medieval red earthenware vessels, and part of a jar or bowl of Glazed Red Earthenware from F2128 (Fig. 6.11). The rim of a shallow Tin Glazed Earthenware dish (which may have been a copy of a Dutch import), and two near complete glazed vessels (a jug and a jar) were recovered from F2187, and F2211 yielded a fragment of Mayen lava, probably derived from a quernstone but apparently used more latterly to smooth wood or bone. Pit F2018 contained a copper alloy pin. A rectangular iron buckle frame, probably from a leather belt was found in F2118, and part of an iron whittle tang table knife in the adjacent F2124.

Five pits/ post holes (F2218, F2228, F2230, F2226 and F2224) formed a possible fence line adjacent to the eastern baulk of the excavation area (Fig. 4).

17th century cockpit and associated features

The ring gully had a diameter of 6.50m, its termini separated by a gap of approximately 1m (Fig. 4). The width of the gully was c.0.71m; it was U shaped where its profile could be ascertained (Fig. 5), but truncation prevented an accurate assessment of its depth. Finds included small amounts of pottery and animal bone, clay pipe fragments, a copper alloy pin and three iron nail shank fragments with wood still attached to them. Unlike others taken at this site, environmental samples from the ring gully did not contain crop processing debris. Five post holes lay within the circumference of the gully (Fig. 4).

It is considered that the most plausible interpretation of the ring gully is as a cock fighting ring. The 17th century manorial rolls of St Ives document a plot of land on The Waites, known as 'le Pitts' (an appellation often associated with cock fighting venues; Scott 1983, 60). An early 18th century will refers to a piece of land on The Waites called 'the Cockpit'. These plots are likely to be the same as one another, and located on the Permanex site, where the dimensions of the ring gully closely match the approximate 20-foot

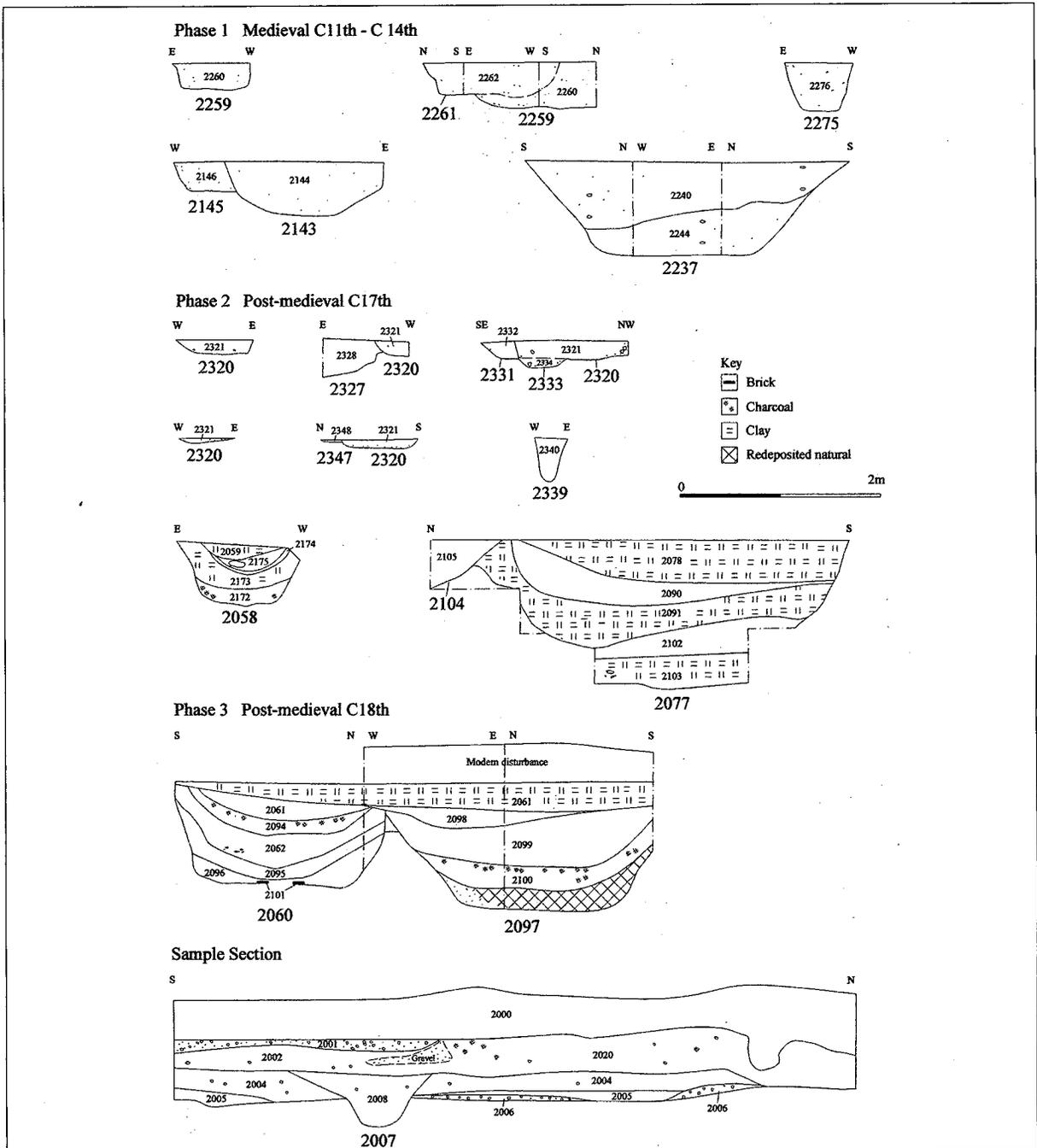


Figure 5. Feature sections.

diameter typical of cockfighting rings of the post-medieval/early modern period (Herbert 1882, Atkinson 1977, 60–70, *Encyclopaedia Britannica* 2004).

Neither the small finds nor the animal bone assemblage included finds which might support this interpretation. This is unsurprising, given that no metal spurs were used in East Anglian cockfighting (Peachey 1993), and that a fighting cock was a prized possession, carefully bred, reared and trained (Atkinson 1977, 73–77), and so unlikely to be simply cast aside if killed in the ring, especially when it could still provide a meal for its owner (Wilde, cited

by Scott 1983, 84–5).

18th century well

The well (F2060) was located north of the post-medieval rubbish pits (Fig. 4). It was sub-circular, with a diameter of approximately 2m. At a depth of 1m one course of the hand-made brick lining (M2101) of the well shaft was uncovered, the upper courses apparently having been removed. The feature was not excavated beyond a depth of 1.20m for reasons of health and safety. The well had six fills (Fig. 5), the lowermost (L2096) of which was a cess-like silty clay

of dark green/ black colour; L2094 was a burnt deposit of silty charcoal. The well was cut by a later pit (F2097), possibly a sump or soak away; an environmental sample taken from its basal fill of silty charcoal (L2100) yielded crop processing debris, fish bone and flax seeds. A modern well was located approximately 8m east of F2060.

The pottery

Peter Thompson

The ceramic assemblage comprises 1286 sherds weighing 24.913 kg and in varied but generally good condition. The medieval pottery (60%) contains some large diagnostic sherds in sealed primary contexts; it was datable mainly to the 13th to 14th centuries, though earlier sherds were also present. The post-medieval and modern pottery (31%) is better preserved with generally larger and sometimes conjoining sherds including two almost complete vessels. A small number of residual prehistoric, Romano-British and Saxo-Norman sherds were also recovered.

Medieval

The medieval assemblage was dominated (34%) by the combined categories of Ely and Ely-type wares, similar in form (jars, bowls and jugs) to examples found at Forehill, Ely (Hall 2003) and in fabric to examples from Colne (Hall 1997). It is possible that pottery was imported from one or both of these sites. However, only 13 of the sherds labelled as Ely/Ely-type exhibited classic Ely Ware attributes in fabric and decoration and so the possibility remains that some may have been manufactured more locally, as very few medieval kilns have so far been identified in Cambridgeshire (Healey 1997; 56). Other medieval wares were Lyveden/Stanion and Northamptonshire type shelly wares, Grimston ware (and hard fired reduced sandy wares of Norfolk-type, similar to Thetford and Grimston wares), Flint tempered, Quartz tempered and Bourne "B" wares. The range of medieval fabrics is thus broadly similar to that found at Forehill, Ely (Hall 2003), and Bene't Court, Cambridge (Edwards 1997). The range of fabrics imported to the Permanex site clearly attests links to the north rather than to the south.

Post-medieval

In the post-medieval assemblage, eight Late Ely ware sherds, with parallels at Bourne (Fabric D Hall 1998; 56) were identified, along with Border Ware (cf. Pearce J 1992, 1–2) and Cistercian ware, but the dominant fabrics (17%) were post-medieval red earthenwares. Later post-medieval wares included tin glazed earthenware and stonewares, including two imported sherds (one a Raeren-type thumbled base sherd, and a rim sherd from a Westerwald mug). As in the medieval assemblage, forms were all domestic types. The main way in which the Permanex assemblage differed from other regional site assemblages was in the complete lack of Essex Wares, which would attest

activity in the 15th and 16th centuries, and the scarcity of imported wares.

Illustrations

- Fig. 6.1. L2197 (F2196) Ely-type 13th–14th century. Bowl with finger decoration to rim and wavy pattern to the body
- Fig. 6.2. L2211 (F2212) Ely-type 13th–14th century. Jar with rouletting to rim and sides.
- Fig. 6.3. L2211 (F2212) Ely-type 13th–14th century. Bowl with slashed rim and clay beading and wavy line decoration to neck.
- Fig. 6.4. L2240 (F2237) Ely-type 13th–14th century. Rim to jar 24cm diameter with applied thumb decorated clay strip
- Fig. 6.5. L2244 (F2237) Ely-type 13th–14th century. Curfew with pie-crust decoration to rim and rouletting to the body
- Fig. 6.6. L2244 (F2237) Ely-type 13th–14th century. Cup with rim 8cm diameter and partial external glazing
- Fig. 6.7. L2107 (F2106) Grimston Ware Late 13th–14th century. Jug handle and glazed and decorated body sherd
- Fig. 6.8. L2150 (F2149) Shelly Ware, possibly Lyveden 13th–14th century. Jar rim 20cm diameter.
- Fig. 6.9. L2197 (F2196) Reduced Sandy Ware, probably plain Grimston 13th–14th century. Jar rim.
- Fig. 6.10. L2244 (F2237) Bourne Ware Late 13th–14th century. Glazed tripod pitcher.
- Fig. 6.11. L2128 (F2128) Glazed Medieval Red Earthenware, possibly an import 17th–18th century. Jar or bowl with grooved rim 26 cm diameter

Small finds and bulk ironwork

Nina Crummy

While a few objects in the assemblage are medieval, the majority date to the post-medieval period, or are of common forms which cannot be closely dated e.g. nails.

No coins were found, but 16th century jetons such as that from F2077 were used for reckoning accounts, and were occasionally fraudulently passed off as coins (Mitchiner 1988, 17, 20–1). Dress accessories are represented by a copper-alloy buckle with its belt-plate intact (Fig. 7.3), an iron buckle (Fig. 7.6), two small pins and a lace-end. The four latter are all of post-medieval date, the former is earlier, belonging within a date-range from the late 13th to 14th century.

A large roughly shaped counter made from a piece of medieval roof tile may have been used as a pot lid (Fig. 7.1). The precise function of these discs, which may be of tile, pottery or slate, is uncertain; they are too large to be game counters (Crummy 2000, 121; Ottaway & Rogers 2002, 2951). A piece of lava, originally from a quern, appears to have seen secondary use as a polishing stone (Fig. 7.2).

The most unusual item in the assemblage is a copper-alloy bowl which has clearly shown considerable wear, perhaps for cooking, mixing foodstuffs, or washing (SF 6, Fig. 7.4). It is holed at one point, the rim appears to be distorted and its shape is generally irregular from use. In the medieval period copper-alloy vessels made of sheet metal were of high value, as shown by their frequent appearance in wills and

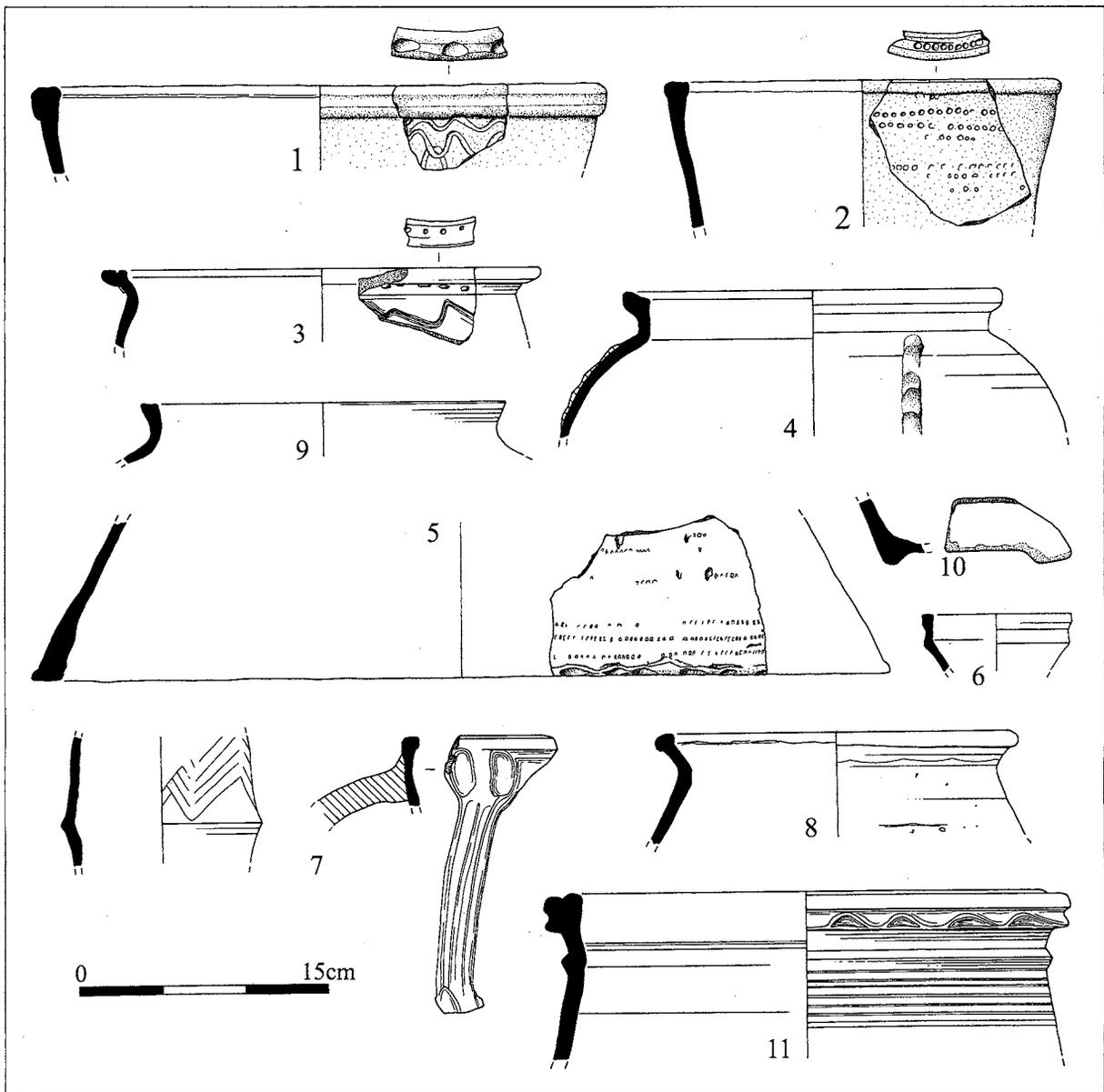


Figure 6. Pottery.

inventories, but they are quite rare as site finds. The ease with which the metal could be both patched and recycled are two reasons for this rarity, but its thinness would also reduce its chances of surviving in many soil conditions. This example, found in a post-medieval pit (F2187), appears to have been discarded at the time when the availability of mass-produced goods had caused a decline in the number of bronze smiths, removing the possibility of local recycling; the vessel may even have been regarded as a valueless antique when it was buried.

The rise in the use of table cutlery in the 18th century is shown by a fragment from a table knife with a carved handle from F2124. A round dished scale pan from an equipoise balance may also have come from domestic rather than commercial activity (SF 7, Fig. 7.5). Its small capacity suggests it may have been

used to weigh out spices or herbs. The form occurs in various sizes in contexts dating from Late Saxon or early medieval to early post-medieval (Goodall 1984; Biddle 1990, Fig. 285, 3221–2; Margeson 1993, 204–5; Egan 1998, 322–4; Ottaway & Rogers 2002, 2952).

Illustrations

Fig. 7.1. (L2244) F2237. Large counter or pot lid made from a piece of medieval roof tile.

Fig. 7.2. (L2212) F2211. Small fragment of a dense pumice, probably Mayen lava

Fig. 7.3 a). SF 5. (L2107) F2106. Copper-alloy buckle with folded belt-plate.

Fig. 7.3 b). (L2107) F2106. Plain copper-alloy ring of circular section.

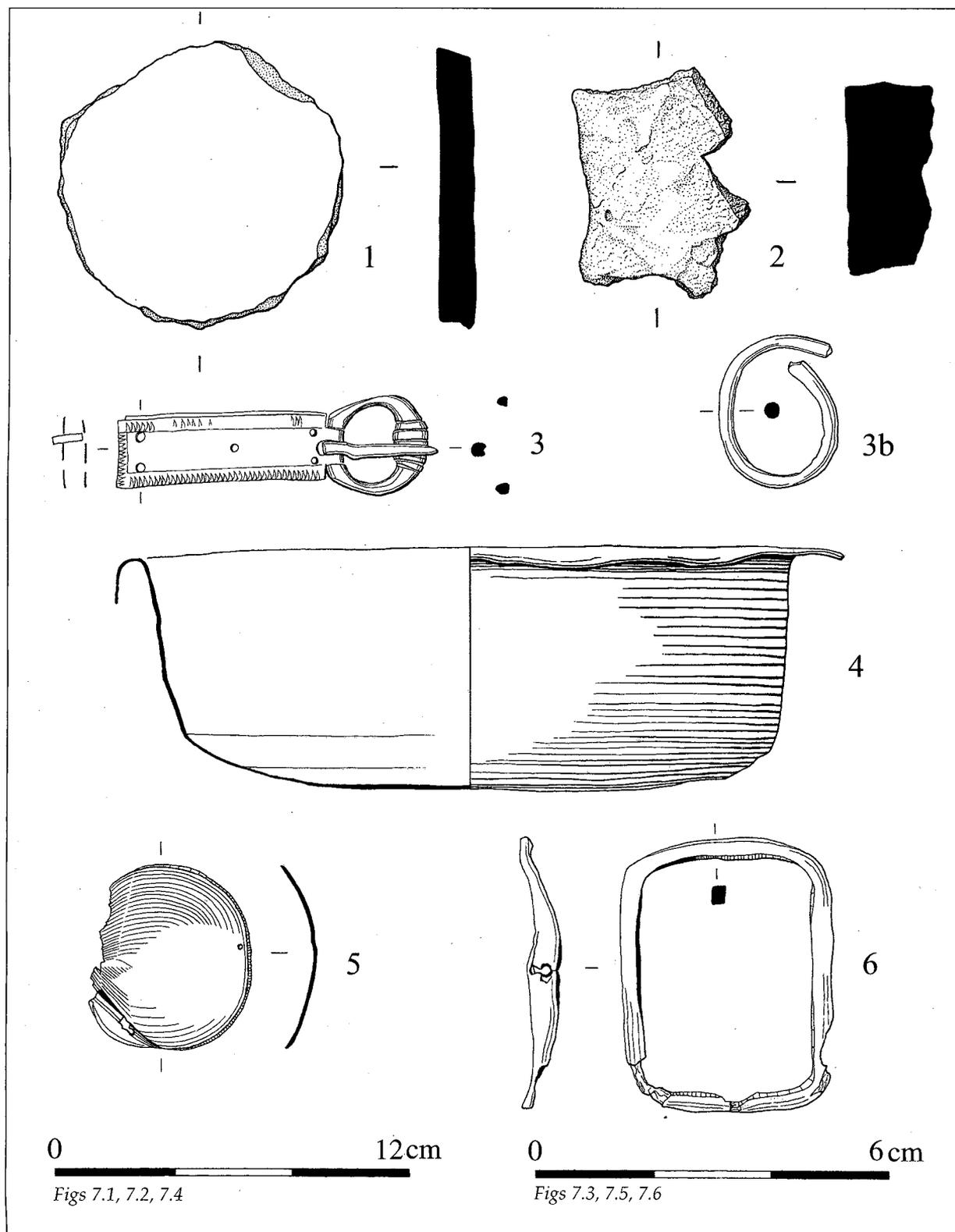


Figure 7. Small finds.

Fig. 7.4. SF 6. (L2189) F2187. Copper-alloy bowl made of beaten sheet metal

Fig. 7.5. SF 7. (L2245) F2237. Copper-alloy scale pan from an equipoise balance

Fig. 7.6. (L2121) F2118. Iron rectangular buckle frame probably from a leather belt

Charred plant macrofossils and other remains

Val Fryer

Medieval contexts

With the exception of that from Pit F2199, the composition of medieval assemblages is reasonably uniform, possibly indicating a common source. Cereal grains/chaff (oat, barley, rye and wheat) and weed seeds (especially stinking and scentless mayweed, vetch/vetchling and meadow/grassland plants) are present throughout. Much of this material is possibly derived from cereal processing waste. The weed assemblages may indicate that the soils on which these cereals were being grown were quite poor. The predominance of stinking mayweed seeds probably suggests utilisation of the local heavy clay soils, whilst leguminous weeds (black medick and medick/trefoil/clover) may indicate an attempt at soil improvement by deliberate cultivation of plants with the capacity to fix nitrogen in impoverished soils. Evidence of this latter practice is seen elsewhere in the eastern region in assemblages of medieval date, for example Boreham Airfield, Essex (Fryer and Murphy 2003).

A sample taken from the palaeosol (L2005) which marked the cessation of medieval activity at the site contained grains of oat, barley, rye and wheat (all in small quantities) and a single spelt wheat glume base.

Post-medieval contexts

Assemblages from post-medieval pits are similar to those of medieval date (above) and are probably derived from cereal processing debris. Both bread wheat and rivet wheat are now being utilised, and cultivation is still probably largely based on heavy clay soils. The continuing presence of legumes in the assemblage may indicate the continuing practice of deliberate cultivation of these nitrogen fixing plants. The presence of seeds of grasses/grassland herbs and possible faecal concretions in a sample taken from Pit F2111 may indicate that this is a mixed assemblage, containing both cereal processing detritus and possible stable or byre waste.

The assemblages from the ring gully (from which three samples were taken) contain a very low density of material, much of which was probably accidentally incorporated. However, small ferrous globules, possibly derived from small-scale industrial activities, are present in two of the three samples.

Wetland plant macrofossils were rare, but did occur in samples from medieval and post-medieval pits; their presence is probably explained by the proximity of the Backwater.

Animal and bird bones

Carina Phillips

A total of 869 (320 medieval, 475 post-medieval and the others modern or undated) fragments of animal bone, all in a good state of preservation, were recovered. Waterlogged conditions are indicated by the greasy texture of most bones and by the concretion of salts to a small number.

Medieval

The medieval bone assemblage is dominated by domestic animals, especially cattle. The amount of meat gained from a cattle carcass is much higher than that of sheep and pig and so it is likely that cattle was the main meat consumed in this area. A cattle small horn core was recovered indicating that an improved short-horned breed of was being kept. Pig and sheep were eaten in similar numbers, although like the cattle pigs produce more meat than sheep. Domestic fowl remains were also fairly high, suggesting they were kept and consumed as a regular part of the diet. Eight fish (including cod and congar eel) bones were recovered (probably reflecting a recovery/preservation bias against small bones), indicating the transportation of marine fish to St Ives.

The neo-natal remains of at least five cattle were recovered from Pit F2149. In the post-medieval period, the skin of still born or newborn cattle was considered to have been the highest quality vellum (Serjeantson 1989); this may also have been true in the medieval period. The substantially complete skeleton of a cat (with the skull, mandible, front long bone, scapulae, vertebrae, ribs and both tibiae present) was recovered from Pit F2237. Cut marks were present on the skull and mandible of the cat skeleton, suggestive of skinning. The absence of foot and ankle bones is also suggestive of skinning, as in the middle ages and the paws and tail were sometimes left on cat furs (Serjeantson 1989). A dog skull recovered from Pit F2023 has a number of cut marks over both the right and left parietal bones, probably also the result of skinning. Chop and cut marks on two horse bones indicate exploitation of horse carcasses, probably for their skins, as horse meat was not generally consumed in the medieval period (Grant 1984).

Post-medieval

The post-medieval assemblage was larger than the medieval, indicating the presence of the main domestic species in slightly increased numbers. The large number of cattle bones indicates a high use of cattle in the area, with pig and sheep/goat present in smaller numbers. Chop and cut marks on the sheep/goat and most of the cattle bones reflects both butchery waste and food refuse, these species along with pig thus forming the majority of town occupants diet. The ages of the sheep/goat indicate a primary use of wool production, with meat being a secondary gain.

Cattle bone recovered from Pit F2124 included a significant quantity of cattle tibia and calcaneum, several of the latter bearing chop marks. The chop-

ping and splitting of the calcaneum suggests a more industrial use of the cattle than just butchery for meat. This may relate to chopped and smashed horse bone which may have been broken and boiled for glue or other substances. Cut marks on horse bones may have resulted from skinning.

Discussion and conclusions

Medieval town planning and the development of property boundaries

The spacing between the plot boundary ditches was between 9 and 11m, a distance approximately equal to two standard medieval poles (Hindle 2002, 53). This matches the standard plot width identified in the oldest parts of Ludlow (Hindle 2002, 55), while in Stratford-upon-Avon plots were originally 3½ poles in width (Slater 1987, 196). The spacing of property boundaries at the Permanex site was maintained when their orientation changed, and there is no evidence for the kind of subdivision of plots often identified in medieval towns (Hindle 2002, 54; Slater 1987, 195-196).

To the north and south of St Ives' market place, plot boundaries run approximately north to south; these boundaries are thought to date to the medieval period when market place street frontage was valuable (Redstone 1932, 216), with alleyways between plots allowing goods to be brought directly to the market from the road to the north and river to the south (Burn Murdoch in Kirby and Oosthuizen 2000, 81). The earlier plot boundaries at this site share this alignment, but the reorientation is not attested elsewhere in the town. The reorientation of plots in medieval towns is unusual but not unknown, having occurred at Ludlow in association with the extension of the town to the south (Conzen 1968, 124). The change in alignment of plot boundaries here suggests a change in street frontage from The Waits to Ramsey road, or to the lane parallel to it at the other side of the site. This may be explained by the decline of the Easter Fair during the 14th century, which would have decreased the advantage of street frontage onto The Waits.

Medieval activity

The finds assemblage is generally consistent with 'backyard activity' and the disposal of domestic waste.

Remains of five neonatal cattle in F2149 suggest that cattle were kept close to the site; it is possible that calves were kept and slaughtered within the town, as is known to have occurred in the St Ebbes area of Oxford (Wilson 1994). The plant macrofossil assemblages show that some stages of crop processing took place either at or close to Permanex, at the edge of the town, although all grain in the town had to be ground at the mills of the abbot or the prior (Redstone 1932, 216).

The animal bone assemblage includes elements which suggest the skinning of cat, dog, horse and possibly neonatal cattle, though in each case the number of animals involved is small (five calves and one of each of the other species). There was no firm archaeological evidence to suggest that tanning took place on the site, and the possibility that Pits F2257 and F2322 and their associated gullies were used for tanning has been investigated and dismissed (Nicholson 2004). In the post-medieval period tanning, malting, brewing and other foul smelling industries were located on the edge of the river to the south of Broadway (Redstone 1932, 212; Fig. 2); this area, down stream from the core of the town, seems likely to have housed such activities in the medieval period.

Cessation of medieval activity

Findings and stratigraphic evidence indicate a hiatus spanning the 15th and 16th centuries. Despite the 'general crisis' of the 14th century, there is no evidence of decline in the town as a whole at this time (Dyer 2002 228-229, 256-257; Ziegler 1969 170, 236; Redstone 1932, 216; Burn Murdoch in Kirby and Oosthuizen 2000, 81), and so the abandonment is thought to have been site specific. Building work was carried out at the parish church, on the other side of Ramsey road, during the late 14th and 15th centuries. The church standing today was constructed almost entirely at this time, though a few elements of earlier architecture remain (Redstone 1932, 220-221). It may be that abandonment/change in activity at the site was connected to the extensive building project at the church.

Post-medieval activity

The Pettis survey (1728) documents several properties fronting The Waits, Ramsey Road, and the lane east of the site. The finds assemblage from post-medieval features is consistent with 'backyard activity' and the use of pits for disposal of domestic waste as well as animal bone resulting from butchery and an unidentified exploitation of horse and cattle carcasses. The possible programme of soil re-nitrification indicated by weed seed assemblages is consistent with grain being a significant trade commodity in the market and inns of post-medieval St Ives (Carter 1993, 93). The presence of an 18th century well is not unusual. It was, however, usual for water to be from rain cisterns or drawn from rivers (Sweet 1999, 87), and so the presence of well so close to the river may indicate that the Ouse at St Ives was noticeably unclean in the 18th century.

The cockfighting ring (Figure 8)

The social context in which the cockfighting ring existed, and the attitudes of towns' people towards it depend on its date. Unfortunately this cannot be established with more precision than 17th or early 18th century. It could thus belong in the early Stuart period (1603-1649), in Commonwealth times/under the Protectorate (1649-1659), or in the Restoration period (1660-1714).



Figure 8. *The Cockpit*, William Hogarth 1759. Copyright Getty Images.

Cockfighting, which was known in Britain by the time of St Augustine (Atkinson 1977, 70), was popular among all social classes, on a large and a small scale throughout the medieval period and into post-medieval times (Atkinson 1977, 73). Blood sports were popular in Tudor times, especially in the reign of Elizabeth I, and James I was a particular devotee of cockfighting.

During the Commonwealth and under the Protectorate cock fighting was banned by law, along with other bawdy pastimes such as horse racing which “[disturbed] the Publique Peace, and [were] commonly accompanied with Gaming, Drinking, Swearing, Quarreling and other dissolute Practices, to the Dishonour of God, and [did] often produce the ruine of Persons and their Families” (ordinance of March 1654, quoted in Firth and Rait, 1911, 681). A later act of 1657 specifically banned betting at cock fighting matches (Firth and Rait 1911, 1250), indicating that neither the 1654 ordinance nor instructions issued to the Major Generals in October 1655 not to allow cock fighting had been successful (Goldsmith, pers comm).

The Parliamentary and Puritan movements of the 17th century were strong in St Ives, with Oliver Cromwell himself living in the town between 1631 and 1636 and the Earl of Manchester (a prominent military leader during the Civil War) holding the manorial lordship. The Independent, Presbyterian and Baptist churches flourished in 17th century St Ives, and there was a strong Quaker presence by 1670 (Little and Werba 1975, 9; Carter 1993, 113, 127).

With the Restoration and the wane of Puritanism in the 1660s cockfighting was once again established as a widespread source of entertainment, Charles II being among its devotees. In this period most towns would have had a cockpit and gambling would have been enjoyed by people from all social strata. On 21 December 1663 the diarist Samuel Pepys described the variety of people he had encountered at a cock fighting main, “from parliament-man ... to the poorest ‘prentices, bakers, brewers, butchers, draymen, and what not” (quoted in Scott 1983, 100–101).

Cockfighting was considered by many among the more educated of the post-restoration era to encourage social vices and potentially to lead to riot-

ous behaviour among the urban poor; it was thus disappearing from urban environments by the late 18th century (Borsay 1984, 234–235, 248; Sweet 1999, 202, 233). In spite of this it continued to have a wide following, from “a gentleman of the old school” to “shabby old men, apparently wanting a meal” (Egan 1832, in Dundes 1994, 21–22). Although banned by law in 1835 cockfighting remained popular, being practiced openly until the 1930s and still practiced illicitly today (Peachey, 1993).

Outdoor cockfighting would usually take place at the back of public houses or other such sociable venues (Sweet 1999, 233). In earlier times, it took place behind the Crown Inn in the centre of St Ives (Carter, pers comm), and a “property messuage formerly called the Cock” (St Ives Parish Records 1755, 1812) may also have been a venue. The location of the Permanex cockfighting ring, on land behind tenements at the edge of town is, therefore, somewhat incongruous. Given the early influence of Independent and Presbyterian ideas in St Ives, cockfighting would have been discouraged here long before it was banned by law.

The excavation site is located in the immediate vicinity of the parish church, and at least one landowner on ‘le Pitts’, Dingley Askham, a prominent local figure commemorated by a plaque in the church (Little and Werba 1975, 15), was among its congregation. The Anglican church of St Ives was of the High Church variety, and had a reputation for deliberate antagonism of the Nonconformist majority in the town. It may be that the cockfighting ring dates to the time of the Commonwealth/Protectorate, or to the preceding years in which Puritan influence was strong in St Ives, and that its backyard location is due to its having been either illegal or frowned upon by those of high standing within the town.

Modern cockfighting rings are usually simple affairs, which can be abandoned quickly and cannot be intrinsically related to their function as the venue for an illegal bloodsport (Peachey 1993). The Permanex ring, by comparison to other known examples of outdoor cockpits (Scott 1983, illustration of a cockpit at Redruth, Cornwall, 58–59) fits this description, perhaps supporting the argument that it dates to a period when cockfighting was banned.

Conclusions

The main archaeological evidence for medieval activity (mainly 13th and 14th century) comprises ditches representing plot boundaries, which changed their orientation, from parallel to Ramsey Road to parallel with the Waits, but maintained their two pole spacing, at some point during this time. There was a hiatus in the 15th and 16th centuries, and the Great Ouse flooded at least once during this time, inundating the site. Activity recommenced in the 17th century, and a 17th or 18th century ring gully has been interpreted as a cockfighting ring.

Without investigation of documentary evidence re-

lating to this site, the identification of the cockfighting ring would not have been possible: the ring gully had eluded interpretation until the fact that land on the site had been known as ‘le Pitt’ and as ‘the Cockpit’ in post-medieval times was brought to our attention by Mary Carter. The use of historical documents pertaining to cockfighting in 17th century and later historical times has allowed a broad discussion of the significance of the cockfighting ring, and has offered an insight into what life may have been like in St Ives under the Puritan influence of the Commonwealth period.

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