

EXCAVATIONS AT READING ABBEY 1979 and 1981

A. G. VINCE; P. J. FASHAM and J. W. HAWKES

INTRODUCTION

This report summarises the results of two separate excavations carried out within the precincts of Reading Abbey (fig. 1) — excavations in 1979 by A. G. Vince for the Berkshire Archæological Trust (Sites 1-9), and in 1981 by P. J. Fasham and J. W. Hawkes for the Trust for Wessex Archæology, then the Wessex Archæological Committee, (Sites A-C). Earlier excavations in the cloister area by Dr C. F. Slade are also shown (fig. 1, I-XVI). The results of these previous excavations and an outline history of the Abbey and its layout are readily available elsewhere (Slade, 1971-2; Slade, 1975-6; Kemp, 1968) and are not repeated here.

The 1979 excavations were funded by the Department of the Environment, and the 1981 excavations were funded by the developers M.E.P.C. Ltd, the Royal County of Berkshire and the Department of the Environment. The drawings are largely the work of Wendy Carruthers (figs. 1-5) and Jane Timby (figs. 6-11, 13).

EXCAVATIONS AT READING ABBAY, 1979 A. G. Vince

SUMMARY

Excavations to determine the archæological potential of a development site covering part of Reading Abbey confirmed the results of Dr Slade's excavations between 1964 and 1967, that the Cloister area and West Range were heavily disturbed by 19th and 20th century activity. A trench running south from the Refectory wall (Fig. 1 Site 6) showed that the archæology of the northern part of this area was destroyed by 19th century terracing and cellars. In the southern part of the area a range of medieval buildings was found with walls preserved in places to a height of 1.0m. In the extreme south the northern bank of a possible stream or culvert leading from the Holy Brook into the Reredorter was found. Excavations on the site of the Abbey

Sawmills (Fig. 1, sites 7, 8, 9) showed that most of the present site was reclaimed in the mid-19th century, but that medieval and possibly earlier waterfronts existed in the western part of the site. These waterfronts were examined in detail by the 1981 excavations and are not included in this report.

THE CLOISTER AREA

Four areas north of the south Refectory wall were examined.

Site 1 (Fig. 2 and 3)

Site 1 was a trench 5.0m wide and 14.0m long running east-west across the Cloister Garth. The object of the excavation was to determine whether pre-Abbey stratigraphy existed in the area and, if so, whether there were any traces of pre-Abbey occupation. It was established that over much of the area the medieval and earlier soil had been removed, but that the surface of the natural

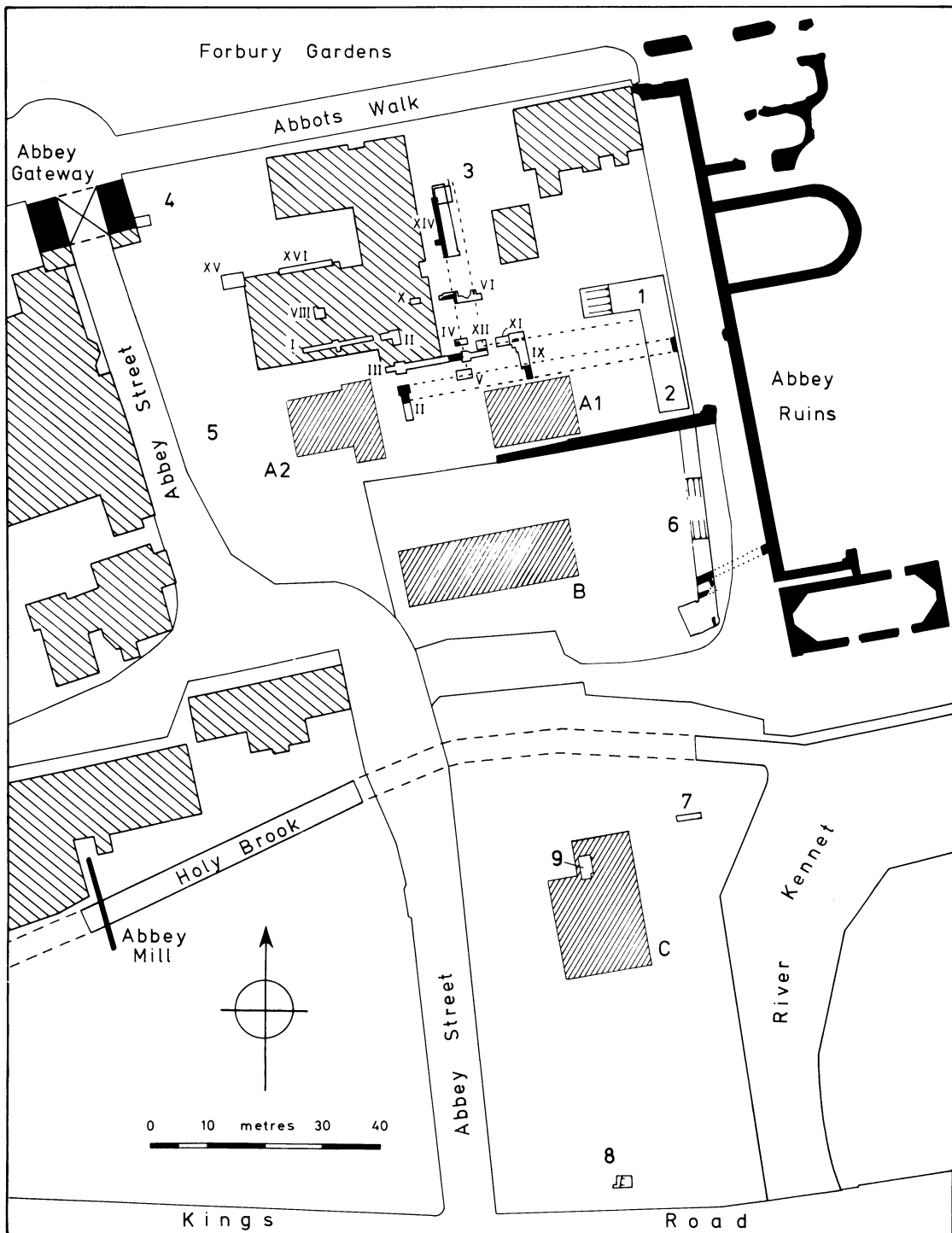


Fig. 1. Location plan of excavations.

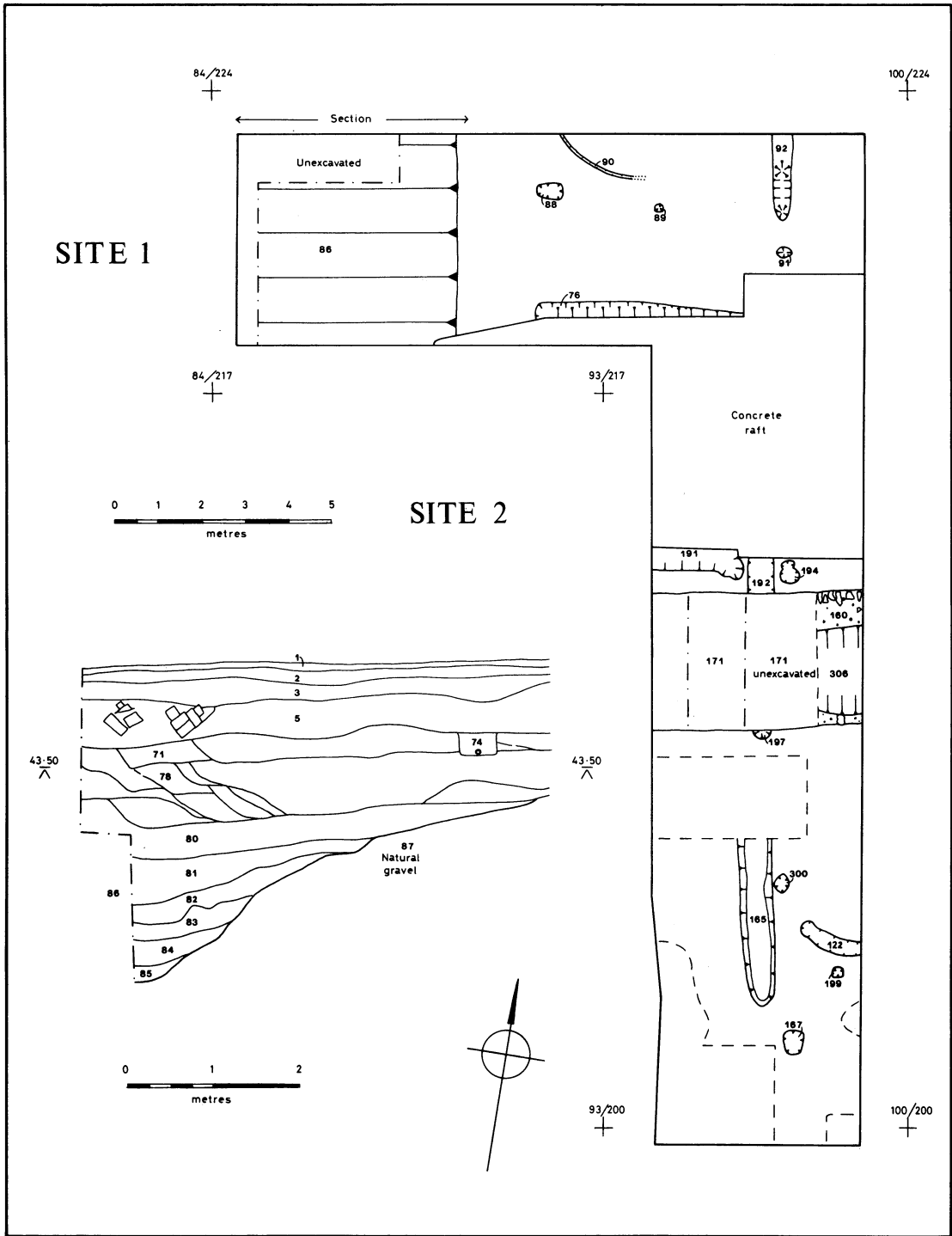


Fig. 2. Plan of medieval and post-medieval features in Sites 1 and 2. Section of Civil War ditch 86.

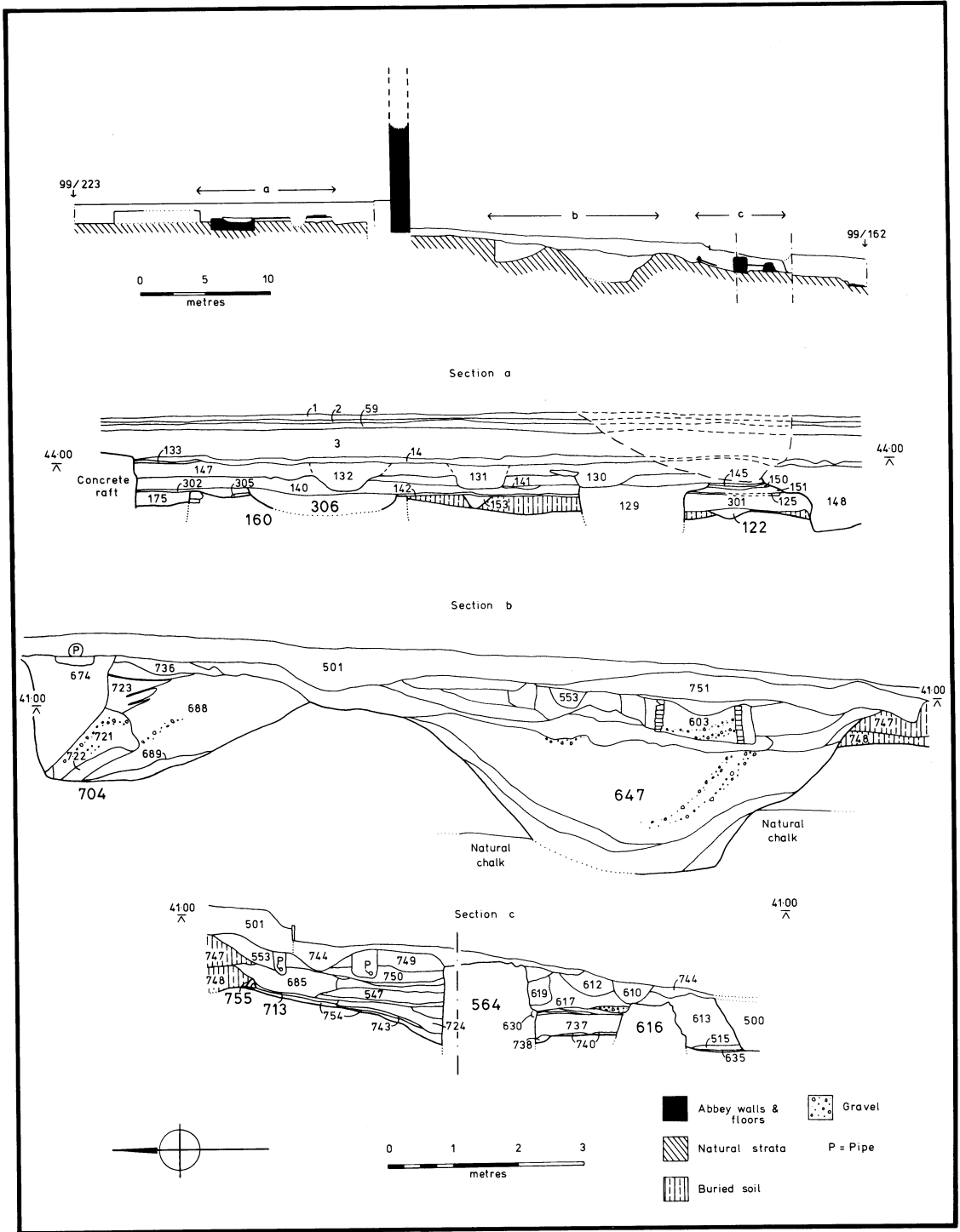


Fig. 3. North-South section along eastern side of Sites 1, 2 and 6.

gravel had not been disturbed. Seven features were found cutting through the gravel. One, 86, was the eastern edge of the Civil War earthwork known to cross the Cloister and end at the north wall of the Refectory. Pottery finds show that the upper filling layers 81 and 80 were contemporary with a general levelling-up of the site in the mid-19th century (71 and 78). The lower filling is interpreted as initial silting 85 and 84 with deliberate slighting of the bank above that (82, 83).

Gully 76 contained fragments of brick and pegtile, and is likely, therefore, to be post-dissolution, perhaps associated with post-medieval cultivation on the site (as shown on Tomkins' map of 1802).

88 and 89 were shallow features containing a sterile light brown sandy soil, and 90 was little more than a stain, probably a root-hole.

91 and 92, however, were part of a line of post-holes and gullies earlier than the north wall of the Refectory — 192, 197 and 165 on site B.

Above the natural gravel was a 1.0m thick spread of rubble and soil, 71 and 78, through which was cut various garden features, including a water pipe, 74. Two paths made of medieval wall rubble were found running north-south and were contemporary with the dump. Above the dump was a 1.0m thick accumulation rubble (5), hoggin (2 and 3) and tarmac (1), all of which sealed various modern features, such as a concrete raft which overlay the inner Cloister wall.

Site 2 (Figs. 2 and 3)

Site 2 was a trench 5m wide and 18m long running north-south across the south Cloister walk and the Refectory. Above the gently sloping surface of natural gravel was a brown sandy soil which was almost completely sterile (Fig. 3, Section a153). One sherd of Saxon pot was found on the surface of the natural gravel. Various scoops filled with fine yellow-to-brown sand

were excavated as features, but were eventually accepted as natural deposits.

The earliest feature found was a curving gully, 122, 0.2m deep and 0.5m wide. This was filled with charcoal-flecked soil containing a large amount of animal bone. No dating evidence was found, except that it was cut through the buried soil.

Eight other features probably pre-dated the Refectory and Cloister. 192, 197 and 165 were part of a line of features found also on site A. Only 165 produced any finds or evidence for a complex fill, the remainder being filled with brown gravelly soil. The initial fill of 165 was a thin spread of dark gravelly soil covered by clean gravel. In the centre of the gully a slot was filled with a dark gravelly soil, which also covered the clean gravel, on either side. This suggests that the gully originally held posts, although no individual post-holes were seen. The finds from the clean gravel were two sherds of Roman pottery and, from the central slot, scraps of Roman and possibly Saxon or medieval pottery, animal teeth and burnt shelly limestone, (identified by F G Dimes, I.G.S., as Bath Stone). 194, 300 and 167 were shallow post-holes containing flecks of light brown mortar.

It is likely that the line 92, 91, 192, 197 and 165 represent timber buildings erected on the site during the construction of the Abbey (although the only dating evidence is the two fragments of shelly limestone). The post-holes however may be either from these buildings or from scaffold posts associated with the construction or repair of the Refectory and Cloister.

The north wall of the refectory was represented by a flint and mortar raft (160) 3.0m wide and 1.5m deep. The mortar or plaster bedding for the north face of the wall survived, but the line of the inner face did not. The inner footings were covered by a 0.05m thick layer of mortar fragments, probably the construction spread from the wall, and possibly also the first floor, (Fig. 3, Section a, 142 and 125). Above this

was a spread of soil, and above this a further mortar spread (145 and 150). Much of the area had been destroyed by the 19th and 20th century pits, and all but a small part of the Refectory wall was similarly robbed (171 and 306).

Site 3

Site 3 was a trench 3m wide by 5m long immediately north-west of Dr Slade's trench XIV. The trench was dug to obtain a level for the tile floor of the west cloister walk, and to confirm that no archaeological levels existed below the tile floor. The core of the west wall of the cloister was found, but the face and edge of the footings had been completely robbed out. A small area of floor tiles was found, square inlaid tiles set diagonally with a band of rectangular border tiles set parallel with the wall (possibly marking the centre of the pavement). These sat on a thin bed of mortar immediately on top of natural gravel. All the soil above this was highly disturbed and contained pegtiles, a few scraps of medieval window glass and loose floor tiles; but little or no building stone.

Site 4 (Fig. 5)

Site 4 was a trench 2m wide running east from the south-east corner of the Abbey Gateway. Only the extreme western end of it contained medieval stratigraphy, the remainder of the site being cellared.

Above a thick brown sand, 215, containing a few flint flakes and some animal bone (presumably other bone would not have survived) was a spread of green sand (214) covered by a succession of cobble surfaces and gravel and chalk spreads. The uppermost of these surfaces was cut by the medieval footings of the Abbey Gateway, 209, flint and limestone blocks and pebbles in a light brown mortar. Set on the footings, which were at least 1.0m deep (and were not fully exposed), were the first and second courses of the medieval wall, the lower course having a chamfer. The

wall was built of oolitic limestone and no mason's marks were seen. Only modern rubble and garden soil covered the footings and surfaces. The remainder of the Gateway in the south-east corner was completely rebuilt, on a slightly different position to the medieval wall, and where the Victorian wall oversailed the medieval, it was supported on bricks and concrete. Not enough of the cobbled surfaces was exposed to show their function. The only finds from the pre-gateway levels were scraps of glazed and unglazed pegtiles and animal bone.

Site 5

Site 5 was situated on a sloping flower bed in the south-east corner of the West Range. The aim of the excavation was to see whether medieval stratigraphy survived. The excavation consisted of machine and hand dug trial holes over the whole of the available area. Most of the site was completely removed by cellars and Victorian walls, but in one trial hole a sequence of natural clayey gravel overlain by a brown sandy soil, 287, was found. This soil contained a sherd of Iron Age shell-tempered pot and was cut by a feature, 288, containing a sherd of black handmade ? Saxon pot. No traces of medieval stratigraphy were found, and modern rubble and garden soil sat immediately on top of layer 287.

Site 6 (Figs. 3 and 4)

Site 6 was a 3m wide trench running north-south from the south refectory wall to the footpath, Chestnut Walk. At the south end the trench was extended by machine to investigate feature 500 filled with Victorian rubbish but thought to be possibly of earlier origin. At a height of 39.2m O.D. natural chalk was found. Above this were yellow and brown loose gravels and, in the southern part of the site, overlying the gravels, was a layer of brown loam of unknown thickness. Only a small area of

medieval stratigraphy remained at the south end of the trench. There a brown sandy soil (748) overlay the compact brown loam. This soil was cut away to the south by a mortar floor, 713, with a flint and mortar footing (755) only c.0.2m wide on the north side. This ran at a slightly different alignment to the south refectory wall and other standing medieval walls. Overlying the mortar floor was a thin spread of brown soil cut through on the south side by the mortared north wall of a small room, terraced into the hillside. The north wall, 564, sat on a footing trench filled with loose mortar and flints, while the south wall, (616) had no equivalent footings. The east wall of the room, 623, was mainly removed by a robber trench, 618, which continued south of 616, possibly indicating a continuation of this wall at one stage. Further south, in the base of 500, was the footing of another mortar wall, 584, on the same alignment.

North of 564 the ground was made up with a dump of rubble and brown soil, forming a roughly level terrace with the top of the natural soil, 747.

Within the room a 0.2m thick layer of brown loam, 737, very similar to the natural loam, overlay the footings; but was covered by a mortar spread running up to the walls. Above this was a white chalky floor level, 630, and above that more brown soil, containing a little mortar and pegtiles. This soil was the highest medieval layer within the building and was disturbed by Victorian features.

To the south of wall 616 was a hearth (693) made of four chalk blocks with pegtiles laid flat around them. Over and around the hearth was a layer of wood charcoal and ash, 635. This extended to the east past the projected line of wall 623 and underlay a rough hearth, 705, again made of pegtiles laid flat. Spreads of mortar rubble overlay this hearth, interleaved with ash. In the base of the robber trench 618 was a thick layer of crushed chalk, not

present under walls 564 or 616. This was also present over the ash and rubble spreads to the south, and may be the base of a wall.

A small patch of wall 564 to the north of 623 appeared to have been repaired in white mortar, possibly also evidence for a late wall running north-south.

Above 635 was a layer of mortar fragments, 514, mixed with a little soil. These fragments probably represent weathering of wall 613, suggesting that by this time, if not before, the area was external.

A rough chamfer 0.2m from ground level on 616 also suggests that the area was not roofed. Above 514 was rubble 513, including collapsed chalk quoins from the corner of 616 and 623 (internal or external ?) and pegtiles, stacks of mortared pegtiles, possibly from the surround to a window, — or perhaps a pegtile course in the wall.

Of late or post-medieval date was feature 608 found in the base of 500. This was interpreted as the north bank of a stream or culvert running eastwards from the Holy Brook through the reredorter. The surface of the bank was dissected by animal burrows, and many small rodent bones were found in the filling above it, which also produced two sherds of late or post-medieval pottery. In the northern part of the site a large pit, 704, of irregular outline except for a straight, vertical northern edge, was found. The filling contained medieval mortar and other debris, including a small mixed collection of medieval pottery.

This feature itself was cut by a massive ditch, 647, running east-west and 7.5m wide. Only a machine-cut section was made of the ditch, which proved it to be flat-bottomed with a slight gravel silting at the sides below deliberate backfill. Finds from the backfill were mixed and included intrusive Victorian material, but excluding this, the latest finds were of 18th century date. This ditch probably represents a hitherto unknown Civil War earthwork.

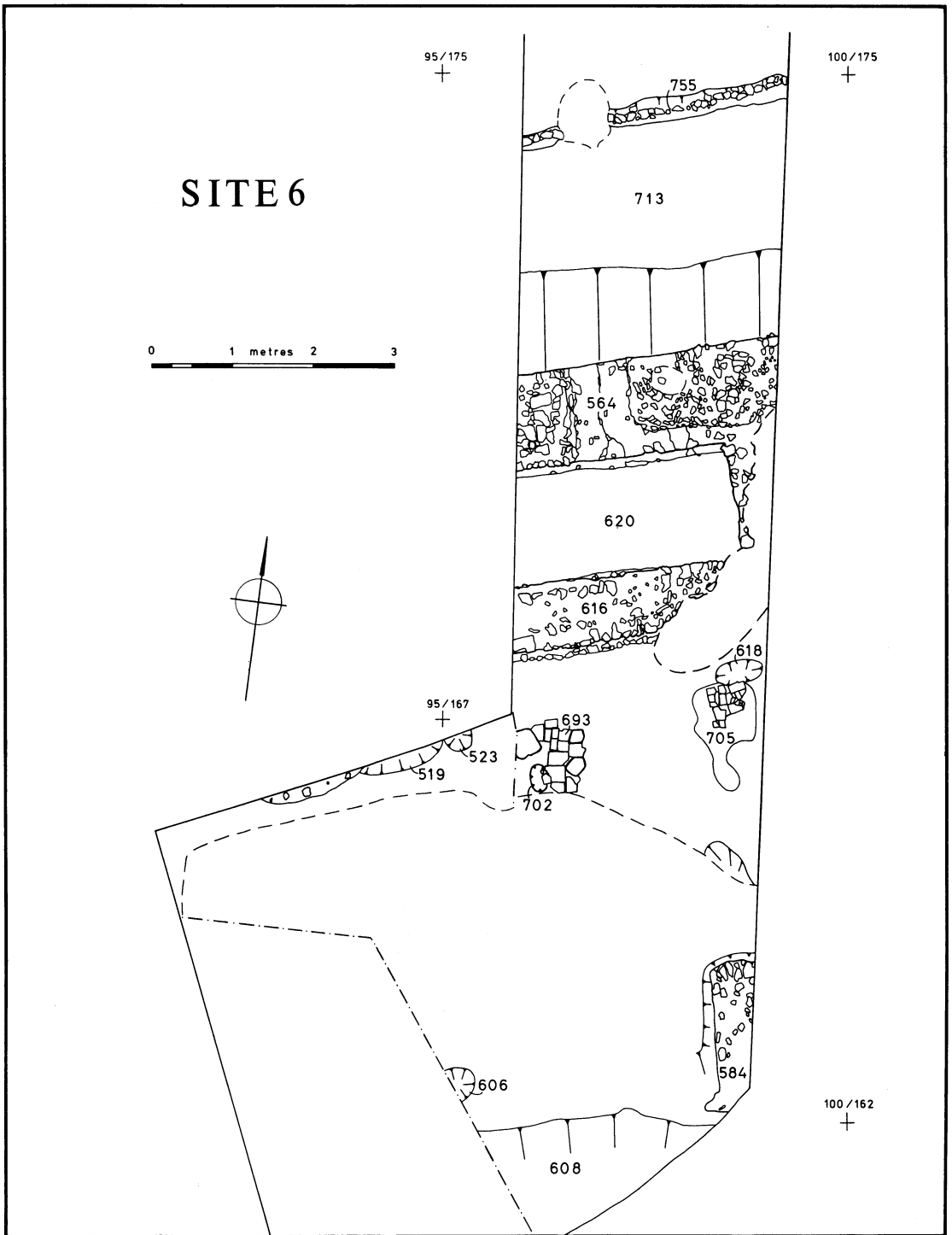


Fig. 4. Medieval features at the south end of Site 6.

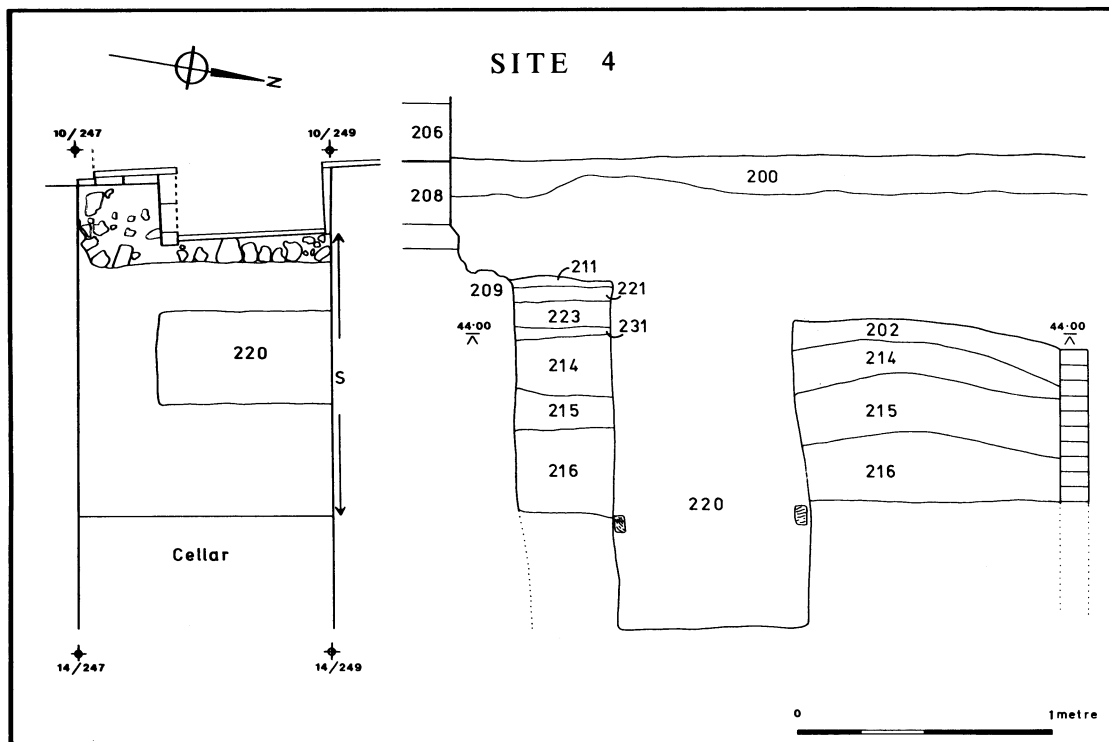


Fig. 5. Site 4.

The fills of these features and the remaining earlier stratigraphy were cut by numerous, often ill-defined features, probably mainly tree-holes. These contained late 18th and 19th century pottery. The northern part of the trench had been terraced to below the level of the Refectory Wall footings, and features cut into the terrace also contained late 18th and 19th century pottery.

At the southern end of the trench was a large pit, 500, cut through the medieval stratigraphy and into the natural brown 'loam'. The function of the pit was not satisfactorily determined. The most likely suggestion is that it was another terrace cut into the hill-side to accommodate a post-medieval cottage (since it cuts robber

trench 618 it must be 17th century or later in date). There was a layer of trample at the base of the feature, 580. This consisted mainly of crushed medieval mortar fragments and three sherds of probably 17th century pottery. No trace of brick or wooden walls was found however.

READING ABBEY IN THE 19TH CENTURY

In 1843 the whole of the cloister and west range area was bought for development (Berks Record Office C/TE/165), and by 1847 the houses in Abbot's Walk had been completed (e.g. B.R.O. C/TE/335). The Civil War earthwork must have been levelled by this date.

Pathways made of medieval wall rubble were found on site A. They appear to have been laid out before soil was dumped to either side to form a terrace 1m high. The pathways and terrace can be recognised on the 1873 Ordnance Survey (1 to 500) plan of the area. It is likely that these features are primary and that therefore the finds contained within them have a T.A.Q. of 1847. Later features on sites, A, B, C, D and G were not recorded or excavated, except where necessary to reveal earlier stratigraphy.

South of the refectory wall a row of cottages was in existence early in the 19th century. No. 5 Abbey Wall was built in 1839 (this is probably the cottage whose cellar was excavated in 1964-7, Trench XX) (B.R.O.C/TE/618). By 1919 these cottages had been re-numbered (and rebuilt ?) as Nos. 1-27 Abbey Wall. These were demolished by the 1930's.

At the north end of site 6, alongside the brick cellar of ? No. 27 Abbey Wall, it was found that all earlier stratigraphy had been removed by a terrace 6m wide, into which were cut post holes and pits containing late 18th and 19th century pottery. A brick path led across the terrace at the base of the refectory wall. The footings of the wall had been exposed by the terracing and were rebuilt in brick.

At the southern end of site 6 a large hole cut into the medieval stratigraphy and natural soil was filled with tips of rubble and refuse, 500. Above these tips was a spread hoggin, 744, which sealed a gully 526 cutting through the destruction rubble 513 and also cutting wall 564.

744 ran up to a kerb of sandstone flags to the north of which was a thick humic soil, 501. The gravel and kerb can be identified from the 1 to 500 scale plan of 1873 as a pathway associated with the Forbury Gardens. The Gardens were officially opened in 1862 providing a T.A.Q. for material in 526 and 500. It is likely that 500 is part of the embankment built by the Local Auth-

ority between 1857 and 1862 as a poor relief scheme; although Taylor states that the embankment was built of abbey debris (1890), there was in fact very little medieval material in the dump.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The trenches were supervised by John Hawkes and the site drawings were produced by Wendy Carruthers and Keith Robinson. Thanks are due to Leslie Cram of Reading Museum and the staff of the former Berkshire Archaeological Unit for their practical assistance, particularly Noel Green who produced the initial typescript. The finds were processed and catalogued by Joanna Vince.

ARCHIVE

A full indexed archive comprising excavation records (written records, field drawings and photographs), and post-excavation analyses including finds lists and summary finds reports are housed with the finds in Reading Museum. To avoid confusion with the 1981 excavations the site sub-division labelling has been altered for this report as follows:

Archive records site A = Publication
site 1

B = 2
C = 3
D = 4
G = 5
K = 6
H = 7
I = 8
L = 9

EXCAVATIONS AT READING ABBEY
1981

P. J. Fasham and J. W. Hawkes

SUMMARY

Excavations at the south-west of the cloisters investigated part of the refectory. A cellar, possibly relating to the cellarer's office, was discovered. A second site south of the south wall of the refectory had been totally destroyed by post-monastic quarrying. The excavation of the waterfront dating from the 12th to the 18th century AD will be the subject of a separate report, as further work is envisaged.

INTRODUCTION

The Wessex Archæological Committee was informed in July 1981 that redevelopment was due to start on November 1st of the same year. In four months a research design had to be formulated and implemented, and funds raised. The project design took full cognisance of the work of Dr Slade and Mr Vince particularly on the site of the wharves. The project was designed to examine three specific areas (Fig. 1).

Area A at the west of the refectory was to examine a large portion of the refectory and the conjectural site of the kitchens, possibly also touching on the cellarer's office. These were details of the claustral area that had not been examined by relatively large-scale excavation.

Area B was immediately south of the standing south wall of the refectory; between the wall and the river Kennet. Vince's excavations in 1979 had located medieval buildings surviving to a height of 1m at the east of this area. Other previous work had revealed no indication of the function of that area of the Abbey, although it was believed that it had been used for storage purposes. It is situated immediately above the river Kennet. The

1981 excavation was designed to ascertain whether the structures Vince excavated in 1979 continued to the west and, if they did, to determine their nature. The whole of the area excavated in Area B in 1981 had been damaged by extensive post-medieval extraction. No medieval stratigraphy survives and thus there is no account of that excavation in this paper. There are full details in the archive.

Area C was on the suggested site of the Abbey wharves (Astill, 1978). Vince had discovered two wooden piles, which he dated on stratigraphic grounds to the late medieval period. There were, therefore, some grounds for anticipating a preserved medieval waterfront, which would have been the first inland waterfront to be investigated. The results of the excavation of Area C will be published elsewhere (Fasham and Hawkes, in preparation).

SITE A

Site A comprised trenches A₁ and A₂. Trenches A₁ and A₂ were excavated in a similar way; approximately 1m of modern build-up — remains of buildings, make-up for car parks etc., — was removed using a mechanical excavator down to the surface comprising either late medieval deposits or, where they did not exist, to the natural gravel.

Trench A₁ — Medieval

Trench A₁ was located at the west of the refectory; the south wall of which was 2-3m south of the trench, while the north wall is known to run approximately along the line of site northing 223. The west wall of the refectory has never been recorded. The north-west corner of Trench A₁ had been disturbed by a post-medieval gravel pit (Fig. 6), typical of many recorded by Dr Slade (Slade 1971-2). There were no pre-Abbey features. The earliest remains were in the north-west corner of the trench and

READING ABBEY - Refectory

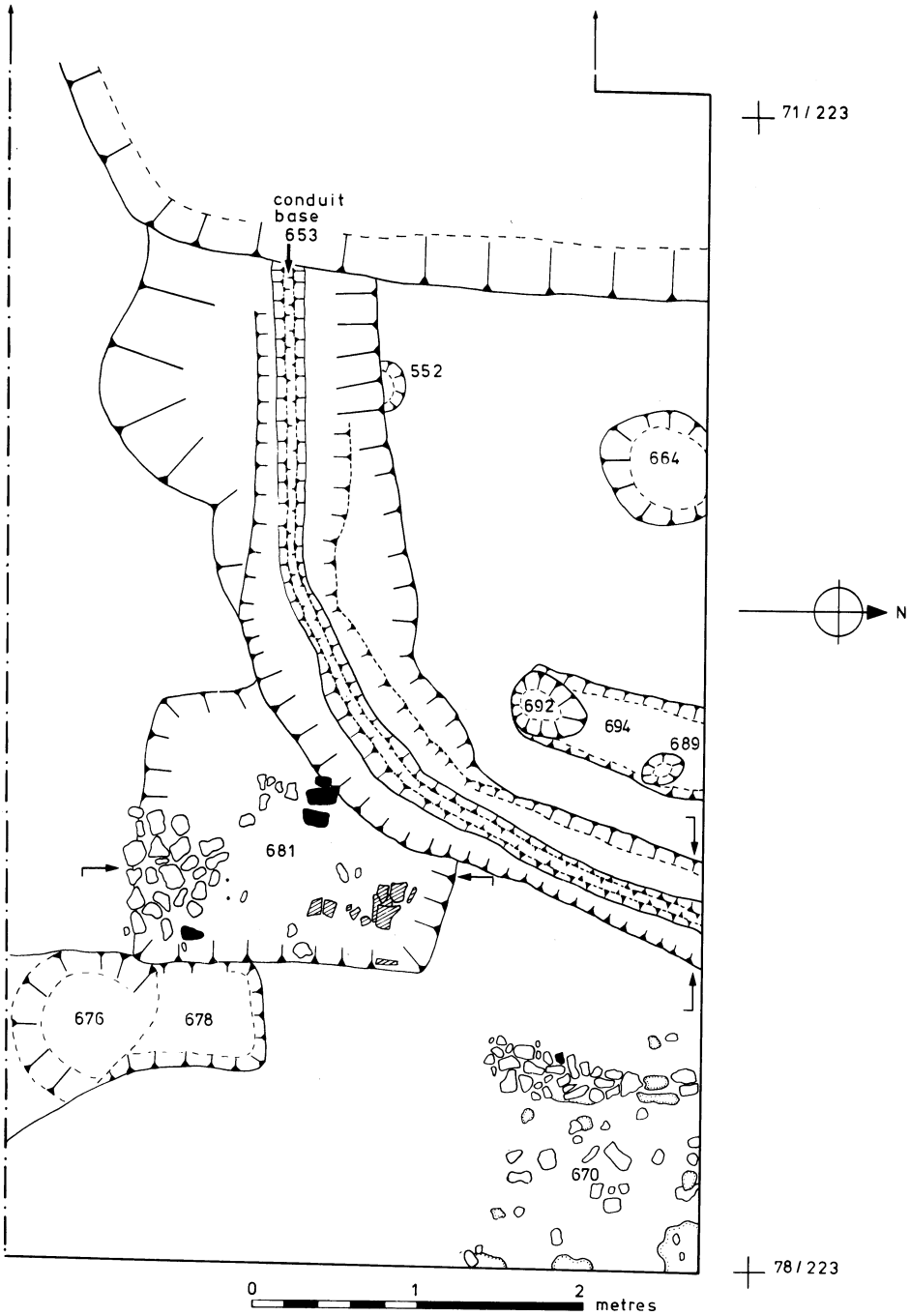


Fig. 6. Medieval features in the west end of Trench A1 within the refectory.

comprised shallow irregular depressions, 552, 664, 689, 692 and 694, deeper and more regular features 678 cut by 676, a scatter of flints possibly representing an internal structural feature, 670, a conduit base 653 and a large irregular flint-filled pit 681.

The rectangular pit 681 was 1.9m by 1.6m and 1m deep (Fig. 7). It was filled with unmortared flint nodules and contained no other finds. It may have been the base of an internal pier within the refectory, but the absence of mortar in the flints and the lack of characteristics similar to those from the pier bases excavated in the cloisters (Slade 1971-2), indicates that 681 was not the base of a column. Its functions and date must therefore remain uncertain.

Construction of the conduit base 653 led to the north-west corner of 681 being dismantled. The conduit was placed in a wide shallow trench on a support of burnt clay, pyramidal in section. A groove in the top of the clay shows where the waterpipe, presumably lead, as there were no iron fittings for a wooden pipe, had been laid (Fig. 8). The conduit appeared to run from the cloisters, where there was a well, towards an area at the west of the refectory where the kitchens may have been located. The pipe had been pulled out rather than grubbed, for there were intact late medieval floor levels preserved over the conduit channel. The date, at which the water supply system was dismantled, is not known, but presumably relates to the destruction of parts of the claustral area at either the Dissolution or during the Civil War occupation.

The floor levels consisted of a spread of sandy-mortar 5-6cm deep, which compares well with the 2-4 inches of the bedding mortar of the tile floors in the cloisters (Fig. 9). Tile impressions on the surface of the mortar indicate that the tiles had measured about 25cm by 20cm. This apparently well-laid floor had been re-

moved and replaced to the east by an irregular floor of flint, bricks and roof-tiles, 428, probably of late date. Pit 664, which cut through the floor level 497, contained sherds of an early Tudor Green lobed cup of the mid 15th century, and sherds of Tudor Green and late medieval stoneware were found within the matrix of 428.

Trench A₁ — Post Medieval

At the west of the trench were the two almost parallel sand and rubble cores of walls 658 and 659. The walls were not on the same alignment as any known monastic or recent structure and presumably belong to the immediate post-dissolution period. The square peg-tiled hearth 451, 1.6 — 1.7m, was almost certainly associated with pit 472, which contained much early material and large quantities of melted and partly melted lead, nearly all window lead, some of which was fused to small flints and gravel. Pits 456, 466 and 652 may be associated with this post-monastic looting of the lead.

Trench A₂ (Fig. 10)

The area of Trench A₂, as shown in Fig. 1, was mechanically stripped to the natural gravel. There were two pits of seventeenth century date or later on the south side. On the east side a cellar was discovered and the remainder of the trench was backfilled to enable the cellar to be excavated and shored in a safe manner. A modern building stood within 2m of the north and east sides of the cellar.

The cellar was square, measuring 3.1m. It has been roofed with brick, probably in the nineteenth century. There were two manholes in the roof and several surface water drains flowed into the cellar, either through the roof or the south wall. The cellar had been used as a sump and approximately 1m of grey rain-water silt had accumulated in the bottom. An attempt had been made to create a tunnel or sewer through the south wall (wall EB),

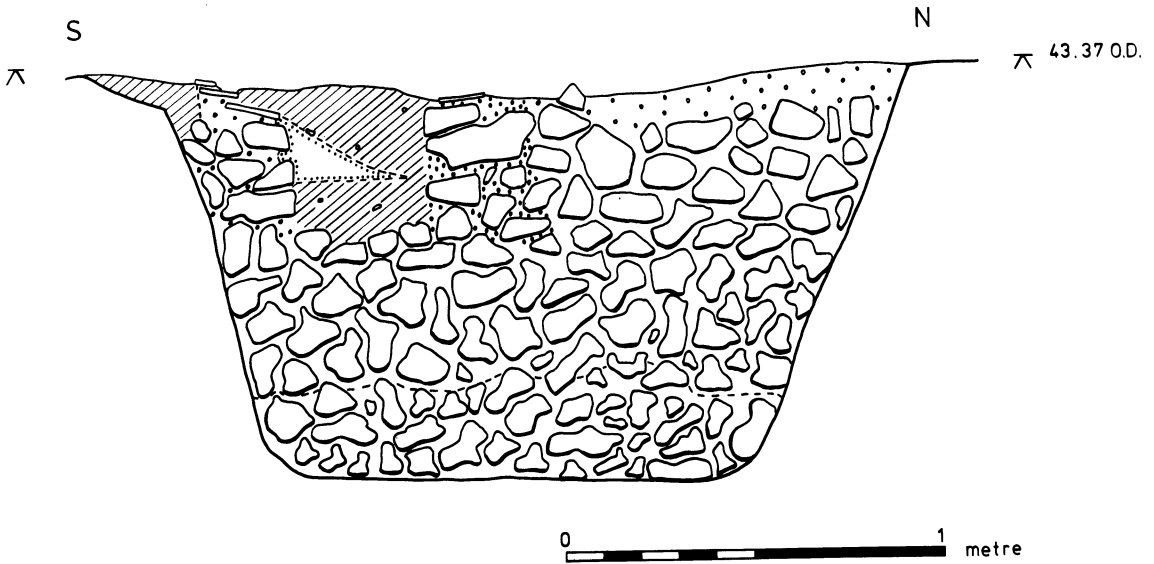


Fig. 7. Section of pit 681. The location of the section is shown in Fig. 6.

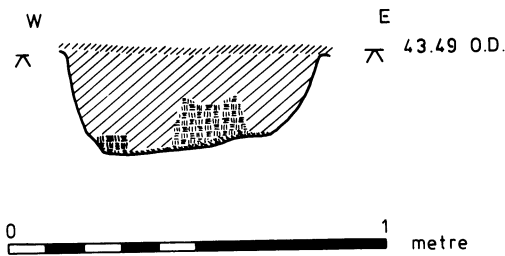


Fig. 8. Section through conduit support 653.
For location see Fig. 6.

but this had not been completed. The bricks in the arches had not all been mortared.

The construction of the brick arches was presumably contemporary with the insertion of the brick roof.

The east and west walls, DE and BC, were original. The walls were constructed of large flint nodules with occasional pieces of stone and contained a range of mortars. There were springers for a roofing arch at

the north end of each wall. The bottom 1.8 — 2m of both walls contained fairly regularly coursed flints with a covering of mortar and this lower portion can be best interpreted as original. Above that the walls appear to have been rebuilt or refaced following a collapse. The south wall, BE, with the later brick arches was a blocking wall inserted probably at the time of the rebuilding of the cellar. The north wall may well have been inserted at the same time.

The natural gravel floor of the cellar at 39.5m AOD was approximately 5m below modern ground level. There were no diagnostic finds from the floor levels apart from some building chips when the brick roof was constructed.

Wall 527 was located immediately above the north-east corner of the cellar. It was not possible to record it properly as it had to be covered with back fill behind the shoring to prevent any collapse. It was planned accurately and the following observations were made. A length of 1.8m

READING ABBEY - Refectory Area

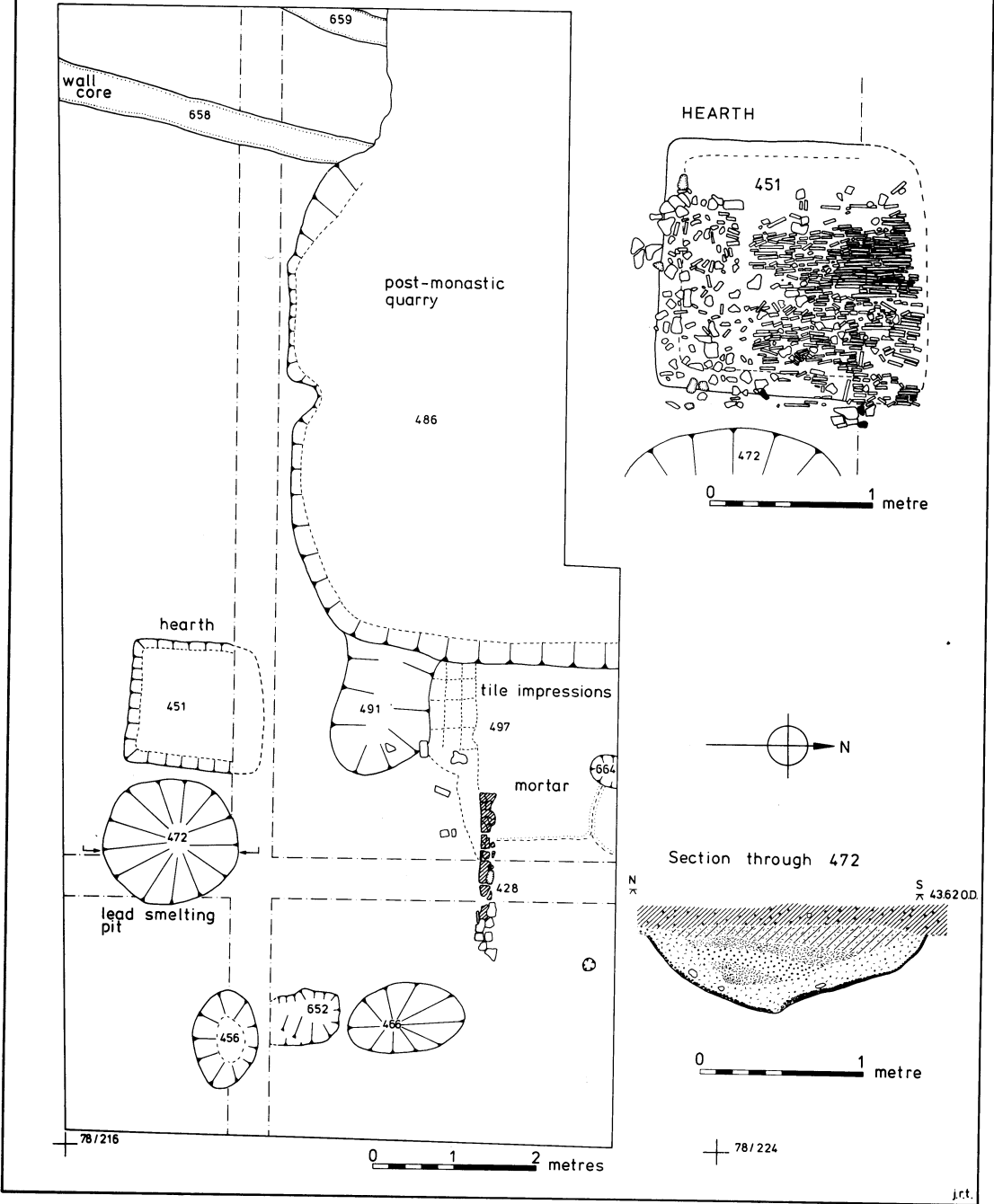


Fig. 9. Late medieval and post-monastic features and levels within the refectory in Trench A1.

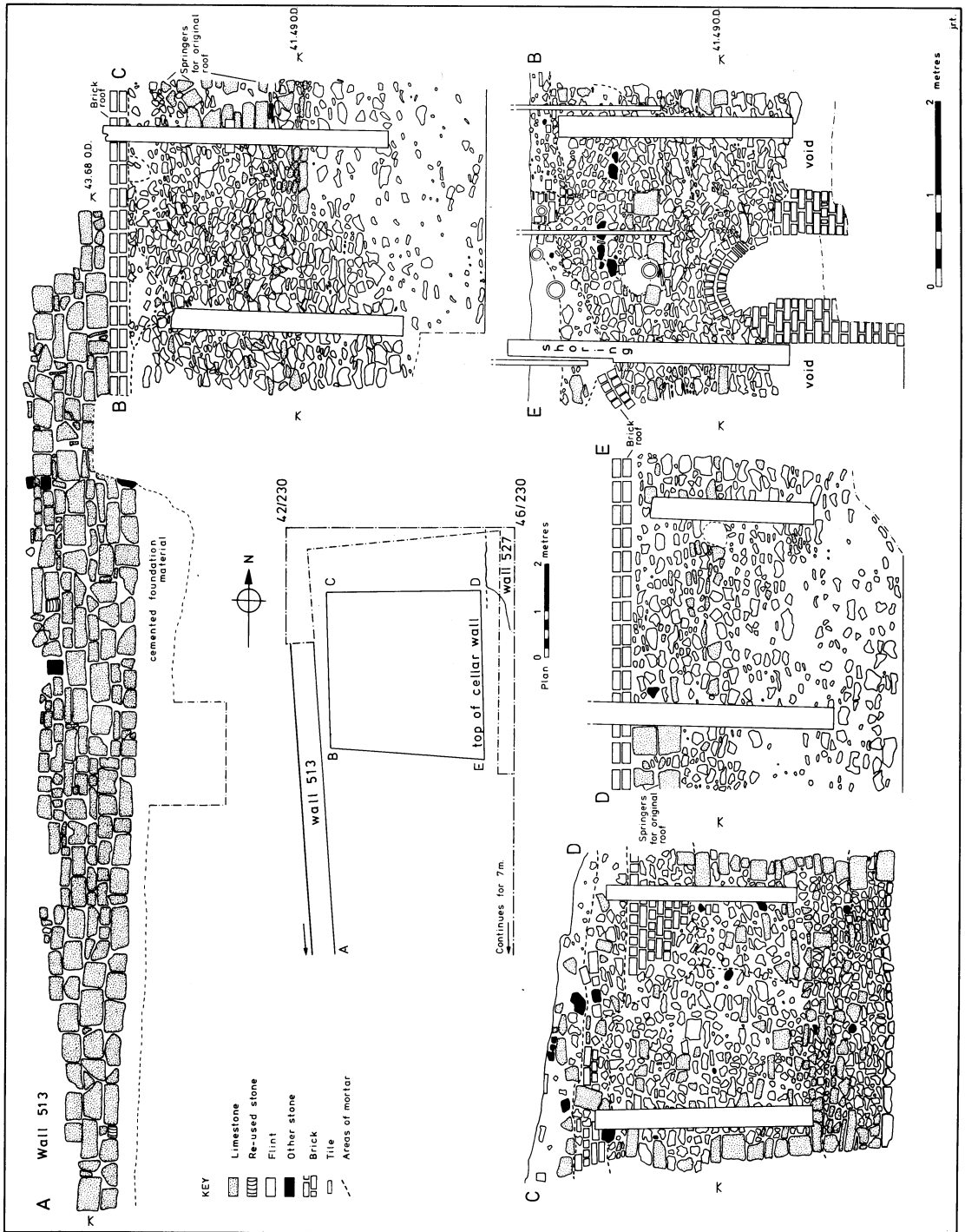


Fig. 10. Plan and profiles of the later medieval cellar.

was observed, it was ashlar faced with a flint core, the mortar (colour yellow 2.5Y8/6) containing small crushed flint. One ashlar stone was recorded on the west face of the wall, the level on the top of that ashlar being 43.37m AOD. The level on the highest point of the flint core was 43.80m AOD, so the wall survived to a height of 0.43m. The south end had been cut away by a surface water drain. Consideration of the levels of cellar wall CD at corner D show that wall 527 may have formed part of the ground floor of the building associated with the cellar. Dr Slade confirmed that wall 527 is typical of other abbey-period walls he has recorded at Reading Abbey.

Although there is no direct dating evidence, several aspects point to the cellar being medieval, perhaps later rather than earlier. The post-Dissolution history of the site quite clearly reveals no record or need for such a feature. The only building which may have needed a cellar, or strictly speaking a boiler-room, was St. Lawrence's school, but it is not recorded on the original plans of the school held in the Berkshire County Council Records Office. If the cellar had been constructed during the life of the school, it would probably have been built of brick or stone, but not flint. The insertion of a brick roof and small man-holes suggest that the cellar was not used from sometime in the nineteenth century onwards. The sites of two vaults are on the 1st Edition of the Ordnance Survey, marked in Gothic script, indicating that they were regarded as antiquities. The parliamentary survey of 1650 records cellars underneath the Cellarer's Office. The circumstantial evidence for this remarkable discovery does strongly suggest that the structure cannot be of post-Abbey date, and it is most likely therefore that the cellar related to the Abbey.

Wall 513, part of St. Lawrence's school, was aligned on the west side of the cellar. A trench was excavated for 9m south of the

cellar alongside wall 513. This machine trench was approximately 3.3m wide. It was excavated to a depth of about 43m, that is at least 0.2m below the level of the natural gravel, and a small hand dug trench was excavated to 42.2m AOD. The natural gravel was not reached at any point in this trench, and the deposits consisted of general building material. The implication is that the cellar formed part of a range and represented one surviving bay of that range. The alleged range of cellars was traced to within 3m of the line of the refectory wall. It seems reasonable to assume that there was an entrance at ground level below the scarp on which the refectory stands; an entrance site there would have been within easy reach of the Abbey wharves and mill. The cellar would have been close to, if not under, the Cellarer's Office in the west range of the cloisters and fairly close to the kitchens. The apparently late date of the blocking wall CE also suggests a continuation of the range northwards underneath the standing building.

THE FINDS

Tabulated details of find types by context are to be found in archive (File 1: All metal objects, File 2: Non-pottery ceramics and stone, including all building materials, File 3: Pottery).

Coins and Jettons D. M. Metcalf

Coins:

No. 424, Context 665:

Edwardian silver penny, 14th century,
(?) York mint.

Residual in a late 16th or 17th century context.

No. 89, Context 434:

Elizabeth I silver 2d, 1582-4 (mm A).

Jettons:

No. 88, Context 434:

Obv Globus crucigen (*Reichsapfel*) in hexafoil design.

RECHENPFENNING NVRENBE

Rev 3 crowns and 3 lis around hexafoil.

EGIDI KRAWINCKEL NUR. German, 16th century: Egidius Krawinckel, c. 1570-1600

No. 86, Context 434:

Same basic design, meaningless legends, BIEM, etc.

Probably German, 16th or 17th century.

No. 87, Context 434:

Same basic design, meaningless legends, BAOI, etc.

Probably German, 16th or 17th century.

No. 425, Context 663:

Obv Globus crucigen, as examples above.

Rev Cross fleury, with crowns in angles, star at centre.

German, probably 17th century.

No. 72, Context 511:

Same basic design as nos 86-88. Hans Krawinckel.

German, probably 17th century. Unstratified from cellar area.

No. 23, Context 405:

Same basic design as nos 86-88. *Obv* HANS SCHULTES NOR

Rev GLICK KVMPT VON GOT.

German, 16th century, Hans Schultes of Nuremberg, *floruit* c. 1550-1574.

Residual in an early 19th century context.

Finds of Copper Alloy**Pins**

There were four complete and four broken pins. The complete ones were 19-35mm long, and the diameter of the shanks ranged from 0.7mm to 1.2mm. Six were recovered from 16th or 17th century levels and two from 19th century deposits.

Wire

A length of wire 24mm by 0.6mm diameter came from context 551. 17th century or later.

Lace Tags

There were four lace tags measuring 22mm — 40mm all from 17th century or later contexts.

Other

There were nine other finds of copper alloy, either fragments of hooks or bits of small chains. All were 19th century or later.

Lead

There were forty finds of lead. Six were definitely fragments of window casing, two were pistol balls of 11-12mm diameter and the remainder were off-cuts, small strips, lumps of fragments. A full report of the contents of the lead melting hearth including slag will be placed in archive (Bayley archive, File 1).

Objects of Iron

Although 323 finds of iron were made in 40 contexts the majority were nails or indeterminate lumps apart from a 19th century key. None can be dated to earlier than the 17th century. None are illustrated.

Pottery

From a total of 494 sherds of pottery there were only two sherds of thirteenth century date, three sherds of late medieval stoneware and twenty-one sherds of Tudor Green, which can confidently be assigned to the monastic period. Of the rest, 275 sherds belong to a continuum from the sixteenth to the late nineteenth century and cannot be more closely defined since reconstructable vessels and closed groups are entirely absent. This class includes all the locally produced hard red sandy fabrics, both glazed and unglazed, seventeenth

century and later English and German stonewares, and some post-medieval Surrey products. The remaining 93 sherds are from a variety of late factory-produced types, including eighteenth century white salt-glazed stonewares and a range of plain tin-glazed and transfer printed tablewares of late eighteenth to late nineteenth century date. Only pottery of monastic date is considered in this report, details of the other categories are in the archive. The post-medieval pottery from the 1981 excavations will be considered in more detail in the waterfront report (Fasham and Hawkes, in prep).

Site A₁

The earliest pottery from this area was Tudor Green. A single sherd of rim and handle fragments from a Tudor Green cup of indeterminate type associated with a sherd of Surrey ware and two sherds from a late medieval Rhenish stoneware vessel (Fig. 11, No. 1) came from the tile and brick floor 428. A fragment from a Tudor Green cup together with a small sherd of late- or early post-medieval hard red sandy fabric came from the mortar bedding 470 immediately below the floor. The shallow depression 664 in the mortar bedding where the floor had been removed contained five sherds from a Tudor Green lobed cup (Fig. 11, No. 2). The three sherds of Tudor Green, one sherd of Surrey ware, six sherds of red sandy fabric and one sherd of medieval stoneware from

the top fill of the conduit trench 654 may also relate to the construction of floor 428 immediately above.

A monastic date might therefore be considered appropriate for this floor. The coarseness of the fabric and dullness of the glaze of the lobed cup suggests a date early within the Tudor Green series, perhaps mid fifteenth century (M. Mellor, pers. comm.). The Rhenish stoneware is part of a small globular jug and is unusual in that the plain rim slopes slightly inwards. A date range of c. 1460-1500 would be acceptable for this vessel (we are grateful to R. G. Thomson for his identification and comments).

Site A₂

Only two sherds of monastic date were recovered from the cellar area, both in residual contexts.

Context 501. Strap handle (Fig. 11, No. 3).

From seventeenth century pit adjacent to cellar.

Context 528. Small sherd from slip decorated jug or pitcher. From modern rain-water silting in cellar (not illustrated).

Both sherds are in identical fabrics containing coarse and medium quartz and are possibly from the same vessel, South Oxfordshire origin, probably early thirteenth century. This is the commonest fabric in the thirteenth and early fourteenth century groups from the waterfront (fabric 1, Fasham and Hawkes, in prep.).

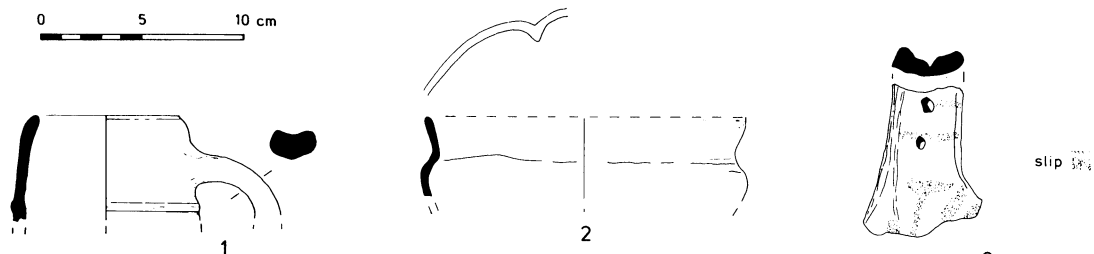


Fig. 11 Pottery

Floor tiles

The report on the decorated tiles are based on notes and comments provided by both Mr D. A. Hinton and Mr L. J. Keen whom the authors wish to thank for their assistance in identifying the tiles. The following abbreviations are used:

Eames – Eames, E. S. 1981 *Catalogue of Medieval Lead-Glazed Earthenware Tiles in the Department of Medieval and Later Antiquities*, British Museum, London.

Haberley – Haberley L. 1937, *Medieval English Paving Tiles*, Blackwell.

Hohler – Hohler, E. C., 1941-6 'Medieval paving-tiles in Buckinghamshire' *Record of Bucks*, XIV, 1-49, 99-132

Slade – Slade, C. F., 1969 'Paving tiles of Reading Abbey' *B.A.J.*, 64, 9-19

There were fifteen fragments of decorated tiles; seven can be compared with published examples, five cannot and three are too small for identification. Only the five 'new' tiles are illustrated. All are inlaid, except 1272 which is printed. None of the tiles were 'in situ', although some of the plain examples came from the late or immediately post-monastic floor 428 and associated contexts.

No 1259. Probably part of Haberley design XVII/XVIII. Origin in south Oxfordshire. 26mm thick.

No 1260. Eames type 2456 (Cat. No. 770). Similar to stabbed Wessex. Origin possibly Reading Abbey, as Eames designs 1088 and 1102 (Cat. Nos 11,571 and 11,572) are quarters cut from this design and both are from Reading Abbey. 28mm thick.

No 1261. Eames type 1395 (Cat. No. 11,045), Hohler's design W26 and Haberley's Design No XXV. Stabbed Wessex, origin Chertsey. 20mm thick.

No 1267. Eames type 2032 (Cat. No. 11,574/11,575). 'Middle Thames' group. Origin probably Reading Abbey. 32mm thick.

No 1268. Eames type 1360 (Cat. No. 13,619) Hohler design P55. Origin Penn, 18mm thick.

No 1269. Eames type 2417 (Cat. No. 11,561, 11,567). 'Middle Thames' group. Origin Reading Abbey. 22mm thick.

No 1274. As 1260. 26mm thick.

The following tiles are illustrated:

Fig. 12, No. 1. No 1262. Corner of tile with border circle. 35mm thick.

Fig. 12, No. 2. No 1263. Corner of tile with border circle with bulge on inside and lion in full stride. The design is common in Clarendon — Salisbury series types. 25mm thick.

Fig. 12, No. 3. No 1270. Almost complete triangular tile with three radiate petals. 35mm thick.

Fig. 12, No. 4. No 1271. Fragment of tile with complex pattern. 25mm thick.

Fig. 12, No. 5. No 1272. Fragment of printed tile with possible zoomorphic design. May be comparable with Slade P.11. No measurable thickness.

Plain floor tiles

There were 97 fragments of plain glazed floor tiles. None were complete and the only measurable attribute on the majority was thickness.

There were sixty four green or dark green tiles (Slade's Group I) with two different thicknesses. Seven were about 26mm, which compares with Slade's smaller size of tiles for this group of 114mm² by 25mm thick, and the remainder were 30-37mm thick, relating to Slade's larger size of 165mm² and up to 37mm thick.

The six yellow glazed tiles (Slade Group III) were evenly divided into two groups on

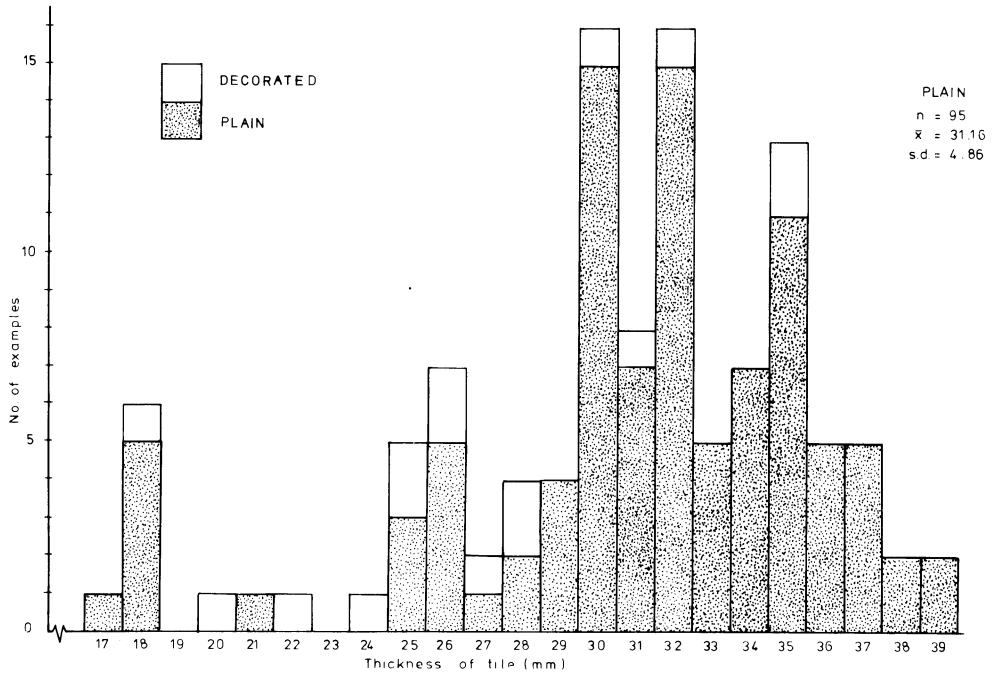
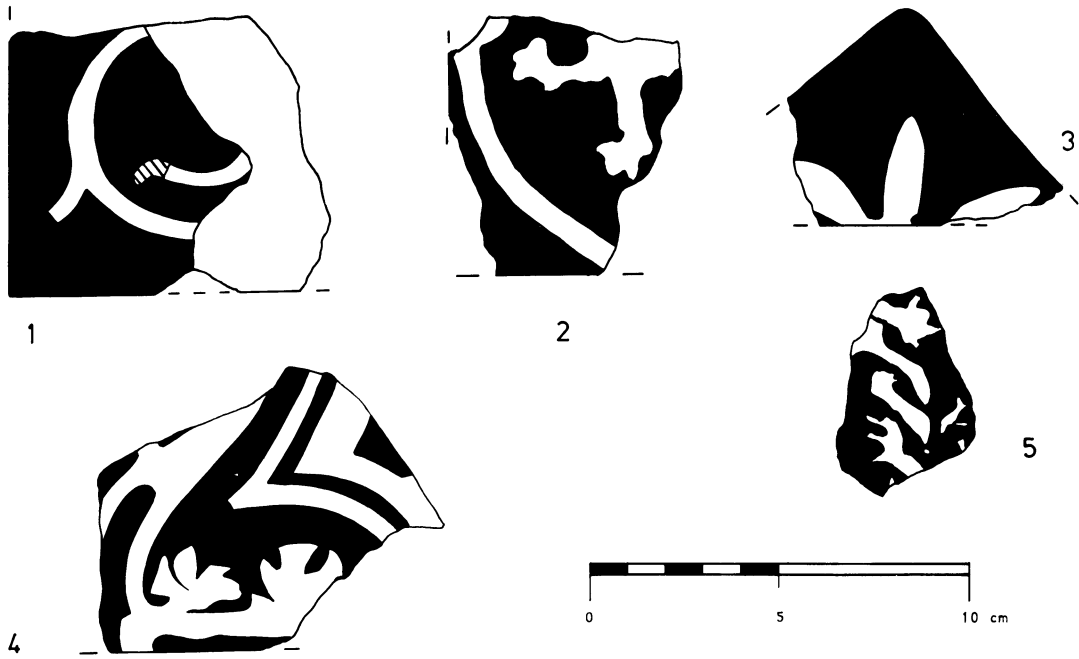


Fig. 12. Decorated Floor Tiles (¹/₂); Thickness of Decorated Tiles and Plain Tiles (all classes).

thickness. Those of 28-30mm thickness compare with Slade's smaller size for this group of 152mm² by 32mm thick and the other three measuring 35-37mm thick presumably relate to the larger size of 190mm² by up to 44mm thick.

There were seven yellow green tiles of which three, 25-27mm thick, would relate to one of Slade's smaller sizes while the remainder, 30-39mm thick, would belong to a larger size.

Nine of the twelve dark green-brown tiles, 31-38mm thick, should belong to Slade's large dark green group, but the other three at 17-18mm thick are considerably thinner than other tiles.

The six dark brown tiles are 18-34mm thick and display no clear grouping in thickness and the two pinkish tiles are 32mm thick each.

Tile 1273 is a square tile, 68 by 69mm and 30mm thick, with a diagonal groove. Presumably it was intended to be split into two triangular tiles.

The thickness of all tiles is shown in Fig. 12b.

Bricks

18 pieces of brick were collected. Six were from the late monastic floor 428 and were 115-124mm broad and 53-57mm wide.

Glass

Apart from fragments of post-medieval bottles and window glass, there were four possible fragments of stained glass, presumably monastic, but only one preserved a design (Fig. 13) context 441.

Clay Pipes

There were four clay pipe bowls from site A: one each of Oswald's (1975) types 8, 10, 12 and 15. A fifth bowl was incomplete. The Oswald type 15 carried the stamp of J. Norris (1828-48) of Reading, and the incomplete bowl was stamped by John Perry 1636.

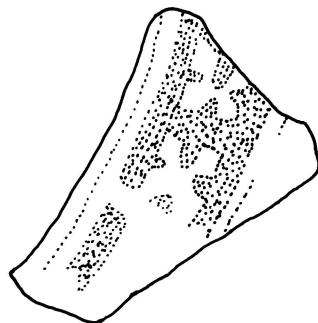


Fig. 13. Window Glass (¹/₁).
Stipple = red.

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ARCHIVE

The finds and the archive will be deposited with Reading Museum. A microfiche copy of the archive will be held by the National Monuments Record.

The site archive comprises context record sheets, context finds record sheets (1 file each), photographs, site drawings and registers, and three post-excavation (finds) files containing lists of find types by phase and context.

The archive of the unpublished Site B comprises the field records and a synopsis.

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