

EXCAVATIONS AT THE COUNTY HOTEL, TAUNTON, 1995–6

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SUMMARY

The evaluation and subsequent excavations at the County Hotel, Taunton (ST 229 244) were carried out by Wessex Archaeology at various times between September 1995 and May 1996 prior to and during redevelopment. The site, covering several former properties along East Street, lies close to the centre of the medieval town and provided evidence for domestic occupation from the late 12th century onwards with the main period of surviving archaeological activity dated from the late 12th to the 14th century. This included fragmentary remains of timber and stone buildings, remnants of possible street metallings, boundary ditches and pits. There were relatively few features or finds of 15th to 18th-century date, predating the 19th to 20th-century hotel buildings. This lack almost certainly reflects late post-medieval clearance and rebuilding along the East Street frontage, the restricted investigation of backyard areas during the excavations, and the likelihood that some refuse was disposed of away from the site.

Pottery was the major finds type recovered, albeit in small quantities, and was overwhelmingly local in origin. There were few other finds and the faunal assemblage was restricted in both range and numbers. The finds and the project archive have been deposited at the Somerset County Museum, Taunton (Acc. No. TTNCM 100/96).

INTRODUCTION

In August 1995 Dr Peter Wardle of The Archaeological Consultancy commissioned an archaeological evaluation prior to submission of a planning application for the redevelopment of the former County Hotel site, Taunton. The results of the evaluation (Wessex Archaeology 1995) showed that the area contained archaeological deposits dating from the 12th/13th centuries. In the light of these findings, the County Archaeological Officer recommended further archaeological investigation before any development of the site took place. The site covers an area approximately 125m long by 60m wide, and is located on the south side of East Street, between Paul Street and Billet Street, about 100m east of Taunton's centre, the triangular former market place at Fore Street (Fig. 1). The drift geology comprises mixed fluvial deposits of silty clays, chert gravels and sands, overlying Triassic Keuper Marl. The ground surface falls from c. 25m OD in the south-east to c. 20m OD in the north-west, and has been subject to terracing for building construction along the East Street frontage in the post-medieval period. Prior to

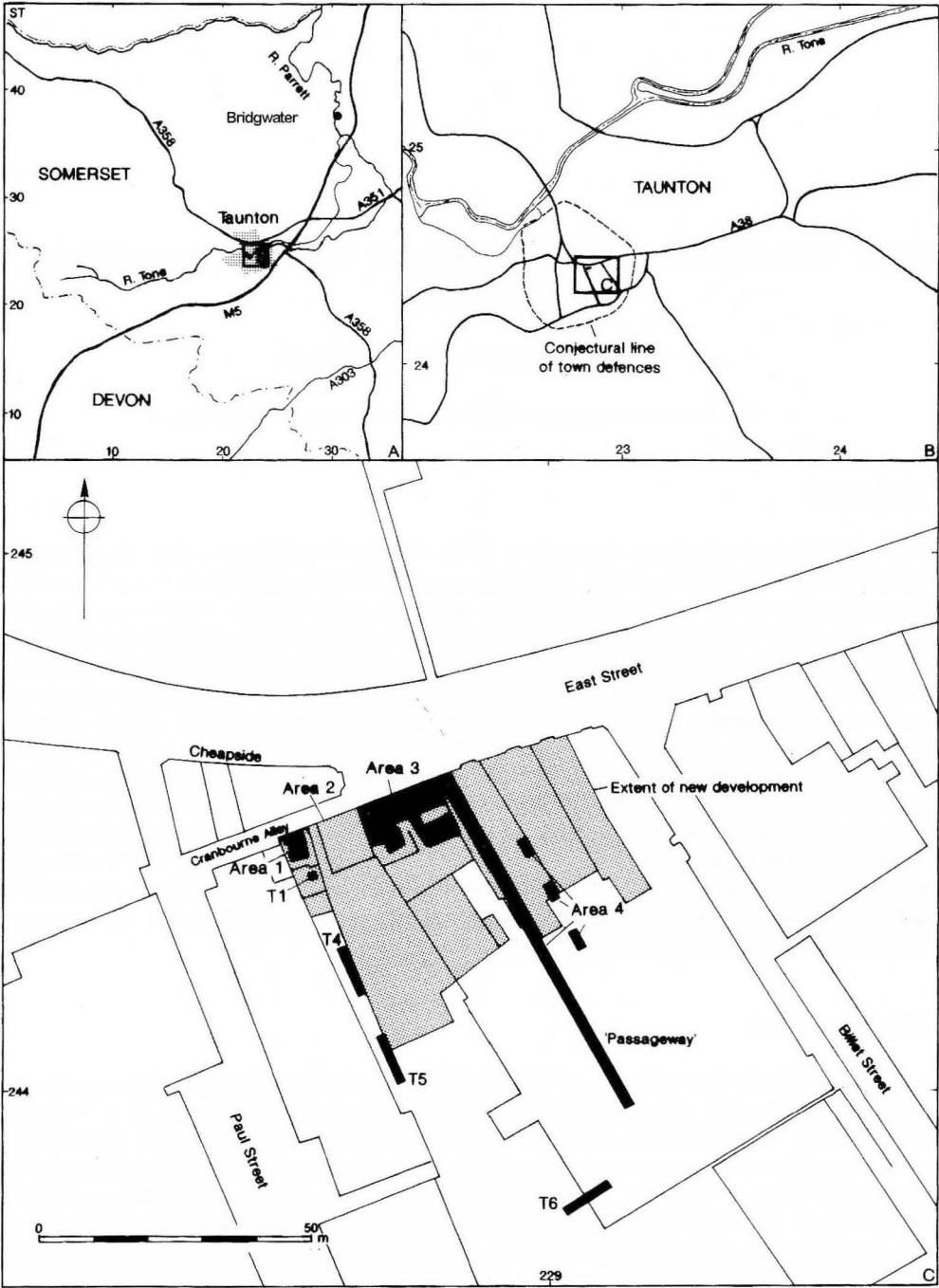


Fig. 1 Site location plans, including evaluation trenches (T1, 4, 5, and 6) and excavated areas (Areas 1-4)

redevelopment most of the northern two-thirds of the site was covered with a variety of buildings constructed at different times from the late 18th/early 19th century onwards, which together comprised the County Hotel (formerly the London Hotel); the southern third of the site was occupied by the County Hotel car park. The central part of the hotel fronting East Street is a Grade 2* listed building which has been retained in the new development.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Some prehistoric activity in the vicinity is indicated by the very limited evidence for Iron Age occupation found at 1 High Street, 150m west of the County Hotel (Leach 1984, 93). For the Roman period, excavation evidence and stray coin finds suggest the presence of dispersed rural settlement in and around Taunton, and at Fore Street, 100m west of the County Hotel, a ditch and probable ard marks were found (I. Burrow 1988). However, virtually no Roman evidence has been recovered from other sites in the immediate area. A mid to late Saxon settlement is known at Taunton from documentary evidence though there is very little archaeological evidence. The suggestion has been made that Saxon settlement was concentrated to the west of the Saxon Minster that was situated about 300m to the west of the County Hotel site, beneath the present castle (Leach 1984, 52 and 75).

The County Hotel site lies within the area enclosed by the medieval defences, towards the centre of the town (Fig. 1b). Excavation of sites at Paul Street, Billet Street, Kennedy's Old Yard and East Street (Leach 1984), all within 50m of the County Hotel, have shown that medieval and post-medieval features have tended to be preserved under parts of more recent buildings. Most of these sites have produced evidence of occupation from the 12th century onwards with little or no indication of earlier activity. The current ground plan may reflect a medieval burgrave plot layout of long thin strips at right angles to the street. Rubbish pits in the yards of former buildings are the commonest feature whereas structural remains are much rarer and have tended to be fragmentary.

The post-medieval history of the County Hotel site has been well documented (Bush nd) and is only summarised here. The presence of an inn ('Le Thre Cuppys') on the site is attested from at least the mid 16th century. In 1644, during the Civil War, the upper storeys of the inn were demolished so as not to obscure views from Taunton Castle; the inn was also burnt during this conflict. It had been rebuilt by 1672 and records from a century later, in 1773, make it clear that this was a substantial building. The inn was rebuilt again in 1784, and the assembly rooms added in 1844. Many improvements and alterations were undertaken in 1901, with further alterations and additions from the 1960s onwards.

METHOD

Virtually all of the archaeological work was conducted after the hotel buildings had been vacated but prior to any demolition taking place. The work had, therefore, to take account of standing walls, floors and other *in situ* structural remains.

The archaeological evaluation was carried out in September 1995 and entailed the excavation of six trenches, three by hand and three by machine (Fig. 1c). The three hand-excavated trenches (evaluation trenches 1-3) lay within the existing buildings in Areas 1 and 3 on the East Street frontage (Areas 1-4 were designated as Units 1-4 on the development plan and comprised four of the six 'shop units' along East Street included in the redevelopment). Evaluation trench 1 was dug in the basement immediately behind the area subsequently excavated as Area 1; the trench showed no surviving archaeological deposits within the basemented area. Evaluation

trenches 2 and 3 both contained archaeological deposits and were subsumed into the subsequent larger scale excavations in Area 3. (The frontage in Area 2, between Areas 1 and 3, had been completely destroyed by a large, concrete-capped cellar of presumed 18th-century date which was not further investigated.) Evaluation trenches 4 and 5, excavated by JCB, lay further back from the street frontage along the western edge of the site in a yard area covered by tarmac. Evaluation trench 6, also excavated by JCB, lay in the tarmac-covered car park immediately to the rear of the hotel buildings. Evaluation trenches 4–6 all contained archaeological deposits, mainly of post-medieval date, but these areas were not further investigated in the subsequent excavation.

The main phase of archaeological excavation took place during October to November 1995 in Areas 1 and 3 within the standing buildings (Fig. 1c). This work was carried out entirely by hand under artificial light. The excavation investigated areas where medieval deposits were known or expected to survive but which would be destroyed or disturbed by redevelopment. In Area 1, a concrete floor in the room on the East Street frontage was removed exposing an area of c. 17.5m² for excavation. In Area 3 the floorboards and floor joists in the former front bar were removed over an area of c 95m²; this area was subsequently expanded by a further 30m² in May 1996 when an additional area to the south-east was made available for excavation.

In May 1996 the passageway in Area 4 was investigated. Tarmac and make-up was stripped by JCB from an area measuring approximately 70m long by 3m wide, but this was found to be heavily disturbed by modern service trenches, drains and footings with no surviving archaeological deposits. Also in May 1996, following demolition work, three small trenches were dug by machine within Area 4. These lay between 15m and 40m back from the street frontage and none contained any features or deposits of archaeological interest.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The description below combines the results of the evaluation (evaluation trenches 1-6) with those obtained by excavation of two areas adjacent to the East Street frontage (Areas 1 and 3) and another further back (Area 4). Full details of all the features and deposits recorded are held in the archive.

The archaeological features encountered were of three main types, namely linear features, pits and postholes. All features have been phased on the basis of the stratigraphic and limited ceramic evidence.

PHASE I (LATE 12TH–14TH CENTURY) (Figs 2–5)

Area 3 provided the most complex sequence of features on the site. The earliest part of the Phase I sequence was represented by several postholes which may have belonged to one or more structures of uncertain form and function (Structure 1). It is possible that these postholes were associated with fences rather than buildings and perhaps marked early property boundaries along the south side of East Street. There followed the laying out of a north–east to south–west aligned ditch – the southern ditch (1565). It is likely that this was a ditch alongside the street, subsequently replaced with a similar – northern – ditch (1555), located just to the north and aligned on the same axis. Finally in Phase I, a series of large postholes was dug, some of which cut the two ditches. These postholes have been interpreted as marking the front of a substantial timber building (Structure 2) lying adjacent to the street. Any floors or shallow features within this building had been destroyed by later clearance and rebuilding. In Area 1, Phase I was largely represented by several intercutting pits. Elsewhere, the only Phase I feature was in evaluation trench 6 where a pit was apparently sealed beneath a layer of what has been interpreted as subsoil.

All of the pottery recovered from this phase is broadly attributable to the 12th–14th centuries. However, it has not proved possible clearly to identify any finer divisions within this date range.

STRUCTURE 1 (Figs 2–4)

The postholes assigned to this structure were all truncated, several by ditches 1555 and 1565, and none was more than 0.2m deep. The exact nature of the structure is difficult to define and the postholes may in fact represent more than a single structure. One group of smaller, sub-circular postholes comprising 1511, 1557, 1567 and 1579 lay towards the north-western edge of the site, close to the line of East Street, and all were cut by later Phase I features. However, no clear pattern was discernible in their layout. One of these postholes, 1567, produced a single sherd of pottery. A further, possibly associated pair of larger but truncated, oval postholes, 1517 and 1586, were aligned at right angles to East Street. Posthole 1586 contained a single sherd of pottery.

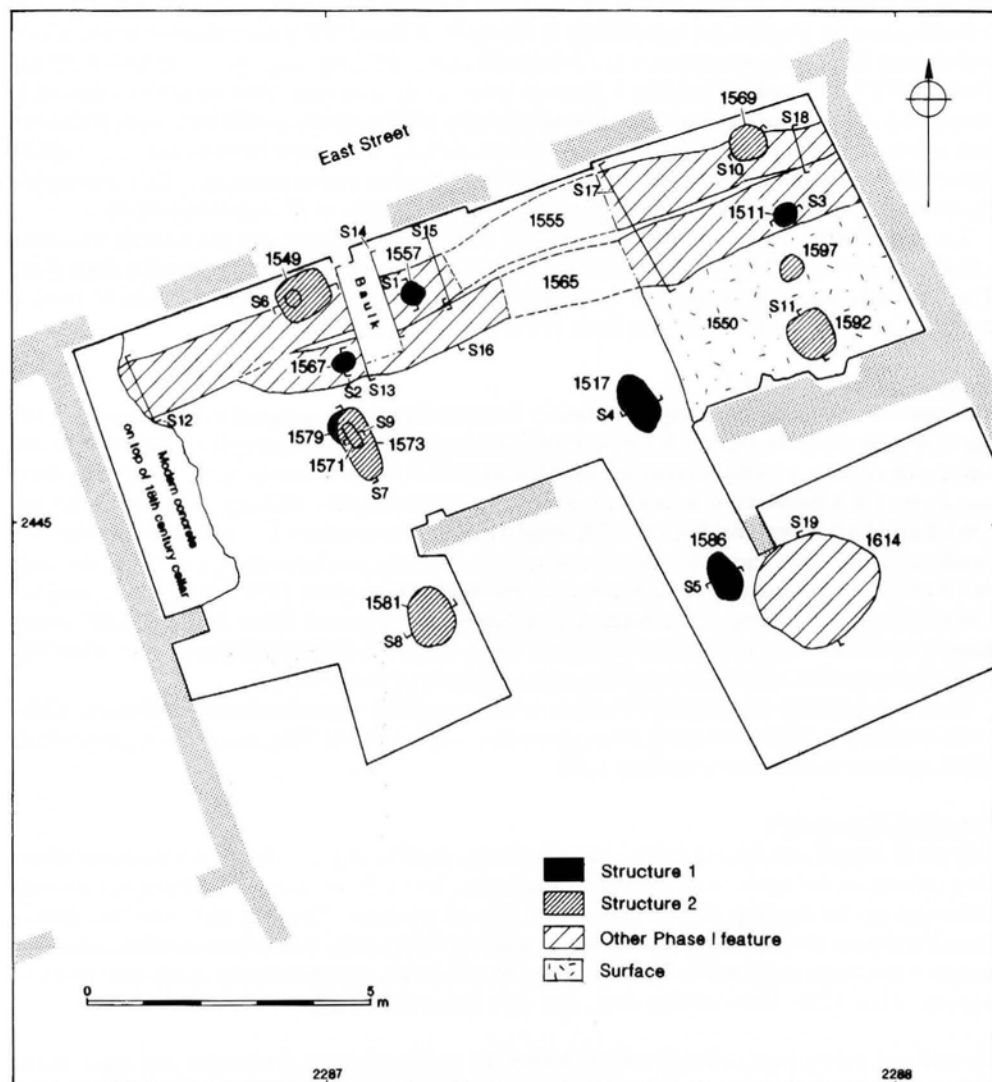


Fig. 2 Area 3: Phase I, plan

DITCHES (Figs 2 and 4)

Southern ditch 1565: This ditch was aligned approximately north–east to south–west and extended for at least 11.3m along the north side of Area 3. It was generally U- to V-shaped in profile, and at its maximum was 0.85m wide and 0.42m deep. It was cut by northern ditch 1555, and cut postholes 1511 and 1567 assigned to Structure 1. Throughout the investigated length the ditch had been horizontally truncated by later clearance and rebuilding. Within the best preserved section were four fills beginning with a reddish brown sandy clay, followed by two distinct layers of yellowish brown sandy clay, and capped with a dark yellow brown sandy clay layer with a very high sand content and containing a large quantity of charcoal. Only one small sherd of pottery was recovered from ditch 1565.

Northern ditch 1555: This ditch was also aligned north–east to south–west, was generally flat bottomed, and lay parallel and immediately to the north of ditch 1565. It extended for at least 13.1m within Area 3, and at its maximum was 1.18m wide and 0.31m deep. It cut northern ditch 1555 and posthole 1557 assigned to Structure 1, but was itself cut by postholes 1549 and 1569 assigned to Structure 2. Throughout the investigated length the ditch had been horizontally truncated. Within the best preserved section (see Fig. 4) were three fills beginning with a mid-brown sandy clay (1554), followed by a similar mid-brown sandy clay containing frequent stone inclusions (1553), and capped by a mid-brown clayey sand (1543). Ditch 1555 produced a total of 28 sherds of pottery.

It is considered likely that features 1027 and 1029 in Area 1 represent the heavily truncated remains of northern ditch 1555 extending further to the west, a total distance of at least 30m. There appeared to be a terminus at the west end, just within the limit of excavation in Area 1, but the ditch continued beyond the limit of excavation in Area 3 to the east.

STRUCTURE 2 (Figs 2 and 3)

Two parallel lines of postholes approximately 8m apart have been assigned to this structure. Each line comprised at least three substantial postholes, dug at irregular intervals of between 1m and 3m (centre-to-centre), which extended back from the East Street frontage. Stratigraphically these two lines of postholes were broadly contemporary, postdating the infilling of ditches 1555 and 1565, though it is not certain that they all belonged to the same structure. The western line comprised postholes 1549, 1573 and 1581 which were up to 1.3m long, and between 0.17 and 0.49m deep; posthole 1573 contained clear evidence of a rectangular post-ghost (1571) and 1549 contained some flint cobble packing. The eastern line of postholes comprised 1569, 1592 and 1597 which were up to 0.88m long and between 0.33 and 0.44m deep. All of the postholes in the eastern line contained ashy fills, and 1592 was filled with a packing of flint cobbles.

Structure 2 produced a total of 14 sherds of pottery, all of which has been dated to the 12th–14th centuries, with eleven sherds from posthole complex 1573/1571, one sherd from posthole 1582, and two sherds from posthole 1594.

PITS (Figs 2, 4, and 5)

One pit in Area 3 and five in Area 1 have been assigned to Phase 1, but it is uncertain where they belong in the postulated structural sequence. The pits in Area 1 had been extensively disturbed by the digging of two substantial pits of probable 18th-century date, and that in Area 3 had been truncated by later clearance and rebuilding. One further pit found in evaluation trench 6 has been assigned to Phase 1. The pits produced comparatively small quantities of pottery, all of 12th–14th-century date, and very few other finds.

Pit 604 was partly exposed in Trench 6 during the archaeological evaluation and appeared to be sub-rectangular in plan with steeply sloping sides. This pit remained largely unexcavated

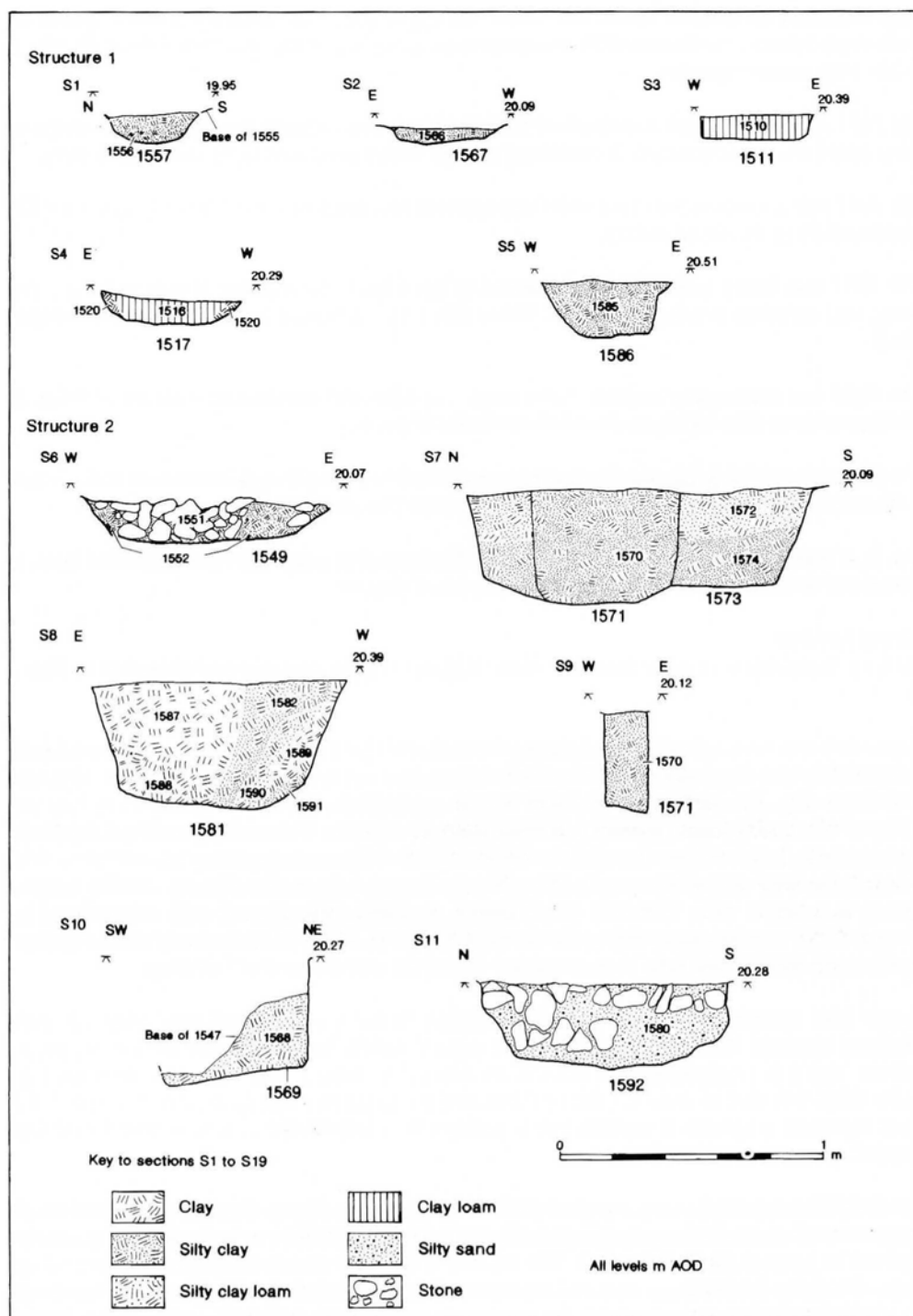


Fig. 3 Area 3: Phase I, sections (Structures 1 and 2); scale as shown

and produced no datable finds. However, the upper part was filled by a thick spread of yellowish brown clay loam (603), interpreted as subsoil, and this produced three sherds of 12th–14th-century pottery.

Pit 1025 survived to maximum depth of 0.7m, but had been so badly truncated that its shape in plan could not be ascertained. It contained six fills which produced eight sherds of pottery.

Pit 1043 was circular, 0.5m in diameter and survived to a depth of 0.3m. The only surviving fill produced three sherds of pottery.

Pit 1051 was badly truncated but appeared to have been rectangular; it was at least 1.1m long, and survived to a depth of 0.8m. Three fills were identified but none produced datable finds.

Pit 1055 was rectangular in plan, 1.8m long, 1m wide and survived to a depth of 0.6m. It contained three fills which produced three sherds of pottery.

Pit 1064 was probably circular but had been truncated by Phase II wall foundation 1031. It had a diameter of 0.39m, was 0.12m deep, and produced five sherds of pottery.

Pit 1614 was oval, 2.3m long, 2m wide and 0.55m deep with steep sides and a rounded base. It contained two fills which produced twelve sherds of pottery.

OTHER DEPOSITS

At least three deposits other than fills of cut features were found that probably date to Phase I:

Layer 603 was exposed in Trench 6 during the archaeological evaluation and comprised a dark yellowish brown clay loam up to 0.7m thick with occasional small fragments of stone, charcoal and burnt clay. The surface of this layer was at approximately 23.70m OD, and lay beneath 0.9m of black silty loam (probably derived from an adjacent 19th-century smithy), hardcore and concrete. Layer 603 produced three sherds of 12th–14th-century pottery and sealed pit 604 towards the west end of the trench. Elsewhere in Trench 6 layer 603 directly overlay natural gravel at a height of c. 23m OD. This deposit, probably subsoil, was only encountered in Trench 6. No trenches were dug to the south of Trench 6, and if it did formerly extend further to the north then it may have been truncated during the construction of buildings.

Layer 1011 comprised a mixed deposit of reddish brown silty clay and light grey ash with frequent charcoal flecks. It directly overlay natural which had been burnt reddish brown in colour, and was stratigraphically the earliest deposit in Area 1. The surviving remnant was 0.2m thick, covered an area of 1.8m by 0.9m, and produced two sherds of pottery. Layer 1011 may represent a spread of rubbish but is perhaps best interpreted as a levelling/demolition deposit.

Layer 1550 comprised a very compact yellowish red/brown clayey silt with occasional small fragments of stone. It was stratigraphically the earliest deposit in Area 3, overlying natural and cut by several Phase I features. The surviving remnant was 0.1m thick and covered an area of 4.4m by 2.65m at the east end. It produced a single sherd of pottery and may represent an area of trampled natural (rather than a floor surface) from which it could not be clearly differentiated.

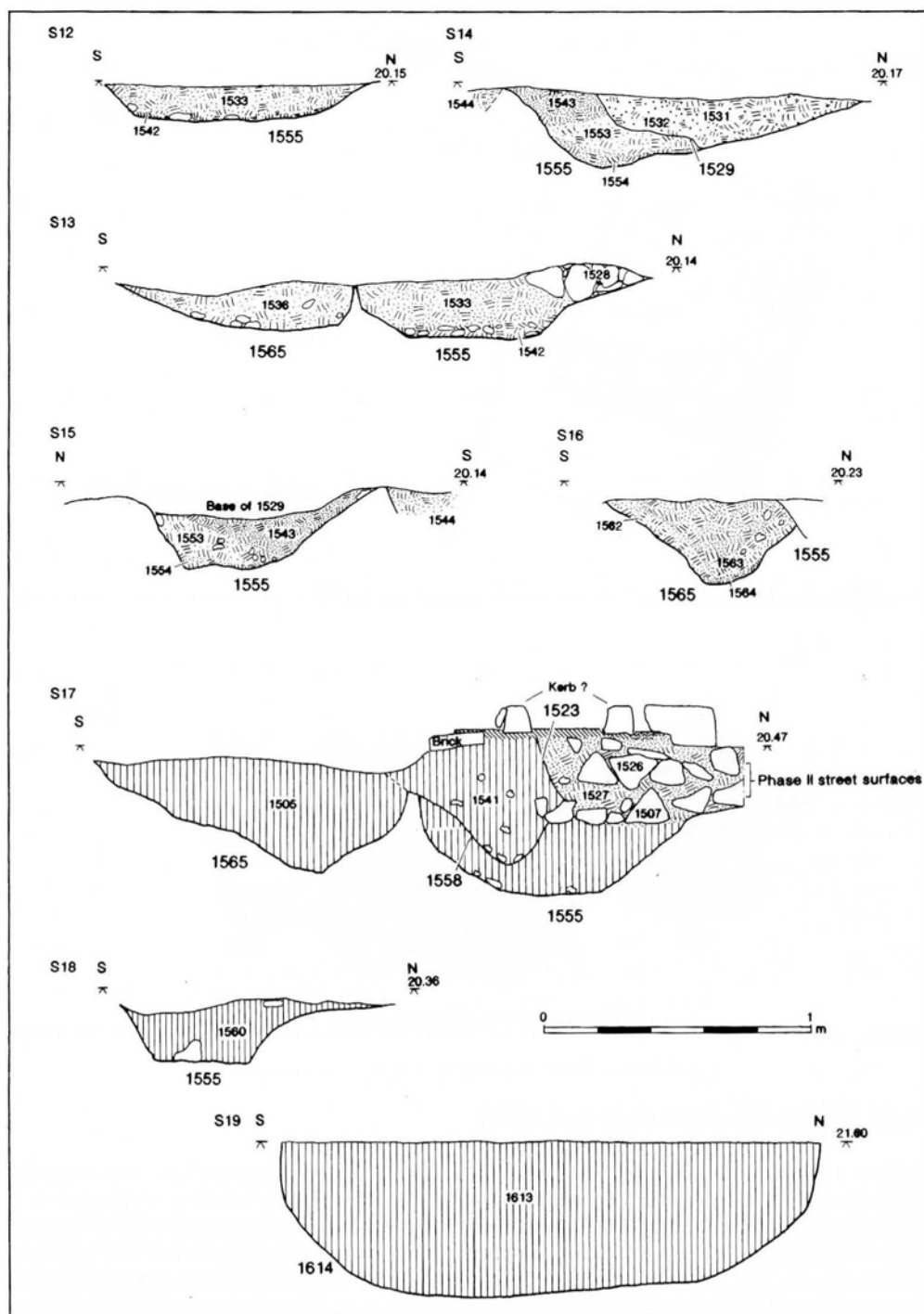


Fig. 4 Area 3: Phase I, sections (ditches and pits); scale as shown

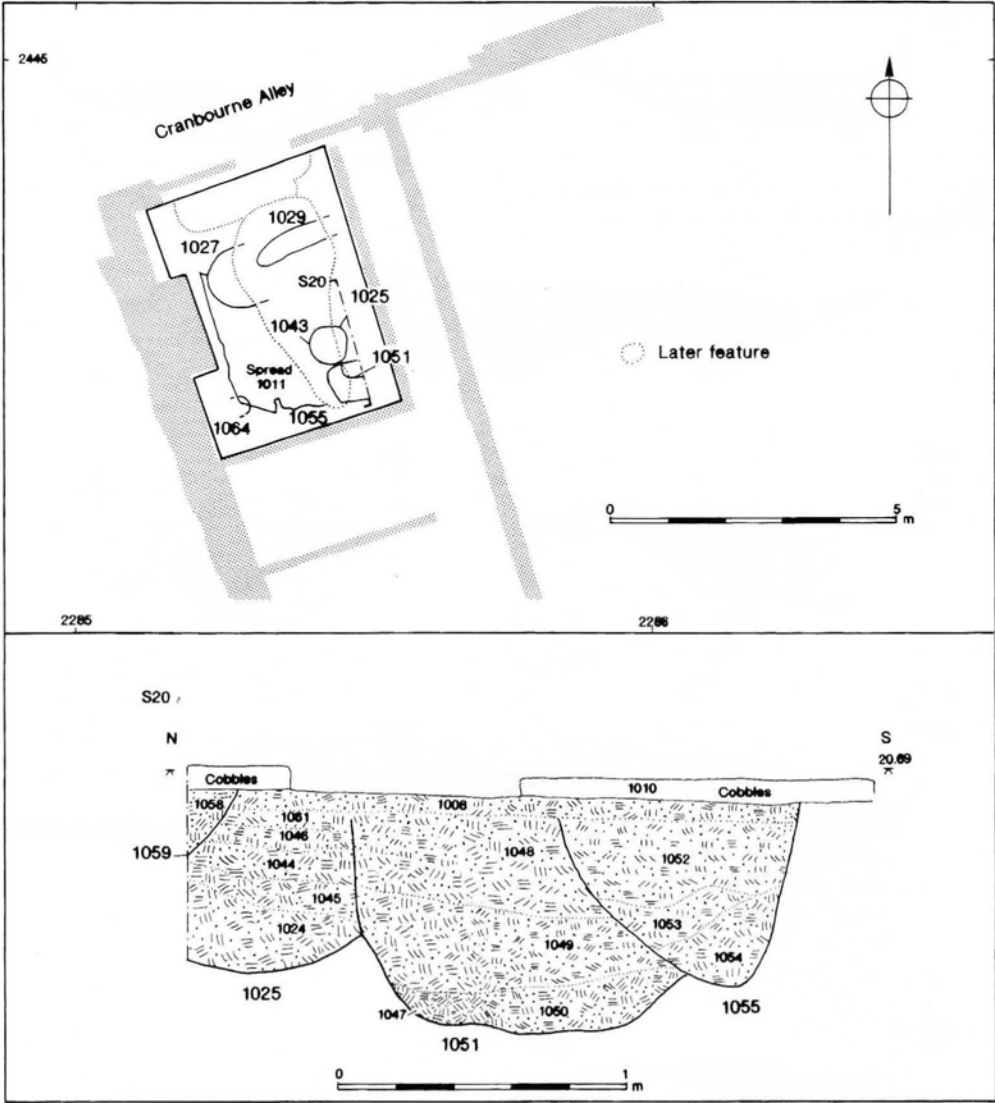


Fig. 5 Area 1: Phase I, plan and section; scales as shown

PHASE II (14TH–16TH CENTURY) (Figs 6 and 7)

In Area 3 the remains of at least two metallated surfaces, probably street surfaces, lay along the northern edge of the excavated area and partly overlay the Phase I ditches and Structure 2. A relatively small ditch or gully (1558) truncated the upper fills of northern ditch 1555 along part of its length and may represent a later delineation of the south edge of East Street during Phase II. Virtually no contemporary structural remains survived in this area and it seems probable that most evidence for structures has been removed during clearance and the construction of later buildings along the East Street frontage. In Area 1, a wall foundation, perhaps belonging to Phase II, underlay later phases of wall along the Cranbourne Alley/East Street frontage and was

butted by a possibly contemporary wall which may have marked the west side of this building. Comparatively few other features or finds can be assigned to this phase.

METALLED SURFACES AND ASSOCIATED FEATURES (Figs 4 and 6)

Layer 1507 along the north-east edge of Area 3 was a remnant of metallised surface 0.12m thick which comprised fragments of limestone in a matrix of reddish brown sand. Part of surface 1507 had slumped into the top of pits 1546 and 1548. A further, smaller remnant of this surface, 1528, lay approximately 5m to the west. A single sherd of 12th–14th-century pottery was recovered from layer 1507.

Layer 1526 was a later remetalling, separated from surface 1507 by a thin layer of dirt represented by layer 1527. Only a restricted area of metallising 1526 survived, set in a shallow

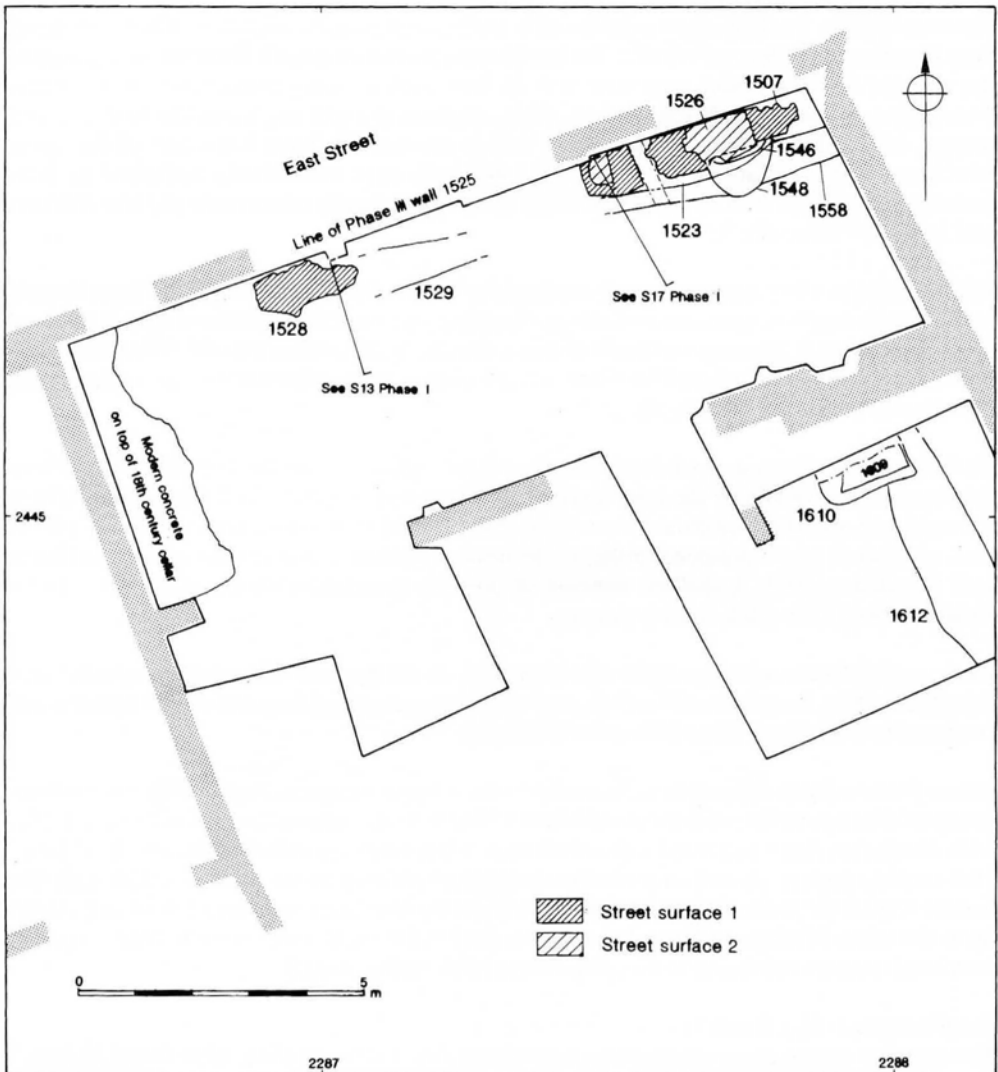


Fig. 6 Area 3, Phases II and III, plan; scale as shown

cut/worn area 1523. It consisted of fragments of limestone that were in turn sealed by several larger sub-rectangular fragments placed end on; the latter perhaps representing a kerb rather than a surface.

Ditch/Gully 1558 was aligned approximately east–west and lay along the southern edge of metalling 1507 which may have been contemporary with it. Only a short length of ditch/gully 1558 survived, elsewhere having been largely truncated. However, feature 1529 (see Fig. 4, S14) may represent a westerly continuation of this ditch and lay between and cut ditches 1555 and 1565. Ditch/gully 1558 was V-shaped in profile, 0.7m wide and a maximum of 0.4m deep, and was filled with a single deposit of mid brown sandy loam containing occasional fragments of limestone. This fill produced two sherds of 12th–14th-century pottery.

STRUCTURES AND RELATED FEATURES

Structure 3 (Fig. 7): The slight remains of a wall foundation, 1018, for a building fronting onto Cranbourne Alley, survived in the north-west corner of Area 1. Both the north wall of the present County Hotel structure and its late 17th-century predecessor reused this foundation. A further wall foundation, 1031, aligned at right angles to the frontage and butting 1018, also belongs to this phase and is assumed to have been part of the same structure. Wall foundations 1018 and 1031 had both been extensively disturbed by later features and it is difficult to be certain about any further details concerning the construction and layout of Structure 3.

Wall foundation 1018 consisted of sub-rectangular lumps of sandstone which had been roughly coursed with intervening layers of slates and bonded with puddled red-brown clay. It survived up to a height of 0.25m and was built within a trench, 1021, cutting natural. This foundation trench produced two sherds of 15th–16th-century pottery along with thirteen earlier sherds and a perforated whetstone (Fig. 8, 5).

Wall foundation 1031 survived over a length of 4.5m and up to a height of 0.09m, but had been destroyed in the middle by the insertion of a later fireplace. It butted wall foundation 1018 at the north end, and at the south end was a short stub suggesting that it originally continued to the east; whether or not it continued further to the south is unclear. It was of similar construction to wall foundation 1018. A shallow remnant of possible foundation trench, 1032, contained a single sherd of 12th–14th-century pottery.

Floor surface/make-up layer 1036 was truncated on all but one side where it abutted wall foundation 1031. It consisted of a dark grey silty clay containing frequent slate fragments and produced two sherds of 12th–14th-century pottery.

Linear feature 1612, aligned at right angles to the street frontage in Area 3 (Fig. 6), has been interpreted as a possible robbed-out foundation trench. It was at least 4m in length, up to 1.25m wide and 0.45m deep, and filled with a dark brown loam which produced nine sherds of 14th–15th-century pottery as well as a smaller quantity of residual earlier material. Although this feature was on the same alignment as the east wall line of Phase I Structure 2 it did not extend up to the street frontage and may have been a ditch rather than a structural feature. No other structural features belonging to this phase were identified in Area 3.

PITS/POSTHOLES (Figs 6 and 7)

Two features representing small pits or large postholes, 1546 and 1548, were found in Area 3 under the remains of metalled surface 1507 which had slumped into the top of them. Feature

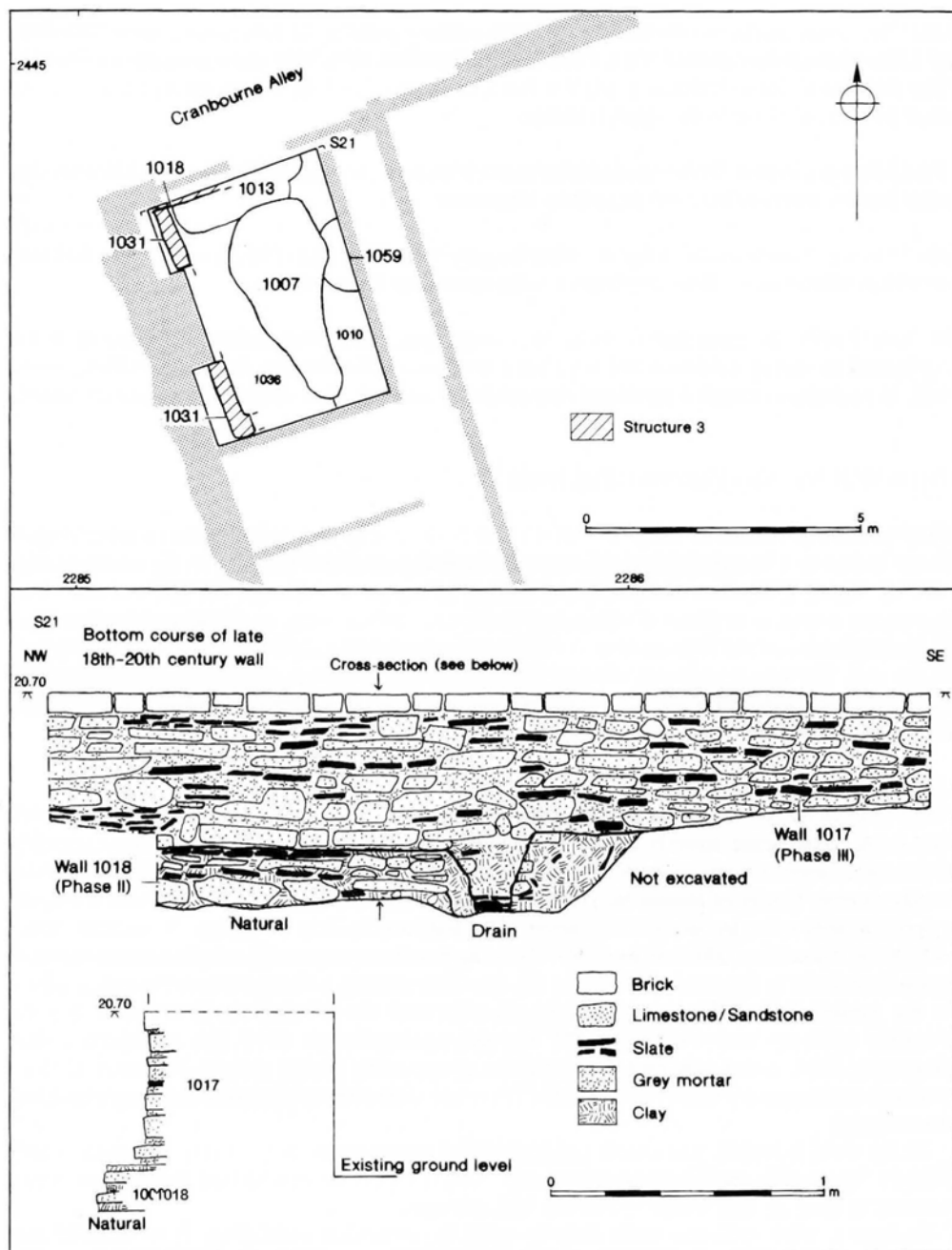


Fig. 7 Area 1: Phases II and III, plan and section; scales as shown

1546 cut 1548 which in turn cut posthole 1569, a Phase I feature assigned to Structure 2. It remains possible that features 1546 and 1548 were successive replacements of posthole 1569 and should therefore also be assigned to Phase 1. However, although 1548 produced no finds

and 1546 contained seven sherds of 12th–14th-century pottery, the latter also contained a sherd of 15th–16th-century glazed ware. On balance, therefore, they have been assigned to Phase II. The purpose of these features is unclear but a structural function seems most probable given their position so close to the street frontage.

Pit 1546 was circular, 0.65m in diameter and 0.35m deep, and filled with a greyish brown silty clay loam containing frequent limestone fragments.

Pit 1548 was roughly oval, at least 1.18m long by 1.2m wide and 0.4m deep. It was filled with a reddish brown sandy loam containing some limestone fragments.

In Area 1 only the truncated remains of a single pit, 1059, may belong to Phase II, but it contained no dating evidence and may have been an earlier feature. A small, shallow scoop, 406, in evaluation trench 4 produced one medieval and one 15th–16th-century pottery sherd.

PHASE III (17TH–20TH CENTURY) (Figs 6 and 7)

Fragmentary structural remains in Areas 1 and 3 indicate an extensive phase of rebuilding in stone in the late 17th century and the encroachment of part of this building on the southern edge of East Street. Clearance and possible terracing of the ground along East Street at this time, during the subsequent phase of rebuilding in the late 18th century, or during major alterations at the beginning of the 20th century, is likely to have removed earlier floor levels and deposits in the area. The paucity of finds relating to this structural sequence means that dating is largely dependent on correlating the surviving remains with the documentary evidence which exists from the 16th century onwards.

STRUCTURE 4

Wall 1525 in Area 3 lay under the late 18th-century building frontage along East Street which had been constructed directly on top of it. Wall 1525 survived to a height of approximately 0.3m and comprised two courses of rectangular granite blocks bonded with a yellowish brown sandy mortar. Traces of plaster survived on the inner face and a blocked door, 0.9m wide, lay approximately midway along the frontage. The wall was built in a shallow foundation trench which cut Phase II metallated surface 1507 showing that there was a realignment or encroachment upon East Street at this time, probably in the late 17th century, a change also reflected by a kink in the present line of the east wall at its junction with the existing north wall (see Fig. 6). Possibly contemporary with wall 1525 was sub-rectangular pit 1610; this contained a slate flagstone, 1609, which was probably a pad for a supporting timber upright. No traces of floor surfaces contemporary with either the late 17th or late 18th-century phases of building/rebuilding were found.

To the west, in Area 2, was a rectangular spread of concrete covering an area of approximately 12m by 5m (see Fig. 6); this is thought to cap a large cellar or cellars, known from documentary sources to have existed on the site in the 18th century.

In Area 1, wall 1017 was built directly upon Phase II wall 1018 (Fig. 7). Wall 1017 was composed of roughly coursed lumps of sandstone and some slate, bonded with a grey sandy mortar. Like wall 1525, wall 1017 also retained traces of a plaster facing on the inside. Built into the bottom of the wall was what appeared to be the remains of a blocked stone-lined drain extending beneath the wall out into the street.

Along the western edge of Area 1 was a cobbled surface, 1010, which sealed the earlier Phase I pits but which had been extensively cut away by two large, later pits (1007 and 1013)

of probable 18th-century date. The surviving remnant of surface measured 4.6m by 0.8m, was 0.15m thick, and was partly covered by a burnt layer, 1009, up to 0.2m deep. Neither the cobbled surface or the burnt layer produced any finds, but a 17th-century date is considered most probable. No later surfaces survived beneath the recent concrete floor.

OTHER FEATURES

The two large pits in Area 1, 1007 and 1013 (Fig. 7), contained much stone rubble along with some pottery and vessel glass of 17th–18th-century date. The largest, 1007, was irregular in shape, up to 4m long, 2m wide and 1m deep. Both pits may have been dug to extract clay, although this seems unlikely given their internal location, and it is possible that they were ‘soft spots’ resulting from earlier pits which were subsequently dug out and filled with hard core. Alternatively, they may represent the initial digging out for a cellar which was never built.

Later features elsewhere included a small, sub-rectangular pit of 18th-century date in evaluation trench 4, and a large, possibly rectangular pit (not bottomed) of 18th–19th-century date in evaluation trench 5. The surface of the natural in evaluation trench 5 showed clear evidence of having been terraced, probably in the 18th century, and lay at an average height of c. 21.60m OD.

Other features were confined to a variety of service trenches, particularly in the passageway in Area 4, and recent construction trenches.

FINDS

POTTERY Lorraine Mephram

A total of 237 sherds (2902g) was recovered from all stages of work on the site, of which 183 sherds (1653g) are of medieval date, and the remainder post-medieval. Only the medieval material is considered in detail here.

FABRICS AND FORMS

The medieval material was divided into thirteen separate fabric types on the basis of the range and size of macroscopic inclusions. These fabric types have been alpha-numerically coded, following the Wessex Archaeology standard recording system (Morris 1992), as either sandy fabrics (Group Q) or calcareous fabrics (Group C), based on the dominant inclusion, although it may be noted that the distinctions between the two groups, particularly for those fabrics containing mixed inclusions, are not always clear-cut. For the purposes of this discussion, the fabrics are grouped according to perceived visual similarities which are likely to reflect common sources (Groups 1 and 2), with other fabrics considered separately (Group 3). Fabric totals are presented in Table 1.

Group 1: Fabrics containing a mixture of quartz, flint/chert and limestone

C400 Hard, fine, micaceous silty matrix, containing sparse (3-10%) to moderate (10-20%), poorly sorted crushed limestone <1mm; rare (<3%) subrounded quartz <1mm; rare iron oxides <1mm; rare carbonaceous material <1mm. Handmade with a slightly soapy or corky texture; irregular firing.

C401 Hard, fine, slightly micaceous silty matrix, containing moderate, poorly sorted crushed limestone <2mm; very rare subrounded quartz <1mm; rare iron oxides <1mm. Handmade; irregular firing.

Q400 Hard, fine, slightly micaceous, silty matrix, containing sparse to moderate, poorly sorted, subrounded quartz <1mm; rare subangular flint/chert <2mm; rare limestone <1mm; rare iron oxides <1mm. Handmade with a ‘pimply’ surface texture; irregular firing.

Fabric	No	Wt (g.)	%
GROUP 1 FABRICS			
C400	13	70	6.2
C401	27	214	18.9
Q400	18	134	11.8
Q401	22	114	10.1
Q402	38	311	27.4
Q403	22	224	19.8
Q409	3	66	5.8
Sub-total	143	1133	68.5
GROUP 2 FABRICS			
Q405	20	286	62.6
Q406	3	18	3.9
Q407	6	122	26.7
Q408	4	31	6.8
Sub-total	33	457	27.7
GROUP 3 FABRICS			
Q404	6	46	2.8
Q410	1	17	1.0
Sub-total	7	63	3.8
OVERALL TOTAL	183	1653	-

Table 1 Pottery fabric totals

Q401 Hard, fine, slightly micaceous silty matrix, containing moderate, poorly sorted, subrounded quartz <2mm; rare subangular flint/chert <1mm; very rare limestone <1mm; rare iron oxides <1mm. Handmade with a 'pimply' surface texture; irregular firing.

Q402 Hard, moderately coarse matrix containing moderate to common (20–30%), fairly well sorted, subrounded quartz <1mm; rare flint/chert <1mm; rare limestone/calcite <5mm; rare iron oxides <0.5 mm. Handmade; irregular firing.

Q403 Hard, moderately coarse matrix, containing moderate, fairly poorly sorted subrounded quartz <1mm; rare flint/chert <2mm; very rare limestone <3mm. Handmade; irregular firing.

Q409 Hard, moderately coarse matrix with a slightly soapy feel, slightly micaceous, containing moderate, poorly sorted, subangular quartz <1.5mm; moderate, poorly sorted crushed limestone <2mm; rare iron oxides <0.5mm. Handmade; unoxidised with oxidised interior.

Diagnostic sherds are scarce, but those that are present (13 rims) indicate that these fabrics were used predominantly for handmade jars with flaring necks and a variety of rim forms (Fig. 8.1, 2). Rims may have been wheel-finished. One dish with a finger-impressed rim in fabric Q402 was also identified (Fig. 8.3), and one thumb-impressed strap handle in fabric Q403 probably derives from a jug or pitcher. Firing of all these fabrics is variable, although cores at least are generally unoxidised. Vessels in these fabrics are almost unremittably plain; apart from the decorated bowl rim mentioned above, there is one other finger-impressed rim, from a jar in fabric Q403 (Fig. 8.4), and one combed body sherd in C401. Three body sherds in fabric Q403 are glazed externally.

These mixed-temper coarsewares form part of a tradition identified over a wide area of north Dorset, south Somerset and north Devon between the 10th and 14th centuries. Comparable coarsewares have been found, for example, at Sherborne (Harrison and Williams 1979, groups A and B), Ilchester (Pearson 1982, groups 16 and 18) and Exeter (Allan 1984, fabric 20). Given the wide distribution, it is likely that a number of production centres were producing these wares, although as yet no kilns have been identified. Potential sources in the Ilchester area and in Taunton itself have been postulated (Pearson 1982, 180; 1984).

Group 2: Finer sandy fabrics

- Q405 Hard, moderately fine matrix, containing common, well sorted, subrounded quartz <0.25mm; very rare subangular flint/chert <3mm. Handmade; variable firing.
- Q406 Hard, fine, micaceous matrix, containing moderate, well sorted, subrounded quartz <0.125mm; rare iron oxides <0.125mm; very rare carbonaceous material <1mm. Wheelthrown; oxidised, generally with unoxidised core.
- Q407 Hard, fine matrix, containing moderate, well sorted, subrounded quartz <0.125mm; rare iron oxides <0.125mm. Wheelthrown; oxidised.
- Q408 Hard, fine matrix, containing common, well sorted, rounded quartz <0.25mm; very rare iron oxides <0.25 mm. Wheelthrown; oxidised or unoxidised.

These finer sandy fabrics are more frequently, although not invariably, glazed and are used for strap-handled jug forms; no other vessel forms can be identified. Decoration is again scarce; one sherd of fabric Q405 has combed decoration, and two body sherds, in fabrics Q406 and Q408 respectively, have applied slip bands.

This group of fabrics may be identified as products of the Donyatt kilns (Coleman-Smith and Pearson 1988). These first appeared in Taunton by the late 13th century (Pearson 1982; C Burrow 1988), and quickly became the predominant pottery types, eclipsing all other types in previous circulation. The handmade fabric Q405 may be equated with the earliest identified Donyatt products of the 13th century (Coleman-Smith and Pearson 1988, 107); from the 14th century all products appear to have been wheelthrown. The three wheelthrown fabrics described here are all very similar visually and may merely be minor variations of the same fabric.

Group 3: Other fabrics

- Q404 Hard, moderately coarse matrix, containing common, fairly well-sorted subrounded quartz <2mm. Handmade; unoxidised with oxidised interior.
- Q410 Hard, moderately fine matrix; sparse subrounded quartz <1mm; rare irregular ferrous inclusions (?slag) <2mm. Wheelthrown; unoxidised, pale-firing (buff/cream).

Both fabrics occur only as plain, unglazed body sherds. Fabric Q410, and probably also Q404, represent single vessels. Both fabrics stand out as visually dissimilar to fabrics of Groups 1 and 2. Fabric Q410, pale-firing and with ?slag inclusions, is particularly distinctive, and matches descriptions of a type found at one of the Bristol production sites, dated to the 14th century or later (Dawson *et al.* 1972, fabric A). Fabric Q404 is a fairly good match for the Laverstock-type coarsewares of the Salisbury area; it is uncertain whether these sherds represent the mid 13th century or later coarsewares comparable to the Laverstock kiln products (Musty *et al.* 1969), or the earlier (12th/early 13th century) tripod pitchers which may have derived from the same source area (Vince 1981).

CHRONOLOGY AND SOURCES

The type series published for Taunton by Pearson (1984) remains the most comprehensive study of medieval pottery in the town, running from the 10th century right through the medieval

period, and is based on a combination of fabric and form types. Some independent dating is available, but otherwise the dating for the various types relies on parallels with fabrics and forms from other sites in the region, most notably Ilchester (Pearson 1982). It was not considered appropriate, however, to use this type series as a basis for analysis of the County Hotel pottery, because of the small quantity of material present, and the difficulties of correlating pottery types in the absence of diagnostic vessel forms. Pearson's type series serves to illustrate the longevity of certain basic fabric types, such as the fabrics with mixed quartz/limestone/flint inclusions (equivalent to Group 1 fabrics, above), which were in use by the 10th century and continued at least until the 14th century.

This longevity is reflected in the simpler type series adopted by C. Burrow (1988), in which these mixed-temper coarsewares fall into three groups dated between the 11th and the 14th century (*ibid.*, groups I–III). It is apparent from both type series that close dating of the Group 1 fabrics as described above would be extremely difficult, particularly given the dearth of diagnostic vessel forms. The most that may be suggested is that the absence of the relatively soft, thicker-walled fabrics characteristic of the 10th and 11th centuries indicates a later date range for the County Hotel material, between the 12th and the 14th centuries.

With the exception of the handmade fabric Q405, the Donyatt products (Group 2) are equally difficult to date closely, since it is apparent that the 14th century potting tradition there continued into the 15th century with little change, and possibly even into the 16th century.

Within the stratigraphic sequence defined for the County Hotel, Group 1 fabrics occur in both of the medieval phases (I and II), but in Phase II they are supplemented by the finer sandy fabrics of Group 2. Given the potentially long timespan of the Group 1 fabrics, it is impossible to say whether they are redeposited in Phase II contexts. It must be stressed that quantities of pottery in all cases are very small; no context in phases 1 or 2 produced more than 20 sherds in total. In Phase II contexts, the handmade Donyatt fabric Q405 occurs in nearly every case with wheelthrown wares.

ILLUSTRATED VESSELS (Fig. 8)

1. Jar rim, fabric C401; handmade.
2. Jar rim, fabric C401; handmade.
3. Dish with finger-impressed rim, fabric Q402; handmade.
4. Jar rim, finger-impressed, fabric Q403; handmade.

OTHER FINDS Lorraine Mephram

Only finds from medieval contexts are included here. These were very scarce, and comprise nine small and undiagnostic fragments (191g) of fired clay or ceramic building material, all in a friable, coarse sandy fabric with prominent flint/chert and slate inclusions; eight pieces of ironworking slag (870g); four fragments of roofing slate; and an almost complete, perforated, mica schist whetstone (Fig. 8.5; from foundation trench 1021, Structure 3).

ANIMAL BONE Sheila Hamilton-Dyer

A small assemblage of animal bone was recovered from 38 contexts, mainly from the two medieval phases (Phases I and II).

METHODS

Identifications were made using the modern comparative collections of S. Hamilton-Dyer. The material is not in good condition and many of the bones show recent fractures; where possible they have been joined and counted as single bones. Undiagnostic fragments have been divided

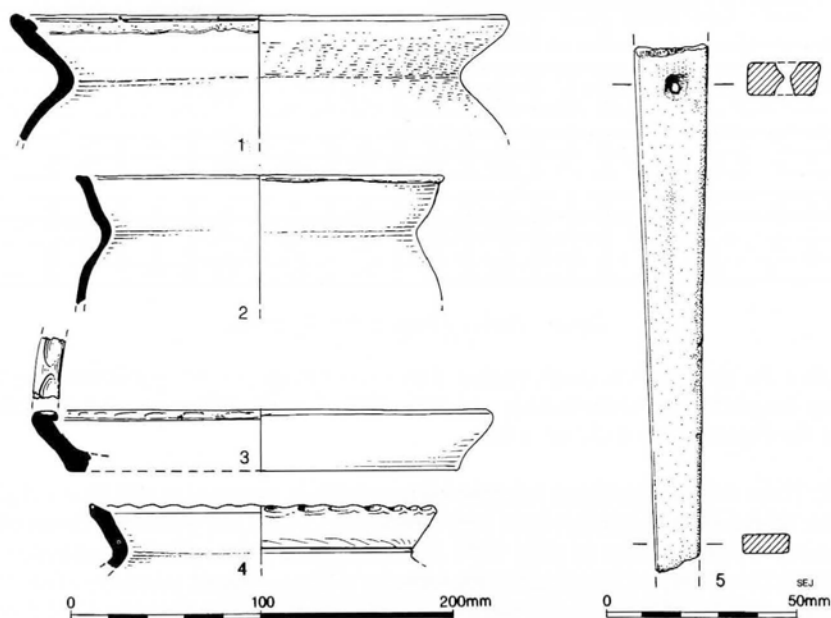


Fig. 8 Finds: Pottery (1:4) and whetstone (1:2)

into cattle/horse sized (LAR) and sheep/pig sized (SAR) with a further group identified only as mammalian. Sheep and goat were separated where possible following Boessneck (1969) and by direct comparison with recent material. The few measurements are in millimetres and follow the methods of von den Driesch (1976). The sheep withers height was calculated using the factors recommended by Driesch and Boessneck (1974). Full details of each fragment or group of fragments are contained in the archive.

RESULTS

A total of 169 bones was recorded, 128 from medieval contexts and 41 from post-medieval and unphased contexts. Many contexts contribute only one or two bones. The largest group of 36 includes 31 broken cattle/horse-sized fragments, some of which are likely to be from other recorded bones but which cannot be satisfactorily joined. The taxa identified are horse, cattle, sheep, goat, pig, dog, rat, jackdaw and buzzard. Cattle bones, and fragments of this size, are slightly more frequent than the combined sheep and goat total. The other taxa contribute just a few bones. The species distribution by phase is listed in Table 2.

Preservation varies; a few fragments are in very good condition but much of the material is eroded and some bones are very poorly preserved and fragile. Surface detail is still visible on most of the remains.

Phase I: A large proportion of the 92 bones from this phase are unidentified cattle-sized fragments from ditch 1555, as described above. The bones in this feature are poorly preserved. They include a probably complete horse pelvis, parts of a cattle jaw and a metatarsus, the jaw of an adult horse, a dog vertebra and a rat humerus. Of the remainder, the twelve bones from pit 1043 are of note as they include three goat horn cores and two further sheep or goat horn core fragments. Cattle bones from this pit comprise fragments of prime meat bones, two of humerus and one each of radius and scapula, two of which have butchery marks. A jackdaw humerus is

	Horse	Cattle	Sheep	Goat	Sheep/ goat	Pig	Cattle size	Sheep size	Mam.	Dog	Bird	Rat	Total
Phase I													
Sub-total	4	14	0	3	5	3	56	2	1	1	2	1	92
%	4.3	15.2	0	3.3	5.4	3.3	60.9	2.2	1.1	1.1	2.2	1.1	
Phase II													
Sub-total	0	8	3	2	5	1	8	7	1	0	1	0	36
%	0	22.2	8.3	5.6	13.9	2.8	22.2	19.4	2.8	0	2.8	0	
Phase III													
Sub-total	0	12	3	0	1	3	12	8	0	0	2	0	41
%	0	29.3	7.3	0	2.4	7.3	29.3	19.5	0	0	4.9	0	
Total	4	34	6	5	11	7	76	17	2	1	5	1	169
%	2.4	20.1	3.6	3	6.5	4.1	45	10.1	1.2	0.6	3	0.6	-

Table 2 Animal bone totals by phase

also present. As pit 1043 was much truncated by later activity it is not possible to say whether these few fragments are representative of the whole deposit. Other contexts contain a few bones of the expected domestic ungulates.

Phase II: There are only 36 bones from the eleven contexts assigned to this phase. Again goat is present, represented by another horn core (from gully 1558) and a phalanx (from pit 1546). Sheep bones are also present in gully 1558 and a complete radius gives an estimated withers height of 0.522m. Gully 1029 contained the femur of a large buzzard, probably a female. Other identified material is of the domestic ungulates cattle, sheep/goat and pig. Pit 1584 contained a sheep/goat jaw of a mature but not aged animal.

Phase III: The 41 bones are mainly of cattle and cattle-sized fragments. Sheep, pig and bird fragments were also noted. Horse, goat and dog are absent. The cattle bones in pit 1007 and the pig in context 508 (evaluation trench 5) are large and are likely to be post-medieval or recent.

DISCUSSION

Most of this very small sample is not untypical of medieval material in southern England. The domestic ungulates are all represented and there is a bone of dog, as well as gnawed bones. The lack of the expected domestic poultry may be simply that none were recovered from these particular contexts; bird bones usually account for about 10% of fragments from medieval town sites but amounts can vary greatly in individual deposits. The buzzard bone represents a bird much reduced in recent years but they were once a common sight and may have been regarded as a pest. The rat bone could not be assigned to species but is likely to be black rat in a medieval context, unless intrusive.

The goat material follows the pattern reported from other medieval town sites; goat is uncommon and usually represented by horn cores with very few other bones. The presence of a phalanx may indicate the use of skins as the horns and feet could be left in the skin, to be removed during processing. The apparently high proportion of goat at this site should be treated with caution as the sample size is extremely small. At Exeter most of the goat remains were of horn cores and feet and amounted to just under 10% of the sheep/goat total, similar to the amounts recorded in the Domesday Book (Maltby 1979).

The sheep withers height, and the general appearance of the other bones, is typical of the very small sheep found at medieval Exeter and Taunton (Maltby 1979; O'Connor 1982) and also at Southampton (Bourdillon 1988). While some contexts may represent the disposal of domestic rubbish, others such as ditch 1555 do not as they contain large pieces of bone normally regarded as waste.

The pits examined here were severely truncated and produced relatively little material; even small volumes from similar features on urban sites elsewhere can be very rich in species and

number of bones. Fish, for example, are absent, although this may be partly due to the soil conditions. These contexts may, therefore, represent a low status area, or perhaps reflect the less urban nature of Taunton at this period.

CARBONISED PLANT MATERIAL

Three bulk samples of 10 litres were submitted for analysis, all from Phase I features (pit 1043, and ditches 1555 and 1565).

The flots from all three samples were very small but did not include much rooty material. The two samples from the ditches both contained a high number of unburnt weed seeds, which can be indicators of potential contamination, along with sparse amounts of grain and charcoal fragments, but no chaff or burnt weed seeds. The pit sample also produced a sparse quantity of grain, but no chaff or burnt weed seeds.

DISCUSSION

Only a relatively small part of Taunton has been subject to archaeological evaluation, excavation or observation, and although the excavations at the County Hotel were not large, they nevertheless provided a rare opportunity to investigate a street frontage within the medieval town. These excavations, therefore, provide a welcome addition to the earlier work in Taunton, much of which has already been published (Leach 1984; I. Burrow 1988).

The site is outside the area of the postulated late Saxon settlement which is thought to lie to the south-west of the castle, itself possibly occupying the site of the former Saxon Minster (Leach 1984, 75). Taunton castle was constructed in the mid 12th century, and it may have been at this time that the borough was moved or emphasis shifted to the east, to the triangular market place bounded by Fore Street at the junction of North Street, East Street and what is now Bath Place all of which were early elements in the medieval street pattern (High Street was probably a later, 14th-century insertion into the existing layout). Certainly, no features or finds of demonstrably pre 12th-century date have been found within the medieval defensive circuit (which is also likely to have been constructed in the 12th century), and this is also the case at the County Hotel site.

PHASE I (LATE 12TH–14TH CENTURY)

The results of the evaluation and excavations showed that surviving archaeological deposits, dating from the late 12th century onwards, were concentrated along the East Street frontage. (More precise dating has proved impossible given the relative paucity of finds and the absence of closely datable artefacts). These deposits lay close to the surface and it is clear that there was never any great depth of stratigraphy; this absence of deeply stratified deposits has been noted elsewhere in Taunton (eg Leach 1984, 93).

Layer 1550 in Area 3 was probably the earliest deposit on the site and has been interpreted as a trampled layer, perhaps the disturbed surface of the natural. It may have been broadly contemporary with the earliest structural remains comprising Structure 1.

Whether the postholes assigned to Structure 1 represented a post-built timber building(s), fences or similar insubstantial structures is unclear. The postholes formed little in the way of a coherent pattern and there is no obvious evidence that they reflected any property divisions within this area.

The two ditches, 1565 and 1555, which succeeded Structure 1 appear to represent successive boundary ditches along the southern edge of East Street. The evidence suggests that the earliest

ditch (1565) was established in the late 12th or 13th century and that its line was maintained for perhaps up to a century. This ditch contained comparatively few finds, but apart from a single recut/replacement (1555) there was no evidence for any cleaning out. The ditch line was traced over a distance of at least 30m, with a terminal in Area 1 perhaps marking an access into the plot from East Street or the extent of the property to the west. No contemporary structures were identified within the excavated area, and both ditches produced relatively large quantities of unburnt weed seeds which might suggest, if they are not contaminants, that the plot was vacant at this time. Whether these ditches represent a segment of a general feature beside the street or relate to the boundaries of a specific land plot cannot be ascertained.

By perhaps the late 13th or 14th century, the ditches had become infilled and were built over by Structure 2. Structure 2 appeared to comprise the remains of a substantial post-built structure which fronted directly onto East Street and was aligned either at right angles or parallel to it. It seems most likely that the building ran parallel to the street, and if so would have been 8m long and 6m wide. Postholes 1549, 1569 and 1581 would both have held corner posts (that in the south-east corner may have been destroyed by later features), and 1573 and 1592 probably held ridge posts. A span of 8m is rather wide whichever way the building was aligned, and intermediate posts would have been required along the north and south sides to support the roof structure, though no trace of these was found; possibly such posts were supported on post-pads which have not survived. Post-built structures have rarely been found in Taunton though the very substantial remains of a building 18m long and 6m wide, interpreted as an open-sided, covered market building of timber-framed construction, was excavated at 1 High Street in 1974 (Leach 1984, 94–8). No features or surfaces contemporary with Structure 2 were found in Area 3, either inside or outside the building. However, a small group of pits, most heavily truncated, were found in Area 1 some 15m to the west which may have been contemporaneous. Although the pits were quite small and contained few finds there is no evidence that they were used for anything other than the disposal of domestic rubbish; unfortunately the environmental data proved of no assistance in their interpretation. The concentration of pits and the apparent absence of structural remains would suggest that this plot remained vacant at this time, though possibly it belonged to or formed part of an originally larger plot which contained Structure 2.

The relatively thick layer of soil overlying natural and partly filling pit 604 in evaluation trench 6 may represent subsoil development over a long period in an area which appears as orchard on Wood's 1840 map of Taunton. This deposit contained only a few small sherds of medieval pottery and animal bone which suggest that it was not an area where large quantities of rubbish were disposed of.

The arrangement and layout of medieval burgable plots in this area of the town is probably closely reflected in Wood's plan of 1840, and the main groups of tenements are still clear on the OS 1:500 plan of 1870. Wood's plan shows the tenements to the south of East Street to extend back approximately 65m from the street frontage, almost three times the length of those behind Paul Street to the west. (Paul Street, like East Street, was one of the principal medieval streets and was in existence by the 13th century; Billet Street, to the east, is relatively recent and was laid out in 1847.) The north–south building lines within the County Hotel site shown on these plans, which correspond to the varying street frontage widths of Areas 1–3 (5, 7 and 11m respectively), probably reflect the widths of the original medieval burgable plots. If so, then Area 1 (pits), Area 2 (medieval deposits removed by a later cellar) and Area 3 (Structures 1 and 2) comprised three separate plots or properties whose boundaries have become fossilised in various external and internal walls of the County Hotel and the subsequent development (see Fig. 1c).

The triangular area of land known as Cheapside which lies between Area 1 and East Street was probably an early topographical feature, and this is reflected by the Phase I building and ditch alignments which appear to follow the southern edge of this (Cranbourne Alley) rather than the northward curving line of East Street. However, the possibility that Cranbourne Alley

represents an early continuation of East Street south of the market place has been discounted by excavations on its projected line (Burrow *et al.* 1980; I. Burrow 1988). It seems likely that Cheapside was originally open ground and it may not have been built over until perhaps the late 16th–17th century (see below).

The pottery from the Phase I features is overwhelmingly local in origin with probable sources including Ilchester and Taunton itself. However, the quantity of material is very small and there is a virtual absence of small finds.

Environmental evidence is also limited with only small quantities of mammal (horse, cattle, sheep/goat, pig, dog, rat) and bird (jackdaw); poultry were conspicuous by their absence. Sieving produced very small quantities of grain but no chaff, and although there were some unburnt weed seeds, burnt seeds were entirely absent.

Overall, the evidence from Phase I indicates that the site did not start to become extensively built-up until relatively late, in the late 13th or 14th century, and that prior to this it may have been mainly open ground with burgage plots defined by ditches and or fences. What few finds and environmental evidence there is suggests that occupation was domestic. However, only the street frontages were examined in detail, and it is possible that any evidence for crafts and industries may lie in the largely uninvestigated backyard areas.

PHASE II (14TH–16TH CENTURY)

There are few features and finds from this phase, probably because much has been lost as a result of later clearance and rebuilding, and the documentary sources provide the best source of evidence for continued occupation on the site.

Successive remnants of metalled surfaces in Area 3 have been interpreted as marking the southern extent of East Street which was later encroached upon, but no associated structural remains were identified. The only structural remains were those which survived in Area 1, though it is conceivable that they belong to Phase III. Little can be deduced from these fragmentary walls or footings, 1018 and 1031, except to say that they may represent the north-west corner of the earliest surviving stone structure on the site. Very few pits were found, perhaps reflecting the street frontage rather than backyard areas investigated.

It may be relevant to note that small-scale excavations at Kennedy's Old Yard in 1973–4, approximately 70m to the west of the County Hotel, suggested that the medieval burgage plots extended only *c.* 50m back from the East Street frontage (Leach 1984, 84–5). This line corresponds approximately with the southern edge of evaluation trench 5, and the subsequent southerly expansion of the plots by *c.* 15m in the 16th century (probably as far south as is shown on Wood's 1840 plan) would place the rear boundary line of the tenements midway between evaluation trenches 5 and 6.

The documentary records for the site (summarised by Bush, *nd*) record an inn called 'Le Thre Cuppys' present in 1555, and perhaps the surviving walls in Area 3 were part of this inn. The site was apparently large and included two houses and a vacant plot on Paul Street; whether it included all of Areas 1–3 is uncertain, though these may have been amalgamated into a single property by this time. In 1591 the triangular area of land known as Cheapside, to the north of Cranbourne Alley, was acquired by Robert Daveridge, the owner of the Three Cups. It was apparently occupied by the Swan Inn which remained until the site was redeveloped in 1822.

PHASE III (17TH–20TH CENTURY)

Only fragmentary structural remains of any pre late 18th-century buildings survived, and the documents again provide the main source of evidence for structural developments on the site during the 17th and 18th centuries (summarised by Bush, *nd*).

There was extensive rebuilding of the inn in the late 17th century, following demolition of the upper storeys in 1644 during the Civil War. This demolition was done so as to provide a clear view to the south-east from the outer walls of Taunton Castle, and provides further evidence that the inn must have been a substantial building by the mid 17th century. The inn is also recorded as having been burnt during this conflict which would have been an additional reason for it having been rebuilt. This rebuilding event may have involved clearance and some terracing of the sloping ground alongside East Street, thereby removing earlier structural remains, and the subsequent encroachment of the frontage onto the street. Wall 1525 in Area 3 and wall 1017 in Area 1 are both thought likely to belong to this phase of rebuilding, but a remnant of cobbling (1010) in Area 1 may be the only surviving contemporaneous surface. There is no doubt that the rebuilt inn was substantial for in 1773 it is recorded as having 20 bedrooms, two kitchens, a dining room which could hold 200 people, a brew house, cellars which could hold 80 hogsheads of liquor, two courtyards and stables and stalls for 200 (*sic*) horses. The cellars are thought to be those exposed in Area 2 and capped with concrete.

The inn was completely rebuilt again just over a century later, in 1784, and at that time included two gardens, one of which was an acre (*c.* 0.4ha) in extent and walled (presumably to the rear of the inn, occupying the area that later became the car park). Only relatively small parts of probable late 17th-century structures were found in the excavations, and this is probably a result of extensive demolition and clearance with perhaps only the footings of earlier walls along the East Street frontage retained in the new buildings.

Other building works followed at various times, most notably in 1844 and 1861, with the construction and rebuilding of the Assembly Rooms, in 1901 when there were major alterations and improvements, and between 1960 and 1990 when there were further major alterations and extensions.

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