Northamptonshire County Council

Northamptonshire Archaeology

Excavation of Medieval and Later Features
at College Place
Brackley, Northamptonshire

March 2007

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August 2007

Report 07/110

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(Front page illustration: Rear of street frontage, Market Place/College Place)

OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS		
Project title	College Place, Brackley, Northamptonshire	
Short description (250 words maximum)	In March 2007, prior to the development of the site for housing, an archaeological excavation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology at College Place, Brackley Northamptonshire. A watching brief was maintained during subsequent groundworks associated with the development. The earliest feature encountered was a medieval ditch with a possible bank, which probably predates the foundation of the planned medieval town in the mid 12th century. Medieval pits were evident across the southern and eastern part of the site and in the area to the rear of the existing street frontage. They relate to 'backyard' activity, probably to the rear of medieval tenements that once fronted on to Market Place. In the 16th century a large clay-lined pit was excavated close to the southern edge of the site. This was subsequently buried beneath a layer of made-ground, up to 0.5m thick, later in the century. In the late 17th century a timber-lined pit or tank was constructed and two other pits were used to dispose of domestic refuse. In the mid 18th century two boundary walls were built, possibly along the line of earlier hedges or fences that may have demarcated earlier medieval burgage plots. The majority of the buildings on the site, most of which have now been demolished, were built in the mid 19th century.	
Project type	Excavation	
Previous work (reference to organisation or SMR numbers etc)	Desk-based assessment, Northamptonshire Archaeology 2002 Trial trench evaluation, Northamptonshire Archaeology 2006	
Future work	None	
Monument type and period	N/A	
Significant finds	None	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Northamptonshire	
Site address (including postcode)	College Place, Brackley	
National grid ref.	SP 5854 3684	
Height OD	122m OD	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Northamptonshire County Council	
Project Design originator	Anthony Maull, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Simon Carlyle, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project Manager	Anthony Maull, Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Sponsor or funding body	BMH Construction	
PROJECT DATE		
Start date	26th February 2007	
End date	25th June 2007	
ARCHIVES	**Location**	**Content**
Physical		
Digital		
BIBLIOGRAPHY	Journal/monograph, published or forthcoming, or unpublished client report (NA report)	
Title	Excavation of Medieval and Later Features at College Place, Brackley, Northamptonshire	
Serial title and volume	07/110	
Author(s)	Simon Carlyle	
Page numbers	23 text, 6 figures, 6 plates and appendix	
Date	2nd August 2007	

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A MEDIEVAL DITCH AND PITS AT COLLEGE PLACE BRACKLEY, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

Abstract

In March 2007, prior to the development of the site for housing, an archaeological excavation was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology at College Place, Brackley Northamptonshire. A watching brief was maintained during subsequent groundworks associated with the development. The earliest feature encountered was a medieval ditch with a possible bank, which probably predates the foundation of the planned medieval town in the mid 12th century. Medieval pits were evident across the southern and eastern part of the site and in the area to the rear of the existing street frontage. The earlier pits, which broadly dated to the 12th to 13th centuries, were concentrated on the lower slope to the south and east; the later pits, which dated to the late 13th to 14th centuries, occurred closer to the street frontage. Many of the pits had been used to dispose of domestic refuse and probably cess, although they may have had a previous function. They relate to 'backyard' activity, probably to the rear of medieval tenements that once fronted on to Market Place. In the 16th century a large clay-lined pit, which may have been used in an industrial process, was excavated close to the southern edge of the site. This was subsequently buried beneath a layer of made-ground, up to 0.5m thick, later in the century. In the late 17th century a timber-lined pit or tank was constructed and two other pits were used to dispose of domestic refuse. In the mid 18th century two boundary walls were built, possibly along the line of earlier hedges or fences that may have demarcated earlier medieval burgage plots. The majority of the buildings on the site, most of which have now been demolished, were built in the mid 19th century. Until the mid 20th century much of the site was occupied by gardens and orchards, before being cleared for industrial and agricultural buildings and yards.

1 INTRODUCTION

An archaeological excavation and watching brief were carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) at College Place, Brackley, Northamptonshire (site centred on NGR SP 5854 3684; Fig 1). The excavation was undertaken in March 2007 and was followed by the watching brief, which was completed in June of the same year. The work was commissioned by The Raven Group, who have been granted planning permission (planning application no. S/2005/1412/P) by South Northamptonshire Council (SNC) for the residential development of the site.

The excavation formed part of a programme of archaeological investigation initiated by Northamptonshire County Council's Historic Environment Team (NCCHET), in response to the submission of the planning proposals. The programme of archaeological work was required in order to mitigate against the impact of the development on buried archaeological remains, in accordance with *Planning Policy Guidance: Archaeology and Planning (PPG16), section 30*. Previously, NA had prepared an archaeological desk-based assessment (Upson-Smith 2002) and undertaken a trial trench evaluation of the site (Carlyle 2006).

The programme of archaeological work comprised an excavation in the area of the proposed basement car park (Area A, Figure 2) and a watching brief on other parts of the site where groundworks (e.g. service runs, wall footings, slope terracing) impacted on

archaeological horizons (Areas B and C). No brief has been issued for the work by SNC, but the proposed mitigation strategy has been discussed with and approved by the former County Planning Archaeologist, Myk Flitcroft.

The aim of the excavation and watching brief, as outlined in the specification prepared by NA (2007), was to identify, excavate, record and retrieve, as far as practicable, archaeological features and artefacts relating to the medieval and post-medieval town of Brackley.

Specific objectives were as follows:

- To characterise the nature of the archaeological remains and to relate them to the historic development of Brackley in the medieval and post-medieval period, in terms of the division of land and land usage.

- To examine the site's environmental aspect in relation to the surrounding natural environment, horticultural and agricultural practices and possible industrial activity. The presence of medieval cess pits offered the opportunity to investigate diet.

The specification was prepared in accordance with Appendix 2 of *Management of Archaeological Projects* (EH 1991). This report details the results of the excavation and watching brief.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Topography and geology

The development site, College Place, is located close to the centre of the historic market town of Brackley, to the south-east of Market Square. It covers an area of approximately 0.47ha and is situated on an east facing slope, the ground level descending from *c* 123m aOD in the former yard to the rear of Market Place to 120m aOD in the south-east corner of the site. To the west the site is bounded by buildings fronting on to Market Place, to the north by school buildings and grounds, to the east by playing fields and to the south by a private car park and derelict ground. Prior to development, College Place was being used as a private car park and as a works compound by SNC contractors, and contained a number of vacant buildings.

Soils in the area belong to the Aberford (511a) soil association, consisting of shallow, locally brashy, well-drained calcareous fine loamy soils (SSEW 1983). However, on the site these have been extensively modified by centuries of horticultural activity and redeposition. The underlying solid geology comprises Middle Jurassic strata of the Great Oolite Group (BGS 2002). These consist of shelly, ooidal limestone of the Taynton Limestone Formation on the upper slope, and sand and sandstone of the Horsehay Formation on the lower slope.

2.2 Historical and archaeological background

The historical and archaeological background of the general area is presented in detail in the Extensive Urban Survey (EUS) of Brackley (Foard 1996; Ballinger 2000) and in the desk-based assessment prepared by NA (Upson Smith 2002). The DBA identified sites of

historical and archaeological interest in and around the site, with the majority of records relating to listed buildings dating to the post-medieval period or later, although the medieval origins of the town were highlighted.

In brief, Brackley probably originated in the Saxon period, its name deriving from either a personal name, such as Bracca, or the Saxon word *braecen*, meaning bracken or fern, combined with *leah*, a woodland clearing (Whynne-Hammond 1994). In 1086 Brackley was recorded in the Domesday Book as a village of two hides with a recorded population of 24 (RCHME 1982); it was probably the centre of an estate, focused on the church of St. Peter.

In the mid 12th century a planned town, one of only two in the county, was built to the south-west of the original village of Brackley. This new development was known as the New Town, to distinguish it from the village, which was referred to as the Old Town (Fig 1). The new town, which was founded by the de Beaumont Earls of Leicester, was laid out around a broad market place situated on the principal route between Northampton and Oxford; it is possible that this road was diverted to serve the new town at this time. The town was probably preceded by a short-lived castle which was built in the late 11th century by the first Earl of Leicester, Robert de Beaumont (d 1118), and may have served as the original focus for the new development (Murray 2002).

The town expanded rapidly in the late 12th/early 13th century, with much of its wealth deriving from the wool trade. Burgage plots were laid out along the main road in the first half of the 13th century, extending the town northwards along High Street. Brackley received borough status in a charter of 1260.

The collapse of the wool trade in the 14th and 15th centuries led to a rapid decline in the town's fortunes and Leland, writing in the 16th century, reported that the town was in a ruinous state, with many streets abandoned and derelict. Between the 17th and early 19th centuries the town became a major coaching centre, due to its favourable position on the Oxford to Northampton and Banbury to Buckingham turnpike roads, and it witnessed a period of recovery. The street plan and much of the fabric of the town dates to this period. With the advent of the railways in the mid 19th century and the demise of the old coaching routes, Brackley reverted to a relatively unimportant market town and avoided the process of large-scale urbanisation that transformed many of the towns in the central part of the county.

In relation to the proposed development site, historical map evidence dating to the late 18th and 19th centuries shows a number of narrow plots extending from Market Place to the south-east, with orchards and gardens to the rear of buildings fronting on to the street. The buildings currently occupying the site are of mid 19th century date or later, the earliest possibly dating back to *c* 1830.

Previous archaeological investigation of the site comprises a DBA (Upson Smith 2002) and trial trench evaluation (Carlyle 2006). In the surrounding area, an archaeological evaluation was carried out immediately to the south of the site in the mid 1990s (NA 1996a and b), prior to the development of housing (Old Brewery Walk). The remains of a late medieval building and associated floor levels were identified, *c* 120m to the south-west of College Place.

3 FIELDWORK METHODOLOGY

3.1 Excavation methodology

All works were carried out accordance with the IFA *Code of Conduct* (1995, revised 2006) and the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation* (IFA 1995, revised 2001). All procedures complied with Northamptonshire County Council Health and Safety provisions and Northamptonshire Archaeology Health and Safety at Work Guidelines.

The excavation area (Area A), which corresponded with the footprint of the proposed basement car park, was marked out prior to the commencement of the excavation by the site contractors, BMH Construction Company Ltd. The overburden was removed using a 360^{o} tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.8m wide toothless ditching blade. All overburden was stripped under archaeological supervision and stacked in a temporary bund to the west of the excavation area. A proportion of this material was removed from site and sent to land-fill; the remainder was used to backfill the site once the excavation had been completed. Mechanical excavation proceeded to the top of the archaeological deposits, to foundation level or to the natural substrate in areas where no archaeology was encountered. Due to the depth of the excavation, the edge of the site was stepped.

Archaeological excavation and recording followed the guidelines outlined in the NA *Archaeological Fieldwork Manual* (2003). The archaeological surface was cleaned by hand and planned at a scale of 1:100. All discrete features were half-sectioned, and later fully excavated if they were found to form part of recognisable structures containing deposits of particular value or significant artefact or environmental assemblages. Linear features were sample excavated to 20% of their length, away from intersections with other features or deposits to obtain unmixed samples of material. Sections were drawn at a scale of 1:10 or 1:20, as appropriate.

The character, composition and general depositional sequence of the site stratification was recorded on *pro-forma* sheets, with a unique context number being allocated to each distinct deposit and feature. A photographic record comprising both 35mm black and white negatives and colour transparencies was maintained, supplemented with digital images. All records were compiled during fieldwork into a comprehensive and fully cross-referenced site archive.

Artefacts and ecofacts were collected by hand and retained, receiving appropriate care prior to removal from site (Watkinson and Neal 1998). Unstratified animal bones and modern material were not retained. Samples were taken for flotation from dateable contexts with the potential for the recovery of charcoal and carbonised or water-logged plant remains. The excavated area and spoil heaps were scanned with a metal detector to ensure maximum finds retrieval.

The relevant planning officer from SNC was contacted prior to and during the excavation but was unavailable for monitoring. Arrangements will be made for the deposition of the site archive and finds. The guidelines of the Society of Museum Archaeologists (SMA 1993) will be followed in the preparation of the archive.

3.2 Watching brief methodology

The methodology for the watching brief, which followed the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Brief* (IFA 1994, revised 2001), was broadly the same as that for the excavation. The watching brief was carried out to monitor the excavation of a large construction trench (Area B) in the area of the former street frontage and service runs and soak-aways, which were located in the area to the rear of extant buildings (Area C).

4 EXCAVATION AND WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

4.1 Site summary

The earliest recognisable feature on the site was a reasonably large, though heavily truncated ditch, which may date to the early 12th century and probably predates the foundation of the planned medieval town in the mid 12th century (Fig 3). There may have been an earthen bank along the northern edge of the ditch. Medieval pits were evident across the southern and eastern part of the site and in the area to the rear of the existing street frontage. The earlier pits, which broadly date to the 12th to 13th centuries, were concentrated on the lower slope to the south and east; the later pits, which date to the late 13th to 14th centuries, occurred closer to the street frontage. Activity on the site appears to have tailed off in the later medieval period.

In the 16th century a large, clay-lined pit was dug into the medieval deposits at the southern edge of the site. Later in the century the ground level in this area appears to have been raised by up to half a metre, effectively re-aligning the natural slope from the south-east to the east. In the 17th century a timber-lined tank was constructed, and two pits were used for the disposal of domestic rubbish. In the mid 18th century two stone boundary walls were built, possibly along the line of earlier medieval burgage plot boundaries. A stone conduit was built at around the same time. No evidence was found for earlier boundary walls or ditches, although it is possible that any earlier boundaries may have been delineated by hedges or fences, which have left no discernible trace. The majority of the buildings on the site were built in the mid 19th century; most of these have now been demolished. Until the mid 20th century much of the area was occupied by gardens and orchards, before being cleared for industrial and agricultural buildings and yards.

4.2 Constraints

Due to the lack of space for the storage of spoil on-site, and the presence of live sewers and drains, the excavation area had to be excavated as a number of ‘cells’, separated by baulks. The baulks were located, where possible, to follow the line of services or to preserve the line of the boundary walls. With the permission of SNC some ‘cells’ were backfilled during the course of the excavation, once they had been investigated and recorded, to allow other ‘cells’ to be opened up. Flooding by surface- and groundwater was also an issue, particularly along the eastern edge and in the south-east corner of the site.

4.3 Site geology

In the southern and eastern part of the site, on the lower slope, the natural substrate was mid brownish orange silty clay (31) with a variable content of fine to coarse, angular limestone pebbles and small cobbles. At depth this deposit became more stony and light bluish grey in colour, with veins of light greyish white silty sand. On the upper slope the natural substrate (62) was mid greyish blue silty clay containing moderate fine limestone pebbles, with veins of mid yellowish orange silty clay. These deposits represent the weathered surface (regolith) of the Middle Jurassic Formations.

4.4 Twelfth century ditch

Probably the earliest feature on the site was a linear ditch (14), which had previously been identified by the evaluation (Carlyle 2006, 6, fig 3). A single sherd of sandy coarseware was recovered from the ditch during the course of the evaluation, suggesting that it may date to the early 12th century. In addition, the alignment of the ditch, from north-east to south-west, does not appear to correlate with later land divisions, which again suggests a date prior to the laying out of the planned town. It is possible that feature (73), which was interpreted as a pit, is in fact the truncated remains of the ditch's north-east terminal. The ditch was relatively large, but had been heavily truncated by later activity (Fig 4, Section 1; Plate 1, right of picture). It had a surviving width of *c* 2m and was up to 0.48m deep. The primary fill (28), which was up to 0.16m thick, was mid grey clayey silt with olive green cessy mottles and occasional charcoal flecks. The upper fill (13) was mid greyish brown clayey silt, with occasional charcoal flecks and limestone pebbles, and was up to 0.32m thick. Deposit (15), which only occurred along the northern edge of the ditch, may be the remains of an earthen bank.

4.5 Medieval pits

Distributed across the southern and eastern part of the site and in the area to the rear of the existing street frontage was a scatter of medieval pits, most of which appear to have been used for the disposal of cess/refuse, although they may have had some prior function (Figs 2 and 3). In the south-west and north-east corners of Area A the pits were cut into the natural substrate and were sealed by subsoil (3). To the rear of the street frontage the pits were cut into the natural substrate but were sealed by 19th/20th century demolition rubble and made-ground (75), (76) and (83). However, further downslope the medieval features were cut into a buried medieval land surface that extended over the south-east corner of the excavation area, approximately 1.2m below ground level. The buried subsoil (9) was mid brown clayey silt; the topsoil (8) was mid to dark greyish brown slightly clayey silt. Both deposits were approximately 0.3m thick and contained sherds of 12th/13th century pottery, occasional charcoal flecks and occasional to moderate limestone pebbles. Several sherds of later medieval pottery found in the buried topsoil (8) are probably intrusive.

Twelfth to thirteenth century pits

To the south and south-east of the centre of Area A (Fig 3) there was a concentration of pits dating to the 12th/13th centuries. A single pit of the same date was located in the north-east corner of the site. The earliest feature (73) had been heavily truncated by later activity and it was not possible to determine its original shape or extent, although it had a depth of 0.54m. Although interpreted as a pit, it is possible that this feature is in fact the north-east terminal of the 12th century ditch (14). The primary fill (72) was 0.09m thick and comprised mid grey sandy silt with cessy mottles and very occasional charcoal flecks.

The main fill (71) was mid grey clayey silt with frequent orangey brown mottles and very occasional charcoal flecks.

The western side of feature (73) was cut by pit (42), a large, probably oval pit that partly lay beneath a baulk. The pit was approximately 3m long, 2.1m wide and 0.83m deep. The primary fill (41) was at least 0.42m thick and comprised mid grey sandy silt with cessy mottles. This was overlain by cessy greenish brown clayey silt (40), which was up to 0.41m thick, and contained occasional charcoal flecks and sherds of Banbury Ware. The northern edge of pit (42) was cut by a small, sub-triangular, steep-sided pit (39), measuring approximately 0.8m long, 0.64m wide and 0.71m deep. It was filled with mid grey silty clay (38) with occasional orange brown mottles.

Several metres further to the east, close to the eastern edge of Area A, there were three pits and an arrangement of limestone slabs. The majority of these features were cut into or lay on top of the buried medieval topsoil (8). The earliest feature in this group was a steep-sided pit (67), which was 0.47m deep and had a flat base. It was not possible to determine its full extent as its fill (66) was indistinguishable from the soil into which it was cut. Pit (67) was cut by an elongated, steep-sided pit (65), aligned from north-west to south-east. This pit was 2.9m long, 0.85m wide and 0.61m deep. The primary fill (64), which was 0.10m thick, was mid to dark grey clayey silt and contained charcoal flecks and the jaw bone of a small pig. The upper fill (63) was 0.51m thick and comprised a patchy, mixed deposit of mid yellowish brown and brownish grey clayey silt with occasional charcoal flecks and limestone pebbles. The third pit (70), which was aligned from north to south, lay approximately 1m to the east of pits (65) and (67). It was approximately 3m long, 0.40m deep, and tapered from south to north, narrowing from *c* 1.4m to *c* 0.6m wide. It was filled with mid brownish grey clayey silt (69), capped with a thin layer, 0.07m thick, of mid orangey brown sandy silt. The latter had the appearance of redeposited natural. The arrangement of limestone slabs (86) comprised three large slabs, the largest of which measured 840 x 490 x 40mm, and several smaller slabs that continued beyond the eastern limit of excavation. They ran in a line from north-west to south-east and had been placed on the surface of the topsoil. They may have been put down to consolidate a muddy patch of ground, perhaps on a pathway.

In the north-east corner of Area A there was a vertical-sided oval pit (55), measuring 2.2m long and 1.8m wide. The fill (54) comprised a mid to dark grey clayey silt with olive green cessy mottles and contained charcoal flecks, a single sherd of Banbury Ware, a sherd of green-glazed roof tile and limestone pebbles. The pit was excavated to a depth of 0.44m but had to be abandoned due to flooding from a ruptured drain.

Late thirteenth to fourteenth century pits

Close to the western edge of the excavation there was a cluster of three roughly circular pits (Fig 5, Section 2; Plate 2). The earliest pit (25) in the group had a diameter of *c* 2.6m, a depth of 1.1m and had very steep sides and a slightly pitted, concave base. The soft, yellowish orange clayey silt into which the pit was cut had partly subsided into the pit on its northern side. The primary fill of the pit (24), which was up to 0.25m thick, was dark grey, almost black organic silt containing very occasional limestone pebbles and moderate charcoal flecks. The upper fill (23) largely comprised a dump of angular limestone cobbles and pebbles in a mid grey clayey silt matrix, with lenses of olive green cessy clayey silt, and lumps and flecks of charcoal. Both deposits contained late 13th/14th century pottery and sherds of roof tile of a similar date, including green-glazed tile and decorated ridge tile.

Pit (25) was cut on its eastern edge by pit (22), which had a diameter of *c* 1.65m and a depth of 0.69m. It had a steep concave slope, tending to very steep on the south and east

sides, and a gently concave base with a slight depression in the centre. The primary fill (21), which was up to 0.45m thick, was very similar to the upper fill of pit (25), although the matrix was bluish grey in colour. The stones, which formed the major component of the fill, appeared to tip in to the pit from its western side. A fragment of a copper alloy folding strap clasp, examples of which typically date to the late 13th to early 15th centuries, was recovered from this deposit. Filling a hollow in the surface of the underlying stony deposit was a mid to dark bluish grey clayey silt (20), which was up to 0.21m thick. This fine-particle sediment was probably deposited when the pit was largely filled with water. The upper fill (19) was 0.27m thick and was similar to the primary fill (21), with the exception of the silty matrix between the stones, which was mid brown in colour. The third pit (27), which had a diameter of *c* 1.2m, was not excavated but it clearly cut pit (25).

Approximately 3m to the south-east of the pit cluster was a roughly circular pit (33) with a diameter of 1.4m and a depth of 0.42m. The fill (32) comprised mid to dark grey clayey silt with olive green cessy mottles and occasional charcoal flecks.

During the watching brief two further pits were encountered, which probably date to the 13th/14th centuries. The first of these lay to the rear of the former single-storey 19th century building that had once fronted on to Market Place, prior to its recent demolition. A large rectangular construction trench (Area B) on the site of the building revealed that the area of the street frontage had been heavily truncated by 19th century development and that any pre-existing structures or features, had they been present, had been entirely destroyed. However, in section in the south-east corner of the trench, beneath a layer of hardcore, there was the edge of a broad, shallow pit (78), the fill (77) of which contained a sherd of 13th/14th century Potterspury Ware. The cessy, stony fill, which was at least 0.22m thick, was very similar to that found in the pits investigated in the main excavation area (Area A).

The second pit was seen in the base of a soak-away (Area C). It was not possible to determine the shape or extent of the pit as only a small part of the feature was exposed. The top of the pit (85) lay 0.9m below ground level, beneath several layers of 19th/20th century demolition rubble (83). The pit was approximately 0.7m deep and was filled with mid to dark grey silty clay (84) with frequent limestone pebbles and cobbles. A single sherd of 13th/14th century pottery was recovered.

4.6 Post-medieval pits

At the southern edge of Area A (Fig 3) there was a large clay-lined pit (18). Only the northern edge of the pit extended into the excavation area, so its full extent could not be determined. In section it was 3.9m wide and up to 0.56m deep (Fig 4, Section 1; Plate 1). The lining, mid to dark bluish grey clay (17), was approximately 0.2m thick and was applied to the sides of the pit, but not the base, presumably because the base was cut into natural clay. The primary fill (30), which had accumulated in a hollow in the base of the pit to a thickness of 0.16m, was dark grey, almost black organic silt, containing twigs, small branches (up to 15mm dia.) and occasional charcoal flecks. The main fill (16), which was up to 0.48m thick, was a mixed deposit of mid grey clayey silt with lenses and patches of yellowish brown silty clay. This deposit contained a single sherd of mid 16th century pottery. The upper fill (29) was a thin layer, 0.11m thick, of mid brown sandy silt with frequent fine to medium rounded pebbles, suggesting that this material probably derives from a stream or river bed. The function of the pit is uncertain but the clay lining would indicate that it was constructed to hold water/liquid, perhaps for an industrial process.

Cutting the eastern side of the medieval pit/ditch terminal (73) was a large rectangular pit (50), aligned from west-north-west to east-south-east (Fig 5, Section 3; Plate 3). The pit had very steep, almost vertical sides and a flat base, and measured 3.7m long, 1.05m wide and 0.73m deep. Fragments of a timber plank in the bottom of the pit and the organic, fibrous lining of the pit, suggests that the pit had probably been timber-lined. The fill (49) of the pit was a deposit of dark brownish grey clayey silt, with flecks and lumps of charcoal, sandy lenses and occasional limestone pebbles. The fill contained late 17th century pottery, including part of an Oxford Ware hollow skillet handle (Plate 4), an iron nail and fragments of medieval roof tile.

Near the eastern edge of the excavation were two large, shallow, irregularly-shaped pits, (57) and (59). It is possible that they were formed by tree throw, and that the resulting hollows were used to dispose of household rubbish. Pit (59) contained mid 16th century pottery; the pottery in pit (57) dated to the 17th century. In the north-east corner of the site a small pit (53) contained late 17th century pottery and clay pipe stems.

4.7 18th century walls and stone conduit

Excavation revealed two boundary walls, (4) and (43), which date to the mid 18th century and are probably those shown on the 1760 map of Brackley (NRO Map 2985). The walls were aligned from north-west to south-east and may have been built along earlier plot boundaries, which may date back to the medieval period. A stone conduit (34) running parallel and to the north of wall (4) is probably of the same date.

Wall (4) was 0.49m thick and extended across the excavation area for a distance of *c* 26m (Fig 5, Section 4; Plate 5). To the north-west the wall was still standing, although it had been extensively repaired, and formed the boundary between the site and an adjacent car park. Within the excavation area it had up to nine surviving courses, the five lower courses being of limestone rubble, the upper four being of dressed limestone blocks (ashlar). The wall was bonded with lime mortar. The foundation trench (6) had been cut into the subsoil (3), and the backfill (5) contained pottery of mid 18th century date.

Wall (43) ran roughly parallel and to the north of wall (4). The distance between the walls was approximately 10.1m at the eastern edge of the site and 10.9m at the western edge. The wall was 0.50m thick and extended *c* 31m across the excavation area. It had 7 surviving courses of limestone rubble and two upper courses of unfrogged brick, and was bonded with lime mortar. The wall had been constructed in a shallow foundation trench (45) back-filled with soil and construction debris (mortar and limestone chippings). The wall probably once continued further to the west and adjoined one of the extant buildings to the rear of the street frontage.

The stone conduit (34) was constructed from unmortared limestone rubble and occasional fragments of brick, and was capped with limestone slabs (Plate 6). The conduit channel was roughly rectangular in section, measuring approximately 0.20 x 0.15m. The base of the channel was silted to a depth of 0.04m with fine dark greyish brown clayey silt (35), which contained fragments of animal bone, a fragment of a clay pipe and small sherds of post-medieval pottery.

4.8 19th century ash-pit and well

In Area B, apart from the foundations of the former 19th century building that had recently been demolished, excavation revealed a brick lined pit (82) and a stone-lined well (80).

The brick-lined pit largely lay beyond the excavated area and only its north side was exposed in the southern section. In section it was approximately 1.8m wide and 0.8m deep. It was constructed from unfrogged bricks, weakly bonded with lime mortar, and had been filled with ash and coke (81). Although the bricks had been blackened with sooty deposits on the internal surface of the pit, there was no evidence, such as cracking and spalling (thermal flaking), that the bricks had been burnt. It is therefore unlikely that it had been a hearth or blacksmith's forge, but it may have had some other use, possibly in a blacksmith's workshop.

The well (80) was situated to the rear of the demolished building, beneath the former yard surface. It had an internal diameter of *c* 0.9m and was constructed from limestone rubble. The fill (79) was a loose, mixed deposit of soil, lumps of clay and fragments of brick and tile. It was probably contemporary with the recently demolished 19th century building and was probably backfilled when the yard was concreted over, sometime in the 20th century.

4.9 Overburden

Over the centuries the original land surface in the development area had been raised, particularly on the lower slope, to the south and east. Only in the north-west corner of the area had the original topsoil and subsoil remained largely undisturbed, although the topsoil had been partly removed within the footprint of the former agricultural building.

The subsoil (3) varied in thickness between 0.2m and 0.5m and comprised mid brown, occasionally sandy, slightly clayey silt with occasional pebbles and charcoal flecks. The thick, dark greyish brown, well-developed topsoil (2) was up to 0.6m thick in places, consistent with there having been gardens and orchards on the site in the 18th and 19th centuries. Overlying the topsoil was a layer of building rubble, tarmac and stone chippings (1) that was probably imported to create an area of hard-standing for the former council compound.

5 FINDS

5.1 **Pottery** by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 201 sherds with a total weight of 2,546g. The estimated vessel equivalent (EVE), by summation of surviving rimsherd circumference was 0.95. The range of pottery types present show that there was occupation at the site, probably of a domestic nature, during the 12th and early 13th centuries, but then the site went into a decline and showed little evidence of activity until the 17th century.

Analytical Methodology

The pottery was initially bulk-sorted and recorded on a computer using DBase IV software. The material from each context was recorded by number and weight of sherds per fabric type, with featureless body sherds of the same fabric counted, weighed and recorded as one database entry. Feature sherds such as rims, bases and lugs were individually recorded, with individual codes used for the various types. Decorated sherds were similarly treated. In the case of the rimsherds, the form, diameter in mm and the percentage remaining of the original complete circumference was all recorded. This figure was summed for each fabric type to obtain the estimated vessel equivalent (EVE).

The terminology used is that defined by the Medieval Pottery Research Group's Guide to the Classification of Medieval Ceramic Forms (MPRG 1998) and to the minimum standards laid out in the Minimum Standards for the Processing, Recording, Analysis and Publication of post-Roman Ceramics (MPRG2001). All the statistical analyses were carried out using a Dbase package written by the author, which interrogated the original or subsidiary databases, with some of the final calculations made with an electronic calculator. All statistical analyses were carried out to the minimum standards suggested by Orton (1998-9, 135-7).

Fabrics

The pottery was quantified using the chronology and coding system defined in the Northamptonshire County Ceramic Type-Series (CTS).

F208: **Cotswolds Oolitic Ware**, ?1100-13th C. 3 sherds, 55g, EVE = 0.13.
F302: **Reduced Sandy Coarseware**, AD1100-?1400. 39 sherds, 587g, EVE = 0.44.
F304: **Sandy Coarseware**, AD1100-1400. 1 sherd, 7g, EVE = 0.
F308: **Sandy Glazed Ware**, ?1100-1400. 2 sherds, 11g, EVE = 0.
F312: **Sandy Greyware**, ?1100-1400. 13 sherds, 233g, EVE = 0.12.
F319: **Lyveden/Stanion 'A' Ware**, AD1150-1400. 1 sherd, 5g, EVE = 0..
F320: **Lyveden/Stanion 'B' Ware**, AD1225-1400. 1 sherd, 11g, EVE = 0.
F324: **Brill/Boarstall Ware**, AD1200-1600. 46 sherds, 383g, EVE = 0.
F329: **Potterspury Ware**, AD1250-1600. 16 sherds, 182g, EVE = 0.13.
F330: **Shelly Coarseware**, AD1100-1400. 3 sherds, 55g, EVE = 0.05.
F345: **Oxford Ware**, AD1075-1350. 4 sherds, 130g, EVE = 0.
F352: **Calcareous Sandy Glazed Ware**, 1200 – 1400. 6 sherds, 80g, EVE = 0.
F360: **Banbury Ware**, AD1100-1400. 41 sherds, 538g, EVE = 0.
F404: **Cistercian Ware**, AD1450-1550. 3 sherds, 10g, EVE = 0.
F405: **'Tudor Green' Ware**, 1400 – 1600. 1 sherd, 2g, EVE = 0.
F408: **Rhenish Stonewares**, AD1450+. 2 sherds, 17g, EVE = 0.08.
F407: **Red Earthenware**, AD1450-1600. 15 sherds, 180g.
F413: **Staffordshire Manganese Glazed Ware**, AD1680-1760. 3 sherds, 28g.
F415: **Creamware**, 1740 – 1820. 1 sherds, 32g.

Chronology

The medieval pottery is dated using the relative seriated phase chronology (RSP) as specified in the County Type-Series. The system attributes to each ceramic group a phase date rather than absolute chronology. The phases are based on the presence and absence of 'major wares' within each individual assemblage, with the earliest known date of the chronologically latest ware within each group defining the Phase date. The chronology and the defining wares are shown in Table 1. This is slightly different from the chronology used at other sites in the town, based on the pottery from the unpublished Castle Lane site. It now appears that the pottery from that site is not typical of Brackley, with the Coventry and Nuneaton wares which were relatively plentiful there being more or less absent from other sites in the town (see below).

Table 1: Chronology of the RSP Ceramic Phasing System

RSP Phase	Defining Wares	Chronology
CP1	F302, F312, F330, F345, F360	*c* AD1100-1200
CP2	F320, F324	*c* E - M 13thC
CP3	F329	*c* M13thC-1400
CP4	F403, F405	*c* AD1400-1450
CP5	F404	*c* AD1450-1550

Table 2: Pottery occurrence per ceramic phase by number, weight and EVE, all major fabrics

Phase	No	Wt	EVE	Mean sherd wt
CP1	45	685	0.44	15.2g
CP2	48	733	0.22	15.3g
CP3	28	272	0.08	9.7g
CP4	21	135	0.13	6.4g
CP5	0	0	0	0
M16th – 17thC	9	127	0	14.1g
17th – L17th C	18	196	0	10.9g
L17th – M18th C	26	284	0.08	10.9g
M18th-19thC	3	64	0	21.3g
19thC	0	0	0	0
Total	**198**	**2496**	**0.95**	

The occurrence per phase of the stratified pottery is shown in Table 2. It shows that there is activity at the site from the 12th century onwards, with broadly the same amount of pottery deposited in the 12th and 13th century phases (CP1 – CP 2/0). However, in CP3 just 28 sherds of pottery were noted from a phase that lasted around 150 years (*c* mid 13th to 14th century), suggesting that the site went into decline during that period. This is further suggested by the fact that the mean sherd weights for the first two phases are both around 15g, which is what would be expected for a medieval site in the region, but in CP3 the value is just 9.7g, suggesting that much of the pottery from this phase is either residual, or the product of secondary deposition.

The CP4 assemblage is similar to that from CP3, comprising a small group of small sherds (mean weight = 6.4g), indicating similar taphonomy, and with all the pottery coming from a layer of subsoil (8). There is no pottery dating to the latest medieval ceramic phase (CP5). A small group of material dates to the immediate post-medieval period (mid 16th to 17th century), but it is not until the 17th to 18th centuries that pottery is deposited at the site in anything like notable quantities.

Table 3: Pottery occurrence per ceramic phase by weight major fabrics only, expressed as a percentage of the total phase assemblage, medieval phases

Phase	CP1	CP2	CP3	CP4
F208	0.4%	7.1%	0	0
F302	51.7%	18.4%	17.3%	18.5%
F312	19.6%	3.7%	26.5%	0
F330	0	7.1%	0	2.2%
F345	1.9%	6.7%	0	0
F360	24.5%	33.6%	2.2%	16.3%
F320	-	1.5%	0	0
F324	-	12.4%	10.3%	28.1%
F352	-	9.5%	3.7%	0
F329	-	-	38.2%	33.3%
F403	-	-	-	0
F405	-	-	-	1.5%
Total	**685g**	**733g**	**272g**	**135g**

It would appear there that the site was occupied from the early medieval period until the 14th century, after which the famines, plagues and economic collapse of that period seems to have brought an end to meaningful activity until the 17th century.

The data in Table 3 offers support for this. The earlier 13th century reduced sandy coarseware (F302) and sandy greyware (F312) fabrics dominate CP1 groups, but in CP2, the fabric F302 and, particularly, F312, go into sharp decline. The former occurs at broadly the same level in CP3, but F312 makes up 26.5% of the CP3 material, with its low occurrence in the previous phase suggesting that most, if not all of it is residual in this phase. It is absent from CP4, but F302 is present in broadly the same quantities as the previous phase, although it is likely to be residual in CP4, as most coarsewares in the early medieval tradition were by this time.

Banbury ware, fabric F360, is well-represented in the 12th and earlier 13th century groups, but goes into decline in the second half of the 13th century. It makes up over 16% of the CP4 material, but, again, is likely to be residual. Generally, about 40% of the pottery from CP4 is made up from residual early medieval wares, and it is likely that a similar figure is appropriate for the CP3 pottery.

The glazed wares, F345, F352, F324 and F329 occur in the quantities which would be expected.

The pottery

CP1, 12th century (45 sherds, 685g, EVE = 0.44)

The pottery from this phase comprises entirely unglazed sandy coarsewares. A single sherd of Oxford Ware (fabric F345) is present, but it is from an unglazed jar. Five rimsherds were noted, four of which are in fabric F302 and the other F312. One of the rimsherds was from a bowl, the rest jars (e.g. Figs 6.2 to 6.4). All of the other pottery was plain bodysherds, apart from a single sherd with a pre-firing pierced hole and internal sooting which is likely to be from a curfew, or fire-cover (Fig 6.1). It is an assemblage entirely typical of the domestic pottery of the period.

Illustrations

Fig 6.1: F360, context (54). Sherd from the upper part of a curfew. Pale grey fabric with darker surfaces. Thick patches of sooting on inner surface.

Fig 6.2: F302, context (69). Jar rim. Grey fabric with pale brown surfaces. Light and even sooting on the outer surface below the neck.

Fig 6.3: F302, context (69). Jar rim. Grey fabric with pale orange surfaces.

Fig 6.4: F312, context (69). Jar rim. Pale grey fabric with slightly darker surfaces.

CP2, early to mid 13th century (48 sherds, 733g, EVE = 0.22)

This assemblage comprises a mixture of glazed and unglazed wares, with the former making up nearly 30% of the group. They are typical of the period, with the Brill/Boarstall wares (F324) consisting mainly of slip-decorated jugs, with the other glazed wares (F320, F345 and F352) being plain bodysherds, other than an Oxford ware strap handle. A total of three rims were present, two from jars and one from a bowl. Again, the assemblage appears entirely domestic in nature.

CP3, mid 13th to late 14th century (28 sherds, 272g, EVE = 0.08)

This phase group is, as noted above, quite small and very fragmented. Glazed wares make up nearly 50% of this phase assemblage, again in the form of decorated Brill/Boarstall jugs, but also Potterspury ware, which is, as usually is the case, generally large plain vessels. Just two rimsherds were noted, both jars in fabric F302.

CP4, 1400 to 1450 (21 sherds, 135g, EVE = 0.13)

As noted above, all the pottery from this phase is from a single deposit, subsoil layer (8). It is all very fragmented, and made up mainly of residual medieval material, although at least some of the Potterspury and Brill wares are likely to be contemporary. There were only two rimsherds, a bowl and a jug, both Potterspury ware.

Post-medieval

Around two-thirds of the pottery from post-medieval contexts comprised residual medieval material, with the contemporary wares consisting of small fragments of common types, such as Red Earthenware and Manganese ware. All the medieval wares were bodysherds, with the exception of a fragment of a rather unusual Oxford ware hollow skillet handle (Fig 6.5).

Illustrations

Fig 6.5: F345, context (49). Fragment of hollow skillet handle. Grey fabric with buff surface. Splashes and pools of dull green glaze on upper surface of handle, light even sooting on the underside.

Overview

Few large scale excavations have been carried out in Brackley in recent years, and this assemblage, although fairly small, is a useful addition to the corpus of knowledge. One constant seems to be that there is a major slump in pottery deposition at some time

between 1250 and 1400 at all the sites, which almost certainly corresponds with a known collapse in Brackley's population between 1330 and 1377 (Atkins et al 1999, 23).

Large-scale excavations in the south of Northamptonshire, which have mainly been limited to the towns, have shown that it has a medieval ceramic tradition with some differences to that in the north of the county, and Northampton itself. In Brackley and the surrounding region, the coarsewares are mainly based on sandy fabrics, whereas the more northerly sites are dominated by shelly wares. The chronology of these sandy wares is, as yet, mainly unrefined. The fabrics themselves were first categorized during the unpublished analysis of the material from Castle Lane, Brackley (Blinkhorn, in archive), but the assemblage from that site shows some differences to those from other sites in the town. There were large quantities of Coventry and Nuneaton wares at the Castle Lane site, which is not a feature of material from elsewhere in the town, and strongly suggests that wool merchants from the Coventry area were either living in Castle Lane, or that there was regular trade between the medieval inhabitants of Castle Lane and merchants from Coventry (ibid.). The assemblage also shows evidence of Brackley's 14th century 'collapse', although perhaps not to the same degree as those from other sites in the town. A total of 1356 sherds of pottery were recovered from contexts of that date, but this is less than a quarter of the amount deposited in the second half of the 13th century. It also seems likely that a large amount of pottery from the 14th century deposits at Castle Lane is residual, as less than 5% of the assemblage comprises glazed wares, which were generally much more common in contemporary assemblages elsewhere.

The assemblage from this site is quite different in terms of chronological representation to that from the Cantor and Silver site in Brackley (Sudds 2002), although the general range of fabrics is similar. There, just 14 sherds of pottery (4% of an assemblage of 240 sherds, by weight) could be ascribed to the 12th or 13th centuries, whereas 37% dated to the mid 12th to 13th centuries, and a small assemblage (ten sherds) dated to CP5 (ibid 74), suggesting that the site was growing when this one was in decline. The growth appears short-lived, however, and suggests that the travails of the 14th century also took their toll at that site as well as this one. Like this site, the Cantor and Silver site did not really see growth again until the late 17th to 18th centuries.

An assemblage of 497 sherds of pottery was recovered during excavations of a medieval bake- or brewhouse at The Elms, Brackley in 1999 (Blinkhorn 1999). The site, like this one, again begins in the 12th century, and pottery deposition is fairly consistent until the later 13th or 14th centuries, at which point pottery deposition ceases (ibid. 18). Just six sherds of pottery from that site date to outside this period, only one of which was post-medieval and occurred in the topsoil, with the other five, all Oolitic ware (F207) possibly dating to the 11th century. The range of fabrics and forms is generally similar to that from this site.

5.2 **Ceramic roof tile** by Pat Chapman

This is a small assemblage of roof tile comprising sixteen fragments, weighing 680g, of which three are ridge tiles with crests. There are no features on the flat tile to indicate whether they had pegholes or nibs.

Five sherds from context (21), pit (22), and context (23), pit (25), are made from a coarse white fabric and broad black reduced core, with some calcareous inclusions up to 5mm and black inclusions *c* 0.5mm. The surface is a very pale pink, similar to Potterspury type ware. Potterspury Ware can be found in Brackley from the late 13th century and throughout the 14th century (Mellor 1994, 140-143, Northamptonshire OX68). With these sherds was a single crested ridge tile sherd made from a coarse, slightly reddish brown

with dense grit <3mm, possibly Banbury ware which was dominant as pottery in Brackley during the early to late 13th century (Mellor 1994, 80-84, OX234).

The remaining ten sherds were made in a coarse or fine fabric with occasional angular grit, flint, calcareous, ironstone or grog inclusions between 2-8mm, reddish to orange brown in colour and some with a grey reduced core.

The five Potterspury-type tiles are glazed, four are pale green the other is darker, and are 10-12mm thick. Two of the three crests are basically triangular and made by the clay being pulled up, not added on. The crest of the Banbury-type tile is complete, measuring 60mm long and 25mm wide at the base, narrowing to a ridge 20mm high and 25mm long. The crest has been hand smoothed and the side of the tile below the crest has a deep thumb groove. The crest in the Potterspury-type fabric, missing one end, was knife cut and narrows in from *c* 50mm long and 25mm wide at the base to almost a point *c* 10 by 10mm at the top. The third crest has been sliced off, leaving just the beginning of the rise at the base.

The remaining tile sherds measure between 11mm and 16mm thick. The top surfaces are smooth, and a few fragments from context (49), pit (50), have sanded under surfaces from the mould or drying area. One fragment from pit (50) has a slight curve, indicating it might have come from a possible ridge tile. The other sherd, from context (54), pit (55), is over-fired and green-glazed.

These tile fragments give a small indication that some of Brackley was roofed in green glazed ceramic roof tile with decorative crests during the 13th and 14th centuries, together with plain red tiles, coming from fairly local kilns.

Table 4: Quantification of ceramic roof tile

Context no.	Feature no.	No. sherds	Weight (g)	Description
21	Pit (22)	4	269	2 ridge tiles; 1 ridge and 2 flat green-glazed
23	Pit (25)	2	128	1 ridge tile, both sherds green-glazed
37	Subsoil	1	17	
38	Pit (39)	1	31	
49	Pit (50)	7	181	
54	Pit (55)	1	54	Over-fired, green glaze
Total		**16**	**680**	

5.3 **Small finds** by Tora Hylton

Three items were recovered from medieval and post-medieval deposits. A copper alloy folding strap clasp came from the upper fill (19) of a medieval pit (22). Folding strap clasps generally date to the late 13th/early 14th to early 15th century. For a similar example see Egan and Pritchard 1991 (fig 77, 556). They would have been used in conjunction with a shield-shaped strap-end and bar-mount which would have been secured to the other end of the strap; one would have passed through the other and then been held in place. The second item was a small whetstone, fashioned from micaceous schist, recovered from the layer of subsoil (3), overlying a buried medieval soil horizon. Whetstones manufactured from micaceous schist were imported in huge numbers from Scandinavia during the medieval period. The third item was an iron nail from the fill (49) of a large, rectangular, timber-lined pit (50).

Catalogue

SF1 Folding strap clasp, copper alloy. Complete, with folded sheet plate, frame and folding end. Rectangular frame with concave sides, folding end slightly tapered and rolled around outer edge of frame, with solid bar-mount attached by means of a single rivet. The folded sheet plate is rectangular and secured by one rivet. Frame: 15 x 12mm Plate: 22 x 10mm Folding end: 11 x 9mm Context (19), Pit (22)

SF 2 Whetstone, micaceous schist (Norwegian ragstone). Incomplete, one terminal missing. Slightly tapered rectangular bar with rectangular cross-section, three faces display signs of wear. Length: 98mm Width: 20mm Th: 13mm Context (3), subsoil

SF 3 Nail, iron. Complete with flat sub-circular head and square-sectioned shank tapering to a fine point. Length: *c* 92mm Context (49), Pit (50)

5.4 **Time ledger** by Simon Carlyle

Although not strictly from the excavation, a hand-written ledger, covering the period 1st March to 16th July 1852, was found by demolition workers in the loft of one of the 19th century buildings being pulled down to make way for the new development. The entries in the ledger list the time taken, in hours, to carry out various tasks in a blacksmith's workshop. The ledger has been included in the site archive.

The 1850 edition of *Slater's Directory for Northamptonshire* (NRO Library 2531) lists four blacksmiths in Brackley: William Alley, High Street; John Blackwell, Pebble Lane; Thomas Coles, High Street; and Richard Durrant, High Street. William Alley and Thomas Coles are listed again in *Kelly's Directory for Northamptonshire* for 1854 (NRO Library 810), along with Thomas Blackwell. The latter may be a relation, perhaps a son of John Blackwell, or the forename may have been recorded incorrectly when the directory was compiled.

A typical ledger entry is as follows:

	Thursday Apl 16	
	Jno. Ebbsworth	
	Rep. cornish pole ends	*3*
11	*do. hinge of grate*	*1*
	Copper straner (sic)	*7*
	Jas. Hall	
	Drag rake	*4*
11	*Frame for rack*	*6 1/2*
	Key to Lock	*1/2*
	Jas. Ebbsworth	
	Rep. and painting two water pots	*4 1/2*
11	*do. Water pots*	*1/2*
	do. do.	*6*

The names in the ledger, probably Jonathon and James Ebbsworth and James Hall, are presumably those of the workshop employees. They were in the workshop six days a week, from Monday to Saturday, and worked an eleven hour day. The name of the master blacksmith was not recorded in the ledger, only those of his employees, so it is not known for whom they worked. One Mary Ebbsworth, a dyer, is listed in *Slater's Directory* (*ibid*); she may have been related to Jonathon and James.

5.5 **Animal bone** by Karen Deighton

A total of 2.9kg of animal bone was recovered from the excavation. The bones were washed, and then identified and analysed using the author's reference collection. Analysis followed guidelines outlined in Bull and Payne (1982), Grant (1982), Grigson (1982), Halstead (1985), Payne (1973), Schmid (1972) and Silver (1969). Fragments of animal bone from wet sieving (3.4mm and 1mm residues) were also included; this material came from samples taken from three medieval pits.

Fragmentation was average and largely consisted of old breaks; bone preservation and surface condition were reasonable. Two examples of canid gnawing and four instances of chopping were noted. No evidence of burning was observed. Due to the small size of the assemblage, analysis of the toothwear data from the cattle, pig and sheep/goat was unable to detect any kill-off patterns. The species represented in the assemblage and the features from which they derive are presented in Table 5 below.

Table5: Identifiable animal bones by context

Feature no.[1]	Cattle *(Bos)*	Pig *(Sus)*	Sheep/goat Ovicaprid	Horse *(Equus)*	Cat (*Felis)*	Ungulate[2] (large)	Ungulate[2] (small)
Layer[3] (8)	1		1		1		
Pit 22 (21)						1	
Pit 25 (23)	1						
Pit 33 (32)						1	
Pit 39 (37)	3	1	2				
Pit 39 (38)			4				
Pit 42 (40)	1						1
Pit 50 (49)	3		7	1			
Pit 57 (56)	1						
Pit 65 (63)	2						
Pit 65 (64)		1					
Pit 70 (69)	2		3	1		1	
Pit 73 (71)			2				
Total	**14**	**2**	**19**	**2**	**1**	**3**	**1**

[1] Fill number in brackets
[2] Ungulate, hoofed animal
[3] Buried medieval topsoil

All of the animal bone came from medieval contexts, with the exception of the cattle bone from Pit (57), which dated to the 17th century. The small size of the assemblage precluded any meaningful interpretation of the animal economy of the site through the identification of animal husbandry practices in the medieval period. For the same reason, intra-site comparisons could not be made. However, it was possible to identify the domesticated species represented on the site. Cattle and sheep/goat were the most common species represented in the assemblage. In the medieval period cattle were utilised for meat, milk, hides and traction, sheep were exploited for wool, meat and very occasionally for milk. Pigs were exploited solely for meat. The domestic cat may have been a pet or a working animal, kept to keep vermin under control, or it could have been feral. Horses were kept primarily for transport and traction. With the exception of the cat, the animal bone probably entered the pits as food waste.

5.6 **Charred plant remains** by Karen Deighton

Four soil samples (40 litres) were taken from three medieval pits during the course of the excavation. Sub-samples (20 litres) were taken from each soil sample and processed using a siraf tank fitted with a 500-micron mesh and flot sieve. The resulting flots were dried and

then analysed using a microscope (10x magnification). Identifications were made with the aid of the author's reference collection, a seed atlas (Schoch *et al* 1988) and the Seed id workshop @ ohio.edu.

Seed preservation was exclusively by charring, and fragmentation and surface abrasion were minimal. Charcoal fragments were too small to permit further identification. A summary of the plant remains present is presented in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Summary of plant remains by context

Context	Feature	Charcoal	Cereal	Wild/weed	Pulse
23	Pit 25	8	69		3
24	Pit 25	8	70		2
32	Pit 33	8	51	4	1
49	Pit 50	10	5		1

Table 7 shows the plant species represented in the assemblage. Cereal grains included hulled barley *(Hordeum* vulgare) and bread wheat (*Triticum aestivum*), which are typically found on medieval sites. Two rye grains (cf *Secale cereale*) were recovered from Pit 25. The only pulse that could be identified to species was broad bean *(Vicia faba*), which came from the upper fill of Pit (25).

Table 7: Plant species by context

Context		**23**	**24**	**32**	**49**
Feature		**Pit 25**		**Pit 33**	**Pit 50**
Bread wheat	*T.aestivum*	2	7	2	
Naked barley	*H.vulgare* var nudum			1	
Hulled barley	*H.Vulgare*	10	5	5	
Wheat/barley	Triticum/Hordeum	29	33	36	2
Rye	*Secale cereale*	1	1		
Cereal indet.	Cerealia	28	20	7	3
Broad bean	*Vicia faba*	2			
Pulse indet.	Leguminosae		3	1	
Weed indet.			3	3	1
Total		**72**	**72**	**55**	**6**

The total assemblage is small and little can be deduced about the diet of the inhabitants of medieval Brackley or about crop-processing and food storage on the site. There was no environmental evidence for any industrial processes on the site (e.g. hammer-scale from metalworking). The absence of chaff and the low proportion of weed seeds suggest that the cereal had already been processed prior to arrival on site or that it was in a late stage of processing, if processing was being carried out in the vicinity. The small quantity of plant remains from Pit (50) probably represents background material (i.e. the small amount of charred plant material often associated with human occupation but not related to any specific activity). The larger assemblages from Pits (25) and (33) were probably introduced as refuse, given the cessy nature of the fill of the two pits.

6 DISCUSSION

The survival of archaeological remains relating to the establishment of Brackley 'New Town' in the mid 12th century, followed by later medieval and post-medieval activity, was demonstrated across the development site, although significant areas, including the street frontage, were heavily truncated by 19th- and 20th-century development.

Probably the earliest feature was a boundary ditch, possibly accompanied by an earthen bank, which followed the contour of the natural slope on a north-east to south-west alignment. The alignment does not relate to later land divisions associated with the 'New Town', founded in the mid 12th century, which suggest that it is slightly earlier. The ditch contained a single sherd of 12th century pottery, so it is likely that the ditch and bank date to the first half of that century.

The majority of the surviving medieval remains relate to 'backyard' activity, probably to the rear of tenements that once fronted on to Market Place. The pits had been used for the disposal of domestic rubbish and probably cess, although some of the pits may have had a prior use, or they may have been dug to extract clay and sand. The identification of cess in the fills was based on the characteristic olive-green colour of many of the deposits, which is usually indicative of the high phosphate levels associated with concentrations of human and animal faecal material. However, environmental analysis found few dietary indicators, such as seeds, pips or bran, which are commonly found in cess deposits. The relative absence of such indicators may be due to poor preservation factors, or it may be that the olive-green colour was produced by chemical or biochemical changes in the soil, totally unassociated with concentrations of cess. It is likely though that some cess material entered the pits along with other domestic waste. The earlier pits, which broadly date to the 12th to 13th centuries, were concentrated on the lower slope to the south and east; the later pits, which date to the late 13th to 14th centuries, occurred closer to the street frontage. The reasons for this distribution are unclear.

In the later medieval period there appears to have been a marked decline in activity on the site, reflecting the general demise of Brackley at this time. The poll tax returns of 1377 show a dramatic reduction in the size of the town's population, when compared with the population size in the earlier decades of the century. The catastrophic collapse in the town's population was brought about not only by the ravages of the Black Death but also by the collapse of the wool trade, on which the town had once prospered. The late medieval decline in Brackley's fortunes has been evident in the findings from other excavations in the area (Atkins *et al* 1999; Murray 2002).

It was not until the 16th century that the apparent hiatus in activity on the site came to an end, with the cutting of a large, clay-lined pit. The purpose of the pit is unknown, but it was presumably clay-lined in order to hold water, possibly for an industrial process. Later in the 16th century the ground level across the southern part of the site appears to have been raised by up to half a metre, effectively re-aligning the natural slope from the south-east to the east. The made-ground preserved the medieval land surface in the south-east corner of the site. Activity on the site remained marginal throughout the 17th century, the only features dating to this period being a timber-lined tank and two pits, the latter being used for the disposal of domestic rubbish.

The two stone boundary walls date to the mid 18th century and are probably those shown on the 1760 map of Brackley (NRO Map 2985). The stone conduit was probably built around the same time. The walls may have been built along earlier burgage plot

boundaries, associated with the establishment of the 'New Town' in the mid 12th century. No evidence was found for earlier boundary walls or ditches beneath the later walls, although it is possible that any earlier boundaries may have been delineated by hedges or fences, which have left no discernible trace.

From at least the mid 18th century, until the mid 20th century, the site was largely occupied by gardens and orchards. This was evident with the presence of thick, dark garden soil across much of the eastern part of the site. The majority of the buildings on the site, including the street frontage, were built in the mid to late 19th century, and one of these may have been used as a blacksmith's workshop at this time.

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APPENDIX: TABLE OF CONTEXTS AND FEATURES

Abbreviations

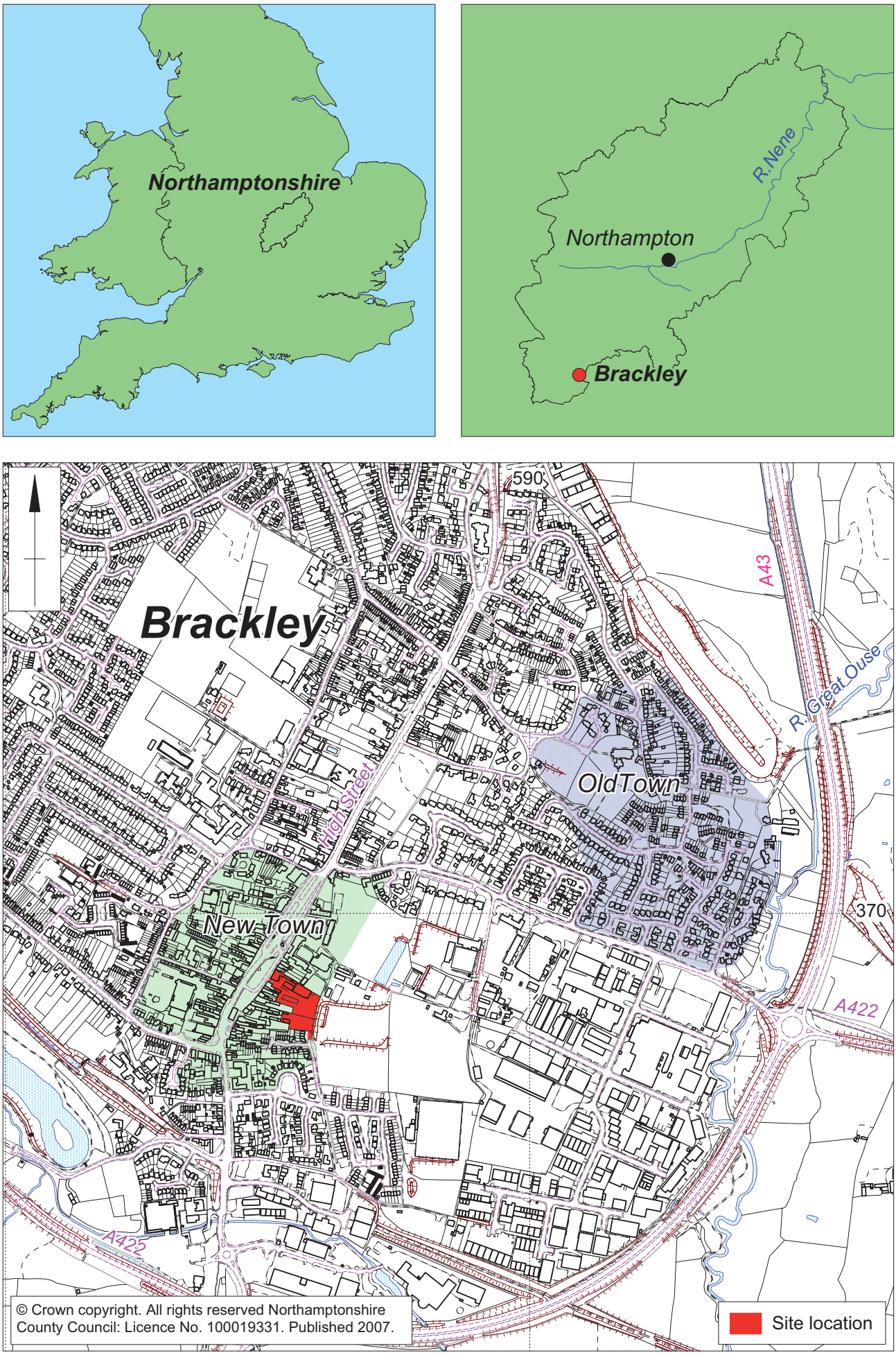
Cardinal points (e.g. N-S, north to south)
Context [**] identifies walls or cuts
Dimensions given as length x width x depth
All measurements in metres (m) or millimetres (mm)

Artefact types

P pottery; **T** tile; **G** glass; **CP** lay pipe; **B** bone; **S** shell

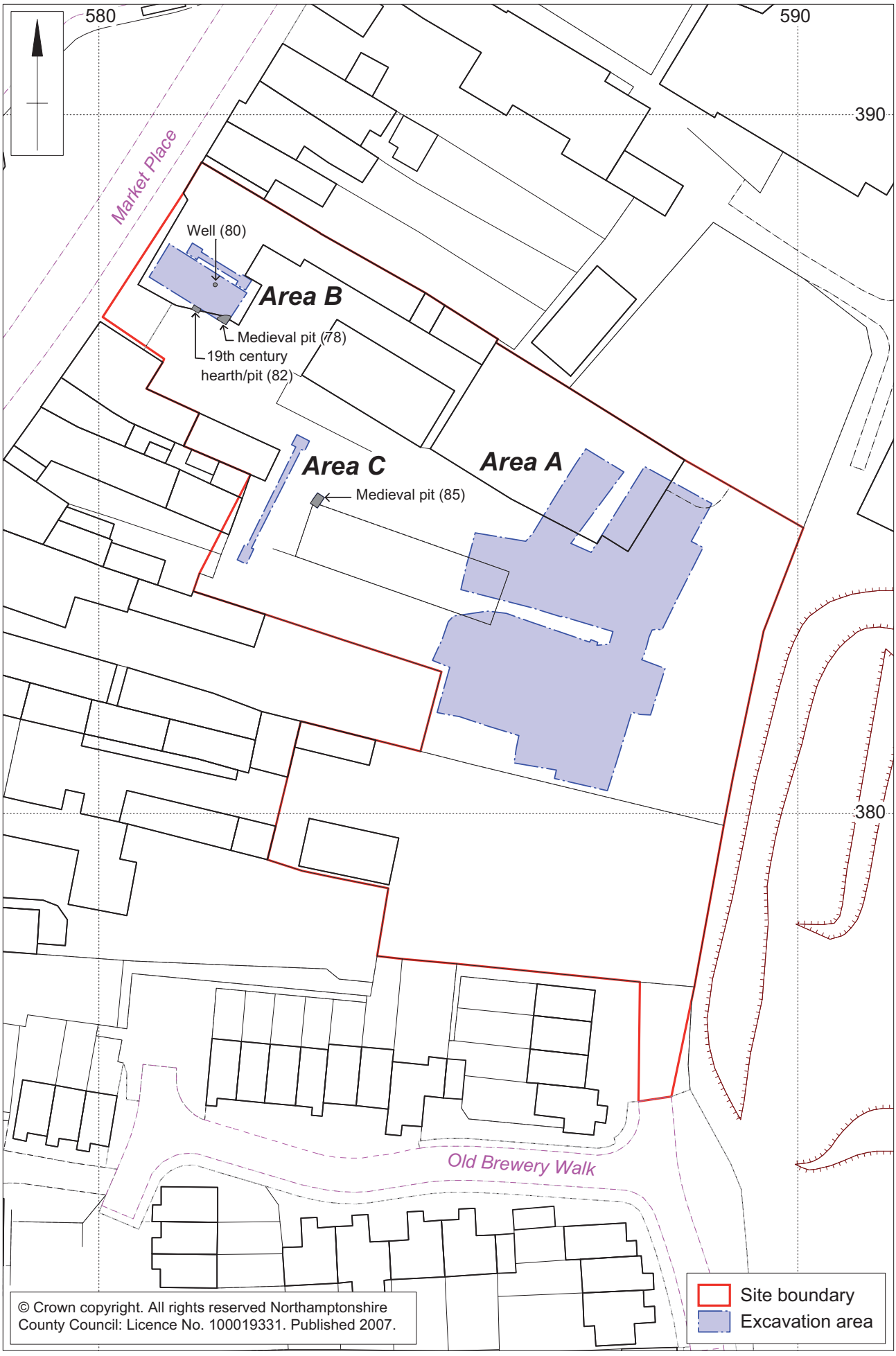
Context no.	Feature type	Comments	Finds	Date of feature
1	Rubble hard-standing	Layer of compacted rubble overlying much of site.		20th C
2	Topsoil	Dark, organic garden soil		Modern
3	Subsoil	Subsoil	**P**	Modern
[4]	Boundary wall	Mortared stone boundary wall		18th C
5 [6]	Foundation trench	Foundation trench for wall [4]	**P**	18th C
7	Layer	Mortar rich layer	**P**	Post-medieval
8	Topsoil	Medieval topsoil horizon	**P B S**	Medieval
9	Subsoil	Medieval subsoil horizon		Medieval
10	Layer	Mortar rich layer		Modern
11	Layer	Mortar rich layer		Post-medieval
12	Layer	Mortar rich layer	**P**	Post-medieval
13 28 [14]	Ditch	Ditch		Early 12th C
15	Bank?			Early 12th C
16 17 29 30 [18]	Pit	Large, clay-lined pit	**P G**	16th C
19 20 21 [22]	Pit		**P** **P T B**	Late 13th/14th C
23 24 [25]	Pit		**P T B**	Late 13th/14th C
26 [27]	Pit	Largely lay beyond limits of excavation, not excavated		Late 13th/14th C
31	Natural substrate			-
32 [33]	Pit		**P**	Late 13th/14th C
[34]	Stone conduit			18th C
35 [36]	Trench for conduit		**CP**	18th C

Context no.	Feature type	Comments	Finds	Date of feature
37	Subsoil		**P T G B S**	Post-medieval
38 [39]	Pit		**T B**	12th/13th C
40 41 [42]	Pit		**B**	12th/13th C
[43]	Boundary wall			18th C
44 [45]	Foundation trench			18th C
46	Topsoil	Medieval topsoil horizon		Medieval
47	Subsoil	Medieval subsoil horizon	**P**	Medieval
49 [50]	Pit	Large rectangular, timber-lined pit	**P T B S**	Late 17th C
51 52 [53]	Pit		**P CP**	Late 17th C
54 [55]	Pit		**T**	12th/13th C
56 [57]	Pit		**P CP B**	17th C
58 [59]	Pit		**P**	Mid 16th C
60	Topsoil			Modern
61	Subsoil			Modern
62	Natural substrate			-
63 64 [65]	Pit		**B** **B**	12th/13th C
66 [67]	Pit		**P**	12th/13th C
68 69 [70]	Pit		**P B**	12th/13th C
71 72 [73]	Pit/ditch terminal		**P B**	12th C
74	Concrete slab			20th C
75	Layer			20th C
76	Layer			Modern
77 [78]	Pit		**P**	Late 13th/14th C
79 [80]	Well			19th C
81 [82]	Ash pit			19th C
83	Demolition layer			19th/20th C
84 [85]	Pit		**P**	Late 13th/14th C
[86]	Limestone slabs			Medieval



Scale 1:1000

Site location Fig 1



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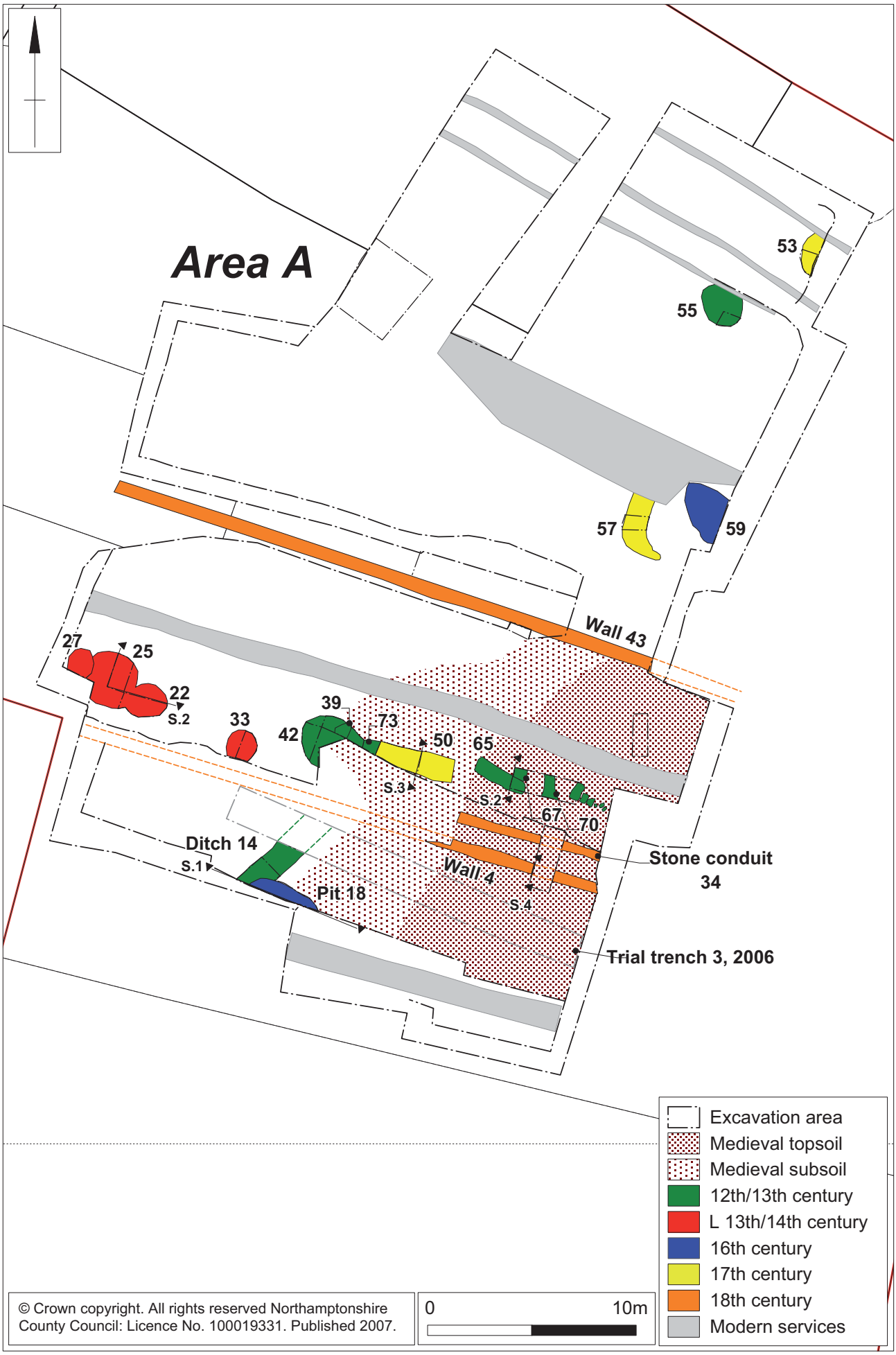
Location of excavation areas Fig 2



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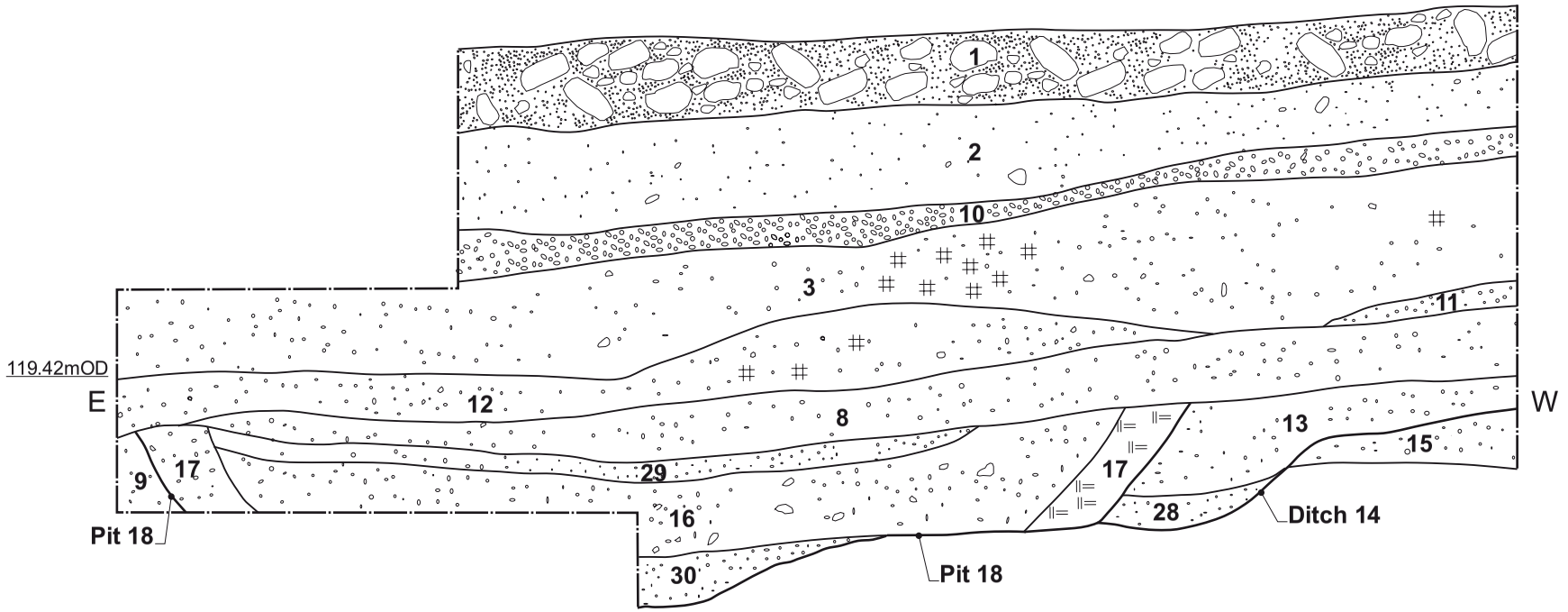
Scale 1:200

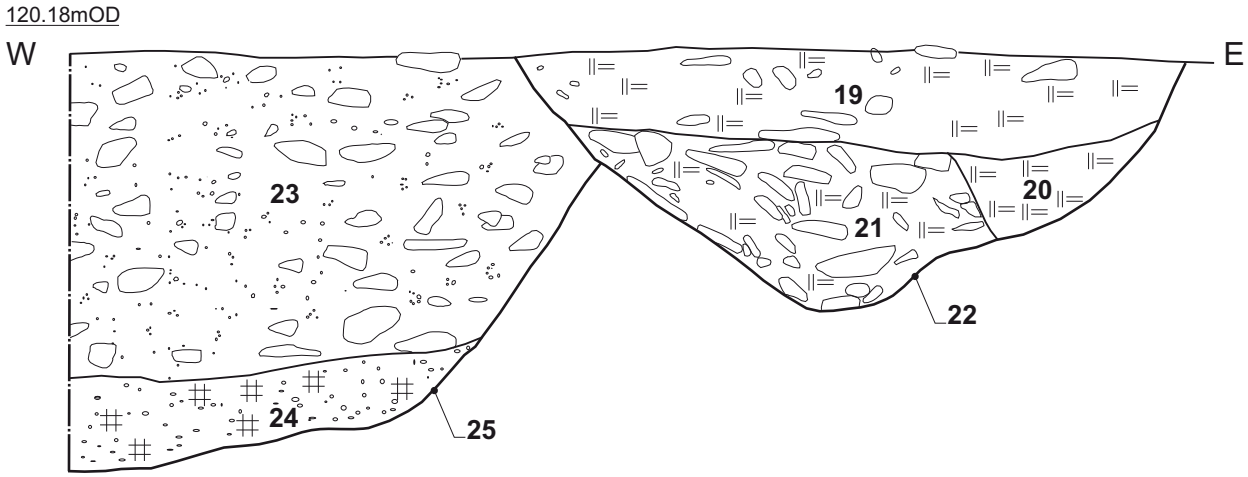
Plan of Area A Fig 3

Section 1 - Area A



Section 1 Fig 4

Section 2 - Area A



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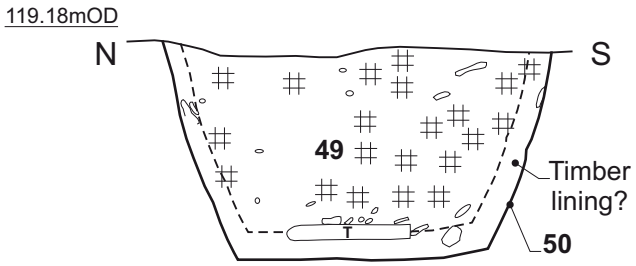

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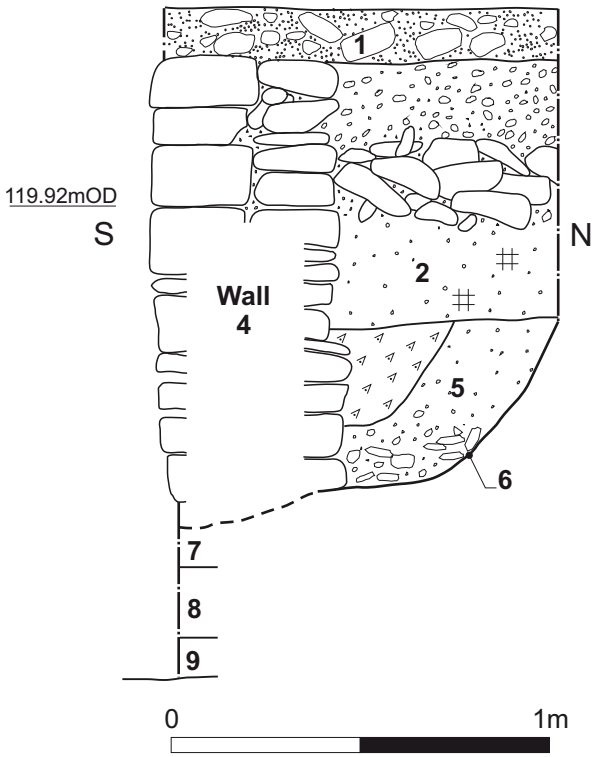
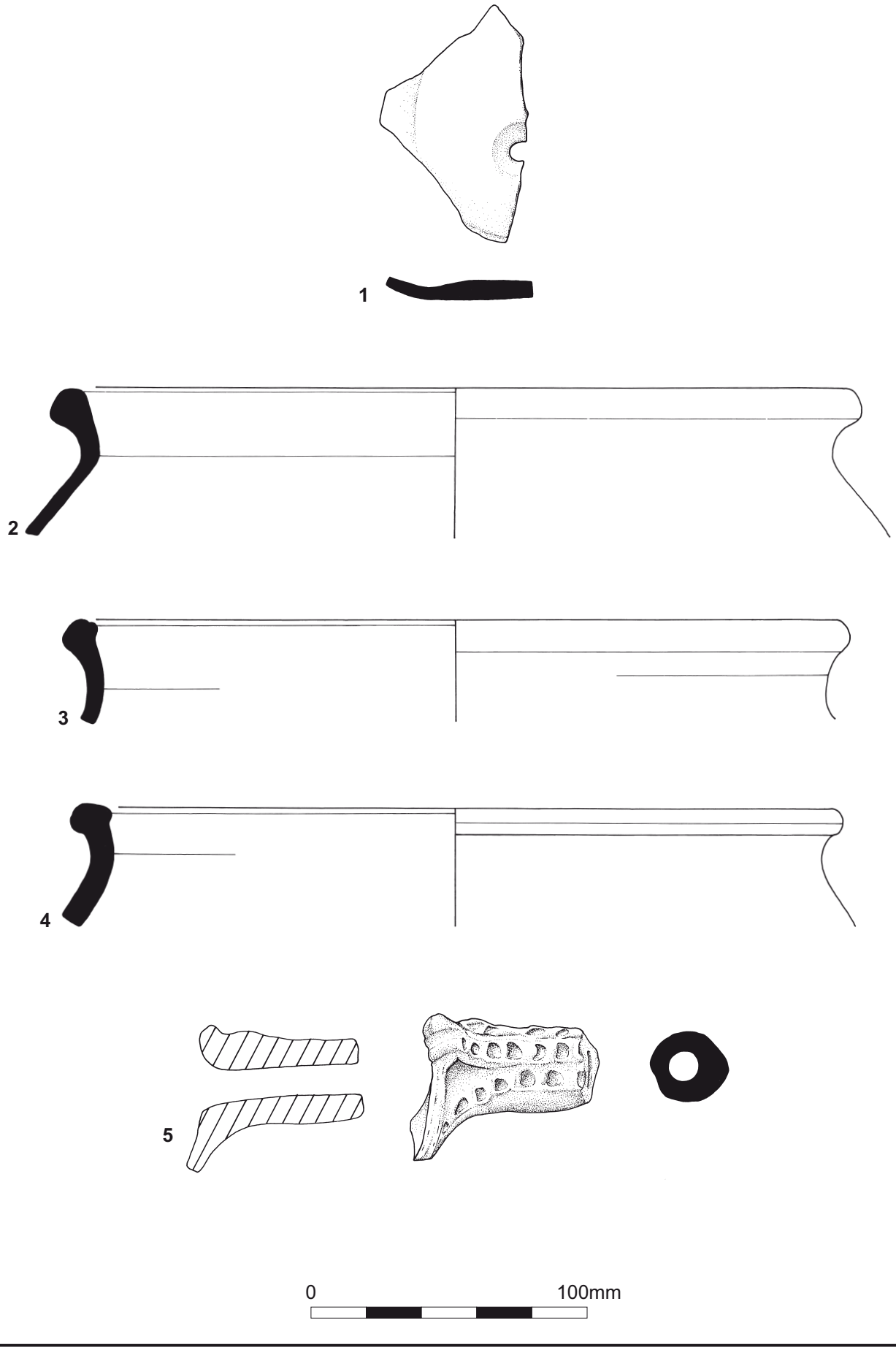


Mortar
Timber
Clay
Charcoal

Sections 2-4 Fig 5



Pottery Fig 6

Plate 1: 12th century ditch (14) and 16th century pit (18), looking south.

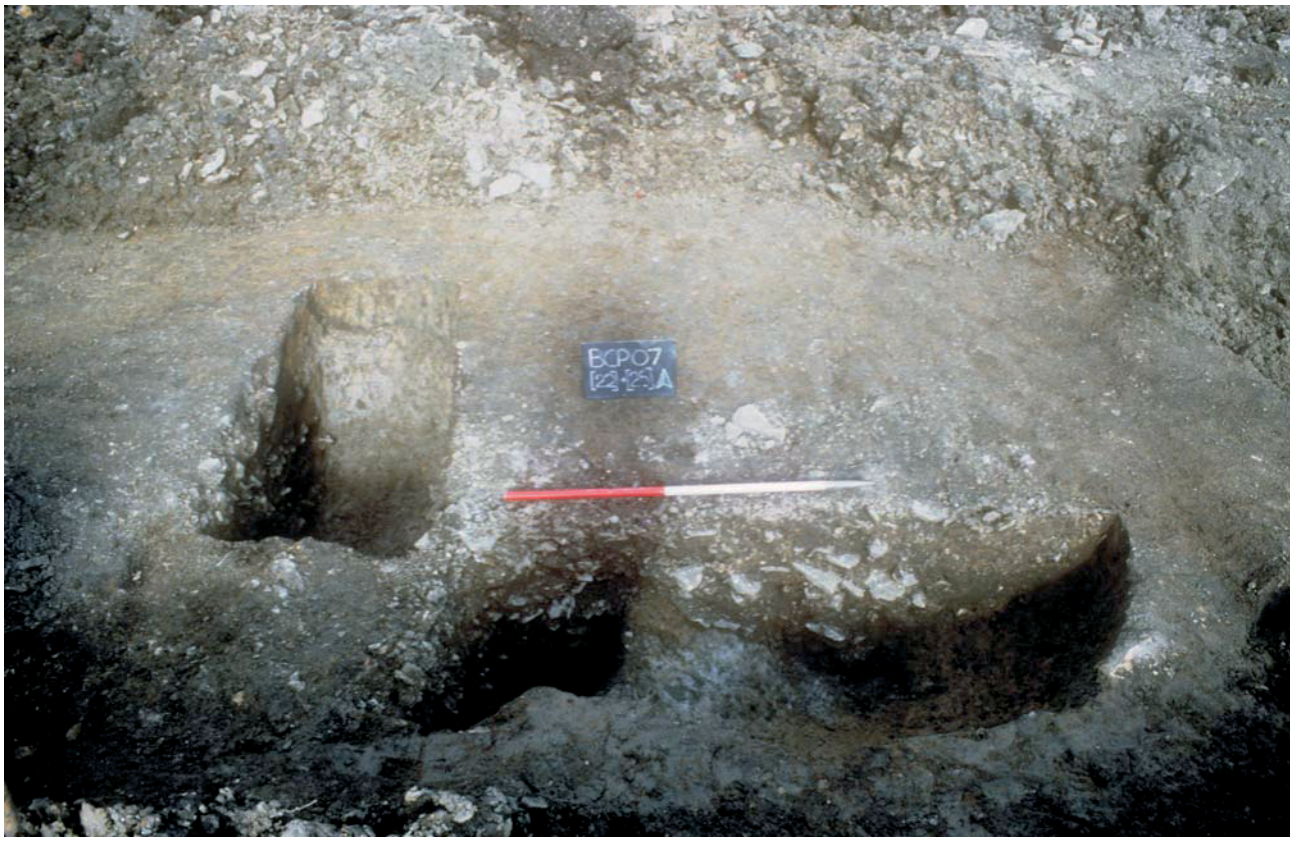


Plate 2: Late 13th/14th century pits (22), (25) and (27), looking north.

Plate 3: Late 17th century pit (50), looking east.

Plate 4: 17th century skillet handle from pit (50).

Plate 5: Mid 18th century wall, (4), looking north.

Plate 6: Mid 18th century stone lined conduit (34), looking east.