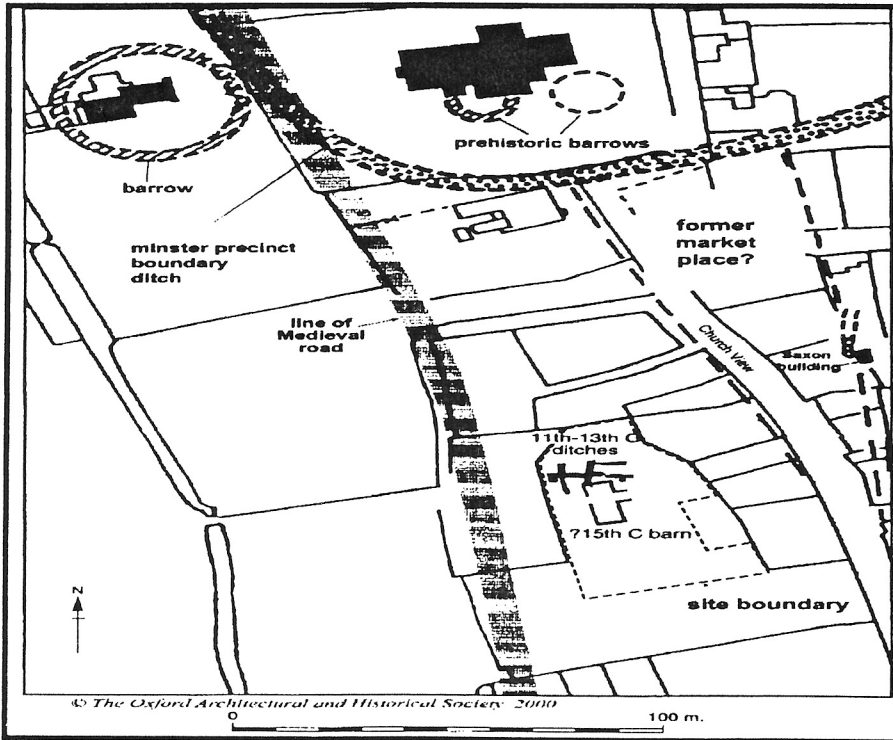


A Glimpse of old Bampton

By Alan Hardy, Oxford Archaeological Unit

A small part of the heart of medieval Bampton was briefly exposed to the

the 8th and 6th centuries BC). The pot was missing its base, and showed



The site in relation to other medieval and prehistoric remains
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trowels of the Oxford Archaeological Unit last summer, adding some intriguing information to the history of the village.

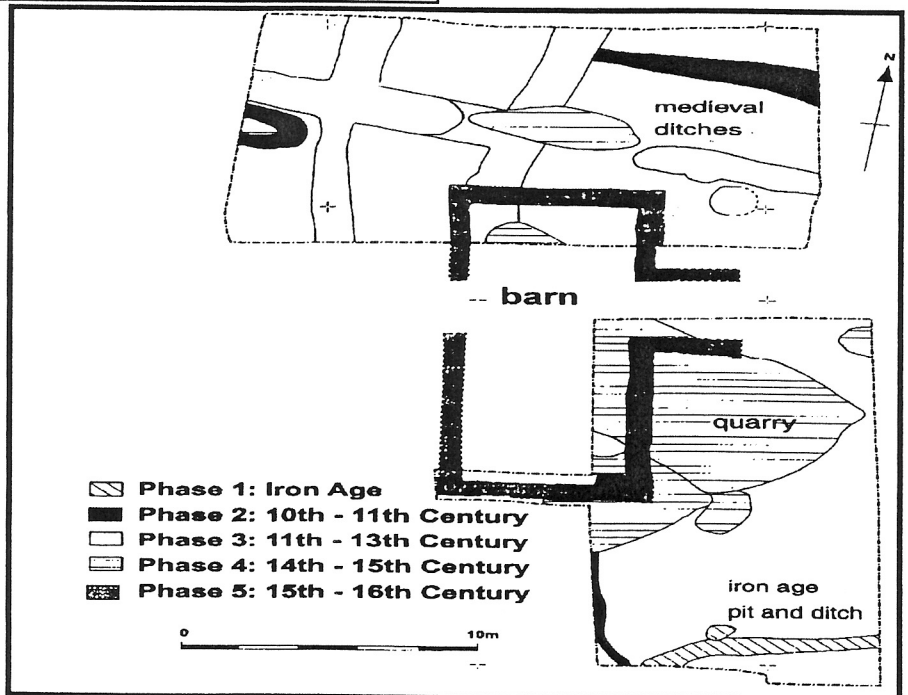
The object of the archaeologists' interest was an old paddock behind the west side of Church View, and the reason was the imminent building of houses on the site. Planning regulations these days means that the developer is obliged to fund an archaeological investigation of the area to be developed, and the OAU is grateful for the funding and the time given by Cover Construction Ltd to enable a clear picture of this part of old Bampton to emerge.

Two areas, each about the size of a squash court, were excavated. The earliest finds from the site came from a prehistoric pit alongside a shallow ditch of similar date. The pit contained a near-complete pot which dates to the early Iron Age (between

signs of 'spalling' - where the surface of the clay vessel flakes away during the firing of the pot. This can happen when the temperature rises too quickly during the firing.

Other examples of this have been found on other sites in the region, where badly fired pots were deliberately buried, rather than just thrown away. Maybe it was a ritual to improve the potter's performance next time! It may also not be coincidence that this happened near to the Bronze Age barrows that used to stand where the church is now.

Much of the Saxon history of Bampton has come to light through the work of Dr John Blair of Queen's College Oxford in the last two decades. The minster church, which gave Bampton its early importance, stood within a precinct on the site of the present St Mary's Church. We think our site lay to the south of that precinct, and hoped for some evidence to link it to the minster, but only two pieces of pottery were dated to a time 200 years before the Norman Conquest. This probably means that our site was part of a garden or open ground, and not close to a house. The trouble is, not much is known about what these precincts which surrounded minster churches were used



Plan of the site showing the different phases of activity
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for. Probably the priests who served the church each had their own small house and little plot of land within the precinct. It was some compensation to find out that those two pieces of pottery are of a rare North French type, which is only ever found - in this country - at important or 'high-status' sites, so at least it is more evidence of the importance of the minster and Bampton before the Norman Conquest. Sometime in the 12th century, a net-

work of boundary ditches were dug across the site, probably marking out properties that were set up along what is now Church View. This was when the original market place was probably at the north end of Church View, right outside the minster gate. However, in the 14th century Bampton declined; the market was moved to its present position, and it looks like the people and the buildings followed. Our site became waste ground and a big quarry pit was dug, presumably to extract gravel for new buildings.



Pot recovered from Iron Age pit (8th-6th centuries BC)
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buildings. It was not until the 15th century or even later that our site was occupied again, as the fortunes of Bampton revived. A stone barn, with a wagon porch on at least one side, was built on the site. All we found were the stone foundations, but we can be reasonably sure of its appearance - many barns of its type still stand in this part of the country. The barn itself was demolished by the middle of the 18th century, because it is not shown on the earliest map of the area (1769), and from then on the site seems to have been used as a paddock or orchard. Which property did this barn belong to? Our site was part of a plot of land called Home Close on a map of 1769, and may have belonged to a house to the west, rather than one alongside Church View. There may have been a road running southwards through the western part of the churchyard and down the west side of the close, connect-

ing with Bridge Street near the bridge, and it is possible that the property of which the barn was a part was approached from this road. The site will soon be under newly built houses - and another chapter of Bampton's story will begin! (The full report on this excavation is published in *Oxoniensia*, the journal of the Oxford Architectural and Historical Society, Volume 65 (2000); permission to reproduce their illustrations for this article is gratefully acknowledged).

The Jubilee Inn

As you will have read under the BEGW article, the Jubilee Inn owner's appeal against West Oxfordshire District Council's decision to withhold planning permission for change of use to residential quarters was rejected by the Inspectorate of the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.

The building therefore remains a public house, but the question many people are asking is "what can be done now to give the Village its pub back?" After discussing the issue with the Planning Department of WODC, the answer would appear to be 'very little'! While the 'Beam' was advised by a council representative that the new owners bought the property as a 'going concern', there is apparently nothing that can be done to force them to continue to trade as a pub. What the owners cannot do however, is use the bar area for residential purposes, since they would be liable to preventative enforcement by the council. They can only use the bar area as a through passage to access other parts of the building.

In answer to the question as to what the WODC Planning Department will do about the situation in the future, the 'Beam' was advised that they are monitoring the situation - and will continue to monitor it - to ensure that the bar area is not being used in breach of permitted planning use. They will also continue to respond to the letters sent and complaints made, which the 'Beam' was advised they continue to regularly receive.

And what can the residents of Bampton do? Well, they can't knock on the door of The Jubilee and request access to the pub and a pint. But they can be vigilant to the situation as outlined above, and continue to hope that the owners will take the welcome step of re-opening the doors of the pub at an early date; or, if they do not wish to do that, sell the pub to someone who will.

**International Day of Culture
Sunday May 20th
Pavilion, Recreation Field
Arts, Crafts, Music, Refreshments
Tea and Coffee Tasting**