

Excavations and Building Survey at Bell Street, Henley-on-Thames 1993-1994

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SUMMARY

Excavations in advance of the redevelopment of Waitrose supermarket in Bell Street identified at least seven broad phases of occupation. Phase I provided the first definite evidence for Roman settlement within the town. A substantial building with chalk footings was partially revealed, but no evidence for the use or function of the building found. A patch of metallurgy near to the building produced pottery of 2nd-century AD date. The Romano-British features were sealed beneath a layer of brown silty soil which contained a small number of sherds of late Saxon pottery (Phase II). Subsequent occupation on the site was medieval and later in date. Excavation on the Bell Street frontage revealed at least two phases of medieval structures and possible evidence for the medieval metallurgy of the street (Phases III & IV). The main occupation as revealed by structures was post-medieval in date (Phases V & VI). Excavations in backland areas revealed medieval and post-medieval pits. Subsequent occupation can be dated to the 19th century or later (Phase VII & modern). As part of the archaeological recording a structural survey of the Regal Cinema was undertaken prior to demolition.

INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of archaeological investigations undertaken by the Oxford Archaeological Unit in Bell Street, Henley-on-Thames, between September 1993 and June 1994. The work was commissioned by John Lewis Partnership in advance of large scale re-development of the Waitrose supermarket. The project comprised two parts: excavation and watching brief, and recording of the Regal Cinema prior to demolition. The excavation was directed by Colm Moloney of the Oxford Archaeological Unit and monitored by Paul Smith, County Archaeological Officer, on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council. The building recording was undertaken in conjunction with the Vernacular Buildings Research Section of the Henley-on-Thames Archaeological and Historical Group.

Location and Geology

The town of Henley is situated on the west bank of the Thames at the bottom of a steep Chiltern valley at NGR SU 760828. The underlying geology consists of Thames gravel overlain by alluvial silt. The development site was located on the west side of Bell Street and

covered an area of approximately 4800 sq. m. (Fig. 1). The evaluation trench, Trench A, and three excavation trenches, Trenches B, C and D, covered a total area of c. 295 sq. m.

Archaeological and Historical Background

Evidence for prehistoric activity from the town itself is limited and consists mainly of chance finds from the river or its immediate vicinity. It is probable that these relate to the use of a ford during the prehistoric period. There is evidence for prehistoric sites and finds both within the parish boundary to the south of the town centre and in the surrounding countryside.

There is little direct evidence for settlement in the Roman period; there are reports of chance finds of Roman coins and pottery from the town, but the locations are not precisely known. A number of Roman sites and finds have been located in the surrounding area, for example the villa at Harpsden just beyond the parish boundary to the south of the town. Other sites are known at Bix and Hambleden.¹ An evaluation carried out by the OAU at Mill Lane sports ground in 1993 identified a V-shaped ditch which contained Roman tile and may have formed part of an enclosure.² It has been suggested that the Fairmile, which runs north-west from Henley in the direction of Nettlebed, was a Roman road with a river crossing located near the present day Phyllis Court.³ The proposed road would have provided an alternative route between Dorchester-on-Thames and Silchester. It should be noted that a small-scale watching brief undertaken by the Oxford Archaeological Unit at Phyllis Court in December 1996 revealed no significant archaeological deposits.⁴

Saxon finds including a spearhead have been found in the Thames at Henley, and Saxon settlement is known in the valley to the south and at Remenham to the east.⁵

The first record of medieval settlement dates to 1179, when it is recorded that King Henry II 'had bought land for the making of buildings'. King John granted the manor of Benson and 'the town and manor of Henley' to Robert Harcourt in 1199. In 1205 the town received a pavage grant, and in 1234 the bridge is first mentioned. In 1278 Henley is described as a hamlet of Benson with a chapel. It is believed that Henley's market was in existence by 1269, and it is probable that the street plan of Henley was established by the end of the 13th century. By the beginning of the 16th century the town extended along the west bank of the Thames from Friday Street in the south to the Manor, now Phyllis Court, in the north and took in Hart Street and New Street. To the west it included Bell Street and the Market Place.⁶

Henley served as a collecting centre for grain grown in the Upper Thames valley. From Henley it was shipped on to London. Other goods were also shipped to London from Henley, and the economic importance and prosperity of Henley in the later middle ages is attested by the many London merchants who owned property in the town from the 14th century onwards.

¹ M. Airs, K. Rodwell and H. Turner, 'Henley-on-Thames', in K. Rodwell (ed.), *Historic Towns in Oxfordshire. A Survey of the New County* (Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit Survey No. 3), Map 1: Henley: location.

² Oxford Archaeological Unit, 'An archaeological evaluation of Mill Lane Sports ground, Henley-on-Thames' (unpublished OAU client report, November 1993).

³ I.D. Margary, *Roman Roads in Britain* (2nd edn. 1969), 167.

⁴ Oxford Archaeological Unit, 'Phyllis Court Club, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire: Archaeological Watching Brief Report' (unpublished OAU client report, February 1997).

⁵ Airs, Rodwell and Turner, op. cit. note 1, Map 2: Henley: archaeology and topography; Map 1: Henley: location.

⁶ Ibid. 125, Map 2: Henley: archaeology and topography.

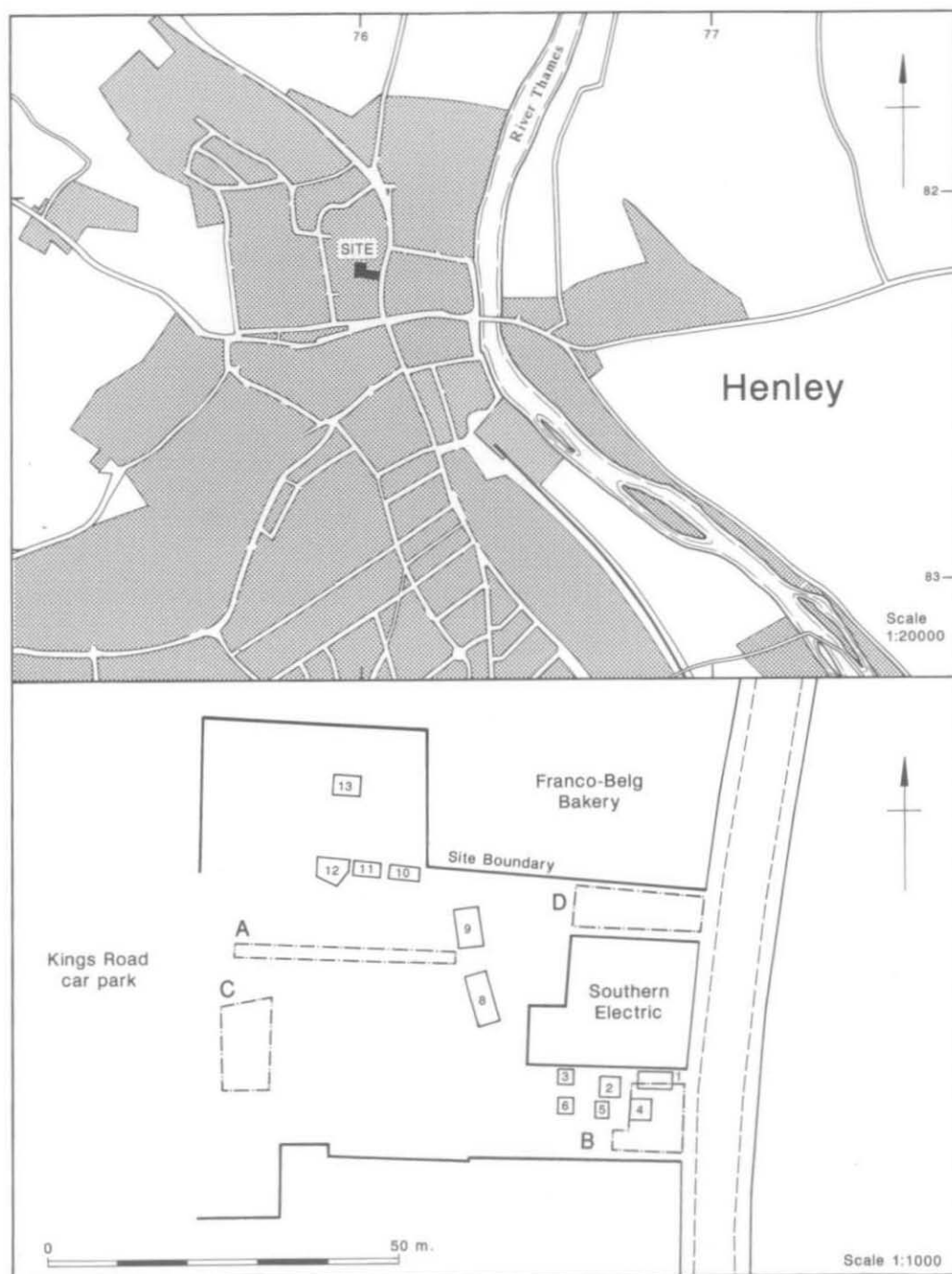


Fig. 1. Site location and location of trenches and watching brief pits.

Previous work

Previous archaeological investigation in the town has been limited. In addition to the fieldwork already mentioned, there have been small scale excavations at No. 20 Market Place, at the former Rectory opposite the church in Hart Street and at Nos. 12–16 Market Place.⁷ More recently, the Henley Archaeological & Historical Group have excavated a site at the rear of the King's Arms Public House which is located less than 200 m. from the present site. This identified a series of deposits dating from the late 13th century through to the construction of a stable in the late 17th or early 18th century.⁸ The buildings within the historic town in an area centred on Bell Street were the subject of a survey carried out during 1990–1993.⁹

Fieldwork Strategy and Methodology

The archaeological excavation on Bell Street was undertaken in a number of phases (Fig. 1). Initial work comprised an evaluation trench A followed by the excavation of Trenches B and C prior to the demolition of the Regal Cinema. Trench A was sited within the footprint of the new development and was set well back from the street frontage. Trench B was located on the Bell Street frontage in front of the Regal Cinema and south of the Southern Electric building. Trench C was located to the rear of the cinema and south of Trench A and sited to further investigate the backland areas away from the street frontage. All areas were stripped of overburden by a 360° excavator down to the first significant archaeological horizon. From this point all excavation was by hand.

The second phase of work comprised a watching brief and salvage work during demolition of the cinema and subsequent groundworks for the supermarket carpark. It also included the excavation of a further trench (D) located on the Bell Street frontage in the entrance to the Waitrose car park. The watching brief and salvage work concentrated on the small pits excavated during development works. Only limited stratigraphic recording was possible.

The drawing of the plan, elevation and section of the Regal Cinema was undertaken by the OAU in advance of demolition.

Structure of the report

For the archaeological fieldwork, the stratigraphic evidence is presented and discussed by phase, rather than being described for each trench separately. Where appropriate, the evidence from Trenches B and D adjacent to the street frontage is described first, together with any evidence from the watching brief. This is followed by a brief description of evidence from Trenches A and C in the backland areas. Fuller descriptions of the stratigraphic sequence in each trench can be found in the site narrative which remains in the archive. Following the description of the evidence there is a general discussion of the site. The finds from the site are by and large undistinguished and are not published in full. The pottery has been quantified

⁷ B. Durham and R. Gibson, 'An archaeological investigation of No. 20 Market Place, Henley-on-Thames' (unpublished typescript report); B. Durham and P. McKeague, 'Three recent archaeological investigations in medieval Henley-on-Thames, Oxon.' (unpublished typescript report).

⁸ R.J. Kendal and A.H.G. Cottingham, 'Excavations in the stable at the rear of Nos. 32–36, Market Place (King's Head public house and private house)' (Henley Archaeol. and Hist. Group Report No. HY 93/1).

⁹ Henley-on-Thames: Historic Town Centre Survey, 1990–1993.

and is discussed. The small worked flint assemblage is also discussed. None of the material is worthy of illustration. The metalwork is largely late in date and uninteresting. The animal bone is predominantly post-medieval in date and has not been published. The finds remain in the archive. The stone mortar from context 118 (pit 119) is described and illustrated.

The historical and structural survey of the Regal Cinema is not published in full, but a note on its history is published together with the main survey drawings (Figs. 8 & 9).¹⁰

EXCAVATION RESULTS

In Trench B the geological strata exposed below the archaeological features and deposits consisted of Pleistocene deposits and included a probable palaeochannel filled with blueish grey amorphous peat.

No prehistoric deposits or features were found, but a small quantity of redeposited flintwork was recovered from medieval and post-medieval contexts. The largest single group of material came from layer 190, the fill of pit 189 in Trench C. A brief report on the flint work is published below.

Romano-British occupation (Phase I)

The Bell Street excavations provided the first evidence for Romano-British occupation in Henley. Part of a Romano-British building with chalk footings together with some small patches of metallurgy were located in Trench B and during the subsequent watching brief. During the subsequent watching brief further sections of chalk footing were recorded which help to define in part the dimensions of the building.

The Romano-British Building – Trench B (Fig. 2). The south-east corner of a building founded on a substantial chalk footing consisting of a rubble core faced externally with blocks (132). The chalk foundations were set on gravel (152) in a foundation trench (108) and were 1.2 m. wide. The corner lay approximately 6.5 m. west of Bell Street.

1994 watching brief. Two walls were observed in Pit 1 just south of the Southern Electric building. One wall (1/2) was built of flint and chalk and aligned east-west and it is probable that this was a continuation of a medieval or post-medieval wall (105) identified in Trench B (see below). It sealed a north-south footing of chalk (1/1). The latter was at least 1 m. wide and it is probable that it was a continuation of the front wall (132) of the building located in Trench B.

To the west of Trench B parts of two different north-south walls were located. In Pit 5 a footing 0.9 m. wide and 0.4 m. deep was found and in Pits 3 and 6 two lengths of a footing 1.2 m. wide and 0.4 m. deep were located. No returns or corners were noted.

Metallurgy and other features – Trench B (Fig. 2). A small area with patches of metallurgy (184 & 185 = 194) was identified in the north-east corner of the trench adjacent to the Bell Street frontage. The finds from 185 and 194 comprised 25 sherds of pottery dating to the late 1st or early 2nd century AD (see p. 120). The original metallurgy consisted of medium-sized flint fragments which showed signs of wear. Subsequently the surface had been repaired with gravel. It is probable that this surface originally covered a larger area and that it extended beyond the trench and under the present Bell Street.

The walls observed in Trench B and in pits 3 and 6 were 1.2 m. wide, whereas the wall seen in Pit 5 was slightly narrower at 0.9 m. It is probable that the latter formed an internal division, and that the wall in Pits 3 and 6 formed the west wall of the building, with 132 in Trench B forming the east wall; the east-west dimensions of the building would have measured approximately 10.5 m. (34 ft. 6 in.) overall and 8 m. (26 ft. 3 in.) internally. The larger portion to the east would have measured at least 4.3 m. (14 ft. 1 in.) internally, the western part 2.8 m. (9 ft. 2 in.) internally. A less likely alternative interpretation would see the wall in pit 5 as the west wall of one building and the wall in pits 3 and 6 as the east wall of a second building. It is likely that the north wall of the building was sited to the

¹⁰ Henley-on-Thames Archaeol. Group: Vernacular Buildings Research Section, 'Regal Cinema' (Report No. 69/ November 1993), copies of which are deposited at the Oxfordshire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), Centre for Oxfordshire Studies, Central Library, Westgate, Oxford, and at the RCHME National Buildings Record (NBR), Fortress House, London.

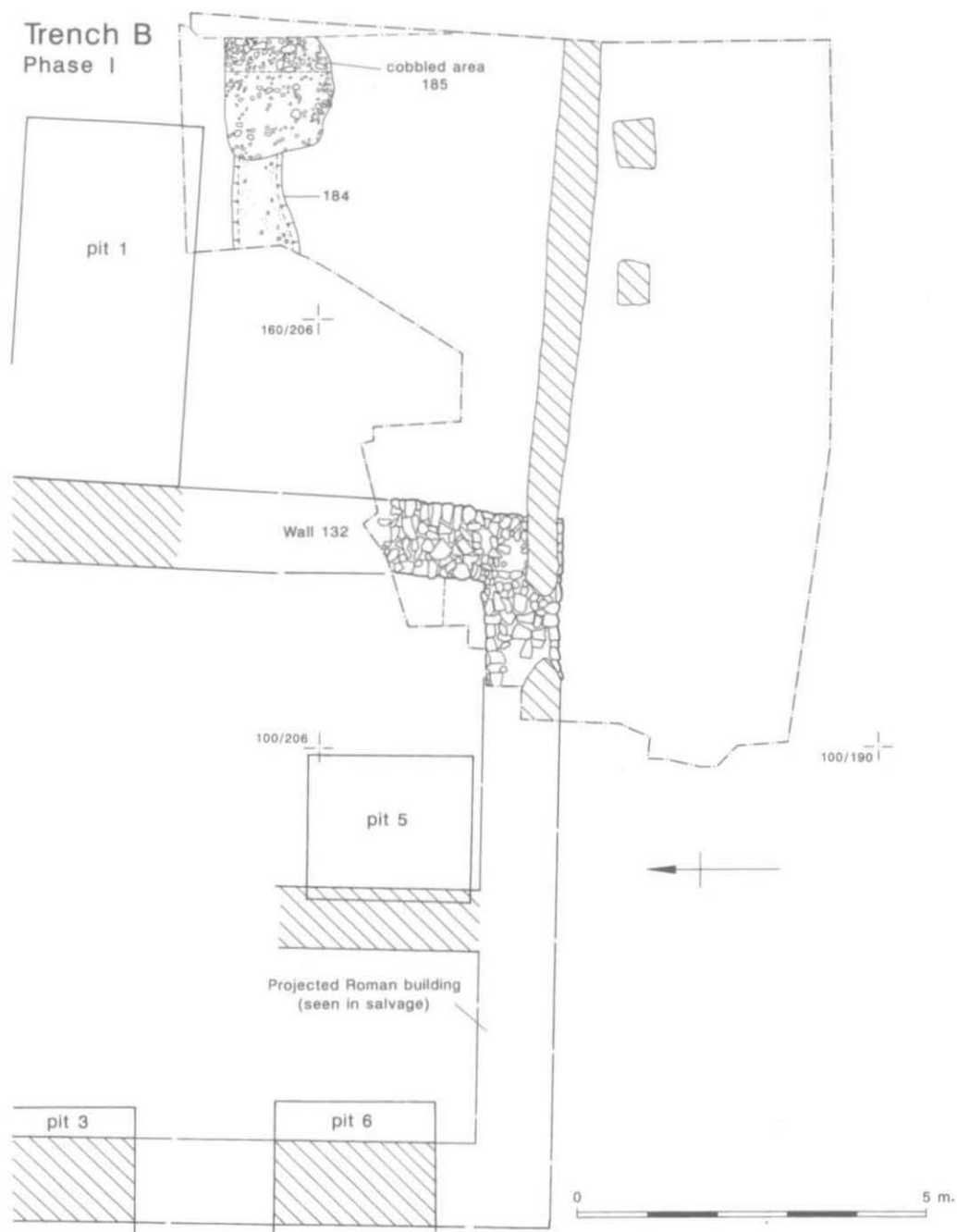


Fig. 2. Trench B – Plan of Phase I Romano-British building.

north of the pits observed in the watching brief, and that the overall size of the building north-south was in excess of 7 m. (23 ft.). This interpretation is based on the identification of the wall observed in pits 3 and 6 as the west wall of the building, and assumes that the building was rectangular in plan. No evidence was retrieved to suggest the function of the building, nor were internal features identified.

Saxon occupation (Phase II)

The site produced no evidence for Saxon features or structures but in Trench A and more particularly in Trench B there was a brown silty clay layer through which medieval and later features were cut. Evidence for such a layer was lacking in Trench D, which produced no evidence for early occupation. It was also probably absent in Trench C.

Trench B. The Roman features were sealed by a layer of brown silty clay (74 and 218), which was found over much of the trench. It was 0.2 m. thick and contained few finds, but these comprised four sherds of possible hand-built Saxon pottery of 7th- to 8th-century date. This layer sealed the Roman building and metalling in Trench B and is likely to be a Saxon horizon.

Trench A. Layer 039 may have been the truncated remains of a soil horizon comparable to 074 in Trench B. Layer 039 was sealed beneath 029 and was a light brown silty layer up to 0.12 m. deep. Layer 029 was described as brown sandy loam up to 0.35 m. deep, and it was most probably a medieval and later garden soil which developed in the backland areas. Neither layer produced dating evidence.

Trench C. Layer 170, which was a dark grey brown sandy silt and sealed the natural clay in Trench C, is probably a later garden soil comparable to 029 in Trench A, since it sealed two pits (161 & 163) containing post-medieval and more recent pottery, and pit 189 which contained medieval pot.

Medieval occupation (Phases III and IV)

Apart from the small quantity of Saxon pottery noted above, there is no definite evidence for occupation before the 13th or 14th centuries, and limited evidence for structures before the post-medieval period. The excavations on the Bell Street frontage (Trenches B and D) produced some evidence for medieval occupation, and those in the backland areas (Trenches A and C) contained a small number of pits. Trench D produced evidence for at least two phases of occupation (Phases III and IV).

Street Front Trenches - Metalling (Fig. 3). A series of metallised surfaces interspersed with clay deposits were found in Trench B. These were laid in a cut 117, the edge of which was identified along the east edge of the trench. The lowest layer (145=82) consisted of gravel mixed with a little sand and was between 20 mm. and 50 mm. thick. At the south end of the site at least four more levels of metalling (142, 140, 115=116 and 136=99) were identified, separated by silty clay deposits (144, 141, 139 and 137). The layers of metalling were between 20 mm. and 70 mm. thick. The overall depth of metalling and clay layers was about 0.35 m. A similar sequence of metalling layers (97-100, 115 and 82) was observed in the north part of the section. The metalling extended about 0.50 m. into the trench and it is likely that it represents the earliest evidence for the metalling of Bell Street. There was no dating evidence recovered from the metalling layers, and it is likely that the earliest layers are late medieval (Phase IV) or even post-medieval (Phase V) in date.

No equivalent metalling on the Bell Street frontage was found in Trench D. What was found was some evidence for metalling (440) along the length of the trench on its north side. This was probably contemporary with the earliest structures found in Trench D (see below) and may have represented a yard or hardstanding. 440 was badly truncated by later activities.

Street Front Trenches - Structures and pits, Phase III. The earliest medieval features comprise two structures found in Trench D (Fig. 4). The better preserved structure consisted of an east-west wall 427 and a north-south wall (425), both constructed of unshaped flint nodules bonded with clay. Wall 427 measured 0.40 m. in width and had 3 courses surviving; 425 was 0.20 m. wide and had three surviving courses. These walls were located in the north-west corner of the trench and had been truncated by later features. The east-west wall would appear to have been an external wall while the north-south wall may have been an internal division. Surfaces constructed of flint gravel and clay (426 and 428) were found to the north of 427 and respectively to the east and west of 425. The walled structure was not directly dated, but is cut by two pits (424 and 422) which contain medieval pottery and are assigned to Phase IV.

The evidence for the second Phase III structure in Trench D is very slight and comprised a small patch of compacted

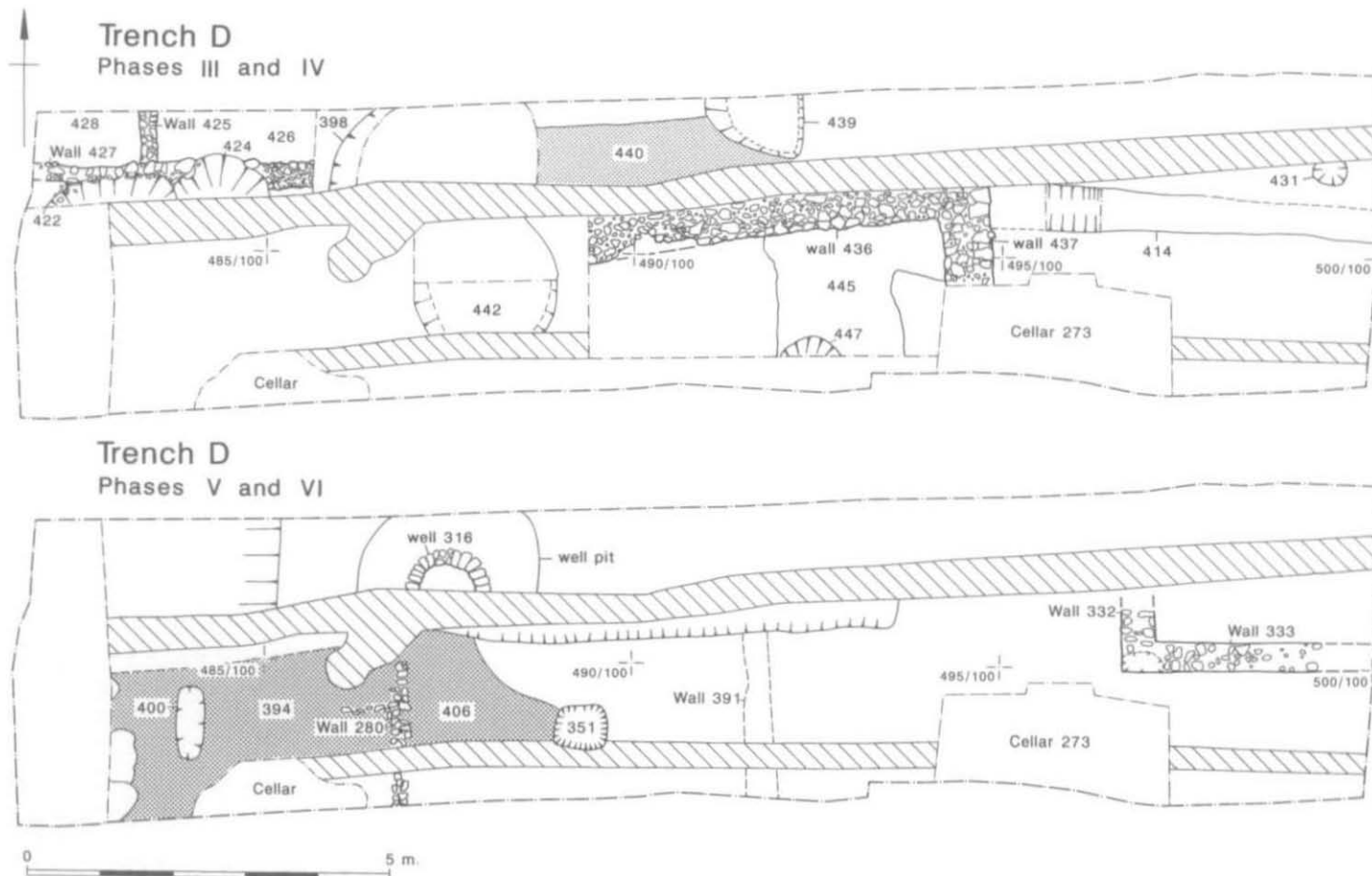


Fig. 4. Trench D - (a) Plan of Phases III and IV and (b) Phases V and VI.

a foundation for a floor. The footings were sealed by deposits of silty loam (434 and 419). 419 contained quantities of pegtile which may have been deposits associated with levelling in Phase V.

A number of pits have been assigned to Phase IV. Pits 424 and 422 both cut the more complete Phase III structure. Pit 424 cut both wall 427 and surface 426, and its fill (423) contained pottery of late 13th- to early 14th-century date. Pit 422 cut wall 427 and pit 424, and its fill (421) of 422 produced pottery which was in use between the 13th and 15th, or even early 16th, centuries.

A sub-rectangular pit 439, which was filled with a deposit of black clay loam and flint fragments (438), contained pottery ranging in date from the mid 13th century to the early 15th century. Pit 398 (fill 397), which was largely destroyed by a later well 316, was possibly contemporary with this phase, since it contained late 15th-century pottery. There was a strip of metallurgy 440 between 439 and 398, which both pits appear to have cut.

In Trench B (Fig. 3), in addition to the evidence for possible medieval metallurgy, there was also evidence for foundations of structures, but it is thought probable that these were post-medieval rather than medieval in date and they have been assigned to Phase V. However, a shallow pit 119, which is the earliest of a series of shallow features at the south side of Trench B, contained a medieval mortar (Fig. 7 and p. 128) and it is possible that 119 may be of medieval rather than post-medieval date. The later pits in the series are likely to be associated with one of the structures found in Trench B and are post-medieval in date. It is more likely therefore that 119 is also post-medieval and that the mortar is residual.

Backland Areas, Phases III and IV – Trench A (Fig. 5). Four pits were identified as containing medieval pottery, but none could be fully explored. These were pits 06 (fill 07), 20 (fill 21), 38 (fill 37) and 26 (fill 25). Pit 20 (fill 021) was the earliest of a cluster of pits towards the west end of the trench, and was largely truncated by later features; it contained a single sherd of pottery of 12th- to 14th-century date. Pit 38 was truncated by a later cut 034 and contained two sherds of mid 13th- to early 14th-century date. Feature 47 was at the bottom of 38 and probably formed part of it. Pit 26 produced two sherds of mid 13th- to early 14th-century date.

Trench C (Fig. 6). Only pit 180 (fill 181) can be assigned a medieval date: it contained pottery ranging in date from the mid 13th to mid 14th century. Other pits produced medieval pottery but are post-medieval in date (see below p. 120).

Post-medieval (Phases V and VI)

Street Front Trenches – Structures, Phase V and VI. Three east-west foundation trenches (105, 103 and 73) were found in Trench B (Fig. 3). The northernmost (105) was found against the north edge of the trench. It is probable that the east-west wall 1/2 observed in Pit 1 during the watching brief was a continuation of 105. 103 was approximately 5 m. to the south of 105. Foundation trench (73) was less than 2.5 m. south of 103.

All three wall footings were constructed of rough chalk blocks and flint. Trench 105 was at least 0.3 m. wide and 0.5 m. deep. The middle footing 111 was set in cut 103 which was filled with a loose friable dark grey soil with charcoal flecks (104). The foundation trench measured 0.4 m. wide and 0.6 m. deep. The southern trench 73 was between 0.5 and 0.6 m. wide. All three foundations extended east right to the edge of the excavation adjacent to Bell Street, and cut the metallurgy observed there and noted above. How much further they extended is not known. No evidence for north-south foundations was revealed at the east side of the trench, but it seems unlikely, assuming such foundations existed, that they would have been constructed very much further into the metalled street. It is also unclear how far west the foundation trenches extended. Only a short stretch of 105 was revealed in excavation. Trench 103 (foundation 111) seems to have continued beyond the west of Trench B: an apparent continuation, formed of chalk blocks (216) set on a bedding of sandy silt (223) in a foundation trench (224), was observed under the cinema's front steps. This footing seems to have been less truncated than 111. The full extent of 103 including 224 was at least 10.5 m. east-west. A possible side wall or internal division (106) running north from 111 had been built over the earlier Roman wall 132. The foundation trench 073 to the south was at least 8 m. long. It seems that it extended for about 6 m. to a square expansion. This may have been the foundation for a reinforced corner or gate or door post. Beyond this feature the foundation trench was markedly attenuated and curved slightly to the south.

There is no direct evidence for the date of the construction of the foundations. Trenches 105 and 103 are recorded as cutting the lower levels of metallurgy (82 and 115 respectively); the relationship with later metallurgy layers is not recorded.

South of 73 a large tile-built hearth was found which may be contemporary with the footing. This consisted of a large bowl-shaped cut (75) measuring 1.18 m. in diameter by 0.13 m. in depth. There appear to be two successive hearths. There was a burnt clay layer (88) sealed by a mortar layer with roughly squared tiles set vertically in mortar (101) around its sides. This was sealed by a charcoal layer 86, which in turn was sealed by a further layer of mortar with tiles (81). No pottery was found. Just south of 73 and east of the hearth was a number of intercutting shallow

Trench A

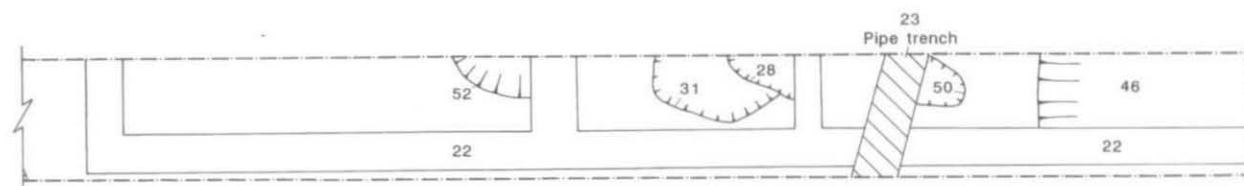
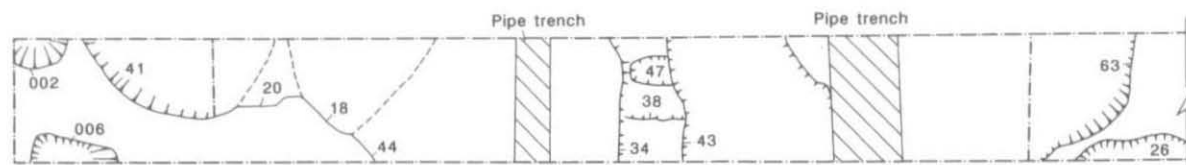


Fig. 5. Trench A - Plan.

pits (193, 199, 203, 204, 213, 124, 119, 220, 222). None of these contained pottery. The earliest pit in the sequence (119) contained a near-complete mortar made from Purbeck marble which could be assigned to Phase III or IV (Fig. 7) (see above p. 118). The relationship between the pits and foundation 73 is not certain, but it is probable that 73 is later.

There was a well (76) to the west of 73. The lining consisted of squared and faced dry chalk blocks which were packed with loose chalk. The fills (83, 84 and 85) of the well pit 121 contained 16th-century pottery, and provide a *terminus post quem* for its construction. The cut for the well was oval or sub-rectangular in plan and lay partly outside the trench and the foundations for the Regal Cinema sat directly on top of it.

Overlying this phase of activity the archaeology in general dated to the 19th and 20th centuries and consisted of pits and service trenches.

In Trench D (Fig. 4), the Phase IV structure (436 & 437) was buried beneath demolition debris, which was deposited across the trench probably as levelling. At the west end and in central areas of the trench this consisted of brown silty loam which contained large quantities of tile, gravel, flint fragments, chalk and charcoal (layers 408, 413 and 418). The east end of the site was built up with redeposited natural clay (411, 415, 416, 417 and 429). The pottery from these layers was predominantly late medieval in date ranging from mid 14th to late 15th centuries. There was however some later material: layer 408 contained pottery which dates between the mid 13th and 15th centuries and the late 15th to early 17th centuries, and further material which was in use between the 17th and 19th centuries; layer 418 contained late 15th- to early 17th-century pottery. Sherds of the same vessel were found in these two layers, and in rubble layer 435 (see above) and later metallurgy 392 (see below). It is reasonable to suggest that the levelling took place at the end of the 17th century or even later, and that much of the pottery was redeposited.

Subsequent occupation was of 18th-century and later date.¹¹ Following levelling, two walled structures (332/333 & 280/405/394/406/391) were built. These are assigned to Phase V. Structure 333/332 was built close to the Bell Street frontage, while the second structure was approximately 9 m. back from the street. When these were demolished the site was levelled again and metallurgy was laid down, which extended up to Bell Street. The surface was metallised with fine and medium sized flint gravel set in a clay matrix (262, 304, 311, 386 and 392) and appears to have been maintained and repaired over a considerable period of time; the deposits built up to a maximum depth of 0.25 m. The metallurgy has been assigned to Phase VI. It is possible that the well 316 was contemporary with the metallised surface and this would tend to support the notion that the metallurgy formed a yard. There is limited dating evidence and this consists of small quantities of pottery from contexts 304 and 392. Layer 304 produced late 14th- to mid 16th-century pottery and 17th- to 18th-century pottery, and layer 392, only medieval pottery. The finds from both 304 and 392 must be residual. Those from 392 included a sherd from a vessel pieces of which were found in contexts 408, 418 and 435. Although the quantities of material are small, combined with the evidence from contexts sealed by the metallised surface, it is clear that the earliest possible date at which it could have been laid down was during the 18th century.

Backland trenches – Pits, Phase V and VI: Trench A (Fig. 5). Pit (50) which was oval in shape was filled with light brown silty loam (49) and contained a number of horse bones and a single sherd of black burnished ware dating to the 3rd century AD. It also contained a small number of fragments of pegtile and was post-medieval in date. Pits 41 (fill 40) and 44 (fill 32) contained early post-medieval pottery of late 15th- to early 16th-century date. Two small pits 31 (fill 30) and 28 (fill 27) near the east end of the trench contained 16th- to 18th-century pottery. At the east end part of a very large pit (46) was found which was filled with brown silty loam (10) and produced post-medieval pottery.

A probable boundary was represented by cut 34 and its recut 43. This may have been the boundary at the rear of Bell Street shown on the 1879 1st edition of the Ordnance Survey. Neither 34 nor 43 produced any dating evidence, but are certainly post-medieval. Both truncated feature 38 which contained medieval pottery. A number of other pits (02, 18, 63 and 52) were located which contained no datable finds. The brick foundations of a 19th-century building were located at the eastern end of the trench. These can be identified with a property shown on the 1879 OS map.

Trench C (Fig. 6). Most of the features in Trench C were post-medieval in date. Pit 159 (fill 158) contained medieval pottery but also red earthenware of 16th- to 18th-century date. Pits 163 (fill 164), 165 (fill 166) and 187 (fill 188) all produced 16th- to 18th-century pottery; pit 189 (fill 190) contained a quantity of medieval pottery, but also a sherd from a Surrey-Hampshire Borderware flask which could date as late as the mid 16th- to mid 18th-century; pits 160 (fill 156) and 161 (fill 162) produced late 18th- to 19th-century pottery. Pit 177 (fill 176) produced a single sherd of medieval pottery, but cut pit 189 (fill 190). Pit 178, which produced no datable finds, cut the medieval pit 180. A quantity of worked flint was found redeposited in the fill 190 of pit 189.

¹¹ The later features are described more fully in the site narrative which is deposited with the archive.

Trench C

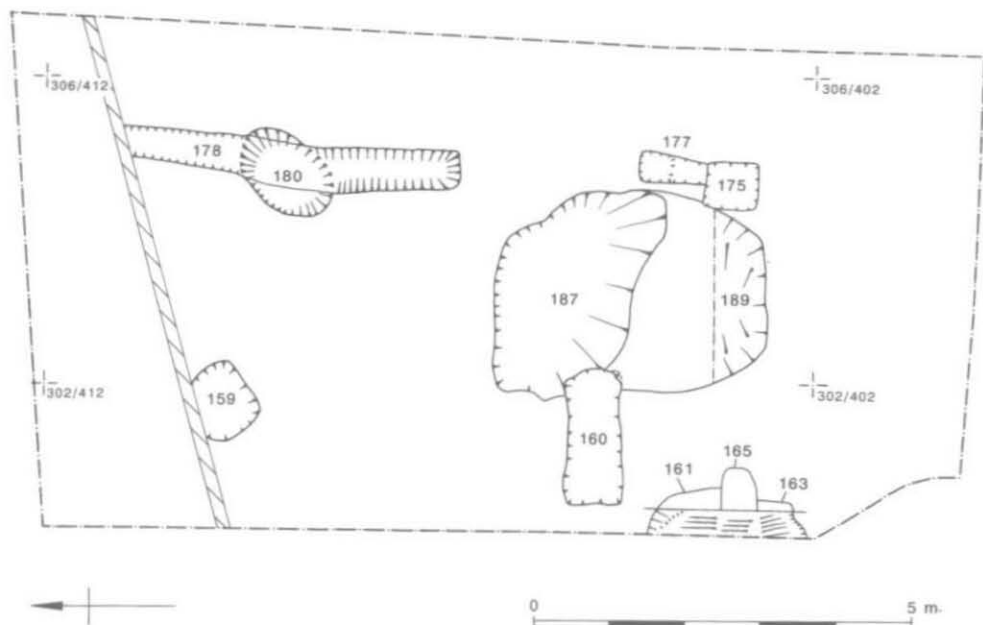


Fig. 6. Trench C - Plan.

FINDS

The finds from the Bell Street excavations are not a particularly distinguished assemblage. The largest group of material comprises the ceramic building materials and this has not been analysed or published in detail. The vast bulk of the material consists of pegtile, with much smaller components of brick and floor tile. The roof tile is all post-medieval in date and from Phase V or later contexts. One complete medieval decorated floor tile was recovered and fragments of two others, and a brief note of these is printed below. The other large body of material is the animal bone, and again the majority of this material is from post-medieval contexts and has not been published. The metalwork from the site is undistinguished and predominantly post-medieval in date.

The pottery, both the medieval and post-medieval and the Romano-British, has been quantified and where possible the fabrics and forms identified. The quantity of Romano-British pottery is very small, but it has been published because of its interest and importance as evidence of Romano-British occupation. The assemblage of medieval and post-medieval pottery is more extensive and has been reported on in greater detail. The final category of material which has been published is the worked flint. Although the material is not from an *in situ* deposit - much is from a single post-medieval pit - it does have intrinsic interest.

ROMANO-BRITISH POTTERY by PAUL BOOTH

Twenty-seven sherds of Roman pottery weighing 159 g. were recovered in the 1993 excavation. Three fabrics were represented. The most numerous (25 sherds, 131 g.) was a dark grey-brown to black fabric

tempered with abundant rounded or sub-rounded quartz sand grains up to 0.5 mm. across, with occasional small organic voids. Twenty-four fragments in this fabric, probably all from a single vessel, a jar or (less likely) a bowl with a fairly simple thickened everted rim, came from surface 185 in Trench B. The other sherd in this fabric was residual in Trench A context 25. A similar rim of a larger storage jar, from context 195, was in a related fabric which incorporated grog inclusions alongside the sand. The only other Roman sherd from the site was a single fragment of black-burnished ware (probably Dorset BB1) from a bowl or dish, in Trench A context 49.

The principal fabrics cannot be assigned confidently to a known source, though they are clearly not products of the Oxford industry. The sandy fabric (and the related sand and grog-tempered storage jar rim) has some similarities with products of the Fulmer/Hedgerley kilns, situated some 23 km. east of Henley. There was clearly some variation of fabric within that industry and the Henley material may have been produced by potters working in a similar tradition rather than originating at the known sites, though the latter remains a possibility.¹² The Fulmer/Hedgerley kilns are generally dated to the early-mid 2nd century, with much material assigned to the second quarter of the century. Even if the Henley sherds were not from this source they would be quite consistent with a 2nd-century date, though such relatively close dating of the material cannot be certain. The black-burnished ware sherd likewise cannot be dated more closely than 2nd–4th centuries, but in any case was probably residual in a post-Roman context.

POST-ROMAN POTTERY by LUCY WHITTINGHAM

686 sherds were recovered from the two seasons of excavation (1993 and 1994). A further 30 sherds of late 18th- to 19th-century wares were produced by the 1994 watching brief but are not discussed in this report. Full quantification of the excavated assemblages recorded sherd count, weight, rim diameter, EVE's and further attributes such as glaze colour and decorative motifs. Where possible the fabric types have been identified with reference to previous work by the Oxford Archaeological Unit at Henley Rectory and No. 20 Market Place, the Oxford Archaeological Unit fabric type series and the Museum of London Archaeology Service fabric type series.¹³ The fabrics have been grouped into five periods: Late Saxon, Early Medieval, Late Medieval, Early Post Medieval and Late Post Medieval. Within these phases the fabrics are categorised as Coarsewares, 'Established Wares' and European imports. The state of preservation is indicated by the number of vessels and EVE percentages shown in Tables 1 and 2. The medieval sherds, in particular, are small and abraded with few surviving rim fragments.

Late Saxon

Fabric 1 – Three hand-built sherds of 1 cm. thickness are from a simple jar with smoothed and wiped surfaces. The clay matrix is coarse and tempered with abundant subrounded quartz of 0.2–0.5 mm. The sherds are a dark reddish brown colour at the core with reduced dark grey/black surfaces.

Medieval

The medieval fabrics divide into four groups; quartz tempered coarsewares, regionally imported 'established wares', European imports and late medieval red earthenwares.

¹² Cf. K.R. Crouch and S.A. Shanks, *Excavations in Staines 1975–76, The Friends' Burial Ground Site* (London and Middx Archaeol. Soc./Surrey Archaeol. Soc. Joint Publication no. 2, 1984), 45; P. and S. Cauvain, 'The Pottery', in B. Stainton and C. Stanley, 'A Romano-British Pottery Kiln at Springwood, Gerrards Cross', *Records of Bucks.* 29 (1987), 164.

¹³ Typescript report on the pottery from Henley Rectory, held by the Oxford Archaeological Unit; R. Haldon with M. Mellor, 'Late Saxon and Medieval Pottery', in B. Durham, 'Archaeological Investigations in St. Aldates, Oxford', *Oxoniensia*, xlii (1977), 111–39; C. Orton, 'Post-Roman Pottery', in P. Hinton (ed.), *Excavations at Southwark 1973–76, Lambeth 1973–79* (London and Middx Archaeol. Soc./Surrey Archaeol. Soc. Joint Publication no. 3, 1988).

Quartz Tempered Coarsewares: Five quartz tempered fabrics were identified:

Fabric 2 – Moderately tempered coarse matrix. Ill sorted with subrounded and subangular quartz of 0.2–0.6 mm. Reduced light grey. This ware is associated with a wide range of both cooking pot and jug forms. The cooking pots have simple everted rims and the jugs plain or thickened rims. Some of the jugs have a splashed copper green glaze and some a yellow or green lead glaze with bands of incised line decoration. This fabric can be paralleled with Henley Rectory fabric type 2.

Fabric 3 – Abundantly tempered coarse matrix. Ill sorted with subangular quartz of 0.1–0.3 mm. Moderate fine red iron oxides of 0.1–0.3 mm. and occasional large red iron oxides of 0.5–1 mm. Oxidized red throughout with darker reddish brown surfaces. This fabric is primarily associated with oxidised cooking pots, the rims of which are everted with a shallow lid seating. The majority of the sherds are unglazed and sooted though there are also some copper glazed sherds from jugs. Fabric 3 can be paralleled with Henley Rectory Fabric 3.

Fabric 4 – Abundantly tempered coarse matrix. Ill sorted with subangular quartz of 0.1–0.3 mm., occasional rounded white quartz of 0.5 mm. Moderate red iron oxide of 0.1–0.2 mm. and occasional large red iron oxides of 0.5 mm. Oxidized red throughout with dark brown surfaces. Fabric 4 is similar in fabric type to Fabric 3, but oxidized. The thin-walled, sooted sherds and pulled handle suggest that several small tripod pipkins are present in this fabric type. A similar ware was identified at Henley Rectory as Fabric type 9.

Fabric 5 – Moderately tempered coarse matrix. Ill sorted subangular quartz of 0.2–0.4 mm. Occasional large sub-rounded quartz of 0.5 mm. Moderate fine red iron oxide less than 0.1 mm. and occasional large red iron oxide 0.3–0.5 mm. Occasional clay pellets. Oxidized reddish brown throughout. This fabric is another oxidised cooking pot fabric, represented by sherds which are less well fired and therefore have a soapy texture. There are no diagnostic sherds but all the sherds are sooted. A similar fabric was identified at Henley Rectory as Fabric type 16.

Fabric 6 – Abundantly tempered coarse matrix with ill sorted subangular quartz of 0.2–0.4 mm. Moderate fine red iron oxide 0.1–0.2 mm. Oxidised pink/reddish yellow throughout. This fabric is a hard fired, oxidized ware in which two jugs are represented by sherds with a lead glaze and a slashed strap handle. The fabric was identified at Henley Rectory as Fabric 5 but is possibly a late medieval oxidized version of Fabric 2.

These five fabric types account for a third (34%) of the pottery in the medieval assemblage, producing a variety of cooking pots, tripod pipkins and a smaller number of jugs. Similar unprovenanced coarsewares were found at Henley Rectory where they were suggested to be local products. Fabric 2 is the most common, accounting for 60% of the coarsewares and 18% of the medieval assemblage. This fabric is possibly the product of the prolific industry at Camley Gardens Estate, Maidenhead, Berkshire, in production from the early 13th to 15th or 16th centuries.¹⁴ Fabric 6 could also be a product of the Camley Gardens industry. Fabric 3 is less common, accounting for 21% of the coarsewares and 7% of the total medieval assemblage. At Henley Rectory it was suggested that this could be a late 13th- and early 14th-century product of local potters in Henley for which there are documentary references.¹⁵ At Henley Bell Street Fabric 4 is similar to Fabric 3. Fabric 5 is different from the other coarsewares and remains a small unprovenanced fabric accounting for 10% of the coarsewares.

Established Wares: Regionally imported wares make up a large percentage (59%) of the medieval assemblage. These include eight ware types – four Surrey/Hampshire products: Cheam Whiteware (CHEA), Kingston-type Ware (KING), Coarse Borderware (CBW) and Tudor Green Ware (TUDG); two London products: Coarse London-type Ware (LCOAR) and London-type Ware (LOND); and two Buckinghamshire products: Brill/Boarstall fabrics OXAM and OXAW.

The earliest wares in this group are the Coarse London-type Ware of 1100–1200 AD and London-type Ware 1150–1350 AD. With the exception of one rim with a lead glaze all of the sherds have copper glazing. These small abraded fragments form only 2% of the medieval assemblage.

Fabrics OXAM and OXAW, the two products of the Brill/Boarstall industry, dominate the medieval assemblage

¹⁴ G. Pike, 'A Medieval Pottery Kiln Site on the Camley Gardens Estate, Maidenhead, 1965', *Berkshire Archaeol. Jnl.* 62 (1965), 22–33.

¹⁵ M. Mellor acknowledges a reference to potters working in New Road, Henley in the late 13th and early 14th century (Henley Borough Deeds, 5) in her typescript report on the pottery from Henley Rectory. There is also a reference in the Ministers' Accounts of 1341 and 1344 to wood being sold for fuel: S. Newns, 'Appendix V: Lay Subsidy Rolls and Medieval Potters in South-east Oxfordshire', in M. Mellor, 'A Synthesis of Middle and Late Saxon, Medieval and early Post-medieval Pottery of the Oxford Region', *Oxonienia*, lix (1994), 200.

with OXAM comprising 8% and OXAW 33%. OXAM is associated with splashed lead and copper glazed jugs and one bottle and OXAW with tripod pipkins, cooking pots, a flanged bowl and jugs. With the exception of one grid stamped sherd and one highly decorated sherd with applied red slip decoration in fabric OXAM the majority of the jug sherds appear to be from 14th- and 15th-century forms. The flanged bowl is also likely to be a 14th- to 15th-century product. Bottles occur throughout the 13th to 15th centuries and cannot be closely dated.

The Surrey/Hampshire products in this assemblage are from different periods of production. The Kingston-type Ware sherds, all from jugs, are the earliest products of 1230-1350 AD. The Cheam Whiteware and Coarse Border Ware are later, dating from 1350-1450 AD and 1350-1500 AD. The majority of the sherds in these two fabrics are undiagnostic but the Coarse Border Ware cooking pot with bifid rim is a typical late 14th-century product. Two fragments of lobed cups in Tudor Green Ware are typical products of the late 15th-century Surrey/Hampshire industry.

Continental imports: A tiny fragment of Saintonge White Ware (SAIN) with a mottled green glaze is undiagnostic and could be of any date between the mid 13th to 16th centuries.

Late Medieval Red Earthenwares: Four quartz tempered fabrics are all types of late medieval earthenware:

Fabric 7 – Moderately tempered coarse matrix with quartz less than 0.1 mm. and occasional subangular quartz of 0.3 mm.-0.4 mm. Abundant fine red iron oxide and occasional red iron oxide of 0.3 mm. Oxidized buff/reddish yellow throughout.

Fabric 8 – Sparsely tempered fine matrix with subrounded quartz of 0.2-0.4 mm. Occasional red iron oxide of 0.2-0.3 mm. Reduced dark grey core with purple/brown surfaces.

Fabric 9 – Abundantly tempered coarse matrix with subrounded quartz of 0.2-0.3 mm. Moderate red iron oxide of 0.2-0.3 mm. Oxidized throughout.

Fabric 10 – Moderately tempered coarse matrix with subrounded quartz of 0.2-0.5 mm. Sparse fine red iron oxides 0.2 mm. Oxidized buff throughout.

TABLE 1. THE MEDIEVAL POTTERY ASSEMBLAGE BY FABRIC TYPE AND VESSEL FORM

Fabric	Sherd Count	Weight	No. of Rims	EVE	% of total
Fabric 1	3	34	—		1%
Fabric 2	79	909	2 cooking pots 2 jugs	0.15 0.10	18%
Fabric 3	29	356	2 cooking pots	0.35	7%
Fabric 4	10	103	—		2%
Fabric 5	15	164	—		3%
Fabric 6	5	144	—		1%
Fabric 7	9	115	1 porringer	0.10	2%
Fabric 8	1	16			1%
Fabric 9	3	14			1%
Fabric 10	4	128	2 jugs	0.30	1%
LCOAR	4	13	—		1%
LOND	5	31	1 jug	0.05	1%
BRILL/OXAM	34	399	2 jugs	0.20	7%
BRILL/OXAW	144	1386	1 tripod pipkin 1 cooking pot 1 jug 1 bowl	0.20 0.25 0.60 0.05	33%
SWW/KING	54	319	3 jugs	0.30	12%
SWW/CHEAM	1	14	—		1%
SWW/CBW	10	84	1 cooking pot	0.05	2%
SWW/TUDG	23	57	2 lobed cup	0.10	5%
SAIN	1	2	—		1%
TOTAL	434	4288			

These four wares occur as a small part (3%) of the medieval assemblage. All are associated with late medieval vessel forms such as the porringer and bung-hole cistern in Fabric 7 and all have zones of lead glazing. The dark reduced colour of Fabric 8 is reminiscent of the Midlands Purple tradition found in the north of England in the late 14th and 15th centuries.

Early and Late Post-Medieval

The Post-Medieval wares group in two chronological phases: early post-medieval (16th- to 17th-/early 18th-century) wares, and late 18th- to 19th-century manufactured wares.

Early Post-Medieval: Local Earthenwares. These glazed and unglazed Red Earthenwares (GREW, REW) comprise a major part (41%) of the early post medieval assemblage. Ninety-three glazed sherds are from a range of vessels including chamber pots, jars, deep bowls, jugs, flanged dishes, chafing dish, large storage jars, tankards, fuming pot, panchcons. These vessels are typical forms of a 16th- to 17th-century style and though unprovenanced are possibly the products of the Nettlebed potteries operating 5 miles west of Henley from the 15th to early 20th century.¹⁶ Fifteen unglazed sherds are mostly from flower pots, some of which could be of 18th- or 19th-century date.

Early Post-Medieval: European Imports. Three types of Rhenish Stoneware comprise a small part (4%) of the early post-medieval assemblage. All of the sherds are undiagnostic but are characteristic of late 15th-/early 16th-century Raeren/Aachen (R/A) drinking jugs, mid to late 16th-century Cologne Frechen (C/F) drinking jug and an 18th-century Westerwald (WEST) chamber pot.

Early Post-Medieval: Established Wares. The Surrey/Hampshire Borderware industry is another dominant type comprising 28% of the early post-medieval assemblage. Copper glazed (BORDG) and lead glazed (BORDY) vessels are both present though the green glazed vessels are more common. The chamber pots, deep bowl, porringer, tripod pipkin, and whistle are typical 17th-century products. The whistle is a less common form and similar to no. 428 from London.¹⁷ The only other regionally imported wares of this date are a small number of 17th-century Tin Glazed Earthenware (TGW) vessels – a drug jar, shallow bowl and flanged dish.

Late Post-Medieval. Approximately one quarter (27%) of the post-medieval assemblage is comprised of various late 18th- to early 20th-century wares. These include English Stonewares (ENGs), Staffordshire White Salt Glazed Ware (SWSG), Staffordshire Slipware (STSL), Nottingham Stoneware (NOTS), Pearlware (PEAR), Creamware (CREA), English Porcelain (ENPO), Black Basalt Ware (BBAS) and Transfer Printed Wares (TPW).

The Ceramic Sequence

A summary of the ceramic sequence using broad chronological phases is shown in Table 3. The archaeological distribution of the ceramic assemblage is discussed in the relevant sections of the stratigraphic report. Dating the local Coarsewares has proved difficult due to the sequence of events on site and in some contexts the dating of these Coarsewares relies on their association with the regionally imported 'established wares'.

The earliest evidence for Post-Roman occupation at Bell Street are the three sherds of Late Saxon pottery associated with phase II. The earliest medieval pottery in this assemblage are the 12th- to early 13th-century London-type Wares but these occur only as residual material in Phases IV to VII. The majority of the pottery found in medieval Phases III and IV is in Coarseware Fabrics 2–6 and the 'Established' Wares; Surrey Whitewares and Brill/Boarstall Wares. The Coarsewares are thought to be of early 13th- to 15th- or 16th-century date and late 13th- to early 14th-century date and the established wares mid 13th- to 15th-century. The imported Saintonge Ware is contemporary in Phase IV.

In Phase V the medieval Coarseware fabrics 2 and 6 could still be contemporary, but the small

¹⁶ N. Stebbing, J. Rhodes and M. Mellor, *The Clay Industries of Oxfordshire: Oxfordshire Potters* (Oxon. Museums Service Publication no. 13, 1980), 13–19.

¹⁷ J. Pearce, *Post-Medieval Pottery from London 1550–1700: Border Wares* (1992).

TABLE 2. THE POST-MEDIEVAL POTTERY ASSEMBLAGE BY FABRIC TYPE AND VESSEL FORM

Fabric	Sherd count	Weight	No. of Rims	EVE	% of total
GREW	90	2377	2 porringer	0.25	35%
			1 chamber pot	0.10	
			1 bowl	0.15	
			1 deep bowl	0.05	
			4 pancheons	0.55	
			1 flanged dish	0.10	
			1 cooking pot	0.30	
			1 chafing dish	0.25	
REW	15	413	1 shallow dish	0.75	6%
			1 flower pot	0.10	
R/A	3	52	—	—	1%
C/F	5	92	—	—	2%
WEST	1	15	—	—	1%
BORD	1	4	—	—	0.3%
BORDG	63	575	3 chamber pots	0.60	24%
			1 deep bowl	0.10	
			1 porringer	0.20	
BORDY	8	197	1 tripod pipkin	0.10	3%
			1 whistle	1.00	
			1 porringer	0.10	
TGW	6	158	1 flanged dish	0.10	2%
ENGs	5	104	—	—	2%
TPW	19	283	2 cups	0.25	7%
NOTS	1	53	—	—	0.3%
GREW-Slip decorated	4	71	1 chamber pot	0.15	2%
PEARL	3	23	—	—	1%
CREA	24	213	—	—	9%
BBAS	6	73	—	—	2%
ENPO	1	3	—	—	0.3%
STSL	3	191	1 press-moulded dish	0.05	1%
SWSG	1	12	—	—	0.3%
TOTAL	259	4909			

amounts of Fabrics 3, 4 and 5 are residual in Phases V, VI and VII. Fabric 6 only occurs in Phase V. The first occurrence of the Late Medieval Earthenwares, Fabrics 7–10, in Phases V and VI coincides with the first occurrence of imported Rhenish Stonewares of a late 15th- to late 16th-century date and late 15th-century Tudor Green Ware lobed cups. The majority of the glazed and unglazed Red Earthenwares and Surrey/Hampshire Border Ware of mid 16th- to mid 18th-century date also occurs in Phases V and VI.

In Phase VII some of the glazed and unglazed Red Earthenware chamber pots and flower pots and the Westerwald Stoneware chamber pot are contemporary with the bulk of the late 18th- to early 20th-century manufactured wares. The majority of these sherds are large undiagnostic pieces which are associated with the latest levelling activity on the site.

The majority of vessels in the medieval period (Phases III and IV) at Henley Bell Street are provided by local Coarseware industries or established industries in Surrey/Hampshire or Buckinghamshire. The Saintonge vessel is likely to have come via London, from where some London-type Ware jugs have also been brought but survive only as residual material in the Bell Street assemblage.

The early post-medieval assemblage (Phases V and VI) is dominated by local Red Earthenware vessels and regionally imported Surrey/Hampshire Borderware. The late post-medieval assemblage (Phase VII) reflects the wider market of factory produced wares available to the late 18th/19th-century market.

TABLE 3. THE TOTAL POTTERY ASSEMBLAGE BY PERIOD GROUPS AND PHASE (PERCENTAGE CALCULATED BY NUMBER OF SHERDS FROM EACH PHASE)

Fabric	Phase II	Phase III & IV	Phase V & VI	Phase VII
Late Saxon (Fabric 1)	3			
Medieval Local Coarsewares (Fabrics 2-6)		37	79 (residual in VI)	21 (residual)
Medieval Established Wares (LOND, SWW, BRILL)		139	77 (residual)	59 (residual)
Medieval European Imports (SAIN)		1		
Late Medieval Earthenwares (Fabrics 7-10)			9	6 (residual)
Early Post-Medieval Earthenwares (GREW, REW, TUDR, TUDB)			70	32
Early Post-Medieval European Imports (R/A, C/F, WEST)			3	5
Early Post-Medieval Established Wares (BORDG/Y, TGW)			48	30 (residual)
Late Post-Medieval (PEARL, CREA etc.)			2 (intrusive)	65
Total	3	177	288	218

STRUCK FLINT by PHILIPPA BRADLEY

A small assemblage of 45 pieces of struck flint and two pieces of burnt unworked flint was recovered during the excavations and watching brief. All the material was recovered from medieval or post-medieval contexts.

The flint is good quality and flakes well; it is generally mid- to dark-brown in colour although there are a few pieces of grey coloured flint. Cortex where present is generally thin buff to white in colour which is sometimes chalky. This material may have been available locally. The assemblage is summarised in Table 4 below:

TABLE 4. ASSEMBLAGE COMPOSITION

Flakes	Blades and blade-like flakes	Irregular waste	Cores and core fragments	Retouched forms	Burnt unworked
21	14	2	3	4	2

The retouched forms include a broken scraper, a retouched flake and two miscellaneous retouched pieces. The two miscellaneous retouched pieces may have been used for scraping and piercing. The cores include a heavily burnt blade core, a roughly bashed lump and a fragmentary core. Dating the assemblage is difficult because no distinctive retouched forms were retrieved. The relatively high proportion of blades and blade-like flakes, many of which are soft-hammer struck, and the blade core may suggest a Mesolithic or Neolithic date for the material. However, without further evidence the dating must remain tentative.

The material seems to be thinly spread throughout features on the site. Only pit 189 (fill 190),

contained any quantity of flintwork. This assemblage consisted of ten flakes, three blades, one blade-like flake, two core fragments and the miscellaneous retouched pieces. The pit is post-medieval in date.

THE DECORATED MEDIEVAL FLOOR TILES by NICK MITCHELL

Pieces of three separate decorated medieval floor tiles were found, all of them unkeyed and decorated in thin slip-design, and all likely to be of 14th-century date although from 18th-century or later contexts. None has been illustrated.

- 1 Complete tile, unkeyed. 120 mm. square, 26 mm. thick HENB 94 (266) sf 5 [Phase VII – 19th century or later]
The design is a variant of Haberly's CXVII design which comprises a large quarter circle and cusp with ten trefoil stems. It differs in that the shield in the corner of Haberly's design has mutated to/ from two small human heads face-to-face and is therefore a better match with Hohler's Buckinghamshire design P/157.¹⁸ It shows virtually no signs of wear, but has traces of mortar on its sides and base showing that it was once set in pavement. It was found upside down in a post-medieval context. The fabric is Oxford fabric IVb and therefore likely to originate from one of the Chiltern tile factories, possibly Penn.
- 2 Tile fragment, unkeyed. L 62 mm., 25 mm. thick. HENB 93 Trench A (1) [modern]
Oxford fabric IVb, too little of the design survives for it to be identified. The surviving edges appear to have been deliberately chamfered.
- 3 Tile fragment, unkeyed. L 64 mm., thickness 31 mm. HENB 94 Trench D (313) [Phase VII – 19th century or later]
This is similar to Haberly's design CCIV but an exact match cannot be found for the fabric; it is similar to Oxford fabric IVa.¹⁹

THE STONE MORTAR by IAN R. SCOTT (Fig. 7)

The mortar was recovered from a small pit 119 in the southern part of Trench B. The mortar was found inverted and its base is missing.

Mortar of Purbeck marble with its bottom missing. Externally, it has a straight angled outer face which is crudely faceted with up to 12 facets. There are two opposed ribs or handles, which have chamfered edges and which swell out and appear to have extended to the bottom of the vessel originally; both are broken. The facets and the ribs have clear diagonal tooling, although the outer edges of the ribs are polished by wear. There is a spout and an opposed lug. The rim is roughly hollowed. Internally the mortar shows marked signs of wear from use; this is more marked towards the bottom. There is a slight trace of the angle to the bottom of the mortar on the inside. Width 306 mm., internal diameter 250 mm., height 133 mm.

This is a medieval form which appears to be current during the 13th and 14th centuries.²⁰ Pit 119 is the earliest of a series of intercutting shallow features, which are not closely dated and lie adjacent to successive tile-built hearths set in pit 073. Most of the pits are probably post-medieval in date (Phase V or VI), but pit 119 may be medieval (Phase III or IV).

¹⁸ L. Haberly, *Medieval English Pavingtiles* (1937), 243; C. Hohler, 'Mediaeval Pavingtiles in Buckinghamshire', *Records of Bucks.* 14 (1942), 40.

¹⁹ Haberly, op. cit. note 18, 170.

²⁰ M. Biddle, *Object and Economy in Medieval Winchester*, vol. ii (1990), 890–908; G.C. Dunning, 'Stone Mortars', in J.G. Hurst, 'The Kitchen Area of Northolt Manor', *Medieval Archaeology*, v (1961), 283.

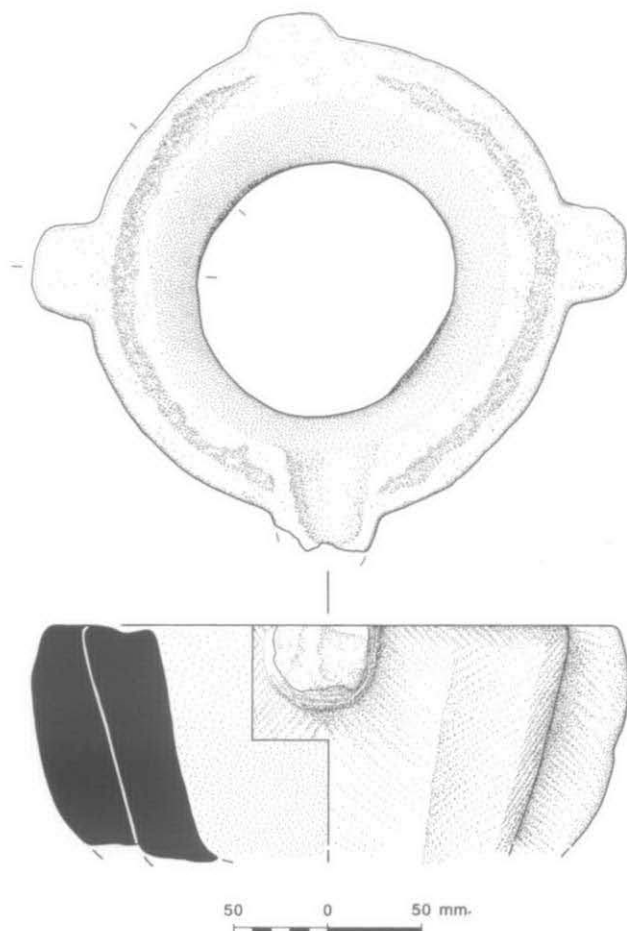


Fig. 7. Stone mortar.

DISCUSSION

Roman

Undoubtedly, one of the more significant finds from the excavations was the Romano-British building revealed in Trench B. Unfortunately, because of the limited evidence revealed and the lack of associated features or finds, it is not possible to do more than suggest the likely form of the building and its function. The footings suggest a stone-built or half-timbered structure and their size would point to the possibility that the building had two storeys.

If the Fairmile had indeed been a Roman road leading to a river crossing, this would provide a context for the Bell Street building. The building lies approximately 250 m. from

the suggested river crossing near Phyllis Court, and could be seen as part of a settlement adjacent to the river crossing rather than part of an isolated farmstead.

Medieval

It is likely that the basic street layout of the historic centre of Henley was established by the late 13th century and that the Market Place marked the western limit of the settlement. The archaeological evidence recovered in the excavations, although limited and a little ambiguous, suggests that Bell Street was not fully built up until much later.

From Trench B, there was evidence (cut 117, layers 99=136, 97=100, 115=116, 139=142, 144, and 145=82) for the metalling of Bell Street. The layers investigated were undated, but it is quite possible that the earliest layers are medieval. There is a marked lack of medieval, or later, pottery from the trench, reflecting the lack of substantial cut features. No rubbish pits were found in this trench, but then it is to be expected that the evidence for extensive pit digging would be confined mainly to backland areas away from the street. There were four properties (Fig. 3, contexts 105, 111 and 073) facing the street, but there is little evidence to suggest that they were medieval rather than post-medieval in date. It is probable that this part of the site was not occupied until a comparatively late date.

Trench D, on the other hand, did provide archaeological evidence for one, possibly two, medieval structures in Phase III. A building with stone footings and gravel floors (Fig. 4, contexts 425=428) was located about 15 m. back from the present street frontage. The structure was not directly dated. Contemporary with this was a second structure only identified from a fragment of packed chalk (413), which may have been a floor, and an associated linear feature (414), which were found close to the present street frontage. Possibly associated with these structures were pits containing pottery of mid 13th- to early 15th-century date and early 13th- to mid 14th-century date and some mid 14th- to late 15th-century or early 16th-century date. It is unclear whether Bell Street existed when either structure was built since neither can be closely dated and evidence for the metalling of Bell Street is absent from this trench.

A further medieval structure (435/437 & 435) (Phase IV) was sited 5 m. back from the Bell Street frontage. Pits assigned to Phase IV contained pottery of a similar date range (mid 13th- to late 15th- or early 16th-century) to that from Phase III pits. This emphasises the problems of dating these Phases closely.

Trenches A and B in the backland areas produced evidence only of pits and boundaries until very late in the post-medieval period. The evidence from the backlands suggests that pit digging was beginning to take place by the mid to late 13th century. Nonetheless, the pits found in trenches A and C were predominantly post-medieval in date, although containing residual medieval pottery. There was only a small number of medieval pits. This lends support to the evidence from the street frontage trenches which suggests that urban tenements were not established until quite late on this part of Bell Street.

Post-medieval

It is probable that the foundations (105, 111 and 073) found in Trench B represent two distinct properties, with 105 and 111 forming respectively the north and south sides of the northern property, which was separated by a narrow alley from the property to the south, the north side of which was represented by 073. There is little artefactual evidence, and almost no features or deposits which can be associated with either 105 or 103. There were two successive hearths (101 & 081) in a pit 075, with a series of shallow pits (193, 199, 203, 204, 213, 124,

119, 220, 222) nearby, and a well (076). These all lay in the property to the south of Trench B marked by trench 073. The basic layout of properties identified in the excavation of Trench B is clear on the 1879 OS map and survived until the building of the new cinema in 1937, when the shops on the street frontage were demolished.

In Trench D the picture was less clear. The site was levelled after Phase IV and two structures (332/333 and 280/405/394/406) were built (Phase V). The levelling appears to be early 17th-century at the earliest. These structures were subsequently demolished and the site metalled over sometime in the 18th century. The well 316 found in Trench D may have been contemporary with the metalling. It seems certain that this part of the Bell Street frontage was not fully occupied until at least the 18th century.

REGAL CINEMA - NOTES ON THE BUILDING SURVEY by JULIAN MUNBY (Figs. 8 & 9)

The Oxford Archaeological Unit carried out a programme of building survey to record the extant structure and layout of the Regal Cinema in advance of demolition. Measured survey drawings comprising plan, cross-section and street elevation were produced at a scale of 1 : 50 and are reproduced here (Figs. 8-9). A full photographic survey of the building and fittings along with documentary research into the building history was undertaken by Ruth Gibson for the Vernacular Buildings Research Section of the Henley-on-Thames Archaeological and Historical Group.

Outline History

The Regal Cinema at Nos. 33 & 35 Bell Street was built in 1936-7 by L.T. Hunt for the Consolidated Cinematographic Company. This continued an older tradition since a picture house had been operating in the roller skating rink behind the shop premises of Nos. 33 & 35 since c. 1911, and occurs in directories from 1915 as the Henley Picture Palace. It originated by the enterprise of Fred Ellis, a cycle agent, and its origin is marked by his neighbour at No. 37 taking out an injunction in 1911 for nuisance caused by the engine for the exhibition of cinematographic pictures. The shops at the front were in a two-storey building with five sash windows on the first floor, and three dormers, perhaps of the 18th century if not older; the entry to the 'Palace' was made in the centre, between the two shops. The skating rink and Picture Palace was a plain brick building of the early 20th century, and as late as 1931 was re-seated with tip-up seats in red plush upholstery. The Palace was sold in 1932 and plans for demolition and rebuilding were approved in 1936. The site was cleared and the new building constructed set back from the street, and at the rear extending sideways behind nos. 37-39 Bell Street; it was sold to Regal Cinemas Ltd. in 1937, bought by Odeon in 1939 and sold to the private Henley Picture House Company in 1959, finally closing in 1986.

The Cinema had a narrow (8 metre) front with steps leading up to the doors, and three windows above flanked by pilasters, all in brick with stone cappings. The narrow entrance and foyer led through to the auditorium. Above the foyer was the bar (previously cinema restaurant) on the first floor, and manager's flat on the second floor. Externally the auditorium was a large plain brick shed, with shallow brick pilasters in the side walls, and an asbestos roof. Internally, the floor sloped towards the stage, and there was a circle (the total seating capacity was 1,000). There was an orchestra pit at the front of the stage, and until 1993 a Compton Organ. The decoration of the interior was modest, with a more elaborate stage surround, and geometric decorated panels on the canted flanking walls above the exit doors.

Henley cinema: front elevation

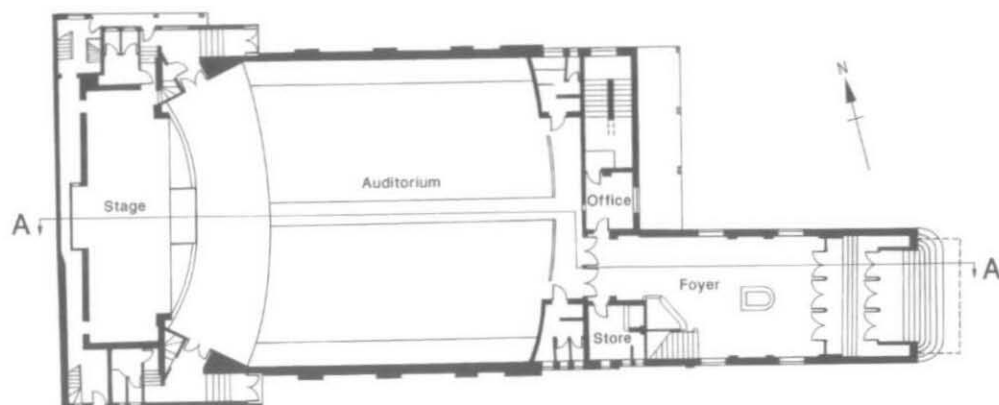


Fig. 8. Front elevation of the Regal Cinema.

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Henley cinema: ground floor plan



composite cross-section A-A

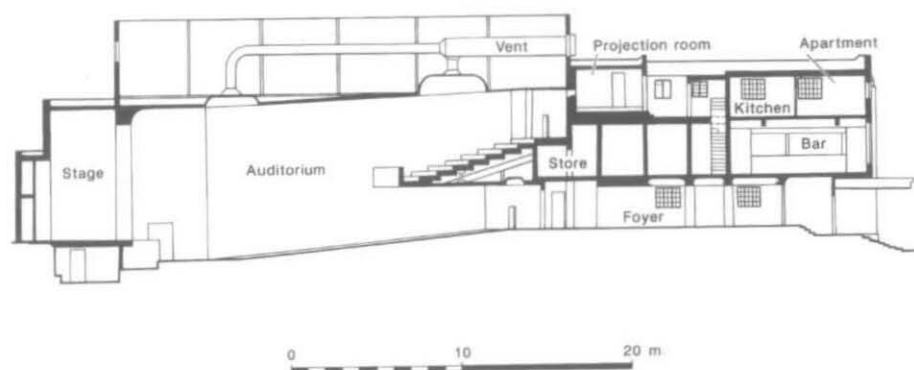


Fig. 9. Plan and section of the Regal Cinema.

of the Oxford Archaeological Unit. Historical research on the Regal Cinema was undertaken by Ruth Gibson of the Henley-on-Thames Archaeological and Historical Group. Ian Scott of the Oxford Archaeological Unit edited the text for publication. The archive will be deposited with the Oxfordshire County Museum Service (Accession Number OXCMS 93.67).