

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
EXTENSIVE URBAN SURVEY

BRACKLEY

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Funded by English Heritage

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BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

This is one of a series of reports compiled by Northamptonshire Heritage as part of the English Heritage funded Extensive Urban Survey (EUS) of Northamptonshire, which is intended to provide an effective information base and research framework to guide the management of the county's urban archaeological resource. The survey encompasses all urban settlements and others that may have had some urban attributes, from the Roman period to the 1930s. The only exception is Northampton, which is the subject of an intensive urban survey in its own right.

Each report comprises three distinct sections: a detailed description of the town in each major period; an assessment of potential and definition of a research agenda; and a strategy for future management. A consistent approach has been taken in the presentation of the description in each report with detail being presented under each standard category even where this has no direct obvious relevance to the urban aspects. This section has however been presented in the form of a gazetteer with standard headings so enabling the reader to identify those sections of particular interest. The Brackley report is presented in two parts, one covering the pre-industrial period prepared by Glenn Foard and a second covering the industrial period by Jennifer Ballinger. The report draws upon research previously conducted by Glenn Foard on the medieval and post medieval towns of the county; from the survey of historic buildings and land use in selected towns conducted by the Archaeology Unit in the late 1970s, and has benefited from the specialist advice of Dr Barrie Trinder on industrial period. Other contributions to the EUS on digital mapping, database input and related work have been made by various individuals including Christine Addison, Chris Jones, Paul Thompson, Rob Atkins, Phil Markham and especially Tracey Britnell and Abi Kennedy.

The primary objective of the report is to determine layout, character and chronology of development of Brackley from its rural Saxon origins up to the 1930s. An attempt has been made to identify the various components of the town which are likely to have left identifiable archaeological remains and, as far as practicable, to define the exact location and extent of these buried or upstanding 'monuments'. They have also all been assessed for likely current survival and their potential to contribute to research objectives. The relationship of the town to its hinterland has also been considered and the potential for study of that interaction has been assessed. In this way the report aims to provide a well founded research framework, establishing the current state of knowledge of Brackley's history and defining a research agenda which can guide future archaeological investigation within the town. Conservation objectives have also been defined. This report should be viewed as a starting point rather than a definitive study, which it certainly is not. If this report serves its purpose then it will need to be regularly reviewed and substantially revised in future years as archaeological investigations, and hopefully also further documentary research, is undertaken.

Given the limitations of time which inevitably must guide the conduct of a countywide project it has been necessary to limit the depth of investigation. No original archaeological earthwork or other such field survey has been conducted, but all available existing

archaeological data has been consulted. Mapping from aerial photographic sources in the Northamptonshire SMR, CUCAP and the NMR has been completed. Although each town has been visited to examine the topography of the town and an assessment attempted as to the general state of archaeological survival, no attempt has been made to conduct cellar survey comparable to that undertaken for Northampton as party of the Intensive Urban Survey of that town. This is due to the absence of detailed mapped evidence comparable to that which exists for Northampton and the very poor results achieved in 1979 when a cellar survey was attempted in Thrapston and Towcester. Nor has it been possible to examine all documentary sources, even for the medieval period. However, an attempt has been made to assess the overall potential of this crucial part of the record of the urban past and to examine in detail the most documentary important sources. An index has been compiled from various list and indexes in the Public Record Office, Northamptonshire Record Office, National Register of Archives and British Library. Given the vast quantity of documentation, particularly for the last 200 years the limitations in the documentary assessment, especially regarding the industrial period must be acknowledged. Attention has focussed on those sources which might contribute significantly to the reconstruction of the historical topography of the town and to the broader characterisation of the various 'monuments' within the town.

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SUMMARY

Brackley lies in the south west of the county in the upper reaches of the Ouse valley, astride the main medieval road from Northampton to Oxford. It is one of only two planned towns in Northamptonshire in which an urban settlement was planned on a new site quite separate from an existing village. The other example is Catesby, which sits at the other extreme of the settlement hierarchy to Brackley, being a failed town that never achieved urban status though it did function as a market village for many decades.

There can be little truth in Leland's claim that *'this towne flourished in the Saxon tyme ontyll the Danes rasid it'*. In 1086 Brackley was an agricultural village with two manorial holdings which appears to have been an estate and ecclesiastical centre. Within a century of the conquest the New Town with its own field system was carved out of that of the original village, thereafter known as the Old Town. The town was probably founded by the second, or possibly the first, Earl of Leicester. Brackley profited substantially from the wool trade, being involved in not just local but also international trade, and grew to become the second wealthiest town in Northamptonshire by the early 14th century. It had more urban attributes than any settlement in the county outside Northampton, including self governing borough status granted in a charter of 1260, a market, two hospitals, two separate parishes and a castle. Throughout the medieval period it, or the associated hamlet of Halse, was an important manorial residence and the town hosted a number of 13th and early 14th century tournaments.

The New Town appears to have been laid out around a new market place that was established along the main Oxford to Northampton road. The road have been diverted onto its present course at the time of the planning of the new town but it is more likely that this road was one of a network of new roads constructed in the late Saxon period to connect the burhs. A second, possibly even the original, focus of the town was the castle of the Earl of Leicester and the adjacent St. James's Chapel, which both lay at the western edge of Brackley close to where the Oxford road crosses the boundary with Evenley. The town expanded north-east from along the main road until the old and new towns were physically joined. The New Town's status as a self governing borough was confirmed in a charter of 1260, although burgages are recorded in the town as early as 1210.

The transformation of the wool trade in the late medieval period, with a concentration on the Cotswold wool towns, saw Brackley's commercial base collapse. With its major source of wealth removed, Brackley went into rapid decline, falling back on its lesser function as a purely local marketing centre and on providing services to travellers on this major road. Hence by the mid 16th century Camden could describe disparagingly that the town *'now only boasts how great and wealthy it once was by its ruins, and by the mayor it retains for its chief magistrate'*. Under the influence of its important lord in the

18th century the fortunes of the town recovered somewhat but it has continued, to the present day, in the role of a local marketing centre. Over the post medieval period perhaps its greatest influence was in the two parliamentary representatives which it returned as a 'Rotten Borough' from 1547 until the Reform Act of 1832.

Brackley continued to operate through the 19th and 20th centuries as a commercial centre for the surrounding locality with a market, several fairs, a large number of inns and public houses and a wide range of specialist retail outlets. The role of the town was enhanced during the coaching era of the 18th and early 19th centuries when Brackley became a major coaching town and again with the importance of the hunting season in the later 19th century. There was only a very modest level of industrialisation in the town until the later 20th century. It had a small trade in boots and shoes and in malting and brewing, but this was clearly secondary to the retail function of the town. Unlike the small towns and several villages in the Ise Valley, Brackley did not undergo a large-scale process of urbanisation in the late 19th century.

The town is exceptionally well documented in the medieval and post medieval period, due particularly to the fact that the property of St. John's Hospital, a major landholder in the town, was acquired as part of its foundation endowment by Magdalen College Oxford. These sources have enabled detailed reconstruction of the late medieval topography of the town and for its evolution to be traced through the post medieval period. Brackley also appears, from previous work, to have a high archaeological potential, while historic buildings survive in sufficient numbers to offer reasonable potential for the enhancement of the post medieval if not the medieval history of the town. This, combined with the potential from documentary sources, means that Brackley must be considered one of the towns with the highest potential in the county.

I DESCRIPTION

TOPOGRAPHY & GEOLOGY

Brackley lies close to the head of the valley of the Great Ouse. To the north, east and south east at 2 – 5 km from the town the landscape is one of boulder clay covered plateau. To the north and north east this was heavily wooded in the medieval period s part of Whittlewood Forest. To the west and south west the landscape is dominated by limestone and ironstone plateau where there was a significant heathland component to the land use in the medieval and post medieval period. Much of the rest of the hinterland in the wide but shallow valley of the Great Ouse and its minor tributaries is largely of Upper Lias Clay. The agricultural potential of Brackley's hinterland was, until the industrial era, relatively poor and this has had a long term impact on the potential fo the town. While the town was able to dominate the wool trade of the district and a wider hinterland then it could overcome these liitations. When it had to fall back on the function of a local market town then it lost out dramatically to the far better placed town of Banbury int eh heart of the rich agricultural land of the upper Cherwell valley to the west.

A PRE MEDIEVAL

1.0 Early History

1.1 Prehistoric and Roman

Prehistoric evidence is particularly sparse. Mesolithic flints are recorded, while a few stray flints of Neolithic and Bronze Age date are reported from several locations within the parish. A number of Iron Age and Roman settlements are known in the area. The single Romano-British pot sherd found within the New Town is probably only a stray find, but the surface scatter of pottery reported to the north west of the town probably does represent a farmstead. Of greater importance is the site in Evenley parish. A very dense surface scatter of pottery ranging in date from 1st century Belgic to 4th century Roman with coins from the early 1st century to the later 4th century, as well a various Celtic coins, extends over several acres, accompanied by waste lead fragments, tile and building debris. It is likely that the holes dug in 1956, which revealed a corner of stone walling associated with Roman coins, were in this area. The evidence is sufficient to suggest a sizeable structure of villa status. Immediately to the south a large Roman coin hoard was found in 1826. A single gold coin of the Dobunni found 'at Brackley' maybe from the Evenley site.

A nucleated Roman settlement lies immediately adjacent to St Peter's church within the Old Town. In the early 1950s Roman coins were reported from near the church. When the area immediately to the east of the Old Town was developed in the early 1970s Roman pottery and fired daub, possibly associated with stone flue and roof tiles, was recovered from the southern part of the estate. Therefore, although there are other local reports of areas of stone

and pottery, the extent of the site cannot be defined accurately. Trial excavation in the area immediately south west of the church proved negative, demonstrating a clear division between this settlement and the area to the south of the Old Town, where housing development in 1972-3 revealed a very dense distribution of Roman material. Unfortunately access was denied to Dr A E Brown to carry out excavation on part of the area and Mr R. Isham carried out observation over only part of the area and hence the full extent of the site has never been defined. The majority of the evidence of major stone structures came from the western-most part of the estate. Given the very limited nature of the observation there is little evidence on which to determine the character or significance of the site. It is however clear that a stone structure of considerable architectural development existed on the western side of the site, possibly a large villa with an associated nucleated settlement. It may be that the settlement was similar to that excavated at Stanwick rather than having any more urban characteristics. Unfortunately although many finds were salvaged during building work, permission could not be gained to carry out more detailed investigation hence insufficient information was recovered to allow any serious interpretation of the site. Clearly a large stone structure of considerable architectural development existed at the western side of the site, possibly a large villa with subsidiary buildings set astride a metalled road, but the possibility of village or related status should not be ruled out in view of the extent of the site. The settlement's siting on a fairly wide terrace between the river and the steep valley side can be explained in part by the presence of various springs issuing from the base of the scarp. The location is very similar to that of the villa in Evenley parish.

The road alignment suggest a river crossing immediately south of the point at which the mill leet rejoins the main stream, indeed the sharp change in alignment of the leet may reflect the existence of the road early in the medieval period. Stone has been reported in the river bank in this area. The leet may reflect the survival of the road into the medieval period. There is limited evidence from the pre-enclosure road- and furlong pattern to suggest the course of the Roman road crossing the parish. The road which follows or is followed by the boundary between the Old Town Side and Castle Side of the field system is remarkably straight and is respected by most of the open field furlongs; hence it is likely to pre-date the laying out of the field system during the late Saxon period. This may prove to be on or close to the line of a route leading to the villa and nucleated Roman settlement at Chipping Warden.

1.2 Saxon origins

The Saxon and medieval village lay next to the Roman settlement, on a terrace close to the Ouse which here is just a small stream. A Pagan Saxon spearhead recovered from a depth of some 8ft. near the tributary immediately east of the castle is the only provenanced find of early-middle Saxon date recorded from Brackley. The rest are all unprovenanced: a Saxon sceatta, a penny of Aethelred and a late Saxon dirk. In the absence of more adequate information we must depend primarily upon the evidence of plan form, supplemented by a few medieval documentary references, for a guide to the origins of the village. All the evidence, though circumstantial, indicates that late Saxon settlement was concentrated in the area known in the medieval period as the 'Old Town', centred on St Peters church. This is clear not only from the name, but also from the pre-turnpike road pattern which focussed on the area of the Old Town, with the exception of the main Oxford to Northampton road which

cuts across that pattern and appears to be a late Saxon or early medieval insertion. The curving boundaries of several closes and roads around St Peters, in contrast to the rectilinear form of the New Town, also suggest that the settlement was already in existence when the open field system was laid out. A few residual early-middle Saxon sherds and Middle Saxon sherds have been recovered from the area of the former Vicarage, immediately to the north west of the church but there was no stratified evidence for occupation on the site at that date.¹

The place name Brackley refers to woodland or a clearing, either 'of Bracca' or 'with bracken'. Several 'graf' field names immediately to the south of the village: Denny Grove, The Grove and Graffnells, indicate an area of Saxon woodland. Breech furlong denotes clearance from woodland. The presence of another 'leah' place name to the south - Evenley - indicates that similar conditions may have existed over a much wider area, presumably an extension of Whittlewood forest which, by the medieval period, lay a few miles north east of Brackley. In contrast the limestone plateau to the west of the town stretching across to Kings Sutton in the Cherwell valley was almost certainly cleared land for it has extensive evidence of Iron Age and Roman occupation and some limited areas of field systems have been recorded as crop-marks. Given the evidence for woodland nearby, it could be argued that the curving boundaries in the area of the Old Town reflect a woodland clearing origin for the settlement. However this conflicts with the evidence of intensive Roman activity and the likelihood of some form of continuity into the Saxon period, given the close proximity to the Roman settlement to the site of the old minster church and of the wells associated with the middle Saxon religious St. Rumbold.

Goldwell Close is a large oval enclosure adjacent to the Roman settlement and possibly sits astride the presumed Roman road. Comparisons can be made with the large oval enclosure of early Saxon date discovered at Higham Ferrers in association with early and middle Saxon occupation possibly of high status. St. Peters church similarly lies within an oval churchyard, somewhat smaller than Goldwell Close but adjoining it on the south east side. Immediately to the west of Goldwell Close, but with their stream leading through the enclosure, lay the sites of St. Rumbold's Well and of Goldwell. According to Leland '*There issuethe a very little streamlet out of each of them being not the cast of a coyte distant, and straitte cum to one streamelet...*'.² Brackley was linked to Kings Sutton and Buckingham by the legend of the life of St. Rumbold, supposedly the son of the daughter of Penda, King of Mercia. Kings Sutton is considered a possible provincial capital of the Mercian kingdom and the legend ties both Buckingham and Brackley into this territory.³ It may be that the presence of St. Rumbold's well, close to the major Roman settlement and to St. Peter's church represents some form of religious continuity at the centre of the old town from at least the 7th century and possibly even earlier. The exact location of Rumbold's well is not known but it may be expected to lie within a few metres of Goldwell, probably also within the highway, given Leland's description. The religious significance of Goldwell, if any, is not known. The site of the well in 1830 lay within the highway at the western end of the stream leading into the pond

¹ Shaw, M., and Steadman, S., 1991, Archaeological Evaluation at Egerton House, Brackley.

² Leland, f.55b.

³ Foard, G., 1985.

in Goldwell Close. The well head appears to have been slightly moved more recently as is now a small brick built well head with what appears to be a reset medieval carved stone arch above the opening.

The location of the Middle Saxon site and particularly of St. Rumbold's well and of Goldwell Close may have been determined by the presence of a Roman Road on the alignment of Goldwell Lane. This would run through the area of known extensive Roman occupation and cross the stream at a point where a cambered mound of stone, gravel and pieces of Roman roof tile has been observed which may have been a road surface.⁴

B MEDIEVAL & POST MEDIEVAL

1.0 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

1.1 Brackley Village: the 'Old Town'

In 1086 the King held the lands which Earl Aubrey had acquired after the conquest, which included property in Alboldstow Hundred in Brackley, Syresham, Halse, Evenley and Farthinghoe and also another manor in the north west of the county at Lilbourne. The Earl had two separate holdings in Brackley. The first of these Azor had held in 1066. The capital messuage of this manor is likely to have been at Halse, not simply because the first named place in the entry is to Halse but also because some tenements in Brackley are described in the later 12th century as belonging to Halse. The estate comprised 2 hides in Halse, 2 hides in Syresham and also a third of a hide there held by Osmund, and 1 hide in Brackley. The link with Syresham is reflected in the records of two detached portions of Brackley St. Peter's parish in Syresham in the 19th century. These were probably the two woods in the Whittlewood forest which Ellen held in 1296, whereof one is specifically named in 1329, when Matilda claimed right of free chase in Whistley Wood.⁵ Syresham Hatch was also a member of the manor of Halse with Brackley and may in part represent the 2 hides of 1086 in Syresham, possibly the 1 small virgate of the 12th century survey?⁶ The second manor was just in Brackley and was of 2 hides but no previous Saxon lord is named. This included demesne land and slaves, perhaps implying also the presence of a capital messuage there.

Although close correspondence between hideage and land area cannot be assumed, the 2:1 relationship between the two Brackley holdings accords well with the size relationship between the Castle and Old Town divisions of the field system shown in 1830 (see below), a division which is recorded as early as the mid 13th century.⁷ In addition the 1086 priest and the woodland are within the first holding, possibly in Brackley, and in the post medieval period both the mother church and the woodland were in St Peters parish. Even if the township was already split into two parts by 1086, it seems clear that the tenements of the

4 Jackson, D., 1987, Buckingham Road, Brackley, typescript report on watching brief, in SMR.

5 IPM 1296; Quo Warranto 1329; Baker.

6 Bridges, 1, p.153.

7 Mag. Coll. 165, C21 and others.

two manorial holdings of 1086 both lay in the old town rather than there being a separate pre-conquest settlement as a precursor to the new town.

A population figure cannot be estimated for 1086 because one holding is grouped with Halse and Syresham. The fact that the overall figures are relatively low when the total acreage is considered is not surprising given the extent of the area in Syresham that remained under woodland in the medieval period. The Halse manor, including property in Brackley comprised land for 12.5 ploughs, 2 ploughs in lordship with 6 slaves, woodland, a church and a mill. There were 20 'villagers' and a priest and 10 'smallholders' with 6 ploughs. The Brackley manor comprised 2 hides, with land for 5 ploughs, 2 ploughs in lordship with 6 slaves, and 10 'villagers' and 8 'smallholders' with 3 ploughs. In the 12th century Northamptonshire Survey Brackley and Halse comprised 7.5 hides, which probably still include the 2 hides in Syresham, though the Earl is separately listed as holding 1 small virgate in Syresham. There was also a 1.5 hide holding of Thomas Sorel, though the remainder may be accounted for by the other Domesday entries, the 4 small virgates with William Fitz Aliu, and the half hide formerly the Count of Mortain's. The total Domesday figure of 7 hides for Brackley, Halse and Syresham may perhaps have increased by woodland clearance in Syresham.

The castle was probably constructed by the Earl of Leicester or his predecessor as a residence at an important estate centre. The first Earl was the second most important layman in the reign of William II and his son was similarly important under Stephen. The in 1153 he supported Henry and was left in charge of the kingdom.⁸ It is not therefore perhaps surprising to see his castles, at Brackley as at Lilbourne and probably at Long Buckby, were also probably intended to control nationally important roads, in this case that from Oxford to Northampton, which crossed the stream immediately to the south east of the castle.

The new town is one of only two small towns planned on a completely new site in Northamptonshire in the medieval period. Although the Old Town is not specifically named as such until 1260 and the market not until 1217, the new town was established much earlier. It may have originated as a new foundation immediately outside the gates of the castle in the late 11th or early 12th century. It is however more likely that the town was founded quite separately from the castle by the second Earl of Leicester around 1150 at the same time as he established a hospital in Brackley. By the 13th century there were certainly two quite distinct communities within Brackley with separate field systems and mills. The favoured interpretation would be that this came about with the foundation of the New Town. However a possible alternative hypothesis would then be that the manor of Brackley had a separate township to that of the Brackley member of the Halse manor. The Earl probably granted the demesnes of the former, at least in part, to Leicester Abbey in the 12th century. The foundation of the New Town will then have been within the existing township of the Halse manorial holding in Brackley, within which the castle had been constructed, in the late 11th century.

⁸ DNB.

Although the main residence moved from the castle to an undefended site at Halse after the manor passed from the earls of Leicester to the de Zouche family, the town continued to benefit from the patronage of this influential family. The town profited substantially from the wool trade, being involved in not just local but also international trade, and grew to become the second wealthiest town in Northamptonshire by the early 14th century. It had more urban attributes than any settlement in the county outside Northampton, including self governing borough status granted in a charter of 1260 although burgages already existed by 1210; it also had a market, two hospitals, two separate parishes and a castle. Throughout the medieval period it, or the associated hamlet of Halse, was an important manorial residence and the town hosted a number of 13th and early 14th century tournaments.

The transformation of the wool trade in the late medieval period, with a concentration on the Cotswold wool towns, saw Brackley's commercial base collapse. With its major source of wealth removed, Brackley went into rapid decline, falling back on its lesser function as a purely local marketing centre and on providing services to travellers on this major road. Under the influence of its important lord in the 18th century the fortunes of the town recovered somewhat but it has continued, to the present day, in the role of a local marketing centre.

2.0 TOPOGRAPHICAL DEVELOPMENT

Old Town

In 1086 Brackley seems to have comprised a single nucleated agricultural settlement. There is no topographical evidence that would suggest an early focus within the area later occupied by the new town. The earliest tenements within the Old Town were probably immediately to the west of St. Peter's church along Goldwell Lane where two virgate tenements are recorded in 1170-80.⁹ This lane appears to be the primary road in Brackley village, leading east to Buckingham and west to the manorial estate centre at Halse. If so, the settlement expanded considerably in the medieval period, to the head of Old Town Lane. The way in which the boundary immediately south of the lane projects the alignment of the western part of Pymstone's Lane suggests the whole block to the north may represent expansion over pre existing furlong. Similarly the tenements to the east of Mill Lane may occupy the northern end of the small furlong between Mill Lane and Pymstone Lane.

The first map, in 1760, shows that Old Brackley extended from the Old Town Paddock in the west, including properties in Goldwell Lane, as far as the east of St Peter's church. Other properties in the 12th to 14th centuries lay on the south side of Goldwell Lane and further east along the road to Buckingham as far as Denny Grove and leading up Bassets Lane towards the new town, where medieval pottery was recovered by Isham during development. Goldwell Lane, already occupied in 1170-80 by virgate tenements both above and below

⁹ Mag.Coll. 40.

Goldwell, was still occupied in 1250, while in 1409 four tofts are also recorded in the lane.¹⁰ The properties at the eastern end of Goldwell Lane in 1830 may in part represent encroachments onto a wider road. However the southern side of Bassets Lane towards the new town was apparently never built up because it is shown as unenclosed in 1760 and is described in various medieval documents as The Crofts. The westward expansion of the Old Town may be a response to the ‘pull’ of the New Town, and also the opportunity for infilling the relatively small and irregular area between the lanes created by the laying out of the High Street.

The Old Town had at its core the oval enclosures of Goldwell Close and the churchyard. To the north west of Goldwell Close it is possible that the roads are in part skirting another oval enclosure which is otherwise lost from the documented historical topography of the town. A network of roads radiated from this settlement core to adjacent settlements of Radstone, Halse, Turweston and Steane and to more distant centres such as Buckingham. This pattern of oval enclosures and radiating roads skirting around them is reminiscent of the core of Daventry. Components of a similar pattern also seem also to be present in fragmentary form in the cores of Wellingborough and Brigstock. At Higham Ferrers although most of the plan form has been lost, the oval enclosure of early Saxon date has been excavated at the northern end of the settlement in one irregular part of the documented town plan, close to the junction of radiating roads. This suggests a plan form that predates the late Saxon re-planning of many, if not all Northamptonshire villages. This may be a plan form primarily associated with Saxon central places rather than simply most village historic cores. Oval enclosure plans are seen in lesser villages, as at Badby, although that was associated with a major Saxon estate later attached to Fawsley.¹¹ There are small quantities of early-middle Saxon pottery and a single sceatta from near the church. This is as yet the only archaeological evidence to support the topographically based interpretation of the settlement core.

The village seems to have been developed by the addition of planned rows of tenements, probably in the late Saxon period if settlement development in this region is in line with that so far demonstrated in the Nene valley. A charter of 1170-80 refers to one virgate with its appurtenant messuage in Brackley ‘*at the head of Goldwell*’ which is said to be of the land of Halse, while a second virgate with its messuage ‘*below the head of the well*’ pertained to Brackley. These tenements are likely to be the properties immediately north of Goldwell, fronting onto the lane, which belonged to Magdalen College in 1760. Clearly the village of Brackley was already tenurially split prior to the creation of the New Town, part belonging to the manor of Halse and the rest being separate manor of Brackley.¹²

New Town

The New was laid out along the main road from Oxford to Northampton, which is likely to be a new road of late Saxon or early medieval date. This road will, in part, have determined the

¹⁰ Mag. Coll. D.247, B72

¹¹ EUS reports for Higham Ferrers, Daventry, Wellingborough and Brigstock.

¹² Mag. Coll. 54. Also quoted by Baker, 1, p.580.

location of the castle, at the stream crossing at the south western corner of the township, in a location where large lakes could be constructed around the site. The castle was perhaps constructed in the late 11th century. The town may have been founded at the gates of the castle and around Goose Green in the late 11th century to accompany the castle. It is however more likely that the new town was created by the second Earl of Leicester in the mid 12th century as a new foundation on the hilltop between castle and old town at the time when he funded the hospital at Brackley. The new town was focussed around a new market place created by widening the existing major road. It then probably expanded, during the later 12th and 13th centuries, to join up with both the Old Town and the castle. Indeed the expansion of tenements up to the castle gate in Castle Lane may only have occurred following the demise of the castle.

The tenements of the new town lay largely along the main street. The continuously occupied frontage extended from the cross near the castle mill in the south side, where the road entered the township, to the borough stone at the north end, a length of 1.3 km. Beyond the borough boundary in the north lay the Leper Hospital, within the Old Town, with other occupation extending beyond this as far as the Burwell, a total of almost 1.6km. Although many of these tenements extended with crofts back to the back lane or to the park boundary, in the northern third of the town there were still open leys or butts between the tenements and the back lane, giving tenements of similar length on the west side as on the east side of the main street. This may have been the original length of all the tenements in the town, the open field land having been incorporated as crofts into the other tenements at a much earlier date.

The long linear market place lay at the centre of the town. It represented a widening of the main road and itself measured 0.4km in length though it was only 50m wide at its widest point. The shops rows and other market buildings were concentrated in the southern half of the market place, as were the many of the major inns and alehouses. Also it would seem that some of the major houses of the great wool merchants lay in this area of the market place, with houses such as the Blackhall, which had belonged to Thomas de Luton. Other tenements there in the mid 13th century had solars and cellars.¹³

Although the mother church of St Peters lay in the Old Town, the chapel of St James served the south western half of the new town and was located at the eastern end of Castle Lane, facing the castle gate. The old town and the northern half of the new town, together with St John's hospital, lay in the parish of St Peter's, while the majority of the market place and the southern half of the new town, with the castle, lay in the parish of St James. This parochial division did not match the division of the field system into two parts, this boundary lying along the line of the Halse Lane and thuds matching far more closely the division between old town and new town.

In the Castle End, in addition to the Castle and the chapel of St James, lay the castle mill. To the north east of the castle there were two greens, called Goose Green, which may originally

¹³ 1231-c1250: reference to a building with a solar and a cellars in the market place in Brackley. Luffield Priory Charter, 125. In 1280 a solar and a cellar in the market place were acquired by William Yrento, which is probably a different building to that mentioned above. Mag.Coll., C49.

have been a much larger open area which may have been the original market place, if the town did in fact originate in the late 11th century outside the castle gates. The area, known as Whitchandys Green in the 16th century was receiving rapid encroachment between 1760 and 1830 but earlier unrecorded encroachment may have taken place here because in 1760 this was one of the most extensive areas of recorded encroachment on the 'waste'. This is the area where at least four side streets existed which were, at least in the case of Castle Lane, intensively built up in the medieval period with the residences of artisans and others. Indeed the occupation is likely to have extended into the area back beyond the main street tenements in the area called the Newlands, already in existence by the 1250s. In 1240-50 there was exchange of half an acre at the Newland outside the courtyard formerly William son of John.¹⁴ It implies that the expansion of settlement in the Newlands was still continuing and again in 1250-60 there were 5 acres in the new land between the messuage late William son of John and the land of Richard of Brackley.¹⁵ In 1256-60 there were crofts in the Newlands.¹⁶ From at least the 16th century one lane led out of the Green to Hinton,¹⁷ though it may not have existed as such in the early medieval period when the route would have been encompassed by the great lake to the north of the castle. Occupation certainly existed in this area for in 1516 a tenement existed on the south side of Hinton Lane, where it led out from Whitchandys Green, extending from the Green right back to Castle Lane. 13th century pottery has been recovered from three pits in this area. From the northern end of the green the Newlands led out towards Steane and Banbury.¹⁸

It was these streets and Castle End in generally, which seems to have borne the brunt of the decline in the 14th century and beyond. Leland records 'divers rowes of howsynge about the quarters of the castle, now clene doune'. Whereas in the earliest period of the town's development this area, in close proximity to the castle, might have been of great significance, with the destruction of the castle in the late 12th or early 13th century the focus of the town around the market place on the hill to the north will have been confirmed. As early as 1320 when 'Le Castle Endel' is first mentioned it must have been considered peripheral to the main focus of the town, the Market place on the hill to the north.¹⁹ In this it is very similar in many respects to Northampton where the decline of the castle was mirrored by the decline of that part of the town, especially when hit by the migration of the woollen cloth industry from the

¹⁴ Mag. Coll., 102.

¹⁵ Mag. Coll., D110.

¹⁶ Mag. Coll., B64.

¹⁷ Mag. Coll. C122

¹⁸ The arrival of the railway in Brackley in the 19th century had led to a significant modification of the road plan at the southern end of the town. Whereas originally the Hinton Lane ran into Goose Green, the insertion of the railway caused the Hinton road to be diverted southward to join a more westward alignment of the Oxford Road. Hence the alignment of the Hinton Road at this time is not reflecting the earlier alignment, which is perpetuated by Goose Green, a lane immediately to the north of the railway cutting. There were at this time still several properties fronting north onto Goose Green. Realignment in the 1970s or 1980s, after the closure of the railway, has resulted in the Hinton Road now running down the line of the railway cutting and has returned the Oxford Road close to its original medieval line.

¹⁹ Mag. Coll. D135

boroughs to the market towns and villages in the later 13th century and then the impacts of the famines and plagues in the 14th century.

Several lesser side streets leading off the market place may also have been built up in the medieval period. At the north east side of the market place lay the Hospital of St John, founded in the mid 12th century which later became the school. This Hospital had an extensive park immediately to the east of the town which seems to have originated in a woodland Grove which was presumably originally a park belonging to the castle. While back lanes seem to have served the tenements on the west side of the main street, on the east side the presence of the park and further north of the Old Town tenements, seems to have precluded the establishment of a back lane. The rectory on the main road in the northern extension of the new town seems to have been a late creation. At the north end of the town, beyond the borough boundary but as yet not exactly located, lay the leper Hospital of St Leonards. The major modification in the town plan, apart from the desertion of Castle Lane and the other side streets, was the insertion of the Buckingham and Banbury turnpikes. This carved a new swathe through the tenement at the south west corner of the market place in the 1790s, though on the eastern side of the town it seems to have used the line of a medieval road.

With a new town foundation as late as the mid 12th century, most if not all the tenements must have been laid out over former open field furlongs. Such areas could either be laid out, as at Kettering Newlands by the enclosure of strips and their individual conversion into tenements or by taking out a whole furlong or part thereof and reorienting the plots to create tenements, as appears to have happened at Brackley. There is ample evidence from the plan form and from 13th century documentary sources to indicate that Brackley was laid out in one or more phases of formal planning. When the lord of the manor founded the Hospital of St. John he granted one acre of land for its construction and then later a further 2.5 acres adjacent to the Hospital. This implies the existence not only of regular plots but that they were not all occupied immediately after being laid out. The strongest evidence however comes from the 1250-60 rental of the property belonging to the Hospital.²⁰ There are a number of rood, half acre and acre plots recorded in the rental which have standard rents of 3d, 6d and 12d respectively. Most of the tenements recorded in the rental have the same rent values implying that they too may be regular rood, half acre and acre plots. The fact that some of the plots recorded in the rental are not apparently occupied may be evidence for the presence of plots available for the further expansion of the town, rather than simply open field strips

The rentals contain a high frequency of 3d rents or multiples thereof. In eleven cases the area of land involved is specified and it can be seen that 3d was a standard rent for a 1 rood plot. There were six examples with an acre (4 roods) at 12d, two half acres at 6d and a third of an acre at 4d. In each case it is possible that we are seeing plots that are not yet built up, but certainly by 1300 one of the rood plots, occupied by Richard Baldewyn contains a house. Unfortunately the tenements concerned cannot at present be located accurately so it is not possible to examine exactly how they fit the town plan, though the quality of the Magdalen College archive is such that more detailed research should enable the link to be made now

²⁰ Mag.Coll. D247.

that a comprehensive reconstruction of the tenements of the later 15th and 16th century has been established. It may be that some of the 3d tenements, which tend to concentrate in side lanes, such as Goldwell and Horn lanes, may reflect subdivision of larger plots. The implication is that there may have been a standard allocation of property by rood at a standard rental value based on 3d to the rood. This would suggest that there were mainly 6d properties of two roods and 3d properties of 1 rood. Even where a lane is mentioned it is a lane and one rood for 6d together implying the lane itself was a rood plot.

The laying out of the market place along the main road may represent the first establishment of a market at Brackley and be an integral part of the first planning of the town. If so then it could be argued that it was in existence by the mid 12th century, because the Hospital which lies at its north east corner was founded circa 1160. However the market place need not be contemporary with the establishment of the Hospital, because the clear evidence in the stepped western frontage in 1760 indicates the market may have been a westward expansion of a pre-existing road. In this context it may be significant that the large tenement lying within the northern area of the market was not considered an encroachment in 1760 and it could be suggested that its eastern boundary represents the alignment of the original road, running the full length of the eastern side of the market, which would correspond well with the change in level seen today between the eastern and western sides of the market place. If this interpretation was correct then it is possible, though unlikely, that the Hospital could pre-date the market place, also explaining why the St James' parish, which we have suggested may relate to the establishment of the market, extends on the western side fully to the northern end of the market, while on the eastern side it only extends so far as the Hospital. This sequence would allow the laying out of the market as late as the 1217 market charter or associated with the creation of the borough in 1235.

It is in this area that the majority of encroachments on *'the waste'* are recorded in 1760, exactly the area where space might be expected to be at a premium. All early encroachments may not have been recognized as such in 1760, but at least one does appear to have been remembered from 1250-60 when two *'purprestures'* are recorded opposite the Hospital of St John,²¹ which must surely be the properties in that position shown as encroachments in 1760. The concentration of recorded encroachments in the market place could reflect the need for continual control by the borough over the use of the important open space of the market. Certainly in the 17th century licence still had to be gained for any development in the area for in 1670 an investigation was carried out to see if the Butchers stalls could be added to *'without prejudice to the Street Fayre and markt'*, and it was decided that one might be added at each end to make six but that any more would *'stopp upp the passage in the cheife part of the street just against the towne hall'*.²² These are presumably the Shambles of 1760, but this early town hall may be the building immediately to the north, for the present town hall was built on a new site in 1705. Today the market place is still the focus of economic activity within the town, but as with the other markets in the county in the 19th century the majority of the encroachments within the area of the market were removed and today it is far more open than at almost any time in its history.

21 Mag.Coll.D.247

22 E/B 564

There are several reasons for considering that this area focussed on the castle may have been the original nucleus of the town, in addition to the obvious expectation that the town would be founded outside the castle gates as is the case elsewhere. Firstly, the field system of the borough is described from at least 1275 as the 'Castle Side', secondly the siting hereof the parish chapel. If such an explanation could be confirmed then the two greens might be considered as a potential early site for the market, later moved to its present location. A process of growth rather than a single laying out of the whole town is more likely considering its size, and there are problems in arguing for two separate foci at the earliest date, castle and linear market, which were later linked by expansion.

Whereas with the Castle End it is difficult to determine how the settlement was inserted into the presumably pre-existing field system, the occupation to the north around the market is clearly laid out in groups of tenements on land enclosed from adjacent furlongs. The two tenement rows immediately north of the Banbury Turnpike appear once to have been part of the furlong to the west which was enclosed and the tenements laid out at right angles to the original orientation of the strips. The slightly angled tenements in the northern of the two rows may result from the restrictions of the change in alignment of the main street. The tenement rows to the north of this, on the west side, also seem to be laid out in a similar way on top of former field strips but turned around through 90 degrees. The positioning of the market place and the main street were determined by the presence of the major road, which presumably had been laid out to avoid the park or Grove and also to run along the level hilltop before dropping down over the shortest distance to the stream crossing.

The High Street may represent the latest phase in the development of the medieval town which had taken place by 1425 when the Common is described as extending from Brackley town to Turweston brook.²³ The evidence for the back-way on the west side of the town is unfortunately conflicting. It is present on Thomas Eyre's map of 1791 but the 1830 shows it only in part, and much of this appears to cross a number of open field strips, suggesting it was a late insertion. The combined evidence does certainly invalidate what has been interpreted from a post-inclosure plan as a classic pattern of long medieval burgage plots stretching from the main street to a back lane.²⁴

Castle Lane

This is the best understood of all the areas of the medieval town, thanks to the combined evidence of detailed topographical reconstruction from the medieval charters and a large scale excavation.

By 1240-50 there are references to houses in the land of the castle and of the corner of Castle Lane opposite St James' Chapel.²⁵ This survived in 1830 as a narrow lane running from the centre of the presumed eastern bailey ditch to St James church, and was probably the original

²³ Mag. Coll. D1

²⁴ Steane 1974

²⁵ Mag. Coll. D116, D247 & D54.

approach to the castle. By 1280 houses extended right up to the castle with a 'tenement in Le Castlelande' (probably an incorrect transcription of Castle Lane) 'on one side near the castle moat on the other a tenement of the hospital'.²⁶

The excavations were undertaken in the 1980s but as they are still not published a detailed discussion of the evidence is presented here as it is the best understood of any medieval street in any town in the county other than Northampton. Occupation began no earlier than the late 12th century and continued until the end of the 13th century. There is equivocal evidence in regard to the construction of the Castle Lane over the backfilled bailey ditch which might indicate that Castle Lane and its tenements were constructed after the demise of the castle, but excavation on the castle itself is essential to determine this more certainly, though investigation has indicated the castle was occupied from the 11th to the 13th century. It is possible that some of the undated features adjacent to Castle Lane could be contemporary to the castle but there is no certain material before the late 12th century. Hence it would be possible for this area to have been initially a castle bailey. Equally the area might have been left open to provide a clear field of fire from the defences. However without investigation of the frontage onto the Oxford Road it will remain uncertain whether the Castle Lane row was merely constructed by subdivision of a tenement which originally fronted onto the Oxford Road and was contemporary with the castle. Whichever is the case it would appear that the occupation along Castle Lane represents part of the growth of the town some years after its initial foundation.

The presence of a pit containing pottery earlier than 1100 towards the rear of the easternmost excavated Castle Lane tenement²⁷ would indicate three alternatives: this area was indeed part of the bailey of the castle but contained very little permanent occupation; and / or the Castle Mill was as an integral part of the construction of the castle in the immediate post conquest period and that the mill tenement stretched back along Castle Lane to the bailey ditch; the new town was founded much earlier than previously thought and was associated with the castle's construction in the later 11th century. The latter seems less likely given the apparent ceramic range of the tenement immediately north of St. James's chapel, which only begins in the 12th century, though much more of the Oxford Road frontage needs to be examined to confirm this dating. It is possible that the valley bottom occupation in this part of St. James's End, together with the chapel itself, is a later phase of urban expansion, given the suggestion of substantial intentional 12th century infilling with clay to facilitate occupation on an otherwise waterlogged area. If this area was a new addition to the town then the possibility of the castle originally having an entrance facing north or north east and not east along the line of Castle Lane should be considered.

There needs to be effective investigation of the potential circuit of any outer bailey moat by examination of a continuous area between the previous Castle Lane excavations and the

²⁶ Mag. Coll. D82

²⁷ Roberts, M., 1994, Tesco's Development next to Brackley Castle, Oxford Road, Brackley, Northamptonshire (Oxford Archaeological Unit), copy in SMR.

Oxford Road to determine if any defensive work existed. The Oxford Road frontage must be examined.

In the late 12th century regularly sized row of tenements approximately 8m wide were laid out along the south side of Castle Lane, a metalled street approximately 6.5m wide. An apparently terraced row of timber post buildings, each 4m. by 8m., with similar ground plan fronted the lane in 4 tenements. In addition they had on their western side buildings c.4m wide running back from the terraced row in each tenement. There was evidence of a metalled yard behind the buildings and then a garden beyond. The rear of the tenements did in some cases contain a few pits but there was only restricted excavation of the gardens. To the south of the gardens there were deposits which probably represent the millpond of the Castle Mill. Though there was not adequate excavation here to determine this clearly. This appears to have been a single development presumably by a single landowner. In the two tenements to the east the survival was far worse but they appear to have had separate frontage buildings of a different plan form. The property at the west end of the row adjacent to the castle ditch and defined by possible cob walls, was occupied by quarrying. This feature was not a pond. Between this and the castle was a possible lane following the outer edge of the ditch and possibly extending north of Castle Lane. These timber buildings were replaced on exactly the same locations by stone structures, probably dwarf walls for timber superstructures, though traces of possible cob walling was present in one or two locations. An occupied tenement may also have been constructed in the property adjacent to the castle ditch during the stone construction phase.

In two of the tenements the rear building contained a stone lined cellar c.4.2m by 2.85m and 1.2 to 1.7m deep. In one tenement this cellar was disused when the property was rebuilt in stone but in the other the cellar continued in use and was extended. The latter was approached from the yard by a flight of steps. Stone lined rectangular features which possibly represent one or two adjacent cellars also lay much further to the rear of tenement 1.²⁸

In one of the tenements the hearths in the frontage building appear to represent a workshop, possibly involved in metalworking as the tenement contained finds of smithing slag. The other frontage buildings had single hearths and could have been domestic. The two cellars may have been storage structures associated with the trades of the tenants whereas the two tenements at the eastern end of the row not only had a different ground plan but also each had a large stone line pit which might in some way relate to the particular occupation of these tenants. Unfortunately the range of artefacts recovered from the tenements does not enable differentiation of trades between the tenements. There were three woodworking tools, 6 leather working and 7 wool or cloth working tools. The latter however were supported by 12 spindle whorls. The preponderance of wood or cloth relate artefacts is not surprising in Brackley but does suggest that one or more of the tenants in castle lane was involved in the wool or cloth industry. Hence though wool or cloth working is the main trade represented, leather working, carpentry and smithing are also present.

The tenement row was abandoned around 1300, before the impact of the famines of the second decade of the 14th century and well before the ravages of the plague from the mid 4th

28 Roberts, 1994.

century onwards. However there were still buildings at the eastern end of Castle Lane in the post medieval period, and so the lane was not totally deserted.

Observation of development in 1993 indicates that archaeological deposits on the Castle Lane site where not excavated in 1981-2 will survive beneath the supermarket and car park, having been protected over most of the site by modern dumping prior to development.

On the north side of the lane the archaeological evidence is in apparent conflict with the documentary evidence, one suggesting extensive occupation but the other suggesting no occupation. Any potential for further excavation here should be taken to try to resolve this conflict. What is however clear is that in this very wet area there were extensive leets which seem to relate to the workings of the Castle Mill, which also warrants far more extensive investigation.

St. James's End: Oxford Road frontage²⁹

This is the other area of substantial excavation, also unpublished. Occupation adjacent to St. James's church began slightly earlier and ended slightly later. Built on a deep clay makeup to raise the site above a waterlogged deposit. This might suggest that the expansion to the stream was not part of the initial planning of the town but an expansion of it, possibly following the demise of the castle. There was a sequence of timber post structures replaced on same plan and with same hearth location by two phases of stone building. This was a building c.5m by 8m lying gable end on to the Oxford road. However the sequence of occupation did not end in this area in the medieval recession, for tenements were there in the post medieval period both from the excavated and the documentary evidence.

3.0 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

3.1 MANORIAL

3.1.1 Manors

3.1.1.1 Main manor

There were probably originally two manorial centres, one in Brackley and the other in Halse (see above). Although in 1295 and 1314 the capital message of the Zouche family lay in Halse, as early as the 13th century the manor is described as '*Brakle cum Halse*', reflecting the far greater importance of the new town in contrast to the old estate centre, although Brackley is specifically said to belong to the manor of Halse.³⁰

After 1086 the manors of Halse and Brackley together with the other properties formerly held by Earl Aubrey were granted to Robert Belmont, created Earl of Leicester in 1107. Brackley

²⁹ Meadows, I., undated redraft of Brackley Castle Lane 1981-2: excavation report; Barcham, R., undated first draft Brackley Castle Lane excavation report. Copies in Northamptonshire SMR.

³⁰ IPM, Elan la Zouche, NRO E(B)9. 1314 IPM E(B)18. PRO C133/76((3), IPM, Elena la Zouche

was presumably a very important part of his estate for at his death in 1118, though his body was buried in France his heart was buried in Brackley.³¹ This may imply that Brackley, and hence presumably his castle there, was a major residence of the Earl. The estate passed to his son Robert after 1118. When the Hospital of St John was founded by the second Earl in circa 1160 the chapel was described as a demesne chapel when the lord was resident. In 1173 the Earl's estates were seized by the crown and were held for a time by Hugh de Grendville, sheriff of Northampton. The estate was recovered by the Earl several years later. In 1204 the Earl's estate was split between two daughters, Brackley falling to the wife of Saher, Earl of Winchester. In 1210-11 the caput of the barony was however stated as being in Leicestershire.³² After the Earl of Winchester's death in 1220 it passed to Margaret his wife. However certain tenements with 20 virgates, worth £20, were given to William de Harecourt at his marriage to the Earl's daughter. These descended to the wife of Sir John de la Haye, who sold them and other land in Evenley and Sibford, comprising 2 carucates and 6 virgates, to the Hospital of St. John in Brackley in 1271-2.³³ In the mid 13th century the heart of Margaret, the wife of Saher, was also buried in a shrine in the Hospital at Brackley, confirming the continuing importance of Brackley for the Earls and in 1263-4 the Earl himself was buried in the Hospital.³⁴ The manor was inherited in 1264, Ellen la Zouche, daughter of the Earl. It remained with the Zouch family until after 1329.

The continuing importance of Brackley during the medieval period is reflected in the tournaments which were held just outside the town on Bayards Green. Bayard's Green, synonymous with Horses' Green, was an extensive area of heathland, covering several hundred acres, to the south of Brackley in the lordships of Croughton, Imley and Hinton, part of a much larger heath extending into Oxfordshire.³⁵ A tournament was held there in 1249, a second great tournament in 1267 and another in 1313.³⁶

After 1329 the manor passed to Robert de Holland and after 1373 John Lord Lovell. In 1407-8 Lord Lovell was buried in the Hospital at Brackley, as had been other family members, once more confirming the continuing importance of Halse and Brackley as a residence. The Lovell estates were confiscated in about 1485. In 1488 George, Lord Strange of Knockyn held Brackley and thereafter it passed to Thomas Earl of Derby, who died 1521-2. It was his son Edward who had an important role in reviving the fortunes of the town. Later in the 16th century the manor passed to John Egerton, Earl of Bridgewater, the family holding the manor until at least 1803.

Though Brackley had become a major town by the 13th century its value to the lord was relatively restricted, for in 1264 the manor of Halse was worth £94/12/9.5d while Brackley

31 Bridges, 1, 145.

32 Baker, 1, p.561.

33 Bridges, 1, p.146.

34 Bridges, 1, p.146. Mathew Paris, p.854, quoted by Bridges, 1, p.146.

35 Beesley, 1841, p.71n. 26; quoting Kennet, p.213; Baker, p.573. Morton.

36 Bridges, 1, p.146. Baker, 1, p.573.

was worth only £9/4/0.³⁷ The assessments of the Halse manor may however include property in the old town of Brackley. In 1295-6 the manor of Halse comprised a capital messuage, 2 free tenants, 16 *nativi* with 16 virgates and 15 cottagers.³⁸ In 1314 there was 20/- free rent and 16 customary tenant.³⁹ Presumably reflecting the ubiquitous decline of the 14th century by 1423 there were still 15 messuages with 15 virgates, at 6/8d each, but just 6 cottages, at 12d each, compared to the 15 of 1295-6.⁴⁰

As we have seen, Halse had probably been a manorial centre in 1086 and it is perhaps likely that a demesne farm if not the capital residence remained there while the castle was in existence. With the demise of the castle the manorial residence returned to Halse where it continued into the post medieval period. The property described by Baker as the manor house in Brackley would appear to be the Rectory mansion created following the dissolution.

3.1.1.2 Rectory Manor

The earliest major grants in Brackley were made by the Earl of Leicester as part of the foundation of Leicester Abbey.⁴¹ This seems to have comprised in large part the rectory manor. All the tenements of the Rectory manor lay in the Old Town, which presumably results from the grants being made prior to the foundation of the new town.

The Abbot of Leicester, as rector of Brackley, held the advowson of Brackley and the chapels of Halse and Syresham, with the tithes of his possessions in Brackley and the soke of Hawes, granted to them by the founder of the Abbey.⁴² In 1229 the Abbot was confirmed as holding the manor of Syresham, Farthinghoe and Brackley.⁴³ In circa 1313-14 the Abbot was certified as holding a quarter fee in Brackley of Alan la Zouche.⁴⁴ In 1291-2 a messuage and one virgate and 4a meadow in the town were held by the Abbot of Leicester rendering 23/- annually and 8a land in the fields held of Elena la Zuche rendering 20d pa. Total value 27/-.⁴⁵ In the ecclesiastical taxations the rectory manor of the Abbot was valued in 1254 and 1291 at £24. At the dissolution in 1535 it was worth £13/3/4d plus the tithes of Halse.

Following the dissolution the Rectory together with the vicarage was held by the crown until 1578-9, when it was granted to Sir Christopher Hatton. In 1579 the rectory and church passed

37 Extent of R.de Quency, Earl of Winchester, Cal.Close Rolls, 4, p.408.

38 IPM, NRO E(B)9.

39 IPM NRO, E(B)18.

40 NRO, E(B)14.

41 Confirmation of charter to de Prato in Leicester re Brackley. Cal.Charter Rolls, vol.3, p.379-81.

42 Leland, VI, p.12. Bodleian, Ms.Laud, 'Charyte' Rental 1477; see Nichols, Leics vol.1, pt.2, app.75. Bridges, I, p.145.

43 Nichols, p.261.

44 Bridges, I, p.549.

45 Cal. IPM, PRO, c133/61(7). William Swet IPM20 ed I (9) Wm Swet Brackley mess and rents of Abbot of Leic. and land there of Ellen la Zuche

to Thomas Crompton and John Morley.⁴⁶ However in 1579 William Lyle presented to the vicarage and according to Bridges the Lises seem to have held the Rectory until after 1720.⁴⁷ In 1746 the Rectory passed from William Price to the Duke of Bridgewater, the lord of the manor of Brackley cum Halse.⁴⁸

Rectory House or 'Tithe House'

Lyle occupied a mansion house in Brackley, presumably the Rectory but described by Baker as the 'Tithe House', until just before 1606,⁴⁹ after which they moved to Evenley leaving the residence in the occupation of the Wenman family, two of whom were members of parliament for the town in the middle and late 17th century.⁵⁰ In 1733 William and Elizabeth Croft released to the Duke of Bridgewater the capital messuage in St.Peters where Philip Lord Wenman lived, which was William Lisle's and Sir George Throgmorton's. It including yards, backsides, buildings, orchards and stables with 5 butts in Castle Field butting the yard of the dwelling house. There was also a messuage in the tenure of John Coles which had been Leicester Abbey's purchased by William Lisle with a cottage on the said property occupied by John Peckover with barn and backside.

In 1760 the '*tithe house*' and '*tithe barn*' stood in adjacent plots on the west side of the upper part of the High Street and by 1830 this property is described as the manor house. Baker states that '*the manor house which succeeded the castle has disappeared, the present building, plain in character and moderate in size was probably formed out of the offices. It stands in the upper part of the High Street and is still used for holding the manorial court*'.⁵¹ However the earliest architectural evidence from the '*tithe house*' is only of the 17th century while in the early 16th century this property comprised simply a series of ordinary tenements. It would therefore appear that the property was acquired and created as a capital messuage for the Rectory after the dissolution. This conversion continued between 1733 and 1760 with the enclosure of the butts in Castle Field to the rear of the property to create what was by 1830 the Tithe Orchard.

3.1.1.3 Lesser holdings

Inevitably with a substantial borough, there were many other property owners who held burgages and other property within Brackley, including several of the major wool merchants.

46 NRO, E(B) Box X9637, Brackley Estate Register of Land purchases.

47 Bridges, 1, p.150.

48 NRO, E(B) Box X9637, Brackley Estate Register of Land purchases.

49 Baker, 1, p.574.

50 Baker, 1, p.574. Bridges, I, 143.

51 Baker, 1, p.567.

In most cases these were grants of a handful of tenements by a range of different donors. In the 13th century there were minor grants to the Abbot of nearby Biddlesden, who held at least one tenement in the town in 1240 and later at least two messuages and 1 acre of land there.⁵² Other property there was held by at least three other monastic houses: Luffield Abbey, the Prior of Wigston and the Prior of Chacomb.⁵³ There were also in the post medieval period several other substantial holdings, including that of Swillington whose capital messuage lay between the market place and Newlands and included a dovecote. The origins and significance of this holding has not been established. However by far the largest holding in the town was built up by the Hospital of St. John of Brackley (see below).

3.1.2 Manorial Appurtenances

3.1.2.1 Castle

The castle lay on the south west edge of the medieval town and may have been the first monument to be constructed outside the old town in the period immediately following the conquest, well before the foundation of the new town. Investigations in the early 1990s in the Castle Lane area demonstrated that the castle ditch lay at the western end of the lane, straddling the boundary of the Castle Close and showed activity from the 11th to the 13th century. Although not mentioned in 1086, the castle could perhaps have been constructed immediately after the conquest by Earl Aubrey. However, on the basis of the very limited ceramic evidence it seems more likely that the castle was built by the Earl of Leicester, in the late 11th century. It is to be expected that the castle became the capital messuage of the manor of Brackley cum Halse, which represented a combination of the two Domesday manors.

Leland states that '*Master Paynell told me that he saw at Brackley..... manifest tokens that it had bene a wallyd toune, and tokens of the gates and tours in the walles by the halfe cirkles of the foundations of them*'. The town was certainly never walled and Leland continues that he '*sowght diligently, and could find no tokens of wales or diches*', but that '*there hathe bene a castel, the dyke and hills whereof do yet appere (I saw the castle plott)*'. Elsewhere he says '*There was a fayre castle in the south west end of the Towne on the left hand or ripe of the riveret. The site and hille where it stode is yet evidently sene, and benthe the name of the Castle Hill, but there is not sene any peace of a waull stondinge.*'⁵⁴ Today a mutilated motte and a much denuded bailey earthwork are visible in the former Castle Close. The motte was constructed at the western and highest end of a low, narrow east-west limestone ridge bounded on the west and south by a small tributary stream of the Ouse. On the north it was divided from the higher ground on which the new town was centred by a shallow depression. The northern line of the moat of motte and bailey may be defined by the present Hinton Road, which must presumably be a later medieval creation. On the east, at least from the Oxford road eastward, there was an extensive area of boggy ground in the 11th century.⁵⁵

⁵² Baker, 1, p.567. Mag.Coll., 173. BL Charters vol.1, p.94; BL Charters, Harl.85, E51. BL, Charters, Harl.86, D34.

⁵³ BL Charters, Harl.55, B5. Bridges, 1, p.150. Elvey, op.cit.n.?, no.407.

⁵⁴ Leland.; repeated by Bridges, 1, p.143.

⁵⁵ Gittins, A., St.James tenement excavation interim., unpublished report in SMR.

Small scale evaluation trenching has shown that the motte, though damaged by the construction of a barn in the later 20th century, and despite use of the whole castle site as allotments in the mid 20th century, contains surviving stratigraphy including rubble spreads and shallow features, from a depth of circa 0.16m and with a thickness of at least 0.15m. Though standing approximately 4m high the motte is in fact on its west and south sides essentially a natural limestone rise, expanded into a motte by construction on the north and east sides.⁵⁶ The small quantities of ceramics from the excavation indicate occupation from 11th to the 13th centuries.

The eastern bailey was defended on the east side by a substantial defensive ditch 7 metres wide, immediately outside the eastern wall of Castle Close. The steep rise in the ground immediately to the west may in part represent the remains of the rampart. The excavation trench which located the ditch was within the area of the small rectilinear enclosure occupied by the Pest House in 1830, which appears to define the width of the ditch. This would suggest that over much of its course the eastern boundary of Castle Close probably runs on or close to the inner edge of the castle ditch, although trenching approximately 10 metres north of Castle Lane suggests the ditch may have swung further to the west by this point. The sections revealed only one thin layer of silt at the base of the moat, containing a single sherd of late C12th/C13th date, while the remainder of the fill was primarily limestone rubble. No clear evidence of any stabilization phase was recognised and it is therefore suggested that the moat was probably backfilled with the material from the rampart soon after it went out of use. However, as it may have functioned in some way as a leet between the two fishponds, it may have continued to be scoured out after the castle went out of use. The bailey ditch must have remained a substantial feature in c.1280 because at that time a tenement in Castle Lane is described as lying adjacent to the castle moat. The absence of evidence for occupation from within the bailey is probably due to the small scale nature of the evaluation conducted within the bailey.

The castle's location seems to have been determined by two factors. Firstly the defensive position which could be easily surrounded by water yet was not too closely overlooked by high ground. Secondly, it was positioned close to the point at which the main Oxford to Northampton road crossed the small stream, and so controlling this nationally important route way. Two other castles were set along this road, at Towcester and Middleton Stoney, with major castles at Oxford and Northampton. The castle was not set back to accommodate tenements along Castle Lane, for these were not constructed until the later 12th century. The motte was positioned to take advantage of the natural limestone knoll at the western end of the site. With an area of approximately 11 acres, the motte and bailey compares favourably with other castles of the period. The presence of a large pond adjacent to the Oxford Road and linked to the castle ditch by a water filled channel might suggest that an outer bailey lay between the inner bailey and the Oxford Road, but it is perhaps more likely that this was just a fish pond or even a mill pond (see below). However even if this were the case it would appear that the ponds created around the castle, probably very extensive in the area on the south and north west, were an integral part of the defensive scheme. A single pit containing

⁵⁶ Oxford Archaeological Unit, 1992, Brackley Castle, Brackley : Archaeological Evaluation, copy in SMR.

late 11th century pottery has been located within this area encompassed by the ponds, adjacent to Castle Lane, and this would suggest that occupation in the area in the late 12th century. This may relate to the use of an outer bailey, though alternative explanations are more likely.

The castle may have been destroyed, together with that at Leicester, after the 3rd Earl joined the Baron's Revolt in 1173, as a result of which all his estates, including Brackley, were seized by the crown.⁵⁷ The property was returned to the Earl in 1177 but by 1206 the Brackley estate had passed to the Earls of Winchester, providing another alternative context for the abandonment of the castle. However the castle may still have been in use in 1215 because in that year the army raised by the Barons, including the Earl and his supporters, marched to Brackley to confront the King who was then at Oxford.⁵⁸ Brackley may have been chosen because of the presence of a castle held by one of the leaders of the revolt. It is possible that the castle was destroyed when the Earl lost his estates following his defeat in arms against Henry III in 1217. The castle had certainly gone out of use by the 1230s when the 'site' of the castle was granted to the Hospital of St. John in Brackley.⁵⁹ The area is first described simply as Castle Close in 1396 and then in successive rentals.⁶⁰ Whenever exactly the castle was abandoned, it would seem that the seigneurial residence was transferred to the nearby hamlet of Halse (see above).

3.1.2.2 Fishponds

Very extensive fishponds, later described as the '*Fischeweeres*' by Leland, had existed at Brackley on the west and south sides of the castle in the 12th or early 13th century. These ponds clearly extended into the townships of both Evenley, where closes called Fishweres are found adjacent to the castle, and Hinton where landowners later released rights of common in connection with the former fishponds (see below). Their position and layout would suggest that they were constructed as an integral part of the castle defences. A similar origin may exist for the pond adjacent to the Oxford road and Castle Mill with its mill pond.

The ponds may have gone out of use at the same time as the castle. The fishponds, or at least part of them, had certainly been drained by 1250 when various landholders in Brackley and Hinton released to the Hospital of St John their rights of common pasture in the meadow above the castle, formerly a fishpond given to the Hospital by the Earl of Winchester.⁶¹ This pond seems to have been enclosed by the Hospital later in the 13th century for in 1297 there was a dispute, settled in their favour, over the enclosure of the 'old fishpond' which they had

⁵⁷ Pipe Rolls 1, 404; quoted by Renn, D., *Norman Castles in Britain*.

⁵⁸ Bridges, 1, p.145.

⁵⁹ Mag. Coll. D119.

⁶⁰ Mag. Coll. C83.

⁶¹ Mag.Coll.D119. Mag. Coll. C137. Grant in 1230-40 of 'the pool of the upper fishpond together with the site of the castle for 20/5d rent. Release from Hughh Botte and Ralph Bernard of Hinton', Mag.Coll.C137 & C84; also various tenants in Brackley, Mag.Coll. C74, C124, C72, 15.

been granted by the Earl.⁶² The area to the north west of the castle has been cleaned out and recreated as a large pond in the 1970s and during this work large masonry blocks, possibly related to the original medieval construction, were reportedly discovered. It is unlikely that much survives of the pond deposits though the structures of the dam may have lain closer to the castle and could have survived the modern disturbance.

Ponds also existed within the Park or warren attached to the Hospital of St. John (see below) and other ponds are recorded in 1763 in the crofts attached to a number of the larger tenements in the town. The latter may in some cases have had a medieval origin for a fishpond lay in the rear of the tenement, known as the Blakehall, owned by one of the wealthy merchant families in the town in the 13th (?) century.

3.1.2.3 Water Mills: Castle Mill

There were separate mills in the Old Town and the New Town. The Castle Mill is first recorded by name in 1240, but it is likely that it was part of the initial works connected with the construction of the castle and its associated fishponds. In 1240 the Castle Mill was granted to the Hospital of St John together with licence to build another mill, either a wind or water mill, and to restrain the townspeople, except John Mace, from carriage to any other mill. The mill was supplied by a mill pond which also served as a fishpond, for which the Earl retained fishpond, swans, pool, fishery and eels.⁶³ The Hospital was also empowered to deepen the mill pool but not lessen it to injure fish and the Earl retained the right to break the fishpond and catch the fish so long as he repaired the damage.⁶⁴ This is the Brackley mill recorded in 1230-40 as lying at the entrance of the town from Oxford, from which the Hospital received 1 mark per annum grant and then in 1240 another 2 marks, making the £2 recorded in the later grant of the mill.⁶⁵ In 1255-6 the Hospital were finally granted the Mill in perpetual farm with a grant of a further 5 marks from the mill.⁶⁶ In 1413 the Hospital leased the Castle Mill, Mullestye and croft and fishewere croft to a new tenant who was to build a new mill.

In 1442-3 the College owned three mills. By the later 15th century there is no reference to the Castle Mill in the rentals, but the property adjacent to the stream and the Oxford road on the south side of Castle Lane is called Trunk Close and is described in 1486 as a toft with the stream and the '*trunk*' for keeping fish. In 1486 there were three mills, presumably under one roof and apparently in the Old Town there was also a mill called Crosmelne which was totally in decay but which is not located.⁶⁷

62 Mag.Coll.C120.

63 Mag.Coll., C114. Granted at a rent of '10 per annum less the 2' which he had already granted to them from the Mill.

64 Mag.Coll., C113.

65 Mag.Coll, C113. C229.

66 Mag.Coll. C109

67 Mag. Coll. Rental 37/16.

The northern edge of what appears to have been the mill pond has been located by trial trenching in two positions at the southern end of the tenements fronting north onto Castle Lane. During the medieval period the pond appears to have been filled with a deep deposit of very humic material containing numerous medieval pot sherds, implying infilling with domestic rubbish from the adjacent tenements. A second edge to the pond was then defined by a stone revetment some metres further towards the present stream.

The mill appears from initial analysis of documentary sources to have lain next to the township boundary at the southern edge of the town on the west side of the Oxford Road. A pond located by excavation and identified by names of adjacent low lying fields owned by the lord of Brackley in the 18th century in Evenley township, lies immediately to the west of the presumed site of the mill. Called the *'fishweeres'* this massive pond may be interpreted as both fishpond and mill pond. Due to *'injuries'* suffered by the Hospital in their right to the watercourse of Castle mill the Earl confirmed to them in 1311 the plot behind the mill, saving the Earl's rights to fishery, extending to the boundary between the Earl and the Lord of Hinton. If the mill pond lay on the south of Castle Lane and the castle then this land should have been owned by the Hospital in later documents.⁶⁸ However the former Hospital property held by the College in 1760 did not include the *'fishweeres'* to the south of the Castle Lane and Castle. Moreover the *'fishweere'* appears to have extended right to the Oxford road and hence to provide nothing that could be interpreted as a 'watercourse' to the mill. The College did however own the property on the north side of Castle Lane extending from the Oxford road, the Castle Close and the *'fishweeres'* north of the Castle which did extend to the Hinton boundary. This would seem to indicate that the mill pond and its watercourse all lay to the north not the south of Castle Lane and Castle Close. The close on the north of Castle Lane in 1760 was called Pond Close and contained a substantial pond fed by a long narrow channel leading from Castle Close. Excavation has show this channel to have been 4 metres wide (not the 10 metres or so suggested by the 1760 map) and over 1.5 metre deep. It was always water filled and appears to have been some form of leet which began silting up as early as the 13th century but remained open until at least the later 18th century, the last infill containing 19th century pottery. Immediately to the west in Castle Close earthwork survey identified a boggy area on the line of the leet which appears to lie outside the bailey and could represent the course of the leet from the *'fishweeres'* on the north west. This leet will have led water directly from the *'fishweeres'* on a higher course from the natural course of the stream to the south of the castle to create a significant head of water where it rejoined the stream to the east. Within Pond Close the pond originally occupied the eastern half of the close, having shrunk somewhat in extent by the 18th century. The waterlogged organic deposits have been found to extend from the wall of Castle Lane almost up to the north edge of the close. Though very shallow on the south and west they were deeper to the north and over 2 metres deep on the east where it remained open in the 18th century. The silting of the pond could have begun in the 12th or 13th centuries, though on the east side the deposits were all 19th century were not bottomed nor the southern edge of the pond located.

⁶⁸ Mag. Coll. C110

The location and course of the leet and pond would accord well on topographical grounds with the construction of a water mill leet and pond. However this would require a leet or outflow to cross Castle Lane to rejoin the stream and none is referred to in any source. Similarly the specific documentary references to the Castle Mill seem to fit best with the tenement owned by the College on the south side of Castle Lane against the Oxford road and on the township boundary with Evenley. Hence there remains an important conflict of interpretation which cannot easily be resolved without further excavation.

3.1.2.5 Water mills: Old Town Mill

A mill was recorded in the Halse cum Brackley manor in 1086 and although it is not certain that the Domesday mill actually lay, of the three members of the manor it is Brackley that has the most substantial stream on which a mill could have been constructed. The Old Town Mill is first identified in 1270 as lying against '*Banlonde*' and '*the great bridge of Torveston*'.⁶⁹ The mill was burnt down and rebuilt in 1458.⁷⁰ This must be the mill recorded in 1830 to the east of the Old Town, lying immediately east of Banlond and south of the road which led towards Turweston. The site is still occupied by buildings today. It is possible that the Hospital built a second water mill in the Old Town for in 1260-5 there is reference to the 'upper mill' of the hospital, near Banland.⁷¹ This is probably the malt mill by le Banlonde in 1270.⁷²

3.1.2.6 Water Mills: Cutler's Mill

Leland refers to a '*Cutlers Mill*' which had been driven by the Goldwell Stream. This may explain the presence in Goldwell Close in 1760 and 1830 of a rectangular pond with small 'island' at its outlet.⁷³ No reference to this has been found in the medieval sources while no building is depicted there on the 1760 map and so it may prove to have been a short lived 16th century mill.

3.1.2.7 Windmill

A windmill is recorded in the manor in 1321-2.⁷⁴ Although this could have been in Halse it may have been on the same site as that depicted on the high ground to the west of the town in c.1720.⁷⁵ This mill is not depicted on Eayre's map but is shown on Thomas Jeffery's mid 18th century map of Buckinghamshire, lying immediately north west of the new town.

69 Mag. Coil. 85A.

70 Mag. Coll. B9OA

71 Mag.Coll., 21a.

72 Mag.Coll., 1270.

73 Leland, f.55b.

74 PRO, SC6/1145/19.

75 Bailey, B. (ed.), 1996, Northamptonshire in the Early 18th Century, Northamptonshire Record Society, 26.

3.1.2.8 Bakehouse

No evidence has been recovered regarding common bakehouses in Brackley.

3.1.2.9 Park & Warren

An area of woodland, which may in part have given Brackley its name, appears to have lain on the gentle valley side and valley bottom to the south of the Old Town. This is the area of Grove and Breech field names in the medieval and post medieval period which extend almost to St. Peter's church with Denny Grove next to Bassets Lane. At least part of this area was cleared for agriculture by the 12th century with one furlong here known as le Breech. However it would appear that another part was possibly some form of park belonging to the lord.⁷⁶ The Grove was certainly in existence as an enclosed area by 1170-80 when the lord of the manor granted the Hospital 2.5 acres below their courtyard which extended to the ditch which enclosed his grove. In 1270-1272, in order apparently to create a park or warren, the Hospital reached an agreement with the community of Brackley regarding the dispute over pasture land which the Hospital had bought from Sir John de la Haye, who at that time held part of the manor demesne. The Hospital were to have sole rights over the field land in le Brech and le Grofhey below their courtyard, extending from their sheepfold by the old ditch as far as the stream dividing Brackley from Turweston so they could enclose it with a ditch and wall. In return the community were to have common in another land which the Hospital had from Sir John.⁷⁷ In 1279 a further agreement the community relinquished all their rights in the Grove of the Hospital in return for rights of pasture in le Brech and le Grofhey. '*Le Groves*' belonging to the Hospital was further released of all common rights in 1425, when the common land was re-defined as lying outside the '*Groveheyditch*'.⁷⁸

This, possibly extending a park of the lord, must be the origin of the park belonging to the Hospital recorded in 1446 when an order was issued by the Archbishop of Canterbury for the excommunication of the people who '*entered the Hospital, broke down its walls and hedges, killed and carried off a great quantity of hares and fishes...*'⁷⁹ It is likely that the slightly curving northern boundary of the College Estate in 1830 represents this ditch of 1425, enclosing a large area to the south with several grove field names, with the croft land to the north being that over which the common rights were retained by the community. The Grove extended as far south as the township boundary with Evenley with the tenements fronting the market place in the 13th century extending east to the bank of the grove. The whole area of the Grove was apparently not turned into a park as by 1415 it was being subdivided, when the hospital leased out a parcel of the Grove, 40 perches long and 8 broad (640ft by 128ft if a 16ft perch) with and adjoining croft between the Chapel of St. James and the watercourse.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ 'Le Grave' was used as a name for a park in Easton on the Hill in the mid 14th century. Steane, 1975, NP&P.

⁷⁷ Mag.Coll. B95 & D119.

⁷⁸ Mag. Coll. DI

⁷⁹ Forrester, 1956, 259.

⁸⁰ Mag.Coll., 313.

To the east of the chapel in 1760 the College had a large enclosed estate which contained a flight of five rectangular ponds which may in origin be the medieval ponds within the park or warren.

3.1.2.10 Sheepfold

The sheepfold of the Hospital is first mentioned in 1270 in connection with the enclosure for the park or warren, indicating that it lay at the western end of that property, presumably adjacent to the courtyard of the Hospital. In 1297 the sheepfold is said to lie next to a walled croft on the way towards Turweston bridge, which must mean the Buckingham road.⁸¹ This would imply that the sheepfold lies at the north west corner of the walled enclosure adjacent to the road.

3.1.2.11 Gallows

In 1276 the right of the Zouche family in Brackley were confirmed including the rights to a gallows.⁸²

3.1.2.12 Wells

In addition to St. Rumbold's and Goldwell, in the Old Town, there were three other major wells: Linch well which rose at the back of the town and ran into Castle Close, the Burwell which lay at the north end of Brackley and there was another well in the market place.⁸³ In addition there are several other lesser wells recorded on the 1760 map, lying on the waste, the publicly accessible land owned by the lord, including the streets, market place and greens.

3.2 CHURCH

The ecclesiastical organization would appear always to have been based on a mother church of Brackley St Peters in the Old Town. Although previously the Domesday Church has been placed in Halse, the exact wording could be interpreted as referring to Brackley, particularly in view of the later parochial organization, hence St Peters can probably be assumed to be of Saxon origin. The RCHME claim that Brackley church was in origin a dependency of the church at Halse seems to be based on the pattern of manorial dependency mentioned by Bridges. The absence of architectural evidence earlier than the Norman period is no major problem judging by the lack of correlation between the two types of evidence elsewhere in the county. The St Peters dedication itself may also support an early origin for the church, but whether the approximately circular form of the churchyard is of similar significance is unclear. In this context the Legend of St Rumbold is probably relevant.⁸⁴ St. Rumbold was according to legend, son of King Alenfrid of Northumbria and of St.Cyneburga, the daughter

⁸¹ Mag.Coll. D196.

⁸² Baker, 1, p.562.

⁸³ Baker, 1, p.560.

⁸⁴ Acta Sanctorum, vol.1. Butler.

of Penda. He was said to have been born in Kings Sutton,⁸⁵ to have died as a baby in the village and was then moved to Brackley to be buried and later moved again for re-burial in Buckingham.⁸⁶ It has been suggested that this legendary link between the three settlements may reflect their early importance in the Saxon period as ecclesiastical centres. In Brackley St Rumbold's Well lay a short distance to the west of St Peters Church.

The advowson of St. Peter's was granted by Robert Mellent, 1st Earl of Leicester to the Abbey of St. Mary of Leicester.⁸⁷ In the later 12th century charter St Andrews at Halse (now lost), and St James' Syresham were both recorded as chapelries of St Peters.⁸⁸ In 1318 there was confirmation of the original grant to Leicester Abbey of the church at Brackley with the chapels of Halse and Syresham with the tithes of Brackley and the soke of Halse.⁸⁹ Within Brackley itself St James' chapel and the hospitals of St John and St Leonard were all subsidiary to St Peters. In addition, when the vicarage of Brackley was instituted in 1223 it was endowed with two parts of the corn tithes of 8 yardlands in Evenley and the tithes of two yardlands in Little Whitfield.⁹⁰ In 1150-58 there is also reference to the preservation of tithe in Whitfield to the mother church of Brackley.⁹¹ Finally one must note Dugdale's comment that Brackley was the mother church of the whole deanery. The secular and ecclesiastical patterns are similar in all but the apparent location of the administrative centre. With such a close correspondence one might perhaps have expected a single manorial and ecclesiastical centre.

The area of the chapelry of St James can be recovered from the Inclosure and the mid 18th century maps with supporting evidence from earlier charters. In 1250-60 specific reference is made to a tenement lying in the Old Town in St. Peter's parish⁹² and in 1251 to a tenement probably in the New Town⁹³ which also lay in St. Peter's parish.⁹⁴ With the foundation of the New Town, or soon after, the original parish was divided with the establishment of a further chapelry, of St. James. Although both Halse and the Old Town lay wholly within St. Peter's parish, the ecclesiastical division did not correspond to the borough and field system division, for in 1830 the northern half of the settlement area of the borough lay in St. Peter's parish and the southern half in St. James's, an approximately even division. In the 1801 census St James'

85 Cam 1944

86 Leland

87 Caley Ms.

88 Baker.

89 Cal. Charter Rolls, vol3, p.379.

90 Rot. Hug. Wells, annis 15 & 20, quoted by Nichols.

91 BL, Harl.84.D12.

92 Mag. Coll., D195.

93 Unlike the references to the Old Town, the new town is rarely mentioned and it seems that silence in this respect normally means the property is in the New Town.

94 Mag. Coll., 66.

parish comprised 106 houses (619 people) and St Peter's 150 houses (801 people), the latter of course also including the Old Town. In contrast the division of the fields was far less equal with only 360 of the 1300 acres of unenclosed land lying in St James' parish, but the 1300 acres includes the Old Town lands, and if these are removed, the 360 acres in St James' parish is far closer to an equal division of the open field land of the New Town. What is not clear is whether the division of the field system between the two Brackley parishes was a simple boundary between two consolidated blocks of land or if the strips in the two parishes were intermixed in the two field systems. The interspersal seen following inclosure is no guide as that simply reflects the parish within which the individual owners' strips lay prior to enclosure.⁹⁵ Detailed documentary research to resolve this matter could add significantly to our understanding of the original planning of the town. There may have simply been an even division of the titheable wealth of the town between the two parishes at a stage in the late 12th or early 13th century when the town was reaching its maximum extent. Alternatively the extent of St. James's parish may reflect an early stage in the foundation of the New Town and have fully encompassed the new foundation, the New Town only later expanding into St. Peter's parish.

3.2.1 St. Peter's church

The church is described in detail by the RCHME and so is only briefly discussed here.⁹⁶ St Peter' lies within an oval churchyard and was the mother church and almost certainly of Saxon origin. The earliest architectural features, the south door and north west transept arch, are however only of Norman date, though the 12th century features do suggest a nave of the present proportions. The remainder of the church is primarily of 13th century construction, with a fine tower, a south arcade of four bays, aisles, and chancel, while the north arcade, south and north aisle windows, and the chapel added to the chancel are all of early 14th century date. The church was depicted by Tillemans in 1719.⁹⁷ It was restored in the late 19th century. The structure itself faces towards the Borough as the more important settlement for the imposing main entrance is set unusually in the west end facing the New Town.

3.2.2 St. James's Chapel

The chapel of St James was in existence by 1250-60,⁹⁸ but it is likely to be somewhat earlier and may have been founded at the same time as the New Town. There was a Norman font in the chapel but this could of course have been brought from elsewhere at a later date. There is

⁹⁵ The presence of two detached, enclosed parts of St James' parish within St Peter's is difficult to explain, but may reflect the Inclosure of Common land which necessitated allocation of an appropriate share to each parish. Certainly tenements in both parishes had previously had common in Banlands, which is believed to have been in this area, between the Old and New Town.

⁹⁶ RCHME churches survey, unpublished notes in SMR.

⁹⁷ Bailey, op.cit.n.?, p.28.

⁹⁸ Mag. Coll. D247; 53.

nothing of Norman construction described in the architectural descriptions, which suggest the structure was of early English and later construction.⁹⁹

The chapel is visible on Tilleman's view of the town in 1719 and 1721.¹⁰⁰ The building was not particularly large: the nave was 57ft 7inches long and 25ft 2 inches wide, the aisles 12ft 4 inches wide and equal in length to the nave, the chancel with the south chapel was 32ft 11 inches long and each was 18 ft wide. The south aisle had lancet windows, the north perpendicular.¹⁰¹ Bridges describes it as having in 1720 two small aisles with a low coped tower on the north side of the west end, containing two bells.¹⁰² Leland describes it as '*an old pece of worke, and on the south syde of the chaunsell of it is a faire chapell or isle, and there be in the wyndow sydes, in stone, imagis beringe woll sakks in theyr hands, in token that it was of the stapelers makyng.*' This is presumably the chantry chapel licensed in 1309¹⁰³ which was endowed with land to the value of £10 per annum by Thomas de Luton¹⁰⁴ who is described elsewhere in 1317 as '*a merchant of Brackley*' involved in the wool trade to the continent.¹⁰⁵

According to Leland St. James's was a chapel of ease to St. Peter's. The chapel continued in use and by 1628 this area of the town had become known as St James End. Regular services were still held there in the 1720s¹⁰⁶ but by the mid 18th century, reflecting the declining importance of this part of the town, the chapel was in difficulties for the vicar refused to give services there until in 1755 three closes of meadow were given to ensure three Sunday services a month.¹⁰⁷ In the early 19th century services were still regularly held at the chapel, and at the Hospital chapel.¹⁰⁸ The chapel, which is described by Baker was demolished in 1836 being replaced by a smaller building which was in turn demolished in 1938.¹⁰⁹

99 Baker. The evidence for the chapel is briefly discussed in the RCHME churches survey, unpublished notes in SMR.

100 Bailey, B.A., 1996, Northamptonshire in the Early 18th Century : The Drawings of Peter Tillemans and Others, NRS volume 39, p.26-7.

101 Baker.

102 18th century history of brackley, NRO E(B)... Bridges, 1, 151.

103 Patent Rolls.

104 NRO Y24212

105 Mag.Coll.

106 Bridges,m 1, 151.

107 Green.

108 Baker, 1, p.575.

109 Baker, 1, p.579.

3.2.3 Crosses

In addition to the market cross, according to Leland other crosses stood at the southern entrance to the town and at the west end of St James church.¹¹⁰

3.2.4 Vicarage

A vicarage was instituted at Brackley in 1223. It acquired a third part of the tithes of Brackley and Hawes with a vicarage house and part of the tithes of both Evenley and Little Whitfield.¹¹¹ At the dissolution the advowson of the vicarage passed to the crown, subsequently being granted with the Rectory. In 1578-9 and in 1579 William Lyle presented to the vicarage.¹¹²

In the early 19th century the Vicarage House stood north west of the church and had been recently modernised and improved. The medieval vicarage may have been created on one or more pre-existing tenements, possibly a row fronting north onto Plymston Lane or on land to the south of such a tenement row. The extensive property of the early 19th century is likely to have resulted from the expansion over adjacent properties. The site of the medieval rectory has not been located and it is likely that this will have lain close to the church, but none of the material so far recovered from the area would suggest the presence of the rectory. This issue requires further detailed documentary research on both rectory and vicarage. Though the vicarage property was bisected by the access to the church from the west it is possible that this was a late insertion and that originally the church was approached from the New Town via the lane depicted in 1763 to the south and east of Goldwell Close.

3.3 MONASTIC AND OTHER ESTABLISHMENTS

3.3.1 Monastic Houses

3.3.2 Hospital of St. John (later St. James & St. John)

The Hospital of St John was founded in about 1150 by Robert de Beaumont, 2nd Earl of Leicester, who was involved in the endowment of various religious houses, raising the collegiate church of St Mary de Castro in Leicester into the Abbey of St. Mary; founding the Abbey of Garendon, the monastery at Nuneaton and the Priory of Luffield.¹¹³ At Brackley the Earl made a foundation endowment of an acre of land to build a Hospital for the poor, with a free chapel with burial rights, which was also to be a demesne chapel of the grantee. The advowson thereafter was held by the lords of the manor. It was established with a prior and 5

¹¹⁰ Leland.

¹¹¹ Bridges, 1, p.150.

¹¹² Bridges, 1, p.150.

¹¹³ DNB.

or 6 brethren under the Augustinian Rule.¹¹⁴ As part of the endowment 2 virgates of land in Brackley were also given to the Hospital. The grant was confirmed in 1170-80 by Robert, 3rd Earl, who added 2.5 acres adjacent to the hospital and land of the lord's grove below the Hospital court. The Grove was certainly in existence by 1170-80 when the lord of the manor granted the Hospital 2.5 acres below their courtyard which extended to the ditch which enclosed the grove. This plot was 19 perches 8ft (321ft) broad and 13 perches (214ft) long from the wall enclosing the courtyard to the bank which inclosed the grove.¹¹⁵ Roger de Quincy granted land below the cemetery and the building formerly William de Merton's for the extension of the cemetery.¹¹⁶ In the years which followed the founding of the hospital large amounts of land in Brackley and other villages, as well as various crofts and messuages, and the castle mill all come into their possession. For example, Richard son of William Harcourt gave the Hospital a grove outside the town with rights to plough it up or enclose it.¹¹⁷ In 1228 there were grants of further diverse gifts to the hospital.¹¹⁸ From the late 13th century the Hospital was known as St. John and St. James. In 1360 the chapel of the Hospital was rebuilt at a cost of over £34.¹¹⁹ There were continuing grants to the Hospital by the lords of Halse during the 14th and 15th centuries.

Originally there was a master and fellows, all secular canons not subject to ecclesiastical rule, though the master was to be in holy orders. In 1423 upon the death of the then master there was no reappointment and Lady Lovell gained licence to convert into a religious house of friar preachers, but this was not apparently done. Instead the Hospital had been re-established by 1425 when the decay and poverty of the hospital was detailed.¹²⁰ Thereafter it was governed by a master until granted to Magdalen College. The College then maintained a priest in the Chapel to say mass for the souls of the Lords Lovell. This chantry was maintained until 1548-9 when the site was turned into a school. In 1720 the chapel was held from the College by lease and was in a ruinous condition.¹²¹

The Hospital had been composed of two quadrangles.¹²² Unfortunately relatively little has been recovered from documentary sources to elaborate out understanding of the character of the complex. In the early 14th century reference is made to the refectory and chambers of the

114 Baker, 1, p.579. Dugdale incorrectly states that the Hospital was founded by the first Earl of Leicestershire. Mag.Coll., 1160-70 (5).
Licence to Salmon, Master of the Hospital to have a church and right of burial but various other rights were retained by the mother church.
This was a licence from the Abbot of Leicester.

115 Mag.Coll., 54.

116 Baker, 1, p.580.

117 Bridges, 1, p.152.

118 Cal.Charter Rolls, vol.1, p.77.

119 Nichols, app.68.

120 Mag.Coll., C62, C121.

121 Bridges, 1, p.151.

122 Bridges, 1, p.151-2.

hospital.¹²³ There was a chamber in the hospital called 'le Sexterye' at the west end with a garden leased out in 1416.¹²⁴ In 1423 there was property leased out which lay on the east side of the gate of the hospital, comprising a ground floor chamber, a chamber above and a chamber over the gate with a chamber called 'le Garrit'.¹²⁵ An inventory of the goods and furniture of the Hospital was made in 1449.¹²⁶

By the mid 13th century about 80 properties in the town are listed in a survey of Hospitals lands¹²⁷ and by 1830 Magdelene College which then held the former Hospital estates was the largest landowner in Brackley with 805 acres, in addition to the large area of old inclosures to the east of the Chapel. A large proportion of the properties derived from successive lords of the manor but various other individuals also made grants to the Hospitals. Many of these people were later buried there judging by the tombs Leland describes as being in the presbytery. *'There ly buried in tumbes dyvers noble men and women in the presbitery of this churche: first 2 noble men in one tombe havynge in theyr shelds a lyon rampant and flures de luce. There lyeth on the south syde in the wall a noble man'¹²⁸ havynge in a feld of gules 10 besants of gold. And at his feet lyethe anothar havynge in his sheld a lion rampant. There lyethe also Robert Holand that dyef in anno dni 1373. Maud his wyfe lyethe there also. There lyethe a noble man and his wyfe. He berithe in his shild varre gold and gules'*¹²⁹. In contrast Leland saw *'no tumbre or great antiquiti'* in the parish church of St.Peter.¹³⁰

Robert Holland, whose tomb lay there, had been Lord of the Manor in the mid 14th century and his tomb were still there in the mid 18th century when the anonymous historian wrote: 'I have seen his effigis on his ruined monument habited in armour.'¹³¹ The Countess of Winchester was buried in the Hospital at Brackley in 1252.¹³²

The mere presence of a hospital, and particularly the rapid development of its wealth mirrors the growth and prosperity of the town itself from which the greater part of the hospitals income was derived through land and rents. The fortunes of the town are also reflected in the later history of the hospital, which by the late 13th century had been known as St John and St James, for it was empty in 1423 when it was re-endowed by Lady Lovel with the intention

123 Mag.Coll., B242.

124 Mag.Coll., C41.

125 Mag.Coll., D118.

126 Mag.Coll., B66.

127 (Mag.Coll. D247),

128 This is a Lord Zouche. 18th century history of Brackley, E(B)...

129 The latter is John Lord Loverl, d.1408. 18th century History of Brackley. E(B)...

130 Leland

131 C18th History of Brackley, NRO E(B)...

132 Richard, Henry, (ed.), 1880, □Matthew Paris□.

that it should become a House of Friars¹³³ and hospital for the poor, old, sick, travellers, and pilgrims.¹³⁴ Her wishes do not appear to have been carried out for it was still '*in great disorder*' with no inmates or fellows when sold to the Bishops of Winchester as an endowment to Magdalene College Oxford in 1484.¹³⁵ However Leland does say that '*there was of late a place of Crossyd Friars*'. From 1484 the College maintained a chantry priest for the chapel until 1548 when the last priest died and it was converted into a Free School. The fellow of Magdalen College who was appointed to say mass for the souls of the Lovells had a chamber on the south side of the chapel together with a garden adjoining. However he died soon after and the College then established a free school. The master retained the chamber until it was demolished in 1787 and a plain school house erected just to the south.¹³⁶

In 1669 the Chapel roof was stripped, and not replaced until 1690. Before its restoration in 1744 the chapel was 120 ft by 22 ft with an aisle and a broad tower on the north east side, with the offices and the rooms of the priest set around two quads. The Old Hall had been removed some 50 years before Bridges described it c.1720, and before 1744 when it was restored by J Welchman, and religious services reinstated for the benefit of the town,¹³⁷ the chapel was in a ruinous state with the glass and tombstones removed.¹³⁸ Magdalen College did still keep up the chapel after 1734. It was described in 1720 as 120 foot long and 22 wide, with one aisle with a low broad tower. The west front of the Hospital chapel was depicted by Tillemans in 1719.¹³⁹ A small building for forge bellows was erected on the School property in 1781 by the clockmaker in Brackley.¹⁴⁰ The school was removed to newer buildings to the south in 1878. All the medieval monuments had completely gone from the chapel by the early 19th century.¹⁴¹ The chapel itself was altered in 1810 and restored and buttressed in 1850 but by 1870 it was again disused when it was re-fitted as a school chapel.¹⁴² The building as it survived in the 19th century is described in detail by Baker.¹⁴³ At that time all that remained of the former ranges of buildings around the two courts were 'a few detached traces of arches in the house and back garden south of the chapel'.¹⁴⁴ The building which survives today includes work of the 13th and 14th century, but with an impressive Norman west door and a Norman font, but the whole structure has been much altered by the Victorian and earlier restorations. On the southern side are the blocked arches and various other

133 NRO YZ 4212

134 VCH II, 1906, p.151

135 NRO YZ 1628

136 Baker, 1, p.584.

137 Baker, 1, p.584.

138 NRO YZ 4222

139 Bailey, op.cit.n.?, p.28.

140 Mag.Coll., DY217.

141 Baker, 1, p.582.

142 NRO YZ 1628

143 Baker, 1, p.582.

144 Baker, 1, p.582.

structural evidence of the aisles and chapels which have been demolished. The only archaeological evidence from the site is the reported discovery during the early Victorian restoration of two stone coffins '*within the walls*', one of which was said to have been of a priest.¹⁴⁵

3.3.3 Leper Hospital of St. Leonard

The Hospital of St. Leonard, for the sick, infirm and for lepers is first mentioned in a deed of 1250, though it is likely to have been founded somewhat earlier. In 1250 a house with a croft in St Peters parish is described as lying '*at the head of the Old Town towards the Hospital of St Leonard*'.¹⁴⁶ It seems likely that this croft is in the area of Old Town Paddocks as this was in 1830 the highest, most westerly part of the Old Town. In 1280 the Leper Hospital is described as being '*extra Brackley*' when Elena le Zouche granted 10 marks rent in Brackley to the hospital to support 2 chaplains.¹⁴⁷ The northern most part of the town recorded in 1760 lay beyond the borough boundary stone. Bridges states that it lay outside the town about half a mile from St James'.

The Hospital is variously mentioned in the 1280s,¹⁴⁸ in 1309 when a warden and brothers are referred to,¹⁴⁹ and again in 1332 when the master of St Leonards is mentioned.¹⁵⁰ In 1313-14 the lord of Brackley claimed the advowson of the Leper Hospital.¹⁵¹ However, by 1417 just one master is recorded for St Leonards and St John's indicating that the two had probably merged.¹⁵² By 1423 St Leonard's is described not as a hospital but as a Free Chantry to which an income of 40/- was paid from the income of the manor.¹⁵³ Leland refers to the chapel of St. Leonard at the north end of the town, showing it still was in existence in the mid 16th century, and in 1588-9 it was described as Brackley chapel or hospital free chapel, at which time there was some land appurtenant to the chapel.¹⁵⁴

An anonymous 18th century history of the town reports that '*there was formerly a church dedicated to St. Andrew which stood near the upper end of the town on the west side the site of the tower seemed to me distinguishable some years ago when I visited it.*' This presumably represents the site of St. Leonard's, though there has been a confusion of dedication with that

145 Green, 1869

146 NRO YZ 1634.

147 NRO, E(B) 6.

148 Cal Pat Rolls, 1281-92, p.237 : leper hospital without Brackley.

149 Knowles and Hadcock, 1953, 257.

150 Martin.

151 18th century History of Brackley, NRO E(B)....

152 NRO YZ 1634.

153 NRO, E(B)14.

154 Patent Rolls, 31 Eliz pt.5.

of the former chapel at nearby Halse. The two hospitals in Brackley were united in the 15th century and thus it seems likely that the College might still own the land of St Leonards. There was only one College tenement in the area in 1760. In 1869 Green reported that the hospital stood near the toll gate at the north end of the town, saying it '*must have been earlier (than 1280) by a single relique of it, now in Mr Nicholl's garden, which has two lancets under one semicircular arch apparently about 1200.*'¹⁵⁵ In 1830 the inclosure award lists the tenement owned by J Nichols,¹⁵⁶ and in 1839 a Mr Nichols is listed as owning an adjacent property, the same property that the College had owned in 1760.¹⁵⁷ This then may prove to be the site of the medieval leper hospital.

However, the omission of the hospital from the 15th and 16th century town rentals is almost certainly because it lay in the old town.¹⁵⁸ These rentals can be mapped with a high degree of accuracy by reference to later maps, and all the plots to the north of the Halse Road on the west side of the High Street are identified as burgage tenements. This would indicate that the Hospital cannot lie in this area as Leland saw the chapel of St. Leonard still standing in the 1540s. The only plot on the west side of the High Street not described in the rentals as a burgage tenement lay to the south of the Halse Road, again within the borough. As the Hospital lay outside the Borough it seems more likely that it lay on the east side of the High Street immediately north of St. Peter's Road. The hospital can thus not be located exactly but it is almost certain that the Almshouses, which lay immediately south of Halse lane in 1760, were not the successors to the Hospital, and evaluation trenching there in 1996 did indeed fail to find any trace of activity which might have been associated with a hospital.

3.3.4 Almshouses

In the late 15th century the rentals located an almshouse adjacent to the market place, but it was in decay by the early 16th century and by 1520 was merely a house. The building known in recent times as the Almshouses seems to have been founded on the site of previous tenements in c.1633 by Sir Thomas Crewe, for six poor persons.¹⁵⁹ By the 1760s the Almshouses lay within a wide plot fronting onto the High Street, the building covering the same area as at present and indeed it may in origin be the same building. The Almshouse plot extended behind the tenement immediately to the south and two small buildings lay in this area, one at the back and one close to the frontage. The almshouse plot already had a close to the rear at this time but this did not extend the full width of the frontage onto High Street, the result of the southern area being separate tenements in the 15th century. The closes attached to the tenement on the south side were appended to the tenement at Inclosure, in 1830. Prior to this the land to the rear was open field. The 1st edition Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map shows the tenement at the southern edge of the Almshouses as a separate plot, this was later

155 Green 1869.

156 Inclosure award 1830

157 Tithe Award 1839

158 Leland, p.35.

159 Baker.

thrown in with the Almshouses to form a single unit. The house currently lying at the south east corner of the plot is that recorded as a separate property on the 1880s map. In the 1880s the whole of the Almshouse plot behind the frontage was a garden and has remained as such, including the creation of two small orchards and two small buildings, until the present.

On the northern edge of the Almshouse site, adjacent to Halse Road, a small, narrow plot runs back from the High Street running parallel to Halse Road. By comparison with the alignment and width of that road on the opposite side of the High Street (which is now called Church Road but was in the 16th century called Goldwell Lane or the Cross Lane), it would appear that this small plot was a medieval or post medieval encroachment upon the Halse Road, both within the main tenement and also within the close to the rear. Although there are two tenements fronting onto the Halse Road on its north side in the 1760s, behind the main High Street frontage, there is no evidence of similar tenements fronting onto the Halse Road on its south side, though this must remain a possibility. It is possible that the close to the rear of the Almshouse in fact represents a medieval expansion of occupation along the Halse Road with a series of tenements fronting onto the road. If so then the suggested encroachment onto the road would suggest that any such frontage would be set back from the current edge of the road. Evaluation in 1996 failed to find any evidence for such occupation fronting north onto the Halse Road.

By the 1880s, on the first edition Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map, the small plot at the north end of the site was still separate but the close to the rear had been thrown in as a single unit with the main Almshouse plot. By this time a terraced row of buildings had also been added beyond the rear boundary of the property and fronting onto the back lane, by then known as Manor Road. Subsequent Ordnance Survey maps show development taking place within the close. First a terrace row of houses were constructed fronting onto Halse Road and then much later a group of houses were built to the rear of this, leading off Manor Court, a new road accessed from Manor Road. As a result, all but the south east corner of the original close is now built up, including its whole frontage onto Halse Road, although any medieval frontage onto the lane would probably lie within the back gardens of the terraced houses not under the houses themselves. The Antelope Hill, recorded on the 1st edition and subsequent Ordnance Survey maps, immediately to the rear of the Almshouse close does not relate to the latter (see below under inns).

Pest House

The first edition 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map shows on the site of the castle ditch at the west end of Castel Lane a small, narrow close which was the site of the former Pest House.

3.3.5 Schools

In the 18th century the former St. John's Hospital was converted into a free school of Magdalen College, which still at that time kept up the chapel *'by barely preserving the Roof and Wall, it being stript of its Decorations, the glass taken out of the windows, the seating gone, and the tombs ruinous , and made a Lumber Room, tis about 120ft in length and has*

*only one isle with a low broad Tower on the north west side coped at top in which was a pretty large Bell, but it was taken down about 20 years ago and carried to Oxford for Magdalen College use.*¹⁶⁰

3.3.6 Town Houses

A number of tenements distributed around the borough were the property of the town and managed by the feoffees.

3.4 TENEMENTS

3.4.1 Population and Wealth

Under the patronage of the Earls of Leicester the growth of the town must have been rapid, for although its 1086 population and valuation were not exceptional, but when compared to those of similarly sized parishes by 1173 the assize rent of Brackley was £66.18s.4d,¹⁶¹ far too large to have been paid by a village. In 1295-6 the burgesses assize rent of the 'villata de Brackley' was £6/17/11.25d and there were also 3 free tenants.¹⁶² By 1301 the town seems to have reached its peak for in the Lay Subsidy it rendered £24. 3s.1d, a value second only in Northamptonshire to the County town while other 'small towns' paid around £10. In 1334 the New Town alone was assessed at £10, again second only to Northampton which was assessed at £270. This is despite the fact that the town had already probably suffered from the decline of the woollen cloth industry in the boroughs (see below). However to put this into context it must be admitted that more than 100 towns in England were assessed at over £225, hence Brackley was by no means an important settlement in national terms.

In 1423, after a long period of decline, the burgess assize rent 52/4d.¹⁶³ By 1524 this wealth had declined dramatically in relative terms compared to the other settlements the county and it had been overhauled by several other small towns. The population levees recorded in 1377, admittedly after a period of sustained decline, does not show Brackley as the most populous of the small towns. It has only 254 people in the old and new towns together. This may be because it had declined dramatically in the preceding half century or more from its heyday in the 13th century. However it may also be that its wealth was relatively high, given the presence of international wool merchants, compared to its population. Although we know that the town went into relative decline in the post medieval period, its taxation figures show a steady rise in population between 1377, 1524 and 1674.

In the 1720s Bridges records 254 households in the New Town and 20 in the Old Town. There were also 9 houses in Hawes and 8 in Brackley Hatch.

¹⁶⁰ History of Brackley, NRO Box 9636.

¹⁶¹ Pipe rolls 19 Hen II. Also 27/2/4d farm of Brackley.

¹⁶² IPM, NRO E(B)9.

¹⁶³ NRO, E(B)14.

3.4.2 Borough/Burgage : The New Town

Had the new town been founded before the mid 12th century one might have expected the Leicester Abbey property, to have included part of the new town. It was however certainly in existence in 1173 when the assize rent was far greater than that of a village.¹⁶⁴ Certainly by 1202 the New Town was in formal existence as it was separately represented at the Assizes¹⁶⁵ and by 1260 the term Old Town was in use to distinguish the settlement around St Peter's from the 'Villata' of Brackley held by Elen as part of the manor of Halse, with view of frankpledge, carts, markets, fairs etc.¹⁶⁶

Within Brackley township there is no simple relationship between parochial, secular administrative and agricultural organization, a situation rendered more confusing by the failure to recover fully the parish or borough boundaries. The Old Town lay wholly within St Peter's parish and at the time of Inclosure (1830) it appears to have had its own separate field system. Until the Charter of Incorporation of 1686 it was not part of the Borough, although even as late as the 1720s the division between Old and New towns was still recognized in the early 18th century by Bridges. Indeed according to Bridges the Old Town, which lay outside the borough enjoyed none of the privileges. Unfortunately the only mapped evidence for the borough boundary is a single boundary stone on the 1760 map. However the Tudor rentals, from which we have been able to reconstruct an almost complete plan of the tenements of the town, almost without exception only describe tenements within the borough. They exclude the properties on the east side of the High Street between Goldwell and Old Town Lane, suggesting that they were not in the borough. Indeed elsewhere one tenement is specifically referred to in 1506 and 1486 as lying in the Old Town and is likely to be in this group of tenements. It is possible that at an earlier date the tenements on the west side of the road in may also have been outside the borough. This is because whereas in the Tudor period Leicester Abbey held numerous tenements in the Old Town, as part of the Rectory manor, it held only one property in the borough, in this specific area. As the Rectory was included in the foundation grant of the Abbey by the Earl of Leicester¹⁶⁷ it was probably prior to the foundation of the new town, so explaining the concentration of property in the Old Town. Various medieval charters indicate that the borough boundary ran down Goldwell Lane, for some tenements in the lane lay in the New Town¹⁶⁸ while other tenements there lay in the Old Town.¹⁶⁹ Such an interpretation is supported by not only the reference to St Leonards Hospital in 1280 as '*extra Brackle*',¹⁷⁰ but also more particularly in 1280-7 by the presence of

164 Pipe rolls 19 Hen II. Also, 27/2/4d farm of Brackley.

165 Beresford, 1967

166 Inq. Post Mortem

167 Leland, VI, p.12; Caley Ms.

168 Mag.Coll., D176, in 1308.

169 Mag.Coll., C30, in 1240.

170 Inq. ad quod Damnum, NRO, E/B 6

a tenant to the Prior of Luffield with the name ‘*Robert atte Barre*’,¹⁷¹ and the reference to the ‘tenementum atte Barre’ after 1316.¹⁷² This tenement can be identified as lying in the High Street west just to the south of Goldwell Lane.¹⁷³ From Goldwell it seems likely that the Goldwell brook may have been the boundary, for not only is the Leicester Abbey land restricted to the area north of the brook, also tenements identified as probably lying in the later Great Close between Bassets Lane and Goldwell Brook are described in the mid 13th century with no reference to them lying in the Old Town.¹⁷⁴ If this interpretation is correct then, together with the interpretation below for the field systems, it would appear that the borough and that of the field system of the Castle do coincide.

The borough

In 1202 the town was represented separately by its own jury at the assize,¹⁷⁵ and in 1210 mention is made of the burgage which Henry the baker held of the Hospital.¹⁷⁶ The first specific reference to borough status is however not until 1260 when Roger de Quincy granted certain liberties to the burgesses of Brackley,¹⁷⁷ while the bailiffs of the borough are listed in 1250-60 and 1256.¹⁷⁸ Unlike the other small towns in the county, other than Northampton and Higham Ferrers the charter established Brackley as a self governing borough.¹⁷⁹ Additional grants of exemption were made later. In 1299 the lord granted Thomas de Lutone and his heirs exemption from all tallages, ripsilver, adis and watches, office of provist or taster of beer, etc except for view of frankpledge.¹⁸⁰ A mayor was then conferred in 1313-14.¹⁸¹ Although the town sent no representative to Parliament until 1547, in 1337 its importance was recognized when three merchant staplers of Brackley, John de Astwick, John de Well and William le Rich, were summoned to Westminster to the King's council on trade, and similar writs were issued to the ‘*bailiffs of Brackley*’ in 1342 and 1344.¹⁸²

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171 Luffield Priory charters, LPC 408. Also Richard Attbare in 1309, Mag.Coll., D176.

172 LPC 764b.

173 Mag.Coll., D176, and Tudor rentals, tenement 1.

174 Mag.Coll., D177, D172, D19, 155.

175 Beresford, 1967.

176 Mag.Coll. B9.

177 Baker, I, p.567.

178 Mag.Coll., D.247,& 136.

179 Mag.Coll., 8.

180 Mag.Coll., D76.

181 Baker.

182 Baker.

1250-60 bailiffs (7)¹⁸³	1256 farmers & bailiffs (7)¹⁸⁴	1272 bailiffs (7)¹⁸⁵	1279 burgesses (28)¹⁸⁶	1341 burgesses (14)¹⁸⁷
			Cotes, Robert de	
			Dodeman, Wm.	
			Donestaple, Ric de	
				Flore, Giles de
			Goddot, Adam	
				Goddot, Wm
				Hardel, Thos.(jun)
				Hardel, Hugh
				Hardel, Thos.(sen)
		Hebbot, Ric.	Hebbot, Ric de	
			Hoker, Jordan	
			Holderness, Peter de	
			Holdernesse, Ric de	
Horn, Richard				
	Lambert, Wm.			
				Lodere, Hen de
London, John	London, John de			
				Love, John
Lutone, Roger de	Lutone, Roger de		Lutone, Roger de	
		Lyvot, Robert		
			Lyvot, Robert	
			Lyvot, John	
Mace, John	Mace, John			
				Mareys, John
			Pessun, Wm.	
			Riche, Wm (jun)	
Riche, Wm le	Riche, Wm. le	Riche, Wm. le	Riche, Wm.	
		Riche, Thom. le		
		Riche, Alex. le	Riche, Alex.le	
				Riche, Wm le

183 Mag.Coll. D247.

184 Mag.Coll. 4a.

185 Mag.Coll. D119.

186 Mag.Coll. B239 & 211.

187 Mag.Coll. C123.

			Russel, Wm.	
			Ryche, Andrew le	
			Salcibus, Th. de	
			Salcibus, John de	
				Stotesberie, John de
		Swet, Ric.	Swet, Ric	
				Szaltere, John le
			Taskere, Roger le	
				Terri, Henry
			Terry, Thos.	
			Tillesworth, Nic	Tillesworth, Nic. de
Waryn, Thomas	Waryn, Thomas		Waryn, Thom.	
Waryn, Ernald	Waryn, Ernald			
				Welle, John de
			Wytefeud, Walt.	
			Wytefued, John de	
			Yrento, John	
			Yrento, Wm.	

In the first lists between 1250 and 1272 there were seven bailiffs or ‘farmers’ of the borough representing the community of Brackley.¹⁸⁸ There are 28 men named in the first full list in 1279, including the seven bailiffs.¹⁸⁹ In 1588 a total of 23 burgesses are recorded as paying smokesilver.¹⁹⁰ In 1720 the corporation had seven alderman including the mayor and 26 burgesses. These alone elected the members of parliament. The lord of the manor had procured incorporation and therefore had the appointment of the mayor. The burgesses were chosen out of the New Town only.¹⁹¹ In the 18th century there were 7 aldermen, including the mayor, and 26 burgesses making in all 33.¹⁹² Under Edward VI Brackley sent a representative to parliament for the first time. Brackley became a ‘close borough’ with just 33 electors.¹⁹³

3.4.3 Virgate and Cottage tenements

188 Mag Coll., D247, 4a, D119.

189 Mag.Coll., B239, B211.

190 NRO E(B)217.

191 Bridges, 1, p.143.

192 History of Brackley, NRO Box 9636.

193 Baker.

In contrast to the borough and the burgages, the virgate and cottage tenements are very poorly understood, as indeed is the whole of the Old Town. The sale of the property by John de la Hay to the Hospital in circa 1270 included all the villeins in Brackley, Evenley and Sibbeford.¹⁹⁴ In 1386 they also leased out a croft in the old town with 12 acres of arable between the cottage of Richard Threchere and the croft formerly of Nicholas Herni.¹⁹⁵ The in 1394 leased a toft in the old village with 16 acres, the land possibly lying in the Old Town field.¹⁹⁶ In 1404 a tenement called Scathowse in the old town was let with 30 acres.¹⁹⁷ This is possibly the croft in the old town called Scatezerdes or one adjacent which had 1 virgate leased out with it in 1409. Significantly this property owed equal rent to the Abbot of Leicester as to the Hospital.¹⁹⁸ In 1411 a messuage and 10 acres is recorded in the old town.¹⁹⁹ In 1451 they leased out a messuage, cottage, croft and meadow with 32 acres.²⁰⁰ Tenements comprising messuage and virgate still existed in the 16th century.²⁰¹ While the vast majority of properties recorded in the old town are messuages, there are some cottages recorded, as in 1365 when three cottages in the Ratoun Row are mentioned.²⁰²

The pattern of tenure in Brackley appears to have been significantly different to that in some other towns such as Oundle, with some virgate land apparently being held by artisans, for in 1240 we find reference to a virgate which Henry the Baker had held.²⁰³ Then in 1386 we find that the Hospital leased out a messuage in ‘the upper part of Brackley’ with 30 acres of arable in the Castelfeld, formerly held by Thomas de Lutone, the wool merchant.²⁰⁴ In 1406 the Blakehall was leased with 22 acres and a shop.²⁰⁵ It is unclear whether these holdings in the possession of burgesses were solely those that lay in the Castle Fields of Brackley or if the burgess were also able to acquire virgate and other land in the Old Town fields.

3.4.5 Decline and Recovery

The archaeological evidence from Castle Lane is for the desertion of the five tenements at some time around 1300, far earlier than one might otherwise expect from the famines and

194 Mag.Coll., 48.

195 Mag.Coll., 92.

196 Mag.Coll., 55.

197 Mag.Coll., 64.

198 Mag.Coll., B72.

199 Mag.Coll., B5.

200 Mag.Coll., D12.

201 Cartwright of Aynho, 1206-1216. Messuage and virgate in Brackley from 1508 onwards.

202 Mag.Coll., B13.

203 Mag.Coll., C30.

204 Mag.Coll., 101.

205 Mag.Coll., C12.

then the plagues of the 14th century. This may simply be a reflection of specific factors relating to that tenement row and its owners, or indeed to changes within the town itself with some form of shift from the Castel End towards the market place and the High Street. However it could reflect a wider pattern of decline in the boroughs in the region in the late 13th and early the 14th century related to migration of the cloth industry to the small towns and villages. There is clearly the need for the recovery of good comparable samples of tenements from various locations within the town to compare the fortunes of different areas. The documentary evidence for the decline of the town would appear too fragmentary to assist in this regard. The first indication, probably under the impact of the famines, is the presence in 1322 of two virgate messuages lacking tenants.²⁰⁶ In 1349 we find Thomas Ernold surrendered a messuage whose rents were in arrears and the buildings ruinous through poverty for 16 years.²⁰⁷ The decline was clearly not just related to the Castle End, which the later descriptions particularly highlight, for in 1409 a croft in the old town called 'Sclatedyerdas' with 1 virgate as well as four tofts in Goldwell Lane were leased out by the Hospital.²⁰⁸ In 1415 John Chaldone was released from the indenture making and reinstating a house in the Old Town.²⁰⁹

The two mid 16th century descriptions of Brackley emphasise above all else the decay which had occurred in the borough. Leland says that '*the town of Brackley by estimation of old ruines hath had many streets in it and that large*'²¹⁰ and Camden also refers to the ruins. The town did not however fall, like several of the lesser market towns and market villages, to the status of a mere agricultural village. With the decline of the wool trade and presumably also of cloth production in the town in the 14th century, Brackley fell back onto its lesser functions as a local market town. By 1524 both in terms of wealth and population Brackley had fallen well behind some of the other small market towns in the county. This was an absolute not just a relative decline, judging by the number of deserted. The Old Town perhaps saw an even greater relative decline than the New Town, for in 1720 though there were 154 houses or families in New Town there were just 20 in Old Town.²¹¹ According to Bridges in the mid 16th century the fortunes of the town were to some extent revived under the patronage of the Earl of Derby, who died in 1572. It was apparently by his recommendation that Brackley returned members of parliament, that he revived the privileges of the Borough and thus enabled trade to increase.

3.5 COMMERCE

206 NRO, SC6/1145/19.

207 Mag.Coll., D227.

208 Mag.Coll., B72.

209 Mag.Coll., D25.

210 Leland, f.54.

211 Bridges, 1, p.143.

3.5.1 Market

It is unclear when the town first acquired its market, but the absence from Domesday is likely to be genuine. The market was undoubtedly established at the same time as the New Town was laid out and was certainly in existence well before the formal market grant of 1217. Bridges suggests that the original grant may have been obtained by the Earl of Leicester in the second half of the 12th century and it was almost certainly in existence by circa 1160 when the Hospital of St. John was founded, which lay at the northern end of the market place.

Like most early markets it was initially held on a Sunday, until 1217 when it was transferred to a Wednesday.²¹² Though the market clearly flourished through into the 14th century, by the mid 16th century, according to Leland, Brackley market was '*desolatyd*', having previously been held on a Wednesday.²¹³ However it was still depicted as a town by Saxton and is in Speed's list of market towns in 1610. Hence it seems unlikely that in the 16th century the market, though in severe decline, was ever completely disused. A thriving market was in existence in 1670²¹⁴ before the charter of 1668 which re-confirmed the market, fairs and the liberties of the borough. In 1686 the new charter confirmed the Wednesday market and extended it to include the sale of cattle.²¹⁵ In the earlier 18th century the then lord also promoted trade and '*raised the markets*' and gained another charter which confirmed the market right.²¹⁶ By the early 19th century the market was still in trouble and so in 1803 further incentive to commerce was given by abolishing the tolls. Despite this in 1822 Baker could still report the market remained at a '*low ebb*'.²¹⁷ It did however survive and in 1849 the Wednesday market was still functioning.²¹⁸

In the early 13th century the Hospital was granted an annual rent of £6/13/4d from the rents, lands, markets and fairs of the borough.²¹⁹ In 1296 and 1314 the yearly profit acknowledged by the manor from the market and fair together was 40/- with in addition 12/- from the rent of the stalls.²²⁰ In 1322 the annual profit from the toll of market and fair was 44/8d, though the total toll of market and court pleas for the fair was £6/13/4d per annum. In addition there was 8/9d income from the market stalls.²²¹ In 1423 the profit was 13/4d for market and fair.²²²

212 Close Roll; Baker, I, p.567

213 Leland

214 NRO, E/B 564.

215 Bridges, 1, p.148-9.

216 Bridges, 1, p.149.

217 Baker, 1, p.574.

218 Whellan, p.609.

219 Mag.Coll., 4a.

220 IPM, NRO E(B)9. PRO C133/76((3), IPM, Elena la Zouche. Baker, I, p.567. NRO E(B)18. NRO, E(B)19.

221 PRO, SC6/1145/19.

222 NRO E(B)14.

3.5.1.1 Market Place

The market place may originally have been in the area of Goose Green, in Castle End (see above) but more likely it was laid out at the foundation of the town in the position it presently occupies. This is a widening of the main street some 40m wide and over 300m long stretching along the flattest ground on the hilltop. The main market buildings including shop, stalls and market house lay at the southern end of the market place. Most of the inns, many of the alehouses and also the most important private houses seem to have fronted onto the market place in the medieval and post medieval period. Although now largely devoid of buildings and enclosures, apart from the 18th century market hall, the medieval and post medieval market place contained various enclosures, shop rows and other buildings, the last of which were not cleared away until the mid 20th century. Apart from the shops and stalls, the scale of encroachment onto the market place appears to have been very modest, unless the buildings and enclosures at the north end of the market place represent early encroachment which was no longer recognised as such in the 18th century documents. This is quite different to the pattern seen in most other market place in the county, where there is evidence which would suggest, and in the case of Oundle is clearly documented, large scale early encroachment. The shape of the market place is also very different to that of some of the other small towns in the county, where market squares were the norm.

3.5.1.2 Shops & Stalls

In 1314 the rent of the market stalls was 12/-.²²³ By 1322 there were 24 market stalls at a rent of 8/9d, but they included decayed rent for 7 stalls which were burnt or vacant, at 3/6d.²²⁴ This gives a total rent of 12/3d suggesting the 1314 value is for the same stalls and indicating a rent of 6d per stall. Though this may represent the total of stalls in the market place in the early 14th century it is possible that others are not listed because held by different tenure, as seen at Oundle. It maybe for the same reason that no value is given for the shops in the market place which are recorded in various other 13th and 14th century sources.

Most of the shops as well as stalls probably stood as encroachments on the market place. In 1321 there is specific mention of '*an outer shop besides one towards the market in the middle of the street of Brackley in the row of shops where iron is sold*'.²²⁵ In 1385 St. Leonard's Hospital owned a shop, adjacent to one held by the Hospital of St. John.²²⁶ However not all shops lay on the market place. In 1323 the Hospital leased to William le Scherman a shop united with a house that had been John son of Robert le Goldsmith's.²²⁷ These examples also reveal the fairly wide range of goods sold from the shops in the town in the high medieval

²²³ NRO, E(B)19.

²²⁴ PRO, SC6/1145/19.

²²⁵ Mag. Coll.D216

²²⁶ Mag.Coll., 38.

²²⁷ Mag.Coll., D97.

period. Only the workshops of the smiths are perhaps likely to have been sited away from the market, as for example the smithy and house of Hugh the Smith mentioned in 1243.²²⁸

Though not specified in the medieval sources, it is likely that the shambles or butchers' stalls and the drapery stalls, recorded in the 16th and 17th centuries, were of medieval origin. The rows of shops and stalls in the 16th and 17th centuries are likely to have been restricted to the three rows depicted in 1760. The 1760 map shows all three rows as *'The Shambles'*. However, the discussion of the butchers' stalls in 1670 does seem to refer to just a single row of stalls. If so, then the others two rows may be the Drapery, with its 18 stalls recorded in 1586,²²⁹ while the other may even represent the row of shops of 1321 where iron was sold. However, given the scale of decline in Brackley during the later medieval period it seems likely that there were many more shops and stalls in the early 14th century than survived to be recorded in the post medieval. If so then they are likely to have been located where other encroachments are recorded in 1760, mainly surviving then as gardens, immediately to the north of the shambles and, perhaps less likely, opposite the Hospital. The former, if it does indeed in part represent the old market hall (see below), then it would be quite likely that, as in Oundle, it was accompanied by shops and stalls.

While the number of shops and stalls is likely to have reached a minimum in the later 14th and 15th centuries, by the 17th and 18th century new stalls and shops were certainly being constructed in response to a renewed growth of commerce in the town. For example in 1670 John Stoake *'a mercer and shopkeeper'* asked for a parcel of ground in *'the Little Markett place towards the Crosse to build thereon a shopp'*. There was also an investigation to see if the Butchers stalls could be added to *'without prejudice to the Street Fayre and markett'* and it was decided that one might be added at each end to make six but that any more would *'stopp upp the passage in the cheife part of the street'*.²³⁰

In addition to the island of shops within the market place, by the 16th century there were other shops at the front of tenements fronting the market place, being small encroachments upon the waste. The record of encroachments in 1588 includes a little porch and a shop with a sign and sign post by it. A number of other encroachments also included sign posts, presumably for shops on the adjacent tenements. In all there were five shops, including specific mention of a butcher's, tailor's and smiths' shops amongst the encroachments.²³¹ By 1757 the number of shops representing encroachments had risen to 24 shops, of which two were said at that time to be *'down'*.²³² These shops, apart possibly from two which probably lay in the island of encroachment north of the Shambles, were all extensions in front of tenements fronting the market place. This seems to represent a development of the later 16th, 17th and early 18th

228 Mag.Coll., D55.

229 NRO, E(B)217.

230 E/B 564

231 NRO, E(B)217.

232 E(B)

century, a quite different solution to the expansion of shops from the dedicated shop rows on the market place itself, which are likely to have been the main medieval provision. The late date of these developments does however need to be confirmed by archaeological investigation.

As well as the permanent shops, whether on the market place or fronting onto it, there was by the 17th century, and probably long before a specialisation of areas elsewhere within the market place. In 1670 the *'Little Market'*, the area between the shambles and the market cross, was where *'Peddlers and other petty stalls and tilts are set up, and where garden ware Pottery Bread and butter is sold on market days'* but it was *'of so little compasse that it cannot conteyne half the country people'*.²³³

3.5.1.3 Market Cross

The main focus of commercial activity in the post medieval period was at the southern end of the market street where the large octagonal medieval market cross stood. It was finally demolished in 1705 to make way for the new Town Hall. The cross according to Leland was *'very antique, fair, and costly'* with *'dyvers tabernacles in this with ladies and men armyd.'* The cross stood 28ft high with an octagonal pillar with images on each side.²³⁴ Fragments of the cross were discovered in 1883 during the enlargement of the Town Hall.²³⁵

3.5.1.4 Town Hall

The site of the town hall before 1705 has not been established with certainty, but it was probably the building, or on the site of the building, which lay on the market place immediately north of the shambles in 1760. This can be concluded from the fact that in 1670 it was said that any extension to the shambles would *'stopp upp the passage in the cheife part of the street just against the towne hall'*.²³⁶ This may be the *'greatly decayed'* building of timber and slate called in 1588 the *'Draperie Howse'*. It belonged to the lord but was then in the occupation of the mayors of Brackley.²³⁷ It must be the building on the island of encroachment seen in 1760 to the north of the Shambles, which was still at that time in the lord's ownership. Buildings remained on this island in the early 19th century, the cellar of one, on the presumed site of the Draperie House, has been identified in water main trenching. Though survival potential appears to be low due the shallow depth of the natural below the road makeup, the trenching was very restricted in width and extent and further investigation of these areas is needed.

233 E/B 564.

234 Bridges, 1, p.143.

235 NRO YZ 1626.

236 E/B 564

237 NRO, E(B)217.

A new Town Hall, described by Bridges as ‘*a noble structure, sixty foot in length, and thirty five in breadth, supported by arches of stone,*’ was built on the site of the old market cross between 1705 and 1707. Its construction cost the Duke of Bridgewater more than £2000, but it was part of the lord’s attempt to revive commerce in the town.²³⁸ In its original form it had an open ground floor to give a covered market area, used in the mid 19th century as the corn market.²³⁹ The town hall was enlarged and altered in 1883.²⁴⁰

3.5.1.5 Stocks, Pound & Ducking Stool

There appears in 1340 to have been a ‘*Stockhouse*’, owned by the lord, in the middle of the street adjacent to tenements of the Hospital in the middle of the street.²⁴¹ As the only property held by the Hospital in the middle of the street was that opposite the Hospital itself it seems likely that the stocks were at this northern end of the market place. In 1760 on the market place, again at its northern end adjacent to the island of development, was the pound and the well, while in the centre of the market place lay a small pond with a ducking stool for the punishment of offenders.

The Shambles, Ducking Stool and the island of development opposite the Hospital including the Pound and Well were cleared away at some time between 1763 and 1830, presumably as part of the early 19th century acts for the improvement of urban settlements, as seen in Oundle. The presumed site of the early Town Hall remained however, the Pound also having been removed to this site, the property only being cleared away in the mid 20th century leaving just the 18th century Town Hall on the market place.

3.5.2 Fair

A medieval fair was presumably, together with the market, part of the original foundation of the town, though it is first specifically mentioned only in 1329-30.²⁴² Held on the feast of St. Andrew it is unusual in being held on the feast day of the dedication saint of Halse chapel rather than of either the mother church of Brackley (St. Peter) or of the town chapel (St. James). In 1329 the fair was confirmed as being held on the eve, day and morrow of the feast of St. Andrew (November 30th). Given the importance of the wool trade to the commercial life of Brackley it is clear from the date of the fair that the fair was not relevant to the trade in wool.

In a charter of 1553 granted to the Earl of Derby, two fairs were added, on the Tuesday after Easter for three days and the feast of St. John the Baptist (June 24th) for three days.²⁴³

238 Bridges, 1, p.143.

239 Whelland, p.609.

240 NRO YZ 1626.

241 Mag.Coll., 107.

242 Quo Warranto.

243 Patent vol.10 K1,1 Mary pt.15.

Though granted for three days, by 1585 the St. Andrew's fair was held for just one day and the later grants were all for just one day. The charter of 1682 added another on the feasts of St. Barnabas (June 11th) and St. Michael (29th September).²⁴⁴ According to the charter of 1708-9 the fairs were to be held on the Wednesday after Valentine's day (14th February), the second Wednesday in April, the Wednesday after Barnabas and the Wednesday preceding Michaelmas.²⁴⁵ By 1803 the fairs had to be rendered toll free in an attempt to revive their fortunes but this was ineffective for by 1822 Baker reports they were nearly in disuse, except for the ancient St. Andrews day fair, '*which is of considerable celebrity for the sale of cattle and articles of clothing, particularly shoes.*'²⁴⁶ They seem to have struggled on until at least 1849 when five fairs are listed: Wednesday after 25th February, April 19th, Wednesday after June 22nd, October 11th and December 11th.²⁴⁷

Records survive for the fair in 1585, giving a good indication of the way in which the fairs were organised, at least in the 16th century. Although only held for one day the associated work involved the bailiff for the three preceding and succeeding days. On St. Andrew's day that year the 18 stalls in the Draperie were let specifically for the fair at a total rent of 23/4d for the day.²⁴⁸ Then there was 26/5d taken in the open fair, from those who set up booths and '*standing*', that is laying out goods in the open. Also, taken at the barriers, were tolls for sale of cattle (8/1d), horses (6/4d) and hogs (8/8d). The total income from the fair was £3/12/10d. Of this there were outgoings of 16/6d leaving a profit of £2/16/4d.²⁴⁹ In all there were twelve men employed in addition to the bailiff to run the fair in 1585. This comprised two men each to take the tolls of sales of horses, cattle and hogs (8d each); one to accompany the bailiff in collecting the stallage payments (8d), one to keep the toll book (10d), 4 men attending the mayor to keep the peace (8d per man). Finally there was to the man that fetched the barriers (12d). In addition John Broccall, the mayor's bailiff, was paid 8/4d for his work on the fair and for the three days before and after.

Throughout its history the fair was presumably held in the market place and streets of the town, being specifically described in 1670 as '*the Street Fayre*'.²⁵⁰ It is clear that the 1585 fair was held in the street, with barriers being set out to control the stock which were for sale. There is no detail in 1585 of the full range of goods sold or their relative importance, however the total toll taken may provide guide to the relative importance of the various stock: hogs and cattle were more important than horses, while sheep did not appear at all.

244 Bridges

245 Patent : 7 Anne pt.4 n.3.

246 Baker, 1, p.574.

247 Whellan, 609.

248 The Draperie stalls were let at the fair for 16d each, less 8d for the end two of the side stalls, a total rent of 23/4d for the day.

249 NRO, E(B)217.

250 E/B 564

3.5.3 Inns & Alehouses

There was at least one inn on the market place at Brackley in the mid 13th century, when Roger the Goldsmith held, as a burgage, an inn which he had built, which was in front of the market stalls. This inn appears to have been built on an encroachment onto the market place, for which a 1d annual rent was payable to the lord.²⁵¹ In the 15th and early 16th century a larger number of inns can be identified, though this increase is likely, at least in part, to be simply a reflection of the more comprehensive nature of the documentary sources available. In 1408 the hospital leased out a thatched house called '*le George*' at the bottom of the churchyard of the hospital.²⁵² Between 1486 and 1520 there are four or possibly seven inns mentioned in the near complete rentals of the Borough. Four are specifically described as inns: The Antelope, le Angell, The Cock, le Blackhall known as The Crown in the 16th century; three other properties are given specific names which would suggest they were probably inns: le Cage, The Swan and le Hangman House.²⁵³ Of these, four fronted on to the market place, close to the concentration of inns and alehouses seen in the 18th century, and of which three were on the sites of 18th century inns or alehouses, while the other three were scattered along the High Street. It would appear that what is being recorded are the inns but not the alehouses, of which there must have been many, judging from the evidence of the number of contemporary brewers seen in some other towns.

Unfortunately, because it was a self governing Borough there are no records of alehouses in the town in the 17th century county lists. Records do exist for the 18th century and in 1755 the town had 33 alehouses, including 4 inns, placing it fourth after Northampton, Wellingborough and Towcester (though figures are not available for either Higham Ferrers or Daventry).²⁵⁴ The number of inns, providing a wider range of services including accommodation, seem to have remained fairly stable in number from the late 15th to the mid 18th century. Overall the number of alehouses clearly reflects both the significance of the market at Brackley, drawing in trade from a substantial hinterland, and the high level of travel on the major Northampton to Oxford road, at least in the 18th century.

In 1760 there were 6 inns and 21 alehouses mapped in the Borough of Brackley. Of these four inns were held by persons listed on the alehouse recognisances of 1755 as innholder. It may be that two alehouses were in the intervening period reclassified as inns or that the annotation on the 1755 list, not seen on any other of the alehouse recognisances in the county, is incomplete. There were 30 names listed in 1760 on the alehouse recognisances for Brackley, compared with the 27 places identified as such on the map. However six of the names cannot be correlated with names on the mapped inns and alehouses. Three of these probably represent the three mapped alehouses or inns not correlated with a name on the list and must represent either changes in tenancy in 1760 or that the actual alehouse or inn keeper was not the named tenant. The three other names do appear as tenants on other houses not

²⁵¹ Mag.Coll.27.

²⁵² Mag.Coll., B62.

²⁵³ Rentals of Brackley in 1520, 1509, 1506 and 1486 listed below.

²⁵⁴ NRO, Quarter Sessions Records, Alehouse Recognisances for 1775.

identified on the map as an inn or alehouse yet they may have been such. Alternatively the three missing alehouses may have been situated in the old town, which is not on the 1760 map, though this is unlikely given that there were only about 20 tenements in the old town at this time. Perhaps more likely is that at the very bottom end of the scale alehouse keeping was very fluid. Certainly there is slight variation from year to year in the numbers on the alehouse lists, with for example 33 alehouses in the town in 1755 but only 30 in 1760.

The number of alehouses in 1755 is almost identical to Towcester (34) which lay on the country's major road, Watling Street. As with Towcester and other towns the number of alehouses had fallen dramatically by 1828 to just 17, presumably resulting in part from a decline in the coaching trade but also undoubtedly reflecting the decline in the fortunes of the market noted by Baker in the early 19th century. However a similar decline is seen even in Kettering and Wellingborough, where the markets thrived at this time as they moved towards an industrialisation and which would later in the century transform them into the dominant towns of the county after Northampton.²⁵⁵

The inns all fronted directly onto the centre of the market place, close by the shops and stalls. The majority (9) of alehouses are also concentrated in this same area, but none in the northern half of the market place. Another small group (4) lay at the junction of the Buckingham road. The rest lay scattered along High Street and two in St. James's End. While the alehouses are in most cases typical small tenements without carriage access to the rear of the tenement from the main street, all the inns are medium or large properties and have such access, although there are several large alehouses which also have access, these almost all being on the market place.

3.5.4 Horse Racing

Though nothing in comparison with the national tournaments of the medieval period, in the 18th century, Brackley was noted in the 17th century for the horse races held on Bayards Green.²⁵⁶

3.5.4 Hinterland

The definition of hinterlands for this study has necessarily been conducted in a relatively simplistic fashion. Firstly using Bracton's theoretical measurement of $6\frac{2}{3}$ miles as the distance within which a new market could be considered to provide direct competition to an existing market.²⁵⁷ An alternative has been calculated using Thiessen polygons. The latter have just taken into account the markets towns which were clearly successful and which survived into the post medieval period. The Thiessen polygons are likely to give a closer definition of the area in which the town had the dominant impact but the former should

²⁵⁵ NRO, Quarter Sessions Records, Alehouse Recognisances.

²⁵⁶ Baker, 1, p.573.

²⁵⁷ The issue is discussed briefly in the Northamptonshire context by Goodfellow, 1987, 305.

provide a guide as to the widest hinterland from which the town will have derived the most of its trade. These theoretical constructs will of course have been substantially influenced by the road pattern. They will also have been affected by physical topography and land use, though in Northamptonshire, unlike upland counties, these are likely to have been relatively limited in their impact.

There was an attempt to vary the day between adjacent markets and in the case of Brackley, with all the market villages avoiding Saturday. Although Kings Sutton was a Domesday market it seems to have declined dramatically in relative importance during the medieval period, perhaps in direct response to the competition from Brackley and Banbury. Within the hinterland of Brackley all the other markets were just minor village markets.

The eastern half of the hinterland is largely boulder clay with large areas of woodland lying in the forest of Whittlewood. Here the population density was significantly lower than in the rest of the county. The western half included significant areas of limestone plateau, some of which was heathland. Only in the north west quadrant was there a more wealthy and productive area. The hinterland of the town was therefore not as wealthy and productive as that of some of the other successful small towns in the county which benefited from the agricultural wealth of the Nene valley or even of the Cherwell. This is visible both in the post medieval taxations, such as the Hearth Tax and the 1524 subsidy. It is not as marked in the 1301 subsidy, suggesting that there was a significant decline in the district with the 14th century recession and that this too will have harmed the long term prospects of Brackley at just the time when it had to fall back upon a role as a local marketing centre. This may explain why the town suffered to significantly with the decline of its national and international trade in wool. Banbury, in the Cherwell valley, was much better placed in this regard, and it has been Banbury that has subsequently developed as a larger modern town and main centre of the district and not Brackley.

3.6 INDUSTRY

3.6.1 Woollen Industry

Much has been made since the mid 16th century by authors writing on Brackley of the dominance of the wool trade in the town's medieval economy.²⁵⁸ The export trade developed with the Flemish cloth industry in the 12th century but it is at present uncertain whether it was the leading commercial activity from the foundation of the town. However the wool trade was certainly central to Brackley's later wealth. When the wool staple was instituted in 1313, until its abolition in 1334, Brackley was one of a set number of towns which controlled the trade in wool.²⁵⁹ In 1337 three merchant staplers of Brackley were summoned to Westminster to the King's council on trade, and similar writs were issued to the '*bailiffs of Brackley*' in 1342 and 1344.²⁶⁰ Wool merchants appear in the town as early as 1250-60, when the

258 Leland. R.Blome, 1673, 'Britannia and Geog. Description of England', drawn largely from Camden and Speed.

259 Baker.

260 Baker.

merchant Yway (Swayn?) is mentioned. These were not just small scale traders, but rather international wool merchants dealing directly with customers on the continent. Hence in 1305 Thomas de Luton, who was then purchasing land and tenements in Brackley, was '*obliged to go to Flanders before completion...*'²⁶¹ At least seven major wool merchants in Brackley are named between the mid 13th and mid 14th centuries: Yway: 1250-60 (but he was a tenant of the Hospital and so may not be a major merchant); Alexander le Riche: 1281; Thomas de Luton: 1305; Tydman le Swarthe: 1317; John de Welle, Wm de Riche and John de Astwick: 1337. Ralph le Wollemongere (pre 1310) is not specifically described as a merchant but is likely to have been a wealthy wool merchant as his daughter was to marry Tydman le Swarthe.²⁶² There are probably others who are simply not described as merchant, for example Geoffrey of Brackley who in 1286 is described as '*citizen of London*'.²⁶³ The association with London is a significant one for it was the main outlet for the Midlands in their international trade.²⁶⁴

None of the wool merchants' houses are known to survive in the town, though this is still possible as no systematic survey of the interior of Brackley's standing buildings has been conducted. One of the wool merchants' own tenements may have been the '*Blackhall*', which lay on the south frontage of the heart of the market. This was the capital messuage of John Maurice which had been purchased from him by Thomas de Luton and then in 1317 by Tydman le Swarthe. This seems to be the property which included fishponds below the garden, extending up to the Grove.²⁶⁵ Also probably part of this property was the upper floor 58ft long by 18ft wide with a sewer below the close of the messuage.²⁶⁶ By the time of its release to the Hospital in 1330 the Blackhall comprised 2 messuages.²⁶⁷ Other wool merchants may have had their residences in the same area, one of which may have been the '*Whitehall*' first mentioned in 1402 but which is as yet unlocated.²⁶⁸ It lay on the west side of the main street between a shop on the north and a tenement on the south, implying it also fronted onto the market place.²⁶⁹ Other tenements can be identified in the ownership of wool merchants but it is unclear whether they are capital messuages or just property they are leasing out to other tenants. For example the tenement immediately to the south of St. James's Chapel which was acquired by Thomas de Luton from Sibilla Lambert in 1305, and included a barn, is in 1416 called 'Lutones' implying perhaps that it had been his residence?²⁷⁰

261 Mag.Coll. D121.

262 Mag.Coll.

263 Mag.Coll. 176.

264 Lloyd, 1977.

265 Mag.Coll., 103.

266 Mag.Coll., D5.

267 Mag.Coll. D64. There is an account of repairs needed to the Blackhall in late 15th century. Mag.Coll., D127.

268 Mag.Coll., 56a.

269 Mag.Coll., D78.

270 Mag.Coll., D41, B112, 176, D121, D206.

Some insight into the character of the tenements is occasionally provided. This reveals a number of cases where what may be first floor halls are referred to, as in 1317 when William le Lorimer released to Robert of Oxford his rights in a chamber in Brackley with an upper floor, a property 66 ft long and 11 ft wide.²⁷¹ In 1342 a messuage and ground was leased by the Hospital to Richard de Altham which was described as being of the same length as adjacent plots and 18 ft wide measured by the 11 inch foot.²⁷² The construction of the buildings is rarely referred to, though several references are made to buildings being of stone, as for example the barn to the south of St. James's Chapel, while some apparently had slated roofs for in 1404 a tenement in the old town was called '*Sclathowses*'.²⁷³

There was clearly a major property market in Brackley, judging from the number of transactions revealed in the charters for the property acquired by the Hospital. Tenements were also being both subdivided and combined. Hence in 1325 we find one messuage which was formerly two houses.²⁷⁴ However the decline of the fortunes of the town does seem to be reflected in the 14th century in the apparent decline and decay of the major residences. Hence in 1380 the '*Blakehalle*' had been let in 1380 to John Draper under a repairing lease but the property was not maintained and in 1402 the beams of the '*longe chambre, hall and kitchen*' were ruinous, the rent was in arrears and it had been sublet without licence.²⁷⁵

As was usually the case at this time, we find the Brackley merchants drawing upon the local region for the wool and entering contracts with major local producers. Hence in circa 1281 Alexander le Riche purchased the whole of the wool crop of Luffield Abbey, 6 miles north east of the town. He agreed in the contract to pay 11.5 marks (£7/13/4d) per sack while the monks were to ensure that the wool was to be free of matting, impurity and foulness and the monks were to advise when shearing was to take place.²⁷⁶ Whereas nationally the Cotswolds came to dominate the trade in the later medieval period, Brackley, lying at the north eastern extremity of the region, did not benefit from this. As such the detailed study of Brackley through both documentary and archaeological sources may give important insights into the nature of the changes of that trade in the late medieval period.

The presence of a small number of high profile wool merchants does not necessarily mean that the trade itself involved the employment of large numbers of artisans in the town. The dressing of the wool, involving washing, drying and cleaning was a labour intensive and thus

271 Mag.Coll., D57.

272 Mag.Coll., B90.

273 Mag.Coll., 176, 64.

274 Mag.Coll., 45.

275 Mag.Coll., D209.

276 LPC 407a.

expensive process, costing in the late 13th century about 1 mark per 10 mark sack.²⁷⁷ Such work was often undertaken by the employees of wool merchants and would have provided substantial employment in the town. However, the terms of the one contract we have relating to the purchase for wool by a Brackley merchant, that between Alexander le Riche and the Abbot of Luffield in 1260-80, included the requirement that the abbey itself prepare the wool for sale.²⁷⁸ It would seem therefore that the production of cloth was possibly the single most important craft industry in the town. The importance of cloth production and the manufacture of garments may be reflected in the fact that the building which appears to have been the post medieval and perhaps also the medieval town hall was known as the Draperie Howse while in the Tudor period, probably reflecting the medieval situation, one of the rows of shops was known as the Drapery (see above). The merchants will have needed warehouses for the storage of their wool purchases before transshipment to the continent, possibly explaining the barn previously referred to on the property acquired by Thomas de Luton. In addition to the direct contracts with the major wool producers, the merchants bought their wool in the towns and great fairs, though the latter were in decline by 1300. The timing of these fairs would be related to the shearing time, the sales usually being completed by Michaelmas, though much of the wool was already bargained and paid for.²⁷⁹

The supremacy of the Cotswold wool was established in the late 14th century and with increased concentration of the trade in fewer merchants. The price to growers collapsed in 1380 and remained depressed through most of the 15th century.²⁸⁰ This may explain in part the massive decline of Brackley and the decline of the wool trade in other Northamptonshire towns such as Oundle and a major shift to cattle and leather which is clearly seen by the 17th century but probably began somewhat earlier.

3.6.2 Other Industries

In addition to wool and cloth related trades there was a significant involvement in the leather industry and a range of other lesser crafts, as well as construction, but perhaps inevitably the sales and services found in any town still formed a major component of the trade of the town. The range in Brackley would seem to be wider than that seen in some other towns but the data is not strictly comparable. The recorded trades would suggest more people were involved in cloth production and manufacture of garments than in the wool trade

Though undoubtedly the dominant factor in the relatively high wealth and population of Brackley compared to all other towns in Northamptonshire except for Northampton, the wool trade was only one element of the commercial base of the town. There a range of trades recorded in the town between 1250 & 1360 in the rentals and charters:

277 Lloyd, T.H., 1977, *The English Wool Trade in the Middle Ages*.

278 Elvey, G.R., 1975, *Luffield Priory Charters*, vol.2, NRS vol. 26, no.407a.

279 Lloyd, 1977.

280 Lloyd, 1977.

	<i>Trade</i>	<i>1250-60</i>	<i>1230-1360</i>	% by group
LEATHER	Tanner	1	3	4% / 5%
	Skinner	0	1	
WOOL & WOOLLEN CLOTH	Merchant	1	5	13% / 20%
	Woolmonger	0	1	
	Weaver	0	1	
	Fuller	1	1	
	Scherman	0	1	
	Tailor	1	6	
	Cooper	0	1	13% / 15%
	Bottler	0	1	
	Plumber	1	1	
	Goldsmith	0	2	
	Smith	2	5	
	Curtiler	0	1	
BUILDING ETC	Mason	0	2	9% / 11%
	Plasterer	1	1	
	Tiler	0	1	
	Slater	1	2	
	Carpenter	0	2	
GENERAL SERVICES	Bloodleter	0	1	17% / 22%
	Mercer	0	1	
	Chapman	0	1	
	Ironmonger	0	1	
	Vintner	1	2	
	Garlikmonger	0	2	
	Salter	0	1	
	Faulkner	0	1	
	Butcher	0	1	
	Baker	3	5	

	Miller	1	6	
	Carter	2	2	
CLERICAL AND SERVICE	Cook	0	1	
	Maidservant	1	1	
	Chaplain	3	3	
	Clerk	1	1	
FARMING	Gardener	0	1	4% / 5%
	Shepherd	0	1	
	Reaper	2	2	
	TOTAL	23	74	

After the high medieval there is very little evidence for the range of commercial activity in the town until the 18th century, hence we lack a clear understanding of the nature and scale of commercial activity and craft production in the town during the long period of decline and then limited recovery. There are just a few trades recorded, as for example in the 1506, 1509 and 1520 rentals : glover, smith, butcher, clerk, shoemaker and baker. Although systematic search of the records may provide further examples, little can be concluded from such fragmentary information. The list of trades between 1735-55 from Henry Purefoy's Diaries²⁸¹ has a particular importance for Brackley as the militia list of 1777 provides trade evidence for St. Peter's parish but not for St. James's parish. Of the 58 tradesmen mentioned there is no particular concentration on any industry but rather a wide range of service industries, reflecting Brackley's decline to a modest market town serving a small hinterland.

Ironmonger	1
Barber	1
Butcher	2
Huckster	1
Dealer	1
Whitter	1
Plasterer	1
Mantramaker	1
Mercer	2
Apothecary	2

²⁸¹ NRO YZ 1640, Henry Purefoy's Diaries.

Glazier	1
Chimney Sweep	1
Whitesmith	1
Blacksmith	1
Tiler	1
Stonemason	2
Lathrender	1
Joiner	2
Carpenter	1
Ropemaker	1
Saddler	1
Plumber	1
Wheelwright	1
Cooper	1
CarterBrazier	1
Chandler	1
Laceman	1
Hatter	1
Tailor	1
Staymaker	1
Shoemaker	1
Lawyer	1
Doctor	1
Schoolmaster	1
Carrier	1
Gardner	3

3.7 COMMUNICATIONS

3.7.1 Major Routes

There were two distinct road networks in medieval Brackley, one radiating out from the Old Town and based on what may prove to be a Roman road running on the line of Goldwell Lane, the other determined by the main Oxford to Northampton road. It is thus only the High Street and the Buckingham road that do not focus on the Old Town. The High Street clearly cuts across not only the early road pattern, which radiated from the Old Town to Halse, Radstone, Turweston and Buckingham, but also across the pre existing furlongs. The New Town was constructed along the new road that had been laid out cutting across the original road pattern. It is very unlikely that the Oxford to Northampton road through Brackley was newly constructed as part of the planning of the town, for a similar pattern is seen at Grafton Regis where the major Northampton to London Road similarly cuts across the earlier road pattern. Indeed the two roads are very similar in that they lead past most settlements rather than passing through them, implying the laying out of a major new component of the road network to serve the burhs or ports of the late Saxon period or early medieval period.

The road pattern was significantly altered with turnpiking in the later 18th century. While the Northampton to Oxford road was not significantly altered at Brackley, the construction of the Banbury to Buckingham turnpike in 1790 led to the insertion of a new road to Banbury leading from the market place and the upgrading of the Croft Lane leading from the eastern end of the High Street towards Buckingham. Previously the Buckingham road, as depicted on Eayre's map, ran eastwards from the Old Town, close to the line of the apparent course of the Roman road. However it is clear that the Croft Lane was used in the medieval period as the main route by those travelling from Buckingham to the market place.

Prior to turnpiking when a completely new road was laid out from the south west corner of the market place, the Banbury road appears from Eayre's map to have run out of the Hinton road, which left the town by the castle. However although in existence by 1516 this road, leading out of Whitchandys Grene, was then called Hinton Lane.²⁸² There is reference in 1260 to the king's highway to Banbury running through Brackley fields.²⁸³ It is therefore possible that the medieval road followed a different course than the post medieval. The most likely route would be running west north west from the Halse road immediately west of the town where a road, known in the 19th century as Steane Way, cuts straight across the township, respected by the furlong pattern.

The Halse Road (known in the 15th & 16th century as the Cross Lane) is one of several earlier roads radiating from the original late Saxon/early medieval village of Brackley. There is a slight possibility that the Halse Road is in origin a Roman road as it appears to be a primary element within the plan form of the original village and runs through the area of substantial Roman occupation which includes a villa-like building adjacent to St. Peter's church.

²⁸² Mag.Coll., C122.

²⁸³ Mag.Coll. 4 & 83b.

3.7.2 Streets and Lanes

There are various references to lanes within the town throughout the medieval and post medieval period. In the 13th century: Beneite's Lane in circa 1230-40; a messuage in Goldwell Lane in the Old Town 1240; Horn Lane in 1240, possibly named after Richard Horn; Netherlane in 1250; Basset's Lane in 1260-5. In the 14th century Saundreslane and Soudones Lane are recorded in 1315 and 1376 respectively, and in 1394 there is reference to land in the field above Daventreway near St. Leonards. A Smetheslane existed in the town in 1402. Plymstones Way was described in 1426 as near the furlong by le Clakmylle, which was near the Old Town. Wythges Lane lay near St. Peter's church in 1450. Biddlesden Abbey held a house in Hancock's Lane in the early 16th century.²⁸⁴ While some are easily identified others are more problematic. For example in the later 13th century there are various references to Gamel Lane (possibly named after Robert Gamel), next to le Dune in the south field of the castle. This is probably one of the two lanes leading west from the market place but it cannot be accurately located at present. Evaluation trenching in Magpie Lane revealed stone walls parallel to and at right angles to the Oxford road, interpreted as property boundaries. Pottery would indicate activity of the 12th century onwards. There was no evidence for buildings fronting to Magpie lane, though further work is needed along the lane to confirm this was true further to the west, indeed the north south boundary may represent the eastern boundary of such tenements.²⁸⁵ On the west side of the town the back lane ran from the Halse Lane through to Goose Green. On the east side however there was only a short section of back lane, adjacent to the Crofts.

The Buckingham Lane is not described as such in the Tudor Rentals despite the fact that there are numerous references elsewhere to the Buckingham Lane. It is therefore possible that this road was created to serve the new town in the medieval period, replacing Bassetts Lane, now Watery Lane, which runs on or close to the road to Buckingham. There is no evidence for medieval tenements fronting the lane. The easternmost property recorded in 1763 was subject to archaeological evaluation but was too heavily disturbed by 19th and 20th century activity to provide any evidence of earlier activity.²⁸⁶

3.7.3 Bridges

The main road, called the Oxford road from where it leaves the market place southward, crossed the stream on the township boundary by a single arched stone bridge in the mid 16th century, though by 1720 this had been rebuilt as a two arch structure.²⁸⁷ The road to Turweston appears to have run eastwards from St Peters to the '*great bridge of Turweston*', which is recorded in 1270 as lying adjacent to the Old Town mill on the Buckingham road.²⁸⁸

284 C.W.Green, 'Biddlesden and its Abbey', p.62.

285 Hardy, A., 1994, 13-13a Magpie Lane, Brackley, Northamptonshire : Archaeological Evaluation, OAU report in SMR.

286 Prentice, J., 1997, Franklins Yard, Buckingham Road, Brackley, Northamptonshire : Archaeological Evaluation, report in SMR.

287 Leland, f.54. Bridges, I, p.143. Bailey, op.cit.?, p.26.

288 Mag. Coll. 85A

In 1297 the Hospital was allowed to keep the enclosures it had made except that *'those coming to Brackley market from Turweston Bridge may have the same path where the wall is not erected at the sheepfold of the Hospital.'*²⁸⁹ The Turweston bridge became known later, in 1426, as the Buckingham bridge.

3.8 LAND USE

3.8.1 Woodland

As we have seen, there had almost certainly been some woodland close to the town in the Saxon and possibly into the early medieval period, in the area called the Grove, later the park of the Hospital. The presence of woodland is also indicated by the 'ley' placename of Brackley. However by the later medieval and post medieval any woodland had been lost. However a substantial block of woodland did lie in the detached portion of the township, in Whittlewood Forest and this remains woodland today.

There was no woodland within the main area of the township of Brackley in the post medieval period.

3.8.2 Open Fields & Inclosure

Before the foundation of the New Town, or at least before the Castle was built, it is probable that a single field system was in existence within the township of Brackley, exploited from the Old Town. Although there were two separate manors in 1086, one in Brackley and another with holdings in Brackley, it seems unlikely that they represent separate settlements and field systems. With the construction of the castle or with the foundation of the New Town the field system was apparently subdivided, for in 1260 reference is made in different documents to *'the north field of the castle of Brackley'* probably the *'Lower Field'* of the *'Castle Side'* in 1830,²⁹⁰ to the western field of the castle of Brackley²⁹¹ and to the *'Heldetunfeld'* (Old Town Field). What is being described is not several Great Fields within a single system but rather two separate field systems each of two or three great fields (high, middle and low). This pattern survived in Brackley until parliamentary enclosure in 1830 when 1280 acres of open field and about 38 acres in Banlands Common were enclosed. By this time 200 acres of Old Inclosures already existed. Detailed documentary study should be able to determine to what degree this 19th century pattern reflects that of the 13th century. This is apparently the only case in Northamptonshire of a field system being subdivided in association with the foundation of a town to create two separate systems, probably because in most other cases an existing settlement was elevated to urban status rather than a new, separate settlement being created. Only at Catesby was a new settlement created but with Catesby there is no evidence of subdivision of the field system.

289 Mag.Coll., C120.

290 Mag.Coll. C20.

291 Mag.Coll. B40.

The boundary between the two field systems or 'sides' is recorded in the 19th century and represents a sharp division in the layout of the furlongs themselves, but as it follows the road from Brackley to Halse it may be simply the antiquity of that road, already in existence by the 12th century, which is reflected in the topography not the antiquity of the division between the field systems. The boundary to the east of the High Street has not been identified, because much of the area was enclosed and the remainder was Common Land by 1830, but it seems likely that Basset's Lane formed the medieval boundary. There had been various furlongs in this area between the Old and the New towns. For example in 1180-90 there were two and a half acres in this area in Goldwell furlong; again in 1220 a grant of '*Inlanda*' near Goldwell furlong; and in 1425 a piece of common land in this area is called Prynstone furlong.²⁹² Significantly in 1360 land at Goldwell was described as lying in the Castle Field.²⁹³

Major replanning of open field systems in Midland England, with the subdivision of long Saxon furlongs into short furlongs, probably occurring in the early medieval period, has been demonstrated by Hall. However the problem of the dating of this major reorganisation of the field system has yet to be fully examined. During the detailed study of the medieval town of Brackley it was recognised that the post medieval open field furlong pattern showed just such subdivision. The furlong pattern as recorded in 1830 comprises numerous short furlongs with many small intermediate double headlands. However fossilised within this pattern, particularly clearly seen in the roads and several of the major headlands, lie the traces in the form of reverse 's' curves, of a very few long furlongs. The reorganisation involved not only simple subdivision but also the reorientation of strips in certain areas through 90 degrees. Numerous 13th to 15th century charters and various post medieval terriers survive for the parish and so it will undoubtedly be possible to elaborate on the evidence of topography. The laying out of blocks of tenements within the framework of a pre-existing field system was documented in the medieval period, at for example Kettering in 1292.²⁹⁴

The medieval borough of Brackley, as a medieval planned new town, would inevitably have had to be laid out wholly in this way and this is clearly seen in from a detailed examination of the layout of both town and open field. Because the tenement layout should be closely dateable archaeologically then it should give a clear date by which the reorganisation of the field system must have taken place. The furlong boundaries which determine the layout of the town, particularly clearly seen around the market place, are those of the subdivided furlongs, hence by the time the town was being laid out at least the first stages of the reorganisation had already occurred. The town reached its maximum extent by the mid 13th century and it is fairly certain that the main phase of planning took place at the latest in the mid 12th century, therefore the reorganisation of the field system must have occurred by 1150. It would seem likely that similar examination of other settlements might provide further evidence to assist in the dating of this major phase in the development of the open field systems of the Midlands, which was occurring at a time when sufficiently detailed topographical information in documents did not exist to enable its study through documentary sources alone.

292 Mag.Coll. DI.

293 Mag. Coil. B226

294 Extensive Urban Survey, Kettering, pp. 15-16

The Old Town was surrounded on the south, east and north east by open field land that had been converted by the later medieval period to croft land: The Crofts, Bole Crofts and Lincroft, while on the east it was abutted by the Banlond. These were all distinctly separate areas to the rest of the open fields. The Banlond was an area of open field between the old enclosures of the Old Town and the Ouse, from the old enclosures of the College on the south to the small stream north of the village. The land was presumably used specifically for the growing of beans in the medieval period.²⁹⁵ The Butts lay at the end of the crofts, as seen on the west side of the northern half of the town, are recorded as early as 1422.²⁹⁶

The burgesses of Brackley had common rights in various land throughout the field system,²⁹⁷ and in 1279 they released to the Hospital all rights of pasture in the old vineyard and garden in the croft late of Ralph Sweyn and in the grove of the Hospital. In return the burgesses were granted right of pasture in le Brech and le Grofhey.²⁹⁸ The whole community of Brackley released their common rights in le Breech and Le Grofhey to the Hospital in return for rights in other land which the Hospital had bought from Sir John de la Hay.²⁹⁹ By 1425 the whole unenclosed area between the New Town and the river had become Common, defined as lying '*in Le Banlond, Croftys, and Prynstone furlong lengthways from Groveheydiche to the little brook called Lettolbrooke and in breadth from Brackley town to Thurvestone brook*'.³⁰⁰ This document also records the release of common rights by the Abbott of Leicester and burgesses of Brackley to allow Inclosure of '*Le Groves*' which lay to the south, adjacent to the Hospital of St John and forming at least part of the Magdalene College Estate delimited in 1830. This, including the site of the Hospital itself and all the other enclosed land owned by the Hospital by 1219, was exempted from tithes in that year whereas any later property acquired was to be subject to tithe.³⁰¹ Hence the area defined at tithe free at enclosure probably defines the extent of the Grove and other College property in 1219.³⁰²

C INDUSTRIAL

295 Field, J., 1989, English Field names : A Dictionary, (Gloucester).

296 Mag.Coll. B168.

297 Mag.Coll. C72, C74, C124, 15.

298 Mag.Coll., B239 & 211.

299 Mag.Coll., D119.

300 Mag.Coll. D1.

301 Mag.Coll., 187.

³⁰² The Grove should be considered in the light of Landsberg, S., 1996, 'The Medieval Garden', p.21-5. Could the Grove be an example of a 'little park' or 'pleasure park' attached to the castle?

1.0 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Brackley retained its status as an ancient borough throughout the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. In 1849 Whellan's directory noted '*Government of the town is vested in a mayor, 6 aldermen and 26 burgesses, but falls within the jurisdiction of the county magistrates who hold petty sessions at the Police Station twice a month*'. The right to return two members to parliament had of course by this date been revoked under the 1832 Reform Bill. However the status of Brackley as a town continued to be recognised in 1835 when the Brackley Poor Law Union was established - covering 29 parishes and 87 square miles. The old borough charter for the town was due to lapse on March 25th 1886, however the charter was enabled to remain in force until the following September³⁰³ when a new charter was granted to the town. Brackley was henceforth governed by a Mayor, four Aldermen and twelve councillors. Brackley comprised two parishes of St Peters (Old Brackley) and St James (New Brackley), but in 1884 the two parishes were amalgamated.

The town of Brackley would appear to be in decline in the late 18th century if contemporary writers are to be believed. An article in Gentleman's Magazine in 1772 describing the area around Brackley claimed that '*From Towcester to Brackley the road is pleasant and the country woody and cultivated; this last mentioned is not inconsiderable as to extent, but it is straggling and wretchedly built*'³⁰⁴. Twelve years later in 1784 G.A. Walpole noted '*at present it has much declined from what it was in former times and most of its trade has forsaken it*'³⁰⁵. The image of the town had clearly not changed considerably by the early 19th century as in 1823 it was described as '*much decayed from its former grandeur*'³⁰⁶. In 1830 Brackley '*possesses but little to recommend it to the observation of the tourist; its buildings have no pretensions of uniformity or to architectural taste*'³⁰⁷. A map of the town dated 1760³⁰⁸ shows however that in many respects the town was continuing to thrive with extensive ownership of land by Magdalen College and the Duke of Bridgewater; in addition to a large number of individual owners and tenants. The town has at this date the Duke of Bridgewater's Market Hall, a Post Office, Excise Office, a Court, Tithe House and over twenty five public houses and inns; a workhouse, '*the Pound*' and Malt House are also noted on the map. It would appear that the writers comments were comparative as the town was one of the oldest boroughs in the county with a charter dating back to 1260 and until 1832 was continuing to return two members to parliament every election. Yet by 1801 Brackley was only the 8th largest settlement in Northamptonshire with the market towns of Wellingborough, Kettering, Daventry, Towcester and Oundle each having larger populations than the ancient borough. It is, however, important to note that although Brackley is located within Northamptonshire the town has very strong links with Banbury in Oxfordshire.

303By the Municipal Corporation Act of 1883.

304Gentlemen's Magazine, 1772.

305Walpole G.A., The New British Traveller, 1784.

306Pigot and Co's London and Provincial Edition, 1823

307Pigot and Co's London and Provincial New Commercial, 1830.

308NRO, Map 2985, A new and accurate plan of the most principal parts of the borough of Brackley in Northamptonshire.

The population of Brackley rose from 1,086 in 1676 to 1,495 in 1801 - a total rise of 36% in 125 years and though this was substantial it was very much less than the national rise of 80%³⁰⁹. John Clarke in his book about Brackley in the 17th - 19th centuries claimed that although mortality patterns conformed to urban models in the 17th century, by the 18th century birth and death rates in Brackley appeared to mirror those of rural populations (with very few burials in the summer). Throughout the 19th century the population rose steadily, but not dramatically and in the early 20th century there were one or two periods of decline.

Industry does not appear to feature significantly in the development of Brackley in the period after 1750. The Militia List of 1777 indicates that there are a number of individual and specialised tradesmen including 8 carpenters, a stay maker, 2 ironmongers, 3 blacksmiths, 2 fell mongers and 2 wheelwrights. However, there is no large-scale industry such as weaving or shoemaking, which can be seen in other towns in Northamptonshire. The wool industry which had formerly provided great wealth to the town had declined by 1770 '*Brackley was once a famous staple for wool, but now can only boast how great and wealthy it once was...for through the length of time that trade is almost lost*'³¹⁰. This pattern continues throughout the late 18th and 19th centuries. Pigot and Co's trade directory of 1830 indicates that there was 1 boot and shoe manufacturer in addition to 7 shoemakers. There was a decline in the craft throughout the 19th century with 6 boot and shoe makers listed in 1849, 4 in 1894 and 1 in 1924; there are no further manufacturers mentioned. It is likely that the trade in Brackley was not related to the Northamptonshire industry, but reflected the usual level of trade to be found in any market town throughout the country. The lace industry appears to have been a major source of employment in the town in the 18th and 19th centuries with 'bobbin lace' specifically mentioned in 1849 and 'pillow lace' in 1894. This industry would have been largely domestically based, but in 1894 Kelly's directory listed a pillow lace manufacturer. The lace industry does not appear in the Militia List of 1777, as it was a female dominated industry. Malting and brewing were the only substantial industries operating in Brackley, both industries being characteristic features of market towns. The map of 1760 indicated the presence of a malt house in the town and by 1849 there were 4 maltsters and 3 breweries. By 1894 this had declined to 1 maltster and 2 breweries, although the latter were large concerns showing on Ordnance Survey maps as very large buildings. Other industrial concerns included a coach builder and a mineral water manufacturer which were recorded in 1894 only.

The economic importance of Brackley was boosted by the hunting season. During the winter a large number of people moved into the town to take part in hunting in the local area. A number of the larger town houses in Brackley were rented out during the hunting season. There are also a number of terraces and smaller houses established for grooms and the servants of the gentry - these were located in Manor Road, on the south side of Banbury Road and on the corner of Hale Road and High Street.

309Clarke J, Yesterday's Brackley: From Restoration to Reform, 1990

310NRO YZ 4212, History of Brackley, 1770.

Brackley clearly functioned as a commercial centre for the surrounding area; many sources refer to the settlement as 'a market town and ancient borough'. Traditionally the market was held every Wednesday and fairs were held on the Wednesdays after 25th February, 19th April, 22nd June, 11th October and 11th December. However in the 18th and early 19th centuries the market function of the town began to decline due to a high level of competition from Banbury and Northampton. George Baker recorded *'In 1803 an effort was made to increase the market and fairs by abolishing the tolls paid on these days and rendering the town toll-free, but the market is notwithstanding at a very low ebb, and the fairs have nearly fallen into disuse, except the ancient fair on St Andrew's Day which is of considerable celebrity for the sale of cattle and articles of clothing, particularly clothes'*³¹¹. There was however, clearly some revival of the market, particularly in the form of a cattle market, as cattle pens remained in the centre until the mid 1960s. Local knowledge informs that a wool market operated in the town until the First World War. Brackley also boasted a large number of public houses and inns, the map of 1760 indicates over 25 public houses. This number declined to 16 in 1831, 14 in 1849, 10 in 1894 and 9 in 1924, presumably many of these serviced the needs of visitors to the town in addition to the resident population. It is unusual that no 'inn keepers' are recorded for the town in the militia lists of 1777 - this may indicate that this role was being conducted either by women or by men over the age of 45, or that the role was secondary to other trades. Trade directories indicate that a wide range of commercial activities was provided in the town. Pigot's directory of 1831 indicates that in addition to the usual trades of baker, butcher, tailor, shop keeper etc, there was a wide range of specialised retail outlets. These included bookseller, linen and woollen draper, silk merchant, lace merchant, stamp distributor, perfumer, gunsmith and grocers dealing in goods such as tea, wine and spirits, glass and china. By 1894 services such as photographer, bird and animal preserver and oil and colour man had been added to range of commercial activities conducted in the town. The central business district for the town was clearly centred upon High Street and Market Place / Market Square, it is interesting to note however that in 1891 there are very few retail outlets such as bakers, butchers, grocers etc listed as being resident in High Street. This would appear to imply that in the late 19th century there was beginning to be a move towards individuals having separate business and home addresses. By 1924 retail outlets were located in High Street and Market Square with a minority of shops in Manor Road and Banbury Road.

Communication links were clearly important to retaining Brackley's status as a commercial centre. Two turnpike roads passed through Brackley - the Northampton to Oxford Road and the Buckingham to Banbury Road - creating good transport links with London, Oxford, Northampton, Banbury, Towcester and Bicester³¹². In 1894 Kelly's directory noted that there were carrier services to Banbury, Buckingham, Croughton, Crowfield, Farthinghoe, Greatworth, Helmdon, Moreton Pinkney and Syresham; the last seven of these must have been journeys coming into Brackley to make use of the facilities of the town. Brackley was also serviced by two railway lines, each with a station situated in close proximity to the town.

311 Baker G, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Northampton*, Volume 1.

312 Pigot's Directory of 1830 notes coach and carrier journeys to each of these places.

The Bletchley and Oxford branch of the London and North Western Railway was opened in the 1840's and the Great Central Railway opened through the parish in the 1899. The feeling at the time was that the development of these rail links would have a profound impact on the town. A letter written to Phillip Sydney from the inhabitants of the town declared '*The inhabitants of Brackley and the neighbourhood in their exultation at the good fortune which will confer upon them the advantages devisable from the Railway to be extended from Bletchley to Buckingham and Brackley and which must speedily result in its connection with a line to Birmingham cannot forget to perceive that without your vigilant attention the present line might have fell short of this town. The inhabitants therefore beg you to accept their thanks as a sincere and grateful acknowledgement of services which must be of great and may be of infinite importance to this town and neighbourhood*'³¹³. The opening of the railway lines may have facilitated the general regeneration from a settlement that was '*wretchedly built*' into a commercial and residential town of some standing in the local area, however there is little evidence for either of the railway lines encouraging industrial development or population growth.

2.0 TOPOGRAPHICAL DEVELOPMENT

The study of the development of the urban topography of Brackley in the post 1750 period is facilitated by the existence of good maps of the town for 1760 and 1830 in addition to the usual Ordnance Survey maps for the late 19th and early 20th century³¹⁴. The town consists of two key elements that are recognised by cartographers and writers discussing the development of Brackley from an early date - Old Town or Old Brackley and New Town or New Brackley. The Old Town area is located to the east of the main settlement and consists of three or four lanes with a number of cottages and houses located on them. St Peters Church, the main place of worship for the settlement in the 18th and 19th centuries is also located here. Old Town was a medieval planned town, which by 1750 essentially had the characteristics of a village and appears to exist independently of the rest of the town; it is only in recent times that the lanes around the area have been developed and infilled. New Town is essentially formed by High Street / Bridge Street / Market Square which provides the focus for the development of the settlement with the creation of a number of small roads and lanes coming off this central area and at a later date the infilling of the linear plots coming off the central area.

The map of 1760 is entitled 'A New and accurate Plan of the most Principal Parts of the Borough of Brackley in Northamptonshire' and is a detailed plan of the new town showing individual plots and buildings with their function and owner clearly marked. The town at this period of time consisted primarily of a singular street (High Street) with a number of distinctively long burgage plots coming off, the map does not show the infilling to the rear of these plots which is indicated on other early maps. The street is not completely built up at this time with a number of gardens, closes and orchards coming right up to the frontage. There was considerable infilling of the centre of the High Street with Market Hall (which remains today), the Butchers Shambles, the Clergyman's house, ducking pool, the Pound, a

313NRO, YZ 4217, letter to Hon Phillip Sidney, 1846.

314 The second edition Ordnance Survey map of 1900 is not readily available for study in any of the usual locations in Northamptonshire.

number of cottages and the houses and an orchard for the college all being located along the centre of the street. A number of roads and lanes leading off High Street are shown including Castle Lane, the road from Hinton and Croft Lane. However, no detail is shown of the Old Town and there is no indication as to whether Back lane, later to become Manor Road is in existence at this time, although rear access would presumably have been needed to the tenements on High Street.

The map of 1830 indicates that the basic topography of the town had remained essentially intact with the division of Old Town and New Town. One or two of the plots had become more densely occupied with infilling of structures to the rear and others had lost buildings and other features. The chief changes were, however the demolition of many of the cottages and other structures lined along the centre of the High Street and the creation of the Buckingham to Banbury turnpike road³¹⁵. The latter dog-legged through the town, entering the settlement from Banbury at the south-west corner of Bridge Street and High Street and leaving for Buckingham by the road which had previously been known as Croft Lane just before the Plough Inn. These two roads are still known as Banbury Road and Buckingham Road today. Back Lane, an access road to the rear of the tenement plots on High Street was in existence and by this date a small number of structures had begun to be developed along it.

By the late 19th century Brackley was continuing to develop within its pre-defined boundaries. Individual plots were changing with new monuments such as schools, chapels and new houses and shops being erected, also the building of the two railway lines, but there was little outward expansion of the town. Structures began to be erected along the frontage of Back Lane and a substantial number of buildings were erected on Halse Road including terraced houses, 19th century shops and an 'Institute'. Banbury Road expanded with the development of the Workhouse, Police Station and Independent Chapel in addition to a number of terraced houses and higher status residences. The High Street remained the focus of the commercial area with shops, inns and higher status town houses being situated along the street. In many instances a distinctive three storey, two bay construction is used for shops and houses. There is evidence that this relative uniformity is a deliberate attempt to improve the aesthetic character of the town - to the south end of High Street is a small two storey building which has had a three storey brick frontage added. Smaller brick and stone cottages and terraced houses are located either in yards and back plots or to the extremities of the town - to the north of High Street, south of Bridge Street and roads and lanes leading out of the town.

The Ordnance Survey map of circa 1900 has not been seen for Brackley so it is not possible to tell exactly when particular structures are erected, but the town develops little in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The Ordnance Survey map of 1922 indicates that new monuments are erected including railway station and line, schools, banks, recreation grounds etc and others enhanced - Magdalen College School was enhanced with a swimming pool and football pavilion. However the general topography of the town remains intact, more housing is erected along Banbury Road and Back Lane (or Manor Road), but there was little outward

315 Authorized by Act of Parliament in 1791.

expansion of the town and the burgage plots remain intact. This was due to a lack of expansion in the town partly because of the large size of the original medieval town. The large-scale development of Brackley does not begin until after the Second World War with the creation of housing and industrial estates at the extremities of the town. It is only in recent times (within the last ten years) that the characteristic burgage plots of the town have begun to be eroded away with the development of a supermarket and modern housing estate in the locations of the former breweries of the town.

3.0 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

3.1 INDUSTRY

Brackley has a limited industrial heritage. In the 18th and 19th centuries lacemaking took place in the town and later the boot and shoe trade provided some employment. However, other than a minority of garden workshops situated behind some of the 19th century terraces there do not appear to be any physical remains of either of these industries. It has not been possible as part of the survey to positively identify any factories for the boot and shoe industry or the manufacture of pillow silk. The largest industry in the town in the late 19th century would appear to have been the brewing industry. The location of two large breweries was identified from Ordnance Survey maps, both of these have subsequently been demolished and replaced by a housing estate and supermarket.

There were a number of features associated with the building industry; these included a brickworks to the east of the town which was out of use by 1926 and a number of small quarries and lime kilns which were located around the periphery of the settlement. The area surrounding the majority of these features has since been developed; it was not possible to locate the kiln to the south of the town, which was situated in close proximity to the corn mill

3.2 AGRICULTURE

In the early 19th century agriculture was the greatest sources of employment in the parish with 203 people being employed in 1801 and 168 in 1831, including 19 farmers the remaining being labourers³¹⁶. Men from Brackley supplied part-time labour for surrounding settlements during harvest and other key times of year. Enclosure came particularly late to Brackley, in 1772 an article in the Gentleman's Magazine claimed 'It is remarkable that, in the last twenty miles of my journey, the evil genius of field-enclosing has not yet exerted his influence'. The Enclosure Award for Brackley was dated 1830 - the parish was the last unenclosed territory in a considerably large local area. Enclosure had been supported by the Cartwright family from Aynho. In the post-enclosure period a number of farms were located around the centre of the town. At least one farmhouse on High Street remained in use until the 1960s. There were two mills to the south and east of the settlement, these would both appear to have been watermills as they were located alongside the River Ouse. Both of the mills have been demolished, the site to the south of the town was taken over by the expanding gas works prior

316Lowerson J.R., Enclosure and farm holding in Brackley, 1829-51, Northamptonshire Past and Present Vol 6 No 1, 1978.

to 1922 and the site to the south was still standing in 1922, the area is now laid down to pasture.

3.3 HOUSING

The housing in Brackley falls into five categories - very large high status houses including Brackley Manor House and Brackley Lodge, large three storey town houses of stone or brick, large 19th century villa style residences, late 19th century brick terraces and small stone cottages. Each house type is located within particular zones in the town.

The high status houses in the town, including Brackley Lodge, Brackley Manor House and The Old Hall, are primarily located in the central area of High Street, the exception to this is the vicarage which is located in Old Town. None of these houses are still in use as domestic residences, all having been converted or in the process of being converted to other uses.

The large town houses, usually of three storey and two bays (although there are variations), are a prominent feature of the High Street. They are constructed of both stone and brick - the former tend to be located to the north of the street whilst the latter are clustered around the south end of the street around the junction with Banbury Road and Bridge Street. Many of the houses to the south have been converted into shops, but the stone examples to the north of the street tend to have remained as domestic residences. Houses of similar status, but different style and design, are the large 19th century villa style houses, these are primarily located on Banbury Road. Perhaps because this was a major area of expansion in the 19th century. There is, however, a large 19th century brick villa on High Street.

The 19th century terraces in the town are located along the two 'new' roads - Banbury Road and Halse Road, Manor Road and to the north end of High Street. The terraces are of mixed design including those with and without architectural embellishment, bay windows and gardens; some have small garden workshops to the rear of the property. On Banbury Road there is a row of particularly embellished terraces complete with elaborate drip molds with gargoyle stops and a porch with entablature supported by columns and topped by balustrading. The number of terraces is very small compared to many towns in the county and it is clear that the large scale expansion of the town in terms of domestic housing did not occur until the mid 20th century.

The small brick and stone cottages of varying dates are not found on the frontage to High Street, but are located to the rear of burgage plots in the area of Old Town and along Bridge Street to the south of the town. However, it is possible that cottages were originally located on High Street, making the town look '*wretched and straggling*', but have been subsequently demolished.

3.4 COMMERCIAL

The primary role of Brackley as a town in the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries was clearly as a commercial centre for the locality - with a wide network of coach and carrier journeys in and out of the town. Hunting was of major importance in the town and in the winter a large number of people migrated into the town for this purpose, boosting the commercial aspects of the town. The central business district of Brackley was clearly focused upon High Street, although shops and inns etc are also located in other areas of the town. The original market square was infilled by the 1760's and although the area is now clear it is in use as a car park.

3.4.1 Shops

There are a number of good survivals of late 19th and early 20th century shop frontages in the High Street in Brackley. These are primarily located to the south end of the street around the junction with Banbury Road and Bridge Street, although there is also an example on a corner plot next to the Methodist Chapel. The majority of these shop frontages are inserted into earlier town houses and other buildings in the centre. However, there is a building on the corner of High Street / Banbury Road / Bridge Street with stone ground floor and mock timber framing above which appears to have been designed as a commercial building. The town hall built by the Duke of Bridgewater in 1706 is still in use for its original purpose.

3.4.2 Public Houses / inns

There were a very large number of inns in Brackley in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries and they appear to be a particular feature of the town. These were primarily for visitors to the market. In 1760 there were over 25 public houses and inns; this had diminished to 14 in 1849 and 9 in 1894. The map of 1760 provides detailed information about the location of the original inns; it would be a valuable task to locate each building and determine how many of the structures still exist and to do a building survey to determine whether they have any particularly distinctive features. This was attempted on a very basic level during the field visit and it would appear that two are possibly still in use as public houses and several more exist as buildings which have subsequently been converted for other uses. There are seven public houses in the town surviving from the late 19th and early 20th centuries - two of these are shown on the town plan of 1760, two date to at least 1885, two to 1922 and '*The Manor*' Free House, formerly the Plummers Arms, appears to have been inserted into a pre-existing house.

3.5 TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

Brackley was well serviced for communication links in the industrial period with two railway lines and two turnpike roads by the end of the 19th century. The Towcester to Weston-on-the-Green road was established in 1756 and the Banbury to Buckingham Road was set up in 1790. The two roads still exist as thoroughfares through the town, although there was no indication of the 'toll house', which is recorded in various documentary and photographic sources, during the field visit. The Bletchley to Banbury branch of the London and North Western Railway and the Great Central Railway routes are no longer in operation, although the earthwork embankments survive for both lines. The goods shed and the main station building of the Great Central Railway are still in existence and are being utilised by small

businesses on an industrial estate and a small amount of the brickwork for the viaduct remains in-situ. The station building was designed by Alexander Ross who was the architect for all the buildings on the Great Central line. It was not possible to determine whether there were any surviving structures for the Bletchley and Oxford branch line.

3.6 UTILITIES

There was a water works, sewage works and gas works in Brackley in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The reservoir for the original waterworks has been covered over and the sewerage works have moved to a different location. The gas works is no longer in use, but a small brick building owned by British Gas PLC remains on the site.

3.7 HEALTH AND WELFARE

Brackley was well serviced with facilities in the late 19th century with a workhouse, cottage hospital, police station and fire station. The workhouse building has subsequently been demolished and replaced by a modern housing estate. The Police Station (1851) remains as a grade two listed building and would appear to have potential for surviving original features. The Cottage Hospital (1876) and Fire Engine House (1887) are both still in use for their original purpose.

3.8 RELIGION

There are references to six different places of worship in Brackley during the industrial period - St Peters Church, St James Church, Wesleyan Methodist Church, Independent Church, College Chapel and the Plymouth Brethren congregation. There was a religious divide within Brackley with a large proportion of the population in the south end being non-conformists and the Church of England dominating the north end near St Peter's. St Peter's church is still in existence and is now the sole parish church for Brackley - the building is dealt with fully in the Royal Commission of Historical Monuments of England unpublished notes. St James Church was demolished in 1836 due to its poor state of repair and replaced by a small chapel for funeral services which has also now been demolished. College Chapel utilised the building of the former St James and St John Hospital and belonged to Magdalen College School, the building is still in use.

Brackley is unusual in its provision for Non-conformist churches in that the Wesleyan Methodist church was built in 1800, prior to the Independent Church that was not erected until 1836. Most Independent churches in the county are of 18th century or earlier date. The original Independent Church still stands and is listed as a grade 2 building, but the current Methodist church is a 1905 replacement. The meeting house for the Plymouth Brethren in the Assembly Hall in High Street was not positively identified during the field trip. A meeting house was established in the 1930s for the congregation and is located between Manor Road and High Street.

3.9 EDUCATION

The town of Brackley has a varied history of educational provision of private, religious and state schools. The earliest school in the town was Magdalen College School, which was founded by Magdalen College, Oxford University³¹⁷. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries the school was in a period of decline; it was only in the late 19th century that the institution saw a revival with general additions and improvements to the fabric of the building. The buildings are still in use as educational accommodation, but the school has been run by Northamptonshire County Council since the 1950's. The school buildings are listed grade 2. Winchester House School, a private institution, moved to Brackley in 1918³¹⁸. The school was originally accommodated in Brackley Lodge, but moved to the Manor House in 1922 where it is still located today. The Manor House had been re-built by Charles Bather in 1870s.

Education has been provided by religious institutions in Brackley since 1818, when the National School was established and held in a converted barn, which has not been located. The Wesleyan School was established in 1855 in a building in Hill Street (now Chapel Lane) the building was shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1885 as a school, but by 1922 had been converted to a 'Sunday School', the structure has since been demolished. A new building for the National School was erected in 1870 and since became known as the '*Bell Tower*' or '*Feed my lambs school*'. The building is an elaborate construction of stone and mock-timber framing and is listed grade 2; the structure is in use as offices today.

Other schools in the town included the infant school in Chapel Lane, a building indicated on a map of 1922 as a school on Banbury Road (now a domestic house). There is also the 1916 Secondary Modern Council School on Manor Road, which is currently used as a Professional Development Centre for Northamptonshire County Council. The 1840 infants school that was erected on the High Street and by 1877 was being used as a reading room is now incorporated into an agricultural machinery shop showroom on Market Square. It would appear unlikely that the 1818 converted barn for the National School would still be extant.

3.10 RECREATION

There were a number of social, recreational and sporting clubs established in Brackley including the Friendly or Benefit Society (1772) who met in the Red Lion Inn, Brackley Town Football Club (1888), Brackley Cricket Club (1872) and Brackley and District Bowling Club (1921)³¹⁹.

³¹⁷The history and development of the school is discussed in detail in A history of Magdalen College School, Brackley, Northamptonshire 1548-1949 E.G. Forrester, 1950.

³¹⁸After being founded in St Leonards-on-Sea in the 1870's.

³¹⁹Brackley and District Round Table, Brackley Silver Jubilee Celebrations.

There are a number of surviving structures including a conservative club which retains its elaborate wrought iron entrance way (the building itself is dated 1737). There is also the 'institute' on Halse Road (which was established by St Peters Church), the Women's Institute and Girl Guides Hall (1928) and a building on Banbury Road which is embossed with the logo 'The Statuaries' and is now in use as a pub and restaurant. Of these the former two have been subject to a change of use, but may retain features relating to their original function as social and educational buildings and may be of interest as individual buildings. The latter two would appear to have had some continuity of use, but are unlikely to be of particular importance in an understanding of the development of the town. It is interesting to note that there do not appear to be any early working men's clubs in Brackley, there is a Band Club on Drayman's Walk, but this does not appear on Ordnance Survey maps of 1922 or earlier. In summary, although there are individual recreational buildings surviving in the town they are unlikely to contribute significantly to the understanding of the development of the town or 18th / 19th century social institutions.

II ASSESSMENT

A PRE-MEDIEVAL

1.0 ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE AND SURVIVAL

Brackley 'Old Town' is clearly a settlement of at least County importance, as a probable Saxon estate centre with a significant religious association linked to its old minster church and holy well. The site is also important in the association of the estate and ecclesiastical central place function with a substantial nucleated Roman settlement with a large villa or other major structure as its focus. The plan form of the Old Town, based on oval enclosures, survives to a remarkable degree compared to some other settlements. The estate lacks the good documentary evidence for the late Saxon period seen at Oundle or Daventry but in this it is not atypical. Although the extensive development of the 1970s and 1980s has destroyed much of the potential of the Roman settlement there is still probably some evidence that could be recovered from the area. A large part of the area of oval enclosures and core of the Saxon and early medieval settlement has not been extensively redeveloped and even where it has the density of development is relatively low, leaving extensive potential for archaeological survival. There is probably very high potential here. In the centre of the area the Goldwell Close, although having suffered some levelling is wholly undeveloped, while significant boundary features may lie either on existing boundaries or within the highway boundary. The important holy wells do lie within the highway boundary, one marked by a rebuilt medieval well head, the Goldwell, the other, St Rumbolds being lost, although its approximate location has been estimated. The area within the highway boundary throughout the old town is of high potential but especially in the area of the holy wells. The church and churchyard also appears likely to have a fair archaeological survival judging from the small scale work already conducted there.

B MEDIEVAL & POST MEDIEVAL

1.0 TOWN

1.1 ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE AND SURVIVAL

The focus of interest in Brackley from the medieval and post medieval period is in the New Town not the Old. The documentary record for the town is very good and it has been possible to reconstruct the late medieval tenement pattern from the various rental and charters. There is much more that probably can be done in this regard using the full range of charters and leases in the Magdalen College archives. The result is that there is a very detailed topographical framework within which all future work can be conducted. This has only proven to be achievable with such accuracy in Oundle, and to a lesser degree of accuracy in Daventry. In this regard then Brackley is one of the exceptional small towns in the county and probably also the region.

The town escaped the worst ravages of industrialisation in the late 19th and first half of the 20th century that destroyed much of the archaeology of towns like Kettering and Wellingborough. It has seen extensive infilling from the 1970s onwards but there is as still a great deal that remains undeveloped, both in the back crofts and, the most important area, the frontages. The extensive redevelopment of the Castle Lane area has been subject to substantial excavation which, when finally published, will make a major contribution to our understanding of the development of the town. This excavation has confirmed the importance of examining wherever possible the frontages which have not been subject to 19th and 20th century development and there are several areas like this within the town that need to be given the very highest priority for conservation or investigation.

The historic building potential of the town is nowhere near as good as that for Oundle but compares favourably with most other of the small towns in the county. There has been no detailed survey of the buildings to compare with that conducted in Oundle but such a study might well reveal some surviving medieval structures. It is however with regard to the post medieval that the greatest potential for standing structures to contribute to our understanding of the nature of small town urbanism in the county.

Overall Brackley should be rated alongside Higham Ferrers, Daventry, Catesby and Oundle as the small towns or failed small towns with the highest potential in the county.

1.2 DOCUMENTARY

1.2.1 Summary of Previous Investigation

The town has been studied by a number of local historians and several books have been published based on the very extensive documentary sources. In addition to the work of Bridges and Baker, there were several 19th century histories of the town. In the late 20th century two significant studies have been published, by Clarke and by Emmerson. These however concentrate largely on the post medieval history of the town and do not deal to much degree with the detailed issues that are of concern to this study. There is also an important calendar of the manuscripts in the Magdalen College archive, though the references are not the modern references of the collection.

1.2.2 Research for this Report

Detailed documentary research has been conducted by G Foard over the last 2 years on the documentary sources for Brackley, particularly those in the Northamptonshire Record Office and the Magdalen College archives. The majority of this material has been collected here. However the major work on the reconstruction of the historical topography for the late medieval and post medieval town is not presented here in complete form. This work involved the linking together of the various rentals for the late medieval and post medieval period, using rent and tenant names to give a completed circuit of the New Town. Only limited reconstruction proved possible for the Old Town but more could possibly be done from the material in the records of Leicester Abbey, which have yet to be examined. The rental

information was then linked through to the 1760s map data where highly accurate mapping provided the tenurial information needed to key in the rental and the map to give accurate locational information for almost every tenement. Only in the side streets were problems encountered, and in these cases it was normally only the pre plague charters that were concerned, not the rentals and the desertion of the side reads had generally been completed by the time the rentals were produced.

1.2.3 Survival

The documentary of the town is particularly promising. The 1760 map records all owners and tenants for each tenement, while the 1830 maps provide a very complete picture of the open field system, and together they provide an essential framework within which future investigations can proceed. It may be possible to trace back many of these tenements and open field holding to the medieval period as a result of two large collections of deeds and charters and other related documents which survive for the town. The Ellesmere Collection contains a good series of post medieval deeds, while the Magdalene College collection includes over 950 charters and other documents from the 12th to the 16th centuries relating to the very extensive possession in Brackley of St John's Hospital, which as early as the mid 13th century held as many as 80 tenements in the town. In addition our very limited survey has identified a good series of court rolls of 16th-18th centuries, with various other court records, surveys, rentals and deeds. In view of the quantity and range of documents surviving for the town a detailed documentary study would prove extremely profitable. The Magdalene College range of leases etc especially of post medieval period was not examined. The records of Leicester Abbey have not been consulted, but they may add significantly to the understanding of the Old Town in particular, where there is an apparent lack of extensive rental with a sequential pattern that can be tied to the tenements seen in the 1760s. In addition, the highly accurate and detailed 1760 map does not cover the old town so one is dependent upon the less detailed but still very important 1760s map in Magdalen College. A number of Tudor terriers exist for the field system that have not been looked at and no attempt was made to reconstruct the medieval or early post medieval tenurial pattern in the open fields.

1.2.4 Potential

There is the problem of the failure to link the pre 1486 rentals fully, especially that of 1250-60, to the later reconstruction of the town topography. If this was achievable, as it may well be with further detailed research on the charters and leases of Magdalen College, then there could be very important information on the size of tenements and on early rents, especially the 3d rents which are lost later on. The main problem is that there are insufficient links in the 14th century and the failure apparently of the early 15th century rentals to follow early or later sequences. A detailed search of the Leicester Abbey records in order to explore more fully the historical topography and development of the old town has not been attempted as part of this study, but significant documentary potential may be expected.

1.3 HISTORIC BUILDINGS

1.3.1 Summary of Previous Investigation

Apart from the Listed Buildings entries there has been no significant historic buildings study conducted in the town.

1.3.2 Research for this Report

No original research was conducted for this report although the Northamptonshire Archaeology Unit rapid survey of the late 1970s as to the survival of historic buildings has been used to give a broad overview of historic building survival to support the evidence from the List.

1.3.3 Survival

The rapid survey undertaken for this survey together with the evidence from the 1830 and 1767 maps has enabled definition of the maximum extent of likely survival of early buildings, and has shown that although far fewer pre-Victorian buildings survive in Brackley than might appear at first sight, although more do exist here than in any other town in the county except Oundle. The buildings are not evenly distributed around the town. The Castle End is has only a very small number, whereas the market place and much of the High Street have a fair survival. In the Old Town again there are very few. Special mention also needs to be made of the Goldwell well head and of course of the church of St Peter and the chapel of the Hospital with the associated fragmentary possible remains of early buildings.

1.3.4 Potential

These buildings may provide an important body of information on the post medieval development of the town, particularly when combined with the documentary evidence, while it is possible that medieval survivals may still await discovery behind later facades. A far more detailed study of the pre-Victorian building in the town could prove extremely valuable, and ideally any of these buildings should be investigated prior to any renovation or alteration. What also is needed is to look at the relationship between historic building survival, once the fieldwork has been undertaken, and the type of tenement as recorded in the rentals of the 15th and 16th centuries and maps of the 18th century. This will enable targeting for further record on the inns, alehouses or other specialist buildings or to focus on other themes for which the surviving buildings may be good exemplars in the town. It will also then be possible to recover many charters, deeds, leases and other documents for some of the properties to enable the integration of further documentary with the historic building data. In the sheer depth of detail relating to individual tenements from these other documents Brackley may prove to be the best documented of all the town in the county in both the medieval and post medieval period.

1.4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL

1.4.1 Summary of Previous Investigation

A watching brief was maintained on the area of Roman settlement in the Old Town during development in the 1970s but only very poor unpublished records exist as to the results. Minor evaluation, negative, was carried out immediately to the east of the churchyard and observation by the river south of the mill, producing limited evidence. Evaluation in the Vicarage grounds in 1997 and at the east end of Pebble Lane in 2000-1 is part of a long term strategy to seek evidence from within the projected area of the Saxon and medieval Old Town and to determine the extent of the Roman settlement. In line with these objectives and to investigate the origin and development of the church there was small scale evaluation and observation within the churchyard in 1993 & 1998.

Within the New Town there has been evaluation and recording action in 1999-2000 behind the Almshouse at the north end of the town recovering ancillary buildings and other features, associated with tenements that stood here in the medieval and post medieval period. No evidence was recovered for the Hospital which is presumed to be further to the north. The potentially highly important area of former tenements in the Dovehouse Close, now a park on the east side of the High Street, has been subject to very minor observation but none has been sufficient in scale or located sufficiently close to the frontage to determine whether important archaeological deposits do survive here. On the opposite side of the road excavation over a significant part of two tenements produced limited information on the boundaries between tenements and very limited structural evidence. It seems clear from such excavations that the vast majority of activity of medieval date was, not surprisingly, concentrated at or close to the frontage in many cases. In the Buckingham Lane area evaluation demonstrated the known small area of tenements to have been largely destroyed although some stratigraphy was revealed to the rear. Minor observation in 1999 in the market place failed to reveal significant deposits mainly due to the small scale nature of the disturbance, though the cellar identified containing 20th century deposits at the surface is most likely to represent one of the medieval rows of shops and the presence of modern material in the backfill need not mean that medieval remains do not exist there. Small scale evaluation and recording action in 1999 on the east side of the market place towards the rear of tenements produced little result due probably mainly to the fact that this had been heavily redeveloped in the late 19th and 20th centuries. Other side lane tenement evaluations have taken place in Magpie Lane in 1999 and on either side of the Halse Lane in 1998 and 2000. These were of sufficient scale to reveal evidence of medieval occupation and on the south side of a leet, but more extensive investigations would be needed to adequately understand the nature and significance of the deposits.

The Castle Lane area and the area immediately opposite, north of St. James's chapel site, have been the most extensive and productive excavations of any in the small towns of Northamptonshire. On the north side of the Castle Lane the investigations were of too small a scale to adequately reveal the true character of the deposits and the site was redeveloped without adequate investigation to resolve important research question. On the south side of the Castle Lane in 1982 the major excavation revealed a well preserved series of tenements with stone buildings, with two undercrofts or cellars and extensive other well preserved stratigraphy, immediately outside the castle ditch. Adjacent to the chapel the excavation also

revealed an important sequence extending into the post medieval and demonstrating excellent survival even where there had been post medieval continuity of occupation, at least in the low lying and formerly boggy areas of Castle End.

1.4.2 Research for this Report

The castle earthwork was surveyed in connection with the study of the town in 1984 but no other archaeological fieldwork has been conducted in connection with the production of this report.

1.4.3 Survival

The only substantial earthwork survival of certainly medieval features is the poor but still very important earthworks of the castle. The area of the fishweeres, the large lakes which encircled a large part of the castle, have been largely destroyed by digging out on the north side of the Hinton Road and by the construction across part of them by the by-pass on the south of the castle. There has been quite extensive infilling of the tenements of the town I, especially in the second half of the 20th century, almost none of which has seen any archaeological recording. However there are substantial areas within the historic core which have still not been built up in this way. Moreover, where investigation has taken place in such locations in the crofts little or no archaeological evidence has been revealed, confirming that they were in most cases simply agricultural crofts. In deed, within the tofts themselves most structural and other significant evidence has tended to be concentrated towards the frontage, though more substantial structures were found further back within the Almshouse tenement excavation. What has been largely missing are any dense distributions of rubbish or other pits comparable to those typical in medieval Northampton, a result probably of the closer integration of agriculture within the urban fabric. Hence it is largely on the frontage itself that the key evidence is to be expected.

Within the Old Town there are extensive areas at the frontage or potential frontages that are not built up, mainly where the modern housing is set back within the properties. The exception is the Goldwell Close which has only one modern building within it, though this may prove never to have been occupied in the medieval and post medieval period. These areas of the Old Town also clearly have high potential, given the relatively low density of most of the housing, for good survival of evidence of the Saxon precursor to the village.

In the New Town large parts of the frontages are built up with historic buildings. Here it may be that significant archaeology survives within the buildings themselves below modern floor levels, though this has yet to be tested. Especially where the historic building itself is of early date or of particular interest then investigation within the buildings may be appropriate where threats arise. However, apart from some of the side lanes, most of which are not known certainly to have been built up in the medieval period, there are relatively few areas of frontage in the New Town which are not presently occupied by buildings. Given that apart from the cellars, the well preserved archaeology on Castle Lane was very shallow and very vulnerable, it may be that post medieval and modern development has destroyed most of the

archaeological deposits over much of the major frontages. This does still have to be tested by significant excavations. The one place such work has been conducted is next to St James's church, where buildings had existed in the 19th century. However the very good archaeological survival of medieval beneath the later structures may have been a result of the very special circumstances of this area of the town, where a boggy area had been successively and intentionally built up over the centuries, so burying the earlier deposits more deeply than usual. Where examination of a potential medieval frontage took place on the Buckingham Lane, admittedly a side road, there was almost total destruction of earlier deposits by the post medieval and modern activity.

Only two very limited parts of the town have seen large scale destruction by modern activity – the area affected by the southern station and railway and the area of the former factory on the south east side of the market place. There are several key areas for tenement frontage survival, the most important of which is the park on the east side of the High Street, formerly known as Dovehouse Close. Though there has been extensive landscaping in the post medieval period at the rear of the area it is likely that the archaeology of the frontage is well preserved. The other areas with major potential are the frontages adjacent to the former St John's Hospital, the garden area on part of the site of the former Tithe House and the frontage immediately to the south of the St James chapel site. However small but very important islands of preservation may exist in many of the gardens and other areas which exist scattered along parts of the medieval frontages.

On the market place itself it would appear likely that there will be good survival of evidence of the shops and related structures beneath the present road, pavement and grass surfaces, but the examination of these areas to date has been far too ephemeral to be able to confirm this.

Of the major monuments there seems likely to be good survival on a number of sites. The castle earthwork may be poorly preserved but structural evidence of uncertain significance and extent has been confirmed by evaluation trenching and on the motte while the bailey ditch survives well judging by the results of the 1982 trenching. St James's chapel site remains an open area although 19th century burial there may have caused significant disturbance of medieval deposits, but this has never been tested. There are significant areas of St John's Hospital site which are not built over or terraced, however there has been no fieldwork here to test survival. Evaluation and observation at St James's church would seem to indicate that good survival is to be expected at least in part.

There would appear to be exceptional potential in the Castle End area of the town for waterlogged deposits. The excavation adjacent to St James's church showed the area was raised up in the medieval period to enable occupation. The Castle Lane excavations showed the location of the edge of the Mill Pond. Both areas and some of the adjacent areas may contain important waterlogged deposits in close proximity to the urban tenements and thus contain exceptionally well preserved palaeoenvironmental or artefactual evidence in waterlogged features.

1.4.4 Potential

The archaeological potential, assessed in terms of the present state of development is high in comparison to that in most other of the county's small towns. It is true that only a small part of the medieval town is not at present developed, but this does include several key areas: the Castle, St James' Chapel, much of St John's Hospital and adjacent frontage on the market place, a long frontage on the High Street (Dovehouse Close). The documentary work which has been carried out has provided a framework for detailed investigation.

The castle site clearly offers very high potential for good survival and for extensive investigation which could yield key information as to the origins and development of the town, for the castle seems likely to have been the primary development of the new town and the place from which the driving force for the development of the town was directed.

St Leonard's Hospital at the north end of the town is unlikely to offer sufficient potential for detailed investigation because of the degree of Victorian and modern development, but particular attention should be paid to any future redevelopment in order that the exact site of the hospital can be identified. In contrast, St John's Hospital, with its good, early documentation could prove well worth excavation if ever threatened, indeed because of the extent to which its site has remained unaffected by later development, and in view of the survival of a large part of the Norman chapel, it may represent the best opportunity anywhere in the county for the study of a hospital founded early in the medieval period. The adjacent area to the north may also provide a valuable frontage on the market place though of course far from the main focus of economic activity.

1.5 HISTORICAL TOPOGRAPHY

Compared to some of the other small towns the plan form of Brackley has been relatively well preserved. There is a high level of continuity of building on the frontages, even if a significant proportion are 19th or even 20th century, the frontage is largely intact in a broad way similar to that seen in the mid 18th century, which reflects the earlier pattern. In the Old Town the pattern of roads has remained largely intact, but the pattern of tenements and the frontages have been mainly transformed to create a 20th century pattern over large parts of the area with modern housing estates over a significant part. However the core of the area with the open Goldwell Close, churchyard and the irregular pattern of lanes does retain an historic character of significance which should be conserved. The High Street north of the market place largely retains its frontages, with substantial survival of historic buildings. On the east side of the street in particular but to a lesser degree also on the west side the tenement pattern for the medieval and post medieval burgages is retained. Around the market place the survival is very good, or appears so when viewed from the market place. However in the back of the properties the medieval tenement layout has been lost over a significant part of the area, though it cannot be viewed from most positions and only on the west side does the back lane enable the loss of the framework of tenements to be appreciated.

The main exception is the Castle End, where the plan form has been dramatically transformed by the construction first of the railway and station and associated road realignment; then by the construction of an industrial estate over much of the area with a supermarket immediately to the south. Even the layout of the streets has been largely lost.

2.0 URBAN HINTERLAND

The main limitation to the assessment of the hinterland of Brackley has been the fact that almost a half of the area lies with adjacent counties and the digital data sets developed for Northamptonshire are not available for those adjacent counties. Apart from the extensive urban development within the township of Brackley itself and the air force base at Croughton, there has been very little urban development or mineral extraction in the hinterland of the town. The wider prehistoric through to Saxon settlement pattern will therefore be recoverable over a wide area. However the critical area close in to the historic core will not yield a significant pattern due to the scale of modern development and so this aspect of the study of the evolution of the central place cannot be a priority. However, for the understanding of the interaction of a medieval town with its hinterland it is the medieval settlements, which were almost wholly nucleated, and the road system which were the most significant influences. No assessment has been made as to the potential for the investigation of the road but in the light of the suggestions about the origins of the Oxford to Northampton road and its critical significance to the development of the castle and the new town this theme would appear to be an important one to be investigated.

There are a number of well preserved shrunken or deserted village sites within the hinterland of Brackley. These sites, such as Stutchbury and Astwick, offer the potential for detailed archaeological investigation and comparison, looking at the impact of the proximity to the major small town of Brackley on the character of activity within the settlements. However none of the villages would appear on present evidence to have a particularly high documentary potential which might complement the archaeological potential. A far more detailed analysis of the documentary sources is however required before the true documentary potential of the settlements can be confirmed.

C INDUSTRIAL

ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE AND SURVIVAL

The town was one of three in Northamptonshire where the overriding characteristic of the town in the 18th century and early 19th century was that it was a coaching station; the other two being Daventry and Towcester. Although the extent of the coaching traffic through the town was less than in the other two settlements, the influence the coaching era had upon the physical development of the settlement was considerable. The town is of county importance in terms of its role in the coaching era and needs to be assessed against other coaching towns in a national context.

The topography of the town for the period 1750-1939, complete with tenement plots, remains largely intact. There are a large number of surviving buildings including public houses and inns (which related to both the market and coaching functions of the town), commercial buildings, houses and educational buildings. The documentation for the study of Brackley in this period is particularly good.

1.0 DOCUMENTARY

Brackley would appear to have a high potential for the documentary study for the period 1750 - 1939 there are a large number of documents, photographs and maps detailing the development of the town in this period.

1.1 Maps

There are a number of good maps showing the town and surrounding area of Brackley in the period following 1750. These include two town plans of 1760, maps dated 1830 showing the area before and after enclosure, plans of property owned by Magdalen College, Oxford and a large number of plans and maps showing individual areas of the town. On the basis of the map evidence it should be possible to do a detailed reconstruction of the development of the town from 1750 onwards. Unfortunately one of the key map sources for the early 20th century, the second edition Ordnance Survey map dated 1900, is not currently available in Northamptonshire.

1.2 Photographs

There are a large number of photographs of Brackley in the 19th and early 20th centuries located at Northamptonshire Heritage, Northamptonshire Record Office and Northamptonshire Local Studies Library. These tend to focus upon the structures in High Street including houses, shops, town hall, schools, manor house etc. There are also a number of photographs of St Peters Church and various street scenes / events in the town, however there are no references to any industrial buildings including the two breweries. Two monuments that have now gone, but have surviving photographs are the tollhouse on Oxford Road and the railway lines, station and viaduct.

1.3 Documents

There are a very large number of documents relating to Brackley including photographs, letters, newspaper reports, notebooks, histories, bills etc relating to the development of the town itself as well as information on particular monuments such as Magdalen College School, Brackley Cottage Hospital, Brackley Workhouse etc. Many of these sources are accessioned in Northamptonshire Record Office, however the parish also retain a large number of documents relating to church and vicarage matters as well as details of various societies etc in the town. One source which is of particular importance for understanding the development of the town in the early part of the industrial period is a set of letters from 1735-

1755 indicating tradesmen in town including hatter, quilts petticoats manufacturer, mercer, laceman, barber, staymaker, tiler, lawyer, chandler, rope maker, shoemaker.

2.0 STANDING BUILDINGS

There are 75 listed buildings in Brackley including five buildings that are now educational premises, four religious buildings, and the police station. Also a number of commercial buildings including inns, hotels and the Town Hall and a large number of 17th, 18th and early 19th century houses on High Street and in Old Town. There are a total of 8 listed buildings that originated prior to the 17th century. The 18th and 19th century Georgian style buildings on the High Street are particularly important in retaining the character of the town at this period. However, there are problems with the list for the town of Brackley. Many of the structures were listed in the 1950's and none of them have been re-surveyed, there are also a number of anomalies - for example the former Wesleyan church which was demolished in the 1980's is still on the list.

There are no substantial industrial buildings surviving from the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries, the two breweries in the town have been demolished and there are no large-scale factories of the period. The small-scale industrial works located throughout the town are not of particular importance.

There were a large number of inns in the town in the period following 1750 and many of these structures appear to survive today, some of them are still being utilised as public houses. This group of buildings would be worthy of further study as they represent an important part of the development of the town and would appear to provide a large sample of the building type.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL

There is little potential for below ground archaeological excavation in Brackley, the only major industries which have been located are the two breweries, the area of which have been fully re-developed in modern times. If evidence of further industry came to light this may be worthy of some form of recording.

4.0 TOPOGRAPHY

The general topography of Brackley with its singular, linear street forming the core of the town centre has remained intact, with High Street clearly providing the focus for the majority of commercial activity in the town. In many places the burgage plot developments leading off from this central area have remained intact and are still being filled in today with small industrial units, garages, lock-ups etc. This is particularly the case to the west of the High Street. The frontage of Back Lane or Manor Road to the rear of the plots on the west has become completely infilled and is now a complete road in its own right. The burgage plots are beginning to be eroded by large-scale developments such as housing estates and supermarkets.

The area of Old Town has retained its general street pattern of small interlined lanes which are still discernible today, but the area has become infilled with modern housing particularly around the area of the vicarage and to the north of the '*Old Town*'. The area to the south of St Peter's church has retained more of its original character with a general sense of spaciousness.

The 19th century housing developments of Banbury Road and Halse Road have been retained, although the former has been infilled with modern housing. Development of the town of Brackley has been around the periphery of the core settlement, primarily to the north and west.

III RESEARCH AGENDA

1.0 PRE MEDIEVAL

The presence and alignment of any Roman road through the Old Town area.

The Broad character of the Roman nucleated settlement and especially of the villa like building by the old town.

Does the occupation continue into the Saxon period.

The location and extent of the early-middle Saxon settlement and the relationship of it to the oval enclosures and irregular plan form of the Old Town, with particular reference to the patterns seen in other settlements such as Higham Ferrers and Daventry.

The location and date of the holy wells and any association between them and other Saxon or earlier activity.

The origins of old minster church of St Peters and of the oval churchyard within which it lies.

The chronology of the addition of tenements within or onto the edge of the early-middle Saxon settlement.

2.0 MEDIEVAL & POST MEDIEVAL

The chronology of the castle and its extent in relation to the Castle Lane and Oxford Road, including the relationship of the fishponds and mill pond etc to the castle defences.

It is essential to identify and assess the state of preservation of the archaeological remains of the capital messuage in Halse for its history is intimately tied into the history of the castle and manor at Brackley. The origin of that capital messuage, in particular when it was rebuilt and enhanced in the late 12th or early 13th century could be crucial in understanding the origin and development of the castle at Brackley.

The date of origin of the chapel of St James and of the tenement rows around the castle in comparison to the market place area of the town. Particular waterlogged potential are believed to exist in this formerly boggy area where landfill took place in the medieval period before construction took of buildings place.

The chronology of the laying out of the market place and comparison to the date of the Goose Green area as a potential earlier market place.

The chronology of the laying out of the tenement rows of the New Town. The investigation will need to look across many of the tenement boundaries in towards the rear of the tofts as well as at the frontages.

The character and status of occupation and the commercial or industrial functions carried on within tenements, comparing tenements from different parts of the town and of different

documented tenurial status etc. Particular attention will need to be given to identifying the best preserved stratified evidence within the town frontages. It is important at the very least to sample tenements across the town to recover collections of artefacts which can shed light on trades followed and status of occupants of individual tenements and change in that status and activity over time. Comparison is certainly needed for the Castle Lane tenements and to find patterning within the town in different streets and rows. Were there specialised area of the town in industrial or commercial terms or were the trades interspersed.

The layout and character of the Hospital of St John.

The extent and significance of the Grove as a constraint in determining the layout of the New Town. The greater part of the Grove and the associated land is now intensively built over, but the north western quarter which is part of the grounds of the school will be important for the evidence they may contain as to the origin and development of the Grove. In particular the archaeological identification and investigation of the boundary or boundaries against the town, may assist in understanding the degree to which the existence of the Grove determined the position and layout of the town, the main road appearing to skirt around the Grove, though this may simply be a result of the desire to layout the town on the higher ground.

3.0 INDUSTRIAL

Why did Brackley not undergo a process of large-scale urbanisation in the period following 1750?

A combination of archaeological and documentary sources is needed to determine the level of urbanisation in this period. How many buildings were erected in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries? What were the factors behind growth and stagnation at particular times? The position of Brackley needs to be considered in the context of other towns, with reference to Banbury in particular. There is also a need to determine whether Brackley did actually undergo a limited urbanisation. Due to the commercial rather than industrial nature of the town the development of the town may have been more middle class rather than working class.

Why did Brackley not develop an industrial basis in the period following 1750?

What factors were inhibiting the industrial development of Brackley needs to be established. The town had some of the industrial features associated with a market town of the period including two large commercial breweries, but it did not develop a substantial boot and shoe trade or alternative industry. Was this just a case of geography as the town is located to the south of the county away from the focus of the trade in Northamptonshire? Or were there other factors such as internal political, economic interests?

What effect did the coaching/hunting eras have upon Brackley?

Brackley was located on two turnpike roads (Towcester to Weston-on-the-Green road and Banbury to Buckingham road) and the hypothesis has been put forward that Brackley was used as a coaching town due to the large number of public houses and inns in the town. It would be possible to test this through a combination of building survey and documentary survey. There is a need to determine when inns were in use and whether they had provision for accommodation for coaches and their crew and passengers.

It is also important to determine the impact the hunting season had on the physical environment of the town. Which buildings were used on a seasonal basis? How did these differ from residential buildings in the town? Were the public houses and inns used extensively during this period?

Educational provision in an urban setting.

Brackley would provide a good case study for the changing nature of education over a long period of time. There are a number of surviving educational buildings of very different types in Brackley including Magdalen College, 'Feed my Lambs' national school, Winchester House School, an infants school and an early 20th century Secondary Modern Council School.

IV STRATEGY

The assessment of the management and conservation priorities within the Extensive Urban Survey have been based around an assessment of levels of importance previously applied elsewhere in the county for management purposes. The grading falls into six categories:

Scheduled: nationally important remains that have statutory protection.

Unscheduled national importance: in some cases statutory protection is suggested while in others recording action may prove to be the appropriate response to threats.

County importance: Where significant archaeology is known or where it is likely but confirmation is required. Normally recording rather than preservation would be the appropriate mitigation strategy.

Historic buildings: Buildings known or which have the potential to contain significant pre 19th century structural remains.

Local importance: where archaeology may survive but where, on present evidence investigation does not appear appropriate.

Destroyed: where the archaeology has been wholly destroyed.

In addition in some cases recommendations have been made for the designation of new or the extension of existing Conservation Areas and for the listing of specific buildings.

This approach has not been possible for the industrial period, as further work on the period is needed at a county, regional and national level before a definitive assessment can be made. The town has been divided up into zones and priorities for additional research, recording and conservation measures have been assigned to each individual area.

1.0 EXISTING DESIGNATIONS

1.1 Scheduled Ancient Monuments

There is one Scheduled Ancient Monument for Brackley (SAM 13636) – Brackley Castle.

1.2 Listed Buildings

There are 79 listed buildings in the town of Brackley.

1.3 Conservation Area

There is a conservation area for Brackley, which covers the historic part of the town (High Street and Church Road). This was designated in 1971 and has been extended and revised in 1977, 1985 and 1998.

2.0 MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES

2.1 SAXON, MEDIEVAL & POST MEDIEVAL

2.1.1 Evaluation and Recording Priorities

Any archaeological evidence which survives relating to the early-middle Saxon activity in the Old Town may prove to be of national importance for the light it may shed on the character of such settlements and the origins and significance of the holy wells.

Given the detailed reconstruction of the historical topography that has proved possible, and the unique nature of the Brackley new town in the history of urbanisation in Northamptonshire, any disturbance of a single house or more anywhere within the new town historic settlement core should be subject to evaluation to determine the archaeological potential. In key areas within the old and new towns, including known or suspected medieval frontages and major monuments such as the Hospitals and the holy wells, then proposals for smaller scale disturbances may also normally warrant investigation. Although it is at or close to the frontages, within the tofts, that occupation evidence is most likely to be recovered, evaluation and, where appropriate, recording action should also be conducted in the crofts at the rear of the tenements. The latter could recover evidence for the laying out of and subdivision of the tenements in the late Saxon and medieval periods.

Within the market place even the most minor disturbance should be subject to investigation as deposits related to the shops, stalls and other buildings and other activity on the market place is likely to survive immediately below the modern surface.

2.2.1 Conservation Priorities

The Castle earthwork is scheduled but needs to be far more effectively managed to stop further damage to the monument.

Conservation of the remaining components of the plan form of the medieval settlement should be an objective, not only retaining the road pattern and the frontages at the road side where medieval and post medieval frontages existed, but also in selected areas it would be

desirable to retain the pattern of the burgage tenements behind the frontage as exemplars of the plan form which dominated the settlement for the last 800 years or more.

Conserve the open enclosure of Goldwell for its high value in terms of historical topography and for its archaeological potential, but also as an important setting for the church and context for the holy well. Goldwell well head itself is neglected and requires conservation, maintenance and interpretation

2.3 INDUSTRIAL

2.3.1 Zone 1 - Core area of settlement

The buildings and topography of the central area of town remain largely intact with the mixture of residential, commercial and educational buildings. The majority of the area is designated as a Conservation Area and the recent Conservation Area review provides detailed proposals for the conservation and enhancement of the town. The one additional recommendation should be for the retention of the tenement plots throughout the town as they are being eroded away by large-scale schemes such as supermarkets and residential developments.

The main buildings of interest to the town, including the public houses and inns and school buildings, are located in the core area of the town. These buildings should be recorded in line with the research agenda outlined above if the opportunity arises.

2.3.2 Zone 2 - Old town

Brackley 'old town' settlement is located to the north-east of the main town and was until the 18th century entirely separate from the main settlement. The area has retained its separate character, although there is some modern infill. Any new development should respect the general pattern of small interlinked lanes and should be of an appropriate size and scale.

There is little potential for archaeological work in the area, but a detailed comparison of the building types in the Old Town and the main part of Brackley would provide valuable information about integration and segregation in the settlement.

2.3.3 Zone 3 - 19th / 20th century mixed development

19th century development of Brackley along Banbury Road. Primarily housing, but also includes a chapel, police station and public house. A small number of houses to the south east of the road are included in the conservation area for Brackley. Consideration should be given to extending the conservation area to include some of the large 19th century houses at the north west end of the road. This area is of interest as part of the continuing development of the town and every effort should be taken to retain the road intact. There are no recording issues in this area.

2.3.4 Zone 4 - 19th / 20th century housing

Area of 19th century housing expanding out of the established plan of the settlement. There are no conservation or recording issues for this area.

2.3.5 Zone 5 - 19th / 20th century mixed development

Area of 19th century housing and a water works site expanding out of the established plan of the settlement. There are no conservation or recording issues for this area.

2.3.6 Zone 6 - 19th / 20th century housing

19th century development of the town. Mainly housing, but also includes a public house and 'institute'. A small number of terraces are included within the conservation area for Brackley. Consideration should be given to extending the conservation area to encompass the entire historic development to the north of the town. There are no recording issues in this area.

2.3.7 Zone 7 - Magdalen College school grounds

It was not possible to gain access to this area during the field visit as it is still part of the school. Map evidence indicates that the area is little changed. No assessment of the importance of the area can be made.

APPENDICES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AASR	Association of Architectural Society Reports
BL	British Library
BNFAS	Bulletin of the Northamptonshire Federation of Archaeological Societies
Bridges Notes	John Bridges original notes for his History, from circa 1720, in Bodleian Library.
NN&Q	Northamptonshire Notes & Queries
NP&P	Northamptonshire Past & Present
NRL	Northampton Reference Library, Local Studies Collection.
NRO	Northamptonshire Record Office
NRS	Northamptonshire Record Society
PRO	Public Record Office
RCHME	Royal Commission on Historical Monuments of England
SMR	Sites & Monuments Record
VCH	Victoria County History, Page, W., 1970.
VCH Notes	Notes compiled by the VCH in the early 20 th century, now in NRO.

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