

### Introduction

The aim of the investigations at Little Wittenham manor house was to learn something more of the earlier layout of the site. The present manor house was built in the late 18th century after the previous manor house had burnt down (ref. ). Rocque's map of 1761 was drawn prior to this, and so should provide some indication of the plan and position of the earlier manor house, but is at a very small scale and is not very informative. It suggests that the manor house consisted of only a single range on a south-west to north-east alignment, in much the same location as the present manor house. Although Rocque's maps are drawn in considerable detail, however, the plans of buildings are not always accurate, as the representation of the surviving medieval and 17th century buildings at Dean Court Farm, for instance, has shown (Allen 1994, 443). A cellar under the existing manor house is aligned slightly askew to the building above ground, and it has been suggested that this is a survival from the earlier manor house, but there is nothing in its construction (other than the fact that it is built of stone not brick) to support this assertion.

During the 20th century a barn has been constructed at right angles to the manor between it and the church, and a range of buildings has also been built roughly parallel to the manor house and to the west, creating a courtyard. Photographs of the earlier 20th century show that part of the interior of this courtyard was formerly a swimming pool, which is likely to have removed any buried archaeological remains, and there is also a large tree in the centre, further restricting access. In the west part of the gardens at the rear of the range of buildings a mound has recently been constructed, and the garden is divided up by a variety of hedges and cultivated plots, but further east behind the church there is a flat grassed terrace overlooking the Thames that seemed likely to have resulted from levelling connected to the complex at some time in the past.

Accordingly a resistivity survey was carried out over this area by Roger Ainslie (Fig. 13.1), revealing a variety of linear features and some possibly areas of stone that it was thought might represent either cobbled floors or rubble from buildings, or alternatively features within a previous garden layout. The results were not however conclusive, so it was decided to test them by digging a trench at right angles to the terrace across some of the revealed features. Trench 16 measured 8 m by 1.5 m and was laid out roughly east-west c. 80 m north of St Peter's Church and the existing manor house.

### Aims of the excavation

To clarify the date and character of the features revealed by the geophysical survey, and in particular to establish whether these represented the remains of buildings along the edge of the terrace.

To see if any evidence of the medieval grange, or of Saxon occupation, might survive behind the church.

To examine the stratigraphic sequence at the edge of the gravel terrace, to see if evidence of prehistoric activity might be revealed, and whether the levelling had sealed a well-preserved series of deposits, or had truncated any earlier activity.

## **Method of excavation**

The trench was dug by hand at weekends, mainly by members of the Abingdon and Area Archaeological and Historical Society under the supervision of Jeff Wallis. Tim Allen also oversaw the excavation. All deposits were dug and recorded stratigraphically using the Oxford Archaeology recording system.

## **Summary of Results**

Excavation revealed a series of medieval and post-medieval deposits, which contained small quantities of pottery and animal bone. Other than a series of alluvial layers and chalk rubble dumps, however, only five cut features were identified. These included one possible pit, three possible postholes and a modern pipe trench. The pit and two of the postholes, if genuine, were of medieval date, but their function is unclear, and they may instead have been depressions in the underlying soil. Several prehistoric, Roman and Saxon pottery sherds were also recovered from the site but, while they represent occupation in the general area, none came from contemporary features or layers.

## **Geophysical survey by R Ainslie**

A resistivity survey covering an area 80 m north-south by 30 m east-west, except for a gap in the centre at the north end, was carried out upon a mown grassed area north of the church in the north-west part of the flat terrace (Fig. 13.1). The work was carried out using a CIA/TR Systems resistivity meter with twin electrodes at probe spacings of 0.5 m, and taking readings at 0.5 m intervals. The survey was carried out in dry weather on ground softened by previous rain, and six grids 20 m x 10 m were completed. The data was processed using TR Systems software.

## **STRATIGRAPHIC NARRATIVE**

Natural clay was overlain by a pale to mid greenish-grey clay silt (16015 = 16020) *c.* 0.18 m deep containing occasional quartzite pebbles. This layer contained three sherds (6 g) of pottery, including two sherds of Anglo-Saxon organic-tempered ware with a broad 5th-8th century date range, and one sherd of St Neots-type ware dating to the 10th or 11th century. It also produced a few struck flints.

Layer 16020 was cut by one possible pit (16017) and two possible postholes (16018 and 16019). All of these features were shallow. Pit 16017 lay at the eastern end of the trench, was sub-rectangular and shallow, and was filled by a dark grey clayey-silt containing animal bone and teeth fragments. It also produced eight sherds (16 g) of pottery, including three sherds of glazed Brill/Boarstall ware (*c.* 1200-1600), probably from jugs. One sherd of possible shell-tempered Saxon pottery was also recorded. The deposit produced two struck flints, neither of which are closely datable, but represent the redeposited traces of prehistoric activity in the general area. Two pieces (2 g) of burnt unworked flint were also recovered.

Feature 16018 was circular, only 0.12 m in diameter, and lay *c.* 1.5 m to the south-east of pit 16017 (Fig. 13.2). It was filled by a dark grey clay silt containing

several bone fragments. Feature 16019 was 0.2 m in diameter, but was filled by a similar dark grey clay silt. Neither feature produced any datable finds. Their small size suggests that they may have been postholes, although no trace of postpipes or packing was found. Stratigraphically, they probably date between the 11th and the later medieval period (see below).

All three features were sealed by a very dark grey clay silt, numbered 16016 over much of the trench but 16009 along the south edge, where the soil was slightly lighter. This deposit covered the entire trench and measured up to 0.2 m deep. Nine sherds (59 g) of pottery were recovered from 16016, including a single sherd of late Roman pottery, one sherd of late Saxon shelly ware, and two sherds of Brill/Boarstall ware dating between the 13th and 16th centuries AD. Two pieces (15 g) of Saxon organic-tempered ware and four sherds (23 g) that date between the 13th and 15th century came from 16009, dating this deposit to the late medieval period. Four residual struck flints came from 16016, including one retouched flake, probably dating to the Neolithic or Bronze Age, and six struck flints including a proximal microburin from 16009. The microburin, manufactured from an unusual flint type containing large inclusions of chalcedony, can be dated to the Mesolithic period. Five pieces (36 g) of burnt unworked flint were also recovered.

Overlying layer 16009 was a charcoal-rich patch of dark grey silty loam (16010), which was 0.03 m deep. The deposit produced a few fragments of animal bone. Layer 16013, a dark grey silty loam, sealed the charcoal deposit. This context yielded ten sherds (65 g) of pottery, including one flint-tempered sherd of possible late Bronze Age or Iron Age date. Most of the pottery, however, belonged to a late or post-Medieval phase. Seven struck flints were recovered from the deposit, the majority of which were unretouched flakes that could not be closely dated. One piece, however, was a retouched bladelet that has been snapped proximally, which most probably belongs to a Mesolithic or early Neolithic industry.

Layer 16016 was overlain by layer 16013 over much of the trench, and by layer 16007 along the south edge, where 16013 faded out. The limits of 16007 corresponded to those of 16009 beneath, leading the excavators to wonder whether these were successive fills of a ditch running from the east end to the middle of the trench. It is more likely, however, that this was merely variation within the successive layers of soil. Layer 16007 consisted of a dark grey silty loam containing occasional chalk pellets but no datable finds. Towards the west end of the trench 16013 was cut by a feature filled with a layer of chalk rubble, gravel and sand (16014). Beyond this at the very west end of the trench, and again cut by the feature, was layer 16006, a dark grey-black silty loam without any finds. This may correspond to layer 16013 further east, but was not excavated.

Deposit 16012 was a patch of soil that overlay layer 16013, and continued beyond the north edge of the trench at its eastern end. It was ovoid to sub-rounded in plan, had a maximum width of 0.68 m and was 0.03 m deep. It contained only a few fragments of plain roof tile. Layer 16013 was also overlain by a dark irregular patch of charcoal-rich silty loam (16011), seen at the eastern end of trench *c.* 1 m to the west of 16012. This patch, which measured 0.36 m by 0.2 m, did not produce any datable finds.

Towards the east end of trench layers 16013, 16007, 16010 and 16012 were overlain by a horizon of flint gravel at the base of a thin layer (16003) of grey silt *c.* 0.05 m deep. Four sherds (31 g) of pottery came from layer 16003. These comprised two possibly Roman sherds and two pieces of post-medieval red earthenware. There were also three flints: one flake, one partially-worked nodule and one probable flake

core fragment. The end-and-side scraper has been abruptly retouched at the distal end and semi-abruptly along the right-hand edge; there is also an area of proximal bifacial retouch, which has the effect of removing the bulb. A Neolithic or Bronze Age date would be appropriate for this piece. Some tile and clay pipe fragments were also recovered from the deposit. At the very west end of the trench layer 16006 was overlain by layer 16004, a friable dark grey-black loam, which was also devoid of finds. This may correspond to layer 16003 further east.

Layer 16003 was overlain by a dump of chalk rubble 16002, densest at the northern edge of the trench, and appeared to be cut by the feature containing layer 16014, a horizontal layer of compacted chalk rubble in a matrix of orange gravel and sand. This was not excavated. It was overlain by another dump of rubble (16005) that extended *c.* 1.3 m eastwards beyond 16014. No finds were recovered from 16014 or 16005. The latter had an edge of fine, yellow gravel and sand, which on excavation widened to about 0.5 m and suggested a possible north-south foundation or path with an oval patch (16008) on one side midway across the trench comprising a scatter of limestone rubble and one quartzite cobble. The oval measured 0.5 m long, 0.25 m wide and 0.03 m deep, and contained two sherds (5 g) of pottery DATE? and a piece of tile.

Cutting layer 16004, and running across the top of 16005, was 16021, a band of loose mid to dark grey-brown loam in a north-north-east to south-south-west direction. This collection of layers may correspond to one of the features identified in the resistivity survey. It was not fully excavated, and no pottery or other finds were retrieved from its surface, but it was most likely a recent pipe trench (see Fig. 13.1).

The subsoil (16001), a friable dark grey-black loam, lay directly above deposits 16004, 16002, 16005 and 16021, and extended across the entire trench. This layer was *c.* 0.22 m thick and contained the largest pottery assemblage from the site, a total of eleven sherds weighing 106 g. The collection is mostly composed of 19th and early 20th century types, including a modern stoneware flagon handle and six scraps of tile. Two sherds of St. Neots-type ware dating to between the 10th and 11th centuries were also present. Three struck flints, including a notched flake, were recovered from the deposit. The notched flake has had a neat notch retouched at the distal end and another, slightly more irregular, notch opposite on the proximal end; this piece may belong to a Neolithic or Bronze Age industry.

The subsoil was sealed by the topsoil (16000), a dark grey-brown friable loam, which produced four sherds (21 g) of pottery, including three pieces of English porcelain and one piece of post-medieval red earthenware. Six struck flints, including four undiagnostic flakes and two pieces of waste, were also recovered from the layer.

The finds assemblage from the topsoil (16000) and subsoil (16001) clearly represents a mixed collection, spanning the prehistoric to modern period. The majority have probably been reworked from underlying deposits, but a number of the post-medieval pottery sherds may have been dispersed throughout the subsoil as a result of manuring practices.

## **THE FINDS**

### **POST-ROMAN POTTERY**

*By John Cotter*

#### **Introduction**

A total of 57 sherds of pottery weighing 347 g was recovered from 10 contexts in Trench 16. This total includes two scraps of prehistoric flint-tempered pottery, probably later Bronze Age, and three sherds of Roman pottery, two of which have been dated to the later part of the Roman period by Paul Booth. The post-Roman total is therefore 52 sherds. Most contexts also included a few scraps of roofing tile which was apparently medieval. Topsoil context (16000) also produced three pieces of modern bathroom-type tile and pieces of black clay (shooting) pigeon.

#### **Methodology**

All the pottery was examined and spot-dated. For each context the total pottery sherd count and weight were recorded on an Excel spreadsheet (Table 14.1), followed by the context spot-date which is the date-bracket during which the latest pottery types in the context are estimated to have been produced or were in general circulation. Comments on the presence of datable types were also recorded, usually with mention of vessel form (jugs, bowls etc.) and any other attributes worthy of note (e.g. decoration etc.). A more detailed catalogue, however, has not been considered worthwhile.

#### **Date and nature of the assemblage**

Most of the sherds were small, sometimes very small, and often worn - a factor reflected in the average sherd weight of 6 g. Very few featured sherds (rims etc.) were present. This immediately suggests that most, if not all, of the pottery is residual in its contexts. The small size and condition of the sherds also makes positive identification impossible in some cases.

The assemblage is fairly typical of sites in this part of Oxfordshire and closely matches the range of post-Roman wares found in Oxford (Mellor 1994; 1984). All the pottery types identified are listed in Table 13.1 and need not be repeated in detail here. It is worth considering the stratigraphy of Trench 16 before discussing the range of types recovered, since this makes it fairly clear that most of it is residual. Nearly all the contexts are layers except possible pit 16017 and posthole 16008.

Stratigraphically the lowest context is 16020. This produced only three sherds of pottery including a sherd of St Neots-type ware, which should date the context to the 10th or 11th century (on the basis of its currency at Oxford). It also produced two sherds of Anglo-Saxon organic-tempered ware with a broad 5th to 8th century date range. These however contained abundant quartz sand - a characteristic which could suggest a 7th to 8th century dating rather than earlier. The dating of organic-tempered ware (normally very locally produced) is notoriously problematic and varies slightly from place to place. In some parts of England it may have lingered on as late as the 9th or 10th century alongside better made late Saxon wares such as St Neots-type ware, which was in production from c. 850-1100. So there is slight possibility that all three sherds in 16020 are roughly contemporary. A date of 590 - 650 cal AD was

however obtained from similar quartz and organic-tempered ware recovered from two pits at Neptune Wood just east of Long Wittenham (see Chapter 12). On balance, therefore, it is likely that the early or mid Anglo-Saxon organic-tempered sherds in this context are residual. The single late Saxon St Neots-type sherd may also be residual, but provides a *terminus post quem* for this layer.

Immediately above layer 16020 is a possible pit (16017), which produced eight sherds of pottery including three sherds of glazed Brill/Boarstall ware (c. 1200-1600), probably from jugs. Two of these sherds are quite possibly from within the earlier part of this range, but one sherd is later-looking and possibly dates to the 15th or 16th century. This means that the remaining eight pottery-bearing contexts which are stratigraphically above this must have been laid down during the late- or post-medieval periods - a suggestion supported by the fact that some also contain Brill/Boarstall ware, other medieval wares and ultimately post-medieval and modern wares. Some of these contexts also produced further residual sherds of Anglo-Saxon organic-tempered ware, St Neots-type ware and late Saxon Oxford shelly ware (Fabric OXB, 9th-11th century).

St Neot's-type ware (OXR) was produced across a wide area of the south-east Midlands centred on Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire. Two types of flint-, shell- and limestone-tempered coarsewares from south-west Oxfordshire and north-east Wiltshire are represented (Oxon. Fabric OXBF, 9th-13th century, and Wilts. OXAQ, 12th-early 15th century). Calcareous gravel-tempered early medieval Oxford ware (OXAC, *alias* 'Cotwolds'-type), which is common in Oxford between the 11th and early 13th centuries, is notable by its absence suggesting perhaps that Wittenhams lies too far east of its normal core distribution area to register in this small trench assemblage. As one would expect, Brill/Boarstall ware (OXAM) from Buckinghamshire is the commonest glazed medieval ware represented, mainly as jugs. A range of grey and brown sandy unglazed fabrics probably represent a more dispersed late Saxon to late medieval south-east Oxfordshire industry, perhaps including that located at Nettlebed from the 14th century onwards (OX162). One or two jug sherds from the Abingdon/Ashampstead-type industry (OXAG) in Berkshire are also present and a single jug base in 13th-15th century Surrey whiteware (OXBG). Local post-medieval glazed red earthenwares (REW), a few clay pipe fragments and modern stonewares occur in the latest contexts and complete the ceramic sequence.

## **FIRED CLAY**

A few very small fragments of shapeless daub were recovered. These are uninformative.

## **STRUCK FLINT**

*By Kate Cramp*

### **Introduction**

A total of 34 struck flints and 11 pieces (65 g) of burnt unworked flint was recovered from Trench 16 (Tables 13.2 and 13.3). The struck flint came from eight contexts, none of which produced in excess of seven pieces. All of the flintwork was residual. The flintwork is largely undiagnostic, although the presence of a proximal microburin (context 16009) and several blades suggests that at least a small amount results from

Mesolithic activity. The end-and-side scraper from context 16003, along with a number of the flakes, probably derive from a Neolithic or Bronze Age industry.

## **Methodology**

The artefacts were catalogued according to broad debitage, core or tool type. Classification of retouched pieces followed standard morphological descriptions (e.g. Bamford 1985, 73-7; Healy 1988, 48-9; and Saville 1981, 7-11). Cores were classified according to platform and removal type; complete examples were individually weighed. Chips were defined as pieces whose broadest surface was less than 10 mm<sup>2</sup>, including small flakes or fragments of flakes (Newcomer and Karlin 1987, 33). In order to avoid any sampling bias, a distinction was made in the database between chips that were excavated by hand and those that were recovered by sieving.

The general condition of the flintwork was noted, along with details of cortication and flint type. The general technological appearance of the flintwork was described, particularly where such information contributed to the dating of individual pieces and groups. Evidence of burning and breakage was recorded consistently. Burnt unworked flint was quantified by piece and by weight, with further details of raw material type and degree of calcination recorded where appropriate.

The assemblage was catalogued directly onto a Microsoft Access database, a copy of which will be deposited with the archive. If possible, a digital copy of the flint database will also be made available.

## **Condition**

The assemblage is in variable condition, with fresh and heavily rolled pieces present within the same deposit. This implies that the collection is of mixed origin. The majority of flints are uncorticated, although a moderate or heavy cortication is occasionally present, sometimes combined with a deep orange iron staining.

## **Raw material**

The assemblage represents the use of both chalk flint and gravel flint sources, although the evidence suggests a heavier reliance on the latter. The majority of both struck and burnt flint nodules possess a very thin, abraded and stained cortex indicating their gravel deposit origin. Chalk flint was used less frequently, probably on account of its non-local source, but is represented by a small number of flakes possessing a thick, white cortex. The presence of a large partially-worked nodule of chalk flint suggests that it was transported to the site in an unprepared state. The interior is grey-black in colour and the cortex, although up to 10 mm thick, is slightly weathered; it is possible that superficial deposits of chalk flint were used for the provision of these nodules.

The assemblage is dominated by flakes (20 pieces) with a small representation of blades, bladelets and unclassifiable waste. The majority of flakes are undiagnostic, although a few exhibit platform edge abrasion and may belong to Mesolithic or Neolithic industry. The blades and bladelets are generally soft-hammer, tertiary removals with dorsal blade scars; such pieces would not be out of place in a Mesolithic industry. The proximal microburin, manufactured from an unusual flint type containing large inclusions of chalcedony, can be dated to the Mesolithic period

and probably reflects limited on-site microlith manufacture using the microburin technique.

With the exception of a probable flake core fragment (context 16003), no formal cores were recorded; the presence of a partially-worked chalk flint nodule from the same context does, however, indicate that some knapping activity probably took place on site; the single chip from context 16009 may have derived from such activity.

The retouched component consists of four pieces: one retouched flake, one retouched bladelet, one end-and-side scraper and one notched flake. The bladelet displays a short length of retouch to the distal end; the proximal end has been snapped, perhaps deliberately. The end-and-side scraper has been abruptly retouched at the distal end and semi-abruptly along the right-hand edge; there is also an area of proximal bifacial retouch, which has the effect of removing the bulb. A Neolithic or Bronze Age date would be appropriate for this piece. The notched flake has had a neat notch retouched at the distal end and another, slightly more irregular, notch opposite on the proximal end. Again, this piece could plausibly belong to a Neolithic or Bronze Age industry.

## **Discussion**

The flints recovered from the 2005 excavations at Little Wittenham form a small and mixed collection. Very few features produced any flintwork, and none contained what could be termed a coherent group. In a few cases, however, the flints were in a fresh condition, for instance three from contexts 16003 and three from 16016.

Although limited, the flint assemblage is of interest when considered in its wider landscape context. Evidence of potentially contemporary Mesolithic and early Neolithic activity was recovered during the Castle Hill excavations (see Chapter 4), while middle and late Bronze Age flintwork was identified from the plateau below the fort (see Chapter 6).

## **ANIMAL BONE**

*by Lena Strid*

### **Introduction**

The animal bone assemblage consisted of 166 re-fitted fragments. The bones were retrieved by hand, and thus may be biased against small species. A full record of the assemblage can be found with the site archive.

### **Methodology**

The bones were identified to species using a comparative reference collection, as well as osteological books and articles. Sheep and goat were not identified to species at this stage, but rather classified as 'sheep/goat'. Ribs and vertebrae, with the exception for atlas and axis, were classified by size: 'large mammal' representing cattle, horse and deer, 'medium mammal' representing sheep/goat, pig and large dog, and 'small mammal' representing such animals as small dog, cat and hare.



The condition of the bone was graded using criteria stipulated by Lyman (1996), Grade 0 being very well preserved bone and grade 5 indicating that the bone had suffered such structural and attritional damage as to make it unrecognisable.

For ageing, mandibles with two or more teeth (Grant 1982), cattle horncores (Armitage (1982) and fused and unfused epiphyses (Habermehl 1975) were noted. Sex estimation was carried out on cattle metapodials and pelves, sheep pelves, and pig canine teeth, using data from Boessneck et al (1964), McCormick and Murphy (1997), Prummel and Frisch (1986), Schmid (1972) and Vretemark (1997). Measurable bones were noted according to von den Driesch (1976).

## **OVERVIEW OF ASSEMBLAGE**

### **Preservation**

The assemblage was in an overall good condition; 78.9% scoring grade 1 according to Lyman (1996) (see Table 13.4). One bone showed traces of burning, and one displayed gnaw marks.

### **Species**

A total of 40 fragments (24.1%) could be determined to species (see table 13.5). The species present include cattle, sheep/goat, pig, horse, rabbit and domestic fowl.

The assemblage is dominated by cattle, sheep/goat and pig, which is the usual trend in most archaeological deposits regardless of time period. Unfortunately, there is not enough information to discern slaughter age patterns for these species.

Most of the bones come from the lower, late medieval deposits; there were 26 from a shallow pit 16017 at the base of the sequence, and 57 fragments from deposit 16016=16009, with another 34 from the overlying layer 16013. The identified bones were however too few to anything about specific assemblages.

## **DISCUSSION**

*by Tim Allen*

### **The stratigraphic sequence.**

The excavation of Trench 16 has revealed a considerable depth of soil overlying the natural gravel. To summarise, the sequence appears to start from the late Saxon or early medieval period, with the majority of the deposits belonging to the late medieval or early post-medieval period (feature 16017, 16016 = 16009, 16013 = 16007 and 16006). This is followed by a thin soil 16003 with a layer of flint gravel at its base, representing either a phase of worm-sorting of the soil, evidence that the area was under grass, or more likely, a short soil accumulation following a phase of construction that is not otherwise evident in the trench. This soil contains clay pipe and post-medieval red earthenware, and dates between the 16th and 18th centuries. If the section is to be believed, it is followed by a further phase of activity marked by the layers of gravel, chalk and stone in a probable feature at the west end of the trench, and the patch of chalk rubble further east. The only pottery from within these layers,

from patch 16008, is later medieval. Finally this sequence is capped by recent garden soils of 19th and 20th century date.

The only possible evidence of structural activity within the sequence is the possible pit and postholes in the top of layer 1620 at the base of the sequence. These shallow features might indicate some truncation at this point in the sequence, and the late date of the pottery in pit 16017 could suggest that this was followed by the dumping of several layers containing residual finds, mainly of later medieval date. Whether these features were indeed genuine is however uncertain; the possible pit was shallow, as were both of the possible postholes, neither posthole had any evidence of postpipe or packing, and all were filled with a soil very similar to layers 16016 and 16009 that directly overlay them. It is therefore possible that these were the result of hollows or depressions in the layer below, and the dating evidence from 16017 and 16016 = 16009 is broadly consistent.

While truncation of layer 16020 may not therefore be indicated, there was clearly a rapid accumulation after this, as some 0.4 m of soil of largely homogeneous character built up, divided only by one spread of charcoal. The dark character and relatively friable nature of these soils might indicate garden soil, which would also explain the patchy character of the soil and the mixed date of the finds. In this case, however, it would appear that a lower garden soil was then sealed by a patch of charcoal, and then a further layer of soil was dumped and reworked to create a second garden soil, both layers being of similar date. For whatever reason, it appears that some soil was being imported to this location from elsewhere within the manor. The generally good preservation of the animal bone from these deposits would suggest that the soils were dumped over a short period of time, and were then not reworked very much.

The present level appearance of the terrace strongly suggests that this area has been artificially levelled at some time in the past, and from the stratigraphic evidence it is clear that this was a levelling up, and that the most likely period for this to have occurred was sometime between the later 15th and the mid-17th centuries. This sequence is capped by lenses of soil and by a thin spread of flint gravel, perhaps associated either with building or with the laying of paths. We might perhaps envisage landscaping for a formal garden alongside the river during the Tudor period.

Following a thin soil accumulation there is another phase of activity, which is probably that visible as lines and spreads of stone in the resistivity survey, although more than one phase of activity may well be visible. As the sequence of gravel and stone spreads at the west end of the trench was not fully excavated, and only the upper layers were shown to postdate layer 16003, it is possible that an earlier feature may be represented by layers 16008 and 16014 below, from which the pottery dated to the later medieval period, which was remade or superseded by the later layers above. The elements visible on the resistivity survey are mostly difficult to interpret, but include a circular feature with a central focus, perhaps a fountain or pool, a probable broad walk parallel to the terrace edge, possibly flanked either side by low walls or kerbs, and possibly supplemented by drainage channels at a later date. The date of this later phase is uncertain, though it is likely to belong to the 17th or 18th centuries rather than any later. More extensive excavation would be required to make sense of the elements, but there was clearly a formal garden of sorts behind the manor house.

## **Significance of the finds**

The residual finds from Trench 16 are more difficult to evaluate, as the source of the imported soil is unknown. A Mesolithic microburin however came from the bottom layer 16020, which is likely to be a naturally occurring soil, so a Mesolithic presence along the terrace edge here is likely, and fits with the evidence from elsewhere in the Study Area (Chapter 15). The mix of Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman, Saxon and early medieval finds from the soils is not easily replicated anywhere else in the Study Area except possibly at Long Wittenham. In addition, finds of almost all of these periods are found at different levels in the sequence. Iron Age, Roman and medieval finds are known from previous findings at Little Wittenham, and the site is documented as present in the late Saxon period, so the most likely source of the soils and the material they contain is within the village itself, and probably close by within the manor house and grounds.

The Neolithic or Bronze Age flintwork again matches a pattern of finds along the terrace edge in the Study Area. The presence of a few later Bronze Age or early Iron Age sherds is not surprising given the extensive activity at Northfield Farm and on Castle Hill above, and the metalwork found in the Thames and (in the Iron Age) in a pond just to the north. Roman pottery was previously found in a garden in the village, and whole pots have been retrieved from the river just below the site (now in Reading Museum).

The seven Saxon sherds are however of considerable interest. These include not only four sherds from layer 16009=16006, and one possible late Saxon sherd from pit 16017, but also two pieces of sandy ware from the lowest deposit in the sequence, layer 16020, which is not thought to have been imported to the site. Although the village of Little Wittenham is documented from the 10th century, its origins are unknown. The presence of even a few sherds of early or Middle Saxon date strongly suggests that the village site was occupied at this time. The late Saxon shelly wares and 10th-11th century St Neots ware provide the first material evidence of the documented settlement.