

A Deserted Medieval Farmstead at Sadler's Wood, Lewknor

By R. A. CHAMBERS

INTRODUCTION

IN May 1972 a previously unknown Medieval site¹ (SU 734962, Fig. 1), was identified during clearing operations at Sadler's Wood for the new Christmas Common diversion road. The clearance also exposed several field boundaries and a possible sunken trackway (FIG. 2). Pottery indicated occupation at this site from the early 13th to the end of the 14th century. No documentary record of the site has been found.

The phases

Phase I : Structures I and II

Phase II : Structure III.

SITUATION

Sadler's Wood lies on the south-west side of the Chiltern escarpment at the head of a valley, the upper part of which is now dry. The land surrounding the site to the west and the north is on a gentle slope which abruptly steepens to the east and south (FIG. 1).

The site is 800 ft. above sea level with the spring line 400 ft. below to the north-west. Shirburn Lodge, one and a half miles to the south-west, lies on the same escarpment ridge and has a similar topographical situation. Here a well head at 797 ft. O.D. is recorded² as providing a constant 15-18 ft. of water at a depth of some 400 ft. This suggests that the water table is between 350-400 ft. below the excavated site.

The local subsoil consists of Plateau Drifts³ and Sarsen⁴ stones, and overlies a thin deposit of Clay with Flints that in turn caps the Chalk.

¹ Excavated under the site name of *New Christmas Common Road West*; the site records are deposited at the Oxford City and County Museum, Woodstock.

I am indebted to Mr. A. Boarder who reported the black soil that indicated the presence of the site. I would also like to express my warmest thanks to Mr. J. Lawrence of the Mynd Woodland Trust, who allowed access into Sadler's Wood. Also to Mr. Frank Holmes of Hill Farm, Stokenchurch, for much interest, help and advice during the excavation and Mr. John Hazelden of the Soil Survey of England and Wales, who generously gave both time and advice on geological aspects. Mrs. Joyce Donald undertook documentary research and Mrs. J. M. Chambers kindly typed out the text.

² A note by J. H. Blake in R. H. Tiddeman, 'Water Supply of Oxfordshire', *Mem. of the Geol. Survey* (1910).

³ J. L. Loveday, 'Plateau Deposits of the Southern Chiltern Hills', *Proc. Geol. Assn.*, LXXIII (1962), 83.

⁴ R. J. Small *et al.*, *The Sarsen Stones of the Marlborough Downs and their Geomorphological Implications*, Southampton Research Series in Geography, No. 4 (June, 1967).

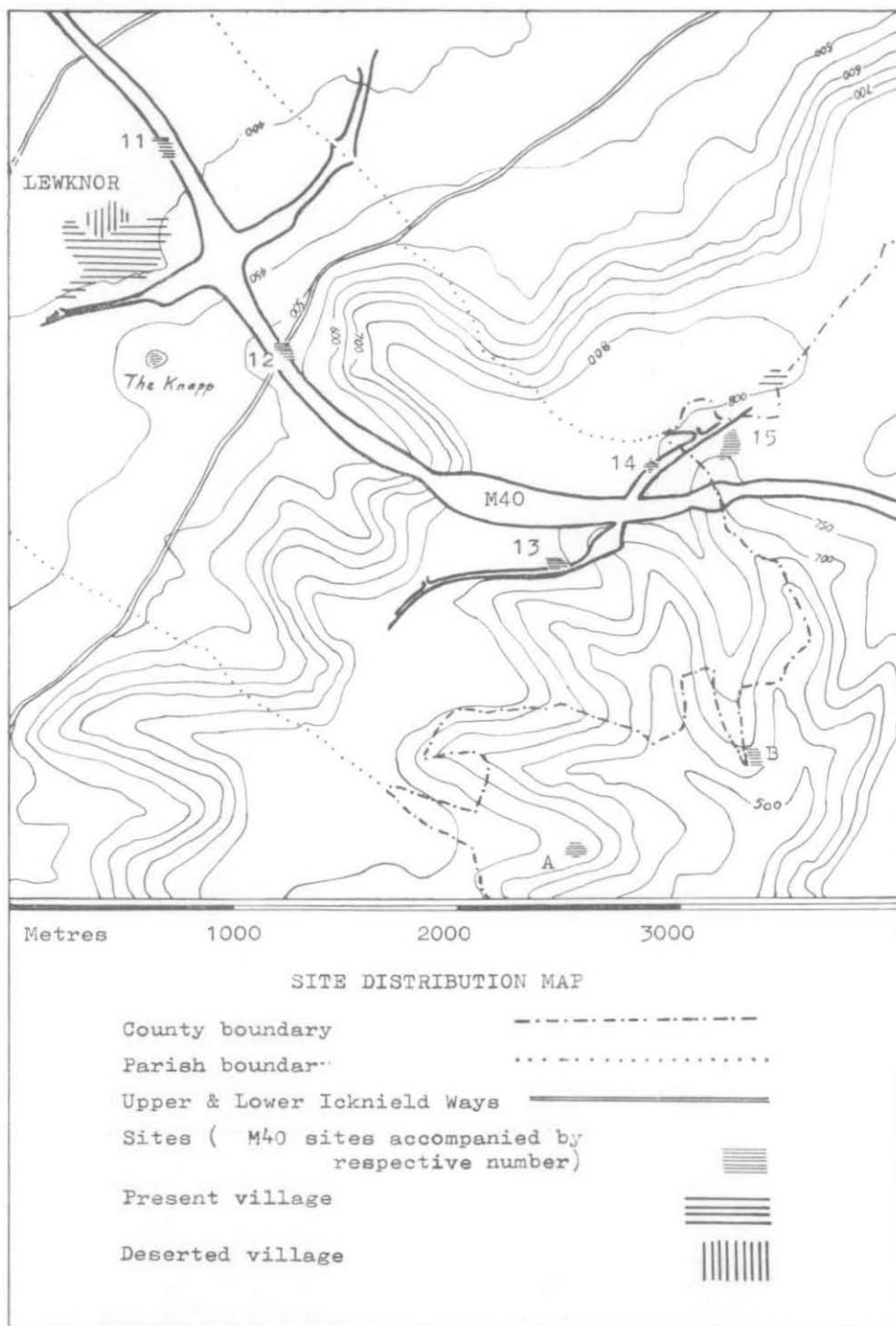


FIG. 1

M.40 and other sites on the Chilterns. Based on the 1 in. O.S. Map with the sanction of the Controller of H.M.S.O. Crown copyright reserved.

THE EARTHWORKS

A survey of the earthworks in the wood was undertaken to investigate the limits of the Medieval settlement (FIG. 2), but this was badly hampered by undergrowth (PLS. IV, V). The earthworks all lay to the north of the new diversion road and were surrounded by a ditch. The survey revealed a U-shaped building platform surrounding a depressed central area, possibly representing a yard open to the east. Both wings of the platform showed the flint foundations of rectangular buildings. At the eastern end of the south wing a long, wide mound rose some 1.2 m. before falling off slightly into the yard area.

The surrounding ditch was most pronounced to the south (D1) and east as D1 turned northwards into the wood (D1a), where it crossed the open end of the yard. Immediately north of this there was a break in the east side of the ditch of which no more was then seen because of impenetrable undergrowth. Ditch D1 at its western end shallowed abruptly before turning north-eastwards for 17 m. as a slight hollow passing below the corner of a building (FIG. 3). A post-medieval sawyer's pit (P3, FIG. 2), marked the turning position of this linear hollow which then ran N.N.E. slightly uphill and slightly deeper than before, until a wide oval depression (F2) was reached. Estimated at two metres deep in the centre, the general shape suggests an overgrown dew pond. To the east of F2, a shallow ditch that bounded the northern side of the settlement was indicated by a linear depression along the tops of the closely spaced conifer saplings. North of this there appeared to be no further major earthworks. The main entrance to the site was not located.

Other features exposed by the roadway (FIG. 2) included three land boundaries to the west of the settlement (B2-4), and two trackways T1 and T2. T1 was probably modern. T2, its west side sunk into the sloping ground, crossed the new diversion road and ran to the present Upper Vicar's Farm. To the east of the site lay a single ditch and bank boundary (B1) which skirted the break of slope overlooking the valley head. These features were concealed by thick undergrowth on both sides of the new road.

THE EXCAVATIONS (PLS. IV, V)

The excavation of the site and related features was confined to the area threatened by the construction of the new road (FIG. 2). As much of the topsoil as possible was removed mechanically and the land boundary ditches already described were sectioned.

EXTERNAL FEATURES

Each ditch (B1-4) was filled with sterile grey, flinty silt and humus levels and in every case the single bank lay to the settlement side of the ditch.

B1 lay to the east of the site, consisting of a bank 1.25 m. above and to the west of the bottom of the 0.75 m. deep ditch. B2 lay to the west of the site and consisted of a bank 0.8 m. above and east of the bottom of the 0.5 m. deep

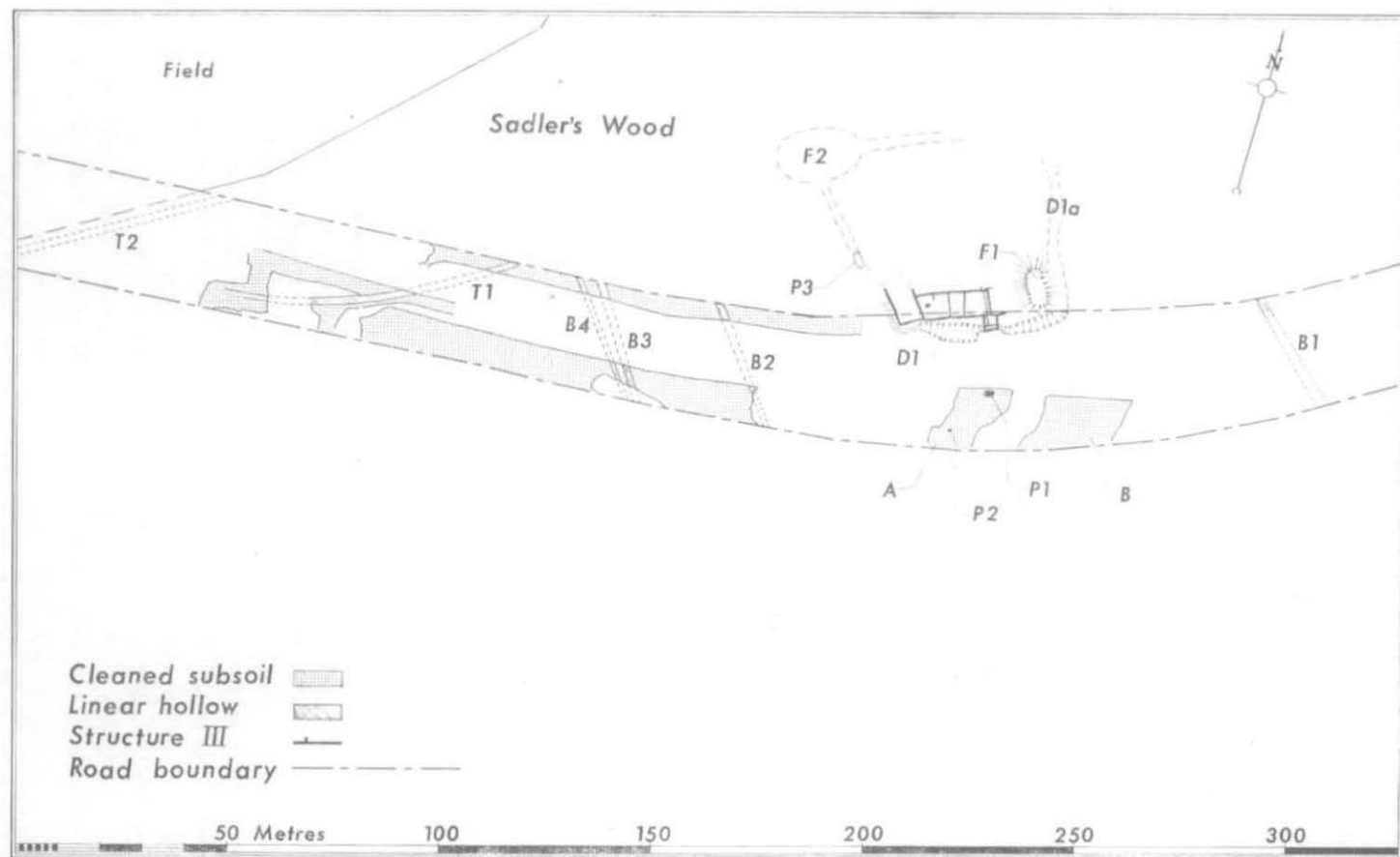


FIG. 2
Sadler's Wood (Site 13) : Plan of Earthworks.

ditch. B₃ and B₄ ran close and almost parallel to each other and both were of similar dimensions to B₂.

After sectioning, T₁ appeared to be modern, although there was no dating evidence. T₂ was not investigated any further.

THE SETTLEMENT

South of Ditch D1

The area of unusually black soil (layer 1) that initially disclosed the existence of this settlement did not extend north of ditch D₁ and any remains within the black soil were obliterated by the contractor's work except for a short black soil-filled ditch. This, however, may have been produced by a machine.

Within two areas, A (153 sq. m.) and B (220 sq. m.) (FIG. 2), the subsoil was mechanically cleaned to reveal two pits (P₁ and P₂, FIG. 2). Pit P₁ appeared rectangular in plan and measured 1.25 m. by 2.0 m. by over 1 m. deep. From its fill of charcoal specks and traces of ash in a flinty black soil, several sherds of Medieval pottery were recovered along with some residual Romano-British coarse ware. The Medieval pottery was contemporary with that from the rest of the site though unfortunately the pit could not be fully excavated and its use established.

A shallow pit P₂ (section A-B, FIG. 5) contained a uniform fill of charcoal and ash traces in black soil. Some minute soft and sooted fragments of clay, with a finely gritted red fabric, were also present. Although there was no heat discoloration of the natural flint-laden clay bottom, it suggested the site of a small fire.

North of Ditch D1

The portion of each building that lay north of the diversion road boundary was not excavated except in the case of Structure III where the walls were traced by clearing the topsoil to complete the foundation plan. Phase I comprised Structures I and II which were the earliest identified and were enclosed within a ditch which in Phase II was recut after the replacement of the former structures by Structure III.

Phase I, Structure I

A small area of the Structure III clay floor was removed to a depth of approximately 10 cm. (FIG. 3) to expose the remains of an earlier structure. This comprised a curved foundation (F₃) of angular flints set in chalky, orange clay, the whole of which ended just before the northern edge of the trench. A brown soil rich in chalk and charcoal flecks and containing pottery fragments attributable to the second half of the 13th century was retained by this foundation, except at the northern edge of the excavation. Here a spillage merged into a black occupational debris spread that overlay a rough flint cobble set on the subsoil, probably a yard area.⁵ Phase I occupational debris probably contributed the major proportion of the black soil layer (1) to the south of ditch D₁. In the

⁵ Cf. M. W. Beresford and J. G. Hurst (eds.), *Deserted Medieval Villages* (1971), 122.

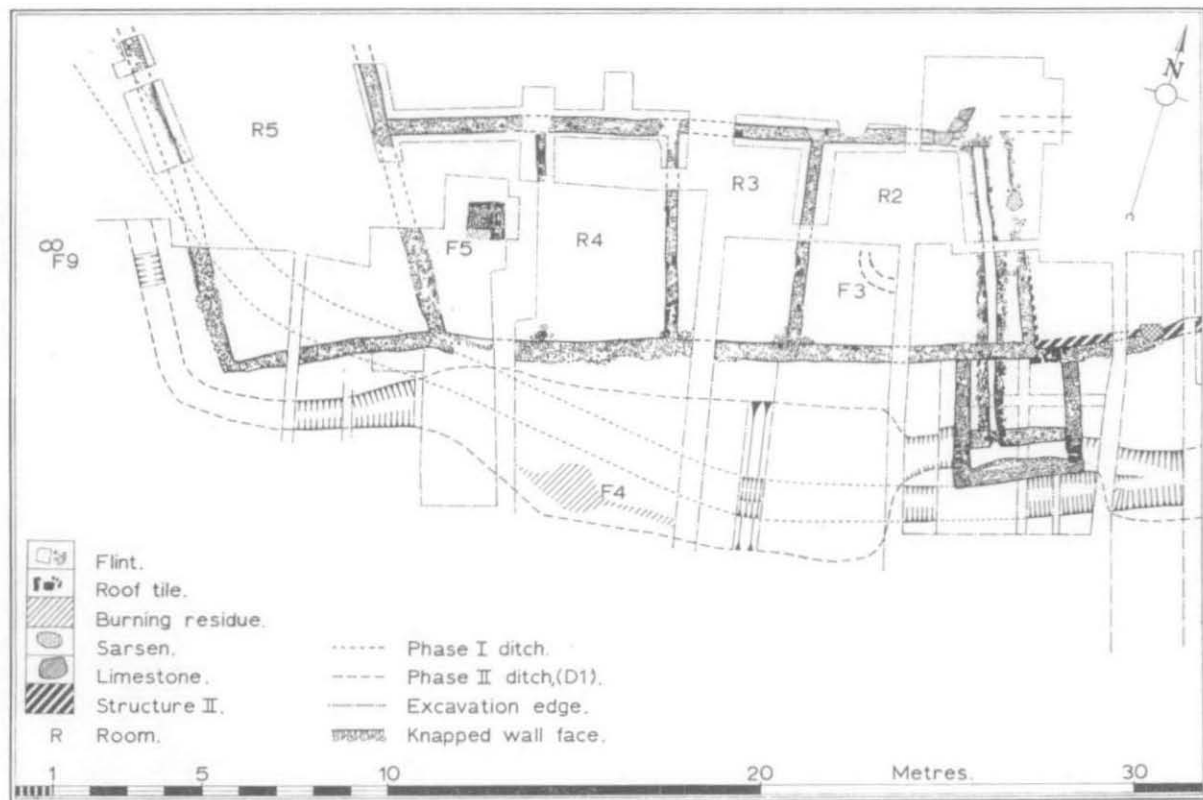


FIG. 3

Details of Structure III.

Note: The south-east salient should have been labelled R1.

side of the Phase II recut of D1 a heavily burnt area of subsoil (F4) was exposed. This lay at the bottom of layer 1, which at this point was much thinner.

To the east of section I-J (FIG. 5) more of the Structure III floor was removed exposing an area of amorphous flint rubble. Both this rubble and the black spread contained fragments of roofing tiles, but as this occurred only in the upper levels it is thought to be later contamination.

South of the site the Phase I ditch averaged 0.70 m. deep by 1.0 m. wide (Sections M-N, G-H, I-J, L-K, Figs. 5 and 6). Westwards the ditch showed as a slight subsidence and ran off at an angle underneath Room 5 (Structure III) whilst eastwards the Phase I ditch appeared to have been cleaned out rather than recut during Phase II.

The Mound (F1)

The eastern end of Structure II was built on the side of a distinct mound (F1), which remained uninvestigated except for a mechanically-cut section across D1 which disturbed the eastern edge. This revealed that the mound, composed of subsoil with which was mixed some chalk and charcoal flecks, sealed a thin black layer of burnt debris.

Structure II (FIG. 4)

The excavation revealed the south and west wall foundations of a rectangular building some 11 m. long by possibly 4.5 m. wide. Of the exterior walls, only the flint foundations remained. One or two courses (8-17 cm.) below ground level, some of the flints had been knapped before being set in line and packed with chalky clay. Traces of a sandy, lime mortar topping the foundations indicated mortared walls (often an indication that an ecclesiastical or manorial

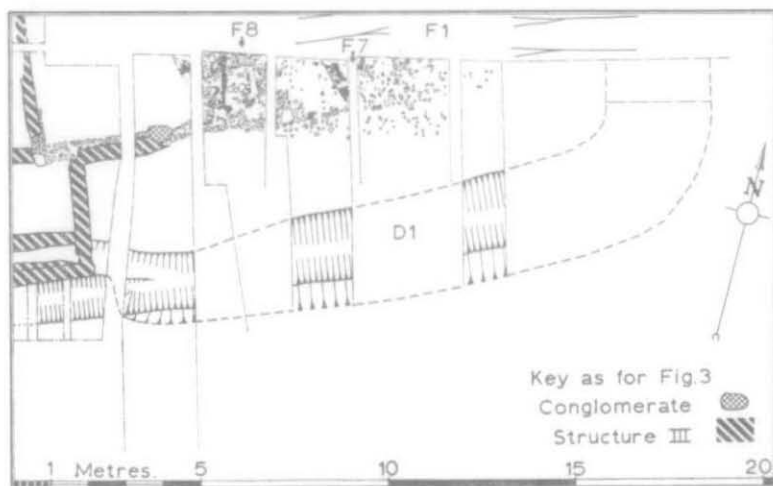


FIG. 4
Details of Structure II.

building is being excavated).⁶ To the east, the south wall foundation had in part been destroyed and it finally merged into a thin amorphous rubble spread which entirely enveloped the east end. The south-west corner of the building had been strengthened by a single, large, roughly squared flint from which extended the west end foundation that lay below the Structure III east end wall. The width of this building was indicated by an unshaped sarsen cornerstone left *in situ* in the end wall of Structure III, although perhaps because of later tree disturbance remains of the north wall were not evident on removal of a small area of topsoil.

The eastern of two possible N.-S. internal partition walls showed as a single course of flints extending 0.4 m. from the south wall junction which was strengthened by a large squared flint. A conglomerate boulder suggested a western internal partition although no foundations remained. These were probably removed when the eastern partition wall was demolished for alterations.

The alterations comprised one or possibly two hollow constructions, one to the east and one to the south of the centre of the building. The eastern construction (F7) which suggested a corn drying kiln,⁷ was made of mortared roofing tile laid flat, and formed a curved wall, U-shaped in plan, of which the east side was represented by fragmentary remains. Whether the apex of the U formed part of the south wall or whether it was an internal addition could not be ascertained since the south wall did not survive at that point. The second internal construction (F8) comprised two mortared flint walls, 0.65 m. wide, butted at right angles to form a rectangular hollow 2.0 m. \times 1.5 m. against the south wall, and another approximately N.-S. wall of mortared roofing tile laid flat. To the north-west in the floor of the adjacent trench, some roofing tile appeared set on edge. These hollow, rubble-filled features, which showed no signs of burning, extended northwards under the edge of the excavation and would have required further work to identify them positively, as only half the plan of this building was revealed. The rubble fill of each of the two features was not removed.

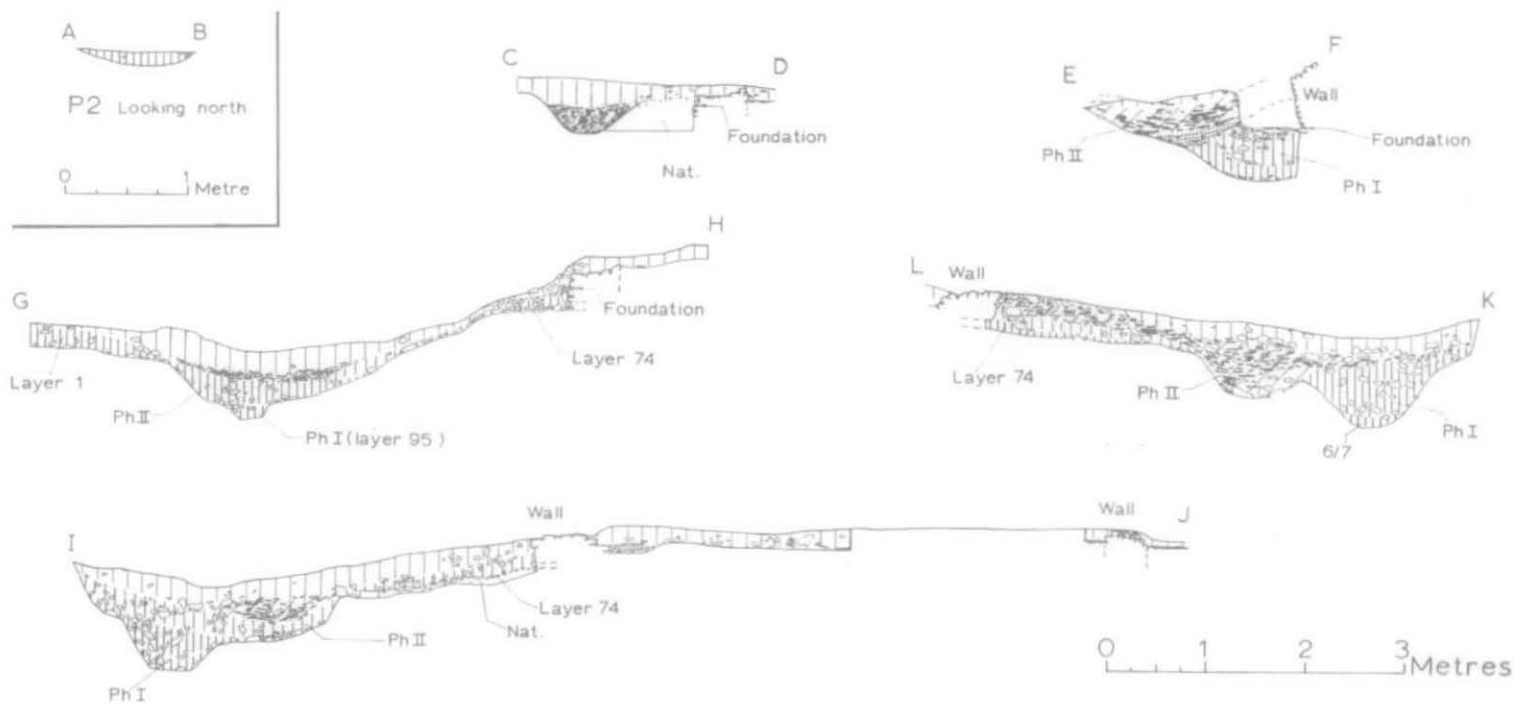
To the east the floor surface appeared clean of any rubbish. The floor itself was of hard-packed chalky clay laid on the subsoil and showed no stratigraphical changes. To the western end the floor level was darker and contained trodden-in occupational refuse from Phase II. A tiled roof is suggested by the tiled fittings inside and the tile scatter in the overlying debris layer, although it is not possible to gauge how much tile was derived from Structure III.

Phase II, Structure III (FIG. 3)

There were several stages of construction in this building which began with a levelling of the Phase I structures. The rubble was covered with a layer of chalky clay, possibly Phase I wall infilling, into which foundations similar to those of Structure II were laid. The construction level lying directly on the subsoil

⁶ Beresford and Hurst, *op. cit.*, 94.

⁷ E. M. Jope, 'Corn Drying Kilns at Beere, Devon', *Med. Arch.*, II (1958), 123-4. A similar 13th century feature interpreted as a corn drying kiln. This also showed no signs of burning except at the entrance, which at the Sadler's Wood site remained beyond the limit of the excavation.



Key to all sections:



Flint.
Roof tile.
Chalk floor.



Clay.
Clay & loam mixture.
Fine silts.



Construction level.

Ph.....Phase.

Nat.....Natural subsoil.

Light (top) soil



dark soil.

FIG. 5
Section Drawings.

indicated that to the west the dip marking the silted Phase I ditch had been cleared of topsoil.

The walls were constructed almost entirely of flint knapped on the exterior face and well laid in a sand and lime mortar. Broken roofing tile was used for levelling up course work, and exclusively in the construction of drain arches. The course work for the N-S drainage channel in Room 1 alternated between roof tile and knapped flint (PL. v).

The walls first constructed formed Room 5 with a wall stub incorporated into the south corner, and this was later extended to form the south wall of the wing. A drain arch was incorporated into this south wall at the east end and wall stubs were built out to begin the N.-S. partition walls. The construction of the east end and drainage channel walls and the northern end drain arch was added next, possibly at the same time or just before the major part of the north and partition walls. Three limestone blocks channelled water which flowed from the east into this drain. A short length of an E.-W. flint wall which from its alignment probably lay against the N.E. corner of the building possibly acted as the second side of the water channel but was only observed where it projected above the rubble, below the modern turf line. The S.E. corner was quoined with a rounded sarsen boulder, whilst a second sarsen near the centre of the east wall may have represented the N.W. corner of the Phase I building left *in situ*. This second sarsen boulder appeared to be a natural occurrence (left undisturbed and incorporated into the wall) because of the difficulty of removing it with the major portion still buried. Within the Structure III north wall which butted against Room 5, a limestone block strengthened the easternmost partition junction whilst two large voids at the other junctions suggested limestone blocks that had subsequently been robbed out.

The ditch digging was probably undertaken next, whilst a small salient building (Room 1) was marked out to the S.E. of the present building. The ditch digging comprised cutting a shallow drainage trench (Section C-D, Fig. 5) around Room 5, sloped to flow into a wide re-cut of the Phase I ditch. After 12 m. this narrowed to funnel the flow through a flint-walled channel built through the end of Room 1. This emptied eastwards into a ditch that after 14 m. turned northwards into the wood. This eastern ditch appeared to be the re-constituted Phase I ditch cleaned out but little widened.

The small salient room, Room 1, was constructed with roughly squared limestone quoinwork and well-knapped and laid flint walls which, however, had no foundations. Within this room, only 7 sq. m. internally, three walls each added separately formed the drainage channels and were butt-jointed at each end to the tiled drain arches (PL. v) each of which was approximately 30 cm. high by 30 cm. wide. The threshold for the narrow north entrance to this room was made up of several courses of mortared roofing tile laid flat onto the floor surface. As there were no post-holes to indicate door jambs, a door must have been hinged to the wooden superstructure which for this purpose must have begun near the ground, indicating that here the walls originally stood little or no higher than when excavated.

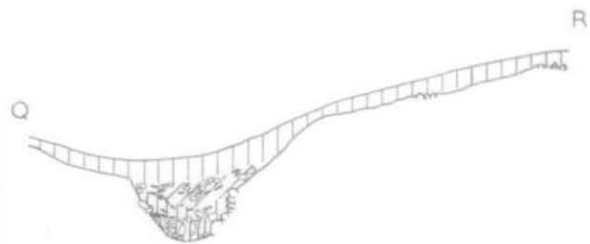
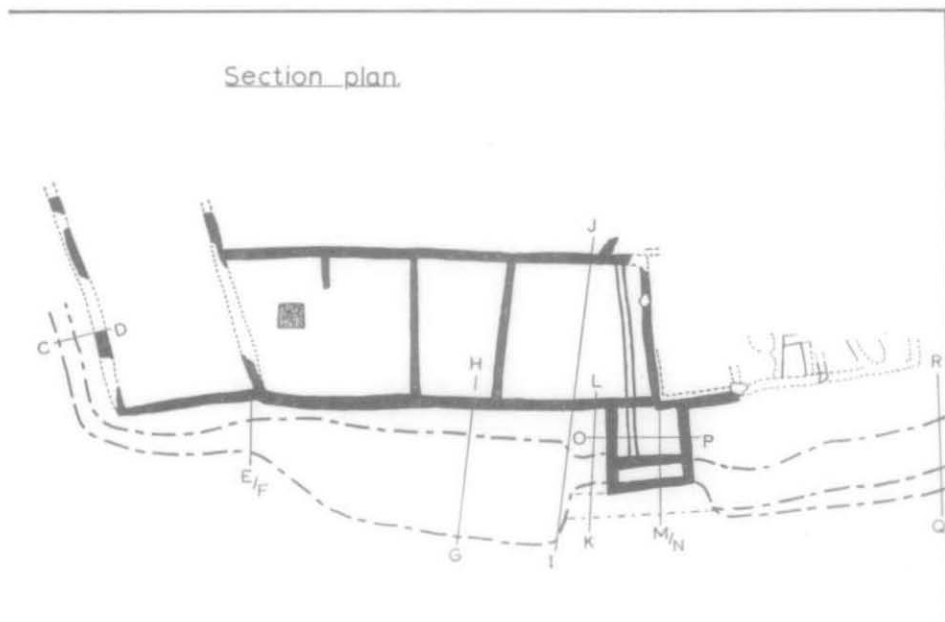
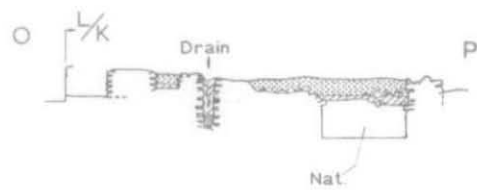
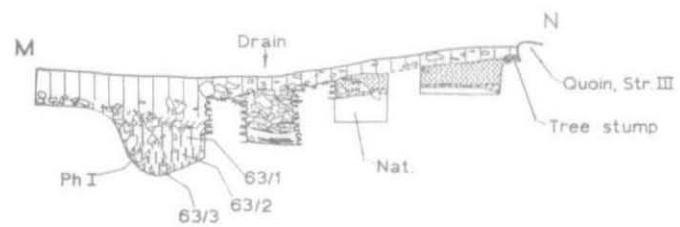


FIG. 6
Section Drawings.

The floors in Rooms 2, 3, 4 and 5 were of flinty orange-brown clay, which in Room 5 lay to a depth of 0.5 m. to level up the hollow of the Phase I ditch beneath. Within Room 2, the floor was not finished until the pounded chalk floor laid in Room 1 was continued along either side of the drainage channel. Where the floor levels were sectioned no stratigraphy was found.

Thus structure III comprised at least two contemporary parts meeting at an angle of 110°. The extensive roofing tile rubble layer that sealed it and filled the ditches indicated that the building had a tiled roof. Within the ditch rubble traces of chalky clay suggested collapsed daub from wall infilling and a quantity of white wall plaster lay within the drain channel in Room 2. Originally the wing was partitioned into four separate rooms of which the easternmost, Room 2, lay over a drain which passed through the building. This may or may not have served the room. Clean, buff, clay silts which lined the bottom and the almost refuse-free outflow residue indicated that the drain carried very little domestic refuse. Except for Room 1 the threshold to every entrance lay at sleeper beam level.

The amount of building rubble and the Room 1 doorway already mentioned, suggested that the construction was of dwarf walls which supported unaided a wooden superstructure. This was indicated by the absence of post rests and major post-holes. The exterior walls showed an average width of 60 cm., 20 cm. wider than the partition walls.

In the later life of this building a central hearth (PL. IV, B), 1 m. square, of broken roofing tile set on edge in lime mortar was added, in the style of tile hearths in other elaborate buildings.⁸ To make way for the hearth, the western partition wall appears to have been demolished to produce an enlarged room (Room 4). A second tiled feature set in the corner on the eastern side of the remaining stub of partition wall required further excavation.

Dating evidence was scanty, the ditch (D1) fill contained very little pottery or other dateable objects whilst inside Structure III the floors were kept clean. Outside the north entrance to Room 1 a little pottery and other domestic refuse had collected, which furthers the idea that the site of Structure II was open ground by that time.

After desertion, it appears that the building was left to rot and collapse. Whether any timbers were robbed out cannot be deduced, but it appears that for the area excavated only two large limestone blocks have been removed and that the walls are standing only centimetres below their full height. These limestone blocks may have been removed long after the collapse of the structure had made them accessible. The site probably then reverted to scrub and later on woodland. A post-Medieval sawyer's pit (P3)⁹ interrupted the line of the Phase I ditch, the upcast from which produced a false ditch end. Several other sawyers' pits were visible within the wood.

⁸ J. G. Hurst, 'The Kitchen Area of Northolt Manor', *Med. Arch.*, v (1961), 215.

⁹ Identified by M. Aston.

THE FINDS

ROOFING TILE

The roofing tile from all parts of the site had similar dimensions and red sandy fabrics that occasionally showed a grey, reduced core. A very few fragments of flat tile had a patchy greenish-brown glaze and over-firing had vitrified the surface areas on others. Many were slightly distorted. The tiles had been produced in moulds but the random placing of nail and peg holes indicated that these had been added afterwards by eye. None bore identification marks.

Samples of flat tile taken from Room 1 drain arches were measured for overall dimensions with the following results :

	No. of Samples	Variation (mm.)	Predominant Measurement (mm.)
Width	23	168-203	178
Length	6	280-292	280
Thickness	24	10-16	13

(Both thickness and length are independent)

Both the ridge and corner tile varied in thickness from 168-202 mm., their curvatures varied between 100°-150° for corner tile and 90°-135° for the ridge tile. This was partly due to distortion within the kiln. The corner tiles had one nail hole each, square or diamond-shaped. The ridge tile was undecorated.

Descriptions (FIG. 7)

- 1). Flat roofing tiles with plain red, sandy fabrics and round peg holes.
 - (a) 12 mm. thick with 15 mm. dia. holes, top soil.
 - (b) 13 mm. thick with 15 mm. dia. holes, layer 32/2.
 - (c) 17 mm. thick with 12 mm. dia. holes, layer 32/2.
 - (d) 15 mm. thick with 13 mm. dia. holes, layer 32/1.
- 2). Corner roofing tile with plain red, sandy fabric. 14 mm. thick and a 7 mm. square nail hole ; layer 32/2.
- 3). Ridge roofing tile with plain red, sandy fabric 14 mm. thick ; layer 32/2.

FLOOR TILE

The top soil contained several fragments of floor tile of unglazed red, sandy fabrics, 2-2.5 cm. thick. One fragment had been stabbed with keying holes on its underside. These holes were both randomly spaced and irregular in size and shape up to 6 mm. across and two-thirds of the tile thickness deep.

STONE

A residual Prehistoric flint core came from the Phase II construction level. Several pieces of limestone roofing slate were found, and some had retained their nail holes intact. Two rim fragments of a limestone mortar came from the Structure III, Room 4 floor make up. The internal diameter was approximately 31 cm. and the wall thickness varied between 3-4 cm. Each fragment had a stub handle level with the rim. A small whetstone fragment was found broken at each end, composed of garnet-quartz-mica-schist;¹⁰ the centre of the fragment had been worn down to a waist from a width of approximately 1.7 cm. and 0.7 cm. thickness. A flat, broken lump of coarse grained Millstone Grit¹⁰ some 17 cm. across by 10 cm. thick, was found near Fig. 7, no. 4. One flat surface was smooth and suggested part of a lower quern stone.

¹⁰ Kindly identified by Philip Powell, Univ. Mus., Oxford.

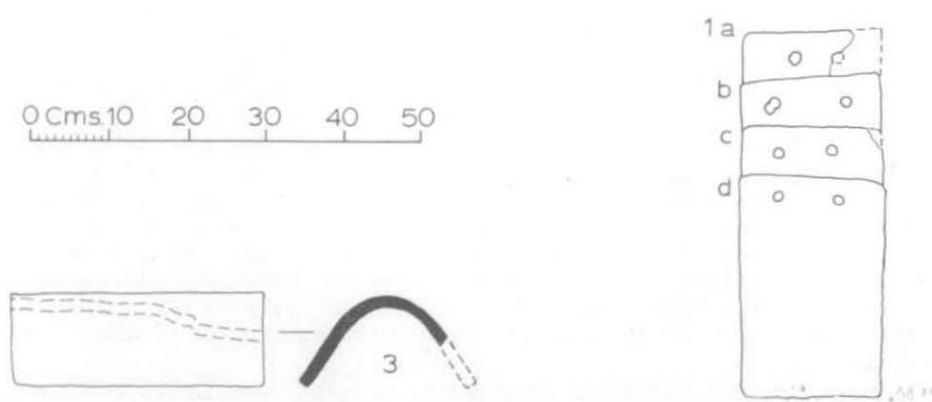
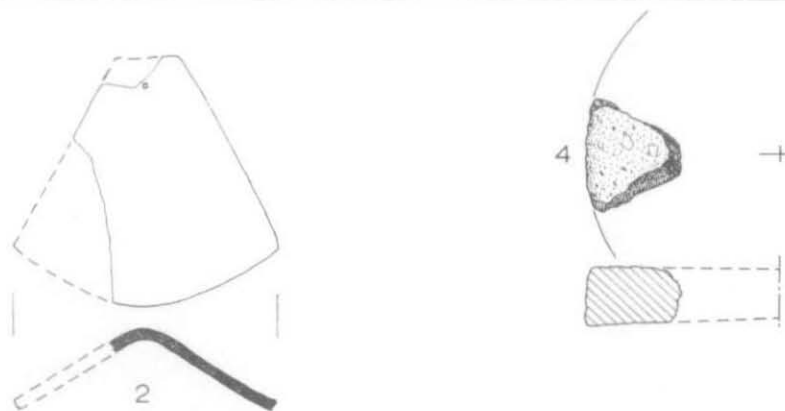
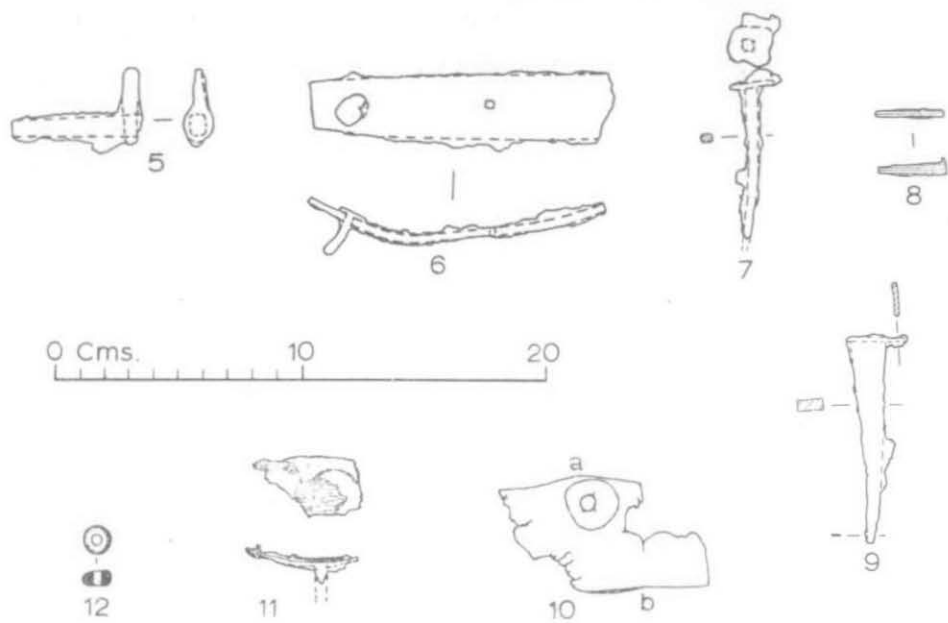


FIG. 7

Roofing-tile (1-3), quern stone (4) : (♯). Iron objects (5-9), lead (10-11), glass (12) : (⊙).

Descriptions (FIG. 7)

4). Upper quern stone fragment, probably Millstone Grit conglomerate. Faintly tooled radii on the underside ; from the rubble above Structure II.

IRON

Iron objects not illustrated include 34 nails from various layers. Where the shape remains visible each was flat headed, up to 7 cm. long and forged with a square cross-section to the tapered shank. Some were for securing corner tiles. Two horse-shoe fragments came from the Structure III debris levels, neither being a complete side. An irregular oval iron ring, 8.5 cm × 5.3 cm. and 1.6 cm. square in cross section, lay on the Structure III, Room 3 floor surface. Its use is not evident.

Descriptions (FIG. 7)

- 5). Possibly a hanger from a window shutter. From bottom of top soil.
 6). Door hinge strap, end fragment with one nail hole having retained a flat headed nail. From bottom of topsoil.
 7). Flat headed nail, square sectioned shank. From bottom of the topsoil.
 8). Possibly well worn horse-shoe nail ; the head is as wide as the shank. From bottom of the topsoil
 9). Nail ? From bottom of the topsoil.

LEAD

From the base of the topsoil and the Structure III roof tile debris layer came two waste cuttings and three fragments of 3 mm. thick lead sheet with closely spaced impressions of large-headed nails, each 2-2.5 cm. across. The close spacing of the nail holes suggest that these may have been for a watertight joint, as on a water tank or a roof fitting.

Descriptions (FIG. 7)

- 10). Lead sheet 3 mm. thick with a nail impression on one side. Edges *a* and *b* have been sheer cut ; edge *b* appears clean and unmarked which suggests that this is possibly a cutting dropped by lead robbers after desertion of Structure III. From the Structure III tile debris layer.
 11). Lead sheet 3 mm. thick with two nail holes, one having retained a flat headed iron nail. From the Structure III tile debris layer.

GLASS (FIG. 7, 12)

Dark blue glass bead with central perforation ; 11 mm. outer diameter, presumably 14th century ; from Structure III tile debris layer. Half of a red bead of similar size was found at Seacourt¹¹ (Fig. 32, 12), though this may have been residual Roman.

THE ANIMAL BONES. Identified by Professor B. J. MARPLES

Within the area excavated animal remains were scanty and in no instance had an area given to the general dumping of domestic refuse been excavated. Therefore the remains identified cannot be regarded as a near complete or proportional representation of the food and other domestic animals present at that time. Some of the bone came from building debris immediately below the topsoil and also the topsoil itself giving an indication of the animals present after the desertion of the site.

The collection consists of about 103 fragmentary bones, some of which can be identified as follows :

¹¹ M. Biddle, 'The Deserted Medieval Village of Seacourt, Berks.', *Oxoniensia*, xxvi-xxvii (1961-2).

Mammals		Birds	
Sheep	12	Goose	7
Pig	12	Pheasant	1
Ox	7	? Fowl	3
Red Deer	2		
Horse	1		
Polecat	1		

Four unidentified fragments of bone were cut, suggesting meat dressed for human consumption.

Nine of the twelve fragments of Pig came from the skull, but few (2 of 12) of those of Sheep. The Red Deer is represented by a tooth and a fragment of antler, the Horse by part of a radius and the Polecat by a skull. There were few fragments of vertebrae or ribs.

The Goose bones are interesting in that they consist of 4 metacarpals and 3 proximal phalanges. It seems possible that the tips of the wings had been cut off in order to retain the primary feathers for the fletching of arrows, goose feathers being the best for this purpose.

The topsoil sealed the structural debris that overlay the Medieval buildings. Thirty-eight fragments of bone were found of which nineteen were identified as representing Pig, Sheep, Polecat, Goose, and possibly two immature fowl. Of the unidentified fragments 1 was cut and two were chewed.

Pig. Fragment of jaw with 4 teeth, all worn. Proximal half of ulna. Distal part of jaw with teeth. One rib. One fragment of skull. Part of pelvis (may be red deer). Fragment of jaw. Sheep. 1 tooth. Polecat. Part of skull. Goose. Part of proximal phalanx of wing. Fowl. Fragments suggest 2 immature fowl. Birds. 1 part tibia.

Immediately below the topsoil the layers of structural debris, mainly roof tile from the decay of Structure III contained the remains of Pig, Sheep, Ox, Goose and Fowl.

Pig. 2 jaw fragments. 4 teeth. Fragment of ulna. Sheep. 1 humerus, very immature. 1 tooth. Fragment of scapula. Fragment of pelvis. Ox. Part of pelvis. Goose. 3 metacarpals. Fowl. Proximal half of ulna, suggestive of pheasant.

The Phase II occupation levels contained little domestic refuse although Pig, Sheep, Ox, Goose and Bird bones were present.

Pig. Skull fragments, with last molar just beginning to wear, the next anterior very worn. Sheep. Distal end humerus. Fragments of pelvis. 1 epiphysis. Ox. Jaw fragments with 3 worn teeth. Goose. Metacarpal. 2 proximal ends of phalanx from the wing. Bird. Bone fragment, very immature.

The make up of the Structure III floors may have contained residual Phase I material. Pig, Goat, Ox and Red Deer were present and two bones which had been cut could not be identified.

Pig. Jaw showing 1st molar very worn, 2nd not worn, 3rd not erupted, 1 ulna. Goat. Proximal half of radius. Ox. Shaft from small metapodial, very chewed at both ends. Red Deer. 1 tooth, unworn. Fragment of antler.

The Phase I animal remains all came from the fill of ditch D1.

Sheep. Shaft of femur. Radius. Horse. 1 radius. Ox. Proximal end of ulna. Radius. Fragment of ulna.

POTTERY. By DAVID A. HINTON

Abbreviations

Bicester Priory. David A. Hinton, 'Excavation at Bicester Priory, 1968', *Oxoniensia*, xxxiv (1969), 21-8.

Churchill. David A. Hinton, 'A Medieval Cistern from Churchill', *Oxoniensia*, xxxiii (1968), 66-70.

New Bodleian. R. L. S. Bruce-Mitford, 'The Archaeology of the Site of the Bodleian Extension in Broad Street, Oxford', *Oxoniensia*, iv (1939), 89-146.

Seacourt. M. Biddle, 'The Deserted Medieval Village of Seacourt, Berks.', *Oxoniensia*, xxvi/xxvii (1961-2), 70-201.

Apart from a small residual Prehistoric sherd and a few sherds of Romano-British coarse ware, the earliest pot from the site was an unglazed rim sherd in a coarse sandy fabric, from a small hand-made cooking pot of local Early/Middle Saxon type (FIG. 8).¹²

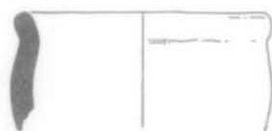


FIG. 8

Saxon rim sherd. ($\frac{1}{2}$).

This was found in the old ground surface outside Structure III (layer 63/1); there was no other Saxon material.

The volume of pottery from the site was relatively low, partly because there was little build-up of debris on the floor levels. The drains and ditches were surprisingly empty, however. This lack of evidence makes it difficult to establish any precise date bracket for the occupation of the site. Furthermore, the sherds tended to be worn and abraded, which did not aid identification. As would be expected, the more easily recognized glazed wares were few in number. None of the pottery could be attributed to the 12th century, however, and none of the decorated sherds belonged to types usually ascribed to the first half of the 13th century. Similarly there were none of the very hard buff fabrics of the very end of the Medieval period, nor any 'Tudor Green', nor recognizable 15th century types.

As the quantity of pottery was small and the site stratigraphy disturbed by roots, no statistical analyses have been made. It was noticeable however that there were many more sandy than coarse fabrics among the unglazed sherds, while several glazed sherds were in a white-flecked coarse fabric: this is in contrast to Tetsworth (Site 4, pp. 80-91). There were several body sherds of 'M.40 Ware', in a medium sandy unglazed fabric, with a distinctive body decoration (See Appendix 2, pp. 181-183), but unfortunately there were no rims present. The most complete pots were the bases of two unglazed sandy cooking-pots, found *in situ* in a small specially-dug pit outside Structure III (Fig. 3), with parts of the bodies and rims around them. Although pots were sometimes used in house foundation ceremonies, these were perhaps too far from the building complex to be associated with it in this way, and were more probably for storage of grain or other produce from which vermin had to be excluded.

Descriptions (FIG. 9)

Unglazed Wares

- 1). Cooking-pot base, with parts of rim and body. Soft coarse sandy fabric, light brown/grey black. Rim pinched from inside to produce long finger trails along the top. F.g.
- 2). Cooking-pot base, and part of rim. Similar fabric and colour to last, with grey deposit on rim perhaps produced by potash in the kiln. Plain rim. Found upright in pit with last (see also above).

These pots are obviously contemporary, but the rims are not diagnostic of a particular period in the 13th or 14th centuries. Sherds of similar fabric in layer 44

¹² I am grateful to Miss F. Beresford for this information.

were in association with a small glazed sherd, probably 14th century (see below), and a large coarse sandy sherd with some internal glaze.

3). Cooking-pot rim, coarse sandy fabric. Brown/black. 13th century, e.g. *Seacourt*, Fig. 22, 14. Layer 104.

4). Another. Medium sand. Grey. ?13th century. Layers 65/66.

5). Large cooking-pot or storage jar rim. Coarse fabric with flint, etc. Finger-pressed on outside of rim. 13th century. *Churchill*, 68-9. Layer 2.

6). Another. Hard, medium sandy fabric. Red-brown, grey core. Applied thumbled oblique ribbon on exterior. Squared-off rim of 14th century type (*Seacourt*, Fig. 26). Two sherds in the same layer are probably from this vessel, and have glaze on the interior. A complete bowl, similar in size, shape, fabric and glaze, came from the deserted site at Woodperry, Oxon. (Ashmolean Museum, acc. no. 1873.23).

7). Another. Similar fabric. Red-brown/grey. Finger-pressed trail on exterior below rim. 14th century. Layer 84.

8). Deep bowl rim. Similar fabric. A bowl having this rim form is unusual. Layer 1, with sherds from 4/2, and possibly 63/1.

9). Cooking-pot rim. Coarse sandy fabric. Buff. 14th century. Layer 43. Down-turned flanges are unusual in the Oxford region.

'M.40 Ware' sherds, from layers 9/1, 32/1, 33, 37, 39, 41/1 and unstratified. Medium and coarse sandy fabrics.

Glazed Wares

10). Jug rim. Red-speckled buff fabric. Clubbed rim of type usually associated with Brill. 14th century, cf. *Seacourt*, Fig. 25, 2. Body sherds in this fabric came from layer 6.1.

11). Bowl rim. Similar fabric. Glaze in the channel undercutting the exterior flange, a Brill characteristic. 14th century. Layer 43.

12). Body sherd, with applied red and monochrome stamps. Highly decorated jugs are usually ascribed to the second half of the 13th and the first half of the 14th centuries. This example is not a type found in Oxford, and may have come from the London basin. Layer 45/1.

Not illustrated: 1st half 13th-2nd half 14th century sherds: Body sherds from two jugs with red clay strips, cf. *New Bodleian*, Fig. 25E. Layer 84.

Body sherd from a red-speckled buff fabric jug with rouletted red and monochrome strips, and monochrome pad stamped with chequer pattern, as *New Bodleian*, Pl. XII, D, and *Seacourt*, Fig. 25, 1. Layer 4/2?

Sherds from a three-decker jug, cf. *Bicester Priory*, Fig. 8, 7. Layer 2.

Sherds of glossy green glazed red-speckled buff fabric. Probably 14th century. Layers 32/3. 61.

Sherds of olive glazed light buff sandy fabric. Layer 45/1.

Base of large green glazed straight-sided jug, fabric as last, but softer, cf. *New Bodleian*, Fig. 26, A, C. Layer 44 (see no. 2 above).

Base of small ?bottle.

Small sherds of white-flecked glazed ware, cf. *Seacourt*, Fig. 21, 1. Probably early 14th century. Layers 13 and 69.

Sherd from red-speckled buff fabric jug, with exterior band of rilling, and mottled green glaze on int. and ext. Cf. *New Bodleian*, Fig. 25, D. 1st half 14th century, or later.

DISCUSSION, INTERPRETATION AND CONCLUSIONS

Pre-Medieval

The small number of prehistoric, Romano-British and Saxon residual pottery sherds was insufficient evidence for pre-Medieval occupation on or

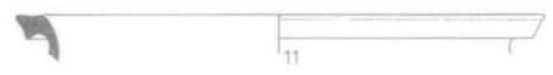
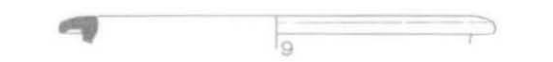
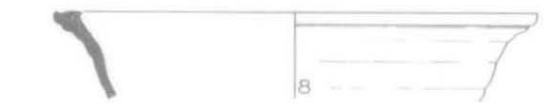
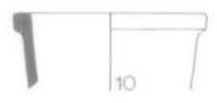
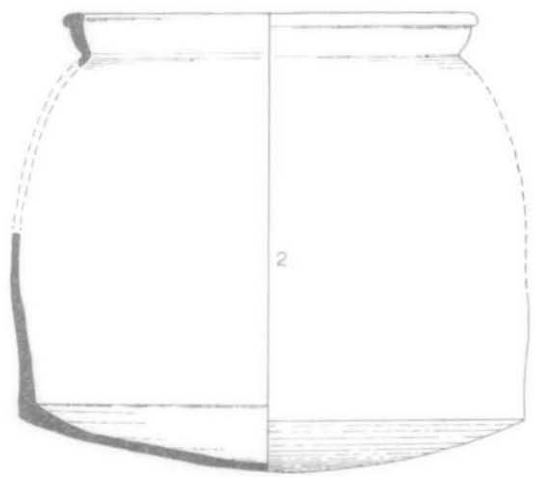
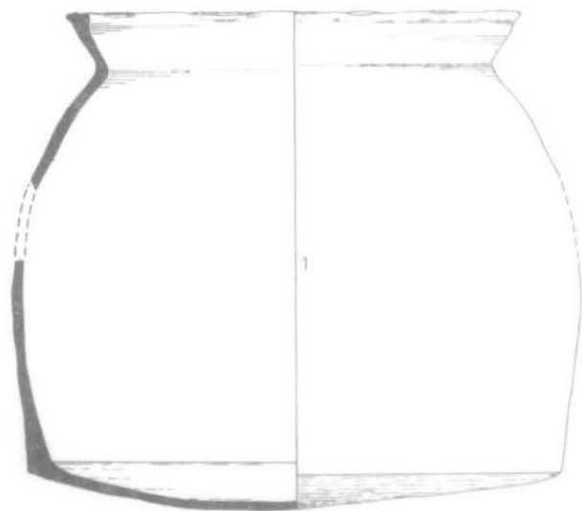


FIG. 9
Pottery. (1/4).

adjacent to this site. These remains are from periods already well represented in this area with the M.40 sites 11, 12 and 14, of which the first lies close to Lewknor.

Medieval chronology

From the pottery it appears that the life span of the excavated settlement lay somewhere between 50 and 150 years with the probability that occupation began during the mid 13th century and ended towards the finish of the 14th century.

To the east end of the site mound F1 was not investigated, neither was its relationship to the early phase of ditch D1a and the Phase I yard refuse level. The mound F1 may be the heaped remains of earlier demolished buildings that pre-date Structure II.

Only a vague date can be given to the coarse pottery from layers 95 and 74, associated with Structures I and II, but the demolition and rebuilding of the site (Phase II) may be concluded with more certainty. During the occupation of Structure III, pottery refuse had been thrown down outside the north entrance to Room 1 onto the old floor surface of Structure II (layers 43 and 44). A high proportion of this appeared to be 14th century accompanied by some residual 13th century pottery. A similar assemblage came from the re-cut ditch fills, though sherds from the Structure III floor surface, notably layer 84, could all be ascribed to the 14th century. The upper fill of the undisturbed Phase I ditch D1 (layer 63/1, section M-N, Fig. 6), provided mainly unglazed pottery sherds equally attributable to the late 13th or early 14th centuries. One sherd came from a jug (see Fig. 9, No. 8), and bore similarities to the other 14th century examples from the site, suggesting that Phase II began in the early 14th century.

The tiled hearth (F5) seems to have been inserted towards the end of the life of the building, as the fresh construction level was not completely swept away.

Character of the buildings

Structure I cannot be further commented upon without more excavation. Although Structure II possibly stood at the same time as Structure I, it is in the second structure that the first indication of the upper work and roof construction exists. This was a three-roomed building some 11 m. \times 4.5 m., probably with a tiled roof, a wooden superstructure on dwarf walls and wattled upper walls filled with daub composed of clay mixed with lime or chalk. For a tiled roof the timbers were presumably framed.

The function of this building is unclear prior to the internal alterations that demonstrate its use as an outhouse possibly for corn drying. This means that the domestic buildings remain unexcavated. Although the land boundaries (B1-4) were probably associated with these buildings, cultivation was not in evidence.

Structure III is probably a domestic building and of a more elaborate design than Structure II. Phase II probably represents a re-planning of the settlement resulting in Structure II being demolished possibly before it had become derelict.

Although it was generally unusual for hearths to occupy smaller rooms at this

time, the addition of an extra hearth (F5) has usefully indicated that this building was single storied, possibly with a louvre to remove the smoke. Hearths of broken roofing tiles packed on edge as in F5 were clearly confined to fairly elaborate buildings¹³ and an identical example has been found in the late 13th century manorial aisled hall at Fulmer, Bucks.¹⁴

The resulting image of Structure III is a single storey substantial building with a tiled roof, and a wattle and daub infilled wooden superstructure that rested on dwarf stone walls. That the eaves overhung the walls by up to 0.75 m. is indicated by the drainage ditch around Room 5 (Section C-D, Fig. 5). There was no evidence about windows: no window glass or leading was found.

The purpose of the N.-S. drainage channel through the east end of Structure III was to transfer water from the yard to the exterior ditch via tiled archways built into the foundations of Rooms 1 and 2. There was no direct evidence as to whether the drainage channels inside the building were originally covered in,¹⁵ but the absence of domestic rubbish both in the drain silts and in the outflow residues indicated that they probably were, and with wood rather than stone since the latter would have stood too proud of the floor. The purpose of Room 1 is unclear and I have not found any parallels for it. Why was the rain water ditch (D1) channelled through the end of Room 1 causing so much of the floor area in that room to be occupied by the water channels? There was no trace of excrement either in the drains or outflow, but this would have been washed out by rain water. Possibly this was the south entrance to the site, the water channels being covered by floor boards.

Water must have been a very carefully conserved commodity here with the water table 350-400 feet below. This explains the presence of a dew pond (F.6), and rain water in the deeper ditches was probably collected for domestic animals, whilst roof water tanks were perhaps kept in the yard for human consumption. Before piped water supplies such practice was common to all hill farms in this area; in a dry summer, water carts had to be sent down to the spring line.

The only non-local building materials employed on this site were limestone, and roofing tile which probably came from a well-established kiln site. The limestone was of two types, that used for quoinwork was generally of low quality and crumbly and may have been brought from the Wheatley quarries.¹⁶ Several fragments of limestone roofing slate, probably from an adjacent undiscovered building may have been supplied from a quarry producing a better fissile stone.

Historical interpretation

It is not possible to establish the land ownership in this area with certainty.¹⁷ The site has probably always been in Lewknor parish. Before the parish contraction in 1844 some 2,000 acres in the Chilterns formed three detached portions which

¹³ Cf. A 14th century hearth at The More, Herts. *Arch. J.*, cxvi (1959), 148, Pl. XIXA.

¹⁴ M. Farley, awaiting publication in *Records of Bucks.*

¹⁵ Aileen Fox, 'A Monastic Homestead on Dean Moor, S. Devon', *Med. Arch.*, II (1958), 141.

¹⁶ W. J. Arkell, *Oxford Stone* (1947).

¹⁷ *V.C.H. Oxon.*, VIII, 98-109.

were collectively named Lewknor Uphill. Although this area is recorded as being divided into several named estates, in each case the manor lay outside this area. Every Lewknor manor appears to be accounted for, and so it is unlikely that the Sadler's Wood site is manorial.

Two other deserted Medieval sites similarly situated and close by (A and B on map, Fig. 1), both suggest farmsteads. They display the same elaborate building materials of lime mortar and roof tile as the present site, though their topographical plans differ. This suggests that the Sadler's Wood site is yet another farmstead. That the quality of building on all three sites is much above that generally found on 14th century Medieval farms possibly indicates outside capital for building. Abingdon Abbey held most of Lewknor and may have been the absentee landlord of these three farmsteads. In 1279¹⁸ the Abbot of Abingdon was recorded as holding 50 acres of woodland in demesne, the principal part of which was Hailey Wood. It is quite possible that Hailey Wood may then have included the area now known as Sadler's Wood, which contains this farmstead. It is interesting to note that the monastic homestead on Dean Moor¹⁹ is dissimilar in layout to any other on the whole of Dartmoor.

The Sadler's Wood establishment probably had a mixed farming policy with the surrounding heavy, stone-laden soil only tilled to supply the establishment's primary needs. The Abbot of Abingdon is also recorded as having received pannage for swine that fed on the beech mast in Hailey Wood. Swine rearing was probably a part of the economy of this farmstead.

The small quantity of animal bone and occasional oyster shell present did not provide a good representation of the occupants' diet. The bulk of the domestic rubbish was obviously thrown elsewhere than the area so far excavated.

Although archaeology was of little help in determining the reasons for desertion, the latest pottery found indicated that the site was abandoned somewhere in the second half of the 14th century, although desertion may have taken place as early as 1350 A.D.

¹⁸ *V.C.H., Oxon.*, VIII, 106.

¹⁹ Aileen Fox, 'A Monastic Farmstead on Dean Moor, S. Devon', *Med. Arch.*, II (1958), 141-157.

PLATE IV



A. General view of Structure III, from west (pp. 153-157).



B. Structure III, central hearth (F5) in Room 2, looking east.

Phh. : R.A.C.

PLATE V



A. Structure III, Room 1, from south west, with the ground adjacent to the south and west walls at construction level.



B. The east end of Structure III in its final state of excavation with part of a drain wall removed to reveal an arch.

Phls. : R.A.C.