THE SITE

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

by J H Williams

Northampton, centrally placed in the heart of England (Fig. 1), has only in recent times been reassuming its mantle as a nationally important economic centre after a period of virtual stagnation as a middling provincial market and county town. Also its later shoe-making fame has perhaps tended to obscure its earlier political and economic position. Only for a comparatively brief period did Northampton enter the first rank of towns but it is nonetheless a most interesting example of that group of towns that developed from Saxon times away from and independently of the Roman *civitas* capitals. Many of them became more than local market centres and some acquired the status of county towns.

Northampton has been a route centre and a focal point for the surrounding countryside from prehistoric times (Fig. 2). The river Nene provided a ready means of access to the heart of the Midlands from the east coast for settlers arriving from the continent and Grimes has argued that an important prehistoric trackway, the Jurassic Way, running from the South-west to Lincolnshire, would have crossed the river at Northampton (1951: 149). How early the important medieval route from Southampton northwards through Oxford became established is impossible to say but a Saxon origin at latest would seem reasonable.

The area is also attractive agriculturally. Extensive neolithic and Bronze Age flint scatters have been found on the lighter soils to the north of Northampton (Hall 1977, citing Hall and Martin forthcoming) and a neolithic causewayed enclosure is currently being excavated some two miles south-west of the present town centre (Bamford 1976). The purpose and function of such sites are still imperfectly understood but it is probable that they represent political, economic or religious foci although perhaps of a 'seasonal' kind.

In the Iron Age there was extensive settlement along the Nene valley (cf. e.g. Williams 1974a and Hollowell 1971) and the hillfort at Hunsbury was constructed approximately half a mile south of Briar Hill. Situated in a commanding position, the site dominated the river crossing and rich finds, including the well-known curvilinear decorated pottery, were discovered during 19th century ironstone quarrying (Fell 1937).

In the Roman period, with the Nene valley continuing as the tribal boundary between the Catuvellauni and the Coritani, the

Fig 1

Northampton's position

miles 0 30

centre of settlement shifted north of the river to Duston. The site is incapable of detailed interpretation, most of the finds being recovered during ironstone quarrying in the late 19th century (VCH Northants 1: 197), but it covered at least 20 acres and in its final form was probably a loosely organised, fairly typical 'small town' (Card *et al.* forthcoming). It must be seriously asked if it had its origins as a fort associated with the initial Roman military advance—with perhaps forts also at Towcester, Whilton Lodge and Irchester—but whether of military or civil origin a valley bottom settlement close to the river had replaced the earlier, Iron Age, hill-top site. Occasional finds of Roman tile, pottery and coins have been found in the western part of Northampton (Sharp 1882: 224; below pages 243, 322; etc.) and presumably there was some form of occupation in the immediate area but this is in no way unexpected in view of the great density of Roman sites along the Nene valley. Indeed, the Roman road between Duston and Irchester probably passed somewhere through the centre of the present town, perhaps even on the line of Marefair, Gold Street, etc. This latter thesis must, however, for the time being be treated as mere speculation.

As yet no definite central point can be demonstrated for the Early Saxon period although the concentration of Pagan Saxon cemetery and settlement sites around Northampton suggests that such a focus may ha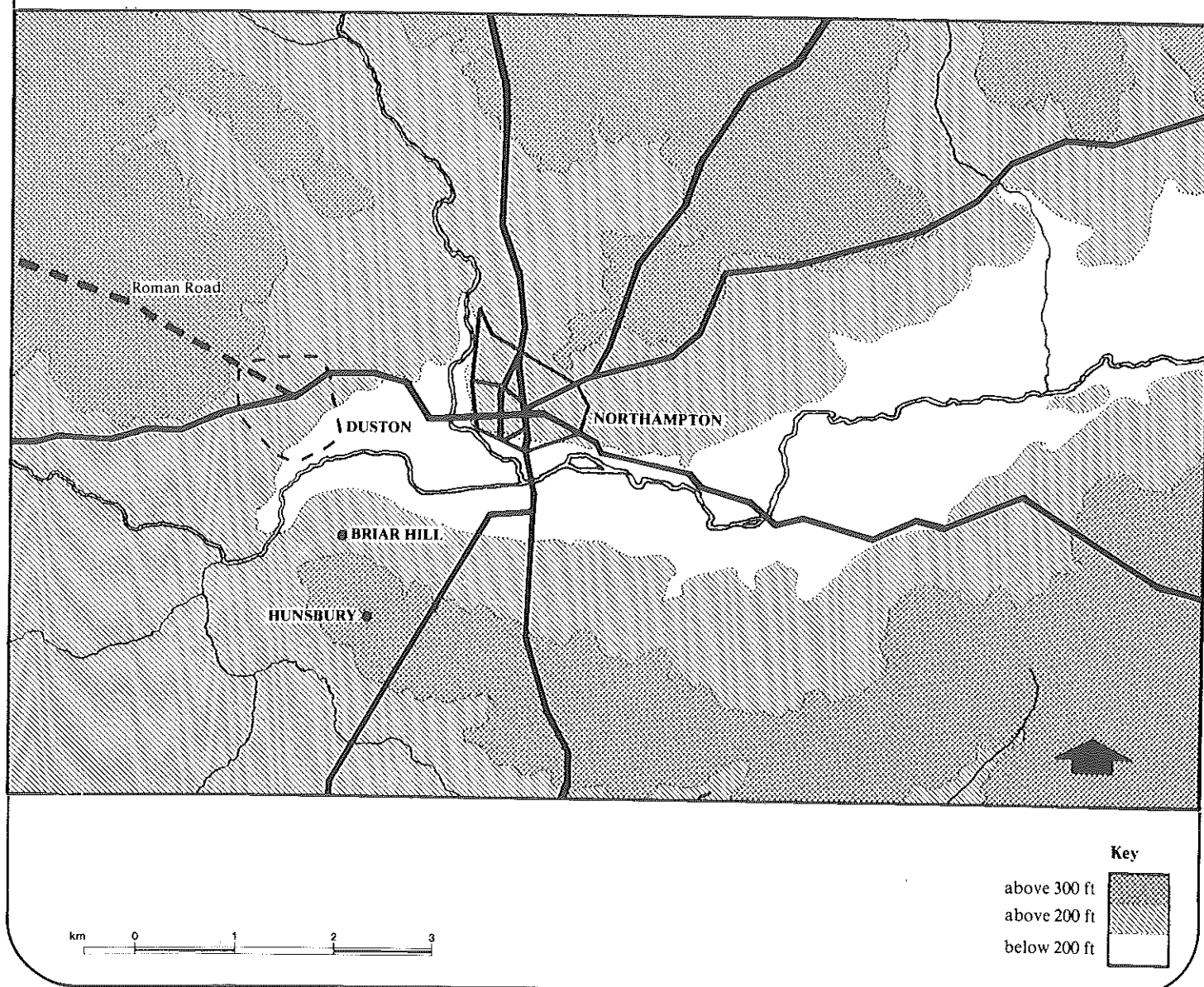ve existed at Northampton at this time (Williams J 1977). Current excavations in the Chalk Lane area are producing Pagan Saxon material including several fragments of decorated, bossed urn, which perhaps strengthens this hypothesis.

Certainly from the 8th century and possibly earlier there is a firmer basis for regarding the area at the west end of Northampton as a focus for the surrounding countryside. The first antecedent of the present St Peter's church was probably erected at this time (see below page 110ff) and whether the church resulted from royal, religious or thegnly initiative it surely reflects Northampton's position as a Mercian centre of some importance.

The archaeological evidence is scarce for the ensuing century or so but there is a dramatic increase of material from the period beginning *c.* 900. Northampton was now very much on the boundary of the Danelaw and at this time becomes an historical entity. The first documentary reference to Northampton occurs in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle under the year 913—'the army from Northampton . . . rode out'. Four years later the Chronicle reads 'And Earl Thurferth and the holds submitted to him (Edward) and so did all the army which belonged to Northampton as far north as the Welland'. This seems to indicate that before its capture by the Saxon King Edward Northampton was a Danish administrative centre for an area stretching as far north as the present boundary of the shire and Northampton continued subsequently as the shire town. Danish

Northampton: a preferred location

Fig 2

Roman Road

DUSTON

NORTHAMPTON

BRIAR HILL

HUNSBURY

km   0   1   2   3

Key

above 300 ft
above 200 ft
below 200 ft

legal and administrative systems may have lingered on, for in the time of Aethelred II an Ealdorman named Aelfric bought land in the assembly of all the army (*heres gemote*) at Northampton (CS: 1130).

The presence of the Hustings Court as the only town court throughout the middle ages again indicates Danish influence. Place name evidence, however, is inconclusive. While there is a fairly significant Scandinavian place name element north-east of the Watling Street the infrequency of such names in the hundreds of Spelhoe, Hamfordshoe and Wymersley around Northampton hardly suggests strong Scandinavianisation (Gover *et al.* 1933: XXVII).

In 940 Onlaf Guthfrithson, the Danish ruler of Northumbria, unsuccessfully attacked Northampton (Symeon of Durham 2: 93). If a literal translation of the verb *'obsedit'* is accepted it would suggest that Northampton was fortified for an unenclosed settlement would hardly have been so treated. (On the reliability of Symeon see Hunter Blair 1963: 104ff.)

Northampton was burnt by the Danes of Thorkil in 1010 at which time it was referred to as a 'port' or market centre (ASC). Corroboration of this is provided by Northampton's position as a mint. Coins were certainly minted at Northampton from the reign of Eadwig (955-9) and earlier minting is quite possible (Blunt and Dolley 1971). Northampton was again ravaged in 1065 by Edwin's and Morcar's forces (ASC).

Northampton's position after the Conquest was perhaps consolidated by the marriage of Waltheof, Earl of Northampton, to Judith the niece of William the Conqueror. Waltheof was executed in 1076 for conspiracy but his daughter Matilda married Simon de Senlis I in 1089 and it is to the three Senlis earls and Matilda's second husband David, King of Scotland, that many important works and general prosperity in Northampton are attributed. The castle was founded in the late 11th century and the Cluniac priory of St Andrew c. 1100 (VCH Northants 3: 3).

Northampton was apparently granted by William Rufus to Simon de Senlis I as a mesne borough together with the earldom but reverted to the crown after his death. Stephen restored the town to Simon de Senlis II but after his death Henry II again resumed it and Northampton remained in royal control from 1154 (Tait 1936: 155, 175).

In Domesday Northampton was a town of between 291 and 301 houses and 36 waste plots rendering a farm of £30.10s. (DB fo.219), approximately the 20th highest borough farm and roughly equivalent to towns such as Nottingham, Derby, Torksey and Worcester (Tait 1936: 184). The town is extra-hundredal, being assessed in the Northampton Geld Roll at a quarter of a hundred, and the tenurial pattern is heterogeneous, marks indicative of an old county borough. Indeed the presence as tenants in chief of the Countess Judith, the Bishop of Coutances and the Count of Mortain, all prominent personages in royal circles, again argues for the importance of Northampton at this time. In addition to the established town a *novus burgus* of French settlers had been planted as at Nottingham and Norwich. Interestingly the *novus burgus* was apparently still recognised as a separate entity in the second half of the 12th century (B.M. Cotton Vesp. E XVII fo.5B).

During the first part of the 12th century Northampton must have prospered for the farm of £100 in 1130 (Pipe Roll 31, Henry I) was more than treble the Domesday assessment, a remarkable increase, and on the evidence of 'aids' under Henry II Northampton may well have been among the six most prosperous towns in the kingdom in the second half of the 12th century (Donkin 1976: 134). The economic base of Northampton's prosperity is uncertain but cloth may well have played an important role at this time. At the close of the century there were apparently 300 weavers in the town (Rot Parl 2: 85).

The first reference to a fair at Northampton occurs in a charter of Simon de Senlis II granting to the monks of St Andrews a tenth of the profits and during the reigns of John and Henry III it was one of the four or five great fairs from which goods were systematically purchased for the royal household (VCH

Northants 3: 23f). Further evidence of Northampton's importance is provided by the long series of parliaments and councils held there from the time of Henry I to Richard II (Markam 1898: 451) and many church councils and chapters were also held in Northampton during the medieval period (VCH Northants 3: 2). Its strategic position is well demonstrated by its recurring prominence in the various civil wars of the middle ages.

In 1189 the town received its first charter and reference is first made to a mayor in 1215. The town was subsequently incorporated in 1459 (VCH Northants 3: 4f, 8).

There is considerable difficulty in relating Northampton's rapidly rising fortunes in the 11th and 12th centuries with the topographical development of the town. Alderman Frank Lee argued on purely topographical grounds (1954) that Horseshoe Street and Horsemarket on the one hand and Marefair and Gold Street on the other hand were the main north-south and east-west axial streets of the early town, with Kingswell Street, College Street and Bath Street on the one hand and Bridge Street, the Drapery, Bearward Street and Scarletwell Street on the other hand fossilising the intra-mural and extra-mural streets of an early defensive perimeter (Fig. 4). He further suggested that markets would naturally have grown up at the gates—at the Mayorhold and All Saints—and this is supported by the relatively open areas at both places and the way the roads radiate outwards from the two points. Further settlement would have grown up basically as ribbon development and subsequently some of these new suburbs were enclosed by the walls visible on Speed's Map of 1610 (Fig. 3). There was further apparently limited suburban development beyond these later walls. Considerable work still remains to be undertaken on the documentary sources but a tentative chronology is outlined below. Tradition attributed the building of the medieval town walls to Simon de Senlis I (VCH Northants 3: 3). A charter referring to the time of Simon mentions *'hospites manentes extra vetus fossatum'* (B.M. Cotton Vesp. E XVII fo.10B) which perhaps relates to Lee's defensive line. A further charter of Simon himself to the monks of St Andrews Priory (B.M. Cotton Vesp.E XVII fo.3A) talks of *'terram . . . a fossa eorum* (the monks of St Andrews) *usque ad fossam burgi'* but at least in 1632 (Pierce 1632) the lands indicated as formerly belonging to St Andrews did not extend as far south as Lee's line. Indeed, perhaps it is better to regard the north and west walls of the St Andrews Priory precinct as *'fossa eorum'* and the south precinct wall (probably originally following the line of Grafton Street right down to the river) as *'fossam burgi'*. In this case the town wall would antedate St Andrews Priory and be thus of late 11th century date. The above scheme must, however, be very tentative especially as it would appear that the priory as indicated on Speed's map was not the original house of the Cluniac monks in Northampton (VCH Northants 3: 57).

The town walls are subsequently referred to in the borough charters granted by Richard in 1189 and by John in 1200 (Markam 1898: 25ff.) and murage grants, presumably for the repair of the walls, were made in 1224, 1251 and 1301, on the latter occasion on such a large scale as perhaps to suggest rebuilding (VCH Northants 3: 30). Goosey's map of Northampton suggests more than one phase to the eastern defence (VCH Northants 3: 8) and this seems feasible although again uncorroborated archaeologically or in documentary sources.

It should also be noted that defences of some sort were probably present round the south-west of the town although apparently not surviving in Speed's day. In 1275 the town walls certainly extended from the south gate as far as Mervyn's mill, where there was a postern, and between the mill and the west gate ran the 'King's ditch' as well as a 'common way' (Rot Hund 2: 3). Additionally, in the 1504 rental of Northampton the town wall is recorded in St Peter's parish (NRO, 1504 Rental).

The enclosure of some 100 hectares (245 acres) in the late 11th century would apparently have been unusual but would have been consistent with Northampton's rapidly increasing prosperity at the time. The eastern extension to the town may perhaps even be identified as the *novus burgus* of Domesday.

The intramural area may not have been very densely settled initially for the site of the present market square was described as waste land in 1235 (Cal Close R 1234-7: 206-7) and the Franciscan and Carmelite friars did not acquire their sites, which may or may not have been previously occupied, until the middle of the 13th century. The intramural area, nonetheless, was exceeded in size only by those of Norwich and London (Biddle *et al.* 1973: 11).
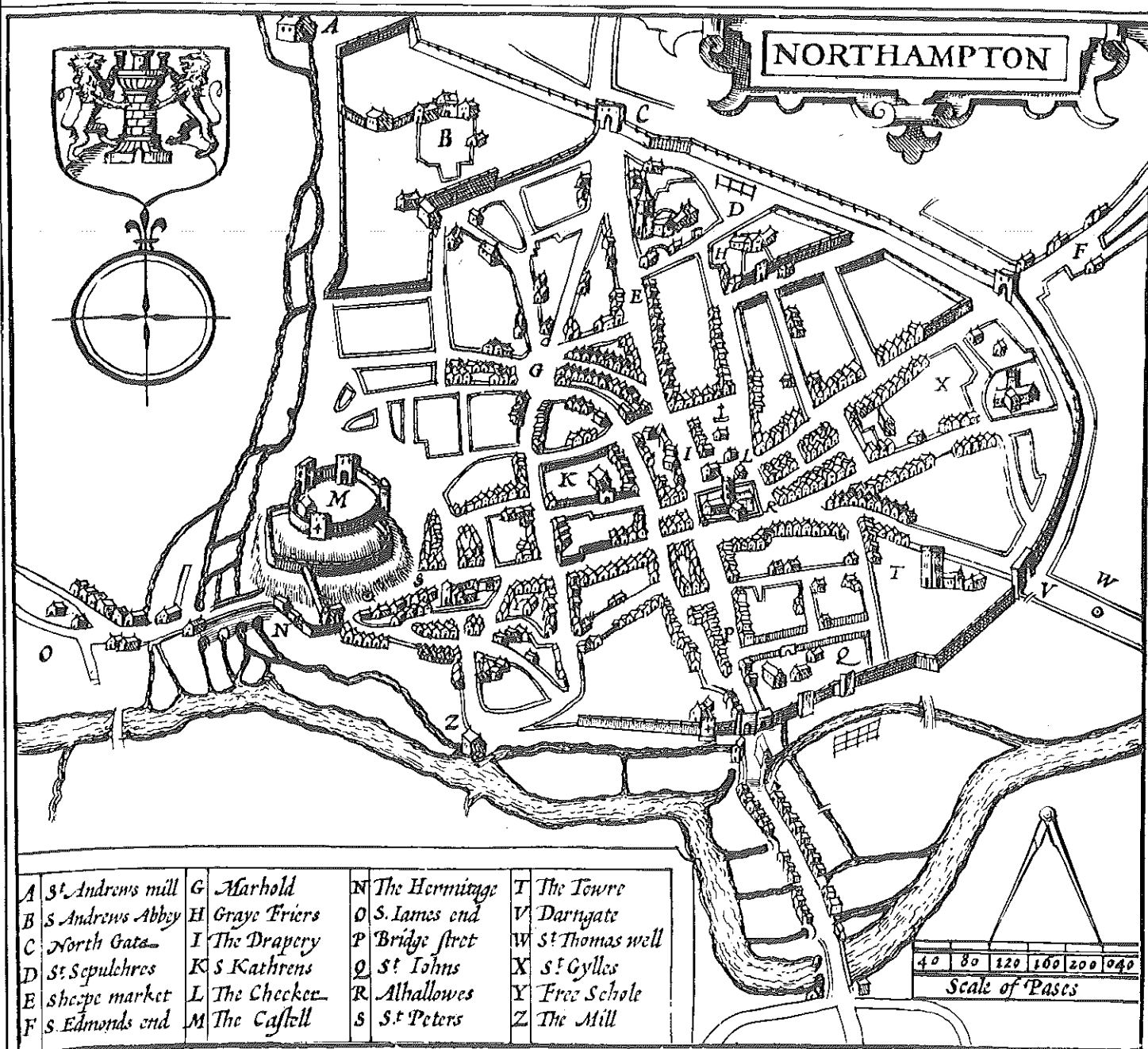
By the 14th century Northampton seems to have passed its peak. A petition of 1334 speaks of houses fallen to the ground and rents thus lost (Rot Parl 2: 85) and in a ranking of towns based on the lay subsidy of the same year Northampton has dropped to below 50th position (Glasscock 1976: 177ff). The decline may even have started in the 13th century (cf. Rot Hund 2: 2). There is further evidence of the town in decay in 1390-1400 and in 1484 50 marks of the farm were remitted by Richard III since the town was 'in great desolation and ruin and with half of it almost desolate and destroyed' and conditions were probably aggravated by the fire of 1516 which destroyed the greater part of the town (VCH Northants 3: 30). Northampton was now an ordinary provincial market centre, a county town, with a fairly diversified economy. There is some evidence for the leather trades beginning to emerge but no one interest dominates the town.

Northampton probably had seven parish churches within its walls throughout the middle ages as well as others in the suburbs but reorganisation subsequent to the Dissolution reduced the intramural parishes to four. The Cluniac priory of St Andrews figured large

Fig 3

Northampton in 1610 (by Speed)

NORTHAMPTON

A	St Andrews mill	G	Marhold	N	The Hermitage	T	The Towre
B	S Andrews Abbey	H	Graye Friers	O	S. Iames end	V	Darngate
C	North Gate	I	The Drapery	P	Bridge street	W	St Thomas well
D	St Sepulchres	K	S Kathrens	Q	St Iohns	X	St Gylles
E	sheepe market	L	The Checker	R	Alhallowes	Y	Free Schole
F	S Edmonds end	M	The Castell	S	St Peters	Z	The Mill

Scale of Paces

the affairs of the town and there was additionally a Cluniac nunnery just outside the town at Delapre, with St James Abbey, an Augustinian foundation, a mile to the west of the town. Northampton was one of the few towns with houses of all the four major orders of friars and there were also hospitals; it would appear that much of Northampton was in the hands of the Church by the early 16th century.

The period after the Dissolution is not really central to the archaeological investigations in St Peter's Street but, in summary, Northampton continued as a middling provincial centre. In the 17th century, however, it experienced a series of natural disasters with bouts of plague followed by the great fire of 1675 but great resilience was displayed, as at other times in its history, and Daniel Defoe could describe Northampton as 'the handsomest and best built town in all this part of England' (Defoe: Everyman 1966 2: 86). So the town ambled on but the boot and shoe trades were making it the town which stood on other men's legs (Fuller 1662: 279). The arrival of the canal and the railway once more provided an economic stimulus to the town and the construction of the M1 and Northampton's designation in the 1960s as an area of considerable expansion have also furthered Northampton's economic growth.

As with many towns Northampton seems to have enjoyed a cyclical development as its prosperity ebbed and flowed and it can probably be argued that St Peter's Street, a single module within the town system, underwent a similar fluctuation of fortune though not necessarily concurrently.

Fig 4

Northampton's archaeology
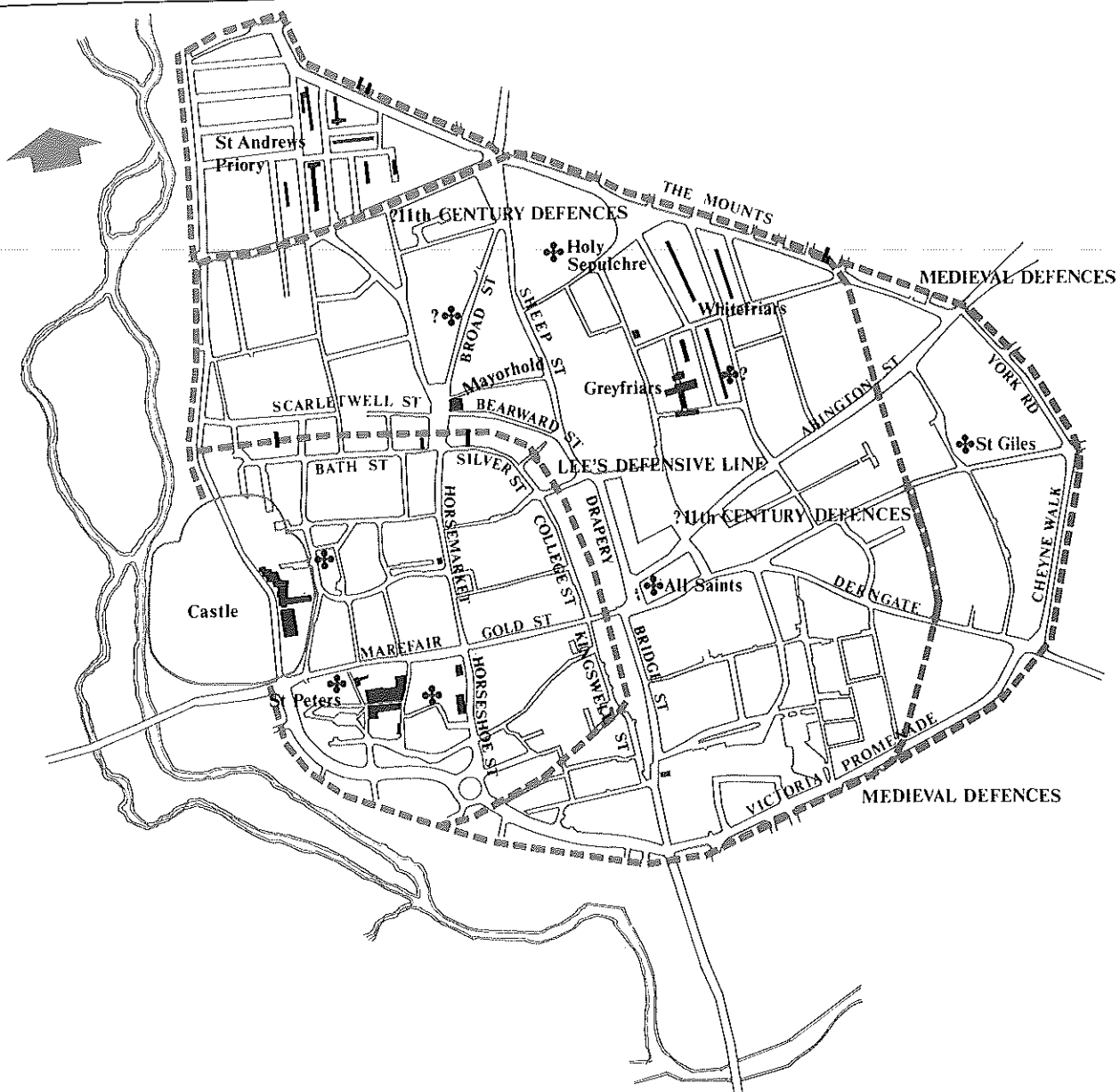
Excavated areas

m 0   500

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

by J H Williams

Location and geology

The site was positioned astride St Peter's Street in the south-west quarter of the town on an eminence in the angle of the river Nene and the Northern Water (Fig. 4). The street lay at 67m above O.D. and some 8m above the river. The geology over the town of Northampton as a whole displays considerable lateral and vertical variation but here was consistent as a weathered ironstone belonging to the Northampton Sands of the Inferior Oolite Series.

The excavation

Trial trenching was carried out to the north of St Peter's Street in 1972-3. The main excavation commenced in June 1973 and continued over the winter to June 1974 and further work was undertaken to the east of St Peter's Church (area N) during 1976.

At the time of excavation it was anticipated that development would be fairly imminent and a conscious decision was taken to generally disregard the post-medieval levels, which were then largely removed by machine, in order to concentrate attention on the earlier development of the town for which the archaeological evidence was rather more crucial. It was also thought desirable to try and expose the whole of both street frontages and thus trace the development of an 'environment' even if this meant excavating fairly rapidly, rather than concentrate on the detailed dissection of a limited number of properties. In the event it is felt that nothing of major significance was missed and the overall picture gained more than justified the approach.

The site was excavated in two major sections, the area to the north of the street followed by that to the south of the street. The only major disturbance to archaeological levels occurred between House 8 (area F) and House 9 (area G). The street itself was only available for excavation towards the end of the work and it was not possible, therefore, to closely relate the street with the properties on either side except through limited sections. Open area excavation was employed. The site was gridded with metal stakes at 2m centres and sections were of the movable 250mm variety, after the Winchester model (Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle 1969). The baulks were, however, in many cases left standing to substantial heights as it was realised that relationships could better be understood when more than the layers immediately under investigation were visible. This was particularly important when gradations of colour and texture rather than sharp and distinct edges were being dealt with. The effects of drying and weathering on the sections were also invaluable in many cases.

The excavation of the site over a whole year was most instructive. Although less digging time was lost for bad weather during the summer months this was more than compensated for in the rest of the year by the improved soil conditions. Damper weather and softer lighting enabled subtle textural and colour variations in the soil to be more readily distinguished and this was of paramount importance when dealing with the vestigial traces of the Saxon timber structures. On many soils the spring and autumn would appear to be the times for the recovery of the maximum amount of information.

The site inevitably had its problems and while many of the difficulties listed below are common to other sites it is nonetheless necessary to recall them so that the limitations of the evidence can be properly assessed, the strategy of the excavation appreciated and the method of presenting the report fully understood.

The depth of medieval stratigraphy excluding features cut into the substratum varied between 0 and 1m, averaging *c.* 0.5m. The stratigraphy, therefore, was essentially compressed and in several areas erosion of the site at various times in its history had produced an entirely horizontal stratigraphy. It seems clear that the site was subject to cyclical fluctuations of prosperity and recession with areas perhaps lying derelict for many years. With compressed and horizontal stratigraphy dating is generally difficult and the cyclical fluctuations present an added difficulty to the establishment of a firm chronological framework.

The deeply founded walls of the later periods and their ensuing robber trenches have tended to destroy relationships between house areas throughout the whole of the site's development. In working out the history of the street it was necessary, therefore, to establish initially the sequence within individual house areas and then try to relate these to each other through whatever stratigraphical links there were and through the dating of associated artefacts. Precision, however, was rarely possible because of the general lack of coin evidence and secondly because of the limitations of the ceramic data, which only enabled a very general date range to be established for most house phases. It must be remembered that this is a problem which is obviously only encountered when several properties are being excavated together and the need arises for a relative sequence. In the excavation of a single plot the problem just does not occur. Thus indeed the very difficulties of interrelating several properties encourages clarity of vision within the individual sub-units.

The well drained substratum and acidic soil was not conducive to the survival of organic material and little success was achieved with environmental analyses.

In spite of the difficulties, perhaps even because of them, it is possible to trace the general development of an environment and note how its character changed through a long period of time from a pre-urban situation through to a fully developed medieval town street. It is more than clear that the excavation of large areas is necessary for the understanding of urban development. Settlement archaeology is at once both the story of the individual and his interaction with other individuals and his surroundings.

Recording

The site was divided into areas A—N (Fig. 5) and each area had its own single series of layer numbers, e.g. A1 etc. The areas did not necessarily coincide with property boundaries and so numbers of more than one series can be met within a single house area. Additionally, during excavation, area boundaries between Houses 6 and 7 and between Houses 9 and 10 were moved. The following is a concordance table between excavation areas and houses:

Table 1

House 1	Area A	House 7	Areas B, C
House 2	Areas A, H, J	House 8	Area F
House 3	Area A	House 9	Area G
House 4	Area B	House 10	Areas G, K
House 5	Areas B, D		
House 6			

Trench/area E, L, M, N are referred to as trench E etc. In the various house sections area prefixes are normally not used but in Houses 5/6 and 10 they are always used. In the other houses they are only used for 'minority' numbers, i.e. H and J in House 2 and B in House 7.
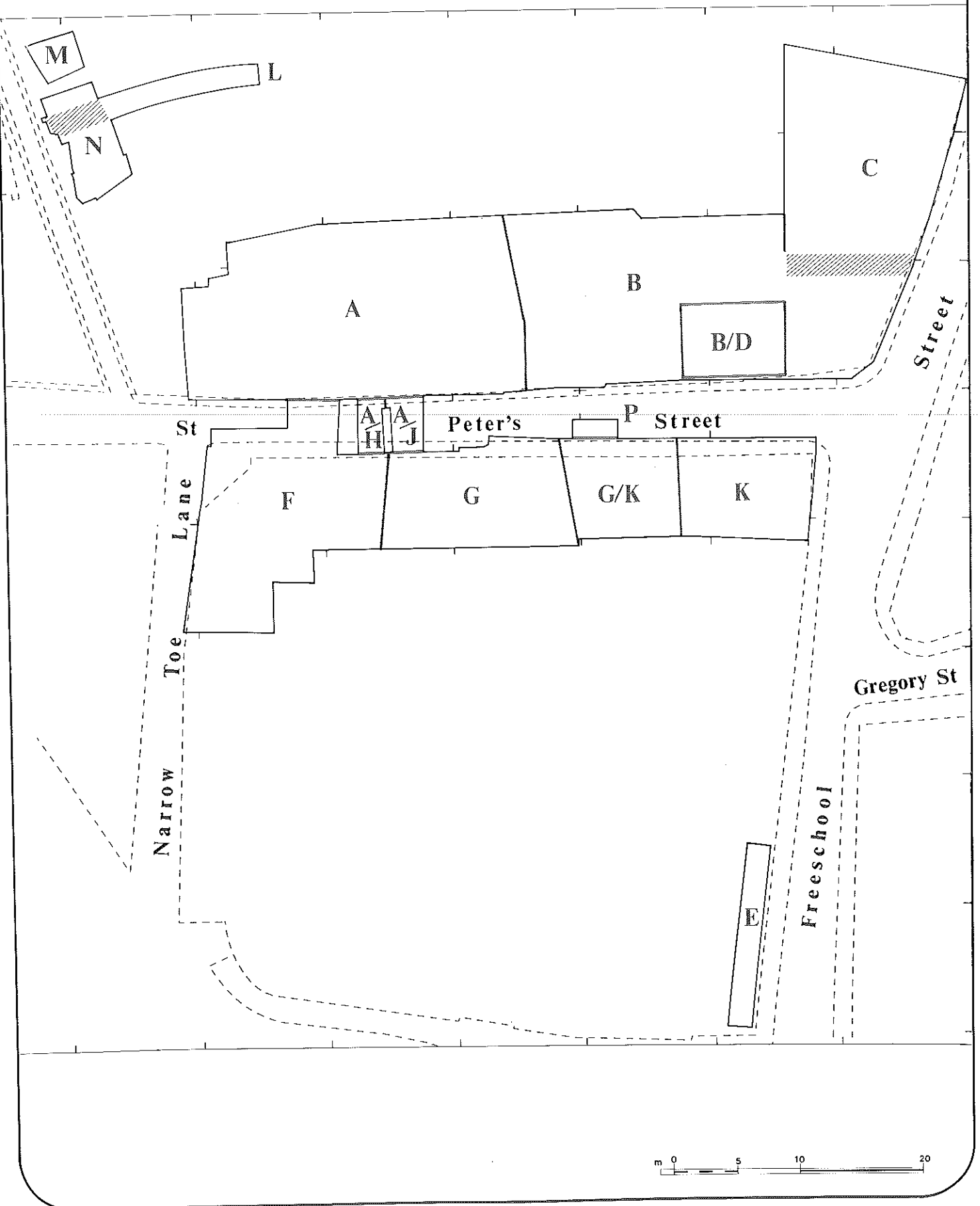
Site records were kept
a by layer in site note books
b by layer on pre-printed master sheets noting description, relationships of each layer etc. in a standard format. In subsequent excavations in Northampton a and b have been felt to be an unnecessary duplication and master sheets alone are now used.
c on plans (1:20) and sections (1:10) on waterproof Admel Draftex sheets over graph paper fixed on boards. For planning 2m square metal planning frames were used. These fitted neatly over 4 pegs in the site grid.

Small finds were recorded (two- or three-dimensionally) in a single continuous series of numbers SF1 . . . irrespective of location or category of find. In subsequent excavations separate series for each category of finds have been employed.

Fig 5

Area locations

M

L

N

C

A

B

B/D

Street

St

A/H   A/J   Peter's   P   Street

Lane

F   G   G/K   K

Toe

Gregory St

Narrow

Freeschool

E

m 0   5   10   20

Publication

The site archives will be deposited in Northampton Museum. The published report as contained in this volume is fairly detailed and the philosophy behind such an approach is discussed below together with the way the volume is intended to be used. The fundamental thinking throughout the report is that since the final interpretation is inevitably subjective and much information is, as it were, 'floating in archaeological time' it is necessary to progress to the final conclusions through a series of well reasoned statements which become more tentative as they become more general. The fundamental stratigraphic information can be simplified but it is essential to the report, rather than to a site archive, if this particular site with its complex relationships between individual properties is to be fully understood.

Since detailed sequences could be built up within individual houses but the overall correlation of such sequences was more tenuous, the publication has been arranged so that the basic stratigraphical facts, if indeed any archaeological evidence is a fact, are grouped by house and separate house sequences are built up with each house thus having its own valid chronological framework. The house area distinctions have been retained even for 'pre-house' levels as they form convenient units for discussion and it also avoids premature consideration of the precise way the site actually became a street. The development of the street as a whole proceeds from a synthesis of the individual house histories.

A flexible system of phasing has been adopted. Phases 1-4 are chronologically consistent over the whole of the site—

Phase 1 :   prehistoric and Roman
Phase 2 :   Early-Middle Saxon : pre-mortar mixers
Phase 3 :   Middle Saxon : mortar mixers and after
Phase 4 :   Late Saxon

—but subdivisions within phases, e.g. Phase 4B, are only applicable to the house area in which they occur; thus Phase 4B in one house is not necessarily contemporary with Phase 4B in another house. Phases 5 and 6 cover the whole of the post-Conquest period up to *c.* 1500 and although they have chronological implications in that Phase 5 in all cases pre-dates Phase 6, the phase numbers essentially denote building character. Thus Phase 5 refers to post-Conquest timber structures and Phase 6 to stone buildings. Phase 5 indeed heralds a change from a loose organisational pattern to one in which the street and the street frontage take a dominant role. Phase 6 again sees the development of a more rigid building pattern along the street. As the change from timber to stone did not occur at a consistent date along the whole of the street, Phase 5 in one area can be contemporary with Phase 6 in another area. Again, as with Phase 4, similarly labelled sub-phases in different house areas need not be contemporary. Phase 7 refers to all post-medieval activity on the street other than the robbing of Phase 6. Only limited parts of Phase 7 were archaeologically excavated and thus published.

Within the individual house areas the structural report comprises five main elements: 1 Layer list, 2 Sequence diagram, 3 Discussion, 4 Plans and sections, and 5 Photographs.

The publication of detailed stratigraphical information has been questioned (Department of the Environment 1975) and for many sites the question is a valid one particularly where the stratigraphy is simple. Items 1-3 above, however, occupy no greater space than would be necessary for a report written in conventional style and far more basic information is given, finds can easily be cross-referenced to their context and the whole way in which the house/phase module is built up can be appreciated.

The layer list is arranged in three columns: Layer no., Phase and Description and Finds. The layer number is that employed on site but not all site layer numbers are listed. Layers which have subsequently been 'destratified' have been omitted and layers which have been combined with other layers are grouped with the primary number for that layer, e.g. 16=(24,25) where 16 is the primary number for that layer and 24 and 25 have been amalgamated with 16. 24 and 25 do not appear in the layer list in their own right. Any reference to the site numbers 16, 24 or 25 will in the text be to 16. Various discrete layers have the same stratigraphical relationships as each other; thus a group of post-holes may cut the same level and be overlaid by the same level. In the layer list each post-hole would retain its own number and be placed in the list according to its number. The first number of the group remains unbracketed but is followed in the description (without an = sign; cf. above) by those numbers, in brackets, which have the same stratigraphical relationships. Later numbers, when they appear in the list, are bracketed and are followed in the description by an unbracketed number which is the first layer number of the group. It is this first number only which appears on the sequence diagram, but all other references refer to the actual layer concerned. Thus the unbracketed numbers in column 1, with a few exceptions, are those which appear on the sequence diagrams. 'Garden' deposits are the soil levels behind the houses proper built up by the intercutting of pits etc.; the individual pits are indistinguishable and the levels themselves cannot be phased. The 'garden' deposits which generally appear to be of medieval date do not feature in the layer lists but 'garden' is used in the finds reports to locate finds.

The phase given in the second column is applicable only to the house concerned. Thus, as noted above, Phase 5 in one house might be contemporary with Phase 6 in another house.

The description column is basically self explanatory. Abbreviations are as follows:

PH   post-hole
SH   stake-hole
CF   charcoal flecks
IF   ironstone fragments
LF   limestone fragments
M   mortar
NOP   not on plan
NOSD   not on sequence diagram

All published finds other than pottery, roof tiles, worked flints, bones and other environmental finds are cross-referenced in the finds column. Since the pottery is arranged by house phase and thus readily accessible, no further referencing was thought to be necessary. For the phasing and location of the roof tiles etc. see the respective reports. The abbreviations used in the finds column are (followed by their finds number where applicable):

AF   architectural fragments
CI   cinder >100gm
ci   cinder <100gm
Cu   copper alloy objects
CuS copper alloy slag >100gm
cus copper alloy slag <100gm
CP   clay pipes
FB   furnace bottom >100gm
fb   furnace bottom <100gm
Fe   iron objects
FL   furnace lining >100gm
fl   furnace lining <100gm
FS   forging slag >100gm
fs   forging slag <100gm
FSc forging scale >100gm
fsc forging scale <100gm
FT   floor tiles
GL   glass
H   hones
M   Purbeck Marble mortar
Nu   coins, jettons and a token
Pb   lead alloy objects
Q   quern and millstone fragments
RC   radiocarbon determinations
SW   spindle whorls
T   textiles
TS   tap slag >100gm
ts   tap slag <100gm
W   wood and charcoal
WB   worked bone

It is hoped by including essentially descriptive material within the layer list the discussion is left free for the drawing out of salient points of a more general nature.

The sequence diagram is a key element in the report. Flow charts of various sorts have been profitably used in the preparation of reports for some time though normally not published. Harris has recently developed the 'Harris Winchester matrix' which regularised the presentation of the information into a formalised rectangular network (1975). The sequence diagrams published in this report draw much on his work but his model has been refined. Five different symbols have been employed to denote different types of deposit and this gives immediate visual impact enabling one to see whether one is dealing with a series of intercutting pits or an internal build-up within a house. The sequence diagram is also presented against a phase background and to emphasise the subjectivity and flexibility of the phase framework vertical connecting lines of the greatest length possible have been retained. Thus a layer placed singly on a long vertical line can be moved up and down the line for it owes its vertical position to factors other than stratigraphical relationships.

The sequence diagram is fairly obvious in its working and has few rules but the following should be noted:

a not all relationships are shown but only the longest path between any two related layers.

b a layer only has a relationship with another layer if the path between the two layers is up or up and horizontal (or conversely down or down and horizontal); the connecting path may not move both up and down.

Sections 3-5 basically follow a conventional form. Discussion is normally restricted to matters specifically related to the house in question, more general issues being reserved for the general synthesis. Dating evidence for the individual house is discussed. Coins and the like appear in the layer list and the ceramic evidence is arranged by house phase in the pottery report enabling speedy cross reference.

In total then each house section aims to present the basic evidence for the house as clearly and concisely as possible.

In the synthesis an attempt is made to integrate the phases established for each house into an overall chronological framework for the street and the layout of the street at particular moments in time is suggested.

The detailed layout of the pottery report is presented on page 151. It is relevant here, however, to note that the same philosophy was applied as in the structural analysis. Information has been coded in order to condense basic data but there was a great need to present the basic data. In the first place it is the first major medieval pottery report for the area and will thus hopefully be used as a reference point for other studies. Secondly, even if further work on Northampton is not published in such detail the method of approach is established. Thirdly, and probably most importantly, the results of the study have general implications for the study of pottery. Problems were encountered quantifying residual and intrusive material and generally processing the pottery. It is all too easy to employ a selective approach which avoids problems but such an approach does not ultimately benefit archaeology.

The report on the other finds is arranged more conventionally by material and all finds are cross-referenced back to the structural report by their layer number.

Fig 6

Key to sections

LOAM light

SAND light

CLAY

CHARCOAL

medium

medium

GRAVEL

MORTAR

dark

dark

BURNING

ORGANIC MATTER

IRONSTONE FRAGMENTS