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Former Owen Owen Store, Shrewsbury:

A Post-Excavation Assessment

by

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Contents

Introduction

The Site Archive

Documentation

The Finds:

Medieval Pottery (V. Buteux)
Ceramic Tiles
Stone Tiles
Other Stone Objects
Metalwork
Slag
Glass
Clay Pipe
Worked Bone
Mortar
Charcoal
Shell

Environmental Data:

Animal and Fish Bones (S. Pinter Bellows)
Plant Material (L. Moffett)

Former Owen Owen Store, Shrewsbury

Post-Excavation Research Design

Introduction

Following on from an evaluation in 1991 excavation took place inside the former Owen Owen store in central Shrewsbury in June and July 1992 ahead of redevelopment of the site.

Two trenches in the area that would have lain behind the High Street frontages revealed evidence of intensive backplot activity in the form of rubbish pit and cess pit digging, and for boundaries, of the late-medieval or early-post-medieval periods. A small timber structure, represented by stakeholes or postholes, was found in an area from which late-Saxon Stafford Ware pottery was recovered.

Off Butcher Row a complex stratigraphic sequence was encountered, representing activity both inside and outside a stone building that would have fronted onto the Row. The building would appear to have been demolished in the late medieval period and the area left open until the 18th or 19th century. The depth of stratigraphy here was impressive, and it contradicts previous assertions about the state of archaeological deposits in this part of the town.

A good assemblage of pottery, animal bone, and environmental data was recovered during the excavations, and it is hoped that post-excavation analysis will add greatly to our knowledge of central Shrewsbury.

The Site Archive

The combined site archive from the evaluation and excavation consists of finds (see below for quantification and assessment) and the paper archive of the excavations (and building recording) which comprises;

Context Forms	336
Feature Forms	149
Drawings	90
Black and White Photographs	780
Colour Slides	476

The archive data is of high quality, with a high research potential.

In summary the archaeological work has demonstrated that there existed beneath the former Owen Owen building a rich store of data capable of elucidating many aspects of the history of this area in particular, and of Shrewsbury in general. There survived, in Area A, deeply-stratified deposits in the form of a stone building and a demonstrable sequence of later-medieval deposits and features, and evidence for post-medieval and pre-Victorian structures. In Areas B and C the surviving archaeology was less complex but still of interest, with intensive pit-digging in the later-medieval and early-post-medieval periods providing evidence of the town's life and economy, with the processing of soil samples from these pits demonstrating the potential of these deposits for yielding macro-environmental data of a kind so far lacking from central Shrewsbury.

It has recently been discussed how the north-east side of Pride Hill, on which part of the Owen Owen store lies, differed in character in the medieval period from the north-west side (Baker, forthcoming) with its concentration of high-status, stone buildings and its distinctive layout of regularised plots. Although the south-east side of the street has not received such intensive study, it is now demonstrated that there might well have been stone buildings here, and in the High Street; the documentary references to Butcher Row point to the division of this area into twenty butchers stalls (Litherland 1990, 38) suggesting, perhaps, that most of the structures here would have been of a lower status. Many of the outstanding questions surrounding the apparently diametric opposition in status between the two sides of Pride Hill and the overall development of the area in the medieval period could be answered by the now-demonstrated date base formed by the overall excavation archive.

The quality of the archive is such that it is recommended that the paper archive is catalogued for museum deposition, that a full site matrix and narrative be prepared and that a text publication be prepared from this narrative and from further contextual research.

Other Documentation

The project at Owen Owen has also included a good deal of documentary research and building recording. Archiving of this material has already taken place, as has the preparation of two narrative reports. It is now recommended that a revision and summary of this work be included in the present post-excavation programme with a view towards its publication.

The Finds

Specialists were asked to consider the finds assessments under the following headings:

1. Size and nature of assemblage - quantification, make-up, condition and quality
2. Research potential - context and value (or lack of it) of assemblage
3. Recommendations for publication - strategy and post-excavation aims
4. Programme for post-excavation - staff input, timings, requirements for illustration/photography etc.
5. Costings.

Assessments on the various categories of material now follow, with an overall post-excavation programme and costing being given at the end of the report.

An assessment of the pottery from the Owen Owen Store, Shrewsbury, 1991 and 1992.

Victoria Buteux

1 Introduction

In 1991 Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) was commissioned to undertake an archaeological evaluation inside the former Owen Owen department store, at the junction of High Street and Pride Hill, Shrewsbury. The evaluation identified areas of surviving archaeological strata and in 1992 excavations were undertaken in three areas where these deposits were threatened by foundation works for the new development. The following assessment includes all the pottery recovered in 1991 and 1992 although the former has been commented on briefly in an earlier report (Ferris and Sterenberg 1991).

2 Aims

An assessment of the pottery was commissioned from the Archaeological Service of Hereford and Worcester County Council. The aims of the assessment, as outlined by BUFAU, were:

- 1 To define the size and nature of the assemblage;
- 2 To assess the research potential of the assemblage;
- 3 To make recommendations for publication;
- 4 To provide a programme for post-excavation including costings.

The assessment covers the points recommended in MAP2 (English Heritage 1991) but is ordered according to the brief.

3 Method

The pottery was examined by context. The sherds were divided, where possible, into broad fabric groups based on the type series used for the analysis of pottery from the excavations at the Queen Anne House Site, Shrewsbury Abbey (Buteux forthcoming a). The resulting groups (SA fabric types) were quantified by count. Vessel types present were noted, as were any unusual sherds. Each context was assigned a *terminus post quem* and an assessment was made of the amount of residual pottery present. No independent dating evidence was available and the pottery was dated by reference to the dates assigned to similar pottery from other sites in the town.

4 Size and nature of the assemblage

4.1 Quantification

A total of 2,752 sherds were recovered from the site. Of these 467 came from the 1991 evaluation and 2,285 from the excavations in 1992. Two complete vessels were recovered.

Quantification by fabric group was based on a rapid inspection and is only valid for the purposes of this assessment.

4.2 Range and variety

As is the norm on urban sites, a large proportion of the pottery was not contemporary with the formation of the deposits in which it was found. Whilst such residual pottery can be difficult to identify with any certainty, this preliminary assessment suggests that, on average, the percentage of residual pottery within each

context is c 75% with some noteworthy exceptions discussed in Section 4.3.

Residual pottery, whilst of no value for dating purposes, can be taken to represent earlier activity on or near the site and as such can be usefully compared to pottery of the same date and type in other assemblages from the town and region. To omit such information would be to greatly reduce the usefulness of any study of the pottery. The following discussion of the range and variety of wares is, therefore, arranged by the dates assigned to the wares themselves irrespective of the date of the context in which they were found. The date ranges used below grossly simplify the complicated ceramic sequence within the town but are intended to identify broad trends for the purposes of this assessment.

10th to 11th century wares

Forty-four sherds of Saxo-Norman pottery were recovered. The majority of these were from Stafford-type ware cooking pots (SA fabric type 27). Two sherds of Stamford-type ware (SA fabric type 2) vessels and three of St Neots-type ware were also found. Vessels in these fabrics have been found in Shrewsbury before, although never in any quantity (Morris 1983a; Baker 1983). Pottery vessels were not used in any quantity in the Marches from the end of the Roman period until the 12th century (Vince 1988) and late Saxon pottery assemblages are small in comparison to later groups. Little material evidence of the pre-Conquest origins of Shrewsbury has been recovered and the Owen Owen group is, therefore, of more significance than its small size would suggest.

12th to 13th century wares

Approximately 38% of the pottery recovered can be broadly assigned to this date range. Of this c 60% are cooking pot sherds. The majority of these are sand tempered (SA fabric type 80) and probably of local origin although c 20% are from vessels produced in the Malvern area (SA fabric type 10). This is a higher percentage of Malvernian cooking pots than has been previously observed in the town (Buteux forthcoming a; Morris 1983b)

and may prove significant. Pitchers and jugs from a number of sources are found but, as with the cooking pots, the majority are probably local wares (SA fabric type 4). These are sand tempered, well glazed and with a considerable amount of incised and stamped decoration often identical to examples previously recovered from the town (Morris 1983a) and from Haughmond and Shrewsbury Abbeys (Ratkai forthcoming; Buteux forthcoming a). Whilst the majority of fabric and form types within this group are well known the significance of the relative quantities of types of pottery from different sites in the town is worthy of study.

14th to 15th century wares

Wares of this date make up c 36% of the assemblage. As with the earlier vessels the majority of the 14th to 15th century pottery is most probably of local origin. This includes glazed jugs (SA fabric type 14), cooking pots (SA fabric type 19) and bottles (SA fabric type 117). Bottles from more distant production sites, possibly Brill-Boarstall (Buckinghamshire), are also found. To the author's knowledge Brill-Boarstall ware has not been found in Shrewsbury before and its presence in this assemblage would be of particular significance. Non-local jugs are also found in small quantities. Some of these could not be identified at this stage but they do include vessels in Malvern Chase ware (SA fabric type 81) and in a range of white wares many of which have been recovered from the previous excavations in the town (Vince 1984; Morris 1983 a; Maxwell 1989). Some of the white wares may come from the kilns at Sneyd Green, Staffordshire and others from as yet unlocated pottery kilns on the Shropshire coal measure clays (Buteux forthcoming a). One white ware sherd, although fragmentary, has an incised merchants mark close to the base. Such marks are rare in this region although the Queen Anne House site in the Abbey precinct produced several sherds with incised crosses and triangles on the neck (Buteux forthcoming a) and marks similar to that found on the Owen Owen sherd have been found on 15th century Malvern Chase balauster jugs in Worcester (Buteux forthcoming b).

16th to 17th century wares

Only a relatively small amount of pottery (7%) from the evaluation and excavation can be dated to the 16th and 17th centuries. This includes Malvern Chase cisterns and dishes, Surrey white ware (SA fabric type 25), Midlands purple (SA fabric type 16) and Cistercian-type ware tygs (SA fabric type 30). Only a few vessels are represented and they are often quite complete. Of particular interest are the Cistercian-type ware tygs which are discussed in Section 5.

18th to 20th century wares

Very little (1.5%) pottery of this date was present in the assemblage though this may be due to the excavation strategy. The pottery includes fragments of stone wares, tin glazed wares, Midland yellow and blackwares, slip decorated plates and modern "china".

Unidentified wares

Not all the sherds, particularly the smallest fragments, were allocated to even a broad fabric type during the assessment. These sherds made up 14% of the assemblage.

4.3 Provenance and condition

The preliminary date ranges of the contexts with pottery are listed in Appendix 1.

Area A (1,546 sherds)

One hundred and fifty eight sherds were recovered in 1991 (Trial Trench 11) and 1,388 in 1992. It was not possible at this stage to identify sherds from the same deposits excavated a year apart and the 1991 pottery is not, therefore, included in the following discussion. The sherds were, however, almost identical in type and condition to those recovered a year later.

Pre-building and pre-property boundary (57 sherds)

The majority of these deposits can be dated to the 12th-13th centuries. A large proportion (70%) of the pottery is cooking pots but no Malvernian cooking pot sherds, characteristic of the 13th century in Shrewsbury, are found. This may be due to the small size of the assemblage, however. Contexts 5013 and

5130 contain three sherds of pottery dated to the 14th-15th centuries. The pottery within this phase is generally small and abraded and is likely to contain a high percentage of residual material.

Dumping to the west of the boundary (110 sherds)

These deposits range in date from the 13th-14th to 15th-16th centuries. White wares appear for the first time and later contexts are characterised by the presence of bottles. As might be expected from dumping layers the sherds are all small, abraded and largely residual.

Demolition and post-demolition of the building to the east of the boundary (1,165 sherds)

With the exception of context 5027 which is 18th-19th century in date the contexts in this area range from the 13th-14th centuries to the 16th century. The latest fills of the well (F528) can be dated to the 15th-16th centuries and contain a complete ceramic bottle. The majority of the pottery is local sandy ware but Malvern Chase and possibly Brill-Boarstall wares are present although in small quantities.

Pottery from these deposits is very mixed, small, abraded and likely to be residual. The exception to this is context 5110 which contains large amounts of 15th century pottery including a large number of ceramic bottles. This is one of the most important groups of pottery from the site both because of the range of bottle fabrics present and because of the connection with the ceramic assemblage from Shrewsbury Abbey (see Section 5).

Later deposits (56 sherds)

These deposits contain residual medieval material, fragments of Cistercian wares etc. as well as 19th and 20th century pottery.

Area B (405 sherds)

Twenty-eight sherds were recovered in 1991 (Trial Trench 3) and 377 in 1992. Unlike Area A, pottery from Area B, although abraded, was generally in quite large pieces. Almost half (45%) of all the late Saxon

pottery from the Owen Owen site came from this area which may suggest the presence of late Saxon deposits destroyed by 12th century and later occupation.

1992 excavation: posthole structure to the north of Area C (17 sherds)

Only one feature from this structure contained any pottery (F352). Thirteen out of the total of seventeen sherds from this scoop were Stafford-type ware dating to the 10th or early 11th century. The presence of body sherds of local sand tempered cooking pot and one very decayed glazed sherd indicate that the deposit is not likely to be any earlier than the late 11th century, however. This structure is possibly the earliest on the site and the dating evidence must be more carefully assessed during post-excavation work.

1992 excavation: other features (360 sherds)

The layers sealing the posthole structure and the stakeholes cutting them contained no pottery and the rest of the assemblage from this area came from a series of pits of 13th-14th century date and one (F335) of 18th-19th century date.

Trial Trench 3 (28 sherds)

The pottery from trial trench 3 was very different in date, type and condition from that recovered a year later and consisted almost entirely of large, unabraded sherds of at least three 16th century types. These appear, from this preliminary assessment, to be the products of a local kiln and are discussed in more detail in Section 5.

Area C (541 sherds)

Fifty eight sherds were recovered in 1991 (Trial Trench 5) and 483 in 1992. This area contained inter-cutting medieval cess and rubbish pits as well as ditches/gullies but it was not possible at this stage to identify sherds from the same deposits excavated a year apart.

1992 excavation (483 sherds)

The condition of the pottery from contexts in this area varied enormously. Some groups contained only small, abraded and residual sherds others contained quantities of

contemporary pottery with little residual material. Preliminary phasing of deposits was not available for this assessment but several features are worthy of note. Features 606, 608, 611, 612 and 613 appear to be cess pits, the sherds from them being abraded, but large, and having a characteristic buff/white deposit on their surface. Feature 607 contained the greater part of a 16th century Midlands Purple bung-hole cistern. Feature 618 contained a small, mixed and abraded assemblage but also one complete ceramic bottle.

Trial trench 5 (58 sherds)

The pottery from this trench was almost identical to that from the larger excavation.

Trial trenches 1, 8, 9, 10, 13 and 14 (220 sherds)

The pottery assemblage from these trenches has been commented on in more detail in the report of the 1991 evaluation at Owen Owen (Ferris and Sterenberg 1991). It ranged from late Saxon Stafford-type ware to modern china. This group did, however, contain a larger proportion of post-medieval material than assemblages from the other areas of the site including Midland Black wares, yellow wares, tin glazed wares etc. The material was generally small and abraded.

Unstratified material

Thirty-seven sherds were recorded as unstratified.

5 Research Potential

The exact number of sherds from the various excavations in Shrewsbury is impossible to ascertain from the published reports. It would appear, however, that the pottery from the Owen Owen store is the largest secular assemblage recovered from the town so far. This combined with the range, variety and condition of the material itself means that the assemblage has considerable research potential.

5.1 As a comparative collection

Pottery assemblages from any particular town

must be compared to assemblages from other settlements and production sites in the region if the factors affecting production, supply, use and deposition are to be understood. Large excavations have taken place in recent years in the major towns along the Severn and a comparison between the types and quantities of pottery from these assemblages and those from Owen Owen should prove useful in more fully understanding trade up and down the river and the relative importance of river and land transport at any in any one period. For example, the sources of the late Saxon pottery from the town would indicate that the case of river transport was not a factor in determining the supply of pottery to the town. In the later middle ages, however, the effect of the Severn on the sources of pottery used in the town is very marked.

The pottery assemblage should also be compared to other sites in the town. From this rapid assessment it would appear that the Owen Owen assemblage is broadly similar to other secular sites in Shrewsbury but includes a wider range of pottery. The range of bottle fabrics, for instance, is unique.

Of particular importance is the comparison with the ceramic assemblage from Shrewsbury Abbey. The social and economic affect of urban monasteries is a research topic of national importance but the abbey's role as a consumer, for instance, is often hard to detect from either the documentary or the archaeological evidence (Baker and Cooper forthcoming). From Shrewsbury there is only one explicit documentary reference to this when, in 1509, it was noted that the abbot spent 400 marks per annum on food and drink in the markets (VCH 1973, 33).

Work on the medieval assemblages from the Abbey (Buteux forthcoming a) and this preliminary study suggest that even before the 16th century the abbey and town bought their pottery from the same source, presumably the local market. The range of wares from both town and abbey is virtually identical but the relative quantities of vessel types are different. This may be due to the differing ceramic needs of a large institution

as opposed to that of a single householder but the consideration of such questions should be an important part of the published report.

5.2 Functional analysis

The most important group of vessels within the Owen Owen assemblage are the ceramic bottles.

These are a fairly common find in Shrewsbury but by far the largest group so far recovered are from the Abbey (Buteux forthcoming a). The use of ceramic bottles is not common in the west midlands but has been linked with ecclesiastical sites in other areas such as Oxfordshire (Maureen Mellor and Graham Keevill pers comm) although their exact function is not known. The discovery of a large number of bottles from different production sites (see 4.2.3) in a secular context is significant. Some of the bottles are smoke blackened up one side as were many of the bottles from the Abbey which suggests that they were used for a similar purpose. This may be because they held commonly used goods or, as the majority were found in one context (5110), because there is a direct link between the Abbey and one particular 15th century householder.

Selected bottles from Owen Owen should be tested by residue analysis to identify their original contents and function. Any such analysis must include a sample of bottles from the Abbey for comparative purposes. Medieval documents include many references to ceramic vessels but relatively few state the use of the vessel or give any details (Moorhouse 1978). In general little work has been undertaken on the function of medieval pottery and such a study should prove significant.

5.3 Pottery source analysis

Documentary evidence points to potters working in Coleham in the early 14th century (Barker 1970) although their kilns have never been located. The pottery assemblage from the Abbey precinct (Buteux forthcoming a) included a range of goods (jugs, bottles,

storage jars/cooking pots and dripping pans) which were so similar and so numerous as to suggest that they were the products of a potter or potters working somewhere very local during the late 15th and early 16th centuries. The lack of a sizable assemblage of 16th-17th century pottery from the town means that the end of this presumably local industry cannot be observed in the archaeological record. Whilst the potters may have ceased production some time in the 16th century it is equally likely that they changed their products to suit the changing fashions, as happened at the potteries in the Malvern area, for example (Vince 1984), and that the connection between the earlier and later wares has not yet been made.

As has been mentioned earlier, the large part of three tygs were recovered from trial trench 3, Area B. From a macroscopic examination these, whilst in the Cistercian ware tradition, appear to be made from local clays. A programme of analysis using thin-section and/or neutron activation analysis may clarify this situation. Whilst this is of importance in understanding the history of the pottery industry in and around Shrewsbury it is also more regionally relevant as the change and development of the potteries in the 15th and 16th centuries is little understood.

5.4 Conclusions

Compared to many other towns along the Severn few ceramic assemblages of any size have been recovered from Shrewsbury and understanding of the ceramic history of the town is limited. The size and nature of the Owen Owen assemblage mean that its research potential is very great. Further work on the pottery would make an important contribution to regional studies of trade and industry, produce new information on town life from the late Saxon period to the 16th century.

6 Recommendations for publication

Section 5 demonstrates the importance of the Owen Owen ceramic assemblage for archaeological research both within the

Shrewsbury and the region. To allow comparison with other sites and to put the results of the scientific analysis in context, the entire pottery assemblage should be sorted by fabric and form, quantified by count and weight and, due to its size, a computerised database created to facilitate analysis.

The final report should reflect the assemblage itself but also discuss the new information it provides on the economic and social life of the town within the region.

Any publication of the assemblage must include illustrations of vessels types not recognised in the town before but should also include any important groups of pottery, for instance the large contemporary assemblage in context 5110.

7 Recommended programme for post-excavation

7.1 Pottery Analyst

To include:

Fabric and form sorting and recording (including any additions to the Shrewsbury Fabric Series) at c.150 sherds per day

Co-ordination with specialists (residue analysis, neutron activation analysis, thin section analysis)

Computer data-base compilation

Analysis of computerised fabric and form data and site matrix

Report production

Editing of final report

7.2 Illustrator Total 11 days

To include:

Production of c 80 drawings for form typology at 10 drawings a day 8 days

Preparation of c 3 publication plates at 1 plate a day 3 days

Baker, N J, and Cooper, M A, forthcoming
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Appendix 1

Preliminary date ranges for contexts and features from the 1992 excavations (contexts with no pottery are not included).

Area A

1 Pre-building and pre-property boundary

5013	14th-15th	5030	15th	5132	12th-13th
5133	12th-13th	5135	12th-13th	5137	medieval
5139	12th-13th	5141	12th-13th		

2 Dumping to the west of the boundary

5003	15th	5007	14th	5011	15th
5012	15th-16th	5021	15th-16th	5022	15th-16th
5032	14th-15th	5038	12th-14th	5039	15th
5041	15th				

3 Demolition and post-demolition of building to east of boundary

5027	18th-19th	5036	14th-15th	5040	15th
5045	15th	5047	15th	5048	15th
5049	15th	5050	15th	5052	14th-15th
5053	14th-15th	5057	15th	5058	14th

F528 (well)

5060	13th-15th	5064	15th-16th	5065	14th
5069	med	5071	15th-16th	5088	15th
5090	13th-14th	5100	med	5105	15th-16th

5067	16th-17th	5073	16th-17th	5074	15th
5077	15th	5081	14th-15th	5082	14th-15th
5083	14th	5086	13th-14th	5087	14th
5089	15th	5092	15th	5093	13th-14th
5094	13th-14th	5097	14th-15th	5098	15th
5101	14th-15th	5103	14th-15th	5109	14th-15th
5110	15th	5113	15th	5119	15th
5120	15th	5121	13th	5123	12th-13th
5125	13th-14th	5126	12th-13th	5127	12th-13th
5129	13th-14th				

4 Later deposits

5000	19th-20th	5024	18th-19th	5025	19th-20th
5026	18th-20th	5028	17th	5019	18th-19th
5037	14th-15th				

Area B

F319

3026 13th?

3031 14th

3027 13th

3047 12th-13th

3028 13th-14th

3051 13th

F320

3022 13th

F335

3029 18th-19th

F352

3021 12th

3023 11th-12th

3034 10th-11th

Area C

F604

6049 12th-13th

F606

6020 13th

6061 13th-14th

6025 13th

6060 12th-13th

F607

6021 15th-16th

F608

6022 13th-14th

6026 14th-15th

6030 13th-14th

6044 14th-15th

6023 13th-14th

6027 13th

6037 14th-15th

6024 13th-15th

6028 13th

6043 14th-15th

F609

6029 13th-14th

F610

6033 15th

6045 16th?

6058 12th-13th

F611

6034 13th-14th

6038 13th-14th

6039 13th

F612

6040 13th

6046 14th-15th

F613

6047 13th-14th

F614

6044? 14th-15th

F615

6048 15th-16th

F616
6054 13th-14th

F617
6052? 12th-13th

F618
6056 12th-13th

6057 15th

6063 15th

F619
6032 13th

F620
6067 12th-13th

Other Finds

Ceramic Tiles

Three boxes of ceramic tiles were recovered, including both roof and floor tiles. A number of decorated medieval floor tiles was among the assemblage. Work is recommended on this group to relate it to other such groups from the town and, in particular, from the abbey.

Stone Tiles

Four boxes of stone roof tiles, the majority of the local Harnage slate, came from Area A and, in particular, from a pit (backfill 5011). Quantification of this material is recommended.

Other Stone Objects

Two complete 'grinding-stones' and a portion of a third were recovered from a feature in Area B; the function of these objects is not yet certain. Three part querns and a hone were also found. Full reporting on all these objects is recommended with illustrations and/or photographs of the grinding stones being a necessity.

Metalwork

In addition to a half box of iron nails and a few amorphous iron lumps (?objects), there were recovered four bronze coins (including at least two post-medieval issues), a spoon (post-medieval) and five pins. All the metal objects require cataloguing to archive level only. The coins require cleaning, identification and reporting on.

Slag

A very small quantity of smithing slag (less than 1kg) was present. No further work on this material is necessary.

Glass

A few pieces of post-medieval bottle glass were recovered. No further work is recommended on these.

Clay pipe

One stamped clay pipe was recovered; reporting on this will be necessary.

Worked Bone

Six pieces of worked bone were among the finds. These will be reported on as part of the overall animal bone assemblage.

Mortar

Six mortar samples were taken from masonry walling. Analysis and reporting of these samples is highly desirable.

Charcoal

Some species identification of larger pieces of charcoal could aid interpretation of some features on the site.

Shell

A small quantity of oyster shell, recovered mainly from Area A, does not merit any further analysis beyond archiving.

Assessment of Animal bone

by S. Pinter-Bellows

For the purposes of assessment, the bones from the main stratified groups were briefly examined. The assemblages from Area A and the contractor's test pits were too small for analysis. The assemblages from Areas B and C contained enough bones to be used in a study. The table provides rough counts of the bones which contain the most information, i.e. jaws, loose teeth, and long-bone ends, etc., including those with useful measurements (M). It would be possible to double the numbers of identified bones by identifying shafts, vertebrae, etc.

The assessment shows the assemblage is dominated by the usual domesticates: cattle are the most common; sheep/goat (only sheep identified at this time) and pig were found in smaller numbers. Horse, cat and dog are present but scarcer. Deer is found in Area C; however, it is represented only by antler. Hare was found in Area B. Chicken and goose were recovered from both areas, and a wader-type bird from Area C. The condition of the bones is mainly fair to good, with a small percentage of bones in poor condition with the outer surface exfoliating.

This is not a large collection but is of a size which can give useful data. Few Saxon or Medieval urban sites have been studied in middle England. the fragments of antlers suggest that some horn and bone industry may have been operating in the vicinity.

The research potential of this collection of bones will depend on how tightly the various contexts are dated by the pottery evidence. The majority of the contexts from Areas B and C will need to be considered an analytical unit. The various areas and contexts are too small to be able to study differences between them. The combined assemblage will give some idea of the relative frequency of the different animals, and it would probably be worth taking the available measurements. Ageing data will need to come solely from the long bones as there are very few loose teeth and mandibles. There will also be individual points of interest that are

worth noting - for example, a sheep metacarpal was observed to have a possible bone tumour.

At the time of the archaeological evaluation of Owen Owen (BUFAU Report 160), it was noted that fish bones were found in the soil samples. The residue from the excavation soil samples was put through a 2mm sieve to investigate the potential of study of the fish bones. Few sites in this area have sieved samples (as opposed to hand collected samples) of fish bones and it could produce interesting information of the range of fish which were eaten during this period. Assessment of the bones in this residue suggested that there was neither a sufficient quantity nor a sufficient variety of fish bones to merit anything other than species identification and listing. The residues will require fine sorting before the involvement of a specialist.

If most of the bone from Area B and C is reasonably closely dated, a short report concentrating on the "more informative bones" would be worthwhile. An interesting question is whether there is a mixture of industrial and food waste in the pits from the site. However, the collection is not worth very detailed recording or reporting.

The collection does not justify work for more than two weeks.

Rough Quantification of Animal Bone Assessed

	Area B Pits	Area C Pits/ ?Ditches	Total
Cattle			
Jaws	0	7	7
Loose teeth	9	5	14
L-b ends etc. (137M)	85 (38M)	186 (99M)	271
Sheep/Goat			
Jaws	1	4	5
Loose teeth	3	4	7
L-b ends etc.	43 (17M)	38 (14M)	81 (31M)
Pig			
Jaws	4	7	11

Loose teeth	14	5	19
L-b ends etc.	28 (9M)	38 (9M)	59 (18M)
Horse (not subdiv)	1 (1M)	4 (3M)	5 (4M)
Deer (only antler found)	0	3 (1M)	3 (1M)
Dog (not subdiv)	0	4 (3M)	4 (3M)
Cat (not subdiv)	2 (2M)	17 (15M)	19 (17M)
Hare (not subdiv)	2 (1M)	0	2 (1M)
Chicken	11 (6M)	10 (5M)	21 (11M)
Goose	2 (2M)	12 (8M)	14 (10M)
Bird (Wader Type)	0	10 (8M)	10 (8M)
Total Informative	205 (76M)	347 (165M)	552 (241M)

ASSESSMENT OF BOTANICAL SAMPLES FROM THE OWEN OWEN SITE, SHREWSBURY, SHROPSHIRE

Lisa Moffett
School of Biological Sciences
University of Birmingham

The purpose of this assessment was to evaluate the botanical potential of samples taken at the Owen Owen site in central Shrewsbury. Samples for plant remains were taken in an attempt to gain information about economic plants and activities on the site, and possibly some environmental information also. Previous archaeobotanical work in the centre of Shrewsbury has been limited to a few samples from cesspits (Colledge 1983). A substantial amount of work has been done at Shrewsbury Abbey (Greig in prep.) and the excavations at Owen Owen provided an opportunity to make some comparisons and possibly relate the results to economic status and function.

Methods

The site was well-drained with no waterlogged contexts and sampling was therefore aimed primarily at recovering charred plant remains although some mineralised remains were recovered also. There were 66 samples taken and these were processed by flotation. The floating fraction was retrieved on two stacked sieves, one with a 1mm mesh and one with a 0.5mm mesh. These flots were dried and bagged separately. It was not possible to do all of the flotation before the assessment began, so some of the samples were not included, but the majority of the samples (52) are included.

For most samples the whole flots were scanned but a few large samples were subsampled and this is indicated in the table of results. The flots were scanned under a binocular microscope. Only the flot fraction greater than 1mm was scanned as there was not the time available to scan the whole of all the flots and experience with charred samples has shown that the smaller fraction is usually less productive. Data was entered into a database which included a text field (NOTES - see accompanying table). This field was used for brief comments which note the presence of certain items in an attempt to characterise the sample but in no way constitutes a full description of species present. It should be emphasized that very little time was taken to identify specific items. Identifications given in the NOTES field are those which could be made easily at a glance on unambiguous, well-

preserved material. Most of these are probably reliable but the rapidity with which the identification was done leaves open the possibility of error.

The presence of cereal grains, chaff, legumes, fruits and nuts, other seeds, bone, molluscs and charcoal were noted in the database but no items were removed from the samples. An indication of the abundance of wood charcoal was noted on a scale of 1 (=sparse) to 3 (=very abundant). The presence of insect remains, fish scales and any other environmental material is indicated in the O (=other) field and mentioned under NOTES. A somewhat subjective judgement of whether the sample requires further analysis is indicated in the field M (=more analysis) by 'Y', 'N' or '?'. Samples marked 'Y' are those which had abundant material which seemed likely to have potential value in adding to the interpretation of the site. Samples marked 'N' contained small amounts of probably residual material of little intrinsic interest. Samples marked '?' were either rather poor in material over-all but contained some material which might potentially add new data, or had fairly abundant material but came from contexts which had other samples which seemed better, and where the data gained might be repetitive.

It should be noted that virtually all the samples in this assessment did produce at least a few items, usually cereal grains or elder and *Rubus* seeds. This is taken to indicate a fairly consistent background of residual material. The presence of background residual material emphasizes the need for caution in interpreting small assemblages.

The sample results

A number of the samples produced abundant amounts of charred remains including cereal grains of wheat, rye, barley and oat. Arable weed seeds were also present but chaff remains were rare. Other charred items included hazel, bean, flax and sloe. A substantial number of seeds present were not charred. Many of these were seeds of elder and blackberry/raspberry. Radiocarbon evidence from other sites (Moffett in prep.) suggests that these are probably archaeological despite their relatively

fresh appearance. Possibly they are preserved by partial mineralisation. Other uncharred seeds which are probably archaeological include fig, grape and strawberry. There were also some seeds which were clearly mineralised. The presence of uncharred/mineralised seeds may indicate the presence of material from cesspits. The abundance of charred cereal grains requires explanation as it is often assumed that grain arrived in towns already ground to flour and townspeople bought their bread from bakers.

Careful identification of the strawberry seeds is needed, especially from the later samples, to check for the presence of possible North American species in addition to the native *Fragaria vesca*. The modern garden strawberry was developed in Europe and Britain from hybrids of North American species so the occurrence of these exotic species would be of interest for the history of this crop.

Further analysis

Although the species so far identified are not unusual for the Medieval period, analysis of the assemblages of plant material may provide information about activities taking place on site, and possible patterns of deposition of material, both of which may have potential for comparison with other sites. The samples most suitable for this are those most abundant in material, comprising about 30% of the samples included in this assessment. About half the samples are probably not worth further analysis. The remaining 20% should be scanned more thoroughly to take more precise note of the species present but the value of a quantified analysis will have to be reassessed in the light of information gained from the other analysed samples. Another 14 samples were not included in the assessment, but assuming the same percentages for these, there will be a total of approximately 20 samples are in need of further analysis, 14 needing scanning and/or reassessment, and about 33 needing no further analysis.

Preliminary sorting of the material

Time needed: 1 month

Cost: At pay scale determined by B.U.F.A.U. - may need to include cost of travel to Birmingham for some supervision depending on experience of person contracted. Cost of supervision = £120.00 per day.

Analysis of the material, including compiling the archive and writing the report

Time needed: 2 months

Cost: £2400.00 if done by myself. If done by another contractor costs would have to be negotiated with them.

References

Colledge, S. M. 1983. The Plant Remains. In Carver M. O. H. (ed.), Two Town Houses in Medieval Shrewsbury, pp. 62-63. Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society 61 (1977-1978).

BOTANICAL SAMPLES FROM OWEN OWEN, SHREWSBURY

Page No. 1
29/10/92

AREA	C NO	F NO	S NO	CONTEXT	PHASE	GR	CH	LE	FR	SE	BO	CL	O	AMT	H	NOTES
A	5023	0000	001	layer	M	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	3	Y	1150	N	A few grains and seeds, small number of fig seeds, some fish scale. Large amorphous lumps some of which may be bone. Sample about 10% scanned.
A	5023	0000	002	layer	M	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	3	Y	350	N	Mostly wood charcoal. A small amount of grain, a few uncharred fragments of hazel, grape and fig. Moderately abundant fish scales. Sample about 30% scanned.
A	5142	0000	051	layer	M	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	2	Y	75	?	A moderate number of grains with a bean and a few seeds, substantial unch/min Rubus, some elder, fig, few insect bits. Mixed but may be worth a further look.
A	5143	0000	040	layer	M	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	1	N	5	?	Lots of uncharred/mineralised Rubus, a few charred grains, abraded bone.
A	5027	0520	003	robbtr?	PM?	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	3	N	370	Y	Abundant grain: oat, wheat, barley, rye. Also bean, grape, hazel, Rubus, weed seeds. About 30% of the sample scanned.
A	5036	0520	004	robbtr?	PM?	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	3	N	380	Y	Fairly abundant grain: rye, oat, wheat. Rye rachis, hazel, weeds, mineralised/uncharred seeds. About 20% scanned.
A	5044	0521	018	drain?	MOD?	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	2	N	150	Y	Lots of Brassica, possibly B. nigra, a bit of grain, fig, and grape.
A	5071	0528	009	well?	C15/C	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	2	N	360	N	Moderate amounts of grain, mostly oat, with a few seeds. Large amorphous lumps, at least some of which looks like it could be bone, accounts for a substantial % of large charred material in the sample. Sample 50% scanned.
A	5088	0528	010	well?	C15/C	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	2	N	34	N	Moderate amounts of grain, mostly oat, a few seeds, grape, amorphous lumps. Preservation fairly poor.
A	5090	0528	011	well?	C15/C	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	2	N	44	Y	Fairly abundant grain, mainly oat, also grape and lumps of ?dung/bread.
A	5100	0528	019	well?	C15/C	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	3	Y	190	Y	Fairly abundant grain: oat, barley, wheat, rye. Prunus, grape, fig, Rubus, strawberry, fish scale.

BOTANICAL SAMPLES FROM OWEN OWEN, SHREWSBURY

Page No. 2
29/10/92

AREA	C NO	F NO	S NO	CONTEXT	PHASE	GR	CH	LE	FR	SE	BO	CL	O	AMT	M	NOTES
A	5102	0528	020	well?	C15/C	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	1	N	18	Y	Uncharred/mineralised fig, grape, Rubus, a few charred grains, abraded bone.
A	5105	0528	021	well?	C15/C	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	3	Y	200	Y	Fairly abundant grain: oat, barley, wheat. Grape, fig, elder, fish scale.
A	5073	0531	041	pit	M/PM	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	2	N	60	N	Very few grains and seeds. Large lumps of poorly preserved charcoal and ?bone.
A	5116	0531	050	pit	M/PM	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	2	Y	64	?	A moderate number of grains, with a few unch/min seeds, ? cherry, fish scale.
A	5118	0531	056	pit	M/PM	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	2	Y	175	?	A moderate number of grains: rye, oat, wheat, barley, some uncharred/mineralised fig, grape, other seeds. Small number of fish scales.
A	5110	0541	038	pit	M	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	2	N	75	Y	Fairly abundant grain: oat, barley, wheat. Grape, culm node, fig, Rubus, lumps of ?dung.
A	503?	?	005	?	?	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	3	N	300	Y	Abundant grain: wheat, barley, oat, rye. Also fig, elder, Rubus, grape, hazel, bean, culm node, weed seeds.
A	?	?	033	well	3	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	2	Y	38	Y	Uncharred/mineralised fig, Prunus, grape, elder, strawberry, Rubus, other seeds, a little charred grain, insect remains.
B	3024	0318	034	trench	MOD?	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	1	N	15	?	Mostly Rubus seeds, with some elder and fig, some charred grains of oat and wheat, a few charred seeds.
B	3027	0319	006	pit	M	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	2	N	90	?	Fairly abundant grain, mostly oat, some weeds and hazel.
B	3028	0319	007	pit	M	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	3	N	130	Y	Very abundant grain, mostly oat, some rye, wheat, weeds, a culm node and hazel. Some large charcoal fragments.
B	3028	0319	014	pit	M	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	3	N	160	Y	Very abundant grain, mostly oat, some rye, wheat, weeds. Some of the grain may be germinated. Some large charcoal fragments.

BOTANICAL SAMPLES FROM OWEN OWEN, SHREWSBURY

Page No. 3
29/10/92

AREA	C NO	F NO	S NO	CONTEXT	PHASE	GR	CH	LF	FR	SE	BO	CL	O	AMT	M	NOTES
B	3031	0319	015	pit	M	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	2	N	70	?	A moderate amount of grains and seeds, a legume and a seed of possible Echinochloa or Setaria
B	3031	0319	026	pit	M	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	1	N	2	N	A few grains, elder, Rubus.
B	3031	0319	029	pit	M	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	2	N	20	N	A few barley grains and seeds.
B	3029	0335	008	pit	PM/MO	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	2	N	34	?	Moderate amounts of grain, mainly rye and wheat, some weeds, uncharred Rubus.
B	3030	0335	037	pit	PM/MO	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	1	N	4	N	Lots of Rubus, some fig and ?dung/bread.
B	3042	0352	016	pit	LS/EM	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	2	N	22	N	A few grains, mostly wheat and barley.
B	3042	0352	030	pit	LS/EM	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	2	N	21	N	A few grains of barley, oat, wheat. Some seeds, elder, B. cf. nigra.
B	3042	0352	057	pit	LS/EM	Y	N	N	N	N	N	2	N	32	N	A few grains of rye, wheat, barley.
B	3050	0354	017	pit	M	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	2	N	33	Y	Moderately abundant grain: wheat, rye, barley, oat. Weed seeds, Rubus, elder, wheat rachis, ?dung/bread.
B	3050	0354	044	pit	M	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	1	N	2	N	A few grains of wheat, rye, oat, also elder, Rubus and an unidentified charred item possibly a fruit pip.
C	6027	0608	031	pit/di	M	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	2	N	30	?	Large lumps of charcoal, some grains, fig, Rubus and an apple/pear.
C	6030	0608	?	pit/di	M	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	2	Y	20	Y	Large lumps of charcoal, some grains of wheat, rye, oat, barley, fig, Rubus. apple/pear, rather a lot of bone, some insect bits.
C	6037	0608	023	pit/di	M	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	3	N	480	N	A few grains and seeds, uncharred Carex, a few fragments of hazel.
C	6037	0608	027	pit/di	M	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	3	N	400	N	Mainly wood charcoal with some large lumps. A very few grains and seeds.
C	6041	0610	024	pit/di	M	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	1	N	3	N	Only a few seeds of Rubus.
C	6038	0611	028	pit/di	M	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	1	N	2	N	A couple of grains, some Rubus and elder.

BOTANICAL SAMPLES FROM OWEN OWEN, SHREWSBURY

Page No. 4
29/10/92

AREA	C NO	F NO	S NO	CONTEXT	PHASE	GR	CH	LE	FR	SE	BO	CL	O	AMT	M	NOTES
C	6047	0613	?	pit/di	M	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	1	Y	3	N	A couple of grains, some Rubus and elder, a few insect bits.
C	6044	0614	025	pit/di	M	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	1	Y	13	N	Lots of bone, some fig, Rubus, a few seeds and insect bits.
C	6044	0614	042	pit/di	M	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	2	Y	60	N	Large lumps of charcoal, a few fig and Rubus seeds, some insect bits.
C	6078	0616	052	pit?	M	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	3	N	350	N	Very little grain, a few seeds, some mineralised Rubus and a mineralised legume. Mostly large charcoal pieces.
C	6050	0617	049	pit/di	M	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	2	Y	60	N	Large lumps of charcoal, a few grains, fig, Rubus, a bit of fish scale and fly puparia, moderately abundant bone.
C	6056	0618	053	pit/di	M	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	2	N	95	?	A few grains and seeds, Rubus, elder, a sloe and legume.
C	6057	0618	036	pit/di	M	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	1	Y	12	Y	Lots of fig and Rubus, some grains and seeds (charred and mineralised), strawberry, grape, fly puparia, fish scale, insect remains.
C	6059	0618	048	pit/di	M	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	2	N	58	N	Large lumps of charcoal, a very few grains and seeds, a sloe.
C	6063	0618	035	pit/di	M	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	1	N	3	N	One grain, some Rubus.
C	6066	0618	039	pit/di	M	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	1	N	4	N	One grain, some Rubus.
C	6069	0618	054	pit/di	M	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	2	Y	54	Y	Fig, Rubus, sloe, flax, strawberry, hazel, elder, a few grains, and seeds, an unidentified object, fish scale frags. and fly puparia.
C	6069	0618	?	pit/di	M	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	1	Y	10	?	Fig, Rubus, flax, elder, a few grains, and seeds, fly puparia.
C	6036	0619	022	pit/di	M	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	2	N	10	N	A few grains and seeds, including <i>Lithospermum arvense</i> (min) and <i>Sparganium</i> sp.

GR=grain CH=chaff LE=legume FR=fruit/nut SE=seed BO=bone
CL=abundance of wood charcoal on a scale of 0 (=none present) to 3 (=extremely abundant)
O=other AMT=amount of flots in mls. M=more analysis

Only the fraction of the sample which is >1mm is included in this assessment and measurements, except sample 33 where the >0.5mm fraction is included.

Summary

The various elements of work carried out at the site - documentary research, building recording, evaluation, excavation, environmental sampling, finds recovery and watching brief to be carried out in autumn/winter 1992/93 - have resulted in the collection of a dataset whose study, archiving and analysis towards publication in a local journal should be seen as the appropriate response given the undoubted importance and research potential of the material on a local and regional level and in a wider national context of studies of medieval urbanism.

Work Programme and Costings (For Financial Year 1992/93)

	#			
1.	Cataloguing of paper archive	(J. Sterenberg)	1 week	375
	Preparation of matrix and site narrative	(I. Ferris)	2 weeks	1,180
2.	Cataloguing, study and reporting of pottery	(L. Bevan)	49 days	3,381
	Specialist pottery consultant	(V. Buteux)	1 week	501
3.	Preparation of animal bone report	(S. Pinter Bellows)	2 weeks	800
	Retrieval of fish bones for analysis	(L. Bevan)	3 days	207
	Fish bone analysis	(B. Nicholson)	4 days	320
4.	Preparation of environmental samples	(C. de Rouffignac)	4 weeks	2,340
	Analysis of samples	(L. Moffett)	8 weeks	3,000
5.	Analysis of insect remains	(D. Smith)	2 weeks	700
6.	Analysis of mortar samples	(G. Morgan)		200
7.	Cataloguing to archive/report level all other finds	(L. Bevan)	2 weeks	690
8.	Report on stone objects	(F. Roe)		100
9.	Editing of data from documentary research and building recording	(S. Litherland)	2 weeks	670
10.	Preparation of stratigraphic/sequence text, research and contextualisation, editing of specialist reports	(I. Ferris)	4 weeks	2,360
11.	Preparation of illustrations	(M. Breedon)	5 weeks	1,675
	Management and Secretarial			1,290
	Expenses and Materials			700
	University Overheads			4,731

Total: #25,220→