Life on a Medieval Backstreet: Archaeological Excavations at Swan Street, Northampton, 1989

by

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SUMMARY

Excavations at Swan Street, Northampton, in 1989 demonstrated the changing use of an area of land behind a minor street within the Medieval walled town of Northampton. Such marginal sites are valuable in that they often prove to be more sensitive to the ebb and flow of a town's economic fortunes than the more intensively occupied major street frontages.

Settlement appears to have spread into the area soon after the Norman Conquest and there may have been timber structures on the site from the mid-12th century. A hiatus in occupation occurred in the 14th century when the area appears to have been given over to cultivation, probably gardening. A horse buried on the site at this time is of interest in bearing a large number of knife marks which suggest that flesh had been removed from the skeleton. This may have been for human consumption, although the feeding of dogs is equally likely.

Further evidence of structures may attest to the return of settlement in the 15th century but by the 16th century the area was given over to cultivation once more. Possible bedding trenches again suggest gardening. The map evidence demonstrates that the area was used as orchards from the mid-18th century until the early 19th century when terraced buildings were constructed.

INTRODUCTION

Archaeological excavations were undertaken by the Contracts Section of the former Northamptonshire Archaeology Unit (NAU) in 1989 to the east of Swan Street, Northampton, ahead of the development of the area as the St John's multi-storey car park. The fieldwork and preparation of a site archive and site narrative were funded by Northampton Borough Council. The further work necessary for the production of a full report has been financed by Northamptonshire Archaeology, a service of the Northamptonshire County Council Planning and Transportation Department.

Swan Street is situated in the south-east corner of the Medieval town (Fig 1). Until the construction of the Derngate Centre in the 1980s blocked off its northern end Swan Street led from Derngate southwards to Victoria Promenade, which preserves the line of the town defences. It lies on the southern slopes of the Nene Valley, the ground falling from *c.* 75 m above OD at the northern end of the street down to *c.* 59 m at its southernmost point, a 5 per cent slope. The excavations revealed that the natural subsoil comprised beds of sand and fractured Ironstone, both part of the Northampton Sand.

It was anticipated that archaeological deposits relating to the Medieval-period occupation of the area and to Northampton's town defences might be present on the site and that these deposits were likely to be destroyed by the development. Accordingly an evaluation was carried out in June–July 1989 in order to establish whether archaeological deposits were present, their importance and their vulnerability. This comprised the excavation of four trial trenches, St. John's Car Park Evaluation Trenches A–D (Fig 2), over a period of 7 weeks in June–July

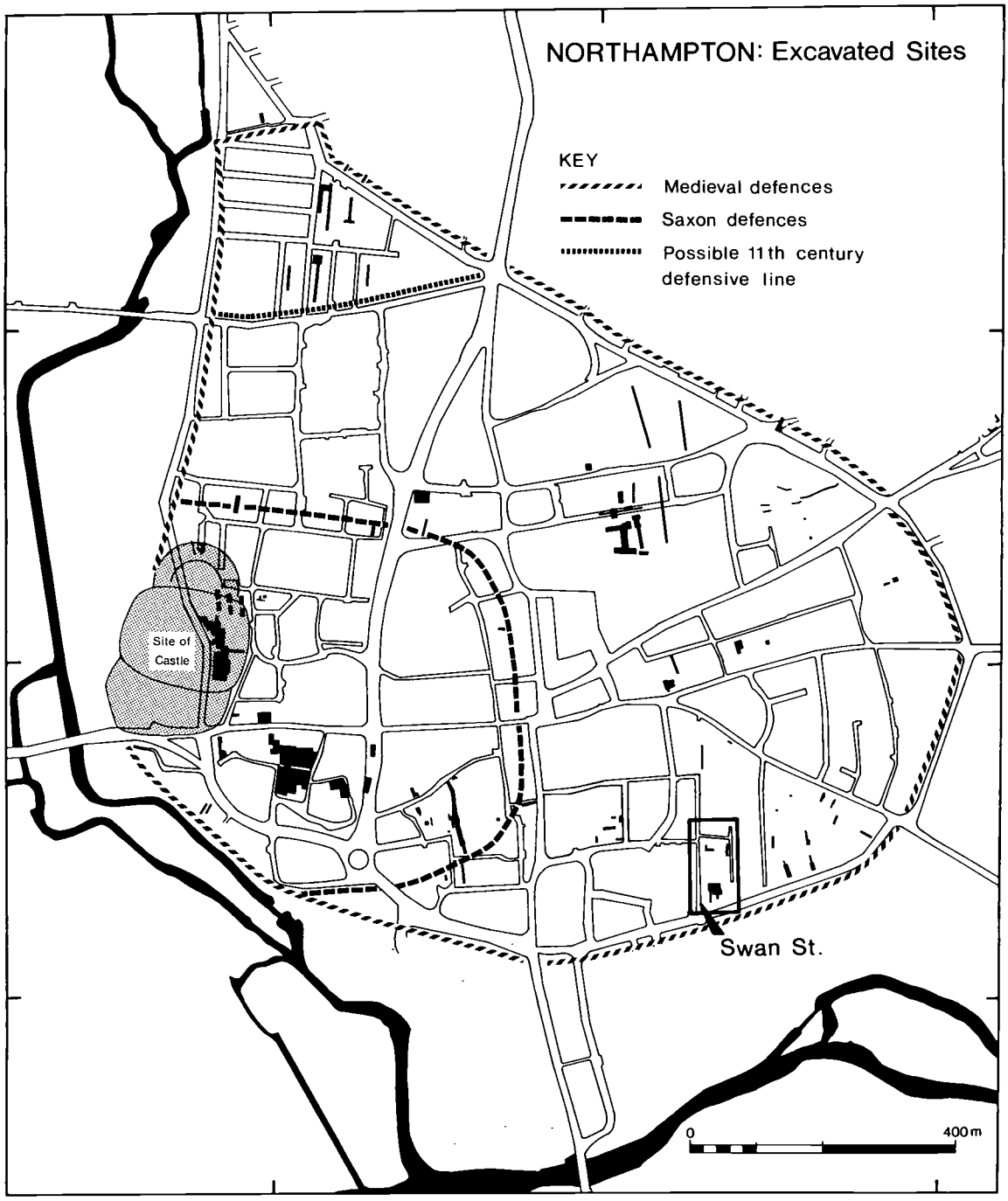

Fig 1 Northampton: showing area of Swan Street excavations.

1989. No definite evidence of the town defences was recovered but archaeological deposits of 11th century date onwards were found to survive in a reasonable condition. It was therefore decided that a sample area should be excavated at the south end of the development area adjoining Evaluation Trenches A and B where the archaeological deposits were best preserved. Two trenches were excavated either side of Evaluation Trench A. Because of constraints of space (the area was in use as a surface public car park at the time) the operation was carried out in two stages. Initially the area immediately east of Evaluation Trench A and north of Evaluation Trench B was excavated as Swan Street Trench A; subsequently Swan Street Trench A was backfilled and the area to the west of Evaluation Trench B was opened up and excavated as Swan Street Trench B. In this way it was possible to fully excavate an area of *c.* 330m^2 at the south end of the development area with only minimal disruption to the car parking.

Deposits of Post-Medieval date were removed by machine, a JCB3C for the evaluation trenches and Liebherr 360^0 excavator for the excavation trenches. Thenceforth excavation was by hand except for a thick layer of sandy loam (1) in the excavation trenches which was also removed by a Liebherr 360^0 excavator.

Michael Shaw acted as Project Manager for both the evaluation and the subsequent excavation. Mark Holmes supervised the evaluation and Sean Steadman the excavation. NAU reports on the evaluation and on the work as a whole have already been published (Shaw, 1989; Shaw and Steadman, 1994). The present report is intended to present the results of the work to a wider audience. It is based on the NAU reports but some of the backup data which is not central to the interpretation of the site has been omitted from the present report. Where this is the case reference is made to the relevant NAU report.

THE RECORDING SYSTEM

A single series of context numbers was used in the evaluation trenches, prefixed by their relevant trench numbers (St. John's Car Park A1–A52, B53–B67 and B89, C68–C84 and C87–C88, D85–D86). Features and their fills were in general assigned the same number, except where a large feature contained a number of distinctive fills. In the subsequent excavation a separate single series of numbers was used (A1–A181, B182–B276), separate numbers being assigned to features and their fills. At the post-excavation stage these have been combined under the feature number. In cases where contexts which have been given separate numbers have subsequently proved to be the same feature or layer these have also been combined at the post-excavation stage using the lowest number as the primary number. A concordance table detailing all the contexts and the combinations is included in the archive. This also gives details of the nature of each primary context (pit, layer etc) and of its phasing. In the present report the trench prefixes have been retained for those contexts uncovered in the evaluation trenches but have been omitted for those contexts discovered in the main excavation. Where contexts were uncovered in both the evaluation and the main excavation both numbers are quoted (e.g. 271/A30 is a ditch whose northern end was excavated in St. John's Car Park Evaluation Trench A as feature 30 while its southern was excavated in Swan Street Trench B as feature 271).

THE EXCAVATIONS

The results from the excavation of the main area, comprising St. John's Car Park Evaluation Trenches A and B and Swan Street Excavation Trenches A and B are detailed first, under the heading of the Main Site. St. John's Car Park Evaluation Trenches C and D lie some distance away from the main excavation area. Accordingly they are discussed separately at the end of the excavation section.

MAIN SITE

The contexts uncovered in the main excavation area can be divided into four broad phases (Phases 1–4) using the evidence of stratigraphy; these broad phases have been further sub-divided on the basis of the alignment of features, the differing nature of their fills and the dating evidence of the pottery recovered from the site.

The natural subsoil was located at 59.1 m above

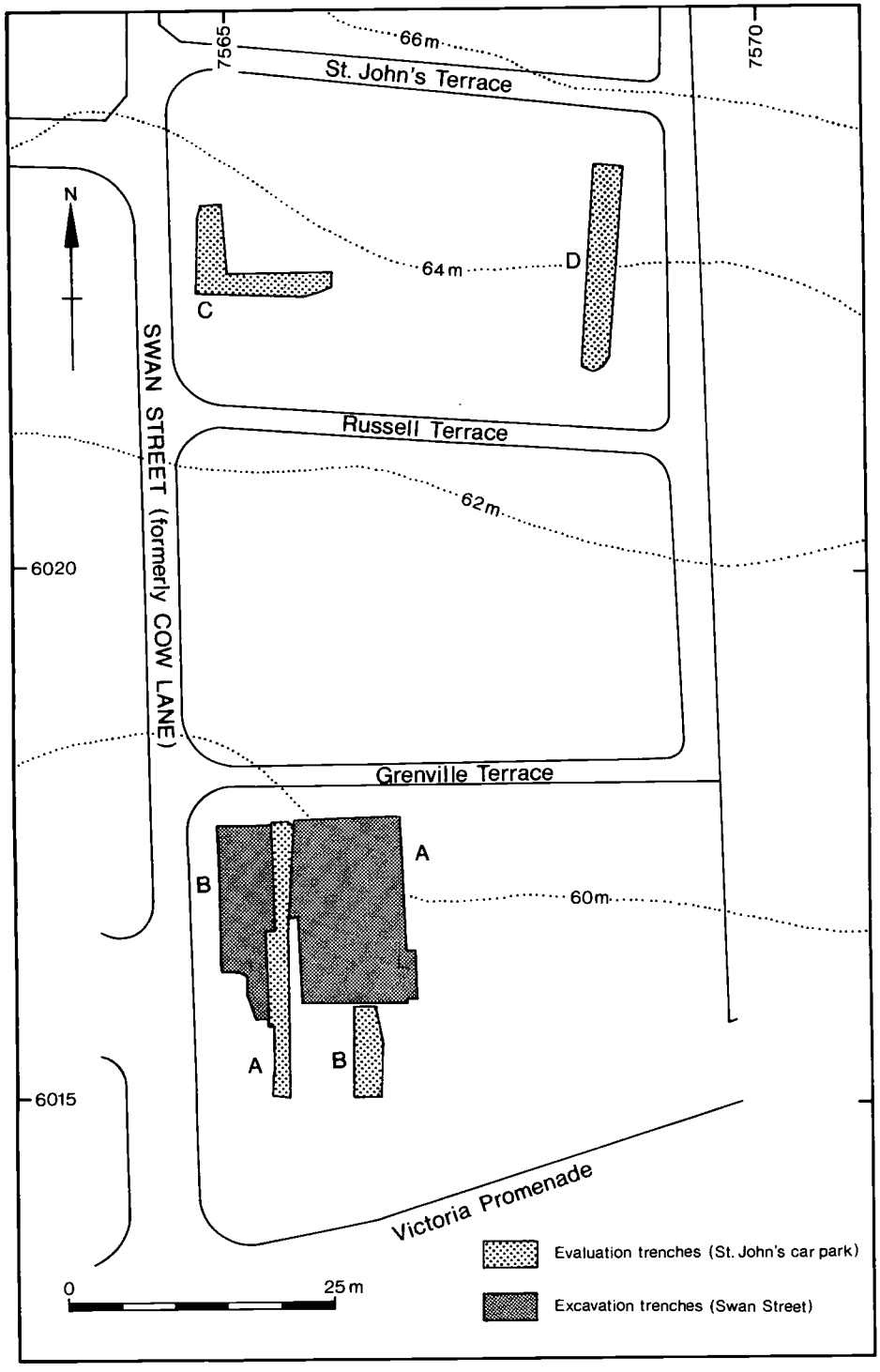

Fig 2 Swan Street: showing position of excavation and evaluation trenches.

OD at the north end of the site and 57.9 m above OD at the south end. It was a yellowish-brown sand, part of the variable beds of the Northampton Sands.

PHASE 1 (pre c. 1075 A.D.)

This phase can be sub-divided into two sub-phases.

Sub-phase 1A Fig 3

This sub-phase comprises a single ditch (181), 0.3 m wide and 0.12 m deep with gently sloping sides and a flattened bottom. It was located at the south end of the site cut down into the subsoil and running on an east–west alignment. It was traced over a length of 5 m, terminating in a rounded butt-end at the west. No dating evidence was recovered from its fill of dark reddish brown sandy loam.

Sub-phase 1B

Ditch 181 was overlaid by a layer of reddish brown sandy loam (179). This layer was present over most of the site; at the south-east end of the site it was up to 0.5 m thick but to the north and west it was much thinner and in places was not present at all. An equivalent layer was not recognised in Evaluation Trench A – possibly it could not be distinguished from the subsoil in a narrow trench. In Evaluation Trench B two layers of sandy-silty clay (B55, B65), up to 0.25 m thick, are perhaps an analogous deposit.

Dating

A total of five sherds of Medieval pottery were recovered from layer 179. At best they may date the end of the period of formation of the deposit but given the dating of the features cut into it (see below) they are likely to be contaminants.

PHASE 2 (c. 1075 A.D.–c. 1300 A.D.)

This phase comprises a large number of features cut into layer 179. It covers a period of over 200 years and therefore has been tentatively divided into three sub-phases based on differences in the alignment of features and slight changes in the pottery assemblage. All of the Phase 2 features are shown on a single phase plan (Fig 4), but are separated out into the individual sub-phases on the summary plans (Figs 16–17).

Sub-phase 2A (c. 1075–c. 1150)

This sub-phase is composed of two features, A50 and A30/271, and a number of layers immediately above and subsiding into A50. A50 (Fig 10) was discovered at the south end of evaluation trench A. It measured *c.* 5 m in width north–south and was 1.7 m deep. Its east–west measurement was not ascertained. It was thought at the time of the evaluation that it might be an early defensive ditch. Accordingly Evaluation Trench B was excavated 6 m to the east of Trench A in order to follow its line. No sign of a ditch was seen, however, and it would appear therefore to be a large pit. It was not possible for safety reasons to excavate the lower fills of the pit by hand in the narrow evaluation trench. Accordingly they were removed by machine. The lower fills (A51, A52) were grey-brown silts, probably representing natural silting, while the upper (A40, A41) were of clayey sand and Ironstone, probably evidence of deliberate infill. The pit was overlaid by layers of sandy or silty clay (A39, A43, A44) and Ironstone pieces (A38), presumably levelling layers.

A30/271, a shallow ditch, 0.9 m wide and 0.3 m deep, was located at the south-west corner of the site. It could be traced for a distance of 1.5 m running in a northerly direction before terminating in a rounded butt end.

Dating

Despite a careful search of the material removed by machine no dating evidence was recovered from the lower fills of pit A50. A single sherd of late Saxon/ early Medieval pottery was recovered from an upper fill (A41). Eight sherds of pottery were recovered from an overlying layer (A39). Five were unidentifiable, the remainder were of late Saxon–early Medieval date.

Five sherds of pottery of late Saxon date, including a small fragment of Northampton Ware crucible, were recovered from A30 during the evaluation and it was suggested in the evaluation report that the feature was of late Saxon date. During the excavation of the remainder of the feature (271) in the recording action, however, four sherds of early Medieval (post-1100) pottery were recovered. It is likely therefore that this sub-phase dates to the late 11th to early 12th centuries.

Sub-phase 2B (c. 1150–c. 1225)

This sub-phase is composed of a number of features with a south-east–north-west alignment, noticeably eccentric to the alignment of Swan Street. The features comprise a ditch (B54) at the south-east end of the site; a complex of post-holes, stake-holes and other features suggestive of timber structures; and three shallow pits at the north-west end of the site.

Ditch B54 was located in evaluation trench B. It was 0.7 m wide with a surviving depth of 0.3 m and a U-shaped profile. Its purpose is uncertain.

The timber-structure features can be divided into two groups and three isolated features. A westerly group comprised post-holes A26, A27, A28, A35, 235, 237, 239, 261, 263, 265, 267, trench? 205, and stake-holes 247, 249, 251, 253, 255, 257, 259; while a central group comprised post-holes A17, 125, 127, 143, 159 and stakeholes 121, 123, 161, 163, 165. Two isolated post-holes (A23, A24) lay towards the south end of the site and a single post-hole (167) lay at the north end. All of these features were extremely shallow, ranging from 2 mm–22 mm in surviving depth and it is possible that further features of the same sort have disappeared completely. The two groups share a similar alignment and may form either a single structure of some kind or maybe individual small structures.

To the north-west of the timber feature complex were three sub-circular pits 241, 233, A22/113. They were 1 m–1.5 m in diameter with a surviving depth of up to 0.2m. Their alignment would perhaps suggest that they are connected with the timber structure(s). There was no sign of posts within them and hence they are unlikely to have been post-pits. Although they are apparently rather shallow for rubbish pits, their upper levels may have been removed at a later date.

Dating

There was little dating evidence from the timber-structured features. A total of only twelve sherds was recovered; all but

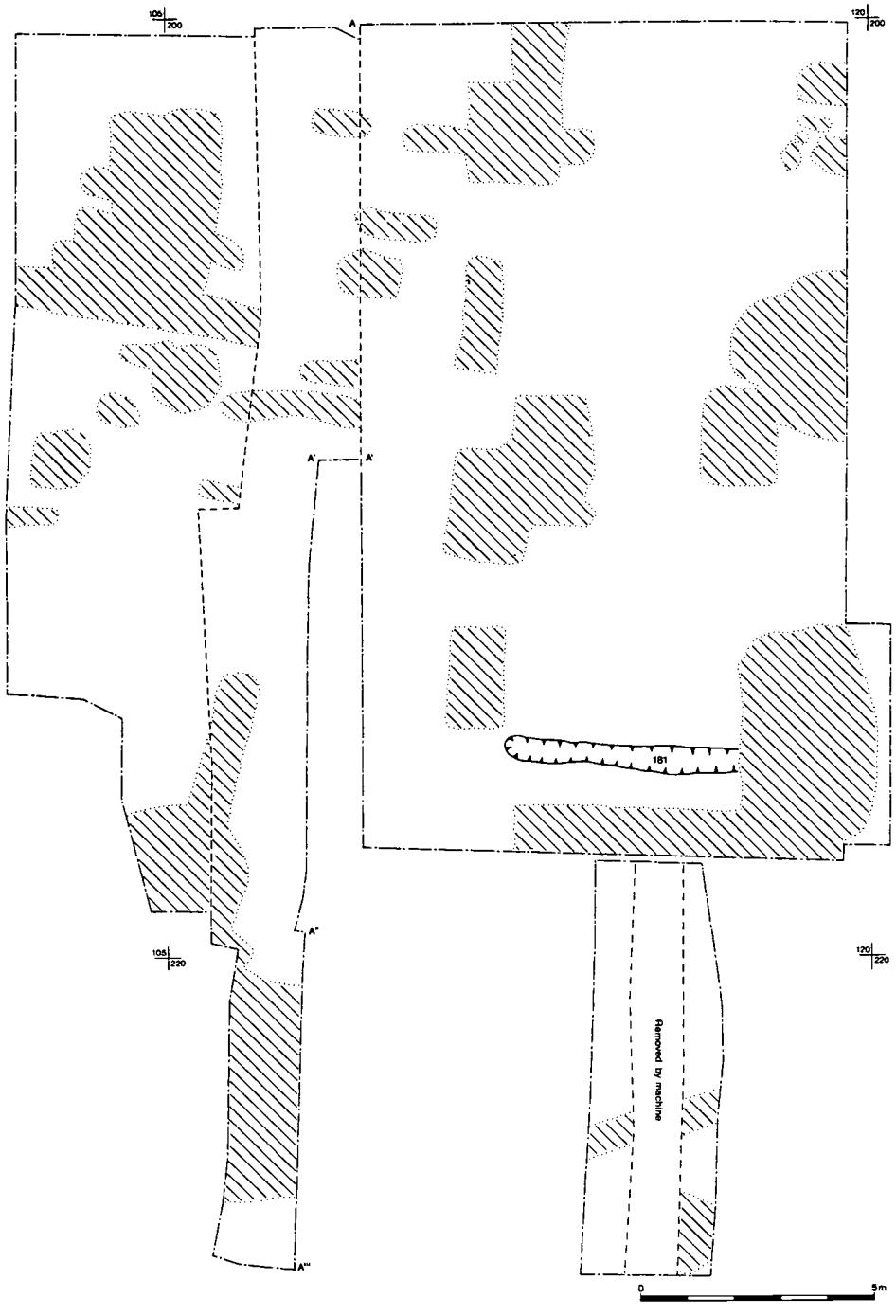

Fig 3 Swan Street: main site plan, Phase 1.

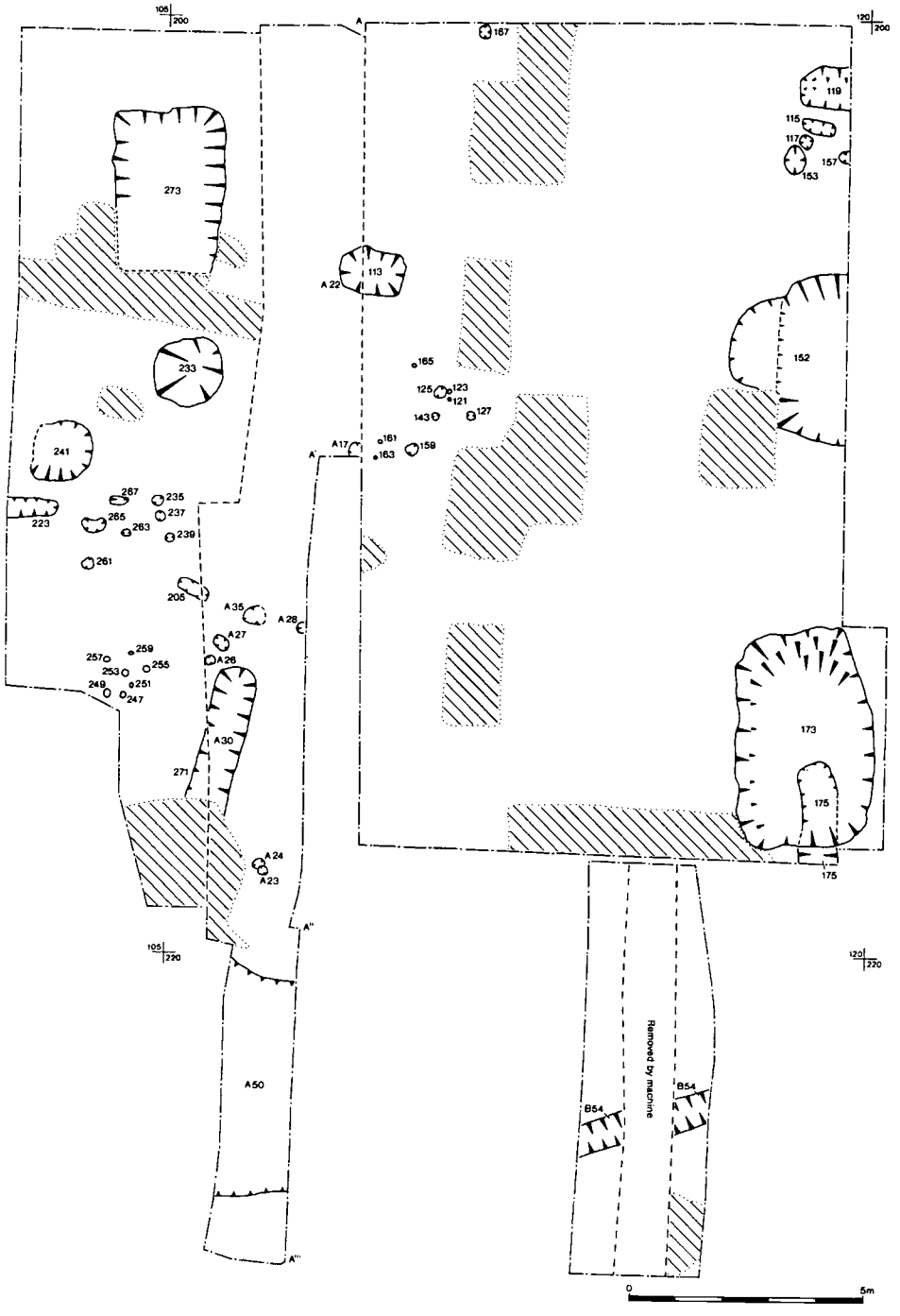

Fig 4 Swan Street: main site plan, Phase 2.

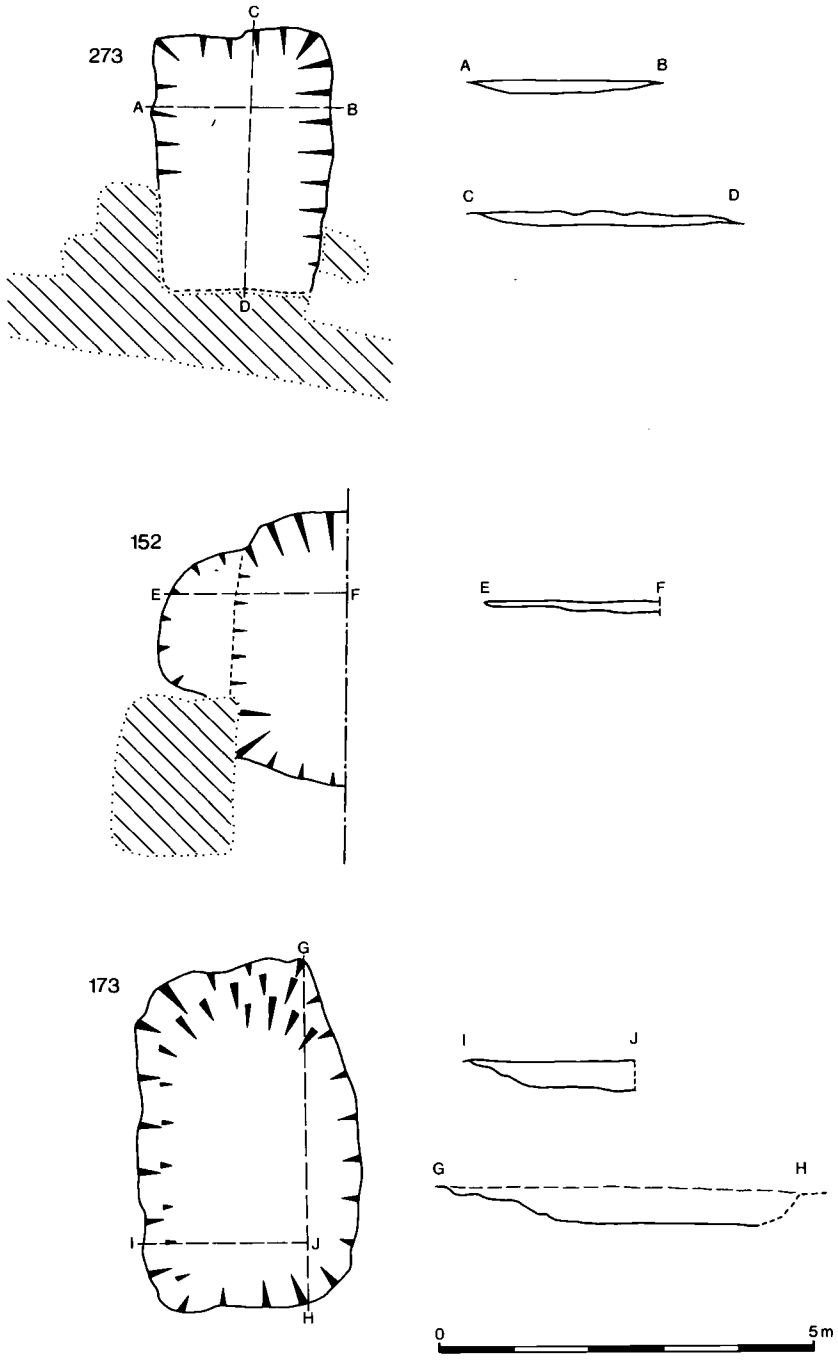

Fig 5 Swan Street: plans and sections of semi-cellared structures.

two from post-hole 239 were of fabrics with a pre-1200 start date.

Twenty-eight sherds were recovered from the three pits. All were of fabrics with a pre-1200 start date.

Twelve sherds of pottery were recovered from B54. Ten were of fabrics with a pre-1200 start date, one was of a fabric with a post-1200 start date while one was an early, coarse unglazed variety of Potterspury-type Ware.

It is suggested that this sub-phase dates to the second half of the 12th and the early 13th centuries.

Sub-phase 2C (c. 1225–1300)

This sub-phase comprises those features cut through layer 179 which are aligned north–south. They are composed of a complex of features at the north-east end of the trench, a trench (223), a ditch (175), and three large, rectangular, flat-bottomed features (152, 173, 273; Fig 5). They are not all contemporaneous for ditch 175 is cut by feature 173.

The features at the north-east end of the site are a shallow trench 115, post-holes 117, 153 and 157 and a shallow ditch/hollow (119), only 0.07 m deep. Their function is uncertain.

Feature 223 is a shallow trench 0.8 m wide and only 0.1 m deep at the west end of the site at right angles to Swan Street which can be traced for a distance of 1 m before terminating in a butt end to the east. Its function is uncertain.

Feature 175 is a steep-sided, butt-ended, V-shaped ditch up to 0.75 m wide and 0.75 m deep at the south-east end of the site. Its function is uncertain.

Feature 173 is rectangular, 4.5 m in length and 3 m wide, with rounded corners. It had steep sides and a surviving depth of 0.5 m. A shallow lip ran round the north and west sides. It was infilled with a brown sandy loam with many Ironstone fragments.

Feature 273 (Plate 1) is similar, though smaller, 3.5 m in length and 2.4 m wide. It survived to a depth of only 0.2 m and its south-west corner had been removed by later intrusions. It was filled with a light brown sandy loam with Ironstone fragments from which a potsherd with a hole bored through it was recovered. It may have been used as a watering pot.

Feature 152 was shallower; its maximum surviving depth was 0.1 m at its western end and it had almost completely disappeared at its eastern end where it ran under the east site

Plate 1 Swan Street, Trench B, "semi-cellared stucture" 273 prior to excavation, showing as a rectangular area of darker fill in the foreground. From the north.

baulk. It measured 3.5 m on its north–south axis. The western side of this feature was rounded. The rounded end was not as deep as the main pit and may be a separate feature. It was filled, however, with an orange-brown sandy loam identical to the fill of the main feature.

Dating

The pottery from this sub-phase would appear to confirm the placing of the features into a separate, later, sub-phase than those features with an alignment eccentric to Swan Street. The assemblage from the features other than the rectangular features is similar to that from the earlier features. The pottery from feature 173, however, includes a larger number of post-1200 fabrics (and a fragment of floor tile), while that from features 273 and 152 includes sherds of Potterspury Ware. A date of *c.* 1225–*c.* 1300 is therefore suggested for this sub-phase. A sherd of Midlands Yellow Ware (W17), a 16th–17th century pottery type, from feature 273 is considered to be a contaminant.

PHASE 3 (c. 1300 A.D.–c. 1650 A.D.)

This phase can be divided into three sub-phases. The earliest sub-phase comprises an overall layer and a horse burial within it; while the two subsequent sub-phases consist of features cutting the overall layer. These have been sub-divided on the basis of their differing nature and on the pottery recovered from them.

Sub-phase 3A (c. 1300–c. 1400)

The Phase 2 features are overlaid by a layer of orange brown sandy loam (1/A2) which varied in thickness from only *c.* 0.05 m at the north end of the site to up to *c.* 0.5 m at the south end (Fig 9). Much of the deeper build-up at the south end of the site was removed by machine. It would seem unlikely that such a large quantity of soil would be deliberately introduced on to the site from elsewhere. Rather it was probably the result of some form of cultivation which resulted in the top of layer 179 and the features cut into it being incorporated into layer 1/A2, explaining the shallow depth of the Phase 2 features. A layer of greyish brown sandy loam at the south end of evaluation trench B (B56) is probably equivalent to 1/A2.

During the removal of this layer by machine a horse skeleton was uncovered (Plate 2). Unfortunately the skull was removed by the machine but the bones were recovered. The skeleton had been partially buried in a shallow pit (13; its

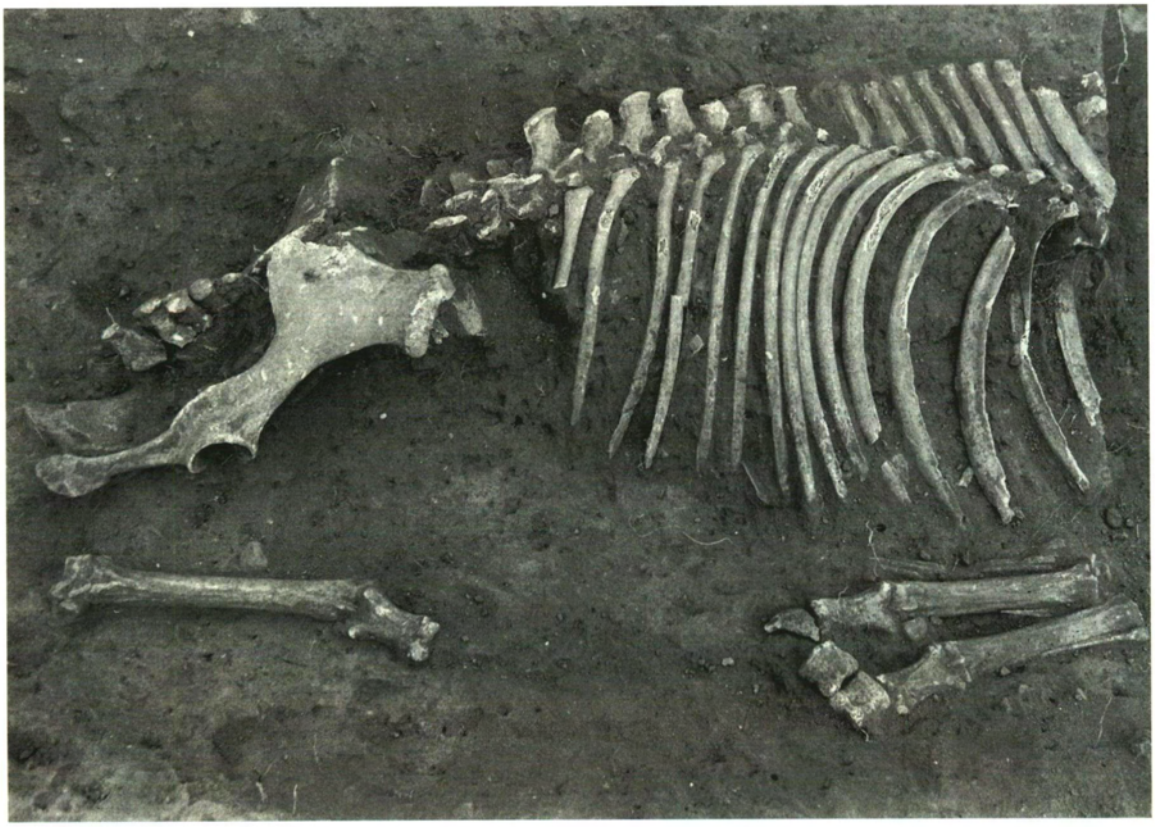

Plate 2 Swan Street, Trench A, the horse burial of Phase 3A. The head was removed during machine clearance. From the west.

position is marked as an inset on Fig 6), *c.* 0.4 m deep, at the time of the formation of layer 1. A full report on the burial is included below.

Dating
A large amount of pottery (709 sherds) was recovered from layer 1/A2 even though much of it was removed by machine. Many of the fabrics found in Phase 2 were present and are likely to have been disturbed from the Phase 2 features. The two assemblages are not identical, however, suggesting that the formation of layer 1/A2 took place over a sufficient period of time to allow sufficient contemporary pottery to be deposited to distinguish its assemblage from that of Phase 2. Hence local Medieval shelly wares (T2) formed a smaller proportion of the assemblage (43% as opposed to 62%) while Potterspury Ware (W18) formed a larger proportion (15% as opposed to 6%). In addition a small number of fabrics with a post-1350 start date were present. It is therefore suggested that this sub-phase dates to the 14th century. Three sherds of 16th century and later date and a single clay pipe fragment are considered to be contaminants.

A total of 39 sherds was recovered from pit 13. The assemblage suggests a late 14th century date for the deposition of the horse skeleton.

Sub-phase 3B (c. 1400–1500) Fig 6
At the north end of the site a complex of post-holes (17, 19, 23, 25, 27, 31, 37, 39, A4, A8, A9, A14, A37), stake-holes (15, 29) and a shallow trench (87) probably form part of a structure of some form, designated here as Structure 1. Four post-holes to the west (207, 209, 211, 275) are possibly part of the same structure. Interpretation of this ?structure is hampered by the large amount of later intrusions which had removed much of the contemporary ground surface and by the shallow surviving depth of the features. They were only 0.05 m–0.15 m deep. It is therefore possible that further features had completely eroded away.

To the south another complex of post-holes was uncovered (Plate 3). This has been designated Structure 2. It comprised post-holes 49, 53, 57, 59, 61, 63, 65, 69, 71, 73, 77, 81, 91, 93, 95, 97 and 101. Again these were extremely shallow with surviving depths of 0.05 m–0.2 m. A probable east wall line (59, 53, 57, 63, 61, 69, 65, 81) and a possible north wall line (71, 93, 97, 95, 91, 77) could be discerned but again, given the amount of later disturbance and the shallowness of the features, it would be unwise to speculate too much on the exact form and size of the building.

A number of post-holes were discovered to the west (A12, 183, 185, 187, 201) and a single post-hole to the south (A11) but their function is uncertain.

At the south end of evaluation trench B a small pit? (B60) was discovered. The pottery recovered from it would suggest that it belongs to this sub-phase. A layer of greyish-brown sandy loam (B67) similar to the fill of the pit? and immediately to the north of it may be connected but insufficient of the area was excavated to determine its function.

Dating
Insufficient pottery was recovered to date this sub-phase with any precision. It is suggested as belonging to the 15th century on the evidence of the dating of the preceding and succeeding sub-phases. A single clay pipe fragment from trench 87 is considered to be a contaminant. If not it would place this feature in sub-phase 3C.

Sub-phase 3C (c. 1500–c. 1650) Fig 7
This sub-phase comprises a number of shallow trenches (A3, 105, 41, 45, 213, 215, 231, 229, 199, 197, A5/85, 193, 195, A6/33, 51, 189, 83), two further shallow features (35, 43) located in the northern half of the trench; two pits in the south-west corner of the trench; and a shallow cut feature at the south end of the trench (59). Otherwise the southern half of the trench was noticeably devoid of features.

The trenches were 0.5–0.8 m wide and generally less than 0.1 m deep (Plate 3; see Fig 7 for selected sections). They were filled with a loamy soil rather darker than the fills of the Phase 2 features although they are not sufficiently distinct from those of the preceding sub-phase to allow sub-division of features on the colours of the fills alone. They would appear to be too closely spaced to form boundary ditches and there was no sign of occupation in the area in which they were located. It is likely that they form some sort of horticultural feature, possibly bedding trenches within an orchard or garden.

The two pits in the south-west corner comprised 269/A10, which was sub-circular and 0.3 m deep with a flat base, and 243/A15, 0.75 m deep, which partially cut 269/A10. A group of Nuremberg jettons were recovered from the fill of 243/A15.

A total of three potsherds with holes drilled through were recovered, two from the ?bedding trenches and a further one from pit 269. They are probably fragments of watering pots and form additional evidence for horticulture at this sub-phase.

Dating
216 potsherds were recovered from this sub-phase. The proportion of Potterspury Ware (W18) had further increased to 27 per cent, while that of the local Medieval shelly ware (T2) had fallen to 31 per cent. A small number of Z fabric sherds (post-1700 in date) are likely to be contaminants for the assemblage as a whole suggests a 16th to mid 17th century date for this phase. This dating is supported by the late 16th to early 17th century date for the jettons recovered from pit 243/A15. This would suggest that the majority of the pottery (at least 55%), including the T2 sherds, is residual from earlier phases – a common phenomenon in the later phases of intensively-occupied urban sites in Northampton.

PHASE 4 (c. 1650 A.D. ONWARDS)

This phase was not examined in detail. Deposits of this date were removed by machine, with only those features which were cut through the earlier deposits being removed by hand. A broad division into two sub-phases can be made, however, using the evidence of the cut features and of the site sections. The earliest sub-phase is composed of a single layer while the later comprises the features cut through the layer.

Sub-phase 4A (c. 1650–c. 1825)
A layer of dark greyish brown loam (277/A1) overlay the Phase 3 deposits. It varied in depth between 0.2 m at the north end of the site to 0.4 m at the south end (Fig 9). It was similar to the fills of many of the Sub-phase 3C features and appears to represent continuing horticultural activity.

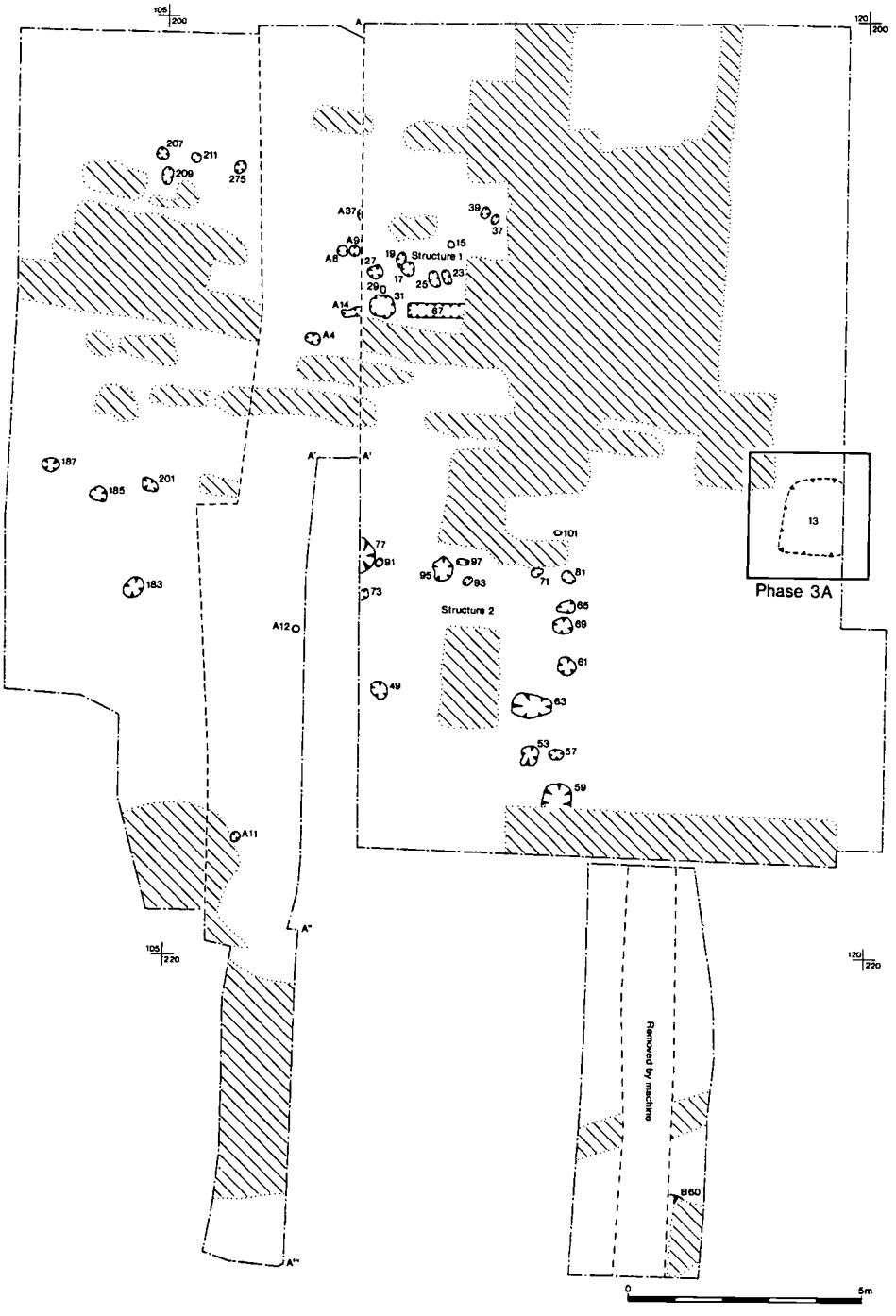

Fig 6 Swan Street: main site plan, Subphase 3B.

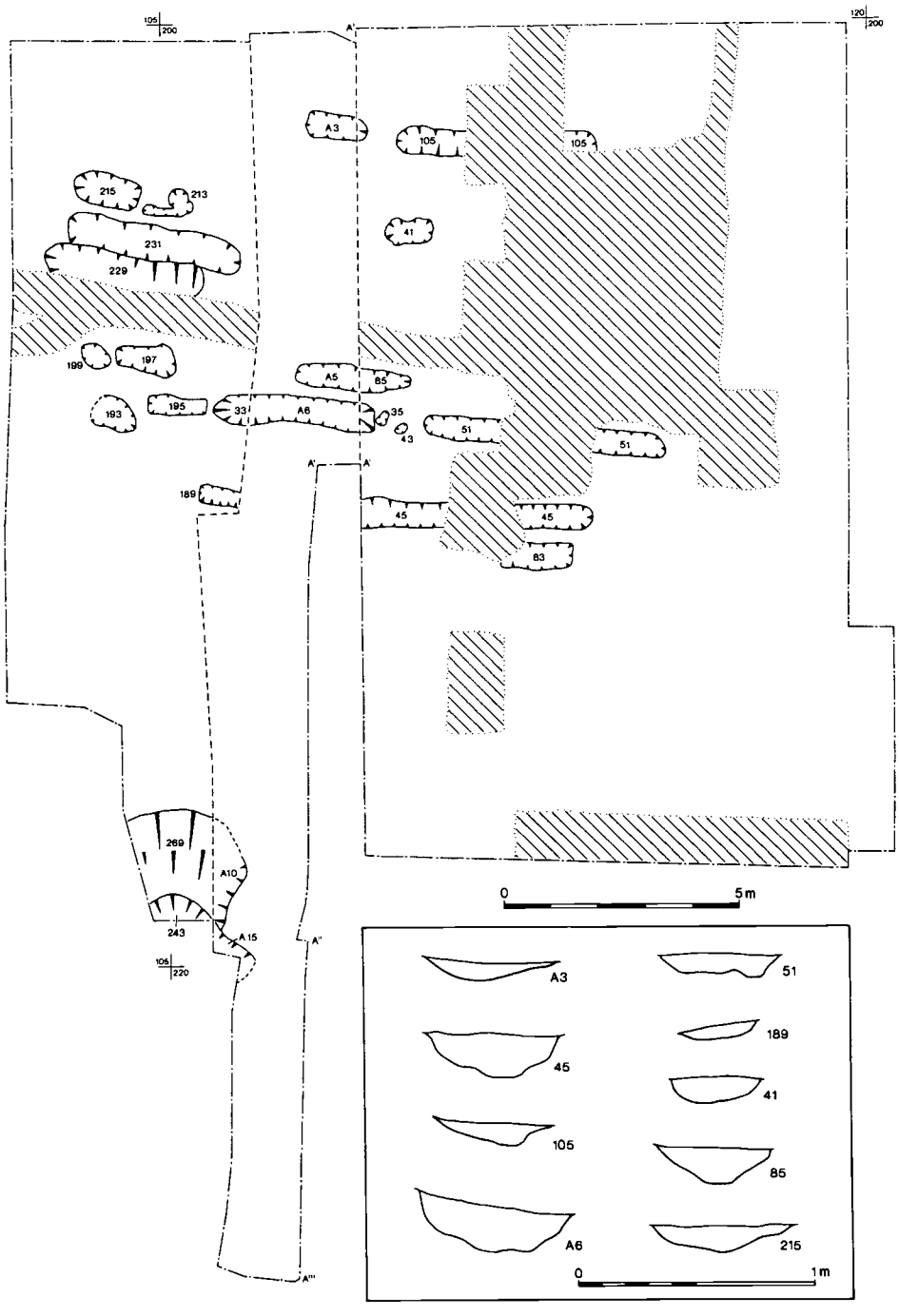

Fig 7 Swan Street: main site plan, Subphase 3C.

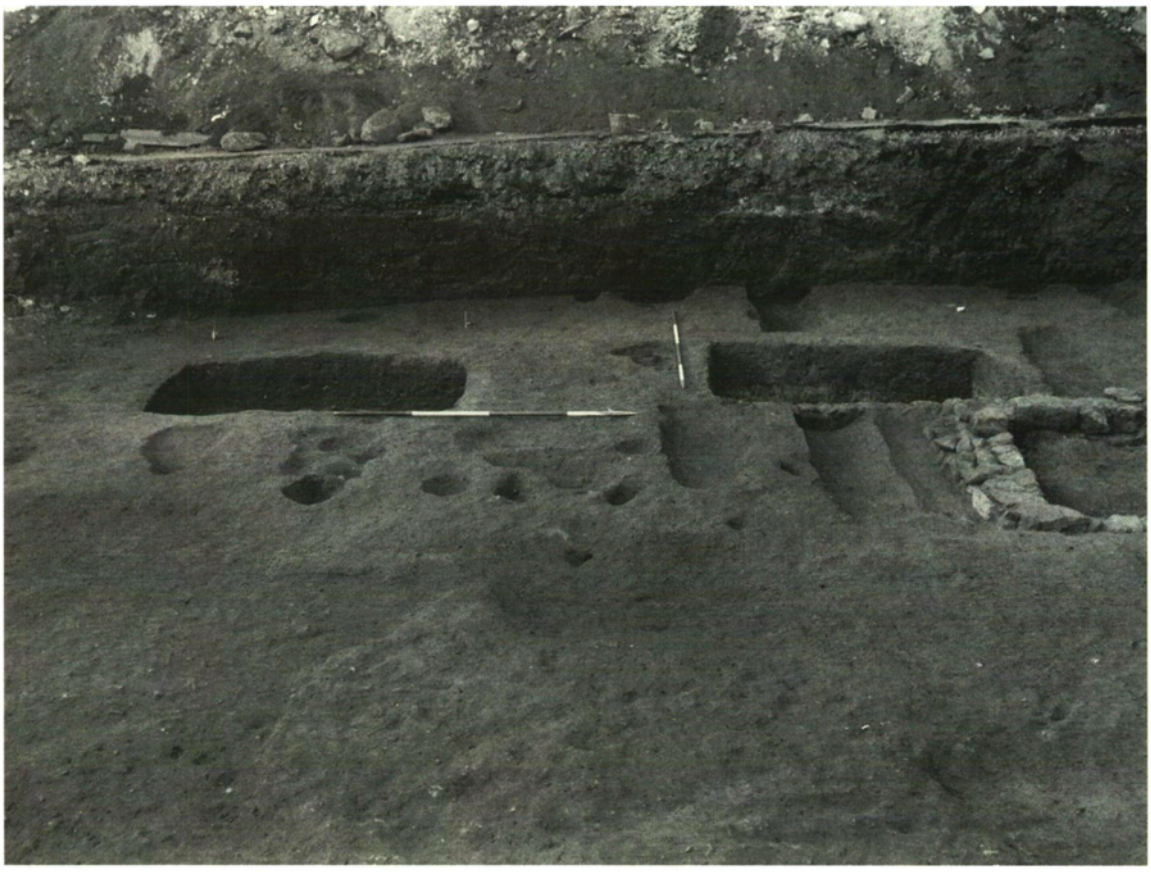

Plate 3 Swan Street, Trench A, post-holes of Structure 2, Subphase 3B, (left), the and bedding? trenches of Subphase 3C (right). From the east.

Dating

Pottery was collected from 277/A1 during the recording of evaluation trench A. Of the 75 sherds recovered 60 (80%) were definitely residual. The remainder were of 17th–18th century date. The historic map evidence (see below), however, suggests that the phase of cultivation activity continued into the 19th century. Accordingly this sub-phase is assigned a mid-17th to early 19th century date.

Sub-phase 4B (c. 1825 onwards) Fig 8

Features of this sub-phase which survived the machining were a cellar and some associated features, a sewer trench and a number of square to rectangular pits. The cellar (21), which measured 6 m north–south and 4.5 m east–west, was uncovered at the north-east end of the site. It was constructed of stone and was cut down to the Ironstone subsoil. Below the cellar a shallow hollow (177) and a trench (107) also proved to be of this sub-phase. Connected to the west wall of the cellar were two rectangular stone-lined pits (3, 5). Two further rectangular stone-lined pits (7, 11) continued the line of 3 and 5 to the south, while two further pits (9, 103) were connected to the south wall of the cellar. All of the pits were backfilled with sandy loam containing a high proportion of charcoal, ash and in some cases clinker and slag.

A sewer pipe trench (47) ran east–west across the site from the west side of the cellar. Foundation trenches filled with Ironstone and Limestone blocks were recorded in the sections of evaluation trenches A and B (A34, B64, B66).

Dating

74 sherds of pottery were recovered from this phase. Better dating evidence is, however, offered by the map evidence which demonstrates that no buildings or occupation features were present on the site until after 1807 (see below).

EVALUATION TRENCHES C AND D

Evaluation trenches C and D lay some 50 m north of the main excavation area. Given this distance the sequence of events discovered in these trenches need not necessarily mirror those

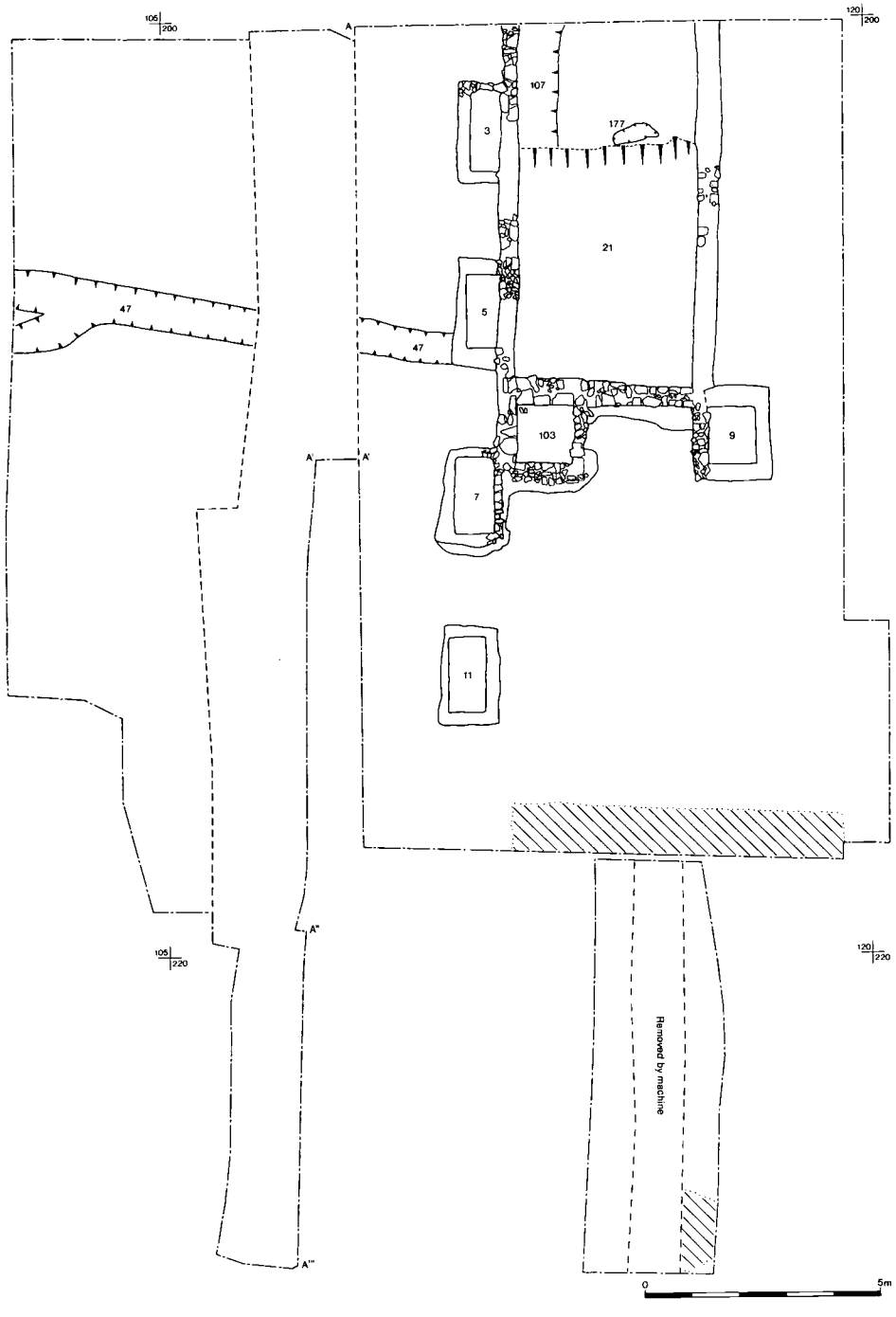

Fig 8 Swan Street: main site plan, Subphase 4B.

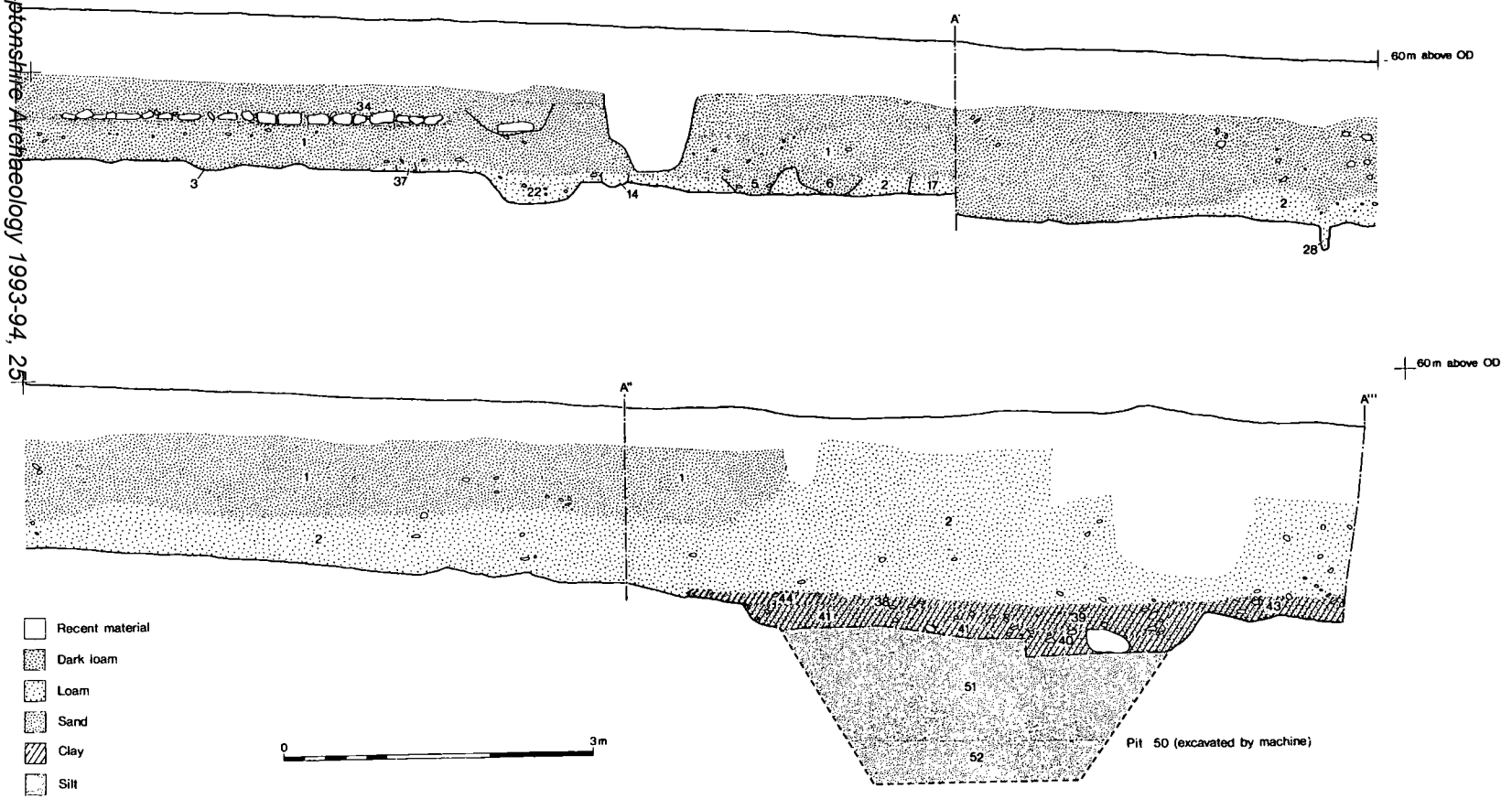

Fig 9 Swan Street: St. John's Car Park, east section of evaluation trench A (context numbers should be prefixed by A).

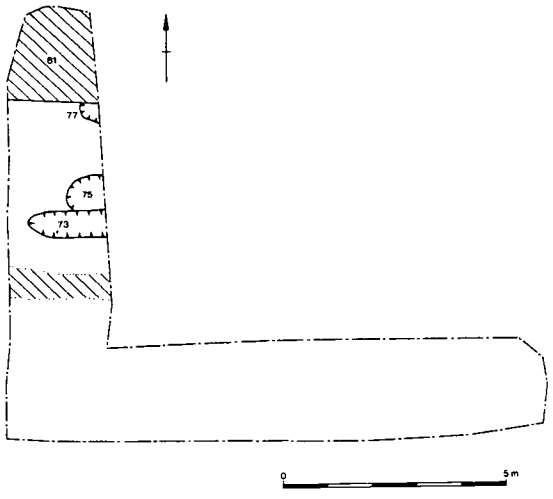

Fig 10 Swan Street: St. John's Car Park, plan of evaluation trench C.

discovered in the main excavation trench. Nevertheless it would appear that deposits broadly similar to those uncovered in the main trench were present and accordingly some attempt at correlation is made relying on the appearance of the contexts and the date of the pottery recovered from them.

TRENCH C Fig 10

Trench C was excavated in order to examine the Swan Street frontage at the northern end of the site. An L-shaped trench was excavated as close as possible to the frontage – its western edge lay 3 m east of the present road line. A total area of 40 m^2 was investigated. At the north end of the trench a stone-walled cellar (C81) was discovered cutting down into the Northampton Sand subsoil. It was not removed. Medieval deposits were located at a depth of only *c.* 0.5 m below recent material. The earliest deposits were layers of sandy clay (C79) and loamy sand (C80), up to 0.3 m thick, which overlay the natural subsoil of orange sand and Ironstone fragments. A number of features were cut into these layers: a U-shaped trench (C73), 0.6 m wide and 0.5 m deep, subsequently re-cut (C82); a shallow pit (C75), cut by C82 but sealing C73; a series of layers of sandy clay (C78, C87, C88) and a post-hole? C77. All of these features lay by the Swan Street frontage. No features were located away from the frontage where a layer of brown sandy clay (C68), up to 0.2 m thick overlay the natural subsoil and underlay recent material.

Dating
The only dating evidence from the features sealed by layer C68 comes from trench re-cut C82. The pottery from this feature appears to be of 12th century date. It is probably best to regard all of these features as belonging to the late 11th to 12th centuries and hence of a broadly similar date to the earlier sub-phases of Phase 2. Layer C68 resembles layer 1 in the main excavation trench in appearance. A similar range of pottery types was recovered from it, although there is a smaller proportion of fabrics with a post-1200 start date. A 13th–14th century date, within Phase 3 on the main site, is therefore suggested for this layer.

TRENCH D

Trench D was located 50 m north-east of the main trench, 40 m east of Swan Street in order to test for occupation away from the frontage. A layer of brown sandy clay (D85), 0.3 m–0.6 m thick, was uncovered below *c.* 0.3 m of recent material. It directly overlay the natural subsoil which was composed of Ironstone pieces. No features or other signs of occupation at any period prior to the 19th century were located in the trench.

Dating
The appearance of D85 and the pottery assemblage recovered from it would suggest that it was equivalent to layer C68 and again belonged to a period equivalent to Phase 3 on the main site.

THE FINDS

THE POTTERY
by Varian Denham and Michael Shaw

The initial analysis of the pottery from both St. John's Car Park and Swan Street was undertaken at separate times by Varian Denham. Following the methods previously established for Northampton pottery reports, the pottery was divided into fabric types using the Northampton Pottery Type Series established by Mike McCarthy (McCarthy, 1979). Their form (jug, cooking pot etc) and the presence of glaze or other form of decoration was also noted, a count of the number of sherds was made and comments on pieces or groups of particular significance were included. The original reports on the two assemblages are contained in the Site Archive.

The grouping of the pottery into phases and sub-phases has been carried out subsequently by Michael Shaw who has prepared the tables of fabric types and pottery by phase. The comments on the dating of the phases and sub-phases in the excavations text are by Michael Shaw but incorporate comments made by Varian Denham in the original pottery reports. In general the assemblage is similar to that recovered from other, larger, excavations in Northampton although without a major Saxon element.

As with the excavations text the pottery from the main excavation site (St. John's Car Park Evaluation Trenches A and B; Swan Street A and B) and from St. John's Car Park Evaluation Trenches C and D is discussed separately.

Table 1 summarises the fabrics recovered from the site and gives references to detailed publications while Tables 2 gives a count of the number of sherds of each fabric type by phase recovered from the main site.

MAIN SITE

A total of 1,404 sherds were recovered from stratified contexts. Although the material was not weighed the generally small size of the sherds was noticeable. This is presumably due to the large number of sherds removed from their original contexts during the cultivation phases and subjected to further cycles of wear and breakage.

The range of fabrics recovered can be seen in Table 2. A small number of Early Prehistoric, Iron Age and Romano-British sherds were recovered. They were too small to be further classified and are too few to suggest actual occupation of these periods in the area. A small amount of late Saxon pottery was recovered from the site. The majority of this was St. Neot's type ware (T1) and may belong to an immediately post-conquest period. Of more potential significance were a few sherds of Northampton Ware (W1) and allied types (W34, W36). These included a fragment of Northampton Ware crucible. Northampton Ware is generally regarded as being of 10th century date. None of the contexts could be assigned to this period, however, and the quantity recovered is insufficient to suggest occupation of this date in the area.

TABLE 1: Key to Fabrics

Main Fabric Groups

P	Prehistoric
IA	Iron Age
RB	Romano-British
S	Saxon (AD 400–900)
T	Late Saxon/Medieval: calcareous
V	Late Saxon/Medieval: calcareous – sandy
W	Late Saxon/Medieval: sandy
X	Late Saxon – Post-Medieval: very fine sandy
Y	Imported
Z	Post-Medieval

References to previously published fabric definitions are cited in the third column. The prefix (M) to a page number indicates microfiche.

Report codes

M115	St. Peter's street report (McCarthy, 1979)
M115X	St. Peter's Gardens/ Saxon Palaces report (Denham, 1985a)
M139	Chalk Lane report (Gryspeerdt, 1981)
M178	Marefair report (Gryspeerdt, 1979)
M282	Gregory Street report (Humble and Denham in archive)
M285	College Street report (Gryspeerdt, 1982)
M351	Derngate report (Shaw and Denham, 1984)
M403	The Riding report (Denham, 1984)
M443	Black Lion Hill report (Denham, 1985b)

The majority of the pottery is of Medieval date. This is to some extent a result of excavation policy and the machining away of the Post-Medieval deposits. It is likely, however, to reflect also the dearth of settlement activity between the end of the 15th century and the early 19th century. As on other Northampton sites two fabrics predominate; local Medieval shelly wares (T2) form 41 per cent of the assemblage while Potterspury Ware (W18) forms 16 per cent. the Potterspury Ware recovered from layer 1/A2 was rather thicker and coarser than normal, suggesting a date at the earlier end of the date range of this pottery type (*c.* 1250–*c.* 1350). Wheel-thrown bowls with knife trimming of 14th century date were also present. It can be seen therefore that the majority of the pottery dates from *c.* 1100/1150 to *c.* 1350/1400, reflecting the periods of occupation on the site. Given that the assemblage spans the 13th century, a period of highly decorated pottery, the quality and range of material is noticeably poor. Local coarse shelly wares predominated with few glazed wares being recovered and foreign imports are rare. The assemblage is evidently of domestic character. Jugs were recovered in addition to cooking and storage pots but few were decorated or glazed.

Five sherds of pottery with holes deliberately bored through them were recovered from Medieval contexts. These are usually interpreted as watering pots. Given the suggestion that the site was given over to cultivation for long periods they are clearly of some interest. They are summarised in Table 3.

In contrast to the Medieval assemblage the pottery brought into the area in the 16th–19th centuries is comparable to assemblages from other sites of a middling status, including Cistercian Ware and German imports and ultimately a widerange of British products.

A further 119 sherds were found in unstratified contexts. These were examined. None were of any intrinsic significance and they were similar in range and fabric type to the stratified assemblage. Accordingly they were not classified or further analyzed. All apart from 1 sherd of Romano-British pottery and 4 sherds of late Saxon St. Neot's type ware were of Medieval or later date. They are not included in Table 2.

EVALUATION TRENCHES C AND D

A total of 249 sherds was recovered from stratified contexts in Trench C and 20 sherds from a stratified context in Trench D. The assemblage is similar in range and proportion of fabric types to the assemblage from the Medieval phases on the main site. It lacks, however, the late Medieval and Post-Medieval fabric types. Hence T2 forms an even larger proportion of the assemblage (61%) while W18 forms less than 4%. A table giving a count of the number of sherds of each fabric type by phase is included in Shaw and Steadman, 1994, 17.

THE JETTONS
by Mark Curteis

A group of 25 Nuremberg jettons was recovered from pit 243/A15 of which seventeen were identifiable, the remainder being illegible. Fifteen were issued by Hans Krauwinckel (*c.* 1586–1635), the most prolific of all the Nuremberg makers, and there was one each of Hans Schultes (*c.* 1553–1584) and Killian Koch (*c.* 1587–1617). Hence the group cannot have been deposited before *c.* 1587 and is probably later. Jettons were primarily used as casting counters and for gaming. They had no monetary value although they might on occasions be used as small change (pers. comm. Edward Besley, National Museum of Wales). Accordingly their deposition in the pit would not have been a significant loss to their owner.

TABLE 2a: Detailed description of fabric.

Code	Familiar Name	References	Origin	Date
S3/T1		M115X:(M)2/27–28	?Local+Regional	650– 900
T1	St Neots-type ware	M115X:(M)2/28–30	Local+Regional	850–1100
T1/2	Transitional late Saxon/early Medieval shelly ware	M115X:(M)2/30–31	?Local	1000–1200
T2	Medieval shelly ware	M115X:(M)2/31	Local+Regional	1100–1400
T2(2)	Lyveden/Stanion-type ware	M351:(M)32–33	Lyveden/Stanion, Northants	1200–1400
T6		M115:157	Local, ?North-east Northants	1200–1400
V1		M115:157	?Midlands	1100–1400
V3		M115:157	?Bedfordshire	1200–1400
V4	Olney Hyde-type ware (Fabric B)	M178:(M)87	Olney Hyde, Bucks	1200–1400
V5		M115X:(M) 2/32–33	?Glos/Oxon	900–1300
V6		M351:(M)34	S Northants/Oxon	1100–1400
V7		M115:158	?Local	1100–1400
V9		M285:68	?Nottingham	1200–1400
V10				1350–1600
W1	Northampton Ware	M115X:(M)2/33–35	Northampton	850–1100
W3	Thetford-type Ware	M115X:(M)2/36–37	East Anglia	850–1200
W4		M115X:(M)2/37	?Leics/Lincs	1050–1250
W7		M115:159–160	Oxon and Beds	1100–1400
W11		M115:160	Midlands	1200–1500
W14	Brill-type Ware	M115:161	Oxon	1200–1500
W15	East Anglian Red Ware	M115:161	East Anglia	1200–1500
W16	Midlands Purple Wares	M115:161	Midlands	1350–1600
W17	Midlands Yellow Wares	M115:162	Midlands	1525–1700
W18	Potterspury Ware	M115:162	Potterspury/Yardley Gobion, Bucks	1250–1600
W20	East Midlands Late Medieval Reduced Ware	M115:162	?Bucks/Beds	1350–1600
W21	Surrey white wares (Tudor Green)	M115:163	Surrey/Hants	1400–1600
W22		M285:68	East Midlands	1100–1400
W29	East Midlands Late Medieval Reduced ware	M115:163	?Local	1350–1600
W34		M115X:(M)2/38–39	?Local	850–1100
W36		M115X:(M)2/39	?Leicester	850–1100
W45			?Bourne, Lincs	1200–1400
W49		M178:(M)88		1100–1400
W56		M282 in archive	Midlands	1100–1500
X1(1)	Stamford Ware	M115X:(M)2/41–42	Stamford, Lincs	850–1250
X1(2)	Developed Stamford Ware	M115:164 M139:118,(M)65–6	Stamford, Lincs	1150–1250
X2a	Cistercian Ware	M115:164	?Local	1470–1550
X2b	Midland Black wares	M115:164–5	?Potterspury, 1550–1700 and East Anglia	
Y8	Raeren Stoneware	M403:(M)34	?Raeren, Germany	late 15th–early 17th

TABLE 2b: Main Site – fabric quantities by phase

Period	Code	Date	Phase									Total
			1	2A	2B	2C	3A	3B	3C	4A	4B	
Pre-Saxon	P	Prehistoric					2					2
	IA	Iron Age					1	1				2
	RB	Romano-British					3					3
Saxon	S3/T1	650–1100					1					1
Late	T1	850–1100		2	4	1	20		1	1		29
Saxon	W1	850–1100		3			2					5
	W34	850–1100			1	1	1					3
	W36	850–1100					1					1
Late	W3	850–1200					1					1
Saxon/	X1(1)	850–1250					2					2
Medieval	V5	900–1300						1				1
	T1/2	1000–1200		3	4	6	28	4	8	5	1	59
Medieval	W4	1050–1250					1					1
post-	X1(2)	1150–1250			1		3		1			5
1050	T2	1100–1400	2	5	26	123	331	12	64	10	4	577
	V1	1100–1400	1		4	4	48	1	4	4		66
	V6	1100–1400				1						1
	V7	1100–1400	1		4	6	32	5	15	1	2	66
	W7	1100–1400			1	3	20	3	1		1	29
	W22	1100–1400					8	1	1			10
	W49	1100–1400					2	1				3
	V3/V7	1100–1400							6			6
Medieval	T2(2)	1200–1400			4	10	26		4	1		45
post-	T6	1200–1400					5					5
1200	V3	1200–1400	1				15	1	3	1		21
	V4	1200–1400					7		6			13
	V9	1200–1400					5					5
	W45	1200–1400					5					5
	W11	1200–1500			1	1	15	2	5		1	25
	W14	1200–1500			1	7	35	2	11	2	1	59
	W15	1200–1500					5		1			6
	W56	1200–1600					1					1
Late	W18	1250–1600			?1	13	112	9	56	33	7	231
Medieval	V10	1350–1600					2					2
/Early	W16	1350–1500							2		2	4
Post-	W20	1350–1600					1		1			2
Medieval	W29	1350–1600							1			1
	W21	1400–1600							1	1		2
Post-	X2a	1470–1550						1	3		1	5
Medieval	X2a/b	1470–1700							1			1
	Y8	1475–1625						1	1			2
	W17	1525–1700				1	1		2	3		7
	X2b	1550–1700								1	1	2
Recent	Z	post –1700					2		5	11	53	71
Unidentifiable (U)				5			4	3	3	1		16
Total			5	18	52	177	748	48	207	75	74	1404

TABEL 3: Sherds from possible watering pots

Context	Combined with	Phase	Fabric	Form	Sherd type	Comment
86	85	3C	X2a	U	Body	Hole bored before firing
172	173	2C	T2	ABC	Body	Hole bored after firing
190	189	3C	T2(2)	C	Body/base	Hole bored after firing
204	179	1	V1(1)	ABC	Body	Hole bored after firing
270	269	3C	V3/V7	B	Rim	Holes bored before firing

CATALOGUE

Type 1
Obv: HANNS KRAVWINKEL IN NVR (rose)
Rev: GOTES.SEGEN.MACHT.REICH (rose)
Dia: 21mm
As Barnard (1916) 84
Nine examples (Nu 2a, 2b, 3, 5, 6, 9 (fragmentary), 10, 13a, 15a)

Type 2
Obv: HANNS KRAVWINKEL IN NV. (rosette)
Rev: GOTES.GABEN.SOL.MAN.LOB. (cross)
Dia: 21mm
As Barnard (1916) 86
One example (Nu 11)

Type 3
Obv: HANNS KRAVWINKEL IN NV
Rev: GOTT.ALLEIN.DIE.HERE.(S?) FI (rosette)
Dia: 21mm
As Eklund (1978) 48
Two examples (Nu 8a, 16)

Type 4
Obv: HANNS KRAVWINKEL IN NV
Rev: GOTES REICH BLIBTEWICK.
Dia: 21mm
As Eklund (1978) 50
Two examples (Nu 7, 8b, 14)

Type 5
Obv: HANS.SCHULTES. (ZV.NVR?) NB (rosette)
Rev: Illegible
Dia: 26mm
One example (Nu 1)

Type 6
Obv: KILIANVS KOCH NVRENBERG
Rev: RECHEN PFENNIGE
Dia: 21mm
One example (Nu 15b)

Encrusted jetton, possibly of Hanns Krauwinkel
One example (Nu 13b)

Encrusted jettons, illegible
Seven examples (Nu 17a–c, Nu 18a–d)

THE CLAY PIPES
by W.R.G. Moore

A total of 167 clay pipe fragments were recovered, comprising 62 bowls and 105 stem pieces. The dateable bowls are mostly 19th century in date, with a few from the 17th century. The undecorated stem fragments also suggest two periods of deposition and medium bore stems, typical of the middle period, *c.* 1660–1760, are almost entirely absent. A full report on the pipes is included in Shaw and Steadman, 1994, Appendix 1, 31–32.

THE HORSE BURIAL
by Mary Iles with a report on the pathology by Kate Clark

The horse appears to have been carefully placed in a shallow pit. Unfortunately the skull was removed by the machine during excavation. It was recovered from the spoil heap but was too damaged to give any indication as to whether the horse was decapitated and the head placed in the pit separately as sometimes happens. The following bones were present: maxilla left and right, mandible left and right, nasal bones, skull, atlas, axis, cervical vertebrae (5), thoracic vertebrae (17), lumbar vertebrae (6), sacrum, caudal vertebrae (4), ribs 34 (minimum number represented), sternum, pelvis left and right, magnum left and right, carpal 4 left, navicular left and right, lateral cuneiform left and right, tarsal 1 and 2 right, metacarpals and metatarsals II, III and IV left and right, sesamoids, phalanges I and II fore and hind left and right, phalanx III fore left and right. Scapula, humerus, radius, ulna, femur, tibia, astragalus and calcaneum are absent.

Distinction of Horse from Ass or Mule
The pattern of enamel on the lower molars was examined in order to determine whether the skeleton is from an ass (*Equus asinus*) or a mule rather than a horse (*Equus caballus*). The lingual fold is 'U' shaped, rather than 'V' shaped and the buccal fold makes a partial penetration into the adjacent folds, both characteristics of horse. There is no penetration in ass or mule (Davis, 1987, 34). Davis also uses a metrical method on metacarpal to distinguish horse from other equids. Using this method the metacarpus falls comfortably into the range expected for horse.

Sex

The horse was sexed following consideration of sexual differences in the morphology of the pelvis set out in Sisson and Grossman (1975), and after comparison with specimens held at the Centre for Human Ecology, Department of Archaeology, University of Southampton. The morphology indicates that the individual was a stallion, and probably had not been gelded. The presence of well developed canines supports this conclusion.

Age at Death

The age at death was estimated from tooth eruption and bone fusion. All bones were fused including the vertebrae, indicating that the individual was at least 4–5 years of age. The estimated age from incisors is between five and nine years (Silver, 1969) and for premolars and molars between five and eleven years. Estimates from the height-wear curves (Levine, 1982) for each measurable tooth indicate that the animal was probably between six and nine years of age, with the majority falling within the seven to eight years bracket. It is probable that the horse was approximately seven to nine years of age at death.

Size

The withers height has been based on metacarpus and metatarsus, though there is greater variance in withers heights from metapodials than other limb bones. Using Kiesewalter's factors (Driesch and Boessneck, 1974, 333), the withers height from metacarpus was 138 cm (13.2–13.3 hands), and metatarsus 140.8 cm (13.3–14 hands). The minimum accepted height today for a horse is 14.2 hands, therefore this skeleton comes from a pony. Although small by modem standards, however, it was not small by those of the 14th century. Smaller horses are easier to load and unload if they are being used as pack animals, and also consume less fodder (Serjeantson *et al.*, 1992, 10).

Butchery

Unusually for a horse, 25 per cent of the bones recovered (34 bones) had knife marks present. One first phalanx from the fore limb had a knife mark. Knife marks on the navicular and other tarsal bones are likely to be from the removal of the tibia. Eleven of the seventeen thoracic vertebrae have cut marks on the dorsal spine. Six have knife marks on both sides of the dorsal spine and five on the right hand side only. Ten of the ribs had knife marks on their lateral surfaces. The majority of the cuts (8) were on the flatter ribs which lie towards the cranial end of the thorax. Some may be the result of the removal of the fore limb including scapula. The marks on the vertebrae and ribs indicate that the horse flesh was cut away from the backbone and ribcage. Similar pattems of the removal of horse meat were recognised at Witney Palace, Oxfordshire (Wilson and Edwards, 1993). The pelvis has knife marks on the ventral surface of ilium, and on both the ventral and pelvic surfaces of ischium. There is also a small cut mark on the lateral edge of acetabulum. It is probable that these knife marks are the result of the disarticulation of the femur from the pelvis.

INTERPRETATION

The carcass may have been dismembered for a number, and possibly a combination, of reasons. Possible industrial uses of a carcass were for tanning, glue, tallow or marrow. Removal of flesh may have been for consumption by people or dogs.

Until the mid 19th century it appears that it was more usual for a hide to be removed with the hooves, and sometimes the caudal vertebrae still attached (Thomson, 1981, 162; Serjeantson, 1989, 136; Serjeantson *et al.*, 1992, 12). Although two of the third phalanges are absent the caudal vertebrae are present and still articulated to the skeleton. The knife mark on the first phalanx of the right fore limb surely means that the horse was skinned prior to partial dismemberment and filleting.

The phalanges are a good source of glue and oil used in the tanning trade, and as these were not removed the dismemberment of the carcass to extract glue seems unlikely. None of the surviving bones have been chopped but the absence of the main limb bones may mean that they were removed for processing for marrow and/or tallow to make candles.

The filleting and dismemberment of the carcass raises the question of the whether meat from the animal was eaten. Despite Pope Gregory III's proscription of horse meat in 732 A.D. there is limited evidence to suggest that it was consumed in a small way, namely during Medieval and Civil War sieges and times of more general famine. The marginal location and poor status of Swan Street and the dating of the burial to the later 14th century would support a hypothesis of human consumption. Famine butchery, however, generally occurs close to the normal distribution places (Wilson and Edwards, 1993; Grant, 1988: 160, 174). The disposal of this horse separately from human food waste makes it perhaps more probable that meat was removed from the carcass to feed dogs. There is evidence that hunting dogs were fed horse meat from at least the 18th century and possibly earlier (Wilson and Edwards, 1993). In earlier times their usual diet appears to have been bread, bones and blood but the hunting accounts of Philippe de Corguilleroy show that in 1398 four carcasses of old, worn-out horses were bought in Nemours market to feed thin and ailing hounds (Cummins, 1988, 257).

Horse carcasses were dismembered for practical reasons to aid disposal (Locker, forthcoming; Wilson and Edwards, 1993). The intact nature of the vertebral column, pelvis and ribcage suggests that this was not the case at Swan Street. The benefit in weight loss gained by the removal of the limbs would surely have been negated by the loss of the handles that they would have provided when lifting the carcase to dispose of it. It is also possible that the horse was dismembered once it had been placed into the pit. This may explain the greater number of knife marks on the right hand side of the body which would have been less accessible. Mrs Done (1983) has suggested for a horse burial from Reigate that it was dismembered "for no other reason than to fit an unwieldy carcass into its grave". In the instance of the Reigate horse the head and legs, except for one which was absent, were found upside down in relation to the torso.

The evidence from the pathology of this individual (see below), and the absence of bit wear on the premolars suggests that its main use in life was a work animal, either as a packhorse or to pull a cart, and probably both. The use of horse in this way was common in the Medieval period (Serjeantson, 1992, 13). The absence of bit wear need not mean that the animal was not ridden. It was not unusual for a horse to be ridden using only a halter.

PATHOLOGY
by Kate Clark

The skeleton was examined for pathological abnormalities. A summary only is given below. A full report is included in Shaw and Steadman, 1994, Appendix 2, 37–38.

The 4th lumbar vertebra had an asymmetrical facet development on the caudal aspect. There was also an asymmetrical articulation between the penultimate and last thoracic vertebrae, and the last two thoracic vertebrae were fused together. The third and fourth tarsal bones of the right foot were also fused together, and there is substantial exostosis on the right metatarsal. This joint has not been X-rayed but the lack of involvement of the proximal articular surface of the tarsal bones suggests that this may be a case of spavin. Spavin is a disease that has been considered to be particularly associated with working animals. In this case the association of lumbar vertebral fusion and spavin could suggest that the remains derive from a working animal.

THE OTHER FINDS
by Tora Hylton

Except where noted under the individual finds type-heading the individual objects are not of intrinsic merit and provide no useful evidence for the interpretation of the site. A catalogue of all the finds is included in the archive.

Copper Alloy Objects
A total of 19 copper alloy objects were recovered. They included three pins, one with a spherical head of coiled wire (Oakley type H1, see Oakley 1979, 261, Figs 113, 220) and four leather mounts/fittings, including a repoussé quatrefoil, an example of which has been found in Winchester (Hinton, 1990, 1088, Fig 350, 4049). All of these objects are likely to be of Medieval date, although some were found in later contexts.

Lead Alloy Object
A fragment of a prick spur with a pyramidal head and moulding beneath was recovered from a late Medieval context.

Iron Objects
Ten iron objects were recovered. They comprised one awl/heckle pin?, six nails and three badly corroded unidentifiable objects.

Worked Stone
Four worked stone objects were recovered. They were composed of one whetstone, an incomplete conical spindle-whorl and two marbles.

Worked Flints
A total of 31 worked flints were recovered as a residual element in later contexts. All were flakes including nine utilised and one retouched.

Glass
Three fragments of glass were recovered. One from a Phase 3C context was from the base/body of a vessel, possibly a tall beaker. Its exterior was decorated with applied white trails. It may be of early 17th-century date (see Charleston, 1984, 273, Fig 151, 110).

The Tile and Brick
A total of 83 fragments of tile and brick were recovered from stratified contexts. Roof tile is the predominant type, constituting 80% of the total amount, all of it recovered from Medieval contexts. Few examples could be identified more closely, although fragments of ridge tile, peg and pantile were noted, including a fragment of lead-glazed ridge tile in a Lyveden-type fabric.

Four fragments of worn floor tiles were recovered, some glazed. Again all came from Medieval contexts. Two fragments of brick came from Post-Medieval contexts, while two fragments of domestic tile from Medieval contexts were clearly of a later date and therefore intrusive.

The assemblage is too small to provide any reliable dating evidence nor is it sufficient to suggest the presence of buildings with ceramic tile roofs or floors were present on the site in the Medieval or early post-Medieval period.

Worked Bone
Four objects of worked bone were recovered. They comprised two complete, carved spoons with elongated bowls and ornate handles, both from a Phase 4B context; a spatulate object with a pointed terminal, unstratified and of indeterminate use; and an unidentifiable fragment, possibly part of a handle from a Medieval context.

Animal Bone
The horse skeleton is reported upon separately, above. The remainder of the animal bones comprises less than one standard archive box of material and is insufficient to be worthy of further analysis. The small total suggest that domestic waste was not being disposed of in any quantity.

THE DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE
by Michael Shaw

Accessible documentary sources for the town have been examined. A more extensive search could only be undertaken as part of a research programme into the documentary sources for the reconstruction of the topography and tenurial pattern of the town as a whole. Nevertheless the documentary references gathered provide a useful insight into the use of the area, although it is not possible at the moment to relate them to a precise location along the street.

Swan Street was known as Cow Lane until as late as 1887 (OS 1:2500 map, 1st edition). It was renamed Swan Street after the Swan Inn (now

The Mailcoach) which is situated on the west side of the junction of Derngate and Swan Street. Cow Lane was perhaps considered too rural for refined late Victorian tastes.

Cow Gate is referred to as early as 1275 ("a porta que vocatur Cougate", Rot. Hund. II, 3) suggesting both the existence of Cow Lane at this time and that there was a gate at its southern end leading to the meadows by the River Nene.

There is a reference to a messuage in Cow Lane in the late 13th century (Bodleian Library MSS DD Radcliffe a, 2, nos 219–223; information from Northampton Topographical File, NRO), while a town rental of the time of Edward I (PRO SC 12/13/38) records "one oven at the corner of the lane of Cows". Four cottages with gardens in Cow Lane are recorded in 1414 (NRO Tresham Cartulary, fols 81–83). A 1504 town rental (NRO) repeats the reference of the Edward I rental to an oven. In 1545 a tenement, formerly the property of St Andrew's Priory, in Cowland, is recorded.

A terrier of borough land of 1586 gives detailed descriptions of three properties in Cow Lane (Cox 1898, 157):

"a little stable near Cow Lane end, with a little garden having three apple trees, a nutt tree, a warden tree and three ash trees";

"a little stable in Cow Lane, and a garden with one apple tree";

"an orchard in Cow Lane, forty-nine yards by twenty yards".

A deed of 1621 (NRO, Northampton Borough Records, deed 91) records a garden plot "now converted into an orchard" set between orchards to the north and the south, Cow Lane to the west and a close belonging to Sir William Chauncey to the east. Its measurements are the same as that of the orchard of 1586 and it is therefore perhaps the same property (unless a number of identically-sized plots were present along Swan Street). The close of Sir William Chauncey is presumably the large property known as The Grange which lay to the east of Swan Street between Derngate and Victoria Promenade. Another deed of 1621 records a stable and garden "in a street leading towards the Derngate and abutteth near the end of Cowe Lane"; possibly this refers to a property on Angel Street, which runs off the northern end of Swan Street to the west.

Further information can be gleaned from the historic maps of the town. Speed's Map of 1610 (Fig 11) shows a number of tenements fronting on to the east side of Swan Street at its northern end. No properties are shown fronting on to the remainder of the east side of the street and all of this land appears to lie in a large close within which is situated the building known as "The Towre". This close is probably The Grange. The mention of small closes between in 16th and 17th century deeds suggests, however, that there are subdivisions of land in this area not shown on the map. Town defences are shown running round the bottom end of the street but no gate is shown. Marcus Pierce's Map of Northampton and its fields fails to show Swan Street, reflecting its position as a minor backstreet.

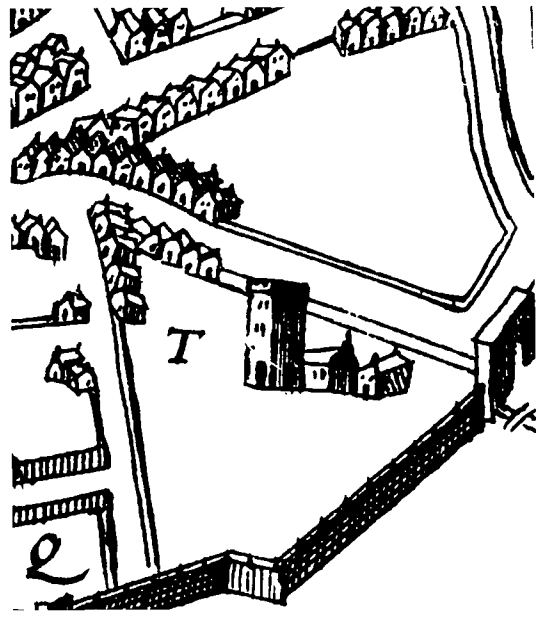

Fig 11 Detail of Speed's map (1610).

On Noble and Butlin's Map of 1746 (Fig 12) the area east of Swan Street behind the Derngate frontage is shown as divided into two areas of orchard. The northernmost property measures *c.* 116 yards north–south by 44 yards east–west and contains a building aligned parallel to Swan Street at its north end. The southernmost property measures *c.* 124 yards north–south by 77 yards east–west. The "Old Wall" is shown to the south-east of Swan Street but it apparently terminates at the south-east corner of the southernmost

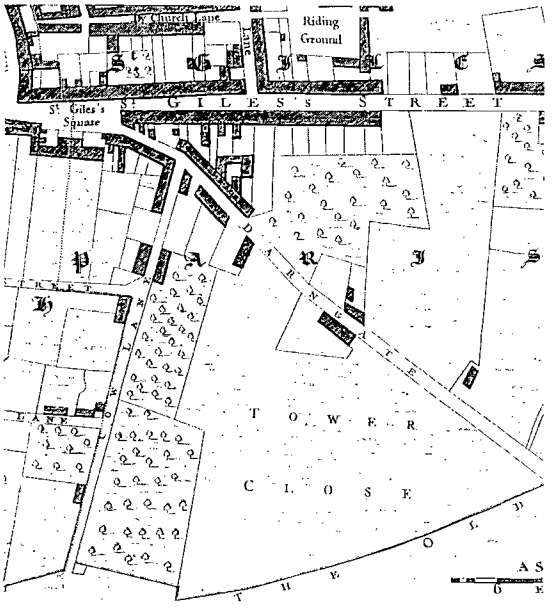

Fig 12 Detail of Noble and Butlin's Map (1746).

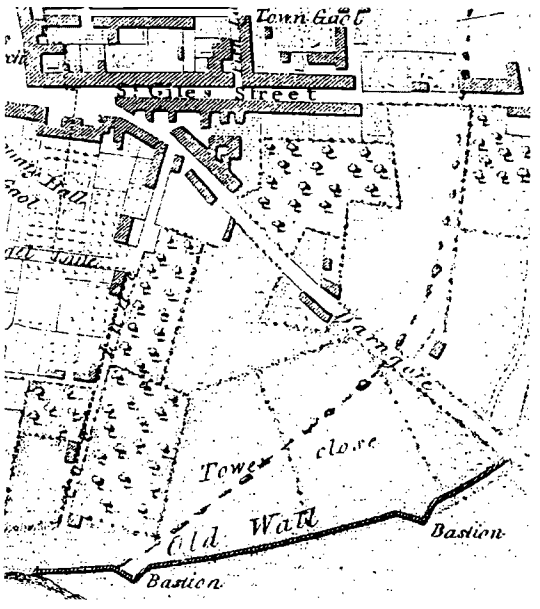

Fig 13 Detail of Roper and Cole's map (1807).

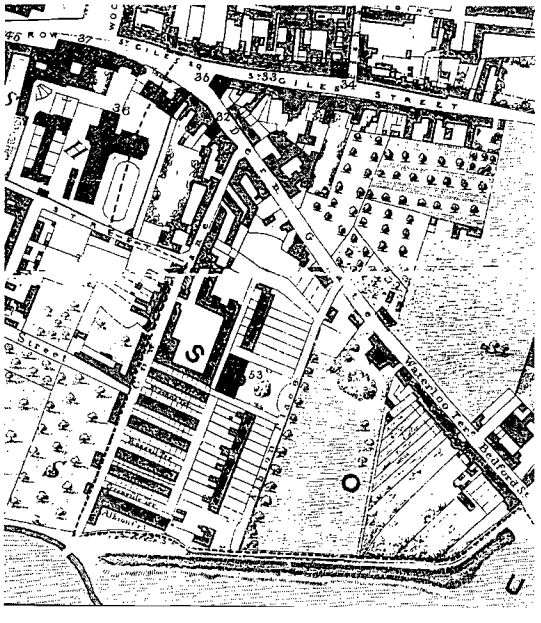

Fig 14 Detail of Wood and Law's map (1847).

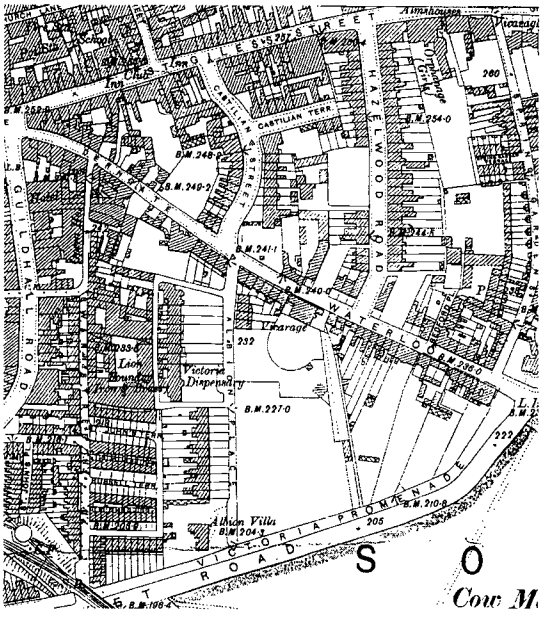

Fig 15 Detail of Ordnance Survey 1:2500 plan (1901).

property on Swan Street. At this point the town boundary appears to inturn towards Swan Street and there is clearly an entrance into the town from Cow Meadow at this point.

Roper and Cole's Map of 1807 (Fig 13) records the same properties as the 1746 map. As regards the town defences though it shows The Old Wall as continuing in front of Swan Street and only terminating further to the west where it lies is continued by a water course (the former town ditch). Behind this line is a second line corresponding to the inturned line of the 1746 plan.

By the time of Wood and Law's Map of 1847 (Fig 14) the area to the east of Swan Street had been developed for housing by laying out a series of terraces at right angles to Swan Street. They comprised St. John's Terrace, Russell Terrace, Grenville Terrace and Albion Crescent. The line of the defences to the south-east of Swan Street is shown as a bank of earth terminating just before the bottom of Swan Street against a water course as on the 1807 map.

The 1886 Ordnance Survey 1:500 Map of the area (Fig 15) shows the buildings and terraces to the east of Swan Street in greater detail. They survived until the 1960s when the buildings were demolished and the area was given over to surface car parking. The line of the defences has disappeared and Victoria Promenade has been laid out as a road and formal walkway. The Midland Railway, Bedford and Northampton Branch, opened in 1872, crosses over the southernmost tip of Swan Street.

Some of the Phase 4B features can be identified. The cellar is the cellar of 2 Albion Crescent, while the four pits in a line to the west and south-west lie at the back of nos 61–67 Swan Street. They are perhaps the cess pits of toilets situated in extensions at the back of the houses.

DISCUSSION

Although no spectacular discoveries were made the excavations are of value both locally in examining a site outside the late Saxon town of Northampton, where work has hitherto largely been concentrated, and nationally in demonstrating the changing use of an area of land off a minor street within a walled Medieval town. As such they go some way towards balancing a general preoccupation with the examination of more intensively-occupied areas on major street frontages. These marginal sites are valuable in that they are likely to be more sensitive to the ebb and flow of a town's economic fortunes.

THE MAIN SITE (Figs 16–18)

PHASE 1 (PRE 1075 A.D.)

There was little sign of activity pre-dating the late Saxon period. The only feature uncovered was an undated linear ditch. The small amount of earlier material recovered can be regarded as little more than "background noise" to be expected from any site in the intensively settled Northampton area.

No features could be dated to the late Saxon period, although forty sherds of late Saxon pottery were recovered. Some may be immediately post-conquest in date, while others are again likely to be "background noise". It can be anticipated that the late Saxon town was expanding to the east at least towards the end of the period but this expansion is more likely to have been along the main roads leading out the town.

The formation of layer 179 would suggest some form of cultivation over a long period of time. It would be difficult otherwise to explain the depth of up to 0.5 m of material discovered at the south end of the site. The layer resembles a "developed soil horizon" found elsewhere on excavated sites in the town immediately above the Northampton Sands subsoil (e.g. Williams and Shaw, 1981, 95). When this period of soil formation and cultivation activity began is impossible to suggest but it is likely to have continued throughout the late Saxon period when this area was perhaps part of the fields of the late Saxon town.

PHASE 2 (c. 1075–c. 1300)

The first evidence of settlement activity on the site occurs at this phase.

Sub-phase 2A (c. 1075–c. 1150)

The features assigned to this sub-phase give little clue as to the activity carried out in the area. Their presence would, however, suggest that the

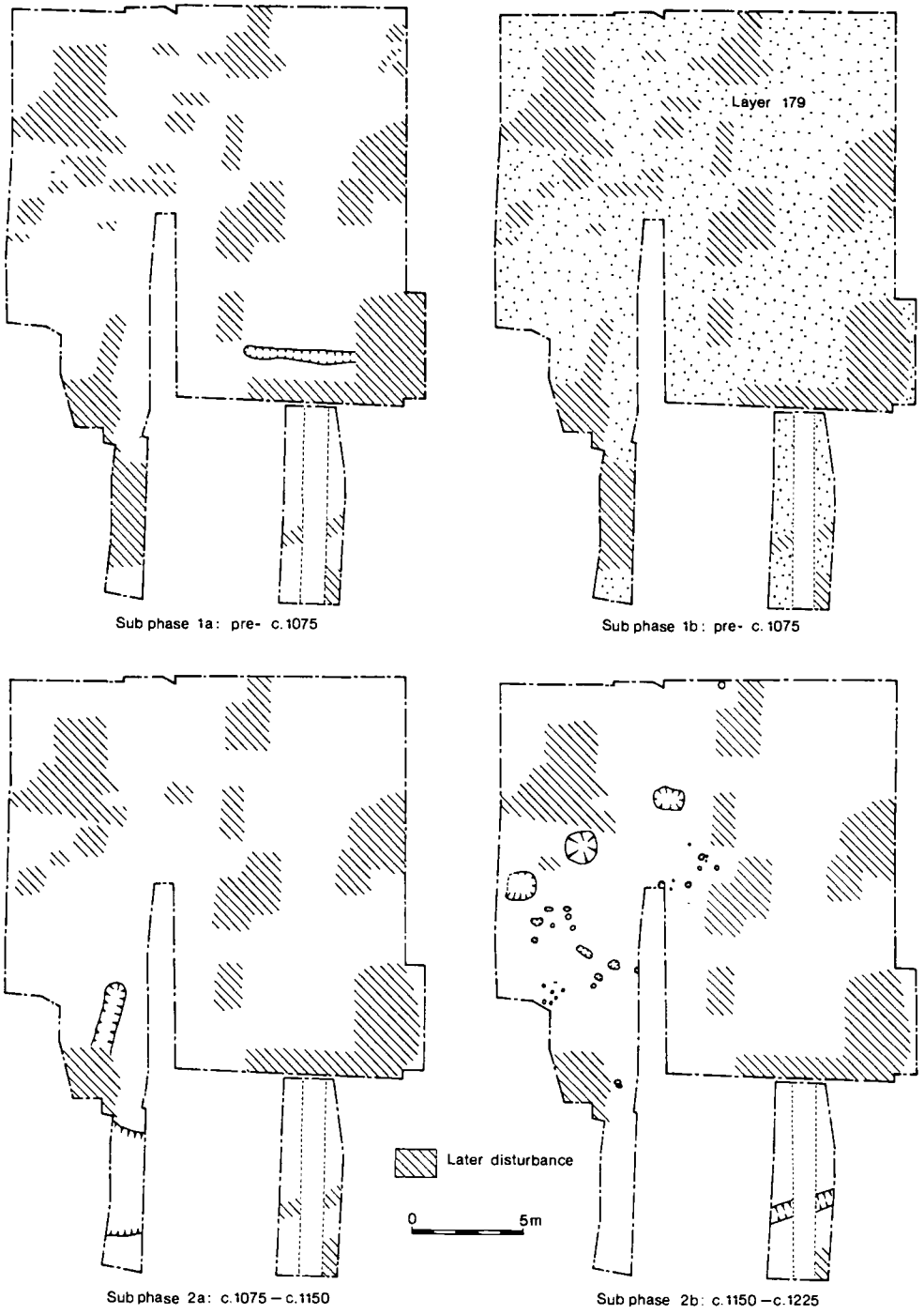

Fig 16 Swan Street: Summary plans, sub-phases 1a–2b.

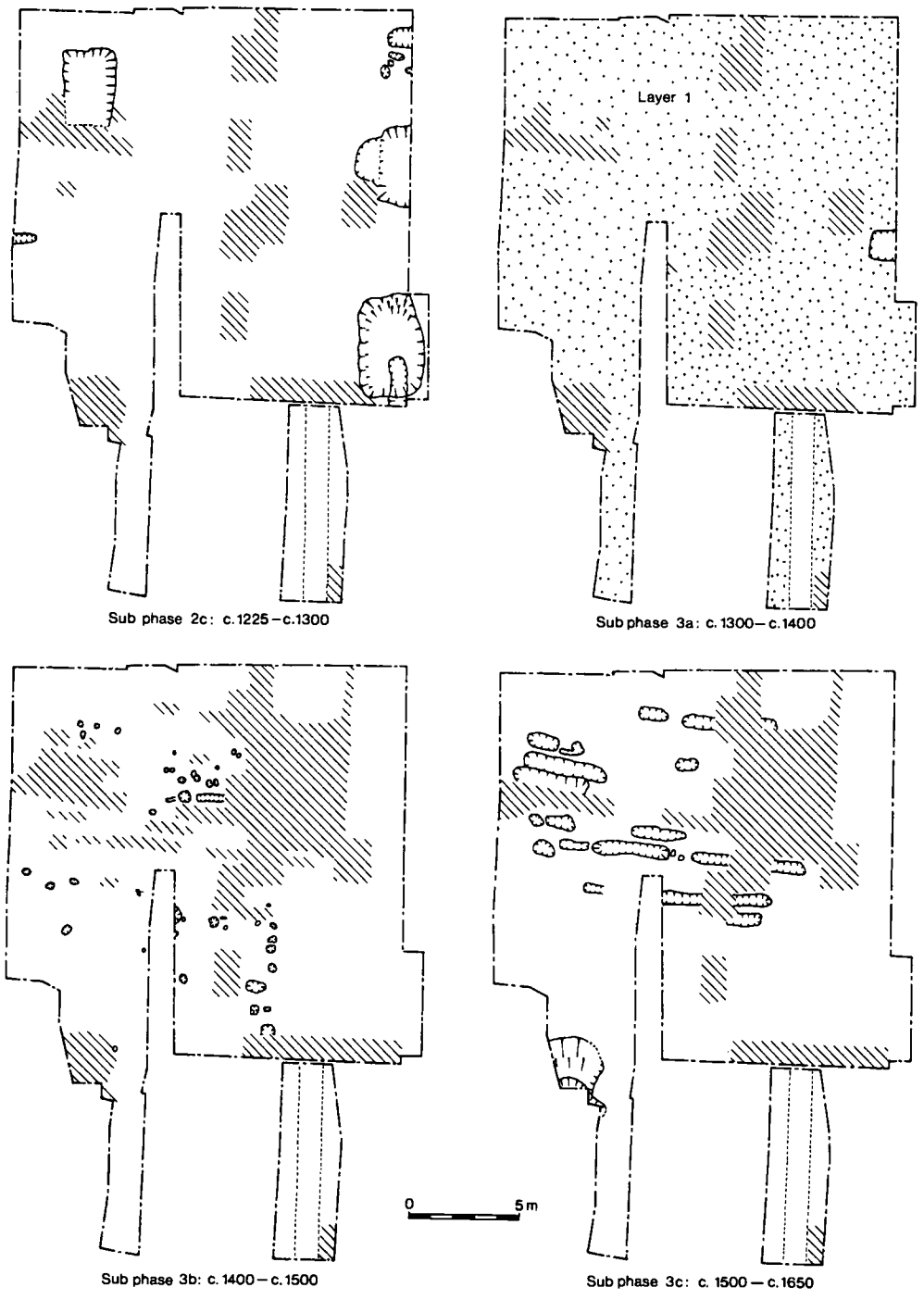

Fig 17: Swan Street: Summary plans, sub-phases 2c–3c.

area no longer formed part of the town fields. Pit A50 is larger than the majority of rubbish pits in the town and it most closely resembles in size the quarry pits which have been found on other Northampton sites (Shaw, 1984, 74). The pit was cut through sand and it is unlikely that useable building stone could have been recovered from this area. It may, however, be that the sand was being exploited for some purpose.

Sub-phase 2B (c. 1150–c. 1225)

The complex of post-holes and stake-holes suggests some form of structure or structures at this period. It is tempting to suggest in view of its/their likely connection with the possible rubbish pits to the north-west that it/they may represent dwellings of a low-status, rather ephemeral nature, although the possibility that they may represent little more than drying racks or some other form of commercial activity should be borne in mind. The alignment of these features, eccentric to the line of Swan Street, would suggest that they pre-date the laying out of the street or that no need for a regular layout was felt at this time.

Sub-phase 2C (c. 1225–c. 1300)

The more regular north–south alignment of features at this sub-phase suggests some form of re-alignment of occupation at this time, possibly associated with the laying out of Swan Street. The three rectangular features resemble in shape and size the sunken-featured buildings found in the town in the Saxon period (*c.f.* Williams and Shaw, 1981, 95–100). None, however, had any remains of timber posts at the sides as is normally the case with sunken-featured buildings. Nevertheless they appear to be the remnants of semi-cellared structures of some form, perhaps representing some form of primitive dwelling. Two similar features were uncovered in excavations in the town's eastern suburbs of St. Edmund's End in 1988 (Shaw, forthcoming). In neither case could their full shape be determined but they were comparable in size to the Swan Street examples and survived to a greater depth. The lack of any rubbish pits associated with this occupation is striking given their ubiquity elsewhere in the town at this date (*c.f.* Williams, 1979, 142–3). Possibly rubbish was being dumped outside the town walls or in the town ditch.

This evidence for rather ephemeral activity is all the more interesting when it is borne in mind that this is the period of the town's heyday when Northampton was one of the leading towns in the kingdom. The town walls at this period enclosed the third largest walled area in the country, some 110 ha – only London and Norwich being larger, and yet it can be demonstrated that suburbs had grown up along many of the major roads running out from the town gates by as early as the 12th century (RCHM, 1985, 52, 54). It would appear, however, that it was only the main streets of the walled town that were fully developed and that the back streets were less attractive than the suburbs. Certainly any major Medieval town can be expected to have contained large areas of open space in which the poorer classes may have squatted. Keene (1985, 151) emphasises that at Winchester, even at the height of its prosperity, "gardens, closes, crofts, and other open ground occupied a far higher proportion of the urban area than that taken up by buildings", while for late Medieval Paris Geremek (1987, 81) states that "the very poor also lived in huts and shanties on the town moat, near the marsh, in the fields, and on the outskirts of the town, in the shanty towns of the Middle Ages".

Certainly at this period there was sufficient room in Northampton for all of the major orders of friars to find sites for their houses within the walled town (RCHM, 1985, 55). In this respect it can be contrasted with Stamford where all four of the friaries founded in the 13th century occupied sites outside the town. (RCHM, 1977).

PHASE 3 (C. 1300–C. 1650)

Sub-phase 3A (c 1300–1400)

A hiatus in even the low-status occupation of the previous sub-phase is attested by the formation of "cultivation soil" layer 1/A2. A use of the area for gardening rather than as arable is likely given its location within the town walls and the documentary evidence for gardening on Swan Street in the early 15th century (see above page 00). The horse skeleton is further evidence of cessation of settlement as it is unlikely to have been buried close to a dwelling. Its use as a work animal is unsurprising given its location and it is possible that in life it was stabled in the area, certainly there is documentary evidence for

stables here at a later date. The removal of meat from the carcass raises the intriguing question as to whether it was for human consumption. Grant (1988, 160, 174) has pointed out that the eating of horse meat was proscribed by Pope Gregory III in 732 and that "horse bones are only rarely found with cut marks". The conditions of the 14th century with the crop failures of the early part of the century followed by the Black Death and other plagues from the middle of the century onwards could perhaps have led to a situation sufficiently desperate for a papal ordinance to be set aside. It is not possible, however, to be certain that the flesh was removed for human consumption. The absence of any other food waste from the feature perhaps implies that this was not the case and a more prosaic use for the feeding of dogs is suggested in the report on the skeleton, above.

The evidence of cessation of settlement in the 14th century is not surprising given that the area lies away from the central core of Northampton. Apart from the general decline in population in the country as a whole there is some evidence that Northampton was in a period of relative decline when measured against other towns in the kingdom. As early as 1275 the town was complaining that "fullers, weavers, dyers, drapers, glovers, magazarii, skinners and other craftsmen of this sort have left Northampton because they are too heavily tallaged" (Rot. Hund., 2, 3a).

Sub-phase 3B (c. 1400–1500)
The construction of Structures 1 and 2 suggests a move away from horticulture at this time. They are again perhaps best interpreted as primitive dwellings although alternative uses such as sheds or stables should be borne in mind.

Whatever their function the structures are further evidence of low-status activity. There is no sign of the stone-founded buildings which are attested at St. Peter's Street, Northampton, from the late 13th century onwards (Williams, 1979, 143–147), even though St. Peter's Street itself was not a major thoroughfare.

Sub-phase 3C (c. 1500–c. 1650)
By the 16th century the area would seem to have been given over to cultivation once again. The evidence for this is in the form of a large number of shallow trenches. It is suggested that these are likely to be bedding trenches. Similar trenches uncovered elsewhere have also been suggested as indicating horticulture. Excavations on the Guildhall site at Exeter (Collis, 1972, 12–14, plate 6) uncovered a series of regularly-spaced trenches. These were dated to the 16th century and suggested as indicating horticulture, possibly a vineyard. Trenches of 17th–18th century date were uncovered in excavations at the Charterhouse, Coventry. Documentary evidence for use of the area as a nursery survives from the 18th century (Soden, forthcoming). Trenches in the gardens at Kirby Hall, one dated to the late 18th century, are interpreted as planting trenches (Dix *et al.*, forthcoming), as are narrow trenches of 19th century date discovered in the gardens at Castle Bromwich (Currie and Locock, 1991, 81; Currie and Locock, 1993, 118, 120, 124).

PHASE 4 (C. 1650 ONWARDS)

The excavations did not examine the post-16th century levels in detail but a broad interpretation can be attempted with the aid of the historic map evidence.

Sub-phase 4A (c. 1650–c. 1825)
A further period of cultivation is indicated by the formation of layer A1. The map evidence would suggest that this area was in use as orchards from at least 1746 until some time before 1847 by which time terraces of houses had been laid out.

Sub-phase 4B (c. 1825 onwards)
The building features uncovered at this period relate to the buildings on Albion Crescent and the east side of Swan Street.

EVALUATION TRENCHES C AND D

The work on these two trenches was on too small a scale to allow detailed interpretation. Settlement activity would appear to have occurred in Trench C towards Swan Street in the late 11th to early 12th centuries and to have ceased by the mid 13th to early 14th centuries, after which the area would appear to have been given over to cultivation. There is no evidence of a phase of late Medieval occupation as seen in the main trench.

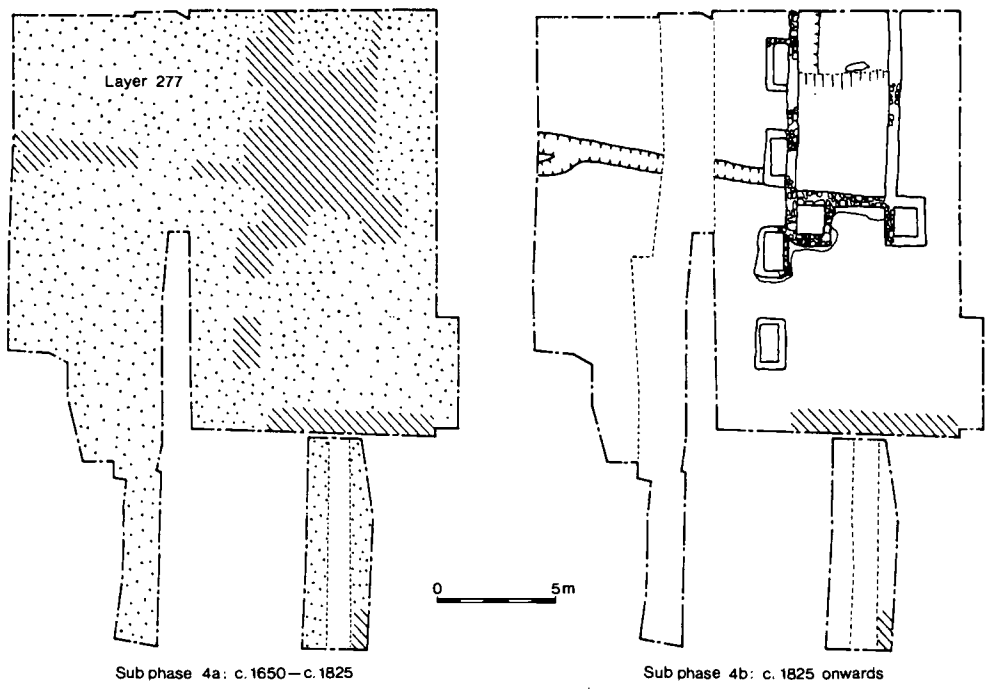

Fig 18 Swan Street: Summary plans, sub-phases 4a–4b.

GENERAL

Two general points are worthy of note. The first is the lack of any sign of land division on the main site at any period despite the excavation of a length of frontage of around 26 m. Either the area was always within a single property or any demarcation between properties was not sufficiently substantial to leave any archaeological traces. The second is the extent to which human activity appears to have contributed to a gradual flattening of the slope downhill to the River Nene. The original slope, calculated from the depth of the natural subsoil at the north end of Evaluation Trench C and the south end of the main site, a distance of around 80 m, is *c.* 8 per cent while the modern slope prior to the construction of the multi-storey car park was *c.* 6 per cent. This is presumably due to the clearance of the ground in advance of cultivation and the subsequent settlement, agricultural and horticultural activity.

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THE ARCHIVE

The site archive has been placed in the Northamptonshire Archaeological Archive within Northampton Museum.

The archive comprises:

Records
File 1. St. John's Car Park and Swan Street. Indices to records, sections of small features, location plans, matrices, site narrative, photographic record, contact prints, negatives and slides.
File 2. St. John's Car Park and Swan Street. Excavation Record Forms.
File 3. St. John's Car Park and Swan Street. Finds Record Forms and Finds Analyses.

Finds
Archive Box 1. St. John's Car Park. Pottery
Archive Box 2. St. John's Car Park. Animal Bone
Archive Box 2. St. John's Car Park. Other Finds.
Archive Box 3. Swan Street. Pottery (1)
Archive Box 4. Swan Street. Pottery (2)
Archive Box 5. Swan Street. Animal Bone (1)
Archive Box 6. Swan Street. Animal Bone (2)
Archive Box 7. Swan Street. Animal Bone (3)
Archive Box 8. Swan Street. Animal Bone (4)
Archive Box 9. Swan Street. Other Finds

Plan Boxes
Box 1. St. John's Car Park. Site Plans and Sections
Box 2. St. John's Car Park. Site Plans and Sections

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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