

Excavations in Banbury, 1972: First Report

By P. J. FASHAM

SUMMARY. This first report on excavations in Banbury in 1972 includes a general historical background to the town, a full account of one excavation, an interim account of the excavation of structures within the inner enclosure of the castle, and a summary of the western defences as revealed in a sewer trench.

INTRODUCTION

A PROPOSED development in Banbury, called 'The North of the Market Place Shopping Precinct', is threatening to destroy all the remaining archaeological evidence about the castle and the north side of the market place.¹ Starting in late March 1972, I undertook a series of small excavations and watching briefs on commercial developments for the Oxford City and County Museum and the Department of the Environment. Two sites, A and B (FIG. 1), were exhaustively excavated by hand, and a machine-dug trench was cut at C. Watching briefs were maintained while a sewer trench was excavated along Castle Street, and during the construction of the pedestrian subway across Castle Street. Site A was a trial excavation aimed at locating the south-western corner of the castle's defences. Site B developed from a small trial excavation into a full-scale rescue operation, which lasted until the end of October 1972.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The excavations were made possible only by the help of various bodies and individuals. For financial assistance I am grateful to the Department of the Environment, Banbury Borough Council, Banbury Charities, the Oxford City and County Museum, Banbury Postiche Ltd., Banbury Historical Society, Messrs. J. and M. Humphris, B. C. Wood, F. Partridge, and the many townspeople who contributed in smaller ways. The help of the Borough Council in providing office and working accommodation is gratefully acknowledged. Financial administration was undertaken by the Oxford City and County Museum, and special thanks for this must go to Mr. D. G. Benson.

For the provision of services or equipment, the following organizations and firms in the town are to be thanked; P. R. Alcock and Sons Ltd., Blinkhorn's Ltd., Banbury Historical Society, Forares Ltd., and Hoods. The staff of the Borough Library and Museum have been extremely helpful in many different matters, especially the Museum's Assistant, Miss Christine Bloxham.

The help and advice of the town clerk, Mr. J. S. T. William, has been of major assistance and is warmly acknowledged. Similar thanks must be made to the Borough Engineer's Department, especially Mr. C. Stevens. For permission

¹ P. J. Fasham, 'Archaeological Implications of Redevelopment in Banbury', *Cake and Cockhorse* (Summer 1972), 49-56.

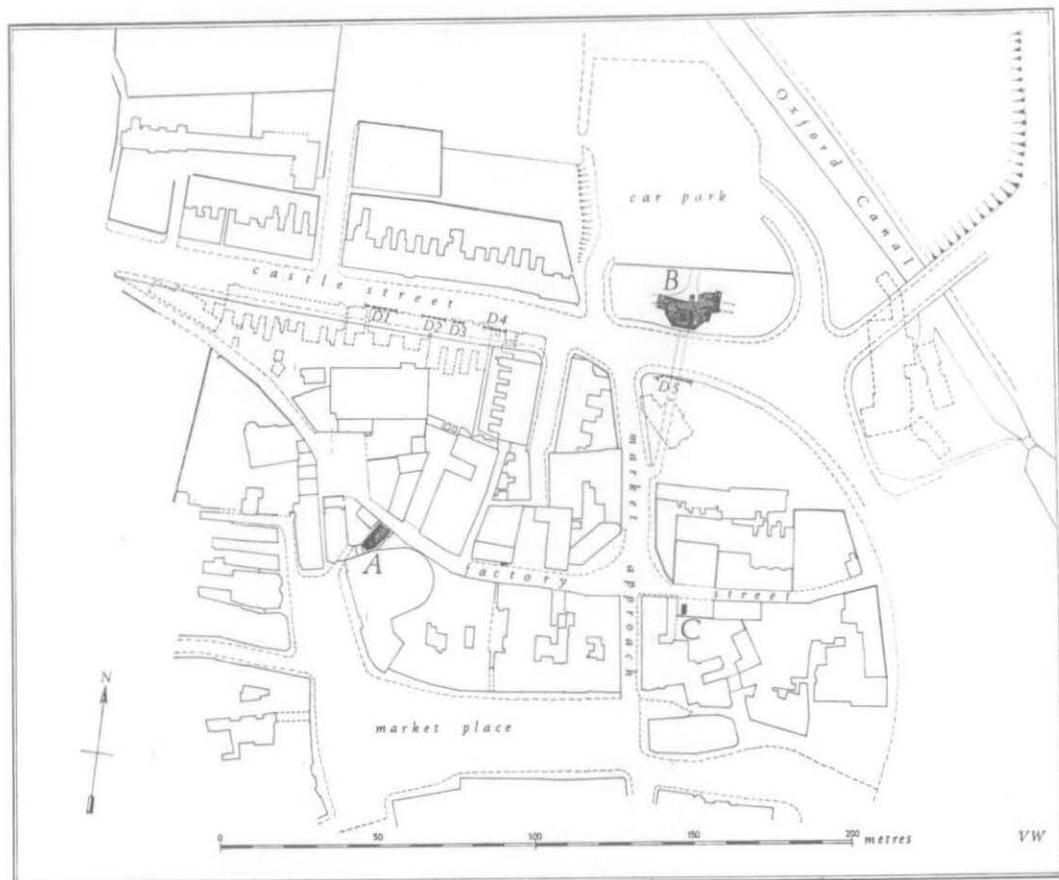


FIG. 1

Ground Plan of Banbury.

Based on the 1 : 500 Survey by permission of the Borough Engineer.

to excavate I am indebted to the Borough Council (Sites B and C), Oxfordshire County Council (Site B), Mitchell's and Butler's Ltd. (Site A). A special debt is acknowledged to Oxcon Ltd., especially Mr. C. Selby, for their ready cooperation on Site B, and along the sewer trench.

For their work on the site, I am extremely grateful to Messrs. Richard Chambers and Richard Ivens, for work in the potshed Mrs. Sue Lavender. Mrs. Vanessa Winchester, aided by Miss Carole Alexander, undertook all survey and planning tasks, and their work is gratefully acknowledged. The finished plans are the work of Mrs. Vanessa Winchester.

About 60 volunteers from the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States of America helped, and deserve many thanks for their labours. Special thanks are owed to Mrs. Margaret Little, Mrs. Judith Macey and Mr. B. C. Wood, and Miss Kathy Golby for their outstanding perseverance.

The advice and encouragement of Messrs. D. G. Benson, M. Biddle, T. G. Hassall, J. G. Hurst and R. T. Rowley are warmly acknowledged. Mr. D. A. Hinton gave advice on the pottery. Finally a special debt is gratefully acknowledged to Miss Sallyann Brown, who took over the potshed from Mrs. Lavender, was instrumental in the pottery analysis, drew some of the pottery and the two sections published here, and also typed this report.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Despite the two recent publications² the real origins of the town are still obscure. There is no conclusive evidence for prehistoric or Roman occupation under the modern town, despite the existence of several sites of both periods around Banbury.³ Roman material from the town is piecemeal, to say the least. A somewhat ambiguous reference in 1586 alludes to Roman coins being found in the town⁴ and Beesley mentions a number of chance finds of coins from various gardens.⁵ Excavations into the castle site in 1959 located two sherds of clearly redeposited Roman pottery.⁶ In the same year late Roman pottery and sub-Roman pottery of the early 'lost century (A.D. 470-597)'⁷ were found during the construction of a new housing estate in the Broughton Road area of the town. So, despite Beesley's attempt to turn a seemingly geological feature into a Roman amphitheatre,⁸ there is, as yet, no conclusively proven Roman occupation in Banbury.

Saxon Banbury is as ephemeral as its predecessors. The present location of the 'sub-Roman' pottery is not known and until this material can be re-examined, no validity can be attached to its date. The only Saxon find is a base silver sceatta dated to 725-750.⁹ The place name offers the most indicative form of evidence for early Saxon settlement. Banbury appears to be derived from Banna's-burgh,¹⁰ the settlement of a man called Banna, and Grimsbury, its attendant suburb on the east bank of the river Cherwell, is derived from 'Grim's-burgh',¹¹ Grim being a pseudonym for Woden. These two name forms have their origins in early Saxon times, although they may refer to prehistoric earthworks. Although small settlements may be envisaged on the banks of the Cherwell some time in the early Saxon period, there is no material evidence for this.

The basic layout of the centre of the modern town originated in the 12th century, although a strong case has recently been published¹² for some form of

² *V.C.H. Oxon.*, x (1972), 1-125. M. D. Lobel (ed.), 'Historic Towns Atlas', i (1969), Banbury.

³ For Roman sites see: V. Bromley, 'Roman Banburyshire,' *Cake and Cockhorse*, ii, No. 7 (Jan. 1964), 103-114.

⁴ W. Camden, *Oxfordshire* (1586), 4-5.

⁵ A. Beesley, *History of Banbury* (1841), 80-81.

⁶ V. Bromley, 'Castle Interim Report', *Cake and Cockhorse*, 1, No. 2 (Nov. 1959), 6.

⁷ *Cake and Cockhorse*, 1, No. 2 (Nov. 1959), 7.

⁸ Beesley, *op. cit.* note 5, 23-25.

⁹ D. M. Metcalf, 'An Eighth Century Find at Banbury', *Oxoniensia*, xxix-xxx (1964-5), 193-4.

¹⁰ *P.N. Oxon.* (E.P.N.S.), ii, 412.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 413.

¹² Lobel, *op. cit.* note 2, 1-2. *V.C.H. Oxon.*, x, 6.

occupation earlier than that. Banbury was acquired by the bishop of Dorchester-on-Thames some time after *c.* 634. In 1072 the See and its North Oxfordshire estates were transferred to Lincoln. It is under the holdings of the bishops of Lincoln that Banbury is recorded in Domesday Book as a manorial centre, along with Cropredy, assessed at 50 hides. Thus, by 1086, Banbury would appear to have been an administrative centre for the bishops of Lincoln. Also there may well have been a Minster church to serve north Oxfordshire. The location of this late Saxon settlement presumably lies either in the area of Horsefair, around the present parish church, or at the east end of Castle Street on the slight rise, overlooking the river where the castle was later built. The present parish church, St. Mary's, was built on the site of its 12th century predecessor,¹³ perhaps an indication that the pre-Domesday manor and its attendant settlement was on the main north-south route in Horsefair rather than under the castle.

The main expansion of the town occurred in the 12th century when Alexander de Blois, 'The Magnificent', was bishop of Lincoln (1123-48). He certainly built a 'castle' some time between 1125 and 1136,¹⁴ and it is possible that he also laid out the triangular Market Place.

There are a few references, mainly 16th and 17th century, to fine buildings within the Castle's inner enclosure,¹⁵ but none are of value in establishing a detailed plan. A 1685 survey¹⁶ indicates that the castle in its final form was roughly concentric with two walled enclosures, each protected by an external ditch.¹⁷ The ditches were wet, water coming from the Cuttle Brook, which used to run along the north side of the Market Place. The survey shows the whole castle occupying some 7 acres, the inner enclosure three-quarters of an acre.

The survey portrays the inner enclosure as sub-rectangular, and the outer as a rough rectangle with four approximately equal sides. The south side is probably on the line of Factory Street before turning north, by Site A (FIG. 1), to run through D1 and immediately east of the car park entrance. The west side extended north for some 75 metres from Castle Street, then turned east to just beyond the canal to form the north side. The north-west corner is recorded on the 1st Edition of the Ordnance Survey (1881). The east side would have run from the canal due south to Factory Street passing just west of the new canal bridge. The inner enclosure lay in the area of the junction of Castle Street with Market Approach.

The castle was in existence for about 520 years, being extensively demolished in 1648 by the townspeople, who successfully petitioned Parliament for permission to use the castle stone to rebuild their properties, which had been destroyed in the Civil War. The castle has subsequently disappeared completely under recent buildings.

¹³ *V.C.H. Oxon.*, x, 101.

¹⁴ The date is uncertain and is cited as 1125 in Beesley, *op. cit.* note 5, 63, and as 1136 in W. Potts, *History of Banbury* (1958), 18, who names his sources as the English Chronicle of Peterborough.

¹⁵ *V.C.H. Oxon.*, x, 41.

¹⁶ Reproduced in Beesley, *op. cit.* note 4, 65. See also this volume, p. 392.

¹⁷ Leland, *Itin. Cur.* v. 4, pt. 2, fol. 162b.

PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK

In 1959, 1960 and 1963 Banbury Historical Society excavated five trenches^{17a} into and around the so-called castle mound¹⁸ immediately to the south and east of the 1972 excavations on Site B. These excavations produced little evidence related to the problems of the castle, apart from the recovery of two human skulls.¹⁹

In 1963 Castle Gardens Car Park, covering the northern half of the castle, and the eastern end of Castle Street, with a main sewer running underneath it, were constructed. Members of Banbury Historical Society observed these works on a part-time basis, their only positive recordings being some more human bones in the sewer trench.²⁰

OBSERVATION 1972 (FIG. 1)

The focal point of observation in 1972 was along Castle Street, where a mains sewer was inserted at a depth of about 4.50 m. at the east end, rising to about 3.75 m. at its west end. The trench was just over 1 m. wide and ran from the junction of Castle Street with Market Approach to the junction of Castle Street with Factory Street. Initially the contractors aimed at excavating the sewer trench in 20-30 m. stretches, but insecure soil made this method inefficient. Consequently the whole trench was dug in short stretches of about 10 m., the pipes inserted and the trench partially backfilled. This constructional technique, the narrow width of the trench and the looseness of the soil rendered impossible the drawing of sections and the assessment of alignments. Sketch sections where possible, photographs and measured details were recorded. Three major ditches, D1, D2 and D4 were observed.

Ditch 4

This eastern-most ditch was approximately 17.5 m. wide at its highest recognizable level, which was about 1.5 m. below present ground level. Its upper layers were filled with redeposited gravel and ironstone rubble. This layer produced a sherd of a stoneware greybeard bottle of the late 16th- early 17th century, with a medallion bearing the arms of Amsterdam²¹ and part of the base of a cylindrical glass bottle, royal blue in colour, of the second half of the 18th century.²² This layer presumably represents the period of the castle's destruction in the 17th century and its continual filling-up later. At the maximum depth of the sewer trench at this point, 4.70 m., the ditch was filled with dark-blue clayey silt full of charcoal flecks and fragments of decayed wood.

^{17a} Bromley, *op. cit.* note 6, 6. Excavation notes in Banbury Museum. Further material and verbal information from Mr. J. Fearon.

¹⁸ *V.C.H. Oxon.*, ii, 322.

¹⁹ Bromley, *op. cit.* note 6, 6.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 7. Photographs and information from Mr. J. Fearon.

²¹ S. Moorhouse, 'Finds from Basing House, Hampshire', *Post-Med. Arch.*, iv (1970), 81, Fig. 23, No. 283.

²² Cf. D. Ashunt, 'Gawber Glass House, Barnsley', *Post-Med. Arch.*, iv (1970), 124, Fig. 37, No. 14.

A layer of ironstone rubble was found immediately to the west, the outside, of this ditch.

Immediately west of D₄ was a shallow scoop, D₃, about 1.5 m. deep, which was filled with ironstone rubble including at least one piece of ashlar. The function of this feature is unclear.

Ditch 1

The western-most ditch, D₁, which must be that of the castle's outer defences, was 10 m. wide at its uppermost level, some 90 cm. below the present ground surface. The bottom of the ditch was not revealed. The lowest layer revealed was blue, heavy silty clay again containing much organic material. Above this was a layer of dark brown dirty silt, full of charcoal flecks.

Ditch 2

At the top this ditch was 10 m. wide. The various strata were 30–40 cm. thick, containing ironstone rubble, redeposited gravel, dark brown silt, and bluish clayey silt with much organic material. It may have been re-cut on the eastern side. This ditch may be the third moat that is recorded as being dug in 1644.²³

With the exception of Ditch 4 no provenanced pottery was recovered in this sewer trench. There were two sherds of a hard red ware of the late 17th-early 18th century and the base of a black glazed cup of Midland type of the 17th century.

Lying immediately west of D₂ and sealed by it was a shallow ditch cut into the natural gravel. The uppermost width of this ditch as it cut the gravel was 50 cm. The lower fill of this ditch was dark brown silt with charcoal flecks; the upper fill was a lighter brown silt. No pottery was recovered.

This feature strongly resembles the ditches of Prehistoric, Roman and Saxon date, which are found in abundance on the Thames gravels, and this feature may prove to be a part of a site predating the castle by many years. Similar features were recorded in Oxford in 1961.²⁴

THE CAR PARK SITE (SITE B)—INTERIM REPORT

This site was excavated in advance of a pedestrian subway. As it was the traditional site of the motte,²⁵ a trial trench (Trench 1) (FIG. 2), some 8 m. × 2 m. was cut. Through the goodwill of the contractors, Oxcon Limited, this was subsequently extended four times. The area and depth of the excavation was limited by the final form of the subway, but three trenches were excavated below these maximum depths. Trenches 1 and 2 were the trial trench and initial extension; Trench 3 was the final cut on the site. Further information was recovered when the contractors moved onto the site.

²³ *V.C.H. Oxon.*, x, 41.

²⁴ F. Radcliffe, 'Excavations in Logic Lane,' *Oxoniensia* xxvi/xxvii (1961–2), 39–42.

²⁵ *V.C.H. Oxon.* II, 322.

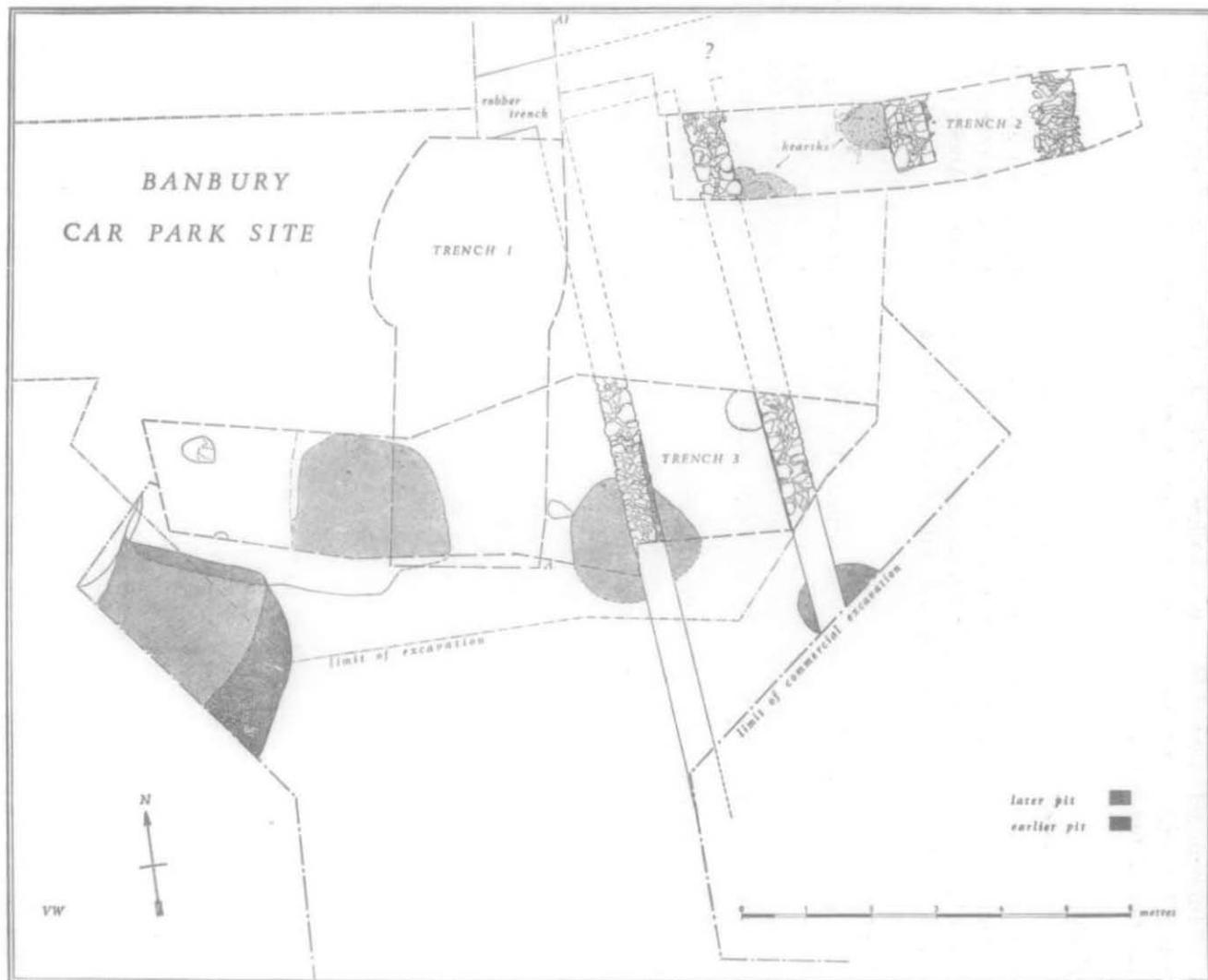


FIG. 2
Site B. Pre-Gravel Phases.

Pre-Gravel—Phase 1. (FIG. 2)

This phase was represented by a series of massive pits, whose fill varied from brown loam to blue silt with clay patches. None of these pits was fully excavated. The pottery recovered was mainly coarse ware of the 11th or 12th century; there was one possible sherd of tripod pitcher. Logically these pits must pre-date the castle and indicate activity from a period for which the only documentary evidence is the Domesday Manor.

Pre-Gravel—Phase 2. (FIG. 2; PL. XXII, c)

The main feature of this phase is the large stone building, at least 6.5 × 7.5 m. of dry stone construction using local ironstone. The main north-south alignment was recovered in Trenches 2 and 3. In the north extension of Trench 1 an east-west robber trench was located, almost certainly part of the same building, which would suggest that it was either a courtyard or a winged building. The building was observed, during construction work, extending for 4.5 m. to the south. The dirt floors were kept spotlessly clean and the only pottery recovered came from a hearth in Trench 2. The pottery was of early 12th century type. This large building must presumably be the first phase of major occupation on the castle site.

The Gravel Dump. (FIG. 3)

The Pre-Gravel Phase 2 building was robbed to various degrees and the remainder was immediately buried by a 1 m. dump of gravel, which contained only occasional patches of clay and loam. The limits of the gravel spread were not fully determined. It can be dated to the 13th or 14th century by the presence of a buckle with a fleur-de-lis terminal of that date²⁶ sealed immediately under the gravel.

Post-Gravel Phases (FIG. 4)

A series of stone and timber buildings were erected on top of the gravel. (The phase numbers of these buildings are those allocated on site, the latest being Z, the earliest T. The stone buildings II and III seem to survive throughout the different periods of timber buildings.)

Phase T

Part of the interior of a large building with rectangular timber partitions was excavated. No external walls were recovered. Two distinctive materials were used for the floor, a lime mortar with much gravel and a compact crushed ironstone. The floor was repaired at least once. An internal doorway was located by the south-east corner of Trench 1.

Phase U

The south-west corner of the site was used as a rubbish dump, vast quantities of pottery and animal bone being recovered.

²⁶ I am grateful to David Hinton for looking at this object.

BANBURY

CAR PARK SITE B

SECTION A-A1

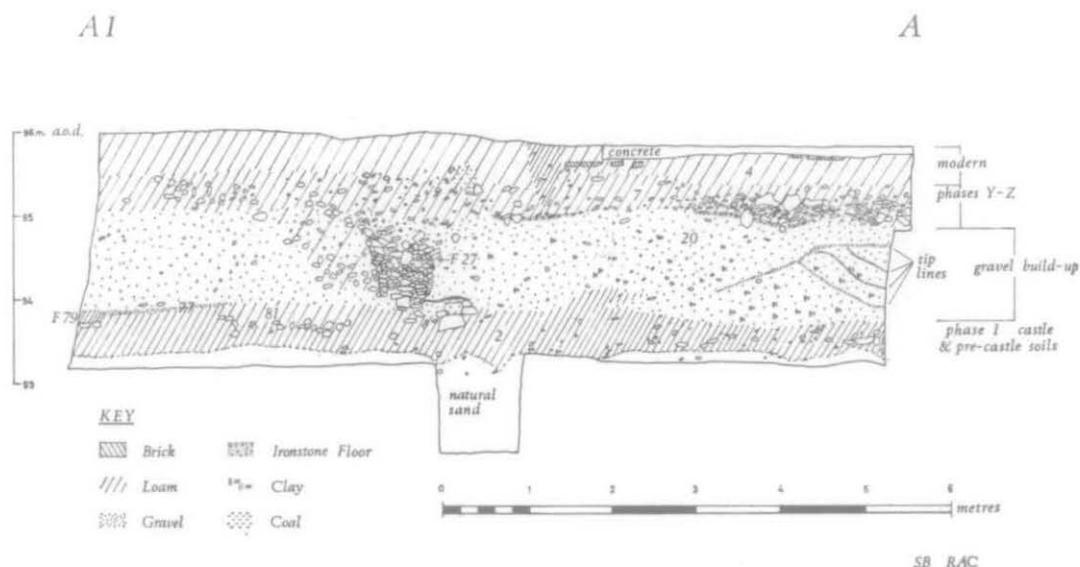


FIG. 3

Site B. Section through Castle Dump.

Stone buildings were erected on the eastern end of the site. The corner of one stone building, 164, was identified in the form of robber trenches.

Stone Building II

Lying some 4 m. north of 164, and constructed at the same time, was a rectangular stone building. This building was represented by a robbed-out wall, 105, and the foundations of wall 255 on the west. The area of the building was clearly indicated by a heavily burnt clay floor. The eastern side had been robbed, and is indicated by the limits of the clay floor. The northern limit was not located.

Sealed under this building was the floor of the Phase T building. This floor was also preserved in the corner of 164. Between 164 and 105 the Phase 1 floor had been eroded indicating that the area between the two buildings had never been built on, allowing the floor to weather away.

Stone Building III

This building was erected on the same alignment as, and on the northern part of, Stone Building II. It was represented by a shallow east-west robber

BANBURY CAR PARK SITE

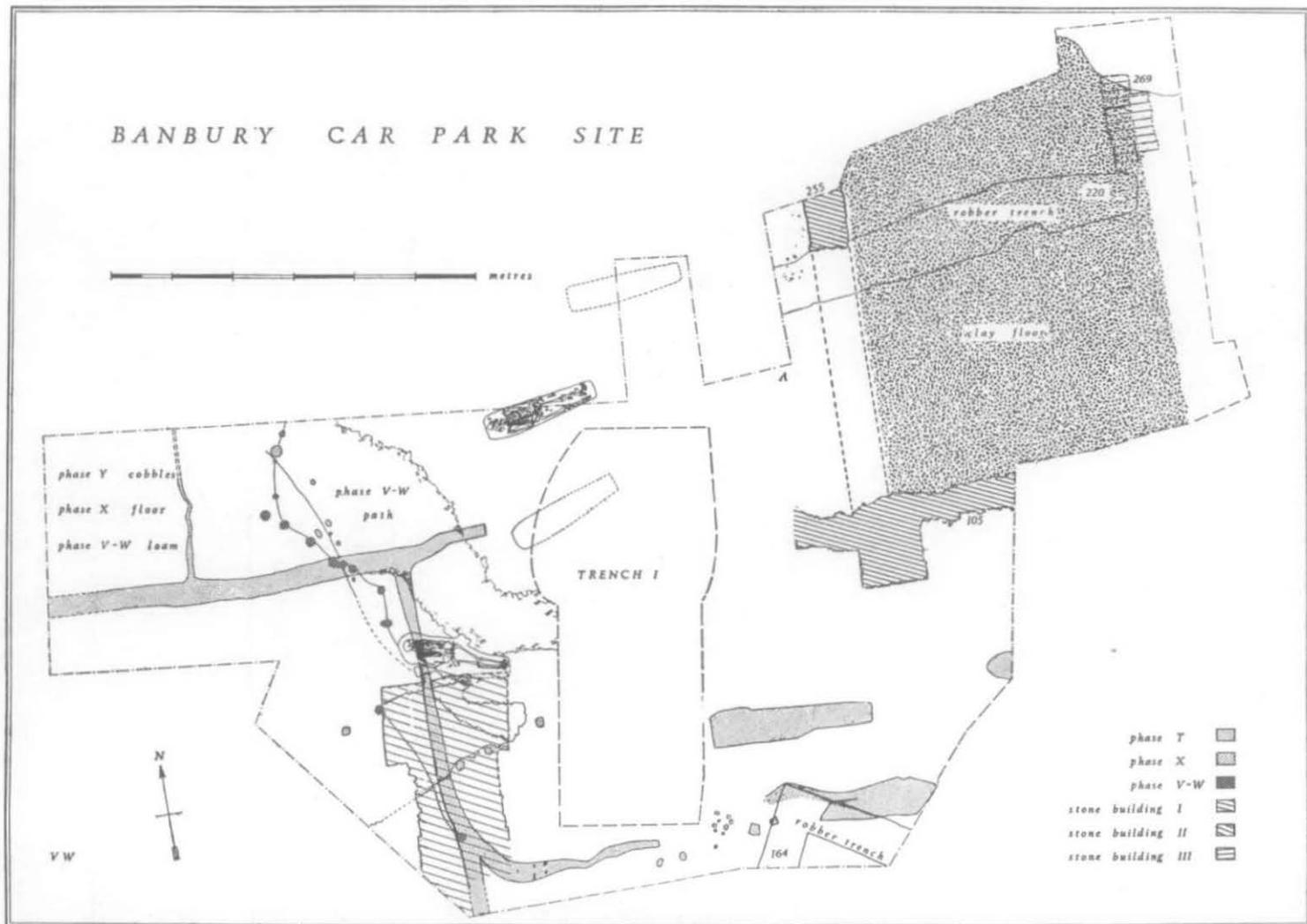


FIG. 4
 Site B. Post-Gravel Phases.

trench, 220, and the foundation of a north-south wall, 269; Wall 255 may have continued in use during this phase. It had a pitched stone floor set into clay.

On the western part of the site, Phase U was followed by a series of timber and stone buildings, Phases V-Y and Stone Building III.

Phase V

A small rectangular timber building at least 4 × 3 m., whose north-west corner was located. It is represented by three post-holes, and a mortar and crushed ironstone floor. A stake fence ran north-west from the northern side of this building.

Phase V-W

While the Phase V building was still standing, the fence was removed and replaced by a crude path of mortar and ironstone lumps.

Phase X

The Phase V-W structures were replaced in Phase X by a larger timber building at least 6 × 2.8 m. The eastern side was represented by a line of posts, giving way at the southern end to a sill beam resting on stone footings, the southern edge indicated by post-holes. The floor was a mixture of grit and pebbles.

Phase Y—Stone Building III

The latest structural element on the site was represented by a cobbled surface and the stone footings of a structure whose construction and purpose are, at the moment, unclear. The pottery indicates that this phase cannot be later than *c.* 1500.

Phase Z

Four burials of perhaps the 17th century were located, all aligned east-west. Only two could be properly excavated. These burials and the skeletons found in the 1963 sewer just to the south-east²⁷ are probably associated with the siege of the castle in 1644.²⁸

The gap of about 150 years between Phases Y and Z suggests that part of the site had been levelled at some period after the demolition of the castle, perhaps with the building of cottages in the 19th century.

DISCUSSION

This excavation has raised a number of problems relating to the original form and subsequent development of the castle. It has generally been assumed that the original castle was either of motte and bailey type²⁹ or had a shell keep.³⁰

²⁷ Notes in Banbury Museum.

²⁸ *V.C.H. Oxon.*, x, 41.

²⁹ *V.C.H. Oxon.*, II, 322. *V.C.H. Oxon.*, x, 41.

³⁰ Lobel, *op. cit.* note 2, 4. Potts, *op. cit.* note 14, 18.

One exception is Beesley³¹ who quotes Stukeley's description, which can be interpreted as pertaining to a concentric shape. The so-called castle mound, which was about 3 m. high, stood in the area of Site B. In 1963 the Historical Society came to the conclusion that it did not form an original part of the castle³² and the 1972 excavations support that conclusion.

The castle may have originated from a manor house or a bishop's small palace, as indicated by the Pre-Gravel Phase 2 building. Whether this was defended or not cannot yet be decided; no pottery was recovered from the defences earlier than the 16th century.

The gravel bank indicates a major rebuilding and the gravel may be derived from the excavation of the defences. In the late 13th and early 14th centuries, there is a trend, in southern England at least, towards the fortification of rural manor houses by the construction of moats and the in-filling of the interiors. This happens for example at Weoley Castle (Warks.),³³ Northolt Manor (Essex),³⁴ Ellington (Hunts.),³⁵ and at Milton (Hants.) and Ashwell (Herts.)³⁶. In Banbury there may be an urban example of this fortification and in-filling of the site.

The re-building was probably caused by climatic deterioration in the 13th century.³⁷ The redesigning in a crudely concentric form, if indeed this is when the final concentric form was established, may be as a result of the visits of Edward I to Banbury in 1275, 1276 and 1277.³⁸ Stukeley's description would seem to fit this final form.

27 CORNHILL, SITE A

This site was excavated on the instigation of J. G. Hurst and R. T. Rowley to locate the south-west corner of the defences of the castle's outer enclosure. The area available was restricted on three sides by the presence of buildings and walls, some of which stood 40 feet high.

METHOD OF EXCAVATION

Underneath the thin, 15 cm., cover of topsoil, a layer of loose brick with some ironstone rubble was revealed. This rubble, proving subsequently to be the infilling of a cellar and very unstable, was removed mechanically over as large an area as possible to enable a safe trench to be cut through the cellar floor. The first stage of excavation created a roughly rectangular trench 4.4 × 7.9 m. (approximately) (FIG. 6), a depth of 1.4 m. of topsoil and brickbat having been

³¹ *Op. cit.* note 5, 63-64.

³² Excavation notes in Banbury Museum.

³³ A. Oswald, 'Excavations at Weoley Castle', *Med. Arch.*, vi-vii (1962-3), 109-134.

³⁴ J. G. Hurst, 'The Kitchen Area of Northolt Manor', *Med. Arch.*, v (1961), 239, 243.

³⁵ C. F. Tebbutt, G. T. Rudd, and S. Moorhouse, 'Excavation of a moated site at Ellington, Hunts.', *Proc. Camb. Antiq. Soc.*, LXIII (1971), 31-74.

³⁶ D. G. and J. G. Hurst, 'Excavations of Two Moated Sites—Milton, Hampshire, and Ashwell, Herts.', *J.B.A.A.*, xxx (1967), 48-86. This article includes a valuable discussion.

³⁷ H. H. Lamb, *The Changing Climate* (1966).

³⁸ *V.C.H. Oxon.*, x, 17.

removed. The second stage of excavation, carried out by hand, produced a trench 1.5×8.5 m. (approximately) (FIG. 5) through the cellar floor.

Phase I (FIG. 5)

The earliest features on the site were two gullies, F.24 and F.21, F.24 apparently cutting F.21. Both were filled with a compact light brown loam, with occasional charcoal flecks. The gullies were uniform in size and shape, between 90 cm. and 1.00 m. wide, 20–30 cm. deep, flat-bottomed with gently sloping sides. Post-holes in both gullies and a scatter of stake-holes in F.24 suggest that there were wattle fences in the bottom of both. The random disposition of the stake-holes indicates that perhaps the fence was rebuilt at least once, perhaps running along the bottom of F.24 and also along the top of the western edge. F.25 was 24 cm. deep with a diameter of 26 cm., F.26 was 13 cm. deep, 40 cm. in diameter; the stake-holes varied in shape from circular to rectangular, and in size from 5 cm. diameter to 13×10 cm., and in depth from 5 to 20 cm.

Six sherds of Stamford type ware were found in F.24, and in both F.24 and F.21 there was quite a large quantity of limestone and shell-gritted pottery of the 11th and 12th centuries. The similarity in character, fill and pottery in the two gullies suggests a basic contemporaneity. A date in the second half of the 11th century may be postulated for the construction of these gullies, their use lasting into the first half of the 12th century.

As the gullies silted up, a small pit, F.22, was cut into the overburden, layer 12 (FIG. 7), adjacent to F.24. This shallow pit, 30 cm. deep, was filled with light brown loam and a very heavy layer of charcoal. It contained a few animal bones and no pottery.

The developing soil, Layer 12, into which F.22 was cut and which subsequently filled F.21 and F.24, was a fine compact brown loam, and produced twenty-two sherds of the limestone and shell-gritted pottery. Some of these sherds formed part of a straight-sided cooking-pot (FIG. 8, No. 1), the rest of which was found in the upper fill of F.21. One sherd of Stamford type ware, identical to those found in F.24, was recovered from 12. One sherd of sandy ware and a few sherds of a coarser flint and limestone-gritted pottery were in 12, similar sherds being present in Phase 2 contexts.

Phase 2 (PL. XXII, D)

This phase is represented by a rectangular stone-lined pit, F.51, with battered sides, measuring 2.84×4.10 m. at the top, and 2.00×3.40 m. at the bottom. Ten courses of lining were extant to a depth of 1.50 m., the sides sloping at an angle of 70° to the horizontal. The bottom of the pit was natural ironstone bedrock. The southern corner had been slightly damaged by the foundation trench of the adjacent building, 'The Vine', formerly the Corn Exchange, built in 1857. The excavation was extended to locate the top of the east and west corners of the pit.

The pit, which cut cleanly through layer 12 and F.21, had been constructed

27 CORNHILL BANBURY

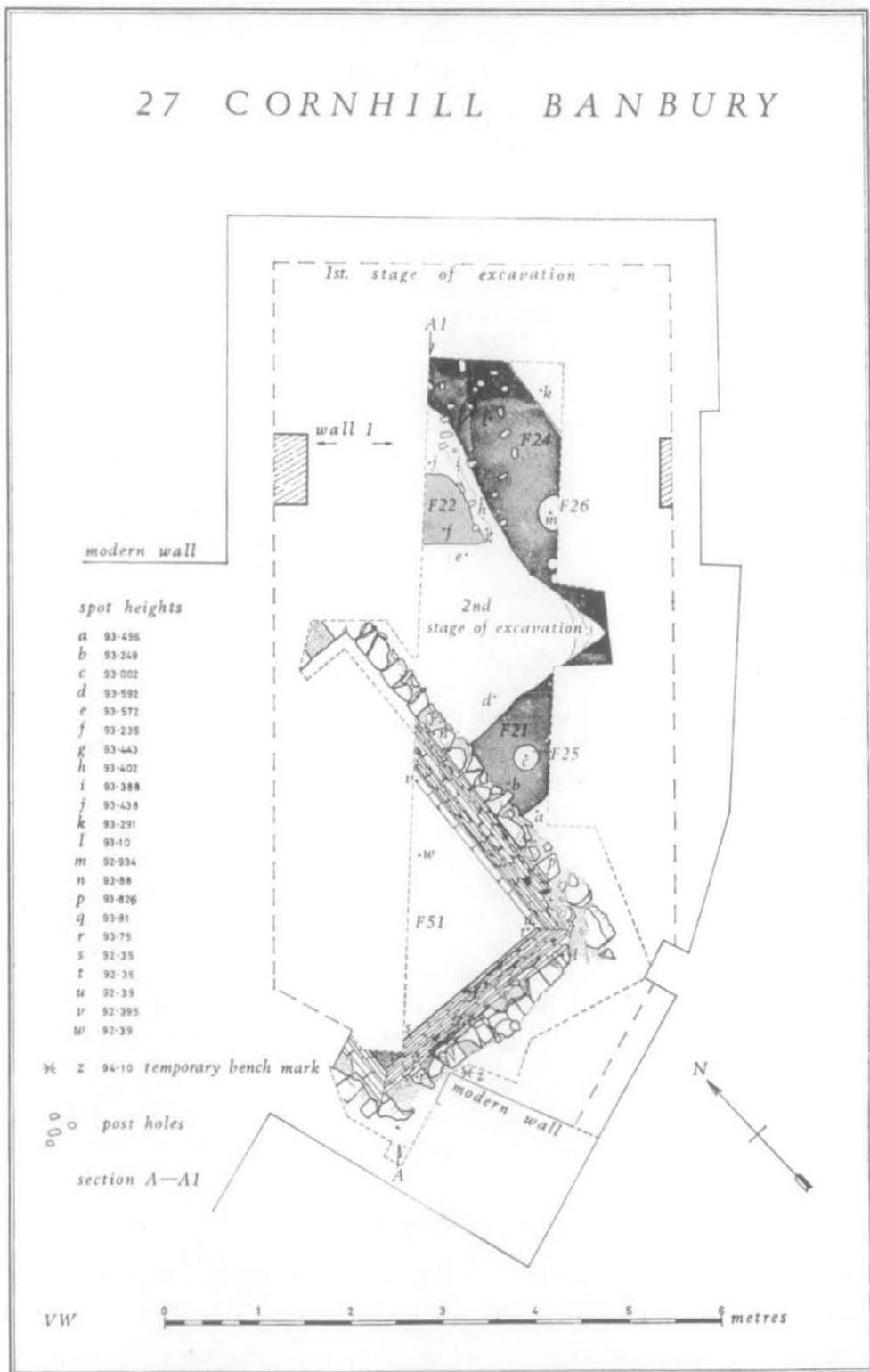


FIG. 5
Site A. Plan of Saxo-Norman Gullies and 13th century Pit.

by digging the hole then lining it with a single thickness of either ironstone ashlar or ironstone blocks squared on one side only. Any gap between the lining and the hole was filled with small ironstone rubble. The ashlar was found predominantly in the lower courses of the pit, the upper being constructed from the squared ironstone blocks. This presumably indicates either a nearby source of ashlar, which became exhausted as the pit was lined, or a lowering of standards during construction. Less than one-half of the contents of the pit were excavated.

The ceramic finds in the pit, mostly from layer 18, were generally of high quality glazed vessels. A few residual sherds of 12th century pottery were found. Layer 20 produced a selection of preserved wood, mostly twigs, but also the remains of one or two boards. This silty layer with clay patches was coloured blue as a consequence of the organic material within it.³⁹ The pit was sealed by clay, layer 17. A silver, long-cross penny was in 17; unfortunately, it was too badly corroded to be accurately identified. However, two silver long-cross halfpennies of Henry III were found in 18. The long-cross coinage was recalled absolutely in 1279 and these two coins must have been deposited by 1280 at the very latest.⁴⁰

DISCUSSION

Although F.51 has been called a pit, for this was clearly its final use, its original function may have been somewhat different. There are three possibilities for the original function of this feature.

The first is that it was the cellar of an upper-halled house.⁴¹ However, the known examples all have vertical walls, are generally preserved to a greater height, and are generally larger in plan, such as the one found in Winchester in 1960, which was 15 ft. 6 ins. × 34 ft. 6 ins. in plan, surviving to a height of 6 ft.⁴²

The second possibility is that F.51 formed the bottom of a garderobe chute. This is unlikely because in the first instance there is as yet no evidence to suggest the proximity of the castle walls, and secondly it is possible that the castle did not reach its full extent until the end of the 13th century,⁴³ by which time, apparently, this feature had been abandoned for two decades.

The third possibility is that this feature is a subterranean store. The organic remains in 17 may well be the remains of a wicker and board floor. Deep stone-lined storage pits are common in Medieval Southampton, where one of 13th–14th century date had a wooden floor.⁴⁴ That F.51 was a storage pit for an, as yet, unidentified townhouse seems most likely. The coin evidence⁴⁵ suggests that the use of this pit for storage ceased between 1256 and 1280 when,

³⁹ This blue discoloration was also noticed in the lower levels of the ditches in Castle Street. See 'Excavations in Hungate, York', Appendix II by L. Biek, *Arch. J.*, cxvi (1959), 107–9.

⁴⁰ I am grateful to Dr. D. M. Metcalf for information and advice concerning this.

⁴¹ See P. A. Faulkner, 'Domestic Planning from the 12th to 14th century', *Arch. J.*, cxv (1958), 150–183.

⁴² B. Cunliffe, *Winchester Excavations, 1949–60*, 1 (1964), 167–68.

⁴³ See above p. 323.

⁴⁴ C. Platt, 'Excavations in Medieval Southampton 1966' (Interim Report), Fig. 3.

⁴⁵ See below p. 337.

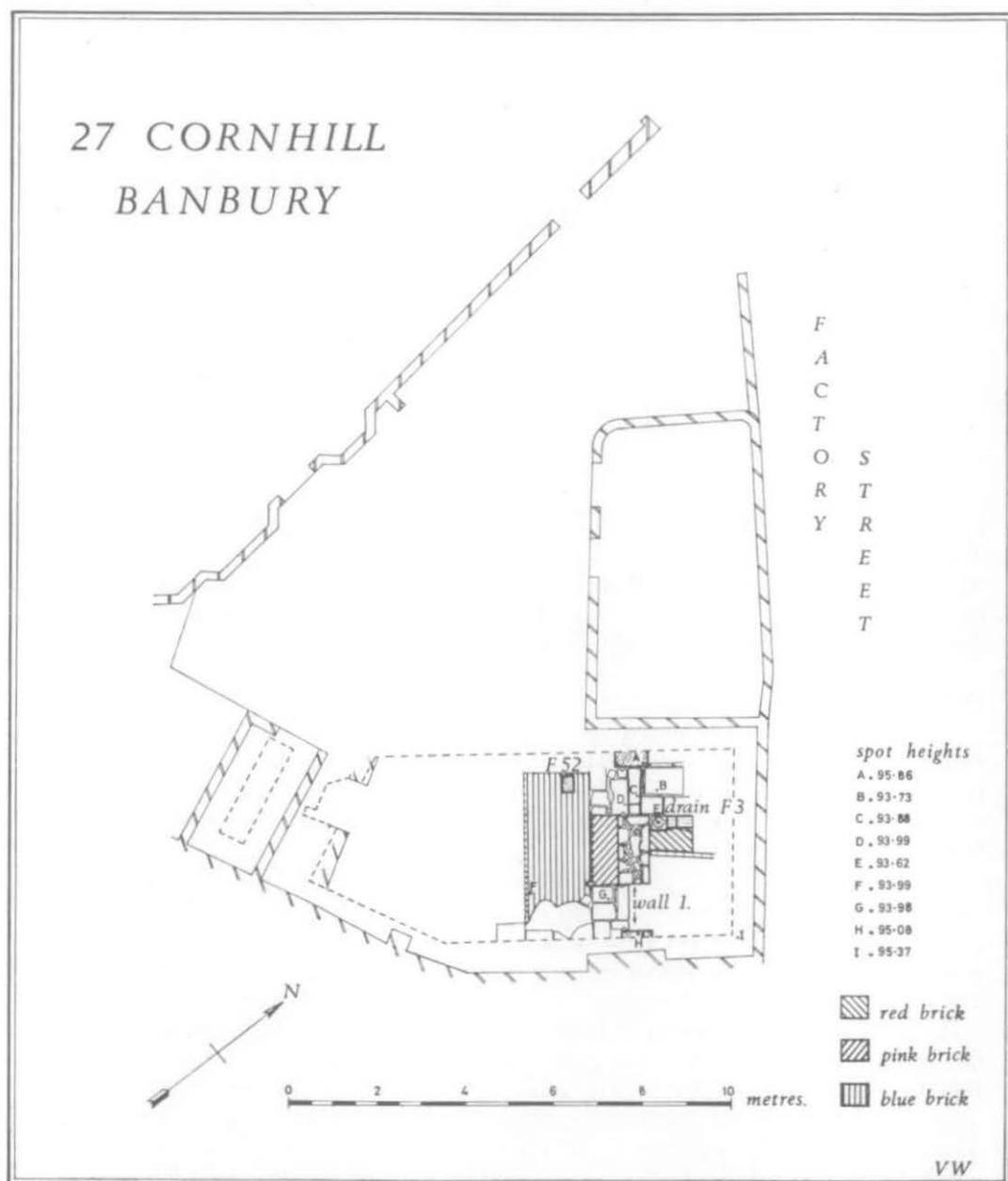


FIG. 6

Location of Site A and Plan of 17th century Cellar.

27 CORNHILL BANBURY

SECTION A-A1

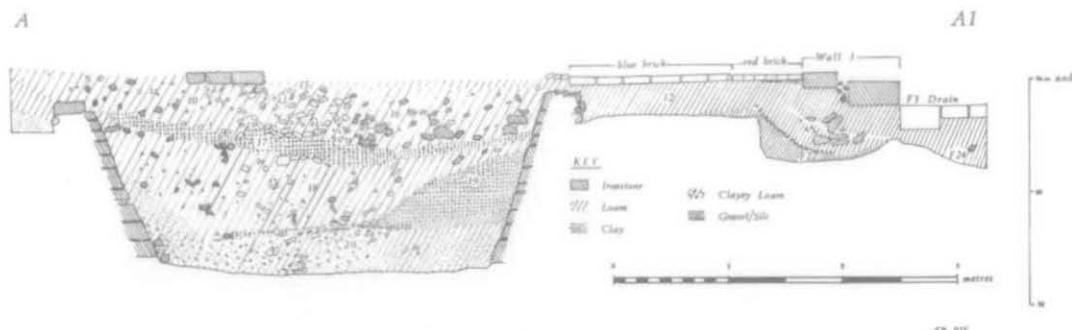


FIG. 7

Site A. Section A-A1 through 13th century Pit and Saxo-Norman Gullies.

perhaps, a rise in the level of the water-table caused too much dampness.⁴⁶ The pit was then used for rubbish before being finally abandoned and sealed with a layer of clay by 1280. A magnificent stone-lined rubbish pit was excavated in Oxford in 1969.⁴⁷ The pottery, when compared with material from Oxford, does suggest a later date than the coins.

Phase 3. (FIG. 6)

This phase is represented by a post-medieval cellar, whose construction completely removed any archaeology on the site from the late 13th century to the post-medieval period. The north-east end of the cellar floor was preserved intact. The full extent of the cellar was not uncovered and cannot be estimated from the archaeological evidence.

The cellar had an original internal partition, Wall 1. This wall was constructed of ironstone ashlar and mortar, and had a rubble core. It was 70 cm. thick and still stood 1.10 m. above the cellar floor. Two original doorways led down two steps into a lower room, floored with flagstones, at the north-east end of the cellar. These steps are recorded on Fig. 6 by spot heights, B, C and D. This lower room may have been a shop set halfway below street level facing Factory Street, or just a store room, the other room being a workshop. Present street level is some 1.7 m. above the floor of this lower room. In this lower room was a stone drain, F.3, with a small sump at the foot of Wall 1, and flowing out into Factory Street. The lower room was subsequently divided by a red brick wall of single thickness running at right angles to Wall 1. The unstable nature of the trench sides made it impossible to excavate the extreme north-east corner of this lower room.

⁴⁶ For climatic deterioration see above p. 323.

⁴⁷ T. G. Hassall, 'Excavations in Oxford 1968; First Interim Report,' *Oxoniensia*, xxxiv (1969), 14 and Plate IIA.

In the upper room was a stout vertical timber, F.52, measuring 38 × 22 cm. and set in a post-hole packed with chippings from the flagstones. F.52 may have been a post for a lifting device. Both rooms were originally floored with flagstones and subsequently repaired with red and blue bricks. Metal hinges and jambs in the floor indicated that both passageways had doors. The floor of the south-west end of the upper room and the upper courses of the central portion of Wall 1 were inadvertently removed by the mechanical excavator while the brick rubble filling of the cellar was being removed.

The cellar was probably constructed in the middle of the 17th century. In the lowest course of the Wall 1 was a sherd of pottery with a buff fabric and a light green mottled glaze, which is probably of late 17th century origin;⁴⁸ it has also been suggested that this sherd may be Stamford ware. However, the stone mortar and general style of Wall 1 compare closely with the walls of St. Mary's Vicarage, which is dated 1648. The cellar may well, then, date to the 1640s or 1650s, when there was a spate of rebuilding in the town following the devastation of the Civil War. Its proximity to the castle site makes it likely that it was one of those buildings which by tradition are built out of castle stone.

In the middle of the 19th century a certain Mr. Scrivener had a tallow chandlery behind the Plough, and it may well be that this cellar formed part of the chandlery.⁴⁹

DISCUSSION

This excavation provided further evidence for occupation prior to the 12th century. An important pottery group was recovered from the pit. It seems most likely that the castle's defences will be found to the north of this site on the north side of Factory Street.

THE FINDS

THE POTTERY

Pottery from this site falls into two chronological groups, as represented by Phases I and II. The Phase I pottery follows in the tradition of the shell- and limestone-gritted fabrics of the South Midlands in the 11th and 12th centuries. Phase II represents for Banbury and the Banbury region a very important, albeit incomplete, dated group of the third quarter of the 13th century.

Each fabric was treated by layer, sherds being counted, weighed and a minimum vessel number hazarded. Seventeen different fabrics were identified.

Phase I—Fabrics 1-4

Fabric 1

Loose clay, with shell, limestone and very occasional flint grits, dark brown-red in colour. Typical of the 11th to 12th century pottery of the region, apparently developing from St. Neots type wares. There was one sherd of St. Neots type pottery (FIG. 8, 3). 75% of the identifiable vessels were cooking-pots, the remainder dishes with slightly inverted rims.

There were 121 sherds of Fabric 1, i.e. some 89% of the pottery in the phase,

⁴⁸ Kindly identified by Mrs. Jo de Goris.

⁴⁹ G. Herbert, *Shoemaker's Window*, 2nd Edition (1971), 93.

having 42 sherds in layer 24, 67 in 21 and 12 in 13; in Phase 2 there was one sherd in 16, 19, 20 and three in 18.

Illustrated (FIG. 8).

1. Straight-sided cooking-pot, club rim. Typical Cotswold type of 11th-12th century.⁵⁰ Layer 12 and F.24.
2. Slightly globular cooking-pot, gently everted rim, pulled to a slight ridge on top. Small ridge one third of way up the body. Diagonal slash marks on rim.⁵¹ F.21.
3. Small cooking-pot; St. Neots type with purple, shelly fabric, soapy and simple everted rim.⁵² F.21.
4. Straight-sided cooking-pot, simple slightly squared rim, similar to No. 1. F.24.
5. Slightly globular cooking-pot, everted square rim with slight internal flange for lid. F.24.
6. Straight-sided cooking-pot, with slight neck 2½ cm. below the slightly rounded and inturned rim. F.24.
7. Straight-sided cooking-pot, club rim.⁵³ F.24.
8. Cooking-pot with square, slightly inturned rim. Layer 12.
9. Cooking-pot. Simple everted rim with slight horizontal hollow half-way up rim. Layer 12.
10. Cooking-pot. Flat-topped triangular section rim with very shallow central depression, presumably for lid.⁵⁴ Layer 13.
11. Rim of cooking-pot, containing much less limestone detritus than is usual for this fabric; some of the grits disintegrated in firing or by chemical action in the soil. Grey core with buff surface. Presumably it indicates the end of the tradition represented by Fabric 1. There are finger impressions on top of the squared rim. Jope has suggested that finger-impressed rims in this fabric date from the middle of the 11th century,⁵⁵ but there may be an element of doubt attached to this date. Layer 12.
12. Apparently deep dish with inturned rim; form lies within the St. Neots type tradition.⁵⁶ Layer 12.
13. Dish with inturned rim. Shallow horizontal groove under rim on the outside, two other depressions on the outside of body. F.21.
14. Shallow dish with inturned flat rim. Sides thicken at both base and rim, with three shallow horizontal grooves. A similar form was found at Logic Lane, Oxford.⁵⁷ F.24.
15. Shallow dish. Club rim with distinct internal and external grooves immediately below rim.⁵⁸ F.24.
16. Shallow dish with simple rounded rim with slight horizontal grooves as on 15. F.24.

Fabric 2

Very crude dark grey flint-gritted fabric (flints up to 6 mm. in length). It bears some resemblance to the 'very coarse' pottery from Swinbrook, Oxon.⁵⁹ Hinton

⁵⁰ Cf. E. M. Jope and R. I. Threlfall, 'The Twelfth Century Castle at Ascott Doilly', *Antiq. J.*, xxxix (1959), 250, Fig. 9, D7.

⁵¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 250, Fig. 9, D8.

⁵² See J. G. Hurst, 'Saxo-Norman pottery in East Anglia', *Proc. Camb. Antiq. Soc.*, XLIX (1955), 43-70; and cf. F. Radcliffe, 'Excavations at Logic Lane', *Oxoniensia*, xxvi-xxvii (1961-2), 49, Fig. 9, No. 15.

⁵³ Cf. Jope, *op. cit.*, note 50.

⁵⁴ Cf. Radcliffe, *op. cit.* note 52, 51, Fig. 10, No. 3.

⁵⁵ See E. M. Jope, 'Late Saxon Pits under Oxford Castle Mound', *Oxoniensia*, xvii-xviii (1952-3), 77-91.

⁵⁶ Hurst, *op. cit.* note 52.

⁵⁷ Radcliffe, *op. cit.* note 52, 54, Fig. 12, No. 6.

⁵⁸ Cf. *Ibid.* 54, Fig. 12, No. 6.

⁵⁹ D. A. Hinton, 'Medieval Pottery from Swinbrook, Oxon.', *Oxoniensia*, xxxvi (1971), 107-110.

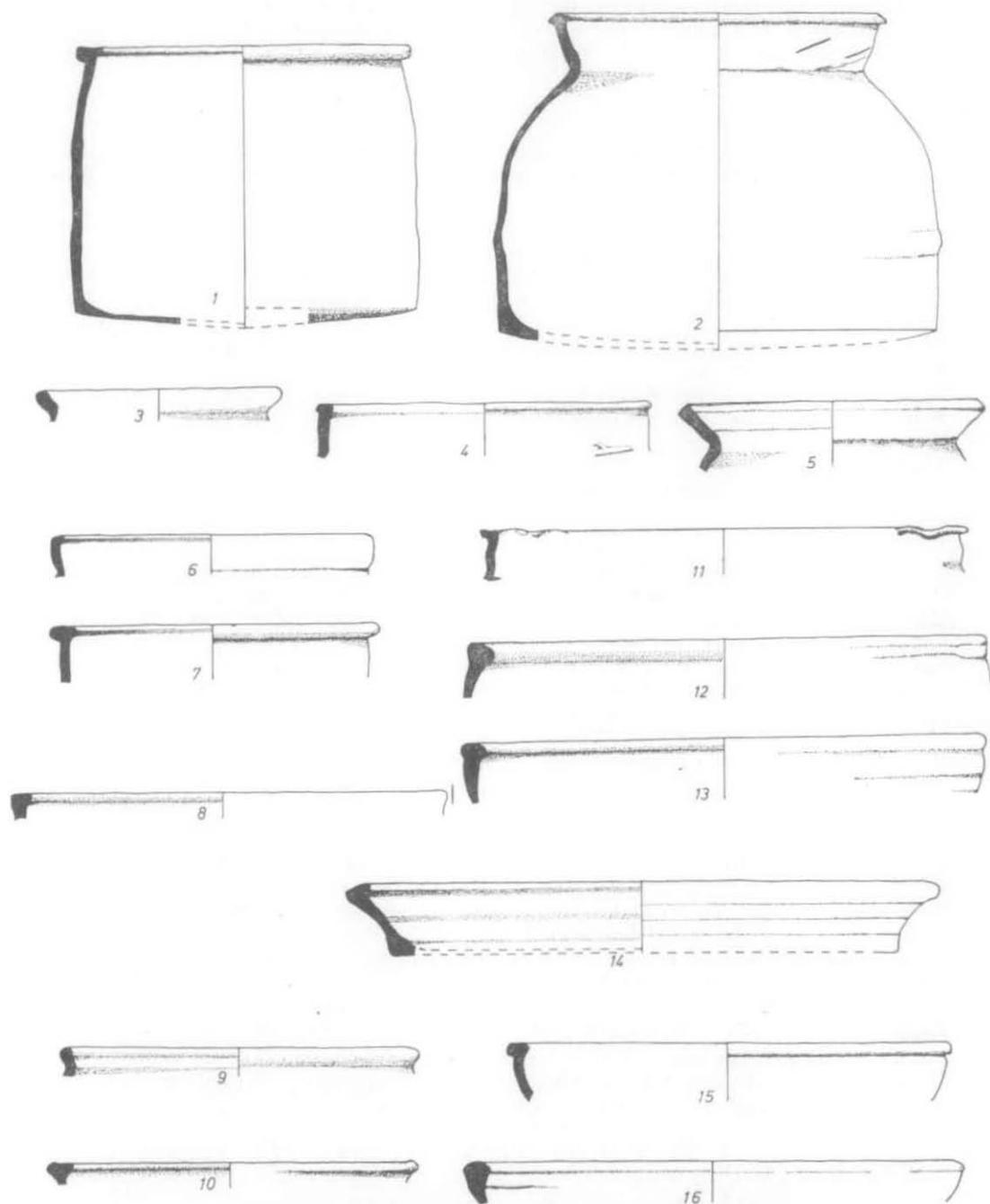


FIG. 8

Saxo-Norman Pottery from 27 Cornhill. Fabric I. (‡).

suggests that this fabric was in use during the 11th and 12th centuries. In Banbury a date between c. 1050 and 1150 would seem reasonable in view of the associated types.

No glazed sherds. Seven sherds in F.24, 1 in 12 and 1 in Phase 2, layer 16. None illustrated.

Fabric 3

Stamford type ware. Hard creamy fabric with pink tinge. Clear light green or orange glaze with copper and iron specks. Six sherds in F.24, 2 in 12. None illustrated.

Fabric 4

Hard sandy fabric with minute flint particles, grey core with slightly darker surfaces. No glaze. One sherd in Phase 1, layer 12, and 1 in Phase 2, layer 20. None illustrated.

The pottery in this phase would indicate a date from the middle of the 11th century to the middle of the 12th century. On the available evidence sandy wares begin to appear in the later stages of this Phase, i.e. in the 12th century, although they were found in 11th century contexts under the Castle Mound in Oxford.⁶⁰

Phase II—Fabrics 5-17

These are mainly sandy and fine fabrics.

Fabric 5

Loose limestone-gritted fabric with grey core and pink buff surfaces. No glazed sherds. The limestone has regularly disintegrated either on firing or more likely through the presence of Calcium Carbonate (CaCO₃) in the fabric, which leaches out when in contact with either acidic soils or water containing CO₂.⁶¹ Similar pottery has come from 13th and 14th century contexts from Slape Copse (Oxon.), where some sherds had splashes of glaze,⁶² and Seacourt (Berks.).⁶³ In Banbury it is deposited by 1280 and may start being used in the mid 13th century and not towards the end of that century as at Seacourt. The fabric is reminiscent of, but finer than, Lyveden type pottery, but an Oxfordshire source for this fabric is perhaps more likely. Phase 1, 3 sherds in 12; Phase 2, 12 sherds in 18 and 1 in 19.

Illustrated (FIG. 9).

17. Jug with plain rim slightly hollowed out externally under rim. Layer 18.
 18. Cooking-pot, everted rim, rounded at top with very slight internal groove immediately under rim. This rim form is found in 12th and 13th century contexts in Oxford⁶⁴ and in Layer 12 at Seacourt.⁶⁵ Layer 12.
 19. Cooking-pot with flat inturned rim, thickened internally and with a shallow horizontal depression on the outside. Layer 12.

Fabric 6

Hard sandy with very occasional minute particles of flint and limestone; grey core, surfaces vary from grey to brown and black. Similar to but harder than Fabric 4. Five sherds from 18, and 1 from each of 16, 19 and 20.

⁶⁰ Jope, *op. cit.* note 55, 85.

⁶¹ Jope, *op. cit.* note 50, 245-246.

⁶² Trial excavations by the writer, unpublished, as more work is planned.

⁶³ M. Biddle, 'The Medieval Village of Seacourt,' *Oxoniensia*, xxvi-xxvii (1961-2), 136.

⁶⁴ Radcliffe, *op. cit.* note 52, 55, 57.

⁶⁵ Biddle, *op. cit.* note 63, 152, Fig. 23, especially no. 18.

Illustrated (FIG. 9).

20. Body sherd with grey core and light grey surfaces, decorated with a single horizontal band of rectangular roller-stamped notches. A sherd with similar decoration was found in the upper layers of Trench B at Logic Lane, Oxford. Layer 19.

Fabric 7

A hard tight sandy fabric with the sand particles visible in both the section and on the surface. Three sherds from 18 are glazed, brown, olive-green and grey-green. One glazed sherd is also decorated with a band of five lines of horizontal rilling. Five sherds from 18, 1 from 19, and 1 from 16. None illustrated.

Fabric 8

Hard fine sandy ware, varying in colour from grey to orange. Forty-one out of the 57 sherds were glazed varying from green-speckled light yellow-orange to a clear apple green. Some sherds were completely glazed, others just splashed. All the sherds were small but all were apparently from jugs.

The decoration includes horizontal rilling and bands on the green-glazed sherds, irregularly applied vertical strips alternately red and monochrome, one sherd having alternate pink and red strips. These sherds with vertical strips are usually glazed a rich yellow.

There are also two sherds of red-painted pottery with speckles of yellow and green glaze. Pottery with broad stripes of red clay pigment, similar to these two sherds, was found in an early 13th century context on the Bodleian Extension site in Oxford.⁶⁷

The most obvious parallel in decoration, but not in fabric, is with Bruce-Mitford's Ceramic Group C,⁶⁸ dated to the last quarter of the 13th century and into the 14th century. In Banbury this fabric is in use by 1280 and so must start by 1260. Eight sherds in 16, 1 in 17, 43 in 18 and 5 in 19.

Illustrated (FIG. 9)

21. Pink jug with reddish surfaces and splashes of dark green glaze. Upright rim thickened outside with pinched spout. This type of rim is found in Nottingham between 1250 and 1350.⁶⁹ Layer 18.

Fabric 9

A loose sandy fabric usually with a grey core and buff, grey and red surfaces. Although reminiscent of tripod pitcher fabric⁷⁰ these are not represented in the 5 sherds (all from 18) recovered. This fabric may represent the tripod pitcher tradition lasting into at least the middle of the 13th century.

Illustrated (FIG. 9)

22. Club-rimmed jug⁷¹ with a red external surface, dull orange glaze on body, brownish-orange glaze on rim. Strap handle with two applied clay strips glazed a dull olive-green. The handle is stabbed between the two applied strips. The rim shape indicates a late 13th century date, whereas the fabric appears to be typical of a mid 13th century context. This latter date seems the more reasonable. Layer 18.

23. Jug, grey core and pink surfaces with occasional small pieces of limestone detritus ;

⁶⁶ Radcliffe, *op. cit.* note 52, Fig. 13, No. 4.

⁶⁷ R. L. S. Bruce-Mitford, 'The Archaeology of the Bodleian Extension', *Oxoniensia*, iv (1939), 99, Nos. 3 and 4.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 123-124.

⁶⁹ M. W. Barley, 'Nottingham Town Wall', *Trans. Thoroton Soc.*, lxx (1965), 61, Fig. 5, No. 10.

⁷⁰ E. M. Jope, 'The Clarendon Hotel, Oxford', *Oxoniensia*, xxiv (1958), 51.

⁷¹ For this rim, see Biddle, *op. cit.* note 60, 144, no. 8.

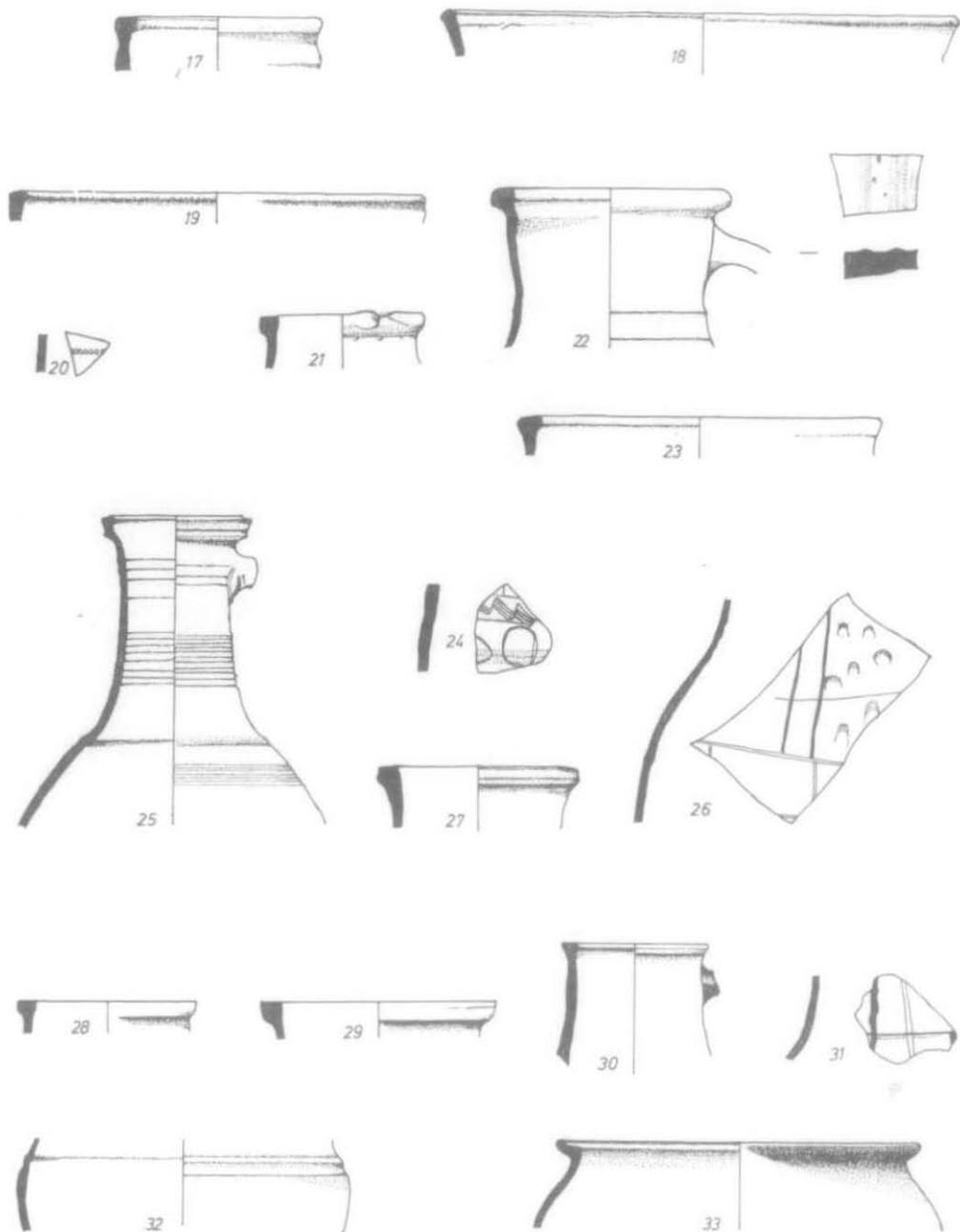


FIG. 9
13th century Pottery from Stone-Lined Pit, F 51, at 27 Cornhill. (1).

this is the only sherd in this fabric with limestone inclusion. The inturned rim is thickened externally. Layer 18.

24. Body sherd with light grey core and external olive-green glaze. Decorated with a band of incised wavy combed decoration with a row of incised circles underneath. This combed decoration, in reverse, can be exactly matched with a mid 13th century sherd from Worcester.⁷² Layer 18.

Fabric 10

Loose matrix filled with chalk and limestone particles and occasional larger flints and grits. Grey core with pink surfaces, twelve out of thirteen sherds (all from 18) glazed with a dull apple-green. Decoration includes both diagonal and vertical raised clay strips on body, overlying horizontal incised lines.

One grotesque sherd has two diagonal applied strips forming a 'V', and an adjacent applied smear of clay with three horizontal rows of stabbing; all this decoration is very crude.

The fabric can be paralleled at Seacourt, where it is dated to the 13th century,⁷³ which corresponds with this group. The fabric and decoration is reminiscent of Lyveden type material. None illustrated.

Fabric 11

Loose matrix with frequent small grits, including flints, cream exterior and grey interior surfaces. Reminiscent of Fabric 2; both fabrics may be local products. Two sherds from 18. None illustrated.

Fabric 12

Fine tight sandy fabric, generally red throughout, but sometimes grey or pink. The fabric is similar to Bruce-Mitford's Group C, but here dating to the third quarter of the 13th century.⁷⁴ The glaze is usually a dark sage green. The majority of sherds come from jugs and at least two 'three-decker' jugs are represented. Nine sherds from 16, 8 from 17 and 21 from 18.

Illustrated (FIG. 9)

25. Upper part of jug with bulbous body. The green glaze has bubbled in parts during firing. The rim is thickened to a squarish shape with slight hollows on the top and outside. Immediately below the rim on a level with the top of the strap handle are three horizontal lines of rilling; a further band occurs on the neck immediately above the curve of the body. As the body swells out, there is another band of fine rilling. There is a variety of internal rilling on the neck. Similar decoration can be seen on 13th early 14th century pitchers from Period 1 at Seacourt.⁷⁵ Layers 18 and 20.

26. Body sherd of 'three-decker jug'. The upper storey is decorated with applied scales in a zone bounded by two vertical red applied stripes. Middle storey has widely spaced applied vertical stripes alternately monochrome and dull red. Layer 17.

Fabric 13

Compact matrix with particles of crushed limestone and flint, dark grey core with buff to cream exteriors. One sherd has a light brown internal surface, and another brick red. Twelve of the 56 sherds were glazed a pale green, 10 of these sherds were from one vessel which appears to be a squat globular jug with horizontal grooves around

⁷² K. J. Barton, 'The Medieval Pottery of the City of Worcester', *Trans. Worcs. Arch. Soc.*, 3 (1965-67).

⁷³ Biddle, *op. cit.* note 63, 136.

⁷⁴ Bruce-Mitford, *op. cit.* note 67, 116-118.

⁷⁵ Biddle, *op. cit.* note 63, 146, Fig. 20, especially no. 1.

the body (not illustrated, but similar to 32). This fabric is found at Badby,⁷⁶ and may be derived from Coventry or be a local product.

Illustrated (FIG. 9)

27. Jug with squared rim and external bevel.

Fabric 14

Fine sandy fabric, similar to, but softer than Fabric 12; a few sherds have been fired to produce a harder almost metallic fabric. All the sherds are small, two-thirds being glazed usually from a light to a dark olive-green; four are orange.

The decoration includes vertical applied strips, alternately red and monochrome, rilling, and incised horizontal grooves. The forms represented are all jugs including at least one 'three-decker jug', a few balusters (? appearing earlier in Banbury than in Oxford) and bulbous-bodied jugs.

This fabric with its different forms comprises 40% of the total pottery recovered from F.51, all of which must have been introduced into Banbury by 1279-80, if the coin evidence is reliable. 152 sherds from 18, 2 from 17, and 3 from 15.

Illustrated (FIG. 9)

28. Jug with rim thickened externally, almost square. Layer 18.

29. Jug with rim similar to 28. Rims very similar to Nos. 28 and 29 were found in Period I at Seacourt, and dated to the early 14th century.⁷⁷ Here they must be at least 25 years earlier. Layer 18.

30. Jug with rim slightly thickened externally and strap handle, which is stabbed. Splashes of olive-green glaze on neck. Similar to one from Period 1 at Seacourt.⁷⁸ Layer 18.

31. Body sherd of 'three-decker jug'. Mottled olive-green glaze. Alternate dull red and monochrome vertical stripes on both upper and middle zones. Layer 18.

32. Body sherd of squat jug with horizontal grooves around waist. Light green speckled glaze. Layer 18.

Fabric 15

Smooth fine fabric with occasional small particles of sand, white core with buff exterior face. Only 6 sherds found, all in 17, and all from one vessel, a globular jug with horizontal grooves on the waist. There were light green splashes of glaze on the body. A jug with a similar fabric was on display (March 1973), in Bristol Museum, where it is described as a French import. If this fabric is not an import, it would appear to be another local product. None illustrated.

Fabric 16

Hard fine slightly sandy fabric with dark grey core and buff interior and pink exterior surfaces. A similar fabric comes from Badby. Four sherds from 15, 2 from 16, and 4 from 17.

Illustrated (FIG. 9)

33. Cooking pot with everted rim and internal lid seating. A similar rim but with a downturned external flange comes from Badby. Layer 16.

⁷⁶ I am very grateful to Mrs. M. Gray for allowing me to examine some of the Badby material.

⁷⁷ Biddle, *op. cit.* note 63, 146, Fig. 20.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, No. 5.

Fabric 17

White sandy fabric with a clear pale yellow glaze reminiscent of Stamford type wares. This fabric is found in Northampton and at Badby, and may represent a local product. Ten sherds from 16. None illustrated.

Finds from Phase III

Apart from the probable sherd of the late 17th century,⁷⁹ the finds from this phase comprised mainly clay pipe stems, but did include several pieces of porcelain, one sherd of willow pattern, one of 17th-18th century slipware and one sherd of a fine brown ware with rilling and a dark brown glaze. There were also some fragments of modern bottles from F.3.

The Coins

1. Silver long-cross penny, voided long-cross with three pellets in angles. Further identification was impossible. Small find No. 2.
2. Henry III halfpenny, Class V, possibly type g. Small find No. 3.
3. Henry III halfpenny, Class V (1251-1272). Small find No. 4.

Dr. Metcalf⁸⁰ informs me that the two Henry III halfpennies must have been lost by 1280 at the latest, as there was a general recall of Henry III's long-cross coinage in 1279 by Edward I. Virtually no long-cross coins of Henry III are found in hoards of Edward I's pennies.

DISCUSSION

The Phase I pottery, mainly limestone and occasionally shell-gritted fabrics associated with Stamford type Ware, is typical of the 11th and 12th centuries in the South Midlands. The occurrence of the coarse Fabric 2 in Phase 1 may lend support to Hinton's suggestion that this fabric represents a slight regional difference in the pottery of the Saxo-Norman period.⁸¹ A date for this group of 1050 to 1150 seems reasonable.

The pottery from Phase II can be dated, on the coin evidence, to the years 1251-80. As such this forms a very important group for north Oxfordshire, south Northamptonshire and south Warwickshire.

Local products are represented perhaps by Fabrics 2, 11, 13, 15, 17, assuming 15 is not an import. The white to cream wares, Fabrics 13, 15, and 17, are perhaps the most interesting, and may lie in the same tradition as the white wares of the Coventry-Nuneaton area. They may also be loosely associated with the so-called Pottersbury type pottery.⁸²

Fabric 5 is becoming more widely known in west Oxfordshire and may have its source in that area. Fabric 9 is considerably cruder than the rest of the group from F.51, and may represent the end of an earlier tradition, such as the tripod pitchers. Fabrics 7, 8, 12, 14 and 16 are all very similar, basically hard fine wares with little sand; although these fabrics are not exactly paralleled locally, the forms are well-known. The best comparisons can be made perhaps with the pottery from the Bodleian extension.⁸³

The distribution of this material from Banbury cannot, as yet, be identified. At present it is not represented in Warwick.⁸⁴ Some of the Fabrics (13, 16 and 17), were found at Badby (Northants.) and Fabric 17 has also been found in Northampton.

⁷⁹ See above, p. 329.

⁸⁰ I am grateful to Dr. Metcalf for advice and information concerning the coins.

⁸¹ Hinton, *op. cit.* note 59.

⁸² D. C. Mynard, 'Medieval Pottery of Pottersbury Type', *Bull. Fed. Northants. Arch. Soc.*, 4 (1970), 49-55.

⁸³ Bruce-Mitford, *op. cit.* note 67.

⁸⁴ I am grateful to Mr. S. Taylor for allowing me to examine the pottery from his excavations in Warwick.

A detailed examination of the pottery from the recent excavations in Northampton may reveal further ties with that town. Fabric 10 is probably Lyveden type pottery, and along with Fabrics 13, 16 and 17 may indicate contacts with Northamptonshire as well as with Oxfordshire.

Assuming the coin evidence is reliable, the date of 1251-80 for the Phase II pottery raises several problems. As indicated under each head, the types may be appearing in Banbury some 25 years earlier than has been suggested elsewhere, for example, at Seacourt (especially Fabric 5),⁸⁵ and in Oxford.⁸⁶ Generally the three-decker jugs would seem, in decoration and fabric, to post-date the highly-decorated jugs, such as face-mask jugs, which are being dated to the late 13th century, and the first half of the 14th century. A notable exception to this general trend is the pottery from the Laverstock kilns,⁸⁷ where highly-decorated jugs with stamps and face-masks were produced between 1250 and 1275; in which case the date of the Banbury pottery raises fewer problems of chronology. Assuming that the Phase II material is 13th century rather than 14th, the problem of the length of use of these Banbury types and of the more highly-decorated types is raised. If the life-span of these types is not a century or more, one must ask, again, what pottery was being used in the 14th and 15th centuries.

Despite these problems the pottery from F.51 forms a very important group for Banbury.

A publication grant from the Department of the Environment was received for this paper.

⁸⁵ Biddle, *op. cit.* note 63.

⁸⁶ E.g. Bruce-Mitford, *op. cit.* note 67.

⁸⁷ J. Musty, D. J. Algar and P. F. Ewence, 'The Medieval Pottery Kilns at Laverstock, near Salisbury, Wiltshire', *Archaeologia*, cii (1969), 83-150.

PLATE XXII



A. New Inn Court, Oxford. Trench VII, medieval and later features from the west. Scales = 2 m.



B. New Inn Court, Oxford. Trench VII, late Saxon and subsoil features from the west. Scales = 2 m.

Ph. : B. G. Durham

EXCAVATIONS AT OXFORD, 1972 : FIFTH INTERIM REPORT



C. Banbury 1972. Walls 224 and 76, looking East.



D. Banbury 1972. Stone-lined Pit, F 51.

Ph. : P.J.F.

EXCAVATIONS IN BANBURY, 1972 : FIRST REPORT