

BRONZE AGE BURIALS, MEDIEVAL PITS AND A POST-MEDIEVAL BUILDING AT 90 HIGH STREET, MARLOW

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with contributions by Andy Chapman, Malin Holst, Anna Fotaki,
Paul Blinkhorn, Pat Chapman and Stephanie Vann

An open-area excavation and watching brief were undertaken by Northamptonshire Archaeology, now MOLA Northampton, on land to the rear of 90 High Street, Marlow, prior to redevelopment of the site. A medieval pit, dated to the 12th-14th centuries, contained a single sherd of early Bronze Age Beaker pottery and a pile of redeposited disarticulated human bones from two juveniles, which have been radiocarbon dated to the early Bronze Age. It appears that two Bronze Age burials, possibly a single burial of siblings, perhaps even twins, had been disturbed in the medieval period, the bones collected with some care and redeposited in a pit. While only two medieval pits had survived, sealed by a soil horizon, there was a small assemblage of medieval pottery comprising a range of domestic wares, probably from nearby buildings on the street frontage. Above and disturbing the soil horizon was a small building with chalk walls, constructed no earlier than the later 16th century. The presence of brick additions indicates a long period of use and refurbishment into the 18th century and perhaps extending into the later 19th century, when the Ordnance Survey records a building in this location, but there was no material evidence to confirm a date of demolition. Thereafter, it formed part of a garden area to the rear of the street frontage.

INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire Archaeology, now MOLA Northampton, was commissioned by Richard Woodeson Associates on behalf of Talmage Homes to carry out an archaeological open area excavation and watching brief on a development area behind 90 High Street, Marlow, Buckinghamshire (NGR SU 8501 8634; Figs 1 & 2). The site is located on relatively level ground on the west side of High Street, at a height of c.30m above Ordnance Datum (Fig. 2). The underlying geology has been mapped by the British Geological Survey of Great Britain as comprising White Chalk subgroup (BGS Geoindex; <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex>).

The excavation was carried out in March-April 2013, following desk-based assessment (Gilbert 2011) and trial-trench evaluation (Williams 2012). The client report (Markus 2014) is available through the Historic Environment Record and online through the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) Library of Unpublished Fieldwork Reports.

The site records and finds will be deposited with Buckinghamshire County Museum, under accession number AYBCM 2013.11.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The summary presented below is drawn from the *Marlow Historic Town Assessment* (EH 2012) and the site desk-based assessment (Gilbert 2011).

The Middle Thames Valley, which extends from Goring, near Reading, to central London, has been a favoured occupation area since Palaeolithic times (Gibbard 1986). Around the outskirts of Marlow, a number of prehistoric sites and finds have been identified. The former brickworks in the east of Marlow, located at Little Dene, produced a number of finds dating back to the Palaeolithic period, including four hand-axes, dated to 500,000–180,000 BC, with further examples of the same period from Dean's Pit to the north (HER 0194600000). The former brickworks also produced over 400 Mesolithic flint finds including

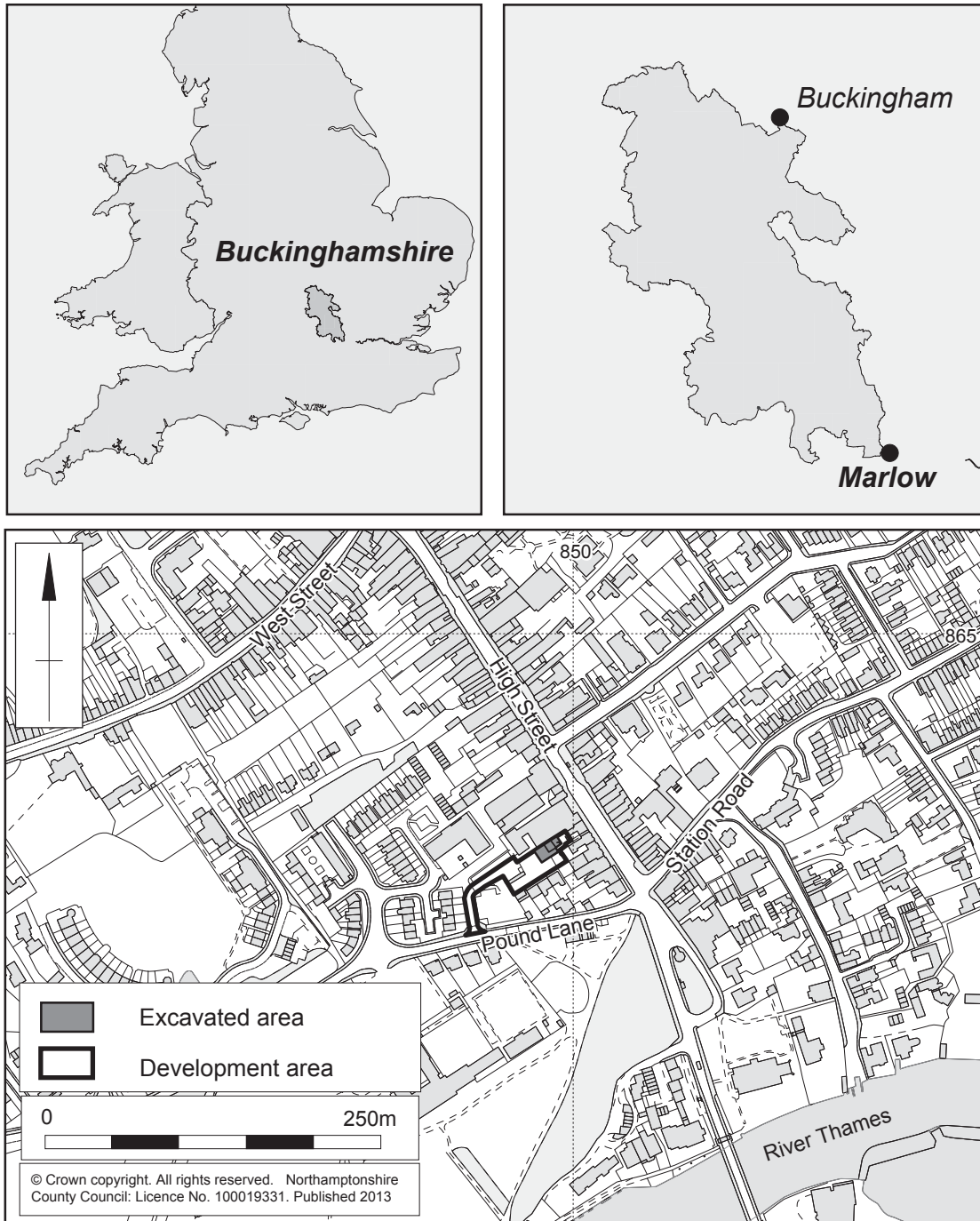


FIGURE 1 Site location

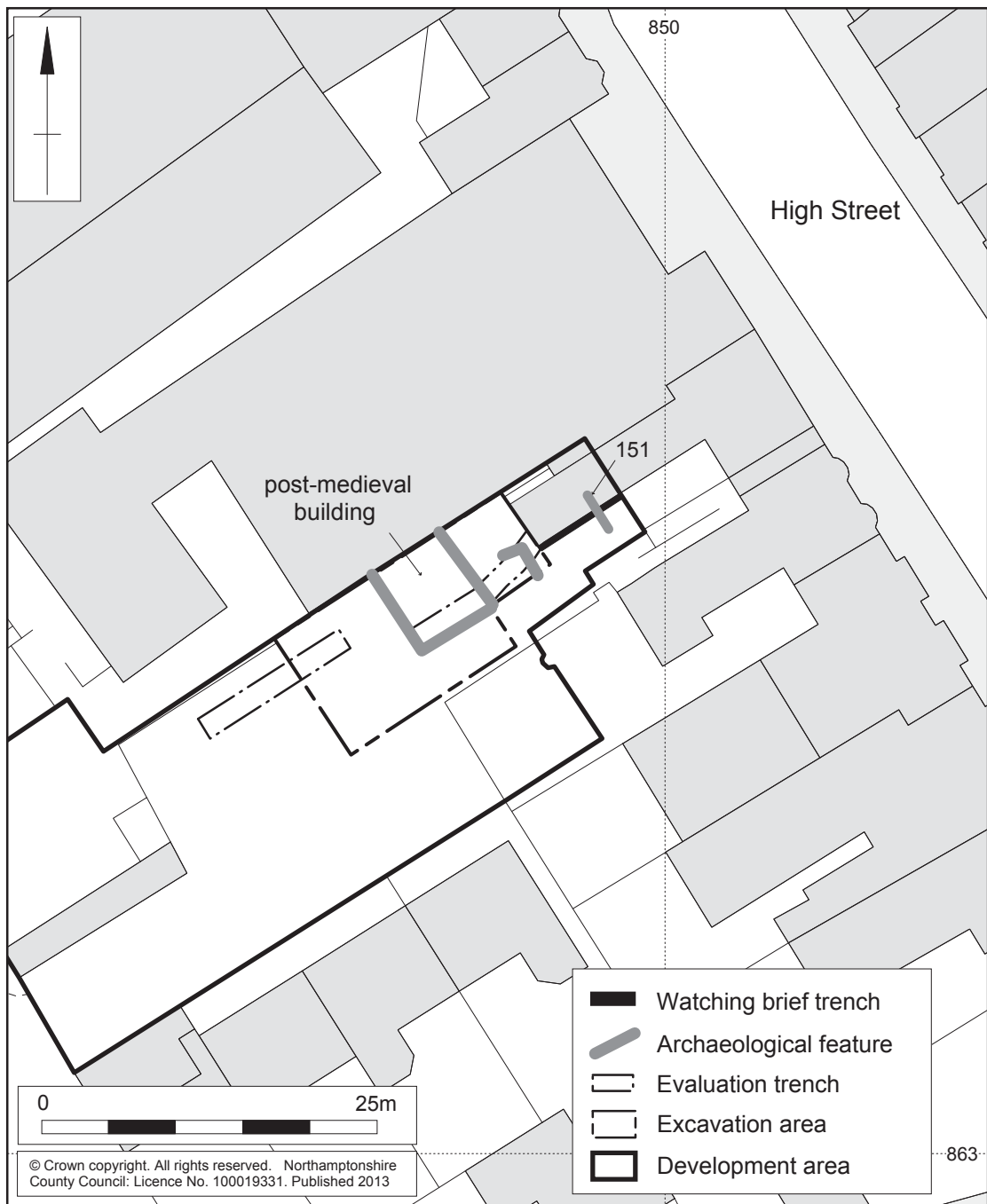


FIGURE 2 General site plan

flake/blades, burins and cores, as well as four tranchet axeheads, with a further tranchet axehead discovered at West Street, towards the centre of the town (HER 0212200000). Mesolithic/Neolithic artefacts have also been recovered from Warren Wood to the north-east of Marlow, as well as Bronze Age and Iron Age pottery.

Three burnt mounds dating to 2475–1385 BC were excavated in 2006 in advance of sand and gravel extraction at Little Marlow Quarry (HER 0614600000) (Richmond *et al* 2006). Further to the west, at Lower Grounds Farm, there is a Bronze Age Barrow cemetery and a series of Iron Age enclosures and ring ditches recorded by Lidar survey (HER 0116100000). In addition to known monuments, a wealth of prehistoric artefacts have been found in the River Thames including; Neolithic axes, knives, arrowheads, scrapers, a chisel, sickle, cores and flakes, three Neolithic polished axes, a middle to late Bronze Age rapier, a late Bronze Age sword and a socketed bronze axe, an early Iron Age spearhead and two Iron Age currency bars.

There is sparse evidence for Romano-British activity within the town. However, to the north of the site, during gravel extraction at Hillside, fragments of painted wall plaster (HER 1188901022) and pottery (0188900000) are dated to the Romano-British period.

The High Street site lies within an area of archaeological interest, and within the Marlow Conservation Area. The town lies on the banks of the river Thames and was formerly referred to as Great Marlow. Evidence suggests that there has been a settlement on the site since at least the Anglo-Saxon period. The earliest record of the town dates from AD1015, where it is referred to as *Merelafan* in the *Codex Diplomaticus Aevi Saxonici*. Documentary sources indicate that the town became a borough in the 12th century, when it was mentioned regarding a reference to burgage rights (Pipe Rolls 29, Henry II). In 1278 the town gained a market charter and a fair.

Pertinent to the present investigation is the phasing and development of the town in the medieval period, in particular the High Street. The Great Marlow Historic Town Assessment suggests two theories. The first is that the town developed around St Peters Street and the church, with subsequent urban growth in the 12th and 13th centuries, during which period the development of the High

Street and associated burgage plots occurred. Alternatively, it is possible that the High Street and the burgage plots testify to the earlier development of the town.

Within close proximity to the excavated area stand the remnants of Wethered's Brewery, which was operational from the mid-18th century until the late 20th century. By the mid-19th century it employed around 50 people, produced 24,500 barrels a year, and owned or leased over 100 pubs in Buckinghamshire (EH 2012).

A number of archaeological investigations are recorded in the vicinity of the site. A possible dwelling of wooden post-fast construction, fronting onto High Street, was identified along with a number of contemporary pits during archaeological investigations at the brewery site to the north, and adjacent to the investigation area (Williams 2012).

METHODOLOGY

The site had been machine-stripped to a depth of approximately 0.4m prior to arrival on site. The area was further machined using a mechanical excavator with a toothless ditching bucket to the depth of buried soil, 107 (see below), avoiding surviving structural remains where they were encountered. The removal of the upper levels by machine accounts for the absence of pottery dating to the 18th century or later.

All structures and features were recorded at the higher level, and then the site was re-machined to the depth of the natural substratum. The foundation trenches for the north-easternmost building were stripped to the natural substratum under continuous archaeological supervision.

The natural substratum, 139, was a mixture of orange and yellow sands with a large amount of small-medium flint gravels (Fig. 3). Medieval pits were cut into the natural and were overlain by a buried soil, 107, of orange sandy clay with a moderate amount of small flint gravels present across most of the site, apart from the north-eastern end of the excavation area, closest to the High Street. The flint-walled building was constructed at this level and above this a layer of demolition material, comprising dark grey-brown silty clay with a small amount of flint gravels and chalk lumps, covered the entire area. A series of modern disturbances to the north-west and north-east were

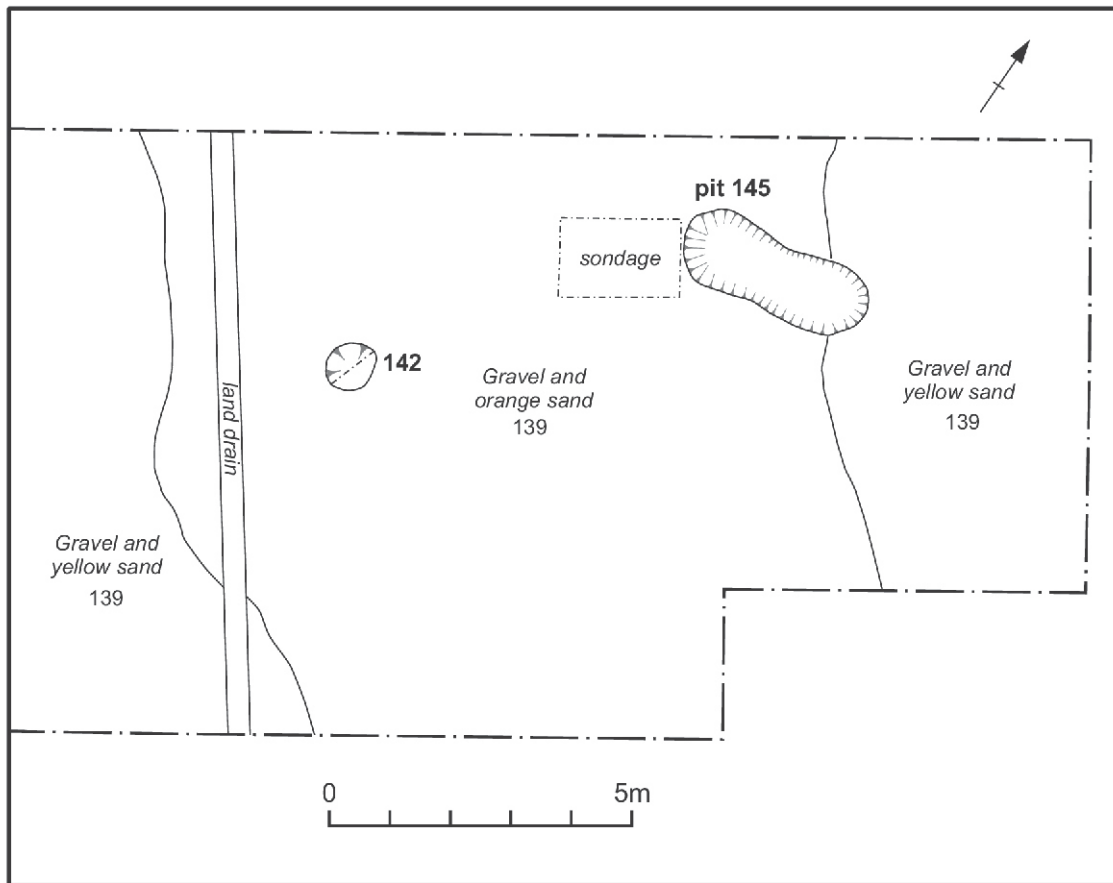


FIGURE 3 The medieval features

a result of construction work, and in the centre of the area they had been caused by large trees, recently cleared.

THE BRONZE AGE HUMAN BONE DEPOSIT

A localised deposit of disarticulated human bone was found in the primary pit fill, 146, at the south-western end of medieval pit 145 (Figs 4-6). The bone deposit was up to 0.80m long as a thin scatter, but the main mass occupied an area 0.55m in diameter and 0.25m deep, against the end of the pit. The bone deposit was excavated in five arbitrary spits, each being planned and photographed. Two of the spits are illustrated in Figure 4. The deposit contained approximately 250 bones, from two juveniles probably aged 10-12 and

10-11 years old. Amongst the bones was a sherd of Beaker pottery. Medieval pottery, dated from the 12th to 14th centuries, and animal bone was also recovered from the pit fills.

The Bronze Age skeletons

by Malin Holst and Anna Fotaki

The assemblage comprised *c.*250 bones and fragments. The majority of the remains (95%) were in the cluster at the end of the pit and the remainder was found more widely scattered as individual fragments.

The bone condition of both skeletons was moderate to very poor (Grade 3 to Grade 5). There was a variable degree of surface preservation, but moderate to severe bone erosion was observed. Both skeletons had also suffered a high degree of fragmentation and this, as well as the closeness of

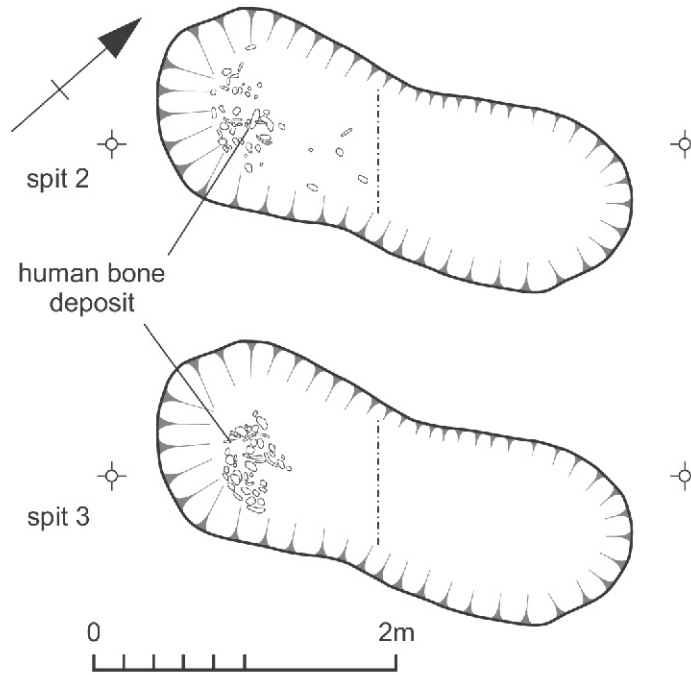


FIGURE 4 The Bronze Age human bone deposit in medieval pit 145

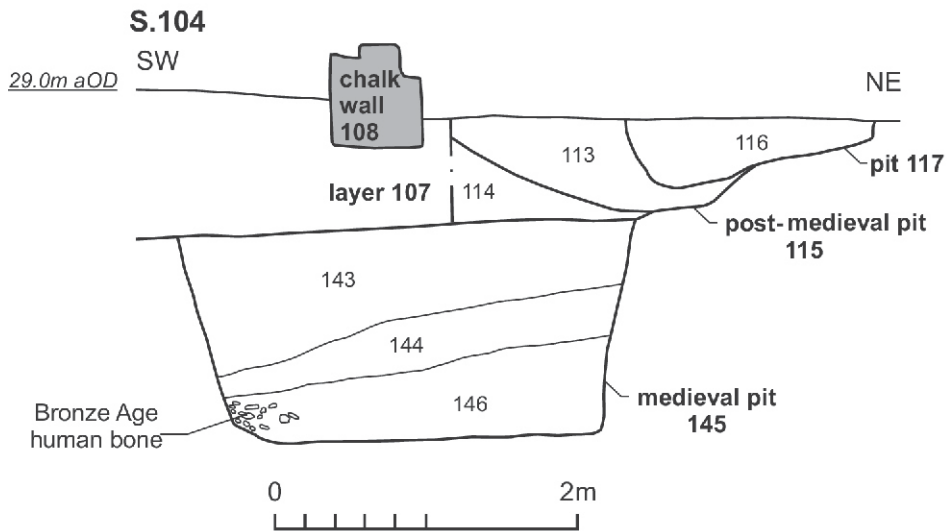


FIGURE 5 Section of medieval pit 145, also showing overlying soils and post-medieval building



FIGURE 6 Remains of Skeletons 1 and 2 in pit 145, looking south-west (scale 0.5m)



FIGURE 7 The first ribs of Skeleton 1, left, and Skeleton 2, showing the difference in size (scale 50mm)



FIGURE 8 Skeleton 1, showing state of tooth eruption (scale 10mm)

their age, hindered the correct articulation of the skeletons.

All bone elements were examined and same-sided duplicates were separated. It soon became apparent that the remains were those of two non-adults fairly close in age. However, a size difference observed in certain surviving bones did enable separation of elements based on size (Fig. 7). Those bones that could be assigned as a specific skeleton were recorded as a full skeleton and the individuals were labelled Skeleton 1 and Skeleton 2. However, due to poor preservation and similarity in age, it was not possible to ascribe bone elements to surviving crania with confidence and the same was the case for other bone elements. For Skeleton 1, 30% of the whole individual could be confidently assigned and for Skeleton 2, 25%. Bones that could not be confidently assigned to either skeleton were listed as disarticulated. Where joints were preserved, the articulation between the various options was checked and compared.

Age assessment was based on dental development and tooth eruption, and bone development, but the material was too fragmented to use long bone lengths. Skeleton 1 was an older juvenile of 10-12 years, based on dental eruption (Fig. 8) and unfused long bone epiphyses at the time of death. Skeleton 2 was also close to that age, 10-11 years, but had a deciduous molar still *in situ* in the mandible.

Little pathological information was retrieved from the two individuals. Skeleton 1 appeared to have a congenital anomaly in the cervical vertebrae, where anomalous “warping” was observed on the 1st cervical vertebrae. This is a minor congenital condition and is unlikely to have affected the child during life. *Cribra orbitalia* was present on the right surviving eye orbit of Skeleton 1, which could be a sign that this individual had experienced a period of nutritional deficiency or infection.

There was little evidence for dental disease, which is not surprising given their young ages. Both individuals had deposits of mineralised plaque on their teeth, a common finding in archaeological populations of all time periods, indicating that any oral hygiene practiced was not completely successful at removing plaque from the teeth.

Even though the dental eruption rates of the two individuals were similar, with Skeleton 1 aged 10-12 years and Skeleton 2 aged 10-11 years, the

first rib of Skeleton 2 was significantly smaller (Fig. 7), which may suggest stunted growth, rather than just a difference in size due to a difference in age. Skeleton 1 had evidence of *cribra orbitalia*, suggesting a period(s) of stress during childhood, but the comparable area of Skeleton 2 was not available for study.

Bronze Age pottery by Andy Chapman

A single body sherd of Beaker pottery, weighing 12g, was recovered from the fill 146 of pit 145. The fabric, 6-7mm thick, is hard and well fired, containing sparse small mineral inclusions. The core and inner surface are dark grey, and the inner surface has been smoothed. The outer skin is orange-brown, although the surface itself is light brown. It is decorated with bands of multiple horizontal lines of comb impressions, flanking a single surviving narrow zone, 10mm wide, which contains a saw-tooth pattern also formed from comb impressions (Fig. 9). The horizontal lines are sometimes incomplete and staggered, leaving it unclear how many lines were intended. The decorative scheme is too incomplete to enable the vessel to be reliably characterised beyond a broad early Bronze Age date, probably within the second half of the 3rd millennium BC.



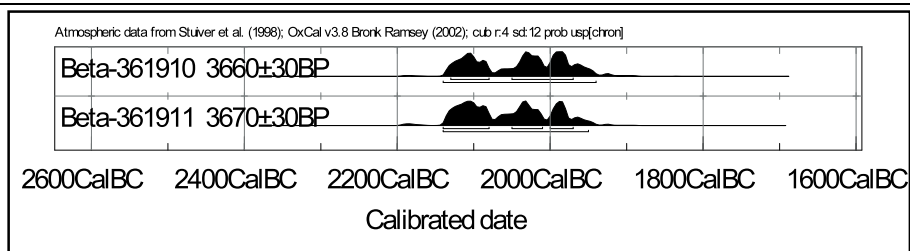
FIGURE 9 Sherd of Beaker pottery from pit 145 (scale 10mm)

Radiocarbon dating

Bone samples from the two identified individuals were submitted to Beta Analytic USA for radiocarbon dating. The results indicate that both individuals were closely contemporary, and had probably died and been buried at the same time in the early Bronze Age, 2140–1950 Cal BC (Table 1).

TABLE 1: The radiocarbon determination

Lab & Sample No.	C13/C12 N15/N14	Conventional Radiocarbon Age BP	Cal BC intercept 68% confidence 95% confidence
Beta-361910 Skeleton 1	-21.1 +9.3	3660+/-30	2030 2120-2090/2040-2010/2000-1980 2140-1950
Beta-361911 Skeleton 2	-21.1 +8.8	3670+/-30	2030 2130-2090/2050-2020/1990-1980 2140-1950



MEDIEVAL OCCUPATION

There were only two features cutting the natural substratum (Fig. 3). A small patch of *in-situ* burning, 142, consisted of a basal layer, 141, of red sandy clay 1.00m diameter and 0.08m deep, overlain by a smaller area of baked light orangey-red sandy clay, 140, 0.31m diameter and 0.04m deep. The medieval pottery recovered from fill 141 comprised five sherds of 'M4' type ware and one sherd of medieval sandy ware.

To the north was an elongated pit 145, 2.70m long, 1.35m wide, and 0.95m deep, with steep sides and a flat base (Figs 4, 5 & 10). Its primary fill was firm dark grey-brown silty clay with 5% large flint gravel inclusions, medieval pottery, animal bone, oyster shell and fired clay. At the western end of the pit was the deposit of disarticulated human bone radiocarbon dated to the early Bronze Age, discussed above. The upper fill, 143, also contained medieval pottery, some of which was later disturbed by and redeposited in the fills of pit



FIGURE 10 Pit 145 fully excavated, looking south-west

115/117, which cut down through the intervening soil horizon, 107/114.

The medieval features were sealed by buried soil 107/114, 0.50-0.75m deep, comprising of orange-brown sandy clay, which extended across the entire site. It contained a small amount of pottery, animal bone and burnt clay.

While only two cut features of medieval date had survived, it is likely that much physical evidence of medieval usage had been lost to later activity. This is indicated by the fact that 27 (40%) of the 68 sherds of medieval pottery came from post-medieval deposits associated with the post-medieval chalk-walled building. This high level of residuality indicates that there was much disturbance of those earlier deposits. The range of medieval pottery, comprising jars, bowls and jugs is typical for domestic assemblages of this period.

A POST-MEDIEVAL BUILDING

In the centre of the excavated area and cut into buried soil 107 were three walls of a building, 103, with an internal width of 5.7-6.0m and a length in excess of 7.5m (Figs 11 & 12). The wall foundation, 109, comprised large unmortared chalk lumps, 0.20-0.30m deep. The upstanding walls, 108, were 0.40-0.60m wide, with a mixture of large chalk lumps and, particularly on the southern end wall, a flint and mortar core. A sherd of red earthenware from the wall matrix suggests a construction date in the 16th century or later. An internal layer, 111, of firm, dark grey-brown silty clay, containing some gravel and small lumps of chalk, also produced a small pottery assemblage containing residual medieval pottery and single sherds of red earthenware and Border ware, which also suggests that the building was in use no earlier than the later 16th century.

At the rear of the building there was a series of additions and repairs in brick, perhaps dating to the 18th century or later. At the south-west corner was a brick quoin, 135, in bricks measuring 200 x 100 x 50mm. There were also two substantial brick buttresses, 152 and 153, abutting the west wall, measuring 1.68m and 1.40m long, 0.78m and 0.90m wide, and 0.30m and 0.25m deep respectively. Both comprised a brick facing with a rubble and mortar fill. Within the building was a small pit, 125, lined with unmortared bricks, measuring 100-150 x 100 x 60mm.

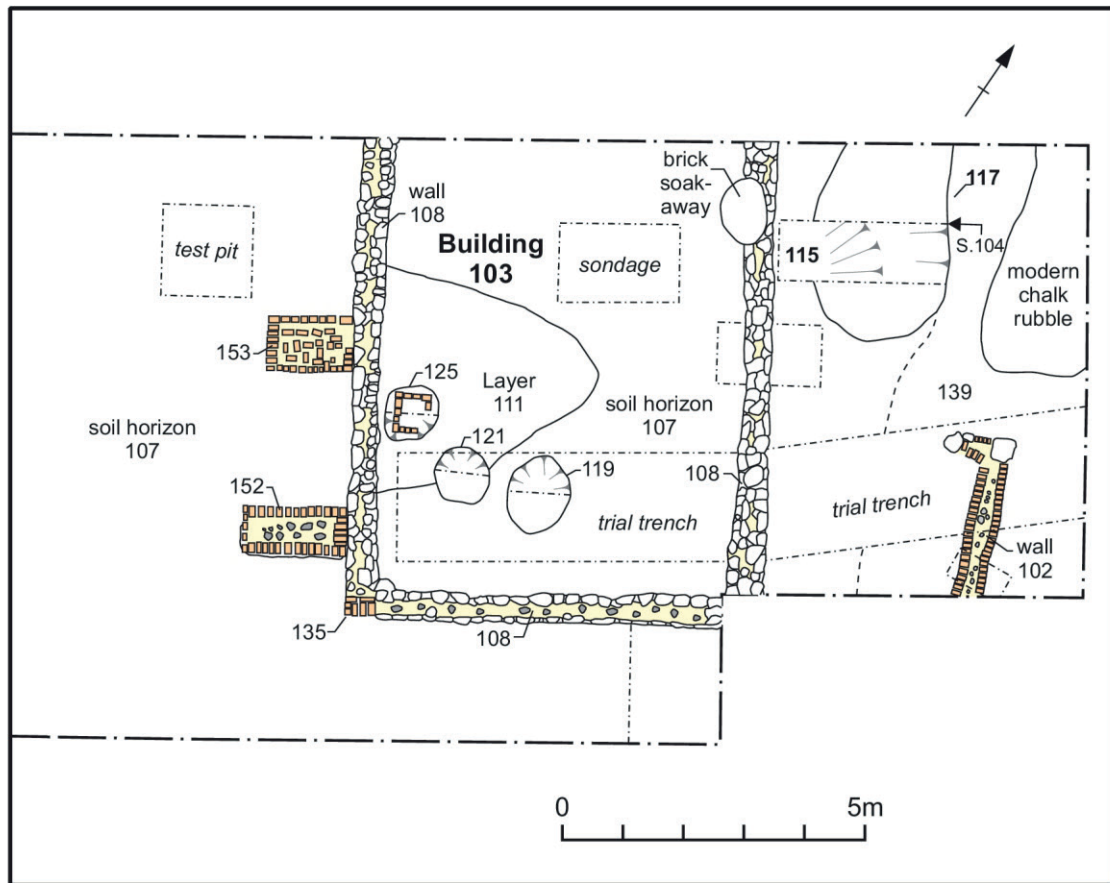


FIGURE 11 The post-medieval building and other features

Within the building there were also two small pits, 119 and 121, 0.90m and 1.30m diameter and 0.27-0.32m deep, with fills, 118 and 120, of yellow-brown silty clay. Fill 118 contained residual medieval pottery, animal bone, and ceramic roof tile, and the fills of both pits contained large amounts of crushed chalk.

To the east of the building was a 1.6m length of wall, 102, 0.50m wide and 0.45m high, faced with bricks, measuring 200 x 100 x 80mm, with a core of chalk lumps (Fig. 12). At the north end was a short length of a return wall. This wall may have formed a small room, 3.0-3.5m long and 3.0m wide, abutting the eastern wall of the main building.

To the north of this extension there was a pit group 115/117, 1.80m wide and 0.60m deep, parallel to the eastern wall of the building. The fill, 113, of mid brown silty clay contained a small

amount of residual medieval pottery and late medieval to post-medieval ceramic roof tile. Pit 115 was partially recut by a more extensive pit, 117, 3.00m long by 1.65m wide and 0.45m deep. Its fill, 116, of mid brown silty clay also contained large amounts of chalk rubble, as well as a small amount of residual medieval pottery and late medieval to post-medieval ceramic roof tile.

Above the building was a remnant of a layer, 110, containing demolition material, comprising dark grey-brown silty clay, 0.40-0.50m deep, with chalk fragments throughout. However, as most of the material above the chalk-built building had been removed prior to the start of the excavation, the date of demolition and later usage of the site could not be determined. A series of post-pads identified during trial trenching (Gilbert 2011), and located roughly in the centre of the excavated



FIGURE 12 General view of the post-medieval building, looking north

area, had been removed as part of this initial site clearance. The only surviving late feature was brick-filled soakaway pit cutting the east wall of building 103.

A building was recorded in this location on the Ordnance Survey map of 1879, but not on the map of 1899, indicating that either the excavated building or a lost successor had survived until almost the end of the 19th century.

Within the watching brief area at the north-eastern end of the site was a large pit or ditch, 151, measuring 4.1m wide and 0.8m deep (Fig. 2). Owing to the narrowness of the modern footing trench it was not possible to establish the full extent of this feature, but its fill did contain both residual medieval pottery and a single sherd of post-medieval red earthenware.

Medieval and post-medieval pottery

by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprises 77 sherds, with a total weight of 1,796g, from a mixture of

medieval and later wares. There is a single sherd of Roman pottery. There are 36 sherds of medieval pottery from medieval pits 142 (6 sherds) and 145 (30 sherds), and a further five sherds from the overlying soil horizon. A further 27 sherds of medieval pottery come from layers and features associated with the post-medieval stone building and its demolition, all as residual material from the earlier period of occupation.

F301: Ashampstead ware, 12th-14th centuries (Mephram & Heaton 1995). Sandy wares produced at a manufactory c.15km to the west of Reading, the main products being jars and highly decorated glazed jugs, the latter often having painted geometric slip designs. 6 sherds, 198g.

F302: 'M40' type ware, ?Late 11th-14th centuries (Hinton 1973). Hard, flint and limestone unglazed ware, with a possible kiln sources at Camley Gardens near Maidenhead (Pike 1965) and Denham in Buckinghamshire (Mellor 1994, 86). Known at numerous sites in south Oxfordshire and Berkshire. 11 sherds, 306g.

F303: London ware, c.1150–1350 (Pearce *et al* 1985). Sandy ware, common in small quantities throughout the Home Counties. Source unknown, but likely to be close to the City of London, where it occurs in extremely large quantities. The jug was by far the most common form, and these were often highly decorated, sometimes copying imported pottery from Northern France (e.g. Pearce *et al* 1985, plate 2). 6 sherds, 74g.

F304: Medieval Shelly Ware, late 12th–13th centuries. Moderate to dense shell, up to 5mm, rare rounded red ironstone up to 2mm. Such pottery has been noted at Windsor (Mephram 1997, 43–5), and is the same as the medieval shelly ware commonly found in London (Vince 1985). 2 sherds, 35g.

F305: Medieval Sandy ware, late 11th–14th centuries? Dense sub-rounded white, grey and clear quartz up to 0.5mm. Early medieval pottery types similar to this are found along a considerable length of the middle Thames Valley and its hinterland, and the problem of differentiating between the numerous different wares has been noted in the past (Mellor 1994, 84). 43 sherds, 950g.

F352: Brill/Boarstall Ware: c.1200–?1600 (Mellor 1994). Wheel-thrown. Hard buff, orange, pale pink, or yellow-grey fabric, sometimes with fine ‘pimply’ surface. Rare to common sub-angular to sub-rounded orange, clear and grey quartzite up to 0.5mm, rare sub-rounded 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. 3 sherds, 51g.

The medieval assemblage dates entirely to the 12th–14th centuries, and consists of jars, bowls and jugs, as is typical of the period. The range of fabric types is fairly typical of sites in the region, coming from production centres in and around London and Reading.

Most of the assemblage is fairly fragmented, with most context groups consisting of one or two sherds from different vessels, and therefore likely to be the product of secondary deposition, as is also indicated by the fact that much of this material is actually residual in post-medieval contexts associated with the stone building. One apparent exception is the fills 113 and 116 of pit group 115/117, which included several large fragments from three jars, one in Sandy

Coarseware (F360), one in ‘M40’ ware (F302) from a fairly large storage jar with applied strip decoration, and another in Brill Boarstall Ware (F352), three non-joining sherds from an unusual small, squat jar with external green glaze, probably of 14th century date. Non-joining sherds from the large storage jar also occurred in the upper fill 143 of the underlying medieval pit 145, indicating that all of the material in pits 115/117 had been derived from disturbance of the upper fills of the medieval pit.

Three of the sherds of London ware have decoration in addition to glaze. The sherd from post-medieval demolition layer 110 is from an imitation Rouen Ware-style jug, with red and white slip decoration (e.g. Vince 1985, fig. 16, 2), and that from fill 116 of pit 117 is in the North French style (*ibid*, fig. 16, 3). Both date to the late 12th to early 13th centuries. The third sherd, from the medieval soil horizon 114, above medieval pit 145 has plain painted slip stripes, and is probably slightly early, perhaps mid to late 12th century (*ibid*).

The post-medieval deposits are dated by only four sherds of pottery, comprising one sherd of red earthenware incorporated into the matrix of chalk wall 108/103, and single sherds of red earthenware and border ware in layer 111, while a further sherd of red earthenware came from a pit, 151, seen only in the watching brief. Further quantities of later ceramics were probably removed in the machine stripping of the upper soils without archaeological supervision.

F425: Red Earthenware, 16th–19th centuries. Fine sandy earthenware, usually with a brown or green glaze, occurring in a range of utilitarian forms. Such ‘country pottery’ was first made in the 16th century, and in some areas continued in use until the 19th century (Brears 1969). 3 sherds, 137g.

F451: Border Ware, AD1550–1700. Wide range of utilitarian and tablewares in a fine, white fabric with a bright green, yellow or brown glaze. Manufactured at a number of centres on the Surrey/Hampshire border, and the main coarseware pottery type in London in the post-medieval period (Pearce 1988). 1 sherd, 16g.

Medieval to post-medieval roof tile

by Pat Chapman

This assemblage of 30 roof tile sherds weighs 2.12kg. The sherds are small with an average size

of 50mm by 20mm. There are 28 plain flat peg tiles and two curved tiles, one of which is glazed, all typically 8mm or 14mm thick. The fabric of the majority of the tiles is hard slightly coarse orange to orange-brown sandy clay, often with a black core, with some tiny quartz and flint inclusions. Ten sherds are made from hard fine light orange-brown silty clay with a pale grey core. Just two sherds are made from hard fine orange silty clay with buff to cream streaks.

Five sherds have remnant pegholes 10-15mm in diameter; the one complete peghole is 13mm in diameter but the hole is blocked by the plug on the underside. Two sherds are curved, probably from ridge or bonnet hip tiles, one has a yellow glaze. Two other sherds have glaze speckles, either due to proximity to glazed items in a kiln or the sherds come from the upper half of a flat glazed tile. A few sherds have traces of white lime mortar still adhering to the surface, in one case up to 5mm thick.

This assemblage is broadly datable to the 14th to early 18th centuries, and is likely to have come from the roof of the excavated chalk-walled building.

Animal bone by *Stephanie Vann*

An assemblage of 64 fragments was recovered from pits and soil layers of medieval and post-medieval date. Like the pottery, it is likely that a proportion of the material in post-medieval contexts was residual from the medieval occupation of the site. Preservation of the animal bone was generally moderate to good. Fragmentation was moderate to high, a result of both old and fresh breaks, and surface abrasion was moderate to high with bone exhibiting signs of erosion, weathering and other taphonomic damage in many instances. There were five examples of butchery and twelve examples of canid gnawing. There was no evidence of burning or pathology.

Of the 64 bone fragments, 43 (67%) were identifiable. The species present were cattle, sheep/goat and fish (possibly Gadidae), with further unidentifiable large mammal (most likely cattle) and medium mammal (most likely sheep/goat) bones. There were no bird remains. Medieval pit 145 produced by far the largest group, comprising 4 cattle bones, 5 *ovicaprid* (sheep/goat), 13 large mammal, 9 medium mammal as well as an oyster shell.

The skeletal elements represent a variety of parts of the body, including the axial skeleton (pelvis, scapula and vertebrae), the feet (metapodials) and the limbs (humerus, ulna and tibia). Five elements were chopped through midshaft or across the acetabulum or vertebral body, suggesting dismemberment and butchery. The distribution pattern and the presence of several chop marks indicates that this is normal butchery waste. The presence of dogs (*Canids*) is indicated by gnawing on twelve elements that came from all but one of the contexts that contained bone.

DISCUSSION

The disarticulated bones of two juveniles, aged 10-12 and 10-11 years, deposited in a medieval pit have been radiocarbon dated to the early Bronze Age and there was also a single sherd of contemporary Beaker pottery, presumably from an accessory vessel from their original grave. This grave may have lain close by, as it seems unlikely that this collection from a disturbed early Bronze Age burial would have transported for any great distance.

The nature of the original deposit must remain unknown, but was presumably either within or close to a Bronze Age round barrow, or was a flat grave with no above-ground earthwork. It seems likely that these two individuals had been buried together, presumably having died at least close together in time. The difference in age between these two is at most a year, so they were probably close siblings, but as one probably suffered from stunted growth it is possible that they were twins, one much healthier and therefore also larger than the other.

Lidar survey around the barrow cemetery at Lower Grounds Farm, to the west of Marlow, identified the site as a possible island on the Thames at the time the cemetery was created. This would suggest that the High Street burials were separated from Lower Grounds Farm by a channel of the Thames. They are, however, at a similar height above Ordnance Datum (within 2m), so the High Street burial may have been an outlier to the Lower Grounds cemetery. As this cemetery has been dated by form only, it is not known whether the two sites were active at the same time.

The later evidence provides a glimpse of life

along High Street, Marlow from the 12th century onward. Between the 12th-14th centuries, in the area examined, lying 22-42m from the modern street frontage, there was only a single pit and an area of burning within a shallow pit, although other evidence may well have been erased by later land use. As these features lay some distance from the frontage, we can surmise that a denser scatter of pits may have lain closer to the frontage, perhaps immediately behind a medieval timber-framed building standing on the frontage. A hint of this medieval occupation is provided by the pottery assemblage, which includes jugs, jars and bowls typical of a medieval domestic assemblage.

By the later 16th century a chalk-walled building had been constructed, presumably an ancillary building to the main structures on and immediately behind the street frontage. A small section of wall identified in the south-west corner of the brewery excavations may be part of the northern wall of this building (BCMAS 1996). Later additions in brick, including a smaller room abutting the south-east corner, indicated that the building was retained for some time, but its date of demolition was not established. A building is shown in this location on an Ordnance Survey map in 1876, but not in 1899, but whether the structure demolished in the later 19th century was the chalk-walled building or a later structure for which no remains had survived is uncertain.

The feature detected within the watching brief area contained a single mid-16th century pottery sherd, close to the surface. This would put this feature in use at around the same time as the construction and use of the chalk structure.

Following the demolition of the latest structures in this area, the majority of the building materials appear to have been removed from the site, and the ground level raised to cover the structural remains. This material contained 12th-16th-century pottery, but the event occurred in the late 19th century or even a little later, and this area remained open ground, containing trees, until the current redevelopment.

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