

Archaeology in Northamptonshire 2001

Notes for Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) compiled by Andy Chapman and Pat Chapman

PREHISTORIC

Northampton, Brackmills Link Road (SP 772 573) (NA) An archaeological evaluation comprising trial trenching and geophysical survey was carried out by Rob Atkins on the line of a proposed new road. It confirmed the existence of a sub-circular ring ditch, 22m in diameter, previously known from cropmarks. The V-shaped ditch was 2.8m wide by 0.80m deep. No finds were recovered, but a sample of oak charcoal from the ditch has given a radiocarbon date centred on 1620 cal BC (1745-1485 at 2 sigma, Beta 132789), confirming that this was a ring ditch surrounding a ploughed-out round barrow.

A43 Dualling Project, Evenley, Barley Mow Roundabout (SP 577 332) (NA) Two evaluation trenches were excavated in an area of geophysical anomalies on land between Barley Mow Roundabout and Juniper Hill. The shallow features examined contained no finds and they did not correlate closely with the geophysical anomalies. It is doubtful that they are of archaeological significance.

A43 Dualling Project, Silverstone, Site 2 (SP 682 462) (NA) Following evaluation, an area excavation was undertaken by Tim Hallam of an Iron Age settlement consisting of a rectangular enclosure containing a penannular ditch with several phases of use. The pottery comprised coarse wares of middle Iron Age type. The southern enclosure ditch appeared to have followed an earlier alignment of shallow pits.

A43 Dualling Project, Silverstone, Site 3 (SP 682 464) (NA) Following evaluation, an area excavation was undertaken by Tim Hallam and Chris Jones of a late Iron Age settlement comprising a series of ditched enclosures representing several phases of activity. The enclosures contained probable house gullies and pits, and these extended outside the excavation area. The ditch of the largest enclosure was in excess of 2.0m deep. Occupation on the site appears to have extended into the Roman period.

A43 Dualling Project, Syresham, Biddlestone Road (SP 633 412) (NA) Evaluation trenches excavated by Simon Carlyle confirmed the presence of late Iron Age/early Roman features, as suggested by geophysical survey. They comprised a dispersed group of curving and penannular ditches. A relatively large quantity of iron slag suggests that iron working was a significant function of the site.

Crick, Midland Meat Packers (SP 4584 2736) (NA) During observation of soil stripping by Gary Edmondson and Chris Jones an Iron Age ditch and associated features were recorded. They appear to represent the edge of a possible settlement situated largely to the north.

Daventry, Borough Hill (SP 5875 6210) (NA) An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Mark Holmes during groundworks for the installation of two new telecommunication dishes at Daventry Transmitting Station, Borough Hill, the site of an Iron Age hillfort, part of which is protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM No. 40). The development site, situated within the compound of the Transmitting Station and located towards the southern defences of the hillfort, is not scheduled. Previous archaeological fieldwork during the laying of the compound fencing in 1992 revealed no archaeological features and none were found this time.

Earls Barton, Mallard Close (SP 8536 6458) (NA) An archaeological evaluation by Rob Atkins and Peter Masters involving geophysical survey and trial excavation located a square Iron Age enclosure and Roman features. The enclosure ditch, nearly 4m wide and 1.25m deep, produced pottery dating from the middle to late Iron Age and into the Belgic period. An internal gully and an external pit are dated to mid to late first century AD. A large primary Belgic assemblage included sherds with spalling and this, and the remains of a kiln spacer, suggests that a pottery kiln may be nearby. About 30m to the

south-east of the enclosure there were three roughly parallel gullies and a later pit all dating to the third or fourth centuries AD.

Northampton SW District, Upton (SP 723 600) (NA) Following evaluation in 1999, a large-scale excavation by Ant Maull of c.3ha was carried out in advance of residential development on Iron Age and Roman sites. An early Iron Age pit alignment crossed one corner of the site. Late Iron Age activity comprised a series of sub-square and rectilinear settlement enclosures with associated pits and structures, straddling a possible droveway.

Raunds, Warth Park (SP 989 734) (NA) A watching brief carried out ahead of development by Steve Morris and Joe Prentice recorded part of a pit alignment. Three pits were excavated but none produced finds. Traces of medieval ridge and furrow field systems and two narrow ditches of unknown date were also recorded.

Rothwell, Sandy Hills Farm (SP 792 799) (NA) A field walking survey and trial excavation was carried out by Rob Atkins and Steve Morris. The survey found a light scatter of flint, as well as five medieval and post-medieval pottery sherds probably representing manure scatters. Excavation located two ditches possibly forming a sub-rectangular enclosure of Iron Age date.

ROMAN

A43 Dualling Project, Silverstone, Site 1 (SP 682 461) (NA) Following evaluation, a small area excavation was carried out by Tim Hallam along the projected line of the Roman road between Towcester and Alchester. Traces of rudimentary cobbling were found up slope from the hollow-way, and it is suggested that this was the vestigial remains of the Roman road, now largely ploughed out. The cobbling was flanked by possible quarry pits. The hollow-way further down the slope may have been formed in post-Roman times.

A43 Dualling Project, Whitfield, Brackley Hatch (SP 607 399) (NA) The site had been identified from surface finds of Roman pottery, and geophysical survey indicated the presence of linear features and other, less regular, anomalies. Trial trenching by

Chris Jones confirmed the presence of ditches dated to the early Roman period, and a flooring bar from a pottery kiln hinted at pottery production in the area.

Northampton, Wootton Fields Roman Villa (SP 766 563) (NA) A previously unknown Roman villa was located by Dennis Jackson during monitoring of groundworks on a new housing development. The exposed building remains were cleaned and planned before they were backfilled for long-term preservation. The initial cleaning was undertaken by a large team of volunteers, and subsequent recording by Andy Chapman was sponsored by English Heritage. An adjacent area containing cut features of both Iron Age and Roman date was excavated prior to road construction. The main villa building was probably a simple strip building with front and rear corridors. A room at the northern end contained a channelled hypocaust and had been decorated with painted wall plaster. At the opposite end a pillared hypocaust had supported the opus signinum floor of a hot room. The pottery and coins spanned the later 1st to 4th centuries AD, but 2nd and 3rd century material predominated. Geophysical survey demonstrated that the main building stood within a 70m square ditched enclosure.

Laxton (SP 976 994) (NA) An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Dennis Jackson whilst a new water main was being laid along the verge of the A43 trunk road in the Laxton area. The trenching revealed that the known iron working and Roman settlement area was more extensive than previously recorded. The line of the water main was altered at one location in order to avoid damage to a large Roman iron smelting furnace, where a separate excavation subsequently took place.

Reference: Jackson, D A and Tylcote, R F 1988 Two new Romano-British iron working sites in Northamptonshire. *Britannia*, XIX, 275-98.

Oundle, Glapthorn Road (TL 033 890) (NA) The excavation of a small Roman farmstead was carried out by Anthony Maull and Peter Masters in advance of housing development. Much of the plan of the farmstead was revealed, including a sequence of overlapping square enclosures with associated late Iron Age round houses, two Roman aisled buildings, a stone-lined well, water pits and hearths. Part of the main complex of Roman buildings lay to the west of the excavated area.

Towcester, Meeting Lane (SP 6931 4858) (NA) An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Rob Atkins and Charmian Woodfield along the length of Meeting Lane. An early Roman road, branching off the Alchester Road was found. The surviving foundations were 2.8m wide and 0.35m high, and the wall would have formed part of the south-west corner of Towcester's later 2nd century defensive circuit, which may have run parallel to Richmond Road. It had gone out of use when it was cut by a wall. An industrial stone-built feature post-dated the road but pre-dated the bank. A thick layer of dark earth, of the 3rd and 4th centuries, overlay the tail of the bank, and increased in depth northwards along Meeting Lane as the natural ground surface fell away. Several Roman pits were sealed below the dark earth and cut the natural subsoil, which may imply that they were no later than late 2nd century in date.

Northampton SW District, Upton (SP 723 600) (NA) Part of a Roman settlement, which forms the westernmost extent of Duston Roman Town, was excavated by Ant Maull, it lay 80m to the east of the Iron Age site (see above). It comprised a multi-phase complex of features ranging from a series of curvilinear and linear gullies, possibly parts of irregular stock enclosures, to a series of larger linear ditches forming either boundaries or enclosures. Pits, drainage gullies, wells and a pottery kiln were also recovered, in addition to two inhumation burials. Provisional dating suggests a 2nd to 4th century AD date.

Welford, Chambers Row (SP 6429 8065) (NA) Trial excavation was carried out by Peter Masters and Tim Upson-Smith ahead of proposed residential development of a 0.21ha site. A single pit containing Roman pottery sherds was found.

MEDIEVAL

A43 Duelling Project, Silverstone, Hazelborough Wood (SP 6577 4298) (NA) An earthwork survey recorded a sinuous linear bank and ditch running approximately parallel to the present A43, between about 8m and 26m from the road. This was considered likely to be a medieval woodland boundary. A section across the earthwork showed that the bank was poorly preserved, while the ditch had probably

been modified recently for drainage purposes. There was no evidence for the date of construction.

Ashton, Moated Manor House (SP 7645 5003) (NA) A watching brief was carried out by Rob Atkins during groundworks for the construction of a new garage (*SAM No. 1361*). Medieval deposits survived on the eastern part of the site, 0.5m below the ground level. The corner of a medieval stone building was uncovered within a few metres of the western moat. It was clay-floored and contained a possible oven, and is dated to the middle to late 12th century. The walls were partly robbed in the 15th century. The remains were preserved in situ beneath the new foundations.

Braybrooke, Firs Farm (SP 7652 8427) (NA) A desk-based survey and trial excavation by Joe Prentice suggested that a potential development site was outside the area thought to be West Hall, as known from an historic document. A small group of features comprising a ditch, two gullies and two post-holes were found. The ditch and one of the gullies produced single sherds of medieval pottery, perhaps suggesting limited activity during that period.

Cranford, St Andrew's Church (SP 924 773) (NA) A trench dug against the east wall of Cranford St. Andrew church revealed a variety of footing construction styles, including a pitched stone section indicative of early medieval date. The footings were recorded by Joe Prentice before the stonework was repaired and pointed.

Daventry, Golding Close (SP 5738 6273) (NA) An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Rob Atkins during proposed development for shops, housing and a car park. A single medieval ditch, dated to the 13th-14th centuries, may be a further length of an enclosure ditch excavated 30m to the east in 1995. The watching brief seems to confirm the results of evaluation trenches excavated in 1994, in finding that occupation in this area was sparse, perhaps due to the steeply sloping ground.

Daventry, Middlemore Farm (SP 565 648) (NA) An archaeological evaluation was carried out by Rob Atkins and Erlend Hindmarch before a proposed housing development. A field walking survey recov-

ered no concentrations of archaeological material; only three flint flakes, a very thin spread of abraded Roman pottery, a couple of medieval sherds and a little post-medieval pottery were recovered. A magnetometer survey found no archaeological anomaly other than the surviving ridge and furrow earthworks.

Deanshanger (SP 763 397) (NA) Trenches excavated by Rob Atkins on either side of Kings Brook behind the Church Lane and High Street road frontage confirmed the map of c.1600, which showed that the area was not occupied in the medieval/early post medieval period. Two 13th-14th century gullies ran roughly parallel to Church Lane, one 50m and the other 70m away, and they may have been the rear property boundaries of former medieval plots.

Fawsley, St Mary's Church (SP561 566) (NA) A watching brief was carried out by Joe Prentice during the excavation of a cable trench between Fawsley Hall and St. Mary's Church to see if any remains of occupation associated with the deserted village would be encountered. None was found and it is likely that the area around the edge of the former village was used for cultivation, but has more recently been under pasture.

Harringworth, Seaton Road (SP 9162 9737) (NA) An excavation was undertaken by Rob Atkin during construction of a sewage outlet. A trench c.37m long and 6m wide exposed an area containing inhumation burials and, consequently, the development scheme was changed to minimise disturbance to the archaeology. The burials were part of a large cemetery whose southern extent was exposed in 1967 adjacent to the present development. The burials were laid out in at least three rows, and the west-east alignment and the absence of grave goods indicated that they are probably Christian in origin. The cemetery was out of use by the early medieval period, as pits dated to 1150-1225 cut the southern burials. A small area excavated within the cemetery, measuring c.3m by 3m, contained a sequence of six burials, and two radio-carbon dates place them in the 6th to 7th century AD, rather than the expected late Saxon date. To the east of the burials there were parts of at least two medieval timber buildings which presumably formed back plot structures to houses previously fronting onto the road. A group of four pits contained significant amounts of smithing and smelting slag indicative of local iron working on part of the former burial ground.

Little Harrowden, St Mary's Church (SP 8715 7167) (NA) An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Rob Atkins during groundworks for the construction of a new external drain. The former medieval tower footings survived adjacent to the east end of the south and north aisles and part of the foundations of the west wall of the tower was found in a section of drainage gully. The other parts of the tower's footings seem to have been totally destroyed by the 1970 concrete and brick foundations of the vestry. The 1850 Victorian north aisle seems to have been built on top of the former medieval north aisle. Probable medieval grave earth was found next to the north and south aisles. This contained a few sherds of mid-late 12 to mid 13th century pottery and some disarticulated human bone. No evidence was found for the hermit's chapel, which is known to have existed in the churchyard.

Northampton, Church of the Holy Sepulchre (SP 7540 6093) (NA) An archaeological recording action by Alex Thorne on groundworks at the junction of the round church and the north aisle recorded structural remains, which appeared to predate the mid 12th century phase of building. A thick layer of mortar and rubble, which was exposed in the majority of the trench, may have derived from the demolition of the gallery and clerestory of the round church, possibly in the 14th century. In addition, two drains were recorded, both post-dating the demolition layer.

Northampton, Express Lift Company, Abbey Works (SP 7375 6061) (NA) Trial excavation by Andy Chapman established that remains of the former Augustinian Abbey of St James, founded in the early 12th century and dissolved in 1538, survived at the northern end of the site, which is due to be redeveloped for housing. It was possible to identify the location of the abbey church, the cloister and the main monastic ranges, but the walls of these buildings had all been robbed to below former ground level. The presence of an extensive cemetery was also confirmed. Beneath the medieval levels most trenches showed the presence of an earlier soil horizon and in several trenches this sealed cut features of Roman date. The finds recovered were appropriate to the status of the site. They include fragments of painted window glass and window lead, decorated ceramic floor tiles, stone and ceramic roof tiles and pieces of moulded architectural stone, including parts of a column capital and a window

mullion. The identified cemetery will be fully excavated prior to the development, and there will be a watching brief across the rest of the site, which is to be largely preserved beneath the new development.

Northampton, Grosvenor Centre (SP 7552 6075) (NA) Trial excavation was carried out by Rob Atkins at four locations ahead of a proposed extension of the Grosvenor Centre. West of the present bus station medieval deposits were found behind the Sheep Street frontage, including a possible 13th century building containing an oven. East of the bus station there were truncated medieval remains including a stone wall, pits and layers, dated to the 12th to 13th centuries. North of the bus station, in The Mounts car park, two substantial ironstone walls survived to at least three courses high. These lie within the precinct of the Carmelite Friary (Whitefriars), founded in the late 13th century and dissolved in 1538, indicating that some remains of the friary buildings survive.

Northampton, St Peter's Church (SP 7498 6038) (NA) An archaeological watching brief by Rob Atkins was undertaken at St. Peter's church during the excavation of drainage trenches. These uncovered mostly grave earth of unknown date. The foundations of a limestone wall were found 0.45m from the south wall of the church, but a modern drain obscured their relationship. A probable medieval layer or feature was found to the north of the church. To the north-east two pits or graves were seen cutting the natural subsoil.

Northampton, St Peter's Way (SP 753 602) (NA) Five trial trenches were excavated by Tim Hallam and Andy Mudd on land located within the precinct of the Augustinian Friary, founded in the late 13th or early 14th century and dissolved in 1538. Medieval stone walls, rudimentary floors and other features dating from the 13th to 15th centuries AD were recorded on the eastern side of the site. The finds are compatible with those expected from a friary. They included a moulded architectural stone, a fragment of window glass and decorated ceramic floor tiles. The medieval remains were preserved beneath a metre or more of later made ground.

Northampton, St James End, Travis Perkins (SP 7445 6034) (NA) A watching brief was carried out by Mark Holmes during redevelopment, following

earlier trial excavations in 1996. However, as the ground was raised no archaeological deposits were exposed or affected.

Oundle, Glaphorn Road (TL 033 890) (NA) Part of an early Saxon cemetery was revealed along the north side of the Roman site (see above), and it possibly extended under the houses and gardens of an earlier development. Nine inhumation burials, aligned north-south and east-west were excavated. The range of grave goods includes bone combs, glass beads (notably a large polychrome melon bead), several iron knives, and a fine oval bone plaque with a central hole and ring-and-dot decoration, which may have been an amulet.

Potterspury, 19 Woods Lane (SP 7603 4320) (NA) A watching brief by Erlend Hindmarch noted the presence of a large medieval ditch or pit, dated to the 13th to 15th centuries, in the trench for the footings for an extension to the property. The remains of a much later stone wall, probably related to a ruined barn, were recorded in a service trench for drains.

Raunds, 34 Marshall's Road (SP 9959 7284) (NA) Whilst excavating a garden pond a human skull and a pot were disturbed. Iain Soden and Tim Upson-Smith investigated and concluded that the skull belonged to an inhumation burial of an adult male. The pot, which was almost complete, is a handmade Saxon plain, bossed vessel of probable late 6th century to early 7th century (see below).

Raunds, RPC Containers (SP 997 723) (NA) Trial excavation by Chris Jones ahead of a proposed warehouse extension identified a sparse scatter of shallow gullies and irregular pits located partly within Thorpe End Iron Age, Saxon and medieval settlement (Scheduled Monument NN11508). One pit contained three sherds of middle Saxon pottery and a gully contained two sherds of late Saxon pottery; other features were undated.

Stanford on Avon (SP 589 788) (NA) An archaeological watching brief by Chris Jones was carried out during the installation of two lines of underground cabling within both the village and the adjacent Deserted Medieval Village of Stanford on Avon (Scheduled Ancient Monument No. 145). No archaeological features were found.

Weldon, 17 Chapel Road (SP 9241 8971) (NA) The site lay within the medieval village of Little Weldon. Excavation by Steve Morris produced a series of archaeological layers and features, including a hearth, which dates to the 13th to 15th centuries, and a single pit containing late Saxon pottery. The site appears to have been levelled at some stage, altering the medieval topography and truncating the archaeological remains.

Weldon, 17 Chapel Road (SP 9241 8972) (NA) An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Rob Atkins during groundworks for the construction of a single dwelling. It confirmed the findings of the previous evaluation (see above) that the site had been heavily truncated. Only two shallow pits were found, one dated as 13th or 14th century and the other to the 19th century.

POST-MEDIEVAL

Brigstock Camp, Pill box (SP 935 863) (NA) Prior to the development of this camp, formerly for the unemployed in the 1920s and later for the army, Peter Masters, Michael Webster and Chris Burgess surveyed one of the three surviving pillboxes.

Brockhall Hall (SP 6326 6271) (NA) An archaeological buildings survey was carried out by Iain Soden and Tim Upson Smith during the conversion of the Grade II* listed Brockhall Hall into self-contained flats. Elements of the building pre-1799 survive within the present structure, although primarily only in main load bearing walls where accompanying original window forms confirm their date. This includes the majority of the windows on the south-east elevation which retain their original Jacobean fittings. The 1799 remodelling included building up the gables to give the Hall a very square appearance. All of the floors and ceilings were also totally renewed, and neo-gothic windows, which still remain on the rear elevation, were introduced into the building. During the 19th century the entire building was re-roofed and the freestone gables and the lower half of the chimney stacks were replaced with blue engineering brick. A single storey billiard room extension was also added. In 1912 the park elevation of the Hall was re-fenestrated to replace the neo-gothic with 'Jacobethan' style windows.

Daventry, Middlemore Farm (SP 565 648) (NA) Following an archaeological evaluation on the surrounding land, a building survey was carried out by Joe Prentice as the farm lies within an area of proposed residential development. It is a Grade II listed farmhouse with an adjoining range of early eighteenth century barns constructed of red brick. The farmhouse has a later extension to the north side, which in turn has a single storey extension containing a bread oven and water heater or 'copper'. The house remains largely intact with alterations and additions throughout reflecting its continuous use for over two hundred and fifty years. The barns remain fundamentally as originally built, though they contain many later minor alterations and additions.

Daventry, Moot Hall (SP 5740 6264) (NA) Trial excavation by Joe Prentice to the north of the Moot Hall located a large 17th century pit and the footings of an 18th century wall. No medieval or Saxon levels were found.

Daventry, 2 Sheaf Street (SP 571 625) (NA) A building survey was carried out by Joe Prentice in the yard of this Grade II listed building to record the ground plan of the 19th century conservatory, of which only half survives, together with the underground chamber, and the "grotto" wall. A fabric survey was later conducted to provide information concerning blocked and covered features within the building.

Holdenby House (SP 69166780) (NA) An archaeological evaluation by Joe Prentice in the kitchen garden revealed nineteenth century planting pits along with an undated feature, but no features relating to the gardens of the Elizabethan mansion were located.

Northampton, Sessions House (SP 6042 7551) (NA) A survey of the Sessions House (a Grade I listed building), which has not been used as Law Courts since 1991, was carried out by Joe Prentice so that decisions regarding the future use of the building will take into account its historic background. It appears to be unique in England, being the only building of its type to have survived from the 17th century in substantially unaltered form. The exterior remains almost unchanged on its George Row frontage, while the rear has been altered by the

addition of later buildings. The interior retains some original features, the most complete being the outstanding ceiling plasterwork by Edward Goudge. There are large areas of oak wall panelling, parts of which may be original. The floor of the Stone Hall appears to be the only section that dates from the time that the building was constructed.

The overall layout has seen some far reaching changes, the most obvious being the subdivision of the once open 'L' shaped space by the insertion of a wall in 1812, dividing the Crown Court from the entrance and *Nisi Prius* Court. The wooden screen closing off the *Nisi Prius* Court from the entrance followed this later in the nineteenth century. Little can be attributed with certainty to the original phase of Court furnishings though parts can be securely dated to the 1812 alterations. The lower basement has also been altered with the introduction of holding cells, though it is possible that the upper basement dates from the 17th century.

Northampton, Southbridge (SP 755 596) (NA) An archaeological evaluation by Alex Thorne and Joe Prentice on proposed redevelopment land at Southbridge revealed considerable destruction by nineteenth century foundations and drains. Any medieval archaeology that may survive must be at a depth which will be unaffected by the proposed development. Three buildings were recorded prior to their re-development or demolition; The Granary, a Grade

II listed structure, the Transshipment Sheds and the Railway Office building.

Orlingbury, Dovecote (SP 8615 7232) (NA) A watching brief by Joe Prentice during work to lay a gravel path around the dovecote revealed a brick floor associated with the 19th century toilets. No other archaeological remains were encountered.

Rushden, The John White Shoe Factory (SP 9559 6766) (NA) Archaeological buildings recording and photographic survey were undertaken by Alex Thorne prior to development works to turn the former shoe factory into flats. The factory was designed by Sir Albert Richardson specifically for John White. A record of the building as it stands today, and an attempt to show how the building functioned throughout its lifetime as a factory has been made.

Wellingborough, Methodist Chapel, West Street (SP 889 678) (NA) A buildings recording carried out by Joe Prentice revealed that the chapel has been enlarged and altered since being built in 1734 and substantially enlarged in 1791. Nothing remains of the 1734 chapel, and little remains of the 1791 interior fittings though the layout can be reconstructed with some certainty. The exterior survives essentially unaltered.

Review

'God made the country, and man made the town'. Recent Works on Northamptonshire Towns.

The Victoria History of the Counties of England. Northamptonshire. The Borough of Northampton, edited by P. Riden and C. Insley, reprinted for Northamptonshire Victoria County History Trust, (1998), vi + 67 pp, £9.95.

E.T. Jones, J. Laughton & P. Clark, *Northampton in the Late Middle Ages*, Centre for Urban History University of Leicester Working Paper 10, (Leicester, 2000), 139pp, 1 map, £7.99.

R.L. Greenall, *Daventry Past*, (Chichester: Phillimore, 1999), xii + 132pp, 96 illustrations, £14.99.

The histories of the town of Northampton and of the smaller urban centres of the county have received little detailed attention in recent years, from medievalists and early modern historians alike. While there has been much archaeological investigation – of Northampton, Daventry and Oundle, for example – mostly published in this journal, documentary studies, historical syntheses and overviews have been sadly neglected. The best survey of the urban development of Northamptonshire towns remains that of R.L. Greenall in his *History of Northamptonshire* (Phillimore 1979, reissued 2000) but the consideration of individual towns is necessarily brief and in the context of a wider framework of places and events. J.H. Williams' work *Saxon and Medieval Northampton* (Northampton, 1982) is good, but it covers only the earlier history of the town and could now usefully be updated with recent archaeological information. Detailed study of single towns has been patchy, confined to antiquarian works and some specialist articles. Alan Dyer, in *Decline and Growth in English Towns 1400-1640* (Cambridge, 1997) noted that there were insufficient local studies of Northampton to do more than guess at the structures underpinning its history (p. 27), and in his chapter on 'Midlands' for the new *Cambridge Urban History of England, vol II, 1540-1840* (Cambridge, 2000) Northamptonshire, alone of the main midlands counties, receives no detailed discussion. So it is with great

welcome that we greet three recent works on Northamptonshire towns, here reviewed.

The first of these works, which I will simply mention, is the re-issued extended essay on the borough of Northampton, originally written by Helen Cam, from the *Victoria County History of the County of Northampton volume III*, (1930). The editors justify the reissuing of this essay on two grounds. First, it remains the 'only connected account based on a detailed investigation of primary evidence' of Northampton, particularly for the period before 1660, and it represents a 'substantial work of one of the greatest medieval historians of her generation', Miss Cam (p. iii). Readers of this journal will be familiar with the original imprint of the text whose content is typical of the old-style *VCH*. The geographical position of the town is treated with first, then the constitutional history of the borough, its municipal government and associated institutions such as guilds. Parliamentary history then follows. Topography and buildings, industry and economy, ecclesiastical institutions, educational foundations and charities are then treated, with some useful illustrations here reproduced. There is little of the analytical and explanatory framework offered in historical works of today, but the volume remains valuable for a number of reasons. It offers a clear and detailed outline description and development of the institutions of Northampton and it is a good guide to the primary documentary sources available for a study of the town. Further, in the introduction to the reprint, the editors, Messers Riden and Insley, have provided a detailed and up to date bibliography of works on Northampton in their footnotes, which is a great service to the scholar, amateur and professional. The *VCH* essay remains the fundamental starting point for all serious studies of the county town.

The volume *Northampton in the Late Middle Ages* is a result of a collaborative project between the universities of Leicester and Birmingham, funded by the Economic and Social Sciences Research Council, on the urban hierarchy of the East Midlands in the late Middle Ages. The project had three aims:

the chart the broad pattern of urban hierarchy in the East Midlands during the late Middle Ages, to identify social and economic markers for different levels of towns and to identify links between urban centres and their rural hinterlands (p. 5). The project is interdisciplinary, using archaeological and documentary sources and methodologies.

The results of the project for Northampton are here presented by Evan Jones (the archaeologist) and Jane Laughton (the historian). After a brief introduction by Peter Clark, one of the project directors, the study divides into two parts: the results of the archaeological investigation and that of the documentary analysis. Jones uses the wealth of modern excavation reports for Northampton, the more limited standing buildings evidence as well as maps, photographs and drawings. Laughton uses borough and taxation records, rentals and the early wills register of the Northampton archdeaconry of Lincoln diocese. Each author addresses the same set of questions and the text is broken down into headed sections. Thus the subjects of enquiry are: topography, population, wealth and status, urban functions, trade networks and urban hierarchy. Within these broad headings there are detailed discussions of the nine parish churches and the devotional practices of the laity; the religious institutions of Northampton (three monasteries, four friaries and two hospitals); domestic housing; occupations, occupational zones and industry; municipal government and civic building; civic amenities (paving, water supply and waste disposal); military installations (castle, walls and gates); trade, marketing and regional contacts; population size, distribution and wealth.

So what do we learn about late Medieval Northampton from this binary approach? The heyday of Medieval Northampton was in the mid to late-13th century, when the intra-mural space was filled with domestic properties and suburbs grew up outside of the town gates. The later Middle Ages saw radical population decline. Domestic occupation within the town walls shrank, particularly in the western and eastern zones, and in the latter, horticulture replaced residence. However, there was no decline in the centre of town, which remained densely occupied and in great demand, evidenced by the construction of taller houses in this period. The reduction in residential area was matched by increasing geographical zoning of urban functions. In the western part of the town, around St. Peter's, there was a

change from a mixed domestic-industrial economy in the late 14th/early 15th centuries to a specialist tanning industry by the later 15th century. Rentals and wills confirm that tanners were numerous in this parish, while textile workers, especially dyers, were notable in the south western parish of St Gregory's. In the eastern part of the town, around St Giles gentry residences were maintained, with large houses and gardens. The commercial heart of the two was centred on the market place, which was improved in the later period.

Although the population declined, the authors concur that the town remained relatively prosperous and that per capita income may have risen in the late Middle Ages. Archaeological evidence suggests that the quality of construction of domestic properties was enhanced, even those occupied by more popular social groups. Further, higher quality ceramics were used by the townsfolk. Parish churches and religious houses were embellished, at least in part with lay bequests. All Saints attracted guild members, benefactions and burials from a town-wide elite, as fitted its status as 'town' church associated with urban government. The convent of the Franciscans at Greyfriars was refurbished and St. Thomas's hospital or almshouse was built. A new council hall was constructed and civic amenities improved. The central streets were better paved and rubbish disposal changed, from back yard pit deposit (characteristic of the period before 1350-1400) to communal disposal, with written evidence for muckhills in different parts of the town.

Northampton's position on the national political stage certainly declined. No longer a centre of military importance after c.1320, the castle and walls fell into disrepair. By 1600 they were both rather dilapidated. After 1380, parliament no longer sat in the town, whose taxable ratings and position in the urban hierarchy dropped. Regional importance was maintained and consolidated, however. Northampton remained the administrative centre for the county and was an archdeaconry (to become a separate diocese, along with Rutland, after 1542). The town was sufficiently important to attract foundations of houses of all four orders of friars. Judicial sessions, secular and ecclesiastical, were regularly held and attracted many visitors to the town. There was a gentry presence. High status houses were inhabited around St. Giles and gentry and landowners had investments in urban properties, rented out at profit.

Luxury goods and services were acquired by this wealthy group. High quality clothing seemed to be a speciality of Northampton's tailors.

The archaeological record shows Northampton's continued importance as a centre of production and exchange. While the textile industry declined in the later 15th century, leather processing increased. Documentary sources show the growth of service industries, with inns and permanent shops, the sale of luxury goods in the town and enhanced commercial links with London. The ceramic record shows that most of the town's trade was with its country (pottery of Olney/Lyveden then Potterspury types) but there were wares from Oxfordshire, East Anglia and even Dutch floor tiles from a gentry house in The Riding, evidence of wider contacts. The market was the most important in the county, held thrice weekly, where bulk commodities (livestock, fodder, grain, textiles, leather) as well as victuals were traded. On the basis of this wealth, civic identity was manifested in public buildings, with the new town hall and market cross, and the reorganisation of municipal government took place in 1489. Northampton became a prosperous, middle rank county town, a position it continued to maintain throughout the pre-modern period.

This study of Medieval Northampton is an important piece of work and should be read by all those with an interest in the town's past. The strength of the work lies in the author's able syntheses of existing archaeological and documentary evidence. The questions asked are important, relevant to current historiography and clearly defined. The level of detail and use of specific examples to support analytical statements is excellent. We learn a great deal about the colour and fabric of medieval urban life as well as its structural features of topography, population etc. My favourite parts were the detailed reconstruction of urban parish piety using wills – each church's saints' cults, fraternities and devotional focuses – and the material culture of domestic occupancy, from house lay out to interior decoration. I rather fancy coverings embroidered with white lilies or red and green lions. There were a few lacunae – lollardy, crime and the operation of different courts, to name three, but study of these topics precludes a binary methodological approach.

My main criticism is that the work was not a fully integrated study of archaeological and documentary evidence. There was reflection by the archaeologist and the historian on each other's results, but this was

multidisciplinary rather than interdisciplinary in approach. Writing on similar issues, the volume provided two, parallel, stories rather than a single tune. For the study to be truly integrative, there would have been one study, not two separate chapters. Secondly, the two chapters began rather abruptly, where both could have benefited from a contextualising introduction, on work already done and conclusions heretofore reached about Northampton. Thirdly, there was great stress on the inter-relatedness of the different sorts of evidence for a 'total history' of aspects of Northampton's past. Certainly, this can be seen in the reconstruction of the metal industries. Excavations have detected metal working in western and eastern part of the town, whereas documentary evidence has evidence for western workers alone; archaeology shows the range of goods produced, pins and pots, bowls and candelabra, whereas the documentary evidence stresses high value goods rather than those in common use. Where archaeology and documentary studies are at variance – for example, in the 'history' of the parish churches – less analysis is given to the significance of this difference. Finally, I would have liked more maps to show population, occupational, religious institutional distributions etc and a bibliography would have been good, in addition to the detailed footnotes.

It is easy to criticise, however, and all work has specific aims, time limits and costs. I think that this is a fine, detailed study of the medieval town of Northampton and its strengths far outweigh its limitations. I now want to know what happens next – why do the late middle ages stop in 1534? Given that 25 per cent of the urban space was occupied by religious institutions, which owned many other urban properties, what was the significance of the Dissolution of the Monasteries for the fabric, economy and rank of the town? What was the impact of the Reformation on Northampton? What about that of the growth of the Tudor state and the economic and social problems of the Elizabethan age? A combined archaeological and historical approach would reap great rewards here, but we must await a new project for the answers.

The small towns of England have increasingly attracted the attention of historians in recent years. Before the 18th century, approximately 50 percent of the urban population in the midlands lived in towns of less than 1,000 inhabitants (Dyer, 2000, p.100).

The urban experience of most people until 1800, was therefore of small rather than larger towns. Revisionist works on the industrial revolution such as those by Berg and Hudson, have shown the importance to manufacture of small scale enterprises, in rural settlements and small towns, to economic take off in the 18th and 19th centuries. The smaller towns of counties neighbouring Northamptonshire have received good, recent scholarly attention. Jon Stobart's work on the North West and Cathy Smith's on Nottinghamshire, are two examples for the 18th century period (Stobart, 1996; Smith, forthcoming). Ron Greenall's book *Daventry Past*, is thus a welcome addition to the literature, for this county.

Daventry Past is an attempt to survey and to explain the changing form and function of the settlement of Daventry across the last two and half millennia of its existence. Daventry lies on the western edge of Northamptonshire, almost on the boundary with Warwickshire. The modern town had its origins in, if not continuous settlement upon, an iron age hill-top enclosure, Saxon and Medieval settlements. Its importance to the local and national historian is that it was 'one of the small boroughs of England ... [wherein]... patterns typical of English towns are to be found' (p. x).

The contents of the book can be divided into three parts: the early settlement (to c. 1500), the early modern town (1500-1840) and the modern town, up to the present day. The first chapters, 1 to 4, provide a survey of the history of Daventry from prehistory to the later middle ages. The surrounding landscape, early history and later mythology of Daventry are dominated by Borough Hill and its late Bronze Age/early Iron Age defended enclosure. The largest of Northamptonshire's hillforts, limited archaeological investigation means that its nature and purpose remain enigmatic in all but outline. The Iron Age settlement was not succeeded by a Roman town, but Bannaventa, on Watling Street, lies nearby and the Borough Hill continued to be a focus of activity and possible settlement: a Roman villa or temple and barrow burials were located in the 19th century. The origins of Daventry proper are traced in chapters 3 and 4. By the late Anglo-Saxon period the landscape was divided into small, thegnly estates, created out of larger, older units as evidenced in charter material and by the existence of a religious unit centred on Daventry, Drayton and Welton. By 1086, scattered settlements had fused into two villages, Daventry and

Drayton, each with its own field systems. In this respect, Daventry has similarities with other villages in Northamptonshire, apparently created by lordly influence in the ninth and tenth centuries.

Like many small towns, Daventry's urbanisation followed the consolidation of the Norman conquest. There were three agents in this process: the foundation of a small Cluniac priory in 1108, that of a market by 1203 and the presence of two manorial centres with their courts. The motors of growth, closely related to the activities of these institutions, were agricultural production, market exchange and the town's location on the road network north to south (London to Warwick) and east to west (Stamford to Oxford). By 1300 population and agrarian cultivation were at their greatest extent; thereafter there was a long period of decline marked by plague and declining trade. By the later 14th century the two manors had been consolidated under the Duchy of Lancaster, following female inheritance. Much of Greenall's comments here are based on the work on taxation and ecclesiastical records by antiquarian writers.

The early chapters of the book provide a rapid survey of the prehistory, Roman and Saxo-Medieval archaeology and prehistory of the town. Coverage is at the expense of detailed analysis. For example, the proposed replanning of the landscape in the later Saxon period raises the question of motive. Greenall does engage with this, but briefly: he suggests defence, population expansion and necessary resource efficiency as motors, but he does not really engage with other models, especially those which have been proposed for other parts of Northamptonshire such as the Raunds area. That stated, this not a specialist monograph and the author does well to survey such a long period in a lucid, dynamic and engaging way in such a short word limit, for the non-specialist reader. Further, detailed references are given for those who wish to pursue specific periods, monuments or work on the topics here described. For example, Greenall has utilised work that has appeared in this publication, by Dennis Jackson (1993-4, 1996) and Ian Soden ((1996), and he has used extensively the work of A.E. Brown extensively for the medieval period, fulsomely referenced.

The second part of the book, the greatest in length and the most substantial in detail, covers the history of Daventry from the 1530s to 1840 (chapters 5 to 7). Although divided chronologically, similar themes are

treated with for each period. The religious history of Daventry is dealt with in detail, from Cardinal Wolsey's dissolution of the priory in 1529-32 (to contribute to the endowment of his new, Cardinal - later Christ Church - College at Oxford), through the Reformation, the rise of puritanism then non-conformity, to the reorganisation of the Anglican parishes in the 19th century. Daventry's standing ecclesiastical patrimony is limited compared to that of other small towns. While the parish church was rebuilt in the 1750s and is a fine example of Georgian design, there was only one dissenting chapel: the non-conformist community remained small in Daventry, because, according to Greenall, it was associated with lower and then middling sorts after 1661 and did not attract wealthy and high status patronage in the town.

The government of Daventry is also traced across three centuries, from incorporation in 1576, through civil wars of the seventeenth century, to the Great Reform Act of 1832 and subsequent reorganisation of town councils. The early 19th century witnessed changes to the physical fabric of Daventry, associated with changing modes of government. An Improvement Act of 1806 and the resultant commission oversaw improved drainage and paving in the High Street, regular street cleaning introduced and lighting in the 1830s. Markets and fairs were improved and a new Moot Hall was purchased at this time. Social and economic activity are also discussed at length for the early modern period and were important in the development and form of Daventry. The economy continued to rest on farming, markets and fairs, and wayfaring. There were numerous inns and alehouses serving these activities. The heyday of Daventry's prosperity was in the 18th and early 19th centuries, with population increasing accordingly. Some of this wealth was diverted into education and charitable activity, which had an impact on the fabric of the town. A grammar school was founded in 1556 by William Parker of London, and subsequently rebuilt. The Dodderidge Academy for non-conformist ministers was located in the town in the mid 18th century; there were boarding schools for young ladies and in 1826, a National School was founded for the lower classes. A work house for the poor was set up after 1835.

These central chapters of the book are good. Indeed, this section is the best part of the book perhaps revealing Greenall's interests and historical expertise in the pre-modern period. The text is detailed and

carefully researched using a range of documentary records held in the Northamptonshire Record Office. The use of headings makes the text accessible to specialist and general reader alike. The development of the town is traced clearly and written in a cogent style. This is a highly competent treatment of the history of a pre-modern small town.

I was disappointed with the final third of the book, on the modern town after 1840. Daventry suffered a steep economic decline from the mid-19th century. The railways bypassed the town, taking business away and the agricultural depression of the later part of the century affected fairs and markets. Footwear manufacture expanded but it was an industry of small employers and handcraft work rather than factory production. Again Greenall examined government through its many stages of reorganisation and its expanding range of functions to include, among others, public health and education. More could have been written here, however. The discussion of the 20th century town is rather thin: the First and Second World Wars, the presence of the BBC after 1925, the motor car and changing leisure patterns were described but not developed. More could have been said about the form, fabric and function of the modern town and its population, given the huge documentary and living witness evidence available for this period.

That said, the final chapter, 'Daventry Renewed', redeems the final section, for it is thoughtful and informative. The focus here is on the expansion of Daventry after the 1952 Development Act, to accommodate Birmingham overspill population with housing and employment in businesses and industries. The successes and failures of this plan are assessed and the work ends with a consideration of DIRFT (Daventry International Rail Freight Terminal), familiar to archaeologists of this county through excavation and field work related to its ancient as opposed to its modern populations.

Overall, *Daventry Past* is an important book for archaeologists and historians working on Northamptonshire. It provides a clear and cogently written outline of the development of a settlement over a long period; the book is detailed, although more in some parts than in others, and well referenced although notes are used rather than a bibliography provided. There are many informative illustrations, although some of the photographs are not well reproduced, the publisher's rather than the author's sin. I liked particularly the two maps inside the front and back

covers, of Daventry in 1791 and 1958, illustrating change over time. I have two main gripes. Firstly, that there is little contextualisation of Daventry, firstly in the wider literature on small towns, nor by much comparison to other similar centres in this region, Kettering, Wellingborough and Market Harborough, for example. Secondly, a conclusion which gave an overview of themes and trends in Daventry's history would have been good. The book came to an end in 1999 but I wanted a bit more on the big picture over time. But the word limit was no doubt tight and rigorous selection of material had to be made. The central theme stated in the introduction does come out clearly, however, - the importance of planning in the form and function of towns. Saxon and Medieval plantation and planning by manorial lords, agrarian reorganisation in the 15th/16th and 19th/19th centuries, the work of improvement commissions and then development corporation in the 19th and 20th centuries. Planning created contemporary landscapes and alters those of the past. It is important, therefore, for archaeologists to know and to enquire about what has altered the urban record, how and why this

occurred, and how this impacted on the constituent features of past townscapes. For Daventry, a good guide has been provided by Greenall's work.

So, here are three works which begin to make good the dearth of work on Northamptonshire towns. It is to be hoped that they encourage further work in these centres and similar work in towns sadly neglected in academic study, such as Kettering, Wellingborough and Oundle. Volunteers step forward, please!

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