

T H A M E S V A L L E Y

ARCHAEOLOGICAL

S E R V I C E S

**Medieval and Post-Medieval features at Priest End
Allotments, Priest End, Thame, Oxfordshire**

Archaeological Excavation

by Steve Ford

Site Code: PET15/206

(SP 7032 0628)

Medieval and Post-Medieval features at Priest End, Thame, Oxfordshire

**An Archaeological Excavation
for Thame Town Council**

by Steve Ford

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code PET15/206

August 2017

Summary

Site Name: Priest End Allotments, adjacent St Mary's Churchyard, Priest End, Thame, Oxfordshire

Grid reference: SP 7032 0628

Site activity: Archaeological Excavation

Date and duration of project: 18th May to 9th June 2017

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Steve Ford

Site code: PET15/206

Area of site: 0.13ha

Summary of results: The excavation revealed deposits of early medieval date along with Post-medieval and modern features. The fieldwork has recorded a component of Thame, perhaps including part of a croft defined by a substantial ditch, that is likely to have been in existence before the medieval planned town but which may have gone out of use shortly after the latter was created. Although pottery that could be of late Saxon date was recovered, no features were definitively dated to that period. Some reuse of the site took place at various times in later medieval and later times.

A single Mesolithic struck flint and a few sherds of Roman pottery indicate a low level of activity of these periods in the area.

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museum Service in due course.

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Medieval and Post-Medieval features at Priest End, Thame, Oxfordshire An Archaeological Excavation

by Steve Ford

Report 15/206b

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological excavation carried out on the former Priest End Allotments, Thame, Oxfordshire (SP 7032 0628) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Ms Janine Howells of Thame Town Council, Town Hall, High Street, Oxfordshire OX9 3DP.

Planning permission (app no P14/S0620/FUL) had been gained from South Oxfordshire District Council to create an extension to the churchyard burial ground. As a consequence of the possibility of archaeological deposits on the site which may be damaged or destroyed by groundworks, a field evaluation has been requested by Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service. This was in accordance with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF 2012, para 128) and the District Council's Local Plan policies. An initial phase of fieldwork in the form of evaluation trenching (Platt 2015) revealed deposits of medieval date and so further open area fieldwork was required, which is the subject of this report. Both phases of fieldwork were carried out to follow briefs prepared by Mr Richard Oram of Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service and agreed by the council as advised by him. The fieldwork was undertaken by Steve Ford assisted by Will Attard, Rebecca Constable and Maisie Foster between 18th May and 9th June 2017 and the site code is PET15/206. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museums Service in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on an irregular parcel of land in the north-western extent of Thame, c. 0.2km to the south of the River Thame (Fig. 1) centred on NGR SP 7032 0628. The site is bordered to the west by Priest End, to the north and east by St Mary's Church and churchyard and to the south by an area of grass owned by the Tithe Barn (Fig. 2). The site is at an elevation of c. 65m aOD and the underlying geology is mapped as sand (BGS 1994), but which was observed on site as a varied mix of sandstone fragments, clayey sand, flint gravel and some chalk flecks.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a brief for the project prepared by Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service (Oram 2015). In summary the site lies with the historic core of Thame close to the medieval parish church, which has 12th century origins. To the south-east lies the site of the medieval manor complex (Bishops Court) documented in the 13th century and to the south stands the tithe barn of early post-medieval (15th/16th century) date. In general the site lies within the area of Thame likely to have been in existence before the Bishop of Lincoln formed the planned town ('New' Thame) with its distinctive burgage plots (still visible in the town) in the late 12th or early 13th century (Airs *et al.* 1975; Spavold and Gilman 2002). The deliberate 'plantation' of a new town, often by a Bishop, was relatively common in this era, as a means of raising income (Blair 1998; Bond 1990). In Thame's case, it appears, the Oxford to Aylesbury road was deliberately rerouted to pass through the new market place (attracting not only customers to the market but also tolls for the Bishop). Priestend was originally a separate manor. Its prebendary is first mentioned in 1234, although little else is known of it and it may have had earlier origins (VCH 1962). The prebendal manor house of 13th century date still stands to the north.

Results

A single area of 600 sq m was stripped of overburden using a JCB-type machine fitted with a ditching bucket under archaeological supervision. Several areas of the site could not be accessed as intended due to the presence of retained trees and their root protection zones. The overburden comprised *c.* 0.3m of topsoil of the former allotments overlying *c.* 0.2m of grey-brown clayey sand subsoil, overlying the natural geology. This revealed a range of cut features comprising ditches and gullies, pits and postholes. Despite the presence of the allotments, few of the features revealed were considered to belong to this recent phase of landuse.

The deposits can be discussed as four phases:

Mesolithic

Medieval

Early Post-medieval

Late Post-medieval/modern (19th-20th century)

A few sherds of Roman pottery and fragments of Roman tile all came from clearly later features.

Mesolithic

The earliest activity is represented by a single narrow flake probably of Mesolithic date.

Medieval

Ditches and gullies

Two boundaries defined by recut ditches were revealed with a third probable ditch only recorded in an evaluation trench. Two short lengths of gully were also recorded. Dating of individual features is not really possible any more closely than broadly medieval, as individual pottery assemblages are rather small, and where more than a handful of sherds, tend to be of wide potential date ranges. It is possible that there is an 11th-12th century phase and a 13th-14th century phase, but there is no clear distinction between them.

Ditch 302-4 (Pl. 3)

Ditch 302 was substantial, 1m deep and perhaps 2.5m across with a v-shaped profile and had been recut twice on only very slightly differing lines (303, 304). The original cut (302) entered the site from the south-west, curved slightly eastwards and terminated as slot 109. It was examined by two slots (125, 109). There is some doubt as to the assignment of slots 6 and 7 to the later recuts and it is possible that slot 7 belongs to the original feature. Ditch 302 contained 4 sherds (and a surface find) of pottery spanning the 9th to 14th centuries of which one sherd was no earlier than the 11th century.

Recut 303 was examined by four slots (7, 108, 126, 207) and was 1.12m deep. It followed the line of ditch 302 closely, largely or wholly removing the latter in the western slots but extending just beyond the earlier terminal 109, where it too terminated (108). Recut 303 similarly contained 4 pottery sherds (and a surface find) spanning the 9th to 14th centuries but one sherd was no earlier than the 12th century. A fragment of late medieval brick came from terminal 108.

Recut 304 was examined by three slots (6, 127, 208) and was again a substantial feature (0.9m deep) particularly to the west. However, its course diverged to the north slightly from the earlier line and no terminal was revealed, although this could easily lie beneath the baulk in this location as the ditch was not seen further east where it might have been expected, north of earlier terminal 108. Recut 303 contained 52 sherds of pottery, five of which were Roman with the remainder spanning the 9th to 14th centuries but with most no earlier than the 11th century. However, as recut 304 cuts 303 with the latter dated no earlier than the 12th century (albeit based on a single sherd), this recut also is probably of 12th century or later date. A perforated bronze disc, a small iron knife blade, iron slag, a human tooth and three fragments of brick/tile were also recovered from this

final recut, while fill 171 produced a moderate quantity of animal bone, including horse, cattle, sheep/goat, pig, and the only bones of deer and cat from the site.

Animal bone (cattle, sheep/goat and pig, along with dog from slot 208 alone) was recovered from various slots for all three versions of this ditch while a moderate quantity of charred wheat and other cereal, along with a few weed seeds, came from initial ditch 302 and recut 304.

Ditch 1

This feature was located by the initial evaluation but lay beyond the eventual excavation area. It was 1.75m wide and 0.75m deep with a steep profile to an almost flat base, and three fills, which contained a combined 12 sherds of pottery spanning the 10th to 14th centuries: four sherds were no earlier than the 11th century. It also contained Roman tile, animal bone, iron slag and a modest quantity of charred cereal grain. It was aligned approximately perpendicular to ditches 302-304 and 300/301, possibly curving, though this was difficult to establish within the narrow evaluation trench.

Ditch 300 (Pl. 4)

Ditch 300 was straight and aligned north east- south west on the same orientation as ditches 302-4 and 5m away. It is possible that together they form a trackway though the shape, size and nature of the fill suggests they are not directly related. Ditch 300 was excavated in three slots (128, 200, 203) and was 1.7m wide and 0.42m deep but narrowing to 0.75m to the north-east. It had a deep rounded profile and a single fill. It contained 7 sherds spanning the 9th to 14th centuries but two sherds were no earlier than the 11th century. The ditch also contained a single sheep/goat bone and some charred cereal grains.

Ditch 301

Ditch 301 lay adjacent to and parallel to ditch 300 and cut ditch 300, but does not appear to have been a simple recut. It was 0.65m wide and 0.25m deep but lessening to 0.34m wide and 0.05m deep to the north-east with rounded profile and a single fill. The four slots (129, 201, 204, 206) contained just 2 sherds of pottery spanning the 11th to 14th centuries. It also contained a single sheep/goat bone and some charred cereal and grass grains.

Gullies

Gully 120 comprised only a terminal end and a short length before disappearing beneath the baulk. It was 0.33m wide and 0.07m deep with a shallow bowl-shaped profile. It contained no dating evidence. Gully 305 was a curvilinear feature examined by two slots (210, 215). It terminated to the west at posthole 214, but with its

southern end lost beneath the baulk. It was up to 0.55m wide and 0.14m deep with a shallow rounded profile. The only dating evidence was a fragment of brick/tile. It also contained some charred cereal grains and two bones each of cattle and sheep or goat.

Pits

Some 12 features were considered to be pits though their size and shape of these overlaps with other features considered to be postholes.

Pit group 116-119

This group comprised four intercutting pits. The earliest was pit 118 which was only 0.21m deep and was largely truncated by pit 116 which was 0.53m deep. A small pit (117), 0.25m deep, was cut into the top of fully infilled pit 116. A second small pit (119), 0.1m deep, also cut the edge of pit 118. Pit 118 contained a single sherd of pottery of 9th-11th century date, and could be the site's earliest feature, whereas pit 119 contained a sherd of the 11th-14th century. Pit 116 contained 23 sherds, the latest of which was no earlier than the 12th century. Pits 116 and 119 contained a small number of burnt indeterminate cereal grains while pits 117 and 118 produced bone from horse, cattle, and sheep/goat.

Pit 2 was 0.75m in diameter and 0.20m deep and had a single fill (55) but no finds were recovered.

Pit 3/139 had been previously investigated in the evaluation and subsequently re-examined. It was 1.2m in diameter and 0.27m deep with a flat base and contained one residual sherd of Roman pottery and another of Medieval (11-14 century) date, and bones of cattle, pig and dog.

Pit 100 was 0.44m across and 0.16m deep with a bowl-shaped profile. It contained two sherds of Medieval (11th-14th century) pottery and a few fragments of tile and a solitary pig bone.

Pit 106 was 0.5m across but only 0.11m deep with a bowl-shaped profile. It contained a few grains of indeterminate charred cereal but no dating evidence.

Pit 110 was oval in plan, 1.65m long, 0.7m wide and 0.16m deep with a bowl-shaped profile. It contained a horse bone but no dating evidence.

Pit 216 was 1.05m in diameter and 0.15m deep with a flat base and contained only brick/tile as dating evidence.

Undated pits

Three pits (8, 112, 113) contained no dating evidence except that pit 8 cut medieval ditch 304.

Postholes (Pl. 5)

Some 19 postholes were revealed in addition to those forming fence 306 and a selection are illustrated on Figure 3. Several of them contained stone post-packing. None of these postholes formed regular patterns interpretable as structures and the presence of post-packing might be indicative of single posts which need more support than structural groups. Few of the postholes produced dating evidence. Posthole 211 cut through infilled medieval ditch 304. Postholes 111 and 209 contained single sherds of medieval pottery with the latter also containing a fragment of tile. Posthole 114, contained no datable finds but its fill was markedly different from and looser than nearby features suggesting it might be of more recent date. Posthole 138 whilst containing no datable artefacts produced the largest amount of charred wheat and other cereal from the site.

Earlier Post-medieval

Pit 4/104 had been investigated in the evaluation and was subsequently fully excavated. It was elongated, 1.06m long, 0.54m wide and 0.09m deep. It contained just two sherds of pottery, the later of which was of 17th century date, along with a small fragment of tile.

Pit group 121-124 (Fig. 5, Pl. 6)

The original feature (121) in this group of pits was an elongated oval in plan with flat base and steep sides. It was 4.1m long 2.2m wide and 0.9m deep. It appears to have been dug and left open for a short while to allow for the formation of a thin soil horizon on the base (173) followed by some erosion of the pit sides (174). It was then infilled fully with a homogenous grey sandy silt with bone, pottery, roofing and floor tile and glass artefacts (175). The five sherds of pottery included material with dates potentially ranging from the 11th-16th centuries. The glass is likely to be of medieval and earlier post-medieval date and similarly the tile seems to include both medieval and post-medieval material and it is thought therefore that this pit is of earlier post-medieval date. Fill 175 contained a modest collection of animal bones, dominated by sheep/goat.

The pit was then recut on the same axis by three successive but shallower pits (122-124), perhaps each located due to the settling of the earlier fills. Pit 122 was mostly truncated away and its extent is not known but it was no more than 0.45m deep. Similarly pit 123 was no more than 0.45m deep. Both of these were truncated by pit 124 which was 3.6m long but only 0.33m deep. None of the later features contained any dating evidence.

Pit group 140/141/213

This feature comprised an irregular oval area *c.* 6m x 4m in extent which contained at least three intercutting pits. Pit 140 was 0.6m deep and pit 141 was 0.7m deep whereas pit 213 was only 0.23m deep. Pit 140 contained a single sherd of pottery of 13th-century or later date, along with post-medieval tile and a tiny fragment of medieval stained glass. Pit 141 contained seven sherds of pottery, the latest being no earlier than the mid 13th century, but 213 contained only post-medieval tile.

Fence 306

Nine features (143-9, 202, 205) lay in a line at intervals along the eastern edge of ditch 301, with three of the post holes cutting the edge of the ditch. The features were mostly spaced at centres of *c.* 1m–1.5m but with one larger gap and one slightly off line. The features were of variable form, some (eg 147) were large and pit like, which contrasted with smaller others. The features were mostly circular, but some were oval, square or rectangular sometimes with ramped sides. They are summarized in Table 1. Just three of these features contained dating evidence: two contained medieval pottery but one contained a 16th-century (or later) sherd.

Table 1: Summary of fence 306 postholes

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill</i>	<i>Length/width or diameter (m)</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Shape</i>	<i>Profile</i>	<i>Finds</i>
143	259	0.33	0.1	circular	bowl-shaped	
144	260	0.57	0.14	oval	bowl-shaped	
145	261	(0.69) 0.3	0.22	(oval) circular	Deep bowl-shaped	
146	262	0.45	0.25	rectangular	Flat-based	Iron nail
147	263,281	0.75	0.38	square	Flat-based	2 sherds 10-14th century
148	264	0.3	0.37	oval	Flat-based	Iron nail
149	265	0.35	0.14	circular	bowl-shaped	
202	268	0.50	0.2	circular	bowl-shaped	2 sherds medieval pottery, 2 frags tile, 1 cattle bone
205	271	0.35	0.24	circular	Deep bowl-shaped	1 sherd 16th century

Late Post medieval/ Modern

Several large pits 217/8, 130/1 were recorded at the eastern end of the site containing modern items such as those made of rubber. One of these (217/8) is substantial at 8m across and mostly lying beyond the baulk. Pit 142 was 3m long, 1.24m wide and 0.86m deep. It had steep sides and a flat base and contained some 11 layers 194-9, 250-4). The basal fill (194) contained two sherds of pottery of Medieval (11th-14th century) date but with a fragment of modern iron sheet and tile of post-medieval date, and occasional animal bone coming from various of the upper layers.

FINDS

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 100 sherds with a total weight of 1267g. A further 46 sherds (558g) came from the initial evaluation. It consisted of a mixture of Roman, late Anglo-Saxon, medieval and later wares. The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. The following fabric types were noted:

Roman

O20: Coarse Sandy Oxidized Ware. 1 sherd, 5g.

R90: Coarse grog-tempered reduced wares. 1 sherd, 145g.

OXRS: Oxford Colour-Coat Ware (Tomber and Dore 1998), 5 sherds, 69g

Five sherds in Oxford Colour-Coat Ware, all from the foot-ring base of a single vessel of 3rd – 4th century date.

The sherd of R90 is from the rim of a very large storage jar, a typical product of the tradition.

Late Anglo-Saxon and Later

The late Anglo-Saxon and later material was recorded using the conventions of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1984; 1994), as follows:

OX68: Potterspury Ware, late 13th - 17th century. 1 sherd, 5g.

OXAC: Cotswold-type Ware, AD975-1350. 38 sherds, 388g.

OXAM: Brill/Boarstall Ware, AD1200 – 1600. 8 sherds, 85g.

OXAW: Early Brill Coarseware, AD1180-1250. 3 sherds, 11g

OXBB: Minety-type Ware, early 13th–16th century. 1 sherd, 38g.

OXBF: North-East Wiltshire Ware, AD1050–1400. 11 sherds, 76g.

OXBK: Medieval Shelly Coarseware, AD1100-1350. 3 sherds, 22g.

OXDR: Red Earthenwares, 1550+. 1 sherd, 29g.

OXR: St Neots Ware, AD850-1200. 14 sherds, 97g.

OXREWSL: Polychrome Slipware, 17th century. 1 sherd, 5g

OPY: Medieval Oxford Ware, AD1075–1350. 51 sherds, 757g.

WHEW: Mass-produced White Earthenwares, 19th-20th century. 2 sherds, 24g.

The range of fabric types is typical of sites in the region. The bulk of the pottery is fragments of jars, along with a few pieces of bowls or glazed jugs. The paucity of Brill/Boarstall Wares suggest that activity at the site did not continue long after the beginning of the 13th century, as such pottery is usually very common from that time onwards in the region (Mellor 1994).

Most of the context-specific groups consisted of a few small sherds, meaning that they are of very little value other than to provide a broad date for the features in which they occurred. Few re-fits were noted, indicating that most of the sherds were the product of secondary deposition. There is nothing to suggest that the pottery is anything other than domestic in nature.

Brick and Tile by Danielle Milbank

Brick and tile fragments were recovered from ten contexts. In total, 208 fragments weighing 9789g were present (including the material encountered in the evaluation). The majority are tile fragments, and no complete bricks or tiles were recovered. These were examined under x10 magnification and are summarized in Appendix 3.

The majority of the tile fragments comprise a hard, slightly coarse sandy fabric with an orange red colour. These are largely too fragmented to determine form and finish, and are broadly of late medieval or post medieval date, however some pieces (described below) have characteristics which give a more specific indication of date.

A brick piece from ditch terminus 108 is in a hard, evenly fired dense clay with sparse fine sand inclusions and an uneven (slightly dished) upper surface. Based on the form and fabric, it is likely to be of late medieval date.

The largest quantity was recovered from pit 121 (175) which comprises tile fragments with an average thickness of 14mm. The pieces are hard and well-fired, with a sandy base. The form is fairly even, with some edge-thickening, and they represent roof tile of late medieval or very early post-medieval date. Also recovered from this context was a piece of plain floor tile with a thickness of 23mm. The form is even, with a light red colour and several very small splashes of a colourless glaze on one side and on the base, and it is of medieval date. A curved fragment from this context may represent a piece of roof tile though it is too small to identify the date nor the specific form. From this same context, two pieces of tile was recovered which are thinner (11mm), with a friable, slightly laminated texture with occasional fine groggy and possibly straw inclusions, and straw marks on the upper and lower surfaces. They are uneven, with a large (15mm diameter) peg hole on one fragment, and are of earlier medieval, perhaps 13th or early 14th century, date.

Pit 140 contained roof tile of broadly post-medieval date, as did posthole 209 and pits 213 and 217/8.

Pit 130 contained material of post-medieval (19th-century) date. Pit 142 contained early post-medieval roof tile fragments and small fragments which are of likely later medieval date.

Summary

The assemblage derived from the site is modest, and is representative of activity on the site in the medieval and post-medieval periods. The range of forms is fairly narrow, with brick and plain floor and peg roof tiles present, though a piece of possible curved ridge tile was tentatively identified.

Overall, the assemblage reflects the ubiquity of this roofing material from the late medieval period onwards, though the two early examples are earlier and represent the 13th or 14th centuries, where tiled roofs were uncommon on typical domestic buildings and limited to buildings of relatively higher status. The floor tile is also likely to be represent medieval activity of some status on or near the site.

Fired Clay by Danielle Milbank

Fired clay weighing 119g (4 fragments) were recovered in the course of the excavation. These were examined under x10 magnification and are summarised in Appendix 4. Two fragments from ditch slot 127 (171) comprise a fine clay fabric with occasional straw marks and a pale yellow colour with pale orange lensing. A piece of a similar fabric was recorded in gully slot 207. A piece from 209 is of a slightly harder darker red colour. No fragments were identified as daub or other objects such as kiln furniture.

Glass by Danielle Milbank

Fragments of glass were recovered from two contexts. Two fragments weighing 32g were recovered from pit 121 (175). These comprised one piece of blue-green glass of irregular shape, with a thick patina. The colour and form are not closely datable though it is most likely to be of post-medieval (16th to 18th century) date, though the function remains unclear. A second fragment from this context is flat, 1.5mm thick, with a dark colour which is difficult to determine accurately due to the brown patina, though likely to be a dark green-brown colour. The patina is overall brown and dull, however a painted pattern is faintly visible due to the patina being shiny where the paint is present. The form of the pattern is dots within squares in a rough grid. It is likely to represent a small piece of painted stained glass of probably late medieval date.

From pit 140 (255) came a very small piece (1g) of thinly patinated orange red glass, fairly flat and possibly representing stained window glass, of likely medieval date.

Summary

The post-medieval glass recovered in the course of the excavation comprised a limited range of forms representing window glass and a bottle or other vessel, though the pieces were of small size and the precise forms could not be identified and closely dated.

However, one of the fragments represents stained glass, a product of Thame's notable stained glass industry in the later medieval period. Various glaziers are noted for the local area in the 14th century. The tax roll of 1327 lists four glaziers, John the glazier, Adam and another John, all living in New Thame, and a Henry the glazier in Old Thame. Another maker of note is 'William the glazier' who was working in the early 14th century and who is believed to have supplied painted glass for Merton College chapel, Oxford, and Notley Abbey. An Alice and a William the glazier occur in 1309 and 1317. Adam was alive in 1332 when he witnessed a charter, and Thomas Glazier, who was living in 1353, may have been his son.

Stuck flint by Steve Ford

A single narrow flake was recorded as a stray find from the site. It is partly cortical but with blade scars on its dorsal surface. It is considered that the flint is likely to be of Mesolithic date.

Stone by Genni Elliott

Two fragments of stone were recovered. One from pit 116 (164) weighing 45.5g is a greyish brown micaceous sandy limestone that has a slate-like appearance. It has a single worked edge to create a straight and flat edge, the like of which would be found on a roofing slate. The fragment may be part of the Stonesfield slate formation found to the west of Oxford (EH 2011). The other was from gully 208 (274) and comprised a piece of unworked, burnt coarse grained limestone weighing 151g.

The Clay Pipe by Genni Elliott

A single pipe stem was recovered from modern pit 130 (181), weighing 7.5g. No mouthpiece is present and the stem has broken off at the junction with the bowl. Part of the foot is however present and this takes the form of a flat base. No makers mark is present but that could be due to where the break has occurred. There are no stamps on the stem either. The borehole size can give an approximate estimation of date, but can not be seen as reliable. The borehole measures 6/64" equating to a date in the early to mid 18th century.

Metalwork by Steve Crabb

Four pre-modern metal items were recovered from the excavations.

A single iron object was recovered from gully 208 (274). It is a small flat-backed knife with a slightly damaged edge. The undamaged section of the edge is suggestive of a curved edge blade. A second iron object recovered from the same context is a fragment of corrosion which has flaked off the knife. The small tang on this knife suggests it may be a child's knife.

Two nail stems weighing 10g each came from fence 306 postholes (146, 262 and 148, 264).

A single copper alloy disc was recovered from ditch 127 (171). It has considerable corrosion and mineralization on the surface. It has a central perforation most likely for suspension. It is possible it is a pierced coin but the surface is completely obscured and not possible to determine whether it is a coin.

Two small fragments of undiagnostic iron slag were recovered from ditches 1 (20g) and 6 (18g).

Human Bone by Ceri Falys

A single human tooth was recovered from ditch 6 (59) in evaluation Trench 2. Identified as a permanent (i.e. adult) right maxillary second molar, a small area of calculus formation (medium severity) was present on the buccal surface of the tooth, and a large carious lesion was located on the distal surface along the cemento-enamel junction. Based on the degree of occlusal surface wear, the individual was approximately 25-35 years of age at the time of tooth loss.

Animal Bone by Matilda Holmes

A very small assemblage of animal bone was recovered from early medieval to modern features (Appendix 5). Modern pet burials were noted on site but are not included in this report.

Bones were identified using the author's reference collection. Due to anatomical similarities between sheep and goat, bones of this type were assigned to the category 'sheep/ goat', unless a definite identification (Zeder and Lapham 2010; Zeder and Pilaar 2010) could be made. Bones that could not be identified to species were, where possible, categorised according to the relative size of the animal represented (medium – sheep/ pig/ dog size; or large – cattle/ horse size). Ribs were identified to size category where the head was present, vertebrae were recorded when the vertebral body was present, and maxilla, zygomatic arch and occipital areas of the skull were identified from skull fragments.

The condition of bones was noted on a scale of 0-5, where 0 is fresh bone and 5, the bone is falling apart (Lyman 1994, 355). Other taphonomic factors were also recorded, including the incidence of burning, gnawing, recent breakage and refitted fragments. All fragments were recorded, although articulated or associated fragments were entered as a count of 1, so they did not bias the relative frequency of species present. A number of sieved samples were collected but because of the highly fragmentary nature of such samples a selective process was undertaken, whereby fragments were recorded only if they could be identified to species and/ or element, or showed signs of taphonomic processes.

Bones were generally in fair to poor condition (Table A5.1), though fragmentary with several refitted fragments and fresh breaks indicating that they were friable upon excavation. The presence of gnawed bones suggests that not all bones were buried immediately following discard, but were left out for dogs to chew. A few butchered bones were recovered from medieval contexts, but no burnt fragments.

Unsurprisingly the major domesticates (cattle, sheep/ goat and pig) dominated the assemblage (Table A5.2), which most likely represent food waste as do the oyster shell and red deer metatarsal. A few bones of equid (horse or donkey), canid (dog or fox) and cat (wild or domestic) were also recovered that would most likely not be consumed, but had other roles in the town. Sample sizes are too small to warrant further analysis.

Charred plant remains by Rosalind McKenna

A programme of soil sampling was implemented during the excavation, which included the collection of ten bulk soil samples (plus two from the evaluation). The samples were wet sieved using a 0.25mm mesh and processed using standard methodologies. The flots were examined under a low-power binocular microscope at magnifications between x12 and x40. Results are given in Appendix 6.

Charred plant macrofossils were present in nine of the samples. The preservation of the charred remains was poor. Indeterminate cereal grains were recorded in all of the samples. Where identifiable cereal remains were present (Table A6.1), poorly preserved wheat grains were present in three of the samples in small numbers. Grass seeds (POACEAE) were present in four samples, and weeds typically associated with cultivation (goosefoot / orache, cabbage family etc.) were also present in three samples.

Charcoal fragments were present in all of the samples. The preservation of the charcoal fragments was poor. The majority of the fragments were too small to enable successful fracturing that reveals identifying morphological characteristics. Identifiable remains were however present in small numbers in five of the samples. The results of this analysis can be seen in Table A6.2.

The total range of taxa comprises oak (*Quercus*), willow / poplar (*Salix / Populus*) and hazel (*Corylus avellana*). As seen in Table 6A:2, the numbers of identifiable remains per sample was very small. Willow / poplar were present in two samples, hazel was present in two samples and oak was present in two samples. It is possible that these were the preferred fuel woods obtained from a local environment containing a broader choice of species. The samples indicate the use of a mixture of species being utilised for firewood. Bark was also present on some of the charcoal fragments, and this indicates that the material is more likely to have been firewood, or the result of a natural fire. The compositions of the samples are all similar, it is probable therefore that these small assemblages of charcoal remains reflect the intentional deposition or accumulation of domestic waste.

The deposits from which the samples derive, probably represent the intentional deposition or accumulation of domestic waste associated with fires. As the plant remains were found together with charcoal remains, it may

suggest that waste or spilt grain were put on the fire with other rubbish and a small fraction became charred without burning up, and then joined the domestic ash on the rubbish heap. However, as the samples are so small in size nothing of great interpretative value can be gained.

Conclusion

The fieldwork has revealed a relatively intensively but episodically used area spanning several centuries. The earliest activity, apart from a prehistoric struck flint and a few residual Roman pottery sherds appears likely to have commenced in or shortly after the 11th century. The chronology of the site based on pottery is not highly specific and the earliest phase is dated using pottery that still had a currency into the 13th or 14th centuries. A proportion of the pottery types were also current in Late Saxon times, though none exclusively so and no features are certainly dated prior to the Norman Conquest (pit 118 with a single sherd of St Neot's ware and no other finds is potentially so, but all the other St Neot's ware on the site is associated with later pottery). There appears to be a hiatus in site use in later medieval times, perhaps as early as the 13th century, before what seems to be renewed but small scale activity in the 16th-18th centuries. Activity continued into late post-medieval and modern times with some large pit digging along with features resulting from allotment use and some pet burials.

The Medieval activity is characterized by the presence of boundary features with a substantial ditch (302) being redefined on two further occasions. The ditch curves slightly (and the curve alters slightly in the recuts) to define an enclosed area to the south-east. The ditch seems far too large to represent a feature defining a simple field boundary, nor even a boundary to a burghage plot typical of a planned town. The ditch and at least one of its recuts terminates within the site suggesting the presence of an entrance but if there was a continuation, this now lies within the current graveyard. Thus the ditch might simply stop at a place in the landscape defined by a non-recognizable feature, such as a tree. A number of other features namely postholes and small pits some with datable finds lie within the suggested interior. None of the postholes formed ground plans suggestive of houses or barns, and many had post-packing for extra support perhaps indicative that they were used in isolation. It is considered that the enclosure represents a croft boundary but even then, it seems unusually large and may be part of a higher status site. However, the features did not produce any high status finds suggesting a great degree of wealth, nor do the faunal and charred cereal remains suggest anything other than typical domestic consumption, with the exception of a single deer bone from the latest fill of the recut ditch.

A second smaller boundary ditch (301) is also redefined by a recut. It lies broadly parallel to ditch 302 (and to the line of Priestend) but is straight and continues beyond the margins of the excavation. Together they give

the impression of a droveway. Both are of medieval date, but their size difference is marked and it is considered that they are not in fact contemporary. A third ditch (1) found in the evaluation cannot yet be related to the excavated examples.

The line of ditch 300/1 is subsequently redefined by a post-built fence (306). The fence post holes contain few artefacts but do include nails and a sherd of 16th century pottery. This chronology fits awkwardly with that for the ditch and recut, with a century or more between them. Ditches 300/1 are dated only by 9 sherds of pottery all of which could be residual. Alternatively the sherd of 16th-century pottery from the fenceline is intrusive. However, it is thought more probable that the boundary may have been perpetuated by a hedge which eventually needed to be redefined and/or made stock proof by the addition of a fence. 'In 1623 every tenant who had land in a certain part of Priestend Field was ordered by the homage to make a quickset hedge round his holding' (VCH 1962), and presumably there were many other occasions when such actions could have been applied. Subsequent use of the site in the 17th and 18th centuries sees just a few small pits being dug and appears have little structure to it, though the medieval activity can hardly be described as spatially organized either.

Until the recent use of the site for allotments (which left few below ground traces), the final use in the 19th/20th centuries is for further pit digging, sometimes of great size, but yielding few finds.

In summary it is postulated that the medieval use of the site relates to some of the earliest activity in 'Old' Thame, within what is considered to be the historic core of a settlement (adjacent to the church) and that this activity pre-dates the formal layout of the planned town (Bond 1986, 137; Airs et al 1975, 147). The site seems to have gone out of use (initially) early in the medieval period and it is tempting to speculate that this is a result of changes brought about when the planned town was laid out in the 12th century. Yet with regards to the historic topography of the town, it is perhaps noteworthy that the excavation area contains no definitive middle nor late Saxon deposits. It has been suggested that the distinctive curving road layout on the north side of the town represents two conjoining oval enclosures represents Late Saxon settlement with one enclosure for religious and the other secular use (Spavold and Gilman 2002,31, Blaire 1998). It is perhaps in their locations that the earliest settlement of Thame should be sought.

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APPENDIX 1: Catalogue of excavated features

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
1	52-4		Ditch	Medieval 11-14th century	Pot
2	55		posthole	-	
3/139	56/193		pit	Medieval 11-14th century	Pot, Roman pot
4/104	57/157		Pit	Post-medieval 17th century	Pot Medieval 13-17th century
5	58		posthole	-	
6	59-63	304	Ditch	Medieval 11-14th century	Pot; Roman pot
7	64	303	Ditch	Medieval 12-14th century	By association
8	65		pit	-	
100	150		Pit	Medieval 11-12th century	Pot
102	152		Posthole	-	
103	153		Posthole	-	
105	155		Posthole	-	
106	156		Pit	-	
107	157		Posthole	-	
108	160	303	Ditch terminal	Medieval 12-14th century	Pot; Brick
109	158-9	302	Ditch terminal	Medieval 11-12th century	Pot
110	161		Pit	-	
111	162		Posthole	Medieval 11-14th century	Pot
112	163		Posthole/pit	-	
113	183		Pit	-	
114	184		Posthole	Modern?	
115	185		Posthole	-	
116	164		Pit	Medieval 13-14th century	Pot; cuts 118
117	165		Pit	Medieval 13-14th century+	Cuts 116
118	166		Pit	Late Saxon? 9th-12th century	Pot
119	167		Pit	Medieval 11-14th century	Pot; cuts 118
120	168		Gully terminal	-	
121	173-5		Pit	Early Post-Medieval?	Pot 13-16th century; glass , Tile
122	176		Pit	Post-Medieval?	Cuts 121
123	177		Pit	Post-Medieval?	Cuts 122
124	178		Pit	Post-Medieval?	Cuts 123
125	169	302	Ditch	Medieval 11-14th century	Pot
126	170,172	303	Ditch	Medieval 12-14th century	By association
127	171	304	Ditch	Medieval 11-14th century	Pot
128	179	300	Gully	Medieval 11-14th century	Pot
129	180	301	Gully	Medieval 11-14th century	Pot
130	181		Pit	Modern	Pot
131	182		Pit	Modern	Pot
132	186		Posthole	-	
133	187		Posthole	-	
134	188		Posthole	-	
135	189		Posthole	-	
136	190		Posthole	-	
137	191		Posthole	-	
138	192		Posthole	-	
140	255		Pit	Early Post-Medieval	Medieval pot, glass, post-medieval Tile
141	256-8		Pit	Early Post-Medieval	Late/Post Medieval pot
142	194-9, 250-4		Pit	Early Post- Medieval	Medieval pot , Metalwork, tile
143	259	Fence 306	Posthole	Early Post-Medieval	By association
144	260	Fence 306	Posthole	Early Post-Medieval	By association
145	261	Fence 306	Posthole	Early Post-Medieval	By association
146	262	Fence 306	Posthole	Early Post-Medieval	By association
147	263,281	Fence 306	Posthole/pit	Early Post-Medieval	By association. 11-14th century pot
148	264	Fence 306	Posthole	Early Post-Medieval	By association
149	265	Fence 306	Posthole	Early Post-Medieval	By association
200	266	300	Gully	Early Post-Medieval	Pot
201	267	301	Gully	-	
202	268	Fence 306	Posthole	Early Post-Medieval	By association 11-15th century pot, tile
203	269	300	Gully	Medieval 11-14th century	Pot
204	270	301	Gully	-	
205	271	Fence 306	Posthole	Early Post-Medieval	16th century pot
206	272	301	Gully	-	
207	273	303	Ditch	Medieval 12-14th century	Pot
208	274	304	Ditch	-	
209	275		Posthole	Medieval 12-13th century	Pot, tile
210	276	305	Gully	Post-medieval?	Tile
211	277		Posthole	Medieval or later	stratigraphy
212	282		Posthole	-	Tile

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Fill</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Dating evidence</i>
213	278		Pit	Early Post-medieval?	Tile
214	279		Pit	-	
215	280	305	Gully	Post-medieval?	By association
216	285		Pit	Post-medieval?	Brick/tile
217	283		Pit	Modern	
218	284		Pit	Modern	

APPENDIX 3. Catalogue of ceramic building material

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>
1	54	Ditch	1	132
8	65	Pit	1	326
100	150	Pit	2	14
104	154	Pit	1	1
108	160	Ditch terminus	1	168
127	171	Ditch	3	191
121	175	Pit	79	4630
130	181	Pit	1	178
142	250	Pit	4	274
142	254	Pit	99	3000
140	255	Pit	6	280
202	268	Posthole	3	115
209	275	Posthole	1	14
210	276	Gully	1	23
213	278	Pit	2	259
217	283	Pit	2	136
218	284	Pit	1	48

APPENDIX 4. Catalogue of fired clay

<i>Cut</i>	<i>Deposit</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Wt (g)</i>
127	171	Ditch	1	38
203	269	Gully	1	1
207	273	Gully	1	62
209	275	Posthole	1	18

APPENDIX 5. ANIMAL BONE

Table A5.1: Condition and taphonomic factors affecting the hand-collected assemblage identified to taxa and/ or element. Teeth included where stated

Condition	Early Medieval (11-12th C)	Medieval (11-14th C)	Early Post Medieval	Late Post Medieval/ Modern
Fresh				
Very good		6		
Good	7	18	11	5
Fair	8	25	10	2
Poor	1		1	1
Very poor				
Total	16	49	22	8
Refit	2=6	8=28	1=5	
Fresh break	2	19	6	
Gnawed	3	11	3	1
Loose mandibular teeth*		1		
Teeth in mandibles*		2		
Butchery		3		
Burning				

*deciduous and permanent 4th premolar and molars

Table A5. 2: Species representation by anatomical element (fragment count). Hand collected and sieved bones (excludes material from the evaluation)

Element	Early medieval (11-12th C)					Medieval (11-14th C)						Early post medieval				Late post medieval/ modern		
	C	S/G	P	E	O	C	S/G	P	E	F	R	C	S/G	P	D	C	S/G	
Horn core + frontal						2	1											
Zygomatic		1																
Loose maxillary tooth	1					3	1						3					
Mandible								1										
Loose mandibular tooth	1		1			1		4										
2nd cervical vertebra													1					
Cervical vertebra							1											
Thoracic vertebra						1	1						1					
Sacrum						1												
Scapula	3					1	1	1										
Humerus	1			1				1		1				1		1		
Radius		1							1				1					1
Ulna			1			1							1					
Pelvis		1				1							1					
Femur							1	1					1					1
Tibia	1	1				1	2					1	1	1	1	1		1
Astragalus						1												1
Calcaneus	1					1		1										
Metacarpal						1	3						1					
Metatarsal								1			1	1		1				
Metapodial												1	1					
1st phalange						1							2					
Lateral phalange								1										
Shell					1													
Total	8	4	2	1	1	16	11	11	1	1	1	3	14	3	1	4		2

C= cattle; S/G= sheep/ goat; P= pig; E= equus; D= canis; F= felis; R= red deer; O= oyster

Table A5.3: Catalogue by context

<i>Cu t</i>	<i>Fill</i>	<i>Phase</i>	<i>Horse</i>	<i>Cattle</i>	<i>Red Deer</i>	<i>Sheep/goat</i>	<i>Pig</i>	<i>Cat</i>	<i>Dog</i>	<i>Large</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Small</i>	<i>Total</i>
1	52	Med								1			1
1	54	Med				2					1	2	5
3	56	Med		2									2
6	59	Med		2								1	3
6	63	Med					1			2			3
100	150	Med					1						1
108	160	Med		5		2	2						9
109	158	Med				3							3
109	159	Med		7		3	1						11
110	161	-	1										1
116	164	Med		2		5	4						11
117	165	Med				1					1		2
118	166	Med	1	2									3
119	167	Med		3		2							5
121	175	PMed		2		12	3			1			18
127	171	Med	1	14	1	9	5	1					31
139	193	Med		3			1		1				5
142	199	Pmed		1		1							2
142	254	Pmed				1			1		1		3
200	266	Med				1							1
202	268	Pmed		1									1
206	272	-				1							1
207	273	Med		1		2							3
208	274	-		2					3				5
210	276	Pmed				2					2		4
215	280	Pmed		2									2
217	283	Mod		1									1
218	284	Mod		1									1

A single oyster shell also came from 158.

This table makes no allowance for refits (Table A5.2 does) and excludes unidentified bone.

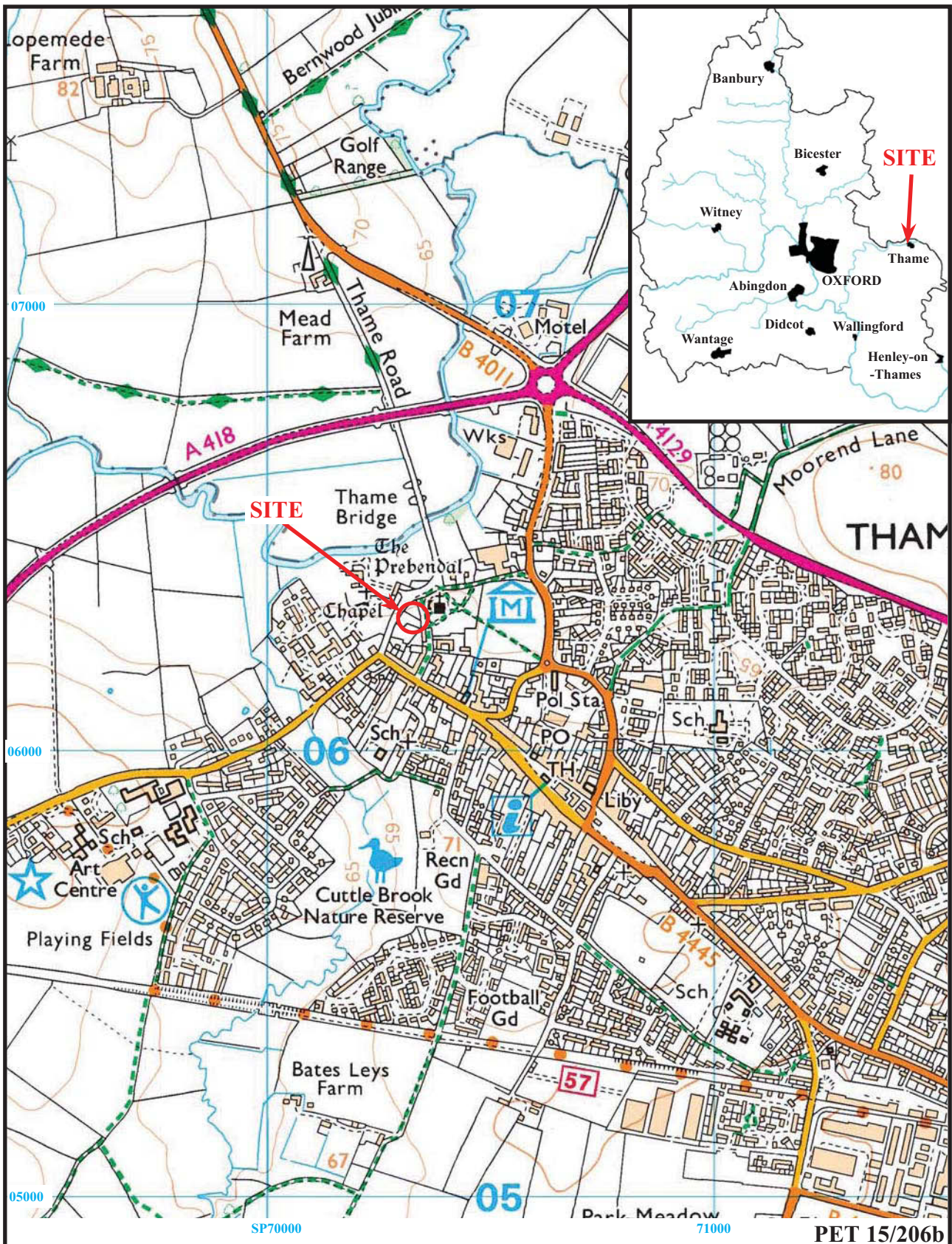
APPENDIX 6. CHARRED PLANT REMAINS

Table A6.1: **Plant Macrofossils** -*Taxonomy and Nomenclature follow Stace (1997).*

Sample	A	B	1	2	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Feature	1	6	106	109	116	119	125	138	203	206	208	
Context	54	63	156	159	164	167	169	192	269	272	274	
Feature Type	Ditch	Ditch	Pit	Ditch	Pit	Pit	Ditch	Phole	Gully	Gully	Gully	
<i>Chenopodium / Atriplex</i>	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	Goosefoot / Orache
BRASSICACEAE	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	Cabbage family
POACEAE	-	-	-	1	-	-	3	-	-	3	2	Grass
<i>Triticum</i> spp.	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	18	-	-	4	Wheat
Indeterminate Cereal	20+	8+	6	27	17	26	22	96	14	8	25	

Table A6.2: **Charcoal.** *Taxonomy and nomenclature follow Schweingruber (1978).*

Sample	2	4	7	8	9	
Feature	109	116	138	203	206	
Context	159	164	192	269	272	
Feature Type	Ditch	Pit	Posthole	Gully	Gully	
No. frags	48	12	100+	28	23	
Max. size (mm)	6	23	16	14	25	
<i>Corylus avellana</i>	Hazel	-	-	9	2	-
<i>Salix / Populus</i>	Willow / Poplar	11	3	-	-	-
<i>Quercus</i>	Oak	-	-	4	-	4
Indeterminate	Indeterminate	37	9	87	26	19



**Priest End Allotments, adjacent to St Mary's Churchyard,
Priest, Thame, Oxfordshire, 2017
Archaeological Excavation**

Figure 1. Location of site within Thame and Oxfordshire.

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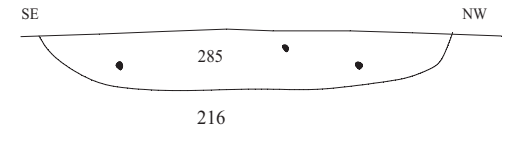
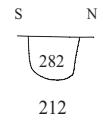
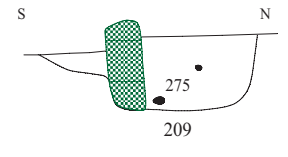
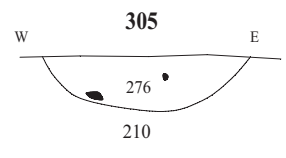
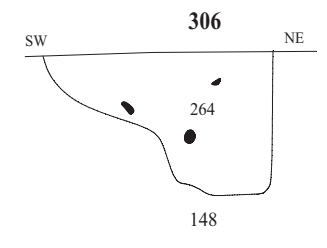
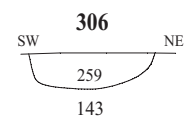
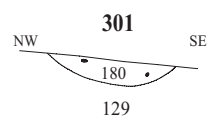
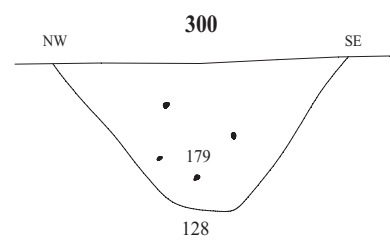
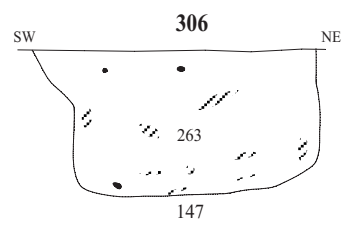
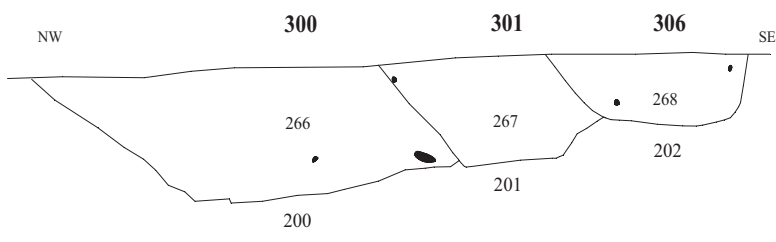
PET 15/206b



**Priest End Allotments, adjacent to St. Mary's Churchyard,
Priest End, Thame, Oxfordshire
Archaeological Excavation**

Figure 3. All features

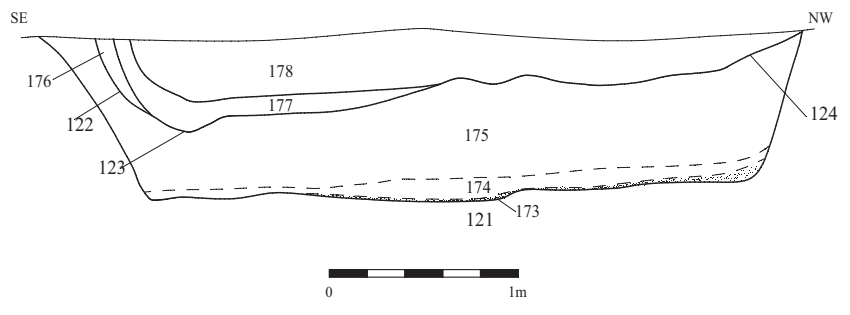
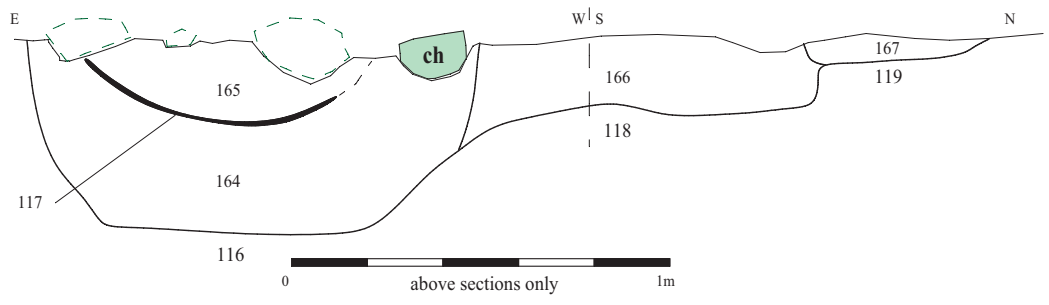
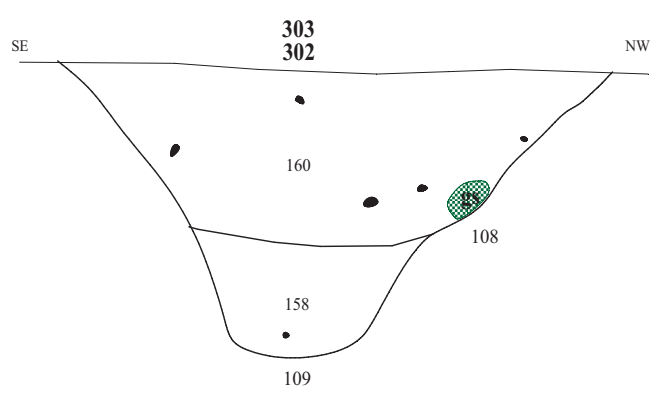
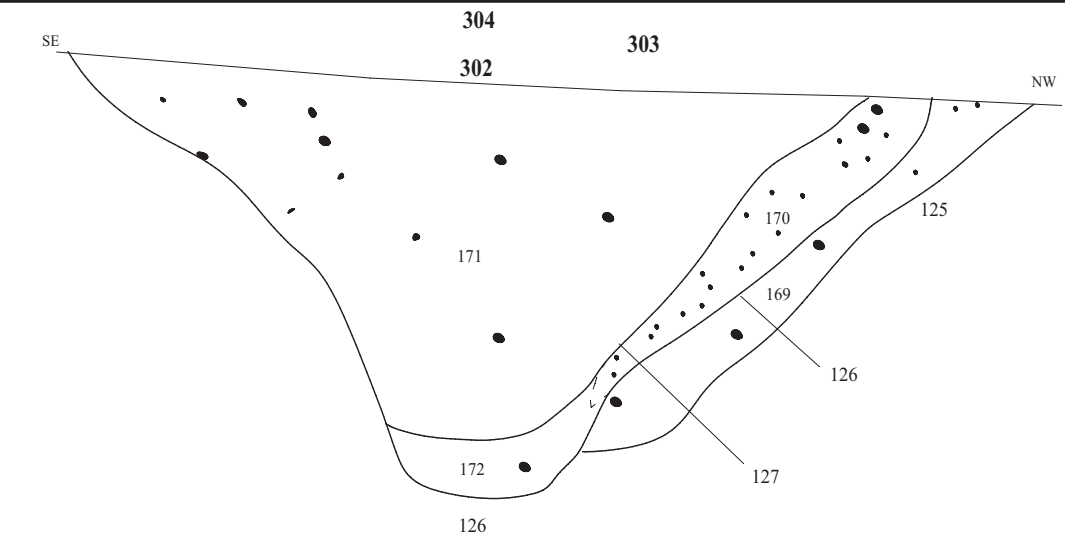




Priest End Allotments, adjacent to St. Mary's Churchyard,
 Priest End, Thame, Oxfordshire
 Archaeological Excavation

301 aeological Exca





**Priest End Allotments, adjacent to St. Mary's Churchyard,
Priest End, Thame, Oxfordshire
Archaeological Excavation**

Figure 4 sections (continued)





Plate 1. General view of site during excavations, looking east.



Plate 2. General view of site during excavations, looking north.

PET 15/206b

**Medieval and Post-Medieval features at Priest End
Allotments, Priest, Thame, Oxfordshire, 2017**

Plates 1 and 2

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Plate 3. Ditches 302-4 (slots(125-7) looking south west, Scales: 2m and 0.5m.



Plate 4. Ditches 300 and 301 (slots 203-4) and posthole 205 looking north east, Scales: 2m and 0.3m (x2).

PET 15/206b

Medieval and Post-Medieval features at Priest End Allotments, Priest, Thame, Oxfordshire, 2017

Plates 3 and 4

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Plate 5. Posthole 209 looking north west, Scales: 0.3m and 0.1m.



Plate 6. Pits 121-4 looking north west, Scales: 2m and 0.5m.

PET 15/206b

**Medieval and Post-Medieval features at Priest End
Allotments, Priest, Thame, Oxfordshire, 2017**

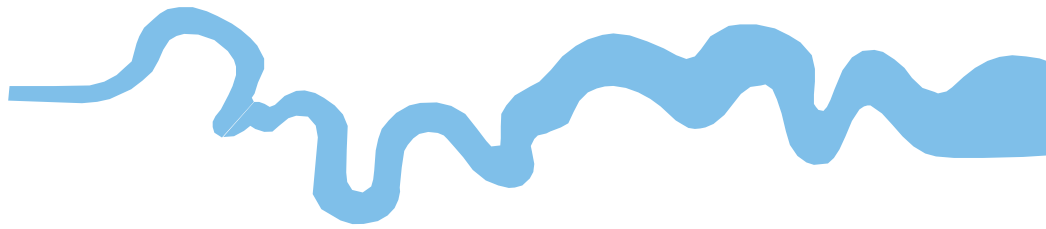
Plates 5 and 6

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TIME CHART

	Calendar Years
Modern _____	AD 1901
Victorian _____	AD 1837
Post Medieval _____	AD 1500
Medieval _____	AD 1066
Saxon _____	AD 410
Roman _____	AD 43 AD 0 BC
Iron Age _____	750 BC
Bronze Age: Late _____	1300 BC
Bronze Age: Middle _____	1700 BC
Bronze Age: Early _____	2100 BC
Neolithic: Late	3300 BC
Neolithic: Early	4300 BC
Mesolithic: Late	6000 BC
Mesolithic: Early	10000 BC
Palaeolithic: Upper	30000 BC
Palaeolithic: Middle	70000 BC
Palaeolithic: Lower	2,000,000 BC





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