
Coven's Moat and the Medieval Landscape of Chesterton

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Archaeological excavations in advance of the redevelopment of the Eastfield neighbourhood of Chesterton provided an opportunity to investigate the environs of a site known as Coven's Moat, on land once held by Barnwell Priory. Analysis of the archaeological sequence, combined with documentary research, has provided new insights into the development of medieval Chesterton and the relationship of this moated site to the historic core of the settlement, its surrounding fields and routeways.

Introduction

Chesterton's early development has recently been examined in detail following excavations undertaken within the historic village core by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit (Cessford and Dickens 2004). However, the site of Coven's Moat – which is situated to the north-east of the village within an area that has seen little archaeological investigation – lies outside of the main scope of that article (Fig. 1). Other recent discussions of Chesterton (Wright and Lewis 1989; Taylor 1999) do not mention the moated site except to suggest that its function could be linked to medieval expansion along Scotland Road (Taylor 1999, 121). The Oxford Archaeology East excavations, carried out intermittently between December 2016 and January 2018, were undertaken in advance of the redevelopment of the Eastfield neighbourhood of Chesterton. Three areas (Areas 1–3) with a combined total of 0.58ha were excavated and revealed a fairly complex sequence of archaeology spanning the prehistoric to post-medieval periods. Earlier remains of note include part of an Iron Age settlement revealed in the north of the site, mainly represented by a large swathe of pits, a watering hole and a series of enclosures. Although of some local interest given the paucity of evidence of this date within Chesterton, these remains are not uncommon within the Cambridgeshire area and the focus of this article is on the medieval sequence and how this can be related to the wider development of the village and its environs.

This thematic article aims to build upon the existing model of Chesterton's development, incorporating the results of the excavation alongside new analysis of

documentary and cartographic sources. The detailed excavation report with full specialist contributions is freely available online (Greef 2019; <<https://library.the-humanjourney.net/5456/>>).

Coven's Moat and a Note on Nomenclature

When the Eastfield housing estate was constructed in what was then an arable field, the area within the moated site was initially left undeveloped with the garden boundaries of the properties established along the perimeter of the moat ditch. An earthwork survived until at least the 1970s after which time the site was levelled and Dundee Close was built within the moat's central platform (Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record 01105; RCHM 1959). To avoid confusion to the reader it should be noted that this site suffers from a couple of misnomers: firstly the name 'Coven's Moat', as the site is labelled on Bakers 1830 map of Cambridge (Fig. 2), appears to relate to a 17th-century tenant and is therefore not the medieval name of the moated site. Secondly, the street name 'Eastfield', chosen by the Hundred Houses Society in the 1930s, was perhaps a poor choice as the area is situated firmly within land that would have once formed part of the Middle field of Chesterton. Both these themes are explored further below.

Anglo-Saxon Origins and Norman Expansion

By the Late Anglo-Saxon period, the village of Chesterton was a royal demesne, directly owned by the king. It was a relatively large settlement with 25 recorded households at the time of the Domesday survey of 1086. It was probably the administrative centre for tax collection from the Cambridgeshire hundred of Chesterton, one of 19 such units in the county (Wareham and Wright 13; Open Domesday, Chesterton <<https://opendomesday.org>>). This early c. 8th-century settlement was probably concentrated in the area around St Andrew's church and the manor house, north of a ferry crossing over the Cam connecting Suffolk and east Cambridgeshire to the King's Highway, which then linked Cambridge to the Isle

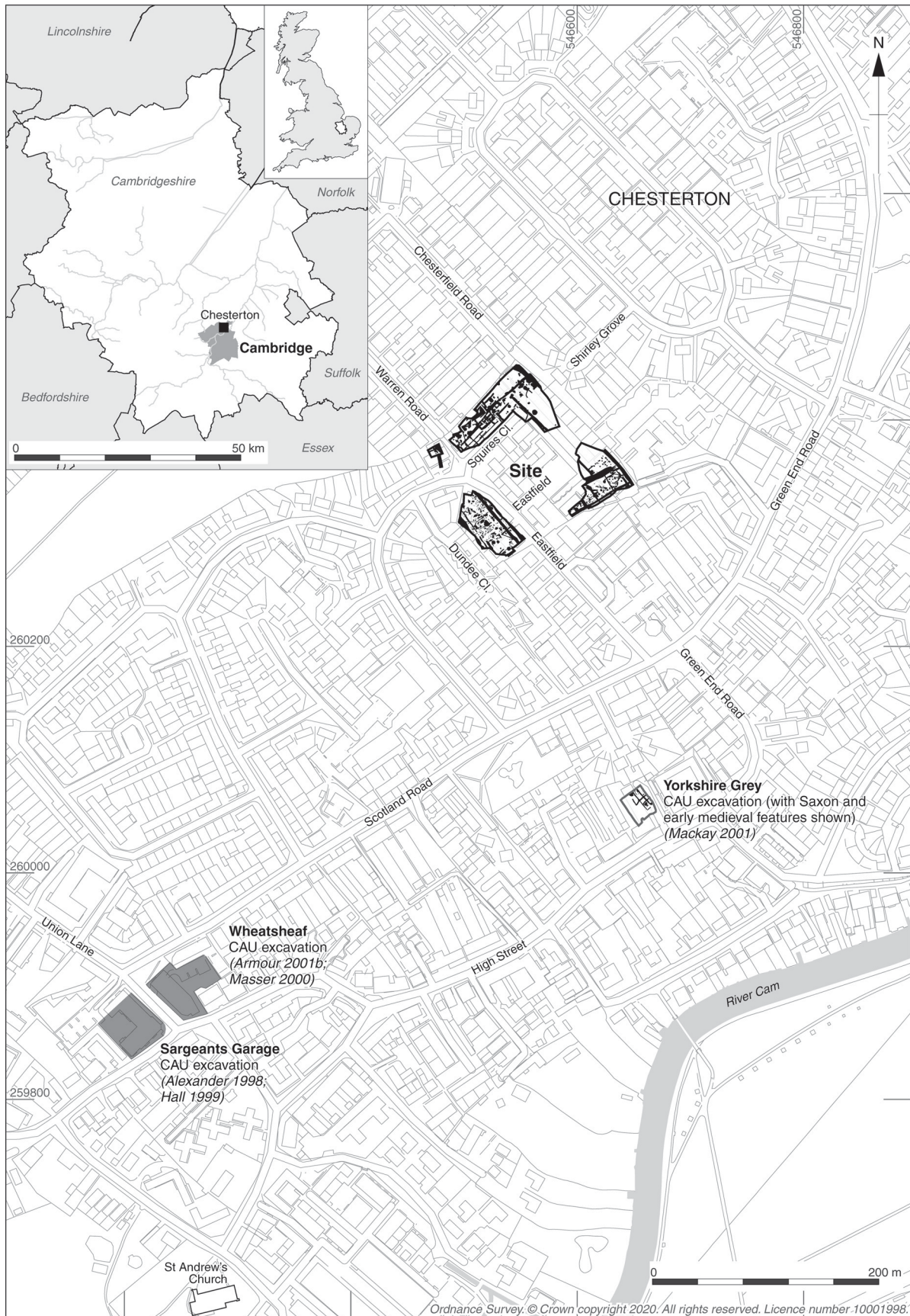


Figure 1. Map of Chesterton showing recent fieldwork.



Figure 2. Baker's 1830 map of Cambridge (showing Coven's Moat). Baker's Map of the University and Town of Cambridge 1830. Cambridge: Cambridge Record Society, 1999.

of Ely (Cessford and Dickens 2004, 125). However, recent investigations within the village have suggested a more polyfocal arrangement with further disparate areas of Late Saxon activity revealed at the W heatsheaf and Yorkshire Grey excavations (Armour 2002, Mackay 2001; Fig. 1). Chesterton clearly expanded in the immediate post-Conquest period, with large-scale planned development evident from a series of ditched property boundaries extending north-west along Union Lane. At this time the principal axis appears to have been aligned southeast to north-west along Union Lane (rather than the High Street), presumably following a routeway associated with a ferry crossing over the Cam. These changes probably occurred during the late 11th or early 12th century and fit well with established patterns of Norman expansion and control documented elsewhere (Cessford and Dickens 2004, 135).

To the north of the village, fragmentary remains of several poorly defined post-built buildings were revealed by the Eastfield excavation, positioned alongside a (projected) southeast to northwest aligned routeway or hollow-way (Routeway 1A, Fig. 3). The most complete of these, Building 1 – which measured 10m by 6m and appears to have been divided into two cells – contained the remains of a hearth, with a similarly-proportioned structure (Building 2) located immediately to the south. Further to the east, and

separated by fencelines, Buildings 3 and 4 were positioned adjacent to and aligned with the projected line of the hollow-way. Although dating evidence from these (significantly truncated) features was scarce, with the small amount of pre-12th-century material mainly being recovered from later features, on stratigraphic grounds they clearly pre-date the construction of a new road in this location during the high medieval period. On current evidence they can be provisionally dated as Late Saxon.

This possible roadside activity lies far from the established core of early Chesterton and at a considerable distance from the expansion recorded along Union Lane. Features recorded at the Yorkshire Grey excavation (Fig. 1) may provide a clue as to the possible course of Routeway 1A, as the Late Saxon and early medieval enclosures recorded here do not seem to relate to the High Street and were located at an unlikely distance to have fronted onto Green End to the north-east, as this would make them in excess of 100m long (Cessford and Dickens 2004, 130). However, if one of the purported Late Saxon settlement foci was located somewhere towards this (eastern) end of the High Street then it is conceivable that this area may represent a separate branch of (ribbon) development on a parallel alignment to Union Lane/Mill Lane, possibly orientated towards a different crossing of the river.

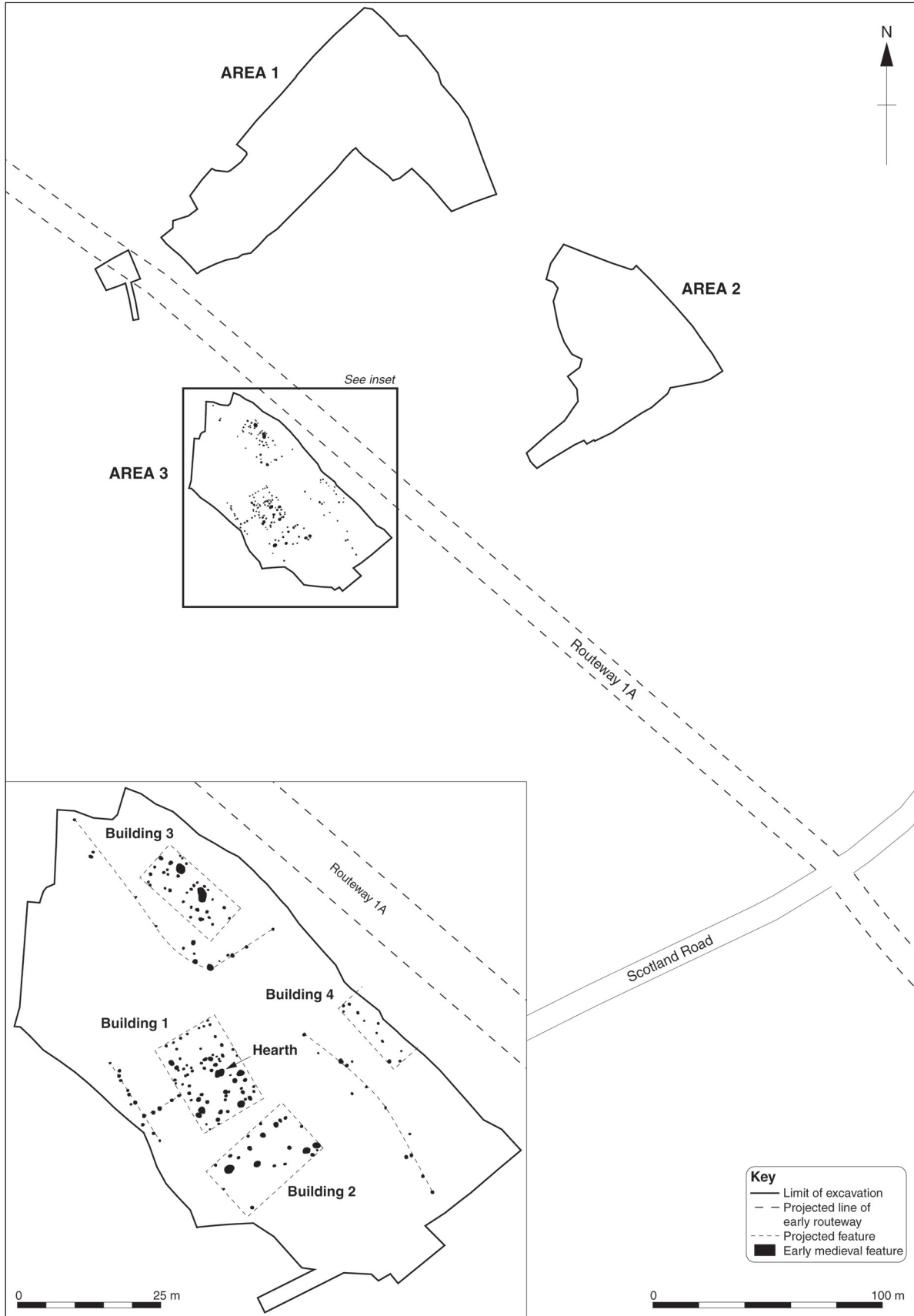


Figure 3. Early medieval features, probably dating to the 10th or 11th century.

Seemingly short-lived, the small settlement at Eastfield appears to have been abandoned as part of a reorganisation of the landscape: an iron key (SF 533) found in one of the fence postholes may date to this period.

From Royal Manor to Priory Lands

At the end of the 12th century, Saher de Quincy, later earl of Winchester, acquired part of the royal manor of Chesterton and then granted it to Barnwell Priory. In 1200 King John granted the whole manor to the priory, although the priory still had to pay an annual feudal rent of £30. In 1240 de Quincy's son Roger, earl of Winchester, released his remaining manorial rights to the priory (Wright and Lewis 1989, 13–14; Clarke and Maitland 1907, xlvii, 76). Some of the priory's records survive, including material on their Chesterton manor in the priory's 13th-century ledger book (the *Liber Memorandorum Ecclesie de Bernewelle*: Clarke and Maitland 1907) and a volume recording entry-fines and other fees paid to the manor by its 13th-century tenants (Bodleian, MS Gough Camb. 1). The village and parish of Chesterton was not, however, entirely under the manorial jurisdiction of the priory: the advowson of the parish church of St Andrew (the right to appoint a priest and to receive the tithes) was owned by an Italian abbey, passing in the 15th century to King's Hall, Cambridge. There were also two or three other small estates within the parish that were not owned by Barnwell and which functioned as separately administered manors, including the Boxworth manor owned in the 14th century by the Colville family, and a manor owned by the Lovells (Wright and Lewis 1989, 15–16).

Chesterton witnessed a period of expansion and population increase during the 13th century, related in part to the growing importance of Cambridge and increased migration to the area. At this time, it appears that the High Street became the main focus of settlement, while activity along Union Lane diminished and by the 14th century had ceased entirely (Cessford and Dickens 2004, 132; 135).

The area in which the Eastfield site was located would have lain within the lands gifted to Barnwell

Priory and it was under their ownership that extensive changes were instigated; sweeping aside the properties that had previously been established here.

Coven's Moat and Rumbland Way

Although most of the moat lay outside the excavation area, the north-eastern side of the ditch was exposed in Area 3 and a partial profile was recorded (Fig. 4). The moat ditch measured a maximum of 8m wide and 1.4m deep; cartographic sources show that the moat enclosed an area of c. 0.2ha (half an acre). The various fills recorded within the moat ditch relate to the end of its life (see below), as it would have been regularly cleaned out while the moated site was in use.

A new c. 10m-wide road (Routeway 1B, Fig. 5) was laid adjacent to the moat, partly based on a diversion of Routeway 1A to enable it to run alongside its eastern arm. The road was constructed from banked up soil, possibly upcast from the moat itself, capped with a metalled surface with a combined thickness of 0.5m (Fig. 4), with a ditch running along its eastern side. This route can probably be identified as Rumbland Way mentioned in documents and evident on later maps related to Chesterton (and further discussed below). Artefacts and pottery from the road make-up indicate a 13th-century date for its construction (and by association the moat), whereas finds from the road surface (and adjacent ditch) span the medieval period and relate to its ongoing use.

Metal objects from Routeway 1B (Rumbland Way)

Christine Howard-Davis

The small group of metalwork came mostly from deposits associated with the construction of the road. It is summarised here, with full descriptions to be found with the archive. Undiagnostic fragments of copper alloy, lead, and hand-forged iron nails found on the road and in its makeup are omitted.

The earliest stratified medieval object is an iron key (SF 533, Fig. 6), recovered from the fill of a post-hole in one of the fence lines that preceded the creation of the road. Being incomplete (lacking its bow),

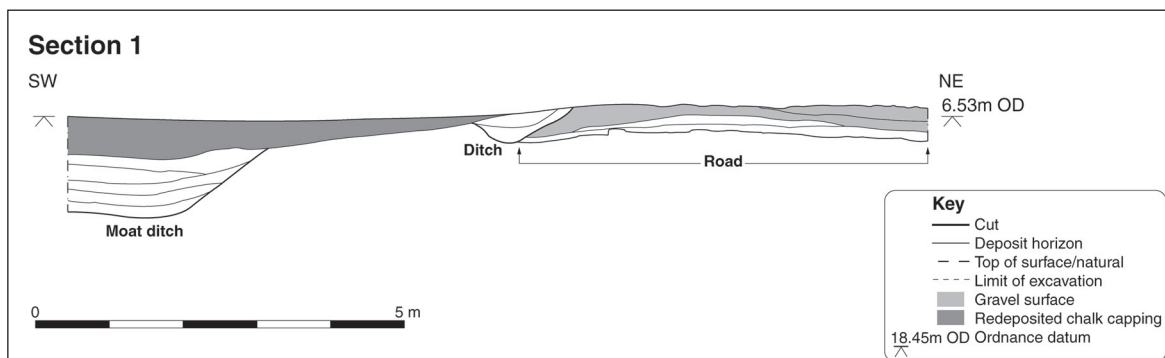


Figure 4. Section of moat and medieval road, Routeway 1B.

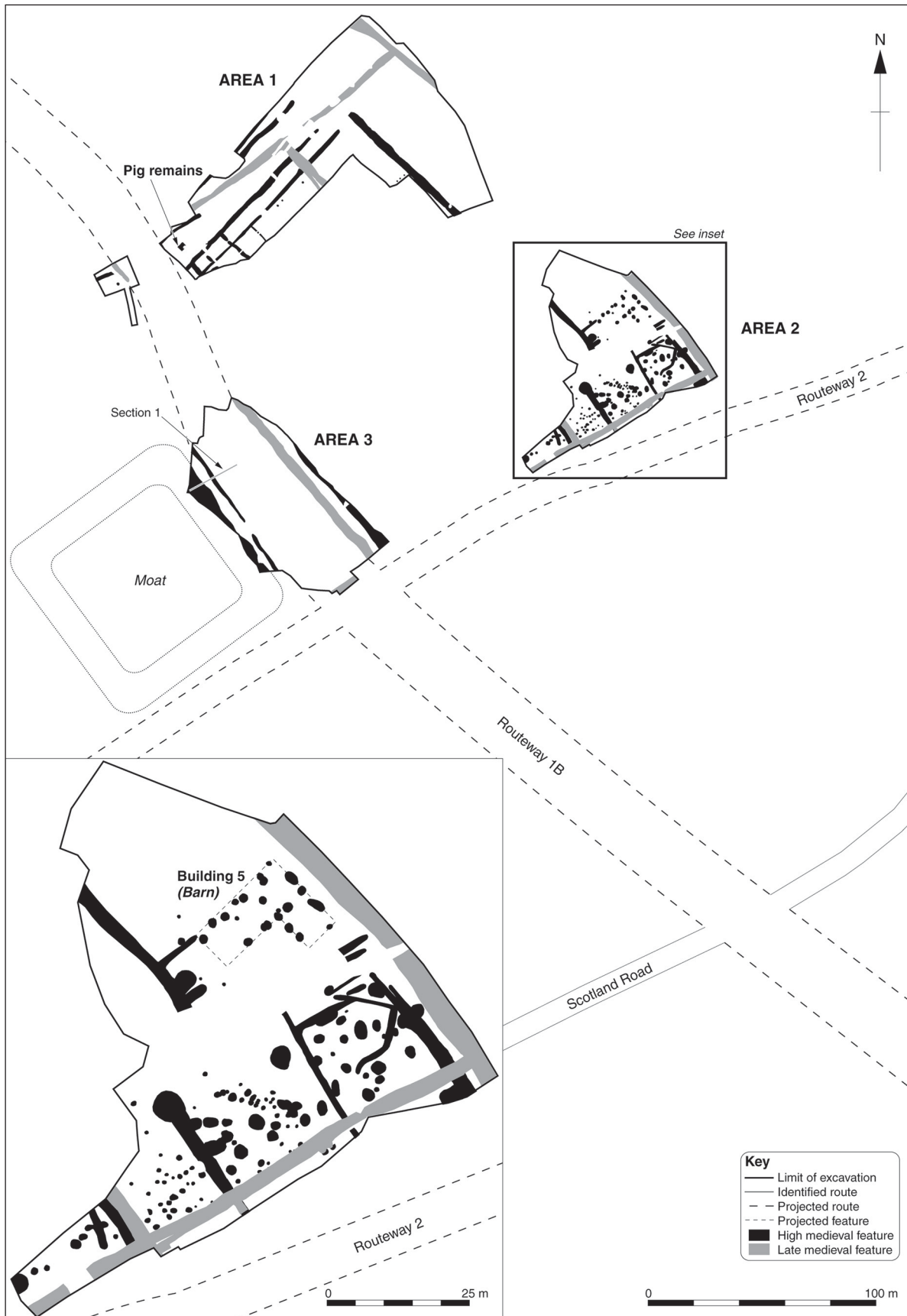


Figure 5. Medieval features dating from the 13th to 14th century.

its potential for precise dating is reduced, but the narrowed pin and complex bit suggests it to be Ward-Perkins (1940, fig. 42) type VIIb, common from the late 12th to the 14th centuries. While the narrowed pin might indicate an earlier date, possibly placing it as early as the 11th century, the complexity of the bit strongly suggests that it is appreciably later.

Most of the interest lies with the copper alloy and silver objects, which can provide some small insight into the appearance and activities of people in the vicinity and those travelling the road over its lifetime. Most are long-lived medieval types, but two silver coins from the road make up and the roadside ditch contribute to dating, being long cross coinage of Edward I and Edward II respectively, and indicating activity between the last quarter of the 13th and the first half of the 14th centuries.

It is most likely that the metal objects were lost by travellers using the road between its construction in the 13th century, and its demise, probably in the 16th century. No doubt some of these were about the business of Barnwell Priory, some were visiting the moated site, and others were just passing through. In such a small assemblage it is impossible to see groups or trends which might illustrate differences in activity at specific times, but the overall date-range points to a peak of activity in the 13th and 14th centuries, when the moated site was relatively new. The loss of two silver coins makes it clear that some, at least, of the travellers were relatively well-to-do, as at this time a single penny was probably equivalent to about a day's wages at the lower end of the social scale, and presumably would have been a significant loss to many travellers. Two copper-alloy buckles were also recovered from the road surface (SFs 515 and 518, Fig. 6). SF 515 can be dated to the 13th/14th centuries, but was possibly more common in the 13th, and SF 518 is marginally later, perhaps dating to the 14th/15th centuries; both are of low value and must have been quite commonplace day-to-day wear. Other buckles were represented by a buckle pin and two fragmentary buckle plates. A silver bar mount (SF 502, Fig. 6) was, again, a relatively common artefact in the 13th century, albeit usually seen in copper alloy. This silver example again hints at an element of wealth, but whether it was the property of an individual, or from the livery of a retainer in an important household, is not evident.

A single lead cloth seal (SF 506, Fig. 6), is an indication that items of trade and commerce were travelling the road, albeit only indicating the presence of a single bolt of woollen cloth, perhaps carried by a travelling merchant, or perhaps on its way to the moated site for use by the household. Such seals, part of a complex process of quality control and taxation (alnage: Egan 2001, 43) were attached to commercially-produced cloth as evidence of compliance. Alnage was introduced in the last years of the 12th century but formalised by the appointment of an Alnager in the reign of Edward I, and continued to be collected well into the post-medieval period (abolished 1724, Egan 1987, 17). Although the seal is effectively undat-

able, it would not be unreasonable to suggest that it is of similar date to other items lost on the road. A possible weight is made from rolled sheet. It is unlikely to be an official weight, being 9.8g (c 1/3 oz).

No doubt, much of the traffic on this road was based on the use of horses, either ridden, or as pack or draft animals. Their presence is indicated by a single poorly-preserved harness pendant (SF 523, Fig. 6). A purely decorative item, these were often used to display personal arms or livery badges (Ashley 2002, 30), and like some of the other copper alloy items, might indicate an element of wealth or status, lost in passing.

There are also several large copper alloy upholstery nails, some of them gilded, with short, square-sectioned shanks and domed heads, including a group of seven located together. These are generally associated with upholstery, and may well have come from furniture, but presumably not while the road was in use, unless, as today, furniture was dumped at the roadside. Objects of this type were also used on medieval manuscript bindings, being added to book bindings to protect the leather covers; they were often placed in the corners and centre of the bindings and sometimes in groups of three in triangular formations (Charlotte Howsam pers. comm.). However, an alternative source might be the superstructure of horse-drawn carriages, used for transport, especially by ladies of high status. One such is illustrated in the Luttrell Psalter (*ff* 181 *verso* 182) where similar-sized domed nails can be seen securing upholstery on the outside of a royal carriage (Backhouse 1989, fig. 60). The casual loss of small decorative items like these must have been a quite common event given rigours of travel and the poor roads of the day.

One final item (SF 500, Fig. 6) presents a problem of identification. It is clearly a decorative edging, made from folded sheet metal, and probably gilded. One tempting identification, in view of the long association of the moated site with Barnwell Priory, is as the protective edging of a book, especially as there appears to be a possible joint at one end of the surviving fragment, suggesting a rectilinear item. Howsam, however, in a detailed consideration of medieval book furniture (2016), points out that book-edge binding is extremely difficult to identify with confidence, as it differs little from decorative bindings intended for chests and boxes, including highly decorated caskets (coffrets) with leather covers reinforced with decorative metalwork which were used for the protection of precious possessions during travelling (see Cherry 2001). Perhaps arguing against an interpretation as a book binding is the size of the gap between the fold where the rivet survives, which is perhaps too narrow to have fitted over a wooden board of a medieval binding (Charlotte Howsam pers. comm.).

Associated Settlement Activity

In addition to the construction of the road and moat, this area of Chesterton witnessed significant planned

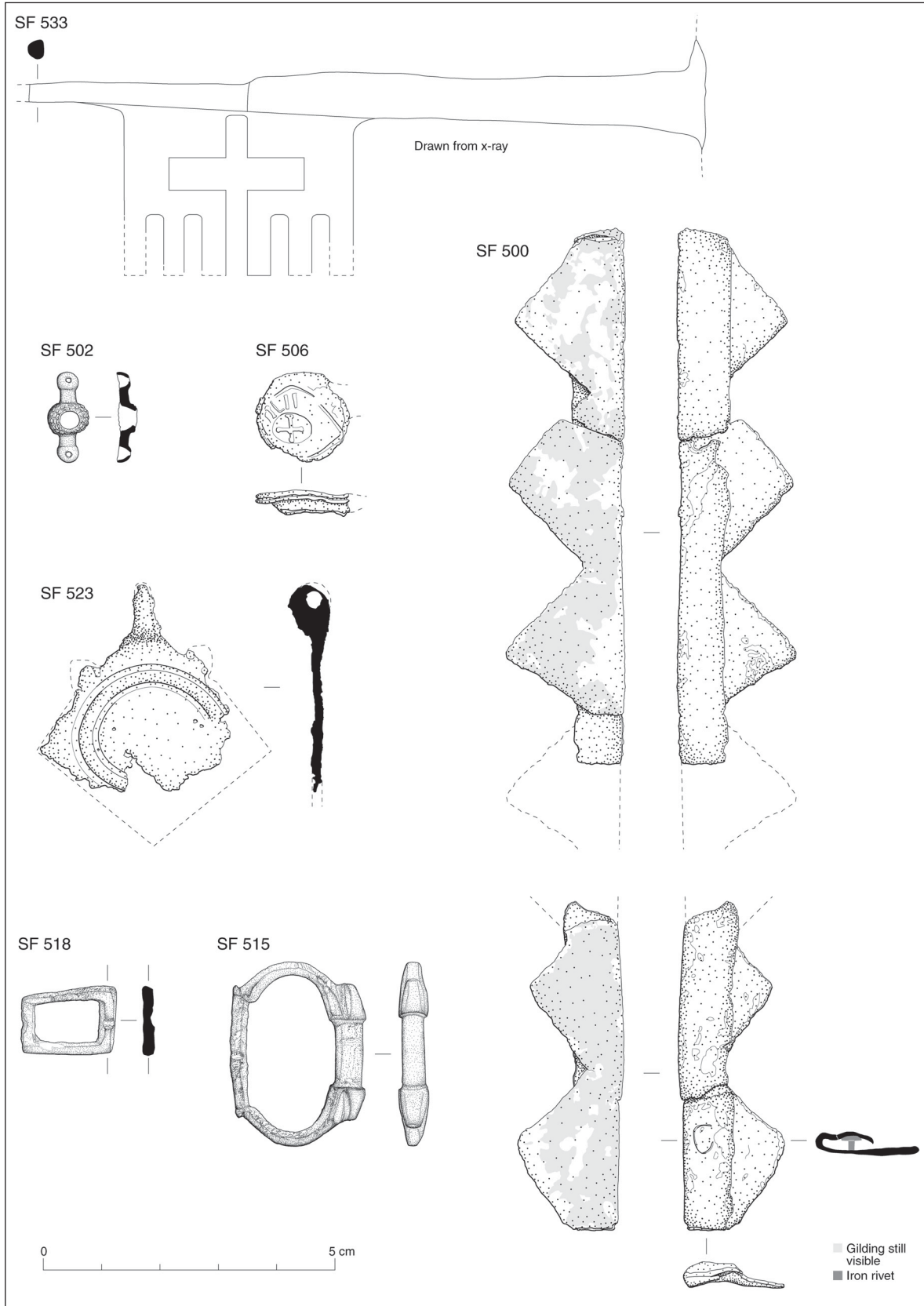


Figure 6. Metal objects from Routeway 1B. Illustration catalogue on facing page.

expansion during the 13th (and possibly 14th) century, presumably also under the initiative of Barnwell Priory. Two slightly different alignments of property plots or enclosures were revealed in Areas 1 and 2: the more northerly boundaries appear to have been laid out on a northeast to southwest axis from Routeway 1B, but the more southerly boundaries followed a northwest to southeast alignment and must have been related to a different track or road located beyond the southern limit of excavation (Routeway 2, Fig. 5). The parallel ditches in Area 1 appear to define a track flanked by paddocks leading to Routeway 1B, while those in Area 3 define Routeway 1B. In Area 2 the plot boundary ditches were similar to those found at other excavations in Chesterton, being fairly shallow (between 0.1 and 0.4m deep), although they varied in width from 0.3m to 1.5m. These plots/tofts extending from Routeway 2 measured 8 to 12m wide and each was in excess of 20m in length, although the full extents of most were not exposed by the excavation. It is of note that these plots are much wider than those laid out along Union Lane in the previous century, presumably as space may have been at less of a premium further from the core of the settlement. Within these plots were the remains of a number of poorly-defined post-built structures and areas of pitting. As was found at the Sargeants Garage excavation (Hall 1999), some of the pitting was concentrated in particular plots, which might indicate that not all plots were occupied at the same time. The most substantial building, Building 5, was located to the rear of the frontage plots in Area 2. This building was L-shaped in plan, 12.4m long, 5.3m wide and formed of large paired posts. The size and form of this building and its position at the corner of a field may suggest a large aisled building, possibly a barn. Generally finds were scarce from these features with low level domestic activity indicated by the small ceramic and faunal assemblages. Presumably, these were predominantly agricultural buildings (possibly 'extramural' settlement to the moated site) with any

domestic areas being located closer to the road frontages.

An Example of Pig Murrain?

Hayley Foster

A notable discovery was the remains of 18 intact pigs and piglets, all buried in a single pit to the northeast of the moat and Routeway 1B, in Area 1 (Fig. 7). These animals appear to have all been destroyed due to disease as they showed no sign of butchery or processing. The number of full and partial pig skeletons recovered is somewhat unusual as pigs would have been raised solely for meat and lard. The presence of articulated young pigs in this group, would suggest that pigs were raised on site; the varying ages being particularly interesting as piglets as young as 4–5 months up to 12 months of age were recovered, indicating they were from multiple litters. A radius taken from one of the pig skeletons was radiocarbon dated to AD 1286 to 1399 (SUERC-75421 631 ± 30 BP). Murrain, an infectious disease, is documented in pigs during the 1300s, causing over a 35% death rate in some cases (Stone 2005, 115). This increase in disease can probably be linked to how draught animals were favoured for arable cultivation, whereas non-draught animals were demoted to more peripheral land such as the edges of woodland or more urban settings during the medieval period (*ibid*). As pigs are omnivorous, they could be easily adaptable to various habitats including towns; they were inexpensive to raise, and their meat could be easily preserved, which appealed to the lower classes (Jorgensen 2013). A similar pit containing multiple pigs, of varying ages, disposed of in the same manner was found during recent excavations at Bramford, Suffolk (Foster 2017) and together these remains demonstrate the important role that pigs played in the diet and husbandry practices of these medieval communities.

Illustration catalogue

SF533 Rotary **key**. Iron. Shank has a tapering pin, but the bow missing. The bit is probably symmetrically arranged, but the x-ray is unclear. Shank, L: 122mm; Th: 15mm L bit: 46mm; W: 33mm; Th: 5mm. 13th-14th century.

SF 515 Complete **buckle**. Copper alloy. Oval frame with narrowed offset bar and, on the opposite side, two knobs frame a narrowed bar, intended to seat a roller. See Egan and Pritchard 1991, fig 44, nos 288 and 298.

L: 23.3mm; W: 31.4mm; Th: 4.8mm; Wt: 4.5g. 13th-14th century.

SF 518 Complete **buckle**. Copper alloy. Plain trapezoidal frame with recess for pin. See Whitehead, 2003, 30 no 169. L: 16.5mm; W: 12mm; Th: 2.4mm; Wt: 1.2g. 13th-14th century.

SF 502 Bar **mount**. Silver. The bar has domed terminals with central perforations (c 0.8mm diam) and a central lobe, also perforated (c 3mm diam) and decorated with cast dots in quincunx. See Egan and Pritchard 1991, fig. 134, no 1157. L: 15.4mm; W: 7mm; Th: 3mm; Wt: 0.6g. 13th century.

SF 506 Cloth **seal**. Lead. The outer surface bears a Latin cross above an illegible inscription. Diam: 16mm; Th: 4.6mm; Wt: 4.2g. 14th century or later.

SF 523 Lozenge-shaped **harness pendant**. Incomplete and poorly preserved. The surfaces of the plate are badly corroded, but it is possible to see the remains of a half a circle in relief. L: 32mm; W: 36.3mm; Th: 0.6mm; Wt: 3g. 13th-14th century.

SF 500 Folded edge **binding**. Copper alloy, gilded. Now fragmentary, it comprises a strip of metal folded over to a depth of c 9.5 mm on one long edge. The other edge is cut into a series of pendant triangles. L: 151.2mm; W: 25.6mm; Th: 5mm; Wt: 18g. Medieval.



Figure 7. Pit containing multiple pig remains.

Chesterton's Medieval Fields, Tracks and Roads

Exploration of Chesterton's field system and associated routeways is key to understanding the setting and function of the moated site and associated features. Ecclesiastical landlords throughout England had been experimenting with improved systems of agricultural organisation and it is quite likely that the priory reorganised their new manor: the layout of Chesterton's open field system may well date to the 13th century. The main field was the Middle or Common field, situated to the north of the village, either side of which were the West and East fields. The strips or furlongs of these three open fields formed the basis for the triennial system of arable crop rotation. An examination of terriers and plans of college holdings in the Chesterton fields has allowed a rudimen-

tary reconstruction of the broad layout of this field system (Fig. 8). The excavation at 'Eastfield' would actually have lain within the Middle Field, the extent of which is depicted on a survey of the holdings of Clare college dating to 1794 (CCAD, 3/3/8/4, not suitable for illustration). The fields of Chesterton are shown to be bounded by Histon Causeway (modern Histon Road) and the Kings Hedge to the northwest and by the village to the southeast. The boundary with the West field is identifiable as Clayton Way and that with the East field is depicted as Kings Hedges Way which extends from the curving Stotfold Way (modern Green End Lane) up to a gap in the Kings Hedge.

This reconstruction is fairly straightforward with the roads which have remained in use in modern times, however, it is more challenging with routes which have disappeared. The Rumbland Way is the

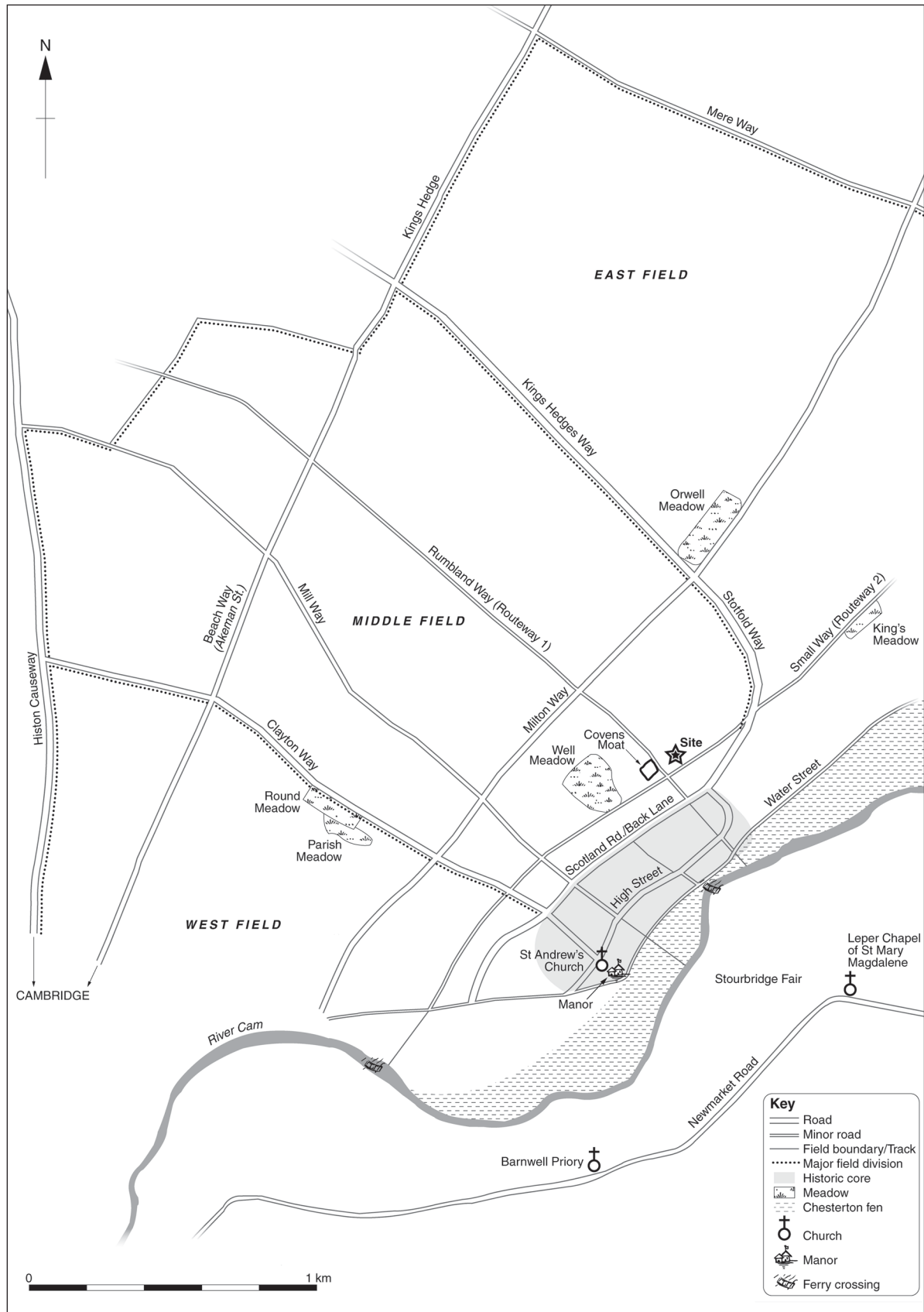


Figure 8. Reconstruction of the medieval landscape of Chesterton.

most likely identification of the unnamed northwest-southeast footpath on the maps of the 1830s and 40s (see Figs. 2 and 9) which runs along the line of Covens Balk and beside the moated site (and is presumably that identified as Routeway 1B within the excavation). This road occurs in the records as Romeland, Romlonde, and Romland. 'Roumlonde' is a Middle English compound word indicating unoccupied or empty land; Rumbland Way may therefore have been the lane that led northwards to the unoccupied land beyond the East field (Middle English Dictionary, 'roum'). The route first appears in the records from AD 1277 as Romeland (Bodleian, MS Gough, Camb. 1) so that is probably how the road was known when the moated site was occupied. In a terrier from 1594 (CA, P40/25/17) this road is described as bounding the eastern side of a plot owned by the Chesterton Charities. The plot is listed as measuring an acre and a half and is very likely to be the one illustrated in Figure 9 as it is the only one of the correct size. The Rumbland Way is also marked on a survey of the holdings of Clare college dating to 1794 (CH, CCAD, 3/3/8/4, not suitable for illustration) and situated between Mill Way and Kings Hedges Way (Fig. 8), although this survey unfortunately does not cover the area of the Eastfield site, that land being simply shown as belonging to the Lord of the manor, it is correctly positioned to be a continuation of the same route and would indicate that the road continued as far as Beach Way (to Landbeach) which forms part of Akeman Street.

The second road or track identified by the excavation, running northeast to southwest (Routeway 2) would probably have followed the line of the 19th-century 11th Public Drain and joined Small Way (Fig. 8). Smallways are common occurrences in Cambridgeshire and refer to narrow (OE *smæl*) ways, with one of the earliest documented examples (1210) being *Smaleway* in Fulbourn (Reaney 1943, 29). The existence of this track would make sense from the layout of the field boundaries and from what is known of the landscape, as a track would probably have run along the backs of plots extending from Scotland Road, possibly continuing beyond Clayton Way towards Cambridge.

Taken as a whole, Chesterton's immediate landscape appears to have been well-organised with a grid of roads and tracks providing access to the fields and to common pastures such as the Well Meadow to the west of the site and the Orwell Meadow to the northeast. Common meadows like these would have remained prized areas for grazing and access to them would have been very important to the villagers. This would have been especially so in the years following the Black Death when availability of land for grazing was of concern and competition for the limited resources was high, with animals being sent as far as Willingham to be fattened (Taylor 1999, 81). Within this landscape, the moated site was constructed centrally in Middle/Common Field at the junction of two routeways. It would have been ideally situated as a collection point for tithes and perhaps to control

the highways and routes to Cambridge and to the Stourbridge market.

Post-Dissolution Ownership and Settlement Contraction

Barnwell Priory continued to own and manage the manor of Chesterton until the Dissolution of the Monasteries. One of the villagers acted as the Priory's local bailiff and collected the manorial rents and fees due to the Priory. For the years 1498 to 1500, for example, William Battsford collected £62 3s 11½d from about 26 named manorial tenants, including rents that he himself paid (TNA, SC 6/HenVII/36, m. 5). A few years later, in 1512 to 1514, William Swayne collected a similar set of rents (£61 10s 2s; TNA, SC 6/HenVIII/251, m. 4).

After the Priory was closed by Henry VIII in 1538, the manor of Chesterton once again became Crown land, part of a vast estate throughout England that had been nationalised by the king (VCH *Cambs.*, ii, 248; *Letters & Papers*, xiii(2), no. 782). In 1540 Thomas Brakyn, a former mayor and MP of Cambridge, purchased the manor from the Crown for £762 (the annual rental income multiplied by 12), with the grant describing the manor as 'messuages lands tenements mills tofts cottages parcels pastures liberties sheepwalks warrens woods', and also mentioning the Chesterton ferry (*Letters & Papers*, xv, no. 733(34), p. 344; TNA, C 66/699, m.1).

The moated site appears to have finally gone out of use at some point after the late 15th or 16th centuries and the moat ditch ceased to be maintained. Acorns from the base returned a radiocarbon date of 1475–1637 cal AD, while the presence of fungal spores and microcharcoal deposits suggest organic waste disposal in the moat after it went out of use. Environmental indicators such as pollen from these levels indicate abundant willows growing along the banks of the moat, with substantial local woodland in the vicinity – perhaps linked with the evidence for pig keeping in the previous centuries. Other plant remains include those of privet, rose and walnut and suggest that the moated site may have contained a formal garden.

While the moated platform may have remained occupied until at least the Dissolution (see below), other areas of the site followed a similar pattern to the rest of Chesterton, in that settlement activity declined at the end of the 14th century, with a notable absence of definitively late medieval fabrics in the pottery assemblage. The reasons behind this may be relatively localised, perhaps in part influenced by wider effects of the Black Death (70 villagers are recorded as dying during 1349 (Cessford and Dickens 2004, 126)), alongside other factors such as worsening climate conditions and the resulting poor crop yields. This more remote area of the village appears to have largely reverted to fields by the 15th century, perhaps utilised for sheep pasture. The field boundaries from this period (Fig. 4) enclose areas of up to 1.5 acres and are similar in alignment and dimensions



Figure 9. Place name evidence (overlain on 1838 draft enclosure map).

to fields to the south depicted on 19th century maps (Fig. 9), indicating that the process of enclosure may have begun relatively early here. This tallies with the documentary evidence which indicates that the open fields of Chesterton continued in use but with piecemeal enclosure taking place. A 1662 lease of Trinity Hall's land at Chesterton, for example, refers to land 'new inclosed' (TH, THAR/8/2/3/4/20). The 1794 pre-enclosure map of Chesterton Farm shows that many strips of the old Middle/Common Field remained un-enclosed, but with some bundled together into long closes by that date (CH, CCAD, 3/3/8/4).

Discussion of Historical Evidence for Coven's Moat

The moated site later known as Coven's Moat appears to be a classic medieval site with its four-sided enclosure. However, the place-name Coven's Moat appears to be 17th-century in origin rather than medieval, perhaps relating to a short-lived local family led by Nicholas Coven senior who lived in the parish in the 1620s (see below). The evidence of the 19th-century enclosure maps (also discussed below) suggests that this moated site lay within the demesne lands of the manor of Chesterton, meaning the lands of the manor

that were directly owned by the lord of the manor, and which had traditional conditions of tenure.

In order to search for a medieval identity for the moated site, two surviving sets of manorial land records were consulted, a set of late 15th-century accounts of the medieval manorial lord, Barnwell Priory, and a survey carried out for the mid-16th-century lord of the manor, Richard Brakyn (TNA, SC 6/HenVII/36, m. 5; SRO, E3/15 104/1). The earlier of these land surveys, the Barnwell Priory accounts for 1498–1500, do not, unfortunately, have much detail for the demesne lands of the manor, but Brakyn's survey of 1567 is more informative in this regard. Searching for built-up tenements that stand out from the 'bread and butter' of the survey (rents of fields, meadow and pasture) four or five such places are named: a tenement called Corys 'now used for an almes house', an unnamed tenement with a croft, a windmill and a messuage called Gaynes Hall. Of these, the Gaynes Hall property seems like the best match for a moated site. The tenant, Matthew Stobes paid just 5s annual rent for the property, but he also rented tenements called 'the Cheker' and 'Bacons', as well as 21 acres of arable strips in the common field and a meadow called the Bawdes, the total rent being 10s. In later documents land called Stubbs lay immediately south of Coven's Moat so the identification of the medieval moat with the Gaynes Hall property of Matthew Stobes (Stubbs) is topographically plausible (CA, 399/M2, pp. 74, 98–9; 399/M4, pp. 154, 302–3).

A court case of 1551 provides a little more detail about the property (TNA, REQ 2/2/22; REQ 2/14/60). The tenant, Godfrey Swayne, was trying to break with manorial tradition and keep sheep on the property, a right reserved to the lord of the manor. A group of six neighbours were called to give evidence concerning the size and history of the property. Most agreed that it was two acres, although one neighbour estimated it as three to four acres. Thomas Godwin described the property, saying 'upon the same is set a barne a warehous and dyverse willowes planted upon the ground ther': it clearly had at least two large buildings, and the presence of willows would suggest

water-filled ditches and tallies with the environmental evidence from the moat. Godwin, aged about 60, named the previous tenants as the widow Margaret Merton and later Roger Memsey; the 50-year old William Wheatley remembered Thomas Merton (the husband of Margaret) and a Bonyface Milten. We thus know the names of several tenants stretching back towards the beginning of the 16th century (Table 1). Thomas Merton mentioned the property in his will of 1502: he granted 'a close called gayness' with 'the Chequer' to his wife Margaret (CA, P40/25/17).

The court case of 1551 may have come about because the manorial lord Thomas Brakyn, son of Richard, had earlier leased (or intended to lease) the property. In December 1544 he obtained a Crown licence to lease this and other property in Chesterton to Nicholas Rose, a London haberdasher. The Gaynes Hall part is described as 'a built-up messuage with a barn and other appurtenances called Gaynes halle', with a sheep-fold for 400 sheep (*falda quadringenta*; TNA, C 66/740, m. 36).

The Anglo-Norman sounding name Gaynes Hall presumably refers to a previous owner. There was a Gaynes Wood in the nearby village of Teversham and there may be a link to another Gaynes Hall in the Huntingdonshire village of Grafham (only 23 miles to the west of Chesterton; Wright and Lewis 1989, 171; Page *et al.* 1932, 356, 360–2). The Huntingdonshire Gaynes Hall was named after the Anglo-Norman d'Engayne family who had estates in East Anglia and a member of this family is a plausible earlier tenant for the Chesterton Gaynes Hall. The place-name 'the Chequer' is also unusual, evoking a square pattern of a gaming board (Smith 1956, i, 92). Might the Gaynes Hall property refer to the whole messuage or croft, with the Chequer describing the moated enclosure within the field or croft?

Although Coven's Moat is first recorded with that name in the 19th century (see below), it is likely to be an older place-name recording an earlier tenant or owner. It is, in fact, an unusual and very rare surname. Parish records show, however, that on 9 October 1621 Nicholas Coven married Margret

Table 1. Manorial lords and tenants of Gaynes Hall in the 16th century

Date	Manorial lord	Tenant	Reference
late 15th century?	Barnwell Priory	Thomas and Margaret Merton	TNA, REQ 2/2/22; REQ 2/14/60
1502		Margaret Martins (Merton)	CA, P40/25/17
first half of 16th century		Bonyface Milten (=Merton?) Roger Memsey	TNA, REQ 2/2/22; REQ 2/14/60
1538	Crown		VCH Cambs., ii, 248
1540	Thomas Brakyn	Godfrey Swayne?	TNA, C 66/699, m. 1
1544	Thomas Brakyn leases manor to Nicholas Rose	Godfrey Swayne	TNA, C 66/740, m. 36
1546	Richard Brakyn; Nicholas Rose lessor	Godfrey Swayne	TNA, E 150/94/3; REQ 2/2/22; REQ 2/14/60

Table 2. *Field-names with 'Coven' in Chesterton tithe map and apportionment of 1839–40 (CA, R60/24/4/2).*

Plot number	Owner	Name	Size
319	Mary Benson	Coven's Grove Close	3 acres 0 roods 17 perches
320	Mary Benson	Coven's Grove Close	25 perches
321	Mary Benson	Coven's Grove Close	1 rood 3 perches
329	St Catherine's Hall	Lower Coven's	12 acres 3 roods 19 perches
330	Trinity Hall (leased to Benson)	Coven's Piece	14 acres 0 roods 0 perches
332	Mary Benson	Coven's Close	4 acres 0 roods 30 perches
333	Mary Benson	Coven's Moat and Wood	1 acre 0 roods 32 perches
334	Mary Benson	Coven's Close	2 acres 0 roods 28 perches
335	Mary Salt	Coven's Close	2 acres 0 roods 28 perches
336	Mary Salt	Coven's Close, Upper Coven's	1 acre 0 roods 36 perches

Collen at St Andrew Chesterton. Two years later on 23 November 1623 the baptism of Joan, daughter of Nicholas Coven, was recorded. Another two years passed and Nicholas son of Nicholas Coven was baptised on 9 October 1625. Nicholas Covens senior was buried on 24 November 1625, shortly followed by his young son on 8 December 1625. In each case the surname Coven has no suffix or title such as esquire or Mr to indicate a higher social status (CFHS 2008; CA, P40/1/1; CUL, EDR/H3/Chesterton). This Coven family – apparently ordinary manorial tenants – appear to be the only bearers of that name who could explain the place-name of Coven's Moat and they were presumably tenants of the old moated site. At this stage the tenement and moated enclosure may no longer have had any standing buildings and could simply have been rented as a field.

The place-name 'Coven's Moat' is first mentioned in 1818 in the manorial court records of Chesterton, when a William Collin leased 'in Middle Field one land containing three roods in 'Coven's Piece', situated between the land formerly in tenure of John Benson to the north and west, land of William Wragg to the south, and that of John Bridgham Wiles to the east (CA, 399/M4, p. 51). The field-name 'Coven' was used to describe several adjoining closes on the draft enclosure map of 1838 and on the tithe map and apportionment of 1839–40, most of which were owned or leased by the lady of the manor, Mary Benson, and were in the tenure of James Few (Fig. 9; Table 2). The Coven field-names – Coven's Grove, Close, Piece, Moat and Wood – add up to just over 40 acres (40 acres 2 roods 20 perches; 16.4 hectares).

The Reorganisation of Chesterton's Fields in the 19th Century

The end of the old open field system of Chesterton finally came with the parliamentary enclosure of the manor in the mid-19th century. This was a process that took some years, beginning with a survey to identify and quantify the interests of landowners so that each of the parties' interests could be settled in the final enclosure award. Surviving records of the process include draft and final maps, and various claims and other documents (CUL, Add MS 6027,

MS doc.627/1–646; CA, TR/R68/59, Q/RDc59). At the same time, the end of the old system of church tithe payments meant that tithe maps and apportionment documents were drawn up (CA, R60/24/4/2; TNA, IR 18/13488, 29/4/16, 30/4/16).

Conclusion

This excavation, building on the existing model of village development, has provided significant new evidence for the expansion of Chesterton and its immediate landscape from perhaps as early as the 10th/11th century. The identification of at least one and probably two new roads, which can be linked to documented routes, has enabled a fuller picture of the organisation of Chesterton's medieval fields and tracks to be established and has demonstrated that settlement was not confined to the historic core of the village. A cluster of probably 11th- or 12th-century buildings beside the lane later called Rumbland Way may be a hamlet – another part of the polyfocal medieval village of Chesterton – or part of a farm to the north-east of the village.

It has been argued that the change in alignment of the settlement from northwest-southeast (Clayton Way/Mill Way/Union Lane) to a southwest-northeast (High Street) axis reflects 'a shift in emphasis from its location from a road-side to a riverside settlement' in the 13th century (Cessford and Dickens 2004, 135). The evidence from the Eastfield excavation and supporting documentary research indicates that the post-Conquest expansion of Chesterton along Union Lane was possibly part of a wider development of the village and may offer an alternative explanation for the subsequent decline of activity along Union Lane. The archaeological and documentary evidence suggest the partial reorganisation of the village landscape in the 13th century, with the laying out of the open fields and their associated tracks and roads. The lane later known as Rumbland Way was moved a little to the west as part of this reorganisation, with the concomitant shift of the hamlet or farm buildings to the east side of the lane. Rumbland Way may have led south to a new ferry crossing over the Cam. These developments would have required significant influ-

ence and means to implement them and can most probably be linked to when Barnwell Priory took possession of the manor and its lands.

Although new light has been shed on the main focus of this project, Coven's Moat, many aspects of the site's history remain enigmatic. Archaeological evidence shows that the moated site was built in the 13th century, around the time of the reorganisation of the village landscape by the priory. Documentary evidence suggests that the medieval name for the moated site was Gaynes Hall, which had at least two large buildings within the enclosure. Coins and metal artefacts lost along the adjacent road have hinted at the wealth and status of the moat's inhabitants (and passing travellers). If further redevelopment of this area takes place, in particular within the moated site itself, then perhaps a fuller picture of this almost forgotten element of medieval Chesterton can be established.

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