

Late Saxon Evidence and Excavation of Hinxey Hall, Queen Street, Oxford

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SUMMARY

This report contains the results of archaeological investigations which took place between 1968 and 1980 at 11-18 Queen Street, Oxford. It focuses primarily on excavations at New Inn Court (Trench VII, 1972). Here Late Saxon structural remains (post-holes and stake-holes) demonstrated that the centre of one of the largest insulae of the medieval town was occupied. This site also overlay the western half of Kepeharm (later Hinxey) Hall, an academic hall which existed from the late 14th century to the early-mid 16th century. Excavation confirmed documentary evidence and produced a remarkable correlation between the archaeological structural remains and W.A. Pantin's conjectural ground floor plan. The first stratified late 15th/early 16th-century pottery from recent excavations was also recovered.

At the site of 11-12 Queen Street, 1980, stratified deposits close to a main street frontage, and a series of gravel road surfaces, were recorded.

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The report has been produced partly in print and partly on microfiche. A detailed description of the archaeology, and full descriptions and catalogues of the finds have been put on microfiche.

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18 Queen Street, 1968 Derek J. Smart and John Gant; *13-18 Queen Street, 1972-1976* P.B. Hitching, Gordon J. Powell, L.R. Flint, M.J. Dixon and N. Weatherley; and *11-12 Queen Street, 1980* Don Walker.

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My thanks are due to Tom Hassall and Brian Durham for their advice during the writing of this report.

INTRODUCTION

This report incorporates the results of a number of archaeological investigations undertaken between 1968 and 1980 at 11-18 Queen Street, south-east of Carfax within one of Oxford's largest medieval *insulae* (Figs. 1 and 2). The survey area lies on the intersection of four parish boundaries: St. Martin's, St. Aldate's, St. Ebbe's and St. Peter le Bailey (Fig. 8).

In 1968 Tom Hassall, on behalf of the Oxford Archaeological Excavation Committee, undertook a watching brief during the redevelopment of 18 Queen Street. The property was then owned by Halford's Ltd. In 1971 the Oxford and Swindon Co-operative Society proposed to extend their shop in Queen Street (Nos. 11-17) as far back as Pembroke Street. They envisaged that the redevelopment would be undertaken in 1975. As part of this scheme the Co-op acquired for demolition 18 Queen Street and 35-37 Pembroke Street. Prior to demolition the area available for excavation was that overlying the western part of Gloucester and HinxeY Hall, (Fig. 8). Seven trial trenches were cut in January 1972. Within Trench VII medieval material was found and an area excavation (6m. x 11m.) was opened. This site of New Inn Court was concentrated on the western half of HinxeY Hall, and was directed by Brian Durham for the Oxford Archaeological Excavation Committee.

In 1974 an exchange of premises was arranged between the Co-op (of Queen Street) and Marks and Spencers Ltd. (of Cornmarket Street). Marks and Spencers therefore

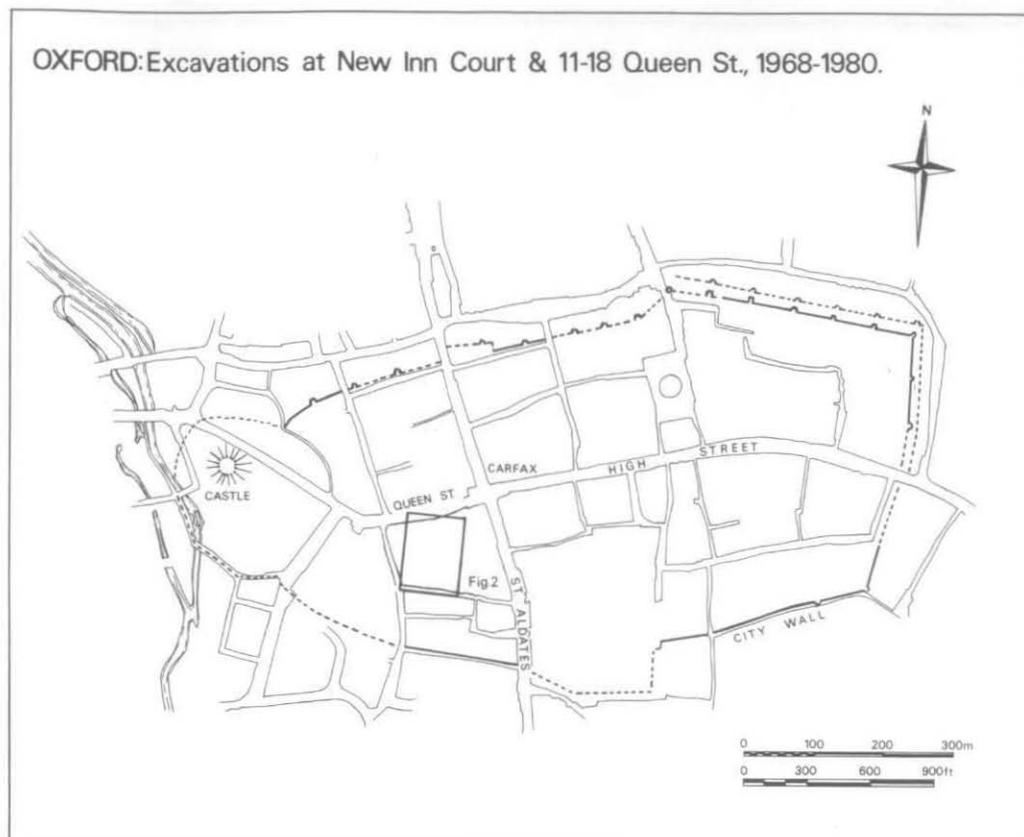


Fig. 1. Location Plan. The box indicates the area of Fig. 2.

undertook the proposed redevelopment scheme. Nos. 36-37 Pembroke Street, being listed buildings, were retained. Demolition of the other buildings commenced in 1976 when Robert Bell conducted a watching brief for the Oxfordshire Archaeological Unit.

11-12 Queen Street were cleared for a new shop in March 1980. The new building did not involve any fresh ground disturbance, but Brian Durham was able to open two small exploratory trenches (I and III) to assess the survival of deposits. A record of an exposed section of the frontage was also made, (Trench II).

DISCUSSION (see also the Archaeological Description, Fiche A3-11)

The recovery techniques were accurate and covered a broad area at the New Inn Court excavation, allowing at least a localized interpretation of events. The other archaeological investigations, however, yielded less information. The piled construction method at 11-12 Queen Street with the resultant lack of ground disturbance meant that the archaeological trenches were small, and were excavated primarily to assess future archaeological potential. The watching brief conducted at 13-18 Queen Street could produce at best only fragmentary evidence, and even the elementary definition of features should be regarded

OXFORD: 11-18 Queen St., 1968-1980.

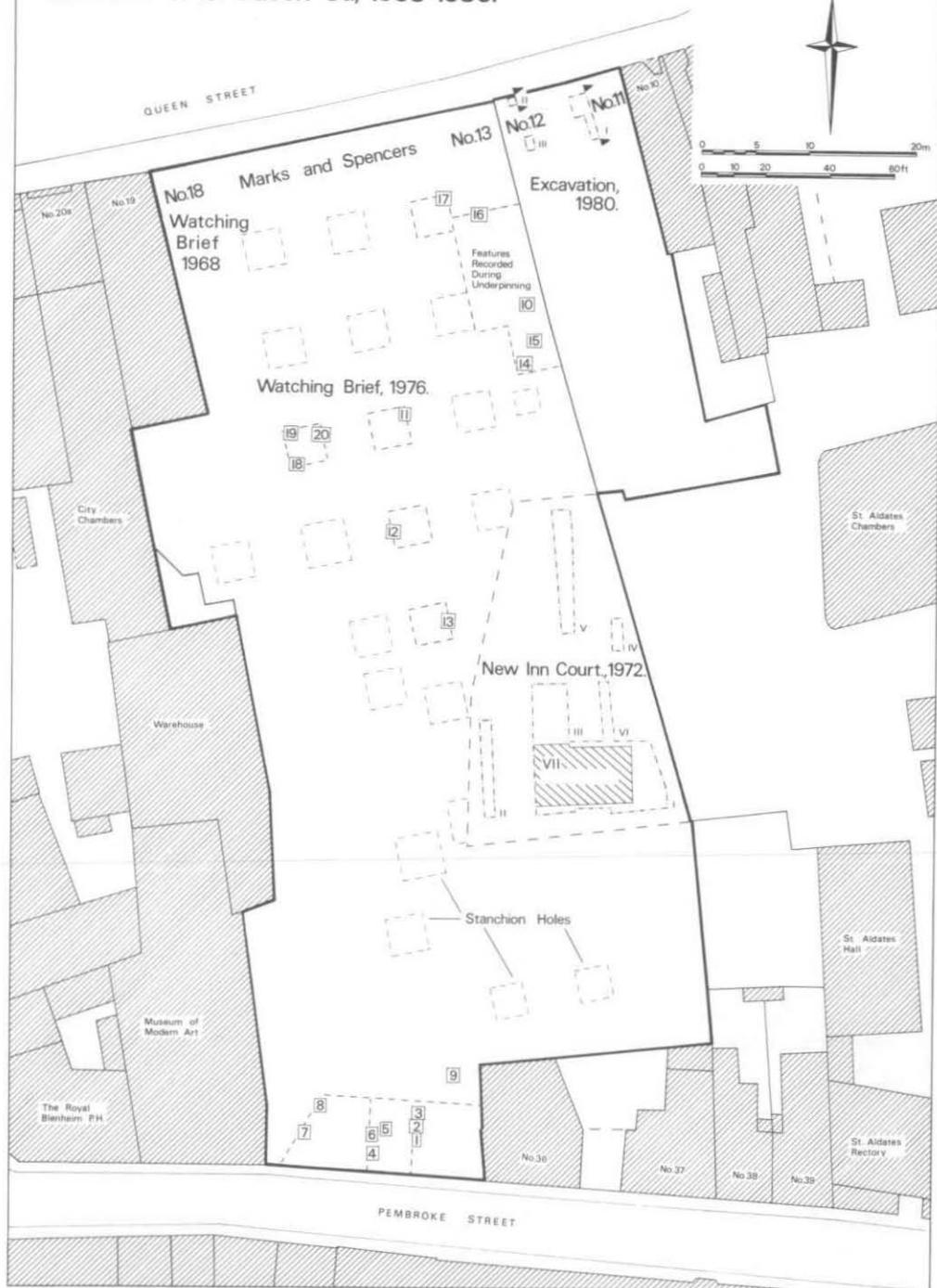


Fig. 2. Location of archaeological investigations at 11-18 Queen Street: Watching Brief, 1968 (No.18); New Inn Court Excavation, 1972 (Trenches I-VII. Trench VII is shaded, details shown Figs. 5-9); Watching Brief, 1976 (Nos. 13-18 & 35 Pembroke Street. Features 1-20); Excavation, 1980 (Nos. 11-12, Trenches I-III).

OXFORD: 11-12 Queen St., 1980. Composite Section.

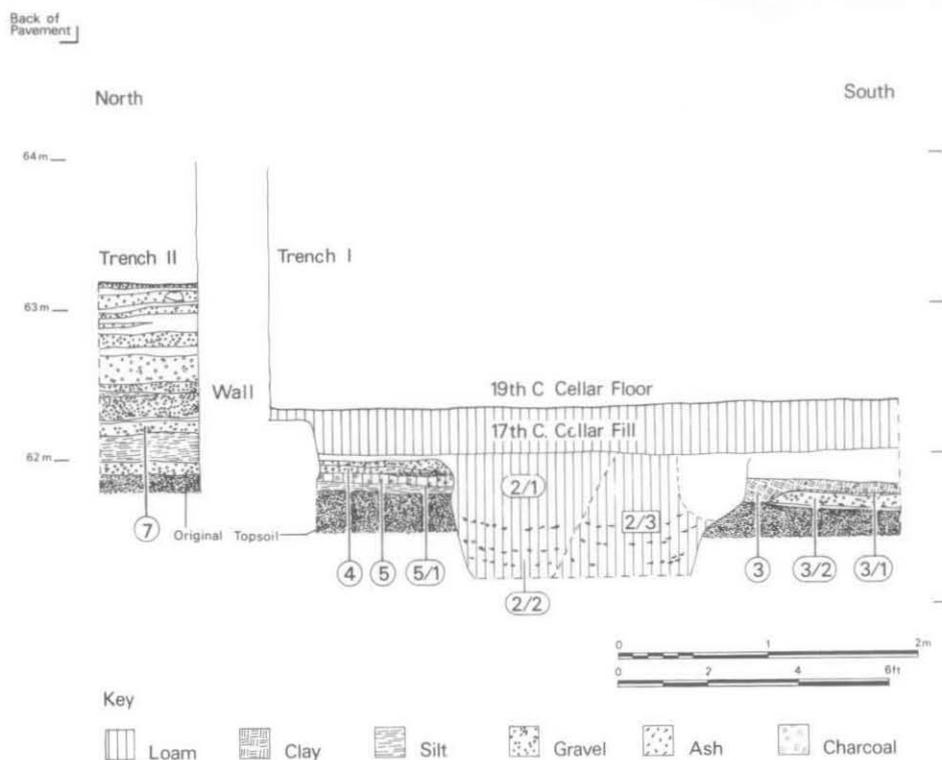


Fig. 3. Section through gravel surfaces and Late Saxon pits and layers.

with caution. Half the features failed to produce dating evidence. Eleven features contained pottery but the quantity was very small and over 50 per cent of these contexts produced sherds of a wide range of dates. The evidence from the watching brief was also distorted by the destruction of large areas by cellar digging. Aside therefore from Trench VII of New Inn Court, the presence or absence of material cannot be accepted as a valid guide to settlement of the area.

Despite the archaeological limitations of the stages of the investigation the information they provided for the Late Saxon period was extremely valuable. The exploratory trenches at 11-12 Queen Street were the Unit's first opportunity to excavate stratified deposits so close to a main frontage in Oxford (Fig. 3). Though inconclusive they demonstrated that early deposits may survive beneath the more shallow basements, and where they do, a larger area of excavation could be expected to produce coherent building plans, even including the original front wall line.

The ensuing discussion and phasing (Fig. 4) is centred on New Inn Court, with information from the other sites indicated as appropriate. Feature numbers from 11-12 Queen Street are prefixed *11-12*, those from 13-18 Queen Street similarly *13-18*. New Inn Court is not separately identified unless confusion could arise.

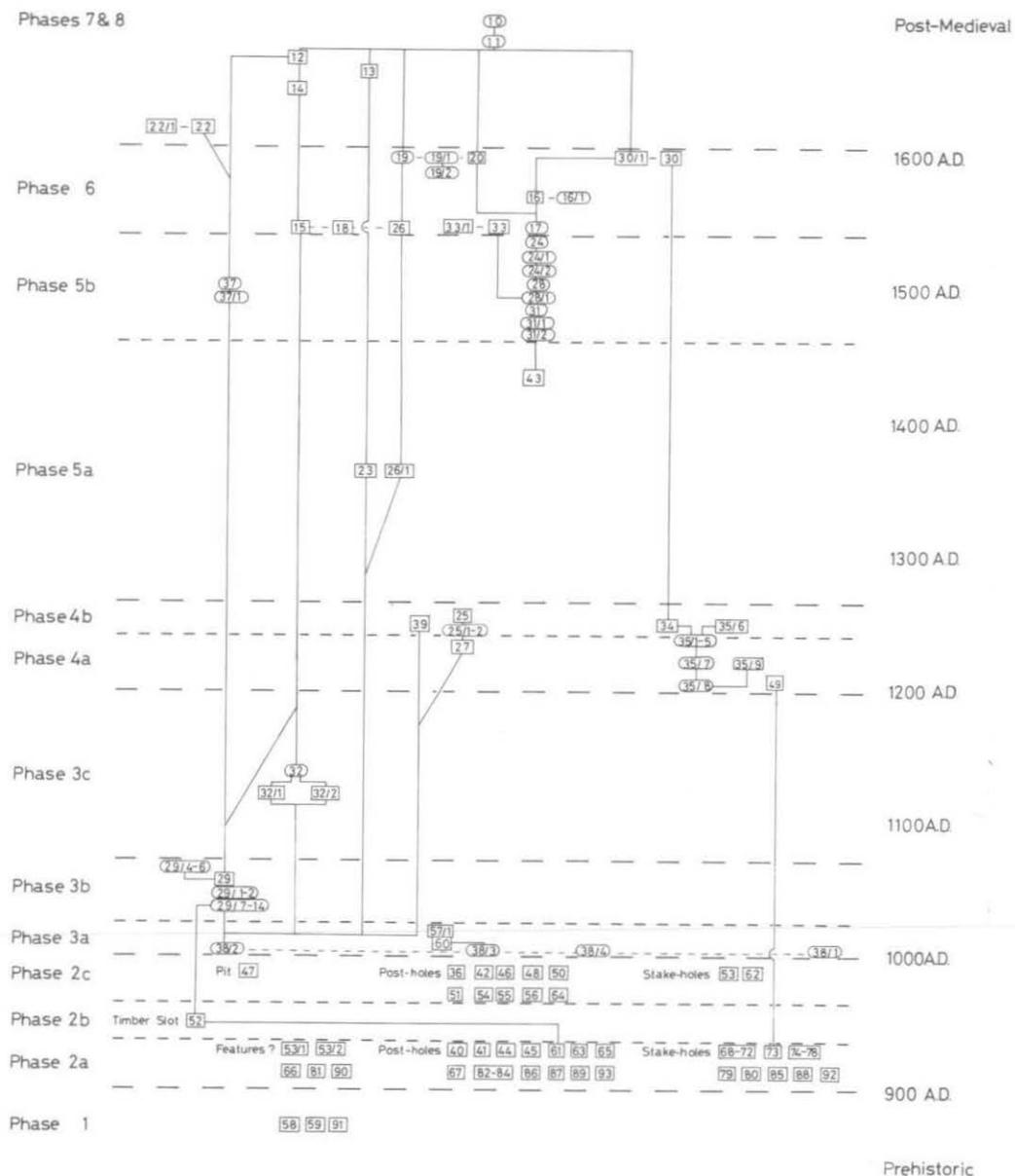


Fig. 4. New Inn Court, 1972. Excavated stratigraphy.

Phase 1 Prehistoric (Fig. 5)

It is possible that the three small hollows or post-holes (F58, F59 and F91) recorded during the main excavation date to the prehistoric period. This suggestion is based upon the unweathered nature of their fills and also upon the uncommon recovery of six struck flint flakes from neighbouring Late Saxon features (L38/2, F54 and F86).

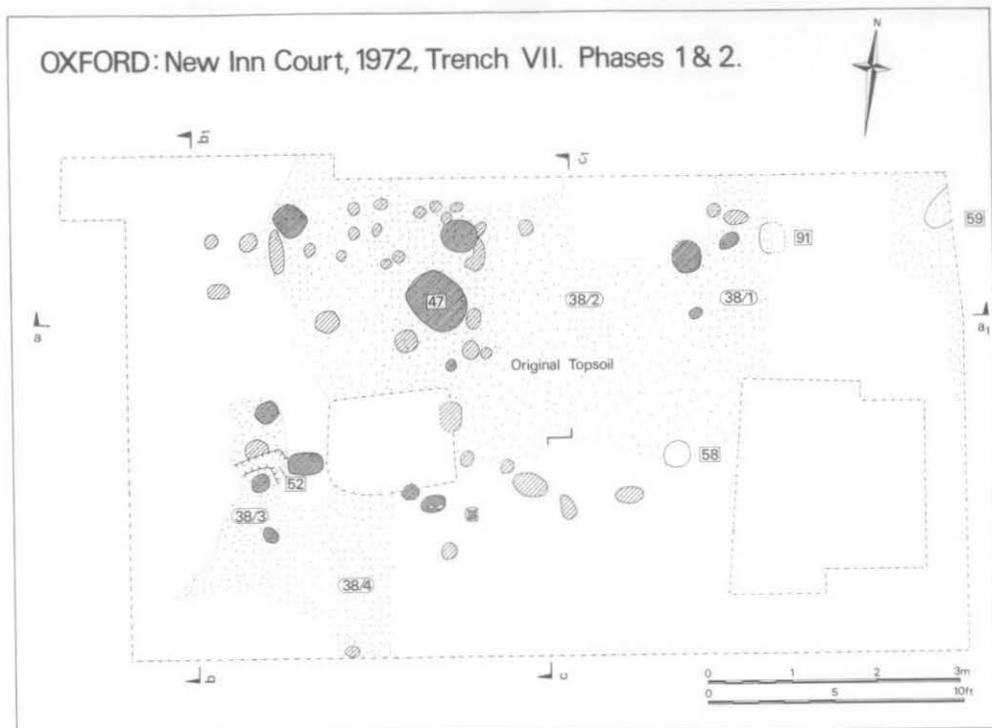


Fig. 5. Phase 1, F58, F59 & F91 (?prehistoric); Phase 2a, lightly shaded post-holes & stake-holes (10th cent.); Phase 2b, timber slot F52 (10th cent.); Phase 2c, heavily shaded post-holes & stake-holes, & pit F47 (10th cent.).

Phases 2a-c: Late Saxon (Fig. 5, Plate I)

One of the most important results of the archaeological investigations was the extent of Late Saxon material recorded within the *insula*. The central area of New Inn Court produced a considerable number of post-holes and stake-holes of this period, but since no form could be made of this structural evidence its detailed phasing (Phases 2a-c) is somewhat arbitrary.

On the northern frontage possible Late Saxon pits were noted during the redevelopment of 18 Queen Street in 1968. Another pit (13-18 F16) produced four sherds dating to the 10th or 11th century and contemporary features were recorded eastwards (11-12 F2, L3, F7). The investigations suggested the possibility that yards with pits came right up to the frontage and that the houses did not form a continuous building line. A series of gravel road surfaces were recorded within 11-12 Trench II where one of the lower levels (L7) produced a single Late Saxon sherd. Though fragmentary, this evidence should be associated with the Late Saxon features excavated at the corner of Queen Street and St. Ebbe's Street in 1960.¹ On the Pembroke Street frontage 4 pits (13-18 F2, F4, F7, F8) produced small quantities of 10th- or 11th-century pottery. This evidence may be coupled with the Late

¹ B.K. Davison, 'St. Ebbe's' in Notes and News, *Oxoniensia*, xxv (1960), 135.

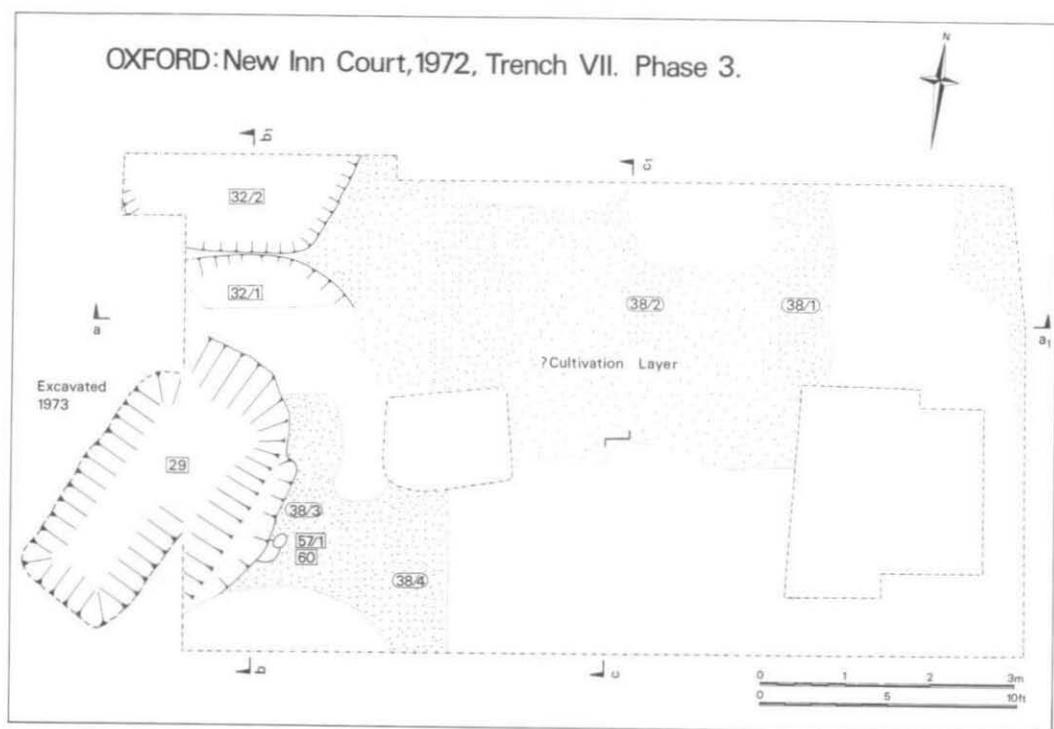


Fig. 6. Phase 3a, ?cultivation layer L38/1-4 (late 10th-early 11th cent.); Phase 3b, pit F29 (mid-late 11th cent.); Phase 3c, hollows F32/1, F32/2 (first half 12th cent.).

Saxon material from excavations at 31-34 Church Street,² which lies to the west of this site, but on the same east/west street alignment.

Considerable Late Saxon activity was thus recorded on the frontage of both Queen Street and Pembroke Street, and also at the centre of one of the largest *insulae* of the town.

Phases 3a-c Late Saxon and Early Medieval (Fig. 6, Plate I)

An archaeological problem arose as to why during the excavation at New Inn Court the post-holes and stake-holes of Phases 2a-c were not seen within the original topsoil (L38/1-4). Certainly the dark ashy fills of Phase 2c features suggest that they were cut from the level of Layers 38/1-4, yet only two features (F57/1, F60) were visible at this upper level. Probably Layers 38/1-4 were disturbed during subsequent cultivation of the area (Phase 3a) and this resulted in the blurring of the outlines of the earlier features. The pottery evidence concurs, in that Layers 38/1-4 produced mixed material with the unusual association of early medieval sherds with a predominance of Late Saxon wares. Furthermore, a chronological gap (based on the lack of St. Neot's type ware domination within the pottery groups) from the early to mid 11th century (between Phases 3a and 3b)

² T.G. Hassall, 31-34 Church Street, forthcoming.

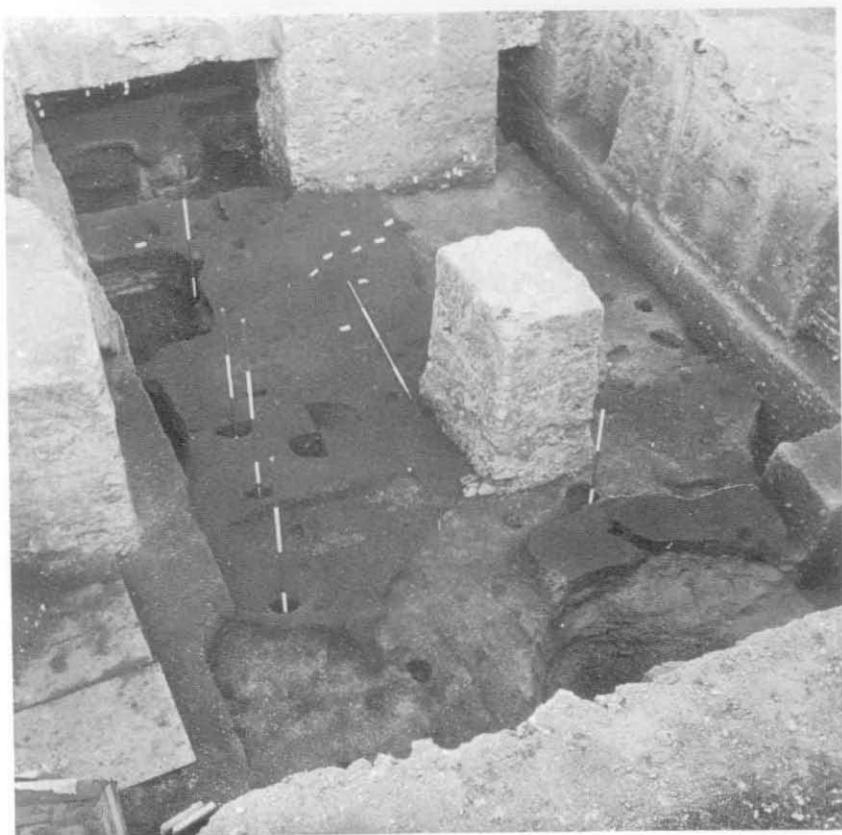


Plate I New Inn Court, 1972. Trench VII. From W, Scale 2m. Phases 2 and 3.

indicates that the site was vacant, and therefore perhaps available for cultivation or gardening.

A large rectangular cess pit (F29, Phase 3b) dating to the mid 11th century was excavated at New Inn Court, thereafter a second chronological hiatus occurs during the late 11th century. For the ensuing period 2 shallow hollows (F32/1, F32/2, Phase 3c) and a post-hole (F49) are assigned to the mid 12th century.

In summary, within New Inn Court for the period from the early 11th century to the early 13th century few archaeological features were recorded, and it appears that the area was given over to gardens and intermittent pit digging. The dearth of material over the entire *insula* is the more striking when contrasted with the Phase 2 remains. However, due to the archaeological constraints, it is not possible to comment on this diverse material.

Phases 4a-b: Early and mid 13th century (Figs. 7)

A scatter of pits behind both frontages (13-18 F2, F3, F6, F9, F17) produced early to mid 13th-century pottery. This relative upsurge of material is paralleled within the central area which produced the first medieval structural remains. The latter consisted of a series of

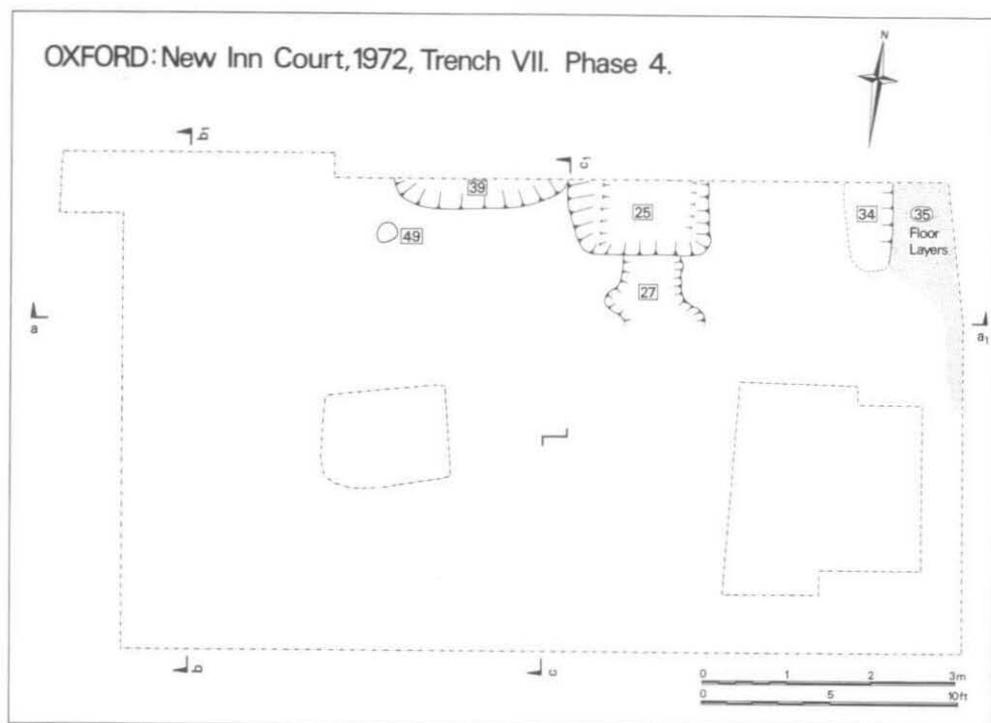


Fig. 7. Phase 4a, floor layers L35 (early-mid 13th cent.); Phase 4b, primarily pits F25, F39 (mid 13th cent.).

fragmentary floor or occupation layers (L35/1-5, 7) lost under the eastern baulk of Trench VII.

Documentary research³ relates these structural remains to Kepeharm (later HinxeY) Hall, for Trench VII partially overlay the western side of this tenement (Fig. 8). W.A. Pantin⁴ deduced that the tenement itself lay in the middle of the *insula*, and that Gloucester Hall probably lay to the north, otherwise HinxeY Hall was completely surrounded by the back gardens of the adjoining tenements, and was approached from St. Aldates by a cul-de-sac called Kepeharm's Lane. By the late 14th century it was used as an academic hall, but Pantin suggests that it probably began as a layman's house. The earliest documents, the OseneY rentals, refer to it as *domus Kepeharm*, and in 1325-6 it was described as the house where Thomas de Henseye used to dwell, hence the later name HinxeY Hall.

If Salter's identification of HinxeY Hall is correct (and the late medieval archaeological finds suggest that it is) the early to mid 13th-century floor layers correspond to the period when the tenement served as a domestic dwelling. The cutting of pits F34 and F35/6 (the latter not shown on the phase plans) through these floors seems to indicate a building alteration in the mid 13th century. Furthermore, F34 and another pit F24 contained a

³ H.E. Salter, *Survey of Oxford*, ed. W.A. Pantin, ii (O.H.S. N.S. xx), South-West Ward, No. 127.

⁴ W.A. Pantin, 'The Halls and Schools of Medieval Oxford: an attempt at reconstruction', *Studies presented to Daniel Callus* (O.H.S. N.S. xvi), 77-82.

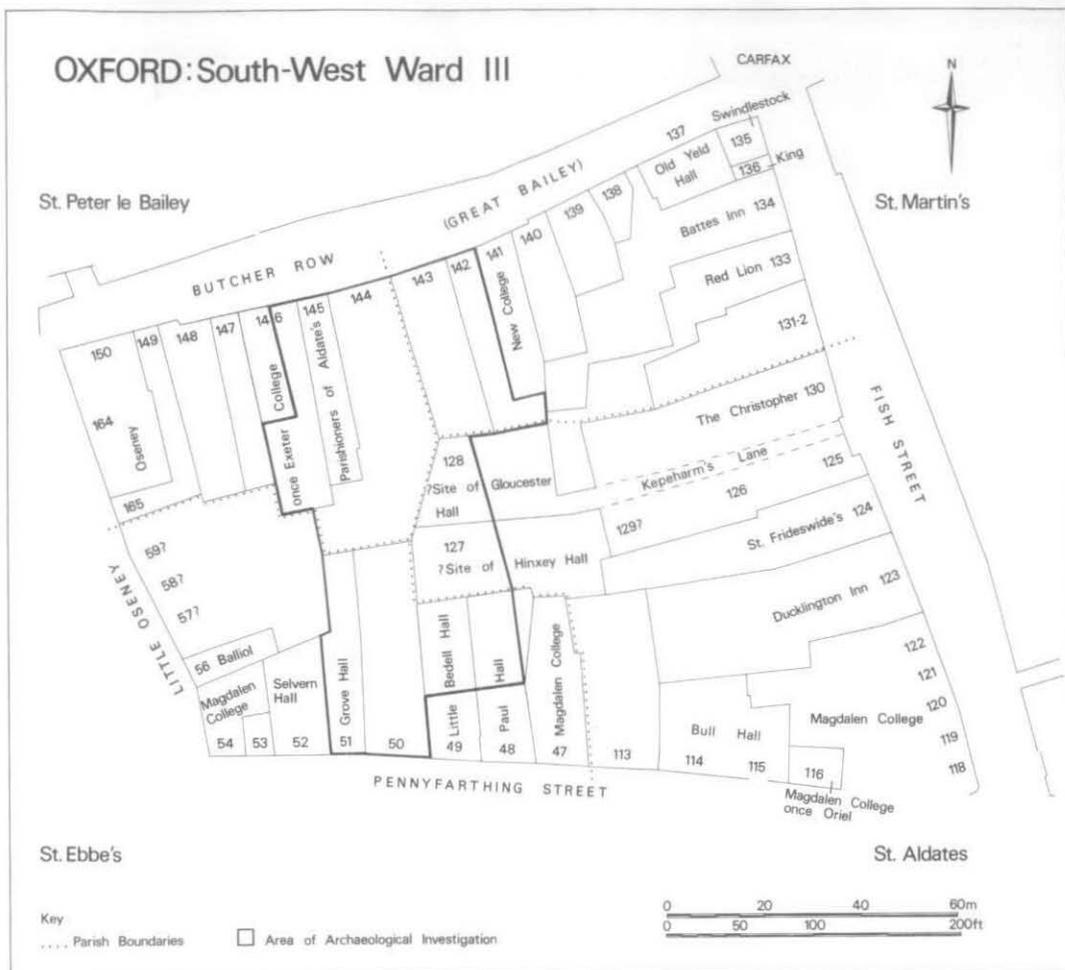


Fig. 8. Map after H.E. Salter, South-West Ward III.

substantial quantity of ceramic roof tiles, numerically comparable to those found in the more extensive 16th century destruction layers. A substantial number of sherds, some highly decorated, were also recovered. The tile and decorated sherds suggest a high status dwelling such as might be fitting for a family like the Kepeharms who supplied the first mayor of Oxford.

Phases 5a-b: Mid 13th-late 15th, and early 16th century (Fig. 9, Plate II)

Only 2 fragmentary stone wall foundations (F23, F26/1) are assigned to Phase 5a which broadly dates from the mid to late medieval period. The documentary references imply a continuity of occupation and the lack of archaeological material is curious. It may be that the mid 13th-century building alterations did not extend across the western side of the

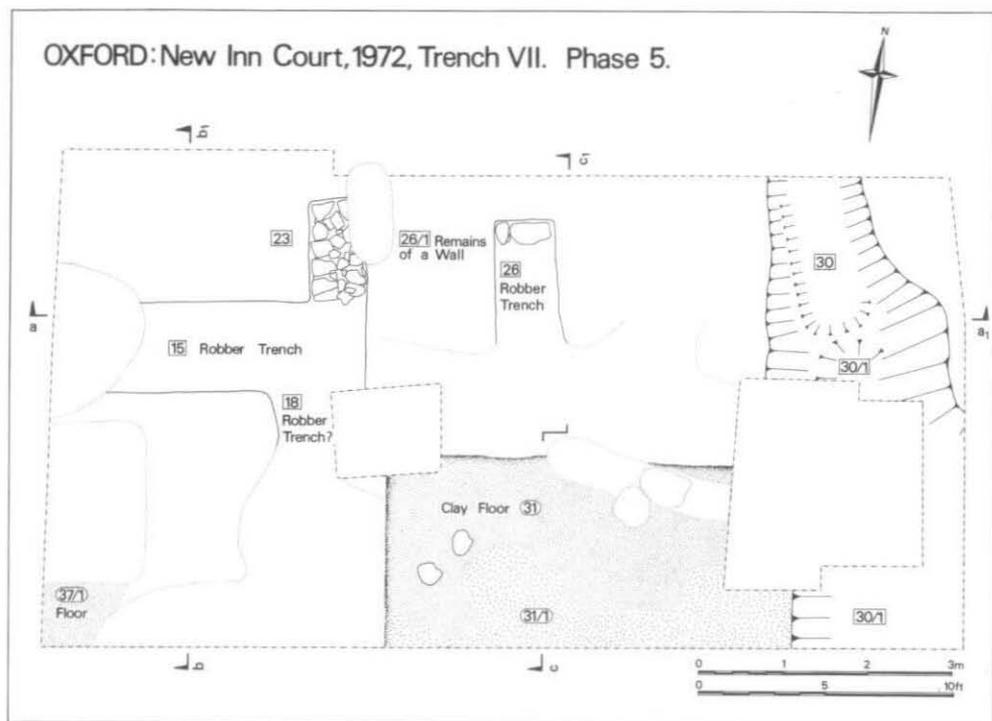


Fig. 9. Structural evidence relating to HinxeY Hall. Phase 5a, walling F23, F26/1 (medieval); Phase 5b, floor layers L31, L31/1, L37/1 (late 15th–early 16th cent.); Phase 6, robber trenches F15, F18, F26, F30, F30/1.

tenement until the late medieval period, however, there would then be the problem of a lack of garden soil and pit digging. The lack of archaeological material is probably due to later disturbance, for example, the extensive clay floor (L31, Phase 5b) which was cut down into the natural gravel (Fig. 10, Section C). It may be that earlier floor levels were eroded by frequent sweepings, or dug out to increase headroom, and the excavated floors only began to accumulate when the building was in decline. Fragments of such an earlier floor, L31/2, were seen below L31.

HinxeY Hall was used as an academic hall from the late 14th century until the 16th century, but had disappeared from the records by 1552.⁵ The surviving structural evidence relating to this period of use (Phase 5b) consists of superimposed floor and occupation layers (L24, L28, L31), and a second area of flooring (L37/1). The robber trenches (F15, F18, F26, F30, F30/1) of the following phase must also be included to recreate the plan of the building. This archaeological material accords well with Pantin's conjectural ground floor plan of HinxeY Hall (Fig. 11).⁶ The latter is derived from an assessment of the hall's room rents made by representatives of the University and Town in 1407. Ten chambers are priced in the document and in addition Pantin states that there must have been a hall, kitchen and buttery. He postulates a two-storey range on the south side of the courtyard.

⁵ Pantin, *Studies to Daniel Callus*, 82.

⁶ *Ibid.* 77.

OXFORD: New Inn Court, 1972, Trench VII. Sections.

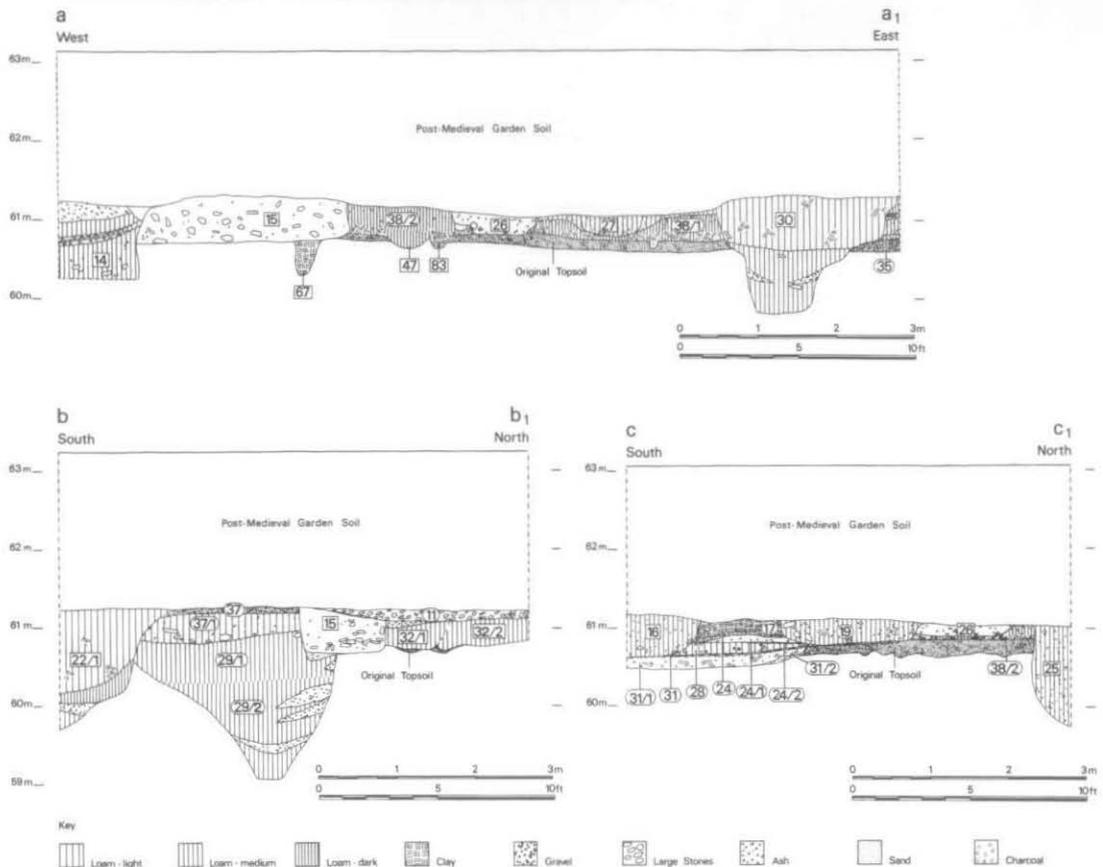


Fig. 10. Sections showing the depth of overburden, features and layers. Section C demonstrates how the clay floor L31, L31/1 was cut down through the natural gravel.

On excavation, the location and orientation of the building appears to have been correct. Furthermore the clay floor (L31) could correspond with Chamber B. The western limit of this floor was located, and if F30/1 is accepted as a robber trench, this gives a width of 4.80m. (15ft. 8in.). The conjectured width of Chamber B is remarkably close, 4.70m. (15ft. 5in.). The northern limit of L31 similarly accords with and lends conviction to the conjectured length of the room, being 4.30m. (14ft. 2in.). A lack of robber trenches to the north and west of L31 suggests framed timber partition walls here. The floor surface (L37/1) in the south-west corner of the trench and the enclosing east/west robber trench (F15) to the north indicate a westward continuation of the range. Pantin shows a light internal wall forming the north side of Chamber B, but an outside wall on the west side.

Cross-ranges are conjectured with that to the west housing chambers, while that on the east contained the hall, buttery and kitchen. This assignment of the room layouts appears correct as the finds from the occupation and demolition layers are consistent with those from a chamber as opposed to a service room. The floor layers produced an unusually

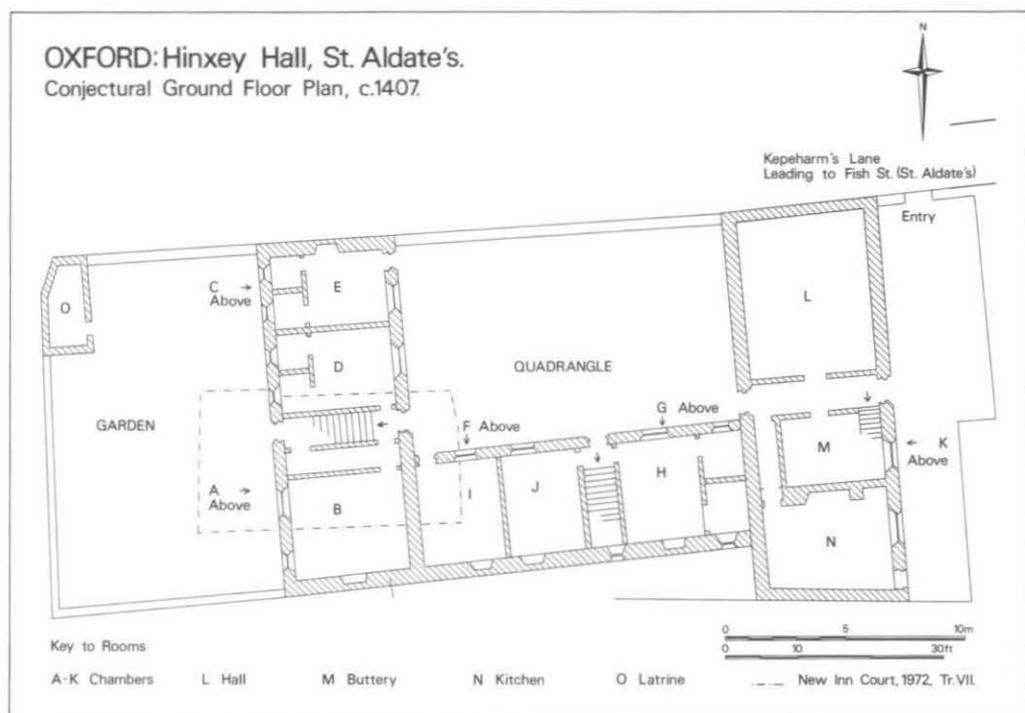


Fig. 11. Plan after W.A. Pantin.

high percentage of Tudor Green ware and Rhenish stoneware. The former specialized in fine tablewares, and the latter in drinking mugs. A fragment from the base of a ?globular flask was found in L24, and the glass cover possibly from a compass or composite sundial was recovered from L31/2. Window glass (probably medieval) and lead window came fragments were also found within the floor layers. A few fragments of painted wall plaster were retrieved from Layers 24 and 28. Similar finds, recorded in greater numbers, were found in the destruction levels, and further indicate the type of room fittings which existed and also the lifestyle of the occupants. Discounting the intrusive material, a variety of 16th-century glass drinking and storage vessels was found, and also a hanging lamp. Plain and painted window glass was recovered, and also fragments of painted wall plaster. Pantin describes two distinguished residents, John Thomas (who became archdeacon of Chichester) and Thomas Polton (who became archdeacon of Taunton, and bishop successively of Hereford, Chichester and Worcester), who rented chambers in HinxeY Hall before 1407.⁷

HinxeY Hall frequently appears in the early 16th-century Chancellor's registers. Pantin notes that it was one of the few academic halls to survive the big decline of numbers in the second decade of the century. In 1533 however it was experiencing financial troubles and the taxers reduced the rent from £5 to £3 6s. 8d.⁸ Archaeological evidence of declining

⁷ Pantin, *Studies to Daniel Callus*, 81.

⁸ *Ibid.* 81-2.



Plate II New Inn Court, 1972. Trench VII From SW, Scale 2m. Phase 5.

standards, likely to be associated with the later period of lower rents, is seen in the accumulation of dirty floor or occupation layers (L24, L28) over the clay floor L31. Similarly the animal bone recovered from L24 indicates an ordinary diet, indeed Bob Wilson notes that in terms of prosperity and status the site was at its lowest ebb in the late 15th/early 16th century (Fiche E2). Though consistent with the documentary references, the archaeological material does not refine the dating evidence for the final decline of Hinxe Hall. The extensive clay floor and overlying layers, and the second area of flooring (L37/1) date to the late 15th or early 16th centuries. A coin, likely to have been deposited before c.1500, was found in L37 which overlay L37/1.

Phase 6 Mid 16th century

The pottery evidence dates the destruction layers and features to the first half of the 16th century and a little beyond. The documentary evidence, however, indicates that Hinxe Hall declined and was destroyed towards the end of that period. It still existed in 1536, but had disappeared from the records in 1552. Three early 16th-century jettons were found in destruction contexts (L16/1, F18, F30/1), with a likely deposition date of c. 1550–1575.

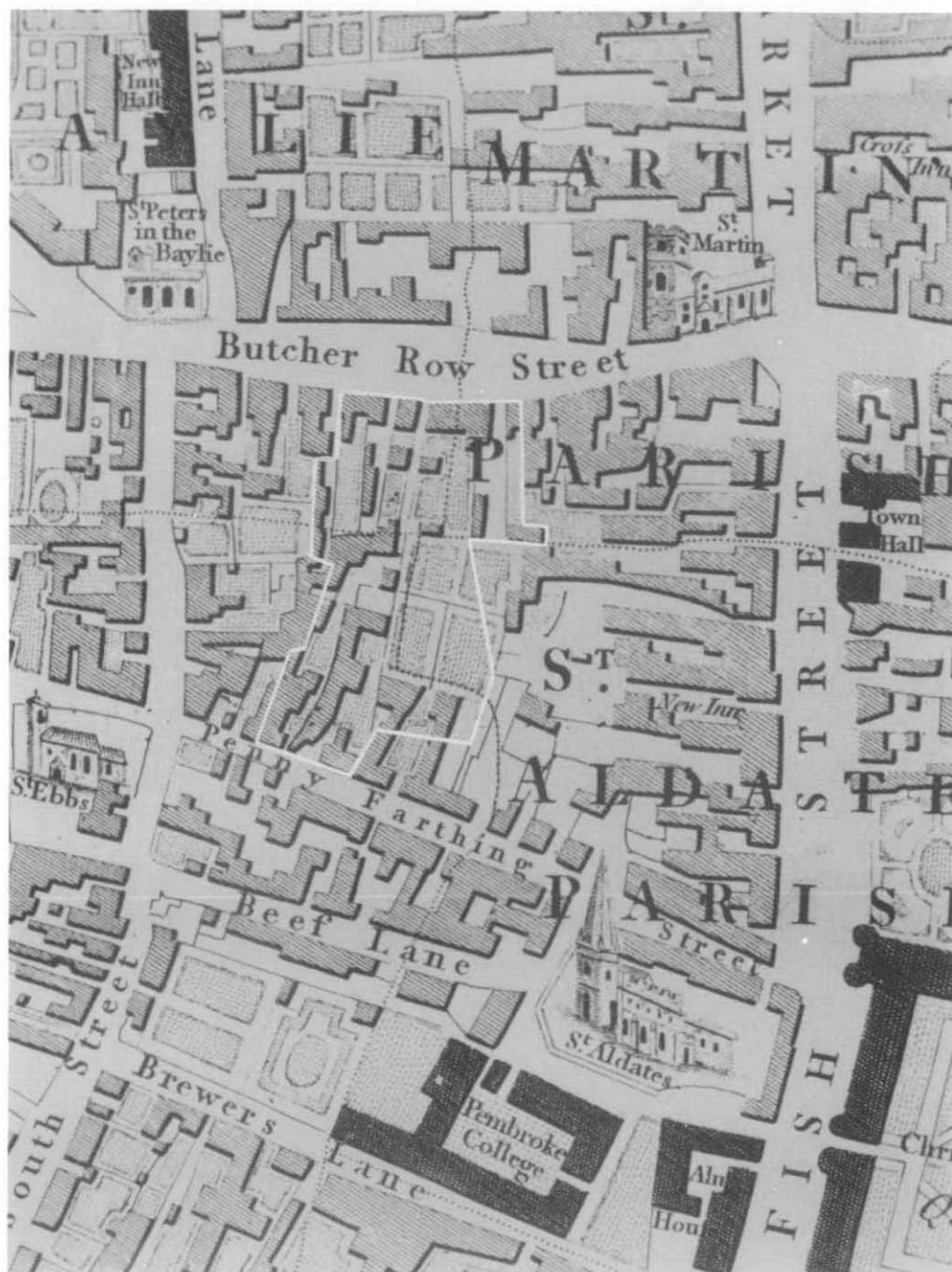


Plate III Davis, 1797. Area of archaeological investigations is outlined.

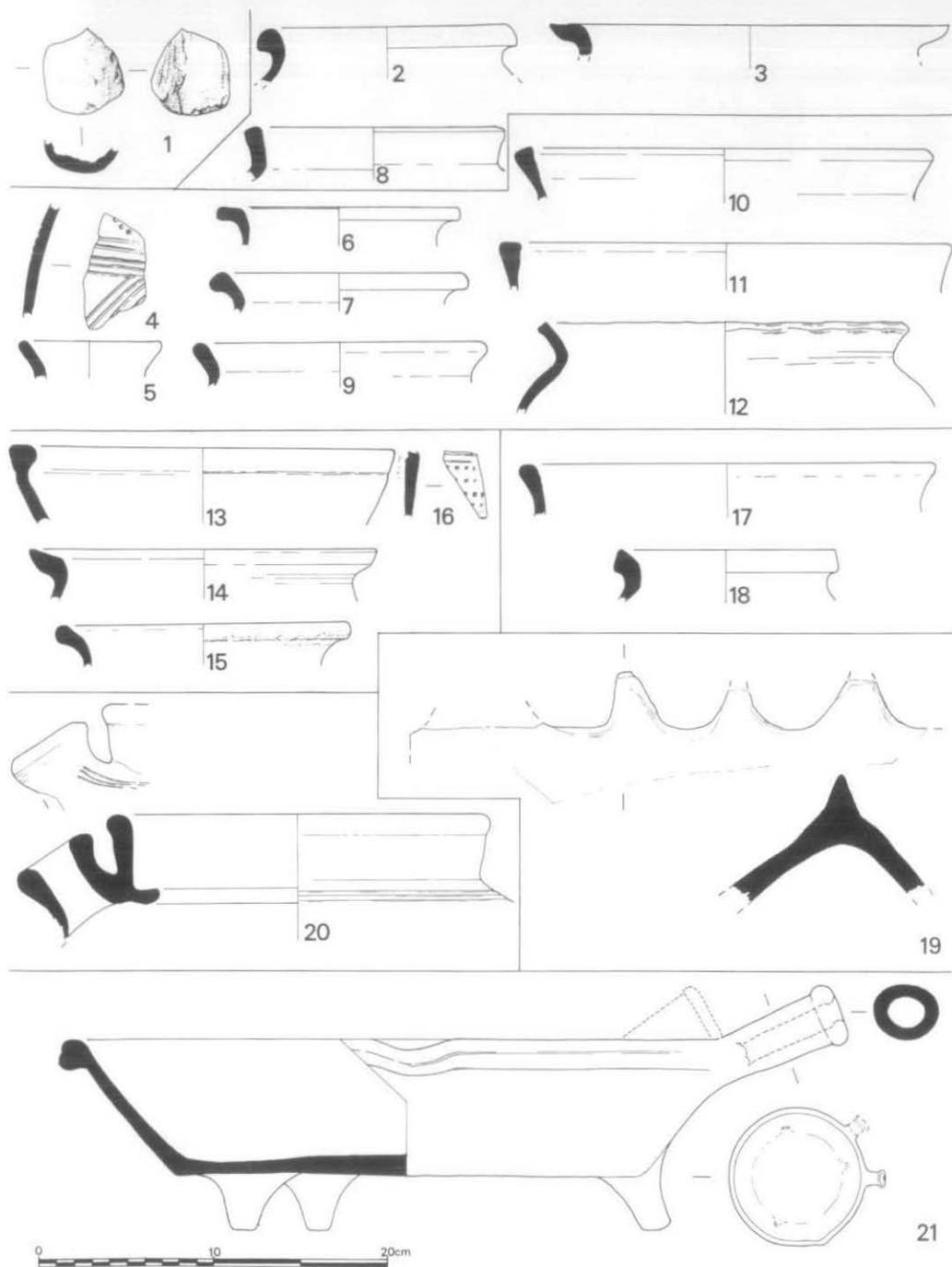


Fig. 12. Phase 2c, No.1; Phase 3a, Nos. 2, 3 & 8; Phase 3b, Nos. 4-7, 9-12; Phase 3c, Nos. 13-16; Phase 4a, Nos. 17-18.

- | | | |
|-----------------|----------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. P48/0/1B; | 2. P38/2/1R; | 3. P38/2/2AC; |
| 4. P29/2/3BF; | 5. P29/2/11B; | 6. P29/2/4AT; |
| 7. P29/1/1R; | 8. P38/3/1X; | 9. P29/1/2R; |
| 10. P29/2/5AC; | 11. P29/2/6AC; | 12. P28/1/3AE; |
| 13. P32/0/3AC; | 14. P32/2/1AC; | 15. P32/0/1R; |
| 16. P32/0/2Y; | 17. P35/8/1B; | 18. P39/0/1CB; |
| 19. T15/0/1HIA; | 20. NIC, U/S; | 21. OX Co-op TT
Fabric 120. |

Phases 7 and 8: 17th century onwards

On its closure it appears that HinxeY Hall was swiftly dismantled and the area given over to pit digging (F12, F13, F14, F22) and gardens, as was postulated for the period from the early 11th to the early 13th century. This central area of the *insula* continued to be used in this manner for several centuries as is shown on a variety of post-medieval maps,⁹ (Plate III). Two metres of soil accumulated during this long period of use.

THE FINDS

FLINT

New Inn Court (Not illustrated) (Full description, Fiche A12)

Five struck flint flakes and blades were found. Only one tool, an awl, is positively identified. These pieces may date to the neolithic or bronze age.

POTTERY by MAUREEN MELLOR

(Stratified Pottery Catalogue, Fiche A13-B11)(Figs. 12, 13)

The sites were particularly interesting as they revealed Late Saxon occupation (Phases 2a-c and 3a) on the frontages of both Queen Street and Pembroke Street, and indicated that the interior of the *insula* was also populated during this period. The excavations also yielded an assemblage which probably reflects material from an ordinary household dating to about the third quarter of the 11th century, (F29, Phase 3b). Finally, the late 15th-16th-century assemblage (Phase 5b) provided the first stratified pottery of this date from recent excavations. Although this latter pottery may reflect a slightly specialised taste in the type of vessels in use, the group proved to be a very useful addition to the ceramic chronology of late medieval Oxford.¹⁰

In all, 1197 sherds were recovered and were recorded using the classification set out in previous reports.¹¹ A few amendments to the fabric types, made since this pottery was originally recorded, should be noted. Fabric AC, Group 1B in Phase 3b, included Fabrics BR and BS, originally recognised at Oxford Castle and All Saints Church.¹² Fabric AE (Group III) on this site also included Fabric BW, originally recognised at the Hamel.¹³ These 'new fabrics' are not illustrated in the histogram nor do they appear in the catalogue.

The Romano-British sherds occur under 'miscellaneous' in the histogram.

The Level III archive of pottery and finds will be deposited with the Oxfordshire Department of Museum Services.

The pottery discussions proceed in date order of excavation.

Co-op, 1972 (Trial Trench)

From the trial trench an unstratified tripod 'frying pan' with two tubular handles was recovered. This form is unparalleled from recent excavations in Oxford. The pan was made in Surrey (Fabric DA and glazed light yellow internally) (Fig. 12, No.21).

⁹ R. Agas, *Oxford Map* (1578); V. Hollar, *Oxford Map* (1643); D. Loggan, *Oxford Map* (1675); R. Davis, *Oxon. Map* (1797). The last is reproduced here, Plate III.

¹⁰ I am grateful to Sarah Green for identifying the Romano-British pottery, to Kathy Kilmurry for her work on the Stamford-types, to John G. Hurst for help with the Rhenish stonewares, and to Amanda Carter who recorded the pottery from New Inn Court.

¹¹ M. Mellor, 'Method of Classification' in N. Palmer, 'A Beaker Burial and Medieval Tenements in the Hamel, Oxford', *Oxoniensia*, xlv (1980), Fiche 1, E06.

¹² M. Mellor, 'Pottery' in T.G. Hassall, 'Oxford Castle', *Oxoniensia*, xli. 255-66; B.G. Durham, All Saints Church, forthcoming.

¹³ M. Mellor, 'Pottery' in N. Palmer, 'The Hamel', *Oxoniensia*, xlv. 160-82.

GROUP FABRIC	PHASE 2A	2B	2C	3A	3B	3C	4A	4B	5B	6	TOTAL
IA B	█	██████████		█	+	+	█			+	█
R			█	█	█	+	█	█		+	█
IB AC	█		█	█	████	█	█	█	█	█	█
BR						█					+
BS				+		+					+
II AQ								+			+
BF				+	█	+			+	+	█
III G						+					+
X				+		+					+
Y				█		█	█	█	█	█	█
Z		█			█				+		+
AE					█	█		█	█	+	█
AF								+			+
AG							█	█			+
AK										+	+
AL				+							+
AM				+		█	█	█	█	█	█
AP										+	+
AW							█				+
AZ						█			█	█	█
BC											
BL										+	+
BN						█			█	+	█
CB							█				+
CE										+	+
CL									+	+	+
ST						█			█	█	█
MISC				█	+	█	█	█	█	█	█
TOTAL	2	1	9	99	230	224	21	227	113	271	1197

Fig. 13. Pottery Fabric types from New Inn Court. Histogram showing sherd numbers in each Fabric as a percentage of the total in each Phase. + indicates 2% or less.

New Inn Court, 1972 (Figs. 12 and 13)

The pottery suggests that there was some activity within the *insula* during the 10th century or possibly slightly earlier, but the earliest appreciable quantity of pottery dates from the late 10th/early 11th century. In this phase, 3a, the hand-made shelly limestone wares (Fabric B, Group 1A) dominate, with a much smaller percentage of St. Neot's-type ware (Fabric R) and Oxford Early Medieval Ware (Fabric AC, Group 1B).

The presence of both Fabric B and Fabric AC 'coexisting', and therefore presumably in competition, has not been noted at other Late Saxon sites,¹⁴ and this together with the excavation evidence suggests that some activity or disturbance, such as cultivation, took place between Phases 3a and 3b, and possibly 3c. This disturbance may have resulted in some pottery from Phase 3b or 3c being recovered from Phase 3a. The lack of St. Neot's-type wares in any significant numbers might suggest that this disturbance took place when St. Neot's-type wares were dominant in other parts of the town, as recorded under Oxford Castle, under All Saints Church and at Logic Lane.¹⁵ A site in Wallingford, 9 St. Martin's Street, also yielded a predominance of St. Neot's-type wares.¹⁶ At the Oxford sites it was evident that wheel-thrown St. Neot's-type wares superceded the earlier hand-made shelly limestone tradition (Fabric B) and preceded the hand-made tradition, (Oxford Early Medieval Ware, Fabric AC, Group 1B). It has been argued that St. Neot's-type ware was probably at its most popular c.1015-1066¹⁷ and may well have begun to decline earlier.¹⁸ This might suggest that the 'disturbance' on the site spanned some two generations, and that at a period when the historical evidence shows that Oxford was a meeting place of national assemblies and might have been expected to expand i.e. we might expect the *insula* to be infilled with buildings, rather than being used for cultivation. However, this lack of St. Neot's-type ware in any notable quantities can be paralleled at 79-80 St. Aldates, Phase 5, where a structural phase existed but no associated pottery was found. It is also lacking in any quantity at 31-34 Church Street (slightly to the west of this *insula*), with the exception of one or two assemblages which did yield substantial percentages of Fabrics B and R, and R alone,¹⁹ but there it can be argued that urban settlement started slightly later. It cannot be ruled out that the lack of St. Neot's-type in any quantity in Phase 3a, and at 79-80 St. Aldates, may be of cultural significance, some households preferring to use the traditional hand-made products (Fabric B, Group 1A).

The subsequent phase, 3b, suggests that the previous dominant tradition (Fabric B) had declined very rapidly and this marked decline was also evident at 79-80 St. Aldates and All Saints. Oxford Early Medieval Ware (Fabric AC, Group 1B) was now dominant. It was also the dominant tradition just prior to the building of Oxford Castle in c.1071.²⁰ This would suggest a date in the third quarter of the 11th century. Other fabrics included regional imports from Wessex (Fabric BF) and decorated Stamford-types dating c.1020-1080. This assemblage slightly post-dated the infill of a cellar pit, F75, at All Saints (which was associated with a coin of Edward the Confessor, minted 1042-1044), but in contrast contained only a few regional imports and no continental imports, suggesting that the jettisoned pottery had once belonged to an average household rather than a well-to-do merchant.

By Phase 3c Oxford Early Medieval Ware (Fabric AC, Group 1B) was meeting competition from another rival, Oxford Medieval Ware (Fabric Y). The transition from Fabric AC to Y occurred at 79-80 St. Aldates by the mid 12th century (a coin of Stephen, dated c.1141, just predated this transition) and this phase probably ranged from the late 11th to the mid 12th century. A continental import, probably from a storage jar, was recovered (Fabric X), and was probably part of the same vessel found in Phase 3a. There were other possible cross-joins between this phase (3c), and Phase 3a. This phase also had a considerable intrusive element dating to the 16th century, possibly from F15, a robber trench which cut F32/1.

Thereafter comparatively little pottery was recovered until the very late medieval period, with the exception of Phase 4b, where Oxford Medieval Ware (Fabric Y, Group III) was as popular as Oxford Late Medieval Ware (Fabric AM, Group III). The building alterations were probably finished by about the mid 13th century. A

¹⁴ M. Mellor, 'Pottery' in T.G. Hassall, 'Oxford Castle', *Oxoniensia*, xli. 255-66; B.G. Durham, All Saints Church, forthcoming; R. Haldon, 'Late Saxon and Medieval Pottery', in B.G. Durham, 'Archaeological Investigations in St. Aldates, Oxford', *Oxoniensia*, xlii (1977), 111-39.

¹⁵ E.M. Jope, 'Late Saxon pits under Oxford Castle Mound', *Oxoniensia*, xvii-xviii (1952-53), 83-106; B.G. Durham, All Saints Church, forthcoming; F. Radcliffe, 'Excavations at Logic Lane, Oxford', *Oxoniensia*, xxvi-xxvii (1961-62), 54-58.

¹⁶ B.G. Durham, 9 St. Martin's Street, Wallingford, forthcoming.

¹⁷ M. Mellor, 'Late Saxon Pottery from Oxfordshire: Evidence and Speculation', *Medieval Ceramics*, iv (1980), 17-27.

¹⁸ Cf. All Saints, Phase IIIB, where St. Neot's-type ware has declined to 40% although it is still the dominant tradition and was found in association with a coin dated 1042-1044.

¹⁹ T.G. Hassall, 31-34 Church Street, forthcoming.

²⁰ Trench III L6 and L8.

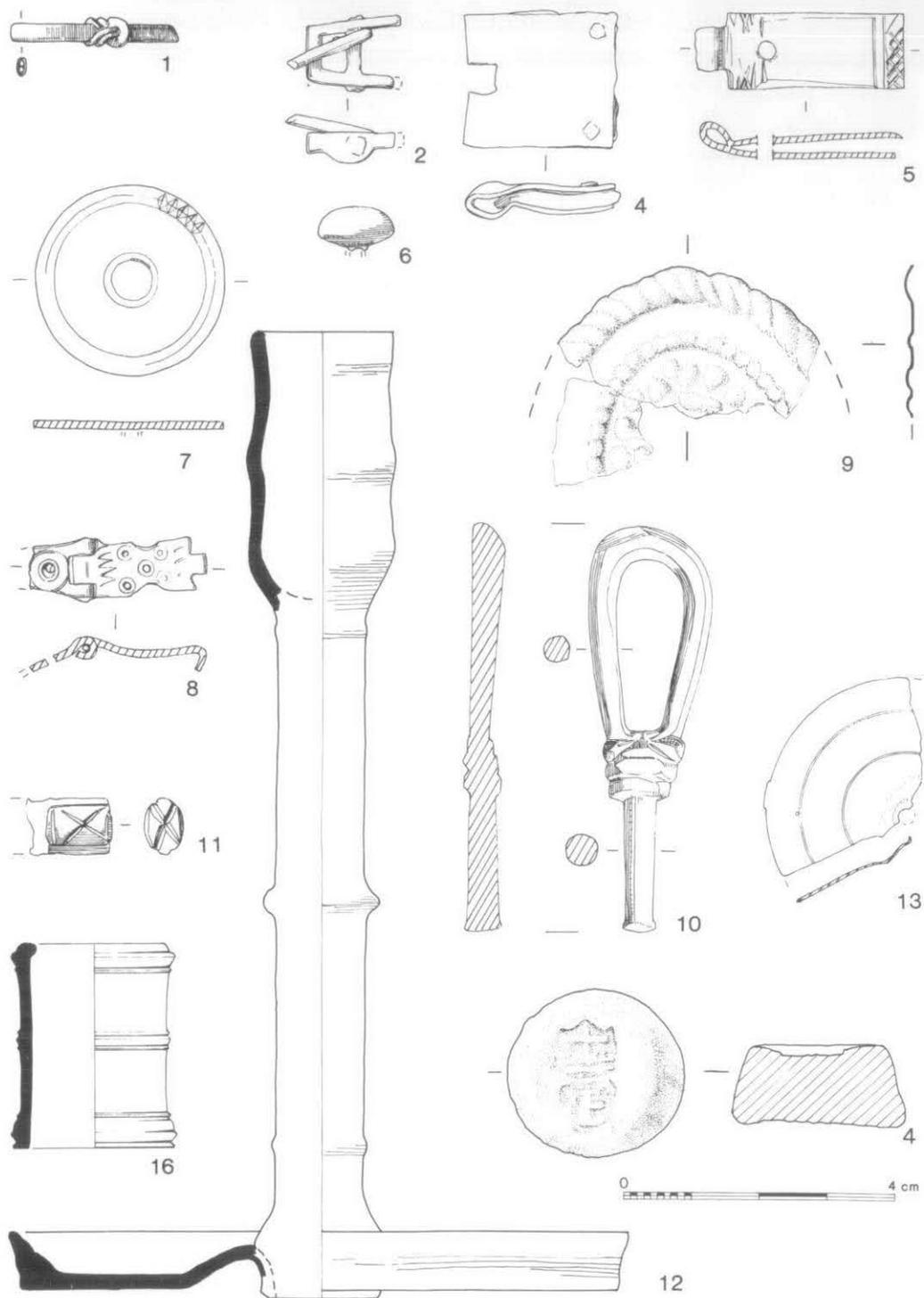


Fig. 14. Copper Alloy Objects: 1. finger ring; 2. buckle; 4. buckle plate; 5. buckle or hinge plate; 6, 7. buttons; 8. hinged clasp; 9, 13. discs; 10. loop; 11. knife handle terminal; 12. 13-18 candlestick; 16. 13-18 ?socket for a candlestick. Scale (†). Lead Object: 4. weight Scale (†).

similar assemblage, though possibly slightly later, was amongst the earliest levels recorded at the recent Blackfriars excavation.²¹ The priory was founded by 1245.

By Phase 5b Oxford Late Medieval Ware (Fabric *AM*, Group III) was still the most popular pottery, but Tudor Green (Fabric *BN*) specialising in fine tablewares, and Rhenish stoneware drinking mugs, were also very popular. Although Oxford Late Medieval Ware (Fabric *AM*) and Tudor Green are found in earlier 15th-century levels at Harding's Field, Chalgrove²² and at the Hamel (Phase HIII), Rhenish stonewares were absent from these 15th-century levels. Other contemporary assemblages were recovered from the Hamel (Phase E(2) and originally dated to the early-mid 16th century, but the coin evidence from this site suggests that the phase begins in the late 15th century and that the Hamel assemblage may also date to the later 15th/early 16th century.

The demolition levels of Phase 6 suggest that Oxford Late Medieval Ware (Fabric *AM*) was still popular in the declining years of the building, but a marked increase in the coarse red earthenwares (Fabric *AZ*) was evident and included vessels associated with the kitchen and brown glazed drinking cups. Rhenish stoneware drinking vessels from Raeren, Frechen and Cologne had also slightly increased. The only parallels to this assemblage were pit groups from the Hamel (Phase BIV). Three tokens were found associated with this phase and a date in the first half of the 16th century and a little beyond is probable. From an unstratified context a unique style of early spouted cooking pot with lid seating (Fig. 12, No. 20) (Fabric *AC*) was recovered.

13-18 Queen Street, 1976

The pottery recovered during the watching brief yielded few sherds from any one context, and frequently (for over 50 per cent of the contexts) these sherds were of widely mixed dates. Finds labelled F10 and F14 are in fact unstratified sherds handed in by the contractors. 'F10' consists of predominantly St. Neot's-type ware, and 'F14' of 12th and early-mid 13th-century material.

Pits F2, F4, F7 and F8 produced some 10th- or 11th-century pottery, suggesting that the frontage along Pembroke Street was settled during the Late Saxon period. This evidence should be coupled with that from 31-34 Church Street, a site which lies to the west of the survey area, but on the same east/west alignment.²³ A pit, F16, located just behind the Queen Street frontage, similarly yielded some Late Saxon pottery, and this should be added to the material from 11-12 Queen Street (below). Evidence of Late Saxon activity was also recognised at the corner of Queen Street and St. Ebbe's Street in the 1960s.²⁴

Other pits contained pottery dating to the 13th century, but F6, F9 and F17 also contained pottery of the late 15th-16th century. 19th-century material was recovered from F13 and F15.

11-12 Queen Street, 1980

No context yielded more than 4 sherds, but this limited evidence suggests that Trench I, F2/1, F2/2 and L3, and Trench II, L7, probably date to the 10th or 11th century. Trench I, L1 and F1/1, and F20, were 17th-century or later.

COIN AND JETTONS by MARIAN M. ARCHIBALD

New Inn Court (Not illustrated) (Catalogue, Fiche B12-13)

1. L37, SF116. Edward IV (2nd Reign 1471-83) Halfpenny. Blunt Class XIV struck in 1473 at London. This coin was scarcely worn when deposited so that a deposition date before c.1500 is most likely.

2-4. L16/1, SF34; F18, SF42; F30/1, SF132. Early 16th-century jettons. The reverse places this series of jettons in the Nuremberg or Nuremberg-related group. One would incline to a deposition date of c.1550-1575.

COPPER ALLOY AND LEAD OBJECTS by ALISON R. GOODALL

New Inn Court and 13-18 Queen Street (Fig. 14. Nos. 1, 2, 4-13, 16 are illustrated) (Catalogue, Fiche B14-C4)

Most of the 61 copper alloy objects are of post-medieval date and about half of them are lace-ends and pins.

1 is a finger ring made from wire with the ends intertwined to make a knotted bezel: the loop is bound with finger wire. 8 is a hinged clasp, probably from a book binding. A gilded repoussé disc, 9, came from a 12th-century

²¹ G. Lambrick, 'Further Excavations on the Second Dominican Priory, Oxford', forthcoming.

²² M. Mellor in P. Page, Harding's Field, Chalgrove, forthcoming.

²³ T.G. Hassall, 31-34 Church Street, forthcoming.

²⁴ B.K. Davison, 'St. Ebbe's', *Oxoniensia*, xxv. 135.

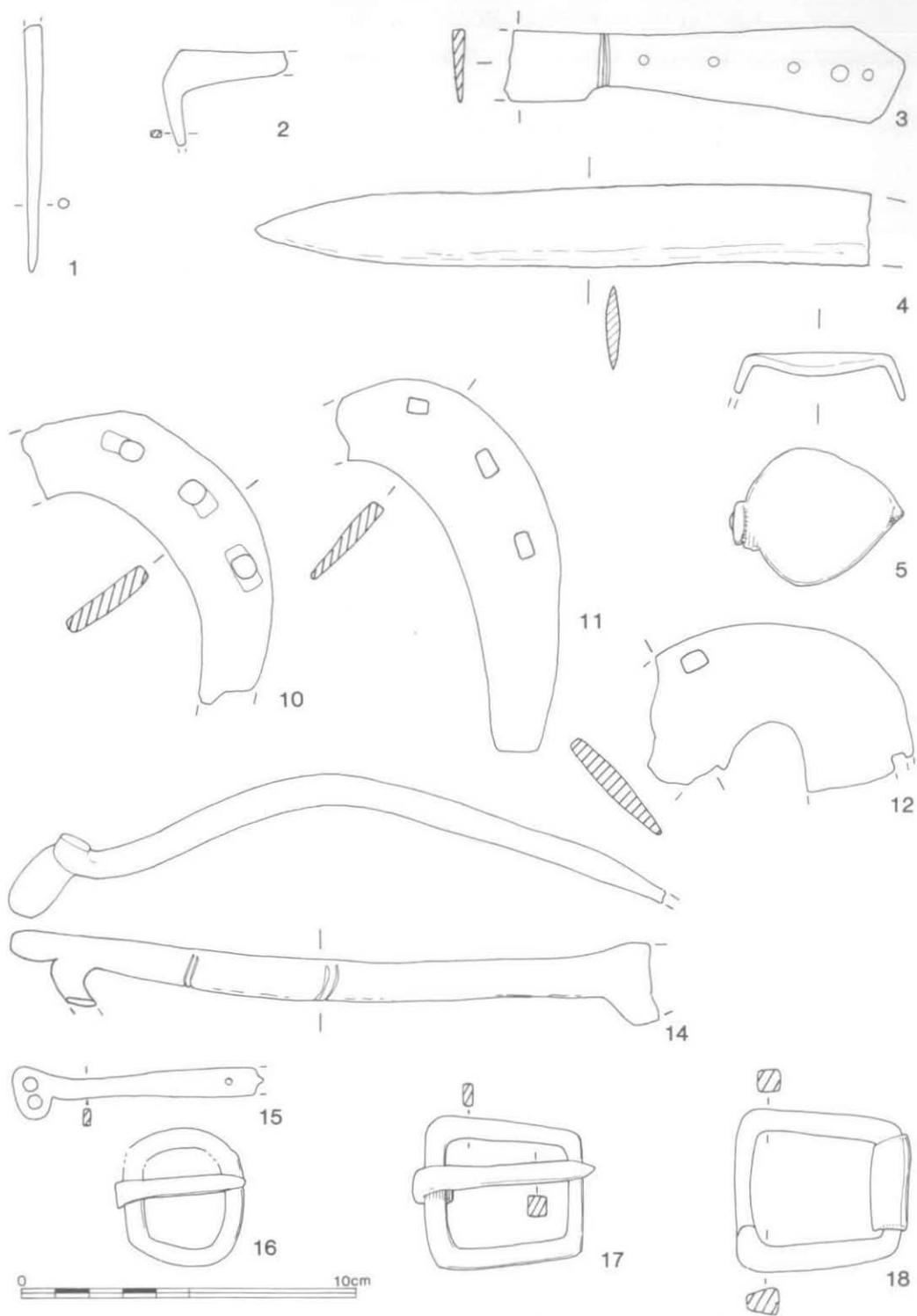


Fig. 15. Iron Objects: 1. heckle tooth; 2. tenter hook; 3. knife; 4. dagger blade tip; 5. staple or rove; 10-12. horseshoes; 14. ?bridle bit; 15. spur side; 16-18. buckles. Scale ($\frac{1}{2}$).

hollow (F32/1) containing intrusive 16th-century material. Although its decoration is reminiscent of that on some Saxon disc brooches the thin sheet metal suggests a more recent date. 11 is the terminal from a late medieval knife handle. The unstratified candlestick, 12 (13-18), is probably of early post-medieval date.

The three lead objects include two fragments of window came (1, 2).

LEAD WEIGHT by GEOFF EGAN

New Inn Court (Fig. 14, No.4)(Full description, Fiche C4-5)

U/S, SF155. A leaden weight in the form of a disc with slightly tapering sides, stamped on top with a crown over an E, apparently from two separate punches. Weight, just over 2 oz. Date, 16th-century.

IRON OBJECTS by IAN H. GOODALL

New Inn Court (Fig. 15)(Catalogue, Fiche C6)

Objects of interest include a heckle tooth, tenter hook, scale tang knife, a dagger blade tip, and a staple or rove (1-5). 10-12 are horseshoes typical of their date, 10 Late Saxon, the others post-medieval. 14 may be from a bridle bit, 15 is a spur side, and 16-18 are buckles.

BONE OBJECTS by ARTHUR MACGREGOR and BOB WILSON

New Inn Court (Full description, Fiche C7-8)

1. F22, SF49. Fig. 17, No. 1. A tuning peg, probably from a fiddle or lute. 15th-century or earlier.
2. L25/1, SF128. Fig. 17, No. 4. A sheep or goat scapula. The series of holes drilled through the blade end suggested it may have been used as a strainer or a whisk. Found in a mid 13th-century pit.
3. F47, SF194; L25/1, SF—. Fig. 16, 1, 2. Bone ice skate fragments made from red deer 'long bones', possibly from the same skate. Late Saxon.

13-18 *Queen Street* (Not illustrated)

4. F7, SF2. A polished bone thread picker. Late Saxon.

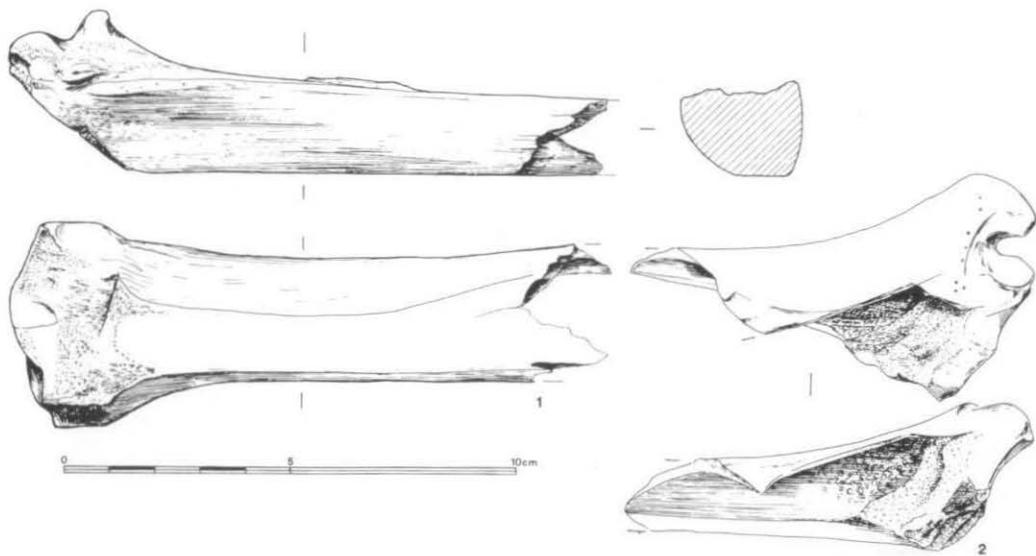


Fig. 16. Bone Skate Fragments: 1, 2.

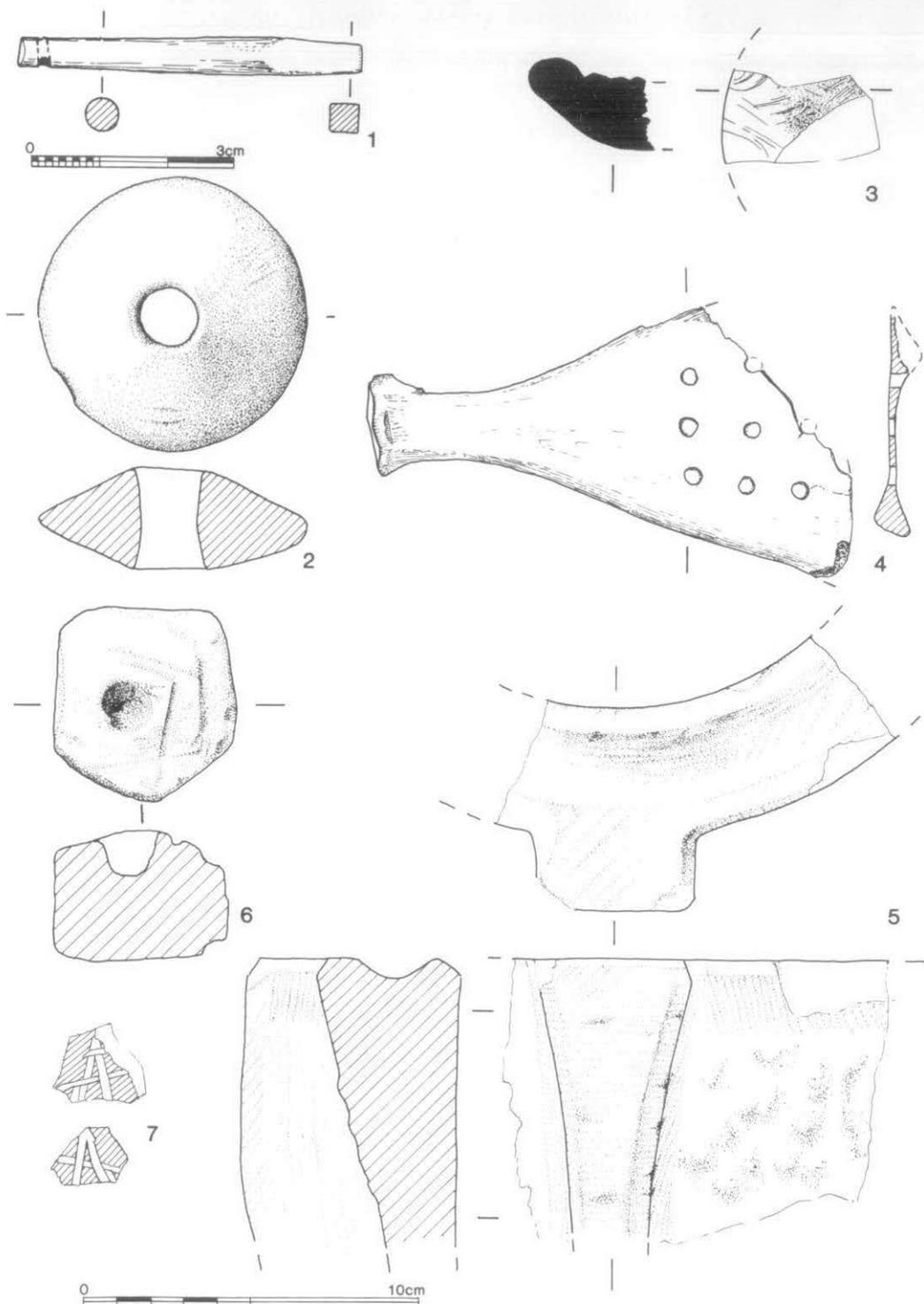


Fig. 17. 1. bone tuning peg; 2. ceramic spindlewhorl; 3. glass linen smoother; 4. bone ?strainer; 5. stone mortar; 6. ?mortar ?candlestick; 7. painted wall plaster. Scales 1, 2 ($\frac{1}{2}$), 3-7 ($\frac{1}{2}$).

VESSEL GLASS by GWYNNE OAKLEY

New Inn Court (Catalogue, Fiche C9-14)

Fragments of 18 vessels and 3 glass objects were found in contexts dated to the late 15th/early 16th century and later.

Seven vessels from predominantly 16th-century contexts include 2 beakers (one with fancy mould-blown pattern), a probable wine bottle base containing a limey deposit, the shoulder of a special flask type with oval body and diagonal ribbing (a complete vessel of this type was found in Broad Street, Oxford),²⁵ a ?globular flask (comparable to those found in mid 17th-century deposits close by in St. Ebbe's),²⁶ and a hanging lamp (a medieval vessel type which continued in production and use into the 16th century at least).²⁷

The pushed-in pedestal base of a cup or sweetmeat dish with mould-blown fluting in greyish colourless glass came from a ?robber trench (F30) dated to the late 16th/early 17th century, and the folded rim of an open-mouthed vessel was found within a contemporary, and possibly associated, feature (F30/1). Both are unusual finds in colourless glass at such an early date, and are possibly imports.

Glass objects of interest are a convex 'linen smoother' showing a worn scratched surface in the centre, remaining glossy at the edge (Fig. 17, No. 3), and a small spherically curved circular cover (or dish?) (diameter c.30mm.) of very thin glass which might have come from some instrument such as a compass or composite sundial: both came from late 15th/early 16th-century floor or occupation layers. A spherical button with an inset iron loop was found in a pit (F14), dated to the 17th century and later.

The glass finds suggest an affluent household with a variety of vessels for drinking, storage of liquids (perhaps spirits or flavouring as well as wine) and lighting being used in the 16th century, a period when glass was a rare and luxurious commodity. The cover may have come from a compass or composite sundial, the executive toy of the 15th/16th century.²⁸

STONE OBJECTS by MAUREEN MELLOR and PHILIP POWELL

New Inn Court (Full description, Fiche D1-D2)

1. L17, SF189. (Not illustrated). A fragment of limestone which has been worked on three sides.
2. F15, SF53. Fig. 17, No. 5. A stone mortar made of Purbeck marble. ?Date as context, 16th-century.
3. L38/2, SF138. (Not illustrated). A piece of unworked Kimmeridge shale, found in a layer dated to the late 10th/early 11th century.
4. F48, SF167. (Not illustrated). A fragment of a hone, recovered from a 10th-century post-hole.

?MORTAR ?CANDLESTICK by MAUREEN MELLOR

New Inn Court (Fig. 17, No. 6)(Full description, Fiche D3)

L38/4, SF76. A ?mortar ?candlestick was recovered from a late 10th/early 11th-century layer. The mortar has been fashioned into a pentagon. The upper side, around a central hole, has been well finished and decorated with incised lines. It is possible that the whole object was inset into something and that only the upper part was visible. The central hole may, however, be too small for a candle at this date. This is the first Late Saxon artefact to be recovered locally that is possibly made of mortar.

CERAMIC SPINDLEWHORL by MAUREEN MELLOR

13-18 Queen Street (Fig. 17, No. 2)(Full description, Fiche D4)

F10 (U/S), SF1. Ceramic spindlewhorl of a fabric which resembles no local pottery types. It is biconical in shape and wear marks are evident around the central hole. Late Saxon.

²⁵ E.T. Leeds, 'Glass Vessels of the XVI Century and later from the Site of the Bodleian Extension in Broad Street', *Oxoniensia*, iii (1938), 153-61, Pl. XII, D2.

²⁶ J. Haslam, 'Glass' in T.G. Hassall, 'St. Ebbe's Survey and Excavation Report, post-medieval', forthcoming.

²⁷ G. Oakley, 'Glass' in J.H. Williams, *St. Peter's Street, Northampton: excavations 1973-1976*, (1979), 298-99, GL53.

²⁸ See the collection of pocket sundials in the Museum of the History of Science, University of Oxford, 2 of which have curved glass covers over the compass recess, the rest are flat.

TILES by MAUREEN MELLOR

New Inn Court (Not illustrated)(Full description, Fiche D5-6)

Three hundred and thirty two stratified ceramic tile fragments were recovered, the majority of them roof tiles. Nine fabric types are identified.

Phase 4b, mid 13th century, yielded 91 tiles suggesting some reconstruction or refurbishment of a building. The destruction layers of the building (Phase 6) yielded 122 roof tiles and 3 floor tiles.

The general trends of the tile fabric types have long been evident as a useful chronological indicator, but a large quantity of tile in any one assemblage would also seem to be a good indicator for structural changes (Phase 4b) or demolition (Phase 6) of a substantial building belonging to a comparatively affluent owner.

WALL PLASTER by JULIAN MUNBY AND MAUREEN MELLOR

New Inn Court

Few archaeological excavations of domestic sites in Oxford have yielded painted wall plaster, but 36 fragments were recovered from this site. The majority was found in late 15th early 16th-century contexts.

The fragments appear to consist of a thick lime wash on thick plaster, and 3 styles of decoration were recognised:

- a) black linear decoration, part of a complex design, recovered from a final occupation layer (L24, SF70)(Fig. 17, No. 7).
- b) Red ochre brush marks, which may have formed part of a decorative motif, recovered from both an occupation layer (L24, SF62) and robber trenches (F15, SF27; F18, SF156).
- c) Red ochre covering the entire surface, also recovered from both occupation layers (L24, SF83; L28, SF89) and general demolition layers (L16/1, SF37; L19/1, SF46).

The painted wall plaster may have formed part of a decorative motif within a chamber, with a red ochre wash around the lower part of the wall, and a more elaborate motif above. Decorative painted plaster was not uncommon in the 16th century and might be found in the private houses of the middle classes or in inns.²⁹

WINDOW GLASS by GWYNNE OAKLEY

New Inn Court (Catalogue, Fiche D7-10)

Nineteen pieces of window glass were found in contexts mostly dated to the 16th century.

Apart from 2 probable medieval pieces, there are 7 pale blue-green, 1 ?colourless and 1 amber piece painted with a red linear design. A small fragment of a known quarry design,³⁰ also found in a c.15th-century window at Marsh Baldon Church, Oxfordshire, was found in F30 with other pieces of glass which could be 16th- or 17th-century in date. The painted quarry fragment is also of pale green glass but much more badly weathered and decayed than the rest. By contrast the other 2 painted fragments are well preserved, including a bright emerald green piece with painted ?leaf design from F22, and are probably contemporary with the context.

ANIMAL BONES AND SHELL by BOB WILSON with ENID ALLISON and ANDREW JONES

New Inn Court (Full description and tables, Fiche D11-E13)(11-12 Queen Street, details Fiche E3)

Collected bone and shell refuse spans the 10th to 16th centuries with a major group from Late Saxon F29. The proportion of pig bones, 35-46 per cent of the identified 10th- to 11th-century bones, is unusual even for Saxon deposits in Oxford. These early groups are also characterised by an absence of horse bones, the presence of roe and red deer, many bones of domestic fowl, few of geese, a noticeable representation of domestic or feral pigeon, and a slightly higher incidence of wild bird bones including teal, bittern, snipe and lapwing. Bones of pike and cod were recorded.

²⁹ Malcolm R. Airs and John S. Rhodes, 'Wall Paintings from a House in Upper High Street, Thame', *Oxoniensia*, xlv (1980), 251-2.

³⁰ P.A. Newton with J. Kerr, *The County of Oxford. A Catalogue of Medieval Stained Glass*. The Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi Great Britain, I (1979), Quarry Type 12.

Smaller groups of 13th- to 16th-century bones are similar to other medieval material from Oxford with fewer pig, more sheep, numerous rabbit and domestic fowl, and a few wild bird species including, interestingly, a common cormorant, normally a coastal bird, and possibly wigeon, scoter and tufted duck. Eel and the following sea fish occurred: thornback ray, conger eel, cod, ling, gurnard, and flatfish.

Most debris appears to be domestic in origin and is not obviously associated with early stages of commercial butchery or other related Saxon or medieval trades. Although the 15th- or 16th-century refuse is much broken up as if boiled to extract tallow, such industrial activity is normally associated with smashed metapodials of sheep. However the bones of roe and those of a skinned immature cat from F29 indicate that some initial butchery, beside the normal kitchen activities, took place near the site and presumably this was related more closely to species which were hunted.

Although some meat was obtained by domestic husbandry and some from hunting, probably at least the mutton and beef was purchased because of the obvious limits to pasturage in Saxon and medieval Oxford. However it is possible that the high percentage of pig bones is due to pigs being reared on the tenements. Another species which could have lived locally is the domestic or feral pigeon, either in an 11th-century dovecote or roosting and nesting among the houses.

The goose bones make up only 5 per cent of the goose and fowl bones, whereas at the low lying site of the Hamel, Oxford, the percentage is 35 per cent. This difference is unlikely to be the result of differential recovery of bones. It can be explained by concluding that the proportion of domestic birds eaten later depended on what could be reared locally: thus goose on the meadows and fowl ubiquitously on the tenements of high and low ground.

The possible deductions of larger land holdings, the keeping of animals on the site, the minimal connection with butchering and related trades, the modest consumption of roe and other hunted species, the furs of cat and roe which might have been worn, collectively indicate a moderate level of prosperity and status for the Saxon period. A general decrease in species variety except perhaps for marine fish, the reduced proportion of pig and roe consumed, the probable diminished husbandry of domesticated animals on site, and the quasi industrial implications of the late medieval debris, all suggest a gradual decline in the subsistence level of the medieval inhabitants.

At no period are there signs of very high status, such as the birds used in falconry, or fallow deer, peacock or pheasant, although if some of these species were Norman introductions their bones would not be found in Saxon deposits. In discussing these aspects of life, larger collections of medieval refuse would have made a more reliable contrast of evidence. In addition the relationship between the consumption of plant and animal products is not known for the site and this factor would be of great help in establishing the levels of prosperity or status.

PLANT AND INVERTEBRATE REMAINS by MARK ROBINSON

New Inn Court (Full description and tables, Fiche E14-F2)

Soil samples were examined from a substantial Late Saxon pit (F29). It contained many plant and invertebrate remains preserved by calcium phosphate mineralisation, this type of preservation confirming the use of the pit as a cess pit. The invertebrate remains from the pit largely comprise the puparia of flies with larvae which feed on sewage: Sphaeroceridae and *Fannia* sp. The culinary plant remains from the pit, mostly apple or pear pips, do not suggest a particularly lavish diet.

11-12 Queen Street (Full description and tables, Fiche F3-4)

A sample from a mid/late Saxon occupation deposit (L3/1) was floated for carbonised plant remains. It proved to be rich in grains of bread/club wheat and six-row hulled barley while rye was also present. It is possible that the carbonised cereal remains resulted from a variety of ordinary domestic processes, there was no evidence for crop processing.

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