

**EXTENSIVE URBAN SURVEY
FOR
BEDFORDSHIRE**

BEDFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

Document 2001/42
Project 510

2001
(edited January 2005)

Produced for:
Bedfordshire County Council and English Heritage

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Preface

All statements and opinions in this document are offered in good faith. Albion Archaeology cannot accept responsibility for errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by a third party, or for any loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in this document.

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2001



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Background to the Project*

English Heritage (EH) has initiated a national series of Extensive Urban Surveys. This report is the second of twelve assessments carried out as part of the Extensive Urban Survey (EUS) for Bedfordshire. The survey of the historic towns of Bedfordshire is funded by EH, and jointly managed by Roger Thomas of EH and the County Archaeological Officer (CAO) of Bedfordshire County Council (BCC). The survey is being jointly undertaken by Albion Archaeology and the Heritage and Environment Section of BCC.

The EUS comprises three stages: Data Compilation, Assessment and Strategy. The first stage, Data Compilation, draws together the accessible history of the town, known archaeological sites and historic buildings data. The Assessment presents this evidence in the form of a report which provides a history of the town, an account of its buried and standing archaeology, together with an assessment of archaeological potential. The Strategy stage will draw on the Assessment to develop a strategic framework for the management of the archaeological and historic resource for each town. It is proposed that the Strategy for each town will be adopted as supplementary guidance notes for the relevant District Plans.

The chronological framework used in the Assessment reports to describe each town's development (normally section 5) reflects the periodisation used in the Bedfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER). Any broad dating system of this kind has limitations in the face of the mass of detailed evidence that exists for each town. It has, therefore, occasionally (*e.g.* Bedford in the Saxon and Saxo-Norman periods, or Luton in the early industrial period) been necessary to use slightly different chronological divisions. In addition, the town of Sandy is exceptional in its own right because only the Roman town has been included in the Bedfordshire EUS.

1.2 *Structure of this Document*

This study focuses on the historic core of the town and takes as its boundaries the limits of development marked on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1884. It has been compiled using a number of sources including the Bedfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER), the Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Records Service (BLARS) and the Albion Archaeology (formerly BCAS) Project Database.

The location and topography of the town's historic core is described in Section 2. The nature of the evidence is discussed in Section 3 and a historical summary of the town is presented in Section 4. The archaeological and historical development of the town is described by chronological period in Section 5. Section 6 comprises an assessment of Bedford's character, importance and potential. The historical development of the town and areas of archaeological potential are presented in plan form at the end of the report.



2 LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHY

Bedford is the county town of Bedfordshire, located 52 miles north of London, at TL 050497. It presently covers an area of about 4 square miles, with extensive housing developments to the north and north-east (Fig 1). The River Great Ouse runs through the town, which has an average height above sea level of 26m. The low hills surrounding the town on the edge of the valley are comprised of Oxford clay and boulder clay, with outcrops of cornbrash closer to the river. The historic core of Bedford is sited mainly on the riverborne alluvium and gravels overlying the cornbrash on either side of the river.

Central to the location and development of the town is the bridge over the Great Ouse, on the site of a former ford from which Bedford takes its name. Bedford Bridge and the High Street can together be taken to comprise the principal axis of the town, running north-south, with the river itself providing an east-west axis. Routes from Kettering, Rushden and Kimbolton in the north to Ampthill, Luton and London in the south all cross the bridge. An east-west route from Great Barford and Cambridge to Bromham and Northampton crosses the northern part of Bedford. Another east-west route from Kempston to Sandy runs roughly parallel to the river on the south side of town.

The Agricultural Land Classification of England and Wales, Sheet 147, shows the area of the town to be predominantly in urban use with the surrounding land mostly classified as Grade II or Grade III.



3 THE NATURE OF THE EVIDENCE

3.1 Previous Archaeological Investigations

Archaeological investigations in Bedford can be divided into three main categories or periods:

- 1) 'Site visits' carried out between 1920 and 1940, mainly consisting of the collection of artefacts from development sites - for the most part scantily recorded and unpublished.
- 2) Excavations conducted from 1967-1984, prior to the setting up of a BCAS project database.
- 3) Excavations conducted by BCAS (recently re-named as Albion) from 1984 to the present day.

3.1.1 Archaeological Investigations 1920-1940

During a period before scientific or professional archaeology, Bedford was fortunate to have some work carried out by the then curator of Bedford Museum, Mr FW Kuhlicke. Much development work occurred in the town centre, particularly in the 1920s and 1930s. Mr Kuhlicke visited and collected artefacts from many of the sites (Fig 2).

A brief account of the ditches or watercourses encountered, which may have relevance to any study of the early defences of Bedford, is given in Kuhlicke (1937, 1940). He describes a large ditch running roughly E-W or NE-SW on the Granada and Rogers Porter sites to the south of St Peter's Street. The same ditch (turning to the south?) was apparently encountered again on the Midland Bank and Barclays Bank sites in the High Street, and may be the watercourse marked on Map 2 in Kuhlicke (1950, 9). The ditch fills were said to contain 'Christian Saxon' pottery, although it is possible it is later in date. Another smaller ditch, presumably on a N-S orientation, was found on the Old Jail site, and this apparently produced pre-Christian Saxon pottery. The site was subject to a small excavation by the Bedford Modern School Field Club in 1936, directed by Mr G. Gearey (HER 14535). A study of the St Neots ware pottery from many of these sites is provided by Kennett (1969). The pottery itself is available for examination at Bedford Museum. A map and list of sites is shown in Baker (1970, 68, 98).

Site	Year	HER	Bed. Mus. Finds Nos.
SILVER STREET		4090 10804 14070	
Meaker's Cellar, nos. 12-14	1930s?		3867, 3980-87
Rose's extension, nos. 6-8	1936		3749-59
Old Jail/Palace Cinema	1936	14048 14535	3766, 3866
HIGH STREET			
Silver Grill, no 32	?	14050	4101
Taylor, Brawn's and Flood, no71	1938		4099-4100,
Westminster Bank, no 81	?		3875
Barclay's Bank, no 111	1926 or 1929		3715-3725
ST PETER'S STREET			
Royal Insurance Company, no 1	1936	14051	3738-3745
Granada Cinema, nos. 5-9	1934	14047	3729-30, 3879, 3938-9, 3963, 4091
Rogers Porter, no 25	1929	14049	3732-3, 3739, 3746
BROADWAY			
Old House, nos. 4-6	?	10811	3766-3771

Table 1. Archaeological Investigations, 1920-1940



3.1.2 Archaeological Excavations 1967-1984

Excavations from 1967-1974 were mostly trial trenches, directed mainly by David Baker, conducted during summer seasons and staffed by volunteers (Figs 3 and 4). These sites were given site codes containing a town element, a street or locale element and a year element. For example, the code 'BRC 71' breaks down as B= Bedford, RC= Ray's Close, 71= 1971. Such codes also carry trench numbers, in a continuous sequence regardless of year, but these have not been reproduced here. The setting up of Bedfordshire County Council archaeology field team in 1974 enabled more intensive excavations over larger areas to be conducted. From 1976-1984, site codes took the form of museum accession numbers (e.g. 1976/2). See Baker *et al* (1979) for further clarification of site coding systems. All these sites are published, either in full or in summary form, mostly in *Beds. Arch. J. Records and finds* have been accessioned to Bedford Museum.

Site Code	Site Location	Summary	Publication / HER nos.
BSJ67	8-10 Cauldwell St, 7-9 St John's St	In Cauldwell St, trial trench revealed large C12th pit and C18th cellar. In St John's, numerous pits of Saxo-Norman date right up to modern pavement edge. No early medieval structures. Traces of medieval wall footings and occupation layers, and post-medieval pits.	Baker, D, 1970, 67-100 HER 14372
BC69-72	Bedford Castle	44 trial trenches opened over 3 seasons, revealing numerous Saxon features, including 2 hall-like structures. Medieval castle features examined included a range of Norman buildings, inner bailey ditch, the motte and the smaller earthwork to the NE.	Baker, D, <i>et al</i> 1979 HER 14373-7, 14379-80, 14385-87, 14394
BMS71-2	43 Mill St + Litson's Timber Yd	At least 3 buildings with stone footings, dating from C15th on. Carved 'knight and rider' roof finial found, dated to about 1450. Important pottery and tile assemblage from late medieval and post-medieval pits.	Baker, D, 1974, 99-128 HER 3069, 14378
BCL71	Litson's Timber Yd, Castle Lane	Footings for post-medieval cottage found.	Baker, D, 1974, 99-128 HER 14379
BSM71-72	5-11, 7-19 St Mary's St	Saxo-Norman timber structures found close to street, with pits behind to W. Other evidence included C14th -15 th hearths and ovens, probably used for baking.	Baker, D, <i>et al</i> 1979, 127-43 HER 3068
BCS71	9 Cauldwell St	Small trench located 2 medieval pits, 4m from street front. Very disturbed by post-medieval pitting and tips.	Baker, D, <i>et al</i> , 1979, 65-78 HER 14380
BHS71	Howard St	No archaeological features. However, old turf line contained St Neots ware and Saxon pottery.	Baker, D, 1974, 104 HER 14381
BSJ71	St John's St (E), nr Wilmer's Corner	No clear sequence of occupation established. A Saxo-Norman pit. Layers of silt tipping down southwards towards King's Ditch. No features associated with crossing of ditch.	Baker, D, <i>et al</i> , 1979, 97 HER 14382
BRC71	King's Ditch, Ray's Close	Section obtained through internal bank of King's Ditch.	Hassall, J, and Baker, D, 1974, 79-80 HER 1198



BRS72	Corner of River St / Midland Rd	No archaeological features. Natural gravels encountered at depth of 0.8m.	Baker, D, <i>et al</i> , 1979, 79 HER 14383
BSM72	17-19 St Mary's St	Standing post-medieval building recorded before demolition. Excavation revealed walls, postholes, pits and other occupation evidence dating from C11th through the medieval period on a single house plot.	Baker, D, <i>et al</i> 1979, 137-43 HER 14384
BCL73	Lime kiln, Castle Lane	Lime kiln within castle area, probably C13th in date	Baker, D, <i>et al</i> 1979, 46-51 HER 7336
BCS73	16 Cauldwell St	C10th-C12th pits and structures (postholes and slots), a C13th-C14th lime-slaking pit. Post-medieval pits contained large assemblage of C17th-C18th pottery and glass. Stratigraphy 2m deep in places.	Baker, D, <i>et al</i> 1979, 67-78 HER 14386-7
BMR 73	10 Midland Rd	Medieval occupation in form of beam slot and 4 pits, C12 th -14 th in date, suggest building set back 5m from Midland Road. Very disturbed by post-medieval foundations. One sherd of middle Saxon pottery.	Baker, D, <i>et al</i> 1979, 79-95 HER 14388
BSPD73	St Peter-de-Dunstable, St Mary's St	Human bones from about 50 individuals found, mostly jumbled, indicating clearance of adjacent graveyard area.	Baker, D, <i>et al</i> 1979, 143-145 (see also Hall 1971, 75) HER 301
BMR74 I	4 Midland Rd	Saxo-Norman features include pits, post-holes, slots and occupation layers. Also medieval and late medieval occupation evidence. Middle Saxon pottery found.	Baker, D, <i>et al</i> 1979, 83-95 HER 11228
BMR74 II	6-8 Midland Rd	Evidence of intensive occupation from C9th-12 th including beam slots and postholes. One medieval and several post-medieval pits.	Baker, D, <i>et al</i> 1979, 83-95 HER 11228
BMod74	Bedford Modern School, central area	No archaeological features. Excavation to depth of 2m revealed that modern mixed debris was still going down. Extensive modern disturbance.	Baker, D, <i>et al</i> 1979, 95 HER 14389
BSJ74	39-43 St John's St	Settlement evidence from Saxo-Norman period onwards, with traces of timber buildings along St John's street frontage and many rubbish pits. Medieval features included stone-built kiln and small oven.	Baker, D, <i>et al</i> 1979, 99-126 HER 5509
1976/2	20-24 St John's Street	Ten phases of occupation dating from C9th-19 th identified on street front site. Timber buildings and rubbish pits respecting line of modern street. Assemblage of middle Saxon pottery from pit, possibly associated with building. Medieval stone well-house.	Baker, D, <i>et al</i> 1979, 99-126 SMA15, 16-17 HER 14390-1
1977/1 and 1977/2	Peacock's Yard and Salvation Army sites, Home Lane	Middle-Saxon and Saxo-Norman residual pottery, but few features. Two medieval well-houses and a well. A large post-medieval rectangular pond, orientated N-S, roughly on line of Saffron Ditch, of which no trace was found.	Hassall, J, 1983 HER 14392-3



1978/2	Empire Cinema, Midland Rd	Middle Saxon residual pottery. C10th-12 th occupation evidence in the form of pits, postholes, slots and gullies, and large ditch running N-S along course of Allhallows. Medieval surfaces but few features.	Hassall, J, 1983 HER 14395
1979/1	Liberal Club, Midland Rd	Evidence for iron working fuelled by woodland clearance in C9th, followed by metal working in late Saxon and Saxo-Norman periods. On top of late medieval dumps were post-medieval structures. Waterlogged material. No sign of Saffron Ditch but environmental evidence suggests flooding, perhaps from stream nearby.	Baker, E, 1986 HER 14396
1980/1	Bennett's Works, Castle Lane	Slots, postholes and hearths dated to middle Saxon period, sealed by turf line. This was cut by later Saxon occupation features, which were sealed by a thick cultivation layer of Saxo-Norman date, above which were occupation layers possibly relating to the early castle.	Baker, E, 1986 HER 14397
1984/2	Duck Mill Lane	Waterlogged feature, possibly cess-pit or ditch, dating to the C11th-13 th . High organic content of fill. C13th limestone wall	Baker, E, 1986 HER 14398

Table 2. Beds County Council Archaeological Excavations 1967-1984

A watching brief behind Shire Hall in 1982 was not allocated a project number but details are recorded in the HER records (HER 558). The excavation of a sewage trench revealed deep deposits of waterborne silt, interspersed with some tipping layers of burnt material, rising up northwards to an indistinct edge. A vertical wooden pile was found 1.5m down within and cutting through these deposits. The observations are quite important because, along with the results of WB25 (summarised below), they suggest that the northern river frontage may once have been about 20m further to the north.

3.1.3 Archaeological Excavations and Watching Briefs 1984-Present

From 1984 on, excavations were allocated project numbers, starting from 1. The prefix 'WB' stands for watching brief. Other prefixes indicate the locality of the excavation or the property on which it took place. Thus 'DAH266' is Dame Alice Harpur, project number 266. This system is still in use today. Archaeological evaluations are mostly written up in the form of client reports. Data on all investigations, including small watching briefs for which no reports were produced, are stored on the BCAS (now Albion Archaeology) project database. The locations of excavations are marked on Figs 5 and 6.

Site Code	Year	Site Location	Summary	Publication or Report / HER no
WB1	1984	Duck Mill Lane	See 1984/2 above	Baker 1986 HER 14398, 16097
WB6	1984	St Mary's Gds	No archaeology observed.	
WB7	1984	St Mary's Gds	No archaeology observed	
WB8	1984	St John's St	No archaeology observed	
WB9	1997-8	2 St Cuthbert's St	Evidence of C10th, Saxo-Norman, medieval, and post-medieval activity, but all truncated or disturbed by later activity.	BCAS 1998/2
WB12	1984-5	Duck Mill Lane	No archaeology observed	
WB13	1985	Embankment	No archaeology observed	



WB14	1985	Silver St	Little of archaeological interest. Some redeposited limestone and possible 'road mud' noted below modern road hardcore.	
WB16	1985	29, 31 St John's St	Post-medieval plot boundary ditches, walls, well, postholes.	
WB18	1985	8-10 Mill Street	Large amounts of black organic material noted, possibly from ditch or pond.	HER 16099
WB19	1985-6	St Paul's Square	Post-medieval occupation layers and surfaces. One inhumation.	HER 14448
WB22	1985	Town Hall	Post-medieval footings and 'trench' noted	
WB25	1986	Town Hall	During basement extension, only post-medieval footings noted. River silts found to extend to 20m N of modern bank.	
WB28	1985	St Paul's Sq	No archaeology observed	
WB38	1985	North Arcade	WWII recruiting poster found during re-plastering of shop	
WB41	1985	River Ouse	Temporary drainage of river allowed inspection of riverbed. Nothing of archaeological interest found.	
WB42	1985	Kilpin Close	Post-medieval foundations noted.	
WB50	1986	53-55 St Mary's St	No archaeology observed	
WB51	1986	12 Mill St	Only one undated feature and some medieval potsherds noted.	
WB62	1986	20 Silver St	Trenches for shop extension allowed sections to be drawn of stratigraphy, over 2m deep in places. Several large pits or linear features, undated, sealed by limestone wall, possibly medieval in date.	1987b HER 15218, 16104
WB76	1981	St Paul's Church	During building of narthex, seven grave slabs of C18th-19th recorded. Indications of structural alterations to W end of building. No evidence found of earlier church.	
WB82	1987-8	Church Sq and Allhallows	Eleven human burials, dated to C12th-13th, associated with All Saints Church.	HER 14820
WB84	1987	Bromham Rd/ Union St	No archaeology observed	
WB86	1987	14 Silver Street	No archaeology observed under standing building - destroyed by cellar.	
WB87	1987	Church Square	No archaeology observed	
WB92	1987	Horne Lane	No archaeology observed	
WB105	1987	Swan Hotel, Embankment	Some medieval masonry (possibly associated with castle?) and truncated archaeological features, but no useful information retrieved due to un-cooperative foreman.	
WB115	1988	Bedford Mus. Car Park	Only a few sherds of medieval pottery recorded.	
WB116	1988	9-11 St John's Street	One post-medieval pit. No earlier features recorded	



WB 117	1989	Greyfriars PH	No archaeology observed	
WB 123	1989	Ray's Close	No archaeology observed	
WB 127	1989	Lime Street	Pits dating from C9th-13 th , and evidence of lime-burning waste. No sign of early boundary ditch of road.	HER 16107
WB129	1989	St Mary's PO	Stone well found in cellar. Contained medieval pottery and tile.	
WB136	1990	Dame Alice St	No archaeology observed	
WB137	1990	St Mary's Church	Project related to conversion of church. Excavation of 4 trial pits revealed early walls and floor tiles, as well as C18 th burial. Survey of graveyard.	
WB138	1990	Horne Lane	Large area of 600sq m stripped to depth of 2-3m, revealing post-medieval walls and medieval walls and pits. Limited recording because of modern disturbance.	
WB157	1991	Gwyn Court	C19th stone-lined well	HER 16112
WB182	1992-3	14 St Cuthbert's Street	Two discoveries by builders of human remains. Archaeological associations uncertain.	HER 15821
WB188	1992	Bunyan Meeting House	No archaeology observed	
WB189	1993	George Fischer Castings, Kempston Road	Test pits produced mostly post-medieval industrial rubble, but some medieval dressed stone, probably associated with Cauldwell Priory.	
WB219	1992	8-10 St Cuthbert's St	Trial trenching revealed wall-base and doorway of post-medieval building. Also a sequence of layers and pits, dating from Saxo-Norman to post-medieval periods.	BCAS 1993/15 HER 15659
WB237	1995	2a Castle Lane	Sherds of medieval pot and animal bone recovered from spoilheap of manhole trench. Some stonework visible in part of section.	
WB242	1995	Prebend Street	No archaeology observed	BCAS 1995/46 HER 15805
WB247	1995	St Paul's Church	No significant archaeology observed, except for possible undisturbed soil under N porch and two brick burial vaults, all left undisturbed.	
WB251	1995	Russell Park East	No archaeology observed. Ground work for putting green did not reach natural.	
WB253	1995	Bedford College Cauldwell St	No archaeology observed	
WB257	1995	Town Centre	No archaeology observed during extensive cable laying – only modern makeup layers, cellars, etc	



265 BHS95	1995	29-41 High St	Evaluation at rear of properties revealed several phases of late Saxon and early medieval industrial activity and occupation, sealed beneath rampart of castle outer bailey ditch. No evidence of post-castle activity. Historic building survey conducted on nos. 29-31.	BCAS 1995/20 and 1996/2. RCHME, report 93669. Steadman 1999b
DAH266	1992	Dame Alice Harpur School	Nine trial pits revealed little significant archaeology. Post-medieval dumps and a large ditch running N-S were recorded.	BCAS 1993/4 HER 16078
304 BSM95	1995-6	Mander College St Mary's St	Evaluation trenches revealed light industry and occupation evidence, from C13th-15 th properties with dual frontage onto St Mary's St and River Ouse. Some documentary research.	BCAS 1996/1
307 SPS86	1986	St Paul's Square	Excavation of N and E sides of square revealed buildings thought to 'shambles' and 'Fish Row' of late medieval date. Earlier timber structures associated with iron working. Other evidence included pits, a well, road and courtyard surfaces, burials, and C13th stone cellar.	Baker 1987a
350	1987-90	Newnham Priory	Evaluation followed by rescue excavations. Foundations of church, cloister, ranges and other buildings of Priory located. Cemetery also uncovered, with 31 burials found.	
363	1986	2 St Cuthbert's Street	Watching brief. No archaeology observed	
TCI399	1995-7	Town Centre	Master number for town centre improvements watching brief. Includes projects 400 and 459 (see summaries below).	
MR400	1995-6	Midland Road and Harpur St	Archaeological deposits dating from late Saxon to post-medieval periods. Many pits, ditches, some structural evidence, road surfaces and WWII tank trap. Main feature was large ditch, at least 70m in length and possibly of middle Saxon date, running E-W along Midland Road. See TCI399.	
403	1996	1 St Paul's Square	Watching brief of small slit trench. Possible wall footing observed.	
409	1996	13 High Street	Small evaluation of single trench in cellar. Clay-lined pit with pottery dating from C10th-12 th .	
SJ414	1996	St John's Inner Relief Road	Nine evaluation trenches along route uncovered little archaeology except a few post-medieval ditches and furrows. Typical sequence was sandy gravel natural, overlaid by sandy silt subsoil and original topsoil, then make-up layers for railway.	BCAS 1996/10



426	1996	Howard Congr. Chapel, Mill St	Trial trenching uncovered pits containing domestic refuse dating from C10th-12 th . Large amounts of Saxo-Norman and medieval residual pottery. Stone foundations of original chapel and burials also recorded.	BCAS 1996/20
433	1996	St Peter's Church	Investigations in the nave uncovered floors and stone settings dating from late medieval to modern times.	BCAS 1996/26
451	1997	14-15a St Paul's Square	Earliest phase of site consists of a cemetery, with graves aligned E-W in closely set parallel rows running N-S. The only find was a sherd of middle Saxon pottery. Some of the graves were cut by pits containing domestic refuse dating from the Saxo-Norman period. These were sealed by a thick layer of garden soil, itself cut by medieval pits.	HER 16858 SMA 1998
WB459	1997	Town Centre	Medieval deposits located along E side of River Street, including stone-lined well and pits. Waterlogged deposits on corner of Allhallows and Midland Road. See TCI 399	
CC468	1997	Castle Close	Watching brief. Narrow slit trench only disturbed C19th –20 th layers	
494	1997	St Peter's Church	Watching brief. Limited evidence of footings to N of S buttress on W wall.	
HSE589	1999	High St South (East side)	Watching brief. Groundwork only disturbed modern layers.	BCAS 1999/66
SPC707	1999	St Paul's Church	Watching brief in churchyard. No archaeology observed.	

Table 3. BCAS (now Albion Archaeology) excavations 1984-2002

3.2 Historical Evidence

Early glimpses of Tudor Bedford are provided by a few paragraphs in Leland's *Itinary* (1540) and Camden's *Britannia* (1586). Celia Fiennes' *Journeys* describes a visit to early eighteenth century Bedford. Lyson's *Magna Britannia* (1813) makes some additions to information mostly derived from the previous writers. Matthiason's *Bedford and its Environs* (1831) is the first detailed and reasonably accurate description of the town.

For a Victorian perspective on the archaeology and history of Bedford, see Wyatt (1865). Volume III of the Victoria County History (Page, 1912, 3-33), published fifty years later, gives a much more comprehensive history of the Borough of Bedford. Farrar (1920) mixes historical research with occasional flights of fancy and speculation. Kuhlicke (1950) is the first to look at the development of the town systematically, using a series of maps to show the evolution of the town. More recently, Hassall and Baker (1974) have also used this approach, taking a detailed look at the origins and development of Bedford, with an emphasis on the buildings as well as the archaeology of the town. Hill (in Baker 1970), and Haslam (1983, 1986) focus on theories of town origin. Crawley and Freeman (1988, 1991) examine in detail evidence of place and street names. A popular and very readable account of all these theories, with summaries of archaeological findings, is provided by Baker and Baker (1985).

Many other papers in the *Bedfordshire Archaeological Journal* (BAJ), now *Bedfordshire Archaeology* (BA), deal with the archaeology and history of Bedford. In particular, most of the sites excavated up to 1977 are written up in a single volume, BAJ 13, 'Excavations in Bedford 1967-77' (Baker *et al*, 1979). The Bedford Historical Record Society (BHRS) has also published a



number of relevant volumes. A useful Bedfordshire Bibliography is provided by Conisbee (BHRS/1962, with supplements 1967 and 1971). Of especial interest to the study of medieval Bedford is Henman's translation of the Bedford Rental Rolls of Newnham Priory (BHRS 25, 1945).

The Bedford and Luton Archive and Record Service (BLARS) holds a large amount of material about Bedford. The county archive includes maps, charters, property deeds, rental rolls, parish registers, census returns, trade directories, newspaper cuttings, photographs, etc, as well as a library of local history books, journals, and reference works. BLARS references are quoted, wherever applicable, in this report.

Another important source of similar material is the Local History Section at Bedford Public Library. This maintains its own independent collection of documents and other material relating to the history of the town.

The map evidence for the Borough of Bedford is relatively good. The earliest map to show the town is John Speed's map of 1610 (BLARS x1/88/1), followed by Jeffery's map of 1765 (BLARS x1/88/2). An Enclosure Award map of 1795 (BLARS MA26) shows the town north of the river only. A fine series of 19th century maps is provided by Brayley in 1807 (BLARS x1/88/4), Reynolds in 1841 (BLARS x1/88/5), and Mercer in 1876 (BLARS x1/28). A Gas map of 1854 by Salmon (BLARS x133/11) shows the original gas pipes in Bedford, and could be particularly useful for archaeologists to help identify post-medieval disturbance. The Ordnance Survey series of maps starts with the first edition, published at scales of both 6 inch and 25 inch to the mile. Further editions were published in 1904 and 1926, with a revised edition in 1939. All these, as well as sundry estate maps and the more recent and current editions of OS maps, are available for inspection in BLARS.

The Historic Environment Record (HER) maintained by Bedfordshire County Council's Historic Environment Section lists over a hundred historic buildings ranging in date from the Anglo-Saxon churches of St Mary's and St Peter's to the pubs, schools and shopping developments of the early twentieth century. It also lists archaeological sites and finds. Locations are marked on a series of maps, available for inspection in the HER office.

Bedfordshire Archaeology Service (BCAS), now Albion Archaeology, maintains a database of archaeological projects carried out within the town from 1984 to the present. Records and finds from many of these and from all pre-1984 sites have been accessioned to Bedford Museum.



4 HISTORICAL SUMMARY

The place name Bedford or 'Bedenforda' is probably derived from 'Beda's Ford' – Beda being a personal name of Anglo-Saxon times (Mawer and Stenton 1926, 11). Identification of Bedford with 'Bedcanforda', the site of a battle between the West Saxons and the British in 571, is usually discounted (though this should now be reviewed in the light of recent national debate on the Dark Ages). The first definite reference to Bedford occurs in the treaty drawn up by Alfred and Guthrum in 878, which places Bedford on the frontier between Wessex and Danelaw (Whitelock 1955, 380). Bedford was captured and occupied by the Danes in about 875. The frontier did not last long, and the Danes spread further to the south and west. For the next 30 years or so, Bedford was a Danish town surrounded by Danish territory. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for 914 tells how Edward the Elder, Alfred's son and king of the West Saxons, began his reconquest of the land occupied by the Danes, consolidating his advance with the construction of a series of fortified burhs. During the fortification of Buckingham, the Chronicle tells us, the earls and principal men of Bedford came and accepted King Edward as their lord. In 915, the Chronicle relates how King Edward brought his army to Bedford to receive the submission of the borough and townspeople. He stayed for a month, and ordered the burh on the south side of the river to be built (Whitelock 1955, 195). This implies, as Haslam (1983) has pointed out, that there was already in existence a northern burh, prior to the arrival of Edward and even that of the Danes. One possibility is that Bedford has its origins as a Mercian frontier town in the 8th century. Supporting this view is the tradition, written down in the 13th century by the St Albans monk, Matthew Paris, that King Offa of Mercia was buried in Bedford.

The importance of Bedford as a trading centre in the 10th and 11th centuries is illustrated by the coins minted in the town. In the reign of Eadwig there were at least five moneyers here. Bedford was now the central burh of the Shire, from which tax would have been collected for maintaining town defences. The town had a number of churches. St Peter's and St Mary's are known to be of pre-Conquest origin. St Paul's was probably the principal church in the centre with St Cuthbert's possibly in existence at this time situated on the eastern edge of town. The growth of Bedford, now the major town and administrative centre of the Shire, must have made it an attractive target for Danish raids. Two years after Edward's visit, the town was attacked by the Danes and successfully defended. In 1010, however, a further wave of Danish invaders took Bedford and pillaged the town. Bedford's population and culture at this time was almost certainly already made up of a mix of Anglo-Saxon and Danish elements. This is shown by the names of the moneyers. Most have Anglo-Saxon names, but Grim, Gunni, and Ulcetel are of Danish origin (Page 1912, 2).

The Norman Conquest in 1066 added a further element. As part of the imposition of Norman rule, Bedford Castle was constructed during the reign of William I (1087-1100). This was probably a timber motte-and-bailey castle initially, later to be consolidated in stone, occupying a good strategic position on the north side of the river. Domesday Book reveals little about Bedford, except that it had never been hidated and that it was assessed at half a hundred for military expeditions and ships. Its value was 100 shillings.

In 1166 the strongly defended town of Bedford received its oldest surviving charter from Henry II, recognising the town's right to a merchant guild. The castle belonged for most of its history to the de Beauchamp family, who also founded the Augustan priory at Newnham in the second half of the twelfth century. Other religious houses founded at about this time were Cauldwell Priory, St John's Hospital and St Leonard's Hospital for lepers. Newnham Priory opened a school in the town. A town gaol was first mentioned in 1165. William de Beauchamp of Bedford was one of the barons who signed the Magna Carta in 1215. The castle was seized from him in 1215 by Falkes de Breaute, a supporter of King John. The churches of St Paul and St Cuthbert were pulled down to provide building material for strengthening the walls. In 1224 William de Beauchamp joined forces with King Henry III to lay siege to the castle. After a six-week siege, the castle was captured. The walls were demolished, the ditches filled in and the leaders of the defenders hanged.

The Franciscan Friars arrived in 1238, and built the Friary at Greyfriars sometime in the late 13th century. By this time a bridge chapel and the chapel of St Mary Herne also existed.



Throughout the 14th century Bedford was primarily an agricultural town. It was subject to the ravages of the Black Death in the middle of that century, and the growth and prosperity of the town declined. A new bridge built at Great Barford directed traffic and trade away from Bedford to other market towns. Appeals were made by the burgesses in 1440 and 1462 to limit the amount of rent paid to the Crown. It was said that 100 messuages (homesteads), formerly well-built and inhabited, were now abandoned and in disrepair. A further appeal in 1504 resulted in a permanent reduction in rent. In the 1530s Newnham Priory and other religious houses were dissolved by Henry VIII, threatening also the closure of the town school run by the monks of the priory.

The year 1552 marked a turning point, however. Bedford received licence by letters patent from Edward VI to found a grammar school. The endowment of land in Holborn by William Harpur in 1566 not only made the founding of the school possible, it also allowed for its support over the coming centuries, and led eventually to the creation of the Harpur Trust in 1764.

During the Civil War, Bedford was principally a Parliamentary town. It was briefly captured by Prince Rupert's forces in 1643 and some refortification of the castle was undertaken. No major battles took place in or near the town, which was the scene of a few small skirmishes only. From 1646 to 1647 the headquarters of the Parliamentary army was in Bedford, with Cromwell being a frequent visitor to the town and much use made of St John's Church and St John's House.

After the Restoration came the Declaration of Indulgence in 1672, which encouraged John Bunyan to start preaching in a barn on the site of the present Bunyan Meeting in Mill Street. Other nonconformist meeting houses sprung up throughout Bedford. The Moravian chapel in St Peter's Street was founded in 1751. The Howard Congregational chapel was founded in 1772 and The Baptist Chapel in 1793.

At the time of the Civil War the River Great Ouse was navigable from Bedford only as far as Great Barford. In 1689, however, the river was made navigable throughout its length to the sea, opening Bedford up to waterborne trade. Barges brought coal from Newcastle and wood from Scandinavia, with the agricultural produce of the county going downstream. Wharves started to be built in the area of the bridge. The increase in river-borne traffic and the wealth this generated must have been a major factor in the revival of the town.

Considerable civic improvements were made to the town in the 18th and early 19th centuries. A Sessions House was built in 1753. Five parish workhouses were combined into one House of Industry in 1794. There was a new County Gaol in 1801, and a new bridge replaced the medieval bridge in 1811-13. A hospital and a lunatic asylum were also built at this time.

Rapid growth continued throughout the 19th century with the coming of the railways and the expansion of the Harpur Trust schools. Bedford became renowned for its relatively cheap public education, which attracted many middle class families to the town, stimulating the building of houses. A population of 3,948 in 1801 rose to 11,693 in 1851 and right up to 35,144 in 1901. Steady expansion throughout the 20th century has seen the present population rise to about double that figure.



5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

5.1 The Prehistoric Period (c10,000BC - AD43)

5.1.1 The Earlier Prehistoric Period (c10,000 – 5,000BC)

The gravel terraces of the Great Ouse river valley have produced many Palaeolithic artefacts over the last 150 years. The most important site is Deep Spinney at Biddenham, 3km to the west of Bedford, where numerous stone tools and flakes have been found at the base of the gravel on top of the Oxford Clay. Recent work on the site (Harding *et al* 1991) suggests that these have been redeposited by water from elsewhere rather than representing *in situ* human activity, and this may apply to most of the finds of Palaeolithic artefacts in the Bedford region. Findspots have been mapped and catalogued as part of the EH English Rivers Survey Project (Wessex Archaeology 1996 - see also Wymer 1999). All those finds listed in the HER record for Bedford Parish are shown below.

HER 248 Palaeoliths, Queens Park
 HER 546 Pal. handaxes and flakes, The Avenue area
 HER 551 Pal. handaxe, De Parys Ave
 HER 553 Pal. flake, Midland Road Bridge
 HER 554 Pal. finds, Cauldwell Priory site
 HER 557 Pal. handaxes, New Fenlake
 HER 563 Pal. handaxe, Newnham
 HER 571 Pal. handaxe, Southend
 HER 572, Pal. handaxes, Harrowden
 HER 612 Pal. implements, Fenlake

The braided channels and valley of the River Great Ouse must have provided an attractive resource for mobile groups of hunters and fishers in the period following the last Ice Age, as shown by several finds of Mesolithic flints in riverside areas. A small range of flint artefacts of probable Mesolithic date was found in the ploughsoil during fieldwalking on the low hill at Norse Road, Bedford (BCAS Report 93/3). A few Mesolithic flints were also found on excavations at the Bunyan Centre (Steadman 1999a). Other implements from the vicinity of Bedford listed in HER are:-

HER 9837 Mesolithic cores, blades, flakes. Honey Hill
 HER 9841 Mesolithic/Neolithic perforated antler sleeve (for flint blade), River Ouse, Goldington

5.1.2 The Later Prehistoric Period (c5,000BC-AD43)

There have been few recorded finds of Neolithic or Bronze Age date from the historic core of Bedford itself. However, there is plentiful evidence of settlement, agricultural and ritual activity during these periods in the surrounding area. Recent work has identified a complex ritual landscape on the eastern side of the present town, stretching from Cople and Willington in the south across the river to Goldington and Howbury in the north (Clarke and Dawson 1996). A henge monument was excavated at the Goldington Tesco site (Mustoe 1988). Further sites have been located along the course of the Bedford Southern Bypass (Shepherd 1995). Two Bronze Age ring ditches were excavated at the Bunyan Centre to the south of Bedford (Steadman 1999a).

Of particular interest in the historical environment records is reference to the 19th century discovery of over 50 funnel-shaped pits in the old brickfield in Clapham Road, just to the north-west of the present town (HER 5124). These were found to be cut into the natural clay about 6ft down, and were each 4-5ft deep. The pits were said to contain burnt stones and bones of ox, horse, deer and wolf, as well as fragments of 'very rude' pottery and several flint flakes. They are perhaps unlikely to be cremations, which is how they are listed, and are of unknown date. Other Neolithic and Bronze Age finds from the vicinity of Bedford are listed below: -

HER 272 Neolithic axe, Kelvin Av are



HER 289 'Neolithic' inhumations found in Russell Park in late C19th
 HER 1171 Neolithic Axe, Putnoe
 HER 1902 Neolithic axe, Bedford, exact location unknown
 HER 14763 Neolithic axe, Kimbolton Road
 HER 277 BA burials and pottery, Fenlake
 HER 278 BA burial, Fenlake
 HER 1506 BA pottery, Newnham
 HER 10180 BA miniature flanged axe, Bedford, exact location unknown
 HER 14659 BA spearhead, Elstow Road

The Iron Age period is also well represented in the landscape around Bedford. The hillfort at Mowsbury Hill on the northern fringes of the present town probably dates from the early Iron Age. In the middle to late Iron Age a transition from defended hilltop settlements to lowland enclosures seems to have occurred. Rural settlements and field systems were investigated at Riverside Meadows, Willington, Cople, Octagon Farm, Eastcotts and Mill Farm on the course of the Bedford Southern Bypass (Shepherd 1995). A late Iron Age settlement is known to have existed at Newnham on the site of the later Roman villa (Johnston 1959). A series of enclosures were constructed on the low hilltop at Norse Road (Edgeworth 2001). Most of these sites continued in use into the Roman period.

5.2 *The Roman Period (AD43 - AD410)*

The best summary of Bedford in Roman times is to be found in Simco (1984, 88-98), which gives map locations and a gazetteer of Roman sites and finds in Bedfordshire. Simco discounts early antiquarian notions that Bedford was a Roman town (HER 292), sometimes identified as 'Lactodorum'. She argues that the occasional finds of Roman pottery in Bedford are no more than would be expected for any other part of the river valley. It is quite possible, however, that the ford across the river was in use in Roman times.

The Viatores group identified a complex network of Roman roads in Bedfordshire, mainly from the evidence of maps (Viatores 1964). Four of the suggested roads pass within the vicinity of the town, though none through the historic core itself. One of these, Viatores no 173 (HER 485), is orientated NNE-SSW and passes to the west of the town. Another, no 210 (HER 10480 / 717), runs in a NW-SE direction to the south of Bedford. A third, no 224 (HER 738) runs westwards from the small Roman town of Sandy, 13km to the east, in the direction of Bedford. The fourth (HER 10473) is a small section of road running along the course of what is now Newnham Avenue and Polhill Avenue. This latter segment is the only one of the suggested roads near Bedford to survive Simco's (1984) critical analysis, which sought to eliminate from the Viatores system all those post-medieval boundaries and trackways not in existence before enclosure, and which could not therefore be Roman in origin. However, a large agger and metalled surface has been observed close to the Mile Road allotments (HER 10473 – see also HER 3639) and may be material confirmation of Viatores road no 210.

Roman sites in close vicinity of Bedford include the villa site at Newnham (HER 986), 2.5km to the east. This was partly destroyed by gravel works in the 1950s and subject to rescue excavations in the 1970s, when building foundations with hypocaust system set within a rectilinear field system were found (Johnston 1959; Simco 1984, 97). A Roman 2nd century lime kiln was discovered nearby at Cardington Mill (White 1977). Romano-British farmsteads have recently been excavated at Octagon Farm near Willington, Harrowden, Eastcotts and Pear Tree Farm near Elstow on the line of the Bedford Southern Bypass (Shepherd, 1995), and on the small hill at Norse Road on the eastern side of town (Edgeworth, 2001). Some of these sites are associated with quite extensive field systems visible on aerial photographs. A 12m deep Roman well was found at Biddenham (Page, 1908, 5) 3km to the west of Bedford. A series of small farmsteads with field systems were recorded on more recent excavations at Biddenham Loop (Luke, in prep). Substantial buildings, a large cemetery, a metalled trackway and many artefacts were discovered on the other side of the river at Kempston Church End, indicating a settlement perhaps the size of a small town (Dawson, in prep).

Within the present town of Bedford but to the south of the historic core, Roman pottery was reported to have been found in the London Road area (HER 271) and the Elstow Road area (HER



270). Pottery kilns were excavated on allotments at Mile Road, on the current southern limits of Bedford (HER 979, Dring 1971), and Roman kiln debris was also found on London Road (HER 16284). A number of Roman coins have been found in the general area of southern Bedford (HER 15927, 15898, 15927, 15933). A single Roman coin was found to the north of the town in Pemberley Avenue (HER 1907). Also on the north side, a possible small Roman enclosure on Cemetery Hill (HER 3112) has been identified, but these earthworks could just be the product of 19th century garden terracing.

A building may have existed in what is now Bromham Road. Large quantities of broken Roman pottery were found within a burnt deposit during house extension works at the front of 2 Victoria Terrace, Bromham Road, in 1884 (HER 249). The sides of the excavation were lined with large stones and Roman tiles, with a concrete-like substance at the base. There was a central mass of limestone and clay, bounded on either side by flue-like spaces. It has been suggested that these could be the remains of a pottery kiln or possibly the hypocaust of a villa (Simco 1984, 97).

Roman finds from within historic core of Bedford are rare. Nineteenth century references to a Roman villa in Castle Lane (HER 13777) are based on ambiguous reports of “Roman bricks, fragments of flues, and tessellated work, and encaustic tile, having in them Norman and perhaps Saxon mouldings” (quoted in Simco 1984, 88). However, recent excavations in the Castle Lane area have produced no Roman features and only a handful of Roman pottery sherds, relative to large numbers of sherds and other artefacts from Saxon and medieval periods (see Baker *et al* 1979). This negative evidence is perhaps enough to discount the idea that there was a substantial Roman building in the vicinity.

In the 1840s a Roman cremation urn, containing charred bones and ashes, was said to have been found in a cellar on the corner of St Paul’s Square and the High Street (HER 284). Excavations for a malting in Horne Lane in 1887 uncovered a coin of Diocletian along with a brass key and a knife blade supposed to be Roman (HER 293). These were found, together with early medieval finds 2-3m down in the black mud of a former watercourse - thought at the time to be the mouth of the Saffron Ditch (although more likely to be river deposits, the bank of the river having since moved south). A Roman kiln-bar was found in a pit on the crossroads of St Mary’s Street and Cauldwell Street (Hall 1971). Several Roman coins found in the riverbed at the south end of the town bridge while laying foundations for the new bridge in 1811 (HER 286) would support the argument that the ford or crossing, and therefore also perhaps the north-south route, was in use in Roman times. However, “It is clear from this scatter of findspots...that there was little in the character of Bedford in Roman times that could be considered as urban” (Hassall and Baker 1974, 77)

5.3 The Anglo-Saxon / Saxo-Norman Periods (AD410 - AD1150)

5.3.1 The Early Anglo-Saxon Period (AD410 - AD650)

The settlement of Bedfordshire by pagan Anglo-Saxons is discussed in Godber (1969), Baker and Hassall (1974, 77) and Bilikowska (1980). The River Great Ouse clearly played a major role in this process, with a pattern of scattered farmsteads gradually being established along the river valley. Earliest evidence of Saxon occupation in the vicinity of Bedford is at Kempston, where a large cemetery was discovered in the 19th century (Page 1904, 176-84). This cemetery contained some of the earliest Saxon artefacts known in England, dating from the first half of the 5th century, leading some to believe that the first burials on site actually date from the late Roman period. Kennett (1986, 5) put forward the idea that “the beginnings of the Kempston cemetery represent the burial ground of a detachment of German mercenaries, with their wives, whose task was to guard the ford which later became formalised as Bedford.” Bedford at this time was probably, as the place-name implies, simply a ford on the river, taking its name from a farmer or local chieftain who lived nearby.

During excavations to the rear of 29-41 High Street, a disc brooch of 5th – 6th century date was found within the rampart of the outer bailey ditch of Bedford Castle, and had presumably come from a feature or layer in the vicinity disturbed by the later castle works. No features of this period were found, but there was a scatter of early-middle Saxon pottery in a layer which extended across the site, possibly a ploughsoil (Steadman 1999b).



Inhumation burials, probably of early Anglo-Saxon date, were found during the making of a path during the creation of Russell Park in 1896. Three skeletons were orientated in a line running east-west, with feet to the east. Also found with were two spearheads and an iron sword (HER 290).

5.3.2 The Middle Saxon Period (AD650 - AD850)

5.3.2.1 Occupation Evidence

Some kind of settlement was probably established in Bedford by the 6th–8th century. Traces of substantial early middle Saxon structures, possibly two timber halls of the post-in-trench type of construction, were excavated in the area behind the Swan Hotel to the north-east of the bridge (Baker *et al* 1979, 20-26). Further structural and occupation evidence of this period was found at Bennett's Work's (Baker 1986).

Sherds of an Ipswich ware pitcher, dated 650-850, were found in Horne Lane before the last war, though the exact find-spot is unknown (Kennett 1966). Middle Saxon pottery has also been found on several excavations in the Midland Road area, including BMR74 (Baker 1979, 79-95), and The Liberal Club (Baker 1986). It is possible, moreover, that some middle Saxon pottery from these sites may have gone unnoticed. Slowikowski (1991) describes a sherd of fine Tating-type ware, initially unrecognised and thought to be of post-medieval date but actually dating from the late 8th to early 9th centuries. Such pottery is sometimes taken as an indicator of high status royal or ecclesiastical sites. The sherd came from one of the Midland Road sites but its exact context is unknown.

To the south of the river, an assemblage of middle Saxon pottery was found in excavations on the eastern side of St John's Street (Baker *et al* 1979 115-126). The pottery was recovered from a pit, which may have been associated with a structure provisionally dated to the 9th century. This shows there was some occupation activity in the southern area of town prior to its enclosure and fortification by Edward the Elder in AD919

Middle Saxon finds from an unspecified location in Bedford, including a coin of King Offa (AD757-796) and a 7th century sword, have been recorded (HER 1906).

5.3.2.2 Burials

A graveyard of probable middle Saxon date was partially uncovered during a watching brief at 14-15a St Paul's Square (summary in SMA 1998). Individual graves were aligned east-west and arranged in closely set parallel rows running north-south. There were no grave goods, and a single sherd of pottery dating to the 6th–7th centuries was found in the backfill of one of the graves, though it is possible that this was residual. The graves were cut by pits containing domestic refuse of 10th-12th centuries, showing that the cemetery had gone out of use by this time.

Three skeletons supposedly of Saxon date were found just to the north at the Silver Grill Tavern, 32 High Street, in 1967 (BLARS co/Ing3/2/12). These may be from the same cemetery, the limits of which have not been established. Numerous human bones were also found during the construction of the Corn Exchange to the west in 1872 (Benson 1995, 60), though these may be medieval in date.

5.3.2.3 Boundaries

The watching brief project in Bedford Town Centre, TCI 399, revealed a large ditch running east-west along the course of the present Midland Road East. It was 3.5m–4m wide and at least 70m in length, apparently carrying on down the south side of Silver Street to the east and with a possible continuation to the west. The fill of the ditch was not excavated to its full depth but was at least 1m deep. It contained a mixture of Maxey ware (7th-9th centuries) and St Neot's ware (9th-12th centuries). This could indicate a late Saxon ditch containing earlier residual material. However, it has been argued that the finds may indicate an early ditch kept open and maintained over several centuries, with periodic slippage of the bank and clearing out of the ditch resulting in the mixed assemblage (Edgeworth, *in prep*). A shoe yet to be dated and an iron key of a type characteristic of the middle Saxon period was also found. The ditch is partly sealed by an early medieval road surface, presumably a precursor of Midland Road. The question as to whether this ditch is an internal boundary within the late Saxon burh or whether it marks the northern boundary



of an earlier middle Saxon burh has yet to be resolved. It is worth noting, however, that nearly all known recent finds of middle Saxon pottery occur on or to the south of the line of the ditch (Fig 10).

5.3.2.4 Church

The existence of an early minster church on or near the present site of St Paul's in Bedford has been inferred by Haslam (1986), largely on the basis of the traditional association of Bedford with King Offa. This tradition was first recorded by Matthew Paris, a monk of St Albans in the twelfth century (Page 1904, 310). According to Paris, Bedford was the burial place of Offa, whose remains were supposedly kept in a chapel later swept away by floods. This implies, Haslam argues, that St Paul's was already in existence at that time as the burh church, possibly founded by Offa himself in the eighth century. Alternatively the church could have been founded during the early conversion period in the 6th-7th century, as implied by Owen (1978). Either theory is supported by the discovery of the possible middle Saxon cemetery in St Paul's Square (see discussion of occupation evidence above) and the 8th century cross shaft fragment in St Peter's Church.

For an alternative theory of town origin in relation to churches, now largely discounted, see Kuhlicke (1937, 1950, 1955), who placed it around St Peter's Church. Kuhlicke's ideas are given new and unexpected support by the realisation that the carved stone in the tower of St Peter's is actually a fragment of a Mercian cross (see below).

5.3.2.5 Cross

A cross shaft fragment incorporated into the jamb of a Saxo-Norman doorway in the tower of St Peter's Church is probably the earliest surviving remnant of middle Saxon Bedford (Fig 9). The main face is carved with two winged bipeds, probably dragons, with interlaced tails. The side panel is also carved with an interlaced design. The fragment is described and illustrated as a 'carved stone' in Smith (1966) and Godber (1978), but its status as a cross can perhaps be demonstrated by comparisons with other cross-shafts. A very similar cross-shaft fragment, probably from the same workshop, is known from only two miles away in St Mary's Church, Elstow (Baker 1969, 30-31) where there is also an extensive Saxon cemetery. It is described and illustrated in Webster and Backhouse (1991, 242, plate 207).

The style and design of the carving is characteristic of the mid-8th- early 9th centuries in eastern Mercia. If this dating is accepted it means that the cross fragment was already at least two hundred years old when it was incorporated into the door jamb during the building of St Peter's Church tower in the 10th-11th century. A significant possibility is that it was broken in the Viking raids of 1010.

5.3.3 The Saxo-Norman Period (AD850-1150): The Northern Burh

5.3.3.1 Occupation Evidence

The characteristic local pottery type of this period is St Neots shelly ware, which dates from 850-1150. Although early and late types are sometimes distinguishable, it is generally difficult to be precise when using this pottery to date archaeological features. Features containing St Neots ware, in the absence of other dating evidence, could therefore be either pre-Conquest or post-Conquest in date. Hence the use of the term 'Saxo-Norman'. Bedford Castle, the development of which straddles the end of this period and the beginning of the medieval period, is dealt with in a section of its own.

Considerable amounts of St Neots ware were found by Mr Kuhlicke on various sites in the High Street, Silver Street, and St Peter's Street (see table and discussion on Archaeological Investigations 1920-1940, above). The distribution of finds led him to the conclusion that the first burh of Bedford was centred on St Peter's (Kuhlicke 1950, Maps 1 and 2). Since then, however, there have been numerous finds of Saxo-Norman date in many other parts of the old town.

On the Bedford Castle excavations (Baker *et al* 1979, 26-27) a 0.5m thick black occupation layer contained large quantities of quantities of St Neots ware, together with earlier pottery. This layer extended across a large area of the castle site, sealing middle Saxon layers and features and cut by Norman castle walls. A similar layer was found on the Bennett's Work's site just to the north



(Baker 1986), though here it is described as a 'cultivation layer'. A number of features of Saxo-Norman date cut through this layer, and may be associated with early castle activity.

At Howard Street (Baker 1974, 104) there were no archaeological features but an old turf line containing St Neots ware pottery was identified.

On the south side of Midland Road (Baker *et al* 1979, 79-95) there was evidence of dense Saxo-Norman activity in the form of pits, postholes, slots, and occupation layers. Beam-slots seem to respect the alignment of Midland Road. A large assemblage of animal bones found in rubbish pits showed a preponderance of sheep, with cattle and pig bones also well represented.

At the Empire site (on the north side of Midland Road) ditches, gullies, pits, postholes, surfaces and stakeholes were found. These indicated quite intensive activity during the 10th–12th centuries. Domestic refuse in fills included the usual range of cooking pots, bowls and jugs, with large amounts of animal bone. A horn-working industry nearby was indicated by the many sheep and goat horn cores. Iron slag, crucibles for the smelting of copper alloys, and quantities of ashy soil showed that metal-working also took place near the site. Natural springs meant wet conditions and good preservation of organic material. Studies were undertaken on insect and plant remains from the excavation (Hassall 1983).

At the Peacocks Yard and Salvation Army sites, no archaeological features from this period could be identified but some sherds of St Neots ware pottery were found (*ibid*).

Trial trench excavations at 2 St Cuthbert's Street (BCAS 1998/3) located two pits containing early St Neots pottery dated to the 10th century. A rubbish pit, dated to the 10th-11th centuries, was also found on the trial trench excavations nearby at 8-10 St Cuthbert's Street. The pit was sealed by a stone structure, again of 10th-11th century date - interpreted as the surface of a floor or courtyard, or possibly the foundation of a building (BCAS 1993/15).

A watching brief in Lime Street (WB127) uncovered rubbish pits containing pottery and animal bone dated to the 9th-13th centuries.

A small evaluation comprising a single trench in the cellar of 13 High Street (WB409) identified part of a clay-lined pit which had been back-filled with domestic refuse, including pottery sherds of the 10th-12th centuries. This was taken to indicate the presence of yards to the rear of properties fronting on to the High Street. Similar evidence was encountered during excavations to the rear of 29-41 High Street (Steadman 1999b). Here several phases of late Saxon activity and occupation were found, comprised of rubbish or cess pits, ditches and the remains of timber structures, sealed beneath the rampart of the Norman castle outer bailey ditch. Several of the pits contained ash and slag – clear evidence for smithing and perhaps other industrial activity. Ditches may indicate the formal laying-out of property boundaries.

In the excavation at 14-15a St Paul's Square (summary in SMA 1998), graves of probable middle Saxon date were cut by pits containing domestic refuse dating from Saxo-Norman times.

Excavations in the middle of St Paul's Square (Baker 1987a) uncovered a number of substantial spreads of burnt material, one of which produced a coin of King Alfred minted in London. Unstratified Saxon finds included a copper alloy strap end inlaid with niello and decorated with an intertwined animal motif, dated to the mid-9th century, and a carved stone with an interlaced knot design thought to be of Saxon date.

On the south side of Mill Street, excavations at the Howard Congregational Chapel (BCAS 1996/20) uncovered a pit and possible ditch running north-south dating from the 10th-12th centuries, at a depth of 1.4 – 1.8m. Large amounts of slag and ashy deposits indicate that this may have been an industrial quarter. No actual structures were found, but there were some fragments of wattle and daub. Considerable quantities of residual Saxo-Norman pottery from within the chapel and from the burial ground indicate that significant archaeological deposits were disturbed by the building of the chapel in the 18th century.



The recent Town Centre Improvement watching brief uncovered evidence of late Saxon and Saxo-Norman activity in Harpur Street. Many pits containing domestic and some industrial refuse were found, dated to the 10th-12th centuries. A series of ditches, recut several times, was found on a north-south alignment beneath Harpur Street, and may represent an early property boundary. On Midland Road East, a mixture of St Neots ware and earlier Maxey ware pottery was found in the fill of the large ditch running east-west beneath Midland Road and heading under the buildings on the south side of Silver Street. This ditch has already been discussed as a possible middle Saxon boundary ditch, which remained open into late Saxon times. No trace of Saxo-Norman activity was found in River Street, outside the supposed western boundary of the town (Edgeworth *in prep*).

5.3.3.2 Aldermanbury

The former existence of the Aldermanbury in Saxon times is inferred from documentary evidence dating from the later medieval period. The first part of the name is thought to refer to the 'Ealderman' or Earl in late Saxon times; the second part is taken to refer to his fortified residence. The Ealderman would probably have been responsible for collecting taxes from the Shire for maintaining the defences of the burh.

The Harrold Cartulary for the years 1260-70 (BHRS 17, item 133) describes an area north of the present Midland Road and west of Harpur Street as the Aldermanbury. Harpur Street was also called the Aldermanbury in the early 16th century (Crawley and Freeman 1988, 106). A possibility is that the Aldermanbury was in the area of St Loyes, and that the present Harpur Street was an approach road from St Paul's (Crawley and Freeman 1997a, 54).

The VCH quotes another 13th century document stating that a property called Aldermanbury Manor was owned by the Abbess of Elstow. In 1224 she claimed from Faulkes de Breaute 11 shillings for the rent of 8 acres of land in Aldermanbury. A further document of 1299-1300 describes it as a vacant space in the shape of a shield, 152 feet long, 92 feet broad in the north, tapering to two and a half feet in the south (Page 1912, 23).

Kuhlicke (1972b, 170) argues that Aldermanbury was a likely site for the Bedford Mint which functioned from the 10th to 12th centuries. He equates the Aldermanbury with the former sites of Bury Farm and Bury Field. The existence of a manor here could explain the location of St Peter's Church, which would have been sited next to the manor by a local lord, perhaps as a daughter church of St Paul's.

Crawley and Freeman (1997, 54) have stated that "The exact location of the Aldermanbury must be one of the most important mysteries of Bedford's past, yet to be solved."

5.3.3.3 Boundaries

Hawkins (1936) examines some of the strategic considerations entailed in defending a town such as Bedford, taking local topography into account. Papers by Hill (in Baker 1970) and Haslam (1983) discuss in detail the question of the location of the boundaries. Both assume an earthen bank and ditch with stockade interrupted by gates. Hill suggests "a line from the east of the Castle area curving round to pass close to St Peter's Church to the area of the junction of the Saffron Ditch". He dates the erection of boundary fortifications, the construction of the bridge and the laying out of an internal street grid all to the four weeks which Edward the Elder spent in Bedford in AD915. Haslam argues that both the bridge and the northern burh must have pre-existed the King's visit. He places the northern boundary much further to the south – roughly along the line of Lurke Street and Lime Street - and puts the date of the building of bridge and burh over a century earlier. According to this theory, Bedford was one of a series of burhs constructed by King Offa to defend the Kingdom of Mercia against the Danes in the late 8th century.

Both models may be roughly correct in so far as they represent different stages in the evolution of the town. As Bedford expanded during the late Saxon period, the northern boundary may have been moved to the north several times (Figs 10 and 11).

Evidence suggests that the substantial east-west ditch recently found beneath Midland Road, possibly middle Saxon in date (see discussion above), was still open during much of the late Saxon



period, though it may have been overtaken by expansion and superseded as the northern boundary of the town. Kuhlicke (1937, 1940) thought he had located a large ditch or watercourse, containing late Saxon pottery, to the south of St Peter's Street and to the north of Lurke Street, half way between those proposed by Haslam and Hill (see also Kennett 1992).

There is general agreement that the eastern and western boundaries were roughly equidistant from the north-south road, now the High Street, which formed the main axis of the town. The eastern boundary, according to Hill, ran approximately along the course or just to the east of the present Newnham Road. Haslam places the boundary slightly to the west, under the later castle mound. Most authors take the Saffron Ditch to form the western boundary (see below).

A large ditch running beneath Allhallows in a north-south direction was found in excavations at the Empire site (Hassall 1983). At least 4m wide and with a bank edged with tumbled limestone on the eastern side, it was sealed by 12th-14th century layers. The ditch contained no dateable finds and the report states that "no evidence has been found to link it with a late Saxon urban boundary or defence". However, it is worth noting the possibility that, with an internal bank, it could have linked up with the Saffron Ditch to form the northern part of the western boundary.

The southern boundary of the burh was the river itself. The evidence from two watching briefs to the south of St Paul's Square suggests that the river frontage was originally about 20m further to the north, and that this part of the river was gradually reclaimed at least partly through the tipping of material from the burh. See HER 558 and WB 25.

5.3.3.4 Saffron Ditch

The Saffron or Severn Ditch is marked on the John Speed Map of 1610, though its course has obviously been modified since Saxon times. It is likely to have created a marshy area forming a natural boundary on the western side of the burh, although it is quite possible that the builders of the burh fortifications utilised the natural resource by ditching and banking it or realigning it according to their needs.

Excavations for the foundations of a malt house in Horne Lane in 1887 uncovered two bone combs of Saxon type together with some Roman finds, 2m down in a black waterlogged deposit thought to be near the outlet of the Saffron Ditch (HER 293). The combs are illustrated in Page (1904, 186). Farrer (1926, 71-2) states that an oak pile, with marks where ropes had been attached, was also found embedded in the mud – indicating that boats had once been moored here. The idea that the Saffron Ditch was located here may have to be re-evaluated, however. Evidence from two watching briefs nearby suggests the river frontage, with piling for wharves, was originally about 20m further to the north than at present, and it may well have been the river deposits which were found (see HER 558 and WB 25).

More recent excavations have failed to locate the watercourse, though work on the Liberal Club site in Midland Road (Baker 1986) found waterlogged deposits indicating flooding from a nearby stream, probably the Saffron Ditch. These contained much organic material together with evidence for iron working, fuelled by woodland clearance, from the 9th century on.

5.3.3.5 Streets

The question of the origin of the street-layout has been an important issue in studies of Bedford (Hill in Baker 1970, Hassall and Baker 1974, Haslam 1983, Crawley and Freeman 1988, summary in Baker and Baker 1986). The rectilinear grid of streets in the northern burh shows clear signs of deliberate planning, which has been variously ascribed to King Offa in the late 8th century, the Danes in the late 9th century and King Edward the Elder in the early 10th century. The north-south route over the ford, running roughly along the course of the present High Street, almost certainly pre-dates the burh, and provides the principal axis around which the burh and its streets were built. The present basic street formation can only be traced back by documentary means to the 13th century, though it is reasonable to assume that it was essentially in place by late Saxon times.

For a map of hypothetical pre-burh roads, followed by a map of roads as they might have been influenced by the construction of the burh, see Crawley and Freeman (1988, 102). On this model, Lime Street and Lurke Street can be regarded as intra-mural roads, running inside the proposed northern boundary of the late Saxon town (Haslam 1983). For an alternative view, based on Hill's



model of town origins (in Baker 1970), see the first map in Baker and Baker (1985, 14). This incorporates St Peter's Street and Dame Alice Street within the boundaries of the town. As already noted, both these models could essentially be correct, representing different phases in the development of an expanding town (Fig 11).

Models of town origin tend to assume : 1) the street grid was planned at the same time as the burh fortifications were constructed, 2) this planned grid was based around a central cross-roads of the north-south route (the High Street) and an east-west route (Mill Street / Silver Street / Midland Road East). Both these assumptions are challenged by the discovery of a major boundary ditch running *underneath* Midland Road East and *sealed* by the first early medieval road surface. In this case, at least, the course of the road seems to reflect that of an earlier boundary feature. The idea that the street grid was the result of a single planning event may not therefore be wholly correct. In an expanding town with boundaries possibly having been extended northwards on several occasions, the street grid may have evolved as the result of a series of separate planning events, each one building in modular fashion on what was already there (Edgeworth *in prep*).

Also on the Town Centre Improvement Watching Brief, late Saxon ditches were found running north-south along either side of Harpur Street. These may be roadside ditches, or may be property boundaries which predate the road (*ibid*).

A possible road surface was located in excavations on the Empire site (1978/2, Hassall 1983). Here a cobbled surface, constructed of small squarish pieces of limestone and small pebbles, with a flanking ditch, extended for at least 12m in a north-south direction to the east of the present Allhallows. This surface, which could be a large courtyard rather than a road, dates from the 9th-12th centuries.

5.3.3.6 Buildings

The only surviving building with stonework from this period in North Bedford is St Peter's Church, though it is thought that a predecessor of the present St Paul's Church also stood at this time.

HER	Address	Comments
852	St Peter's Church	Anglo-Saxon long and short work in tower. Carved stone (cross fragment) set into Saxon doorway above chancel arch. Present building mostly Norman. Restored in C14th and C15th.

Table 4. Saxo-Norman Buildings in North Bedford

5.3.3.7 St Peter's Church (HER 852)

St Peter's Church is the best preserved of the Saxon churches of Bedfordshire. The present building dates from the 10th-11th centuries. It originally consisted of a single storey west porch, with a nave and possibly a chancel to the east. The tower was built onto the porch and has traces of Saxon windows at belfry level (Smith 1966). Inside the tower there is a cross fragment with carvings of two dragon-like creatures set upside down in the north jamb of a Saxon doorway above the chancel arch. This has already been described. Hill (in Baker 1970, 96-98) argued that St Peter's Church was incorporated into the defences of the late Saxon town as a bastion or flanking guard to the northern gate. Others argue that at that time St Peter's was an extra mural church situated outside the gates of the town, with the triangular green possibly being used as a market (Haslam 1983, 29). Local tradition states that marks of burning on the interior and exterior of the tower were made during an attack on Bedford by the Danes.

5.3.3.8 St Paul's Church

Domesday Book states that St Paul's Church existed as a house of secular canons in 1086 and that it was worth five pounds before Domesday. It is also likely that it was the burial place of Oskytel, Archbishop of York. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle of 970 records that his body was brought to the town by Thurketyl, the Abbott of Bedanford. This implies that St Paul's was an important minster church - or as some have it, a monastery - during the tenth century and probably for some time preceding it. Haslam (1986) argues that St Paul's Church was founded by King Offa in the 8th century. Baker and Baker (1985, 30) believe that this minster church may have been destroyed by



the Danes in their raid of 1009-1010. The 11th century church that replaced it was probably destroyed again in 1153 when Prince Henry laid siege to Bedford Castle.

No architectural evidence from Saxon times survives in the structure of the church itself. However, a stone carved in the form of an interlaced knot was found during the excavations in St Paul's Square (and is currently in the Albion finds archive). It could be from a cross or a gravestone, or may even be a roundel or boss from a building. Its style is dateable to the Saxon period. The only building in the vicinity in Saxon times would have been the church, so it could possibly be a fragment of the old St Paul's, perhaps deposited in the ground during one of the periods of destruction outlined above.

After the Norman conquest St Paul's was the ecclesiastical centre of the archdeaconry of Bedfordshire, and a regular court was held in the back chapel.

5.3.4 The Saxo-Norman Period (AD850-1150): The Southern Burh

The entry in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for the year 915 is crucial for understanding the origin of the southern part of Bedford. It reads:

'In this year King Edward went with his army to Bedford, before Martinmas and obtained the borough, and almost all the townfolk who dwelt there before submitted to him. And he stayed there four weeks, and before he went away ordered the borough on the south side of the river to be built.' (Whitelock 1955)

5.3.4.1 King's Ditch (HER 1198)

The King's Ditch, which encloses the southern part of Bedford, is generally assumed to have been built in 915 on the orders of King Edward, as described in the Anglo Saxon Chronicle. The primary function of the earthwork must have been to provide a defensive boundary against attackers, with the possible secondary function of flood defence. It may initially have provided fortifications for a large garrison, only later developing into an urban settlement. Or it could have been planned as a town from the beginning. The earthwork consisted of a large bank and ditch just under a kilometre in length and roughly semicircular in shape, enclosing an area of about 45 acres. Gaps or bridges over the ditch must have existed for roads on the west, north and east sides. In its present state, it leaves the river near Mander College and returns near Duckmill, with the water flowing in that direction.

The stream is now culverted for much of its length. Open stretches of the ditch can still be seen at the roundabout at the end of St John's Street and in the grounds of Dame Alice Harpur School. The best preserved stretch, however, is from Rope Walk to Cardington Road, where vestiges of internal bank up to 2m high as well as ditch survive.

Excavations at Ray's Close (Hassall and Baker 1974, 79-80) cut a section through the internal bank. This revealed a series of gravel, clay and silt-loam layers (*ibid*, fig 2), some of which may have resulted from clearing out of the ditch in medieval times. Just above natural was a small spread of mortar. The earliest pottery recovered was developed St Neots ware, dated to the 11th-13th centuries. The earthwork was therefore not conclusively dated to the late Saxon period. No traces of a palisade on the bank were found.

During excavations on the east side of St John's Street at Wilmer's Corner (Baker, *et al*, 1979, 97), a trench just to the north of King's Ditch revealed layers of silt tipping down southwards towards the ditch. No features associated with a crossing of the ditch, which might be expected near this point, were discovered.

Also at Wilmer's Corner, roadworks in 1972 left a standing section through what appeared to be an external bank (Hassall and Baker 1974, 80, fig 3). Sherds of St Neots ware were found in loamy soil overlying a gravel bank, which may be a primary feature of the earthwork.

'Kyngesdiche' continued to be maintained and to serve as a boundary and flood defence into the medieval period (see discussion below).



5.3.4.2 Occupation Evidence

On the south side of Cauldwell Street excavations revealed a number of ash and rubbish pits of 10th-12th century date. Metalworking nearby was indicated by the amount of slag in the pits. Set well back from the road was a possible post-in-trench building. It was concluded that the street frontage itself may not have been built up in this part of the burh (Baker *et al* 1979, 65-78). Similar evidence of industrial activity from pits containing 11th century St Neots ware pottery was found near the corner of Cauldwell Street and St Mary's Street, in the later graveyard of St Peter-de-Dunstable. This church (demolished in the 16th century) may have been founded in early Norman times. One pit contained debris from bronze working which may relate to the casting of bells (Hall 1971).

Evidence of Saxo-Norman timber structures close to the road, in the form of beamslots running east-west with associated postholes, was found in excavations at 5-11 St Mary's Street (Baker *et al*, 127-143). Also on the western side of the road, at 7-19 St Mary's Street remains of a timber structure dating from the 11th-12th centuries were found. A row of postholes represents the wall of the building, with pits to the rear (*ibid*),.

Excavations at 7-9 St John's Street uncovered a number of pits of Saxo-Norman date extending right up to the modern road on its western side. The excavator concluded that either there were no structures fronting the road at this point, or that these pits were to the rear of structures sealed by the present road surface (Baker 1970).

Further to the south, the remains of a possible 9th century timber building was found fronting onto the eastern side of St John's Street. Numerous later rubbish pits were also found. Some contained sherds of large storage vessels of Thetford ware. Charcoal from two of the pits was radio-carbon dated to the 9th-10th centuries (Baker *et al* 1979, 99-126).

At the southern end and on the western side of St John's Street excavations revealed numerous structural features and inter-cutting rubbish pits dating from the 10th-11th centuries. Beam slots aligned parallel or at right angles to each other suggest that buildings were placed alongside St John's Street. Postholes may represent internal room divisions. An unusually high percentage of (un-butchered) horse bones was found in the pits; one contained the partial remains of at least 9 individual horses, leading to an alternative interpretation of the structural features as stables. Possible property boundaries and further pits were found to the rear of the buildings, with evidence of Saxo-Norman activity extending right across to Kingsway (*ibid* 99-126).

On the eastern side of St John's Street at Wilmer's Corner a single pit of Saxo-Norman date was found. Layers of silt were noted tipping down southwards into the nearby King's Ditch. (*ibid* 97).

In sum, excavations on the interior of the southern burh have revealed fairly intense Saxo-Norman activity. At least on the main north-south road represented by St Mary's and St John's, the remains of timber buildings for the most part respect and front onto the present streets, with pits situated in yards to the rear.

5.3.4.3 Streets

The discovery of a possible 9th century timber building fronting onto the eastern side of St John's Street (Baker *et al* 1979, 99-126) indicates that this north-south route was in use, with some settlement along its course, prior to the construction of the southern burh.

The building of the southern burh entailed a re-orientation of two roads originally aligned onto the southern end of the bridge. Cardington Road and Cauldwell Street were deflected at their point of entry into the burh to meet with the main north-south road at a point 160m south of the bridge, thus creating a central crossroads (Hassall and Baker 1974, 78; Crawley and Freeman 1988, 32 – see maps in Baker and Baker 1985, 12). The present St Mary's Street and St John's Street formed the north-south axis round which the burh was constructed. According to Crawley and Freeman (1988, 101), no other roads were associated with the burh. The fairly simple street plan has survived more or less intact to the present day.



5.3.4.4 Buildings

The only surviving building with stonework surviving from this period in the south of Bedford is St Mary's Church.

HER	Address	Comments
853	St Mary's Church	Anglo-Saxon work in lower tower and window in S transept. Mostly Norman. C14th chancel.

Table 5. Saxo-Norman Buildings in South Bedford

5.3.4.5 St Mary's Church (HER 853)

The church of St Mary was not mentioned in Domesday Book, but was referred to in the same year (1086) by the foundation charter of Lincoln Cathedral. According to this document the church belonged at that time to the see of Dorchester. It is one of only two churches in Bedford with surviving Anglo-Saxon work. The VCH described it as of Norman date, though possibly built on the foundations of an earlier Saxon church (Page 1912, 27). Saxon stonework was not suspected until 1959, when the un-blocking of an early Norman window in the south transept revealed that it cut through a still earlier window of Anglo-Saxon style. Another similar window was found on the opposite wall, and observations of Saxon work in the tower indicate that both the tower and the transept are originally of Saxo-Norman date.

Smith (1966) states that this workmanship is of post-Conquest date. Haslam (1986, 45), on the other hand, argues that the position of St Mary's - on the crossroads at the centre of the southern burh - indicates that its foundation was contemporary with that of the burh itself, and that it was built by King Edward the Elder as a church for its inhabitants. The area around St Mary's may have been the site of a marketplace from an early date.

A carved corbel-head found in the blocked-in Norman window was dated as Anglo-Saxon when it was discovered in 1959, but subsequently re-dated by the British Museum to the 2nd half of the 12th century. It is expertly carved out of Caen stone (which would support a post-conquest date). However, as Kuhlicke (1972) points out, "If this dating is correct, then the corbel is a remarkable instance of Anglo-Saxon artistic survival into the Norman era". The head is slightly larger than life-size and resembles the head of a Viking, with long mane and moustache. There are traces of red pigment on its lips, nostrils, hair and cheeks, though this may be a later feature. Originally an architectural sculpture, it could have been part of the first St Mary's Church or perhaps a building nearby. At any rate, it was deposited in the window niche during reconstruction of the church in the 14th century (the date of the blocking). This little-known sculpture is on display in Bedford Museum. (For an account of its discovery, see the Bedfordshire Times 17/4/59).

5.3.5 The Saxo-Norman Period (AD850-1150): General

Prior to the regaining of the town by King Edward the Elder in 915, Bedford (the northern burh) had been under Danish occupation for nearly forty years. At first, it was a frontier town on the Danish side of the border between Wessex and the Danelaw. Later, as Danish settlers spread further to the south and west, it became an administrative centre surrounded by Danish territory, before being retaken by the Saxons. Little distinction can be drawn, however, between the material culture of the Anglo-Saxons and the Danes, so it is difficult to identify this period in the archaeological record.

Baker (1970, 67) argues that the southern burh was built as a fortress against Danish activity on the northern bank, but there is no evidence of such a north-south internal opposition. Much more likely, as the Danes of Bedford had accepted King Edward as their lord, is that Danish and Anglo-Saxon inhabitants joined in the common enterprise of protecting the town against fresh waves of Danish invaders. From a strategic point of view, the double-burh only makes sense as a single unified defensive unit. Indeed, two years after Edward's visit, a Danish attack on the town was successfully repelled.

The points at which the river entered the defences would have themselves been defended in some way, perhaps by the use of booms and chains.



The building of the southern burh and the enclosure of the river within a 'double-burh' must have had important economic as well as defensive implications. The town itself and possibly its population were effectively doubled in size, with the number and variety of markets increased accordingly. Full advantage could now be made of the waterfront on both sides of the river, stimulating increased traffic in waterborne trade. The prosperity and growth of the town in the later 10th and early 11th centuries was therefore founded upon King Edward's transformation of Bedford in 915 – perhaps the major event in the history of the town.

5.3.5.1 Bridge

There are no documentary references to Bedford Bridge before the late 12th century, but the medieval stone bridge may well have had a Saxon predecessor, probably of wooden trestle construction. Haslam (1983, 31) argues that the existence of a burh implies the existence of a bridge, and that the bridge was the *raison d'être* of Bedford right from its beginning as a fortified burh on the north bank of the river in Mercian times. Hill (in Baker 1970) dates the first bridge to the visit of Edward the Elder in 915, and supposes that the main purpose of the construction of the southern burh was to provide a bridgehead or flanking work to a fortified bridge, blocking the river to Danish attackers. Simco and McKeague (1997, 32) also consider that the bridge may have been built at this time, to link the two halves of the town.

Timbers found in the riverbed next to the bridge by Bedford Sub Aqua Club were thought by Baker and Hassall (1974, 78) to possibly be the remains of an early bridge, although doubt is cast on this theory by Simco and McKeague (*ibid*).

Large amounts of St Neots ware pottery were found during dredging of the river at Bedford Bridge in 1940, indicating that much dumping of rubbish had taken place here in late Saxon times (Kuhlicke, Beds Times, May 31st, 1940).

5.3.5.2 Mint (HER 14044)

The existence of a late Saxon mint in Bedford is known only from the coins which were produced there. The earliest coins are of the reign of Eadwig (946-959). However, a mint was probably started much earlier in the reign of Aethelstan, who in 928 decreed that every borough should have its own mint, obtaining dies and pattern coins from the government, as a means of guarding against counterfeits. Names of the moneyers on coins provide an interesting window on the kind of personal names common in Bedford a century before the Norman Conquest – Boiga, Frothgar, Grim, Herewig, Baldric, etc. The mint continued in use for a period of almost two hundred years up to the reign of Stephen I in the mid-12th century. Many coins from the Bedford mint are in the collections of Bedford and Luton Museums (Hagen 1974).

Kuhlicke (1972b, 170) addresses the question of where the mint workshop was located. He argues that it must have been situated in a fortified place and puts forward the Aldermanbury as a likely candidate.

5.3.5.3 Trades

As well as the specialist moneyers mentioned above, Bedford must have possessed a range of craftsmen working with pottery, metal, wood, leather, wool, cloth, bone, etc. The presence of a mint in a fortified town implies the existence of a market, giving a livelihood for sellers, hawkers, and so on. The river would naturally have supported a number of fishermen, and there must have been several mills in or near the town.

Iron-working is indicated by the presence of pits containing ash and slag in Midland Road, High Street, Mill Street, Harpur Street and Cauldwell Street. Excavations at 29-41 High Street revealed pits containing furnace-linings, hearth-bottoms and hammerscale. These clearly indicate the presence of a forge nearby, from which the waste had been brought and dumped while still hot. It has been suggested that smiths in Bedford were well-placed to exploit a demand for iron in the territory of the Danelaw (Steadman 1999b). Traces of copper-working in the form of crucible fragments were found on the Empire site in Midland Road. From the same site were many waste cores from horn-working activity. In excavations in St John's Street surprising quantities of horse bones were found, indicating not only the possible existence of stables, but also of processes that made use of the horse carcasses – such as glue-making from hooves or tanning of hides. The large



number of buildings known in Bedford from this time –made principally from timber and wattle and daub - presupposes the presence of carpenters and builders.

Wooden piling found on the north bank of the river, with the presence of river-silts suggesting that the riverbank was about 20m further to the north than now, may date from the Saxon period (HER 558). At any rate it is likely that there were many wharfs and jetties with boats moored along this side of the river. Fishermen and fowlers would have exploited the rich river resources. There is evidence that merchants used the river for trading, with a percentage of the pottery coming from Stamford and the east coast. No doubt Bedford provided agricultural produce in exchange for more exotic wares. Large assemblages of animal bones have been found on several sites. These show a preponderance of sheep, followed by cattle and pig. Much of Bedford at this time must have been ‘countryside within a town’, with gardens and fields to the rear of houses being devoted to the growing of crops and the rearing of livestock.

5.3.6 Bedford Castle (HER 298)

Shortly after the Norman Conquest, a castle was constructed as a means of dominating the town and surrounding area. As the principal construction work to have ever taken place in Bedford, straddling both the late Saxo-Norman period and the early part of the medieval period, it seems appropriate to discuss it in a section of its own.

The castle occupied the south-east quadrant of the northern burh, the primary strategic site for controlling traffic on the river and the bridge. Existing houses and streets, or whatever occupied the area, were cleared. The first construction would have been a motte and bailey castle of earth and timber, later to be consolidated or replaced with stone. It seems likely that the original motte-and castle was much smaller than the later castle – its outer limits perhaps defined by what later became the inner bailey ditch.

The castle may have been founded by the Beauchamp family, who held it in the 1130s when it was besieged and temporarily taken by King Stephen. At this time it was said to have a strong and unshakeable keep and a high wall. The castle was besieged on further occasions in the 12th century, and was subject to several phases of damage and rebuilding. In 1153 it was occupied by Prince Henry (later Henry II), whose forces plundered the town. Re-fortification by Faulkes de Breauté in the early 13th century brought it up to continental standards. Chronicles record that he pulled down the churches of St Paul and St Cuthbert for building material, in order to construct towers, walls and deep paved ditches. But the castle was destroyed on the orders of Henry III after the final siege of 1224-25. Walls were dismantled, buildings demolished, the motte drastically reduced in height, and ditches and moats filled with rubble. In the aftermath, William de Beauchamp was allowed to build only an unfortified house in the inner courtyard. By the late 14th century the area had degenerated into ‘a void plot of old enclosed by walls.’

The history of the castle is given in Goddard 1906, Godber 1969 and Baker *et al* 1979. Although Bedford was a royal castle there are only four short references to it in royal papers before 1224. The main documentary evidence comes from chronicles. Ralph de Coggeshall describes the re-fortification by Faulkes de Breauté. Matthew Paris of Dunstable Priory describes the final siege. (For references, see Baker *et al* 1979, 9-10).

The known limits of the castle at its most powerful are outlined by Baker and Baker (1985). An outer ditch, running along the rear of buildings presently fronting the High Street, marked the western boundary. About halfway along was the Barbican, the principal fortified gateway into the castle. The outer ditch turned along the present Ram Yard and the upper part of Castle Lane to form the northern boundary. A defensive tower may have stood on the mound at the north-east corner. On the eastern side the ditch ran roughly along the course of Newnham Road. A curtain wall with a possible water-gate or tower on the bank of the river formed the southern boundary.

The motte survives today as an earth mound about 10m high and a diameter at the base of about 70m, with some traces of a surrounding ditch. A smaller mound survives to the north-east. Both these, which represent the principal surviving visible remains of the castle, are included within the area designated as a scheduled ancient monument (SAM 20412).



Farrer (1926,57) quoting George Hurst (1851) states that the last remains of the Barbican were removed during the building of cottages in 1851. The remains are described as rough walls about three feet thick.

Excavations on the castle site between 1969 and 1972 (BC69-72, Baker *et al* 1979) consisted of 44 trial trenches. These uncovered evidence of a stone-lined ditch round the motte, an inner bailey ditch, a range of Norman buildings within the inner bailey, a south curtain wall with a possible water-gate or tower, and a possible timber superstructure on the smaller north-east mound. Evidence of the destruction of the castle and the in-filling of the ditches was also found. A further excavation in 1973 (BCL73, Baker *et al*, 1979) revealed a large 13th century lime-kiln in the northern part of the outer bailey. Pottery evidence suggests that this was built and functioned during life-span of the castle in the early 13th century. Now largely in-filled, it is classed as a separate scheduled ancient monument (SAM 24259).

A number of Saxo-Norman features which may be associated with early castle activity were found on the excavations at Bennett's Works (Baker 1986). A post-pit and burnt floor levels provided evidence of a structure. A pit containing quantities of tap, slag, ironstone and cinders, indicated industrial activity nearby.

Excavations at 29-41 High Street (BHS 95/265, BCAS reports 1995/20 and 1996/2) located the line of the western outer bailey ditch during piling for foundations. This is set back about 32m to the east of the High Street. Several episodes of pre-castle activity were found, sealed by the rampart of the outer bailey ditch to the east of the site.

The castle must have made a huge impact on the economy of the town, stimulating growth in many areas of local industry. It not only employed considerable numbers of craftsmen skilled in building, carpentry, metalwork and other crafts; it also provided a large stationary market for goods and services of all kinds. Equally, it has to be said that the sudden destruction of the castle must have had a devastating effect on the local economy, with long-lasting effects on Bedford throughout the later medieval period.

5.4 The Medieval Period (AD1150 - AD1550)

5.4.1 The Medieval Period (AD1150 – AD1550): North Bedford

5.4.1.1 St Paul's Church (HER 861)

The church was demolished in the early 13th century by Falkes de Breaute to provide building stone for castle re-fortifications, and perhaps to clear a line of fire. However, the church was rebuilt in 1224 with stone from the demolition of Bedford Castle. Some of the pillars (with stone carvings of faces) and an entrance arch may be 13th century in date. Most of the present church that survives 19th and 20th century restoration, however, dates from the 15th century. Various seats and wooden stalls with carvings under misericords also date from this time. One of these depicts a man with a crossbow and a wild man outside the barbican of a castle. A history of St Paul's Church is provided by Kuhlicke (1950b).

Leland records that by the high altar in the sanctuary there was a brass with a Latin inscription reading 'De bello campo jacet hic marmore Simon fundator de Newnham' which translates roughly as 'Under this stone lies Simon de Beauchamp, founder of Newnham Priory'. This was the earliest known brass inscription in England. Unfortunately, the brass has been removed and only the stone slab matrix survives.

A Norman font reputedly from St Paul's Church is now in All Saint's Church at Queen's Park. For many years the font was used as a horse trough in the yard of the Swan Inn before being rescued and taken to Houghton Conquest in the 19th century. It was eventually returned to St Paul's, who presented it to All Saint's (Bass 1980).

Two archaeological watching briefs (WB 76 and SPC 707) have taken place. Neither produced evidence of the medieval period. Burials from the medieval cemetery were uncovered during excavations in St Paul's Square (Baker 1987a).



The churchyard is listed as HER 8857. A late medieval seal die (HER 16050) was found within the churchyard.

5.4.1.2 St Peter's Church (HER 852)

The Normans heightened the tower of the existing church (see section 6.6.7) and added a nave to the west. This effectively made the tower central to the church, and the former nave on the eastern side became a chancel. The Norman door in the south porch was added in post-medieval times (removed from the church of St Peter-de-Dunstable).

The green was probably used for fairs throughout the later medieval and post-medieval periods. In particular, a wool fair revived in 1850 (Wildman 1982) is known to have taken place.

Archaeological investigations within the church (433, BCAS Report 1996/26) uncovered floors and stone settings dating from late medieval to modern times. A recent watching brief (WB 494) found limited evidence of footings to the north of the south buttress on the west wall.

The churchyard is listed as HER 9019. It is recorded that bones were found during excavation for the foundations of the Bunyan Statue and in other late 19th century works in St Peter's Street and the Broadway (Cross 1905). Such finds indicate that the medieval (or perhaps the earlier Saxon) graveyard may have been much more extensive than it is today, covering much of what is now St Peter's Green.

5.4.1.3 St Cuthbert's Church (HER 860)

It is possible that this was originally a Saxon foundation, as its dedication suggests, though there is no archaeological or documentary evidence. A stone church existed in the early 13th century. The chronicler Ralph de Coggeshall records that along with St Paul's Church it was pulled down by Faulkes de Breaute in about 1216 to provide stone for castle refortification. A replacement was rebuilt after the siege, probably from the stones of the demolished castle. There are some drawings and prints of the medieval church (see Cecil Higgins 1992 42-45).

The church was demolished and re-built in 1848. At this time the old font (variously described as Norman or 12th century) was removed from the church. It was apparently taken to the church at Great Woolstone in Milton Keynes (Langley 1947).

The churchyard is listed as HER 8855.

5.4.1.4 All Saints' or Allhallows Church

First recorded in a document of 1221, this is the least well known of all the medieval churches in Bedford. It appears on the Newnham Priory Rental of 1507. John Speed's map of 1610 shows Allhallows Street with the church at the north end on the western side. On the eastern side of the church was Allhallows Green (Crawley and Freeman 1991, 39). All references to the church and rectory disappear after the early 17th century. The date of demolition is not known. Architectural fragments incorporated into the fireplace of the later Ship Inn may have originated from here.

An archaeological watching brief (WB 82) located the graveyard of All Saints Church. Eleven human burials, dated to the 12th-13th centuries, were uncovered.

5.4.1.5 Herne Chapel (HER 14449)

The Chapel of St Mary in the Herne stood on what is now the town hall car park, on the west side of St Paul's Square. In existence by 1200, it was rebuilt in the later medieval times. The chapel probably fell into neglect in the 16th and 17th centuries. It was used for yearly assizes (John Bunyan was tried here in 1666), a brewery and a storehouse before being demolished by the early 19th century.

5.4.1.6 School

From the 12th century a school owned and run by Newnham Priory was situated in 'Schole Lane', now known as Mill Street. The exact location of the school is unknown, but Crawley and Freeman (1997, 97) believe it was about half way down the north side of the street. After the dissolution of



the monasteries in the 1540s the building was property was sold, and the school moved to St Paul's Square in about 1550 (see section 6.13.5).

5.4.1.7 Trinity Mill

The Trinity Mill was situated on the south side of Mill Street at the eastern end, on the present site of the Bunyan Meeting. It was owned by a religious guild called the Fraternity of the Holy Trinity, based at St Paul's Church. The date of origin of the horse mill is not known but it was mentioned in the Newnham Rentals of 1506-7. Around the time of the Dissolution, the mill apparently had a monopoly on the grinding of malt in the town (Crawley and Freeman 1997b, 97). A century later, however, it had fallen out of use. Title deeds of the Bunyan Meeting in 1672 describe the piece of land as an orchard and garden with a barn.

5.4.1.8 Port Mills

A medieval watermill known as the Port Mills is mentioned in documents from the 13th century on. The last reference to it is in 1653. It is generally thought that it was situated on the north side of the river east of the bridge, but its location is uncertain. Hawkins suggests that a mill was located at Little Chethams near the present junction of the Embankment with Newnham Street.

This could explain the persistent local tradition of a barrage running diagonally across the river at this point. "When the water is clear it is possible to see a broad band of weeds at the bottom of the river, marking the course of a barrage which crossed the river obliquely in a south-westerly direction" (Farrar 1927). Farrar supposes the function of the barrage to have been to keep a full head of water in the moat and the King's Ditch, but this makes little sense in terms of water mechanics. More likely perhaps, as Hawkins (1937, 24-5) argues, is that it was made to direct the water into a leet for a mill. Early maps show a channel splitting off from the main river and running parallel to it along Thames Street. The barrage is said to have been demolished in 1770, the material used as hardcore for the foundations of the Howard Congregational Church (Cecil Higgins 1992, 56).

5.4.1.9 Saffron Ditch

The Saffron or Severne Ditch continued to effectively mark the western boundary of Bedford into the medieval period, although expansion west of the ditch occurred by the 13th-14th century. This is indicated by a series of pits, including a stone-lined well-house, on the line of the present River Street (TCI 399). Mentions of the stream occur in numerous deeds and other documents. Foot-bridges were built over the stream in Wells Street (Midland Road) and Horne Lane, with horses and wheeled traffic using the ford by the side (see the John Speed map of 1610). References to Batt's Ford, often taken to refer to a ford over the river, may in fact refer to a ford over the Saffron Ditch (Hawkins 1937), or the nearby Trumpington Mead stream (Crawley and Freeman 1991, 36).

Crawley and Freeman (1994, 143) found documentary evidence of bridges in Bendhouse Lane (Dame Alice Street), and argued on the basis of this that the Saffron Ditch must have once had another branch running down from the north-east, possibly along the course of the present Allhallows. One of the main branches of the stream is said to have risen at a spring called Iron Well (HER 14989) in the present Conduit Road.

The Saffron Ditch was built over in the first half of the 19th century.

For an account of other early watercourses in medieval Bedford see Farrer (1926, 71-2).

5.4.1.10 County Gaol (HER 14984)

County Gaol was situated on the north corner of the Silver Street and High Street crossroads. It is first mentioned as being repaired in 1189, and was probably in existence since at least 1166, when a law ordained that every county had to have a gaol. The gaol is mentioned several times in the Harrold Cartulary up until the 15th century. Silver Street was sometimes referred to as Gaol Lane from at least the 17th century. The gaol was moved to its present position in St Loyes in 1801. The last remaining fragment of the old county gaol wall was demolished in 1911 (see Wildman 1974, plate 48).



John Howard in his *State of the Prisons* tells us that the night rooms of the prisoners were two dungeons, one of which had a small grate opening onto the ground of Silver Street. For an outline plan of the gaol, see Stockwood (1973, 31).

A door said to be from the old County Gaol is on display in the Bunyan Museum.

An excavation of the old gaol site was undertaken by the Bedford Modern School Field Club in 1936, led by Mr Gearey. No records of the excavation can be traced, apart from a few notes in the Field Club Journal. "Nothing of interest concerning the prison was found, but some old wells were uncovered" (Kuhlicke 1936).

5.4.1.11 Moot Hall

From at least the late 12th century there was a small guildhall or moot hall on the north-east side of St Paul's Square, to the west of the High Street (Godber 1969, 53-5). This is shown on John Speed's map of 1610. It was probably rebuilt several times, and was demolished in the early 19th century.

A riot broke out here in 1439 between Lancastrian and Yorkist supporters on the eve of the war of the Roses. Eighteen people were killed (Godber 1978, 45).

5.4.1.12 Market

Bedford must have had a market since its origin as an Anglo-Saxon burh. Domesday Book does not mention a market in Bedford, but this is because the town was exempt from geld and tax, and only markets which yielded revenue to the Crown were listed (Hassall and Baker 1974, 88). Godber (1969, 50) states that at the time of Domesday survey it was held in the High Street. John Speed's map shows the market cross was situated here in 1610. This market may have extended up to the crossroads with Silver Street and Mill Street. The VCH (Page 1912, 2) places the market in St Paul's Square in the 13th century. By the 15th century the square had been filled by a network of small streets or shambles - including a Butcher Row, a Fish Row and a Poultry Market (Crawley and Freeman 1988, 105). Some evidence of these was found in excavations in St Paul's Square (307 or SPS86, Baker 1987a).

The sheep market of Le Schepyschepyng is first referred to in the 14th century. This is shown on the John Speed map of 1610 as being located in the present Harpur Street.

Other outlying markets and fairs may have been held on St Peter's Green, Allhallows Green, and the land around St Cuthbert's Church. It is also likely that the town to the south of the river had its own markets and fairs, though there is no record of these until the 16th century.

5.4.1.13 Inns

Most of the major medieval inns of Bedford – the Bell, Christopher, Cock, Crown, Falcon, George and Swan - were grouped around or close to the market square (Godber 1969, 156). Records of the Swan Inn go back to 1509, although it was rebuilt in 1794. Local tradition has it that the old Swan was built out of stones from the ruined castle walls. Farrer (1926, 57) describes medieval walls encountered on a visit to the cellars, implying that these were actual castle walls, but this is almost certainly not the case. A visit to the cellars as part of this survey revealed possible late medieval walls on the footprint of the present building; it is suggested that these are the walls of the cellars of the back part of the previous Swan Inn, retained when re-building of the inn took place. An oil painting of the older building, which extended right up to the High Street, is shown in Cecil Higgins (1992, 21).

5.4.1.14 Streets

The John Speed map of 1610 is broadly representative of medieval Bedford, the basic plan of which had probably changed little since the 13th century. The map shows a street grid almost symmetrical around the north-south axis of the High Street, though clearly disrupted on the eastern side where the streets had been cleared to make way for the castle. Houses are shown fronting onto the streets, with the areas behind the houses largely occupied by yards, gardens and fields. Buildings on St Paul's Square formed a number of small streets or shambles no longer in existence. Several small lanes, now lost, extended from St Paul's down to the river. Apart from



these, the pattern of medieval streets shown on the Speed map would be familiar to an inhabitant of Bedford today (see Henman 1945 for a hypothetical map of Bedford in 1506, reconstructed partly from information in the Bedford Rental rolls).

Much of the presumed Saxon street layout (Haslam 1986) has survived into the medieval period, apart from in the castle area. The west end of Castle Lane traditionally marks the position of the barbican. As it continues eastwards from here, Castle Lane may represent an internal road within the outer castle defences (Crawley and Freeman 1991, 37).

The main north-south road has always been called the High Street, or its Latin equivalent *Alta Strata*. Mill Street was known as *Horsemylane* in 1341, referring to the existence of a horsemill on the southern side at the east end. It was also known as *Scolestret* or *School Lane* throughout the medieval period, referring to the school belonging to Newnham priory half way along the northern side. Silver Street is a common name of principal streets of Saxon and medieval towns and could derive from 'street of the silversmiths'. Harpur Street was called *Doke Lane* in 1422, *Aldermanbury* in 1507 and *Sheps Chepping* in 1610. Midland Road was called *Well Street*. St Peter's Street is probably the *Holydays Lane* mentioned in the Newnham Rentals of 1507 (Glassby 1917). For further and more detailed analysis of the street-names of Bedford, see Crawley and Freeman (1988, 1991).

The archaeological watching brief in Bedford town centre (Edgeworth *in prep*) uncovered evidence of an early medieval road made of limestone slabs in the eastern part of Midland Road. Pottery dating from the 13th century on top of the road provides a *terminus ante quem*, while Saxo-Norman pottery from the upper fills of the ditch sealed below provide a rough *terminus post quem* for its construction.

A probable continuation of the limestone surface, over 1m below the present road, was discovered and noted during roadworks on the corner of Gravel Street and Midland Road (HER 7681).

Other metalled road surfaces, dating to the late medieval period, were recorded in the town centre watching brief. One runs north-south along the present course of Harpur Street, probably replacing an un-metalled track. A smaller lane was found to run east-west at right angles to Harpur Street on its western side. But while Harpur Street continued in use to become a major thoroughfare, this lane fell out of use and was built over in post-medieval times (Edgeworth *in prep*). Cobbled roadways and surfaces associated with the shambles on St Paul's Square have also been found (Baker 1987a).

As Godber (1969, 54) points out, many of the medieval roads and lanes of Bedford were laid or re-surfaced at the time of the destruction of the castle in 1224, when large amounts of stone suddenly became available. Butcher Row, Fish Row, Pudding Lane and the Poultry Market around St Paul's Square may date from this time, as might the predecessor of the present Midland Road discussed above.

5.4.1.15 Surviving Buildings

North Bedford has few surviving medieval buildings. To those listed in Table 6 below should be added St Peter's Church. This has been included in the table of Saxo-Norman buildings, though it is primarily of medieval construction.

HER	Address	Comments
861	St Paul's Church, St Paul's Square	Main church of town. Some C13 th and 14 th work. Principally C15 th , but church was known to exist in Norman times and late Saxon times.
991	George Inn, rear of High Street	C15 th remains of inn at rear of Debenhams

Table 6. Medieval buildings in North Bedford

5.4.1.16 The Old George (HER 991)

The Old George Inn on the corner of Silver Street and High Street is thought to have been one of the town's major inns, probably owned by Newnham Priory (Baker and Hassall 1974, 86). The inn was in the form of a range of buildings set around a courtyard. All that remains is a gateway



on the western side, now steel-joisted, with flanking walls. Stonework dating from the 15th century survives up to a height of 4m, with possible late medieval doorway and window. A detailed print of the statue of St George, now lost, which once stood in the niche above the doorway, can be seen in Woodcock (1951a). Woodcock argues that the inn was originally a hospice named after the crusading knights of St George. Others have argued that it was originally a chapel, or alternatively a town house. For comparison between an old print of the building and a recent photograph showing it as it stands after modern alterations, see Baker and Baker (1985, 35). As one of the few medieval buildings in Bedford, the George is now a scheduled ancient monument (SAM 44).

5.4.1.17 Further Archaeological Evidence

Excavations on the Bedford Castle site (Baker *et al* 1979) have already been summarised.

Trenches produced little evidence for post-castle occupation of the site. Some pottery dating from the 13th-14th century could represent dumping of waste on what had effectively become a “void plot” by 1361. It seems that the area remained largely derelict throughout the medieval period.

The huge lime kiln excavated in Castle Lane (*ibid*) was situated within the castle and probably played a major role in the re-fortification of castle walls and the building of structures on the interior. Other evidence of lime-burning outside of the castle has been found in Lime Street (WB127). Indeed, a lime kiln is shown at the west end of Lime Street on John Speed’s map of 1610.

In excavations at 43 Mill Street (Baker 1974), stone footings of three or more buildings dating from the 15th century were found. Finds uncovered on this site included an early medieval lamp bowl, 14th century floor tiles with line figures, a 15th century knight-on-horseback roof finial, and an assemblage of 15th century pottery containing both local and non-local wares.

Remains of a 12th-14th century timber building were found on the south side of Midland Road. This was set back about 5m from the road and accompanied by several pits, also of early medieval date. Medieval rubbish pits were also discovered on an adjacent site. These were sealed by limestone wall footings of the 15th-16th centuries (Baker *et al* 1979, 79-93). On the other side of Midland Road, at the Empire site, the medieval period was mainly represented by spreads, with the possible remains of one timber building dating from the 12th-14th centuries (Hassall 1983).

Two 13th-14th century well-houses and a well, in addition to pits, postholes and other medieval features, were found on the Peacock’s Yard site (1977/1, Hassall 1983). A ditch and several pits of similar date were found on the nearby Salvation Army site (1977/2, *ibid*). A stone-lined well and pits were uncovered during recent investigations in River Street (TCI 399). These sites show that settlement had spread beyond the Saffron Ditch, indicating that there was some expansion of the town on its western side during the medieval period.

A watching brief on the south side of Silver Street (WB 62, Baker 1987b) revealed deep stratigraphy with limestone wall footings overlying and sealing earlier Saxon features. The walls were associated with a few sherds of 11th-13th century Olney Hyde type pottery. Unfortunately this evidence was only encountered in deep slit trenches so it is difficult to give form to the building.

During the Town Centre Improvement Watching Brief, limestone wall footings of probable early medieval date were noted in Harpur Street - but again the narrowness of the trenches prevented detailed investigation. There is evidence of a change in use of this area during the medieval period, with extensive levelling of the ground, presumably involving the demolition of structures. This levelling operation facilitated the construction of external surfaces made of limestone and tile fragments that may be derived from demolished buildings. A metalled roadway, the predecessor of the present Harpur Street, was laid in the late medieval period, although this may have been preceded by a rough track flanked by ditches (Edgeworth *in prep*).

The best archaeological window onto life in medieval Bedford is provided by excavations in St Paul’s Square, which still await full publication. On the northern side of the square, remains of two rows of buildings with a cobbled roadway running between them were uncovered. Dating from the late medieval period, the road is known from documentary sources to be Butcher’s Lane,



part of the market shambles. These levels sealed a number of medieval burials and a 13th century cellar which had been re-used as a furnace. The remains of two rows of shops, this time representing the Fishmarket, were also found on the east side. These medieval and post-medieval levels sealed earlier cess pits and quarry pits (Baker 1987a).

Wyatt, writing in 1868, observed a ditch running across the lower part of St Paul's Square, presumably during excavation for building work. The ditch contained numerous pairs of goat horns - probably the remains of the horn-working industry indicated by the nearby street, Horne Lane. The ditch itself may be the Gooseditche, known from street-name evidence to be somewhere in the vicinity of St Paul's Square. For a discussion of the location of Goose-ditche Lane, see Crawley and Freeman (1988, 105)

Under buildings on the north side of St Paul's Square a layer of garden soil sealed earlier Saxo-Norman features, but was itself cut by medieval pits (SMA 1998).

Some medieval rubbish pits, and other features were uncovered on the south side of Horne Lane (WB138). For details of medieval jugs previously found in Horne Lane, see HER 4462 and 4463.

Medieval masonry was noted in a watching brief investigation of trenching at the Swan Hotel (WB125), though difficulties with the contractor prevented proper recording.

Other medieval finds listed in HER are:

HER 300 Medieval pottery found during development at rear of 83 High Street in 1921.
 HER 4456 Medieval jug found in the grounds of the Fleur-de-Lys, Mill Street
 HER 4464 Medieval and Saxon pottery, St Peter's Street
 HER 14819 Two medieval or post-medieval glazed jars found 6ft down at 81 High Street.

See also the archaeological investigations of 1920-1940 listed in Table 1. These yielded large quantities of pottery, loosely labelled as Saxon and medieval, now in Bedford Museum.

5.4.2 The Medieval Period (AD1150 - AD1550): South Bedford

5.4.2.1 St Mary's Church (HER 853)

The nave of the existing church (see section 6.7.5) was rebuilt in the 12th century and the chancel rebuilt in the 14th century. A north aisle was built from the stones of the demolished St Peter-de-Dunstable in the mid 16th century.

Restoration work in 1959 led to the discovery of a blocked-up Norman window in the east wall of the south transept (as well as earlier Saxo-Norman windows and a sculptured corbel head already described). In the splay of the window a large medieval mural was found. At the time of its discovery 'faint traces of a head worked in red, with black flames emanating from it' was noted (account of discovery, Beds Times, 17/4/59), but this is unfortunately no longer visible. Further work revealed depictions of buildings of a walled town or city – possibly meant to be Jerusalem. The foot of a falling upside-down man is seen by some, though others see a knight on horseback entering the gate of the city. The paintings were sealed by the blocking-in of the window in the 14th century.

An archaeological watching brief took place in 1990 (WB137). Four trial pits were excavated inside the church, revealing medieval walls and floors. A survey of the graveyard was also undertaken.

The graveyard is listed as HER 8856.

Medieval gravestones have been incorporated into the southern wall of the chancel. These are probably 12th-13th century in date.

At the Reformation the Abbess and a number of nuns from Elstow Abbey are said to have moved into a house in Potter Street (now Cardington Road) and to have been buried in St Mary's churchyard.



A St Mary's Hospital (HER 14753) was in existence in 1232 at a place called 'Stocwell', but its exact location is unknown. It may have been associated with St Mary's Church.

5.4.2.2 St Peter-de-Dunstable (HER 301)

Little is known of this church. It was situated on the corner of St Mary's Street and Cauldwell Street opposite St Mary's Church. Built in Norman times, it was demolished in 1545-6 on the orders of the Bishop of Lincoln. Its Norman doorway was transferred to the church of St Peter-de-Merton across the river. Stones from the church were also used to repair the town bridge, to pave various parts of the town, to construct a bear-baiting arena, and to build the north aisle of St Mary's Church (where a stone with a carving of the keys of St Peter can still be seen on the outer wall).

Excavations in the churchyard area (Baker *et al* 1979, 143-45) uncovered the remains of about 50 individuals of probable medieval date. See Hall (1971) for an account of earlier and smaller-scale archaeological observations on this site. Bungay (1937, 27) states that when excavations for gas mains were made in the 19th century, walls of the church of St Peter were found to extend about a third of the way across the road. This may indicate that two churches of St Mary's and St Peter's together formed a very narrow gate-like entrance to the inner part of the town.

The font of St Peter's Church is now in St Mary's Church. A story of how the font was used for many years as a horse trough, in the yard of the Angel Inn in Harpur Street, is told in Bungey (*ibid*). The font may be of Norman date but is badly worn and has a crude cross of much later date incised upon it.

5.4.2.3 St John's Church (HER 1206)

The church has a 14th century nave and chancel, to which a tower was added in the early 15th century. It was originally built as a private chapel for the medieval Hospital of St John. It became a parish church in its own right when a small parish was carved out of the parish of St Mary at some time before 1321. Medieval fishponds to the rear probably belonged to St John's Hospital.

The churchyard is listed as HER 9018.

A medieval seal of 'Thome Pictoris', made of Irish bog oak, was found in a field near St John's Church in 1850 (HER 288).

5.4.2.4 St John's Hospital (HER 283)

Founded by Robert de Parys and John and Henry St John in the late 12th century. A document of that time grants one of the chapels on Bedford Bridge to the Hospital (BHRS 9, 1925, 177, 180). The hospital was used for religious services and for the tending of the poor and sick. The church was originally built as a private chapel for the Hospital in the 13th century, and only later became a parish church. The present St John's House or Old Rectory represents a substantial part of the Hospital, and has 14th century beams in the roof. It was considerably altered in the 15th century with the insertion of a floor with finely carved woodwork to make it 2-storey. There are late medieval painted ceilings surviving in good condition (see Godber 1978, Plate 6). By the 17th century it had become the Rectory House. Baker and Baker (1985, 34) state that the earliest remains in the present buildings may represent a 12th century open hall aligned at right angles to the street. The building was extensively restored in 1968-70.

The wall running alongside the street pavement is thought to be of ancient stonework. Brief observations from the pavement reveal that it is interbedded with, and therefore the same date as, the west wall of the hospital building.

Traces of the fishponds of St John's Hospital survive about 50m to the south-east of St John's Church. Now consisting of only of shallow depressions partly filled with water, something of their original form can be glimpsed on the Mercer map of 1841, which shows an L-shaped pond connected by a narrow channel to an inverted L-shaped pond. Both were connected at their extreme ends to the King's Ditch, which runs just to the south of the ponds. The flow of the ditch



could thus be diverted through the ponds as and when required (HER 11365: see especially the copy of Bedford Archaeology Society Newsletter 9, 1975).

Medieval stone wall foundations had been noted during mechanical digging to the rear of St John's House in the late 1960s (Baker *et al* 1979, 115). A trench later excavated in this area (Baker 1979 *et al*, 121-3) revealed several medieval pits and an occupation layer dated to the 13th and 14th centuries.

5.4.2.5 King's Ditch (HER 1198)

The 'Kyngesdiche' continued to serve as a defensive boundary round the southern part of town. This would have entailed regular digging out of the ditch and building up of the bank throughout the medieval period. In this sense it is as much a medieval monument as it is a Saxon work. Indeed, at the site of the excavation across its internal bank (Hassall and Baker 1974), the Saxon origin of the earthwork was not proven archaeologically. Because the earliest dating evidence for the bank was pottery from the 12th century, the excavators concluded that "It might represent a rebuilding in the 12th century of the bank built by Edward the Elder or it may have been a medieval flood prevention work" (Hassall and Baker 1974, 79-80). This implies that the earlier ditch and bank could have been further to the west, and that expansion of the eastern side of town might have led to a shifting of the boundary in early medieval times.

Glassby (1917) cites a document of 1330, which records a complaint brought before the justices of the County of Bedford. Various persons, including the Prior of Cauldwell and the Master of St John's Hospital, had "to the peril of the aforesaid township when war may break out, stopped and levelled a certain ditch called 'Kynges Dych', which used to be, and ought to be, 32 feet in width at the top of the said ditch and 16 feet at the bottom, by which ditch a certain course of water flowed for the defence of the town". Presumably the damage was repaired because the water still flows, albeit mostly through culverts, even today.

A document of 1229 cited by the VCH seems to refer to the western part of the ditch as 'Barkedich' (Page 1912, 21).

5.4.2.6 Joel's Mill (Duck Mill)

The earliest reference to this watermill is in the 12th century, when it was granted to the monks of Bermondsey. After the Dissolution it was leased to the Knight's Templars, Newnham Priory, and other tenants. It was known as Joel's Mill throughout the medieval period, and was called Duck Mill from the late 16th century (Crawley and Freeman 1991, 33-35).

5.4.2.7 Markets

There is no historical reference to a market in the south of Bedford until 1554, when a grant was made for a Tuesday market to be held in St Mary's Square – the site of the recently demolished church of St Peter-de-Dunstable. Buildings shown in the square on the John Speed map of 1610 may be market houses. However, it seems likely that markets and fairs were held south of the river before this date. As Simco and McKeague (1996, 32-34) point out, the existence of toll gates on the bridge in the 14th century may well have stimulated the growth of separate markets.

5.4.2.8 Streets

Streets marked on the John Speed map of 1610 can be taken as broadly representative of the medieval street pattern (see Henman 1945 for a hypothetical map of Bedford in 1506, reconstructed in part from the Bedford Rental Rolls). The earliest recorded name of St Mary's Street is Brugestrade in 1270, later known as Bridge Street or High Street. St John's Street was known as such from at least the 15th century. Cardington Road was called Potterestreet in about 1300, perhaps indicating the existence of a pottery industry. Cauldwell Street was described as Cauldewelle Strete in the late 13th century and was named after a cold spring or well. See Crawley and Freeman (1988, 1991) for further and more detailed historical analysis of street names.

The will of Robert Bele in 1368 bequeathed a house next to the bridge in Potterestreet as 'le Carrebrigg' (an early name, perhaps, for Talps Bridge?).



5.4.2.9 Surviving Buildings

Surviving medieval buildings in South Bedford are summarised in Table 7. The list excludes St Mary's Church which, while essentially a medieval building, is of Saxo-Norman foundation and therefore listed in Table 5.

HER	Address	Comments
283	St John's House, St John's Street	Originally part of St John's Hospital. Dates from C12th/13th. C14th roof beams. Much altered in C19th.
1206	St John's Church, St John's Street	C13th. Former chapel of the medieval Hospital of St John.

Table 7. Medieval buildings in South Bedford

5.4.2.10 Further Archaeological Evidence

Traces of 13th-15th century properties with dual frontages onto the street and the river were excavated at the north end of St Mary's Street on the west side (BCAS 1996/1). On a nearby site, substantial medieval remains on a single house plot consisted of wall footings, postholes, pits, hearths, occupation spreads, etc (Baker *et al* 1979, 137-142). Light industrial activity in this area in the 14th-15th centuries is indicated by the finding of a complex sequence of hearths and ovens, with associated pits and spreads, probably for baking or brewing (*ibid*, 127-36).

A stone-lined well was located during extension of a cellar in St Mary's Post Office (WB 129). It contained animal bone, tile and pottery, which is apparently of medieval date. The well is kept open and maintained as a curiosity by the present owners. Some 13th century wall footings and a waterlogged feature, probably a cess-pit, were found on the corner of St Mary's Street and Duckmill Lane (Baker 1986).

A 13th-14th century lime-slaking pit and some early medieval dog burials were found on the south side of Cauldwell Street (Baker *et al* 1979, 67-78). On the north side, two pits dated to the 12th century were excavated (*ibid*).

A stone well-house of 13th-14th century date was uncovered on the east side of St John's Street (*ibid*, 115-126). The structure was walled on three sides, was probably roofed, and had a flight of steps leading down to a square well outlined in timber.

Remains of medieval buildings fronting onto the street, with associated occupation spreads and pits to the rear were found at the north end of St John's Street (Baker 1970). Wall foundations have also been encountered to the rear of St John's House (Baker *et al* 1979, 115-126).

Excavations at the southern end of St John's Street revealed a stone chamber set into a pit with an associated paved area. This was interpreted as a baking oven and is dated to the 12th-13th centuries. A number of rubbish pits were also found, but the main feature was a large circular stone structure, 3.5m in diameter, built of coursed and sometimes faced limestone blocks. It had two opposing stokeholes and evidence of intense heat. At the time of excavation it was thought it could be a pottery kiln, and if so this would be a very important find, as no other pottery kilns from any period are known in the historic core of Bedford. However, kiln-bars and wasters were conspicuously absent. Alternative and perhaps more likely interpretations of the feature are lime-kiln, malting or corn-drier. The structure was infilled in the second half of the 13th century. A stone-lined well was constructed on one side of the kiln at the time of its infill (*ibid*, 97-126).

Other medieval finds listed in the HER are:

HER 4458 Medieval pottery found at the old site of the Black Knight PH, St Mary's Street.
HER 15251 A late medieval Lattern Candlestick, found at Telephone House, St John's Street



5.4.3 The Medieval Period (AD1150 - AD1550): General

5.4.3.1 Bridge (HER 15147)

A detailed discussion of the medieval bridge at Bedford is given by Simco and McKeague (1996, 32-34), of which the following is a summary. Local tradition states that the first stone bridge at Bedford, known as the Great Bridge, was constructed using the rubble from the demolition of Bedford Castle in 1224. The first surviving documentary reference to Bedford Bridge is in the late 12th century when the Baron of Bedford, Simon de Beauchamp, granted a bridge chapel to St John's Hospital. A new bridge chapel was built by 1321. Grants of pontage (the right to collect tolls and the obligation to maintain the bridge) were made in 1349, 1359 and 1383. Toll gates, later to become gatehouses, were positioned on the bridge. As Simco and McKeague point out, this probably had an effect on the movement of goods between the two parts of the town, which may have developed separate markets as a consequence (although they may well have had separate markets in any case). A new Chapel of St Thomas was built to replace the old chapel (the northern gatehouse) in the mid-15th century. A woodblock print of the old bridge in the late 18th century (BLARS Z 48/50) shows two gatehouses near the centre of the bridge.

The medieval bridge was replaced in 1810-11. Descriptions by the architect John Wing and others (quoted in Simco and McKeague 1997, 35) provide a valuable record of its material and structure. The bridge had been constructed of thin masonry walls of un-squared stone, infilled with loose rubble and cemented by a grout composition of stone, lime and sand. The foundations of all the piers were built upon 3ft long piles driven through clay down to the solid limestone rock beneath.

A quantity of medieval pottery found in the riverbed during the widening of Bedford Bridge in 1938-40 is described by Kuhlicke (Beds Times, May 31st, 1940).

5.4.3.2 Outlying Religious Houses

The three priories of Newnham, Cauldwell and Greyfriars, were all situated outside of the medieval borough of Bedford, partly for reasons of space and partly to obtain a quiet location for religious worship. All owned property in the town, however. Their sites are now within the present town boundaries. Leper hospitals and pest-houses and their associated chapels were sited out of town for obvious reasons of contagion prevention (see Fig 12).

5.4.3.3 Newnham Priory (HER 297)

In the mid-12th century, according to Leland, one of the Canons of St Paul's Church killed a man. A group of canons was moved out of town as a result, and the priory set up at Newnham in the parish of Goldington. By the 1180s, the secular canons were being gradually replaced by Augustinian monks. From this time on St Paul's Church was appropriated to Newnham Priory, which received the endowments of the church in return for providing and maintaining services. This meant that much of the land in Bedford passed into the hands of the Priory and now paid rent to it. Hence the importance of the Newnham Cartulary and the Bedford Rental Rolls (Henman 1945, BHRS 25) for understanding the history of the town in medieval times. Newnham was dissolved in 1541.

The only surviving visible remains of the Priory are a group of fishponds near the present marina, and two lengths of wall commonly called the 'Roman wall' – actually dating from the 15th-16th century – demarcating parts of the western and northern boundaries of the Priory estates.

Evaluation excavations in 1987-8 and rescue excavations in 1989-90 on the site of the present Aspects Leisure Centre (350 or NP87) uncovered foundations of church, cloister, ranges, and other Priory buildings. A cemetery was located and 31 burials found.

5.4.3.4 Cauldwell Priory (HER 250)

An Augustinian priory was founded at Cauldwell in about 1153. The situation of the priory a short distance outside the town to the south-west, can be seen on the John Speed map of 1610. It was dissolved in 1536, after which it was sometimes referred to as Cauldwell Manor. The buildings eventually became part of a farm, and these were demolished in the late 19th and early 20th century. No pictures or photographs survive. The remains of the priory until recently laid underneath the Britannia Ironworks, now mostly demolished.



A watching brief took place in 1993 (WB189). Test pits produced mostly post-medieval rubble, but some medieval dressed stone was found, and this may have come from priory buildings.

5.4.3.5 Greyfriars Friary (HER 268)

Greyfriars Friary was built by the late 13th century, though it is known the Franciscan friars were in Bedford as early as 1238. The friary was situated just outside Bedford on the north-west side. It was dissolved in 1538 and eventually became a farm. A print of some of the priory buildings in 1730 can be seen in Baker and Baker (1985). Cloisters and refectory still existed in the 19th century, but all buildings were pulled down in 1899. For photographs taken before demolition see Wildman (1974, photos 1 and 2).

Remains of a square moated island in Conduit Road (HER 15396) are likely to be of medieval date and were almost certainly associated with the Friary. The moat may have served as a fishpond.

The friars had a preaching cross somewhere near the north end of Ree Lane (now River Street), which they approached along a footpath called Greyfriars Walk (Crawley and Freeman 1997b, 96)

5.4.3.6 St Leonard's Hospital for Lepers (HER 273)

Lepers' hospitals had to be located outside of town. St Leonards was situated just outside the southern gate, on the junction of roads to Luton and London. There was almost certainly a chapel associated with the hospital, which probably also had its own burial ground. First mentioned in a charter of 1207 (Page 1904, 398-9), the hospital seems to have ceased operating and to have become St Leonard's Farm (HER 15006) by the 17th century. The form and size of the medieval building complex is not known. However, an estate map of 1773 (BLARS R 1/9) shows 5 buildings, a horse fair and cow fair at St Leonard's Farm. It also shows a cross-shaped pond known as the Muswell (HER 150007). A painting of the main house by Thomas Fisher, c1810, appears to show some medieval work (see Baker and Baker 1985, 33). The building was demolished and the area greatly disturbed by the construction of the railway in the 1840s. (For detailed documentary research, see BCAS report 96/10).

Trial trench excavations for the St John's Area Relief Scheme (SJ414) did not uncover any evidence of the hospital buildings.

5.4.3.7 St Loye's Chapel

This chapel is mentioned in the Court Books of 1584-1604. Its position to the west of the present St Loyes Street, on the current site of Holy Trinity Church in Bromham Road, is shown on the John Speed map of 1610. There is no connection between the earlier chapel and the later church, except that the latter was built on land called Pesthouse Close. A pesthouse, used for isolating victims of the plague and other infectious diseases, was associated with the chapel. In the 17th century it is recorded that forty plague victims from the north side of Bedford were buried in Pesthouse Close, and it seems likely that there was an already established burial ground here during the medieval period. For detailed discussion, see Crawley and Freeman (1989b, 1991).

5.4.3.8 Surrounding Fields

Bedford was completely surrounded by fields and water meadows. To the west of the Saffron Brook by the river was Trumpington Mead. In a clockwise direction from here were the fields of Prebend, Conduit, Middle, Bury, Oak, Newnham, King's Meadow, Mother Field, Hole, Muswell and Coney Garth (see map 3 in Kuhlicke 1950, also a map of 1791 showing fields on the north side of town - BLARS X1/57).

5.4.3.9 Trades

In the medieval period Bedford has been described as being for all practical purposes two towns, separated by the river but joined by the bridge. The townspeople on either side were taxed separately - those in the north as 'Men of Bedford' and those in the south as 'Men beyond the bridge of Bedford' (Baker and Baker 1986, 41). They also probably had separate markets, though there is no documentary evidence for this. There is some archaeological evidence for different trading patterns, however. In the 12th-14th centuries, for example, pottery vessels from Lyveden in Northamptonshire were more common on the north side of the river, while vessels from Oxfordshire were more common in the south (Simco and McKeague 1997, 32-3).



As with most rural towns in the medieval period agriculture was the dominant trade. Many inhabitants of Bedford would have kept pigs and other animals in their back gardens. Sheep and cattle would have been driven into town to be sold in markets and fairs. Butcher Row, the Fishmarket and Poultry Lane were all in existence on the market square in medieval times, clearly indicating the flourishing of butchers, fishers and poulterers.

In the tax returns of 1297, 11 tanners are mentioned. The pits they used to soak skins in urine probably remain to be found in the vicinity of the river. Also listed are drapers, a spicer and salter, a blanket-maker, a potter, a tailor, a shoemaker, a carpenter, a carter, a cloth merchant, and a man who dealt in salt, iron, oil and sea coal (Godber 1969, 56). The latter information indicates that the river was probably navigable to a certain extent at this time, allowing merchants not only to import goods but also to export wool and other agricultural products. The richest inhabitant of Bedford was John-at-the-Wall, who was a farmer and tanner.

A Jewry existed in Bedford in the 12th and 13th century – an indicator of an active business centre (Godber 1969, 55-6, Farrar 1929, 70-71). But a trade recession occurred alongside a general decline of the town in the 14th century. Tax returns of 1309 listed 116 taxpayers but only 72 were listed in 1332. The surnames of some of the town burgesses reflect trades current at that time – John Glover, Robert Baker, Roger Peyntour, Reginald Spycer, and Simon le Tanner. Other tradesmen's names were Drapere, Parchiminer, Roper, Scriptor and Taylour (Godber 1969, 117). One field expanding at the time was the wool trade. As well as wool merchants, of which there were at least 6 in Bedford towards the end of the century, there would also have been shepherds, weavers, fullers and embroiderers.

The flourishing of the tanning industry into late medieval times may be indicated by the street-name, Bendhouse Lane (now Dame Alice Street). Bends were pieces of high quality leather, so a bendhouse may refer to a warehouse for such goods (Crawley and Freeman 1991, 37). Many of the old tanyards must have been situated near to the river.

Horne Lane may be named after a horn-working industry that took place there. The activity of fullers was preserved in the name Fullers Street, mentioned in documents though its location not recorded. Mill Street was so-called because of a horse mill known as Trinity Mill situated on its southern side and at its eastern end. The locations of Port Mill and Castle Mill are not known. Joel's mill (Duck Mill) was the principal mill on the south side of the river. By the 16th century there were at least four millers working within the town.

Cardington Road was called Potter Street, indicating the presence of at least one local potter. A possible pottery kiln was found in excavations at St John's Street, though it is perhaps more likely to be associated with lime-burning. A lime-burner called Simon is mentioned in the 1309 tax returns. Evidence of lime-burning was also found in Cauldwell Street and in the appropriately named Lime Street, where a lime kiln is in fact shown on John Speed's map of 1610. Baker's ovens were found in both St John's Street and St Mary's Street. The name of Silver Street may indicate the former presence of silversmiths, and there are documentary references to ironsmiths and goldsmiths. Archaeological evidence of metalworking, however, is greatly reduced compared with the amount of evidence from the Saxo-Norman period.

5.5 The Post-Medieval Period (AD1550 - AD1850)

The medieval period came to an end with the dissolution of the monasteries. Newnham Priory, Cauldwell Priory and Greyfriars Friary all became farms and their former property in the town was sold, changing the economic as well as the religious landscape of Bedford.

The John Speed map of 1610 seems to depict a 'shrunken settlement' (Hassall and Baker 1974, 2), with the number of buildings not matching the size of the street grid. If Bedford had experienced some decline during the medieval period, however, there was to be a gradual recovery in the 16th - 18th centuries leading up to massive expansion in the 19th century.

A number of factors prompted growth in the town in the post-medieval period. One was the granting of a licence to found a Grammar School in 1552. Another was the River Navigation Act



of 1665, which allowed the River Great Ouse to be made navigable from King's Lynn to Bedford – a project completed in 1689.

At first glance of Jeffery's map of 1765 Bedford seems to have changed little since 1610. This impression is misleading, however. It is true that there was hardly any external expansion of the town, but development was taking place internally, filling in gaps along the existing streets. The map shows, for example, that there were now three nonconformist chapels in Bedford. By this time Bedford had established a strong tradition of dissent and independent worship.

The steady growth of the town continued throughout the late 18th century, so that by 1801 the population was about 4,000 – roughly double the population of John Speed's Bedford two centuries earlier. A Sessions House was built in St Paul's Square in 1753. To the north-east of town a large workhouse known as the House of Industry was built in 1796. To the north-west, the County Gaol was built in 1801. Enclosure of fields surrounding the town took place in 1797-99. Brayley's map of 1807 shows a Bedford in transition. The Swan Inn had been re-built. The old guildhall had already been demolished under the Town Improvement Act passed in 1803, and other features of the medieval town such as the market shambles and the bridge were about to be demolished or replaced.

It was in the early 19th century that the town increased greatly in size. The success of the Harpur Trust Schools attracted many middle class families to Bedford. The population trebled from about 4,000 in 1801 to nearly 12,000 in 1851. New streets of houses were built to accommodate the increasing number of people. Ribbon development took place along roads leading out of Bedford, with the greatest area of growth being on the north-west side of town. The Reynolds map of 1841 shows the town just beginning to encroach upon the surrounding fields, with ancient features such as the Saffron Ditch now disappeared (for schematic maps of the development of Bedford, see Figs 12-20).

Views of the town from the vantage-point of St Paul's steeple were drawn by William Dawson in 1833 (see Godber 1978, Plate 22).

5.5.1 Castle Mound Fort

During the Civil War of 1642-45 the mound of Bedford Castle was fortified, presumably a wooden stockade with loopholes for muskets, and a Parliamentarian garrison of about 100 men was briefly stationed there. Labour was conscripted for its construction from the nearby villages (Godber 1969, 262; Liddle 1973, 9). In 1645 a letter stated that "The mount is still defended with violence by Captain Hudson and his soldiers who use it as a refuge and a prison" (Page 1912, 11). Apart from a few minor skirmishes, however, Bedford did not play a major part in the war. The flat top of the mound was utilised as a bowling green from the 17th century (and was still in use as such in the late 19th century). The rest of the castle site remained for the most part the 'void plot' it was described as in 1361.

5.5.2 St Loyes Chapel and Pesthouse

St Loyes Chapel is marked on the John Speed map of 1610, and is known to have been associated with a pesthouse (Crawley and Freeman 1989b, 1991). The chapel was probably situated on the road, with the pesthouse and associated burial ground located away from the road to the north. The chapel seems to have gone out of use during the 16th century. Several architectural fragments from the chapel may have been incorporated into the fireplace of the Ship Inn when it was built in 1758 (see below).

The registers of St Paul's Church record that in 1665 about forty people from north Bedford who were victims of the plague were buried in Pesthouse Close (Cirket 1981, 21).

From 1765 to 1824 the town gaol was situated on land close to the former pesthouse, as shown on the Brayley map of 1807.

Holy Trinity Church (HER 1274) was built on the site in 1839-41, on a piece of land called Pesthouse Close.



5.5.3 Moot Hall or Gild Hall

The Moot Hall in St Paul's Square continued in use as a meeting place for the borough council, the merchant guilds and the courts until the 18th century, when it was considered too small and started to become dilapidated. The Moot Hall is shown on the John Speed map of 1610. A print of John Bunyan preaching outside the Moot Hall in 1659 is reproduced in Liddle (1973). A new Sessions House was built on the south side of St Paul's Square in 1753. The old Moot Hall was demolished in 1806.

The site of the Moot Hall was not examined in excavations of St Paul's Square in 1986 and is known to have been badly damaged by a 20th century electricity sub station.

5.5.4 River Navigation and Wharves

The River Navigation Act of 1665 allowed work to commence on making the River Ouse navigable from Bedford to the sea. In 1689 barges got through to Bedford. Wharves and warehouses were constructed to receive the goods and a thriving trade developed in coal, salt, iron, timber and wine. Other cargoes were millstones, tar, brick, and sedge for thatching. Agricultural produce such as grain, peas and apples as well as malt and fuller's earth was sent downstream on return journeys (Godber 1978, 79-80). Green's Wharf on the south-east side of the bridge is marked on Jeffery's map of 1765. Barnard's Wharf was on the north-west side. Bedford became a centre for the distribution of coal, and leading coal merchants became some of the richest and most influential people in the town. River trade was one of the defining characteristics of post-medieval Bedford. The trade fell into decline only with the coming of the railways in the mid-19th century.

5.5.5 Harpur Trust and Grammar School

The resurgence of Bedford in the post-medieval period is inextricably bound up with the Harpur Schools and their benefactor, William Harpur (c1496-1574). Following the sale of the school owned by Newnham Priory in Schole Lane or Mill Street, Harpur bought land on the west side of St Paul's Square to build another school in about 1550. In 1552 Edward VI granted letters patent allowing the school to accept an endowment. Harpur acquired 13 acres of land in Holborn as the school's endowment in 1564. Rents from Holborn paid for masters' fees and the maintenance of school buildings. An Act of Parliament in 1764 created the Bedford Charity or Harpur Trust.

The present 'Town Hall' building (HER 1223) is on the site of the original Grammar School, which is marked on the John Speed map of 1610. The building was refurbished and refaced in 1767. The statue of William Harpur standing in the niche also dates from this time, but the infrastructure of the building itself is likely to be Tudor. Extensions to the northern side of the school in the 19th century caused the eastern end of Horne Lane to be diverted northwards, involving some demolition of properties. In 1892 the Grammar School moved to its present site north of St Peter's Church.

The Harpur Trust also ran the nearby Harpur's Hospital (HER 15000) for poor children on the west side of Angel Street (now Harpur Street), shown on the Brayley map of 1807. The same map shows a row of almshouses in Bromham Road, built by the Trust in 1794, and a row of cottages known as Harpur's Cottages in St Loyes. These were built by the Trust in 1802 after a fire destroyed numerous dwellings in this part of town in 1802. The surviving almshouses in Dame Alice Street (HER 1281) were built in 1804.

5.5.6 Bunyan Meeting House

John Bunyan was one of those imprisoned under the 1660 Act, which forbade non-conformists to preach in a town. Released in 1672, his congregation met in a barn in Mill Street. In 1689 the Toleration Act was passed, allowing non-conformists to build their own chapels. A meeting-house was built on the site of the barn in 1707. A painting of the back of this three-gabled red brick meeting house is shown in Cecil Higgins (1992, 53). It was demolished in 1849 and replaced with the present larger and much grander building (HER 1249), which is still in use today.

The datestone of 1707 from the first Bunyan Meeting may have been incorporated into St Mary's House in Cardington Road (Buss 1981).



Artefacts associated with the life of John Bunyan and 17th century Bedford in general are on display in the adjacent Bunyan Museum.

5.5.7 Moravian Chapel

The Moravians were a religious movement originating in Moravia, part of the present Czechoslovakia. They first came to Bedford in 1742. After using a meeting house in the High Street, they built their chapel and choir houses on the north side of St Peter's Street in 1750-1, with a burial ground behind. The chapel was completely rebuilt in 1864-5 (HER 4023).

The surviving building on the left of the chapel (HER 1293) was built in 1751 as the Single Sister's House for unmarried Moravian women, who supported themselves by lace-making and embroidery. Nearly 40 women lived here in 1806. The building on the right (HER 1294) was the Minster. A large house set back from the road (HER 1296) was the Single Brother's House and later a successful Ladies College, founded in 1802. This was subsequently re-named as the Howard Building and became part of Bedford School. The whole complex of Moravian buildings was quite extensive and is shown in a Bradford Rudge lithograph of 1852 (Cecil Higgins 1992, 58).

5.5.8 Howard Chapel (HER 1246)

The New Meeting was founded in 1773 by a group who broke away from the Bunyan Meeting, with funds provided by the philanthropist and prison reformer, John Howard. A chapel was built in 1774 (a print is shown in Cecil Higgins, 1992, 55). It is said that material from an old barrage across the river, demolished in 1770, was used in its foundations. The chapel was enlarged in 1847, bringing the entrance and front of the building closer to the road. It was badly damaged, however, by a fire in 1985, and now stands in ruins.

Trial trench excavations in 1996 revealed the rubble foundations of the building as well as a number of burials around the chapel (BCAS 1996/20). Records suggest that up to 400 burials took place from 1755 to 1855, and that the graveyard is densely occupied.

5.5.9 Methodist Meeting (HER 15002, 884)

The famous preacher John Wesley first came to the town in 1753 and subsequently made over 30 visits. He used a loft on the east side of Angel Street (now Harpur Street) as a meeting place until a 'new room' was built in 1763. A red-brick hall with two storeys was built in 1804, and this building is illustrated in a watercolour painting by Thomas Fisher (Cecil Higgins 1992, 59). It was completely rebuilt in 1832 to accommodate the increasing size of the congregation, as Methodism grew in popularity during the 19th century. The chapel, presumably on the site of the original building with loft (possibly the former Angel Inn and now the site of part of Beales and Bedford Library), was demolished in 1969.

5.5.10 Sessions House

The Sessions House was built on the south side of St Paul's Square in 1753. It was principally a court-house, but after the demolition of the old guildhall in 1806 it was also used as a county hall and as a meeting place for the borough council. The building is depicted in a painting by Thomas Fisher (Cecil Higgins 1992, 64). It was demolished and replaced by the present Shire Hall in 1879 (Godber and Cirket 1969).

5.5.11 Swan Inn

Prior to rebuilding, the old Swan Inn extended much further towards the High Street. Early oil paintings (Cecil Higgins 1992, 20-22) also show that the river came right up to the south wall of the inn. The inn was demolished and rebuilt in 1794 by John Wing on a design by the famous architect Henry Holland. Built further back from the road, the new inn was probably placed on the footprint of the back part of the old inn, re-using the cellars. Many features from Houghton House near Amphill (which was dismantled at the same time) were incorporated into the building, including the staircase.



In the 18th century the County Quarter Sessions were held at the Swan – the old guildhall being considered too small for the purpose. The inn also played a prominent political role as a meeting place. While the George next door was considered the Tory headquarters, the Swan was held to be the main Whig establishment.

The Swan was the principal coaching inn in Bedford. A public passenger coach, also carrying mail, operated a return journey three times a week between Bedford and London in 1785. The famous Bedford Times coach made its first journey from here in 1825. Many other long-distance coaches to Cambridge, Oxford, Kettering and Leeds used the Swan as a staging post. In 1830 there was a daily coach to Manchester (Godber 1969, 433). Other inns, of course, operated rival services. This traffic ceased to be viable when the railways came to Bedford in 1846.

An inscribed stone was dug up in the yard of the Swan Hotel in 1793 and was drawn by Fisher in the early 19th century (BLARS FB63). Fisher labelled the stone as the pedestal of a cross. However, the stone (as depicted) has the look of a late or post-medieval architectural fragment – probably from a building. Of the large inscribed letters, ‘CRV..’ and ‘STAB..’ are recognisable. The latter may actually be part of the word ‘STABLES’, in which case the stone was probably part of the inn itself.

A watching brief excavation (WB 105) was carried out in the grounds of the Swan Inn in 1987. There was a suspicion at the time that major medieval walls were encountered, but work was made difficult by an uncooperative foreman. No useful information was retrieved.

5.5.12 Other Inns

Apart from the Swan, the principal inn north of the river was the Old George (HER 991), which had been in use since medieval times. In the 18th century the courtyard was also used for religious meetings and the performance of plays (Lutt 1989, 25). The inn was closed in 1928, and partially demolished soon after. The remaining walls are now preserved as a scheduled monument (SAM 44).

By 1752 there were 66 inns and taverns in Bedford. Of those in operation in the 17th–18th centuries the Flowerpot (HER 1280), the Rose (HER 1233) and the Ship (HER 1257) are all still in use today.

The name of the Ship in St Cuthbert’s Street is first mentioned in 1785, although deeds for the property go back to 1681. At that time there were two cottages on the site, both belonging to a pipe-maker. Kuhlicke (quoted in Beds Times, 28/7/57) uses evidence from documents to argue that the cottages were knocked down and the Ship Inn built in about 1758. However, the building looks older than this and is classed as 17th century in the HER. Architectural fragments noted in the fireplace include a reredos, chamfered quoins, grooved portions of pilaster, and a carved stone which may be the boss from a roof. These are clearly earlier in date than the fireplace and probably came from a church or chapel knocked down at some time shortly before the Ship was built. Suggested places of origin include St Loyes Chapel and Allhallows Church.

The Fleur-de-Lys in Mill Street was started about 1650, but completely rebuilt in Victorian times (HER 4043). Glass flagons from the Cromwellian period were reputedly found in the old cellars (Woodcock 1951a). The Cross Keys in the High Street (HER 1230) was formerly the Robin Hood, and takes its present name from the old Cross Keys on the market square. The Falcon was a three-storied jettied inn on the south side of the market-square. Part of the timber-frame of this building may be preserved behind the 18th century façade of No 1 St Paul’s Square (Crawley and Freeman 1997b, 92).

Some inns, now demolished, gave their names to the streets in which they were situated. The Angel Inn stood on the site of the present Bedford Library and gave its name to Angel Street (now Harpur Street). The building was later used as the St Paul’s Parish workhouse, and in 1761 was probably the ‘building with a chamber over’ in which John Wesley preached. It was demolished in 1804 to make way for the Methodist Meeting Chapel. The White Horse (HER 1824), situated on the present site of Marks and Spencers, gave its name to the northern part of Harpur Street. A



photograph (Wildman, plate 55) shows a timber-framed building of 15th- 16th century date. It was demolished in 1929.

Other inns demolished in the late 19th or early 20th centuries include:- the New George (HER 14983) which was situated next to the Swan, and the Cross Keys and the Coach and Horses which both stood on St Paul's Square. The Chequer's Inn was situated next to the old County Gaol, with the innkeeper sometimes also serving as gaoler (Stockdale 1973). The Peacock Inn was a large building on the corner of the High Street and St Peter's Street.

South of the river the main inn was the Kings Arms (HER 1204), an important coaching inn probably started in 1660-80, whose name commemorates the restoration to the throne of Charles II (Collett-White 1980, 312). On the other side of St Mary's Church was the Fountain Inn, with a courtyard used for the Tuesday pig-market. The Black Knight was also situated in St Mary's Street. On the present site of the Phoenix in St John's was the old Sow and Pigs. Early photographs of some of these public houses, now mostly demolished, can be seen in Wildman (1974).

Excavations on the south side of Midland Road (BMR 73, Baker et al 1979, 79-83) revealed the 19th century footings of the former Shoulder of Mutton PH, with evidence of chimney, soakaway and floors. Footings of a previous building dating from the 17th-18th centuries were also found, with paved area, floor and hearth.

During a watching brief on excavations in the town centre (TCI 399), a circular pit was observed in the centre of Midland Road, near the corner with Greyfriars. It contained ashes, charcoal, and a quantity of broken clay pipes and bottles dating from the 17th-18th centuries. Nearby a dump of similar material was found. Both are thought to represent refuse from a nearby inn.

5.5.13 Malting Kilns and Breweries

In medieval times most innkeepers had brewed their own beer. Documentary references to specialist maltsters preparing malt for these small brewers appear in about 1550. Many malt-kilns were built, and by 1602 there were complaints made to the Bedford mayor that he had allowed maltsters to proliferate. Former malting kilns known include one on the corner of High Street and Lime Street (HER 14998), and a 'malthouse' between Harpur Street and High Street (HER 14999). This latter may be the kiln in Mayes Yard (HER 537) described and illustrated in Fortescue (1942, 25). It was demolished in 1959.

The earliest reference to specialised brewing occurs in 1588, when Samuel Christy and Simon Beckett were charged with not selling beer at the regulation price of a penny a quart. The Becketts were an important and successful local brewing family up to the 18th century, controlling a number of inns. Their brewery is thought to have been at one of the inns north of the river (Collett-White 1980). It may have been the brewhouse of the Castle Inn on the south side of St Paul's Square, demolished in 1753 to make way for the Session House (Godber and Cirket 1969).

Francis Jennings started a brewery in the south-west corner of St Paul's Square in the mid-18th century, next to an already existing malting kiln. **St Paul's Brewery**, as it was later called, had a policy of buying large numbers of inns and taverns as outlets for their beer. In the early 19th century they owned the Harse and Horses, Shoulder of Mutton, Castle, Wrestlers, Black Horse, Saracen's Head, New Inn, Nag's Head, Red Lion, Haycock and New Ship (Godber 1978, 104). This policy was also followed by the other emerging breweries. The back of the brewery buildings – then known as the Jarvis Brewery - can be seen in an early photograph of 1868 (Wildman 1982, plate 102). The buildings were demolished in 1884.

In 1671, it is recorded that a house on the west side of St Mary's Street by the bridge had a 'malthouse, kiln and kilnhouse' standing nearby. This was taken over by Peregrine Nash in 1783, who founded the **Nash Brewery** using water from the river and making full use of the river frontage and a constructed inlet called the New Wharf to bring in materials by boat. The brewery was extensively rebuilt in about 1819. Maps show that it had stabling and coach-houses as well as malthouse and other brewery structures. These continued in use until partial demolition in 1875.



For a detailed historical survey of the documents and maps pertaining to this area, and for the results of excavations here, see BCAS Report 96/1.

In Horne Lane, a malting had been in use since at least 1751. The **Horne Lane Brewery** (HER 4266) was founded in about 1818. It had a wharf, malt house, kiln, cistern and chambers as well as a brewery house. The construction of the brewery involved the building over of the old Saffron Ditch, which can be seen on Brayley's map of 1807 but has disappeared on Reynold's map of 1841. A detailed map of the site can be found in a sale catalogue of 1875 (BLARS WL 73). In 1885 the brewery was sold to Charles Wells and the extensive rebuilding occurred. During the building of a malt-house in 1887 the black mud of the Saffron Ditch was said to have been encountered (the finds from these diggings have already been described). The brewery was demolished in the 1970s. An archaeological watching brief in 1990 (WB 136) records that an area of 600 sq. m was stripped to a depth of 2-3m. Extensive modern disturbance was observed and only very limited recording was undertaken.

A malting on St Peter's Green and a brewery on Lurke Street, later known as **St Peter's Brewery**, were built in 1819. This became a steam brewery in the late 19th century, and was mostly demolished in 1934.

A large 'sugar-loaf' malting tower (HER 4040) survives as part of the old Smith's Corn Merchant's building on the north side of the eastern end of Lurke Street.

In 1837 the **Castle Brewery** was founded by Charles Higgins, formerly innkeeper of the Swan. The brewery buildings (HER 4274) survive as Bedford Museum, while the adjoining house built in 1846 (HER 4117) is now the Cecil Higgins Art Gallery. The ice-cellar dug into the north side of the castle mound was built by the Higgins family in the mid-19th century.

5.5.14 Dovecotes

A dovecote (HER 14997) is depicted on the John Speed map of 1610, north of Bendhouse Lane (now Dame Alice Street). This area of land is referred to in a deed of 1559 as Doffehouse Close. Another (HER 14996) is shown between Lurke Street and St Peter's Street. A third (HER 14993) may be depicted on the same map at the north end of Rey Lane (now River Street).

5.5.15 Lime Kiln

Two lime-kilns are depicted on early maps - the first in St Loyes Street (HER 14995) on the John Speed map of 1610, and the second in Lime Street on the Jeffery's map of 1765 (HER 14986). These may in fact be the same lime-kiln. The kiln in Lime Street was closed in 1803.

5.5.16 Mills

The medieval watermill known as Joel's Mill started to be called Duck Mill in the late 16th century. The name may derive from the practice of ducking suspected witches or from baptism by total immersion (Crawley and Freeman 1991, 33-35). John Bunyan received his second baptism here in the dead of night in 1653. A painting by Robert Fraser in 1885 shows the mill buildings (Cecil Higgins 1992, 26-7). In the late 19th century steam power was used for a short while before the buildings were demolished. The mill pool and sluices are still in existence.

Documentary references to Port Mill, of uncertain location, occur up to 1653.

A wind and steam mill for grinding corn and sawing timber is recorded in Newnham Street. It was burnt down in 1844 (HER 12138).

Two post mills are shown on early maps either side of Kimbolton Road just to the north-east of Bedford.

5.5.17 Bury Farm and other Farmhouses

Until the late 19th century there was a large red brick farmhouse just to the west of St Peter's Church. It had outbuildings, a pond, and a considerable area of land. This was called Bury Farm,



and a road running north-south along the edge of its fields was called Little Berry Lane (now Foster Hill Road). The 'bury' part of the place-name is often taken to imply the former existence of a manor or fortified place (Conisbee 1976, 301), and is sometimes equated with the Aldermanbury mentioned in medieval documents (Kuhlicke 1972, 170). The extent of the farm buildings and land is best seen on the Reynolds map of 1841. Bury Farm disappeared in the 1880s with the construction of De Parys Avenue.

Other farmhouses situated on the edge of Bedford were Peck's Farm (HER 14987) near St Cuthbert's Church and Hawes Farm on the corner of Midland Road and Allhallows. To the south of Bedford was St Leonard's Farm (HER 15006). An Estate map of 1773 (BLARS R 1/9) shows 5 buildings, a cross-shaped pond called the Muswell (HER 150007), a horse fair and cow fair. All these were subsumed by development and town expansion in the 19th century.

5.5.18 Ponds

The Brayley map of 1807 shows a long rectangular pond (HER 14990) running north-south on the eastern side of Gravel Lane. The Saffron Ditch appears to have been diverted round the pond. The same bend in the course of the stream is also visible on John Speed's map of 1610, indicating that the pond may have been present at that time too. The pond was partially excavated during investigation of the Peacock Yard site (1977/1, Hassall 1983). Part of a Chinese Porcelain cup dated to 1715-40 was found in the bottom layer of the pond.

A large L-shaped pond (HER 14991) on the west side of Allhallows is also shown on the Brayley map. This too is likely to be of post-medieval date, perhaps originating as a quarry for gravel or limestone.

Both ponds were built over by the time of Reynold's map in 1841.

5.5.19 Enclosure

At the end of the 18th century the town of Bedford, only slightly expanded since medieval times, was still surrounded by the ancient fields of Conduit, Bury, Windmill and Oak in the north, and Coney Garth, Muswell, Hole and Mother in the south. In 1797 the fields in the parishes north of the river were enclosed, followed by those south of the river in 1799 (Godber 1978, 102-3). All the fields, except some of the water-meadows, have now been subsumed into the town and covered by modern development.

5.5.20 County Gaol (HER 1272)

The County Gaol situated on the corner of Silver Street and High Street (HER 14984) in use up to the end of the 18th century, has already been described. John Bunyan was imprisoned and wrote his *Pilgrim's Progress* there. A century later, it was said to have become rat-infested, insanitary and dilapidated. A sail ventilator was installed in 1754 to attempt to remove the stale air. After John Howard published *The State of the Prisons* in 1777, plans were made for a new Gaol. It was designed and built by John Wing in 1801, on the present site in St Loyes. The prison was meant to embody the new humane attitude towards criminal punishment, with prisoners mostly housed in separate cells. Even so, the entrance still sported the 'chains on iron rings' motif in the form of a large letter M, and above the entrance was a raised platform for public executions (for drawing, see Cecil Higgins 1992, 63). A House of Correction was added to the rear of the prison in 1819 - to replace the old one, known as the Bridewell, in Cauldwell Street. The prison was expanded and improved in 1849. New walls and flanking lodges were built, and the entrance was replaced. The main part of the original building still survives in the centre of the present gaol.

5.5.21 Town Gaol

A stone house on the north-west corner of St Paul's Square was used as the town gaol up to 1589 (Crawley and Freeman 1988, 105). Up until 1765 the town gaol was situated in the lower part of the northern gatehouse on Bedford Bridge. On the demolition of the gatehouse it was moved to near the site of a former pesthouse on Bromham Road, where it is shown on the Brayley map of 1807. It was closed down in 1824 and its prisoners transferred to the new County Gaol. The buildings were later demolished (Liddle 1973, 13).



5.5.22 The Bridewell (House of Correction)

This small prison stood on the south side of Cauldwell Street just to the west of St Mary's Square. An exact location for the Bridewell is shown on the map of historic buildings and sites in Hassall and Baker (1974, Fig6). Holding poachers, beggars and other offenders whose crimes were regarded as not serious, it had five treadmills for the male prisoners and a laundry for females to work (Liddle 1973, 13). The Bridewell gaol closed in 1801 when inmates were transferred to the new County Gaol in the early 19th century. There are no surviving traces of the prison buildings.

5.5.23 House of Industry

In the 18th century nearly every parish had a workhouse – often just a large house hired by the parish. Many of these were badly run and conditions were often dire. Five Bedford parishes grouped together in 1794 to form the combined workhouse or House of Industry, which was built in 1796 just out of town on the north-east side of Bedford. It was four stories high and could house up to 200 people. It had workrooms for trades and schoolrooms for children, as well as extensive grounds used for gardening and farmwork (Godber 1969, 442). A plan of the buildings is shown on the Brayley map of 1807.

5.5.24 Fire of 1802

On Tuesday, 25th May, 1802, a fire started in St Loyes when a red hot horseshoe from a blacksmith's shop shot off a forge and landed on a nearby thatched roof. This quickly spread to other thatched cottages and a farmyard nearby. Wooden outbuildings and bales of hay fuelled the blaze, which lasted for seven hours. In all 72 cottages in the area of St Loyes were destroyed (Liddle 1973, 15). These were partly replaced by a row of houses built later that year by the Harpur Trust to house the homeless – marked as Harpur's Cottages on the Brayley map of 1807.

5.5.25 Bedford Infirmary

The Infirmary was built by John Wing in 1801-3. It was sited between the Ampthill and Kempston Roads on what was then the very edge of town. A new fever hospital was added in 1848. Most of the earlier buildings were replaced in 1898. The hospital continues to function as South Wing Hospital.

A Lunatic Asylum was built close to the Infirmary, on the south side of Ampthill Road, in 1812. Extensions were added in 1850 so that it could accommodate up to 250 inmates. It had its own burial ground. The asylum went out of use and was demolished in the second half of the 19th century.

5.5.26 Militia Depot

The local militia was formed as a result of the Militia Act of 1757. Names of local men were drawn by lot, and those selected underwent military training. Until 1765 the militia used the southern gatehouse on the bridge as a depot. In 1804, a hexagonal militia building was constructed on top of the small mound on the corner of Newnham Street and Castle Lane. This was incorporated into the house built by Cecil Higgins in 1848, now the art gallery, as can be seen from any map that shows the building. Some downcast from the building of the militia depot was encountered when a trial trench was dug on the side of the mound during the castle excavations (BC 69-72, Area D, Baker et al, 1979, 51-5).

5.5.27 Bridge (HER 15147)

A wood-block print (BLARS Z 48/50) shows the old medieval bridge with gatehouses, before these were demolished in 1765. The larger southern gatehouse accommodated the wardens appointed in 1569 to administer the tolls. This building later held the magazine and store for the county militia. The northern gatehouse, formerly the chapel, was used as the town gaol from 1587-1765. The gatehouses were removed during repairs in 1765. Even without the gatehouses the bridge still presented an obstacle to traffic and impeded the flow of water, creating flooding problems. The Town Improvement Act of 1803 called for a new bridge, built by John Wing in 1810-1813. It cost nearly £15,000 and involved the construction of a temporary wooden bridge to



the east. For depictions of the bridge before, during and after the demolition and re-building, see Cecil Higgins (1992, 14 – 20).

A toll-house was situated at the north-western corner of the bridge. When tolls were abolished in 1835, the building was used as a post office.

In 1938-40 Wing's Bridge was widened on its western side, though the original facade was retained. The former toll-house was demolished at this time. Kuhlicke (*Beds Times*, May 31st, 1940) describes numerous objects of post-medieval date found in the river during the bridge widening process. These include fragments of leather shoes, pieces of glass, horse-shoes, many 17th century brass pins, a tinker's anvil, a shepherd's crook, a chain, a purse, and an 18th century double-headed brass pestle. Axes, wedges, picks, trowels and other metal tools found probably date from the actual demolition/re-building period 1810-13.

The bridge is now protected as a scheduled ancient monument (SAM 91).

5.5.28 Markets

In 1682-4 a market house was built in the middle of the High Street, just south of the junction with Silver Street and Mill Street. Stalls under and around the building may have served as the butter-market. This started to obstruct traffic and was demolished in 1780. The market house is shown on Jeffery's map of 1765, but no other pictorial record survives. By this time, the market cross shown on Speed's map of 1610 had disappeared. No doubt the market still extended for most of the way along the High Street from the bridge to the crossroads with Silver Street.

After demolition of the market house, the butter-market moved to the present site of the arcade entrance further up the High Street, where it is shown on the Brayley map of 1807.

The medieval sheep market of Sheps Chepping continued to be held. Harpur Street is called Sheps Chepping on the John Speed map of 1610. It must have taken place on the eastern side of the street because the western side is shown on the map to be completely built up (Crawley and Freeman 1997a, 54). There are records of a cattle, sheep and pig market being held on the north side of St Paul's Square up to 1865, when it was moved to Horne Lane. Iron rings were set into walls in Mayes courtyard and St Paul's churchyard walls to tether horses and cattle (Fortescue 1942, 24-5, Roberts 1957, 10). Stonehouse Lane on the north side of the square was sometimes referred to as the pigmarket in deeds and wills of the 17th century.

The cluttered market square of medieval and post-medieval times was very different from the open market square of today. The market shambles created a network of alleys known as Butcher's Row, Fish Row and Poultry Lane. Buildings such as the Moot Hall, the Coach and Horses and the old Cross Keys also crowded into the central area. There was no covered area set aside for the selling of corn – one of the main commodities of the market. Slaughtering of animals was still conducted on the streets, and bad paving and lighting made matters worse. So obstructed were the streets on the Saturday markets that radical plans were made to improve this part of town.

The Bedford Improvement Act of 1803 empowered Commissioners not only to rebuild the bridge, but also to take down the moot hall, clear numerous other buildings, construct proper slaughter-houses and take any other measures necessary for public health. A total of 82 houses were scheduled for demolition, mostly in the network of little streets and alleys in St Paul's Square. Clearance of buildings, however, was carried out in a piecemeal fashion over a period of about a hundred years, with one fish shop still surviving in 1904. A slaughter house was built on the north side of the square (shown on the Brayley map of 1807). The shambles on Butchers Row were initially rebuilt by Wing in 1804-5. These were described by Matthiason (1831) as two red brick buildings with slate roofs, joined at the end by a third building which served as the butter and poultry market at that time. The shambles were replaced by the first Corn Exchange in 1849. The Moot Hall was taken down, but the Cross Keys remained standing until 1870, and the Coach and Horses stayed up till 1895.

Excavations in St Paul's Square (307 or SPS 86) revealed the foundations of the Coach and Horses, the first Corn Exchange and the old fish shop, with the cobbled surfaces and structural



remains of Butchers Row and Fish Row underneath. Pits and wells dating from the post-medieval period were also found.

The right to hold fairs and a market south of the river was granted in 1553. A Tuesday market was held in St Mary's Square, following the demolition of the church of St Peter-de-Dunstable in 1545-6. A market house is mentioned in a church terrier of 1708. In 1760 the rector of St Mary's Church described "an old market cross now entirely out of use, a blacksmith's forge, two small tenements and a shed, all of which are in ruin" (Bungey, 1937, 27).

A pig market was held in the courtyard of the Fountain Inn, formerly the Red Lion, opposite St Mary's Church on the southern side of Cardington Road. This is depicted in a painting by William Pyne dated 1806 (Cecil Higgins 1992, 31). The painting shows an informal scene with pig stalls in the courtyard and the church in the background.

An estate map of 1773 (BLARS R 1/9) shows a horse fair and cow fair at St Leonard's Farm, on the southern edge of the town.

5.5.29 Commercial School (HER 1218)

The Commercial School, later known as Bedford Modern, was founded as an offshoot of Bedford School and provided with prestigious buildings in Angel Street (now Harpur Street). The complex of buildings, designed by Edward Blore, was completed in 1837. It was replaced by a shopping centre in the 1970s and only the Gothic facade was retained.

An excavation in the central area of the school found extensive modern disturbance down to a depth of 2m, with no archaeological features observed (Baker *et al* 1979, 95).

5.5.30 Assembly Rooms (HER 1221)

The Bedford Rooms or Assembly Rooms (now known as the Harpur Suite) were built in Harpur Street in 1834, for civic assemblies, share-holders meetings, social gatherings, etc. Part of the building became a library in 1836.

5.5.31 Streets

The development of streets in Bedford in the post-medieval period is well documented by maps from the time of Speed's map in 1610. Liddle (1973) provides an analysis of a series of six Bedford maps from 1610-1973. Crawley and Freeman (1988, 1991) provide a detailed study of street names and associated historical material.

Many streets on the Speed map, such as Cauldwell Street, Potter Street, Wells Street, Silver Street and High Street retained their names from the medieval period. Offal Lane is named after the practice of dumping offal out of town, as specified by the Black Book of Bedford in the 16th century. This ended the practice of taking it down Pudding Lane to dump in the river. Sheps Chepping is named after the sheep market which was held on the eastern side. This later became Angel Street, and its extension to the north became White Horse Lane – both taken from the names of inns situated there. See Crawley and Freeman (1988, 1991) for a detailed historical analysis of street names.

By 1555 parishes had appointed surveyors of highways to direct repairs (Godber 1978, 54). Increased traffic on the roads led to the introduction of tolls. Between 1720 and 1814 turnpike trusts were formed for all the major roads in and out of Bedford. The funds derived from tolls led to a greatly improved road system and made possible the development of regular coach services to London and other towns.

A significant problem for Bedford in the 18th century, however, was the congestion of the town centre. It was caused mainly by the narrowness of the town bridge and the network of tiny streets and alleys in St Paul's Square. This led to the Improvement Act of 1803, the re-building of the bridge and the piecemeal clearance of the market square, all of which have already been discussed.



In 1835 the Improvement Commissioners introduced a scheme to officially name streets. Many of the old street names such as Wells Street, White Horse Lane and Angel Street were replaced, and most of the present street-names were formalised at this time.

5.5.32 Surviving Buildings

Large scale re-building is generally thought to have taken place in towns during the 16th and 17th centuries and Bedford must have lost many of its old medieval buildings at this time. The Flowerpot (HER 1280), King's Arms (HER 1204) and Ship Inn (HER 1257) are all examples of timber-framed buildings from the early post-medieval period. Other examples survive in what was then Potter Street (now Cardington Road) and St Cuthbert's Street. Many of the buildings in the High Street may date from this period but have since been re-fronted.

HER	Address	Comments
702	23-27 High Street	C19th frontages hide earlier structures
1204	King's Arms, St Mary's Street	C18th front. Timber-framed. Probably C16 th
1209	13 Cardington Road	St Mary's Cottage. Early C17th
1212	Abbey Cottage, 34 Cardington Road	Possibly C16th
1227	84 High Street	
1228	82 High Street	
1233	Hogshead/Rose Inn, 45 High Street	C19th front hides earlier structure. Mentioned in document of 1692
1237	27-33 High Street	Nos. 29 and 31 have timber-frames and evidence of jettying. Possible C16th work. Some analysis by RCHME carried out.
1243	Harrison and Gibsons' premises, High Street/Castle Lane	Possibly C16 th
1254	13 St Cuthbert's Street	
1255	11 St Cuthbert's Street	
1256	9 St Cuthbert's Street	
1257	The Ship Inn, St Cuthbert's Street	Timber-framed. Possibly C16th
1280	The Flowerpot Inn, Tavistock Street	Timber-framed. Possibly C16th
1286	11-13 St Peter's Street	Possibly C16 th
1307	23 St Cuthbert's Street	
4020	18-20 St Peter's Street	
4094	80A High Street	Wattle and daub found inside.

Table 8. 17th century buildings in Bedford (from HER)

In the 18th century Potter Street (now Cardington Road) was one of the most desirable parts of town in which to live. Many prosperous merchants and other well-to-do citizens lived in buildings such as St Mary's House, the large 18th century town house at 15 Cardington Road (HER 1210, see Buss 1981 for a detailed historical account of the house and its occupants). Other brick town houses include College House in St Mary's Square (HER 1203).

Good examples of larger 18th century buildings are the former Grammar School in St Paul's Square (HER 1223), a remodelling of an earlier building, and the Swan Hotel (HER 1241).



HER	Address	Comments
1203	College House, St Mary's Square	Built c1707
1207	2-8 Cardington Road	Built 1799
1208	11 Cardington Road	Supposedly has date-stone of 1601, but this may come from elsewhere. Re-fronted in early C19th.
1210	15 Cardington Road	St Mary's House. Built mid-C18 th . Date-stone of 1707 may come from Bunyan Meeting. For detailed historical account, see Buss (1981).
1222	8 St Paul's Square	Possibly earlier internal structure
1223	Town Hall, St Paul's Square	Former Grammar School. Re-building in 1767 or possibly re-facing of earlier building? Could be 17 th or even 16 th century in origin
1230	Cross Keys Inn, High Street	Formerly the Robin Hood Inn
1231	63 High Street	
1235	37/39 High Street	
1240	1-5 St Paul's Square	No 1 was refronted in 1764 but thought to be older. Said to be former site of Falcon Inn. Some of late medieval timber-frame may be preserved.
1241	Swan Hotel, 1 High Street	Built 1794, on site of earlier inn. Contains C17th staircase from Houghton House. Cellar walls may be late medieval.
1246	Howard Congregational Chapel	Built 1774. Facade 1849. Now in ruins.
1250	38 Mill Street	
1251	Howard House, 55 Mill Street	
1252	Surgery, corner of Lurke Street and St Cuthbert's Street	Re-fronted in C19th
1253	15 St Cuthbert's Street	
1284	Hospital, N Wing (S block), Kimbolton Rd	Built 1796, as workhouse called 'House of Industry' Much extended.
1287	23, 23A and 23B St Peter's Street	
1288	25-27 St Peter's Street	
1293	24 St Peter's Street	Built 1751 as the Single Sister's House of the Moravian Church.
1294	26 St Peter's Street	Late C18th. Formerly the Minster of the Moravian Church.
1296	Howard Building, Bedford School	Formerly the Single Brother's House of the Moravian Church, later a Ladies' College
1306	Crofton Rooms, 27 St Cuthbert's Street	
4060	12-16 Newnham Street	Built 1798
4062	1 St Cuthbert's Street	
4065	5 St Cuthbert's Street	
4066	8-12 St Cuthbert's Street	
4078	13 High Street	C18th footings. C19th front

Table 9. 18th century buildings in Bedford (from HER)

The architect John Wing not only built the Swan Hotel (HER 1241) in 1795 – see table above - but also the House of Industry in 1796 (HER 1284), the County Gaol (HER 1272) in 1801 and the Bridge (HER 15147) in 1813. All these have survived despite massive extensions.

Gothic revival churches and chapels include Holy Trinity Church (HER 1274) of 1841 and the more Romanesque St Cuthbert's Church (HER 860) of 1847. The front and entrance of the Howard Congregational Chapel (HER 1246) was built in 1849 and the Bunyan Meeting House (HER 1249) replaced an earlier building in 1850.

The Assembly Rooms of 1834 (HER 1221, now the Harpur Suite) is in the Greek Doric style, while the Commercial School or Bedford Modern (HER 1218) built by Blore in 1837 is in a Tudor style.



A comparison between Brayley's map of 1807 and Reynold's map of 1841 testifies to the amount of building taking place on the north-west of Bedford during this period. New residential sectors were developing in the area of The Crescent and Priory Terrace. These houses were built typically bought by middle class parents - known by locals as 'Squatters' – who moved to the town to gain a cheap education for their children at the Harpur Trust Schools. Such fashionable residences contrasted greatly with the 'New Town' built north of Tavistock Street. The triangular-shaped development around Chandos Street and Canning Street was comprised of much smaller and more cramped houses. These were the homes of working-class people coming into Bedford from surrounding villages to look for work (Liddle 1973, 19-20). The area is now covered by high-rise flats.

Houses in Adelaide Square and the town end of Kimbolton road are good examples of the villa architecture of the 1840s (Houfe, 1969).

HER	Address	Comments
860	St Cuthbert's Church	Built 1844-7 on site of medieval church
1214	Wing's House, 50 Cardington Road	Built c1817
1218	Bedford Modern School (facade), Harpur St	Built 1837
1221	Assembly Rooms, Harpur Street	Built 1834
1236	35 High Street	Built c1820
1249	Bunyan Meeting House, Castle Lane	Built 1849
1264	131 and 133 Tavistock Street	Built 1825
1265	123-129 Tavistock Street (odd nos.)	
1266	12 and 14 The Crescent	Built 1825
1267	2 The Crescent	Built 1825
1268	St Ethelreda's Children's Home	Built c1830
1269	38-48 Bromham Road (even nos.)	
1270	26-36 Bromham Road (even nos.)	Priory Terrace
1271	22 and 24 Bromham Road	
1272	HM. Prison	Built 1801, but main entrance and wall dates from 1848
1274	Holy Trinity Church, Bromham Road	Built 1839-41
1275	19 The Crescent	
1276	15 and 17 The Crescent	
1281	Almshouses, 1-45 Dame Alice Street	Built 1804, refaced 1882.
4117	Cecil Higgin's Art Gallery, The Embankment	Built 1846. Incorporates a hexagonal militia building of 1804
4274	Museum (Bennett's Works), Castle Lane	Former Higgins Brewery, built 1837
7306	4-6 The Crescent	Built 1825
7307	8-10 The Crescent	Built 1825
15147	Bedford Bridge	Built 1810-11. Replaced old medieval bridge, in existence by C12th

Table 10. Early 19th century buildings in Bedford (from HER)

5.5.33 Trades

The medieval trade of lime-burning trade continued on into the post-medieval period, as shown by the lime-kiln marked on the John Speed map of 1610, though there is little further mention of the trade after this date. In 1649 a tanner is mentioned as owning a house on St Mary's Square. However, the medieval tan-yards that formerly made extensive use of the riverside area were replaced by wharfs, warehouses, malting kilns and coal-yards towards the end of the 17th century. The opening up of navigation on the River Great Ouse from Bedford to the sea in 1689 stimulated enormous economic changes in the town.

The most valuable commodity coming to Bedford by river was coal, and coal merchants rapidly became some of the richest and most influential people in town. Some served as county treasurer



or filled other important civic posts. Thomas Battison had a coal wharf and yard near Batt's Ford in the early 18th century (probably giving his name to the ford). Water-men and their barges were hired from St Neots, St Ives and other places upriver. A merchant called Thomas Wilkes imported 800-900 loads between June and September, 1730 (Godber 1978, 84). Bedford now became a centre for the distribution of coal to surrounding areas. The road traffic was estimated in 1729 as 5000 wagons of coal a year. Thus there was a knock-on effect, with increased livelihoods available for waggons, cartmakers and wheelwrights. This necessitated the collection of tolls for the upkeep of roads, and the introduction of toll-gates and toll-keepers.

The improvement in road maintenance led in turn to greater use of the roads for personal transport, and the increased use of coaches brought about opportunities for coachmen, ostlers, etc. In particular, the movement of people around the country gave a particular boost to the inn trade. The large number of inns in Bedford, and the malting kilns and breweries which serviced them, have already been discussed. A coaching inn like the Swan was a centre for trades connected with the preparation of food and accommodation, the stabling of horses, the driving and maintenance of carriages, and the distribution of post. It was the equivalent of a bus station, a post office and a hotel rolled into one.

In the 1830s the post office was in the Fishmarket on the market square, with only one postman needed to deliver all Bedford's letters (Godber 1978, 129). Local newspapers were set up in 1837 (Bedford Mercury) and 1845 (Bedfordshire Times).

The registers of St Paul's Church record the occupations of some of the people of Bedford in the 17th-18th century. The principal occupations are tanners, innkeepers and wool-combers. Unusual ones are, dancing-master, higgler, hosier, limer, net-maker, organ-blower, peruke-maker and postillion (Cirket 1981).

Another trade that had become well established by the 18th century was the pillow lace industry. This specifically employed the female part of the population, usually from poorer families, though it depended on lace-men to provide the patterns and threads and market the finished product. A lace-man, Isaac Hayes, became mayor in 1742. One group of women who had to support themselves by lace-making was the house of Single Sisters of the Moravian Church in St Peter's Street (Cecil Higgins 1992, 57). By the early 19th century, however, the trade went into a dramatic decline due to the introduction of machine lace (Godber 1978, 120).

Brick-making was an important craft in the area around Bedford, especially on the low clay hills of Brickhill just to the north. Brick-kilns are known to have existed in the 18th and 19th centuries on Clapham Road, Kimbolton Road, and on the site of present Fox and Hounds PH in Goldington Road.

Trades listed in Piggot's directories of the late 18th century are stationer, tinman, bookseller, brazier, brewer, hatter, ironmonger, joiner, builder, miller, malster, butcher and baker. The majority of trades apparent in the 18th century continued through to the early 19th century. A comparison between the Bedford directory for 1785 and 1823 shows a growth in the food trades, with a significant increase in the number of butchers (11/15) and bakers (8/14), but a decline in traditional crafts such as weaving and parchment-making (Godber 1978, 105). In 1806 watchmakers, jewellers and engravers were established on the High Street and in 1817 a goldsmiths shop was opened.

In 1799 Joseph Barnard set up Barnard's Bank on the south-east corner of the market square. For forty years his bank issued their own notes. Many new ventures in the town were facilitated by loans from the bank.

Industrialisation came late to Bedford. In 1813 John Howard started an ironmongers shop on the High Street. Within four years he had set up a foundry across the road at No 35, where he produced small goods such as stoves and railings, later moving on to make farm implements. The foundry was quite extensive and is shown on a letterhead of 1839 reproduced in Cecil Higgins (1992, 7). It is now demolished. His great innovation was his new plough, which was shown at



the Royal Agricultural Show in 1839 and became known as the Champion Plough of England. Its success enabled his sons to open the Britannia Ironworks in 1851 (see below).

The Bedford Carriage Works was set up in the 1840s. It was owned by Deane and Son and located in St Mary's Square.

5.5.34 Further Archaeological Evidence

The following is a selective account of post-medieval finds from excavations in Bedford. Most excavations encounter some evidence from this period, if only in the form of brick footings, cess-pits and cellars or fragments of brick, pottery, tile and glass. A report from the 1850s shows that there were 3,000 cesspools in the town at that time, with wells often situated close by (Godber 1978, 122).

Excavations at Bedford Castle (Baker *et al* 1979) produced considerable amounts of material. Parts of the castle site have been used as a rubbish dump throughout the post-medieval period. During excavations of the small mound in the north-east corner, which still has traces of the militia building on top, two foundation trenches of an 18th century building were found nestled into the foot of the mound (*ibid* 51-3). The existing wall to the south of Ram yard was shown to be of post-medieval date, but resting on medieval wall footings (*ibid* 41).

Wall footings of a late medieval/ early post-medieval building were uncovered at 43 Mill Street (Baker 1971, 99-103).

Numerous finds of post-medieval date were found on the recent Town Centre Watching Brief. These include wells, cobbled surfaces, wall footings, etc. Artefacts included a Jew's harp (Edgeworth *in prep*).

During excavation of the Bedford Modern School site, large amounts of post-medieval pottery and tile fragments were found. It is thought that the ground was considerably disturbed and made up in the early 19th century (Baker *et al* 1979, 95).

A stone lined well was found on the south side of Midland Road. The sides were comprised of un-mortared limestone slabs. Its upper fill contained 18th- 19th century finds, and it may have been associated with the remains of a 17th-18th century building found nearby (*ibid* 79-83).

South of the river the most exciting evidence came from the site of the former St Mary's Vicarage in Cauldwell Street (*ibid* 67-8). As well as the 19th century vicarage footings, there were several pits dating from an earlier period of use of the site. These contained outstanding assemblages of 17th-18th century glass and pottery vessels, with clay pipes and other objects such as scissors, clay pipes and buttons. Elsewhere in Cauldwell Street at Nos. 8-10 an 18th century cellar was found with walls of clunch, obviously re-used from another building (*ibid* 65).

At 17-19 St Mary's Street (*ibid* 137-142) a late 17th-18th century timber framed house was recorded prior to its demolition. In the adjacent property an 18th century cellar and wall footings with domestic hearths were uncovered. At Nos. 5-11 (*ibid* 127-136), a hearth and oven was associated with wall footings of another town house fronting onto the street.

A number of circular wells of un-worked limestone, with brick at the top, were found on the Mander College site (HER 10250).

5.6 The Industrial Period (AD1850 - AD1914)

The industrial period brought about the transformation of Bedford from a small market town of about 11,000 people to a vastly expanded town of nearly 40,000 people in the early 20th century. In this period of time gas, water and sewage services were introduced and Bedford became part of the national rail network. Most of what is now called Bedford was built during this time.



5.6.1 Bedford Gas Company

In 1832 the Gas Company was established near Greyfriars on the edge of town. At first only streets and shop windows were lit by gas lamps, but private consumption in homes gradually increased as people got used to the new source of energy. A Gas map of 1854 by Salmon (BLARS x133/11) shows the original gas pipe trenches in Bedford. The gas works was expanded in 1839 – 1844. An essential element to the running of the gas works was coal, which local merchants supplied, but river transport was always a problem. In 1859, the Gas Company signed a contract with Midland Railway. In 1869 they moved to Ford End Road in Queen's Park, closer to the railway.

5.6.2 Railways

The railways came to Bedford in 1846, when the Bedford Railway Company opened the line to Bletchley. This allowed an indirect trip to London, taking less than three hours, to be undertaken. A line to Cambridge was opened in 1862 and a line to Northampton in 1872. The direct line to London was finished in 1867.

The coming of the railways entailed the drastic decline of river and road transport systems. The Bedford Times coach ran for the last time one week after the railway opened in 1846. In that year there were ten coaches passing through Bedford. In 1854 there were only carriers to villages and railway stations (Godber 1978, 117).

There were three main stations in Bedford. St John's Station was built in 1846. Midland Station was built in 1859. It was recently demolished and replaced by a new station further north. St Leonards Station was built in 1862. For a more detailed account of the early days of the railways in Bedford, see Liddle (1973, 27-9).

The excavation of nine trial trenches for the St John's Inner Relief Road (BCAS 1996/10) followed the course of part of the old railway and encountered the make-up layers involved in its construction.

5.6.3 Shire Hall (HER 1225)

The existing Shire Hall was built in 1879-80 by Alfred Waterhouse to replace the old Sessions House, now considered too small (Godber and Cirket 1969).

The excavation of a sewer trench between two of the buildings in 1972 allowed some archaeological observations to be made (HER 558); these have already been described.

5.6.4 Corn Exchange (HER 4114)

Bedford market had always been, in part, a corn market. The crowded market square was unsuitable for this purpose, however. Farmers and merchants had nowhere to meet for the transaction of sales, and the merchandise was always subject to spoiling by the weather. The first Corn Exchange or Floral Hall was built in 1849. It was situated on the north-east part of the 'island' in St Paul's Square, on the site of the Butcher's Shambles. From 1872 its interior space was used for covered market stalls. It was demolished in 1904.

Excavations on St Paul's Square revealed the red brick foundations of this massive building to be sitting on rafts of agglomerate which sealed the remains of the post-medieval and medieval shambles below (Baker 1987a).

The present Corn Exchange was built in 1872 on the former site of the slaughter houses on the north side of St Paul's Square. During excavation of the foundations a great number of human bones were found (Benson 1995, 60). It is possible that the medieval graveyard of St Paul's extended this far northwards. Alternatively the remains could belong to the Saxon graveyard found in excavations further to the east. Also found was a large 'cavern' or 'subterranean lake', or alternatively a number of underground pools, which had to be pumped out. These appear to be entirely of geological origin (BLARS X567/94, Benson *ibid*).



5.6.5 Statues

The bronze statue of John Bunyan (HER 1289) was presented to the town by the Duke of Bedford and erected in 1874. Twenty years later, the statue of John Howard (HER 1239) was placed on St Paul's Square in 1894. The money was raised by public subscription to mark the centenary of Howard's death in 1790. The South African War Memorial was erected in the yard of the Swan Hotel in 1904.

5.6.6 Britannia Ironworks (HER 4521)

The Britannia Iron Works was known as 'the most complete agricultural implement factory in the world, and was a source of pride for Bedford in the Victorian era. Perhaps its most famous product was the steam plough which revolutionised agriculture in the 19th century. It was founded by the Howard brothers (sons of John Howard) in 1851, and expanded further in 1859 over the former site of Cauldwell Priory. The factory was located in a prime position, immediately adjacent to the railway on the east, a major road to the south and the river to the north. It had its own station for receiving and dispatching goods on the main line, as well as its own internal railway for moving materials and workshop to another. A large gatehouse with central clock-tower was built in 1860. At this time there were over 600 men employed, and trains carried away about 300 trucks Howard goods a month. Other goods were sent by river to King's Lynn, and from there to countries all over the world.

The factory at the height of its success, with railway lines, wharf and despatch bay, is shown in a wood engraving of 1860 (Cecil Higgins 1992, 80).

The factory was largely demolished in the 1960s, though the gatehouse and a few buildings still stand. An archaeological watching brief in 1993 (WB 189) recorded evidence from a series of test pits. This consisted mostly of post-medieval industrial rubble, with a few dressed stones probably originating from the buildings of Cauldwell Priory.

5.6.7 Cemetery

The growth of population in Bedford created the problem of a shortage of burial space. In 1852 it was said of St Mary's graveyard that only thirty spaces were left, and that the available ground had been used several times over (Godber 1978, 123). A burial board was set up and land acquired on Foster's Hill on the northern side of town. All town graveyards were closed and the new cemetery opened in 1855.

5.6.8 Charles Wells Brewery

The Horne Lane Brewery was bought by Charles Wells in 1876. It continued to expand until it became the principal brewery in Bedford.

A well was sunk at the top of Cemetery Hill to the north of Bedford. This supplied the brewery with clean water for the production of beer. A water tower and pump-house was built in Park Road North in 1902 (HER 7991), and pipes were laid across Bedford to the brewery.

The Horne Lane buildings and chimney were demolished and the brewery moved to Queen's Park in the early 1970s. The water from the well was re-routed and is apparently still used today.

5.6.9 Cauldwell Bridge (HER 4527)

The iron bridge over the river at Prebend Street was built by John Webster in 1883 to serve the developing areas around the railway stations. It was replaced by the new County Bridge in 1992 (Simco and McKeague 1997, 37-8).

5.6.10 Suspension Bridge (HER 4519) and Embankment Area

The Suspension Bridge was constructed by John Webster in 1888 (Simco and McKeague 1997, 32), alongside the large town houses being built along the Embankment. It marks the beginning of a new way of perceiving and using the River Ouse – not so much a route for commercial traffic, but as an amenity area to be enjoyed by the middle classes. A picture of the Embankment area



being cleared and some of the first houses built is shown in Wildman (1974, pl. 113). In 1894 the Duke of Bedford gave the town a meadow called Duke's Field which was laid out as Russell Park. The Keeper's Cottage is now the Russell Park Café. Newnham Swimming Pool was built on the site of Newnham Priory Mill in 1899.

5.6.11 Bedford Park

The extensive grounds of Bedford Park, on the north side of Bedford, were opened in 1888. The park included a lake with islands, a bandstand (HER 4525), an east lodge (HER 4526), a west lodge (HER 4522), a café (HER 4524) and the main ornamental gates (HER 4525) onto Park Avenue. For a brief history of the park, see Shelton (1988).

5.6.12 Prebend Street Electricity Station

The power station was opened in 1894 on land to the west of Prebend Street. It was situated next to the railway line to facilitate the intake of coal.

An archaeological evaluation on the site (BCAS 1995/46) was undertaken but nothing of archaeological significance was found.

5.6.13 Streets

The streets within the historic core of Bedford remained essentially the same after the work of the Improvement Commission in the early 19th century. The creation of new streets and estates as the town expanded outwards is best seen on the Mercer map of 1876 and the OS maps of 1884 and 1904.

In 1859, the eastern end of Horne Lane was diverted northwards by about 10 metres to accommodate the extension to the Grammar School. Lithographs of Horne Lane and the west side of St Paul's Square as it was before can be seen in Cecil Higgins (1992, 33, 37).

5.6.14 Market

In St Paul's Square, the Coach and Horses was demolished in 1895. The Floral Hall (the first Corn Exchange) and Brown's Fish Shop (the last remnant of the market shambles) was taken down in 1904. This meant that the market square was clear for the first time in about 700 years. The Saturday and mid-week markets were held here, later expanding onto the site of Barnard's Bank when it was demolished in the 1930s. The cattle market was held in Horne Lane, until it became the site of the present town market in 1985.

Excavations on the market square have already been described.

The wool fair on St Peter's Green was revived in 1850 and held annually in July for many years. A photograph of the fair in 1864 can be seen in Wildman (1982, plate 36).

5.6.15 Buildings

Public buildings such as The Corn Exchange (HER 4114) and the Shire Hall (HER 1225) continued to be built in St Paul's Square. The Cowper building at No 7 St Paul's Square (HER 1224) and the Bedford High School in Bromham Road (HER 1273) were both built by Basil Champneys.

The late Victorian era was the time of the great expansion of Bedford when the population almost doubled in size from 19,000 in 1883 to 35,000 in 1901. This was when most of the present day town was built. Roads such as De Parys Avenue and the Embankment were comprised of large houses for middle class families, with attics for servants' quarters. These contrasted greatly with the houses in the working class districts, between Bromham Road and Midland Road - or in the new area of Queen's Park on the other side of the railway. Semi-skilled workers could afford the slightly higher rents in the new Black Tom and Castle Road districts (Liddle 1973, 32-3).

Schooling for children up to 12 became compulsory in 1881, and many of the late Victorian school buildings survive.



Photographs in Wildman (1975) chronicle some of the changes brought about in the architecture and townscape of Bedford during this period.

HER	Address	Comments
1224	Cowper Building, 7 St Paul's Square	Built 1885-6
1225	Shire Hall, St Paul's Square	Built 1879-81
1229	77/79 High Street	
1232	53-55 High Street	
1238	Lloyds Bank, 19/21 High Street	
1247	30 Mill Street	
1248	43-45 Mill Street	
1258	2-28 The Grove	Built 1840-1850s
1259	13-19 The Grove	Built 1840-1850s
1260	1-11 The Grove	Built 1840-1850s
1261	Gallery, Castle Road	
1262	13 St Mary's Street	
1273	High School, Bromham Road	Built 1878
1277	60-62 Adelaide Square	Built 1840-1850
1278	50 Adelaide Square	Built 1840-1850
1279	46 and 48 Adelaide Square	
1285	9 Rothsay Gardens	
1292	Preparatory School (Inky Building)	Built 1900
1295	28-32 St Peter's Street	Mid-C19th
1297	10-12 Kimbolton Road	Built c1840
1298	14 Kimbolton Road	Built c1840
1299	16-18 Kimbolton Road	Built c1840
1300	20-22 Kimbolton Road	Built c1840
1301	24-26 Kimbolton Road	Built c1840
1302	28- 30A and 30B Kimbolton Road	Built c1840
1303	Bedford School (Main Building)	Built 1889, restored after fire in 1981
1304	1 Kimbolton Road	
1305	2-4 Goldington Road	
1308	36-38 St Peter's Street	
1309	126 and 128 Bromham Road	
1310	136 Goldington Road	
1314	130 and 132 Bromham Road	
2479	Holly Lodge, 43 The Grove	
2480	Alexandra Cottages, Grove Place	
2813	The Old Fire Station, 36B Mill Street	Built 1888
4000	1 The Broadway	
4002	23 Tavistock Street	
4003	27-29 Tavistock Street	
4004	31-37 Tavistock Street	
4005	39-41 Tavistock Street	
4006	The Crown, 46 Tavistock Street	
4007	40-42 Harpur Street	
4008	48-50 Harpur Street	
4009	52-54 Harpur Street	
4010	Guild House, 56 Harpur Street	Built 1856
4011	58-60 Harpur Street	
4012	62-64 Harpur Street	
4013	1 Adelaide Square	
4014	2-4 Adelaide Square	
4017	3 St Peter's Street	Built 1887
4021	21 St Peter's Street	
4022	22 St Peter's Street	
4023	St Luke's United Reformed Church	Formerly the site of the Moravian Chapel, founded 1751.



4024	33-37 St Peter's Street	
4034	11-13 Silver Street	
4035	15 and 15A Silver Street	
4036	17 Silver Street	
4037	19 Silver Street	
4038	2-4 Kimbolton Road	
4039	6-8 Kimbolton Road	
4041	3 Duke Street	
4042	8-10 Mill Street	
4043	Fleur-de-Lys, 12-14 Mill Street	Records of inn date back to C17 th
4044	16 Mill Street	
4046	22 Mill Street	
4047	24 Mill Street	
4048	28 Mill Street	
4049	30A Mill Street	
4050	Mill Hotel, Mill Street	
4051	36 Mill Street	
4053	39 Mill Street (back of)	
4054	44-50 Mill Street	
4055	Sorrentino's, Ram Yard	
4056	Schoolroom, back of Howard Congregational Church, Castle Lane.	
4057	56-60 Castle Lane	
4058	2-2A Newnham Street	
4059	4 and 6 Newnham Street	
4061	2-4 Grove Place	
4064	3 St Cuthbert's Street	
4067	17-19 St Cuthbert's Street	
4068	21 St Cuthbert's Street	
4069	22-24 St Cuthbert's Street	
4073	29-39 St Cuthbert's Street	
4074	41-43 St Cuthbert's Street	
4075	45-47 St Cuthbert's Street	
4076	St Cuthbert's Church Hall	Built 1891
4077	9-11 High Street	
4079	Phoenix Chambers, 15-17 High Street	
4081	20 High Street	
4082	22-24 High Street	
4083	26-28 High Street	
4084	32 High Street	
4087	38-40 High Street	
4089	72-74 High Street	
4093	80 High Street	
4095	89-93 High Street	
4096	86-88 High Street	
4098	90 High Street	
4099	The Bear Public House, 92 High Street	
4100	94 High Street	
4101	96-98 High Street	
4102	95-101 High Street	
4103	103-5 High Street	
4104	107 High Street	
4108	123-125 High Street	
4109	9 St Paul's Square	
4111	14,14A, 15 and 16 St Paul's Square	
4112	16-17 St Paul's Square	
4114	Corn Exchange, St Paul's Square	Built 1871
4118	20-22 Cauldwell Street	Built 1883
4121	6-16 St Mary's Street	Medieval well found in cellars



4122	16 and 18 St Mary's Street	
4123	20 and 22 St Mary's Street	
4124	26 St Mary's Street	
4125	The Clarence, 13 St John's Street	
4135	St John's Church Hall	
4136	3 Cardington Road	
4138	21 Cardington Road	
4139	48 Cardington Road	
4246	Howard House, 17 Cardington Road	Built c1870. Has Victorian painted interior panels.
4247	37 Mill Street	Bedford's first fire station, superseded by later fire station at HER 2813
4249	21 and 23 Gadsby Street	Built 1872. Former County police station.
4250	8 and 10 Newnham Street	
4251	20 and 22 Newnham Street	
4252	2 Lurke Street	
4253	2 Howard Street	Stone-lined well found in cellar
4256	Beales Store, corner of Silver Street and Harpur Street	Built c1890. Formerly YMCA.
4259	44 and 46 Harpur Street	
4260	6-12 Adelaide Square	
4261	14 and 16 Adelaide Square	
4262	2 St Michael's Road	
4267	19 Cardington Road	Built 1850s
4270	St Mary's Church Hall, Cauldwell Street	
4275	47 High Street	
4276	49 High Street	
4277	57 High Street	
4416	The Clock House, 122 Bromham Road	Built 1852, clocktower added 1870
4507	Church of the Holy Child of St Joseph (RC), Midland Road	Built 1872-74
4508	Catholic Rectory, 2 Brereton Road	
4509	120 Bromham Road	
4518	Bedford Club, 11 De Parys Avenue	
4519	Suspension Bridge, The Embankment	Built 1888. Map of 1765 shows footbridge on same site
4520	Chapel, N Wing Hospital	
4521	Britannia Iron Works, Kempston Road	Built 1857-59. Mostly demolished, but gatehouse still standing.
4522	West Lodge, Bedford Park	Built 1888
4523	Main Gates, Bedford Park	Built 1888
4524	Café, Bedford Park	Built 1888
4525	Bandstand, Bedford Park	Built 1888
4526	East Lodge, Bedford Park	Built 1888
4528	59 and 61 High Street	
4530	Albert Terrace, 1-11 Union Street (odd nos.)	Built 1841-45
6515	51 High Street	
6624	Royal County Theatre, Midland Road	Built 1898
6625	Amphill Road Primary School	Built 1876
7308	52-54 Adelaide Square	Built 1840-50
7309	56-58 Adelaide Square	
7855	95 Bromham Road	Built 1893
7905	2-3 St Paul's Square	
7906	4 St Paul's Square	Built 1849. Former St Paul's Vicarage
7909	6 St Paul's Square	
7991	Water Tower and Pumping House	Built 1902 by Charles Wells Brewery
8039	Chapel, S Wing Hospital, Kempston Road	Built 1899



8173	Onslow Villas, 39-41 The Grove	Built 1869
8175	44 Ashburnham Road	Built 1869
8176	133-135 Midland Road	Built 1893
8181	2 Union Street	Late C19th
8182	4 and 6 Union Street	Late C19th
8365	14 St Cuthbert's Street	Former St Cuthbert's Rectory
9304	22 and 27 De Parys Avenue	
9588	1 Pemberley Lane	Mid- C19th
10088	9-11 Newnham Street	
10195	55 Goldington Road	Built 1889
10443	50 Tavistock Street	
10534	18 Newnham Street	
10535	4 and 6 Howard Street	
10536	2 Duke Street	
10537	6-8 Grove Place	
10538	10-12 Grove Place	
12101	84-86 Bromham Road	
15987	Providence Baptist Chapel, Rothsay Rd	Built 1894

Table 11. Mid-late 19th century buildings in Bedford (from HER)

5.6.16 Trades

The construction of the railways had an enormous influence on the economy of Bedford. At first there was an influx of labour to build the embankments, cuttings, tracks, stations and sheds. Many former agricultural workers were employed as navvies. When the railways opened in the late 1840s and 1850s, trades connected with transportation of goods and people by road and water went into sudden decline. New trades connected with the maintenance of the railway system came into being, and some of the terraced housing around Midland Road must have been built to accommodate them.

Bedford never became an industrialised town in the sense in which some northern and midland cities did. The economy still had a primarily agricultural base, and employment for most people was still in small trades and crafts. Directories still list coopers, wheelwrights and saddlers and other traditional occupations. But developments in manufacture were made possible by the construction of the railways. Cheaper materials could now be obtained and there was easier access to a wider market. The Britannia Iron Works made full use of this by situating itself next to the railway, and became the largest employer in the town. They provided accommodation for their workers in terraced housing nearby. The Water and Gas Companies also provided work. WH Allens engineering works was set up in 1894. The Robertson Works were opened in 1907.

Middle class people moving into Bedford at this time included many retired officers and civil servants, often from far-flung corners of the British Empire. These people created a great demand for servants, and many young people from working class families went straight from school into service. Jobs for girls included housemaids, kitchen-maids, cleaners, and cooks. Jobs for men included butler, groom, coachman, valet, etc. There was also a demand for more shops, and services such as dairies, cabs, carvers, florists, tailors, dressmakers, upholsterers and laundries. (Liddle 1973, 31-33). The Bedford Steam Laundry in Goldington Road was opened in 1880.

Other occupations recorded in the trade directories are bricklayer, shoemaker, printer, greengrocer, butcher, stonemason, carpenter, blacksmith, carter, ostler, furnace-man, clerk, fireman, brewer, engine-driver, printer, plumber, etc. Liddle (*ibid.*, 34-6) provides an interesting account of the occupations of working class families in relation to the streets in which they lived. By the early 20th century electrical and automobile engineers' workshops had started to appear. The Igranic Electric Company arrived in 1913.

For a picture of commercial Bedford at about this time, with details of shopfronts, hotels and businesses, see Mate's *Illustrated Guide to Bedford*, 1906.



5.7 The Modern Period (AD1914 - present)

During the 20th century the expansion of Bedford continued. It became a centre for light engineering and confectionery industries. At first the town expanded through ribbon development along Kimbolton Road, Bromham Road, Goldington Road, Ampthill Road, Elstow Road, London Road and other main routes into the town. In 1934 the municipal boundaries were extended as a measure to ease shortage of space for housing. The nearby village of Goldington was enveloped by the expanding town. In the 1950s the nearby brick-fields in south Bedfordshire brought workers from Italy, Poland, West Indies, India, Pakistan and many other countries to live in the town. Indeed, one of the distinctive features of Bedford today is the wide diversity of its people and culture. By 1961 immigrants represented 12% of the population, which had risen to 63,000. Today the population stands at about 80,000.

Large areas of suburban housing at Putnoe, Brickhill, Mowsbury and Biddenham were built in the post-war period. In the town centre, department stores, banks and cinemas replaced the houses where the people of the town once lived. A large bus station, the new County Hall and the new Town Hall have taken up areas of land formerly occupied by terraced housing or industry. The Modern School has been replaced by the Harpur Shopping Centre. Many of the old breweries and inns that once characterised the town have disappeared. Recently, however, the trend has been reversed, with out-of-town shopping centres putting town shops out of business, and larger pubs moving back into the centre.

One of the most important classes of buildings in this period was the cinema. The Blake Brothers opened the **Picturedrome** (HER 1831) in 1910 on the present site of Moat House. It was demolished in the 1960s. Other cinemas were the **Palace** (HER 1820), opened in 1912 on the site of the former Chequer's Inn at the corner of High Street and Silver Street and demolished in 1936. The **Empire** (HER 8174) was also built in 1912, on the former site of Hawes Farmhouse in Midland Road. The Palace sold out to the **Granada** (HER 4031) which opened in St Peter's Street in 1934. The **Plaza** on the Embankment was started in 1929. The Empire, the Granada and the Plaza were all demolished in the 1970s.

An important class of monument is the war memorial, of which Bedford has some fine examples. These are listed in the RCHME National Survey of War Memorials, a copy of which is kept in HER.

The remains of a WWII tank trap were found in Harpur Street during the watching brief in the town centre (TCI 399). A WWII poster was uncovered during re-plastering of a shop in the N. Arcade (WB 38). Records of other wartime installations and artefacts can be found in the HER.



HER	Address	Comments
1283	Bedford School Chapel	Built 1907-8
1820	Palace Chambers, 58-60 High Street	Built 1936, Former site of Palace Cinema, Chequer's Inn, Town Gaol
1843	St Bede's School, Bromham Road	Built 1914
1900	Marks and Spencer Ltd, Midland Road	1930s
4015	Science Block, High School, Bromham Rd	1927
4016	1 St Peter's Street	
4018	St Peter's Church Hall	
4032	1-3 Silver Street	
4033	5-7 Silver Street	
4071	26 St Cuthbert's Street	
4072	28 St Cuthbert's Street	
4088	Arcade entrance, 68 High Street	Arcade opened 1905
4090	76-78 High Street	
4105	Barclay's Bank, 111 High Street	
4106	113 High Street	
4107	121 High Street	
4110	Saracen's Head, 13 St Paul's Square	Built 1913
4131	32 St John's Street,	
4248	The George and Dragon, 39 Mill Street	Built 1934, replacing old George and Dragon inn.
4517	College of Education, corner of The Crescent and Tavistock Street	
4531	10A Goldington Road	Built 1935
4532	Ardour House, The Broadway	Built 1930
4533	The Dujon, 34-36 High Street	Built 1935
7320	42 Midland Road	Rebuilt after fire
7903	Dame Alice Harpur School, Cardington Road	Built 1930s
14977	The Arcade	Built 1906, on former backyards and gardens at rear of High St & Harpur St

Table 12. Early 20th century buildings in Bedford (from HER)



6 ASSESSMENT OF BEDFORD'S CHARACTER, IMPORTANCE AND POTENTIAL

6.1 *Character of the Present Town (Historic Core)*

Bedford is a historic market town that derives its particular character from the River Ouse which runs through its centre. The historic core of the town still divides into south and north, with the fine bridge over the river a central point. Most of its medieval buildings have long since disappeared but the town still retains something of the original street plan. The tall tower of St Paul's Church dominates the town on the northern side of the bridge. Around the old market square is much civic architecture of the Victorian era – the Shire Hall, the Corn Exchange, etc. Cars, unfortunately, have turned the square into a traffic island, and the market has moved to Horne Lane. Many of the houses in the High Street were re-built or re-fronted in the 19th century. Cardington Road and St Cuthbert's Street both have a Georgian feel to them. The area around St Peter's Church, too, has its own atmosphere with many historic buildings of the post-medieval period. All these are overshadowed, however, by the huge modern towers of Moat House, Telephone House, the new Town Hall, and the giant multi-storey car parks in Greyfriars and Lurke Street. The historic core of the old town is now completely surrounded by 19th and 20th century development.

Five Conservation Areas were originally designated by the County Council in 1969-70. These were subsequently consolidated into a single Conservation Area in 1975 (Fig 23). The area stretches as far as Russell Park in the East and Bedford Park in the north. It also includes the large 19th century residential district to the north-west of Bedford. However, it fails to include most of the western part of the south of the old town. Most of the standing historic buildings have gone from this area, though significant archaeological deposits probably remain to be found.

6.2 *Archaeological Potential*

Modern development has occurred in many parts of the old town. Moat House on the east side of St Mary's Street is likely to have removed any archaeological evidence within its footprint in the crucial area next to the bridge. Much the same can be said of the extensive Mander College and County Hall developments to the west of St Mary's Street, and Telephone House in St Johns. The building of Kingsway, too, must have taken its toll on the evidence of structures just inside the King's Ditch. On the north side of the river the construction of the Harpur Centre and the BPHA building opposite has taken huge chunks out of an area where significant archaeological deposits might have been expected. The chances of locating the lower stretches of the Saffron Ditch, for example, are now fairly slim. The multi-storey car parks in Greyfriars and Lurke Street, which employed piles in their construction, are likely to have damaged areas of some archaeological potential.

A list of cellars in Bedford affected by flooding (a document entitled 'Bedford Basements' kept in the HER), while not completely comprehensive, gives a good idea of the extent of cellaring in the historic core of Bedford. A large number of cellars are listed in the High Street, Silver Street, Harpur Street, Midland Road and St Paul's Square. A brief cellar survey undertaken as part of the present study revealed that many of the houses on the east side of St Mary's Street also have cellars, though rather small. Larger cellars can be found under many of the shops in the High Street. One example is the cellar under McDonalds in the High Street, which was found to have 18th century gravestones as floor slabs. Most of the post-medieval inns and taverns were cellared, as can be seen at the surviving Swan and Ship inns. Some inn cellars, such as those at the New George next to the Swan, have been filled in and concreted over. The Shire Hall and Magistrates Court buildings on St Paul's Square have large basements. Some of the 18th and 19th century buildings on Mill Street also have cellars. And the old County Gaol on the corner of Silver Street and High Street, demolished in 1801, is known from John Howard's description in 1777 to have had at least two dungeons.

Salmon's Gas Map (1854), the map of early sewerage pipes in Tulloch (1910) and more recent plans show that service trenches mostly follow the course of streets. Any excavation across a town



street is likely to encounter numerous pipes, cables and trenches dating from the last 150 years. These have disturbed the archaeological evidence that, in many cases, may have been uniquely preserved by roads (see below).

Notwithstanding the truncation described above, undisturbed and sometimes complex urban stratigraphy has been found on parts of the Bedford Castle site (BC69-72), St Mary's Vicarage (BCS 73), Midland Road (BMR 73), Silver Street (WB 62), St Mary's Street (304), the Howard Congregational Chapel in Mill Street (426), 29-41 High Street (305), 14-15a St Paul's Square (451) and other sites. In the middle of St Paul's Square (307), this stratigraphy was encountered surprisingly close to the modern ground surface. There are large parts of the town, such as the land behind St Johns Church or the Bedford Castle area where no significant development has occurred in the last 600 years and preservation of remains is likely to be extremely good.

The recent Town Centre Improvements Watching Brief has shown that the linear areas covered by roads within the town, while subject to systematic damage through sewerage trenches, gas pipes, etc, may also preserve ancient boundary features. The eastern part of Midland Road has been identified as a road that has been literally constructed on top of (and therefore follows the course of) an in-filled boundary ditch. This has important implications for excavation strategy, which has tended to focus on the importance of areas adjacent to roads, rather than to the area of the roads themselves.

Perhaps the most important and as yet untapped area of archaeological potential is the former Saxon and medieval waterfront. The probability that the original waterfront on the north side of the river was once at least 20m further to the north raises exciting possibilities. The indications are that there may be a considerable depth of silt and dump deposits preserving ancient waterfront structures such as jetties or wharfs. Such deposits could contain crucial evidence about the origin and development of Bedford.

Although archaeological deposits in the ground that are only accessible to excavation are usually thought of as the principal archaeological resource, another important resource is comprised of the standing buildings of the town. Many of the buildings with 17th, 18th or even 19th century facades may hide structures of earlier date, or be built on the foundations of earlier buildings. Major discoveries have been made at St Peter's Church, St Mary's Church and St John's Hospital. It is not just ecclesiastical buildings that carry this potential, moreover. To give just one example, it has been observed that the Georgian frontage of 1 St Paul's Square may hide a late medieval timber-frame structure belonging to the old Falcon Inn (Bevan 1993).

6.3 Archaeological Components

Archaeological components identified below are shown in Figs 25 and 26.

- **Component 1 *The River***

The river, the primary topographical feature of Bedford, forms the east-west axis of the town. Excavations on the north bank have shown that the river frontage near the bridge was about 20m further to the north at one time. This waterfront area may have been a crucial element of Saxon Bedford - particularly in relation to the minster church of St Paul's, which may have been sited deliberately adjacent to the river for trading purposes. The likelihood is that this part of the river was gradually transformed from its natural wild state to its present canalised form through the building of wooden structures such as wharfs and jetties, and the tipping of material from the market area and the town settlement. It can be surmised that offal and other refuse from the market was taken down Pudding Lane to be dumped in the river before the practice was banned in late medieval times. Right up to post-medieval times sewage was channelled into the river through a number of ditches and drains, adding to the accumulation of material.

Wooden piles and layers of tipping have been observed in a small watching brief. In the 19th century Roman and Saxon artefacts as well as wooden piling were found deep in the black mud of a former watercourse, thought to be the mouth of the Saffron Ditch (though possibly the northern part of the river itself). The potential of such waterlogged deposits, with anaerobic conditions for the preservation of organic materials, is demonstrated by water-front excavations in other early medieval towns - but has yet to be explored in Bedford.



The river was a focus of light industrial and commercial activity throughout the medieval and post-medieval periods, especially after the opening of the river navigation to the sea in the late 17th century. Remains of mills, fish-traps, tanning pits, barrages, wharfs, maltings, coalyards, etc, may survive in the vicinity.

- **Component 2** *The North-South Road*

The route now represented by the High Street, St Mary's Street and St John's Street must have pre-existed the urbanisation of Bedford, and may have been in use since prehistoric times. Forming the north-south axis of the town, it was clearly used as an axis of symmetry in the layout of the north and south burhs and in the design of the street grid. Great potential exists, as excavations have already shown, for finding further evidence of Saxon and medieval structures fronting on to the road, typically with rubbish pits to the rear. Gates were no doubt located at the points where the road passed through the town defences. The southern gate has yet to be identified by excavation although its general position at the intersection of St John's Street with King's Ditch is known. In the northern burh, the north gate may have been moved several times as the town expanded. Possible locations for the north gate at various stages of town development have been suggested: - 1) adjacent to St Peter's Church on the west side, and 2) near the junction with Lurke Street and Lime Street. Another possibility for an earlier gate - 3) the junction with Silver Street and Mill Street - is indicated by the recent discovery of a major Saxon boundary ditch running east-west along Midland Road (see Fig 10).

- **Component 3** *The Ford/Bridge*

The importance of the river crossing in the development of Bedford has already been described. It is not known exactly whether the ford that gave Bedford its name was metalled or not, or when exactly it was replaced by a bridge. The first documentary references to a stone bridge are in the 12th century. It is likely, however, that this was preceded by a wooden trestle bridge. Buildings on the bridge served as chapel, gatehouses, prison and militia depot. Considerable amounts of St Neots ware pottery and other artefacts have been found in the riverbed nearby, and it is probable that much dumping into the river took place here.

- **Component 4** *Middle Saxon Settlement Core*

The discoveries of middle Saxon structures on the Bedford Castle site, as well as an assemblage of middle Saxon pottery from a pit in St John's Street are published but not generally well known. Further discoveries of an inhumation cemetery on the north side of St Paul's Square and at least 70m of a 3-4m wide boundary ditch containing middle Saxon material and running underneath Midland Road have yet to be published. Taken together this evidence suggests that the northern burh of Bedford, and possibly aspects of its street grid, are likely to be of middle Saxon origin. There is clearly potential for finding further evidence from this period. Such evidence could shed light not only on the question of the origin of Bedford but also on wider issues of urban origins in Anglo-Saxon England.

- **Component 5** *Late Saxon and Medieval Settlement Core*

The expansion of the town in the late Saxon period seems to have brought about a series of expansions of the northern burh, with the northern boundary reaching as far north as St Peter's Church. The other major development was the construction of the southern burh, demarcated by the King's Ditch, in the early 10th century. It was within the boundaries and street grid of the late Saxo-Norman town that medieval settlement was structured. There is evidence of some slight expansion beyond the Saxon boundaries – for example, medieval pits and wells have been found in River Street to the west of the Saffron Ditch. But for the most part the size of the town remained roughly the same, with the actual density of settlement decreasing. John Speed's map of Bedford in 1610 is therefore a good indicator of the approximate boundaries of both the medieval and the late Saxon towns. Medieval and late Saxon deposits, sometimes in the form of deep and complex stratigraphy, might be expected anywhere within the area marked on Figure 10.

- **Component 6** *St Paul's Church*

The church is now mainly of 15th century construction, but it has been rebuilt several times since its origins before the Norman Conquest. It was probably the monastery mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle entry for 956. As the major church of Saxon Bedford, it is likely to have been an



integral part of the town layout, with the street grid laid down around it. The first church was probably constructed of wood, but successive demolitions and re-buildings have hidden any trace of smaller, earlier structures. Such traces may, however, survive beneath the floor of the present church. Fragments of earlier churches - such as the carved stone of Saxon date which was found in excavations nearby (which may be a boss or roundel from a wall or ceiling, or could be part of a decorated cross or gravestone)– might be found in the vicinity.

- **Component 7 *St Peter's Church***

As one of the two churches in Bedford with surviving Anglo-Saxon work, St Peter's is important to any understanding of the development of the town. It has been suggested that its tower was originally a defensive feature incorporated into town defences next to the northern gate. Any future development in the vicinity of the church may provide an opportunity to test this theory. It should be noted that the medieval cemetery is thought to extend right over the Green up to St Peter's Street. Developments inside the church are also of great interest. The fragment of an early cross in the tower is an exciting feature. There may be other fragments of the same cross yet to be discovered within the fabric of the church.

- **Component 8 *St Mary's Church***

Renovations in 1959 yielded discoveries of Saxo-Norman windows and medieval wall paintings as well as an important early medieval carved corbel head. As the only surviving Anglo-Saxon building south of the river, St Mary's Church is clearly crucial to an understanding of Bedford.

- **Component 9 *King's Ditch***

Although culverted for much of its length, a well preserved stretch of ditch and internal rampart survives between Rope Walk and Cardington Road. Should the necessity for excavation arise, valuable information could be gained from further investigation of the earthwork. In particular, it should be remembered that the earthwork has not been securely dated by archaeological means. The traditional association of the construction of King's Ditch with the visit of Edward the Elder in 915 has yet to be confirmed.

The area enclosed by King's Ditch seems to have been densely occupied in Saxo-Norman times, but much more sparsely occupied in the medieval and post-medieval periods. The fact that the settlement has shrunk, however, means that the potential for finding evidence of the earlier period is high, as excavations south of the river have shown.

- **Component 10 *Bedford Castle***

Excavations at the castle site have revealed the richness of archaeological deposits, but have perhaps raised more questions than they have answered. How extensive are the middle Saxon settlement structures? Are the substantial post-in-trench structures Saxon halls? What is the nature of the black earth uniform layer? Was the Norman castle built over the eastern boundary of the Saxon burh? How does the inner bailey ditch fit in with the overall plan of the castle? Were the ditches and moats water-filled? Was there a tower on the mound on the north-eastern corner? Much clearly remains to be discovered in terms of both external defences and internal structures. And the post-castle Beauchamp mansion has yet to be located.

- **Component 11 *St John's Hospital and Church***

St John's Hospital and its chapel, later to become the parish church, is one of the most important medieval sites in Bedford – not least because of its standing buildings. The timber-frame of part of the medieval Hospital survives virtually intact, and it is likely that the hospital buildings were once much more extensive. Remains of cloisters could survive, for example, between the Hospital and the Church. The ancient wall running along the pavement indicates that an extension of the building may once have run alongside the road to the north. The area of land to the rear, between the church and King's Ditch, is also of interest. The surviving earthworks show that there was considerable activity here in medieval times, with fishponds connected to the Kings Ditch, and relatively little disturbance since.

- **Component 12 *St Paul's Square***

Excavation has already demonstrated the archaeological potential of this area, with significant deposits surviving surprisingly close to the surface. Development in the vicinity of St Paul's is



always likely to disturb medieval or earlier burial grounds. The graveyard of possible middle Saxon date on the north side of the square could be crucial to the understanding of the origins and first settlement of Bedford. The area of the square has also been a central focus of the economic life of the town and its shire throughout the medieval period. Remains of the buildings and streets of the market shambles are present, as well as earlier pitting.

- **Component 13** *The Saffron Ditch*

There were probably several courses of this watercourse, which was no doubt modified and redirected as required. Its importance lies in the fact that it is thought to have formed the western boundary of the Saxon burh. Locating the Saffron Ditch by excavation and obtaining a section across it could provide valuable environmental evidence for early Bedford. The waterlogged mud of the stream is likely to provide good conditions for the preservation of artefacts made from organic materials. There may be remains of bridges over the stream.

- **Component 14** *The Street Grid*

The question of the date of origin of the street grid remains an important issue for archaeologists to address. The extent to which the streets have been planned, or represent a series of planning events, and if so when, is also a critical issue. Throughout the history of Bedford roads have naturally formed a linear focus for settlement, and buildings fronting onto the streets with yards to the rear is an expected pattern. But roads are also important in another sense. The discovery during excavation of possible early boundary ditches running beneath Allhallows and Midland Road East suggests that further undiscovered urban boundaries may be hidden by roads. Indeed, in some cases the roads may actually follow the courses of the earlier boundaries. The principal elements of the street grid should therefore perhaps be identified as areas of high archaeological potential in and of themselves.

Any town as old as Bedford is likely to have many archaeological components. Only those considered to be the most important, in the sense of being integral to the development of the town as a whole, are listed and discussed above. Newnham Priory is not listed because, while very important, it lies well outside of the historic core. Other possible components from the medieval town are listed below. In the character statement and guidance note, discussion of these is incorporated into one or other of the 14 principal components, as set out here.

- **All Saint's Church** (Component 5 Late Saxon and Medieval Settlement Core)
- **Church of St Peter-de-Dunstable** (Component 2 The North-South Road, and Component 8 St Mary's Church)
- **St Cuthbert's Church** (Component 5 Late Saxon and Medieval Settlement Core)
- **Herne Chapel** (Component 12 St Paul's Square)
- **Moot Hall** (Component 12 St Paul's Square)
- **Old County Gaol** (Component 5 Late Saxon and Medieval Settlement Core)
- **St Loyes Chapel** (Component 5 Late Saxon and Medieval Settlement Core)
- **The Old George Inn** (Component 2 The North-South Road, and Component 5 Late Saxon and Medieval Settlement Core)
- **Aldermanbury Manor** (Components 5 Late Saxon and Medieval Settlement Core, and Component 7 St Peter's Church)
- **Cauldwell Priory** (Component 5 Late Saxon and Medieval Settlement Core)
- **Greyfriars Friary** (Component 5 Late Saxon and Medieval Settlement Core)



6.4 Conclusion

Bedford is increasingly being recognised as one of the earliest of the Saxon towns, its foundations probably going back to the 6th - 8th centuries. A coherent story can be told from the archaeological evidence of the town's late Saxon expansion, its decline in the medieval period and resurgence in post-medieval times. The archaeology of the town, potentially at least, has much to contribute to discussion of urban origins and development. So far such discussion has taken place mainly at a local level, but there are clearly major implications for studies of regional and national importance.

One area of great archaeological potential that needs to be highlighted as requiring more work is the records and archives of previous excavations. The important excavations on St Paul's Square and at 14-15a St Paul's Square as well as other sites have yet to be written up and published. Other evidence, such as Mr Kuhlicke's extensive pottery assemblages from development sites in pre-war Bedford, stored in Bedford Museum, could yield valuable information if subjected to modern forms of analysis. Since the publication of "Excavations in Bedford 1967- 1977" (Baker *et al* 1979), there has been no updated account of the totality of evidence recovered from the impressive number of more recent excavations. The data from all the excavations summarised in this document has still to be synthesised into a single 'Archaeology of Bedford', available to the public as well as to the many archaeologists and historians who are interested in Bedford's past. Hopefully this report is a step towards that objective.



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Abbreviations:

BA = *Bedford Archaeology*

BAJ = *Bedford Archaeological Journal*

BM = *Bedfordshire Magazine*

BHRS = *Bedford Historical Record Society*

SMA = *South Midlands Archaeology*

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8 BCAS/ALBION REPORTS

Year/Number of Report	Project Code	Title/Site	Type of Report
1998/2	9	2 St Cuthbert's Street	Evaluation
1993/15	219	8-10 St Cuthbert's Street	Assessment
1995/46	242	Magistrate's Court, Prebend Street	Evaluation
1995/20	265	29-41 High Street	Project Design and Evaluation Report
1996/2	265	29-41 High Street	Phasing Report
1993/2	266	Dame Alice Harpur School, CDT/Drama Extensions	Evaluation Report
1996/1	304	Bedford College, St Mary's Street	Evaluation Report
1996/10	414	St John's Inner Relief Road	Evaluation Report
1996/20	426	Howard Congregational Chapel, Mill Street	Evaluation Report
1996/26	433	Church of St Peter-de-Merton	Report on Archaeological Investigations
1999/66	589	Bedford High Street South	Watching Brief Report
2001/10	732	Bedfordshire Magistrate's' Courts, Bedfordshire Shire Hall	Desk-based Study

Table 13. BCAS/Albion Reports