Medieval to modern suburban material culture and sequence at Grand Arcade, Cambridge

Archaeological investigations of an eleventh-to twentieth-century suburb and town ditch

Craig Cessford and Alison Dickens

Cambridge Archaeological Unit Urban Archaeology Series
The Archaeology of Cambridge Volume 1
Medieval to modern suburban material culture and sequence at Grand Arcade, Cambridge
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By Craig Cessford and Alison Dickens

With contributions by
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## Contents

Contributors ix  
Figures xi  
Tables xv  
Dedication and acknowledgements xvii  
Foreword xix  
Summary xxi

### Chapter 1 Introduction (C. Cessford and A. Dickens)

- Circumstances and background 4  
  - Previous archaeological investigations 5  
  - Grand Arcade and related developments 7  
- Structure and organization 10  
- Inset: Some doorways and windows to the past 16  
- Site sequence 21  
- Starting at the end 28

### Chapter 2 Preludes: prehistoric to early twelfth century (C. Cessford)

- Space not place 35  
  - Prehistoric–mid-eleventh century 35  
  - Mid/late eleventh century 36  
  - Early twelfth century 39  
- Discussion 42

### Chapter 3 The Kings Ditch: from Anarchy to alleyway (C. Cessford)

- Previous investigations 45  
- Circumambulating the King’s Ditch 48  
- The King’s Ditch sequence 50  
  - Early/mid-twelfth century 50  
  - Late twelfth–mid-fifteenth century 58  
- Inset: Bridging the divide 67  
  - Late fifteenth–late seventeenth century 69  
  - Late eighteenth–early twenty-first century 79  
- Discussion 83

### Chapter 4 The early suburb: mid-twelfth to sixteenth century (C. Cessford)

- Mid–late twelfth century 94  
  - Archaeological remains 94  
  - Wells 99  
- Case study 1: Well 5 100  
  - Cesspits 102  
  - Buildings 102  
  - Gullies 102  
  - Pits 103  
- Case study 2: Pit 5 104  
  - Garden soil 106  
- Thirteenth–fourteenth centuries 106  
  - The documented plots (R. Horrox with C. Cessford) 107  
  - Archaeological remains 107  
  - Wells 110  
- Case study 3: Well 32 111  
  - Cesspits 117  
  - Buildings 117  
  - Gullies 117  
  - Water-filled features 117  
- Case study 4: Water filled features 3–5 118  
  - Ovens 122  
  - Animal disposal pits 122
Plot XVI
Plot XVII
Plot XVIII
Plots XIX–XXI

Case study 10: Well 46
Plot XXII

Nineteenth century
Plots I–VII
Plot VIII
Plot IX
Plot X
Plot XII
Plot XIII

Case study 11: Well 52
Plot XIV
Plot XV

Case study 12: The backfilling of Soakaway 3
Plot XVI
Plot XVII
Plot XVIII
Plot XIX
Plot XX
Plot XXII

Twentieth century
Plot X
Plot XIII
Plot XIV
Plot XX

The Robert Sayle department store

Inset: Living above the shop and other stories

Material culture
Coins and jettons (M. Allen)
Metalwork (C. Cessford and A. Hall)
Worked stone (S. Timberlake and C. Cessford)
Vessel glass (V. Herring)
Pottery (C. Cessford, A. Hall and D. Hall)
Clay tobacco pipes (C. Cessford, incorporating specialist information from A. Vince)
Ceramic building material (P. Mills, incorporating specialist information from A. Vince)
Wood and timber (R. Darrah, incorporating specialist information from I. Tyers and S. Allen)
Leatherwork (Q. Mould)

Economic and environmental data
Mammal and bird bone (L. Higbee)
Fish bone (J. Harland)

Discussion

Chapter 6 Wider environs (R. Newman)
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## Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fig.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>13th-century ‘ditch’ at Corn Exchange Street.</td>
<td>xx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Location map.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Location plans.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Composite sections from Grand Arcade.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Aerial view of Grand Arcade.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Investigating the ‘garden soil’.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>Plan of all excavated discrete features at Grand Arcade.</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>Plots phasing in the Grand Arcade street block.</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>The initial clearance of part of the main Grand Arcade area.</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>Excavations ongoing within part of the main Grand Arcade area.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>Past, present and future frontages of Plot XIII.</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>Schematic plans of Grand Arcade over time.</td>
<td>22–7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>Eighteenth–twentieth-century standing buildings at Grand Arcade.</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>Digital model of the standing buildings.</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>Digital model of the standing buildings.</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>1938 plan of the Robert Sayle department store and frontage.</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Middle Iron Age Gully 1.</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Plan of mid/late eleventh-century dispersed occupation.</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Mid/late eleventh-century Area 1, plus early twelfth-century material.</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Late eleventh–early twelfth century gravel quarry Pit 2.</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Plan of the early twelfth-century planned layout.</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Early twelfth-century Ditch 1.</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Plan of 2005–6 King’s Ditch investigations.</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>The course of the King’s Ditch.</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Plan and phased section of main southern area the King’s Ditch.</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Sections of the King’s Ditch.</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Section and photograph of the King’s Ditch.</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Section and photograph of the King’s Ditch.</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Plan of main northern area of excavation of the King’s Ditch.</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Section of the King’s Ditch and evidence for its initial phase.</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>The King’s Ditch excavations.</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>Excavations inside the standing Lion Yard car park.</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>Analysed samples from the King’s Ditch.</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>Thirteenth–fourteenth-century artefacts from the King’s Ditch.</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>Fourteenth-century pottery from the King’s Ditch.</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>Fourteenth-century animal bone from the King’s Ditch.</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>Fourteenth-century bridge across the King’s Ditch.</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>Artefacts from late fifteenth–early sixteenth-century King’s Ditch.</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>Artefacts from early/mid-sixteenth-century King’s Ditch.</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>Early/mid-sixteenth-century woven basket from the King’s Ditch.</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>Leatherwork from early/mid-sixteenth-century King’s Ditch.</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>Early/mid-sixteenth-century leather panel of the King’s Ditch.</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>Material from mid-sixteenth-century King’s Ditch.</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>The seventeenth-century King’s Ditch.</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>1629 survey of the King’s Ditch.</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>Eighteenth–nineteenth-century features fronting onto Tibb’s Row.</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>Sawpit 1, created 1858–74, plus material of c. 1874–81.</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>Leatherwork from Cellar 10, c. 1929–31.</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>The King’s Ditch and medieval Cambridge.</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>The changing profile of the King’s Ditch over time.</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>Comparative widths and depths of medieval town ditches.</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Plan of mid–late twelfth-century features.</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 Layout of putative mid/late twelfth-century property boundaries and wells.  
4.3 Plan of twelfth-century archaeological features in the northeastern area.  
4.4 Plan of twelfth-century archaeological features in the southeastern area.  
4.5 Twelfth-century Well 18 and material.  
4.6 Twelfth-century Wells 5 and 6.  
4.7 Distribution of eleventh–sixteenth-century gravel quarry pits.  
4.8 Twelfth-century gravel quarry Pit 5 plus material.  
4.9 Material from twelfth-century Pit 6.  
4.10 Plan of thirteenth–fourteenth-century archaeological features.  
4.11 Putative thirteenth–fourteenth-century property boundaries and wells.  
4.12 Plan of thirteenth–fourteenth-century archaeological features in the southeastern area.  
4.13 Mid-fourteenth-century Well 22.  
4.14 Mid-thirteenth-century Well 32, plus mid-fourteenth-century material.  
4.15 Mid/late fourteenth-century pottery from Well 33.  
4.16 Well 33 and mid/late fourteenth-century material.  
4.17 Mid-thirteenth-century Wells 23 and 25 and reused wooden items.  
4.18 Fourteenth-century WFF 7.  
4.19 Mid-fourteenth-century WFF 3, plus late fourteenth-century pottery.  
4.20 Mid-fourteenth-century WFF 4, plus reused wood.  
4.21 Late fourteenth century eel grig from WFF 5.  
4.22 Early/mid-fourteenth-century WFF 2.  
4.25 Mid/late fourteenth-century SP 1.  
4.26 Material from fourteenth-century Pits 20 and 29.  
4.27 Fourteenth-century gravel quarry Pit 23 and associated material.  
4.28 Mid/late fourteenth-century clay quarry Pit 16 and associated wood.  
4.29 Late sixteenth-century plans.  
4.30 Plan of fifteenth–sixteenth-century archaeological features.  
4.31 Fifteenth–sixteenth-century property boundaries and wells.  
4.32 Plan of fifteenth–sixteenth-century archaeological features in the southeastern area.  
4.33 Mid-fifteenth-century pottery from Well 22.  
4.34 Mid-fifteenth-century Well 36 and reused stone.  
4.35 Mid-fifteenth-century Well 39.  
4.36 Fourteenth–fifteenth-century jugs.  
4.37 Wood and leather items.  
4.38 Plan of fifteenth–sixteenth archaeological features in one plot, plus late sixteenth-century Well 37.  
4.39 Late sixteenth-century Well 38.  
4.40 Late sixteenth-century Well 38.  
4.41 Fifteenth-century Cesspit 14 and associated wood.  
4.42 Fifteenth-century Cesspit 14 and associated wood.  
4.43 Sixteenth-century Cesspits 15 and 16.  
4.44 Mid-fifteenth–mid-sixteenth-century possible malting kiln Building 20.  
4.45 Mid/late fifteenth-century WFF 13.  
4.46 Mid/late fifteenth-century WFF 14, plus ladder.  
4.47 Mid/late fifteenth-century WFF 11, plus late fifteenth–early sixteenth-century pottery.  
4.48 Mid-sixteenth-century ladder from WFF 15.  
4.49 Mid-fifteenth-century WFF 16.  
4.50 Mid-sixteenth-century gravel quarry Pit 46 plus material.  
4.51 Fifteenth-century Pit 49, plus associated material.  
4.52 Early/mid-fifteenth-century material from clay quarry Pit 36.  
4.54 Thirteenth–sixteenth-century metalwork.  
4.55 Timeline of the Ely pottery industry.
4.56 Sources of tenth–seventeenth century ceramics.
4.57 Twelfth-century pottery.
4.58 Thirteenth–fourteenth-century pottery.
4.59 Fifteenth–sixteenth-century pottery.
4.60 Miscellaneous twelfth–sixteenth-century items.
4.61 Distribution of significant assemblages of stone mouldings.
4.62 Cumulative date ranges of stone mouldings and types of stone.
4.63 Stone from a dogtooth triforium blind arcading of c. 1250.
4.64 Stones from a parapet crenellation junction of c. 1350.
4.65 Coppiced roundwood in twelfth–fifteenth-century well linings.
4.66 Relative frequency of eleventh–thirteenth-century livestock species.
4.67 Relative frequency of fourteenth–seventeenth-century livestock species.
4.68 Relative frequency of eleventh–nineteenth-century livestock species.
4.69 Assemblages of horn-working, bone-working and leatherdressing waste.
4.70 Thirteenth–nineteenth-century animal skeletons.
5.1 David Loggan’s map of 1688.
5.2 Seventeenth-century and later plots.
5.3 Plan of seventeenth-century features.
5.4 Well 41 constructed c. 1625–42.
5.5 Wooden objects from Cesspit 16, c. 1616–37.
5.6 Leatherwork from Cesspit 16, c. 1616–37.
5.7 Early/mid-seventeenth-century horse skulls in Pit 56.
5.8 Building 25 constructed in the 1680s.
5.9 Building 25 constructed in the 1680s.
5.10 Well 42, constructed in the 1620s, plus winding block.
5.11 Rear arches from Lancet windows of c. 1250.
5.12 Well 43, constructed in the 1680s.
5.13 Cattle ADPs 10–12, c. 1680–1720.
5.14 Cattle ADPs 10–12, c. 1680–1720.
5.15 William Custance’s map, 1798.
5.16 Plan of all eighteenth-century features.
5.17 Plan of southeastern area in the eighteenth-century.
5.18 PBs 7–8, created c. 1770–90 and abandoned c. 1800–20.
5.19 Standing Buildings 42 and 65, plus Building 22.
5.20 Standing Buildings 42 and 65, plus Building 22.
5.21 Material from Well 38 c. 1760–80.
5.22 Eighteenth-century material from Plot XII.
5.23 Material from PB 9, dug c. 1760–80.
5.24 Well 45, constructed c. 1723.
5.25 Baseplate of Well 45, constructed c. 1723.
5.26 Stone from windows reused in Well 45, constructed c. 1723.
5.27 Material from Pit 57, c. 1760–80.
5.28 PB 11 dug c. 1770–90, plus material.
5.29 Well 46, constructed c. 1761.
5.31 Timber-framing of Standing Building 23.
5.32 Mid-eighteenth-century Soakaways 3–4, plus material of c. 1780–90.
5.33 Material from the Cellar 6, c. 1780–90.
5.34 Miscellaneous eighteenth-century material.
5.35 Wall 10 constructed c. 1720–50.
5.36 Stone from footings of Wall 10, constructed c. 1720–50.
5.37 Mid-eighteenth-century Cellar 4.
5.38 Plan of all nineteenth-century features.
5.39 Plan of eastern area of main excavation in the nineteenth-century.
5.40 Nineteenth-century maps.
5.41 Standing Building 18/19, constructed c. 1866–9.
5.42 Plan of Plot X in the nineteenth century, plus pottery from Well 37 c. 1855–8.
5.43 Material from Well 37 c. 1855–8.
5.44 Standing Building 20, constructed c. 1867–9.
5.45 Standing Building 72, constructed c. 1867–9.
5.46 Mid-eighteenth-century Soakaway 2, and material of c. 1813–23.
5.47 Standing Building 70, constructed in 1845.
5.48 Standing Building 70, constructed in 1845.
5.49 Well 52, constructed in 1845.
5.50 Carved initials from Standing Building 70, constructed in 1845.
5.51 Sarah Dobson and her mid-nineteenth-century school.
5.52 Ceramics from PH 3, c. 1822–40.
5.53 Further ceramics from PH 3, c. 1822–40.
5.54 Garden features of c. 1820–40 and associated material.
5.55 The early–mid-nineteenth century College cook Thomas Wicks.
5.56 Ceramics from Soakaway 3, c. 1800–25.
5.57 Material from Soakaway 3, c. 1800–25.
5.58 Mid/late nineteenth-century Building 50.
5.59 The Barrett family ceramics and glass business.
5.60 Emmanuel College sealed bottles.
5.61 Ceramics from Cellar 12, c. 1882–5.
5.62 Selected nineteenth–twentieth century ceramics.
5.64 Mid–late eighteenth-century Cellar 7, plus nineteenth century material
5.65 College-associated material from Cellar 4, c. 1830–45.
5.66 Pottery of Richard Hopkins from Cellar 4, c. 1830–45.
5.67 Tea and coffee related material from Cellar 4, c. 1830–45.
5.68 ‘Personal’ material from Cellar 4, c. 1830–45.
5.69 Origins and temporality of material in Cellar 4.
5.70 Corn Exchange Court, created c. 1844–5.
5.71 Early–mid-nineteenth-century Building 49 plus pottery of c. 1879–82.
5.72 Ceramics from Building 49 c. 1879–82.
5.73 Bottles from ‘H’-shaped brick Foundation 3, c. 1884–90.
5.74 Ceramics from Pit 67, c. 1881–1900.
5.75 Plan of twentieth-century archaeological remains.
5.76 Bone typewriter brush from Building 47, c. 1920–40.
5.77 Twentieth-century buildings in Plot XIII.
5.78 The Norwich Union building.
5.79 Nineteenth-century plans of the Robert Sayle department store.
5.80 The aftermath of Robert Sayle department store (I).
5.81 The aftermath of Robert Sayle department store (II).
5.82 The Robert Sayle department store frontage, constructed c. 1876–1906.
5.83 The Robert Sayle department store frontage.
5.84 Snapshots of Robert Sayle premises.
5.85 Standing Building 48, constructed c. 1877–85.
5.86 Cellar 13, constructed c. 1877–85.
5.87 Well 49, constructed c. 1862–70.
5.88 Building 43 and Well 50, constructed c. 1862–77.
5.89 Building 43 and Well 50, constructed c. 1862–77.
5.90 Material from Cellar 13, c. 1913–21.
5.91 Ceramics from Cellar 13, c. 1913–21.
5.92 Glass from Cellar 13 c. 1913–21.
5.93 Public engagement.
Tables

1.1 Archaeologically investigated plots within the Grand Arcade street block. 13
1.2 Abbreviations used. 20
3.1 King’s Ditch radiocarbon determinations. 57
3.2 Pottery from the King’s Ditch. 57
3.3 Meat represented in King’s Ditch recut F.5085/F.5198. 59
3.4 Meat represented in King’s Ditch recut F.1073.
3.5 Dimensions of medieval town ditches.
4.1 Criteria for the archaeological identification of property boundaries.
4.2 Gravel quarry pits and pits of unknown function by period.
4.3 Meat represented in Well 32.
4.4 Overall pottery assemblage.
4.5 Saxo-Norman pottery.
4.6 Thirteenth–fifteenth-century pottery by broad ware types.
4.7 Thirteenth–fifteenth-century intermediate pottery.
4.8 Thirteenth–fifteenth-century fine ware pottery.
4.9 Sixteenth–seventeenth-century pottery by broad ware types.
4.11 Sixteenth–seventeenth-century German stoneware.
4.12 Burning of ceramic building material by date.
4.13 Species and felling season of roundwood from wells.
4.14 Casks.
4.15 Animal bone identified to species by period.
4.16 Estimated meat weights for livestock species by period.
4.17 Deposits of horn-working waste by period.
4.18 Deposits of bone-working waste by period.
4.19 Deposits of leatherdressers’ waste by period.
4.20 Industrial deposits of animal bone by period.
4.21 Animal skeletons and unusual deposits.
4.22 Animal skeletons by period.
4.23 Innovations in the use of animals by period.
4.24 Changes in the age, size and shape of animals by period.
4.25 Sieved fish.
4.26 Hand collected fish.
4.27 Environmental samples.
4.28 Economic plant species.
4.29 Ecological grouping of Coleoptera.
4.30 Synanthropic groupings of Coleoptera.
5.1 Meat represented in Soakaway 3.
5.2 Studied mid/late eighteenth-century assemblages.
5.3 Mid/late eighteenth-century assemblages by function.
5.4 1800–50 assemblages by material type.
5.5 1800–50 assemblages by function.
5.6 1850–1900 assemblages by material type.
5.7 1850–1900 assemblages by function.
5.8 Twentieth-century assemblages.
5.9 Twentieth-century assemblages by function.
5.10 Eighteenth–twentieth-century pottery.
5.11 Ceramic building material by date.
6.1 Comparative ceramic densities.
6.2 Twelfth–seventeenth century buildings at Christ’s Lane.
6.3 Lands associated with The Vine Estate in 1769.
6.4 Archaeological investigations in the East Fields.
6.5 Quantities and densities of selected materials and feature-types.
7.1 Indicators of rural, suburban and/or urban characteristics.
7.2 Feature types through time.
7.3 Water supply to Plot XIII over time.
Dedication and acknowledgements

This work is dedicated to the memory of two distinguished archaeologists with long standing Cambridge connections who influenced it in very different ways. Tony (Anthony) Paget Baggs (1934–2006) had a long career in architectural recording at the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments for England and the Victoria County History. Following his retirement in 1997 he continued working in a freelance capacity and undertook many projects for the Cambridge Archaeological Unit, including the work at Grand Arcade which he unfortunately did not live to complete. Tony was always generous with his time and immense knowledge, his presence was one of the most enjoyable aspects of the fieldwork at Grand Arcade. This book owes much to him and is undoubtedly the poorer through his demise. John Amyas Alexander (1922–2010) conducted numerous excavations in Britain, Africa and elsewhere. The investigations of the King’s Ditch that he directed in 1969–71 only rank amongst his more minor achievements, but it was a great pleasure to be able to show him around our subsequent excavations over three decades later (see Fig. 5.93B). We must also mention two other contributors to this volume who are sadly no longer with us, Richard Darrah and Alan Vince. Richard possessed an unparalleled understanding of woodworking that has greatly enhanced this volume and will be greatly missed. Similarly Alan Vince provided unique specialist knowledge.

First and foremost this work is based upon the dedication, skill and commitment of the Grand Arcade and Christ’s Lane excavation teams, although they are too numerous to list particular appreciation goes to Richard Newman and Letty ten Harkel. Alison Dickens managed both projects for the CAU and finds processing was overseen by Norma Challands and later Gladwys Monteil. Both projects were monitored by Andy Thomas, Principal Archaeologist, Land Use Planning, of the County Archaeology Office. The work in the field also benefited greatly from the work of Rosemary Horrox on documentary sources and the prompt spot-dating of the pottery by David Hall. The main authorship of the volume broadly corresponds to the two principal author’s responsibility, with Cessford dealing mainly with the below ground excavated remains and Dickens with the above ground standing buildings although a great deal of cross-over has occurred. The structure of the volume has benefited from input by Chris Evans and Sam Lucy, the latter of whom proof-read the volume, and we are also grateful for the comments of the two anonymous reviewers.

The graphics are primarily the work of Vicki Herring with oversight and input from Andrew Hall. Photographs are principally by Dave Webb, Craig Cessford and member of the excavation team. The timber drawings are largely based upon original drawings by Nigel Randall, with the exception of a number of illustrations supplied by Richard Darrah (Figs. 4.8C, 4.41C, 4.42C, 4.45D, 4.47D, 5.87D). Drawings of stone mouldings are based upon illustrations by Mark Samuel (Figs. 4.34A–H, 4.63C–G, 4.64, 5.11A–D, 5.11G, 5.26, 5.36, 6.15), whilst the leather drawings were informed by sketches by Quita Mould. Images from the digital model of the standing buildings owe much to the work of Marcus Abbott. A number of images are courtesy of the Cambridgeshire Collection, Cambridge Central Library (Figs. 1.10 lower image, 3.24, 5.59, 5.77C–D, 5.78A–B, 5.83, 6.3B, 6.14, 6.17D), and are reproduced thanks to the assistance of Chris Jakes. Aerial photographs of the Grand Arcade site (front cover and Fig. 1.4) are courtesy of Bovis Lend Lease Ltd. and the Cambridge University Collection of Aerial Photographs (Fig.1.14). The leather jug (Fig. 5.6B) is copyright MOLA, Faith Vardy. Some animal bone photographs are by Lorrain Higbee (Fig. 3.12C, 3.14A–D, 3.25D–E, 4.14E, 4.26B, 4.50B, 4.69) and the fish bone photo (Fig. 4.27B) is by Jen Harland. The portrait of Barnett Leach III on a box lid (Fig. 7.3) is
courtesy of Ric Leach. The pottery from the Fitzwilliam Museum (Fig. 5.34A) although photographed by Craig Cessford is reproduced by permission of the Syndics of The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, and the pottery from his personal collection (Fig. 7.15) was photographed by Peter Stoivin. The images in Fig. 7.2 are courtesy of Charles French (A–D), Kevin Hayward (E–K) and Alan Vince (L–S). Emmanuel College bottles (Fig. 5.60A–B, 5.60E) are courtesy of Emmanuel College although drawn by Vicki Herring and access to College material was obtained with the assistance of Sarah Bendall, the curator of the Emmanuel College Douglas Finlay Museum of College Life. The 1629 survey of the King’s Ditch is courtesy of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society publication, but we have unfortunately been unable to trace the current owner of the plan (Fig. 3.23).

Plans from college archives are reproduced by kind permission of the Master and Fellows of Christ’s College Cambridge (Fig. 6.17B), the Master and Fellows of Emmanuel College Cambridge (Figs. 5.58, 5.63B, 5.70C, 6.13A) and the Master and Fellows of Jesus College Cambridge (Figs. 5.19B–C, 5.79). The plan in Fig. 1.15 is based upon an original in the John Lewis Partnership Archive Collection and Fig. 5.84 (middle) and Fig. 5.88B derive from the same source. The x-rays that are reproduced were undertaken by York Archaeological Trust particularly Ian Panter, Jo Dillon of the Fitzwilliam Museum and English Heritage. Graphs and charts are largely based upon versions supplied by the relevant specialists. For the eBook version of the monograph, figures that incorporate Ordnance Survey data have been altered so they only incorporate Ordnance Survey OpenData products that are permitted under the Open Government Licence. The affected illustrations are Figs. 1.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.27, 4.55, 4.61, 4.69, 4.70, 5.69, 6.1, 6.6, 6.19 and 6.20.

A number of college archivists responded helpfully to queries concerning documents, maps and other material: Geoffrey T Martin (Christ’s College), Amanda Goode (Emmanuel College), Madeleine Patston (Gonville & Caius College), Frances H. Willmoth (Jesus College), Malcolm Underwood (St John’s College) and John Pollard (Trinity Hall). The radiocarbon dating was undertaken by the Waikato Radiocarbon Dating Laboratory with the assistance of Fiona Petchey and Alan Hogg. Access to documents and material was assisted by the staff of the Cambridge Records Office, the Cambridgeshire Collection and the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, particularly Anne Taylor, while Quinton Carrol arranged for access to archives and material held at the Cambridgeshire Archaeological Store and Julia Poole arranged for access to material held by the Fitzwilliam Museum. Mark Ashton kindly arranged access to St Andrew the Great. Additionally a number of individuals supplied helpful information and insight on a range of topics. These include Peter Addyman (the 1959 investigations), John Alexander (the 1969–71 investigations), Alasdair Brooks (Modern ceramics), Peter Carter (the Eel grig), Joanne Cooper of the Natural History Museum, Tring, (bird bone identification), Peter Kuniholm and Tomasz Wazny from the Malcolm and Carolyn Wiener Laboratory for Aegean and Near Eastern Dendrochronology, Cornell University (the Ottoman barrel), Gavin Lucas (Modern ceramics), Tim Murray (Modern material), Harvey Sheldon (the 1971 investigations). Peter Stovin (college ceramics), Chris Swaysland (the cattle burials), Robin Wood (the European Maple jug), Rachel Wroth (college servants). Conservation of various materials was undertaken by the Museum of London, English Heritage and the York Archaeological Trust.

The work at Grand Arcade would have been impossible without the generous support of John Chesters of Grosvenor Plc on behalf of the Grand Arcade Partnership and Doug Dawes from the principal contractor Bovis Lend Lease Ltd, who acted as archaeological liaison. The Grand Arcade excavations were funded by the Universities Superannuation Scheme and Grosvenor Developments Ltd. as joint funders under the auspices of the Grand Arcade Partnership. The Christ’s Lane excavations were funded by Land Securities Properties Ltd. (now Landsec Securities Group), and undertaken with the assistance of their agents SDC Construction. This publication has been principally funded by the Grand Arcade Partnership, with Land Securities Properties Ltd. funding the Christ’s Lane element.
Foreword

Martin Biddle

From 1956 to 1988 four hundred volunteers and a small band of professionals worked together to save evidence of the original nucleus of prehistoric and Romano-British Cambridge on Castle Hill before it was destroyed by modern development. This was a pioneering and remarkable effort, but with one single exception it was to be some time before any attempt was made to mount a similar programme on the main site of the medieval town on the opposite bank of the Cam.

The single exception was the work of Professor T. McKenny Hughes who between 1873 and 1915 recorded the remains of medieval Cambridge revealed by building operations. No attempt was made to follow his example in the hey-day of Victorian and Edwardian rebuilding or indeed down to the late 1950s, when it appeared that another period of reconstruction was about to begin and that ‘the progress of modern development will destroy more and more of the archaeology of the town’ Addyman & Biddle 1965, 76).

Some forty years later Peter Addyman and I did what we could mostly in term time 1958–61 on a few sites – Bradwell’s Court, Corn Exchange Street, and Post Office Terrace, for example – and warned of coming problems (Addyman & Biddle 1965, especially p. 76):

> In a few years the redevelopment of the largest single site ever to be rebuilt in the town in modern times – the Lion Yard – will destroy the archaeology of a large area within the King’s Ditch. Its prior excavation on an adequate scale is imperative. The progress of modern development in Cambridge will destroy more and more of the archaeology of the town. The constant observation and systematic recording of this work is necessary if any adequate picture of the development and topography of early medieval Cambridge is to be achieved. In very few English towns has this need been met, but the recording of medieval Oxford provides an example which Cambridge should follow.

The archaeology of Lion Yard was almost entirely lost and little else was done for the next quarter of a century. Medieval Cambridge was far from the interests of academic archaeology in Cambridge then or for decades to come and it was only with the coming into force of Planning Policy Guidance 16 in 1990 that things began rapidly to change. Much of this welcome new work was, however, done in central Cambridge, within the line of the King’s Ditch.

The singular and wholly exceptional achievement of the present volume is that it represents what is probably the largest area of suburban development ever investigated in an English or to my knowledge European city:

- throughout time, from the beginnings of settlement to the present day,
- covering every kind of documentary, artefactual and environmental evidence,
- without social bias, from the most simple to the most elevated,
- and closely related in visual and recording to the actual patterns created and, most important, to the elements that will now survive into the future.

The innovative element is the way the archaeological evidence (excavation and standing buildings) is presented together with the evidence of the written sources and with historic images of every kind. And this is not done in the ‘traditional’ way of separate, usually sequential, sections devoted to each kind of evidence, but rather by the way in which the sources
are assembled so that the relevant parts of the evidence are woven together, phase by phase.

For the present writer, the whole approach of this remarkable volume is demonstrated by a single exciting photograph (Fig. 2.6). This looks across the excavation towards the standing buildings on Hadstock Way and shows how the line of an excavated early 12th-century boundary ditch coincides precisely with a property division still in use today.

Martin Biddle
5 December 2018
Large-scale excavations undertaken by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit in 2005–6 at the Grand Arcade and Christ’s Lane sites in Cambridge allowed extensive and intensive investigation of both the town ditch and two street blocks of a suburb lying outside it. The town ditch, known as the King’s Ditch, was created in the eleventh or twelfth centuries and was then recut on a number of occasions with a surviving sequence extending until the mid-sixteenth century including a timber bridge, plus some later features. In the suburb dispersed occupation began in the mid-eleventh century with a planned layout following in the early twelfth century. Significant proportions of the backyard areas of 14 plots founded at this time were investigated and their development traced up to the present day, including a detailed programme of standing building recording plus intensive documentary and cartographic analysis. Substantial assemblages of a wide range of artefact types were recovered, including large quantities leather and timber preserved in waterlogged conditions. Major assemblages of pottery, animal bone and stone mouldings were analysed. The material includes a large number of substantial mid-eighteenth to early twentieth-century assemblages of pottery, glass, clay tobacco pipe and other materials that have been analysed in detail. There was also extensive environmental sampling, including pollen and insect analysis. As well as the scale of the assemblages there were a range of individually significant items including leather and wooden jugs and an imported Ottoman barrel from Greece. A considerable number of distinctive college related ceramic and glass items were also found.

The main feature types were pits, wells, post-holes, beamslots, gullies, animal burials, ovens and ditches. From the eighteenth century onwards there were increased levels of building activity, during the early nineteenth century in particular the area became much more heavily built up and became urban rather than suburban in character. The features of this phase were largely brick built and consisted of walls, floors, wells, cellars and soakaways. Of particular note is the fact that the depth of the development meant that the bases of all but the deepest features were investigated, uncovering the lower portions of features such as wells that are often left in situ by developer funded excavations.

Overall the work presents a detailed picture of the medieval town ditch on a scale that is previously unparalleled in Britain, one of the most comprehensive archaeological pictures of the development of the plots of a medieval and later suburb and treats eighteenth–twentieth-century material culture in a manner unparalleled in a British context.
Chapter 2

Preludes: prehistoric to early twelfth century

Craig Cessford

Space not place

Until it was given meaning by human beings, Cambridge was simply a ‘space’ rather than a ‘place’ (Relph 1976; Tuan 1977). Whilst the crossing point of the River Cam may have been a meaningful place in prehistory, in archaeological terms this ‘placeness’ is first recognisable in the first century AD with the foundation of a Romano-British settlement (Alexander & Pullinger 1999). As the Romano-British settlement was followed by a hiatus, although there were Early Anglo-Saxon settlements and cemeteries in the general vicinity (Dodwell et al. 2004), it can be argued that archaeologically an eighth century execution cemetery provides a more appropriate marker as it demonstrates a distinctive central place activity taking place (Cessford et al. 2007). These definitions are, however, effectively irrelevant in terms of the specific locale that is the concern of this book, as it is in the mid/late eleventh century that this becomes a place, albeit a relatively minor one. Whilst it would be tempting to ignore the earlier ‘space’, all ‘places’ have a prelude, which is outlined here.

Prior to the establishment of the long-lived and intensively occupied suburb that forms the principal focus of this volume, some limited evidence of earlier activity was encountered at the Grand Arcade site. In all, three phases of ‘pre-suburban’ activity have been identified (see Figs. 1.11A–C). As these pre-date the main period of study they will be discussed briefly here before the more substantive medieval and post-medieval material is presented. The earliest of the three phases, which was prehistoric to mid/late eleventh-century in date, pertained to the establishment and subsequent maintenance of a broad agricultural hinterland (Fig. 2.1). This period came to an end when the site was encroached on by a pattern of scattered, dispersed occupation (Figs. 2.2–2.4). Commencing no earlier than the mid-eleventh century, it appears that the area gradually became incorporated into the outermost periphery of Cambridge’s expanding urban ‘fringe’. Then, during the early twelfth century, a much more regular, grid-like layout was imposed on the site (Figs. 2.5–2.6). This phase appears to represent a marked intensification in the scale of occupation. Ultimately, however, the episode proved to be abortive. Around the mid-twelfth century a substantial ditch was created that truncated many of the pre-existing divisions and separated the site into two discrete portions. For the first time, this boundary – the King’s Ditch (Chapter 3) – definitively segregated within from without: the Barnwell Gate suburb was born.

In addition to the following text, further detailed information – relating in particular to specialist analyses, feature descriptions and associated historical sources – can be found within the supplementary volume.

Prehistoric mid-eleventh century

Geologically, the Grand Arcade site is located upon well-drained c. 1–3-m-thick Second Terrace Cam Gravels, which in turn overlie impermeable Gault clay. This rendered it a relatively attractive venue for occupation. Nevertheless, for the first few millennia of the site’s history the overall level of activity appears to have remained low. Above the gravels, micromorphological analysis has revealed that well-developed argillic brown earths developed, indicating stable and well-drained wooded conditions that were cleared from the Neolithic period onwards (see Figs. 7.2A–D). The area was then incorporated into an extensive rural hinterland; residual flakes of struck flint were the only finds of Neolithic or Bronze Age date.

It thus appears that throughout this earliest phase of activity the site remained only a peripheral element within a broader agricultural landscape. Despite this, certain features within that
Chapter 2

By the mid-eleventh century Cambridge was a well-established and economically thriving town and most archaeological investigations conducted within the urban core to the south of the river have produced evidence of eleventh-century occupation. The best evidence for the form of the settlement at this time is its churches, as these formed a central ‘spine’ running along Trumpington Street, the medieval High Street, indicating that this was then the most important thoroughfare. In contrast, along the line of the former Roman road only three churches were present, implying that by the eleventh century this route had declined in significance. Occupation at the Grand Arcade site commenced around the mid/late eleventh century, although issues of dating and the degree of later truncation – which has potentially removed over 80 per cent of the relevant features – make certainty difficult. It is probable that the King’s Ditch itself did not exist at this date, although it may perhaps have later followed the course of a pre-existing natural feature (Chapter 3). The major topographic influence on the area therefore remained the former Roman road, which by this date was known as Hadstock Way.

Within the Grand Arcade street block itself there is convincing evidence for at least two discrete areas of eleventh-century occupation (Fig. 2.2). Although many of the constituent features were heavily truncated, there is little to imply that this phase lasted more than around 50 years (from c. 1050–1100). Indeed, it may have been as short as 20 to 40 years; the average lifespan of a timber-built structure during this period (Bowsher et al. 2007, 317–18; Horsman et al. 1988). In the northern area (Area 1), the features were stratigraphically sealed beneath a ditch that was created in the early twelfth century. They consisted of timber Building 1, which comprised a row of three postholes that extended over 2.2m in length (Fig. 2.3E), Cesspit 1 (Fig. 2.3E), which was located to the rear of the building, and wattle-lined Well 1 (Fig. 2.3G). While there is no evidence that landscape – albeit features that can only be archaeologically inferred as opposed to positively identified – are likely to have had a marked impact on the subsequent developments that occurred from the mid/late eleventh century onwards. The most significant was the former Roman road from Colchester to Godmanchester, which probably followed the same alignment as medieval Hadstock Way. Also likely to have been of influence were the Late Saxon field strips of c. 850 onwards that were associated with the East Fields of the nascent town (Hesse 2007). These presumably ran perpendicular to the Roman road. When occupation was first established at the site during the mid/late eleventh century, therefore, these topographic elements were already well-established. This implies that the extensive changes which occurred at this time were not a tabula rasa; indeed, certain long-lived elements were to persist for centuries.

Mid/late eleventh century

Figure 2.1. Plan of Middle Iron Age Gully 1 plus photograph, facing southeast.
definitively proves that these features were contemporary, the most likely scenario is that they relate to a plot c. 36m in length that fronted onto Hadstock Way. Moreover, the combination of a building, a cesspit and well indicate a relatively high level of investment, consonant with permanent domestic occupation. The well and cesspit were deliberately backfilled around 1100. Their infilling contained a number of oak boards that derived from the demolition of a timber building – which had been constructed after 1049, on dendrochronological grounds – four jars and bowls (Fig. 2.3A–D) and a quantity of faunal remains.

Area 2, located a short distance to the south, lacked the direct stratigraphic dating associated with the occupation of Area 1. It can be identified because it contained a discrete concentration of stratigraphically early features containing pale, subsoil-rich fills alongside a significant proportion of eleventh-century material culture. The area of activity was 9.6m wide and around 38m long, covering c. 365 sq. m. Its northern perimeter was defined by a linear alignment of 12 intercutting gravel quarry pits (Pit 1). Pit rows such as this are frequently encountered on medieval urban sites (Schofield & Vince 2003, 80–1). The presence of such an alignment indicates that the area was already quite rigidly subdivided and demarcated. Located 26m from the frontage was a 9.6m long gully (Gully 2), which probably demarcated the boundary of the plot’s innerland and backland zones. Within the innerland were located the traces of a timber-built structure (Building 2) and two cesspits (Cesspits 2–3), whilst towards the rear of the property lay a wattle-lined well (Well 2) whose structure had been reinforced with reused mid-tenth-century cask staves. Also located in the backland zone were a number of gravel quarry pits. The backfilling of one of these – Pit 2 (Fig. 2.4A) – contained portions of five pottery vessels (Fig. 2.4B), four worked bone objects (Fig. 2.4C) an iron knife (Fig. 2.4D) and hook, and almost 500 animal bones representing c. 42kg of meat. The latter included mutton, beef, pork and chicken, some of which indicate that the pit filled up over a period of several months.

It is possible that there were other, unrecognized areas of mid/late eleventh-century occupation at the site, as well as additional isolated eleventh-century features (principally gravel and clay quarry pits); although none can be identified with certainty. The distribution of tenth–eleventh-century pottery (Fig. 2.2) does however indicate that contemporary occupation was principally concentrated in Areas 1 and 2. Whilst the exact nature of this occupation is unclear, had the area been fully urban in character it is

Figure 2.2. Plan of mid/late eleventh-century dispersed occupation showing distribution of identified features and typologically early St Neots-type ware, plus detail of the principal features associated with Areas 1 and 2.
Preludes: prehistoric to early twelfth century

likely that more evidence would be identifiable. It therefore appears that some form of dispersed, and potentially intermittent, ribbon development existed at this time, stretching out along Hadstock Way. To the north, the church of St Andrew the Great had most probably been established (Fig. 2.2). There is unlikely to have been any formal boundary between the periphery of the settlement and the surrounding East Fields.

Early twelfth century
The early twelfth century was a time of pronounced change for Cambridge. In 1101 Henry I granted the fee farm to the town, meaning that in return for payment of a lump sum it was authorized to collect what had previously been payments to the crown. Then, in 1109, the town was transferred from the Diocese of Lincoln to the newly created Diocese of Ely. It was also around the turn of the twelfth century that the Grand Arcade street block was divided

Figure 2.3 (opposite). Mid/late eleventh-century features in Area 1, plus associated material from early twelfth-century backfilling: (A) Thetford-type ware rounded wide jar with thumbed clubbed rim and two strap handles from Cesspit 1 ([35197]); (B) Thetford-type ware rounded jar with clubbed rim and fingernail decoration from Cesspit 1 ([35197]); (C) St Neots-type ware rounded narrow jar with clubbed rim from Cesspit 1 ([35197]); (D) St Neots-type ware rounded deep bowl with clubbed rim from Cesspit 1 ([35197]); (E) photograph of posthole from Building 1, facing north; (F) photograph of oak board(s) and overlying pottery in base of Cesspit 1, facing north; (G) photograph of wattle-lined Well 1, facing north.

Figure 2.4. Late eleventh–early twelfth century gravel quarry Pit 2: (A) photograph of pit, facing southeast; (B) St Neots-type ware rounded shallow bowl with flanged rim ([34261]); (C) square-sectioned object made from mammal long bone with dot decoration on all sides ([34258]); (D) iron whittle-tanged knife ([34258]).
into four segments (Fig. 2.5). The principal boundary at this time was a substantial ditch that ran perpendicular to Hadstock Way – *Ditch 1* (Fig. 2.6) – parallel to which ran two shallower gullies (*Gullies 3–4*). *Ditch 1* would originally have measured c. 2.5m wide by 1.5m deep and there is evidence of a bank on its northern side. The gullies, which were probably dug immediately after *Ditch 1*, were only c. 0.3–0.4m deep by c. 0.3m wide. The primary function of *Ditch 1* was presumably to demarcate a boundary, but it would also have provided effective drainage for the area. Whilst ditches are a common feature on broadly contemporary rural sites such as West Fen Road, Ely, (Mortimer *et al.* 2005, 116–20) and Cottenham (Mortimer 2000) they are rare in urban contexts. This is probably because space was at more of a premium. To the north of *Ditch 1*, lying c. 47–50m from Hadstock Way, was situated *Gully 3*. This

![Diagram of features associated with the early twelfth-century planned layout.](image)

**Figure 2.5.** Plan of features associated with the early twelfth-century planned layout.
Preludes: prehistoric to early twelfth century

To the south of Ditch 1 lay Gully 4. This was located c. 40m from Hadstock Way and ran for over 40m in length. Gully 4 had a more variable history than Gully 3, with some stretches rapidly going out of use during the twelfth century while others remained open until the fourteenth century.

Feature measured a minimum of 28m in length and may represent a continuation of Gully AB1 that was previously identified in 1959 (Addyman & Biddle 1965, 85, fig. 9). If this attribution is correct then it originally measured over 80m in length. Gully 3 was relatively short-lived; it contained no evidence of recuts or material later than the twelfth century. To the south of Ditch 1 lay Gully 4. This was located c. 40m from Hadstock Way and ran for over 40m in length. Gully 4 had a more variable history than Gully 3, with some stretches rapidly going out of use during the twelfth century while others remained open until the fourteenth century.

Figure 2.6. Photograph of early twelfth-century Ditch 1 facing east-northeast with edges of feature highlighted; note how the ditch alignment matches the boundary between two twentieth-century standing buildings. Sections of ditch (A–C; locations shown in Fig. 2.5), reconstructed profile of original ditch and bank (D).
Whilst some eleventh century features from Area 2, such as Well 2, appear to have continued in use into this period, Area 1 was effectively obliterated by the creation of Ditch 1. This latter feature, along with the associated gullies, effectively divided the area into four rectangular areas or quadrants (Fig. 2.5). Although it would be somewhat misleading to characterize this development as ‘planned’ rather than ‘organic’ in nature - an artificial and unhelpful dichotomy that often ‘begins to dissolve on closer inspection’ (Baker & Holt 2004, 376) - it represents the subdivision of a substantial area that was probably undertaken by the landowner rather than the individual occupants. Occurring during the mid/late eleventh century, the scale and layout of this development indicate that the King’s Ditch did not yet exist (as this would have cut across the quadrants at an awkward, obtuse angle). Similarly, the obliteration of Area 1, allied with the ‘clearance’ of a relatively sizable quantity of domestic material in Areas 1 and 2, indicates that this development was directly imposed on the landscape by an outside agency. As such, it is likely to have been undertaken by a single landowner, although it is possible that the areas to the north and south of the ditch remained under separate control throughout.

It appears probable that the relatively large quadrants were intended to be further subdivided into smaller properties ready for domestic occupation. The surviving evidence suggests that this process did not occur immediately, but in a more gradual, piecemeal fashion, though it must be noted that delays of a few years or even decades are difficult to identify archaeologically. This situation is further complicated by the fact that the area was subsequently heavily affected by the creation of the King’s Ditch. While it is likely that a considerable amount of activity predated this event, such a scenario cannot be proved (except in certain specific instances). More generally, within Cambridge’s wider environs the development at Grand Arcade was by no means unique. Morphological evidence indicates that very similar, ‘imposed’ developments also occurred at a number of local villages during the late eleventh and/or early twelfth centuries. This situation has been identified archaeologically at Chesterton (Cessford with Dickens 2004; Newman 2015) and fits very well within the broader, national pattern of Norman expansion and control (Aston 1992, 71–81). The instigator of the early twelfth-century development is unknown, although a potential candidate might be the Benedictine monastery of Ely, founded in 970, which is known to have owned land in Cambridge (van Houts 1992, 64). If correct, the division might potentially have been linked to the foundation of the Ely diocese in 1109. A link with Ely is suggested by the fact that it was the patron of St Andrew the Great, although it is unclear how early this relationship began. It may be no earlier than 1225–8, although this may represent the restitution of an earlier relationship that existed in 1200 and at least one church in Cambridge belonged to Ely in 1086 (Otway-Ruthven 1938, 359).

There are three areas where a convincing argument can be made for early-twelfth-century occupation at the Grand Arcade site. The first of these coincided with one of the earlier areas of occupation (Area 2), now located within the new southeastern quadrant, where Well 2 continued in use. In the north-western quadrant (Area 3), two parallel west-southwest to east-northeast aligned gullies – Gallies 5–6 – were identified, lying 12.3m apart (Fig. 2.5). As these features are aligned perpendicular to Hadstock Way, rather than with reference to any later alignment, it appears likely that they were associated with the occupation of this area prior to the establishment of the new town boundary. Located a short distance to the east, in Area 4, was a poorly preserved wattle-lined well (Well 3). This again must have predated the King’s Ditch on stratigraphic grounds. Finally, close by Well 3 was situated a cluster of intercutting pits. These features contained very little cultural material, and the uppermost pits in the sequence were also sealed by an early phase of the ditch. Additional features of early-twelfth-century date may also have been present, although none could be conclusively identified.

Discussion

The open pastoral landscape that was created during the later prehistoric period persisted until at least the mid-tenth century. At this time Cambridge has been described as an ‘economically viable backwater’ (Hines 1999, 136) and it was around then that one of the reused cask staves in Well 2 was felled (c. 930–70). Subsequently, the site was encroached on by mid/late eleventh-century dispersed occupation. This expansion coincided with the rapid economic development of the town, which by the late eleventh century had been transformed into a well-established county centre that contained a concentration of central-place functions. The pattern of scattered, piecemeal occupation which predominated at this time is consistent with that of the outlying urban fringe, indicating that the site probably lay on the periphery of the settled area. During the early twelfth century, however, a pattern of more regular planned urban development appears to have superseded the earlier, dispersed phase. A series of discrete topographic blocks was created and the overall level of activity seems to have increased.

Such a pattern is by no means unique to Cambridge. The eleventh–twelfth centuries were a period of major urban growth all across England. Large numbers of pre-existing settlements expanded and many new towns were established (Beresford 1988). Furthermore, a two-fold pattern wherein an initial phase of scattered occupation was succeeded by a more organized, imposed layout is also paralleled elsewhere, as at No. 1 Poultry, London, where these stages occurred during the later tenth and early eleventh centuries respectively (Burch et al. 2010). In the case of Cambridge, the degree of success that was enjoyed by the newly imposed development is somewhat unclear. The intention was probably to create a series of narrow rectangular plots aligned perpendicular to Hadstock Way, one of the town’s two principal approach roads, in order to increase rental income and stimulate additional growth. Although both wider and longer than the majority of properties located within the urban core, such as those investigated at the Old Divinity School site (Cessford 2015a), these plots were nevertheless distinct from the large ditched enclosures that predominated in many rural contexts at this date.

What is less clear is the number of inhabitants who had taken up residence within the new development by the mid-twelfth century, when the landscape of the area was substantially altered (see Chapter 3). This uncertainty arises for two reasons. Firstly, the degree of later truncation obfuscated much of the earliest portion of the sequence, thereby making precise determination of the number of relevant features difficult. Secondly,
the material culture that was in use during this period remained relatively unchanged for over a century, thus rendering fine-grained chronological distinctions difficult. Overall, it appears that this period was one of marked growth all across Cambridge, as indicated by the foundation of such religious institutions as the Augustinian Barnwell Priory (founded 1092, and transplanted to a new site c. 1112), the leprosarium of St Mary Magdalene (c. 1130) and the Benedictine nunnery of St Mary and St Radegund (1133). Nevertheless, the surviving evidence from Grand Arcade indicates that process of plot adoption on the urban fringe most probably remained relatively gradual and piecemeal as opposed to rapid and uniform in nature.
Medieval to modern suburban material culture and sequence at Grand Arcade, Cambridge

This is the first volume describing the results of the CAUs excavations in Cambridge and it is also the first monograph ever published on the archaeology of the town. At 1.5 hectares the Grand Arcade investigations represent the largest archaeological excavation ever undertaken in Cambridge, significantly enhanced by detailed standing building recording and documentary research. It includes one of the most comprehensive studies of the suburb of a British town, with fourteen investigated plots of the mid/late eleventh to twentieth centuries, and the most detailed investigation of a British town ditch ever undertaken, spanning the early/mid-twelfth to eighteenth centuries. Major artefactual assemblages of many material types were recovered, with extensive waterlogged preservation of wood and leather plus environmental sampling, including pollen and insects. The volume treats the copious eighteenth–twentieth-century material culture in a manner unparalleled in a British context, including a considerable number of college related items that attest to the town’s distinctive role as a university centre.

This is an important book, and the scale of the investigations and the richness of the archaeology make it a major contribution to studies of British town suburbs and boundaries in particular and urban archaeology more generally. The ground-breaking commitment to the archaeology of the eighteenth–twentieth-centuries is particularly important, as Cambridge was one of the key intellectual hubs of the foremost global power for much of the period.

Published by the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, University of Cambridge, Downing Street, Cambridge, CB2 3ER, UK.

Cover design by Dora Kemp, Ben Plumridge and Andrew Hall.

ISBN: 978-1-902937-78-6