

LATE IRON AGE–ROMANO-BRITISH AND LATE SAXON ACTIVITY EAST OF LATIMER STREET, ROMSEY

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ABSTRACT

Excavations undertaken in the centre of Romsey prior to redevelopment have produced important evidence for the Middle Palaeolithic environment, with charcoal and pollen being recovered. Evidence for a Late Iron Age and Romano-British field system may relate to a contemporary farmstead previously recorded to the south-east of the site. A single pit may provide evidence of Middle Saxon activity, but most of the potentially Saxon features are of Late Saxon/early medieval date, the pottery indicating a date range of late 9th to 11th century. The features include numerous pits, a possible structure and an oven or kiln. A series of ditches indicates probable property boundaries, and changes in the orientations of these features suggest the reorganisation of activity on the site, possibly related to the early development of the town following the founding of the abbey in the early 10th century. While plant and animal remains indicate the agricultural base of the economy, the recovery of slag blocks confirms the presence in the Late Saxon town of a significant iron smelting industry, as previously recorded south of the abbey. Limited medieval and post-medieval evidence was also found.

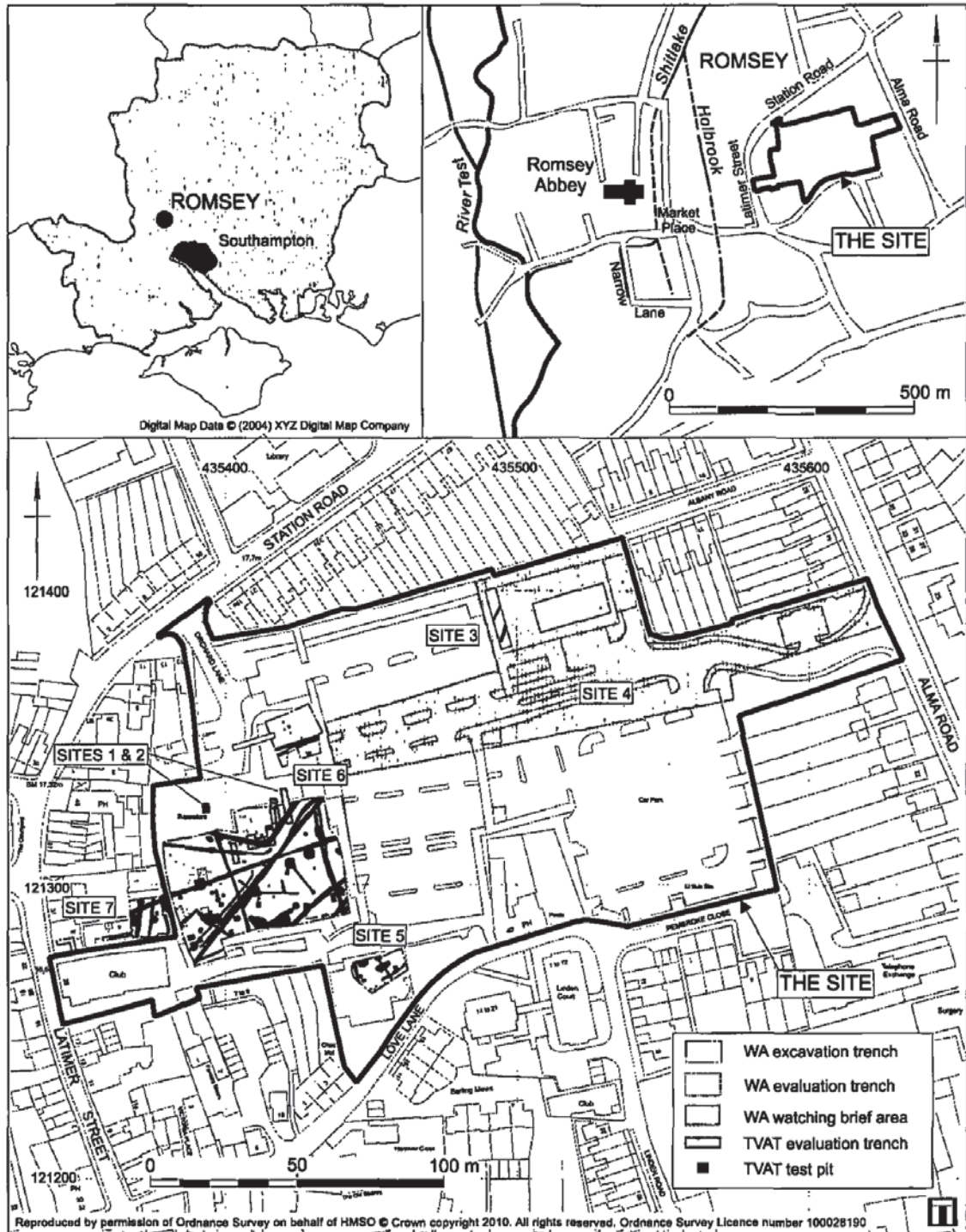
INTRODUCTION

Archaeological excavations in the centre of Romsey have provided valuable information about the town's origins. The main excavation reported here, centred on NGR 435410 121300 east of Latimer Street, was the largest (Site 6) of a series of archaeological works (Sites 1–7) undertaken on a c. 2.8 hectare development site between 1986 and 2003, initially by the Test Valley Archaeological Trust (TVAT) and subse-

quently by Wessex Archaeology (Fig. 1). The development site, on the eastern edge of the town's historic core, lies between Latimer Street to the west, Love Lane to the south, Alma Road to the east, and Station Road to the north.

Romsey is sited on the floodplain of the River Test, which follows a braided course on the west side of the town, with two former south-flowing stream channels lying to the east, between Romsey Abbey and Latimer Street (Hampshire County Council 1999, 6; L–P Archaeology 2002). The drift geology comprises valley gravels capped by brickearth (Geological Survey of Great Britain, sheet 315), locally eroded by the river channels, with localised alluvial deposits resulting from river flooding. The excavation site occupied relatively level ground, sloping gently from c. 18 m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) at the north-east to c. 17.5 m aOD at the south-west.

Although there is documentary evidence for the founding of Romsey Abbey as a royal nunnery in the early 10th century, the origins of the settlement at Romsey are less clear. The town has been subject to a considerable number of archaeological investigations (Scott 1993; Rees *et al.* 1993), which have provided indications of Iron Age and Romano-British activity south of the abbey, but with no clear evidence for settlement. Various sources suggest that the present town has its origins in the Middle Saxon period (e.g. Hase 1988; Collier 1990), developing perhaps as a royal manor, a metal processing centre and/or an ecclesiastical centre. The substantial excavation reported here offered the opportunity to throw light on the town's Saxon origins, as well as to identify and characterise any earlier activity.



Following the removal of the modern overburden, 13 test pits were machine excavated across Site 6 through a 'cultivation soil' down to either archaeological remains or natural deposits; the presence of coke within this soil, which was identified on several of the other Sites, indicates that it had been cultivated up to at least the 18th century.

THE EXCAVATION

Palaeolithic with Catherine Barnett

During the excavation of Late Saxon pit 1232 (Fig. 2), a thin (*c.* 0.05 m thick), fine-grained deposit (1299) was exposed at a depth of 1.6 m within the gravel into which the pit was cut. The deposit comprised fine bands of very dark brown slightly humic silty clay, laminated with fine silty sand, the sandy bands becoming thicker with depth. This is interpreted as a slack water deposit formed within a shallow pool or depression within the river gravel, indicating slow water and settling conditions. The individual laminations and indeed the deposit as a whole are likely to represent a short-lived series of depositional events. The layer was overlain by higher energy fluvial deposits of sand then gravel.

Given its humic nature and the presence of wood charcoal within it, the deposit was at first assumed to be of Late Glacial or Early Post-glacial (Final Upper Palaeolithic to Mesolithic) date, but a fragment of pine charcoal (*Pinus sylvestris*) submitted for radiocarbon dating produced a determination of $34,930 \pm 390/370$ BP (KIA-34485 $\delta^{13}\text{C}(\text{‰}) -23.84 \pm 0.15$), indicating a date of mid-glacial (Middle Palaeolithic), date (Marine Isotope Stage 3). Two further dates were obtained to test the validity of the initial result. One on a fragment of oak charcoal (*Quercus* sp) returned a result of $35,940 \pm 770/700$ BP (KIA-36125 $\delta^{13}\text{C}(\text{‰}) -26.30 \pm 0.24$), and a second on a fragment of willow/aspen charcoal (*Salix/*

Populus sp) gave a result of $39,390 \pm 440/420$ BP (KIA-36126 $\delta^{13}\text{C}(\text{‰}) -24.06 \pm 0.13$). Both results are consistent with the initial result.

Pollen analysis was attempted and although preservation was poor and counts low, Poaceae (grass) and pine grains were recorded by Steve Boreham, along with some reworked pre-Quaternary spores. Of particular note was the presence of ten pieces of macroscopic wood charcoal within this layer. Most were too vitrified and glassy for identification but in addition to the two pieces of pine charcoal, two pieces of willow/aspen were identified. Given the localised nature of the deposit, this indicates that pine, dwarf willow and/or cold-tolerant aspen were growing locally during the later Middle Palaeolithic. The presence both of trees and, particularly, of burnt wood is of exceptional ecological and archaeological significance given the early date and will be explored further in a forthcoming paper.

Late Iron Age to Romano-British

Pre-Saxon archaeological activity on the site is represented by a series of generally straight ditches and gullies, some of which are clearly associated, either parallel to, or turning in respect to others, and dated broadly to the Late Iron Age/early Romano-British period (Fig. 2). However, since they contained very limited and inconclusive dating evidence, the following interpretation is based mainly on the few stratigraphic relationships and the apparent associations suggested by the layout of the ditches, which had a predominantly NE-SW alignment. Two main phases of activity can be discerned.

An early component was a narrow ditch (1580) that crossed the whole site on a slightly sinuous NE-SW line, bowing out around the end of another ditch (1577) that ran towards it from the west. Ditch 1577 turned to the north-east as it approached ditch 1580, at which point it either terminated or had subsequently been completely truncated. These

Fig. 1 (*opposite*) Site location

ditches appear, therefore, to have formed part of a 'funnel' narrowing to *c.* 1.5 m, possibly laid out to control the movement of livestock. Another narrow ditch (1581) ran parallel to 1580, to its immediate north-west, while a third (1584) lay *c.* 6 m further to the north-west.

Although they had been subject to later truncation, ditches 1580, 1581 and 1584 were of similar dimensions, 0.6–0.7 m wide and up to 0.1 m deep, each with a single fill. Ditch 1577 was in places slightly larger, up to 1 m wide and 0.35 m deep, with moderately steep sides and a flat base, and up to three fills; it was the only one of these ditches to contain any datable finds – a single small sherd of later prehistoric flint-tempered pottery (possibly residual Late Bronze Age) and two fragments of possibly Iron Age sandy ware coming from the upper of three fills, and one sherd of Romano-British pottery from a section with a single fill.

A second phase saw a slight modification of this arrangement, ditch 1580 being truncated, at the point where it bowed out, by a larger ditch (1579 – up to 1.1 m wide and 0.85 m deep) on approximately the same alignment. At the same time, ditch 1577 appears to have been replaced by a similarly wide ditch (1574) (although there was no stratigraphical relationship between them), forming a similar, *c.* 4 m wide, 'funnel'. Ditch 1574 had a narrow gully (1543) on its north edge. Again, the dating evidence was limited, ditch 1579 producing two sherds of possibly Romano-British pottery from a secondary fill, and ditch 1574 producing a sherd of probably intrusive Late Saxon pottery from a section with a single fill. During an evaluation in 1986 a barb from a spring padlock of Romano-British date was recovered from a pit recorded as cutting ditch 1574 (Scott 1993, 49, 51).

In combination, therefore, these features appear to represent part of a wider layout of possible fields, enclosures, trackways and other boundaries of relatively long duration, with a 'funnel' arrangement leading from a field or open area at the south-west into a trackway running towards the north-east. It is possible that the truncation of the early

phase ditches was caused by the convergence of people and animals into and along the trackway in the later phase. The same trackway may be represented by four parallel but undated ditches on a similar (but not identical) alignment recorded during a 2002 evaluation (Site 3) some 800 m to the north-east, one (203) defining the north-west side of the trackway and three (205, 207 and 209) defining the south-east side (Wessex Archaeology 2002a). The limited dating evidence suggests that these features were of Late Iron Age to Romano-British date.

Two other sets of ditches may have been broadly contemporary with these features. In the south-east corner of Site 6, NE–SW aligned ditch 1578 was up to 1.3 m wide and 0.4 m deep, its single fill producing two possibly Iron Age sherds and one Romano-British sherd (as well as two intrusive medieval sherds possibly deriving from one of the medieval pits which cut the ditch). Two smaller, slightly diverging ditches (1022 and 1588) ran approximately parallel to it to its south-east, each *c.* 0.55 m wide and up to 0.2 m deep, and both producing single sherds of sandy fabric pottery of either Iron Age or Saxon date (ditch 1588 also contained an intrusive post-medieval sherd). These three ditches may have formed a broad trackway, or again represent more than one phase of boundary.

At the west of the site (in Site 7) three small parallel ditches (121 at the east and 132 and 134 overlapping at the west) appear to define another possible trackway, 2.8 m wide, running approximately north–south and therefore perpendicular to ditch 1577 (although any intersection with 1577 would have lain just outside the excavation areas) (Wessex Archaeology 2002b). The ditches, which were 0.5–1 m wide and 0.15–0.3 m deep, each with a single fill, produced ten sherds of pottery, although these included sherds of prehistoric and Romano-British date through to Late Saxon, early medieval and even post-medieval date. However, their stratigraphical position within the site suggests a probable relationship to the other features of this period, the later pottery within them probably deriving from the later

activity in the area, as represented by Late Saxon/medieval (113, 114 and 136) and post-medieval (106 and 107) features which cut them.

Apart from the pottery, most of the finds from this complex of ditches were undiagnostic worked and burnt flint; only six fragments of animal bone were recovered. However, a small number of further Romano-British sherds were found in later pits, along with fragments of Romano-British ceramic building material (CBM), including fragments of *tegulae*, *imbrices* and flue tiles, two fragments of Romano-British glass and some oyster shells. This low level of pre-Saxon finds suggests that any settlement associated with the ditches was probably some distance away.

Although 43 postholes, some of them in groups, were recorded on the site, only one was datable (by a single medieval sherd), and while it is possible that some were of Late Iron Age/early Romano-British date, this cannot be determined. If they were contemporary with the ditches, they may have formed structures with an agricultural, rather than a settlement function. The ditches likewise appear to have had a solely agricultural function, with the low level of finds within them probably deriving from the incorporation of domestic debris in manure spread onto fields away from the settlement, rather than from the direct dumping of waste. A single fragment of cremated human bone from ditch 1574 is likely to have been from a disturbed burial (possibly Romano-British) in the area.

Saxon

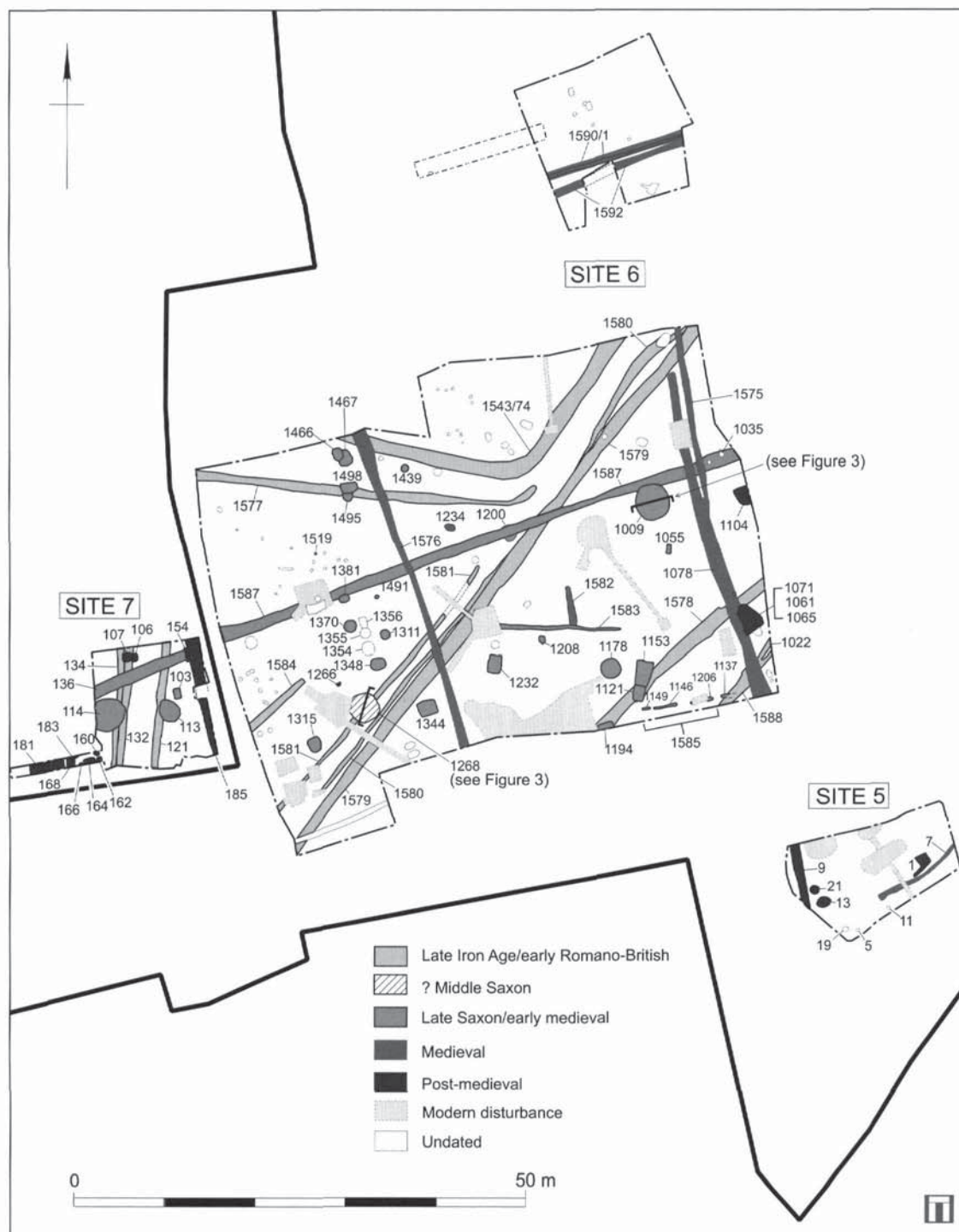
There was a period of apparent inactivity between the use of the Late Iron Age/early Romano-British field system and the subsequent Saxon reoccupation of the site, the latter being represented mainly by a series of pits suggestive of predominantly settlement activity within the immediate vicinity (Fig. 2).

Evidence for a possible Middle Saxon origin for that activity was very limited and far from conclusive, comprising nine sherds (197 g) from a limestone-tempered jar of possible

Middle Saxon date (see below). The sherds were recovered from a lower fill (1397) of a large pit (1268) in the south-western part of Site 6 (Figs 2 and 3). The original function of this pit, which was 3.4 m in diameter and 2.3 m deep with steeply sloping sides and a concave base, is unclear but it had not been left open for long before it began to be backfilled with dumps of gravel and waste material. In addition to the limestone-tempered pottery, charcoal-rich layer 1397 contained CBM, fired clay, slag, burnt flint and a large animal bone assemblage (1910 g), comprising bones of cattle, pig and sheep/goat, as well as, uniquely for the site, goose, duck and domestic fowl. The layer was overlain by another thick gravel dump (1399).

The pit's upper fills were noticeably different in character, and may have been deposited some time later, as the earlier fills settled and compacted. They contained large quantities of slag and fired clay, including two loomweights and the remains of a clay-lined kiln or oven constructed in the resulting depression. The oven was represented by an apparently *in situ* layer of fired clay (1269), and a stakehole (1464) visible in the pit section may have formed part of an associated superstructure. Two charred wooden stakes from context 1269, presumably structural and burnt *in situ*, were identified as oak roundwood. Once the oven fell out of use it was overlain by further waste material containing a single sherd of Late Saxon pottery. Charred plant remains, mostly from the upper series of fills, included barley, oat, wheat and rye, as well as lentil and flax, and the pit contained the only mineralised weed seed from the site – corn gromwell, mineralised through phosphates providing possible evidence of cess in the pit.

One other sherd of limestone-tempered pottery was recovered from a Late Saxon pit, but there were no other indications of Middle Saxon activity on the site. As discussed below, the bulk of the ceramic material from the Saxon/early medieval features provides a likely date range of the late 9th to the 11th century, and there was little artefactual evidence with which to apply a more detailed phasing. The



few stratigraphical relationships between features provide little additional information about the development of the site. While the arrangement of features, their variable orientations and alignments, as well as variations in pit function suggested by their different forms and contents, point to changes in the organisation and use of space, it is not possible to pin these down chronologically.

Site 6 was bisected by one straight, ENE–WSW aligned ditch (1587) (which continued across Site 7 as ditch 136) (Wessex Archaeology 2002b). This was up to 1.6 m wide and 1 m deep with moderate-steep sides and a slightly concave base. In the absence of information about the character and layout of Saxon settlement at Romsey, the purpose of this ditch is unclear. It could represent a field boundary, and a number of sections across it may indicate either a former bank on its north side or perhaps the erosion of agricultural soil down the prevailing slope. However, the fact that it cut an earlier pit (1200) containing settlement waste suggests that there was already some settlement activity on the site when it was laid out, and the ditch may represent, alternatively, an early definition of properties laid out perpendicular to some precursor of Latimer Street. In addition to pottery, the ditch also contained fired clay, slag and animal bone.

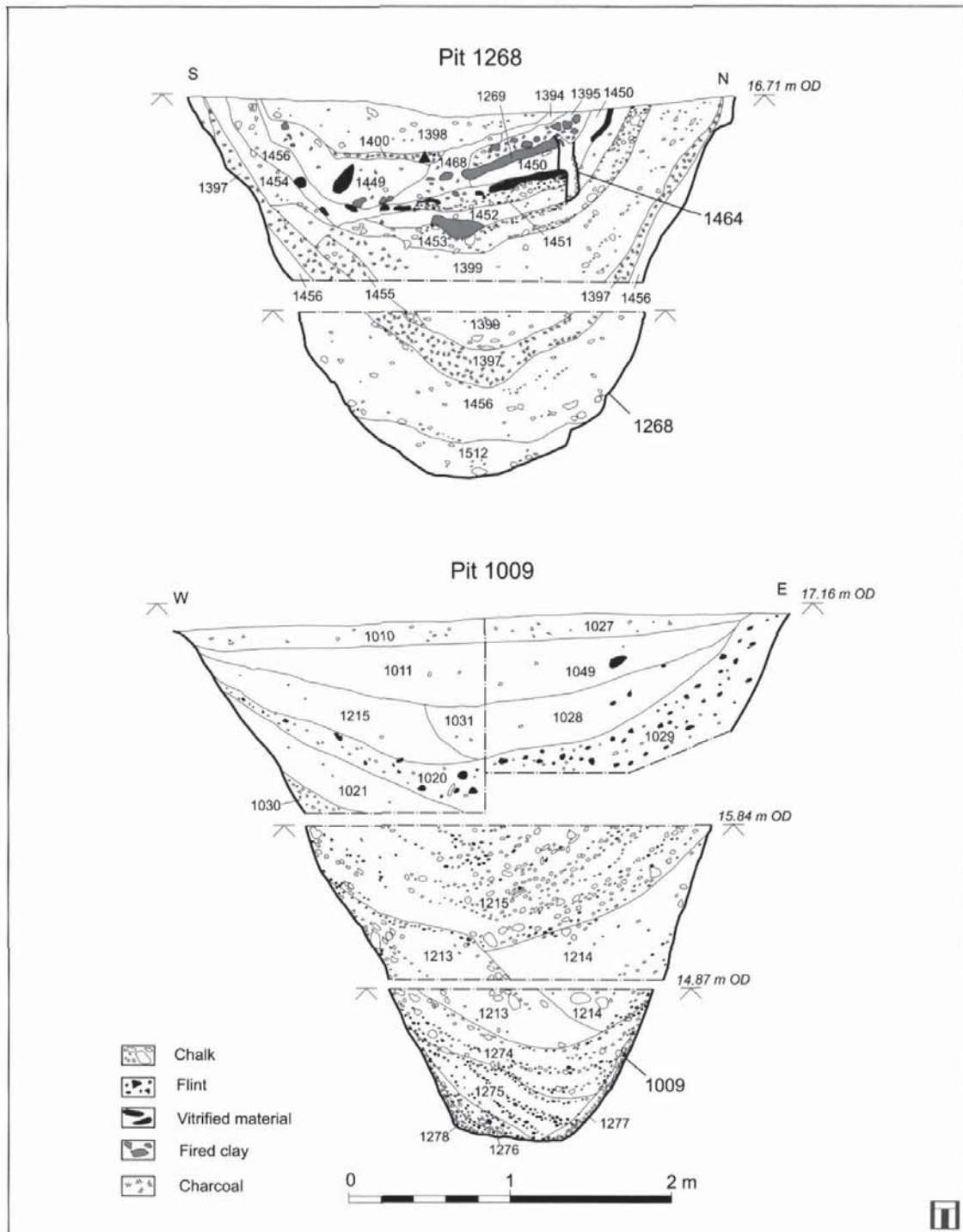
Other features, however, have different alignments, and could represent an earlier organisation of space. A 13 m long gully (1583) towards the south of Site 6 is aligned almost due east–west, while a number of subrectangular pits sited close to it (intercutting pits 1121 and 1153, and pit 1232 and 1055) have their long axes lying near perpendicular to it. The earlier of the two intercutting pits (1153) was *c.* 2.8 m long, 1.3–1.8 m wide and 0.6 m deep, with vertical sides and a flat base. It was dug only to the top of the valley gravel, perhaps for the extraction of brickearth, although much of it cut into the fills of Late Iron Age/early Romano-British ditch 1578. A single stakehole cut into its northern edge may be associated with it. Dumps of waste used to backfill the pit

contained Late Saxon pottery, slag, fired clay, animal bone, CBM, lava quern fragments, an iron nail and a knife blade, as well as charred grain and charcoal. It was cut along its south-west side by a smaller pit (1121), 1.7 m long, 1.3 m wide and 1.65 m deep, with vertical sides curving at the bottom to an almost flat base. The pit had been similarly backfilled, including with dumps of hearth material, while green staining around its edges suggest it had also been used for the disposal of cess. Finds included pottery, animal bone, CBM, fired clay, oyster shell, quern fragments and a large quantity of ironworking slag (over 12 kg). Large amounts of charcoal and charred seeds were also recovered.

Another orientation is indicated by a possible structure in the south-east corner of Site 6. This is represented by an intermittent gully (1585) approximately 10 m long (its eastern end cutting ditches 1022/1588) and surviving as four short segments no more than 0.05 m deep. Four subrectangular postholes were recorded in its base, the best-preserved (at the east end of segment 1146) measuring 0.8 m by 0.3 m and 0.35 m deep. The feature, which lies less than 1 m from the southern edge of the excavation, may represent a wall trench on the north side of a rectangular building, most of which lay outside the excavation area, although it is not possible to ascertain its function. As in the Late Iron Age/early Romano-British period, it is possible that the many undated postholes, recorded mainly in the eastern and northern parts of Site 6, are of Saxon date, but again this cannot be determined.

It is possible that the features described above pre-date the construction of ditch 1587/136, since the alignment of that ditch appears to either influence or reflect the layout of a number of the other Late Saxon features, as well as being reflected in the perpendicular arrangement of the subsequent medieval ditches across the site. In the same way as pits 1121, 1153, 1232 and 1055 appeared to be orientated in relation to gully 1583, so subrectangular pits 103, 1315, 1344 and 1356 appear to be orientated in relation to ditch 1587/136;

Fig. 2 (*opposite*) Phase plan



the latter of these pits (which was undated) was in a line of four pits running perpendicular to the ditch. While the orientation of these pits may be entirely fortuitous, their subrectangular shape may, unlike with the circular pits, reflect the orientation of other features, some of which may not be archaeologically visible.

Pit 1344 measured *c.* 1.6 m by 2 m, and was 1.1 m deep with near-vertical sides and a flat base. Green staining on the base possibly indicates its original use as a cess pit, and its lower and middle fills contained pottery, CBM, fired clay, an iron boot heel, a fragment of possibly architectural limestone, animal bone and burnt flint. A small quantity of ironworking slag came from these fills but the pit's upper fill produced over 5 kg of slag. Similar variability in the incidence of slag was found in pit 1315, where a lower fill contained only 8 g of slag, while the uppermost fill produced 336 g, and in pit 1268 (see above) where a lower fill (1397) contained 1.2 kg of slag, compared 10.5 kg for an upper fill (1450) (Fig. 3).

The slag consisted mainly of fragments of very dense blocks, often with clear visible surface 'runs', although there were a few more vesicular fragments. Slag blocks are formed by allowing the slag to drop into a pit below the furnace at the end of the smelting process, prior to the removal of the iron bloom from the furnace. No complete or largely complete blocks were recovered; the largest single fragment, from pit 1035, weighed *c.* 18.5 kg. Slag blocks, both complete and in fragments, have been found on several other sites in the town, particularly in the Narrow Lane area and at La Sagesse Convent (some 300 m south-west of the site) (McDonnell 1988; Wessex Archaeology 2002c). Romsey represents the most westerly occurrence of this particular slag type (which is otherwise confined to the east coast of England and northern Europe). This suggests that there was an important iron smelting industry in the Narrow Lane area of Romsey. While a Middle Saxon origin has been suggested (Scott 1993; 1996) for this industry, perhaps operating within part of a royal estate supplying the nearby port

of *Hamwic* (Southampton), this date has yet to be proved, and recent evidence from West Quay, Southampton, suggests that this type of slag may extend into the Late Saxon period (P. Andrews pers. comm.). In terms of the overall assemblage from Romsey, the slag from this site represents a relatively small group, and it is likely to have been redeposited on the site from nearby smelting activity.

The largest pit on the site (1009) was *c.* 4 m in diameter and 3.2 m deep, with steep straight sides and a *c.* 0.7 m wide flat base (Fig. 3). There were no clear indications as to its original function, although its depth suggests it may have been a well. Unusually for such a large feature, there was little evidence of material slumping in from the sides, raising the possibility that it may originally have had a wattle lining. Although some post-medieval brick and tile was recovered from the upper fills, all pottery from the primary and secondary fills was of Late Saxon date, and most of the other finds were distributed throughout its fills. The large animal bone assemblage from the pit was dominated by cattle with little sheep/goat and only a single pig mandible. It also included a large number of horse bones (the bulk of the horse bones from the site), as well as the only dog bones (a partial skeleton) and the only deer bone (a single mandible). The pit also produced lava quern fragments, a fragment of a Greensand rotary quern, iron objects, fired clay, possible building stone and burnt flint, as well as a large quantity of ironworking slag (over 28 kg). Environmental samples from the lower fills produced quantities of charred grains (including rye, wheat and oats), seeds and charcoal.

Medieval

The ceramic evidence points to a break in settlement activity on the site soon after the Norman Conquest. However, the general orientation of property boundaries, as established in the Late Saxon period by ditch 1587, appears to have continued to influence the activity in the medieval period (Fig. 2). Two almost parallel ditches (1590 and 1592), with the

Fig. 3 (*opposite*) Sections of pits 1268 and 1009

same ENE–WSW orientation, were recorded in the detached northern part of Site 6, both containing sherds of medieval pottery, 1592 also containing medieval and (presumably intrusive) post-medieval CBM. Both were c. 1 m wide and 0.4 m deep, ditch 1590 having a small gully (1591), 0.4 m wide and 0.2 m deep, cut into its fill. Their line corresponds to that of a long field boundary depicted on the 1st edition OS map of 1878 running to the east, indicating the possibly enduring influence of the town's earliest boundaries into the modern age.

At a right-angle to these ditches, in the main part of Site 6, were two further boundaries some 30 m apart represented by ditches 1078/1575 in the east and ditch 1576 in the west, both cutting across the fully silted up Late Saxon ditch (1587). At the east it was not possible to establish the relationship between ditches 1078 and 1575 where they converged, but they probably represent the reworking of a single boundary; neither extended into the detached northern part of Site 6, but it is possible that ditch 9 on Site 5 to the south was a continuation of this boundary (and although it produced two sherds of post-medieval pottery in addition to medieval sherds, the former may be intrusive in the ditch's single fill). Ditch 1078, which was c. 0.8 m wide and 0.3 m deep with a U-shaped profile, contained a single medieval sherd. Ditch 1575, which was c. 0.5 m wide and 0.3 m deep with a V-shaped profile, produced Late Saxon and medieval pottery; two sherds of post-medieval Verwood pottery are likely to be intrusive, being recorded from a section where the ditch was cut by a group of post-medieval pits (1061, 1065, 1071) containing a large quantity of the same type of pottery.

Medieval sherds were also recovered from a heavily truncated gully (1582), 4.4 m long, aligned north–south in the center of Site 6, and up to 0.8 m wide but only 0.05 m deep. A heavily truncated ditch (7) aligned NE–SW in Site 5 (Wessex Archaeology 2003) produced two sherds of 12th to 14th century pottery. It appears to follow the curving line of the present Love Lane to its south, suggesting that this road may date to the medieval period. A

single medieval sherd provided the only dating evidence for any of the postholes on Site 6. Posthole (1519) was one in a group of postholes in the north-west part of the site, which, although they form no recognisable structure, do appear to be associated, some forming a line running WNW–ESE. Residual medieval pottery was also occasionally present in post-medieval deposits and features, and an isolated medieval posthole (307) was recorded on Site 3 (Wessex Archaeology 2002a).

Post-medieval

There was limited evidence of post-medieval activity, although the soil layer observed in most areas overlying the brickearth is likely to have developed as a result of agricultural/horticultural activity throughout the post-medieval period. In the west, on Site 7, ditch 181, gully 168 and ditch 185 probably relate to the rear boundaries of properties fronting onto Latimer Street (Fig. 2). None of these ditches corresponds to boundaries shown on the 1st edition OS map. They were succeeded by a number of small sub-rectangular pits (106, 107, 154, 160, 162, 164, 166 and 183) of uncertain function.

A group of intercutting late post-medieval pits (1061, 1065 and 1071), and a fourth to their north (1104) were also recorded on the east side of Site 6, pit 1071 containing a large dump of post-medieval brick and tile. A number of small pits (1, 13, 21) and postholes (5, 11, 19) recorded on Site 5 probably relate to activities in the yards and gardens to the rear of the Love Lane properties.

FINDS

Pottery by Lorraine Mephram

The total pottery assemblage from all stages of fieldwork at the site amounts to 810 sherds (12,547 g). The majority of this assemblage (623 sherds; 7332 g) is of Late Saxon or medieval date, and it is on this group that this report will focus. Prehistoric and Romano-British wares, which were found in minimal quantities, and

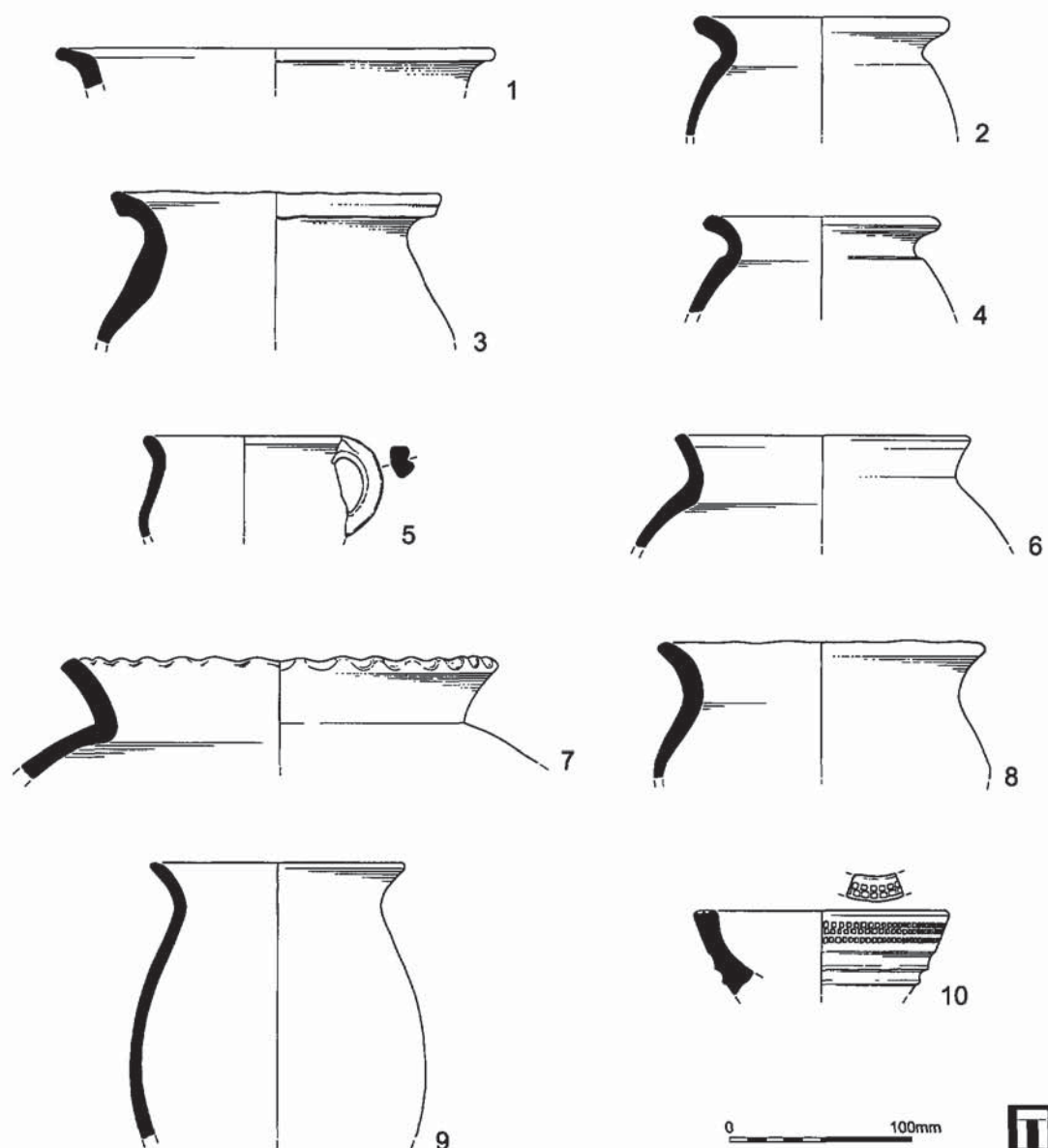


Fig. 4 Saxon pottery

1. Wheelthrown bowl/dish rim, Michelmerssh-type ware (E404). PRN (Pottery Record Number) 280, context 115, pit 114. 2. Handmade jar; fabric FL400. PRN 132, context 1349, pit 1348. 3. Handmade jar with bevelled rim; fabric FL402. PRN 70, context 1154, pit 1153. 4. Handmade jar; fabric FL402. PRN 337, context 1345, pit 1344. 5. Handled jar; fabric FL400. PRN 220, context 1472, pit 1467. 6. Wheelthrown jar; fabric CH400. PRN 165, context 1346, pit 1344. 7. Wheelthrown jar; fabric CH400; finger impressed rim. PRN 45, context 1142, pit 1121. 8. Handmade jar; fabric LI400. PRN 112, context 1397, pit 1268. 9. Handmade jar; fabric QU406. PRN 222, context 1438, ditch 1587. 10. Lamp; fabric CH402; rouletted decoration, internally sooted. PRN 148, context 1251, pit 1121.

Table 1 Pottery totals by fabric type

<i>Fabric code</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>No. sherds</i>	<i>Weight (g)</i>
<i>All prehistoric wares</i>		12	45
<i>All Romano-British wares</i>		18	70
<i>Late Saxon</i>			
E400	Cheddar-type ware	1	8
E404	Michelmerssh-type ware	109	1468
E422	Laverstock-type coarseware	90	762
CH400	Chalk-tempered fabric, some quartz and rare flint	135	1641
CH401	Chalk-tempered fabric, more frequent flint	11	183
CH402	Chalk-tempered fabric with rare flint and quartz	1	22
FL400	Sparsely tempered with patinated flint	165	1661
FL401	Patinated flint and quartz	22	251
FL402	Coarser variant of F400?	17	373
LI400	Limestone-tempered ware	10	203
QU400	Glauconitic sandy fabric, fairly fine, well sorted	1	25
QU401	Fine glauconitic sandy fabric, some carbonaceous inclusions	10	139
QU402	Sandy fabric with rare flint	19	177
QU403	Medium grained sandy fabric	1	20
QU404	Relatively fine, well sorted sandy fabric	1	6
QU406	Fine sandy fabric with rare voids	19	284
<i>Medieval</i>			
E421	Laverstock-type fineware	3	14
E445	South Hampshire redware	2	9
QU405	Fine pale-firing sandy, glazed	4	56
QU407	Fine oxidised sandy, glazed	1	1
QU408	Late medieval fine sandy ware, oxidised	1	29
<i>sub-total Late Saxon and medieval</i>		623	7332
<i>All post-medieval wares</i>		157	5100
<i>Overall total</i>		810	12,547

post-medieval wares, are not discussed further, although full records are held in the project archive.

The Late Saxon and medieval pottery has been subjected to full fabric and form analysis, following the standard Wessex Archaeology pottery recording system (Morris 1994), which fulfils recommended minimum archive standards for post-Roman pottery (MPRG 2001). Definitions and descriptions of vessel forms follow nationally recommended nomenclature (MPRG 1998). All records are held in an Access database in the project archive.

Description of the assemblage

Twenty-one separate Late Saxon and medieval fabric types were defined (Table 1), of which five are known regional ware types (Group E). The remainder have been defined on the basis of the range and frequency of macroscopic inclusions, and fall into three broad groups: flint-tempered wares (Group FL); calcareous wares including chalk-tempered wares (Group CH) and limestone-tempered ware (L1); and sandy wares (Group QU), although many fabrics contain a mix of inclusions, a characteristic observed in much of the Saxon and early medieval pottery in the region.

Regional wares amongst the Late Saxon wares comprise Michelmershtype ware, Laverstock-type coarseware and Cheddar-type ware. The Michelmershtype wares (which constitute 20.3% of the total Late Saxon assemblage by weight) are visually comparable to products of the Michelmersht kilns, one of which has an archaeomagnetic date of late 10th to early 11th century (Mephams and Brown 2007). Seven rim sherds appear to derive from everted rim jar forms similar to those recovered from the kilns; there is also one bowl or dish rim which is not paralleled within the kiln assemblage (Fig. 4.1). One body sherd bears stamped decoration. The Michelmershtype wares are, however, also visually similar to Late Saxon Sandyware as identified in mid-9th to mid-10th century contexts in Winchester (Biddle and Collis 1978).

Laverstock-type coarseware (10.5% of the Late Saxon total) is less easy to pin down

chronologically. This distinctive, densely sandy fabric is macroscopically indistinguishable from products of the 13th century kilns outside Salisbury (Musty *et al.* 1969) but, as is apparent from this and other assemblages, its initial production must pre-date the excavated kilns by a significant period. On sites in Wilton and Amesbury, Wiltshire, the ware has been found in association with Michelmershtype and other wares of 10th to 12th century date (Andrews *et al.* 2000; Powell *et al.* 2009). At this site, the Laverstock-type coarsewares that occur in context groups within this date range tend to derive from thick-walled vessels; there is one jar rim, simply everted, of a type which has a pre-Conquest origin but which survived as an 'archaic' form into the 13th century (Musty *et al.* 1969, type I). There are also variants of the fabric with very prominent quartz inclusions, and some with rare angular flint inclusions – the latter probably derive from a source other than the Laverstock kilns as none of the coarsewares from Salisbury and the immediate surrounding area contain flint. None of the coarsewares in Saxon contexts, however, are scratchmarked; this is a surface treatment which in Southampton is considered to mark a post-Conquest development (Brown 1995, 143).

Cheddar-type ware is represented by a single sherd. This is another wheelthrown ware, and is comparable to wares identified at the Saxon palace at Cheddar in late 10th to 11th century contexts (Rahtz 1979, 309–18). Its occurrence here is of interest as it has not as yet been recorded from Romsey, although occurring at both Wilton and Amesbury.

The flint-tempered and chalk-tempered wares are considered here as locally made Late Saxon products, although both fall within wider ceramic traditions. The flint-tempered wares (31.6% of the Late Saxon total), for example, find parallels amongst the Late Saxon wares from Southampton, although most examples from this site lack the sandy matrix seen in the latter wares (Brown 1995, fabrics 900 and 1000). In Southampton, flint-tempered wares constitute the most commonly occurring types, and may have been made in the town itself (*ibid.*, 131, table 4). They are much less

common on sites to the north-west, at Wilton and Amesbury. At this site flint-tempered wares are used exclusively for handmade jar forms; no base angles were observed so these were presumably round-based. Rims are most commonly simple and rounded (13 examples; Fig. 4.2), although there are examples which are slightly lid-seated, thickened, or externally bevelled (seven examples; Fig. 4.3–4); rim/body profile is generally sinuous, with no marked neck/body junction. There is one unusual form – a jar with a thin strap handle springing from the rim (Fig. 4.5).

Calcareous wares (which make up 28.4% of the Late Saxon total from this site) are not common in Southampton (Brown 1995, table 4), but dominate late 9th/10th century contexts in Winchester (McCarthy and Brooks 1988, 189). Visually similar fabrics have been recorded from both Wilton and Amesbury (Andrews *et al.* 2000; Powell *et al.* 2009). This group includes both chalk-tempered (CH400, CH401 and CH402) and limestone-tempered fabrics (LI400). As for the flint-tempered wares, they are used almost exclusively for jar forms at this site, and for one internally sooted lamp, with rouletted decoration, in fabric CH402 (Fig. 4.10), but the vessels in chalk-tempered fabrics CH400 and CH401 are wheelthrown, with sagging bases and sharply everted rims; one example has a finger-impressed rim (Fig. 4.6–7). These vessels show a striking resemblance to wheelthrown jars found at Portchester, and tentatively attributed to a Winchester-area source (Cunliffe 1975, nos. 325, 337; see also Collis 1978, fig. 81, 27). In contrast, the single vessel in limestone-tempered fabric LI400 is more crudely made, with a gently concave neck profile (Fig. 4.8).

Sandy wares are far less common here (9.0% of the Late Saxon total). Six fabrics have been assigned to the Late Saxon phase, largely on the basis of stratigraphic provenance, since there are few diagnostic sherds – three jars, two with simple everted rims, in fabrics QU403 and QU406 (Fig. 4.9) with one with an external bevel.

The remaining five fabrics are all of medieval date, and include identifiable sherds of Laverstock-type fineware from the Salisbury area and

South Hampshire redware, as well as a handful of other fine sandy glazed wares of uncertain source. These wares are broadly dated as 13th/14th century.

Chronology and affinities

A general absence of well-dated pre-Conquest ceramic groups in the region renders any discussion of the dating of the assemblage somewhat difficult. Nothing has as yet been published from Romsey itself, although an assemblage of just over 1000 sherds is discussed in an unpublished report (Rees 1993). Only summary details of the ceramic sequence in Winchester are available (McCarthy and Brooks 1988, 189–90). The largest external published group available for comparison, and with the best stratigraphic dating, although still lacking a good ceramic sequence, is from Southampton (2530 sherds; Brown 1995). There are other groups from Portchester (Cunliffe 1975), Wilton (Andrews *et al.* 2000) and Amesbury (Powell *et al.* 2009), and kiln groups from Michelmersh (Mephram and Brown 2007).

Links with the preceding Middle Saxon period should not be ignored. The flint-tempered fabrics of Late Saxon Southampton have their origin in this period, and in fact show little development in terms of either fabrics or vessel forms throughout their period of use, which continues into the early medieval period. The S-shaped profile and rounded base seen in the flint-tempered jar forms from this site are echoed in both Middle Saxon *Hamwic* and Late Saxon Southampton (Timby 1988, group VI wares, fig. 8; Brown 1995, fig. 2), and the limestone-tempered fabric LI400, in a similar jar form, appears to be an entirely Middle Saxon element (Timby 1988, group V wares, fig. 7).

The possibility that some of the assemblage is of Middle Saxon date cannot, therefore, be ruled out. The presence of other wares, however, points to a Late Saxon date (late 9th to 11th century) for the majority of the assemblage. The wheelthrown wares appear to offer the best chronological evidence. Visually similar sandy wares (initially under the name of Late Saxon Sandy ware, later Michelmersh-type

wares) are known in Winchester from the late 9th to the early 11th century. Chalk-tempered wares have a similar date range in Winchester, and the jar forms from this site, with sagging bases and sharply everted rims, find parallels in other 10th/11th century wheelthrown wares of this period, such as Portchester ware and Cheddar-type ware.

An end date is perhaps easier to define; the absence of any sherds of identifiable tripod pitchers suggests that active use of the site had virtually ceased by the end of the 11th century, i.e. round about the Conquest period, although a few medieval sherds attest to sporadic activity at least into the 13th century (for example, the upper fill of pit 1344).

Sources of supply appear to lie almost exclusively within the local area (less than 20 km from the site). Identifiable sources include the Michelmersh kilns and, to a much lesser extent, the Salisbury area. The wheelthrown chalk-tempered wares may originate in the Winchester area, while the patinated flint gravel in the flint-tempered fabrics suggests a river valley source which, given similarities with wares from Southampton, could lie in the Test valley south of Romsey. A single Cheddar-type sherd indicates more long-distance contacts.

All these ware groups appear to have been supplying almost exclusively jar forms to the site; there is no evidence here for the use of the decorated pitchers made at Michelmersh. Interestingly, there seems to have been no preference for the better-made wheelthrown jars over the handmade forms, as both occur on the site in similar quantities.

Distribution on site

Late Saxon and medieval pottery derived from 49 cut features, as well as from the post-medieval 'cultivation soil' and the topsoil. Within this, a total of 573 sherds (6813 g) came from features which are relatively confidently ascribed, on either stratigraphic and/or pottery grounds, to the Late Saxon or medieval periods; the remainder was either intrusive in earlier features, or residual in later contexts.

Pottery was most commonly deposited in pits (511 sherds; 6226 g), with 72 sherds (771 g) in ditches; only minimal quantities ended up in other feature types (e.g. postholes) or miscellaneous layers. Mean sherd size comparison between pits and ditches suggests that pits may have been used generally for primary refuse disposal (mean sherd weight 12.2 g), while pottery in ditches may have been subjected to more post-depositional movement (mean sherd weight 10.7 g), although the picture may be complicated to some extent by reworking of deposits during the intercutting of various features.

Distribution of pottery across the site is generally at a low frequency – only three features produced more than 30 sherds (pit 1121: 36 sherds; pit 114: 92 sherds; pit 1344: 154 sherds). The two largest groups, from pits 114 and 1344, show a high degree of similarity in the range of fabrics and forms they contained. Both produced Michelmersh-type, flint-tempered and chalk-tempered wares in some quantity, with a few sherds of Laverstock-type coarseware; pit 114 also yielded the single sherd of Cheddar-type ware. Apart from a Michelmersh-type bowl rim (Fig. 4.1), all diagnostic forms are jars, including both wheelthrown and handmade forms (Fig. 4.4 & 6). Both groups can be dated broadly within a range of late 9th to 11th century, and this date range can also be applied to most other feature groups, with the exception of a few features dated by the presence of early medieval sherds (e.g. ditches 1078, 1575, 1576, 1590, 1592), and the upper fills of some Late Saxon features (e.g. pit 1344).

It has not proved possible to determine any chronological sequence within the various Late Saxon context groups across the site. This is largely due to the small size of these groups, which would render any proposed sequence unsafe, but it also reflects the absence of fabrics or forms which can be dated more closely within the period.

Charred plant remains by Chris Stevens

Twenty-two samples were taken from features, with a further 14 from the test pits through

Phase	Feature/ cut number	Context	Sample volume (litres)	R-B	Late Saxon										Undated									
					Ditch		Pits								Ditch		Pits							
					1577	1009	1121	1153	1232	1268	1315	1370	1495	1498	1386	1418	1354	1355						
					1540	n/a	1123	1156	1292	n/a	1318	1372	1497	1501	1387	1420	1362	1365						
					10	14	10	10	8	27	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10						
<i>Brassica</i> sp.	Wild mustard/ cabbage			-	-	-	cf.1	-	-	cf.1m	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-						
<i>Raphanus raphanistrum</i> (capsule frag.)	Wild radish			-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-						
<i>Lens culinaris</i>	Lentil			-	-	-	-	-	-	cf.6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-						
<i>Lens/Vicia</i> sp.	Lentil/vetch/ bean			1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-						
<i>Pisum sativum</i>	Pea			-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-						
<i>Vicia/Lathyrus</i> sp.	Vetch/tare/ wild pea			-	1	2	-	-	-	17	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1						
<i>Linum usitatissimum</i> (seed)	Flax			-	-	-	5	-	-	cf.1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-						
<i>Lithospermum arvense</i>	Corn gromwell			-	-	-	-	-	-	1m	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-						
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Plantain			1	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-						
<i>Odontites vernus</i>	Red bartsia			-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-						
<i>Galium aparine</i>	Cleavers			-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-						
<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Elder			-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-						
Asteraceae small indet.	Daisy/ dandelion/ thistle			-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-						
Cyperaceae (inner kernel)	Sedge			-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-						
<i>Eleocharis palustris</i>	Spikerush			-	-	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-						
Poaceae (culm node)	Grasses			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-						
<i>Avena/Bromus</i> sp.	Oats/brome grass			-	-	3	1	-	-	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-						
<i>Avena</i> sp. (grain)	Oats			2	6	9	2+frgs	-	-	17	1	-	4	7	-	2	-	-						
<i>Phleum</i> sp.	Cat's tails			-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-						
<i>Bromus</i> sp.	Brome grass			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-						
Seed indet.				-	2	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-						
Seed/tuber				1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-						

the 'cultivation soil'. They were processed using standard flotation techniques and charred remains identified and quantified. Fourteen samples were examined (Table 2). The nomenclature follows that of Stace (1997). The 'cultivation soil' had been reworked up to at least the 18th century so the test pit samples could not be securely dated and are not further discussed.

A sample from Late Iron Age/early Romano-British ditch 1577 produced a poorly preserved possible grain of free-threshing wheat (*Triticum aestivum* s.l.) but the similarity of the remains to those from the Saxon features suggests that much of the material from the ditch was intrusive.

The samples from the Late Saxon features indicate the cultivation of free-threshing wheat, probably 6-row hulled barley (*Hordeum vulgare* s.l.) and to a lesser extent rye (*Secale cereale*). Chaff of free-threshing wheat was recovered from two pits, but was not well enough preserved to distinguish between tetraploid and hexaploid varieties. The prevalence of free-threshing wheat and barley has been noted on a number of Saxon sites in and around Southampton (Monk 1978; Carruthers 1991; Green 1991; Hunter 2005; Stevens 2006; 2007).

Rye is rarely recorded from Early and Middle Saxon sites within the region (Green 1991), although small amounts have been recorded at Abbots Worthy (Carruthers 1991) and two sites at Southampton (Hunter 2005; Stevens 2006), and more recently at a Late Saxon pottery kiln at Michelmersh (Stevens 2007). While large quantities were recovered from previous excavations at Romsey, leading to the suggestion that it was a significant crop in the town during the Late Saxon/early medieval period (Green 1994b; Green and Lockyear 1992; 1994), radiocarbon dates on these grains suggest dates from the mid-12th to late 13th century. As rye was definitely present in only two samples from this site (one of them undated) it would appear, at best, to have been only a minor crop in the Late Saxon period and, given the high presence of charred rye in the later 'cultivation soil', even these grains may be intrusive.

Several of the samples contained grains of oats (*Avena* sp.). Evidence for cultivated oat

florets was recovered at a site in Southampton (Hunter 2005), although that and two other sites produced wild-type florets (Carruthers 1991; Stevens 2007). As no floret bases were recovered from this site that could allow identifications of the cultivated or wild variety, the status of oats as a crop at this site remains unclear.

A number of other crops were present, including flax (*Linum usitatissimum*), which has been identified from most of the sites already mentioned (Carruthers 1991; Clapham 2005; Stevens 2006), and pea (*Pisum sativum*). While some seeds resembled lentil (*Lens culinaris*), in no specimen was the hilum well enough preserved to confirm identification, and while bean (*Vicia faba*), lentil and pea have all been recovered from other sites in the region (Carruthers 1991; 2005; Green 1994b; Hunter 2005; Clapham 2005; Stevens 2006), peas generally appear to have been the more common crop.

A single seed of beet was recovered from pit 1268; beet seeds have also been recovered from Saxon *Hamwic* and Winchester (Clapham 2005; Green 1984; 1994b). Although it is difficult to distinguish seeds of cultivated beet (*Beta vulgaris* ssp. *vulgaris*) from the wild sea beet (*B. vulgaris* ssp. *maritima*), the plant is likely to have been used for its leaf (chard or leaf beet), as swollen root varieties are not recorded before the 16th century (Ford-Lloyd 1995). Beet is described as a suitable garden herb by Charlemagne (Crisp and Childs Paterson 1966), Neckham (n.d.) and Hill (1652), and as it is listed among many herbs that today are considered as wild plants, e.g. mercury, orache, sorrel, and mallow, it is possible that it was sea beet rather than the domestic variety that was cultivated in Saxon and medieval times.

Wild foods recovered at this site, such as hazelnut (*Corylus avellana*) and elder (*Sambucus niger*) have been recorded from other Saxon sites in the region (Carruthers 1991; 2005; Clapham 2005; Hunter 2005; Stevens 2006; 2007). Tubers of lesser celandine (*Ranunculus ficaria*), which are edible, were recovered from pit 1121.

Weed seeds were poorly represented in the

samples. Most were of larger seeded species, comparable to those from other sites in the area. Few are specific to soil type, although sedges and spikerush may indicate the cultivation of occasionally flooded soils. However, stinking mayweed (*Anthemis cotula*), an indicator of the cultivation of heavy clay soils, was absent from this site, although recorded in fairly high numbers at others in the region (Carruthers 1991; Hunter 2005; Stevens 2007). The predominance of larger seeded species and the general absence of cereal rachis fragments may signify that cereal crops were brought to the site fully processed, as observed at other Saxon sites in the region (Green and Lockyear 1994).

Animal bone by Jessica M. Grimm

The bone material described in this report mainly derived from the fills of pits and ditches of Late Saxon to early medieval date. Small quantities of bone from Romano-British, medieval and post-medieval contexts were also found.

Methods

Each animal bone fragment was recorded using a Disarticulated Animal Bone database (DAB) using characteristics following Grant (1982) and von den Driesch (1976), and others. The extent of mechanical or chemical attrition to the bone surface was recorded, as was the number of gnawed bones, and butchery marks following Lauwerier (1988); burnt areas were also described. Whenever possible, bones were pieced together with masking tape in order to take measurements; conjoining fragments were counted as one bone. Fragments that could not be identified to species or family were recorded as small, medium or large mammal, bird, fish or amphibian. Withers heights were calculated using May *et al.* (1996) and Matolcsi (1970), and ages estimated using Habermehl (1975) and Jones (2006). Hambleton (1999) points out that assemblages with a combined and evenly spread number of identified species (NISP) of below 300, or a minimum number of individuals (MNI) of less than 30 for cattle, sheep/goat

and pig, are probably not representative. This means that the Saxon/early medieval bone assemblage (Table 3) is probably not representative and the results should be treated with caution.

Taphonomy

The majority of the bones were in fair (56%) to good (5%) condition, with 39% in poor or very poor condition. Saxon pits 1009 and 1268 had better than average bone preservation. Scavenging by canids (probably dogs) is a possible biasing factor as gnawing had marked 10% of the bones, mainly from cattle and with a strong preference for the joints. The bones from Saxon pit 1268 were particularly affected, indicating that they were accessible to dogs before their final deposition in the pit.

The assemblage was highly fragmented, with only around 6% complete bones; these included small compact bones like carpal, tarsal and teeth; complete long bones were rare. Loose but matching epiphyses or articulating bones were also rare, confirming that the material had lain around before final deposition in the pits and ditches. However, the low proportion of loose teeth (4%), which reflects the low number of jaws, suggests that most of the material was probably not extensively reworked.

Only 3% of bones (cattle and sheep/goat) show signs of contact with fire, most deriving from pit 1121. As bone does not discolour when meat is cooked or roasted, the discoloured fragments are the result of deliberately throwing bones into the fire, or of bone sticking out during roasting and so making direct contact with the fire. Most of them were charred, indicating temperatures of *c.* 400°C (Wahl 1981).

Faunal lists

Overall, 75% of bones were identified, most belonging to domesticates: cattle, horse, sheep/goat, pig and dog (Table 3). The (possible) wild species consist of deer and mallard. In terms of the NISP, cattle bones were the most common, and as bone weight (BW) comprises about 7%

Table 3 Species list and numbers of identified specimens

<i>Saxon/early medieval</i>	<i>NISP</i>		<i>BW</i>		<i>MNI</i>	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>g</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
<i>Mammals</i>						
Cattle (<i>Bos taurus</i>)	165	39	3159	59	5	28
Horse (<i>Equus caballus</i>)	6	1	829	15	1	6
Sheep/Goat (<i>Ovis/Capra</i>)	81	19	460	9	4	22
Pig (<i>Sus domesticus</i>)	27	6	340	6	2	11
Dog (<i>Canis familiaris</i>)	39*	9	242	4	2	11
Deer	1	0	25	0	1	6
<i>Birds</i>						
Domestic fowl (<i>Gallus gallus dom.</i>)	4	1	3	0	1	6
Goose (<i>Anser anser</i>)	4	1	24	0	1	6
Mallard (<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>)	2	0	0	0	1	6
<i>Classes</i>						
Bird	4	1	0	0	-	-
Large mammal	70	16	288	5	-	-
Medium mammal	24	6	26	0	-	-
Total	427	99	5396	98	18	102

* = 2 partial skeletons

of the carcass weight (Kubasiewicz 1956), this indicates that beef contributed the most to people's diet. However, the MNI counts shows that sheep/goat were also important.

Pit 1009 contained a piece of a possible deer mandible, but no teeth were preserved. No other wild mammal remains were present. The almost complete absence of edible wild species suggests that the Saxon inhabitants of Romsey relied mainly on their livestock for their protein needs.

As the difference in size between the greylag goose and the domestic goose probably evolved in the last 200 years, it is impossible to tell to which species the remains belong (Prummel 1990). Similarly, it is almost impossible to separate mallard and duck on morphological characteristics. The scarcity of duck bones is in line with evidence from other medieval sites in Britain. This led Albarella (2005) to the con-

clusion that duck breeding played only a very minor economic role.

Husbandry

The analysis of the representation of anatomical elements for sheep/goat, cattle and pig shows that most skeletal elements are present (Fig. 5). However, small elements like phalanges and carpal/tarsals are missing, as are horn cores, suggesting that skins with feet and horns were transported off the site to the tanner. However, this conclusion might not be valid as the dataset is very small.

Age analysis

Sheep/goat mandibles were classified according to the data by Jones (2006), and three of them belonged to group F9/10 which corresponds

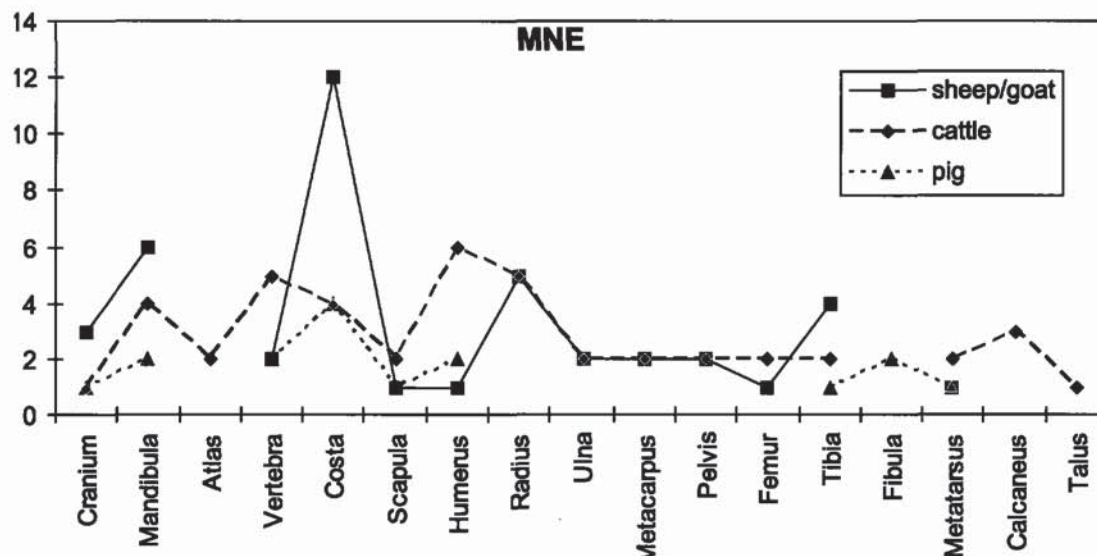


Fig. 5 Animal bone: representation of different anatomical elements (MNE = minimum number of elements)

to an age of 3.5–6 years. Two had tooth wear stages of 53 and 57 (after Grant 1982), indicating adult animals. Examination of the fusion age data revealed the presence of a lamb of less than 5 months (unfused acetabulum) and three further unfused bones.

The cattle mandibles also indicate older animals, three of them being older than three years, and one with a tooth wear stage of 41, indicating an adult but not very old animal. The epiphyseal fusion data confirms this as no bones of juveniles, and only a few bones of subadult animals, were present.

Among the ageable pig bones were a cranium fragment of a 16–24 month old animal and a mandible fragment of an animal over 24 months old, the latter with a tooth wear stage of 53. The few ageable post-cranial pig bones were all unfused.

A fused distal tibia of horse indicates an animal over 24 months of age. The dog bones derive from adult and subadult dogs.

Analysis of sex

Two pig mandibles belonged to boars as their canines were quite large and the canine root

continued well beyond the premolar row. A sheep/goat pelvis fragment probably belonged to a ewe.

Breed

As the sample is small, only two bones were complete enough to allow a height at the withers estimation. A fused radius and ulna of cattle resulted in a height at the withers of *c.* 1090 mm (Matolcsi 1970), a typical small animal for this period, and comparable to those seen at a variety of Middle Iron Age to the medieval sites in Hampshire. A fused pig metatarsus III allowed a height at the withers estimation of *c.* 790 mm (May *et al.* 1996); equally large pigs are known from early medieval sites in Southampton.

Pathologies and anomalies

Although few of the bones show pathological changes, this does not necessarily mean that the animals were healthy. As the surrounding soft tissues and cartilage where lesions may originate have disappeared, only the reaction of the bone to an illness can be analysed. The

pathological conditions seen in the sheep/goat occur in the jaws, as also noted by Siegel (1976) at 18 British sites ranging from the Neolithic until the medieval period. A left mandible from pit 1268 had a slight sharp articular extension on the medial side, as well as bone resorption around the roots of P4 and M1. Both conditions, particularly the bone resorption, are commonly seen in older sheep/goat. A right mandible, also from pit 1268, showed bone resorption in the same area.

An anomaly frequently encountered in sheep/goat is the presence of an extra small foramen on the lateral side of the mandibula beneath P2 or P3 (Halstead and Collins 2002). The condition is seen on three of the five mandibles which have the appropriate area preserved. Of these, one is situated beneath P2, one in the middle beneath P2 and P3 and one beneath P3.

Butchery marks

The accumulation of cut and chop marks on particular skeletal elements points to the use of the dead animal body (for example, Uerpman 1977; Lauwerier 1988; Ewersen 2004). Some marks result from butchering practices (skinning and partitioning of the carcass), while others are the result of food preparation.

The fact that few butchery marks were seen does not mean that the animals were not, or were only sparsely butchered. A skilled butcher will try to avoid hitting the bone with his implements as they will get blunted. Most butchery marks were seen on cattle bones (costa, humerus, radius and metatarsus) and involved disarticulation, portioning and filleting with a cleaver or a knife. The sheep/goat carcass also seems to have been portioned by a cleaver or knife, and subsequently filleted with a knife. Portioning marks on a pig costa indicate that spare ribs were created using a cleaver.

Partial dog skeletons

Late Saxon pit 1009 contained the partial skeletons of two dogs. Both humeri, right femur, right tibia and right fibula belonged

to a medium-sized adult dog. A left humerus, left radius and left ulna belonged to a subadult medium-sized dog. Dog vertebrae and ribs were also found.

Summary

The bulk of the animal bones, recovered mainly from the series of Late Saxon pits and ditches, derive from the usual domesticates (i.e. cattle, sheep/goat and pig), although eggs and meat from domestic fowl, goose and possibly duck would also have been available; wild species, however, were not an important source of protein.

DISCUSSION

Important environmental evidence of Middle Palaeolithic date (Marine Isotope Stage 3) was recovered from the site in the form of pollen and charcoal fragments. This provided evidence for pine, dwarf willow and/or cold-tolerant aspen growing locally and as such provides a rare insight into local environmental conditions at this time.

Previous finds of Iron Age and Romano-British material from Romsey suggest that there was a focus of activity in the area south of the abbey, with Early Iron Age pottery and animal bone recovered from a possible silted up stream (Green 1994a), evidence of Late Iron Age settlement and ironworking although with no identifiable structures (Hampshire County Council 1999, 2), and a number of Romano-British features and finds (Scott 1993, 51–6), including a timber structure which may post-date AD 367 (although this is not secure). Together, the evidence may indicate a small rural settlement or farmstead, some 200–300 m to the south-east of the site. The nature of the evidence from the site would be consistent with the ditches recorded on it being associated with such a settlement. Although Romano-British building material was incorporated in the fabric of Romsey Abbey, it is generally held to have been imported from elsewhere.

Much of the evidence for Saxon activity lies

close to the abbey site, on the island between the River Test to the west and two south-flowing stream channels to the east, the Shitlake and the Holbrook (Fig. 1), the latter subsequently marking the medieval boundary between Romsey Infra (*Romesie infra pontem*; Calendar of Charter Rolls 1257–1300, 102) centred on the abbey, and Romsey Extra. The site lies to the east of the Holbrook, and therefore may have lain on the eastern margins of any focus of Late Saxon settlement, and it has been suggested that the low level of finds from east of the Holbrook may indicate that this area was covered by closes or paddocks (Hampshire County Council 1999, 4).

While the Late Saxon remains from the site contribute to a fuller understanding of the early development of the town, they do little to resolve questions about its origins, about which there is still uncertainty. It has been suggested that Romsey Abbey, traditionally thought to have been founded by King Edward the Elder in 907, may have been founded in the 9th century (Collier 1990), or may have been preceded by an even earlier minster church (Hase 1988). Excavations at the abbey, however, have given no clear indications of any church predating the Late Saxon period, and more generally the evidence for a Middle Saxon origin to the town is limited and in some cases inconclusive; this applies also to the suggested Middle Saxon date for an iron smelting industry operating within part of a royal estate to supply the nearby port of *Hamwic* (Southampton) (Scott 1993; 1996). The potentially Middle Saxon date for pit 1268 stands out from the other features on the site, and, given the uncertainties about dating of the pottery assemblage from Romsey, perhaps not too much significance should be placed on this single feature.

The main period of settlement activity on the site clearly falls within the Late Saxon period, ending shortly after the Norman Conquest. Although the suggested wall-trench in the south-east corner of the site was the only potential structure of this date, the predominance of pits containing waste material, including cess and other domestic waste, suggests the presence of substantial settlement activity in the immediate

vicinity. The presence of possible property boundaries, and the spatial organisation and reorganisation displayed in the shared orientations and alignments of groups of features, suggest that the settlement was potentially urban in character, although given the predominantly agricultural base likely for such a developing town, particularly on its possible edges, it is hard to discern anything distinctively urban in the material recovered from the pits. The finds from the pits, which included animal bones (of horse, cattle, sheep/goat, pig and fowl, as well as fish bones, but perhaps significantly few other wild species), plant remains (of barley, oat, wheat and rye, as well as lentil and flax), loomweights, quern fragments, pottery, fired clay and objects of iron, indicate a range of activities likely to have been undertaken on both rural and urban settlements. These involved primarily the processing and consumption of agricultural products, but also included the engaging in domestic crafts, such as that involving the use of an oven/kiln, the *in situ* remains of which were recorded in the top of backfilled pit 1268. The presence of slag blocks, however, may link the site to significant iron smelting industry previously recorded in the Narrow Lane area south of the abbey.

Although the nature of activity on the site changed following the Norman conquest, with the apparent abandonment of settlement, the orientations of the medieval ditches suggest that some of the Late Saxon boundaries had a continuing influence on the layout of properties, by then presumably agricultural, on the eastern edge of the medieval town, and lasting into the post-medieval and modern periods.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Wessex Archaeology is grateful to L-P Archaeology (Janine Young) for commissioning the excavation on behalf of John Lewis Partnership, and to Frank Green of Test Valley Borough Council for his advice and observations. The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Paul McCulloch and Alistair Barclay, the fieldwork was directed by Paul Gajos and the

publication report was written and compiled by Andrew Powell. The soil monolith from the mid-glacial deposit was examined by M. Bates (SDUC Lampeter), R. Briant (now of Queen Mary, University of London), the pollen was analysed by Steve Boreham (Department of Geography, University of Cambridge), and P. M. Grootes (Leibniz Laboratory for Radiometric Dating, Kiel) undertook the radiocarbon

measurements. The illustrations are by S. E. James.

THE ARCHIVE

The archive and finds have been deposited with the Hampshire County Museum Service under the Accession Number A.202.34.

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