

Excavations at Derngate, Northampton 1997-2000

by

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SUMMARY

The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) carried out a limited area excavation and watching brief on the site of the former Girls' School at Derngate, Northampton (NGR: SP 758 602), during 1997. A further watching brief was maintained on all subsequent phases of building development on the site. A clay and earth bank that formed part of the medieval city defences was excavated. Several medieval quarry pits were identified across the site: pottery from the quarry fills indicated that the pits were open in the early medieval period. Later medieval rubbish pits were cut into the infilled quarries. Medieval and post-medieval soils were recorded across the site, although no evidence was found to support the existence on the site of the late medieval grange building known as 'the Towre'. Nineteenth-century walls and garden features associated with the properties that fronted onto Derngate were also recorded.

INTRODUCTION

The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) carried out a watching brief and limited area excavations on the site of the former Girls' School at Derngate, Northampton (NGR: SP 758 602), during 1997. A secondary phase of watching brief was undertaken towards the end of 1998 and throughout further development work in 1999 and 2000 (Fig 1). The archaeological work was carried out during the redevelopment of the site for residential housing by Hassall Homes of Tamworth, Staffordshire, on behalf of Hobden Part-

nerships Ltd and J.S. Bloor (Northampton) Ltd (Planning Application 96/0134). Later work on the north part of the site was undertaken on behalf of Alfred McAlpine Homes Ltd, who completed the residential development on the site.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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PROJECT BACKGROUND

Northamptonshire County Council Planning and Transportation Department Heritage Branch Heritage had highlighted the application area as being of archaeological potential, and advised the Borough Council of the presence of known archaeological remains on the site. A desktop survey of the site was undertaken in October 1991 by Northamptonshire Archaeology Unit (Shaw 1991) in response to a previous development application, and the archaeological potential of the Derngate site was demonstrated. An archaeological evaluation on the site by Northampton Archaeology Unit (Shaw *et al.*, 1992) revealed further archaeological material.

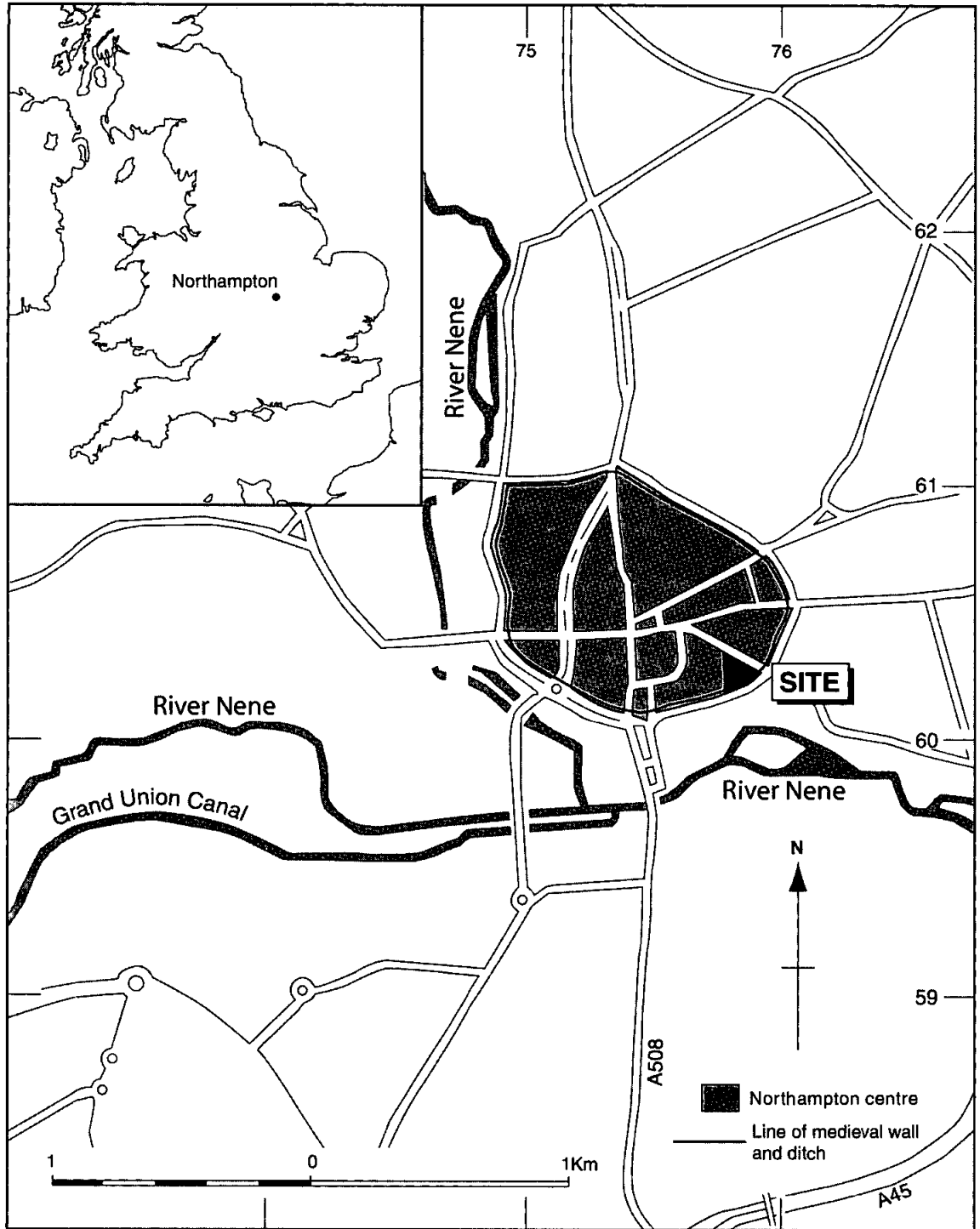


Fig 1 Site location.

As a result of the evaluation, the Borough Council applied a planning condition to the proposed housing development. This required the applicant, Hassall Homes, to make provision for the physical preservation of any archaeological remains on the site, or secure a written scheme of archaeological investigation (WSI) for the excavation of archaeological remains on the site prior to, and during the development. Northamptonshire Heritage prepared a brief for the first stage of an archaeological recording action in March 1996 (Kidd 1996). Northamptonshire Archaeology undertook further trial trench excavations on the site in 1996, and archaeological remains were found in several of the trial trenches. The presence of these remains led the Borough Council to attach a further archaeological monitoring condition to the development, principally a watching brief during the development, augmented by limited excavation as necessary. A WSI was drawn up by the OAU in April 1997.

TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

The development area comprises a triangular area of land covering 1.2 hectares situated in the south-east corner of the town centre (Figs 1-2). The site is bounded to the north by Derngate (road), to the west by Albion Place and to the south by Victoria Promenade. The topography of the site is uneven, and it lies on a pronounced south-facing slope leading down to the River Nene. The site slopes from a high point of c. 72m above OD to c. 64m above OD over a distance of some 60m, a gradient of 1: 7.5. The remains of several demolished school buildings occupied areas of the site, and these were removed in the course of the housing development. The underlying geology of the site is the Northampton sands and ironstone, which overlie Lias clay.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The origins of Northampton date to the Anglo-Saxon period, when the town ('Hamtun') developed as a military and administrative centre for the conquering Danish army. The Anglo-Saxon *burh* was sited on a sandstone bluff above the Brampton branch of the River Nene. Its favourable geographical location close to the river made 'Hamtun' a natural focus for trading, and by the early 11th century the town was

known as a port. Post Conquest, the Norman castle attributed to Earl Simon de Senlis I (1090-1111) was constructed over the Anglo-Saxon houses in the west of the old *burh*.

The town expanded to the east of the castle, and was enclosed with a defensive wall and ditch in around AD 1150 (Fig 1), although the area enclosed was much larger than the area then occupied. The line of the wall and ditch extended along the south side of the present day St. George's Street (North Gate), along Campbell Street and the Upper and Lower Mounts (East Gate), and then along York Road, Cheyne Walk (Dern-Gate - the secret or 'hidden gate') and Victoria Promenade (the South Gate). Lastly it extended by the river to the West Gate near the castle (Steane 1974, 141-6).

A consequence of the construction of the town defences was an expansion of the medieval town, yet even at the height of the town's growth in the 13th century, some parts of the intramural town might not have been developed (Foard 1995, 115). It seems likely that lightly populated areas within the town's limits would have been away from the main street frontages, and the effects of plague and famines from the 13th to the 15th centuries would have had an adverse effect on the number of houses in the town. Later medieval expansion tended to take the form of extramural suburbs such as North End and Cotton End, which evolved along the axes of the major north-south and east-west roads.

The Derngate development site lies in the south-east corner of the walled medieval town, and is situated immediately inside the town defences by one of the gates. A fuller and more extensive account of the documentary background to the Derngate site can be found in Shaw 1984. The following is a summary based partly on that work.

Derngate is first recorded in 1185 as Swinewelle Strete (*De dominabus* 22), and further references exist c. 1215 and 1225 (*Luffield Charters* II, nos 326 and 327; NRO Tresham cartulary, fol. 152), when the site was known as 'Swynewellestrete'. The name 'Derngate' originally referred only to the gate itself. Evidence for occupation in the area in the form of tenements on Swinewelle Strete can be found in two town rentals - one from the time of Edward I (Public Record Office SC 12/13/38) and one of 1504 (NRO Northamptonshire Borough Rentals, Royal Charters 29). Documentary sources suggest that in the early 16th century the development area lay within a large urban property known as 'the Grange', whose

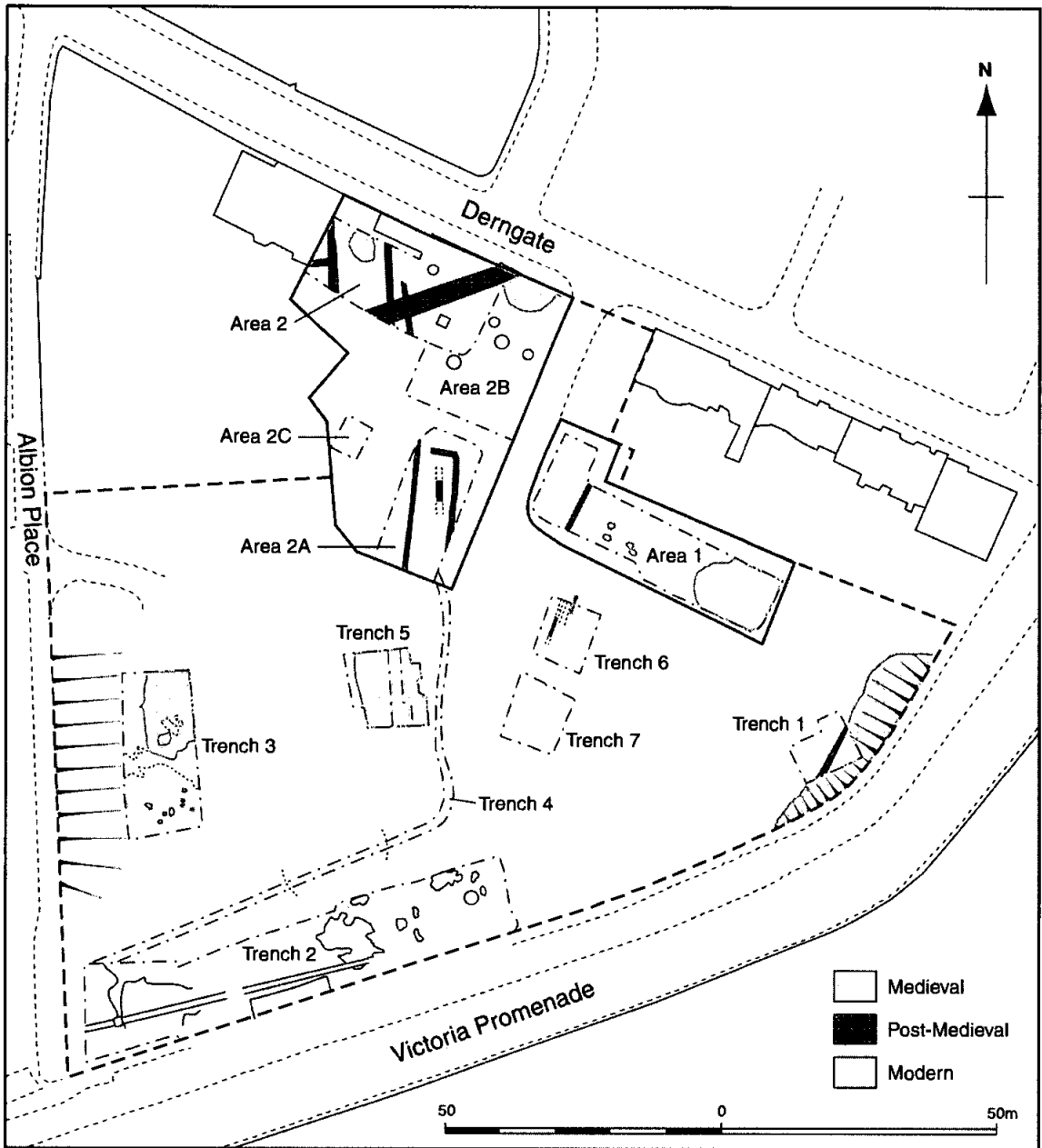


Fig 2 Location of Trenches (1997) and Areas (1998-2000).

principal building was known as 'the Towre'. This building is shown on Speed's map of Northampton of 1610 (Fig 3), apparently located in the north of the development area, immediately south of but not aligned to the road leading to Derngate itself. The triangular area of land of the present development appears on Speed's map, which also shows the city wall, its intermittent angled bastions, and the Derngate entrance at the east side of the town. Tenement buildings are also depicted in the north-west of the development area. A deed of the mid-16th century (NRO FH 1137) records the presence of a pond on the site, although not its exact location.

By the time of Noble and Butlin's map of 1746 (Fig 3), the tower was gone, although the area was known as Tower Close. J. C. Cox, writing in 1898, suggested that the Tower "disappeared in the Fire of 1675", although he did not give authority for the statement. An abstract of the title to the property (NRO NPL 2666) indicates that while in 1649 the property is described as containing a "capital message or tenement" and in 1653 a "house"; by 1709 the "Tower grounds" are said to contain only lands and closes, barns and barnyards. The line of the city defences was depicted as 'The Old Wall', but illustrated without bastions. By the time of Roper and Cole's Map of Northampton (1807) the area was still known as Tower Close and was divided up into a number of separate paddocks or closes. The town's defences were again drawn as 'The Old Wall' and two angled bastions are clearly shown on the drawing.

By 1847 suburban development along Derngate (depicted on Wood and Law's map, 1847, as Waterloo Terrace; Fig 3) included narrow plots of land at the rear of the houses. The city wall appears to have been removed by this time and a large ditch is shown following the approximate line of the wall. The garden plots at the rear of the houses on Derngate appear very well ornamented and arranged by the time of the Ordnance Survey 1st edition of 1885 (Fig 3) and the western part of the site appeared to be large garden backing onto the vicarage (No. 44 Derngate). From the early 20th century a school, including substantial buildings, tennis courts and playing fields, occupied the site.

excavation and watching briefs in advance of development. In 1975 street surfaces and a wall were observed during the excavation of a GPO trench along the north side of Derngate (NAU SMR nos 1160/0/64-68). A trial trench was excavated in the 1970's within the school site (NGR: SP 7583 6029) which demonstrated the presence of a backfilled quarry pit of uncertain date. Small-scale excavation at the junction between Derngate and north Swan Street, which lies parallel to Albion Place to the west of the site, took place in 1980 in advance of the construction of the Derngate Centre (NAU 1160/0/195, NAU 1160/0/29; Shaw 1984). Occupation deposits dating from the 11th century onwards were excavated. An associated watching brief (NAU 1160/0/33; Shaw 1984) revealed evidence of 12th-century ironstone quarrying with later medieval rubbish pits cutting the fills of the quarry. Excavations at the south end of Swan Street in 1989 (NAU 1160/0/191) in advance of car park construction again produced occupation deposits dating from the 12th to the 14th centuries (Shaw and Steadman 1993/4).

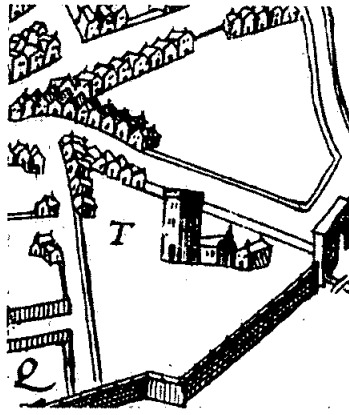
Within the area of the Derngate development site, an archaeological evaluation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology Unit (NAU) in response to a previous development application (Shaw 1991; Shaw *et al.*, 1992). A further evaluation was carried out by NAU in 1996 (Shaw 1996). Together these investigations identified Romano-British features at the east of the site, close to the line of the medieval defences, perhaps relating to a small settlement. No evidence of Saxon occupation or significant activity was found in the area. Early medieval deposits were identified in the south-west corner of the site, comprising rubbish pits and postholes of a possible timber building. The remains of an earth bank, thought to be part of the town's medieval defences were observed at the extreme south-west corner of the development area, and also further to the east of the site. Medieval remains were generally observed 0.6m or more below the existing ground level. Evidence of quarrying was revealed across the site together with late 19th- or early 20th-century rubbish pits.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

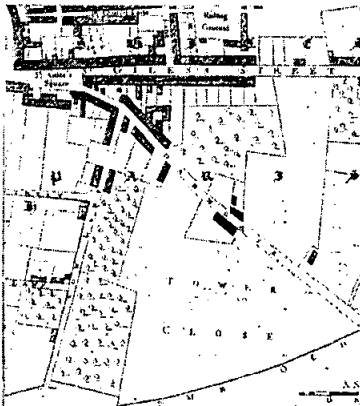
Previous archaeological work in the vicinity of Derngate has taken the form of small-scale

STRATEGY AND METHODOLOGY

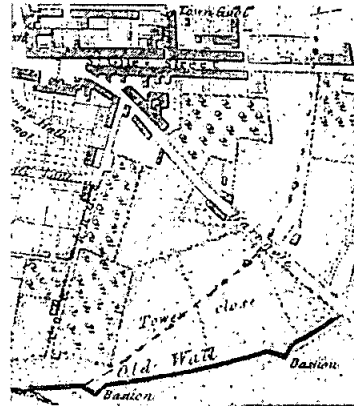
The archaeological mitigation strategy was initially determined on the basis of the impact of the proposed



Detail of Speed's map (1610)



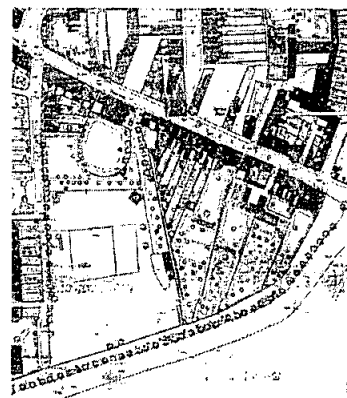
Detail of Noble and Butlin's map (1746)



Detail of Roper and Cole's map (1807)



Detail of Wood and Law's map (1847)



Detail of Ordnance Survey 1:2500 plan (1885)

Fig 3 Demgate as portrayed in maps.

house platforms upon the known areas of surviving archaeology, and the importance of the archaeology.

The strategy for the first programme of works in 1997 (Trenches 1- 7) required specific areas of the development area, corresponding to building footprints, to be targeted for a watching brief. Supplementary archaeological excavation was undertaken of deposits revealed under proposed building footprints at formation level.

For the second programme in 1998-2000 (Areas 1 and 2-2C), situated generally closer to the Derngate frontage, the strategy was modified to allow deeper excavation of overall deposits within building footprints, below formation level if necessary, in order to ensure identification of possible significant deposits under what was anticipated could be a considerable depth of modern terracing and make-up. For both development programmes, the emphasis was on preservation *in situ*, with minimum excavation of deposits. Initial demolition of the school buildings and site clearance by the contractors slightly impacted upon surviving pre-20th-century horizons at some points, although this was not considered to have compromised the potential for interpretation of the character of the site.

The areas investigated during the project are indicated in Figure 2. All topsoil stripping was by 360 mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket under archaeological supervision. All archaeological features and deposits were issued with unique context numbers, and context recording was carried out in accordance with OAU standard procedure (Wilkinson 1992).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESCRIPTION

1997 PROGRAMME

TRENCH 1 (FIGS 2 & 4)

Trench 1 was located in the south-east corner of the development area, adjacent to the boundary wall surrounding the site. The earliest deposit identified at the base of the trench was a 0.1m thick layer of compact reddish-grey clay (11) with inclusions of ironstone. A single sherd of 12th- to 14th-century pottery (fabric F330) and two bone fragments were recovered. The layer sloped from the south-east to the north-west, and was overlain by a compact layer of light grey tenacious clay with ironstone (10) which was up to 0.15m thick, and contained pottery of an early to mid-13th-century date, snail shell fragments and a few bone fragments. This layer sloped noticeably from east to west before levelling, giving the impression of the tail of a banked layer of material. Layer 10 was sealed by a 0.4m thick dumped deposit of

red-brown silty clay (17) containing pottery of early to mid-13th-century date and animal bone, which was in turn overlain by a sloping layer of compact light blue-grey clay (18) that was 0.5m thick. This layer included ironstone pieces, shell and charcoal flecks, but contained no dating evidence. Overlying all these deposits was a compact light grey clay (9) that contained shell, charcoal flecks and ironstone, and sherds of medieval and modern pottery. Collectively these layers formed a constructed 'bank' (group context 12), probably within the limit of the medieval town wall. A final layer of light grey-brown clay loam (8) that contained post-medieval and clay pipe fragments overlay layer 9.

At the western extent of the bank was an ironstone drain (13) aligned NE-SW, which appeared to respect the inner edge of the bank. The drain was set within a construction trench (15) that certainly cut the stratigraphically early deposit 11, but had no stratigraphic relationship with the later bank deposits. The drain averaged 1.0m wide and 0.4m deep, and comprised two lines of un-mortared ironstone blocks three courses deep, capped with flat ironstone slabs and slates. Post-medieval pottery was recovered from the drain fill (14) which comprised a 0.2m thick deposit of light grey clay with substantial inclusions of shell and charcoal flecks, and partially-decayed vegetable matter.

The capping stones of the drain were overlain by an undated compact light brown clay loam (19) that was 0.45m thick, and which also sealed layers 8 and 18. This deposit effectively levelled the slope of the clay and earth bank. Above lay a deposit of loose dark grey clay loam (7), with a maximum thickness of 0.52m, which contained pottery of both medieval and modern date. This layer was sealed below topsoil (16).

TRENCH 2 (FIG 2)

Trench 2 was located on a landscaped terrace, formerly tennis courts. The total depth of deposit removed averaged 0.4m. In places, excavation went deeper to remove unconsolidated quantities of 19th- and 20th-century levelling material.

Natural ironstone (4) was observed at one point adjacent to the south bank; otherwise the surface exposed was a friable mixed light reddish-brown clay loam with 20% ironstone pieces (5), interpreted as quarry backfill. The full extent of the quarry pit (or pits) was lost due to the density of later 19th- and 20th-century features that were cut into layer 5. To the east were areas of dark-grey silt loam containing quantities of late 19th- and 20th-century pottery, glass and oyster shells, and other domestic refuse including shoe leather, clay pipes and whole bottles. These deposits represented the upper fills of rubbish pits of recent date and were not formally investigated. The largest of the pits (24) was 8m wide by 9m, and the fill was machined out by the contractors.

At the west end of the trench another modern rubbish pit (20) was identified, cutting layer/fill 2. The base of the 1991 evaluation Trench A was identified immediately to the east. A layer of topsoil and turf (1), 0.12m thick, sealed all the revealed deposits.

TRENCH 3 (FIGS 2 & 5)

The trench was situated over a terraced grass tennis court, bordered on the west side by a raised bank. The terracing had clearly truncated deposits by up to 0.80m in the north of the trench, judging by the level of surviving medieval features identified in the western section. The exposed natural subsoil was ironstone (309), with amorphous areas of Lias clay (319, 320 and 322). The trench is described from north to south.

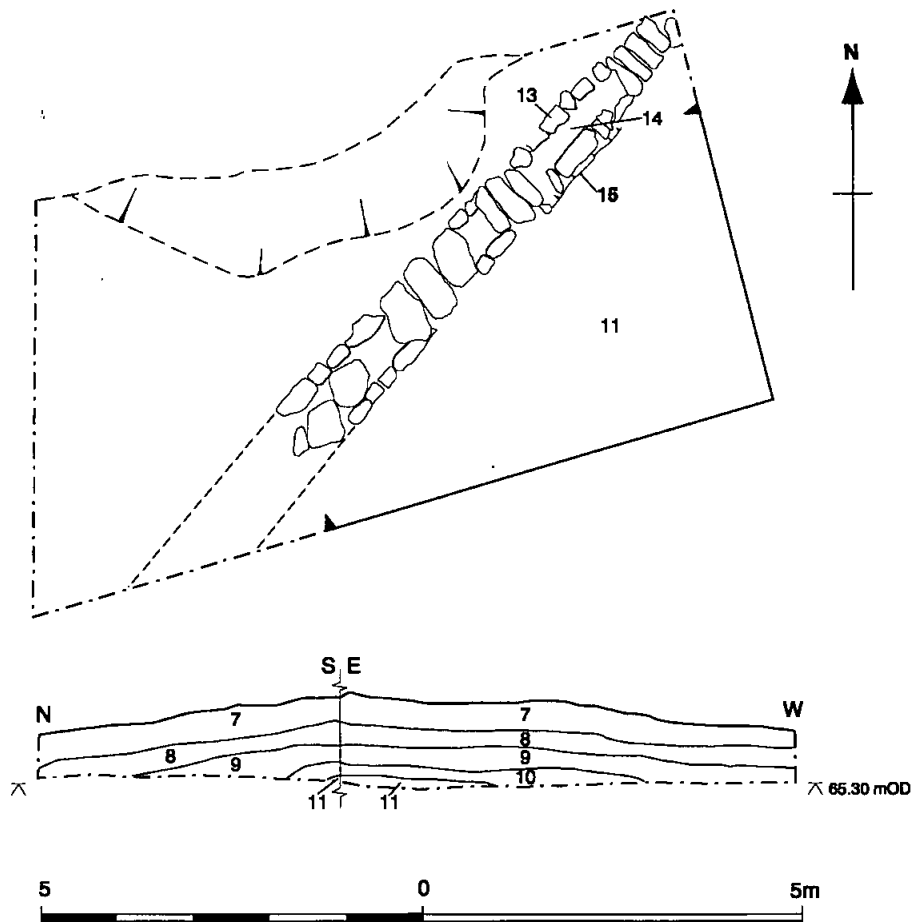


Fig 4 Trench 1: plan and section.

Medieval activity

Natural ironstone (309) was cut by a large pit (376), which extended beyond the trench to the north and east. The part revealed was 14m long (N-S) and 7.5m wide and was not fully excavated for safety reasons. The earliest excavated fills of the pit (312, 314, 315 and 303) comprised loose red-brown sandy silts with up to 20% ironstone inclusions. Pottery from these deposits was of 12th to 13th-century date. This material was overlain by an accumulated depth of 0.80m of tipped layers of reddish-brown or grey-brown silty loam (304 and 301) which produced pottery of a similar date. Modest quantities of animal bone were also recovered from these deposits. The layers appeared to represent the backfilling of a quarry.

A shallow, ovoid pit (365), 2.1m long, was cut into the fills of the quarry. Its fill (302) was a yellow-brown clay silt with charcoal and ironstones that contained pottery of 13th- to 15th-century date, along with animal bone and oyster shells. An

environmental sample was taken from this deposit (see Pelling below).

In the north-west corner of Trench 3, a sequence of grey-brown or reddish-brown silty loam layers (363, 362, 361 and 360), overlay the quarry pit fill and survived in section. 12th- to 13th-century pottery was recovered from layer 361, which also contained charcoal inclusions.

Cut into layer 360 was a large pit (356), 3.8m wide by 0.80m deep. The earliest fill was a light grey-brown sandy loam (310) with charcoal, at least 0.1m deep. Above lay a 0.2m thick dark brown clay loam (311) with charcoal inclusions and 12th-century pottery, sealed in turn by a compact dark brown loam with charcoal flecks (355). Overlying this was a loose light grey sandy clay mixed with patches of darker clay loam (354) containing pottery of 13th- to 14th-century date. The upper fill of the pit was a 0.44m thick red-brown sand and ironstone deposit with patches of sticky grey clay (310).

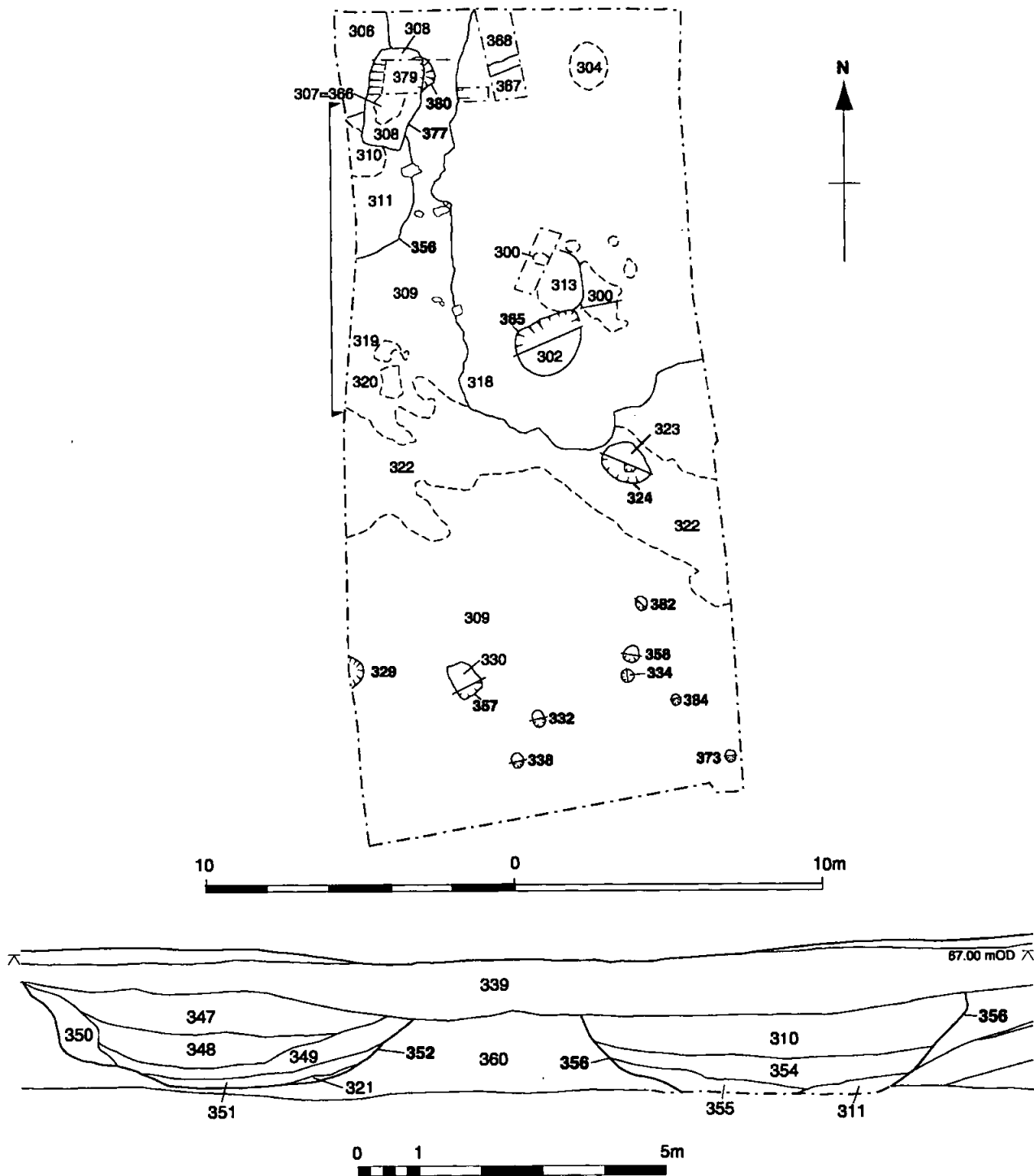


Fig 5 Trench 3: plan and section

The north side of pit 356 was cut by another pit (377), notable for a concentration of burnt material within its fills. The primary fill (379) was a 0.15m thick red-brown sandy silt with ironstone inclusions but no datable material. This was overlain by a 0.18m thick mid-dark brown silt with charcoal inclusions (378), itself sealed by 0.1m thick deposit of reddish-brown silt (307 = 366) with a high percentage of charcoal inclusions. An environmental sample was taken from this deposit (see Pelling below). The final pit fill was a grey-brown sandy silt (308). The upper fills produced animal bone and pottery generally of a 12th- to 13th-century date, although three sherds of 15th-century pottery were also recovered.

A further large pit (352), measuring approximately 4.0m wide by 1.05m deep, was observed in the west section to the south of 356. A sequence of grey-brown and reddish-brown sandy clay fills were recorded (321, 350, 351, 349, 348 and 347). The middle fills (351 and 349) produced pottery of a 12th- to 13th- century date.

In the southern part of the site, layer 343, identified as that sealing the quarry backfill, was overlain by a compact red-brown sandy clay loam (342) up to 0.2m thick which sloped down to the southern edge of the trench. It was cut by a pit (329), 0.8m deep and 0.75m wide, which produced animal bone and 13th-century pottery from its fill (328).

Six features (340, 332, 382, 358, 384 and 373), probably truncated postholes, were identified to the south of the quarry pit edge. Whether they had originally cut layer 343 was unclear and therefore their stratigraphic relationship to the quarry could not be ascertained. Three of the posthole fills (341-f.o.340, 333-f.o.358, and 372-f.o.373) produced 12th- to 13th-century pottery.

Evidence of the dumping of levelling material associated with the laying out of the tennis court terrace was recorded at the southern end of the trench. A distinct layer of soil (339) below the turf (364) probably represents the late post-medieval/Victorian soil horizon.

TRENCH 4 (FIG 2)

The contractor's excavation of the trench for the main site sewer was subject to close archaeological supervision. A large 19th/20th-century rubbish pit (404) was identified in the south of the trench; otherwise no archaeological features pre-dating the late 19th/early 20th century were observed. It should be noted that most of the length of Trench 4 extended over an area already raised by dumped material, so the absence of revealed archaeology was not considered surprising.

TRENCH 5 (FIG 2)

The natural of silty clay and ironstone (504) was observed at the north-east side of the trench, cut by a large feature (503), interpreted as a quarry pit, which extended outside the limits of the trench. Its excavated fills (501 and 502) comprised tipped lenses of brown silty clay, ironstone rubble and blue clay that contained 12th- to 13th-century pottery and some animal bone. Over the quarry backfill lay a compact yellow-brown clay silt (500), which was 0.26m thick. This layer, which contained 16th- to 17th-century pottery, may have been hill-wash or levelling over the top of the infilled quarry. It was sealed by layer 505, an accumulation of later garden soil, and modern topsoil. The outline of the 1991 evaluation trench G was visible in the cleaned surface of quarry fill 502.

TRENCH 6 (FIGS 2 & 6)

Surviving archaeological deposits were revealed in the north-western part of the trench. Truncation (presumably associated with the school building construction), had removed corresponding deposits in the eastern half of the trench. Terracing meant that pre-20th-century deposits were not exposed in the southern part of the trench.

Natural (623), in the form of ironstone in a red-brown sandy clay matrix was identified, overlain by a layer of red-brown sandy silt with charcoal flecks (605), which was 0.52m thick and contained 12th- to 13th-century pottery and some animal bone. The upper surface of the layer was level and may represent an early medieval soil horizon. Layer 605 was overlain by a 0.16 - 0.2m thick deposit of compact grey-brown clay loam layer (606 = 607) which included charcoal flecks, ironstone pieces, animal bone and pottery of both medieval and 18th-century date. This was cut by a wall (608); it had been partially robbed and backfilled with brick rubble and other building debris (layer 604). Possibly consequent to this a further wall (602) of unmortared ironstone rubble was constructed to the west of 608. A 0.42m deep cultivation soil (621) had accumulated against both sides of wall 602.

A small rubbish pit (614) was located adjacent to the west bank, containing modern glass bottles, bricks, and blocks of iron slag in its fill (615).

To the east of wall 608, a partly demolished NE-SW oriented wall (611), part of the school building site, defined the eastern limit of surviving archaeological deposits. A layer of soil and turf (600) sealed the deposits described above.

TRENCH 7 (FIG 2)

Trench 7 was located immediately south of Trench 6. The excavated house plot level did not impinge upon archaeological remains. The earliest deposit revealed was a cultivation layer of grey-brown loam (702), very similar to the 19th-century deposit 606 in Trench 6. It was sealed by later levelling material and a turf topsoil (layers 701 and 700). No significant pre-19th-century deposits were revealed.

1998-2000 PROGRAMME

AREA 1 (FIG 7)

An area of c. 280 sq m was stripped of modern overburden, to the level of the natural subsoil at approximately 67.2m 0.20m). This was a reddish-brown silty clay with inclusions of ironstone fragments. A seam of natural ironstone was also revealed extending NE-SW across the area.

Medieval activity

The earliest features were two sub-circular pits (109 and 113), located near the west end of the area, both measuring approximately 1.0m in diameter and 0.15m in depth. Both contained single greyish-brown silty clay fills (110 and 114 respectively). One 12th to 13th-century sherd and two animal bone fragments were recovered from fill 110. A single sherd from a watering-pot of similar date and an animal bone fragment were recovered from fill 114. Two postholes (115 and 118) were identified approximately 6m to the east of the pits. Both contained

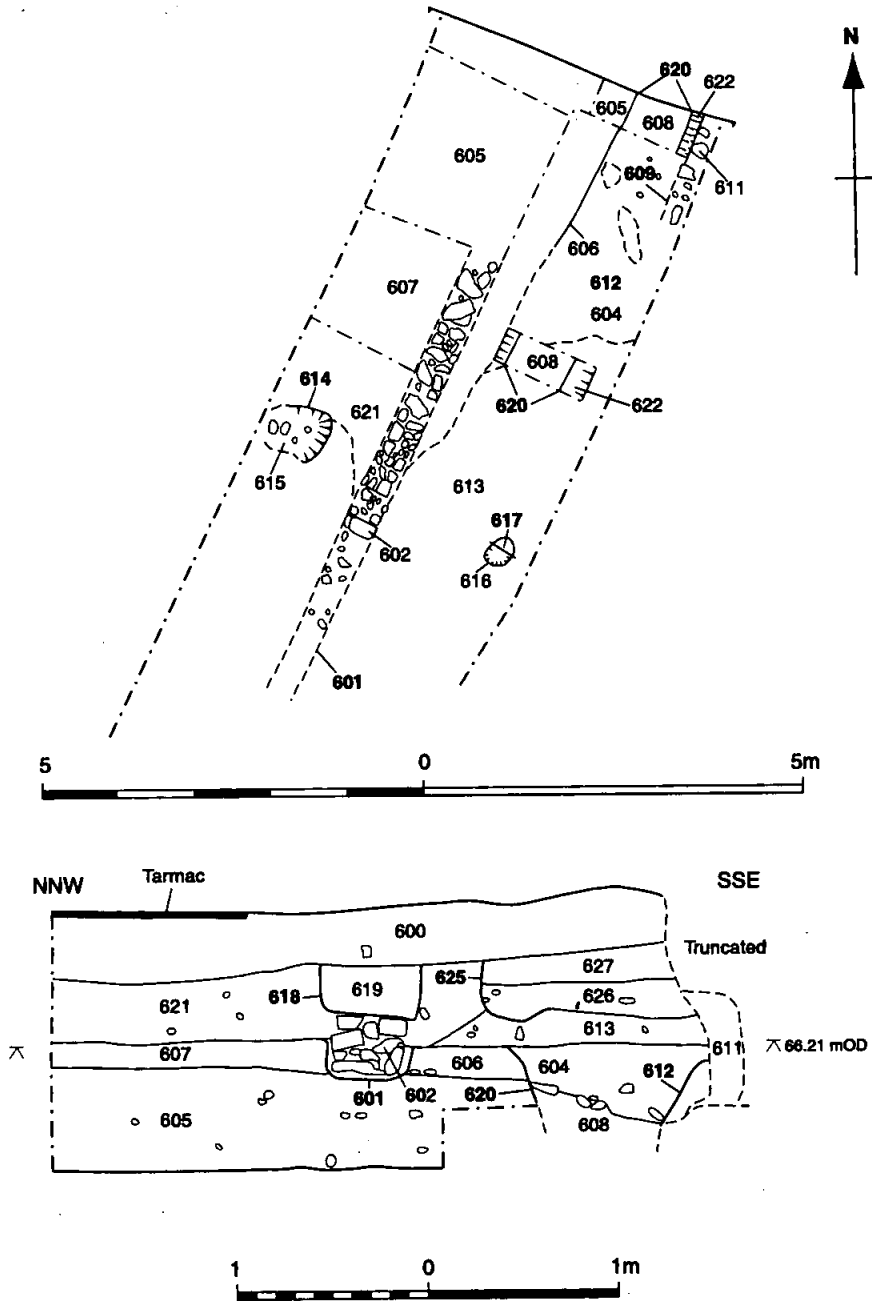


Fig 6 Trench 6: plan and section

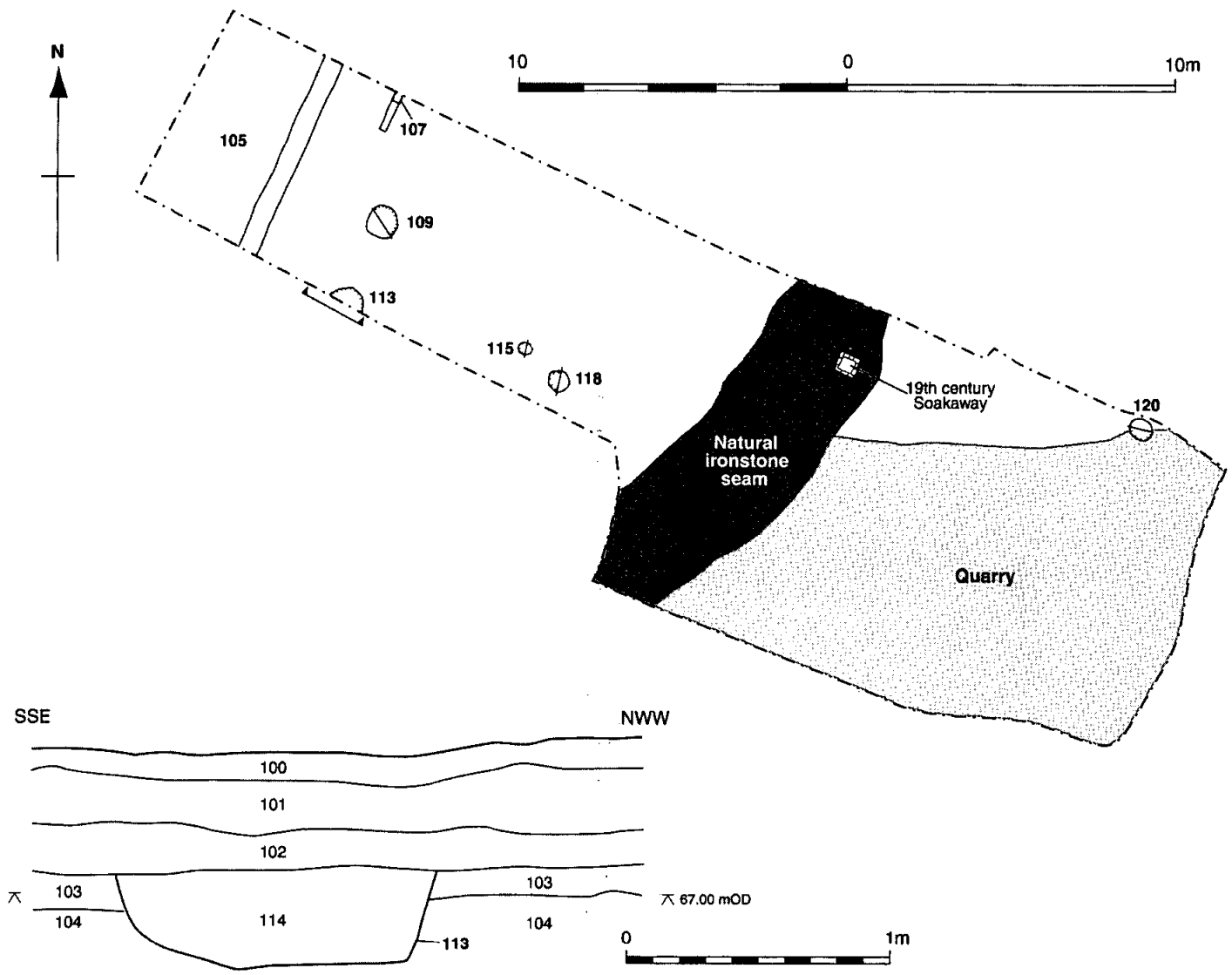


Fig 7 Area I: plan and section

fragments of charcoal in their fill, but no other dating evidence. A shallow gully (107), containing no dating evidence, extended from the northern bank for a distance of 1.25m.

The eastern end of the Area partly exposed the edge of a large quarry pit (122). This was sample-excavated by machine, revealing a depth of up to 0.45m. The (back)fill of the quarry was a mixed deposit of dark brownish-grey sandy silt with frequent inclusions of ironstone fragments. Pottery (dating to the late 12th – to early 13th century) and bone fragments were recovered from the fill. The northern edge of 122 was cut by a circular feature (120), either a small pit or a large posthole, which produced 12th to 13th-century pottery and animal bone fragments from its sole fill (121).

All of the medieval activity was sealed by a layer (102) of yellow brown silty clay, with inclusions of ironstone fragments. This layer varied in depth from 0.10m in the southern section to an average of 0.30m in the northern section, and was itself overlaid by a loamy topsoil (101), averaging 0.15m deep. The final deposit was a very mixed layer (100) of modern topsoil, building rubble and landscaping debris, which varied from 0.10m to 0.70m in depth.

Post-medieval activity

A square brick-lined soakaway was identified, close to the northern edge of the area, and cut into the sandy silt subsoil. To the east, a 1.15m wide ditch (105) was identified, backfilled with rubble, tile and brick fragments in a greyish clay matrix, oriented N-S and cutting layer 101. The lower part of this feature was exposed in plan, but not excavated. Finally, a partly-robbled shallow stone footing (124) was revealed, 0.50m west of ditch 105, also cut into the topsoil layer 101. This footing was noted as being on the same alignment as the west wall of the 19th-century property immediately to the north of the area.

AREA 2 (Figs 2, 8 & 9)

An area of approximately 450 sq m, situated against the east wall of No. 44 Derngate, and to within c. 5m of the modern line of Derngate itself, was stripped of overburden to the level of the natural subsoil at between 68.80m - 68.90m OD. The edge of a natural seam of ironstone was revealed along the northern edge of the eastern half of the area.

Medieval activity

Directly overlying the natural subsoil (222) at the west end of the Area was a compacted surface (206) or shallow hollow of trampled subsoil of c. 13 sq m, sub-rectangular in plan, oriented NW-SE, and extending beyond the north edge of the Area. The hollow contained a 0.08m deep fill of mid-brown sandy silt (202) which produced a large quantity of 13th-century pottery, many animal bone fragments, and the remains of a decorated pair of bone tweezers (see Fig 10.6 and Allen below). Patches of burning were observed within 202, and a single 0.30m deep posthole (225) contained ironstone packing.

The western edge of hollow 206 was defined by a very shallow linear feature (223), 0.90m wide and 3.5m long, which was filled with a mix of brown silty clay and ironstone fragments. The fill of the hollow appeared to respect that of feature 223.

A large pit (220) was partially revealed approximately 2.5m to the south-west of hollow 206. It appeared to measure at least 2.5m west-east and extended under the standing building at the west end of the area. The fill (221) of dark brown silty clay and ironstone fragments produced a mixed assemblage of pottery

dating from the 12th to the 15th century, and some bone fragments.

Post-medieval activity

The earliest feature appeared to be a large ditch (214) oriented NE-SW across the eastern half of the area, approximately 4m wide and at least 0.60m deep. The dark silty clay fill (207) contained 17th- to 18th-century pottery.

The partially robbed remains of two insubstantial stone footings (212 and 216) overlay the infilled ditch 214. Both were set into slight construction trenches (213 and 216 respectively) and were c. 0.50m wide. Footing 212 extended approximately 7.5m from the southern bank to a terminus. Footing 216 appeared to extend right across the area, continuing as footing 218 into the northern bank. It was observed that the base of footing 216 was approximately 0.20m higher than 212, which might imply that it was a later construction, although no discernible stratigraphic relationship was evident. Terracing is probably a more likely explanation for the disparity in levels.

A similarly oriented, and partially robbed footing (203), 0.90m wide and set into a shallow construction trench (204), was identified near the west end of the area. Very disturbed remains of a further footing (227), in construction trench 228, ran at right angles to the south-west, extending under the standing building No. 44. Both footings cut the fill of pit 220.

The eastern half of Area 2 revealed three linear features, all evidently truncated remains of modern drains, one circular brick-lined shaft (208), most probably a well, and one square stone-lined cess pit (211). The fills of all of these features were clearly 19th or 20th century in origin, based on the artefactual debris within them.

AREA 2A (FIGS 2 & 8)

The area, of approximately 240 sq m was situated to the south of Areas 2 and 2B. Natural subsoil (234) was identified at a level of 66.59m OD.

Medieval activity

The N-S oriented edge of a large cut feature (235) was revealed. It appeared to extend beyond the east and north of the area. The upper fill (236) produced 12th- to 13th-century pottery, probable medieval tile and some animal bone, suggesting contemporaneity with the other quarry activity on the site. However, the presence of clay pipe stem fragments in deposit 236 indicates that it was at least heavily disturbed by post-medieval activity.

Post-medieval activity

Three insubstantial footings, two of brick (240 and 242) and one of ironstone (241) were revealed, all cut into the upper fill of feature 235 and oriented NW-SE. A SW-NE return footing (239) was identified at the northern terminus of 240; this appeared to cut, or was abutted by a sub-rectangular pit 237, containing quantities of 19th-century pottery in its fill 238. The stone footing was cut by an irregular pit (243), which contained large quantities of 19th- and 20th-century pottery.

The southern end of the area was considerably levelled up with modern infill material.

AREA 2B (FIGS 2 & 8)

This area (of c. 300 sq m) was situated immediately to the east of

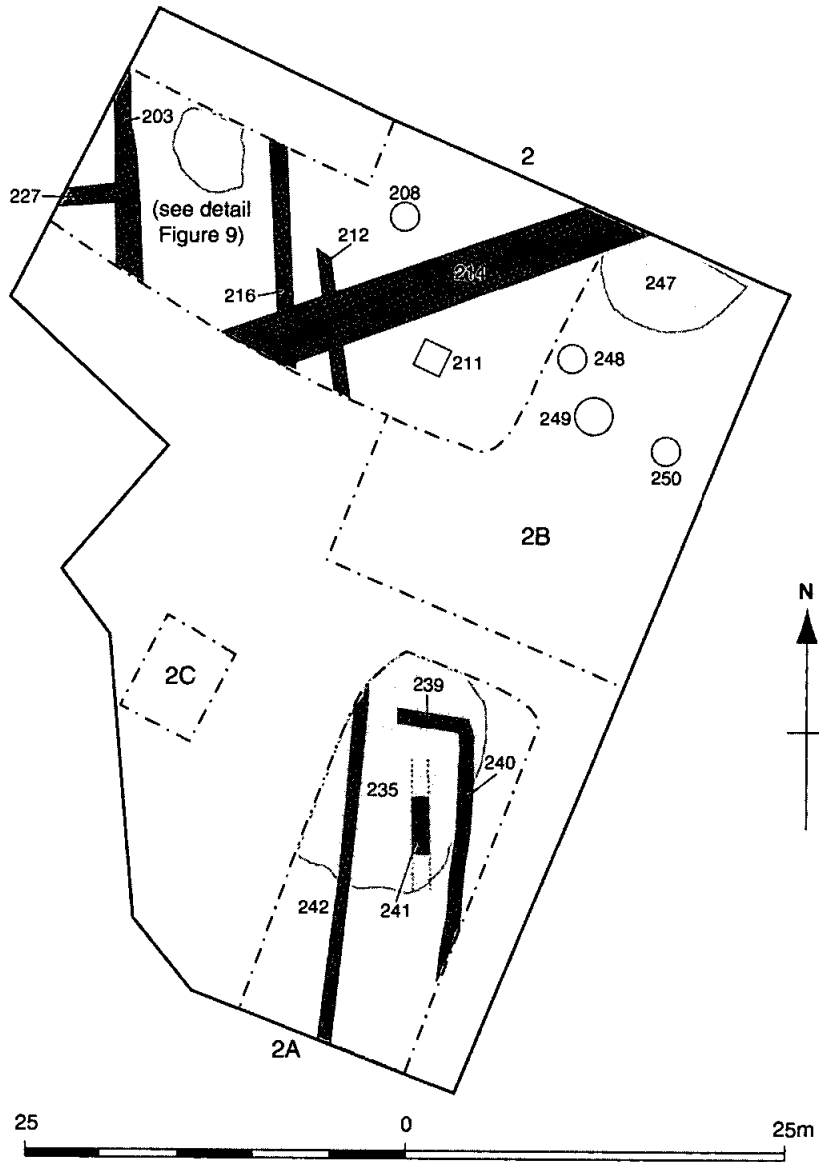


Fig 8 Plan of Areas 2-2C

Area 2, abutting the south side of Derngate and the west side of the access road onto the site, and overlying the location of the 1992 'evaluation trench,' the base of which was identified. Natural, in the form of reddish-brown silty clay with ironstone fragments, was revealed in the southern part of the area at a level of 68.70m.

Medieval activity

A 4m wide feature was identified (247) extending across the

northern part of the area, cut into the natural subsoil. The fill (246) produced 13th-century pottery and animal bone.

Post-medieval activity

Three brick lined circular features (248, 249 and 250) were exposed. Each was evidently 19th or 20th century in date, judging by the modern debris in their fills. Two modern drain trenches were also identified.

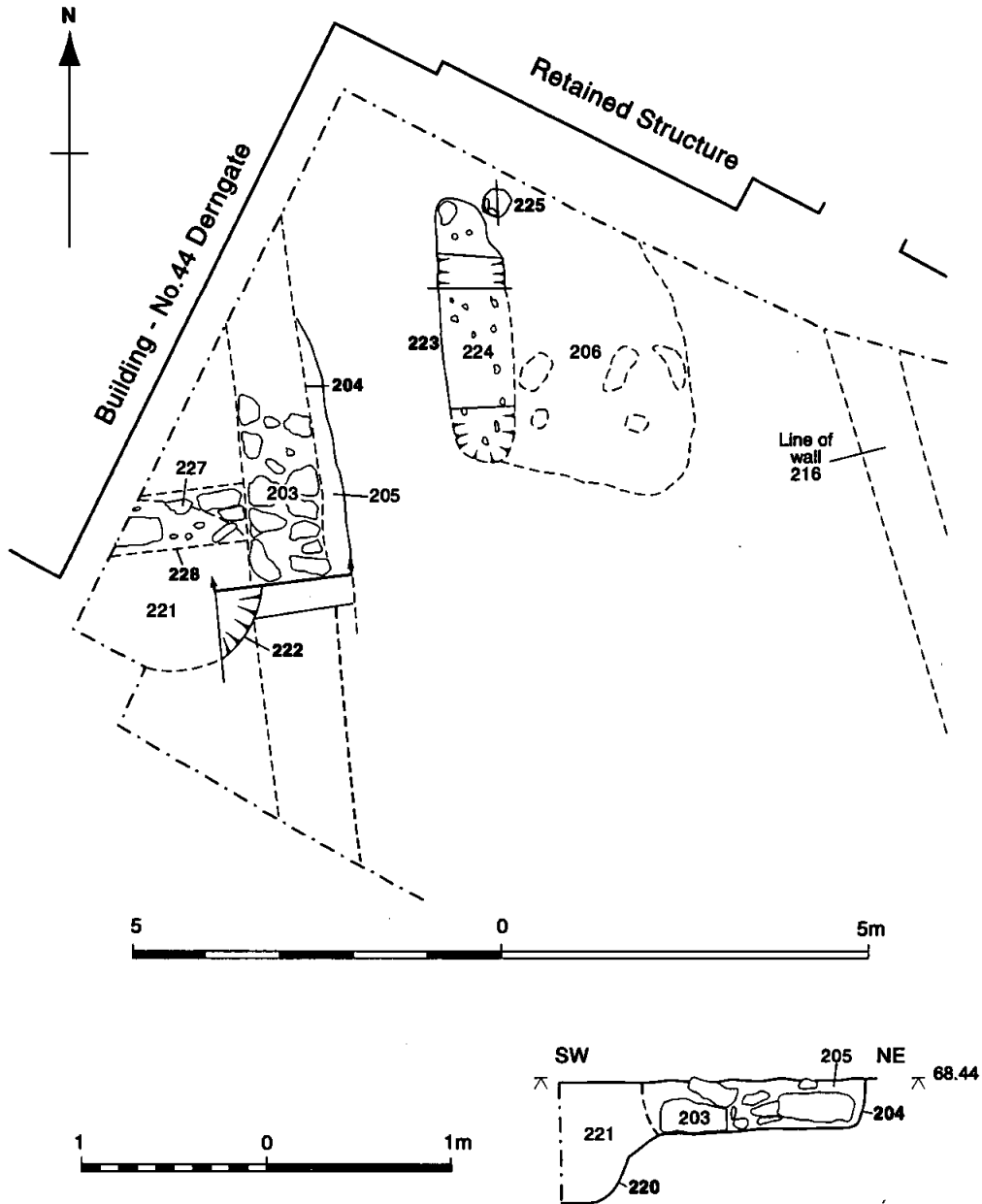


Fig 9 Area 2: detail plan and section

AREA 2C (FIGS 2 & 8)

The area of c. 25 sq m was situated west of Area 2B and south of Area 2. Natural was revealed at a level of approximately 65.5m OD.

Medieval activity

The natural was overlaid by a 0.95m deep layer of reddish-brown silty clay with ironstone inclusions (256), which could represent

medieval quarry backfill, although no dating evidence was forthcoming from the deposit.

Post-medieval activity

Layer 256 was partly sealed by a pad of brick fragments and concrete (255). A 0.85m deep layer of mixed silty clay and demolition rubble (254) overlay the pad, and was itself sealed by a modern construction/levelling layer (253).

THE FINDS

The combined episodes of archaeological intervention during the two programmes of development produced a modest assemblage of finds, principally in the form of mostly 12th- and 13th-century pottery and a small quantity of animal bone. That a nominally 'urban' site produced so little is partly due to the nature of the archaeological mitigation strategy - predominantly watching briefs with only limited excavation of features. However, despite this factor, the scarcity of material evidence is still notable, and its significance with regard to the intensity and character of the activity on the site is considered in the overall discussion.

THE POTTERY

by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 797 sherds with a total weight of 11,327g. The minimum number of vessels (MNV), calculated for the late Saxon and medieval vessels by summation of surviving rimsherd circumference was 5.03. All the pottery was medieval or later, with the exception of two sherds of redeposited Romano-British ware, and a sherd of late Saxon material.

The medieval assemblage suggests that the main period of activity at the site was in the 12th and 13th centuries, with the site going into decline during the later 13th or earlier 14th century. The most notable find was a fragment of a Developed Stamford Ware watering-pot, an extremely rare vessel type which implies a degree of sophistication in at least one household in the area during the earlier medieval period. In addition, a large fragment of a jar in East Wiltshire Ware (F364) is the first find of the ware from the town of Northampton.

FABRIC

The late Saxon and medieval pottery was quantified using the chronology and coding system of the Northamptonshire County Ceramic Type-Series (CTS), as shown below. Tables recording the number of sherds of each fabric type by context can be found in the site archive.

- F130: Northampton Ware, 10th-11th century. 1 sherd, 11g, MNV = 0.
 F200: T1 (2) type St. Neots Ware, AD1000-1200. 2 sherds, 19g, MNV = 0.
 F205: Stamford Ware, AD850-1250. 3 sherds, 75g, MNV = 0.
 F207: Oolitic Ware, AD975-1150. 1 sherd, 11g, MNV = 0.
 F319: Lyveden/Stanton 'A' Ware, AD1150-1400. 14 sherds, 243g, MNV = 0.
 F320: Lyveden/Stanton 'B' Ware, AD1225-1400. 18 sherds, 287g, MNV = 0.10.
 F322: Lyveden/Stanton 'D' Ware, AD1400-?1500. 4 sherds, 153g, MNV = 0.
 F324: Brill/Boarstall Ware, AD1200-1600. 26 sherds, 296g, MNV = 0.15.
 F329: Potterspury Ware, AD1250-1600. 24 sherds, 243g, MNV = 0.

- F330: Shelly Coarseware, AD1100-1400. 571 sherds, 6715g, MNV = 3.94.
 F331: Developed Stamford Ware, L12th-E13thC. 3 sherds, 8g, MNV = 0.40.
 F345: Early Medieval Oxford Ware, late 11th -14th century. 3 sherds, 16g, MNV = 0.
 F360: Miscellaneous Sandy Coarsewares, AD1100-1400. 56 sherds, 281g, MNV = 0.
 F364: East Wiltshire Ware, early 12th - early 15th century. 2 sherds, 224g, MNV = 0.14.
 F365: Late Medieval Reduced Ware, AD1400-?1500. 8 sherds, 105g, MNV = 0.04.
 F401: Late Medieval Oxidized Ware, AD1450-?1550. 2 sherds, 98g, MNV = 0.02.
 F407: Red Earthenwares, AD1450-1600. 5 sherds, 43g.
 F408: German Stoneware, AD1480+. 1 sherd, 40g.
 F410: Tin-glazed Earthenware, AD1550-1700. 5 sherds, 153g.
 F411: Midland Blackwares, AD1550-1700. 4 sherds, 178g.

F1000: Miscellaneous 19th-century wares (Ironstone China, Late English Stoneware etc.). 42 sherds, 2121g.

F1001: All Romano-British wares. 2 sherds, 18g.

There is little evidence of significant activity before the Norman Conquest. Two heavily abraded sherds of Romano-British Greyware were noted in later contexts (Area 2, contexts 202 and 205), as was a sherd of late Saxon Northampton Ware (Trench 3, context 366). A few sherds of Roman pottery have been previously noted in the Derngate area (eg Shaw and Denham 1984, 77), and a single sherd of Northampton Ware was noted at the Old Bus Station site at the Derngate (ibid., table 2).

The range of medieval pottery fabrics is very much what would be expected for a site in Northampton, although a single vessel of East Wiltshire Ware (F364; context 202; Fig 10.5) is worthy of comment. Whilst this material is common throughout Oxfordshire (Mellor 1994), finds in Northamptonshire are rare, and have been hitherto limited to sites in the extreme south of the county, such as the Elms site in Brackley (Blinkhorn 1998/9, 16). This is the first find of the ware in Northampton.

CHRONOLOGY

The medieval pottery is dated using the relative seriated phase chronology (RSP) as specified in the County Type-Series. The system attributes to each ceramic group a phase date rather than absolute chronology. The phases are based on the presence and absence of 'major wares' within each individual assemblage, with the earliest known date of the chronologically latest ware within each group defining the Phase end date. The purpose of this system is to allow the chronology of published groups to be clearly related to any future changes in the dating of the major wares. The chronology and the defining wares are shown in Table 1. Table 2 records the occurrence of the pottery from the whole site within each of these phases.

The data in Table 3 shows the range of major fabric types and their representation in each ceramic phase, which is fairly typical of sites in the region. However, the large proportion of F330 (Shelly Coarseware) in the late medieval phases (Ph4 and Ph5), which is higher than in Ph2/2, does show that there is a fair amount of redeposition, as such pottery had ceased to be made by that time. The data in the sherd fragmentation table (Table 4) shows that the mean sherd weight of the Shelly Coarseware

Table 1: Chronology of the RSP Ceramic Phasing System.

RSP Phase	Defining Wares	RSP Chronology
LS4	T1(2) St. Neots Ware	c. AD1000-1100
Ph0	Shelly Coarsewares, Sandy Coarsewares	c. AD1100-1150
Ph1	Lyveden/Stanton 'A' Ware	c. AD1150-E13thC
Ph2/0	Lyveden/Stanton 'B', Brill/Boarstall ware	c. E13th-L13thC
Ph2/2	Potterspurty Ware	c. L13thC-1400
Ph4	Lyveden/Stanton 'D' Ware	c. AD1400-1450
Ph5	Late Medieval Oxidized Ware, Cistercian ware, Midland Purple	c. AD1450-1500

Table 2: Total pottery occurrence, by number, weight of sherds and MNV per medieval ceramic phase.

Phase	No.	Weight (g)	MNV
LS4 (c. 1000-1100)	1	10	0
Ph0 (c. 1100-1150)	104	1045	0.27
Ph1 (c. 1150-E13C)	60	904	0.65
Ph2/0 (c. E13C-L13C)	402	4552	3.56
Ph2/2 (c. L13C-1400)	80	856	0
Ph4 (c. 1400-1450)	49	839	0.49
Ph5 (c. 1450-1500)	12	263	0.06
16thC	0	0	0
Total	708	8469	5.03

Table 3:

Pottery occurrence of major wares by weight per medieval ceramic phase, expressed as a percentage of the phase assemblage.

	F330	F360	F319	F320	F324	F329	F322	F401	Total weight (g)
Ph0 (c. 1000-1100)	96.8%	3.2%	-	-	-	-	-	-	913
Ph1 (c. 1100-1150)	89.6%	4.2%	6.1%	-	-	-	-	-	896
Ph2/0 (c. 1150-E13C)	86.4%	4.6%	1.8%	4.5%	2.7%	-	-	-	4310
Ph2/2 (c. E13C-L13C)	51.2%	0.7%	7.9%	1.8%	16.6%	21.8%	-	-	856
Ph4 (c. L13C-1400)	62.3%	0	5.6%	7.7%	0	3.4%	21.0%	-	730
Ph5 (c. 1450-1500)	62.7%	0	0	0	0	0	0	37.3%	263
Total weight (g)	6470	269	243	265	258	212	153	98	7968

actually increases during this time, suggesting that the material may be from disturbed primary deposits dating to the 12th or 13th century.

Generally, the pottery chronology indicates that the main period of activity in the area (in terms of pottery deposition) was during the 12th and 13th centuries, with a decline during the later

13th to earlier 14th century. Many sites within medieval Northampton have produced large assemblages of 14th-century pottery, particularly Potterspurty Ware (eg Denham 1985, table 3). This was not the case here, with only 24 sherds (232g) of this ware occurring. This phenomenon has been noted at previous excavations at Derngate (Shaw and Denham 1984, 79).

Table 4: Mean sherd weight (g) of major wares by fabric type and medieval ceramic phase.

	F330	F360	F319	F320	F324	F329	F322	F401
Ph0 (c. 1000-1100)	9.8	9.7	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ph1 (c. 1100-1150)	16.1	6.3	18.3	-	-	-	-	-
Ph2/0 (c. 1150-E13C)	11.5	4.4	26.3	14.9	11.6	-	-	-
Ph2/2 (c. E13C-L13C)	11.2	6.0	13.6	7.5	11.8	8.9	-	-
Ph4 (c. L13C-1400)	15.2	0	13.7	28.0	0	12.5	38.3	-
Ph5 (c. 1450-1500)	16.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	49.0

The majority of the pottery came from Trench 3 and Area 2 (Tables 5-10). In the case of Area 2, most of the pottery dates earlier than the later 13th century, whereas the pottery from Trench 3 suggests that activity was slightly longer-lived. In both areas, some of the pottery may have been deposited from

domestic tenements fronting onto the Derngate and Albion Place respectively, although ironstone quarries were also noted in both areas, and the material may be the product of dumping of refuse from further away.

Table 5: Trench 1: pottery occurrence by number, weight of sherds and MNV per ceramic phase.

Phase	No.	Wt. (g)	MNV
Ph0 (c. 1100-1150)	4	34	0
Ph1 (c. 1150-E13C)	0	0	0
Ph2/0 (c. E13C-L13C)	10	77	0.12
Ph2/2 (c. L13C-1400)	0	0	0
Ph4 (c. 1400-1450)	0	0	0
Ph5 (c. 1450-1500)	0	0	0
Total	1414	111	0.12

Table 6: Trench 3: pottery occurrence by number, weight of sherds and MNV per ceramic phase.

Phase	No.	Wt. (g)	MNV
Ph0 (c. 1100-1150)	61	520	0.12
Ph1 (c. 1150-E13C)	4	69	0.08
Ph2/0 (c. E13C-L13C)	57	391	0.22
Ph2/2 (c. L13C-1400)	76	714	0
Ph4 (c. 1400-1450)	5	101	0.12
Ph5 (c. 1450-1500)	12	263	0.06
Total	215	2058	0.60

Table 7: Trench 5: pottery occurrence by number, weight of sherds and MNV per ceramic phase.

Phase	No.	Wt. (g)	MNV
Ph0 (c. 1100-1150)	0	0	0
Ph1 (c. 1150-E13C)	0	0	0
Ph2/0 (c. E13C-L13C)	39	566	0.94
Ph2/2 (c. L13C-1400)	0	0	0
Ph4 (c. 1400-1450)	0	0	0
Ph5 (c. 1450-1500)	0	0	0
Total	39	566	0.94

Table 8: Trench 6: Pottery occurrence by number, weight of sherds and MNV per ceramic phase.

Phase	No.	Wt. (g)	MNV
Ph0 (c. 1100-1150)	21	204	0.08
Ph1 (c. 1150-E13C)	0	0	0
Ph2/0 (c. E13C-L13C)	0	0	0
Ph2/2 (c. L13C-1400)	0	0	0
Ph4 (c. 1400-1450)	0	0	0
Ph5 (c. 1450-1500)	0	0	0
Total	21	204	0.08

Table 9: Area 1: pottery occurrence by number, weight of sherds and MNV per ceramic phase.

Phase	No.	Wt. (g)	MNV
Ph0 (c. 1100-1150)	1	8	0.07
Ph1 (c. 1150-E13C)	0	0	0
Ph2/0 (c. E13C-L13C)	1	5	0.40
Ph2/2 (c. L13C-1400)	4	142	0
Ph4 (c. 1400-1450)	4	85	0
Ph5 (c. 1450-1500)	0	0	0
Total	10	240	0.47

Table 10: Areas 2-2C: pottery occurrence by number, weight of sherds and MNV per ceramic phase.

Phase	No.	Wt. (g)	MNV
Ph0 (c. 1100-1150)	17	279	0
Ph1 (c. 1150-E13C)	56	835	0.57
Ph2/0 (c. E13C-L13C)	295	3513	1.88
Ph2/2 (c. L13C-1400)	0	0	0
Ph4 (c. 1400-1450)	40	649	0.37
Ph5 (c. 1450-1500)	0	0	0
Total	408	5276	2.82

VESSEL USE

The range of vessel types and their occurrence is fairly typical of the medieval period in the region. The watering-pot fragment (Area 1, context 114; Fig 10.4) is, however, perhaps of some significance. Such vessels, although not unknown, are very rare, and are taken as a sign of some sophistication, as they are fairly certain to have been used for tending decorative rather than food plants. This is one of the very few examples of a watering pot from a medieval site in Northampton. A fragment of a late medieval (15th to 16th century) vessel in Potterspurty Ware was noted at Woolmonger Street (Soden 1998/9, fig 14.17), but the Derngate sherd is in Developed Stamford Ware, which is considerably earlier; the kiln-site in the eponymous Lincolnshire town has produced an archaeomagnetic date of 1200-20 for the last firing (Kilmurry 1980). Five pierced sherds of medieval pottery from Swan Street in Northampton were reported as being from watering-pots (Denham and Shaw 1993/4, 144), but the interpretation is clearly wrong. All are rim- or bodysherds, apart

from a single fragment which may come from a base, although this is far from certain. Watering-pots only have piercing on the base (MPRG 1998, 10.29); if the bodies were pierced, they could not have functioned in the required manner, as air would have entered the vessel and caused the water to drain away during transportation.

Watering-pots are known to have comprised a small part of the output of the Brill/Boarstall industries of Oxfordshire (eg Mellor 1994, fig 66, no 5), although few examples have been found. One of these, from Becket Street, Oxford (Blinkhorn in press) was found in association with Spanish Tin-Glazed Earthenwares and a fragment of a Saintonge Polychrome jug. These imported wares are extremely unusual at such inland sites, with their occurrence usually limited to castles or manors, and perhaps give an indication of the potential status of the Northampton household which used the vessel discussed here. Certainly, few sites in the town have produced earlier medieval pottery which has shown any sign of sophistication. The excavations at the Old Bus Station in Derngate in 1980 produced a

Table 11: Vessel occurrence per ceramic phase, in MNV, expressed as a percentage of each phase assemblage.

	Jars	Bowls	Jugs	Other	Total MNV
Ph0 (c. 1100-1150)	85.2%	0	0	14.8%*	0.27
Ph1 (c. 1150-E13C)	75.4%	12.3%	12.3%	0	0.65
Ph2/0 (c. E13C-L13C)	80.9%	5.1%	2.8%	11.2%**	3.56
Ph2/2 (c. L13C-1400)	0	0	0	0	0
Ph4 (c. 1400-1450)	71.4%	0	28.2%	0	0.42
Ph5 (c. 1450-1500)	100%	0	0	0	0.06
Total MNV	3.96	0.26	0.30	0.44	4.96

*cylindrical jar

**watering pot

pottery assemblage nearly twice as large as this one (Shaw and Denham 1984), but it produced nothing which could be considered to be out of the ordinary. A fragment of a Scarborough Ware aquamanile, a vessel type which can be taken as an indicator of formal dining, was noted amongst the pottery assemblage at Black Lion Hill (Denham 1985, 126 and fig 11.35), but otherwise indicators of status or sophistication are rare amongst the pottery of the town. Thus, it would appear that at least one household in the Deragate area in the late 12th to earlier 13th century was a little more wealthy than is the norm for the town.

The two Lyveden/Stanion 'B' Ware jugs with incised face-masks (Area 2, context 202 and unstratified; Figs 10.1 and 10.2) are also worthy of comment. Such vessels in this fabric are extremely unusual and are rare finds in Northamptonshire, despite being a relatively well-known product of industries to the north and east of the county, such as that at Grimston in Norfolk (eg McCarthy and Brooks 1988, 268). The unglazed Lyveden/Stanion jug-neck with incised decoration (Area 2, context 202; Fig 10.3) is also rather unusual in terms of its decoration and lack of glaze.

ILLUSTRATED POTTERY

Fig 10.1: Jug rim with incised face. Thin, apple-green glaze. Unstratified, F320.

Fig 10.2: Jug rim with incised face. Thin, apple-green glaze. Context 202, F320.

Fig 10.3: Rilled jug-neck with incised wavy line. Unglazed. Context 202, F320.

Fig 10.4: Top of watering-pot. Yellowish-green glaze with darker green mottling. Context 114, F331.

Fig 10.5: Jar. Dark grey fabric with black core and surfaces. Context 202, F364.

THE BUILDING MATERIAL

by Alan Hardy

A total of 46 fragments (6086g) of brick and tile was recovered from a variety of deposits on the site, as detailed in Table 12. Of

this total, 42 were found in contexts dated either by pottery or their stratigraphy to the 18th or 19th century.

BRICK

The brick recovered from the Trench 6 robbed wall 604 and the contemporary layer 613 is likely to derive from the wall itself, and supports its likely 19th-century date. Similarly, the brick from the upper layers of the defensive bank (Trench 1, context 13) indicates the relatively modern augmentation of the original bank.

ROOF TILE

Of the 14 pieces of tile recovered, only three came from medieval (or probable medieval) contexts. Two small fragments of roof tile were recovered from within the 12th to 13th century layers 11 and 17 of the defensive bank exposed in Trench 1. A single small fragment came from fill 302 of pit 365 in Trench 3, dating to the 13th to 15th century. The fabric of all three was similar: a hard pinkish surface over a dark grey core.

Two fragments (from 19th-century contexts 371 and 501) showed traces of a thin green glaze, and could possibly be parts of ridge tiles or even floor tiles. However, both examples were heavily abraded, suggesting that they may well have been redeposited as part of an episode of landfill, and derive from building outside the area.

CONCLUSION

It is not surprising to find roofing tile as a ubiquitous element in urban deposits, even if its presence is not necessarily indicative of the existence of a tiled roof in the vicinity, but often merely the result of routine redeposition of material from elsewhere. That so little roof tile occurred in medieval deposits in the Deragate area supports the contention that the area was not extensively developed, or at least any buildings present in the medieval period were not, in all likelihood, roofed with tile.

Table 12: Occurrence of building material.

Context	No.	Type	Wt. (g)	Context date
9	1	Tile	30	19th C
11	1	Tile	13	12th - 13th C
13	1	Brick	550	19th C
17	1	Tile	73	13th C
205	1	Tile	88	19th C
236	1	Unidentified	4	18th -19th C
302	1	Tile	42	13th - 15th C
336	1	Unidentified	8	19th C
371	2	Tile	186	19th C
385	2	Tile	44	19th C
500	5	Tile	115	19th C
501	2	Tile	308	19th C
604	23	Brick	4178	19th C
613	4	Brick	447	19th C

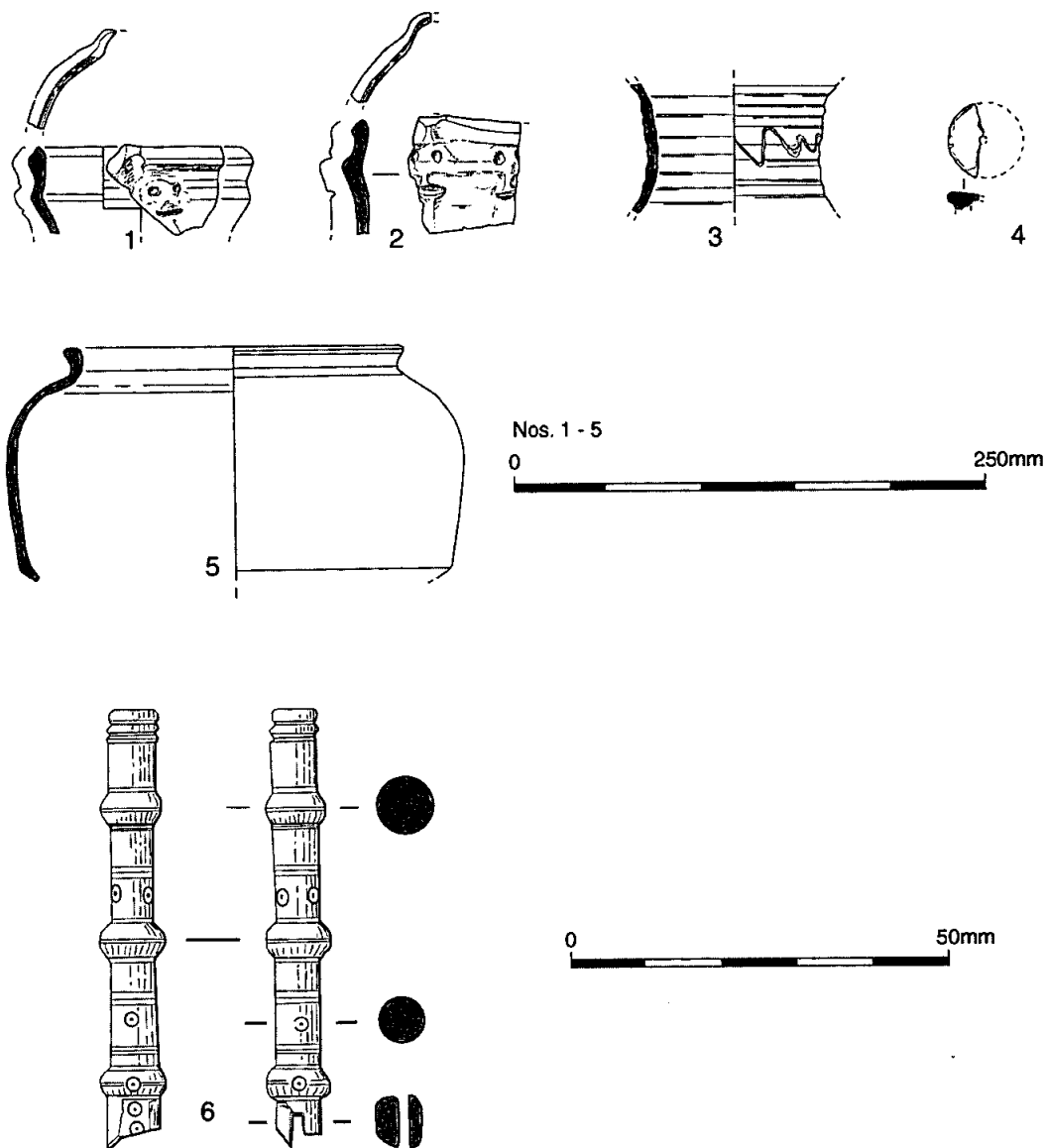


Fig 10 Pottery and worked bone object

THE WORKED BONE OBJECT (FIG 10.6)
by Leigh Allen

The remains of a decorated pair of bone tweezers were recovered from the accumulated deposit 202 within the hollow 206 in Area 2, from which a large quantity of 13th-century pottery was excavated. The tweezers are incomplete with most of the length of the arms missing, broken off just as they split into two, and the butt end is flat. The tweezers have a circular section handle decorated with three expanded collars spaced regularly along it and bands of three lathe-turned grooves between the collars.

Ring and dot decoration has been randomly applied over the handle.

Bone tweezers with similar types of lathe-turned groove, ring and dot motif on them have been recovered from late 14th-century contexts in London (Egan and Pritchard 1991, 380-3, fig 253, nos 1776-7). Other examples are rare until the 16th century, by which time bone toilet sets had achieved widespread popularity. These sets often included tweezers and ear scoops combined in a single implement (MacGregor 1985, 99-100, fig 57).

THE ANIMAL BONE
by Bethan Charles

A total of 516 fragments of bone were recovered by hand, and reassembly of some of the fragments reduced this to 439. A further 48 fragments of bone were recovered from environmental samples sieved through meshes of >10mm and 10-4mm.

The bone was generally in very good condition with only a small amount of attritional damage. Eight fragments of bone, all but one from the 12th to 13th century phases, had gnawing damage, mostly from canine teeth, although at least one from context 202 had signs of rodent gnaw marks. Four fragments of bone from the medieval layers had been burnt, three of which were from context 302.

METHODOLOGY

The calculation of the species recovered from the site was done by adding the number of identifiable fragments of bone of each species (NISP). All fragments of bone were counted including elements from the vertebral centrum, ribs and long bone shafts. An attempt was made to separate the sheep and goat bones using the criteria of Boessneck (1969, 331-58), and Prummel and Frisch (1986, 567-77). Since only one goat bone was positively identified by this method all caprine bones were listed as sheep. The ageing of the domestic animals was based on tooth eruption and epiphyseal fusion of the bone. Tooth eruption and wear was measured using Grant's and Payne's tables for sheep (Grant 1982; Payne 1973, 281-305), and the timing of epiphyseal closure for cattle and sheep was based on Silvers' tables (1969, 283-302). The measurements taken are those defined by Von den Driesch (1976). All detailed data can be found in the site archive.

RESULTS

The majority of the assemblage came from the 12th and 13th century occupation deposits (Tables 13 and 14), a large proportion of which came from context 202, the accumulated deposit within the medieval hollow in Area 2.

Sheep appear to have been the most numerous animals found at the site during all periods. The other main domestic species were cattle and pigs. One goat metacarpal was also identified from the 12th to 13th century deposits.

The majority of the sheep analysed indicated an age of 2 to 3 years or more at death, whilst most of the pigs were between 14 - 21 to 21-27 months old at death. There were not enough diagnostic elements from the other animals to give a real indication as to their average ages at death.

Bone measurements were taken, principally from the sheep bones from the 12th to 13th century phases, which indicated that the sheep were small and unimproved - similar to the soay sheep found today.

The only fragments of horse bone were found in pit fill 378. The mandible of an immature cat was found in context 605.

Twelve fragments of bird bone came from the 12th to 13th century phases. Four were from domestic fowl, another four were from domestic geese and a further four fragments were damaged and could not be identified by species. One fragment of domestic fowl bone was recovered from the 14th to 18th century deposits and another was not identified by species. The 20th century deposits produced two fragments of domestic fowl bone and one fragment of bone from a partridge.

Many of the bones had butchery marks, most of which were found on the cattle and sheep bones from the 12th to 13th century contexts. These included knife chop marks on many of the cattle ribs while a large number of sheep metapodials had chop marks at the mid section of the shaft, probably caused by the removal of the feet from the carcass.

DISCUSSION

It appears that sheep were the most common farmed animals at the site. Their age at death indicates that they would have been kept mainly for secondary products such as their wool, milk and dung. Cattle although less numerous in the assemblage would have provided greater quantities of meat. It is likely that they were also kept for traction as well as for their milk and dung. However, there is no clear indication from the assemblage as to their specific purpose at the site. The pigs were killed young,

Table 13. Quantity of hand-retrieved bone according to species and period.

Date	Horse	Cattle	Sheep	Goat	Pig	Cat	Bird	Fish	Frog	Unidentified	Total
Unphased	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	9
12th-13th century	0	31	100	1	11	1	12	1	1	198	356
14th-18th century	2	7	11	0	3	0	0	0	0	6	29
18th-19th century	0	1	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	10	15
20th century	0	2	5	0	1	0	3	0	0	19	30
Total	2	41	124	1	15	1	17	1	1	236	439

Table 14. Quantity of sieved bone according to species and period.

Date	Cattle	Sheep	Pig	Bird	Toad	Unidentified	Total
12th-13th century	1	8	1	1	1	36	48

consistent with the likelihood that they were kept predominantly for their meat since they provide little in secondary products.

The majority of the assemblage appears to represent domestic waste, consisting mainly of foot, rib, vertebra and skull fragments. There was obviously some variety in the diet of the inhabitants, including poultry as well as meat from the main domestic species, but the assemblage does not indicate a high-status site.

THE CHARRED PLANT REMAINS by Ruth Pelling

Bulk samples were taken from archaeological deposits for the extraction of charred plant remains. Samples were processed by bulk water flotation using a modified Siraf machine. Sediment was suspended on a 500µm mesh and the flot collected on a 250µm mesh. The volume of deposit processed ranged from 20 to 40 litres. Following an assessment by rapid scanning, samples 5 and 6 were identified as having potential for further analysis. Both samples came from the fills of pits 366 and 302 dated to the 13th to possibly early 14th century. Both pits represented part of a small area of possibly short-lived occupation-related activity.

METHODOLOGY

Both samples were sorted under a binocular microscope at x10 to x20 magnification, and quantifiable charred seeds and chaff were extracted. Identifications were based on well-established morphological criteria and compared with modern reference material held at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History. Given time constraints the identification of the weed seeds was not taken as far as might be possible, although the identifications are sufficient to characterise the assemblages. The quantified results are presented in Table 15.

RESULTS

Sample 5 produced a particularly high concentration of remains. Cereal grains form the greatest component (58.2%) while weed seeds were also numerous (33.9%). Chaff was relatively rare forming only 7.8%. Sample 6 produced an assemblage with grain forming 38.2% and weeds forming the slightly greater component with 52.8%. Chaff again forms a small component of only 9%. Occasional pulses and fruit remains were also identified in sample 5.

Free-threshing *Triticum* (wheat) and *Avena* sp. (oats) were the most numerically significant cereals, while *Secale cereale* (rye) was the third most common cereal and hulled *Hordeum vulgare* (barley) formed only a minor component. The *Triticum* sp. included *Triticum turgidum* (rivet wheat) identified on the basis of rachis internode. This wheat is recorded archaeologically in the United Kingdom from at least the 12th century (Moffett 1991). Rivet wheat may have been introduced into the Northamptonshire area at an earlier date as suggested by late Saxon finds from West Cotton (Campbell 1994). *Triticum aestivum* (bread wheat) type wheat could not be identified from the rachis internodes although, as the major wheat cultivated in the Saxon and medieval period in England, it is likely to have been present. Given the inherent difficulties in distinguishing *Secale cereale*

from *Triticum* sp. grains the *Secale cereale* grains are thought to be under-represented. Several grains of *Avena* sp. and *Hordeum vulgare* in sample 6 showed signs of being germinated, while sprouted embryos were also recorded.

The chaff element in both samples is small, as is usual in the case of free-threshing cereals. Rachis internodes of wheat and rye dominate sample 5 with indeterminate rachis including basal nodes. Several culm nodes suggest the presence of straw in the sample. Sample 6 is dominated by sprouted embryos with only rare rachis internodes. One *Triticum spelta* glume base is likely to represent residual contamination. This is a species not usually recorded after the Roman period.

The non-cereal crop remain included occasional indeterminate pulses, a *Prunus* sp. (plum/bullace) stone and a *Malus/Pyrus* sp. (apple/pear) pip. Fragments of *Corylus avellana* (hazel) nut-shell might represent food debris or might have been burnt with fire wood.

Weed seeds are particularly common in sample 5, and while less numerous, form the major component of sample 6. Sample 5 includes weeds of arable fields, particularly of *Anthemis cotula* (stinking mayweed) which with *Odontites verna* (red barstia) is characteristic of heavier calcareous clay soils. *Spergula arvensis* (corn spurrey), *Valerianella dentata* (narrow-fruited cornsalad) and *Lithospermum arvense* (corn gromwell) are all particularly characteristic of cereal crops. Several species are characteristic of ruderal habitats but also occur as cereal arable weeds and are often recovered with charred assemblages, including *Stellaria media*, *Chenopodium album* (fat hen), *Atriplex* sp. (orache), *Rumex* spp. (docks), *Polygonum* spp. (knotgrass, persicaria), *Fallopia convolvulus* (black bindweed), *Plantago media/lanceolata* (plantain) and *Galium aparine* (goosegrass). *Spergula arvensis* and *Fallopia convolvulus* are particularly associated with spring sown barley or drage crops (Silverside 1977) while *Galium aparine*, *Lithospermum arvense*, *Anthemis cotula*, and *Valerianella dentata* are typically found within autumn sown crops, including wheat and rye maslins. Circum-neutral and acidic sandy-loam soils are suggested by *Rumex acetosella* agg. (sheeps sorrel), *Spergula arvensis* and *Raphanus raphanistrum*. Other ruderal species such as *Reseda* sp. (dyers rocket/mignonette) and *Torilis japonica* (upright hedge parsley) are less commonly regarded as arable weeds although are recorded in archaeological cereal assemblages.

In addition to the arable and ruderal species a number of weeds characteristic of grassland and wet ground, possibly meadow-land, were also identified. Nutlets of *Carex* spp. (sedges) were particularly common, while *Isolepis setacea* (bristle club-rush) and *Eleocharis palustris* (common spikerush) were also present, all plants which tend to be associated with wet ground. *Isolepis setacea* is sometimes found among the taller herbage in marshy meadows though more often in bare sandy or gravelly places beside lakes. *Caltha palustris* (kingcup, marsh marigold) is particularly characteristic of marshes, fens and stream sides. Grassland species include *Picris hieracioides* (hawkweed ox-tongue) which is particularly characteristic of calcareous slopes, *Centaurea* sp. (knapweed/cornflower), although this will also occur as an arable weed, the grasses themselves, and the Leguminosae including *Vicia/Lathyrus* sp. (vetch/vetchling/tare) and *Medicago/Trifolium/Lotus* sp. (medick/clover/trefoil). The leguminosae are also often found in association with cereal crops and particularly cultivated pulses. These weed species must have been deliberately collected, perhaps as hay.

Table 15a: The charred plant remains from samples 5 and 6. The grain and cultivated plants.

Sample		5	6
Context		366	302
Date		13thC	13-14thC
Grain			
<i>Triticum</i> sp.	Wheat, free-threshing grain	36	10
<i>Triticum</i> sp.	Wheat, cf. free-threshing grain	36	-
<i>Triticum</i> sp.	Wheat grain	33	6
<i>Hordeum vulgare</i>	Barley, hulled grain	2	1
<i>Hordeum vulgare</i>	Barley, hulled grain, germinated	-	7
<i>Hordeum vulgare</i>	Barley, grain	12	1
<i>Hordeum vulgare</i>	Barley, grain, germinated	-	-
<i>Avena</i> sp.	Oats, grain	115	11
<i>Avena</i> sp.	Oats grain, germinated	-	10
<i>Secale cereale</i>	Rye grain	23	1
<i>Secale cereale/Triticum</i> sp.	Rye/Wheat grain	58	10
Cerealia indet.	Indeterminate grain	350	40
	Total Grain	665	97
Cereal Chaff			
<i>Triticum spelta</i>	Spelt wheat glume base	-	1
<i>Triticum turgidum</i>	Rivet Wheat rachis	4	-
<i>Triticum</i> sp.	Wheat, free-threshing rachis	21	-
<i>Secale cereale</i>	Rye rachis	9	-
<i>Secale cereale/Hordeum vulgare</i>	Rye/Barley rachis	4	-
Cerealia indet.	Indet basal rachis	5	-
Cerealia indet.	Indet rachis	11	2
Cerealia indet.	Sprouted embryo	-	17
Cerealia indet.	Detached embryo	6	3
Cerealia size	Culm node	18	-
	Total Chaff	78	23
Other Cultivated Plants			
<i>Vicia/Pisum</i> sp.	Vetch/Bean/Pea	5	-
<i>Prunus</i> sp.	Plum/Bullace etc	1	-
<i>Malus/Pyrus</i> sp.	Apple/Pear	1	-
<i>Corylus avellana</i>	Hazel, nut-shell fragment	5	-
	Total Chaff	12	0

Items recorded are number of seed, nutlet individuals etc, unless otherwise stated.

() = non-charred seeds

Table 15b: The charred plant remains from samples 5 and 6. The weeds.

Sample Context Date		5 366 13thC	6 302 13-14thC
Weeds			
<i>Caltha palustris</i>	Kingcup, Marsh marigold	1	-
<i>Ranunculus</i> subgen <i>Ranunculus</i>	Buttercup	11	-
<i>Brassica/Sinapis</i> sp.	Cabbage, Turnip, Mustard etc	-	1
<i>Raphanus raphanistrum</i>	Radish, capsule	2	-
Cruciferae		1	-
<i>Reseda</i> sp.	Dyers rocket/Mignonette	17 (2)	-
<i>Silene</i> sp.	Campion, Catchfly	7	-
<i>Stellaria media</i> agg.	Chickweed	5	-
<i>Spergula arvensis</i>	Corn spurrey	1	1
Caryophyllaceae		5	1
<i>Chenopodium album</i>	Fat hen	9	-
<i>Atriplex</i> sp.	Orache	8	1
Chenopodiaceae		2	-
<i>Vicia/Lathyrus</i> sp.	Vetch/Vetchling/Tare	44	7
<i>Medicago/Trifolium/Lotus</i> sp.	Medick/Clover/Trefoil	11	34
<i>Torilis japonica</i>	Upright hedge parsley	5	-
Umbelliferae		1	-
<i>Rumex acetosella</i> agg.	Sheeps sorrel	14	3
<i>Rumex</i> sp.	Docks	17	2
<i>Polygonum aviculare</i>	Knotgrass	6	1
<i>Polygonum lapathifolium/persicaria</i>	Red ahank/Pale persicaria	4	-
<i>Fallopia convolvulus</i>	Black bindweed	1	-
Polygonaceae		2	-
<i>Lithospermum arvense</i>	Corn gromwell (silica)	2	-
<i>Veronica</i> sp.	Speedwell	-	1
<i>Odontites verna/Euphrasia</i> sp.	Red barstia/Eyebright	4	7
Labiatae		1	-
<i>Plantago media/lanceolata</i>	Plantain	4	-
<i>Galium aparine</i>	Goosegrass	1	-
<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Elder	3	-
<i>Valerianella dentata</i>	Narrow-fruited cornsalad	1	-
<i>Anthemis cotula</i>	Stinking mayweed	43	43
<i>Tripleurospermum inodorum</i>	Scentless mayweed	-	2
<i>Centaurea</i> sp.	Knapweed/Cornflower	6	-
<i>Picris hieracioides</i>	Hawkweed ox-tongue	2	-
Compositae		11	13
<i>Eleocharis palustris</i>	Common spikerush	9	-
<i>Isolepis setacea</i>	Bristle club-rush	1	-
<i>Carex</i> spp.	Sedge, two-sided seed	28	-
<i>Carex</i> spp.	Sedge, three-sided seed	22	-
<i>Bromus sterilis</i>	Barren brome	2	-
<i>Bromus</i> subgen <i>Eubromus</i>	Brome grass	1	-
Gramineae	Grass, large seeded	16	8
Gramineae	Grass, small seeded	37	1
Indet.		36	8
	Total Weeds	387	134

Items recorded are number of seed, nutlet individuals etc, unless otherwise stated.

() = non-charred seeds

DISCUSSION

Both samples represent mixed deposits of waste material presumably associated with occupation activity. The presence of some chaff would suggest that some unprocessed cereals were brought into the site, although the majority of the cereals may have come in as fully processed grain, as would be expected in an urban environment. The weed seeds include arable species that may have entered the site with cereals, but which might also include hay or additional fuel, thatching material or fodder. The large number of arable weed seeds might have been associated with unprocessed cereal straw used for thatch, rather than representing impurities of a grain crop. The cereals represented may include a mixture of cereals grown for grain and cereals produced for other purposes. For example, both rivet wheat and rye produce a particularly long straw which is suitable for thatch as well as matting. The analysis of medieval smoke-blackened thatch has demonstrated that rivet wheat was commonly used for thatch in the Midlands and parts of the West Country, while rye was very widespread (Letts 1999). Of interest is the fact that in the majority of cases the thatch examined produced a mixture of cereals including bread type wheats. The culm nodes and the basal rachis suggest the presence of some straw (possibly of rivet wheat and rye) used for such purposes.

The mixture of sprouted oats and barley in sample 6 might be derived from malting activity, although they could represent a spoilt crop. Oats and barley were commonly sown as a drage in a ratio of 1:1 during the medieval period, usually as a spring sown crop (Slicher van Bath 1963). Both cereals could be used for brewing purposes, although barley was the favoured species. Markham recommends that oats should be added only when the barley is found to be 'wanting' (1681, 15). Evidence for the cultivation of drage and its use for brewing was found at West Cotton where a close association between oats and barley was noted, including a large mixed deposit where approximately one third of the grain was germinated (Campbell 1994).

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the two samples has identified mixed deposits associated with occupation activity in this area of the town. The cereals identified were free-threshing wheat, including rivet wheat, hulled barley, oats and rye. It is likely that the cereals have derived from a number of sources including grain crops and crops possibly grown primarily for their straw, possibly for thatch. Some evidence for brewing has been identified. The large weed component includes arable weeds and elements of possibly hay meadow flora.

DISCUSSION

The archaeological results of the seven Trenches of Programme 1, and two Areas of Programme 2 can only provide an incomplete view of the development of the Dergate area, but when considered in the light of the results of the previous investigations in the last nine years (see above, Archaeological Background), a reasonably coherent overall picture emerges of the character and development of the area

lying between Dergate and the southern line of the town defences.

PREHISTORIC, ROMANO-BRITISH AND SAXON ACTIVITY

No evidence was found of any significant prehistoric or Roman activity beyond a few residual flints and two heavily abraded 3rd century AD Greyware sherds. Similarly, the single sherd of 10th century St. Neots Ware supports the conclusions derived from earlier work that the area of Dergate lay beyond any settlement focus until after the Norman Conquest.

MEDIEVAL ACTIVITY

The pottery from both the Trenches and Areas clearly point to a relatively short period of activity, indicated by the presence of several quarry pits, domestic rubbish pits, and some structural evidence. This activity lasted from approximately the 12th to the late 13th century, and coincides with the rapid expansion of Northampton.

THE TOWN DEFENCES

No structural evidence of the town wall was observed during investigations, although the clay and earth bank recorded at the south-east of the site (Trench 1) appears to represent the inner part of the town defences at this point, dated as it was to the 12th to 13th century. As with the 1992 evaluation Trenches A and C (Shaw *et al.* 1992, 24), no evidence was found to suggest that the bank was originally part of the Saxon *burh* defences, but there was some evidence to indicate that the bank was repaired at least once in the later medieval or post-medieval period, judging by the later pottery and brick in the upper fills.

QUARRYING

Evidence of extensive quarrying was found over the entire western half of the development area. From the presence of seams of ironstone surviving close to the surface (Trench 3 and Areas 1, 2 and 2B), the extent and depth of the individual quarries was presumably dependent upon the size of the ironstone seams. Figure 11 shows the conjectural extent of the quarries, based upon the evidence from these investigations along with those from previous trenches and test pits. The quarrying seems to be at its most intense in the west, which may be simply due to the convenience of having the quarries near to the destination of the stone. Alternatively, it may reflect the accessibility of the seams of ironstone. The date of the backfill material in the quarries cannot give an accurate date for the quarries' initial excavation, but the general presence of 12th to 13th-century pottery in the backfills support the likelihood that the quarries were dug to provide stone for the town walls, constructed in the 12th century. Research has suggested that while there is some evidence for stone-built houses in Northampton in the late 13th century, they were rare until the 15th century (Williams 1979, 143-5). Although the building of houses in stone in the Dergate area in the medieval period cannot be entirely disproved, the absence of any worked stone or

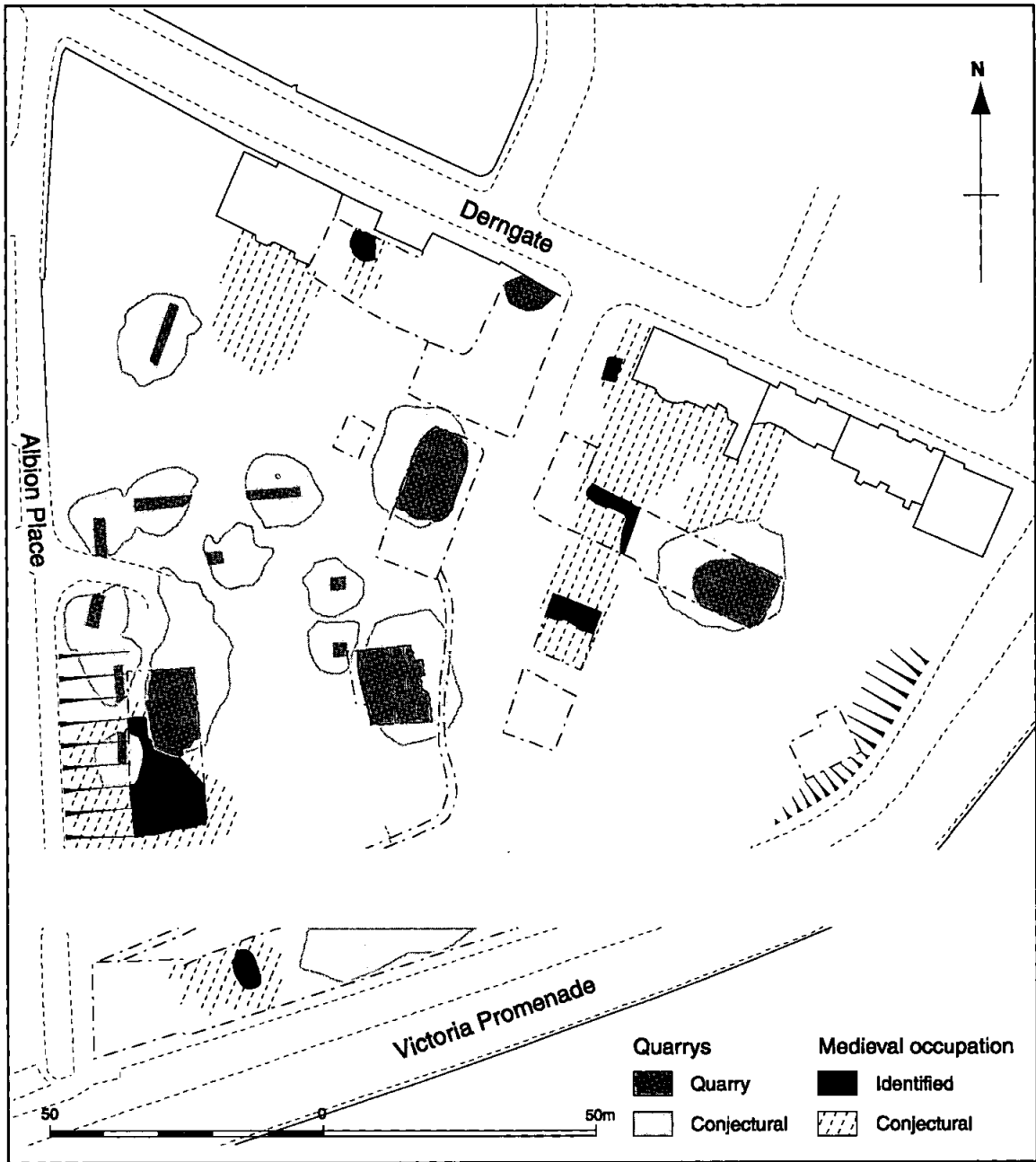


Fig 11 Site area showing medieval quarrying and occupation

even rubble in significant quantities supports the contention that in the 12th and 13th centuries, such buildings as existed in the vicinity were timber-built. The absence of significant quantities of roof tile could also be seen as an indication of predominantly timber construction.

THE DERNGATE FRONTAGE (AREAS 1 & 2)

The two Areas available in Programme 2 of the development allowed a rare opportunity to investigate the south frontage of Derngate, albeit in a piecemeal way. The partial survival of medieval deposits and the medieval ground surface in Area 2 confirmed the reasoning put forward in the 1991 study (Shaw 1991, 4.2).

Structural

The only significant focus of medieval activity revealed was the trampled hollow in the northwest corner of Area 2. The hollow appears to represent a floor or yard surface defining an approximate rectangle and aligned N-S, oblique to the street line. That this surface represents a place of domestic activity is clear from the overlying accumulation of pottery and bone-rich debris and ash within layer 206 and fill 202. It is less clear whether the surface was internal or external.

The revealed surface was at least 5m back from the present street frontage, and it could be argued that it was a working area behind a building, or possibly an internal floor within a workshop or outbuilding. The absence of structural evidence (apart from a single posthole) is not necessarily significant. An outbuilding may have had no foundations at all, and merely have rested on sleeper beams. Only slight truncation of the ground surface would be required to remove all evidence of any such beams, leaving the shallow depression of the floor surface, echoing the internal building dimensions.

The occupation was probably short-lived. The dating of the large pottery assemblage from the hollow fill points to occupation from possibly the mid 12th century to the late 13th century. Other examples of possibly similar building arrangements have been found nearby. Trench E in the 1991 evaluation (Shaw 1991), revealed part of a shallow flat-bottomed pit (feature 5) with late 13th century pottery in its fill.

Alignment

The alignment of the hollow in Area 2 warrants consideration, as one would normally expect any tenements to be at right angles to the street frontage, with their outbuildings respecting that alignment.

Interestingly, feature 5, in Trench E of the 1991 evaluation some 30m to the east of Area 2, also displayed a N-S orientation. No archaeological evidence was found in either case of contemporary boundaries that could have influenced this skewed alignment. The earliest maps (for example Speed 1610, or Roper and Cole 1807; see Fig 3) do not show any influencing boundaries on the south side of Derngate, but the eastern boundary of a large plot on the north side of the street does have a similar alignment. The documentary history suggests that during the late medieval and post-medieval period, parcels of land on both sides of the street at this point were part of the same property. Even on the 19th-century map by Wood and Law (Fig 3) the small properties at this point are still skewed to the road, and oriented close to N-S.

The level of this trampled surface is at present approximately equivalent to the basement level of the post-medieval buildings

to the west of the site. The fact that the post-medieval walls 203, 216 and 227 were founded at much the same level indicates that the ground level immediately south of the line of Derngate at this point was, until at least the late 18th century, at a level of around 68.50m, 3.3m below the present road surface. This suggests that the medieval level of Derngate itself at this point was likely to be at much the same level.

As to the function of the building represented by the trampled floor, the finds assemblage is generally characteristic of an urban tenement of modest status, with the exception of a fragment of East Wiltshire Ware and a Lyveden/Stanton Ware jug rim with incised face, which are rare finds in Northampton. Although the broken pair of tweezers (Fig 10.6) could hint at status or even the possibility of a craft workshop, its probable date, some 200 years later than the pottery assemblage, suggests that it is redeposited.

The only other indications of medieval occupation along the south side of Derngate were a small group of pits and postholes in Area 1, some 50m east of the occupation discussed above, and which might be considered a pointer to another occupation focus. A late 12th- to early 13th-century watering pot fragment could allude to occupation of some status in the vicinity, although it must be accepted that it may be redeposited from elsewhere.

The only slight indication of activity dating after the 13th century is from pit 220 on the northwest edge of the site, which produced some 14th century pottery. That late medieval evidence was only found at this point would be consistent with the shrinking of Northampton back towards its core in the late medieval period.

THE SOUTHERN OCCUPATION

The evidence from Trench 3 suggests the proximity, most likely to the west, of occupation dating from the late 12th century until possibly the late 13th or early 14th century. Whether the occupation, at least in its origins, was related to the nearby quarrying is impossible to say with confidence, although it clearly persisted for some time after the quarries were backfilled. The structural evidence is inconclusive; the scatter of postholes, assuming they are all contemporary, could belong to a single structure. Given the proximity of two substantial domestic rubbish pits close by, one might surmise that the area exposed in the trench represents the rear of a plot extending back from a dwelling to the west. It is tempting to suggest that this evidence offers some indication of a north-south medieval road or lane running from Derngate south to the town wall, a forerunner of the 19th-century Albion Place. No such road is indicated on maps earlier than 1807, but given the very insubstantial medieval development of this area, such a road may well have disappeared at an early stage of the town's contraction in the later medieval period.

THE MEDIEVAL ENVIRONMENT

The environmental samples recovered from two 13th century pit fills in Trench 3, at the western edge of the development area, allow some tentative conclusions to be drawn concerning the nature of the occupation and the local environment (see Pelling above). The evidence could suggest that the open and undeveloped area of Derngate may have been supporting some cereal crops, and maybe fruit trees, although in both cases the remains could have derived from cereals and fruit imported onto the site; the presence of weeds characteristic of grassland and wet ground

suggests that the crops were being brought in from lower and wetter ground elsewhere, possibly for use as thatch. The evidence for thatch can be seen as support for the view that the short-lived settlement in the area was of low or temporary status, in buildings roofed with the cheapest material available. The evidence for brewing is slight but intriguing; it may suggest the presence of a brewhouse close by to the west of the site, although there is no other archaeological evidence from this or previous excavations to support this hypothesis.

POST-MEDIEVAL ACTIVITY

'THE TOWRE'

As far as the documentary and cartographic history of the Derngate area is concerned, one of its principal elements is 'the Towre' or Tower House, known to have been in existence from at least the 15th century through to the 17th century. It is accepted that it must have been a substantial stone-built centrepiece of a complex of buildings within the property known as 'the Grange', and would presumably have left a legacy in the archaeological record.

Consequently, the complete absence of any archaeological evidence of buildings or occupation in the area for that period demands a re-evaluation of that documentary and cartographic evidence. A review of the documentary and cartographic history and its implications was recently undertaken independently by Dr Thomas Welsh (1999) and is summarised below.

The documentary evidence

The earliest, indeed only, visual record of the Tower is on Speed's map of 1610 (Fig 3). From his depiction, it would appear to be located on the south side of Derngate, and possibly set back a little from the road. It has been reasoned that, as the Tower building was contained within the property called the Grange, and was depicted by Speed as lying to the south of the street, the Grange must encompass land to the south of Derngate, the area of land later called Tower Close, and depicted as such on 18th and early 19th century maps. However, a close examination of the rentals from c. 1300 and 1504 can suggest an alternative conclusion. The rentals of 1504 indicate that the Grange had bought many of the small separate properties on either side of Derngate, and therefore, as Welsh suggests, the Grange actually encompassed land on both sides of Derngate. It is therefore possible that the Tower also lay on the north side of Derngate.

The archaeological evidence

The survival of medieval occupation deposits in the north-west corner of the development area, and the evidence that no substantial infilling took place until the 19th century indicates that we cannot look to post-medieval truncation or landscaping to explain the absence of *in situ* building remains dating to the late medieval or early post-medieval period. Even if the Tower House was dismantled and removed stone by stone in the late 17th century, one would still reasonably expect some detritus or occupation debris to have found its way into the contemporary surrounding deposits. However, none of the pottery from Area 2 can be dated to the period between the late 13th century and the late 17th century, precisely when the centrepiece of the Grange, 'the Towre', existed.

Why would Speed have misplaced such an important building? A simple error is possible, although perhaps a more

likely explanation is that by positioning the building to the south of the road, Speed (whether by instruction or his own decision) was emphasising the fact that a substantial part of the land south of the road was part of the Grange.

16TH- TO 18TH-CENTURY ACTIVITY

The later medieval contraction of Northampton, due to plague and economic depression is well documented, although by the 16th century, fortunes were reviving; not only were some intramural parts of the town redeveloped, but extramural suburbs, which Foard has traced back to the 13th-14th century (1995, 115) were continuing to develop along the principal roads on all four sides of the town. Foard suggests that the absence of suburbs along the road leading out of Derngate indicates its lack of importance.

It would be reasonable to argue that such an unfrequented road would be equally unlikely to attract road-frontage building within the walled town, beyond the immediate proximity to the market. Thus there is evidence for stone-built buildings with tiled floors and garderobes along the south side of Derngate some 200m to the NW, close to the junction with St. Giles Street (Shaw 1984), and some cottages are shown on the 1610 map at the junction of Derngate and Cow Lane (later Swan Street) (Fig 3). Further to the east the absence of documented building is notable, and corroborated by the archaeological evidence.

The Civil War

There is a reference in Henry Lee's history c. 1716, quoted by Dr Welsh (1999), alluding to the part this area of the town played in the Civil War:

"....in the time of the wars, the barns [of the Grange] were made use of to set great vats in to receive salt petre..."

It would understandably prudent to situate such dangerous activities as gunpowder manufacture away from built-up areas, but no evidence of contemporary activity or building was found in the investigated Areas and Trenches.

It was mooted that the drain in Trench 1 might be related to one of these barns. Its location, far from apparent habitation yet still within the town defences would certainly be suitable. Therefore the environmental sample taken from the drain fill was assessed for any residues of gunpowder production. However the three constituents of gunpowder - sulphur, saltpetre and charcoal - would tend to separate out very quickly in a damp environment such as a drain, and only undiagnostic small grains of charcoal might survive (pers. comm. S. Kippin, Dept of Government Chemists). The sample contained no evidence of suitable charcoal grains. Another aspect of the evidence arguing against such a connection is that the drain precisely lines up with the southern edge of the 19th-century garden plots, and this is almost certainly the origin of the structure. As to the Civil War defences themselves, no evidence was found of supplementary defence works augmenting the original town defence line, although there was some evidence from Trench 1 that the original earthwork had been raised or repaired at this time.

19TH- AND 20TH-CENTURY ACTIVITY

At the beginning of the 19th century, the area was still undeveloped and known as Tower Close, although, from the

evidence of Cole's map (Fig 3) the area was subdivided into smaller fields or paddocks. One of these ditches was identified in Area 2 (context 214).

From the cartographic evidence it is clear that the area to the south of Dergate underwent major redevelopment in the mid-19th century. This principally involved the construction of terraced housing along the south frontage to the Dergate itself. Behind the housing, long plots extended south to the line of the old town defences, now marked as an earthwork.

The construction of the school and modern augmentation of the original buildings has clearly entailed a considerable amount of terracing and landscaping. From both these investigations and those of previous years, this process has left pockets of medieval landscape sealed beneath considerable depths of modern material.

CONCLUSION

In spite of the fragmentary nature of the several archaeological investigations into the area known as Dergate, in most respects the material evidence supports the original contention that the expansion of the population and economy of Northampton was, even at its height in the 13th century, never enough to stimulate the development of the south-eastern quarter of the town to the point where it could survive economic decline. Such expansion and development as later occurred, both intra- and extra-mural, focussed on the major roads leading out of the town to the south and east.

The archaeological interventions have contradicted the accepted historical narrative in the almost complete lack of evidence of any occupation of the documented 'Towre', let alone of a high-status character as would be reasonably expected in association with it. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that - as is suggested in Dr Welsh's reinterpretation of the rentals - while the Grange almost certainly included land on the south side of Dergate from the 13th century, the major building development took place on the northern side of the road, and this included the 'Towre' itself.

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