

Excavations at 1–3 High Street, Seaford, East Sussex

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An area of c. 7 m by c. 7 m was mechanically stripped following the discovery of buried features during an archaeological evaluation of the site. The remains of a substantial structure were uncovered in the western half of the excavation area. The surviving masonry consisted mainly of flint and chalk/clunch, bonded with a sandy mortar. A single sherd of pottery dating from 1300–1400 was recovered from the foundation trench. A chalk-lined well was located below the corner of the building from which pottery dating from 1200–1275 was recovered, and the masonry also truncated a pit from which a pottery assemblage dating from 1225–1325 was recovered.

More limited structural remains built on a similar orientation were encountered in the eastern half of the site. Part of one of the structures truncated a pit containing pottery dating from 1125–1225. Hence all the structural remains encountered during the excavations appear to be of late medieval date.

The other features consisted of a small group of pits and post-holes. Medieval pottery was recovered from 19 separate contexts. The earliest group dates from 1125–1225, with the latest group dating from 1325–1425. Other finds include glazed roof tiles, floor tiles, slate, metalwork and animal bone (including fish) and charred seed remains.

INTRODUCTION

Planning permission was granted by Lewes District Council for the demolition of existing buildings and subsequent redevelopment of a site at 1–3 High Street, Seaford, East Sussex (Fig. 1). Following consultation between Lewes District Council and East Sussex County Council (Lewes District Council's advisers on archaeological issues), a requirement for an archaeological evaluation of the site prior to the commencement of groundworks was made a condition of that permission. The initial phase of this work involved an examination of relevant maps and records, and the mechanical excavation of two trial trenches to assess the archaeological potential of the site (OS grid reference TV 4830 9890).

Archaeology South-East (a division of University College London Field Archaeology Unit) was commissioned by Mr M. Elliot of D. F. Tourle Ltd to undertake the archaeological work. The initial investigations were carried out in October 2001, and medieval features were discovered in both of the mechanically-excavated trenches (Stevens 2001, Trenches T1 & T2, Fig. 2). Subsequently, an area of c. 7 m by c. 7 m was mechanically stripped, after consultations between representatives of East

Sussex County Council, Lewes District Council and D. F. Tourle Ltd, in order to identify and record all archaeological features to be destroyed during groundworks. The full excavation was undertaken in November 2001.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The site lies in the historical centre of the medieval port, at the junction of High Street and South Street at an average elevation of 4.5 m to 5.0 m OD (Fig. 1). According to the British Geological Survey 1:50,000 map of the area, the site lies close to the boundary of Chalk (undivided) and Woolwich Beds. A number of sites have been archaeologically excavated in the general area between 1976 and 1993 (Fig. 1 shows their location). Archaeological remains have included the remains of medieval structures, wells and rubbish pits (Gardiner 1995 and entries in East Sussex County Sites and Monuments Record).

A full account of the town's history and recorded archaeological work has been published relatively recently (Gardiner 1995) and is not repeated here. To summarize, documentary references suggest that the port was founded at the mouth of the river Ouse shortly after the Norman Conquest and prospered in the 12th and 13th centuries. French raids and

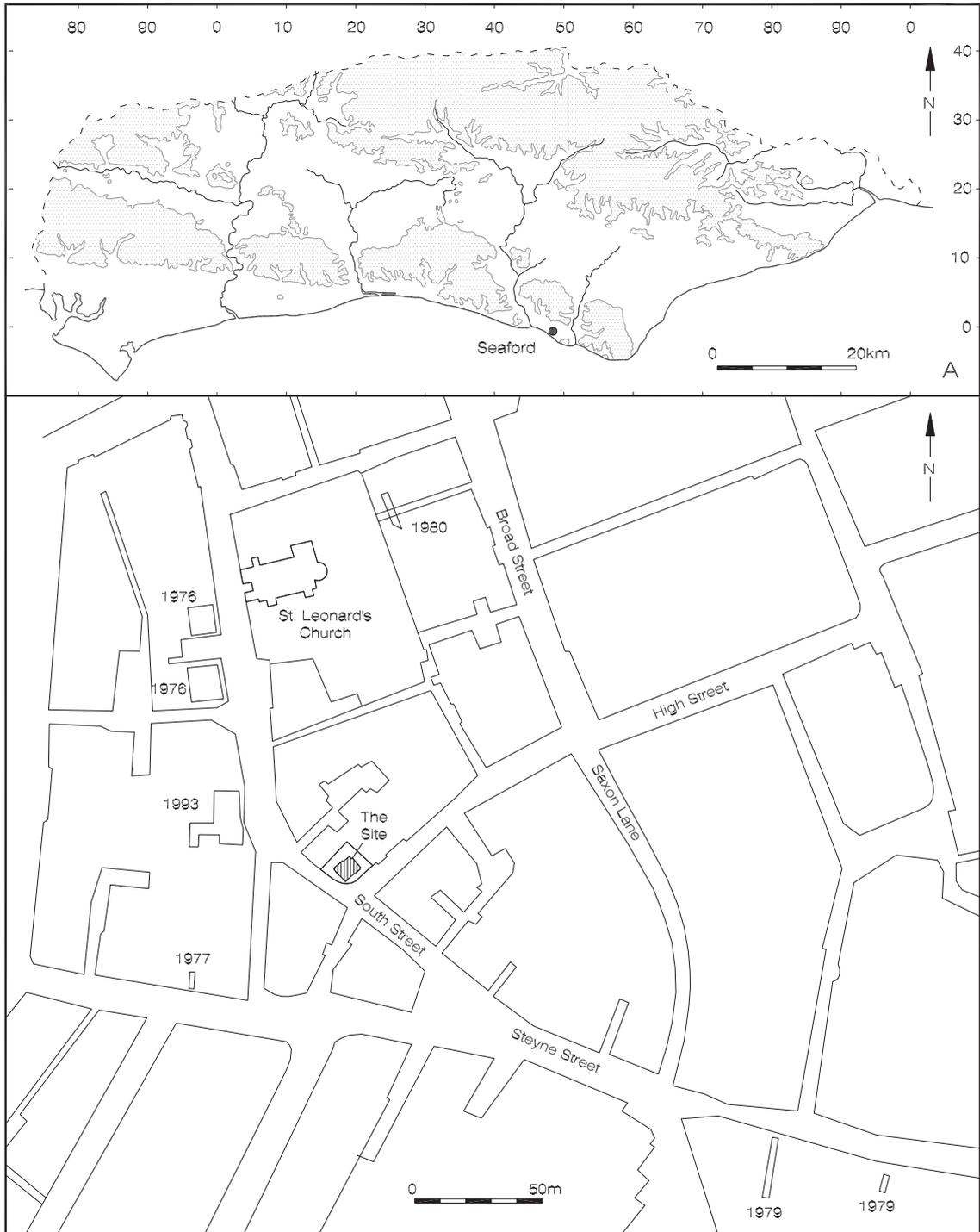


Fig. 1. Site location map.

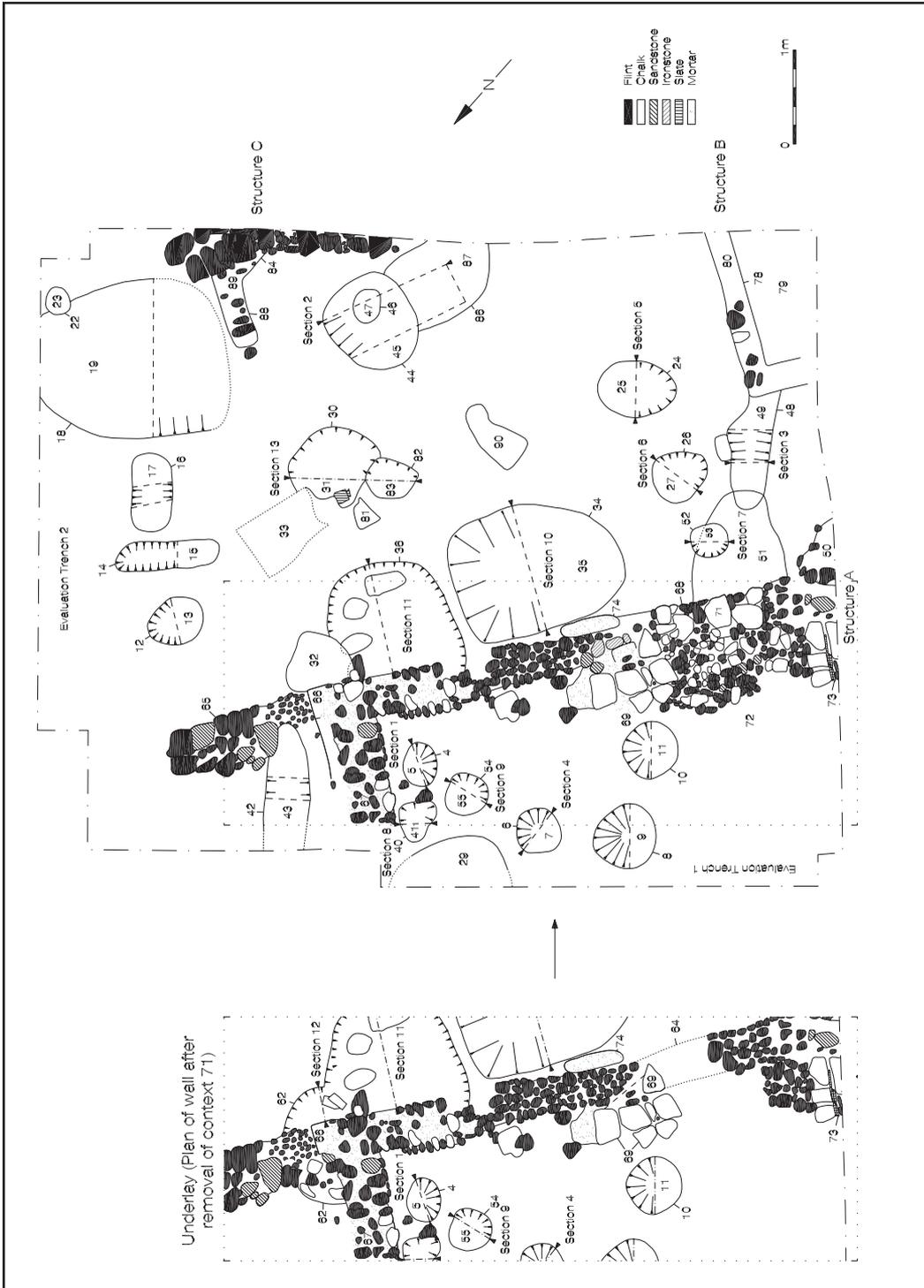


Fig. 2. Site plan.



Fig. 3. Sections.

possibly the effects of an outbreak of the Black Death led to a sharp decline in the 14th century, from which the port did not fully recover. However, the final decline of the port was the result of the silting up of the harbour during the 15th and early 16th centuries.

THE SITE

THE EVALUATION

Two trenches (T1 and T2) were excavated at the site using a mini-excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket 1.54 m wide under the supervision of staff from Archaeology South-East (Fig. 2 shows the location in relation to the main excavation area). The location of the trenches took into account on-site obstacles such as thick concrete and a drainage channel. The mechanical excavation was taken down to the top of the underlying Woolwich Beds ‘natural’ which was subsequently cleaned by hand in an attempt to identify archaeological features. All archaeological deposits, features and finds encountered were subject to excavation and recording as detailed elsewhere (Stevens 2001).

The features excavated during the evaluation are included in the descriptions and plans of each of the dated phases at the site (see below). Detailed descriptions and illustrations of all features, both from the evaluation and the subsequent excavation, are housed with the archive.

THE FEATURES (Figs 2, 3 & 4)

Following the mechanical removal of c.1 m of recent overburden from the excavation area, the following features were identified:

Phase 1: AD 1125–1250

A number of features dating from this period were identified and excavated. Cut 4 was a shallow post-hole (Fig. 3, S1) encountered in evaluation Trench T1. Late-12th- to early-13th-century material was recovered from its silty clay fill (Context 5). A similar-sized post-hole (Cut 8) was also found in Trench T1. Pottery of a similar date, as well as animal bone and shell, was recovered from its silty clay fill (Context 9).

Two features of this date were recorded in the main excavation area. Cut 44 was a shallow pit (Fig. 3, S2). The silty clay fill (Context 45) contained pottery dated to 1150–1250 and a small assemblage of glazed floor tiles. It was truncated by a post-hole (Cut 46) dating to a later phase (*see below*). In addition, Cut 44 truncated an earlier pit (Cut 86). No dating evidence was recovered from its silty clay fill (Context 87), although it should be noted that the fill did contain chalk/clunch, flint nodules and mortar, suggesting undetected 12th-century building work very close-by.

The other feature of this date was a shallow deep gully, Cut 48 (Fig. 3, S3), which had been truncated by the footings of a later building (78/79). The silty clay fill (Context 49) contained pottery dated to AD 1125–1225 (*see below*). The feature was partially overlain by a spread of crushed chalk (Context 51).

Phase 2: AD 1200–1350

The majority of dateable features from the site fell within this phase. Cut 6 was a post-hole encountered in Trench T1 (Fig. 3, S4). The silty clay fill (Context 7) contained pottery dated to the 13th century. An environmental sample taken from the feature contained a range of artefacts. Small assemblages of 13th- to mid-14th-century material were also recovered from three features in Trench T2. Cut 12 was a shallow post-hole, Cut 14 was a flat-bottomed gully, and Cut 16 was a small sub-rectangular pit.

There was a group of three features in the southern section of the excavation area dating from this period. The largest in diameter was a small pit, Cut 24 (Fig. 3, S5). The silty clay fill (Context 25) contained pottery dated to 1200–1275 and a piece of ironworking slag. Fish bone was recovered from an environmental sample, which also contained charred

seed remains. Fish bone was also present in the upper silty clay fill of a pit, Cut 26, (Context 27) (Fig. 3, S6), as well as a small assemblage of pottery dated to 1200–1300. No dateable material was recovered from its silty lower fill (Context 28). The other feature, Cut 52, was a post-hole (Fig. 3, S7). The fill (Context 53) contained pottery dated to 1225–1300. The feature was almost completely overlain by a chalk spread (Context 51), from which contemporary pottery was recovered.

Immediately to the south, an isolated silty clay deposit lying directly on top of the 'natural' subsoil was identified. Context 50 was less than 5 mm thick, but contained fish bone and pottery dated to between 1225/50 and 1325/1350. It was interpreted as a buried soil horizon, or part of a demolition deposit.

Other post-holes contained pottery dating them to this phase, including Cut 40 (Fig. 3, S8). An assemblage of material dated to 1200–1275 was recovered from the silty clay fill (Context 41). Cut 54 had a single silty clay fill (Context 55) which contained pottery of a similar date (Fig. 3, S9). In the immediate vicinity of the two features, an isolated silty clay buried soil or demolition deposit was also encountered (Context 29, not illustrated). It contained roof tile and pottery dated to 1200–1300.

A shallow pit dating to this phase was encountered in the middle of the site. Cut 34 contained a charcoal-rich silty clay fill (Context 35) (Fig. 3, S10). This produced a large assemblage of West Country slate, a small quantity of fish bone and pottery dated to 1250–1350. The characteristics of the fill, including the quantity of charcoal recovered from an environmental sample, suggest an episode of re-roofing or roof repair at the site at this date, presumably as the result of a fire.

Significant assemblages of artefacts were recovered from a feature to the north of Cut 34. Cut 36 was a pit containing seven distinguishable fills (Contexts 37, 38, 39, 57, 58, 60 & 61) (Fig. 3, S11). The fills had differing characters: Context 37 was a reddened clay deposit which appeared to have been heated *in situ*, Context 38 was a layer of silty sand, Context 60 was a silty sand deposit, Context 57 was a sandy silt, Context 39 was a silty clay and Context 58 was a clay layer representing either a deliberate placement or a compacted primary natural silting. The remaining fill, Context 61 was the result of 'natural' slumping down the side of the pit.

Pottery and fragments of chimney pot dating from this phase were recovered from three of the



Fig. 4. Phased plan.

fills (Contexts 37, 39 & 57). Significant assemblages of animal bone were also present in those three particular fills, and fish bone and charred plant remains were also recovered from Context 39. The pit had clearly been used for a number of episodes of deposition of domestic refuse, although the original function is uncertain. The pit was truncated by the foundation of Structure A (*see below*).

The pit had truncated an earlier feature, resulting in the presence of chalk blocks lying on top of the clay lining (Fig. 3, S11). The earlier feature was a chalk-lined well (Cut 62), which had also been disturbed during the construction of Structure A (*see below*). There were two distinguishable fills in the portion of the well which could be excavated in safety (Fig. 3, S12). Context 59 was a 'dump' of 'natural' clay into the top of the well shaft. It contained pottery dated to 1200–1275 and a single piece of ironworking slag. The examined part of the lower fill (Context 63) consisted entirely of chalk rubble (with some blocks showing evidence of shaping). No dating evidence was recovered from this deposit, which appears to show deliberate backfilling of the well. The well was also partly overlain by a spread of crushed chalk (Context 32). From its stratigraphic position, it is probable that the well belonged to Phase 1.

The other feature firmly dated to Phase 2 was an irregular pit (Cut 30) (Fig. 3, S13). Its silty clay fill (Context 31) contained pottery dated to 1225–1325. It was truncated by a modern post-hole (Cut 82). A shallow gully (Cut 42) is also tentatively assigned to this phase as it ran directly under Wall 65 of Structure A. No direct dating evidence was recovered from its clayey silty fill (Context 43).

Phase 3: AD 1300–1425

This phase is represented by building remains, Structure A, Structure B, Structure C, and by a single post-hole. The latter feature, Cut 46, truncated the shallow pit (Cut 44) (Fig. 3, S2). The silty clay fill (Context 47) contained pottery dated to 1325–1425 (*see below*).

Structure A

The most obvious of the building remains were those of Structure A, which consisted of a wall foundation c. 500 mm wide which had clear evidence of a corner (Walls 67 & 71). There was direct dating evidence for the construction of the foundation from a sherd of pottery dated to 1300–1400 recovered from the almost imperceptible foundation trench (Context

64). Part of an iron blade was also recovered from the immediate vicinity of the masonry. There was also stratigraphic evidence for the date of the wall, as it truncated features of 12th- and early 13th-century date (the well, Cut 62, and the rubbish pit, Cut 36).

The masonry consisted of a mixture of materials, but was predominantly flint nodules, flint beach pebbles, chalk/clunch blocks with some Tertiary sandstones and ironstones which are common in the area. The constituents were bonded with a strong, pink sandy mortar containing small pebbles. There was a clear difference to the masonry at the north end of the foundation, where there appeared to be the foundation of a buttress or outshut/lean-to on the north-east corner of the main structure (Wall 65). This may have been added simply to create more storage space, however, it would also have had the added effect of providing strength to the corner where it overlaid the earlier infilled well. Wall 65 was of far cruder construction than the rest of Structure A, with no mortar and much larger flint nodules/cobbles than were seen elsewhere, in addition to a higher concentration of sandstone. The lower level of the foundation was made up of a layer of regularly-sized beach pebbles (Context 70), again with no apparent bonding. The pebbles were typically 30 mm in diameter, with little variation.

There were also local anomalies, including a possible door location, adjacent to Cut 34, although this may be an illusion created by a localized area of slightly narrower, neater construction. A neatly dressed quoin (Context 66) was incorporated in the masonry at the original back corner of the building. In places the mortar bed on which the lower courses were laid was visible (Context 74), as was the lower course consisting of tightly-packed, regularly-sized beach pebbles (Context 68). The pebbles were typically c. 100 mm in diameter (i.e. much larger than those forming the lower level of Wall foundation 65), but again with little variation in size. The southern end of the masonry was partially covered by fallen rubble, made up of flint and clunch/chalk, similar in character to the 'standing' masonry. The fallen masonry was recorded as Context 69 and Context 72, with the former differentiated by its higher clunch/chalk content. Pottery dated to 1250–1375 was recovered from Context 72. It was thought for a time that the differing character of the fallen masonry might suggest a rebuild, but removal of the tumble showed no obvious evidence of this.

At the most southerly exposed extent of Wall 71

there was a noticeable thickening associated with a clear concentration of clunch/chalk and West Country slate laid end-on in the mortar (Context 73). Although this could represent the edge of a later inserted fireplace, there was no obvious evidence of burning. As such, it is possible this change was the result of either a door sill or impending return wall running along the South Street frontage. Unfortunately, this area could not be fully investigated owing to the danger of section collapse.

Structure B

The investigation of this masonry was also hampered by danger of section collapse. Structure B was encountered in the southern corner of the excavated area and consisted of a right angle of masonry made up of flint nodules and chalk blocks bonded together with a strong grey mortar (Context 80). The extent of the foundation trench (Cut 78) could not be detected. The foundation was laid on an orientation similar to that of Structures A and perhaps C, but was noticeably thinner (*c.* 250 mm) than the masonry of Structure A, suggesting that it formed the surviving base of a timber-framed building. The 'interior' of the structure contained a charcoal-rich fill (Context 79), but this could not be investigated on grounds of safety (*see above*).

Although no dating evidence could be recovered from Context 79, there was stratigraphic evidence for the date of the laying of the foundation. It clearly truncated Gully 48/49, which contained pottery dated to 1125–1225. Hence it is possible that Structure B and Structure A were contemporary.

Structure C

Dating of the other masonry encountered at the site is more problematic, given that there was no direct artefactual or stratigraphic evidence. Limited investigation of the area showed a possible corner of a building. The element, which ran below the

eastern baulk, was a foundation of unknown width consisting of clunch/chalk blocks and flint nodules bonded with a strong grey mortar similar to that used in Structure B (Context 85). The extent of the foundation trench (Cut 84) could not be detected. The other element ran towards Structure A, and consisted of a detectable 270-mm-wide feature (Context 88) filled with a yellowish-brown clay containing a high concentration of clunch/chalk blocks, flint nodules and mortar (Context 89). It is possible that this represented the base of a robber trench, although alternatively it may have been the base of a foundation trench.

It is possible that Structure C formed part of a larger enclosed area, or with Structure A as the western boundary, but unfortunately not enough of the roughly north–south element of Structure C could be investigated to confirm their apparently similar orientations. The virtual absence of contemporary features between the two walls suggests some deliberately defined use, and the presence of isolated areas of crushed chalk (Contexts 32, 51, 81, 90 and the crushed chalk deposit of what was possibly a threshold, Context 33) may suggest that the area was used as a courtyard of some kind. Unfortunately, the exact relationship of this possible arrangement to the other masonry of Structure B remains unclear.

'Medieval' (c. AD 1125–c. AD 1425)

A small number of features could not be closely dated. Cut 18 was a pit encountered in evaluation Trench T2. It contained three distinct fills (Contexts 19, 20 & 21). West Country slate was recovered from the upper fill (Context 19), suggesting a broadly medieval date. The pit was truncated by a modern post-hole (22/23). In addition, a broadly medieval date was assigned to a shallow post-hole (Cut 10) encountered in evaluation Trench T1 as its silty clay fill (Context 11) was similar in character to other fills excavated in the trench.

THE FINDS

THE POTTERY by Luke Barber

Introduction

The excavations at the site produced a relatively small assemblage of pottery: 318 sherds weighing 4262 g from 26 individually numbered contexts. The bulk of this (307 sherds weighing 4077 g) came from the main excavation.

The material spans the mid-12th to early-15th centuries, though by far the majority is of 13th- to early-14th-century date. The condition of the assemblage is mixed. Although sherd size is generally small, the material does not show extensive signs

of abrasion/ reworking. The overall assemblage from the site comes almost exclusively from cut features, though, with the exception of Pit 36 (*see below*), individual assemblages tend to be small in size. Many of the contexts contain small amounts of intrusive or residual material and few totally secure contexts are present.

The main aims of the pottery analysis were to characterize the assemblage and to help the dating of the excavated deposits.

All the studied pottery was divided into fabric groups based on a visual examination, using a hand-lens where necessary, of tempering, inclusions and manufacturing technique. Context

Table 1. Pit 36, Fill 39. Pottery quantification.

Fabric	No. of sherds	%	Weight (g)	%
1	37	25.5	468	25.3
2	31	21.4	511	27.6
2 (chimney)	3	2.1	303	16.4
3	31	21.4	243	13.1
4	10	6.9	111	6.0
5	5	3.4	45	2.4
6	26	17.9	162	8.7
7	2	1.4	9	0.5
Total	145	100	1852	100

groups were then spot-dated. Only the two largest assemblages were quantified by sherd count and weight by fabric (*see below*). Quantification based on Estimated Vessel Equivalents (EVEs) or form was not considered appropriate owing to the small size of the assemblages. No sherd groups suitable for illustration were noted.

Samples of all fabric groups were extracted from the assemblage and have been retained for Archaeology South-East's reference collection. Shortened fabric descriptions are given below.

The fabric groups

Fabric 1: Moderate flint and sparse shell to 2 mm

Reduced/Oxidized. Low-medium fired. Undecorated cooking-pots only. Local fabric predating the mid-13th century.

Fabric 2: Moderate medium-coarse sand with sparse flint and shell to 1 mm

Reduced/Oxidized. Medium fired. Undecorated cooking-pots/storage jars only (though some with thumb-applied strips). At least one chimney pot is also present in this fabric. Local fabric probably dating between 1175 and 1275/1300. Similar wares were noted at St Nicholas's Hospital, Lewes (Barber forthcoming).

Fabric 3: Moderate medium sand with very rare flint and shell to 1 mm

Reduced/Oxidized. Medium- to high-fired. Undecorated cooking-pots/storage jars only (though some thumb-applied strips). Local fabric probably dating between 1225/1250 and 1325/1350.

Fabric 3b: Moderate fine-medium sand with sparse-moderate shell to 0.5 mm

Oxidized. High-fired. Undecorated cooking-pots only. Local fabric probably dating between 1225/1250 and 1325/1350.

Fabric 4: Moderate medium sand with occasional very rare flint and/or shell to 1 mm

Oxidized. Medium-high fired. Undecorated cooking-pots and glazed jugs, the latter with some applied 'scale' decoration. Local fabric probably dating between 1225/1250 and 1325/1350.

Fabric 5: Moderate medium sand with occasional very rare flint and/or shell to 0.5 mm

Reduced. Medium fired. Glazed jugs only. Local fabric probably dating between 1225/1250 and 1325/1350.

Fabric 6: Sparse very fine sandy off-white/pinkish ware

Oxidized. Medium fired. Glazed jugs only (at least two vessels

Table 2. Pit 36, Fill 57. Pottery quantification.

Fabric	No. of sherds	%	Weight (g)	%
1	11	18.6	151	14.3
2	5	8.5	74	7.0
3	19	32.2	418	39.5
3b	7	11.9	110	10.1
4	7	11.9	67	6.3
5	2	3.4	28	2.6
6	4	6.8	29	2.7
9	2	3.4	102	9.6
10	2	3.4	79	7.5
Total	59	100.1	1058	99.6

represented). Decoration - red/orange painted zones surrounded by triangular-section applied strips under patchy clear (yellow) glaze. French: probably Rouen. 1250-1325/1350.

Fabric 7: Sparse very fine sand reduced

Reduced. High fired. Undecorated cooking-pots only with slightly corrugated bodies. Possibly a French import.

Fabric 8: Sparse-moderate fine sand.

Oxidized. High fired. Undecorated cooking-pots with occasional spots of glaze. Local fabric probably dating between 1300-1400/1425.

Fabric 9: Sparse fine sand.

Oxidized. Medium-high fired. Glazed jugs only. Usually good thick external green/brown glaze sometimes with white slip on interior of neck. Probably a Ringmer fineware rather than a Rye product. 1225/1250 to 1325/1350.

Fabric 10: Sparse very fine sand.

Oxidized (dull orange/pink surfaces). Medium fired. Glazed jugs only — usually with a good thick and even dark green glaze, sometimes over horizontal cordons around neck. Scarborough-type ware.

The assemblage

The assemblage from the site generally only consists of very small groups. Pit 36 yielded the two largest context groups from the site: Fills 39 and 57 (*see Tables 1 & 2*).

The lower of the two fills, Context 39, is dominated by the earlier flint and sand-and-flint coarse wares (Fabrics 1 & 2) though the medium sand-tempered wares (Fabric 3) are also well represented. The 26 sherds of Fabric 6 appear to be from the same Rouen jug with red painted and applied strip decoration. Further sherds of this jug were located in the upper fill, Context 57, suggesting some mixing of the pit's fills. The assemblage is typical in that it is dominated by undecorated local cooking-pots (predominantly Fabrics 1, 2 & 3) with smaller quantities of glazed jugs (mainly Fabrics 3, 4 & 5) from local or regional sources. The presence of the Rouen jug and possible Fabric 7 demonstrate the port's trade network with Normandy. A 13th-century deposition date is suggested for this deposit.

The group from Fill 57 contains a spread of fabrics similar to that of Fill 39 though the proportions are noticeably different: Fabrics 1 and 2 have decreased in proportion and the sandy Fabrics (3 & 4) have increased. This general trend towards the sand-tempered wares, together with the appearance of slightly higher fired Fabric 3b, suggests a slightly later deposition date

for this context. However, as noted above, there are sherds from this context which conjoin with those from Fill 39 below (at least two examples). A date between 1225 and 1325 is suggested for this fill's deposition.

THE TILE by Luke Barber

The excavations produced only 45 pieces of tile, weighing just over 3 kg, from eight different contexts. No large groups or complete dimensions are present though all are from medieval contexts spanning the late-12th to 14th centuries (virtually all are from 13th- to 14th-century deposits). The assemblage consists of both peg tile (36 pieces from seven contexts) and ridge tile fragments from roofing (three pieces from two contexts) as well as floor tiles (six pieces from two contexts). The ridge and floor tiles have a patchy sparse green glaze. The latter average approximately 23 mm thick and have bevelled edges. Context 45 (Pit 44) produced five of the floor tiles, including an example with mortar adhering to the glazed upper surface. Owing to the small size of the assemblages no detailed analysis was undertaken on the tile fabrics. However, all are tempered with medium to coarse sand, occasionally with iron oxide inclusions. Fuller details are housed with the archive.

THE STONE by Luke Barber

The majority of the collected stone from the site consists of West Country roofing slate (59 pieces weighing 3568 g from nine different contexts). The material is exclusively from medieval deposits of the 13th and 14th centuries. Virtually all of this material is very fragmentary though two complete slates are present. The first is from Context 35 where the measurements of the slate are 285 × 90 mm, with a thickness varying between 6–9 mm and a circular nail hole measuring 6–7 mm in diameter. That from Context 72 is slightly larger, measuring 290 × 115 mm, with a thickness varying from 5–10 mm and a circular nail-hole of 7 mm diameter. These dimensions are not out of place with those noted previously in Sussex (Holden 1989). The example from Context 72 has a mortar line on its upper surface 105 mm up from the tail (lower edge of the slate) indicating the overlap with the slate originally beneath it. By far the largest assemblage of slate came from Context 35 (32 pieces weighing 1408 g), suggesting that this pit may have been open during a period when the adjacent building was undergoing re-roofing or roof repair work. Alternatively the slate may have been deliberately placed in the pit to create a soakaway.

Other stone includes two German lava quern fragments (Context 25 - 983 g and Context 51 - 66 g), though no original measurements on the stone sizes were obtainable. A single piece of Horsham stone slate was recovered from Context 64 (80 g).

OTHER MATERIAL by Luke Barber

Fifteen pieces of iron were recovered from five different contexts. With the exception of a blade fragment from Context 64, all are from general-purpose nails. Seven pieces of slag, weighing 488 g, were recovered from three different contexts. With the exception of the single piece of fuel-ash slag, all appear to relate to iron smithing (Contexts 27 & 41), though the quantities are so small this is likely to have occurred only on a domestic level.

THE ANIMAL BONE by Lucy Sibun

The bone assemblage was recovered from sixteen 13th- to 14th-century contexts and comprises 113 fragments weighing 1305 g. Owing to the small size of the assemblage and the absence of large contexts within it, full identification has been limited

to three specific contexts (37, 39 & 57) from one large pit (36). However, all the material was scanned during quantification for anything of significance. The bone is in good condition with some larger fragments surviving. In addition to the animal bone a small quantity of fish bone was recovered both by hand collection and by flotation: see separate report below.

Contexts 37, 39 and 57 contain 2, 43 and 18 fragments respectively. Of this total of 63, it was possible to identify 53 to bone type and species. The species identified were cattle (30.2%, 16 fragments), sheep/goat (60.4%, 32 fragments) and pig (9.4%, 5 fragments). All three of the species are represented best by cranial fragments but most other parts of the skeleton are present. Evidence for butchery was only noted on sheep/goat and includes shallow cuts to shafts of long bones and split vertebrae. Unfortunately, owing to the small numbers involved, it was not possible to carry out any meaningful statistical analysis on this material with regard to age, sex or butchery patterns.

THE FISH BONE by Deborah Jaques

Introduction

A very small assemblage of fish bone, representing six contexts, was recovered during the excavation phase. Pit/post-hole fills provided the bulk of the assemblage, with a single fragment from a demolition layer, Context 50. Evidence from the pottery suggested that all of the deposits were of 13th-/early 14th-century date.

Methods

Bone from Contexts 27, 41 and 50 was collected by hand, whilst material from Contexts 25, 35 and 39 was retrieved from the residues of sediment samples, which had been sieved to 1 mm.

Remains from all six deposits were examined and records were made concerning the state of preservation, colour of the fragments, and the appearance of broken surfaces ('angularity'). Other information, such as butchery marks, gnawing, fresh breakage and burning, was noted where present. Fragments were identified to species or species group using the modern comparative reference collections of PRS and the Environmental Archaeology Unit, University of York.

Results

Table 3 shows the number of fish fragments recovered and the species identified. Detailed records by context can be found in the archive, including a small number of non-fish remains present within the assemblage.

Preservation of the fish remains was, generally, fairly good. Damage to the edges of some bones was noted, most of which probably occurred during or after excavation.

Most fragments were, however, fairly robust, with little evidence of erosion. Some slight variations of colour were noted within the material from Context 39, which may possibly indicate the presence of redeposited material. Several of the large ling and gadoid vertebrae had clearly been chopped, but no other evidence of butchery was apparent.

Sixty-three of the 66 fish bones recovered were from the sieved samples, with Context 39, the basal fill of Pit 36, producing the greatest concentration of fragments. Gadidae remains, including ling (*Molva molva* (L.)), cod (*Gadus morhua* (L.)), and whiting (*Merlangius merlangus* (L.)) were the most commonly represented taxa (Table 3), whilst gurnard (Triglidae) — mainly red gurnard (*Aspitrigla cuculus* (L.)) — bones were also present (Contexts 25 & 41), and a single vertebra was identified as sea bass (*Dicentrarchus labrax* (L.)).

Table 3. The fish remains.

Species		no. frags.
Gadidae	cod family	8
<i>Gadus morhua</i> (L.)	cod	1
cf. <i>Gadus morhua</i> (L.)	?cod	3
<i>Merlangius merlangus</i> (L.)	whiting	3
<i>Molva molva</i> (L.)	ling	7
cf. <i>Molva molva</i> (L.)	?ling	1
<i>Dicentrarchus labrax</i> (L.)	sea bass	1
Triglidae	gurnard family	1
cf. <i>Trigla lucerna</i> (L.)	?tub gurnard	1
<i>Aspitrigla cuculus</i> (L.)	red gurnard	2
Unidentified fish		38
Total		66

Key: no. frags. = total number of fragments.

Comparison of the ling and cod bones with those of modern reference specimens of known size indicated the presence of large fish of over a metre in length. Smaller fish of approximately 30–40 cm were also represented by a number of ?cod and whiting vertebrae.

Examination of the skeletal elements present showed that the Gadidae were represented by vertebrae and by cranial elements. Only the distinctive boney plates of the skull of the gurnards were present within the assemblage. Unidentified fish bones included spine and fin ray fragments which are rarely distinctive enough to be identified.

Discussion

Although well-preserved, this assemblage was too small for detailed interpretation or for the discernment of any specific patterns in the relative abundances of different species or elements. However, the remains appeared to be domestic refuse, including both kitchen and table waste.

Not surprisingly, given the location of the site, only marine species were represented in the assemblage, with Gadidae (i.e. ling, cod and whiting) providing the bulk of the remains. Small cod, whiting, gurnard and bass could have been caught locally and eaten fresh, all being species which are found inshore in shallow waters. The gurnard and sea bass remains in particular are taxa which today, are rarely found north of the English Channel (Enghoff 2000). Ling, however, is normally a deep-sea species, and modern distribution records suggest that it is more abundant in northern waters (Whitehead *et al.* 1986) and generally absent from the English Channel (Locker 2001). Although immature ling are known to frequent shallower water, closer to shore, the archaeological fragments are not from small individuals. The remains of ling are, therefore, more likely to represent imported fish. This could have been in the form of fresh individuals, as skeletal elements representing both the head and the body of the fish were identified, but could also have been as stored/stock fish, i.e. fish that had been dried, salted or smoked or a combination of these (Locker 2001, 47). The absence of cranial elements is usually an indicator of stored rather than fresh fish (as the head of the fish is removed prior to salting or drying), but here the numbers of fragments were too few to be conclusive.

At the nearby site of Battle Abbey, ling remains were also recovered. Here, it was suggested, primarily on the basis of documentary accounts, that the monks at the Abbey bought ling and other marine fish from fishmongers in London (Locker 1985). The cellarers' accounts also show that fresh fish was bought at local ports such as Hastings, Pevensey and Rye, and one record (1351–1352) mentions the purchase of saltfish from Winchelsea. Remains of cod and ling were also recovered from medieval deposits during excavations in Hastings (Rudling & Barber 1993), along with several fish hooks. Seaford's increasing importance as a centre of trade in the 13th and 14th centuries would suggest that the availability of fish here, both fresh and dried, was similar to that offered at other ports in the area.

The increasing exploitation of Gadidae from the 11th century onwards (Barrett *et al.* 1999; Enghoff 2000; Locker 2001), does not explain the absence of herring and eel remains within this assemblage. These species are commonly recorded from medieval sites and are often the most abundant taxa present. Their absence could be the result of recovery techniques, but this seems unlikely given that sieving was undertaken at the site. Additionally, preservatory conditions appear to favour the survival of bone. It may be a reflection of varying disposal methods for different fish remains/waste. For example, herring and eel vertebrae are often recovered from cesspits, deriving from faecal material within the pits. This type of deposit may not have been encountered during excavations at High Street.

The consumption of imported species may be an indication of the status of the occupants of this area of Seaford. Herring was a staple food, available to all, but the supply of other fish, such as large gadoids, particularly fresh, may have been restricted to those who could afford them (Woolgar 1999). Excavations close-by in Church Street (Gardiner 1995) recovered the remains of rabbit. Rabbits were quite scarce in the early-medieval period and consequently were regarded as high-status food (Faull & Moorhouse 1981), although research has shown that there were comparatively local sources in the 14th century (Baker 1966, 5). If these bones are indeed of medieval date (and are not intrusive), then they suggest, along with the large Gadidae remains from High Street, that this area of Seaford could have been quite wealthy.

However, it must be borne in mind that this small assemblage, recovered from only six deposits at this site, is not necessarily a representative sample from which to extrapolate the dietary preferences of the inhabitants of Seaford during the medieval period.

THE SHELL by Luke Barber

The excavation produced 54 pieces of shell, weighing 2812 g, from 15 different medieval contexts. The material is totally dominated by oyster: the only other species recovered consist of limpet from Contexts 27 and 35 (one fragment in each context), a periwinkle from Context 25 and a cockle from Context 41. Full details of the shell are housed with the archive.

THE CHARRED PLANT REMAINS by Pat Hinton

Method

Dried flots from three samples processed by the excavators were searched by stereo microscope at 7–40X magnification.

Results

All samples included charcoal, with the largest amount of flot (c. 900 ml), from Context 35, almost entirely composed of charred wood fragments. All included cereal grains but in

Table 4. Charred plant remains by context.

Context		25	35	39
Sample		1004	1003	1002
Sample volume		14 l	28 l	28 l
Flot volume		120 ml	900 ml	300 ml
Cereals				
<i>Triticum aestivum</i> type.	free-threshing bread wheat	110	17	140
<i>Hordeum vulgare</i>	hulled barley	53	32	38
<i>Avena</i> sp. – grains		520	12	
– floret bases	oats	2		370
– awn frags.		4		
Cerealia indet.	unidentified cereal fragments	+	+	+
Legumes				
<i>Pisum sativum</i> (L.)	pea		1	
<i>Vicia</i> cf. <i>Faba</i>	broad or horse bean			1
<i>Vicia</i> cf. <i>Sativa</i>	common vetch		3	6
<i>Vicia/Lathyrus</i> spp.	vetch or vetchling	5	8	1
Arable/grassland/waste				
<i>Ranunculus acris/repens/bulbosus</i>	meadow, creeping or bulbous buttercup			2
<i>Chenopodium album</i> (L.)	fat hen	1		
cf. <i>Atriplex</i> sp.	orache		1	1
<i>Stellaria media/neglecta</i>	common or greater chickweed			1
<i>Cerastium</i> cf. <i>Fontanum</i>	common mouse-ear			1
<i>Agrostemma githago</i> (L.)	corncockle			1
cf. <i>Rumex acetosella</i>	sheep's sorrel		2	
<i>Rumex</i> sp.	dock		7	
<i>Calluna vulgaris</i> (L.) Hull – shoot tip	heather		1	
<i>Vicia tetrasperma</i> (L.) Schreber	smooth tare	1		1
<i>Trifolium</i> sp.	clover		1	1
<i>Linum catharticum</i> (L.) – seeds – capsule fragment	fairy flax			2 1
<i>Chrysanthemum segetum</i> (L.)	corn marigold	1		
<i>Centaurea</i> sp.	knapeed or cornflower		4 + frags	
<i>Bromus</i> sp.	brome			2
Poaceae indet.	grass family		1	1
Damper ground				
cf. <i>Eleocharis</i> sp.	spike rush	1		
<i>Carex</i> sp.	sedge			1
Woodland/Hedgerow				
<i>Corylus avellana</i> (L.) = shell frags.	hazel		2	

different proportions, and small numbers of wild plant seeds. The results are summarized in Table 4.

Context 25

This context, the smallest bulk sample (14 litres, compared with 28 litres from the other two) contained most cereal grains. Oats (*Avena* sp.) are dominant and the survival of two floret bases with the typical indistinct scar confirms them as cultivated species. Wheat is present and is best described as bread wheat (*Triticum aestivum* type). There are no chaff or rachis fragments to indicate any other species. Barley (*Hordeum vulgare*) appears as about half the amount of wheat. Legumes, not closely identified, are only a very small presence and there are very few seeds of wild plants.

Context 35

The sample from this context, the largest volume of charred material, consists almost entirely of wood charcoal with only

small numbers of cereal grains. Of these slightly more are barley with wheat and oats in almost equal quantities. Cultivated legumes, i.e. pea (*Pisum sativum*) and vetch (*Vicia sativa*) are present and again there are very few wild plant seeds.

Context 39

The cereals in this context, although fewer in number, reflect the proportions found in Context 25, i.e. oats are dominant, followed by wheat and less barley. Legumes are represented by one probable broad bean (*Vicia faba*) and several vetches, and there is a wider range of wild plant seeds.

Discussion

The cereals and legumes in the three contexts are cultivated crops, which, in view of the few weed seeds, were probably prepared and ready for use, whether for bread, brewing or fodder. Wheat and barley were major cereal crops in Sussex at this time, with oats being grown in rotation or to break up heavier soils.

Oats and legumes were valuable fodder crops with oats locally dominant on the Lower Greensand (Brandon 1971).

Whether or not the wild plant seeds were originally associated with cereals or were incorporated with other burned debris, they provide some evidence of local conditions. Most are those of common field weeds but there are a few which indicate particular conditions. In Context 25 corn marigold (*Chrysanthemum segetum*) indicates sandy soils, but spike rush (*Eleocharis* sp.) grows in damper muddy ground. Included in the mass of charcoal from Context 35 sheep's sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*)

and a fragment of heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) are evidence of more acid conditions and the two fragments of hazelnut shell (*Corylus avellana*) suggest nearby woodland or hedgerows. Corn cockle (*Agrostemma githago*) in Context 39 was a very typical weed of medieval fields. Fairy flax (*Linum catharticum*), however, more commonly occurs in chalky grassland and sedge (*Carex* sp.) suggests damper conditions.

Although sparse, the seeds with their various environmental indications together suggest a background of arable and grazing, probably with ditch and or hedge boundaries.

DISCUSSION

Despite the small size of the excavations, the site has provided further important data on the medieval town. There is clear evidence that activity on the site began in the early/mid-12th century. No definite structural elements of this early period were identified, although shallow structural features may have been removed by later truncation, which probably also removed the floor levels of the later structures. It is possible the excavated area lay just to the rear of buildings fronting either High Street or South Street, both of which have probably been widened in the post-medieval period. The area may therefore have been located to the rear of a tenement. The location of pits and a well would tend to back up this suggestion. During the 13th century pits continued to be dug within the excavated area suggesting it was still situated to the rear of a tenement.

The presence of building rubble in one of the pits dated to Phase I (Cut 86, Context 87) is significant and suggests that the undetected structure of that date, which presumably lay on the street frontage, could have been a stone building. Stone buildings are known from this date in larger settlements (e.g. Colchester, Canterbury and Worcester), but would not normally be expected in a minor port such as Seaford, suggesting a building of some status (Mark Gardiner pers. comm.). Unfortunately, further discussion is hampered by lack of firm evidence.

However, the majority of the structural evidence on the site appeared to date to the 14th century. At this time at least one, though probably two, buildings were constructed at 90 degrees to the street. Unfortunately, too little of the building plan was available to be certain how many buildings were represented and what form they took. It is probable Structure A was part of a cross-wing (Mark Gardiner pers. comm.) or the rear of a relatively wealthy building fronting South Street, however, whether Structures B and C were related to this building, forming a courtyard, or represent the rear of a building or buildings fronting the High Street

is uncertain. In order to clarify this issue excavation would be needed below the pavements of both streets. During the 14th century no or few pits were excavated at the site suggesting it was then probably a courtyard with apparent access from Structure A. The one exception to this may be Pit 34, which could be contemporary with Structure A, which in turn may be the source of the large quantity of slate located in the pit's fill.

The precise date at which these structures went out of use is difficult to determine with any certainty. Two explanations can be offered at present. The first is that the buildings went out of use during the late-14th century. This suggestion is backed up by the virtual complete absence of finds on the site postdating this period. This would correlate with a known period of decline for the town following French raids and the Black Death (Gardiner 1995), although this could equally be attributable to the possible cessation of the use of rubbish pits in towns in the 15th century (Mark Gardiner pers. comm.). These suggestions would also assume that the excavated area remained as open land until it was built on in the early 20th century. The thick orchard/garden soil overburden at the site would tend to support this theory. As to the second theory, a reconstruction of this part of the town in 1563 (reproduced in Gardiner 1995) suggests that the excavated site lay within a plot owned by Edmund Elphick which consisted of a house with surrounding grounds. If Structure A had continued in use into the 16th century (or later) it is possible that Context 73 does indeed represent part of an internal fireplace. But whether occupation during the 15th and 16th centuries could have occurred without any finds getting into the archaeological record remains doubtful. It is therefore likely, based on the current evidence, that the former theory is the correct one.

The pottery assemblage from the site shows a similar composition, in both date and sources, to that excavated from the nearby site at the 'Crypt' (Gardiner 1995). The earliest material from both

sites is of 12th-century date and, although the majority of pottery was of local origin, a reasonable amount was imported from other parts of Britain and the continent. The importation of goods is also represented by the German lava quernstone fragments and West Country slate. Although the assemblage of bone (including fish) and carbonized seeds is too small from the current site to allow detailed interpretations, the material will add to the growing body of data which, at some point in the future, will address wider socio-economic issues for the medieval town.

The range of evidence from 1–3 High Street provides a clear indication of the potential value of small urban sites in our understanding of the medieval economy of Sussex, as well as other facets of medieval life ranging from diet to décor. The results

from this site and other recently excavated examples from the coastal ports, such as Pevensey and John Street, Shoreham (Barber 1999; Stevens forthcoming) show the quality of the information which can be gathered by the excavation of a small number of archaeological features in an urban context.

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