

Fig. 37. Roman worked bone. (Scale 2:3).

5. Hair pin with an ovoid head and swelling stem. These forms are the most common type of Roman hair pin, being most numerous in the late Roman period. Colchester type 3 (Crummy 1979, Fig. 1.3), Jewry Wall type C (Kenyon 1948, Fig. 90, 7-8) and Shakenoak type 'B' (Brodbribb *et al.* 1968-73, II, 124). 74 mm long, broken. (0432)
6. Plain, flat bone object with an oval head and tapering stem. 50 mm long, broken. This piece has close affinities with a small number of Roman inlay forms. These related types have large concentric circles inscribed on their upper surface. Such examples are known from Cirencester (unpublished, Corinium Museum Acc. No. A 314 and C 666, illustrated here, Fig. 37:6a, b), Wroxeter (two examples, unpublished, excavations by P. A. Barker) and Xanten (unpublished, Xanten Museum). Two similar unfinished pieces are known from Augst (unpublished, Römermuseum Augst). (0935)
7. Square bone object with sides of c.18.5 mm. The centre has a drilled hole, c.9.5 mm diameter. In each corner a small ring and dot motif has been incised, 6.5 mm diameter. This piece is probably related to a series of square ring and dot ornamented antler and bone forms, of the Roman period. These are typically late Roman, as is the closest parallel from Gadebridge Park (Neal 1974, Fig. 67, 335) with similar ring and dots and central perforation. (0432)
8. Small bone peg with a broken, knife-cut stem 47 mm long. A rudimentary head has been cut. This is possibly a rough out for a hair pin of Roman type. (1513)

The Roman Animal Bones G. G. Jones

Bone from Roman contexts was contaminated from below (Iron Age) and above (Medieval). Therefore, no animal bone can be called Roman with complete certainty. However, the volume of Roman finds means that a large quantity of animal bone must belong to this period, although contexts here termed 'Roman' contained residual and intrusive material. Some indication of this is provided by the ratios of pottery by weight from the 'Roman' contexts which were as follows (sample size 21 kg): Roman 74%, Iron Age 23%, Medieval 3%. A further sample, from contexts designated 'probably Roman' was looked at briefly (sample size 35.5 kg): Roman 67%, Iron Age 9%, Medieval 24%.

Table 7. Roman animal species present, by percentage.

	N	Cattle	Sheep	Pig	Horse	Other
Iron Age	1411	31	43	22	2	2 deer, dog, cat, hare, fowl, goose, duck,
'Roman'	668	40	37	17	2	4 deer, dog, cat, hare, fox, <i>Corvus</i> sp., dove buzzard
'probably Roman'	947	37	39	17	2	6 deer, dog, hare, fowl, <i>Corvus</i> sp., mallard, barn owl

N = Number of identified bones.

How far identified fragments from excavation reflect the actual livestock kept by past farmers is not known, but Table 7 shows that the proportion of the main domestic species found in Roman features appears to be remarkably similar to the Iron Age sample. Cattle bones form a greater proportion of the 'Roman' than the Iron Age sample, and pig bones form about a fifth throughout.

The 'Roman' bone was more fragmented than the Iron Age. Bone was recorded on two lists: 'zones', where more than half of the element (e.g. proximal end, left) was present; and 'fragments'. Although the purpose of the zone list was to assess minimum numbers and long bone maturity, the relative size of the two lists also provides a measure of fragmentation, i.e. the larger the zone count is relative to the fragment count, the less fragmented is the assemblage. The Iron Age zone list contained 73 per cent of the total identified Iron Age bone, whereas the 'Roman' zone list contained 64 per cent. Also, more of the 'Roman' cattle bones bore chopmarks, 11 per cent against 7 per cent. Differences may be just the result of the differences in the types of deposit, but may mean that bone was more intensively used, e.g. for extracting fat and tallow.

The 'Roman' layers included one goat horn core, one probable goat phalanx, and a piece of

skull from a hornless sheep or goat. The deer bones were from red deer (one piece of sawn antler) and roe deer (two metatarsals). Roe was also well represented in the 'probably Roman' sample (five metatarsals), as was hare (six bones). An increase in hunted species in the Roman period has been observed in the Upper Thames Valley sites (Wilson, personal comment). Hare was probably hunted with a spear, with the help of one of more hounds, to judge from pictorial evidence from the Roman world (Toynbee 1973).

From all periods, evidence of red deer comes entirely from pieces of antler, which may have been collected or even traded.

The 'Roman' and 'Medieval' contexts both produced a larger proportion of pathological bones than the Iron Age. Lack of certain dating makes detailed description pointless, but photographs and descriptions are held at the Buckinghamshire County Museum. From the 'Roman' and 'probably Roman' layers the following species were affected: cattle, 6 bones, 3 of them phalanges; sheep, 3; pig, 3, one being an immature metacarpal IV with a splayed end, possibly the result of rickets (Baker and Brothwell 1980, 49) and another an immature metacarpal V with a large, oval swelling, a lesion rather suggestive of tethering; horse, 1, a mandible with a tooth abscess; and dog, 1.

house, and the yard and outbuilding area of a manor house, are accepted, then it might be expected that the range of pottery in use would be broadly similar (see below p. 95 and Allen and Dalwood 1983, 54). A superficial examination of the pottery indicated that the quality of the earlier medieval pottery at Bierton was rather better than that at George Street (P. Yeoman, personal comment), which might reflect the manorial status of the site. It is likely that, in general, the pottery in use at Bierton was bought at market in Aylesbury, from the same traders who supplied the occupiers of the George Street site.

The detailed understanding of Buckinghamshire medieval pottery will emerge through the study and excavation of the kiln sites such as those at Denham, Brill and Boarstall: all the medieval pottery from Bierton was retained and may be examined in more detail in the future, when the products of the kiln sites have been characterised.

Objects of Iron, Copper Alloy and Pewter (Fig. 48:1-6)

Objects of Iron

1. Horseshoe (broken), 90 mm long, 42 mm wide, later medieval type, post-thirteenth cent. (Goodall, I. H. 1981, 61, Fig. 60, 2). (0122)
2. Nail (fragment), 48 mm long. (0608)
3. Harness buckle, square, with roll-bar and broad pin, 58 mm long.
4. Pendant, 56 mm long (complete), two plates joined at tip. A type of object usually in bronze. (0202)

Objects of Copper Alloy

5. Leg of cauldron or skillet, 120 mm long, with rounded central midrib. Cast as a separate piece and then attached to a flat-based body, and subsequently broken at the join. Traces of charring remain on both sides of the leg. The size shows it formed part of a large cauldron, although the usual form was bag-shaped rather than flat-based, and was usually cast with the feet in one piece (Goodall, M. 1981, 65, Fig. 63); in form it is similar to a leg from Goltho (Goodall, I. H. 1975, 95, Fig. 45, 40). (0903)

Pewter

6. Decorative fitting (broken), 44 mm across, cast, with rounded cut-outs. Retains metal rivet at top. Possibly part of pilgrim badge. (0348)

The Medieval Animal Bones

G. G. Jones

The problem of residual and intrusive bone in medieval contexts is similar to that for Roman contexts (p. 74). The medieval contexts were even more mixed, and made study of the medieval bone of limited value.

Medieval features contained quantities of residual pottery and for the purpose of this report were divided into 'medieval' and 'probably medieval' by percentage weight as follows: 'medieval' (sample size 8.5 kg): 16% Iron Age, 32% Roman, 52% Medieval; 'probably medieval' (sample size 8.4 kg): 22% Iron Age, 26% Roman, 42% Medieval. For the range of animal species present see Table 8.

Cattle

The skeleton of an immature bull or steer was recovered from a thirteenth-fourteenth-century ditch. Much of the rib-cage was found in position. Common as animal bones are on excavations, it is unusual to recover articulated remains. Burial of a whole carcass is likely to be because the animal was diseased. In this case the scapulae and most of the long bones were missing. It is possible that they were removed and the meat used, although no sign of butchery was observed.

Evidence for maturity is given in detail, as the jaws were well preserved and at a very precisely definable stage of development. The front part of the jaws was present, with the first and second incisor erupted, the latter in wear over three-quarters of its occlusal surface. The deciduous third incisor and canine were missing, but the erupting third permanent incisors were visible c.4 mm below the alveolar border. The animal can be aged in modern terms as 2½ years±2 months (data from 869 cattle kept in optimum conditions, Brown *et al.* 1960) and was probably in its third or fourth year. The cheek teeth were all present as follows: (right jaw) P₂ erupting through bone; P₃ in wear; dp₃ in wear at stage k (method of Grant 1975); M₁ and M₂ in wear, stages j and g; and M₃ first two units in wear, stage d. The left jaw showed similar development and wear M₁

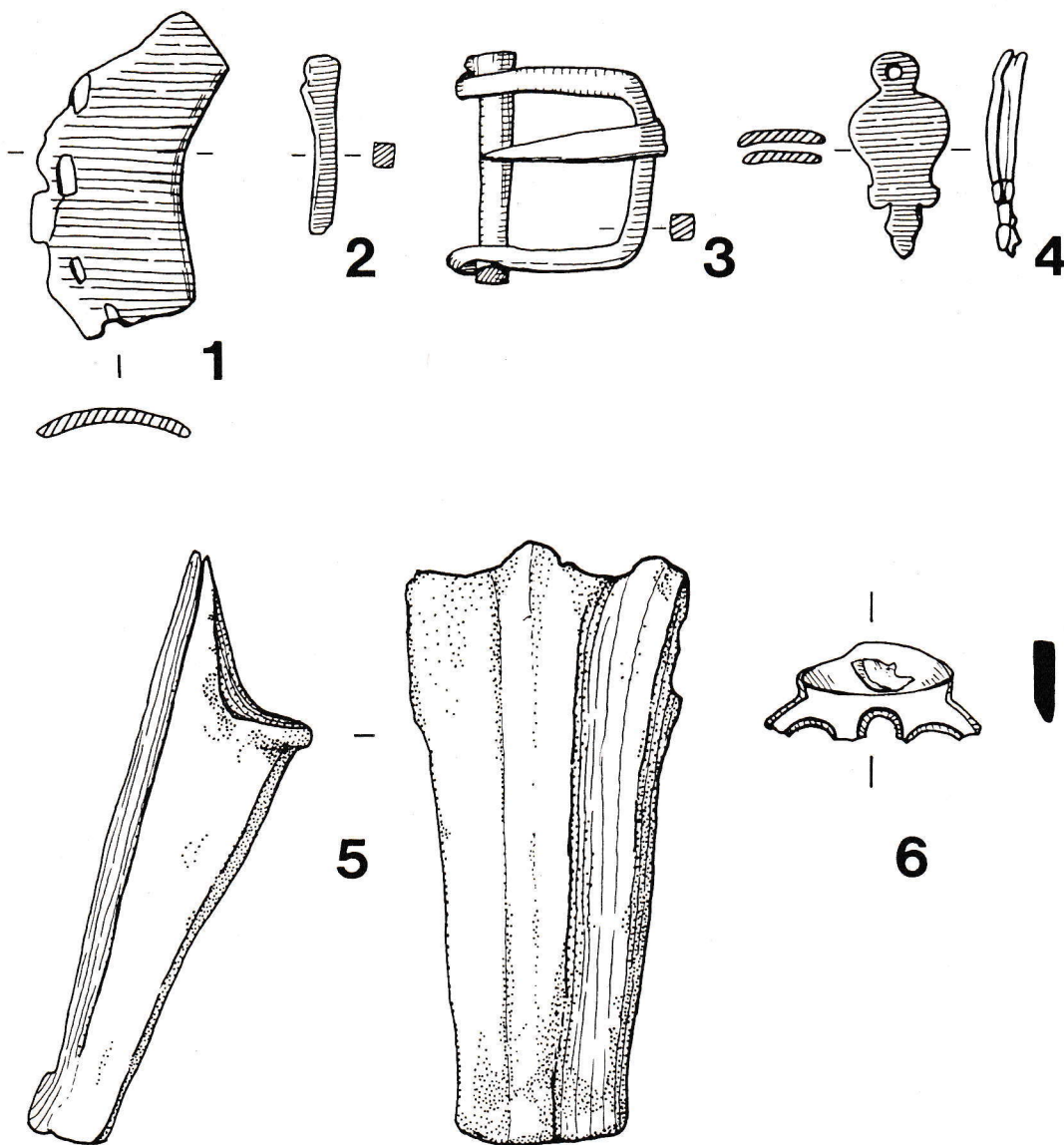


Fig. 48. Medieval finds. 1-4, iron; 5, copper alloy; 6, pewter. (Scale 2:3)

at stage k). The acetabulum of the pelvis was fused; vertebral epiphyses and the proximal femur were unfused.

Pig

The 'Medieval' layers contained remains of at least seven immature pigs and two mature (M_3 erupted), which compares with fourteen and nine respectively from the Iron Age phases.

There were two 'medieval' Stage I piglets but none of this young age were found in Iron Age or 'Roman' deposits. Numbers were too small to make definite conclusions, but it does appear that pigs were fattened earlier in the medieval period.

Pathology

From the 'medieval' layers four cattle bones

Table 8. Medieval animal species present by percentage.

	N	Cattle	Sheep	Pig	Horse	Other species
'Medieval'	325	38	41	15	2	4 Red and roe deer, dog, cat, fowl, goose
'Probably medieval'	335	49	29	17	2	3 Red deer, dog, hare, goose

N: number of bones

showed pathological alteration and one cattle lumbar vertebra had a greatly enlarged foramen

passing right through the centrum into the spinal cavity (cf. Baker and Brothwell 1980, 35).

Discussion of the Medieval Occupation and Evidence of Manorial Status

In common with the Iron Age and Roman evidence, the nature of the medieval evidence discourages lengthy discussion. Many of the features clearly relate to activity that was centred away from the excavated area and the considerable disturbance created by post-medieval use of the site limits the inferences that can be drawn from those located fully within it. Nevertheless, the chronology of the features shows that the site was occupied throughout the medieval period.

Boundary Ditches

With the exception of one sherd from ditch 0109, of fifteenth-century date (Fig. 44:6), the pottery from the ditches indicates that these features were in use in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

The disposition of the ditches in the excavated area clearly related to features situated beyond, but in only one case can this relationship still be seen. Ditch 0447 would, if it continued to the north-west, link with, or form, the eastern boundary of the churchyard, assuming of course that the land given over to the church or chapel was of the same area in the medieval period as in the present day.

Hearths, Pits and Wells

Only one of the two hearths (0532) produced any finds, and this was a sherd of thirteenth-century date (Fig. 46:1, 1). In contrast, the dozen or so pits contained numerous sherds of pottery and on this evidence they can all be

attributed to the twelfth and early fourteenth centuries (Fig. 45:1-28). Sherds from the narrow-mouthed well (0948) suggest a thirteenth/fourteenth-century date for this feature (Fig. 45:29-30).

The Structures

No dating evidence was available for the construction phase of the circular structure (0325, 0417), nor indeed, strictly speaking, for its demolition. Only the backfilled robber-trench contained any datable sherds, and these suggested that the footings had been robbed out not long before the area was sealed by the sixteenth-century layer of cobbles. As a result, it is presumed that the structure was in use in the later medieval period; it is fairly certain that it was a dovecote.

The Sites and Monuments Record at the County Museum currently lists 28 dovecotes in Buckinghamshire, from documentary sources or standing remains, although it is certain that many more examples existed originally. They range in date from the thirteenth century, e.g. Fillington Farm, West Wycombe (CAS 0186), to the nineteenth century, e.g. Amersham (CAS 4231). They are constructed from either local stone or from brick, and are generally of square or circular plan, although an octagonal example exists at Stewkley (CAS 4001). Perhaps the best parallels for the excavated example at Bierton are to be found in the circular structure at Dinton (CAS 0703; Eland 1923, 92), which is still standing, and one at

Clifton Reynes (CAS 1820; *RCHM Bucks* II, 93) which was demolished earlier this century.

The evidence for the other medieval structure located within the excavated area at Bierton is fairly insubstantial. However, two factors, the distribution of medieval pottery across the site, and the presence of an extensive, flat-bottomed, vertical-sided pit (Fig. 41: 0362) combine to suggest that during the medieval period a building may have stood in the area occupied by the post-medieval cellared building. Indeed, if this was the location of an important dwelling-house, then this would explain the presence of the dovecote, and the choice of the site for the Tudor building. The fill of this feature is datable to the thirteenth to early fourteenth century (Fig. 46:2-10).

The pottery from the site indicated occupation from the eleventh century, although the sparsity of medieval features meant that there was little evidence upon which to base the chronology of the site. This was largely due to the effects of disturbance in the post-medieval period, but partly because the favoured method of rubbish disposal in the medieval period would have been onto middens, for later manuring of surrounding fields. If any such midden existed in the excavated area, it would have been removed by the levelling for the sixteenth-century cobbled yard.

The finds themselves do not provide any clear evidence for the status and nature of the medieval occupation and the strongest evidence for this lies in the dovecote. Dovecotes are certainly indicative of manorial or monastic ownership, and often have a close proximity to a manor house. The large pond lying 60 m south-east of the excavation (CAS 1044) is almost certainly a fishpond, and although it is not in itself datable, a medieval date is possible, and also implies manorial land.

It is therefore tempting to suggest that the structural traces recovered were those of a manorial building, and other evidence can be found to support this interpretation.

Historical Evidence

The Domesday entry for Bierton (see above p. 4) records only part of the land-holdings there, and it is clear that the rest of the parish was a part of the manor of Aylesbury, held by the King. The manor of Aylesbury (and by implication the lands in Bierton) were granted by King John to the Fitz-Piers family in 1204 (*VCH Bucks* II, 320). Other landowners are recorded holding lands in Bierton from the fourteenth century, and although details of the changing ownership of these manors is known, there is no documentary record of a manor house. Apart from the evidence from the excavation, Dove House Close, a moated site in Bierton, 150 m west of the excavation, also suggests a manor house site (see Fig. 1c:8 above and details in Miles, P. 1981, 33-5, Figs. 15-16). This may be the site of the manor house of *Stonors* manor (*VCH Bucks* II, 322) since it lay within the lands of the Boss family in the sixteenth century, who briefly held the manor of *Stonors*. Lamborn, quoted by Sheahan (1862, 97), identified Dove House Close as the site of the *Stonors* manor house, and it is quite likely that the house stood within the moat (for survey, see Miles, P. 1981, Fig. 15).

Clearly, positive identification of the site with one of the Bierton manors would require new documentary evidence. However, the close proximity of the excavated structure to the church suggests that this was the primary manor of *Bierton*, held by the lords of the manor of Aylesbury from 1204. The church at Bierton was a daughter chapel of the church at Aylesbury in the early medieval period, and was established as a separate parish church in 1266 (*VCH Bucks* II, 326). The archaeological and historical evidence that the church at Aylesbury was a Saxon *monasterium* has recently been discussed, as well as the archaeological evidence for changes in ecclesiastical organisation at Aylesbury (Allen and Dalwood 1983). The church at Aylesbury still retained ancient privileges at Domesday, and it was no doubt the erosion of these that led to the independence of the church at Bierton.

The date of origin of the daughter chapel at Bierton is uncertain, but the independence of

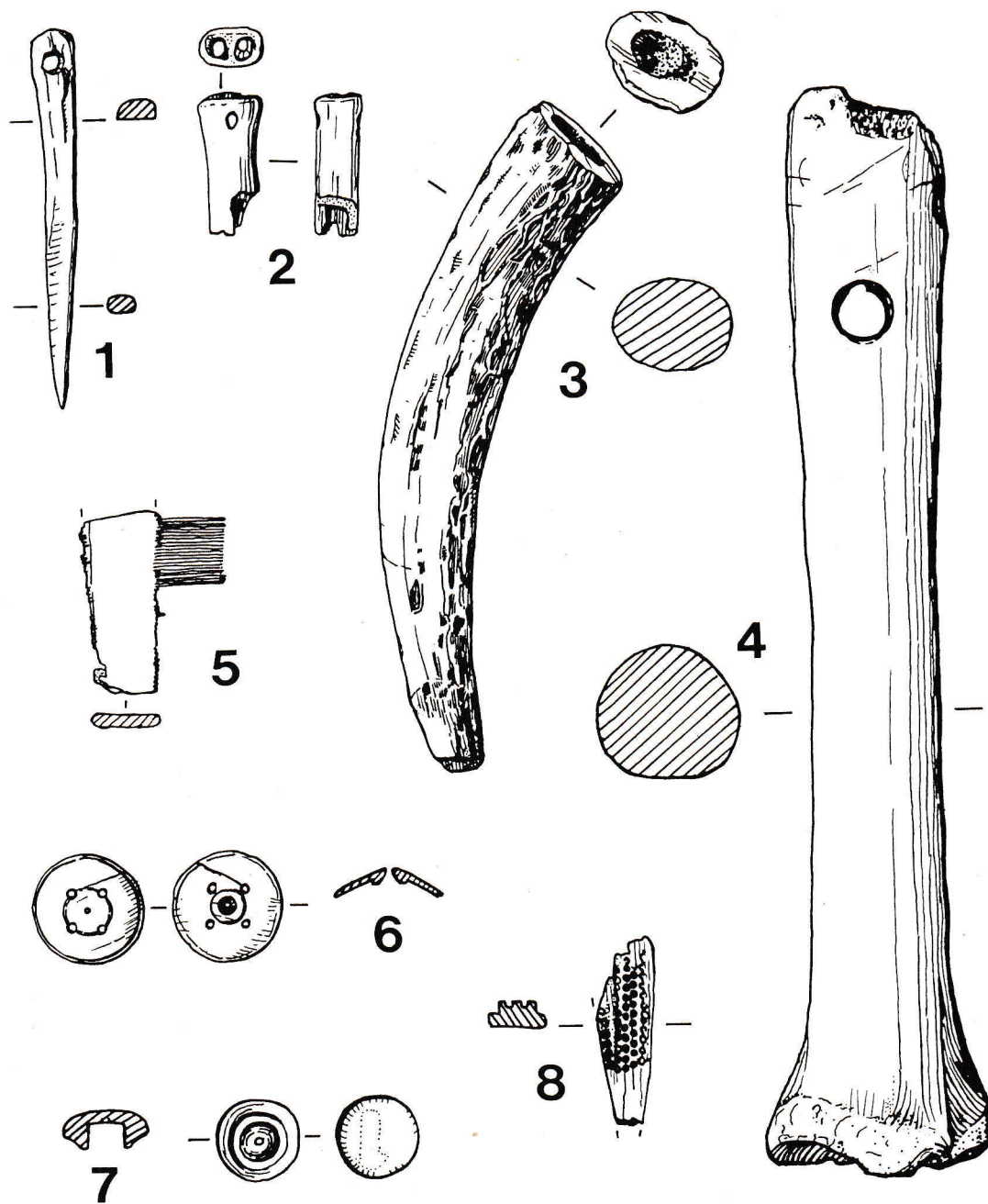


Fig. 60. Post-medieval and undated worked bone. (Scale 2:3)

*The Animal Bone from Post-medieval
and Unstratified Contexts*

G. G. Jones

Over 6,000 bones from contexts with very mixed pottery, including post-medieval, were looked through to establish species present. These included the usual domestic mammals, and some bird and fish bones. Bird bones included fowl (42 bones), goose (11), and duck (2) of mallard size (*Anas platyrhynchos*). There was no direct evidence here for the keeping of Aylesbury duck, which was chiefly a later nineteenth-century industry, popular in Birtton at that time (*VCH Bucks* II, 320), or of rock or stock dove (*Columba livia* or *oenas*) (21). Rook or crow (*Corvus frugilegus* or *corone*) (4) were also present. Of the dove bones, two were small enough to be almost certainly rock dove; most were more likely rock dove than stock

dove, from their size; one was a larger bone, either stock dove or wood pigeon (*C. palumbus*). It is the rock dove which is the domestic bird. These bones were found in seven contexts, but their distribution does not assist in the interpretation of the circular structure (0325, 0417) as a dovecote.

The Fish Bones

A. K. G. Jones

A small number of fish bones were collected by hand from these mixed layers. Despite the paucity of identifiable remains, it is apparent that fish from both marine and freshwater habitats were present, i.e. a large member of the cod family (*Gadidae*), ling (*Molva* sp.), plaice (*Pleuronectes platessa* L.) and carp (*Cyprinus carpio* L.).

Discussion of Post-medieval Occupation and Evidence for Continuity as a Manorial Complex

The excavation revealed two contiguous structural phases of post-medieval date indicative of a high-status dwelling which continued the role of the medieval manorial complex.

The first of these, datable to the Tudor period, consisted of a building with substantial stone footings, with a 'kitchen wing' to the east. To the south lay an extensive cobbled yard. Much of the structural ironwork including heavy wood nails, doorstuds and hinges, can be related to this phase.

In the seventeenth century the stone footings were replaced by a brick-built structure. A number of features apparently relate to the occupation of this building, including many of the rubbish pits cut into the area of the cobbled yard (Fig. 50). Subsequently, this building was demolished and its substantial cellar was filled with brick rubble. Closely datable finds from this feature (Fig. 55:1-8) and the fact that the building is absent from a detailed Enclosure

Award map of 1780 (Fig. 61) place this demolition in the third quarter of the eighteenth century. A reorganisation of property boundaries also took place at this time, with the substantial east-west boundary (1510) being infilled and superseded by a north-south fence represented by a line of postholes (Fig. 50). This latter can be equated with a boundary on the 1780 map.

The substantial nature and location of the post-medieval structures suggests a continued manorial status for the site up to the mid eighteenth century. The nature and range of the associated finds indicate a certain degree of wealth, but there are few outstanding items. One exception is the silver pendant from the cellar fill (Fig. 59:8).

From the mid eighteenth century until the excavation took place the site lay within the vicarage garden, and various small structures relating to this were found during excavation.