

# Living opposite to the Hospital of St John

Excavations in medieval Northampton  
2014

Jim Brown

With contributions by

Sander Aerts, Philip L Armitage, Rob Atkins, Liz Barham, Rob Batchelor, Paul Blinkhorn,  
Julian Bowsher, Andy Chapman, Pat Chapman, Steve Critchley, Nina Crummy, Claire Finn,  
Val Fryer, Damian Goodburn, Tora Hylton, Imogen van Bergen-Poole  
and Yvonne Wolfram-Murray

Illustrations by

Olly Dindol (plans and sections), James Ladocha (finds photography),  
Carla Ardis and Sofia Turk (finds drawings)

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Front cover: Plot 1, looking south

Back cover: Worked antler pieces trimmed and partly finished bishop and king/queen chess pieces

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*This publication is dedicated to the memory of Lesley-Ann Mather, County Archaeological Advisor for Northamptonshire. Lesley-Ann monitored the excavation for the County Council and had been greatly looking forward to its publication. She herself went to school in Northampton and had worked much of her career within the county. Archaeology has lost one of its staunchest and most unstinting advocates but above all a very nice and genuine person.*



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## Contributors

**Jim Brown BSc PGDip MCIfA**

Former Senior Project Manager, MOLA

**Sander Aerts BA MSc**

Environmental Processing Officer, MOLA

**Philip L Armitage BSc MSc PhD**

Curator, Brixham Heritage Museum

**Rob Atkins BSocSc DipArch MCIfA**

Project Manager (Reporting and Publications), MOLA

**Liz Barham**

Senior Conservator, MOLA

**Rob Batchelor BSc PhD MCIfA**

Director, Quaternary Scientific (Quest), School of Archaeology, Geography and Environmental Sciences, University of Reading

**Paul Blinkhorn BTech**

Independent pottery specialist, Northampton

**Andy Chapman BSc MCIfA FSA**

Former Senior Project Manager, MOLA

**Pat Chapman BA ACIfA**

Former Post-excavation Supervisor, MOLA

**Paul Clements BA**

Former Project Supervisor, MOLA

**Steve Critchley BSc MSc**

Independent geological specialist and volunteer metal detectorist, Peterborough

**Nina Crummy BA MA**

Freelance small finds specialist

**Claire Finn BA MA PhD**

Post-excavation and Reporting Officer, MOLA

**Val Fryer BA MCIfA**

Independent environmental specialist, Norfolk

**Damian Goodburn BA PhD**

Senior Specialist – Woodwork, MOLA

**Tora Hylton**

Former Finds and Archives Officer, MOLA

**Imogen van Bergen-Poole BSc PhD**

Independent fossil wood and charcoal specialist, Aberdeenshire

**Yvonne Wolframm-Murray BSc PhD**

Post-excavation Project Supervisor, MOLA

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

by Jim Brown

### Project background

The archaeological excavations at St John's Street and Fetter Street make one of the most significant contributions to the understanding of medieval Northampton since the wholesale redevelopment of St Peter's Way in the 1970s. Whilst the site was situated to the east of the putative Saxon town defences, beyond the Saxon *burh*, it lay immediately south of the core of the post-Conquest New Borough, which focused upon the Norman marketplace at All Saints Church (RCHME 1985, 52; BL Royal 11 Bix, f.128b). As such the excavations have provided valuable insights into the early-mid 12th-century development of the town close to its economic centre, and immediately beyond its Saxon limits.

Northamptonshire Archaeology, which became part of MOLA during the project, was commissioned by Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) to carry out an archaeological investigation associated with the construction of new offices at Angel Street, Northampton (Fig 1.1; NGR SP 75501 60264). Since the development was designed with an undercroft and extensive foundation piling, a programme of archaeological work was required to preserve the earlier settlement remains by record before they were lost permanently. The works comprised open area excavation of stratified urban archaeological deposits in both the upper and lower areas of the site, which comprised a block of derelict land occupied by a rough surface car park. The investigation was carried out as requested by the NCC Archaeological Planning Advisor (NCC 2013) in accordance with recognised professional standards and guidance (Cifa 2019; 2014a; b; HE 2015). The programme of works was laid out in *A programme of archaeological excavation recording, analysis and publication* (Brown 2014a), which was approved by the authority and the work was subsequently monitored each week. At the conclusion of the fieldwork a *Statement of intended post-excavation analysis* (Brown 2014b) was issued by MOLA which was followed by an assessment report and Updated Project Design that outlined proposals for a programme of analysis leading to publication (Brown and Finn 2018). The present report represents the culmination of that further analysis and draws together a narrative of the excavated evidence especially in the context of medieval to post-medieval Northampton.

### Location, topography and geology

The site lay within the centre of modern Northampton, bounded by Angel Street to the north, Fetter Street to the east and St John's Street to the south. The western boundary was defined by the rear of properties fronting onto Bridge Street. The whole site was c0.7ha in extent and terraced on two levels as a by-product of its historical land use. The modern hillside slopes down south towards the River Nene from 68–62m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). The terrace was cut into this natural contour leaving the ground surface at roughly 63m aOD in the former lower car park and at 67m aOD in the former upper car park.

The geology of the site was Northampton Sand and Ironstone in the upper two thirds of the site, with Upper Lias Clay closer to St John's Street underlying superficial deposits (BGS 2001; 2020). The origin of the soils was of Wickham 2 association, which comprised slowly permeable seasonally waterlogged fine loam over clayey soils, which frequently formed above clay and mudstone (LAT 1983). However, intense urban occupation of the site with the introduction of greater organic components over time had modified the texture and structure of the buried garden soils to produce dark friable loam-rich soils, which had a greater capacity for drainage than the more clayey progenitor.

### Historical and archaeological background

This section of the report is intended as a precis of the often-conflicting interpretations of the development of Saxon, medieval and post-medieval Northampton, but not as an analysis of those works. It considers the historical context of the site and its place within medieval Northampton.

### *Location of Saxon and medieval town including its defences*

The site lay within the southern quarter of the Norman New Borough, established outside the postulated circuit of the earlier Saxon *burh* (Lee 1954). Whether it was an administrative centre for a Mercian province (Foard 1985) with its own middle Saxon palace (Williams 1982a; Williams *et al* 1985) or was built around an ecclesiastical minister (Blair 1996) is a matter of opinion. Foard (1995)

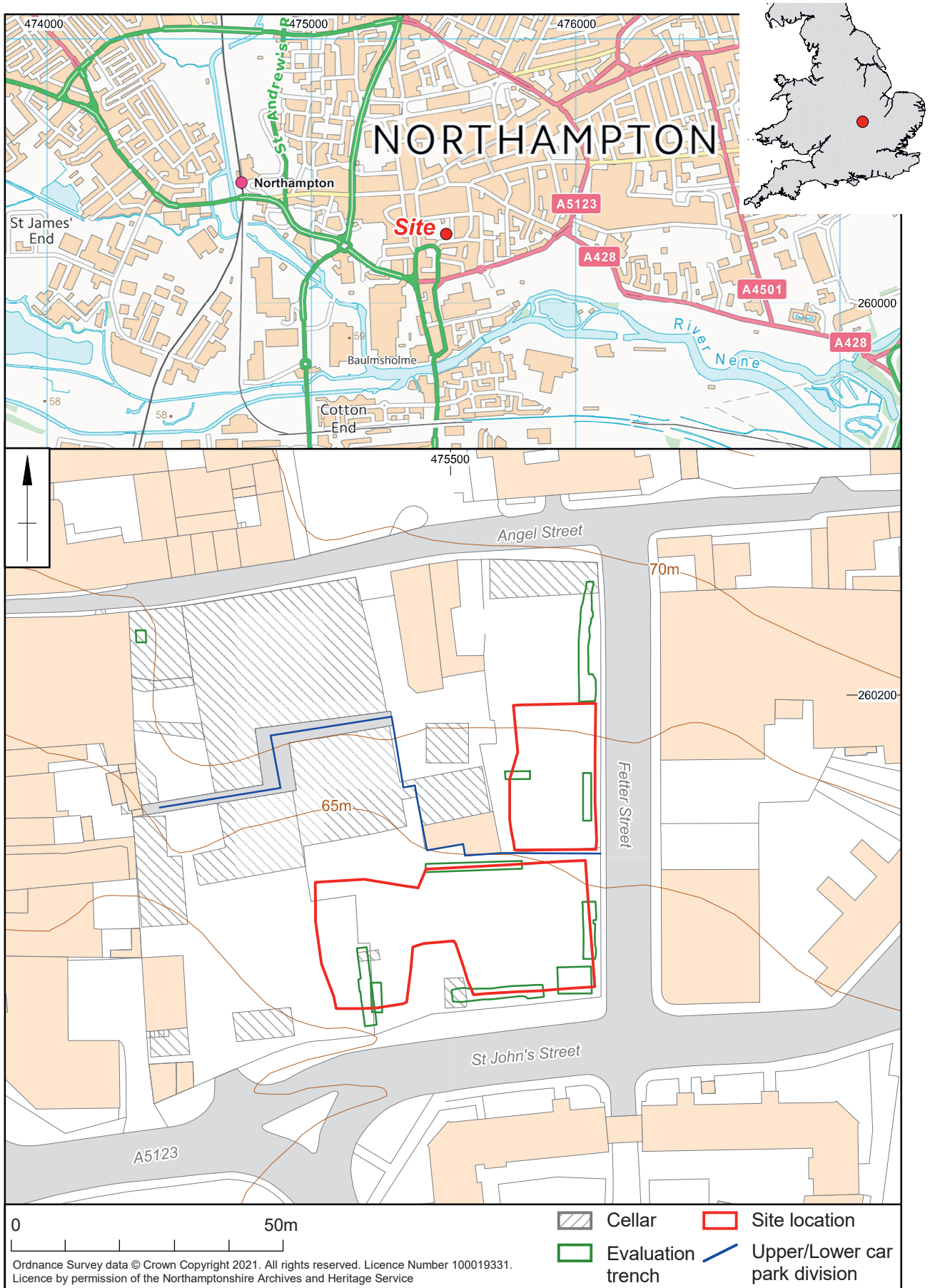


Figure 1.1 Site location

argued that the Saxon town was established on a grid pattern, and the creation of the New Borough was an extension of that grid laid out in c1100 by Henry I or by Simon de Senlis, Earl of Northampton. Foard noted the roads followed the extant boundaries of the furlongs in the open fields surrounding the township. Variations to this grid pattern were attributed to later medieval or post-medieval developments (*ibid*, 112). The Norman town was re-centred upon the marketplace at All Saints, which provided a new place to generate income and tax goods, rather than perpetuating the continuance of the former Saxon market. The location of the Saxon market is uncertain; it may have been to the north of the *burh* at Mayorhold (Cox 1898), but this has not been substantiated. The shift in the market's location was at the heart of the process that laid out the New Borough, and the former Saxon market site was presumably no longer suitable. Archaeological explorations within the New Borough have steadily built a catalogue of evidence that shed light upon its use and development.

The circuit of the Norman town defences was exceptionally large and comprised a wide arc to ensure the town could not be overlooked, but it perhaps was also a tribute to Norman ambitions for future expansion within the town. Within this circuit there were seven churches established, or rebuilt, and these formed localised centres for the community. The churches of St Mary, St Gregory and St Michael no longer stand but are alluded to in *The Itinerary of John Leland the Antiquary* when he visited in the mid-16th century (Hearne 1768, 9). Bridge Street, to the west of the site, became the 12th-century north-south road through the Norman town centre with a crossing of the River Nene at Southbridge (Fig 1.2). This was the main route southward to London by 1290 when the body of Eleanor of Castile was conveyed south by Edward I. At its northern end the road passed along Sheep Street and exited the North Gate at Regent Square. Excavations on the east side of Sheep Street found an earthen cellar that was infilled in the 12th century (Brown 2006). The Saxon town had its main approach from the east, and the East Gate of the New Borough remained important through to the 17th century when it was described as adorned with coats of arms, whilst the other main gates were tenements for the poor (Page 1930). To the west there was a crossing of the river for an east to west thoroughfare, with a West Gate that was in use during the 11th century (Chapman 1999), and that Welsh (1997) suggested may have supplanted an earlier Saxon route after the castle was built.

Marefair and Gold Street may have formed part of a Roman road between Duston and Irchester. The road's position is so far unproven but Roman finds were recovered at Chalk Lane, Marefair and Sol Central, all adjacent to this suggested routeway (Williams and Shaw 1981; F Williams 1979; Miller *et al* 2005). It is

uncertain who founded Northampton Castle due to a lack of reliable documentary evidence; but it is usually attributed to Simon de Senlis. The structure was perhaps founded in the rebellion of 1088 (Giggins 2017), although recent excavations within the south bailey provided no evidence for this (Chapman 2018). The most important roads that led out of the medieval town were a focus for suburban growth (Foard 1995, fig 2.3). The nearest suburb to St John's Street lay on the north-south road from the town walls and across Southbridge, called Cotton End, which despite the recession, famine and pestilence of the late 13th-14th centuries was still fairly densely occupied when Leland visited. The street was recorded by John Speed in 1610, lined with houses and bridges over the narrow and braided channels of the River Nene.

An alternative view of Northampton's growth favours a less deliberately planned expansion (Welsh 1997). Welsh followed antiquarian sources that suggested the market was traditionally held at Mayorhold on the north side of the Saxon *burh*, and which continued to be the focus of the early Norman market (Lee 1716). Consequently, the antiquarian views were that the market at All Saints did not acquire that distinction until the late 13th century after a shift in the town's importance (Page 1930) and the creation of the Checker Ward (Cox 1898). How this took place was linked to the river crossing at Southbridge, established c1100, drawing north-south traffic eastwards away from a hypothetical river crossing at the south end of St Martin's Street (Horsemarket) (Lee 1954), and creating a competing economic centre to the east of the Saxon *burh* that gradually became the dominant marketplace. Welsh (1997), argued that most early commentators were convinced that All Saints remained outside the town walls until c1300 and that they felt the Norman town would have simply occupied the area of its Saxon forebear. According to the 1235 Close Rolls, fairs or markets were banned from churchyards and instead were located on waste ground on the north side (Serjeantson 1901). The assumption from this is that the market was moved slightly north of All Saints to its present location (Jones *et al* 2000; Welsh 2002).

Welsh argued in support of the antiquarian hypotheses that attributed the double street plan to a preceding post-Conquest processional way from Southgate to Mayorhold (Welsh 2002), which maintained that Bridge Street was a late insertion that both superseded Kingswell Street as the main thoroughfare (Cox 1898), and replaced Crackbole Street after its enclosure. This latter street passed through the precinct of the Hospital of St John the Baptist and St John the Evangelist, between the church and their grange as described in the Hundred Roll of 1274, but it is unclear on what alignment. The enclosure permitted and provided a route that allowed continued free access

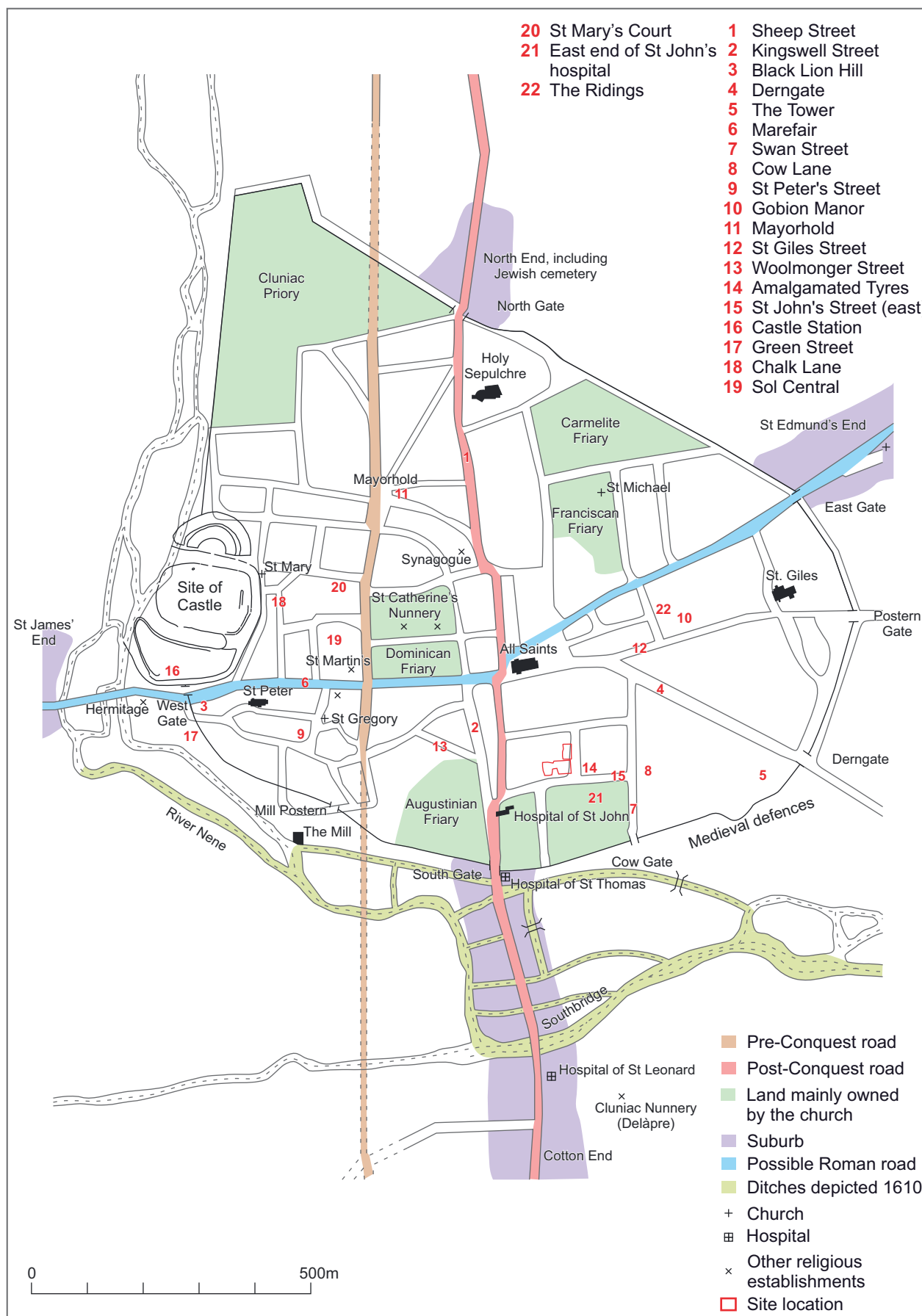


Figure 1.2 The context of medieval Northampton

to the new marketplace (Serjeantson 1901). Welsh therefore surmised that Crackbole Street had access to the marketplace and would have lain north–south through the site of excavation, or along the alignment of Fetter Street (Welsh 2002, fig 1). Others considered that Crackbole Street was an earlier name for St John’s Street (Williams 2014), and note that the event was recorded as a complaint against the Master of the Hospital of St John for having enclosed *Krakebollestre* in 1266 at a cost of half a mark to the Crown. The grounds for permission would therefore appear equivocal. The Hundred Roll also described the eastward expansion of the Dominican Friary 15 years earlier, and it is to this and the redevelopment of the town following the Great Fire of 1675 that Welsh attributed the irregular curvature of the street plan (Welsh 1997; 2002), rejecting the notion of an intramural road to Lee’s postulated Saxon defensive circuit.

Excavations at the corner of Woolmonger Street and Kingswell Street found no evidence of a defensive circuit of any date, intramural or otherwise (Brown 2010a). Perhaps more striking is that buildings identified at that site, i.e. the late Saxon cellared building (A) and the Saxo-Norman timber building (B) were both eccentric to Kingswell Street (Brown 2008). During the late 11th–12th centuries this location was largely undeveloped with few features of note, and where a relict 12th-century buried soil survived it contained few finds. Kingswell Street may not have been a route at that time, and the building alignments fitted better with *Lewnyslane*, although no road surfaces for this were found (Welsh 2002; Brown 2010a). Intense activity in the yard spaces during the 13th–14th centuries suggested a frontage was likely beneath the modern road. The location for the back of one stone building (D) was confirmed and collectively the evidence suggested that Kingswell Street was a relatively late street development that lay parallel with, but behind, the main north–south thoroughfare of Bridge Street, with neither demonstrating a relationship to an earlier defensive circuit or to a post-Conquest road from the South Gate to Mayorhold.

Of great dispute in both cases was the location and extent of the Saxon *burh*, and indeed whether any defensive circuit existed, and if so, the route that this might have taken. A potential earthwork defence was favoured by many that might explain the curvature of the streets of the town as a late Saxon defensive circuit (RCHME 1985, fig 7). If this is correct it could have been a 10th-century fortification by Edward the Elder in 917 (Foard 1995, 112), who had reconquered the town in 918, strengthened the defences and created a *burh*. However, these defences were short-lived, and the town was sacked and burnt down by the Danes in 1010. The only location where Saxon defences have been positively identified was at Green Street, facing

the loop of the river, and not on the north or eastward sides of the *burh* (Chapman 1999). In contrast several small-scale investigations were undertaken at different points around the town attempting, but failing, to confirm the line of both the Saxon and the later post-Conquest defences (Williams 1982b). Variations of Lee’s (1954) postulated Saxon defensive circuit remain the only published working models of the town plan to have emerged (JH Williams 1979, fig 4; RCHME 1985, fig 7; Chapman 1999, fig 1; Brown 2008, fig 1); none of them are particularly satisfactory. The putative circuit was only 3,000ft (910m) in length and encompassed c700 hides, which would make it one of the smallest *burhs* in the Danelaw (Blanchard 2007, 165) and as the Saxon defences remain largely unsubstantiated they are consequently a source of critique (Welsh 1997).

The medieval defensive line, which extended further to the north and east of the Saxon centre, was in existence by the mid-12th century. Eastgate Street (probably Abington Street) and East Gate, to the north of St Giles Church, were recorded before 1166 (Williams 1982b; BM Royal II B IX f.144b). The walls in 1277–8 were embattled and wide enough for six people to walk abreast (Brown 1915, 88). The route of the later medieval town walls and town ditch have been more readily demonstrated (Welsh 1994), but in his critique of the Royal Commission model of the town, Welsh often disputed the precise positioning of the town wall by stating it was contradictory to documented or excavated evidence (Welsh 2001). The town walls were described by various antiquaries and were referred to in the Hundred Roll, a terrier of town property that dated to 1586, the town rentals of c1300 and 1503–4, occasional property deeds and the map of 1610 by Speed (Fig 1.3). Surviving fragments were depicted on Roper and Cole’s map of 1807 (Fig 1.10), which shows the old wall and two bastions on the south-east side of town (Williams 1982b). However, by the time the town started to be depicted in the early 17th century, the walls were already in a terrible state of repair (Speed 1676) and what had survived upon the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660 was largely being torn down, along with the former castle, in retribution for its parliamentary stance during the civil war and to the great humiliation of the town. The area within the town walls, however, has remained the principal study for the town’s morphology with notable wrangling over all its possible details.

### ***The medieval town from the 12th century to the early post-medieval***

The town was a seat of parliament from the reign of Henry I (1100–35), which elevated the town’s castle to royal status, and it was used as a royal residence during Easter 1122. The outer bailey was probably constructed at this time (Chapman 2018). The Borough received

its first market charter in 1189, ensuring that it would receive appropriate oversight and taxation. The castle was an important symbol of Royal power; it withstood siege in April 1215 during the 1st Barons War, but was surrendered to the Barons at the signing of the Great Charter in June, and was besieged again in October following the resumption of hostilities (Giggins 2017). The Royal Court spent Christmas at Northampton in 1218 and again in 1223. Following the marriage of Henry III to Eleanor of Provence in 1236 there were numerous orders for improvements to the castle (Colvin and Brown 1963). The castle was besieged again in 1264 following the Battle of Northampton during the 2nd Barons' War. The effect of these various conflicts on the town is largely unknown, but they seemed to make no impact that can be detected archaeologically. By the mid-13th century Northampton's status and royal patronage made the November Fair one of the four great fairs of medieval England; a place for royal purchases and authorisation of contracts (Jones *et al* 2000, 99). Royal patronage continued to benefit the town up until the last parliament was held in 1380 at St Andrew's Priory, by which time the castle was in a state that was no longer fit for the King's presence.

Royal investment marked Northampton for great things, and that attracted the ecclesiastical houses. The Church was often swift to acquire land in towns of growing affluence or political significance, and Northampton was no exception. The Church, however, usually acquired its land through bequests and donations, often in marginal areas rather than in the prime locations of towns. In the case of Northampton they seem to have acquired large blocks of land at the edges of the New Borough (Fig 1.2), suggesting that there were large areas of open space in need of development, and in the case of the Augustinians and the Hospitallers this was the marshy ground prone to flooding by the river.

The dates of the foundations mainly span the late 12th–13th centuries: Cluniac monks, c1093–1100; Hospital of St John, c1138–40; Convent of St Mary de le Pre, c1145; Hospital of St Leonard, before 1150; Franciscan Friars, c1226; Dominican Friars, before 1233; Carmelite Friars, before 1265; Friars of the Sack, before 1271; Augustinian Friars, c1275–90. Understanding of the precise extent of the church holdings within the town is inexact (Fig 1.2), but it is clear from Speed's 17th-century depiction (Fig 1.3) that many of the precincts probably remained as enclosed units even after their dissolution from 1536, owing to a broad pattern of economic decline in the intervening years (Jones *et al* 2000). Given the expansion of the Dominican Friary between St Martin's Street and College Street (Welsh 1997, 175; Chapman 2001), described in the Hundred Roll, the location of the Augustinian Friary at the south end of Kingswell Street, and the affairs of the Hospital of St John concerning

Crackbole Street, it is clear that units of impassable ecclesiastical land heavily influenced the street pattern. Another enclosed unit is a block of land between Silver Street and Sheep Street that may have housed the Jewish Synagogue, at least until their expulsion in 1290. Enclosed blocks of land would have impeded growth, forcing tenements and other infill buildings to spread around them when demand for land was at its peak.

Economic growth blossoming outwards from focal points of activity such as the royal castle, the marketplaces and the Jewry, produced an eclectic mixture of land use incorporating tenements, workshops, places of worship and places of sacred retreat, into a vibrant patchwork townscape with a thriving mixed community in the late 12th–13th centuries. The expansion of parochial space including the new foundations of churches suggests that the population grew rapidly in the 12th century but had ceased to prosper after the mid-14th century (Jones *et al* 2000). There is also a general lack of documentary evidence that the Northampton abbeys and friaries contributed significantly to growth; they seemingly collected fees but did not make notable purchases, being largely self-sufficient. In later periods of recession or stagnation large blocks of land were seemingly vacant. Previous discussions over street plans have not explored the evidence of polyfocal settlement growth in the context of medieval communities and have instead focused on a growth pattern radiating out from the Saxon *burh*, and then post-Conquest from the Norman market at All Saints. The stark difference in local neighbourhoods between such places as the Castle, Woolmonger Street, the south quarter, Gobion Manor and Mayorhold exemplifies far more localised developments rather than treating the town as a single unit. Medieval Northampton had many ecclesiastical communities within the town walls represented by the Cluniac monks of St Andrew's Priory, all four major orders of friars, St Catherine's nunnery, the Convent of St Mary and the Hospital of St John to name but a few. Outside the walls were further communities such as the Augustinian Abbey of St James to the west, the Cluniac nunnery at Delapré to the south, the Hermitage, and the Hospitals of St Leonard, and later on also of St Thomas, as well as two other hospitals to the north of the town in Kingsthorpe. St Andrew's Priory and St James' Abbey at the time of the Dissolution held over 160 properties between them and commanded huge influence over the way the town conducted its domestic and economic arrangements (Williams 1982a; PRO E318 21/1098). There were also seven churches for secular folk within the walls, that number including both those buildings present today and those lost before Speed's map was drawn. The addition of St Bartholomew, St Edmund and St Thomas outside the walls brings the total to ten as confirmed by Hugh of Avalon, Bishop of Lincoln (1186–1200). Henry Lee added to this list further including several chapels and non-parochial churches that brings

the count to 18 places of Christian worship (Williams 1982a, fig 1). Together with the people who lived and worked in the Royal castle, the artisans/craftsmen who plied their trades in the markets, and the residents of the Jewry; it is these local neighbourhoods that determined how the town grew. An example of this is the enclosure of *Krakebollestre* in 1266 by the Hospital of St John (Williams 2014; Welsh 2002). Whatever alignment the street lay upon, the attempt to enclose was either stopped or quickly reversed and neatly illustrates how localised agency determined town development at a neighbourhood level and how it was policed mainly where there were interests to be protected.

Prosperity in Northampton across the late 12th–15th centuries fluctuated and was starkly imbalanced across society. Many sites excavated within the town show that there was a decline in domestic occupation from c1350–1500, leaving large areas derelict, abandoned or vacant, such as at Black Lion Hill (Shaw 1985), Derngate (Shaw 1984), The Tower (Hiller *et al* 2002), Marefair (F Williams 1979), St John's Street (Shaw and Steadman 1993a), Cow Lane/Swan Street (Shaw and Steadman 1993b) and St Peter's Street (JH Williams 1979). This suggests that the urban poor were present in fewer numbers; many would have been victims of famine and pestilence, and some may have sought to relocate. The town appears to have stagnated during the Hundred Years War and the period of the Black Death; town rents and the cloth trade declined, with urban estates being acquired by religious foundations (Miller *et al* 2005). Evidence of population decline is supported by records from the royal rentals, the surveys of the abbey and priory at dissolution, and of the murage grants indicating a broad drop in population by c2,000 people between the late 12th and late 14th centuries, with a slight recovery from the early 16th century (Jones *et al* 2000, 128–9, 137). Despite this, however, and until their dissolution, the ecclesiastical communities continued to flourish largely independently of the town. Unlike the secular areas there was a great deal of building and refurbishment that took place within religious buildings in the 14th century, including construction of the surviving building of the Chapel of the Hospital of St John on Bridge Street, and the cloisters at Greyfriars, which were retiled in the 15th century (Williams 1978). The Hospital of St Thomas was not founded until c1450, by which time the secular community had dwindled considerably according to the documentary records (Jones *et al* 2000). Perhaps the ailing fortunes of the secular markets also provided opportunity for ecclesiastic acquisition and investment. There was also a rising affluent gentry who stepped in to fill a void in local politics left by the withdrawal of the Royal Court and its regular parliaments after 1380. Such families as the Gobion family, mostly knights of the realm, had served the crown for almost two centuries. Hugh Gobion was Sheriff of Northamptonshire (1161–64)

and his descendants amassed a sizable manor that was recorded in the inquisition post-mortem on the death of the last Sir Richard Gobion as a capital messuage with over 58 other properties and 300 acres of arable land (Williams and Farwell 1984; Serjeantson 1911). By 1380 this manor had passed by marriage into the hands of the Paynell family. The town retained its commercial and judicial privileges and held two seals under the Statute of Merchants. These townsfolk were still wealthy enough to construct a crenelated two-storey town hall, which was raised to three storeys in the 15th century, and it is they who probably shaped the town thereafter. The excavation site fronting St John's Street could well have been occupied by a gentleman's town house at this time. A garden, dove house and pond were recorded by a lease of 1499 in Knight Street (Angel Street) (Maxwell Lyte 1906, A.10945). Members of the town gentry would have invested in land, which was plentiful with significant vacancies available, and in profitable local industries.

Despite instances of dereliction, decline and recession, the town carried on. The Paving Act of 1431 brought about a drive for civic cleanliness and attempts to keep the streets clean of refuse, which was followed by local by-laws in Northampton c1460 preventing dyers, butchers and other inhabitants from casting their stinking refuse in the streets with further prohibitions directed at butchers in 1505–6 (Jones *et al* 2000, 94). Four civic refuse dumps were located within the walled town and the nature of the refuse that was allowed was also closely prescribed in 1466. Attempts were also made to segregate dirty activities from within the town, excluding them to the suburbs. A private charter from 1439 records that land by the South Gate was granted to 16 townsmen that they may be allowed to build houses (NRO Private Charter 48). This together with a group of four wills that span 1478–96 suggested that at least three properties on Bridge Street had become the domicile and craft base for dyers (Early Will Register, f20r; ff95r–95v; f97v; f106v). Presumably its location by the river, south of the Hospital of St John, suited their trade and was far enough from the houses of good gentle folk not to be deemed a nuisance. Another major industry, tanning, was established further upstream c1470–1550 at The Green (Shaw 1997a), which suggests an ample supply of hides. It is possible there was an expansion of livestock markets already denoted by place names such as Sheep Street, Horsemarket and Marefair, which in the 14th–15th centuries were important enough to draw butchers from outside Northampton from Market Harborough, Catthorpe, Lilbourne, Eastcote, Pattishall, and even North Wales (Jones *et al* 2000). Documents survive for the investment in property and business within the town rental of 1503–4, which includes an inn in Bridge Street known as the Angel (*ibid*); one of many such establishments that would shape the character of a coaching town in later years.

The town was struck by fires in 1516 and 1675 that swept away many of the older buildings, which together with the impact of the Dissolution from 1536, probably accounts for the loss of many civic, ecclesiastic and parish records. In their wake localised recovery was probably at a neighbourhood level. Leland visited the town around 1530–43 and noted that the old buildings were of stone and the new buildings were of timber (Hearne 1768, 9), but he did not describe the location or extent of the regeneration. His description of ecclesiastic sites also suggested that the rolling impact of the Dissolution had yet to strike the town, and only four of the seven churches that he mentioned would survive the ensuing Reformation. What is likely is that the post-medieval rural market economy of Northampton subsequently took advantage of considerable empty space, which is recorded even up to the 1807 map of Northampton by Cole and Roper, with plots of cultivation, trees and pasture (Fig 1.10). In this context the excavated site occupied land in the abandoned part of the medieval southern quarter where it was located between two side streets from the main north–south road and lay opposite to the grounds of the Hospital of St John.

#### ***Previous archaeological work at St John's Street and nearby***

Prior to the excavation of 2014, the site incorporated a massive, brick and concrete retained terrace, bearing all the hallmarks of intensive earthmoving and levelling from more recent periods of land use (Fig 1.1). This had significantly reduced the potential of the central portion of the site to retain archaeology. Much of the central and north-west area, including the larger part of the Angel Street frontage, were also known to contain cellars of modern origin that related to former structural configurations of the site since the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey of 1885.

#### ***Trial trench evaluation of the site***

Evaluation of the proposed development block in 1990 found that medieval and post-medieval buildings survived along both Fetter Street and St John's Street, whilst the Angel Street frontage was believed to be primarily cellared, and any former buried archaeology was largely destroyed (Shaw and Steadman 1993a, fig 10). It was considered that behind the two frontages there would be yards and back-plots, which in Northampton usually contain numerous rubbish pits and buried soils, with the latter often lying above the backfill of quarry pits. The evaluation in 1990 took place within the present excavation area (Fig 1.1). The results found no archaeological remains pre-dating the Conquest and there was a single residual Iron Age pottery sherd (*ibid*). The work identified a likely Saxo-Norman timber building at the west end of the St John's Street frontage

in trench D, which was succeeded by a stone-founded building, probably in the 13th century. At the east end there was a late 13th-century stone building found in trench E (*ibid*, 25). These two buildings were constructed as Northampton reached its medieval heyday. The former is not an unusual succession for structures in the medieval town with the foundations of some former timber buildings replaced in stone. However, because of the fire in 1516 a great deal of post-medieval houses were timber built on a stone foundation (dwarf wall) as observed by Leland (Hearne 1768), which may also account why the fire of 1675 also swept the town so quickly. This pattern of activity is comparable to the evidence exhibited on other sites excavated in the town at Mayorhold (Mynard 1976), Derngate (Shaw 1984), Black Lion Hill (Shaw 1985), St James End (Shaw and Soden 1996), Kettering Road (Shaw 1997b), St Peter's Walk (Soden 1998/9) Woolmonger Street and Kingswell Street (Brown 2008).

The evaluation found a building dating to the 17th–18th centuries in trench B (Fig 1.1), next to Fetter Street and trench D along St John's Street and these appeared to equate with buildings on the 1746 Noble and Butlin map.

Further evaluation was undertaken in 2010 in order to fill gaps in the understanding of the archaeological potential of the site by locating archaeological trenches along all the major frontages. This provided data to assemble a predictive model of the depth and extent of surviving archaeological deposits (Brown 2010b, fig 26). The evaluation found Saxo-Norman features, perhaps structures on the south and south-east parts of the site, a possible late 12th-century wall fronting St John's Street and a 13th-century wall on the south-eastern side along St John's Street. Post-medieval to modern features were found as well as deep cellars along the Fetter Street frontage.

The combined evaluations demonstrated that whilst some areas of the site contained remains of significance, there were other areas where there was no potential for survival owing to the presence of modern cellars, terracing and the foundations of 20th-century buildings.

#### ***Monitoring of the Water Board trenches in 1975***

A major series of trenches were dug through central Northampton for a water main in the 1970s, part of which passed the west end of St John's Street (Moore and Giggins 1977). Conditions for recording and recovery of finds were generally difficult as the archaeological investigation relied upon the co-operative agreement of the water board, pre-dating any conditions that might be set by modern planning guidance. At the north-west corner of St John's Street (NGR SP 7541 6020) was

found the roof of a well-constructed sandstone barrel-vaulted cellar beneath the pavement and road, aligned north-south, with an internal width of 3.3m and filled with loose rubble. The stone cellar was like those found along the Drapery and at Georges Row, which date from the 13th century. Given its location and the costs/skills required for masons to construct barrel-vaulted cellars, it is quite likely to have been associated with the Hospital of St John.

Further along the trench at NGR SP 7539 6019 there were waterlogged black clay layers at c1.26m depth that preserved leather off-cuts, parts of shoes, wood, animal bone, iron slag, and coarse fabric in association with early medieval pottery sherds. Further west along Commercial Street (NGR SP 75276016) the surface of the natural sand and gravel was found at 2.3m below ground surface. Overlaying this were medieval finds recovered from homogenous loamy buried soils and these were sealed by 19th-century cellars. The nature of these discoveries implied not only good preservation and conditions for waterlogged remains in the town close to the river, but also a deeply stratified sequence of medieval and possibly earlier deposits.

### ***Investigations at the Chapel of the Hospital of St John***

The precinct of the Hospital of St John was located on the south side of St John's Street, opposite to Plots 1-3 (Fig 1.2). In context of the local neighbourhood the hospital was by far the most important group of buildings near to the present excavation and consequently was a focus of study for a significant number of antiquarians and for archaeologists (Dryden 1875; Poynton 1905; Serjeantson 1912a; 1912b; 1913a; 1913b; RCHME 1985; Soden and Leigh 2006). The result is that far more is known about the Hospital of St John than any other ecclesiastic community in the town. The chapel and another building, perhaps an infirmary, fronted onto Bridge Street, whilst the refectory (later the Master's House) and other buildings were within the precinct to the east with a gateway opening onto St John's Street. Within this arrangement was a much larger 'conventual church', built in 1307-8 (Serjeantson 1912a). However, despite this intensive research (and much of it now quite dated) there has been no confirmation of the size, location and extent of this church. An episcopal visitation in 1520 also noted four chantries and a chapter house. A watching brief undertaken during refurbishment of the chapel surmised that the medieval walls discovered in the external trenches may have belonged to a building extending from the surviving chapel and perhaps belonged to such a church (Soden and Leigh 2006, fig 3). However, the church served only the brethren of the hospital and it was noted by the King's Commissioners in 1545-6 that it served no parish functions (Serjeantson 1912b), an observation that would go heavily against its retention. In the late

medieval period, the hospital cared for the destitute and infirm, and provided boarding for travellers. In later years this hospital focused more heavily upon caring for its brethren and less on receiving guests or interacting with the lay community beyond the precinct walls.

### ***Archaeological excavations at the corner of Fetter Street, east of the site***

Excavations were undertaken at the former Amalgamated Tyres site following its demolition and in advance of redevelopment (Soden 2018). That site was on St John's Street, further along to the east (Fig 1.2). The excavated area contained a low density of medieval features, with little direct evidence for occupation along the St John's Street frontage. The sequence of development was comparable in that there was no evidence of activity prior to the 12th century, after which it was quarried. Soden suggested that such a quarry may have provided stone for St John's Hospital (founded c1138-40), which was on the flatter ground below the hillside.

The extent to which the hillside was modified by the quarrying suggests that the terrace observed along St John's Street, into which medieval buildings and other structures were later built, did not extend much further east along the hillside. A difference in the level of the natural ironstone to either side of Fetter Street was c1.0m at the St John's Street frontage but was greater further uphill where the quarry cut into the hillside. This suggested that a large quarry was needed in the south quarter, perhaps initially for the town defences at South Gate and then later providing stone to the Hospital of St John and the Augustinian Friary. Other large-scale quarries provided localised sources of stone in other parts of the town, such as those at Derngate (Hiller *et al* 2002). The similar reshaping of the natural contour was observed at Cow Lane (Finn 2015), and it is likely that a series of quarries probably targeted stone outcrops along the valley side before settlement took place. By comparison, small quarry pits in yard spaces tended to provide minor interventions for the individual plots, commonly observed elsewhere in the medieval town.

The present excavations have firmly established that a building fronting Fetter Street was constructed early in the 15th century. Soden suggests that the street was established in the late medieval period along the line of a back-boundary for plots extending between Bridge Street and Cow Lane (Swan Street), these being the earlier streets. No such east-west back plot boundaries were identified by excavation. Instead, excavations suggested that Fetter Street was probably inserted through a vacant plot with back-boundaries extending from St John's Street to Knight Street (Angel

Street). These parallel streets were eastern side streets to the main north–south thoroughfare along Bridge Street. The extent to which Cow Lane was used is less clear, as it extended down toward the meadows by the river and not to a crossing. Speed (1610) also indicated that the street was closed off by the town wall and it is only surmised that there was a postern at this location through the documentary reference to *Cougate* (Williams 1982b; Jones *et al* 2000). Excavations spaced out along almost the entire length of Cow Lane suggest that it was a very minor thoroughfare (Shaw 1984; Finn 2015; Shaw and Steadman 1993b; Carlyle *et al* 2017).

#### ***Archaeological excavations at the east end of St John's Street***

The east end of St John's Street meets Cow Lane (Swan Street) where the corner on its south side was excavated in 2012 within the precinct of the Hospital of St John (Carlyle *et al* 2017; Fig 1.2). Medieval pits were dated by pottery and other finds to the 13th–14th centuries. In addition, there were also two residual Roman greyware pottery sherds and two Saxo-Norman sherds. No features were found that dated prior to the late medieval period or possibly even the early post-medieval. There was a complete absence of either industrial scale quarrying or the density of backyard quarries found behind medieval frontage settlement elsewhere in town. It is suggested that the pits in the northern-most part of the excavated area may have been dug as quarries for ironstone, but the extent was limited to the roadside. The waste material filling the pits was attributed to the hospital as its source, although since there was no evidence for a precinct boundary wall, the quarrying and refuse disposal need not have been associated with the activities of the brethren.

The content of the pits was possibly of more interest than the features themselves, as they produced several unusual finds. A healthy assemblage of animal bone included, in addition to all the meat-bearing domesticates, cat, red squirrel and mole, leading to a suggestion that there may have been some furrer activity nearby (Armitage 2017). In addition, a wide range of fish bones for at least nine species including four saltwater fish were attributed to the hospital diet. Geese were present alongside elements from four other wild birds, sparrow and thrush sometimes eaten as delicacies, but also including carrion crows as scavengers (O'Connor 1993) and the remains of toads and frogs perhaps signifying plentiful insects for them to feed upon (O'Connor 2000).

The botanical remains amongst plant macrofossils were also interesting (Cobain 2017). Free-threshing wheat was most evident, which was used to make bread and ale, although rye was also found, and oats perhaps for porridge or unleavened bread. A small amount of barley

was found, a common ingredient both in baking and stews. Peas and possibly vetches may have provided vegetables for pottage or soup (Stone 2006). A few fruit stones were identified as fig, cherry and domestic plum pips and it was suggested the same pit contained a small amount of discarded cess. A lot of the wild species were from arable environments, which typically occur as crop contaminants and suggest that the waste may have been from cleaning the grain and thus burning the leftover material. The arable weed seeds included stinking mayweed that prefers heavier clay soil, typical in Northamptonshire. The assemblage also included other burnt waste as much of the charcoal derived from burning oak logs, valued for their high calorific content and long, slow burn time. Varieties of hazel, hawthorn, rowan and crab apple indicated the brushwood used for kindling.

There was no evidence for plot boundaries extending from either street, or for buildings. The earliest structural evidence was an ironstone wall extending west from Cow Lane in the 18th century.

#### ***Archaeological excavations on the east side of Cow Lane, 1980, 1989 and 2014***

Cow Lane (Swan Street) is a street that lies parallel to Bridge Street and is c130m to the east of the site (Fig 1.2). *Cougate* is mentioned in 1275 in association with Derngate and *Swynewellestrete* (Williams 1982b; Shaw 1984). In medieval Northampton it led from Derngate south to the town wall, and perhaps a small postern, although no firm evidence for this has been identified. Surprisingly the east side of this street has had quite extensive investigations over the years all the way from its north end at the back of Derngate (Shaw 1984), immediately north of the junction with St John's Street (Finn 2015), and south of the junction too, before the multi-story car park was built (Shaw and Steadman 1993b), and directly opposite to the site investigated at the corner of that junction, described above (Carlyle *et al* 2017). Considering this, one would have expected that if there was significant medieval settlement along this street, a great deal would be known about it. Instead very little tangible evidence was found, partly due to the impact on preservation, but also it would seem that Cow Lane was a side street with dispersed settlement at each end, bounded for the larger part of the 14th–17th centuries by a private estate and latterly occupied by gardens and orchards.

The work at Derngate preceded construction of the theatre and was a combination of small-scale trench excavations and a watching brief (Shaw 1984). Prior to settlement the area south of the Derngate frontage was extensively quarried for ironstone. The pottery from the quarry backfill was of 12th-century date, which Shaw attributed to the construction of the town walls in

the late 11th–12th centuries. The earliest evidence for a building on the site was a possible foundation trench, A73, dated to the 12th–13th centuries, on the Cow Lane frontage. More conclusive occupation evidence for the 13th–14th centuries was inferred from the rubbish pits, discovered at the south-west end of the site during the watching brief. Most of the occupation evidence was on the Derngate Street frontage where two medieval stone-built buildings were identified. The more substantive building was late medieval and exhibited refurbishments of the original floor, at one time tiled, but generally as clay floors and with a stone garderobe situated to the rear of the structure. The other, built after 1350, had fewer substantive foundations that were considered to be dwarf walls for a half-timber structure. There were also two ovens of the 13th–14th centuries, and a series of clay floors laid over them, which implied the establishment of a possible town house, ostensibly in the 15th century.

Shaw noted how the 1504 rental demonstrated that most properties on Derngate to the east of Cow Lane had become part of the Grange (Shaw 1984), which he felt was synonymous with the ‘Towre’ depicted on Speed’s map of 1610 and described in John Chauncey’s will of 1498. Consequently, it seems likely that much of the land to the east of Cow Lane lay within its grounds and was therefore not developed by the town until much later. Archaeological excavations further to the east, within the grounds, have been unable to locate the Tower (Hiller *et al* 2002). Later medieval rubbish pits were found cut into infilled quarries and overlain by thick medieval and post-medieval soils, but no late medieval grange buildings were found. Shaw’s documentary work (1984) also noted that Cow Lane was far less important than *Swynwellestrete* (Derngate) containing four cottages with a garden in 1414, which by the 16th century included stables and by 1621 also mentioned orchards.

The most recent investigations examined a site along the middle of Cow Lane, where the hillside rises from the junction with St John’s Street (Finn 2015). The archaeological preservation was limited as a result of the impact of the Lion Foundry (est. 1830). Consequently, only two narrow strips of ground could be examined extending away from the frontage. As had occurred in the southern excavation area on St John’s Street, the original natural contour of the hillside was cut away in the late 12th century to extract building stone. Unlike the quarry at St John’s Street, these were smaller interventions, perhaps prospecting for good stone. The intercut relationships of individual pits demonstrated how the smaller fragmented ironstone waste was used to backfill one pit as the next one was dug, and the resultant burrowing would have left an uneven ground surface heaped with fragmented stone and sandy soil. Subsequently the land was flattened out on two

levels incorporating a good deal of imported domestic waste and refuse from the town to help make up the ground. From the late 13th century a retaining wall formed a property boundary that extended eastward from Cow Lane between the two levels and although the revetment was rebuilt and replaced in various periods, its position was retained into the 21st century. Although some possible postholes were found close to the wall, there was no firm evidence for a structure or the kind of continuous back yard activities that might suggest settlement along the street frontage. Instead a layer of dark grey-brown sandy and silty loam soil built up across the site well into the mid-15th century, which presumably represented the period during which it formed part of the Grange (Shaw 1984). After this date a number of stone-lined pits were constructed, and filled with domestic refuse, indicating that at least some occupation was probably located at the frontage from the 16th century onwards and that latrine pits were located to the rear, an activity that became far more prevalent into the 17th–18th centuries until the ironworks was built.

Land to the south of the St John’s Street junction has been excavated on both sides of the street, at the corner of the junction (Carlyle *et al* 2017) and on the east side (Shaw and Steadman 1993b); however, neither excavation extended as far south as the town wall. The evidence for *Cougate* therefore rests within documentary records (Williams 1982b). Excavation on the east side of Cow Lane suggested that settlement was established soon after the Norman Conquest and dated c1075 but was not necessarily along the later street grid (Shaw and Steadman 1993b). Later features in sub-phase 2B (c1150–1225) were found with a south-east to north-west alignment that contrasted with the alignment of Cow Lane. There was a ditch at the south-east end of the site, a complex of postholes, stakeholes and other features suggestive of timber structures, and three shallow pits at the north-west end of the site. Sub-phase 2C (c1225–1300) supported continuous occupation aligned north-south with features that included a foundation trench, a ditch, and three large rectangular flat-bottomed pits. These may have been for timber structures of a kind where earthen cellars were dug out beneath the floorboards of timber buildings for additional storage. Cow Lane is consequently thought to date from the 13th century, as supported by documentary references to the *Cougate* (Shaw 1984; Jones *et al* 2000). However, this was ostensibly just a side street with a small cluster of buildings at either end. From the 14th century the land accumulated thick homogenous soils during its ownership by the Grange. From within the layer was a horse burial with many knife marks from de-fleshing of the bones. Sub-phase 3B (c1400–1500) comprised postholes, stakeholes and a shallow trench that were thought to be part of a structure, but interpretation was difficult due to site

truncation in both planes leaving few features over 0.15m deep. The structure was probably short-lived and positioned away from the street frontage, perhaps an ancillary building within the grounds of the Grange. In subsequent centuries the land was given over to planting trenches and probable orchards, as suggested by 18th-century maps, until c1825.

**Historic map and engraving evidence for the site and its neighbourhood**

All four streets that surround the site are shown on the earliest map of Northampton by John Speed (1610) and are likely to derive from the medieval street pattern (Fig 1.3). Bridge Street was a major thoroughfare leading from Southbridge into the town centre and was probably densely occupied almost as soon as the market at All Saints came into use. The other streets represent side streets that probably had densely

occupied frontages during the 12th–13th centuries, as the prosperity of the market became established. At this time the town lay before the gates of a royal castle and benefited from considerable patronage. During the reign of King John, the town was foremost amongst the urban centres of England, rising in royal favour almost to that of the capital (King 1988, 178). The town was successively mapped from 1610, showing development on the site and appears in a few notable historic images.

**Depictions of the 17th-century town plan**

John Speed’s map of 1610 depicts within the excavation area a single building located on the east side fronting onto the west side of Fetter Street (Fig 1.3). The site was bounded on its southern south side by a wall or fence fronting St John’s Street and possibly a wall or ditch along Fetter Street. No internal detail is depicted within the site.

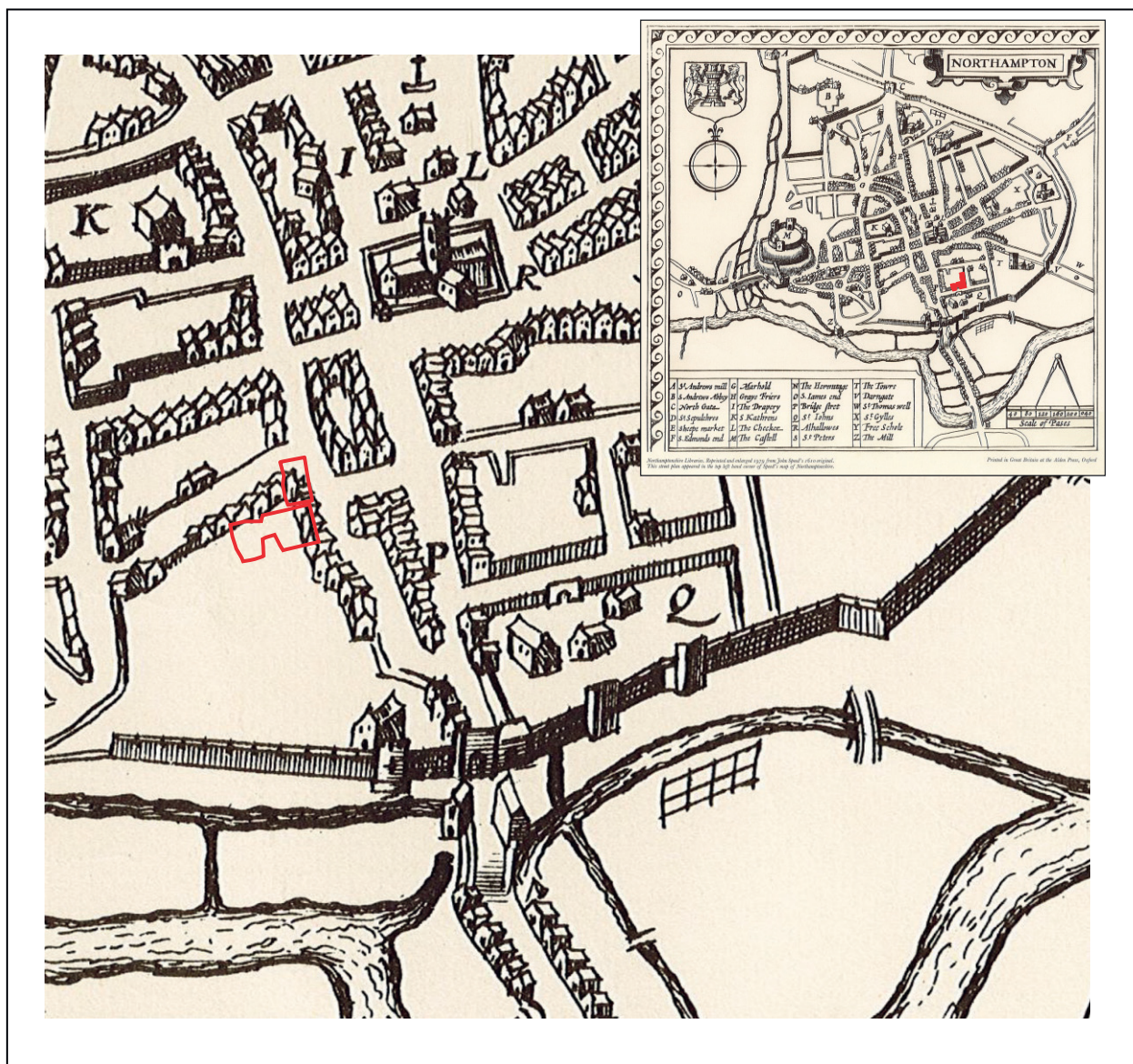


Figure 1.3 The site on Speed’s map of Northampton, 1610

To the north of the site another low wall is depicted, with an entrance into the block from Angel Street at its west end. Along St John's Street directly to the east of the site there is a single house fronting the east side of Fetter Street. To the west of the site a block of land with five properties front onto Bridge Street. The properties at each end are depicted as larger buildings than those along the middle.

The local neighbourhood is depicted with significant open space. The main concentration of settlement is located along the street frontages to the north and north-west in the vicinity of the market. Much of the interior of the blocks have no detail. The Hospital of St John is shown to the south of the site with a gateway facing onto the site from the opposite side of the street and three main buildings are depicted within the precinct. The building to the east of the gateway was probably the hospital refectory building, later the Master's House (Soden and Leigh 2006). The largest building may be the 'conventual church' that was recorded in 1307-8 (Serjeantson 1912a), the third building could possibly be a dormitory. Two buildings front Bridge Street, one of these would be the surviving chapel, the other is likely to have been an infirmary. There are no buildings depicted along the whole of St John's Street or on land to the east as far as the tower.

Contrary to the earlier map produced by Speed, twenty-two years previously, Marcus Pierce's depiction of 1632

did not show any streets behind the main thoroughfares (Fig 1.4). The routes of Dergate and Bridge Street are depicted, but all the land behind George Row to the south of All Saints Church is shown as vacant as far as the town walls. The depiction of the neighbourhood largely reflects that of Speed emphasising that the primary focus of the town was upon the market at All Saints but gives no indication as to the extent of ancillary settlement.

Both of these images depict the town plan before the loss of its castle, c1660, and before the fire of 1675, after which it was reported that the desolation had consumed almost the whole of the town. Although, as later drawings suggest, this paved the way for a period of urban regeneration and civic investment that brought about renewal of the town, the true impact of the fire remains elusive.

#### *The sketches and watercolours of Peter Tillemans, 1721*

A collection of original drawings and watercolours are held at the British Library, which were commissioned to illustrate one of the earliest county histories of Northamptonshire (Bridges 1791). Tillemans produced over 200 drawings for the local antiquarian, John Bridges, which illustrate the county at the beginning of the 18th century but were never published owing to Bridge's death. The field notes and research diaries



Figure 1.4 The site on Pierce's map of Northampton, 1632 (aligned north-east)



Figure 1.5 A view of Northampton from Queen's Cross on the London Road by Peter Tillemans, 1721

went to the University of Oxford and Tillemans' drawings were donated to the British Library.

Within the collection there are several fine drawings of Northampton that were 'taken from the road' and identify particular features and landmarks. The drawings view the town from various approaches and selected viewpoints. One such location is from the Queen Eleanor Cross on the hill to the south of the town at the top of London Road (Fig 1.5). This made for a suitable prospect for Tillemans to capture the town in its full splendour. Erected by Edward I in memory of Eleanor of Castille, the cross is a major county landmark that affiliates the town to its royal past and stands to the left of the drawing. In the foreground of the watercolour is the private estate of Delapré Park, which belonged at that time to the Tate family. The drawing takes in a wide-angled view that celebrates civic pride and commercial prosperity. The town is shown as rich, prosperous, and set within an idyllic valley that included gardens, orchards and parkland. The centre line of the drawing is the London Road that draws the eye from the Cross downhill towards Southbridge and into town and is depicted with a coach and outriders hurrying towards Northampton.

Southbridge, however, and the entire of the south quarter including the site is largely screened by trees, although the upper part of Bridge Street can be made out to the left of All Saints along with the buildings of the County Infirmary, County Hall and Gaol along George Row. The drawing quite literally paints a picture of the town's recovery after the devastation of the previous century. Northampton was greatly reduced twice, initially following the Restoration when the castle was slighted and the town's reputation was permanently tarnished by the Crown as a town rebellious, seditious and traitorous in nature for its part in the civil wars. The town was then also swept by a fire in 1675 that began near the western end of St Mary's Street and moved eastward, resulting in more than half of the

town being destroyed. Archaeological excavation at Sol Central identified post-medieval building remains, which were most likely constructed after the fire had scoured the site (Miller *et al* 2005).

Tillemans' drawing is of a town that was given a new beginning and was striving to establish a new reputation. Fine quality town houses are shown in minute detail to the west of the urban centre, but central to the drawing is All Saints Church. Opened in 1701, this civic icon was in every way aimed at recovering the town's standing with the Crown; it was based on the City Church of London and royal timber was used in its construction. The patronage of Charles II is celebrated by the effigy in the church's western portico.

The south-west prospect of the town is another image that depicts the site (Fig 1.6), although without characters, so it would seem this was not one that Bridges wished to illustrate for his book. Tillemans' grasp of perspective is good and gives the drawing the realistic feel that demonstrates the artist's own personal experience. There is a good deal of tree cover depicted, much of it in the foreground around the cottages at Far Cotton. In this image the Towcester Road is depicted winding its way across the meadows of the valley floor and turning to head towards the crossing at Southbridge. The suburb of Cotton End is shown to either side of Southbridge just behind the wooded foreground. At its eastern extent stands a large church building (possibly the Hospital of St Thomas, or Delapré Abbey depending on how distance is perceived in the drawing). The Hospital of St John at the other end is not visible as the whole of the southern quarter is shown with town houses interspersed with trees in which the site was located. The terrace of cottages that is mapped by Noble and Butlin (Fig 1.9) along Fetter Street cannot be seen at this level of detail. The south quarter is depicted more as infill to the wider scene, which is dominated by the four surviving parish churches and shows a great density of houses in the north and west



Figure 1.6 Peter Tillemans' south-west prospect of Northampton, 1721

of the town, with moderate development extending as far as St Giles' Church.

There is, however, some artistic license evident where Tillemans omitted parts of the town to improve the overall aesthetic of the image. The castle mound is missing, it appears in Bucks' engraving ten years later, so its absence in Tillemans' drawing is odd considering his patron took great interest in the antiquities of the county. The town walls are not depicted per se, but the town ditch can be made out lined with trees and bushes where it arced around to the south-east of St Giles' Church. To the south of St Peter's Church where the tanneries were located, other industries including Cotton Mill are hidden amongst trees.

The drawing is remarkable in that it pushes across an image of the quintessential English country market town, surrounded by open fields and meadows, in which post-mills can be seen and before any of the famous artists like John Turner, John Constable or Thomas Gainsborough were even alive to lament the loss of the English landscape. This was the rural scene of their childhoods, which was to be swept away by the Parliamentary Inclosure Acts. However, the purpose of this drawing was to celebrate the county town in Bridges' history of the county, not to play to nostalgia as would the great landscape artists much later.

Perhaps more striking than this is *The Western View of the Town of Northampton taken above Kingsthorpe* and

dated July 1721 (Fig 1.7) in which much of the town is hidden from view behind the hilltop and to the south of Holy Sepulchre. Orientation is simple based on the three characteristic bell towers so that it is plainly observed that there are a number of large affluent Georgian town houses among the trees to the east of the site (on the brow of the hill to the left of All Saints), perhaps depicting Derngate or Cow Lane (Swan Street).

#### ***Engravings of the south-west prospect of Northampton, 1726 and 1731***

Tillemans was not the only artist to portray the south-west prospect, indeed of all the views of Northampton it is this view from Hunsbury Hill, and not the view from the Queen Eleanor Cross that persists. The engraving by Collins and Harris in 1726 is similar to Tillemans' drawing but has within it a greater attention to detail (RCHME 1985, plate 8). In the margins are also images of all the town's great civic buildings including the crenelated 15th-century Guildhall, which no longer stands.

The perspective is well positioned, giving the impression that the artist has spent some time experiencing the prospect first-hand, suggesting a more faithful portrayal. The *South-west Prospect of Northampton* depicts the 18th-century townscape as seen from the south-west side of the river with the cottages of Far Cotton to the right of the picture surrounded by woodland. The suburb of Cotton End is shown as a double row of terraced buildings to either side of Southbridge. The

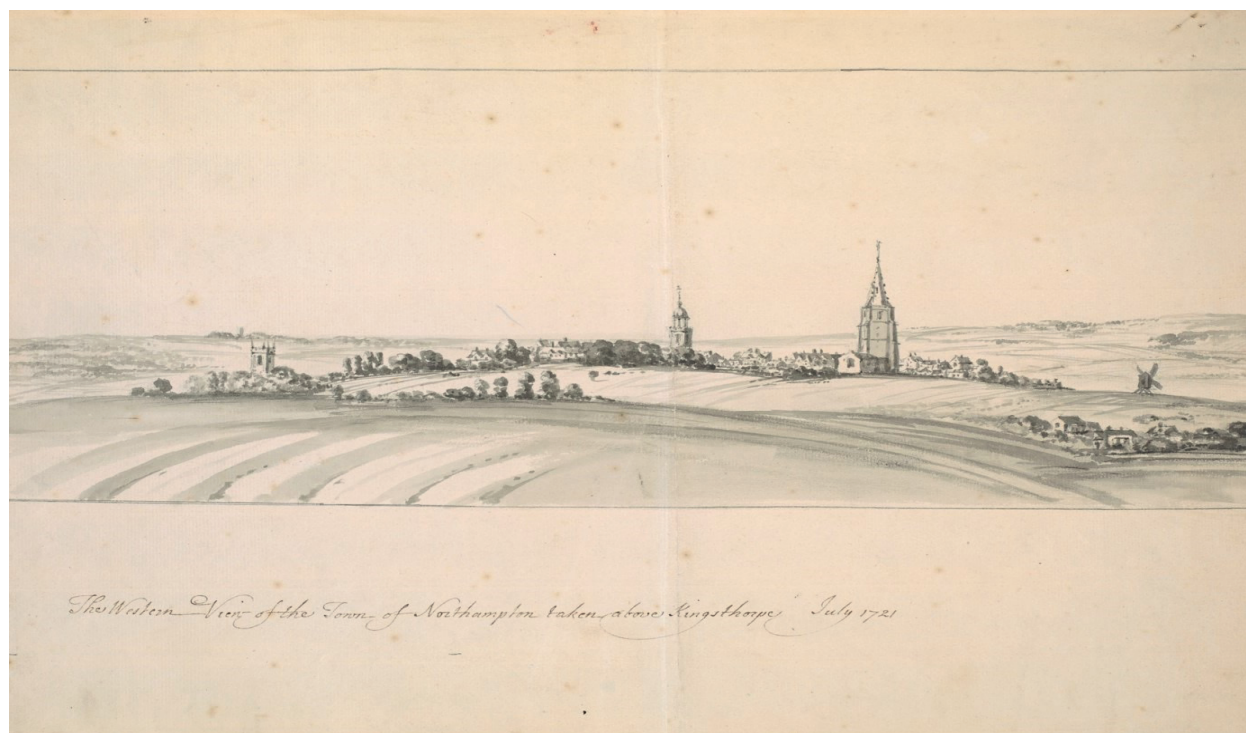


Figure 1.7 Peter Tillemans' western view of Northampton, 1721

woodland is less dense than in Tillemans' drawing, and individual buildings are clearly picked out amongst the trees of the south quarter. Bridge Street stands out remarkably well, just below All Saints Church, and using this orientation it is possible to distinguish what may have been the buildings of the Hospital of St John as they appear on Speed's map of 1610. Behind them the site on the north side of St John's Street is occupied by trees in the south-east corner and empty space further uphill behind George Row. A clear separation is depicted at the river crossing between Bridge Street and Cotton End. The wider scene depicts but is not dominated by the parish churches; indeed, one must search a little to find St Peter's and St Giles' Churches at either side of the frame. The river is shown lined by dispersed trees with low rise buildings around The Green where the tanneries were located (Shaw 1996a). The castle mound is out of the frame, there are no town walls and the town ditch is only perceptible as a line of trees behind the town to the north-east. The land between St Peter's Church and the river is parkland. Cotton Mill is depicted as a large L-shaped plan building astride the river. The buildings to the east of the south quarter are dispersed amongst the trees and are smaller than the grand Georgian mansions shown along Derngate. Buildings occupy the site of the Augustinian Friary, which appear to be a cluster of small cottages. The terrace of cottages that is mapped by Noble and Butlin (Fig 1.9) along Fetter Street is absent.

The 1726 engraving is most appealing for its portrayal of the rural scene in the foreground. The open fields to

the south of the river and west of Far Cotton are shown as arable land in the process of harvest, unlike in the 1721 or 1731 drawings where it is shown as meadow. The undulations of the ridge and furrow are clearly drawn and shaded, with bushels of wheat in rows along each ridge. Slightly to the east, closer to Far Cotton, there are a couple of shepherd boys minding a flock of sheep grazing the next field, seemingly no separation between the arable and pasture. At the front of the picture, next to the crest and shield of the town that dedicates its sponsors, are three wealthy landowning gentlemen in conference; one with a wig and two in tricorne hats dressed in the fashion of the day.

The 1731 engraving by Nathaniel and Samuel Buck (Fig 1.8) is a striking contrast to the image that was drawn by Peter Tillemans ten years earlier, or the work of Collins and Harris (RCHME 1985, plate 8). The perspective is unfamiliar and appears warped, drawn more as if from a facsimile than from the hilltop at Hunsbury. The cottages of Far Cotton are in the foreground and with the suburb of Cotton End to either side of Southbridge extending to the right. Much of the woodland depicted by Tillemans in the foreground appears cleared, although areas of the town that were built over in Tillemans' drawings are instead covered by trees in this engraving. Bridge Street is shown as a continuous row of houses stretching from All Saints Church downhill to join with the houses in the suburb. The buildings of the Hospital of St John, the chapel of which still stands today, are masked from view by an oversized tree, which hides the separation between Bridge Street and Cotton End giving the impression of

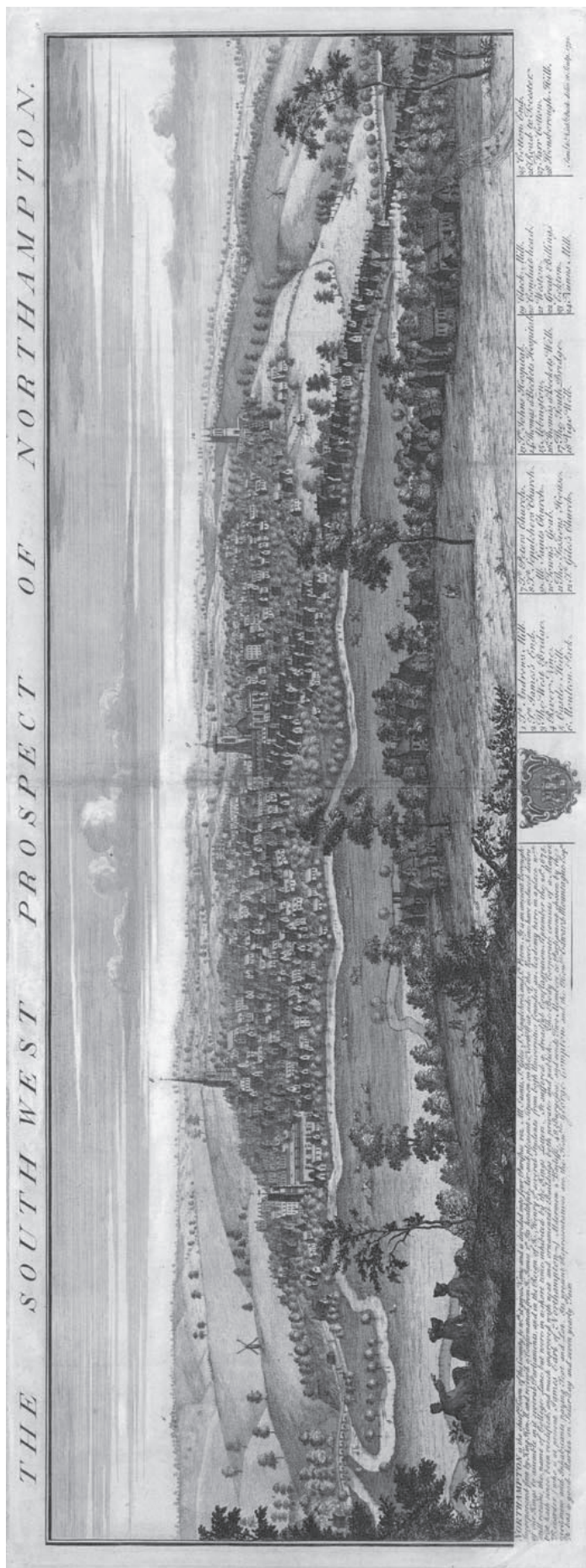


Figure 1.8 Nathaniel and Samuel Buck's south-west prospect of Northampton, 1731

a more populous street. The wider scene remains dominated by the parish churches disproportionate to the other buildings. The addition of colour to the original emphasises the bright orange tile rooftops across the town and gives an impression of a wealthy township. It remains a vision of prosperity that fits with a general rise in affluence for rural market towns in the 18th century (Jones *et al* 2000).

The more critical viewer will, however, start to realise that the perspective of the town is distorted, and the townscape is staged with great artistic license. Not only is the Hospital of St John hidden from view but most of the medieval antiquities of the town are either played down or are absent. The castle mound is depicted as a flat-topped hill populated with trees and is not immediately recognisable as the castle. The town ditch can be made out along the east side of St Giles' Church where it is lined by trees and then merges to an early enclosure boundary. The whole of the townscape to the south of St Peter's Church, including Cotton Mill, is missing and instead the floodplain of the River Nene has been shifted upslope to flow past St Peter's Church; a building that would have overlooked the tanneries on the lower slopes to its south-east, between it and the river. At the left edge of frame is the bridge across the river to St James showing two channels, much as Speed had depicted with multiple shallow anastomosed and braded channels in 1610, but the innermost channel rises too high so that it appears to be flowing uphill. The scene has been significantly staged and the resultant image is topographically impossible.

The artists have made other interesting choices by depicting densely wooded areas with a few scattered rooftops poking above the canopy. The buildings in the south quarter are notably smaller than the town houses further uphill or even those fronting Bridge Street. The riverside is densely wooded with a few small cottages and a clearing by the river. The row of terraced cottages that is mapped by Noble and Butlin (Fig 1.9) along Fetter Street is still absent, either it was built in the years 1731–46 or is similarly lost amongst the trees.

The engraving is striking not for what it shows, but for what it is hiding, perhaps because the south quarter at this time was one of the more impoverished districts, a lower class suburb with buildings of little consequence or in a largely ruinous state and much of the land given over to trees. It is tempting to think of this as a period of entropy but a closer look at the detailed property divisions shown on 18th-century maps suggests that the land was closely managed. Nonetheless the image conveyed by the engraving is essentially a prosperous one.

### *The south quarter within the 18th-century market town*

Noble and Butlin's map of 1746 was the first survey to portray Northampton's street plan and properties in greater detail. The Angel Inn, which gave Angel Street its name, and the Chapel of St John's Hospital are both depicted (Fig 1.9). The map as a whole shows that town growth was most densely clustered to either side of the main north-south route, of which Bridge Street is a part, and extended all the way from the north side of Holy Sepulchre to Southbridge, with its central focal point upon the market at All Saints. There was a high density of occupation along all the streets and in the blocks of land around the market. Towards St Peter's Church and in the Castle Ward this density of occupation was more dispersed. A further block of settlement filled the fork between Abington Street and St Giles' Street but quickly dissipated before it reached the church and the town ditch. Large areas within the walled town were divided up into enclosures, indicating the land was managed either as gardens, pasture or woodland. This is particularly the case for the south quarter where, once off the main road to the east and west, the land beside or overlooking the river was largely agricultural. This may have supported market gardening and pasture for livestock waiting for market or have been arboricultural in nature; perhaps incorporating both coppice and orchards, which in turn would provide adequate pannage for pigs.

The site is shown as six principal areas within the block; properties along Bridge Street and their rear yards/gardens, properties along Angel Street and their yards/gardens, a terrace of cottages in the north-east, a probable courtyard building, and three large fenced areas of trees, either managed woodland or possibly orchards. Bridge Street was fully built up and at the northern end of the frontage there was a large property bounding a courtyard. Five other properties lay to the south, each with a rear yard or garden extending to the east into the block. The southernmost property had a small structure to the rear of the yard.

Angel Street and the northern part of Fetter Street were built up. Five or possibly six properties fronted Angel Street, each with a yard or garden to the rear – these

were less evenly sized than those along Bridge Street. Behind the enclosed yards there was an area of empty ground, which may have been accessed from Angel Street by a possible covered alleyway.

At the east end of Angel Street, there was a vacant plot and a building at the corner with Fetter Street bounding three sides of a courtyard, perhaps a stable yard. Three further properties lay to its south along Fetter Street. Further buildings lay immediately south of the courtyard with their own yards to the rear, part of a terrace of cottages that extended halfway down the street. The southern end of the terrace had a large plot behind it depicted with trees. At the south-eastern corner of the block there was a further plot occupied entirely by trees.

A single building lay midway along St John's Street, which was then called Three Pots Lane. The building lay in the south-east corner of a plot containing trees between the rear curtilage of properties on Bridge Street and the plots on Fetter Street. A small building also stood in the north-west corner of this plot, and on the opposite side of the road a single building was located at the approximate position of the gateway to the Hospital of St John, depicted in 1610. This building is recorded in the survey of Sir Henry Dryden as the Master's House (Dryden 1875), previously the hospital refectory building (Soden and Leigh 2006, fig 2).

The overall layout of the town changed very little in the later part of the 18th century, so that Cole and Roper's map of 1807 shows the site and its surrounding neighbourhoods in a similar manner to 1746 (Fig 1.10). As before, most of the south quarter to either side of Bridge Street was undeveloped. There is, however, greater detail of land use that defines a difference in how the land was managed, between the orderly planting of shrubs/trees in rows for horticulture, possibly for orchards, and enclosed wooded ground without arrangement either still coppiced or providing firewood. The local neighbourhood served as market gardens, and horticulture was particularly prevalent on undeveloped land close to All Saints, taking fresh produce from source directly to market. The map also suggests that development to the north of Angel Lane was planned and the town was preparing for expansion. The whole block of land behind the County Infirmary, County Hall and gaol on George Row was still an area of cultivation when this town plan was drawn up, but the dawn of the early 19th century was about to bring a huge level of investment in the town that would see their expansion too.

The site of the excavations was divided into five parts and the trees in the south suggest enclosed semi-mature woodland rather than the orderly planting shown to the north of Angel Lane. Some minor changes since

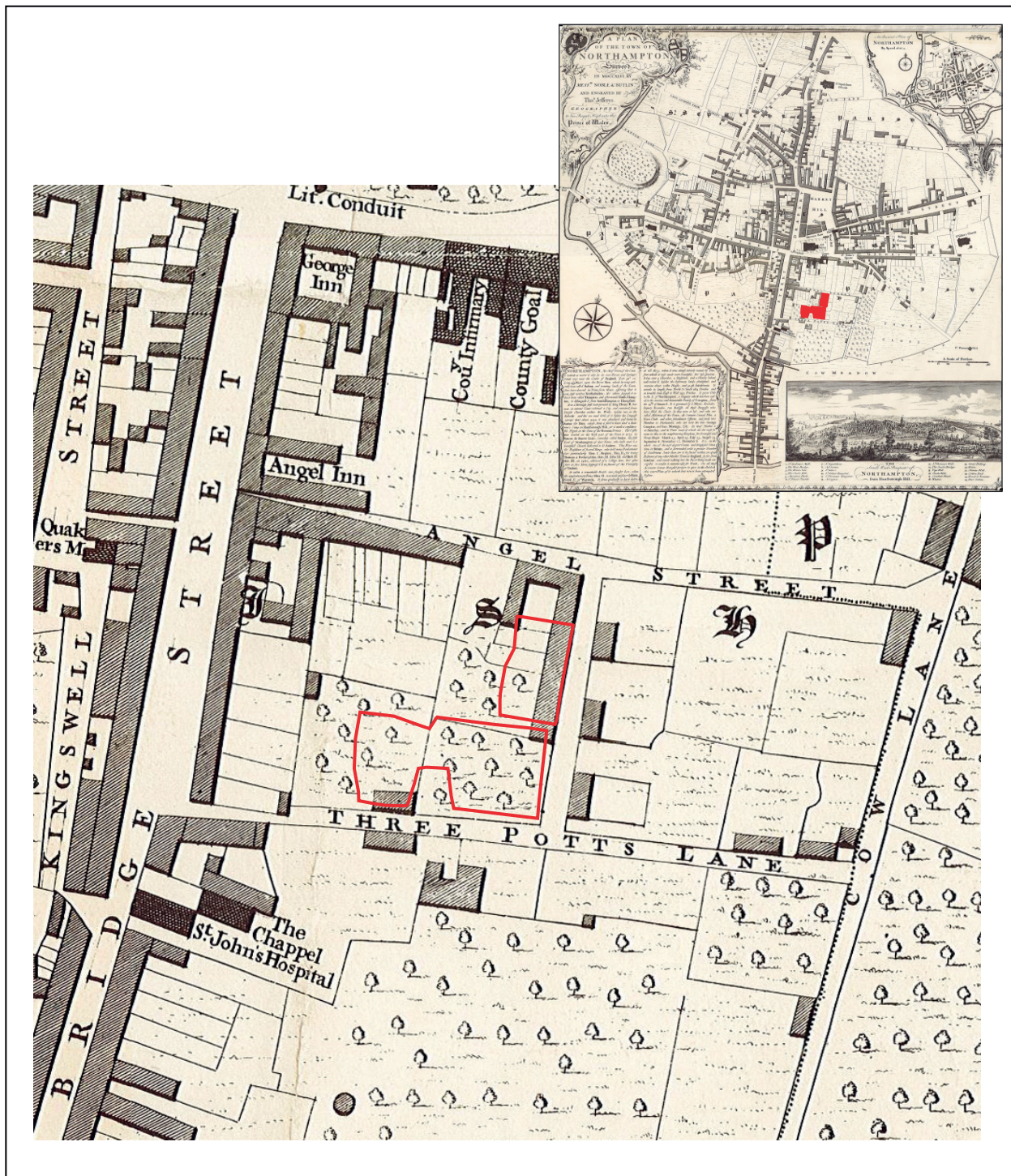


Figure 1.9 The site on Noble and Butlin's map of Northampton, 1746

1746 indicate that the principal divisions were relict boundaries. The properties along Angel Lane were broadly unchanged although some rearrangement took place in the gardens; two or possibly three narrow plots in the middle of the row were combined into one larger square yard. An outbuilding was constructed at the rear of the western plot and the former empty land in the middle of the block was closed off and amalgamated into the adjacent tree covered plot.

At the eastern end of Angel Street, the vacant plot remained and was still bounded to the east by three wings of a building around a courtyard in the north-east corner of the site. This courtyard opened to the south onto ground previously occupied by two narrow yards behind properties on Fetter Street. On St John's Street, the tree covered land was combined into two large plots, still occupied by the solitary buildings as they were depicted in 1746. On the opposite side of

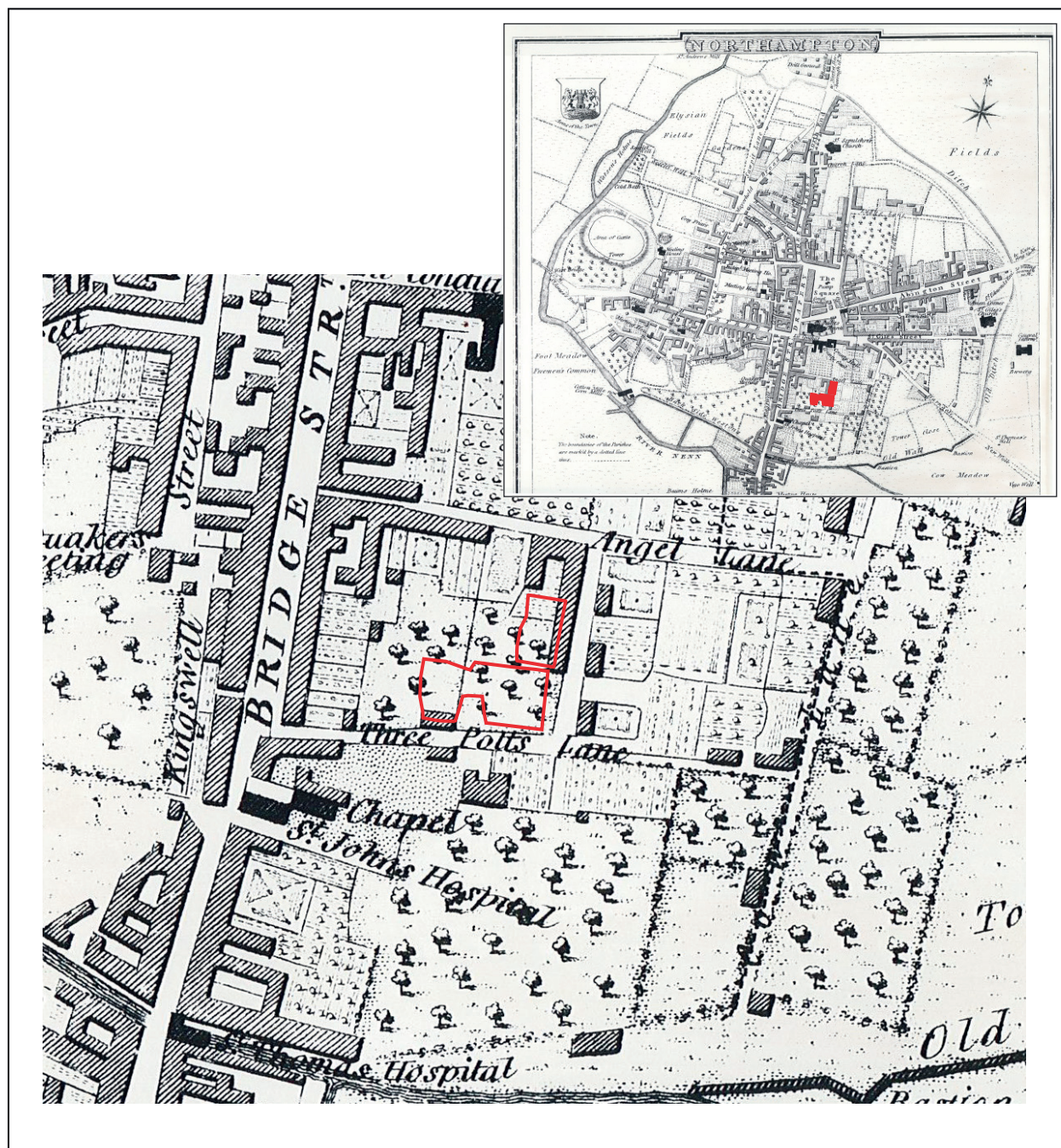


Figure 1.10 The site on Cole and Roper’s map of Northampton, 1807

the street, to the south, the depiction of land associated with the Hospital of St John indicates that whilst the arrangement of buildings was the same, the land use was different to that of the cultivated and wooded plots. The grainy fill is different to that in the burial grounds of St Peter’s, St Giles’, Holy Sepulchre and All Saints, which are all depicted differently, so it is not clear what the variation in land use is intended to mean. It potentially indicates the extent of a burial ground, but more precisely the extent of the hospital grounds. The extent of the post-medieval cemetery attached to the south side

of the chapel was recorded by Sir Henry Dryden (Dryden 1875; Soden and Leigh 2006, fig 2). An earlier cemetery existed, but its extent is unknown; it is recorded as being enlarged in 1286 (Cox 1898). Leland’s visit in 1530–43, 70 years after the 1460 Battle of Northampton which was therefore within living memory, recorded that some of the dead from there were buried in the chapel (Hearne 1768). The battlefield was located a short distance across the river near Delapré and it is fair to surmise others might also have been buried outside the chapel in the hospital grounds.

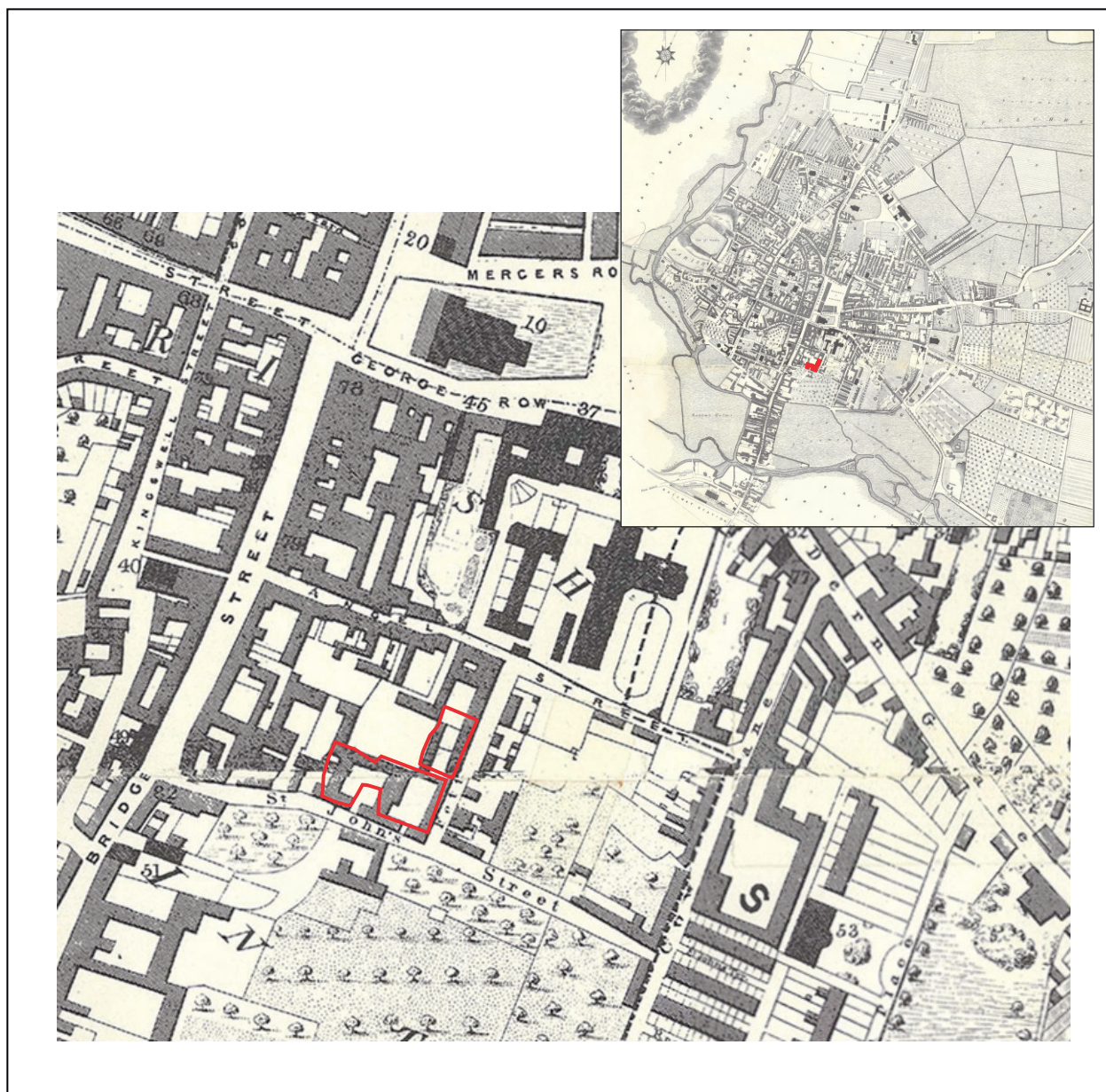


Figure 1.11 The site on Wood and Law's map of Northampton, 1847

### *The south quarter towards the end of the coaching era*

The rise in wealth from the boot and shoe industry brought with it increasing demands for land close to the market and the birth of a recognisably modern central business district. The character of the local neighbourhood plan was changed from one of market gardening to one of stable yards and farriers' workshops. A period of rapid urbanisation had brought the plans for the County Hall and the gaol to fruition on the north side of Angel Street, and all through the centre of town smaller plots of land or yards to the rear were being built up. The local landscape of the excavation site altered significantly between 1807 and the publication of Wood and Law's map of 1847 (Fig 1.11). The trees were cleared away and the block was heavily occupied with

buildings depicted as long narrow ranges, many around courtyards, which were probably residences with stable yards and individual stables that served the central business district during the mid-19th century, much as a car park would in the present day. All the streets of the block were fully built up, and demand for space at the heart of town was starting to spread to the side streets in the south of the town. However, this growth had only begun to change the local neighbourhood to south of St John's Street or east of Fetter Street.

An advertisement of sale posted in the Northampton Mercury on Saturday 4th September 1858, details the auction of 'SIX substantial stone-built DWELLING-HOUSES, with Garden and Out-offices, and a pump of excellent water' at Fetter Street and St John's Street,

along with a plot of adjacent garden ground with an area of 7,000 feet (650m<sup>2</sup>). The properties in question were on Fetter Street and although it is not known which plots are referred to, the 1847 map suggests they were on the east side of the street. Much of the new development was further east along Cow Lane, which had gained an almost continuous street front of town houses with large plots of land to the rear. The larger extent of land given over to horticulture in the 18th century had disappeared but there were still areas of woodland between Cow Lane and the site.

On St John's Street (no longer called Three Pots Lane) there were five large entrances along the frontage, presumably for carriages, each entering courtyards or providing access to rear yards. Buildings were constructed behind Bridge Street, fully enclosing several smaller courtyards, perhaps accessed by covered entranceways. The site plan is one that accommodated space for the horse drawn transportation of the age, and many of the stables would also have served the inns and hotels along Bridge Street. The centre of the site was occupied by a large open space, perhaps also a stable yard or a small paddock, bounded on all sides by rows of buildings and accessed via a lane opening onto Angel Street. The smaller properties along Angel Street had outbuildings and narrow yards to the rear, indicating that these were probably lower-class dwellings.

To the south of St John's Street, the arrangement of plots contains greater detail than on previous surveys, suggesting that this had now become a more important distinction and that part of the hospital precincts had been transferred into private hands. There is a clear access route shown from St John's Street leading to the rear of the Chapel of the Hospital of St John. The access approximates to the position of the gateway depicted by John Speed in 1610, and is located next to a courtyard plan building (replacing or extending the former Master's House) that suggests a coach house and stable block akin to those on the opposite side of the street. The larger area of the grounds depicted as a unit in 1807 are shown as woodland and there is distinct separation of this from the properties and their yard spaces on the corner of St John's Street and from those to the rear of the chapel.

### ***The south quarter after the arrival of steam power and electricity***

By 1885 there were five principal groups of properties within in the layout of the block, based roughly on the units defined by 1746 (Fig 1.12). Many probable former stables and appurtenant yard spaces depicted in 1847 had been swept away. All the buildings were significantly different in plan. The local neighbourhood was now characterised not only by its proximity to

the central business district and the seat of local government, but also by the great innovations of Victorian England. A railway station had been built into the heart of Northampton, located on the south side of St John's Street, and terraced into the side of the hill, on land that had once belonged to the Hospital of St John. To the east of Fetter Street there stood the Vulcan Works, a former ironworks and engineering workshop for steam traction and industrial mechanisation. Bridge Street was lined with a mixture of high-class tenements, hotels, public houses and shop fronts then on the north side of Angel Street was the rear of County Hall and the county gaol.

The north side of St John's Street was fronted with sixteen buildings. At the western end there were five structures and the opening for an alleyway that extended along the back of Bridge Street to the Spread Eagle public house. To the east of the alleyway were two houses with yards and then access to several buildings situated around three courtyard area with a slightly different layout to the earlier stables. One courtyard contained a well. To the east of these was a row of six houses with yards and outhouses, which fitted within the arc of a large L-shaped building in the south-east corner of the block, fronting Fetter Street, and extended westward one third of the way into the block. Another well lay in the yard space of this plot, which was found during excavation.

Terraced cottages occupied the rest of the Fetter Street frontage; ten plots each of which had a yard with smaller outbuildings to the rear. A narrow alleyway provided access to the centre of the block midway along the street. In the north-east corner of the site, the square courtyard layout was retained, formed of a single horseshoe-shaped building on the north frontage and divided into four smaller units on the south side. A covered entrance at the north end of Fetter Street gave access into the courtyard.

Properties fronting Angel Street were largely unchanged, although the backyards had minor alterations with considerably more outbuildings and rear extensions than in 1847. The access at the east end remained and led past a row of five small outhouses with walled yards and around to the back of several buildings, but no longer accessed the centre of the block. Eleven properties stood between the eastern access and another at the west end, which entered a smithy yard behind the houses. The houses had a less regular arrangement of yard spaces, and several properties shared yards with rows of small outhouses to the rear. A narrow alleyway in the centre of the frontage led into a yard space from the street.

Access to the smithy may previously have been covered, as an alley is also suggested by the map of 1746. The

smithy comprised at least nine large buildings in two rows on the north and south sides of the yard, with numerous smaller ancillary buildings and boundary walls adjacent.

Along Bridge Street the frontage remained fully inbuilt, with one narrow covered alleyway giving access into an enclosed yard halfway along the frontage. Approximately fifteen properties fronted the street, and several had small yards to the rear that were entirely enclosed by the buildings. A courtyard space at the corner of Bridge Street and Angel Street was largely infilled, but many of the properties retained the bounds of narrow plots extant since 1847. The Spread Eagle public house was located at the centre of the row (at no.37). A courtyard behind the pub was accessed by a long alleyway opening onto St John's Street. The alleyway was edged to the east by a row of possible stables.

The centre of the block contained three probable gardens, one accessed from Fetter Street and one from the smithy behind Angel Street. The third walled area had no clear access. These gardens are depicted with a few scattered trees and footpaths.

The greatest modernisation of the age to impact the site was recorded in 1898–9 by Goad's Insurance Plan (Sheet 7, not illustrated), which indicates that the lower class houses along the south side of Angel Street were cleared and replaced entirely by the Northampton Electric Light and Power Company. The buildings fronting the road included offices, a battery room, tank rooms and a coal bunker. Behind this the arrangement of buildings around the former smithy included a machine workshop, storage, further tanks, linemen stores and coal bunkers. Land to the south of the electrical works remained undeveloped and was labelled as 'empties'.

Many of the buildings within the block were labelled with their functions for fire insurance information. A large smithy was situated to the east of the electrical works, with access to either side. A row of five buildings down the east side of the smithy were 'Under Cons. April 1898'. The buildings surrounding a courtyard in the north-east of the site were occupied by Messrs. Berry and Co. machinists and a bottle exchange run by Smiths Bottle Department. The warehouses and cellars of this courtyard were put up for sale in 1910 (Northampton Mercury, Friday 30 September 1910).

At the corner of Bridge Street there was a furniture-makers with a workshop situated to the east of it on Angel Street. Moving south there was a hardware store (no. 25), a china shop (no. 27), and a draper (no. 33). The Spread Eagle (no.37) was still trading, although the plot next door at no. 39 was vacant. A grocer's shop

and a bakery were situated at nos. 43 and 49. The other buildings on the frontage were shops, but their trades are not specified.

Moving east along St John's Street, no. 1 was a residence adjacent to a cold store. Two further houses were at nos. 11–13, next to the narrow alleyway leading to the Spread Eagle yard, and the row of buildings along its east side was a stable block. Although the buildings had not altered to any major extent since 1885, the southern part of the block was divided between two large businesses. In the centre of the block, fronting St John's Street, was W. Verrall, van builder. The entrance led into two yards: one with wooden stables, a wooden storage shed and a private residence; the other contained a workshop, smithy and furnace. Next door at no. 12 a third former stable yard housed a coach factory, engineer and a coach builder.

A terrace of domestic houses continued to occupy nos. 25–35, apart from no. 33, which was a registrar. Behind this and fronting Fetter Street was another large business; H. Smith coach manufactory. *Kelly's Directory* records this business on Fetter Street from 1876 (Table 1.1). The individual buildings are not labelled apart from an office and a timber yard. The L-shaped building remained as part of this factory, although the former courtyard was inbuilt with wood and metal structures.

### *St John's Street and Angel Street in the 20th century*

The layout and character of the local neighbourhood had altered very little by the time the Ordnance Survey published an updated map in 1901 (not illustrated). This map was slightly abridged and individual property divisions are not always marked. Some further in-building of the open spaces in the middle of the block had occurred.

The 1912 update of Goad's Insurance Plan (Sheet 7, not illustrated) demonstrated the next major change to the site, whereby the buildings of the Northampton Electric Light and Power Company were significantly extended to the south across the centre of the plot. The engine and dynamo house were the largest buildings that occupied most of the space, edged to the east by a metal tank building, and on both sides by coal bunkers, battery rooms, and other ancillary structures. Four wooden buildings managing water usage were constructed in the space between the Fetter Street curtilages and the electrical works, which comprised the water softener, well house and two water coolers.

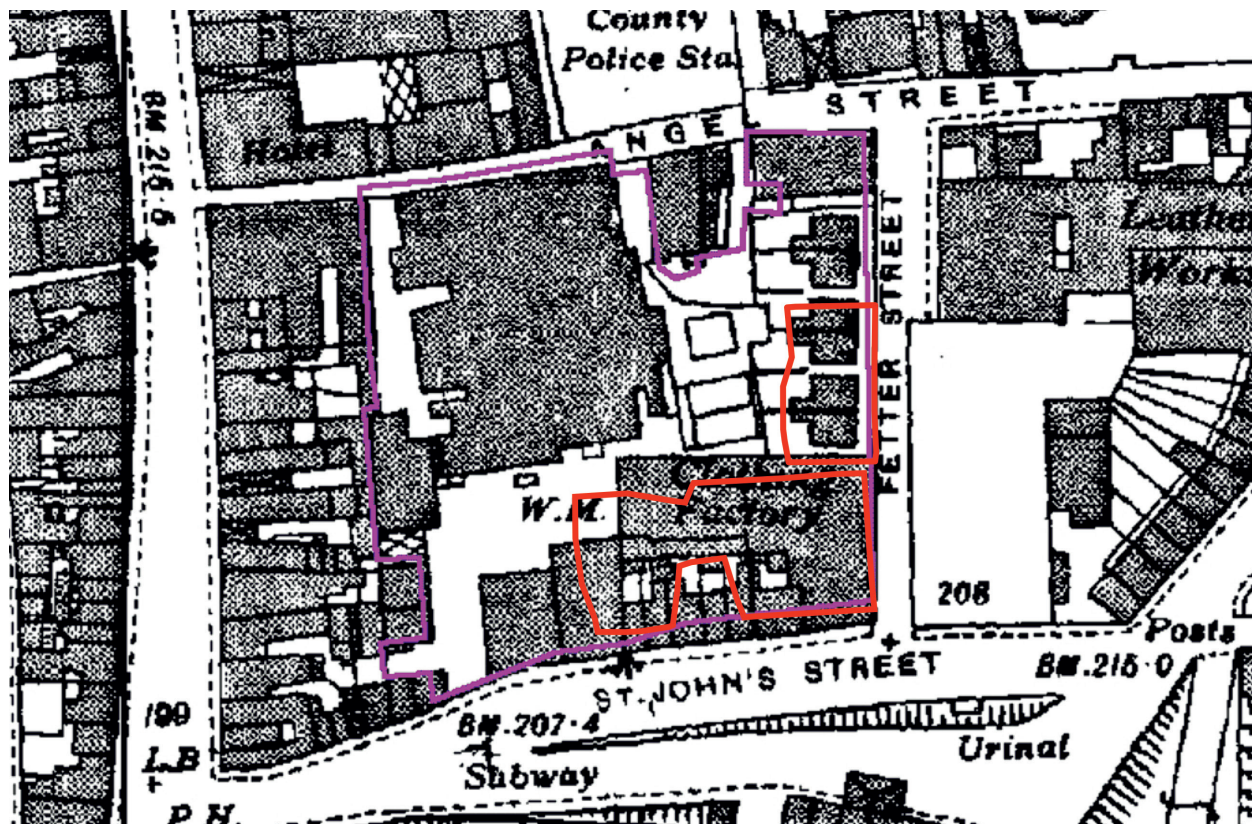
The remainder of the buildings on the block had not altered significantly, although some usages changed. The buildings to the east of the Angel Street smithy, which were previously under construction, were residences by this time. The furniture maker on Bridge



Northamptonshire Archives Service OS XLV9 1885

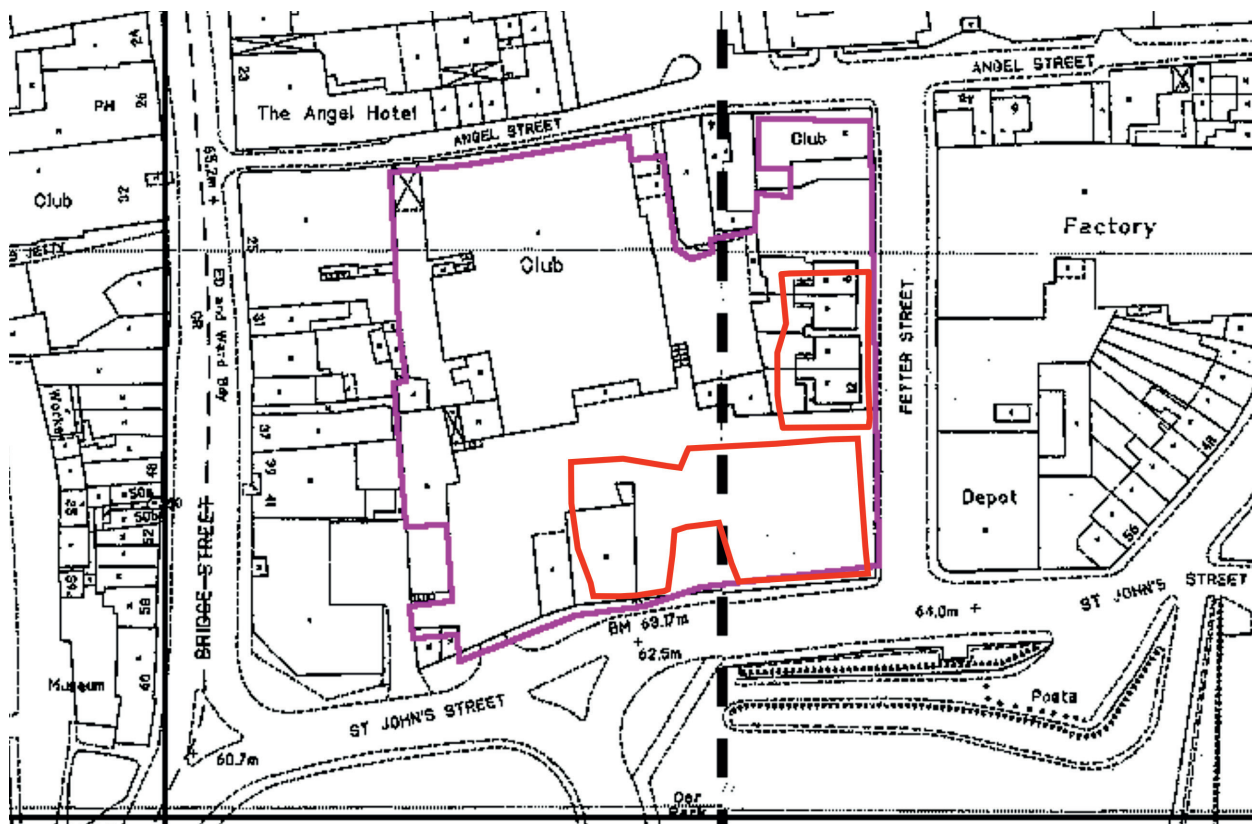
Figure 1.12 The site on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map, 1885





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Figure 1.14 The site on the Ordnance Survey map of 1938



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Figure 1.15 The site on the Ordnance Survey map of 1993

### *The directories of 19th–20th-century businesses*

Data for the businesses and residences are recorded in Table 1.1 for premises along Fetter Street and St John’s Street inside the area of the excavation from 1830 until the Great War. The data was derived from late 19th- or early 20th-century business directories and newspapers, and a full list of these appears at the end of the bibliography.

### *The street names around the site*

There was a street that passed through the precinct of the Hospital of St John that was known as Crackbole Street in 1274–75, which was recorded as *Krakebollestre* in 1266; it is disputed if this was the earlier name of St John’s Street or an entirely different route connected to it (Williams 2014, 346; Welsh 2002). Bridge Street was first mentioned in 1323, associated with the river crossing (Gover *et al* 1975, 7). Angel Street was previously known as *Knyghtstrete* in 1499 (Gover *et al* 1975, 7). Angel Lane was mentioned in 1504 and purportedly took its name from the Angel Inn at its west end and was first depicted by Noble & Butlin on the north side of the street in 1746 (Fig 9). Fetter Street is ascribed to the 13th century by Cox (1898, 520). An orchard and garden in *Felsterstrete* are also mentioned in a document of 1545 (Gairdner and Brodie 1905, 308). St John’s Street is named after the Hospital of St John,

which had occupied the whole of the block of land on its south side from around the mid-12th century. Leland gives William St. Clare, Archdeacon of Northampton, as the founder c1140 (Serjeantson and Adkins 1906, 156–159). St John’s Street was also called Three Potts Lane in the 18th–19th centuries, derived from a cheap beer shop on the corner of Bridge Street (Cox 1898, 527).

### **Aims and objectives**

The principal aim of the archaeological fieldwork was to provide a permanent record of the archaeological remains on the site before they were lost to development. The East Midlands Historic Research Framework was used to steer the project objectives (Cooper 2006; Knight *et al* 2012; EMHRF 2020), which were particularly relevant to the early medieval, high medieval and post-medieval periods.

Mitigation of the development impact was achieved through recording the archaeological remains before they were lost. A program of assessment was then undertaken to examine the materials recovered and outline proposals for their further analysis and reporting (Brown and Finn 2018). A permanent archive and record of the archaeological excavation is accessioned with Northamptonshire Archive Resource Centre under the code ENN107673.

*Table 1.1: Recorded businesses and residents occupying the excavation area, 1830–1914*

<b>Address</b>	<b>Business</b>	<b>Year</b>
St John’s St	William Poole, wood turner	1890
St John’s St	William Coleman, engineer, machinist, and implement maker	1876
St John’s St	William Sawbridge, wheelwright and blacksmith	1876
St John’s St	Samuel Smith, agricultural implement maker and millwrights	1849
St John’s St	A Mullins, hide and skin dealer	1903
St John’s St	James Pearson, upholsterer	1910, 1914
St John’s St	Thomas Mills, shoe manufacturer	1885
2 St John’s St	Josiah Bonham, shoe manufacturer	1861
11 St John’s St	William Muddiman	1859
11 St John’s St	George Henry Percival	1894
13 St John’s St	John Hollands	1893
15 St John’s St	John Hitchcox, scrap iron merchant	1898, 1890, 1903, 1906
15 St John’s St	William Fenn, carriage builder	1890
The stables, St John’s St	Charles Coles, tenant	1897
15 St John’s St	Walter Verrall, coach builder	1898, 1903, 1906
St John’s St	T. Jarrett and Sons, wheelwrights, later van and cart builders	1903, 1906
St John’s St	Alfred Bullimore, wheelwright	1898
St John’s St	William Allchin & Son, agricultural implement makers, later Henry Allchin, engineers	1849, 1853, 1898, 1883, 1890, 1903
25 St John’s St	James Berrill	1893
25 St John’s St	John Austin Knight	1876
27 St John’s St	James Hollowell, mason	1859
27 St John’s St	John Muddiman	1893

LIVING OPPOSITE TO THE HOSPITAL OF ST JOHN

Address	Business	Year
27 St John's St	Charles Henderson and lodger	Died 1897
St John's St	Aliband & Surridge, monumental masons	1910
29 St John's St	Harry Geleni Pilkington, school attendance and inquiry officer to Northamptonshire Union	1890, 1893, 1898
29 St John's St	Frank Harrold, manager of Victoria Music Hall	1890
33 St John's St	William John Thornton, registrar of births and deaths	1890
35 St John's St	John Duley, ironfounder	1859
35 St John's St (either side of Fetter St by 1899)	Henry Smith, carriage manufacturer (Midland carriage works), later carriage & motor builder & harness maker. <i>'SMITH HENRY, carriage builder, repairs of every description in the first-class style at moderate charges, Midland Carriage Works, St John's St'</i>	1876, 1890, 1893, 1906, 1910, 1914, 1923 (sold)
St John's St	John James, coach builder and wheelwright	1849, 1859, 1861
St John's St	A Bullimore, coach and carriage makers	1893
St John's St frontage with Fetter St	John Duley and Sons, iron founders, patent cooking stove manufacturers	1861-1875
St John's St	Charles Bland, motor engineer	Bankrupt in 1924
Fetter St	John Ratnett, letter and general carrier	Prior to 1830
Fetter St	H Jacob, carpenter and joiner	Prior to 1833 (sold)
Fetter St	Samuel Howard, Bricklayers and builders	1841
Fetter St	William Willey	1841 to 1846
Fetter St	Joseph Old	Prior to 1846
Fetter St	George and James Mold, later James Mold wheelwrights, carpenters, builders	1838, 1841, 1849, 1853, 1854, 1859
Fetter Ln	James Mole, sawmills (error for the above)	1853
Fetter St	Thomas Reeve, tailor	1861
Fetter St	Thomas Burton, shop keeper	1861
Fetter St	Thomas Gardner, builders	prior to 1878 (sold)
Fetter St	S. Dunkley and Co, builders	after 1878 (bought)
Fetter St	James Chapman	Prior to 1853 (sold)
Fetter St	William Mayne	Prior to 1853 (sold)
Fetter St	William Meek	Prior to 1853, 1858 (sold)
Fetter St	William Neville	1853 to 1858 (sold)
Fetter St	George and Mrs Crookhall	Prior to 1853, 1858 (sold)
Fetter St	Thomas Hornby (or Arnsby)	Prior to 1853, 1858 (sold)
Fetter St	George Smith	Prior to 1853 (sold)
Fetter St	William Marriott	Prior to 1853 (sold)
Fetter St	Elisha Starmer	1853 to 1858 (sold)
Fetter St	Thomas Burton	Prior to 1853, 1858 (sold)
4 Fetter St	Priscilla Roberts	1893
6 Fetter St	Mr and Mrs Clare	1883
6 Fetter St	John Brown	1889, 1893
8 Fetter St	W. Merrill	1889
10 Fetter St	Mr Frisby	Prior to 1866 (sold)
10 Fetter St	Rebecca Carter	1893
10 Fetter St	Joseph Brown	1902
12 Fetter St	Mr Clark	Prior to 1866 (sold)
12 Fetter St	Thomas Barnes	1893
14 Fetter St	George Law	1893
16 Fetter St	George Edward Crapper, certified bailiff	1893, 1903, 1906, 1910, 1914
18 Fetter St	Albert Chaplin	1893
20? Fetter St	Thomas Hornsby, fireman	1853

Address	Business	Year
20 Fetter St	Thomas Hornsby, labourer	1859
20 Fetter St	Martin Finn	1893
22 Fetter St	Henry Ward	1867
22 Fetter St	Isaac A. Clarke	1893
Fetter St	Christopher Hales	1893

### Key objectives

The core investigations focused on medieval activity where it survived along the St John's Street frontage and to the west of Fetter Street. The work also recorded structural 16th–17th-century activity where it was present. Buildings were identified, investigated for evidence of function and dated based on the artefacts found within their deposit sequences. Activities were examined and defined within each potential property plot. The excavations sought to determine and investigate any evidence for the development of crafts and trade in the area and considered the domestic and commercial lives of people occupying the site, including the organisation of their homes and businesses. The excavations recorded the stratified sequence of development, from which the occupation was broken down into phases.

### Specific research objectives

Although the likely objectives were considered at the outset (Brown 2014a), the true potential for research was not realised until excavation was underway. Specific research objectives were identified following the assessment of the site archive, materials and environmental samples (Brown and Finn 2018). Some of these objectives could not have been anticipated prior to the start of the project or were expanded in greater detail and are related to the regional research agenda (EMHRF 2020).

#### Early medieval (AD410–1066)

6H *Assess the evidence for extractive industries in the late Anglo-Saxon and Viking periods*

Quarries in the hillside overlooked the River Nene within the south quarter, which were filled during the mid-12th century. An overwhelming lack of 10th–11th-century finds suggested that these quarries served the post-Conquest development of the New Borough.

#### High medieval (AD1066–1485)

7.1.1 *How did the major towns and smaller market towns of the region develop after the Norman Conquest, both within the urban core and in suburban and extra-mural areas?*

This is a core element of research addressed by the site chronology and its relationship to the surrounding streets within the south quarter of Northampton.

7.1.2 *Can we define more closely the industrial and trading activities associated with towns and the nature and extent of urban influence upon the countryside?*

Industrial and craft activities found at the site included antler working, malting, baking and possibly brewing. The evidence informs understanding of the place of such industries within the development of the town and provides a new angle towards addressing economic decline in the 14th century. Whilst the presence of locally made pottery was extensive, particularly from Potterspury and Lyveden/Stanion, there were few other artefacts that informed upon the relationship between the town and its hinterland.

7.6.1 *How and where was post-Conquest pottery manufactured and distributed, and what communication systems were employed?*

Although this is not a pottery production site, it has produced the largest assemblage of medieval pottery so far recovered from Northampton. The assemblage contained many imported wares, with continental imports from Germany and/or the Low Countries outnumbering those from East Anglia. This suggests that pottery vessels, or goods held within them, were being traded directly through the ports from the continent to Northampton. The site produced the first definite finds of Spanish pottery, which has implications on the wealth and status of the local neighbourhood. Analysis of the pottery assemblage from each plot by period suggests that this was probably particular to one household occupying the western plot along St John's Street.

7.6.4 *Can we develop a typological classification of buildings associated with medieval industrial and commercial activities and can we identify sub-regional and chronological patterning?*

The well-preserved industrial features were mainly associated with malting and included a clay-lined tank, three drying ovens and several wells. The nature, infrastructure and layout of the site add to the corpus of

malting evidence from Northampton. Their comparison with other excavated structures in the region suggests some sub-regional differences.

7C *Investigate the provisioning of the medieval town by further detailed study of environmental data and human remains (Knight et al 2012, 98).*

There were no human remains from the site. Pollen and charred plant remains were not suitable for further analysis. However, examination of the faunal remains in reference to other assemblages from Northampton provides some good comparative data on diet in different parts of the medieval town, which also reflects on differences between neighbourhoods.

*Post-medieval (AD1485–1750)*

8.1.2 *How were towns organised and planned, and how did population growth impact upon their internal spatial organisation?*

During the 15th–16th centuries a townhouse was constructed on St John’s Street as a direct successor to the medieval buildings, and the first evidence for a property on Fetter Street came into existence c1400–50. This development was probably influenced by late medieval town planning, with the creation of a new connecting street. Further development took off in the period 1731–46 with the addition of a terrace of cottages at the north end of Fetter Street, but for the most part expansion seemed to accommodate room for market gardening near the market square.

8.1.4 *What can study of environmental data, artefacts and structural remains tell us about variations in diet, living conditions and status?*

Limited assemblages of shellfish and faunal remains contribute to the study of diet, craft/industrial resource exploitation, social/economic status, and waste deposition.

8.8.2 *Can we establish a dated type series for ceramics (building in particular upon unpublished urban pit and well groups)?*

The existing Northamptonshire Ceramic Type Series (CTS) forms the basis for all pottery coding. All the pottery has been coded to the CTS for the present report.

8I *Develop further the study of ceramic assemblages (Knight et al 2012, 119).*

Previously unknown or unidentified ceramics are continually added to the Northamptonshire CTS, usually published on a site by site basis, until such a time as

funding is available to collate these discoveries into an updated type series. With such a large assemblage now available for study there is increasing need to update and secure the future for this valuable resource for the region.

8.8.3 *Can we identify the changing material culture of the urban and rural poor, the emerging middle classes and the aristocracy?*

Pottery use and food consumption are strong indicators for differences in wealth across most periods, and these provided the key observations for the site. Other artefacts, particularly clothing and costume fittings, were generally too few and lacked sufficient typological distinctions to demonstrate associations with social status.

8.8.5 *What may be deduced about the symbolic use of material culture (e.g. in social competition)?*

The pottery was examined by form and function, identifying specialist vessels and determining the frequency of different fabrics/forms. Utilitarian cooking vessels stand out against tablewares, trade/storage vessels and specialist vessels like cisterns. However, for the early post-medieval period the pottery fashion was based on locally available products rather than exotic or expensive vessels.

### Methodology

To meet the project objectives the following specific tasks were completed:

- identification, characterisation, recording and dating of all surviving archaeological remains found by means of detailed excavation;
- compilation of written, illustrative, digital and photographic records that form an archive for all archaeological works undertaken;
- retrieval of sufficient artefactual and faunal assemblages supplemented with environmental samples to inform upon the domestic and industrial activities at the site and their relationship with the town.

Excavation areas were located using survey grade GPS (Leica System 1200) and hand tapes. The modern layers were removed under continuous archaeological supervision using a 360° tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket to reveal significant archaeological remains. Mechanical excavation was undertaken in stages with periods of investigation between to enable recording at different period horizons. All deposits pre-dating the 14th–15th centuries were excavated by hand.

Thick layers of homogenous garden soil were investigated by hand using 2.0m by 2.0m size test pits to characterise and record the sequence of layers before being reduced by machine.

At each period interface the excavation areas were cleaned sufficiently to enable the identification and definition of archaeological features. A hand-drawn site plan of all archaeological features was made at scale 1:50 and was related to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. All archaeological deposits and artefacts encountered during excavation were recorded following the

established Northampton recording system (MOLA 2014).

Deep features and deposits of interest such as wells and deep quarries were subject to final day mechanical investigation and recording. This end stage of fieldwork was undertaken using a range of water pumping devices to recover deep stratigraphic samples and sectional details. Hand augering was undertaken to determine the full depth of features. A limit to practical hand investigation of the deepest wells was reached at the water table.

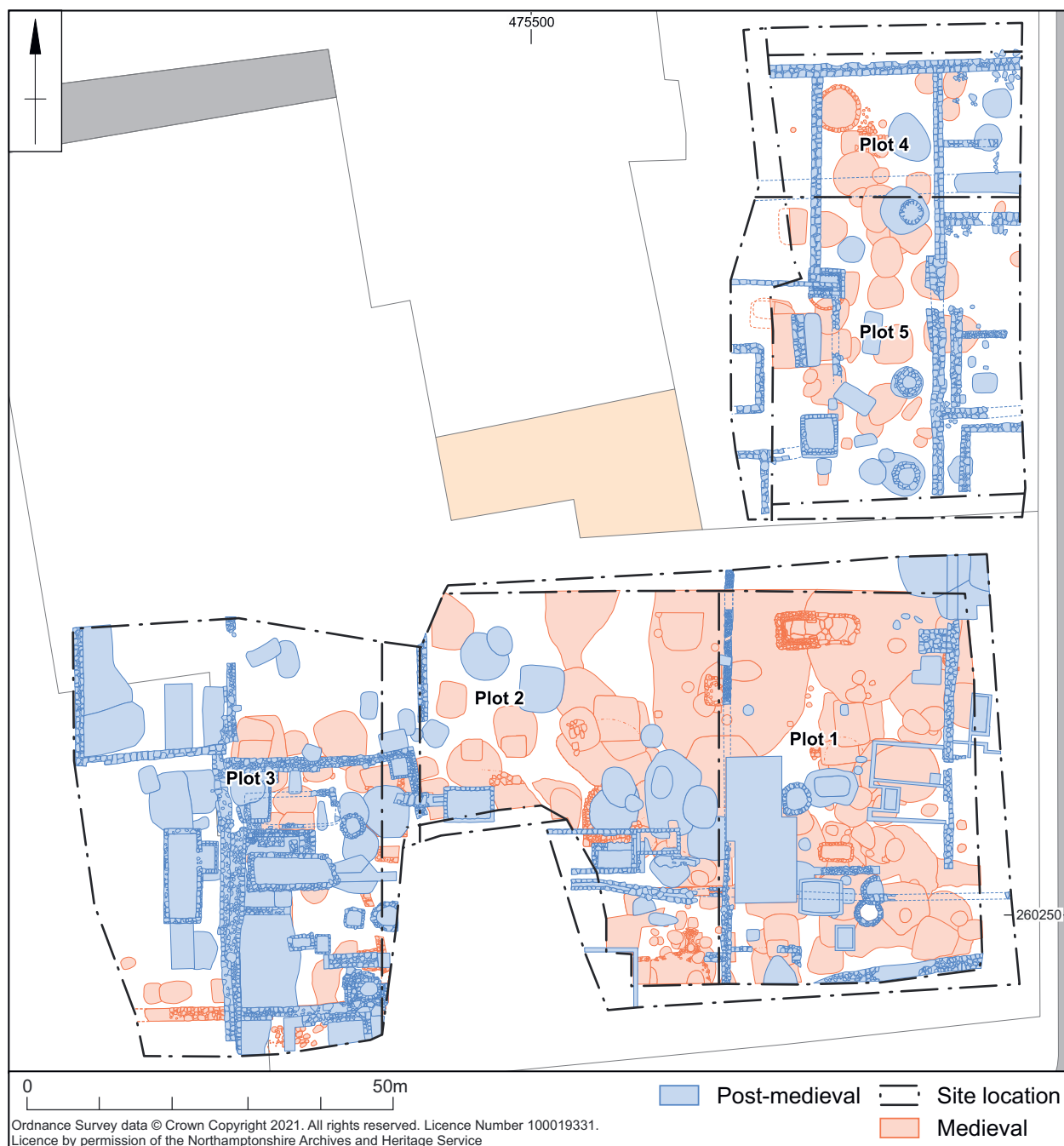


Figure 1.16 Site layout and putative plot boundaries

### Site summary

The site assessment was divided across five plots and the excavations examined the potential variations and difference in land use between different parts of the street frontages at different times (Fig 1.16). Plots 1–3 lay from east to west along St John’s Street and Plot 4 lay to the rear of Knight Street (Angel Street). Part of Plot 4 fronted onto Fetter Street from the 15th century onwards that became Plot 5, incorporating land at the centre of the block between the two earlier streets. These divisions should not be considered as the absolute boundaries of historical properties but are close approximations used as convenient subdivisions that allowed for some interpretation of activities within different parts of the site. As the street frontages developed the plots were increasingly subdivided from their medieval forbears into the modern era. The inaccessibility of the frontage buildings beneath the modern pavements and the absence of many medieval boundaries mean that the actual medieval plots cannot be clearly defined. At Kingswell Street it was possible to make similar subdivisions based on ridges of undisturbed

natural between plots (Brown 2008). By comparison St John’s Street contained no surviving ridges of natural, all of it having been quarried in the mid-12th century, so the subdivisions were instead based on broad changes in the character of the archaeological features that were found. Subdivision of the finds by context in these areas enabled a better understanding of how the site functioned through defining the differences or similarities in the assemblages. Key episodes of activity emerged from this analysis that indicated the presence of properties or activity, loosely located to certain parts of the site and to the buildings or yard structures that were found within them.

The site exhibited key episodes of activity within distinctly separate occupational phases and these vary by plot, summarised in Table 1.2. All features and deposits were initially dated by the pottery they contained to the period of their abandonment and in-fill, and their earliest possible date was determined by their position stratigraphically with other dated features and deposits using Harris matrices.

Table 1.2: Summary of site development

Period	St John's Street (east to west)			Knight Street & Fetter Street Plots 4-5
	Plot 1	Plot 2	Plot 3	
<b>early-mid 12th century</b>	<i>Plot 1</i> Prospection and extraction pits, levelling, postholes, early backfill beside the road	<i>Plot 2</i> Extraction pits, levelling, postholes, hearth/cooking area at frontage	<i>Plot 3</i> Carver's workshop built at frontage, earthen cellar, oven in the yard, stakeholes, pits	<i>Plot 4</i> Prospection pits, smaller shallow pits, bread oven
<p><i>St John's stone quarry (Plots 1-2):</i> A large quantity of Northampton sand with ironstone was extracted along St John's Street, cutting into and below the hillside. The lower level of this open cast quarry was filled with the waste material from the extraction and shaping processes, leaving an uneven surface. Waste material from the adjacent carver's workshop and other nearby settlement was also discarded in parts of the quarry.</p> <p><i>A carver's workshop (Plot 3):</i> At least one timber-framed building occupied St John Street where carved antler was fashioned into handles and chess pieces.</p> <p><i>Other occupation (Plot 4):</i> A stone bread oven was built, and shallow pits/postholes attested to other activity to the south of Knight Street.</p>				
<b>mid-late 12th century</b>	<i>Plot 1</i> Quarry filled, drying oven, construction of three wells, steeping tank, hearths, possible shelter, postholes, pits	<i>Plot 2</i> Quarry filled, maltster's house built, drying oven, construction largest stone-lined well, various pits	<i>Plot 3</i> Refurbishment of the carver's workshop, drying oven, various pits	<i>Plot 4</i> Latrine pits, two smaller pits with domestic waste
<p><i>Disuse of the stone quarry (Plots 1-2):</i> The remaining uneven ground was gradually filled with refuse from nearby settlement.</p> <p><i>A maltster's premises (Plot 2):</i> A stone building was constructed adjacent to the carver's workshop. The rear yard space was shared between Plots 1-3 with at least five medieval wells, including one of immense size, providing water. One of the wells fed a clay-lined spillway with a tank to collect the water (Plot 1). Two wells were associated with fires for heating water in a working area that may have been beneath a free-standing shelter. There were also three drying ovens suggesting that drying sheds or malting floors were also present.</p> <p><i>Other occupation:</i> The adjacent carver's workshop continued in use with minor refurbishments (Plot 3). Occupation to the south of Knight Street (Plot 4) continued; latrines and two separate pits contained differing domestic waste assemblages.</p>				
<b>early-mid 13th century</b>	<i>Plot 1</i> Drying oven filled, disuse of wells	<i>Plot 2</i> Maltster's house abandoned, drying oven filled, disuse of wells, vacant plot, various cess/refuse pits	<i>Plot 3</i> Carver's workshop demolished, stone tenement built at frontage, drain, privies and cess pits	<i>Plot 4</i> Construction of stone-lined well, scattered broad rounded pits with refuse disposal
<p><i>Regeneration on St John's Street (Plots 1-3):</i> By c.1250 the whole St John's Street frontage was demolished, the yard structures associated with malting were filled and the ground was levelled out. The former carver's workshop was replaced with a stone tenement (Plot 3), this may have extended westward as part of a short terrace. Cess pits were in use to the rear of the plot, and on the land adjacent, which became a garden (Plot 2). Another stone tenement occupied the frontage at the east end of the site (Plot 1).</p> <p><i>Other occupation (Plot 4):</i> A well was built and pits containing domestic refuse attested to yard activities to the south of Knight Street.</p>				

<p><b>mid 13th–14th centuries</b></p>	<p><i>Plot 1</i> Stone tenement at frontage, cess/refuse pits to the rear, construction of a well, robbing of steeping tank</p>	<p><i>Plot 2</i> Vacant land, outdoor hearths and burning, cess/refuse pits</p>	<p><i>Plot 3</i> Side boundary wall, yard surface, drainage sump, robbing of stone, latrine pits, cess/refuse pits</p>	<p><i>Plot 4</i> Stone-lined wells, latrine, various pits</p>
<p><i>Occupation on St John’s Street (Plots 1-3):</i> Stone tenement continued to be occupied at either end of the site with a vacant plot of land between them, perhaps used as a garden with occasional outdoor fires and the disposal of waste including cess pits.</p> <p><i>Occupation behind Knight Street (Plot 4):</i> Yard activity continued and became more intense; two further wells were constructed and used, but their short periods of use suggested fluctuating water levels.</p>				
<p><b>15th–16th centuries</b></p>	<p><i>Plot 1</i> Gardens, import of topsoil, minor pits, possible shed, western boundary wall</p>	<p><i>Plot 2</i> Gardens, import of topsoil, minor pits, small kiln, clay-lined pit, eastern boundary wall</p>	<p><i>Plot 3</i> Tenement rebuilt in stone, kitchen ranges, clay floor levels, construction of two wells, stone yard surfaces, back plot boundary walls laid out, latrines and cess pits, robbing of medieval stone, separate yards to the north and west</p>	<p><i>Plot 4</i> Boundary ditch between Plots 4–5, pits north of ditch</p> <p><i>Plot 5</i> Timber and stone building built c.1400–1450, demolished c.1550, rectangular pits, stone-lined pit, well, back plot boundary wall</p>
<p><i>Kitchen and gardens (Plots 1-3):</i> Robbing of the medieval buildings, drying ovens and wells was extensive. The stone building in Plot 3 was rebuilt, extended and refurbished with three rooms, each with a clay floor. A kitchen contained a cooking range that incorporated a bread oven into one corner and with two open hearths on either side. Behind the kitchen and on the east side of the house was a small yard occupied by latrines and two wells. The perimeter of the plot was bounded by a stone wall that may have opened onto adjacent gardens. The building survived until the early 17th century.</p>				
<p><i>Fetter Street established (Plots 4-5):</i> A boundary ditch divided the plot and marked the back of Plot 4. Knight Street was renamed Angel Street. The first clear evidence for Fetter Street comprised a timber and stone building on the frontage, pottery dates suggest it was demolished by c.1550.</p>				
<p><b>17th–mid 19th centuries</b></p>	<p><i>Plot 1</i> Wooded, dark loamy soil horizons, minor pits</p>	<p><i>Plot 2</i> Wooded, dark loamy soil horizons</p>	<p><i>Plot 3</i> Wooded, dark loamy soil horizons</p>	<p><i>Plots 4-5</i> Wooded, dark loamy soil horizons, minor pits</p> <p>Terraced row of cottages along Fetter Street, yard boundary walls laid out, stone cellars, stone-lined wells</p>
<p><i>Orchards:</i> The house on Fetter Street mapped by Speed in 1610 did not survive and was probably incorporated into the 18th-century terraced cottages. Maps and engraved images suggest that until 1731 much of the site remained undeveloped and was populated by trees. This situation continued along St John’s Street and the southern end of Fetter Street until the 19th century when the block was occupied by residences with stables.</p> <p><i>Terraced cottages:</i> A terraced row of six cottages was established along Fetter Street, built c.1731–46. The properties shared a yard or garden to the rear with outbuildings and two wells either side of a central alleyway.</p>				

<b>mid 19th–20th centuries</b>	<i>Plot 1</i> Stone-lined drain, brick cellars, coal storage pits, smithing waste, two wells  H. Smith coach manufactory	<i>Plot 2</i> Stone-lined drain, coal cellars  H. Smith coach manufactory	<i>Plot 3</i> Stone-lined drain, stone and brick coal cellars, coal chute, a well  W. Verral, van builder	<i>Plots 4–5</i> Terraced cottages demolished  Semi-detached brick tenements
<i>Modern developments:</i> There was increased economic exploitation for land. Different parts of the site were occupied by various organisations and individuals which included: The East Midlands Electricity Company, an engineering workshop, coach builders, a textile manufacturer, a coal merchant, a blacksmiths workshop, private residences, and a skate park. Semi-detached brick residences were built c1925–35 on Fetter Street and later demolished in 1992.				