

MULTI-PERIOD ACTIVITY AT MAIN STREET, ASHENDON: EXCAVATIONS IN 1999

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John Samuels Archaeological Consultants undertook an archaeological excavation of approximately 675m² of land off Main Street, Ashendon, Bucks (NGR SP7058 1415) in May and June 1999. This followed a desk-based assessment and trial-trenching evaluation undertaken by the Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust in July 1998, and was carried out in advance of the development of the site. Material dating from the late Neolithic, Iron Age, Romano-British, early/middle Saxon, medieval and post-medieval periods was recovered.

Finds of Neolithic struck flint and Roman pottery indicate occupation during these periods in the vicinity of the site, although there was no direct evidence for activity within it. There was clearly Iron Age activity on the site, probably in the form of stock rearing. Two sherds of Early/Middle Saxon pottery were found, but there was little archaeological evidence for occupation during the Saxon or Saxo-Norman periods. This is perhaps significant given that Ashendon is recorded in the Domesday Book and it may be that occupation was nearer the church.

The main period of occupation at the site took place between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries when at least three buildings were constructed, roughly along the modern road frontage. Of these, two had stone foundations and crushed stone was used in their floors. They apparently had a timber-framed superstructure and thatched or timber shingle roofs. The third building was probably of earth-set sill beam or earth-fast post construction.

The buildings were abandoned by the middle of the fourteenth century and the site was then subdivided for agricultural use. There was no evidence from the excavation for the 'Wid' Cherry' house shown on a map of 1641.

INTRODUCTION

Geology & Topography

The excavation site was located in the centre of the village of Ashendon, Buckinghamshire, on the north side of Main Street, east of The Close, centred on NGR SP 7058 1415.

The site lay on the Portland Formation (BGS 1994), at a height of approximately 146 metres above Ordnance Datum. There is a triangulation point at 158 metres AOD, some 400 metres southwest of the excavation. From this point the ridge falls away steeply to the north and south. The present settlement and the excavation site are situated on this ridge.

The area proposed for development was used as rough grazing land prior to the investigation. The soils on the site are generally fine loams overlying limestone (SSEW 1983). The northern part of the site was divided from the south by a limestone band. To the north of this was a layer of rather sandy subsoil, sealing early features.

Archaeological Background

Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust carried out a desk based assessment (Vaughan 1998) and archaeological trial-trenching in 1998 (Figure 2) (Humphrey 1998). A concentration of archaeological features was recorded along the street frontage, including probable medieval structures. Medieval and later property and field boundaries were recorded to the rear of the site. There was some evidence for prehistoric and Roman activity, in the form of residual finds.

The site is located within the medieval core of the village of Ashendon. The village is first mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 (Mawer & Stenton 1925, Morris 1978). Before 1066 it was held by three brothers, who also held Little Policott, immediately to the south (Vaughan 1998). The parish church, some 50 metres southwest of the site, has Norman fabric. (Pevsner & Williamson 2000, 143). The medieval and later manor house was located in the area immediately north of the

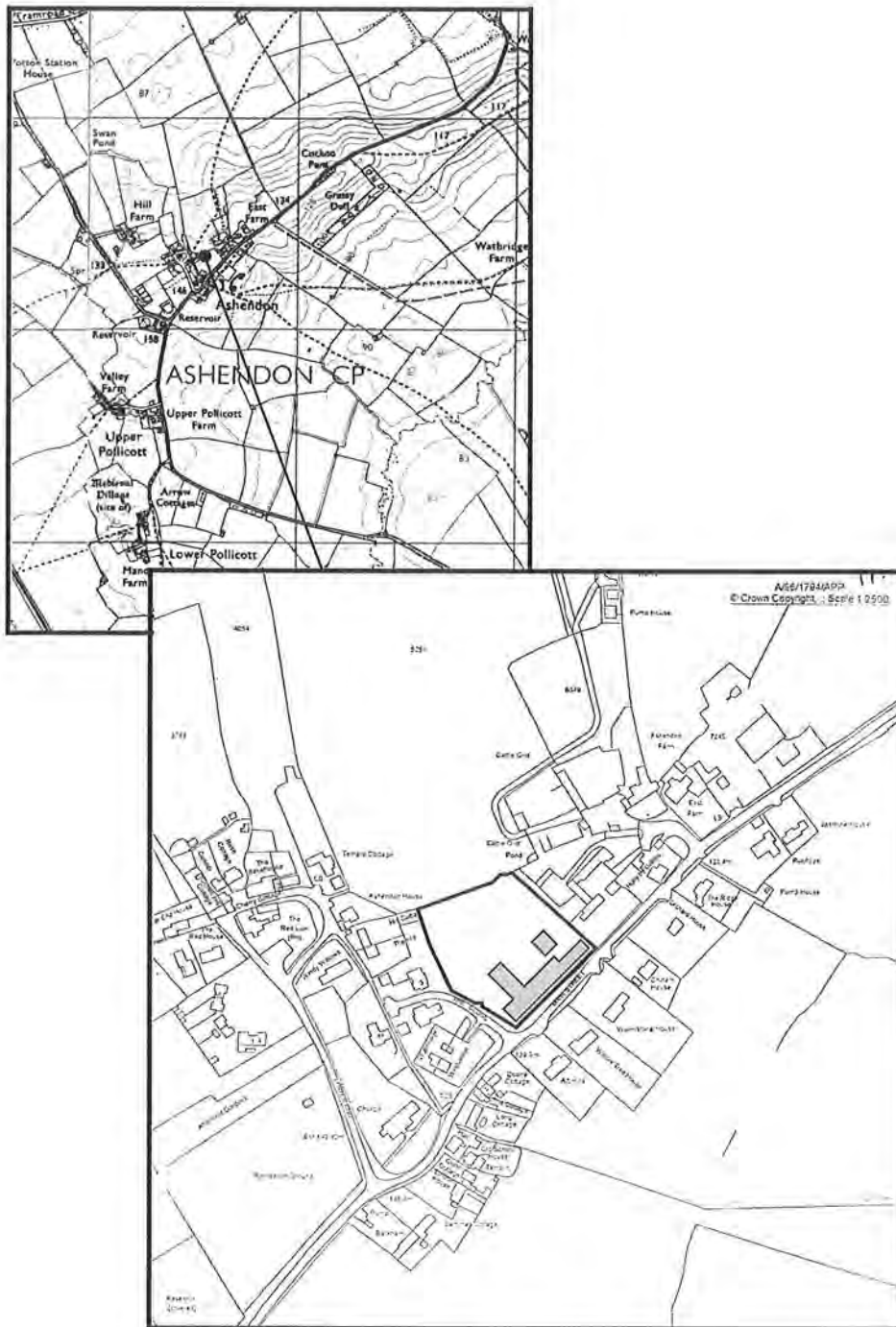


FIGURE 1 Ashendon: site location.

Phase 1: Late Neolithic/ Bronze Age

Seven small of Neolithic/ Bronze Age struck flints (68 grams) were discovered during the evaluation. No further finds of such material were made during the excavation, and no dated features of this period were discovered.

Phase 2: Iron Age (Figure 3)

A number of features were found to contain only Iron Age pottery. However, stratigraphy makes it clear that most pottery of this date had been redeposited and that only a few such features represent activity during the Iron Age. The features discussed in this section are almost entirely undated by pottery, dating is inferred from relationships and fills.

The northern arm of Area 1 lay north of a natural limestone band separating it from the main area. A layer of rather sandy subsoil sealed the features described in this section. This subsoil predated the main phases of activity on the site because it had features from those phases cut into it.

Several small post-pits were excavated in the northern part of this arm [1123] [1125] [1127] [1129] measuring between 0.35 and 0.50 metres in

diameter and from 0.12 to 0.4 metres deep. A very shallow, small sub-circular pit-type feature, about 0.12 metres deep, [1131], rather larger than the post holes, lay to their north-west

A large ditch ran roughly east-west across this part of the site, cut into the natural limestone brash. The ditch [1124] was steep-sided and flat bottomed. It had been recut by [1110/ 1048], a ditch about 2 metres wide and 0.8 metres deep. This had gently sloping, fairly symmetrical sides into a flat base. Neither ditch contained dating evidence.

Immediately south of this ditch were several vertical-sided post holes [1112] [1114] [1116], all cut into the natural limestone brash, smaller in diameter than those to the north of the ditch, measuring from 0.18 to 0.25m in diameter and from 0.25 to 0.45m deep. These features may represent a fence line associated with the large ditch.

Interpretation

The character of Iron Age occupation was not determined, but a significant amount of pottery and bone was recovered, probably indicating occupation nearby.

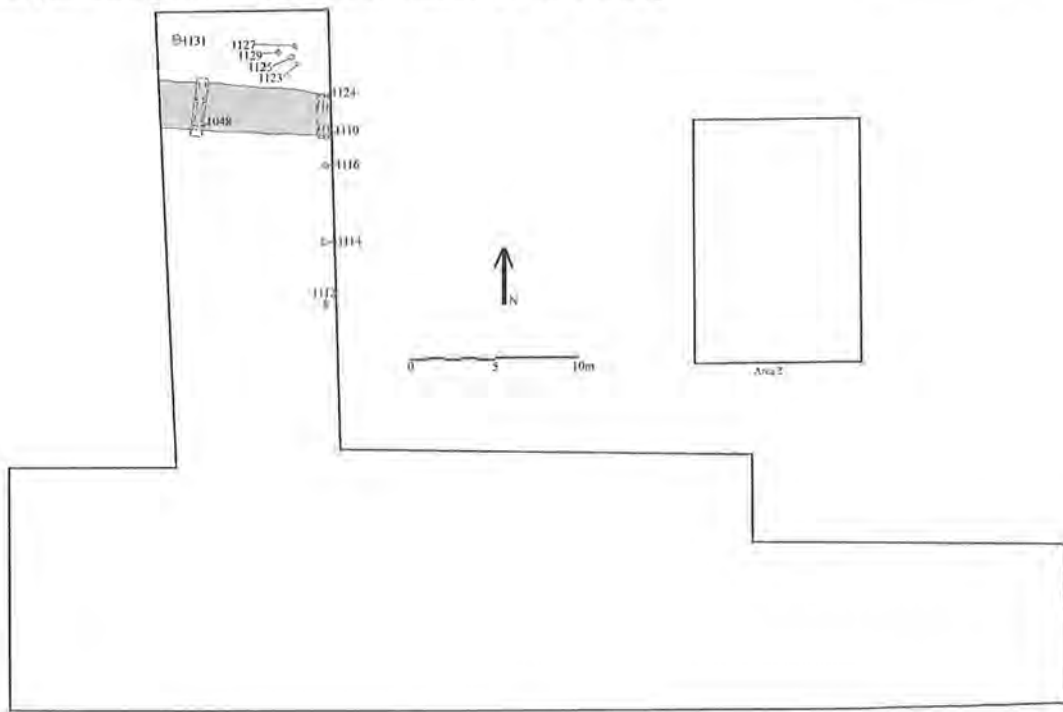


FIGURE 3 Ashendon: Phase 2 – Iron Age.

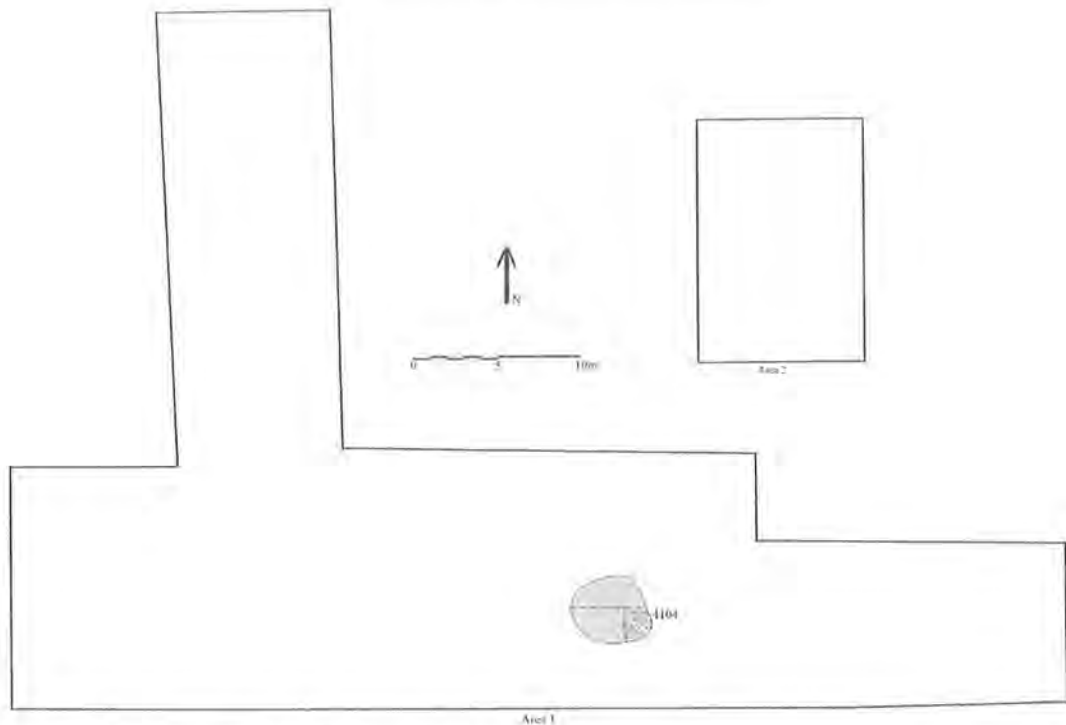


FIGURE 4 Ashendon: Phase 3 – Romano British.

Phase 3: Romano-British (Figure 4)

Eight sherds of Romano-British pottery recovered from the site during the evaluation, with a further three sherds found during the excavation. One came from a large pit [1104]. This was a steep sided, sub-circular feature, about 3 metres in diameter and about 1.2 metres deep. The fill was distinctive for this site, comprising a silty clay, containing occasional charcoal flecks. It was dated by a single sherd of samian ware and also contained a small quantity of cattle and sheep bones. The remaining sherds from the site were redeposited in later features. A sherd of box-flue tile was recovered from the surface subsequent to the main excavation. Sherds found during the evaluation were similarly redeposited and/ or very abraded.

Interpretation

The overall impression is one of, possibly fairly high-status occupation activity occurring in the vicinity of the site, with the site itself probably used for agriculture. The flue tile suggests a villa in the vicinity.

Phase 4: Twelfth Century (Figure 5)

Parts of at least three intercutting enclosures were revealed in the centre of Area 1. The earliest feature in this complex was a curvilinear ditch [1078] [1196] [1194]. Another gully [1205], measuring about 0.48 metres wide and about 0.36 metres deep, extended to the north from this main feature. A number of postholes were excavated in this area. Of these [1176], [1178], [1180], [1182], [1184], [1186], [1188] and [1190] seems to form a fence line around the inside of an enclosure formed by the gullies. A large fourteenth century (Phase 6) boundary ditch [2005] cut the enclosure at its eastern end.

The northern arm of the earliest enclosure seems to have remained in use, the remainder being replaced or modified by [1200], which cut it at [1076]. The southern return of this enclosure petered out to the east, with [1198] butting the main enclosure to the north-west. With [1205] these two gullies seem to form a third enclosure contemporary with [1200].

There was no continuation of the complex of

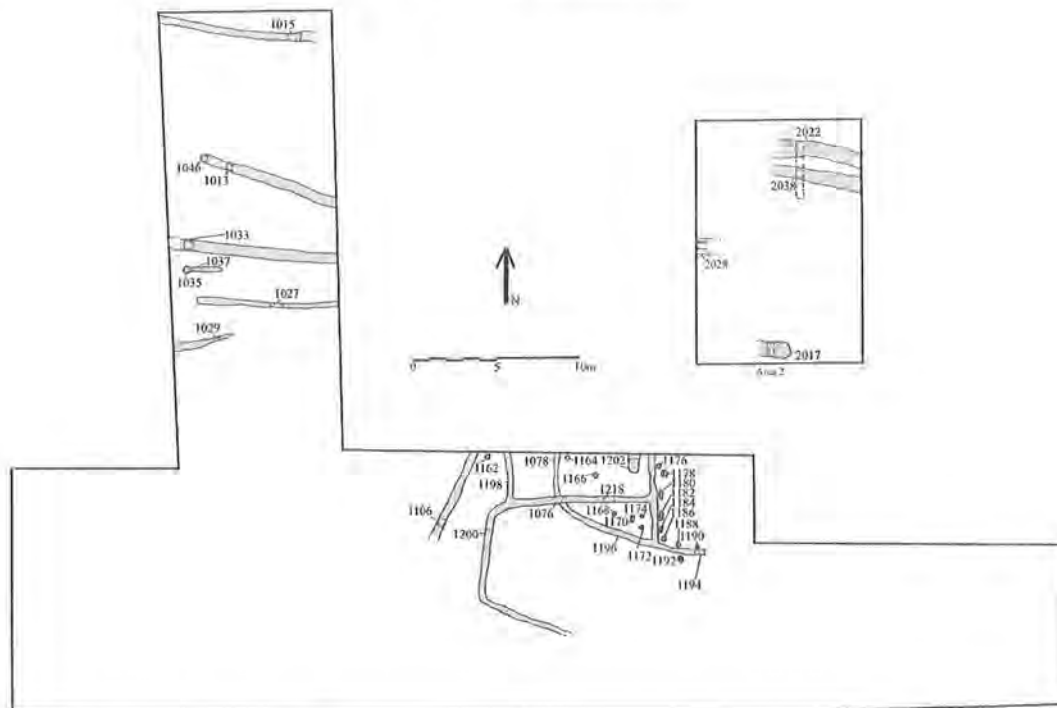


FIGURE 5 Ashendon: Phase 4 – 12th Century.

gullies on the eastern side of the boundary ditch, although much of this area was outside the limit of excavation. There was no evidence for more substantial structures than fence lines in this area and no evidence for domestic use.

A large rectangular cut [1202] had a sharp break of slope at the top into almost vertical sides. At the base was a sharp break of slope into a flat base. It contained (1203) a mid brown clayey silt fill, containing occasional sub-rounded stones. This was sealed by (1204) a dark greyish brown clayey silt. The latter fill was dated to the twelfth century.

West of the main enclosure complex was a shallow gully running roughly north-south [1106], cut by the large Phase 5 boundary ditches 1039–1041 (Figure 2). The gully was about 0.05m deep by about 0.25m wide and was filled with (1107), a soft dark greyish-brown silty-clay, with lots of root action. There were no finds.

A series of post holes [1162] [1164] [1166] [1168] [1170] [1172] [1174] [1192] were also associated with the features in this area, but formed no clear pattern.

An east-west orientated ditch at the northern end

of the northern arm of Area 1 [1015] contained twelfth century pottery.

A narrow, shallow, roughly U-shaped linear feature [1027] measured about 0.4m wide by about 0.15m deep. It was slightly asymmetrical, sloping more sharply on its northern side had a concave base. It contained a single fill (1028) with a single small sherd of redeposited Iron Age pottery. The feature was dated through the nature of its fill and its orientation, also east-west following the contour of the slope.

North of gully [1027] was a shallow gully about 0.1m deep and 0.2m wide [1037] filled with (1038), a soft light greyish-brown silty-clay containing occasional ironstone nodules. There were no finds in this fill. This was cut by a small pit [1035].

South of gully [1027] an ephemeral linear feature [1029] petered out at its eastern end, probably as a result of later truncation. Its fill (1030) was very similar to that of several other Phase 4 features in this area and it is tentatively assigned a twelfth century date on that basis.

Parallel to ditch [1027] a similarly orientated

ditch [1033] was cut by a Phase 5 boundary ditch [1003] (Figure 5). This was filled with (1034), a soft light greyish brown silty clay which contained pottery of thirteenth century date. The uniformity of the fill indicates that it may have been deliberately backfilled. It is assigned to Phase 4 on stratigraphic grounds and it is assumed that the later pottery is an indicator of the date of its being infilled.

A ditch, approximately east-west [1013] was also cut by the large boundary ditch. It was filled with (1014), a soft mid-grey brown silty-clay with occasional limestone fragments. It terminated at its western end with a post hole [1046], filled with (1047), identical to (1014). There were no finds from this feature, which perhaps represented an entrance.

In Area 2, a narrow flat-bottomed linear feature [2022] ran roughly east-west across the north-eastern end of the excavation area. This undated ditch measured about 2.4 metres wide and 1 metre deep and was cut by the Phase 6 boundary ditch [2005]. Its fills (2023), (2024), (2032) and (2033) were similar to those encountered in other Phase 4 features in Area 1. Immediately south of [2022] was a similarly orientated and proportioned feature [2038] filled with (2039). Neither of these ditches extended beyond [2005]. On the southern edge of Area 2 was a small linear feature with a rounded terminal [2017] which did not extend beyond [2005]. A further similar ditch [2028] was again cut by [2005]. This was filled with (2029), which was sealed by (2030). The complex is interpreted as a group of animal enclosures in use during the twelfth century.

Interpretation

The morphology of the features discovered indicates that, during the twelfth century, the area seems to have been used mainly for animal enclosures. One of the enclosures had a substantial boundary consisting of a ditch and fence. They may have been used as pens for bulky stock such as pigs or cattle. This, the quantity of pottery and the cattle, sheep and pig bones also implies that there was domestic activity very close by, although no direct evidence was found.

Phase 5: Thirteenth Century (Figure 6)

In the thirteenth century a large boundary ditch was dug across the site [1003] [1037] [1082] [1095]. Its northern arm cut several Phase 4 features. The

ditch was generally about 0.8m wide and about 0.6m deep. The pottery recovered from it indicates a thirteenth century date for its use. It also contained bones from cattle and sheep or goats and a radius from a dog. The ditch had been recut in places, particularly at its northern end [1135] and along its east-west orientated length [1041]. It divided the excavated area into two. In the angle of the boundary ditch was a group of post holes [1005] [1007] [1009] [1019][1021] [1023]. They did not appear to form a coherent structure.

A rather ephemeral linear feature [1031] was located to the west of the northern length of the enclosure ditch. This was filled with (1032) a soft grey brown silty clay containing pottery dating to the thirteenth century. Adjacent to it was a small sub-square pit, possibly a post hole [1017].

Three buildings were found which dated to this phase. Each of them fronted the main road.

Building 1 (Plate 1) In the south-western part of the site were the limestone rubble foundations of a building, evidence for which had been found during the evaluation. Parts of two sides survived. These were between 1.1 and 1.4 metres wide and a single stone thick.

Adjacent to the western edge of the excavation area, the outline of the structure was much more irregular and it appeared to have been deliberately levelled, although traces of what may have been a buttress survived adjacent to the southern edge of the excavation area. The south-western extent of the building lay outside the excavation area.

A low earthwork mound in this area may have represented the unexcavated portion of the building.

The footings on the southern side of the building (1101) were probably built up to achieve a level floor within the structure. The wall was defined on its inside by a line of larger limestone blocks (1099) forming a boundary between the foundations and the lowest make-up levels of the internal floors. The floor make-up layer consisted of a thin (0.14m) horizon of mid-brown clay-silt containing abundant small crushed limestone fragments. There did not appear to be a true floor surface, nor was there any evidence for a hearth. In the centre of the building a large shallow pit [1108] was open at the time the building was constructed; it was filled with the floor makeup.

The area containing the building sloped steeply to the south and it is likely that the upper levels to



PLATE 1 Building 1, looking south.

the north had been destroyed by scarping or ploughing. The building was probably of timber framed construction, on sill beams.

To the north of the building was an ironstone spread, which may have represented an external yard surface. The relationship between this surface and the building is unclear but they are thought to be contemporary.

Cutting the ironstone spread was a shallow sided gully [1071] orientated approximately east-west. This feature was about 1.5metres wide and 0.25 metres deep. The fill (1072) was dated by pottery to the fourteenth century.

Building 2. About 7 metres east of Building 1 was a small building, represented mainly by a single stone thick spread of limestone fragments (1103), interpreted as the plough spread foundation of a further building. Its northern and western sides were rectilinear in plan, aligned with a gully on the west. The other visible side was very amorphous. The structure did not appear either in or to the north of the evaluation trench to the north. A concentration of Brill-Boarstall wares dated to the thirteenth century (1226) lay on the stone spread, as well as a number of small finds of similar date,

including a mirror case (small find 9B). The building may be slightly earlier than that to its west.

A north-south gully [1080] lay about 5 metres east of Building 1. About one metre north of this feature was a further gully [1213] lying perpendicular to [1080]. This was about 0.35m wide by about 0.12m deep. These features probably represent property boundaries.

An irregularly spaced line of very ephemeral post holes [1207][1209][1211][1221], one of which was dated to the thirteenth century, ran roughly parallel to and about a metre south of the east-west orientated gully [1213] and may have been associated with this feature. A large pit [1215] lay immediately north of the gully.

An irregularly spaced line of post holes [1207] [1209][1211][1221] ran approximately east-west about a metre south of the east-west orientated gully [1213] and may have been associated with this feature. The post holes were all very ephemeral and measured about 0.25m wide by about 0.05m deep. The fill of [1211] (1212), contained pottery dated to the thirteenth century. The alignment of these post holes was roughly similar to that of a group of postholes found in evaluation Trench 1.

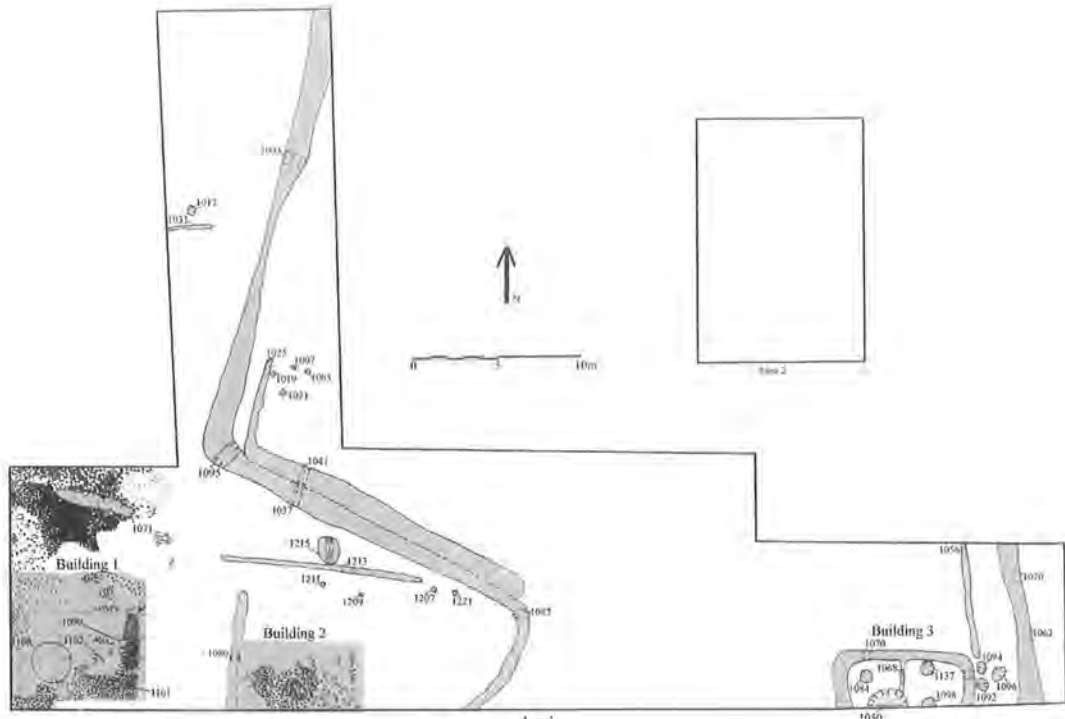


FIGURE 6 Phase 6 – 14th Century.

Building 3 Thirty metres east of building 2 lay building 3. It was defined by a rectilinear gully [1070], about 8.5 metres wide. Within the gully was a hearth [1098] and it is presumed that the gully marked the building's extent. The hearth was a shallow reddish brown layer of burnt clay. The building was not fully exposed.

A small gully [1068] was cut by a large pit [1050], also containing thirteenth century pottery, could have been an internal division. Within the building were two smaller discrete features, [1084] and [1137] which may have been post pits.

Immediately to the east of the building were three discrete features. A small shallow thirteenth century pit [1096] contained (1095), a soft mid-greyish brown silty-clay with occasional charcoal flecks and very small flecks of daub. A second small sub-circular pit [1092] was about 0.4m wide and 0.09m deep. The fill (1091) was again a soft light greyish-brown silty-clay with charcoal flecks. A third feature, [1094] was similarly proportioned to [1092] and had a similar fill. It contained no dating evidence.

Terminating immediately north of [1094] was a

north-south gully [1056], the fill (1057) again dated by pottery to the thirteenth century.

The easternmost feature in the excavation area was a north-south ditch [1062], [1070]. No finds were made during the excavation but the evaluation recovered material dating the feature to the thirteenth to fourteenth century. It is likely that the ditch is a property boundary.

Interpretation

During the thirteenth century the area was used for domestic occupation, with houses along the road frontage, the large ditch [1003] apparently separates buildings 1 and 2 from building 3. The houses were apparently aligned along the present main road, which had been established by that date. Abandonment of the buildings seems to have taken place at some time during the fourteenth century.

Phase 6: Fourteenth Century (Figure 7)

A large north-south ditch [2005], some 4 metres wide and 1.6 metres deep (Figure 8) ran roughly at right angles to the current main road through the village, was dug across the site. It was later re-cut.

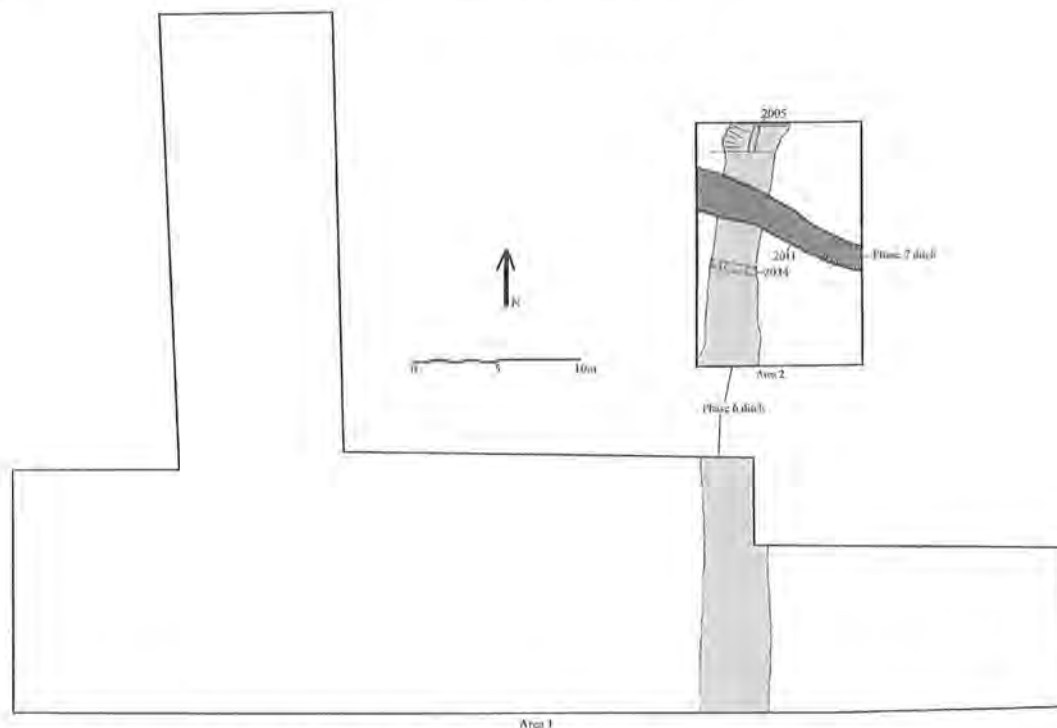


FIGURE 7 Ashendon Phase 6 & 7 –14th Century & Post-Medieval.

A fill of the original cut contained fourteenth century pottery. It is unclear when the ditch was finally filled, although it probably took place before the sixteenth century.

Phase 7: Post-Medieval (Figure 7)

A ditch approximately east-west [2011], cut the Phase 6 ditch [2005]. The primary fill contained the skeleton of a cow, thought to be a relatively modern breed (2014). Sherds found within the fill sealing the cow burial, dated it to the sixteenth century or later.

Interpretation

As that the ditch does not appear to relate to any feature shown on the 1641 map of Ashendon, it had probably already been filled by this date. It may represent the subdivision of the site into fields at this time.

Modern Features

Several modern features were identified during the excavation. A machine-cut cable trench [1073] was excavated but not recorded in detail, while the

stone covered top of an obviously modern feature [1225], which contained pieces of plastic was left unexcavated.

Discussion & Conclusions

The character of Iron Age activity is not known. No buildings were recorded on the site and much of the Iron Age pottery was redeposited. The ditch may represent a field or domestic enclosure boundary, possibly with a fence line leading up the slope from it. The likelihood is that the focus of the settlement was on the higher ground towards the church.

Evidence for Roman activity is more limited, with a single sherd of pottery providing a tentative date for a large pit. Several Roman sherds, including an unstratified piece of box flue may indicate occupation activity nearby, but again the site does not appear to be the focus of Roman occupation in the area.

Several sherds of St Neots ware were found during the excavation, indicating late Saxon activity in the area, although no structural evidence was found from this period. It may be that occupation was nearer the church and manor house.

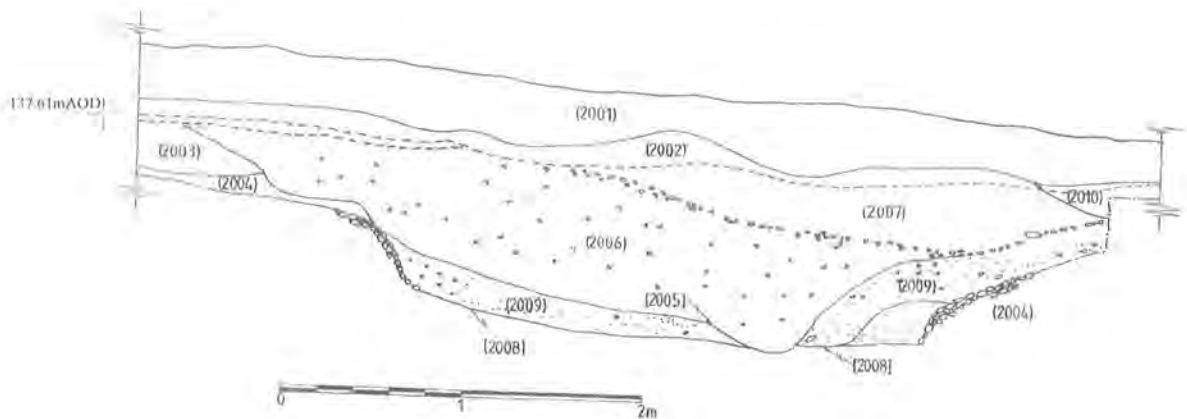


FIGURE 8 NW Section of ditches [2005] and [2008].

The twelfth century saw the site used for animal enclosures, presumably with domestic occupation nearby. By this time, if not before, the church had apparently been established on its present site and presumably this formed the focus of domestic activity in Ashendon, with the excavation site on the periphery.

The main phase of medieval activity occurred during the thirteenth century, with occupation probably ceasing by the middle of the fourteenth century. This chronology broadly reflects that noted at the village of Caldecotte in Milton Keynes, some 35 kilometres to the north-east (Zeepvat *et al* 1994, 59).

The three thirteenth century buildings are by no means identical. Two used stone foundations, probably with crushed stone floors. Of the three, Building 1 is the best preserved. A parallel for this building may be found at Forge Cottage, Botolph Claydon, 10 kilometres to the north (Airs & Broad 1998, 45 & Figure 3). Building 3 had no sign of stone foundations or floors, but unlike the others, contained evidence for a hearth.

The excavation suggests that during the medieval period, Ashendon contained timber domestic structures, as is the case at Caldecotte, Westbury and Tattenhoe (Zeepvat *et al* 1994, 94). The Ashendon buildings were perhaps of sill-beam construction, stone being used for foundations, with crushed limestone basal layers for floors. There was no evidence for mortar upper floor

layers. There was a notable absence of roof tile, suggesting the use of thatch or wooden shingles. The alignment of the buildings indicates that the current main road line was probably in existence in the medieval period.

It appears that the abandonment of the buildings, presumably due to settlement shrinkage, was later followed by subdivision in the fourteenth century. There was a hiatus in activity between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, with the area presumably being used for pasture.

The 1641 map of Ashendon shows the 'Wid: Cherry' house in the vicinity of the excavation site, however it seems likely that the house was located to the north of the excavation site, fronting onto a back lane to its north and not onto the present main road.

THE FINDS

The Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

Introduction

The pottery assemblage comprised 422 sherds with a total weight of 5134g. The assemblage consisted of a range of pottery types from several periods, including Iron Age, Romano-British, Early/Middle Saxon, medieval and post-medieval wares. The medieval wares suggest that the main occupation at the site was between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries.



FIGURE 9 Section from a Map of Ashendon of 1641 (Bucks County Record Office).

Iron Age

Full sherds (800g) of Iron Age pottery were noted. The fabrics are typical of the pottery of the period in the region, and can be paralleled at sites such as Pennyland, Milton Keynes (Knight, 1993).

Fabrics

F1: Coarse Shell. Moderate to dense plate-like shell fragments up to 10mm. 57 sherds, 464g, MNV = 0.04.

F2: Fine Shell. Sparse to moderate, shell fragments up to 2mm in a fine sandy matrix. 31 sherds, 336g, MNV (Minimum Number of Vessels) = 0.21.

Chronology

Very few chronologically diagnostic sherds were noted, apart from three simple everted rims, and two bodysherds with scored decoration. These suggest a middle Iron Age date, but this date cannot be advanced with confidence on the basis of such flimsy evidence.

Romano-British

Three sherds (131g) were noted: one from the shoulder of a large, grog-tempered storage vessel, another the fragment of a footring base from a South Gaulish samian bowl, and the third a sherd from a Nene Valley colour-coat bowl. All were redeposited, with the possible exception of the samian.

Early/Middle Saxon

Two sherds (12g) were noted, both of which were redeposited.

Fabrics

Chaff-tempered. Moderate chaff voids up to 4mm. 1 sherd, 4g, MNV = 0.

Fine quartz. Moderate to dense sub-angular quartz up to 0.5mm. 1 sherd, 8g, MNV = 0.

These fabrics are typical of the handmade Anglo-Saxon pottery of the region, and can be paralleled at sites such as Pennyland, Milton Keynes (Blinkhorn 1993).

Chronology

It is impossible to date undecorated Anglo-Saxon pottery other than to within the broad period c AD 450–850. The chaff-tempered sherd is undecorated, but the quartz-tempered sherd has incised slash decoration, which suggests a fifth or sixth-century date.

Late Saxon, Medieval and Post-Medieval

All the fabric types noted are well-known in the region, and, where appropriate, have been recorded using the coding system employed by the Milton Keynes Archaeological Unit (eg. Mynard and Zeepvat 1992). The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Appendix 1.

Fabrics

St. Neots Ware (MK SNC1). c AD 900–1100 (Denham 1985). Fabric moderate to dense finely crushed fossil shell, with varying quantities of quartz and/or ironstone. Usually purplish-black, black or grey, with fairly fine, dense inclusions. Main forms small jars with sagging bases, although a few lamps are known. 14 sherds, 114g, MNV = 0.16.

Stamford Ware (MK MS19). c AD 900–1200 (Kilmurry 1980). Wheel-thrown. White, pink, buff or grey fabric, usually with sparse to dense quartz up to 0.5mm, occasional black or red ironstone up to 1mm. Often glazed with yellow, pale or sage green glaze. Jars, bowls, Pegeaux pitchers, cups, crucibles, candle sticks. 4 sherds, 66g, MNV = 0.

Cotswold-type ware, (MK MSC1) c AD 975–1150 (Mellor 1994). Slow-wheel made. Fairly hard, dark blue-grey fabric with moderate sub-rounded white pink and grey quartzite up to 1mm. Sparse to moderate calcareous material, including ooliths, up to 2mm. Rare haematite up to 1mm. Mainly 'barrel' jars with triangular rims or more shouldered examples with high everted rims, bases usually sagging. Probably manufactured at a number of sources in the Cotswolds region (ibid.). 22 sherds, 303g, MNV = 0.16.

South-West Oxfordshire Ware. Oxfordshire fabric OXBF (Mellor 1994, 52–54). c 1075 – early thirteenth century. Handmade wares with moderate to dense angular flint up to 2mm, moderate to dense quartz up to 1mm. 8 sherds, 72g, MNV = 0.07.

Oxford ware. Oxfordshire fabric OXY, c L eleventh – fourteenth century (Mellor 1994). Abundant sub-angular quartz with some rounded clay pellets and occasional polycrystalline quartz. Handmade and wheel-thrown vessels. Both sherds from this site were glazed. 2 sherds, 9g, MNV = 0.

East Wiltshire Ware. Oxfordshire fabric OXAQ (Mellor 1994, 100–6). Early twelfth – early fifteenth century. Coil built, wheel-finished. Similar fabric to OXBF, but finer flint (c 1mm or less), and thinner-walled with visible turning marks. 4 sherds, 25g, MNV = 0.15.

Shelly Coarseware: (MK MC1). AD 1100–1400. Handmade/Wheel finished. Products of numerous known and very probably many unknown kilns on the Jurassic limestone of west Northants/east Bedfordshire. Similarity of fabrics makes it virtually impossible to differentiate products of individual kilns. Pale buff through virtually all colours to black, moderate to dense shelly limestone fragments up to 3mm, and any amount of ironstone, quartz and flint. Full range of medieval vessel types, especially jars and bowls, and ‘Top Hat’ jars. Vessels very rarely decorated, although rectangular-notched rouletting and wavy lines do sometimes occur. Jug handles sometimes slashed, stabbed and/or with thumbled edges. Large storage vessels occasionally have thumbled or, rarely, rouletted/stamped applied strips. 10 sherds, 95g, MNV = 0.

Medieval Grey Sandy Ware (MK MS3). Mid eleventh – late fourteenth century, common in assemblages in the region during twelfth – thirteenth century. Hard-fired, medium to coarse-surfaced sandy ware. Inclusion range from 0.3 – 0.8 mm, and predominantly sub-angular and sub-rounded quartz. Possibly manufactured at Great Brickhill, Buckinghamshire. Jars, bowls, jugs and skillets known. 40 sherds, 397g, MNV = 0.19.

Brill/Boarstall ware, (MK MC9). AD 1200–?1600 (Mellor 1994). Wheel-thrown. Hard buff, orange, pale pink, or yellow-grey fabric, sometimes with fine ‘pimpley’ surface. Rare to common sub-angular to sub-rounded orange, clear and grey quartzite up to 0.5mm, rare subrounded to sub-angular red ironstone up to 1mm. Mottled pale to dark glossy green exterior glaze, often with copper filings. Applied rouletted strips common, sometimes in red-firing clay, rosettes, spirals also occur. Usually ‘three-decker’ or baluster jugs, although puzzle jugs also known. Jars, bowls, etc occur at end of medieval period. Later vessels plainer, and include the full range of medieval and early post-medieval vessel types. 217 sherds, 2914g, MNV = 1.82.

Overfired Brill/Boarstall ‘proto-stoneware’. Oxford fabric OXAP (Mellor 1994, 117). Very hard, semi-vitrified, brown or purple version of OXAM. Such vessels can be as early as the thirteenth century, but most appear to be 14th century or later. 3 sherds, 80g, MNV = 0.

Potterspury ware, (MK MC6). ?AD 1250/75–?1600. Wheel-thrown. Many kilns known in eponymous village, not yet possible to relate fabrics to manufactories. Fabric usually buff with grey core, although brick-red fabric with buff or grey core also known. Glazed patchily on exterior of jugs and interior of base of bowls, usually glossy green. Bowls often have incised wavy line, jugs finger-grooved on shoulder. Moderate to dense sub-rounded quartz up to 0.5mm, rare black or red ironstone and calcareous inclusions. Jars, bowls and pitchers common, but cisterns, cups, pipkins, costrels, bottles chafing dishes dripping pans and lids known from the later kilns. 1 sherd, 11g, MNV = 0.

Red Earthenware (MK TLMS12). sixteenth – seventeenth century. Wheel-thrown. Hard-fired, slightly sandy utilitarian earthenware with a pale core and orange-red surfaces and an pale olive-green to clear glaze. Probably a product of the Brill/Boarstall kilns. 4 sherds, 105g, MNV = 0.

Chronology

All of the post-Roman contexts containing pottery, with the exception of 2013 (sixteenth century), can be dated to within the twelfth – fourteenth centuries, and all can be placed within one of three phases, based on the presence of major wares or vessel forms, as follows:

- Phase 4: twelfth century
- Phase 5: thirteenth century
- Phase 6: fourteenth century

The pottery occurrence by MNV per fabric type, per phase is shown in Table 1.

There were no context-specific groups dateable to before the twelfth century, despite potentially earlier wares occurring. In most cases, these had a use-life which extended into the twelfth century or beyond. The lack of any of the common wares dateable to the fifteenth century, such as Tudor Green or Cistercian ware, indicates that the site had been abandoned by that time.

TABLE 1 Post-Roman pottery occurrence by major wares per phase, expressed as a percentage of the MNV per phase assemblage.

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Total MNV
SNC1	45.4%	6.1%	0	0.16
MSC1	54.6%	5.6%	0	0.16
OXBf	0	1.7%	7.4%	0.07
OXAQ	0	8.3%	0	0.15
MS3	0	10.6%	0	0.19
MC19	—	67.8%	92.6%	1.72
Total MNV	0.11	1.80	0.54	2.45

Vessel Use

Vessel types were entirely limited to jars, bowls and jugs, as shown in Table 2. This pattern, especially the increase in use of jugs at the expense of jars, is typical of the medieval period, and can be paralleled at many sites in the region, and is probably the result of the increasing use of metal cooking vessels during the medieval period. The lack of any developed high-medieval vessel types, such as specialist table and cooking wares (eg dripping dishes, skillets and chafing dishes) further supports the suggestion that the medieval activity at the site had ceased before the fifteenth century, and further indicates that occupation probably did not extend much beyond the middle of the fourteenth century.

TABLE 2 Vessel Occurrence per phase expressed as a percentage of the MNV per phase group, all fabrics.

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Total MNV
Jars	45.4%	24.4%	7.4%	0.53
Bowls	54.6%	10.6%	27.8%	0.40
Jugs	0	65.0%	64.8%	1.52
Total MNV	0.11	1.80	0.54	2.45

The Small Finds by Jane Cowgill

Introduction.

The finds were all recovered during surface cleaning; there were no stratified finds from the site.

The majority were found in the vicinity of the medieval buildings. The copper alloy objects are all relatively stable and in a good condition, however, most of the iron finds are in an advanced

state of deterioration, flaking and beginning to fall apart.

Catalogue

No. 1, COPPER-ALLOY BUCKLE AND BUCKLE PLATE, MEDIEVAL.

Oval buckle frame with integral cast, forked spacers for the buckleplate. The frame of the buckle is lipped and bevelled. Only one of the plate sheets survives and this is shorter than the spacer bars; it has traces of white metal solder on the back. The only rivet is also made from copper alloy. The London examples are well finished (Egan, 1991, 78–9) but this example is not particularly well cast or finished. Date Mid fourteenth – Early fifteenth Century.

No. 2, IRON KNIFE, MEDIEVAL.

A scale-tang knife with a complete blade (length 125mm) but the tang has probably broken off at the first rivet hole through it (length 15mm). A fine, elegant thin blade with an inlaid makers' mark similar to number 163 in Cowgill et al. 1987, 21 which has tentatively been identified as the letter I. (The mark will be on the left side of the blade as with all modern knives.) Knives were carried by men and women, usually in scabbards, for use as and when required. Table knives were not supplied and guests would normally be expected to bring their own. Mid fourteenth – Mid fifteenth Century.

No. 3, IRON TOOL, POST-MEDIEVAL.

Complete, probable file with a blade length of 190mm (7½"); short tang of 50mm and a domed thimble acting as a crude shoulder band in which traces of the wooden handle survive. The blade has a D-shaped section and a shaped sloping end; all the angles are rounded. The thimble has machine made indentations and will therefore post date 1620 (Holmes 1988).

No. 4, IRON KNIFE, MEDIEVAL.

Whittle-tang knife with an incomplete blade (length 44mm, maximum width 15mm) with a complete tang (length 32mm). There is an inlaid makers' mark that may consist of an upper and lower element, the upper perhaps being a crown. Probable Mid fourteenth – Mid fifteenth Century.

No. 5, IRON SCREW, MODERN.

Screw with missing head. same as find numbers 8 and 9A.

No. 6, IRON OBJECT.

Unclear whether complete or fragmentary. A rod (length 100mm) which tapers to a blunt point at one end and has been forged to a thinner bar at the other, with a short length at right angles to the main shaft. Maximum width 9mm, 7mm thick.

No. 7, COPPER-ALLOY BUCKLE PIN, MEDIEVAL.

Cast pin with raised rectangular grip. Probably fourteenth Century.

No. 8, IRON SCREW, MODERN.

Complete screw, same as find numbers 5 and 9A. Length 80mm.

No 9A, IRON SCREW, MODERN.

Incomplete screw, same as find numbers 5 and 8.

No. 9B, COPPER-ALLOY MIRROR CASE, MEDIEVAL.

A rare example of an almost complete, robust hinged mirror case with the glass intact inside on one side. The object is composed of two cast discs, each of which have one lug on one side and two on the other and these have all been drilled through. One pair act as a hinge for the case (the copper-alloy pin is still in place) while the other pair could have been used with a removable pin that held the case closed. (It is unusual for this second pair to be perforated). One disc has a third,

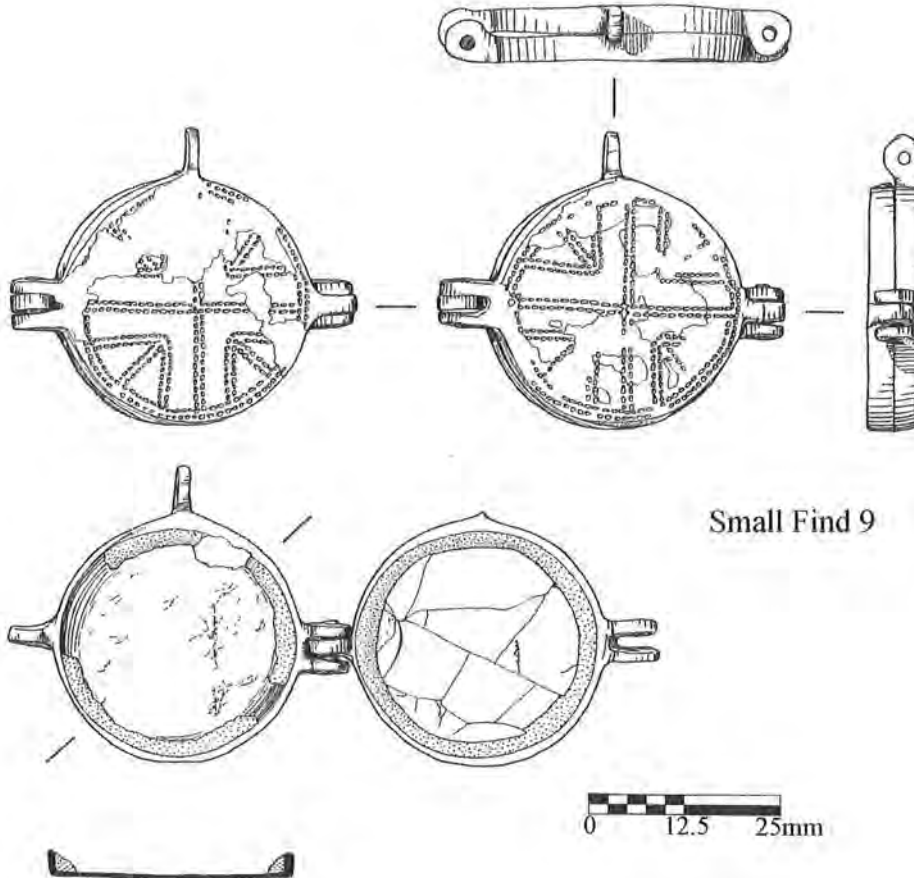


FIGURE 10 Small Finds illustrations.

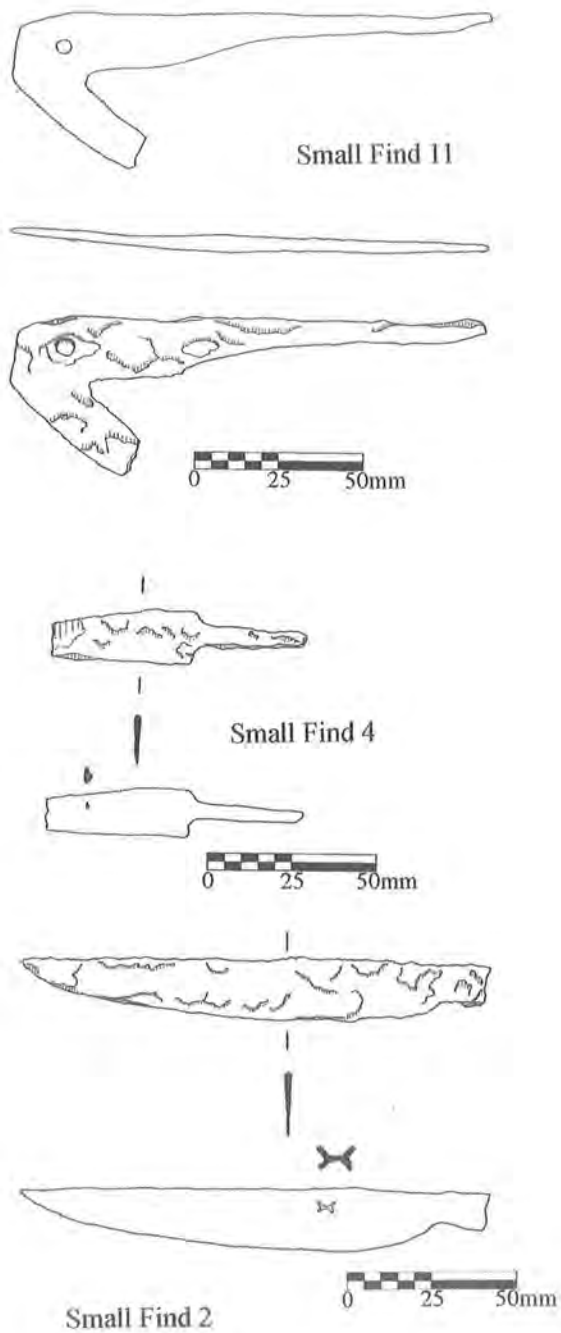


FIGURE 11 Small Finds illustrations.

single perforated lug and it is likely that a chain was attached to this to secure the closing pin to the object (this is also an unusual feature). The two discs have clearly been cast in the same mould, the third lug that exists on one has been cut off the second. The discs are probably cast in gunmetal, which consists of significant amounts of zinc and tin in addition to copper with a smaller quantity of lead (for results of mirror analyses, see for example Bayley 1990). The calcium carbonate cement that held the glass in place, survives in both discs; on the side where the glass is missing, the original location of the edge of the glass lens is apparent. On some mirrors a lead-rich surface layer has been identified covering this cement. It has been suggested by Bayley that it was applied as galena (lead sulphide) to create a black surface and was added for aesthetic rather than functional purposes (Bayley 1990). The object was found closed and was opened by the Conservation Laboratory (pers. Comm. R Sell), and therefore it is likely that the glass on one side was missing when the object was lost. The surviving glass is slightly convex (although broken) and probably has on the back a thin layer of lead foil which, with the glass, provided the reflective surface (Egan 1991, 361).

The decoration is identical on both discs, and consists of a circular band around the edge of the disc enclosing an even armed cross with central divisions through the cross arms and diagonal lines from the edge into the angle of the cross arms. All the lines are double and consist of punched opposing triangles.

This example is more elaborate than those found either in London or in Winchester. The London examples appear to have been current in the late fourteenth century (Egan 1990, 365). They were probably a fairly expensive item but one that was nevertheless mass-produced. There were craftsmen in London during the fourteenth century who called themselves 'mirrorers' but there is also a record of 1,000 mirrors being imported in 1384 probably from the Low Countries (Bayley et al. 1984).

NO. 10, IRON ARROWHEAD, MEDIEVAL.

Complete, apart from the very end of the tip (length 90mm). A leaf-shaped head with a short central spine and a long socket (length 50mm). The socket may have a perforation to take a pin to secure it

more firmly to the shaft (see X-Radiograph OCA 2 2000). A multi-functional arrowhead that could be used for either hunting or military purposes. Date range thirteenth – sixteenth Century.

No. 11, IRON OBJECT, MEDIEVAL?

Possibly a structural fitting or associated with lighting. There is a spike at one end possibly to fix the object into a wall with a thin, broad (width 20mm) V-shaped extension with a nail head, possibly originally two, remaining of the nail/rivets used to attach it to another component. Length 140mm.

No. 12, IRON SWIVEL RING.

Length 84mm, ring diameter 47mm.

No. 13, IRON BAR.

Bar with a rectangular section, tapers to a blunt point at one end. Length 85mm, maximum width 8mm, 5mm thick.

The Animal Bone by D.J.Rackham

A small assemblage of 212 bone and marine shell fragments was collected by hand from the excavations at Main Street, Ashendon. The assemblage is dated to the Iron Age and medieval periods, with a few fragments of Romano-British date. This material has been identified and recorded following the procedures of the Environmental Archaeology Consultancy and an archive catalogue produced. The bones and shells are summarised in Table 1 and cattle, horse, sheep/goat, sheep, pig, dog and oyster have been identified.

The bone is in good condition with little evidence of surface erosion or pitting. A few of the bones show some deterioration but there is no evidence for this being greater in the older Iron Age assemblage than the medieval material. Nearly 19% of the bone fragments show evidence of dog chewing and a small proportion carry evidence of butchery and burning.

Very few of the bones were measurable, but some information on the age at death of the animals is present in the form of fused and unfused epiphyses and jaws. The cattle bones are primarily derived from adult animals but a single tibia in context 1086 derives from a small calf. The sheep bones include both juvenile and adult animals, while the pig bones derive from immature animals.

TABLE I Frequency of fragments of bone and marine shell in each period.

species	nat	IA	IA?	RB	12th	12th?	13th	13th?	14th	14th?	16th	und
Horse				1				1				
Cattle	2	5	2	2	10	2	10	2		1	3	
Cattle size	2	5	4	1	5	5	32	2	1	3		1
Sheep/goat		10	2	1	6	3	14	1	5	1		1
Sheep							1					
Sheep size	1	6	1		1	1	17			1		1
Pig	1		2			3	13	1				
Dog							3					
Small animal							1					
Unidentified	1	5	1				3					
Oyster								1				

Nat – natural; IA – Iron Age; RB – Romano-British; 12th – twelfth century AD, etc; und – undated

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