

INTERIM REPORT ON EXCAVATIONS IN ST. GEORGE'S STREET, WINCHESTER, 1954.

By SARNIA BUTCHER, B.A.

Introduction.

THE demolitions involved in the widening of St. George's Street are making available for excavation a number of sites near the High Street of Winchester. This area is interesting archaeologically because of its position in the centre of the city, the soil of which is usually inaccessible and is unlikely to be available again for a very long time.

The City Council has recognised the importance of this opportunity to investigate an area likely to have been occupied at most stages of the city's history, and has generously financed excavations in the summers of 1953 and 1954. The Curator of the City Museums, Mr. Frank Cottrill, has had a general direction over all the work and has done a great deal himself by digging trial trenches as sites became available, to determine whether or not they would repay full investigation.

Excavations were directed by the writer for four months in the summer of 1954 on three sites in St. George's Street, of which one was at the corner of Upper Brook Street, while the other two were the site at the corner of Middle Brook Street, partly excavated in 1953, and a small site between the two. On all of these both Roman and mediaeval features were investigated. I would like to thank Mr. Cottrill and his assistant, Miss G. B. W. Chapman, for constant help and advice, and many others who gave me the benefit of their specialised knowledge or who assisted in other ways, including Miss M. A. Bennet-Clark, director of the 1953 excavations; Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Carpenter Turner; Alderman R. J. Dutton; Mr. C. T. McCrea, Hon. Secretary of Winchester Archaeological Society; Councillor J. S. D. Mansel, Chairman of the Winchester Museums and Library Committee; Mr. R. H. McCall (Town Clerk), Mr. P. H. Warwick (City Engineer) and Mr. W. D. Rider (City Treasurer) and many members of their staffs. Permission to excavate on the three sites was granted by the Winchester Improvements Committee. For help with the digging, I am most grateful to Mr. D. B. Connah, who brought parties of boys from Newbury Grammar School Archaeological Society, and to all the volunteers, too numerous to mention individually, who supplemented the paid labour; many of them came from other parts of the country and stayed in Winchester in order to give this help. Mr. A. R. T. Ball worked strenuously and skilfully for us throughout the season and undertook several difficult

tasks, notably the excavation of the well on the Middle Brook Street site.

In preparing this interim report, I have been glad of the help of Mr. G. C. Dunning, who has identified mediaeval pottery and who undertook the publication of the late Saxon buckle; of Dr. D. B. Harden, who has identified specimens of glass; of Dr. E. L. Taylor, of the Ministry of Agriculture Veterinary Laboratory, and of the Department of Botany at the Natural History Museum, London, who have reported on material from the mediaeval tank. All the excavation photographs except that of the tank are the work of Mr. E. A. Sollars. Miss E. Meikle drew the late Saxon buckle (Fig. 1). My thanks are due also to the officers and members of the Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society for their help, including the publication of this report, and for the interest shown on the occasion of the Club's visit to the excavations on 9 September, 1954.

All the finds from the excavations have been added to the collections of Winchester City Museum.

The Site on the North-west Corner of the Junction of St. George's Street with Upper Brook Street.

Mrs. Carpenter Turner, the City Archivist, has traced the documentary history of the site, the most important building on it being the church of St. Ruel. This was one of the many mediaeval churches of Winchester (there were over sixty) which have now disappeared. The first record of it is in 1172, when it is mentioned among Winchester churches which belonged to the Cathedral priory,¹ and it was closed by Bishop Fox in the early sixteenth century, the parish being united to St. Mary Kalendar. It was used as a storehouse for a time and then cottages were built on its site. Latterly a warehouse stood here which incorporated some mediaeval masonry, mainly at its north-east angle, and when this building was demolished in the spring of 1954 Mr. Cottrill found that three large sarsens and a Roman capital² had been incorporated in the upper part of massive foundations which ran round the south and east limits of the site. Excavation has shown that these must be the foundations of St. Ruel's. They are mainly of flint and chalk and are as much as 7ft. deep where they have been completely excavated. This was no doubt to counteract the softness of the underlying ground (see below). No trace of the church floor remained; it must have been removed in demolition work on the site at one or other period of its history, as the top of the foundation trench is now on the surface. The foundations cut through two

1. A. W. Goodman, *Charterary of Winchester Cathedral*, 18.

2. This, which is now in Winchester City Museum, is of Tuscan type; the diameter of the shaft at the necking is 14in.

chalk floors, very near the modern surface but undoubtedly antedating the church. The occupation layer between these floors yielded fragments of glazed pottery which have been dated by Mr. Dunning to the late eleventh or twelfth centuries.³ There was also a quantity of animal bones, showing that these chalk floors cannot represent an earlier church on the site. Together with a few sherds of the glazed pottery mentioned above which were found in the foundation trench, this constitutes evidence that St. Ruel's was a new foundation of about the twelfth century.

The dedication is unusual. It appears in the records in various forms : *e.g.* Rumbald (in 1172), Rumbold, Rowald and Ruald. These could represent one of three saints : Rumbald, an eighth century child saint of Buckinghamshire ; Rumbold, an eighth century bishop of Malines ; and Romuald, an Italian saint (950-1027) who founded the order of the Camaldolenses⁴. The names of the first two have a considerable variety of spellings and their lives are mainly legendary. There is one record from the time of Wykeham of a grant for the rebuilding of the church of St. Romwald "the Confessor", which would seem to rule out the Buckinghamshire child saint, who only lived for three days. The date of the foundation of the church would favour the Italian. On the other hand, one version of the life of the bishop of Malines says that he came originally from an English monastery and was one of Willibrord's missionaries in the Low Countries and he might, therefore, appeal to an English community. He was, however, a martyr and should not, strictly, have had the title "Confessor".⁵

The plan of the church, so far as the foundations have been traced, shows a rectangle with no structurally differentiated chancel. In this it resembles some other mediaeval churches of Winchester, such as St. Peter Chesil and St. Lawrence. There seems to be a western tower, however, and the internal measurement from the western end of this to the east wall is about 44ft. It is hoped to obtain a complete ground-plan in further work near here.

There is a gap in the occupation of the site between the Roman period and about the eleventh century, which is represented in the ground by 4ft. of dark mud. The formation of this may have been due to some obstruction of the flow of the Itchen through the city after the Roman period—somewhat on the analogy of the 'Moorfields', north of the Roman wall of London, which formed when the

3. This ware has not hitherto been found in the Winchester area, but there are a number of sherds from this site and the tank on the Middle Brook Street site. It is hard white or pink ware mixed with fine grit, with a glossy yellow, orange or pale green glaze. So far no rims have been found, and only one decorated sherd ; this has rouletted triangles.

4. There are eight other dedications to Rumbold (or a variant form of the name) in England, at Cann and Pentridge in Dorset ; Rumboldswyke, Sussex ; Bonnington, Kent ; Colchester ; Essex ; Lincoln ; Stoke Doyle, Northants, and Romaldkirk, Yorks. They have usually been ascribed to the child saint of Buckinghamshire but there does not seem to be certainty in any case.

5. In a twelfth century list of relics belonging to Hyde Abbey, Winchester, there is an "Oss (sic) Sancti Rumboldi" (*Hants. Record Soc.* for 1892, 159).

culvert of the Walbrook was blocked⁶—and the channels known as the Brooks may have been cut to improve the drainage in late Saxon times.⁷

Within the small area available, excavation revealed half of a room of a Romano-British building, with an outside wall on the west. The layout and character of this building apart from this is completely unknown. The room has a mosaic floor which is much damaged, but it is apparently of a layout which has been found elsewhere.⁸ This consists of a central circular panel surrounded by semi-circles and quadrants within a square frame. In our example the panels are all outlined by guilloche pattern, which also forms the inner band of the frame. Outside this there is a broader border of braided or double guilloche and the outer plain border consists of large red tesserae. The central circular panel and some of the subsidiary panels have been destroyed. In the north-west corner quadrant there is a quarter-rosette (Pl. I); in the semi-circle to the east of it (seen on the same plate) all that remains is three red points, possibly the tail of a dolphin, which is a common figure on mosaics. In the eastern and western semi-circles are cornucopiae (Pl. IV). In two of the spandrels are two-handled vases and there is a conventional ivy-leaf and tendril design in another.

The guilloche is common on mosaics of all periods, though its use as a continuous border round all the elements of the design seems to be a late feature. The braided guilloche is less common but can be seen on a fair number of pavements in the western Roman provinces as well as in North Africa.⁹ There is one example near Winchester, at Itchen Abbas.¹⁰

A quantity of Samian and fine metallic Rhenish ware underlying the floor suggests a date for it about 200 A.D. The building destruction debris which lay over it contained hardly any pottery and only one coin, which is a barbarous radiate of the late third century.

Much of the damage to the mosaic was done in the Roman period, the breaks being sealed by the collapsed remains of the walls of the building. A straight-edged break across the western semi-circle was explained by the presence beneath it of a channelled

6. *Royal Commission on Historical Monuments: Roman London*, 18.

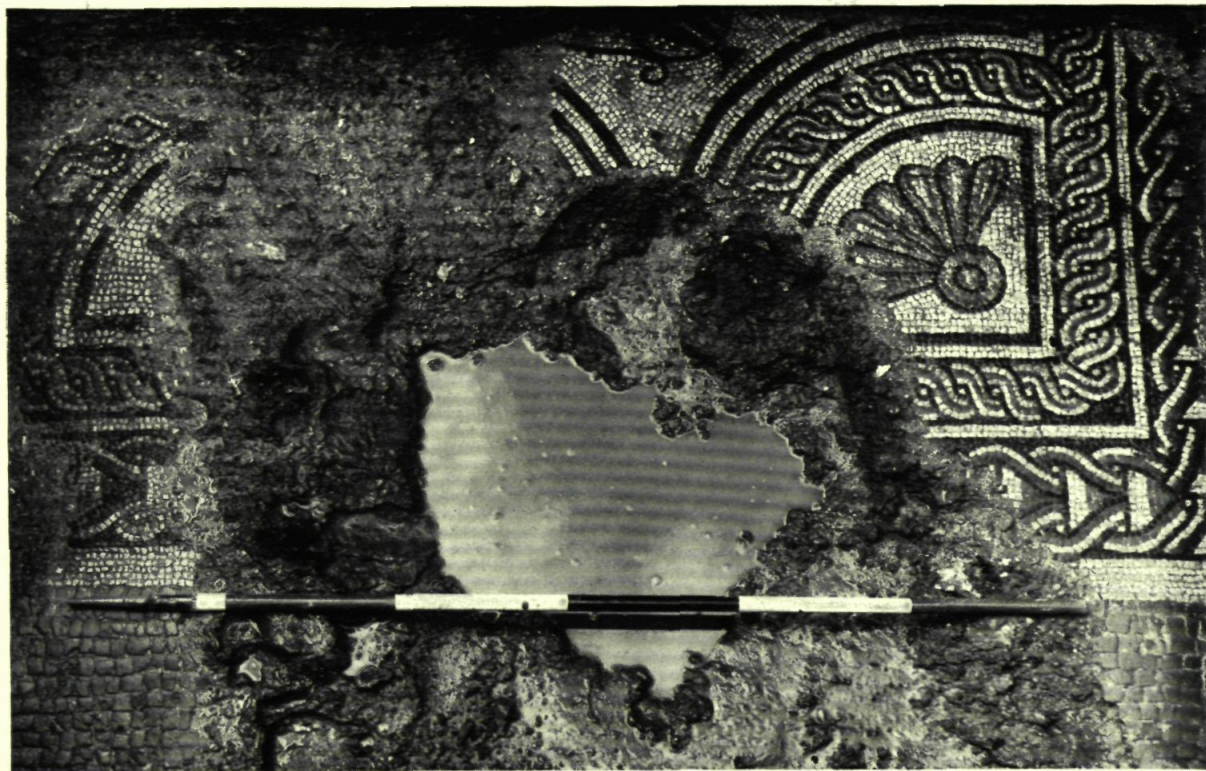
7. They are said to have been made by St. Ethelwold, Bishop of Winchester from 963 to 984 (Milner, *History of Winchester*, I, 160).

8. At Lincoln (Morgan, *Romano-British Mosaic Pavements*, illust. facing p. 183) and Cirencester (*Gentleman's Magazine* for 1849, II, 358-9). Also in France: *Inventaire des Mosaïques de la Gaule*, nos. 167 and 224.

9. Hinks, *Catalogue of... Mosaics in the British Museum*, nos. 18 (Carthage); 32b (London); 73 (Hemsworth, Dorset) and 50e (Halicarnassus). *Inventaire des Mosaïques de la Gaule et de l'Afrique*, nos. 191 (Algeria); 198, 199 and 217 (Ste. Colombe); 174 (Vienne); 560 (Perigueux) and 644 (Carthage). Also on the Woodchester mosaic (Morgan, *op. cit.*, plate facing 72); Barton (near Cirencester; *Trans. Bristol and Glos. Arch. Soc.*, 1951, 70), dated to the fourth century; Silchester (*Archaeologia* LV, Pl. XIV).

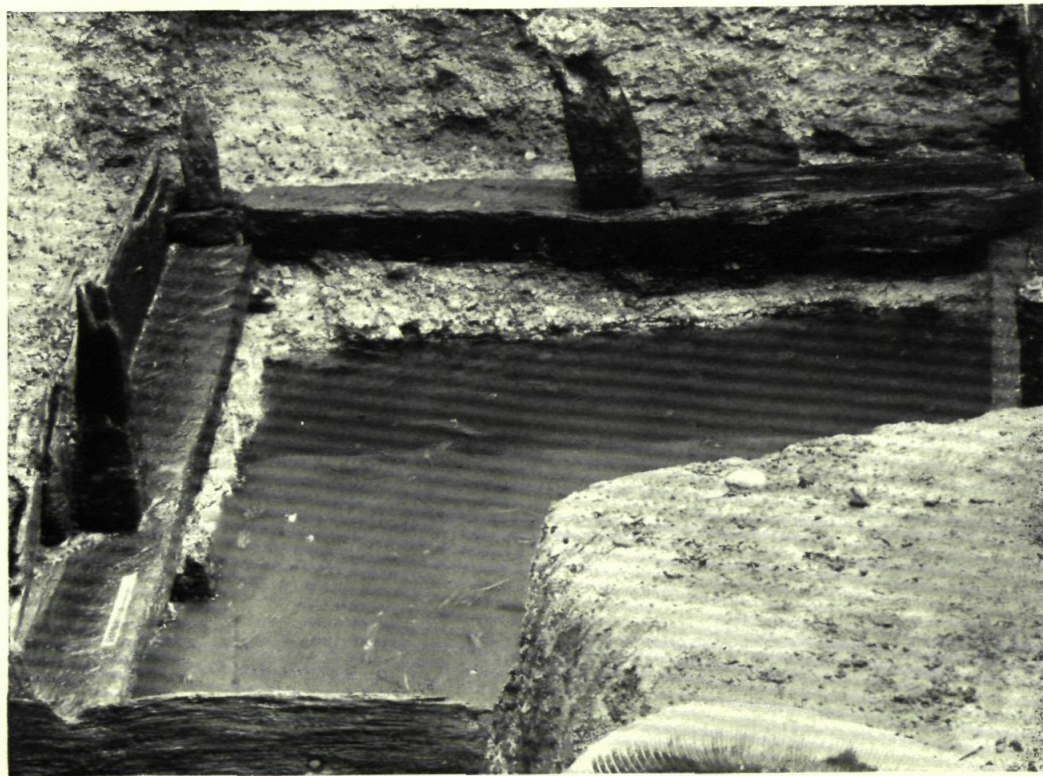
10. There is a drawing of this in Winchester City Museum.

PLATE I.



Roman mosaic floor found at the corner of St. George's Street and Upper Brook Street : north-west and north panels

PLATE II



The mediaeval timber structure on the Middle Brook Street site, from the south.
(There is a foot-scale on the left-hand timber.)

hypocaust. The tesserae had not merely subsided into it, they had been removed. The sides of the hypocaust channel were formed of chalk blocks, the covering of curved tiles.

The walls of the east and west sides of the room came within the area available for excavation and give a width for the room of 19ft., while the mosaic panel would be 9ft. 6in. wide. The intervening space was filled in with the large red tesserae. Although the mosaic must be square (from the layout of the design), the room need not be so; a wider plain border or another band of pattern might, on analogy with other floors, fill up the remainder of the space.

Both walls were built mainly of flint, but they also had brick bonding courses. Some of these project several inches from the walls as they survive. Large quantities of wall plaster, in several colours, were found in the debris both inside and outside the building. The only recognisable design was of plain bands of colour.

The best preserved corner of the mosaic (Pl. I) was lifted by Mr. Cottrill after this season's excavation and will be kept in the City Museum. It is hoped that the rest of the floor will be uncovered and lifted when the roadway of St. George's Street is being reconstructed.

The Middle Brook Street site.

Miss Bennet-Clark in her report has already dealt with the main features of the Middle Brook Street site.¹¹ Some points of detail were left for this year, notably the mediaeval timber structure there referred to.¹² This has now been completely excavated.

It consisted of a rectangular timber frame, approximately 10ft by 8ft. (Pl. II) which had remained in very good condition through being continually under water. The long beams forming the frame were joined at the corners by stout uprights (on an average 6in. by 4in. thick) pegged through them. These uprights had sharp pointed ends which had been driven into the soft ground and there were supplementary supporting struts below the frame at irregular intervals round the sides. Most of the timber was evidently re-used, having dowel-holes in positions quite meaningless in the tank's construction. Dowels were used throughout, no nailed joints being found. Thinner planks lay on edge on the main frame of beams, but it is evident that the main purpose of this frame was to hold the sides firm and not to support a lining, as the bottom 3ft. of the tank were entirely unlined. The uprights and the planks only survived below water-level, to about one foot above the frame.

The main problem posed is the purpose of the structure. The

11. *Proceedings H.F.C.*, XVIII, 315-324.

12. *ibid.*, 320 and Plan, Fig. 1.

condition of the wood shows that it was always under water ; it was evidently a tank and, from its size and the solidity of its construction, it was a tank for some industrial process. It was hoped that the filling would yield evidence of the nature of this, but it proved very unhelpful and seems to have been rubbish, thrown in after the tank went out of use. A large part of it was excrement. Dr. E. L. Taylor has kindly examined samples of this and from the species of the large numbers of parasitic worms' eggs within it he identifies its source as either human or porcine. The filling contained several sherds of glazed pottery which Mr. Dunning dates to the late eleventh or twelfth century. Analysis of what may be sediment from the bottom of the tank is in progress at the time of writing, but if this does not give any positive clue we shall be left to guess at the possible uses of a tank of this size. Textile processes would fit the neighbourhood very well : the Brooks were naturally the centre of Winchester's mediaeval cloth industry.

A late Romano-British well was discovered close up against the southern end of the tank (see plan, Fig. 1), tapping the same very plentiful supply of water.¹³ The well was unlined—or any lining had disappeared—and had been dug through the natural crumbled chalk subsoil of this area. The only part of its construction remaining was a wooden frame forming a square with sides a little over 3ft. long, which was found at a depth of 6ft. 6in. The well was about 9ft. deep and contained a variety of objects presumably dropped in while it was still in use, including a late-third century pewter jug (see below, p. 8), several iron hoops, which had probably bound a wooden bucket, a linked iron hook and a knife with remains of its wooden handle. The upper part of the well had been filled up with heavy building rubble, the bulk of which consisted of unworked flints, but there were also many architectural fragments, including part of a drum of a column 2ft. 2½ in. in diameter, a cornice bracket which Mr. W. J. Carpenter Turner informs me is architecturally in proportion with the column drum (Pl. III), a heavy stone ridge-piece¹⁴ and the capital of a small column. This very solid filling was necessary to make the ground stable for a wall of the later building which runs close to the well (see plan, Fig. 1).

Further investigation of this building included the complete excavation of the pit underlying the south-east corner.¹⁵ This produced a denarius of Lucius Verus (166 A.D.) and a long series of pottery types with a wide range of date, but the evidence of the latest sherds and of the base of a glass vessel of late third century

13. We came upon the actual spring at about 12ft. below modern ground level ; the presence of the Romano-British well, the mediaeval tank and an eighteenth century well all independently using the same source may indicate that some form of divining was used at each period.

14. cf. *Arch. Cambrensis* CII, Pl. IV and Pl. XI (Llantwit Major). Many roofing slabs of Purbeck limestone have been found in building debris on the Middle Brook Street site.

15. *Proceedings* H.F.C., XVIII, 318.

(or, possibly early fourth century) type confirms the date about the turn of the third and fourth centuries previously suggested for the building on this site.¹⁶

Two walls were found, one forming the northern limit of the courtyard, the other—which is badly preserved—running roughly parallel with the west side of the oven (see plan, Fig. 1). A trench some six yards north of the present area of excavation uncovered an angle which is probably the north-east corner of the building. As the north, east and south limits are now defined it seems likely that full excavation of this wing of the building would be rewarding. Since the site is already cleared, it is intended that this should be done at the earliest possible opportunity.

Site of Nos. 8 and 9 St. George's Street.

The area available for excavation here, between the two wings of the slaughterhouse, was too small for conclusive results to be obtained, but it has given further indication of what may be expected when the ground below the slaughterhouse wing intervening between this and the Middle Brook Street site is investigated (see plan, Fig. 1).

There was a considerable depth of mediaeval occupation mainly consisting of large rubbish-tips with quantities of black ash and slag from metal-working. The pottery in these ranged in date from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries and included cooking-pots with everted rims in black gritty ware and pitchers in green-glazed ware. One room of a building probably of fourteenth century date overlay this deep deposit; it had a floor of trodden earth, mortar and clay, and roughly built flint and mortar walls.

The principal Romano-British feature was a wall running roughly north and south. As can be seen from the plan, this is probably the western end of the building which runs across the Middle Brook Street site. Towards the south it had been robbed in the medieval period, but in its surviving portion it was of coursed flints and was 2ft. 3in. wide, including offsets on both faces. The north-west corner was formed by a fine squared block at ground level and at this end the offsets were mainly composed of tiles. There was a soak-away of tiles sloping downwards into the ground just outside this corner.

The other features on the western side of the wall, which are indicated in outline on the plan, consist of a very solid foundation filling of chalk, with a level surface flush with the external offset (which is higher than the internal one) and a foundation of different character, containing flints and mortar, running east and west and abutting on to the main wall at right-angles. The east-west foundation was mostly destroyed by a large mediaeval pit.

16. *Ibid.*, 320. The pewter jug found in the well is also confirmatory evidence.

Very little can be said of the floors to the east of the wall, as only a strip a few inches wide came into the area available. In the northern part there was a cement floor in bad condition. A deep mediaeval pit which may represent another robbed wall divided this from the southern strip in which no floor survived, only a thick fill of mortar with many red tesserae scattered in it and a quantity of late Romano-British slip wares.

A coin of Claudius Gothicus (268-270 A.D.) was found sealed in the building layer over the chalk outside the wall. If the wall is part of the Middle Brook Street building, this would support the evidence for the date of construction obtained on that site.

The Finds.

The sites were rich in pottery and small finds, but the bulk of this material must await publication in the full report on work done in connection with the St. George's Street scheme. Three items of especial interest from the Middle Brook Street site are noted here.

1. Romano-British Pewter Jug (Pl. III).

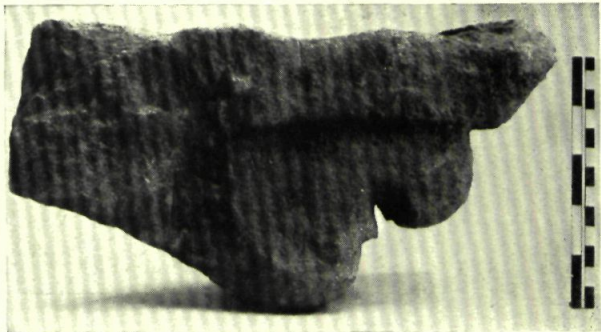
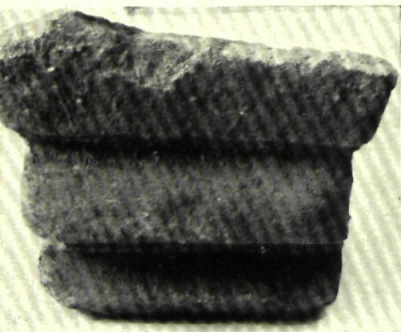
This was found in the well (p. 6). It stands 13in. high and is biconical. There are two mouldings round the neck and the handle springs from just below the lower one. The handle is triangular in section and is undecorated (in some of the examples noted in Mr. St. George Gray's list in *Procs. Somerset Arch. Soc.* LXXXIII, 151, the handle is decorated or the attachment plate is elaborated). The base is flat and projects beyond the angle with the side.

Quite a number of similar jugs have been found in the southern half of England, with a preponderance in Somerset, the most likely source of their lead. One was found recently at Chew Stoke in that county which is similar to the Winchester example, except in the detail of the neck, which has only one projecting moulding.¹⁷ This jug was also found in a well, which its excavators date to the end of the third or early fourth century, and this seems the most probable date for our example.

2. Fragment of a Glass Beaker (not illustrated).

A fragment of a decorated conical beaker of green glass was found in late Roman rubble in the courtyard of the building. It shows part of a notched vertical rib and a blob with a tail. Dr. D. B. Harden reports that the type is a well recognised one of the fourth century on the Continent but that he does not know of any other example from Britain.

¹⁷ *Arch. News Letter*, Oct.-Nov. 1954.



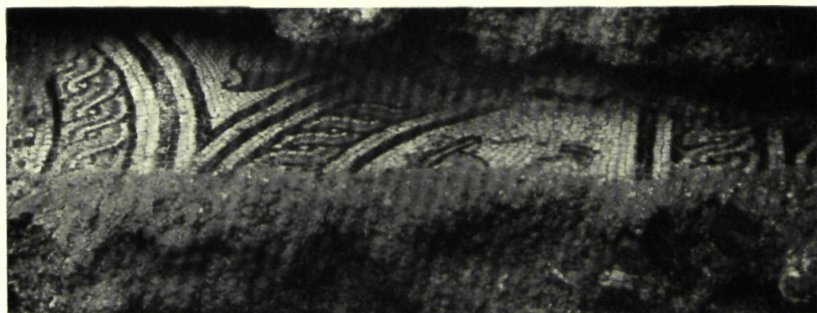
Pewter jug, 13 inches high, and cornice bracket (front and side views) found in the Romano-British well on the Middle Brook Street site

PLATE IV

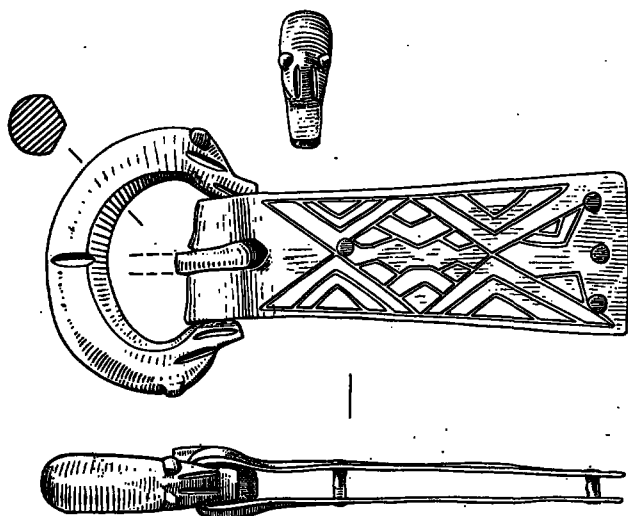
(a)



(b)



Roman mosaic floor found at the corner of St. George's Street and Upper Brook Street : (a) eastern (*top*) and (b) western semicircular panels

Fig. 2. $\frac{1}{1}$ 

3. Late Saxon Buckle (Fig. 2).

This was found in a rubbish pit near the northern edge of the present area of excavation. Mr. G. C. Dunning, F.S.A., reports on it as follows :—

This large buckle is of base silver, with part of an iron pin.

The buckle plate is 2·2in. long and 0·6in. wide at the loop end, widening to 0·8in. at the strap end. It is decorated with an incised angular design apparently based on interlace, covering the whole surface. The front and back plates are formed from one long strip of metal folded round the bar of the loop, and fastened together by four rivets, of which three are in line across the wider end.

The loop is a solid casting, 1·35in. wide, almost round in section. At each side, where the loop passes as a bar through the end of the buckle plate, is an animal's head moulded in full relief. The ears are small and protruding ; the eyes are long grooves ; and the mouth is also a groove along the sides of the snout.

A few parallels for the zoomorphic treatment of the buckle loop may now be quoted. The first is a buckle 1·4in. wide from Royston Heath, Herts.¹⁸ ; it has animal heads shown in profile, and is referred to the ninth century on the style of the decoration incised on the loop. More remote geographically but closer in style to the Winchester example is a small bronze buckle, only $\frac{1}{2}$ in. wide across the

18. *V.C.H., Cambs. and Isle of Ely*, I, 322, no. 8, pl. XII, d.

loop, from the site of the Saxon Monastery of Lindisfarne, Northumberland,¹⁹ destroyed by the Danes in 875. Though small in size, the loop is a thick oval in section, and the animal heads are in full relief. The ears are prominent, and set in the eyes are minute glass beads, a rather unusual technique but instances are known on two rings, a seal, and a brooch, dated ninth century.

These parallels show that animal-style buckles were certainly made in widely separated parts of Saxon England in the ninth century. The remaining examples, both found in Wessex, are evidence that the style became localized in the south and persisted until the eleventh or even the twelfth century. One is a large bronze buckle, 1.9in. across the loop, found near Beckhampton, Wilts.²⁰ On this the bar of the loop is held in the mouths of the two animal heads shown in profile. Another head, modelled in the round, but less realistic than the heads on the loop, is on the pin, the point of which projects from it like a tongue. The point of the pin fits into a small slot in the middle of the loop, and outside this is a solid projection in the form of a very stylized animal head. The last example, also of bronze, 1.4in. across the loop, was found at Old Sarum²¹ about 1817. Here the animal heads face backwards at each end of the bar, and a third head projects forwards from the middle of the loop. The heads are modelled in the round, but as seen from above, with both eyes visible. The eyes are deep round hollows; details of the face are shown by fine incised lines; and the tip of the tongue projects from the mouths. The characterisation is so precise that the heads are clearly intended as ram's heads.

These two buckles provide some evidence of date later than the others mentioned first. The Old Sarum buckle has a site-association with the castle founded in the Norman period, and so is more likely to belong to this period rather than earlier.²² The Beckhampton buckle (an isolated find) was also presumed to be Norman; this attribution is strengthened by a structural detail shared with the Old Sarum buckle, a third head on the loop with a slot behind it for engaging the point of the pin.

The Winchester buckle was found in association with fragments of cooking-pots which are almost certainly not later than c. 1100, though a date slightly earlier, in the eleventh century, is not precluded.

A few observations of a general nature may be added in conclusion. The three buckles found at Winchester, Beckhampton, and Old Sarum, appear to be reasonably close in date, and all were

19. Lindisfarne Priory Museum.

20. *Wilts. Arch. Mag.*, XXXVIII (1913), p. 111, fig. 1.

21. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, no. 1927.6372.

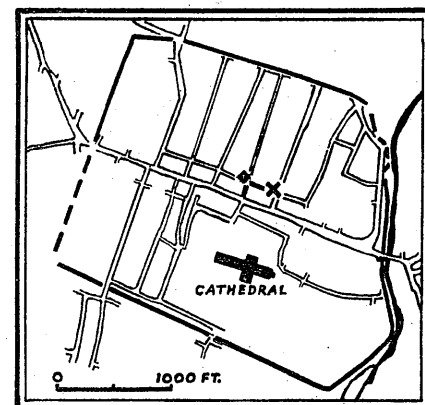
22. A few late Saxon objects have, however, been found at Old Sarum, e.g., a disc brooch referred to the 9th century. *Arch. Journal*, CIV, 136.

found in a fairly prescribed area of Wessex. These large buckles, with animal heads on the loop and once at least on the pin, are very distinctive in type and decoration. The basic idea of the buckles is a loop formed by two joined necks, each ending in a head at the other end. This is well shown by the Winchester buckle and the earlier one from Lindisfarne, and on both these the loop is thick and fleshy-looking. On the Beckhampton and Old Sarum buckles a third head is added on the loop as a structural feature. Many analogies exist for this plastic animal-ornament on late Saxon and early medieval metal work, for instance on pins, strap-ends,²³ and spoons,²⁴ but the subject need not be pursued further here. Sufficient has been said to show that the Winchester buckle may be recognised as the product of a lively local style in Wessex at the close of the Saxon period, with antecedents two centuries earlier. The buckle is thus a welcome addition to the very few minor objects of metal work known from the West Saxon kingdom.

23. Brondsted, *Early English Ornament* (1924), pp. 130-2; *Archaeologia*, LXXXIX, 55-8.

24. *Antiq. Journ.* XIX, 313.

Figure 1. PLAN OF ROMANO-BRITISH STRUCTURES FOUND AT MIDDLE BROOK STREET
AND AT Nos.8 & 9 ST. GEORGE'S STREET, WINCHESTER, IN 1953 AND 1954



Plan showing the Upper Brook Street site (■) and the sites at Middle Brook Street and Nos. 8 and 9 St. George's Street (X) in relation to the walled area of the city.



DRAIN

EAST WING OF SLAUGHTER-HOUSE

ROBBED WALL

5 0 5 10 15 20 25
SCALE OF FEET

ST GEORGE'S STREET

KERB

WELL

OVEN

MOSAIC FLOOR

STREET

MIDDLE BROOK STREET