

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE  
EXTENSIVE URBAN SURVEY

# OUNDLE

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Funded by English Heritage

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## **BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT**

This is one of a series of reports compiled by Northamptonshire Heritage as part of the English Heritage funded Extensive Urban Survey (EUS) of Northamptonshire, which is intended to provide an effective information base and research framework to guide the management of the county's urban archaeological resource. The survey encompasses all urban settlements and others that may have had some urban attributes, from the Roman period to the 1930s. The only exception is Northampton, which is the subject of an intensive urban survey in its own right.

Each report comprises three distinct sections: a detailed description of the town in each major period; an assessment of potential and definition of a research agenda; and a strategy for future management. A consistent approach has been taken in the presentation of the description in each report with detail being presented under each standard category even where this has no direct obvious relevance to the urban aspects. This section has however been presented in the form of a gazetteer with standard headings so enabling the reader to identify those sections of particular interest. The Oundle report is presented in two parts, one covering the pre-industrial period prepared by Glenn Foard and a second covering the industrial period by Jennifer Ballinger. The report draws upon research previously conducted by Glenn Foard on the medieval and post medieval towns of the county; from the survey of historic buildings and land use in selected towns conducted by the Archaeology Unit in the late 1970s, and has benefited from the specialist advice of Dr Barrie Trinder on industrial period. Other contributions to the EUS on digital mapping, database input and related work have been made by various individuals including Christine Addison, Chris Jones, Paul Thompson, Rob Atkins, Phil Markham and especially Tracey Britnell and Abi Kennedy.

The first objective of the report is to determine layout, character and chronology of development of Oundle from its rural Saxon origins up to the 1930s. An attempt has been made to identify the various components of the town which are likely to have left identifiable archaeological remains and, as far as practicable, to define the exact location and extent of these buried or upstanding 'monuments'. They have also all been assessed for likely current survival and their potential to contribute to research objectives. The relationship of the town to its hinterland has also been considered and the potential for study of that interaction has been assessed. In this way the report aims to provide a well founded research framework, establishing the current state of knowledge of Oundle's history and defining a research agenda which can guide future archaeological investigation within the town. Conservation objectives have also been defined. This report should be viewed as a starting point rather than a definitive study, which it certainly is not. If this report serves its purpose then it will need to be regularly reviewed and substantially revised in future years as archaeological investigations, and hopefully also further documentary research, is undertaken.

Given the limitations of time, which inevitably must guide the conduct of a countywide project, it has been necessary to limit the depth of investigation. No original archaeological earthwork or other such field survey has been conducted, but all available existing archaeological data has been consulted. Mapping from aerial photographic sources in the Northamptonshire SMR, CUCAP and the NMR has been completed. Although each town has been visited to examine the topography of the town and an assessment attempted as to the

general state of archaeological survival, no attempt has been made to conduct cellar survey comparable to that undertaken for Northampton as part of the Intensive Urban Survey of that town. This is due to the absence of detailed mapped evidence comparable to that which exists for Northampton and the very poor results achieved in 1979 when a cellar survey was attempted in Thrapston, Higham Ferrers and Towcester. Nor has it been possible to examine all documentary sources, even for the medieval period. However, an attempt has been made to assess the overall potential of this crucial part of the record of the urban past and to examine in detail the most important documentary sources. An index has been compiled from various lists and indexes in the Public Record Office, Northamptonshire Record Office, National Register of Archives and British Library. Given the vast quantity of documentation, particularly for the last 200 years the limitations in the documentary assessment, especially regarding the industrial period must be acknowledged. Attention has focussed on those sources which might contribute significantly to the reconstruction of the historical topography of the town and to the broader characterisation of the various 'monuments' within the town.

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## SUMMARY

Oundle lies within a kilometre of the site of an un-walled Roman small town at Ashton (see separate EUS report by Taylor). Although the industrial and commercial central place functions were served by the Ashton site, it is unclear where local administrative functions were based in the Roman period. It is possible that the Roman evidence from Oundle itself might represent such a central place but no modern archaeological investigations have recovered any Roman material from the town. Oundle was probably the central place of one of the small tribal units which composed Middle Anglia in the early Saxon period. The physical proximity of Oundle to the Ashton site may indicate some degree of administrative continuity from the Roman period, either of the site itself or at least of a local territory.

In the middle Saxon period Oundle was probably the capital of a sub unit of the Mercian kingdom, based upon an earlier tribal unit. At this time there was a monastery at Oundle, closely associated with the administrative centre, although the polyfocal nature of such Saxon central places may mean that the actual site of the ecclesiastical functions was in a nearby settlement. Other functions may also have lain at other nearby places, as is seen in other central places in the region. The monastery was presumably destroyed during the Danish hegemony of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, but it is unclear what administrative functions may have remained at Oundle.

During the revival of monastic life following the re-conquest from the Danes, Oundle was chosen as the site of a new monastery. This was however soon abandoned in favour of Peterborough, the Oundle estate being granted to the new abbey at its foundation. By 1086 Oundle had a thriving market, one of only four documented by 1086, and it is probable that the presence of the market is a direct result of the earlier central place functions. It is however unclear when this marketing function was formalised or how early the commercial activity began.

The development of the settlement as an urban centre was undoubtedly promoted by the abbots of Peterborough as part of their profit driven capital investment in their estates. By the early 12<sup>th</sup> century there were a number of tenants holding burgages in the town. Oundle grew substantially as the medieval economy expanded in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. The abbots protected their commercial interests in the town by the granting of limited freedoms to the non agricultural tenants, by the development of the road network through the construction of bridges to bring all traffic through the town and thus meeting challenges to its local marketing functions from new markets nearby. In one case, that of Barnwell, they had recourse to a legal challenge in order to have the competing new market extinguished. As a result, through the medieval period Oundle remained the main market centre for the middle Nene valley and its environs. However from the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards it was always overshadowed by both Stamford and the rapidly growing town of Peterborough, which was developed by successive abbots around their monastery.

Oundle rode out the economic recession of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries and is revealed again in the 16<sup>th</sup> century as the dominant local marketing centre. Unlike Higham

Ferrers or Rothwell, Oundle did not have successful nearby 'new towns' which survived the recession to challenge its dominance. As a result, and given the high agricultural wealth and population levels of the townships of the middle Nene valley, Oundle remained in the top level of the small towns of the county throughout the post medieval period. In 1712 it was described by Morton as *'a fair, well built, pleasant and Healthy Town advantageously and Sweetly Situated. Its situation encourages trade.'*<sup>1</sup>

Oundle continued in use as a market town through the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, although the town had some industrial production, with production of leather goods in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and brewing and malting in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the main basis of its wealth and success seems to have rested on the commercial servicing of its local hinterland. It never developed an industrial specialism which, like boot and shoe production on Wellingborough or woollen cloth production in Kettering, could provide a sound base for its expansion in the industrial era. Although the town was on the Nene navigation and thus its economy was enhanced to a limited degree by the growth of heavy trade that this enables, it was bypassed by the main rail routes in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. As of this combination of non specialised industrial base and lack of mainline rail links, Oundle was largely bypassed by the Industrial Revolution which transformed the certain of the towns and villages of the Ise and Upper Nene valleys in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Today Oundle remains a small country town noted primarily for its public school.

As a result of being bypassed by the industrialisation that led to massive redevelopment in some other towns in the county, the archaeological and historic building potential of the town remains remarkably high. Except where 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century redevelopment has occurred for the public school, there are a wide range of building surviving from the late medieval, post medieval early modern periods. Good archaeological survival has also been demonstrated in a number of small scale investigations within the town. This potential is complemented by the excellent documentary record. The combination of excellent surviving evidence for the history of the town from the Saxon, medieval, post medieval and industrial periods means that Oundle is probably the town with the highest potential of any small town in Northamptonshire. Although the work which will be required to realise that potential will often have to be very piecemeal and small scale, in the long term the settlement warrants the very highest level of response on buried and standing remains of all periods.

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<sup>1</sup> Morton, 1712.

# **I DESCRIPTION**

## **TOPOGRAPHY & GEOLOGY**

Oundle lies in the middle Nene valley on a spur overlooking the river. It is in an area of largely permeable geology providing good agricultural land which was extensively exploited since the Neolithic and Bronze Age. A causewayed enclosure lies in the valley 5km to the north east of Oundle. However the extensive boulder clay capping of the plateau away from the valley provides far poorer land which was not settled until the Iron Age. Although substantial areas of the latter was cultivated at the highpoints of population growth, particularly in the medieval, this land always remained marginal and most suited for woodland or pasture.

## **A PRE MEDIEVAL**

### **1.1 PREHISTORIC AND ROMAN**

Unlike a number of other locations in the county where central places of Roman, Saxon and medieval date lie in close proximity, no Iron Age hillfort site is known in the Oundle area. However, the most defensible location by far is the site of Oundle itself, lying as it does on a narrow spur encompassed by the river on three sides. The most likely location for a hillfort, which might then have been re-occupied in the post Roman period, is then the eastern end of the ridge, close to the site of the later church and manor. No evidence has been recovered of Iron Age activity in this area but there has been very little archaeological work in the town. The small undefended Roman town which lies on the opposite bank of the river to Oundle, in Ashton parish is almost certainly related in some way to the later, Saxon importance of Oundle. The Roman town is discussed in detail in a separate EUS report by Jeremy Taylor.

It appears likely that one of the metalled roads from the Ashton town, after crossing the Nene, ran up onto the spur which Oundle now occupies and then westward to join a road presumed to have run on the west side of the valley. A possible alignment for such a road on the west side of the valley might be provided by the road recorded in the 16<sup>th</sup> century running from Biggin into the Back Lane on the north side of the town, close to the ridge top, and whose line is projected to the river by boundaries of ancient closes. Between this lane and the church a few Roman sherds and tile fragments were recovered in 1985 and adjacent a few Roman sherds were also been recovered by chance during housing development to the north of the lane in the 1970s and in the 19<sup>th</sup> century a Samian or Arretine cup was found in Oundle churchyard. This road and the probable associated settlement may have had some impact on the later layout of the Saxon and medieval settlement.

### **1.2.1 SAXON ORIGINS**

There is at present too little evidence of either Iron Age or Roman activity in the heart of the medieval settlement to support an argument for continuity between Roman and Saxon periods, at least in the area of the Saxon manor and church. The general association of Roman, Saxon and medieval urban and administrative centre is however very strong,

mirroring that seen at the other two major Saxon foci in the county at Kings Sutton and Northampton.<sup>2</sup>

Small quantities of 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> century pottery have been found to the north of the present churchyard in small scale archaeological investigations. During the 1985 excavations to the south of Blackpot Lane (formerly Dwell Wong Lane) only a very small area was investigated and no Early Saxon features were identified, but two early 6<sup>th</sup> century sherds and 100 residual sherds dated from the mid 6<sup>th</sup> to the mid 7<sup>th</sup> century were recovered. The sherds recovered would appear to derive from some form of occupation in immediate proximity. Other early Saxon occupation has been recovered just beyond the western edge of the medieval town, less than a kilometre from the church. This may be part of what is expected to be a dispersed pattern of early-middle Saxon settlement. This would extend over the whole of the area of permeable geology along the Nene valley, but is likely to be completely excluded from the clayland which covers the plateau beyond the valley, much of which will have been wooded in the early and middle Saxon period.<sup>3</sup>

### **1.2.2 MIDDLE SAXON PROVINCIAL CAPITAL**

It would appear likely that a major royal administrative site and possibly also a monastery existed at Oundle in the Middle Saxon period. One or other of these, most likely the administrative centre, could lie in the area beneath and to the north of the medieval church. The evidence for the importance of Oundle in the Middle Saxon period, derived from 8th century, 10th century and medieval sources have been reviewed as follows<sup>4</sup>:

‘The only specific documentary reference to a unit of organisation above the soke which can be definitely related to Northamptonshire is the *"province of Oundle"* within which Bishop Wilfrid died in 709.<sup>5</sup> As Campbell points out in relation to Oundle, 'provincia' is Bede's normal term for kingdom or sub-kingdom.<sup>6</sup> Bede does not apply the term to units as small as the sokes we have discussed above, which are probably equivalent to the 'royal estates' to which he also refers.<sup>7</sup> Hence the *"province of Oundle"* should almost certainly not be equated with the Oundle soke, but rather with an administrative grouping of this and other sokes. There is also apparent conflict between the various sources. Bede states that in 709 Bishop Wilfrid *"died in his monastery which he possessed in the province of Oundle, under the government of Abbot Cuthwold ..."*<sup>8</sup> In contrast, Eddius records that Wilfrid's company came *"to his monastery which was in Oundle where Wilfrid had once dedicated a church to St Andrew, and here he was twice overcome with sudden illness."*<sup>9</sup> It has thus been concluded that there was a monastery in the town of Oundle which was also a small provincial centre. Also, because Bede states that in the mid 670's Medeshamstede (later Peterborough) monastery was in the region of the Gyrwe (*"Medehampstedi in regione Gyrwiorum"*), that the province of Oundle did not include the later soke of Peterborough.<sup>10</sup> However, as Mellows suggested, the evidence must be reassessed, for Bede clearly states that Wilfrid's monastery

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<sup>2</sup> Foard, G., 1985.

<sup>3</sup> Foard, 2001, Settlement, Agriculture and Industry in Rockingham Forest, Medieval Archaeology, 47.

<sup>4</sup> Foard, 1985.

<sup>5</sup> Bede V, 19.

<sup>6</sup> Campbell, 1979, 48.

<sup>7</sup> Eg Bede, III, 21

<sup>8</sup> Bede, V, 19

<sup>9</sup> Eddius, LXII.

<sup>10</sup> Bede, IV, 6.

was in the province of Oundle.<sup>11</sup> When referring to the territory of the Feppingas, Bede says: "*in regione quae vocatus Infepingum*", and so when Eddius says that the monastery lay in Oundle ("*ad monasterium eius, quod in Undolum positum erat*") he is similarly describing a territory rather than an actual settlement.<sup>12</sup> In contrast, when describing the monastery at Ripon, Eddius clearly states "*ad Hyrpense monasterium*".<sup>13</sup> We should therefore perhaps be looking for a monastery in the province of Oundle. Mellows has already suggested Medeshamstede because Bede stated that Cuthwold was the abbot in the monastery where Wilfrid died, and at that time there was an abbot of Medeshamstede called Cuthbald. However although Cuthbald, second abbot of Medeshamstede, held office in 656 and 675, by 686 Egbalth is described as the third abbot.<sup>14</sup> Eddius states that Wilfrid had, in the monastery where he died, once dedicated a church to St Andrew, and so it may be significant that the Abbey of Medeshamstede was dedicated not only to St Peter and St Paul, but also to St Andrew.<sup>15</sup>

The contrary evidence is strong, however, and must be reviewed. Hugh Candidus states that when, in the 960's, St Aethelwold came to Middle Anglia, to restore to its former state a certain ancient monastery of St Peter, he went first to Oundle and "*began to build*", only later abandoning the site in favour of Medeshamstede.<sup>16</sup> The ecclesiastical importance of Oundle in the 10th century is confirmed by the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, which records that in 957 archbishop Wulfstan was buried at Oundle. It is possible that Oundle was chosen merely because it was the centre of a large royal estate granted for the purpose, but, in an 11th century list of the resting-places of the saints, Oundle appears as the resting-place of St Cett.<sup>17</sup> The site of a chapel dedicated to the saint can be identified, for in 1565 a street running south-westwards from the town, called St Sithe's Lane led towards the nearby St Sithes Chapel Hill in St Sithes Field.<sup>18</sup> If a Middle Saxon monastery existed in Oundle then this may have been its location. The approximate area of this hill is an isolated area of limestone and gravel geology, which may have been the focus for a separate focus of early-middle Saxon activity. If, on the other hand, the two monasteries were one and the same, then it might be unnecessary to contradict Cam, as has been done in the past for example by Courtney, in her claim that the medieval administrative unit called the 'eight hundreds' of Oundle represented in reduced form the Middle Saxon 'province' of Oundle.<sup>19</sup> The 'eight hundreds' are first recorded in the late 10th century, and they are defined in a document of 1329 as the hundreds of Polebrook, Navisford, Huxloe, North and South Navisland, Uptongrene and the villis of Peterborough and Finedon.<sup>20</sup> The inclusion of the latter townships is probably a rationalisation to create 8 hundreds, for, in fact, the list comprises only 6 Domesday hundreds: Polebrook, Navisford, Huxloe, Navisland, and the double hundred of Uptongrene. In 1329 the 'eight hundreds' were administered by just two hundred bailiffs. There is only the supposed problem over Medeshamstede which has prevented general acceptance of Cam's

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<sup>11</sup> Mellows, 1949.

<sup>12</sup> Bede III, 21.

<sup>13</sup> Eddius, LXIII.

<sup>14</sup> Mellows, 1949; Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.

<sup>15</sup> Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, 656.

<sup>16</sup> Hugh Candidus .....

<sup>17</sup> Farmer 1978, 74.

<sup>18</sup> NRO, ML 116.

<sup>19</sup> Cam, 1932. Courtney 1979 & 1981.

<sup>20</sup> Robertson 1956, 77 and 83; Cam, 1944, 101. The rights over the eight hundreds were confirmed in 1332: Cal.Charter Rols, vol.4, p.83.

conclusion that, like many similar groupings of hundreds elsewhere, the grouping at Oundle represented in reduced form a Saxon territory that, in this case, was dependent upon Oundle. The description as eight hundreds when it only comprised six in the 14th century would tend to confirm a pre-Conquest origin.

Further long distance linkages within the territory are recorded in 1086, with the jurisdiction of holdings in Woodford and Irthlingborough in the West pertaining to Peterborough in the east. Other evidence indicates that the medieval unit was substantially smaller than the original territory: the estates and sokes of Finedon, Brigstock, and Oundle are split by the boundary of the eight hundreds; the hundred of Willybrook did not belong to the 'eight hundreds' yet the meeting place of the 'eight hundreds' lay at Wansford bridge on the boundary of Willybrook and Uptongrene;<sup>21</sup> Oundle had at least one dependency (Lutton) and certain rights of commoning within Willybrook hundred; and the lands of Willybrook and Polebrook hundreds were interspersed. Hart includes Willybrook in the 'eighthundreds' on the evidence of the Northamptonshire Geld Roll where it appears grouped with the other Oundle hundreds.<sup>22</sup> Indeed he suggests from this document that the Oundle grouping is but one of four equal units of eight hundreds into which the shire was divided by the 11th century."

The archaeological evidence for Middle Saxon activity in the area around the churchyard may not at first appear to be strong. Three Middle Saxon sherds were recovered from observation of trenching in 1983. Only 6 unstratified sherds of later 7th to early 9th century pottery, including one Ipswich type ware sherd, were recovered from the 1985 investigation. However if the evidence is considered in more detail it becomes apparent that the finds indicate Middle Saxon occupation in close proximity. The investigations have been on a very small scale, they have been located at the very periphery of the area concerned but, most importantly, the quantities of pottery recovered compare favourably with the low quantities of pottery sometimes recovered from sites of the period in Northamptonshire. This is particularly true at the very highest status site, which may be comparable to that being postulated for Oundle, the 'palace' at Northampton.<sup>23</sup>

If a monastery existed at Oundle it will have been destroyed in the later 9<sup>th</sup> century Danish conquest, but Oundle probably remained an important administrative focus, though it was perhaps at this time that it first came to be overshadowed by Stamford.

### **1.2.3 THE LATE SAXON AND EARLY MEDIEVAL ESTATE**

Following the re-conquest from the Danes, which took place in the 920s, Oundle appears to have recovered its ecclesiastical importance for in about 957 archbishop Wulfstan was buried at Oundle. Then, at the time of the great monastic revival, Oundle was chosen as the site for an important foundation and in the 960s St. Aethelwold began to build a monastery there. However, he soon abandoned the work, in 966, in favour of the site at Medeshamstede, which later became known as Peterborough.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Liber Eliensis, 85.

<sup>22</sup> Hart, 1970, 20.

<sup>23</sup> Williams et al....

<sup>24</sup> Foard, 1985.

The site of the present church is a good candidate for the monastery at Oundle, although the archaeological evidence from the adjacent area could simply relate to what was presumably until the 960s an important royal estate centre. High status pottery of the 10th century has been recovered during small scale excavation in the area to the north of the churchyard in 1985. The assemblage recovered from a Late Saxon ditch comprised 103 sherds of which 5 were likely to be continental imports and a further 54 could be imports or Stamford or Northampton wares. Such imported sherds are so far absent from investigations of contemporary sites in Northamptonshire, including the manorial sites in the Raunds area, the royal manor at Brigstock and even the county town itself. Such pottery tends to be found on high status sites including royal sites, monasteries and major urban centres. The assemblage is also unusual in the fact that the usually most common late Saxon types represent only about 50% of the assemblage. High status is also supported by the presence of a copper alloy dress pin, possibly of the 9th century.

From the topographical arrangement of the Rectory, Rectory tenements, churchyard, Burystead manor and former parcels of the manor garden, all discussed below, it is possible that in the early medieval or late Saxon period there was a single plot with a distinct curving boundary which was held by the lord and included all the manorial and ecclesiastical functions.

At present it must remain a very strong probability, supported by the limited archaeological investigation which has so far been carried out, that the Middle Saxon provincial administrative centre and possibly also the monastery were located in this same area at the centre of the later town, defined by the curving boundary we have identified as a dominant topographical feature in the layout of the town.

Within the estate defined in the charter of circa 970 there was, in addition to Oundle itself, probably also the township of Stoke Doyle which was a member of the manor of Oundle in 1086. Also encompassed was some land in Benefield township, land that would, following large scale assarting in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century, become the isolated grange of Biggin. It is uncertain whether the hamlet of Churchfield was encompassed by the charter bounds.<sup>25</sup> While these two settlements existed in the late Saxon period and are likely to have earlier origins the other two settlements encompassed by the manor were medieval creations.

### **THE WOODHOUSE**

Within Oundle township however there was only one settlement other than the town itself. This was the Wodehouse, a single, possibly moated farm with at some point an associated dovecote. It belonged to the Wakerley manor in Oundle in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and had been created through the clearance of about 100 acres of woodland to create closes later known as the Stibbings. This clearance had presumably been completed by 1292 when we have the first reference to the site, with William Wasteney's paying 11lb of cummin as rent for the Wodehouse. In 1307-8 the rent was paid by John of Milton but in 1400 la Wadhaus was a tenement held by John Wakerley. In 1565 the area known as Wakerley Closes, included a Dovecote Close and must represent the site of the Wodehouse, though by this time any settlement had been lost.

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<sup>25</sup> The historical development of the area is considered in more detail in Foard, 1991 and 2001.

## **B MEDIEVAL & POST MEDIEVAL**

### **1.0 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT**

In 1086 Oundle was one of only four settlements with a recorded market, all of which had been important Saxon administrative foci. The layout of the core of the town had probably been established by this date, as an agricultural village attached to the administrative and ecclesiastical centre. By 1086 the settlement had lost its importance as a monastic centre and was probably primarily an agricultural village.

The development of the settlement as an urban centre was undoubtedly promoted by the abbots of Peterborough as part of their profit driven capital investment in their estates. There is no record of burgesses in the town in 1086 but by the early 12<sup>th</sup> century there were a number of tenants holding burgages there. It is likely that the market place was established at this time, outside the gates of the manor and church, but it is possible that it was of earlier origin and related to the existence of the late Saxon market. Oundle grew substantially as the medieval economy expanded in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. The abbots protected their commercial interests by a series of measures. They extended the limited freedoms, first granted in the late 11<sup>th</sup> or early 12<sup>th</sup> century, to additional non agricultural tenants as the town expanded. They also developed the road network through the construction of bridges to bring all traffic through the town. This and the simple factor of being well established at an early date meant that Oundle was able to meet most of the challenges to its local marketing functions from new markets nearby. However in one case, that of Barnwell, the Abbot had recourse to a legal challenge in order to have the competing new market extinguished. As a result, through the medieval period Oundle remained the main market centre for the middle Nene valley and its environs. However from the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards it was always overshadowed by both Stamford and the rapidly growing town of Peterborough, which was developed by successive abbots around their monastery.

Oundle rode out the economic recession of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries and is revealed again in the 16<sup>th</sup> century as the dominant local marketing centre. Unlike Higham Ferrers or Rothwell, Oundle did not have successful nearby 'new towns' which survived the recession to challenge its dominance. As a result, and given the high agricultural wealth and population levels of the townships of the middle Nene valley, Oundle remained in the top level of the small towns of the county throughout the post medieval period. In 1712 it was described by Morton as *'a fair, well built, pleasant and Healthy Town advantageously and Sweetly Situated. Its situation encourages trade.'*<sup>26</sup> Thus it continued in use as a market town through the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Although the town had some industrial production, with production of leather goods in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and brewing and malting in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the main basis of its wealth and success seems to have rested on the commercial servicing of its local hinterland. It never developed an industrial specialism which, like boot and shoe production on Wellingborough or woollen cloth production in Kettering, could provide a sound base for its expansion in the industrial era. Although the town was on the Nene navigation and thus its economy was enhanced to a limited degree by the growth of heavy trade that this enabled, it

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<sup>26</sup> Morton, 1712..

was bypassed by the main rail routes in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century and this was undoubtedly a major factor in its relative decline thereafter.

## **2.0 TOPOGRAPHICAL DEVELOPMENT**

The town is focussed on a core around the church and manor, an area with a curving boundary which it appears may have an early or middle Saxon, if not earlier, origin. On the western side this may have originally extended beyond New Street as far as Drumming Well Lane, where there is a distinct break in the plan form of the settlement. This area lies on the spur end mainly on limestone geology. During the late Saxon or early medieval period this area seems to have been subdivided into three, with the church and rectory occupying the eastern half and the manor occupying the western half. The northern boundary of the putative enclosure may also have been restructured as there is distinct step in the boundary against Blackpot Lane between the manor and the rectory plots. The western half of the manorial area may have been re-planned at some point with the insertion of a road running north to join the road to Stamford, which it appears likely did not originally run through the settlement. This may have been at the time of the laying out of the market place, but it certainly at some point enabled more tenements to be established close to the market place by subdivision of the pre-existing plots (see below).

This manorial/ecclesiastical focus was occupied at the time of early-middle Saxon dispersed settlement and it seems likely that one or more foci of middle Saxon occupation should also be expected within or extending just beyond the limit of the some part of the medieval settlement. It may be that Oundle was a polyfocal settlement in origin, with the irregular plan form of the area around Chapel End representing another early focus of settlement, with other dispersed settlement of early-middle Saxon date undoubtedly existing in a number of other locations within the township. The middle Saxon occupation, wherever located within or close to the medieval settlement, will be critical to the understanding of the evolution of the settlement but as yet no evidence has been located from this period other than at the manorial focus.

On the basis of results from investigations at Raunds, Warmington and elsewhere it is to be expected that the rectilinear plan form of the double row village stretching west from the manorial core was the result of late Saxon re-planning. This area is almost wholly on limestone geology running along the length of the spur on which Oundle lies. On the north side the Backside Road may have early origins, extending north-westward across the township as a headland towards Benefield. On the south side the back lane is said in 1565 to have been a recent creation. The double row of tenements contains the majority of virgate tenements in the town, interspersed with a few freehold and cottage tenements and burgages, the latter undoubtedly being cottage tenements raised in status in the late 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is possible that this double row represents the laying out of tenements between two early foci of occupation, one the manor and the other around Mill End (later Chapel End), with its associated water mill which was already in existence by the late 10<sup>th</sup> century. It is unclear whether the double row was laid out afresh at the same time as the open field furlongs but it seems unlikely that the regularity results from the expansion over pre-existing furlongs, which are generally believed to originate in the county at this same period. It is noted at Raunds and Warmington that there could be a substantial shift in the location of the occupied area during the late Saxon period and so it should be considered possible that some

pre medieval occupation in the settlement lies well back within the double row tenements. The Wakerley manor lies at the south west end of the row and comprises a single carucate or hide. The great width of the Wakerley property may prove to relate proportionately to the amount of field land it held. Later in the medieval period there is clear evidence for the longitudinal subdivision of tenements, to accommodate population increase, with the virgate field land being divided into half in proportion. However the spacing of the virgate tenements along West Street, in 1565 and 1400, would suggest that if there had been any subdivision at a much earlier date it was to create cottage tenements from part of the virgate tenements.

Whereas the distribution of the burgages and of the virgates reveals a pattern which may indicate the chronology of the evolution of the town plan, the lesser fees and free tenements do not appear to yield a clear pattern, other than the fact that they are concentrated in the double row of West Street. This may reinforce the argument that this was a primary component of the late Saxon village.

The late Saxon re-planning of the settlement will be a key issue in the development of the town as it is unclear whether the market place was established at the same time. The market, which was in existence before the 1086, and probably in 971, lay immediately to the south of the manor and church. The expansion over much of the early market place by shops and their conversion to permanent tenements took place progressively from the 11<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is conceivable that a large open area existed adjacent to the manorial/ecclesiastical focus from a very early date and that this was used for periodic exchange or simply as a green. Thus the market square may have been simply a conversion of an existing open space. Alternatively a very large market place, comparable in size to the market square in medieval Northampton, may have been laid out at the time of the conjectural 10<sup>th</sup> century re-planning. If however the market was a slightly later insertion into the village plan then it may have involved the removal of existing peasant tenements, although this seems unlikely given the plan form of the double row to the west of the market place. The conjectural original market extent (see below) would appear to have a similar depth up to the church and manor as the length of the tofts of the northern tenement row along West Street, perhaps suggesting a common origin for the two. There is a clear break between the tenements of West Street and those around the market place, represented by Drumming Well lane and the small lane on the south side of the street. To the west of this the tenements have a quite different alignment. Whereas on the south side of the street this seems to be a primary topographical division marked by a small lane, on the north side there are two possible origins. Here the tenements may have originally formed an extension of the row on West Street that was reorganised at the time of the laying out of the market, the easternmost tenement(s) being subdivided and the rear area having new tenements created facing eastward onto the market place. Alternatively this may have been part of the original market place, extending north as far as the manorial enclosure, with the tenements representing later encroachments onto the market place. On the east side of the market place there is another complex area with small lanes, Jericho and Duck Lane, which may also represent encroachment onto an originally much larger market place or earlier green.

Within the centre of the original market place there is clear documentary evidence demonstrating that the tenements between the present market place, Church Lane and New Street lay on part of the original market. Some at least of these tenements were in origin shops

which were only later converted to tenements.<sup>27</sup> While some were converted before the 13<sup>th</sup> century, when one shop in this area of later tenements on the south side of Church Lane is documented as such, the Wool Market remained an open trading area until the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century, only later seeing a final conversion to tenements.

The detailed documentary evidence for Oundle shows that there were separate marketing areas within the market place and a number of separate rows of shops on the market place in the late medieval and post medieval period. The final shop rows on the present market place were only finally removed in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The expansion of the town in the 13<sup>th</sup> century was accommodated in part by the laying out of new tenements along what is likely to have been a new road running north to the north bridge, a new medieval crossing of the river (see below). The road appears to have been constructed immediately adjacent to the Rectory enclosure and so the expansion, all of burgages except at the northern end, was on the east side of the road, with a back lane behind them on the east side dividing the row from a row of closes. It is possible that these closes represent the remaining part of the open field furlong from which the tenements were cut out, with the closes on the east of the back lane in 1656 generally belonging to its adjacent tenement on the west side of the lane.<sup>28</sup> Evaluation in several of these closes has failed to find any evidence of medieval occupation, tending to confirm that these were only ever used as closes. On the west side of North Street it appears that the Rectory manor subsequently laid out new tenements fronting the west side of the road from what was formerly part of the rectory. At the northern end of the row on the east side the tenements also belonged to the rectory, being free tenements not burgages.

On the west side of the town there was also clearly a subdivision of the tenements which ran alongside on either side of Mill Lane, creating quite short tofts. The lane itself may already have existed in the late Saxon period as a mill existed on this site by the late 10<sup>th</sup> century. On the east side of the lane the tenements were created as part of the Wakerley manor, probably from part of the manor site itself. At the southern end of Mill Lane on the east side there were two virgate tenements between the river and the Backside Road. It is unclear whether the tenements along St Sythe's Lane at the south east corner of the town represent a late addition to the town, similar to that seen along North Street, but the opposite side of the street appears not to have been built up. Possibly because this lane was not a major through route.

The majority of the growth of the town in the medieval period seems however to have been accommodated by the subdivision of the existing tenements, whether virgate, cottage,

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<sup>27</sup> The Harts Head Inn in 1565 is described as a tenement with various buildings held for 4/- rent: by the 1214 Charter of Oundle "Roger son of Maefred holds 1 croft 1 toft and one shop with garden - on the north the aforesaid shop and house of Hugh, against the garden of William son of Osbert towards the church, and two acres of land in Annesden, for service of 8/- rent and other services. William Paymor bought of Stephen Grindell the toft of the aforesaid burgage at 3/- rent. This shop is clearly what is later a tenement on the south side of Church Lane.

<sup>28</sup> This back lane, now East Road, was known in 1565 as Jericho Lane. At that time the land immediately east of the lane comprised a number of long narrow parallel closes. They extended from the demesne close called Bury Lees on the north to St. Scythe Field on the south and were bounded on the east by further closes. A number of these closes immediately east of Jericho Lane contained one or more pasture leys, arable strips which had been laid down to permanent pasture and enclosed by hedgerows. This would suggest that these closes represent an anciently enclosed open field furlong. These closes belonged to immediately adjacent tenements on the west side of Jericho Lane. The date of enclosure has not been established but it is likely to have occurred during the late medieval period. By 1813 several of the closes contained buildings, but there had been no buildings within these closes in 1565 and it is very unlikely that occupation occurred in any of the closes during the medieval period. This does not however mean that occupation of Saxon date could not extend into this area.

burgage or freehold, to create a much large number of tenements. This resulted by 1400 in many tenements with two or even four separate component holdings.

The road network was substantially altered in the Oundle area by the Abbott of Peterborough in order to further promote the growth of the town. He built two new bridges, the north and south bridges, in order to bring travellers through the town and to make access to the market from all directions far easier. The river crossing in the Saxon period is likely to have been at Basford, at the end of St Sythe's Lane. The construction of the two bridges brought the main routeway, which had passed along the valley on the east side on the probable Roman route, through the town running up Mill Lane through the market place and up North Street to the north bridge. Stamford road is also likely to have been an important route in the late Saxon or early medieval period. It too seems originally likely to have passed by the town immediately to the west. If so it too was probably drawn into the town with the development of the road network by the Abbots of Peterborough.

The reconstruction of the town plan in 1565 from the detailed survey, its projection back to 1400 with the detailed rental and then to 1215-24 using the charter has enabled the earliest and most detailed reconstruction of any town in the county. Although there are many details which will need to be confirmed and elaborated by further detailed documentary research the overall pattern appears secure. There are enough topographical points of reference in the three documents to confirm a high level of stability in the plan form through the medieval period and, with the acknowledged subdivision, the relatively high level of stability in the tenorial pattern. Apart from the encroachment already discussed for the market place, there is very little evidence of encroachment during the medieval and post medieval period elsewhere in the town, though minor examples occur in Duck lane, Jericho and elsewhere.

### **3.0 THEMATIC ANALYSIS**

#### **3.1 MANORIAL**

##### **3.1.1 Manors**

###### **3.1.1.1 Burystead Manor:**

Oundle and its berewicks were granted to the new abbey at Peterborough in its foundation endowment in c.963. In 975 Leofsi seized and despoiled the lands of the abbey in Peterborough, Kettering and Oundle, the lands laying waste without tillage for two years but he was then forced to return the property to the Abbey.<sup>29</sup> Thereafter, although in 1212 the granges of the Abbey are said to have been destroyed by King John,<sup>30</sup> the Abbey continued to hold the manor until the dissolution in 1537. It was run until the late medieval period as a grange by a steward and bailiff and thereafter leased together with the demesne lands to various tenants.

It is clear that the Abbot's manor was the principle manor since at least the 10th century. The existence, character and location of that manor can be established from medieval and later documentary sources. There is little reason to doubt continuity in the site of the manor

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<sup>29</sup> Bridges, 2, p.405.

<sup>30</sup> It is unclear whether Oundle manor is meant. VCH, p.87.

recorded in the immediate pre conquest period and that which is located with certainty from the late 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

The manor is recorded in 1086 and again in 1125, while the late 13<sup>th</sup> and early 14<sup>th</sup> century account rolls give detailed evidence on the running of the manor, its demesne economy and tenures, and a little information on the repairs and construction of the structures of the manor itself. In 1086 the demesne had comprised land for 3 ploughs and had three slaves.<sup>31</sup> In 1125-8 *'in the lords courtyard there are 3 ploughs, 24 oxen, 10 cows, 8 calves and 9 non draught oxen, 1 bull... etc.'*<sup>32</sup> The demesne was managed in hand in the 13<sup>th</sup> and earlier 14<sup>th</sup> centuries at least, and hence in 1300-1 employed on demesne were 2 carters, 1 dairymaid, 1 swineherd, 1 heyward, 4 ploughmen, 1 shepherd, 1 repreeve and a miller. There were also payments to a smith and to the fisherman who fished in the new pond (*stagnum*).

Following the dissolution Oundle was granted to Queen Catherine Howard in 1539 and was leased in the same year to John Henson at ,13 per annum. It was later leased to John Russell, Earl of Bedford, and he finally bought the manor from the crown in 1550. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century it was leased out to the Pickering family but by the later 17<sup>th</sup> century the manor had been sold to the Duke of Powis, who was lord of the manor and the site of the manor house moved.<sup>33</sup>

### 3.1.1.2 Rectory manor

The rectory was held by the Abbot of Peterborough until the dissolution but it was not impropriated until the later 15<sup>th</sup> century. However, in 1338 the Abbot had received licence to acquire the rents out of tenements from Robert of Croyland, parson of Oundle relating to 33/- rent out of tenements called Claryvausefe in Oundle.<sup>34</sup> This may have been the Nicholas Clerivaux who was killed in 1347.<sup>35</sup>

The earliest known rector was Ralph, who occurs in 1159.<sup>36</sup> It may be that the rectory was finally impropriated because the Abbott was intending to lease out the Burystead manor site and needed the Rectory as a base for the management of his Oundle property. This is the implication when in 1539 the Rectory itself is leased out to Robert Baker (although the Rectory was already leased out in 1518, to Richard Wilkinson<sup>37</sup>). He was required, for his rent of £45/6/8d, not only to maintain the property but also to share with the Abbot and his officers *'sufficient lodgyng, convenient sheddyng and house room in the hall parlor chambers and kitchen with the untensilles of the Kitchen and conveyent stabullyng, hay littor for their Horses'*.<sup>38</sup> In 1590 the crown granted the rectory to Sir Anthony Mildmay for life and in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century it was acquired by the Walcot family.<sup>39</sup>

As with the rest of the town, the Rectory was further developed in the medieval period to exploit the growth in wealth and population in the town by the creation of new tenements from within the Rectory property. There were certainly tenants of the rector by the 1230s for

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<sup>31</sup> DB, 221b.

<sup>32</sup> Survey of the manor of Oundle 1125-8, Camden Society vol. 47, (Peterborough Black Book), p.158.

<sup>33</sup> Bridges, 2, p.407. VCH, p.91.

<sup>34</sup> Patent Rolls, 12 edward III.

<sup>35</sup> VCH, p.93.

<sup>36</sup> VCH, 3, p.98.

<sup>37</sup> PRO, Account Roll, SC6/Henry VIII/2778.

<sup>38</sup> NRO, Westmorland?, 2 xv 3 D7 1530 AD.

<sup>39</sup> VCH, p.92.

John de Burgo, rector of Oundle in 1234, granted William de Milton a house which Harwisia filia John Capellani held in Oundle with half an acre of field land.<sup>40</sup> Apart from the single tenement in West Street, the Rectory property lay wholly within North Street. The majority of these tenements in 1565 lay on the east of the Rectory, between it and the High Street and seem on topographical grounds to have been carved out of the original Rectory property following or as part of the laying out of North Street to the new North Bridge, which occurred some time before 1214-22 (see below).

### ***Rectory tenement expansion on North Street***

There were certainly tenants of the rector by the 1230s for John de Burgo, rector of Oundle in 1234, granted William de Milton a house which Harwisia filia John Capellani held in Oundle with half an acre of field land.<sup>41</sup> Apart from the single tenement in West Street, the Rectory property lay wholly within North Street. The majority of these tenements in 1565 lay on the east of the Rectory, between it and the High Street and seem on topographical grounds to have been carved out of the original Rectory property following or as part of the laying out of North Street to the new North Bridge, which occurred some time before 1214-22 (see below). These tenements seem to have been laid out in at least three separate groups, the southernmost are short and irregular plots and probably represent the latest stage of infilling on the frontage, probably late because so close to the probable site of the capital messuage.

The remaining tenements lay on the east side of North Street, at its northern end. These appear to represent tenements laid out over the western part of open field strips that survived as closes to the east of Jericho Lane in 1565, just as the burgages in North Street seem to have been created.

#### **3.1.1.3 Wakerleys Manor**

Though not a major manor, the largest subsidiary fee in Oundle was that held in the late medieval period by the Wakerley family. This fee can be traced back to 1236 when Alvedredus de Suleny held a tenement in Oundle from Thomas Pincebee for customary payment and service.<sup>42</sup> By 1259-60 the overlord was John Grey from whom John de Suleny then held the messuage and 1 carrucate,<sup>43</sup> and then in 1260-1 William de Monsea for 6/8d. This John Grey held a knights fee in Armston.<sup>44</sup> In about 1250 Robert de Croyland and John Attehall held tenements in Oundle by grand serjeanty (a type of knight's service).<sup>45</sup> Presumably this is a different Robert to the rector in 1310 who died in 1342. Walter of Papley and Sir John of Ashton, Peter de Holt and William Brown all held tenements in Ashton in the same way.<sup>46</sup>

By 1333 the property, now comprising a number of tenements was held by John de Crowland for 50/- from Thomas, son of Lord John of Pavenham.<sup>47</sup> We find that in 1345 Thomas de Pakenham in turn held from Roger de Grey for 50/- rent 1 carucate of land which Basillia late wife of John of Croyland holds. In 1351 John of Croyland also held 12 acres of the fee of

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<sup>40</sup> Tenement with half acre on Berw, held freely for 2/- and 6 capons and 12d and 6 capons and 12d forem.

<sup>41</sup> Tenement with half acre on Berw, held freely for 2/- and 6 capons and 12d and 6 capons and 12d forem.

<sup>42</sup> Cal. Close Rolls, 20 Henry III.

<sup>43</sup> Feet of Fines, 44 Henry III.

<sup>44</sup> Feet of Fines, 45 Henry III.

<sup>45</sup> Henry Pytcheley

<sup>46</sup> Henry Pytcheley=s Book of Fees, p.117.

<sup>47</sup> Feet of Fines, 44 Henry III.

Walter of Ireland.<sup>48</sup> Roger de Grey held 60 acres of land by service of a quarter of a knight's fee.<sup>49</sup> In 1346-7 John Pabenham had the rents of Oundle held of Roger de Grey for service of 1/4 knights fee<sup>50</sup> and in 1398-9 Lawrence Pabenham still held these 60 acres in Oundle.<sup>51</sup> This must be the same manor as that held in 1400 by John Wakerley. He then held 1 tenement and 1 carucate for 12/-; 1 messuage of the lord and ?1 virgate; tenants, 1 tenement and 12a of the fee of Walter of Ireland; 1 tenement, the Wadhaus. Wakerley owed suit of court at Castor. In 1555 Edmund Elwes purchased tenements and pasture in Oundle and elsewhere from Richard Wakerley.<sup>52</sup> This resulted in the fragmentation of the fee, with various lands being sold off. Hence by 1565 there was '*A great Capital Messuage called le Bull and le corner howse..... This was a manor in Wakerleys days and kept a court baron which is now dismembered because the land is sold to diverse persons.*'

The Wakerley fee held a close in a former woodland area adjacent to Southawe Wood which was known after clearance, at some time before 1395, as Stibbing Close. A moated site was established within Stibbings, an area of some 100 acres, which is probably the '*Wodehous*' which is first recorded in 1292.<sup>53</sup> The adjacent unenclosed arable represents clearances which, in contrast, were incorporated into the open fields of Oundle, for the names include Stubb Half Acre and Bushaw furlong. Indeed some 70 of the 120 acres of the Wakerley carucate lay in this area adjacent to the Stibbings, perhaps indicating that the very origins of the fee might in some way lie in the process of assarting. Hence its absence from Domesday and from the 1125-8 survey of Oundle may even reflect a late 12<sup>th</sup> century origin for the fee.<sup>54</sup>

#### **3.1.1.4 Lesser holdings**

There is no reference in 1086 to free tenants or sokemen in Oundle, though they do exist in the manor's sokelands and members. However by 1125-8 we find that Vivianus held 1 virgate within another fee, Hugh son of William 1 virgate by knight service and that three men held 3 houses ('mansuras') in Oundle rendering 18d. It may be that these free tenements or subsidiary fees already existed in 1086 but were not specifically mentioned. Unfortunately they cannot in most cases be related to tenements in the reconstructed town plans of the medieval period. All the subsidiary fees and other freeholds in Oundle were held of the Abbot of Peterborough's Burystead manor, as were many of the manors in the surrounding townships. Though no freemen are recorded in 1086 there were in 1125-8 three men holding three houses at a total of 18d, in addition to the fees of Vivianus and Hugh son of William who both held virgates.

Several of the freeholders who held land and tenements in Oundle which were not considered manors. In addition several lords of manors in other townships also held property in Oundle, one certainly and others probably as 'part of' their nearby manors. The significance of these holdings within the town at present remains obscure but may have been of significance in the origins and development of the town. It is perhaps most likely that these tenements within the

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<sup>48</sup> Proc. Of Court of Castor, BL, Bob.Cot.Vesp.xxi.

<sup>49</sup> Cal. IPM, vol.VIII, 598.

<sup>50</sup> Bridges notes, c.2.

<sup>51</sup> Cal. Inq, vol.3, p.242-3.

<sup>52</sup> Eg: Account for repair of the tenement of Power in Oundle in 1534-5. NRO, FM1505.

<sup>53</sup> There is reference to a close next to '*Dovehouse Close at the Woodhouse*' formerly Wakerley's; 1565 survey, NRO ML.116; John Wakerley held a tenement called '*la Wodehous*', op.cit.n.26, f.107. '*le Wodehous*', 1292 Peterborough Abbey estates account roll, NRO Rockingham A/4/33.

<sup>54</sup> NRO, ML.116. Stapleton, T., 1849, *Chronicon Petroburgense*, p.158.

town reflect the original linkages between manor of Oundle and its soke in the Saxon period rather than representing any kind of association relating to the development of the town itself.

### ***Matfridus***

In 1214-22 Matfridus's sons held various burgages in the town including the only burgage described as a capital messuage. The holdings comprised the capital messuage, a toft, part of a croft and grange, a toft and croft, a shop with a granary, the house of Hugh of Auton, a toft and croft, and also 5 acres 1 rod of field land and 1 acre of meadow. This is possibly the same family as Metefrei the dispenser from whom Baldric Angevin acquired 32 acres in 1202. Between 1274-95 Abbot Richard collected the lands of Mathefrid, a free man and his family and thus this holding became subsumed into the wider manorial holding of the Abbots.<sup>55</sup> This may explain the grant by the Abbot to Robert Welwrighte of Oundle of a messuage with appurtenances which Robert son of Mathi of Oundle had held, freely.<sup>56</sup>

### ***Walter of Ireland***

The property held by Walter of Ireland in the 13<sup>th</sup> century may be the property in Oundle held in the 12<sup>th</sup> or early 13<sup>th</sup> century by Ralph Celvert from the Abbot of Thorney.<sup>57</sup> Walter of Ireland had freehold property in the town which was rented out to tenants, in 1260-1 Ralph le Parchemyner holding a messuage and 7 acres in Oundle.<sup>58</sup> In 1305 Walter of Ireland, clerk to William, son of Nicholas of Oundle held one built up plot and half a virgate with 3a 1r of meadow. This tenement lay between Thomas Levying's messuage on the east, a villein tenement of the Abbot, and the tenement of Henry le Messer on the west, except the house against the road which Walter gave to Matilda. The king's highway lay to the south and the land of the Abbot north. This was held together with 12d rent from a tenement in Church lane which Lawrence and William Fithyum then held.<sup>59</sup> In 1351 John of Croyland held 12 acres of the fee of Walter of Ireland.<sup>60</sup>

By 1400 this property had passed to Henry Attehalle of Deene, who held 1 tenement and 1 virgate in Oundle and owed suit of court at Castor for 1 free tenement and 6 cottages in the town. Thereafter the property has a more complex descent, which has not been fully traced. In 1426 some of this property, and his property in Glaphorn and Stoke, passed to Simon of Norwich and thence to William Weldon, to Richard Hall and then to Richard Duke of York by 1448, who included it in the endowment of Fotheringhay College.<sup>61</sup> Another part of the Ireland fee had been granted before 1436-7 to William Braunspath and Thos Wydeville which passed to Thomas Mulso and later to Lord Mountjoy.<sup>62</sup> In 1551 Lord Mountjoy<sup>63</sup> held 1 tenement with stables and other buildings and an adjacent croft of 3 rods and 13.5 acres in the fields and 7.5 acres of meadow - held by Robert Marsh (144), 1 tenement in Mill Lane 12d held by Robert Rippon(8), 1 tenement in Church Lane 12d held by Richard Morton (113), land and possessions of the Guild 18d (114)<sup>64</sup> These can be mapped in 1565 when

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<sup>55</sup> Carte Nativorum, 437-8, 444, 442.

<sup>56</sup> BL, Cot.Cleop.II, 56. Terrier of land given.

<sup>57</sup> NRO, Westmorland, 2VII2.17.

<sup>58</sup> VCH notes.

<sup>59</sup> NRO, Westmorland, 2IV2E1.

<sup>60</sup> Proc. Of Court of Castor, BL, Bob.Cot.Vesp.xxi.

<sup>61</sup> NRO, Westmorland, 2II3B.

<sup>62</sup> BL, add ch. 738b.

<sup>63</sup> Patent Rolls 24 April 1551.

<sup>64</sup> NRO, Westmorland (A)XII.6.

Mountjoy held freely of the king a Capital messuage, barn, curtilage and croft adjacent and a tenement in Church Lane.

### ***Churchfield Fee***

Churchfield was an ecclesiastical dependency of Oundle but it lay outside Oundle township and seems to have been excluded by the late Saxon charter bounds of Oundle lordship. It was generally considered to be a parcel of the manor of Lyveden, although the tenurial structure of Lyveden, like its settlement pattern, is complex and has yet to be adequately unravelled.<sup>65</sup> Abbot Thorold, first Norman abbot of Peterborough in 1070, created a number of smaller manors out of the abbey estates to support knights which the abbey had to provide as part of its feudal dues. This included the creation of the Churchfield fee comprising half a hide, which included a sixth of a hide in Oundle and other property in Churchfield and Warmington. In 1125-8 Vivianus held the fee, which passed by 1235 to William Angevin and then Baldric Angevin,<sup>66</sup> and was held in 1286 by Hugh Gorham of Churchfield.<sup>67</sup> (This may be the 1125-8: Hugh son of William held 1 virgate under knight's service.) It was sold in 1332 to Henry de Wyvill who held it, by suit of court of Castor, in 1336.<sup>68</sup> From 1372 it descended as with Lyveden in Aldwinckle St.Peter, held by Sir John Holt as a manor comprising Lyveden, Churchfield, Oundle and Warmington. This explains why in 1375-6 John Holt had tenements in Oundle.<sup>69</sup> Holt retained this in 1390, except the lands in Lyveden, which were granted by the king to John Devereux<sup>70</sup> and then passed to Lord Fitzwalter.<sup>71</sup> Thereafter the holding passed to Pye but by 1419 it was back with Holt. In 1452 Richard Holt's lands were transferred to Simon of Norwyche including one messuage, one carucate and a half and eight cottages in Islip and Oundle.<sup>72</sup> By 1458 this property had descended to Sir Thomas Tresham.

In 1520 property of John Tresham in Lyveden, Churchfield and Oundle was passed to John Mordant<sup>73</sup> and this may explain why only 9 acres 1 rood are accounted for as formerly Tresham's in 1565.

The extent of Churchfield in circa 1250 lists 3 cottages with a total of 7 acres of land in Oundle, as well as 13 rent from Lord Reginald le Gray, overlord of the Wakerley fee.

### ***Property of the Thorpe Waterville manor***

In 1400 John Holland held 1 tenement in Oundle, previously held by William Lyveden and after him by Lord Reginald Wasvill. John Holland was lord of Thorpe Waterville and Ashton. This property can be identified in 1565 on the east side of the market place when it is described as belonging to the lord of Thorpe Waterville. Also in 1400 John Blogwyn, and before him Lord John of Ashton, held 1 tenement. In 1424-5 the wife of Robert of Ireland, formerly John Adam of Ashton held lands including in Oundle. By 1553 Hugh & Thomas Lawe had acquired the lordship of Ashton including lands in tenure of Reynold Greneall & Thomas Sympson in Oundle and Ashton. These were all lately a parcel of the jointure of

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<sup>65</sup> Bridges.

<sup>66</sup> Otherwise known as Baldwin of Anjou. Peterborough Black Book, Soc of Ant. Ms60, f.18. Hugh Candidus, p.114 & 169.

<sup>67</sup> Stapleton, 1849, p.144-5.

<sup>68</sup> BL Cleop c1&2, f.105; Bridges notes. VCH, p.93.

<sup>69</sup> Bridges notes vol.38.

<sup>70</sup> Cal.Close Rolls 1391-2.

<sup>71</sup> 1400 survey of Oundle.

<sup>72</sup> Cal.Close Rolls, vol.5, 389.

<sup>73</sup> NRO, SS3300. Bridges notes, vol.38.

Queen Katherine and comprised a messuage and land in tenure of William Everell; 2 cottages under one roof in tenure of John Taylor; and 5 cottages in tenure of John Bullocke, Nicholas Smythe, John Sugar, Ralph Marcy, James Peves, all formerly part of the Fotheringhay College estate.<sup>74</sup>

### ***Fotheringhay College***

Whereas most of the other fees probably have something to tell us about the development of the manor and settlement in the Saxon and early medieval period, the Fotheringhay College holdings were brought together in the medieval period in the form of tenements and land held from the other manors. The College was founded in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century by the Dukes of York, but its Oundle endowment was not made until 1506-7.<sup>75</sup> In 1506-7 they held 6 messuages from the Abbot (at 46/2d at the dissolution), 2 messuages from John Wakerley for 2/6d (later 2/8d), 1 messuage from Edward Minskipp for 8d and 6 acres of pasture from John Tresham for 2/3d (later 2/4d). There are various records of the management and repair of the property.<sup>76</sup>

### ***Other Lesser Properties***

There were also a number of other minor holdings in Oundle which have not been adequately related. 1417-18: Robert Crow held tenements in Polebrook and Oundle fee of John Waryn clerk. In 1515-16 this seems to have been held between Roger Corbet and George Puttenham. Bridges notes that in 1562-3 Richard Palmer and Ed. Windefor knight held property of the manor of Stoke Doyle and tenements in Stoke, Lyveden and Oundle.<sup>77</sup>

In 1226-7 Walter de Busseboc was confirmed in 100 acres in Oundle.<sup>78</sup> This may have been the property which William Cook held in Oundle in 1503-4 comprising 8 messuages, 100 acres arable, 20a [pasture, 6a meadow.<sup>79</sup> In 1565 these were recorded in the survey as plots 152, 122-128, 91, 89 and 48.

Geoffrey Crasse was granted by Abbot of Peterborough a tenement in Oundle. This was a mensura in the vill of Oundle which was Richard Perinhard's with an acre of land in a croft adjacent to the said mansur and 18 acres arable, 2 acres meadow for 2/8d and 2d for all service.<sup>80</sup>

In 1267 Roger de Merle was granted a tenement in Oundle. This was a tenement and croft and a house in Oundle with 1 acre in Annesdale, held freely for 8/- per annum.<sup>81</sup>

The Prior of Fineshade also acquired property in Oundle. These lands and tenements in Oundle and elsewhere were a gift of Richard Wriyth of Gt. Weldon.<sup>82</sup> These then descended to John Hychecock of Weldon, a woolman, and John Brown of Stamford.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Patent Rolls, vol.5, p.42.

<sup>75</sup> Inq. Ad quod d., Cal IPM vol20, 29.

<sup>76</sup> 1534, Acc Book of Fotheringhay College, NRO Westmorland 4xviii.6.

<sup>77</sup> Bod. Lib.: Bridges notes vol.38.

<sup>78</sup> Feet of Fines, 11 Henry III, case 172, file 18, no.125. VCH notes.

<sup>79</sup> IPM ser.II, v.17, n.66; VCH notes.

<sup>80</sup> BL, Cot.Cleop.II, 56. Terrier of land given.

<sup>81</sup> BL, Cot.Cleop.II, 56. Terrier of land given.

<sup>82</sup> BL, Add Ch. 7570.

## 3.1.2 Burystead Manorial Appurtenances

### 3.1.2.1 Burystead Manor House or Grange (Peterborough Abbey)

The manor site appears to have been created from the western part of the putative large pre medieval enclosure which also encompassed the later Rectory and church. This is likely to have been the Saxon royal administrative centre or even monastery site. The enclosure seems to have been divided by a straight north/south boundary with the rectory and church on the east and manor on the west. The date of this division is uncertain, but had certainly occurred by 1400 and may be far earlier. This separation continued through the medieval period because the rectory was not impropriated by the Abbey until the later 15<sup>th</sup> century.

During the 14<sup>th</sup> century part of the manor site, or at least that part of the manor garden nearest to the market place, was being fragmented and granted out to tenants. It is possible to accurately reconstruct the former extent of the manor site by tracing these developments recorded in the various documents. It is unlikely, but the fragmentation may already have occurred by 1321-2 when it was stated that the capital messuage with curtilage but *without a garden* was worth 2/- per annum. In 1400 there were three parcels described as formerly part of the manor garden, held by Robert Lymbergh (formerly held by LadeWions Heriut and then held in 1414-15 by William Wadenowe<sup>84</sup>) for 2/- per annum, another by William Botiller for 2/- per annum and the third by John Sperhankes for 18d. per annum.<sup>85</sup> By the later 15th century these plots, which are then given accurate measurements, were held by two tenants, an earlier tenant of one of the plots having already built upon by John Wise.<sup>86</sup> In all there were three parcels of the manor garden granted out. The northernmost, which had been worth 2/6d and had been built upon, was in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century used to create the new vicarage (see below). The adjacent plot to the south, formerly held by William Harryot and later Thomas Harryot for 2/4d had passed by 1516-17 to Richard Morton. By 1565 this too had been incorporated into the vicarage. The southernmost plot continued in separate ownership through the 16th century and can be accurately located in 1565 as lying immediately to the south of the vicarage.<sup>87</sup> This same plot is recorded in 1565 where immediately to the south of the vicarage lay a tenement held by Copy of Court Roll by Robert Moreton, called the 'Horse Market' but by then just *'a strip of land now used as a yard with a garden at the east end'* and held for 2/4d per annum. This may well be the other parcel of manor garden held in 1400 by Robert Lymbergh.

No attempt has been made here to provide a comprehensive review of all the structures which are recorded on the Burystead site in the various medieval account rolls but a number of major features can be easily identified in the sources. In the late 13<sup>th</sup> and early 14<sup>th</sup> century the manor comprised a capital messuage with a courtyard containing various buildings.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> BL 7570/809.

<sup>84</sup> Court Roll, NRO, PDCCR, B20.

<sup>85</sup> BL M53892.

<sup>86</sup> Account Roll 1471-2 (NRO Westmorland 5V4), 2/- William Harryot parcel of garden of the manor 30ft long to him demised; 3/6 of Wm. Baker for a certain other strip of the said garden of the aforesaid length and width on which a certain John Wise built the said parcel of garden 75ft long by 31 ft wide demised to the same Wm. Baker.

<sup>87</sup> Account Roll 1542 (PRO SC 6/Hen VIII/2787 m.77).

<sup>88</sup> The summary is taken from the 1292, 1300-1, etc account rolls.

These presumably included a thatched barn, malt kiln,<sup>89</sup> and dovecote. There was a large gate, presumably giving entry to the courtyard. It is perhaps less likely that the sheepfold lay within the main yard. In 1365-6 reference is made to 'le Stepyngghous' being repaired, but it is unclear if this is a building associated with cloth making, leather or some other trade.<sup>90</sup> There was also attached to the manor a walled garden from which there was income from herbage and fruit in 1300-1. In 1321-2 the profit of the capital messuage and curtilage but excluding garden and dovecote was 2/-. The dovecote was worth 4/- per annum.<sup>91</sup>

In the survey of 1565 it is stated that '*Oliver St. John holds by indenture the site of the manor there called lee Burysteede containing a hall, upper chamber, storeroom, kitchen, and various rooms under one stone tile roof. A stable and malthouse roofed with straw and a large curtilage.*' The plot comprised 1 acre 3 roods and 8 perches. To the manor pertained both enclosed land and demesne of 116 acres. The site of the manor was later leased in 1614 to John Okes for 99 years. At that time it comprised a messuage, 2 barns, dovecote and 120 acres of land. Then in 1633 the lease passed to Sir James Evington, comprising a messuage, dovecote and 150 acres.<sup>92</sup> There was also an area immediately to the north of the town in the open field called the Burystead Piece which was by 1565 a Bowling Green. When surveyed again in 1651 the manor comprised '*All that capital messuage or mansion house called Berrystead now in the occupation of Margery Page consisting of a large hall and a fair dining and a parlour boarded and wainscoted with a kitchen, a brewhouse, one little parlour, two buttrys nine lodging chambers one gallery with a little bay of buildings used for a cole house. The building being of square stone and covered with slate and a garden to the south side of the manor house and a fair orchard well planted with fruit trees wherein standeth a dovehouse consisting of two bays well stored with piggions and built of rough stone and covered with slate, also one kiln house consisting of one bay of rough stone building with 2 bays of rough stone building one building adjacent thereto used for malting floores part covered with thatch and part with slate and also one stable and hay barn adjacent consisting of 2 bays of rough stone building covered with thatch also a very large fair barn of 6 bays of rough stone part covered with thatch and part with slate; which manor house and seit thereof abutt upon the street west and the churchyard east, upon the vichoridge house south and the common high way north.*' The site comprised 2 acres 2 perches<sup>93</sup>

After being held in the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century by the Pickerings, by the later 17<sup>th</sup> century the manor had been sold to the Duke of Powis, who was lord of the manor.<sup>94</sup> By 1691 a new capital messuage, still called Berrystead, had been built on the east side of North Street and the old site of the manor was in the hands of Thomas Manning, previously Bridget Page.<sup>95</sup> The new Burystead carried a datestone of 1670 and this is likely to be its date of construction.

On the Inclosure map of 1813 the old Burystead was held by William Walcot, being a close of 1 acre 3 roods and 31 perches, containing a house at its southern end, in the area now part of the churchyard, and a large barn at the southern end of the area now called Gardenways.

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<sup>89</sup> Described as a 'kiln' but the purchase of 'hurdles' would seem to confirm it was a malt kiln.

<sup>90</sup> Jeayes, I.H., 'On the Compotus Rolls of the Manor of Oundle, in the possession of the Association', *JBAA*. 50, .384-390, 1878. The various account rolls from which Jeayes published extracts were possibly destroyed when the BAA premises were bombed in WWII.

<sup>91</sup> 1321-2 (Extent of the Manor of Oundle) Sparke 'Historia Angli. Script.' p.188-9

<sup>92</sup> Feet of Fines; VCH notes.

<sup>93</sup> Survey of Oundle, in BigginHall.

<sup>94</sup> Bridges, 2, p.407. VCH, p.91.

<sup>95</sup> VCH, p.92.

Immediately to its south lay a small close, which later in the 19th century became part of the churchyard, which may represent the garden recorded as lying to the south of the manor house in 1651. It would therefore appear that the site of the manor house itself now lies within the 19th century extension to the churchyard, but that the outer court of the manor with its barns etc lies in the area known as 'Gardenways'. The land which was the garden of the manor in the 17th century includes part of the churchyard extension, while the parcels of manor garden recorded as being detached from the manor in the 14th century are occupied by the old vicarage and other properties today.

### **3.1.2.2 Fishponds & Fishery**

The only reference to a pond being in 1300-1 when a payment was made to the fisherman who fishes in the new pond (stagnum). The only possible site for a fishpond is that in the western edge of the township where there is also reference in 1565 to an area of cow pasture called Dam Head and to Dame Hill, immediately to the east of South Wood, on either side of the Lyveden brook. This is likely to represent a fishpond, perhaps that recorded as new in 1300-1, because only one water mill is recorded in the township.

The absence of more fishponds is probably because there was an extensive fishery in the Nene, from Stoke Mill dam to Ashton mill, from which there was an income of 3/- in 1292. There was also a fishery in the small tributary stream immediately to the west of Chapel End, which was leased in 1307-8 for life to Reginald Shakelok for 2d. There was also an income from eels from the mill, in 1086 this was assessed at 250 eels and in 1122-25 200 eels.

### **3.1.2.3 Water Mills**

There was a water mill at Oundle as early as the middle of the 10th century, when the manor was granted to the Abbot of Peterborough by the king. The Saxon boundary charter securely locates the mill at the same location it was to occupy for over 800 years, at the point where the boundary left the main river to follow a lesser stream.<sup>96</sup> During the medieval period this was at the south end of Mill Lane next to Barnwell Bridge, but in the 10th century there was no bridge here and so the lane, if it already existed, must have led solely to the watermill.<sup>97</sup> By 1399 this part of the town was known as Mill End, but during the later 15th century the mill was called Capyll Mill, after the Chapel of St. Thomas which lay at the north end of Mill Lane. The mill dam is recorded in 1565 just to the west of the mill, the channel upstream of the dam being known as the mill pool in 1300-1. At this time the mill pool lay adjacent to an area of pasture owned by the lord. By 1565 a house had been built on a strip of this pasture next to the mill, which belonged to a tenement immediately to the north in Chapel End and which, like the mill, was at that time held by Thomas Simpson.

Immediately to the north of the mill lay a plot of ground called the mill yard, which is mentioned as early as 1471. In the early 14th century there is reference not only to the mill house itself but also to a cottage at the mill, which clearly belonged to the mill. The mill yard may be the site of this cottage for in 1471 the mill yard was described as a toft. In 1516-17 it was in the lord's hands and so yielded no rent. Significantly it is described as a parcel of the lord's waste 36ft long and in width 5 feet held for a rent of 6d and which had previously been enclosed by Henry Lytster to extend the mill site.<sup>98</sup> The pasture strip next to the mill yard is

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<sup>96</sup> G.Foard, 1991, 'The Saxon Bounds of Oundle', In Northamptonshire Past & Present, vol.8, no.3, p.179-189.

<sup>97</sup> Plac. de Quo Warranto, E3 557.

<sup>98</sup> Account Roll, PRO, SC6/Henry VIII, 2777.

also described as a piece of the lord's waste in 1565. In 1542 the mill yard is still described as a toft, but in 1565 it was 'a peece of great wast ground' which stood at the corner of Mill Lane and Back Lane.

In the early 14th century two other cottages lay immediately to the north of the water mill, though they apparently had no connection with it. By 1399, like some other tenements in the town, the two cottages had gone though the two vacant tofts within which they had stood still remained. In 1491-2 they and the tenement immediately to the north were still recorded as empty tofts but in 1542-3 they were termed crofts. This is probably the tenement recorded in 1565 as lying immediately north of the Back Lane.

In 1086 the mill was worth 20/- and 250 eels, the latter presumably being taken in the mill leat. In 1125-28 the mill was a tenement with a virgate of open field land attached to it and rendered 40/- and 200 eels. In 1214-22 the mill paid rent of ,11/5/8d and still had attached to it a virgate of open field land which rendered 25/- a year. This was held by Simon the miller who also held another toft with a virgate of land attached. The field land probably became detached from the mill in the later 13th century when the mill was taken in hand, like much of the rest of the demesne, to be managed directly by the lord, as a result of economic changes which caused a similar phase of direct management throughout the country. During this period the manor employed a miller, was responsible for the maintenance and repair of the mill and took profits rather than rent from the mill. Later in the 14th century, again in response to national economic changes, the mill, like other parts of the demesne, was leased out. During the 15th and 16th centuries the leaseholder of the mill was typically the bailiff of the manor.

In 1321, for the first time, there is reference to two watermills within the Abbot of Peterborough's manor of Oundle. These were worth 100/- per annum and from them there was a profit of 20/-. It is clear from later documents that these two mills were in fact under one roof, for in 1463 there was an income of £4 from the lease of two watermills called the Chapel Mill. At this time the lease, for a term of 12 years, was held by Richard Oylemaker alias White who was also, under the terms of the lease, responsible for the repair of the mill. By 1471-2 the lease of the two mills called Capyll Mill, held by Richard Leefe, was worth £4/13/4. Leefe still held the mill in 1491-2 though he was now paying £6 per annum. In 1511-12 the lease was worth £6/13/4, as it remained in 1516-17 and in 1539 £6/8/4d when it was held by Alexander Sympson.<sup>99</sup> He still held it in 1542-3, and in 1545-6 the mill was leased for £8 per annum and then in 1546 for £6/8/0. In 1550, and apparently in 1463, the income of the mill included a payment of 20/- for the mill leat. In addition to the payments to the manor the mill also of course made tithes payments to the Rector, which in 1530-1 amounted to 6/- per annum. In 1565 the mill, still comprising two mills under one roof, was held by Thomas Simpson for a rent of £11/01/4d. By 1651 it had been enlarged for there were *'4 water grise mills under one roof scittuat on the south side of Oundle near Barnwell bridge having a pair of stones, one pair whereof are Black Stones, but only 2 pair of them can grind together being but 2 wheelles.'*

Together with the mill there was a parcell of meadow ground called Hobden comprising 3 roods.<sup>100</sup> The mill still existed in 1691 and, for the one and only time, is depicted as a

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<sup>99</sup> Mellows, 1947.

<sup>100</sup> Survey of Oundle, at Biggin Hall.

substantial building with two chimneys in 1710 on Buck's engraving of Barnwell castle which shows a prospect of Oundle in the background.<sup>101</sup> By 1810, at Inclosure, the mill had gone, though the weirs were still in existence. The mill site and the adjacent pasture land, as in 1565, belonged to the same person, together with the same tenement in Chapel End, and in 1810, at enclosure, they also held the Mill Holme.<sup>102</sup>

There are five account rolls for the manor of Oundle from the late 13th and early 14th centuries, which give detailed information on repairs to the mill. They show it to have been a thatched building with an upper and a lower room. It is not stated whether the building was constructed wholly of stone or timber, but stone, including freestone, was purchased for repairs to the mill. The base of the mill and the bays before the mill were repaired with board, the trough repaired with timber, while both timber and wood were used to repair the 'sidesplints'. Other repairs were done to the rungs of the mill wheel and to the cogs. Iron was purchased for the upper axle and for binding the mill wheel and the trundle wheel(?). The mill pool itself also underwent repairs. The expenses of the mill also included the purchase of millstones, steel mill picks, oil and other equipment, in addition to the wages of the miller.

Because Oundle mill lay on the boundary of the manor there were difficulties in gaining access to repair and alter the mill leat and dam. These were resolved in the late 13th or early 14th century, when landowners in Barnwell parish granted the Abbot an easement across their land and permission to enclose a plot of meadow which lay between their meadow and the river. This was allowed so long as the works on the watercourse did not cause the meadow to flood.<sup>103</sup> It may be for the same reason that in about 1500 there is reference to the payment by the leaseholder of 20/- to lord Wyndesor for the leet to the watermill.<sup>104</sup>

As elsewhere, during the medieval period the tenants of the manor of Oundle, who comprised the majority of the households in the town, were required to use the lord's mill to grind their corn, providing the lord with a substantial income. There was however an agreement in circa 1280 whereby those households which had hand mills were allowed to grind their own corn, paying to the lord collectively 10 marks a year for the privilege.<sup>105</sup>

#### **3.1.2.4 Windmill Mill**

A windmill is recorded on the east side of the Glapthorn road in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century on the Inclosure map.

#### **3.1.2.5 Horse Mill**

In 1491-2 there is reference to the presence of a horse mill within the Rectory manor, which paid 13/4d per annum to the Abbott of Peterborough, but this was disused by 1530-1. At this time the rector also received 6/- tithe from the water mill at Oundle.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> W.Page (Ed.), 1970, 'The Victoria History of the County of Northampton', vol.3, plate facing p.88.

<sup>102</sup> NRO, Inclosure map.

<sup>103</sup> BL Cot. Cleop. II f.56. C.N.L.Brooke and M.M.Postan (eds), 1960, 'Carte Nativorum', 443.

<sup>104</sup> Valuation of Peterborough Abbey possessions, reprinted in Mellows, W.T.(Ed.), The Foundation of Peterborough Cathedral AD1541, NRS volume 13, 1941.

<sup>105</sup> Bodleian Library, Bridges Mss, f.2.

<sup>106</sup> Account Roll. Sc6/Henry VIII/2779.

### 3.1.2.6 Bakehouse

Two bakehouses are recorded in the town in 1292, one with a solar above lying in the 'marketstede' worth 36/- per annum and the other in le Westende worth 24/-. Although the majority of virgate tenements lay in West Street there is no evidence to suggest that the two bakehouses were intended for use by agricultural versus burgage tenants. These are variously recorded during the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. All the tenants in the town, including those holding burgages by the charter of 1214-22, were required to use the lord's bakehouse. Only one or two tenants paid for licence to bake in their own houses, though orders had to be issued in court to stop some tenants from doing so illegally by 1500.<sup>107</sup> It is clear that the value of the bakehouse in the West End was declining significantly compared to that in the market place.<sup>108</sup> Hence in 1471-2 they were valued at 12/- and 6/- respectively, while in 1491-2 it was 13/4d and 3/- and in 1542 it was 13/4 and 6/-.<sup>109</sup> By 1545-6 only the bakehouse in the market place is listed, at 13/4 and by 1565 both had ceased to function and had become merely ordinary tenements.<sup>110</sup> In 1565 the former bakehouse in the market place was described as '*a common furnace by virtue of ancient useage has licence to bake for all tenents of the Lord*'. The disappearance of the bakehouses in the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century reflects a general trend at this time rather than any special circumstances in Oundle and is part of the overall transition from medieval to post medieval.

### 3.1.2.7 Warren

In 1304 the Abbot was granted right of free warren in his demesnes of Oundle.<sup>111</sup> This is thought to have been the time when Biggin Park was laid out, with the enclosure of previously cultivated land. In 1500 two tenants were fined for breaking into the lord's warren and taking hares and rabbits.<sup>112</sup> Warren Bridge is recorded in 1565 at the south-west end of Chapel End leading towards Stoke Doyle. Presumably the rabbit warren lay in this area, but the only old enclosure at that time was called Spittle Plot, which was already in existence in 1400, and the close attached to the last tenement at this end of the town. Neither is there any evidence of the site of a warren in the open field furlongs in 1565. It seems unlikely therefore that the warren was in fact in the area of Warren Bridge but remains unlocated.

## 3.1.3 Rectory Manor House and Appurtenances

The topography of the Rectory and the Church must be considered together because they share a north-south boundary dividing them from the Burystead manor. The Rectory comprised the north east part of the putative pre medieval enclosure at the core of the settlement, the church having been taken out of the south eastern part of the eastern part of the enclosure.

The manor is accurately located by 1400. In 1292 Hugh of Collingham, who was rector of Oundle in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century, paid 12d for right of access to the fields over the Abbot's

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<sup>107</sup> In 1400 just one tenant paid for licence to bake, for his inn. This was probably the same inn as in 1471-2 for which William Harryot paid for licence to bake within his house for his Inn. Various orders in court, eg: in 1500, to stop tenants from baking their bread away from the common bakehouse. Court Roll, NRO, B.15.79.

<sup>108</sup> Eg: 2 bakehouses in 1367-8. Jeayes, p.385.

<sup>109</sup> 1542: sc6/Henry VIII/2787, m.77.

<sup>110</sup> Account Roll of Oundle Manor, PRO Sc6, Henry VIII, 2661.

<sup>111</sup> VCH, p.89. Cal. Charter Rolls, vol. 3, p.43.

<sup>112</sup> Court Roll, NRO, B.15.79.

furlong. This must have been at the north west corner of the Rectory where the property abutted the Burystead demesnes, confirming the location of the rectory earlier in the medieval period. In the 1565 survey the rectory is described and accurately located. It comprised 'within the gate' the manse, barns, stables, other buildings, easements and curtilage. It was leased for £15/13/04. On its east side it was divided from the High Street by the tenements of the rectory fee, except for one plot which contained the kiln house ('*le kilne*' or '*ustrinum*') and the gate of the rectory, opening out onto North Street.

## 3.2 CHURCH

### 3.2.1 Church of St.Peter

It is uncertain whether the church lies on the site of Wilfrid's 8<sup>th</sup> century monastic church or indeed if, more likely, it is on the site of the 10<sup>th</sup> century re-founded monastery. An important minster church is likely to have existed on the present site from at least the 10<sup>th</sup> century, the ecclesiastical organisation being expected to some degree to mirror that of the secular 'eight hundreds' (see above). The parish in the 12<sup>th</sup> century still encompassed the chapel at Churchfield and those at Ashton and Elmington, while the importance of the church was also maintained through the medieval period as the head of a deanery.

The building is largely of the 13<sup>th</sup> century and later, but it has evidence of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. It almost certainly lies on the site of a much earlier church and there is a late Saxon decorated grave slab built into the fabric of the church, which may relate to such an earlier cemetery and church on the site.<sup>113</sup> It is described in detail by the RCHME and so is not discussed in detail here. The main additions after the 13<sup>th</sup> century were the tower, started in the 14<sup>th</sup> and completed in the 15<sup>th</sup>, the clerestory of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and the south porch in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>114</sup> Though restored by Scott in 1862-4, the archaeology of the church appears, from limited recording action conducted in the 1980s, to have reasonable survival of archaeological deposits. The wealth of the town in the medieval period is perhaps reflected in the construction of at least three chapels within the church in the late medieval period and the establishment of two guild, the second in 1499.

### 3.2.2 Chapels

In 1332 the rights of the manor of Oundle are defined and this specifies that to its church belonged the chapels in Ashton, Elmington and Churchfield, confirming the ecclesiastical dependency of these chapels to the old minster at Oundle. The failure to mention any other chapels in Oundle itself may not mean that other chapels did not exist at this time, for it seems likely that there was already a chapel on the North Bridge by 1300-1 when William de Sylkeby was chaplain(?) of Ashton bridge.<sup>115</sup>

#### 3.2.2.1 St Scythes Chapel

In the charter of c.963 the bounds of Oundle begin at Scyta's stream (*Scytan-lacu*). This has been identified close to the south end of St.Osyth's Lane, east of Basford. The name is applied in 1565 to the whole of the Great Field to the south east of the town. At that time St.Scythe's Chapel Hill lay in St Scythes field to the east of Cressicle meadow, north of Balforth meadow, west of Penny meadow and belyhill, south of Blodhill and St.Sithes

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<sup>113</sup> VCH, p.95.

<sup>114</sup> RCHME Northamptonshire churches survey, unpublished notes in SMR.

<sup>115</sup> NRO F(M)2388.

furlongs. There is however a Thomas Chapel holding land nearby and so it cannot be certain that there had not be a transfer of a personal name to the hill. However the small hill rising immediately to the north east of Basford is a very distinct rise from which the ground falls again to the town. It is possible that a small chapel lay on this hill, although there is no old inclosure in the area. If so, it may represent an early ecclesiastical focus in Oundle. In the 11<sup>th</sup> century Oundle is recorded as the resting place of St.Cett and it seems reasonable to conclude that this hill may be the site of a chapel to St.Cett or Scyta.<sup>116</sup>

### **3.2.2.2 St Thomas's Chapel**

There was within the town another chapel, dedicated to St.Thomas, which is first recorded in 1400.<sup>117</sup> Endowments were still being made to the chapel in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century for in 1519 J.Butler left 6/8d for the repair of the chapel of St.Thomas,<sup>118</sup> and in 1529 J.Barnard left 3/4d in his will to the chapel.<sup>119</sup> Leland, who visited in the 1540s, reported seeing *'another church or chapelle of S. Thomas, now of our Ladie, as I enterid into Oundle toun.'* It may have had burial rights for in 1565 the site is described as the 'cemetery'. The change in dedication indicates that in the 1530s it must have become a chantry chapel which was the responsibility of the Guild of Oundle. This is confirmed in 1548 at the dissolution of the chantries when it is listed under the Guild of Our Lady in Oundle. It was at that time *'a Chapell of Ese stoniding in the said Towne coveryd with lead unoccupied no Lande thereto belonging but the Churchyard and defacyd by the Town; whereof the towneshipe require that the king take the same and suffer the chappell at Ashton to stand in place of that.'*

1548 the *'late chapel'* was granted to Francis Samwell and John Byll who then sold it to Philip Stockwell.<sup>120</sup> He still owned the site in 1565, which lay *'in the midst of the street'* and was described as a cemetery, formerly a chapel with stone walls and tiled. The chapel had previously had an endowment of 1 acre of arable and 1 acre of meadow. By the 17<sup>th</sup> century the chapel had been converted into a house. Bridges recorded in 1719-21: *'In Chapell End supposed to be a Chappell where the wheelright Mr.Bradshaw lives remains of large east and west windows and a large arch on the north side and a little stone arch for a door with pillars also on the north side - stonework of east window almost entire - seems to be a chappell of some note.'*<sup>121</sup> This building is clearly visible on Buck's engraving of 1729 of Barnwell castle which gives a very small scale prospect of the town.<sup>122</sup> In 1813 the site of the chapel was occupied by a number of buildings, but in 1879 a new chapel, the Jesus Church, was built and still remains today.<sup>123</sup>

### **3.2.2.3 North Bridge Chapel**

In 1565 there was a chapel on the bridge, on the west side of the river on the north west side of the bridge.<sup>124</sup> It is likely that this already existed in 1300-1 - see above.

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<sup>116</sup> Foard, G., 1985, p.194 and 1991, p.186; Farmer, 1978, p.74.

<sup>117</sup> The Abbot held a toft near St.Thomas's Chapel towards the western end of the town. BL M53892.

<sup>118</sup> Serjeantson & Longden, Northamptonshire Churches, extracts from wills: A.380.

<sup>119</sup> Serjeantson & Longden, Northamptonshire Churches, extracts from wills: D.250.

<sup>120</sup> Cal. Patent Rolls, vol.1, p.311.

<sup>121</sup> Bridges notes, vol.f.2.

<sup>122</sup> VCH, vol.III.

<sup>123</sup> VCH, p.99.

<sup>124</sup> NRO ML116.

### 3.2.3 Vicarage

The Abbot of Peterborough held the Rectory and the advowson of the church of Oundle throughout the medieval period, but in 1477 the abbot was granted licence to appropriate the church of Oundle with all the lands, tenements, rents and to establish for the first time a vicarage.<sup>125</sup> The vicarage continued in existence through the 16th century, and its location can be accurately reconstructed from the 1565 survey.<sup>126</sup> At that time the vicarage or '*vicar's manse*' comprised a tenement, orchard and attached garden between the Burystead manor and the Horsemarket, and the church and Bury Street.<sup>127</sup> It is noted in the survey that in a rental of 1481-2 the vicarage house was tenement of William Baker and was held from the Abbot of Peterborough for 3/6d per annum. This had been a strip of the manor garden and had been built upon previously by John Wise.<sup>128</sup> In the same rental William Harrycott held another parcel of the garden of the Burystead manor house 30 ft. long for 2/- per annum. In 1542 this was rented by Richard Morton for 2/4d<sup>129</sup> but by 1565 this too had been annexed to the vicarage: it '*contained as much as is inclosed as lyeth to the street from the corner wall of the vicarage in the lords garden and there shots in again in a corner and so now this, William Baker's tenement and the lord's garden is made a vicarage by a composition of the Abbot of Peterborough as seen in a survey in the vicar's hands.*' The tenement of William Baker was held in 1481 for a rent of 3/6d, exactly the sum of the rent of the two plots of manor garden held in 1400 by Wm.Botiller and John Sperhankes. These must be one and the same piece of land.

## 3.3 MONASTIC & OTHER ESTABLISHMENTS

### 3.3.1 Monastic houses

There was no hospital or other monastic establishment in Oundle because the manor was owned by the Abbot of Peterborough and the wealth of the manor was exploited to maintain and develop the Abbey. Though there was a Spittle Plot on the west side of the town, recorded first in 1400, immediately to the west of Warren Bridge, there is no reason to believe that there was a hospital in the town. It is possible that this ground was part of the land of the Knights Hospitallers which was held in 1558-9 by Thomas Tresham.<sup>130</sup>

### 3.3.2 Guildhall

It was not until the later 15<sup>th</sup> century that a guild or fraternity to the honour of the Blessed Virgin, St.John and St.George was founded in Oundle in 1485 by Joan, widow of Robert Wyatt a wealthy London merchant, who had also rebuilt the south porch of the church. The Guild was endowed with revenue for the maintenance of two priests, for whom Leland says '*at the west end of the chirche yarde they [Robert and Joan Wyatt] made lodgings for too cantuarie prestes, foundid there by them.*' The priests' house lay on the north side of Church Lane, adjacent to the churchyard which is known earlier to have been a burgate. The Guild

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<sup>125</sup> Cal. of Patent Rolls 17 Ed.IV (1477); Cal. Close Rolls, 1477.

<sup>126</sup> NRO ML.116.

<sup>127</sup> The plot measured on the north against the Burystead manor 165 ft., on the south against the Horse Market 181.5 ft., on the east against the Burystead manor 30 ft. and on the west against Bury Street 87.5 ft.

<sup>128</sup> The plot was 75ft. long and 31ft. wide and was *>now built upon=* and yielded no rent *>because granted to the vicar inperpetuum=*. Account Roll 1471-2 (NRO Westmorland 5V4)

<sup>129</sup> Account Roll 1542 (PRO SC 6/Hen VIII/2787 m.77)

<sup>130</sup> Bridges note: vol.27.

was re-founded in 1499.<sup>131</sup> In 1506-7 there was acquisition of lands in Oundle by the aldermen and bretheren of the Guild of the Virgin Mary in Oundle, comprising 32 messuages, 16a, 10a mead all worth £10.<sup>132</sup> The Guildhall was described by Leland as '*a praty almose house of squarid stone. And a goodly large haule over it for the bretherhodde of the chyrch.....The scripture brasse on the almose house doore berith the date of the yere owr Lord 1485. as I remembre.*'

At the dissolution of the chantries the property is described as '*one house called the Guilde house, worth to be let for 22/- under which there is inhabiting seven poor widowes rent free. The upper part of the house is very mete for a school.*' The property of the guild within the town was however described as '*very ruinous housing*'.<sup>133</sup> When the college of Fotheringhay was dissolved the chantry commissioners said that a free school had been kept there which was now dissolved and that a school should be newly erected in the town of Oundle.<sup>134</sup> However a school had existed in Oundle before 1427 although the exact date of its foundation is unknown.<sup>135</sup>

In replacement of the Guildhall, following its dissolution, the executors of William Laxton were to establish a foundation for the relief of 7 poor souls to be rented freely.<sup>136</sup> The Guild had served both a school and an almshouse, for in 1548-9 the school was the responsibility of a teacher who had been there for 40 years.<sup>137</sup>

### 3.3.3 Laxton's School

Sir William Laxton, who was to endow the school, had been born at Oundle. He had made his wealth as a grocer in London, where he had become alderman, sheriff and lord mayor. He died in 1556.<sup>138</sup> By his will the property was purchased in 1557 and at this time the former Guildhall property was described. It was east to west 72 ft., breadth at the east end with the length of the kitchen belonging 38ft. On the west end with the breadth of a small piece of land called a wood yard, 36ft. It abutted on the market there called the Cornhill, on the churchyard on the north, the land of the Earl of Bedford on the south and on that of Robert Rudstone on the west.<sup>139</sup> A note states '*certaine poore folkes hadd their lodgings and houserome in the premyses with certain allowance of wood...*'. The endowment of the school, required at the dissolution of the chantries was completed for in 1565 the survey records a plot 72 ft by 45.5ft, described as a school lately a Guildhall: '*a very fair hall builded with free stone*'. It had been purchased for ,22/6/11d and made into a free school house by Mr. Laxton, with lands given by him to maintain a schoolmaster. The former priests' house of the Guild, described as '*well builded*' chambers in 1565, in Church Lane

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<sup>131</sup> Cal. Patent Rolls, 1494-1509, p.518. Walker, W.G., 1956, *A History of the Oundle Schools*. Bridges reference to Patent Rolls for the Guild of Our Lady is said to be incorrect.

<sup>132</sup> Cal. Patent Rolls, 1494-1509, p.518. Inq. Ad quod D.: Cal. IPM, vol.20, 63.

<sup>133</sup> Hamilton Thompson, A., 1911, Chantry Certificates, AASR, vol.31, p.164.

<sup>134</sup> Leach, A.F., 1915, *The Schools of Medieval England*, p.241.

<sup>135</sup> At the foundation of the College and arrangements for the continuation of the school there at Higham it was stated that no other schools should be established in the vicinity other than those already existing at Oundle, Rothwell and Northampton. Groome, N, 1964, *The College of the Borough of Higham Ferrers*.

<sup>136</sup> BL, Bibl.Harl. 41, A.20; Bridges notes.

<sup>137</sup> Bridges, 2, p.410.

<sup>138</sup> VCH notes.

<sup>139</sup> BL, Harl. 607, f.82d; VCH notes.

was also purchased for the schoolmaster's house.<sup>140</sup> A new school and hospital was then built in North Street in 1611.<sup>141</sup>

There are views of the building in 1798 on the west side of the churchyard. It was surveyed in 1850 prior to its demolition in 1852 to make way for the new Laxton School.<sup>142</sup>

### 3.4 TENEMENTS

#### 3.4.1 Population and Wealth

	1086	1125-8	1214-22	1300-1	1321	1400	1565
Hides	6	4					
Demesne ploughs	3	3					
ploughs	9	10 men have 9					
villeins	23	25	20		34		
virgates		20	20.5	20.5	15		20
cottagers	10	10	4		19		
burgages	0	15	53		37 free tenants hold (24)	58 burgages 13 cots of burgages = total 71	
market	25/-	,4/3/0			£2/13/4		
mill	20/- & 250 eels	40/- & 220 eels <sup>143</sup>			£9/5/3		
total value	£11	£11			£9/5/3		

<sup>140</sup> ML 116.

<sup>141</sup> VCH, p.86.

<sup>142</sup> Walker, W.G., 1956, *A History of the Oundle Schools*, p.76-7.

<sup>143</sup> Included 1 virgate.

It has been suggested by King that the 1214-22 charter shows immigration was at a very modest level as only 5 of the 53 listed personal names include placenames. This is 9 percent and compares well with the 6% from the contemporary Peterborough charter. However it is far lower than the 35% seen for the new town of Stratford on Avon, which had been created in 1196 and which in 1251-2 had 82 out of its 234 burgesses named with places.<sup>144</sup> Although 25% of the names recorded in the market account roll of 1292 (30 out of 116 names) were placenames most of are likely to represent persons from other settlements visiting or trading in the market.

### 3.4.2 Burgages

In 1086 although the market was in existence there was no reference to burgesses. By 1125-8 there were 15 burgesses paying a total rent of 30/-, implying a rent of 2/- per burgage. This and the similar reference for Peterborough is by far the earliest record of burgesses in any town in the county outside the nationally important borough of Northampton. It is even possible that these burgage tenements, as well as the free tenants recorded in 1125-8 but not in 1086, were already in existence at Domesday but were not recorded for some reason. There were the same number of cottagers in 1125-8 as there had been in 1086, suggesting it is unlikely that the burgesses had been created by the raising of cottage tenants to burgage status. Neither will they have been former virgate holders, the numbers of which actually increase by 1125-8. If not previously in existence then the burgages presumably had been created afresh as an intentional piece of urban development in the late 11<sup>th</sup> or early 12<sup>th</sup> century.

By a charter of liberty granted at some time between 1214 and 1222 the number of burgages was increased to 58. However given the limitations of the documentary record, the actual number of burgage may well have already increased during the intervening 90 years or more. This charter released the burgesses from the more onerous feudal services but it was a most restricted degree of freedom. They were freed of tallage, merchet, suit of halleMOTE (manor court), hoeing and haymaking labour services and were free of market dues, although they still had to reap for 3 days and sow for 1 day and plough for 1 day and also owed suit of court to the portmanmote, the market court. These freedoms were granted in return for a substantial increase in rents, the total increasing by more than double from £5/19/7d to £12/11/6d. It has been suggested by King that the Oundle charter, and the contemporary charter for Peterborough, were a response to the attempt by the Abbey, in line with national trends, to increase the servile obligations of the peasantry to increase the available labour services for work on the demesne which was now being farmed in hand.<sup>145</sup> The granting of these liberties will have lessened the resultant tensions between the lord and those tenants involved in commerce and craft industry in the town. King also points out that the tenants were not generally described as burgesses, suggesting that this was a lower level of freedom than was given to tenants in some other towns in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, but it should be noted that term burges had already been used for those who held by burgage tenure in 1125-8. The grant has also to be placed in a wider spatial and chronological context. This was a time of major urban development nationally and there was clearly substantial competition between urban centres. The increased freedoms must surely have been part of that process of competition, not simply a response to the changes in the demesne economy and villein services. Moreover, as

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<sup>144</sup> King in NP&P.

<sup>145</sup> King, 'Two Charters of Liberty', NP&P...., p.37-42.

burgesses already existed in 1125-8 in Oundle the charter must to a degree be seen as merely a confirmation of the rights of some existing burgesses.

The charter shows very clearly that the burgesses in 1214-22 did not hold significant amounts of agricultural land. There were 17 tenements with no arable land, 24 with less than an acre and just 14 with between 1 and 4 acres. Neither did any of the burgesses hold virgate tenements in addition to their burgages, nor is it likely that demesne land was leased out to tenants at this time, though this cannot be ruled out. Hence it is clear that most if not all of the burgesses will have gained their income from commercial or industrial activities.

Unfortunately it seems unlikely that documentary sources will enable the exact location of the original burgages from those created later in the 12<sup>th</sup> or earlier 13<sup>th</sup> century. Neither is it clear the degree to which the new burgages had been created by the subdivision of existing burgages or had been created by raising cottages to burgages or even the addition of new burgages at the edge of the town. Certainly it would appear that the number of cottages fell from 10 to 4 between 1125-8 and 1214-22.

Analysis of the distribution of burgages in 1214-22 does not show a systematic patterning of rent values which might assist in interpretation of origins. The highest frequency of rents is 4/- with 28 as well as one double toft at 8/- and several others at 8/- which might raise the total to 37. It is conceivable that the 4/- rents represent the newly created burgages, while the other varying rents may represent an earlier phase of burgage creation, yet those earlier burgages are likely to have had standard 2/-rents not inconsistent ones. Neither are the irregular rents in any way consistently distributed around the town.

In contrast topographically the burgages do fall into three distinct groups but it is not clear whether any one of these groups represent the original burgages and this seems only to be answerable, if at all, by archaeological investigation. The burgages on North Street are a single continuous row of burgages without any interspersed tenements. This might imply this was a single phase expansion of the town in the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century. This would accord well with the evidence (see below) that the North Bridge was a new creation of the medieval period and implies that North Street will have been created at that time. It is clear that these tenements need to be examined archaeologically to determine the date of laying out to see if they might be equated with the 1125-8 burgages or if they are later.

Whereas 37 of the burgages were tofts with crofts, there were a group of 15 which lack crofts or in several cases have only a garden attached. In addition one burgage was of two shops while another was of one shop and garden held together with a separate tenement. All these burgages lie on or front onto the market place. It may not be a coincidence that the number 15 corresponds to the number of original burgesses. It is possible that all represent in origin shops on the market place. In 1214-22 Robert son of Thurburni held a toft, apparently between the church and the market place. This might in origin have been the shop which belonged to Thuirburni's burgage which was retained by his son when converted to a tenement while the original burgage was subdivided and sold off to three other tenants. Indeed it is perhaps possible that the 15 burgages without crofts surrounding the market were all in origin shops of the original burgesses, which were then converted to tenements. Alternatively but perhaps less likely they might be the original burgages themselves, laid out on an already existing market place.

The final group of burgages are the 28 which each comprise a toft and croft dispersed with virgate and cottage tenements in the western two thirds of the town. These are most likely to be the earliest of the burgage tenements though starting their life as part of the agricultural settlement. Their possible origins are therefore discussed below with the virgate tenements. The later expansion of the town was accommodated through the subdivision of burgages and it is clear that the 12<sup>th</sup> and early 13<sup>th</sup> century expansion was, at least in part, accommodated in the same way. In 1214-22 the former property of Thurburni near the north west end of the town, originally apparently one capital messuage with toft and croft, had been subdivided to create three separate burgages in 1214-22. Such subdivision is likely to have been an important factor in the expansion of the number of burgages for throughout the tenement rows from the market place westward the burgages are generally grouped in threes or fours with interspersed virgate or occasional cottage or free tenements. It is conceivable that the original fifteen burgages were large tenements like that held by Thurburni and that there had been comprehensive subdivision over some 90 years to accommodate demographic increase and further urbanisation. Such evidence of subdivision, as well as the date of laying out of the tenements may be dateable by archaeological investigation.

In the period following 1214-22 some of the burgages were certainly subdivided to accommodate the increase in population. Though we do not have a comprehensive record from the demographic peak in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century there is piecemeal evidence. For example in 1300-1 Robert Papillorn paid for entry into a third part of one burgage which John his father had held. The 1321 extent, a very incomplete source, shows 24 burgages held by 37 free tenants thus indicating subdivision was on a fairly large scale. By 1400, following half a century of major demographic decline there were 71 burgage or former burgage tenements created out of the original 53. 11 burgages had been subdivided, in most cases into three, to create 30 tenements and there had previously been even more subdivision, for there had previously been multiple tenants in 4 other burgages, making a further 10 tenements. These burgages were randomly distributed around the town. However the picture is further confused by the fact that engrossing had also already begun. In 1214-22 only in one case did a burgess hold two tenements. In 1292 John of Oundle, steward to the Abbott, held 2.5 burgages and one customary virgate in Oundle as well as leasing 90 acres in Biggin. By 1307-8 Hugh son of Thomas of Oundle paid 40/- for the release of 2.5 burgages acquired from his brother.

Though the manorial records continue to record the original status of burgages, from at least the late 13<sup>th</sup> century the Abbot had begun to recover a few burgages or parts of burgages by escheat and to release them as copyhold cottages. Some of the burgages thus re-let were at a higher rent, some at a much lower rent and others the same as when burgages. This process was already underway by 1274-95 when the burgages formerly belonging to Matfrei were purchased by the Abbot. However not in all cases were such burgages converted from burgages for in 1292 another burgage is recorded eschaeting to the Abbott, on the death of Ralph Bassett, but this remained a burgage in 1400. In all there were twelve cottages created by the eschaet of 10.5 burgages. This process continued after 1400 because in 1491-2 it is specifically stated that a burgage formerly of Thomas Boleyn was made into a cottage because it demised into the lords hands.

The tenurial status of the tenement did not however necessarily indicate a return to an agricultural living. These cottages were, as had always been the case in Kettering and some other towns, occupied by tradesmen or artisans. For example in 1400 John Selby paid for the right to bake for his inn, a burgage which had been turned back into a cottage, while Robert Cato had an inn, previously William Lyveden's, which had always been a cottage.

The burgages regularly passed from father to son, as in 1300-1 when Nicholas le Aketoun (tunicmaker) paid 2/- for entry into 1 messuage he had of the gift of Adam his father and Lawrence at the Cross paid 16/- for entry into a burgage formerly his father Lawrence's. There was also of course examples of burgages being sold. Hence in 1309-10 John son of Matchi the candlemaker paid for entry into one burgage which he bought from John Burgeys, as did Robert Carpenter wheelwright for entry into 1 burgage bought from William Capello.

There is little documentary evidence to indicate the character of the burgages. In the charter there were the three shops already referred to as well as another with a capital messuage and barn. By 1400 there were 6 other burgages now described as capital messuages in burgages.

### **3.4.3 Virgate**

In 1086 Oundle comprised 6 hides on which there were 23 villagers with 9 ploughs while only 3 ploughs lay in demesne. By 1125-8 there were 4 hides recorded with 25 villagers holding 20 virgates who still had 9 ploughs with a further virgate held with the mill. The significance of the reduction in the number of hides is unclear but it is possible that, if not an error, then part of the estate had been detached, though the number of ploughs and villagers listed would seem to contradict this interpretation. It seems likely that the villagers of 1086 were holding the same virgates. Already by 1086, and to a greater extent in 1125-8 the virgates had begun to be subdivided between more than one tenant, although most of the individual virgates remained in separate existence in accounting terms until Inclosure, the exception being 8 half virgate holdings which were detached from any tenements by 1400.

The reconstruction of the distribution of virgate holdings in 1400 shows they were all dispersed through the western two thirds of the settlement. It therefore appears likely that this represents the extent of the peasant settlement as it was in 1086, but it also seems likely that by then it had already seen some degree of evolution from an original laying out, probably in the 10<sup>th</sup> century.

By 1125-8 money rent was only 20/- but with dues in kind (hens and eggs) and especially in 'works' forming the bulk of the payment. The other virgate was held with the mill for a total of 40/- and 250 eels. In total then there were 21 virgates held by villein tenants. There were also 2 virgates held freely, the 1 virgate of Vivianus's fee having been granted out before 1086 as part of a knight's fee.

The burgage charter of 1214-22 is accompanied by a rental of the other tenants in Oundle. This includes the virgate tenements, 4 other tenants, the land of three burgage tenants and 3 tofts in Churchfield. This shows that there were then 21 holdings of virgate land, including the mill land. All but one of these is apparently of 1 virgate each, for 14 are listed at 20/- rent while the final entry is specified as half a virgate at 10/- rent. Hence it would seem that 20 tenants were holding 19.5 virgates, plus the single virgate held with the mill, already

separately identified in 1125-8. Despite various changes in the way in which the virgates were held, the number remained consistent for in 1461-2 there is 'tourne' of 4d payable for each of the 20.5 virgates and in 1565 there were 20.5 yardlands paying burgeworke. At that time each virgate is described strip by strip, with each virgate comprising approximately 30 acres of arable land, 8 acres of meadow and held by rents varying from 24/- to 36/-.<sup>146</sup>

Already by 1214-22 half a virgate had it would seem already been detached from one of the tenements. However, as 25 men held 20 virgates in 1125-8 already at least five half virgates must have been in existence, yet by 1214-22 these had apparently been united once more, leaving only one half virgate. Three of the virgates were attached to tofts and two to crofts, the rest by implication had to be attached to occupied tenements. It should not however be assumed that the tofts were not occupied because the burgage rental consistently refers to tofts and crofts showing that tofts were occupied, in contrast to later useage for vacant tenements in later surveys. In no case are the virgates held by persons listed in the burgage rental, confirming that all were purely agricultural tenants as in any other village.

While most of the virgates were held at a 20/- rent there were 6 (one being the mill land) listed at higher rents (27/-, 32/-, 25/-, 27/-, 28/- and 25/-). The 14.5 virgates of 1214-22 at a rent of 20/- per virgate almost certainly correspond to the 14.5 virgates of 1292 valued at 24/- per virgate. The remaining virgates of 1292 had escheated to the lord and been leased out for life to various tenants at rents ranging from 28/- to 32/-. This would imply that the higher rents of 1214-22 for the six higher rent holdings already represent a similar process. However this does not apparently mean a detachment of the virgates from the tenements as at least four of these were held with tofts or crofts, although it must be significant that only these higher rent virgates have tofts or crofts specified. This process of escheat may explain how the numbers holding virgates had been reduced since 1125-8. The process of escheat was continuing in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century for in 1292 two virgates in addition to the existing 4 were let out to farm and then recovered, being specified as the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> virgates. This leasing out led to a 4/- increment of rent. By 1307 two further virgates had been recovered and similarly let out to farm. Between 1292-1307 these virgates were let out at 28/- and 30/- respectively, but they no longer owed labour services. The remaining 14.5 virgates of 1292 each paid 24/- because they had now been released from all but plough service.

In 1300 it is clear that an entry fine of 40/- was payable for entry into a virgate.

Of the 15 virgates recorded in 1321-2, 7 can be equated with the remaining virgates not recovered by the Abbott, but reduced in number since 1307-8. The rental value of £8/13/4d would give 24/- virgates as in 1307-8, but with an additional 64d perhaps from release of mowing service or for aletoll or other dues. This correlation is confirmed in 1400.

The other 8 virgates are more difficult to relate, for they owe one plough service though in 1307-8 farmed virgates had been released from plough service and rental values were between 28/- and 32/-, compared to 1321-2 at 10/- per virgate. They may however represent an increased number of farmed virgates. These are the first figures since 1125 to indicate the number of tenants holding virgates: 8 held by 22 tenants and 7 by 12 tenants. A considerable degree of subdivision had clearly taken place since 1125. The document is placed soon after the height of the medieval expansion and, though the famines may have reduced population

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<sup>146</sup> NRO, ML117.

significantly, this explains the very high degree of subdivision. There are clearly some virgates where subdivision must have proceeded to quarter virgates.

In 1400 the group of 7 virgates at 24/- with plough service still existed, but the remainder are seen at variable rents. However the 9 half virgates are valued at 32/- per virgate and these, with all services relaxed, must be equated with the 4 virgates of escheat in 1307 and 1 other virgate let to John son of Thomas. Presumably 1.5 virgates had become escheated in addition. It is probably significant that it was the escheated virgates which were let as half virgates in 1400, suggesting the practice may have started by 1292. The remaining virgates farmed at various rents may represent the group of 8 virgates of 1321, one virgate of escheat having been newly farmed since 1321. The 1400 rental is the first virgate list which can be related with confidence to the town plan, but it may represent a far earlier pattern judging from the relationship of other tenements seen between 1400 and previous centuries.

The absent 4.5 virgates may be represented in the town plan by some of the cottages. Hence the 25 men holding 20 virgates in 1125 may indeed have all held separate virgate properties with each of the 8 half virgates having its own tenement. Alternatively only 4 additional full virgate tenements may have existed, which may have been the four cottages suggested in the reconstruction of 1214-22. This subdivision must surely have been a response to the major population increase taking place between 1086 and the early 14<sup>th</sup> century. In 1400 however, following the great demographic collapse of the previous half century, it is not surprising to find that there was far less subdivision of virgates and that 2 tenants actually held two virgates each. The holders of the detached half virgates in 1400 were in three cases cottage holders, in two cases virgate holders, while four are unrecorded and had perhaps been let to tenants of other fees.

#### **3.4.4 Cottage**

In 1086 ten bordars are recorded in Oundle, listed alongside the villeins together holding 9 ploughs. By 1125-8 there were still only 10 bordars though, as would be expected, it is clear that they had no relationship to the 9 ploughs. By 1214-22 we can account for at most 6 possibly 7 tenements which may be cottages. It is possible that over the preceding 90 years or so there was a substantial increase in the number of cottagers but that the charter of 1214-22 raised almost all of them to burgage tenure. By 1321-2, a source which in all other aspects significantly under represents numbers of tenants there were 19 cottagers, a significant increase over the preceding century, at a time when substantial population increase was to be expected.<sup>147</sup> By 1400 only seven cottages are identified, including one which was newly built while three were merely vacant tofts. Of these three cottages 3 had attached crofts, one 3 acres of land and one half an acre of pasture. The small number of cottagers and their lack of field land would accord reasonably well with employment as wage labourers.

The lord of the manor was responsible for the upkeep of the cottages. The 1300 account Roll details expenditure of: 12d for roofing one cottage at the head of the town with the making of the gable; repairing the wall of 2 cottages there 5/-; on buying roofing for the said cottages 2/-; on buying ?rushes for the same cottages 15d; on roofing the said cottages 3/-. Total 12/3d.

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<sup>147</sup> The 1300-1 account roll records a third of a burgage tenement.

### 3.4.5 Decline and Recovery

As in all other well documented settlements in the county, the effect of the early 14<sup>th</sup> century famines and especially of the Black Death of 1349 and subsequent plagues had a major impact on both commercial activity and population levels in the town. By 1400 there were a number of decayed tenements in the town, though perhaps not so many as seen in some other places, such as Kettering. However the exact degree of decline in tenements is difficult to measure as an indeterminate number of tenements had been subdivided and it is unclear how many of these are recognised in the 1400 rental. There were various other waste, ruined or vacant. These included 3 waste cottages made out of burgages, a waste burgage, 3 vacant tofts, one near the chapel and two next to the watermill. There was also a vacant virgate tenement. In 1500 the messuages of three tenants were exceedingly ruined and were ordered to be repaired,<sup>148</sup> while in 1565 some tenements were still vacant, notably Hobstows Close and the Close at Barnwell Bridge, which still had virgates pertaining to them. These decayed or empty tenements were mainly at the western edge of the town, in Chapel End and the adjacent area and just one at the south end of St Sythe's lane. This is in considerable contrast to the much higher level of tenement desertion seen in Kettering and Irthlingborough at the same date. However, the decline is to a degree perhaps marked by the decline in the number of subdivided burgages. However it is likely that Oundle continued to thrive as a town and was certainly not in significant decline like many of the market villages, almost all of which appear to have lost all their commercial functions.

## 3.5 COMMERCE

### 3.5.1 Market

The date of foundation of Oundle market is not known. It is first supposedly mentioned in the charter of 971 but this is a forgery.<sup>149</sup> However the primacy of Oundle market over that at Peterborough is supported by king Edgar's charter of c.970, whether or not genuine. It talks of the markets of Oundle, Stamford and Huntingdon and says '*we will that there be a market in Burch*' (Peterborough). The first certain reference is in 1086 when it was one of just three recorded for the county, in addition to the Borough at Northampton. The others were at Kings Sutton, which together with Northampton and Oundle are thought to have been the three Mercian provincial capitals in the county, and at Higham Ferrers which appears to have been created as an estate centre by the fragmentation of the major middle Saxon royal estate of Irthlingborough. As seems to have been typically the case with late Saxon and early medieval markets the market day was originally Sunday.

The Abbot's right to hold a market at Oundle was confirmed in 1198<sup>150</sup> and in 1202 the market day was moved from Sunday to Saturday.<sup>151</sup> In 1227, 1270 and 1332 there was further confirmation of the market and the right to collect market tolls,<sup>152</sup> while in 1327 it was

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<sup>148</sup> Court Roll, NRO, B.15.79.

<sup>149</sup> Sawyer, P.H., 1968, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, 787.

<sup>150</sup> Cal. Charter Rolls, vol.4, p.278.

<sup>151</sup> Assize Rolls.. Volume

<sup>152</sup> Cal. Charter Rolls, vol.1, p.22. Cal. Charter Rolls, vol.4, p.274.

repeated that ‘no one should presume to buy without their licence in their markets of Burgh and Oundle.’<sup>153</sup>

Both fair and market continued to be held, on a Saturday, through into the post medieval period, Leland describing the town in the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century as having ‘*a very good market*’. The markets continued in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, the market day being changed from Saturday to Thursday in 1825, presumably reflecting the relative decline in importance of Oundle compared particularly to Peterborough and Kettering.<sup>154</sup> However, despite a relative decline the market continued to be held into the 1930s.<sup>155</sup>

The actual income generated by the market is very difficult to assess as different documents group together the incomes in different ways while at some times the market was leased out for a fixed sum. In 1086 the market was worth 25/-. In 1215-1222 the market, pleas of the hundreds and the bakehouse and pannage were together worth 22 marks.<sup>156</sup> In 1292 the toll of market together with ?aletoll was £12/8/8d. In 1367-8 the total income from rent of stalls in market place, stallage, plots in the market place and 2 bakehouses was £12/6/8d.<sup>157</sup> By 1407-8 the market was leased by Ralph of Thorney for £20 per annum. In 1471-2 the toll and profit of market was 4/6d, while portmanmote with farm of burgages was worth 27/4d. In 1491-2 the farm of the toll of market was 7/8d. In 1539 the market and fair together were worth £2/1/0 and the perquisites of the court 11/8d. At the same date Peterborough market and fair was worth £3/10/4 and that at Thorpe £0/4/0.<sup>158</sup> In 1542 and 1545-6 the toll of the market was worth 8/-, while in 1550 the market was worth £2/1/0.<sup>159</sup> However the complexity is partly explained in 1565 when the toll of market was 8/<sup>160</sup> but this specifically excluded the toll of grain sales, which was charged amongst the rents of the tenants. In 1651 the profit of the weekly market was £2/13/4d per annum.<sup>161</sup>

The range of traders in the market was quite wide. In 1527-8 there is reference to a mercer, chandler, fishmonger, draper, barber and smith, though they might be involved in a range of transactions for these were all involved in a case relating to the illegal enhancement of grain prices in Oundle market in that year.<sup>162</sup> The range of goods sold and of traders coming to Oundle is most clearly defined in 1565 when the toll of the market is said to cover all kinds of cattle, pedlars, chapmen, glovers, tanners, while the toll of grain was charged amongst the rents.<sup>163</sup> The specific areas of the market defined in the 16<sup>th</sup> century for the sale of different goods also indicates the range of important sales: Wool, Corn, Cheese, Meat, Horses, though not all may have still been currently a major component, most notably wool. There had clearly been a significant shift between the high medieval and the 16<sup>th</sup> century from wool to hides as major component of the market sales and it is surely significant that the woolmarket was already in decline as an area of marketing in the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and was

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<sup>153</sup> Cal. Charter Rolls, vol.4, p.83.

<sup>154</sup> VCH, p.87.

<sup>155</sup> VCH, p.92.

<sup>156</sup> Soc. Of Antiquaries, Ms60, f.177b.

<sup>157</sup> Jeayes, p.385.

<sup>158</sup> Mellows, 1947, p.7.

<sup>159</sup> Mellows, W.T., 1941, The Foundation of Peterborough Cathedral, AD1541, NRS vol.13, p.65.

<sup>160</sup> Account Roll of manor, PRO, SC6. Henry VIII, 2661.

<sup>161</sup> Survey of Oundle, in Biggin Hall.

<sup>162</sup> Selden Society, vol.25, 1910, Selext Cases in Star Chamber, vol.2.

<sup>163</sup> Survey of the Manors of Oundle and Biggin, NRO ML116 & 117.

completely closed by 1565. The importance by then of cattle and specifically of hides is clearly seen on 3rd April 1546 when Richard Preston of Glapthorn wrote to John Johnson of Calais: *'At Oundle market on Saturday was great demand for fells (animal hides with the hair), and buyers sought them at the town's end before they reached the market...'*<sup>164</sup>

### **3.5.1.1 Market Place**

The market place appears to be in two distinct parts in plan form. The west half with the Woolmarket, corresponding to the Manor/Rectory and church division extends much further north and correlates with the long to short tenements on the south row, which also corresponds to the easternmost position of virgate tenements. To the east of this only burgage tenements and the three other fees (Churchfield, Thorpe Waterville and Rectory fees) exist, no virgate or cottage tenements. This is focussed in particular upon the north street which runs to the North Bridge which we know to be a medieval creation. This appears then to be a new block added to the town or an area which has been completely replanned in at some time before 1214-22. But the Churchfield fee was a grant of 1/6 hide in the town to Vivianus in the late 11<sup>th</sup> century. Presumably this part of the town was already in existence at that time for the tenement to be granted, unless it is a former open field close?

The process of encroachment on the market place was clearly well under way by 1214-22 when shops are recorded there and apparently various burgage tenements. By this date it would seem that the medieval topography of the market had been largely fixed and relatively little change seems to happen thereafter except the usual subdivision of the burgages until the late medieval period when we see a large scale conversion of stalls to shops in the Shambles and the decay of the shops and stalls in the Woolmarket, though the latter may have been underway much earlier.

By the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries and probably long before, the market place had been divided up into various specialised areas and groups of buildings. There was the Shambles with its butchers' shops, the Woolmarket, though now in decline and being infilled, the Cornhill, the Cheese Cross, Horsemarket. In addition there was the Hall of Pleas with the adjacent pillory and also the bakehouse.

The shops and stalls which all appear to have lain in the market place at least until 1565 when all but one, in West Street, lay on or fronted onto the market. They appear to have been distributed about the market place in a similar fashion in the medieval period as in 1565. For example in 1307-8 there is a mention of a wool shop while 4 shops and one solar are said to lie in the market place opposite the cross, presumably the square pile of shops including the bakehouse recorded in 1565.

It is difficult to determine the exact distribution and even the number of shops and stalls in the town in the early and high medieval. The first locational information we have is in 1214-22 when 3 shops were recorded to the north of the later Woolmarket. The first specific reference to the shops of the woolmerchant or woolmarket is in 1307.

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<sup>164</sup> L.&P. Henry VIII, xxi, I, 528.

### 3.5.1.2 Shops and Stalls

The shops and stalls are not consistently recorded in the manorial records and this provides a clear lesson for the interpretation of the far more sparse records which exist in various other towns as to the number, rental value and location of the shops and stalls.

In 1214-22 there is reference to only 3 shops in the burgage charter. These three shops were adjacent to each other, in the market place, two being held by the same tenant.<sup>165</sup> These may not have been the only shops in the town at that time, rather being just those held by tenants of burgages for as we see later, there were other tenants of shops who lived in settlements elsewhere. Similarly there is no reference to market stalls. There are occasional other references to shops during the medieval period as in 1246-7 when a messuage and shop in Oundle passed from Richard son of William to Hugh le Blund.<sup>166</sup> In 1292 the number of shops (and presumably stalls) in the market place is not specified but the rent from them was 53/2d. In addition there were 4 shops and one solar before the cross at 5/6d. The rental also specifies two other stalls held at 1/4d and 1/6d as well as a further 4 stalls and one shop leased for life. The rental values of shops and stalls varied significantly, and not solely according to whether it was leased for life or rented. Two shops in 1214-22 were held together for 3/-, probably at 1/6d each. In 1292 one shop was held for life for 10/-. In 1292 the two stalls were rented for 1/4d and 1/6d, while those leased for life varied from 1/- to 3/-. In 1471-2 the shops range from 2/- 3/- and 4/- and almost all the stalls 2/- while the remainder though including 4d and 8d rents seem customarily to have been held for 2/-.

There was clearly a process of conversion from stalls to shops. Though this is seen most clearly in the late 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> century it probably occurred on a small scale in the medieval period, though it cannot be assumed that all shops started their life as stalls.

The main grouping of shops and stalls were in two rows in the Shambles in the late medieval period. These butchers stalls and shops were otherwise known as the 'ffleshamblez'.<sup>167</sup> There were 32 stalls here in 1471-2 although this number declined to 21 by 1565. In contrast the number of shops remained fairly stable at around 15. However by 1813 the number of shops had declined to 10, with a further nine tenements there, representing the conversion of shops to tenements. There were also an unspecified number of stalls in 1813.<sup>168</sup> By 1565 the South Row had been wholly converted to shops and one of these already had a chamber above. Those in the North Row were still largely stalls but there was one double shop and two other single shops, one with a chamber above. The stalls themselves in the North Row where single are specified as either north or south stalls. It seems likely that the two rows originally comprised purely stalls and that each row had two rows lying back to back, one facing north and the other south.

The stalls were presumably in origin temporary structures, and that may explain the occasional medieval references to the renting of 'plots' within the market places of several Northamptonshire towns. However permanent structures had been constructed in every case in Oundle by 1565 for it is specified that most of the stalls in the north row were double stalls

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<sup>165</sup> Oundle Charter, 1214-22.op.cit.n.? The two shops held by Hugh of Auton - he held his house from Roger son of Matfridus

<sup>166</sup> Feet of Fines, Henry III, case 172, file 24, no.275; VCH Notes.

<sup>167</sup> 1544-5 Richard Harryson holds one shop at the west ends of the stalles, formerly Thomas Crosse and later Thomas Phillip. Also John Hewes for a stall situated in the butchers shops there called the >ffleshamblez= between the stall of Philip Towers on the east and the stall of William Burell on the west. Polebrook Hundred court rolls, NRO, Montagu old box 21, no.13.

<sup>168</sup> Inclosure Award.

*'under one roof'*. These stalls and shops, clearly converted to shops, in the engraving of 18?? where the north row appear as mainly timber framed structures of single storey whereas the shops of the south row were two storey structures with stone (?) chimneys. In 1565 the form of construction of only one shop and one stall are described, one a smith's workshop and stall away from the main stalls and shops. They were *'lying together and roofed in thatch and tiles'*. There was also a shop on the waste built onto a cottage with stone walls.

In addition to the conversion from shops to stalls, the late 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards seems to show a gradual expansion in the distribution of shops. In 1471-2 payment was made for the enlargement of a burgage onto the waste for a shop, opposite the manor.<sup>169</sup> This is probably the iron farrier's shop recorded in 1565 next to the Talbot. In 1471-2 the size of the plot of waste used to extend the burgage to create a shop was 8ft long and 16ft wide.<sup>170</sup>

The shops rented from the lord, at least by the 16<sup>th</sup> century were the responsibility of the tenant to maintain. Hence in 1500 it was reported that *'The shops in the tenure of Thomas Philip are exceedingly ruined and are ordered to be repaired before Christmas on pain of a fine of 10 marks.'* The shop in the tenure of John Cope was also ruined and was ordered to be repaired. In contrast William Corio had demolished and carried away wood from the shop in the tenure of William Odam and he was ordered to rebuild the shop.<sup>171</sup> Similarly the maintenance of the street and its cleansing, including the clearing out of the open drains, was the responsibility of the tenants. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century various stall holders of the shambles were in trouble for waste left in the street<sup>172</sup> and in 1535-6 it was specifically required that every man should clean the street before his door from St.Thomas Chapel to the north end of the town.<sup>173</sup> In general the shops and stalls were each held by different tenants in the medieval period, although in 1214-22 two had been held together. With the decay in the economy in the late medieval period, by the late 15<sup>th</sup> century some groups of shops and stalls were combined into single shops, as in 1491-2 when William Dobbes held 3 shops beneath the Hall of Pleas,

The Woolmarket and the adjacent Hall of Please represented a distinct area of the market with its own shops, largely beneath the Hall and immediately adjacent and fronting onto the main market place. However, already by 1471 areas of the Woolmarket had been converted to other uses, several parcels of waste being granted out and also a barn there. The number of stalls on the Woolmarket decline as they were converted to shops,. By 1542 there were 8 shops there. By 1565 this had decline to 5 and all the stalls had gone. Between 1491 and 1542 the number of shops and stalls beneath the Hall of Please declined and by 1565 all had gone, save the shop beside the pillory which was in fact just a lean to on the waste. The Market Hall itself had by 1565 been converted into a cottage and a tenement with the Woolmarket itself now a curtilage. This was the last stage in the encroachment of the market place, which must have begun in the early medieval period. The pattern remained largely the same from 1565 to 1813 when the market place was finally cleared in a major clearing and repaving of the town under parliamentary Act.

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<sup>169</sup> held by William Harryot in 1471, a burgage which had been William Byngley=s and later William Coke=s, which was in 1516 held by Powell.

<sup>170</sup> Account Roll of manor of Oundle, 1471-2, NRO, Westmorland 5V4.Account Roll, PRO, SC6/Henry VIII, 2777.

<sup>171</sup> Court Roll, NRO, B.15.79.

<sup>172</sup> Polebrooke Hundred Court, NRO, Montagu old box21, no.13

<sup>173</sup> Polebrooke Hundred Court, NRO, Montagu old box21, no.13.

The economic activity in the town may have suffered significantly in the later 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries and even in the 16<sup>th</sup> century the Woolmarket may have been in decay. However by the Tudor period this was probably not a general decline in economic activity but rather a shift in focus from one trade to another and a restructuring of the way in which the commercial activity was conducted. Hence in 1536-7 we find that Thomas Brown and Smyth had made a little shop which had annoyed the king's street. They were instructed to clear it away (?) or to 'make it clean' under pain of a substantial fine.<sup>174</sup>

### 3.5.1.3 Moot Hall and Market House

The virgate and cottage tenants still owed suit to the hallmote, which was in 1321-2 worth 3/4d to the lord. However, at least since the charter of 1214-22 the burgage tenants owed only suit of court of Portmanmote.

The first reference to the market court or Portmanmote is in 1292, but the Moot Hall is not mentioned until 1461 when '*lez market mote*' was held on market day in the Hall or House of Pleas.<sup>175</sup> This lay on the Market place to the south west of the Woolmarket. The Hall of Pleas was presumably some form of colonnaded building in the medieval and early post medieval period for it had a hall above and stalls (later shops) below. In the late 15<sup>th</sup> century the pillory lay immediately adjacent in the market place and in 1565 it is specifically located abutting the west side of the Hall, towards the High Cross, though it is then described as '*the lord's stocks house*' and the '*cage for punishment of offenders*'. By the time of the first engravings of the town the Moot Hall had long been converted to tenements and apparently completely rebuilt and was then occupied by an inn, the Swan. The pillory and cage had also long since been removed.

Where the court was held following the conversion of the Hall to tenements in the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century is not clear, but with the complete reorganisation of the market place in 1826 a new Market House was constructed in what was by then the centre of the market place, on the site of the earlier Shambles. Part of the stone for the construction of the new market house was brought from All Saints church, Barnwell.<sup>176</sup>

	1292	1471	1491-2	1542	1565
beneath the Hall of Pleas		3 shops (1 by the pillory)  3 stalls	6 shops  2 stalls	3 shops  1 stall 1 vacant stall	1 shop by the pillory  0 stalls
Woolmarket		5 shops (1 new shop)	6 shop	6 shops	5 shops

<sup>174</sup> Polebrooke Hundred Court, NRO, Montagu old box21, no.13

<sup>175</sup> 1461-2 The court held in Oundle on a Saturday. Jeayes, p.387.

<sup>176</sup> NRL, Stamford Mercury 28 July 1826.

		6 stalls 1 barn 1 parcel of waste	3 stalls 1 barn 2 parcel of waste	4 stalls 1 barn 2 parcel	0 stalls
Butchery or Shambles		32 stalls	14 shops 19 stalls 1 parcel of waste	12 Shops 20 stalls	15 shops 21 stalls
Square pile of shops	4 shops 1 solar (rent 5/6) bakehouse before the cross	1 stall? bakehouse	1 shop 1 stall bakehouse	3 shops (1 new) bakehouse	7 shops bakehouse
TOTAL SHOPS		9 shops	27 shops	24 shops	28 shops
TOTAL STALLS		42 stalls	25 stalls	26 stalls	21 stalls
TOTAL	(rent 58/8d)	51	52	50	49

#### **3.5.1.4 Horsemarket**

The Horsemarket as recorded in 1565 had previously been a part of the manor garden, and hence was a relatively late creation. This may well reflect a growing importance of horses and stock in general in the sales of the market compared to the declining importance of wool. However horses had of course been offered for sale at the market in the medieval period, as can be seen from the case of the bailiff of the Duke of Gloucester of Rothwell who distrained the horses of the lord of Clyffe going towards Oundle market.<sup>177</sup>

#### **3.5.1.5 Market crosses**

There was a cross in the market place in 1292 and from its association with a group of shops there it is likely that it was on the site of the Cheese Cross, which was constructed in 1591

<sup>177</sup> Hundred Rolls - vol.2 - Willybrook Hundred.

and destroyed in 1826. There was however also a second cross, called the High Cross at the bottom of Bury Street which was in existence by 1565.

The most fundamental change in the market place came in the 1820s when, under an Act of Parliament for the clearance and improvement of the town, as in other towns in the county, the shambles and other tenements and shops in the market place, together with the cross were cleared away and a new market hall erected in their place. However in 1849 Whellan describes the marketplace as containing ‘a commodious market house and shambles’.<sup>178</sup>

### 3.5.2 Fair

Though it is likely that there was an earlier fair in Oundle, the first reference is in 1267-8 when the Abbot received the right to hold a 15 day fair annually on the feast of Ascension.<sup>179</sup> This fair must be assumed always to have been held in the market place and the other streets of the town, as must have been the case in all the towns in the medieval period. It is clear that by 1471-2 the fair was being held for just a single day, on the Monday in Holy week. Following his purchase of the manor of Oundle, in 1552 Lord Russell received a grant of two fairs in Oundle in addition to the ancient fair. They were to be held on the eve, day and morrow of St. Lawrence the Martyr and of St. Valentine. For the new fairs the inhabitants of Oundle were to be quit of stallage, picage, customs etc pertaining to the fairs for all beasts and merchandise they bought and sold there.<sup>180</sup> In 1720 these three fairs, on St. Valentines day, Whit Monday and the 10<sup>th</sup> August were still being held.<sup>181</sup> In 1849 fairs for horses, sheep and cows were still held on the 25<sup>th</sup> February and Whit Monday and a new fair for all sorts of stock and cheese on the 12<sup>th</sup> October but by this time the fair on the 21<sup>st</sup> August had fallen into disuse.<sup>182</sup> In the 1930s a horse fair was still held on the 25<sup>th</sup> February and on the 12<sup>th</sup> October.<sup>183</sup>

As with the income from the market so that from the fairs is not straightforward to interpret. In 1463-4 the fair was worth 10/8d,<sup>184</sup> in 1471-2 the profits were 15/-, in 1491-2 the farm of the fair was 6/8d. In 1542 the profit of the toll of fair was 24/- and in 1545-6 it was 24/4d.<sup>185</sup> In 1565 the profits of the ancient fair had been 24/8d while the two new fairs ‘*yield for the toll what may be gotten*’. The sum of the old fair was to be charged thereafter in the rents. In 1651 the profit of 3 fairs, with tolls, booths, stallage and pickage was ,12 per annum.<sup>186</sup>

### 3.5.3 Inns & Alehouses

In 1400 there was one inn (*‘hospicium’*) in the town, held by John Selby who also paid 4/- per annum for the right to bake in his tenement for the inn, and one tavern (*‘taberna’*), held as a cottage by Robert Cato and which had formerly been held by William Lyveden. The latter

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<sup>178</sup> Whellan, p.758.

<sup>179</sup> Cal.Charter Rolls, vol.2, p.101.

<sup>180</sup> Cal. Patent rolls, vol.4, p.260.

<sup>181</sup> Bridges, II, 404.

<sup>182</sup> Whellan, p.758.

<sup>183</sup> VCH, p.87.

<sup>184</sup> Jeayes, p.388.

<sup>185</sup> Account Roll of manor, PRO, SC6. Henry VIII, 2661.

<sup>186</sup> Survey of Oundle, at Biggin Hall.

is listed as an inn by 1471-2 but in 1491-2 is described as formerly an inn. By 1565 the number of inns in the town had apparently increased to at least six, judging from the names of the tenements: le Bull, The Crown (first mentioned in 1516-17 and said formerly to have been held by Richard Rawlyns for 23/6d<sup>187</sup>), The Harts Head, Le Lyon, Le Talbret, and The Swan (first mentioned in 1471-2 when it is described as an inn held as a virgate tenement).<sup>188</sup> Unlike the vast majority of the other tenements in the town these almost all had stables within their curtilages.

While the number of inns appears to have increased, the numbers of brewers and typlers appears to have declined in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. In 1400 most tenants paid aletoll, as in 1471-2, at the rate of 1d per tenement whether they were brewing or not, but they also paid 1d per gallon sold if they were brewing. By 1471-2 the aletoll itself was farmed for 8d per annum and so the numbers actually brewing is not recorded. By 1565 it is specifically stated that there were '*not so many brewers or sellers of ale or beere to make up the said sum (8/-) at 2d per head*' and so some were rated at 2d and some at 4d.<sup>189</sup> This implies that in the 15<sup>th</sup> or early 16<sup>th</sup> century there had been as many as 48 brewing or selling ale in the town. By 1520-1 there were just 36 brewers (8) and typlers (sellers) (18) of ale. Thereafter the numbers appear to continue in decline, to 12 by 1538-9.<sup>190</sup> However in 1630 there were 19 inns and alehouses in the town.<sup>191</sup> This apparently rose to 44 in 1673 and 47 in 1674, declining again by 1755 to 28 and then in 1828 to 18. In this Oundle lies close to the top of the list of towns in the county, and probably representing a good indication as to the degree to which the town drew custom to its shops and market.

### 3.5.4 Hinterland

The definition of hinterlands for the EUS reports has normally been conducted in a relatively simplistic fashion. Firstly using Bracton's theoretical measurement of  $6\frac{2}{3}$  miles as the distance within which a new market could be considered to provide direct competition to an existing market.<sup>192</sup> An alternative has been calculated using Thiessen polygons. The latter have just taken into account the markets towns which were clearly successful and which survived into the post medieval period. The Thiessen polygons are likely to give a closer definition of the area in which the town had the dominant impact but the former should provide a guide as to the widest hinterland from which the town will have derived the most of its trade. These theoretical constructs will of course have been substantially influenced by the road pattern. They will also have been affected by physical topography and land use, though in Northamptonshire, unlike upland counties, these are likely to have been relatively limited in their impact.

The hinterland of Oundle market can also be judged in two other ways, by the places from which shop and stall holders came and from which all those attending the market came. However, particularly with regard to the latter, there is in the medieval period a significant problem in distinguishing immigration to the town from merely attendance at the market and

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<sup>187</sup> Account Roll, PRO, SC6, Henry VIII, 2777.

<sup>188</sup> NRO, ML116.

<sup>189</sup> NRO, ML117.

<sup>190</sup> Brewers and typlers: 1520-1: 8 brewers & 18 typlers; 1535-6: 18; 1536-7: 16; 1538-9: 12. NRO, Polebrook Hundred Court Rolls.

<sup>191</sup> Quarter Sessions records.

<sup>192</sup> The issue is discussed briefly in the Northamptonshire context by Goodfellow, 1987, 305.

fair. The evidence for 1292 is of particular importance, because of its early date. There were stall and shop holders in 1292 who came from the nearby villages of Wadenhoe, Stoke Doyle and Brigstock; from the market village of Kings Clyffe and from the town of Rothwell.<sup>193</sup> In 1453-4 three stalls held by a smith from Glatton<sup>194</sup> and in 1471-2 one stall had recently been held by John Grene of Stamford. In 1491-2 stalls were held by tenants from Weldon, Gidding and Lowick, while former tenants came from Benefield, Stanion, Brigstock and Titchmarsh.<sup>195</sup> In 1516-17 tenants came from Weldon and Lowick and one formerly from Gidding. In 1542 they were from Benefield, Stanion, Warmington and Lowick.<sup>196</sup> It is likely in most if not all these cases these were genuinely traders from other places attending the market on a weekly basis, presumably as one in a circuit of local markets they frequented during the week.

In 1292 there were 29 people, that is about 25% of the names recorded in the proceedings of the portmanmote and including the stall holders who had names indicating origins from other settlements. Many of these will have probably been persons attending the market or fair from those villages but some, such as those from London and Fakenham(?) must surely represent immigrants.<sup>197</sup>

### 3.6 INDUSTRY

Establishing the composition of trades and industries present in Oundle in the medieval period is difficult because so few of the trades are recorded in the documentary sources. Of the 52 tenants holding burgages by the charter of 1214-22 only 12 trades are recorded (>20%).<sup>198</sup> Of the 116 names recorded in the market court records of 1292 there were 19 trades (<20%).<sup>199</sup> These major sources and the other medieval and early post medieval documents do however give a general idea of the range of trades practised in the town:

The earliest significant concentration of trades is in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century with the cloth industry. In 1214-22 there was a feltmaker, fuller, weaver, woolman. King notes the significance of this compared to the absence of any such evidence from the related source recording trades in Peterborough.<sup>200</sup> By the late 13<sup>th</sup> century it seems possible that the industry had fallen into decline in Oundle for in 1292 only one person is named who is in any way related to the cloth industry, and that tunic maker involved in the manufacture of garments not in production of the cloth. Nor is there later evidence of cloth production, although not surprisingly a draper was present in the town in the earlier 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>201</sup> In

<sup>193</sup> 16d Geoffrey of Wadenhoe, 1 stall; 18d Walter cobbler (sutore) of Stoke, 1 stall; 3/- from John son of John Kipping (?furrier) of Clyve, 1 stall for life which his father had; 12d from John son of William butcher of Benefield, 1 stall which his father William had; 10/- from Simon of Rothwell for 1 shop for life which Hugh Earnold had; ? from John son of Richard of Brigstock for 1 stall for life which Mathew of Brigstock had.

<sup>194</sup> John Barbour, a smith from Glatton held 3 stalls in the market recently William Lymour, at will 7/- per annum. Court Roll, NRO B.15.79.

<sup>195</sup> Wm Johnson of Weldon; Robt Button of Giddyng; former holder of another Richard Archer of Benyfeld; John Grainger of Stanion; former John Henyngton of Brigstock; former John Okam of Tichmarsh; Richard Peke of Lufwyk.

<sup>196</sup> 2 shops: Edward Browne of Stamford; stall: richard Archer of Benefield; John Granger of Stanion; Richard Dobbes of Warmington; Richard Peke of Lowick

<sup>197</sup> Aldwinkle, Apethorp, Ashton, Benefield (2), Brigstock, Bulwick, Kings Cliffe, Crowthorpe, Deene, Fagenham (Fakenham?), Glatton, Kibworth, Kimbolton, Lilford, London, Lyveden, Melding, Milham, Milton, Nareford, Northampton, Papley, Raunds, Rothwell(2), Stanford, Stoke Doyle, Wadenhoe.

<sup>198</sup> 2 masons, smith, baker, saucer, gate-keeper, skinner, feltmaker, fuller, weaver, woolman, carpenter.

<sup>199</sup> Trades recorded in the town in 1292 : baker, brewer, butcher, carpenter, chapman, cobbler, fencer (trickelove), forester, furrier (parmenter), goldsmith, ironmonger, parchment maker, repereeve, smith, spicer, tanner 2, tunicmaker.

<sup>200</sup> King, ....NP&P...

<sup>201</sup> William Stockwell a draper in 1527-8. Selden Society, vol.25, 1910, Select Cases in Star Chamber, vol.2.

1700 an attempt was made to establish the manufacture of serges in Oundle but it was not successful,<sup>202</sup> and in 1777 the cloth industry still did not figure significantly in the trades present in the town.

The leather trade and related trades were represented in the town from 1214-22 but only by one skinner. In 1252,<sup>203</sup> 1260<sup>204</sup> and 1292 there was a parchment maker while in 1292 and 1330 there was a furrier,<sup>205</sup> and in 1292 and 1529 a shoemaker.<sup>206</sup> Also in 1292 there were two tanners or barkers, as there were in 1400<sup>207</sup> and at least one remained in 1527-8,<sup>208</sup> while a tannery was located within the town in 1565 comprising a tenement with various buildings, a yard and the 'Tanne House'. In 1543-4 the glovers in the town were specifically ordered not to dress leather in the town and not to wash the lambskins near the North or Barnwell bridges.<sup>209</sup> The presence of glovers and tanners in the list of tolls in the market in 1565 is also probably significant as the only industrial group represented.<sup>210</sup> It seems that if any industry replaced the wool industry in the town in the later medieval and post medieval period it was the leather industry. In 1777 the leather related industry was still the most important. Although there were still 6 glovers, shoemaking had begun to provide the largest number of workers though still only 9. There were also 1 tanner, 1 whitower, 1 currier and 3 fellmongers. A tannery still existed in the town in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>211</sup>

Despite the substantial iron industry in Rockingham Forest during the medieval period, and unlike the adjacent Roman small town of Ashton centuries before, there was no significant industrial production from pig iron produced by the iron bloomeries just a few miles to the north and west.<sup>212</sup> The ironmonger of 1292, the smith recorded in 1214-22, 1292, 1527-8<sup>213</sup> and the smith and the iron farrier recorded in 1565 are no more than might be expected in any small town.

There was no large scale quarrying activity in Oundle at any time in the medieval or post medieval period. That which did take place was generally of a very modest scale and seems largely to have been for the town itself. In 1565 there was a five acre plot of Burystead demesne immediately to the west of the town being 17 lands and lees and containing '*A great mortar pit used by the lord's tenants to take clay for mortar for their houses*'. There was also in 1565 a small clay pit at west end of Northbridge furlong on an half acre strip of lees held by William Everall, next to Dwell Wong furlong. Some quarrying was also apparently conducted at times in the open field without permission. Hence in 1453-4 two tenants were fined for digging pits in the common.<sup>214</sup> This had already been occurring in 1295 when Reginald Shakelok, John Ernold, Anthony Leving and Juliana Fithion made quarries on their

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<sup>202</sup> VCH, p.88.

<sup>203</sup> George le Parcheminer re a message and rood in Oundle at 8d rent. Feet of Fines, Henry III, case 173, file 38, no.619; VCH

notes.

<sup>204</sup> Ralph le Parchemyner re mes and 7 acres in Oundle. Feet of Fines, 45 Henry III, case 174, file 45, no.789; VCH notes.

<sup>205</sup> Thomas le Parmenter, Court of Castor: Hundred of Huxloe: Bridges notes, c.22: BL Cot.Vesp.xxi, f.42b.

<sup>206</sup> John Day, NRO, Court Roll, PDCCR E53.

<sup>207</sup> John Hegger, barker and William of Leyghton, barker.

<sup>208</sup> Robert Boloks, Selden Society, vol.25, 1910, Select Cases in Star Chamber, vol.2.

<sup>209</sup> Polebrook Hundred Court, NRO, Montagu old box 21, no.13.

<sup>210</sup> Survey of the Manors of Oundle and Biggin, NRO ML116 & 117.

<sup>211</sup> Inclosure Award.

<sup>212</sup> Foard, G., Agriculture versus industry ....

<sup>213</sup> Thomas Brown, Selden Society, vol.25, 1910, Select Cases in Star Chamber, vol.2.

<sup>214</sup> Court Roll, NRO, B.15.79.

land which they held in villeinage and sold the stone without licence. There was a stone pit leased by Edward Gyles in 1542<sup>215</sup> which may have been the stone quarry in Steple Pit Lees in 1565. At this time there was also a gravel pit on the south west edge of the town in the open field north of Spittle Plot furlong.

The one possible exception, which may have been in production for more than just the tenants of Oundle was the lime kiln, first recorded in 1565. A stone quarry and lime kiln lay at the west end of Kiln Lees, in Brook Furlong in Pepley field, lying next to the cow pasture called Dame Head. It lay between the lords wood called Pepley Wood on the north and the Brigstock highway on the south. This was a plot of *'the lord's wast for a quarre of stone and for a lime killne because the stone is good for lime.'* The quarry and kiln, held by copy of court roll by Henry Henson, were a group of short lees comprising 4 acres.<sup>216</sup> A lime kiln still existed in the manor in 1691<sup>217</sup> and in the earlier 19<sup>th</sup> century a limekiln and quarry still existed in the same area as in 1565, but now to the south of the road.<sup>218</sup> In 1546 lime from Oundle was used in the building of Fotheringhay bridge.<sup>219</sup>

A range of other more generalised trades, to be expected in any town, are recorded in Oundle at various times. What this seems to show is that overall in the early and late 13<sup>th</sup> century, that the town was largely one based on general commerce and craft production to serve the broad needs of its hinterland rather than focussing heavily upon a single industry. This pattern is clearly repeated in 1777 with a wide range of trades being present.

### 3.7 COMMUNICATIONS

#### 3.7.1 Major Routes

Before the 12<sup>th</sup> century the town was probably accessed across the Nene by Basford to the south, leading towards Barnwell and perhaps a ford close to Ashton Mill leading east.

The Abbot further promoted trade in the town by building the north and south bridges. In an enquiry of 1329 it was stated that formerly there had been no common way through Oundle, due to inundation. Therefore the Abbot had built the bridges and causeways and had been granted the toll of the bridges for their maintenance in recognition. The tolls were: *'each sack of wool 2d, each horse 1/2d, bundle on a man's back 1/4d, cartload of merchandise 2d.'*<sup>220</sup> Pontage grants are then recorded in 1352 with regular renewals until 1401.<sup>221</sup>

#### *North Bridge*

The North or Ashton Bridge leads from the town towards Peterborough and to the village of Ashton. This was probably a new construction of the 12<sup>th</sup> century on a new road set out from the market place for the purpose, which was already built up by 1214-22. Previously there was presumably a ford crossing the river close to Ashton mill, to which a road ran from the east end of the town until Inclosure. This will have given access eastward to the main road

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<sup>215</sup> Account Roll of Oundle, PRO, SC6/Henry VIII/2787, m.77.

<sup>216</sup> Survey of the Manors of Oundle and Biggin, NRO ML116 & 117.

<sup>217</sup> VCH, p.92.

<sup>218</sup> OS 1<sup>st</sup> edition 1:10560 map.

<sup>219</sup> RCHME, 1984, *An Inventory of Architectural Monuments in North Northamptonshire*, 75.

<sup>220</sup> Quo Warranto 3 Ed III, 553.

<sup>221</sup> VCH, p.87.

running through the Giddings from London to Stamford via either Wansford Bridge or possibly earlier through Fotheringhay. Leland describes the bridge as of great length, guessing 30 arches, great and small.<sup>222</sup> The bridge was destroyed in 1570 and rebuilt in 1571.<sup>223</sup> It was the subject of major repairs in 1835 and was rebuilt in 1912-14.

In 1565 there was a chapel built on the bridge, on the west side of the river on the north west side of the bridge.<sup>224</sup> In 1300-1 William de Sylkeby was chaplain(?) of Ashton bridge and held the rights to collect alms but was to maintain the bridge from the revenues he received.<sup>225</sup>

In 1307 specific payments appear in the manorial accounts for stonework repair to the bridge.<sup>226</sup> Pontage grants specifically relating to Ashton bridge are recorded in 1352 for 5 years on things for sale coming to the town and passing over Ashton bridge, for the repair of that bridge. Further grants were in 1359-60, 1377-81, 1361-4, and in 1369 for 3 years to bailiffs and good men of Oundle for the repair of Ashton bridge.<sup>227</sup>

In 1494 Robert Wyatt, who also endowed the Guild at Oundle, left 13/4d in his will for the maintenance the bridge,<sup>228</sup> and in 1565 there were 1.5 acres of land in the open field called 'bridge lands' for the upkeep of the bridge.

### ***South Bridge***

South or Crowthorpe Bridge lay immediately to the east of the watermill, at the south end of Mill Lane. This road was probably in existence by the late 10<sup>th</sup> century when the mill is first recorded, but the bridge did not exist at that time, having been added, probably in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, probably replacing Basford as the main point of entry to the town from the south.

Leland described it as of five great arches and two small but revised this with 16.<sup>229</sup> It existed by 1312, built of stone and mortar, and although it had no chapel, two crosses stood upon the bridge.<sup>230</sup> It is shown in elevation on the 1716 map of Barnwell.<sup>231</sup> It is described by VCH as bridge of six round arches '*of no architectural interest*'.<sup>232</sup>

### ***Warrens Bridge***

Warren's bridge is described in 1565 as a little stone bridge that lay on the road to Stoke Doyle, the main road along the west side of the valley.

## **3.8 LAND USE**

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<sup>222</sup> >I rode ovar a stone bridge, throughe the whiche (Nene) passith; it is cawllid the North Bridge, beinge of a great lengthe, by cawse men may passe when the river overflowith, the medowes lying on every side on a great leavel thereabout. I gessid that there were about a 30 arches of smaule and great that bare up this cawsey. =Toulmin-Smith, p.4.

<sup>223</sup> NRL, Newspaper Cuttings.

<sup>224</sup> NRO ML116.

<sup>225</sup> NRO ...2388.

<sup>226</sup> NRO, FM233.

<sup>227</sup> Cal. Patent Rolls.

<sup>228</sup> Bridges notes, e8, 13, 28.

<sup>229</sup> Toulmin-Smith, p.3.

<sup>230</sup> Cross, Charles (Ed.), 1896, *Coroners' Roll 1262-1413*, p.64

<sup>231</sup> NRO Map 1413

<sup>232</sup> VCH, p.85.

### **3.8.1 Woodland**

In 1086 at 3 leagues by 2 leagues Oundle's woodland was almost the largest in the county. Although it was encompassed within the royal forest of Rockingham in the early medieval period it had been exempted from forest jurisdiction by the late 12<sup>th</sup> century, during the period of large scale assarting in Biggin by the Abbot. The woods were an important resource within the agricultural economy of the town, with tenants having rights of pannage for pigs in most of the woods. The history of the woodland in Oundle lordship and its environs has however been discussed elsewhere and so will not be further reviewed here.<sup>233</sup>

### **3.8.2 Open Fields & Inclosure**

Oundle was divided by 1400 into three Great Fields: Inham Field, Howe Field and to the east of the town, Holm Field. By 1565 the three fields were known as Howhill field, Pexley Field and St. Scythe's Field. The system was finally inclosed by Act of Parliament of 1807.

Oundle is one of a distinct group of manors where a significant part of the open field demesne was largely consolidated, including a large block, partly enclosed by 1565, to the north of the manor site. A significant amount of the free land was also concentrated in the same way. This may have significance in terms of the origin and development of the field system and indeed of the township.

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<sup>233</sup> Foard, 2001.

## **C INDUSTRIAL**

### **1.0 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT**

The primary function of Oundle was as a market and commercial town. Leland writing in 1715 described Oundle as '*The towne hath a very good market and is al buildid of stone*'<sup>234</sup>. In 1894 Kelly's Trade Directory described '*Oundle a corruption of 'Avondale' is a market and union town*' before continuing with a list of the legal/administrative roles of the town. 19<sup>th</sup> century trade directories indicate that market day was on a Thursday, although before the Improvement Act of 1825 the market had traditionally been held on a Saturday. This Act also brought about a change to the working of the market, with stalls and booths being set up each market day and provided for the demolition of the Butter Cross and Shambles around the area. In 1826 a new town hall was established in the centre of the market place, which also functioned as a butter market. There were also four annual fairs for sheep, horses, cows, stock and cheese held throughout the year<sup>235</sup>. The census of 1861 would appear to have fallen on the date of one the fairs as the population of this date was 3,040 compared to 2,913 in 1851 and 2,868 in 1871.

The retail industry in Oundle was substantial - in 1744 6 butchers, 5 bakers, 4 grocers, 9 innkeepers, 7 tailors, 3 hairdressers, 2 dealers, an ironmonger, a fishmonger and a hatter were listed. These numbers were comparative with retailers in Daventry, Kettering and Wellingborough at this date - indicating that in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Oundle was one of the major market centres of the county. The town clearly benefited from the large number of gentry houses in the area including Deene, Lilford, Fermyn Woods and Apethorpe; this ensured that there were substantial numbers of good quality shops.<sup>5</sup> The retail functions in the town were many and varied there were beer retailers, booksellers, builders merchants, clothiers, confectioners, wine and spirit merchants as well as the usual grocers, bakers, butchers etc. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century these numbers were not comparable to Daventry, Wellingborough, Kettering etc, nor were there such varied or specialised functions. This was primarily due to an expansion of these other towns. Census statistics for 1851 and 1891<sup>6</sup> indicate that retailers were living all over the town - this would indicate that some individuals had separate home and work addresses. Analysis of Kelly's Trade Directory for 1924 (where entries are based on business address) indicates that the vast majority of retailers were located in West Street (18) and Market Place (7) with lesser numbers in North Street (6) and New Street (2). There were a large number of public houses and inns in Oundle - 15 are mentioned in the day books of John Clifton<sup>7</sup> and 17 are listed in trade directories of 1830 and 1849; this declines to 13 by 1894, but rises again to 15 in 1924. These inns and public houses must relate to the market function of the town because Oundle was not one of the major coaching towns, although there were regular coaches to London in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The town of Oundle also appeared to have a large number of professionals. Trade directories consistently list three banks, although these changed their names over time and included The Oundle Commercial Bank, J and T Smith, Stamford, Spalding and Boston Banking Company

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<sup>234</sup>Leland 'Itinerary' 1715

<sup>235</sup>25th February, Whit Monday, 12th October, 21st August.

<sup>6</sup>It should be noted that the census statistics for 1851 were incomplete.

<sup>7</sup>ZA 8731/8476 Day Books of John Clifton 1763 / 1784

and York and Co's banks.<sup>8</sup> Other professionals listed by trade directories include accountants, auctioneers, dentists, estate agents, teachers / school masters / mistresses, solicitors, surgeons, surveyors, police inspectors etc. This would indicate that Oundle was a thriving centre in the 19<sup>th</sup> century despite its slowly declining population in the latter years of the century.

The economic basis of the town was clearly commercial rather than industrial; there appears to have been a very limited amount of industry in the town throughout the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century Sir Matthew Dudley is credited with trying to establish a weaving industry in the town for the manufacture of 'serges, tammies and shallons' and even went to the extent of bringing weavers over from Flanders. The attempt did not succeed and the industry died with Sir Dudley<sup>9</sup>. There were no weavers listed in the Militia Lists of 1777 (although there was a stocking weaver and a staymaker). The Militia Lists do, however, indicate that there were 10 shoe makers in the town which was slightly less than for Daventry (15), Earls Barton (11), Irthlingborough (16), Kettering (14), Raunds (16) and Towcester (15) and of course substantially less than the 111 listed for Wellingborough. There were clearly more shoemakers than the numbers required to service a local market. The industry did not, however, develop to any great extent in the town, in contrast to the vast majority of urban settlements in Northamptonshire. Boot and shoe makers were listed in the census returns of the period (the numbers have not been collated), and Kelly's Leather Trade directories for the county indicate that there were 6 people employed in the industry (as makers, warehouse and dealers) in 1894 and 7 in 1902. It is very uncertain where they would have worked as there were clearly no large factories<sup>10</sup> and no clearly defined standard shoemaker's workshops in the town. The industry must have carried out in the large number of small outhouse buildings located around the town.

The main industry was brewing and there were at least four breweries operating in Oundle in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. These included Union Brewery (1835-1853), Anchor Brewery (1854-1904), T Barnes brewery (demolished 1883) and Smiths Brewery (1775-1962), in addition to a large number of maltings throughout the town centre and in close proximity to the River Nene. In John Smith's Day Books he indicates that the former tan yards in the town were giving way to maltings and breweries in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>11</sup> Smith's brewery in particular was influential. The brewery was in operation between 1775 and 1962 and the majority of public houses in the town were owned by the brewery. John Smith gained a wider local influence and purchased the Rectory as well as the title of the Lord of the Rectory Manor.

A large number of small, individual traders also worked in the town. In the Militia Lists of 1777 there were six glovers, three fellmongers, three watchmakers, two matmakers, two wheelwrights, seven tailors and one each of a hempmaker, tanner, tuner, currier, cooper, basketmaker, ropemaker, sadler, miller, gunsmith and whittawer. The situation was similar in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with various tradesmen including basketmaker, bicycle manufacturers, currier, cooper, engineer, glazier, motor engineer, upholsterer, printer being listed in various trade directories in fairly small numbers; some of the more obscure trades included heraldic

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<sup>8</sup>There are currently 2 banks in Oundle whose buildings date from the 19th century - the Nat West Bank on Market Place and Barclays

<sup>9</sup>C S Law, Oundle's Storey, The Sheldon Press, London, 1922

<sup>10</sup>Only manufacturer listed was Cotton Robert Chas and Sons, Market Place in Kelly's Trade Directory of 1924, but the building has not been located from map / fieldwork evidence.

<sup>11</sup>A Osborn and D Parker, Oundle in the 18th century, Spiegel Press, 1994

painter (1849) and a paper hanger (1894). The building industry was clearly thriving in the town from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards, with a large number of buildings dating from the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. John Clifton provides a great deal of information about the building industry in his Day Books, as this was his trade<sup>12</sup>. In 1777 4 carpenters and 4 slaters were listed in the trade directories; this does not appear a great number compared to many of the other towns in the county. 1777 may, however, be unrepresentative as Alice Osborn and David Parker in their book *'Oundle in the 18<sup>th</sup> century'* claim that there were a large number of joiners, carpenters, wood tuners, slaters and masons listed in late 18<sup>th</sup> century militia lists.

Agriculture was clearly not a significant element of the economy of the town. The enclosure of the parish came very late in 1811. The 1777 Militia Lists and later trade directories list very few farmers in many cases there were just four for the entire parish. This would appear to reflect the urban nature of the settlement.

The early 19<sup>th</sup> century was a significant period for the physical development of the town with Parliamentary Enclosure occurring in 1811 and the 1825 Act for *'lighting, watching, paving, cleansing, regulating and otherwise improving the town of Oundle in the county of Northampton'*<sup>13</sup>. The reason for the latter Act was that *'the town of Oundle ....is an ancient town and large and populous and a place of considerable thoroughfare and the several streets, lanes, entries and other public passages and places within the same are not sufficiently paved, cleansed, lighted or watched and are subject to various nuisances and other public inconveniences'*. The Act provided for several major changes within the town including a body of Improvement Commissioners was set up, the market day was changed from Saturday to Thursday, the dates / functions of the annual fairs were changed. There was also the provision for removing various buildings around the town including the Butter Cross and the Butchers Shambles and there was a long, detailed list relating to provisions for gas, lighting, street cleaning. The Act also enabled the commissioners to require house-owners to alter buildings including erecting hoards, making doors and gates open inwards etc. The Act would appear to have been a success as in 1849 Whellan's Trade Directory described Oundle as *'A clean, regular and compact market town'*. The town today, with its many buildings dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, is clearly very well maintained and of great aesthetic value.

One of the major developments to occur within Oundle in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was the massive expansion of Laxton Grammar School. The school had been founded in 1556 by Sir William Laxton Knight for the instruction of boys in Latin and Greek. Boys from Oundle were taken on as free scholars and others were taken on as boarders. The school became associated with the Grocer's Company in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and underwent a massive expansion. The original building was knocked down in 1852 and a new structure built. A large number of buildings were erected around the town in the 1880s to the early 1900s including the main school-house, great hall, memorial chapel, boarding houses, sanatorium and laundry. The expansion of the school was to have a significant impact on the development of the town. The physical development of the school required the demolition of a large number of buildings including a brewery, yard, public houses and domestic dwellings and brought about a considerable change to the topography of the town. The school must also have had a significant economic impact on the town; census statistics would need to be

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<sup>12</sup>A Osborn and D Parker, *Oundle in the 18th century*, Spiegel Press, 1994

<sup>13</sup>NRO, MSP9

analysed in order to determine the number of people from the local area directly employed in the school as teachers, maintenance workers, matrons of boarding houses etc. The presence of the school in the town would also have boosted the retail and commercial well being of Oundle. It is clear however, that the development of the school did not bring about an expansion in the size of the town as the population went through a gradual decline from 2,953 in 1881 to 2,654 in 1921.

There were substantial transport links to Oundle in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The River Nene was made navigable from Peterborough to Oundle and Thrapston in the 1730's and to Northampton in 1761. The Peterborough, Oundle and Thrapston Road was turnpiked in 1753-4 and the Oundle and Weldon Road in 1794. Oundle Station was established on the Blisworth to Peterborough line of the London and NorthWestern railway in 1845. None of these transport links appears to have had a major effect on the economic or physical development of the town in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Industrial buildings, malshouses in particular, were located to take advantage of the river and the town would clearly have benefited from the improved road conditions. It was not, however, until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that the town began to expand northwards in the direction of the river and railway station. The town was clearly well established during the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and although the improved transport links would presumably have helped in the settlement retaining its status as a town they did not bring about any large scale economic change or development.

## **2.0 TOPOGRAPHICAL DEVELOPMENT**

The study of the development of the urban topography of Oundle is facilitated by the survival of a number of early maps, plans and deeds. The earliest surviving maps of the town are the enclosure map of 1810, the tithe map of 1845 and a plan of Oundle in 1824. A number of maps of particular individual estates and a calendar of deeds relating to the Oundle School properties also remain. The Austell Survey of 1565 would also be a useful source for the study of the town as the settlement is described in great detail frontage by frontage and includes detailed measurements. The original document is much earlier than the period considered here, but lords of the manor in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century annotated the names of their tenants in the margins, thus allowing for a reconstruction of the town in the later period.<sup>14</sup>

Map evidence indicates that the town changed little over the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and indeed it is claimed that '*The layout of the town is mainly medieval and the roads have altered little during the intervening centuries*'<sup>15</sup>. The main change appears to be to the road names and for the purpose of this report I shall use the names on the Ordnance Survey map of 1926. The map of 1810 indicates that West Street, New Street, Market Place, North Street and St O'Syth's Lane had already been substantially developed with buildings lining all of these streets. Each of these roads were characterised by having long plots of land reaching back to Milton Road/ Blackpot Lane, East Road and South Road. At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century these plots were only occupied along the frontages and one of the prime developments of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries was infilling along back plots. Infilling took two distinctive forms; the development of numerous courts, yards and alleyways including

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<sup>14</sup> Oundle History Society pers comm

<sup>15</sup> A Osborn and D Parker, Oundle in the 18th century, 1994

Inkerman Yard, Setchells Yard, Victoria Yard, Danford Yard and Drummingwell Yard and the development of the back roads as frontages in their own right. This latter development was much more limited and by 1926 there were comparatively few buildings along South Road and East Road, although Oundle School had made extensive use of Milton Road to the north of the town. There is a very good survival rate for buildings in Oundle and the vast majority of buildings in the centre of the town are listed buildings of 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century date. The buildings on West Street, Market Place and North Street are mainly high status structures of domestic, commercial, religious, educational and corporate function.

There are very few lower-status houses remaining in the central area of the town around West Street, Market Place and North Street, although the various almshouses and the row of picturesque stone cottages with slate roofs on Mill Road are within this category. Lower status housing was concentrated in the numerous yards in the town, but the majority of these buildings have now been demolished. There were also a number of small scale cottages along the back plots such as South Road and East Road. There was an area called 'Rotten Row' in the town which was located in the area off Station Road; this was used in a similar way to a workhouse. Town houses were built in the area by the overseers of the poor to replace the 15 houses that had been located throughout the town. By 1799 the houses had disappeared from the map, although the name continued to be used into the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>16</sup>. Outward expansion of the town has been fairly limited; development beyond the core of the town was prohibited until after the enclosure act of 1811. Such expansion as did occur was in the north end of the town along Benefield Road, Glapthorn Road and Station Road. The development along Benefield Road was the earliest with a large number of stone houses as well as some later terraced and semidetached houses; this would appear to be a major area for small-scale industrial works (with a large number of outhouses/workshops).<sup>17</sup> Glapthorn Road, by comparison, enjoyed far greater prestige with a number of large 19<sup>th</sup> century villa houses occupied by some of the elite of the town.<sup>18</sup> Rock Road and Gordon Road, leading from Glapthorn Road, were developments of classic 19<sup>th</sup> century terraced houses. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Station Road was primarily industrial characterised by buildings relating to railway and river, a number of maltings and the cattle market. The only area of development to the southern extremity of the town were the villa houses and smaller terraces on the corner of South Road/Herne Road/St O'Syth's Lane. The large, mixed urban developments of late 19<sup>th</sup> century date, which are characteristic of many towns in the county, were not developed in Oundle.

The major impact on the development of the topography of the town in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century was the continued expansion of Oundle School. The rebuilding of the school led to the construction of some very large, fine Victorian buildings by the architects John Sebastian Gwilt and Arthur Blomfield. The creation of these buildings, which form a distinctive part of the townscape today, required the demolition of a number of former structures particularly in New Street, Church Street and North Street thus wiping out large elements of the former topography of the town. The School also contributed significantly to the northward development of the town and the re-use of many pre-existing buildings as boarding houses and class rooms for Oundle School all contribute to the sense of physical domination of the town by the school.

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<sup>16</sup>CS Law, Oundle's Story, 1922.

<sup>18</sup>1891 census indicates that there was an accountant, maths and science teacher and curate of Oundle in the area

The major change in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has been the demolition of small-scale structures to be replaced with modern houses/flats and other buildings. This has occurred mainly in the numerous small yards and alleyways in the central part of the town in addition to portions of land between Black Pot Lane/North Street and St O'Syth's Lane/East Road. However, the number of demolitions in the town have been minimal compared to many other towns and the vast majority of buildings shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1926 still survive.

### **3.0 THEMATIC ANALYSIS**

#### **3.1 INDUSTRY**

Industry in Oundle was of a fairly limited nature, involving small tradesmen rather than any major industrial outlets. There are many buildings located throughout the town which have not been linked to any particular function, although they were probably used for agriculture, industry or storage. These structures are of both brick and stone, and in one case corrugated iron construction and range from very small outbuildings for domestic use to very large structures. Buildings of particular interest include two-storey, single-cell structures to the rear of houses on Basset Place, these structures have one door at ground floor level, one very small window at the rear of the upper storey and no other features, they may have been shoemakers workshops. There was clearly a building industry in the town with a brickworks and limekiln/quarry being located to the north of the town along the Glapthorn Road which have both now been built over by modern housing.

##### **3.1.1 Malting / Brewing industry**

The major industry in Oundle was malting and brewing. There are a large number of surviving buildings relating to the brewing industry. The Anchor Brewery on South Road is currently standing empty with the potential for good surviving remains and there are numerous extant malthouses throughout the town (on South Road, North Street/East Road and Station Road). The majority of these have been converted into domestic residences, but the example on North Street/East Road (one of a very few unconverted malthouses in the county) has only recently been sold for redevelopment and there is a recording condition on any development work. The largest and most influential brewery in the town >Smith's Brewery= has, however, been demolished and the area redeveloped.

##### **3.1.2 Boot & Shoe industry**

The boot and shoe industry in Oundle was clearly of a very limited nature. There were no factories identified on early Ordnance Survey maps and the one classic factory building with three north-facing lights on land to the south of West Street was a Totetctors production works post-dating 1926. It was not possible to identify the use of this building as it is now out of use. A possible group of boot and shoe workshops of single-storey construction with chimneys lie behind terraces on Benefield Road, although only one was seen and this was from the rear. The boot and shoe industry in Oundle, such as it was, must have been conducted in some of the numerous unidentified buildings discussed above.

### **3.1.3 Weaving industry**

There were attempts to establish a weaving industry in Oundle, as discussed above. It is possible that the number of three-storey houses in Oundle with a disproportionately small upper storey may be houses relating to this industry.

### **3.1.4 Other industry**

There were other smaller industries operating in the town at different dates. The early workhouse had a stocking factory for its inmates, which was possibly located in the large stone building to the rear of Victoria Yard. At a later date a garage for the building and repairing of motorcycles and cars was established on Station Road and is now in use as bus depot.<sup>19</sup>

## **3.2 AGRICULTURAL**

Although agriculture was not a major element of life in Oundle there are a number of surviving structures relating to farming and milling in the parish. The remaining farm buildings are located on the outskirts of the town on Stoke Doyle Road, Benefield Road and Glapthorn Road (Herne Lodge to the south east of the town was not checked as part of the field survey, but would appear to be a farm complex). The farm on Stoke Doyle Road is still in use. There are, as discussed above, a number of outbuildings throughout the town which may have had an agricultural function.

There were also two mills in the parish, which were consistently listed in trade directories for the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The windmill on Glapthorn Road was a stone tower mill built in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and demolished in 1964 and a stone house on the same plot of land, which is likely to have been the mill house, is still in existence. Oundle Mill to the south of the town on the River Nene has been demolished, but Barnwell mill in close proximity to the town has been converted to a public house and restaurant.

## **3.3 HOUSING**

There are many houses in Oundle dating from the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries; the vast majorities are of stone, although there are examples of brick-built houses including terraces and villa houses. There are many listed buildings in Oundle; the vast majority of structures on West Street, New Street and North Street are listed and there are additional listed buildings on St O'Syth's Road, Mill Road, Stoke Hill and Benefield Road. Many of these do not have a function ascribed to them and are therefore assumed to be domestic houses. The buildings range from rows of small single or two-storey cottages, as are to be found on Mill Road, North Street and of course the almshouses in both North Street and Church Street, to very large and magnificent town houses of 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century date.

There are a number of later 19<sup>th</sup> century villa-style houses on Milton Road and Glapthorn Road and a selection of terraced houses of stone, white/cream brick and red brick located at the extremities of the town on Benefield Road, Rock Road/New Road/Gordon Road, East Road and Bassett Place. The older structures outnumber these to a considerable extent. A number of smaller dwellings in the numerous yards and alleyways in the town have been demolished, thus the surviving building stock in Oundle is not representative of all the types of housing in the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

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<sup>19</sup> Oundle History Society pers comm.

### **3.4 COMMERCE**

Oundle had a distinctive commercial role throughout the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and this is reflected in the remaining buildings. The market was of central importance and following the remodelling of the market place by the Act of 1825 the area has remained largely intact. The cattle market to the north of the town on Station Road has been demolished and the area is now a supermarket and car park. There are a number of purpose-built commercial buildings. The town hall, which was erected in 1826 by the lord of the manor, is still standing and used by a number of small businesses, the Post Office in New Street (dated 1903) is still in use and there are two early bank frontages which are currently occupied by Barclays and NatWest.

#### **3.4.1 Shops**

There are a relatively large number of shop frontages of 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century date in Oundle. These are concentrated in West Street and Market Place (within the Conservation Area for Oundle) and the vast majority are inserted into earlier buildings which are listed and therefore have a good level of protection.

#### **3.4.2 Public houses and inns**

Public houses and inns were also prolific with between 13 and 17 public houses listed in the town in all sources used for the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries; it is likely that these may have changed name and location over time. Of the buildings which it has been possible to locate three have been demolished, five have been converted to other uses, one (the Railway Hotel) is currently standing derelict and the remaining four (The Talbot Inn, Rose and Crown, The Angel, The Ship and George Inn) all remain in use as public houses. Eight public houses or former public houses are listed buildings, including the Talbot Inn, originally called the Tabret Inn, the oldest public house in the town (established in 1552 and rebuilt in 1626) and is a grade 1 listed building reputed to have been built using stone from Fotheringhay Castle.

### **3.5 TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS**

From the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Oundle's transport links developed steadily. The River Nene was made navigable in the 1730s, the road system was turnpiked in the 1750s and 1790s and the London and NorthWestern railway was constructed in 1845.

The River Nene was made navigable to Oundle in 1730, to Thrapston in 1737 and ultimately to Northampton in 1760 and there are a number of structures relating to the river transport including boathouses, Oundle Wharf and associated buildings. There are two elaborate stone bridges which cross the river, North Bridge and South Bridge; the former has been rebuilt several times (1571, 1835 and 1912-14) and is a listed building and the latter is both listed and scheduled. It is primarily of stone with a small element of rebuilding in brick.

The road networks to Thrapston / Peterborough (turnpiked in 1753-4) and Weldon (1794) are intact and still in use. The road bridges over the Nene are still in use as discussed above, but the toll bars on both of these bridges and along the Benefield Road have now gone.

The London and North Western Railway was constructed 2 mile to the north east of the town in 1845 following the Act of Parliament of 1843. The railway line is now disused and the bypass now runs along part of the alignment. The railway station, an impressive building of

Ashley stone, and the Railway Hotel are still in existence. The former has been converted to a house and the latter is currently standing out of use and derelict. The ancillary buildings such as goods shed and cattle pens have been demolished and the area is now a modern housing estate.

### **3.6 UTILITIES**

The gasworks in the town were provided for in the Town Improvement Act of 1825. The original gas works were located on the north west side of Black Pot Lane/Station Road; these were later replaced with a larger site to the north-east of East Road. The former area has now been demolished and modern houses occupy the site and the latter is a small-scale industrial estate. It was not possible to determine whether there were any remains relating to the works. The waterworks/pumping station, of decorative brick design, on Barnwell Road are still standing, and in partial use. The hydraulic ram for the sewage works along the same stretch of road has been replaced with a modern utility building. On the Ordnance Survey map of 1926 there is an 'Electric Power Station' on the playing field for the school. This has now been incorporated into workshops for the school.

### **3.7 HEALTH AND WELFARE**

There were a variety of administrative buildings and structures in Oundle; the earliest would appear to have been the parish workhouse, which was purchased in 1720 as a way of reducing the cost of providing poor relief and thus reducing the size of the annual levy. John Clifton mentioned this workhouse in his day books '*The Town is eased of two Thirds of their Charge, and yet I assure you the Poor are provided for in a plentiful manner, and have everything necessary or convenient in Life*'. Secondary sources indicate that part of the workhouse is still standing in the form of a 17<sup>th</sup> century L-shaped building, which was subsequently the Victoria Inn Public House and is now a domestic residence. There is also a large, substantial stone built structure to the rear of Victoria Yard which is believed to have been part of the original workhouse, perhaps housing the stocking factory in which the inmates were employed<sup>20</sup>. It is likely that this was part of the building where the master of the workhouse lived. The Oundle Union Workhouse was erected in 1837 and covered 37 parishes, including 5 outside the county border. The workhouse was to the north of the town along the Glaphorn Road; it became the Glaphorn Road Hospital in the 1930's and continued as such until the 1970's when the main building was demolished. A number of ancillary buildings do, however, survive. The workhouse chapel was erected in 1896 by John Ninian Comper is still standing; it has now been converted to a house. The workhouse infirmary (a red brick structure dated 1900) is now used as 'Fletton House - Youth and Residential House'. A small red brick building associated with the workhouse (which possibly served as an office) is now in use by Oundle Library. To the north of the workhouse is a building shown on maps of 1900 and 1926 as >Sanatorium= this was constructed for use by Oundle School and is now in use for housing staff at the school.

Oundle had its own Police Station and Fire Brigade; the former was erected in 1877 on the corner of Stoke Hill and Mill Road. It comprised a magistrate's room, dwellings for an inspector, a married and single constable, and four cells. The building is still standing, and is being renovated with a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund it is to be used as Town Council offices, a registry office, and part of Oundle Museum and craft workshops. The Fire Brigade

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<sup>20</sup>Oundle History Society pers comm

was established in 1844 and consisted of 3 officers and 13 men; the Fire Station was in the parish churchyard and has now been demolished.

There was an 'Infectious Diseases Hospital' on the western outskirts of the town along the Stoke Doyle Road. This was not visited as part of the field visit, but map evidence appears to indicate that a number of the buildings are still in existence and appear to be in use as private domestic houses. The Municipal Cemetery, which was established in 1859, was also to the west of the town and remain intact with its lodge and chapels for Nonconformist and Church of England worshippers.

Only one building is shown on early Ordnance Survey maps as offices for the Urban District Council. This was a small, stone, single-storey structure on the corner of St Osyth's Lane and East Road. It is a very unprepossessing building, which has now been converted to a house. It would seem probable that there was a more prestigious Urban District Council elsewhere in the town in the early years of its existence. The list description mentions offices for Oundle Urban District Council in an 18<sup>th</sup> century building in North Street; however, these are likely to have been in use at a later date.

### **3.8 RELIGION**

The Church of St Peter was the medieval parish church in Oundle. A second Church of England building, Jesus Church was erected on July 29<sup>th</sup>, 1879; it was built by the Lord of the Manor and was on the site of a chapel dedicated to St Thomas a Becket. It is located on a small island in the centre of West Street, Mill Road, South Road and Benefield Road. Both buildings are still in use as churches, although both have been considerably modernised inside. In contrast chapels for the Independent/Congregational, Methodist/Wesleyan and Baptist denominations are no longer in use as religious buildings. The Congregational Chapel, a large Gothic structure erected in 1864 on the site of the former chapel (built in the 1690's) has been converted to Randolph Stahl Theatre. The Manse House next to the chapel still appears to be in domestic usage. The Methodist Chapel on West Street was erected in 1842 and renovated in 1923, with some unusual detailing on the frontage of the building. The structure is now in use as Oundle Video Store. The previous building was located in New Street and was presumably demolished as part of the expansion of Oundle School. The Baptist Chapel in West Street dates from 1852 and is of very basic construction with a central doorway and two large flanking windows. It is a listed building, but has now been converted into a house and has lost all of its internal features.

### **3.9 EDUCATION**

The history of educational provision in Oundle is a complex one and has been the subject of a number of books. Rev Nicholas Latham, the rector of Barnwell St Andrew, founded Latham's Hospital and Blue Coat School in 1616 for the education and clothing of 30 poor men's sons. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the school was attended by the sons of artisans and craftsmen. The school was closed down in 1905, but Latham's Hospital still survives as almshouses.

The physical dominance of the town by Oundle School has been discussed in detail above. There are a very large number of surviving buildings relating to Oundle School, although one of the boarding houses and the original sanatorium have been demolished. The majority of these buildings are listed, some were purpose-built for the school and in many cases were architect-designed whilst others have adapted earlier buildings for school

There are also a number of the more usual school buildings found in any small settlement. The National School was established in 1812 and teaching took place in a loft over stables behind the Talbot Inn. In 1842 the school moved to a purpose built structure on Milton Road; this is now in use as Oundle Church of England Primary School. The British School, which was later to become the Council School, was established in 1843 and was located to the rear of West Street off Inkerman Yard. The small stone building is still intact with a plaque on the side of the wall indicating its former function and has now been converted to a house. St Ann's Infant School, which was linked to the Church of England School, was erected in 1862 on the corner of Benefield Road and Milton Road, secondary sources indicate that the building is still standing and is occupied by auto repair firm<sup>21</sup>. In addition there was a school building located on the land between West Street and South Road on the Ordnance Survey map of 1926 this is still in existence, but it was not possible to determine whether it was still in use as a school. It is uncertain what type of school this was, but it seems that it was a local, municipal school rather than a building belonging to Oundle School.

### **3.10 RECREATION**

There appear to have been very few recreational facilities in Oundle in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. A playing field, recreation ground, tennis courts and cricket ground are shown on early Ordnance Survey maps, but is likely that at least some of these belonged to the Oundle School. There are references to a quoit and bowling ground on Herne Road, which has now been built over by modern houses. The only social club was the Victoria Hall on West Street which was built to commemorate the reign of Queen Victoria (the foundation stone was laid on the Coronation Day of King Edward VII - 9th August 1902). The building had a hall, which seated 500 people, a stage, retiring and cloakrooms and a smaller room for meetings. The municipal Victoria Cinema, which operated in the town between 1949 and 1963, was housed in this building. The building is now in use by Oundle Town Council. The Drill Hall on Benefield Road, part of which is now used by Oundle Museum, appears to have been used as social facility, but was not erected until after 1926.

### **3.11 OTHER**

There were a large number of charitable endowments in Oundle in the post-medieval and industrial periods. Laxton's almshouses and grammar school and Latham's Hospital and School were major institution, but Paine's almshouses on West Street also ensured that the poor of Oundle were well catered for.

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<sup>21</sup>Hill P, The Archive Photographs series around Oundle and Thrapaston, Chalford Publishing Comapny, 1997

## **II ASSESSMENT**

### **A PRE MEDIEVAL**

It is a strong probability, supported by the limited archaeological investigation which has so far been carried out, that the Middle Saxon provincial administrative centre and possibly also the monastery were located at the core of the medieval town. The apparent low level of post medieval and modern disturbance over much of this the land around the church, site of manor and rectory defined by the curving boundary, would seem to offer a very high potential for the recovery of archaeological evidence of national importance with regard to the origins and development of the administrative and ecclesiastical system of in the Saxon period. There is also the potential to investigate continuity with Roman occupation and even of earlier, Iron Age activity. Whether such work in the future were to demonstrate continuity or discontinuity of the administrative and ecclesiastical centre between the Middle and the Late Saxon periods either evidence would also be of high importance. This area is therefore clearly of national importance and ranking with the most important archaeological sites in the county. This potential and importance is reinforced by the close association of the Saxon central place with the well preserved and well understood Roman small town at Ashton and the generally very good preservation of the hinterland of the town. This means that the potential for detailed study of the evolution of the whole settlement hierarchy, settlement pattern and land use of the area from at least the Iron Age through to the early post medieval is one of the best anywhere in the county.

### **B MEDIEVAL & POST MEDIEVAL**

#### **1.0 TOWN**

##### **1.1 ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE & SURVIVAL**

**Oundle shows an exceptional quality and range of documentary evidence which can be closely tied to a topographical framework, combined with the relatively low level of later 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century redevelopment over substantial areas of the town and a well preserved hinterland. This means there is far greater potential in Oundle than in probably any other of Northamptonshire's early small towns, to examine in detail the topographical development of the settlement from the early Saxon through to the post medieval. This archaeological potential does however need to be confirmed by evaluation across a much wider area of the town. The main limitation is the degree to which historic buildings cover substantial parts of the medieval frontages, making large scale excavation a relatively limited possibility in all but a few areas. However, rather than being a problem, in anything other than practical implementation, this coincidence of standing structures, a significant number of which are of medieval date, offers an exceptional potential for the study of the medieval town, combining archaeology with standing building and documentary evidence. However the nature of this resource means it is particularly vulnerable to small scale works within existing houses. Thus the scale and nature of the archaeological investigations should be focussed down to the smallest scale and include effective management of the above and below ground remains within the historic buildings themselves.**

**The detailed mapping from documentary sources which has been possible, though it needs further refining, means that there are a wide range of themes that can be**

investigated. The testing of the association between specific types of tenure (virgate, cottage, burgage, free and tenants at will) of both the main manor and of the subsidiary fees, taken back to the early 13<sup>th</sup> century with some confidence, is an exceptional opportunity. Comparison of the archaeological and standing building evidence with that from the documents may yield a wide range of new insights into the nature of the urban and rural settlements of the region. The highly accurate mapping which has been possible of the market place, with the documents enabling the pattern to be projected back into the late medieval, means the town also offers a high potential to look at the evolution of the market place and its shops and tenements. In each case however the archaeological potential will need to be carefully established using even the most small scale and piecemeal of development threats. This is because the significant archaeological evidence may in some cases need only be of very small extent given the very detailed and accurate mapping that has generally be possible from the survey of 1565.

## **1.2 DOCUMENTARY**

### **1.2.1 Summary of Previous Investigation**

There is a limited analysis of the town in the VCH as well as Bridges. Several other books deal generally with the history of the town, most notably Smalley Law, while other volumes specifically deal with the history of the public school in the post medieval and modern periods. The Saxon charter has been discussed in detail by both Foard and by Hart. A more general study of the wider landscape around Oundle has been published in Foard, 2001. The early 13<sup>th</sup> century charter of liberty for the town has been reprinted and analysed by King. Some of the documentary sources have been published by Mellows, mainly in the volumes of the Northamptonshire Record Society. There has not however been a detailed history published on the town, which has drawn effectively upon the exceptional range of documentary sources that exist.

### **1.2.2 Research for this Report**

The present report has drawn upon the extensive documentary research conducted by Foard on Oundle over the last 20 years. This has involved transcription and translation of the 1565 survey, which has been used with reference to the 1813 map to prepare a detailed reconstruction of the plan form of the settlement from the 1565 survey. This has then been used as the base from which to reconstruct the earlier tenorial structure of the town in a detailed topographical framework using the 1400 rental and 1214-25 charter of liberty and the but unpublished survey of the non burgage tenements of the settlement. A wide range of other sources has supported the latter analysis. For example in the market area the various late 15<sup>th</sup> century rentals have been used to support the analysis of the detailed layout and character of the market place in the late medieval period. For the manor and rectory in particular the early 17<sup>th</sup> century surveys and the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century account rolls have supplied further information. The account rolls and other documents have also been used to give a wider insight into the nature of the economy of the town in the medieval and post medieval period. Apart from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century survey and the 1813 map very little use has been made here of the extensive collections of 17<sup>th</sup> century and later documents.

### **1.2.3 Survival**

Oundle has probably the most extensive and detailed collections of documentary sources, from the late 10<sup>th</sup> century through to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, of any small town in the county, and certainly that with the potential for the most accurate and detailed topographical reconstruction. Many of the main sources are listed by Martin.<sup>236</sup> Of particular note are the 1813 Inclosure map, 1565 survey, 1400 rental and 1214-25 charter, are the account rolls of the late 13<sup>th</sup> and early 14<sup>th</sup> century with the 1292 detailed market court record of 1292 which appears to be the earliest surviving court roll for a market in the county.

### **1.2.4 Potential**

## **1.3 HISTORIC BUILDINGS**

### **1.3.1 Summary of Previous Investigation**

Oundle has been the subject of a detailed study of its historic buildings by a group led by John Heward. Unfortunately this survey is as yet unpublished. There were no other individual historic buildings surveys identified for the town in the search of source material conducted for this study. The RCHME historic buildings survey did not extend to Oundle, other than for the church, and there is almost no evidence on historic buildings presented in the VCH volume.

### **1.3.2 Research for this Report**

No specific research was undertaken for this report.

### **1.3.3 Survival**

Oundle appears to have the greatest survival of medieval and post medieval buildings of any town in the county. The numbers and locations of the known medieval and early post medieval buildings are presented here in plan form.

### **1.3.4 Potential**

Given the potential to link these remains to good documentary sources, there seems to be far greater opportunity in Oundle than in any other town in the county for historic buildings evidence to contribute significantly to the study of small towns. There has been no attempt to provide a more detailed analysis here however as this will be provided by the report in preparation by John Heward on the survey of the buildings conducted in the early 1980s. Given the high importance and potential of the historic buildings in the town it is important that the Heward survey is published. It may therefore be appropriate to seek to provide any necessary assistance to ensure that the survey is published, as soon as possible and in sufficient detail to enable it to be used effectively in managing the historic building as a major source of information on the early history of the town..

## **1.4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL**

### **1.4.1 Summary of Previous Investigation**

There have been several evaluations within the township. To the east of the town this has produced no significant results. On the west side of the town, adjacent to the cemetery, early-

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<sup>236</sup> Martin, 1978 & 1980.

middle Saxon occupation was revealed in the late 1970s but only limited follow up excavation was conducted prior to housing development, although most of the occupation may extend westward into the undeveloped area and into the cemetery. To the north evaluation revealed a small early Saxon cemetery within enclosures associated with a Roman settlement.

Observation on small scale trenching in the Rectory gardens produced evidence of early-middle Saxon features. Minor trenches immediately to the west in the former manorial area... Small scale excavation at the northern extremity of the rectory area produced boundary features of the late Saxon period which included ceramics suggestive of high status occupation. Small scale trenching immediately to the north of Blackpot Lane, in the area of the enclosed, consolidated demesne in 1565, seems to confirm the absence here of any medieval occupation, but it also failed to find any evidence of early-middle Saxon activity. However the scale of the investigation was not sufficient to prove that such activity is wholly absent in this area.

A watching brief has been conducted in the market place demonstrating good survival of at least post medieval structures. Evaluation trenches on the Coop site in St Sythe's Lane produced good survival of medieval features, but construction of the supermarket was then carried out without recording action. Other very small scale trenching to the rear of properties in North Street. This has confirmed the potential for good survival of medieval deposits to the rear of the existing buildings, but there has been no investigation as yet within any of the existing standing buildings anywhere in the town to determine what potential may exist in that situation. In contrast, several evaluations in the closes to the east of East Road have failed to produce any evidence of medieval or earlier occupation in this area.

A detailed watching brief with follow up excavation was conducted over a large part of the interior of the church during re-ordering and is published by Johnson. However, observation of minor trenching in the churchyard produced no significant evidence.

#### **1.4.2 Research for this Report**

No specific archaeological investigation was undertaken in connection with the production of this report.

#### **1.4.3 Survival**

Generally within the limited evaluation so far conducted would suggest that there is potential for good survival of archaeological deposits across much of the town.

In the far south western part of the historic core there are extensive deposits of alluvium, in the lower lying areas of the town, adjacent to the Nene and its tributary brook. Waterlogged deposits may be expected in these areas where a few medieval tenements are recorded. The majority of the town lies on permeable, Limestone geology and hence waterlogging will not be found. However, waterlogged deposits were revealed by Johnson in an observation at the north east end of North Street. Hence it seems that in special circumstances elsewhere in the town, on the impermeable geologies in Chapel End and the southern and eastern parts of the town waterlogged deposits may also be expected.

Observation within the market place has demonstrated the survival of post medieval structural remains immediately below the modern surface relating to the rows of shops and stalls. This may indicate that medieval deposits also survive in good condition in some parts of the market place.

Some 'yard' type development had taken place in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in a few tenements. There has also been modern infilling of a number of the areas of the crofts which lay behind the medieval and post medieval frontages, there are still substantial areas of within the town, mainly in large gardens, where the crofts and rear of tofts have not been built up. Hence in these areas there is likely to be good survival. These rear parts of the tenements were in 1565 and presumably in the medieval period also, crofts or areas of pasture and so unoccupied. However although there may be little or no occupation here they are likely to preserve important archaeological boundary evidence on the chronology of the laying out and subdivision of tenements. Historic buildings still largely occupy the frontages on the main streets of the town, a large number of them listed. There is likely to be good archaeological survival beneath many of these given the lack of destructive re-development. However this needs to be tested.

The manor/rectory area clearly has a high potential for both the archaeological investigation of both the Saxon and the medieval settlement. Although heavy disturbance was revealed at the very northern area of the site, adjacent to Black Pot Lane, in the 1985 investigation, this would appear to be a very localised quarrying and terracing activity of the post Medieval period, and even here a major Saxon feature was revealed. The observation of trenching in 1983 demonstrated the deeper burial and probable better survival of the Saxon features further to the south. The apparent absence of post medieval and modern destructive activity over a substantial part of the area, particularly in 'Gardenways' would suggest that good survival may be expected. On the frontage of the rectory site against North Street there is no indication that the medieval tenements have been affected by modern disturbance. Hence they would seem to represent the only surviving area of medieval tenements in the town where there has not been some degree of modern activity and which are not at present built up. Though of far lower importance than the Saxon remains, these tenements add another minor element to the value of the whole site.

#### **1.4.4 Potential**

There would appear to be a high potential for the recovery detailed archaeological evidence on the buildings on the market place, particularly with regard to the Shambles and the associated shops and other buildings.

### **1.5 HISTORICAL TOPOGRAPHY**

#### **1.5.1 Survival**

The pattern of roads in Oundle preserves very well the medieval and post medieval layout of the town. The main loss to the plan is the back lane to the south of Chapel End. The frontages of the medieval and post medieval town are also largely still built up and retain large number of late medieval and post medieval historic buildings. It is generally in the minor streets, particularly Mill Lane and St Scythe's Lane that the pattern has been significantly changed by modern development. The pattern of tenements has been altered by a process of infilling within the tenements, towards the frontages in the 19<sup>th</sup> and earlier 20<sup>th</sup> century and at the rear

of the properties, encompassing in most cases the crofts of the tenements in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century. Despite these changes, the plan form of the post medieval tenements is better preserved in Oundle than in any other substantial small town in the county. The most significant losses have been to the north west of the market place where Oundle School has expanded dramatically in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries replacing the tenement pattern with large blocks of buildings. However these cover a very small percentage of the historic core of the town. The other major change, but paralleled in almost every other town in the county, is the loss of the shops and stalls and other buildings from the market place, in the case in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Overall then, Oundle has the best preserved historical topography of any medieval or post medieval town in Northamptonshire.

## **2.0 URBAN HINTERLAND**

The Bracton hinterland of Oundle is extremely well preserved in terms of mineral extraction and urban development. Apart from the urban area of Oundle itself and a small area of gravel extraction across the river on the site of Crowthorpe hamlet, the historic landscape is relatively complete. Even within the urban area Oundle itself the developed area is relatively small and in the last decade most of the developments have been subject to archaeological investigation. There is therefore a very high potential to study the prehistoric, Roman and especially the Saxon settlement and funerary landscape both in the township itself and in the wider hinterland. This will be especially important given the high status of Oundle in the Saxon period and the opportunity that exists to compare the interaction of the Roman, Saxon and medieval central places with their hinterlands.

However for the medieval town it is the medieval settlements themselves that have by far the highest significance in such studies. The medieval settlements within the hinterland have a significant variety in economic base, the intensively cultivated and wealthy Nene Valley parishes being balanced by the woodland settlements of the boulder clay plateau on either side. To the south of the Nene these were primarily arable but to the north of the Nene in Rockingham Forest there was a strong industrial base in iron and charcoal production and other industrial craft activities. The documentary potential of the hinterland has not been adequately assessed but there are well documented manors and settlements such as Warmington and Biggin. Within the hinterland there are a large number of deserted or heavily shrunken medieval settlements, most of which were hamlets or single farms rather than nucleated villages. Although a large proportion of these have been significantly affected by cultivation there is still a high potential for study. There are a number of major excavations that have taken place in the settlements in the hinterland, particularly at Lyveden and at Warmington. Most importantly are sufficient well preserved earthwork sites to offer the opportunity for future detailed excavations to enable comparative studies between villages and hamlets like Stoke Doyle, Blatherwyke, Armston and Warmington and the central place of Oundle itself.

Oundle thus has a very high potential in terms of the study of the relationship between town and hinterland.

## **C      INDUSTRIAL**

### **1.1      ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE & SURVIVAL**

**Oundle is the only town in the county whose physical development was substantially influenced by an educational institution. Oundle School had a massive impact on the topography of the settlement in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The town needs to be assessed against other settlements with large public schools including Eton, Harrow and Windsor. The size of the brewing and malting industry in the town is of importance in a county context, but needs to be assessed against other towns in a national context**

**Oundle has a very high potential for further study due to the remarkable survival of both individual buildings and the urban topography of the town. The documentary records for the town are also exceptionally good with the existence of the Austell Survey, the Improvement Act of 1825 and several early maps for the town. There are also a number of documents relating to individual monuments / events in the town.**

### **1.2      DOCUMENTARY**

#### **1.2.1    Documents**

Documentary evidence for Oundle in the period following 1750 is plentiful. The Day Books of John Clifton<sup>27</sup> provide in diary form a great deal of information about the life and inhabitants of the town in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. These have already been utilised to great effect by both Alice Osborn and David Parker '*Oundle in the 18<sup>th</sup> century*' and J L Cartwright '*Oundle in the 18<sup>th</sup> century through the eyes of John Clifton*'<sup>28</sup>. Other important collections include the Smiths of Oundle papers relating to the major brewery in the town, numerous papers relating to Oundle School and the full parliamentary Improvement Act of 1825. In addition there are documents on the British School and National School (latter in parish records), detailed records of the enclosure award, and miscellaneous documents relating to individual monuments and businesses in the town. There are a series of very good detailed records for Oundle Rural District Council, but the Record Office does not appear to hold anything for the Urban District Council. The parish records appear to be detailed and include records from the Overseers of the Poor and Surveyors of the Highways as well as documents relating more specifically to church business and property.

In addition the Austell Survey of 1565 with its 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century annotations, which was not consulted during the course of the study on Oundle, is a vital document for the reconstruction of the town. The survey is presented in a great deal of detail and it is possible to reconstruct the town.

#### **1.2.2    Maps**

There are two good maps in Northamptonshire Record Office for Oundle, the enclosure map of 1810<sup>22</sup> and a plan of Oundle of 1824<sup>23</sup> which shows individual plot boundaries / ownership for the North Street and Market Hill area. The former map shows the area of the town in

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<sup>27</sup> ZA 8731/8746 Day Books of John Clifton (joiner) his life and work and inhabitants 1763-1784

<sup>28</sup>Northamptonshire Past and Present Vol 5, No 4.

<sup>22</sup>NRO, Map 2858

<sup>23</sup>NRO, P8410-16

some detail within the surrounding field system. The latter is very narrowly concentrated around the central area of the town and only shows the frontages of plots and individual monuments such as Latham's Hospital, Oundle Brewery, the Grammar School and a number of the public houses. Both sources show the layout of the town prior to the two major changes of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Improvement Act of 1825 and the expansion of Oundle School. Other maps which would be of use for considering particular parts of the town include maps of the Watts-Russell estate (1864)<sup>22</sup>, the estate of JW Russell<sup>23</sup>, the Walcote estates (1811) and the rectorial estates (1860/1863)<sup>24</sup>. In addition there are plans for sewage and road improvements and other documents such as the Tithe map Apportionment (1845)<sup>25</sup> and a sale catalogue of lands in Oundle<sup>26</sup> which would help to reconstruct a detailed picture of the development of the town, particularly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. None of these sources have been looked at as part of this survey.

### **1.2.3 Photographs**

There are a large number of photographs and pictorial references for Oundle in the period following 1750. These include photos of the church, chapels, Talbot Inn and other public houses, market place, town hall, railway station, bridges, almshouses, school buildings, shops and businesses, and general street scenes, as well as the usual photographs of the social life of the town. A substantial proportion of buildings survive in Oundle and photographs are therefore likely to be of greatest value in indicating changes and developments to individual buildings and may help in determining their former use and function. Photographs of structures which have now been demolished (for example White Hart Inn, windmill, brewery etc) may help to reconstruct elements of the urban topography as well as providing additional information about the nature and function of the buildings.

### **1.3 STANDING BUILDINGS**

There are a very large number of surviving buildings in Oundle 172 of which are listed buildings; of these 122 date from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. A total of 128 of the listings have no function ascribed to them and they are assumed to be domestic houses; other building types include chapels and the two churches, a large number of the buildings constructed for Oundle School, five maltings, a number of barns, the Talbot Hotel and some of the public houses, the north and south bridges, the war memorial and a number of the walls and gazebos. There are a number of grade one and grade two \* buildings in the town. Consideration should be given to the re-listing of the town, as this exercise was last conducted in 1955 and the list descriptions are not very detailed. In some cases the buildings have now been demolished (for example the workhouse on Glaphorn Road).

The unlisted buildings for the town include many structures of unknown function (either agricultural or industrial or simply storage for domestic dwellings) and late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century terraced or villa houses. The precise function of the unidentified buildings in the town should be determined if the opportunity presents itself. The main unlisted buildings which have potential for contributing to our understanding of the town are the Anchor Brewery on South Road (which should be assessed in order to determine the completeness of the structure) and the unusual two-storey single-celled buildings behind Bassett Place.

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<sup>23</sup>NROMap 1752

<sup>26</sup>NRO ZB706/34

#### **1.4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL**

The potential for below ground archaeological investigation in Oundle for the period following 1750 is limited, mainly because a large part of the town survives above ground as standing buildings. Archaeological investigation in the area of Oundle School may be required to determine the nature and layout of the town prior to the large-scale construction of the school. There may also be some potential for excavation in some of the former yards and alleys in the town.

#### **1.5 TOPOGRAPHY**

The urban topography of Oundle survives in a remarkably intact form; as indicated above, the basic layout of the town changed little over the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and any changes that did occur have been preserved in the built fabric of the town. The central area of Oundle around West Street, Market Place, New Street and North Street in particular has retained the vast majority of its buildings - most of which are of stone. Buildings in the area include high-status houses (17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century), smaller cottages, religious, educational and municipal buildings. A very large number of the buildings are listed and the area was designated a Conservation Area in June 1970. The importance of the survival of the central area of Oundle for understanding the development of the market town in the period following 1700 should not be understated.

The development that brought about the greatest change to the urban topography of Oundle in the past 100 years was the expansion of Oundle School. The school represents a major phase of development in the history of Oundle and contributes greatly to the topography of the town today. The development of the school was, however, initially a destructive element in the town with the demolition of a large number of structures, which radically altered the nature and layout of the town.

The majority of buildings shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1926 are still in existence today. The exceptions are the small structures located on the 'yards' in the central area of town and a number of utilitarian structures on Benefield Road, St O'Syth's Lane/East Road, Black Pot Lane/North Street and between West Street and South Road. These buildings are likely to have been small, lower class dwellings and industrial/agricultural structures. It should be noted, however, that there are still many examples of these types of buildings on the back plots of houses today, although it has not always been possible to identify their functions.

### **III RESEARCH AGENDA**

#### **1.0 PRE MEDIEVAL**

Potential for an Iron Age hillfort should be considered.

Roman origins of activity in the area of the church and manor.

#### **ROMAN TO SAXON CONTINUITY**

Location and character of any early –middle Saxon high status site and subsequent monastic foundation in the area of the church and manor.

Date of decline of Saxon regional administrative functions of Oundle.

Location of 10<sup>th</sup> century monastery and manorial focus.

10<sup>th</sup> century laying out of the tenement rows.

The extent and the chronology of the laying out of and then the final infilling of the market place will be a key research theme.

#### **2.0 MEDIEVAL**

The availability of such detailed topographical information means that there are many research potential which may prove possible to examine, but they can only be determined once the archaeological survival in any specific area is determined. All evaluations should be conducted and assessed in the light of the demonstrated or presumed status and character of particular areas from documentary research.

The recovery of detailed information from individual tenements, particularly where surviving in a good state of preservation, as this should enable the integration of archaeological with very specific, topographically located documentary information from the early 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Similarly the examination of the character and development of both the manor and the rectory from their late Saxon precursors.

The development of the market place from its putative large early form to the 19<sup>th</sup> century area. Particular focus on the development through stalls, shops and tenements on the market place.

#### **3.0 INDUSTRIAL**

##### ***Development of the town***

The survival of large areas of the urban topography of Oundle combined with the good documentation for the town mean that the settlement would provide a good case study for the development of an urban centre in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The existence of the Austell survey (with annotations from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries) and the Improvement Act of 1825

provide good documentary references against which the physical surviving remains can be examined. The key questions that need to be addressed for Oundle are the level of continuity and change from the medieval and post-medieval periods and the importance of the school to the development of the settlement.

### ***Brewing and malting***

The brewing and malting industry in Oundle appears to be of greater than local importance. This would appear to be due to the proximity of the town to the River Nene as a communication route; a number of the malt houses are located on the wharf site. The documentary history of the businesses has been fully recorded<sup>237</sup>, but survey is required to determine the level of survival of the built remains. The nature of the industry in the town needs to be investigated. What was the distribution network for brewing and malting in the area? How was the industry organised? What were the links between the brewers and maltsters in the town? Were there any distinctive characteristics of the industries in Oundle as opposed to elsewhere in the county?

One of the maltings in Oundle, which survives in a relatively complete state, is to be subject to a recording brief as part of a planning application.

### ***Importance of Oundle School***

The development of Oundle School had a major impact on the town in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, both in terms of the social and economic domination and the physical impact on the settlement. The school is a good example of the influence that an individual or institution can have on the physical development of a settlement. A full survey needs to be undertaken of the buildings in Oundle to determine how many were erected by or are owned by Oundle School. This will allow for a complete understanding of the extent of the influence of this institution on the settlement. Knowledge of the location of the school buildings in the town is also important for determining areas of loss of the earlier topography of the town. Below ground archaeological investigation of these areas may be required, if there are to be further works in the area, in order to develop a full understanding of the layout of the town prior to the development of the school.

### ***Oundle wharf on River Nene***

The wharf area at Oundle survives remarkably well intact and includes a number of maltings buildings. The area would provide a good case study for wharf sites along the River Nene. A combination of documentary research, building recording and archaeological investigation should help to develop an understanding of commercial and trading links along the river with particular emphasis on what goods were being transported. The links between the town of Oundle and the river should also be investigated.

### ***Building materials in the town***

There are large numbers of surviving stone buildings in Oundle. Many of these buildings date from the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. There is the potential for a detailed investigation of the types of stone being used in buildings over a considerable period of time in the town. The investigation should focus upon where the stone for individual buildings was quarried. This will enhance understanding of the distribution of stone and the use of particular types of stone in buildings of a different status.

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□ Brown M, 1998, Brewed in Northants. A Directory of Northamptonshire Brewers (including the Soke of Peterborough) 1450-1998

## **IV STRATEGY**

The assessment of the management and conservation priorities within the Extensive Urban Survey have been based around an assessment of levels of importance previously applied elsewhere in the county for management purposes. The grading falls into six categories:

**Scheduled:** nationally important remains that have statutory protection.

**Unscheduled national importance:** in some cases statutory protection is suggested while in others recording action may prove to be the appropriate response to threats.

**County importance:** Where significant archaeology is known or where it is likely but confirmation is required. Normally recording rather than preservation would be the appropriate mitigation strategy.

**Historic buildings:** Buildings known or which have the potential to contain significant pre 19<sup>th</sup> century structural remains.

**Local importance:** where archaeology may survive but where, on present evidence investigation does not appear appropriate.

**Destroyed:** where the archaeology has been wholly destroyed.

**White Land:** Archaeology not assessed for his report.

In addition in some cases recommendations have been made for the designation of new or the extension of existing Conservation Areas and for the listing of specific buildings.

**This approach has not been possible for the industrial period, as further work on the period is needed at a county, regional and national level before a definitive assessment can be made. The town has been divided up into zones and priorities for additional research, recording and conservation measures have been assigned to each individual area.**

### **1.0 EXISTING DESIGNATIONS**

#### **1.1 SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENTS**

There are four Scheduled Ancient Monuments within and in close proximity to Oundle. Ashton Roman Settlement (SAM 169), Oundle South Bridge (SAM 171), a Saxon settlement enclosure (SAM 200) and a bowl barrow (SAM 17125).

#### **1.2 LISTED BUILDINGS**

There are 172 listed buildings in Oundle.

#### **1.3 CONSERVATION AREA**

There is a conservation area which covers the core historic area of Oundle. This was designated in June 1970.

## **2.0 MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES**

### **2.1 SAXON, MEDIEVAL & POST MEDIEVAL**

#### **2.1.1 Evaluation and Recording Priorities**

The Saxon activity at Oundle is clearly of national importance. Any development of at least a house or more, or other ground disturbance of similar scale, proposed in the area of St Sythe's Chapel Hill (broadly defined by the isolated area of limestone and gravel geology to the south east end of St Sythe's Lane) should be evaluated because of the potential for the Saxon monastery. Similarly the area of the manor and rectory and its immediate environs warrants response, on even more small-scale disturbance. This is because of the potential for both a middle and late Saxon monastery and a secular administrative centre, possibly of the same status and character of that partially examined archaeologically at Northampton.

Any disturbance of the scale of a single new house or more anywhere within the township of Oundle should also probably be subject to evaluation. This is because of the potential for occupation or other evidence of Saxon, Roman or Iron Age date as precursors to the medieval town and for their association with the Saxon administrative and ecclesiastical centre.

With regard to the medieval and post medieval urban settlement, the detailed reconstruction of the historical topography that has proved possible, combined with the apparent relative lack of disturbance, means that there is potential for exceptional integration of archaeological and documentary information. In this context even the most small scale disturbance anywhere within the historic core has the potential to produce valuable archaeological information. Although it is at or close to the frontages, within the tofts, that occupation evidence is most likely to be recovered, evaluation and, where appropriate, recording action should also be conducted in the crofts at the rear of the tenements. The latter could recover evidence for the laying out of and subdivision of the tenements in the late Saxon and medieval periods.

Within the market place even the most minor disturbance should be subject to investigation as deposits related to the shops, stalls and other buildings and other activity on the market place is known to survive immediately below the modern surface.

#### **2.1.2 Conservation priorities**

There are no earthwork remains of the medieval settlement, which demand preservation at all costs. If however remains of the middle or late Saxon secular or ecclesiastical centre are found then case for preservation in situ would have very strong weight. Indeed, the first priority for well preserved Saxon and medieval settlement, whether in the form of buried archaeology or standing fabric, should also be conservation in situ, although in many cases this may not be practicable and recording action may prove necessary.

The historical topography of the medieval town is very well preserved in the present town plan. This is unusual in the main small towns of the county and so the priority should be for the preservation of this plan form, as a major component of the historic character of the town. Even in the back crofts of the town there is sufficient survival of the tenement pattern to give a good impression of the overall plan form of a medieval small town. This is probably the

best-preserved example of such a tenement pattern of any of the small towns in the county. Overall then there is a very high priority for the active conservation of all the components of the medieval and post medieval town plan. This would mean restricting the restructuring of the rear of the properties as well as preserving the frontages and the existing buildings there of the medieval through to the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## **2.2 INDUSTRIAL**

### **2.2.1 Zone 1 - Core area of settlement (including commercial business district)**

This area forms the historic core of the settlement and survives remarkably well intact with the survival of the majority of buildings in the area. A large number of the buildings are listed structures and part of the area is a conservation area. Therefore the conservation of the built environment should be adequately protected. The recording issues for the area include the excavation of areas of former yards and alleys, the investigation of the former breweries and malt houses in the area and an understanding of the development of the settlement in the light of the Austell survey of 1565 and the Improvement Act of 1825. There is also the potential for some survey work on the use and distribution of stone in the town.

### **2.2.2 Zone 2 - 19<sup>th</sup> century mixed zone.**

This area forms part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century expansion of the town along the Glaphorn Road. The area includes the Poor Law Union Workhouse, a number of 19<sup>th</sup> century villa houses and terraced houses and a brick works. The workhouse has now been demolished, although the chapel remains and has been converted to a domestic residence. The area is now in use by various services and there are no recommendations regarding the archaeology of the area. The brick-built villas and terraces (of red and cream brick) are of interest in the town as they form a stark contrast to the stone structures in the remainder of the town. The structures are, however, similar to many terraces found all over the county and are not worthy of preservation in their own right.

### **2.2.3 Zone 3 - 19<sup>th</sup> century mixed zone.**

This area forms part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century expansion of the town along the Benefield Road. The majority of buildings in this area are houses and cottages of various descriptions. There were also a large number of small workshops, outbuildings and ancillary structures that have now been demolished. The area would appear to have been a centre for lower status houses and possibly small-scale industrial works. There are no conservation priorities for the area, but there may be recording issues in relation to the lower status housing and the possibility of an industrial centre within the settlement.

### **2.2.4 Zone 4 - 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century housing zone**

This area was developed with terraced houses and some larger houses in the period between 1885 and 1926. There are no recording or conservation priorities for the houses, but there are a several two-storey outbuildings, which would be worthy of further investigation.

### **2.2.5 Zone 5 - Industrial zone**

Industrial development to the northeast of the town. The zone comprises Oundle Wharf, a substantial number of malthouses and the cattle market. The former railway station is located further to the north. The cattle market has been demolished, but the wharf area and a large

number of the malhouses remain intact. The wharf area should be considered for inclusion in the conservation area boundary for the town. The wharf area should be investigated archaeologically in line with the research criteria defined above.

#### **2.2.6 Zone 6 - Oundle School.**

This is the area initially identified as being part of the complex for Oundle School. There may be additional buildings and areas after further research on the town. This zone is of interest in two respects. The expansion of the school in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was one of the major issues in the development of the town in this period and the buildings relating to the school should be preserved as an important element of the townscape. Many of the buildings are listed and lie within the conservation area for the town and should therefore be adequately protected. The location of the school buildings are areas of major disturbance in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and may require recording for further information about the earlier topography of the town if ground disturbance was to take place in the area.

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

AASR	Association of Architectural Society Reports
BL	British Library
Bridges Notes	John Bridges original notes for his History, from circa 1720 in Bodleian Library
JNNHSFC	Journal of Northamptonshire Natural History Society & Field Club
NRL	Northamptonshire Reference Library, Local Studies Collection
NRO	Northamptonshire Record Office
NRS	Northamptonshire Record Society
PRO	Public Record Office
VCH	Victoria County History

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## **APPENDIX 1: THE MAJOR DOCUMENTARY SOURCES FOR OUNDLE**

Enclosure Map and award of 1813

Survey of Oundle manor 1651 (in Biggin Hall)

Survey of Oundle in 1565 (NRO ML116) which give the measurements of almost every tenement allowing a complete reconstruction of the town together with a complete terrier of the field land allowing a complete reconstruction of the field system

Rental 1400AD (British Library M53892) - complete rental of tenements in town and of demesne lands in fields allowing near complete reconstruction of the layout of tenements in the town and of the demesne in the open field

Account roll and court roll of manor and account roll of market and market court roll : 1292

Account rolls of manor: 1300-1, 1307-8, 1309-10: include detailed record of the demesne economy, including some repairs to the buildings of the manor

Account rolls of manor for 1471-2, 1491-2, 7 Hen VIII, 3 Hen VIII, 1516-17, 1542, 37-8 Hen.VIII, 22 Hen VIII

Also extracts from 11 account rolls 1353-1496 are published but the originals are lost..

Account rolls of Rectory manor 1530-1 and 1518-19

Extent of the Manor of Oundle 1321-2

Charter of Liberty relating to the burgages of 1214-22 together with the contemporary rental of the non burgage tenures allowing a near complete reconstruction of the layout of tenements in the town.

Survey of the manor of Oundle 1125-8 (Camden Society vol. 47 Liber Niger Monasterii S.Petri de Burgo p.158)

Charter c.971 (BCS 1128) and boundary clause (BCS 1129)