

The Archaeology of Wiltshire's Towns
An Extensive Urban Survey

RAMSBURY

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The Archaeology and History of Ramsbury

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Towns are an important component of the historic environment which have developed over many hundreds of years and are under constant development pressures. The archaeological resource within our historic towns is an invaluable and irreplaceable source of data about past societies and the evolution of our culture. Despite these factors the archaeology of many towns, especially the smaller market towns, is poorly understood.
- 1.2. In 1976 the D.O.E. sponsored a study of the archaeology of Wiltshire's historic towns, aiming to assess the relative importance of the towns at different points in time as a basis for future archaeological research. This resulted in the publication of "*Wiltshire Towns: the archaeological potential*" (Haslam 1976). Since then, the book has been one of the key references for archaeologists monitoring urban development and its impact in the county.
- 1.3. An increase in the amount of archaeological and historical data available and changes in legislation such as the introduction of Planning Policy Guidance note No.16, have meant that a reappraisal of the situation is now due. The Extensive Urban Survey of Wiltshire has been commissioned by English Heritage, as part of a National programme, to address the need for a new assessment of urban archaeology in the county. The current structure of the historic county of Wiltshire is two-tier, with the County Council working in conjunction with the four District Councils (Kennet, North Wiltshire, Salisbury and West Wiltshire) and the new unitary authority of Swindon – historically part of the county. The survey aims to map the development of all of Wiltshire's and Swindon's historic towns (Fig. 1) and to assess the extent of the surviving archaeology and built heritage. It is also proposed that the threat of development on the historic environment within the county's towns will be examined.
- 1.4. As far as is known the first towns in Wiltshire appeared during the Romano-British period but all the known examples are now greenfield sites, although some may have given rise to nearby settlements. Most modern towns in the county have their roots as Saxon villages or defended settlements such as Cricklade and Wilton. Many of the villages grew into small towns after the Norman invasion, often focussed around a castle or market and in the early thirteenth century 'planted boroughs', in which individual plots of land were sold by the major landowner.
- 1.5. The definition of a town for inclusion in the survey follows the criteria laid out in Heighway (1972), by which the settlement must possess certain characteristics such as defences, a mint, a market, a street plan, or a judicial centre, and demonstrate such urban attributes as high population, a diversified economic base or a central or key location. For the purposes of the survey, however, the towns should meet these criteria historically, even if they no longer do so. This allows, for example, the inclusion of the five Roman towns in the county, and

settlements such as the village of Heytesbury, which was developed as a planned town in the 13th century, but which did not succeed as an urban centre. The full list of 34 towns included in the survey and the criteria for inclusion are included as Appendix 1. Ramsbury satisfies three criteria: it has a documented early market (*criteria* iii); it has evidence for a diversified economic base (*criteria* viii); it was the site of a Saxon cathedral (*criteria* xii).

- 1.6. The area of study in each town is defined by the size of the town as it stood in 1945, encompassing both the historic core of the town and the older industrial and suburban development. There is an emphasis on the earlier material, and the later Victorian and 20th century development are covered here only very briefly. Although more detailed than Haslam's report, in most cases each study remains no more than a brief summary of the data, and a guide to the location of more detail for other researchers. The extent of the study area for Ramsbury is depicted in Fig. 2.
- 1.7. The research into each town will be encapsulated into two reports: a summary and assessment of the data gathered and an outline strategy for future management of specified sections of the urban area. This first report is intended to provide a clear and up-to-date synthesis of the available archaeological and historical data for Ramsbury, with an assessment of the main areas of historic settlement in the town and of the potential and sensitivity of the archaeologically important areas. The assessment reports are compiled from four main data streams: geographical and geological sources for the location and topographical summary; secondary historical sources for the historical outline; recorded archaeological data for the sites and finds information; the archive of the Wiltshire Buildings Record (WBR) for architectural data. The architectural summary is not subject to the same level of research as the other three data streams, and the information presented in the reports is based upon evidence compiled from the existing WBR archive, updated in places by field visits to note non-listed buildings of historic interest, combined with the Department Of The Environment schedule of listed buildings.

2. LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 2.1. Modern Ramsbury is a village lying close to the eastern border of the county, approximately halfway between Marlborough and Hungerford (Berks.), in the District of Kennet. The settlement is sited on the north bank of the River Kennet, which drains to the east.
- 2.2. The geology of the Ramsbury area is typical of the river valleys of the Wessex chalk downs, comprising Upper Chalk capped on high ground by deposits of Clay-With-Flints. Within the Kennet valley itself, intermittent, discontinuous deposits of Valley Gravels are separated by a c.200-400m wide strip of Alluvium (British Geological Survey 1947). The elevation of the area ranges from c.217m AOD on the chalk uplands to north and south, down to a mean of c.125m within the village itself (Ordnance Survey 1985).

3. PAST WORK AND THE NATURE OF THE EVIDENCE

3.1. Historic Sources

3.1.1. This is a desk-based study, using material available within the County Council Heritage Services facilities in Trowbridge: the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR); The Wiltshire Reference Library; the Wiltshire & Swindon Record Office; and the Wiltshire Buildings Record. Historical data are generally drawn from secondary sources, normally the Victoria County History and histories of the individual towns, based on recommendations or specific requirements. Data on archaeological investigations and their results are drawn directly from the original reports or publications wherever these are available, but for some poorly recorded finds we have had to rely on passing references or the existing entries in the county SMR.

3.1.2. The use of primary sources in the Record Office is restricted to maps and sometimes other pictorial material, which are consulted to accurately locate individual sites or buildings and to trace the growth of the settlement.

3.2. Archaeological Work In The Town

3.2.1. This section outlines the known archaeological investigations that have taken place in Ramsbury. The list is compiled from information in the County Sites and Monuments Record, Excavations Register, and the fieldwork reports kept in the County Archaeology Section in Trowbridge. Others have been added as a result of incidental mention in one of the above sources, and where there is enough information to get at least a general idea of the location of the site. The numbers refer to the map included in this report (Fig. 3).

Event	Year	Site Name/Location	Event Type	Excavator	Reference
001	1965	Burdett Street	Excavation	J.W.G. Musty	Wiltshire Archaeological Magazine 1966
002	1974	High Street	Excavation	J. Haslam	Haslam 1980
003	1985	Orchard Close	Evaluation	Unknown	Croucher 1985
004	1986	6 High Street	Evaluation	Wessex Archaeology	Wessex Archaeology 1986
005	1986	Central Garage, High Street	Evaluation	Thamesdown Archaeological Unit	Thamesdown Archaeological Unit 1986
006	1987	The Gallery, Back Lane	Excavation	Thamesdown Archaeological Unit	Wiltshire Archaeological Magazine 1988
007*	2002	Ramsbury Church	Resistivity Surveys	Naomi Payne	Naomi Payne Univ. of Bristol 2002

Table 1: Archaeological Investigations in Ramsbury. Reports flagged thus * have not been used in this Assessment

4. HISTORICAL OUTLINE

- 4.1. This report is not intended to provide a major historical review of the history of Ramsbury and the material included here relates mainly to events which might have had some impact on the archaeology of the town, or its survival. The chief source of historical information for Ramsbury is Volume 12 of the Victoria County History (1983), upon which, unless otherwise stated, the majority of the Historical Outline is based.
- 4.2. The earliest mention of Ramsbury is in connection with the creation of a bishopric in c.909, although the see may have been named after the estate granted to it rather than a settlement – however it is likely that at least a small village existed at this time. It is probable that any such settlement would have belonged to the bishops of Ramsbury, and that their successors kept it after the see moved to Salisbury in the Norman re-organisation of the church in 1075-1078. The Bishop of Salisbury is listed as holding Ramsbury at Domesday, when five burgesses of Cricklade were attached to the manor.
- 4.3. Ramsbury is thought to have been the largest of the seven settlements in this part of the Kennet valley in the later 11th century, when its name was that of a 90 Hide estate – the second largest non-royal estate in Wiltshire at the time. The Domesday manor appears to have been prosperous, with ten mills listed, although these would not all have been sited in or near the settlement.
- 4.4. An important and early church can be inferred at Ramsbury, at least from the time of the creation of the see, and it is possible that in the later 10th century the parish of this church – which may have been of cathedral status - included the whole episcopal estate and Hundred. The church was transferred to the see of Salisbury along with the parish, until in the mid 12th century or earlier they were given to endow the prebend of Ramsbury, a unit which remained intact until the 16th century.
- 4.5. The bishops are known to have had a market at Ramsbury in 1219, and in 1227 the sherriff was ordered by the king not to prevent it and formally granted the right to market. Two years later, however, it was suppressed due to its impact upon the market at Marlborough, but may have continued to trade. For the next seventy years the authorities of the two settlements argued over market rights whilst continuing to trade in both towns. By 1300 the market at Ramsbury may have no longer been considered a threat to Marlborough and a further royal grant is recorded. However, the last mention of a market thereafter is from 1319, suggesting that it failed to flourish, although bi-annual fairs continued until the early 20th century.
- 4.6. A fulling mill and quilling house are known in Ramsbury in the 14th and 15th centuries, indicating cloth-making to be in progress. The leather trade was prominent from at least the 17th century, and by the late 18th/early 19th centuries there were three or more tanneries in operation. Malting was also important at

this time and several maltings were said to be in existence by the early 19th century. Two foundries are recorded in the later 19th century.

- 4.7. Ramsbury is known to have suffered at least two significant fires, the first in 1648 which claimed the dwellings of 130 families (Chandler 2001) and must have removed much of the town's Medieval fabric. The fire of 1781 destroyed some forty dwellings, and properties to the north of the church, in Back Lane, were never rebuilt after this disaster. In the period between these two fires a coach road developed from London to Bath. Ramsbury gained additional prosperity from this trade and several inns were established. However, the subsequent by-passing of the settlement by canal and rail, coupled with the fast decline in coaching in the mid 19th century, have contributed towards Ramsbury's present position as a quiet, rural village.

5. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SUMMARY

5.1. Introduction

- 5.1.1. The following is a resume of the archaeological record of the town, drawn from the county SMR and the various excavation reports. Data on surviving buildings come from the Wiltshire Buildings Record unless otherwise stated. The bold print numbers in this section refer to entries in the Urban Survey database, and appear on the sites and findspots location maps in Figs. 4 - 7, which were created from the database and the SMR.

5.2. Prehistory (Fig. 4)

- 5.2.1. A single find of this period is known from within the Study Area. Barbara Croucher in her 1986 local history volume records the excavation of a skeleton found in a crouched or foetal posture, in a north-south alignment (**RA006**). No grave goods were found, but the burial was considered to be of probable Bronze or Iron Age date. Unfortunately, the County Archaeology Service has no record of this find, which is of significance for the area from whence it originated – Orchard Close.

5.3. Roman (Fig. 4)

- 5.3.1. A number of re-used Roman bricks were discovered within the construction layers of a Saxon furnace excavated in the High Street in 1974 (**RA005**, Haslam 1980). No other Romano-British finds are known from Ramsbury, although it is probable that a villa site lies somewhere within the vicinity as it is unlikely that the bricks travelled far to get to the furnace site.

5.4. Saxon (Fig. 5)

- 5.4.1. The Saxon iron smelting site was discovered during an excavation sited just north of the High Street (**RA001**, Haslam 1980). The site dated to the 7th and 8th

centuries and included four iron smelting furnaces, a number of forges or working hearths and evidence for a post-built structure – possibly a lean-to shelter for the iron workers. The metal working may have ceased within the excavation area some time in the 9th century – although it possibly continued at a nearby location. The industrial deposits were then sealed by a later Saxon occupation layer. A large Medieval ditch later cut through this stratigraphy (RA009).

5.4.2. Holy Cross church (**RA007**, Doran Webb 1891) is of Medieval origin, but traditionally has been thought to be built on the site of the Saxon cathedral of the bishopric of Ramsbury, created in 909. During the restoration of the church in 1891 substantial masonry foundations were observed (though not recorded in detail) to the south of the present building. These are thought to relate to this earlier church. Also recovered during this work were large fragments of an intricately carved Saxon cross shaft – possibly of 9th century date - and pieces of stone coffin lid, one of which is thought to depict a bishop. These finds are displayed within the present, Medieval, church (RA008). The cross shaft fragments are significant, and may indicate the presence of a minster church before the creation of the bishopric.

5.5. Medieval (Fig. 6)

5.5.1. The Church of the Holy Cross, High Street (**RA008**, Pevsner 1975) has a 13th century originally cruciform core of flint with limestone ashlar dressings extended in the 13-14th century. The chancel was lengthened in the 15th century. The aisles were later rebuilt in 1891 by Doran Webb. The 1891 work encountered earlier foundations which may be of Saxon date (RA007).

5.5.2. A vicarage between the church and Back Lane is first documented in 1341 (**RA010**, Crowley 1983), although the prebend of Ramsbury was endowed in the early to mid 12th century, and a house may have been part of that endowment. There are records for repairs to the vicarage in 1681, and it was partially rebuilt in 1786. The original building was replaced in c.1840 by the present house now called 'The Old Vicarage', although it is uncertain whether the earlier house was incorporated within the new or completely demolished.

5.5.3. To the west of Ramsbury lies Ramsbury Manor Park (**RA011**, Crowley 1983). This became the seat of the Bishops of Salisbury after they moved from their as yet undiscovered location in the village. The pale of the park is thought to have limited the western spread of the settlement since the 13th century, and today still marks the edge of the village, although little in the way of an earthwork is visible.

5.5.4. Pipe trenching work at the rear of Burdett Street in the 1960s revealed a group of five skeletons laid apparently carelessly in a single grave (**RA002**, Musty 1965). Pottery of 13th/14th date was recovered from the fill. They were thought by the excavator to be possible plague burials. Some distance to the west of these burials a large north-south aligned ditch of 13th century date was

recorded at the Saxon iron-working site (**RA009**, Haslam 1980). A single sherd of Medieval pottery was found during work at 6 High Street (**RA003**, Wessex Archaeology 1986).

5.6. Post Medieval (Fig. 7)

5.6.1. Excavations at the former Central Garage site (**RA012**, Thamesdown Archaeological Unit 1986) encountered a wall foundation, pits, soil horizons and artefacts of Post-medieval origin, dating from the 17th to 18th centuries. The work revealed that substantial disturbance had occurred on the site within the past 150 years. Further west, at 6 High Street (**RA013**, Wessex Archaeology 1986), excavators recorded a compacted chalk floor and demolition rubble dating to the 16th or 17th centuries. An evaluation at The Gallery, Back Lane (**RA014**, Thamesdown Archaeological Unit 1987) found evidence of 18th century terracing.

5.7. Industrial/Recent (Fig. 8)

5.7.1. Two historic mill sites lie within the Study Area, at Edwards Mill (**RA015**) and Town Mill (**RA016**). Both are at least of 18th century date, and they may lie upon the sites of mills listed at the time of Domesday (Croucher 1986).

5.7.2. Ramsbury was prosperous in tanning and malting in the late 18th and 19th centuries. The sites of several tanneries and malthouses have been identified, although this survey has only plotted the locations of the tanneries, as these sites will leave significant archaeological traces (sunken vats, tanpits, etc.), whereas the malthouses may survive as structures, although converted to other uses such as dwellings. An extensive survey of the village's standing buildings is required to assess the quantity and quality of any remains associated with the malt trade – a task beyond the scope of this project.

5.7.3. The tanning trade was clustered chiefly to the south of the High Street, presumably for access to the River Kennet, although one site (**RA019**) has been identified north of the High Street. Barbara Croucher (1986) has located the sites of this activity from cartographic sources. Those recorded on an enclosure award map of 1778 include the businesses of John Day (**RA017**), Jennings (**RA018**) and Edward Francis (**RA019**). Those recorded on the 1839 tithe map include the businesses of Thomas Goddard (**RA020**), Langfield (**RA021**) and John Ashley (**RA022**). The decline of the brewing and tanning industries may be linked to the bypassing of the town by road, canal and railway.

5.8. Undated (Fig. 8)

5.8.1. Investigations by Thamesdown Archaeological Unit at a site in Back Lane (**RA004**) revealed a sill beam trench and the possible foundations of a stone building. Both were undated. An evaluation by the same organisation at the

Central garage site in 1986 (**RA023**) encountered undated pits and soil horizons.

5.9. Built Heritage

5.9.1. Ramsbury lies on the River Kennet and was a coaching stop on the important London to Bristol Road. The main industry here was brewing the well-reputed Ramsbury Ale and tanning, which flourished between the 16th and 19th centuries. The gradual failure of these industries, together with the bypassing of the town by rail, road and canal left Ramsbury in decline. All domestic building up to the 16th century was in timber after which there is a gradual increase in the use of brick and flint, and especially ornamental brickwork in the 19th century.

5.9.2. **Sixteenth Century.** The five buildings of this century are of timber-frame construction, 2-3 panels high and with corner bracing where this is visible.

5.9.3. **Seventeenth Century.** Probably the best house in Ramsbury itself is Parliament Piece, Back Lane (grade II*). It is a large English bond brick house of c.1620 with an extension to the east in 1680-1700 in similar materials. The interior has been altered and now has an 18th century open well staircase, panelled dining room and stone fireplaces. Crowood House, Crowood Lane (grade II*) is a late 17th century stuccoed brick mansion (the date 1686 has recently been found on a rafter - Pevsner) with a parallel rear block added probably in the early 19th century. The interior has reset early 17th century panelling and other good features.

5.9.4. Up to this period, all houses were still generally timber-framed and thatched, such as Elmdown Farmhouse, Spring Hill (grade II). Of 27 buildings listed in this period, almost all ordinary domestic housing is of this type with the exception of Vine cottage, Union Street which is of flint and brick.

5.9.5. **Eighteenth Century.** There are no outstanding buildings of the twenty-four listed in this period. Some brick or brick-laced flint houses at this time were beginning to replace timber-framed structures. An example of this is Brookside, Newtown Road where the framing was replaced in flint and brick probably during this time. Timber framing by this time was mostly weatherboarded and confined to farm buildings such as barns and granaries. The brickwork was used decoratively in panels or bands with flint, a much cheaper material. Back and side walls were often of brick in the majority of ordinary housing.

5.9.6. **Nineteenth Century.** New building in this century continued to be of flint with brick lacing courses, and increasingly of brick alone with or without diaper work and decorative bands. Stone was rarely used, though an example can be seen at 81 High Street. Earlier timber framed houses continued to be clad in brick, or a mixture of brick and flint. Thirty-five structures are listed in this period.

6. PLAN FORM ANALYSIS

6.1. Introduction

6.1.1. The town has been divided into components, each representing blocks of activity, and sub-divided by period. Ramsbury, in common with all existing Wiltshire towns, has no foundation in the prehistoric or Romano-British periods, although archaeological remains belonging to both periods are present within and nearby to the study area. Historical and documentary archives have clearly identified the presence of a settlement from at least the 10th century, although the sparse archaeological evidence and lack of detailed historical records for the Saxon period has meant that a conjectural reconstruction has been necessary. Otherwise, the town has been divided into different plan components (settlement areas, church, market place, etc.) for each relevant period, and these are illustrated in the stated figures.

Table 2: Plan form components

COMPONENT	PERIOD OF ORIGIN	COMPONENT TYPE	FIGURE No.
COM 1	Saxon	Possible Cathedral & Precinct	9
COM 2	Saxon	Possible Bishops Residence	9
COM 3	Saxon	Iron Smelting Site	9
COM 4	Saxon	Conjectured Extent of Settlement	9
COM5	Saxon	Possible Mill Sites	9
COM 6	Saxon	Roads	9
COM 7	Medieval	Parish Church & Vicarage	10
COM8	Medieval	Possible Market Place	10
COM9	Medieval	Settlement Area	10
COM10	Medieval	Ramsbury Manor Park	10
COM11	Medieval	Probable Mill Sites	10
COM12	Medieval	Roads	10

6.2. Saxon (Fig. 9)

6.2.1. **COM1 - Possible Cathedral & Precinct.** There is documentary (Par. 4.4) and archaeological evidence (Par. 5.4.2) for the existence of an early high status church in Ramsbury. As the seat of an important bishopric this would have been termed a cathedral. Further archaeological research is required to clarify the nature of the building which preceded Holy Cross Church, and the area shown on Fig. 9 is conjectural, based upon the Medieval parish church land, including the area to the north of the church given over during that period for the construction of the former vicarage house (Crowley 1983). Given the status of the church in Ramsbury in the 10th century, it is possible that the Saxon building was a substantial affair, perhaps analogous with the excavated former cathedral site at North Elmham, Norfolk (Rigold 1962-3, Taylor 1978), or to be thought of as a larger version of the extant minster church at Deerhurst, Gloucestershire (Butler, Rahtz & Taylor 1975, Rodwell 1989). Whatever the exact comparison, it is true to say that an important church lies beneath Holy Cross, and given the community of clergy and clerks usually found in such establishments (Darvill 1992), may have been accompanied by a range of ancillary buildings and accommodation, separate from the bishops residence (**COM2**).

- 6.2.2. **COM2 – Possible Bishops Residence.** In the early to mid 12th century the Bishops of Salisbury moved their Ramsbury residence to the well-documented site at Ramsbury Manor Park (**COM10**). Prior to that time it is thought that the episcopal residence was located within the settlement, adjacent to the cathedral (Crowley 1983), although there is as yet no archaeological evidence to confirm this. A possible site for this component may lie to the west of the present churchyard, between the church and what is now Burdett Street. Burdett Street was known in the Medieval period as Castle Wall or Castle Street (*ibid.*), and in this context ‘castle’, rather than denoting a defensive stronghold, may be derived from the Latin *castrum* or Old English *caester* or *ceaster*, denoting an early political centre or seat of administrative power (Darvill 1992). This theory, based solely on place-name evidence, requires archaeological research to determine the true nature of the site.
- 6.2.3. **COM3 – Iron Smelting Site.** The excavation of a mid-Saxon iron-producing site is of great interest (Par. 5.4.1). Haslam (1980), in his discussion of the site, considers the significance of the finds in terms not only of technological achievement, but also in terms of the distance that iron ore would have to travel to get to Ramsbury, the organisation necessary to do this, the resulting importance the finished products would have within a large area of distribution and the economic interchange which would have taken place between the Ramsbury site and its suppliers/customers. Although it is beyond the scope of this report to reproduce Haslam’s discussion at length, two issues are of relevance: the probability that the smelting/metalworking site was more extensive than the excavation area, and that further deposits may survive in-situ beneath adjoining properties. This was recognised by Haslam, who warned that periods of inactivity identified within the excavated archaeology may have meant that the focus of production had moved beyond the excavation area rather than indicating a period of disuse. For this reason, a conjectural area to the east, west and north of the excavation site has been included in the area depicted in Fig. 9, to hopefully cover the full extent of this important site.
- 6.2.4. **COM4 – Possible Settlement Area.** The archaeological evidence suggests that by the time of the cathedral’s foundation – the early 10th century – a settlement engaged in trade and manufacture on a regional basis was in existence, and the fragments of 9th century cross shaft recorded during the 1891 restoration of the church (Par. 5.4.2) attest to the presence of a possible minster church before the cathedral. Although the settlement associated with these sites need be no larger than a village, it is obvious that it must have experienced some relative prosperity, which would have been enhanced by the creation of the bishopric. Such a settlement would probably have been focussed upon the church/cathedral (**COM1**) and the bishops residence (**COM2**), and Haslam (1980) suggests that during the mid-Saxon period at least the principal area of settlement would have been along Back Lane, rather than the Medieval High Street. This observation is based upon the probable location of the industrial site to the rear of, or to one side of, the settlement. Certainly by the late Saxon/early Medieval period it was usual to locate such activity away from residential living space, to the rear of properties. Crowley (1983) considers

the elliptical arrangement of Back Lane and High Street to be of antiquity, and therefore the postulated settlement area has been extended east beyond the cathedral (**COM1**) to the meeting point of these two roads.

6.2.5. **COM5 – Possible Mill Sites.** Several mills are listed in Ramsbury estate in 1086, and successive writers (ie. Haslam 1976, Crowley 1983, Croucher 1986) have suggested that the two mill sites marking the south-western and south-eastern ends of the village have been used as such since that time. It is most likely that some if not all mills recorded at Domesday were in existence before the Conquest, although archaeological research is required to determine these suggestions.

6.2.6. **COM6 – Roads.** The roads depicted in Fig. 9 include the two main thoroughfares within the settlement – the present High Street and Back Lane – connecting ways to other local settlements listed in the Domesday Survey, and access roads to the mill sites.

6.3. *Medieval (Fig. 10)*

6.3.1. **COM7 – Parish Church and Vicarage.** The present Holy Cross church has been dated to the 13th century (Par. 5.5.1), and the vicarage to its north to at least c.1341 (Par. 5.5.2). It is likely that the 13th century re-building of the church – possibly the former cathedral - followed from the creation of the prebend of Ramsbury in the 12th century. Although the vicarage is first mentioned in the 14th century, it may have been contemporary with the new parish church, and prebend houses are known from other 12th/13th century foundations across the county. The area depicted in Fig. 10 includes the present churchyard boundaries and the rectangular property to the north which the vicarage may have had sole occupancy of in the Medieval period.

6.3.2. **COM8 – Possible Market Place.** Market activity is documented in Ramsbury from the early 13th to early 14th centuries (Par. 4.5), and is thought to have dwindled away thereafter. Whether Ramsbury ever had a formal market place is questionable, but one site suggests itself for the role. The Square, at the east end of the village, is a now irregular open space at the junction of four historic roads, and has traditionally served as a meeting place for local festivities, marked by a large tree in the centre of the area. It is possible that this site, somewhat encroached upon from all sides, represents the physical evidence for Ramsbury's attempt to compete with the established market centre at nearby Marlborough.

6.3.3. **COM9 – Settlement Area.** The extent of Medieval settlement can be inferred, based upon topographical constraints, cartographic evidence and the known history of Ramsbury from the late Medieval period onwards. To the south the River Kennet has traditionally defined the border of settlement, while to the west the boundary of Ramsbury Manor Park (**COM10**), in existence since the 12th century, has checked the expansion of the village. The present Old Forge, of 17th century date, and Edwards Mill (**COM11**) mark the boundaries of historic

settlement here. Back Lane is known to have been more heavily occupied than today (Crowley 1983), and Haslam (1980) has suggested it to once have been the main street. A major fire in 1781 destroyed many houses, some of which were never rebuilt (Par. 4.7), giving this street its present, relatively undeveloped appearance. If Haslam is correct, the colonisation of the present High Street began in the period following the Conquest, and was possibly contemporary with the reconstruction of the church and the attempt at creating a market place (**COM8**). Crowley considers it unlikely on balance that any significant planned expansion of the settlement occurred at Ramsbury, and that the modest growth of the settlement in the Medieval period was a natural filling-out process. This survey has found no evidence to conflict with this theory. It is possible that, like many other small Wiltshire towns, the Post-medieval era for Ramsbury was one of relative inactivity (Par. 6.4.1). If this is correct then the extent of the settlement shown in the 1773 Andrews & Jury map may largely reflect that of the late 15th century, and has been used here to trace the northern and eastern extents.

6.3.4. The present built heritage of Ramsbury presents itself as chiefly 18th/19th century houses and former shop frontages, with small pockets of 17th century survival. However, a systematic buildings survey could identify many earlier survivals behind these later frontages, and help to prove some of the postulated Medieval settlement areas.

6.3.5. **COM10 – Ramsbury Manor Park.** Ramsbury Manor, the Medieval residence of the Bishops of Salisbury, lies largely outside the Study Area, and as an urban plan-form component concerns us in only two aspects. The relocation of the bishops left a large area in the centre of the settlement available for use/occupation, and the creation of the Manor Park introduced an artificial boundary in the landscape which checked the expansion of Ramsbury village to the west.

6.3.6. **COM11 – Probable Mill Sites.** These are the two historic mill sites, located at either end of Ramsbury, which as discussed above (Par. 6.2.5), may have been in continuous use since the later Saxon period, and certainly through the Medieval period.

6.4. Post-medieval

6.4.1. Ramsbury, in common with many Wiltshire towns entered a period of relative stasis in the Post-medieval era. Although some localised changes did occur, such as - within the town centre - the development of coaching inns and the rise of the local tanning and malting trades. Limited developments included the building of large private houses such as Parliament Piece (par. 5.8.3) and Ramsbury Hill in Back Lane. These events did not significantly alter the form of the town, and therefore a plan form map has not been prepared for this period.

7. ASSESSMENT

7.1. Summary of Research

- 7.1.1. Historical and documentary evidence clearly indicates a settlement to be in existence at Ramsbury from at least the early 10th century, when the bishopric was created. Little is known of the history of the mid Saxon settlement, and the existing references do not describe it in detail. The first such description is of the 90 Hide estate held by the Bishops at Domesday, and indicates the presence of mills, a church and detached burgesses from Cricklade – a situation which raises more questions than it answers. Similarly, the history of Ramsbury in the 12th to 14th centuries is obscure. The legal wrangles over market rights are known, but not the size or site of the market place, whether any planned stimulus of the settlement accompanied it, or whether any burgages were created. From the Post-medieval period onwards the picture becomes clearer, with the development of the coaching, tanning and malting trades covered by researchers, but it is obvious that much remains to be studied in virtually all aspects of the settlement, over all periods.
- 7.1.2. The archaeological work conducted in Ramsbury has produced some intriguing finds, of which the most important is the mid Saxon smelting site in the High Street, although the finds of burials in Orchard Close and Burdett Street are also significant. The smelting site indicates that archaeological stratigraphy can often survive even on intensively developed sites, and indicates a good potential for the survival of further Saxon remains in the village. The more recent archaeological work has comprised small development-generated projects, often with inconclusive results, however both burial sites were unexpected and may indicate a more complex archaeological stratigraphy than that anticipated.

7.2. The Growth of the Town (Fig. 11)

7.2.1. Saxon

- 7.2.1.1. Haslam (1980) has suggested that Ramsbury has been in existence as a settlement or estate centre since at least the early Saxon period, and as a land unit or estate may possibly be of much earlier origin. This survey, however, is concerned primarily with the proven continuity of settlement on an established site leading to the development of urban or proto-urban attributes. As such Ramsbury can be traced to the early 10th century, by which time the creation of the bishopric strongly suggests an established settlement to be in existence. The iron smelting site takes this back to the mid-Saxon period, and section 6.2 of this report has summarised the probable main components of Ramsbury by the later Saxon period. Settlement at this time may have occupied the area from Back Lane south to the present High Street, may have been defined to the south-east by the smelting site and to the east by the established road junction in what is now The Square.

7.2.2. Late Medieval

7.2.1. Based upon the evidence presented in Section 6.3, above, it is possible to attempt to define the expansion of Ramsbury by the late Medieval period. The chief development in this period was the emergence of High Street as the main thoroughfare through the settlement. It was probably at this time that the southern side of the street became built-up within the constraints imposed by the River Kennet and the eastern boundary of Ramsbury Manor Park. At the east end of High Street, The Square may have been a small market area at the junction of four roads, and some settlement appears to have colonised the two roads leading east from the settlement as far as Tankard Lane.

7.2.3. Post Medieval & Recent

7.2.3.1. It is suggested above (Par. 6.4.1) that little expansion occurred during the Post-medieval period. Although this is true in terms of territorial expansion, it is clear from the surviving built heritage that much rebuilding took place in the 18th century, probably in conjunction with the rise of coaching and the local industries. By the end of the 19th century low-density settlement and smallholding had grown to the east and north-east of the Medieval settlement core, and the present mill buildings had been built at both mill sites south of the village. In the first half of the 20th century this trend slowed, and a small social housing scheme arose north-west of Back Street. North of Parliament Piece a group of buildings are depicted on the latest relevant 1:25000 map which do not survive on modern maps, but are neither depicted upon the 1st edition OS map. Ramsbury has seen little of the sprawling post-war suburban expansion which has enveloped many of the larger Wiltshire towns, and the key to this lies in its relative isolation from the mid 19th century onwards, when road, rail and canal all avoided the village.

7.3. The Archaeological Potential

7.3.1. One of the principal aims of this phase of the Extensive Urban Survey is to examine the archaeological potential of the town to assist with the development of a management strategy in the later phase of the project. Whilst all of the core town may be considered important archaeologically, it is necessary to try to highlight those areas of greater interest, either because of the importance of the remains or because better than average preservation is expected there.

7.3.2. One of the prime research considerations for Ramsbury must be the site of the possible Saxon minster church and cathedral. Such monuments are rare nationally – only twenty-four are recorded, of which a maximum of nineteen were active at any one time (English Heritage 1989) – and any opportunity to study the remains at Ramsbury would be welcome. As a potential site of national importance, any work at this location should focus upon determining the extent and condition of the remains, which partially or substantially lie beneath the present church (itself a Grade I listed building). It is recognised that the opportunities for such work are limited, but churches and churchyards are occasionally subject to necessary, relatively minor interventions such as

underpinning, damp-proofing, and the cutting of drainage and service trenches, all of which offer the opportunity for archaeological observation and recording.

- 7.3.3. Of only slightly lesser importance to the cathedral is the site of the Saxon episcopal residence. A possible site has been identified for this complex to the west of the parish church and cathedral site. Part of this area has been adopted as a graveyard extension to the parish church, and documentary sources have referred to it at different times as Free Orchard or Old Orchard, indicating the site to have been largely free of past development. If this is the case then there is a good possibility of sub-surface structural remains surviving *in-situ*. Much of this area is used as gardens today, and geophysical survey may help to determine the presence of former buildings on the site.
- 7.3.4. The Saxon settlement at Ramsbury is of interest in its own right, and may date to the first wave of Germanic settlement in the area. Any opportunity for archaeological investigation or observation within the area depicted in Fig. 9 would be valuable in beginning to plot the extent and nature of Saxon settlement activity. The mid Saxon iron smelting site has been shown to extend beyond the area of the 1974 excavation. Determining the full extent of this activity and locating any further phases will help to further our knowledge of this unique site.
- 7.3.5. Medieval Ramsbury is poorly understood at present. Any opportunity to conduct archaeological investigations with the assumed settlement area should be taken. Issues include the determination of a formal market place, the true extent of settlement, the chronology of expansion from the area of Saxon settlement and the date, density and nature of activities carried out within the settlement. This is a relatively blank sheet at present, and any forthcoming investigations will be the key to establishing the depth and type of surviving stratification.
- 7.3.6. Ramsbury's two mill sites may well have been in continuous use since the late Saxon period. Archaeological investigation and standing buildings survey would increase our understanding of these locally important sites.
- 7.3.7. The Post-medieval and recent industries of the village have been documented in recent histories. These components are of importance to the local historic resource, and deserve investigation and recording prior to any proposed development. The cluster of tanning and malting sites on the south side of High Street are of particular interest, as the low-lying ground and proximity to the river increase the possibility for the preservation of organic remains within moist soils in this area. The remains of the malting industry may survive as standing buildings – the malthouses lend themselves to conversion into dwellings. Given that the industry was virtually defunct by the 20th century it is likely undocumented examples survive, and a survey of the built heritage south of High Street may prove rewarding.

7.3.8. The discovery of a prehistoric burial on the higher ground north of Back Lane may flag the presence of further features of this type. Any further development on this side of the village may merit archaeological investigation, as the recorded example may not exist in isolation.

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9. MAPS

- 1773.** Wiltshire map series, No 12: Andrews & Dury.
- 1820.** Map of the county of Wiltshire. Greenwood (Chandler 1998).
- 1839.** Tithe Map
- 1886.** Ordnance Survey, 1st Edition, 1:500 Series.
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- 1947.** Ordnance Survey, Geological Survey of Great Britain (England & Wales), Sheet 267, Hungerford, 1" to 1 mile.
- 1985.** Ordnance Survey, Pathfinder No. 1170, 1:25000 Series.

10. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Towns included in the Extensive Urban Survey of Wiltshire, with reference to urban criteria defined by Heighway (1972).

	Town	Criteria
1	Amesbury	iii, xi
2	Bradford-on-Avon	iii,vi viii, xi
3	Calne	ii, iii, ix
4	Chippenham	i, iii, iv, viii, ix, x, xii i, ii, v, xii
5	Cricklade	i, ii, vi
6	CUNETIO	i, ii, iii,. v
7	Devizes	ii, iii, v, ix, xi
8	Downton	i,, ii vi
9	DUROCORNOVIUM	i, vi
10	EASTON GREY	iii, iv, v, ix
11	Great Bedwyn	ii, iii, ix
12	Heytesbury	ii, iv
13	Highworth	ii, vi, ix
14	Hindon	ii, iii, xi
15	Lacock	v
16	Ludgershall	i, iii, iv, xi
17	Malmesbury	iii, ix
18	Market Lavington	ii, iii, iv, xi
19	Marlborough	ii, iii, viii
20	Melksham	ii, iii, xii
21	Mere	iii, viii, xi
22	Ramsbury	i, ii, iii, v, vi, vii, viii,
23	Salisbury	ix, x, xi, ii, iii, ix
24	Sherston	i, vi
25	SORVIODUNUM	iii, viii
26	Swindon	iii, v
27	Tilshead	i, vi, xi
28	Tisbury	ii, iii, viii
29	Trowbridge	ii, iii, iv, vii
30	Warminster	iii, viii
31	Westbury	i, iv, v, vi, vii,
32	Wilton	ii, iii, v, ix, xi
33	Wootton Bassett	ii, vi
34	VERLUCIO	

Appendix 2: Urban Criteria set out in Heighway (1972)

- i) *Urban Defences*: A town, at some time in its history, might have a wall, or bank and ditch with wooden defences.
- ii) *Internal Street plan*: A town may be planned at any moment in its history; part of its street pattern may display evidence of deliberate planning, such as a grid lay-out. A street plan with provision for a market place will also distinguish a town.
- iii) *Market*: Perhaps the only indispensable criterion, although a market alone does not distinguish a town. The date of a market charter is usually taken in this study as indicating the date by which the place had become a town.
- iv) *Mint*: The existence of a mint often denotes a town.
- v) *Legal existence*: This aspect of the town was one of the first to be studied and formed the basis of most of the early studies of towns. It has long been evident that legal history, once a favoured method of study, does not provide the only clue to urban origins, in which economic causes play an important part. However, the date of a borough charter or the dates of taxation at borough rates or of the town's parliamentary franchise may provide a date from which the place may be called a town.
- vi) *Position*: A town may have a central position in a network of communications and this can be a clue to its importance. This can be a difficult criterion to assess as it involves knowledge of the age of the road system in relation to the town itself, the past navigability of rivers, and other related problems.
- vii) *Population*: A town will often have or have had a high density and size of population compared with surrounding places.
- viii) *Diversified economic base*: Archaeological or documentary evidence might suggest a diversified economic base, particularly a concentration of various crafts in one area, and evidence of long distance trade. For earlier periods, only archaeological evidence can determine this; it is a reflection on the state of urban archaeology that so little is known of this aspect.
- ix) *House plot and house type*: The town-plan may show long, narrow 'burgage-type' plots; surviving houses will be urban rather than rural in form.
- x) *Social differentiation*: A town should contain a wide range of social classes and especially possess a middle class. House types, demonstrated in the earlier periods by archaeology, again form part of the evidence.
- xi) The presence of a *complex religious organisation* may also denote a town; i.e. the possession of more than one parish church or the existence of other institutions, especially monastic.
- xii) *Judicial centre*: A town may be a centre for courts of national or local status.

Appendix 3: Listed Buildings by Schedule Category (Refer to Dept. of National Heritage schedule for Grade II buildings)

Grade I

Church of the Holy Cross, High Street (13C, early 14C, 15C & 1891)

Grade II*

Parliament Piece, Back Lane (c1620 & 1680-1700)

Crowood House, Crowood Lane (late 17C, early 19C)

East gate and lodges to Ramsbury Manor, White's Hill (c1680 & 1800)

Appendix 4: Buildings Survival by Century

13th Century

Church of the Holy Cross, High Street (13C, early 14C, 15C & 1891)

16th Century

36 High Street (late 16C/early 17C)

4 5 & 6 Burdett Street (16C-17C)

Wistaria Cottage 45 & 46 Oxford Street (16C-17C)

The Boot, Cranmer Cottage, Scholard's Lane (16C-17C)

17th Century

8, 12 Burdett Street

59, The Forge & Forge Cottage (16C – WBR fieldwork), 84, High Street
Brookside, Newtown Road

Jasmine Cottage 33, Toby Cottage 40 & 41, 42, Oxford Street

Elmdown Farmhouse, Spring Hill (1654)

Parliament Piece, Back Lane (c1620 & 1680-1700)

East gate and lodges to Ramsbury Manor, White's Hill (c1680 & 1800)

Barn to Parliament Piece, Back Lane (late)

Crowood House, Crowood Lane (late, early 19C)

Gates, gate piers & enclosing wall to garden of Parliament Piece, Back Lane (17C-18C)

Hillsborough 7, 9 & 10, Oxford Street (17C-18C)

Vine Cottage, Union Street (17C-18C)

18th Century

Kennet House 25, 79, High Street

The Knap House, The Knap

The Cedars, Scholard's Lane

Ramsbury Hill, Back Lane (c1700)

Knap Cottage, The Knap (mid)

Bridge & weir on River Kennet, White's Hill (c1775-1800)

The Hayward 73/75 & 77, 83-89 (odds), High Street (late)

Briar Cottage 2 & The Maltings 3, Dormer Cottage 4 & The Red House 5 Back Lane (late 18C/early 19C)

4, 6 & 6A, Old Tannery 5, 27, High Street (late 18C/early 19C)
9 High Street (18C-19C)

19th Century

Smithy Cottage, Union Street

1 High Street (c1820-40)

Manor Farmhouse, White's Hill (c1830)

Brick Kiln Cottage, Love's Lane (c1830-40)

The Old Vicarage, Back Lane (1830 & 1841)

Syon House 3, Evelyn House 7, 8, Kilderkin Cottage 20, The Institute, High Street (early)

The Old Mill, Scholard's Lane (early)

Burney Farmhouse, Burney Hill (early-mid)

2, 10 & 12, 14-18 (evens), 78, 81, High Street (early-mid)

Rush Cottage, Newtown Road (early-mid)

The Gallery & 5 Back Lane (c1852-60)

Appendix 5: Individual Architectural Details

16th Century

Timber framing: 4, 5 & 6 Burdett Street (16C-17C); 36 High Street (late 16C/early 17C); Wistaria Cottage 45 & 46 Oxford Street (16C-17C); The Boot, Cranmer Cottage, Scholard's Lane (16C-17C)

Thatch: 36 High Street (late 16C/early 17C); Wistaria Cottage 45 & 46 Oxford Street (16C-17C); The Boot, Scholard's Lane (16C-17C)

Casements: 36 High Street (late 16C/early 17C)

Leaded: 4, 5 & 6 Burdett Street (16C-17C)

Chamfered beams: The Boot, Scholard's Lane (16C-17C)

Spine beams: The Boot, Scholard's Lane (16C-17C)

Clasped purlin roof: 36 High Street (late 16C/early 17C)

17th Century

Brick:

English bond: Parliament Piece, Back Lane (c1620 & 1680-1700)

Stucco: Crowood House, Crowood Lane (late, early 19C)

Timber framing: Barn to Parliament Piece, Back Lane (late); 8, 12 Burdett Street; 59 High Street; The Forge & Forge Cottage, High Street; Hillsborough, 7 Oxford Street (17C-18C); Jasmine Cottage, 33 Oxford Street; Elmdown Farmhouse, Spring Hill (1654)

Wattle & daub: 12 Burdett Street; Jasmine Cottage, 33 Oxford Street

Moulded plinth/plat band/eaves cornice: Crowood House, Crowood Lane (late, early 19C)

Roof:

Thatch: 8, 12 Burdett Street; Hillsborough, 7 Oxford Street (17C-18C); Jasmine Cottage, 33 Oxford Street

Tiled: 59 High Street; The Forge & Forge Cottage, High Street

Dormers: Parliament Piece, Back Lane (c1620 & 1680-1700); 59 High Street

Stacks:

Brick: Parliament Piece, Back Lane (c1620 & 1680-1700)

Windows:

Mullioned & transomed: Parliament Piece, Back Lane (c1620 & 1680-1700)

Casement: 8, 12 Burdett Street

Leaded: Parliament Piece, Back Lane (c1620 & 1680-1700); 59 High Street; Hillsborough, 7 Oxford Street (17C-18C)

Beams:

Chamfered: Jasmine Cottage, 33 Oxford Street; Jasmine Cottage, 33 Oxford Street;

Chamfered & stopped: The Forge & Forge Cottage, High Street

Moulded: 59 High Street

Spine beams: 12 Burdett Street; The Forge & Forge Cottage, High Street; Jasmine Cottage, 33 Oxford Street; Up to this period, all houses were generally timber-framed, such as Elmdown Farmhouse, Spring Hill

Fireplace:

Inglenook: 12 Burdett Street

18th Century

Brick/flint: Old Tannery, 5 High Street (late 18C/early 19C)

Brick: With vitrified work: 4 High Street; The Knap House, The Knap

With flint & brick dressed returns: Briar Cottage, 2 & The Maltings, 3 Back Lane (late 18C/early 19C); The Knap House, The Knap

Dentilled/moulded eaves: Briar Cottage, 2 & The Maltings, 3 Back Lane (late 18C/early 19C)

Roof:

Tile: Briar Cottage, 2 & The Maltings, 3 Back Lane (late 18C/early 19C); 4 High Street; The Knap House, The Knap

Slate: Old Tannery, 5 High Street (late 18C/early 19C)

Dormers: Briar Cottage, 2 & The Maltings, 3 Back Lane (late 18C/early 19C)

Doorway:

Fan/overlight: The Knap House, The Knap

Panelled doorcase: Old Tannery, 5 High Street (late 18C/early 19C)

Hood on brackets: Briar Cottage, 2 & The Maltings, 3 Back Lane (late 18C/early 19C); Old Tannery, 5 High Street (late 18C/early 19C)

Door:

Panelled: Briar Cottage, 2 & The Maltings, 3 Back Lane (late 18C/early 19C); 4 High Street; The Knap House, The Knap

Window:

With cambered arch: Briar Cottage, 2 & The Maltings, 3 Back Lane (late 18C/early 19C)

Sash: Briar Cottage, 2 & The Maltings, 3 Back Lane (late 18C/early 19C); Old Tannery, 5 High Street (late 18C/early 19C); The Knap House, The Knap

Tripartite: 4 High Street

Fireplace:

Marble: Parliament Piece, Back Lane (c1620 & 1680-1700)

Staircase:

Open well: Parliament Piece, Back Lane (c1620 & 1680-1700)

19th Century

Flint with brick lacing courses: The Gallery & 5 Back Lane (c1852-60); 9 High Street (18C-19C); Smithy Cottage, Union Street

Coursed squared stone: 81 High Street

Brick: 8, 14 & 18, 20 High Street; The Old Mill, Scholard's Lane (early)

With vitrified header work: 2 High Street

Diaper work: 1 High Street (c1820-40); Evelyn House 7, High Street (early); Brick Kiln Cottage, Love's Lane (c1830-40); Rush Cottage, Newtown Road (early-mid)

Brick laced flint returns: Rush Cottage, Newtown Road (early-mid)

Timber framing:

With cogged eaves: Evelyn House 7, High Street (early)

Dentilled eaves: 1 High Street (c1820-40); 2, 8, 14 & 18, 20 High Street; Rush Cottage, Newtown Road (early-mid)

Roof:

Tile: The Gallery & 5 Back Lane (c1852-60); Evelyn House 7, High Street (early); 9 High Street (18C-19C); 2 High Street; Rush Cottage, Newtown Road (early-mid)

Welsh slate: 1 High Street (c1820-40); 81 High Street; Brick Kiln Cottage, Love's Lane (c1830-40)

Thatch: Smithy Cottage, Union Street

Dormers: Evelyn House 7, High Street (early)

Windows:

Segmental heads: Evelyn House 7, High Street (early); Brick Kiln Cottage, Love's Lane (c1830-40)

Eared stone surrounds:

Sash: 1 High Street (c1820-40); Evelyn House 7, High Street (early); 9 High Street (18C-19C); 81 High Street; Brick Kiln Cottage, Love's Lane (c1830-40); The Old Mill, Scholard's Lane (early)

Tripartite: 9 High Street (18C-19C)

Canted bay: The Old Mill, Scholard's Lane (early)

Casement: Rush Cottage, Newtown Road (early-mid)

Leaded: The Gallery & 5 Back Lane (c1852-60); The Old Mill, Scholard's Lane (early)

Gothick: The Gallery & 5 Back Lane (c1852-60)

Doorway:

In porch: The Gallery & 5 Back Lane (c1852-60)

Reeded doorcase: 1 High Street (c1820-40)

Fluted doorcase: 9 High Street (18C-19C)

Hood on brackets: 1 High Street (c1820-40); Evelyn House 7, High Street (early);

With fan/over light: Brick Kiln Cottage, Love's Lane (c1830-40)

Door:

Panelled: 1 High Street (c1820-40); 81 High Street; The Old Mill, Scholard's Lane (early)

Boarded: Rush Cottage, Newtown Road (early-mid)

Notes

Churchyard monuments not included.