
Multi-period archaeology on land at Church Street, St Neots, Cambridgeshire

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In 2007, Archaeological Solutions Ltd conducted an excavation at this site, which lies immediately adjacent to the areas in which CF Tebbutt, and later PV Addyman, recorded Anglo-Saxon settlement. The excavation identified features and finds ranging in date from the late Neolithic/early Bronze Age to the early modern period. The results help to further characterise the late Anglo-Saxon settlement at St Neots and identified further portions of the seventeenth to eighteenth century mansion, Hall Place, previously excavated by PV Addyman in 1961. In addition, small scale Romano-British activity and evidence demonstrating the shift in focus from this area to the core of St Neots, to the west, during the medieval period was recorded.

Introduction

Between August and December 2007, Archaeological Solutions Ltd. (AS) conducted an archaeological excavation, in advance of proposals for residential re-development, on land at Church Street, opposite 15 Church View, St Neots, Cambridgeshire (NGR TL 186 620; Fig. 1).

The site is located in the historic town of St Neots and is situated approximately 150m south-east of St Mary's, the parish church. The area is generally flat, but slopes towards the Fox Brook, a tributary of the River Ouse which lies just south of the site. The elevation of Fox Brook is approximately 16m OD. Prior to excavation, much of the site consisted of gardens, parkland, or areas used for quarrying. It is surrounded by modern residential developments. The site was located within the area of the late Saxon Settlement, as identified by Tebbutt (Lethbridge and Tebbutt 1933) and Addyman (1973) and immediately adjacent to the areas previously investigated by these individuals.

Archaeology at Church Street; the work of Tebbutt and Addyman

Much archaeological work has been undertaken in the urban centre of St Neots. Since the 1930s (Table 1), archaeological investigations have been undertaken within the bounds of the Church Street site and in the area to the immediate east and north-east. CF Tebbutt

(Lethbridge and Tebbutt 1933) undertook investigations during gravel quarrying at Hall Place to the north-east of the current site between 1929 and 1932, revealing eight pits of late Saxon date. This work was of great importance to the archaeological world as the 'pit dwellings' that he discovered were amongst the first grubenhäuser to be recognised in England. This was also the site at which St Neots ware pottery was first identified (Taylor 1978, 17). In the early 1960s, PV Addyman excavated an area within and slightly to the east of the current site, to the south of the area investigated by Tebbutt; in this area he recorded further evidence of Anglo-Saxon settlement which included evidence of the structural remains of a complex timber building (Addyman 1973).

Addyman also investigated the foundations, walled garden and mortared yard of Hall Place, in the central northern part of the site, which was the premier residence in St Neots during the post-medieval period, and observed that this lay adjacent to the site of a medieval fish pond (Addyman and Marjoram 1972).

Romano-British

During excavation work, Addyman (1973) noted that many of the late Saxon features that he was recording contained residual third to fourth century Romano-British pottery. Near the western edge of his excavation area, lying above the natural 'hogging' was a layer of dark gravelly soil containing a large quantity of Romano-British pottery. Close to this was a ditch, set out in two straight lengths meeting at right angles. This feature, and a series of postholes and an oval pit that lay near by, were dated as Roman. Addyman (1973, 60) interpreted these features as the structural remains of buildings.

Anglo-Saxon

Tebbutt (Lethbridge and Tebbutt 1933) undertook investigations during gravel quarrying at Hall Place to the north-east of the current development site in 1929–32 and recorded eight pits of late Saxon date. He identified three distinct types of pit: four pits were sub-rectangular with bulging sides, rounded corners and vertical walls; three were sub-circular or oval; and

| Description of fieldwork | Published reference |
|--|---|
| 1929-32. CF Tebbutt's investigations during gravel digging in the grounds of Hall Place, St Neots identify Saxon settlement. | Lethbridge and Tebbutt 1933 |
| 1961. Excavation by PV Addyman of the area to the south of the area previously investigated by Tebbutt and to the east of the site excavated by AS. Further evidence of Saxon settlement recorded. | Addyman 1973 |
| 1961. During work here Addyman also recorded the remains of the seventeenth to eighteenth century Hall Place and associated features and a possible medieval fishpond. | Addyman and Marjoram 1972 |
| 1964. Observations by CF Tebbutt and GT Rudd indicate that the Saxon settlement was surrounded by a substantial enclosure ditch. | Tebbutt and Rudd 1966; Rudd and Tebbutt 1973 |

Table 1. Previous fieldwork in this area.

a single trapezoidal pit was recorded. The five largest were interpreted as 'pit dwellings', the three smaller as rubbish pits. The meagre finds included animal bone and domestic debris, Romano-British and later Saxon St Neots Ware pottery, clay loomweights, quernstones, a bone comb, a pin beater and iron objects.

Addyman's investigation, in 1961-2, of a narrow strip to the south of the area investigated by Tebbutt, revealed late Saxon structures (Addyman 1973). The features were thought to be contemporary with Tebbutt's findings (Lethbridge and Tebbutt 1933). Amongst the features recorded during this phase of work were the remains of a large late Saxon timber building. These remains consisted of a series of parallel trenches and a posthole, which were interpreted as sill beams with an upright post. Approximately 4m east of the structure was a small boundary ditch. Further structures and associated features were also recorded, in particular to the north. In the central area of the excavation a 'boat-shaped' or 'barrel-shaped' structure and associated features, including evidence for pottery making, were identified. The results from the eastern area of Addyman's (1973) excavations were not as coherent, but showed that the late Saxon features continued eastwards and comprised further structures, pits, ditches and a possible house platform, representing several phases of occupation.

Demolition of houses at the south-east corner of the crossroads to the north-west of the current Church Street site allowed excavation by CF Tebbutt and GT Rudd in 1964 (Tebbutt and Rudd 1966). This revealed traces of a deep defensive ditch running parallel with Cambridge Street and sweeping round the corner to follow Church Street. It was noted that it had been deliberately filled, in one operation, with soil containing pottery of twelfth and thirteenth century date. Immediately following the filling in of the ditch, buildings were erected over it, following the building lines of the present streets, suggesting that it was at this time that the street plan was laid out (Rudd and Tebbutt 1973). Consistent evidence relating to the ditch has been obtained from three sites, showing that it was a substantial (c. 2.4m wide, 2.1m deep) wet ditch, in places revetted with stakes, possibly with a bank on the east side (Rudd and Tebbutt 1973).

Medieval and post-medieval

During excavation by Addyman in 1961, an area within and adjacent to the northern part of the current site was subject to a resistivity survey. Two parallel anomalies, one of high resistance and one of low resistance, were identified and these were subject to intrusive investigation with nine 10ft (3.048m) squares excavated to provide a complete east to west cross section (Addyman and Marjoram 1972, 72).

Within the westernmost square, part of the structural remains of Hall Place, a seventeenth to eighteenth century house, which at one time was the premier dwelling within the town, were revealed. Further to the east, a continuous mortar floor was found and was considered to represent a yard surface behind the house (Addyman and Marjoram 1972, 72). Even further to the east, an area of low resistance proved to have been caused by a deep excavation which cut through the natural gravel into the underlying Oxford Clay. The sides of the feature were revetted and wicker retaining walls were identified. Water-laid clayey silts, rich in organic material and containing leather objects and bone were present in the lower reaches of the feature and aided its identification as a pond. Finds recovered were mostly dated to the second quarter of the sixteenth century (Addyman and Marjoram 1972, 78).

The Excavation

The excavation carried out by Archaeological Solutions Ltd comprised two areas (see Fig. 2). The first was located to the west of, and partly reinvestigated, the area of Addyman's excavation of the Saxon settlement (Addyman 1973). The second was located to the west of the part of the post-medieval house, Hall Place, investigated by Addyman in 1961 (Addyman and Marjoram 1972). The excavated areas covered approximately 0.45 ha.

In excess of 400 archaeological features were recorded during the excavation; detailed archaeological descriptions and discussion of these features can be found in the Research Archive Report produced for this project (Newton *et al.* 2009). These features represented eight phases of archaeological activity dat-

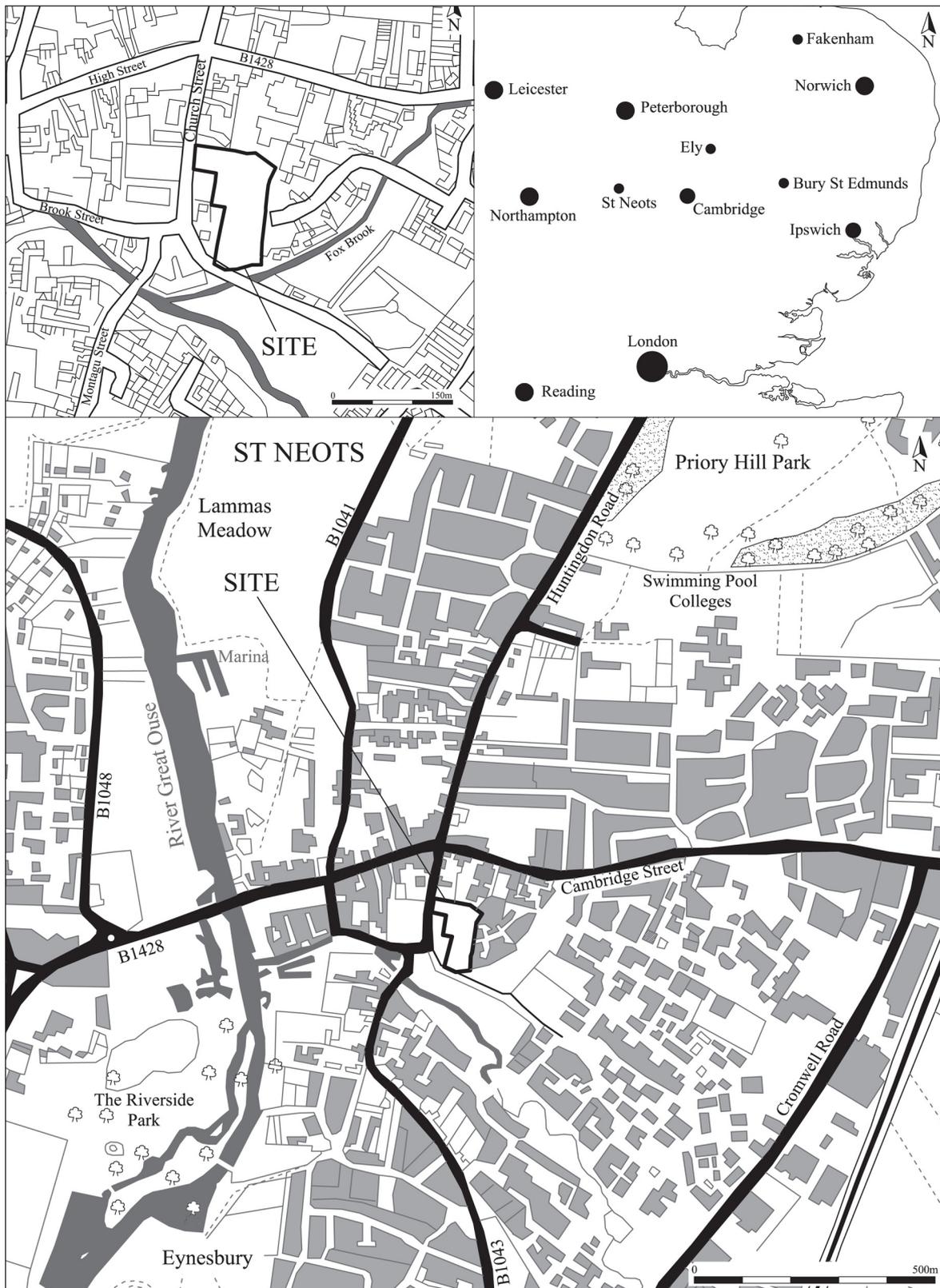


Figure 1. Site location.

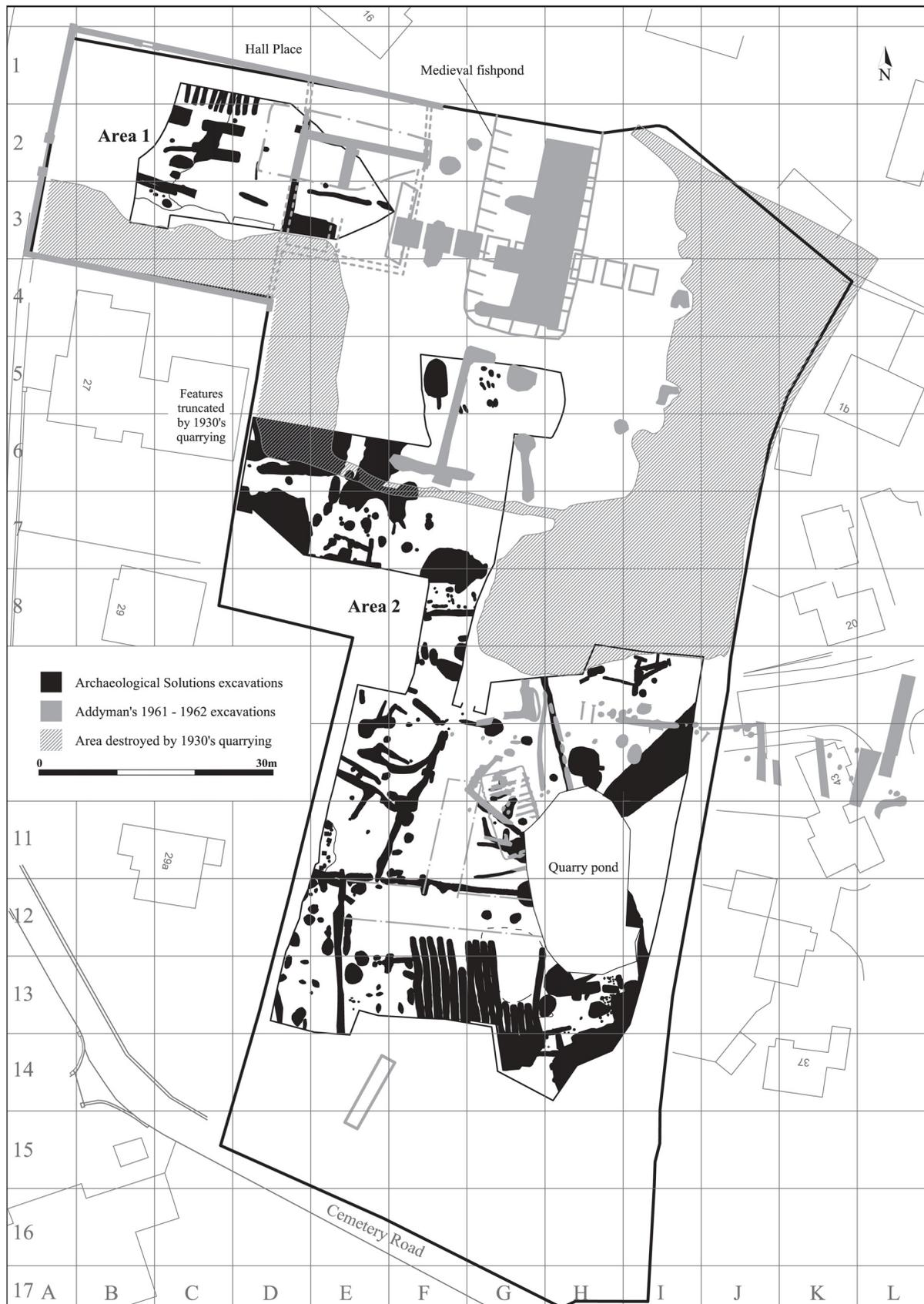


Figure 2. All features plan.

ing from the late Neolithic/early Bronze Age to the modern period (Figs. 3 and 4).

The Results

Phase 1: Late Neolithic/early Bronze Age

Phase 1 activity was represented by a single, small ovoid-shaped pit (F1810; see Fig. 4). Placed on the base of this pit was a near complete grog- and sand-tempered ware collared urn. Collared urns date between c. 2,200 and 1,200 BC, and were used for both funerary and domestic purposes (Gibson 2002, 96 and 101). The presence of what was probably a complete vessel, in the absence of any other ceramics, suggests that this vessel was a ritual deposit (Thompson 2009). No cremated remains were present either within the vessel or within the pit itself but the presence of charcoal flecks within the fill of the pit might suggest that burning took place in this location. Gibson (2002, 97) asserts that when collared urns are used for burial, the cremated bones are found inside the pot and the pot is usually found upside down. The upright position of the vessel may indicate that the lack of cremated remains was not a result of degradation but rather that none ever existed. The rationale for the deposition of this vessel, therefore, remains open to interpretation but given its suggested 'ritual' nature may in some way be connected to the prehistoric ritual complex recorded c. 2km to the south, in Eynesbury (Ellis 2004).

Phase 2: Romano-British

The first activity of any real intensity attested at the site dated to the Romano-British period. Phase 2 features yielded pottery stretching in date from the late first century AD to the fourth century. However, the core date for the assemblage would appear to be the second century AD.

Following his earlier investigations on land forming part of the current site, Addyman (1973) reported evidence of Romano-British activity, which he dated to the third to fourth centuries AD. This included a ditch and a possible timber structure (Addyman 1973, 58–60).

During the 2007 excavation, a series of ditches and gullies at the western side of the site (Grid Squares (GS) E9–F11; Fig. 4) appeared to form a series of small enclosures. These ditches were not all contemporary with one another and it would appear that a series of boundaries were created, possibly representing remodelling of the enclosure system over time. The overall character of this group of features is suggestive of small enclosures or pens, possibly for stock management or other agricultural purposes.

A small cluster of Phase 2 features lay to the east of the group of enclosure ditches and associated pits that represented the main body of Phase 2 activity. The northern-most features in this group were the

north-west to south-east aligned elongated Pit F1284 and Ditch F1253 (GS G11; see Figs. 4 and 5). These features corresponded exactly to a Roman feature identified by Addyman (1973, 58–59; fig. 6; see Fig. 5) during excavations here in the 1960s. Addyman recorded it as feature number 25; a "shallow ditch or trench... set out in two straight lengths meeting at right angles" (1973, 58–59). Addyman (1973, 60) also noted that within the angle formed by the two lengths of Ditch 25 were a number of postholes and an oval pit also of Romano-British date. He postulated that the presence of the postholes indicated that there were timber buildings and that the clay patches present in Ditch 25 may have been packing material for posts set into it. The 2007 excavation did not produce any further evidence to prove Addyman's (1973) assertion that there were Roman period buildings at the site, though features to the south of F1284 and F1253 may provide some tenuous evidence for associated structures of Roman date. Two linear features lay at right angles to one another hinting at the presence of a structure.

Despite the inconclusive evidence for structures, the artefactual evidence indicates that people were living, rather than just working at this site. The pottery that was recovered would appear to suggest a modest level of domestic activity that primarily utilised products from central/northern Cambridgeshire and was affluent enough for low to moderate consumption of southern and central Gaulish samian ware. The animal remains from Phase 2 features appear to be the result of small scale butchery and domestic waste. Other Roman finds included a fourth century coin of the Trier mint, a sandstone hone, and part of a clenched-bolt.

As far as can be stated with any certainty, there was no Roman period settlement cohesive or large-scale enough to be referred to as a town in the St Neots area. Instead, the evidence indicates an agricultural area of farms, hamlets and a villa lying between the small market towns at Godmanchester, to the north, and Sandy, to the south (Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) 2002). The evidence recorded at Church Street fits comfortably into this pattern.

Phase 3: Early to Middle Saxon

The early to middle Saxon period was represented by a single ditch (F1062: GS E9, F9; Fig. 4). Saxon pottery dating to between AD 450 and AD 850, and an iron knife (SF1) were recovered from this feature. The majority of the pottery was organic-tempered and from the same vessel, probably a globular bowl. Organic temper appears in the early Saxon period, and continues in certain areas throughout the middle Saxon period (Hurst 1976, 309).

This paucity of evidence for early Anglo-Saxon activity at the Church Street site reflects the general picture of this period for the St Neots area. Four locations of pagan Saxon burials are known around St Neots and Eynesbury but these show evidence for only occasional burials rather than being the cemeteries of a

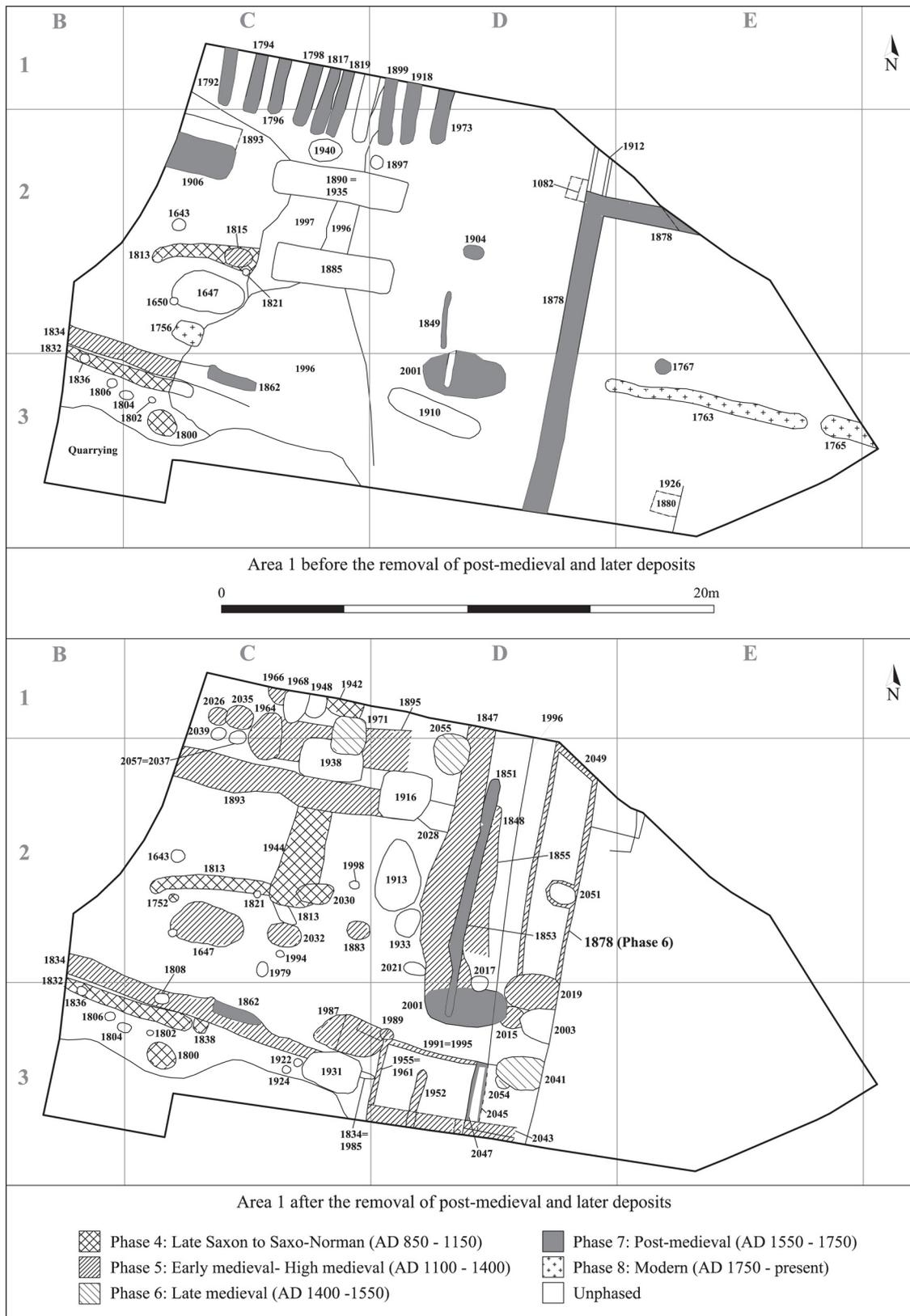


Figure 3. Area 1 phase plan.

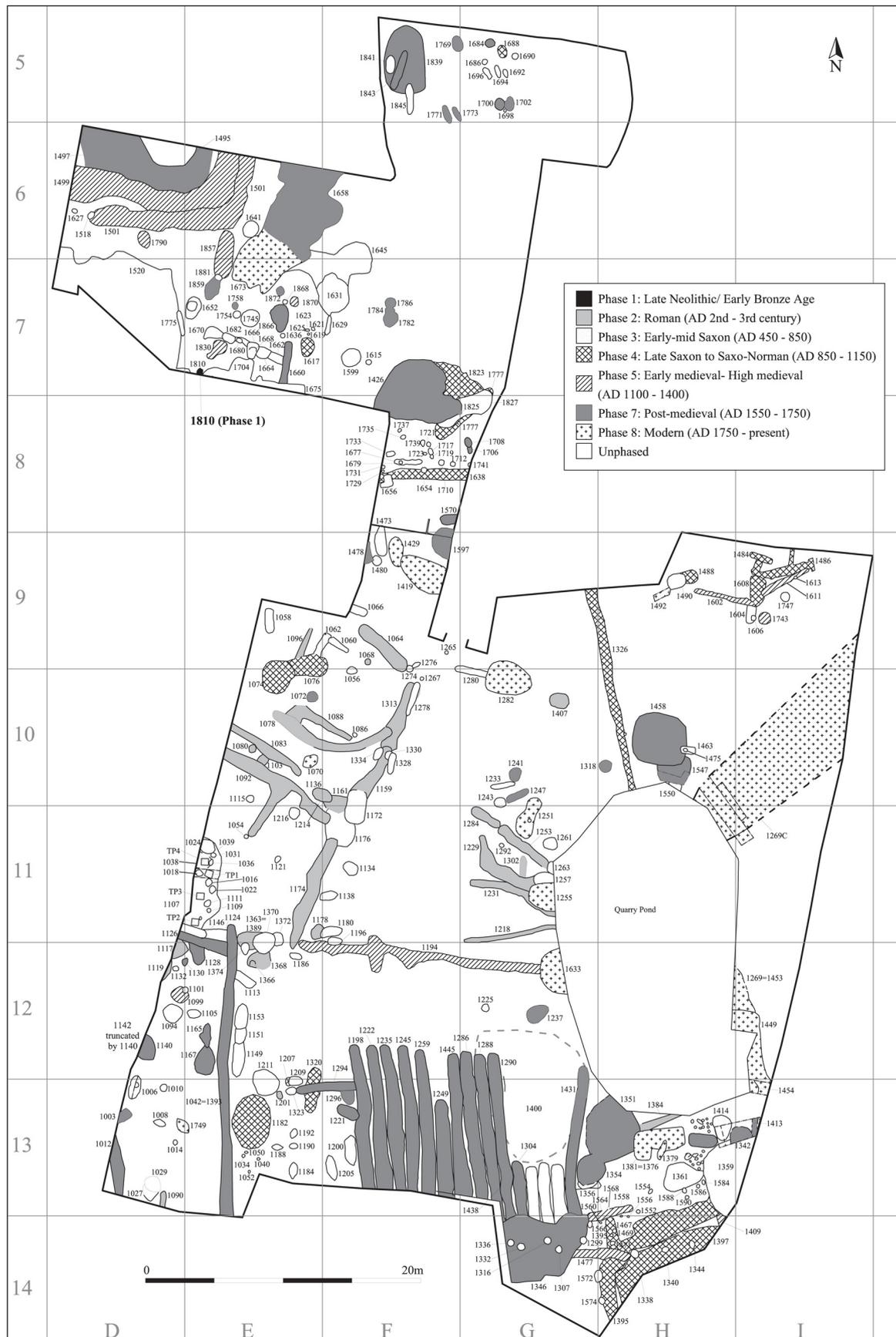


Figure 4. Area 2 phase plan.

large settlement (Spoerry 2000, 150). Recent work at Love's Farm has revealed brief early Saxon settlement following Iron Age to Romano-British settlement activity. It is of note that Tebbutt's excavation in the late 1920s and early 1930s adjacent to the current site, identified amongst what is considered to be a middle to late Saxon settlement site, an inhumation which is considered to be early Saxon (Lethbridge and Tebbutt 1933; Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record (CHER) MCB17661).

Phase 4: Late Saxon/Saxo-Norman

The various settlements that form the modern urban area of St Neots area all have Anglo-Saxon period origins. Eynesbury and Eaton Socon are referred to as manorial estates in the Domesday Book and the priory of St Neots was founded on land belonging to the then Lord of Eynesbury in the 970s (CCC 2002, 9). Taylor (1978, 17) states that Anglo-Saxon St Neots is scarcely mentioned in the historic record but that the archaeological work of Tebbutt between 1929 and 1932 and Addyman in the 1960s has shown that there was a sizeable, well laid out settlement with evidence for domestic industries in the late Saxon period. The areas investigated by Tebbutt and by Addyman were, of course, immediately adjacent to and, in the case of Addyman, partially within the site at Church Street excavated by AS.

Phase 4 (Figs. 3 and 4) activity is represented by features dated as ninth to twelfth century. The dateable artefactual evidence clearly placed Phase 4 activity in the immediate pre- and post-conquest period; many features assigned to this phase were found to contain St Neots Ware pottery (dateable to AD 850–1150).

Residual pottery of Romano-British and earlier Saxon date was recovered from some features assigned to Phase 4 and some later, intrusive material was also present; this is considered unsurprising given the density of archaeological features present and later disturbances at the site (see Newton *et al.* 2009). However, the evidence accords with Addyman's (1973) observation that the ceramic sequence from the site commenced around the ninth century, and continued without a break until the fourteenth century. This is probably demonstrative of the transition between Phases 4 and 5.

The north-western corner of the site, within Area 1 (see Fig. 3), contained what may be considered to be the most concentrated Anglo-Saxon/Saxo-Norman activity. This activity is represented mainly by ditches, with some features that may represent portions of truncated ditches and pits and postholes. Ditch F1944 (Grid Square C2), a large feature measuring 4.80m in length, 1.90m in width and 0.62m in depth, was perhaps the most prominent Phase 4 feature in this part of the site. Its position in relation to Church Street suggests that it may have been related to the defensive ditch recorded by GT Rudd and CF Tebbutt in 1964 (Tebbutt and Rudd 1966; Rudd and Tebbutt 1973) which ran along Cambridge Street and Church Street

and possibly joined up with the Fox Brook (Taylor 1978, 18). It is reasonable to postulate that this ditch represents one boundary of a small enclosure situated up against the settlement's main enclosure ditch. It ran parallel to Phase 5 Ditch F1847, which lay further to the east but which may have been a later version of the same boundary. Other Phase 4 ditches in this area may represent complementary boundaries; certainly the alignment of Ditches F1813 and F1832 suggests that they could have formed the third side of an enclosure with F1944, though the former of these was stratigraphically earlier than the large ditch.

Evidence for late Saxon/Saxo-Norman activity across the rest of the site was much more dispersed than that present in the north-west, within Area 1. Ditch F1326 (Grid Squares G9, H9, H10) was traced for over 10 metres, but was cut to the north by modern quarrying activity, and to the south by a modern quarry pond, preventing a full appreciation of its dimensions. It was possible to identify Ditch F1326 as Addyman's (1973, fig. 4) Ditch 97, only portions of which were excavated during the previous excavation at the site in the 1960s. To the north-west (Grid Squares F8, G8) lay Ditch F1638. It was aligned east to west, at a right angle to F1326, and extended beyond the excavated area in both directions. Ditch F1638 was strikingly similar in profile and dimensions to Ditch F1326, strongly suggesting that the two represent the same feature, possibly some kind of boundary.

To the immediate north of Ditch F1638 there was a concentration of small undated postholes. Although they showed no clear structural configuration, their proximity to Ditch F1638 suggests that they may have been in some way associated with the ditch, possibly as part of a fence line augmenting the boundary. To the north of this concentration of postholes lay five intercutting irregularly shaped pits. The three stratigraphically earliest pits in this group were all of Phase 4 date. Their function remains unknown. Activity to the north of these irregular features was limited to two isolated pits (F1617 and F1688). Each of these features contained sufficient artefactual evidence to confirm its assignment to Phase 4 but was of indeterminate function.

Pits to the south of Ditch F1638 and to the west of Ditch F1326 lay on the inside of the right angle created by these ditches and so may be considered to have been located within the possible enclosure. Some of these pits may have been created for the disposal of refuse material, while F1076 was of a depth sufficient to tentatively suggest that it represents an early attempt to utilise the underlying gravels that were quarried in close proximity to the site in the more recent past.

To the east of the possible Saxo-Norman enclosure, and just north of the extent of Addyman's excavation in 1961–2 (Addyman 1973), were Ditch F1486, Pit F1608 and Grave F1484 (Fig. 6; Grid Square I9). Ditch F1486 was an amorphous feature; for the most part it was a linear (aligned north-east to south-west), however, after c. 1m, a narrow arm branched off directly northward. At its south-western end, Ditch F1486 turned

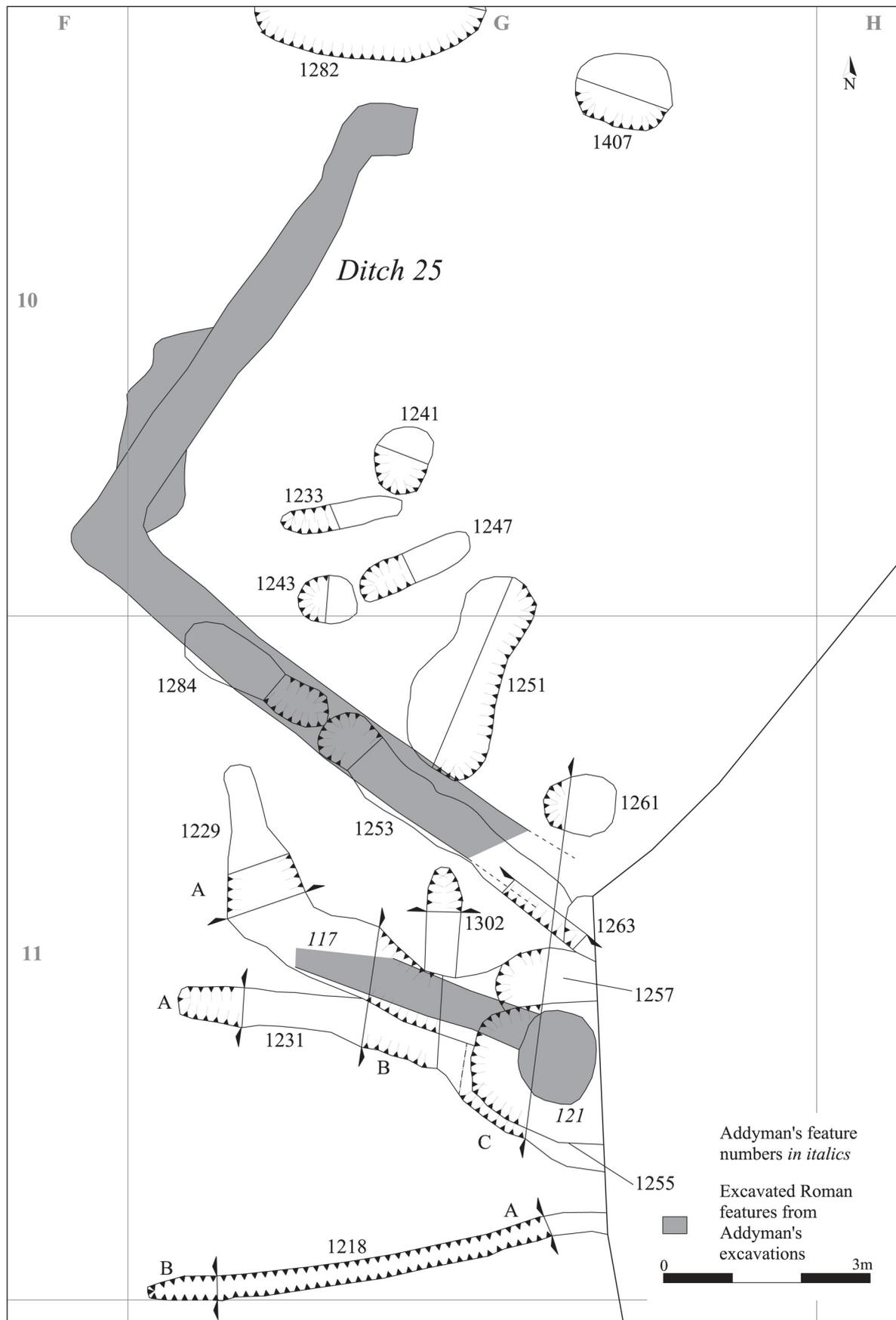


Figure 5. Plan showing Addyman's 'Ditch 25'.

through 90° or more and continued in a northerly direction for 1m before being directly truncated by Grave F1484.

The proximity of this grave to the inhumation recorded by Tebbutt (Lethbridge and Tebbutt 1933, 144–145) suggests that it may have formed part of the same group of burials; human remains were found during gravel extraction following Tebbutt's work here. However, the pottery recovered from Ditch F1486 is late in date for the Saxo-Norman period and is most likely to be of post-Conquest date. As Grave F1484 is clearly later than this ditch it seems that it is a later burial than that recorded by Tebbutt (Lethbridge and Tebbutt 1933) which is recorded on the Cambridgeshire HER database as being of early to middle Saxon date. The grave contained the semi-articulated Skeleton SK1483. The individual, a young adult female (20–35 years), was only 25–50% complete. Preservation was generally moderate although the upper limb bones were poorly preserved. SK1483 was buried in a supine extended position, which is the most common position for burial during the Anglo-Saxon period in Britain (Lucy 2000). The

east-west alignment of the burial, with the head to the west, may suggest a Christian burial (Taylor 2001, 138). This is consistent with the late Saxon date of the grave and the lack of grave goods.

Two large amorphous features in the south-eastern corner of the site, F1395 and F1397, may represent some kind of boundary. Ditch F1395 was clearly a linear feature with north and south projecting arms extending from its western end. F1397 was considerably wider; much of the southern extent of the feature extended past the southern boundary of excavation and, as it was not possible to investigate it any further to the south, it is possible that it was a large pit.

Addyman (1973) noted that the pottery from his excavations at Church Street contained the full developmental range of St Neots ware, in a considerable variety of forms, with anything other than St Neots ware being rare (Addyman 1973, 78). The Church Street pottery assemblage follows this pattern and also parallels Addyman's (1973) description as it contains predominantly wheel-thrown forms comprising cooking pots and bowls.

The animal remains from Phase 4 appear to be the

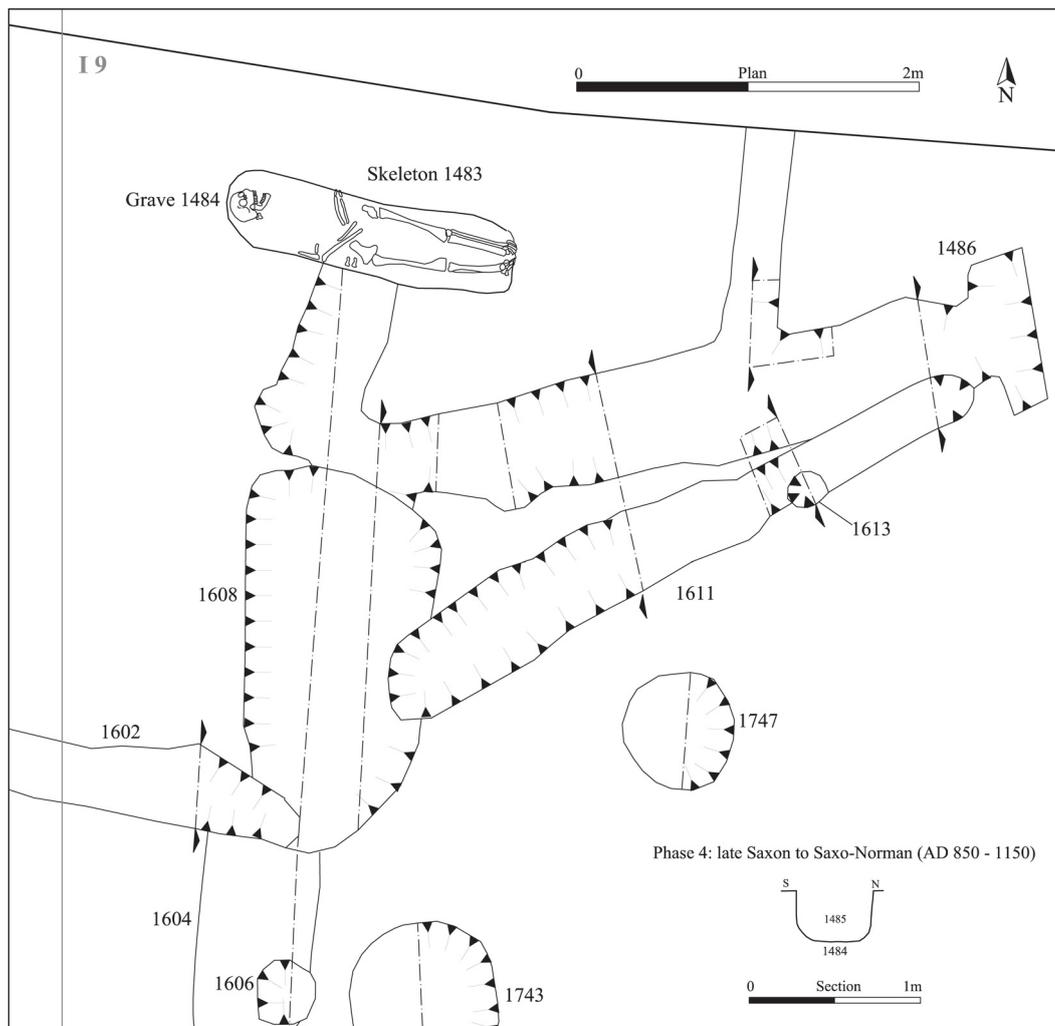


Figure 6. Grave F1484 plan and section.

result of small scale butchery and domestic waste. This is unsurprising as they were recovered from an area identified by Lethbridge and Tebbutt (1933) and Addyman (1973) as a settlement site. The recovery of the remains of pulses and cereals, including oats, from environmental samples taken from Phase 4 contexts provides further evidence suggestive of domestic activity.

Phase 5: Early medieval to high medieval

A search of the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record suggests that the medieval period is possibly the best attested archaeologically in the area surrounding the site. It would seem that by *c.* 1500, the burgeoning settlement at St Neots had grown into a market town. The earliest portions of St Mary's church (which is situated *c.* 150m from the site), have been dated to the thirteenth century (Jamison 1932). As well as being a market town, there is also evidence of a growing industrial economy at St Neots during the medieval period (*c.f.* Addyman 1973, 83; Tebbutt and Rudd 1966, 159).

The majority of evidence for medieval activity recorded by the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record within a 500m radius of the site at Church Street lies to the west. This would appear to support the notion that settlement activity moved away from the area of the late Saxon settlement identified by Tebbutt (Lethbridge and Tebbutt 1933) and Addyman (1973) to the area around the Priory. Evidence for medieval activity does exist in fairly close proximity to the site, although, with the exception of the Church of St Mary, St Neots, this is mostly of an industrial nature with the evidence for metal working from the site of the Church Street ditch and the possible evidence for malting, parching or grain drying and for tanning recorded at St Mary's Street (Jones 2000, 23). This would appear to confirm that this area of the town was peripheral to the medieval town to the west.

The densest concentration of Phase 5 features occurred in the northern part (Area 1) of the site (Fig. 3). As was the case in Phase 4, the most prominent Phase 5 features in this part of the site were several ditches aligned either broadly north to south or east to west. These features lay to the west of the area described by Addyman as containing a medieval fishpond (Addyman and Marjoram 1972). The form and character of many of the features in this part of the site would suggest that they represent boundaries. Ditch F1834 (GS B2, B3, C3) was located immediately to the north of Phase 4 Ditch F1832 and followed the same alignment, though the later feature extended considerably further to the east. It seems possible that Ditch F1834 was a replacement for F1832, indicating that the same, or a similar, division of land that was employed in the late Anglo-Saxon/Saxo-Norman period remained in place in the medieval period. Similarly, Ditch F1847 ran parallel to Phase 4 Ditch F1944, suggesting that it may have been a more easterly replacement for the Saxon feature. The spatial relationships of some of the possible boundary features

in this part of the site indicates that they are unlikely to all have been immediately contemporary with one another, suggesting that the system of land division in this part of the site was modified, possibly more than once, during the period represented by Phase 5. The proximity of the medieval fishpond identified by Addyman and Marjoram (1972) may indicate that some of the other features recorded in this part of the site had a function associated with this feature. For instance, the large, rectangular, vertical-sided, flat-based Pit F1991=F1955=F1961 (Grid Square D3) has tentatively been suggested to represent a feature such as a stewpond, which commonly occurred in chains of two or three adjacent to ponds for the raising of young fish (Muir 2004, 212). This feature, however, lacked the organic and waterlogged deposits that Addyman and Marjoram (1972, 78–79) recorded in the fishpond.

It is possible that part of the system of boundaries/enclosures represented by the concentration of Phase 5 features in the north-western part of the site continued to the south-east in to the north-western part of Area 2. Ditch F1501 was aligned east to west for much of its recordable extent but turned through 90° to the north after a distance of *c.* 10m (Grid Squares D6, E6). This indicates that had it continued further to the north, Ditch F1501 would have passed the concentration of Phase 5 features recorded in Area 2, *c.* 2.5m to the east of them. Ditch F1499, which cut the northern edge, or the inside angle, of F1501 clearly represents a recut of this feature. The area in which these features lay is understood to have been heavily disturbed by 20th century quarrying activity (see Fig. 2) but the evidence revealed during excavation would appear to suggest otherwise.

Further away from the north-west corner, evidence of Phase 5 activity became increasingly sparse (see Figs. 3 and 4). In the area to the immediate south of Ditches F1499 and F1501 were a series of pits dateable to Phase 5. Further to the south-east, three features of Phase 5 date (Gully F1602, Gully F1611 and Pit F1743; GS H9, I9) lay in close proximity to, and two cut, features forming the Phase 4 group associated with Grave F1484. Their position in such close proximity to Phase 4 Grave F1484 and its associated features might be of significance, especially given the sparse distribution of other features of this phase across the majority of Area 2 of the site. The remaining evidence for Phase 5 activity comprised a narrow ditch (F1194; GS E12, F12, G12), running east to west which may have represented a boundary or part of an enclosure, a pair of shallow ditches in the south-east corner of the site and five scattered pits.

While the pottery and animal bone assemblages recovered from Phase 5 features seemed to be suggestive of domestic activity the metalwork recovered from them appears to indicate otherwise. The ratio of iron to other metalwork is typical of rural or urban industrial sites, an interpretation supported by the absence of medieval or early post-medieval dress accessories such as buckles, strap-ends or wire pins, which occur frequently on both secular and monastic sites of the period.

Tebbutt and Rudd (1966, 159) recorded a probable wooden-framed building in the area to the immediate north of the Church Street site and to the south of Cambridge Street, with the remains of a second building overlying it. A building containing the furnaces associated with the known metal working activity in this area was recorded running parallel to Church Street along the present building line. Based on this evidence Spoerry (2000, fig. 12.6) has suggested that the 'built up area' of the medieval town, although focussed on the market square area to the west, extended a short way to the east of Church Street. The direction of several of the Phase 5 boundary ditches recorded in Area 1 of the Church Street site, especially F1847 and F2049, appears to suggest that they may have been associated with the rear plots of the buildings recorded by Tebbutt and Rudd (1966) while others may be associated with structures formerly located in the area between the excavated site and Church Street itself.

Phase 6: Late medieval

Three features (Fig. 3) in the northern part of the site (Area 1), where the concentration of medieval features was densest, were assigned very late medieval dates. These features were also observed to be clearly stratigraphically later than those of Phase 5. None of these features displayed any evidence from which their function could be determined. Their location in an area understood to be in close proximity to buildings of medieval date would suggest that they were directly related to those buildings.

Phase 7: Post-medieval

A large proportion of the features recorded at the Church Street site were found to date to the post-medieval period. Features belonging to this phase were present across the site but appeared to form three main concentrations. The first of these was at the northern end of the site (within Area 1); the second was located slightly to the north of the central part of the site (at the northern end of Area 2); the third concentration was located at the very southern end of the excavation site (Figs. 3 and 4).

Much of the activity during this phase would appear to have been related to the post-medieval Hall Place, recorded during Addyman's excavations at the site in 1961–62 (Addyman and Marjoram 1972), and which was further represented by features recorded during the current excavation. This archaeology includes both structural remains and features which would appear to have formed part of the gardens or grounds. Hall Place was a late seventeenth or early eighteenth century house described in the will of John Eayre, who died in 1772, as 'the capital messuage in St Neots' (Addyman and Marjoram 1972, 71–72). The building is understood to have been demolished by the 19th century and the name Hall Place transferred to a property on Cambridge Street.

A length of wall footing, aligned south-south-west

to north-north-east and turning through 90 degrees at its northern end, was recorded within the north-western part of the site. It was constructed of bricks of varying colour, ranging from pale orangey-pink to purplish-blue and was rendered and plastered on its internal side indicating that it was probably a wall of the main part of the Hall Place dwelling. Within the area bounded by this wall was a bedding layer for a tiled floor; a single tile remained *in situ* mortared to the material comprising this surface. Abutting the outer corner of this first wall was a second, which would appear to represent a later addition to the building. A third wall lay within what would have been the interior of the building, this overlay the floor surface suggesting that it too was a later addition.

The walls recorded during the excavation represent the western half of the building recorded by Addyman and Marjoram (1972, fig. 33) (see Fig. 7). They predicted the presence of an internal wall in the approximate location of that recorded during the 2007 excavation and the wall abutting the corner of the main wall appears to represent part of the wall belonging to the enclosed garden that lay to the west of Hall Place.

To the west of the structural remains of Hall Place were a number of features that, due to their location, must relate to garden activity. One of these comprised a rectangular feature with steep sides and a flat base (F1906). Two similar but undated features lay to the east. It has been suggested that these features represented planting trenches or some other aspect of garden design. To the north of these features, extending beyond the limit of the excavated area, were a group of ten linear features (of which nine were excavated; F1792, F1794, F1796, F1798, F1817, F1819, F1899, F1918 and F1973; GS C1–D2) aligned north-east to south-west. These features have been identified as bedding trenches for plant cultivation. Their character, closely set parallel to one another, would suggest that they were not ornamental and did not contain flowers, but instead were used for the cultivation of some crop plant; possibly soft fruit, carrots or onions. This suggests that a degree of market or kitchen gardening was being carried out in the grounds of the post-medieval Hall Place. A similar group of features, comprising fifteen gullies (of which 12 were excavated; F1198, F1222, F1235, F1245, F1259, F1249, F1445, F1286, F1288, F1290, F1304 and F1431) was recorded at the very southern end of the excavated area (GS F12–G13). These features would have lain outside of the walled garden. This may indicate some degree of differentiation in what was grown in the two sets of bedding trenches; those within the walled garden may have contained more visually attractive, more fragrant or more delicate plants while those at the southern end of the site may have been used for the cultivation of hardier crops.

Three features, identified as possible ponds, were recorded close to the eastern side of the southern group of bedding trenches. From one of these ponds, in addition to the post-medieval finds from which its Phase 7 date was established, a small quantity of

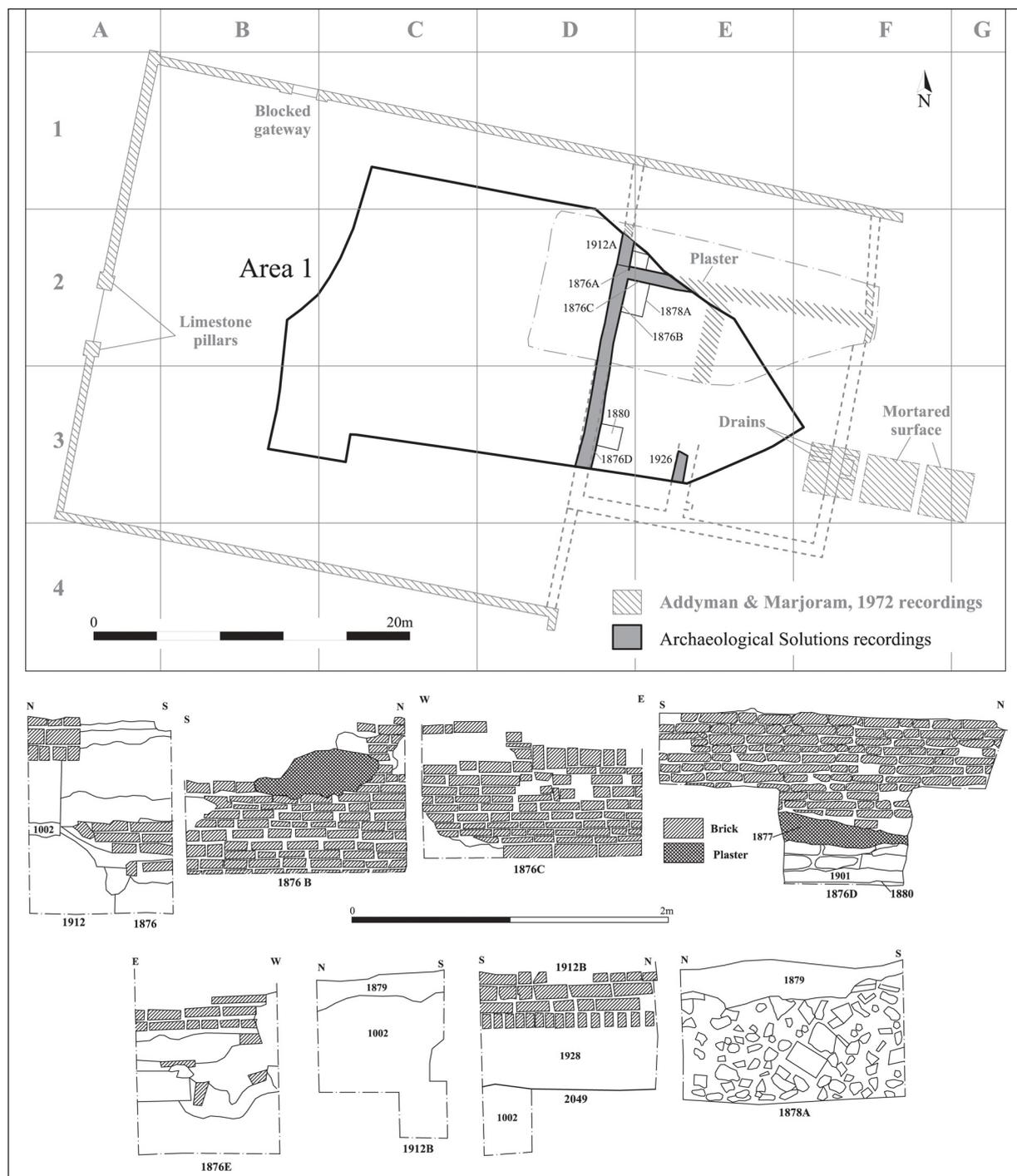


Figure 7 Phase 7 Structural remains of Hall Place.

early high medieval pottery was recovered. This may indicate that the pond was a long established feature possibly associated with the large medieval pond recorded to the north by Addyman and Marjoram (1972).

At the northern end of Area 2, and therefore at the approximate centre of the entire area investigated, Phase 7 was represented by a number of medium to large sized amorphous features. Some of these may represent deliberate infilling of naturally occurring

features while others could feasibly represent attempts to utilise the underlying river terrace gravels that were quarried extensively in the 1930s allowing Tebbutt (Lethbridge and Tebbutt 1933) to identify the Saxon settlement.

The excavation recovered a total of 3458 fragments (168,788g) of Ceramic Building Materials (CBM), the bulk of which is comprised of post-medieval peg tile with sparse fragments of contemporary brick and floor tile. This pattern of presence and distribution

is directly the result of the location of Hall Place, the demolition of which by the nineteenth century, can be ascribed as the source for nearly all of the CBM recovered. The animal bone assemblage recovered from Phase 7 features contained high numbers of sheep/goat metapodials and this appears not to be ordinary domestic waste. High frequencies of foot bones have been interpreted as tannery waste, as, prior to the modern era, the bones of the feet would often be left on the skins (Serjeantson 1989, 136; Thomson 1981, 162). Excavations at nearby St Mary's Street, St Neots revealed tanning pits and a substantial assemblage of animal bone (Jones 2000; Pinter-Bellows 2000).

The presence of features representing possible small scale quarrying activity and large quantities of animal bone that may represent tanning waste do not fit with the picture of the site in the post-medieval period as the gardens of one of the most well-appointed houses in St Neots. The possible quarry pits could conceivably have been created during the building of the mansion in 1678, for Robert Pulleyn, steward to the Earl of Sandwich, or during its rebuilding in 1712, in order to supply material used in its construction. They could also have been created following the sale of Hall Place in 1770 to one John Broughton of Kettering, when it may, according to Tebbutt (1978, 162), have been demolished so that Broughton could use or sell the materials elsewhere. Small-scale quarrying may have allowed John Broughton to yield further gains from his investment. This suggestion may explain why quite large quantities of CBM were recovered from these features; broken bricks and tiles from the recently demolished Hall Place may have been incorporated in to the back fill material as these pits were closed up following the extraction of gravel. It is interesting to note that there were no whole examples of bricks or tiles in the post-medieval CBM assemblage recovered from the site. This may be a result of damage in the burial environment but it may alternatively indicate that any whole bricks or tiles from the demolition of Hall Place were salvaged for use or sale elsewhere. The apparent tanning waste may have been imported on to the site, possibly from the St Mary's Street tannery as a convenient dumping ground following the demolition of Hall Place.

Phase 8: Early Modern

Five ditches and 11 pits were assigned to this phase on the basis of the finds recovered from their fills and their stratigraphic relationships (Figs. 3 and 4). Features of this period were identified across the site but were slightly more concentrated in the south-east corner of the site.

Two features (Ditches F1763 and F1765; both Grid Square E3) were cut into a layer of demolition material that lay within structural remains of Hall Place and appeared to be aligned with drains identified by Addyman and Marjoram (1972, fig. 33) at the eastern side of the building. This may represent an attempt to relocate the line of the drains, possibly to gain access to the materials from which they were construct-

ed. It is clear that these features are not the result of Addyman and Marjoram's (1972) investigation of the remains of Hall Place as they did not excavate (see Addyman and Marjoram 1972, fig. 33) this far to the west.

F1269, a large curvilinear feature (GS H10–H12), at the eastern side of the site, does not appear on any of the early Ordnance Survey maps of the area and it is, therefore, possible that it was created during the earlier part of the early modern period. This may suggest that it was created during the ownership of the Hall Place site by one of the subsequent owners to John Broughton, who sold it in 1770, the same year that he bought it, to Joseph Eayre, a bellfounder. The size and depth of the feature and its location in close proximity to the areas in which quarrying was carried out during the 1930s, suggests that it may represent earlier quarrying activity. Several other features that were identified as being of Phase 8 date were recorded in this part of the site. Although much smaller in size than F1269 some of these features were of a depth sufficient to reach into the underlying gravel deposits and possibly represent further quarrying activity.

Discussion

The Prehistoric presence at Church Street

The Ouse valley and its gravel terraces are known to be a major area of prehistoric activity (CCC 2002, 28). Indeed, prehistory is well attested in the St Neots area. On this basis it may be considered unsurprising that evidence for prehistoric activity was discovered at the Church Street site, in the form of late Neolithic to early Bronze Age Pit F1810. In fact, it is perhaps surprising that more prehistoric activity was not recorded, given the wealth of prehistoric activity on the gravel terraces of the Ouse as a whole. It may be that later activity at the site has masked or destroyed any further prehistoric evidence that may have existed.

Romano-British activity

Addyman (1973, 60) interpreted the Roman features that he recorded as the remains of timber buildings, though he admitted that too little of the site had been excavated to produce any useful conclusions. Certain features recorded during AS's excavation at the site represent re-examination of Addyman's Ditch 25, a feature which he suggested may have represented a timber building (see Figs. 5 and 8). Other features, however, were not in anyway suggestive of the presence of buildings. The Phase 2 features on the western side of the site especially, appeared to represent some form of enclosure or boundary system that may have been repeatedly remodelled or rearranged.

Existing evidence in the vicinity of St Neots indicates that it was an agricultural area of farms, hamlets and a villa lying between the small market towns of Godmanchester, to the north, and Sandy, to the south



Figure 8. Plan of area of Addyman's excavation.

(CCC 2002, 7). Roman activity in the St Neots area appears to be concentrated in the vicinity of Eynesbury. The number of Roman finds from the area between Eynesbury and the Great Ouse indicates extensive settlement from around the third century (Ellis 2004, 107). It has been suggested that this may represent a Roman small town, especially because of the presence of a possible river crossing point (Bigmore 1979). However, the distribution of finds could equally indicate a villa estate (Spoerry 2000, 148) and this appears a much more likely explanation.

Agricultural exploitation of the landscape in the Romano-British period existed on two levels. Firstly, the peasant settlements, villages or single farmsteads, continued and developed in the same kind of way as they had in the pre-Roman period. It is to this type of settlement that the possible farmstead excavated at Little Paxton (Greenfield 1969), to the west, probably belongs. Secondly, is the Romanised villa estate. These became more frequent as time went on and can be seen to be a new system growing beside, and out of, the old one (Frere 1967, 265). It may be that the features recorded at Church Street represent part of a native-style farm that would have been fairly indistinguishable from a similar settlement of the Iron Age with the exception that some Roman-style corn drying kilns, pottery and other objects are likely to have been present (Wacher 1978, 128). Occasionally at such sites rectangular buildings are found instead of roundhouses (Frere 1967, 265). This may account for the presence of the rectangular building postulated by Addyman. Alternatively, it is possible that the fea-

tures represent an outlying set of enclosures within and forming part of a wider agricultural landscape focussed on the villa at Eynesbury. In some areas stock enclosures in large open spaces across which animals are allowed to roam and graze with a large amount of freedom are known. These stock enclosures would have been used for animal round-ups or for lambing and calving (Wacher 1978, 111). The size and form of the enclosures at Church Street may suggest that the site may have functioned in this way. However, the artefactual evidence suggests that a modest level of domestic activity occurred at this location in the Roman period. It would appear, therefore, that even if the features do represent a site forming an outlier of the villa estate, there must have been people living at this location, clearly reinforcing Addyman's (1973) assertion that buildings must have been present.

The Anglo-Saxon and Saxo-Norman periods

Despite a clear correlation between some of the features recorded by AS at the Church Street site and those recorded by Addyman (1973), the area was comparatively lacking in features of an Anglo-Saxon date. Gully F1062, which was found to contain pottery of an early Anglo-Saxon date, is suggestive of longevity of settlement in this area but the function of the feature itself is not entirely apparent and no other features of a similar date were recorded. All of the other Saxon features that were present were of a late Saxon or Saxo-Norman date indicating that they were most likely to belong to the same phase of occupation

as those recorded by Addyman (1973) and Tebbutt (Lethbridge and Tebbutt 1933).

The majority of the Anglo-Saxon features recorded are suggestive of boundaries. Ditch F1326, which was previously recorded by Addyman (1973), appeared, along with Ditch F1638, to form two sides of an enclosure. Two short linears, one undated and one which yielded post-medieval finds, appeared to be the only surviving evidence of the late Saxon structure recorded by Addyman (1973) as 'Structure A' (Fig.

9). These features lay on the inner side of the angle formed by Ditches F1326 and F1638 suggesting that Addyman's 'Structure A' lay within an enclosed area. At Cowdrey's Down in Hampshire, several major buildings were seen to be contained within fenced compounds and similar layouts have been observed at Chalton, also in Hampshire, and at Thirlings in Northumberland (Arnold 1988, 161). These sites would appear to compare well with the enclosure around 'Structure A' and may indicate that it was a

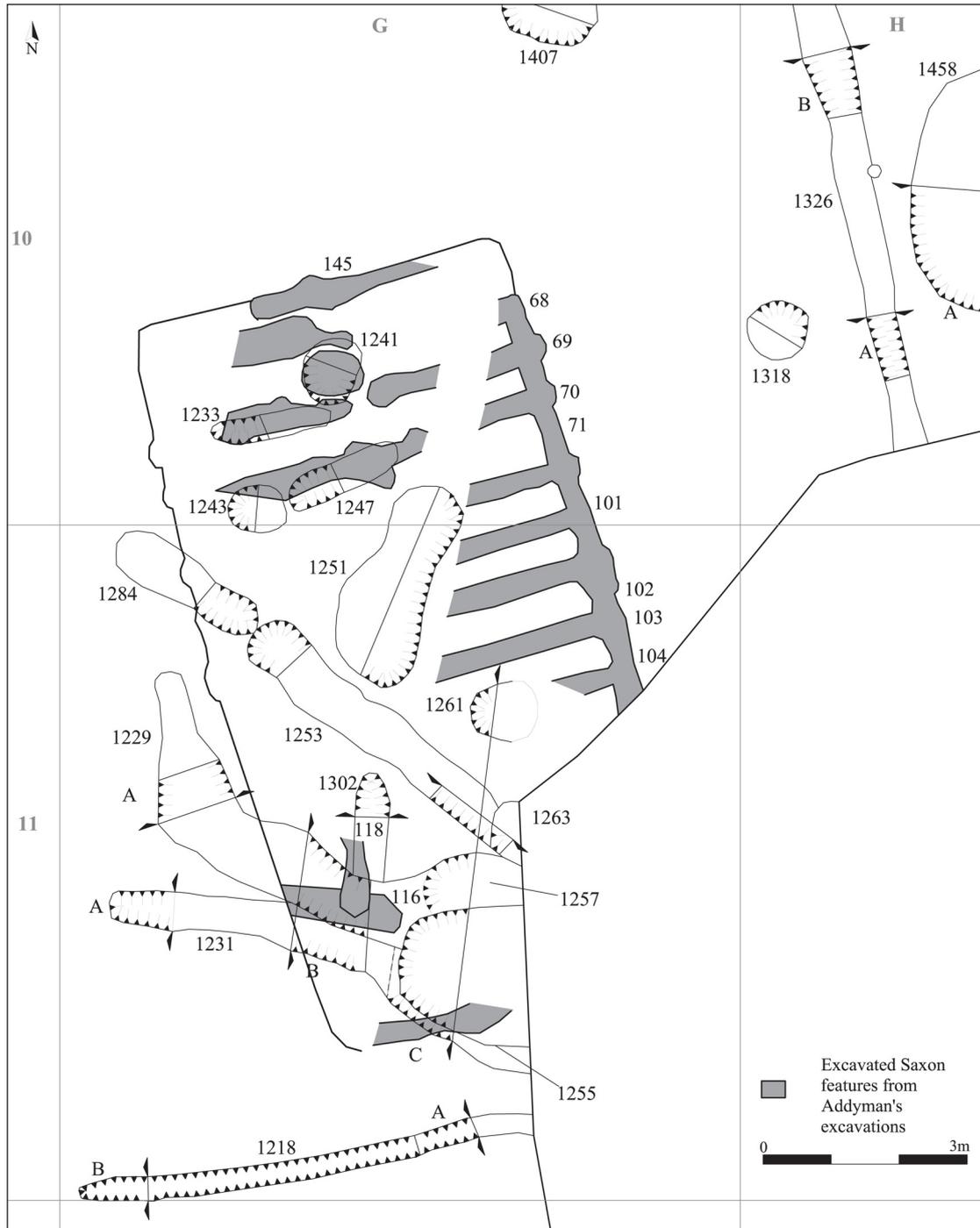


Figure 9. Addyman's Structure A in relation to features recorded during As' excavation.

building of some importance.

It appears possible that some, if not all, of the ditches in the far north-west of the site were boundary or enclosure ditches. Ditch F1944 ran approximately parallel with the line of the Church Street ditch and may indicate the presence of enclosures in this area aligned with the enclosing ditch of the Saxon settlement (Tebbutt and Rudd 1966; Rudd and Tebbutt 1973). Although a small number of pits were recorded in this area, no features indicative of structures were present.

Addyman (1973, 45) predicted that the settlement recorded by himself and Tebbutt extended to the west. The evidence from this excavation would appear to suggest that occupational activity within the late Saxon settlement extended no further west than Addyman's 'Structure A'. The features recorded to the west of 'Structure A' did, however, lie within the area understood to have been surrounded by the large ditch running along Cambridge Street and Church Street (Tebbutt and Rudd 1966; Rudd and Tebbutt 1973) and as such lay within the settlement enclosure. It seems reasonable to suggest that part of the enclosed settlement would have been set aside for the overwintering of animals or for their safekeeping during periods in which their safety or security might have been threatened. Oval 'infield' enclosures have been recorded at the late Saxon site at Puxton on the North Somerset Levels (Reynolds 2003, 117). This may accord with Addyman's (1973) suggestion that different parts of the Saxon settlement had differing specialised functions.

Although no further evidence for late Saxon habitation and domestic activity was recorded during the excavation at the Church Street site, it has helped to further characterise the late Saxon settlement at St Neots. The evidence recovered during this excavation is best understood in conjunction with the work conducted by Tebbutt (Lethbridge and Tebbutt 1933), Addyman (1973) and Rudd and Tebbutt (Tebbutt and Rudd 1966; Rudd and Tebbutt 1973). The sum of all of these pieces of work is a picture of an enclosed settlement within which habitation appears to be located in the central part of the enclosed area and may extend to the east. The nature of this habitation may be slightly unusual as in the northern part of the site it appears to comprise sunken-featured buildings, an architectural style that is generally understood to have been phased out by the seventh century, yet at this site appears to be associated with occupational debris of a late Saxon date. Further to the south within the area of habitation these somewhat archaic buildings give way to a later style of architecture that may be considered more contemporary with the artefactual material recovered from across the area of the settlement. These apparent architectural inconsistencies may be a result of the fact that settlement at this site occurred in a prolonged phase of activity which allowed for little or no clear differentiation in the archaeological record between the early and late parts of the Anglo-Saxon period. However, Tipper (2004, 160) argues that the buildings recorded by Tebbutt (Lethbridge and

Tebbutt 1933) were merely pits, based on their late Saxon date and small size.

Medieval activity

Much like the Anglo-Saxon activity, medieval features were fairly sparsely distributed across the majority of the site with a concentration in the far north-west. This apparent lack of evidence of activity is perhaps unsurprising, as by the beginning of this period settlement had already begun to shift to the area around the Priory, to the west. Medieval evidence recorded on the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record reflects this new focus. During the medieval period, the Church Street site lay on the periphery of the settlement.

The concentration of ditches in the north-western part of the site may represent a medieval re-working of the enclosure ditches that were present in this part of the site in the Anglo-Saxon period. These ditches would appear to have been aligned with the Church Street ditch or, when it was filled in, the line of Church Street, which like much of the street plan of St Neots, is understood to have come in to being in the thirteenth century following the infilling of the ditch surrounding the area of the Anglo-Saxon settlement. As such, they may represent rear plots or enclosures associated with the buildings constructed on the line of the former ditch. Equally, they may have been associated with the metal working site that lay to the north and which was constructed following the infilling of the Church Street ditch (Tebbutt and Rudd 1966, 159).

Scattered features across the site indicate that activity was still occurring in the area of the Saxo-Norman settlement during the medieval period. None of these features could be considered to represent dwellings. The suggestion that much of the artefactual assemblage for Phase 5 is of an apparently domestic nature would, however, suggest that people were living within, or in very close proximity to, the site in the medieval period. Hibbert (1989, 103) states that the poorest medieval workers had to be content with small, insalubrious dwellings in the suburbs of towns. It may be that the poorest members of the population of medieval St Neots, or those on the lowest rungs of the social ladder, remained living in and around the old Saxo-Norman settlement as they could not afford, or were not permitted, to live in the newer part of the town closer to the priory.

The proximity of the Fox and Hen Brooks may have meant that the southern part of the site was wet or prone to flooding and therefore unsuitable for habitation; other sites nearby have yielded evidence to indicate that the area was marshy in the medieval period (Jones 2000). It may be that the medieval features within the southern part of the site, which mostly comprise ditches of varying size, represent nothing more than land division or small enclosures associated with pastoral agriculture on this land which, although possibly wet, may have been suitable for summer grazing. Overall, the picture of this

part of medieval St Neots that may be drawn from the excavated evidence conforms to what has been previously understood about the townscape. Spoerry (2000, fig. 12.6) indicates that Church Street site lay on the periphery of the medieval town, close to, but not within, the built up area. There was no evidence of anything other than activity peripheral to an urbanised area.

Hall Place and the post-medieval period

Excavation at the Church Street site revealed more of the structural remains of Hall Place previously recorded by Addyman (Addyman and Marjoram 1972). They (see Fig. 7) indicate that Addyman's predictions regarding the layout of the building were mostly accurate (see Addyman and Marjoram 1972, fig. 33).

It can be seen that much of the post-medieval archaeology recorded at the Church Street site relates directly to the presence of the important dwelling, Hall Place, at the northern end of the site during this period. In addition to the structural remains of the building itself elements that must represent grounds have been identified. Hall Place was constructed during the period which Dyer (2002, 54) describes as the 'golden age' of small towns; the point at which the English small town was at the height of its development. During the eighteenth century, towns in Britain experienced both quantitative and qualitative urbanisation (Borsay 2003, 291). Small towns in this period had a variety of functions which allowed them to exist and flourish; they served the surrounding countryside as market centres but also worked in a symbiotic relationship with the large towns in whose hinterland they lay (Dyer 2002, 56). This is the role that St Neots filled, acting as a market town serving the immediately surrounding area and acting as a gateway for regional trade. The town had already successfully made the transition to a trade town following the loss of the priory during the Dissolution (CCC 2002, 32). It is from this period of economic expansion that the large merchants' houses, of which Hall Place may be considered one, can be dated (CCC 2002, 32). The presence of post-medieval garden features within the land understood to have been the property of Hall Place indicates that sufficient land was available in this post-medieval urban or sub-urban setting for the inhabitants to enjoy the benefits of their own garden; the fact that such land was available within the town at this time implies a certain level of wealth.

Certain other elements of the post-medieval archaeology, however, appear to be at odds with this picture. The large features which have been interpreted as gravel pits would appear to be contradictory to the residential nature of the area suggested by Addyman and Marjoram (1972, 71). It seems reasonable to suggest that these may have been dug following the demolition of Hall Place for the use or resale of its constituent materials by John Broughton, the Kettering carpenter. Broughton, to maximise the returns on his investment, may have quarried the underlying river terrace gravels or one of the subsequent

owners may have purchased the site for this specific purpose.

The presence of faunal remains, mainly sheep/goat metapodials, suggestive of tannery waste in features of this period, is less easily explained. However, evidence for tanning activity was recorded at St Mary's Street, c. 100m to the south-west, where tanning pits and a substantial assemblage of animal bone were recorded (Jones 2000; Pinter-Bellows 2000). In the later eighteenth century tanning may have also taken place at a brick 'tanning factory' constructed between Church Street and Hen Brook (Tebbutts Ltd. 1949, 2). The metapodials may have had a further use after removal from the skin by the tanner and may have been acquired for a specific purpose at Hall Place. This has been suggested for a similar assemblage from eighteenth-early nineteenth century deposits at Grove House, Fenstanton, Cambridgeshire (Phillips 2006). Phillips (2006) cites examples of the use of cattle metapodials in construction and gardening. Alternatively, this waste may have been imported to the site following the demolition of the building, in or around 1770, possibly deliberately to aid in the filling in of pits and other disturbances or possibly as opportunistic dumping of waste material by the workers at the tannery site on an abandoned piece of land.

Conclusion

As a multi-period site, it can be seen that activity has occurred in this location since the late Neolithic or early Bronze Age. This may be due to the site's position adjacent to the Hen and Fox Brooks and the Ouse, suitable for the supply of water and for communication, and its light and fertile soils of the Efford 1 Association (Soil Survey of England and Wales 1983). These factors may certainly have been important factors in the presence of Roman activity and the siting of the late Saxon settlement in this location. They would also presumably have made the site and its surrounding area attractive to the local Iron Age population, though no evidence for activity in this period was recorded during the excavation work. These factors may also explain why there still appears to have been activity in the area in which the site lies even after the focus of the settlement shifted to the west in the medieval period, although there is evidence from other sites to suggest that this area became less desirable for habitation at around this time. Topography and soils are likely to have had less influence over the development of the site and the surrounding area in the post-medieval period when development in the town is far more likely to have been influenced by what was happening in the rest of the townscape.

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