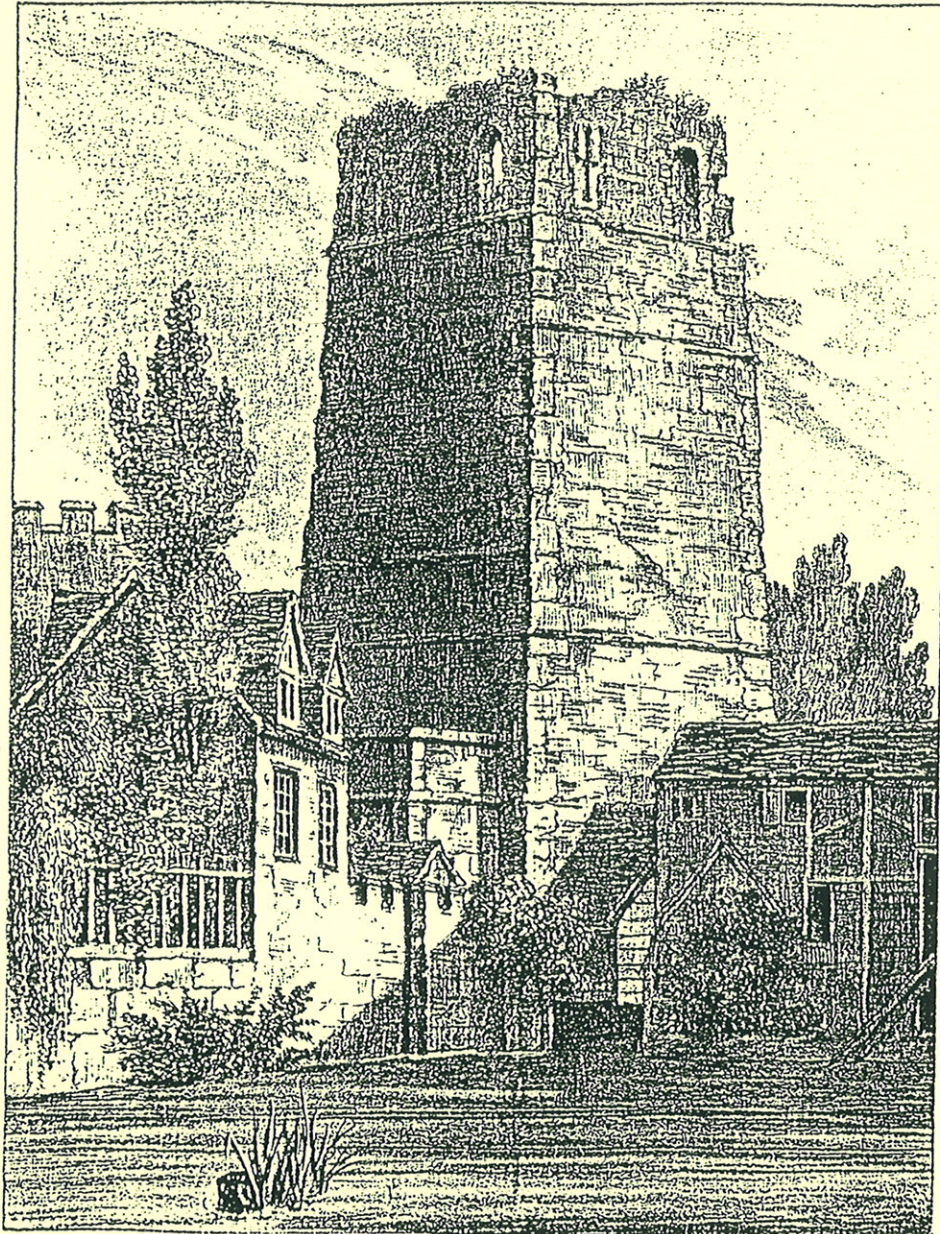


Boreham's Yard, Tidmarsh Lane Oxford



The Old Tower of Oxford Castle
N. Whistock lithog. Oxford

Oxford Archaeological Unit

1994

Boreham's Yard, Tidmarsh Lane, Oxford

(NGR SP509061)

Archaeological Evaluation

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Boreham's Yard, Tidmarsh Lane

Archaeological Desktop Study

Summary

Boreham's Yard lies on the edge of the medieval castle, and may contain remains of the castle ditch and west gate, and possibly remnants of early river frontages. The site is bisected by a deep sewer, which may have destroyed much of the archaeology in the centre of the site.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Oxford Archaeological Unit was asked by TEAM architects on behalf of St Peter's College to provide a desktop study of the recently acquired Boreham's Yard at the south end of Tidmarsh Lane. Situated below the perimeter wall of Oxford Prison, this has for many years been unused and is now being redeveloped. The archaeological implications for the site are being considered in advance of submission of planning application, in order that the requirements of the City, as Archaeological Curator, may be met and that sufficient information is available for determination of the application.

2. Historical background

- 2.1 The site lies within the historic bounds of Oxford Castle, though outside the new Prison that was built in the late 18th century.¹ The west gate of the castle led to a barbican situated at the north end of Tidmarsh Lane, first recorded in the early 13th century. As the defensive aspects of the castle became less important, Tidmarsh Lane became an ordinary thoroughfare, with a row of houses on the west side, and a footbridge at the south end over to St Thomas' High Street (Quaking Bridge). The castle was sold to Christ Church in 1613, and the site next the river was built on in the mid-18th century, and separately leased out, being retained when the remainder of the castle was sold in 1785. The picturesque house by the river became a feature of views of the castle mill, and it was sold by Christ Church in 1871 to a coal merchant, and The Oxford Battery Company occupied the premises in the 1920s, until 1930 when it was taken over by Boreham's Electrical, and they vacated the premises to the Home Office in 1968, since when they remained empty.

2.2 Before the castle

The castle lies at the western end of Saxon Oxford, in the one area where the layout of the streets and defences is least well understood. For despite extensive

1 A more detailed historical account, with further references will be found in *Oxford Castle A Heritage Survey*, OAU forthcoming.

archaeological work round the castle there is still uncertainty as to the route of the western exit road from the town (New Road was only made in 1770), and the line of Oxford's western defences has not certainly been identified. Wherever this defensive line was, the discovery of pre-Conquest material from under the Castle Mound by Jope in 1952² clearly implies the continuity of urban and suburban settlement down as far as the river, and this was probably along the primary route to the west. The suggestion has recently been made that St George's Tower in the Castle may be of pre-Conquest origin, functioning as a defended west gate.³ Whatever the case, it is likely that the riverside was colonised at an early date.

2.3 *The castle*

The castle was built in 1071 by Robert d'Oilli according to the Oseney Chronicle,⁴ and this must refer to the creation of the motte-and-bailey castle: that is the existing mound and the earth ramparts that survived until the late 18th century. The church of St George in the Castle was founded in 1074 as a collegiate church for a small number of secular canons,⁵ and the fact that it was later a parochial church may suggest that it was founded in a church existing before the castle. Part of the crypt still survives, as does the 11th-century tower that seems to have served both as a bell tower and strongpoint guarding the western approach to the castle. A cemetery on the north side of the church continued to be used by the Prison until modern times.

The castle twice played a role in national history, in 1142 during the Anarchy when the Empress Matilda was besieged in the castle and made her famous escape in mid winter across the frozen Thames, and again, in the troubles of King John's reign, when the castle was attacked in 1216 by the baronial party, and defended for the crown by Fawkes de Bréauté, who built the eastern barbican that was excavated in the building of the Westgate Centre. The castle was made defensible in the baronial revolt of 1255-66, but saw no action. The castle was only rarely used by the king, who had more favoured residences at nearby Beaumont Palace (until 1318), and Woodstock, and it became one of the many royal castles that had lost any role as a lodging for the King's household, and came under the control of the Sheriff or his appointed Custodian, serving as a centre for the county administration.⁶

2 Jope, *Oxoniensia* 1952-3.

3 Derek Renn, pers. comm.

4 'MLXXI. Eodem anno aedificatum est castellum Oxenefordense a Roberto primo', H.R. Luard (ed.), *Annales Monastici IV, De Oseneia, Chronicon Thomae Wykes, et de Wigornia*, Rolls Series 36 (1869), 9.

5 'MLXXIV. Fundata est ecclesia Sancti Georgii in castello Oxenfordensi a Roberto de Oyly primo et Rogero de Iveri', *ibid.*, 10.

6 For general accounts of the castle, see Brown and Colvin *History of the King's Works*, and *VCH Oxon iv*.

2.4 *The castle buildings*

Building work is recorded in the national records from the late 12th century, and throughout the 13th, but repairs became less frequent in the 14th century, and it is likely that many buildings fell into disrepair, with the exception of the Shire Hall and the prison. A listing of the buildings named in repair accounts and orders gives the following references to external parts of the castle:

<i>Gate</i>	Hen III, 1312-17 (outer gate repairs)
<i>Great gate</i>	1327 (mantlet before gate needs repair)
<i>West gate</i>	1327 (ruinous), 1331 (broken)
<i>Bridges</i>	Hen III, 1255 (decayed), 1256 (repairs)
<i>East bridge</i>	1266, 1331 (ruined)
<i>West bridge</i>	1324 (rebuilt)
<i>Barbican</i>	1216, 1226-7

[Sources: Brown & Colvin, *History of the King's Works*; Wood's *City of Oxford* ii, 265ff; Salter, *Snape's Formulary* OHS lxxx (1924), 292 (1331 Inquisition), Crossley, *VCH Oxford* iv, 297]

The references to a barbican may refer to the eastern barbican excavated under the Westgate Centre, but there is certain evidence for a second barbican on the west side of the castle, from descriptions in 13th-century property deeds (see below). This must have guarded the approach to the castle west gate and bridge.

2.5 *Post-medieval history*

The castle remained in use for the Gaol, the Assize courts and Quarter Sessions long after its military importance had waned, and by Act of Parliament in 1531 the gaol was formerly constituted as the common gaol of the County.⁷ The Shire Hall was used until 1577 when the 'Black Assize' carried off over 300 people with a sudden outbreak of gaol fever, and the courts transferred to the Oxford Gildhall. Of little use to the Crown, the site was sold in 1611, with the proviso that it should for ever be lawful place of assembly for the courts and the county.⁸ The new purchasers sold it to Christ Church in 1613, which already had an interest in the site as inheritors of the Oseney property in the Church of St George, and was to remain as owner until 1785. The college leased out the castle, though the Gaol remained in the buildings near St George's Chapel, and part of the site seems to have been used as a pleasure garden offering refreshments.⁹ The long legal dispute (1615-22) between Christ Church and the City over the ownership of the outlying parts of the castle has preserved a detailed map of the castle, and a wealth of testimony as to its appearance

7 Gaol Act, 23 Hen VIII, c.2

8 Walton 1987, 29, quoting Letters Patent of 8 March 1611.

9 Salter, *Oseney Cartulary* iii O.H.S. xci (1931), 15-22.

(see further below).

The state of the castle in the 17th century is described by Wood, writing in 1662, who reported that the ruins of the towers had been pulled down by the Parliament forces in 1649 and replaced by new fortifications, themselves demolished in 1652.¹⁰ The plan of the royalist defences drawn in 1645 by the military engineer Bernard de Gomme can be compared with Loggan's view of 1675, which suggests that the earthworks survived the building and removal of the Parliamentary 'bulwarks'. During the Civil War the castle was used as a prison, and there begin the first of the long catalogue of complaints of its unhealthy state.

The appearance of the castle in the 18th century is well recorded on maps and a growing number of antiquarian drawings. The view taken by Burghers for Hearne in 1719 depicts the group of buildings round St George's chapel, the derelict east gate and ruins of the Shire Hall, much as depicted in 1750 on Taylor's map of Oxford. Several important drawings were made by Malchair in the late 18th century, recording the appearance of the castle in its last years. But greater changes were in hand, and according to an account written by The Rev^d John Pridden in 1785 much of the castle remains were being removed for the new prison, the outer wall of which was being built.¹¹

2.6 *The prison*

Complaints by the Grand Jury in 1784 led to the rebuilding of the gaol, one of twelve new prisons in this first era of reform.¹² First the site had to be repurchased by the County, and in 1785 Christ Church sold it to 'the Justices of the County of Oxford for £331 10s, pursuant to the Act of Parliament for enlarging Gaols'.¹³ The new buildings were designed by William Blackburn (1750-90), a notable prison architect who also built Oxford's City Gaol on Gloucester Green.¹⁴ Faden's map of Oxford in 1789 shows the new buildings (though the western wing was apparently not yet built), and also the surrounding wall and entrance lodge.

The Tidmarsh Lane site was left outside the new circuit of prison walls, and remained in the hands of Christ Church after the sale of 1785. The house shown in topographical views of the castle and mill from the north first appears on Taylor's

10 Wood's *City of Oxford* i, 276.

11 Bodleian, MS Top.Oxon. d.281, f.111.

12 Robin Evans, *The fabrication of virtue* (1982), 131ff.

13 Salter, *Oseney Cartulary* iii, 22.

14 Blackburn's authorship is confirmed by Howard's observations in 1789, and the notice in *Jackson's Oxford Journal*; for Blackburn see Evans op.cit. and H.M. Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600-1840* (1978), 113-4; the *VCH* also names George Money Penny (Colvin, 555).

map of 1750, and in 1829 was tenanted by one Henry Round in a yard containing a pigsty and stable.¹⁵ Christ Church sold the property in 1871 to William Round, Coal Merchant, when it was known as Castle House and consisted of a house with a cottage, stable and outbuilding (see Appendix). In 1884 his widow sold Castle House to Stephen Franklin, Lime Merchant, who transferred it to his son Henry in 1884, a Coal Merchant, who seems to have been living there when he died in 1914. Henry Franklin's widow lived for another twenty years, and it was her sons who sold the property to Frederick Boreham in 1936. Directories show that the premises were being used for electrical trades from the 1920s, and the Oxford Battery Company was in occupation in 1930 when it was taken over by Boreham's Car Electrical Service; they vacated the premises and leased to the Home Office in 1968, since when it has remained empty.¹⁶

The first main drainage scheme for Oxford included a large sewer that came from North Oxford down through Jericho, along Tidmarsh Lane and under St George's Tower to exit into the former Waterworks site in Paradise Street. This improbable route is confirmed by the City's Connections Book, though as there is no sign of disturbance in the basement of the tower, the sewer must have been tunnelled under the prison, and possibly under part of the site.¹⁷

County Offices were built in 1911-12 at the corner of Tidmarsh Lane, on site of the former Parochial School of St Peter le Bailey, purchased from the parish in 1897.¹⁸ Macclesfield House was built in Tidmarsh Lane in 1967-9, following the demolition of the Militia Armoury of 1854 (by J.C. Buckler; later the County Police Headquarters).

3. Site topography

3.1 Castle topography

The principal though unproved assumption is that the ditch round the castle motte (independent of the main castle ditch) emptied into the Castle Mill Stream of the Thames somewhere in the vicinity of the site. The ditch itself was excavated by Jope on the south side of the motte, and it is known that it existed on the east side, since there is evidence that the curtain wall was arched across it. Since the castle had a west gate, bridge, and barbican, it is fairly probable that bridge was outside the gate and crossed the ditch where it exited into the Thames. The west gate presumably stood in the length of curtain wall between St George's Tower and the Keep on top of the motte, and the barbican in Tidmarsh Lane. Depositions taken in a lawsuit in

15 Badcock survey in *Oseney Cartulary* ii (OHS xc 1929), 601.

16 Information from Messrs Anthony and Martin Boreham.

17 Oxford City Drainage Services, Sewer Connection Book No. 5.

18 Ex. inf Hugh Walton; City Engineer's deposited plans, no.1738 (NS), in Centre for Oxfordshire Studies.

c.1615 between the City and Christ Church describe the appearance of the castle in some detail.¹⁹ From these it is clear that the curtain joined St George's Tower to the tower on the motte: Roger Moore recalled '*that the Castle wall went from St George's church to the tower on the round hill and so to St George's church again round the Castle and that there was no way out of the wall towards Brokenhayes [Gloucester Green] but a hole where men might go into the Castle ditch*'. But there is little certainty about precise locations beyond what can be found in post-medieval maps and views. This can best be seen in the context of a general account of the topography of the west side of the castle.

Passing down Castle Street, where houses were built up in the 16th century on the edge of the castle ditch, the road turns westwards into Paradise Street. Here the city wall circuit met the castle at the city West Gate (demolished in 1610). The perimeter wall of the Prison now runs down the mid-line of the former castle ditch, and excavations for the Simon Hostel and in the Thames Water Depot revealed the ditch profile. The ditch exited into the Thames just by the present bridge, possibly with some arrangement of sluice gates to maintain the water level.

The present Castle Mill Bridge dates from 1865, but there was always a bridge there taking the road from the West Gate out to the suburb of St. Thomas's. This was the Waram bank, which under its later name of Fisher Row was occupied by a row of houses demolished for slum clearance in the early part of this century. Below St George's Tower stood the Castle Mill until 1930. A favourite subject for Oxford artists, its stood partly in the roadway, and was removed to clear space for traffic; until demolished it was still a working mill, and had been in continuous existence from at least the time of Domesday Book.

The river is crossed again at Quaking Bridge, opposite the end of St Thomas's High Street (once a busy suburban street), giving direct access to the north side of the town, and perhaps named after a flimsy precursor (Agas again shows a timber bridge here in 1578). The layout of the castle at this point is not fully understood, but there was a western gate from the castle onto the strip of land between the castle ditch and the mill stream, about where the two houses now stand in the angle of Tidmarsh Lane. On the other side of the road is a converted malthouse, one of many buildings associated with brewing in this area. The present road must have been on the very edge of the castle ditch, for when the foundations of Macclesfield House were dug it was found to be entirely sited on black mud. The earlier County Hall, built on the corner, also needed deep foundations to reach the bottom of ditch fill. The ditch survived down to the 18th century, when pictures show it silted up and with trees growing in it. The Queen's Head public house opposite the north corner belonged to Oriell College until New Road was built, when it was sold to the Turnpike Commissioners; the college had acquired it on its foundation along with St Bartholomew's Hospital in Cowley. Their 13th-century title deeds refer to the site as being next the 'outer drawbridge', and record Nicholas Franceis 'de la Barbekane'

19

Salter, *Oseney Cartulary*, iii, 16-19, from Christ Church archives, MS Est. 75.

as the former owner,²⁰ so there seems to have been another barbican on the west side of the castle, though it was not accessible in recent excavations in the Worcester Street car park.

3.2 *The site*

While the castle stood, so much of the site as was not in the castle ditch must have been on dead space outside the castle walls. From the seventeenth century the site seems to have become independent of the prison, and was a yard outside the precincts of the prison and its burial ground, with a house on the edge of the river. The site boundaries have changed somewhat with the building of the prison wall, the defining of the line of Tidmarsh Lane, and the widening of Quaking Bridge.

Agas' map of 1578 shows a gap between St George's Tower and the river, some enclosure bounded by fence and a wooden bridge. The curtain wall is shown, but not the castle west gate, and the ditch appears to end without reaching the river. The plans produced for the City/Christ Church lawsuit of c.1615 show a wall with a tower and archway, and a footbridge at Quaking Bridge; part of the matter of the dispute was the cutting of a new millstream closer to the tower, which is clearly shown on the contemporary plan of Waram Bank;²¹ this clearly implies that the earlier river bank was further west.

Hollar's map of 1643, generally unreliable, shows a western gatetower between the motte and St George's. The royalist survey of the Civil War earthworks by Bernard de Gomme (1645) appears to show a tower or gate in the western castle wall, though curiously for a military survey shows no water or ditches at all. Loggan's birdseye view of 1675 is of prime importance for its accuracy, being based on a cadastral survey, and shows a walled garden or churchyard north of St George's tower, but nothing between it and Quaking Bridge. An isolated building between St George's Tower and the motte, perhaps the remains of the gate, has two curious attachments on the west side, almost like remains of a bridge abutment. This building may be shown on William William's 1733 map of Oxford (partly based on Loggan's survey), but it is no longer isolated, but attached to the southern end of the wall on the east side of Tidmarsh Lane. All subsequent maps show a building or group of buildings at this location, though it is hard to identify them on any of the views of the castle, as distinct from buildings on the west side of Tidmarsh Lane. Thus neither the drawing by the Bucks, nor that of Burghers (1719) are of much use in this respect.

The principal new survey was Taylor's map of 1750, which shows a wall striking north from St George's Tower and returning towards the river, a building next the river, and the row of buildings at the south-east corner of Tidmarsh lane already described. This is the first appearance of the house on the river's edge, and it ends

20 Munby & Walton, 'The Building of New Road', *Oxoniensia* 1990, 127-8.

21 T.W. Squires, *In West Oxford* (1928), Pls. xxxi (the Christ Church plan) and xcvi (Waram Bank); most other plans described below are illustrated by Squires.

some way south of the narrow footbridge at Quaking Bridge. It is as shown on all subsequent maps of the 18th and early 19th century, and on Badcock's survey of 1829; it is also the building shown on all early views of the castle mill from the north. This had two storeys and attics, was apparently of stone construction with sash windows and attic dormers. A low extension joined it to the Prison wall, and there was a gap at the north end between the house and Quaking Bridge (this narrowed after the bridge was rebuilt on a wider plan). The house seems to have survived down to the beginning of the present century, being shown on a photograph of c.1900.²²

22 Westgate Library, Centre for Oxfordshire Studies, OCL 2220 (photo of c.1900).

Appendix: Title Deeds of Boreham's Yard

Title Deeds of St Peter's College, seen courtesy of Messrs Morrell, Peel & Gamlen.

18 October 1871

[1] Dean and Chapter to William Round of St Thomas', Coal Merchant for £700 'messuage or dwelling house with the cottage stable and outbuildings yard and premises adjoining' in occupation WR, together with a garden plot formerly woodyard near the messuage and brewhouse formerly of John Bishop. Castle Wall (S), towards Hythe Bridge (N), the Wareham Stream (W) and Castle Wall (E), now called Castle House.

[2] Order of Copyhold Commissioners under College Estates Act 1858.

January 1872

*Mortgage for £500 from Thomas May of Ickford, listed with others in [5] abstract of title (1884).

February 1883

*Will of William Round leaves all real and personal property to his wife SMR (27/2), and dies (28/3); *probate granted (21/11/83) and [3] she pays succession duty to Revenue, as listed in [5].

31 May 1884

[6] Mrs S.M. Round sells to Stephen Franklin of the Canal Wharf Lime Merchant for £1100 the Castle House and Cottage yard stable buildings and ground adjoining ([4] records sale by private treaty following intended sale in March at King's Arms).

27 June 1888

[7] Stephen Franklin Lime Merchant conveys same to his son Henry Franklin of the Canal Wharf, Coal Merchant.

October 1914

* Henry Franklin devises to his wife Frances Jane (20/10) and dies at Castle Hill House (23/10); will proved (26/3/1915), as listed in [9] abstract of title (1949).

July 1934

* Will of Frances J Franklin appoints her sons HEHF and FHF executors (17/7); and dies (20/7); her will proved (29/1/1935), as listed in [9] abstract of title (1949).

December 1936

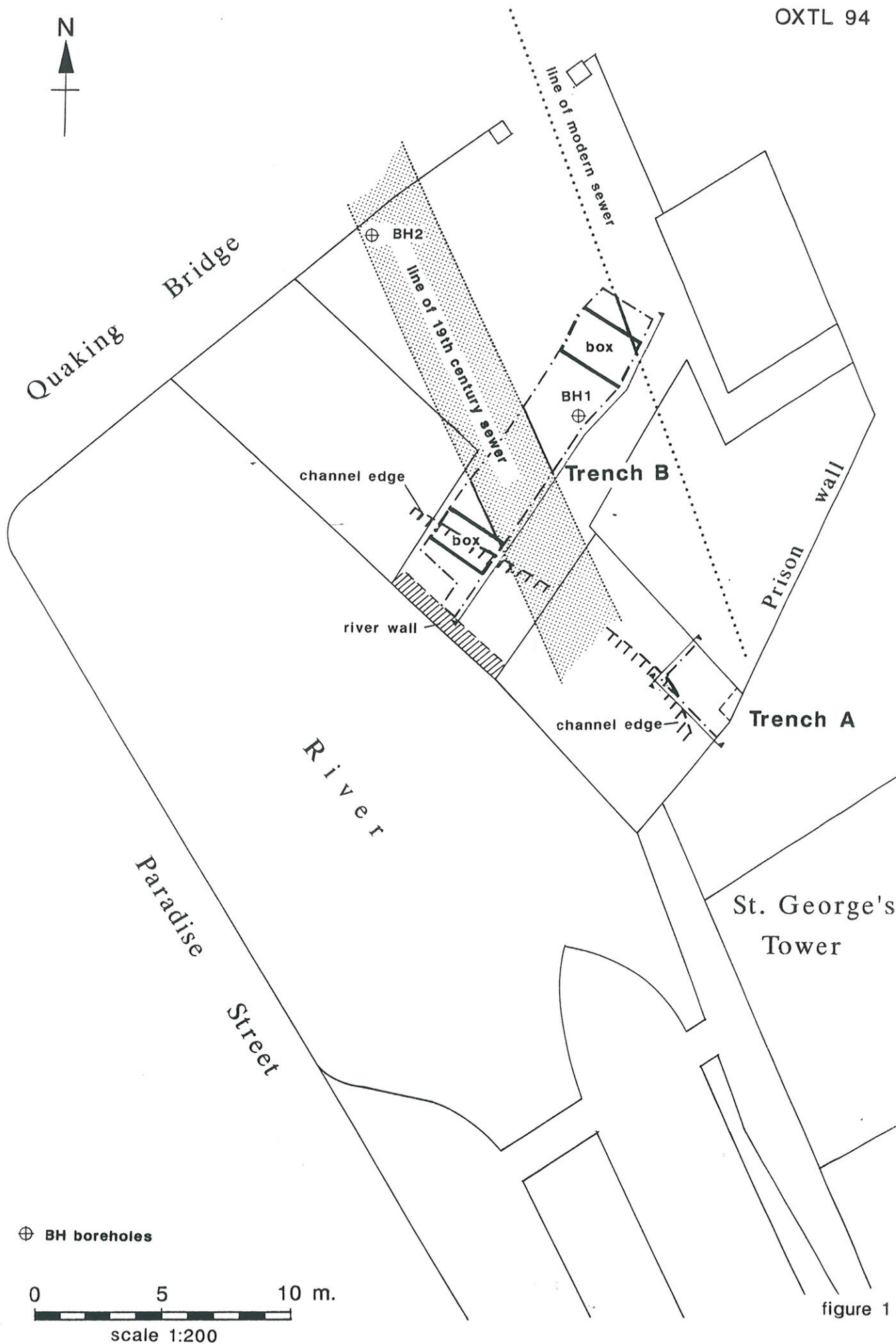
[8] Herbert Franklin M.A. and The Revd Frederick H Franklin having executed the will of FJF now vest themselves in the 'stables and yard attached in Titmouse Lane now or for some time past in occupation of Frederick G.L. Boreham as tenant.'

25 March 1949

[12] The Franklins sell to FGL Boreham, Electrical Engineer for £2750.
(1980 nine-year lease to Home Office; other transactions)

4 October 1993

Borehams Car Electrical Services Ltd sell to St Peter's College. (Registered 15/10 ref ON 161885)



⊕ BH boreholes



figure 1

Trench A

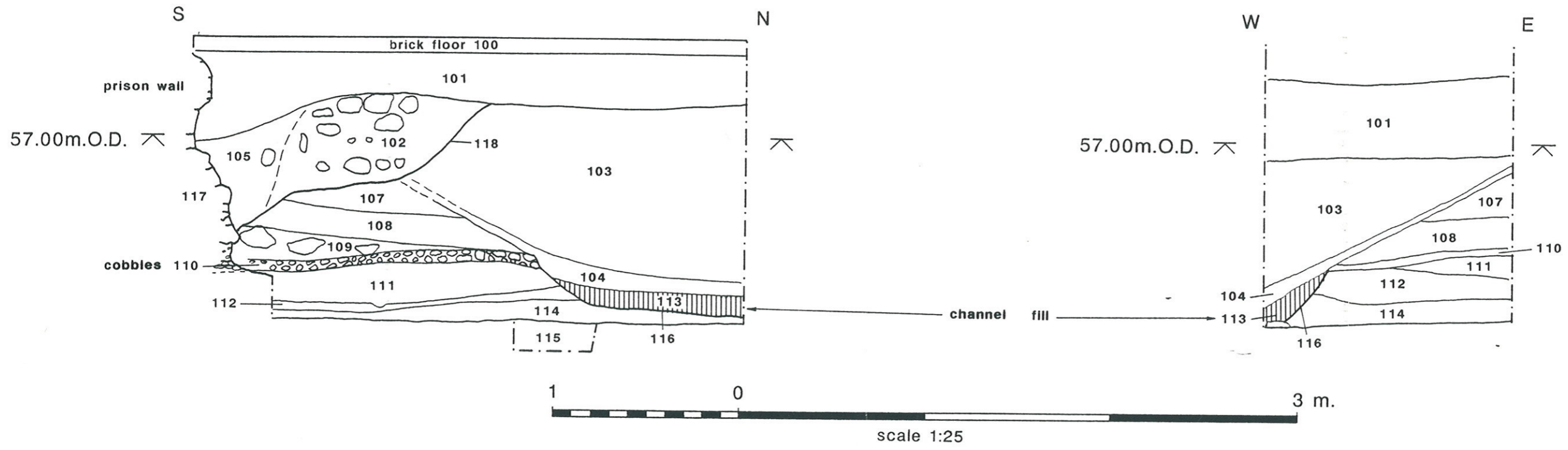


figure 2

Trench B

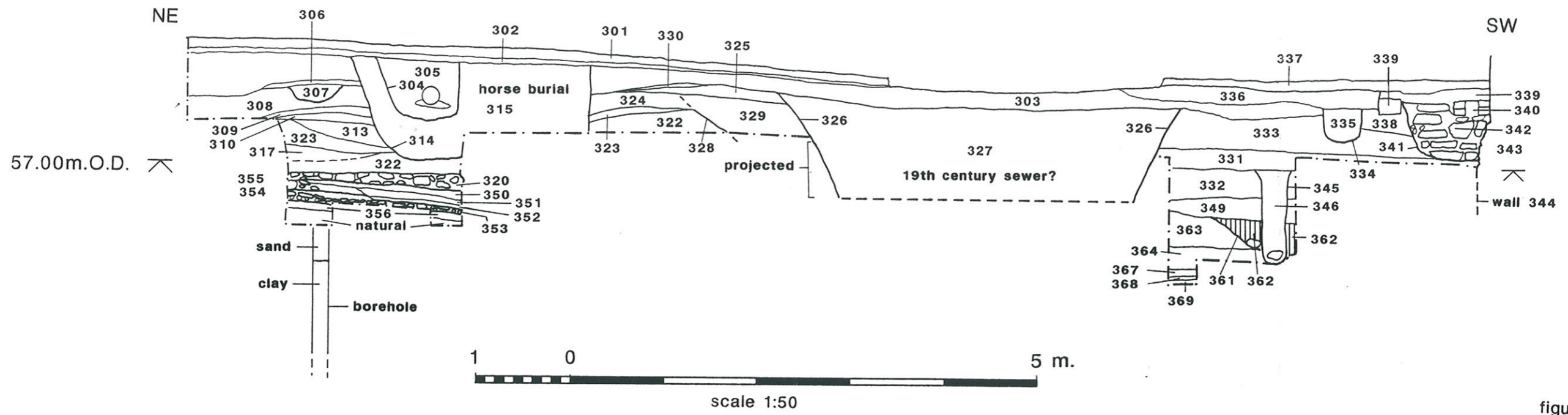
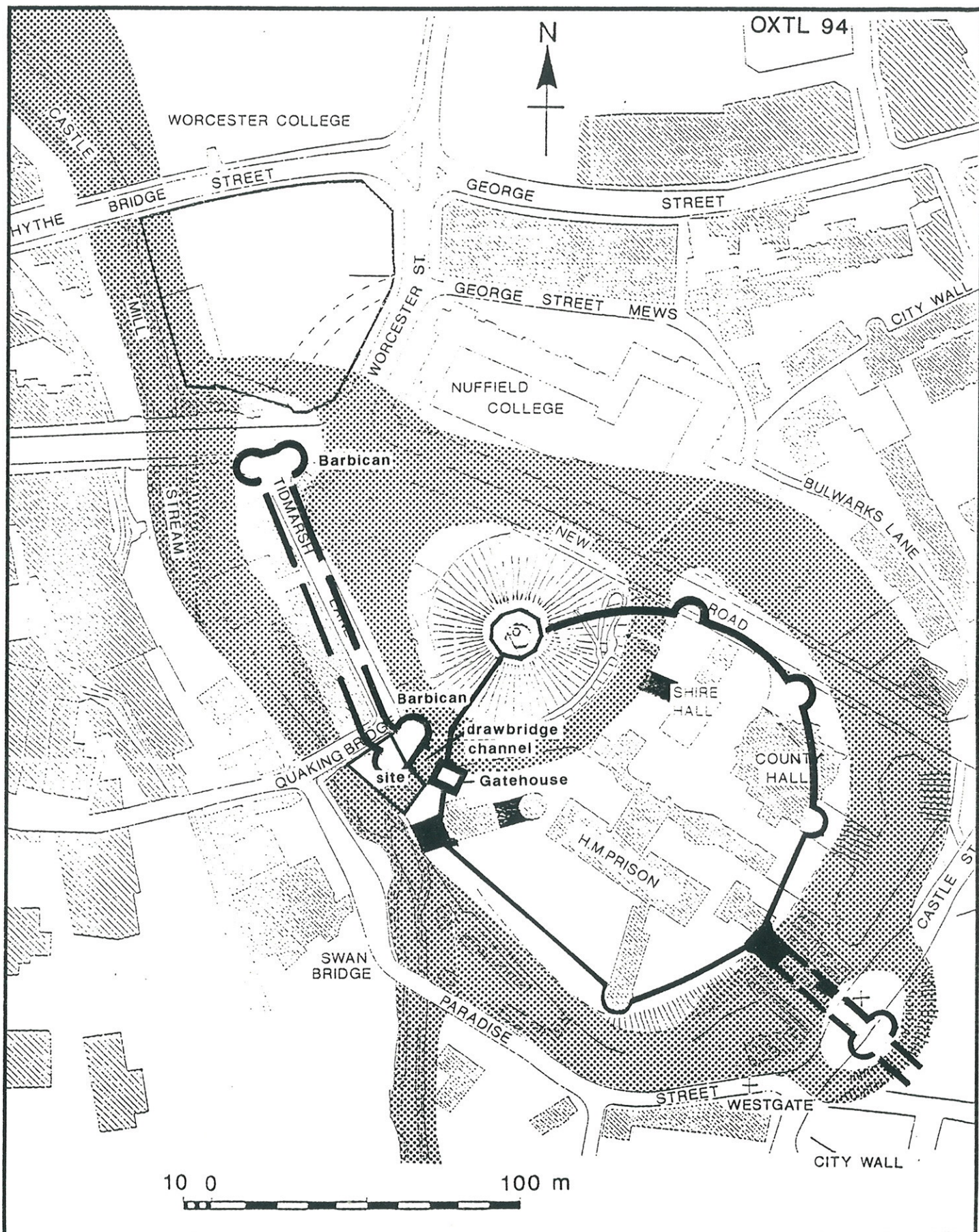


figure 3



Conjectural plan of the castle

figure 4

The description and situation of Waram
Banck wth the rivers bridges buildings
on each side the letter A in the north
side of S^t Georges Church was the Church
yarde the letter B is a pece of ground w^{ch}
was of late time cutt out of the churchyard
where now runeth a streame

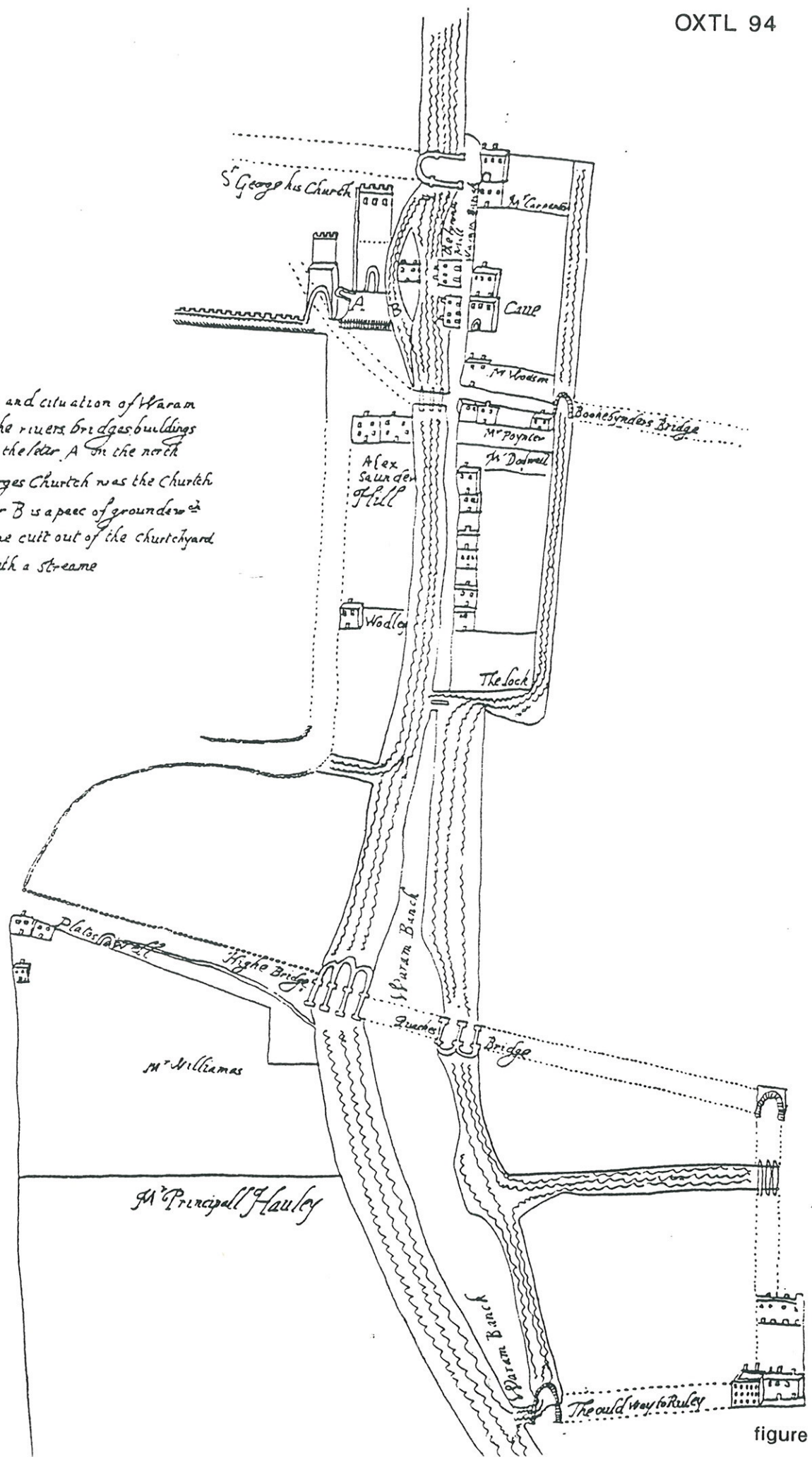


figure 5

Boreham's Yard, Tidmarsh Lane, Oxford

Archaeological Evaluation Report

Summary

From April 11th to 20th 1994 the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook an evaluation in Boreham's Yard, Tidmarsh Lane Oxford (SP50920615). Evidence was found of several medieval cobbled surfaces W of the supposed location of the Castle gatehouse, one of which overlay what could be an infilled channel linking the motte moat to the river.

4. Introduction

- 4.1 A planning application for student accommodation, adjacent to the river and to the N of St. Georges Tower, has been submitted to the Oxford City Council (OCC) by St. Peter's College.
- 4.2 The Oxford Archaeological Advisory Service (OAAS) has advised that the site has potential for containing remains of the W entrance to the Castle, and pre- and post-medieval river fronts.
- 4.3 The site lies immediately SE of the junction of Tidmarsh Lane and Quaking Bridge, NW of Oxford Prison, and E of the Castle Motte. At present it contains the vacant workshops of Borehams Ltd.

5. Aims

- 5.1 To determine the nature and state of preservation of the archaeological remains on the site.
- 5.2 To attempt to establish the antiquity of the boundaries with the Castle to the S and E, and the Mill Stream.
- 5.3 To investigate the possible presence of a barbican, castle gate, and putative drawbridge channel.
- 5.4 To establish whether there is metalling for the road into the castle.
- 5.5 To look for the E edge of the putative drawbridge channel.
- 5.6 To establish whether the churchyard attached to St. Georges Tower extended into the proposed development.
- 5.7 To examine the N face of the prison wall foundations.

6. Methodology

- 6.1 Two trenches were excavated, both limited to a maximum depth of 1.75 m. (Fig 1.)
- 6.2 Trench A (2.5 m x 1.5 m), being within one of the buildings adjacent to the prison wall, was entirely hand excavated to the depth limit, and shored as necessary below 1.2 m. Scheduled Monument Consent was obtained to permit the exposure and cleaning of the Prison Wall.
- 6.3 Trench B (2.0 m x 14 m) extended from the riverside wall NE across the yard. Initially this trench was machine excavated, using a 1.5 ton Kubota with a toothless ditching bucket, to a depth of approximately 1.0 m - the first significant archaeological horizon. Further excavation, in the form of two shored boxes, was carried out by hand down to the depth limit. The location of the boxes within the trench was dictated by safety considerations and to avoid areas where archaeological deposits had evidently been destroyed by modern disturbance.
- 6.4 All archaeological features were recorded in plan and/or section, and photographed. All features and deposits were assigned unique context numbers, Trench A starting at 100, Trench B starting at 300. Samples of deposits were taken where the potential for the presence of significant ecofactual/environmental evidence appeared to be high.
- 6.5 The archaeological brief allowed for the excavation of a third trench in the N area of the site, subject to the findings in Trench B. In the event it was concluded that the archaeological deposits in the area of the proposed third trench would have been destroyed by a 19th century sewer (Figure 1 and below).

7. Results

7.1 *Trench A SE-NW (Fig.2)*

A modern brick floor, overlaid by floorboards (100), was removed to reveal a loose make up layer of sandy silt and gravel (101), which was up to 0.50 m deep at the SE end, against the Prison wall (117). 101 sealed a mixed sandy silt and gravel layer (103) which was up to 0.90 m deep in the NW corner.

A construction cut 118, presumably for the 18th-century Prison wall 117, was identified cutting layer 103. The wall proper continued down below the present ground surface for 0.42 m, and below this were expanded footings 0.5 m deep. The construction cut was backfilled with dumped layers 102 and 105.

Removal of 103 revealed a dark brown sandy silt layer 104, up to 0.08 m deep, sloping steeply down from E to W. Beneath 104, over all but the W corner of the trench, were sandy silt layers 107 and 108, which appeared to slope only slightly. Redeposited Late Saxon pottery was recovered from both 104 and 108.

Layer 108 overlay a mixed layer of small rubble and sandy silt, (109) which produced 13th-century pottery, and some unglazed roof tile. Underneath this layer was a good quality cobbled surface (110), comprising small to medium cobbles set in a matrix of compact sandy clay.

In the W corner 110 stopped cleanly along the edge of a well-defined cut (116) oriented N-S. There appeared to be a concentration of larger cobbles along the edge of this cut. The excavated part of the feature was 0.30 m deep, and appeared to be bottoming out at this depth in the very corner of the trench. It was filled with a dark grey sandy silt, with some organic content (113), and is interpreted as a channel (Figure 1). In section it was apparent that 104 was tipping down into this channel, sealing 113.

The cobbled layer 110 was removed to reveal a make up layer (111) of gravel and sand, overlying a compact dark greenish-grey sandy silt (114) which gave off a distinctive 'cessy' aroma.

This layer produced a few fragments of unglazed roof tile, and animal bone.

Layer 114 overlay an extremely compact layer of sandy silt/clay with inclusions of small rubble (115), which on the evidence of a small test-pit was at least 0.20 m deep. The surface of this layer was at a level of 55.96 m O.D.. As the layer extended below the depth limit it was not fully excavated. A small quantity of animal bone was retrieved from this deposit.

7.2 *Trench B. NE-SW (Fig.3)*

The modern brick and concrete yard surface (301) (302) (337) overlay, in the N half of the trench, a sandy silt levelling layer (303) of variable depth, cut through by a service trench (304) and a horse burial (314). In the S of the trench, abutting the N face of the riverfront wall (344), were layers of dumped mortar and rubble (336) and (339), which sealed a W-E brick drain (340) and a mortar and rubble footing (342). 342 was revealed only in the NW facing section and extended approximately 1.0 m at right angles to the riverfront wall.

Defining the SW extent of 303 in section was a small pit 334 (filled by 335) and a dumped layer (338).

Both 303 and 338 overlay a 0.45 m deep layer of reddish brown silty clay (333) which was truncated to the NE by a large linear feature (326), oriented NNW-SSE and up to 3.8 m wide in plan. The upper fill of 326 was a mix of yellowish brown silty clay, crushed mortar, and limestone rubble. An investigative slot was hand-dug across the feature after machining, establishing that it was of considerable depth, and that the lower fill was a mix of greyish clay, gravel and rubble (Figure 3).

Cutting the E edge of 326 was a brick lined soakaway 359 (not illustrated), whose N edge truncated a possible drystone wall 366 revealed in the SE facing section. The truncation of 366 by the soakaway to the SW and the service trench (304) to the NE

made it difficult to determine the alignment of 366 but it is estimated to have run N-S. The wall appeared to be respected by a thin layer of brown sandy silt 316 (not on section) which produced some 15th century sherds.

To the NE of 326 and underlying 316 was a succession of thin gravel and silty clay layers 308, 309, 310, 313, 324, 325 and 323, mostly heavily truncated by horse burial 314. A few sherds of late medieval and post medieval pottery were recovered during the machine removal of these layers.

These layers sealed 322, a composite sequence of lenses and patches of compacted orange gravel, cobbles and sandy silt 0.24 deep. 13th -14th century pottery was recovered from this sequence, and a large quantity of unglazed roof tile and animal bone.

Below this level the N box was excavated, revealing under 322 a level layer of large cobbles (320) showing evidence of wear.

Beneath 320 and its bedding layer were thin accumulated deposits 354, 355, 352 and 351, tipping slightly from NE-SW, overlying a compact layer of small cobbles (353), again sloping slightly to the SW.

The make up layer for 353 was removed in two small sondages to reveal fairly coarse sand (356), probably naturally deposited, at a level of OS. 56.07 m. This represented the depth limit of excavation in the N box.

The S box was positioned immediately SW of linear feature 326, revealing that layer 333 overlay a dumped layer of sandy silt (331). This sealed 332, a composite layer of compacted gravel surfaces with a total depth of 0.30 m similar to 322 further NE. Sherds of 13th-century pottery and animal bones were recovered from this. Cut through 332 was a vertical posthole (345), 1.0 m deep x 0.40 m dia. which contained limestone packing in its upper fill.

Layer 332 overlay a layer of grey brown sandy silt (349), up to 0.20 m deep. This sealed the SW sloping cut of a linear feature (361), whose maximum depth within the trench was 0.45 m. 361 was filled by 362, a very dark grey sandy silt with occasional stones and a high organic content, including some fragments of oak.

Feature 361 was cut through a dumped deposit of silty sand and rubble (363) overlying a similar but lighter coloured layer (364).

In a small sondage dug in the NE corner of the box, two thin, possibly natural deposits of sand and sandy silt (367) and (368) overlay coarse sand (369), probably naturally deposited, at a level of 55.42 m O.D..

7.3 *Boreholes*

During the excavation the ground immediately in front of the riverfront wall, as revealed in Trench B, was probed, indicating that the landward face of the wall

foundation stepped in by approximately 0.40 m at a depth of 1.60 m below present ground level.

After the excavation, two test boreholes were drilled (Figure 1). Borehole 1 indicated that the sand revealed at the bottom of the N box was 0.60 m deep, overlying natural grey clay (Figure 3). This sand would thus appear to be naturally deposited. Borehole 2 appeared to go through material similar to that excavated within feature 326, to a depth of 3.8 m, below which was natural grey clay. This suggests that feature 326 continues to at least the N edge of the site.

8. Archaeological Interpretation

8.1 *Trench B*

Interpretation of this trench is presented first, because a complete stratigraphic sequence was recovered from both ends of the trench. Natural sand was located in both boxes and probed in borehole 1, and appeared to indicate that the ground was sloping down gently from NE to SW. This surface was apparently stripped of any topsoil before being laid with the earliest cobbled surface 353. No dating evidence was recovered from this layer, but 12th - 13th century sherds were retrieved from the overlying accumulated layers, and the bedding layer for the upper cobbled layer 320. These cobbled surfaces would therefore appear to belong to the forecourt of the W castle gate.

The two cobbled layers in the N box (353 and 320) do not appear in the S box. The lowest deposits in the S box were considerably less compact and more water permeable than those in the N box (or in Trench A), and had the character of dumped fills. The limits of the cobbled forecourt 353 presumably lay somewhere between the two boxes, SW of which the ground sloped down to the Castle Mill Stream. At sometime in the 13th century the ground to the SW was levelled up approximately and the forecourt was extended with a new cobbled surface 320, creating an artificial channel edge represented by 361. This cobbling and channel edge may also be evident in Trench A (Figure 1 and below).

Sealing 320, the composite layer 322 in the N box is very similar to 332 in the S box. Both produced sizeable quantities of 13 - 14th century pottery, and a large amount of roof tile was retrieved from 322. Unlike 320, both 332 and the underlying 349 have horizontal surfaces, implying that they were retained on the S by a waterfront wall, rather than a sloping bank. This suggests that the present wall (344) could be, if not the original, then at least built on the foundations of the original wall. The large quantities of tile suggest the demolition or refurbishment of a major building close by, and together with the contemporary re-landscaping of the river front this suggests major alterations at this time. The dating would tentatively suggest the early 14th century, and this might be linked to the documentary evidence for either the repairs of the W bridge or the ruinous W gate. The vertical posthole 345 may be evidence of a medieval waterfront construction.

No substantial evidence of late or post-medieval building activity was found, apart from the possible wall 366, the accumulated deposits to the N over 322, and the footing 342 against the riverfront wall 344. These deposits were badly truncated by modern features, but may relate to the 18th century building documented as being sited on the waterfront. The building itself probably lies under the standing building NW of Trench B.

The line and depth of the present main sewer (Figure 1) were plotted electronically, and as no evidence of a construction trench was revealed at the NE end of Trench B, it can be assumed to have been tunnelled. Linear feature 326, by its evident width and apparent depth (as indicated in Borehole 2), could well be an earlier trench-built sewer, possibly the original Victorian sewer. Its alignment suggests that it may have been constructed around the W side of St. Georges Tower rather than tunnelling underneath it, contrary to the evidence of the City's Connections Book (see Desktop section 2.6 above), but if so why the sewer was then re-routed is unclear.

8.2 *Trench A*

Undisturbed natural sand was not found within the excavated depth in this trench. The composition of layer 115 at the bottom of this trench suggested dumped material, and the single sherd recovered from 115 suggests that the deposition of the layer could have occurred not long before the laying of the cobbles 110 in the 13th century, and could be construed as part of the same operation.

Layer 115 was not however similar to the soils at a corresponding level in the SW end of Trench B. The level at which excavation was halted in Trench A was between the bottom levels of the N and S ends of Trench B, and if the slope in Trench B is representative of the general gradient in this area, natural sand might have been expected at the very bottom of Trench A. This may indicate that 115 is infilling a buried feature, just possibly a drawbridge channel outside the W gate of the castle (Figure 4).

Channel 116 and the associated cobbling 110 are broadly contemporary with channel 361 and cobbling 320, and are interpreted as a single feature (Figure 1). The continuation of the channel edge upwards, truncating the overlying deposits 107 and 108, suggests that the channel was maintained in this position for some time.

The redeposited 9th - 11th century pottery within layers 109 and 108 overlying the cobbles suggest that they represent excavated material from elsewhere, since no finds of this date were recovered from Trench B. This could imply a difference in land use between the two trenches. Occupation of this date is likely to have existed around St. Georges Tower, which some authorities believe is of Late Saxon origin, and layers 109 and 108 could derive from grave digging within the late medieval churchyard immediately NW of the tower (Figure 5). The boundary of the graveyard might therefore lie between Trench A and Trench B. However no human bone or evidence of graves was found in the excavation, and the Late Saxon finds could have derived from elsewhere in the vicinity; Late Saxon occupation was for instance found by Jope under the castle mound (E.M.Jope, *Oxoniensia* 1952-3, 77-111).

The evidence of the building of the prison wall is clear, the construction trench being dug to the level of the firm cobbled surface (110). Sometime before the wall's construction the ground was levelled up with 303, an operation probably contemporary with the building of the riverfront wall at this point. However, no secure dating was recovered from layer 303, so it can only be said that it was deposited prior to the building of the prison wall in the late 18th century.

9. Archaeological Conclusions

Despite the very limited area of excavation of the lower deposits of the site, some qualified conclusions can be drawn, relating to the specified aims of the excavation.

- 9.1 The two channel edges identified, 116 and 361, can be seen as contemporary, suggesting that in the 13th century the bank of the river curved back to the NE to the N of St Georges Tower.
- 9.2 No structural evidence of the gatehouse/barbican was found, but the presence of large quantities of roof tile from 13th/14th century contexts, particularly in the N end of Trench B, suggests that a high status building of some sort existed a short distance to the NE of the site.
- 9.3 The nature and function of the lowest deposits in the area of Trench A was not resolved by the evaluation. Dumping 115 may be infilling a buried feature, which might possibly be the putative drawbridge channel.
- 9.4 The differing stratigraphy and the redeposited Saxon material in Trench A could suggest that the N limit of the churchyard lay between Trenches A and B, and possibly overlay the S edge of the former drawbridge channel.

The map of 1616 (Fig.5) relating to a legal dispute over the millstream shows what could be a gatehouse, with a wall and ditch running from it towards the motte. The ditch does not continue SW of the 'gatehouse' but its line is shown as the edge of the churchyard.

One possible sequence is that the original forecourt of the castle gate, represented by the cobbled surface 353, lay SW of a drawbridge channel. The forecourt was enlarged sometime in the 13th century by moving the riverbank to the W (361) and, after infilling the drawbridge channel SW of the gate with layer 115, laying another cobbled surface (320 and 110). A further extension of the forecourt was made in the 14th century with the construction of a riverside wall, possibly linked either to repairs or demolition of part of the W gate structures reflected in the documentary references to repair of the W bridge in 1324 and to the 'ruinous' and 'broken' West Gate in 1327 and 1331.

10. Impacts and archaeological implications

- 10.1 No detailed plans of the proposed development are available, and thus the assessment of impacts is based purely upon the quoted likely depth of disturbance, 1.75 m from present ground level. The client has indicated that the proposed development would be constructed upon piled foundations, but we have not received further details.
- 10.2 The line of feature 326, possibly the original sewer, has destroyed a strip 3.5 m wide across the W side of the site. Apart from this the medieval and earlier archaeological deposits appear to be preserved under later infilling. The present sewer is tunnelled, and at such a depth that it does not appear to have affected the archaeology.
- 10.3 The revealed stratigraphy shows that the proposed foundations will reach natural gravel over the N half of the site, cutting through all of the overlying stratigraphy. In the S part of the site the 1.75 m deep foundations will bottom a little way above natural sand, but will still truncate the archaeology as far back as the 13th century at least.
- 10.4 A possible buried feature was located at the bottom of the archaeological sequence in Trench A, which may represent the drawbridge channel at the W gate of the castle. Only the top 0.3 m of this will be affected at the lower S end of the site, but as the gravel rises to the N more of this feature may be affected by the proposed development. More information concerning this key archaeological feature may therefore be available at the N end of the proposed development.

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Appendix 2: Pottery Report

Introduction

This excavation has produced a well stratified, closely dated pottery assemblage of the late 11th to 13th century. Previous excavation has shown that all the wares present at Tidmarsh Lane are common types in Oxford and can therefore be used as a valuable check on existing form typologies and fabric chronologies.

Quantification

Of the total 229 sherds (2.8Kg), 2 are Saxon, 1 Late Saxon, 145 Early Medieval, 24 Medieval and 57 Post Medieval.

Two Saxon sherds have been identified; one as early to mid Saxon, (Oxford Fabric CN) of 6th to 8th century; the second sherd is too small to be identified satisfactorily, being less than 2 gms in weight. Both these sherds are residual, in contexts 105 and 104 respectively. A single sherd of St Neot's-type Ware (Oxford Fabric R) of 10th to late 11th century is also residual in context 108.

Within the Early Medieval wares three fabric types are present, Oxford Fabrics BF, AC and Y, of 10th to mid 13th-century date.

Fabric type BF is the earliest of these wares being a coarse flint tempered, hand built ware of the 10th to 12th century. There is very little of this ware present at Tidmarsh Lane, amounting to a total of 5 sherds, found in contexts 300, 316 and 319.

Fabric type AC is a limestone tempered ware commonly found in Oxford from the mid 11th to mid 12th centuries. Thirteen sherds occur at Tidmarsh Lane, of which 5 are found in situ in contexts 111, 316, 322 and 332 and the remainder residual in contexts 103, 104, 300 and 311. Three cooking pot rim forms can be dated by comparison with St Aldates (Durham 1978) as late 12th century, found in context 103, 300 and 316.

The third Early Medieval ware is the predominant ware for this period in Oxford and therefore termed "Oxford Medieval Ware" (Fabric Y). It is a coarsely gritted, quartz tempered fabric in which cooking pot and jug sherds are the predominant ware found at Tidmarsh Lane. Of the 127 sherds the majority are from cooking vessels, of which fourteen cooking pot rims can be dated as first half of the 12th century and late 12th to 13th century, by comparison with excavations at St Aldates (Durham 1977) and St Ebbes (Hassal, Halpin & Mellor 1989). Rims of both date occur in Trenches A and B. In Trench A an early 12th century cooking pot rim occurs in context 108, whilst the late 12th to early 13th century forms occur in contexts 109 and 115. In Trench B the early 12th century forms are either residual or occur together with the late 12th to early 13th century forms in contexts 300 and 319. Contexts 316 and 322 contain only late 12th to 13th-century forms.

A smaller number of jugs are represented by glazed sherds and a single rim form. These sherds occur in the same contexts as the cooking pots but as there are no diagnostic sherds present cannot be considered in terms of chronology or stratigraphic sequence.

Twenty four sherds have been categorized as Medieval. These are a limestone tempered ware (Oxford Fabric AQ), a shell tempered ware (Oxford Fabric BK) and products of the Brill pottery industry (Oxford Fabrics AM and AW).

Six sherds of Oxford Fabric AQ are found equally divided between contexts 316 and 319 in Trench B. This fabric type has previously been vaguely dated as late 12th to 15th century, but its presence at Tidmarsh Lane would indicate a date in the late 12th to mid 13th century as more appropriate.

Of the ten sherds in fabric BK one sherd in Trench A, context 104 is residual. The remaining nine sherds all occur in related contexts 317, 319 and 322 in Trench B. This fabric type has been dated previously as late 12th to 14th century. The sherds at Tidmarsh Lane can be accepted as contemporary with their stratigraphic position if they are considered as late 12th to mid 13th century rather than 14th century.

Within the Brill products, eight sherds divide equally between fabric type AM and AW. All are disturbed in context 300 with the exception of one sherd (Fabric AW) in context 316 where it would appear to be of a 13th century rather than 14th or 15th century date.

Fifty seven sherds of post medieval material include imported 15th to 16th-century Raeren/Aachen and mid 16th to 17th-century Cologne/Frechen drinking vessels, 16th to 18th-century Glazed Red Earthenwares, 16th to 18th-century Surrey Hampshire Borderwares, 18th to 20th-century Nottingham Stoneware and 19th-century Pearlware. With the exception of a Glazed Red Earthenware sherd in medieval context 112, all the other Post medieval Wares occur in Post medieval, modern or disturbed cleaning layers, contexts 103, 300 315, 325 and 360.

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Lucy Bown

Appendix 3: Table of Contexts

Context	No of Sherds	Period	Date Range
103	4	EMED	M11 - M13
103	2	PM	L15 - 19
104	1	SAX	
104	4	EMED	M11 - M13
104	1	MED	L12 - 14
105	1	SAX	6 - 8
105	2	EMED	L11 - M13
107	1	EMED	L11 - M13
108	1	LSAX	10 - L11
108	3	EMED	L11 - M13
109	3	EMED	L11 - M13
111	1	EMED	M11 - L12
112	1	PM	17 - 18
115	1	EMED	L11 - M13
300	1	EMED	10 - 12
300	15	EMED	M11 - M13
300	7	MED	13 - 15
300	20	PM	16 - 19
312	2	EMED	L11 - M13
315	2	EMED	L11 - M13
315	2	PM	17 - 20
316	1	EMED	10 - 12
316	23	EMED	M11 - M13
316	4	MED	L12 - 15
317	6	MED	L12 - 14
319	3	EMED	10 - 12
319	39	EMED	L11 - M13
319	4	MED	L12 - 15

Context	No of Sherds	Period	Date Range
322	25	EMED	M11 - M13
322	2	MED	L12 - 14
325	31	PM	M16 - 19
331	3	EMED	M11 - M13
332	10	EMED	M11 - M13
350	2	EMED	L11 - M13
360	1	PM	19

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