Roman and Medieval Occupation in Causeway Lane, Leicester

Excavations 1980 and 1991

by

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Plate 1: The excavation team
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND
Richard Buckley and Aileen Connor

Circumstances of the project [RB]
Proposals for the redevelopment of a site on Causeway Lane, within the historic core of Roman and medieval Leicester, led to a small-scale excavation in 1980, followed by evaluation and subsequently full excavation of most of the site in 1991 by Leicester Archaeological Unit (LAU). The fieldwork and post-excavation analysis was funded by the Inland Revenue. Richard Buckley directed the 1980 excavation and managed the 1991 project. The evaluation and excavation of 1991 were directed respectively by Gerry Martin and Aileen Connor. The latter also directed the post-exavation assessment and analysis. Towards the end of the post-exavation analysis, LAU was closed down by Leicestershire County Council and the remaining work leading to publication of this volume was completed by the newly-established University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS). All archive records and materials are held by the Jewry Wall Museum, St. Nicholas Circle, Leicester (Accession Codes A475.1979 and A1.1991). This report presents the detailed results of the fieldwork.

Site location, geology and topography [AC]
The site, occupying an area of 1,875m², lies within the town walls of Roman and medieval Leicester, on the north side of Causeway Lane, adjacent to its corner with East Bond Street (NGR SK 5846 0481), in an area commonly known as the north-east quarter (fig. 1).

The geology comprises alluvial sands and gravels above Mercia mudstone (formerly known as keuper marl, Pye 1972, 22-3), typical of this part of Leicester. Topographic survey of the natural ground level (Lucas 1980-81) shows that the site lies at the top of an escarpment overlooking the river Soar to the west. The top of the natural sand and gravel occurs between 57.5m and 59m above OD, some 1m – 2.5m below the present ground surface (fig. 2).

Planning background [RB with Anne Graf]
Initial development proposal
Following demolition of the Bond Street Maternity Hospital in 1974, the land was purchased by the Property Services Agency (PSA) for redevelopment. This was to be carried out in two stages: firstly the
construction of temporary accommodation with car parking in 1978-79, to be replaced by a permanent Crown building scheduled for 1980-81. In view of the high archaeological potential of this part of the city, approaches were made to the PSA in 1979 by Jean Mellor of the (then) Leicestershire Museums Archaeological Field Unit (LM AFU) for permission to undertake excavation of the site prior to redevelopment.

**Cellar survey**
Initial research, by John Lucas (of LAU), to assess the potential survival of archaeological deposits involved a survey of cellars which were suspected to exist on the site. From 1849 onwards, planning regulations required the deposition of plans with the borough authorities prior to consent being given for new buildings or major alterations. The Leicester Sanitary Authority plans 1849-1934 are deposited in the Leicestershire Records Office where they are catalogued by street. These plans provide information on the depths of cellars beneath ground level, enabling comparison with contour plans allowing the likely depth of made ground above natural geology in the city to be calculated (Lucas 1981-82, 1-9). Uncellarised areas were identified at the west end of the site, and to the north beneath the temporary Unemployment Benefit Office building, and were therefore regarded as being of high archaeological potential. For the remainder of the site archaeological deposits were considered to be potentially extant beneath cellar floors and between cellars.

**Evaluation/excavation 1980**
It was subsequently proposed to carry out an evaluative excavation at the west end of the site, to assess the survival of archaeological levels, with further excavation dependent on the results. The evaluation took place between March and May 1980 with £5,000 of grant aid from the Department of the Environment and a team of excavators on a government 'Special Temporary Employment Programme' (STEP). Overburden was stripped by a Drott 100B excavator and stockpiled within the small area at the west end of the site. It was immediately apparent that all traces of horizontal stratification above the natural sand and gravel had been destroyed by medieval and post-medieval cultivation, leaving only earthfast features – mainly Roman and medieval pits. The cultivation episodes had resulted in the build-up of some 2.0-3.5m of so-called ‘garden soil’ (Buckley 1979-80).

The development proposed for 1980-81 was subsequently postponed, and the site remained a car park for the next eleven years. In view of the small amount of rescue archaeology funding available and the fact that the threat had receded, no further areas were excavated at that time.

**Final development proposal**
In 1989, Leicester City Council learnt that the site was to be redeveloped by the Property Services Agency (PSA) for the Inland Revenue and sought comments from their archaeological planning adviser, Leicestershire Museums, on the archaeological implications. The PSA had consulted the local authority for any observations and conditions following the normal planning clearance procedure on Crown Developments under DoE Circular 18/84. At this stage the building had, however, already been designed. Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 ‘Archaeology and Planning’ was still in a draft form at the time (published only in November 1990), but its principles had been embodied in the Leicestershire City Council supplementary planning guidance document ‘A Policy for Archaeology and Planning’ (1988), which had been drawn up in consultation with Leicestershire Museums, and these principles were followed in the subsequent negotiations regarding archaeological provision on the Causeway Lane site. T

Although the 1980 excavation had revealed comparatively little likelihood of deep stratification, it was considered, in view of the large area (over 1800m2) and the unpredictable survival of archaeological deposits in an urban context, that further archaeological field evaluation (AFE) should take place. Potential damage to surviving archaeological deposits from the piles for the new structure had been estimated at about 10%. Redesign of the building to protect archaeological levels was no longer an option and hence at the late design stage at which consultation took place, the Director of Leicestershire Museums advised the Planning Authority that planning clearance should be conditional on provision for archaeological evaluation and any subsequent necessary programme of archaeological work.

**Evaluation 1991**
Evaluation took place over a period of three weeks in January 1991 and sought to employ as non-destructive a strategy as possible through emptying backfilled cellars and removing their walls to provide a view of parts of the site in section. Ceilars for evaluation were selected from the survey already carried out. In the north-east corner of the site (Area 3), the cellar section indicated that deep stratification and structural remains were likely, but also hinted at the presence of large post-medieval quarries. The trench in the centre of the site (Area 1) indicated the potential for about 1.0m of stratification above the natural sand and gravel, with probable evidence for early Roman timber buildings and medieval activity.

A project design with costings was subsequently produced by RB for full excavation of the footprint of the proposed building. This was approved by English Heritage and the Inland Revenue in mid-March 1991. Although construction of the new building was scheduled for July 1991, agreement was reached to delay the redevelopment until late September 1991 to allow time for the excavation.
Excavation and analysis

Strategy

Excavation began on March 29th 1991 and continued until September 13th 1991. A total of fifty staff were employed on the excavation and a further fifty unpaid volunteers helped for short periods of time throughout the excavation

The site was excavated in three areas: Area 1 comprised the western end of the site, Area 2 the south-east end, and Area 3 the north-east end (fig.1). The results from the area excavated in 1980, to the west of Area 1, are included in this volume as Area 4. Areas 1 and 2 were opened at the same time, but Area 2 was completely recorded and excavated by mid-July whereas Area 1 was not completed until the end of the excavation, reflecting their widely differing levels of preservation. Area 2 had largely been truncated by 16th-century garden soil horizons down to the natural gravel, whereas archaeological layers in Area 1 had been formed in a hollow and therefore protected from truncation. Fortunately, the 19th and 20th century cellars were found to be far less extensive than initial estimates based on documentation and evaluation had suggested, and those areas unaffected by gravel quarrying remained essentially undisturbed. Area 3 was examined on completion of Area 2, after the demolition of the Unemployment Benefit Office, but was not totally excavated: surviving horizontal stratigraphy was fully investigated, whilst Roman gravel extraction pits were sampled to provide information on relationships, depth, dimensions, and finds retrieval (including environmental samples).

As the entire development area was to be excavated with the exception of the area of the 1980 site (Area 4; to be reserved for site accommodation), all spoil had to be taken off site. Overburden was 1m – 2.5m thick, resulting in c.3,600-4,500m³ of spoil. This was removed by two "Poclains" 360° tracked excavators and one "Caterpillar" bulldozer and carried away by a fleet of six ten-ton lorries. The overburden – consisting mainly of "garden soil" – was removed in spits to within 0.5m of the uppermost archaeological deposits and then carefully peeled back by the two Poclains using ditching blades to produce a smooth surface.

This garden soil is a deposit common to the north-east quarter of Leicester, and is presumed to derive from late medieval and early post-medieval manuring and cultivation. The soil's removal exposed an interesting topography, demonstrating the true extent of truncation (fig. 2). A large central area disturbed by 18th-century quarrying for sand and gravel effectively divided the site into the three noted areas, with no stratigraphic connections. Stratigraphic survival thus differed widely over the site: in Area 1 a depth of over 1.0m was common; in Area 2 up to 30cm survived around the edge, but much had been truncated to the top of natural gravel only leaving cut features undisturbed; in Area 3, extensive Roman quarrying had removed much of the natural gravel deposits and it was therefore difficult to determine what depth of horizontal stratigraphy had survived, although above the uppermost fill of the quarry pits about 1.0m of stratified deposits existed.

All the surviving archaeological deposits were either of Roman or medieval date, with no stratified deposits dating to the intervening centuries, although some artefacts found in later contexts could be dated to this period.

Excavation methodology

It was considered a high priority to excavate all Roman stratified layers by context and to empty fills from any cut features, particularly pits. Whilst this was achieved in Area 2, Area 3 was only available for excavation for six weeks prior to the excavation deadline. Truncation along the southern edge of the latter indicated that deposits survived to a depth in excess of 2.5m. Accordingly, in order to gain as much information as possible, identifiable pits were half sectioned by hand, the remaining layers excavated by machine and the resulting spoil checked for finds. In Area 1 an extensive homogeneous Roman deposit was encountered which was excavated in a series of 100mm spits in 5m squares until properly differentiated layers were revealed. After the removal of all the stratified layers, a series of pits was encountered which were half sectioned. Some were excavated only as far as was safe and practicable given their great depth; one phase 5 pit had the added complication of an early 20th-century concrete pile driven into one edge, removal of which caused additional damage.

Whilst truncation by later activity, particularly quarrying in the 18th century and Victorian buildings, had caused some damage to many Roman deposits, the level of disturbance was clearly much greater for the post-Roman and medieval contexts. Hence although the 1991 site evaluation had identified certain potential areas of investigation, it had also suggested that the survival of post-Roman levels was likely to be limited to pits. Since previous excavations in Leicester had undertaken full excavation and recording of medieval pits and detailed recording of sample areas of post-Roman garden soils, this strategy was considered to be of lower priority at Causeway Lane: thus all pits were half sectioned, but only a sample was fully excavated and a sample augered. The only exceptions to this policy were on Area 3, where the late commencement of excavation and the unexpected depth of Roman stratigraphy led to the more rapid removal of the medieval and post-medieval deposits. This resulted in separate pit fills remaining unrecorded, pits not being fully excavated, and profiles only recorded rather than full sections.

Recording

An Electronic Distance Measurer (EDM) was used to install a grid across the site to within 1 degree west of Ordnance Survey Grid North; this had to be reinstated periodically to allow for lowering of stratification. The grid was kept at 5.0m intervals where possible, but modern intrusions, particularly concrete piles and steel reinforcing in walls, meant that this was not always
practicable. All heights were calculated to above Ordnance Datum. All stratigraphic units were given a unique context number, and where contexts filled a cut such as a pit or ditch, a feature number was allocated. Contexts and features were recorded on LAU pro-forma feature and context sheets. All plans were drawn in pencil on pre-printed A2 sheets of drafting film at a scale of 1:20; obvious cuts were usually drawn before and after excavation, whilst individual contexts within those cuts were not normally drawn in plan. Where cuts could not be positively identified at the pre-excavation stage, each layer was drawn separately. Single context planning was used where appropriate. Sections were normally drawn at a scale of 1:10; those through deep features were drawn as composite (or running) sections and some loss (up to 100 mm) was noted at the interface.

**Post-excavation analysis**

Four levels were used to aid in the analysis of the evidence from Causeway Lane:

1. Those individual contexts (000) recorded on site that could be demonstrably shown to be stratigraphically and interpretatively linked were placed into subgroups (000/0).
2. Such subgroups were amalgamated into groups (G): these could either be linked stratigraphically or be interpreted as being similar or associated.
3. Groups were amalgamated to form subphases (sub 0.0): this relied upon site information and data from finds specialists to contribute towards dating and interpretation of the site record.
4. Groups of subphases were placed into a phase (phase): this relied upon interpretation and dating drawn from all sources of evidence, and was the only level that attempted to achieve correspondence across all areas of the site.

As noted above, little stratigraphic evidence from the post-Roman period was available for examination. Accordingly, the relevant evidence was examined in two ways. The first sought to identify stratigraphic changes and similarities within and between discrete features (usually pits). So all pit fills were initially grouped on the basis of their position within the pit and primary, secondary and tertiary deposits were identified where possible. The second approach analysed the spatial distribution and postulated a series of building 'plots', which were then tested for similarities and differences across the site. The first method had limited success since much of the pottery was broadly dated to between the mid-11th and the mid-13th century (Davies and Sawday, below), although the relationships between the upper, slumped fills and the overlying garden soil truncation were made more evident. The second approach proved more successful, particularly in Area 1 where the pits fell into neat north-south running lines, whereas in Areas 2 and 3 truncation, intercutting and other features confused the evidence.

**Archaeological background**

This section is intended to provide a broad chronological framework for the development of the town in the Roman and post-Roman periods to provide a context for the results of the project.

**Introduction**

The Causeway Lane site lies in a part of Roman and medieval Leicester where comparatively little fieldwork has been undertaken. The majority of large scale excavations undertaken before 1980 were located in the western part of the town, with results biased towards public and high status buildings of both the Roman and medieval periods, with little evidence for occupation which might be considered 'low status'. The location of the site – at the intersection of two Roman streets and on the corner of two medieval streets – meant that its archaeological potential was never in doubt. Before the 1991 excavation, the only field projects in this quarter of the town comprised sections across the town defences at Elbow Lane, Butt Close Lane, Sanvey Gate, Churchgate and St. Peter's Lane (Buckley and Lucas 1987); an excavation in Elbow Lane (Lucas 1989), the small excavation at Causeway Lane in 1980 (Buckley 1979-80) and two large excavations at St. Peter's Lane and Little Lane in advance of the Shires shopping centre development in 1988-9 (Lucas and Buckley 1989, 105-6).

Of published excavations within the walls, most are
concerned with Roman activity and comprise the Jewry wall site (Kenyon 1948), Elbow Lane (Lucas 1989) and groups of small sites in the Bath Lane (Clay and Mellor 1985) and West Bridge areas (Clay and Pollard 1994) along with a series of sections across the town defences (Buckley and Lucas 1987).

Comparatively little large scale excavation of medieval sites in Leicester has been undertaken so far, and only the examination of the extra-mural Augustinian Friary in 1973-78 has been published in detail (Mellor and Pearce 1981). Whilst the latter clearly represents a milestone for Leicester's medieval archaeology, with its detailed analysis of the site sequence, finds and environmental assemblages, the results cannot, perhaps, be regarded as typical of domestic occupation in the town as a whole. Although excavation of medieval structural sequences has been carried out in St. Nicholas Circle (Mellor and Pearce forthcoming), High Street (Cooper 1993), Bonners Lane (Finn 1994) and in a minor way elsewhere, most of the evidence we have so far relates to back-yard activity—mainly rubbish pits, cess pits and wells. Modern road widening has meant that access to medieval street frontages is rarely possible and when it is, there is often considerable destruction from 19th century cellars.

The Roman period
Summary of chronology

Initial urban occupation in Leicester is dated to the late first century BC and consisted of Iron Age settlement occupying an area of c.10ha on the west bank of the river Soar. After the Conquest, there is limited evidence to suggest that a small fortlet was established to control the crossing point of the river near the present West Bridge (Clay and Pollard 1994, 46). Evidence for timber buildings of the pre-Flavian period has been encountered, with the suggestion, on the basis of uniformity of alignment, that they have more in common with buildings within a fort than with a native settlement or vicus. Timber buildings later in the first century are on a different alignment, and are considered to represent the first Roman town, expanding to the east from the

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**Fig. 3: Roman Leicester.** Excavations referred to in the text: 1. Causeway Lane; 2. St. Peters Lane and 3. Little Lane (Shires, 1988-89); Lucas and Buckley 1989; 4. Butt Close Lane (Buckley and Lucas 1987, Site 4); 5. Elbow Lane (Lucas 1989); 6. St Peters Lane (Buckley and Lucas 1987, Site 3; 7. The forum; 8. Jewry Wall (baths) site; 9. Blue Boar Lane; town house and macellum; 10. St. Nicholas Circle, Mithraeum.
river, with the presence of wall plaster and opus signinum suggesting the gradual adoption of Roman tastes (ibid., 46). Ditches from the Little Lane excavation (Lucas and Buckley forthcoming) perhaps point to field systems beyond the settled area.

In the early second century, the street grid appears to have been formalised, if not entirely laid out, and at the same time, Ratae was probably established as a civitas capital. Timber buildings of this period are aligned on the street grid, and have been found beneath the northern and eastern defences, pointing to the rapid expansion of settlement (Buckley and Lucas 1987). In the middle and later years of the second century, a major programme of public and private building was undertaken. This included the construction of the forum and basilica complex, the Jewry Wall public baths, at least one temple and a variety of domestic, commercial and industrial premises (Clay and Mellor 1985; Clay and Pollard 1994). On most Roman sites in the town, masonry buildings begin to appear in this period, some perhaps commercial and domestic properties whilst others might be described as palatial town houses.

In the late second or early third century, the town was defended with a rampart and ditch, a wall perhaps being added later in the third century (Buckley and Lucas 1987). There is some evidence for suburban occupation outside the walls, to the north (N orthogonal: Buckley 1987, 92; Sanvey Gate: Finn 1993) and south (Bonners Lane: Finn 1994), comprising both timber and, possibly, substantial masonry buildings. To the west, across the river, excavations at Great Holme Street have suggested the existence of an industrial suburb, with evidence of pottery kilns and an abattoir (Lucas forthcoming a). Cemeteries surrounded the town, although few have been subjected to controlled excavation, that at Newark Street being one of the most extensive (Cooper 1996).

Evidence from the fourth century still remains elusive. This may be due to truncation from medieval activity, although a decline in urban occupation is possible in view of the evidence for street metalling having been dug into (Redcross Street: Clay and Pollard 1994, 48) together with evidence for the illegal extraction of silver from coinage within the ruins of the macellum (Wacher 1974,353).

The north-east quarter
Previous fieldwork has left a considerable gap in our knowledge of Roman urban topography in the north-east quarter of the town, the evidence coming mainly from small trenches across the defences and from excavations in advance of the Shires development. The boundaries of this notional 'quarter' are the defences to the east and north, the main east-west street carrying the Fosse Way to the south, and the street leading to the north gate, possibly a minor route, to the west. The Leicestershire Sites and Monuments Record (50 SE.PH., Abbey ward) lists a number of chance finds in the vicinity including two mosaic pavements and a late Roman coin hoard from the corner of Causeway Lane and East Bond Street (J. Davies, below). In addition, an approximate idea of the street pattern may be gained by projecting the grid from known alignments. The earliest clear evidence of Roman activity was found on the Little Lane excavation (Shires; 1988-9), and comprised probable field ditches dating to the first century AD, suggesting that this quarter was perhaps still in agricultural use at that time. The same site produced evidence from the late first - early second century for a north-south street (that which passes through the Causeway Lane site), fronted on both sides by timber buildings including one with a timber-lined cellar. Timber buildings of the same period were found sealed beneath the late second century rampart at Butt Close Lane and Elbow Lane (Buckley and Lucas 1987,49-50). On the basis of alignment, this activity all seems to post-date the street grid (c.100AD) and possibly the establishment of the town as a civitas capital. It is clear that the town expanded rapidly in the late first - early second century from the original focus of settlement on the east bank of the Soar, to the line of the late second century defences on the north and east sides, and possibly beyond. Later occupation in this quarter is only known from the Little Lane site, comprising the remains of substantial masonry buildings of the late second to third centuries again fronting the north-south street. On the St. Peter's Lane excavation (Shires, 1988-9), almost all Roman activity had been obliterated by post-Roman cultivation, save for a north-south ditch and a possible robbed stone cellar (Lucas and Buckley 1989, 105-6). In the fourth century, the evidence for occupation is based almost entirely on artefacts. On most sites in this quarter, little evidence of floors or the superstructure of walls has survived post-Roman cultivation or robbing respectively.

It is difficult at present to characterise the status of occupation in this quarter. One might speculate - on the slenderest of evidence - that the location of wealthier districts of Roman Leicester was influenced by factors including the proximity of major public buildings (the forum and the baths), the major east-west route through the town (the Fosse Way) and perhaps even a good view across the river. Certainly the densest concentration of mosaic pavements, some of which are of exceptionally high quality, is in the western half of the town (Johnson 1980,1). There are only a few in the north-east quarter, perhaps supporting the idea that this was rather a backwater, albeit one which must have contained buildings of some architectural pretension.

The Post Roman Period

The topography of Saxon and medieval Leicester
The nature of occupation in Leicester after the end of Roman Britain remains difficult to define due to the comparative dearth of archaeological evidence. Recent excavations some 250m to the south of the town, adjacent to the Roman road to Tripontium (Caves Inn) revealed the truncated remains of two sunken featured buildings associated with finds of the fifth-sixth centuries (Finn 1994, 167; Gossip 1998, 159-60). These represent the first Anglo-Saxon
Fig. 4: Medieval Leicester. Excavations referred to in the text: 1. Causeway Lane; 2. St. Peter's Lane and 3. Little Lane (Shires 1986-9; Lucas and Buckley 1989); 4. Butt Close Lane (Buckley and Lucas 1987, Site 4); 5. Elbow Lane (Lucas 1989); 6. St. Peters Lane (Buckley and Lucas 1987, Site 3).
structures to be located in or near the Roman town, but may indicate no more than a small suburban settlement and the evidence cannot be taken at present to suggest the continuation of urban life (P. Courtney pers. comm.). Within the walls, no structures of this period have been identified as yet, although pottery and other finds have been made in the north-east quarter at St Peter’s Lane (Shires), Causeway Lane and elsewhere, but always residual in later contexts.

Leicester became a Mercian bishopric soon after 670, one of the five Boroughs of the Danelaw in 877 and – based on the Domesday Survey – was apparently a flourishing town at the time of the Norman Conquest, with 322 houses, 65 burgesses and six churches (Ellis 1976, 38-9). There is little archaeological evidence so far; however, for late Saxon occupation, and only the church of St. Nicholas has fabric of this period. Courtney argues that it cannot be assumed that the town had an urban character by the tenth century despite its strategic military importance (1998, 114). Instead, he suggests (below p.91) on the basis of the distribution of finds, that the main street of Leicester in the Saxon-Norman period was the north-south running axial road, the medieval ‘High Street’ (later renamed Highcross and Southgate Streets). This takes the shortest route between the north and south gates, and apparently respects the Roman forum (Buckley and Lucas 1987, 56). As the town’s widest street, it would initially have served as the chief market and was, perhaps, the focus of pre-Conquest occupation.

After the Conquest, a motte and bailey castle was constructed in c.1068 at the south-west angle of the Roman defences in a position where it would dominate the town. In the early 12th century, the timber elements of the castle began to be replaced in stone and St Mary de Castro was endowed as a collegiate church. Other churches were clearly rebuilt at this time, as shown by surviving Romanesque fabric, and work commenced on the great abbey of St. Mary de Castro, later renamed the ‘High Street’ (later renamed Highcross and Southgate Streets). This takes the shortest route between the north and south gates, and apparently respects the Roman forum (Buckley and Lucas 1987, 56). As the town’s widest street, it would initially have served as the chief market and was, perhaps, the focus of pre-Conquest occupation.

The excavations on Causeway Lane have demonstrated intensive 12th century urban back yard activity in, what was apparently, a series of narrow plots whilst the St. Peters Lane (Shires) site to the south has shown organised gravel quarrying in the same period. However, there appears to have been a sudden population decline in the late 12th to early 13th centuries from which the area did not recover until the 19th century. In the archaeological record, particularly on the Causeway Lane and St Peters Lane (Shires) sites, this hiatus has manifested itself by a lack of pits or other features after the 12th century, and the considerable build up of so-called ‘garden soil’. This is a substantial deposit of dark brown loam, up to 3.5 metres in thickness, which has been taken to represent manuring and cultivation. The churches of St. Michael and St. Peter had been abandoned by the end of the 16th century and their parishes were absorbed by All Saint’s. Maps of the 17th and 18th centuries indicate that much of the north-east quarter by this time was occupied by gardens and orchards.

The decline is difficult to explain. In the early 18th century Samuel Carte suggested it was due to the sack of Leicester in 1173 by the forces of Henry II, although Courtney believes towns generally recovered rapidly from such short-term crises unless other factors were at work. Instead, he proposes the rise in importance of the medieval Swinesmarket (modern High Street), and the appearance of continually built-up frontages in the borough for the first time, creating higher population densities along the main commercial streets, whilst prompting contraction in less favourable areas (see below p.91).
Summary of the main results of the project

The Causeway Lane site in the Roman period

Excavation and post-excavation studies clearly highlighted the differing character of Roman deposits within each of the four excavated areas. Area 1 (insula XI) showed most potential for the early Roman period, a deep stratified sequence being available for the early first through to mid-second century. This sequence mainly suggested plot boundaries, but overall the stratigraphy was restricted here. The ditches pre-dated a largely robbed mid-second century stone structure, which may have continued in occupation into the third century, when an annexe or second building was erected. Possibly contemporary with the building(s) were a number of third-century pits and yard surfaces. Large pits in Area 3 (insula XII) indicated gravel extraction, with the backfills containing a very large assemblage of late third and early fourth century pottery, as well as painted wall plaster and coins (extending to AD 380). Subsequently, consolidated levelling combined with post and stake holes suggests the presence of flimsy timber structures. Little evidence for Roman occupation had survived on Area 4 (insula XI), although there was a large number of Roman finds found in medieval pits in this area.

Table 1: Summary of the site phasing with approximate dates and subphases within the excavated zones.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Subphases</th>
<th>Approximate Dates AD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Areas 1 &amp; 4</td>
<td>Area 2 Area 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1A</td>
<td></td>
<td>M id-late 1st century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1B</td>
<td></td>
<td>Late 1st century</td>
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<tr>
<td>1C</td>
<td></td>
<td>M id 1st-mid 2nd century</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2A, 2J</td>
<td>Late 1st century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2E, 2J</td>
<td></td>
<td>Late 1st-early 2nd century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2L</td>
<td>Early 2nd century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2F, 2G, 2H</td>
<td></td>
<td>Early - mid-2nd century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3A, 3C</td>
<td>Late 1st century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3B</td>
<td>3F</td>
<td>Early-mid 2nd century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3D</td>
<td></td>
<td>M id 2d - Early 3rd C.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3G</td>
<td>M id 3rd-4th century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4A</td>
<td>M id-late 3rd century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5A, 5B</td>
<td>M id-late 3rd century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5C</td>
<td>5D</td>
<td>M id-late 3rd century</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5E, 5F</td>
<td>L ate 3rd-early 4th century</td>
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<td>5G, 5H</td>
<td>Early 4th century</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6A, 6B</td>
<td>Early-mid 4th century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>M id-late 4th century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>?E arly post-Roman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>11th-12th century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>Early 12th-mid 13th C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>M id 13th-early 14th C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td>16-17th century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 9, 10</td>
<td>18th-20th century</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
tained throughout the Roman period, but was possibly encroached upon in places (below p.52).

The occupation on the site is apparently residential in character (below p.52) and in general conforms to the classic sequence observed on other Leicester sites: timber buildings of the late first to early second century, followed by more substantial stone buildings from the mid second century with a comparative lack of occupation in the third and fourth centuries. Evidence suggests that formal plot boundaries were probably established in the late first-early second century and that these continued to exert influence for some time on topographic development. In Area 1, the landuse exhibits continuity over a long period of time, with successive timber buildings and gravel yards occupying the same spot (below p.52). Of particular interest is the change from essentially domestic occupation in Area 3 in the late third century to gravel quarrying on an organised scale, but still respecting the street grid and possibly plot boundaries (below p.52).

Most of the structures of the Roman period identified on the site were of timber, exhibiting a variety of constructional techniques and differing status, including strip buildings, sheds and outbuildings (below p.53). Construction in timber continues through to the third century in Area 1, whilst Area 3 shows some evidence for a possible timber structure of the fourth century. The stone structure of Area 2 is a classic urban strip building, perhaps with a corridor (below p.54). The finds assemblage has provided considerable information on the range and variety of building materials including tile, slate, painted wall plaster, tesserae, window glass and fragments of burnt daub (below p.55). Whilst some of these derive from buildings on the site or in the immediate vicinity, others - in particular the large assemblage of painted wall plaster in Area 3 - were almost certainly tipped on the site following demolition of a substantial building elsewhere.

From the outset, analysis of environmental samples to recover plant and animal remains was considered to be a high priority in order to characterise the diet, health and living conditions of the inhabitants of the site in the past. The results have provided a wealth of information to complement that from the excavations to be a high priority in order to characterise the exploitation of domestic species as draft stock, for dairy and meat produce. It has also demonstrated the changing preference in meat consumption from sheep to cattle as the town became increasingly Romanised, supplemented by fowl - for meat and eggs - and to a limited extent, wild species (below p.55-6). The fish remains constituted the largest assemblage so far from Roman Leicester and have indicated the reliance on freshwater species, although the presence of marine fish and oysters has confirmed long-distance trade to one of the most landlocked towns of Britain.

From the earliest Roman phases, the finds and environmental assemblage attests local trade in food products, fuel and building materials from the hinterland of the town, whilst the pottery assemblage indicates the range of imported wares which were coming into Leicestershire from elsewhere in Britain and beyond (Clark, below). Although some of the site appears to have been primarily residential for much of the period, there is some evidence of industry, comprising horners' and probably skinners' or tanners' waste, offcuts from bone working and small scale bronze or brass casting and possibly glass making (below p.305).

One of the most contentious areas of study in relation to Roman towns is the nature of occupation in the late third and fourth centuries. At Causeway Lane, the truncation of later Roman levels by cultivation - including the destruction of street metalling, masonry and floors - is not in doubt, particularly in Area 2. Elsewhere on the site, timber buildings continue into the late third century, whilst fourth century activity is represented by quarrying and a possible timber structure (pp.59-60).

**The Causeway Lane site in the post-Roman period**

Anglo-Saxon

The excavation produced possible evidence for early Anglo-Saxon occupation in the vicinity. A few sherds of residual pottery and a brooch fragment attest activity in the fifth-sixth century in common with the St. Peters Lane and Little Lane (Shires) sites to the south (below p.83). An insubstantial timber structure cutting late Roman deposits in Area 3 could be early Anglo-Saxon rather than Roman, and if so represents the first structural feature from this period within the town walls. Evidence from the site has also shown that Roman fabric persisted into the medieval period, with street metalling and parts of the superstructure of stone buildings surviving into at least the 12th century.

Medieval

The only horizontal stratification of the medieval period which had escaped truncation occurred on the eastern edge of Area 2 and presumably continued beneath East Bond Street. The layers here seemed to indicate the presence of several phases of a 12th to 13th century timber structure with associated pits nearby containing fills of a similar date. Elsewhere the cut features were almost all moderate or deep pits, many with timber or clay lining, with fills dated to the 12th to
early 14th century. These pits fell into lines and it is likely that they represent evidence of individual properties.

Hence, with the exception of part of Area 2, most of the archaeological evidence from the medieval period at Causeway Lane represents back-yard activity. The finds and environmental assemblages have presented a wealth of material data for archaeological study providing a clear picture of the nature and status of domestic occupation, trade and industry, diet and health in this part of medieval Leicester.

The linear distribution of pits on the site has attested intensive 12th century occupation in narrow plots for the first time in this part of the town. Analysis of the finds assemblages from the different plots suggests essentially domestic occupation with simple household 'industry', but with perhaps more commercial production at the eastern end of the site (below pp. 85-86). In Area 2, some horizontal stratification survived and one plot produced evidence for a timber structure which reused the partly demolished walls of a Roman stone building (p. 86ff). The dating evidence suggests that this intensive occupation was relatively short-lived and had declined considerably by the mid-13th century, to disappear finally by the early 14th, to be replaced by dark, humic garden soils.

By far the greatest contribution the Causeway Lane excavation has made to our knowledge of the medieval town comes from the study of the contents of the many pits found on the site. Analysis has indicated the presence of industry, in the form of tanning and soap-making (below p. 87), cupellation and ironworking (p. 88). In addition, a tanner or tawyer (oil-tanner) may have been operating on the site and trade in skins and furs from small animals is suggested (p. 88). The finds assemblage suggests that goods were for the most part traded relatively locally, although fish was coming from the east coast (p. 89) and grapes and figs from further...
There is little evidence for high status imported luxury goods, and the pottery for the most part comes from the midland and eastern counties (p.89).

The faunal and environmental assemblages indicate the consumption of a relatively wide range of food stuffs (p.89), including fish, meat, poultry and game, eggs, cereals, vegetables and fruit. Wild food resources were only slightly represented, as were exotic imports of fruit; fish bones were from those fish at the cheaper end of the market (below p.337). Residues from pottery sherds suggest an apparent preference for pig or boar fat for cooking (below p.197).

Many of the pits were timber or clay lined and provided evidence for the disposal of latrine waste, animal dung and general domestic rubbish in much greater quantities than in the Roman period. It is clear that lime was dumped into the pits to seal such deposits and counteract the nuisance from flies. There is also evidence (from flies which breed in the dark) that pits were covered in some way. Other aspects of daily life are represented by pottery lamps containing fat residues from cattle or sheep (below p.337) whilst the plant remains include rushes presumably for floors or bedding.

**Post-medieval and modern occupation**

Other than a very few pits which were backfilled during the 16th and 17th centuries, the site seems to have been open ground or orchards from the 14th until the 18th century. Gravel extraction then destroyed much of the central area of the site and any direct links between the three excavated areas. An interesting group of clay pipes and a large part of a kiln was dumped on the site in the early 19th century, found sealed beneath a mid-19th-century cellar. The second half of the century witnessed considerable development on the site beginning with a row of terraced houses along Causeway Lane and continuing with a variety of factories, a tram depot, housing, a new street and, most recently, hospitals, the latter demolished only in 1974 when the site became a car park and the site of the Unemployment Benefit Offices (see Courtney, below).

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**Key to plans and sections, figs.7-52**
Fig. 6: Insula XI (Area 1) Subphase matrix for Roman deposits
Fig. 7: Insula XIX (Area 2) subphase matrix for Roman deposits
Fig. 8: Insula XII (Area 3) subphase matrix for Roman deposits