A Late-Medieval Kitchen in Parson's Street, Banbury: Excavations at the Ye Olde Reindeer Public House

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with contributions by Paul Blinkhorn, Trista Clifford and Karine Le Hégarat

SUMMARY

An archaeological trench was excavated by Archaeology South-East at the rear of the Ye Olde Reindeer public house, Banbury on behalf of the 'Pub Dig' television programme. The earliest feature was a twelfth- or thirteenth-century ditch, possibly a burgage plot boundary associated with the laying out of the medieval planned town. The site remained open ground until the fifteenth century when a substantial masonry kitchen building with oven(s) was constructed. A diverse macrobotanical assemblage was recovered from deposits associated with the use of the kitchen. The kitchen building was demolished by the late sixteenth century, possibly as the result of a change in ownership. Previously the identification of archaeological deposits associated with the medieval town has proved elusive and this is the first occasion that a significant stratified sequence of deposits has been demonstrated.

Archaeology South-East (a division of the Centre for Applied Archaeology, UCL Institute of Archaeology) undertook two archaeological trenches at the rear of two public houses in Banbury on behalf of Oxford Scientific Films Limited (Fig. 1). The archaeological work was filmed as part of the 'Pub Dig' programme and was televised in 2011 and 2012 (Fig. 2). The two public houses were The Unicorn, in Market Place and Ye Olde Reindeer in Parson's Street. The archaeological trench at the former was curtailed after it was apparent that a nineteenth-century cellar had removed all the potential earlier remains. This article deals only with the work at the latter site.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

No convincing archaeological evidence of Roman occupation has been identified at Banbury, but the presence of settlement in the Anglo-Saxon period is suggested by the place-name, OE *Banesberie* (1086 DB), meaning Ban(n)a's *burh*, or 'fortified place'.[1] Documentary evidence shows that Anglo-Saxon Banbury was the centre of a large estate, including the site of an important church belonging to the bishops of Dorchester and later, after the see was removed there in 1072, to the bishops of Lincoln.[2] The location and extent of the initial settlement is unknown although it has been speculated that the focus was some distance away from the ford of the River Cherwell around the site of the present St Mary's church. The current church is

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[1] M. Gelling, *The Place-Names of Oxfordshire*, vol. 2 (1954), pp. 411–12.
[2] Mary D. Lobel, *Historic Town Maps and Plans of Towns and Cities in the British Isles, Volume 1* (1969), p. 1.

Fig. 1. Site location.

Fig. 2. Photograph of the trench-side filming of 'Pub Dig' presenters Paul Blinkhorn (right) and Rory McGrath.

an eighteenth-century rebuild of its medieval predecessor, but presumably it is on roughly the same site as the original Anglo-Saxon church.[3]

Banbury, like Thame and Witney, was indebted to an ecclesiastic for its medieval urban expansion.[4] Alexander bishop of Lincoln (1123–48) is known to have constructed the castle and to have laid out a new town between the river and the older settlement, laying out plots around a marketplace close to the original village of Banbury.[5] As the town seems to have already possessed a successful market, this initiative appears to have been more of a formalisation of the existing settlement, rather than as a completely new planned urban development.[6] The establishment of a castle at Banbury seems to have had a relatively minimal effect on the development of the town when compared to places such as Wallingford.[7] The initial establishment of the castle on an open site on the northern periphery of Banbury in the early twelfth century meant the town's existing buildings escaped unscathed. The later town was also allowed to develop over the site after the castle was abandoned and levelled well before the end of the medieval period.[8]

Under the influence of the bishops of Lincoln the 'planted' town prospered. Burgage plots were taken up, markets and fairs developed, trading connections were established with distant places, and in the thirteenth century the town's ale and cloth began to gain in reputation.[9] A secondary phase of planned medieval growth took place in the thirteenth century to the south-east at 'Newlands', although this later growth was limited, confined mainly along the major route ways. Other examples of medieval towns in the county

[3] Kirsty Rodwell, *Historic Towns in Oxfordshire* (1975) p. 53.
[4] Ibid. p. 17.
[5] Lobel, *Historic Town Maps and Plans of Towns and Cities*, p. 2.
[6] Rodwell, *Historic Towns in Oxfordshire*, p. 17.
[7] Ibid. p. 21.
[8] Ibid.
[9] *VCH Oxon.* 10, pp. 29–42.

expanding in this linear way include Thame and Witney, both of which belonged to the bishop of Lincoln.[10]

Plague and economic troubles precipitated a decline in the town in the fourteenth century, but recovery was inspired in the fifteenth century by its increasing importance as a collecting centre for the regional wool trade. War and fire took their toll in the seventeenth century, and the town was largely rebuilt in the form we see today. Although the medieval buildings have largely not survived, Banbury retains much of its medieval street pattern, and burgage plots are still visible on the west side of South Bar Street.[11]

The Ye Olde Reindeer Public House

The pub is located on Parson's Street, formerly Gropecunt Lane, in the historic medieval core of Banbury, south-west of the site of the castle. The pub was formerly a courtyard building, although a substantial portion of the rear has been demolished and the east side (No. 48) has been converted into a separate dwelling. The pub is one of Banbury's oldest inns. The majority of the building dates to the early to mid sixteenth century, although an examination of the building fabric by Richard K. Morris as part of the television programme identified earlier medieval structural elements.[12] The front gates of the pub are carved with the names of John and Joan Knight and David Horn and dated 1570. John Knight was probably the baker who seems to have founded the Knight family's fortunes. Members of the family certainly owned the property in 1706 and had probably held it continuously since 1590. The core of the inn was the early/mid sixteenth-century western 'L'-shaped building (No. 47) of both stone and timber. The eastern side (No. 48) was added possibly in the late sixteenth century and incorporates fine star-patterned timber-framing. The northern range forming the rest of the courtyard was completed by the seventeenth century and rear access was afforded via a pair of gates to Castle Street. The seventeenth-century addition to the north of the west side, the 'Globe Room' was particularly notable for its great mullioned and transomed window, which has not survived. The fine panelling, plaster ceiling with broad enriched ribs and other internal decoration was well above the standard of other local domestic architecture, and would have served to attract wealthy patrons to the inn.[13] The inn suffered from declining trade in the eighteenth century and part of the building was sold off as a private dwelling in 1795. This may have been because Parson's Street was too narrow for the growing coach traffic.[14]

Previous Archaeological Work in Banbury

By far the largest and most sustained series of archaeological excavations in Banbury centred on the castle; these were mostly undertaken in advance of the building of a new shopping centre in the early 1970s and succeeded in outlining the castle's chronological development and identifying many of its principal buildings, as well as excavating the moat.[15] While the development of the castle is relatively well-understood, the adjacent town is not. Despite Banbury's clear regional importance as a medieval market town, and the relative wealth of historic documentary sources, archaeological evidence from this period has remained elusive. It is ironic that two of Banbury's outlying medieval hamlets, Grimsbury and Hanwell, have both been archaeologically identified

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[10] Ibid. p. 19.
[11] Rodwell, *Historic Towns in Oxfordshire*, p. 53.
[12] Richard K. Morris, personal communication. A report on this work has unfortunately not been produced.
[13] *VCH Oxon.* 10, pp. 32–5.
[14] Ibid.
[15] For the castle excavations see P.J. Fasham, 'Excavations in Banbury, 1972: First Report', *Oxoniensia*, 38 (1973), pp. 312–38; idem, 'Excavations in Banbury, 1972: Second and Final Report', *Oxoniensia*, 48 (1983), pp. 71–118; K.A. Rodwell, 'Excavations on the Site of Banbury Castle, 1973–4' *Oxoniensia*, 41 (1976), pp. 90–147; S.J. Litherland and K. Nichol, 'Banbury Town Centre', *SMidlA*, 29 (1999), pp. 40–2.

and are far better understood than their considerably larger neighbour.[16] While the historic core of Banbury never experienced the large-scale rescue excavations that many other urban centres (such as Oxford and Abingdon) witnessed from the 1970s onwards, Banbury has seen a number of small archaeological interventions. However, these interventions have, by and large, repeatedly identified post-medieval activity truncating all earlier deposits (as in the trench at The Unicorn). On the rare occasions when medieval features have been found, these have been mostly ephemeral pits and gullies[17], and the identification of buildings or significant stratified sequences has been lacking.[18] Indeed such is the town's reputation for lacking medieval archaeology, that when two archaeological trenches were located in the historic core of Banbury for the 'Pub Dig' television programme, the intention was to explore the seventeenth-century Civil War remains, not any potentially earlier structures.

DISCUSSION

A potential burgage plot ditch was the earliest feature identified. This feature may be associated with the initial laying out of Gropecunt Lane (the earlier version of Parson's Street) and the division of the plots during the creation of the planned town by Alexander, Bishop of Lincoln in the twelfth century. The ditch appears to have fallen out of use by the fourteenth century and, although only a small area was investigated, there was no evidence of any further occupation until the fifteenth century, and this apparent hiatus may be a consequence of the devastation thought to have been brought to the town by famine and successive plagues in the fourteenth century.[19]

The boundary division defined by the ditch was clearly no longer relevant by the time a large masonry kitchen building was constructed above the in-filled ditch, straddling at least two former land plots. The kitchen was a substantial edifice representing a significant capital outlay, and is likely to have been an ancillary structure to the pre-sixteenth-century timber framed building identified within the standing fabric of the existing Reindeer public house. These two late-medieval buildings would appear to have been set around a courtyard, with other buildings, such as stables, nearby.

Whilst medieval kitchen ranges are frequently identified on monastic and manorial sites, kitchens associated with town houses are somewhat less common, and rarely have they been published in archaeological literature in any more than summary detail. This kitchen was clearly a notable building, built by a wealthy landowner, possibly the prebendary of Banbury, who is known to have owned much of the street in the later Middle Ages.[20]

Both the masonry and the floor deposits displayed obvious signs of burning and this may have resulted either from the use of the building as a kitchen or alternatively from its destruction by fire. However, the lack of charcoal in the environmental samples from above the floors suggests the latter is unlikely and the continual use of ovens and hearths caused the heat damage.

Environmental samples produced a diverse macrobotanical assemblage including cereals, pulses, fish bones and egg shells, but these unfortunately do not precisely determine the use of

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[16] T.G. Allen, 'Archaeological Discoveries on the Banbury East–West Link Road', *Oxoniensia*, 54 (1989), pp. 25–44; C. Stevens et al., 'Iron Age and Saxon Settlement at Jugglers Close, Banbury, Oxfordshire', *Oxoniensia*, 69 (2004), pp. 385–416; R.A. Chambers, 'Excavations at Hanwell, near Banbury, Oxon, 1974', *Oxoniensia,* 40 (1975), pp. 218–37.

[17] For example: PRNs 16123 and 10715.

[18] Two stone rubble spreads, interpreted as the foundations of medieval buildings, were excavated at Bridge Street in 1990. Both spreads were undated but were adjacent to dark earth deposits containing thirteenth-century pottery: R.A. Chambers and M. Napthan, 'Banbury: Inner Relief Road', *SMidlA*, 21 (1991), pp. 99–100.

[19] Lobel, *Historic Town Maps and Plans*, p. 3; J. Steane, 'Medieval Oxfordshire, 1100–1540', *Oxoniensia*, 65 (2000), p. 9.

[20] Lobel, *Historic Town Maps and Plans*, pp. 2–3.

the ovens. However, it seems likely that the ovens were used for a variety of domestic purposes, perhaps including brewing, an industry Banbury was famous for in the Middle Ages, and the identified macrobotanical remains give a small insight into the range of foodstuffs being used.

There was no evidence to precisely date the destruction of the building, but this seems to have occurred sometime in the sixteenth century. The building seems to have been first abandoned, with a thin soil layer ([12]) forming on stone floor [31], before being deliberately demolished and levelled with a series of clay dumps. The slighting of the building may have been associated with a change in ownership, since the Knights, a family of wealthy bakers, took up residence in the second half of the sixteenth century.[21]

This small trench has adequately demonstrated that significant stratified medieval urban deposits do indeed survive in Banbury. Further discoveries should be anticipated by future interventions. Similarly, the identification of medieval structural timbers within the sixteenth-century inn, although these were not subject to formal recording and analysis, indicates the potential for other timber-framed buildings in the town to contain earlier elements.

THE EXCAVATION

Period 1, Phase 1: Twelfth-/Thirteenth-Century Possible Burgage Plot

The earliest stratigraphic feature identified in the trench was ditch [43] dug into the blue alluvial clay [44] (Fig. 3). Only a small portion (c.1.5 m) of the ditch length was seen but the feature seemed to be aligned north-east to south-west. The ditch fill [41/42] contained five sherds of twelfth-/thirteenth-century pottery and the environmental sample produced a rich assemblage of macrobotanical remains including cereals, weeds from disturbed or cultivated ground, hazelnut shells and egg shell fragments. This assemblage indicates that the ditch was an open feature near habitation and it is likely that it represented a land boundary, possibly a burgage plot to the rear of domestic buildings.

Immediately east of the ditch was posthole [48], formed by a sharpened post being driven into the natural clay. Although the posthole contained no finds, its stratigraphic situation suggests it is most likely contemporary with ditch [43] and part of an adjacent fence line.

Period 1, Phase 2: Fifteenth-Century Detached Kitchen Building

Ditch [43] had fallen out of use and had been allowed to silt up before a substantial masonry building was constructed, possibly coinciding with a modification or complete removal of earlier land divisions (Fig. 4). The two main elements of the building seen in the trench were stone wall [24] and clay floor [29], into which was set an oven. As the wall and majority of the floor were not excavated and remained in situ, not all of the stratigraphic relationships were identified. Wall [24] was of a substantial ironstone masonry construction and apparently formed the northern external wall of the building (Figs. 4 and 5). The wall had been built on a stepped rubble foundation base [50] within construction cut [49]. Only a small portion of the base of its construction cut was seen and its full extent was unknown, lying beyond the limits of the trench. The foundation of the wall (c.1 m deep) was made of unfaced, uncoursed rubble. The upper part of the wall was of roughly faced ironstone blocks set in irregular courses. The size of the foundations clearly indicates that this was an imposing structure probably of more than one storey. The wall itself was aligned roughly east–west with a battered internal face and a vertical external face. It was slightly thicker in the east (0.6 m) than the west (0.5 m) although no reason for this was apparent.

Posthole [45] was dug into the base of construction cut [49]. This posthole was only partially seen, but it is likely to have been related to the erection of the external scaffolding: the fact that it was overlain by the construction cut backfill [38] indicates that the post was only in use
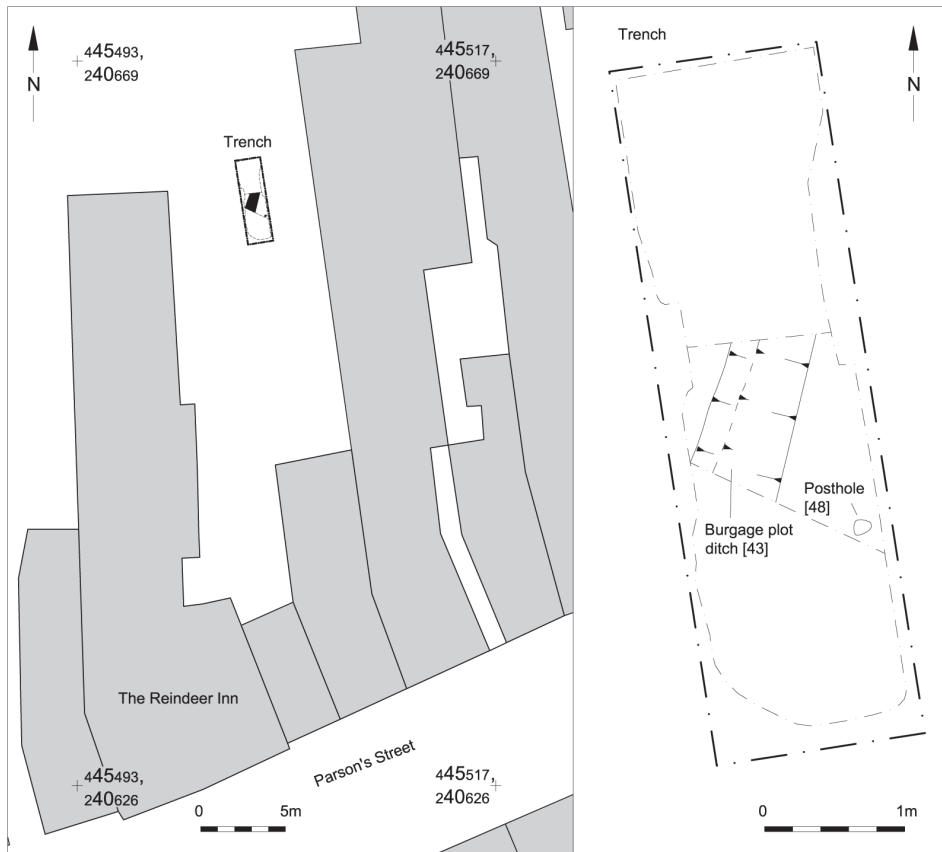
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[21] *VCH Oxon.* 10, p. 34.

Fig. 3. Period 1.1: Twelfth-/thirteenth-century burgage plot.

during the construction of wall. The four sherds of fifteenth-century pottery recovered from backfill [38] represent the best dating evidence for the construction of the building; the small assemblage of eleventh- to thirteenth-century pottery sherds recovered from the internal clay floor [29] are likely to be residual, originating from underlying ditch [43].

To the south of the wall was an internal floor of rammed clay [29] extending throughout the trench and beyond the limits of excavation. This floor was likely to have been contemporary with the construction of the building and it contained two features, the fragmentary remains of oven 1 and posthole [39].

The oven survived only as an area of red and brown burnt clay in floor [29], and although nothing of the superstructure remained, having been removed by later modifications, it was likely to have been circular and at least 0.6 m in diameter.

Between the oven and the north wall was posthole [40] with in situ packing stones [39] for a squared post measuring *c*.0.12 m by 0.12 m. The function of this posthole was not clear, but it may have related to the internal scaffolding used during the construction of the roof and upper stories. This interpretation was also put forward for similar postholes found in the medieval kitchen building at Lincoln College, Oxford.[22]

[22]   Z. Kamash et al., 'Late Saxon and Medieval Occupation: Evidence from Excavations at Lincoln College, Oxford 1997–2000', *Oxoniensia*, 67 (2002), p. 216.

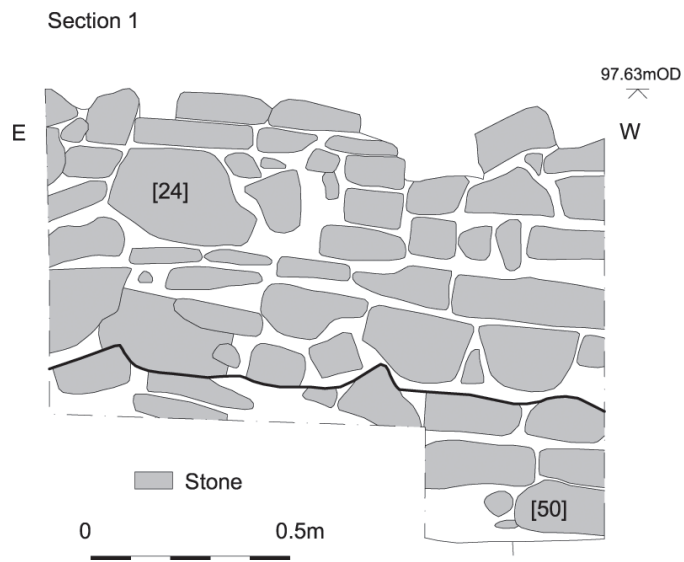Fig. 4. Period 1.2: Fifteenth-century detached kitchen building.

Section 1

Fig. 5. North elevation of north wall [24].

Period 1, Phase 3: Fifteenth-Century Building Alterations
At some point the internal layout of the building was altered and a series of internal masonry features and clay floors were added, overlying posthole [40] and oven 1 (Figs. 6 and 7). During this phase, the oven was re-built in irregularly coursed stone [18] and [19] with a clay and stone rubble core [23] (Oven 2). The floor of this second oven was made of heavily burnt red stone cobbles [22], abutting a stokehole floor of squared flag-stones [21] with an external stone cobble kerb (Fig. 8). It was notable that a finely tooled splayed block had been reused in the eastern stokehole wall [19], in contrast to the unfaced stone blocks elsewhere, and may have originated from a nearby building of some status. The western stokehole wall [20] was built on top of the floor [21], and was set at a slightly different angle to wall [19], suggesting that it was perhaps a later rebuild or addition. At the north end of the trench, abutting wall [24] was a fireplace [32] with a recessed ash-pit and an adjacent stone block floor [31] (Fig. 9). A bone knife handle RF<2> was recovered from the base of the ash-pit [30].

Abutting the south side of the stone floor [31] was a burnt clay floor [26/27]. Overlying the burnt clay floor [26/27] and stokehole floor [21] was a mottled black and grey charcoal-rich silt layer [28], possibly a rake-out deposit from the oven. Environmental samples from the floor [26/27] and rake-out deposit [28] both contained rich macrobotanical remains including cereals, arable weeds, some pulses as well as egg shell fragments, fish bones and small mammal bones, potentially indicating some of the foodstuffs being prepared in the oven.

Period 2 Phase 1: Late Fifteenth-/Late Sixteenth-Century Abandonment
Inside the building, a silty layer [12] formed above stone floor [31], suggesting the building fell into disuse before part of wall [24] collapsed inward covering much of the area with rubble [15] (Fig. 10). At some subsequent point the ruins of the building were deliberately backfilled [9] and [10]. A small assemblage of late fifteenth-/late sixteenth-century pottery was recovered from these deposits. Against the external face of wall [24] a series of *c.*0.5-m thick buried soil horizons ([37], [25] and [4]) formed containing sherds of fifteenth- to late sixteenth-century pottery and a fragment of highly corroded copper alloy sheet RF<1>.

Period 2 Phase 2: Seventeenth-Century Boundary Wall
Dug through the remains of the medieval building, was east–west aligned stone wall footing [3], built of large unworked ironstone blocks laid in foundation trench [17] (Fig. 11). A continuation of this wall was visible as a scar in the standing wall forming the eastern boundary of the pub's yard. A single sherd of late seventeenth-century pottery was recovered from within the wall footing.

The only other contemporary feature was pit [13], largely seen in section, possibly representing a cess pit (Fig. 10). Any floor surfaces associated with wall [3] had been truncated by later concrete floor [2].

THE POTTERY by PAUL BLINKHORN

The pottery assemblage comprised 61 sherds with a total weight of 1,324 g. It comprised entirely medieval and later material. It was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series, as follows:[23]

OXAC: Cotswold-type ware, late tenth century to mid fourteenth century. 4 sherds, 14 g.

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[23] M. Mellor, 'A Summary of the Key Assemblages. A Study of Pottery, Clay Pipes, Glass and other Finds from Fourteen Pits, dating from the 16th to the 19th century' in T.G. Hassall et al., 'Excavations at St Ebbe's', *Oxoniensia*, 49 (1984), pp. 181–219; M. Mellor, 'Oxford Pottery: A Synthesis of Middle and Late Saxon, Medieval and Early Post-Medieval Pottery in the Oxford Region', *Oxoniensia,* 59 (1994), pp. 17–217.

Fig. 6. Period 1.3: Fifteenth-century building alterations.

OX234:   Banbury ware, late eleventh to late fourteenth century. 5 sherds, 71 g.
OX68:   Potterspury ware, late thirteenth to seventeenth century. 1 sherd, 7 g.
OXBK: Medieval shelly coarseware, twelfth century to mid fourteenth century. 3 sherds, 38 g.
OXAM: Brill/Boarstall ware, thirteenth century to fifteenth century. 7 sherds, 80 g.
LOXAM: Late Brill/Boarstall ware, fifteenth century to mid sixteenth century. 8 sherds, 144 g.
OXCL: Cistercian ware, late fifteenth century to seventeenth century. 8 sherds, 44 g.
OXAMTG: Brill/Boarstall 'Tudor Green' wares, late fifteenth century to sixteenth century. 3 sherds, 6 g.
OXST: Westerwald stoneware, late sixteenth century to eighteenth century. 1 sherd, 6 g.
OXBESWL: Staffordshire slip-trailed earthenware, mid seventeenth century to mid eighteenth century. 1 sherd, 11 g.
OXEAH: Midland blackware, late sixteenth to seventeenth century. 1 sherd, 5 g.
OXBEW: Staffordshire manganese wares, eighteenth century. 1 sherd, 24 g.
WHEW: Mass-produced white earthenwares, nineteenth century to twentieth century. 18 sherds, 874 g.

Fig. 7. The trench, looking north.

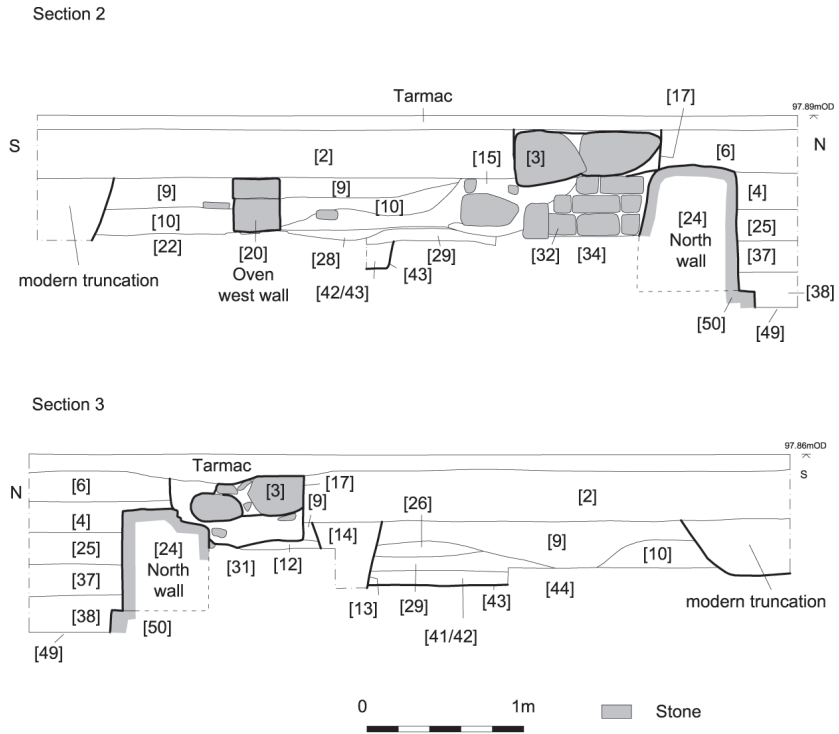Fig. 8. Oven 2, looking south-west.

Fig. 9. Fireplace [32], looking east.

Section 2

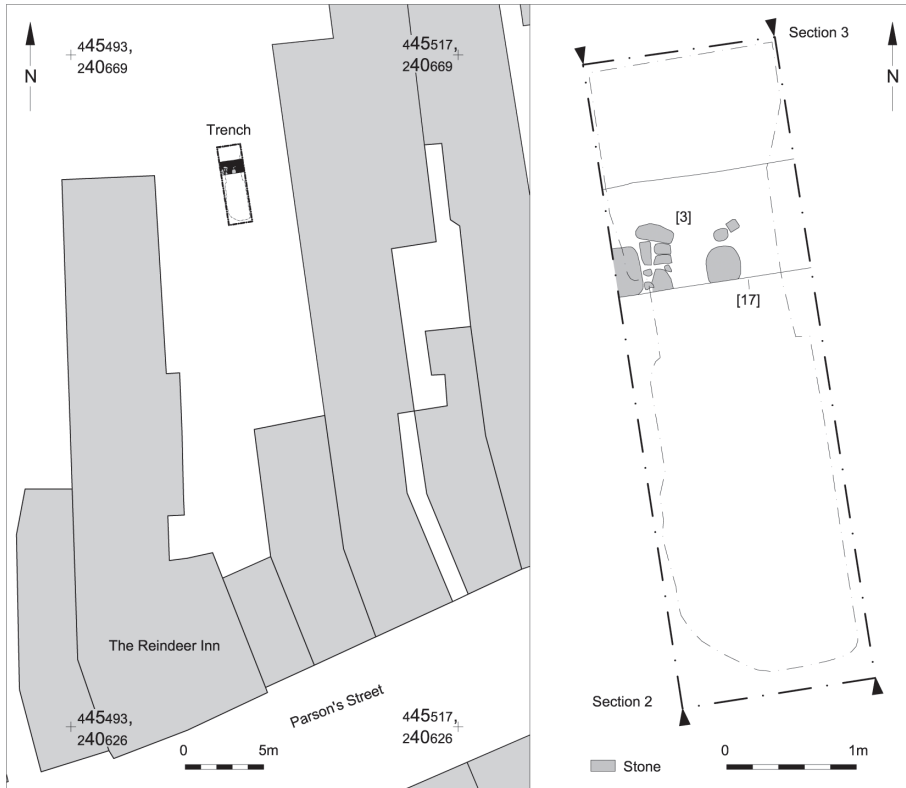Section 3

Fig. 10. Trench sections.

Fig. 11. Period 2.2: Seventeenth-century boundary wall.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*. The range of medieval fabric types is typical of sites in north Oxfordshire, and consists of a mixture of relatively local sources in Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire itself. The range of vessel types also appears typical of sites in the region. The early medieval assemblage comprises largely jars, along with a few fragments of jugs, but by the late medieval period, cups in OXCL and OXAMTG are very common. The post-medieval assemblage comprises largely cups, jugs and dishes or bowls, which is, again, as expected.

Chronology

Each stratified, context-specific pottery assemblage has been given a ceramic phase ('CP') date based on the range of ware and vessel types present. The chronology, defining wares and the amount of pottery per phase is shown in Tables 1 and 2. It would appear from the data in Table 1 that the earliest activity at the site dates to the late eleventh or twelfth century, continuing into the mid/late thirteenth century. There then may have been a break in activity, as Potterspury ware does appear somewhat under-represented, as do thirteenth-century/fourteenth-century OXAM types, although some sites in Banbury demonstrate a paucity of these wares at that time.[24] The site appears to have been re-occupied in the fifteenth century, and then abandoned again before the mid to late sixteenth century. Afterwards there appears to have been very little activity at the site until the seventeenth century.

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[24] Ibid.

Table 1. Ceramic phase chronology, occurrence and defining wares

Phase	Defining wares	Date	No. Sherds	Wt Sherds
CP1	OX234	Late eleventh/twelfth century	4	25
CP2	OXBK	Twelfth/thirteenth century	6	84
CP3	OXAM	Thirteenth/fifteenth century	2	10
CP3a	OX68	Mid thirteenth/fifteenth century	0	0
CP4	LOXAM	Fifteenth/late fifteenth century	4	66
CP5	OXAMTG, OXCL	Late fifteenth/late sixteenth century	19	214
CP6	OXEAH	Late sixteenth/seventeenth century	0	0
CP7	OXST	Seventeenth/mid seventeenth century	3	13
CP8	OXBESWL	Mid/late seventeenth century	4	14
CP9	OXBEW	Late seventeenth/late eighteenth century	1	24
MOD	WHEW	Nineteenth century	18	874
Total			61	1324

THE REGISTERED FINDS by TRISTA CLIFFORD

Only two registered finds were recovered: highly corroded copper alloy sheet RF<1> and bone handle RF<2>. The copper-alloy sheet from wall backfill [25] was possibly part of a vessel or a repair patch. The one piece bone handle from stone tank fill [30] was made from a cattle metapodial and fitted a tanged implement, such as a knife. The handle had been shaped to form a square section, with incised collars and notches at the blade end.

ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLES: MACROBOTANICALS by KARINE LE HEGARAT

A total of four bulk soil samples were taken from the trench to retrieve environmental remains such as charcoal, charred macrobotanicals, bones and shells. The samples were taken from the twelfth-/thirteenth-century ditch fill [43] (sample <4>) and three samples came from three deposits within the fifteenth-century building. Sample <3> originated from burnt clay floor [26]; the possible rake-out deposit [28] (sample <1>) from Oven 2 and a trample layer [12] (sample <2>) above stone floor [31]. Sampling aimed to provide material which could help characterise the medieval occupation of the site prior to the construction of the inn in the early to mid sixteenth century. More precisely, it aimed to recover material which could clarify the function of the ditch and material which could elucidate the use of the kitchen building.

Samples were processed in their entirety in a flotation tank, the flots and residues were captured on 250 μm and 500 μm meshes and were air dried prior to sorting. The residues were sieved through 8 mm, 4 mm and 2 mm geological sieves and each fraction sorted for environmental and artefact remains (Table 3). The flots were scanned under a stereozoom microscope at x7–45 magnifications and an overview of their contents recorded (Table 4). Preliminary identifications were made for the macrobotanical remains by comparing them with specimens documented in reference collection and manuals.[25]

[25]   R.T.J. Cappers et al., *Digital Seed Atlas of the Netherlands,* Groningen Archaeological Series, 4 (2006); S. Jacomet, 'Identification of Cereal Remains from Archaeological Sites', unpublished manuscript (2006); NIAB, *Seed Identification Handbook: Agriculture, Horticulture and Weeds*, 2nd edn (2004).

Table 2. Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

Context	OXAC		OX234		OXBK		OXAM		OX68		LOXAM		OXAMTG		OXCL		OXEAH		OXBEWSL		OXST		OXBEW		WHEW		Date
	No.	Wt	No.	Wt	No.	Wt	No.	Wt	No.	Wt	No.	Wt	No.	Wt	No.	Wt	No.	Wt	No.	Wt	No.	Wt	No.	Wt	No.	Wt	
1																							1	24			CP9
2																									13	450	MOD
3															3	3			1	11							CP8
6															1	2	1	5			1	6					CP7
8																									5	424	MOD
9															2	29											CP5
10															1	8											CP5
11							2	10																			CP3
12							1	11			4	11			1	2											CP5
25							1	23			2	91	2	4													CP5
26					1	21																					CP2
29	2	2	2	23																							CP1
37			1	4			2	22	1	7			1	2													CP5
38	1	10					1	14			2	42															CP4
41	1	2	1	10	1	1																					CP2
42			1	34	1	16																					CP2
Total	4	14	5	71	3	38	7	80	1	7	8	144	3	6	8	44	1	5	1	11	1	6	1	24	18	874	

Table 3. Residue quantification (* = 1–10, ** = 11–50, *** = 51–250, **** = > 250) and weights in grams

Sample Number	Context	Context / deposit type	Sample Volume litres	Sub-Sample Volume litres	Charcoal >4mm	Weight (g)	Charred botanicals (other than charcoal)	Weight (g)	Bone and Teeth	Weight (g)	Burnt bone 4–8mm	Weight (g)	Fishbone and microfauna	Weight (g)	Other (eg ind, pot, cbm)
4	41	Fill of ditch/ beam slot [1/043]	40	40	**	4	** Corylus avellana (shell frags), Pisum/Vicia/ Lathyrus sp., Cerealia, Triticum sp., cf. Avena sp.	2	*	14			*	< 2	Burnt clay */6 g – Eggshell frags */< 2 g – Pottery */8 g
3	26	Deposit – clay floor	20	20	**	2	* Pisum/ Vicia/ Lathyrus sp., Cerealia, Triticum sp.	< 2	*	10					Pottery */18 g
1	28	Deposit – oven rake-out	10	10	**	6	** Pisum/ Vicia/ Lathyrus sp., Triticum sp., Cerealia	< 2	**	12			*	< 2	Eggshell frags */< 2 g
2	12	Deposit – trample	8	8	**	2	* Pisum/ Vicia/ Lathyrus sp.	< 2	*	< 2	*	< 2			Pottery */< 2 g

Table 4. Flot quantification (*=1-10, ** = 11-50, *** = 51-250, **** = > 250) and preservation (+ = poor, ++ = moderate, +++ = good)

Sample Number	Context	Weight (g)	Flot volume ml	Volume scanned	Uncharred %	Sediment %	Seeds uncharred	Charcoal > 4mm	Charcoal > 4mm	Charcoal < 2mm	Crop seeds charred	Identifications	Preservation	Weed seeds / fruits charred	Identifications	Preservation
4	41	8	28	28	5	10	** *Sambucus nigra*	*	*	**	***	*Triticum aestivum/ turgidum* s.l., *Triticum* sp., *Hordeum vulgare* sp., cf. *Avena* sp.	+ to ++	***	*Asteraceae, Polygonum/Rumex* sp., *Chenopodiaceae, Tripleurospermum inodorum, Anthemis cotula, Crepis* sp., *Lamium* sp., *Sinapis/Brassica* sp., *Raphanus* ssp. *raphanistrum, Carex* sp.	+ to ++
3	26	4	8	8	4	28	** *Sambucus nigra*	*	*	**	**	*Triticum aestivum/ turgidum* s.l., *Triticum* sp., *Cerealia, Pisum/ Vicia/Lathyrus* sp.	+ to ++	*	*Poaceae*	+ to ++
1	28	2	8	8	5	15	* *Sambucus nigra*	*	**	***	***	*Triticum aestivum/ turgidum* s.l., *Triticum* sp., *Hordeum vulgare* sp., *Avena* sp, *Cerealia, Pisum/Vicia/Lathyrus* sp.	+ to ++	***	*Galium aparine, Poaceae, Polygonum/ Rumex* sp., *Chenopodiaceae, Caryophyllaceae, Tripleurospermum inodorum, Anthemis cotula*	++
2	12	< 2	2	2	25	2	** *Sambucus nigra*	*	**	***	**	*Triticum aestivum/ turgidum* s.l., *Triticum* sp., *Hordeum vulgare* sp., *Avena* sp, *Cerealia*	+ to ++	**	*Vicia/Lathyrus* sp, *Polygonum/Rumex* sp., cf. *Anthemis cotula, Asteraceae,* cf. *Circium* sp., *Chenopodiaceae*	+ to ++

Results

Sampling produced small but relatively rich flots which contained fairly similar archaeobotanical material. The wood charcoal fragments were infrequent but the samples produced moderate-sized assemblages of charred grains accompanied by charred seeds but no cereal chaff elements. In addition, bones were also present in all samples. On account of the overall similarity of the environmental remains within these samples, the results are presented together.

Cereals.   Two of the four major cereals cultivated in medieval England were present in the samples: wheat (*Triticum* sp.) and barley (*Hordeum* sp.). They appear to be present in about equal proportion, although a slightly smaller amount of barley is represented in samples <3> and <4>. Grains of free-threshing varieties were evident amongst the assemblage of wheat, however due to the absence of rachis segments no further identifications have been provided. Both the hexaploid bread wheat (*Triticum aestivum* s.l.) and the tetraploid rivet wheat (*Triticum turdidum* s.l.) types could therefore be present in the assemblage. One of the earliest finds of rivet wheat was made not far from Banbury at High Ferrers[26] and it is now increasingly recognised during excavations on local sites. Evidence indicates a Late Saxon date with the use of the cereal spreading during the medieval period. Grains of hulled barley (*Hordeum vulgare*) were recorded and the presence of asymmetrical lateral grains indicates that six-row barley was represented within the assemblage. Oat (*Avena* sp.) was present very sparsely; however, in the absence of florets, it was not possible to confirm if the caryopses represented the wild or cultivated taxa. Rye (*Secale cereale*) which represents the fourth cereal grown during this period[27] was not present in the assemblage, although it was recorded as a minor crop at nearby Old Grimsbury and in Bicester.[28]

Pulses.   Pulses were recorded in all samples although they were not numerous. They included seeds of small surface dimension (< 3 mm) but also larger ones which indicate the presence of cultivated species.[29] However, hila and testa were insufficiently preserved to identify the types of pulses and the assemblage of large-sized pulses could include small Celtic/broad bean (*Vicia faba* var *minor*) and vetch/pea (*Vicia/Pisum* sp.). Large cultivated pulses would have usually been used for human consumption. Nonetheless, assemblages of cultivated vetch (*Vicia sativa* ssp. *sativa*) have recently been recovered in Drayton (Oxfordshire) from tenth century contexts.[30] This additional crop could have been used as fodder or as part of the crop rotation system.

Weeds, nuts and fruits.   Charred wild/weed seeds were well represented in the samples. They included common arable weeds, grassland taxa and seeds associated with disturbed/waste grounds. Seeds of cabbage/turnip (*Brassica/Sinapis* sp.) are more likely weeds of cultivation although they could represent a cultivated variety. Wild radish (*Raphanus* sp. *raphanistrum*) is indicative of acidic soils and is a likely weed from cultivated or disturbed ground. Characteristic arable weeds growing with cereals included stinking chamomile (*Anthemis cotula*) and scentless mayweed (*Tripleurospermum inodorum*). Stinking chamomile points

[26]   L. Moffett, *The Archaeobotanical Evidence for Free Threshing Tetraploid Wheat in Britain* (1991).

[27]   J. Greig, 'Archaeobotanical and Historical Records Compared – A New Look at the Taphonomy of Edible and Other Useful Plants from the 11th to the 18th centuries AD', *Circaea,* 12:2 (1996), pp. 211–47.

[28]   R. Pelling, 'The Medieval Charred Plant Remains', in A. Hardy, 'The Excavation of a Medieval Cottage and Associated Agricultural Features at Manor Farm, Old Grimsbury, Banbury', *Oxoniensia*, 65 (2000), pp. 373–5; eadem, 'Charred Plant Remains', in P. A. Harding and P. Andrews, 'Anglo-Saxon and Medieval Settlement at Chapel Street, Bicester: Excavations 1999–2000', *Oxoniensia*, 67 (2002), pp. 167–70.

[29]   R. Pelling, 'Charred Plant Remains', in D. Challinor et al., 'Excavations at Manor Farm, Drayton, Oxfordshire', *Oxoniensia*, 68 (2003), pp. 303–7.

[30]   Ibid.

to the use of heavy and poorly drained soils and although scentless mayweed can also occur on clay soils, it can equally be found on soils of medium texture. Both stinking chamomile and cleavers (*Galium aparine*) are often associated with winter-sown cereals such as wheat. Seeds of the goosefoot (Chenopodiaceae) family and dock/knotgrass (*Polygonum/Rumex* sp.) can occur in spring-sown crop such as barley, although they can also represent seeds of disturbed grounds. Leguminous plants such as vetch/vetchling (*Vicia/Lathyrus* sp.) can be found as arable weeds but can also occur in grassland. Another plant of grassy vegetation is thistle (*Cirsium* sp.); it can also be found on waste grounds. Sedges (*Carex* sp.) can indicate the presence of wetter ground.

Infrequent small hazelnut (*Corylus avellana*) shell fragments were present in the residue from sample <4> ([43]) and uncharred elder (*Sambucus nigra*) seeds were recorded in all four samples. They could have both been consumed. The wild taxa so far identified indicate the presence of plants found in hedgerows, grassland, damp environments, waste/disturbed places and cultivated grounds (arable fields and smaller plots). It should be noted that a large proportion of the plants could occur as arable weeds with some species indicating that the crops could have been cultivated around the town, on the heavy clay soils (Lower Lias clay).

Charcoal.   All the samples produced very little charcoal. The wood charcoal fragments in the flots and residues were predominantly small with some occasional large-sized fragments > 4 mm. No identifications have been provided for this small assemblage as they are too limited to provide significant information regarding the use of structural wood, fuel use and local woody vegetation.

Preservation of the Charred Material

Several grains were heavily pitted indicating charring at a relatively high temperature. Many grains, pulses and seeds were abraded, preventing identifications beyond the genus level although other remains were better preserved. It appears therefore that the charred material originated from more than one fire event and that the remains were not in their primary deposits. They seem to represent slightly mixed redeposited material, moved around, maybe as part of a clean-up. Distortion was infrequent; it was noticed principally at the apex/distal end of some wheat grains as well as along the lateral edges of some barley grains, where some material was exuding. This could be associated with unripe grains or grains stored slightly damp.

During the medieval period oat and wheat as well as oat and barley were sometimes used together in brewing and the masonry oven as well as the potential oven bases found on site could have been used during the malting process, to halt the germination. However, there was no evidence of germinated grains amongst the assemblage. Brewing could still have taken place on a domestic level, as the ovens could have fulfilled a number of functions and without their in situ contents it is difficult to infer on their usage.

Differential destructions caused by charring could explain the absence of chaffs and straw in the assemblage of charred macrobotanical remains.[31] However, the significant number of charred seeds indicates that the chaff and straw elements were actually missing from the initial assemblage.

Composition of the Assemblage

The absence of charred chaff, straw and stem fragments is interesting. They would be expected in assemblages associated with flooring, animal bedding and/or feeding and thatching. The presence of charred grains with the charred weed seeds is more likely to indicate the presence of semi-cleaned grains. A large majority of the seeds are typical arable weeds and could have been brought back with the grains as the larger weed seeds and the large composite seed heads

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31   S. Boardman and G. Jones, 'Experiments on the Effects of Charring on Cereal Plant Components', *Journal of Archaeological Science,* 17 (1990), pp. 1–11.

of the stinking chamomile and scentless mayweed would have stayed with the grains after sieving. The grains could be stored in this semi-clean state with the final processing being carried out on site at a later stage. The assemblage could therefore represent stored grains. They could have been accidentally charred while drying before storage or before grinding. It is possible that the grains could have been used for baking, malting or general human consumption either in soups or porridge.

The scarcity of charcoal is also interesting. The small assemblage suggests a background scatter and the remains do not seem to indicate a large fire event unless the latter was followed by extensive clearance of the debris.

Conclusion

Sampling has produced an interesting assemblage of charred grains and charred weeds, and although it consists of a mixed assemblage and cannot provide direct evidence for the exact use of the oven(s), the remains almost certainly represent domestic kitchen waste, probably stored grains prior to being used for baking, malting or general consumption. Similar assemblages have been found locally, for instance at Old Grimsbury.[32] However, the assemblage recovered from Ye Olde Reindeer public house is unusual as it is from the town rather than the surrounding countryside, and may be more closely linked to the use of the crops and other plants rather than their supply.

[32]   R. Pelling, 'The Medieval Charred Plant Remains', in Hardy, 'The Excavation of a Medieval Cottage'.