The Excavation of Early Iron Age and Medieval Remains on Land to the West of Church View, Bampton, Oxon

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with contributions by Leigh Allen, Alistair Barclay, Paul Blinkhorn, Kayt Brown, Bethan Charles and Ruth Pelling

SUMMARY

The excavation revealed a possible ritual pit and a shallow gully dating to the early Iron Age, which may relate to other known prehistoric monuments nearby. The presence of sherds of imported North French Blackware dated to the 8th or 9th century AD adds to the evidence for a mid Saxon minster, at Bampton, and an evolving arrangement of property boundary ditches probably reflects the evolution of associated settlement from the 10th to the 13th centuries. The site appeared to have been abandoned in the 14th century, and exploited for gravel quarrying. The foundations of a late medieval barn were also revealed.

INTRODUCTION

Archaeological excavations were carried out by the Oxford Archaeological Unit in October 1999, on land to the rear of the former Eagle public house, in Bampton, Oxon (NGR SP 3129 0316), on behalf of Cover Construction Co. Ltd. A preliminary archaeological evaluation of the site had already produced evidence for Anglo-Saxon and medieval activity. The results of the evaluation are summarised below. The excavations were undertaken in order to mitigate the effects of the development on archaeological deposits, and the excavation brief was provided by the Assistant County Archaeological Officer, Hugh Coddington.

Geology and Topography (Figs. 1 and 2)

The village of Bampton lies on a limestone gravel terrace on the N. bank of the Upper Thames, approximately 15 km. W. of Oxford. The top of the gravel is at approximately 70 m. OD in the vicinity of the excavation. The site is located within the centre of Bampton, S. of St. Mary's church and W. of the medieval market place, behind properties fronting Church View to the E. and Field Cottage to the W.

Historical background

Bampton is identified as an important Anglo-Saxon settlement by the presence of a minster, which is first mentioned in AD 956-8, but, along with a series of other minsters along the Upper Thames, was almost certainly in existence by the 8th century. The original settlement

 ^{&#}x27;Land at the rear of The Eagle, Church View, Bampton, Oxon' (unpubl. archaeol. evaluation report, Oxford Archaeological Unit, 1999).
 J. Blair, Anglo-Saxon Oxfordshire (1994), 60-3.

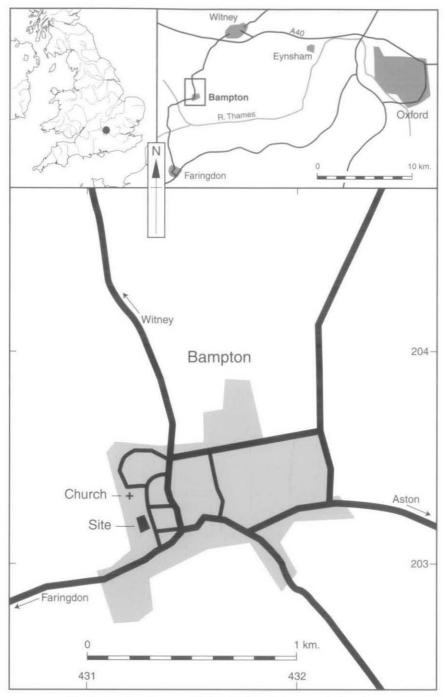


Fig. 1. Land to the west of Church View, Bampton: site location.

appears to have grown up around the southern boundary of the minster enclosure, but in the 13th century a new market place was laid out to the E., shifting the focus of the community. This shift may have been associated with the building of a castle to the W. of the minster. After a decline in the 14th century, possibly related both to the plague and to regional agricultural changes, Bampton recovered to maintain itself as a moderately prosperous market town. The church only finally lost control of its former minster status in the mid 19th century.

Summary of the evaluation results

The evaluation revealed a sequence of probable boundary ditches. The pottery assemblage from the ditch fills suggested a relatively narrow date range, from the 10th to the 13th centuries. The partially robbed stone footings of one wall of a building were also identified, provisionally dated to the later medieval period.

Excavation methodology (Fig. 2)

Two areas (Areas 1 and 2) were machine excavated on the site, each within the footprint of the proposed development, and incorporating the areas of significant archaeology found in the evaluation. The two areas exposed a total area of 424 sq. m. A small extension trench was subsequently excavated from the western edge of Area 1 to confirm the extent and orientation of a revealed wall footing. Overburden (approximately 0.50 m. deep except over parts of the stone footings) was removed by machine down to the first significant archaeological horizon. Thereafter, all exposed archaeological features were manually cleaned, excavated and recorded following standard Oxford Archaeological Unit practice.³ Area 1 context numbers ran from 1000 to 1058. Area 2 context numbers ran from 2000 to 2076.

The Phasing (Fig. 3)

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

Phase 1: Early Iron Age (8th-6th century BC)

Phase 2: Late Saxon – medieval (10th-11th century)

Phase 3: Medieval (11th-13th century)

Phase 4: Late medieval (14th-15th century)

Phase 5: Late medieval (15th-?16th century)

RESULTS

General

Natural subsoil comprising light yellow natural sands and gravels (1002, 2002) was encountered at a level of ϵ . 70.70 m. OD across both excavation areas. Localised patches with a more sandy/clay component were also noted. The overburden consisted of a modem turf/topsoil (1000, 2000) that varied in depth between 0.20 m. and 0.30 m. overlying a dark brown plough/garden soil ϵ . 0.30 m. in depth (1001, 2001). The earliest features were filled with generally loose clay/sands and gravels that varied in colour from a mid-reddish brown to brownish grey. Later features were generally filled with noticeably darker sandy silts.

³ D. Wilkinson (ed.), 'OAU Field Manual' (Oxford Archaeological Unit, 1992).

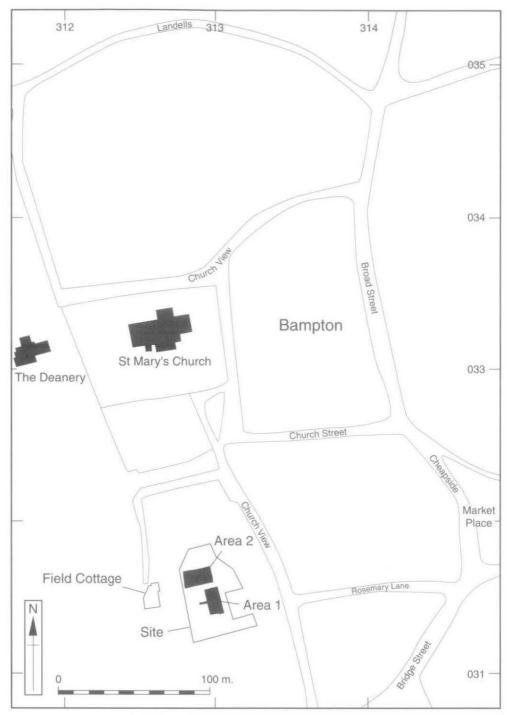


Fig. 2. Land to the west of Church View, Bampton: detail of trench location.

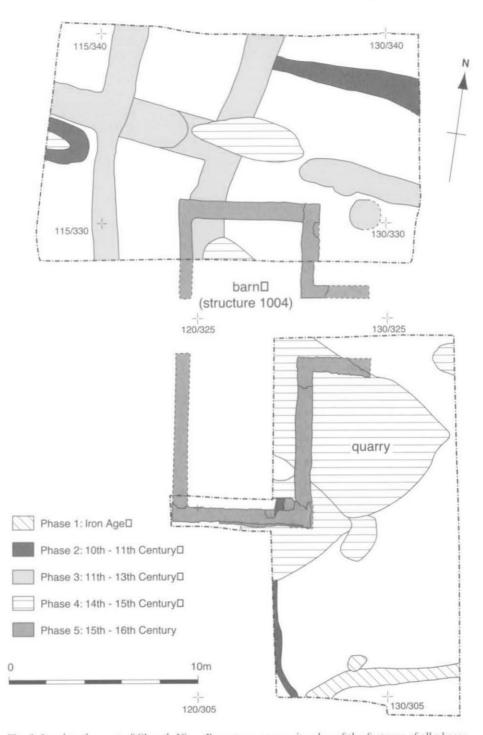


Fig. 3. Land to the west of Church View, Bampton: composite plan of the features of all phases.

Phase 1: Early Iron Age, 8th-6th centuries BC (Figs. 3, 4 and 6)

Area 1: A bowl-shaped pit (1016) measuring 0.90 m. in diameter and 0.18 m. in depth was located close to the southern limits of Area 1. The fills (1013 and 1014) of the pit, a reddish brown clay silt with charcoal inclusions, contained fragments of four vessels (see Barclay below for a detailed description and analysis, and Figs. 9 and 10).

Immediately to the S. of the pit was an E.-W. orientated gully (1019), measuring 0.68 m. wide and 0.38 m. in depth. The primary fill (1018) was a light yellow/grey silty sand and contained a single sherd of pottery of probable Iron Age date. The angle of the surface of this layer might suggest that there was originally a bank to the S. of the gully. Layer 1018 was overlain by a dark red/brown clay silt (1017) which contained a small quantity of animal bone.

The cut of the pit slightly encroached into the line of the ditch cut, but no clear relationship between the two was established. From the recovered pottery and the similarity of their fills, they are assumed to be broadly contemporary.

Phase 2: Late Saxon - medieval, 10th-11th centuries (Figs. 3, 4, 5 and 6)

Area 1: A shallow, north-south orientated gully (1052) was located near the W. baulk of Area 1. The gully contained a single fill (1051) of dark grey brown silt. An intrusive sherd of 13th-century pottery was retrieved from this context.

Area 2 (Figs. 3, 5, 6): An E.-W. orientated ditch (2012) extended approximately 7.5 m. from the E. baulk. It measured 0.94 m. wide and had a maximum depth of 0.65 m., with a flat bottomed, funnel-shaped profile, which is typical of palisade trenches (see Fig. 6, section 201). The W. terminus was completely truncated by ditch 2023 (see below). No dating evidence was recovered from the red/brown sandy silt ditch fills (2010, 2011).

A large pit (2036) was partially revealed against the W. baulk. It measured 2.3 m. wide x 2.4 m. long x 0.75 m. deep, and was flat bottomed, with near-vertical sides. Fragments of burnt clay were found in the fills (2038 and 2039) of the pit. These also produced a mixed pottery assemblage (OXAC, OXAQ, OXAM), but the upper fills were heavily disturbed by a later pit (2042), causing some contamination of the overall pottery assemblage and probably accounting for the late sherds. No other features were identified which could be stratigraphically associated with this pit.

Phase 3: 11th-13th centuries (Figs. 3, 5 and 6)

Area 2 (Fig. 5): Four probable boundary ditches were laid out during this phase of activity, and two pit features may be associated with them. The ditches were aligned N.-S. and E.-W., at right-angles to each other.

Ditch 2015 (aligned E.-W.) extended some 6.5 m. W. from the E. edge of excavation, and lay some 3.5 m. S. of, and parallel to, ditch 2012 of phase 2. It was U-shaped, and approximately 1.4 m. wide by 0.83 m. deep. Tree disturbance has unfortunately compromised the ceramic dating evidence for the feature, and the 14th-century sherds from its upper fills are considered to be intrusive.

Ditch 2061 was situated to the W. of ditch 2015, following the same alignment, and sharing the same flat bottomed and steep sided U-shaped profile. Its fills comprised a primary gravel slip (2073) overlaid by sandy silts (2062, 2071, 2072), and a sandy clay (2063), which contained two residual sherds of middle Saxon pottery and a small quantity of bone.

North-south ditch 2023 appeared to be contemporary with ditch 2061. It measured 0. 90 m. wide by 1.10 m. deep, and contained four fills of silty clay. The primary fill (2024) had the appearance of backfilling against a post palisade, and was overlain by a dark reddish brown clay silt (2025). Two further fills (2026, 2022) of mid brown clay silt contained animal bone but no pottery.

Ditch 2053 lay 3.5 m. to the W. of ditch 2023; it followed the same alignment as ditch 2023 and had similar dimensions. The upper part of the ditch was entirely removed by a later recut, 2051, which is shown on Fig. 5. Only one original fill of ditch 2053 survived the recut, a reddish brown silty clay (2054) that contained no finds

Two pit features may be associated. Pit (2027) was located immediately to the S. of ditch 2015; it was of circular shape, 1.60 m. in diameter and 0.60 m. deep. It was filled with three clay/sand deposits (2028, 2031, 2032) and contained pottery dating to the 13th century (OXAC, OXBB, OXAM) and animal bone.

An oval pit or possible eastern ditch terminus (2042) was located by the W. edge of excavation, and truncated the fills of the large phase 2 pit 2036. Pit or terminus 2042 contained a single fill (2043) of grey/brown silty loam, which contained a large quantity of pottery (EMS, OXAC, OXBF, OXY, OXBB, OXAM), and a small quantity of animal bone, slag and tile fragments. The dimensions of this feature were c. 0.90 m. wide by 1 m. in depth.

In addition a 13th-century token, further pottery and some animal bone was recovered from an area of root disturbance (2014, not illustrated), located at the N. edge of excavation, adjacent to the W. edge of ditch 2023.

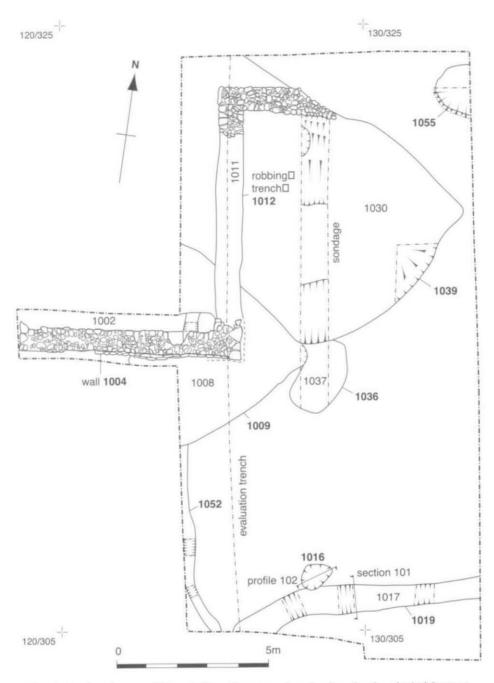


Fig. 4. Land to the west of Church View, Bampton: Area 1: plan of archaeological features.

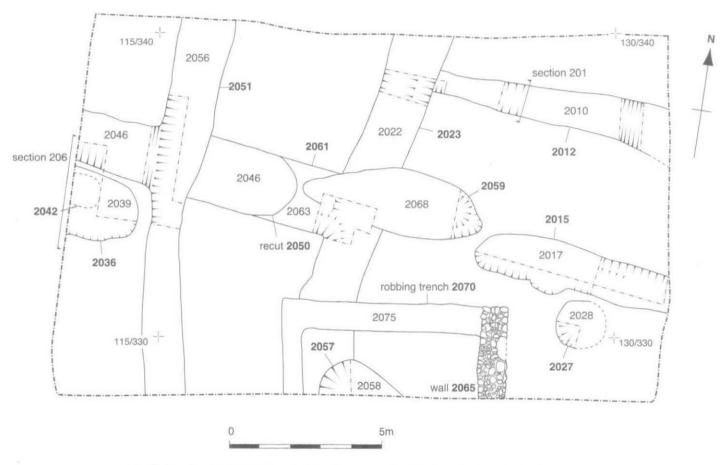
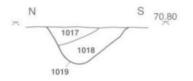


Fig. 5. Land to the west of Church View, Bampton: Area 2: plan of archaeological features.





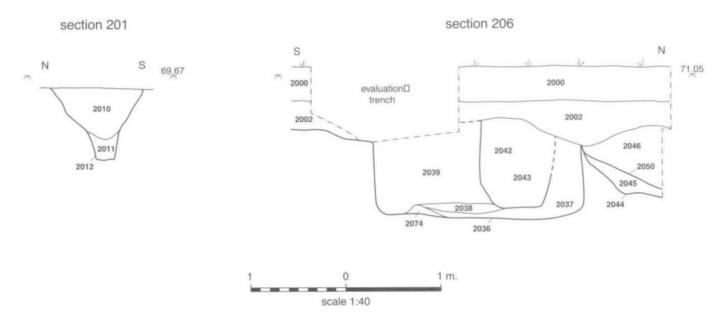


Fig. 6. Land to the west of Church View, Bampton: Area 1 & 2: sections through features.

CHURCH

Phase 4: 14th-15th centuries

Area 1 (Fig. 4): A large irregular feature, interpreted as an episode of systematic gravel quarrying, and consisting of at least three intercutting pits (1009,1036 and 1039), extended over much of the N. part of Area 1, and beyond the trench to the W. and N. The surface area covered by these features amounted to over 80 sq. m, and the sample excavation of the features revealed a maximum depth variation from 1.2 m. to 1.8 m. The lower fills as seen were a mixture of mid-brown silts and primary gravel slumping. Mid and upper fills were generally dark grey/brown silts. The fills were very clean, apart from a few sherds of OXAC (from fills 1030 and 1037) and animal bone and small fragments of tile from an upper fill (1033). A penannular copper alloy brooch was also recovered from an upper fill layer (1030) of the quarry (see Allen below).

A small pit or possibly a ditch terminus (1055) was partially revealed against the east edge of Area 1.

Ama 2 (Fig. 5): A shallow pit (2057) was partially revealed against the S. edge of Area 2, and measured 2.50 m. by 1.10 m. by ϵ . 0.2 m. deep. It was semicircular in plan and was filled with a brown/grey silt (2058) containing sherds of OXAC and OXBF. As suggested in Fig. 3, this may represent the northernmost edge of the quarry pit mostly evident in Area 1.

Phase 5: 15th century? (Figs. 3, 4 and 5)

Areas 1 and 2: The partially robbed foundations of a N.-S. orientated rectangular stone building (structure 1004) were recorded in both Areas 1 and 2. The building measured ϵ . 17 m. from N. to S. and 9 m. E. to W. The walls, which had a maximum width of ϵ . 0.82 m., were represented by partially robbed stone footings, constructed of roughly hewn unmortared limestone blocks measuring a maximum of 0.60 m. by 0.20 m. by 0.08 m.

Up to six courses of the wall foundations (maximum depth 0.52 m.) survived at the S. end of the building and along half of the E. side. The W. side of the building was not excavated, although its position was established by the small extension trench excavated on the W. side of Area I, and a robbing trench (2070) in Area 2. Where the wall foundations crossed earlier features their depth had been increased to improve stability. This was noted along ϵ . 3.50 m. of the S. end, where the wall construction cut truncated the phase 4 gravel quarry pit 1009 to a depth of ϵ . 0.30 m. The lower courses had also been stepped on the external side at this point, presumably as additional consolidation of the structure.

An entrance was located, offset to the N. of centre on the E. side of the building. The entrance was 3,25 m. in width and in the form of a porch-way, with stone foundations extending more than 3 m. out from the E. face. The N. side of the porch was situated between the two excavation Areas, but was at least defined in plan, if not fully excavated, by removal of a minimal amount of overburden. No evidence of aisle posts was noted within the exposed part of the building footprint. The complete absence of any surviving floor layers or internal occupation deposits might suggest that there was originally a flagstone floor, which would certainly have been salvaged for reuse elsewhere once the building was demolished. No archaeological evidence was found to clarify the date of the demolition of the building.

A large sub-oval pit (2059) oriented E.-W. and measuring ϵ , 6.0 m, in length by 2.2 m, wide was located approximately in the centre of Area 2. It was 0.40 m, deep and truncated the phase 3 ditch 2023, and the possible E. terminus of phase 3 ditch 2061. It contained a single fill (2068) of dark/grey clay silt with a small number of probably residual potsherds dating to the mid 11th century.

THE IRON AGE POTTERY by ALISTAIR BARCLAY (Figs. 9, 10)

A total of 24 sherds weighing 1025 g. were recovered from two fills (1013-4) of a single shallow pit (1016). Despite the small size of the pottery assemblage it appears to include a range of vessel forms that were manufactured from a single calcareous tempered fabric. The vessels form a coherent assemblage that can be assigned an earliest Iron Age date (8th-6th century BC). One pot appears to be a waster from firing, while another vessel has traces of burnt residue indicating use as a cooking pot. It is suggested that the vessels were intentionally selected and buried in the pit as a structured or ritual deposit.

Methodology

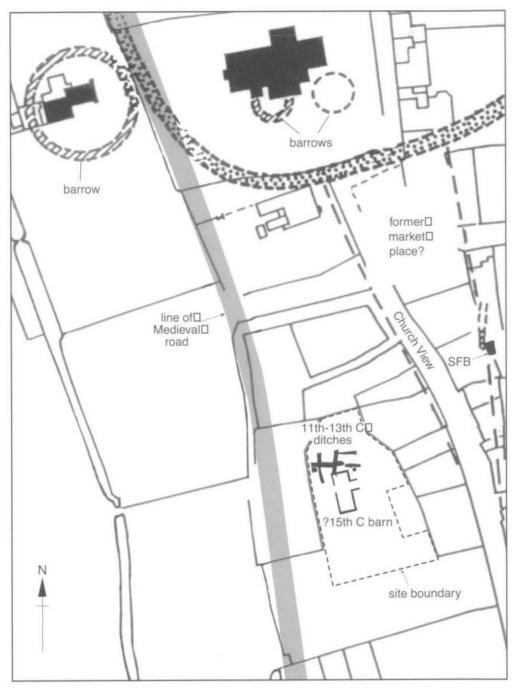


Fig. 7. Land to the west of Church View, Bampton: site and principal features in relation to identified prehistoric and early medieval features (after J. Blair, *The Bronze Age Barrows and the Churchyard* (Bampton Research Paper 5, 1999), Fig. 1).

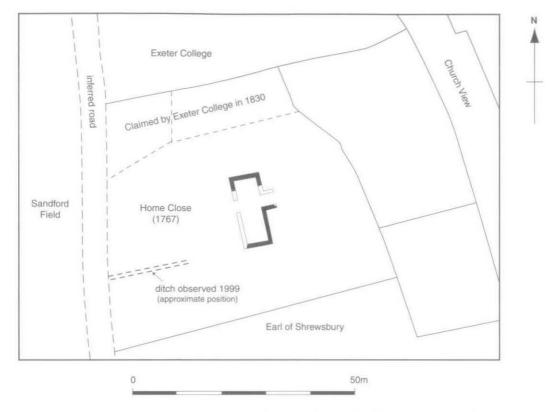


Fig. 8. Land to the west of Church View, Bampton: late medieval barn superimposed onto 18th/19th century property boundaries.

Fabric

The vessels were made from a single calcareous fabric: SLAP(Fe) 3, a hard, ill-sorted fabric with moderate shell platelets, rare angular limestone, rare quartz sand and rare iron-rich pellets.

Firing and manufacture

The inclusions identified within the fabric indicate that local clays and temper were used in their manufacture. The use of calcareous temper, especially crushed fossil shell, was very common during the early Iron Age.⁴ The limestone, quartz sand and ferruginous pellets could all be naturally occurring within the clay. All the pots were handmade and open fired. From the breakage patterns it is possible to suggest that vessel P1 (Fig. 9 No. 1) could have been ring built, while the vertical breaks in vessel P4 (Fig. 9 No. 4; Fig. 10) indicate that it was probably slab built. Both vessels carried finger marks on the interior surface from the moulding of the

⁴ G. Lambrick, 'Pitfalls and Possibilities in Iron Age Pottery Studies – Experiences in the Upper Thames Valley', in B. Cunliffe and D. Miles (eds.), Aspects of the Iron Age in Central Southern Britain (OUCA Mono. 2, 1984), 165.

shoulder and neck, which in vessel P1 are quite pronounced. Vessel P4 has numerous spall marks and could have lost its base as a result of this process. This could result from the vessel's not having been dried before firing, and having then been heated too rapidly during firing. Thus the vessel can be described as a waster.

Forms and date

The forms occur in a range of sizes, and can all be broadly described as bipartite with angular shoulders and concave necks and flattened or squared rims. The largest is the decorated jar (P1; Fig. 9 No. 1), while the base (P3; Fig. 9 No. 3) from a second probable jar and a third much smaller jar (P4; Fig. 9 No. 4) also occur. In addition, there is a rim (P2; Fig. 9 No. 2) from a small probably biconical cup or bowl. Similar forms to all these vessels are present amongst assemblages of final late Bronze Age or earliest Iron Age date and parallels can be found at a number of sites in the Upper Thames Valley. The calcareous fabric also indicates a date within the earliest Iron Age, 8th-6th century cal BC.

Use and wear

The large vessel (P1) has a burnt residue on its interior surface indicating that it was probably used as a cooking pot, although this form is usually associated with storage. The small rim (P2) is probably from a cup or bowl that could have been used as an individual serving and eating vessel. The waster P4, as discussed above, was never used but could have been more suitable for storage.

Context

Most of the pottery was recovered from fill 1013 (18 sherds, 575 g.) with the remainder (6 sherds, 450 g.) coming from fill 1014. The latter accounted for most of vessel P4, while a refitting rim sherd came from 1013. There was evidence that the pit deposit had been disturbed by ploughing, which could account for the displacement of this and other sherds. Originally the pottery might have been placed in the centre of the pit with vessel P4 inverted over a deposit of animal bone with the large rim and shoulder sherd (P1) placed either over or alongside it.

Discussion

Similar pottery has been found at a small number of settlement sites on the Upper Thames gravels and often, like the present assemblage, from single pit deposits. Sometimes this type of pottery occurs with elaborately decorated vessels that have affinities with the so-called 'All Cannings Cross' style assemblages from north Wiltshire, although no such vessels were found at Bampton.

As a group of pottery this is an interesting deposit because of the range of vessel sizes represented, and could represent a domestic or household assemblage. At least some of the pottery had been used, while the most complete pot could be considered as a possible waster. The selection of the different vessels along with the waster could indicate that this was a placed or special deposit. There are a number of similar pit deposits from the Oxford area of the Upper Thames region. At Kirtlington, Oxon part of a fine bowl which had signs of warping and sooting and is of transitional late Bronze Age/early Iron Age date was recovered as the only find from a pit. There are other deposits of this date recorded from Standlake and from New Wintles Farm, Eynsham that also included inverted bowls and in these cases overfired sherds. 10

Catalogue

P1. Fig. 9 No. 1. Context 1013. Rim and shoulder from a large bipartite shouldered jar (9 sherds, 495 g.), that has a squared plain rim, an applied finger-nail impressed neck cordon. Oblique finger-nail impressed decoration occurs on the shoulder. The vessel has been burnt through use. Fabric SLAP. Colour: ext. reddish-brown; core grey; int. black. Condition fair.

9 D.W. Harding, The Iron Age in the Upper Thames Basin (1972), 81-2.

⁵ O. Rye, Pottery Technology: Principles and Reconstruction (Taraxacum Manuals on Archaeol. No. 4), 114.

⁶ P. Booth, report on Iron Age pottery from Cresswell Field, Yarnton, OAU excavation report, in prep.
⁷ There is, for example, a single pit deposit from OAU excavations at Cresswell Field, Yarnton. Single pit deposits are also known from New Wintles Farm, Eynsham, from Standlake and from Kirtlington.

⁸ Duncan, Barclay and Lambrick, report on the Iron Age pottery from Gravelly Guy, OAU excavation eport, in prep.

¹⁰ D.W. Harding, 'An Iron Age Site at Kirtlington, Oxon', Oxoniensia, xxxi (1966), 157 & Fig. 14.A.

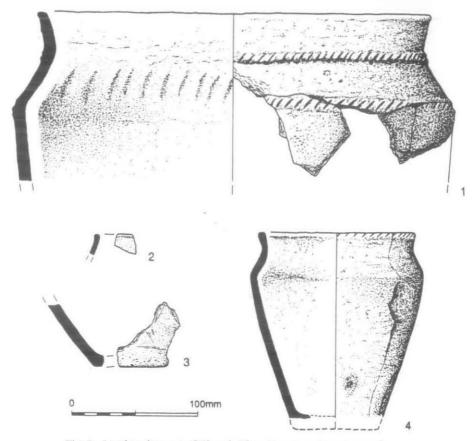


Fig. 9. Land to the west of Church View, Bampton: Iron Age pottery.

P2 Fig. 9 No. 2. Context 1013. Plain rim (2 g.) from a small bipartite cup or jar. Fabric SLAP. Colour: ext. reddish-brown throughout. Condition fair.

P3 Fig. 9 No. 3. Context 1013. Base (25 g.) probably from a small to medium sized jar. Fabric SLAP Colour: ext. reddish-brown; core and int. grey. Condition fair.

P4 Fig. 9 No. 4 and Fig. 10. Context 1013-4. Almost complete bipartite jar (11 sherds, 480 g.) with squared rim that has been decorated with oblique incised finger-nail impressions. The vessel has a spalled surface and no base. Fabric SLAP. Colour: ext. reddish-brown throughout. Condition fair.

THE POST-ROMAN POTTERY by PAUL BLINKHORN

The pottery assemblage comprised 104 sherds with a total weight of 1073 g. The details of the pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is included in the archive. The assemblage comprised mainly Saxo-Norman or later pottery, with a date range of the 11th-15th centuries, although small quantities of Iron Age, Romano-British and early/middle Saxon handmade pottery were also noted, along with two sherds of 8th- to 9th-century? North French Blackware. The last named can be seen to be highly significant, as it is only the fourth find of such material in the Thames Valley to the west of London, and indicates the existence of a middle Saxon settlement of some status at Bampton.



Fig. 10. Land to the west of Church View, Bampton: Iron Age pot (P4).

Fabrics

The majority of the pottery comprised types which are well-known in the region. Where appropriate, the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series has been used, 11 as follows:

OXAC: Cotswold-type ware, AD 975-1350. 54 sherds, 501 g.

OXBF: North-East Wiltshire Ware, AD 1050-1400. 7 sherds, 30 g.

OXY: Medieval Oxford ware, AD 1075-1350, 5 sherds, 57 g.

OXAQ East Wiltshire Ware, early 12th-early 15th century. 3 sherds, 34 g.

OXBB: Minety-type ware, AD 1125-1500. 4 sherds, 36 g.

OXAM: Brill/Boarstall ware, AD 1200-1600. 15 sherds, 105 g.

In addition, the following pottery types were noted:

Early/Middle Saxon handmade wares, 7 sherds, 68 g. All the sherds contained very sparse to moderate oolitic limestone up to 2 mm., and sparse to moderate chaff voids up to 4 mm.

North French Blackware. 2 sherds, 39 g. 8th-9th century. Soft, grey fabric with orange margins and a black burnished outer surface. Moderate subangular quartz up to 0.5 mm., sparse rounded red and black

ironstone of the same size. Inclusions give the surface a fine 'pimpled' effect.

Late Medieval Oxidized ware. 4 sherds, 153 g. ?15th century. This material has a number of sources in the south and east midlands, such as Glapthorn (Northants)¹² and Great Brickhill (Bucks).¹³ The fabric is generally very hard and grey, with weak to bright orange surfaces, sometimes with a poor quality green glaze. Moderate to dense subrounded quartz up to 1 mm., with sparse rounded ironstone up to 2 mm. Occasional calcareous fragments. Full range of late medieval/transitional vessel forms (cisterns, 'fish dishes', etc). Finds of the material have been made at sites in the Thames Valley to the E. of Bampton, such as King Stable Street, Eton.¹⁴

Vessel Forms

The small assemblage size and the high fragmentation of the pottery made detailed analysis impossible. However, a fragment of a handle of a Cotswolds-type ware curfew was noted in context 2039, and a small fragment of a highly vitrified crucible occurred in context 1030. Otherwise, the assemblage was unexceptional, with the few rimsherds present indicating that the majority of the assemblage consisted of unglazed jars, although bodysherds from glazed jugs were also noted.

Discussion

The presence of sherds of handmade Saxon pottery suggest that there was activity in the vicinity of this site during the early and middle Saxon period. This is further supported by the presence of the two sherds of burnished ?North French Blackware, which are worthy of some discussion. Such wares are reasonably well-attested from middle Saxon ports such as Ipswich, London and Southampton, 15 but are extremely rare finds away from these areas. These sherds, which are both from the same vessel, represent an addition to a very

¹¹ 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.

¹² G. Johnston, 'The Excavation of Two Late Medieval Kilns with Associated Buildings at Glapthorn, near Oundle, Northamptonshire', Medieval Ceramics, 21 (1997), 13-42.

13 M.R. McCarthy and C.M. Brooks, Medieval Pottery in Britain AD 900-1600 (1988).

14 P. Blinkhorn and G. Pugh, Excavation of the Medieval Waterfront at King Stable Street, Eton, Berks (Oxf.

Archaeol. Unit Occas. Paper No.7, 2000).

15 K. Wade, 'Ipswich', in R. Hodges and B. Hobley (eds.), The Rebirth of Towns in the West AD 700-1050 (CBA Res. Rep. 68); R. Hodges, The Hamwih Pottery: the Local and Imported Wares from 30 years' Excavations at Middle Saxon Southampton and their European Context (SARC Rep. 2, CBA Res. Rep. 37); L. Blackmore, 'The Anglo-Saxon Pottery', in R.L. Whytehead and R. Cowie with L. Blackmore, 'Two Middle Saxon Occupation Sites: Excavations at Jubilee Hall and 21-22 Maiden Lane', Trans. London & Middx Archaeol. Soc. 39 (1988), 81-110.

small corpus of such finds from the Thames Valley, and are one of the most westerly finds of such material. At this time, the only other findspots apart from *Lundenwic* are from Lake End Road, Maidenhead, Oxford and Old Windsor. ¹⁶ The Oxford sherds were associated with radiocarbon dates of the late 8th/early 9th

century.17

The most significant aspect of the occurrence of this pottery is the proximity of the site to the postulated middle Saxon minster church at Bampton. ¹⁸ Imported pottery such as this only tends to occur at specific types of site, most commonly those with a significant religious component or an association with a royal estate. ¹⁹ Certainly, the other sites in the Thames Valley which have produced imported wares can be argued as belonging to one of these two categories on grounds other than the ceramic, and this find can therefore be taken to indicate that Bampton was of some status during the middle Saxon period, and perhaps support the hypothesis that there was an ecclesiastical site of some significance there.

Some discussion is necessary with regard to the chronology of the contexts that produced only sherds of OXAC. Such material is known in Oxford from the later 9th century, although it did not become common until after the mid 11th century. A sherd was also noted in the bank of the burh at Cricklade, which is dated to the later 9th century on historical grounds. However, the absence of late Saxon Oxford shelly ware (OXB) at this site suggests that the OXAC groups noted here are probably late. OXB is known at sites in the Thames valley in Oxfordshire during the 9th and 10th centuries, but is thought to have fallen from use before AD 1020 from the evidence from Oxford. Similarly, the lack of St. Neot's ware at this site suggests that the earliest pottery groups date to around the mid 11th century, as such material is thought to have had a use-life in the region of ε . AD 925-1050.²⁰

This site would seem to have been occupied more or less continuously through the medieval period until the 15th century. It is possible, from the pottery evidence, that there was a hiatus in activity during the 14th century, but the identification of pottery assemblages of this date in the region is very much dependent on vessel form, particularly those of Brill/Boarstall wares (OXAM). However, the absence of any identifiable vessels of this date from this site is as much due to the fragmentary nature of most of the pottery as to any

hiatus in activity.

THE DAUB AND BURNT CLAY by KAYT BROWN

A small quantity (523 g.) of burnt clay was recovered during the excavation, and a detailed quantification of the material by context is included in the archive. The only diagnostic material comprised possible daub fragments from contexts 2038 and 2039, both fills of pit 2036, and dated through association with the ceramic evidence to the 10th to 11th centuries AD. Context 2039 alone produced 430 g. of possible daub with smoothed outer surfaces, although wattle impressions were not observed. All the material consisted of a sandy clay, presumably derived from a source local to the site. Assemblages of burnt clay (as opposed to deliberately fired clay objects such as loomweights) are a common find on archaeological sites, being produced through a range of processes. Although often surviving only as amorphous fragments, its presence is generally taken to indicate domestic activity on the site.

THE METALWORK ASSEMBLAGE by LEIGH ALLEN

A small assemblage of 19 metal objects was recovered from the evaluation and the excavation, comprising 3 copper alloy and 16 iron objects.

The copper alloy objects comprise a jetton, a brooch and a buckle plate. Nick Mayhew of the Ashmolean Museum has identified the jetton from context 2013, the fill of a tree hole. It is English-made and dates to

17 Mellor op. cit. note 11, p. 41.

18 Blair op. cit. note 2, p. 64.

¹⁶ P. Blinkhorn, 'The Post-Roman Pottery'. in J. Hiller, S. Foreman and S. Mortimer, *The Archaeology of a Middle Thames Landscape*, Vol. 3: *Anglo-Saxon to Post-Medieval* (OAU Thames Valley Landscapes monograph, in prep.); M. Mellor, 'Late Saxon, Medieval and Later Pottery', in B.G. Durham, 'The Thames Crossing at Oxford: Archaeological Studies 1979-82', *Oxoniensia*, xlix (1984); G.C. Dunning, J.G. Hurst, J.N.L. Myres and F. Tischler, 'Anglo-Saxon Pottery: A Symposium', *Medieval Archaeol.* 3 (1959), 1-78 and Fig 24.

¹⁹ P.W. Blinkhorn, 'Of Cabbages and Kings: Production, Trade and Consumption in Middle Saxon England', in M. Anderton (ed.), Anglo-Saxon Trading Centres and their Hinterlands. Beyond the Emporia (1999), 10-11.

²⁰ Mellor op. cit. note 11, pp. 40-1, 51-2, 57.

c. 1300 although it could have been in circulation until c. 1400. The brooch from context 1030, an upper fill of quarry 1039, is a small delicate penannular brooch, with a circular-sectioned hoop and globular terminals. This form of brooch is early Iron Age in origin but maintained its popularity in the Roman and Saxon periods.²¹ The buckle plate from context 1037, also a quarry fill, is folded, rectangular and recessed for the frame. There is a small hole in each corner for attachment; one has a tack still in situ. There is a larger hole for the pin, which is missing. The upper plate has a simple decoration in the form of a scalloped edge.

The iron objects consist of a spur, a horseshoe, 2 horseshoe nails, a knife, a stapled hasp, 6 nails, 2 strips, fragments of sheet, and a miscellaneous fragment. The spur from evaluation context 14 (part of Phase 4 quarry 1009) is a prick spur of late Saxon or early medieval date. The goad is relatively slender and the arms are long with a slight curve to fit under the wearer's ankle. 22 The terminal rings are both incomplete and the

x-rays indicate decorative incised lines just behind the terminal rings.

The horseshoe fragment from context 1058, the upper fill of phase 4 pit 1055, is a late medieval form frequently reported from 14th- and 15th-century contexts.²³ A horseshoe nail from evaluation context 2 (post-medieval ploughsoil) is of a type used with horseshoes with rectangular countersunk holes dating to the 13th and 14th century.²⁴ A second horseshoe nail, from context 2046 (an upper fill of phase 3 ditch 2050), is of the fiddle key form designed to sit in the long countersunk holes of horseshoes of the 'Norman' type, a type of shoe that was hardly seen before the Conquest but was common thereafter into the 13th century. The knife from context 2037 (a lower fill of the Phase 2 pit 2036) is a whittle tang knife; the blade back rises and then angles down to the tip, and the cutting edge is straight. Knives with angled backs are common in the Saxon period, continuing in use into the 12th and early 13th centuries.²⁵ The remaining identifiable object (with the exception of the nails) is a looped stapled hasp from evaluation context 41 (a fill of a phase 4 gully). This type of hasp would have been attached to the eye of a hinge and in use its staple entered a mounted lock and was closed by the passage of the lock bolt through it.²⁶

ANIMAL BONE by BETHAN MAIR CHARLES

A total of 1845 fragments were recovered from the site of which 1434 were collected by hand and 411 were retrieved from sieved samples (Tables 1 and 2).

Condition

The bone was generally in good condition, graded between 1 and 2 using the criteria established by Lyman. ²⁷ Many of the bones had butchery marks and 1% of all fragments with evidence of gnawing. Seven fragments of burnt bone were identified from the assemblage, the majority coming from sieved material from the earliest phase.

Methodology

The analysis followed standard OAU procedure, details of which are included in the archive.

Species Representation

Sheep and cattle dominate the assemblage through all the phases (Tables 1 and 2). The number of pig bones also shows that they were an important part of the diet. The greater number of identifiable elements come from the later medieval period (phases 3 and 4).

Sheep: The epiphyseal and mandible wear stages of many of the sheep at death was between 6 months and 2 years. A few of the sheep appear to have been kept to an older age during the later phases, possibly as a result of better management or an increase in wool production leading to sheep being kept for longer periods. Two male sheep from the later phases were identified from the assemblage.

- ²¹ A. MacGregor and E. Bolick, A Summary Catalogue of the Anglo-Saxon Collections (Non-Ferrous Metals) (Ashmolean Mus. and BAR Brit. Ser. 230, 1993), 93-5.
- ²² B. Ellis, 'Spurs and Spur Fittings', in J. Clarke, Medieval Finds from Excavations in London: 5. The Medieval Horse and its Equipment (1995), 125.
 - 23 Ibid. 96-7.
 - ²⁴ Ibid. 96.
 - 25 I.H. Goodall, 'Knives', in M. Biddle, Object and Economy in Medieval Winchester (1990), 835-863.838.
 - 26 I.H. Goodall, 'Iron Fittings from Furniture', in ibid. 971-980.973.
 - ²⁷ R.L. Lyman, Vertebrate Taphonomy (Cambridge Manuals in Archaeol. 1996).

TABLE 1. SPECIES REPRESENTATION IN HAND COLLECTED SAMPLES ACCORDING TO PHASE

Phase	Cattle	Sheep	Pig	Horse	Dog	Roe Deer	Unidentified
1	1	1	0	0	0	0	4
2	42	19	5	0	0	0	35
3	174	284	52	16	2	1	572
3/4	3	2	0	0	0	0	16
4	53	40	3	10	1	0	92
Total	273	346	60	17	3	1	719

TABLE 2. SPECIES REPRESENTATION IN SIEVED SAMPLES ACCORDING TO PHASE

Phase	Cattle	Sheep	Pig	Unidentified
1	2	4	3	93
2	0	0	0	2
3	2	5	4	118
4	6	3	2	59
Total	10	12	9	272

TABLE 3. BIRD SPECIES REPRESENTATION IN HAND COLLECTED MATERIAL ACCORDING TO PHASE

Phase	D.Fowl	D.Goose	Mallard	Unidentified	Total
1	0	0	0	1	1
2	1	0	0	0	1
3	6	2	1	0	9
3/4	0	1	0	0	1
4	1	0	0	0	1

Cattle: The majority of cattle from the medieval period (phases 3 and 4) were kept until fully mature and possibly older. Very few bones from young individuals were recovered. It is possible that some of the cattle were kept for traction or that they were farmed for beef only.

Pigs: Evidence from the mandible wear stages shows that the majority of the pig bones from the medieval period (phase 3) were young animals less than 2 years of age whilst the animals from the later medieval period (phase 4) were slightly older. Since pigs were valued primarily for their meat it is unlikely that the animals would have been kept to an old age.

Horse: Only a small number of horse bones from the later phases were recovered from the site. Some of the fragments had chop marks although it is unlikely that horse meat was eaten since it was not customarily eaten in England during the medieval period. One pelvis bone from phase 3 was identified as female. The horse may have been used for traction purposes although it may also have been kept for riding.

The bird, small mammal, amphibian and fish bone (Table 3): A total of 13 fragments of bird bone were retrieved from the hand collected material. Most of the identified fragments were from phase 3 and consisted mainly of elements from domestic fowl (Gallus gallus) and domestic goose (Anser anser). One fragment of a mallard (Anas platyrhynchos) was also retrieved from phase 3. There were no butchery marks on the bird remains.

Ten fragments of fish bone consisting mostly of scales were recovered from two later contexts of sieved material. Only one vertebral fragment was diagnostic but was not identified to species.

Discussion

Iron Age: A small number of bones from the assemblage came from the Iron Age features. These consisted of a small number of elements from cattle, sheep and pigs. No further information other than the presence of the animals around the site could be ascertained.

Late Saxon-medieval: A small number of bones were retrieved from features dating to the earlier part of the medieval period (phase 2). It is possible that they indicate a gradual change in the animal husbandry of the site, with an increase during the later period in the number of sheep kept in comparison to the cattle. The greatest variety of animal bones from the assemblage was evident in material from the latter half of this period. The majority of the bird bone came from 11th- to 13th-century deposits and it also appears that the diet was supplemented very slightly by wild species. One fragment of roe deer (Capreolus capreolus) and a few elements of rabbit bone were retrieved from the assemblage.

Late medieval, 14th-15th century: The majority of the bones came from features of this period and consisted mainly of sheep, cattle and pig. Around 70% of the fragments of bone came from context 2046 (ditch 2050) and a further 20% from context 2056 (ditch 2051). Both of these contexts were upper fills of the boundary ditch system. Since the majority of the assemblage came from two contexts, it may not be representative of the true economy of the site during this period. However, evidence from the few cattle and sheep elements that were complete indicates that the stature of the animals increased during this period in comparison with the measurements taken for the earlier periods (measurements in archive). The elements of rabbit bone found in this period may indicate a medium status site since they were still expensive animals to obtain during the medieval period and not widespread until the post-medieval era. ²⁸

THE CHARRED PLANT REMAINS by RUTH PELLING

A small number of samples were taken for the recovery of charred plant remains. A total of nine samples were processed, usually of 40 litres, with one sample of 12 litres. Three samples were taken from the pit or gully deposits of Iron Age date, while the remaining samples came from quarry backfill, ditch or pit fills of medieval date (11th to 14th century). The samples were processed by bulk water flotation and the flots collected onto a 500μ mesh. Dried flots were submitted for assessment.

Methodology

Each flot was scanned under a binocular microscope at x10 magnification. Any charred seeds or chaff noted were provisionally identified and an approximation of abundance made. Charcoal was broken in transverse section and provisionally identified.

Results (Table 4)

Charred remains in all samples were generally poorly preserved and had suffered much abrasion, possibly a result of post-depositional processes. Some distortion was also witnessed which tends to suggest charring at high temperatures.

The three phase 1 samples contain large numbers of the mollusc Cecilioides acicula, a burrowing mollusc and a medieval introduction. This would suggest that either the features are actually late in date or simply that they have been disturbed by the burrowing molluscs. Vallonia excentrica and Pupilla muscorum were also noted, both characteristic of dry open conditions. Cereal grains are present in low numbers in two samples (contexts 1013 and 1049) while chaff is absent and weeds very rare. The cereals are dominated by free-threshing Triticum sp. (bread type or rivet wheat) with some Hordeum vulgare (barley). It was not possible to establish if the Hordeum vulgare is hulled or naked. In addition, occasional legumes were present in sample 502 (context 1049) including Vicia sativa (cultivated vetch), a medieval introduction. Charcoal noted in two samples consists entirely of Ouercus sp. (oak).

The phase 2, 3 and 4 samples contain slightly higher concentrations of remains although the numbers are still not very significant. Cereal grains noted include free-threshing *Triticum* sp., *Hordeum vulgare*, with occasional *Avena* sp. (oak) and *Secale cereale* (rye), all appropriate species for the period. Legumes are also present in three samples but were poorly preserved, lacking testa and hila, so could not be identified. Charcoal is again dominated by *Quercus* sp. (oak). The molluscs present in two of the samples again are dominated by *Cecilioides acicula* but also include *Cepea nemeranis*, and *Pupilla muscorum*, which suggest dry open conditions.

TABLE 4. THE CHARRED PLANT REMAINS NOTED IN THE SAMPLES

	Sample	500	501	502	503	504	507	506/8
	Context	1013	1015	1049	1030	2011	2028	2060
	Phase	1	1	1	4	2	3	3
	Volume	40	12	40	40	40	40	80
	Feature Type	Pit	Pit	Gully	Quarry	Ditch	Pit	Pit/
								Ditch
	Approx. Total Grain	20	0	10	50	10	15	100
	Approx. Total Chaff	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Approx. Total Weeds	1	0	0	20	0	5	5
	Approx. Total 'Other'	0	0	2	10	0	5	30
	Total Charcoal	2	3	0	2	0	0	1
Species Present								
Triticum sp., free-threshing	Bread/Rivet Wheat		-		0:	*	*	
Hordeum vulgare	Barley	-	-	*	*	*	*	*
Avena sp.	Oats	-	-	-	*	-	-	20
Secale cereale	Rye	-	-	-	-	~	-	
Vicia/Pisum sp.	Vetch/Bean/Pea	-	-	*	- 10	-	*	*
Vicia sativa	Cultivated Vetch	-	-	7	-	-	-	-
Quercus sp.	Oak		. 0		*	4	-	
Other charcoal		-	-	-	*	-	-	-
Molluscs		. 0		*	*	2	~	

Charcoal quantified on a four point scale, 1= present, 2 = moderate, 3 = frequent, 4 = abundant * = present

Discussion

The charred plant remains in the samples are generally fairly poorly preserved and present only in low concentrations, suggesting an absence of crop processing in the vicinity of the site. The cereals are all known cultivars during the medieval period, while the absence of chaff prevented identifications from being taken further. The presence of medieval introductions in the charred plant remains suggests some disturbance of the Iron Age deposits, possibly by ploughing.

DISCUSSION

The site lies less than 200 m. S. of Bampton parish church, an Anglo-Saxon minster that has been the subject of a research programme since the mid 1980s.²⁹ The following discussion will therefore consider the results of the excavation in the light of the current themes and provisional conclusions of the research programme.

Early Iron Age

As discussed elsewhere in this report, the characteristics of the pottery deposited in the pit may suggest a motivation beyond mere domestic rubbish disposal. Small scale excavation has revealed parts of two Bronze Age barrow ditches approximately 150 m. N. of the site (see Fig. 7). So If there was a ritual element to the Iron Age features, it could reflect a continuing awareness of the religious significance of the barrow area. That the two features revealed in

30 S. Midl. Archaeol. xxii (1992), 55, 57; xxviii (1998), 47-51.

²⁹ For a summary of results see J. Blair, 'Bampton: an Anglo-Saxon Minster', Current Archaeol. 160 (1998), 124-30. Interim reports have appeared in S. Midl. Archaeol. xvi (1986), 87-92; xviii (1988), 89-93; xxii (1992), 55-62; and xxviii (1998), 47-54.

this excavation were confined to the S. end of the site, and no other contemporary artefacts were recovered, suggests that any occupation focus would have been situated to the S. of the site.

Mid Saxon

Although the excavation produced no definite mid Saxon features, two very important pottery sherds of North French Blackware, dating to the 8th or 9th century, were recovered from the upper fill of a 12th-century ditch. Although clearly residual, their presence on the site is crucial; this is the first find on the Thames above Oxford of this prestige imported ware, and supports both the contention that Bampton was an elite, and presumably monastic, settlement by AD 800, and that trade from *Lundenwic* and the Thames estuary extended this far up-river.

Late Saxon: 10th-11th centuries

The features that were stratigraphically assigned to this phase were not, in themselves, particularly diagnostic. The flat bottomed pit had certain similarities to sunken featured buildings and the presence of such a structure in the vicinity could add support to the idea of a early settlement coalescing around the southern approach to the minster as defined by Church View. It has been inferred, on topographical grounds, that a funnel-shaped area NE. of the site is the infilled relict of an original open space – possibly a market site – situated in front of the minster enclosure (see Fig. 7). A small 11th-century sunken featured building was partly revealed under the former E. frontage of this open space.³¹

Medieval: 11th to 13th centuries

The growth of a settlement associated with the minster seems to be reflected in the development (and subsequent modification) of a series of rectilinear boundary ditches. Possibly part of this ditch arrangement is an undated E.-W. ditch seen in the garden of Field Cottage, immediately W. of the excavation site.³² These ditches may have defined paddocks or properties clustered around the minster enclosure, and one early example from the excavation displayed a profile characteristic of a post-in-trench palisade (see Fig. 6, section 201). The predominance of cattle and, latterly, sheep in the bone assemblage recovered from the ditch fills is typical of the development of animal husbandry in the region at that time.

Other examples of lay settlements developing into proto-towns around the fringes of minster churches can be found along the Upper Thames, as at Abingdon (where Domesday mentions 'ten merchants dwelling before the gate of the church') and Eynsham.³³ The picture emerging at Bampton is of a late Saxon or early Norman nucleus around Church View.

However, this original lay nucleus seems to have been marginalised by the establishment of the triangular market place to the SE., probably laid out in the 13th century. The apparent abandonment of the ditch system may add support to this idea, as the economic focus of the community moved to the E. The pottery from the ditches was scarce in quantity

³¹ Ibid. xxviii (1998), 49, 53.

³² Information from the owner, Mr. G. Marsh, 1999. The ditch was about 1.2 m. wide, about 1.2 m. deep from present ground surface, and had a 'U' shaped profile.

³³ J. Blair, 'Small Towns before 1270', in D.M. Palliser (ed.), The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, 1: the Middle Ages (2000), 245-70.

and consisted mainly of 11th- and 12th-century material, with some 13th-century sherds in

the upper fills.

If, by the end of the 13th century, the area around the excavation had become wasteland, the evidence of extensive quarrying would arguably be unsurprising. The fills of the quarry pits produced generally residual material, ranging from the penannular brooch to 11th- and 12th-century pottery. The lack of 13th- and 14th-century material could be seen as consistent with the absence of nearby occupation.

The later medieval period: 14th-15th centuries

The stone building is almost certainly a small barn, probably with a facing pair of entrances in the lateral walls (although only the E. wagon porch was revealed in the excavation). No dating material was found to define a construction date, and stylistically it could fall anywhere between the 13th and the 16th centuries. While it is not impossible that the barn related to a property fronting onto Church View, the post-medieval evidence for the local topography suggests otherwise. Fig. 8 shows plot boundaries as transcribed from the earliest accurate map of the area, the enclosure map of 1821,34 with additional data taken from other maps and documentary and archaeological sources. The close containing the barn is first identifiable in 1767 on a map of the estate of John Frederick, where it is labelled 'Home Close', containing 2 roods 26 perches. 35 The Fredericks, and their successors the Whittakers, were lessees of the rectory manor, held since the 1050s by the chapter of Exeter cathedral.³⁶ On a sketch map of 1830, however, the close is labelled 'pasture field said to be Mr. Whittaker's freehold', suggesting that it was not part of the rectory manor (of which the Whittakers only obtained the freehold in 1866).³⁷ The same sketch-map claims two parcels of land in the N. part of the close as belonging to the property immediately N. of the close, which Exeter College had brought from local freeholders in the 16th century and leased to John Frederick in 1775.38 However, this is contradicted by the 1769 map which shows the entire close already in Frederick's hands. The property to the S., on which the school was built in 1860, was part of the Earl of Shrewsbury's estate in 1789,39 and therefore presumably part of the main, originally royal manor of Bampton, which had been held by the Talbots in the late middle ages.

The late medieval status of the property is unclear; it could have been a part of the rectory manor or the Talbot manor, or an independent early freehold. The last possibility is hinted at by the name 'Home Close', one of a category of names that often referred to the sites of abandoned medieval houses. The barn could therefore have been associated with a house situated within the close, rather than one fronting Church View. Given the evidence for a now-lost road running S. through the W. part of the churchyard and down the W. side of the close, ⁴⁰ connecting with Bridge Street near the bridge (see Fig. 7), it is possible that the property of which the barn was a part was approached from the W. rather than from the E., and that a house stood in the W. part of the Close with the barn – to the E. – behind it.

³⁴ O.R.O., Encl. Award, plan I; for full transcription see V.C.H. Oxon. xiii, 18.

³⁵ BL Add. MS. 31323-III (reproduced Blair op. cit. note 29, p.127).

³⁶ V.C.H. Oxon. xiii, 25-6.

³⁷ Exeter Coll., Bampton docs. (M.II.1), Bundle B; V.C.H. Oxon. xiii, 26.

³⁸ Exeter Coll., Bampton docs. (M.II.1), Bundle B.

³⁹ Parcel 13 on the 1789 Shrewsbury estate map: BL, Map Room, C7.e.16.3.

⁴⁰ S. Midl. Archaeol. xxii (1992), 55, 58.

Thus the documentary evidence seems to point towards a likely 15th-century date for the barn's construction, and the topographical evidence implies that the land division of the 10th to 13th centuries had been radically redefined after a period in the 14th century when the area was effectively wasteland. This is supported by written sources suggesting that depopulation and amalgamation of holdings only became evident in Bampton near the end of the 14th century.⁴¹

Post-medieval

Once the barn had been demolished, which from the map evidence had happened by the late 18th century, the site seems to have remained largely undisturbed apart from the occasional small pit, and probably served as an orchard garden judging by the reasonable depth of accumulated cultivation soil encountered in the excavation.

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