

## Excavations at Oxford, 1972: Fifth Interim Report

By T. G. HASSALL

With contributions by B. G. DURHAM, D. KEENE, G. H. LAMBRICK, B. J. MARPLES  
and R. C. READER

DURING the fifth year of the Oxford Archaeological Excavation Committee's activities, excavations were continued at the Roman kiln site at the Churchill Hospital and in St. Ebbe's. Further rescue excavations were undertaken at the site of the Blackfriars, at the site of Hinkey Hall in New Inn Court and at the Castle, while observation and salvage work was carried out on other sites in the City including 13 High Street, Corpus Christi College, Christ Church, and New Inn Hall Street (FIG. 1).<sup>1</sup> The Churchill Hospital site is described by Mr. C. J. Young in his second Interim Report as also is the salvage work on a further kiln site at St. Luke's Road.<sup>2</sup> The other major sites are described in approximately chronological order. Details of other sites and finds will be found in 'Notes and News' (page 381).

In spite of the continued heavy commitment to carry out excavations, work on publication is continuing. A grant by the Gulbenkian Foundation towards the employment of a draughtsman for two years has helped greatly with this work. Apart from the excavation and publication the Committee held an exhibition arranged jointly with the Oxford City and County Museum. This exhibition entitled 'How Old is Oxford?' attempted to demonstrate the five years' work of the Committee by putting the finds and sites in a chronological sequence. Nearly 8,000 visitors saw the exhibition and, although there was no admission charge, over £350 was collected in donations. The museum extremely generously bore the very heavy costs of mounting the exhibition, including employing a designer, Mrs. Pauline Moor bath.

The Excavation Committee is always grateful to its donors. In addition to the regular subscribers (who are acknowledged at the end of this report) this year grants have been received from the Gulbenkian Foundation; £500 from an anonymous donor for the Churchill excavation; the William Abel Pantin Trust; the Meyerstein Fund; the Greening Lamborn Trust; the Haverfield Trust; the Society of Antiquaries; and the British Academy.

A team project of this nature depends on the efforts of a large number of people: Mr. Brian Durham became full-time assistant director and he has shouldered much of the responsibility for excavation and has taken most of the site photographs; Mr. Christopher Young once again co-directed the Churchill excavation; Messrs. George Lambrick and Christopher Whittick of the Oxford University Archaeological Society supervised the Blackfriars site; Mr. David Sheard worked as draughtsman during parts of the year and all the drawings

<sup>1</sup> For previous excavations see the Interim Reports in *Oxoniensia*, xxxiv (1969)–xxxvii (1971).

<sup>2</sup> See page 207.

# MEDIEVAL OXFORD

## EXCAVATION SITES 1972

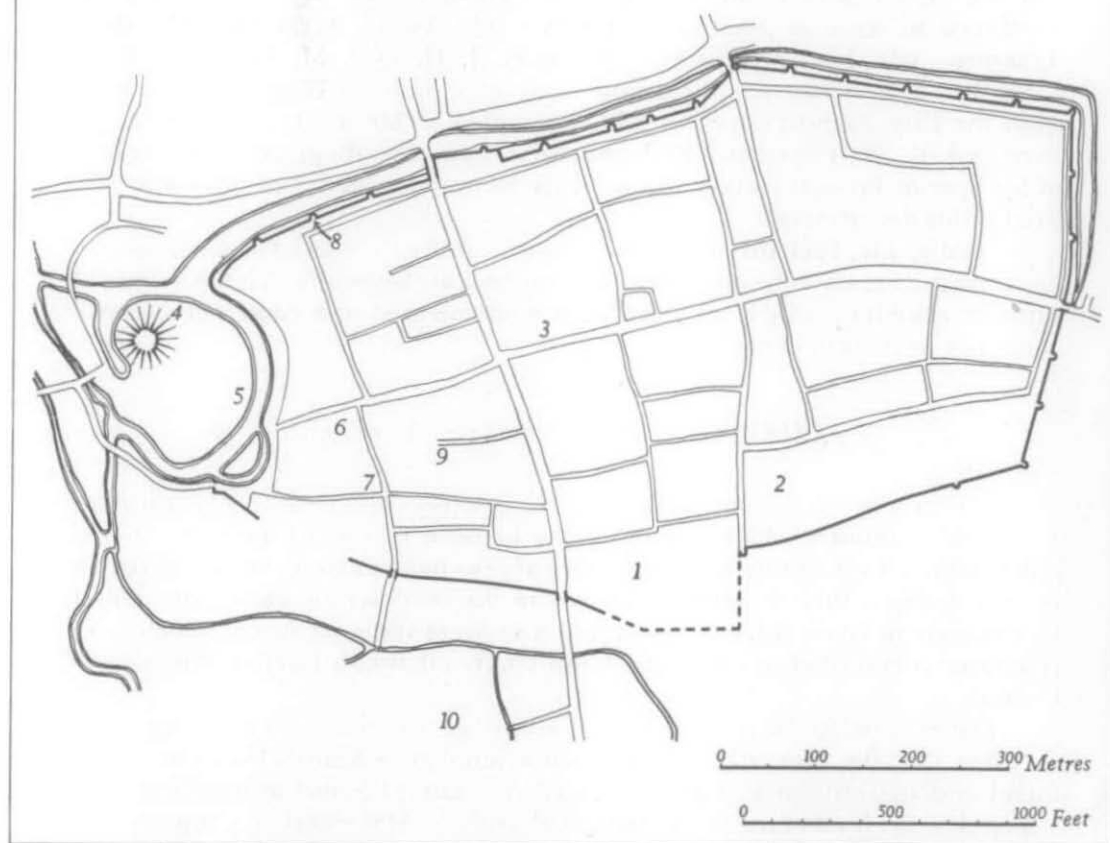


FIG. 1

The sites are numbered as follows : 1. Christ Church ; 2. Corpus Christi College ; 3. 13 High Street ; 4. The Castle mound ; 5. The Castle ; 6. 1-4 Castle Street, 7. 28-31 St. Ebbe's Street ; 8. The Reform Club ; 9. New Inn Court ; 10. The Blackfriars.

in this Interim Report are his work ; Mrs. Rosamond Crane helped with much of the administration and was also in charge of finds during the greater part of the year ; Mrs. Crane was succeeded by Miss Maureen Mellor ; and Mrs. Josephine de Goris has continued to work on the post-Medieval material. A large number of volunteers has assisted with the actual excavations (numbers were up to 35/40 at the Churchill site). Messrs. J. Munby and H. Woods were particu-

larly active and a further loyal band of volunteers led by Miss P. Horsman manned the exhibition during July and August and have assisted in the pottery washing and marking. Mrs. E. Beard has continued to draw the pottery. Without this unstinted help it would be impossible for the Committee to continue operations on its present budget.

It is also a pleasure to thank all those officers of Oxford City Council and Oxfordshire County Council who have contributed so much time to the Committee's work; Miss C. M. Preston of the Town Clerk's Department who has continued to serve as Assistant Secretary; Mr. W. H. P. Davison the Hon. Treasurer, who has been assisted by Messrs. J. H. Day, M. Petty and A. B. Lindsell. The Excavation Committee has also received continued assistance from the City Architect and his staff, in particular Messrs. J. Ashdown, P. G. Beresford, K. W. Hearn and K. Lichtenstein; the City Engineer and members of his Special Projects section and the City Estates Surveyor and especially Mr. Flint of his department.

Finally, Mr. Richard Foster, the Director of the City and County Museum has continued to offer the museum's constant backing without which the successful summer exhibition could not have been contemplated and conservation work could not have been carried out.

### CHRIST CHURCH (FIG. 2; PL. XX, A)

#### THE SITE

The origins of Saxon Oxford were obviously closely involved with St. Frideswide's minster which was reputedly founded in the 8th century. Some information on the history of this minster came to light when in August workmen reconstructing a surface water soak away in the south-west corner of the Great Quadrangle of Christ Church uncovered a series of skeletons two of which were resting on a bed of charcoal. The Dean kindly allowed a brief examination of the site.

The excavation for the new drain consisted of a trench 1.50 m. square. By the time that the excavation was noticed a number of human bones had been found and the excavation had penetrated the natural gravel at approximately 1 m. below the level of the turf in the Quadrangle. At the bottom of the excavation were two skeletons in graves (1 and 2) orientated east-west. Grave 1 was visible in the northern and eastern section and extended 45 cm. into the excavation; its bottom was 1.45 m. below the present turf level. Grave 1 overlay Grave 2 which was dug across the trench and both ends extended beyond the excavated limits. This grave was 50 cm. wide at its base which was 1.53 m. below the modern turf level. The bottoms of both graves were covered with a layer of charcoal which was up to 10 cm. deep in Grave 2. The skeletons were lying on this bed of charcoal and the bones themselves were not charred. Mrs. Rachel Reader kindly examined the skeletal material and her report is published below.

Mr. P. G. H. Franklin of the Department of Forestry has identified the

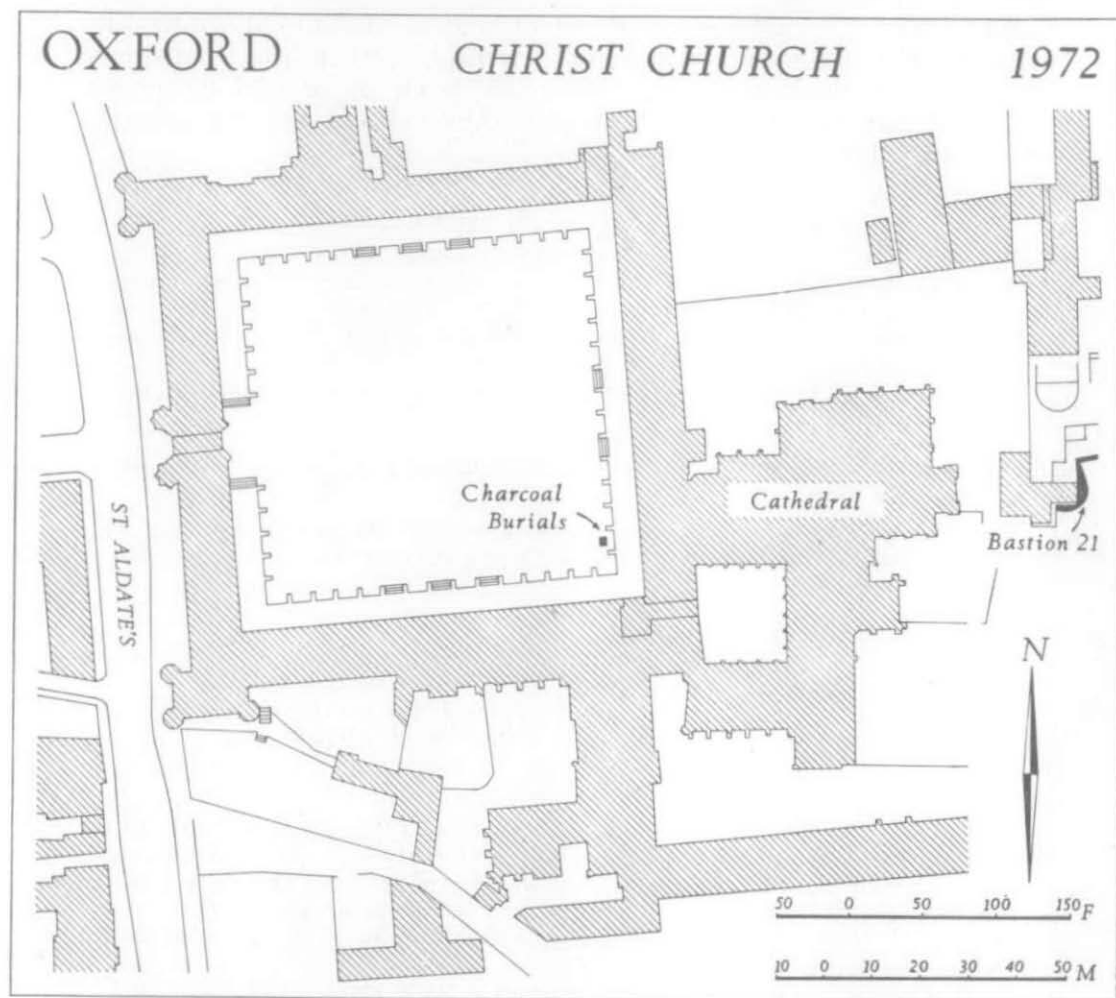


FIG. 2

*Based on the City of Oxford 1 : 500 Survey, by permission of the City Engineer.*

charcoal as largely oak and possibly elder or birch in Grave 1 and entirely oak in Grave 2. A sample of the charcoal from Grave 2, the earlier grave, was sent to A.E.R.E. Harwell where Mr. R. L. Otlet carried out a radiocarbon test. The radiocarbon date was  $1110 \pm 100$  years BP. This result would put the date of this burial into the second quarter of the 9th century A.D. The charcoal sample was taken from young wood and is therefore probably not distorted to any great degree by the age of the timber.

This type of burial was at one time thought by Mr. Martin Biddle to be Danish, but burials have now been found at Winchester sealed beneath the New

Minster c. 900.<sup>3</sup> These burials from Oxford must be related to St. Frideswide's minster.<sup>4</sup> They are important since they extend by perhaps one hundred and fifty years the authenticated history of a religious site on or near the present Cathedral. Their position would have placed them almost immediately outside the western end of the 12th century Priory Church.<sup>5</sup>

#### HUMAN SKELETAL REMAINS. By RACHEL C. READER

**GRAVE 1:** The bones are those of an adult, probably middle-aged. The sex is impossible to determine. The bones present are: the distal end of the left humerus; the right ulna; the distal end of the right radius; a fragment of femur shaft; pa; of the iliac crest and the ischial tuberosity; and a fragment of calvarium from the occipito-parietal region.

**Pathology:** There is slight lipping and grooving, indicative of osteoarthritis, on the iliac crest fragment.

**GRAVE 2:** The bones are those of a male, aged between 25 and 35. Areas of the body represented are:

**Cranial.** Fragments from all areas of the calvarium, facial fragments including the mandible and maxilla, and part of the right zygomatic arch.

np	87654	17345678	np
	<del>87654</del>	<del>17345678</del>	
	87654	12345678	
np			np
		c	
		a	

( / = lost post-mortem  
 X = lost ante-mortem  
 c = caries a = abscess  
 np = not developed)

**Postcranial.** The left femur, lacking the distal end; the distal end only of the right femur; the distal end and a shaft fragment of the left tibia; the head of the right humerus and humerus shaft fragments; the left ulna; proximal and distal portions of the left radius; both clavicles; rib fragments; a lumbar vertebra (L1).

**Injury.** The right clavicle has been fractured during life. The bone has healed well, with fairly little distortion.

**Dental Pathology.** The condition of the teeth is fairly good. The lower left first molar has a large buccal interproximal caries, and also an abscess at its roots, with a labial exit-hole. The bite is edge-to-edge. There is heavy calculus covering many of the teeth, and a moderately severe level of periodontal disease.

**Stature.** This and all other statures are estimated on the basis of the regression equations supplied by M. Trotter and G. C. Gleser, *Am. J. Phys. Anth.*, N.S. 10, 463-514; *ibid.* 16, 79-123. It must be stressed that these can only be estimates, and there is an unavoidable possibility of error. The estimated living stature of this individual was 174.558cm. (5 ft. 8.72 ins.).

**UNSTRATIFIED Skeletal material.** This consists of the mixed bones of several individuals. While it is impossible to be sure of the number of separate skeletons represented, certain clearly definable and distinct specimens can be described.

<sup>3</sup> Martin Biddle, 'Excavations at Winchester, 1962-3', *Ant. J.* XLIV (1964), 211. I am grateful to Mrs. Birthe Kjolbye-Biddle for the latest information.

<sup>4</sup> F. M. Stenton, 'St. Frideswide and her Times', *Oxoniensia*, I (1936), 103-112.

<sup>5</sup> Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, *City of Oxford* (1939), 35.

## 1. There are the skeletons of three children.

(a) This is a child of approximately twelve to fifteen years of age. The bones present are the right femur, showing no sign of apiphyseal fusion, and the proximal and distal parts of the left femur.

(b) The remains are those of a child of about eight to twelve. Bones present are the proximal ends of the right and left femora, and a fibula shaft fragment.

(c) This child was probably two to three years of age. The bones present are the left tibia, the left humerus, and a fragment of the right orbit. This last showed cribra orbitalia, strainer-like perforations in the roof of the orbit. The precise cause of this anomaly is not known, but may possibly result from environmental factors such as faulty diet.

## 2. At least four adults are represented. The bones present are:

*Cranial.* Fragments of at least three calvaria, of which two are identifiably male and one female; there are fragments of two mandibles, one male and the other probably female. Dental charts are as follows:

(a) Male	<del>87654321</del> <del>12345678</del>	
	87654321	12345678 (— = area missing)
(b) Female	<del>87654321</del> <del>12345678</del>	/ = post-mortem
	87654321	12345678

Mandible (a) appears from the degree of molar wear to have been that of a man aged between 25 and 35. There is little enamel on the teeth, and also signs of gross hypoplasia; these symptoms indicate illness or Vitamin D deficiency in childhood. Mandible (b) is that of an individual, probably female, aged between 25 and 35. Comparatively heavy incisural wear indicated edge-to-edge bite.

*Postcranial.* Recognizable femoral fragments include the proximal portions of three right femora and of one left; there are shaft fragments from at least two tibiae; four complete or nearly complete right humeri are present, as well as shaft fragments from humeri considerably less robust than any of the complete ones, and hence probably from different individuals; fragments of fibula shaft; a right ulna and a proximal fragment of another right ulna; the distal part of a left ulna; part of a right scapula including the medial border; two right and one left clavicles, all from separate individuals; first and second cervical vertebrae from the same skeleton, the body of a lower thoracic vertebra and a first or second lumbar vertebra; an iliac fragment; ribs.

Three of the humeri, all probably male, could be measured to give estimations of living stature of the skeleton concerned. These statures are:

- (a) 171.736 cm. (5 ft. 7.61 ins.)
- (b) 167.690 cm. (5 ft. 6.02 ins.)
- (c) 171.447 cm. (5 ft. 7.50 ins.)

*Pathology.* Fragments of a male calvarium show thickening of the diploë which may indicate chronic anaemia.

Humerus (a) has a small area of periostitis just below the head; this is localized and may well be the result of trauma.

An upper lumbar vertebra shows severe symptoms of osteoarthritis, being very lipped and with some central distortion.

While many of the bones from Church Church show symptoms of dietary deficiency, these are in all cases fairly mild. The bones are robust, and wherever



an estimate of living stature could be made, the suggested height is fully in accordance with present-day statistics.

### CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE (FIG. 3)

The perimeter of the 10th century burgh has yet to be established. There was an opportunity to test current theories on this subject during the long vacation of 1972 when the front quadrangle of Corpus Christi College was paved. Before the new works began the President and Fellows allowed a small salvage excavation to take place and the bursar Rear Admiral G. C. Crowley kindly made the practical arrangements involved.

The aim of the excavation was to test the archaeological potential of the site which before 1517 was occupied by the back portions of at least four properties.<sup>6</sup> It was also hoped that an excavation might produce some evidence to throw light on the topography of the 10th century burgh. It has been suggested that the original burgh may have extended only as far east as the line of the modern Oriel Street and Magpie Lane.<sup>7</sup> Corpus Christi College, situated between Merton Grove to the east and the Cathedral to the west, lies across this hypothetical line.

The position of the excavation was limited by the existence of services under the Quadrangle and its size was restricted in order to minimize the necessity to reinstate the site. The area chosen was the south side of the quadrangle where a narrow trench on an east/west alignment 1 m. wide and up to 4 m. deep was rapidly excavated and immediately back-filled by machine (FIG. 3). At the eastern end of the trench a brick barrel-vaulted cellar or large sump was uncovered. Immediately to the east of this modern feature a large gulley or ditch was uncovered, filled with unstable black mud and sealed by stone rubble. It was cut through loam, not the natural gravel which was not visible in any part of the trench. The bottom was in excess of 4 m. The feature was at an oblique angle from north-east to south-west across the quadrangle. No material was recovered from the fill.

If the feature was a ditch, whether natural or artificial, it could have formed part of the 10th century defences. The presence of this ditch in conjunction with the absence of the second gravel terrace both emphasize the fact that St. Frideswide's minster must have stood on a promontory of gravel.<sup>8</sup> Further work on the site will not now be possible.

### ST. EBBE'S SITES

#### 1-4 CASTLE STREET, 36-37 ST. EBBE'S STREET

Late Saxon and medieval material has continued to be found in St. Ebbe's. During the autumn of 1972 work began on the main second phase of the Sel-

<sup>6</sup> H. E. Salter, *Survey of Oxford*, ed. W. A. Pantin, I, O.H.S. N.S. xiv (1960), South-East Ward, Nos. 2, 89, 90, 207, 208.

<sup>7</sup> T. G. Hassall, 'Excavations in Merton College, Oxford, 1970', *Oxonienia*, xxxvi (1971), 36.

<sup>8</sup> David Sturdy, 'Excavations in Christ Church', *Oxonienia*, xxvi/xxvii (1961/2), 30.

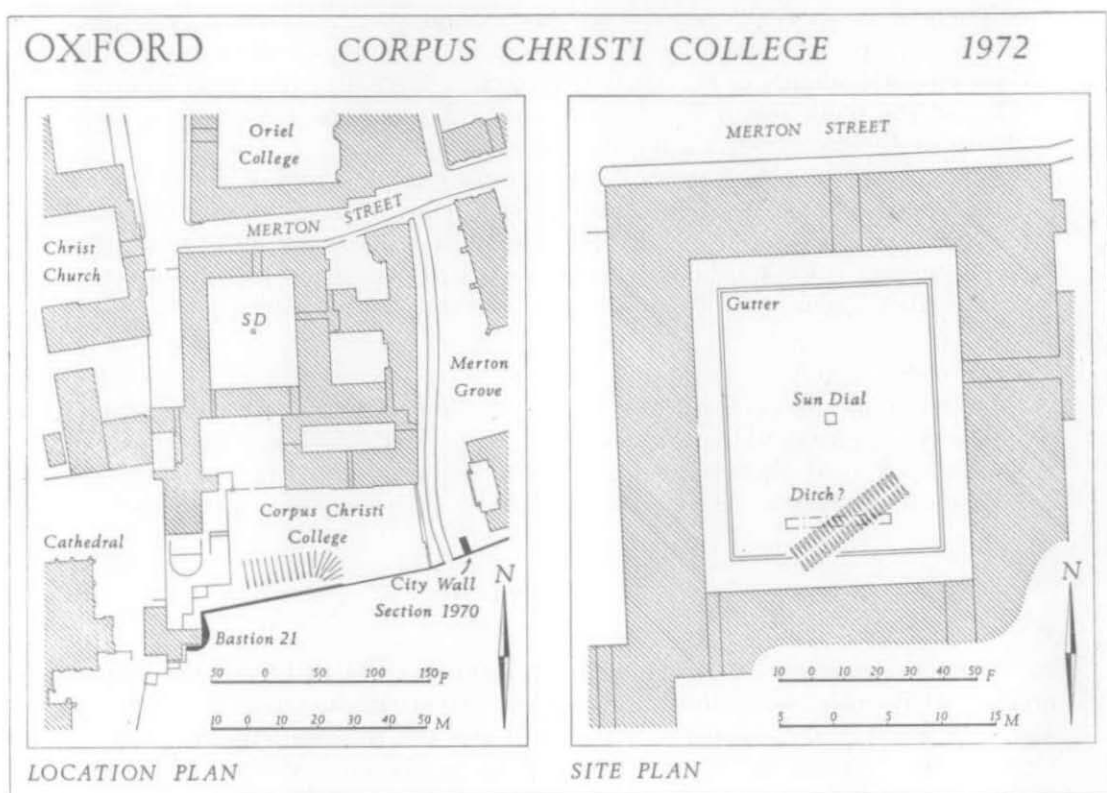


FIG. 3

Based on the City of Oxford 1 : 500 Survey, by permission of the City Engineer.

fridge's development at the corner of Castle Street and St. Ebbe's Street. The contractors' bulk excavation followed immediately after the demolition of the pre-war shop of G. R. Cooper. The old building had very extensive basements which had removed all structural evidence on the site, although beneath 36-37 St. Ebbe's Street which was occupied by small 18th century buildings, there was a narrowly defined area of occupation.

Archaeological work on the site was confined to salvage and observation work carried out by Mr. Humphrey Woods. The bulk excavation was dug by a hydraulic machine and it was therefore possible to record the position of ninety-six pits and wells.

Behind the sheet piling which was put in by the contractors to stabilize the sides of the excavation, the surfaces of Castle Street were observed for virtually the whole length of the frontage. These surfaces seemed continuous along the whole length of the frontage. The 1972 section agrees well with the previous section of the street recorded in 1970 and consisted of alternating layers of gravel and silt.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> T. G. Hassall, 'Excavations at Oxford, 1970, Third Interim Report', *Oxoniensia*, xxxv (1970), 9.



There were sixteen Medieval and late Saxon street surfaces. Two small sherds of rather coarse St. Neots type pottery and a sandy sherd were found in the lowest silt. Sherds of St. Neots type pottery were also recovered from the ninth and the tenth streets from the bottom. There must have been a rapid build-up in the street levels during the late Saxon period.

Most of the recorded features, pits and wells produced some dating evidence although it was impossible to collect complete groups. The date range extended from late Saxon to post-Medieval. There were late Saxon pits along the Castle Street frontage. One pit, 68, contained a virtually complete tripod pitcher as well as further fragments of tripod pitcher and sandy ware cooking-pots.

#### 28-31 ST. EBBE'S STREET

Observation and salvage work was carried out during the construction of Fenwicks Store on the former premises of F. Cape and Co. Extensive cellarage had destroyed most medieval features, but one stone-lined 14th century pit was partially excavated. This feature produced fragments of a glass vessel.

### 13 HIGH STREET (FIG. 4)

#### THE EXCAVATION

Late Saxon material was found in 1972 at 9-15 High Street, the former premises of Webbers, when the buildings were converted into separate shop units. The new works (which included new drains and the reconstruction of the rear basement of 13 High Street) were carried out by Symm and Co. and salvage excavations and observation were permitted.

In the new drains the original buried topsoil was observed at a depth of 2.53 m. below modern pavement level. The existing basements had been built immediately on this level; with the exception of no. 13 the basements were not altered. In the case of no. 13 the rear basement floor was taken up and excavated down a further 25 cm. in order to lay down a new reinforced floor which was to take the weight of a lift. It was therefore possible to clean the bottom of the new excavation immediately below the old topsoil and to record the features which were exposed in the underlying gravel.

Seven pits (nos. 1-7 in Fig. 4) were exposed and small quantities of material were recovered from the tops of pits 1-6 which were filled with dark soil and ash. Pit 7 was a large 19th century stone-lined pit which was completely excavated by the contractors because its fill was still too soft to build on. Pit 1 stood in isolation but the remainder intersected although it was not possible to decide the relationship between pit 6 and its neighbours 5 and 4. Pit 5 was later than pit 3 and pit 4, and pit 2 had been cut by pit 4.

#### DISCUSSION

The finds (discussed below) from 13 High Street fill a gap in the distribution-map of late Saxon objects found within the walled area of Oxford. The site

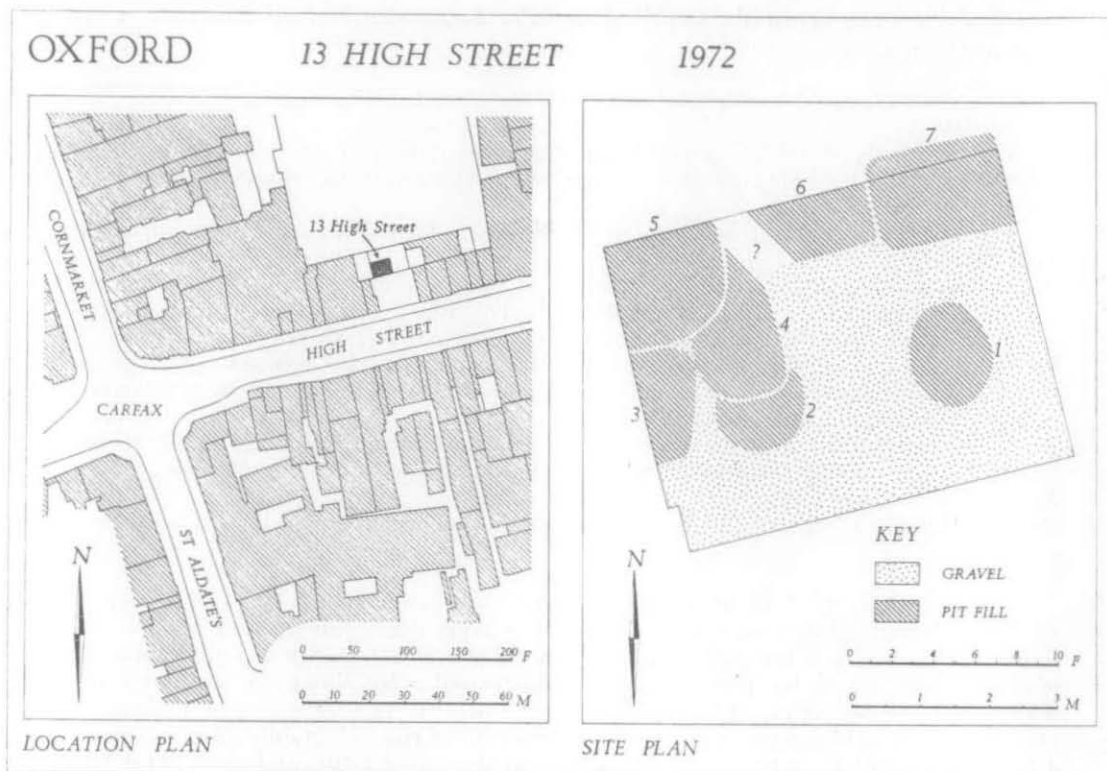


FIG. 4

Based on the City of Oxford 1 : 500 Survey, by permission of the City Engineer.

conforms to the general pattern of tenement sites in Oxford in that it shows a developed street frontage by the 10th century. The absence of pits after the 12th century probably indicates that the portion of the site excavated was either a yard or else covered by buildings.

From the 13th century the history of the property, of which the excavated site was a part, is well documented. The descent of the property was worked out by H. E. Salter.<sup>10</sup> The property is first recorded in 1260, when it was owned by John Purdy whose tenant was Mag. I. Noble. A quitrent of 4s. was payable to Oseney Abbey. John de Bereford acquired the property by 1351 and he added a tenement in Cheyne Lane (now Market Street) to the main property. The total tenement became known as Bereford's tenement and at his death it contained two messuages worth 100s. The tenement's frontage on the High Street was 27 ft. 6 ins. and in Cheyne Lane 99 ft. In 1508 Lincoln College obtained permission to acquire the site, but eleven years later the College sold it to William Freere. The descent of the property thereafter is complicated

<sup>10</sup> H. E. Salter, *Survey of Oxford*, ed. W. A. Pantin, I, O.H.S., N.S. xiv (1960), North-East Ward No. 147.

but the site was eventually acquired in 1772 under the Oxford Paving Act for part of the new Market.<sup>11</sup>

#### THE FINDS

##### *Pottery* (FIG. 5)

Pit 1. Five body sherds of coarse shelly ware ranging from 6 mm. to 13 mm. thick ; 1 body sherd of St. Neots type ware. Late Saxon, possibly 10th century.

Pit 2. No pottery.

Pit 3. One rim sherd, 1 body sherd of St. Neots type ware. Late Saxon, 10th/11th century.

Pit 4. Two rim sherds, 1 base angle sherd, 5 body sherds of St. Neots type ware ; 1 abraded rim sherd, 4 base angle sherds, 12 body sherds of gritty wares ; 1 rim sherd of coarse sandy ware (described below). Late Saxon, 10th/11th century.

Pit 5. One body sherd flinty coarse ware ; 1 body sherd of gritty coarse ware ; 1 body sherd of fine sandy ware ; 1 base angle sherd, glazed externally, of sandy ware of tripod pitcher type. Early Medieval, 12th century.

Pit 6. One sherd coarse shelly ware ; 1 rim sherd, 3 base angle sherds, 5 body sherds of gritty coarse ware ; 1 decorated body sherd of sandy ware (described below). Late Saxon, late 11th century.

Pit 7. Various Medieval and late Saxon sherds, including 2 rims of St. Neots type ware.

The number of sherds of pottery recovered was very small. Pits 1, 3, 4, and 5 were late Saxon. Pit 2 must have been of the same date, although no pottery was found in it. Pit 1 was probably the earliest of these since it contained a predominance of coarse shelly wares, but there was also a single sherd of St. Neots type ware and this ware was also found in pits 3 and 4. The vessels present, as represented by their rims, are all of the small 'cooking-pot' variety. Two typical rims are published from pit 4 : 4/1 and 4/2. All the rims are of the usual rolled everted forms and their diameters range from 14 cm.-20 cm. (*cf.* Fabian Radcliffe, 'Excavations at Logic Lane', *Oxoniensia*, xxvi/xxvii (1961/2), FIG. 9). There are various sherds of gritty coarse wares, including, from pit 6, a simple everted rim (6/1), with light finger tipping and slanting incised lines on the rim flange (*cf.* E. M. Jope, 'Late Saxon pits under Oxford Castle Mound', *Oxoniensia*, xvii/xviii (1952-3), FIG. 23, no. 23 for the form). There are a few sherds of sandy wares from the late Saxon pits 4 and 6. In pit 4 there was a slightly everted rim (4/3) with the deep finger tipping which is usually associated with 12th or 13th century cooking-pots. In pit 6 was a decorated sherd of sandy ware (6/4) with two parallel lines of stabbed dot ornament forming a criss-cross. This sherd presumably comes from a decorated pitcher.

Pit 5 contained a few typical early Medieval sherds. The only large group of material from the whole site was from the 19th century pit, pit 7.

##### *Animal Bones*

The collection consists of 63 bones, mostly fragmentary, of which 22 can be identified as Ox, 27 as Sheep and 2 as Bird, probably small Fowl. There are also 12 unidentified fragments. Five show signs of cuts, 1 of having been chewed presumably by a dog, and 3 are charred. There are 2 horn-cores of Ox, with some of the adjacent skull. One is small, 33 × 28 mm. at the base, the other large, 65 × 52 mm. at the base. The larger one has shallow cuts around the bottom, presumably made when the animal was being skinned. One part of the rib of an Ox is flattened and polished on the convex surface and has clearly been used as a burnisher. The details are as follows :

<sup>11</sup> H. E. Salter, *Surveys and Tokens*, O.H.S., LXXV (1920), Map facing 72 ; H. E. Salter, *Oxford City Properties*, O.H.S., LXXXIII (1926), 376.

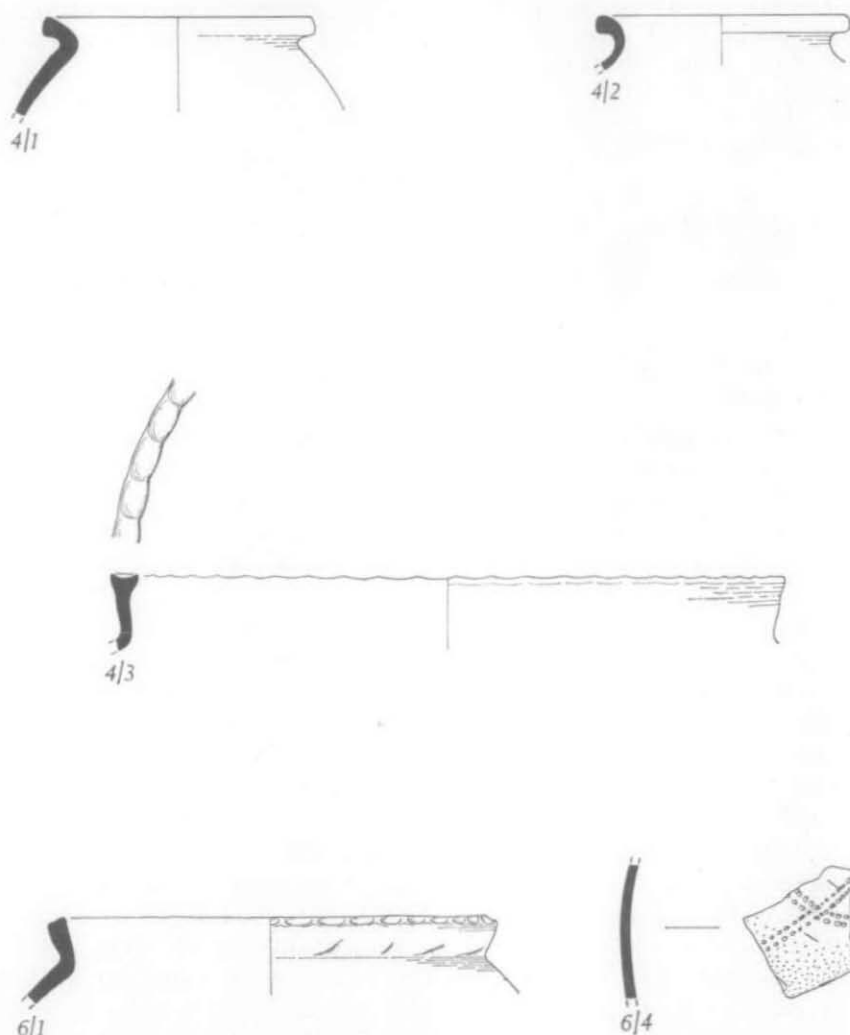


FIG. 5

13 High Street, Oxford. Late Saxon coarse pottery : 4/1 and 4/2, St. Neots type ware ; 4/3 sandy ware : 6/1 gritty ware ; 6/4 sandy ware. 1 : 4.

Pit 1. Ox : Metacarpal. 1 and 1 distal end. Vertebra. 1 transverse process. Rib. 1 part.

Sheep : Vertebra. 1 (cut). Rib. 2 fragments (1 cut). Pelvis. 1 Part.

Fragments : 3.

Pit 2. Ox : Jaw. 1 proximal end. Horn-core. 1 small (cut). Tibia. 1 distal end (immature). Fragments. 4 (1 of rib).

Sheep : Pelvis. 1 part (cut). Phalanx. 1. Rib. 2 parts.

Pit 3. Ox : Horn-core. 1 large, with shallow cuts round the bottom. Rib. 1 part flattened and smoothed on the convex surface.

Pit 4. Ox : Teeth. 2. Vertebra. 2 parts. Phalanx. 1. Rib. 4 parts.

*Sheep* : Pelvis. 1 part. Scapula. 1 part. Vertebra. 2 parts. (1 immature). Humerus. 1 distal end. Tibia. 1 distal half (chewed). Metatarsus. 1. Metapodial. 1 part. Ribs. 10 parts.

*Fragments* : 9 (3 charred).

*Bird* : Femur. 1 probably Fowl. Fragment. 1.

Pit 6. *Fragment* : 1 ? Ox.

#### *Other Finds*

One fragment of burnt daub (maximum dimension 70 cm.) was found in pit 4. In the same pit was the highly polished pointed end of a bone pin beater. The surviving piece was 11.5 cm. long, its maximum width was 1.4 cm., and its maximum thickness was 0.7 cm.

### CASTLE SITES (FIG. 6)

#### THE CASTLE MOUND

The archaeological importance of the castle mound which was constructed c. 1071 was first demonstrated in 1952 by Professor E. M. Jope's excavation of late Saxon material sealed beneath it.<sup>12</sup> In 1966 there was a further opportunity to study the mound before the building of the first phase of Oxfordshire County Council's redevelopment of the castle site, Macclesfield House, between New Road and Tidmarsh Lane. A series of trenches by the writer on behalf of the Oxford City and County Museum produced a small quantity of stratified material from under the mound. The excavation showed that the retaining wall on the north-western side of the castle mound is largely revetting post-Medieval material heaped around the base of the mound rather than holding back the primary mound construction. When the foundations for the new offices were excavated in 1967 the moat was exposed and at the same time an undateable burial was recorded sealed beneath the mound.

In 1972 the main retaining wall of the castle mound which fronts on to New Road collapsed. An elaborate new wall was built which took over six months to complete. Throughout this time a watch was maintained in case further stratified material was uncovered. The main contractors Benfield and Loxley and their sub-contractors, F. E. Watkins Ltd., were very co-operative at all times. However, the New Road wall like the wall to the west, was found to be revetting recent material. There was also a series of early 19th century pits cut into the mound behind the wall; consequently only two late Saxon pits survived. These pits only contained a few sherds of pottery.

#### THE CASTLE : TRENCH I

Although the castle mound site was disappointing, a quantity of interesting material was found on Oxfordshire County Council's Phase II development at the corner of New Road and re-aligned Castle Street. A trial excavation (Trench I) was dug on this site in 1970.<sup>13</sup> This trench identified the eastern edge of the moat and it also showed that late Saxon material could be expected sealed beneath the clay lining of the sides of the moat.

<sup>12</sup> E. M. Jope, 'Late Saxon pits under Oxford Castle Mound', *Oxoniensia*, xvii/xviii (1952-3), 77-111.

<sup>13</sup> T. G. Hassall, 'Excavations at Oxford, 1970', *Oxoniensia*, xxxvi (1971), 10.

## OXFORD

## CASTLE EXCAVATION SITES

1948-73

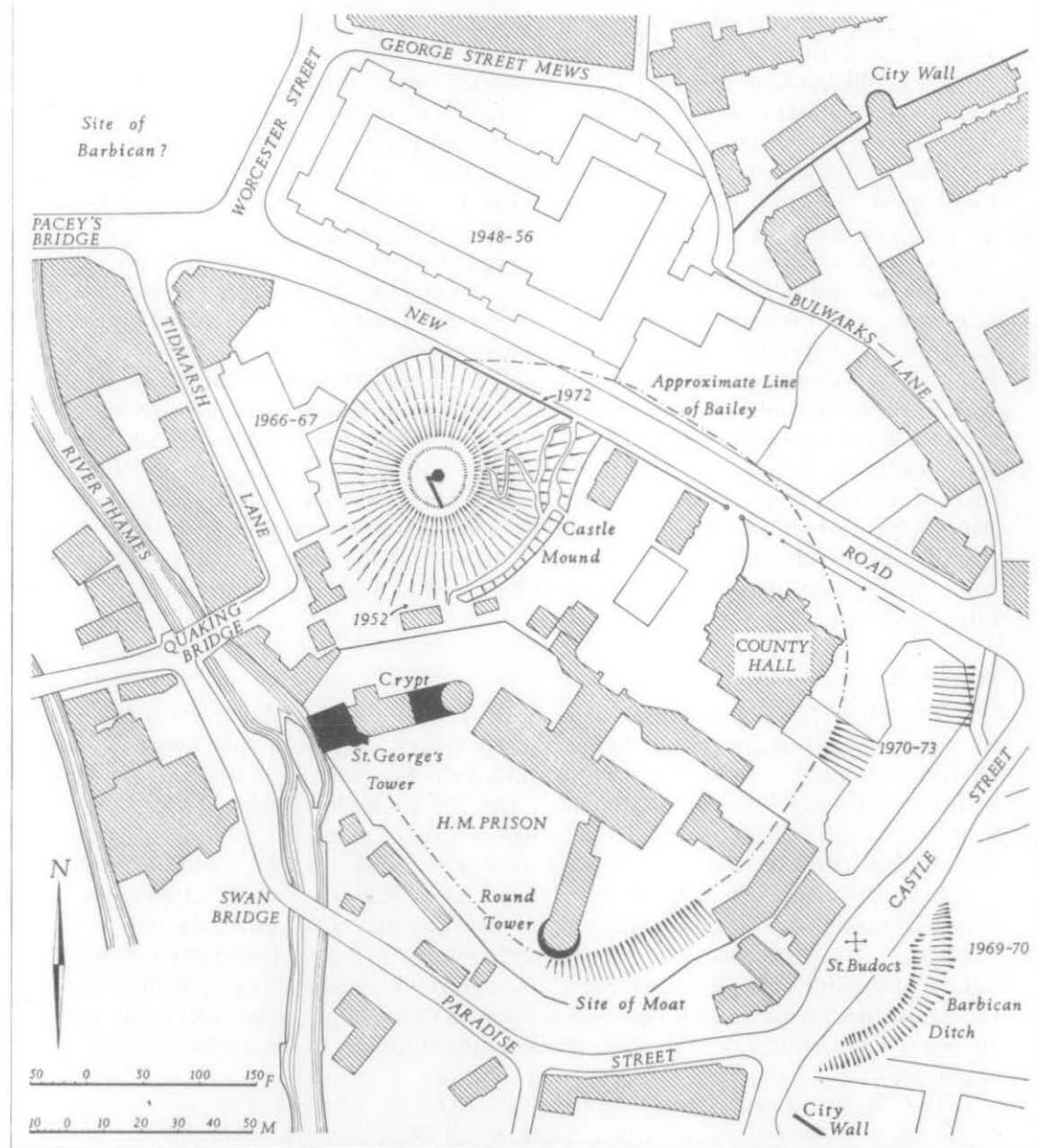


FIG. 6

Based on the City of Oxford 1 : 500 Survey, by permission of the City Engineer.



## THE CASTLE : TRENCH II (FIG. 7)

In the autumn of 1972 before building began, two further trenches, II and III, were excavated under the supervision of Mr. H. Woods. More features came to light during the contractors' bulk excavation. Arrangements for these excavations were made by Mr. M. Reeves of the County Architects' Department. Benfield and Loxley, the main contractors, and their sub-contractors, E. H. Crapper and Sons, were extremely co-operative while these salvage excavations took place. Observation on the site by Mr. Woods continued into 1973.

Trench II was excavated mechanically and then completed by hand. Its position was chosen in an attempt to dig as long a section as possible from the inner lip of the moat north-westwards across the bailey. The trench proved to be very disturbed by concrete footings (F2), a very deep modern trench (F1), and a brick soakaway (F8). There was also a series of post-medieval pits cut into the natural gravel (F3, F4, F5, F10). In spite of these disturbances three late Saxon pits survived (F6, F7, F9). These pits must have been sealed by the bank of the bailey when it was constructed, c. 1071, although no trace of this bank or the subsequent curtain wall survived. Presumably the bank and curtain wall were thrown into the ditch when the Castle was slighted in 1652. No large groups of pottery were recovered. Pit F6 contained sherds of St. Neots type ware, gritty wares and one sherd of unglazed sandy ware. In the same pit there was also a single sherd of orange coloured sandy ware which was glazed externally. Although this sherd may be an import on superficial visual examination it appears to have all the characteristics of sherds of tripod pitcher type. It may be that a few sandy ware glazed vessels were being produced locally before their main introduction, c. 1120.<sup>14</sup>

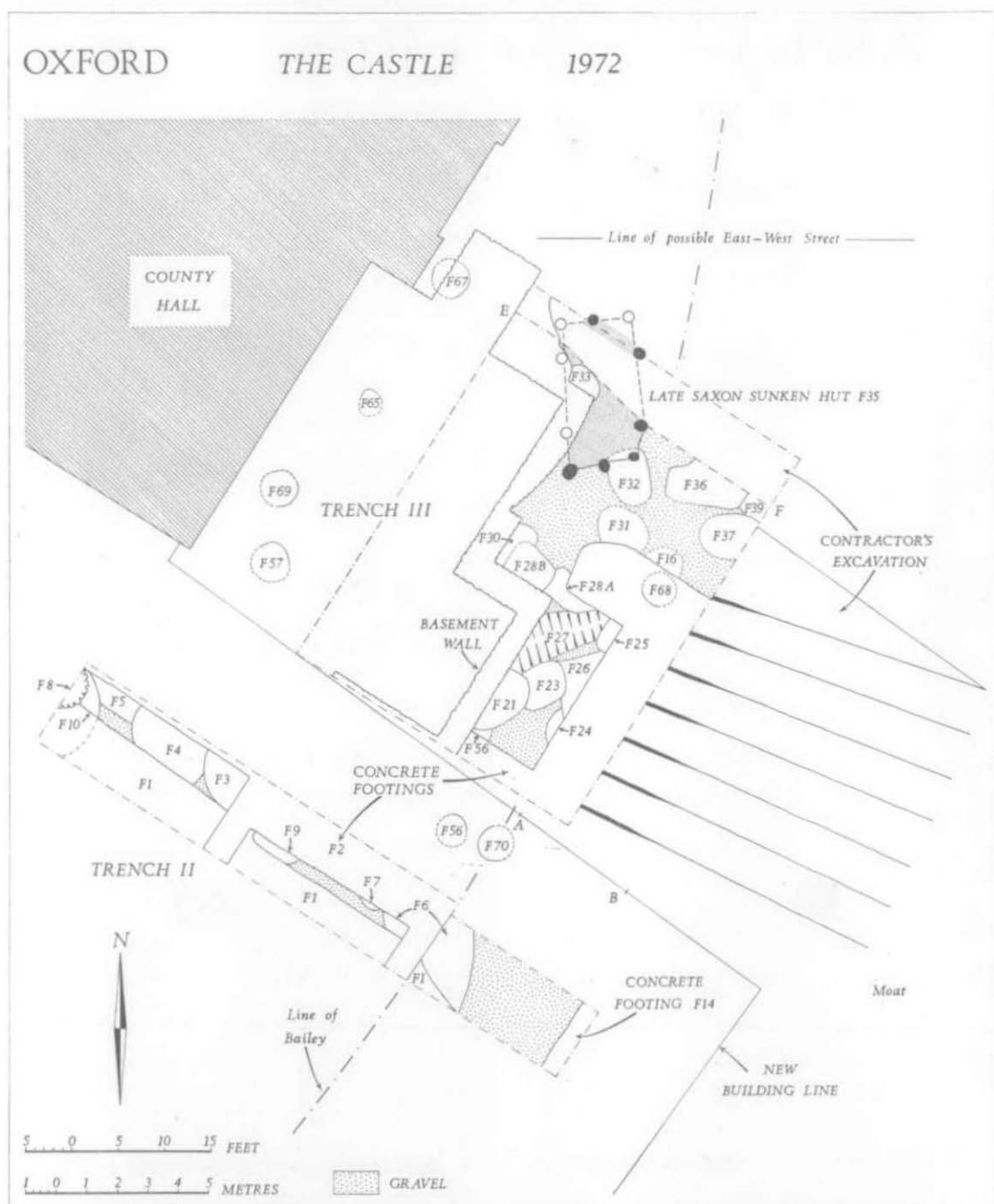
## THE CASTLE : TRENCH III (FIG. 7)

Trench III was excavated mechanically and then extended during the contractors' bulk excavation. Much of this trench had been dug away by a modern basement. As in the case of Trench I the excavated features were either sealed by the clay lining of the moat or else by the bailey bank. The earliest feature was a V-shaped ditch (F27), which was filled with old topsoil. It was aligned diagonally across the site and it appeared to line up with a similar ditch (F17), on the other side of the moat. In the fill of the ditch was a single sherd of coarse sandy ware which is presumably late Saxon. The rest of the site was a honeycomb of late Saxon pits. Three of these pits (F16, F31, F68) were isolated but the remainder formed sequences. A round silver halfpenny identified by Dr. M. Metcalf as of Eadred 948-952 was found in pit F23 which only contained St. Neots type pottery.<sup>15</sup> This coin provides useful dating evidence for this type of pottery.

The most important feature in Trench III was a late Saxon sunken hut (F35) (FIGS. 7 and 8 ; PL. XX, B). This small building was disturbed by the modern basement and partially destroyed by an extension to the contractors'

<sup>14</sup> E. M. Jope, 'The Clarendon Hotel, Oxford', *Oxoniensia*, xxiii (1958), 54.

<sup>15</sup> *Current Archaeology*, iii, No. 12 (1973), plate 321.



## OXFORD

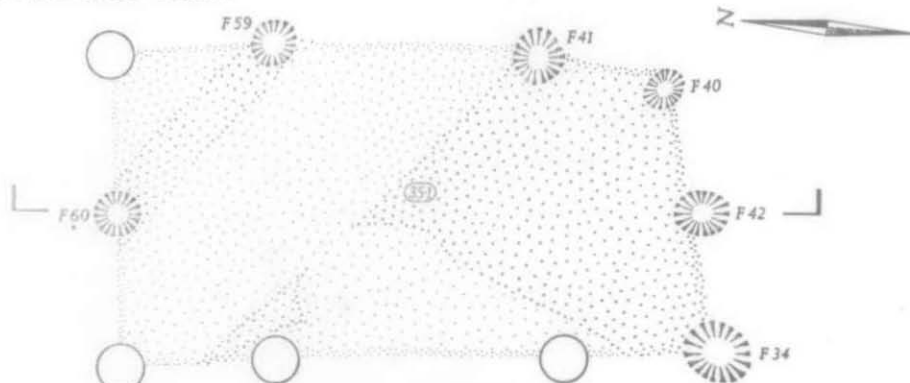
## THE CASTLE

1972

## TRENCH III

## LATE SAXON SUNKEN HUT

## RECONSTRUCTED PLAN:



## KEY:

- |  |                               |  |                       |
|--|-------------------------------|--|-----------------------|
|  | EXCAVATED<br>OCCUPATION LAYER |  | INFERRED<br>POST-HOLE |
|  | INFERRED<br>OCCUPATION LAYER  |  |                       |

## CONJECTURAL SECTION:

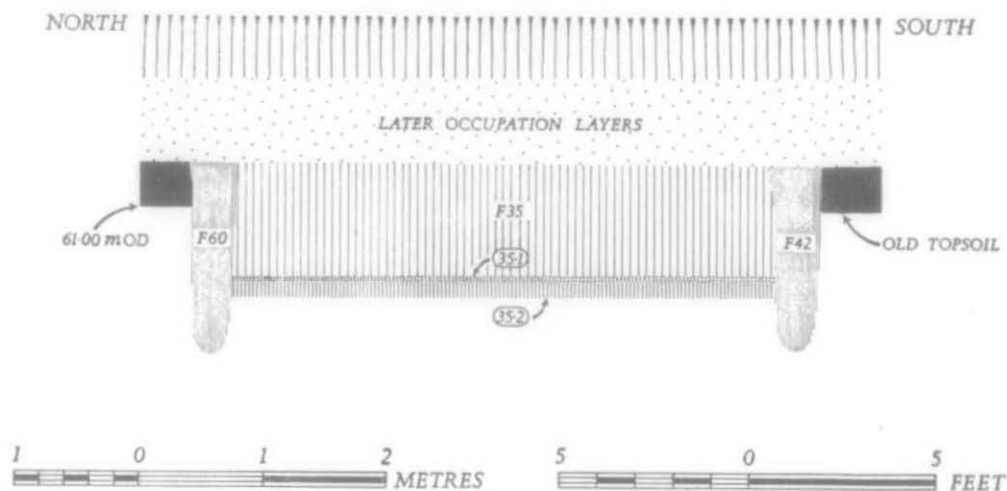


FIG. 8

excavation. Nevertheless, it is possible to reconstruct its plan and section with certainty. The floor of the hut, layer 35/2, was sunk 1.04 m. below the old topsoil. The floor consisted of red clay beneath which was mixed gravel and red clay. The floor was about 2.26 m. wide from east-west and 4.78 m. long from north-south. At the southern gable end there were three post-holes (F34, F40 F42). Two further post-holes were excavated on the eastern side (F41, F59), but only one post-hole (F60) was excavated in the middle of the northern gable end. The positions of the remaining four post-holes can be inferred. The diameters of the post-holes ranged from 0.6 m. to 0.30 m. On top of the floor was an ashy occupation level, layer 35.1. The floor had been deliberately back-filled with clean material through which the post-holes could be seen rising so that the posts were not withdrawn when the hut was abandoned. The dating of the hut depends on the sherds from an earlier pit (F32), single sherds from the floor, layer 35/2, and the backfilling (F35) and four sherds from a later pit (33). Virtually all the sherds were shelly wares. It seems certain that this hut is 10th century, and probably early in that century. This suggestion was supported by the existence of 0.70 m. of occupation layers sealing the hut which indicate a long period of intensive occupation before the castle sealed the site. These occupation layers and the alignment of the hut indicate that it probably lay on the southern side of an east-west street. This street could well be the continuation of High Street and Queen Street, diverted when the castle was built. If this interpretation is correct, then a considerable length of pre-castle street with its frontages may exist in the bailey. The discovery of this hut is important for Oxford's late Saxon archaeology, since it is the most complete structure of its date so far to have survived later Medieval disturbances. A similar sized building may have existed on the New Inn Court site (see below), and portions of buildings of the same date were excavated at 79/80 St. Aldates. The occupation material on the floor of the hut suggests that this hut under the castle was used as a dwelling place, although Mr. P. V. Addyman has recently argued that huts of this type at this date usually have specialist functions and are ancillary to larger hall-type buildings.<sup>16</sup>

#### THE MOAT

Observation of the contractors' bulk excavation of the moat has resulted in the recovery of large quantities of late Medieval and post-Medieval pottery, leatherwork and iron objects. This work will continue in 1973.

#### THE REFORM CLUB (PLS. XX, C ; XXI, A, B)

Archaeology continues to throw light on the Medieval defences of Oxford. During 1972 the Reform Club in New Inn Hall Street was demolished to make way for an extension of the Southern Electricity Board's showrooms, at 37 George Street. During the demolition the rear wall of no. 32 St. Michael's Street was

<sup>16</sup> P. V. Addyman, 'The Anglo-Saxon house : a new review', *Anglo-Saxon England*, I (1972), 273-307.

exposed and when this wall was underpinned part of the base of bastion no. 2 was exposed. During the contractors' bulk excavation information was also obtained on the berm and the City ditch. The architects, Messrs. Peter Bosanquet and Russell Diplock Associates, allowed recording to take place on this site.

Before salvage excavations began it was thought that bastion no. 2 had been totally destroyed.<sup>17</sup> But its position was known and it was shown by the Ordnance Survey on the site of the 19th century outshot behind no. 32 St. Michael's Street, a City property occupied by A. Maltby and Son, Bookbinders (PL. XXI, A). The outshot probably dates from the mid 19th century, since an undated plan exists in the City Vellum Book which shows the half-round bastion still in existence (PL. XX, c). Like so many of the bastions around the town it was rented out by the Corporation for use as a tenement.

The underpinning showed that when the outshot was built the foundations of the tower were sealed beneath it. (PL. XXI, B). The stones of the foundation were roughly coursed coral rag which existed to a height of over 4 m. The forward (northern) edge of the footings was about 1.75 m. deeper than the rest of the footing. The bastion projected 5.41 m. (17 ft. 9 ins.) in front of the wall and it had been built on a berm. On the berm was a single pit (F1), in which were two sherds of undateable Medieval pottery. The bastion has now been covered up again with polythene to protect the stonework, but the outshot has been repaired and will remain visible.

Gravel which may mark the northern edge of the ditch was seen in the basement of 37 George Street only 19 m. north of the wall. Allowing for the berm, the ditch can only have been approximately 13 m. (42 ft. 6 ins.) wide. This width is narrower than one would have expected and needs to be verified, if the opportunity arises.

### THE BLACKFRIARS (FIGS. 9, 10)

One of the most important events of the 13th century in the life of both the town and the university was the coming of the mendicant orders. The Blackfriars arrived in Oxford in 1221 and they occupied first a cramped site between the modern Blue Boar Lane and Christ Church. Their stay on this site was comparatively brief and by 1236 it seems that a decision was made to move to an island site in the water meadows now known as St. Ebbe's. The documentary evidence for the two pre-Reformation sites of the Oxford Blackfriars was collated in 1938 by W. A. Hinnebusch, O.P.<sup>18</sup> Hinnebusch attempted to locate the second site of the Blackfriars Priory on the basis of the evidence which was then available. At that time it was thought that all trace of the buildings had disappeared but excavations since 1961 have begun to reveal the plan of both the Church and the Cloisters (FIGS. 9 and 10).

<sup>17</sup> Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, *City of Oxford* (1939), 159.

<sup>18</sup> W. A. Hinnebusch, O.P., 'The Pre-Reformation sites of the Oxford Blackfriars', *Oxoniensia*, III (1938), 57-82.

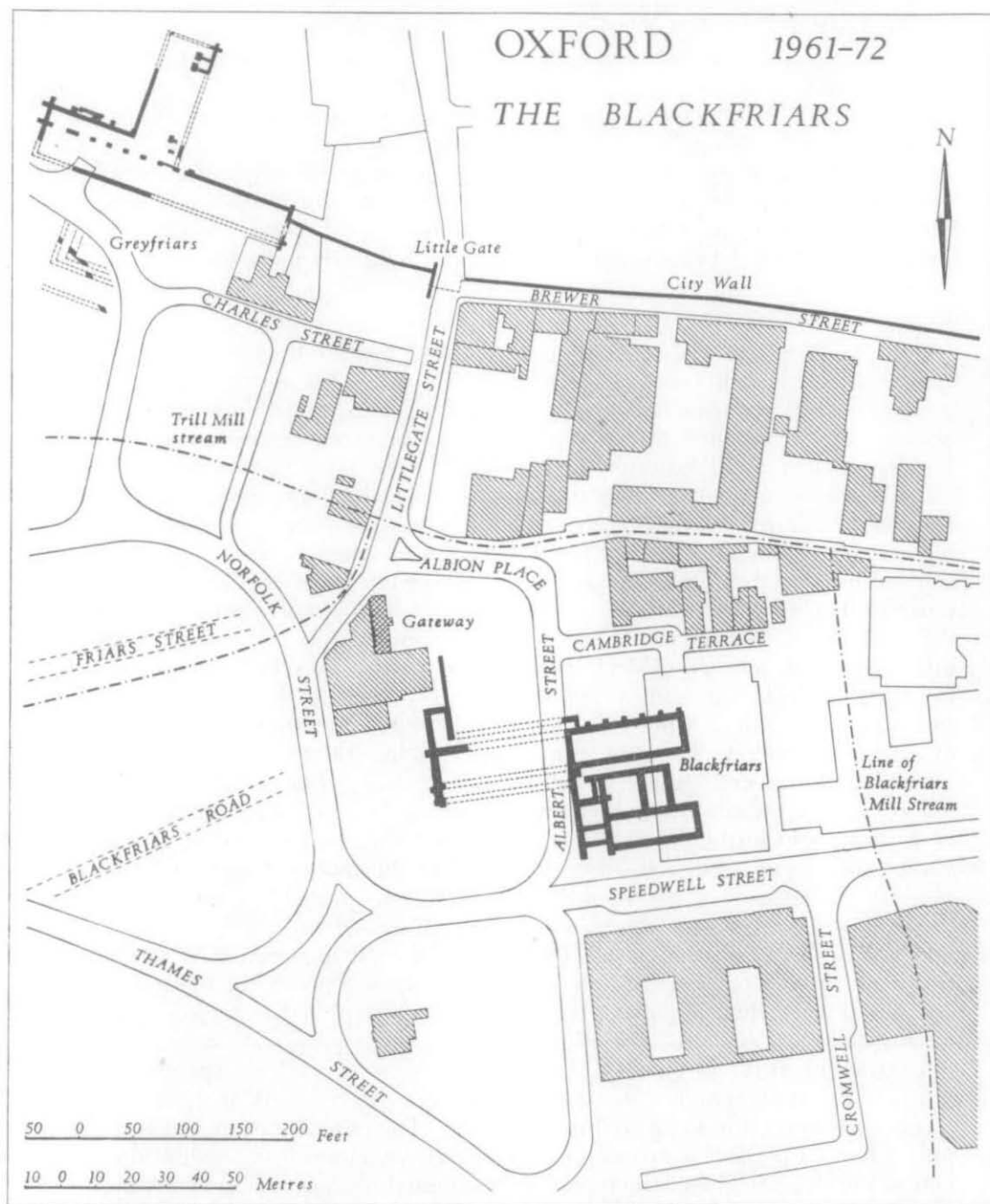


FIG. 9

*Based on the City of Oxford 1 : 500 Survey, by permission of the City Engineer.*



## EXCAVATIONS IN 1961 AND 1966

In 1961 a trial trench was excavated by Mr. J. W. Banks for the Oxford Excavation Committee on the supposed site of the Church to the west of Albert Street.<sup>19</sup> A rubble footing was found which was then thought to be the south wall of the Church. Subsequent excavations in 1966 by The Rev. F. Radcliffe, O.P., Messrs. T. G. Hassall and N. Jackson on behalf of the Oxford City and County Museum showed that this wall was the sleeper wall for the arcade between the nave and the north aisle and that therefore the Church lay slightly further to the south and west than had been originally thought.<sup>20</sup>

## EXCAVATIONS IN 1967. By D. KEENE

In 1967 extensive excavations were carried out for the Oxford City and County Museum in the area between Albert Street and Cambridge Street. The position of the trenches was largely dictated by the work of demolition on nearby houses which continued throughout the excavation, and by the needs of the builders of the new Magistrates' Court which now occupies part of the site.

The main and latest monastic structure excavated was interpreted as the choir of the church of which the north, south and east walls were traced. The internal width was 8.23 m. (27 ft.), the length excavated 23.16 m. (76 ft.), and the width of the bay (taken from the spacing of the two buttresses against the north wall) was 4.88 m. (16 ft.). The walls had been almost entirely robbed in the 16th century and later, but in places the original stonework survived up to the 16th century ground level or just above. A substantial section of the north wall footing with an adjacent buttress had not been robbed. This showed that a wall 1.5 m. (5 ft.) thick had rested on a slightly wider footing of rough stonework set with the gravel. Some sherds of late 15th/16th century pottery were found embedded in this gravel. The ground both inside and outside the structure had been built up with yellow clay after the completion of the walls and in the graveyard to the north this clay was found to rest on an earlier floor level. These two facts suggest that the chancel was constructed as at least a secondary phase of the friary buildings, probably in the late 15th century, and are in accord with the documentary evidence that a new choir and dormer were built in 1500. The floor of the choir consisted of sandstone fragments resting on the clay. Resting on the floor 1.57 m. (5 ft.) inside the north wall was a slight, unmortared wall which is interpreted as the front support for wooden choir stalls.

Adjacent to the chancel on the south side were two other structures apparently of the same period. One may have been a covered walk or slype 2.74 m. (9 ft.) wide along the south wall of the choir. The other, 5.79 m. (19 ft.) wide internally and possibly a two-storey building, ran from south to north at the east end of the slype. These structures were examined in more detail in 1972.

To the north of the choir was a graveyard. Running through the graveyard and 8.23 m. (27 ft.) to the north of but not quite parallel to the choir was a wall

<sup>19</sup> *Oxoniensia*, xxvi/xxvii (1961/2), 337-8.

<sup>20</sup> *Oxoniensia*, xxi (1966), 155.

which in construction pre-dated the chancel, and was apparently associated with the floor beneath the clay build-up. Three reused ashlar blocks with chamfered edges could have formed one side of a doorway in this wall. Most of the finds came from the robbed levels but they do help to illustrate what the building must have been like. They included: stone tiles and some lead from the roofs; floor tiles dating from the 13th to 15th centuries; painted window glass and window lead; moulded stonework, including small shafts and a capital and pieces of a 15th century Purbeck limestone tomb; five brass letters once set in a Purbeck limestone slab; several trading tokens, and a decorative bone pin on the chancel floor beneath the choir stalls. Pottery was relatively sparse and of all Medieval periods, except in the space south of the slype where there was a substantial collection of late Medieval sherds.

The walls of the Church were probably demolished to ground level in the 1550s. In the 17th century a structure following the lines of the north and south choir walls for a length of about 12.2 m. (40 ft.) was erected. This simple 'byre or cartshed' rested on a very rough rubble foundation and probably had main supports set at 2.44 m. (8 ft.) intervals.

#### THE GATEWAY, 1968. By T. G. HASSALL

During the reconstruction of the New Centre for the Deaf, the cottage of c. 1647 at the southern end of Littlegate Street was restored. In the rear rubble stone wall the main gateway into the priory precinct was re-discovered. The gateway had been visible into the 19th century, but was then concealed by a brick building until recognized by P. S. Spokes.

The gateway with ashlar dressings dates from the 15th century and consists of a main entrance 2.75 m. (9 ft.) wide, surviving to a height of 3.40 m. (11 ft. 6 ins.). It was entered from the east. To its south was a smaller pedestrian entrance 1.42 m. (4 ft. 8 ins.) wide and originally about 2.59 m. (8 ft. 4 ins.) high, although only its relieving arch survived.

Traffic entering the priory must have travelled southwards down Littlegate Street, crossed over the Trill Mill Stream and then turned sharp right (i.e. west) through the gate and then left (i.e. south) into the precinct. After the general demolition of the priory, the gateway survived as a free-standing wall which was incorporated into the back wall of a small cottage c. 1647. A fireplace was built into the wide gateway. The gateway has been restored and is now visible.

#### EXCAVATIONS IN 1969. By T. G. HASSALL

Two trenches at right angles to each other were dug west of Albert Street in a car-park to confirm the length of the church. The first trench was aligned east-west and relocated the sleeper wall of the arcade between the nave and north aisle and the west wall. The west wall was then examined in a north-south trench. The buttresses at the end of the church were uncovered. There also appeared to be a narrow south aisle whose existence seems to be confirmed by a subsequent sighting in a sewer trench in Albert Street. Traces of buildings

west of the church were also found. Much of this area will become available for further excavation in 1973.

EXCAVATIONS IN 1972. By G. H. LAMBRICK

The main purpose of excavations in 1972 was to locate and recover the plan of the east range of the cloisters. In addition trenches were dug to discover the 'walking-place' between the nave and the choir. As with previous excavations long narrow trenches were dug by machine down to the medieval levels and then continued by hand. Since the east and west ends of the church, and some structures to the south-east had already been recorded, and since the footings of all the buildings are so massive, it was not difficult to position trenches so as to recover as much as possible of the plan of buildings in the general area of excavation.

For the first time some attempt was made to excavate the levels beneath the 13th century church and cloister. It was necessary to use a pump continuously. It was found, as inferred from documentary evidence, that the land must have been little better than a marsh or water meadow. There was a considerable build-up of alluvial clay in which the only man-made feature discovered was a ditch lined with a wattle fence. Little work could be done on this, but it was probably a boundary or drainage ditch, and the island (as the area then was) would have been used for pasture. Preliminary radiocarbon dates on the wattle give a date of A.D.  $1220 \pm 100$ . This meadow had later been covered with a layer of clay c. 0.50 m. (1 ft. 8 ins.) thick to raise the level of the land for the priory. This was laid after the foundations of the buildings had been built.

In the choir the findings of the 1967 excavations were confirmed. In particular the continuation of the choir-stall footings was found and in addition the stratification suggested a similar arrangement on the south side. More extensive investigations of the south wall of the choir (and some of the cloister walls) showed how massive the footings were—presumably to overcome the marshiness of the site. All load-bearing walls were laid in trenches dug through the alluvial clay and rested on natural gravel, about 1 m. below the present water level. At foundation level the stones were packed with clay, presumably as a measure against water rising through the walls. In most cases the walls had been robbed to water level. Where this was not so it was clear that fairly good mortar had been used in the walls. The massiveness of the footings is represented by the south wall of the choir, which was 2 m. (6 ft. 6 ins.) wide at its base.

The discovery of the eastern wall of the walking place helps to establish the line of the cloister alley and defines the limits of the choir, showing it to be rather shorter than the nave. The western wall of the walking place could not be excavated, if, indeed it was not simply a wooden screen. Above the walking place would have been the belfry—indicated by the large buttress on the south choir wall of the choir, by the door of the walking place. On the northern side of the church the walking place extended eastwards outside the choir, filling up half a bay of the north wall. This may well have been an extension of the north aisle, though no doubt it was partitioned off from the main part of the aisle as

# OXFORD

# BLACKFRIARS

# 1961-72

## INTERPRETATION PLAN

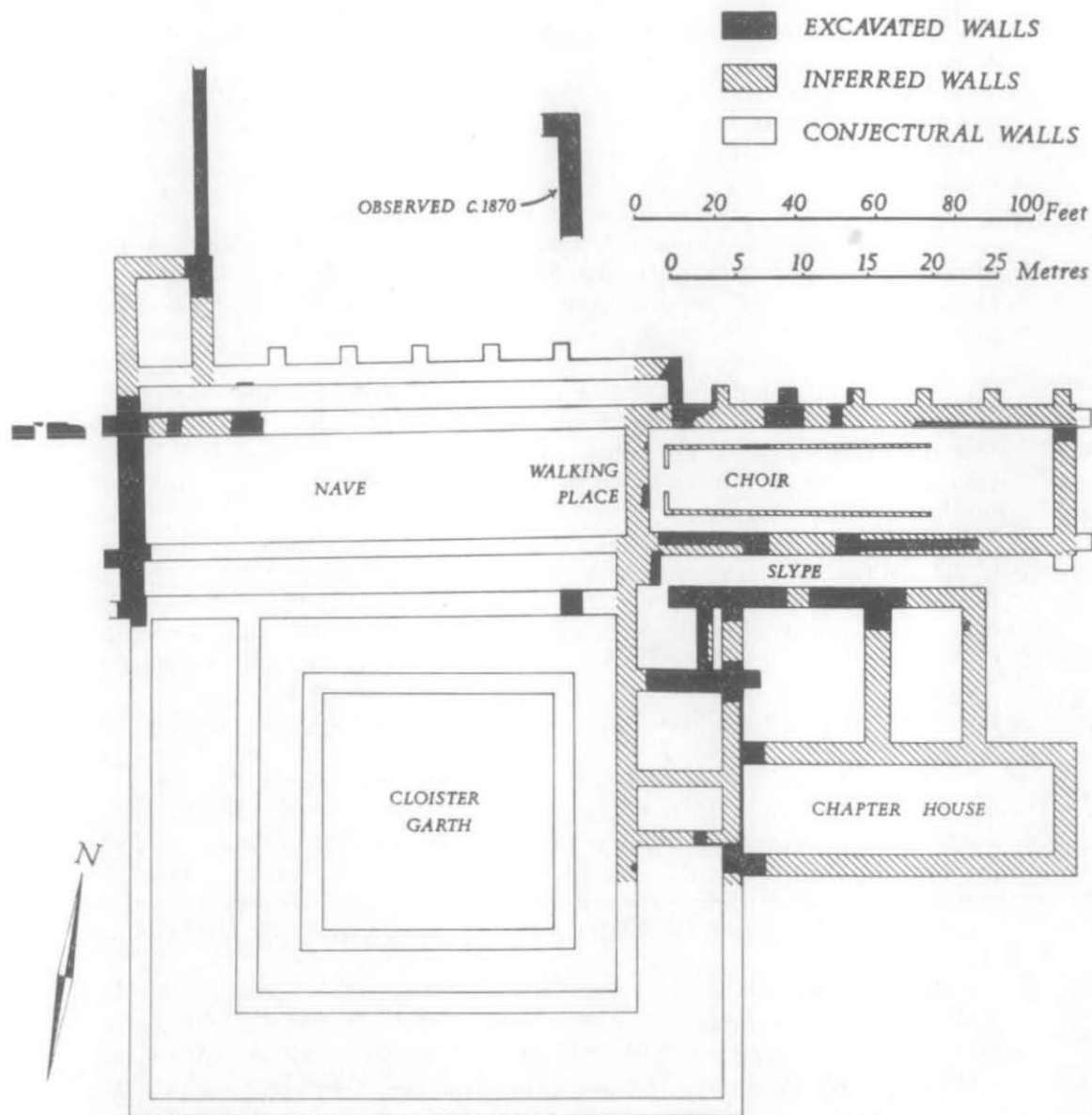


FIG. 10

would have been the walking place from the nave. It is quite possible that this was a chantry chapel, since it was not uncommon to have small altars and burials in the walking place. A burial was found in this little chapel. The entrance to the walking place from the churchyard would have been between this chapel and the north aisle itself.

This position of the walking place gives support to the possibility that the length of wall under Albert Street, observed in 1870, is the eastern wall of an unusual 'north nave'. If so the plan of the church becomes significantly similar to the Greyfriars Church.<sup>21</sup> If there was a north 'nave' then Sir Peter Bessels' will of 1426 in which he left £120 to make six windows in the northern 'aisle' may refer to the refenestration of this extension. But until the existence of the 'north nave' can be proved, it is also possible that Bessels' will referred to the north aisle.

The buildings to the south of the choir—the east range of the cloisters and associated buildings—form a fairly conventional lay-out. They were separated from the choir by the slype already identified in 1967. It ran the length of the choir from near a very massive buttress on the south wall of the choir (which may well have contained a stair to the belfry) at the western end, almost to the east end of the church. It was almost certainly covered over its whole length since its wall was continuous despite the apparent existence of the open yard to its south, just east of the cloister range (see below). It would thus have formed both a covered alley and in effect a continuous buttress for the church (no conventional buttresses were found on the south wall of the choir as existed on the north).

To the east of the main cloister range was a building of which a small section of the east wall and its north-west corner had already been found in 1967. The discovery of the chapter house extending eastwards from the cloisters suggests that the north wall of the chapter house may have formed the southern wall of this building. If this inference is correct the building was quite sizeable, and almost certainly too large for a sacristy or other building directly associated with the church. It is more likely that this building was the prior's lodging, as at the Greyfriars in London.

The courtyard formed by this building, the chapter house, the east wall of the cloister range and the slype, appears to have been open. It had no solid floor as all other covered areas or rooms had, but only layers of gravel and stone packed into the clay, and layers of mortar which were probably demolition material. In one of these mortar layers a gold and sapphire ecclesiastical ring was found.<sup>22</sup> This yard is too small for a little cloister and was probably no more than a light-well.

The eastern range of the cloisters ran south from the west end of the choir. The alley must have continued on the line of the walking-place since the ground-floor rooms of the range were immediately to the east of this line. At the north end of the range was another small area which may have been open, since it

<sup>21</sup> *Oxoniensia*, xxvi (1971), 6-7.

<sup>22</sup> *Current Archaeology*, III, No. 12 (1973), plate 320.

lacked a continuous northern side. The slype wall stopped short of both the massive buttress on the choir wall and the wall between the cloister alley and the rooms in the range. Two curious features of this area were a depression containing a series of floor layers in its western half and a robbed wall parallel to, and only 1 m. (3 ft. 3½ ins.) inside, the eastern wall of the cloister range. This wall had been robbed and floored over in the late 15th or early 16th century, possibly in 1500 when the dormer was rebuilt. It seems quite possible that this was a staircase to the dormitory (which was normally on the first floor of the eastern range). The removal of this wall was the only apparent sign of alteration to the cloisters during the life of the priory.

To the south of this area ran the cloister range proper. The first room in the range was the only one whose dimensions, 6.50 m. (12 ft. 4 ins.) by 6 m. (19 ft. 6 ins.) could be deduced. This room was clearly well used, for its mortar floor had been replaced twice, but its function is not clear. The north and east walls of this room were very sizable and solid, being c. 1.50 m. (4 ft. 11 ins.) wide. The western wall was discovered by augering underneath the pavement of Albert Street, and the southern wall was inferred by the variation of floor-levels each side of a large post-Medieval pit.

The presumed chapter house was discovered extending eastwards from the eastern wall of the range. The evidence for it being the chapter house is strong, since its most common position was the centre of the eastern range. If one assumes this position here it is possible to project a square cloister whose western side lines up with the west end of the church. In addition, its footings were more substantial than those of the other claustral buildings, and its width was almost equal to that of the choir. The strongest evidence is that it had several burials at its west end (the only part excavated). Normally, the chapter house was the only place other than the church itself where burials were allowed to be made within the priory buildings. Curiously, these included two child burials suggesting either very young recruitment (probably against the Order's statutes), or (unusually) lay burials in the chapter house. In addition to this there was a considerable build-up, c. 0.5 m. (1 ft. 6 ins.) of floor levels. The extent of the building eastwards is not known, but it is likely that it would have extended as far east as the end of the choir. This length can be inferred since the room would have needed seating capacity for ninety-six friars. It is also recorded that a tiled pavement, possibly the east end of the chapter house, was dug up in Cambridge Street earlier this century. The absence of burials in a band c. 1 m. wide next to each wall suggests that there were benches, perhaps of stone, along each wall of the chapter house.

The chapter house was approached from the cloister alley by a vestibule crossing the cloister range just south of the room already discussed. This was much narrower than the chapter house and was formed by two shallow partition walls. The robber trench of the southern wall was excavated, but the northern wall was destroyed by the post-Medieval pit already mentioned. Here, too, the floors had been extensively renewed, and the levels showed a marked similarity to those in the chapter house itself.



South of this vestibule was a further room. This was similar to that on the north, but its floor was better preserved, retaining its hard mortar surface. Again the floor had been replaced. Only in this room was the wall between the alley and the rooms excavated, and then only a tiny section of its eastern face. The extent of this room to the south could not be discovered.

Very few architectural details could be deduced from the remains excavated, most of the carved stonework found has been only small fragments, though one piece of window tracery was found in a depression, filled with demolition material, in the choir. Some painted glass has also been found, and many floor tiles.

After the dissolution in 1538 the buildings were thoroughly demolished and most of the works were robbed more or less to water level. It is recorded that by the 17th century, when almost all trace of the priory had disappeared, the site was turned into ornamental gardens. Remains of these, in the form of a grid of shallow gulleys, were apparent in several of the trenches. Various 18th and 19th century pits and the cellars of the 19th century houses were the only other later features.

The plan of the Blackfriars Priory is now becoming clear. Further investigation of the church is required and it will be important to confirm the dimensions of the two aisles. The existence of a north nave must also be tested. It is unlikely that any further information on the eastern range of the cloisters will come to light. Likewise the south range is sealed beneath Speedwell Street. The western side of the western range will be excavated in 1973.

## NEW INN COURT (FIG. 11 ; PLS. XXII, A, B)

### THE HISTORY OF THE SITE

One of the most important aspects of the recent excavations in Oxford has been the investigation of ordinary medieval tenement sites. Two medium-sized tenements were examined in great detail at 31-34 Church Street, St. Ebbe's and a third small suburban tenement at 79 St. Aldates produced good structural remains.<sup>23</sup> In 1972 there was an opportunity to examine a site of a large tenement set well back from a street frontage in New Inn Court. This site will form a small part of the large Co-operative development which will extend the present shop in Queen Street as far as Pembroke Street.

The site available in 1972 was occupied by the western part of Gloucester Hall and Hinxey Hall.<sup>24</sup> Kepeharm Lane provided access to them from St. Aldates.

The excavation was concentrated on the western half of Hinxey Hall. In the Oseney rentals it is called *domus* Kepeharm. By 1325-26 it was called the house where Thomas de Hengseye used to dwell. From then onwards it was often called *aula* Hinxey. The Hall's history is fairly fully documented, although it is not known when it first became used as an academic hall. On 18th October

<sup>23</sup> *Oxoniensia*, xxxiv (1969)-xxxvii (1971).

<sup>24</sup> H. E. Salter, *Survey of Oxford*, ed. W. A. Pantin, II, O.H.S., N.S. xx (1969), South-West Ward, Nos. 127 and 128.

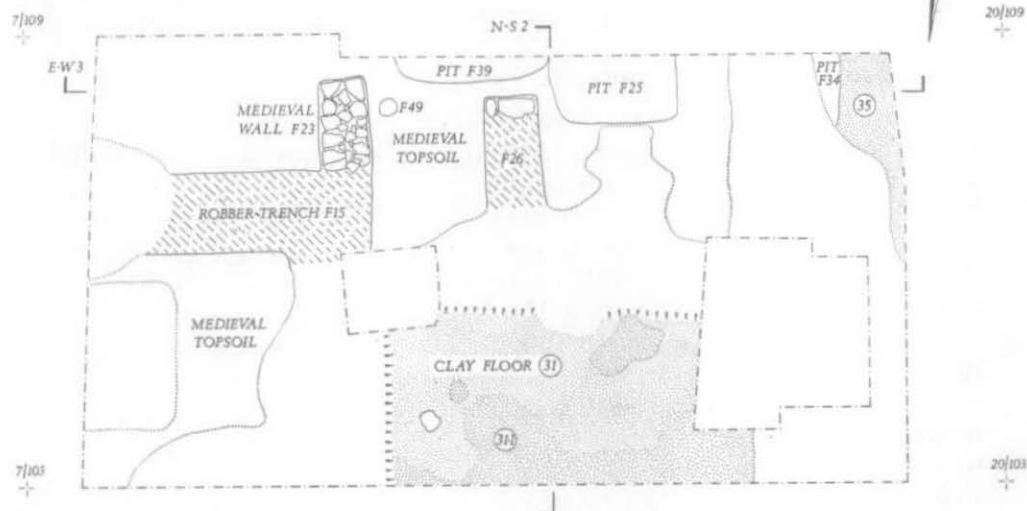
OXFORD

NEW INN COURT

1972

## TRENCH VII

## MEDIEVAL AND LATER FEATURES:



## LATE SAXON AND SUBSOIL FEATURES:

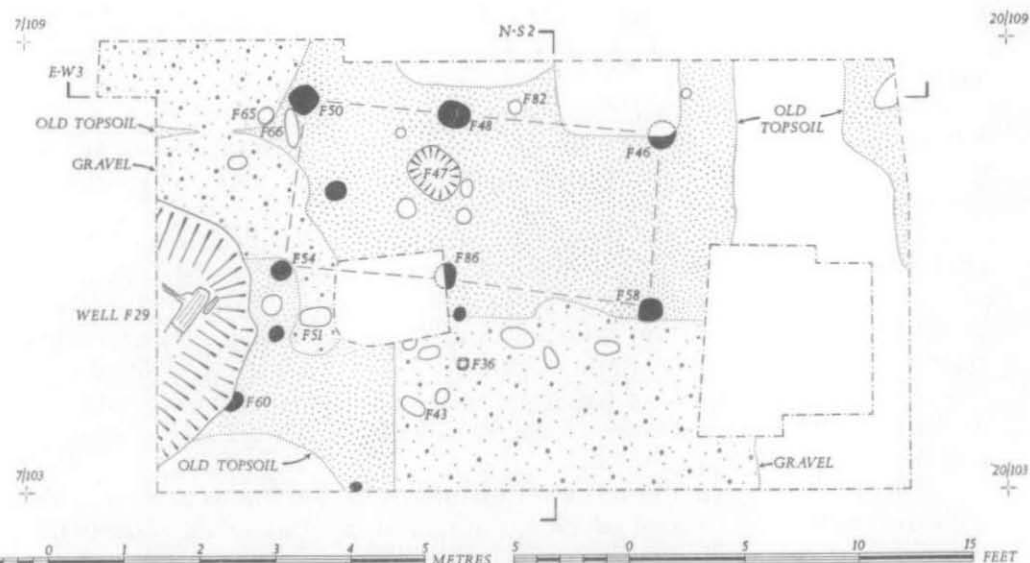


FIG. 11

In the lower plan the post-holes shown in black were first seen in the old top-soil, the remaining post-holes left open were only seen in the gravel.

1407, an official 'taxation' or assessment of its room rents was made by representatives of the University and the Town. This document provides one of the best descriptions of any academic hall in Oxford and it has been fully discussed by Dr. W. A. Pantin who has attempted a reconstruction of the building.<sup>25</sup> There must have been ten rooms and also a hall, kitchen and buttery.

Apart from the principal there were up to twenty scholars at Hinxey Hall at any one time. By 1533 it was in decline and it had disappeared by 1552.

#### THE EXCAVATION. By B. G. DURHAM

Five small trial trenches were dug by hand in January and extended mechanically in April. None of them produced anything other than 18th and 19th century build-up through the full 2 metres depth. Only when the bottom of trench VII was investigated by hand did it emerge that there were structures below this level (FIG. 11; PLS. XXII, A, B). The largest area possible was then cleared consistent with the safety of the surrounding buildings. This area was on the western half of the Hinxey Hall site.

The first layer encountered was layer 11 which contained much mortar, stone and broken stone tile, and appeared to be the result of the destruction of a building. Beneath this were three late pits, F12, F13, F14, and a large irregular trench F30 and F30/1, all 17th century in date. Both F30/1 and F15 were cut into the backfill of shallow late 16th and early 17th century scoops F16, layer 19, to which no function could be ascribed, but which in turn cut into the destruction layer 17, and floor levels layers 24, 28, and 31 of a 16th century building. There was, however, no evidence of the building which enclosed these floors, presumably because the footings or ground beam slots had been removed by the 17th century disturbances. The lowest floors were set into the gravel, well below the contemporary ground surface. It is suggested that the floor levels were eroded by frequent sweeping, and only began to accumulate when the building was in decline. This would explain the lack of any finds earlier than the 16th century, and may permit the interpretation that this was part of the Medieval Hinxey Hall.

The only other possible Medieval structure was a small section of a gravel-packed stone wall (F23), which would probably have intersected with the wall lost in the robber trench (F15). There was another shallow slot (F26), which paralleled F23 further E, but from which there was no dating evidence. There were no floors related to any of these features, but at the east end of the site there was a series of floor layers 35/1 to 35/7, with no structure, but which must date to the late 12th or 13th century. The remaining Medieval features were three pits (F25, F34, and F39).

The areas between the medieval features were for the most part covered with the reddish clay topsoil which is the typical covering of the second gravel terrace where it is undisturbed by man. This layer was up to 0.45 m. thick in the least disturbed areas, although the top 0.25 m. was weathered, darkened and

<sup>25</sup> W. A. Pantin, 'The Hall and Schools of medieval Oxford: an attempt at reconstruction,' *Studies presented to Daniel Callus*, O.H.S., N.S. xvi (1959-60), 77-82.

contained a random assemblage of late Saxon and Medieval pottery. There was no evidence of any meaningful stratification in any part of the layer. However, features appeared at various levels during the excavation of the layer, and the stage at which they first appeared may give an indication of their antiquity.

The first of those features to appear were two small intersecting hollows (F32/1 and F32/2), containing 12th century pottery and cut by the wall (F15), but to which no purpose could be ascribed. The other major feature was a large late 10th or early 11th century pit (F29), with a profile and backfill pattern unlike the normal Saxon rubbish pit, and which may be the top of the construction shaft of a timber-lined well. There were fragments of decayed wood at 2.20 m. below the contemporary ground surface, but it became unsafe to dig deeper than this in the restricted area available. This should become accessible when the building contract starts. Apart from these three features a number of small pits and post-holes were encountered in the old topsoil and others were seen in the gravel after all the topsoil had been removed.

Post-holes F46, F48 and F50 were similar in size and depth and were in line. F86 bore a strong resemblance to them and with the two smaller post-holes (F54 and F58) formed a rectangle with dimensions almost identical to the Saxon hut on the castle bailey site (see above). The only pottery related to this structure, two sherds of coarse calcite-gritted ware from F48, is consistent with 10th or early 11th century date.

The remainder of the post-holes failed to show any clear spatial arrangement, and in the absence of dating or stratigraphical evidence all were included in the Subsoil Features plan.

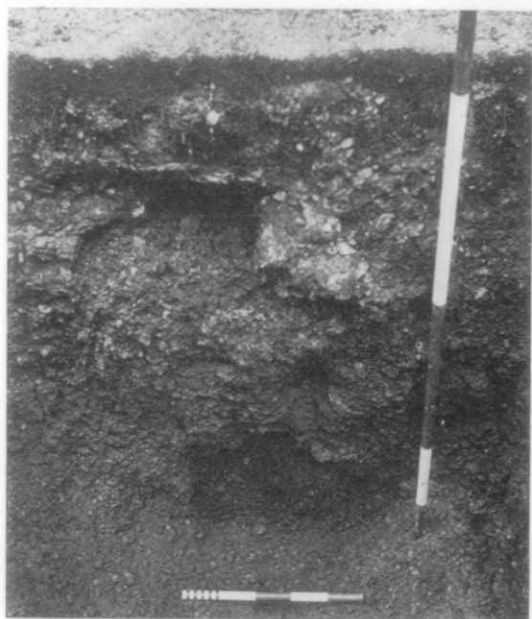
The site, though too small to show complete buildings, has still added much useful background information to the archaeology of the City. Firstly, it demonstrated that even in the very centre of one of the largest insulae of the medieval town, there was considerable late Saxon activity. Secondly, it showed fragments of medieval structure which must have been related to Kepeharm House, although they did not contribute much to Dr. Pantin's reconstruction of Hinxey Hall. And thirdly, it showed how little one could expect to find of a 16th century timber building if the beam settings had been disturbed. On a more esoteric level it showed a larger proportion of preserved old topsoil than on most of the sites recently excavated, and it is interesting how little the levels had built up through perhaps five hundred years of late Saxon and Medieval activity. This contrasted with the apparently aimless deep and shallow diggings in the 17th century, and the subsequent accumulation of two metres of soil and rubbish during 18th and 19th centuries until the site was sealed by a factory. Further excavations are planned when building work starts.

The following contributed to the cost of the excavations in 1972: The Department of the Environment, Oxford City Council, the Pilgrim Trust, the Gulbenkian Foundation, Oxfordshire County Council, the British Academy, the William Abel Pantin Trust, the Oxford Preservation Trust, the Sir Felix

Brunner Trust, the Meyerstein Fund, the Greening Lamborn Trust, the Haverfield Trust, the Society of Antiquaries, Corpus Christi College, All Souls College, Jesus College, Brasenose College, Christ Church, The Queen's College, Merton College, Worcester College, Trinity College, St. John's College, Oriel College, Wadham College, New College, St. Catherine's College, University College, Exeter College, Somerville College, Lady Margaret Hall, St. Peter's College, St. Hugh's College, Keble College, St. Hilda's College, Balliol College, St. Anne's College, Pembroke College.

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PLATE XX

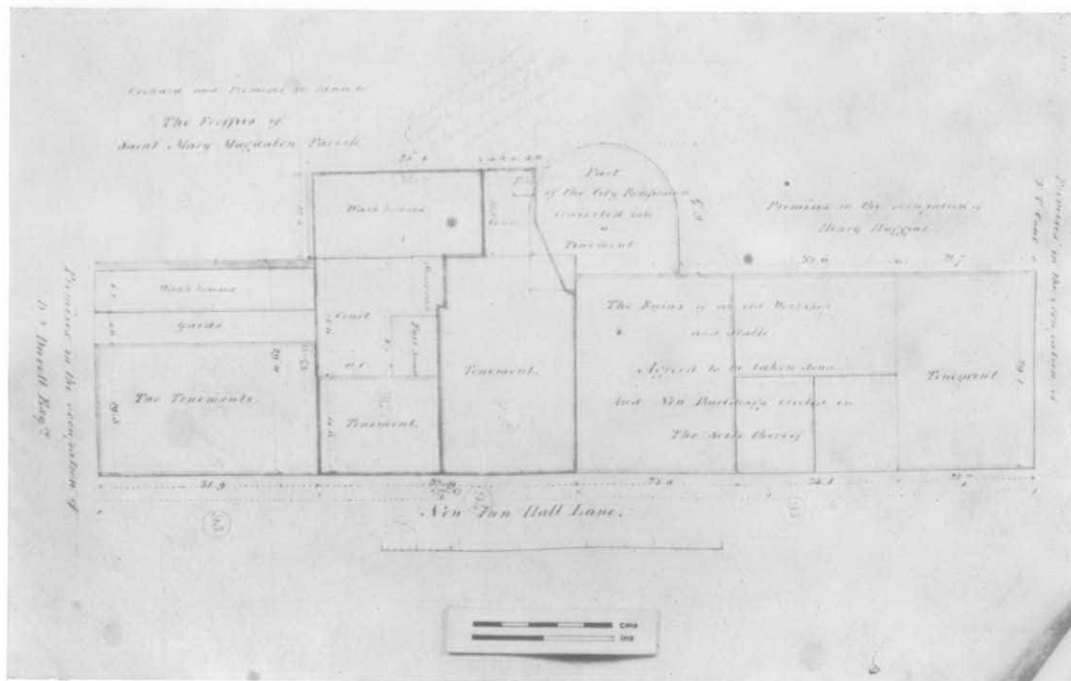


A. Christ Church, Oxford. Section through middle Saxon burial, grave 2, showing the thick deposit of charcoal from the east. Horizontal scale = 50 cm.



B. The Castle, Oxford. Trench III, the south gable end of the late Saxon sunken hut F35. Scales = 2 m.

Ph. : B. G. Durham



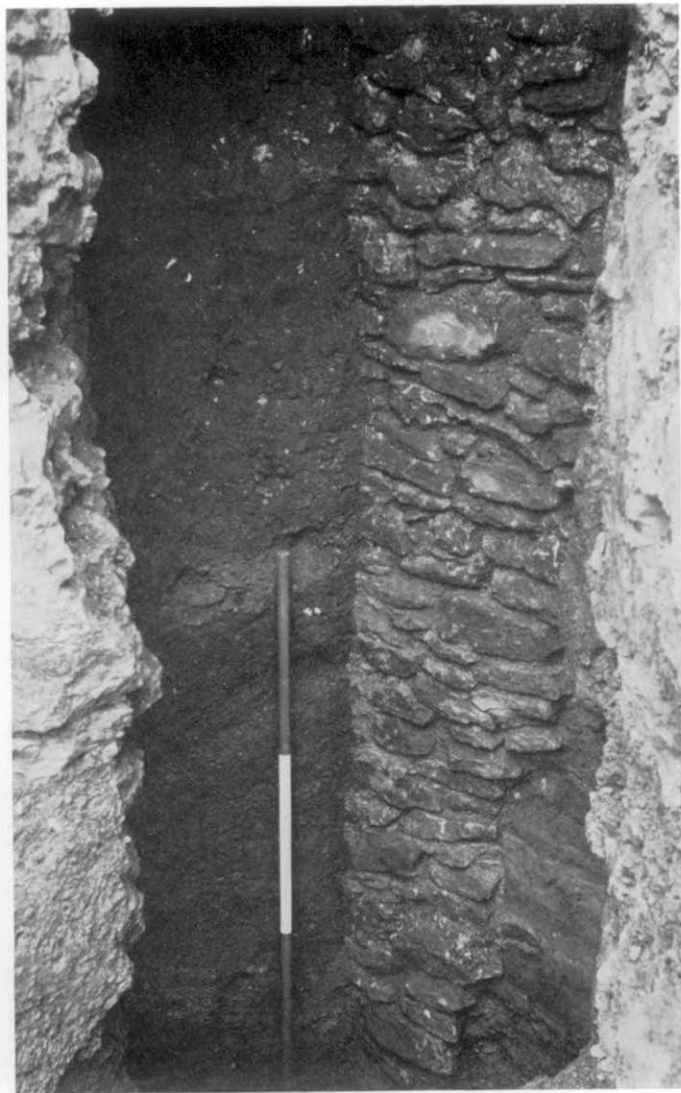
C. The Reform Club, Oxford. Mid-19th cent. plan of bastion no. 2 behind no. 32 St. Michael's Street, 'New Inn Hall Lane' being the old name. Reproduced by the permission of City Solicitor; ref. Vellum Book I, nos. 93-95.

Ph. : D. Carpenter





A. The Reform Club, Oxford. View from the north of the Outshot behind no. 32, St. Michael's Street, built on the foundation of bastion no. 2.



B. The Reform Club, Oxford. The western side of bastion no. 2. Scale in 50 cm. divisions.

*Phh. : B. G. Durham*

PLATE XXII



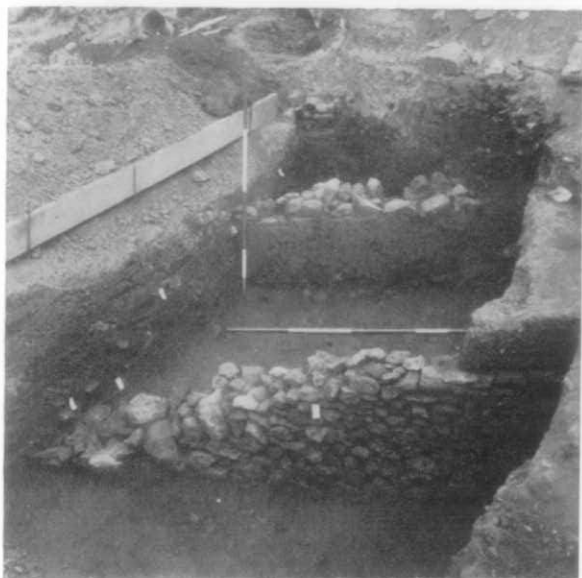
A. New Inn Court, Oxford. Trench VII, medieval and later features from the west. Scales = 2 m.



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

*Phh. : B. G. Durham*

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



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

*Phh. : P.J.F.*

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