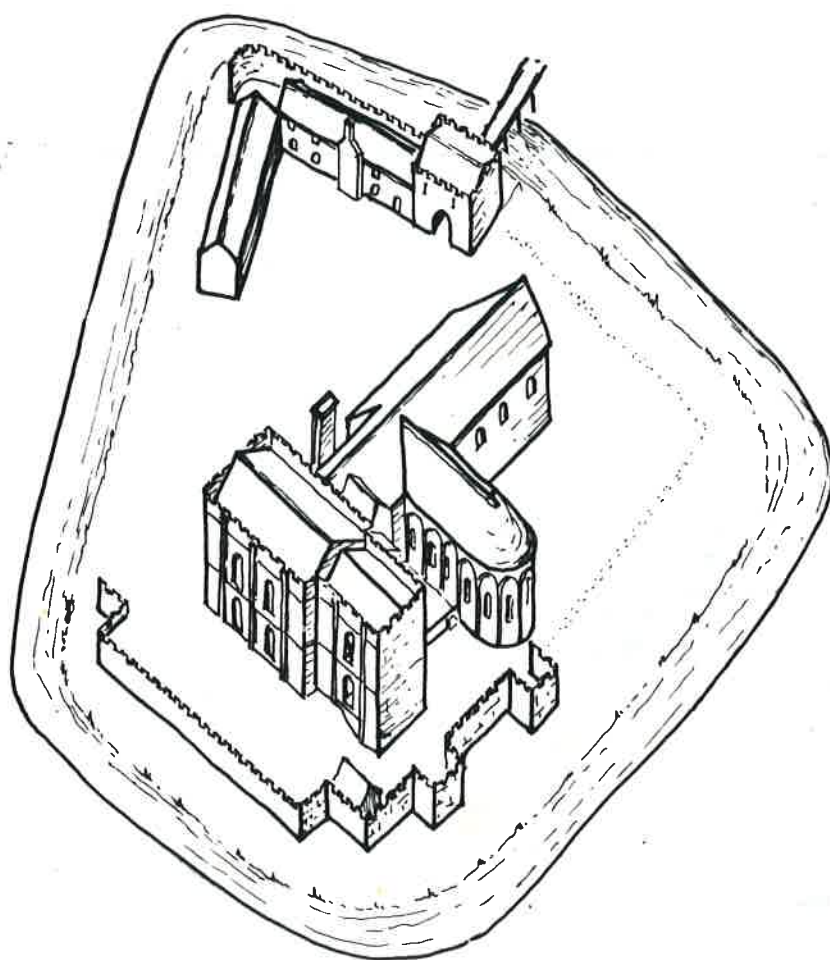


OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT ANNUAL REPORT 1984



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The Newsletter of the Council of British Archaeology

Regional Group 9, 15, 1985

Oxfordshire

BANBURY: East-West Link Road - Tim Allen
(SP455418 - SP467417; PRN 11,470)

In advance of road construction 3 JCB trenches were cut across the line of the road where it crosses the slight elevation occupied by Grimsbury House. The excavation was funded by the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission. The surrounding fields all show signs of ridge and furrow, the trenches were dug in the landscaped garden of the house. A north-south ditch was found in the central trench, and a small area was opened up to investigate this. Both prehistoric and medieval ditches were found.

When the roadway was stripped further prehistoric ditches were salvaged, including two small penannular enclosures and a pair of parallel ditches, possibly for a trackway. A number of medieval ditches, apparently enclosure and field boundaries, were also recorded. The area of occupation both in the prehistoric and medieval periods seems to have been limited on the east to the top of the elevation, but features continued both north and south beyond the limits of the site.

On the west several ditches were recorded in construction trenches. These lay beneath ridge and furrow in the field west of Grimsbury Green road. Construction trenches further west beyond the railway line were also watched as occasion arose, but revealed nothing of interest.

The prehistoric occupation produced very few finds, and no diagnostic pottery. The flint assemblage suggests use of the local very poor quality pebble flint, with the exception of a few well-made tools, and a Bronze Age date seems likely.

The medieval pottery was predominantly of 12th century date, though late 12th/early 13th century features were also common, and there were some 14th century and 15th century sherds from Pottersbury and elsewhere. A very small assemblage from the ditches beneath the ridge and furrow west of the Grimsbury Green road included St. Neots ware and a few late Saxon fabrics, suggesting that this may have been part of the late Saxon settlement at Grimberie mentioned in Domesday.

The settlement presumably shifted east during the earlier Medieval period, and probably moved again during the 13th century away from the area examined, possibly to the area of Manor Farm some 200m to the south-east.

BLEWBURY: London Road - Claire Halpin
(SU 531856)

In the week before Christmas 1983 a telephone call was made by John and Ivan Beer reporting that they had uncovered two pits during the construction of a new garage for a recently completed house adjacent to Yew Tree Cottage, London Road, Blewbury. Permission was given to excavate these pits, and also for the finds to be deposited in the Ashmolean Museum.

The pits lay c. 32m back from the road line, each was c. 1m in diameter and c. 0.3m deep. Many pieces of antler, bone, flint flakes and split quartzite pebbles lay on the surface. The flint was seen to be in remarkably

fresh condition and on excavation each piece was wrapped separately to avoid damage. The animal bone had evidently been deposited as joints as articulated shaft and knuckle bones were apparent. All the soil was retained for wet sieving and a bucket sample from each pit was recovered for flotation.

Preliminary examination of the material has produced good results and indicates it is potentially a highly interesting assemblage. The fill of each pit was exactly similar and cross joins of flint flakes and pottery from each pit, probably from the same vessel, indicate that the pits are precisely contemporary.

About 300 large pieces of waste flint flakes and many tiny spalls were recovered. It is knapping debris which, given its sharpness and lack of edge damage, was deposited soon after its production. Casual attempts at refitting flakes demonstrate that it is conjoinal and that extensive refitting may be possible. Clearly this material may be expected to produce information about lithic technology and similarly microwear analysis on selected pieces may be appropriate. Recognised tool types include snapped or 'D-shaped' scrapers, long end scrapers, and denticulated and serrated flakes. Until the pottery fragments can be identified or a radiocarbon date produced, a transverse arrowhead (chisel-type) provides the dating evidence (late neolithic) for this assemblage. About six fragments of pottery were recovered. It is buff coloured, flint tempered and one piece has an incised decoration. It is either Peterborough or grooved ware.

The environmental evidence is of the same high interest as the flintwork. About 100 animal bones were recovered and include cattle and pig. Small bones have also been retrieved eg. those of a mouse. Flotation has produced sizeable quantities of material and seeds of cereals and hazelnuts have been recognised. An important aspect of this sealed group is the diversity of material represented and its quantity is sufficient to permit some statistical analysis. A worked bone point was also recovered.

The nature of the material suggests that it is a domestic assemblage. The numerous split pebbles and the fact that some of the flint flakes are burnt suggests that it may be the sweepings from a hearth.

About 2m south of the pits twenty or more medieval sherds dating to the 12th century were recovered from the section of a foundation trench. Their context was unclear.

CUMNOR: Dean Court Farm - Tim Allen
(SP 47600595 -47400615; PRN 10795-7, 12983)

Excavation of parts of a medieval grange was undertaken in advance of housing development. The work was funded partly by the landowners, Oxford University, and partly by the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission.

Medieval settlement has been known in the area of the present farm since 1975, when buildings were found by the Oxford University Archaeological Society during construction of the Cumnor Bypass. Site E, which survived until the 18th century as Busby's Farm, produced evidence of late 13th century origins, Site A part of a masonry building with late 12th and 13th century finds. Later medieval pottery was recovered from inside a building exposed on Site B, Building XI, in a drainage ditch for the Eynsham road. More recently Dr John Blair noticed a pair of two-light late 13th century windows, now blocked, in one wall of the farmhouse Building X. He believes these may be in situ (see site plan below).

Documentary research shows that the settlement, known as 'La Dene',

belonged to Abingdon Abbey until the Dissolution. It is first recorded in the late 12th century, paying tithes for the upkeep of the abbey buildings. By the mid 13th century it was one of 5 granges in Cumnor parish. In the 14th century the settlement included an 'ecclesia' owning land of considerable value, suggesting that this may have been one of a small class of granges with sub-conventual layout. After the Dissolution however the church is not heard of again, and is now lost.

Aerial photographs have not been helpful, and traces of medieval cultivation and other earthworks are very slight. A magnetometer proved unable to detect buried features, but a resistivity survey was completed in time for excavation of Site C (see below). This survey showed areas of greater disturbance, but was not distinct enough to identify individual buildings. Consequently excavation concentrated on the known areas of settlement.

Concrete and modern outbuildings limited work around the farm to small trenches, Site D. Only one was productive. Just behind the east end was a yard wall, probably 16th century, and west of this the east wall of an earlier building, Building IX, with a large drain running north-east from it. Another drain joined this from the south just outside the wall. Both produced early 14th century pottery, which agrees with the date of the windows, and it seems likely that these were contemporary parts of the grange.

At Site A three solidly built masonry buildings were uncovered. The one partly excavated in 1976, Building I, was an L-shaped block 18m x 12m consisting of 4 rooms interpreted as the hall, private chamber, service room and kitchen of a domestic house. Buttresses and substantial foundations indicate stone walls up to the roof, possibly of 2 storeys. Another building, Building II, lay to the south of its' east end. This was slightly wider, 5m internally, and at least 15m long, but had no internal divisions. It may have been a barn, but its walls were bonded with mortar, a more sophisticated construction than the clay-bonded domestic block. Buildings I and II were contemporary; the wall of the passage through Building I continued south alongside Building II, and the area between them was infilled with a rubble platform contemporary with the wall foundations. Of the third building, which lay south of the west end of Building I, only part of one wall was seen.

Building I was originally separated from Building III by a ditch, but this was later infilled and replaced by a cobbled road, in which cart ruts were visible. Outside Building II was a rubble platform, perhaps hard standing for carts and animals.

This group of buildings obviously represents the residence of someone of consequence, and it was most likely the centre of the grange from the late 12th to the late 13th centuries. There were ditches and long narrow slots beneath the stone buildings showing earlier occupation, but very little of this was dug. This area seems to have been abandoned at the end of the 13th century.

Site B was a rectangular house-platform in the south-east corner of the field just west of the farm. Part of this had been destroyed without record by a sewer-main. An east-west building of several rooms and phases of construction was revealed. The west room had a door on the south side and a small outshot with a roughly flagged floor added on the north-west. There were very few internal features, and it may have been a barn. The central room, however, contained a large rectangular hearth and a circular oven in the north-west corner, and this room connected with the east one, which had a partly flagged floor. Large numbers of iron objects were recovered from upon this floor, and two silver coins, one 14th and one early 15th century.

The latter date agrees with the provisional date of the pottery from this building.

North of this was a rectangular stone platform, the floor and ground-sill of a small timber building, VI. This was also late medieval. South of the east-west range was a cobbled yard, at whose south edge was the foundation of a narrow wall and the ground sill of another, later, timber building. Within the ditched enclosure north of these buildings were only one shallow ditch and a single pit.

Beneath the late-medieval features was a horizon of late 12th/13th century occupation. This was represented by cobbling, a large stone hearth, several pits, a buried tripod pitcher and several ditches and gullies. No buildings were found, but it seems likely that these lie nearby.

Site C was dug to investigate anomalies shown by the resistivity survey. Most of the trench showed only ridge and furrow, but at the east end was a late-medieval stone building, with a yard on the west bounded north and south by ditches. The building, probably mid-late 14th century in origin, had one entrance facing onto the yard. Inside the floor was flagged at the north end, and a drain ran across it and out under the south wall. In the yard were circular and rectangular ovens and a small hearth, and along its north side was a paved walkway. There were traces of a similar paved area along the south side of the yard and the building. East of the building there was further masonry extending into the trench edge.

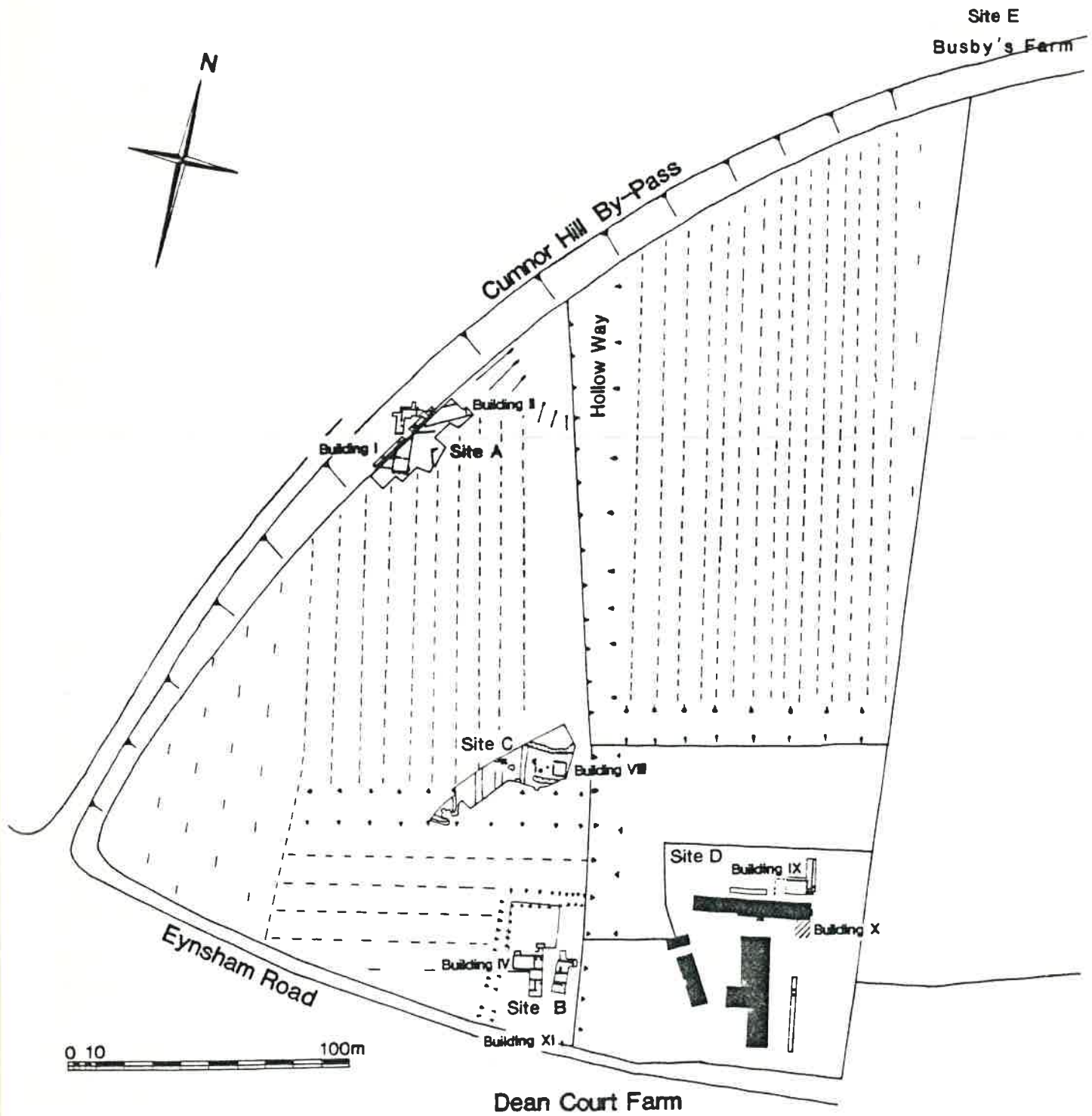
Building VIII overlay the east boundary ditch of the ridge and furrow, which was thus probably contemporary with the buildings in Site A. The apparent abandonment of Site A at the end of the 13th century and the absence of finds earlier than the 14th century from the limited work on Site D may suggest that the centre of the grange shifted at that time. 18th century maps show that there was a track running north through the site, and the evidence from sites A, B and C suggests that the medieval settlement was concentrated along the same line. It is suggested that this was a medieval road from Cumnor north to Wytham and Seacourt.

HENLEY: 12-16 Market Place - Brian Durham
(SU 759 826)

Anne Cottingham and the Henley Group excavated a slot inside the former Co-op shop. There was only one part of the street frontage which was unaffected by existing cellars, and Crest Estates Ltd kindly arranged to remove the concrete slab in an area 7m x 1m. This miniscule patch had everything! At the front was a tunnel-vaulted brick cellar which Georgina Stonor dates to about 1790. Behind this was a fireplace or oven set into the corner of a room, probably of similar date but re-using bricks of the 17th century. This in turn had been cut into a sandwich of earlier earth floors, and the earliest of them had a remarkably extensive hearth. There was a rectangular area of tile-on-edge, with another rectangular area of closely fitted flints to the west. The latter had three small sockets which must have been for a trivet. To the north was further burning and a clunch feature which suggests part of an oven.

Do these features belong to a medieval hall or service range? They may be no earlier than the 16th century, but on this prime market place frontage one would anticipate buildings from the 13th century.

Fig. 21



CUMNOR: Dean Court Farm, 1984. General Site plan.

NEWINGTON: Manorial Site - R A Chambers
(SU 6101 9622)

In conjunction with the trial excavation of medieval remains south of Newington House, the South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group has methodically field walked the arable land to the north-east. Remains of a high status medieval building complex have been recovered including fragments of decorated floor tiles and glazed ridge tiles.

NEWINGTON: Newington House - R A Chambers
(SU 608963)

In the autumn of 1983 medieval pottery was found whilst digging a new well some 100m south of Newington House. Slight earthworks in the vicinity suggested building platforms. A trial trench excavated by members of the South Oxfordshire Archaeological Group has so far revealed a metalled yard surface associated with much medieval and late medieval domestic debris. Traces of one or more building foundations beneath the yard surface remain to be examined.

NORTHMOOR: Watkins Farm - Tim Allen
(SP 410035-427022; PRN 8312-20; 8322-27)

Iron Age.

Amey Roadstone Corporation kindly lent us a machine to strip the last part of the main enclosure, excavated in 1983, which was then excavated in December 1984 with the help of the MSC team.

The suspicion that parallel ditches led from the enclosure entrance to a central roundhouse was confirmed. The house enclosure originally had an entrance on the south; unfortunately medieval ditches had obliterated any possible features just inside this, including probably the doorpostholes. The house faced directly onto the possible house enclosure excavated last year. In its first phase this enclosure had a southern entrance adjacent to a gap in the main enclosure ditch, and it seems that the central house was originally oriented towards this entrance into the enclosure, not the north-east entrance. The entrances in both the main enclosure ditch and the smaller enclosure were subsequently blocked, and it was probably at the same time that the central house was rebuilt. The doorpostholes of this house survived cut into the earlier surrounding ditch, and the door faced onto the north-east entrance to the main enclosure. Ditches were dug from this entrance flanking a roadway up to its door. The ditches around the house had an entrance on the south side as in the preceding phase, suggesting that there were still close links with the enclosure to the south. These ditches were recut on several occasions, indicating that the house had a fairly long life. A human skull came from one of the ditches, and at some stage a horse was buried inside the house enclosure.

Another circular enclosure was found on the west edge of the interior, also with an entrance on the north-east. This was badly damaged by later Romano-British ditches, but contained one of the only two circular pits on the site, and a deeper waterlogged feature, possibly a well. An extended human skeleton was found up against the side of this feature, just above a very dense concentration of highly burnt limestone, and at least one wooden object was also recovered from the waterlogged deposits below.

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North of these enclosures were only curving lengths of ditch subdividing the interior. Although the subsoil had been removed by medieval cultivation in this area, the impression is that this part of the interior was less densely occupied.

Abutting the main enclosure outside on the north-west were small sub-rectangular enclosures, which produced Iron Age finds. It seems therefore that the main enclosure was only one element in the settlement, more of which is still to be stripped.

Romano-British

It is clear that the main enclosure ditch was still a significant boundary in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, and various ditch circuits were dug parallel to it during that time. Further ditches were discovered, also waterlogged pits, probably wells, and one or two shallower pits. A series of curving gullies cut into the central roundhouse area may have been pens or chicken runs, but there was no evidence of buildings. If these existed they must have been in the areas truncated by later ploughing or stripping before excavation began.

It is now apparent that the trackway which cuts across the main enclosure is leading to a succession of subrectangular enclosures, overlying the 2nd century AD Romano-British ones. A very little late 3rd/4th century pottery came from its ditches, showing that there was continued use of this area, but bearing out the lack of occupation features.

Medieval

Ridge and furrow covers the northern part of the site. From its boundary ditches and the tops of earlier features came pottery of 11th to 13th century date, presumably mucked out from the village close by at Northmoor.

OXFORD: Churchill Hospital - Brian Durham
(SP546057; PRN 3615)

A large area of Nissen Huts have been cleared to the west of the kiln site excavated by Dr C J Young in 1971-74. Brian Durham found four new kilns to add to the nine already known, and the western limit of the production area was established as roughly the line of the main hospital north-south access road.

Sarah Green has dated the new kilns to the 4th century (Phase 4b). Three of them possibly relate to the known workshop complex D, and the fourth was interesting in that it was the only Churchill kiln to be relined. Peter McKeague has prepared a report on this year's excavation.

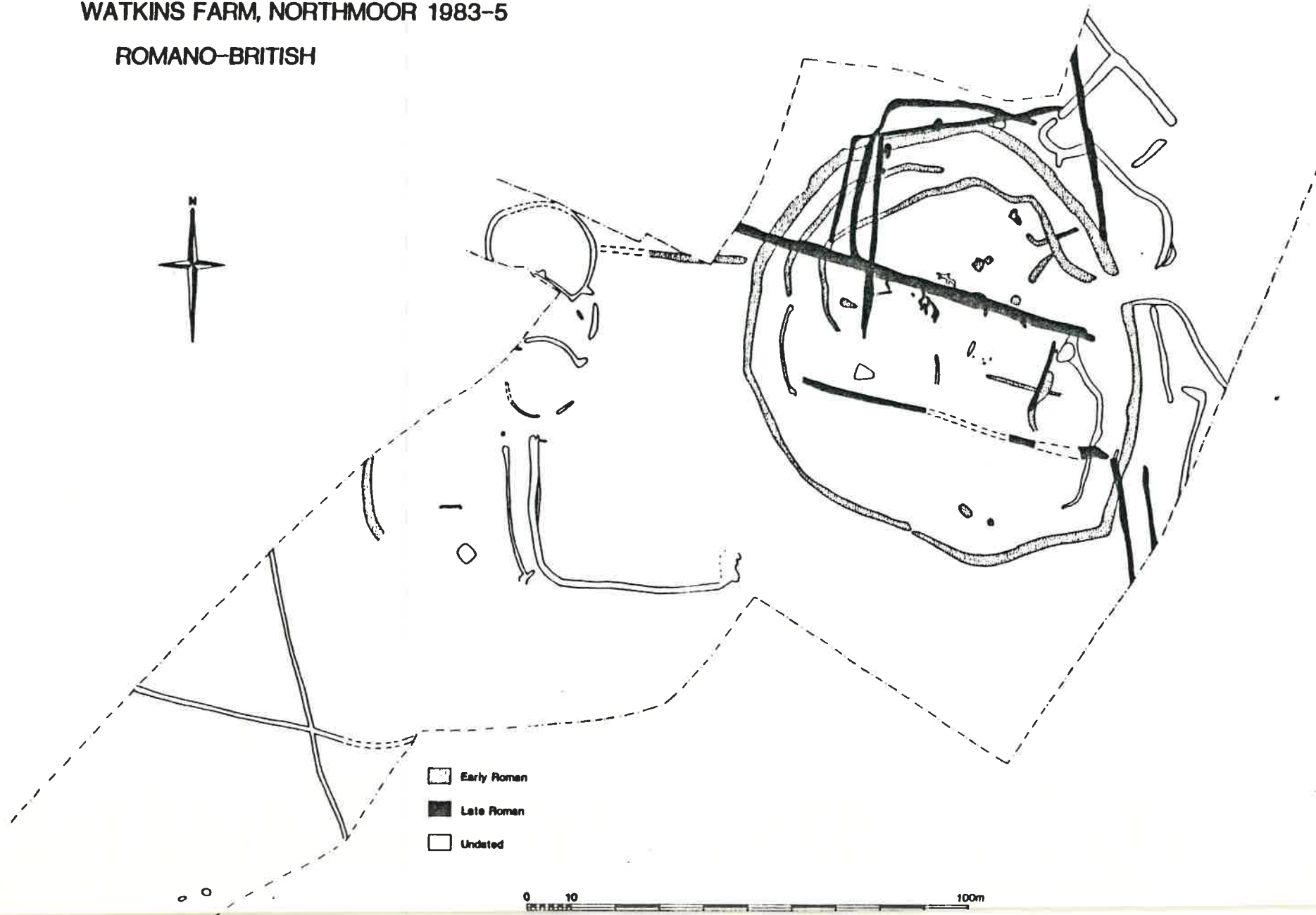
OXFORD: High Street, All Souls College - Brian Durham
(SP516063)

In October 1983, All Souls College was refacing the north side of the chapel when a large number of painted fragments of medieval masonry came tumbling out of a cavity. It transpired that this was an old doorway which had been reopened during internal restorations by Sir George Gilbert Scott in 1872. The painted fragments were all attributable to the medieval reredos which had just been rediscovered at that time, and which Scott was restoring. They provide a useful check on the accuracy of the new carving, and show

WATKINS FARM, NORTHMOOR 1983-5

ROMANO-BRITISH

Fig. 23



clearly that all the painted stonework now visible on the reredos is original 15th century work, and the unpainted work and the figures are replacements. Precisely why such a collection of fragments came to be walled up is not clear, but the inclusion of a fragment of 14th century stone cross-head suggests that the builders regarded these as special fragments which should not simply be dumped.

The cross-head fragment includes the lower body of the crucified Christ on one side, and drapery of perhaps the Virgin on the other. The history of this fragment is remarkable. Philip Lancaster of the Council for the Care of Churches prepared a report on it, and found that the identical fragment had been illustrated by J C Buckler in the 19th century. It had apparently then been found built into the east wall of North Hinksey Church 2 miles west of Oxford, and Buckler had drawn it with fragments of a gabled top and the existing cross-base and shaft. The top is no longer tracable, but the remainder will appear as a reconstruction in the 1984 volume of Oxoniensia in an article by Nicholas Doggett discussing all aspects of these discoveries. The remaining mystery is how the crucifixion fragment got to All Souls, and how it came to be built into a wall for the second time.

RADLEY: Barrow Hills - R A Chambers and Claire Halpin
(SU 5135 9815; PRN 13,400)

With the exception of a break in the late summer and early autumn excavations continued on this multiperiod site throughout 1984. The site lies one mile north-east of Abingdon, Oxfordshire. The excavations are being undertaken in advance of a new housing scheme by the Oxford Archaeological Unit with funding from HBMC and labour provided by the Manpower Services Commission. The Oxford Archaeological Unit is extremely grateful to the developers, Kibswell Builders Ltd for providing both earthmoving machinery and direct financial help during the year. The Abingdon and Area Archaeological and Historical Society working under the direction of Claire Halpin has undertaken the further excavation of several Bronze Age features. The Oxford Archaeological Unit would also like to thank the owner, Mr W P Docker-Drysdale for permission to excavate and for his help over the year. The Oxford Archaeological Unit is also grateful to Mr B Ford, the tenant farmer, for his continued assistance over the past year. An interim report was published: Barrow Hills, Radley 1983-4, Excavations: an Interim Report by R Bradley, R A Chambers and C E Halpin which sold very successfully at a site Open Day which was attended by about 2000 people.

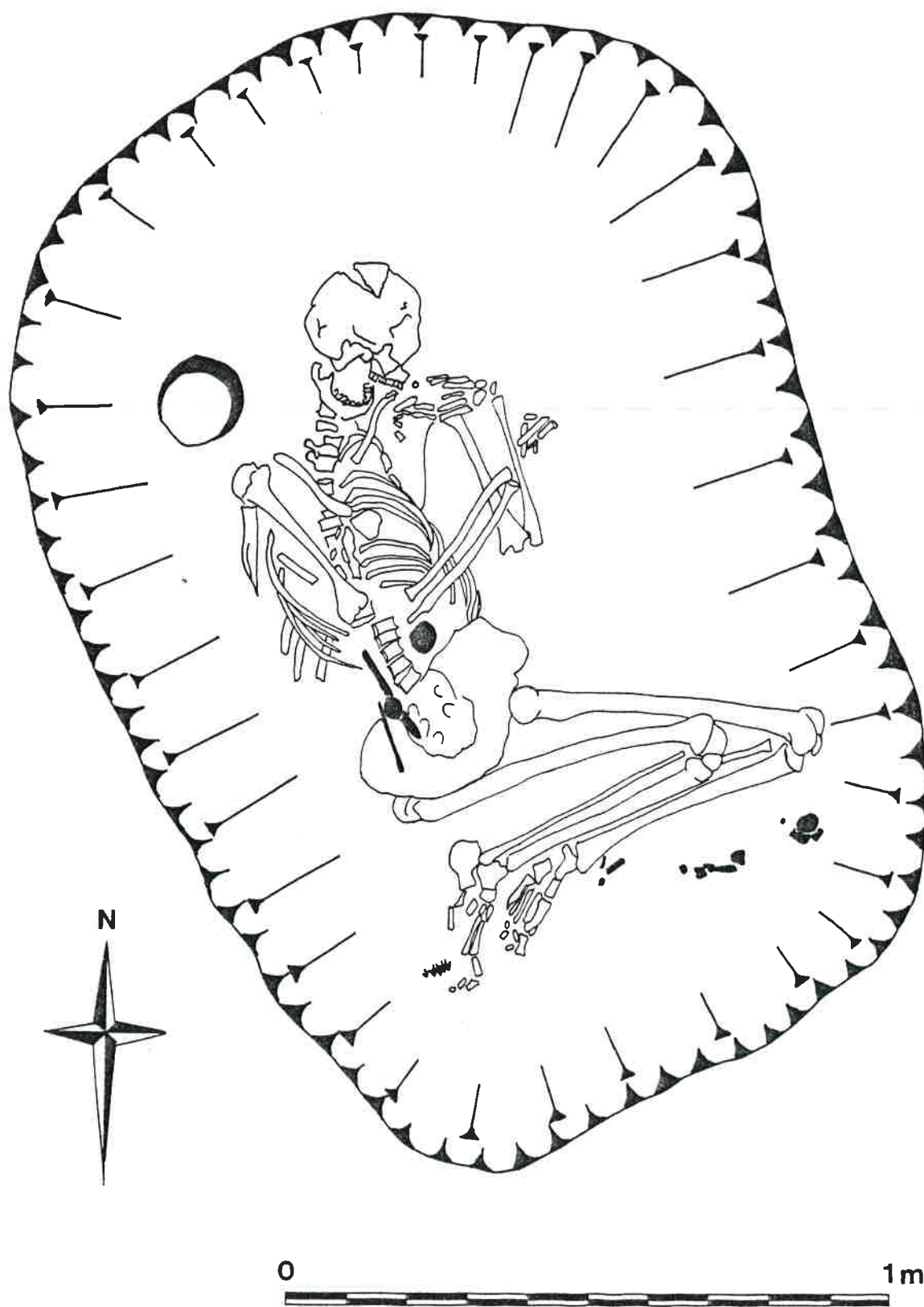
The Neolithic Features - Claire Halpin

In addition to the long barrow and segmented ring ditch excavated by Richard Bradley and students of Reading University, a ring ditch and c. 10 pits have been excavated.

The ring ditch (Feature 611) was cut by the outer ditch of Barrow 12. Although truncated it was possible to see that the ditch had been continuous. The form of the ditch was remarkable; though less than 9m in diameter it was c. 1.8m deep, comparable in depth to the large ring ditch of Barrow 12 which is 25m in diameter. Originally the ditch was steep-sided and flat-bottomed.

Ranged around the floor of the ditch were five large deer antlers and two groups of articulated animal bone. The latter consisted of shoulder blades with upper and lower leg bones and are probably those of an immature cow. These antler and bone finds were deliberate deposits comparable to

Fig. 24



RADLEY: Barrow Hills. The primary burial (Feature 203) of the small Bronze Age ring ditch adjacent to Barrow 1.

those found within the henge at Dorchester. It is anticipated that selected items will be sent for radiocarbon dating.

A relatively prolific number of finds were recovered from the fill of the ditch and include animal bones, waste flint flakes, large plain pot sherds and charcoal deposits. The function of the ditch is uncertain but it may have served as a focus for burial.

In the south-west corner of the field c. 10 pits containing rich deposits of late Neolithic material were found. These finds consisted of fresh flint knapping debris and flint scrapers, grooved ware pottery, animal bone and charcoal. They are most interesting as for example, the flintwork, being derived from sealed contexts, will provide a useful comparison for the material collected during fieldwalking by members of the Abingdon Archaeological Society.

The Bronze Age Barrows - Claire Halpin

In total three Bronze Age barrows (Nos. 1, 12 and 13 of the cemetery), two small ring ditches and numerous secondary burials have been excavated.

The spring and summer season of weekend excavations concentrated on the adjacent barrows (Nos. 12 and 13) which lie at the western end of the cemetery. No central burial was found within Barrow 13, indeed, only nondescript hollows were present. Conversely seven burials were excavated from within Barrow 12.

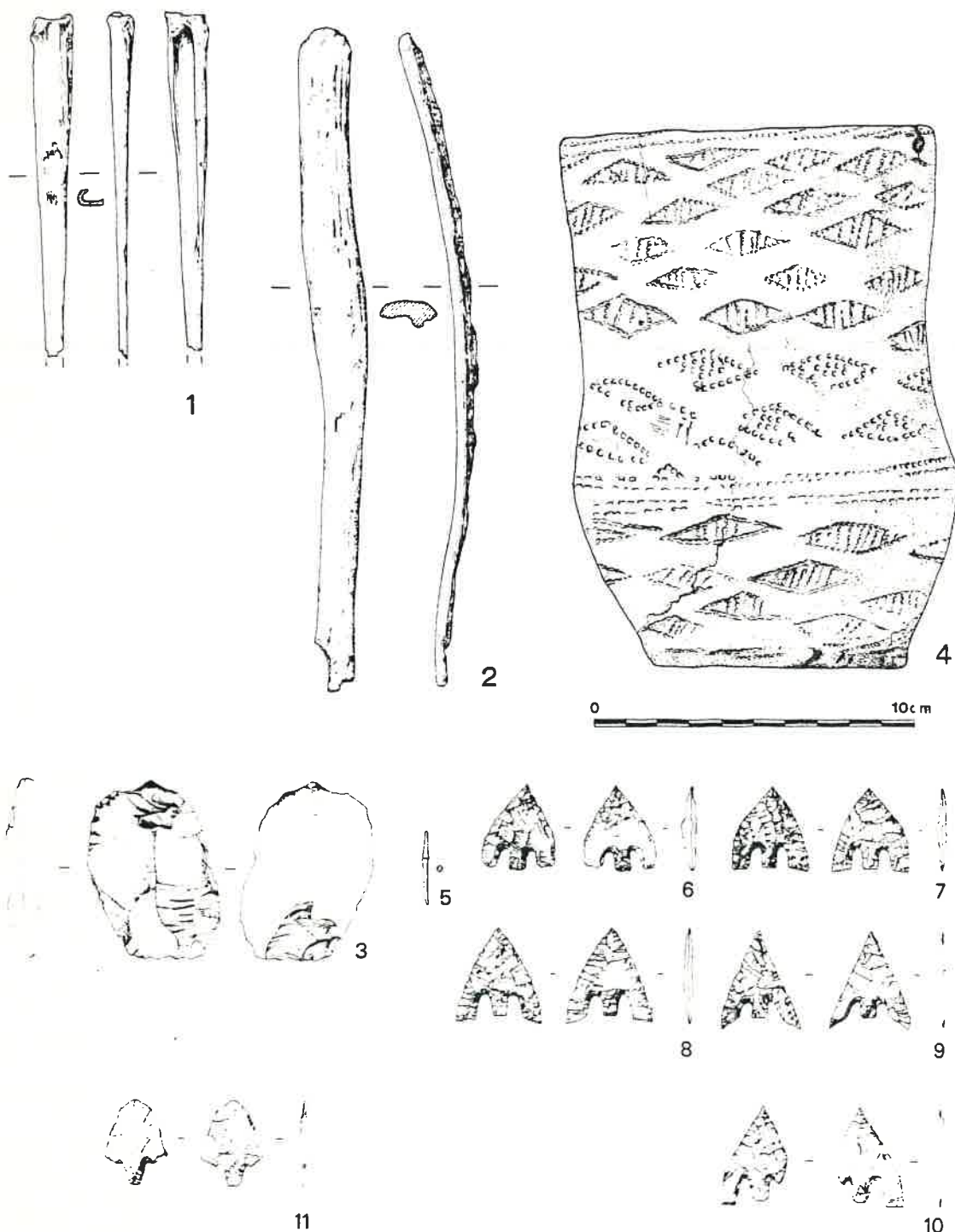
Barrow 12 was a double-ditched barrow, comparable with others in the cemetery, and of at least two phases of construction. Four burials were recovered from the centre. The primary burial consisted of an adult crouched burial with a bronze awl lying against the left foot. It may be contemporary with that from the centre of the small ring-ditch adjacent to Barrow 1. An unaccompanied cremation and a fragmentary inhumation were found in a pit cutting the central burial. The unusual, fragmentary burial consisted of the articulated upper half of a child, laid with care and accompanied by a food vessel. Overlying these graves was a cremation. About 2m south-east of these central burials an infant inhumation in the crouched position was excavated. The burial pit was shallow (c. 0.20m) and the lower leg bones and skull were plough damaged. Further evidence of plough damage was seen in the discovery of a pot base in situ in the south-east quadrant of this barrow. It is likely that the pot originally contained a cremation. On the east side of the ditch, above the primary silts, a small urn containing cremated bone was excavated. A miniature pot lay inverted over this deposit. A satellite burial consisting of a plough damaged cremation was excavated on the north-east side of Barrow 12.

During the 1983/84 excavation seasons we have been impressed by the contrast between prestigious burials (laid with care and containing numerous grave goods) and poor or low status burials; disarticulated inhumations which may represent reinternments or exposed burials; and fragmentary inhumations (such as found at the centre of Barrow 12) which were apparently mutilated before burial. One of the high status burials (F203) excavated in 1983 is illustrated in the accompanying 2 figures to illustrate the wealth of material from this site.

The Roman Cemetery and other burials - R A Chambers

The excavations of the mixed inhumation and cremation cemetery at the centre of the present site was reported in detail last year. Top soil stripping has since confirmed that there are no further burials to the east.

Fig. 25



RADLEY: Barrow Hills. The grave goods found with Feature 203:
 1. Bone tool; 2. Antler spatula; 3. Flint end scraper; 4. Long-necked beaker; 5. Bronze awl; 6-10. Five finely flaked barbed and tanged arrowheads; 11. Barbed and tanged arrowhead found lying against the spine.

The Roman period burials on this site now appear to fall into two distinct groups: nine inhumation burials and one cremation burial scattered across the south-western quarter of the site and the small discrete cemetery comprising 47 inhumations and several cremations which was excavated in 1983. Four of the nine scattered inhumation burials each provided evidence for wooden coffins and one of the four inhumations was buried with hobnail boots placed between the lower legs. Although almost certainly Romano-British the remaining burials did not provide any datable artifacts. Some of these outlying burials may belong to a small Romano-British settlement, probably a farmstead some 100m to the south-east of the site.

The Anglo-Saxon Settlement - R A Chambers

Excavation at Barrow Hills, Radley between summer 1983 and August 1984 has uncovered the major part of an early Anglo-Saxon settlement. The excavation has been undertaken for the HBMC by the Oxford Archaeological Unit with labour supplied by the Manpower Services Commission. Work on this scheduled monument will continue into 1985 after which the land will be taken for house building.

Two hectares (5 acres) of this site have now been stripped of topsoil to reveal the major part of a migration period settlement. The settlement appears to have been established sometime during the first quarter of the 5th century AD and deserted during the 7th century.

The settlement lies on the well-drained second gravel terrace between the south-west end of a prehistoric barrow cemetery and a stream to the west. In the medieval period the stream valley was dammed to form a fishpond for Abingdon Abbey. In 1928 early Saxon pottery was found within the area occupied by the pond. This suggests that pond construction destroyed the western edge of the Anglo-Saxon settlement.

The archaeological remains of this settlement take three distinct forms: sunken featured buildings, rectangular post-built structures and domestic rubbish deposits which accumulated within the earthwork remains of Bronze Age and Neolithic barrow ditches.

More than 40 sunken featured buildings have now been excavated. Each building is represented by a generally sub-rectangular pit with a post hole placed centrally at either end. The pits varied in size from 1m deep by 4.5m square to shallow scrapings. In several buildings the end posts had been replaced which suggested rebuilding.

In only one of the sunken featured buildings had the pit bottom been used as a floor surface. In the remaining buildings the pits appear to have been covered with floor boards. The walls of each building lay beyond the pit edges and no archaeological evidence survives for them. Many of these sunken features appear to have been purposely backfilled to avoid the nuisance of open pits close to replacement buildings. However some pits were allowed to fill up gradually as refuse tips for domestic rubbish. In two instances partly backfilled pits were briefly used to protect open fires, possibly for cooking.

Timber post-built structures form the second building category on this site. This category can currently be divided into two distinct building techniques. Firstly, post-built rectangular structures in which the spaces between the uprights would have been filled perhaps with wattle and daub panels. The second technique employed pairs of posts in place of large single posts. Presumably the posts were placed either side of wattle panels. More than ten post-built structures have so far been identified but in many cases only a few of the post-holes had penetrated the topsoil to leave

recognisable traces in the gravel beneath.

This settlement appears to have been finally deserted around the time of the foundation of Abingdon Abbey, itself one of the earliest English monastic foundations. Early charter evidence suggests that Barrow Hills may have been included in the initial 20 hides of land granted to the Abbey in the 670's AD.

ROLLRIGHT - See Warwickshire: Long Compton

SALFORD: Pickwell Close - R A Chambers
(SP 2901 2772; PRN 13,584)

In August 1984 five trial pits and trenches were excavated across earthworks in Pickwell Close, Salford. Substantial stone building remains, glazed roof tiles and 12th - 13th century pottery indicated that the earthworks marked the remains of the manor house of the manor of Pickwell. This manor is first mentioned in the early 13th century. It has been variously spelled Pickel, Pykewell, Pikewell and in 1845 as 'Pickwell Close and Pasture'.

The trial trenching was undertaken by the land owner Mr George Fawdry and members of the Salford Historical Society.

STANTON HARCOURT: Gravelly Guy - George Lambrick
(SP 403054; PRN 8281-6)

Excavations at Gravelly Guy financed by HBMC and MSC continued from July to November 1984. The second halves of almost all the Iron Age features examined last year were excavated. A programme of sieving was undertaken to establish some control on recovery for finds. No spectacular finds were made though two dog burials were recorded. Two large areas not dealt with last year which appeared to have little in them, were fully examined and as expected produced only a scatter of post-holes and the odd pit. One more four-post structure emerged from this together with a possible house site though the only evidence for this is a pair of large post holes suggesting door posts. Further work was also carried out on the complicated series of ditches surrounding the deep Roman well-pit discovered last year.

One piece of salvage work begun last year was also completed. This was the excavation of a series of ploughsoils interstratified with alluvium and sealing the original ground surface on the Windrush floodplain (see section). Since most of the ploughsoil was stratigraphically earlier than the alluvium, any finds within it would indicate the earliest possible date for the alluvium to have started to accumulate. The ploughsoils contained Iron Age pottery and one Roman sherd thus showing that most of the alluvium must be Roman or later. This agrees with the dating of alluvium elsewhere in the Thames valley. On the old ground surface beneath these deposits a transverse flint arrowhead and one or two sherds of possible Neolithic pottery were found. These fit well with the presence of a small henge monument nearby excavated last year, a number of casual finds including a fine greenstone axe, and a couple of small domestic pits found nearby in recent salvage work.

The main effort this year was the excavation of another large area (100 x 60m) adjoining last year's and again kindly stripped for us by the gravel company, Smith and Sons of Bletchington (see General Site Plan). As with the

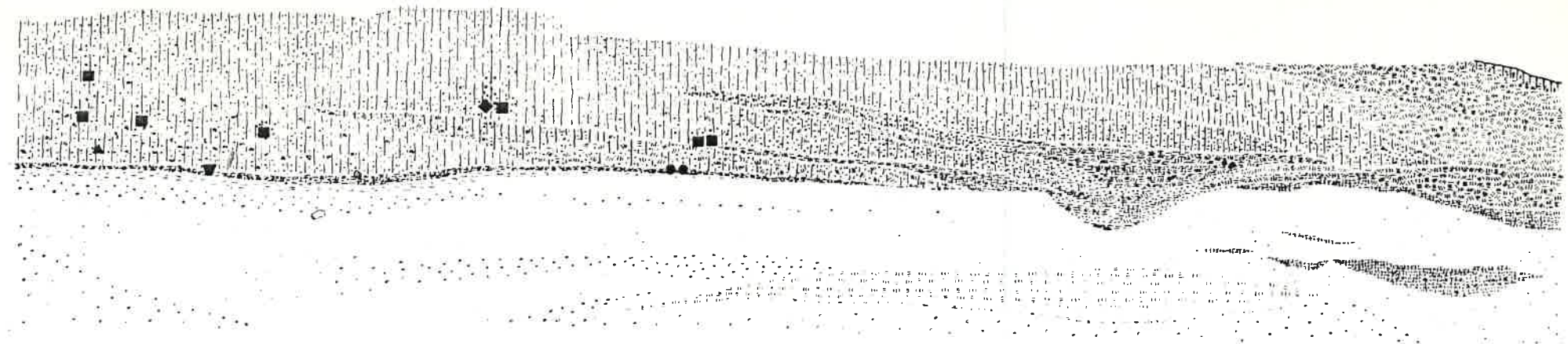
1983 area the site was sharply divided into an Iron Age half and a Roman half separated by shallow ditches marking what was obviously an important land division in both periods. The Iron Age settlement was tightly confined to a linear strip following the same pattern of dense pits respecting small penannular enclosures which probably mark the positions of houses. In this case there was a ditched boundary to the pits which in one phase turned to cut across the general scatter dividing it into two blocks, similar to the pattern found in last year's area though not so clear-cut. This division was later superceded as the area of pits spread and the undisturbed ground diminished. The very clear division in the blocks of pits found last year was re-emphasised by the discovery of another large post built house (c. 10m in diameter) on the line of the division immediately adjacent to one of last year's houses.

As with last year's excavation the pits on the whole produced only moderate amounts of domestic rubbish. Loom weights and quern stones for grinding corn seem to be common on the site, while bone tools are surprisingly scarce compared with the sites at Ashville, Abingdon or Mount Farm near Dorchester. The site is also exceptional in the area for the number of animal burials, almost all of them dogs. This is particularly true of this year's area where a further ten ritual dog burials have been found, including two double burials. Both long and short tailed breeds are represented. The burials were associated with layers of stones and the presence of other bones possibly suggests the provision of food for the after life. Horse and sheep skulls have also been found, and so has a severed foreleg of a horse. Two adult human burials were found, one with a bone toggle, the other with a fine shale spindle whorl, probably brought to the Thames valley from Kimmeridge in Dorset. Over half a dozen new-born babies have also been found. Among the most interesting finds were two fine brooches, one an early La Tene iron type, the other a middle La Tene bronze penannular brooch similar to one from Maiden Castle.

Although the general pattern of the pits respecting small enclosures was maintained, one late development in the Iron Age settlement was the creation of another small enclosure, surrounded by a much deeper ditch than is usual for such features, which overlapped one of the gully enclosures and part of the pit scatter. At its most impressive the surrounding ditch was sharply V-shaped and about six feet deep. At this stage the enclosure had two entrances, one to the east and one facing north-west. The terminals of the ditch on this side contained a concentration of domestic refuse probably from a house enclosure immediately next door which was excavated last year. It is doubtful whether the large enclosure surrounded a house though there were some post holes within it. However, there was not an obvious concentration of domestic rubbish at the eastern entrance as would be expected for a house site. One part of the ditch did contain a concentration of slag, the only instance so far of evidence for metal working being significant.

It still seems likely that this settlement had a predominantly arable agricultural economy whereas the sites at Mingies Ditch, Hardwick (half a mile to the west) and at Watkins Farm, Northmoor (currently under excavation, 1.5 miles to the east) were lower lying, enclosed pastoral farms. Following Humphrey Case's suggestion for Vicarage field (across the road from Gravelly Guy) it seems likely that these dense linear pit scatters mark boundaries between large fields or groups of fields. The dating evidence suggests occupation from around 600-500 BC perhaps till the Roman Conquest, and the layout of the site reveals very strict continuity of functions and layout throughout this period, with settlement features including the numerous pits

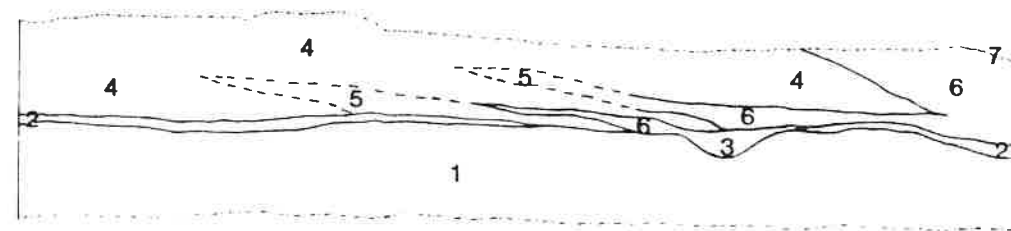
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GRAVELLY GUY 83-84

SECTION ACROSS PLOUGH-WASH AND ALLUVIUM

Transverse Arrowhead	▼	Loam	
Flint Flake	▲	Silt	
? Neolithic Pot	●	Clay	
Iron Age Pot	■	Decayed Gravel	
Roman Pot	◆	Sand and Gravel	
Bone	☞	Peat	
Burnt Quartz Pebble	◄	Charcoal	



INTERPRETATION

- 1 : Pleistocene gravel with channel deposits
- 2 : Pre Iron Age ground surface
- 3 : ? Natural hollow / tree hole
- 4 : Ploughwash
- 5 : Ploughwash and ? alluvium
- 6 : Alluvium
- 7 : Modern ground surface

Fig. 26

used for storing grain crammed into a narrow strip not encroaching on the fields either side.

In the Roman period one of the adjacent fields was used for paddocks and other features peripheral to an unlocated settlement, while the area of Iron Age occupation was abandoned. This year only part of the Roman area was examined. A fairly neat, largely rectilinear layout of small paddocks was found within the large square enclosure, the corner of which was excavated last year. Another large gravel pit, well or ritual hole, possibly similar to one or other of the somewhat inexplicable features of this type excavated last year, has been uncovered, but there was insufficient time to do more than establish that it is Romano-British. It will require excavation next year. The only probable Roman features within the Iron Age half of the site (none were found last year) were two graves with extended burials, one with coffin nails.

Although no formal open day has been held at the site, several school and college groups were shown round as well as a number of individual visitors. We also had the pleasure of having the assistance of two Rumanian archaeologists, who worked at Gravelly Guy for three weeks, having had a week's archaeological tour round Britain with Tim Allen, who visited Rumania the previous two summers. They seem to have greatly enjoyed their visit and it added much to the success of the exchange.

WALLINGFORD: 68-70 Wood Street - Brian Durham
(SU608 893)

Roger Bettess and TWHAS have dug a small trench to check whether there was early occupation on this back street, which runs parallel to the Market Place and about 35m to the east on the riverward side. The result was about as positive as could be hoped in a trench 2m x 4.5m, with a large pit producing the earliest Late Saxon assemblage known from Wallingford. Provisionally dated by Maureen Mellor to the 10th-early 11th century, the pottery is of the type which was predominant in Oxford in the 9th-10th centuries, and was appearing as far downstream as London in the 10th century.

The significance of this find is twofold: it suggests early activity on Wood Street which may, therefore, have been laid out in the foundation of the town by Alfred: it focuses attention on the many sites of potential redevelopment on this side of the town, which may produce the late Saxon evidence which is inaccessible on the main frontages.

WANTAGE: The Vicarage - Brian Durham
(SU396 879)

It has been the policy of the Unit to look closely at the focal points of the many lesser towns of Oxfordshire, and particularly those with ancient beginnings. Wantage Vicarage occupies the area west of the churchyard with a steep slope down to the Letcombe Brook. It seemed likely that this large area would include evidence of any early settlement in the neighbourhood of the church. A series of four trial trenches were dug in an effort to substantiate this.

The trenches were placed to investigate the south and east frontages of the site, on the premise that these were the most promising areas for early settlement adjoining the churchyard. The vicarage pulled down in the 1840's was in this area, with an access near the corner of the church. Other

GRAVELLY GUY 83-84

GENERAL SITE PLAN

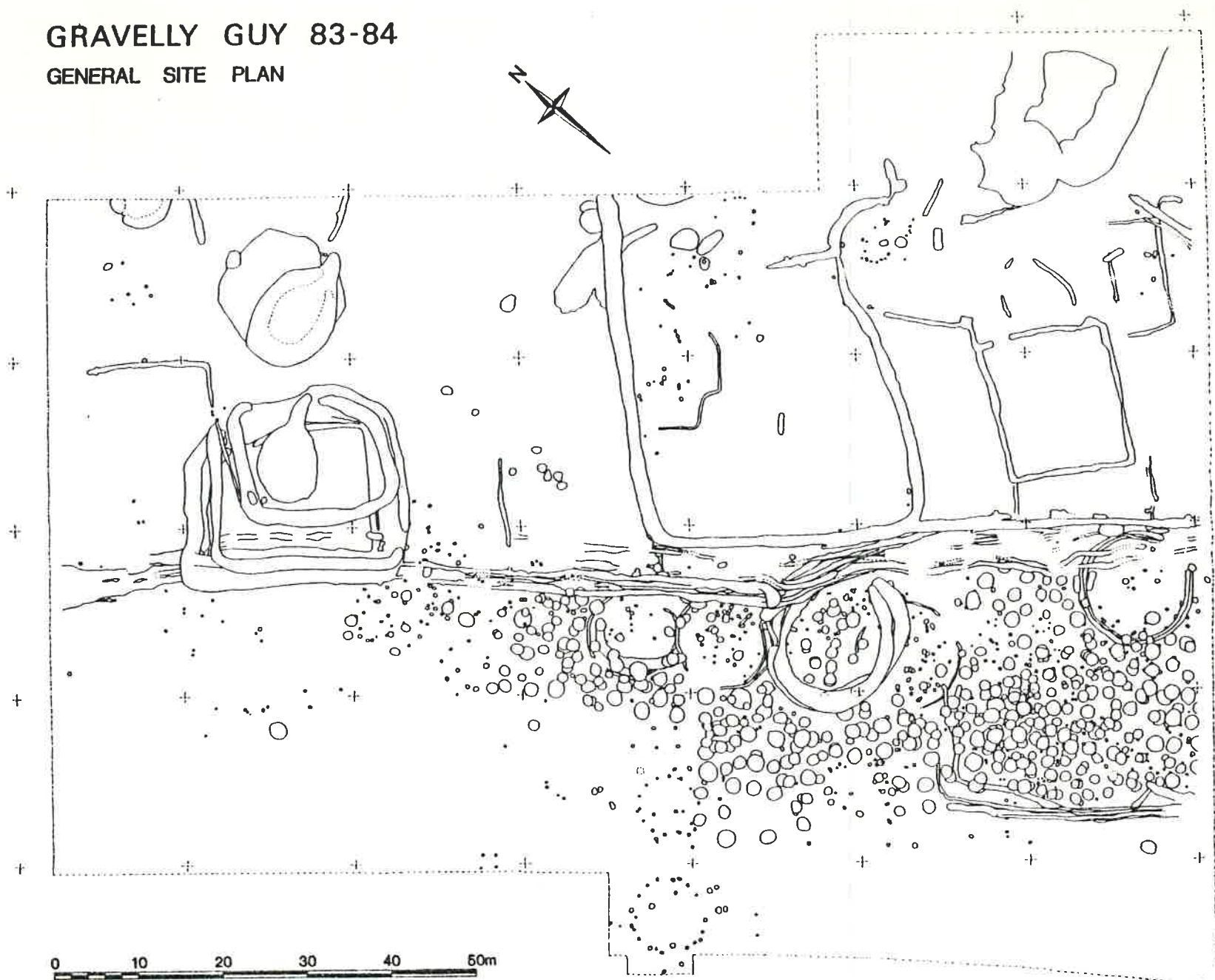


Fig. 27

trenches investigated the terraced site of the proposed replacement vicarage and the north extremity of the lawn west of the existing vicarage. There was evidence of cultivation in all the trenches. In most places this extended down to the surface of the natural Greensand, leaving no early stratigraphy. The only place where a distinctive deposit survived was in the northernmost trench IV. A layer of very smooth dark grey silty loam produced one sandy sherd and one grass-tempered sherd, which suggested an early deposit. Enlargement of this trench failed to produce any more of this material however, and ran into an area of 17th century disturbance. It is possible that the layer was intact in other areas, but would certainly be patchy and there seems little prospect of recovering the sort of sealed deposit which would add anything new to our knowledge of early Wantage.

With this degree of cultivation or other disturbance it can be anticipated that only features dug into the subsoil would be found, and Trench II produced a good ditch of the late 12th-early 13th century. It ran NE-SW at a distance of 8.5m from the existing churchyard boundary, and the length excavated was precisely parallel to it. It seems not to have been the boundary of a larger graveyard, since there was no sign of grave cuts, human bone, or graveyard build-up on the church side. It may, therefore, have defined a lane outside the churchyard, which perhaps at this date led to an original vicarage. The building demolished in the 1840's could well have had medieval origins as shown by a pencil drawing in Wantage Museum. It is not available for excavation since its site was planted with an avenue of lime trees which are to be preserved in the new development.

WITNEY: Cogges Medieval Fishpond - R A Chambers
(PRN 4602; SP 3632 0980)

The first known reference to a fishpond at Cogges dates to 1232 or 1233 when a pond was described as belonging to the Lords of Cogges. Ten years later another document also mentions the pond but this time in greater detail. This has enabled Dr John Blair to define precisely its position as that of a site previously identified as a possible fishpond from earthwork evidence.

In September, the fishpond was sectioned across its width in advance of house building at the request of HBMC. This revealed that a medieval fishpond in this position would not have been rectangular as previously thought, but trapizoidal in plan. The pond was apparently created by constructing two dams across the flood plain of the Madley Brook. Also a bank was constructed along the south-eastern edge of the flood plain to match the height of the north-western edge. The Madley Brook was diverted along a leat which passed to the north of the fish pond. This leat, broadened and deepened in recent times, still carries the brook.

Further survey work has revealed that the dam which presumably formed the head of the pond now lies beneath houses to the NE. The earthworks of what was presumed to be the remains of the demolished NE dam have now been shown to be extensive domestic rubbish dumps deposited during the 19th and early 20th centuries, presumably within the pond.

The positions of the entry and exit sluices which controlled the rate of flow of water through the pond are no longer visible.

The section showed that the base of the pond was level. During this century much earth and building material had been dumped over the whole of the pond area to a depth of several feet in places. This rubble sealed 0.3m - 0.5m of buff, silty clay which covered the bottom of the pond. This bottom

deposit was examined by Dr Mark Robinson who found that only 4% of the molluscs present were aquatic species. The terrestrial molluscs suggested damp, shaded conditions. Such an assemblage might have occurred in a drained and derelict pond overgrown with coarse herbage or scrub. The high percentage of terrestrial molluscs was inconsistent with the deposits accumulating in a water-filled fish pond.

WITNEY: Mount House and Mount Mills: residence of the bishops of Winchester.
(SP35720927)

'The Mount' is a large house in 1.5 acres of garden next to Witney church. It had always been associated with the Witney manor of the bishops of Winchester, but there were no visible signs of ruins to substantiate this and the site was never scheduled. This may explain why there was no archaeological response when a planning application was made to build a complex of retirement homes. The Oxford Unit was, therefore, fortunate that C H Pearce Homes of Bristol permitted trial trenching and then a ten week excavation. The understanding was that the development would proceed immediately thereafter, but the results were so impressive that the District Planning Committee is seeking ways to protect the site.

In broad terms, the garden encloses the east, south and probably west ranges of a large 12th century 'country house', together with the north moat and probably the bridge and gatehouse. The principal private lodgings appear to be a tower solar at the south-east corner, to which was added a full-width latrine block. An antechamber or narrow hall formed the east range and seems to have had a 'chapel' projecting eastwards. The term 'chapel' is applied because of its orientation and exterior roll-moulded pilasters. This complex survives in many places to head-height as a result of having been embanked in the 12th century, and then buried by 18th century landscaping.

The second area of excavation investigated the north range, which was built against the substantial curtain wall. The range had an original wall-fireplace with a roll-moulded surround, but there were also several central hearths within a good accumulation of medieval floor surfaces. A section of the rock-cut moat was excavated, and shown to have been silting steadily since the 13th century.

The documentary background to the site is likely to be as good as any of the manors of the Winchester bishopric. Patricia Hyde used the detailed accounts of the bishops pipe rolls for a B. Litt. thesis on the manorial economy and she has recently transcribed the entries for 1251-52. There are references to the aisle of the hall, the kitchen and the bakehouse, all of which remain to be located by excavation. It will, however, be an enormous task to collate all the references, and this has been deferred until the future of the site is known. If the refusal of planning permission is upheld by the Queen's Bench Division, the site will be purchased by the local authority and will be displayed as an ancient monument. There would logically be some further excavation to assist in display. The remains will never have the grandeur of the Winchester palaces of Wolvesey and Bishops Waltham, but they have the merit of being relatively pure 12th-century work, with little in the way of later rebuilding and modification.

There is no close parallel among excavated sites for a major 12th-century country house built around a court-yard, part of which is embanked as an adulterine castle in the Anarchy. It is the rectilinear terracing of the tower area in both Phases 2 and 3 which promises to be most challenging for both excavation and display. It may be that the site was effectively a

'castle' at this time. For this reason it is difficult to see it as simply a large moated manor, and hence the temptation to follow 18th century antiquarians and refer to it as Witney 'Palace'. An interim report: Witney Palace: Excavations at Mount House, Witney in 1984 by Brian Durham was published and is available from the Oxford Archaeological Unit.

WITNEY: St Mary's Church - R A Chambers
(SP 3562 0923)

Contractors installing new rainwater drains and soak-aways at St Mary's parish church, Witney, have recovered several fragments of decorated floor tile.

The church was extensively rebuilt in the first half of the 13th century when north and south transepts were added. Part of the nave and north porch of the previous Norman church were incorporated in the rebuilding.

The south transept has received extensive alterations since the 13th century, one of which is the blocked arch which formerly led to a chapel on the east side (J. Sherwood and N. Pevsner, Oxfordshire (1974), 845). The excavation of a pipe trench and new soak-away immediately east of the blocked archway revealed several fragmentary, decorated medieval floor tiles. These tiles appeared as a thin layer of rubble over the presumed site of the former chapel floor of which nothing was seen. The chapel floor may have comprised floor tiles laid directly on the raw, natural clay subsoil. No trace of the chapel foundations were seen.

Other Oxfordshire Sites

In addition to the sites described above the Unit was involved in 1984 with a number of other smaller watching briefs and excavations which have been described in the Unit's Newsletter. These included:-

BICESTER, St Edburg's Church: examination of the floor of the north aisle.

CHALGROVE, (SU6360950): watching brief during the laying of drains across an earthwork site.

DIDCOT, site of Vaux Hall (SU5210 9090) excavation by the Didcot and District Historical and Archaeological Society.

DORCHESTER (SU5748 9448): undated inhumation.

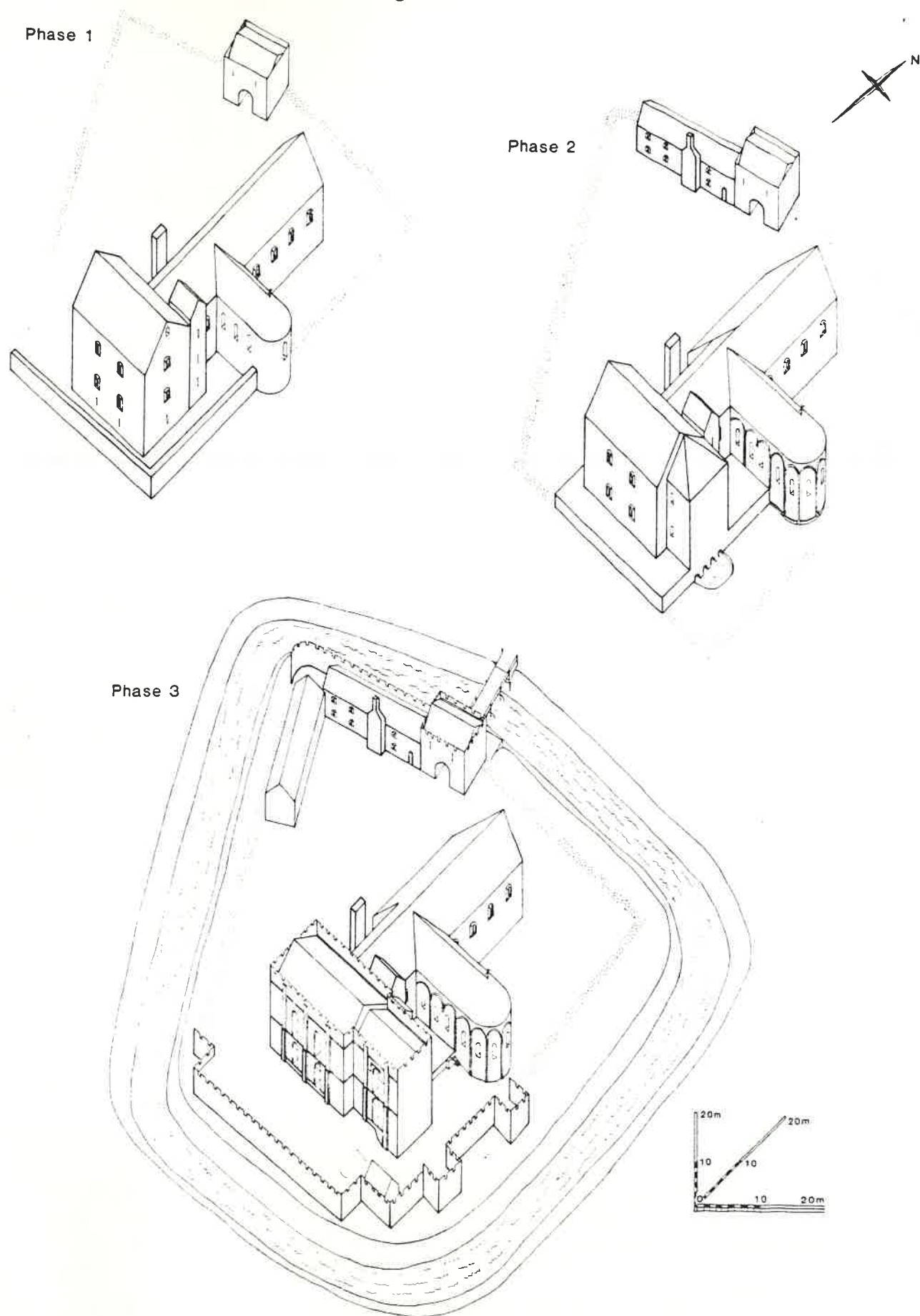
DUCKLINGTON CHURCHYARD (SP 3590 4768): watching brief during trenching adjacent to the 'Manor House'.

KENNINGTON, Old Man's Piece (SP 509 014): fieldwalking on post-medieval kiln site.

KIDLINGTON, Moat Cottage (SP488137; PRN 9219): watching brief on site of partly moated early post-medieval house.

OXFORD, Abingdon Road: survey of Norman arches of the Grandpont.

Fig. 28



WITNEY: Mount House. An exercise in reconstruction of the phases of the development of the palace drawn by Kate Steane. From B. Durham, 'Witney Palace: Excavations at Mount House, Witney in 1984'.

OXFORD, 3 Beaumont Buildings: medieval pottery from gravel quarry or ditch

OXFORD, Broad Street (Exeter College): 17th century pottery from the city ditch.

OXFORD, 9-10 Queen Street: examination of 12th century cellar or pit in watching brief.

OXFORD: 39-41 Queen Street: watching brief.

SOMERTON, the Rectory (SP28754967): watching brief during trenching across a medieval fish pond at Castle Yard.

WALLINGFORD, High Street (SU609 895): observation of street surfaces and central drainage 'kennel'.

Warwickshire

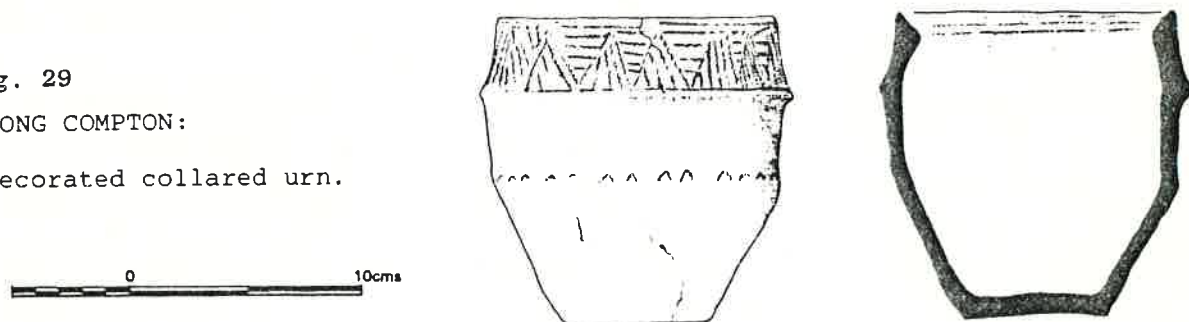
LONG COMPTON: The Rollright Stones - George Lambrick

Excavations with the University Archaeological Society investigating sites round the Rollright Stones for HBMG were brought to completion this year when the remainder of the small barrow west of the King Stone, first examined in 1982, was excavated. A central pit produced burnt bone, but had probably been robbed. However a more peripheral small pit contained a

Fig. 29

LONG COMPTON:

decorated collared urn.



decorated collared urn with cremated bone, providing valuable dating evidence. Immediately adjacent to it was a post hole which had contained a thick plank placed over a further cremation partly occupying a hollowed out void beneath the cremation in the pot.

The excavation also recovered the remainder of the scatter of Mesolithic flint bladelets in the old ground surface beneath what little remained of the barrow mound. With the 1982 material about 180 flints were found, almost all small blades struck from a well prepared core. Almost all had been snapped but show little sign of subsequent working or use. They thus seem to represent a temporary knapping site concerned only with producing bladelets, not primary involving knapping nor final working.

The trench-like feature which produced an assemblage of post glacial woodland snails in 1982 was also further excavated. Its character remains somewhat uncertain but is most likely to be a natural feature rather than being man-made.

In January 1985 a contour survey of the stone circle was carried out by Andrew Mudd and Frances Peters. Preparation of a final report on the project is now well under way.