ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT WESTON UNDERWOOD IN 1994

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A watching brief and small-scale excavations were undertaken during the initial stages of a new sewerage scheme at Weston Underwood, Buckinghamshire. This work represents the first archaeological investigations in the village. Evidence was recovered for a probable prehistoric cremation, and for settlement during the Roman, Saxon and Medieval periods. This activity was recorded in various locations around the eastern side of the village, including an area close to a medieval moated site. A high degree of settlement continuity over the past two millennia is implied by these results. A possible nucleus of late Saxon occupation in the vicinity of the present church is suggested.

INTRODUCTION

In January 1994, Buckinghamshire County Museum Archaeological Service was commissioned by Anglian Water Engineering and Business Systems Ltd, to undertake investigations during the early stages of sewage pipelaying in and around the village of Weston Underwood. The proposed routes of the pipelines fell into two distinct types of terrain; open pasture fields immediately southeast of the village which had not been previously disturbed by excavation, and thoroughfares where either existing pipes were being replaced, or pipes were being laid for the first time (Figure 1). Although monitoring of the entire scheme was undertaken, archaeological deposits were only observed in the areas of pasture.

TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

Weston Underwood is a small village some 2km west of Olney. The village plan is essentially linear, the majority of the houses being situated along the High Street, which is orientated NE – SW. There are five small lanes (Pevers Lane, Chapel Lane, and Cross Lane and two un-named thoroughfares) leading for short distances from the southeastern side of the High Street.

The village is on ground which slopes slightly from the northwest down towards the River Ouse, some 0.9km to the south east. The High Street is some 20 to 25m above the valley bottom, which is just below the 50m contour. The flood plain of the Ouse is generally just under 1km wide along its upper reaches. The hydraulic gradient along the valley is low, and there will probably have been fairly frequent, even regular, flooding episodes before modern land drainage was installed.

Weston Underwood is situated on a narrow band of Oolitic clays and limestone, dating to the Jurassic, which are exposed for a considerable distance along the valley side. On the valley sides there are terrace gravels downslope of the village, and boulder clay upslope. The valley bottom is filled with alluvium with some admixture of colluvium, entrenched into the first Terrace Gravels; below this the deeply buried incised river channel is filled with quaternary deposits. The alluvium/ colluvium has probably masked all but the most recent archaeological episodes. In contrast, the terrace gravels generally give good crop marks, enabling the evidence for past human activity to be seen from the air under suitable conditions; the Oolitic and boulder clays, on the other hand, are much less conducive to the detection of sites from the air.

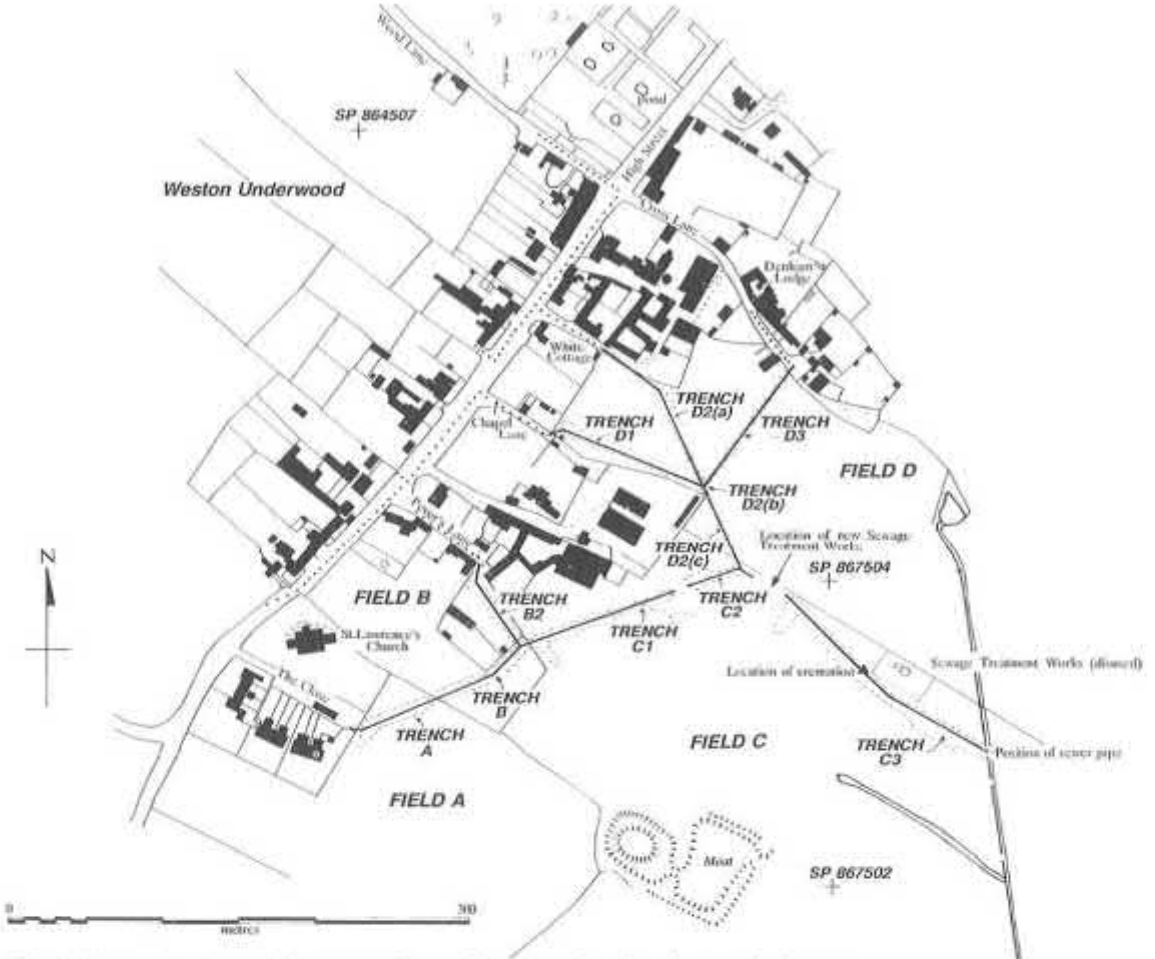

Fig. 1: Weston Underwood Sewerage: General location plan showing trench layout

In terms of potential for exploitation, the Ouse Valley presents a reasonable diversity of habitats, including the flood-prone valley bottom which will have contained marshlands and/or good quality pasture, the gravel terraces which would have given rise to well-drained and easily worked soils, and the heavier clay uplands. The last do not appear to have been intensively cultivated until the later prehistoric periods.

The sewerage works followed the southern and eastern sides of the village "envelope", with spurs coming in from the direction of the High Street (Fig 1). Most of the geology encountered consisted of grey or orange clays with limestone fragments of various sizes and occasional outcrops of tabular limestone. These deposits are characteristic of the Great Oolite beds on which the village is situated. Finer deposits, typically orange-brown silty loams with clay and sand fractions, presumably colluvially derived, were present downslope of the sewage plant in Field C.

The pasture in the study area appears to have been so for a number of years. Photographs taken by the RAF in 1947 (CPE/UK 1926.1007: BCM AP Collection, Run 49) show the survival of extensive ridge and furrow (representing medieval arable cultivation) around Weston Underwood, particularly in the vicinity of the moat, although there appears to have been more intensive arable cultivation near the southwestern end of the study

area (Field A), presumably during the second world war. The same photographs clearly show the edge of the alluvium, which is generally co-extensive with the limit of ridge and furrow.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

No systematic archaeological investigation had been undertaken within the village before the investigations described in this report. Nevertheless, a number of archaeological sites were already known to exist in and around the village, as a result of various casual discoveries.

The site of a probable prehistoric ring ditch, to the south of the village, is visible on aerial photographs taken in 1974; such sites are typical of the gravels of the Ouse Valley. The frequency with which they occur apparently increases further downstream, although this may be a reflection of modern agricultural regimes as there is more pasture (and therefore fewer areas with optimum conditions for cropmark development) upstream. Numerous ring ditches have been recorded in the Ouse Valley by aerial photography (Field 1974), and in 1978 one was excavated, 2km upstream of Weston Underwood, at Ravenstone (Allen 1981).

The valley sides are clearly important for early prehistoric activity, for although much of the evidence is funerary this seems to be because settlement remains are generally harder to detect archaeologically. In contrast, there is a relative dearth of material from the clay uplands of North Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire.

Romano-British artefacts have been found at a number of locations around the village: in a garden in the High Street; in the NW corner of the churchyard; on the village green; and NW of the medieval moated site, on the course of the pipeline in Field C. Romano-British material has also been found south of the village; in one instance the assemblage included sherds of Iron Age pottery, suggesting an element of continuity in settlement pattern.

Nothing was known of the nature of settlement here during the Saxon period, but since Weston [Underwood] is recorded in Domesday Book (1086), it is probably safe to assume the presence of a small nucleated settlement with its origins in the late Saxon period. The manor was forfeited to the Crown in 1088 following the rebellion of the Bishop of Coutances, and subsequently split, and then held by two families, the Nowers and Pevers. These two manors had been amalgamated before 1518 (VCH 1927, 4 497–502). In terms of archaeological material from the medieval period, two finds of tile had been made in the village: a glazed ridge tile and two fragments of fourteenth century encaustic tile, probably Penn tile. There is also a moated site, a Scheduled Ancient Monument, with associated earthworks, to the south of the village, which is thought to have belonged to the Pevers family in the early 14th Century. A path leading to the site is still called Pevers Lane. The moat, a roughly oval enclosure measuring 36 × 46m, has an internal platform some 0.7m higher than the surrounding ground level. Connected with the wide, shallow moat are two fishponds on the downslope (southeastern) side. Medieval pottery sherds have been found on the platform of the moat.

There are a number of seventeenth-century houses in the village, indicating that the topography of the village had reached its present form by this date, although the overall layout is likely to be considerably older. Few village morphologies are entirely static; the opportunity to sample even a narrow strip of land on the edge of the medieval village by means of the sewage scheme was therefore potentially useful in terms of detecting any shifts in settlement focus.

METHODOLOGY

At the outset it appeared that the potential for earlier occupation within and around the village was high. During the planning of the pipeline, two phases of work were proposed:

i) Supervised topsoil stripping accompanied, where appropriate, by limited excavation where the pipeline went through the greenfield areas

ii) a watching brief where pipe-trenches cut through the village thoroughfares

Arrangements were made with Anglian Water for topsoil stripping to be carried out under archaeological supervision. Two weeks were set aside for archaeological investigation following each phase of topsoil removal. All the archaeological deposits exposed within the easement areas during topsoil stripping were then recorded. Those directly on the line of the pipe were excavated and, where sufficient time allowed, deposits in the easement area were also excavated to determine their character and date. With the co-operation of metal detectorists, stripped areas were scanned in order to recover diagnostic metal artefacts.

The easement was up to 10m wide in the pasture area, and it was generally relatively straightforward to inspect the areas concerned and to distinguish archaeological features. Closer to the river, however, alluvial/colluvial deposits were deeper and some masking of archaeological deposits may be suspected.

During pipelaying along the thoroughfares the trenches were close shuttered, and opportunities for detailed inspection of the trench sides were severely limited. In the event no archaeological data or material were recovered during this phase of the work.

THE RESULTS

The excavation revealed the presence of a large number of archaeological features, although their density varied. They are described below according to the four main phases (prehistoric, Romano-British, Saxon and Medieval). These are further subdivided in relation to the various "areas" where concentrations of features were noted. (Fig 1 and Table 1). Each field was allocated a letter (A to E), and individual sections of pipeline in each field were numbered. Areas are thus referred to in the text as C1, D2 etc.

A total of 339 cut features were recorded. Of these, 160 (47.20%) were excavated, but only 38 (11.21%) contained datable finds. Datable finds were recovered from a further 11 features (3.24%), either by surface collection or with the help of metal detectors, bringing the total number of features that could be directly dated to 49 (14.45%). It is mainly this sample of dateable features that is discussed here. An indication of the comparative density of features along the route can be gained from Table 1.

Prehistoric

A low density of prehistoric flint waste was recovered, and a very few artefacts (see below). Most of the material was of late Neolithic/ Bronze Age date, but five probable Mesolithic fragments were also present. Although there did not appear to be any concentrations, the amount of material recovered seems to indicate a more than casual prehistoric presence in the vicinity. The only identifiable feature probably of prehistoric date was a cremation (Context 109), lying in the field adjacent to the stream (Field C). No other features were associated with it. Cremations are uncommon in the archaeological record later than the early Saxon period, when they are almost invariably found grouped in formal cemeteries. Cremation was also a common rite during the earlier Romano-British period, but then too there was a preference for interment in cemeteries, the remains normally being buried in pottery vessels. This single find, therefore, is probably prehistoric. The relative frequency of ring-ditches along the gravel terraces of the Ouse during the second millennium bc indicates that this position may have been perceived as being suitable for the deposition of funerary remains.

Romano-British

Roman material was present in small amounts along the entire pipeline route. It appeared to be concentrated in two of the areas described below (C3 and B), with signs of activity also in Area D, as well as at the other locations in the immediate environs of the village previously recorded. The features cannot be securely dated, however, and the focal point(s) of any settlement remain elusive, although they were evidently not in the direct route of the pipeline.

Area C3

This was SE of the new sewage works in an area which sloped downhill to a stream which fed into the River Ouse (Figures 1 and 2).

TABLE 1.
DISTRIBUTION OF FEATURES, BY AREA

AREA	*A*	*B*	*C1*	*C2*	*C3*	*D1*	*D2*	*D3*	*TOTAL*
Features recorded	13	43	117	13	12	50	67	24	**339**
Features excavated	9	12	42	10	11	25	34	17	**160**
Features with finds (including finds recovered from unexcavated features)	10	11	22	4	8	17	27	3	**102**
Datable excavated features	2	5	6	2	3	11	8	1	**38**
Datable unexcavated features	2	2	1	–	–	1	5	–	**11**
Total datable features	**4**	**7**	**7**	**2**	**3**	**12**	**13**	**1**	**49**

Three features were recorded, cutting through the lower part of the colluvial deposits at the base of the hill. Roman sherds were recovered from all three.

098: possible pit 20m NW of the stream. Aligned approx NW–SE, 2m by 0.7m, with heavily undercut sides and irregular base. Single fill (099) of clean brown clay silt, 3 R-B sherds, 5 uncertain sherds. Irregular nature of the edges of the feature suggests that it was possibly a tree hole.

100: circular pit 30m NW of the stream. Approx 2m diam. Excavated to a depth of 0.60m. Fill (101) of brown/grey clay silt with occasional fragments of limestone grits. 56 sherds (see fig 8, nos 1–3 for drawn examples); 21 R-B including 3 Nene Valley colour coated ware, 2 Samian sherds, one from Central Gaullish stamped cup; 35 sherds uncertain date, small quantity of sheep bone frags, glass vessel handle (SF 1028; Fig 11 no 6), iron nail (SF 1024). The quantity of material would suggest (at least in part) a deliberate dump of domestic rubbish.

102: circular pit 40m NW of the stream, approx 2m diam. Excavated to depth of 0.18m. Gently sloping sides and rounded base. Single fill (103) of brown clay silt with occasional limestone fragments, containing 5 Roman sherds, including two basal sherds of central Gaulish Samian (fig 8 nos 7 and 8) of the mid to late Antonine period (160 to 200AD), and coin *c*204 AD.

Although this site appears to be of restricted extent, the finds suggest that the pits, whatever their primary function, were eventually used for the disposal of domestic rubbish from a nearby settlement.

Area B

The second area of Roman activity was in Field B (Figures 1 and 2), slightly north of a small scatter of Roman pottery and tile fragments discovered on the surface in 1968. Six features contained Romano-British artefacts. One pit (194) and a gully (041) contained exclusively Roman material, whilst the remainder of the features contained a mixture of Roman, Saxon and medieval pottery.

194: rectangular pit 1.15 × 1.0m. Single fill (195); 1 R-B rim sherd.

041: gully 1.35m wide. Single fill (042); 2 R-B sherds.

Four other features, (178, 035, 142 and 022) contained Romano-British material, along with other material which was either certainly later (178 and 022), or of uncertain, but possibly Romano-British, date (035 and 022). The Romano-British finds are perhaps most safely interpreted as residual, although the presence of a brooch (fig 11 no 3) and a coin of Vespasian in 022 is worth noting.

178: irregular, pear-shaped cut. Fill 179, red brown clay silt with limestone fragments and grits. Some limestone fragments showed evidence of burning; concentration of charcoal noted towards base of fill. Burning also noted around edge of cut. 1 R-B sherd, 1 med., fragments of brick and tile, 1 fragment of animal bone. Interpreted as possible hearth.

035: circular pit with two fills. Basal fill (325) light grey brown clay silt with limestone fragments; no finds. Upper fill (036) contained 1 R-B rim sherd, 6 unidentifiable sherds, fragments of animal bone.

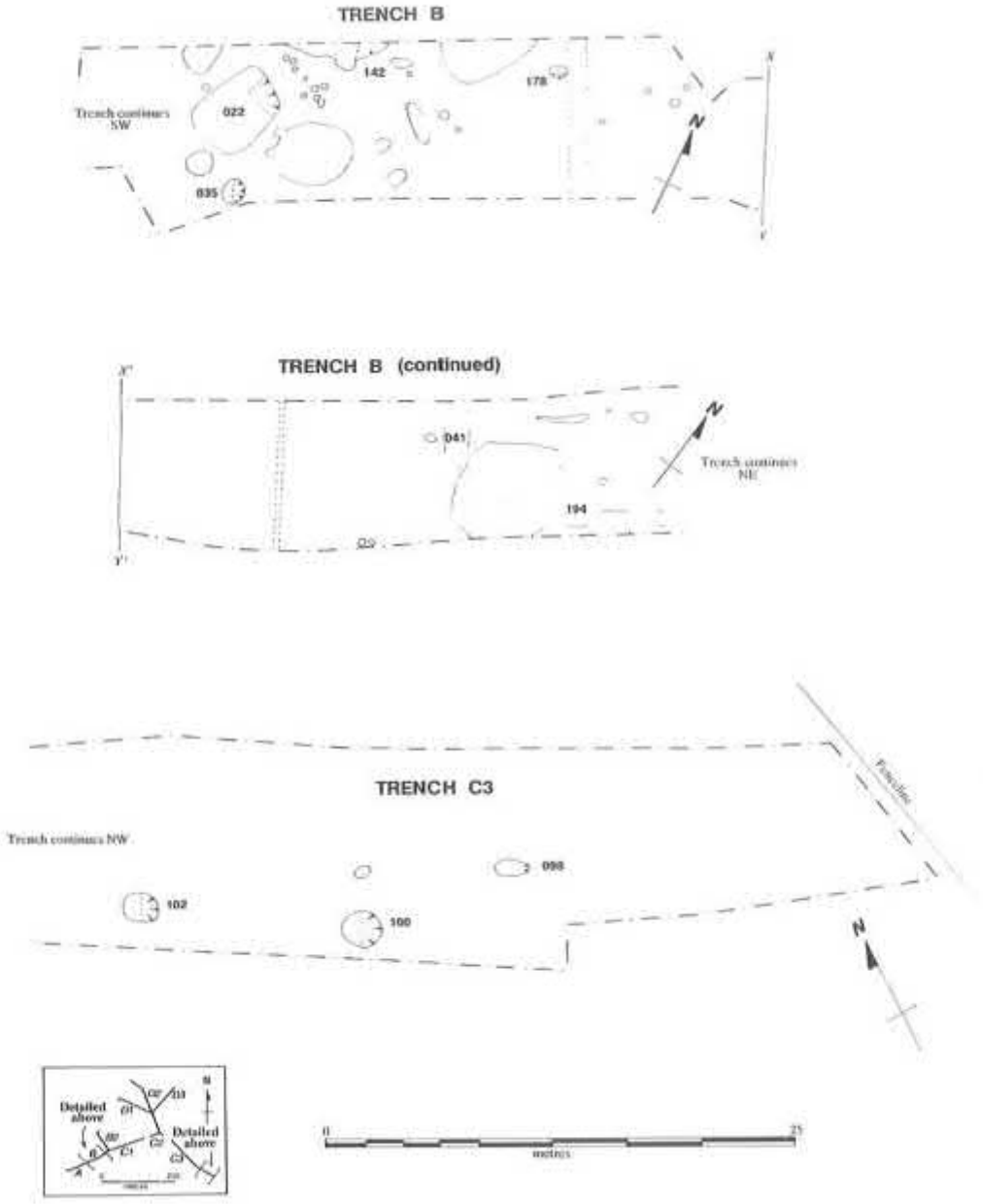

Fig. 2: Areas of Romano-British activity within trenches B and C3

142: probable series of intercutting pits, mostly obscured by north baulk. Fill (143) contained 2 Romano-British sherds, 4 sherds of uncertain date, 2 fragments animal bone.
022: see below (Saxon period); contained residual Roman material.

The evidence from field B again is slight, but, taken in conjunction with the other finds of pottery and tile nearby noted above, seems to suggest some form of occupation in the vicinity.

Area D1

Layer (321) in area D1 contained eight sherds of Romano-British pottery and a quernstone, possibly reused in a hearth. In view of its apparent association with medieval features the dating of layer 321 is uncertain, and it is described in the medieval section below.

Saxon

The Saxon evidence was in total rather insubstantial. Some of the Saxon material was recovered from unstratified contexts during the initial stages of stripping. No firm evidence for a settlement focus can be identified (it may well have been beneath the medieval village) and an interpretation for the function of the individual features is problematic. The only possible Saxon building, the arrangement of postholes in area C1, lacks any satisfactory dating evidence. The presence of features containing pottery of early to mid Saxon material is of some significance, as relatively few settlements of this period are known from Buckinghamshire.

There was a small concentration of unstratified material, including sherds of inturned bowls in St Neots ware diagnostic of the late Saxon period, from near te boundary between fields A and B. This area is not far from the church, and may indicate some form of pre-conquest settlement focus here. Whilst the existence of numerous late Saxon settlements is demonstrated by the Domesday survey, archaeological evidence for the majority of these is absent. Early and middle Saxon settlements are even more scarce. Perhaps the most important feature of the Weston Underwood evidence is an apparent continuity of settlement which seems to be implied by the data.

Field B

Saxon material was recovered from one of the areas of Roman activity, described above (see Figure 3). Two pits were recorded, 028 and the adjacent 022, which contained Saxon pottery, although the two features were not contemporary. One of these (022) also contained several sherds of Romano-British pottery and other Romano-British material.

028: ovoid pit, 4.5m by 3.5m, with gradually sloping sides and slightly concave base. Fill 029, mid grey clay silt with decayed limestone fragments and frequent charcoal fragments, 12 fragments animal bone, 1 fragment daub, 2 fragments (R-B?) brick, 1 fragment burnt limestone, 1 flint blade fragment, 2 lava quernstone fragments (SF 1039), 38 sherds (mostly late) Saxon pottery, including rims of St Neots type ware (fig 9 nos 1–5).
022: oval pit, 4m by 3m, with steep sides sloping to flat base at a depth of 0.45m. Single fill (023) compact orange brown clay loam with frequent limestone fragments. 3 R-B sherds (fig 8 nos 4–6), including samian dish rim (Drag. 18/31, Antonine), 4 early or mid Saxon sherds, 23 sherds uncertain date, 1 struck flint flake, 39 fragments animal bone, 1 R-B bronze brooch (SF 1029; fig 11 no 3)), 1 coin of Vespasian (SF 1020). Whilst this feature clearly appears to have been open during the Saxon period, there is much residual material.

Field C

The field directly west of the sewage works contained one pit and one posthole with Saxon artefacts (Figure 3). It is possible that a group of postholes adjacent to a medieval ditch (080/133, described below) may also be of Saxon date, although they did not produce any datable material.

312: posthole. Fill (313) with 1 early or mid Saxon sherd.
358, 360, 362, 364, 366, 368 and 370: circular postholes, diam 0.20m to 0.30m, recorded along western edge of ditch 080/133 (figure 5). Five (358 – 366) were in a straight line, parallel with and immediately outside the ditch edge, whilst two (368 and 370) were slightly offset and cut through one of the fills (087) of ditch 133. Postholes 358, 368 and 370 were excavated; 0.20m deep with mid brown clay loam fill. No artefacts recovered.
352, 354, 356: postholes, at right angles to the northernmost of the seven (358–370) described above, with similar dimensions and fills. None was excavated (as outside the pipe centreline).

If 368 and 370, the postholes that cut the ditch, were contemporary with the rest of the group, as they seemed to be, the line of postholes 358–370 therefore appears to postdate the ditch. It is possible that all ten postholes together form the corner of an enclosure or structure. Two other features may possibly be associated with the postholes, although their relationship is not clear:

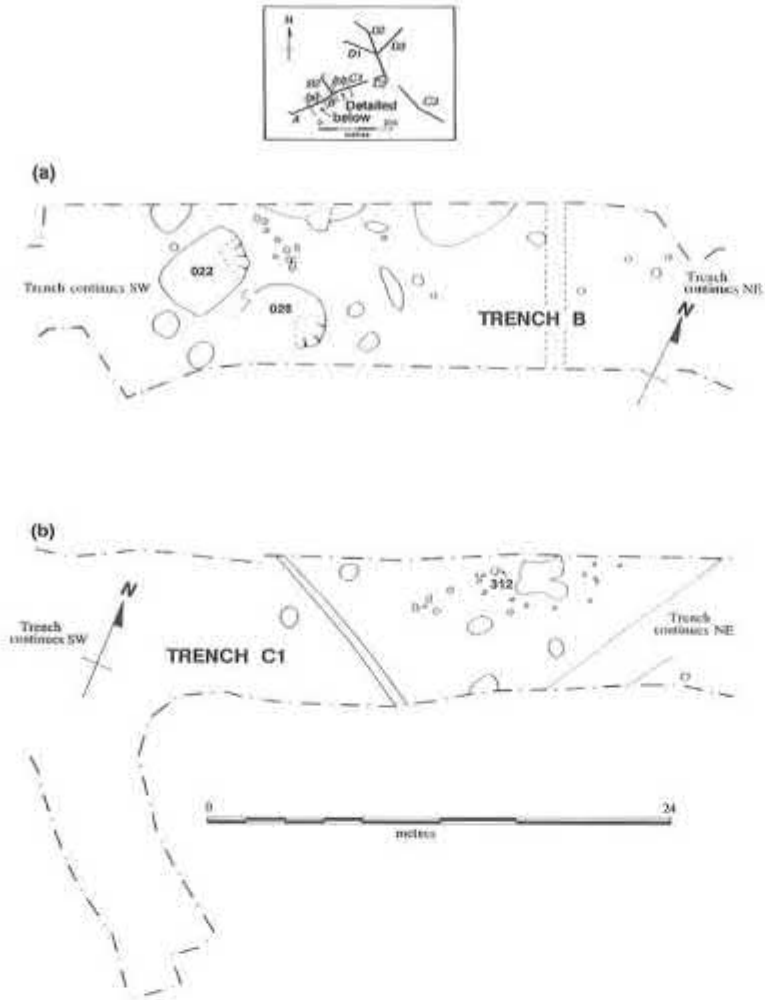

Fig. 3: a) Area of Saxon activity within trench B, b) Area of Saxon activity within trench C1

392: linear feature, within the angle formed by postholes 352–370 and extending beyond the stripped area, >1.50m long, 0.60m wide. Not excavated, as not within pipe centreline.

314: oven/hearth, cutting linear feature 392. Sub-circular, 0.66m × 0.60m, 0.21m deep, slightly convex sides and flat base. Single fill (315) of large daub and burnt limestone fragments in charcoal/ash matrix, 1 fragment burnt animal bone.

The dating and interpretation of these features is difficult. It is suggested below that ditch 080/133 is medieval, but the evidence is largely circumstantial. Even if the medieval date for 080/133 is correct, the only postholes that are directly related to it stratigraphically are the two offset post-holes 368 and 370, which may not belong with the rest of the group. If the dating problems are disregarded, the most likely explanation for a rectilinear arrangement of closely-spaced posts is that it is the corner of a post-built Saxon building.

Field D

Within the field NW of the sewage works and south of Chapel Lane, the topsoil was stripped from three "spurs" which joined in the southern corner of Field D (see figure 1).

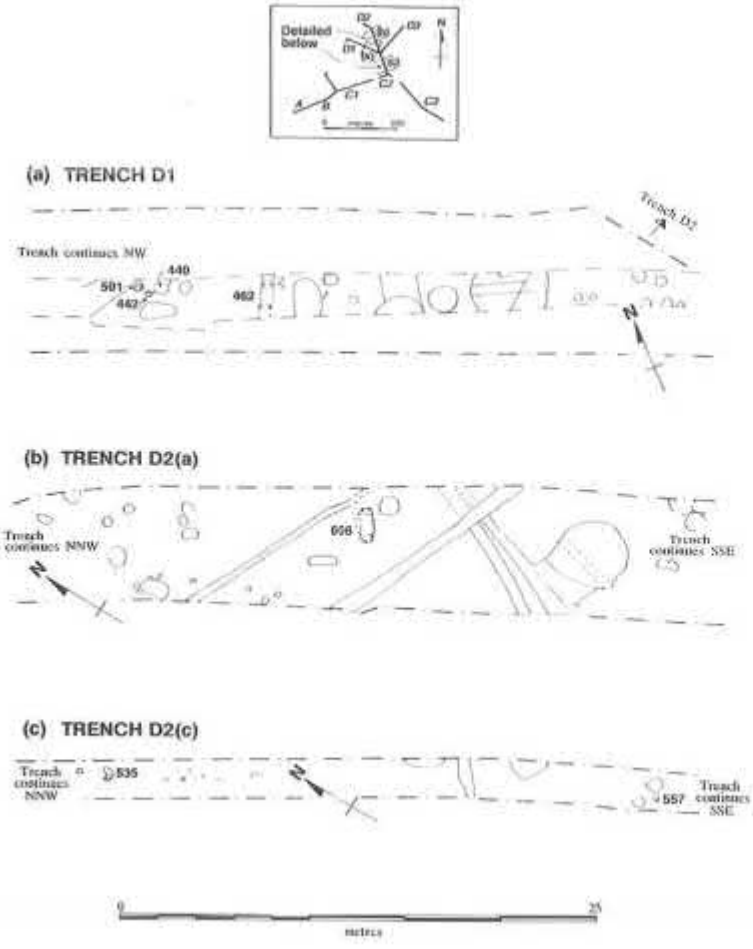

Fig. 4: a) Area of Saxon activity within trench D1 b) and c) Areas of Saxon activity within Trench D2

Area D1

Area D1, adjacent to Chapel Lane, contained a pit and a linear feature containing Saxon material (figure 4).

440: Pit, with gradually sloping sides and rounded base, cut on its northern side by two postholes (442 and 501). Only partly within machine-stripped area. Single fill (441), dark grey/brown clay silt with limestone grits and charcoal flecks, 11 fragments animal bone, 1 early or mid Saxon sherd.

426: Linear feature 6m to south of pit 440. Sloping sides and irregular base. Single fill (461) dark grey silty clay with stone fragments. 3 late Saxon St Neots sherds, 2 unidentifiable sherds, 1 fragment of animal bone. Fill is thought to represent gradual silting after feature had gone out of use.

442, 501: postholes cutting pit 440. No cultural material recovered, but fills were very similar to pit fill 441 in the nature of their soil matrix and natural inclusions, suggesting perhaps a broadly contemporary date for when they went out of use, although stratigraphically they are clearly later than pit 440.

The purpose of this group of features is uncertain.

Area D2

Area D2, a pipeline spur which ran from the small (un-named) lane south of Grange Farm, contained two postholes (535 and 557) and an adjacent spread of material (layer 606) which contained Saxon artefacts, although the dating of this group of features is not secure (fig 4).

606:layer of dark grey brown clay silt with concentrated patches of burnt material, 1.8m by 1.3m; 0.15m deep. Layer partially excavated in order to sample two areas of burning. 8 early or mid Saxon sherds, 1 small (intrusive?) med sherd, fragments of burnt stone, 1 small (intrusive?) brick fragment, 3 fragments animal bone. As no *in situ* burning was noted, it is assumed that 606 represented a deposit of burnt material rather than a hearth.

535:posthole, not excavated. Surface finds: 1 Saxon sherd, 2 med sherds.

557:posthole, approximately rectangular, 0.28m by 0.20m, with gradually sloping sides and concave base at depth of 0.07m. Single fill (558); dark grey silty clay, 1 early to mid Saxon sherd.

Medieval

Not surprisingly, the evidence for medieval activity far outweighed that for the Saxon and Roman periods. Most of the deposits encountered contained medieval pottery, and the area around the village appears to have been extensively used in the medieval period.

Three main areas of medieval occupation were identified: areas C1, D1 and D2 . In the case of the first of these (C1), however, the dating evidence is very slender.

Area C1

Ditches representing two sides of a possible enclosure were identified. Sections were cut through both by machine.

125:ditch, orientated approximately NE – SW with gradually sloping concave sides and concave base, 0.85m deep. Two fills (Figure 5): basal fill (068) of yellowish brown silty clay with limestone fragments and charcoal flecks, 1 undated sherd; upper fill (067) of greyish brown silty clay with occasional small limestone fragments, 1 (?med) sherd, 1 piece iron slag, 2 animal bone.

063:ditch, recut of ditch 125. 2.60m wide, 0.95m deep, straight sloping sides and concave base. Single fill (064), dark greyish brown silty clay with large quantity stone fragments, and occasional charcoal flecks. 1 × med sherd, 1 × post-med sherd (?intrusive), 2 × unidentifiable sherds, 2 small fragments of animal bone. The large quantity of stone may suggest a deliberate backfilling of the ditch once it had gone out of use.

080:ditch, to east of ditch 125/063 and at right angles to it, 2.50m wide, 1.05m deep, with straight sides and flat base. Three fills (figure 5); basal fill (086) of dark grey clay silt with limestone, 3 unidentifiable sherds, 2 fragments animal bone; secondary fill 088 (in eastern part of ditch) of greyish brown clayey silt, 8 fragments bone (sheep), 3 flint fragments, 1 unidentifiable sherd; fill 087 (in western part of ditch) also a greyish brown clayey silt, 2 fragments bone (sheep). Fills 088 and 087 probably represent same fill, truncated by a partial recutting (recut 133) of 080.

133:recut of ditch 080, 1.70m wide, 0.70m deep, straight sloping sides forming V-shaped profile. Single fill (081) of limestone rubble <0.30m diam in yellowish brown clayey silt.

Ditch 080 (and its recut 133) possibly functioned as a drainage ditch. It appears to have been associated with slight traces of a bank or headland which lies on the west side of the ditch and appears to run ESE downhill to the fishponds. The only dating evidence for 080/133 is circumstantial, consisting of a single medieval sherd from ditch 125, which appears to be the return of ditch 080/133.

Postholes 352 – 370, and the difficulties in dating them, are discussed above in the Saxon section, along with the possibly related features 392 and 314. The position of the postholes appears to respect the edge of ditch 080/133, whilst two of the postholes, 368 and 370, cut the ditch. The possibility of a Saxon date for ditch 080/133 should not be ruled out.

Other features in Area C1. In addition to the features described above, some eight pits and fifty postholes were contained within the apparent enclosure formed by ditches 125/063 and 133/080. As so small an area was examined, little datable material was recovered. No other recognisable or coherent structures or fencelines could be identified. A single posthole (312; fill 313) produced a sherd of possible Saxon pottery. Posthole 074 (fill 075) produced an undated bone pin. Activity within this area appears to have been intense, but its nature and date are difficult to determine.

Field D

The second concentration of medieval activity lay in Field D, north of the sewage works, where three spurs of land (areas D1, D2 and D3) were stripped (Figure 1). Earthworks noted in this field (Figure 6), consisted of four possible building platforms and traces of a hollow-way, which appears to be a continuation of Chapel Lane. The building platforms were difficult to distinguish but were approximately 8m across. The line of the pipe cut through two of them.

Area D1

Area D1 lay parallel with the hollow-way and then continued beneath the field gateway and along the length of Chapel Lane until it intersected the High Street. Chapel Lane derives its name from a former nonconformist chapel (see appendix). What

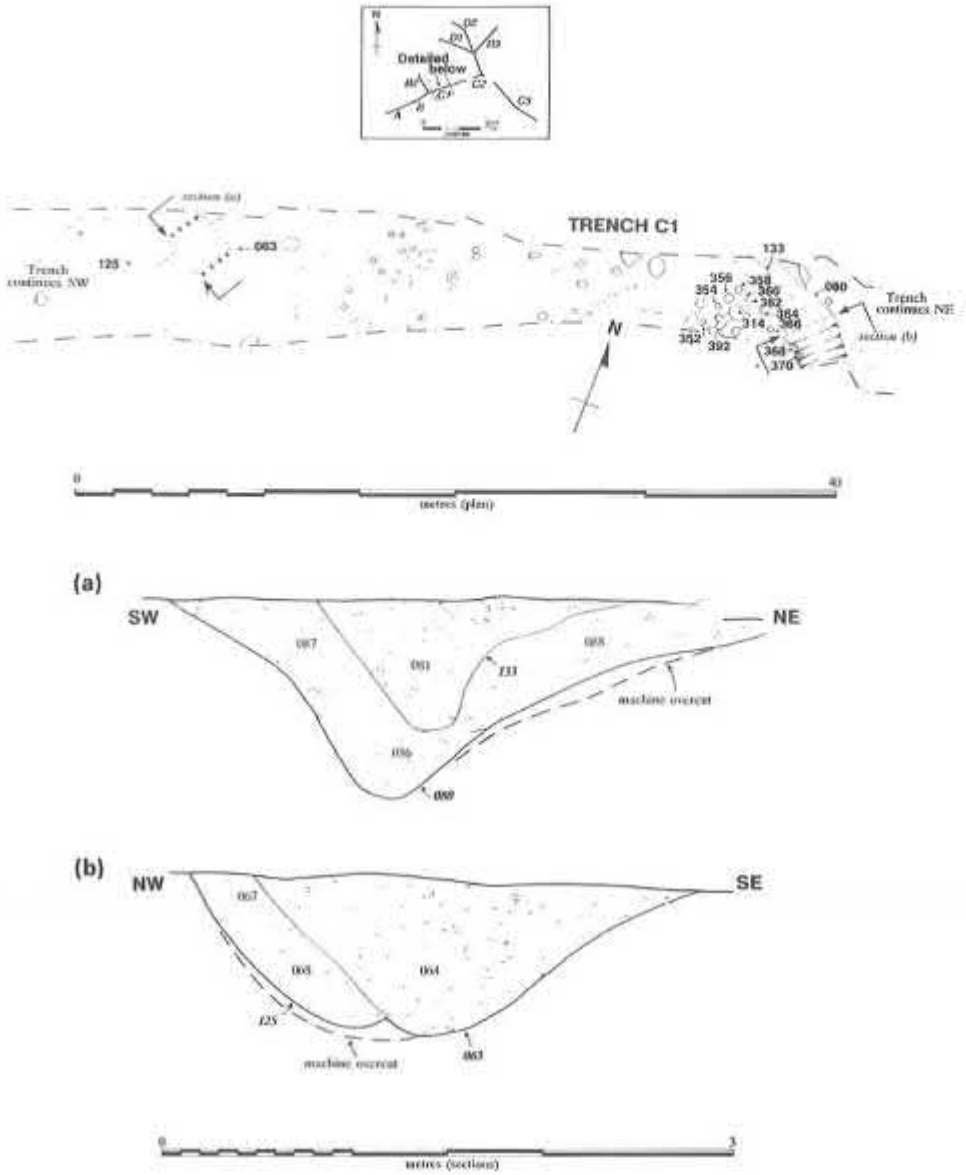

Fig. 5:Area of medieval activity within trench C1, and sections of medieval enclosure ditches

are presumed to be the remains of the chapel, according to local information, now form a garden wall which butts onto Field D. Spur D1 terminated 0.5m short of the chapel remains. Owing to the greater depth of topsoil and the presence of a subsoil in this area, the easement was not stripped down further than the top of the subsoil, whilst only the centre line was stripped to the top of the archaeological deposits. A number of archaeological features were noted and excavated, from which medieval and post-medieval material was recovered. The features are described in order, from northwest to southeast.

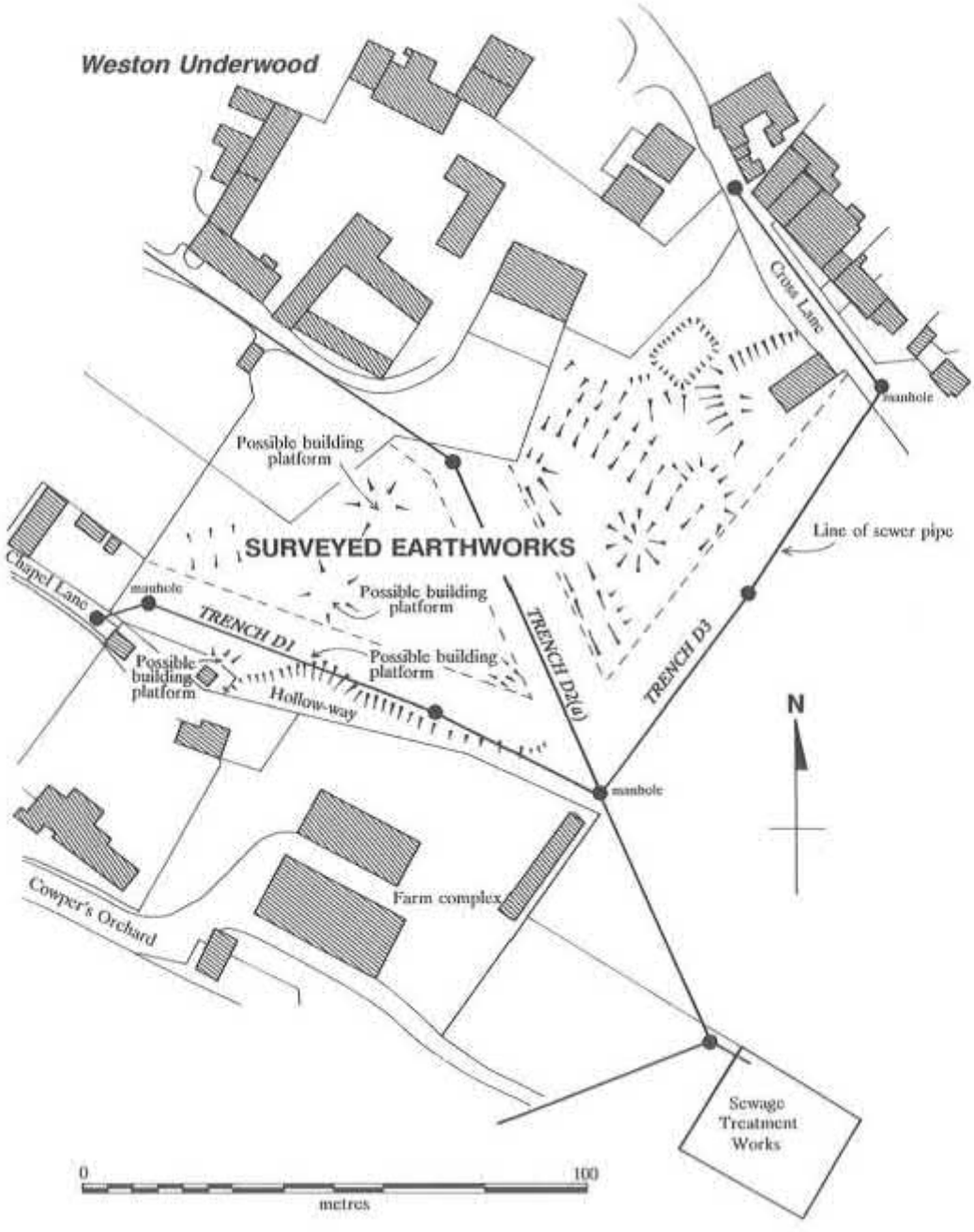

Fig. 6: Sketch survey of earthworks within field D

400: posthole, at northern end of spur, circular 0.34m diam, 0.13m deep. Single fill (401) of yellowish brown silty clay with occasional limestone fragments. 2 × post-med sherds.

South of posthole 400 were three intercutting pits: 409, 407 and 412. It is possible that these features, with their mixture of medieval and post-medieval finds (some as late as the nineteenth century) may have been associated with the former chapel, just to the north of these features.

409: pit, approximately circular, 1.74m diam, 0.72m deep, straight sloping sides and flat base. Two fills: basal fill (410) of dark yellowish grey silty clay with frequent large subangular limestone fragments. 4 med (C11/12) sherds, 9 sherds uncertain date (the large amounts of stone may suggest a deliberate backfilling of the pit); upper fill (411) of dark grey silty clay with limestone grits and occasional charcoal flecks, 5 med sherds, 81 undatable (?possibly med) sherds shelly fabric, 80 fragments animal bone, 1 flint waste flake. Cut on south side by pit 407 and on north side by pit 412.

407: pit, sub-circular, *c*.0.90m diam, 0.09m deep, straight sides and flat base. Single fill (408) of greyish brown clayey silt with occasional limestone grits, 1 × med sherd, 5 × post-med sherds, iron knife (Special Find No. 1001). Cut southern side of pit 409.

412: pit, approx circular, 0.60m diam. Not fully excavated. Fill 414, 2 × unidentifiable sherds shelly fabric. Cut the northern side of pit 409.

404: shallow cut (?pit or gully terminal), extending for 0.80m from the eastern baulk, 0.50m wide, 0.13m deep, oblong with semi-circular terminal to west, concave profile. Two fills: lower (405) of light brownish yellow silty clay, no finds; upper (406) of yellowish brown silty clay with occasional large limestone fragments and charcoal flecks, 25 med sherds (including Potterspury wares).

415: linear feature, 2.5m from pit complex 409/407/412, orientated NE – SW, 5.5m wide, excavated (by machine) to 0.50m depth, straight sides sloping at 10° for 1.25m, then at 50° to concave base. Single fill (416) of dark greyish brown silty sand with large limestone fragments and occasional charcoal flecks, 2 med sherds. Presence of large amounts of stone may suggest deliberate backfilling. Possibly some form of drainage channel? Cut by feature 417.

417: cut (?? soakaway), approx circular, 1.5m diam, concave sides. Not fully excavated, depth unknown. Fill (418) of dark greyish brown clay silt with frequent large limestone fragments, occasional flecks charcoal, 3 med sherds (inc. 2 Potterspury).

419: possible gully terminal, to south of 417 and extending beyond NE baulk, not excavated, visible extent 1.10m long by 1m wide. Fill (420) of dark greyish brown silty clay with large frequent limestone fragments and occasional charcoal flecks. Appeared to run parallel with possible drainage ditch 415.

455, 426, 427, 429: postholes, in rectangular array *c*.8m from gully terminal 419, next to SW baulk. Circular, diam 0.20m to 0.40m. Not excavated. Fills appeared to be similar. Possibly part of a larger group of features extending beyond the study area. 1 × med sherd (Potterspury) from exposed surface of 455, 427 and 429 cut NW edge of layer 425 (see below).

425: layer, mid greyish brown clayey silt with small limestone fragments, extending for *c* 3m along pipe trench. Not excavated; 3x med sherds (inc C14 rim) recovered from surface.

433: pit, to south of layer 425, sub-circular, 1m by 0.85m, 0.44m deep, concave sides and flat base. Two fills; lower fill (431) of yellowish brown sandy silt with frequent limestone fragments, no finds; upper fill (434) of mid yellowish brown sandy silt with occasional limestone and flint fragments and charcoal flecks, 6 × med sherds (inc Brill), 21 undatable sherds (inc shelly fabrics), 1 × animal bone, 1 iron "whittle and tang" knife (Special Find No. 1031; medieval).

497: linear feature (?drain), orientated E–W. Original dimensions unknown, as truncated during machine stripping. Two fills: basal fill (498) of limestone blocks, (avg. 0.30m by 0.40m); upper fill (499) of mid yellowish brown sandy silt with occasional limestone fragments, 4 med sherds.

321: layer: heavily burnt horizon on remnants of possible building platform, on natural surface of limestone and clay. R-B Quernstone (SF 1037) from slight depression within layer 321 showed evidence of burning, suggesting re-use as hearthstone Also 8 R-B sherds. Although the artefacts from this layer could be residual, the identification of the slight mound on which 321 was situated as being medieval must be viewed with great caution.

447: layer of limestone cobbles in a brown silty clay loam. Overlay part of layer 321. 1 × (?) med sherd.

As so small an area was cleared, interpretation is difficult. The pottery recovered from this area suggests a medieval date for the complex as a whole, although the basal burnt layer 321 may have been a Romano-British deposit.

Two further areas of burning (533 and 534) were associated with an area of intercutting pits and postholes (523, 525, 527, 529 and 531).

523: pit, oval, 1.3m by 0.90m, 0.60m deep, sharp sloping sides and concave base. Fill (524) of dark greyish brown silty clay with large limestone fragments. No finds. Cut by postholes 527 and 529 and pit 525.

527: posthole, circular, 0.15m diam, 0.25m deep, straight sides sloping to concave base. Fill (528) of dark greyish brown silty clay with occasional limestone grits. 6 undatable sherds (shelly ware).

529: posthole, circular, 0.15m diam, 0.35m deep, straight sides and concave base. Fill (530) of dark greyish brown silty clay with occasional limestone grits and charcoal fragments. 2 undatable sherds , 5 pieces animal bone.

525: pit, oval, 0.8m by 0.7m, 0.40m deep, sharp sloping sides and flat base. Fill (526) of light orange brown sandy silt with occasional limestone grits. No finds. Cut by pit 531.

531: pit, circular, 0.70m diam, not excavated. Fill (532) of dark greyish brown silty clay with limestone grits. Partially overlain by burnt layer 533.

533: burnt layer, similar to 321 (above). Not excavated.

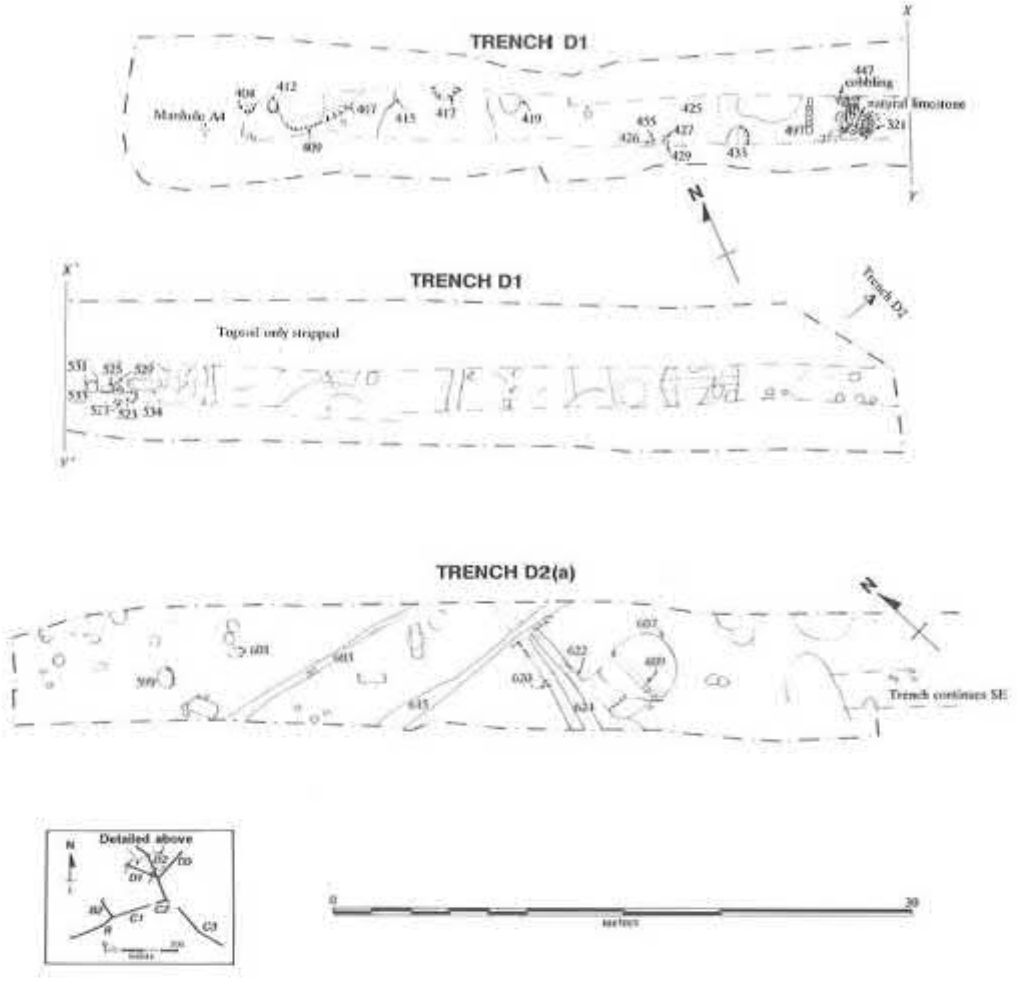

Fig. 7: Area of medieval activity within trenches D1 and D2

Area D2

Area D2 extended diagonally across the field from the small (unnamed) lane south of Grange Farm (figure 1). There were a number of archaeological features that were recorded and excavated at the northern end of the spur, and from which medieval material was recovered.

The features are described in order, from NNW to SSE.

599: pit, circular, 0.70m diam, 0.21m deep, near-vertical sides and concave base. Fill (600) of grey brown clay silt with limestone fragments and grits, 1 × med sherd (Potterspury), 2 undatable sherds, 1 frag burnt animal bone.

601: pit, circular, diam 0.87m, 0.20m deep, gradually sloping sides and concave base. Fill 602 of dark grey silt with limestone grits, 2 × med sherds, 5 undatable sherds, 2 frags animal bone.

The function of both pits is uncertain. There were a number of other features in the vicinity of pits 599 and 601 which could not be dated, although it is likely that at least some of them were medieval. To the SE was a series of intercutting gullies. Those which were orientated NE – SW (624, 622 and their precursor 624) were cut by one of the gullies (615) orientated at 90°(NW – SE); another gully, 603, was parallel with 615 but did not intersect with the other gullies within the limits

of the trench. The function of all the gullies is uncertain, but on the basis of their profiles they are more likely to have been for drainage than to have served any structural purpose.

603: gully, 0.50m wide, 0.11m deep, gradually sloping sides and concave base. Fill (604) of dark greyish brown clay silt with very occasional limestone fragments and grits. 1 undatable sherd.

615: gully, 0.76m wide, 0.22m deep, gradually sloping sides and concave base. Fill (626) of dark brown sandy clay with frequent limestone fragments. 2 med sherds, 7 undatable sherds, 1 × brick frag. Cut gullies 620 and 622.

620: gully, 0.70m wide, 0.20m deep, gradually sloping sides and concave base. Fill (621) of a mid brown sandy clay with occasional limestone fragments, 1 undatable sherd, 1 frag of animal bone, 1 copper alloy buckle plate (SF 1017).

622: gully, 0.60m wide, 0.20m deep, gradually sloping sides and concave base, Fill (623) of mid brown sandy clay with occasional limestone fragments (similar to fill of parallel gully 620), 1 × med sherd, 1 × undatable sherd, 1 frag burnt stone, 2 animal bone frags.

624: gully, width unknown (as edges cut by other features), 0.36m deep. Fill (625) of orange brown sandy clay (difficult to differentiate from fills of the two gullies which cut it), 1 med sherd, 2 frags animal bone. Cut by gullies 620 and 622.

607: pit, subrectangular, 1.5 × 3m, 0.87 deep, near-vertical sides and flat base. Fill (608) of mid brown sandy clay with occasional limestone fragments and lenses of orange brown clay, 13 med sherds (C11/12), 23 undated (?possibly med) sherds in shelly fabric. Some contamination is possible. Cut by gully 622 on NW side and by pit 609 on SW side.

609: pit, circular, diam 0.90m, depth 0.30m, near-vertical sides and flat base. Fill (610) of mid-brown sandy clay with occasional limestone fragments, 1 med sherd, 2 undatable sherds.

THE FINDS

by Nicola J.L. Smith

The Pottery

A total of 864 sherds (nearly 9 kg) was recovered and examined macroscopically, a variety of different fabrics from different periods being identified. A selection of these have been illustrated (Figures 8–10). From diagnostic characteristics, together with a general fabric analysis, several specific forms and classes of vessel were identified, and 367 pieces (42.48% of all sherds collected) were subsequently found to be datable. The majority of the remaining 497 sherds (3.607 kg) were bodysherds of a coarse, shelly fabric possessing no diagnostic features. Shelly fabrics are known to have been in use at several different periods in the local area.

Prehistoric

Two recognizable Iron Age sherds (0.030 kg) were recovered, one a shell-tempered rim, and the other a base fragment of the same fabric-type.

Romano-British

Sixty-five sherds (0.854 kg) were identified as Romano-British, 7.52% of the entire assemblage. Three colourcoat sherds were noted, including a large, white Oxfordshire mortarium rim, two Nene

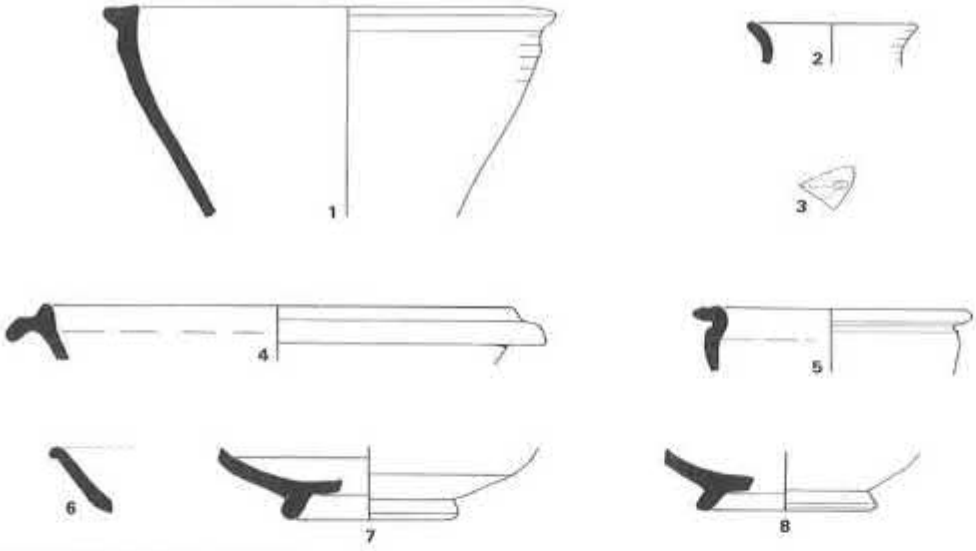

Fig. 8: Romano-British pottery, scale 1:4

Fig. 9: Saxon pottery, scale 1:4

valley vessel fragments, and three folded beaker sherds with a hard, sandy reduced fabric. Several grey, sandy pie-dish rims were present, together with a number of coarse, shell-tempered storage jars and also finer shelly wares, representing an assortment of vessels. A proportion of the unidentified shelly sherds noted above are also likely to be Romano-British in date.

Six pieces of samian were recovered, including a stamp, not previously recorded, which was identified by Brenda Dickinson (School of Classics, University of Leeds); the stamp VCVL?M appears on form ?33, Buccala of Central Gaul, Die 4a. Buccala's fabrics suggest that he worked at both Les Martres-de-Veyre and Lezoux, though no stamps are attested from either factory. Other dies were used to stamp forms 18/31R, 27 and 80, implying that the potter's life began in the Hadrianic or early Antonine period and continued to AD 160 or later. This piece is almost certainly Antonine (Fig 8, no 3).

Illustrated sherds (Fig 8)

1. Bowl rim, shell tempered fabric, context 101 (fill of pit 100), Area C3
2. Beaker rim, grey ware, context 101
3. Samian stamp, Central Gaul, VCVL?M (see above), Antonine, context 101
4. Mortarium rim, white colour-coated Oxfordshire ware, context 023 (fill of ?Saxon pit 022, Field B: residual)
5. Lid-seated jar rim, shelly fabric, context 023
6. Samian rim, form 18/31, second half C2, context 023
7. Samian dish base, form 31R, first half C2, Context 103 (fill of pit 102), Area C3
8. Samian dish base, form 31R, first half C2, Context 103

Saxon

Approximately 8% of the pottery (sixty-nine sherds, 0.630 kg) could be attributed to the Saxon period. Three red-gritted sherds, similar to sherds identified as early Saxon elsewhere in Buckinghamshire, (for example at Walton, Aylesbury) were noted, together with twenty-three early to mid Saxon hand-made, in sandy fabrics, including a number of rims and bases. No typically mid-Saxon Maxey ware was recognised, but at least forty-three sherds were of the St.Neot's type, with a tenth to eleventh-century date. An unstratified concentration of St.Neot's ware was noted near the boundary between fields A and B, and thirty-eight sherds (Figure 9, 1–5) were recovered from pit 028 in Field B. Many of the presently undatable, undiagnostic shelly sherds recovered could be Saxon in date, of the mid Saxon Maxey type, or the later St. Neot's type.

Illustrated sherds (Fig 9)

1–5 Rim sherds in St Neot's type ware, Context 029 (fill of pit 028), Field B.

Medieval

The medieval pottery, (211 sherds, 3.363 kg), represented fabrics from a number of different kilns. Sixteen sherds of Olney Hyde ware were present, including rims and jug handles, and at least nine fragments of Potterspury ware. A number of twelfth to thirteenth-century grey, sandy cooking-pot fragments were present, many fourteenth-century rims and bases (including at least twenty sherds of Brill fabric), and a bowl rim of the late fifteenth or early sixteenth-century. Nearly a hundred miscellaneous shell-tempered rims, bases and handles, with associated bodysherds, together with several oxidized wares were also noted. In all, 24.42% of the entire pottery assemblage was recognized as medieval; numerous sherds at present unclassified are also likely to belong to the same period.

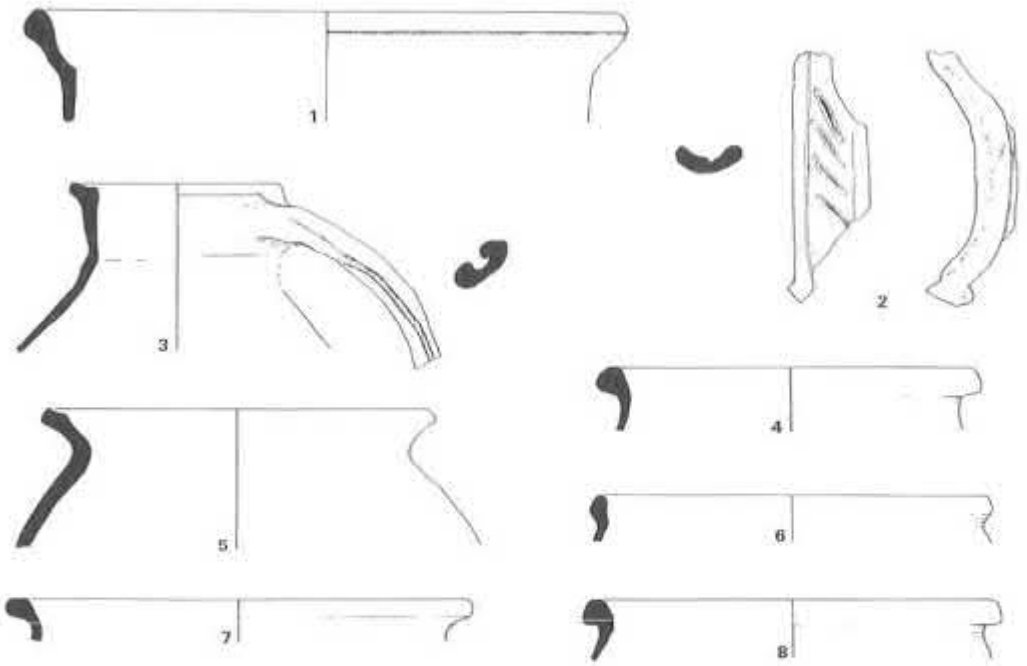

Fig. 10: Medieval pottery, scale 1:4

Illustrated sherds (Fig 10)

1. Lid-seated jar rim, shelly fabric. Context 608 (fill of pit 607) Area D2.
2. Jug handle, Potterspury ware. Context 406 (upper fill of pit/gully 404), Area D1
3. Jug, Olney Hyde ware. Context 608
4. Cooking pot rim, sand-tempered fabric. Context 410 (lower fill of pit 409), Area D1
5. Lid-seated jar rim, shelly fabric. Context 608
6. Cooking pot rim, sand-tempered fabric. Context 425 (layer), Area D1
7. Rim, shelly fabric. Context 608
8. Rim, shelly fabric. Context 608

Post-medieval

Surprisingly only twenty post-medieval sherds (0.495 kg) were collected in total, representing 2.32% of the whole pottery assemblage. This may be due to different refuse disposal practices in the post-medieval period.

Other Finds

Approximately five kg of animal bone, including horse, sheep and deer, were recovered. Although the bone has not been analysed in detail, many pieces showed butchery marks and several were also burnt. Numerous pieces of burnt limestone and some smithing slag were recovered, all from mixed-date deposits. Two pieces of wall plaster and thirty-seven fragments of daub also came from undatable contexts. Most of the remaining artefacts were datable, either by intrinsic characteristics or else from their spatial association with other datable finds. These have been grouped together by period and are described in detail below.

Prehistoric

Sixty-four flint flakes (four of which were also burnt) were retrieved including a core preparation flake, a retouched Neolithic flake/scraper, and two Bronze Age scrapers. Four Mesolithic blades were also identified (three snapped) and a Mesolithic blade core fragment. This small flint assemblage

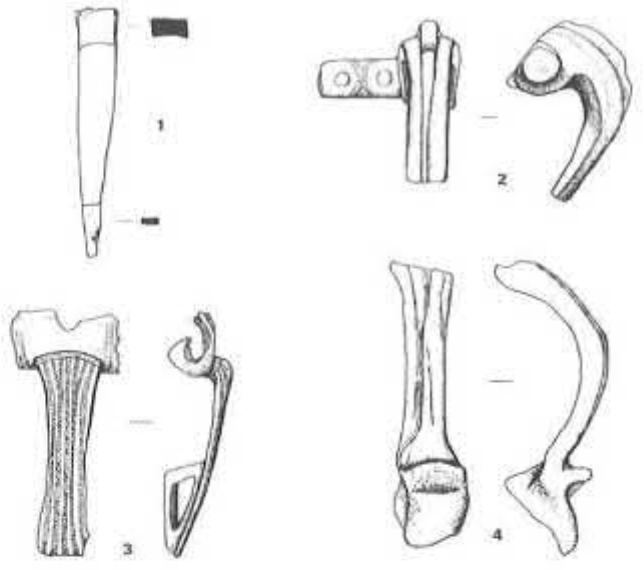

Fig. 11: Romano-British finds, scale 1:3 (item 1); 2:3 (items 2–4)

suggests more than a casual prehistoric presence in the area.

Romano-British
Illustrated

Iron object. 101mm × 16mm × 6mm (max.) Badly corroded iron bar, tapering to a blunt point, function uncertain. Found in close association with quern SF 1037 (described below), but evidently not a quern fitting. Context 321, possibly medieval layer containing Romano-British pottery and *in situ* hearth-lining. Field D. (SF 1000). Fig 11,1.

Brooch 35mm × 25mm. Incomplete copper-alloy brooch with T-shaped, decorated tubular wings (wide bow variation). The wings (only one remains), are cast in cylindrical form and perforated lengthwise to take the axis bar from end to end. Only 12mm of the pin remains, details of its attachment to the axis bar and the spring mechanism being obscured by mineralised soil deposits. It has the comma-shaped profile of a dolphin-brooch, with a thick, rounded head. A central ridge runs over the crest and down the bow, the tail-end of which (together with the catchplate) is missing. Found in topsoil of Field B by metal detector. (SF 1022). Fig 11, 2.

Brooch 50mm × 21mm. Incomplete copper alloy brooch with an open-end cylinder, wing arrangement. Here the wings have full backward flaps at top and bottom. The spring, now missing, would have been placed between them and held in position by bending the flaps together around it, a central slot being left for the pin itself (also missing), and the ends left open. The complete profile of the brooch remains, together with the catchplate. The bow is relatively flat and splayed slightly at either end (particularly at the top), and the back is decorated with several longitudinal ridges. This continental brooch form came to Britain on Langton Down and Rosette-type brooches before the Invasion, and lasted for a couple of decades or so thereafter (Hattatt 1985). Context 023 (fill of ?Saxon pit 022, residual), Field B. (SF 1029) Fig 11, 3

Vessel Glass 57.5mm × 11mm (max.) Curved, "ear-shaped", D-sectioned cup handle of a very streaky, olive-green glass. The bottom end is thickened and splayed at the lower sticking point; the upper sticking point is now missing, but was probably folded over. It was found in association with Romano-British pottery sherds, including Central Gaulish samian wares and Nene Valley colourcoat types. The handle very likely belongs to the fourth century

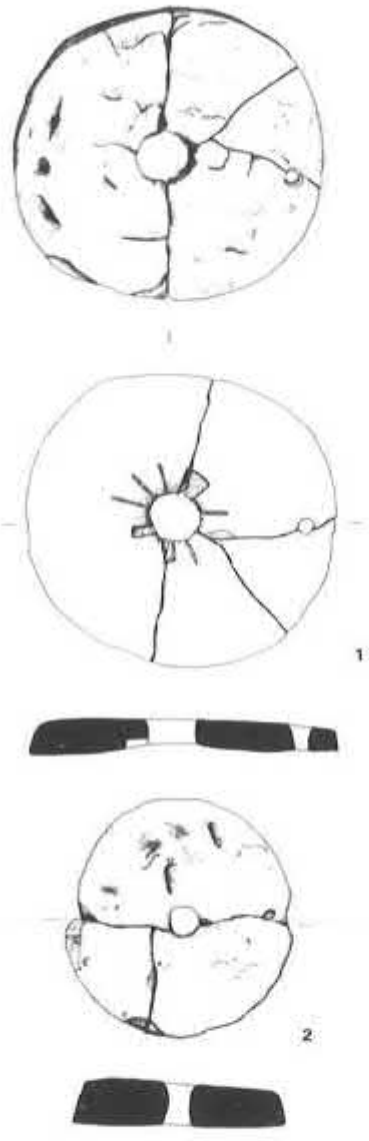

Fig. 12: Romano-British quernstones, scale 1:12

AD, and a similar example, recovered from a Romano-British villa site at Mantles Green, Amersham, Buckinghamshire during excavations in 1983–4, is discussed by Denise Allen (Allen,1992,165–6 and Fig.3). Allen discusses forms represented at Lankhills Roman cemetery, Winchester – namely a one-handled, globular flask with concave base (Harden,1979,217–218,class VI,nos 472,551,632, fig.27) and a two-handled flask, again with a globular body, but with a base-ring, (*op cit*, 218–219,VIII,nos 450 and 270,fig.27) which are the most likely candidates for the Weston Underwood handle's form. The Lankhills examples were retrieved from graves dating from AD370–410 and AD340–390 respectively). Context 101 (fill of pit 100). Field C. (SF 1028). Fig 11, 4.

Quernstone Sandstone (?Sarsen). Diameter 0.49m. The hopper is 90mm in diameter. Near the outer edge is a handle socket which has been bored through to the grinding surface; there are traces of three aborted attempts to bore handle sockets on the opposite edge. The grinding surface exhibits the usual profile, although its angle is shallower than that of many Romano-British stones. The chief interest of this piece is the arrangement of the rynd chases, of which there are three. Two of these, both narrow, are situated about 65° apart along the inner edge of the hopper, but aligned at 90° to each other; the third is wider and deeper and situated approximately opposite a point midway between the two smaller sockets. The arrangement implies that the rynd itself was of a most unusual "**Y**" form. Other striations around the lower edge of the hopper suggest efforts, evidently abandoned, to locate rynd chases elsewhere along the hopper circumference. An iron object (SF 1000 above) was found within the hopper, but does not appear to have been an original fitting. There are traces of wear, particularly around the outer skirt. There is evidence of burning on the grinding surface, apparently owing to its re-use as a hearthstone. The quern was found in association with several fragments of sandstone hearth-lining (SF 1031), noted below, and sherds of Romano-British pottery. Context 321, Field D. (SF 1037). Fig 12, 1.

Quernstone 0.38m diameter; 50–70mm thickness. Lower stone, complete, but broken into three pieces, in a very coarse, shelly sandstone; the inner, worn surface shows clear evidence of burning. The central, circular perforation is 50mm in diameter; the grinding surface has the usual profile, being slightly higher at the centre, but as with SF 1037 above, the angle of the grinding surface is shallow. The quernstone itself is not datable and was not found in association with any other stratified, datable finds, but a Romano-British date is quite possible. From context 310; apparently re-used as metalling in a former gateway, Field D. (SF 1038) Fig 12, 2.

Not Illustrated

Coin (Coins recorded in this report were kindly identified by George Lamb of Buckinghamshire County Museum). Worn; ? Vespasian (AD 69–79). Context 022, fill

of a large, oval feature. Field B. (SF 1020).

Coin Denarius, good condition, Septimius Severus (AD 204). See *RIC, vol.4, no.266*. Context 103 (fill of pit 102), Field C. (SF 1004).

Hearth lining Eight flat, scorched fragments of yellow sandstone (SF 1031), found in the same feature context as a number of Romano-British sherds, were identified as *in situ* hearth-lining. They lay adjacent to a similarly scorched quernstone (see above; SF 1037). Context 321.

Saxon

Illustrated

Stirrup Mount 62.5mm × 29mm × 2.5mm. Copper alloy, decorated Saxon stirrup mount with a distinctive punched band of rings bordering the external edge of the flat body, and running immediately parallel with an incised line decoration. Two circular perforations, with the remains of iron corrosion surrounding each (former rivets), are situated 11mm apart at the base of the mount; a flange projects at 90° from the bottom rear side

The main body plate tapers up into a short circular, moulded shaft (a debased animal head representation, with prominent eyes), the apex of which comprises a flat, roughly circular plate within which is a third perforation, a slightly off-centre fixing hole. The mount is of the pentagonal long-necked variety and only one other example, also from Buckinghamshire (Foscott; unpublished), is known to have similar punched, circle decoration.

No sign of gilding was noted during conservation. The rear side displayed clear signs of abrasion and wear, indicating that the piece had not remained "static" during use. Objects of this kind have often been interpreted in the past as book mounts, but David Williams (*in litt*, and forthcoming) convincingly identifies these types as stirrup mounts. He suggests that the Weston mount represents a basic but uncommon design, belonging to a sub-group which typically consists of a flat pentagonal plate clasped by two tendril-like shapes which converge to a narrow neck terminating in a fixing loop. Metal detector find from stone layer (?trackway), context 018, within Field B. (SF 1011) (Figure 13, 1).

Strap End 61mm × 15mm × 1mm. Flat, abraded copper alloy strap end; the remains of two iron rivets survive at the split end, one now reduced to an area of corrosion.

M Farley comments: Strap ends of this date usually contain three standardised elements: an animal snout terminal, a decorative panel and a fan-shaped device around the rivet end. On this example the fan-shaped device appears to be absent, although the presence of iron corrosion may obscure it. The animal snout is present in simplified form, and the central decorative element is missing from the now empty, rectangular central recess. The recess had been prepared by roughly chiselling out a depressed area; no mean feat in a piece of sheet only one millimetre thick. During conservation, electrochemical means were used to break down the corrosion within the recess, revealing chisel lines and the remains of a white metal coating, most probably solder. Organic material was also identified during conservation within the split end, adhering to the corrosion (information kindly supplied by David Parish). This probably represents the remains of an original leather strap. Apart from the use of a panel, which is unique amongst the twenty other Buckinghamshire strap ends so far recorded, the whole is a fairly unsophisticated piece. Such tag ends appear to have been common in the ninth century AD, but had a longer life. The relatively large size and simplicity of the surviving motifs suggest that the Weston Underwood tag end may be relatively late in the series. Found by metal detector, apparently within a pit along pipeline route, Field C. (SF 1018). Figure 13, 2.

Not illustrated.

Quernstone Fragments 30mm × 20mm; 20mm × 15mm. Two, small square-shaped joining pieces of basalt lava quernstone from the Eiffel mountains in Germany, with traces of a grinding surface. Thirty-eight sherds of Saxon pottery were recovered from the same context as the quernstone; such lava was imported into Britain during Anglo-Saxon times in large quantities. From context 029 (fill of pit 028), Field B. (SF 1039).

Antler Seven fragments of red deer antler were found within a context which also contained a substantial number of both Saxon and medieval artefacts (SF 1021).

Medieval

Illustrated

Buckle 40mm × 18mm. Oval copper-alloy buckle frame with rectangular and decorated recessed sheet plate. The inside edge of the buckle frame possesses a small notch to receive the pin. The pin, looped over an offset and narrowed buckle bar, tapers to a point. The front sheet of the folded plate is decorated with a line of tiny, stamped nicks which border the sides and edges. The rear sheet is partially bent back over itself, the two end rivets now missing. Three rivets are still in place, however, securely fixing the two sheets together. Surface enrichment is responsible for a superficial impression of remnant gilding. The

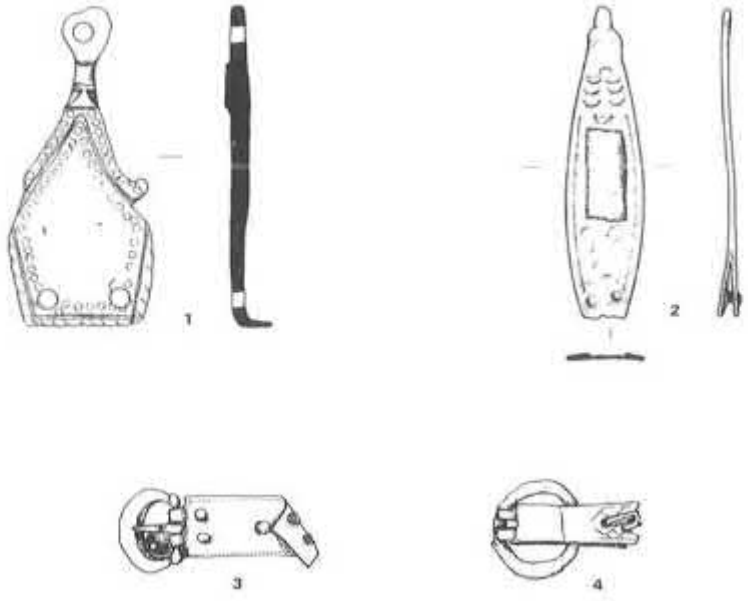

Fig. 13: Saxon and Medieval finds, scale 2:3

whole appears to have been covered with a white metal coating, possibly silver; X-ray fluorescence analysis would be needed to identify the specific metal conclusively.

This buckle and plate represent a basic form which, with all its variety, was a long-lasting fashion and in use from the early fourteenth to early fifteenth century (Egan and Pritchard,1991, 22). One, two or four rivets are most common, and pairs would have been more effective for distributing the stress than arrangements in which a single rivet took most of the strain at a central point. This example possesses five rivets, and although its precise use is uncertain, its relative robustness suggests that it was intended to serve a function which involved some stress or sustained movement – as perhaps a spur buckle or part of some military dress. Metal detector find from subsoil, context 475, Field D. (SF 1014). Fig 13, 4.

Buckle 30mm x 20mm. Round, flat copper-alloy buckle frame with the pin missing, attached to a decorated, rectangular folded sheet plate, recessed to accommodate (most probably) an originally sub-rounded, oval or D-shaped frame. The single perforation through the plate shows clear evidence that the buckle has been repaired, with the original rivet missing, and a twisted length of copper alloy wire now crudely fastening the two sheets of the buckle plate together. The front, forked end of the plate is decorated, the detail partially obscured by the twisted copper wire repair. The whole appears to have been covered with a white metal coating, probably either silver or tin.

The single rivet suggests that the buckle was not intended to serve a particularly stressful function originally, and its form implies that it was used to secure some item of everyday medieval dress. Buckle plates provided a means of attaching the frame to the strap that was arguably more secure in the long term than folding the leather or textile around the frame and sewing the strap together to hold it in place, as was done with the plain, circular frames – which were usually intended as shoe buckles. Metal detector find, from subsoil, context 475. Field D. (SF 1015) Fig 13.

Not illustrated

Knife Blade 75mm × 16mm × 4mm. A severely corroded fragment of ironwork; most of the blade and much of the tang are missing. The knife appears to belong to the "whittle and tang" type and is medieval. Context 434 (fill of pit 433), Field D, in close association with several sherds of medieval pottery. (SF 1013)

Coin Long Cross penny of Edward I (1272–1307); poor, worn. Metal detector find, from subsoil, context 117. Field C. (SF 1007).

Coin Long Cross halfpenny of Edward I (1272–1307). Very worn. Metal detector find, from subsoil, context 475. Field D. (SF 1016).

Post-medieval

Only three pieces of tile were recovered from the investigations and seventeen fragments (0.795 kg) of brick, including a single, complete Tudor brick. Sixteen clay pipe stems and four bowl fragments were found, all probably eighteenth century. The small amount of glass recovered all appears to date to the eighteenth/nineteenth century. A number of relatively modern or insignificant, undatable pieces of ironwork were recovered by metal detector along the route; several iron nails, corrosion conglomerates, unidentifiable lumps of lead and copper alloy, together with post-medieval buttons, buckles, knife blades, lead shot and window came. Items recorded as special finds include an iron dress pin with double-looped head (perhaps sixteenth century, cf Woodfield and Goodall, 1981, 94 and Fig.5); a "Nuremberg jeton", probably Hans Krauwinckel, *c* 1580–1620; a worn penny of Elizabeth I, and a rectangular whetstone with square section.

CONCLUSIONS

A project of this nature inevitably yields data which is difficult to interpret. Scanning of relatively narrow trenches will rarely reveal the full extent of features, or show the relationship of features to their neighbours. Spatial patterning can not be seen on any scale which is useful, and interpretation of features is inevitably a problem. There are therefore many questions concerning the date and significance of the features described in this account which can not be readily answered. Relatively little attention has been paid in this report to those features which were either not excavated (as they did not lie on the direct line of the pipe cut), or which failed to produce dating evidence. Nevertheless, the archaeological monitoring and investigation of the Weston Underwood Sewerage Scheme has yielded useful results. Previous finds of material from the village and its environs had all been casual discoveries, lacking much in the way of an archaeological context.

There was a general paucity of prehistoric material. Apart from the cremation, a scatter of struck flints and two Iron Age sherds were the only pre-Roman material discovered. The cremation, although not accurately dated, seems to indicate prehistoric funerary rites other than those associated with barrows/ ring ditches, and which feature so prominently in the archaeological record of the Ouse valley. The relative absence of Iron Age material seems to imply that the Roman settlement, for which there was rather more in the way of evidence, did not develop, as on many sites it did, from a pre-Roman settlement. However, it should be noted that finds associated with two adjacent sites to the south of the village include an Iron Age component.

There was rather more evidence for Roman activity, although this period, too, was relatively sparsely represented. No settlement focus was found, but the overall impression is of either a single extensive site not far from the study area, or of a densely settled landscape, although the two need not be mutually exclusive. The discovery in 1968 of a dozen Romano-British sherds, together with tile and building stone, a short distance south of the pipeline in Field C may point to a structure. It is also possible that the flood plain had a more prominent role in the economy during the late Iron Age and Roman periods than previously, as demonstrated by the Stanton Low villa, situated on the edge of the terrace gravels a few kilometres upstream at Stantonbury, which exploited the alluvium (Woodfield and Johnson 1989). Stanton Low was an extensive site, at over 3 ha nearly the size of a "small town", with wharves on the river frontage, and close set parallel ditches in the early Roman phases probably indicating land management and drainage. It is perhaps worth noting that one of the areas of Romano-British activity identified at Weston Underwood was on the part of the study area closest to the flood plain, which possibly suggests a comparable interest in the lower-lying areas.

Saxon settlement, as with the Romano-British settlement, cannot be tied down to a specific focal point, but sufficient pottery was recovered from the line of the sewers to show that there was some form of occupation here during both the early (fifth to seventh centuries) and late Saxon periods (ie ninth century or later). There may also have been mid Saxon occupation as well, but its identification is

extremely problematical owing to the general absence in this region of pottery which is diagnostic of the period. There is also the possibility of a post-built rectilinear timber structure in area C1, although it must be stressed that there is no firm dating evidence, and the Saxon date is proposed solely on the basis of the similarity of the structure's form with the plans of Saxon halls excavated at numerous other sites in southern England. The Saxon evidence is potentially the most important to have been recovered during the project. There is often discontinuity of occupation during the Saxon period, with significant changes of settlement patterns between the early and the late Saxon periods; this certainly appears to be the case at many of the settlements within the area of Milton Keynes, only a few kilometres to the south, which has been studied in some detail (Croft and Mynard 1993, 15); only in two instances, Bradwell and Great Linford, has early to middle Saxon pottery been found within the present village.* At Weston Underwood the evidence seems to imply continuity of settlement within the general area, as opposed to a hiatus.

Recovery of (unstratified) late Saxon material from near the boundary between fields A and B, not far from the church, hints at a possible occupation focus in existence prior to the Norman Conquest, and it is quite possible that the first church on the present site, originating perhaps as a proprietary church, was another element of a small, nucleated settlement.

The processes by which a dispersed pattern of farmsteads coalesced into nucleated settlements is still imperfectly understood. In the case of Weston Underwood we may suspect that this process was well advanced by the twelfth century, by which time the present church was certainly in existence: the dating of the moated site is less certain, although the Pevers chief messuage (presumably on the moated site) was first documented in 1315 and may well be earlier. It has recently been noted (Lewis and Fox 1993) that within Buckinghamshire there are a number of nucleated settlements in the lower lying clay vales of the Ouse and Thames where moat and church are adjacent, suggesting a church-manor complex forming the focal point of a settlement. Whilst the Weston Underwood moat is *c*250m from the church, neither site is far from the area of pre-Conquest occupation which we propose above.

There have however been some changes in the village morphology since the middle ages. Apart from the moated site, abandoned presumably at some point during the late medieval or early post medieval period, there are traces of several possible building platforms immediately east of the present village in field D. The present work has shown at least one of these platforms to be the site of a building, although its dating was equivocal. Traces were also discovered of a ditched enclosure in field C, with a post-built structure within it; here too the dating evidence is very difficult to interpret. These remains apparently point to some degree of settlement shift or small-scale shrinkage, before the village reached its present morphology during or before the seventeenth century.

Archive

The site archive is to be found at Buckinghamshire County Museum (ref CAS 6166).

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*But see Milton Keynes Village: this volume

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APPENDIX:

The Union Chapel in Chapel Lane

The eponymous establishment in Chapel Lane was presumably the Union (ie independent dissenting) Chapel recorded in the 1851 religious census (Legg 1991). The chapel was built, according to the census, in 1827, but its location is not given. There is no reference to any place of worship at Weston Underwood, other than the Parish church and the Catholic church, in any of several nineteenth and early twentieth county directories consulted, the earliest dating to c1830. The census shows the presence of a strong Catholic congregation in the village (due to the recusancy of the Throckmortons, who had held the manor since the fifteenth century), and the majority of the inhabitants attended the services of the Catholics or the Established church. The Catholic church was situated near the northern end of the village, in what had been the stable wing of the manor house, which was demolished in 1827 (Lipscombe 1847, 4, 402–404). The Catholic church was built in the same year, and since 1827 is also given for the construction of the Union Chapel the possibility of confusion between the two cannot be ruled out. Dissent evidently came late to Weston Underwood, since there was only one dissenter (described as a Presbyterian) in 1706 and two in 1709 (Broad 1993). Average attendance at the Union chapel's weekly service was thirty. It is possible that the attractions of dissenting worship were relatively short-lived, and that the chapel was not in use for long. Given the evidently feeble strength of the cause, it is quite possible that the chapel was an adapted building rather than a purpose-built structure.

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