

The Excavation of a Medieval Cottage and Associated Agricultural Features at Manor Farm, Old Grimsbury, Banbury

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SUMMARY

Excavations at Manor Farm, Old Grimsbury, Banbury revealed a sequence of occupation and activity dating from the 12th century onwards, preceded by slight evidence of late Neolithic occupation. The medieval activity was initially represented by field ditches, possible trackway gullies and postholes associated with occupation, followed by a period in the second half of the 13th century when the site appeared to be unoccupied and under cultivation. Redevelopment of the site began in the late 13th century with a cottage and associated agricultural building and yard laid out on a raised platform. By the early 15th century the platform was in use as an agricultural yard, and the cottage had been abandoned, if not yet demolished. Limited early post-medieval activity may be associated with a forerunner of the extant 17th-century Manor Farm, situated to the east of the site.

INTRODUCTION

The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) carried out an area excavation at Manor Farm, Old Grimsbury, Banbury (SP 4644 4165) in August 1998, in advance of development of the area. The work was carried out on behalf of McLean Homes South Midlands Ltd. The recording action was requested by the County Archaeologist, in accordance with the requirements of Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (PPG16), as significant archaeological deposits had been identified during a prior archaeological survey and field evaluation of the development area.¹ A summary of the evaluation results precedes the main site description, below.

Geology and Topography (Fig. 1)

Old Grimsbury lies on the E. bank of the floodplain of the river Cherwell, over poorly drained alluvial clays. Topographically the site was, in 1998, situated in a surviving pocket of pastureland, called 'Square Close' in the 1852 Banbury Tithe Award, immediately to the W. of Manor Farm, and approximately 250 m. SE. of Grimsbury House.

¹ 'Banbury Old Grimsbury (Manor Farm)' (OAU unpubl. evaluation rep. 1993).

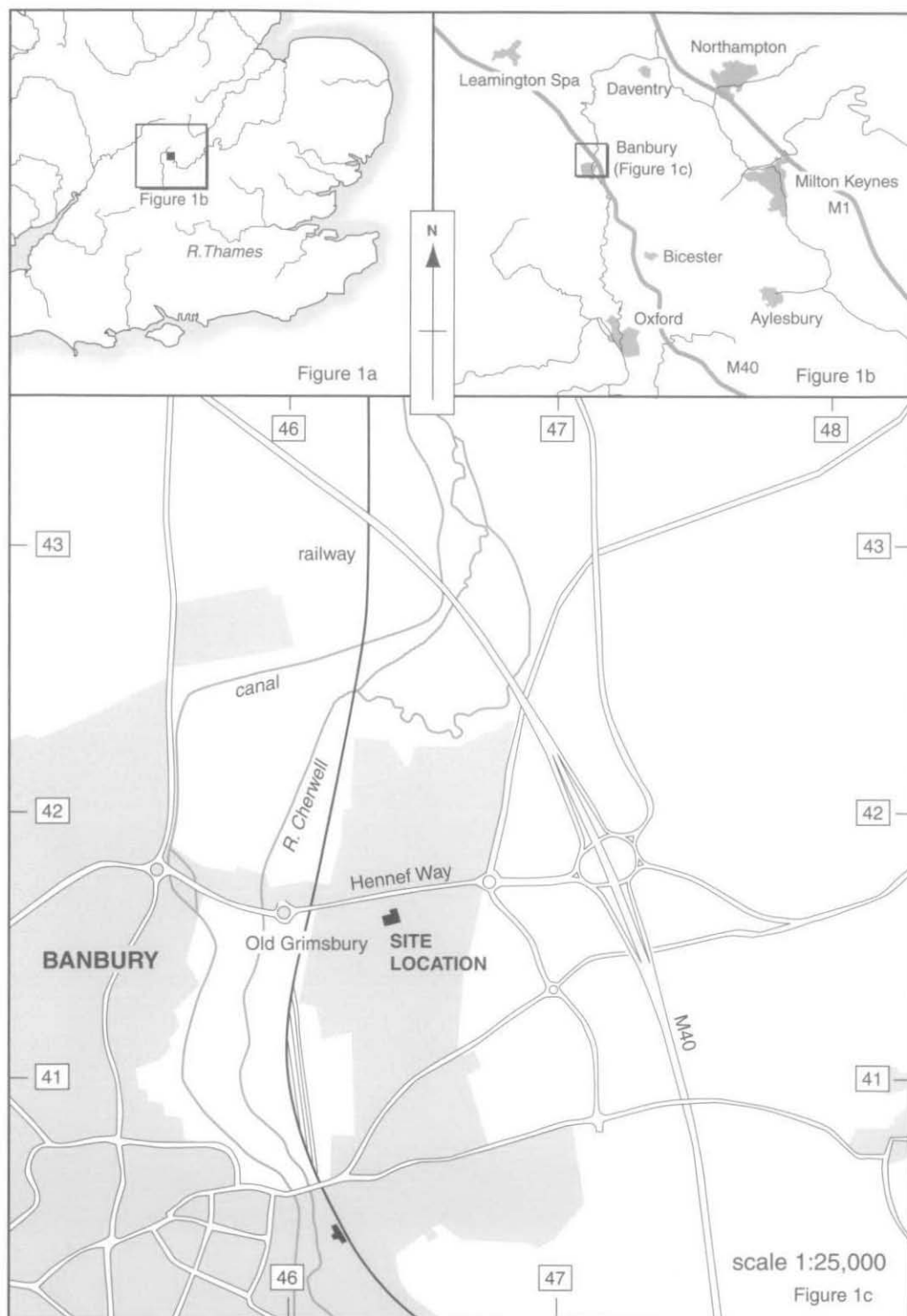


Fig. 1. Manor Farm, Old Grimsbury: site location.

Historical and archaeological background

'Grimsbury' is a Saxon placename, as is 'Banbury'. Indeed, it has been suggested that 'Grimsbury' contains a pseudonym of the Nordic god Woden, and therefore could have been an earlier settlement than Banbury.² In any event no clear archaeological evidence has yet been found to confirm an established pagan Saxon settlement in either place. The first mention of Grimsbury ('Grimberie') occurs in Domesday.³ The manor was assessed at six ploughlands, 30 acres of meadow and a mill. From the 13th century until the Dissolution in 1538, it was jointly held by Bicester Priory and members of the Boteler family. It should be noted, however, that none of the documentary evidence sheds light on the layout of the lands of the manor, and therefore it cannot be confirmed that the area of the present archaeological investigation was part of the manor.

The great expansion in sheep farming in the later medieval period led to the pastureland of Grimsbury supporting very large flocks,⁴ and also becoming a focus for inclosures. Grimsbury was one of the first places where a case was brought under the Act of 1536 which sought to return inclosed pastureland to the plough.⁵ The post-medieval history of Grimsbury shows its unremarkable evolution and expansion southwards into a suburb of Banbury, highlighted only by a period in the second half of the 18th century when it was the centre of the short-lived Banbury cheese-making industry.⁶ The suburb's historic core, now distinguished as Old Grimsbury, forms the northern edge of the suburb, confined by the Banbury Link Road, Hennef Way.

Summary of the 1993 evaluation results (Fig. 2)

The evaluation trenches were sited to cover the development area between Hennef Way to the N. and Manor Road to the S., extending across the surviving ridge and furrow and other earthworks to the W. of Manor Farm, and the open area to the E. of Manor Farm (not shown on Fig. 2). The evaluation established that the focus of archaeological activity lay in the W. part of the development area, confirming the findings of a preparatory geophysical survey of the area conducted by Bartlett-Clark Consultancy.⁷ Early activity appeared to be concentrated in the N. half of a low earthwork platform, possibly defined on the N. and E. sides by a hollow way running N. from the line of Manor Road. No traces of buildings were found, although thin spreads of stone rubble over parts of the platform were thought to be possible stone floors of timber buildings. This activity seemed to date to the 13th-14th century, although the presence of earlier pottery, and the implication of earlier activity or occupation, was noted. Limited late medieval occupation appeared to have ended, at least in the vicinity of the platform, by the 17th century.

Excavation methodology (Fig. 2)

Based upon the results of the evaluation, an area of approximately 1600 sq. m., which included the putative building platform, was subjected to an area excavation (Area A). The overburden of modern turf/topsoil/ploughsoil was removed by a mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless bucket, down to the first significant archaeological horizon. The resulting surface was cleaned by hand, and areas and features excavated as required to understand the stratigraphic, chronological and structural development and character of the site.

² *V.C.H. Oxon.* x, 6.

³ *V.C.H. Northants.* i, 348, 368.

⁴ *V.C.H. Oxon.* x, 57.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.* 63.

⁷ OAU, *op. cit.* note 1, Appendix 3.

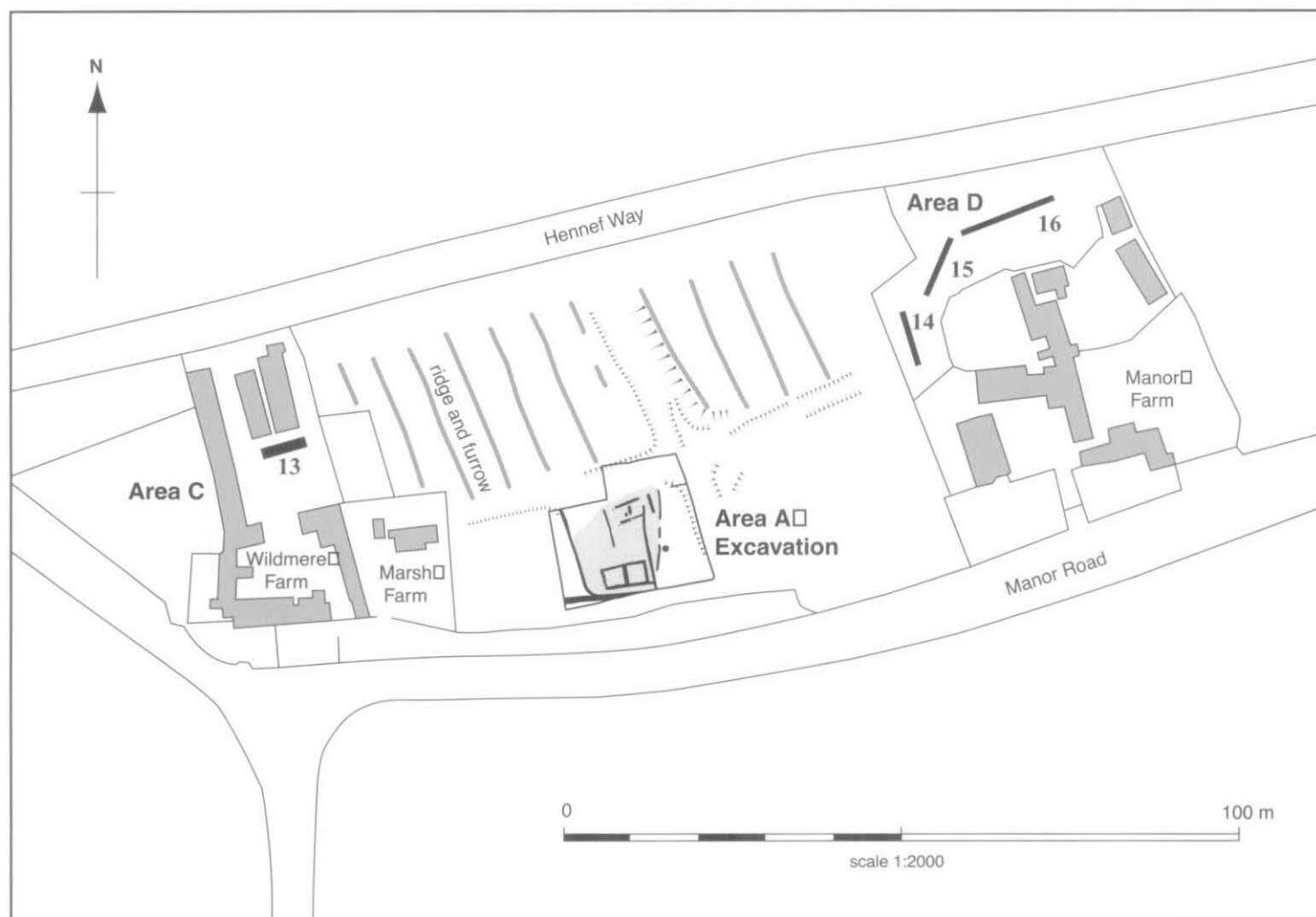


Fig. 2. Manor Farm, Old Grimsbury: trench locations.

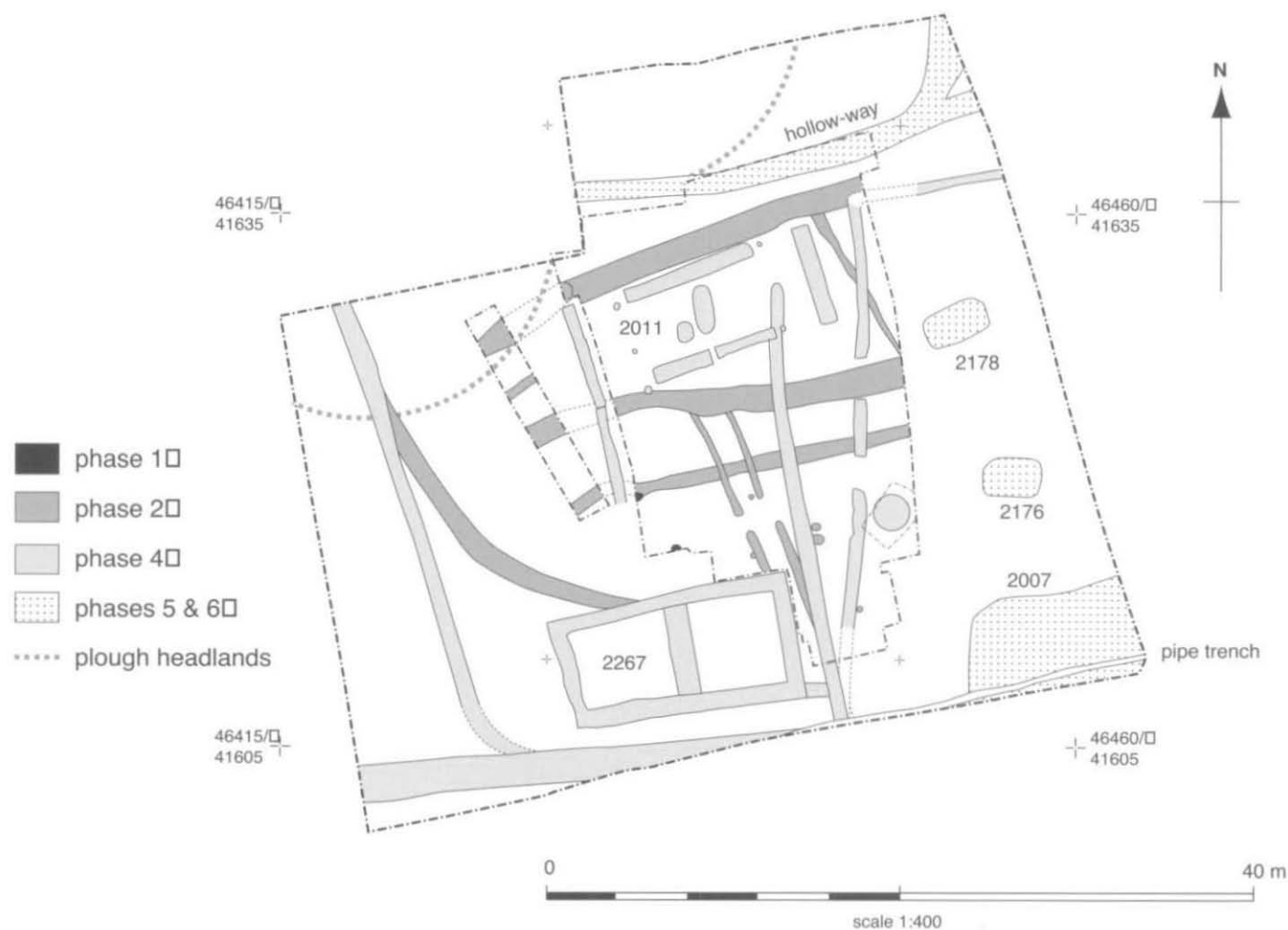


Fig. 3. Manor Farm, Old Grimsbury: Area A, composite plan of features of all phases.

When it was clear that the platform sealed earlier archaeological deposits of significance, further mechanical stripping of parts of the platform took place after consultation with the County Archaeological Officer. The platform material and the underlying relict cultivation soil was removed to reveal negative features cut into the subsoil. These were manually cleaned and selectively excavated.

Four further evaluation trenches (Nos. 13-16) were machine-excavated, one immediately N. of Wildmere Farm (Area C) to the NW. of the area excavation, and three around the N. and W. of Manor Farm (Area D) to the NE. of the area excavation. These were situated to refine the assumed limits of the occupied area, as suggested by the 1993 evaluation, and to test the possibility of links to a focus of occupation to the NW., identified during earlier fieldwork in the vicinity.⁸

All excavation and recording was undertaken in accordance with standard OAU practice.⁹

The Phasing (Fig. 3)

The chronological phasing of the archaeological deposits is set out below. It was based upon a combination of the recorded stratigraphy and dating of the finds, principally the pottery.

Phase 1: Neolithic

Phase 2: 12th century to mid 13th century

Phase 3: mid to late 13th century

Phase 4: late 13th century to mid/late 14th

Phase 5: mid/late 14th century to 17th century

Phase 6: 17th century to modern

THE RESULTS

Reliability of the results

The absence of significant modern disturbance on the site meant that the medieval and post-medieval deposits were relatively undisturbed. However, the nature of the alluvial clay soils of the area meant that definition of cut features was invariably difficult, a problem which was also encountered in the 1993 evaluation.¹⁰ Furthermore, the modest level of medieval activity, generating only insubstantial accumulations of deposits, did not aid clear definition of the functional areas of the platform. Thus planar excavation, particularly on the southern part of the platform, was only partially successful, and had to be augmented by investigatory slots dug through the deposits, in an attempt to define the building footprints and other features. Nevertheless, this is not felt to have seriously compromised the overall understanding of the site's development.

PHASE I (Fig. 4)

Two small sub-circular pits were revealed during the second phase of machining. Pit 2268 was partially revealed against the S. baulk of the main area. It was bowl shaped in profile, 0.60 m. in diameter, and 0.20 m. deep. Its fill (2269) was a light grey silty clay, with a high percentage of charcoal, and inclusions of burnt stone, bone and undiagnostic flint fragments, and Neolithic pottery. Pit 2193 was partially revealed in the W. baulk, and was of similar dimensions and profile to pit 2268. Its fill (2194) was similar to 2269, and also contained inclusions of flint, burnt stone and Neolithic pottery (see Barclay below for a detailed analysis of the pottery).

A W.-E. orientated shallow ditch (2270), situated immediately N. of pit 2193, also produced small quantities of Neolithic pottery. In the baulk section the stratigraphic relationship between the ditch and the pit was unclear, due to the similarity of the fills. However, other characteristics of the ditch suggest that it is in fact contemporary with the Phase 2 activity, and that the Neolithic pottery within its fills was residual.

⁸ T.G. Allen, 'Archaeological Discoveries on the Banbury East-West Link Road', *Oxonienia*, liv (1989), 25-44.

⁹ D. Wilkinson (ed.), 'OAU Field Manual' (OAU, 1992).

¹⁰ OAU, op.cit. note 1.

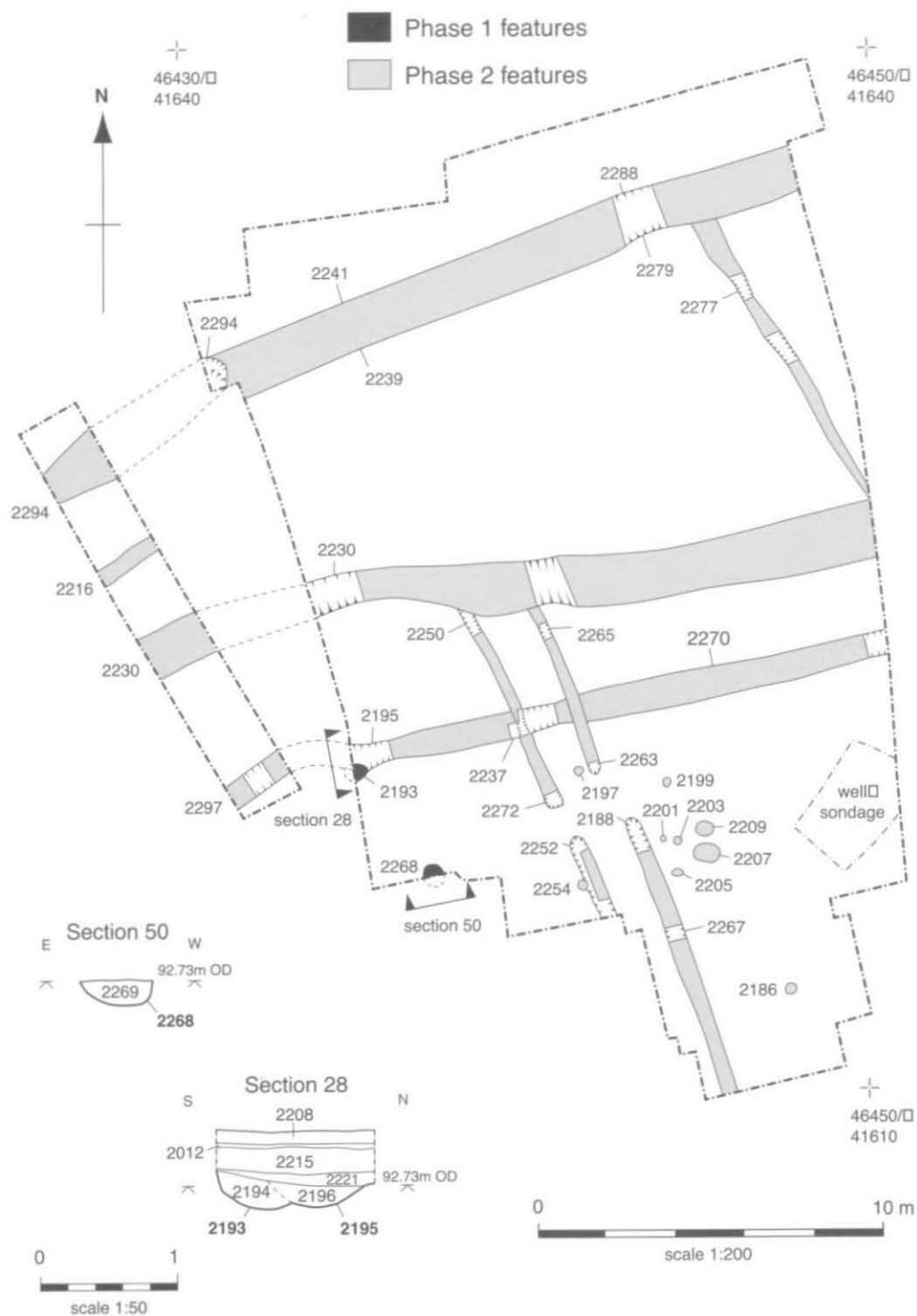


Fig. 4. Manor Farm, Old Grimsbury: Area A, plan of Neolithic (phase 1) and 12th- to 13th-century (phase 2) features.

PHASE 2 (Fig. 4)

Two areas totalling approximately 380 sq. m. were mechanically stripped of the remains of the Phase 4 platform material and the underlying relict cultivation soil. An alignment of linear features, pits and postholes was revealed, cut into the natural subsoil horizon (2003). With the exception of the four parallel gullies (see below) the feature fills were a fairly homogeneous mid-dark greyish brown silty clay with occasional slight charcoal flecking.

The southernmost ditch (2270, also recorded as 2195) was orientated WSW-ENE., and was exposed for a length of 16 m. Its average width was 0.90 m. and the depth varied from 0.10 m. to 0.16 m. Where sample sections were excavated there was a noticeable concentration of small pieces of stone in the fill (2271) against the N. side of the cut, suggesting that there may originally have been a bank along the N. side of the ditch. A short length (2297) of what was almost certainly the same ditch was revealed in the W. trench, curving slightly to the SW.

Ditch 2230 was situated to the N. of 2270 and was similarly aligned. Its average dimensions were 1.2 m. wide x 0.70 m. deep, and its profile was steep-sided and flat bottomed. The same ditch was located in the W. trench, and at this point was turning slightly to the SW. Eleven sherds of 12th- to 13th-century pottery were recovered from the fill (2231) of the excavated part of the ditch.

A further large ditch (2279) was revealed approximately 6 m. to the N. of 2230 and was aligned more markedly towards the SW. The original cut of the ditch (2279) was up to 0.85 m. wide and 0.45 m. deep. A late recut (2288) of the same ditch was of similar width but slightly shallower. Pottery of 12th-century date was recovered from the fill (2280) of the original ditch, and late 13th-century pottery from the fill (2289) of the later cut. Again the ditch was identified in the W. trench (2294), also turning to the SW.

Two pairs of parallel gullies, 2250 and 2265, and 2188 and 2252, were identified extending SE. from ditch 2230. There was a gap of between 1.0 m. and 1.5 m. between the northern pair and the southern pair. The SE. gully (2188) was seen to extend beyond the S. baulk. The profiles of the individual gullies were fairly consistent, averaging 0.28 m. wide and 0.18 m. deep, with steep sides and a rounded base. The gully fills (2251, 2266, 2229 and 2253 respectively) were distinctly more friable and silty in character than those of the other linear features. Pottery of 12th-century date was recovered from three of the four gullies, predominantly from the gully termini.

A cluster of six discrete postholes and stakeholes were identified immediately east of the SE. gully terminus 2188. Their diameters ranged from 0.20 m. to 0.40 m., and their depths were of the order of 0.06 m. to 0.09 m., suggesting a fairly severe amount of truncation by later activity. Three other small postholes were identified in the area: posthole 2186 approximately 4.0 m. to the S., posthole 2197 between the termini of the two N. gullies, and posthole 2254 cut into the W. edge of gully 2252. By their location these features are likely to be contemporary with the gullies, a contention that is supported by 12th- and 13th-century pottery recovered from their fills.

One other gully (2277), similarly orientated to those described above, was identified in the NE. corner of the main trench. This extended SE. from ditch 2279 for a distance of approximately 6.0 m. The fill was similar to the other gullies, and although no dating evidence was recovered from the excavated fill, it is likely to be a contemporary and associated feature.

PHASE 3 (Not illustrated)

A uniform cultivation soil layer up to 0.15 m. deep (2215, also recorded as 2041) sealed all Phase 2 features. It was identified in 12 separate contexts under all areas of the Phase 4 platform where the layer was protected against disturbance by post-medieval and modern cultivation. Plough furrows relating to the ridge and furrow were seen in the NW. corner of the excavated area. Pottery recovered from the cultivation soil was mainly of late 13th- and 14th-century date; a number of nails and mundane iron objects were also found, together with a few fragments of animal bone.

*PHASE 4 (Figs. 5-9)**The Platform (Figs. 5, 6, 8 and 9)*

The beginning of Phase 4 is defined by the construction of the platform. This comprised a dumped layer of mid/light brown sandy clay and small ironstone rubble laid directly over the Phase 3 cultivation soil. It was most clearly identified in the area between buildings 2011 and 2267 as contexts 2052, 2074 and 2124, and appeared to be of a fairly uniform depth of between 0.15 and 0.20 m. The E. side of the platform was initially defined by a N.-S. ditch (2039), measuring 0.52 m. wide x 0.17 m. deep. This extended N. from the S. baulk, past the extension to the E. wall of building 2267, and N. to a terminus within the footprint of building 2011. The building of 2011 necessitated moving the boundary to the E., to the line of the later wall (2032), although there was no evidence of the deposition of further platform material in the added area.

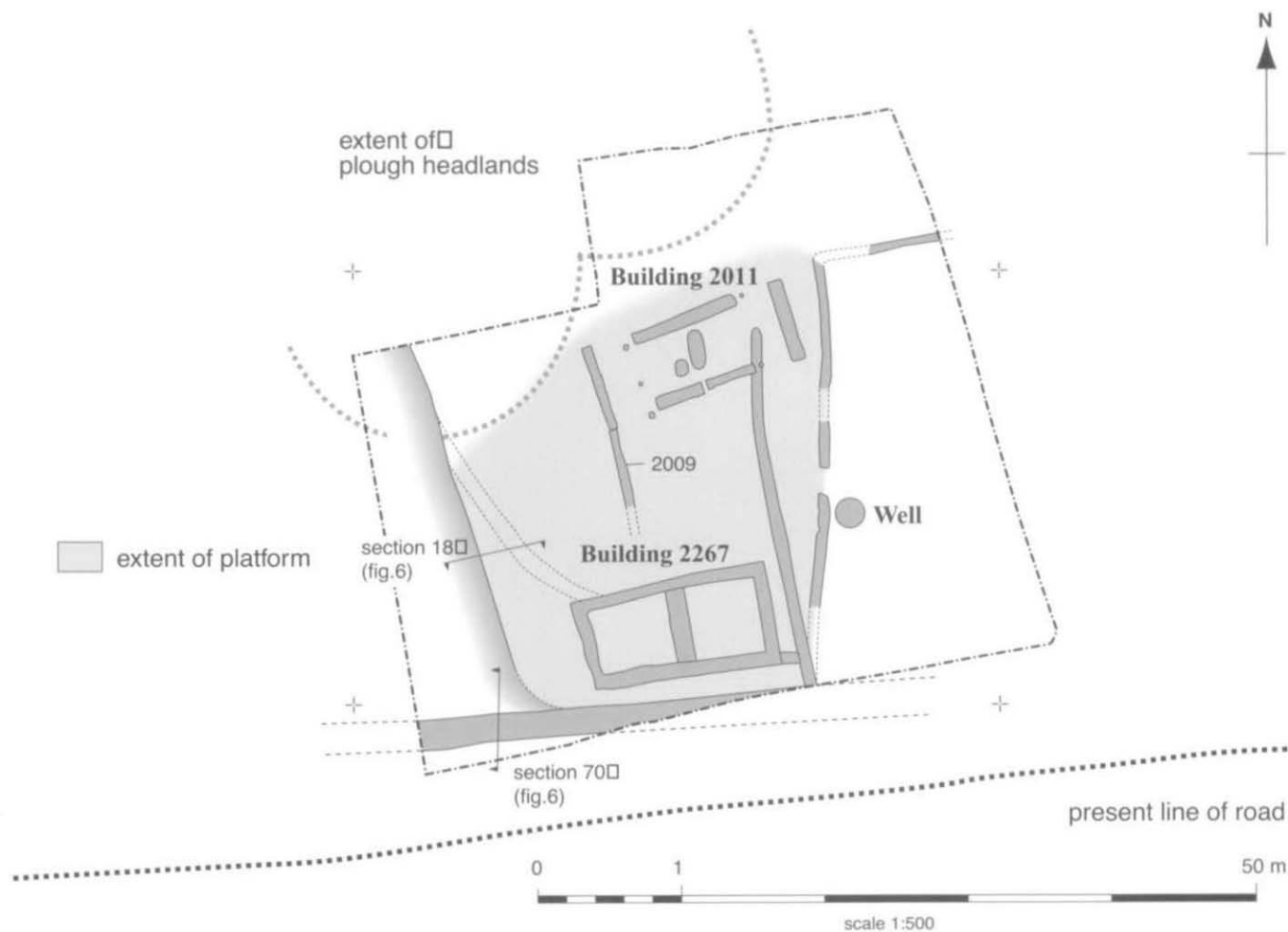


Fig. 5. Manor Farm, Old Grimsbury: Area A, plan of medieval building platform (phase 4).

Wall 2032 survived as a partially disturbed footing of unmortared and unworked ironstone blocks and rubble. It extended S. from a point near the NE. corner of building 2011, to a point approximately 4.0 m. from the S. edge of the excavation. The width of the footing averaged 0.75 m. One probable gateway, approximately 1.8 m. wide, was evident just N. of a stone-lined well (see below). A further break in the wall's continuity was evident a few metres to the N., but this was considered to be the result of localised truncation. Wall 2032 returned sharply to the E. just N. of building 2011, and continued to the E. edge of the excavation. The E. return survived only as a very disturbed line of scattered rubble and the evidence suggests that it was demolished in Phase 5, leaving the N.-S. stretch surviving until much later.

The W. side of the platform was defined less clearly. A sequence of ditch cuts (2100, 2047, 2036, 2094 and 2049) was identified extending from the NW. corner of the excavated area, towards the W. side of building 2267 (Fig. 6 Section 18). Pottery from the fills was almost exclusively late 13th-century in date. Part of one of the ditches may have extended under the N. wall of building 2267, recorded as cut 2234. This could be interpreted as evidence that the W. side of the platform was essentially determined by earlier field boundaries, and required relatively minor reorientation to accommodate the new platform and associated buildings.

Further evidence that the platform was superimposed upon an earlier land division was suggested by the sequence of ditches along the S. side of building 2267. At the E. end of the building a shallow sloping ditch cut 2157 was backfilled (2156) and partially overlain by the S. wall of building 2267; a deeper ditch (2159) was dug in its place (see Fig. 8 Section 16).

Evidence of an early, shallow sloping ditch was also seen in the SW. corner of the site, in a section cut through a complex sequence of related contexts (Fig. 6 Section 70). The early cuts (2325 and 2323) are truncated by a large double ditch (2310), with a gently sloping N. side and more steeply sloping S. side. Between the two parts of the ditch was a disturbed stone revetment (2303), faced on the S. side, comprising roughly worked ironstone blocks, among which was a reused architectural fragment (WS 3, see below). The general character of the ditch fill (2311) was indistinguishable between the two parts of the ditch, being a grey brown silty clay, but it was noted that the S. part contained relatively more ironstone pieces, and more domestic refuse, in the form of pottery and bone.

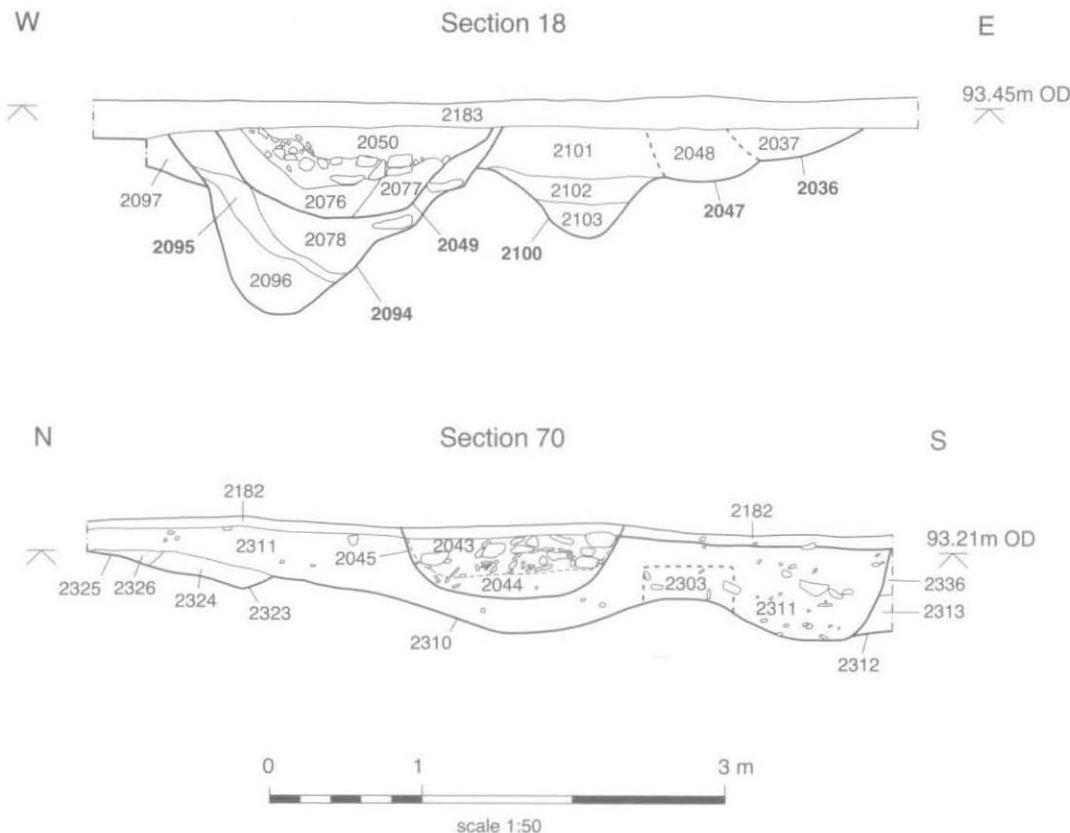


Fig. 6. Manor Farm, Old Grimsbury: Area A, sections 18 and 70.

A short length of N.-S. orientated stone footing (2009) was revealed 1.4 m. S. of the W. end of building 2011. It was approximately 3 m. long and 0.70 m. wide, although it appeared to have been truncated by later activity at its S. end. It appears likely that it originally linked the W. end of building 2011 with the N. wall of building 2267.

The stone-lined well

A stone-lined well (2369) was revealed approximately 1.5 m. E. of wall 2032 (Fig. 5). As the top 1.8 m. of the stone had been robbed out in Phase 5 (see below), the feature was initially thought to be a post-medieval clay pit backfilled with rubbish, and therefore not accorded a high priority in the excavation programme. At the end of the second phase of machine excavation, the rest of the post-medieval material was removed by machine, eventually revealing the circular ironstone shaft *in situ*. This was mechanically excavated to a depth of over 4.0 m., at which point the shaft was still continuing down. Safety considerations and the rapid inflow of groundwater precluded any close examination of the fabric, but photographs were taken during the process, and some finds were recovered from the excavated fill of the surviving well-shaft including 14th-century pottery and a fragment of sawn timber plank with a corroded nail attached.

Other than the well, the excavated area E. of the platform was notable for the absence of finds contemporary with the Phase 4 platform activity.

The Buildings

Building 2267 (Figs. 7 and 8)

Building 2267 was rectangular, orientated W.-E., and measured approximately 13 m. long x 6.6 m. wide externally, with one central N.-S. dividing wall. The walls were defined in plan by very shallow and indistinct robber trenches and occasional stretches of surviving stone footings. The robber trenches varied in width from 0.70 m. to 1.0 m. and they were between 0.05 and 0.15 m. deep. The average width of the surviving stone footings varied from 0.70 m. to 0.90 m. There was no clear evidence that foundation trenches of any substance had been dug for the footings.

The N. wall was defined by an indistinct robber trench (2152) filled with a medium brown sandy clay, with small fragments of ironstone and flecks of charcoal and burnt clay (2153). Near the W. end it was seen in section to overlie an earlier ditch (here recorded as 2334). Towards the centre of the N. wall was a post-setting (2142) defined by stone slabs set on edge and incorporated within a surviving patch of stone footing. This could be construed as part of the doorway (see below).

The E. end of robber trench 2152 abutted the N. part of the E. wall. This was represented by a surviving stone footing (2227), comprising a 2.4 m.-long x 0.90 m.-wide stretch of medium/small unworked ironstone slabs rudimentarily faced on the W. and E. sides, surviving in one or two courses to a maximum depth of 0.30 m. The rest of the E. wall was defined by robber trench 2224.

This in turn encroached upon a surviving footing (2013) forming the E. end of the S. wall; it was notable that footing 2013 extended approximately 1.3 m. E. of the E. wall of the building, running to the edge of the N.-S. ditch (2039). Footing 2013 was of similar character to 2227, although slightly narrower at around 0.80 m. in width. Most of the rest of the S. wall was represented by the robber trench 2342, although a short stretch of stone footing (2320), 0.75 m. wide, was identified near the W. end.

The W. wall was defined by robber trench 2315, with the same mid-brown sandy clay fill as the other robber trenches.

Exterior features

A 'U' shaped gully (2357), with revetting slabs of limestone (2356) set against its W. side, was identified immediately W. of the W. wall. The grey/brown silty clay fill of the gully (2355) was partly truncated by the robbing (2314) of the wall (see Fig. 8 Section 78).

Two small stone-lined postholes (2144) and (2146) were located immediately N. of the N. wall, to the W. of a small area of compacted cobbling (2333).

Interior features

The N.-S. partition wall was defined by a very shallow robber trench (2348) of similar width to the external walls, and with a similar fill (2352). There was no evidence of a uniform floor surface, but local areas of both E. and W. cells had accumulations of thin layers of material, reflecting use and wear patterns.

The E. cell had a spread of accumulated burnt clay (2301) set against the partition wall. The E. end of the cell was mostly covered by a mix of sandy clay and ironstone rubble (2125). A small area of cobbles, pitched stones and two large slabs close to the N. wall (2370) may represent a threshold, and although no clear

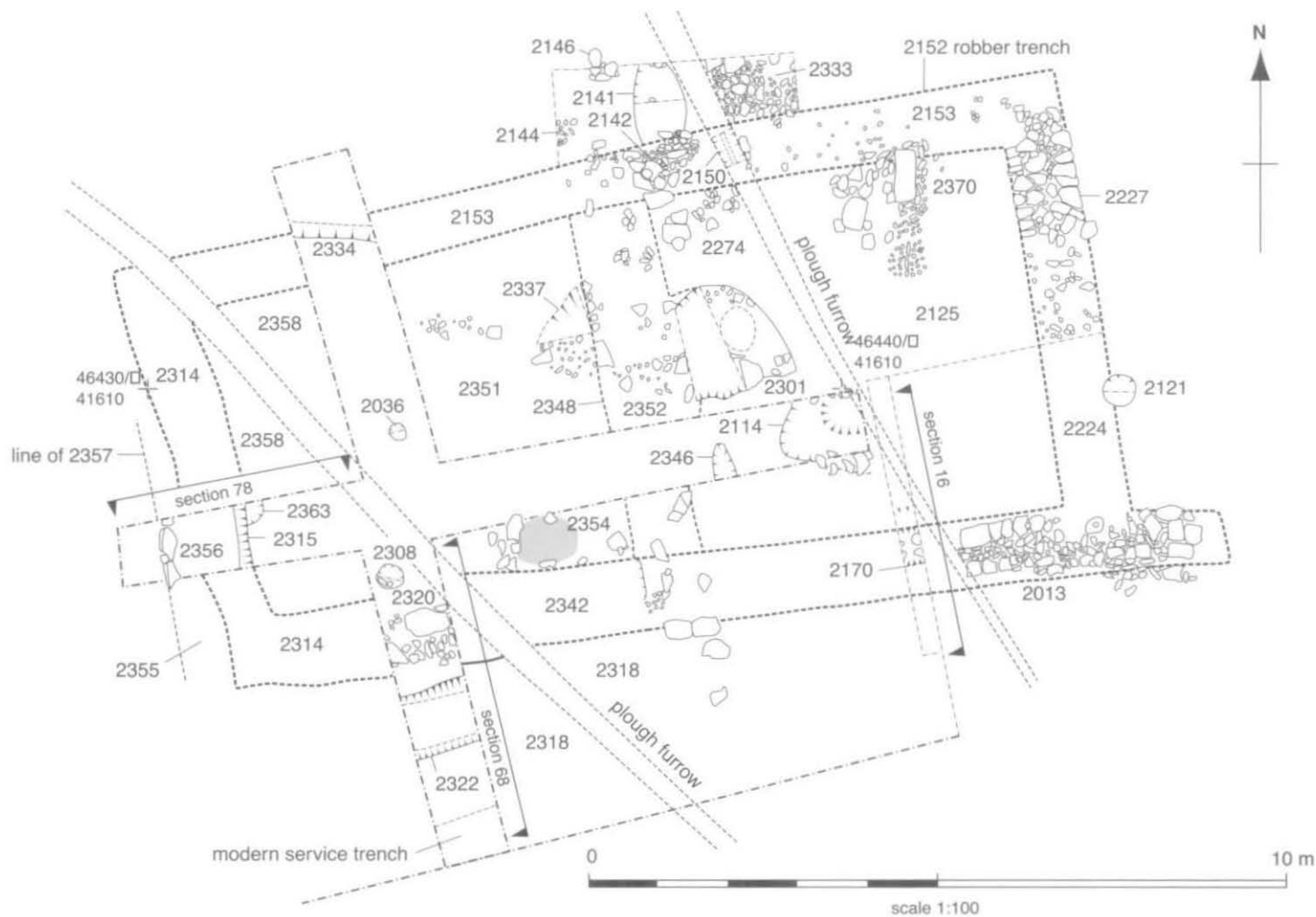


Fig. 7. Manor Farm, Old Grimsbury: Area A, detailed plan of medieval building 2267.

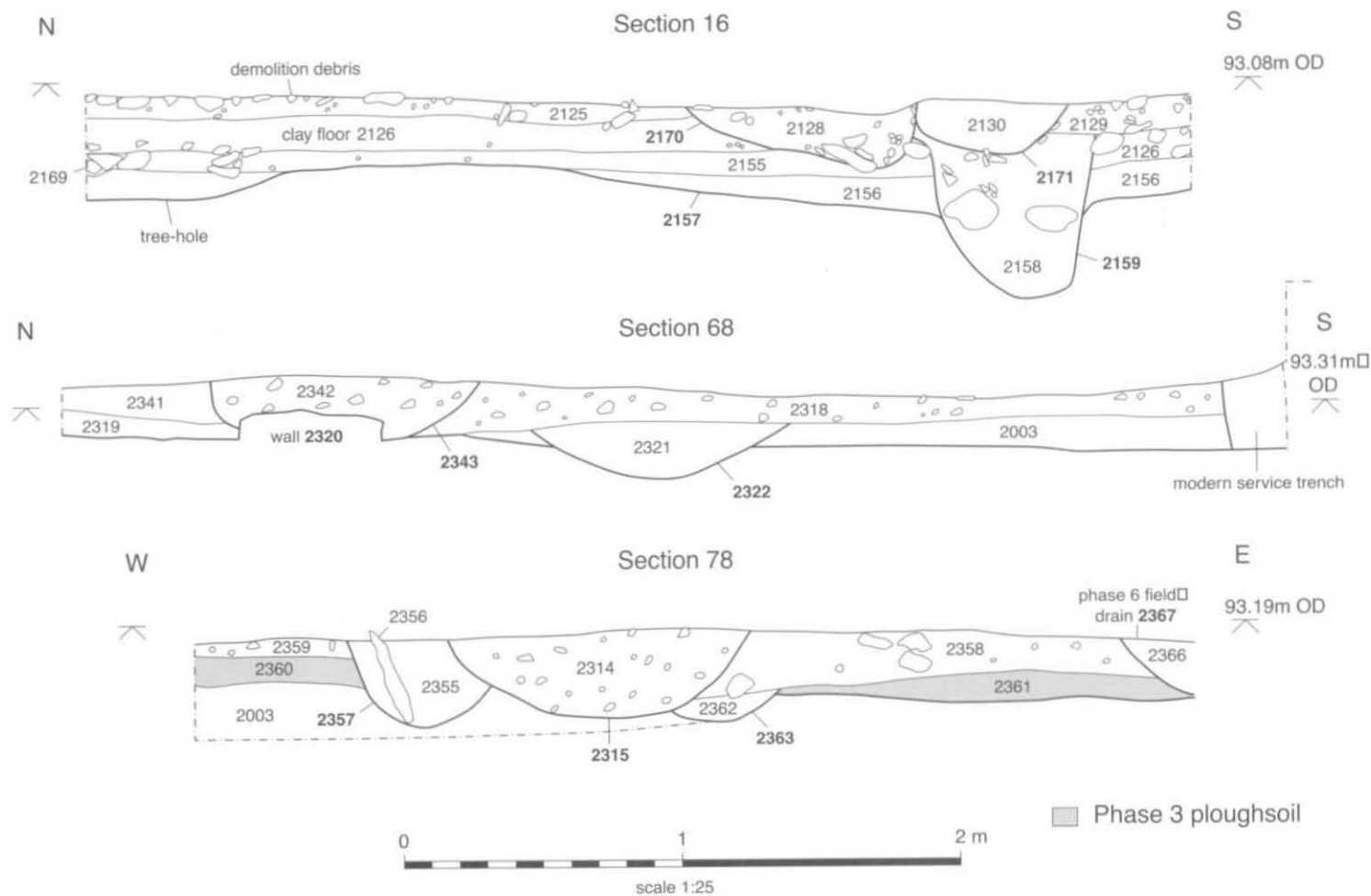


Fig. 8. Manor Farm, Old Grimsbury: Area A, sections 16, 68 and 78.

evidence of a doorway was identified in the robber trench of the N. wall at this point, the post setting 2142 (see above) could be interpreted as the setting of a W. door jamb.

The W. cell contained a sub-rectangular area of burnt clay and flat stone pieces (2354), possibly representing a hearth, situated against the S. wall. Three shallow postholes were recorded: 2363 against the W. wall, 2308 against the S. wall, and 2036 on the W.-E. centre line of the building. The W. half of the cell was covered with a spread of small ironstone rubble (2358), apparently a rudimentary floor surface.

Modest quantities of pottery were recovered from internal layers such as 2358 and 2125, and the robber trench fills. A concentration of pottery was recovered from a hollow (2141) just outside the N. wall, adjacent to the cobbled area 2333. Most of the pottery was of late 13th- to 14th-century date, although there was some intrusive 15th-century pottery from layer 2125.

Building 2011 (Figs. 9 and 14)

Building 2011 was situated 12 m. N. of building 2267, on the N. edge of the platform. The building elements directly overlay the platform material (2074), a greyish brown silty clay with small stone inclusions, averaging 0.15 m. deep. The building formed a rectangle in plan, its long axis aligned ENE.-WSW., with overall dimensions of 14.8 m. x 5.8 m.

The evidence for the N. and S. walls comprised parallel shallow footings of unworked medium/large ironstone slabs, mostly surviving to only one course deep. The footings were laid directly onto the platform material, although it was evident that they had sunk a few centimetres into the platform, leaving shallow 'robber trenches' where the stones had been removed.

The N. wall (2068) measured 6.20 m. long x 0.80 m. wide. The outer faces were of roughly faced stone slabs; the core of the wall was a mix of clay and much smaller stone pieces, where it survived at all. The S. wall (2066) was 6.60 m. long x 0.80 m. wide, and of similar construction. A narrow slot was evident in the wall at its mid point. The internal distance between walls 2068 and 2066 was reasonably consistent at 3.95 m.

Three postholes were located in a line W. of the two walls. Posthole 2064, 0.40 m. wide x 0.40 m. deep was situated 1.0 m. W. of wall 2068, its centre in line with the interior face of the wall. Posthole 2060, 0.45 m. wide x 0.18 m. deep, was located 0.80 m. W. of wall 2066, its centre point in line with the exterior face of the wall. The central posthole (2062), 0.25 m. wide, was situated 2.20 m. N. of 2060 and 2.8 m. S. of 2068.

The W. end of the building consisted of a stone footing (2065), 3.0 m. long x 0.80 m. wide, situated approximately 2.2 m. W. of the three postholes. The footing consisted of medium/small ironstone rubble. A shallow 'robber trench' was detected at either end of the wall, suggesting that the original wall extended across the whole width of the building. There was some evidence of a slot, approximately 0.15 m. wide, across the centre of the footing, similar to that evident in the S. wall.

Two postholes were located E. of the N. and S. walls. Posthole 2054, measuring 0.35 m. wide x 0.31 m. deep was situated 0.80 m. E. of the E. end of wall 2066 and aligned with the centre line of the wall. Posthole 2052, measuring 0.30 m. wide, was situated 0.50 m. E. of the E. end of wall 2068 and approximately aligned to the outer face of the wall. No central posthole was identified at the E. end of the building.

Approximately 2.0 m. beyond the postholes was the E. wall of the building (2067), comprising a footing of medium/small ironstone rubble, 0.80 m. wide and surviving to a length of possibly 2.80 m. The N. end of this footing had been truncated by later activity, and the rest of it was severely disturbed, but it appeared to be a similar structure to the W. wall.

Interior features

Two features were revealed in the interior space of building 2011. An oblong pit (2091) was situated approximately across the centre of the building. It measured 2.80 m. long by up to 1.10 m. wide, and was 0.30 m. deep, with near vertical sides and a flat base. The fill (2069) was a mix of redeposited platform material, ploughsoil and subsoil, in the upper levels of which were a number of large stone slabs. Late 16th-century pottery was recovered from the fill.

Immediately to the W. of the S. end of 2091 was pit 2082, sub-rectangular in plan, measuring approximately 1.10 m. across x 0.30 m. deep, with near vertical sides and a flat base. The fill (2081) of this feature was a fine clean yellowish clay, with inclusions of a number of medium/large pieces of ironstone. Five sherds of 13th-century pottery were recovered from the excavated part of this feature.

External features

A layer of ironstone cobbles (2070) was revealed, butted against the exterior face of the S. wall (2066). This extended for a distance of 4.60 m. from the W. end of the wall, and averaged 0.80 m. wide. The slot identified in the wall extended through the cobbles, and was 0.35 m. wide. It did not appear to cut into the underlying platform material.

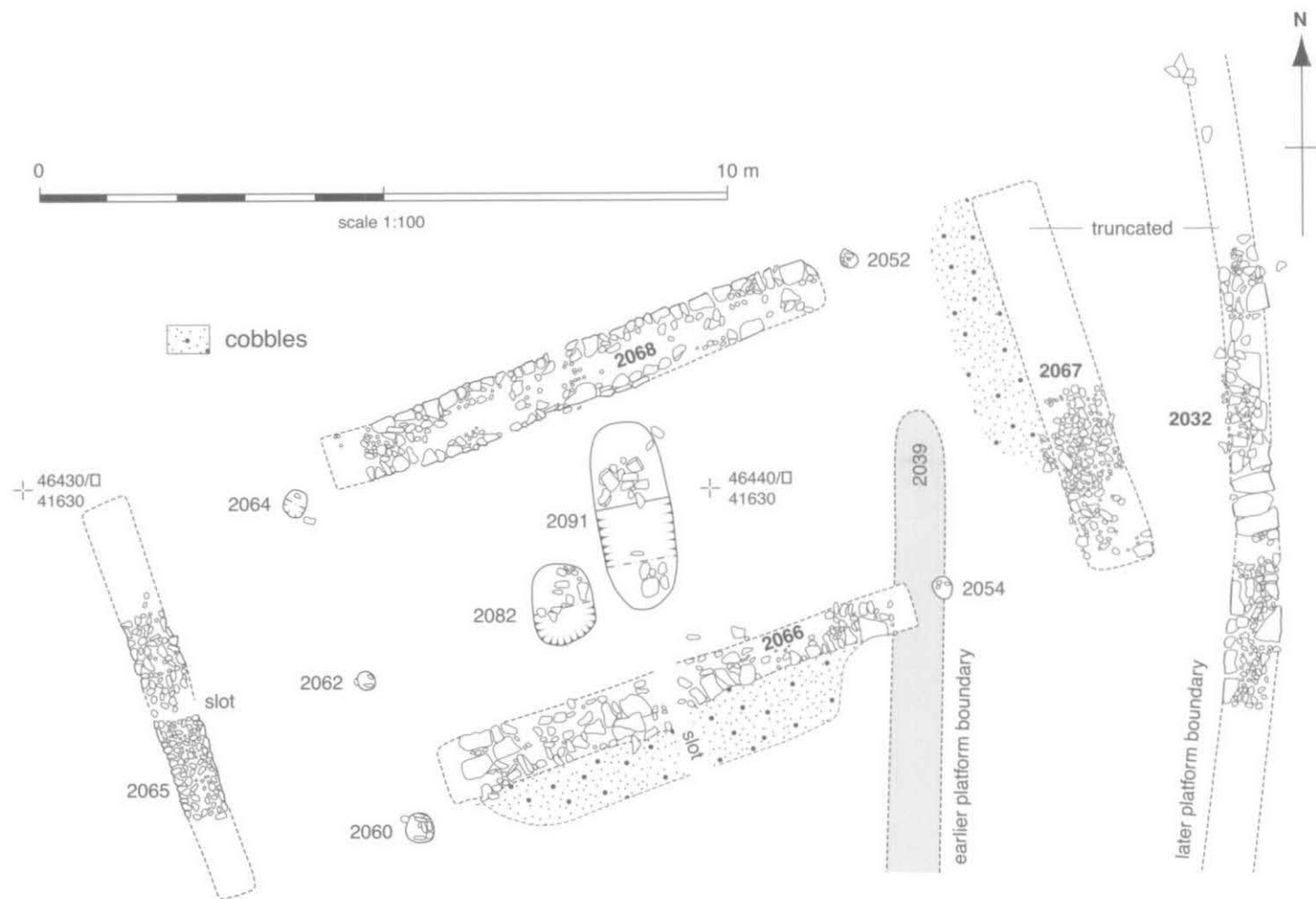


Fig. 9. Manor Farm, Old Grimsbury: Area A, detailed plan of medieval building 2011.

Finds

Apart from the finds from the two interior pits, no dating material was recovered from any of the building contexts.

PHASE 5

The archaeological activity over the extent of the platform was characterised by substantial spreads of mid brown sandy clay and high proportions of ironstone rubble, particularly concentrated over the building footprints of the site (layer 2030 over building 2011, and layers 2180 and 2181 over building 2267). Close to the SE. corner of building 2267, a layer of compact mottled silty clay (2130) was found that may represent a collapsed section of wall fabric (see Fig. 8, Section 16). The W. end of building 2267 was covered by a silty clay layer (2132) which contained many ironstone fragments and significant concentrations of domestic rubbish, dating mostly to the late 15th century or later.

A final phase of the boundary ditch in the SW. corner of the platform was cut (2045) into the fill (2311) of the double ditch (see Fig. 6 Section 70). The upper fill included another rudimentary revetting wall (2043) of medium large ironstone rubble with occasional limestone inclusions. Many of the stones showed signs of being subject to intense burning. The wall was roughly faced on its N. side. While most of the dating material recovered from this area was redeposited material from the late 13th to 14th century, there were some sherds from the 14th to 15th century, reflecting the reworking of some of the deposits.

The well shaft (2369) was robbed (2015) to a depth of approximately 1.8 m. and the resulting pit rapidly filled with material containing 16th- and 17th-century pottery (contexts 2016–2020 inclusive). The N.-S. length of wall 2032 appeared to survive (or was allowed to collapse) during this period, whereas the E.-W. wall (2033) was certainly removed. In the SE. corner of the site an area of 40 sq. m. was covered with a compact layer of mid brown sandy silt and small ironstone rubble (2007), forming a hardstanding (see Fig. 3). Pottery recovered from this material was predominantly 17th-century or later in date.

PHASE 6

The activity is characterised by the accumulation of ploughsoil (2002) and topsoil (2001) over the entire site. In the vicinity of building 2267 the material contained noticeable amounts of redeposited 14th- and 15th-century pottery, but elsewhere, and particularly E. of wall 2032, the pottery recovered (mostly during the machining) was principally 17th-century. The most significant features were a pair of rectangular pits (2176 and 2178), dug into the natural subsoil E. of wall 2032 (see Fig. 3). Both were partially excavated by machine and had fills of mixed loamy silt with lenses of natural clay. Neither produced any finds.

Evaluation trenches 13-16 (Fig. 2)

None of the additional evaluation trenches produced any evidence for significant occupation at any period, nor did they produce deposits that could link the activity on and around the platform of Area A with that revealed by the 1989 excavation on the line of Hennef Way. A detailed description of the deposits within these trenches is included in the archive.

THE FINDS

LATE NEOLITHIC GROOVED WARE AND FIRED CLAY by ALISTAIR BARCLAY

A total of 13 sherds (108 g.) of late Neolithic Grooved Ware from at least two vessels belonging to the Durrington Walls substyle were recovered from pits 2268 and 2193 (see Table 1).

TABLE 1. A BREAKDOWN OF THE NEOLITHIC POTTERY ASSEMBLAGE BY FEATURE
(SHERD NUMBER, WEIGHT)

<i>Context</i>	<i>Vessel 1</i>	<i>Vessel 2</i>	<i>Indeterminate</i>	<i>Total</i>
Pit 2268 fill 2269	1, 16 g.	3, 12 g.	3, 30 g.	7, 58 g.
Pit 2193 fill 2194		4, 17 g.	2, 33 g.	6, 50 g.
TOTAL	1, 16 g.	7, 29 g.	5, 63 g.	13, 108 g.

Fabric, form and decoration

The fabric was generally hard, slightly soapy in texture and micaceous, and was tempered with coarse sand and angular grog. Some variation in the abundance of sand was noted between the fabrics of vessels 1 and 2, with the former having a distinct sandy texture. This sandy and grog fabric is commonly used to manufacture Durrington Walls style Grooved Ware in the Upper Thames Valley. The bevelled rim forms and tub or jar shaped vessel profiles are typical of the Durrington Walls substyle, as is the decoration.

Most of the sherds derive from two vessels (Fig. 10: 1-2). Both were probably jars. The rim (Fig. 10 No. 1; context 2269) is from a thick walled vessel and is decorated with horizontal rows of stab and drag impressions. This type of decoration is unusual within the region but can be paralleled at the type site at Durrington Walls.¹¹ The rim and body sherds represented by Fig. 10 No. 2 are from a thin-walled vessel in which the decoration appears to consist of vertical panels with opposed filled triangles. These lines are not clean grooves and appear to have been made by impressing or dragging some material, possibly knotted cord or a tool with a rough edge. It can be matched at the type site of Durrington Walls, as well as at other sites in southern Britain.¹² With this type of vessel, paired vertical incised lines seem to have taken the place of moulded cordons; otherwise the design is practically the same. A number of base fragments from at least two different vessels (e.g. Fig. 10 No. 3) were found in both pits and it is possible that these belong with the two vessels represented by Fig. 10 Nos. 1 and 2.

Catalogue

Fig. 10 No. 1 Context 2269. Bevelled rim from a jar with stabbed decoration. Fabric GA2. Condition worn.

Fig. 10 No. 2 Context 2269 and 2194. Rim and body sherds from a jar. The decoration has been made by impressing or dragging. Fabric GA2. Condition worn.

Fig. 10 No. 3 Context 2269. Base sherd, possibly from vessel 1 or 2. Fabric GA2. Condition worn.

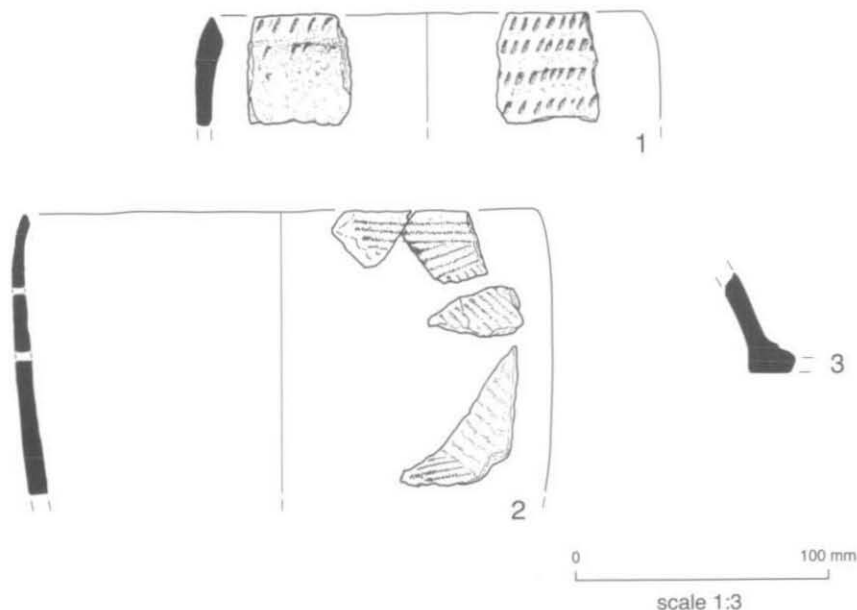


Fig. 10. Manor Farm, Old Grimsbury: Neolithic pottery.

¹¹ I. Longworth, 'The Neolithic Pottery', in G.J. Wainwright and I.R. Longworth, *Durrington Walls: Excavations 1966-68* (Rep. Res. Comm. Soc. Antiq. London 29, 1971), Fig. 57: 434, 438-9.

¹² *Ibid.* Fig. 47: 207-8, 215, 218.

Fired clay

In addition to the Grooved Ware, context 2269 produced 29 fragments of fired clay. Twenty-eight amorphous fragments of fired clay also came from the undated context 2354, although this material does not have to be prehistoric and could be medieval.

Discussion

In the Upper Thames Valley Grooved Ware is nearly always associated with pit deposits.¹³ It is assumed to have been used in ceremonial activities, and deposits within pits are often considered to have been placed or structured as part of some ritual practice.¹⁴ The sherds from the two vessels were generally small and worn indicating that they could have been recovered from a trampled surface or midden before deposition in the pits. The fact that parts of the same vessel came from the fills of separate pits may simply reflect a common source for the material (such as a midden) and that the pits were contemporary.

Grooved Ware is very common on gravel sites in the Upper Thames Valley but is rare to the north of this area, although a small quantity of similar pottery was recovered from Briar Hill in the Nene Valley, some 30 km. NE. of Banbury.¹⁵ This deposit was associated with wood charcoal that gave a radiocarbon date of 2900-2300 cal BC (OxCal 2 sigma 2060±90 bc HAR 2607) and the assemblage from Banbury is likely to be of a similar date. It has been suggested that Grooved Ware in southern Britain has a date range of 2900-2100 BC.¹⁶

THE POST-ROMAN POTTERY by PAUL BLINKHORN

Introduction

The post-Roman pottery assemblage comprised 2,105 sherds with a total weight of 33,956 g. The minimum number of vessels (MNV), by measurement of rimsherd length, was 12.37. Full details of pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is available in the project archive. The range of ware types present is typical of the pottery from medieval and later sites in south Northamptonshire and north Oxfordshire. The assemblage shows that there was occupation at the site from around the middle of the 12th century onwards, although the range of vessel types and fragmentation analysis suggests that there was a change from domestic to some other, perhaps non-domestic, activity during the 14th or 15th century.

Fabrics

Where appropriate, the alphanumeric coding system of the Oxfordshire County type-series has been used.¹⁷ The numeric codes are those used in archive and the data tables.

- F200: OXAC Cotswold-type ware. AD 975-1350. 7 sherds, 74 g.
 F301: OX234 Banbury ware. L11th - L14th century. 401 sherds, 8,774 g.
 F300: OXY Medieval Oxford ware. AD1075 - 1350. 140 sherds, 1,471 g.
 F352: OXAM: Brill/Boarstall ware. AD1200 - 1600. 336 sherds, 5,331 g.
 F353: OX68: Potterspury ware. Late 13th - 17th century. 579 sherds, 6,537 g.

¹³ A. Barclay, 'Grooved Ware from the Upper Thames Region', in R. Cleal and A. MacSween (eds.), *Grooved Ware in Britain and Ireland* (Neolithic Stud. Group Seminar Papers 3, 1999), 9-23.

¹⁴ J. Thomas, *Rethinking the Neolithic* (1991).

¹⁵ H.M. Bamford, 'The Neolithic Pottery', in *Briar Hill Excavation 1974 - 1978* (Northampton Dvlpmnt. Corp. Archaeol. Mono. 3, 1985), 104.

¹⁶ P. Garwood, 'Grooved Ware in Southern Britain: Chronology and Interpretation', in Cleal and MacSween, op. cit. note 13, p. 152.

¹⁷ M. Mellor, 'Oxford Pottery: A Synthesis of Middle and Late Saxon, Medieval and early Post-medieval Pottery in the Oxford Region', *Oxoniensia*, lix (1994), 17-217.

Other wares also present:

F330: Shelly coarseware. AD1100-1400. Shelly limestone wares, produced at numerous sites along the Jurassic spine in Northamptonshire and Bedfordshire.¹⁸ 110 sherds, 1,502 g.

F401: Red Earthenwares. AD 1550+. Fine, uniform, brick-red sandy fabric. Sparse quartz and ironstone inclusions up to 0.5 mm. Produced at numerous centres throughout Britain.¹⁹ 187 sherds, 3,675 g.

F404: Cistercian Ware. c. AD1470-1550. Hard, smooth fabric, usually brick-red, but can be paler or browner. Few visible inclusions, except for occasional quartz grains. Range of vessel forms somewhat specialised, and usually very thin-walled (c. 2 mm.). Rare white slip decoration. 53 sherds, 435 g.

F405: German Stonewares. AD1480+. A range of hard, grey, salt-glazed fabrics produced at numerous sites in the Rhineland and beyond.²⁰ 2 sherds, 65 g.

F477: Midland Purple wares. c. AD1450-1600. Very hard, dark purplish-grey 'semi-stoneware' fabric. Occasional quartz grains up to 1 mm. Purple to black glaze, often thin and patchy.²¹ 32 sherds, 820 g.

F431: Midland Yellow wares. c. AD1550-1700. Hard creamy-white fabric with brown to white surfaces. Yellow to greenish-yellow glaze.²² 7 sherds, 300 g.

F412: Midland Blackwares. c. AD1550-1700. Very similar to Cistercian ware, although usually thicker-walled (c. 4 mm.) and with a slightly coarser fabric with more quartz.²³ 233 sherds, 4,784 g.

F417: Tin-Glazed Earthenwares. c. AD1600-1800. Fine white earthenware, occasionally pinkish or yellowish core. Thick white tin glaze, with painted cobalt blue decoration, occasionally manganese purple and ochre. Rare inscriptions. Glaze tends to flake away from surface of body clay. Vessels usually ointment pots, albarellos and plates.²⁴ 6 sherds, 67 g.

F416: Metropolitan Slipwares. c. AD 1612 - 1800. Fine, uniform, brick-red sandy fabric. Sparse quartz and ironstone inclusions up to 0.5 mm. Generally flatwares such as dishes, bowls and plates, with an internal orange or green glaze over painted slip decoration. Produced at numerous centres throughout England.²⁵ 3 sherds, 71 g.

It is curious to note that although the site is very close to Banbury, the range of wares and their occurrence, at least superficially, seems closer to those of the medieval pottery assemblages of Brackley, Northants. Generally, early medieval assemblages from Banbury comprise around 40% OXAC with c. 25% Banbury ware, whereas those from Brackley comprise on average over 50% Banbury ware,²⁶ with little Cotswolds-type ware, as was the case at the Castle Lane site,²⁷ where OXAC was virtually absent. This pattern becomes more pronounced in the later medieval period. The high proportion of Potterspur and Brill/Boarstall wares in the later medieval assemblages at this site is not repeated at Banbury, where the bulk of the pottery from 15th-century assemblages in the town comprises Banbury ware and OXY, with Potterspur and Brill very much minor wares.²⁸

It would appear highly unlikely that the people of Grimsbury would have travelled to Brackley to obtain their pottery when the market centre of Banbury was so much closer at hand, so the reason for this difference, at least in the early medieval period is likely to be chronological.

¹⁸ V. Denham, 'The Pottery', in J.H. Williams, M. Shaw and V. Denham, *Middle Saxon Palaces at Northampton* (Northampton Dvlpm. Corp. Mono. 4, 1985), 46-64.

¹⁹ C. Orton, 'Post-Roman Pottery', in P. Hinton (ed.), *Excavations in Southwark 1973-76 and Lambeth 1973-79* (MoLAS and DGLA Joint Publ. 2), 298.

²⁰ D. Gaimster, *German Stoneware* (Brit. Mus. Publ. 1997).

²¹ M. McCarthy, 'The Pottery', in J.H. Williams, *St. Peter's St., Northampton; Excavations 1973-76* (Northampton Dvlpm. Corp. Mono. 2, 1979), 161.

²² Ibid. 162.

²³ Ibid. 164.

²⁴ Orton, op. cit. note 19, 298.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Mellor, op. cit. note 17, Fig. 24.

²⁷ P.W. Blinkhorn, 'The Pottery', in I. Meadows, 'Excavations at Castle Lane, Brackley, Northamptonshire, 1983' (in prep.).

²⁸ Ibid. Fig. 74.

Chronology

The post-Roman pottery assemblages from this site were grouped into phases based, in most cases, on the accepted chronology of the major ware types, although the chronology has been in some cases adjusted, for the reasons listed below.

<i>Pottery Phase</i>	<i>Equivalent Stratigraphic Phase</i>
Phase A: Mid 12th century -	2
Phase B: Early 13th century -	2/3
Phase C: L13th-L15th century -	4
Phase D: 14th/15th century -	4
Phase E: Late 15th century -	5
Phase F: 16th century -	5
Phase G: Late 16th-17th century -	6
Phase H: 17th-19th century -	6

The presence of large quantities of Banbury ware, as well as unglazed vessels in fabric OXY allows for a Phase A start date of the later 11th century, but the paucity of Cotswolds-type ware (OXAC), coupled with a complete lack of St. Neot's type ware, both of which are common finds on sites of 10th- and 11th-century date in Northamptonshire and northern Oxfordshire, suggests it is very unlikely that the medieval activity at this site began much before 1100, and more likely as late as 1150.²⁹ This is comparable with the site at Castle Lane, Brackley (noted above), where the start of activity is also datable to around the middle of the 12th century. The absence of OXAC at Castle Lane suggests that such pottery was not reaching the north-east area of Oxfordshire or south Northamptonshire by that time.³⁰ Evidence from other sites in the north of Oxfordshire suggests a similar picture.³¹

As noted, OXAC and OXY form a significant proportion of groups dated up to the early 13th century at Banbury.³² The evidence from the present site, and from Brackley Castle Lane, would suggest that it largely fell from use in the area by the middle of the 12th century.

Phase D assemblages were identified by the presence of later medieval vessel types, such as bottles, skillets, dripping dishes and curfews, rather than by the introduction of new ware types. The small size of many assemblages, coupled with the fact that such vessel types are usually rare, means that it has not been possible to identify a clear distinction between Phases C and D. The relatively large quantities of Potterspury and Brill wares at Manor Farm, when compared with the assemblages from other contemporary sites in Banbury, may again reflect residuality at other sites. Very few sites have been excavated in Banbury in recent years, and the sites examined in the 1960s and 70s appear to have produced assemblages with a fairly high degree of residuality.³³ This problem also exists for the latest medieval and earliest post-medieval phases at Manor Farm (see Table 2); wares such as F300, F301 and F330, which are generally thought to have fallen from use by around AD 1400, form a total of 34.5% of the phase assemblage. Nevertheless, the earlier assemblages at Manor Farm may offer a more accurate picture of the pottery supply to Banbury and its dependants through the medieval period than has previously been available.

TABLE 2. POTTERY OCCURRENCE IN EACH MEDIEVAL PHASE BY MINIMUM NUMBER OF VESSELS (MNV) PER FABRIC TYPE, EXPRESSED AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE MNV PER PHASE ASSEMBLAGE

	F200	F300	F301	F330	F352	F353	F404	Total MNV
Phase A	0.3%	2.9	74.0	22.9				3.15
Phase B/C	2.8	7.3	49.0	2.5	11.2	27.3		5.65
Phase D	0	9.3	10.8	7.2	18.0	54.7		1.39
Phase E	0	16.7	10.9	6.9	16.7	36.2	12.6	1.74
Total MNV	0.17	0.92	5.44	1.08	1.17	2.93	0.22	11.93

²⁹ P.W. Blinkhorn, 'The Post-Roman Pottery', in A. Chapman, 'West Cotton: A Study in Settlement Dynamics: Excavations at West Cotton, Raunds, Northamptonshire, 1985-9' (Eng. Heritage, in prep.); Mellor, *op. cit.* note 17.

³⁰ Blinkhorn, *op. cit.* note 27.

³¹ Mellor, *op. cit.* note 17, 52.

³² *Ibid.* fig. 24, but residuality does appear to have been a problem (*ibid.* 84).

³³ *Ibid.* 84.

The data in Table 3 provide some support for this. The mean rim size for F300 is fairly constant throughout, but the other fabrics do show some evidence of decline. Shelly coarseware (F330) appears to be largely residual after Phase A, and Brill/Boarstall (F352) after Phase C, but Potterspury ware (F353) and Banbury ware (F301) only decline during Phase E. F300 does not appear to decline at all, despite the fact that evidence from elsewhere in Oxfordshire indicates that it was not used much beyond the later 13th century.³⁴

TABLE 3. RIM FRAGMENTATION, EXPRESSED AS THE MEAN PERCENTAGE COMPLETE PER FABRIC TYPE PER PHASE

	F300	F301	F330	F352	F353
Phase A	4.5%	16.6%	14.4%	-	-
Phase B	0	9.5%	0	11.5%	-
Phase C	8.2%	15.9%	7.0%	10.0%	10.3%
Phase D	6.5%	15.0%	5.0%	6.3%	15.2%
Phase E	7.1%	6.3%	6.0%	9.6%	6.3%

The data in Table 4 closely reflect this pattern, sample size distortion notwithstanding.

TABLE 4. MEAN SHERD WEIGHT (IN GRAMS) PER FABRIC TYPE PER PHASE

	F300	F301	F330	F352	F353
Phase A	12.2 g.	73.2 g.	28.9 g.	-	-
Phase B	8.2 g.	14.4 g.	8.6 g.	14.3 g.	-
Phase C	8.5 g.	15.1 g.	8.4 g.	25.1 g.	13.4 g.
Phase D	19.4 g.	14.3 g.	11.9 g.	9.8 g.	12.5 g.
Phase E	13.6 g.	6.8 g.	7.9 g.	8.6 g.	7.9 g.

This does not reflect the general lifespans of the industries. As noted above, pottery assemblages in Banbury comprise mainly Banbury ware and OXY throughout the medieval period and even during the early 15th century, which Mellor saw as being due to residuality.³⁵ In this case, the same appears true, although there is also a case to be made that there was a change in the nature of the activity within the excavated area. However, the data in Tables 3 and 4 show that neither Banbury ware nor OXY appears to be any more fragmented in Phase D contexts than they do in the earlier ones, suggesting that they may still have been current at that time. This may, however, simply be a distortion caused by differential levels of redeposition, or it could suggest that most of the Phase D groups are 14th- rather than 15th-century in date.

Pottery Function

Analysis of a similar range of pottery types at the medieval hamlet of West Cotton, Northants,³⁶ indicated that Potterspury ware jugs, being larger than their Brill/Boarstall counterparts, tended to be more commonly used (and hence broken) in non-domestic contexts, due to their usefulness as transportation vessels. Brill vessels, by contrast, were used mainly for consumption, and hence tend to be more commonly found in association with domestic areas. The decline in Brill/Boarstall wares at Manor Farm during Phase D (14th/15th century) may therefore reflect change in activity at the site, or at least a change in refuse disposal patterns. There is support for this in the data from Table 5, which show a pattern typical of medieval domestic sites during the 12th to 15th centuries (Phases A-D).

Table 5 shows that jars are by far the most common vessel type in the earliest phases, but jugs gradually increase as a percentage of the assemblage. However, the increase in jar rims and the decline in jugs during Phase E once again suggests that the majority of the ceramic from this phase is redeposited. More crucially, fragments of a wide range of domestic vessel types, skillets, dripping dishes, bottles and curfews, occur in

³⁴ Ibid. 71.

³⁵ Ibid. 84.

³⁶ P.W. Blinkhorn, 'The Trials of being a Utensil: Vessel Use at the Medieval Hamlet of West Cotton, Northamptonshire', *Medieval Ceramics* (forthcoming).

Phase D contexts, but are completely absent from Phase E assemblages. This would further suggest that domestic activity had ceased before that time. However, Cistercian Ware cups and tygs (drinking vessels) do occur, showing that there was still activity at the site. This would suggest therefore that some form of non-domestic process was taking place, with pottery mainly having been used for drinking, and food preparation and consumption taking place elsewhere.

TABLE 5. VESSEL TYPE OCCURRENCE PER PHASE, EXPRESSED AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE TOTAL PHASE ASSEMBLAGE, BASED ON RIMSHERD COUNT

Phase	Jar	Bowl	Jug	Dripping Dish	Curfew	Bottle	Skillet	Cup/Tyg	Total
A	85.7%	14.3%	0	0	0	0	0	0	21
B	85.7%	0	14.3%	0	0	0	0	0	7
C	65.1%	25.6%	9.3%	0	0	0	0	0	43
D	31.6%	15.8%	26.3%	5.3%	5.3%	10.6%	5.3%	0	19
E	52.0%	28.0%	8.0%	0	0	0	0	12%	25
Total	3.201	0.837	0.579	1	1	2	1	3	115

Catalogue of illustrated pottery

Fig. 11

BW1: F301. Context 2141. Full profile of jar. Grey fabric with brown surfaces. Lower inner surface limescaled. Part of the outer surface is dark grey, probably due to inefficient circulation of oxygen in the kiln.

BW2: F301. Context 2141. Rim and body of jar. Grey fabric with pale brown surfaces. Outer surface has light sooting on the lower body.

Fig. 12

BW3: F301. Context 2028. Full profile of jar. Dark grey fabric with grey brown surfaces. Lower outer surface is sooted and scorched.

BW4: F301. Context 2247. Full profile of a bowl. Grey fabric with brown surfaces. Sooting on outer body.

SW1: F330. Context 2246. Rim and body of jar. Light grey fabric with orange surfaces. Most of the shell is leached out, and the outer surface is thickly sooted.

SW2: F330. Context 2231. Rim and body of bowl. Grey fabric with brown surfaces.

BB1: F352. Context 2141. Jug. Grey fabric with pale orange surfaces. Most of the outer body is covered with a variegated pale green and yellow glaze, with dark areas of copper-spotting. There is a single kiln scar on the side, and another on the base.

Fig. 13

BB2: F352. Context 2149. Rim and base angle of a dripping-dish. Grey fabric with buff surfaces. Thin yellowish-green glaze on the inner surface.

PW1: F353. Context 2311. Curfew fragment. Dark grey fabric with pale orange-buff surfaces.

PW2: F353. Context 2318. Rim and handle from jug. Grey fabric with pinkish-orange surfaces. Patch of green glaze between the handle terminal and the rim.

PW3: F353. Context 2229. Rim and neck of jug. Grey fabric with white surfaces.

CW1: F404. Context 2132. Base and lower body of tyg or cup. Very hard reddish-purple fabric. The whole vessel is covered with a thick, very dark brown glaze. Two applied pads of a white-firing clay on the outer waist, showing yellow beneath the glaze.

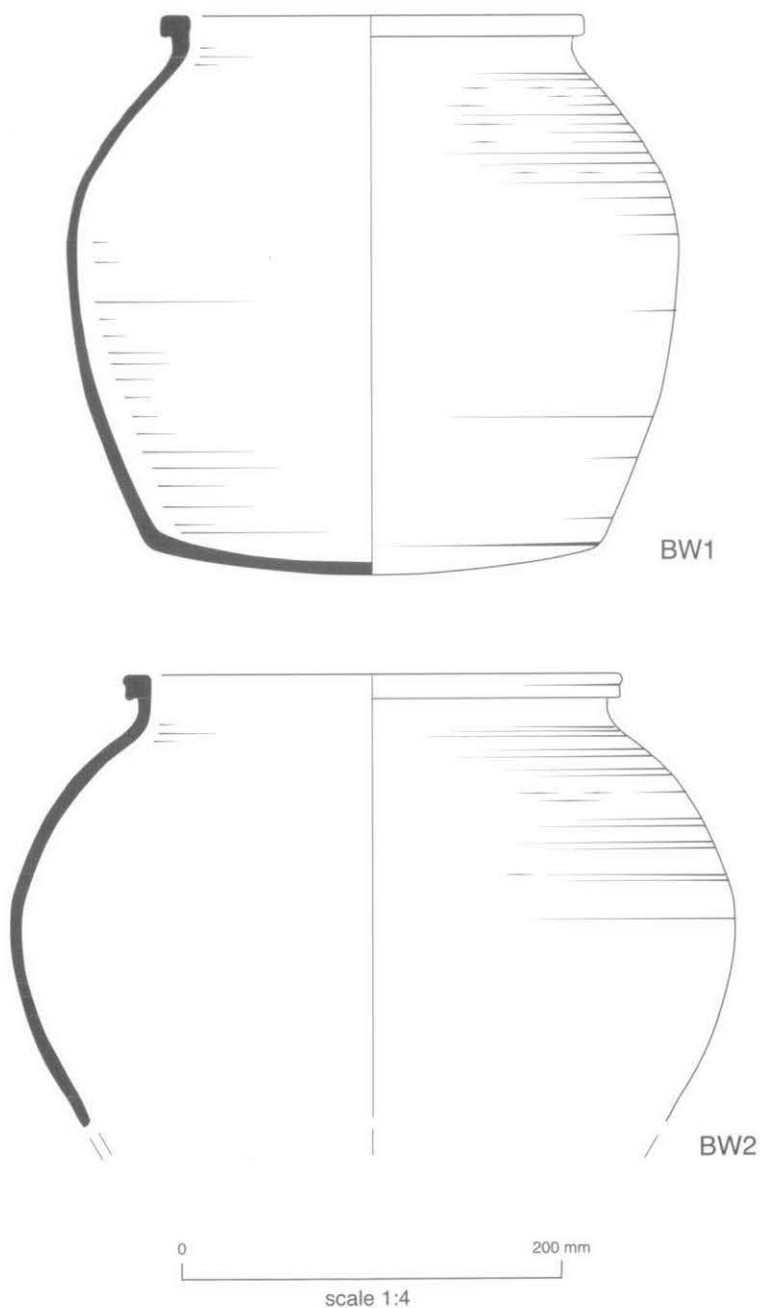


Fig. 11. Manor Farm, Old Grimsbury: Medieval pottery, Banbury ware jars (BW 1 and 2).

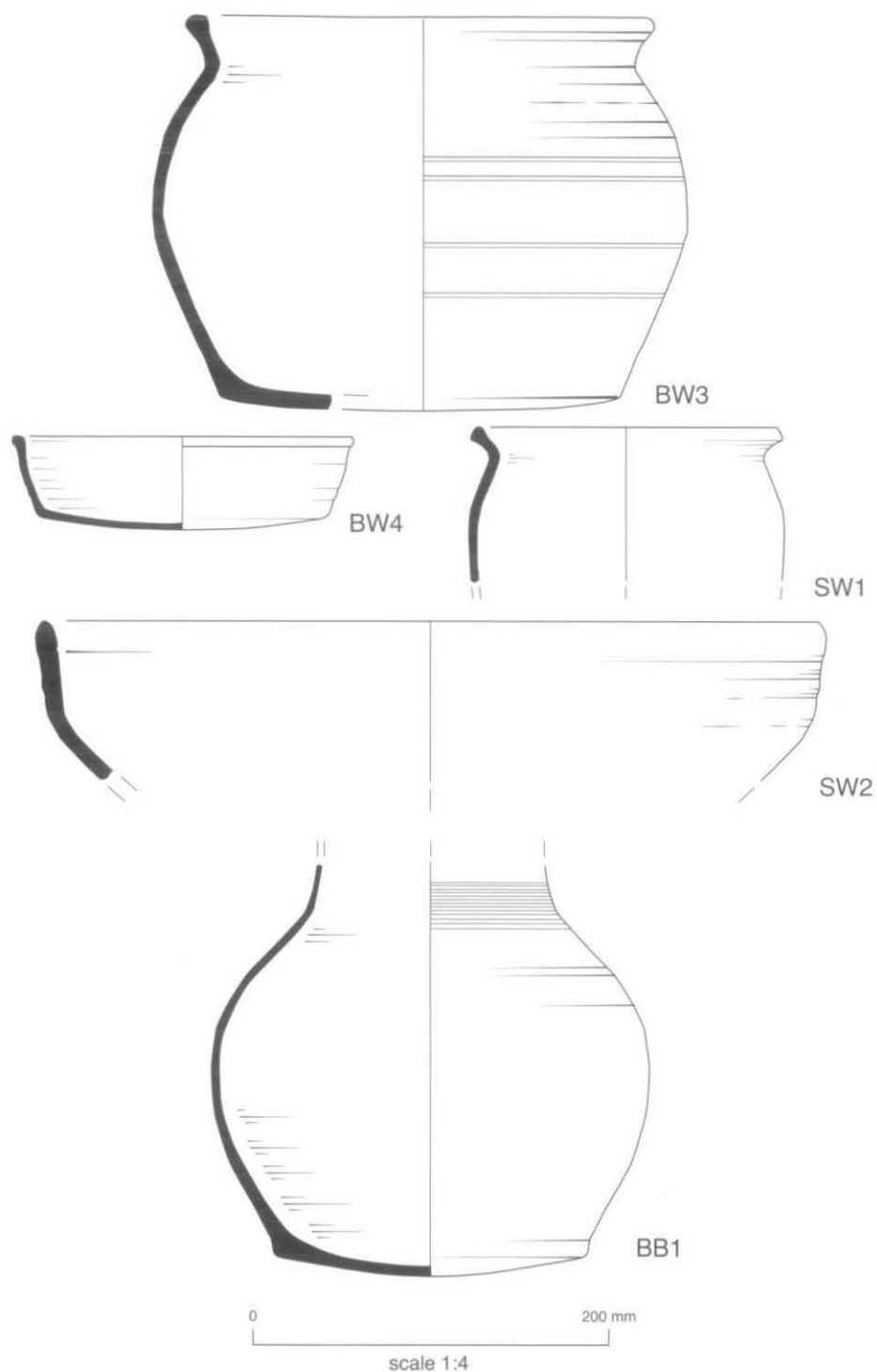


Fig. 12. Manor Farm, Old Grimsbury: Medieval pottery, Banbury ware jar and bowl (BW 3 and 4), Shelly coarseware jar and bowl (SW 1 and 2), Brill/Boarstall ware jug (BB1).

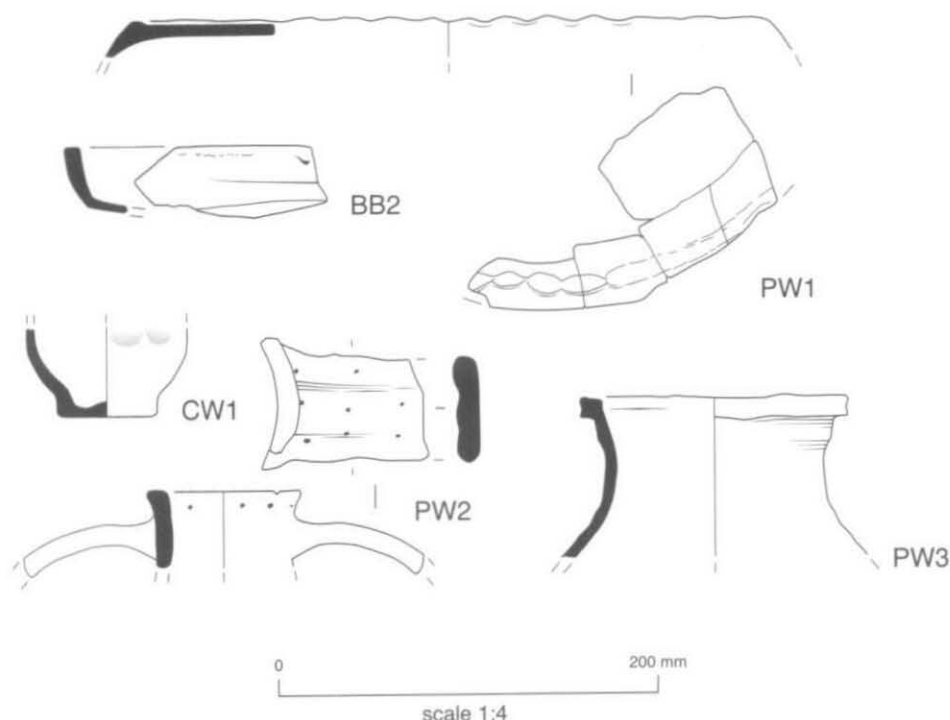


Fig. 13. Manor Farm, Old Grimsbury: Medieval pottery, Brill/Boarstall ware dripping dish (BB2), Pottersbury ware curfew and jugs (PW1-3), Cistercian ware tyg or cup (CW1).

ARCHITECTURAL STONE FRAGMENTS identified by JULIAN MUNBY

Three pieces of architectural moulding were recovered during the excavation:

1. A fragment of cusped window tracery in dark ironstone, moderately weathered, probably of the 14th or 15th century. 0.15 x 0.12 m. x 0.10 m. WS1, Context 2006. U/S
2. A corner of a classical capital, cyma-recta + hollow in dark sandstone/?ironstone, lightly weathered, probably the surround of a doorway, 16th -18th century. 0.22 m. x 0.15 m. x 0.15 m. WS2, Context 2006. U/S
3. Ironstone ashlar, trapezoidal in section, probably from a gable end; moderately weathered, 14th - 17th century. 0.30 m. x 0.25 m. x 0.18 m. WS3, Context 2303.

Fragments 1 and 2 were both recovered from the machine stripping of the overburden in the SW. area of the platform. Fragment 3 was recovered from the partially robbed revetment wall 2311 which was situated in the double-ditch boundary revealed in the SW. corner of the platform.

All three fragments clearly derive from a building or buildings off the site, and perhaps were incorporated into a load of rough stone brought onto the site for consolidation or construction in the early post-medieval period, when the Phase 4 cottage and outbuilding had gone out of use, and the platform was being utilised as a working area. The character of the three fragments is consistent with their originating in a building - possibly ecclesiastical - of some status, although there is of course no reason why they should all have come from the same building.

THE METAL AND GLASS ARTEFACTS by LEIGH ALLEN

A total of 251 objects of metal and one of glass were recovered from the excavations. Nearly 75 percent of the total assemblage (183 objects) comprises nails and miscellaneous fragments, which are not discussed further in the present report. A full list of contexts from which they were recovered is available in the archive. The remaining assemblage is small and predominantly post-medieval in date.

There were no finds recovered from Phase 1 or Phase 2 contexts.

Phase 3: Mid-late 13th century

The only object from a Phase 3 context was a broken fragment from an undecorated buckle plate (SF 131, context 2041). It is recessed for the frame and has a slot for the pin. Similar examples recovered from excavations in London date from the mid 14th to the mid 15th centuries.³⁷

Phase 4: Late 13th-mid/late 14th century

There are 4 objects from Phase 4 contexts. The shank from a fine 'sewing pin' was recovered from context 2114. Although the earliest examples of this type of pin appear in 13th- and 14th-century contexts at sites such as Winchester and Southampton,³⁸ they are more commonly seen in contexts dating after the 14th century, with many hundreds or thousands coming from 17th- and 18th-century urban deposits.

A button (SF108) and a bell (SF106) were recovered from context 2014. The button is a plain slightly dome-headed blazer button of post-medieval date. The bell is a clapper bell with a perforated rectangular tab for suspension and remains of the iron clapper inside. Similar examples have been recovered from Aldgate High Street, London, dating to the late 17th century,³⁹ and from Great Linford, Buckinghamshire.⁴⁰

The remaining object is a fragment from the arm of a horseshoe from context 2124. It is in very poor condition but appears to have a lobate profile with lozenge shaped countersinkings and a calkin at the tip. This type of shoe, traditionally referred to as 'Norman', was predominant throughout the 12th century until it was replaced by a heavier type of shoe sometime in the 13th century.⁴¹

Phase 5: Mid/late 14th-17th century

The 13 objects recovered from Phase 5 contexts include personal items, lock furniture, domestic items and structural ironwork.

SF121 from context 2032 is a large pin with a wire wound head; these larger examples tend to be earlier in date than the smaller finer examples. SF161 from context 2181 is a small circular buckle probably from a shoe.⁴² There is also a single lace tag (SF120) from context 2032, with edges that overlap at the join. Tags were common from the 15th century onwards and were used to secure the ends of laces and facilitate easy threading. Examples are found in large numbers in the late medieval and post-medieval periods.⁴³ SF 163 from context 2007 is a 4th-century Roman coin, with a very faint figure, possibly Victory, on the reverse.⁴⁴

The single item of lock furniture is a key (SF162) from context 2181. It is cast, with a stamped circular bow; the hole is not central. The stem is oval in cross-section; the bit is cut from a thick sheet and has no teeth.

³⁷ G. Egan and F. Pritchard, *Medieval Finds From Excavations in London: 3. Dress Accessories c.1150-c.1450* (HMSO, 1991), 110-14.

³⁸ M. Biddle and K. Barclay, 'Sewing pins and wire', in M. Biddle, *Object and Economy in Medieval Winchester* (1990), 560-71; Y. Harvey, 'The finds catalogue', in C. Platt and R. Coleman-Smith, *Excavations in Southampton 1953-1969: Vol. 2: the Finds* (1975), 254-6, Fig. 240.

³⁹ A. Thompson, F. Grew and J. Schofield, 'Excavations in Aldgate 1984', *Post-Medieval Archaeol.* 18 (1984), 1-148, Fig. 57, no. 93.

⁴⁰ D.C. Maynard and R.J. Zeepvat, *Excavations at Great Linford 1974-1980* (Bucks. Archaeol. Soc. Mono. 3, 1991), 171, Fig. 80, no. 216.

⁴¹ J. Clarke, *Medieval Finds from Excavations in London: 5. The Medieval Horse and its Equipment c.1150-c.1450* (1995), 96.

⁴² Egan and Pritchard, op. cit. note 37, pp. 57-64.

⁴³ S. Margeson and I.H. Goodall, *Norwich Households: The Medieval and Post-Medieval Finds from Norwich Survey Excavations 1971-8* (E. Anglian Archaeol. Rep. 58, 1993), 22-4.

⁴⁴ Identified by P. Booth (OAU).

A similar key was found at Westbury, Buckinghamshire,⁴⁵ and is comparable to an example from the late medieval period at Colchester.⁴⁶

Pieces of two vessels were recovered: SF141 from context 2132 is a fragment from the rim of a cast vessel, and SF157 from context 2260 is a heart-shaped drop handle possibly from chafing dish. A similar handle was recovered from Southampton and is dated to the 16th century.⁴⁷

There are two simple D-shaped iron buckles, of utilitarian form: SF151 from context 2180 and a second from context 2130.

Two whittle tang knives were recovered from Phase 5 contexts: SF155 from context 2181 and SF107 from context 2007. The first has a long triangular blade with a centrally placed tang. The second has a cylindrical bone handle, which is slightly bulbous and plugged at the butt end. The blade is incomplete and is broken just above the bolster, and the tang is set into the handle. Bolsters were an innovation in hafting probably introduced around the middle of the 16th century. The X-ray indicates decoration on the bolster, and similar decorated examples have been recovered from excavations at Norwich⁴⁸ and Great Linford.⁴⁹

Two items of structural ironwork were recovered: a D-shaped swivel ring from context 2007, and a figure-of-eight shaped hasp with a looped grip from context 2181.

A glass linen smoother was recovered from context 2180. Linen smoothers of this type have been in use since the Viking period in Scandinavia, and have been recovered from Saxon and medieval contexts in England.⁵⁰ They were used to smooth the surface of textiles. By the 16th century they had developed a vertical handle, giving them a mushroom-shape. This example is semicircular with a diameter of c. 80 mm.; there is a central scar where the stalk or pontil has been removed. There is a tendency for linen smoothers to increase in size through time,⁵¹ implying that this relatively large example is likely to be late medieval in date.

Phase 6: 17th century-modern

Ten objects were recovered from Phase 6 contexts, and the assemblage is similar in composition to that of Phase 5, with personal, domestic and structural items all represented.

A rose farthing of Charles I dated 1625-1644 was recovered from context 2000.⁵² A buckle (SF139) recovered from context 2006 is an ornate example formed from filigree wire twisted around a circular or possibly D-shaped frame. This buckle was recovered from a context that contained 17th-century pottery. A thimble (SF115) from context 2029 is constructed from sheet metal and has straight sides; the indentations have been applied in a spiral, beginning at the open end and continuing up over the crown. This example is post-medieval in date.⁵³ A crotal (SF160) with a semicircular perforated suspension tab and the iron pellet still present was recovered from context 2001. The crotal is plain apart from eight circular perforations, one in each quadrant of the sphere. Similar crotals were recovered from Great Linford.⁵⁴

There are 3 fragments from knives or blades. SF110 from context 2000 and SF 127 from context 2029 are both fragments from the tangs of scale tang knives with rivets or rivet holes visible. Scale tang knives were not introduced until the 13th century.⁵⁵ SF 128, also from context 2029, is a very damaged fragment from a blade.

The structural items recovered from this phase include a strap from a hinge, a hinge pivot and two staples.

Unphased

There are 2 objects from unphased contexts, a pin and a spur. The pin (SF 113) is a 'sewing pin' with a wire wound head (see above). The spur is in poor condition, but is a rowel spur with D-shaped sectioned sides that curve under the wearer's ankle. At the front end only a small section of one of the terminals remains. Both

⁴⁵ R.J. Ivens, P. Bushy and N. Shepherd, *Tattenhoe and Westbury: Two Deserted Medieval Settlements in Milton Keynes* (Bucks. Archaeol. Soc. Mono. 8, 1995), Fig. 151, no. 48.

⁴⁶ N. Crummy, *The Post Roman Finds from Colchester 1971-1985* (Colchester Archaeol. Rep. 5, 1988), Fig. 87, no. 3230.

⁴⁷ Y. Harvey, op. cit. note 38, Fig. 245, no. 1864.

⁴⁸ I.H. Goodall, 'Iron Knives', in Margeson and Goodall, op. cit. note 43, pp. 124-33, Fig. 96.

⁴⁹ Maynard and Zeepvat, op. cit. note 40, p. 185-7, Fig. 92, nos. 280 and 282.

⁵⁰ G.E. Oakley, 'The Glass', in Williams, op. cit. note 21, pp. 296-8.

⁵¹ R.J. Charleston, 'Slick Stones (Linen Smoothers)', in Biddle, op. cit. note 38, pp. 240-2.

⁵² I am grateful to Mr. N. Mayhew of the Ashmolean Museum for this identification.

⁵³ E.F. Holmes, 'Sewing Thimbles' (Finds Research Grp. 700-1700, Datasheet 9, 1988).

⁵⁴ Maynard and Zeepvat, op. cit. note 40, pp. 170-1, Fig. 80, nos. 211-14.

⁵⁵ Margeson and Goodall, op. cit. note 43, pp. 838-9.

the sides and the neck taper from the thickest point at their junction, from where the neck projects slightly downwards. The rowel box with D-shaped section sides divides most of the neck. Very little remains of the star rowel, the base of a single point being all that is visible on the X-ray. This example is probably of mid 13th- to mid 14th-century date. It is similar to an example from Great Linford.⁵⁶

ANIMAL BONE by BETHAN CHARLES

Introduction

A total of 746 fragments of bone were recovered from the site, of which 693 were collected by hand. A further 53 fragments were retrieved from sieved environmental samples, although most were undiagnostic. Recording of the bone followed standard OAU practice, details of which are included in the archive, along with tabulated details of the assemblage.

Results

Condition of Bone

The condition of the bone was measured by grading it from 1 to 5 using the criteria stipulated by Lyman,⁵⁷ grade 1 being the best preserved bone and grade 5 indicating that the bone had suffered such structural and attritional damage as to make it unrecognisable. The majority of bone was between stage 2 and 3.

Many of the bones from all the phases had gnaw damage, amounting to 13% of both the hand-collected and sieved material. It is possible that this may have affected the recording of some of the butchery marks along with signs of minor pathological changes. Only 2% of the whole assemblage had been burnt and none of this was concentrated in any one area or phase.

Just under 23% of the total assemblage had butchery marks. The majority of the cut marks were found on the long bones. It seems apparent that all the bone was being chopped up to retrieve the meat and marrow. Skull fragments from all main domestic species were also found, possibly indicating that skull meat was consumed.

Species Representation (Table 6)

TABLE 6. TOTAL QUANTITIES OF HAND COLLECTED BONE BY PHASE

Phase	Cattle	Sheep	Pig	Horse	Dog	Bird	Frog	Unidentified
2	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	11
3	11	9	0	0	1	0	0	67
4	20	31	6	1	0	1	0	89
5	32	57	10	5	2	1	1	154
6	25	49	9	0	1	1	0	93
Total	91	149	25	6	4	3	1	414

Cattle. The epiphyseal fusion of a small number of cattle elements from Phases 4, 5 and 6 indicates that the majority of the animals were mature. It is probable that the cattle were therefore being kept to an older age possibly for use in traction or for dairy purposes.

Sheep. Evidence from the mandible wear stages and epiphyseal fusion indicates that the sheep from all phases were being kept to mature and old age. It is likely that milk and wool would have been the major products of the sheep husbandry through all phases. Two elements of sheep bone from Phase 4 were complete enough to measure, and are dimensionally typical of smaller unimproved breeds.

Pigs. The few diagnostic elements from Phases 3, 4 and 5 indicate that the pigs were being killed before reaching 2 years of age.

⁵⁶ B.M.A. Ellis, 'Spurs', in Maynard and Zeepvat, op. cit. note 40, pp. 172-81, Fig. 85, no. 234.

⁵⁷ R.L. Lyman, 'Vertebrate Taphonomy' (Cambridge Manuals in Archaeol. 1996).

Horses. Horse bones were found in Phases 4 and 5. Two of the fragments from Phase 5 had a butchery chop mark and a further two of the elements had tooth marks on the shafts.

Miscellaneous. A scatter of dog bones and undiagnostic bird bone fragments were recovered. Four elements from dogs were found in the assemblage in Phases 3, 5 and 6.

Discussion

The majority of the assemblage appears to be waste from mid- to low-status domestic activity, although the limited size of the recovered assemblage qualifies any conclusions that can be drawn.

Generally, cattle and sheep were dominant through all phases, with pig and horse only becoming evident during the more active periods of the site. However, there is a significant rise in the number of sheep bones in Phases 4 to 6, which may reflect the increase in sheep farming in Britain from the 13th century.⁵⁸ This is supported by the apparent maturity of the sheep at death, suggesting that they were kept primarily for their secondary uses (wool and possibly milk). The pigs would have been killed young since it was less economical to keep the animals over the age of two years due to expense and the lack of compensation in the way of secondary products.

It appears that a large proportion of each carcass was being used, including the skull, as well as the breaking up of the bone for the marrow. This and the lack of variety in the meat points to the conclusion that it was a low-status site.

THE MEDIEVAL CHARRED PLANT REMAINS by RUTH PELLING

Introduction

A total of 24 soil samples were taken from medieval/post-medieval deposits for the extraction and examination of charred plant remains. Samples were processed by bulk water flotation and collected onto a 500µ mesh. The volume of deposit processed for each sample ranged from 10 to 40 litres. Each sample submitted was scanned under a microscope to assess the quantity and quality of plant remains present. The majority of flots produced very low numbers of poorly preserved charred seeds, with no more than 10 items per sample. The items present included free-threshing *Triticum* sp. (wheat) grains, indeterminate cereals and occasional weeds. The material recovered was likely to represent typical background scatters throughout the site, and these samples were not considered for further analysis.

Five samples did contain more useful quantities of remains and were analysed further. Samples 1 and 7 were derived from an 11/12th-century gully fill (context 2028). Samples 2 and 6 were derived from a late 13th-century pit fill 2022. Sample 5 was derived from a late 13th-century plough soil (context 2073) preserved under a building platform.

Samples were sorted under a binocular microscope at x10 to x20 magnification. Any identifiable and quantifiable plant remains were extracted. Identifications were based on morphological characteristics and by comparison with modern reference material at the Oxford University Museum. Taxonomic order and nomenclature follows Clapham, Tutin and Moore.⁵⁹

Results (Table 7)

The majority of plant remains recovered were charred. Occasional uncharred seeds were recorded as fossilised (shown in brackets), being of the character of dried waterlogged or mineralised remains. The charred remains were generally in a poor state of preservation showing high degrees of abrasion, with some distortion. The abrasion is characteristic of material which has suffered post-depositional damage, such as could occur in mixed redeposited material. It is therefore assumed that the remains are not present in their primary deposits. The concentration of remains ranged from 2.38 to 27.5 items per litre.

Cereal grain represents the biggest category of remains. Wheat (*Triticum* sp.) was the dominant cereal with barley (*Hordeum vulgare*) present and very occasional grain of oats (*Avena* sp.) and rye (*Secale cereale*). Wheat was identified as free-threshing where preservation was sufficient. Well preserved wheat chaff was not present so it was not possible to establish if hexaploid bread type wheat (*Triticum aestivum* type) or tetraploid rivet wheat (*T. turgidum*) was represented, both of which were available by the 11/12th century. Chaff was generally scarce in relation to grain, as is often the case in medieval deposits, and may merely reflect differential preservation.

⁵⁸ J.M. Davis, *The Archaeology of Animals* (1987).

⁵⁹ A.R. Clapham, T.G. Tutin and D.M. Moore, *Flora of the British Isles* (1989).

TABLE 7. THE MEDIEVAL CHARRED PLANT REMAINS

	Sample	1	2	5	6	7
	Context	2028	2022	2073	2022	2028
	Volume (litres)	10?	10?	40	10	10
	Date	11/12th	L13th	L13th	L13th	11/12th
Grain						
<i>Triticum</i> sp.	wheat					
	free-threshing grain	14	21	13	26	32
<i>Triticum</i> sp.	wheat grain	11	8	15	24	33
<i>Triticum/Secale cereale</i>	wheat/rye grain	1	1	-	3	-
<i>Hordeum vulgare</i>	barley grain	2	2	-	5	4
<i>Avena</i> sp.	oats grain	2	2	2	7	9
cf. <i>Secale cereale</i>	rye grain	-	-	-	-	4
Cerealia indet	grain	31	15	10	65	74
Chaff						
<i>Triticum</i> sp.	Wheat					
	free-threshing rachis	1	5	-	3	1
<i>Secale cereale</i>	rye, rachis	-	-	-	-	1
<i>Secale cereale/</i>						
<i>Hordeum vulgare</i>	rye/barley rachis	-	-	-	1	-
<i>Avena</i> sp.	oats, awn fragment	-	1	-	-	-
Cerealia indet	rachis internode	-	-	3	3	1
Cerealia indet	basal rachis nodes	-	-	-	-	2
Cerealia indet	culm node	2	1	-	-	-
<i>Vicia/Pisum</i> sp.	cultivated vetch/ bean/pea	-	-	5	3	10
<i>Corylus avellana</i>	hazel nut shell fragments	4	1	1	1	-
Weeds/Wild						
<i>Brassica/Sinapis</i> sp.	brassica/mustard etc.	-	2	-	-	3
cf. Crucifereae	seed capsule	-	1	-	-	-
Caryophyllaceae		-	3	-	-	2
<i>Chenopodium album</i>	fat hen	2	2	-	5	-
<i>Chenopodium</i> sp.		-	-	-	-	1
<i>Atriplex</i> sp.	orache	7	2	1	-	7
Chenopodiaceae		5	4	-	2	11
<i>Montia fontana</i> subsp.	blinks	-	-	-	-	1
<i>Chondosperma</i>						
<i>Medicago/Trifolium</i> sp.	medick/clover	-	1	-	-	-
<i>Vicia/Lathyrus</i> sp.	vetch/tare	4	4	5	6	10
Leguminosae	legume, small seeded	-	-	6	3	-
<i>Aphanes arvensis</i>	parsley-piert	1	-	-	(2)	-
<i>Galium aparine</i>	goosegrass	-	3	2	3	1
<i>Plantago lanceolata/media</i>	plantain	-	1	-	-	-
<i>Plantago major</i>	plantain	-	-	-	1	-
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	stinging/ common nettle	-	-	-	-	(8)
<i>Rumex</i> sp.	docks	3	1	4	5	5
<i>Polygonum aviculare</i>	knotgrass	-	-	1	-	-
<i>Fallopia convolvulus</i>	black bindweed	-	-	-	1	-
Polygonaceae		1	-	3	5	7
<i>Odontites verna</i>	red barstia	8	1	1	5	5
<i>Anthemis cotula</i>	stinking mayweed	15	23	11	13	24

<i>Tripleurospermum inodorum</i>	scentless mayweed	1	4	-	-	1
<i>Carduus/Cirsium</i> sp.	thistle	-	1	-	-	-
Compositae	indet seed	-	-	-	1	-
<i>Carex</i> sp.	sedge	1	-	1	2	1
<i>Eleocharis palustris</i>	common spikerush	-	1	-	1	-
<i>Juncus</i> sp.	rush	-	9	-	-	-
Gramineae	small seeded	1	1	5	-	3
Gramineae	large seeded	4	10	1	-	14
Indet		8	8	5	3	8

figures represent total number of charred items.

() uncharred fossilized seeds

Occasional large legumes represent a further cultivated crop. Again the remains were badly damaged through abrasion, lacking both testa and hila. Identification to species was not therefore possible, and remains are recorded as *Vicia/Pisum* sp. (cultivated vetch/bean/pea).

All samples analysed produced moderately sized weed assemblages. The weeds represented are generally all common arable or ruderal species such as *Chenopodium album* (fat hen), *Atriplex* sp. (orache), *Galium aparine* (goosegrass), *Plantago media/lanceolata* and *Plantago major* (plantain), *Rumex* sp. (docks), *Odontites verna* (red barstia), *Anthemis cotula* (stinking mayweed) and *Tripleurospermum inodorum* (scentless mayweed). There is some indication of the cultivation of heavier, damp soils. *Anthemis cotula* tends to favour heavy clay soils in the Oxfordshire region. *Eleocharis palustris* requires at least seasonal flooding, while many species of *Juncus* sp. and *Carex* sp. are characteristic of damp or marshy ground. These species may suggest the cultivation of the wetter part of fields extending onto the flood plain. The leguminous weeds, *Vicia/Lathyrus* sp. (vetch/tare) and *Medicago/Trifolium* sp. (medick/clover), are characteristic of grassland, but also tend to be associated with cultivated legumes (peas, vetches etc.).

Discussion

The Manor Farm assemblages are generally characteristic of redeposited mixed cereal and cereal processing debris. The species represented are all typical of the medieval period. Similar deposits were recovered during earlier excavations at Old Grimsbury,⁶⁰ where the same range of cereals was represented, with free-threshing wheat the major species, although oats were much more significant. The weeds showed a similar range of common arable/ruderal species.

DISCUSSION

Prehistoric

Beyond establishing that there was a Neolithic presence on the site, the evidence of the two small pits identified under the platform material can lead to little more meaningful consideration beyond that by Barclay (see above).

Phase 2, the earliest medieval occupation (Fig. 4)

From the ceramic evidence, it appears that occupation of the site was established in the mid 12th century (see Blinkhorn, above), a fact which might reflect the environmental character of the site, suggesting that the relatively low-lying, heavy ground, susceptible to seasonal flooding, would not be obviously attractive for settlement. The development of the site may

⁶⁰ M. Robinson, 'Carbonised Plant Remains', in T.G. Allen, op. cit. note 8, pp. 38-9.

perhaps be seen in the context of the general expansion of agriculture onto marginal land that was such a feature of this period and of the ensuing century. This could have been stimulated by development of the manor, although, as was pointed out earlier, it is not known for certain that the excavation site was part of the manorial estate.

While no definitive Phase 2 structural evidence was recovered from the excavated areas, the presence of an alignment of boundary ditches and possible trackway gullies, in addition to the scatter of postholes, clearly points towards occupation close by, with a systematic division of land use underway. The three substantial west-east ditches (2270, 2230, and 2279; see Fig. 4) could be seen as successive definitions of the same boundary, with the central ditch (2230) being contemporary with the parallel north-south gullies. It is notable that the boundary ditches are, broadly speaking, either parallel or at right-angles to the present Manor Road, suggesting that this road is of some antiquity. The fact that the few medieval ditches revealed in the 1985 excavation are broadly similar in orientation may not be coincidence and could suggest an organised pattern of land division, perhaps centred on the manor, with the Manor Farm site and its surrounding boundaries as an element within it.

The ceramic dating from these Phase 2 features is predominantly mid-late 12th century, but the re-cut northern ditch contained 13th-century pottery, which is significant, because the line and position of the ditch effectively defines the north edge of the Phase 4 platform.

Phase 3, the break of occupation between Phases 2 and 4

The apparent interruption in the occupation of the site in Phase 3, the mid/late 13th century, is supported by the presence of the relict cultivation soil sealing the Phase 2 features, subsequently overlain by the Phase 4 platform. However, the apparent survival of the boundary denoted by ditch 2279 and its re-cut, and the evidence of the southern limit of the plough headlands, seem to indicate that any interruption may have been very short-lived, and conceivably may have been only as long as it took to construct the platform.

A possible scenario is that the original 12th-century settlement was abandoned due to conditions brought about by the changing climate; the site became overgrown, and was possibly cultivated for a short period, whereupon the platform was constructed and the area re-occupied. There was no clear evidence in the interval for the extension to the south of the ridge and furrow even assuming that it was still under cultivation at this time, and not already given over to pasture.

It seems likely that the platform was constructed to provide a drier base for building and working. It is accepted that the lowland climate changed from a dry weather optimum in the 11th and 12th centuries to much colder and wetter conditions by the 14th century.⁶¹ Thus the platform and its stony compacted yard surface can be seen as a necessary response to a deteriorating climate, which would have had a marked effect on such poorly drained land.

Consideration must be given to the archaeological evidence from the excavation in relation to the topography of the platform and the nearby earthworks. The original survey of the area, prior to the 1993 evaluation, appeared to show a hollow-way running along the north side of the platform, branching north into the ridge and furrow, and south to Manor Road (see Fig. 2). In the event the excavation revealed the hollow-way along the north side of the platform to be a very shallow and indistinct linear feature, which may be merely the effect of the edge of the platform abutting the headlands of the plough ridges. The apparent

⁶¹ J.M. Steane, *The Archaeology of Medieval England and Wales* (1985), 176.

hollow-way leading to Manor Road is topographically much more convincing, exaggerating the apparent height of the platform. The similar alignment of this feature and the parallel gullies of Phase 2 could suggest that it predates the Phase 4 platform.

The requirement for a second building (2011) appeared to have caused a re-arrangement of the line of the eastern edge of the platform (see Fig. 5). The boundary ditch had to be twisted to the north-east to allow room for the second building, while still passing on the west side of the well. This suggests that the width of the plot fronting onto the road to the south was fixed. The separation of the well from the platform was presumably related to the activities on the platform.

Phase 4, the reoccupation of the site (Fig. 5)

In the late 13th and early/mid 14th centuries the site was occupied by a sub-rectangular platform, bounded to the south by a road (later Manor Road). A track or hollow-way led from the road past the eastern side of the platform and around the north side of the platform to a probable byre. The southern part of the platform was occupied by a two-roomed cottage. A north-south wall defined the eastern side of the platform yard and separated both buildings from a stone well to the east.

The pottery and small finds from the site do not suggest a high status occupation, comprising typical domestic wares and occasional functional small finds. Evidence does not point to intense activity taking place on the platform, either of an agricultural or industrial nature, only a typical background scatter of crop processing waste.

The Buildings

Building 2267 (Fig. 7)

The evidence appears to represent a two-cell rectangular building, with remains of hearths in both rooms and a possible doorway and threshold represented by the post setting (2141) and cobbled area (2370) within and against the north wall of the eastern cell.

The layout and size of the building suggest an occupant of modest status, more than a labourer's cottage, but less than a farm. A local example of similar dimensions was found in Fringford, near Bicester, Oxon in 1997. A two-cell dwelling of similar dimensions, although probably with walls completely constructed of stone, was excavated in 1997.⁶² In that case the evidence pointed to its possible occupation by a farrier.

The footings of building 2267 were unmortared and lightly founded, and arguably too insubstantial to represent the footings of walls constructed completely of stone. This could suggest that the superstructure was timber framed with wattle and daub infill, the stone footings serving as plinths for wooden sills. However, an alternative, that the walls of the building were of cob, set on stone dwarf walls, cannot be ruled out. Such material is notoriously difficult to detect archaeologically, because although it does not disappear with decay, as timber does, it collapses and is dispersed, becoming indistinguishable from ordinary layers. In this instance it could be argued, therefore, that the greater depth and visibility of the platform material in the vicinity of the building is due to it consisting at least

⁶² P.W. Blinkhorn, C. Bloor and D. Thomason, *Excavations at The Paddock, Rectory Lane, Fringford 1997* (OAU Occas. Paper 6, 2000).

partly of the decayed fabric of the walls. Cob was a cheap and, in some areas, readily obtainable material. Local examples of cob walled buildings have been found at Wallingford, Chalgrove and in the 13th-century suburb of St. Thomas's in Oxford.⁶³

Building 2011 (Figs. 9 and 14)

The form of this building, as indicated by the surviving evidence, suggests a distinct design for a specific function. As with building 2267, the stone footings would probably have supported walls of timber-framed or cob construction. The gaps between each end of both side walls and each end wall were presumably for access. The complete absence of internal occupation deposits points to a utilitarian function for the building. While no clear evidence was found of a north-south partition wall, the large pit 2069 seemed to divide the interior space into two. The pit may originally have been a setting for a trough at which animals could feed from both sides. The adjacent pit 2082 could have served a similar function. Thus the structure as a whole could have provided basic shelter for a few large animals, perhaps oxen or even horses, while allowing easy access.

Comparable contemporary examples of animal shelters, byres or stables, are extremely rare. Such buildings by their nature would often be insubstantial, and, with the absence of accumulations of occupation debris in and around them, would be less likely to leave archaeological traces of their structure than houses. In addition the design of such buildings would arguably be much more likely to be idiosyncratically functional, reflecting individual requirements rather than conforming to a typological pattern.

Occasional documentary references to such specialised buildings have been found, but usually in relation to buildings forming part of a grange or manor complex.⁶⁴ Fig. 14 shows a possible structural interpretation of the building.

Late medieval and post-medieval development

By the late 14th or early 15th century (Phase 5) the scenario had changed. The abrupt disappearance of pottery associated with eating and food preparation, and the predominance of drinking vessels, suggests that although the platform and its buildings may still have been used as a continuing part of the agricultural operation, the buildings themselves were not lived in, and it is possible the cottage may already have been demolished. Whether the agricultural activity around the platform still involved cultivation of the ridge and furrow to the north of the platform, or whether the area had by now been turned over to pasture, is debatable. The increase in the predominance of sheep bones over those of cattle and to some extent pig, reflects the trends in economic activity in lowland England in the late medieval period, with the expansion of sheep farming and the reduction of arable husbandry.

There is some documentary evidence for the land around Grimsbury and nearby Nethercote becoming a focal point for sheep farming in the late medieval period; flocks of up to 100 sheep are recorded, as landholdings were agglomerated by inclosures. The 1536 Act of Henry VIII was one of many attempting to impose statutory restrictions on inclosure,

⁶³ R. Carr, 'Wallingford Castle' (CBA Group 9 Newsl. iii, 1973), 18; 'Excavations at Harding's Field, Chalgrove' (OAU, forthcoming); A. Hardy, 'Archaeological Excavations at 54-55 St. Thomas's Street, Oxford', *Oxoniensia*, lxi (1996), 225-73.

⁶⁴ H.E.J. Le Patourel, 'Rural Building in England and Wales', in E. Miller (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales III 1348-1500* (1991), 883-4.

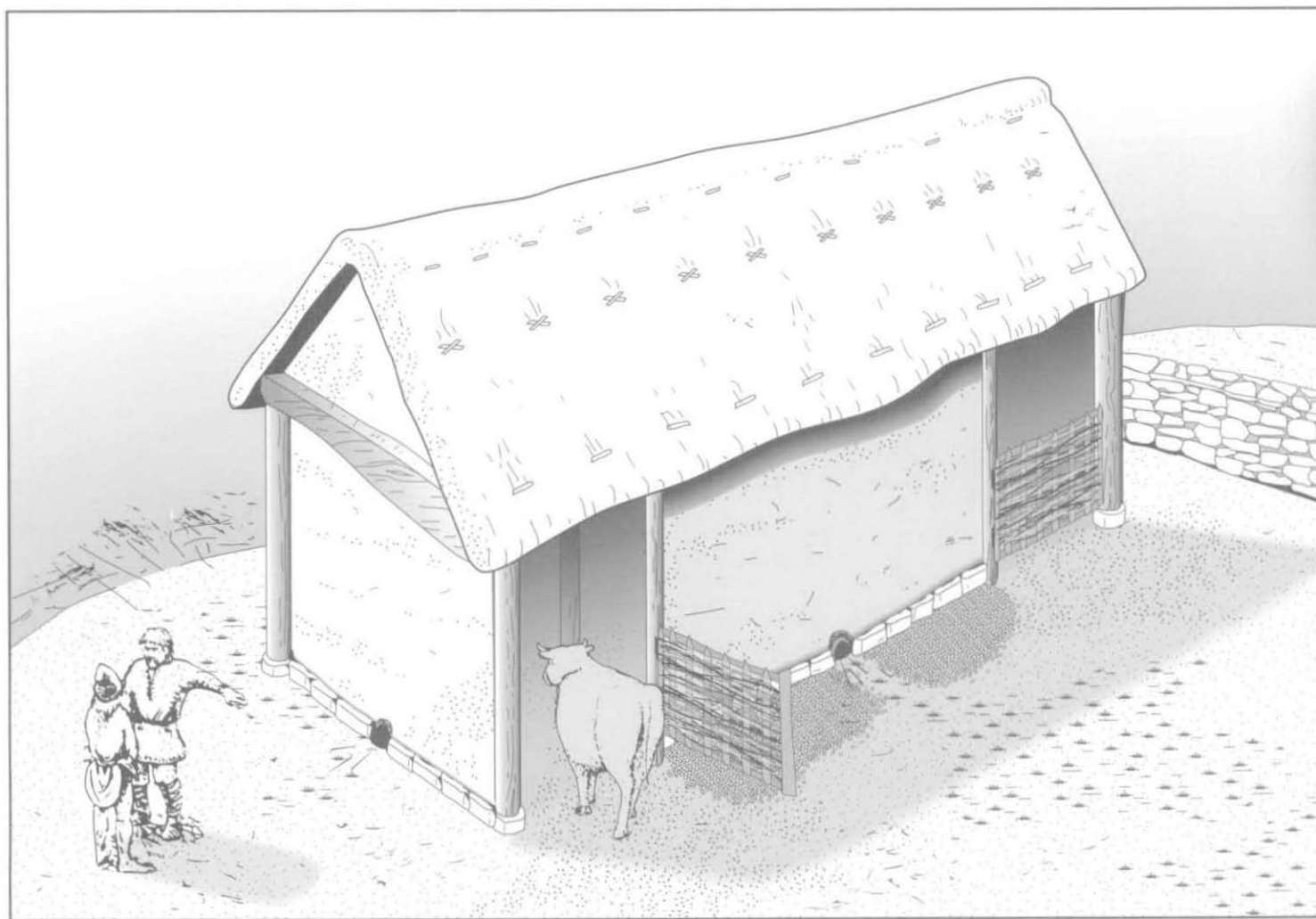


Fig. 14. Manor Farm, Old Grimsbury: possible reconstruction of medieval building 2011.

and an early case involved the restitution of some arable land in Grimsbury which had been deliberately depopulated and given over to pastureland.⁶⁵

The southern boundary to the platform appears to have survived into the late medieval period, with the latest ditch incorporating a revetment wall. The remnant of the wall contained a number of heavily burnt ironstone blocks. This wall could have been constructed after the house was demolished, and therefore these stones could derive from the house structure and suggest that it could have been destroyed by fire. However, in such circumstances more evidence of a fire might have been expected in and around the building footprint, either in the form of ash deposits or other burnt stone.

By the late 15th or early 16th century the buildings had been demolished, the usable materials salvaged, and the well infilled. Significantly, the focus of activity shifted eastwards in the post-medieval period, a reflection of the construction both of the cottages immediately to the east of the site, and the extant Manor Farm itself, further on. It should be noted, however, that the evidence does not support the idea of the 17th-century Manor Farm being a direct replacement for the occupied buildings on the platform, principally because the platform appears to have been unoccupied by the early 15th century, some two hundred years before the construction of Manor Farm. However, the evidence showing that the platform was still in use as an agricultural working area in this intervening period could suggest that the present Manor Farm is itself a rebuild of a late medieval predecessor on the same site.

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⁶⁵ J. Thirsk, 'Enclosing and Engrossing', in J. Thirsk (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales IV 1500-1640* (1967), 213-38.