

# Excavations at Jowett Walk, Oxford

By MARK R. ROBERTS

with contributions by LEIGH ALLEN, LUCY BOWN, CATHERINE UNDERWOOD-KEEVILL and BOB WILSON

## SUMMARY

*Excavations at Jowett Walk, behind numbers 1-7 Holywell Street, were undertaken in 1993 by the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU). Three drainage ditches and a number of large pits which possibly represent gravel pits were dug on the site during the late 12th and early 13th centuries. Subsequently there were structures on the site from the late 12th to the late 14th centuries, including a number of sunken-featured structures which may have been cellars. The area appears to have reverted to cultivation before the 15th century. Two walls across the site represent the boundaries of a post-medieval property on St. Cross Road that ran across the backs of nos. 1-7 Holywell Street; the evidence for early medieval occupation suggests that there were properties on St. Cross Road until the 15th century.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project was funded by Merton College and arose from a town-planning agreement made between the college and Oxford City Council Planning Authority. In addition, the author wishes to thank the OAU's site staff for their hard work.

## INTRODUCTION (Figs. 1A and 1B)

### *Background*

The site lies on the north-east of the medieval walled town, towards the edge of the gravel terrace overlooking the river Cherwell. It covers an area of c. 1.23 ha., at a height of 61 to 62 m. OD. The natural subsoil across the site is gravel, and in places this is overlain by red loess, which is the post-glacial soil. At the time of excavation the site was mostly garden, with numerous trees and garden buildings; the area of Trench 2, and part of Trench 5, was in use as a car park.

In 1993, Merton College began redevelopment of the site for new student accommodation. In February 1993, the OAU carried out an archaeological evaluation (Fig. 1B, Trenches 1-4), which revealed evidence of medieval structures and pits on the site. Subsequently an excavation was carried out in May 1993, which extended the area of evaluation Trench 2 (Fig. 1B, Trench 5); this was followed by a watching brief during the construction works. Previously, Oxford University Archaeological Society (OUAS) had dug

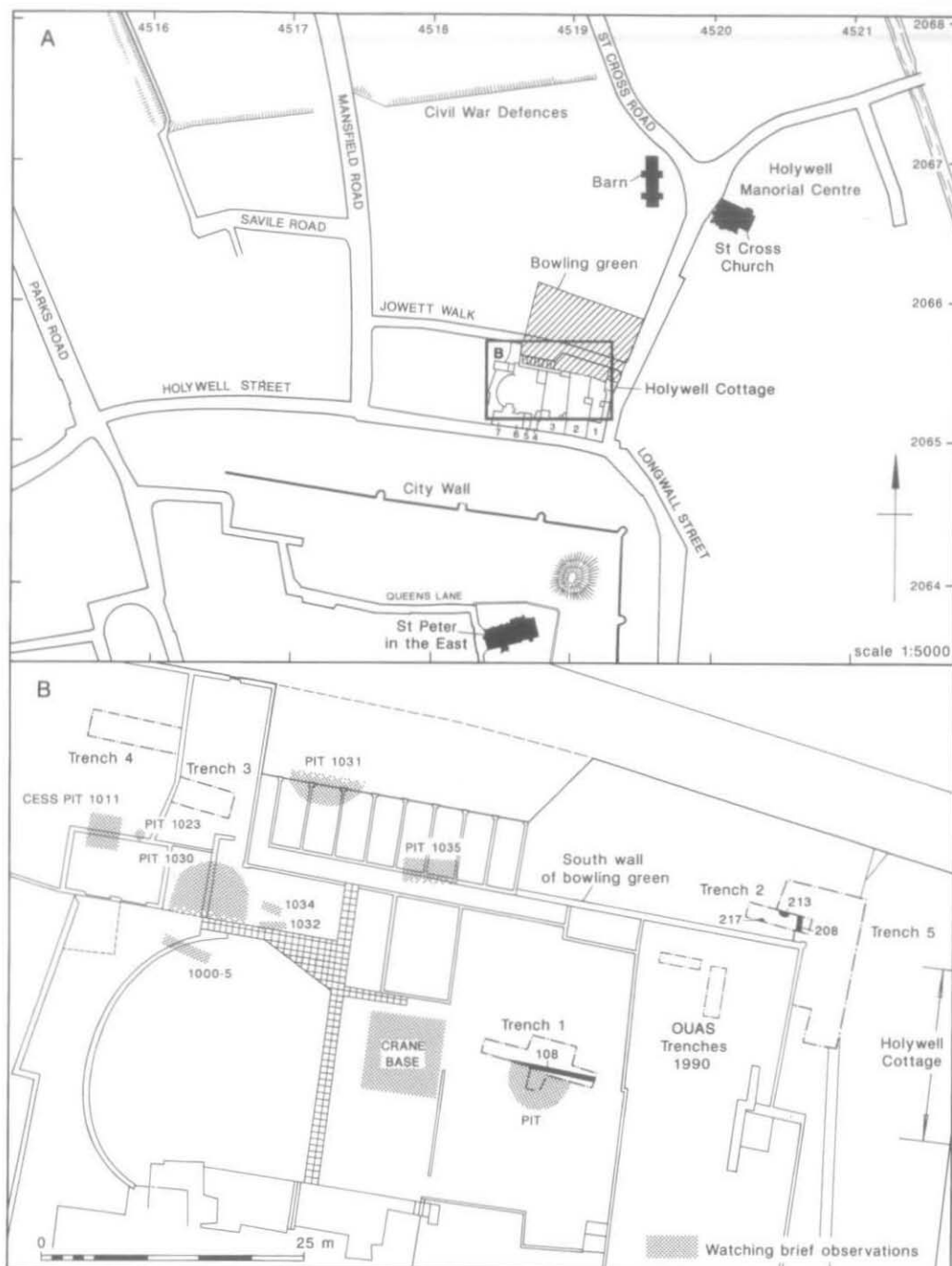


Fig. 1. A: site location. B: trench location with plan of features observed during the evaluation and watching brief.

trenches at the rear of no. 2 Holywell Street, in 1990 (Fig. 1B). These trenches had reached a depth of 1.8 m. without encountering medieval deposits; however, the surface of this particular garden had been raised some 1 m. above the adjoining garden of no. 1 Holywell Street and OAU Trench 2.

### *Historical background*

Holywell Manor comprises a large area of extra-mural Oxford on the north-east side, extending as far as the north end of the University Parks and bounded on the west by Parks Road, and the river Cherwell to the east. The manor of Holywell was held by Robert d'Oilly in 1086, but it did not become part of the City of Oxford until 1667.<sup>1</sup> The parish church of Holywell, St. Cross, is documented as a chapel of the Oxford church of St. Peter in the East throughout the Middle Ages. When Merton College (founded 1264) appropriated the church in 1294, the manor was also acquired. The existing manor house, beside the church, was rebuilt in 1516, and until the 19th century a large medieval barn stood on the opposite side of the road.

The level of agriculture in the parish was high; following its acquisition of the manor, Merton College appears to have invested heavily in its demesne land in Holywell, producing large quantities of barley for the adjacent urban market at Oxford throughout the early 14th century. Two new granges were built<sup>2</sup> and the college paid substantial amounts for casual wage labour recruited from the neighbouring town.<sup>3</sup> In 1337, as many as fifty-four pigs and eight sows belonging to cottagers strayed into the demesne corn. Many of the properties fronting onto Holywell Street may be based on the roadside ends of ridge and furrow cultivation plots. Loggan's bird's eye view of 1675 shows clear evidence for this, and the pattern is shown on a manorial survey of 1758, and survived to be shown in great detail on the first edition OS 1:500 and 25-inch plans of 1875. From these it appears that although the walled gardens of the houses in Holywell Street were not themselves very deep, plots of identical width continue behind them as far as the lane (now Savile Road) and beyond that to the field boundary used for the Civil War defences.

The parish had legal and fiscal advantages throughout the Middle Ages, and some settlement may have been encouraged to provide revenue for Merton College. Development is documented along Holywell Street, Longwall Street and St. Cross Road from the 13th century, but no clear medieval documentary evidence is available for the site itself. Many documents exist, but attempts to identify individual properties have not been successful.<sup>4</sup> Although the entire settlement pattern is not clear, it is likely that there were medieval

<sup>1</sup> The history of the manor of Holywell is given in *The Victoria History of the County of Oxford*, iv, 271-4 and is only summarized here.

<sup>2</sup> The building of a 'new grange' is recorded in the 1290s at a cost of £20 (M[erton] C[ollege] R[ecord] 4467), and there was probably more than one barn by 1340 when there is a reference to the 'great grange', implying the existence of another one (MCR 4503); information from L.G.H. Kent, 'The Manor of Holywell in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries' (unpubl. TS. for the History of the University). Drawings of the barn by J.C. Buckler are in the British Library (MS. Add. 36439), reproduced as plate IV in J. Catto (ed.), *The History of the University of Oxford*, vol. 1, *The Early Oxford Schools* (1984).

<sup>3</sup> Information regarding Merton's management of its Holywell demesne has been derived from D. Postles, 'Some differences between seigniorial demesnes in medieval Oxfordshire', *Oxoniensia*, lviii (1993), 219-32.

<sup>4</sup> Pers. comm. Dr. S. Gunn, Merton College archivist.

houses extending southwards from the manorial centre towards Holywell Street, which were later abandoned leaving the properties fronting onto Holywell Street which are clear on Loggan's view. Agas's map of 1578 (of doubtful accuracy) shows a building on the corner of Holywell Street and Longwall Street, and another to the north. These properties are also seen on Loggan's bird's eye view of 1675.

The evidence of Loggan's view is confirmed by later estate records of Merton College and 19th-century OS plans: the north part of the site was a bowling green, and to its south and extending east-west behind the gardens of nos. 1-7 Holywell Street was a property on St. Cross Road. There is still a 17th-century house on this site, but the cock pit shown by Loggan behind it has gone. Earlier tenants of this property could no doubt be found in Merton leases, but in 1758 the tenant was Shaw.<sup>5</sup> While the excavations unfortunately did not find clear traces of either cock pit or bowling green, the remains of earlier occupation were very suggestive.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESCRIPTION

### *Methodology*

The evaluation and excavation trenches were placed in the building footprints and were stripped using mechanical excavation machinery to the top of archaeological horizons. The excavation trench, Trench 5, was at the E end of building block C and was located to extend evaluation Trench 2 in which medieval structural features had been seen. The trenches were hand cleaned and the archaeological deposits excavated by hand. Each deposit and cut was given a unique number. The archaeological deposits in the evaluation trenches were numbered from 100 for Trench 1 and from 200 for Trench 2 etc. The deposits in Trench 5 were numbered from 500 and reached 747. Sections and plans were drawn at a scale of 1:20.

The watching brief was carried out on the bulk excavations for the cellar basements and access ramp of building blocks A and B. Some foundation piles and other groundworks were monitored. The excavated material was machined out into lorries and removed from the site, allowing little opportunity for the recovery of archaeological material.

### *Evaluation Trenches 1, 2, 3 and 4 (Fig. 1B)*

The results of the evaluation are summarized briefly here; a full account is given in the evaluation report.<sup>6</sup> In Trench 1, natural gravel and red loess were located at a depth of 60.52 m. OD, and were cut by a large pit (fill nos. 113, 114 and 115). The extent of the pit could not be defined within the evaluation sondage, but it was observed again during the watching brief on the contractors' excavations (see below). A build-up of cultivation soils overlay these features, and was cut by a wall (108) which was aligned NW-SE across the trench. Trench 2 contained the only structural features datable to the medieval period. A floor layer (212) at the E end of the trench was cut by a N-S beamslot (208) to its W (Figs. 1B and 2). The beamslot cut a series of cuts for postholes (210). A shallow feature (217) filled with flat stones may have been a post pad. Four pits were identified, of which one (cut 213/fill 218) was excavated; it was 0.80 m. deep and 0.80 m. across, and circular in plan. These features were overlain by cultivation soils. Trench 3 revealed only an 18th-century pit and later garden features (not illustrated). In Trench 4, two early tree-throw pits (not illustrated) were seen in the natural gravel, filled with red loess. These were overlain by ploughsoils (411 and 413); ploughsoil 411 was dated by pottery to the mid 13th to early 14th century (see pottery report, below). This was succeeded by a sequence of cultivation soils with post-medieval and modern garden activity.

<sup>5</sup> Map of Holywell Parish by Edward Smith, 1758 (Merton College Muniments).

<sup>6</sup> M. Roberts, 'Jowett Walk, Oxford: an Archaeological Evaluation' (Oxford Archaeological Unit Evaluation Report, March 1993).

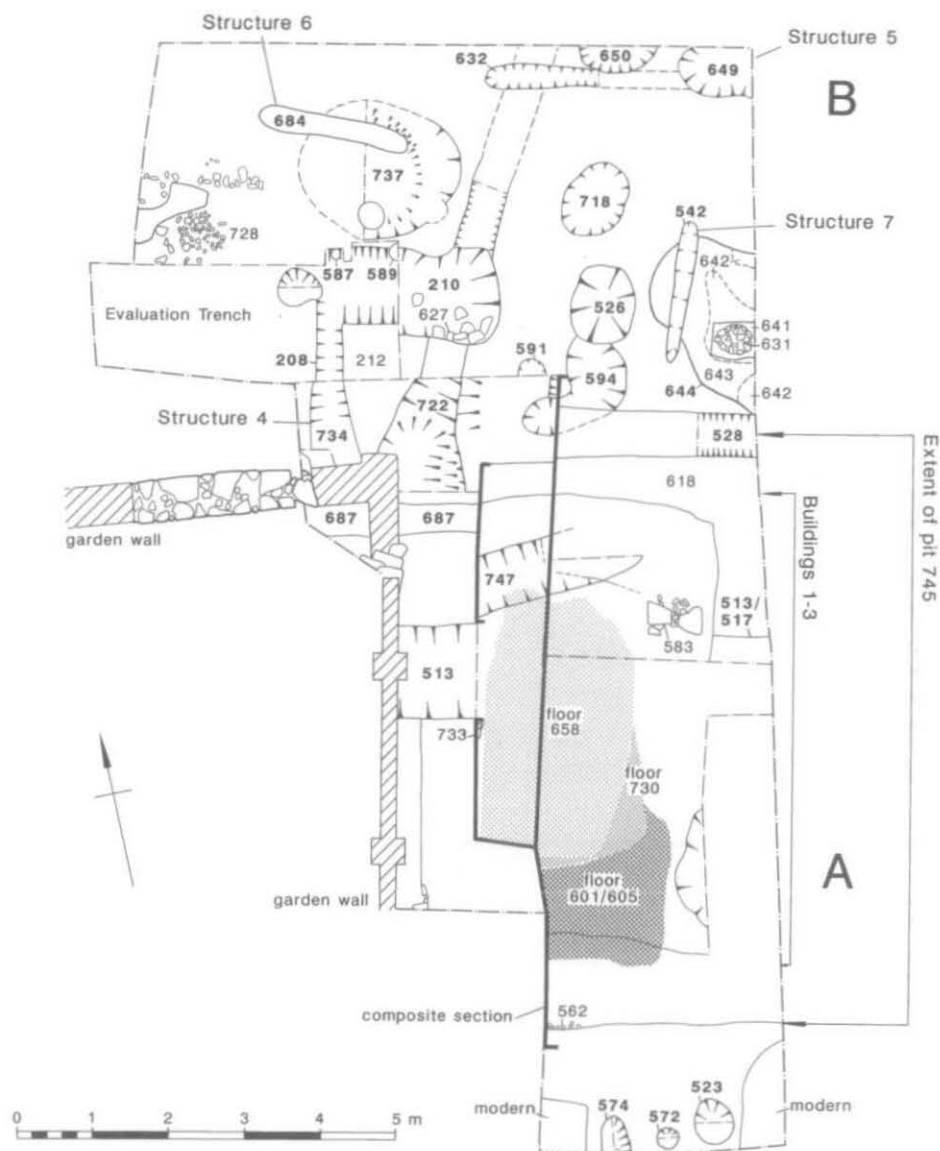


Fig. 2. Plan of excavated features, Trench 5.

### *Excavation Trench 5 (Figs. 2, 3, 4 and 5)*

Trench 5 was an extension of evaluation Trench 2 in which the presence of medieval features had been revealed. The excavation of Trench 5 revealed a complex sequence of stratigraphy, much of which could not be clearly understood because repeated recutting of features on the site, and subsequent cultivation, had resulted in widespread truncation. The following account therefore concentrates on describing the clearest and most important of the recognized features. The stratigraphic matrix (Fig. 5) shows the sequence of deposits and features in detail.

## Composite section

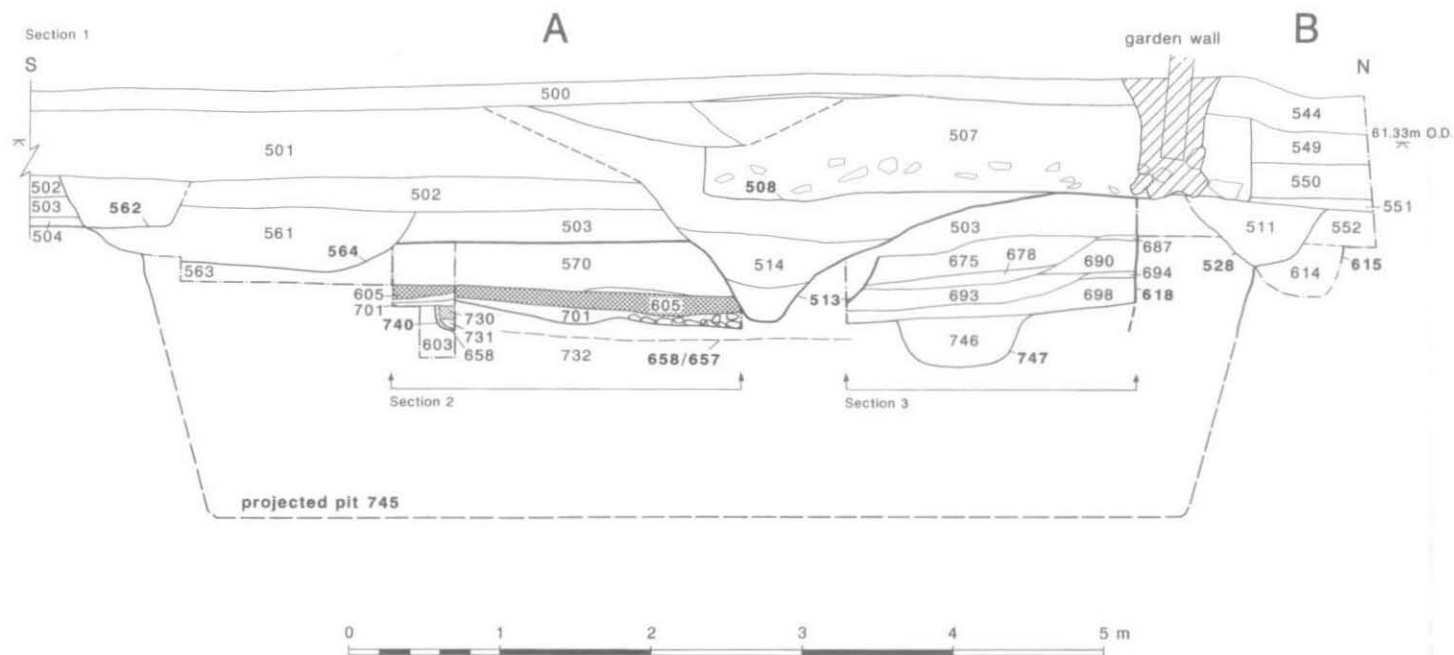


Fig. 3. Composite section, Trench 5.

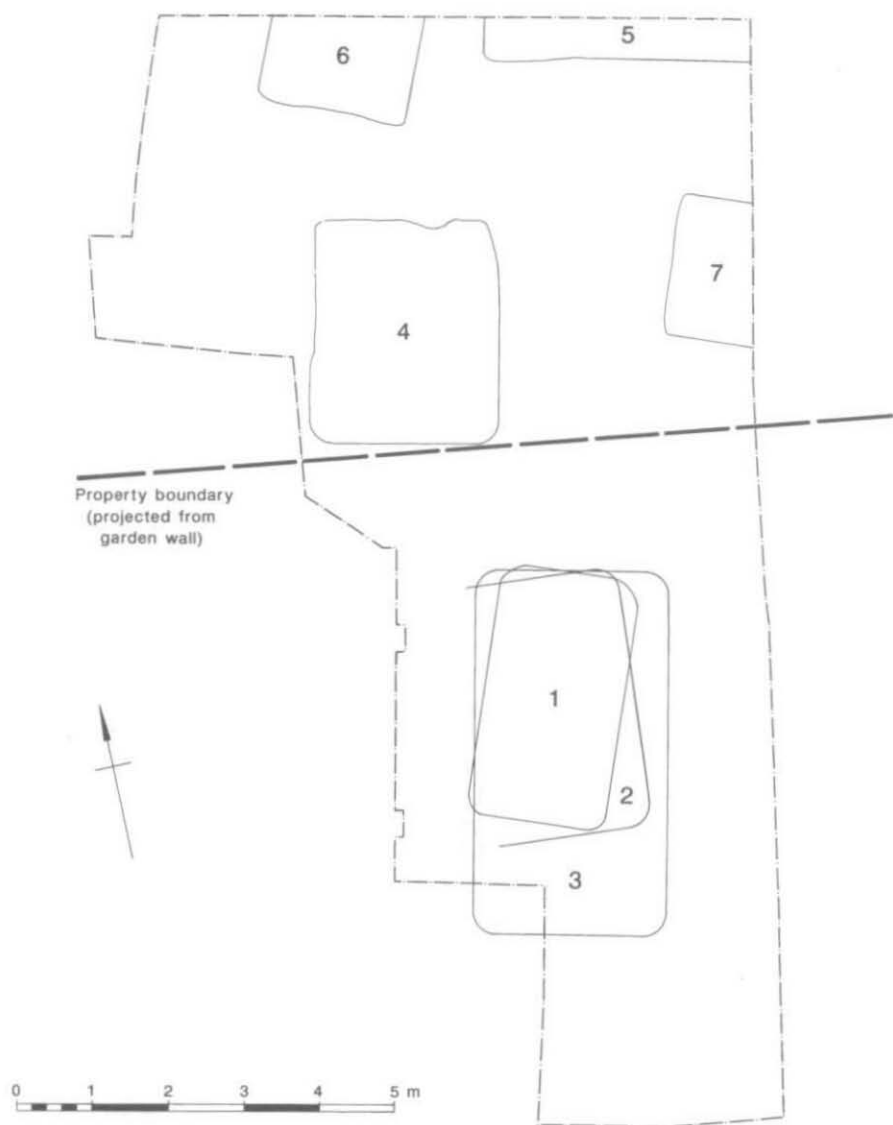


Fig. 4. Suggested layout of the site in the 13th to 14th centuries, showing the possible extent and alignment of excavated buildings and structures.

As the excavation developed, it became clear that the features lay in two distinct groups, to the N and S of a line which was respected, to some extent, by a sequence of ditches and gullies and a standing stone garden wall, which itself possibly dated from at least the 17th century. In topographical terms, this was the wall between Shaw's tenement and the bowling green to the north. The area to the N of this alignment was designated area B, and that to the S area A. The features are dated by the pottery assemblage from the stratigraphic groups, the date of which is given in the heading; the date range of all the sherds from a context is given in the text.





*Ditches: late 11th to late 12th century*

The earliest features on the site were three ditches with red-brown loam fills and rounded bases, which radiated from a point just to the W of the edge of the trench, and which did not seem related to the later property boundaries.

*Ditch 734* was on the same alignment as the beamslot 208 recognised in the evaluation. The ditch was recorded running N-S for a length of 2 m.; it was 0.64 m. wide, and cut to a maximum depth of 0.25 m.

*Ditch 722* was aligned N-S and ran for a distance of nearly 5 m.; it was a maximum of 1.05 m. wide, and a maximum of 0.46 m. deep, and contained pottery datable to the late 11th to late 12th centuries.

*Ditch 747* was aligned NE-SW and was observed for a distance of c. 2 m.; it had been truncated by later structures. It was c. 1 m. wide, and 0.30 m. deep. It contained pottery of the late 12th to early 13th centuries.

*Area A. Pit 745: late 12th to early 13th century*

A large pit, 745, was the earliest activity in area A. It may represent a gravel pit.

*Pit 745* covered much of area A. It was 8 m. long, and in excess of 3 m. deep. A number of contexts within the fills of pit 745 were identified as cuts on site (663-5), but subsequent analysis suggests that these probably represent areas of subsidence and stabilisation within the pit. The fills of pit 745 contained pottery of the late 12th to early 13th century, with later pottery of 13th- to 14th-century date in the upper fills.

*Area B. Pits and hearths: late 12th to early/mid 13th century*

A group of pits were dug on a N-S alignment. A shallow, oval pit, 718, lay at the N end of the alignment; pits 596, 598, 615 and 646 (not on plan) formed an alignment to its S, and were subsequently cut away by pits 526 and 594, which left only vestiges of the earlier alignment. Pit 718 was c. 1 m. in diameter, and cut to a depth of 0.12 m. into the gravel; it was filled with red-brown loam. Pit 596 was badly truncated, but appeared to be square in section and cut to a depth of 0.35 m. Pit 598 was c. 0.5 m. in diameter and cut to a depth of 0.55 m. Pit 615 was 0.40 m. deep and 0.50 m. wide, ovoid in plan and of rounded section. Pit 646 was severely truncated. Pit 594 was shallow (0.15 m. deep) and sub-ovoid in plan; pit 526 was ovoid in plan, with a rounded base cut to a depth of 0.35 m., and a maximum diameter of 1.60 m.

At the E edge of area B was a large pit (644) partially backfilled with grey-brown sandy silt (643). A small oval hearth made of cobbles (631) had been set on 643, and a layer of scorching (642) was visible at the same horizon. A sequence of burnt layers containing ash overlay the hearth.

*Area B. Structure 4: late 12th to early/mid 13th century*

A small structure was excavated in the SW of area B. It was the clearest of the structural remnants in area B.

A layer of compacted, scorched red-brown loam (212) was observed during the evaluation (Trench 2). It had been set into a shallow, flat-bottomed cut into the gravel, and appeared to represent a scorched, earth floor. It covered an area of c. 3 m. N-S by 2 m. W-E. Two postholes, 587 and 589, lay to the N of floor 212 and, together with floor 212, may represent a structure. Both the postholes and the floor were cut by a beamslot (210) with stone packing for timber surviving at its E end (627). The beamslot was c. 2 m. long, 0.80 m. wide, and its depth varied between 0.10 and 0.29 m. To the W of layer 212 was a second beamslot (208) which ran N-S for a distance of c. 3 m. Beamslot 208 was on the same alignment as the earlier ditch, 734, but the relationship between them could not be defined. Beamslot 208 was cut to a depth of 0.26 m., and was 0.56 m. wide. Over 212 were further layers of red-brown loam including two earth floors (586 and 585), which may be part of a later structure formed by the beamslots.

*Area A. Buildings 1, 2 and 3: mid 13th century to ?late 14th century*

The natural gravel and the upper fills of the possible gravel pit 745 were cut by a sequence of three sunken structures (buildings 1, 2 and 3), which may represent cellars.

*Building 1* was represented by a roughly oblong, round-cornered, vertical-sided pit 662/740, which had been cut into the top of pit 745, and was 0.50-0.60 m. below the surface of the gravel, although its surviving depth was only

0.12 m. Filling the cut was a sequence of patched floor layers of mortar with charcoal lenses (655, 658 and 661) which extended vertically up the sides of the pit for a distance of c. 0.20 m. Floor 658 extended over an area of 3.5 m. N-S and 2 m. E-W. On the W edge of cut 740 was a linear arrangement of stones (733), resting on the natural gravel.

*Building 2*: overlying floor 658 and stones 733 was a makeup layer of silty sand (731). This was overlain by a probable floor layer of dark grey silty sand (730) with several burnt patches, which may represent hearths. Probable floor 730 covered almost exactly the same area as floor 658. Building 2 was backfilled with a layer of dumped grey-brown loam (693), containing mid 13th- to early 14th-century pottery. This layer extended to the N and E of layer 730, where it was overlain in places by patches of stone cobbling 626, 629 (not illustrated), which may represent a yard surface.

*Building 3* was represented by a floor sequence, 601/605/701, which overlay layer 730. The floor sequence consisted of a grey-brown makeup layer under yellow mortar floors with burnt patches, and represented the largest area of floor surfaces exposed, covering an area of c. 5 x 2.5 m.

The floor sequence was overlain by a dump layer of loose brown sandy loam, probably equivalent to later dump layers (see below; labelled as 570 on section). This layer also overlay a sequence of stone cobbled surfaces and dumps, probably representing a yard, surviving only as very small areas to the N and E of the floors.

Building 3 was truncated by a complicated series of cuts and deposits. Some of these appeared to be dumps of stony material (580-582) and others were probably related to later cultivation (515, 560, 565-568, 570, 580, 612 and 630). This sequence contained pottery of 13th- to 14th-century date.

### *Area A. Walls*

*Wall 583*: a small portion of stone wall, 583, lay in a construction trench 620, which appeared to be cut into cultivation/dump layer 515. The wall was constructed of medium-sized limestone blocks which survived to a height of two courses, and were faced at least on the W side. The wall had been robbed to the N and S; the robber trench (557) contained pottery of 13th- to 14th-century date.

A further small portion of stone wall (562) lay to the S, on the same line as the S edge of the possible gravel pit 745. The wall consisted of rough-hewn limestone blocks surviving to a height of two courses, and a length of 0.65 m. The stones were not bonded by mortar, and the wall was similar to the line of stones 733 observed at the W edge of building 1. The relationship of this wall to other deposits was destroyed by a later pit, 564.

### *Area A. Postholes 523, 572 and 574*

Three postholes, 523, 572 and 574 lay in an E-W line at the S edge of the trench. Posthole 523 was roughly circular, with a diameter of 0.55 m., and cut to a depth of 0.30 m.; posthole 572 was ovoid with a rounded base, a diameter of 0.35 m. and was cut to a depth of 0.10 m.; posthole 574 was ovoid with a flat base, 0.70 m. wide and in excess of 0.45 m. long. Posthole 523 contained pottery of 13th- to 14th-century date.

### *Area B. Pits and structures 5, 6 and 7*

This part of the site contained a scatter of medieval refuse pits with elements of three slight structures, 5, 6 and 7.

*Pit 737*: immediately N. of structure 4 was a large pit, 737, which had been deliberately backfilled (fill 637). The maximum diameter of the pit was 2.5 m., and it was cut to a depth of 0.75 m. into the gravel. Pottery of mid 13th- to 14th-century date was recovered from the pit, together with a copper alloy and glass finger ring (SF cat. no. 6) of a form popular from the 12th century onwards. To the W and N were several further pits (not illustrated) which cut pit 737. These were either shallow, or left unexcavated for reasons of safety. In the top of these pits, at the extreme W of the trench, was a dump of limestone rubble, 728.

*Structure 5*: in the N of area B, a shallow beamslot, 632, cut the early ditch 722 and a series of shallow scoops 649 and 650 of mid 13th- to early 14th-century date. Beamslot 632 was 2 m. long and 0.20 m. wide, and survived to a depth of 0.05 m. Immediately N of the beamslot were two small patches of possible sandy floors, 685 and 686, which were observed to tip into the beamslot edge; 686 contained pottery of 13th- to late 14th-century date.

*Structures 6 and 7:* evidence for structures 6 and 7 was very slight. Structure 6 was represented only by a beamslot 684, which was cut into the fill of pit 737, and was 1.95 m. long and 0.55 m. wide. It contained pottery of mid 13th- to late 14th-century date. Structure 7 was represented by a N-S beamslot 542, which had been cut into the earlier area of burning associated with hearth 631. It was 1.90 m. long and 0.23 m. wide, and survived to a depth of 0.07 m. This beamslot contained residual pottery of late 12th- to early 13th-century date.

#### *Areas A and B. Cultivation soils and garden walls*

Homogeneous layers of soils 503, 552 and 607 overlay all the site and contained pottery of late 10th- to 17th-century date. These soils were cut by several pits and postholes which are probably the result of later garden activity. The soils tipped into a large E-W ditch (513, 517, 531), which may have formed a boundary between areas A and B and which contained pottery of late 17th- to 18th-century date. It was observed for a length of 3 m.; the ditch was in excess of 1.78 m. wide and 0.76 m. deep, and had a rounded base. A smaller ditch, 528, ran parallel to 513/517; it was observed for a length of 3 m., and was in excess of 0.82 m. wide and 0.34 m. deep, with a flat base. It may have been earlier than 513/517 but it contained pottery of 17th- to 19th-century date.

The latest phase of the boundary between areas A and B was represented by a stone wall which was still standing on the W of the trench, but which had been robbed out to the E, to the rear of no. 1 Holywell St. The remains of this wall were uncovered during the excavation, immediately S of ditch 528. A second wall ran N-S at the W limit of Trench area A. This wall had a stone foundation with later brickwork on top, and it formed the boundary between nos. 1 and 2 Holywell St.

#### *Watching Brief (Fig. 1B)*

Observations during the watching brief were limited as the material was excavated quickly and immediately removed from the site. The excavation of the basements for building blocks A and B was monitored. Three large pits 1030, 1031 and 1035, of similar size (c. 8 x 5 m. across and over 3 m. deep) to pit 745 were recorded in the area of block A. A large stone-lined cess-pit 1011-22 and a smaller pit 1023 were also seen. One large pit was seen in the area of Block B and was the very deep feature which Trench 1 had been cut across (layers 113, 114 and 115). The excavation of an access ramp and underpinning of the large curving wall behind no. 7 Holywell Street were monitored and three small E-W gullies 1000-5, 1032 and 1034 were seen.

#### FINDS

POTTERY by LUCY BOWN and CATHERINE UNDERWOOD-KEEVILL

#### *Introduction*

A total assemblage of 1734 sherds (20 kg.) of pottery was recovered; the evaluation produced 159 sherds (2 kg.), the excavation produced 1538 sherds (17 kg.), and the watching brief produced 37 sherds (1 kg.).

The majority of features produced a similar group of material which can be closely dated as mid 13th to early 14th century. The range of fabric types is therefore very limited comprising 0.1 % Roman, 0.1 % late Saxon, 23.8 % early medieval (11th to early 13th century), 70 % medieval (mid 13th to 15th century) and 6 % post-medieval.

An assessment of the pottery has recorded sherd number, weight and the presence of rim and vessel forms, and is available for consultation in the archive. All fabrics have been compared and classified with reference to the Oxford fabric type series.<sup>7</sup> The pottery will be discussed firstly in chronological order and secondly within significant stratigraphic groups. All forms represented have been illustrated in previous published reports, and are therefore not illustrated here.

<sup>7</sup> R. Haldon (with a contribution by M. Mellor), 'Late Saxon and medieval pottery' in B. Durham, 'Archaeological investigations at St. Aldate's, Oxford', *Oxoniensia*, xlii (1977), 111-39.

### 1. Roman

One sherd of Oxford colour-coated ware dates from AD 240 to 4th century.

### 2. Late Saxon

*OXB Oxford Late Saxon Ware.* One sherd weighing 1 g. is probably of this fabric type, though given the size of the sherd the identification cannot be categorical. This fabric is dated as late 8th/early 9th century or later at Oxford.

*OXR St. Neot's-type.* A single thick base and further undiagnostic sherd in this 10th- to late 11th-century ware cannot be assigned to a particular form nor therefore dated more closely.

### 3. Early medieval

*OXAE.* Thirteen body sherds in this flint-, limestone- and quartz-tempered fabric are characteristically hand built and finished with a wiped surface. This fabric has been dated as 10th- to 12th-century in Oxford.

*OXBF.* Fabric BF is a quartz-tempered fabric characterised by large inclusions of flint. Of the ten body sherds found in this assemblage, all are undiagnostic. This fabric type is usually dated as 10th- to 12th-century in Oxford.

*OXAC Oxford Early Medieval Ware.* This oolitic limestone-tempered ware is a common type in Oxford in the mid 11th to late 12th century. The thirty-six sherds found in this assemblage are from large cooking pot/jar forms. The only rim present in this fabric is a tall flat-topped 12th-century form. Two examples of decorated sherds include large applied strips usually found in the large jar forms, and combed incised line decoration. One example of a cresset lamp is represented by base sherds.

*OXBR.* One body sherd in a fabric characterised by decayed oolitic and other limestone could belong to this fabric type. The sherd is likely to be from a cooking vessel. This ware is usually dated as 11th century or later in Oxford.

*OXY Oxford Medieval Ware.* Fabric Y is an early medieval ware found predominantly in Oxford from the late 11th to mid 13th centuries. The 348 sherds found in this assemblage divide into lead glazed pitchers and cooking pots. The late 12th- to early 13th-century pitcher form is represented by twenty-seven green lead-glazed sherds, two examples of applied tripod feet and one sherd with applied strip decoration. Nineteen cooking vessels are represented by late 12th- to early 13th-century flat-topped rims with bevelled edges and squared rim forms, early 13th-century clubbed rims, early to mid 13th-century thumbled rims and flat-topped rims. Two skillets are represented by an everted rim and base sherds with an internal lead glaze.

*North French Blackware.* Four greyware sherds with rilled surfaces are typical sherds of North French Blackware which was imported into Britain in the late 11th to 12th centuries.

### 4. Medieval

*OXAG Abingdon type A.* Eleven sherds belong to this quartz-tempered fabric which is the predominant supplier of jugs/pitchers in Abingdon between the late 11th and late 15th centuries. Ten of the sherds in this assemblage are from jugs with the usual splashed lead glaze and painted white slip curvilinear patterns on the exterior surface.

*OXBK.* One sherd in this late 12th- to 14th-century shelly limestone-tempered fabric type was recovered, from evaluation Trench 4.

*OXCI Lyveden.* One sherd from the tall neck of a jug in this late 12th- to 13th-century ware was found.

*OXCG Developed St. Neot's.* One cooking pot rim of late 12th- to 13th-century type occurs in this assemblage.

*OXAQ Newbury type B.* Three hundred sherds in this assemblage have the characteristic poorly sorted inclusions of limestone, usually leached out of the surfaces, flint and angular quartz associated with this fabric type. They are

from wheelthrown cooking vessels wiped on the external surfaces and decorated with bands of combed lines, usually around the shoulder of the vessel. Eleven cooking pot/jars are represented by early 13th-century thickened or flat-topped rim forms with a bevelled or rolled edge, three early to mid 13th-century thumbled rolled rim forms, and two 13th- to 14th-century rolled rims.

The fabric is well known throughout S. Oxfordshire and Wiltshire and is dated at Oxford, Abingdon and Newbury as beginning in the late 12th to 13th centuries, continuing into the 15th century. Most of the vessel forms in the Jowett Walk assemblage are of early 13th- to 14th-century date. The Kennet valley has been suggested as a production source for this ware, owing to its concentrated distribution throughout this area.<sup>8</sup>

*OXAM and OXAW Brill/Boarstall.* 891 sherds in these two fabric types account for the majority of sherds, 51%, of the Jowett Walk assemblage. These two fabrics are the products of the Brill/Boarstall pottery industry in Buckinghamshire and are always the principal fabric found between the mid 13th to 15th centuries on sites in Oxford.

The majority of sherds, 877, belong to fabric OXAM, whereas only fourteen sherds are found in OXAW. This can be explained by the types of vessels present in each fabric. This assemblage is notable for the number of highly decorated jugs present in fabric OXAM, whereas the fourteen sherds in OXAW are from plain baluster jugs which are far less common.

A minimum of 113 vessels are represented within fabric OXAM by rim sherds and a distinctive variety of body sherds which can be assigned to individual vessels. These include jugs of various forms, a bottle, cooking pots, skillets and possible bowls.

The earliest forms present on the site are baluster jugs, rounded jugs and double-shelled lamps. A small number of baluster jugs are represented by eight bases, which occur throughout the site in early 13th-century features (floor 586 in structure 4 and in the fill of pit 745), in a mid 13th- to early 14th-century feature (pit 737) and yard surfaces (611 and 626) in Trench 5A, and residually in post-medieval contexts.

Two examples of rounded jugs are present, one occurring in the earliest features of Trench 5A (603, fill of pit 745) of early 13th-century date and the second above the mid 13th- to early 14th-century cellars in Trench 5A.

Numerous sherds from double-shelled lamps were found in 13th- to 14th-century features, representing 19 vessels. The examples in post-medieval contexts are assumed to be residual. This suggests that like other Oxford assemblages this vessel type is common throughout the 13th to 15th centuries.

It has been suggested that baluster jugs might be the precursor of the highly decorated, more angular Brill/Boarstall jugs of the mid 13th to early 14th centuries, and it has been noted that baluster jugs and double-shelled lamps occur in the earliest late 12th- to early 13th-century levels of previous Oxford excavations at St. Aldate's and The Hamel.<sup>9</sup> The occurrence of baluster jugs, rounded jugs and double-shelled lamps in late 12th- to early 13th-century levels of excavation at Jowett Walk would appear to represent further evidence for the early occurrence of these vessel forms before the highly decorated Brill/Boarstall forms.

Highly decorated jugs are by far the most common form of Brill/Boarstall product found in this assemblage. A minimum of forty-six vessels are represented. Various types of decoration occur using strips, pellets and pads of clay applied to the body of the vessel, sometimes in quite elaborate combinations and designs. Where applied strips are used they are frequently painted with a red slip in contrast to the vessel colour (buff/white), producing alternating red and white vertical strips or alternating rouletted and plain vertical strips in white or red and white. Some of the more elaborate styles of decoration include snaking vertical strips of white clay alternating with rouletted red vertical strips. On examples of angular bodied jugs the decoration enhances and respects the shape of the vessel, for example, the contrasting red slipped strips are applied vertically on the yellow lead-glazed neck and lower part of the body, but in horizontal chevrons/arrows around the upper part of the body, respecting the sharply angled carination of the body. On monochrome copper-glazed vessels, applied strips occur in curvilinear lines, like tendrils, ending with a stabbed pad of clay or applied pad of clay in the shape of an 'ivy leaf'.

Zoomorphic vessels are known in Brill/Boarstall products but are not particularly common. One example is present in the Jowett Walk assemblage in the form of a bridge spout with 'arms' attached to either side of the spout.

The multiple use of different motifs and colours on the same vessel is found on a jug where strips are applied in diamond shapes around groups of four scales, coloured with red slip to resemble bunches of grapes. These vertical bands of diamonds also alternate with rows of applied grid stamps.

These highly decorated jugs were found in all features except the earliest pits and levels (723, 614, 643, 599, 579, 588, 578, 575, 585 and 719), confirming that they are not the earliest of the Brill/Boarstall products.

<sup>8</sup> A.G. Vince, S.J. Lobb, J.C. Richards and L. Mephram, *Excavations in Newbury 1979-90*, Wessex Archaeol. Mono. (forthcoming).

<sup>9</sup> Haldon with Mellor, op. cit. note 7; M. Mellor, 'Pottery' in N. Palmer, 'A Beaker burial and medieval tenement in the Hamel, Oxford', *Oxoniensia*, xlv (1980), 160-82.

Four jugs of indeterminate body form are represented by 13th- to 14th-century squared and thickened rim forms.

Examples of both slashed strap and stabbed rod handles occur throughout the site in late 12th- to early 13th-century features (fill 599 of pit 598 and fills 603 and 744 of pit 745) and mid 13th- to 14th-century features (big pits, yard surfaces, later pits in Trench 5B and 691 in Trench 5A). In this assemblage the type of handle does not appear to be associated exclusively with a particular form of jug, nor to differ chronologically in date.

Two other types of jug which are usually considered to be later 14th- or 15th-century products have a continuous flecked/mottled copper-green glaze, or a continuous plain yellow lead glaze. These occurred as residual sherds in post-medieval contexts. Only one residual bottle base was found. Four cooking pots are represented by two late 13th- to early 14th-century squared rims and two 14th-century undercut rims.

One 14th-century skillet is represented by a single handle.

Two possible bowls are present.

*OXBB Minety-type Ware.* Ten sherds in an oolitic limestone-tempered fabric are the products of the pottery industry at Minety, Wiltshire. The only diagnostic sherd is a 13th-century rolled rim from a cooking pot or bowl. This industry has been dated provisionally as 14th to 15th century at Minety,<sup>10</sup> though the same ware is found in Oxford from the late 13th to mid 15th centuries.

*Surrey Whitewares.* Three sherds of Coarse Border Ware include one example of a late 14th- to 15th-century bifid cooking pot rim. These three sherds are residual in post-medieval contexts.

### 5. Post-medieval

All the following post-medieval wares are found in the upper levels (521, 520, 509, 507, 514, 518, 502, 512, 511, 529 and 667).

*Cologne/Frechen.* The only post-medieval import present in this assemblage is the handle from a 16th- to 17th-century drinking jug.

*Local Buff Earthenware.* Four sherds in a buff/white earthenware are local copies of the Surrey Hampshire Borderware tradition. These are open 17th-century forms such as bowls with a continuous copper-green glaze.

*Glazed Red Earthenware.* Sixty-seven sherds of various red earthenware fabrics are the products of several sources. These include local Brill/Boarstall products comprising a late 16th- to early 17th-century cooking pot rim and various 17th- to 18th-century pancheons/dairying bowls. Other products are five sherds in a fine, brown-glazed red earthenware, producing cups in a 17th- to 18th-century post-medieval blackware tradition. One thick base sherd, from a shallow bowl or flanged dish, has a crude form of marbled slip decoration on the interior indicative of a late 17th- to 18th-century date. The remainder of the red earthenware sherds are from large dairying pans/pancheons with internal lead glazing which are typical mid 17th- to 18th/early 19th-century products.

*Tin Glazed Earthenware.* Nine sherds from two 17th-century drug jars and an 18th-century tankard and palette are decorated in cobalt blue.

*Later post-medieval wares.* A variety of 18th- to 19th-century post-medieval wares include three sherds of Staffordshire White Salt Glaze, two sherds of Staffordshire Manganese Speckled Ware, four sherds of English Porcelain, six sherds of Creamware, one sherd of Pearlware, two sherds of Transfer Printed Ware and one sherd of English Stoneware.

## THE POTTERY EVIDENCE: DISCUSSION

### *Watching Brief*

Fabric OXY of the late 11th to mid 13th century occurred in unstratified material (context no. 1037). Eight contexts can be dated as 13th to 15th century, containing OXAM, OXAW and OXAQ: 1006 (finds from gullies

<sup>10</sup> J. Musty, 'A preliminary account of a medieval pottery industry at Minety, North Wiltshire', *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine*, 68 (1973), 79-88.

1000-5), cess pit 1011 and cess-pit fills 1017 and 1018, pit 1030, pit 1031, gully 1032 and gully 1034). Pit 1035 contained post-medieval pottery of 17th- to 18th-century date.

### *Evaluation*

Within the evaluation trenches all contexts in Trench 1 and 3 contained post-medieval pottery of 17th- to 19th-century date.

In Trench 2, all contexts containing pottery are similar, with an assemblage of late 12th- to early 13th- and 14th- to 15th-century fabrics and types (OXY, OXAQ, OXAW, OXAM and OXBB).

Within Trench 4 three contexts contain mixed residual Roman, medieval (OXBB, OXAM) and post-medieval material. Ploughsoil 411 is the only tightly-dated context containing medieval pottery (OXY and OXAM) dating from the mid 13th to the early 14th centuries.

### *Excavation*

The Roman and late Saxon pottery, which constitutes a very small percentage of this assemblage, is residual.

The earliest features occur in Trench 5B, where the association of early medieval wares OXAC, OXY and OXAQ indicates a late 11th- to late 12th-century date for ditch 722, pit 615 and pit 718. The remaining sherds in early medieval wares OXAE, OXBF, OXBR and sherds of OXAC are residual/redeposited, other than sherds from these three dated contexts.

The early medieval ware OXY, which is usually a predominant late 11th- to mid 13th-century fabric in Oxford, forms only 20% of the assemblage. This results from the lack of late 11th- to early 13th-century stratigraphic evidence. The majority of the 348 sherds in OXY (58%) are found in mid 13th-century contexts occurring throughout all the phases of excavation up to the 14th-century cultivation layer (503).

The introduction of Brill/Boarstall pottery, in particular the association of baluster jugs, rounded jugs, double-shelled lamps and fabric OXAQ, is interpreted as an indicator of the late 12th to early 13th century. In Trench 5A this period is the earliest phase of activity (ditch 747, and pit 745), whereas in Trench 5B this is the second phase of activity (in features hearth 643, pit 598, and post-dating Structure 4 in layers 586, 578, 575 and 585).

The monopoly of Brill/Boarstall products, in particular highly decorated jugs, found in the majority of features in Trench 5B and all the remaining features associated with the pits, cellars, yard surfaces and later pits in Trench 5A, represents the mid 13th- to 14th-century in the ceramic and stratigraphic sequence at Jowett Walk.

Occasional examples of medieval regional imports include sherds of Lyveden (OXCI), Abingdon Type A (OXAG), Developed St. Neot's Ware (OXCG), Minety type Ware (OXBB) and Newbury type B (OXAQ), found *in situ* throughout the site, except for some sherds of OXAQ and OXBB which are residual in post-medieval contexts.

The *terminus post quem* for medieval activity at Jowett Walk must be in the 14th century, as all activity on the site is truncated by cultivation layer 503. As there is late 14th- or 15th-century pottery in context 503, the truncation of the site by cultivation can be suggested as having taken place by the last quarter of the 14th century.

The only evidence of 15th-century pottery at Jowett Walk is the occurrence of a few 14th- to 15th-century Brill/Boarstall jugs and Surrey Whiteware cooking pots in post-medieval contexts. As activity on the site is truncated in the late 14th century, these wares must be residual sherds in post-medieval features, indicating disturbed activity on the site.

The ceramic sequence at Jowett Walk would therefore suggest that the overall sequence of activity falls within a dating framework of the late 11th to 14th century, with most of the activity being more closely dated as mid 13th to early 14th century.

Although there are significantly different features serving different functions on this site (pits, cellars, yard surfaces, floors and hearths), the pottery vessel forms show no discrimination between these features. For example, double-shelled lamps and jugs occur in the same types of feature.

This assemblage has produced a large number of highly decorated jugs and noticeably few cooking pots, skillets or bottles. It is doubtful whether this bears any relationship to the status of the site, as the highly decorated jug is the usual predominant form on Oxford city sites in the mid/late 13th to early 14th century. It is noticeable, however, that there are very few cooking vessels in OXAQ which usually accompany the Brill/Boarstall products.



## SMALL FINDS by LEIGH ALLEN

*Dress accessories*

1. Buckle, copper alloy (incomplete). Oval frame with ornate outside edge, two knobs and an offset bar which has a sheet roller round it with parallel grooves. The bar for the pin is offset; the pin and the plates are missing. 18.5 mm. × 17 mm. × 3.5 mm.

Late 12th–late 14th century<sup>11</sup>

SF 508 Ctx u/s

2. Buckle, iron (complete). Plain, rectangular with pin. 30 mm. × 23 mm. × 5 mm.

SF 503 Ctx 514 (modern)

3. Mount, copper alloy (incomplete). Square, pyramidal with single separate rivet and possible beaded border; the rivet is missing. 8.5 mm. × 8.5 mm. × 2 mm.<sup>12</sup>

SF 512 Ctx 534 (dumps and backfills over Buildings 1–3)

4. Button, copper alloy (damaged). Circular, biconvex, slightly domed front. Integral attachment loop. 12.5 mm. × 6.5 mm. × 6.5 mm.

SF 511 Ctx 579 (pits and hearths)

5. Button, copper alloy (complete). Cast, biconvex, front and back are plain. The embedded shank has a loop. 10 mm. × 10.5 mm. × 10.5 mm.<sup>13</sup>

SF 518 Ctx 657 (building 3)

6. Finger ring, copper alloy and glass (complete). Decorative ring with rounded hoop and imitation gemstone setting. Slender hoop with transverse oval bezel which has a pie dish profile. It is set with a glass cabochon. Popular from the 12th century onwards. 27 mm. × 21.5 mm. × 1.5 mm.<sup>14</sup>

SF 510 Ctx 637 (pit 737)

*Household implements and furniture*

7. Sewing pin, copper alloy with non-ferrous plating (complete). Spiral wound head. 24 mm. × 1 mm. × 1 mm.

SF 505 Ctx 518 (modern)

8. Socketed implement, iron (incomplete). The socket is badly damaged and the implement is very corroded. It is rectangular in section and expands before tapering towards a point; possibly an arrowhead. 102 mm. × 12 mm. × 5.5 mm.

Ctx 732 (natural gravel)

9. Pricket candlestick, iron (incomplete). Tang broken, decorative terminals broken near base. 72 mm. × 17 mm. × 14 mm.<sup>15</sup>

Ctx 557 (robber trench of wall 583)

10. Writing lead, (complete). Round in cross section, tapering along the shank to a point. The head is slightly splayed. 69.5 mm. × 4 mm. × 4 mm.

SF 509 Ctx 561 (dumps and backfills over Buildings 1–3)

<sup>11</sup> G. Egan and E. Pritchard, *Medieval finds from excavations in London, 3: Dress accessories c. 1150–1450* (1991), p. 76, fig. 49, no. 317.

<sup>12</sup> Egan and Pritchard op. cit. note 11, p. 198, fig. 125, no. 1068.

<sup>13</sup> A.R. Goodall, 'The Copper Alloy finds' in N. Palmer, op. cit. note 9, p. 183 and fiche 2 B13, fig. 24, no. 46.

<sup>14</sup> Egan and Pritchard op. cit. note 11, p. 326–27, fig. 215, no. 1614.

<sup>15</sup> I. Goodall, 'The Iron finds' in T.G. Hassall et al., 'Excavations in St. Ebbe's', *Oxoniensia*, liv (1989), p. 228, fig. 65, no. 69.



11. Object, iron (incomplete). L-shaped fragment, rectangular in section with one protruding arm, broken at the other end; possibly a staple or joiner's dog. 41 mm. x 14.5 mm. x 4 mm.  
SF 2 Ctx 218 (beamslot Structure 4)

12. Spike, iron (complete). Large spike with shaped head; the shank swells in the centre before tapering to a point and is square in section. 184 mm. x 13.5 mm. x 10.5 mm.  
Ctx 112

13. Ten nails, iron, from contexts 107, 514, 515, 518, 529, 541, 579, 599.

#### *Other*

14. Ring/link, copper alloy (complete). Strip, circular in section, bent into a rough circle. 13.5 mm. x 12 mm. x 3 mm.  
SF 515 Ctx 703 (pit fills at W. of trench)

15. Loop (fastener), copper alloy (incomplete). Circular loop of wire with two twists to secure it. 11.5 mm. x 7.5 mm. x 1 mm.<sup>16</sup>  
SF 507 Ctx 518 (modern)

16. Disc, copper alloy (complete). Plain disc, possibly a very worn coin or token. 20 mm. x 20 mm. x 0.5 mm.  
SF 514 Ctx 701 (floor building 3)

17. Coil of wire, copper alloy (incomplete). One of the fine strands of wire has been wrapped around the coil in order to secure it. 26 mm. x 21 mm. x 12.5 mm.  
SF 1 Ctx 218

18. Hooked strip, copper alloy (incomplete). Rectangular strip with a hooked end and a single rivet hole in the strip. 21 mm. x 10 mm. x 3 mm.  
SF 520 Ctx 570

19. Modern coin, copper alloy (complete).  
SF 522 Ctx u/s

20. Disc, lead (complete). Roughly circular lead disc, ragged around the circumference. 22.5 mm. x 22 mm. x 1.5 mm.  
SF 3 Ctx 400

21. Strip, lead (incomplete). Irregular shape, rectangular in section. 42 mm. x 9 mm. x 1.5 mm.  
SF 516 Ctx 719

22. Strip, iron (incomplete). Possibly a nail shank.  
41 mm. x 4 mm. x 3.5 mm.  
Ctx 541

23. Miscellaneous fragment, iron (incomplete). Irregular in shape. 21 mm. x 21 mm. x 3 mm.  
SF 519 Ctx 521

#### ANIMAL BONE by BOB WILSON with bird and fish bone identifications by ALISON LOCKER

Some 249 bones were identified and tabulated; 308 remained unidentified, while interpretative difficulties of dating and phasing meant that some others which were identified could not be allocated a place within the properly-phased results. The main body of bones conveniently divided into three chronological groups for their presentation in Table 1.

<sup>16</sup> A.R. Goodall op. cit. note 13, p. 183 and fiche 2 B13, fig. 24, nos. 69 and 70.

TABLE 1. FREQUENCES AND PERCENTAGES OF ANIMAL BONES AT JOWETT WALK, OXFORD

	Late 12th- early 13th-century		Mid 13th- to 14th- century		17th and 18th- century	
	<i>frequency</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>frequency</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Cattle	48	67	56	51	23	33
Sheep	16	22	19	17	40	58
Pig	7	10	33	30	5	7
Horse	1	1	—	—	—	—
Dog	—	—	2	2	—	—
Cat	—	—	—	—	1	1
Identified	72		110		69	
Unident	55		176		77	
Total	127		286		146	
Burnt Bones	14		10		4	
Domestic fowl	2		1		1	
Goose	—		1		—	
Duck	—		1		—	
Fish (Cod)	1		—		—	

Feature context subgroups number relatively few bones and show only small differences where compared and contrasted in a more complex tabulation of data (see archive). There are two medieval groups, and a post-medieval group; the latter consists of the debris from the large ditch 513/517 (fills 514/518), the only sizeable post-medieval group.

Among the identified bones there is little that is atypical in the occurrence of species, although it is noted that a human cranial fragment was found in the 13th- to 14th-century debris at the top of the 12th- and 13th-century big pit.

Despite the small sample sizes of bone groups, some interpretative suggestions can be made. Comments assume that results here are comparable to those of handpicked bone collections at other sites in Oxford. Retrieved medieval bones consisted of relatively coarse debris, especially in the 12th- to 13th-century group, and are suggestive of peripheral settlement activity, as might be expected of a site outside the city walls. Better indications of domestic activity were present in the few bones from building 3 and structure 4, while external contexts such as the early pits and hearths yielded coarse debris, perhaps secondarily derived from domestic bone waste dumping, and, in 527 and 573, probably accidentally burnt. There is little evidence of any trade activity involving industrial processing of bones of cattle and sheep as found elsewhere in late medieval and post-medieval deposits in Oxford, Abingdon and Bicester.<sup>17</sup>

In assessing the results, it is noticeable that medieval sheep bones are not as well represented as usual and this may mask the true extent of medieval domestic activity at the site as judged from the coarseness of the bone debris. The sheep bone percentage from the post-medieval group is more typical of deposits of bones elsewhere in Oxford.

These results may indicate the eating preferences of Holywell residents for beef and pork. However, absence of bones of wild species like deer alongside the higher percentage of pig bones appear insufficient evidence to indicate high status and greater purchasing power of inhabitants. Nevertheless, they may have had better access to land to crop and raise animals and may have consumed something of the animals they raised. Perhaps few sheep were kept, cattle and pigs being better suited to environmental conditions. Alternatively, if sheep were raised in greater numbers than apparent, most would appear to have been sent to market, butchery and consumption elsewhere in

<sup>17</sup> R. Wilson and M. Robinson, 'A survey of Environmental Archaeology in the South Midlands' in H. Keeley (ed.), *Environmental Archaeology: a Regional Review*, Directorate of Ancient Monuments and Historical Buildings Occasional Paper 1 (2) (1987), 71; R. Wilson and J. Wallis, 'Prehistoric Activity, early Roman Building, Tenement Yards and Gardens behind Twickenham House, Abingdon', *Oxoniensia*, lvi (1991), 10-15.

Oxford. Unfortunately there are too few bones indicating age and sex in the bone assemblage to allow further investigation of the kill-off patterns, animal husbandry and marketing of sheep and cattle as has been discussed generally for the city.<sup>18</sup>

## DISCUSSION

### *Pre-medieval*

The tree-throw pits and the Roman pottery from the ploughsoil may be indicative of activity loosely associated with the nearby Roman sites to the N and the Bronze Age activity evidenced by the barrows, ring-ditches and ritual metalwork deposits by and in the Cherwell.<sup>19</sup> Clearance of the gravel terraces for agriculture in the Bronze Age is well attested in the Thames Valley.

### *Ditches and pits*

The three earliest ditches 722, 734 and 747 are grouped because of their similar natures. Ditch 722 was dated by pottery to between the late 11th and late 12th centuries, while 747 contained pottery of late 12th- to early 13th-century date. The function of these ditches is unclear, but they grew deeper as they converged (to the SW where they left the excavated area), so it is possible that they performed some drainage function.

A number of large pits were recorded (Trench 5, 745; Trench 1 113-5/121; watching brief 1030-1, 1035). These were all of a similar size, over 5 m. across and cut over 3 m. deep into the gravel. Pit 745 was partially excavated, and appeared to be a gravel extraction pit; its lower fills contained late 12th- to early 13th-century pottery. The upper fills of 745, and the pits seen in the watching brief, contained pottery of 13th- to 14th-century date (see pottery discussion). Some post-medieval pottery was recovered, but is probably intrusive owing to the nature of the watching brief, and dating of these pits may rely on their relationship to later property boundaries. In places, the pits were overlain by boundary walls and ditches, which may perpetuate medieval property divisions (see below, and Fig. 1B); additionally, pit 745 was overlain by several phases of 13th- to 14th-century building (see below). This implies a date at the earlier end of the pottery date-range, and it is suggested that the site as a whole saw a period of drain and pit digging during the early 13th century, prior to the laying-out of property plots and buildings which are documented on Holywell Street from the mid 13th-century.

<sup>18</sup> R. Wilson with Alison Locker and Prof. B. Marples, 'Medieval Animal Bones from Church Street and other sites in St. Ebbe's Oxford', in T.G. Hassall, C.E. Halpin and M. Mellor, 'Excavations in St. Ebbe's, Oxford, 1967-1976: Part I: Late Saxon and Medieval Domestic Occupation and the Medieval Greyfriars', *Oxoniensia*, liv (1989), 258-68 and Fiche m. V A7-M V C11; R. Wilson, 'Mortality Patterns, Animal Husbandry and Marketing in and around Medieval and Post-medieval Oxford', in A. Hall and H. Kenward (eds.), *Urban and Rural Connexions: Perspectives from Environmental Archaeology*, Oxbow Monograph 47 (1994), 103-15.

<sup>19</sup> See T.G. Hassall, 'The archaeology of Oxford City' in G. Briggs, J. Cook and T. Rowley (eds.), *The archaeology of the Oxford Region* (1986); and T.G. Hassall, 'Roman finds from the Radcliffe Library Extension', *Oxoniensia*, xxxvii (1972), 45-6.

*Layout of the properties*

A series of features representing E-W boundaries were aligned across the site. No N-S boundaries were seen, other than modern walls. A clear distinction was apparent in Trench 5, between the sequence of development represented by the gravel pit and cellars (buildings 1-3) in area A, and the structures to the N in area B. The difference between the two areas suggests that they may represent two properties divided by a boundary, which has left no visible remains, but which may be fossilised in the later stone wall. The post-medieval ditches (513 and 528) may be flanking ditches on either side of this wall, or perhaps an earlier post-medieval boundary of which no trace survives (but which may have been a hedge or bank, for example).

The evaluation revealed another boundary wall (Trench 1, 108) running E-W behind nos. 1-7 Holywell Street, as shown on the 1875 OS plans. This second E-W boundary was some 16 m. S of the boundary seen in Trench 5, as they represent the S and N boundaries of a long property, running E-W across the backs of the Holywell Street properties, and fronting onto St. Cross Road. As mentioned above, Holywell Cottage occupied the street frontage of this property from at least the 17th century, and the line of the property and its boundaries is evident on Loggan's bird's eye view of 1675, where the E end of the property is shown to be occupied by a cock pit. The property was tenanted by Shaw when it appears on Smith's 1758 map of Holywell Parish.<sup>20</sup>

The series of small E-W ditches and gullies observed in the watching brief (1032-4, 1000-1005) may represent the encroachment of no. 7 Holywell Street onto the W of Shaw's; an encroachment is clearly shown by Loggan. The medieval cess pit (1011) may also have belonged to no. 7 Holywell Street, rather than Shaw's.

*Structures*

The possible extent and alignment of the excavated buildings and structures is reconstructed in Fig. 4. Buildings 1, 2 and 3 in the S of the trench (site area A) appear to represent a sequence of sunken structures, possibly cellars, which had been dug into the gravel, probably to a depth of c. 1 m. below the contemporary ground surface. The extent of the surviving floor layers implies that the structures had an internal area ranging from 3.5 x 2 m. (building 1) to 5 x 3 m. (building 3). Very little evidence of their superstructure survived. The floor of building 1 was seen to run vertically up the side of the pit, and was associated with the remains of a slight wall, 733, which may suggest a light superstructure. Buildings 2 and 3 may have had stone walls lining the sunken area, which were subsequently robbed. However, only wall fragment 583 survives to support this theory. This wall was not closely dated and could be a later garden wall with no connection with the cellars, although the depth of the bottom of the wall from the surface of the gravel (c. 0.6 m.) and the fact that the robber trench (containing 13th- to 14th-century pottery) was not clearly visible through the later dumps and backfills suggest that the wall may be contemporary with a cellar. Alternatively, the sides of the cellar pits may have been reinforced with wood which created some disturbance of the edges of the pits when it was removed, and may have obscured the archaeological details of the cellar construction.

<sup>20</sup> See note 5.

A range of cellars around 1.2 m. deep and 3 × 5 m. across, with stone-lined pits and in some cases stone steps and door jambs, were found to the E of Brackley Castle, Northamptonshire, in 1981–2 by the Northamptonshire Archaeology Unit.<sup>21</sup> These cellars were behind, and apparently belonged to, a terrace of low-status early medieval tenements. It is possible that the structures at Jowett Walk were similar, although so little evidence survived that the comparison can be only speculative.

The identification of structures 4–7 is problematic as so little structural evidence has survived, and the greater part of the structures may lie outside the excavated area. The association of beamslots, postholes and floors in structure 4 suggests a building, but structure 5 with only a beamslot and a floor is less certain. Structures 6 and 7 are inferred from the beamslots alone. These structures (4–7) were probably only 3 × 2 m. in area, based on the surviving dimensions of structure 4. These are smaller than is commonly to be expected for dwellings.<sup>22</sup> The orientation of structures 6 and 7 is uncertain as there were no internal floors. However, the presence of an earlier hearth 631 to the E of the N–S beamslot of structure 7, and a pit alignment to the W, suggests the interior of a building in this area of the trench. The beamslot may be a later rebuild of a structure which is only represented by the hearth. Structure 6 also has no clear interior area but the presence of shallow scoops to the N of the E–W beamslot is very similar to the remnants of structure 5, where scoops underlie the building and a floor lies to the N of the E–W beamslot. From this comparison it could be suggested that the interior of structure 6 also lay to the N of the beamslot.

The construction techniques of structures 4–7 are typical of medieval buildings. Beamslots and postholes define the shape; the floors rested on the gravels and so must have been inserted into pits cut into the contemporary ground surface. The floors in both sets of structures were of yellow mortar, black ash or hard-packed earth. The finds give little clue as to the use of the buildings and structures. The assemblage of pottery from all deposits is typical of the period, and there is no clear indication of the status or activity of the site's medieval occupants.

### Conclusions

The archaeological evidence suggests that building plots fronting onto St. Cross Road may have been laid out and occupied from the early to mid 13th century. One of these plots may correspond to an E–W property which can be observed on Loggan's bird's eye view of 1675, and was held by Shaw in the mid 18th century. There appears to have been at least one further building plot laid out to the N in the 13th century, corresponding to the structures excavated in site area B. The fact that this was outside the surviving post-medieval tenement and on the site of the bowling green, suggests that the green may represent a block of

<sup>21</sup> Information on the results from Brackley was kindly supplied by I. Meadows, of Northamptonshire Archaeology. Cellars are found on a wide variety of non-urban sites, where they served various functions. These are discussed in J. Chapelot and R. Fossier, *The Village and House in the Middle Ages*, trans. H. Cleere (1985), 207. Other instances are a building interpreted as part of a barn, in D. Austin, *The Deserted Medieval Village of Thrislington, County Durham, Excavations 1973–1974* (Soc. for Medieval Archaeol. Monograph Series 12, 1989), 24–27; and an industrial feature in P. Armstrong, 'Excavations in Sewer Lane, Hull, 1974', *East Riding Archaeologist*, 3 (1977), *Hull Old Town Report Series No. 1*, 12–15.

<sup>22</sup> G. Beresford and J. Hurst classify cottages or cots as 3–4 m. wide and 5 m. long in *Deserted Medieval Villages* (1971).

tenements facing St. Cross Road that had fallen into disuse. The occupation represented by the excavated buildings and structures appears not to have survived the contraction of Oxford in the late 14th century.

Evidence for the nature of the buildings and structures was insubstantial, but suggests that there may have been a number of sunken structures which could have functioned as cellars (such as are widely documented in medieval Oxford). These might be analogous to better-preserved examples of stone-lined cellars excavated behind a row of low-status medieval tenements in Brackley, Northamptonshire. The other structures probably represent lean-to structures. The potential for further discovery of 'lost' Oxford suburbs is an important aspect of future development in this and similar areas.