

Excavations in Abingdon, 1972-4

Excavations at West St. Helen Street, Abingdon

By DAVID MILES

with contributions by

ELISABETH CROWFOOT, MICHAEL PARRINGTON and R. WILSON

SUMMARY

The excavation at West St. Helen Street was on a small scale and provided an impression of successive layers of settlement from prehistoric to modern times. The earliest feature on the site was a post-hole of early Iron Age date. Other evidence of pre-Roman settlement was a pit containing two horse skulls of the immediate pre-Roman Iron Age. A palisade ditch, running at right angles to the modern street, dated to the late first century A.D. There were no later Romano-British features on this site. The next evidence of occupation was of the medieval period with a timber structure possibly on to West St. Helen St., and rubbish pits of the 12th-13th centuries. The timber building appeared to have been replaced in the 14th century by another with stone footings, also accompanied by cess and rubbish pits. In the 19th century, a terrace of cottages was constructed along West St. Helen St. and the excavation was in the yards and gardens behind these properties.

Acknowledgements

I SHOULD like to thank the following for their help : Abingdon Borough Council for permission to excavate ; Curtis & Son Ltd. for help with re-instatement ; the volunteers who carried out and recorded the excavation, particularly members of the Abingdon Archaeological Society and Christopher Balkwill, Dianah Collins, Gwyn Miles, Hugh Rance, Susan Robertson and Roger Thomas ; the contributors of specialist reports, Elisabeth Crowfoot, Michael Parrington, Bob Wilson and D. Bramwell ; and Wendy Lee who did the drawing.

INTRODUCTION

The West St. Helen St./Lombard St. site was the first one chosen for excavation by the Abingdon Excavation Committee, in June-August 1972. After the demolition of 19th-century cottages in the 1960s and the widening of the northern part of West St. Helen St., known as The Narrows (FIG. 56), the site had been left vacant. There was only a limited area available for excavation, an area which was further decreased by problems of reinstatement of the ground for the construction of a new Salvation Army headquarters. Nevertheless excavation was carried out in order to obtain a section through an important part of the town which had not previously been examined archaeologically.

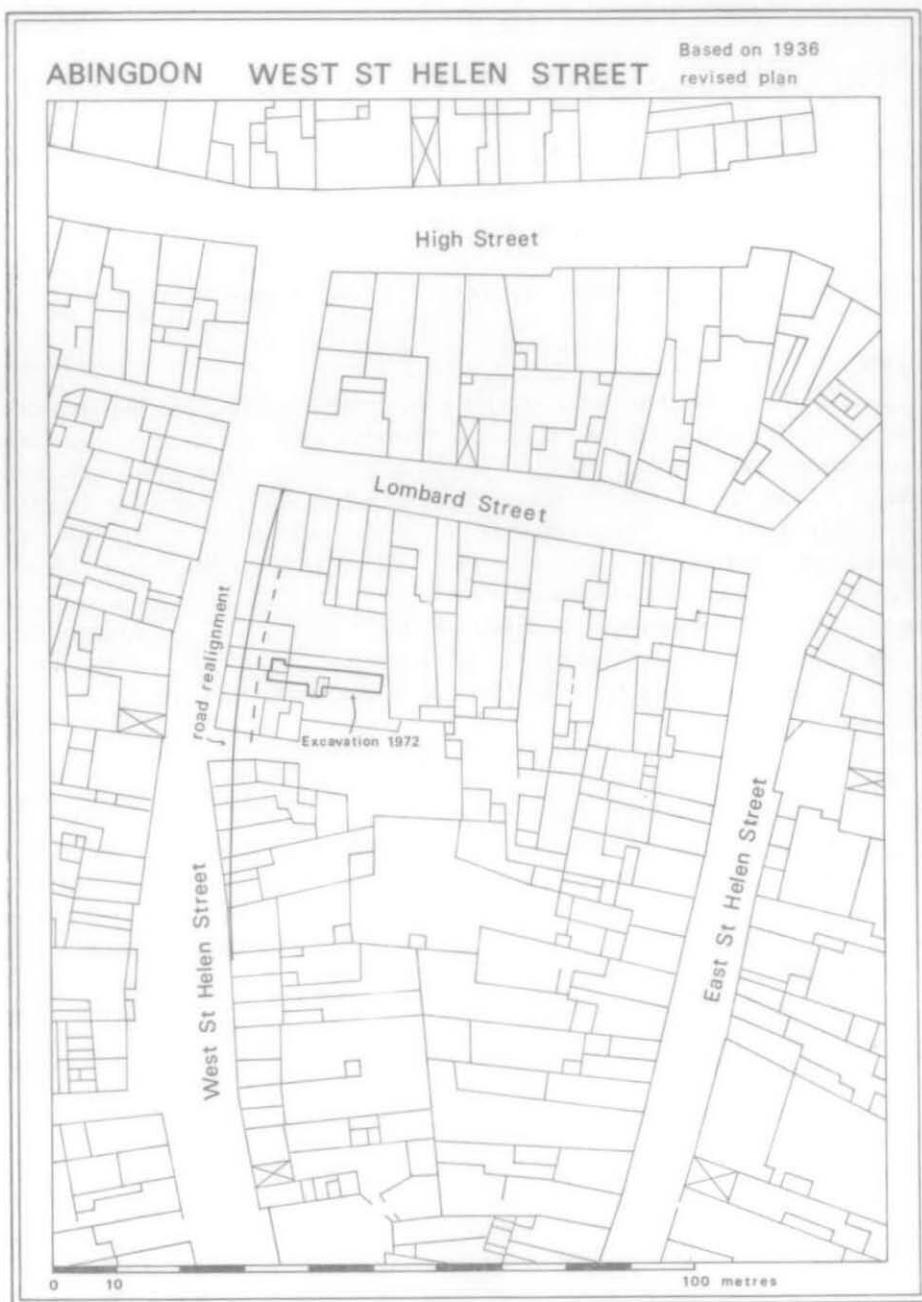


FIG. 56
Abingdon : West St. Helen Street : location plan.

As a result of his observations on Fore St. (now the northern end of West St. Helen St.), J. Y. Akerman was able to proclaim to the Society of Antiquaries on 15 June 1865, 'I have the honour to announce to the Society the discovery within this town of remains which afford undoubted proofs of the permanent occupation of the site of Abingdon by the Romans, a fact for proofs of which I have long sought until the present occasion'. His discoveries consisted of '... massive foundations, among which the well known herring-bone masonry is conspicuous ... and a few vases and several coins'.¹ The following December Akerman reported further discoveries on this site to the Society of Antiquaries—coins of Trajan, Philip and Constantine and pottery probably from Sunningwell. The Akerman building was probably about 80 m. to the east of the present site. Although the finds indicate evidence of Romano-British occupation, the amount of disturbance likely from medieval features must make us wary of a definite identification of the building as Roman.

The only other archaeological work carried out in the West St. Helen Street area was an excavation in 1971, directed by N. Clayton on behalf of the Department of the Environment, about 40 m. north-east of St. Helen's Church and 160 m. south of the present site. This excavation, although limited in area, suggested intensive Romano-British occupation, certainly in the 1st century A.D. and possibly in the late Iron Age.²

The present site, lying between these two, and alongside West St. Helen Street seemed likely to provide evidence of prehistoric, Romano-British and medieval settlement.

The position of Abingdon, on the Summertown/Radley second gravel terrace at the confluence of the River Ock with the Thames and its hinterland has been discussed more fully elsewhere.³ Mrs. Gabrielle Lambrick reconstructed the basic outline of the Medieval Abingdon street plan⁴ and showed that St. Helen's Church at the Ock/Thames junction provided a focus for West and East St. Helen Streets, both of which link the parish church to the Bury (now High Street) and the Market Place outside the Abbey Gate. St. Helen's is first mentioned in a charter of 995 as *Monasterium sanctae Helenae* in the 10th century. Two roads leading to St. Helen's Church are the earliest streets for which there are any references in Abingdon. East St. Helen Street is mentioned in a deed of about 1245–50 (*in vico de Sancta Elena*) and in mid 13th-century deeds as *in Vico orientali sancte helene* or *Estsenthelenstret*. About 1,250 references occur to properties in *le Westseynthelene Street* or *in vico occidental beate helene*.⁵ Lombard Street is also mentioned in the 13th century, as *Shieveslane*. In 1370 it was *Thurtoverstret* and in the 14th century *Crostrete* or *Overthwart saint Elyns Strete*. From the 15th century it was known as Lombard Street, possibly referring to the presence of a goldsmith's or banker's property.⁶

¹ *Proc. Soc. Antiq.*, III, 145, 202.

² CBA 9 Newsletter No. 2 (1972), 22.

³ C. M. Heighway, *The Erosion of History, Archaeology and Planning in Towns* (1972), 46–48. D. Miles, 'Abingdon and Region: Early Anglo-Saxon Settlement Evidence', T. Rowley (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Settlement and Landscape*, B.A.R., 6 (1974), 36–41. D. Benson & D. Miles, *The Upper Thames Valley: an archaeological survey of the river gravels* (1974), 57–61, 87–90.

⁴ M. Biddle, H. T. Lambrick and J. N. L. Myres, 'The Early History of Abingdon, Berkshire, and its Abbey', *Med. Arch.*, XII (1968), 28 (Fig. 5).

⁵ *Chronicon Monasterii de Abingdon*, ed. J. Stevenson, Rolls Series (1858), I, 394; II, 270, 278–9.

⁶ References collected in A. C. Baker, *Historic Streets of Abingdon*, (1957).

THE EXCAVATION

The site available for excavation was enclosed on the north side by the rear of buildings fronting onto Lombard St. and on the east and south sides by the high walls of property boundaries. It was decided to cut a trench 18 m. long and 3·2 m. wide west-east through the site to obtain a section from as close to the medieval street frontage as possible and to the rear of any medieval properties located. The build-up of garden soil at the rear (east end) of the site suggested that earlier, pre-medieval layers might be best preserved away from the street frontage. This trench had the advantage of avoiding weight-bearing walls of the proposed building. Unfortunately, the widening of West St. Helen St. has meant that the likely medieval street frontage is now covered by the roadway and not accessible for excavation. A JCB IIIC removed the upper levels of the site, under careful observation.

The underlying oolitic gravel of the second terrace was located about 1·30 m. deep at the western, street frontage, end of the trench. At the eastern end layers of rubbish, soil and surfacing material in the 19th-century gardens and yards had created a build-up of 2·10 m. of overburden on the gravel surface (FIGS. 59, 60). Levelling for the construction of the cottages and subsequent pit digging in the backyards meant that very little earlier vertical stratigraphy survived in spite of the depth of the deposit.

Iron Age

Iron Age 1. The earliest evidence of occupation on the site was part of a feature CG, 30 cm. across and cutting 64 cm. into the gravel. The feature was possibly the remains of a post-hole or small pit only half of which survived, the rest being removed during the construction of the stone-lined cess pit BJ. The fill of CG was a red brown sandy loam, similar to the type of soil found in Iron Age features on the excavation at the second terrace cropmark site Barton Court Farm 1·8 km. to the north-west. In the bottom of the feature was a fragment of Coral Ragstone, probably used as packing for the post-hole. Also in this feature was a fragment of a bone weaving comb (FIG. 66, 1) and several sherds from a coarse bucket-shaped vessel of the type usually associated with the earliest phases of Iron Age occupation in the Upper Thames Valley (FIG. 63, 1).⁷

Iron Age 2. 3·5 m. to the west of CG a large oval feature FG was located (FIG. 60, section). This pit was 2·6 m. across its long (N.W.-S.E.) axis and 1·8 m. across the narrower S.W.-N.E. side. It was cut 0·60 m. into the gravel. Although mainly straight, in places the sides became slightly convex; the pit was flat bottomed. Placed in the centre of the pit, on its floor, were two horse skulls. The pit also contained fragments of late Iron Age pottery, notably butt-beaker sherds, which suggest a date in the late 1st century B.C. or early/mid 1st century A.D.

Romano-British

Most of the medieval or later features contained Romano-British pottery, sometimes in quite large quantities, but the only stratified material came from a

⁷ D. Harding, *The Iron Age of the Upper Thames Basin* (1972).

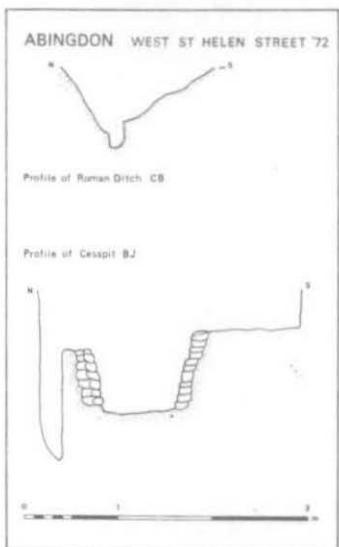


FIG. 61

Profiles through (i) Romano-British Ditch CB ; (ii) Stone-lined cess pit BJ.

ditch running E.-W. along the length of the trench. This feature was cut through by many later pits and could only be traced in a very fragmentary way. Consequently it is recorded under a series of letters (AT, BH, CB, CD, CT, and DP). Pits which cut this feature included DO (13th-century), BM (19th-century) and the early 13th-century post-holes DT and DS (FIG. 57). At the east end of the trench a narrow section of the base of the ditch survived (CB), only 5 cm. thick, cut by pits BM and BR. To the north of pit BR the shelving sides of this ditch were traced (AT). These fragments suggest that the original ditch was slightly over 2 m. wide and about 62 cm. deep. The profile of CB (FIG. 61) with a slot-like bottom tended to suggest that it possibly functioned as a palisade ditch. To the west, in the centre of the excavation, a more complete section of the Romano-British ditch was located (CD, DP) in the bottom of which were some fifteen stake-holes, confirming the existence of a palisade. These stake-holes were 4–8 cm. in diameter and up to 10 cm. deep. A further segment of the ditch (EB) was located between pits ET and DO at the western end of the trench. Altogether the Romano-British ditch was traced over slightly more than eleven metres. The pottery from the ditch was of late first-, early second-century A.D. date. A coin of Domitian was found in the medieval pit DO. A dolphin brooch (FIG. 66, 2) from the Romano-British ditch supports the late first-century dating. There were also three fragments of Roman tile from the ditch which might indicate a fairly substantial building of this date in the area.

Medieval

Pit CX. This large irregular feature was about 3 m. across and cut 1·20 m. into the gravel. The pit was exaggeratedly bell-shaped and flat-bottomed. It was cut by the cess pit BJ and itself cut through the Romano-British ditch. The fill was a

uniform dark brown sandy loam with little evidence for the deposition of rubbish. It may have been dug to provide a supply of sand and gravel. The stratigraphy and the pottery found within the pit suggest this to be the earliest medieval feature in the excavation, dating to the late 12th or early 13th century.

Structure 1. Four post-holes (EN, BV, EZ and FA) were located running in an east-west axis at right angles to the present street. EN, BV and EZ were each 2 m. apart (from their centres). EZ and FA were only 50 cm. from each other. Two further post-holes DT and DS were found north of BV, at right angles to the other four, cut into the top of the Romano-British ditch. All the post-holes except EN had packing stones of Coral Rag; BV, DT and DS were particularly well packed. All these features had a similar fill of orange-brown sandy loam. EZ showed traces of a post void in its centre. This indicated a slightly tapering post with a diameter of 20 cm. All six post-holes were of a fairly uniform size, 40–50 cm. diameter and 50–60 cm. deep into the gravel. DS was deeper than the rest, but this might be accounted for by the fact that it was cut into the deepest part of the underlying Romano-British ditch, while in the other cases gravel would have been located at a higher level by the medieval builders. It has been found at Barton Court Farm that Romano-British builders invariably emptied earlier underlying features when these coincided with the positioning of their foundations.

It seems likely that these six post-holes represent part of the foundations of a 13th-century timber structure.⁸ The size and depth of the holes and the evidence of the post void suggest a building of some size, though a fence line of a property boundary cannot be altogether ruled out. The interpretation as a building is reinforced, however, by the discovery of a shallow slot about 7–10 cm. wide and 5 cm. deep running along the south side of post-holes EZ and FA. This had a series of scalloped shapes within it suggesting small stakes. The slot was not traced elsewhere, but its brown sandy silt filling was very similar to the surrounding features. It seems likely that this represented the outer cladding of a timber building protecting the main posts EZ and FA from weathering.

Insufficient evidence survives to make any intelligent comment on the form of this building. It was evidently aligned on West St. Helen St., which we know to have existed in the 13th century. The axis and shape of the building cannot be estimated from the surviving evidence. It might be expected that the post-holes were part of a rectangular structure, gable end onto the street, with internal divisions into rooms similar to those found at Brook St., Winchester.⁹ The position of the stone-lined pit EW, which seems to be of similar date to the timber structure, is anomalous, as it lies along the line of the south side of the building.

Stone-lined pit EW. This feature was located towards the western end of the trench (FIG. 57). It was cut by the 19th-century pit BZ and overlain by the stone footings of a late medieval building. The pit was 2 m. long and lined with coral ragstone of

⁸ Most of the pottery from the post-holes fits into a 13th-century context. One sherd of 'Brill' type from BV is more likely to be 14th-century. This could be a stray sherd, but suggests the possibility that post-holes BV, DT and DS represent an internal division of the later structure 2.

⁹ M. Biddle, 'Excavations at Winchester 1967. Sixth Interim Report', *Antiq. J.*, XLVIII (1968), 261, Fig. 3.

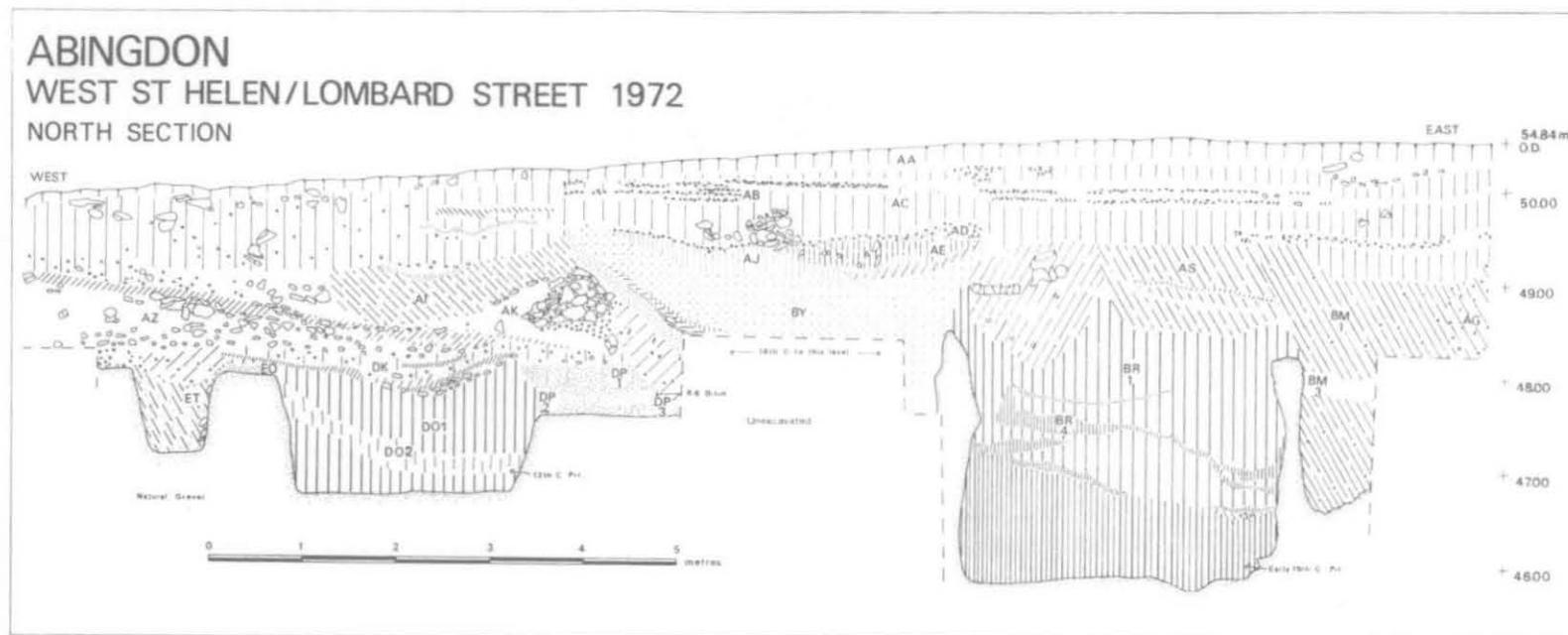
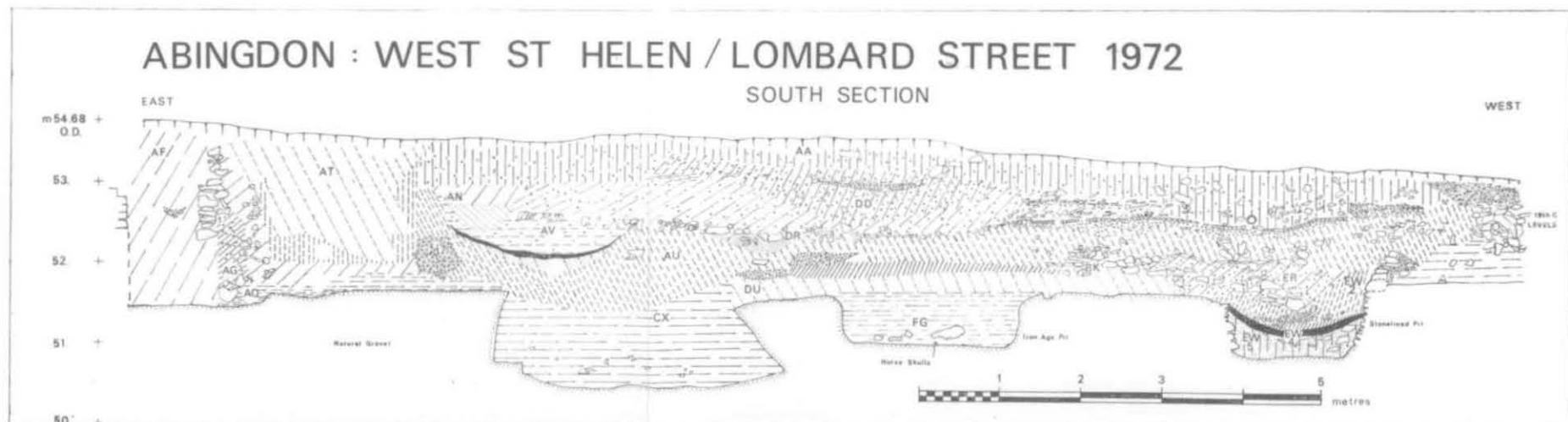


FIG. 59



Abingdon : West St. Helen Street. South Section.

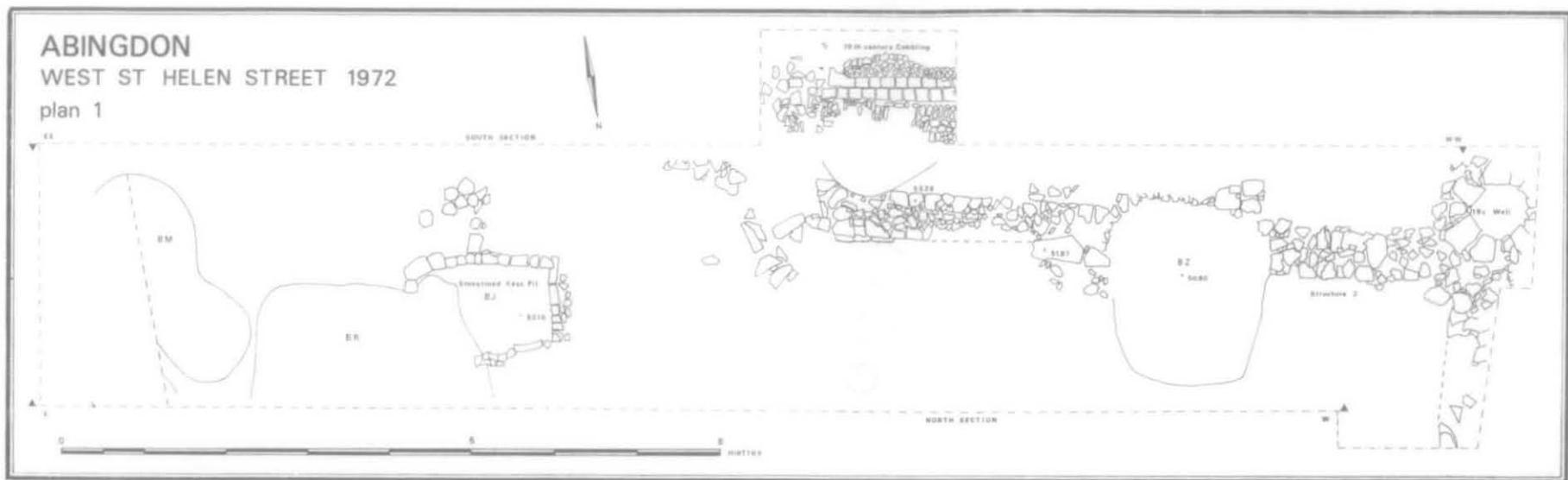


FIG. 57
Abingdon : West St. Helen Street : Excavation plan 1. Iron Age, Romano-British and Early Medieval Features.

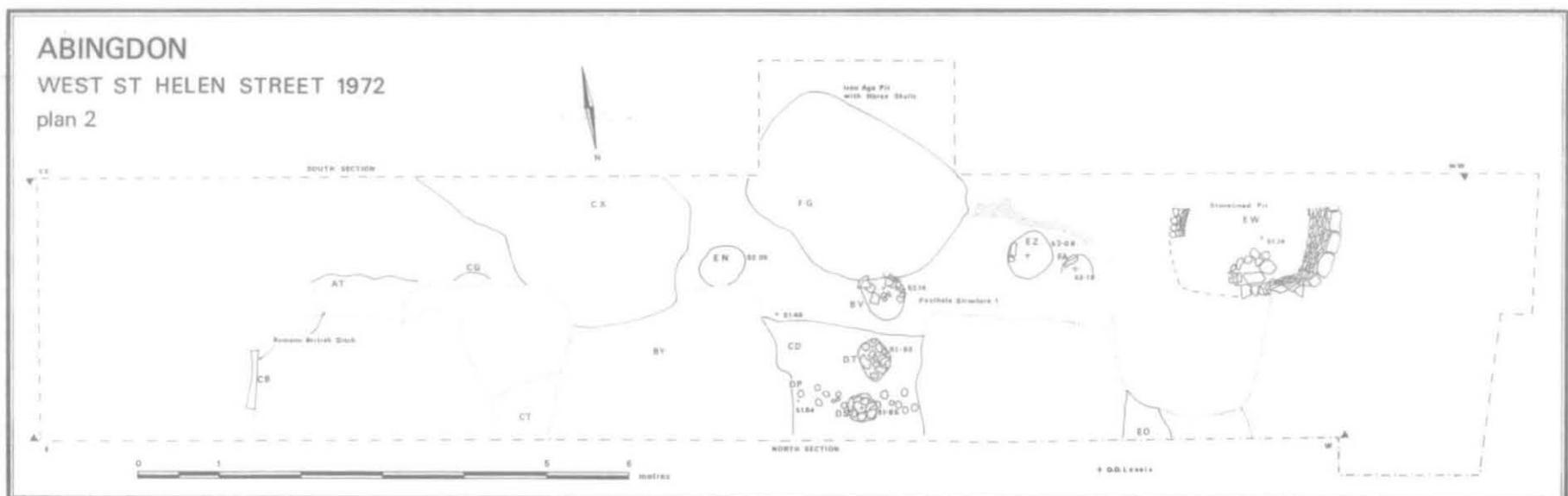


FIG. 58
Abingdon : West St. Helen Street : Excavation plan 2. Later Medieval and Post-Medieval Features.

[face page 82]

which up to 13 courses survived. The pit cut 0·80 m. into the underlying gravel. The base was partly covered with limestone slates on which there was evidence of fairly intensive burning. There was also a layer of charcoal and burnt material up to 8 cm. thick in the fill of the pit. The pit seems most likely to have served as a rubbish pit, with regular emptying, also utilized for burning rubbish. The north side shows evidence of relining with stone over the bottom layer of charcoal. The pottery within EW suggests a late 13th-century date. Its relationship to the timber structure 1 is uncertain. The dating evidence of the pottery would make them roughly contemporary, but from the position of the post-holes and the later stone structure 2, it may be that the pit predated the timber building.

Structure 2. In the late 14th or early 15th century the post-hole structure was apparently replaced by a building on almost exactly the same alignment (FIG. 58). This later building was probably half timbered with a dry-stone footing (referred to in the site records under AH, FD, and EY). These footings were composed of irregular blocks of ragstone and were traced for a total length of 9 m. There was a maximum of seven courses surviving 52 cm. high. They were much disturbed by later pit digging (BZ) and cut into by a 19th-century well (DF). The footings were 56 cm. wide with an off-set near the base—in part a further 6 cm. wide. At the west end of the trench the footings turned to the south (BZ) and could be traced for 2 m. before disappearing into the southern section of the trench.

The building might have terminated at the west end of the excavation, along the line of the north-south footing, but disturbance from the well and the cottages make this conclusion uncertain, and it may have been an internal partition rather than an outer wall. The 19th-century street frontage was certainly further to the west than this.

The dating of this building was particularly difficult. No trace of internal flooring survived to provide occupation material, and the great amount of disturbance meant that pottery of all periods was found actually among the stones, including much Romano-British material. The wall was not constructed with a foundation trench, but pottery located under and in the lowest courses suggests a construction date in the late 14th century.

Stone-lined pit BJ. To the west of Structure 2 was a second stone-lined pit, BJ. This was cut by the 19th-century pit BK and the 15th-century pit BR. Like the previous pit EW, it was lined with coral ragstone, but was two stones thick on its north and west sides. On the south side the lining was 12 courses or 82 cm. deep, tapering towards the bottom. The pit was sub-rectangular in shape, 2 m. long and 1·5 m. wide. There was very little evidence of rubbish deposition in the pit but the limited amount of pottery supports a late 13th-century date. The yellowish green sandy fill tended to support the interpretation of BJ as a cess pit, apparently contemporary with, and at the rear of, Structure 2.

Pit BR. This deep pit cut the previous one BJ and was itself cut by a 19th-century pit BK. It was shaped like a slightly irregular sub-rectangle and had been dug approximately 1·70 m. into the underlying gravel. The bottom of this pit was

almost 5 m. from the modern ground surface. Its sides were almost straight or slightly concave. The alternating bands of black charcoal/humic material and sandy loam suggested that the pit had been used for the deposition of rubbish, each layer of which had been covered by fresh soil.

The black humic layers produced large quantities of early 15th-century pottery including an almost complete cistern (FIG. 65, 33), and a cooking-pot with a sagging base (FIG. 65, 34), both from layer 4. This layer also produced a piece of textile (see below, page 97), and a fragment of worked stone which will be reported at a later date. The pottery suggests that the pit was dug during the occupation of Structure 2, but after the cess pit had gone out of use.

Post-Medieval

There is little evidence of occupation from the 16th to the early 19th centuries, possibly because these levels had been removed by the construction of the 19th-century cottages and the digging of many pits behind them. Traces of a cobbled roadway (DR) were found protruding into the south section of the trench about 60 cm. from the present ground surface, and more were uncovered in the southern extension of the excavation. The road surface may have predated the cottages, but as it was on a level with the top of the well (DH) and ran along the south side of it, it seems more likely that this was a 19th-century track from West St. Helen St. to the rear of the properties. The well itself was only partially excavated. It contained late 19th-century pottery in the top and matched others found at the rear of standing 19th-century houses further south in West St. Helen St. There were many 19th-century pits, the largest being BC and BM.

DISCUSSION

Such a small trench in which there is complicated stratigraphy and much inter-cutting of features cannot provide a clear picture of the true nature and character of successive periods of settlement. This can only be done by larger scale work over a number of areas within the town. The excavation did however give an impression of the complexity and antiquity of the site of Abingdon.

Iron Age : The post-hole and pit provided evidence for the first time of pre-Roman occupation in Abingdon. Late Iron Age pottery has been found previously in East and West St. Helen Streets, but tended to be the native forms which commonly occur into the Roman period. The post-hole, although small, suggests settlement quite early in the Iron Age and the bone weaving comb and pottery perhaps indicate that this was a remnant of an occupation site rather than a stray feature. Bone combs similar to this are common on Iron Age sites in the Thames Valley and have been found at Radley ; City Farm, Hanborough ; and more decorative examples from Northfield Farm Long Wittenham, Stanton Harcourt,¹⁰ and in the recent excavations by M. Parrington at the Ashville Trading Estate to the west of Abingdon.

The large pit belonging to the late Iron Age probably predates the Roman Conquest. Its shape is unlike most of the storage pits from local Iron Age sites and

¹⁰ *Op. cit.* note 7, Pl. 75.

it contained little material which might indicate backfilling with rubbish. The two horse skulls, although not complete (part of the skull was missing from one, and the mandible from the other) seemed to have been carefully placed in the bottom of the

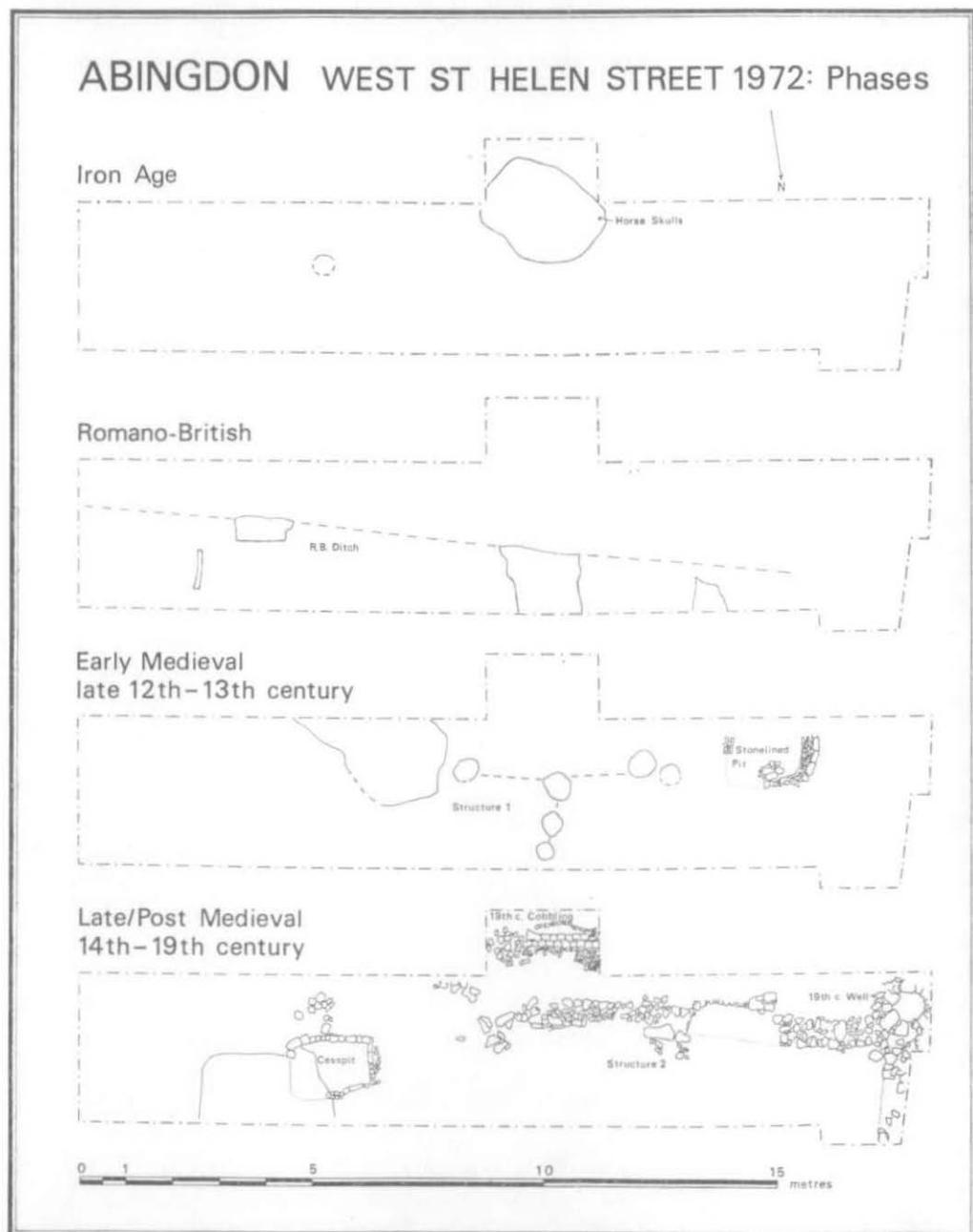


FIG. 62
Abingdon : West St. Helen Street : Phases.

pit. The orderly burial of four horse skeletons has been recorded in the entrance of the hillfort of Blewburton,¹¹ and a skull in a pit together with some of the long bones.¹² Various animal skulls, or at least mandibles, have been found by the author in the bottom of a pit at Barton Court Farm, Abingdon. In view of the discoveries suggesting ritual burial of animals at La Tene,¹³ Harding considered the Blewburton horses to represent ritual foundation burials.¹⁴ It is possible that these skulls have similar religious connotations.¹⁵

Romano-British : The existence of the palisade ditch dating to the later part of the 1st or early 2nd century confirms that Abingdon was the site of extensive Romano-British settlement. Traces of occupation have been found over some 15–20 hectares (37–50 acres), but the nature of this settlement remains uncertain. Many cropmark complexes of Romano-British date in the Upper Thames Valley correspond to this in size, for example at Radley, Appleford and Long Wittenham.¹⁶ Abingdon therefore might be a settlement of native village status as discussed above, p. 14; there may be at least one villa within the complex, or alternatively it might have functioned as a local trading centre. Certainly its location at a river confluence and crossing, very similar to Dorchester-on-Thames, and the lack of Romano-British 'towns' in the Upper Thames area would make this suggestion an attractive one.

Medieval : The density of medieval features, albeit fragmentary in character, suggests that from the late 12th century onwards this part of the town was built up and fairly densely occupied. Documentary evidence suggests that until this date Abingdon consisted of little more than a thin scatter of buildings between the Abbey and St. Helen's Church. Even by the time of Amyce's Survey of 1554¹⁷ the west side of Stert Street outside the Abbey walls was still only partially built up. The discovery of the timber building and its stone-footed successor, aligned on the present street with cess and rubbish pits, supports the documentary evidence that this part of the street pattern of Abingdon was functioning by the 13th century.

The replacement of a post-hole structure by one with stone footings in the late 13th or 14th century, has been observed on other sites as far afield as Dorset and Lincolnshire.¹⁸ At the deserted medieval village of Seacourt, about 10 km. north of Abingdon, Biddle found the same change in construction technique at this time.¹⁹ In an urban context, this pattern is repeated in excavations at Brook St., Winchester²⁰ and, at a slightly earlier date, at Southampton.²¹

¹¹ M. A. Cotton, 'Berkshire Hill-Forts', *Berks. Arch. J.*, LX (1962), 30–52.

¹² *Op. cit.* note 7, 70.

¹³ H. Jankuhn, 'Zur Deutung der Tierknochenfunde aus La Tene', *Helvetia Antiqua. Festschrift Emil Vogt* (1966), 155–8.

¹⁴ *Op. cit.* note 7, 70. (Note also jawbone in entrance to hut circle at Heath Farm, M.40 Site 3 : T. Rowley, 'An Iron Age Settlement at Heath Farm, Milton Common', *Oxoniana*, XXXVIII (1973), 23–40, Fig. 3. Ed.).

¹⁵ Anne Ross, *Pagan Celtic Britain* (1974), 404–17.

¹⁶ Benson and Miles, *op. cit.* note 3, Maps 31, 34 and 35.

¹⁷ Roger Amyce, *Survey of Abingdon, 1554*, P.R.O., L.R.Z/189, fos. 211v.

¹⁸ M. Wood, *The English Medieval House* (1965), 215.

¹⁹ M. Biddle, 'The Deserted Medieval Village of Seacourt, Berkshire', *Oxoniana*, XXVI/XXVII (1961–2), 70–201, at 118.

²⁰ M. Biddle, 'Excavations at Winchester 1966. Fifth Interim Report', *Antiq. J.*, XLVII (1967), 266, and *op. cit.* note 9.

²¹ C. Platt, *Medieval Southampton : the port and trading community, A.D. 1000–1600* (1973), 39.

Unfortunately, the large amount of pit digging into the relatively unresistant gravel prevents any useful suggestion being made as to the function of these medieval buildings. The presence of the stone-lined pits behind or next to medieval houses is a common arrangement however for depositing kitchen rubbish or for use as cess pits.²²

The gravel terraces of the Upper Thames create an area notably lacking in stone. This results in the use of cob; several surviving buildings in Dorchester, Oxfordshire, are built in this material. Severe robbing of stone from redundant buildings is commonly found during excavation. All the stone on the site, from the Iron Age post packing to the medieval building, is coral ragstone, which can be found about five kilometres west of Abingdon. This stone is also that used in the earliest buildings in Oxford, for example St. Michael's church tower, Cornmarket.²³

THE FINDS

POTTERY

Iron Age

The only Iron Age pottery occurs in two features :

Post-hole CG

Ten sherds from one vessel (FIG. 63, 1). Pot appears to be a straight-sided bucket-shaped vessel with a flat, expanded rim, diameter c. 28–31 cm. Fabric is hard and coarse, with large (c. 8 mm.) shell inclusions, orange-brown to buff in colour. Surface is uneven with eruptions and pittings. Inner surface has been wiped horizontally. Form and fabric match Harding's²⁴ earliest Iron Age pottery in the Upper Thames Valley (6–5 centuries B.C.). Similar sherds have been found at Wittenham Clumps, Dorchester, Blewburton Hill and a number of sites in the Abingdon area, but there is a notable lack of stratigraphical data and associated material from most of these sites.

Pit FG

There are five sherds of true butt-beaker with incised decoration and two sherds of thicker, probably local imitation. These probably date the pit to the late Iron Age, circa early to mid 1st century A.D. It is likely that such pottery continued in use into the early decades of the Roman period, but the total lack of any Roman or Romano-British sherds suggests a pre-Conquest date for the pit.

Other pottery includes :

36 sherds of hard, sandy ware, mostly black and well burnished, some unevenly fired. One sherd is from a large jar with uneven faceted burnishing and tooled chevrons (FIG. 63, 2).

Fragment of a necked bowl. Hard, fairly fine fabric with quartz inclusions, dark, burnished exterior.²⁵

Three decorated sherds may be residual :

- 1 Well burnished sandy, black ware with tooled horizontal line and swag decoration.²⁶
- 2 Similar to 1, but swag formed by impressed dots.

²² *Op. cit.* note 20.

²³ W. J. Arkell, *Oxford Stone* (1947), 22.

²⁴ Cf. *op. cit.* note 7, Pl. 45.

²⁵ Cf. *op. cit.* note 7, Pl. 69, d.

²⁶ Cf. *op. cit.* note 7, Pl. 67, f.

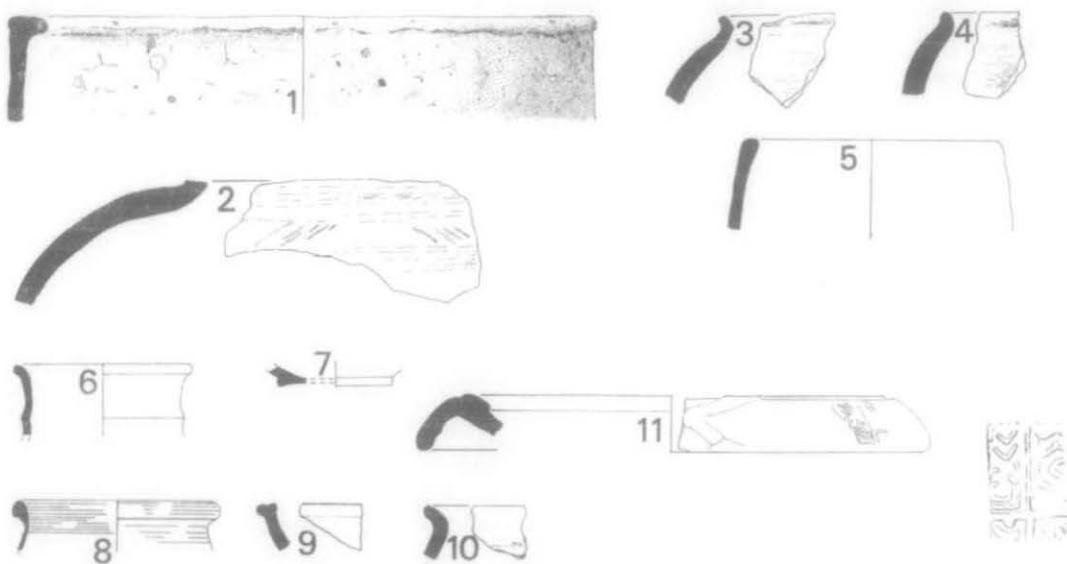


FIG. 63

Abingdon : West St. Helen Street : Iron Age and Romano-British Pottery. Scale $\frac{1}{4}$.

3 Hard shell-gritted, buff coloured ware. Thin-walled vessel with cord impressed decoration.

Jars (FIG. 63, 3 and 4) with slightly pinched-out rims. Hard fabric with fine shell, quartz and possibly some grog inclusions. Interior and exterior well burnished.

Jar (FIG. 63, 5) Simple form in black fabric with quartz inclusions.

10 sherds of shell-tempered ware including one in same fabric as those from post-hole CG. 8 sherds with flint tempering, inclusions 2–5 mm. in diameter.

Romano-British

Palisade Ditch (AT)

Samian One small sherd with good quality gloss, possibly form 27.

Coarse Pottery

1 Hard micaceous reddish brown coloured beaker (FIG. 63, 6). Heavily mica dusted on exterior, dense scatter of mica inclusions on interior. Carination on neck. Unevenly fired with reduced interior.

2 Base of bowl with mica dusted exterior (FIG. 63, 7). Hard fabric with few inclusions except mica and a few small quartz grains. Fabric not quite so sandy as 1 and colour more buff-brown.

3 68 mostly small abraded sherds; 12 are of 'native' fabric. 1 sherd of hard thin burnished grey ware decorated with a triangle of applied dots, could be a product of the Overdale Kilns judging by the fabric.²⁷

4 Butt-beaker (FIG. 63, 8) might indicate continued use of native types in post-Conquest period.

Continuation of Palisade Ditch (CD)

76 sherds, mostly small and abraded, include :

Samian One sherd, abraded possibly E. Gaulish ware.

²⁷ J. R. Kirk, 'Romano-British Pottery from Sunningwell, Berkshire, 1952', *Oxoniana*, xvii/xviii (1952–3), 229–31.

'Native' wares Two sherds of butt-beaker and part of a coarse ware storage jar²⁸ and part of a necked bowl.²⁹

The rest of the sherds are in a hard metallic micaceous grey ware with burnishing.

Examples include :

FIG. 63, 9 Thin walled bowl with short flange.

FIG. 63, 10 Rim of jar with short everted rim in hard quartz-tempered black ware.

All the pottery from the palisade ditch is consistent with a date in the latter half of the 1st century. Mica-dusted pottery is manufactured in the first century, for example in Gloucester, but the production centres of the two sherds found here are not known. The grey wares are probably products of the Overdale Kilns, approximately 5 km. north of Abingdon, which began operations at some stage in the latter part of the first century.³⁰

The ditch also produced three fragments of tile, which may indicate the presence of an early Roman building.

The large amount of later disturbance meant that most features produced some Romano-British pottery. The 13th-century pit DO, for example, contained 400 sherds of residual RB and 'native' pottery of principally first-century date. These included 12 sherds of Samian (none identifiable) and 5 sherds of butt-beaker. The 19th-century pit BM also produced a mortarium, early 2nd-century form, with an illiterate stamp (FIG. 63, 11).

THE MEDIEVAL POTTERY. By M. PARRINGTON

This report deals with the pottery from five of the West St. Helen Street pits which were relatively well stratified and uncontaminated by later intrusions. The pottery has been tabulated using the 'type fabric' series evolved from the study of the Broad Street pottery (above p. 32). These results are shown in Table 5 and correspond well with the results obtained from the Broad Street pottery.

TABLE 5
Type Fabric % in the West St. Helen Street Pits

PIT	Type Fabrics									Total %	Sherd Total
	A	B	C	D	E	G	H	K	N		
CX	75	16	5	—	—	1·5	2·5	—	—	100	81
EW	85	6	9	—	—	—	—	—	—	100	68
DO	85·5	7	6	—	1	0·5	—	—	—	100	413
BJ	20·5	—	3·5	65·5	10·5	—	—	—	—	100	29
BR	29·5	3	3	17·5	23·5	2	—	1	20·5	100	193

The pottery assemblages are similar to the Broad Street ones and have been dated by reference to published sites in the area and the relative dates hinted at by the presence or absence of certain 'type fabrics'. A sherd from layer AJ which is of intrinsic interest is published here also.

²⁸ Cf. op. cit. note 7, Pl. 70, 5.

²⁹ Cf. op. cit. note 7, Pl. 69, d.

³⁰ E. Harris and C. J. Young, 'The "Overdale" Kiln Site at Boar's Hill, near Oxford', *Oxoniensia*, xxxix (1974), 12-25.

The following abbreviations are used in this section :

- Jope, 1947* E. M. Jope, ' Medieval Pottery in Berkshire ', *Berkshire Archaeological Journal*, L (1947), 49–76.
Jope, 1950 E. M. Jope, *et al.*, ' Pottery from a late 12th century well filling and other Medieval Finds from St. John's College, Oxford, 1947 ', *Oxoniana*, xv (1950), 44–62.
Jope, 1958 E. M. Jope, ' The Clarendon Hotel, Oxford, Part 1. The Site ', *Oxoniana*, xxiii (1958), 1–83.
L.M.M.C. *London Museum Medieval Catalogue*, third impression (1967).
Reading Abbey S. Moorhouse, ' The Finds ', in C. F. Slade, ' Excavations at Reading Abbey ', *Berkshire Archaeological Journal*, 66 (1971–2), 65–116.
Seacourt M. Biddle, ' The Desolated Medieval Village of Seacourt, Berkshire ', *Oxoniana*, xxvi/xxvii (1961–62), 70–201.
Tetsworth M. Robinson, *et al.*, ' Excavations at Copt Hay, Tetsworth ', *Oxoniana*, xxxviii (1973), 41–115.

Pit CX (FIG. 64)

- 1 Cooking-pot, Fabric B (*Cf. Jope, 1950*, Fig. 18, no. 4).
- 2 Cooking-pot, Fabric A, diameter approx. 32 cm.
- 3 Cooking-pot, heavy finger-tipping on rim, Fabric A, diameter uncertain (*Cf. Tetsworth*, Fig. 16, no. 18).
- 4 Cooking-pot, Fabric A, diameter approx. 26 cm.
- 5 Strap handle with stabbed decoration, light green glaze ; the handle has been notched along each side after firing, Fabric A.
- 6 Cooking-pot, Fabric B, diameter uncertain.
- 7 Cooking-pot, Fabric B, diameter approx. 30 cm.

Number 1 occurs in a late 12th-century context at Oxford and number 3 in a 12th-century context at Tetsworth. Among the unillustrated sherds is a tripod pitcher handle with a twisted rope of clay inserted, and notching along the sides. (*Cf. Jope, 1950*, Fig. 16 for examples of this technique and *Reading Abbey*, Fig. 11, no. 8, for a Berkshire example ; also *cf. Broad Street* (above), Fig. 23, no. 7.) The parallels and the absence of painted wares suggest a pre-13th-century date for the feature and a date in the late 12th century would seem appropriate.

Pit EW

- 8 Bowl, flanged rim with finger-tip decoration, Fabric A (*Cf. Seacourt*, Fig. 24, no. 3).
- 9 Bowl, internal flanged rim with finger-tip decoration, Fabric A, diameter approx. 34 cm. (*Cf. Tetsworth*, Fig. 21, no. 94).
- 10 Bowl, flanged rim with finger-tip decoration on outside of flange, Fabric A, diameter approx. 36 cm.

The sherds paralleled at Tetsworth and Seacourt indicate a 13th-century date ; the absence of painted wares suggests an early 13th-century date for the pit.

Pit DO

- 11 Rim of large dish, Fabric B (*Cf. Jope, 1947*, Fig. 6, no. 2 and *Jope, 1958*, Fig. 18, Z 12.).
- 12 Cooking-pot, clubbed rim, Fabric B.
- 13 Cooking-pot, Fabric A (*Cf. Jope, 1947*, Fig. 5, no. 1).
- 14 Rim sherd with very heavy finger-tipping, Fabric A.
- 15 Rim sherd, Fabric A.
- 16 Cooking-pot, Fabric A.
- 17 Cooking-pot, Fabric A.
- 18 Dish, Fabric A.
- 19 Cooking-pot, Fabric A.

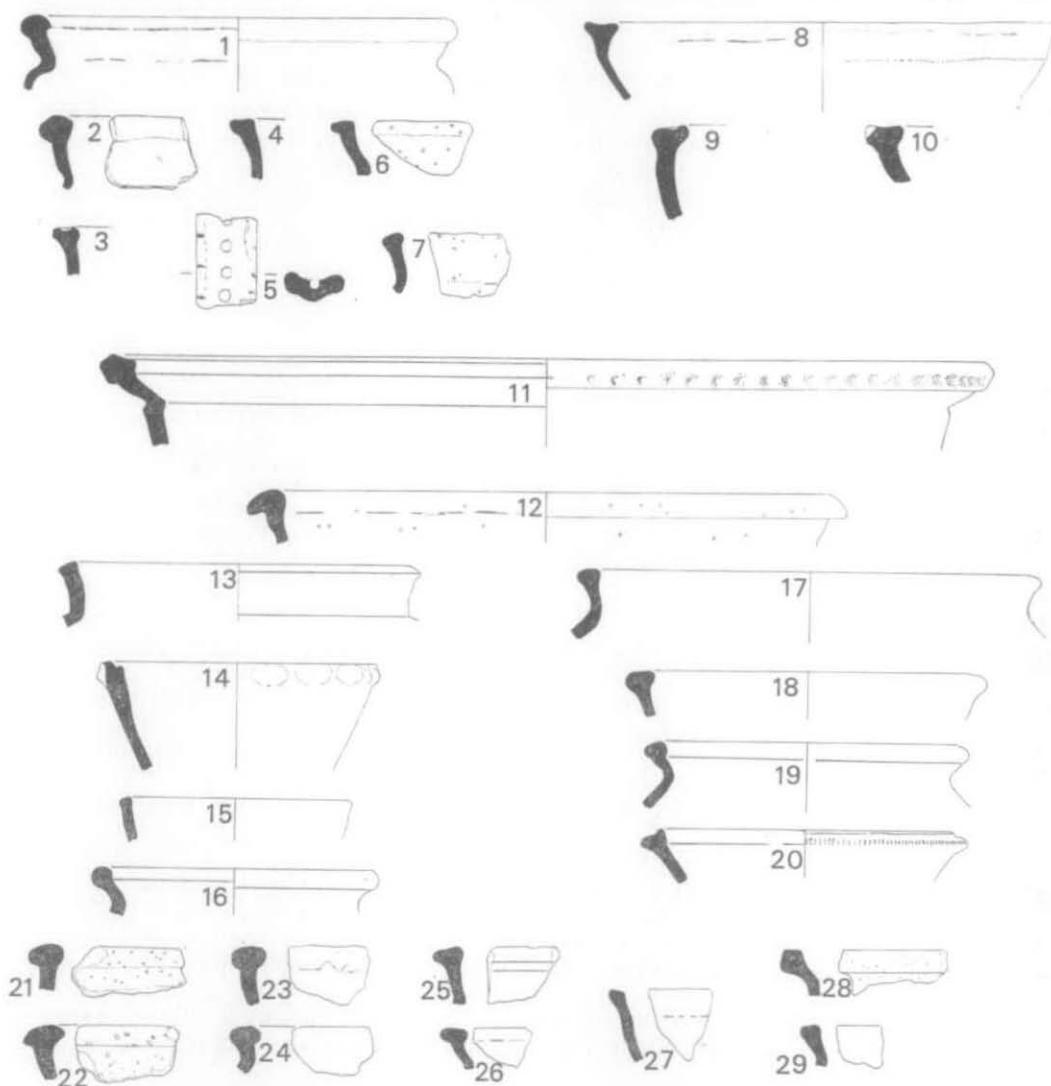


FIG. 64

Abingdon : West St. Helen Street : Medieval Pottery, Pit CX, 1-7 ; Pit EW, 8-10 ; Pit DO, 11-29. Scale $\frac{1}{4}$.

- 20 Rim of jug or pitcher, dark yellow external glaze, notching on rim, Fabric A (*Cf. Reading Abbey*, Fig. 11, no. 2).
- 21 Dish, expanded rim, Fabric C, diameter approx. 31 cm.
- 22 Dish, expanded rim, Fabric C, diameter approx. 30 cm.
- 23 Dish, expanded rim, Fabric A, diameter uncertain.
- 24 Cooking-pot, Fabric B, diameter approx. 22 cm.
- 25 Dish, expanded rim, Fabric A, diameter uncertain.
- 26 Dish, expanded rim, Fabric A, diameter uncertain.
- 27 Rim of jug or pitcher, yellow external glaze, Fabric A.

- 28 Cooking-pot with flanged rim, Fabric C, diameter approx. 38 cm. (*Cf. Tetsworth*, Fig. 20, no. 71).
 29 Rim of jug or pitcher, internal green glaze, Fabric A, diameter uncertain.

Among the unillustrated pottery is a handle sherd decorated with thumb impressions (*Cf. Tetsworth*, Fig. 15, no. 1), and 68 sherds of a large baggy pitcher with elaborate slip decoration consisting of concentric circles and zones of dots defined by lines of white slip and linear decoration in dark brown slip. The sherds have an external green glaze and both the pitcher and the decorated handle are in Fabric A. The presence of painted wares and nos. 11, 13 and 20 suggests a 13th-century date for the feature and the absence of Fabric D (a late 13th-century fabric, see *Broad Street* pot report, p. 32) indicates a mid 13th-century date for the pit.

Pit B7 (FIG. 65)

- 30 Pitcher, squared-off rim, dark green glaze, Fabric D (*Cf. Seacourt*, Fig. 20, no. 4).
 31 Base sherd, Fabric D.
 32 Rim of jug or pitcher with strap handle, slashed decoration on handle, Fabric D.

Number 30 is paralleled in a late 13th-century context at Seacourt and the presence of significant quantities of Fabric D indicates a late 13th-century date for the pit.

Pit BR

- 33 Jug with slightly expanded rim, strap handle with stabbed decoration, bung hole near base of jug, frilled round the base which is slightly sagging. The jug is glazed on the upper half with a green glaze and is decorated with vertical lines of brown slip in the glazed area, Fabric N (*Cf. L.M.M.C.*, Pl. LXIV, no. 3).
 34 Cooking-pot with sagging base, two spots of green glaze on the body of the pot where it has been in contact with another in the kiln, Fabric E.
 35 Bowl with flanged rim, patchy external greenish-yellow glaze, Fabric E (*Cf. Seacourt*, Fig. 27, no. 7).
 36 Small bowl with flanged rim, Fabric E.
 37 Three joining body sherds with grid stamp and impressed strip decoration, external glaze varying in colour from reddish-brown to dark green, Fabric N.
 38 Base of bottle, Fabric D (*Cf. Seacourt*, Fig. 19, no. 15).
 39 Base sherd, slightly sagging with partial frilling on basal edge, Fabric D (*Cf. Jope*, 1947, Fig. 7, no. 9).
 40 Rim of a storage jar with a seating for a lid, flecks of green glaze internally and externally, Fabric N (*Cf. Seacourt*, Fig. 27, no. 12, and also *Broad Street*, above, Fig. 31, no. 127).

Numbers 35 and 40 are paralleled in late 14th-century contexts whilst no. 35 is 15th-century in date. The presence of significant quantities of Fabric N which occurs in the latest pit at Broad Street (Pit 26) in association with 'Tudor Green' type pottery suggests an early 15th-century date for the pit.

Layer A7

- 41 Fragments of a face mask mug in a hard red fabric with a dark green internal and external glaze (*Cf. Jope*, 1950, Fig. 22, nos. 1-2 and pp. 60-62, where these mugs are discussed in detail and tentatively dated to the 15th century. (Subsequent finds at the Chilvers Coton kilns, Nuneaton, make an earlier date for the glazing and form of these mugs likely. Extraordinarily, in view of their previously very limited distribution, an example has recently been found in a builder's trench at Sherborne Abbey, Dorset. Ed.)).

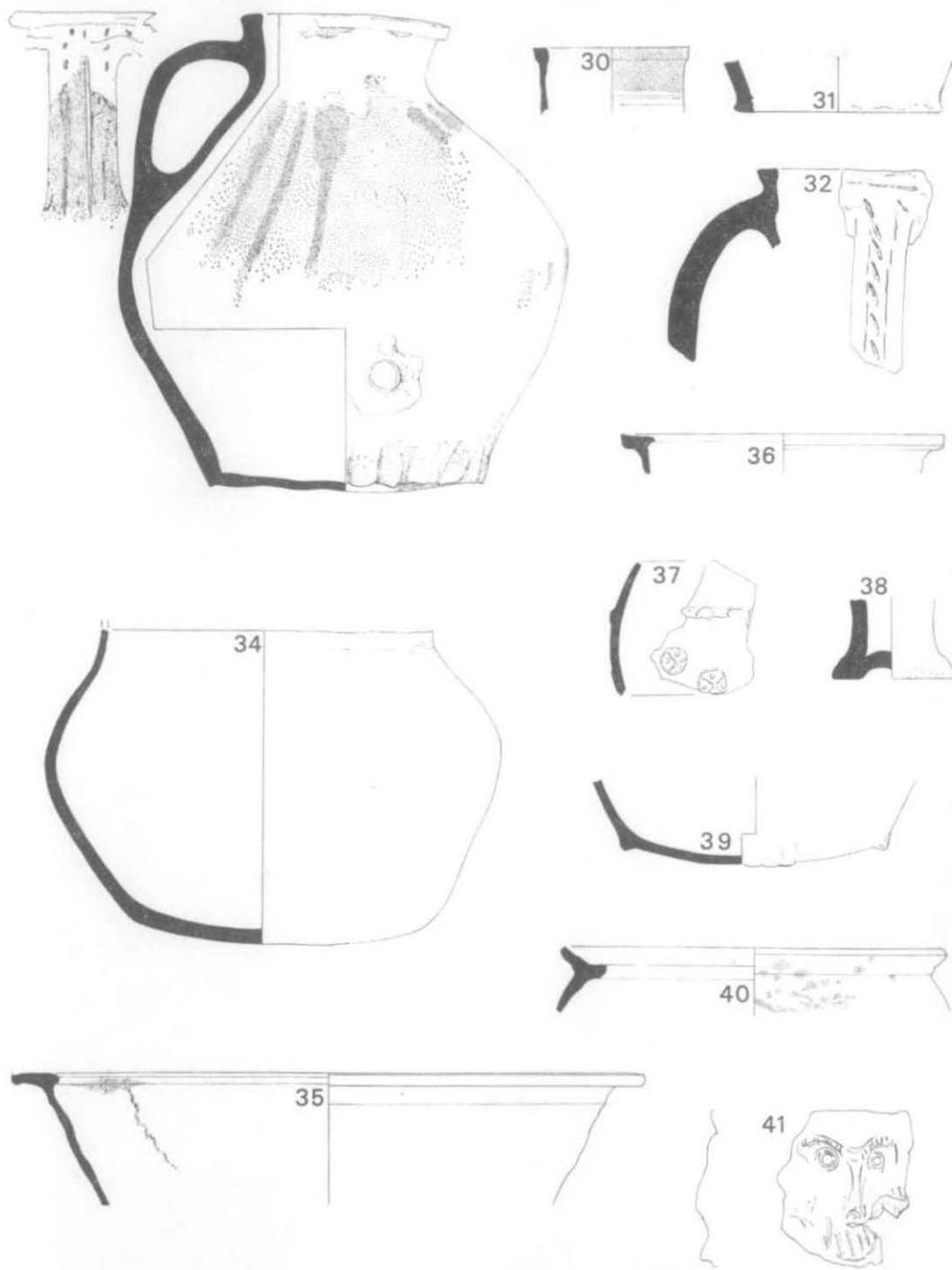


FIG. 65

Abingdon : West St. Helen Street : Medieval Pottery, Pit BJ, 30-32 ; Pit BR, 33-40 ; Layer AJ, 41. Scale $\frac{1}{2}$.

COINS

Identification was carried out by the staff of the Heberden Coin Room, Ashmolean Museum.

- 1 Only one Roman coin was found and this was in the 13th-century pit DO
 Domitian, Ae As Lugdunum
 Obv. CAESAR AUG F. DOMITIANUS COS V
 Rev. Spes draped. Holding flower in R. hand, lifting skirt with L.
 Date. 77-78 A.D.
 (BB Cat. No. 873 p. 215)

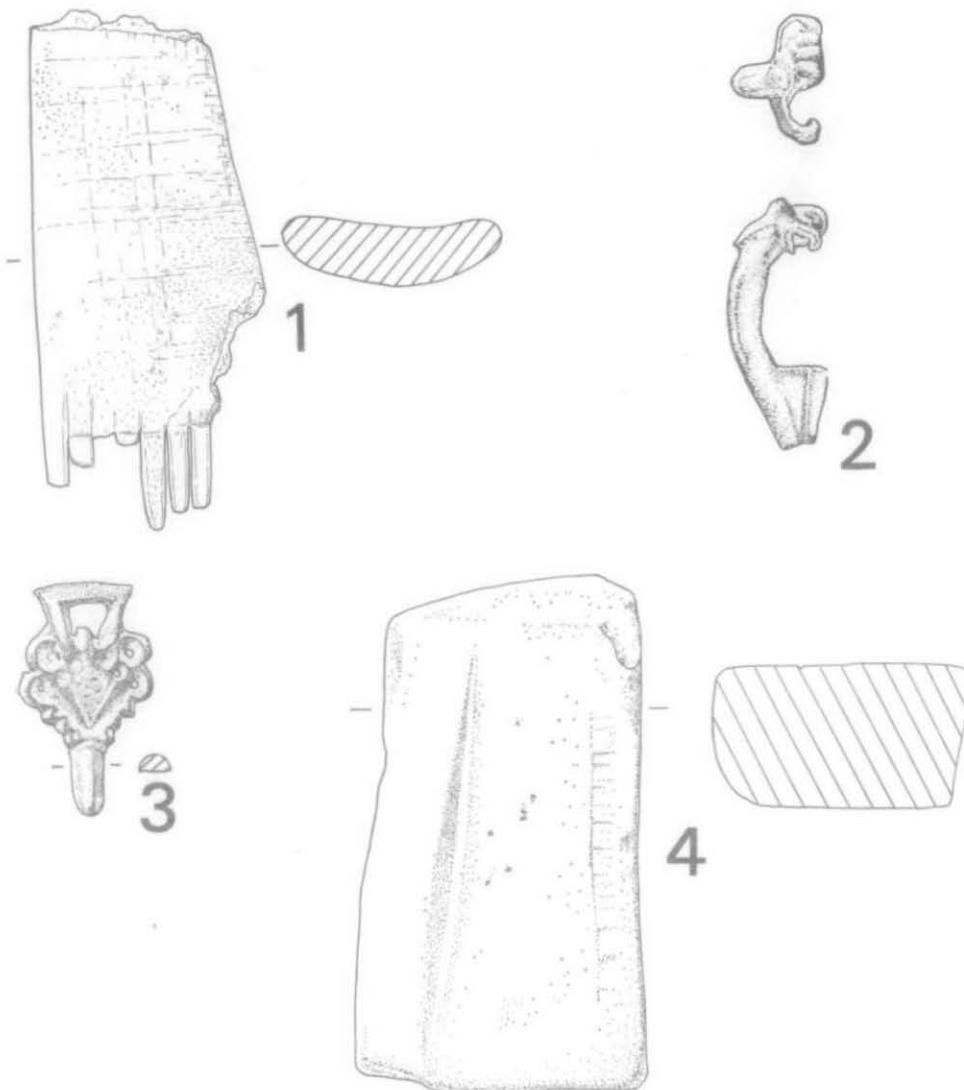


FIG. 66
 Abingdon : West St. Helen Street : Finds. Scale $\frac{1}{2}$.

- 2 From pit BR
 Anglo-Gallic jetton Barnard type 58.
 Probably struck after 1351 (date of introduction of groat in England) and before 1453. May have circulated later.
- 3 Unstratified.
 Ae Rose farthing of Charles I.
 Issue discontinued 1644. Probable date of issue late 1630s to early 1640s. May have circulated later.

SMALL FINDS

Bronze

- 1 A brooch (FIG. 66, 2) found in RB ditch AT. Small (3½ cm. long) 'dolphin' type. Undecorated, pin missing, but originally on a spring. Short arms and small catch plate (broken). Late 1st to mid 2nd century A.D.
- 2 Small (3 cm. long) belt fitting (FIG. 66, 3) found layer CA. Openwork quatrefoil with thistle shaped head and downward curving projection. Back is a flat plate. Late Medieval.

Worked Bone

- 1 Fragment of weaving comb (FIG. 66, 1), partially burnt. From early Iron Age post-hole CG. Parts of teeth survive, with possible signs of wear between them. Original width c. 3·5 cm. Plano-convex in section. Probably made from ox rib. Identical tools are used by present-day weavers in Central America. Their function is to beat-up the weft from the front on a warp-weighted loom. Wild suggests they may only be used on fairly coarse woollen cloth.³¹ Such combs are common on Iron Age sites in Southern Britain, but although found in Romano-British contexts they seem to appear in Northern Britain more often than the southern lowlands.³²

Worked Stone

- 1 Fragment of mica schist whetstone (FIG. 66, 4). From 13th-century pit DO. Wear marks along centre and sides.

TEXTILE. By ELISABETH CROWFOOT

From the 15th-century pit BR came one fragment, measuring c. 6·6 × 5·3 cm. overall, with four cut edges. Wool, dark brown, apparently naturally pigmented, worsted type, fairly evenly Z spun in both systems. Weave, regular tabby, count 13/13 threads per cm. The cloth was not fulled; it is slightly matted on one side, but not enough to suggest deliberate napping. Remains of stitches in very deteriorated ?vegetable thread show that the piece was cut from a garment.

By the late 13th century, English and European evidence suggests that most professional woollens were made with yarn Z spun in one system and S spun in the other, a practice which facilitates the matting of the fibres when the cloth is to be finished by fulling or napping. Of the many fragments recently found in late 14th- and 15th-century levels at Baynard's Castle in the City of London only a very small proportion of the tabby and three-shaft twill weaves do not follow this rule, and have Z spun, or S spun thread in both systems. The worsted type of wool and similar spinning in warp and weft are commonly reserved for simple four-shaft twills, where the diagonal pattern of the weave was presumably intended to show. This perhaps suggests that the Abingdon fragment is of good domestic rather than professional production.

Finds of medieval woollen textiles often include cut pieces, sometimes new cloth probably from tailors' workshops, but more often fragments like this one, cut from worn garments when the better portions are presumably being used for re-making or patching.

³¹ J. P. Wild, *Textile Manufacture in the northern Roman provinces* (1970), 66.

³² A. Henshall, 'Textiles and Weaving appliances in prehistoric Britain', *P.P.S.*, xvi-vii (1950), 148, Fig. 5.

BONE REPORT. By R. WILSON

Some 60% of 732 bone and shell remains are identified from the dated features at West St. Helen Street. The bones are well-preserved except for those in the medieval Pit CX. There are four burnt fragments of 44 in the late Iron Age features and six burnt fragments (all metapodials) in the early 15th-century Pit BR.

Animal abundance. In Tables 6 and 7, the numbers are recorded as for the Broad Street and Old Gaol sites in Abingdon (pp. 105 and 112 in this volume) and are similar to those distributions. There are two horse bones in Pit BZ and single bones in Pit FG and Pit CX, four dog metatarsals and a calcaneum in FG, and three dog bones in Pit DO; nine cat bones in DO and two in Pit BR (one individual in each pit); two rabbit bones in Pit BR and one in Pit BZ (one individual in each pit), a small fish fragment in each of Pits BR and BZ, and a frog bone in Pit EW. The minimum numbers of oysters are one in Ditch AT, thirty in Pit BR, six in Pit BZ, three in BM and nine in both BM and BZ combined.

The combined medieval sample from the three Abingdon sites gives a minimum ratio of 16 cattle : 22 sheep : 10 pigs (33, 46 and 21%—as at Broad Street, which contributes to two-thirds of this sample). Totals of the minimum numbers in all the medieval features give a ratio of 48 : 77 : 32 (31, 49 and 20%) for the above animals. 12th- to mid 13th-century features give ratios of 11 : 15 : 4 (37, 50 and 13%) and 29 : 45 : 19 (31, 48 and 21%), while the ratios for the late 13th- to early 15th-century features are 8 : 12 : 6 (31, 46 and 23%) and 19 : 32 : 13 (30, 50 and 20%). These percentages indicate a relative increase in the pig population, but the comparison is based on 106 pig bones. Sheep numbers seem to have remained much the same even in relation to cattle and this nullifies the Broad Street evidence of their increase (p. 119).

Affinities of the sample. The average number of fragments per individual for medieval cattle, sheep and pig are 16, 10 and 6 respectively, and are closer to those in the Old Gaol sample. These averages appear to be related to the sample number of bones for each species (p. 113).

15% of the bones are complete or nearly so, about half-way between the 10% at Broad Street and 22% at the Old Gaol.

The average length of all bone with no apparently new breaks are 8·3 cm. and 10 cm. respectively for medieval and 19th-century cattle (7·7 and 9·9 cm. for Broad Street and the Old Gaol medieval debris); 7·4 cm. and 8·2 cm. for medieval and 19th-century sheep debris (7·2 and 8·9 cm. at Broad Street and Old Gaol); and 3·7 cm. (5 bones) and 8·0 cm. for medieval and 19th-century pig (7·4 and 8·0 cm. at Broad Street and Old Gaol). Six of the nine sample numbers range from twelve to seventy-four and only the sheep and cattle fragments at Broad Street number more than two hundred. The average length of all bones that are not freshly broken (71% of the three species, 80% of cattle and 70% of sheep bones) is 6·4 cm. compared to 6·3 cm. at Broad Street and 7·9 cm. at the Old Gaol. The unidentified medieval bone fragments have an average length of 5·2 cm. compared to 5·5 cm. at Broad Street and 6·7 cm. at the Old Gaol, a measure which might be expected to be as constant as the investigator's ability to identify the smaller fragments. Ribs have been lumped with the unidentified material and although no record was made of the measurements of any particular bone, the portions of rib did appear to be much longer in the Old Gaol debris than in the other two samples. These figures suggest that the extent of medieval bone fragmentation is intermediate between the other two site samples: all these results also being conditional upon how bone was collected on these sites. As noted above, the fresh breakages are numerous, twice as many as at Broad Street and four times as many as at the Old Gaol.

Butchery. Some aspects of medieval metapodial butchery emerge with an examination of the triple site sample. There are 37 metapodial fragments, three with knife cuts and 29 with angular fractures, heavy knives or choppers appearing to be the major disarticulating blades. On the metatarsals of cattle, the tops of six of ten proximal ends are one- to three-quarters cut away from the anterior intact edge. Six (including four of the previous six)

TABLE 6
West St. Helen Street Animal Bone and Shell Frequency

Feature	Late IA/RB 1 BC-1 AD				12th century- mid 13th century				Late 13th century- early 15th century				19th century		
	FG	AT	CB, DT	Total	CX	DO	EW	Total	BJ	BR	Med.	Total	BZ	BM	Total
Cattle	2	1		3	9	26	3	38	1	23	62		27	31	58
Sheep	8	3	11		13	21	7	41	6	32	79		15	25	40
Pig	4	—	4		4	3	—	7	—	5	12		12	8	20
Domestic Fowl*	—	—	—		2	1	1	4	—	5	9		3	3	6
Other Bird	—	—	—		—	3	—	3	—	6	9		4	3	7
Oyster	—	1	1		—	—	—	—	—	78	78		8	5	13

* Bird bones identified by Mr. D. Bramwell.

TABLE 7
Minimum Numbers of Individuals (M.N.I.)

Feature	Late IA/RB				Early Medieval			Late Medieval		Medieval		Sample		Post Medieval			Sample	
	FG	GX	DO	EW	BJ	BR	Total	M.N.I.	BZ	BM	Total	M.N.I.	BZ	BM	Total	M.N.I.		
Cattle	1	1	2	1	1	3	8	4	3	5	8	8	3	5	8	8		
Sheep	2	2	3	1	3	6	15	8	4	6	10	7	4	6	10	7		
Pig	1	1	1	—	—	2	4	2	3	1	4	3	3	1	4	3		

of twelve distally fused epiphyses are broken away, the direction of the blows being difficult to determine. Four of thirteen proximal metacarpals are broken, and these and one other also had their distal ends broken away. Two metacarpals had been split lengthways, but the other metapodial bones tend to be smashed in the midshaft. This pattern may be chance fragmentation or indications that butchery tended either to produce meat joints or marrow bone destruction.

The 19th-century proximal metatarsals were disarticulated at the same place as noted for the medieval bones, five of nine bones evidently being cut using finer blades but probably with no more precision than medieval butchers used their chopping blades. Three of four sheep vertebrae and a sacrum of sheep are cut through their midline suggesting a halving of the carcass in the 19th century. Similarly for a cattle vertebra, but the two pig vertebrae have only the lateral process trimmed off.

Skeletal proportions. The percentages of medieval skull, foot and main body debris, as in the previous reports (p. 108) are 55, 19 and 26% for cattle (62 bones); 24, 32 and 44% for sheep (79 bones); and 25, 58 and 18% for pig (12 bones!). For the 19th-century debris, 9, 36 and 55% for cattle (58 bones); 15, 55 and 30% for sheep (40 bones); and 50, 30 and 20% for pigs (20 bones). These figures and previous ones are variable although they suggest that cattle head debris was less common on the 19th-century site but explanation lacks other supporting evidence.

Mortality estimates. In the medieval cattle bones only three in ten epiphyses are fused, seven epiphyses coming from Pit DO. For 19th-century cattle bones, ten of twelve early fusing epiphyses and eleven of sixteen late fusing epiphyses are fused. In medieval sheep, twelve of thirteen early fusing epiphyses and fifteen of twenty-two late fusing epiphyses are fused, while in the 19th-century pits all ten early fusing sheep epiphyses and thirteen of seventeen late fusing bones are fused. Of the pig epiphyses, two of the four late Iron Age epiphyses, one of three medieval and one of seven 19th-century epiphyses are fused.

Two medieval cattle jaws and three medieval sheep jaws including a matching pair (Pit BR) had the third molar in wear. Two matching late Iron Age sheep jaws (Pit FG), one medieval and three 19th-century pig jaws are immature on the above criterion. Apart from the unfused cattle epiphyses from Pit DO, the figures confirm the previous findings for Broad Street and the Old Gaol, that pigs were killed at much earlier stages than cattle or sheep. This also appears to be a post-medieval practice.

Bone abnormality. Two of the distal cattle metatarsals in Pit BM are nearly pathological in that their shaft surfaces are pitted or raised as small calcified outgrowths, the medial condyles showing wear, and relatively more lateral extension and calcified deposits than do the other metapodials. One of the medieval metatarsals (Pit 36 at Broad Street) shows this but to a lesser extent. Uerpman considers these characteristics to be evidence of the use of draught animals.³³ None of the distal metacarpals show the above signs, but one first phalanx and two phalanges from Pit BM, and two first phalanges from Pits 26 and 73 at Broad Street also show calcified outgrowths.

A distal humerus and a proximal radius from Pits 41 and 36 at Broad Street show considerable outgrowths around their epiphyses and the articulation surface of the humerus is markedly striated. A pig tibia from Pit 35 bears an ulcer-like pit 15 mm. in length on the lower shaft. Most interesting is a healed-over triangular hole, 7 mm. wide, through the side of the parietal of a sheep's skull, a 12th-century cure or escape (Pit 80, Broad Street). A young 15th-century dog in Pit 26 (Broad Street) seems to have been less fortunate and had the left side of its skull smashed in. This evidence constitutes the obvious pathology of the three site samples.

Worked bone. In the whole medieval sample three bones had been worked. One is a pig fibula, 130 mm. in length, which had been sharpened to a simple point (Pit BR). The

³³ Personal communication.

other two bones are distal metatarsals of cattle. After the shafts had been trimmed and rounded off, presumably while the bone was still green, the epiphyses were sawn off, discarded, eventually being deposited in Pit 78 at Broad Street and Pit 22 at the Old Gaol, both being dated to the 13th century.

Discussion. These bones have contributed little to site interpretations and comparisons, as is shown by the attempted assessment of fragmentation patterns. This is related to problems of method, to how refuse appears to be spread over a wide area, and to how bones record biological processes that are mostly remote from the site.

The circumstances of the 19th-century bones may become better documented. Earlier in the century butter production was notable on the Thames meadowland around Radley and up river, while cheesemaking was most characteristic of the upper Ock River around Shrivenham.³⁴ Berkshire Nott sheep and crosses with this breed were preferred for folding and farming in the vicinity of Abingdon although the meat and wool were rather coarse.³⁵ Although horses were numerous in Berkshire, oxen teams were kept at least by Mr. Stacey of Abingdon.³⁶ Later in the century the extent of pastoral farming may have increased.³⁷

BIRD REMAINS. By D. BRAMWELL

BM and BZ, Post-medieval

Goose, domestic. Six bones, parts of an adult and an immature bird.

Duck, probably domestic, may be as large as a Muscovy. Tibia of immature.

Domestic fowl. Six bones from 2 adults, an immature and a more juvenile specimen, i.e. four birds. One of the bones is of a large bird of present-day size.

BR, 15th century

Goose, cf. domestic. Six bones possibly from one bird, an adult. There are signs of butchery on a wing bone.

Fowl. Five bones, all from a small bird or birds. One bone is butchered to remove the foot in preparation for cooking.

DO and EW, 13th century

Goose, domestic. Three bones representing two adults.

Fowl. Two bones of small variety of fowl, one or two adults.

CX, 12th century

Fowl. Two coracoids, from two immature small fowl.

³⁴ W. Mavor, *A general View of the Agriculture of Berkshire* (1809), 374–5.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 381–90.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 400.

³⁷ N. Hammond, *Rural Life in the Vale of the White Horse 1780–1914* (1974), 93.