

---

# ST PETER'S STREET NORTHAMPTON

---

EXCAVATIONS  
1973-1976



John H Williams

Following the designation of Northampton as an 'area of considerable expansion' and with the ensuing major development, a large scale programme of archaeological excavation has been undertaken since 1970. The discoveries made demonstrate probably continuous settlement on the site of the present town from the late 7th or early 8th century. In Late Saxon times Northampton became established as a midlands 'shire' town and by the 12th century it had grown into one of the six most prosperous towns in England. By the 14th century, however, medieval Northampton had begun a decline which was not really arrested until the Industrial Revolution.

This volume traces the development of a large area within the urban nucleus from Middle Saxon times through to the end of the Middle Ages. St. Peter's Street is particularly significant in showing how a 'local environment' rather than an individual house site evolved. There are also notable groups of pottery and other artefacts. This excavation, one of the largest medieval urban excavations undertaken in England, makes a most important contribution to the understanding of town origins and growth.

John H. Williams, M.A., has been Chief Archaeologist to Northampton Development Corporation since 1971.

*Cover illustration*

*Silver penny of Berhtwulf, King of Mercia  
AD 843-848*

*(see page 244 The Other Finds, NU7)*

---

# ST PETER'S STREET NORTHAMPTON

---

## EXCAVATIONS 1973-1976

John H Williams

**With contributions by**

F W Anderson M M Archibald J R B Arthur H Bamford  
D Barlow J Bayley A Boddington D Bramwell H F Cleere  
E Crowfoot G C Dunning E Eames B Ellis J G Evans M A Girling  
I H Goodall A D Hall M Harman B R Hartley A E R Harwell J Hunter  
R Hunter A K G Jones R T Jones H Keeley C A Keepax K Kilmurry  
K Langley M McCarthy D M Metcalf D T Moore W R G Moore  
G E Oakley P J Paradine S E Rigold B W Spencer D Sutherland  
C Wapples L E Webster D Williams F Williams C Wilson



PLATE 1 *General view of the north side of St. Peter's Street looking west. Late 15th century levels are showing.*



---

# FOREWORD

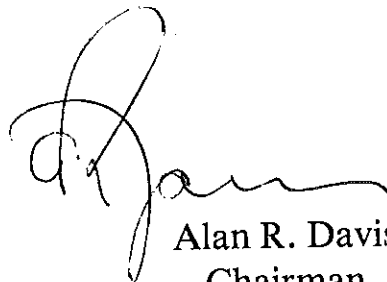
---

This, the second archaeological monograph produced by the Development Corporation, provides something of a contrast to the first. While the former concerned itself with the investigation of rural Iron Age settlements this considers the highly complex development of a major urban centre.

The St Peter's Street excavations have most successfully focussed attention on the growth of Northampton from the Saxon through to the medieval period; subsequent work in the same area has been extending our knowledge of the development of this early nucleus of the medieval town. It is perhaps appropriate that evidence of Northampton's early medieval prosperity is being uncovered at a time when the town is now once more assuming a significant national economic role.

This site, and details of others published elsewhere, are all part of a unified programme of research into Northampton's past. Inevitably there is some conflict of interests between development and conservation but the Development Corporation, in planning for Northampton's growth, has attempted to take account of historical and other environmental factors. Indeed, the Archaeological Section, established in 1970 and one of the earliest such 'Units' to be formed, has, in the years since then, been substantially modifying several of the established views of Northampton's history. It is abundantly clear that significant and major research programmes can be undertaken within a 'rescue' situation. With the number of archaeological sites diminishing yearly, the scarce archaeological resources currently available must be devoted, even more than at present, to such projects.

The Development Corporation gratefully acknowledges the help and support it has received over the years from numerous organisations and individuals and especially to the Department of the Environment for its continued financial assistance.



Alan R. Davis  
Chairman

Northampton Development Corporation



---

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

---

The success of the St Peter's Street excavation owes much to assistance from many sources.

Firstly I wish to thank Northampton Borough Council, Metropolitan Estates and Marsham Warren Taylor, Architects for access to the site. The work was financed primarily by the Department of the Environment and Northampton Development Corporation with additional funds provided by Northampton Borough Council. I am grateful to officers and staff from all the above organisations for help in various ways. The work could not have been undertaken without the continual support of the Board and Chief Officers of the Development Corporation.

Mr M McCarthy was assistant director of the excavations and supervisors included Mr A Boddington, Miss L Blanchard, Mr M Card, Mr R Hunter, Miss D Kenyon, Miss F MacDonald, Miss G Oakley and Mrs F Williams. Many other people assisted in the excavation and the processing of the finds.

I am also grateful to all the various contributors for their specialist reports. Numerous helpful comments have been provided and in particular I wish to thank Mrs M D Lobel and Professor G H Martin for advice on the historical background and Dr L Clarkson and Messrs L Biek and R Thompson for discussion of the tannery. Others are acknowledged in the respective sections.

Graphics have been largely the work of members of the Archaeological Section assisted by Mr M Kirkland.

I am particularly grateful to Mrs F Williams, Mr M Shaw, Miss G Oakley and Miss M Gryspeerdt for help with proof reading and final preparation of the text.

**Archaeological Monograph No. 2**

This volume has been printed with the aid of a grant  
from the Department of the Environment

© 1979 Northampton Development Corporation

ISBN 0 902711 09 1

Designed and produced by J Rawsthorne and J Birch  
of Northampton Development Corporation

Published by Northampton Development Corporation

Printed in England by Belmont Press

July 1979



# CONTENTS

FOREWORD  
*by Alan R Davis*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## THE SITE

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND <i>by J H Williams</i>	3
GENERAL INTRODUCTION <i>by J H Williams</i>	8
DESCRIPTION OF THE EXCAVATIONS	12
House 1 <i>by J H Williams with F Williams</i>	12
House 2 <i>by J H Williams with F Williams</i>	25
House 3 <i>by J H Williams with F Williams</i>	37
House 4 <i>by J H Williams with R Hunter</i>	46
Houses 5 and 6(?) <i>by J H Williams with R Hunter</i>	60
House 7 <i>by J H Williams</i>	63
House 8 <i>by J H Williams with A Boddington</i>	71
House 9 <i>by J H Williams</i>	84
House 10 <i>by J H Williams</i>	92
Trench E <i>by J H Williams</i>	107
Area N <i>by J H Williams</i>	110
THE MORTAR MIXERS <i>by J H Williams with contributions by F W Anderson, D Barlow, K Langley and C Wapples</i>	118
THE POST-MEDIEVAL DEVELOPMENT OF ST PETER'S STREET <i>by R Hunter</i>	134
SYNTHESIS <i>by J H Williams</i>	137

## THE POTTERY

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	151
INTRODUCTION <i>by M McCarthy</i>	151
GAZETTEER OF CERAMIC TYPES <i>by M McCarthy with contributions by K Kilmurry and D Williams</i>	153
ANALYSIS OF POTTERY BY HOUSE AREA <i>by M McCarthy (Samian identified by B R Hartley)</i>	166
POTTERY SYNTHESIS <i>by M McCarthy</i>	225
APPENDIX: ST NEOTS TYPE WARE <i>by R Hunter with a contribution by D Williams</i>	230

## THE OTHER FINDS

THE COINS, COUNTERS AND A TOKEN <i>by M M Archibald, D M Metcalf and S E Rigold</i>	243
THE RADIOCARBON DETERMINATIONS <i>by Carbon-14/Tritium Measurements Laboratory, AERE Harwell</i>	247
THE COPPER ALLOY OBJECTS <i>by G E Oakley and L E Webster with a contribution by J Bayley</i>	248
THE LEAD ALLOY OBJECTS <i>by G E Oakley and B W Spencer</i>	265
THE IRON OBJECTS <i>by I H Goodall, B Ellis and G E Oakley</i>	268
THE METALLURGICAL REMAINS <i>by H F Cleere</i>	278
THE HONES <i>by D T Moore and G E Oakley</i>	280
THE PURBECK MARBLE MORTAR <i>by G C Dunning</i>	284
THE QUERN AND MILLSTONE FRAGMENTS <i>by G E Oakley and F W Anderson</i>	285
THE SPINDLE WHORLS <i>by G E Oakley and A D Hall</i>	286
THE WORKED FLINTS <i>by H Bamford</i>	290
THE GLASS <i>by G E Oakley and J Hunter</i>	296
THE CLAY PIPES <i>by W R G Moore</i>	303
THE TEXTILES <i>by E Crowfoot</i>	306
THE WORKED BONE <i>by G E Oakley and M Harman</i>	308
THE CHARCOAL AND WOOD REMAINS <i>by G E Oakley</i>	319
THE ARCHITECTURAL FRAGMENTS <i>by C Wilson and F W Anderson</i>	320
THE TILES AND BRICKS <i>by F Williams, J H Williams and E Eames</i>	322
THE STONE ROOF TILES <i>by G E Oakley (stone identifications by D Sutherland)</i>	327
THE MAMMALIAN BONES <i>by M Harman</i>	328
THE BIRD BONES <i>by D Bramwell and M Harman</i>	333
THE AMPHIBIAN BONES <i>by R Jones</i>	334
THE FISH BONES <i>by A K G Jones</i>	335
THE SHELLFISH <i>by G E Oakley</i>	336
THE ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS <i>by C A Keepax, M A Girling, R T Jones, J R B Arthur, P J Paradine and H Keeley</i>	337
THE LAND MOLLUSCA <i>by J G Evans</i>	338

