

Prehistoric Activity, Early Roman Building, Tenement Yards and Gardens behind Twickenham House, Abingdon

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based on contributions from PAUL BOOTH, MAUREEN MELLOR, JOHN CARTER, JACQUELINE SMITH, JOHN COOPER, ALISON GLEDHILL, ROGER AINSLIE, JULIAN MUNBY, PHILIP POWELL, ROGER THOMAS, JOHN LIGHTFOOT, MIENEKE COX, SALLY and CHRIS OATLEY, BRIAN JONES and others.

SUMMARY

Beaker sherds in a 'plough soil' and iron-age occupation features preceded substantial, better preserved, early Roman floors, wall foundations, and gravel layers – probably of a courtyard. Early medieval wall robbing, pit digging and domestic refuse dumping was followed by a predominance of waste dumping from butchery, tannery, or similar trade activities from the 14th to 18th centuries – Thomas Knight and Son, soap-boilers, tallow chandlers and grocers, lived nearby. Thick upper layers of dark earths are confirmed by 16th-century and later documentation of gardens. From the 18th century, higher status occupants included Matthew Anderson, gentleman and mayor; Joseph Tomkins, maltster; John Box, surgeon, whose medical specimens were recovered; and George Saxby, brewer.

Excavations in the disused walled garden behind Twickenham House, 20 East St Helen Street and alongside Turnagain Lane (Fig. 1) were carried out by the Abingdon Area Archaeological and Historical Society to investigate the surroundings of the enigmatic Roman building below the frontage of Fore Street, another name for East St Helen Street.¹ Iron age and medieval deposits were expected.²

Twickenham House, also called 'The gatehouse', is a substantial 18th-century house paid for by Joseph Tomkins and almost unchanged since it was built c. 1757.³ Fig. 2 shows the ground floor, especially the domestic rooms, and kitchen garden around 1875. Despite the frontal solidity and continuity of the house, the northern (and eastern)

¹ J.Y. Ackerman, *Proceedings of the Soc. Antiquaries*, 2nd ser. iii (1865), 145, 202–3.

² D. Miles, 'Excav. at West St Helens Street, Abingdon', *Oxoniensia*, xl (1975), 79–101; M. Parrington, 'Small Excav. in Abingdon 1973', *Oxoniensia*, xxxix (1973), 34–42, and 'Excav. at the Old Gaol', *Oxoniensia*, xli (1975), 59–78; R. Wilson, R.W. Thomas and A. Wheeler, 'Sampling a Profile of Town Soil-accumulation', *Oxoniensia*, xlv (1979), 26–9.

³ P.S. Spokes, 'Some Notes on the Domestic Architecture of Abingdon', *Berks. Arch. Jnl.* lviii (1960), 14–15; W.J.H. Liversidge, 'Matthew Anderson, Gent.' in W.J.H. and M.J.H. Liversidge (eds.), *Abingdon Essays* (1989), 116.



Fig. 1. Site and trench locations in Abingdon.

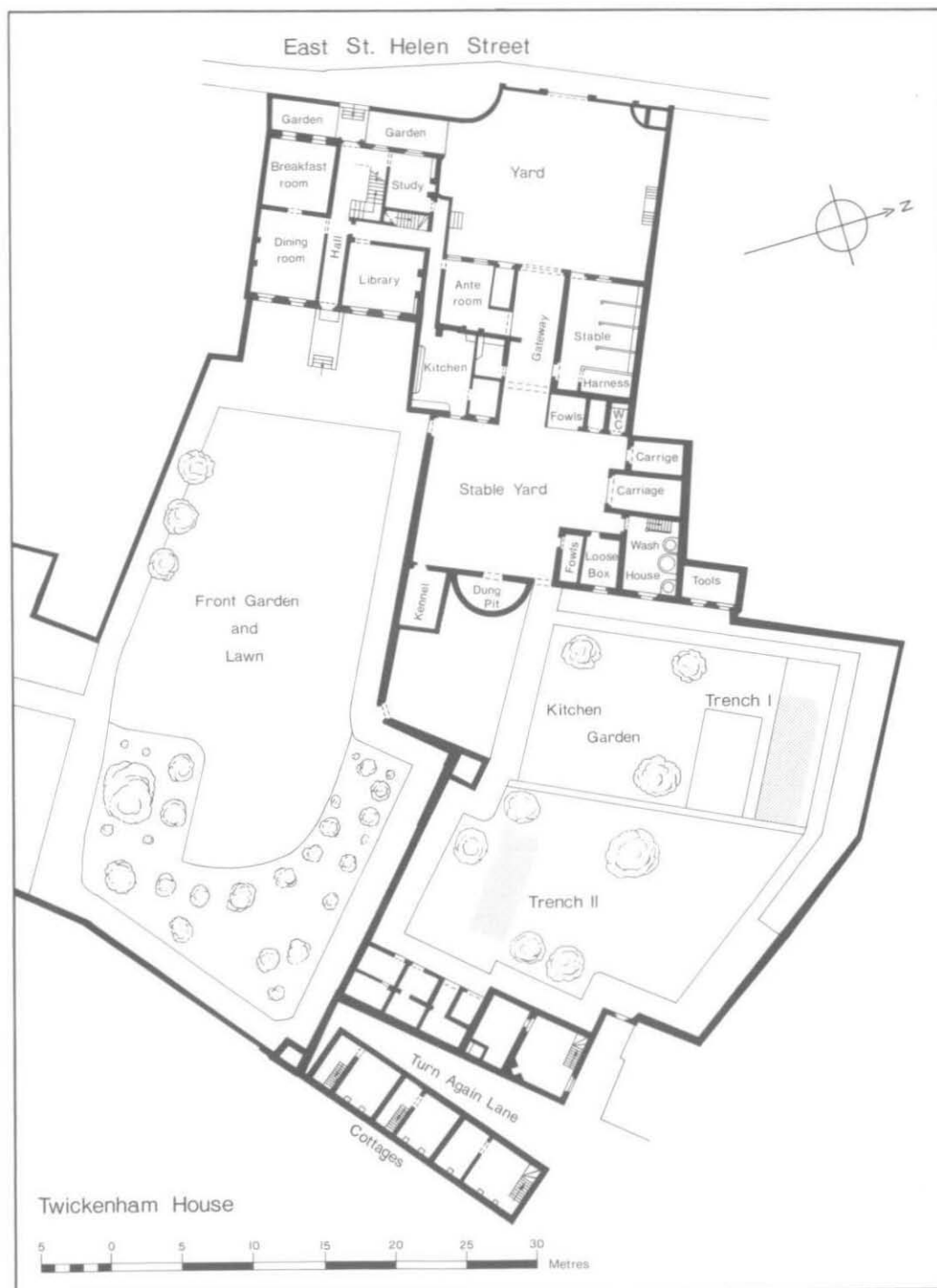


Fig. 2. Plan of Twickenham House and the kitchen garden around 1875.

'stable' side and the garden, in which excavations were carried out, existed for a long time as a separate property, leased from the Borough and distinguished from the southern, privately owned half.

Mr John Lightfoot kindly allowed the Society to dig two trenches in 1987 and 1989 prior to the construction of a car park. Digging and recording were hurried and unfinished, especially of the second trench, despite working on summer evenings and Saturdays as well as at our more usual Sunday hours.

Commencing Trench I, the structural remains and sunken floors of a greenhouse were stripped out with a mini-excavator; for Trench II, over 1 m. of post-medieval soil was removed by similar machining to expose significant earlier deposits. Normal excavation uncovered prehistoric, Romano-British and medieval deposits in Trench I but prehistoric deposits were not located in Trench II.

Findings from the site will be dealt with chronologically.

PERIGLACIAL AND POST-GLACIAL NATURAL DEPOSITION

Deep yellowish alluvial silts and gravel underlay the natural orange-brown loam of the early post-glacial soil (FI-9) lying variably between 1.9 m. and 2.6 m. below ground level (Figs. 3 & 4).

BRONZE AGE

Feature I-9 graded upward into a red-brown loam and gravel mixture suggestive of a plough soil (FI-17/4). The upper layer included sherds of a single southern British beaker and a few flint flakes.

IRON AGE

Overlying the 'plough soil' was a grey-brown loam and occupation debris including some early and mid iron-age pottery (FI-17/3). This layer filled a posthole (FI-21) 10 cm. in diameter, which penetrated the soil below. Around this time a ditch (FI-18) of V- to U-shaped profile was dug into the alluvial silts and became filled with five layers of red-brown and grey-brown soil and some iron-age pottery.

ROMANO-BRITISH

Over FI-17/3 was a compacted pebble surface including quartzite and limestone (FI-17/2) and a higher grey-brown soil layer (FI-17/1), both of which contained a few iron-age and Roman sherds. Other formerly widespread layers accumulated. Layer I-7/6 consisted of 0.14 m.-deep gravel mixed with limestone and mortar detritus and lumps of red-brown soil; layer FI-7/5 of coarse yellow gravel; layer FI-7/4 of 0.2 m.-deep fine grey gravel; layer FI-7/3 of grey-brown grit; layer FI-7/2 of 0.08 m.-deep sandy gravel and an early Roman rimsherd; and layer FI-7/1 of coarse compacted gravel, evidently concreted over a long period and containing Roman sherds.

Layers in FI-7 survived mainly in the SE third of the trench but recurred in the NW edge (Fig. 4) and were quite extensive. They appear to be yards or, doubtfully, road surfaces, made by importing and spreading gravel on at least six occasions. Since the layers appear little disturbed by carts or heavy animals, they could be courtyards.

The earliest manmade feature in Trench II was an uneven hollow, cut into the natural yellow river silts (Fig. 5). Romano-British digging removed prehistoric soil and settlement and natural deposits. With the absence of natural silting and soil formation in the deepest part, the hollow appears to have been quickly filled by thick layers of grey silt and fire ash (FII-38) and greenish cesslike deposition (FII-33) intercalated with thin spreads of redeposited red brown natural soil and yellow gravels (II-32 and II-39). These layers and similar ashy ones

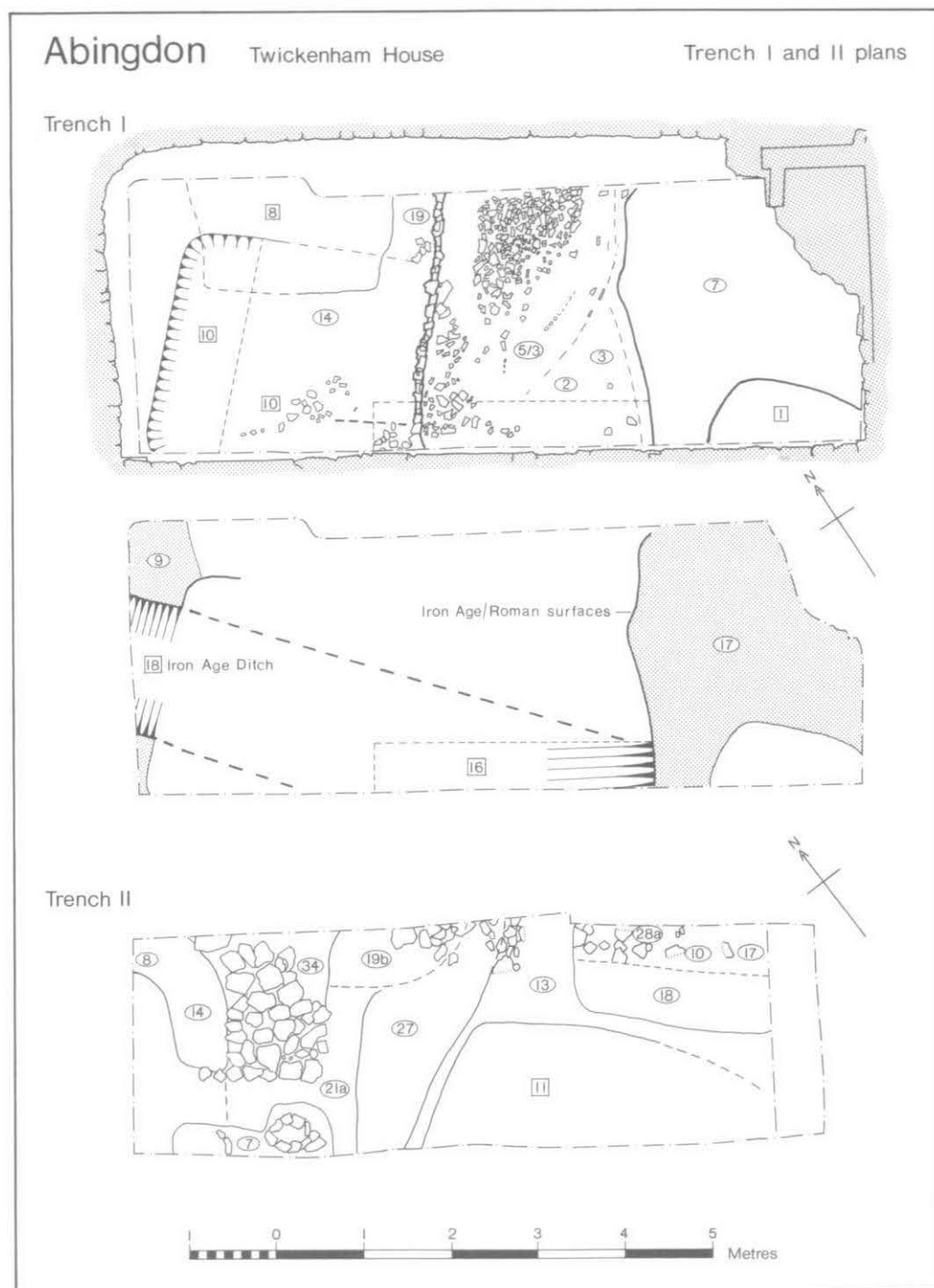


Fig. 3. Composite plans of lower features of Trenches I and II.



Fig. 4. Sections of Trench I.

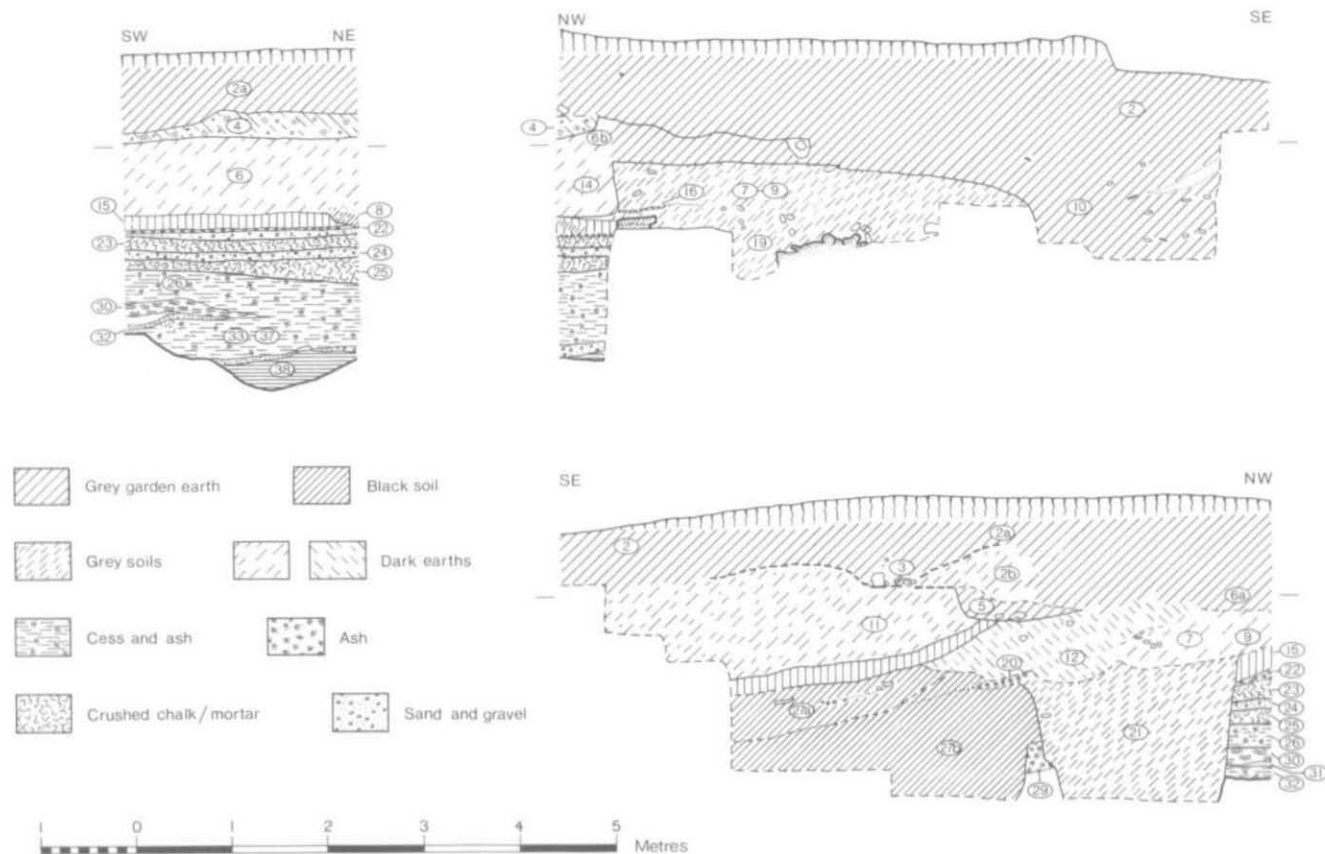


Fig. 5. Sections of Trench II.

above (Fs II-26, II-30 and II-31) appear to have been dumped to bring the ground up to a level suitable for the construction of a building or an extension of one. An ashly deposit (FII-29; see Fig. 5), mostly later destroyed, was probably a continuation of FsII-26 and 30-32.

Paul Booth considers the pottery from these features to date consistently to the post-conquest period of the mid 1st century A.D. Local coarsewares predominated but finewares, notably butt beaker sherds and a Samian fragment, were present.

A succession of higher flatter layers were associated with wall trenches, stone foundations remaining in some (Fig. 5). Later destruction made it difficult to determine the level from which the wall trenches were dug into the lower deposits of site levelling, and impossible to say at what depth the uppermost floor layers of the building were laid to. However, one edge of wall trench FII-21c survived as a notch cut into FII-29 and therefore the wall appears dug into the dumped layers (Fs II-26 and II-29-32).

Some upper layers must be floors, namely those of crushed chalk (FII-23), mortar (FII-16) and rough sizeable paving stones (FII-34, see Fig. 5), with intervening, less diagnostic layers of orange brown loam (FII-15b), gravel (FII-41) and, possibly, ash (FII-22, which may be deposition from an intervening phase of destruction). Flatness and evenness of these layers as deep as FII-25 indicates other floors above the dumped levelling deposits (FII-26 and below). Total depth of the successive floors was around 0.6 m. These layers extended horizontally over 2-3 m. between and into three trench sections and probably once occurred to the SE. Most appear laid down between the main walls of the building.

Pottery groups from the floors were small. Paul Booth says they collectively indicate a late 1st- to early or possibly mid 2nd-century occupation of the building.

A major stone wall base (Fs II-19b and II-28b) of the building ran roughly WNW-ESE for 5 m. along one side of the excavation trench (Fig. 3). It consisted of rounded irregularly shaped lumps of stone packed solidly and competently together, 0.5 m. wide and 0.2 m. deep, during the mid 1st century - on the basis of it incorporating a single South Gaulish Samian sherd. On meeting the surviving floors this wall turned SSW, but its passage was only registered by the robbed building trench (FII-21a). A shallower, narrow robber trench and wall foundation slot (FII-14) was cut through upper floor layers as deep as FII-24 and parallel to wall trench FII-21c. Curvature in the lower profile is not easily explained, but undoubtedly it was a building feature since the stone paved floor (FII-34) was confined between it and the other wall (Fig. 3).

Thus FII-34 indicates a building phase of a 1.2 m.-wide, stone-floored, NNE-SSW corridor set apart from the surrounding rooms at a later date than the lower and more extensive earthen floors. Otherwise there is little evidence of the definitive structure of the building. It is uncertain whether the larger wall exposed was an internal or external feature. Building size was in excess of trench dimensions (8 x 3 m.).

Relatively small and fine bone debris occurred in the dumped levels preceding the building, and finer debris occurred in the floor layers (Table 1). Bones were quite well preserved and consistent with other inferences that most were quickly buried or otherwise protected from severe degradation. Finest debris is probably table refuse, most of which would have been removed from domestic rooms and dumped outside buildings where it would usually become mixed with coarser bone debris from butchery and scavenging. Burnt bones were absent from floor layers, indicating a lack of nearby hearths, or fairly efficient rubbish removal to external areas such as the earliest Roman deposits, where ash and burnt bones were more evident - though one floor layer included ashes.

Sheep predominated among the Roman species bones, and oyster shells were noticeably absent; otherwise the debris is fairly typical of Roman deposits. Although there may be some unresolved taphonomic variables affecting interpretation, due to comparison of bones from different types of feature, the bones here and in small samples elsewhere in Abingdon contrast with those of the predominantly 3rd- to 5th-century farmstead settlement at Barton Court Farm.⁴ Generally the differences indicate lower status or less prosperous people living in Abingdon on a diet more abundantly of mutton and less of beef than elsewhere. Absence of oyster may be due to constricted trade connections with estuarine settlements downriver during the early period before Oxford kiln industries developed.

There appear to be almost no abandonment- and demolition-deposits closely related to the demise of the building - particularly above the uppermost floor level (FII-15a), itself free of rubble and rubbish. It is significant, however, that the major stone robbing trench (FII-21a), layers of a large pit (FII-27) and the shallow robber trench (Fs II-8 and 14a) and possibly others (all intruding into the building ruins during medieval times) were truncated and removed or totally transformed at the same level as floor layer FII-15a ceased.

Quantities of early Roman pottery were redeposited during medieval and post-medieval times, notably in FII-21a, but among them were only occasional sherds of later period wares, e.g. colourcoat and mortarium. This indicates that the locality was not heavily occupied beyond the mid 2nd century. Later domestic rubbish

⁴ D. Miles (ed.), *Archaeology at Barton Court Farm* (1986), Fiche VI.

TABLE 1: FRAGMENT FREQUENCIES AND PERCENTAGES OF ANIMAL BONES IN TRENCH II AT TWICKENHAM HOUSE

Century: Features:	<i>Romano-British:</i>					<i>Medieval:</i>		<i>Post-med:</i>		
	<i>Mid 1st to mid 2nd</i>		Floors	Total	%	<i>c. 13th</i>	<i>14-15th</i>	<i>16-17th</i>	Total	%
	Dump levels	Wall F19c				Robtr./ pits	Pits	Pits/ layer		
Cattle	33	5	5	43	25	33	85	26	144	42
Sheep (n3)	84	3	27	114	66	48	79	22	149	44
Pig	9	3	2	14	8	16	17	4	37	11
Horse	1	—	—	1	0.6	—	—	1	1	0.3
Dog	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	0.3
Cat	—	—	—	—	—	—	7	—	7	2
Subtotal	127	11	34	172		97	189	53	339	
Unident.	180	12	42	234		132	107	74	313	
Total (n1)	307	23	76	406		229	296	127	652	
Burnt	17	1	—	18		7	8	—	15	
Fragments > 10cm.	18	2	5	25		17	35	10	62	
Domestic fowl	1	—	1	2		2	10	5	17	
Domestic goose	—	—	—	—		1	—	1	2	
Other bird	—	—	—	—		1*	2	—	3	
Foetal human	1	—	—	1		—	—	—	—	
Oyster	—	—	—	—		4	30	21	55	
Marine mussel	—	—	—	—		1	—	—	1	
Conger eel	—	—	—	—		—	—	1	1	

* = Small duck, cf Garganey (identified by Alison Locker).

TABLE 2: PERCENTAGE SKELETAL ELEMENT REPRESENTATION OF SHEEP AND CATTLE

Century: Features:	SHEEP						CATTLE			
	<i>1st-2nd</i>	<i>1st-2nd</i>	<i>1st-2nd</i>	<i>c. 13th</i>	<i>14th-15th</i>	<i>16th-17th</i>	<i>1st-2nd</i>	<i>c. 13th</i>	<i>14th-15th</i>	<i>16th-17th</i>
	Dump levels	Floors	Roman total	Groups as in Table 1						
Sample size (n3)	84	27	114	48	79	22	43	33	85	26
Head	26	37	25	29	18	14	19	24	48	31
Feet	25	11	25	27	27	55	23	24	25	38
Body	49	52	49	44	56	32	58	52	27	31

could have been dumped elsewhere though there were no signs of later rebuilding, such as walls cutting into preserved levels.

Redeposited Romano-British debris yielded little extra evidence except several clay tile fragments, indicating sturdily roofed buildings in the vicinity, but possibly not those excavated, unless their robbing and re-use elsewhere was very efficient. Presumably much demolition occurred during Roman times. A small group of coarse bone refuse close to wall FII-19b indicates destruction detritus. Associated redeposited potsherds are all early Roman but are too few to give a reliable date.

LATE ROMAN TO EARLY MEDIEVAL

Two features were sectioned hastily and can not be dated. Feature I-16 was deep and elongate, cut through the Roman gravel layers and filled with red-brown soil and a little occupation debris. Feature I-10, intersecting FI-16, may have been a sizeable pit and had a similar fill.

MEDIEVAL TO EARLY POST-MEDIEVAL

In Trench I a period of pit-digging destroyed more of the earlier layered deposition and upper levels of Fs I-10 and 16 above. A large pit (FI-1) was backfilled with grey-brown and black layers. Over FI-16 were small pits (FsI-2 and 3) backfilled with brown and black soil fills and later cut by a large pitlike complex of unresolved features (FI-5), possibly of a medieval building, backfilled with black and purplish soils containing a layer of stones and tiles (FI-5/4) abutting a thin L-shaped wall (FI-15) within FI-5.

This complex was overlaid by a distinct brown-black layer (FI-4) and cut in turn by another deep pit (FI-18), which was comprised of much rubble and brown-black soil.

Pits Fs I-1, I-2, I-3, I-5 and I-10 all appeared medieval in date, with FI-1 assigned to the 12th century and FI-5 to the 16th. Layer FI-4 contained 15th- to 16th-century ceramic.

Maureen Mellor identified the pottery from the upper levels of Trench II. Nearly all stone-robbing of the Roman walls was associated with 12th- and 13th-century pottery (Fs II-8 and 14, II-21 and II-8) and these ceramics are consistent with the less well-known ones of Trench I as conclusive evidence of occupation recommencing on the site some centuries after the Roman period.

Pit FII-27 contained the most substantial medieval deposit. It cut steeply into natural silts and did not appear dug to rob stone; its other boundaries were not located. Unfortunately the ancient digging of this pit destroyed any floor layers on the south side of the wall FII-21b and left only the small island of deposition (FII-29). The pit was backfilled with black soil interspersed abundantly with typically 14th- and 15th-century rubbish including Surrey wares, Wiltshire flint tempered ware, Brill wares, local Abingdon wares and horn cores of cattle among the many bones.

Feature II-21 was a complex, two-level and L-shaped feature with a homogeneous grey fill, originally seen and excavated as a similarly shaped robber trench. The NW-SE arm is now concluded to be the edge of a pit mostly remaining behind the SW section, and cut (FII-21d) more deeply into the natural than the NE-SW arm (FII-21c) which, interpretively, was only dug deep enough to rob the stone wall (FII-21b) encountered while digging the intended pit. Alternatively FII-21d was a deeper wall trench. All of this irregular feature was backfilled at the same time, with relatively few bones and a scatter of 12th- and 13th-century sherds amongst Roman pottery.

Most of the truncated tops of these medieval features and the Roman building floors were overlaid by thick, irregularly bottomed but widespread 'dark earth', variously labelled Fs II-6b, II-7, II-9 and II-12, and which contained some destruction-debris of the Roman building and the reworked upper parts of the medieval pits and robber trenches (Fig. 5), including FII-8/14a. As in the robber trenches, most pottery (Fs II-6, II-7 and II-9) dated to the 13th century, but that from FII-12 (which overlay FII-27) dated mainly to the 14th and 15th century though the features could not be distinguished stratigraphically.

Some of this level of soil transformation seems related to a possible medieval building, since a pad and circlet of rocks reminiscent of a stone standing or posthole packing supporting a wooden pillar was found in FII-7 above FII-21a and d. A small patch of flat stones on the opposite, NE, side of the excavation trench could suggest another part of this hypothetical building. The latter would be associated with the typically 13th-century ceramic but could be somewhat later in date. The SW section record could also be interpreted as showing that the later pottery of FII-12 overlaid the earlier of FII-7.

An orange brown layer (FII-13) was laid over the dark earth of FII-12 above FII-27, in the SE half of the excavation trench, but was destroyed in the NW area of the supposed later building. The colours of FII-13 suggest that it came from outside the area of the excavation trench, and that its development of dark earths derived from centuries of rubbish- and ash-dumping and cultivation altering the natural red brown soil seen in Trench I. Its small pot group dates to the 13th and 14th century.

Sixteenth- and 17th-century dark earth of FII-11 accumulated over FII-13 but, in the SE trench end, pits and trenches (Fs II-10, II-28a, II-17 and II-18) were cut through FII-13 and possibly FII-11, perhaps to rob the wall (II-28b) below. However, the lowest of the features above wall FII-28b typically contained 13th-century pottery, while the sherds and pipestems of FII-10 dated to the later 17th century. Backfill of FII-10 included a fragment of gilded and red painted sculpture (see below).

Such stone robbing might suggest that some walls of the Roman building were moderately upstanding and locateable as late as the early post-medieval period. This late date appears doubtful owing to discrepancies

between the apparent stratigraphy and medieval dating evidence. Difficulties of excavation, any recording errors, and small sample sizes of ceramic groups do not satisfactorily explain the discrepancies and it appears instead that the sequence of deposition was complicated. Certainly the sandwiching of red-brown FII-13 between FII-12 and FII-27 appears to be due to redeposition of 13th- and 14th-century material from elsewhere between the late 14th century and the 16th, while redeposition in the 17th century might explain the occurrence of 13th-century debris immediately above wall FII-28.

Consideration of Tables 1 and 2 indicates that the relatively sparse bones associated with the 12th- and 13th-century pottery resemble table refuse, suggesting domestic habitation nearby prior to any construction of the possible medieval building above FII-21. Comparable debris of similar date at higher levels is consistent with the hypothetical redeposition of 13th-century pottery above the 14th- to 15th-century features. Moreover, the bones of 14th- to 15th-century and 16th- to 17th-century features are different in character to those from the '13th-century' ones.

These later bones are coarser in size and species composition, with cattle bones predominant and bones of smallest animals uncommon – typical of features outside buildings, rubbish dumping, butchery of large animals and scavenged bones on ground away from domestic rubbish sources. Here the bones appear to have been fairly quickly buried, probably after being chopped up for marrow extraction which was unrelated to domestic preparation and table consumption. Bones of the main carcass of cattle were less prominent while skull debris, including horncores, was more conspicuous in Fs II-10-12 and II-27, and foot bones in Fs II-10 and 11. Foot debris of sheep was relatively abundant in the small 16th- to 17th-century sample from FIIs-10 and 11.

An abundance of cattle horn cores is usually associated with tanning activities or hornworking, while foot debris appears associated with skin processing and tallow, glue and oil extraction. Thus butchery, skinning and fellmongery trades developed in the vicinity between the 14th century and the 17th.

The distinctiveness of early- and late-medieval refuse at comparable levels of deposition is due to the ancient digging of entirely separate features at different periods at the lowest levels, but at higher levels the distinction may have been maintained by a structural feature between Fs II-7 and II-12. The suggested medieval building could have performed this separation, and disturbance during its demolition would explain several anomalies in the stratigraphy of these deposits, cursorily excavated and recorded.

Carved and painted medieval stone fragment from FII-10

Maximum fragment length is c. 70 mm. and Philip Powell considers that its source was the Taynton stone of Burford – a source of much local medieval stone. Julian Munby identifies it as miniature architecture in Perpendicular Gothic style, consisting of a convex bevelled central rib flanked by elongate slots, closed at the top by the expanding rib, and in turn flanked on the left by a rib with a convex inner surface and a concave outer surface, which indicates the curve of a masonry arch. The moulding appears to be a sidepiece of niched and canopied stonework, a common motif in sculpture of the 13th to 16th centuries.

All carved surfaces were painted vermillion and overgilded in the slots – some gold still gleams. Quality of carving and painting are superior. Repainting is not obvious.

The fragment appears to have been smashed from standing, well-kept sculpture and to have been quickly buried during the mid- to late-17th century, and thus presumably results from religious desecration. Abingdon Cross and St Nicholas' church stood about 136 m. from the findspot – other churches and chapels being significantly farther away. The massive volume of masonry from the demolition of the Cross in 1644 indicates the more probable origin, and the moulding fragment is fairly consistent with what is known of the Cross's form.⁵ St Nicholas' and St Helen's churches have no matching sculptures, but the chancel screen of St Helen's was also smashed during the Civil War.⁶ Two medieval pieces of sculpture in Abingdon Museum are not obviously related to our one.

Knife small finds

Part of a badly eroded clasp knife came from FI-5 and a finely ornamented bone knife handle came from FII-27 (Fig. 6: both finds are medieval).

⁵ M.J.H. Liversidge, 'Abingdon's "Right Goodly Crosse of Stone"', in *Abingdon Essays*, op. cit. note 3, 42-57.

⁶ A. Preston, *St Nicholas, Abingdon, and Other Papers* (1971), 83, 96-7.

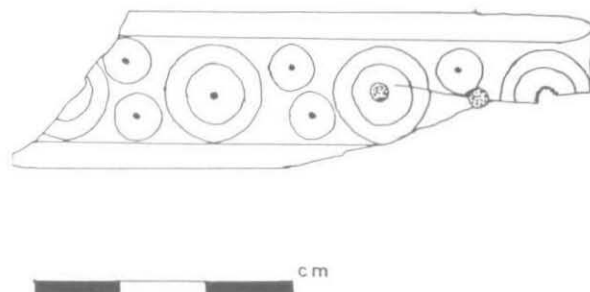


Fig. 6. Ornamental bone knife handle mount from FII-27 (medieval).

LATE POST-MEDIEVAL PERIOD

In Trench I, FI-8 was a deep pit cutting through layer FI-4 and lower features, backfilled with much rubble and brown-black soil containing salt-glazed fine whiteware, red earthenware, slipware and wine bottles of the 17th to 18th centuries. Feature I-6 was a pit of rubble evidently supporting the stone wall which was sunken into FI8 and completely lined the top of the trench. Brick and concrete foundations inside the wall and a floor layer of gravel belong to the construction of the greenhouse.

In Trench II, later intrusive but higher features (i.e. a mid 19th-century pit (FII-5) to bury domestic china, chiefly Staffordshire wares; skeletons of a dog and a cat; a macabre *c.* 19th-century deposit of human bones (FII-3, below); and linear feature, mortar and rubble remnants (FII-4), probably of a shortlived post-medieval wall) did not penetrate as deeply into the thickening accumulations of dark earths (Fs II-2b, II-6a and b), and their upper levels were homogenised by further natural and human activities such as rubbish dumping, composting and soil turnover, mixing numerous potsherds and fragmented clay pipes, tiles and glass (Fs II-1 and II-2a).

Child skeleton and an adult cranium in FII-3

During machining of the topsoil, a cluster of human remains was exposed in the side of Trench II, 1 m. below the ground surface. Police were informed and we were asked to uncover the rest of the deposit and advise the Coroner on the findings.

Burial stratigraphy could not be readily defined. Compactness of the deposit indicated burial in a hole or a perishable container. Most of a skeleton of a child aged between 2 and 6 years and a toothless adult cranium were present. The child bones were mainly articulated but some body parts had been separated before burial: the lower body from the sacrum, the right arm from its scapula, and the front of the cranium had been sawn carefully ear to ear from its rear and base. Articulated body parts were jumbled together and lacked any systematic arrangement. Flecks of red pigment occurred among the bones.

The high degree of articulation showed that the child bones were not redeposited and therefore most of the deposit is of a similar period to the surrounding soil. Dating is vague but the adjacent post-medieval debris indicated the mid 19th century onward. Decaying tree or shrub roots penetrating the deposit and the absence of characteristic later materials suggested the bones were buried well before the mid 20th century.

Obviously normal Western culture burial patterns do not apply to the deposit. Criminal activity, particularly murder, does not explain well the composition and treatment of the remains. The possibility that they are medical or scientific specimens is most plausible. Neat sawing of the skull indicates post-mortem examination or preparation of anatomical teaching aids, although post-mortem remains are unlikely to have been disposed of in such depositional circumstances. A backgarden would not, however, be an unlikely repository for burial of reference or teaching specimens beyond their usefulness or value to a doctor or other professional, or to a collector. Discard of damaged or disintegrating specimens would explain the missing teeth of the adult skull and the irregular composition of the child bones. The red pigment may have come from tissues coloured to allow better anatomical recognition. An owner is identified below.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

First indications of bronze-age burials or occupation in central Abingdon and further evidence of iron-age settlement have been recorded.

Good information on intensive early Roman occupation and the confirmation of a well-preserved Romano-British building complex on the gravels are useful findings. Our building lies some 40 m. SW of the one noted by Ackerman, the massive and distinctive herring-bone foundations of which indicate a more elaborate and important building – his suggestion that it was a temple appears consistent with the interpretation of the gravel surfaces as a courtyard. We may have uncovered subsidiary buildings, though there was no evidence of ritual.

Of their relationship with the rest of the Roman 'town' little new can be said, except that the 'corn-drier' found at the Old Gaol site had to be medieval and cannot be related to the Romano-British occupation as previously concluded.⁷ Late Roman pottery occurred at 19 East St Helen Street.⁸

Nothing can be added to the single remnant of Saxon activity noted by Parrington. Intensive reoccupation of the locality began during the 12th and 13th centuries, with household activity particularly evident on the East St Helen Street frontage of the Market Place⁹ and less so in the tenement backyard features of this site and at the Old Gaol.¹⁰ Associated stone-robbing may be an incidental reflection of increased site usage. Pit digging was also intensive at this period.

Nearer the river and here, backyard activity changed around the 14th century, with bone and documentary evidence of slaughterhouse(s), and of skinning and tanning activities until the 18th century. Indeed rectangular pits backfilled around 1805 during the building of the Gaol and interpreted as wharf foundations¹¹ may actually have been tanning pits.

Originally the site of these activities and the slaughterhouse of Widow Wykes appeared to be a tenement lying along the river, but it has been argued that the adjoining White Hart Inn, of c. 14th- to early 19th-century date, lay along the frontage of Butcherrow, now Bridge Street, while the slaughterhouse bounded the SW side of the inn yet still backed onto the river.¹² This interpretation fits the spread and composition of bones, although refuse was likely to have spread outside the tenements it was generated on. Our trenches were sited to the north of Turnagain Lane, which probably existed in the 16th century,¹³ and this land might have had different ownership. Butcherrow occurs in town records from the 1550s until c. 1860,¹⁴ but the bones indicate butchers in the area as early as the 14th century – evidently a time of significant change.

In the 16th century Thomas Reade of Barton owned a garden in the vicinity, probably the NE property. It appears to have stayed in his family's hands until relinquished as a Borough lease from the late Sir Thomas Reade's family to Richard Greene, maltster, in 1666, who retained it for at least 20 years, and his descendants for even longer, since a

⁷ M. Parrington, 'Old Gaol', op. cit. note 2, 66; R. Thomas, pers. comm.

⁸ J. Milln, 'Some Pottery from East St Helens Street, Abingdon', unpub., held by Oxford County Museum.

⁹ R. Wilson, unpub. report on Market Place site held by R. Thomas.

¹⁰ R. Wilson, 'Animal Bones from the Broad Street and Old Gaol Sites', *Oxoniensia*, xlv (1975), 105–121.

¹¹ M. Parrington, 'Old Gaol', op. cit. note 2, 66–70; R. Wilson, 'Animal bones', op. cit. note 10, 118–20.

¹² W.J.H. Liversidge, 'The White Hart', in *Abingdon Essays*, op. cit. note 3, 74.

¹³ A. Baker, *Historic Streets of Abingdon* (1957), 32.

¹⁴ J. MacGowan, *Origins of the Street Names of Abingdon* (1988), 2.

Mrs Green let the garden go in 1755 to Joseph Tomkins – another maltster and the builder of Twickenham House.¹⁵

Thomas Hedd also owned a fenced or hedged garden to the north of the White Hart in 1674, possibly the S property. Thomas Knight's warehouse appears to have been in the area in 1805,¹⁶ but his business seems to have fronted onto Butcherrow. Thomas Knight & Son were soapboilers; Thomas was listed also as a tallow chandler and Richard as a grocer. Thomas lived in the town from the mid 18th century until his death in 1811.¹⁷ His soap, candles etc, would have been obtained mainly from boiling up bones like those of sheep feet, as occurred in Fs II-10, II-11, and II-27 and as dumped in the late medieval town waste between the Twitty Almshouses and Winsmore Lane.¹⁸

Between 1745 and 1756 Matthew Anderson, gent and mayor, seems to have lived on the property, possibly on the southern and western side, and somewhat earlier the family of Henry Knapp, town clerk, may also have done so; the construction of Twickenham House followed there soon after.¹⁹ John Rocque's map of 1761 indicates mainly open ground around the house. In 1844 the garden/carpark boundaries existed in walled or fenced form and this land was still a Borough property,²⁰ since the 'piece of ground and stable' was rented by Mr John Box,²¹ who owned Twickenham House and its pleasure garden, the SW property, from at least 1841 until 1867 or later.²²

Fig. 2 shows his kitchen garden with small trees (probably for fruit), two small buildings (one sited on the substantial stone walls of Trench I), peripheral footpaths, and an open central area partitioned into two,²³ a division which seems to explain the presence of FII-4 as a wall and offers evidence of earlier NE-SW property division aligned close to the medieval feature anomalies. Adjacent to the main domestic buildings were fowl houses, a dung box next to the stable yard, and a kennel. Perhaps the dogs of the kennel were chained and the fowls of the fowl houses had the run of the stable yard and the ground outside, which was walled off and probably gated from the kitchen garden proper.

Box was listed as a surgeon MRCSL from 1841 to 1867 but then seems to have retired. The house was willed to William Badcock, aged 56 in 1881, a widower living in the house between 1876 and 1887. He was a silkwear mercer and senior partner in Badcock and Hedges, drapers at 15-16 High Street, until c. 1891. In 1889 George Saxby of Northcourt sold the Stert Street brewery and other licensed premises outside the town to Morland & Co, bought the whole property from Badcock for £1,800, and lived there until 1930. During this economic depression the house was converted into five flats and the domestic rooms bordering the garden became a cottage. Some of the cottages lining Turnagain Lane appear to have been demolished slightly later.²⁴

Clearly the general vicinity was long used as gardens, orchards and stables and this

¹⁵ W.J.H. Liversidge, 'The White Hart', op. cit. note 12, 73; 'Matthew Anderson', op. cit. note 3, 116; M. Cox, Information on Borough leases.

¹⁶ W.J.H. Liversidge, 'The White Hart', op. cit. note 12, 74 and 78.

¹⁷ *Universal British Directories* [1790-97]; J. Townsend, *News of a Country Town* (1914), 128.

¹⁸ R. Wilson, 'Trade, Industrial and Domestic Activity at the Old Clothing Factory Site, Abingdon', *Oxonienia*, liv (1989), 279-86; *South Midlands Archaeology*, xix (1990), 90-93.

¹⁹ W.J.H. Liversidge, 'Matthew Anderson', op. cit. note 3, 116; M. Cox, Information on Borough leases.

²⁰ Council Archives, Stratton Ho., Bath St., Abingdon: Christ's Hospital Map 1844.

²¹ *Ibid.* Abingdon Corporation report and valuation 1861-2, 16.

²² Town and county *Directories*; census returns.

²³ O.S. Map 1/2,500, Oxon. XLV. 6 (1875).

²⁴ *Directories*; census; Morlands Brewery conveyance 24 Apr. 1890; will in possession of J. Lightfoot.

helps explain the depth of soil, the occasional burial of dead animals, and the presence of various domestic and other semiorganic trade refuse. Probably the mid-19th century china, buried pets, and almost certainly the human 'medical specimens' belonged to the surgeon, John Box, who might have been keenly interested in our discoveries.

Box was Abingdon born *c.* 1798, probably fathered by another John Box, surgeon, mentioned denying a smallpox scare in 1794.²⁵ Around 1838 Box junior married Hannah Mary (b. *c.* 1811) of Somertown, Oxford, who bore four daughters between 1839 and 1849. Servants in Twickenham House during 1851 included a governess, cook, two sisters as parlour and nursemaids, housemaid, groom, footman, and a medical assistant, Robert Fraughton, aged 20.

By 1861 Mrs Box had died and John's unmarried sister Mary, 64, a 'fundholder', had moved in, presumably to help raise three remaining daughters. A governess, housemaid, groom and footman made up the household along with Slade Baker MRCSL, evidently sharing the general practice. In 1871, after Box's death, his daughter retained a housemaid, nurse, another female domestic servant and a groom. Eliza Mary Box then married and moved elsewhere. A decline in household prosperity seems evident toward the late 19th century but family capital would have been dispersed by marriages.

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²⁵ Townsend, *op. cit.* note 17, 106.