

Evidence for Late Saxon and medieval occupation near Salisbury Street, Amesbury

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An excavation south of Salisbury Street, Amesbury, revealed a sequence of Late Saxon, early medieval and post-medieval features. Among the Saxon features were a number of ditches whose positions and alignments are reflected in post-medieval and even modern property boundaries. The finds from these and associated features indicate substantial domestic, craft and agricultural activity in the 10th-11th centuries, but considerably less activity in the 12th century. This may reflect the site's location close to a possible early crossing over the River Avon and the Saxon royal precinct, before a shift in the focus of occupation west towards the High Street, the Abbey and a new bridge. Historical research has also identified the post-medieval and modern development of the site.

INTRODUCTION

In 2005-6, a 0.05 hectare site (NGR 415500 141350) south of Salisbury Street, in the centre of Amesbury (Fig. 1), was excavated and subject to a watching brief prior to redevelopment, revealing a number of features dating from early in the history of the town. Despite the presence of the abbey (founded in 979) little archaeological evidence has been found for contemporary settlement. However, evaluations of the site in 1995 and 2005 (Wessex Archaeology 1995; 2005) had indicated the possible presence of Late Saxon features, and the excavation sought to ascertain the nature and date of these features.

Amesbury lies within the valley of the meandering River Avon and is built on a promontory of river gravels around which the river curves on the western side. The site sloped gently from 69m-70m above Ordnance Datum. Two small areas were excavated (Fig. 1).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The historical evidence suggests that Amesbury, which appears to have been a royal possession and occasional residence from an early date, was a place of some importance before the founding in 979 of the Benedictine nunnery, dedicated to St. Mary and St. Melor (Chandler and Goodchurch 1989, 5-7) (Fig. 2). Amesbury was the centre of a large eponymous hundred, and as such it is likely to have possessed a minster church. However, the archaeological evidence for this period is limited. It includes pagan Saxon burials, perhaps from a cemetery, discovered in the 19th

century near the High Street-London Road junction (Bonney 1983), and coins of Edward the Elder found in the present churchyard (Robinson 1984). On stylistic grounds, Saxon cross fragments now in the abbey church may predate 979 (Ball 1979).

It has generally been assumed that the first settlement grew up around the present abbey church and the nearby river crossing (e.g. Haslam 1984, 130), extending perhaps along an earlier line of High Street north-west of the present street (Crowley *et al.* 2003, 17). However, Hinton (1979, 27-9) has suggested that the earlier minster church may originally have been a chapel within the royal precinct, occupying a different site from that of the abbey, and McMahon (2004, 16, 19) has suggested that a large north-south ditch of possible 12th or 13th century date, exposed during an archaeological evaluation in 1999 in Church Street (Hulka and Valentin 1999), but misaligned with the supposed pattern of medieval property boundaries in the area, lay within a possible royal enclosure, sub-circular or D-shaped, similar to that known from other Saxon towns. The enclosure would have been located strategically close to the river crossing, which may originally have been at Broad Bridge. Broad Bridge, accessed from Frog Lane (now Flower Lane and its continuation to the south-west), was recorded in 1566 while the present bridge upstream, close to the abbey church, was first recorded in 1578 as West Bridge (Crowley *et al.* 2003, 32-3), implying that it was of less importance. The suggested enclosure may be reflected in the pronounced circuit defined by roads, of which the development site forms the major part.

It seems likely that during the 11th and 12th centuries Amesbury was a town only on the smallest scale (Chandler and Goodhugh 1989, 10), and its nunnery remained poorly endowed and of no great significance (Pugh 2003, 111-13). However, urban renewal followed the refoundation of the nunnery in 1177 as a Fontevraldine double house, for female and male religious, and known as Amesbury Priory (Pugh 2003, 113-16; Kerr 1999), comprising a new and much larger suite of monastic buildings, including a church, on a site some 300m to the north (underlying the present abbey mansion and its parkland). The old church was retained for parish use and (probably) also for the male religious, who may have had their convent adjacent (RCHM(E) 1987, 233-5; Chandler and Goodhugh 1989, 14-16; Kerr 1999, 109-13; Crowley *et al.* 2003, 99).

One consequence of the new foundation seems to have been a reordering of Amesbury's street plan to accommodate a market, first granted in 1219, laid out in a 'long and narrow triangle' shape, its apex at the High Street, one long side running along the northern building line of Salisbury Street to Smithfield Street, and the other running to Salisbury Road possibly along a line set back from the present southern building line of Salisbury Street and then across the present excavation site (Crowley *et al.* 2003, 17-18).

There is little documentation on the topography of Amesbury until the early 18th century, when the Flitcroft Atlas of 1726 (WSRO 944/1), with accompanying book of reference (WSRO 944/2), records the site in detail (Fig. 5). This shows the development site occupying the central and eastern parts of a subcircular block of land bounded by the east end of Market Place, Smithfield Street (now Salisbury Street), Tanners Lane and Frog Lane (now Flower Lane). The two excavation trenches fall within four of the properties shown on the map (Fig. 1). A major ESE-WNW

boundary across the centre of the block divides a close of (presumably) agricultural land, Green Hays Close (parcel 90) to its south, from a number of tenements or burgage plots to its north fronting onto Smithfield Street and the turn into Frog Lane. The north-eastern part of the site was mainly orchard.

To the north of the boundary, much of the main excavation trench lay within parcel 82, the backland to a house and garden which fronted the turn into Frog Lane, described in 1741 (WSRO 283/6, 44) as 'one thatcht tenement in Frog Lane two storie high and a small skilling (addition) on the backside thereof all in middleing repair; also a small thatcht woodhouse with a young orchard and garden. The adjacent plot to the north, parcel 84, which had a curving rear boundary, was described in 1741 (WSRO 283/6, 49) as including a thatched tenement late Pinkneys, a small skilling, a thatched barn 'skillinged backward' in good repair, a smaller backside but no garden or orchard. Parcel 85, abutting parcels 82 and 84, was described in 1741 (WSRO 283/6, 44), as 'Two thatcht tenem'ts in Smithfield Street 2 storie high in middleing repair, a thatcht maulhouse in middleing repair, a garden and orchard.'

An undated Amesbury estate map of *c.* 1824 (WSRO 283/219) suggests that during the century prior to 1824 the backlands of parcels 82-85 had been amalgamated, at least two buildings (in 84 and 85) had been lost, and one (in front of former 84) had appeared. By first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1877 the present western boundary of the development site had been established, truncating the backlands of all the properties fronting Frog Lane and its approach. By then, almost the entire site, apart from a row of 'New Cottages' along its eastern side (mentioned in the 1851 census, WSRO 2916/24), was garden or orchard, bisected by paths, and with glasshouse vineries built against the southern side of the main ENE-WSW boundary. Redworth House had been built south of the boundary by 1891. It became the offices of the Amesbury Rural District Council between 1953 and 1956, until the council was abolished in 1974. By 1923 the northern part of the site had been divided up and partly built over.

EXCAVATION RESULTS

Four residual sherds of Romano-British pottery were recovered from the site, and two of Middle Saxon date, but the earliest features were identified by a range of Late Saxon pottery wares that have a broad date range of the 10th-11th century (Fig. 3).

Late Saxon

The most securely dated Late Saxon feature was ditch 523, which produced 112 sherds (1522) of Late Saxon pottery from throughout its fills, along with animal bone, three oyster shells, four iron objects (a knife, another possible tool and two nails), two pieces of slag and a fragment of lava quern. It ran NW-SE across the site, curving to the south and narrowing towards a bulbous terminal or pit (604, later recut as 607), and was 1.3m wide and 0.85m deep at its widest point, with moderately steep sides towards the top but a steeper slot in the base.

Ditch 523 intersected with a large circular pit (518), and although the single ditch fill at that point appeared to continue into the pit, overlying its lower fills, the stratigraphic relationship between ditch and pit was largely obscured by a later recut of the pit (511). The original cut of the pit was 2.5m diameter and 2m deep with steep-sloping sides and a concave base. One of the pit's primary fills (517) contained a single sherd of early medieval 'Kennet Valley' type pottery (11th-13th century), but the rest of the pottery from the pit (84 sherds, 951g) was Late Saxon (apart from one residual Romano-British sherd). It may be that the medieval sherd in the primary fill was intrusive in (or wrongly attributed to) that layer, or it may indicate a slightly later date for this feature.

The functional relationship between ditch and pit is uncertain. It is possible that the pit was integral with the ditch, possibly dug as a sump to collect water. The pit had a dog burial at its base; whether this has some significance to the purpose of the pit, or had simply been discarded there, is unclear (The pit was only partially excavated for safety reasons, and the dog bones were not recovered). Other finds included non-local stone, possibly representing building materials, slag and oyster shells and a possible iron awl. The pit was subsequently recut to a depth of 1.3m (511) (the recut also cut through the ditch). The fills of the recut produced further substantial quantities of Late Saxon pottery (135 sherds, 1747g), along with nine early medieval sherds (76g), and further iron objects (a blade, 2 knives, fragments of sheet plate and nails).

Much of the Late Saxon animal bone assemblage from the site came from ditch 523 and pit 518/511, with a predominance of sheep/goat followed by pig and then cattle, with horse, dog, deer and bird also represented (Table 1). This contrasts with the predominance of cattle in the medieval and post-medieval periods. Butchery marks on a large number of bones consisted mainly of helical fractures from marrow extraction, chops to portion the carcass and a few cuts from filleting and disarticulation. Some ribs showed splintering consistent with snapping of fresh bone during consumption. A small but significant number of bones had been burnt, possibly representing the remains from cooking and/or roasting meat. Some contexts contained a large proportion of bones from the head and feet which may be primary butchery waste, while instances of articulated lower limbs indicate direct, rapid deposition (perhaps also primary butchery waste).

{Table 1 }

Running approximately parallel to ditch 523 was another, smaller ditch (522) some 3.6-4m to its north-east, the relative positions of the two ditches indicating that they may have been contemporary (or otherwise associated), possibly defining a trackway. Ditch 522, which produced only a single Late Saxon sherd, was 0.6m wide and 0.35m deep with a moderately steep V-shaped profile; its northern terminal was truncated by a later pit.

The southern terminal of ditch 523 was located close to the northern edge of another large ditch (519) at the southern end of the main site (its projected alignment to the east), also of possible Late Saxon date. Ditch 519 produced 11 sherds of Late Saxon pottery from throughout its fills (10 sherds from the 2005 evaluation), and while this relatively low level of finds means that a Late Saxon date for its construction should be viewed with caution, the ditch produced no finds of later date.

The ditch's profile and fills varied considerably along its length, being recorded during the 2005 evaluation as 2.4m wide and 0.8m deep with a steeply concave north side and a shallow convex south side; its two fills appeared to have resulted from natural silting. When recorded immediately to the west during the excavation, it was 2.1m wide and 1.1m deep with steep convex sides and a narrow flattish base, its asymmetrical fills possibly suggesting the presence of a bank on its northern side. However, these variations may simply be a reflection of the degree to which this boundary ditch had been recut, cleaned out or reworked at various times in its long period of use.

A number of other features containing exclusively Late Saxon pottery were recorded between ditches 519 and 523. To the immediate north of ditch 519, pit 484 measured 1.7m in diameter and 0.5m deep with moderate-sloping sides and a concave base, while pit 495 measured 0.7m by 0.5m and 0.17m deep with moderate-sloping sides and a flattish base. Both contained small quantities of pottery, animal bone, worked and burnt flint (and in the case of pit 495, a fragment of glass), but little to indicate their original functions. Further north was an irregular shaped feature (428) running perpendicular to ditch 523 that had been partly excavated during the 2005 evaluation and interpreted as a possible beam slot (116). It was over 3m long, up to 1.5m wide and 0.2m deep with moderately steep sides and a concave base, and appears to have had three postholes along its western side – in the centre and at either end – suggesting it formed part of some structure.

Other potentially early features include two ditches (503 and 507), either shallow or heavily truncated, recorded in the smaller trench at the south-west of the site. Ditch 503, aligned parallel to ditch 519 (and corresponding closely, but perhaps coincidentally, to a formal garden pathway shown on the 1879 Ordnance Survey 25 inch map, sheet Wiltshire 54/16), was 0.8m wide and 0.15m deep and filled with material that formed a 0.1m deep layer underneath the subsoil across the trench. As well as three sherds of Late Saxon pottery, the ditch also produced a residual sherd of early-Middle Saxon organic-tempered ware (5th-8th centuries). Ditch, 507, aligned NE-SW, was of similar dimensions and had a similar fill (and similar contents, although with a residual Romano-British sherd).

Medieval

The alignments of both the main Late Saxon ditches (519 and 523) were continued in the early medieval period. Ditch 462, which lay parallel to ditch 519 *c.* 1m to its north, had a single fill containing, in addition to five sherds of Late Saxon pottery, seven of early medieval date including two of West Wiltshire ware dating from the 11th to the 13th century. The ditch, which was 0.5m wide and 0.2m deep with moderately steep sides and a concave base, ended at a square terminal 4m west of the terminal of ditch 523.

Ditch 523, towards the west of the site, was cut on its northern edge by a parallel ditch (106) which ended to the south-east at a rounded terminal (as recorded during the 2005 evaluation). The ditch was over 1m wide and 0.33m deep with a U-shaped profile and a single fill containing two medieval sherds and one, presumably residual, Late Saxon sherd. Three postholes (426, 477 and 487) on the south-west side of ditch 523, may have related to continued use of this boundary in the early medieval period. Postholes 477 and 487 were both subrectangular in shape, up to 0.9m by 0.5m

and 0.2m deep, while posthole 426, between them, was 0.6m in diameter and 0.1m deep. Each contained early medieval pottery.

Three features towards the north end of the site may also belong to this phase. A linear feature (489), again aligned NW-SE, was recorded for just 2m, having been truncated at both ends by post-medieval feature 425. It was 0.45m wide and 0.25m deep with moderate-sloping somewhat irregular sides and a concave base, its single fill containing two sherds of pottery, one residual Middle Saxon sherd and one early medieval sherd. A large subrectangular pit (497), 2.1m by 1.2m (again with the same alignment) and 0.45m deep with steep-sloping sides and a flat base, produced predominantly early medieval pottery from its single organic-rich fill, along with two nails, burnt and worked flint and animal bone. A single posthole (405) in this area produced an early medieval sherd.

Post-medieval and modern

The main ESE-WNW boundary continued to be marked in the post-medieval period by postholes 465, 475, 491, 492 and 493, a possible sixth (undated) posthole being positioned between the terminals of ditched 523 and 462. In the same general area a large irregular pit (624), 3m by 1.8m and 0.6m deep with very steep sides and a flat base, cut ditch 523. It was filled with a succession of dark soils and redeposited rubble, together containing a range of post-medieval pottery wares (along with residual early medieval sherds), roof tile, clay pipe stems, animal bone, fired clay and glass.

Further post-medieval features were recorded at the northern end of the site, most of them being pits located within a relatively tight cluster. The largest, pit 482, which cut one end of ditch 522, was 2.7m in diameter and 0.25m deep. It contained 5 sherds of Verwood pottery, along with a rectangular iron buckle, nails, CBM and animal bone. The other pits were located to its north and north-east, these varying considerably in their size and shape, but containing a similar range of finds. Three were dated by pottery (403, 533 and 536), others by other finds such as clay pipe stems (520) or glass (526), while a number of undated pits in the same area may be of a similar date (410, 540, 542 and 544).

A large irregular feature (417) of uncertain function, at least 3m across and 0.2m deep, was recorded extending beyond the northern edge of the excavation (in parcel 84). It was cut on its eastern side by a north-south ditch (419), 0.2m wide and 0.15m deep, whose line corresponded to the curving property boundary shown on the 1726 Flitcroft map between parcels 84 and 85. It was also cut by a large feature (425), measuring 7m across and extending west from ditch 421, appeared to have an irregular cruciform shape. A single 0.8m by 1.3m slot was excavated in its eastern arm, this indicating that it was over 1.3 m deep (its base was not reached) with vertical sides. It contained a series of naturally accumulated deposits and dumps of modern waste material. The shape of the feature may have been deliberate, although for an unknown purpose, or it may be fortuitous, resulting from a number of intercutting pits. Neither the 1726 map, the 1741 descriptions of the properties, nor subsequent maps provide clues as to the possible nature or function of these features.

SAXON AND MEDIEVAL POTTERY

By Lorraine Mepham

The complete assemblage from all stages of fieldwork at the Site amounts to 514 sherds (7850g). Of this, 440 sherds (5442) are of Saxon or medieval date. Four Romano-British sherds were also recovered, all residual, and the remainder of the assemblage is of post-medieval date. Only the Saxon and medieval pottery will be discussed here; details of other wares are held in the project archive.

The overall condition of the assemblage is fair; it is fragmentary, with few conjoining sherds, but sherds are relatively unabraded. Mean sherd weight is 12.4g.

The assemblage was analysed following the standard Wessex Archaeology recording system for pottery (Morris 1994), focusing on a detailed examination of fabric and form. Fabrics have been defined here either on the basis of the range of macroscopic inclusions, or by reference to known types. Sixteen fabric types have been identified, of which eight are known types that can be related at least to source area if not precise source; some others may be variants of these types. Fabric totals and brief fabric descriptions are given in Table 2. Vessel forms have been defined and described following nationally recommended nomenclature (MPRG 1998). All data resulting from the pottery analysis are stored in the project database (Access) and are held in archive.

{Table 2}

Early/Middle Saxon pottery

Two sherds of organic-tempered ware (V400) are dated as early to Middle Saxon (5th to 8th centuries). Both are small, abraded body sherds, and both occurred residually in later contexts (ditches 489 and 503).

Late Saxon and medieval pottery

The Late Saxon and medieval assemblage contains 14 different ware types, most of which are identifiable at least to source area, and which reveal a number of geographically distinct sources of supply to the town. Of these, six fabrics are considered to be of Late Saxon type, with a date range of 10th to 11th century.

Most common are calcareous (chalk-tempered) wares (C400), which appear here exclusively in jar forms, long-necked, with simple, everted rims (Fig. 4.1)). These vessels are well finished and are possibly wheelthrown, or have wheel-finished rims on handmade bodies. No complete profiles are present, but body profile appears to be rounded, and bases are sagging.

Alongside the calcareous wares are sherds of wheelthrown, reduced sandy wares of Michelmersh-type (E404), in jar forms, comparable to products of a recently excavated late 10th/early 11th century kiln in that village (Mepham and Brown forthcoming), but also comparable to its probable precursor, Late Saxon Sandy ware, found in Winchester from the late 9th century (Biddle and Collis 1978). Two examples were observed with curvilinear tooling around the shoulder. Sherds of similar sandy wares in the same contexts, but of a slightly different texture, with

oxidised surfaces (QU400), may also be Michelmersh-type products; they include body sherds with applied, stamped strips (Fig. 4, 2) (Briscoe 1981, stamp type A3a) in the same manner as some of the Michelmersh-type spouted pitchers (Addyman *et al.* 1972), although the only other diagnostic sherds in this fabric are two jar rims with expanded profiles.

Also present, but in smaller quantities, are a small number of sherds containing patinated flint inclusions (FL400); only one vessel form is present, a jar with short, everted, simple rim (Fig. 4.3). A single sherd in a second flint-tempered fabric, containing angular, white and grey flint inclusions (F401), appears to derive from a similar form.

One other known fabric type is represented amongst the Saxo-Norman group, by just two body sherds. This is a wheelthrown ware of Cheddar type, found in late 10th and 11th contexts at the Saxon palaces at Cheddar (Rahtz 1979, 309-18).

Other wares are probably or certainly of later, early medieval date. A single sherd of a glazed, decorated tripod pitcher in Laverstock-type coarseware, from pit 520, is likely to be of late 11th or 12th century date. These pitchers have been previously recorded as 'South East Wiltshire pitchers' (e.g. Vince 1981), but the similarity of fabric type with the products of the 13th century Laverstock kilns suggests an earlier production centre in this area. Other sherds of Laverstock-type coarseware from the site, however, are not so easily dated, and could lie anywhere between the 11th and 13th centuries.

Other wares occur in much smaller quantities. Flint-tempered and calcareous-/flint-tempered wares potentially fall within two ceramic traditions, from the Kennet Valley and from west Wiltshire. Wares of 'Kennet Valley' type (E441, E442; Mephram 2000) have a wide distribution across west Berkshire and north-east Wiltshire, and have a lengthy currency, from at least the 11th century through to the 13th century; one possible source is in the Savernake Forest, where the place-name *Crockerstrope* is recorded (Vince 1997, 65). 'West Wiltshire' wares (E428) have a distribution centred on Warminster and were probably products of the medieval Crockerton industry; they have a similarly lengthy currency through the medieval period (Smith 1997, 21-2, fabric D).

Finally, there are a few sherds of fine sandy ware, mostly of 13th/14th century Laverstock type (E420/E421), with one other glazed sherd of unknown source, probably of similar date (Q402), and four unglazed sherds of a non-distinctive, unglazed sandy ware (Q401).

Chronology and affinities

This small assemblage from Amesbury is a useful addition to a growing body of evidence for Late Saxon ceramics within Wessex. The precise dating remains somewhat debatable, but the presence of Michelmersh-type and Cheddar-type wares indicate a date range of 10th to early 11th century for the bulk of the assemblage.

There are several comparable assemblages from sites in Wiltshire and Hampshire. Similar calcareous and flint-tempered wares, in similar jar forms, have been found at Trowbridge, Wilton and Market Lavington in Wiltshire, and at Romsey

in Hampshire (Mephram 1993; Andrews *et al.* 2000; Mephram 2006; Powell *et al.* in prep.). Michelmersh-type and Cheddar-type wares were also identified on all four sites. One sherd in an identical fabric to Amesbury fabric Q400, also with applied stamped strips, was found at Wilton (Andrews *et al.* 2000, fabric Q404), and both fabric and jar rim form are paralleled at Market Lavington (Mephram 2006, fabric E424, fig. 51, 9), although in both instances these wares were misidentified as medieval.

The evidence from all these sites tends to support the generally accepted pattern of Late Saxon pottery production and distribution, consisting of a small number of production centres in the 10th century, each with a relatively wide distribution, increasing in number and decreasing in distribution area in the 11th century (Vince 1981). All five sites produced wares within the five groups of calcareous, flint-tempered, Michelmersh-type, Laverstock-type and Cheddar-type, although in varying proportions, showing that each site had access to a number of sources of ceramic supply. Sources for the calcareous and flint-tempered wares are unknown, but each may in fact form part of a 'ware tradition' produced in more than one location, but exploiting similar sources of clay and tempering agents, flint-tempered wares perhaps originating from the river valleys and calcareous wares from the chalk uplands..

A continuation of the ceramic sequence after the 11th century is difficult to demonstrate, apart from the presence of 13th/14th century glazed wares. Coarsewares of Laverstock, West Wiltshire and Kennet Valley type all have their origins in the 11th century, although continuing in use well into the medieval period. There is one definite tripod pitcher sherd of late 11th/12th century date, but nothing else closely datable. In any case, these wares are only sparsely represented on the site, and the emphasis does seem to be on the earlier period.

Distribution on site

The largest groups of pottery came from ditch 523 (106 sherds), pit 518 (86 sherds) and its recut 511 (144 sherds). Sherds from ditch 523 are entirely of Late Saxon type – chalk-tempered and Michelmersh-type wares, the latter including the oxidised variant with applied stamped strips (Fig. 4.3). A very similar range of fabrics and forms, with the addition of flint-tempered wares, came from pit 518 (which intersected with ditch 523) and its recut 511 (Fig. 4, 2), although a single sherd of Kennet valley ware from the primary fill of 518, and further sherds of the same fabric from the lower fill of the recut, could indicate a slightly later date for this feature.

Apart from these three features, pottery distribution across the site was sparse, no feature yielding more than 20 sherds. This obviously renders the dating evidence provided by the pottery slightly unreliable, but what pottery there is suggests that ditches 503, 507, 519, 522 and 523, feature 428 and pits 484 and 495 are all of Late Saxon date, while pit 518/511 may be slightly later. Ditches 462 and 106, pit 497 and postholes 405, 426, 477 and 487 are of medieval date.

Illustrated sherds (Fig. 4.1-3)

4.1 Jar rim, fabric C400. PRN (Pottery Record Number) 105, context 514, pit 518

4.2 Jar rim, fabric F400. PRN 59, context 510, pit recut 511

PLANT REMAINS

by *Chris Stevens*

Fifteen samples were taken and processed from the excavations. Examination showed most to be relatively rich in charred plant remains. The samples were mainly from the Late Saxon period, although two (pit 518, and ditch 106) date from deposits extending into the early medieval period.

Most samples produced evidence for grains of free-threshing wheat (*Triticum aestivum* s.l.), hulled barley (*Hordeum vulgare* s.l.) and rye (*Secale cereale*), wheat seemingly the dominant crop. Evidence for rachises of all these cereals was recovered, although never in the same quantities as grains. Few of the rachises fragments were identifiable beyond genus, although single examples indicated the presence of 6-row barley and hexaploid, bread or club, type wheat.

Free-threshing wheat and hulled barley often appear as the dominant crops in Wessex during this period. Rye (*Secale cereale*) has been recovered from middle and later Saxon sites (Carruthers 1991; Hunter 2005; Stevens 2006), but is often absent from earlier Saxon settlements (Wessex Archaeology 2003; 2004; 2006). Notably rye seems to have gained in importance in the region from the Late Saxon period into the early medieval period (Green 1994; Stevens 2007), something that is reflected upon this site.

Remains of leguminous crops, in particular pea (*Pisum sativum*) and horsegram (*Vicia faba*) were frequent, while at least two samples contained probable seeds of lentil (*Lens culinaris*). Both pea and bean are common finds from Saxon sites in southern England (Carruthers 1991; Green 1994), while finds of lentil are rarer. However, lentil has been recovered from other middle to later Saxon sites in Wessex (Carruthers 1991; 2005; Green 1994; Hunter 2005; Clapham 2005; Stevens 2006).

Lentil favours warmer climates and is not a crop that today grows well in many parts of Britain. The appearance of this crop upon more rural settlements within the Late Saxon period, continuing into the early medieval period, suggests local cultivation (Greig 1991; Wessex Archaeology 2005b; Stevens 2004), and can be seen as consistent with the proposed warming of the British climate from c. 900 AD, accumulating in the warmest phase between c. 1150 and c. 1250 (Lamb 1977, 435; Astill and Grant 1988).

As is often seen on Saxon settlements fragments of hazelnut signify the exploitation of wild resources to supplement the cereal diet. Pit 607 contained some mineralised material, that in the case of bramble (*Rubus* sp.) and elder (*Sambucus nigra*) may represent further exploited wild plants, although the presence of other wild species; hedge parsley (*Torilis* sp.) and nettle (*Urtica urens*) may indicate that all come from local scrub and hedgerows.

The dominance of grain suggests crops arrived at the settlement relatively processed, having been threshed, winnowed and sieved in the field. The weed flora was generally small, with large seeded weed seeds such as corncockle (*Agrostemma githago*), cleavers (*Galium aparine*), vetches/wild pea (*Vicia/Lathyrus* sp.), persicaria (*Persicaria maculosa/lapathifolia*), corn gromwell (*Lithospermum arvense*) and knotgrass (*Polygonum aviculare*) present, all of which are common grain contaminants removed only by hand in the final processing stages. It is probable that not all grain sized seed-heads were removed by sieving accounting for the presence of a seedhead of poppy (*Papaver* sp.) and numerous seeds of stinking mayweed (*Anthemis cotula*). This latter species is common on heavy-clay soils and appears to be a frequent weed of Saxon crops, doubtless grown on such soils.

DISCUSSION

The possibility that the early focus of settlement at Amesbury was sited not around the present church and bridge, but downstream to the east around Broad Bridge (and hence in the general vicinity of the site), gives the findings of this excavation greater potential significance. For while two residual sherds of organic-tempered pottery provide evidence for some Early-Middle Saxon activity (5th-8th century) in the area, the bulk of the evidence, which is of Late Saxon (10th-11th century) date, comprises not only a typical range of domestic and economic waste, but also an array of boundary ditches whose regularity of alignment and long-term durability suggest that they were part of a formal process of land apportionment in the form of burgage plots, rather than the product of ad hoc enclosure.

The NW-SE orientation of ditches 523 and 522 matches that of a number of the property boundaries shown on the 1726 Flitcroft map of Amesbury (Fig. 5), which run perpendicular from the curved frontage at the corner of Smithfield Street and Frog Lane. Although the ditches' locations, which fall within Plot 82 on that map, do not match precisely the positions of the marked boundaries, perhaps due to the amalgamation of early properties or to inaccuracies in the 18th-century cartography, their common orientation suggests that significant elements of the 18th-century layout of this part of Amesbury had Late Saxon origins. In addition, some 30m to the east, a Late Saxon ditch on the same alignment was recorded during the 1995 evaluation, indicating that these properties may originally have extended further east (another ditch recorded in 1995 aligned NE-SW may have run to the curved frontage at the north-eastern corner of the block).

The apparent correspondence between these ditches and the 1726 property boundaries suggests that they were very long-lived, none more so than ditch 519, aligned ESE-WNW, which not only corresponds to another major property boundary marked on the Flitcroft map, but which also survived as the northern boundary wall of the grounds of Redworth House, only recently demolished. This suggests that Late Saxon property boundaries continued to influence the layout of the town, certainly into the 18th century and possibly for a millennium up to the modern day.

However, the small-scale of the excavation provides only a glimpse of that early townscape, although a picture of life perhaps typical for a Late Saxon community is provided in part by the various other features on the site and, more

clearly, by the range of finds retrieved from them. Part of a possible structure of uncertain use was recorded and small quantities of nails and possible stone building materials were recovered, but no clearly domestic structures were identified. The finds included a range of domestic pottery wares supplied from a number of different geographical sources, with regional and possibly longer distance trade also indicated by the recovery of non-local stone, including a lava quern fragment. There was also a number of iron tools of possible domestic and/or craft/industrial use, and a small quantity of ironworking slag. While much of the animal bone comprised probable butchery waste, predominantly of sheep/goat, pig and cattle, some pieces that were burnt probably reflect domestic cooking and consumption, with cereals (wheat, barley and rye) and legumes (peas, beans and lentils) also being consumed, the crops brought to the site already largely processed. The diet also included some wild food resources, such as hazelnuts, brambles, elder berries and eels.

There was substantially less evidence of activity on the site in the medieval period, possibly reflecting a shift in the focus of occupation within the town, westwards towards the High Street, the Abbey Church and a new river crossing. However, the re-marking of the earlier boundaries on the site indicates that while the character and use of these properties may have changed, their layout survived the continuing development of the medieval town, with its market established in the early 13th century running from High Street to Smithfield Street.

THE ARCHIVE

The project archive will be deposited with the Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum.

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- WSRO 283/219: Amesbury estate map, undated (c. 1824)

WSRO 944/1: Flitcroft atlas of Amesbury estate maps, 1726

WSRO 944/2: Book of reference to Flitcroft atlas, 1726

WSRO 2916/24: Sketch maps of Amesbury district, apparently prepared for the 1851 census enumerators

Table 1. Animal bone species percentages (as proportion of identified bones – NISP).

	Horse	Cattle	Sheep/goat	Pig	Dog*	Deer	Cat	Bird	Fish	Total (NISP)
Late Saxon	2	16	53	24	2	1	-	3	-	336
Medieval	-	44	11	22	-	-	-	-	22	9
Post-medieval	-	43	29	14	-	-	14	-	-	7
Undated	-	33	33	33	-	-	-	-	-	3

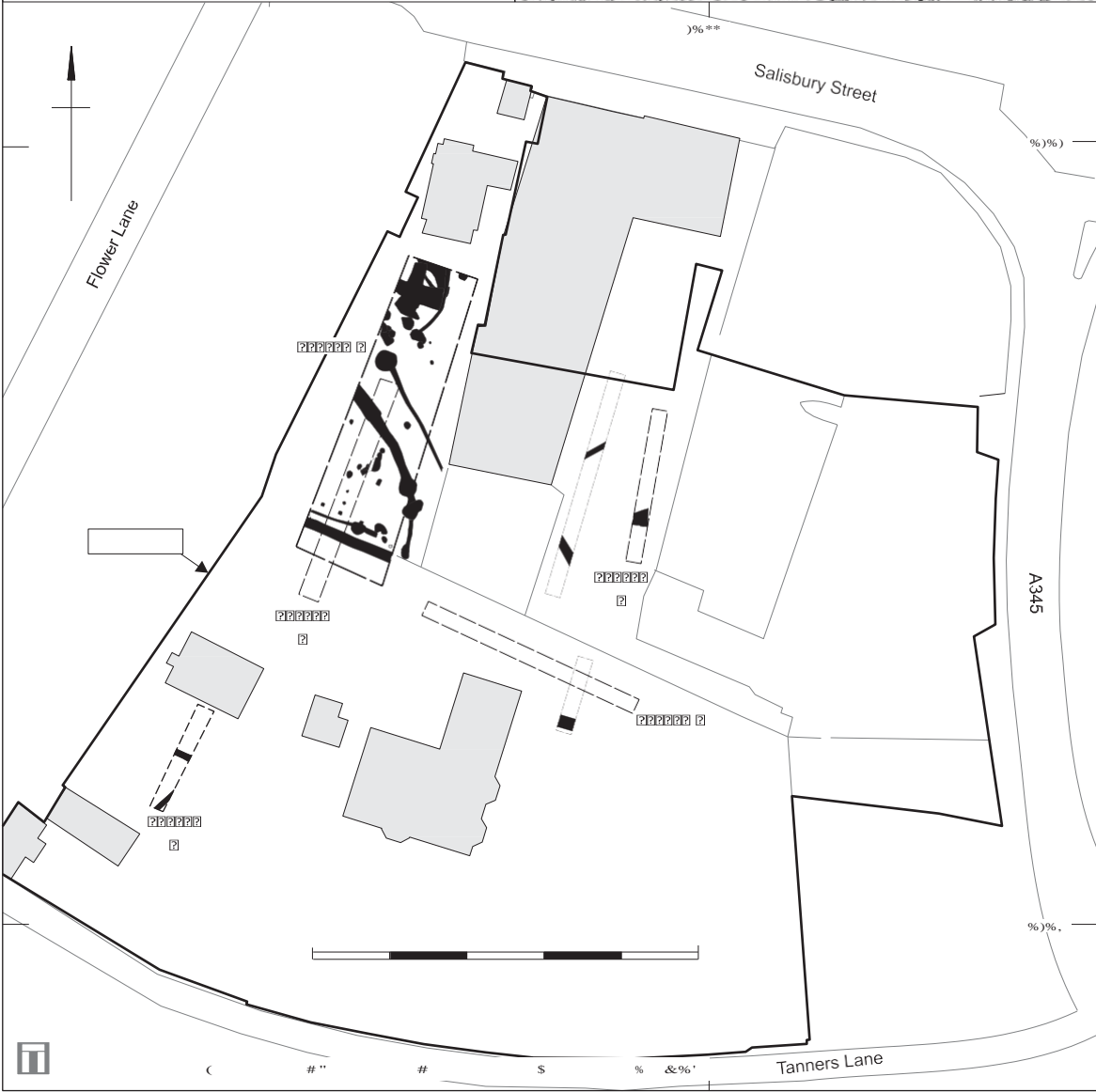
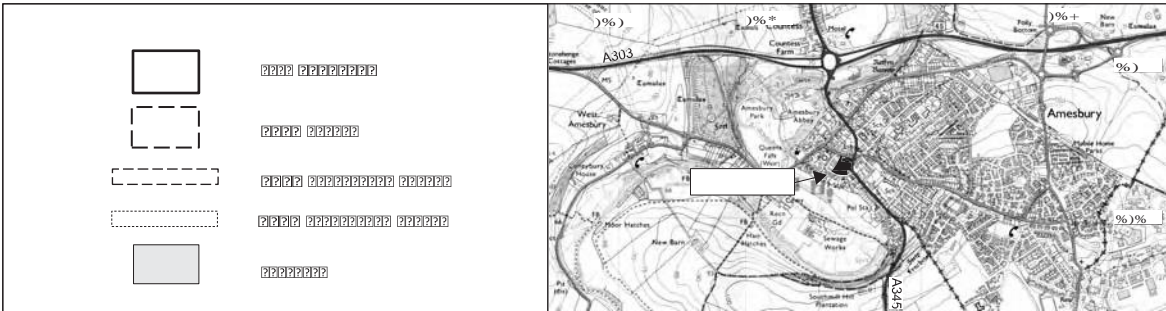
* excludes dog bones from pit 518

Table 2. Saxon and medieval fabric totals.

Fabric code	Description	Number	Weight (g)
<i>Known ware types</i>			
E400	Cheddar-type ware	2	22
E404	Michelmersh-type ware	80	992
E420/E421	Laverstock-type finewares	4	55
E422	Laverstock-type coarseware	17	107
E428	West Wilts type micaceous coarseware	6	32
E441	Kennet Valley flint-tempered ware	6	42
E442	Kennet Valley chalk-/flint-tempered ware	16	80
<i>Other wares</i>			
C400	Limestone-tempered fabric; probably wheel-thrown, or with wheel-finished rims	246	3285
F400	Fabric containing sparse, patinated flint inclusions	23	314
F401	Fabric containing common, angular white/grey flint	1	43
Q400	?Michelmersh ware variant; generally with oxidised surfaces	32	404
Q401	Medium grained sandy fabric	4	11
Q402	Fine sandy glazed ware, rare flint inclusions	1	37
V400	Organic-tempered fabric (early-mid Saxon)	2	18
Total		440	5442

Figures

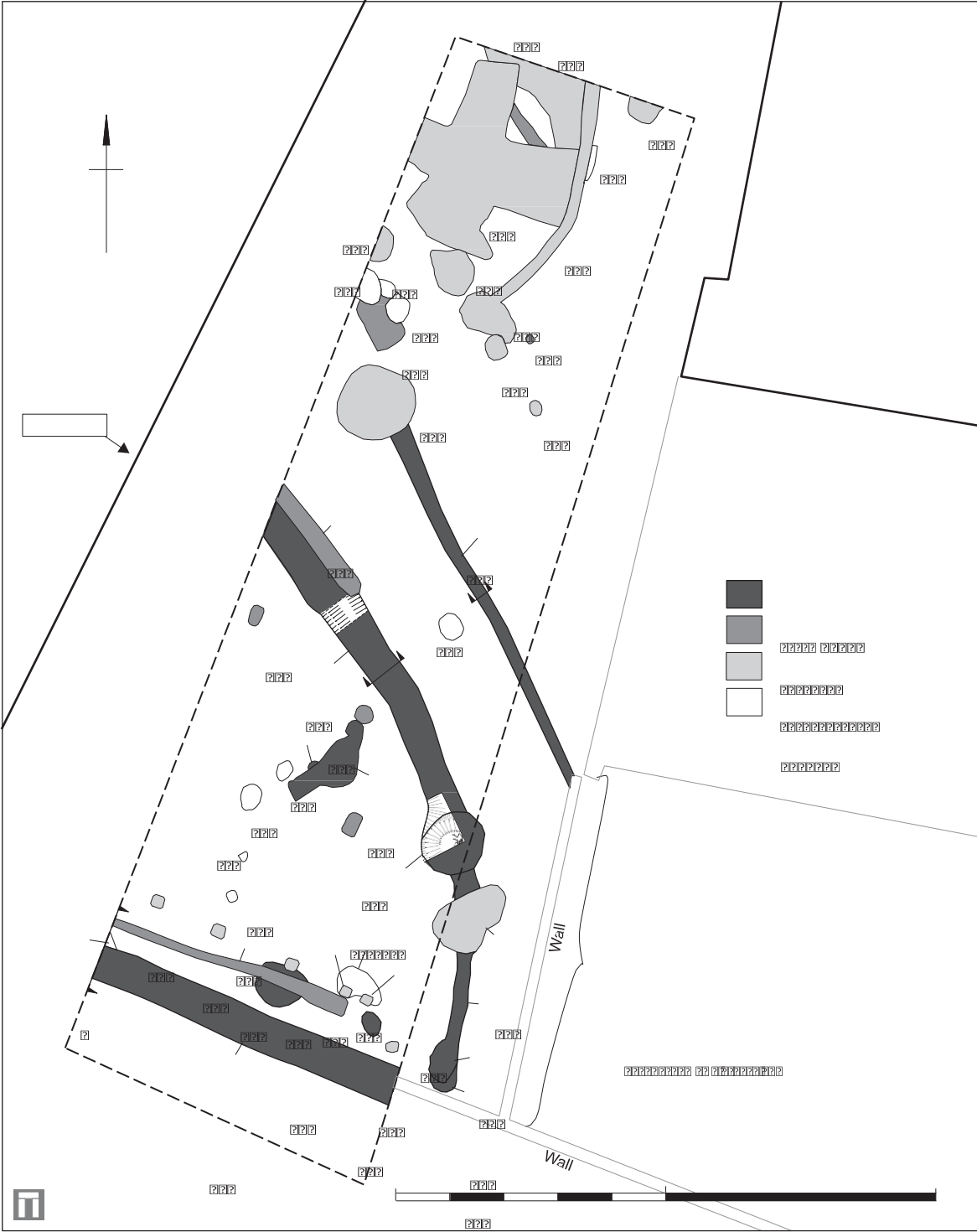
- 1 Site location and trench layout
- 2 Medieval/post-medieval Amesbury (based on 1726 Flitcroft map)
- 3 Phase plan of main trench
- 4 Late Saxon pottery
- 5 Excavated features in relation to 1726 Flitcroft map



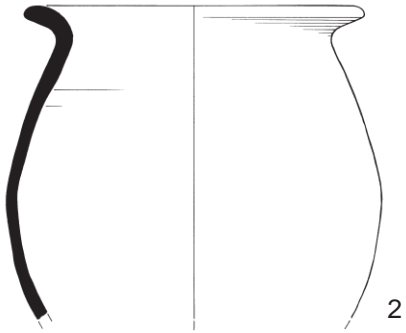
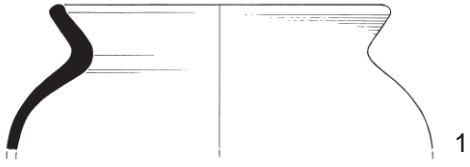
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0 100mm

A scale bar indicating a length of 100mm, with a '0' at the start and '100mm' at the end.

