

In Search of the Early Medieval Monastic Archaeology of the Middle Thames

**Interim Report No. 2 on University of Reading Excavations
at Cookham, East Berkshire, August 2022**



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Introduction

This report summarises the results of excavation by the University of Reading in Paddock Field, an area lying to the west of Holy Trinity Church, Cookham, East Berkshire, 1st-27th August 2022. The results confirm the presence of substantial Mid-Saxon activity, including a riverside zone with commercial and industrial infrastructure and a separate cemetery. These discoveries follow trial excavations in 2021, and are consistent with Early Medieval documentary evidence for a royal monastery in Cookham in the 8th-9th centuries AD. The 2022 excavations were delivered as a University of Reading Field School, working with members of local archaeology and metal-detecting groups. The archaeological and historical background of the site in the context of the early medieval Middle Thames were detailed in the Interim Report on the 2021 excavations, which can be downloaded from <https://research.reading.ac.uk/middle-thames-archaeology/projects/cookham-excavations/>

The results of the 2022 excavation are summarised, beginning with a description of the archaeological features, with a brief summary of the artefactual assemblage. The report concludes with an overview of the excavation findings and a discussion of how they throw light on research questions pertaining to an understanding of early medieval monasticism in the Middle Thames.

All dates in the report are AD unless indicated otherwise. The conventional subdivisions of the Saxon period are: Early – c. 450-650; Mid – c. 650–850; Late - c. 850-1050. Context numbers are shown in square brackets [] for cuts and round brackets () for fills/deposits. Contexts investigated and numbered separately but later determined to be the same feature are shown thus (C1004=C1013=C1018). Illustrations copyright University of Reading.

2022 investigations

Excavation methods

Two open area trenches were excavated in Paddock Field in August 2022. Their location and extent was based on geophysical surveys, and the results of six test pits opened in 2021. Trench 1, located in the north-east corner of the field, extended 30 x 30m and was aligned broadly north-south. The modern riverbank is about 50m north of the trench edge, and parallel to it. Trench 2, in the south-west of the field, was rectangular covering 12 x 10m with a 5 x 5m eastern extension, aligned broadly NW-SE. The total area of the trenches was approximately 1045 m², representing about 16% of the field area. In each trench, turf and a 30-40cm layer of silty topsoil and subsoil were removed by machine. Below this level, the trenches were excavated by hand.

The trenches and spoilheaps were scanned with metal detectors continuously throughout the machining and subsequent excavation. Bulk Finds (bone, ceramic building material, metal, daub and mortar) were recorded by context. Small Finds (glass, significant metal and pottery artefacts, human remains) had their locations recorded individually and were removed for specialist analysis and interpretation. Bulk soil samples were taken from selected contexts for flotation and categorisation by material. Excavated soil was dry-sieved with a 5mm mesh. 30 spot locations in Trench 1 were investigated by X-ray fluorescence (pXRF) to determine their geochemical composition. Geophysical testing was carried out on areas outside the trenches, in the southeast of the field and in the grounds of the Parish Centre.

Excavated features were recorded on context sheets, plans, section drawings and by static and aerial photography. This included photogrammetry to enable 3D reconstruction of the site. At the end of the excavation season, unexcavated features in Trench 1 were protected with permeable fabric covering and the trenches were backfilled and reseeded. Again, metal detecting was done during the backfilling process. All excavation records have been recorded on IADB (Integrated Archaeological Database). This is publicly available at www.iadb.co.uk/iadb2017.php with read-only access

(username: student@cookham and password: student). Specialist reports will be posted online at <https://research.reading.ac.uk/middle-thames-archaeology/projects/cookham-excavations/> as they become available.



Figure 1. Paddock Field during excavation. Right side of image - North

The opening up of large windows within Paddock Field demonstrated wide and well preserved Mid-Saxon archaeological strata of the type rarely seen in rural contexts. In Trench 1 this included street and path surfaces, floor levels and hearths. As will be seen, not all of the trench area was fully excavated horizontally or vertically in the 2022 season.

Trench 1

Overview

The main features and zones in Trench 1 were:

- i. an extensive midden spread sealing much of the Mid-Saxon activity over the northern half of the trench;
- ii. a substantial trackway constructed or reused Roman building materials, parallel to the waterfront to the north, some 15m long and running under the baulk at the eastern side of the trench;
- iii. a gravel lane extending 20m southwards from the E-W trackway, with gravel paths radiating east and west, flanked by:
- iv.& v. two ranges of timber buildings with associated floor surfaces, hearths, oven bases, refuse deposits and cess pits. Detail for the wooden structures, in the form of postholes and plank slots, was recorded in the eastern area where excavation was more advanced;
- vi. a later phase of boundary definition comprising a N-S ditch running close to the western baulk of the trench, probably a continuation of a similar ditch in Trench 2, and an E-W ditch located in the south-west quadrant of the excavated area.

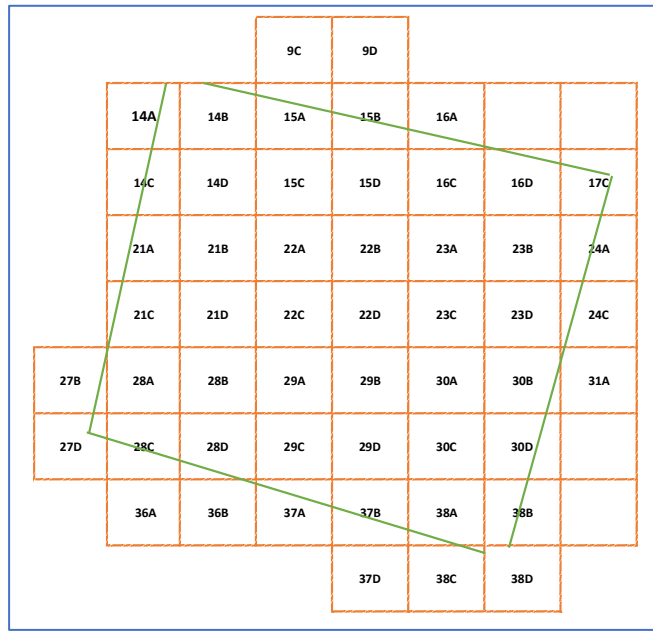


Figure 2. Trench 1 grid squares referred to in text, aligned N-S. Green overlay shows limits of 2022 excavation



Figure 3 . Trench 1 partially excavated, showing E-W trackway, N-S lane, industrial zones, ditches E-W (yellow) and N-S (blue). Midden deposit – dark brown area at top and right of image. Top of image: North.

The detail of these features and zones are described in the sections below.

i. Midden spread

A homogeneous dark-brown midden deposit extended over much of the north-east sector of Trench 1 sealing Mid-Saxon features below. This was excavated in a series of 5m squares (C1058=C1059=C1089=C1015) with bulk environmental samples taken from each. The thickness of the midden was greatest at the north-west corner of the trench where it measured 0.3m thick.

These widespread deposits suggest that the site was subject to relatively swift abandonment. Dateable objects from the midden, including zoomorphic strap-ends, indicate that abandonment occurred by the end of the 9th century. Following abandonment, a perpendicular arrangement of E-W and N-S boundaries appears to have been laid out across the site, as indicated by ditches [C1035] and [C1084], described below. This suggests that the main settlement had shifted to a new location with Paddock Field serving a peripheral role.

ii. E-W trackway

Beneath the midden deposits in the north-east of the trench lay a substantial cambered trackway (C1002) running east-west parallel to the river. The trackway was c. 5m wide. It ran from the eastern trench edge for a distance of some 15m westwards, where it turned south. The trackway had been cut at its eastern end by a slot excavated in 2005, and re-excitation of this cut in 2022 showed the trackway in section. Its maximum thickness was c. 0.4m. It was constructed from flint nodules and chalk blocks mixed with fragments of Roman CBM, with a patchy metallised surface. The substantial trackway could have carried heavy traffic such as carts to load and unload goods from shipping moored on the riverbank.



Figure 4. Section of E-W trackway C1002 looking west

The Roman CBM included fragments of roof tile and flue tile and adhering mortar, showing that it came from a demolished domestic residence rather than an agricultural building. There is no indication whether this building was nearby; the material could have been brought by boat from further away. A total of some 35 kg of CBM was excavated from the site in 2022.

The trackway surface itself was not excavated in 2022. At its western end the road surface was less densely packed. It was cut by a posthole or small pit (C1036) 0.27m x 0.45m x 0.22m deep, filled with redeposited soil. It was also cut by a circular pit (C1049) in the middle of the trackway, 1.50m in diameter, excavated to a depth of 1m. Its fill was ashy material with much animal bone, charcoal and flint, probably hearth refuse. Below this its base slumped into a void, which was not excavated further. This void was possibly a well, cut through the trackway.

iii. N-S lane

In grid square 15D the E-W trackway (C1002) turned southwards. It became a narrower dense gravel lane running some 20m through grid squares 22B, 22D, 29B and 30D. In grid square 22D the dense gravel lane radiated into occupation areas to the east and west, possibly short paths to assumed structures indicated by postholes in grid squares 23C and 23D (see below), possibly derived from use of the lane. This overlay an occupation deposit (C1038), 4.85m x 3.40m x 0.05m deep. The deposit contained copper alloy metal fragments and slag, iron nails, animal bone, glass and pottery fragments. In square 30D the gravel surface became much sparser, eventually fading out. The deposits in the three grid squares were strongly suggestive of craft/industrial activity in this area.

iv. Occupation zone to east of the N-S lane

On its eastern side in grid square 23A, below the midden spread, was a sub-circular spread of flint cobbles (C1068) 1.2m x 1.25m with a disturbed linear extension, presumed to be an oven base. Further east still, in grid squares 30A and 30B, was a N-S line of plank slots (C1090) 0.42m x 0.13m x 0.1m deep, (C1044) 0.34m x 0.07m, (C1045) 0.4m x 0.1m and (C1046) 0.39m x 0.1m. These indicated the wall of a timber structure.



Figure 5. Area of internal features and floor surfaces east of N-S lane; oven base C1068 in the right foreground.

To the east of the trackway in grid squares 23C, 23D and 30A was another large occupation area which measured 10m wide E-W, extending to the trench edge, and about 15m N-S from the edge of the E-W track. Various features were apparent in this area. Contexts C1123, 1082 and 1093 were layers of scorched soil comprising a hearth.

The midden deposit (C1058=C1059=C1089=C1015) continued to the west of these features as a thin occupation layer 0.05m thick. It sealed numerous hearths and flooring in an area roughly 5m x 5m. These were not excavated in 2022, but were investigated for geochemical anomalies/peaks using pXRF. (C1083) was a sub-rectangular deposit of yellow beaten brick earth 1.2m x 1.4m. It might have been a flooring surface for heavy equipment such as an anvil or quenching pot. Another more crumbly patch of daub surface (C1134) 0.95m x 0.26m might have had a similar function. A larger daub surface (C1139), 1.7m x 2.24m, was overlain by a patch of scorched brickearth 0.5m x 0.7m, assumed to be a hearth (C1129) and a separate ashy deposit (C1131), perhaps from cooking or an industrial process. Adjacent to the daub surface (C1139) was a charred red deposit (C1128) from a hearth (C1093). A third hearth (C1135) 0.6m x 0.4m was seen, but not excavated.

Extending south into grid squares 30A, (C1059) was a silty occupation deposit, the same as (C1058=C1089=C1015). To enable systematic sampling it was excavated in 1m squares. Beneath this deposit were a group of postholes (C1076) 0.5m x 0.5m depth not recorded, (C1105) 1m x 0.8m x 0.65m deep, all cut into the natural. (C1130) 0.35m x 0.74m x 0.12m deep appeared to be a pit associated with the structure supported by the postholes. Another two possible hearths were noted in grid squares 30C and 38A, but not excavated. There were further gravel patches in grid squares 38A and 38C, in the bottom SE corner of the trench.

v. Occupation zone with intercutting pits in NW corner of trench

In the NW corner the midden spread (C1017=C1018=C1021) overlay a gravel floor or yard surface (C1030), 2.0m x 2.0m. Its cobbles were larger than those in the trackway to the east. To the west of (C1030) was an area of sandy silt 8.0m x 5.0m x 0.1m maximum depth (arbitrary context C1025) and a denser patch of cobbles (C1143) 0.9m x 1.0m, adjacent to deposits of gravel (C1142) 3.1m x 2.3m, with daub and animal bone inclusions. This overlay a silty occupation deposit (C1050). Further still to the west (C1025) was associated with another gravel spread. These features were not excavated in 2022. They are likely to be associated with a structure, as yet undefined.



Figure 6. Occupation zone in NW corner of Trench 1. Right side of image - North

Adjacent to, and slightly to the south of this gravel spread, a group of three intercutting pits was excavated. The earliest was [C1055], cut into the natural. It was circular in plan, 1.1m in diameter and 0.8m deep, with sloping sides, with a 0.20m layer of compact redeposited clay at its base. Its lowest fill (C1039) was a fairly loose deposit of soil containing some charcoal, daub and burnt flints. Above this was a 0.42m deposit of hearth clear-out (C1033), charcoal rich with potsherds, animal bone, daub and CBM. This fill was cut by second pit [C1054] 1.7m x 1.2m. Its sides were vertical, bellling out on the southern edge, with a flat base. Its lower fill (C1061) was a clayey deposit 0.3m thick with small amounts of daub and charcoal and greenish material. The deposit appeared to be hearth rake-out, and possibly cess. Above this was a 1m thick layer (C1027) of fill, densely packed with charcoal, daub, ceramic pieces and animal bone. It contained several fragments of iron and copper and a bone pin beater SF322. It was overlain by a 0.05m capping layer (C1032) and slumped soil (C1031).



Figure 7. Sectioned pit cluster in NW corner of Trench 1.

Deposit (C1033) in pit [C1055] was cut by a further sub-circular pit [C1118] 1.34m wide and 0.5m deep. Its sides were undercut, making a bell-shaped profile. Its lowest fill (C1111) measured 0.2m in depth and contained a series of charcoal lenses. Above this was (C1110), a 0.15m layer of dark grey soil with charcoal and daub, probably hearth rake-out. It underlay a 0.3m silty deposit (C1117) containing some charcoal. This was in turn capped by (C1032) and (C1031).

The pits and their fills indicate an area of domestic occupation at the western end of the E-W trackway. Its features were poorly defined, and will be excavated in a future season.

vi Later ditches [C1035] and [C1084]

At the northwest corner of the trench, and extending roughly southwards, was a ditch [C1035]. This feature probably forms the same N-S boundary ditch encountered in Trench 2, a radiocarbon date from which confirms that it was dug late in the Anglo-Saxon sequence.

A 1m slot was excavated, showing the ditch to be 2.33m wide and 0.9m deep with a U-shaped profile. Its sides were concave and steep, with a flat base. The ditch cut an occupation deposit (C1050), described above. The basal fill of the ditch (C1034) 0.55m was a mixture of soil erosion from the ditch

edges, and silting. A middle fill (C1053), 0.55m deep, was sandier, with lenses and blobs of natural soil indicating redeposition of upcast material, perhaps from a bank to the west. A compact silty top fill (C1026), 0.4m deep, containing animal bone and some snail shells and a Cu alloy pin SF334.

A second ditch [C1084] – a continuation of the ditch found in Test Pit 2 in 2021 – was sectioned at the south western edge of the trench in grid squares 28A and 27B against the baulk. [C1084] was V-shaped in profile with sloping edges, 1.50m wide at its top and 0.8m deep. Its single fill (C1085) was gravel-rich and contained small quantities of pottery and daub.



Figure 8. Section of N-S boundary ditch C1035

The ditch fill continued south-eastwards from the excavated slot for about 4m in grid square 28A. Its surface was overlain by occasional gravel patches, scatters of bone, and a worked stone fragment (quern?). It was flanked by a hearth surrounded by a scatter of fired stones and fired clay. These features will be investigated in a future season, when they will be assigned context numbers.

The ditch's southern side cut a sub-circular pit [C1086] 1.50m x 0.80m x 0.80m deep with steep concave sides. Its lower fill (C1087) 0.68m deep, was silty-sandy and greenish-brown suggesting cess content. The middle fill (C1120) was 0.47m deep, dark grey-brown, with shell and frequent charcoal inclusions, suggesting a change of use after the cess pit's primary function ceased. Above this, the upper fill (C1121) 0.32m deep was hard grey-brown sandy silt with some charcoal inclusions.

The E-W ditch [C1084] and cess pit [C1086] truncated the cut of another pit [C1122], sub-rectangular 1.40m N-S x 1.0m E-W, x 0.50m deep and overlying natural. It had steep sides and a flat base. It contained a single fill (C1123) of clay and silt with flint flakes.

Trench 1 - summary

Trench 1 represents a widespread zone of intensive craft, industrial and domestic activity which begins to throw light on the significant economic infrastructure which supported the religious institution and its inhabitants. Processes here include refuse disposal in pits (potentially with a prior life as receptacles for storing food), and cooking in large ovens/hearths. Large lumps of iron slag, some characteristic of smelting slag, were identified in the top of unexcavated features. This zone exhibits clear spatial planning articulated by the substantial E-W trackway close to the river and the perpendicular gravel lane flanked on either side by buildings and workshops. Overall, the findings of excavation in Trench 1.

An extensive midden deposit sealed much of the Mid-Saxon activity zones. This suggests that the site was abandoned relatively swiftly. Dateable artefacts indicate that abandonment occurred by the end

of the 9th century. Following abandonment, a perpendicular arrangement of N-S and E-W ditches appears to have been laid out. This suggests that the main settlement had shifted to a new location, with Paddock Field becoming peripheral.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was located in the southwest corner of Paddock Field. It was excavated following the discovery of an E-W ditch securely stratified to the Mid Saxon period in Test Pit 5 during the 2021 trial excavation. Trench 2 was rectangular, aligned roughly NW-SE. Its sides were 20m x 15m, with an extension 5m x 5m at its eastern end.

Overview

The main features found in Trench 2 were:

- i. A burial zone in the western sector of the trench comprising intact and disturbed interments. The burials appeared to follow Christian burial practice and one skeleton was radiocarbon dated to the first half of the Mid-Saxon period;
- ii. An E-W boundary ditch with a curving eastern extremity cut by a more substantial N-S ditch;
- iii. A substantial N-S linear boundary ditch, likely to be a continuation of the N-S boundary ditch [C1035] in Trench 1 which has been radiocarbon dated to the Late Saxon period;
- iv. A pair of sub-circular rubbish pits.

These features are described in more detail below.

i. *Burial zone*

Excavation in the vicinity of the N-S ditch at the western end of the trench revealed several E-W aligned burials that seem to form part of regular rows justifying its identification as a portion of a part of a larger well-organised cemetery. Partly due to the difficulties of defining grave cuts, only a sample of burials in this area were examined, but the indications are that interments are quite closely packed. Detail on the excavated burials is as follows:

<SK317> cut [C2027]; fill (C2028)

This linear grave was aligned E-W. It was c. 2.0m long. Its width and depth were unknown because of severe truncation by ditch [C2002]. It contained a partial skeleton <SK317> which had been truncated by the digging of the ditch. The skull and cervical vertebrae were present on the western side of the grave cut. There was trauma to the right side of the skull and mandible, indicating post-depositional damage. The ditch cut completely removed the torso and upper legs. The lower legs and feet remained in situ, with possible minor disturbance, on the eastern side of the grave, which was narrower. The lower legs and feet were close together, suggesting that the body had been wrapped in a shroud. The skeleton was lifted for further investigation.



Figure 9. View across burial SK 317 looking east showing legs and feet in situ beyond cut of N-S boundary ditch.

A bone sample was taken for radiocarbon dating. The result (Beta Analytic 639209) gave a calibrated date of 659-774 cal AD (95.4% probability).

<SK483> Grave cut [C2041]; fill (C2042)

The grave and its burial cut were identified approx. 1.4m below the modern ground surface and had been truncated by the cut of the later burial SK484. Only the semi-circular eastern end of the grave remained. Skeletal elements present were the feet and parts of the lower legs, and three human teeth. The ends of the toes were absent.

<SK484> cut [C2050]; fill [2051]

This was a pile of disarticulated human bone, contained in a small sub-circular pit at the eastern edge of the N-S ditch [C2024]. Skeletal elements present were both legs (without feet), left arm, lower right arm, cranial and mandible fragments, and a large number of unidentified smaller bones. These disarticulated elements were placed over the feet of the individual SK483 which remained in situ beyond the eastern cut of ditch [C2024].



Figure 10. Disarticulated burial SK484.

<SK485> cut [C2038]; fill (C2039)

This grave was adjacent to the N-S ditch [C2002], though not cut by it. The cut of the trapezoidal grave was 2.09m long. The western (head) end was 0.83m wide, narrowing to 0.60m at the feet. It was 0.40m deep. The profile of the skeleton suggested that it had been wrapped in a shroud. The non-natural position of a finger bone, and post-depositional damage to the pelvis, suggest that the grave was disturbed by another grave cut to the south-west. The grave fill contained bone and pottery fragments.



Figure 11. View of burial SK485.

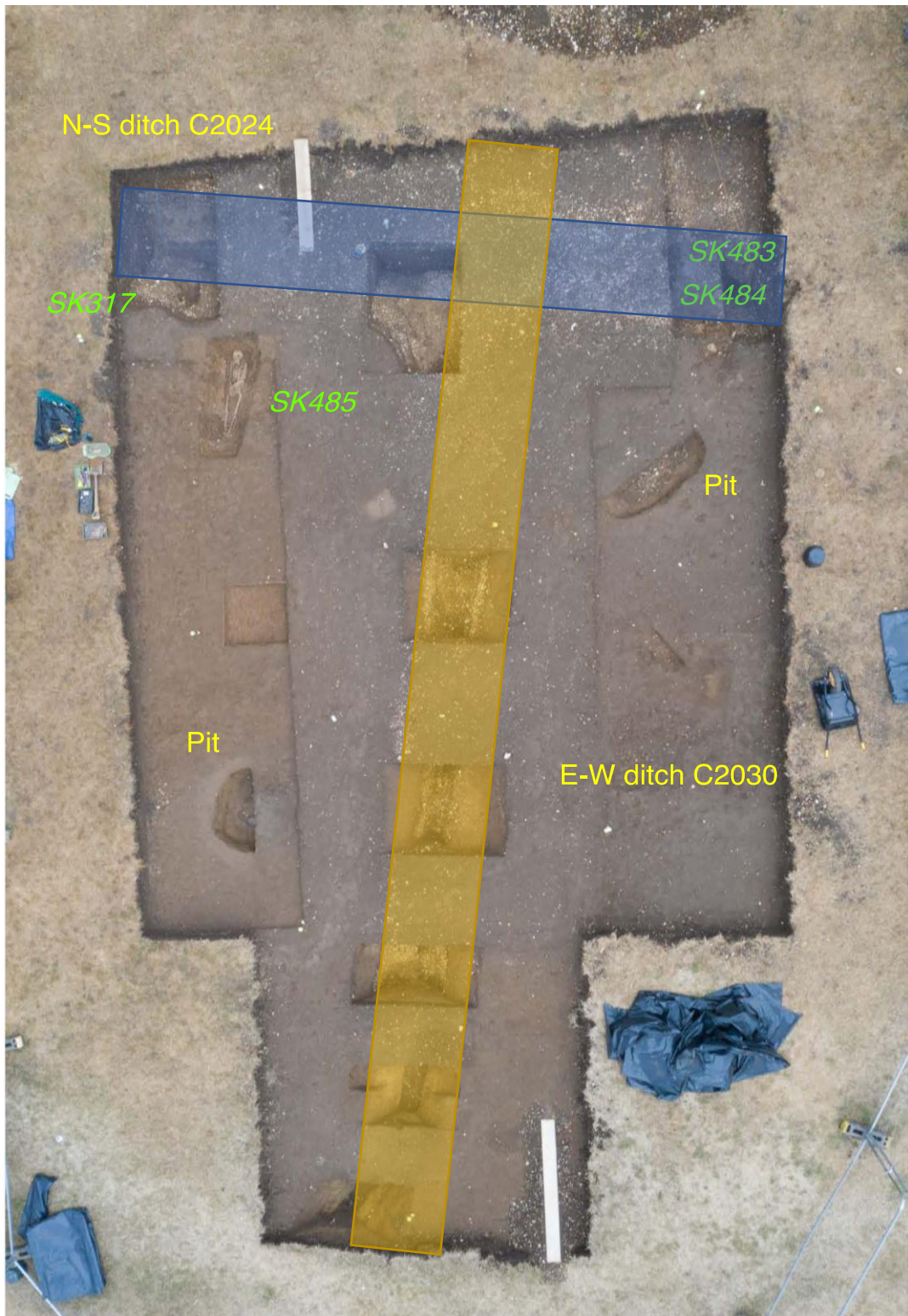


Figure 12. Trench 2 post excavation. E-W ditch (orange) N-S ditch (blue). Right side of image - North

ii. **E-W ditch**

Ditch [C2030] bisected Trench 2 on a broad E-W alignment with a slight southern curvature towards the eastern baulk of the trench. Sampled in three slots, it measured 1.2-1.6m wide and 0.8-1.0m deep and had a V-shaped profile, with steep sides breaking to a rounded base about 0.4m wide. The variations in fill thickness, soil consistency and colour between the slots, and the similarities of their

inclusions, suggest that the ditch was backfilled over a relatively short period, rather than the result of more natural erosion processes which would have resulted in a more consistent fill along its length.

At its western extent, this ditch intersected with a larger N-S ditch, [C2032=C2024=C2002]. A sondage dug at the intersection confirmed that this was the earlier of the two boundaries. This is also supported by the fact that the upper gravelly fill of the N-S ditch ran continuously across the western extent of the trench.



Figure 13. View across ditch C2030 looking west.

iii. *N-S linear boundary ditch*

At the western side of Trench 2, a substantial boundary ditch [C2032=C2024=C2002] was excavated in 3 slots. Its full extent in trench 2 was >10m. Its depth was 1.10-1.20m, and its width at the top was 1.55m. It was V-shaped with slightly convex sides and a flat/rounded base. The ditch was closely aligned with the N-S ditch excavated in Trench 1, and was a similar depth (25.76m OD and 25.86m OD).

The ditch fills contained very little material culture, suggesting a process of backfilling over a short period of time. An articulated animal bone <SF508> from the basal fill of the ditch was submitted for radiocarbon dating (Beta Analytic 639210) and yielded a result dating to 875-994AD (89.3% probability).

iv. *Non-burial activity*

A pair of sub-circular rubbish pits, [C2036] and [C2034] were identified to the east of the burial zone. [C2036] was 1.78m long, 1.23m wide and 0.30m deep, with two fills of brown clayey-silty soil, which produced a range of domestic artefacts including pottery, animal bone, CBM and glass. [C2034], a similar size and depth, contained an Anglo-Saxon bone pin beater SF449, a tool type used in weaving, and a metal disc SF 486, possibly a lamp holder.



Figure 14. Pit C2304 under excavation.

Trench 2 - summary

Trench 2 revealed an area of tightly clustered E-W burials with spatially defined rows that seem to form part of a larger cemetery. The radiocarbon date confirms that the cemetery is broadly contemporary with the other Mid-Saxon activity represented within Paddock Field. A number of these burials had been disturbed by the N-S boundary ditch, the dating of which indicates that the cemetery had gone out of use by the Late Saxon period, probably in the second half of the 9th century, synchronising with the abandonment horizon seen in Trench 1. The relationship of the E-W boundary to the cemetery is more uncertain because the excavated portion lay beyond (to the east) of the area of burials. The recovery of a disarticulated human skull from its upper fill in 2021 might suggest that it too postdates the cemetery, but this discovery does not preclude the possibility that its active use as a boundary was coeval with one or more phases of burial. The recovery of Mid-Saxon pottery and other diagnostic artefacts from the slots excavated in 2021 would support this scenario. Mid-Saxon activity in this sector of Paddock Field is further indicated by a pair of rubbish pits which could be potentially contemporary with the use of the cemetery.

Artefactual perspectives

As in 2021, animal bone and Roman ceramic building material formed the most abundant categories of bulk find from stratified Mid-Saxon contents. Mid-Saxon pottery was also found in significant quantities from certain contexts (particularly the pit cluster in Trench 1), with organic tempered wares predominating. Several categories of small find were recovered both by hand excavation and via the metal-detection of spoil heaps. The latter recovery method generated an important collection of decorated 8-9th-century metalwork, including high-status pins and strap-ends in silver and copper-alloy redolent of the aristocratic monastic setting under investigation. Stratified finds included several sherds of vessel glass, notably a distinctive form in a black fabric with yellow trailing known from other Mid-Saxon monastic contexts such as Brandon, Suffolk. Items of a more domestic utilitarian nature

include bone pin-beaters used in textile manufacture, iron knives, and a pair of iron fittings preliminarily identified as lamp holders.

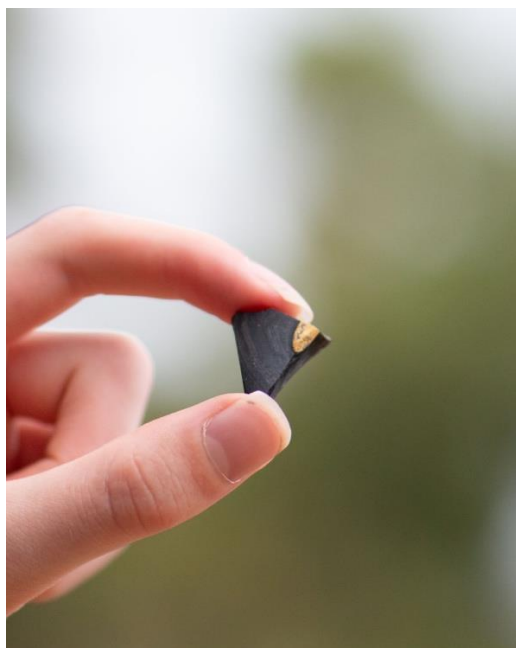


Figure 15. L: 'Pin-beaters' - bone tools used in weaving. R: decorated vessel glass, black with a yellow trail.



Figure 16. (not to scale). 9th-century strap-ends bearing Trewhiddle-style animal decoration.



Figure 17. (not to scale). Silver-gilt pin with openwork head in the form of a backward-biting beast with a speckled body. This animal ornament is typical of high-status Mercian metalwork style of the later 8th century.

Concluding discussion

2022 marked the inaugural season of open-area excavation within the Paddock. This allowed the preserved Anglo-Saxon strata first glimpsed in 2021 to be viewed at an extensive scale, a scale at which we can begin to appreciate the full complexity and rich research potential of Cookham as an early medieval monastic landscape. It should be emphasised that only a small sample of the archaeology revealed in 2022 was subject to excavation, so interpretation can only be tentative and preliminary at this stage. Nevertheless, important advances have been made in understanding the spatial organisation and chronological development of the site and a coherent narrative is starting to emerge.

The evidence currently available suggests that the early medieval occupation and activity represented within the Paddock was established *de novo* in the Mid-Saxon period in association with the foundation of Cookham's documented monastery. Future discoveries and analysis should enable the inception of the monastery to be established in tighter chronological terms; at present, there is nothing in the artefactual record that stands out as recognisably earlier than the 8th century.

There is still much work to do to resolve the internal phasing of the Mid-Saxon archaeology, but the overall impression is that the area under investigation represents intensive occupation and usage

over perhaps a 150-year period through until the second half of the 9th century. As observed in the conclusion to the 2021 Interim Report, there are clear distinctions in the character of the archaeology across the Paddock indicating spatial zoning within this part of the monastic settlement. As revealed in Trench 1, infrastructure associated with production (putative workshop buildings) and provisioning the monastic community (bread ovens) with accompanying access arrangements (the E-W trackway and the N-S lane) existed towards the riverfront. We can be confident that this zone was fairly extensive because its limits lie outside the 30 x 30m extent of Trench 1. However, there were no signs of similar activity in Trench 2 which displays very different usage, namely the eastern limits of a contemporary Mid-Saxon cemetery fringed to the east by a light smattering of domestic pits. More work is needed to establish the character and organisation of the cemetery, but there are indications that it could be quite extensive and may represent a lay population.

Contrary to the assertion made in 2021, the boundary ditches that criss-cross the site can no longer be assumed to be an integral feature of the Mid-Saxon landscape. This certainly applies to the large north-south ditch which returned a late Saxon radiocarbon date, and it may be that some of the east-west ditches also belong to this era. The former boundary which cuts through several Mid-Saxon burials may relate to the formalised re-planning of Cookham following the abandonment of the monastic settlement at some point in the second half of the 9th century. Complementary witness to such abandonment is provided by the thick and extensive accumulation of midden material sealing Mid-Saxon archaeology at the north-east sector of the site. Taken in combination, the evidence from both trenches would appear to suggest that the monastic focus did not outlive the 9th century.

The artefactual evidence has been briefly summarised above. In date, function and character, the material from 2022 has strong echoes with the smaller assemblage of artefacts recovered in 2021. However, it does bring to attention new tendencies including the quality and diversity of Mid-Saxon vessel glass and opulent silver dress accessories, both of which attest the high-status lifestyle of Cookham's monastic occupants.

Overall, the results from last summer have confirmed the high research potential previously speculated by pilot work in the Paddock in 2021. The site has scope to transform understanding of the character, organisation and lifestyle of Anglo-Saxon monasteries in the Thames region and pose new questions connecting with much wider research agendas of international significance.

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