

SALVAGE EXCAVATIONS AT 13-19 BUCKINGHAM STREET AND THE BULL'S HEAD REDEVELOPMENT SITE, AYLESBURY, IN 1979 AND 1980

BY DAVID ALLEN

WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY
Michael Farley, Stephen Greep and Gill Jones

This paper records the results of two three-day salvage excavations at redevelopment sites within the town. At Buckingham Street (SP 8196 1394) evidence of Roman occupation was recovered, and a number of medieval pits and wells noted. Pottery was plentiful in both contexts and dates the main Roman presence to the late first and second centuries, and the medieval activity to the twelfth to fourteenth century. At the Bull's Head site (SP 8198 1377) the preservation of archaeological deposits was limited, but a small number of Roman and medieval features was noted. An attempt is made to view the discoveries in their local and regional contexts.

BUCKINGHAM STREET

Introduction

Early in April 1979, County Museum archaeologists paid a routine visit to the site of 13-19 Buckingham Street, Aylesbury (SP 8196 1394) which had been cleared down to the surface of the limestone subsoil in advance of construction work for a new supermarket. Much of the area was occupied by cellars or covered with rubble (Fig. 2) but, on the eight hundred square metres that consisted of comparatively clean limestone, numerous pits and gullies could be seen. With the permission of the contractors, Tarmac Ltd., and the co-operation of the site agent, Mr. George Shirley, the Museum was able to organise a three-day salvage excavation which recovered evidence for Roman, medieval and post-medieval activity at the site. The site is listed as CAS 4463 in Museum records, accession number 332.1980.

Location and Past History

Buckingham Street, which was named 'Back Street' on the eye-draft plan of Aylesbury dated

1809, is situated on the north-east side of the town and channels the roads from Bicester and Buckingham towards Kingsbury and the Market Square (Fig. 1). It is thus likely to have been an early feature of the town plan, and although this is not particularly evident from the buildings which now occupy its route, the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments was able to suggest seventeenth century origins for several of those surveyed in the early years of this century, including some on the site itself (RCHM 1912, 30). In addition they considered an out-building at No. 21 Buckingham Street to be of 'possible mediaeval date' (ibid. 30, No. 26). Further evidence for medieval activity came to light in the form of a well, containing thirteenth/fourteenth century pottery, which was discovered during building work at No. 43 Buckingham Street in 1963 (Gowing 1963, 202). In short, this evidence suggests that Buckingham Street was in existence as a routeway in the medieval period.

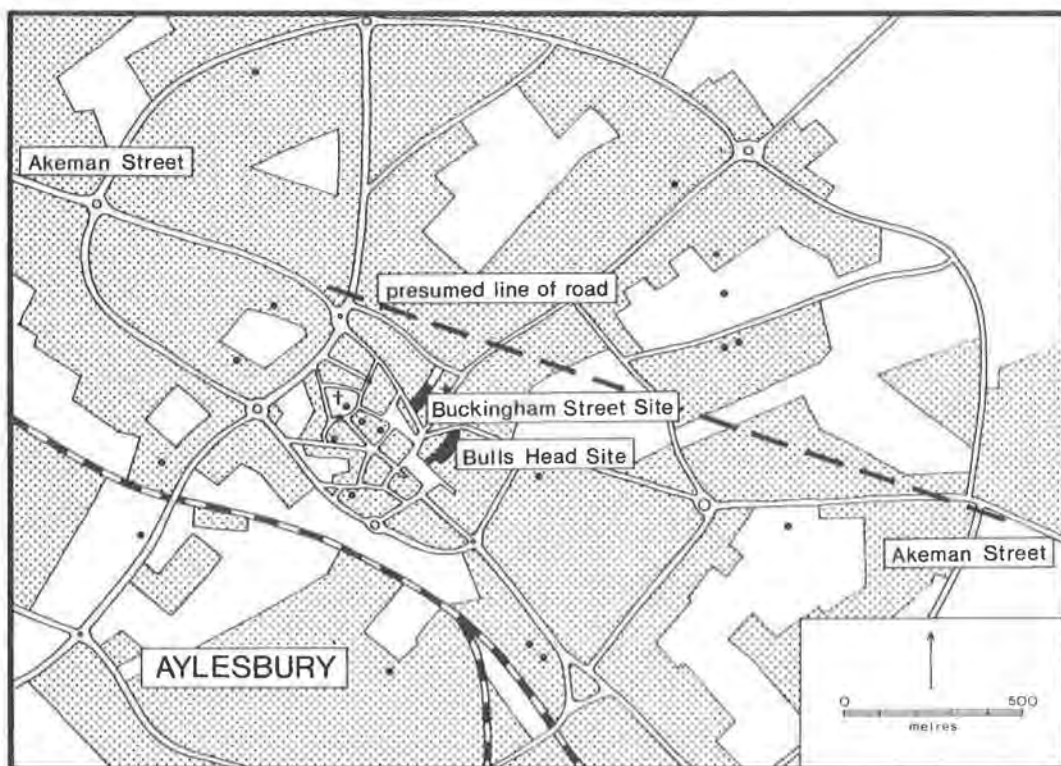


Fig. 1. Location map Buckingham Street and Bull's Head sites. Roman finds indicated by dots.

Any attempt to trace the pre-medieval nature of this part of the town, however, is fraught with difficulty. In a paper describing the discovery of a defensive ditch at the corner of Temple Street and Bourbon Street, Michael Farley (1974, 430) draws a conjectural line for the town's Saxon defences which runs along Buckingham Street. Unfortunately the excavation described here failed to produce any evidence to support this theory. In the Roman period, however, an interest in this area could perhaps be inferred from the proximity of Akeman Street (Fig. 1), the Roman road from Verulamium to Cirencester, and this was confirmed by the discovery of a pit and gullies in the eastern half of the site. Finds of coins, etc., from the town have been numerous and widespread (Fig. 1, information from the Sites and Monuments Record) but this excavation provided the first definite evidence for Roman occupation. Evidence for Iron Age activity was almost totally absent from the excavation,

although recorded from the area of the old town, notably at the western end of Granville Street (Gowing 1964, 301) and, more recently, on the northern side of George Street (Allen 1981). However, several sherds of distinctive 'flint-gritted' pottery were recovered from the Roman pit and one of the gullies, and the same features also produced fragments of 'Belgic' brick. These finds are presumably residual material and suggest a late Iron Age presence in this area.

The Excavation

The method of excavation was, to a large extent, dictated by the very limited time available. The majority of features were already visible as a result of the machine work and these were planned in outline and then sectioned, unless their modern origin was already apparent (e.g. 117, 119). It was obvious that the site clearance had removed a substantial depth of limestone bedrock, perhaps 0.50m,

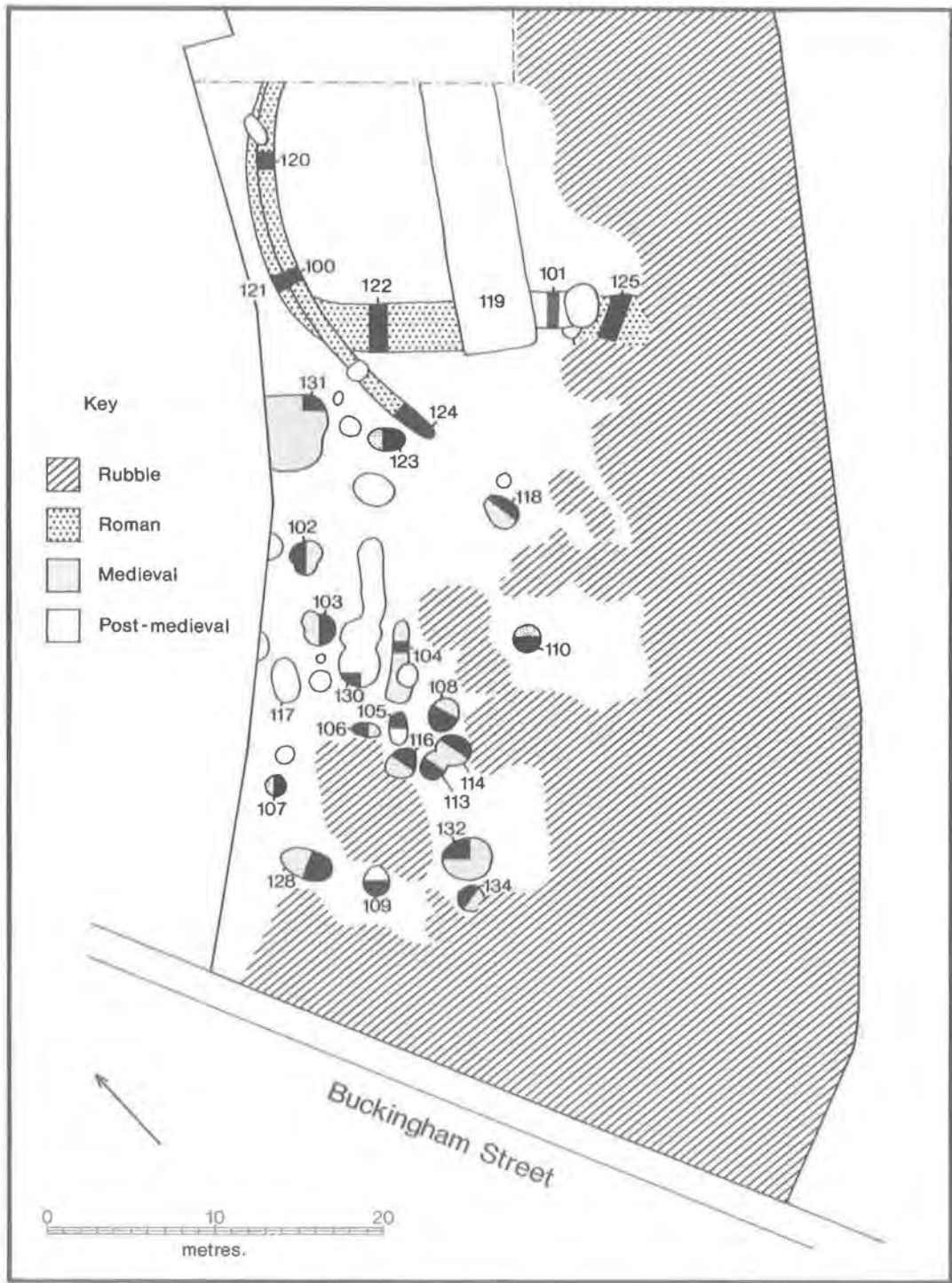


Fig. 2. Buckingham Street: general plan.

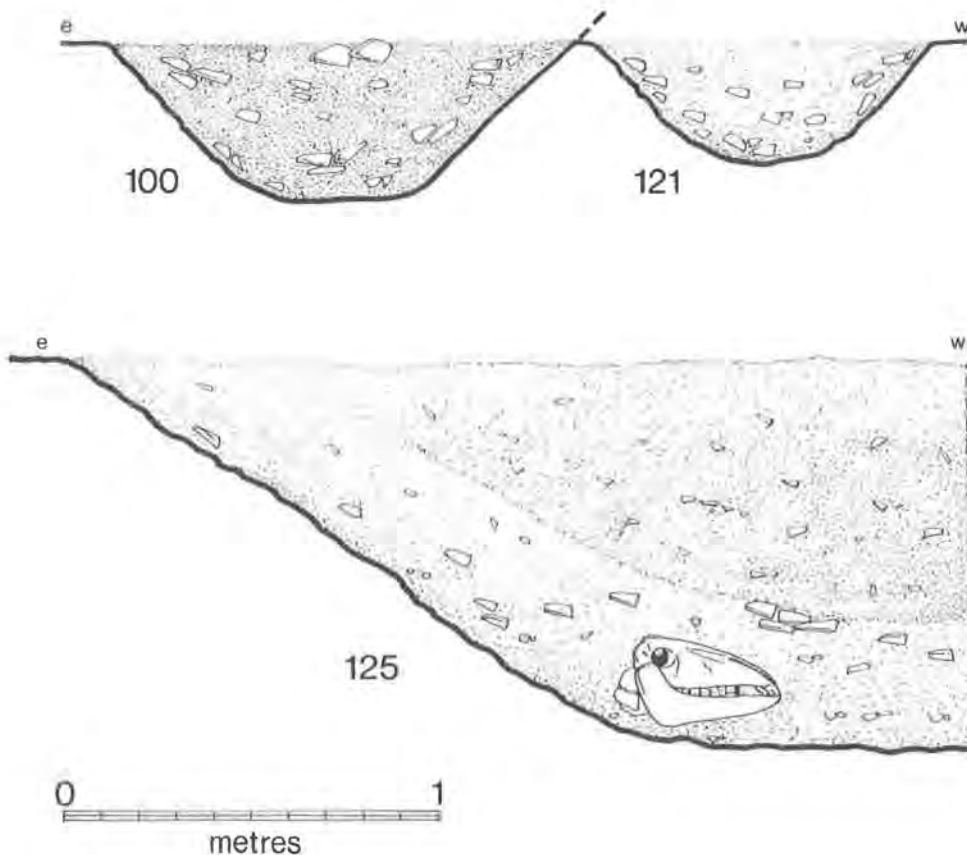


Fig. 3. Buckingham Street: sections of Roman gullies.

from much of the area, but whilst the medieval and Roman features survived this treatment sufficiently well to warrant investigation, a number of post-medieval pits remained only as shallow traces. These are outlined on the plan but not numbered.

The Roman Period

Evidence for activity in the Roman period was restricted to the eastern half of the site, and consisted in the main of two curving gullies and a large pit. It is possible, however, that less substantial features, such as postholes, existed in this area but had been destroyed by post-medieval activity or the site clearance.

The Gullies

(Cuts 121/122 and 100/120/124)

The earlier of the two gullies entered the site

in a south-westerly direction as a 'V'-shaped feature 1.0m wide and 0.50m deep and gradually increased to a maximum 3.0m width as it curved towards the south-east. It measured over 25m in length but its end was obscured by a substantial post-medieval trench (119). The fill consisted of weathered limestone in brown clay soil and contained very few finds (see p. 91).

The later gully entered the site in the same location as its predecessor, thereby cutting much of it away, but followed a more gradual curve over its 20m course and had a simple rounded end. Throughout its length it was of uniform width (1.20m) and averaged 0.40m in depth, although it became much shallower towards the end. The fill consisted of dark brown clay soil, containing fragments of lime-

stone. In addition it produced numerous sherds of pottery, mainly of second century date, and animal bones (see p. 94).

The Pit (125)

Just to the south-east of the gullies was a substantial pit. Unfortunately the imposition of post-medieval features made it impossible to determine its full extent, but the visible area measured 4.0m x 3.0m. A section (Fig. 3) revealed that the pit had gradually sloping sides and a flat base, with a depth of c. 1.0m. The lower fill consisted of brown clay soil containing some pieces of limestone, and on the bottom of the pit was the articulated skeleton of a horse (see p. 94). The upper fill, possibly a recut, was composed of darker brown soil, and this contained numerous sherds of pottery as well as fragments of tile and animal bone.

The Medieval Period

Sixteen features of medieval date were recorded and sectioned during the excavation. They consisted in the main of pit bases, with a remarkable variety of shape, size and fill, but two wells (107, 134) were also present. Features with a clear structural purpose were totally absent, and once again this probably resulted from the loss of the upper levels of the site.

The Pits

(Figs. 4 and 5)

102. An oval pit c. 2.0m x 1.80m x 0.60m deep, with rounded sides and flat base, containing dark brown/black organically rich soil flecked with charcoal. Finds included 93 sherds of medieval pottery, one Saxo-Norman and nine Roman, as well as fragments of tile and animal bone, four iron nails and a broken whetstone.
103. The shallow base of a circular flat-bottomed pit, 1.80m in diameter x 0.05m deep. The dark brown soil fill contained eighteen sherds of medieval pottery and animal bones.
104. A tapering slot, 5.0m in length, with a width ranging from 2.0m to 1.0m. The excavated section had a broad 'U' profile and contained a basal layer of charcoal and organically rich soil, above which lay dark brown clay. It produced sixty sherds of medieval pottery and three Roman, as well as fragments of tile, animal bone, oyster shell and an iron nail.
106. A shallow oval pit base 1.80m x 0.80m x 0.15m deep. It had near vertical sides and a flat base and contained dark brown soil with some limestone. This produced seventeen sherds of medieval pottery, two Roman, and one piece of animal bone.
108. A shallow, circular pit base with an irregular profile, 1.90m in diameter x 0.25m deep. It contained dark brown clay soil, which produced twenty-one medieval sherds and fragments of tile and animal bone.
110. This circular pit had vertical sides and a flat base and measured 1.40m in diameter x 0.60m deep. It contained dark brown soil with some limestone, and produced sixty sherds of medieval pottery, one Saxo-Norman, and one Roman, as well as numerous pieces of animal bone.
113. This circular feature, 1.40m in diameter x 0.20m deep, contained a mixture of fills including dark brown clay soil and re-deposited limestone, which probably represent more than one pit base. The dark soil fill contained twelve sherds of medieval pottery and fragments of tile and animal bone.
114. An oval feature, 2.0m x 1.50m x 0.30m deep, containing dark brown soil which produced sixty-eight medieval sherds, fragments of tile and animal bone, and an iron object.
116. An oval pit, 1.70m x 1.40m, with near vertical sides, possibly a well. The dark brown soil fill was removed to a depth of 1.20m, but the base of the feature was not reached. The fill contained 176 medieval sherds, two Roman, and fragments of tile and animal bone, oyster shell and iron

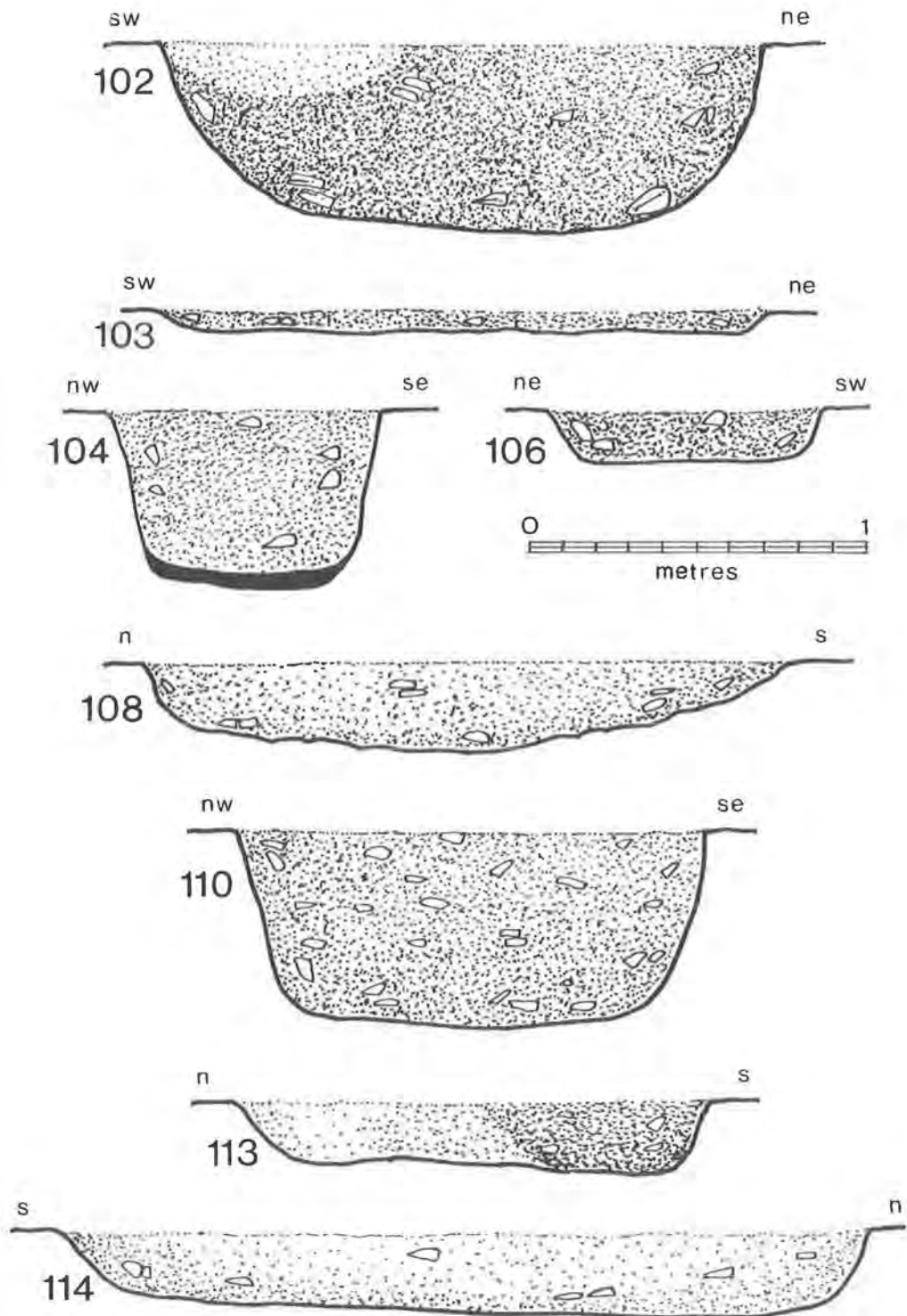


Fig. 4. Buckingham Street: medieval sections.

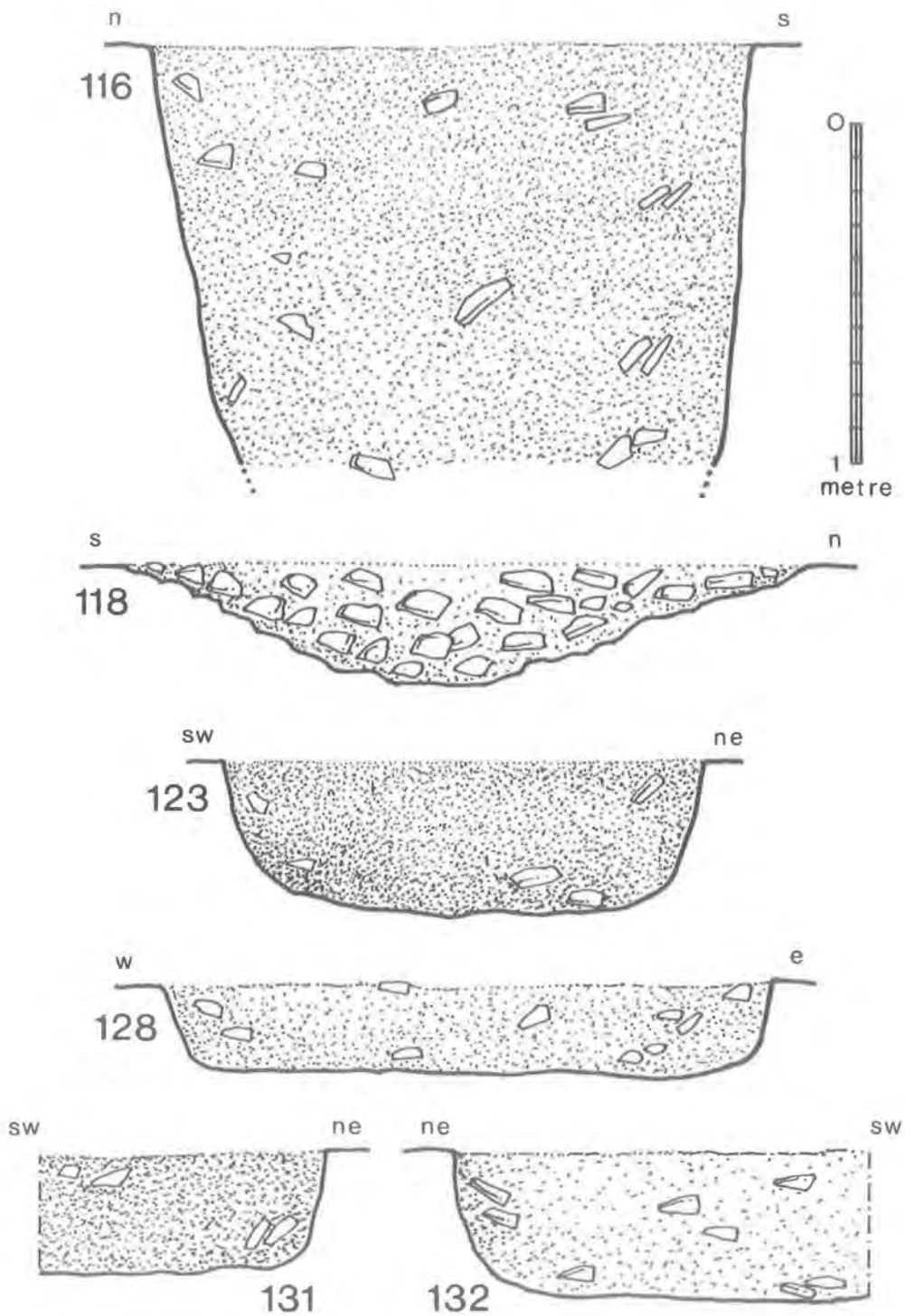


Fig. 5. Buckingham Street: medieval sections (cont.).

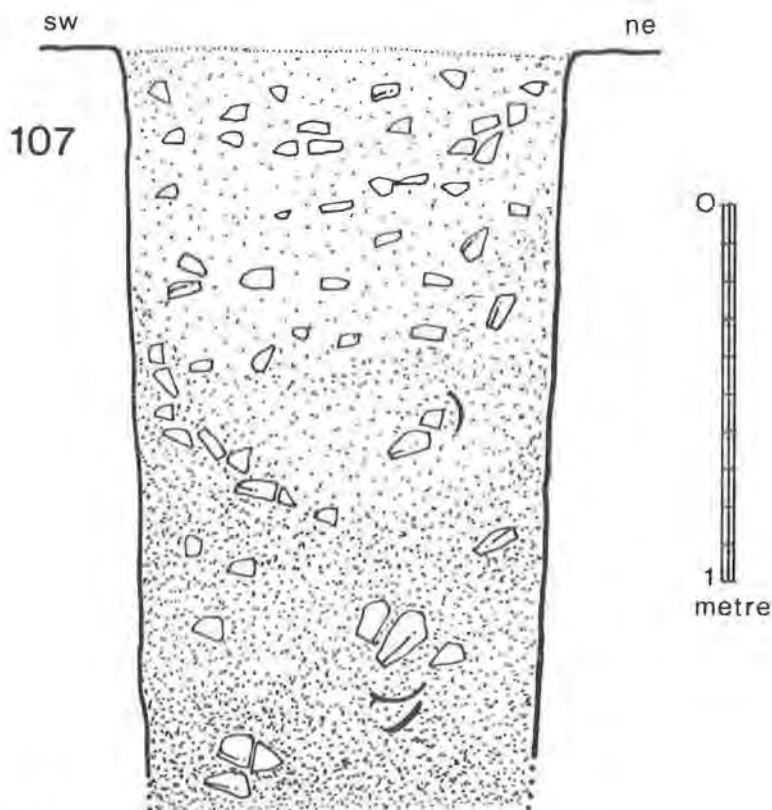


Fig. 6. Buckingham Street: medieval sections (cont.).

- nails. In addition a piece of worked bone pipe was recovered.
118. An irregular oval pit base, 2.0m x 1.80m and 0.30m maximum depth. The brown soil and limestone rubble fill contained twelve sherds of medieval pottery, seven Roman, and a few pieces of animal bone.
123. This oval pit measured 2.0m x 1.40m and had a broad 'U' profile with an average depth of 0.40m. The fine textured black soil fill contained twenty-two medieval sherds, three Roman, fragments of tile and animal bone, and a piece of burnt flint.
127. An oval pit, measuring 3.0m x 1.80m + x 0.25m deep, containing dark brown soil with sparse limestone. This produced
- forty-nine medieval sherds, three Roman, and numerous animal bones. It also contained a counter fashioned from a sherd of medieval pottery.
131. This large sub-rectangular feature was truncated by the northern limits of the excavation. The visible area was c. 4.0m square with a depth of 0.35m. The excavated section revealed a fill of dark brown soil, which contained fourteen sherds of medieval pottery and one Roman, as well as several pieces of animal bone.
132. A large circular pit base, 2.10m in diameter x 0.40m deep. The brown soil fill produced eighty-one sherds of medieval pottery, two Roman, and fragments of tile, animal bone, oyster shell, and an iron nail.
- 133

The Wells

(Fig. 6)

107. This circular, unlined well measured + 1.15m in diameter and had near vertical sides. Its excavation was completed to a depth of c. 2.0m, whereupon waterlogged conditions and lack of time caused it to be abandoned. The fill of limestone rubble in dark brown soil contained 250 sherds of medieval pottery, including large sections of glazed jug, three Roman sherds, and numerous fragments of animal bone as well as shell, tile and objects of bronze and iron.

134. Probable circular, unlined well, 1.20m in diameter. Its excavation was pursued to a depth of 1.20m, whereupon lack of time caused it to be abandoned. The fill of dark brown clay soil containing limestone produced seventy-six medieval sherds, fourteen Roman, and numerous pieces of animal bone as well as fragments of tile and two iron nails.

The Post Medieval Period

Certain of the post-medieval features were clearly too modern, given the salvage nature of the excavation, to warrant full investigation, and these are shown in outline on the general plan (Fig. 2). In addition, two others were numbered (117, 119) but not excavated, for the same reason. In the event, four features were sectioned and of these three proved to be of sixteenth century and one of eighteenth century date, as follows:

101. A broad, shallow feature, 2.0m wide x 0.05m deep. The fill of limestone rubble in brown soil contained six sherds of post-medieval pottery, one sherd of Roman, and pieces of tile, clay-pipe, bottle-glass, iron and animal bone.
Eighteenth century.

105. This oval pit measured 2.0m x 1.0m x 0.50m deep and had a broad 'U' shaped profile. The grey soil fill contained considerable quantities of charcoal and sealed a rich organic layer on the base of the feature. It contained seventy-eight sherds of post-medieval pottery, four Saxo-Norman and three Roman, as well as tile, animal bone, oyster shell, and objects of iron.

Late sixteenth century.

109. Probable circular, unlined well, 1.10m in diameter. The feature had a wider mouth + 1.80m diameter) with a neatly cut ledge at a depth of 0.35m, which could represent a well-head. Excavation was pursued to a depth of 1.0m, whereupon lack of time caused it to be abandoned. The dark brown soil fill contained thirty-five sherds of post-medieval pottery, 150 medieval, and five Roman, as well as pieces of tile, objects of iron and copper alloy, and numerous fragments of animal bone and shell.

Late fifteenth - early sixteenth century.

130. This amorphous feature, c. 8.0m x 2.0m, clearly represents more than one pit base, but it was only possible to sample one of these. A limited section revealed that the feature was 0.50m in depth, with rounded profile. The dark brown soil fill contained nine post-medieval sherds, twenty-five medieval, and one Roman, as well as pieces of tile, animal bone, shell and iron.
Later sixteenth century.

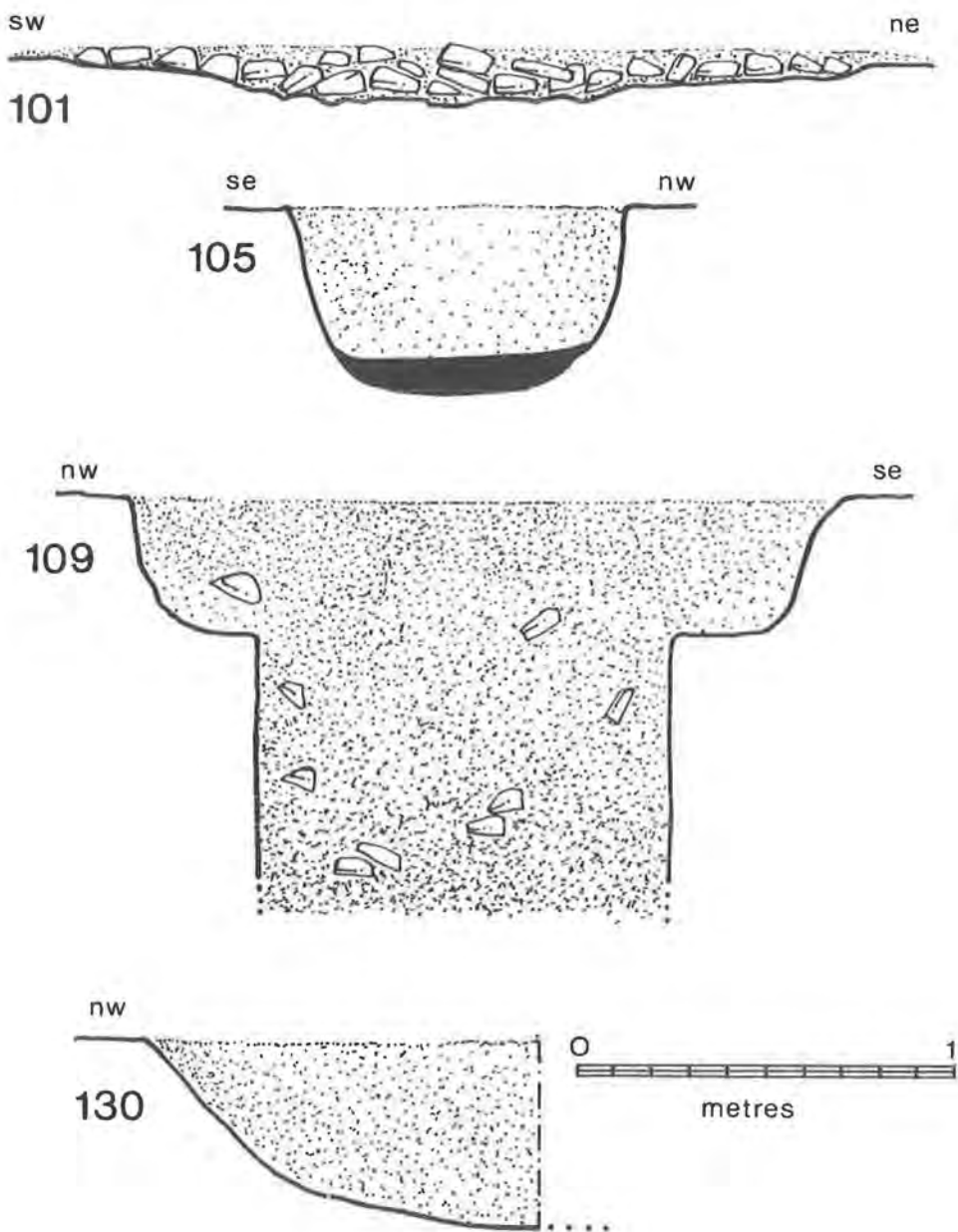


Fig. 7. Buckingham Street: post-medieval sections.

Prehistoric Finds

Although the earliest recognisable features revealed by excavation are probably of Roman date, a number of finds of pre-Roman nature were recovered.

Flint

(not illustrated)

Five pieces of waste flint were found, including a fragment of core, and three flakes, one of which shows signs of retouch.

Pottery

(not illustrated)

Fourteen sherds of coarse, flint-gritted pottery were recovered, eleven of them from pit 125. They closely resemble material from the recent excavations at Bierton (Allen forthcoming) which occurs in a late Iron Age context.

'Belgic' Brick

(Not illustrated)

Several fragments of these distinctive, hand-made clay bricks were present in the Roman features. This material is at home in pre-Roman contexts (e.g. Allen forthcoming; Farley 1981) but its continued use into the Roman period is a distinct possibility. The bricks were probably used to contain hearths or provide level surfaces for cooking purposes. For a fuller description and illustrations, see the references cited.

Roman Finds

Finds of the Roman period were limited to fragments of tile, daub and brick, sherds of pottery, and animal bones. The majority of this material was recovered from the Roman features, but a quantity of Roman pottery appeared as residual material in later contexts. It is a possibility, therefore, that some of the small finds from these later features may be of Roman date.

Tile and Daub

(Not illustrated)

Only one piece of Roman tile was discovered, a fragment of tegula from ditch section 100.

However, all the Roman features produced some fired clay, either in the form of daub or the so-called 'Belgic' brick. This distinctive material certainly appears in pre-Roman contexts but may have continued in use into the Roman period (see above).

The Roman Pottery

by Stephen Greep

The excavation produced stratified groups from two features only: the later gully (contexts 100 and 120, Fig. 8, 1-10) and the pit (125). The pottery from the pit (Fig. 8, 11-20) seems to form a coherent group belonging to the early or mid-second century, and includes at least two products of the Verulamium region (nos. 15 and 18). The pottery from the gully includes sherds from vessels found in the pit (e.g. Fig. 8, 7 and 9), but overall exhibits a much longer date range, lasting throughout the Roman period. The earliest pieces are fragments of hand-made shell or quartz fabrics (e.g. Fig. 8, 5), and whilst the majority of the pottery would seem best placed in the first or second century, Fig. 8, 10 and possibly Fig. 8, 6 are definitely of much later date (see p. 000).

A number of vessels from both gully and pit have slightly warped rims (e.g. Fig. 8, 1 and 10-13). In no case, however, can these be termed 'wasters', but rather 'seconds', and probably easily saleable ones at that.

The remaining vessels (Fig. 9, 28-30), although unstratified, confirm the evidence from the gully. The bulk belongs to the early Roman period but a number date to the third and fourth centuries, and include pieces from the Oxfordshire (Fig. 9, 23) and Nene Valley (Fig. 9, 25) centres.

Samian Ware

(Not illustrated)

1. Dr. 15/17 or 18. South Gaulish: riveted: pre/early Flavian. From the later gully (120).
2. ? Central Gaulish mortaria. Later second century: unstratified.

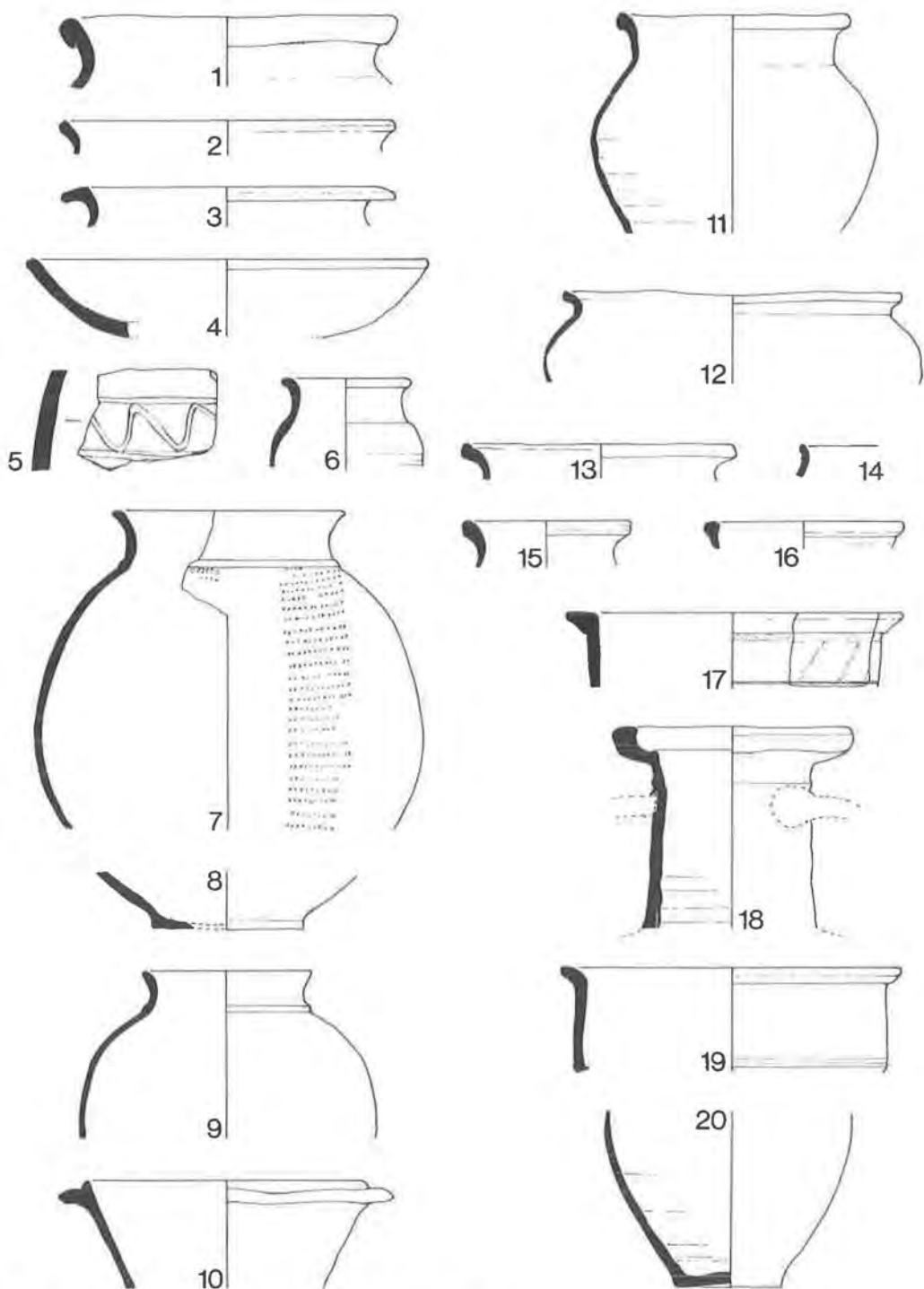


Fig. 8. Buckingham Street: Roman pottery (1/4 scale).

Coarse Wares. Catalogue.

Fig. 8.

1. Jar. Exterior silver/grey burnished; interior grey unburnished; grey core. Undercut rim with remains of clay at cut. (100)
2. Jar. Exterior grey; interior and core light grey. (100)
3. Jar. Surfaces dark grey, with some burnishing on exterior, and top of rim. Grey/brown core. (100)
4. Bowl. Surfaces red colour-coat; grey core. Slight bead rim. Traces of rouletting on interior. (100)
5. Heavy storage jar, sherd only. Surfaces buff, externally burnished and decorated with panel of scored lines. Core pink and granular. (100)
6. Jar. Grey surfaces and core. External burnished bands and grooves. (120)
7. Poppy-head beaker. Exterior silver/grey burnished; interior grey; core grey/brown. Decorated with panels of barbotine dots. (100 and 125)
8. Base of jar. Surfaces dark grey; core light grey. (100 and 125)
9. Poppy-head beaker. Exterior grey/brown burnished; interior grey; core light brown/grey. (100 and 125)
10. Flanged bowl. Exterior grey, burnished to top of rim; interior and core grey. Flange distorted. Late Roman. (120)
11. Jar. Exterior grey/brown; interior brown; core red. Rim distorted. (125)
12. Jar. Surfaces and core grey. Uneven rim. (125)
13. Jar. Surfaces and core black. Uneven rim with shallow groove. (125)
14. Beaker/jar. Exterior grey with traces of

brown slip; interior and core grey. Small bead rim. (125)

15. Jar. Buff/orange surfaces and core. Sooting visible on exterior of grooved rim. Verulamium Region product. (125)
16. Bowl. Brown surfaces and core; mica-dusted. (125)
17. Bowl. Surfaces dark grey; core light grey. Burnished band below rim on exterior, diagonal burnished groove below this. (125)
18. Two-handled jug. Buff surfaces and core. Traces of orange slip on exterior, Verulamium Region product, e.g. Corder, 1941, fig. 8, 13. (125)
19. Bowl. Exterior grey/brown slip; interior and core grey. (125)
20. Base of jar. Surfaces and core grey. ?Trace of barbotine decoration. (125)

Fig. 9.

21. Large bowl. Grey surfaces and core. (125)
22. Base of bowl. Exterior grey slip; interior and core grey. Uneven foot ring. (125).
23. Mortarium. Buff surfaces, pink core. Probably an Oxford product, cf. Young 1977, form ?M22, c. A.D. 240-400+. (129)
24. Jar. Grey surfaces and core. Some burnishing on exterior. (128)
25. Mortaria. Buff core. Grey slip inside and out. A Nene Valley product, cf. Howe *et al.* 1981, fig. 8, 101. (130)
26. Jar. Dark grey surfaces; pink, coarse sandy core. (105)
27. Jar. Grey surfaces; light grey, sandy core. Everted rim, lower edge burnished. Sooting on rim. (126)
28. Flanged bowl. Exterior dark grey burnish-

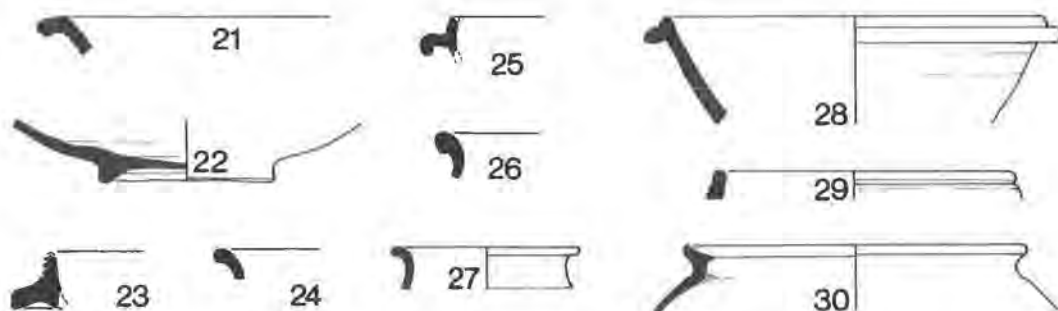


Fig. 9. Buckingham Street: Roman pottery (cont.) (1/4 scale).

ed; interior and core light grey. Micaceous. Late Roman. (118)

29. Jar or bowl. Exterior black/brown burnished; interior and core brown. (132)
30. Jar. Dark grey surfaces; pink core. Possibly medieval. (134)

The Animal Bones

by Gill Jones

The majority of features investigated contained animal bones, but it was decided to submit only those from the Roman contexts for specialist study.

Horse Skeleton. Pit 125.

The articulated skeleton of a horse, probably of 1st–2nd century date, was found in the bottom of pit 125. There were no associated finds suggesting ritual burial, but the pit was probably dug for the purpose of disposing of the horse. Pottery, tiles and other animal bones were found in the pit, but only in the upper fill.

The remains consisted of a nearly complete skull, the cervical and most of the thoracic vertebrae and most of the rib cage, both scapulae and humeri and one radius. The rest of the skeleton was not salvaged.

The animal was a male of about 13 hands, which had died at about seven years old. The complete set of teeth (including canines, which are present only in male horses) were recovered; only one incisor, the left I_1 , had lost its 'mark'

and the cheek teeth were in full wear but not very worn; the vertebral epiphyses were fused and the parietal/frontal and frontal/maxillary sutures were almost obliterated. No sign of disease was apparent.

No marks were observed on the bones. This plus the apparently purposeful burial suggest, although they do not prove, that the skin and meat were not used. Treatment of horses after death varied during the Iron Age and Romano-British period, some animals receiving burial with associated artifacts (e.g. at Danebury, Grant forthcoming) while at some sites horse meat was certainly eaten, the bones being chopped and fragmented (Maltby 1981. Wilson personal communication).

Measurements of the horse

skull	1) total length	500
	4) short skull L	330
	9) upper neurocranium l	167
	10) facial L	343
	22) cheek tooth row	169, 173
mandible	41) greatest breadth	204
	6) cheek tooth row	170, 171
	19) height of ramus	195
Scapula	greatest L of spine	310
humerus	greatest lateral L	255
radius	greatest lateral L	304

L = length.

The measuring points are defined in von den Driesch (1975) (skull and mandible) and von den Driesch and Boessneck (1974).

A few other animal bones were found (in features 100 and 125-upper fill). They consisted of the remains of common domestic animals, fragmented and chopped as is typical of bone samples from occupation sites.

The species present, in order of bone frequency, were cattle, sheep (goat), horse, pig and fowl (15, 9, 3 excluding the skeleton, 2 and 1 bone(s)). Gnawmarks on catted bones indicate that dogs were also kept.

Of the ovicaprine bones two were from sheep. One was an incomplete skull bearing very small horns. The horny sheath, despite its small size, appears to have been made use of, since one of the horn cores was chopped (length of outer curve 32mm, circumference at base 42, 44). Another piece of skull was also from a sheep, to judge from the shape of the fronto/parietal suture, and was either polled or it may have had a very small horn scar. Hornlessness occurs more commonly in the Romano-British period than in earlier times. However, an example was found in a late pre-Roman Iron Age context at Berton, Aylesbury (Jones, forthcoming).

The collection included bones from young, sub-adult and mature cattle, from sub-adult and mature sheep (goat) and a mature pig.

Two horse bones and a tooth were found in gully 100, but whether or not they are food waste is not known. They were not chopped, and one was an unbroken metatarsal. (All the cattle and sheep bones were broken, probably for their marrow). Measurement of the latter bone indicates a horse of 13 hands, which is typical of the period (greatest lateral length 251mm).

None of the bones was burnt.

Medieval Finds

The medieval finds consisted of quantities of pottery, animal bone, oyster shell and roofing tile. In addition a number of the mediaeval features contained fragmentary iron objects, and one a piece of bronze. Also present were a

broken whetstone, a counter fashioned from a sherd of pottery, a piece of bone pipe and a stone spindle-whorl.

Medieval Pottery

(Figs. 10, and 11, 1-14)

by Michael Farley

A provisional chronology for the medieval ceramic of the area was established at Walton (Farley 1976) and the material recovered at the present site is insufficient to advance the matter further. The earliest feature present (128) is datable to the twelfth century. The remaining four features contain jugs from the Brill/Boarstall industry which are datable from the latter half of the thirteenth to the later fourteenth century, but not more precisely within this bracket at present.

Fig. 10

Pit 127 + 128:

1. Large shallow bowl, brown ext., sooted; int. Brown/grey. Core grey with brown margins, flint gritted. Thumbing on top of rim. (127)
2. Cooking pot, black ext. and int.; core brown/grey, flint gritted. Rim fingered on outer edge. (127)
3. Cooking pot, brown/grey ext. and int.; core grey. Sparse flint, rounded silica grits. Some fingering on outer edge of rim. Diameter 34cms. (127)
4. Cooking pot. Ext. sooted; int. grey. Core brown/grey. Diameter uncertain. (127)
5. Cooking pot lid, surfaces orange; core grey. Diameter uncertain. (128)

Features 113 and 114:

6. Cooking pot, grey/brown int. and ext. Core grey/brown, rounded silica grits. Thumbing on inside of rim. (Surface of both features)
7. Cooking pot, int. and ext. black; core brown/grey, rounded silica grits. Diameter uncertain. (Surface of both features)

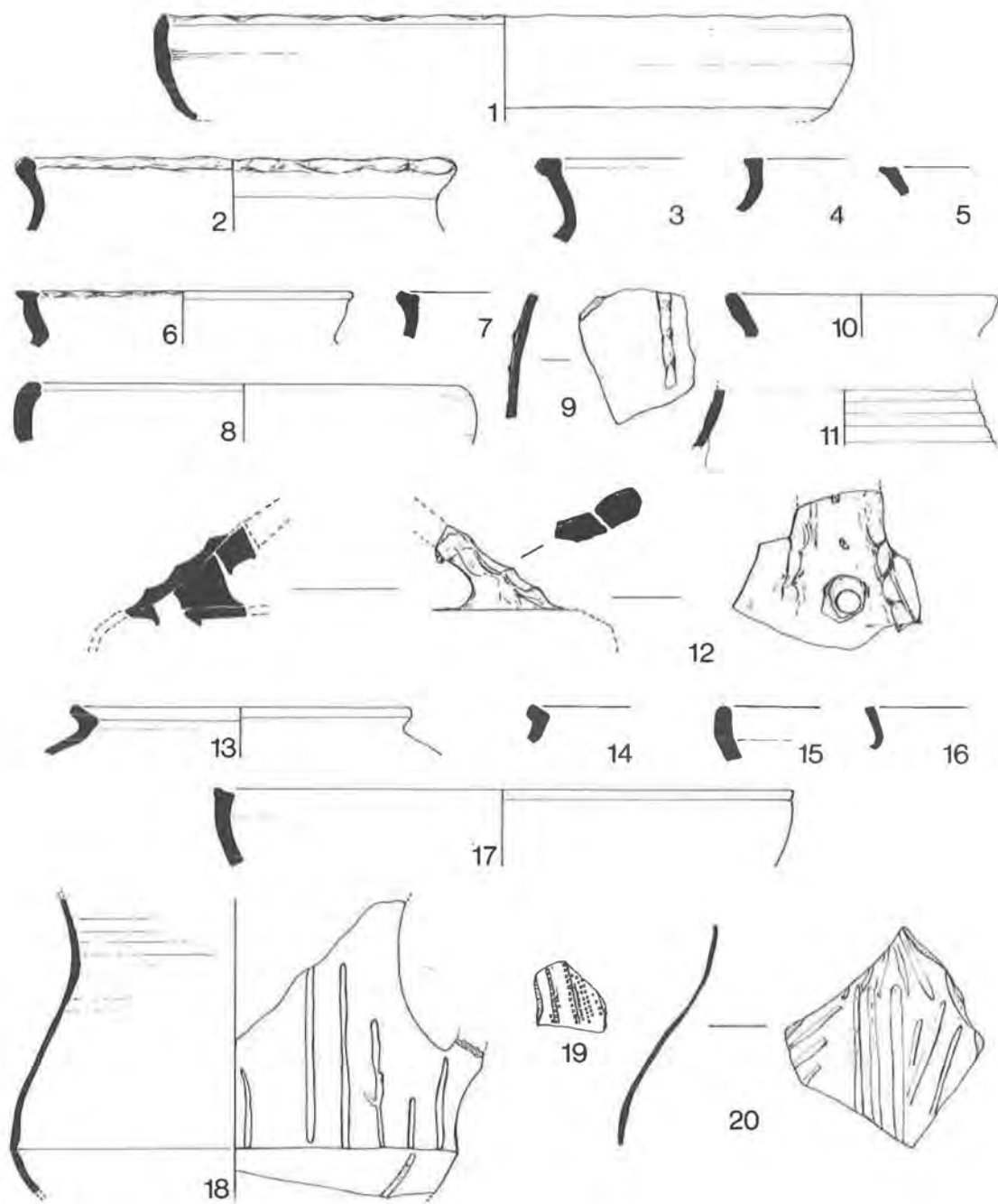


Fig. 10. Buckingham Street: medieval pottery (1/4 scale).

8. Bowl. Ext. black and int. brown, core red/brown, sparse flint grit. (113)
9. Sherd of cooking pot, with applied thumbed strip and other striations. Ext. light grey; int. dark grey, grey core. Fine fabric with rounded silica grits. (114)
10. Cooking pot. Ext. and int. grey/brown. Rim well sooted. Core grey/brown, sparse flint grit with rounded silica. (114)
11. ? Jug. Ext. has light green glaze; int. is orange with some glazing. Fine fabric with ironstone inclusions. Brill. (114)
- Pit 116:
12. Fire-cover; heavy pierced strap handle, thumbed with vent-hole at base, black ext. and int., red core. Fine fabric with sparse silica grits. (116)
13. Cooking pot. Grey/brown throughout. Rounded silica grits. (116)
14. Cooking pot. Grey throughout. Diameter 0.22m. Rounded silica grits. (116)
15. Lid/bowl. Ext. black, int. brown. Core grey. Diameter 0.24m. Shelly. (116)
16. Cooking pot. Ext. black, int. grey/brown, core grey. Diameter uncertain. Sparse flint and rounded silica. (116)
17. Large bowl. Ext. black, int. Black/grey. Core brown/red. Rounded silica grit with sparse flint. (116)
18. Jug. Olive green glaze to waist, barbotine ribs alternately dark brown. Slashed handle plugged through into body, orangey ext., light grey int. and core. Fine silica grits and ironstone inclusions. Brill/Boarstall. (116)
19. Jug, buff/orange ext., int. and core. Rouletted bands of squares. One strip painted red. Brill/Boarstall fabric as above. (116)
20. Jug sherd, pale green glaze with barbotine strips, some brown. Buff-white int. and core. Fine silica grits and ironstone inclusions. Brill/Boarstall fabric as above.
- Fig. 11
Well 107 + 126:
1. Lid/bowl, ext. sooted, int. red, grey core. Shelly. (107) Upper fill.
2. Lid, dark grey ext. and int. with applied strip. Light grey core. Silica grits. (107)
3. Pot. Dark grey ext. and int. Light grey core. Sparse silica grits. (107)
4. Strap handle unglazed, slashed at edges with two centre grooves. Brown/red, grey core. Sparse flint, silica grits and ironstone.
5. Jug, with applied barbotine strip in brown slip, rouletted. Yellow brown glaze ext. with iron speckled, int. yellow, core orange. Brill/Boarstall. (107)
6. Cooking pot, black ext. and int., grey core. Coarse sandy fabric. Traces of applied thumbed strip on lower edge of sherd. Silica grits. (126) Lower fill.
7. Jug base, thumbed. Bubbled green-glaze ext., brown int., grey core. Silica grits. (126)
8. Jug, rib decoration. (126)
9. Cooking pot, ext, ext. and int. grey; core red. Sparse silica grits and ironstone. (126)
10. Cooking pot, ext. sooted, int. red/brown, core grey/brown, flint and calcareous inclusions. (126)
11. Jug base, ext. orange with spots of green glaze, green glaze on base, int. orange, core orange/buff. Brill/Boarstall. (126)
12. Spouted jug. Body slightly ribbed, slashed handle plugged through into body. Green/brown glaze with iron staining ext., int.

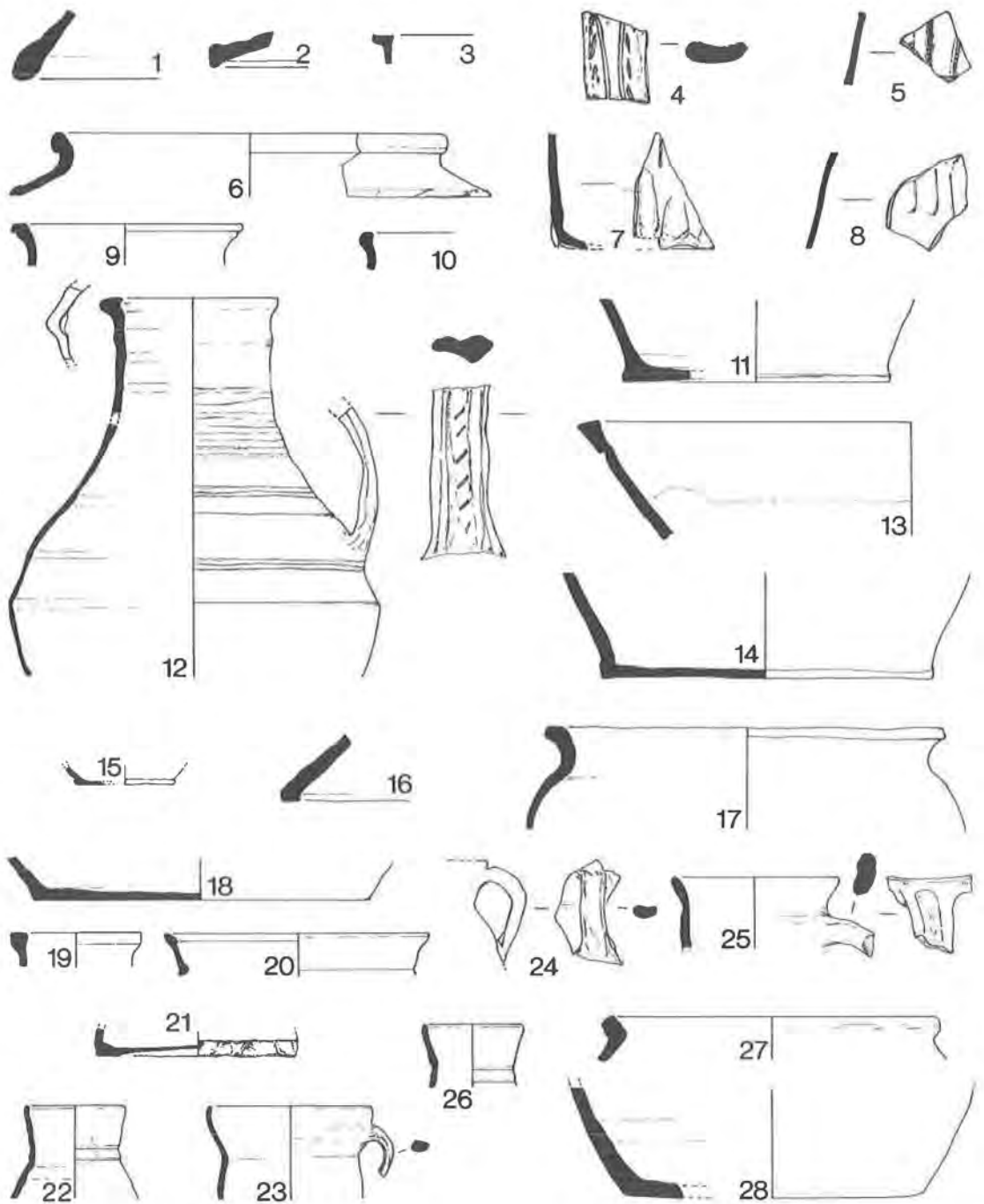


Fig. 11. Buckingham Street: medieval (1-14) and post-medieval pottery (15-28) (1/4 scale).

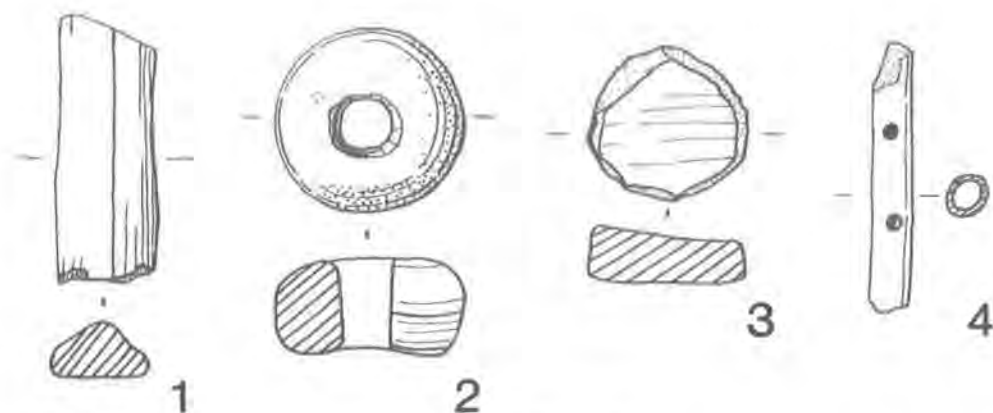


Fig. 12. Buckingham Street: medieval small finds (2/3 scale).

orange, core buff with grey margins. Brill/Boarstall. (126)

a sherd of medieval pottery. Surfaces black/grey and grey, core grey; hard and sandy. (128)

13. Bowl (diameter 0.40m.). Ext. orange sooting, int. orange with clear glaze on lower part. Brill/Boarstall. (126)

Metalwork (not illustrated)

Eleven pieces of iron were recovered from the medieval features, and all can be identified as nails. A plain, flat strip of bronze (18mm x 12mm) was also found, in context 126.

14. Jar, orange ext. int. and core. Clear glaze externally just above base. Brill/Boarstall. (126)

Worked Bone. S. Grep writes:

Fig. 12.4

Fragment of a simple bird-bone whistle, two perforations remaining. A common medieval type (e.g. Biddle 1961/62, Fig. 32.5) 52mm long, broken.

Other Finds

Stone

Fig. 12.1

Fragment of rod-like whetstone, with dished surfaces resulting from whetting. ? Mica schist. (102)

Fig. 12.2

Spindle-whorl. Complete whorl fashioned from limestone. 16g. (113)

Animal Bone

Nearly all of the features produced quantities of animal bone, and this material has been retained, but not subjected to specialist study.

Tile (not illustrated)

The majority of the medieval features produced quantities of roofing-tile. Many were perforated 'peg-tiles' but a number of pieces of green-glazed ridge tile were also present. In addition some of the tile fragments had been burnt along one edge, which suggests that they might have formed part of a 'peg-tile' hearth.

Pottery Roundel

Fig. 12.3

Roundel, c. 30mm diameter, fashioned from

Post-Medieval Finds

The post-medieval finds from the four features of the date described in the report consist mainly of quantities of pottery, animal bone, oyster shell and roofing tile. In addition a number of iron and copper alloy objects were discovered, as well as fragments of glass and clay-pipe. In view of the unassociated nature of the post-medieval pits, however, only a small number of sherds (Fig. 11, 22-28) and three copper alloy objects (Fig. 13) are illustrated.

Post-Medieval Pottery

(Fig. 11, 15–28)

by Michael Farley

Illustratable pottery comes from three features, all of which contain late fifteenth—late sixteenth century products of the Brill industry which continue to dominate the local market. Well 109, which includes some reddish wares verging towards the later products of the industry, probably dates to the late fifteenth—earlier sixteenth centuries; Pit 105 and feature 130 date to the later sixteenth. Pit 105 contains vessels which can be closely paralleled amongst the products of a kiln examined at Brill in 1974, and were possibly produced there (Farley 1979, Fig. 7).

Well 109 also contained an interesting group of metalwork.

Well 109 + 129:

15. Small cup/jug base. Spots of green glaze ext. on buff-reddish body, dark green glaze int. (109) Upper fill.
16. Lid. Dark grey surfaces int. and ext., light grey core. Flint grits. (129) Lower fill.
17. Cooking pot. Grey ext., int. and core. Flint grits. (129) ?Residual.
18. Base. Ext. well sooted, int. yellow/green iron-stained glaze. Core red. Rounded silica grits. (129)
19. Jug. Traces of green glaze. Grey/brown surface; orange fabric. Brill/Boarstall. (129)
20. Jar? Reddy ext., int. and core. Spots of clear glaze on inner edge of rim. Rounded silica grits. (129)
21. Jug. Thumbed base. Traces of green glaze ext. and int., core red sandwiching grey. Rounded silica grits and sparse ironstone. (109)

22. Cup/jug. Dark green glaze ext. and part int. Fine bricky fabric, sparse silica grits. (129)

23. Cup. Brown-glazed surfaces ext. and int., red core. Thin. Sparse ironstone and silica grits. (109)

Feature 130:

24. Cup. Black-glazed surfaces, reddish core. Fine fabric. ?Midlands. (130)

25. Jug. Even green glaze ext. and part int., red core. Sparse silica and ironstone. Brill. (130)

Pit 105:

26. Cup. Dark green glaze ext. and part int. Reddy-orange core. Fine silica grits. (105)

27. Jar. Grey ext., reddy int. and core. Silica grits and some ironstone. Brill. (105)

28. Jar base. Light red ext., int. and core. Sparse silica and ironstone. Brill. (105)

Metalwork:

Catalogue (Fig. 13)

The illustrated metalwork comes from the upper fill of a probable well apparently back-filled in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century.

1. Buckle, copper alloy. Flat back, slightly bevelled on loop. (109A)
2. Double buckle, copper alloy. (109C)
3. Skimmer or perforated spoon in copper alloy with riveted handle socket. (109B). A similar example from Oxford is dated to the mid-sixteenth century (Palmer 1980, Fig. 26, 143 and see Goodall, Fig. 63, 5).
4. Decorated fitting of cocked hat shape with single attachment perforation. (129C)

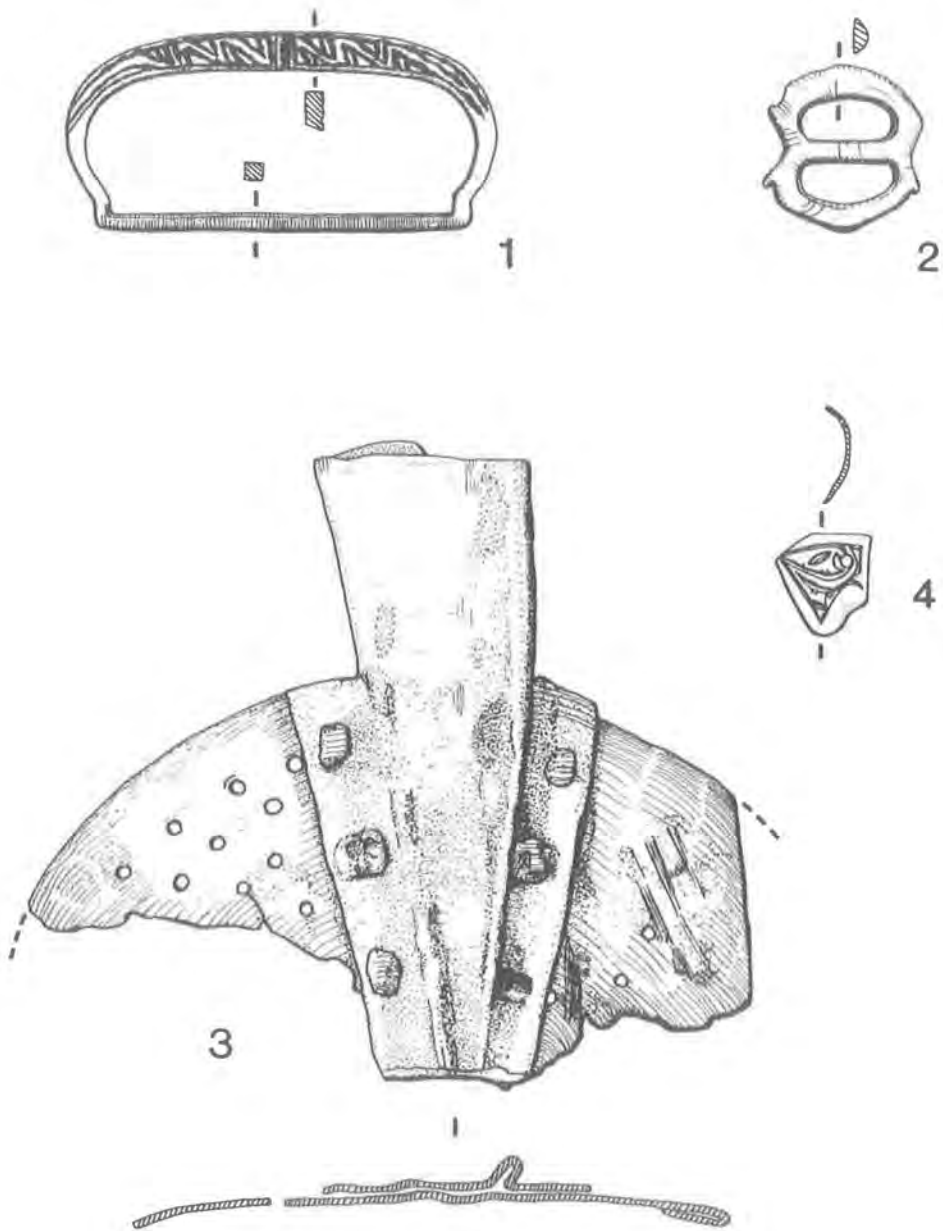


Fig. 13. Buckingham Street: post-medieval metalwork (2/3 scale).

BULL'S HEAD SITE

In October 1980 work began on the 7,000m² Bull's Head/Hale Leys redevelopment, located between the High Street and Market Square (Figs. 1 + 14) at SP 8198 1377. As this involved the clearance of the area to ground level, and then a considerable amount of machine excavation, a 'Watching-brief' was established through the good offices of Mr. Derrison of Laing Properties Ltd., to monitor this work, and recover evidence for earlier activity on the site. In the event the disturbance created by the post-medieval foundations proved so great that only ten features were located in plan, around the fringes of the area. Of the ten, three proved to be of Roman date: a substantial ditch (201) and two pit-bases (202, 203). It is these that are described here. Details of the remainder are deposited with the site records (CAS 4872). The finds are accessioned at 641.1981.

The Ditch 201

One of the structures demolished to make way for the scheme was the Congregational, later United Reformed Church situated on the High Street frontage. This building was constructed in the mid-nineteenth century and opened in 1874. It replaced a chapel, the ancestry of which can be traced back to 1707 (Gibbs 1885, 442). Whilst neither foundation appears to have had an attached burial ground, the Congregational Church records state that one of their longest serving ministers, the Reverend William Gunn (d. 1844) and his wife Obedience (d. 1845) were laid to rest beneath the floor of the Chapel, 'near to the pulpit from which he preached'. Armed with this knowledge the contractors decided to locate the grave (so that any remains could be reinterred before the site clearance took place) and this

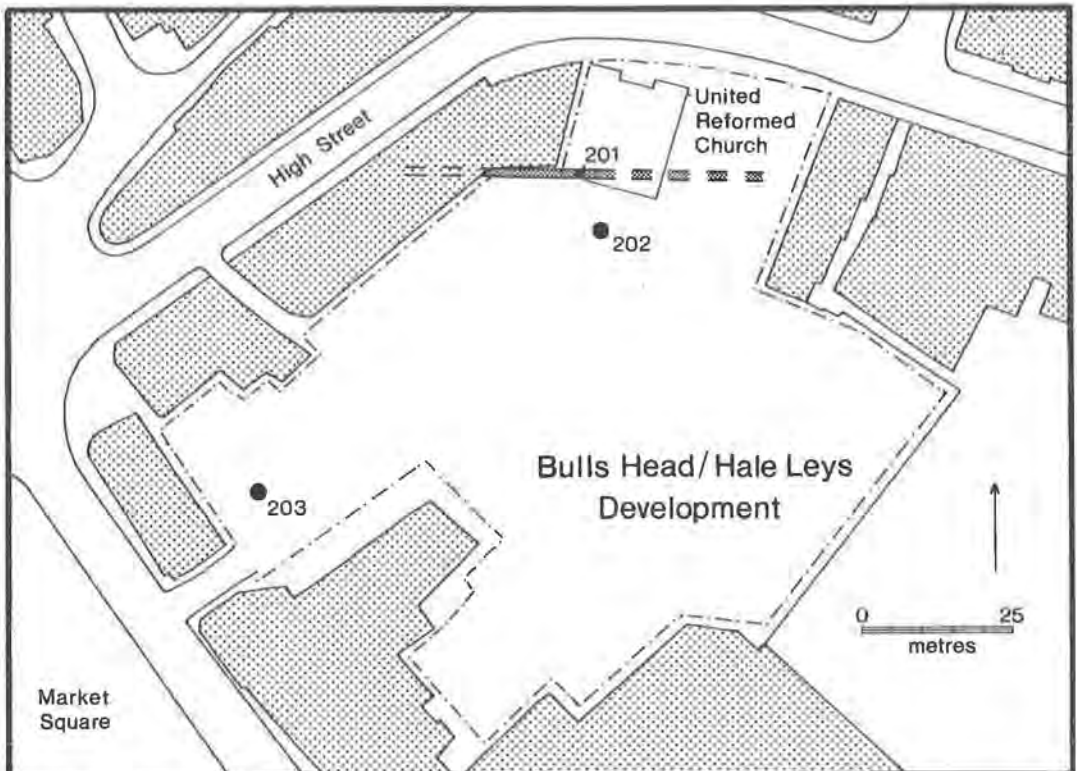


Fig. 14: Bull's Head, Aylesbury: general plan.

they did beneath the vestry floor of the 1874 church. At a late stage in this investigation the County Museum was requested to comment on the discoveries, to determine whether or not the grave contained one or two burials, the evidence of the recovered skeletal material being somewhat equivocal. A brief inspection soon revealed that the grave had indeed contained two coffins, presumably those of the Rev. Gunn and his wife, but it also showed that earlier features existed in this area. With the co-operation of the contractors, a small exploratory excavation was carried out which demonstrated that the most prominent of these features was a large 'V'-profile ditch.

The ditch measured 3.0m in width and 0.40m in depth, although it was clear that the construction of the vestry had removed some of its upper levels (Fig. 15). Its layered fill consisted of dark brown clay/soil containing varying quantities of limestone, particularly prominent in the primary layers and upper levels. Most of this material had entered the ditch from the northern side, suggesting that a bank originally existed on this side of the feature. The course of the ditch could be traced with some certainty to the west of the excavation, until it disappeared beyond the limits of the site, a distance of c. 12.0m. To the east its course was less apparent, being interrupted by foundations and demolition disturbance, but it could be inferred for at least 15.0m. Throughout this c. 30.0m length the feature apparently pursued a straight course.

Finds from the excavated section were few, but of the six sherds of pottery recovered, five were of early Roman and one a piece of storage jar of late Iron Age or early Roman date. A

late Iron Age or Roman date for this feature would therefore seem to apply.

Pit 202

The area surrounding the ditch had been badly disturbed by clearance work, but an untouched ridge of limestone subsoil 10.0m to the south protected a small pit-base. This feature was roughly circular, measuring at least 2.0m in diameter and 0.40m deep. It contained a lower fill of dark brown clay/soil above which lay a deposit of crushed limestone. The lower fill produced seven small sherds of late Roman pottery.

Pit 203

The only other part of the site where it proved possible to examine features in plan was a small area near to the western limits of the operation (Fig. 14). Here eight pit bases were identified and sectioned. Seven of these were of late medieval or post-medieval date, and are not detailed here, but the largest proved to be a Roman pit. This feature was roughly circular, measuring 1.80m in diameter, but its two-fold fill showed that it had been recut (Fig. 15). The earlier pit was the full 1.80m diameter and contained re-deposited limestone in a brown clay matrix, whilst the later feature measured 1.0m diameter, and contained brown/grey clay soil with some larger stones. Both fills produced numerous sherds of pottery and considerable quantities of animal bone. The later cut also contained abundant charcoal. Both features were excavated to a depth of 1.0m but full excavation was not possible in the circumstances. The pottery is of late fourth century date, and includes sherds of stamped Oxfordshire ware, and shell-gritted, flanged bowls.

DISCUSSION

The piecing together of the past history of settlement in the area now occupied by the town of Aylesbury has been, in the absence of detailed documentary evidence and large-scale excavation, a slow and unrewarding task. The two salvage excavations described above do, however, despite their limited scope and

duration, provide important information which aids this process.

The Iron Age Period

The suggestion that the low hill now occupied by the core area of the town was once the site of an Iron Age settlement was first made in 1974

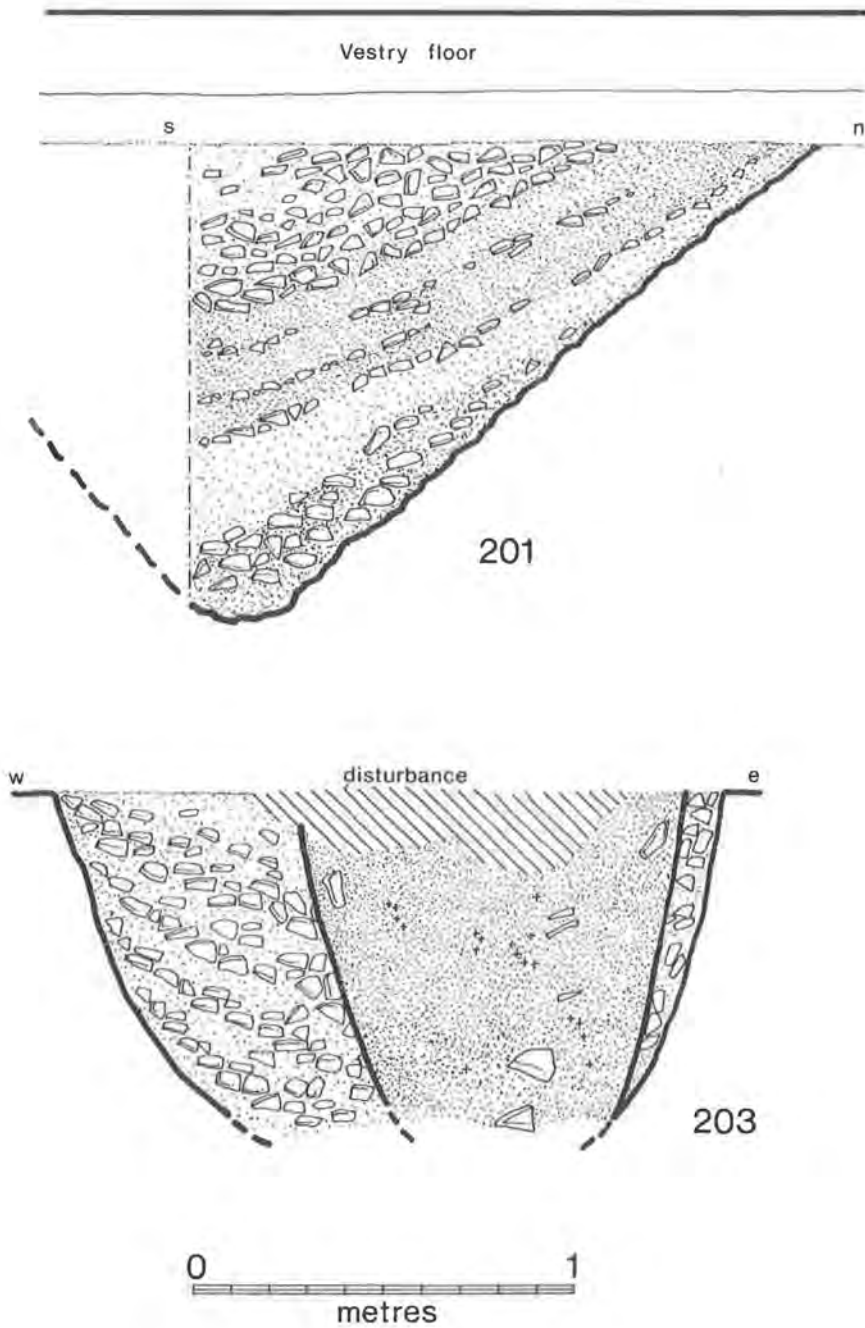


Fig. 15. Bull's Head: sections of Roman features.

(Waugh *et al.* 1974, 405), and has been corroborated by finds made during the recent excavation in George Street, which suggests that this occupation belongs to the middle Iron Age (Allen 1982). Neither the Buckingham Street nor Bull's Head site produced any definite evidence for occupation at this period, but both could lie beyond the limits of a substantial settlement, even an eight hectare contour hillfort. The sites do, however, provide limited evidence for a late Iron Age presence in the form of sherds of 'Belgic' pottery and fragments of 'Belgic' brick, and although this material may have found its way into the locations as a result of the Roman activity which was to follow, recent work at Bierton (Allen, forthcoming) and Walton Court (Farley *et al.* 1981) has revealed two sites, occupied in the Roman period, which had late Iron Age beginnings. It is not impossible that the Aylesbury sites had similar origins, and in this respect it is worth noting that the earlier gully and horse-burial pit (lower fill) at the Buckingham Street site, did not contain any Roman sherds.

The Roman Period

It is the evidence for Roman settlement which is undoubtedly the most important aspect of the excavations. Stray finds of Roman date, in the form of coins and other small finds, have been both numerous and widespread in the area of the town (Fig. 1), but this is the first definite evidence for Roman occupation. The proximity of the Buckingham Street site to the probable line of Akeman Street (Fig. 1), encourages the interpretation of the curving gullies as the southern limits of an enclosure which faced on to the Roman road, but it is impossible to determine the extent or role of this wayside occupation. The wide time-span evident from the pottery (first to fourth centuries) suggests a long-lived settlement, but it seems probable that the later gully and pit (upper fill) both belong to the second century, and that the flanged bowl and associated vessel (Fig. 8: 6 and 10) apparently from the former, were in an intrusive feature which was not recognized as such during the excavation. The features discovered at the Bull's Head site do

not lend themselves to easy interpretation, but may indicate on the one hand a fairly lengthy and extensive Roman presence, or on the other a shift in location during the Roman period.

An even more difficult task is to place the Aylesbury site into the pattern of Roman settlement generally, for although our knowledge of this pattern has increased markedly over the past decade, the picture is still far from complete, and the function of many newly discovered sites remains obscure. Nevertheless it is possible to suggest that the settlement located at Aylesbury was not the key roadside site in the area. The quantity and quality of material from the town seems insufficient for this, and a more likely candidate for the role is Fleet Marston, 5 kms to the west along Akeman Street, which lies at a Roman crossroads (Viatore 1964, 306; Farley 1973, 334). In this respect it is interesting to note that the emerging network of conquest forts leads Webster to suggest Fleet Marston as a possible site for such a structure (1980, 118). It does indeed seem certain that such a post existed in the vicinity of Akeman Street, midway between Northchurch and Bicester, but evidence for a military presence in the Aylesbury locality is not good. Items of military metalwork from Walton Court focus attention upon that area, but no military features were noted in the admittedly limited salvage work which took place there (Farley 1981). In contrast the Bull's Head ditch exhibits a certain military aspect, with its 'V' profile, and straight course, but no finds have been made to support this observation. It can only be hoped that future work will one day bring this suspected military establishment to light, and also enable the role of the Aylesbury settlement to be determined.

The Medieval Period

The growth of Aylesbury in the medieval period is another aspect of the town's past which is not well recorded. However, the disposition of pits and wells on the Buckingham Street site suggests that by the fifteenth century at least this area fell within the town boundaries, and the features presumably relate to structures that were facing on to the street.

The Bull's Head site too was certainly occupied at this period, as a documentary source confirms that the Crown Inn, which was located near the intersection of the High Street and Market Square, was in the possession of one Richard Baldwin in 1486 (VCH 3, 3), but no features of this date were noted on the site.

Acknowledgements

Thanks must be given to the developers, Tarmac Construction Ltd. (Buckingham Street) and Laing Properties Ltd. (Bull's Head) for allowing the work to take place, and to their site agents Mr. George Shirley and Mr. Derrison for overlooking any inconvenience

our presence may have caused. The scale of work achieved at the Buckingham Street site was only possible because members of the County Museum Archaeology Group rallied round at a day's notice to provide the workforce, and particular thanks go to those who were able to help in this fashion. Special thanks go to Gill Jones and Stephen Greep, who have contributed to this paper, Barbara Hurman, who co-ordinated the work on the finds and prepared the pottery illustrations, and Mélanie Steiner, who drew the small finds. Particular thanks go also to Michael Farley who provided supervisory assistance during the excavations, reported on the pottery and commented on the text, and to Janet Fuller who typed this report.

The Society is much indebted to the Department of the Environment for a grant towards the cost of publishing this paper.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allen, D., forthcoming. 'The Excavation of a multi-period site in the former vicarage garden at Bierton', *Recs. Bucks.*
- Allen, D., 1982. 'Excavations in George Street, Aylesbury', *CBA Group 9 Newsletter* 12, 22.
- Corder, P., 1941. 'A Roman Pottery of the Hadrian-Antonine Period at Verulamium', *Antiq. J.* 21, 271-298.
- Farley, M. E., 1973. 'A Roman Burial at North Marston', *Recs. Bucks* 19, 329-335.
- Farley, M. E., 1974. 'Aylesbury—A defended town?', *Recs. Bucks* 19, 429-448.
- Farley, M. E., 1976. 'Saxon and Mediaeval Walton', *Recs. Bucks* 20, 153-290.
- Farley, M. E., 1979. 'Pottery and pottery kilns of the post-mediaeval period at Brill', *Post-Med. Arch.* 13, 127-152.
- Farley, M. E., 1981. 'Walton Court, Aylesbury', *Recs. Bucks* 23, 51-75.
- Gibbs, R., 1885. *A History of Aylesbury*.
- Goodall, A. R., 1981. 'The Medieval bronzesmith and his products' in D. W. Crossley, ed. *Medieval Industry* (CBA Res. Rept. 40).
- Gowing, C. N., 1963. 'Archaeological Notes from the County Museum', *Recs. Bucks.* 17, 202.
- Gowing, C. N., 1964. 'Archaeological Notes from the County Museum', *Recs. Bucks.* 17, 301.
- Howe, M., Perrin, J. R., and Mackreth, D. F., 1981. *Roman Pottery from the Nene Valley: A Guide*.
- Jones, G., forthcoming. 'The Animal Bones', in Allen, D., forthcoming, 'The Excavation of a multi-period site in the former vicarage garden at Bierton', *Recs. Bucks.*
- Maltby, M., 1981. 'Iron Age, Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon husbandry—A Review of the Faunal Evidence'. In *The Environment of Man: The Iron Age to the Anglo-Saxon Period*, ed. Jones, M. and Dimbleby, G., *BAR* 87, 155-203.
- Palmer, N., 1980. 'A Beaker burial and medieval tenements in the Hamel, Oxford', *Oxon.* 45, 124-225.
- RCHM, 1912. *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in Buckinghamshire*.
- VCH, 1925. *Victoria County History of Buckinghamshire*, Vol. 3.
- Viatores, 1964. *Roman Roads in the South East Midlands*.
- von den Driesch, A., 1976. *A Guide to the Measurement of Animal Bones from Archaeological sites*. Harvard.
- von den Driesch, A., and Boessneck, J., 1974. 'Kritische Anmerkungen zur Widerristhöhenberechnung aus Längenmassen vor- und frühgeschichtlichen Tierknochen', *Säugetierkundliche Mitteilungen*, 22(4), 325-248.
- Waugh, H., et al., 1974. 'Some Iron Age Pottery from mid and north Bucks, with a Gazetteer of Associated sites and finds', *Recs. Bucks* 19, 373-421.
- Webster, G., 1980. *The Roman Invasion of Britain*. Batsford, London.
- Young, C. J., 1977. *Oxfordshire Roman Pottery*. *British Archaeol. Rep.*, 43.