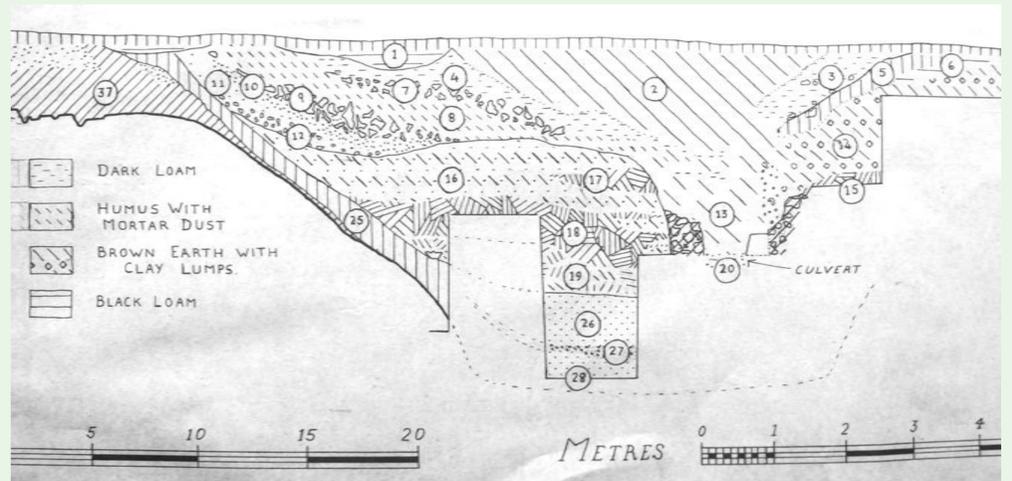


THE WALLINGFORD BURH TO BOROUGH RESEARCH PROJECT

CASTLE AND NORTH GATE EXCAVATIONS 1965-1968

Work on excavation archives

Excavations at Wallingford Castle were conducted by Nicholas Brooks and a team of volunteers in 1965, 1966 and 1968. Results were outstanding, revealing significant information about the development of the town and castle from late Saxon to Norman and medieval times. One of the tasks of the Wallingford Burh to Borough Research Project is to work through the excavation archives – plans, sections, journals, photographs, slides, material artefacts – and publish a written account of the results of those early excavations.



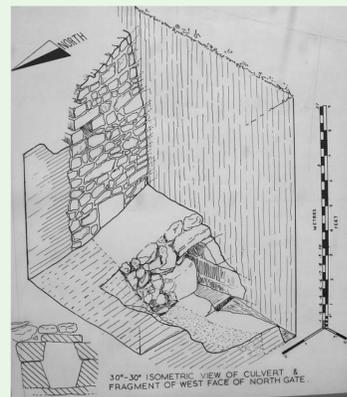
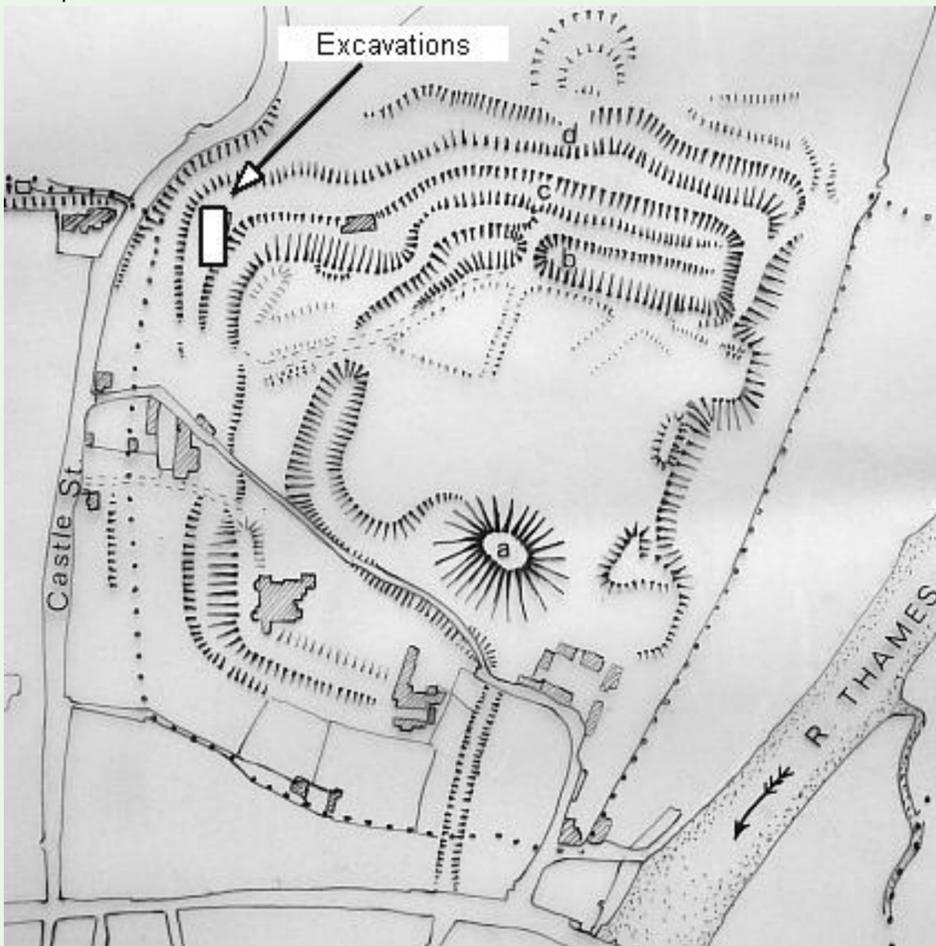
Above: A section through the town ditch, with the lower levels of the internal earthen rampart on the left. This is just one of many fine drawings by Brooks and his team.

A stone gateway

The discoveries span the whole period from the 9th to the 13th century. To the earliest phase belong the original cut of the broad town ditch and the lower levels of the internal town rampart. The ditch was over 10m wide and 4m deep. From a layer of stones pitched into the ditch the excavator deduced the existence of a later town wall that stood on top of the rampart. Part of an even later stone gateway was found, dated to the 13th century, along with the surface of a road that ran through the gate over a causeway and a stone culvert.

Archaeology in the 1960s

Excavations in the 1960s were very different from the open excavations of today but effective nonetheless. Trenches were laid out in a Mortimer Wheeler style grid-pattern, so that vertical sections could be joined together to give a series of profiles across the site. One long trench was excavated right across the ditch, inner rampart, and part of the town interior.

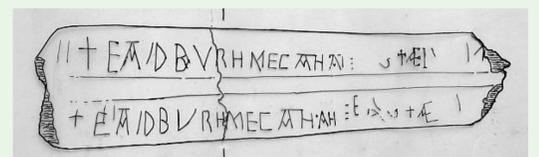


Left: A drawing of the west side of the stone gateway, road surface and culvert.

Centre: Looking through the culvert from the east. This culvert would have channelled the waters of the ditch under the road as it passed through the gate.

The building, ovens and bone weaving sword

In opening up a large area along the course of the road, Brooks found evidence that the road had been shifted to the north not once but twice, when the second and third outer moats of the castle were made. Traces of buildings were found next to the road. A huge timber-framed building just on the inside of the rampart was over 12m wide – one of the largest town-houses of the 11th-12th centuries to have been excavated. Associated with it was a series of baking ovens with many pig bones found (bacon-curing ovens perhaps). Amongst the many artefacts were a number of bone weaving tools. These included a fragment of a weaving 'sword' or 'reed' with an inscription which indicated it once belonged to a lady called Eadburh. A coin of Athelred II from Cricklade mint (c. AD 980) found in foundation deposits means the house must be later than that in date. Traces of five or six smaller houses were found. All these buildings were destroyed as the castle was enlarged and the road re-located to the west.



Above: An inscribed bone weaving sword fragment (now at Reading Museum)

Left: Pottery washing on site

The location of the excavations

The excavations were intentionally located at a key point on the outer defences. It was thought that, when the outer (third) moat and bank of the castle was constructed, the original north-south road through the northern part of Saxo-Norman Wallingford must have been diverted about 40m to the west, to where Castle Street is now. By targeting the point where the original road might have crossed the defences, it was hoped that traces of the north gateway might be found.

The 2008-2010 Project is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and is a joint academic venture between the archaeology departments of the Universities of Leicester, Exeter and Oxford. The project is supported by Wallingford Town Council, Wallingford Museum and The Wallingford Historical and Archaeological Society, South Oxfordshire District Council, the Northmoor Trust, Oxfordshire County Archaeology Service, English Heritage, the Ashmolean Museum and Reading Museum; the pilot project was funded by the British Academy, the Medieval Settlement Research Group and the Marc Fitch Fund, and with logistical support from the universities of Leicester and Exeter.