

Excavations - Friary Field 1971

The first and main purpose of the excavations during the season was to try to establish a date for the building of the two large structures.

Despite wide circulation among academic people, no-one has yet produced a parallel to the buildings either in Britain or from the Continent.

With no parallel to guide us the dating must rely on the archaeology.

The second purpose was to look for evidence for an upper storey to the buildings. The 6 uprights across each building would seem to indicate that they were necessary to support weight other than a roof.

Two excavations were undertaken each 50' 0" x 30' 0" wide, one outside the footway doorway in the south wall between the two buildings, the other at the north wall entrance.

The south wall excavation

The topsoil was removed to natural chalk. This exposed 4 cross features of Building 2.

Obliquely across these is the loam fill of a ditch which apparently cuts out two of the crosses and part of the wall trench.

There is also a rectangular pit with sharply cut corners that is partially dug through another cross.

The topsoil in this area is only 18" deep. Beneath the turf at a depth of 8" to 10" was the normal stratum that covers the field containing broken tile, monastic debris and clay pipes of all periods. One jetton or abbey token was found.

Due to lack of time this excavation was abandoned at the natural chalk level and the loam filled features have been left unexcavated until Spring 1972.

The north wall excavation. Plan Fig. 4, Page 16

This was 50' 0" long and 30' 0" wide and the cut extended 20' 0" beyond the entrance gap in the outer wall. The cut was restricted to 20' 0" due to the spread of tree roots from the field boundary.

The whole of the area was stripped to natural chalk which is covered by approximately 24" of topsoil in this part of the paddock.

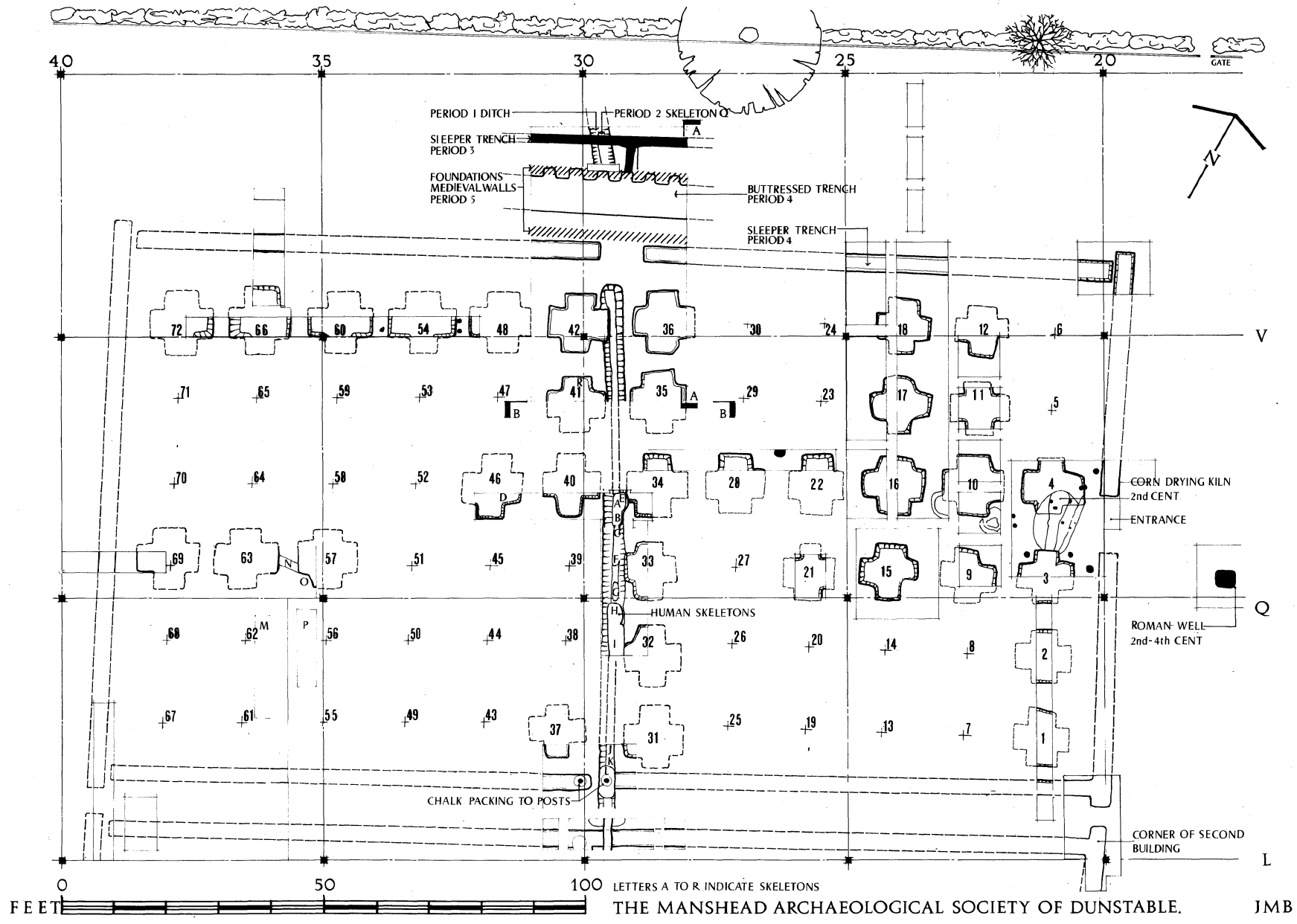


fig 4

Turf to Natural Chalk.

The whole area was covered by the usual broken tile and clay pipe stratum beneath the turf, at a depth of 8" to 10". Within the dark loam of the turf was a George III penny and on the tile layer 8" deep were two George III pennies highly polished that had presumably been used as shove-halfpennies.

Within the tile stratum was a mixture of sherds that included Romano British, medieval wares and Cistercian pottery.

Also within the tile was a white pipeclay wig curler.

Just below the turf layer at 12" a carved bone object was found (Fig. 6, Page 22). This may be a seal or perhaps a pipe tamper and was in the form of a small box containing a phallus.

No clay pipe fragments are found below a depth of 10" to 12".

Beneath the tile layer was loam containing monastic debris. Large blocks of dressed Totternhoe stone (clunch) were found at the natural chalk level above the central wall trench of the building and above Cross No. 36.

Also above the wall trench was a Roman coin. This was a contemporary plated forgery of a Denarius of Septimus Severus 193-211 A.D.

Two silver coins of Henry I were found. One laying 4" above the natural chalk, the other 2' 0" away at the same level above the loam fill of Cross No. 41 (see note below, Page 23).

Features within the Excavation.

The excavation of this north wall entrance exposed 5 separate features of differing dates. These are listed as follows....

- | | |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Period I. | Unidentified ditch, probably Roman. |
| Period II. | Grave dug into the above ditch and a grave disturbed by Cross No. 41. |
| Period III. | Sill beam trench of a building, probably late Roman. |
| Period IV. | Trench with buttress slots and features of timber building with crosses. |
| Period V. | Medieval timber building. |

Medieval Building - Period V.

Parallel to the north wall of the great timber building and partially over-lapping the loam fill of its ditch was the chalk rubble base for a sleeper beam to a timber building.

The natural chalk slopes slightly to the south in this area and to provide a level floor for this structure, it had been excavated to a depth of 6" on the upper slope.

The chalk rubble base for this northern wall survived 18" high and 2' 6" wide with one post hole sunk 15" into it. This post hole showed as a loam filled round slot with a 12" diameter.

Both of these chalk rubble foundations continue through the width of the excavation making the building more than 30' 0" long. Its width measured from the centres of the foundations is 12' 6".

It was built over a loam filled buttressed trench of the earlier Period IV and to give stability to the floor this loam had been covered with chalk rammed hard into the underlying loam.

The Finds.

Lying on the floor of this building were masses of broken pegged roof tile probably representing its final destruction. With the tile was a sandy mortar and this was found in small quantity all over the floor.

A scatter of sherds was found throughout the building. These included many fragments of coarse grey wares, strap handles with stab decoration, green-yellow glazes and glazed sherds with applied decoration probably from the brick kilns.

Alongside the chalk rubble walls were clusters of shells of the common garden snail.

A few animal bone fragments were found that included sheep, pig and ox.

A horse skull was found on the floor but this was an intrusion buried long after the building had disappeared.

Metal Objects.

A mint condition Roman coin of Constantinopolis 330-335 A.D. was found alongside the chalk rubble north wall. This was minted in Trier and is an intrusion.

FRIARY FIELD TIMBER BUILDING SECTIONS 1971

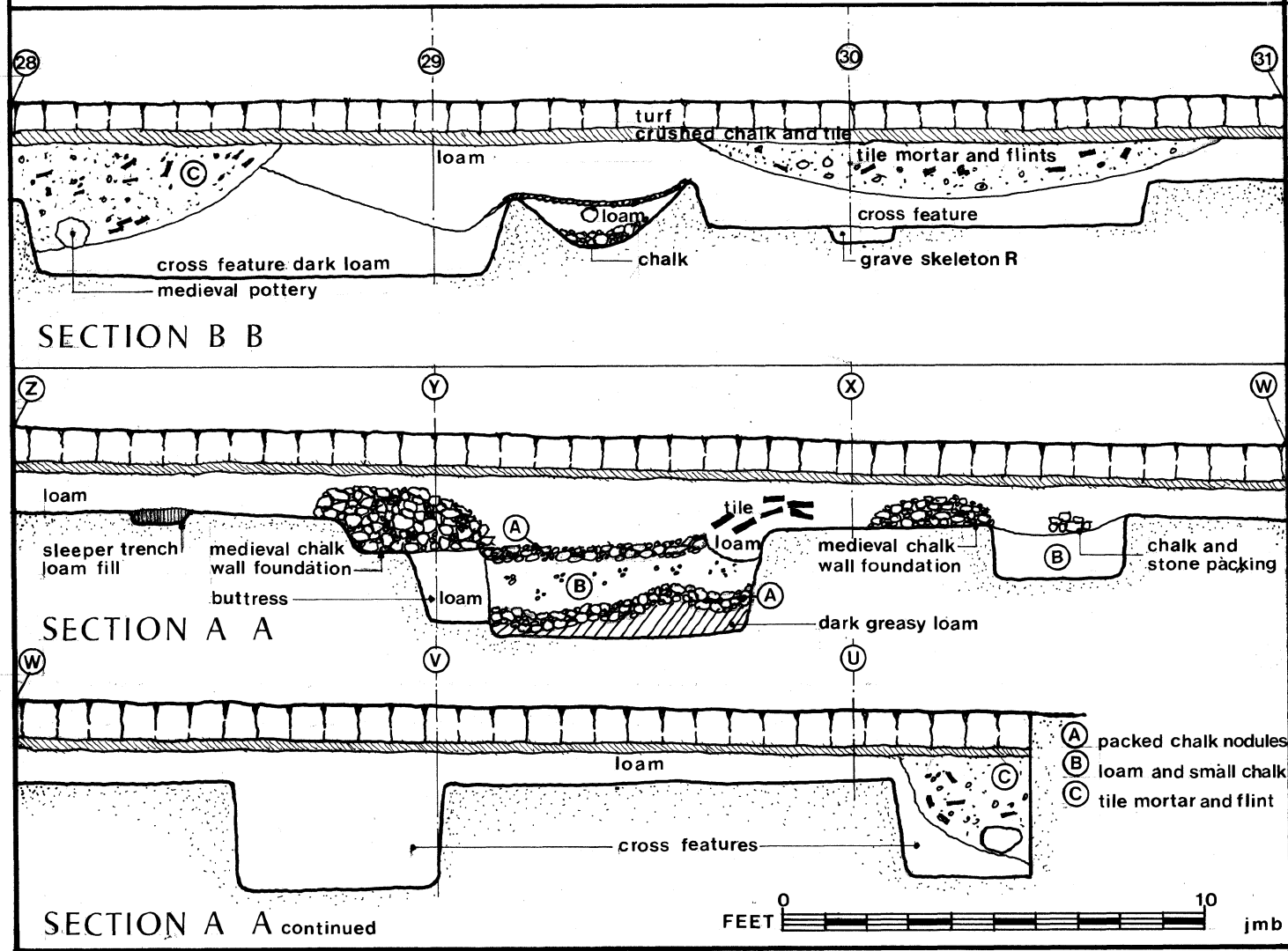


fig 5

Concave Lead Disc.

This was found on the chalk floor. It is round and has a diameter of 1.7/10".

Iron Lock Barrel. Fig 6, Page 22.

A very eroded heart-shaped iron box. This has been identified as a padlock outer case. On the inside was a green deposit probably representing decayed bronze. This was found alongside the north wall and under the chalk, probably buried at the time of the building's final destruction.

Building - Period IV.

Buttressed Trench and Cross-Features

A buttressed trench was under the building described above and is probably part of the great timber structure.

It is parallel with the outer wall of Building 1 but is continuous across the entrance gap.

It appears as a loam filled trench with sheer sides sunk 2' 4" into the natural chalk. Along the outer or north side it has slots cut into the chalk for buttresses.

There are 6 slots along the 30' 0" exposed and each slot is approximately 2' 6" wide x 1' 8" deep and they have been sunk to a depth 2" to 3" above the floor of the trench.

Only a single section of the trench including two buttress slots has been excavated. It is filled with loam with two bands of chalk across it.

The sides of this trench show no signs of weathering but the buttress slots both show some rotting of the chalk probably caused by rain-wash down the buttress beam.

The open trench to allow air circulation around supports to timber buttresses follows the same building technique as that used for the two large structures. This new feature is therefore considered to be part of the Period IV and probably represents a verandah to Building 1.

The Cross Features

The excavation exposed the entrance gap in the wall trench, part of the central partition wall ditch and 4 crosses numbers 35, 36, 41 and 42.

Crosses 35 and 41 were excavated to provide a section across the area. See Fig. 5 Section BB.

The fill of both of these crosses had been disturbed probably by holes dug into them for burying the contents of cess buckets. Within these were several flints, pieces of roofing tile and sherds of coarse gritty pottery.

Cross No. 41 followed the pattern of crosses Nos. 40 and 42 by being shallower than the crosses to the east of the partition trench through the centre of the building.

This change in pattern of the depths of the crosses, shallow on the west side and deeper on the east side of the central partition trench has a purpose that we do not as yet understand. (See Page 19, Section BB, Fig. 5).

Cross No. 41 had been dug over an earlier burial (Period II) and when this had taken place the bones had been disturbed but the bottom 4" to 5" of the grave had been left intact. One leg and a foot of the skeleton was still in place but the other bones had been moved when the chalk had been rammed into them to provide a flat floor to the cross.

The filling of the crosses is a dark loam containing a few small scraps of Romano British pottery.

Period III - Sill Beam Trench of a Timber Building.

These building foundations were partially destroyed by the buttress trench of Period IV.

One wall survives as a trench 12" wide and 4" deep and like the other features is continued across the 30' 0" of the excavation. It is also parallel with the later features and the modern field boundary.

The opposite wall of this structure has been completely destroyed by the later features but part of a right-angled wall survived to show that it had been divided into at least two rooms.

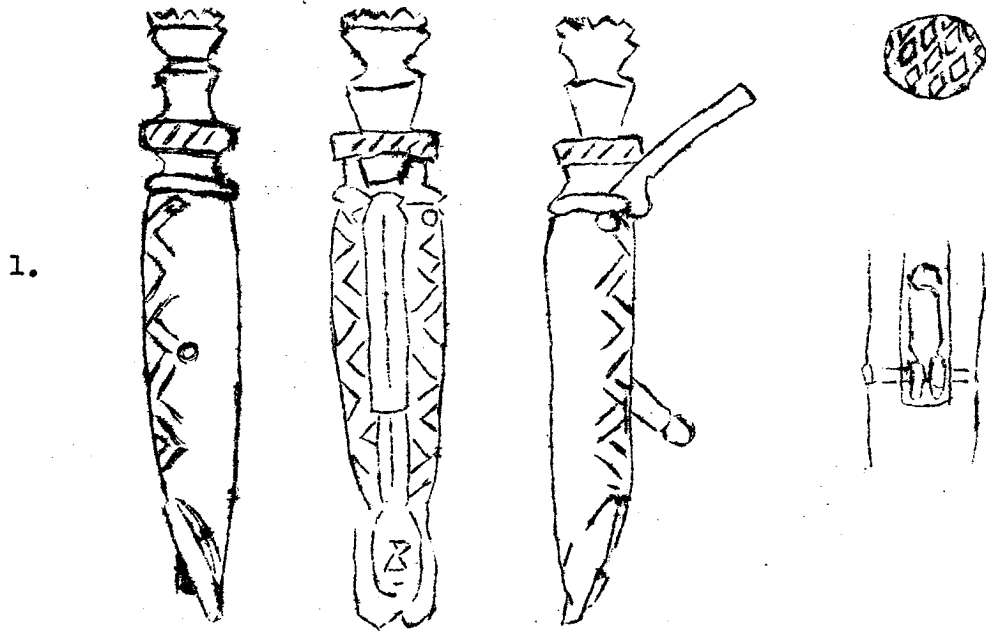
This building cannot yet be dated. A few small Romano British sherds were found in the loam fill of a short section excavated.

Period II - Burials

Skeleton Q.

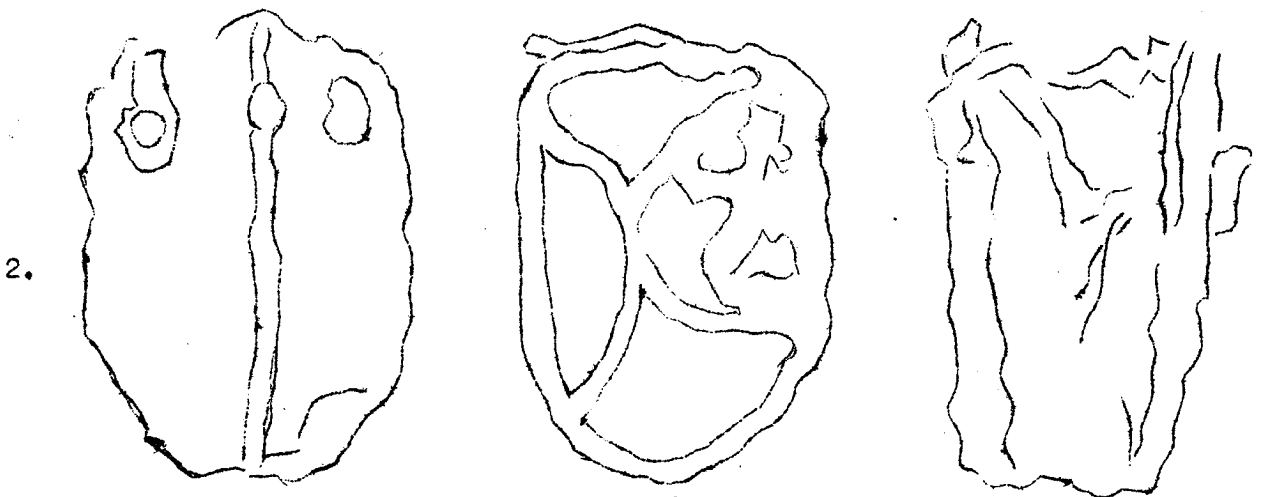
The beam trench of the Period III building crossed over a grave

FIG. 6.



1. Carved bone object. The lid and phallus are held by two bone pivot pins.

2. Iron padlock case ? decorated with applied iron ridges.



containing the skeleton of a male aged about 50 years.

The skeleton was lying in an extended position north-south with the head to the north and had probably been buried in a coffin. Above and around the bones was hard-packed chalk but over the skeleton for several inches was loam only.

Under the skeleton's left leg spread over a distance of 12" and approximately 4" wide were 72 small clenched iron nails.

These were apparently boot nails and over them was a small area of puddled chalky soil which was probably adhering to the boot sole.

Skeleton R. Cross No. 41.

This grave had been dug approximately 18" deep into the natural chalk but had been destroyed by the digging of cross number 41. Only 3" to 4" of the bottom of the grave survived.

The skeleton was lying north-south with the skull to the south. The southern end of the grave and presumably the skull and upper parts of the body still remain in the section of the cross as yet unexcavated.

The bones have not yet been studied but appear to be those of a young person.

Nothing was found to date the grave.

Period I - Ditch ? Roman 1st/2nd century.

The grave of Skeleton Q had been partially cut through and into an earlier ditch that extends north-south across the field.

The ditch continues beyond the limit of the excavation on the north side. The southern end has not yet been excavated and its relation to the buttressed trench has yet to be resolved.

Several fragments of Romano British potsherds were found in the fill with some animal bone.

More work must be carried out within this area which is being protected against weathering with a plastic tent.

Henry I Coins.

The coins were identified by Miss Archibald of the British Museum who commented as follows.

"The coins have been cleaned but due to wear a large amount of the

inscription is not clear".

Silver Penny of Henry I, Type XV which is the latest type and would therefore be struck towards 1135 A.D.

The mint and moneyer are both uncertain, REV. +.....SIS

The mint signature ends in an 'S'. This offers a number of possibilities, e.g. Bristol, Exeter, Colchester, Chichester, etc. Nothing more than this is visible of the moneyer's name.

Weight cleaned .93 grams = 14.3 grains.

Cut Halfpenny of Henry I. Again Type XV. The mint is Norwich but the moneyer uncertain.

There are several moneyers at Norwich whose name ends in 'E'.
REV. +..... = E.ON.NOR

Weight cleaned .69 grams = 10.6 grains.

Since only three letters of the mint name appear it is unlikely to be Edwins on whose coins the signature is usually NORPIC.

A moneyer with the larger name Baldwine usually wires NOR but the remains of the second last letter of the moneyer's name does not appear to be an 'N'.

From the small number of hoards so far found it seems that the coins were not used for very long into Stephen's reign.

DISCUSSION

The excavation around the north wall entrance this year has shown five distinct chronological features.

The earliest is the rather mysterious trench running north-south. A very small portion of this has been excavated and we cannot yet say whether it continues into the later features.

It looks very like the central trench through the large timber building. We may find that it has some connection and if this proves to be the case then the conjectural reconstruction of the building and the significance of the mutilated bodies discovered last year will require drastic revision and re-thinking.

The finding of the two coins of Henry I is very useful stratification. The close proximity of the coins is a strong suggestion that they were lost at the same time and it is a fair guess that this was somewhere near 1150 A.D.

This is some 100 years prior to the building of the Dominican Monastery and after the crosses were filled up.

If the assumptions are correct then we have the latest date for our timber buildings as being prior to 1150 A.D.

But we still cannot be sure. Not mentioned in the above report was the discovery of a fragment of thin-glazed strap handle beneath the door post packing at the south wall entrance.

This was found when cleaning down the chalk packing for the door post which has been left in section in the outer wall trench.

This piece of pottery was in the loam of the trench beneath the chalk rubble and was firmly stratified.

This means that either the two door posts which are in exactly the right position for the building, are a later construction or that the building is much later than we have thought.

The fragment of strap handle would be at home in a 16th century context.

We are still very much in the dark about the date of the building.

The finding of the buttressed trench eliminates the theory that the crosses were dug to plant trees in and the discovery of timber slots of this size is in itself quite new and is in keeping with the technique of the whole structure.

The Period V building across the entrance is also quite exciting and it will be most interesting to find its total length, its entrances, and its function and how it fits into the history in this field.

The same applies to the Period III building. Here we know that it exceeds 30' 0" in length and that this was divided into two rooms. We cannot put a date to this structure but it looks Roman.

It is certainly earlier than the grave of the man whose boots had been buried with him in his coffin.

The loam fill of the sleeper beam trench could be clearly seen crossing the grave with no disturbance in the fill.

This grave with the grave disturbed by the making of cross No. 41 is probably part of the late Roman cemetery which appears to be confined to this western half of the field.

The ditch through which the grave was cut was evidently filled up

and lost to sight at the time of the burial for the grave overlaps it on one side only. We haven't a date for this but it may belong to the earlier occupation of the 1st/2nd Century A.D.

A great amount of work has yet to be done on this field and also on the adjoining paddock.

Whilst this report is "going to press" we understand that the land is to be developed and a road will be constructed at the end of this year through the paddock adjoining Mr. Steven's field.

In view of the urgency which now faces us and the archaeological importance of the structures we have been excavating, your Committee decided to appeal to the Department of the Environment to take over the total excavation of the two timber structures.

Details have not yet been finalised but Dr. Ian Stead has provisionally agreed to carry out the excavation and hopes to commence work at the end of March.

He will concentrate on the area in Mr. Steven's field but it is hoped that some sections will be made through the adjoining field and that we will carry out work on this site during the summer.

Skeleton Q. By Dr. E. V. Jones.

Male skeleton aged 50 years or more as deduced from the considerable wear on the teeth, fusion of the sutures and generalised osteoarthritis. Height 174 cms (5' 8½") (average finding).

Pathology - Generalised early osteoarthritis with considerable osteophyte formation in lumbar vertebrae especially L1 and 2. Gross arthritis in C3 inferior joint. Some arthritis on odontoid and adjacent axis.

Gross arthritis 1st metacarpal.

There was considerable wear on all teeth and the wear on second upper and lower premolars was irregular but fitted exactly with each other and must have been due to the missing first and second molars. There were dental abscesses in lower incisors and two teeth were carious leaving only their roots.

Metric analysis.

Skull

L 193	S'1 120	S1 144	LB 120	Biasterion 118
B 154	S'2 115	S2 135	FB 31	G'1 50
H'145	S'3 107	S3 134	FL 35	G'2 38

Long Bones

	1	D1	D2
Femur	454	28	35
Tibia	363	27	36
Fibula	370		

Humerus	333	28	22.6	
Radius	255			
Ulnar	275			
Clavicle	155	11	16	
Mandible	ZZ 43.8	CR H 73		ML 105
	GoGo 100	HL 32.5		
	W1 128	RB 33.5		
