

# Raunds 1977–1983: An Excavation Summary

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*A SELECTIVE SUMMARY of the excavation evidence from the extensive Saxon and medieval excavations at Raunds, Northamptonshire 1977–82 is presented. A provisional development sequence is outlined with descriptions of the major structural features. Occupation commenced during the 7th century and continued until the 15th. This summary concentrates upon the secular structures prior to 1350, which include a 12th- to 14th-century manor-house and several pre-Conquest timber buildings.*

## INTRODUCTION

Raunds is a large village in E. Northamptonshire about 20 miles from Northampton. It lies along the valley of a small tributary of the R. Nene (Fig. 1). The village underwent expansion in the 19th century associated with the boot and shoe industry, resulting in factories and their adjacent estates, of which many were built away from the core of the earlier village. Although there has been a steady decline in the industry in Raunds, as elsewhere, this has been accompanied by the arrival of new industry and housing. It was the gradual infilling in the village which led to the discovery of the Saxon and medieval site, and to the rescue excavation between 1977 and 1982.

Fields to the NW. of the village were designated for development in 1975. Earthworks had been recorded by Mr D. Hall ten years earlier and were thought to be the result of a shift southwards of the village. The Northamptonshire Field Group, under Hall's direction, trial-trenched these earthworks in 1975 and recovered two decorated Saxon grave covers, indicative of a late Saxon cemetery, together with stone structures of medieval date. The Northamptonshire County Council Archaeology Unit commenced rescue excavations in 1977<sup>1</sup> and these continued until mid 1982, made possible by a delay in implementing the planning permission.

The northern part of the site overlies a limestone pavement formed of Upper and Lower Cornbrash dipping at a moderately shallow angle to the N.<sup>2</sup> To the S. the underlying Blisworth Clay reaches the surface, occupying the central area. This in turn overlies Blisworth Limestone. The southern area contains a Drift material, a dark red loam.



FIG. 1  
RAUNDS: Site location

The final limits of the excavation trench were defined to the E. and SE. by private gardens whilst to the N. the limit was imposed by warehouse construction. To the W., excavation extended just beyond the limit of a medieval bank and ditch, separating the village from the open fields. Small-scale trial trenching has continued in 1982 further S. and W. in order to determine whether pre-medieval settlement extended beyond the limit of the medieval settlement. It is anticipated that a watching brief will be maintained as housing and industrial development progresses in the areas which were not excavated.

This report summarizes selected excavation evidence concentrating upon the work of the last two seasons. The churches and cemetery have received summaries elsewhere,<sup>3</sup> as has a review of the documentary evidence.<sup>4</sup> At this early stage in the post-excavation programme the aim is to provide an outline of the evidence that might otherwise not be available until final publication of this complex site.

For the purpose of this summary the stratification has been divided into broad groups (Fig. 3) which approximate to the sequence of phases currently being developed for the final excavation report. Dating is based upon an initial assessment of the stratification sequences and on a preliminary pottery typology.

Records of the excavation, finds from it, and all other Level II and III data will be held in the Northamptonshire Archaeological Archive in Northampton.

#### *Objectives and approach*

Initially the objective was the rescue excavation and recording of the late Saxon cemetery and associated buildings. This objective was reviewed as it became apparent that the ecclesiastical elements were part of a succession of major and lesser buildings extending from the Saxon period to the 15th century. The presence of at least two medieval manor-houses provided an opportunity for tracing the development of the manor prior to the Conquest (Fig. 2) while initial assessment of documentary evidence suggested the possibility of broadening this study so as to investigate wider aspects of Saxon rural settlement and its administrative framework.

As the objectives of the project were revised and expanded so the area under excavation was enlarged. Mechanical stripping of the topsoil undoubtedly destroyed some features but the consequent larger area available for excavation more than justified the approach. Most features were totally excavated and the sub-soil exposed over most of the site.

During the excavation most observable stratigraphic units were recorded as equally significant and interpretation was limited to that necessary to guide the conduct of the excavation. This approach was particularly valuable in those parts of the site where stratigraphy was both deep and complex. On areas of little or no stratigraphy, the stratigraphic units were more readily interpreted at an earlier stage. In the final season some recording procedures were streamlined in order to cope with the area involved and to achieve completion.

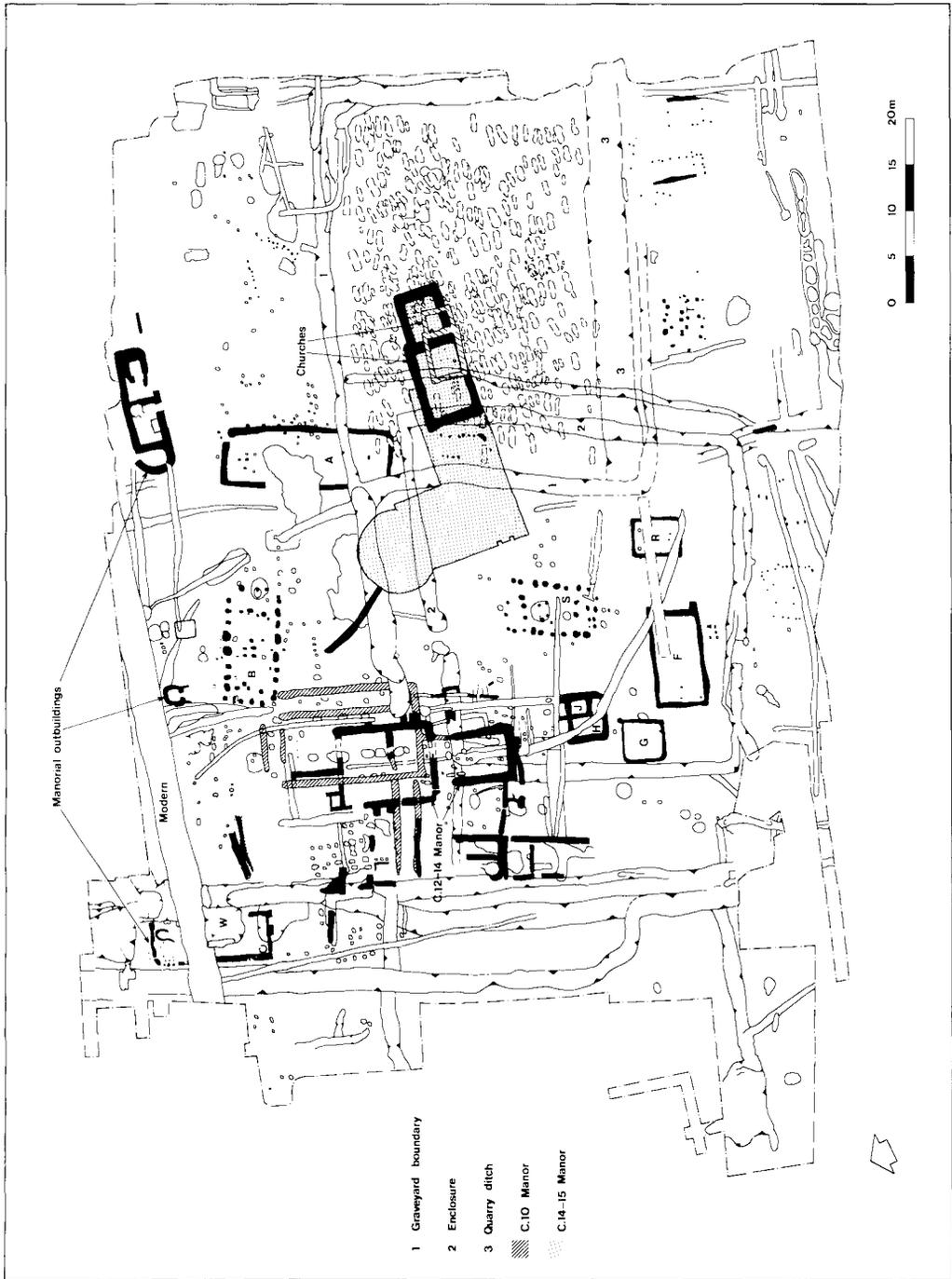


FIG. 2  
RAUNDS: General site plan

## THE EVIDENCE

*Group I* (Fig. 3)

Many features of early activity were recorded, the most numerous being post-holes of varying dimensions and character. These were concentrated in the NW. of the excavation, and although they currently present no easily interpretable form the presence of at least one structure of timber post construction is suspected.

A shallow pit (2.4 m long and 1.4 m wide) with a fill of grey-brown clay pre-dated the Group III enclosure ditch and contained 7th-century pottery.

The two most substantial features from Group I may represent sunken-featured buildings. One (Building W) is represented by a sub-rectangular cut into the cornbrash limestone in the site's NW. corner. The N. and E. edges of the feature were removed by later intrusions (Fig. 4). The cut, which measured 4.7 m N.-S. and 4.5 m E.-W., attained a maximum depth of 0.4 m and had two post-holes, each placed centrally on the E. and W. sides of the feature with depths of 0.4 m and 0.5 m respectively. The more westerly (6387) was slightly angled so as to suggest a leaning post. A shallow depression along the W. lip of the feature could have represented an entrance. A brown silty clay containing fragments of limestone filled the entire feature.

The second sunken-featured building comprised a shallow sub-rectangular cut in the natural clay underlying the church, and was lined with limestone blocks. A number of features including post-holes was found in close association, but none could with certainty be assigned to the building. The pottery from all Group I features suggests a date within the 7th century. A small quantity of earlier pottery has been identified from across the site though the Group I features appear to represent the earliest occupation. A boundary defining the extent of this occupation has not been identified although initial results from small trenches *c.* 30 m to the W. of the main excavation suggest that settlement does not continue in that direction. A watching brief on access roads *c.* 40 m to the N. made further settlement in that direction unlikely.

The importance of Group I is that it represents not only the first stage in the lengthy occupation of the site, but provides a context for an early group of Saxon pottery.

*Group II*

Three timber buildings comprise the main elements of this Group with Building A being of post and trench construction and Buildings B and S (Figs. 5 and 6; Pl. x) of timber post type.

Building A was a slightly bow-sided structure, 19 by 6.8 m orientated N.-S., the width across the ends of the building being one metre narrower than across the centre. Survival was poor on the W. and S. sides of the building, but the eastern side was well preserved. The walls, set in a series of trenches (0.6 m wide and a maximum of 0.5 m deep) included stone post-packings placed at approximately 0.3 m intervals. A deeper slot off-centre on the eastern side may represent provision for an entrance structure and there was also evidence of what may have been external buttress posts.



FIG. 3  
RAUNDS: Provisional chronology

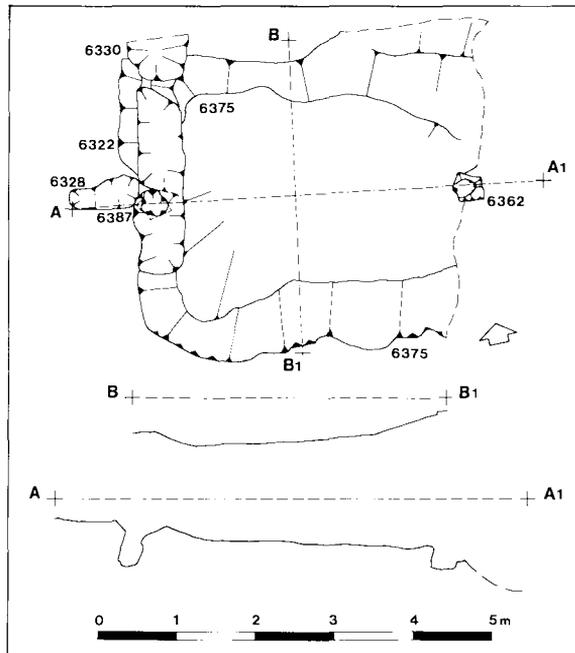


FIG. 4  
RAUNDS: Building W. Group I

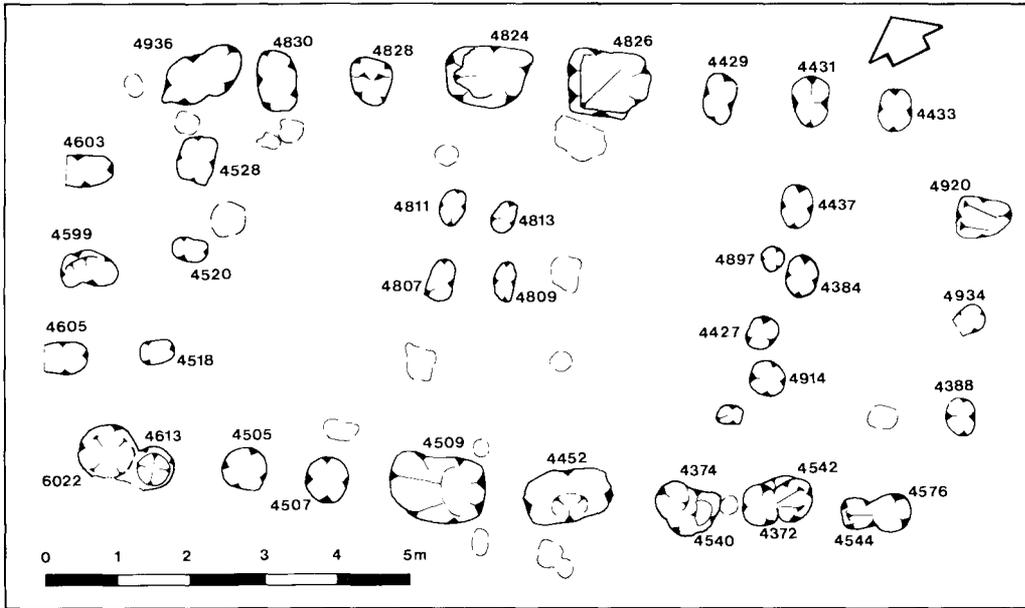


FIG. 5  
RAUNDS: Building B. Group II

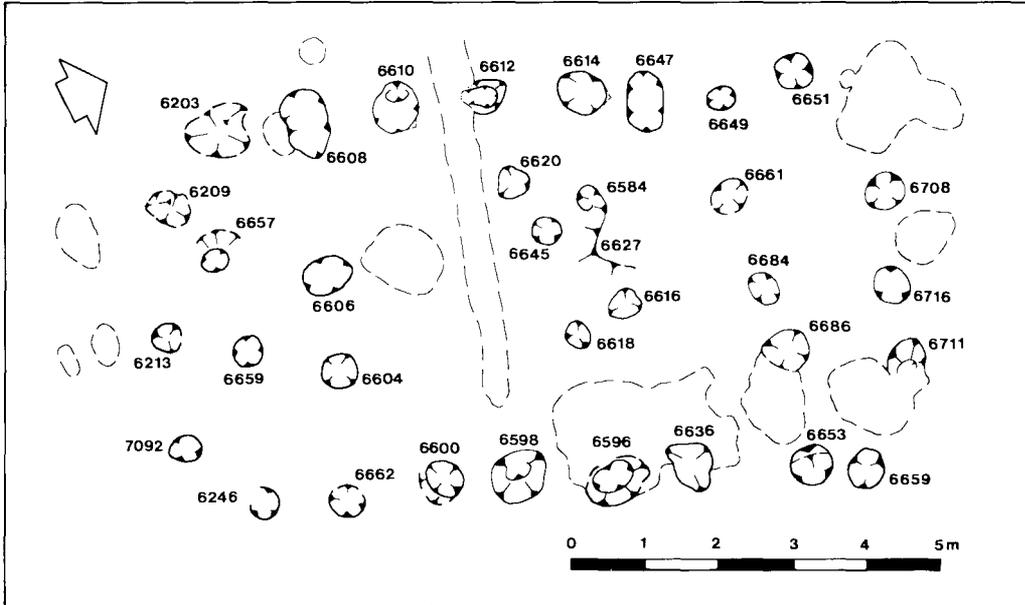


FIG. 6  
RAUNDS: Building S. Group II

Internal features were confined to four post-holes, which could not be conclusively associated with the building.

Building B (Pl. x, B), set to the W. of A, was 12 m long by 6 m wide and orientated E.-W. Eight regularly spaced sets of rock-cut double post-holes formed the N. and S. long sides. Along each side, the two central post-holes (4452, 4509, 4824, 4826) were considerably larger than their neighbours (being over one metre square in area), and apparently represent the entrances to the structure. The ends of the building were represented by three double post-holes, with another set of three posts placed on the inside, approximately one metre from the W. end and two metres from the E. end. The eastern set of internal roof posts may also have formed the base of a partition. Placed between the two entrances, and midway between the partition on the W. end of the building, were four double post-holes (4807, 4809, 4811, 4813), probably forming the base for a hearth, or a fire canopy. The double post-holes are thought to represent an initial strengthening for the upright posts rather than evidence of either cruck construction or rebuilding. Their differing orientation on the N. and S. sides of the building has been noted.

About 25 m to the S. of Building B and built on clay, lay Building S (Pl. x, A). Orientated N.-S. its dimensions (10.4 m by 6.0 m) and plan closely resemble those of Building B. Eight opposing pairs of post-pits formed the building's E. and W. sides, the central two on both sides (6612, 6614, 6596, 6598) exhibiting such close similarities of profile that they probably represented provision for entrances. At the northern end of the structure a double row of triple posts (6711, 6716, 6708 and 6686, 6684, 6661) appeared as in B, although at the southern end the arrangement was different as regards the inner post alignments, there being two possible two-post alignments (6604, 6606 and 6659, 6657). Four of the five internal and centrally located post-holes (6645, 6584, 6616, 6618) suggested the presence of a feature similar to that interpreted as a fire canopy or hearth base in Building B. No areas of burning that might otherwise be interpreted as hearths were located within either structure B or S.

Whilst no traces of posts were clearly visible in post-holes in either building, limestone fragments within many of the post-pits indicated the presence of post-packing, the positioning of which may eventually allow for estimates of post size. Only a single construction phase can be identified in S although in the case of B there is some evidence to suggest a westward extension of the building. No floor or occupation levels were identified from either structure.

A general symmetry in the layout of Buildings A, B and S argues for their contemporaneity. A fourth structure may have existed *c.* 20 m W. of Building S. The roughly rectangular pattern that they present should be noted. As in Group I no limit to the buildings and their immediate environs has been identified though some features lying to the E. are believed to be contemporary, representing structures of a somewhat smaller size and stature.

### *Group III*

A ditched enclosure with entrances on its N. and S. sides was set out sometime towards the end of the middle Saxon period. Four structures initially thought to have post-dated the enclosure are now believed to have been contemporary with it.

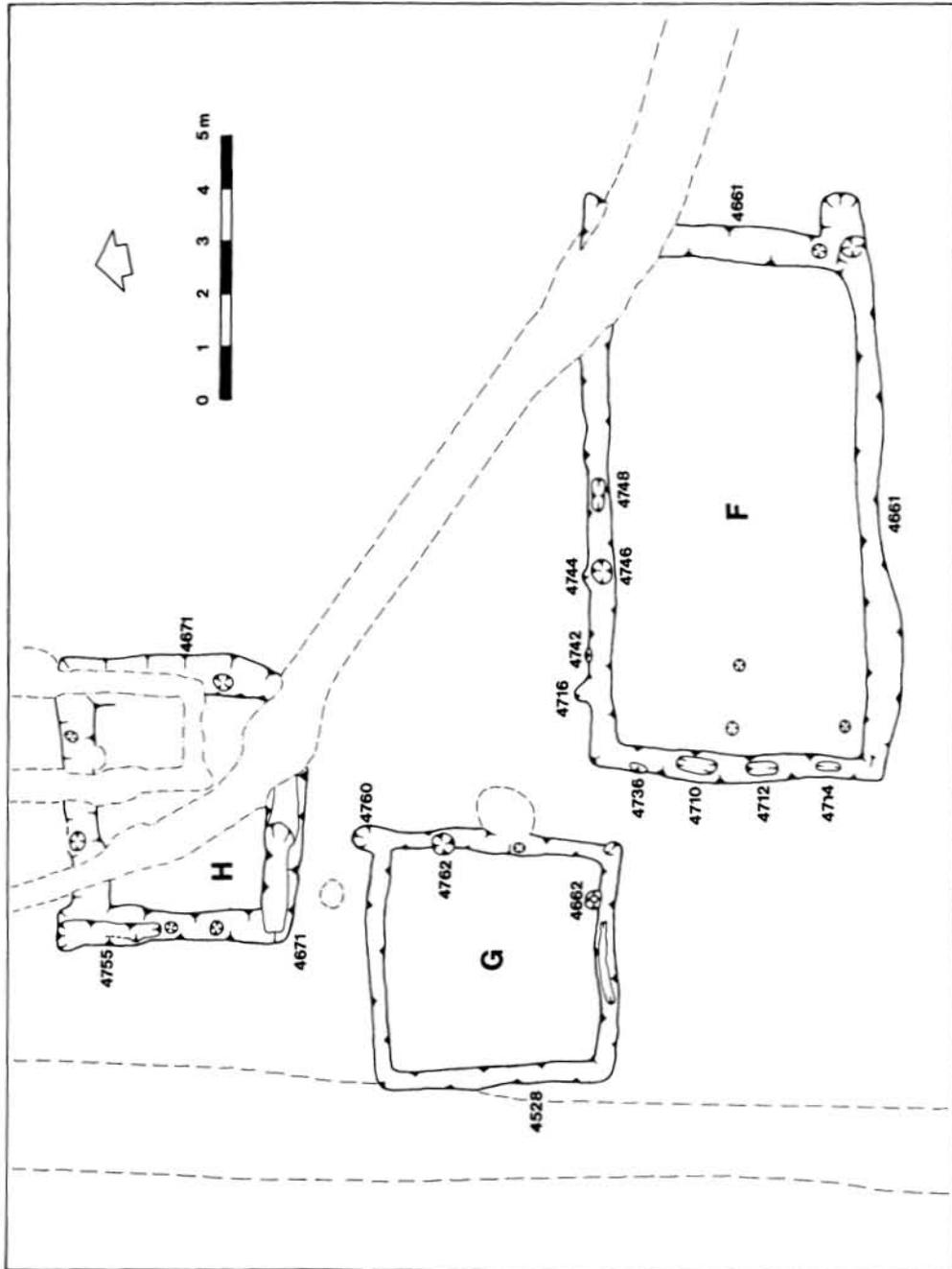


FIG. 7  
RAUNDS: Buildings F, G, H, Group III

The enclosure (34 m N.-S. and 37 m E.-W.) was bounded by a ditch of variable depth and width with a maximum depth of 0.9 m on the W. side. The width at the top of the cut did not exceed two metres. A second small ditch lay outside the main enclosure on its eastern side. The northern enclosure entrance was formed by two butt-ended ditches; that on the S. was more complex and consisted of at least three phases during which time the entrance was moved from the SW. corner of the enclosure to a point 10 m further E. The first entrance was formed by butt-ended ditches, subsequently by a system of similar ditches linked by slots, these containing some form of movable fence or gateway. Some degree of recutting of the enclosure ditches accompanied the southern entranceway realignment. At the end of its life the entire enclosure ditch appears to have been deliberately back-filled, and, while no evidence for an accompanying bank was located, a dearth of contemporary features adjacent to the outer edge of the ditch supports the presence of a bank. The changes to the enclosure ditch may have accompanied changes in the layout of the enclosed structures.

These structures F, G, H, R (Fig. 7; Pl. ix, A) were constructed with continuous wall trenches, with traces of post-hole impressions in the base and in some cases set in the trench sides (4746, 4748, 4716, 4744 on F). Entrances were represented by short lengths of deeper set slots, as on the S. side of G or associated with post-holes, as in F (4710, 4712). Internal features were confined to occasional post-holes. At the NW. corner of H, NE. corner of G (4760), and SE. corner of F, there were elongations of the wall trench whose function remains unclear. The NW. corner of Building G is now known to cut the fill of an earlier version of the W. side of the enclosure ditches.

#### *Group IV*

It appears that at some time during the 9th to 10th centuries further construction took place immediately to the N. of Building H, involving the cutting of two N.-S. slots that parallel the E. and W. sides of H. Whether this construction incorporated Building H is not known but what is clear is that the development eventually superseded H with a small structure J. To the N. of the enclosure ditch further construction work was in progress and it was about this time that the enclosure ditch was deliberately back-filled so that the structures to N. and S. occupied the area once cut by the enclosure ditch.

This entire phase of development is complex but some tentative conclusions are possible regarding the structures set to the N. of the enclosure.

The earliest phase (Fig. 8) is a timber post structure whose eastern side consisted of three large post-pits (6743, 6745 and 6771) with a maximum depth of 0.6 m and with post-hole 6765 possibly forming a fourth post setting (Pl. ix, B). Shallower post-holes (6912, 6913, 7104) form a northern side to the structure. Western and southern sides of this building have yet to be identified with certainty although slot 7643 and an early phase of 6915 are likely to have served this purpose.

This structure was incorporated into, or replaced by, an aisled structure set on the same N.-S. alignment. Limestone-cut slots 6510 (max. depth 0.5 m, width 0.8 m) and 4300 (max. depth 0.4 m, width 0.8 m) formed the eastern side with a slot (6915)

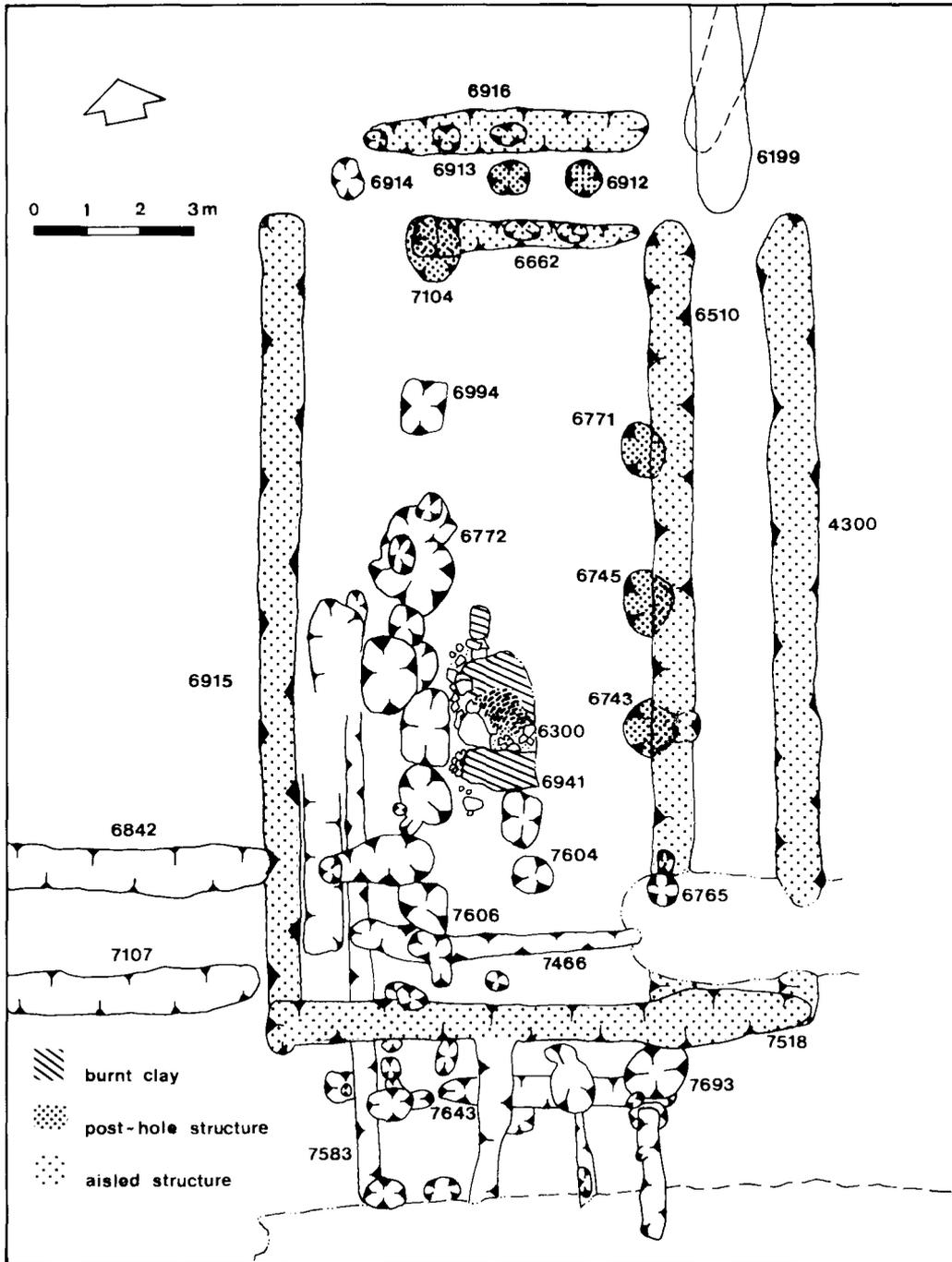


FIG. 8

RAUNDS: Aisled structure. Group IV

of similar dimensions forming the western side. Grey silty clay, frequently with limestone fragments, constituted the fill of these slots though only in the case of slot 6510 were post-settings definable. It is not certain whether the aisles represent an additional building phase or whether they were an integral part of this structure. Whilst the eastern aisle was clearly defined that to the W. was less so. Here the inner aisle alignment was marked by a series of post-pits, many cut by later features. Cuts 6994, 6772 and 7606 were representative of this alignment, their maximum depth being 0.7 m. Two slots (6916 and 6662) mark the building's northern limit whilst a further slot (7518) marks the southern limit. A hearth constructed of pitched stone (6300) and surrounded by an area of burnt clay (6941) occupies a central position within the structure though set towards the S. end. A gully (6199) butt-ending at the NE. corner of the building was believed to have been contemporary with the use of the building as were two slots (6842, 7107) to the W. of the structure; these may represent part of a western 'wing' arrangement to the main hall. This structure (18.0 m by 10.0 m) is believed to have been contemporary with the earlier of two churches constructed towards the eastern end of the site. It was also at this time that a ditched and banked boundary separating the settlement from the neighbouring field system was laid out. Incorporated within this boundary were the aisled structure, church, and enclosed cemetery. It is however possible that the main settlement boundary has its origins in an earlier period, possibly Group III, as there is evidence to suggest a link between the enclosure ditch and an early form of the N.–S. western settlement boundary. Whatever the date for the formation of the settlement boundary it was to be retained until the 15th century, undergoing only slight realigning to the W. in order to accommodate an expansion and addition of structures.

The date for the abandonment or demolition of the aisled building is uncertain but it may have continued in use until the 11th century. Some fragmentary slots and post-holes suggest building activity during the 11th century but not on the same scale as the aisled building. These features could represent piecemeal additions to a decaying aisled building; on the other hand the remains of a later structure could have been removed by later levelling. However, it is known that during this time the first church had been replaced by a larger structure and that the cemetery continued in use.

#### *Group V*

During the latter part of the 12th century a general levelling preceded the construction of a manor-house in the same location and on the same alignment as the aisled building. This levelling removed down to sub-soil level much of the earlier occupation material. The manor-house is thought to have been the residence of the De Furneus family during the 12th and 13th centuries. From the 15th century the field has been known as Furnell's Close. Although the walls constructed were of stone and timber many of the alignments remained only as shallow robber trenches (Fig. 9). Walls survived to a maximum of three courses on the W. side of the hall where they were constructed of rough-hewn limestone facing blocks with a rubble core, with some mortar present. No evidence of separate foundation courses was

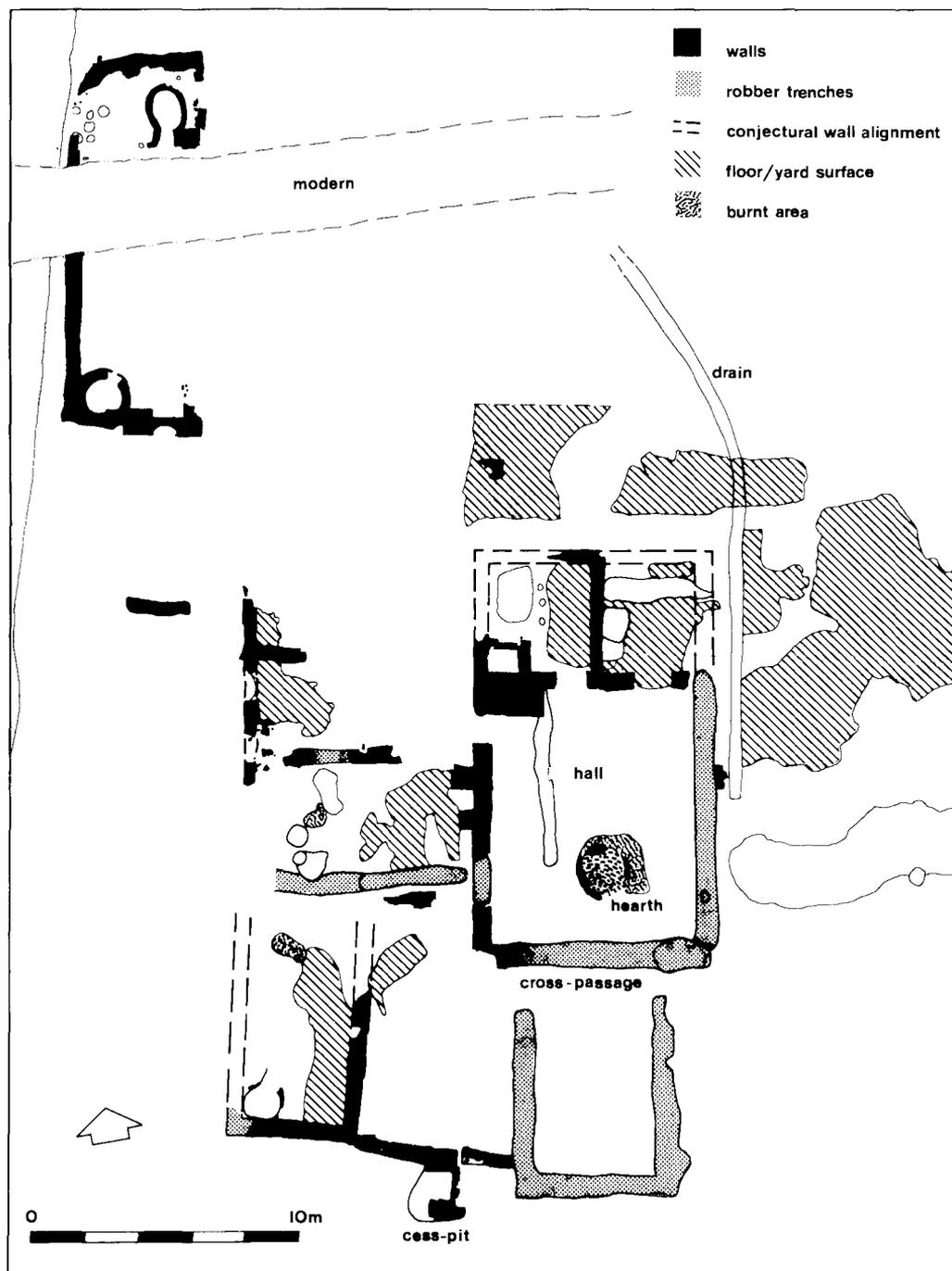


FIG. 9  
RAUNDS: 12th- to 14th-century manor-house. Group V

noted, nor were any clear traces of foundation trench located. Floor surfaces within the hall, which measured 9.5 m by 7.5 m, were largely missing, probably as a result of demolition activity, although the pitched stone foundation of a hearth was found *in situ*. Three entrances to the hall were defined; two were placed in the N. wall and one in the W. wall. Immediately N. of the opening in the W. wall was a rectangular stone feature set into the hall's NW. corner, thought to represent the base to a stairway leading to an upper storey or balcony. Against the outer face of the W. wall and the E. wall robber trench were two stone bases. The western one measured one metre square and was an integral part of the main wall; both may represent buttresses. To the S. of the main hall was a cross passage running E.-W. and beyond this robber trenches indicated a single large room (6.5 m by 4.5 m). Immediately W. lay a series of wall fragments incorporating a partially stone-lined cess-pit and beyond this the remains of a rectangular stone structure in the SW. corner which included the remnants of a circular hearth or oven. This structure formed part of small chambers adjoining the manor-house's western side, many of which survived only in a fragmentary condition.

To the N. of the main hall and linked by the two entrances through the hall's N. wall were two chambers. Both were better preserved than the rest of the manor-house and had floors comprising large slabs of rough-hewn limestone. The easterly chamber of the two also contained two stone-lined features, resembling drains, which may once have adjoined a well-preserved, stone-lined drain lying immediately E. and outside the main building. About twelve metres to the NW. of the main structure three sides of an unmortared stone structure (13 m by 5 m) were located. Two circular ovens were located within the structure; that to the N. appears to pre-date the other.

A number of other structures and features associated with the manor-house has been recorded. In the SE. part of the site (to the S. of the cemetery) a series of deep, long pits had been dug, and must have provided building sand. To the N. there were the remains of a series of domestic and industrial activities which utilized pits and a malting oven.

During the 12th and 13th centuries, the eastern part of the site, previously occupied by the church and cemetery, contained only a single stone structure converted from the nave of the church. The graveyard boundaries were largely abandoned at this time and there is some evidence for small timber buildings standing in and around what had once been the cemetery. The best preserved of these lay to the N. of the cemetery in the NE. corner with two well preserved phases of stone-lined drain.

### *Group VI*

During the mid to late 14th century the manor-house of Roger De Furneus was demolished and another manor-house constructed on the site previously occupied by the churches. This new manor-house,<sup>5</sup> which continued in use until the 15th century, incorporated the remains of the rectangular structure of the previous period of occupation, built over the churches.

*The Pottery*

The excavations produced a large quantity of pottery and although the analysis is at an interim stage several important aspects of the assemblage have emerged. The overall range of the material is from the 6th/7th to the 15th century. The domestic pottery of the early and middle Saxon period (Groups I-III) is important in that it forms a large group (in excess of 1,000 vessels) in an area of the county where there is little excavated material that is comparable. The stratigraphic sequence of this period contributes a framework within which typological and technical features of the pottery can be described. The Saxo-Norman period (Group IV) is dominated by shell-tempered wares, the bulk of which are hand-made, with a smaller proportion of wheel-thrown St Neots type ware. The hand-made types would appear to be a continuation of a tradition first seen in the late middle Saxon period where it is comparable with the pottery from Maxey.<sup>6</sup>

Pottery from the kilns at Lyveden and Stanion, including an aquamanile, is well represented in the 12th/14th centuries (Group V) and in the later levels they are associated with products from Brill and Oxford. There is a distinct change between the ceramics of Groups V and VI with the later period represented by 'Late Medieval Reduced Ware'<sup>7</sup> and other Northamptonshire wheel-thrown types.

## SUMMARY AND OBSERVATIONS

Although the data from the excavation are only in the early stages of analysis there are several points which should be noted.

Within the limits of the excavation there was a remarkable range of pre-Conquest and medieval buildings across a sequence of occupation extending over nine centuries. There is some doubt as to the continuity of occupation between the earliest activity and the structures of Group II. Events in the 11th century are far from clear. No settlement boundary is identified for the two earlier settlement 'groups' and that for the third remains unproven, although a small-scale project currently in progress may help to solve this. The boundaries of subsequent periods of activity are reasonably well understood.

The origins of the site could be related to a tenurial sub-division of an estate of Raunds. There are two Raunds manors recorded in 1086, with intermixed dependencies within the adjacent settlements. During the late Saxon period the site is probably the centre for one of these manors, held in 1066 by the great thegn Burgred. The presence of the church is indicative of the site's manorial status, particularly in view of the proprietary nature of some late Saxon churches. The superimposition of a later structure of certainly manorial status (the great house of Group V) upon the aisled building strengthens the case for the aisled building also being of manorial status.

Since various buildings on either side of the Conquest are almost certainly manorial, there is obviously scope at Raunds for the detailed examination of the genesis of the Saxon and medieval manorial system. On the other hand there is an absence, for the excavated site, of account rolls, extents and other documents which could have provided complementary evidence of structural development, dating,

and economic activity in and around the manor. However, such records are available for the other main manor in Raunds, known as Burystead (Fig. 1), adjacent to and associated with the medieval parish church. The area of Burystead is currently subject to preliminary investigation and has provided evidence of middle and late Saxon occupation.<sup>8</sup> The inter-relationships between Burystead and the excavated Furnell's manor are obviously of prime interest. Further rescue excavation is planned for one of the deserted settlements within the land unit of Raunds which were dependencies of the 1066 manors and in the case of West Cotton the origins and structural development of the village will be compared to the sequence seen at the manor site. A field-walking programme is also under way in Raunds to examine the early/middle Saxon settlement pattern out of which the excavated sites grew.

The function of individual buildings is an area that must await more detailed assessment of the structures, as must presentation of the sequence of their structural development.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> A. Boddington, site director 1977-79; G. Cadman, site director 1980-82.

<sup>2</sup> Pers. comm. Dr D. Sutherland.

<sup>3</sup> A. Boddington, 'A Christian Anglo-Saxon Graveyard at Raunds', 373-78 in P. Rahtz, T. Dickinson and L. Watts (eds.), *Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries* (Oxford, Brit. Archaeol. Repts. Brit. Ser. 82, 1980). See also A. Boddington and G. Cadman, 'Raunds. An interim Report on Excavations 1977-80', 103-22 in D. Brown, J. Campbell and S. Chadwick-Hawkes (eds.), *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History*, 2 (Oxford, Brit. Archaeol. Repts. Brit. Ser. 92, 1981).

<sup>4</sup> G. Cadman and G. Foard, 'Raunds, Manorial and Village Origins', forthcoming for Society of Landscape Studies.

<sup>5</sup> Boddington and Cadman, op. cit. in note 3, 111-15.

<sup>6</sup> P. V. Addyman, 'A Dark Age Settlement at Maxey, Northamptonshire', *Medieval Archaeol.*, viii (1964), 20-73.

<sup>7</sup> S. J. Moorhouse, 'A Distinctive Type of Late Medieval Pottery in the Eastern Midlands', *Proc. Cambridge Antiq. Soc.*, 65 (1974), 46-59.

<sup>8</sup> S. A. Power, in preparation for *Northants. Archaeol.*

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