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**The medieval pottery from Parsonage Farm,  
Westwell, Kent (ARC 430 84+900-85+100 99)**

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

A total of 3500 sherds (59,343 g) of post-Roman pottery was recovered from Parsonage Farm (MoLAS excavation: ARC PFM98). The assemblage ranges in date from late Saxon to post-medieval and, as the largest medieval assemblage recovered from the CTRL route, provides valuable evidence for the development of the local Ashford ware industry as well as information on the chronology and nature of the Parsonage Farm site.

A small ceramic zoomorphic figurine (55 g), probably a toy, is also included with the pottery assemblage.

## 2 METHODS OF ANALYSIS

The pottery was recorded using a project-specific Access database. Fabric types were defined, using a x20 binocular microscope, following the Canterbury Archaeological Trust (CAT) type series for post-Roman pottery. A scheme-wide type series was created for rim, base and handle forms, and this was linked where possible to vessel forms whose definition followed nationally recommended nomenclature (MPRG 1998). Details of decoration, surface treatment, manufacture, use-wear and condition were also recorded. Quantification in all cases is by both number and weight of sherds; rim count and (in some cases) EVEs have been used for quantification of vessel types.

This report draws on recorded data and a report prepared by Lyn Blackmore (MoLSS) as part of the assessment phase (URS 2001).

## 3 DESCRIPTION OF ASSEMBLAGE

Twenty-seven fabric types were identified: two late Saxon (LS), eight early medieval (EM), 12 medieval (M), three late medieval (LM), and two post-medieval (PM); totals by fabric type (including the zoomorphic figurine) are given in Table 1. Most of the Saxon and medieval wares are local or regional types with known or likely sources in Kent or East Sussex, and much of this material is likely to be locally produced in the Ashford area. There are, however, a small number of regional imports from slightly further afield (London area), and some continental imports.

*Table 1: Fabric totals*

Fabric Code	Fabric Name	No. sherds	Weight (g)	Date range
LS2	Late Saxon Shelly Ware	3	16	850-1050
LS3	Late Saxon Shelly-Sandy Ware	1	8	850-1050
EM1	Canterbury Sandy Ware	2	20	1050-1225
EM3	Miscellaneous Shelly Wares	93	2409	1050-1250
EM3A	Miscellaneous Shelly-Sandy Wares	25	364	850-1225
EM28	Kentish Sandy Ware with shell and sparse flint	1	5	1175-1225

Fabric Code	Fabric Name	No. sherds	Weight (g)	Date range
EM31	?Kentish Coarse Sandy Ware with moderate shell	6	79	1100-1200
EM33	?E. Sussex Shell+Flint-Tempered Coarse Sandy Ware	2	5	1075-1225
EM36	NW Kent Sandy and Shell-Tempered	1	23	1100-1250
EM.M5	Ashford-type (Potter's Corner) Shelly-Sandy Ware	2720	44,984	1125-1250
M1	Medieval Tyler Hill Ware	67	1402	1225-1375
M5	Fine London-Type Ware	60	830	1080-1350
M10	Wealden-Type Pink-Buff Sandy Ware	3	264	1350-1550
M19G	N French/Rouen Green-Glazed Ware	6	28	1170-1350
M22P	Saintonge Polychrome Ware	1	5	1280-1350
M38A	NW Kent Sandy Ware (mainly reduced)	145	1370	1175-1350
M38B	NW Kent Fine Sandy Ware (reduced)	8	260	1175-1400
M40A	Ashford/Wealden Sandy Ware with sparse chalk/shell	181	3120	1175-1400
M40B	Ashford/Wealden Sandy Ware with very rare shell	138	3578	1175-1400
M40C	Ashford/Wealden Fine Ware with chalk, shell + flint	19	380	1250-1450
M53	Surrey/Wealden Ware	5	32	1250-1450
M100	Miscellaneous unidentified medieval wares	5	76	1200-1400
LM1	Late Medieval Tyler Hill Ware	4	56	1375-1550
LM11	Early Valencian Lustreware	2	25	1380-1450
LM32	Wealden orange-Buff Sandy Ware with reduced streaks	1	39	1475-1550
PM1	Local Post-Medieval Redware	1	7	1550-1700
PM5	Frechen Stoneware	1	13	1550-1700
	TOTAL	3501	59,398	

The condition of the assemblage is variable. In general sherds are in fair condition, with light abrasion, although some are more heavily abraded – sherds in Ashford-type wares (EM.M5) in particular, being in general less well-fired, can be subject to heavier wear and leaching of shelly inclusions. There are few reconstructable profiles. The mean sherd weight overall is 17.0 g.

### 3.1 Late Saxon

Four sherds of late Saxon pottery were recovered, in shelly and shelly-sandy wares. Both these wares are considered to be closely related to the later Ashford-type wares (EM.M5) and could represent a precursor to the industry of the later 12th/13th century. These wares occur in larger quantities at Mersham (ARC MSH98).

### 3.2 Early medieval: Ashford-type wares

The early medieval assemblage from Parsonage Farm is very obviously dominated by Ashford-type (Potter's Corner) Shelly-Sandy Ware (EM.M5), which is unsurprising given the location of the site. This fabric accounts for 93.9% of the total by weight.

The most common vessel forms in this fabric are jars (Fig. 2, Nos 1-4, 6, 10, 11), but a range of other forms are present, albeit in small quantities. Table 2 gives the quantified breakdown of vessel forms with details of rim profiles. That many of the jars functioned as domestic cooking pots is attested by sooting on exterior surfaces but, given that alternative (or

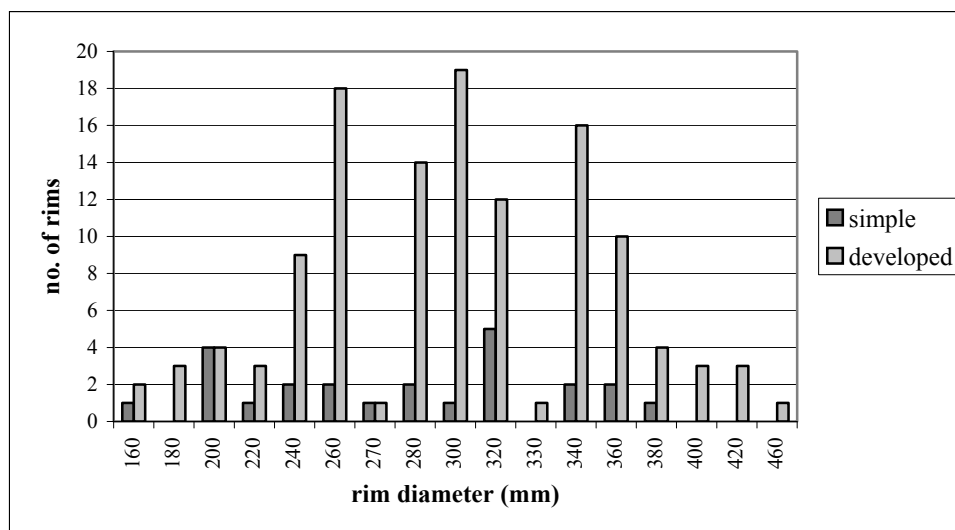
indeed multiple) functions, such as storage, industrial or sanitary, are possible, all such vessels have been classified here as ‘jars’ (MPRG 1998, type 4.1).

*Table 2: Vessel/rim forms for EM.M5 (number of rims/EVE)*

Rim Profile	Jar	Jar/Bowl	Bowl	Bowl/ Dish	Dripping Fish	Cauldron	Curfew	Jug	?Indust.	TOTAL
Everted, thickened	16/1.62									16/1.62
Everted, slight beading	2/0.12									2/0.12
Externally expanded, flattened	14/0.82		1/0.08							15/0.90
Triangular section	1/0.05									1/0.05
Squared	133/11.72	1/0.06	9/0.64	2/0.07	1/0		18/1.14			164/13.63
Squared, hooked edge	19/1.25						3/0.21			22/1.46
Squared, external bevel	9/1.27									9/1.27
Collared								6/0.83		6/0.83
Inverted									4/0.16	4/0.16
Unspecified	3/3					3/0		13/1.38		17/1.41
TOTAL	197/16.88	1/6	10/0.72	2/0.07	1/0	3/0	21/1.35	19/2.21	4/0.16	256/21.45

Rim profiles for the jars include both undeveloped and developed forms, but the latter are in the majority, with 161 out of the 197 jar rims of squared profile. The latter are well represented amongst the Potter’s Corner wasters (Grove and Warhurst 1952, figs. 4 and 5). Although all these vessels are handmade, the more developed rims may have been wheelthrown and applied to handmade bodies. This may account for the occurrence of finger-impressed ‘dimples’ around the shoulder (ibid., fig. 4, no. 5), although in only a few cases is this sufficiently pronounced and regular to constitute a decorative feature (9 rims: Fig. 2, Nos 4, 6, 10). Apart from these examples, and a few vessels with applied, thumbled strips on the body (7 rims: Fig. 2, No. 6), the jars are plain. Further body sherds with applied thumbled strips (a total of 81) could derive either from jars or from curfews (see below).

An examination of the measurable rim diameters for the jars shows an interesting contrast between those with simple rims and those with developed (squared) rims. The 24 measurable simple rims range in diameter from 160 to 380 mm and show little sign of standardisation, with a fairly even spread across this range. The range for developed rims, on the other hand (160 to 460 mm), is closer to a normal distribution curve, peaking between 240 and 360 mm (Fig. 1).

*Figure 1: Jar rim diameters*

There are a small number of open forms (Fig. 3, No. 16), most of which are decorated, with stabbed dots and/or combing over and inside the rim (Fig. 3, No. 15). The relative scarcity of bowls and dishes, and the high incidence of decoration, suggests that these vessels fulfilled a more specialised food preparation or serving function (although no concentrations were noted within rooms identified as possible kitchen areas – see below). None are glazed and none are obviously sooted. Dimensions vary widely, from a minimum of 240 mm to a maximum of 480 mm in diameter, but these measurements could be deceptive, since some of the rims could in fact derive from oval dripping dishes, of which there is one positively identified example, carrying similar stabbed decoration on the rim (Fig. 3, No. 17).

Other specialised cooking vessels are represented by three rims with integral upstanding lug handles, two from occupation debris layer 382 (Fig. 3, Nos 13, 14), and one from Building 2 Room 1. These could be from cauldrons but, given that the lug handles are designed for suspension, these do not fulfil the standard definition of cauldrons (MPRG 1998, type 4.4), and are more likely to be from bowls, or perhaps more elaborate vessels, imitating metal prototypes (eg Gaimster and Verhaeghe 1992, fig. 8, 1; Egan 1998, fig. 137). These vessels have not been identified on other medieval sites along the CTRL route, or indeed elsewhere in Kent.

Curfews are relatively well represented (21 rims and one handle: Fig. 3, Nos 18-20). Most sherds are internally smoke-blackened. Several of these vessels are decorated, with applied thumbled strips, or with curvilinear combing or tooling. All have squared rims very similar to the jar forms described above, and further examples may be present amongst the rims, lacking body profiles, attributed to jars. Where measurable, however, the curfews are distinguishable by their greater diameters, which range from 480 to 580 mm (17 examples, 14 between 480 and 500 mm). Two examples of comparable profile, with crude thumbing on the

shoulder, are published from Potter's Corner, although as bowls rather than curfews (Grove and Warhurst 1952, fig. 4, no. 11, fig. 5, no. 14). Curfews appear to have been mainly associated with Building 1, but did not show any particular concentration within the building, since most were found within occupation debris layer 382 (Group 43700).

Jugs are also present (19 rims and four handles: Fig. 4, Nos 21, 22). Overall profiles are uncertain, but these vessels have pulled lips and strap or rod handles (thumbed or stabbed). Only two examples are glazed, and only one is decorated, with diagonal tooling around the shoulder (Fig. 4, No. 22).

Four unusual vessels with inturned rims are of uncertain function (Fig. 4, Nos 30, 31). Alternatively, these might be perforated bases, and could have an industrial function. No parallels have been found. Three came from the large pit groups outside the moated area (Group 43514) and one from the moat (Group 43515).

### 3.3 Early medieval: other wares

Fabrics other than Ashford-type wares make up a very small proportion of the early medieval assemblage. Most numerous amongst this group (5.8% by weight of the total) are the miscellaneous shelly (EM3) and shelly-sandy wares (EM3A), some of which may be related to the Ashford-type wares, since they occur in very similar jar forms (mostly with squared rim profiles).

Other fabrics, Canterbury-type sandy wares, and various shelly, shelly/flint-tempered and sandy/shelly wares, are represented by a handful of sherds. Vessel forms in these fabrics comprise two jars (EM31) and one dish with stabbed rim (EM36).

### 3.4 Medieval: Ashford-type wares

Ashford-type wares remain the most common within the medieval assemblage, although their predominance is not as marked as in the early medieval period (62.7% by weight of the total). This is made up largely of variants M40A (containing sparse shell) and M40B (shell absent or very rare); the 19 sherds of variant M40C are almost all apparently from a single jug.

The range of vessel forms (Table 3) is very similar to that in the earlier Ashford-type wares, but the proportions show a marked change. Jars and jugs occur in roughly equal quantities.

*Table 3: Vessel rim forms for fabrics M40A, M40B and M40C (number of rims/EVE)*

Type	Curfew	Bowl	Jar/Bowl	Jar	Jug	?Indust.	Total
Squared	1/0.11	2/0.07	2/0	9/1.17			15/1.35
Squared, bevelled				1/0.16			1/0.16
Collared					1/0.25		1/0.25
Unspecified					9/1.38	1/0	10/1.38
TOTAL	1/0.11	2/0.07	2/0	10/1.33	10/1.63	1/0	27/3.14

Rim types for the jars are all developed forms. Applied thumbled strips are still used decoratively, and one example has a pre-firing perforation below the rim (Fig. 2, No. 12). Both bowls are flared forms, one with stabbed dots on the rim. The single curfew is of a very similar form to the examples in EM.M5. The jugs are decorated with slipped designs or combing (or horizontal rilling) (Fig. 4, No. 24), and one example combines combing with ring-and-dot stamped decoration (Fig. 4, No. 23). Handle decoration comprises stabbing or stamping on rod handles and thumbing on strap forms (Fig. 4, No. 28).

There is one unusual vessel, represented by sherds from three separate contexts, in the form of a flat-based dish with an external flange and a cut-out in the vessel wall, possibly for drainage (Fig. 4, No. 29). The function of this vessel remains uncertain; it could have been a beehive base, or have some role in the dairying process. No parallels have been found.

### 3.5 Medieval: other wares

Amongst the other medieval wares the North-West Kent reduced wares (M38A and M38B) are the most common (14.4% of the total by weight). These seem to have supplied the site primarily with rod-handled jug forms, with combed or horizontally rilled decoration; one example has applied, rouletted strips.

Wares from Canterbury (M1) and London (M5) are also quite well represented, again primarily in jug forms, the examples in London-type ware are generally white-slipped under the glaze and include some with North French/Rouen style and other complex applied and slipped decorative schemes. These London-type jugs (Fig. 4, Nos 25-27), which appear to be associated with both Building 1 and Building 2, occur in sherds too small to be confidently identified to specific form, but are likely to be rounded or baluster types, and the complex decorative schemes indicate a date range from the early 13th through to the late 13th or early 14th century (Pearce *et al.* 1985, 19-21). The Tyler Hill vessels are plainer, with combed or rilled decoration, but there is one small fragment of an anthropomorphic jug.

Imports are also present amongst the medieval assemblage in the form of six sherds of North French Monochrome ware (all from different contexts but possibly all from the same vessel, a jug with a ribbed neck) and one of Saintonge polychrome. The presence of these French wares is interesting (together with the later medieval Spanish lustre ware, see below), as the distribution of continental imports within Kent is not yet well understood. Parsonage Farm is the only site on the CTRL route to produce such imports. North French Monochrome wares are generally considered to have been in circulation in the first half of the 13th century, declining fairly sharply in the later 13th century as trade links with Normandy were interrupted (Allan 1983, 197; Brown 2002, 108). The growing wine trade with Gascony in the later 13th century accounts for the popularity of Saintonge wares at this time, and these wares are seen in quantity in the south coast ports such as Southampton, Poole and Exeter. The date



range for the polychrome wares in southern England is fairly restricted, c 1280-1310 (Allan 1983, 200).

### 3.6 Ceramic figurine

Part of a small ceramic zoomorphic figurine was found in a pit/posthole in Building 2, Room 3 (Group 43733). This appears to represent a horse; all four legs and most of the head are missing (Fig. 4, No. 32). The figurine is in a Wealden-type sandy fabric (M10), which is dated from mid 14th to mid 16th century.

The identification of toys (as opposed to gaming pieces) in medieval contexts is rare. Certain miniature objects in lead or tin have been recognised as possible toys, falling within a tradition of such miniatures from at least the early 14th century (see, for example, Egan 1998, 281-3). Comparable ceramic objects are scarcer, although they seem to be more common on the continent; excavations at the Carmelite friary at Esslingen, for example, produced a range of ceramic animals (including horses), human figures and miniature pots (information from 'Esslingen im Mittelalter' website). In this country, a miniature lamp from Amesbury, Wiltshire, probably of 13th century date, is described as a possible toy (Musty *et al.* 2001, 172, fig. 71, no. 280), but although pipeclay figurines (both human and animal) are known from the late medieval period, no other objects could be found to parallel the Parsonage Farm horse.

### 3.7 Late medieval wares

These are confined to seven sherds – four (from the same vessel) in Tyler Hill ware (LM1), one in Wealden sandy ware (LM32) and two (from the same vessel) in Early Valencian lustreware (LM11). As for the earlier medieval imports (see above), the presence of the Spanish lustreware warrants some comment, extending as it does the period during which continental connections can be demonstrated for Parsonage Farm. The sherds are from a closed but otherwise unknown form, perhaps a jug or albarello. Early Valencian lustrewares are not common finds in this country. Hurst listed 17 examples of 'Late Andalusian or Early Valencian lustreware' (1977), to which a few more examples have subsequently been added. They have a date range from late 14th to early 15th century. Both sherds were found in the fill of the garderobe pit on the west side of Building 2 (Group 43761), where they appear to extend the use of the pit at least into the later 14th century (see discussion of chronology below).

## 4 DISTRIBUTION AND CERAMIC SEQUENCE

Pottery was recovered from numerous contexts across the site, which span the whole period of activity on the site from the pre-building phase to ultimate abandonment, although the bulk

of the assemblage obviously derives from activities relating to the construction and occupation of the two-phase medieval building complex. For the purposes of examining the intra-site distribution of the pottery, and its chronological sequence, the assemblage has been viewed within the framework of the defined land-use divisions.

It should, however, be stated at the outset that any consideration of intra-site distribution is biased by the occurrence of three large groups. Three contexts stand out as producing significant quantities of pottery – pit 165 (SG 179, Group 43514), pit 226 (SG 180, Group 43514) and occupation debris layer 382 (SG 359, Group 43700). Between them these three contexts produced just under half of the total post-Roman assemblage by weight.

Tables 4 and 5 present breakdowns of the pottery assemblage by fabric type and vessel form within phases and stratigraphic groups. The pottery is discussed below within the three medieval phases.

#### **4.1 Medieval Phase 1: Pre-Building features and early ?moat**

The stratigraphically earliest contexts on the site yielded relatively small quantities of pottery – this phase accounts for just 126 sherds, of which 105 came from a ditch or watercourse on the south-eastern side of the site (Group 43503). This context group is dominated by Ashford-type (Potter's Corner) shelly-sandy ware (EM.M5), but with a significant proportion of North-West Kent Sandy ware (M38B). The most common vessel forms, based on diagnostic sherds (rims and handles), are jugs, occurring in both major fabric types, and including a large part of a single strap-handled jug in fabric EM.M5. The quantities of pottery involved in such a restricted area, and the range of vessel forms, suggest more than just sporadic activity on the site prior to the construction of Building 1.

Five sherds came from a barrel well (Group 43504), and the possible early moat or channel (Groups 43510, 43513) produced only 16 sherds. No further comment is warranted for either of these two groups.

There is little within this stratigraphic group which is particularly closely datable, but there is nothing which is definitely earlier than *c* 1100. The potential overall date range, given the presence of fabrics M38B and M40A, is wide, but the stratigraphic position of these features (and the dating of the Phase 2 assemblage, see below) restrict this to a more short-lived phase of activity. One developed jar rim from the pre-building ditch/watercourse (Group 43503) suggests that this was infilled sometime towards the end of the 12th century or even in the early 13th century.

#### **4.2 Medieval Phase 2: Construction/use of Building 1**

The fabric breakdown for the construction and use of Building 1 (104 sherds: Groups 43611, 43621, 43622, 43631, 43632, 43634, 43662-5, 43672, 43681-2) is very similar to that for

Phase 1, which suggests that little time elapsed between the infilling of the early features and the construction of Building 1. Quantities of pottery are still too small, however, for any significant comment.

There is very little within this group which is useful for close dating beyond indicating a start date in the late 12th or early 13th century. The few jar rims include examples of both simple and developed forms. It is also worth noting the presence of a single sherd of Tyler Hill ware (M1) associated with the possible modification of Room 3 (Group 43634), indicating a date after *c* 1225 at least for this building episode if not for the earliest construction of the building. A second sherd of Tyler Hill ware came from a post-built structure to the east of Building 1 (Group 43662).

Likewise any evidence for intra-site functional variation is scanty to say the least. Identifiable vessel forms for this phase largely comprise the basic common forms (jars and jugs). Most of the jugs came from the ditch/watercourse, along with one decorated bowl – the latter form may have had a more specialised function (see above). A single curfew was found in an industrial pit to the west of Building 1 (Group 43681).

The largest ceramic group from this phase, however, derives from two pits outside the Phase 3 moat – pits 165 and 226 (1155 sherds; Group 43514). It is assumed that this material derived ultimately from the use of Building 1 and contemporaneous activity outside the building complex, although no direct sherd links were found to confirm this. The make-up of the two pit groups is very similar (overwhelmingly Ashford-type wares (Fig. 2, Nos 1-4, Fig. 3, Nos 15, 17-19, Fig. 4, Nos 21-22), with Tyler Hill and London-type wares), and conjoining sherds between the two pit groups indicates that their deposition was contemporary. Joining sherds of a later Ashford-type jug (Fig. 4, No. 23) also link pit 165 with the primary fill of the Phase 3 moat (Group 43515). Pottery from other pits within the same spatial group (Group 43519) is also comparable.

The London-type wares augment the range of fabrics associated with the use of Building 1 (see Table 4). The 28 sherds from the two pits derive from jugs with complex slipped and applied decoration. Sherds are too small to assign to specific jug form with any degree of certainty, but the decorative schemes are characteristic of the North French and highly decorated styles of the mid to late 13th century (Pearce *et al.* 1985, 19-21). This date range is supported by the presence (albeit small-scale – 15 sherds) of the latest Ashford-type ware (M40C), which has a date range of *c* 1250-1450.

Table 4: Pottery fabrics by stratigraphic group (weight of sherds / percentage of stratigraphic group)

Fabric	Date	MEDIEVAL PHASE 1		MEDIEVAL PHASE 2		PHASE 2/3	MEDIEVAL PHASE 3						Bdg 2 disuse
		watercourse	early ?moat	Bdg 1 use	pits o/side moat	Bdg 1 disuse	levelling over Bdg 1	Bdg 2 use	moat fills	pits o/side moat	garderobe pit	features N of Bdg 2	
LS2	850-1050				16 0.1								
LS3	850-1050				8 <0.1								
EM3A	850-1225			26 1.8		241 6.1		17 0.6			80 2.1		
EM1	1025-1225										20 0.5		
EM31	1100-1200	17 1.5				44 1.1		18 0.6					
EM28	1175-1225							5 0.2					
EM3	1050-1250			23 1.6	333 1.5	2 0.1	37 0.4	50 1.7			906 23.8	49 11.9	1009 15.5
EM33	1075-1225							5 0.2					
EM36	1100-1250						23 0.2						
EM.M5	1125-1250	824 74.6	273 84.0	1050 72.4	20479 91.3	3438 86.5	8860 88.5	890 29.5	2371 89.3	636 93.4	1331 35.0	253 61.4	3437 52.8
M5	1080-1350				418 1.9	9 0.2	72 0.7	18 0.6	6 0.2	15 2.2	140 3.7		150 2.3
M19G	1170-1350					11 0.3	5 <0.1	1 <0.1			2 0.1		9 0.1
M38A	1175-1350			240 16.6	106 0.5	58 1.5	202 2.0	24 0.8	7 0.3		209 5.5	10 2.4	473 7.3
M38B	1175-1400	247 22.4				13 0.3							
M40A	1175-1400	16 1.4	52 16.0	71 4.9	411 1.8	13 0.3	684 6.8	1388 46.1	42 1.6	2 0.3	82 2.2	39 9.5	295 4.5
M40B	1175-1400			13 0.9	153 0.7	96 2.4	28 0.3	122 4.0	153 5.8		292 7.7	8 1.9	988 15.2

Fabric	Date	MEDIEVAL PHASE 1		MEDIEVAL PHASE 2		PHASE 2/3	MEDIEVAL PHASE 3						Bdg 2 disuse
		watercourse	early ?moat	Bdg 1 use	pits o/side moat	Bdg 1 disuse	levelling over Bdg 1	Bdg 2 use	moat fills	pits o/side moat	garderobe pit	features N of Bdg 2	
M1	1225-1375			26 1.8	194 0.9	30 0.8	33 0.3	264 8.8	5 0.2	28 4.1	662 17.4	35 8.5	99 1.5
M100	1200-1400					7 0.2					51 1.3	18 4.4	
M40C	1250-1450				308 1.4		12 0.1		60 2.3				
M53	1250-1450					14 0.4		2 0.1	9 0.3				
M22P	1280-1310												5 0.1
M10	1350-1550							209 6.9					
LM1	1375-1550						56 0.6						
LM11	1380-1450										25 0.7		
LM32	1475-1550												39 0.6
PM1	1550-1700												7 0.1
		1104	325	1449	22426	3976	10012	3013	2653	681	3800	412	6509

Table 5: Vessel forms by stratigraphic group

	MEDIEVAL PHASE 1		MEDIEVAL PHASE 2		PHASE 2/3	MEDIEVAL PHASE 3						
Vessel	watercourse	early ?moat	Bdg 1 use	pits outside moat	Bdg 1 disuse	levelling	moat fills	pits outside moat	Bdg 2 use	garderobe pit	features of Bdg 2	N Bdg 2 disuse
Jar	2	1	3	96	11	48	16	8	6	10	1	12
Lug-handled bowl						2			1			
Jar/bowl unspec.			1							1	1	
Bowl unspec.							1		1	1		
Decorated bowl	1			3	1		1		1	2		1
Bowl/dish unspec.				1		1			1	2		
Dripping dish				1								
Jug	3		1	19	2	11	4		7	1		3
Curfew			1	12	5	3	1					4
?Industrial				3			1					1
TOTAL	6	1	6	135	19	65	25	8	17	17	2	21

The range of vessel forms from Group 43514 is also more extensive than for contexts directly associated with Building 1 (see Table 5). Jars are the most numerous form, with both simple and developed rims (Fig. 2, Nos 1-5), but jugs are also common (Fig. 4, Nos 21-3, 25-7; note that the total in Table 5 is based only on rims and handles, and thus probably underestimates the actual number of vessels represented, particularly in the London-type wares), as are curfews. Forms not represented within Building 1 comprise one dripping dish (Fig. 3, No. 17) and three inturned rims (Fig. 4, Nos 30, 31) from vessels of unknown form, possibly with an industrial function.

#### **4.3 Medieval Phase 3a: Disuse/demolition of Building 1**

As for the Phase 2 pit groups described above, it is likely that the pottery from contexts associated with the demolition and robbing of Building 1 (Groups 43612-3, 43623-4, 43633, 43673), and from the overlying occupation debris (Group 43700), derives from the use of Building 1 prior to its demolition and reconstruction. This sub-phase is dominated by the large ceramic group (678 sherds) from episodes of dumping over the demolished structure of Building 1 (Group 43700), primarily from occupation debris layer 382. The proportions of earlier and later Ashford-type wares (EM.M5 and M40 variants) and North-West Kent reduced wares (M38 variants) are similar to those observed for Phase 2 (see Table 4), as is the range of vessel forms (see Table 5). Jars, jugs and curfews are the three most common forms. Jar rims include both simple and developed forms. Two of the three examples of bowls with upstanding lug handles (Fig. 3, Nos 13, 14) also came from this ceramic group.

The dating of this sub-phase appears to accord with that for Phase 2 (mid to late 13th century, perhaps into the early 14th century), although most of the more closely datable fine wares - London-type decorated jugs, including a North French Rouen-style copy, and three sherds of North French green-glazed ware – are slightly earlier, perhaps early to mid 13th century. Four sherds of late medieval Tyler Hill ware (LM1), with a date range of *c* 1375-1550, are probably intrusive here, as there is nothing else to support a date later than the early 14th century.

#### **4.4 Medieval Phase 3b: Construction/occupation of Building 2**

Other stratigraphic groups associated with the (re)construction and occupation of Building 2, apart from contexts within the building itself, include the fills of the moat (Groups 43515-7, 43723-4), the garderobe pit on the west side of the house (Group 43761-3), and pits, hearths, etc both within (Group 43772) and outside the moat (Group 43520).

Joining sherds of a stamp-decorated jug in fabric M40C (Fig. 4, No. 23) link the primary fill of the moat (Group 43515) with the large Phase 2 pit group (Group 43514), and a small sherd of North French green-glazed ware from Room 3 (Group 43731) may derive from

the same vessel(s) as the sherds from Phase 3a (see above). Otherwise, however, distinct ceramic changes can be observed from the Phase 2 and Phase 3a assemblages. Ashford-type wares are still predominant, but the proportion of the earlier types (EM.M5) is now much lower, while the proportion of the later types (M40 variants) is correspondingly higher (the anomalous proportions from the external pits (Group 43520) is probably skewed by the very small number of sherds involved (50)). Tyler Hill wares now form a more significant part of the assemblage (eg Fig. 2, Nos 7, 8).

The range of vessel forms is similar to Phase 2, but jars with simple rims are now very scarce, and the few examples present could be residual. There is only one curfew from this phase, from the fill of the moat (Group 43516), despite the fact that hearths were found within the building, for example in Room 3. There are a few bowls, including decorated examples (Room 1, garderobe pit and moat: Fig. 3, No. 16), one bowl with an upstanding lug handle (Room 1), and one possible industrial vessel with inturned rim (moat), similar to examples from pits 165/226 (Phase 2: see above).

The latest datable material here suggests that Building 2 was occupied at least into the late 14th century, although this is based on just two sherds of Early Valencian lustreware (*c* 1380-1450) from the garderobe pit (Group 43761) and two sherds of Wealden-type pink-buff sandy ware (M10, *c* 1350-1550) from Room 1 (Group 43711). There is nothing else here which need be later than the early 14th century, although the four sherds of late medieval Tyler Hill ware (LM1, *c* 1375-1550) from occupation debris layer 382 (Phase 3a, see above), should perhaps be noted.

## 5 DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Dating of the site

Examination of the pottery assemblage within the framework of the stratigraphic phasing suggests the following outline chronology for the site. Much of the assemblage, by virtue of its utilitarian nature and longevity of ware types, is not particularly closely datable. Broad trends in the use of various fabrics and vessel forms are, however, visible, and close dating depends on the fine wares, in particular the regional and imported types.

- *Phase 1 (pre-Building 1)*: a relatively short-lived phase of activity with a start date within the 12th century. A jar with a developed rim from the watercourse suggests a date for its infilling towards the end of the 12th century, or possibly in the early 13th century.
- *Phase 2 (Building 1)*: the pottery gives a start date in the late 12th or early 13th century for the construction of Building 1, perhaps after *c* 1225 on the basis of a single sherd of Tyler Hill ware associated with building modifications. Pottery associated with the occupation of Building 1 (most of which derived from two pits located outside the Phase



3 moat) includes London-type and imported fine wares with a date range in the mid to late 13th century.

Pottery from the demolition of Building 1, in particular from the layer of occupation debris overlying the demolished structure, although recovered from Phase 3 contexts, is also likely to derive ultimately from this phase. The chronological range is very similar, with nothing definitely later than early 14th century apart from a handful of Tyler Hill sherds (late 14th to mid 16th century) which could be intrusive.

- *Phase 3 (Building 2)*: the end date for the occupation of Building 2 remains slightly ambiguous. A latest date in the late 14th century or later is based on just four sherds, and there is nothing else which need be later than the early 14th century.

## 5.2 Site function and intra-site variability

Kitchen wares dominate the assemblage, consisting largely of jars in a range of sizes. External sooting indicates that one of the primary functions of these vessels was for cooking. Jars could also have been used for food or liquid storage, but such versatile vessels are likely to have been multi-functional, and without an extensive programme of residue analysis these and other, more esoteric uses (see, for example, Moorhouse 1981, 114ff) cannot be determined. More specialised cooking vessels (eg dripping dishes) have been identified, and this function would, of course, also have been fulfilled by metal vessels (examples of which have been found on the site). The rarely occurring bowls, frequently decorated, may have had a role in food serving rather than preparation; other table wares include the jugs of various types. Curfews could have been used either in the kitchens or in other rooms. Some vessels with a possible industrial function have been identified.

An examination of the intra-site distribution of vessel forms has proved inconclusive as to the functions of the various rooms within the building, or areas outside. This is partly due to the fact that the largest context groups (accounting for about 200 vessels, identified on the basis of rim form) derived from two pits outside the Phase 3 moat, and the occupation debris spread over the demolished structure of Building 1. Both groups almost certainly derived from the occupation of Building 1, but represent secondary rather than primary refuse (ie they were not *in situ*), probably from the redistribution of midden deposits. Joining sherds and possible same-vessel sherds link these contexts with other parts of the site, demonstrating the post-depositional movement of sherds.

A few general points can, however, be made. Jars occur in all areas of the site in Phases 2 and 3, which is unsurprising given their probable multi-purpose nature. Jugs likewise are found throughout, including sherds of the finer wares (London-type and imported) which might be considered to represent the higher quality table wares. Almost all the curfews were

associated with Building 1, but were found in each of the three main rooms (Rooms 1, 2 and 3).

The decorated bowls which, by virtue of their relative scarcity, and the high proportion of decorated examples, might be considered to have a more specialised function, also occur across the site in Phases 2 and 3; one example was found in the Phase 1 watercourse. The only dripping dish was found in the large pit group outside the moat, as were three of the four possible industrial vessels. The provenance of the unusual flanged vessel with a cut-out (Fig. 4, No. 29) cannot now be determined. In other words, the ceramic assemblage cannot help in the identification of specific activity areas, whether cooking or industrial/other. This is in contrast to the evidence from, for example, the metalwork – a concentration of tripod feet from metal vessels was located within Rooms 4 and 5 of Building 2, which have been identified as kitchens.

### **5.3 Socio-economic status**

As well as illustrating the distribution patterns of various local and regionally traded wares, the relative proportion of wares on the site can be an indication of the status of the site. In this instance the presence of London-type fine wares, as well as imported continental wares, suggests a relatively high standard of living and the wide-ranging connections of the inhabitants. This is the largest group of London-type wares from the CTRL route – single sherds came from Tollgate and Northumberland Bottom, both much closer to the source area – and the only occurrence of imported wares. London-type wares were absent from the earlier medieval assemblage from the nearby moated site at Pivington (Rigold 1962). Imports are rarely found in Kent outside the ports and major towns (eg Dover, Canterbury and Rochester). Other sites within the county producing imports include Eynsford Castle and the Maison Dieu Hospital, Ospringe, the latter situated on the main road from Canterbury to London. Imports are absent from moated sites such as Pivington and Leigh – the latter site, however, did produce some London-type wares.

### **5.4 The Ashford pottery industry**

Potter's Corner, Ashford, remains one of the very few medieval pottery production centres known from Kent – kilns are known only from Canterbury, Tyler Hill and Hareplain, Biddenden, and the evidence from Ashford is in the form of wasters only, no associated structures being located. The site was never fully excavated and the pottery found there has only been published in summary form (Grove and Warhurst 1952).

There is now a considerable body of evidence from sites excavated in recent years across south Kent and beyond, including the sites on the CTRL route, to enable at least a preliminary reassessment of the Ashford industry. Of these sites Parsonage Farm, located very

close to Potter's Corner, provides a valuable 'snapshot' of the industry at its late 12th-13th century peak. Evidence from other sites along the CTRL route, in particular Mersham (ARC MSH 98), has shed some light on the possible late Saxon origins of the industry. By the late 12th and early 13th century it is apparent that the industry was supplying a range of kitchen and table wares to sites in south Kent and beyond. The Parsonage Farm assemblage appears to span the period of transition from the production of jars with relatively simple rims (externally beaded, thickened and/or flattened) to those with more developed, squared rims.

It is extremely unlikely that the Potter's Corner site was the only such production site in operation in the Ashford area at this period, and other sites almost certainly remain to be discovered. Rigold noted the difference in colour between the Potters Corner wares and those of similar fabric from the nearby moated site at Pivington, suggesting that another source, perhaps closer, might have been supplying the site (Rigold 1962, 40).

### **5.5 Development of vessel forms**

The range of vessel forms seen at Parsonage Farm extends that known from the kiln wasters found at Potter's Corner. In particular it includes jars with undeveloped rims which are generally considered to precede the more developed, squared forms which are illustrated from Potter's Corner, thereby demonstrating production prior to the 13th century. The dimensions of the Parsonage Farm jars suggest that the development from simple to developed rims was accompanied by some degree of standardisation in size.

The Parsonage Farm curfews are of the same profile as the Potter's Corner vessel drawn as a bowl (Grove and Warhurst 1952, fig. 4, no. 11) and this may therefore have been drawn inverted, although a very similar vessel from Parsonage Farm (Fig. 3, No. 16) has been interpreted as a bowl on the basis of its small size and the absence of internal blackening. More unusual vessels seen at Parsonage Farm include the dripping pan(s) and possible industrial vessels with perforated bases or inturned rims.

The two rims with integral lug handles appear to be unique in Kent, and may represent special commissions. A similar suggestion was made for a single, elaborately decorated cauldron found at a late 13th century kiln site in Berkshire (Mephram 2000, 56, fig. 17, 52). Like cauldrons, these vessels are rare ceramic forms, the form presumably being more frequently provided by metal prototypes

### **5.6 Markets and distribution across Kent and elsewhere**

Any comment on the marketing and distribution of medieval pottery in Kent must acknowledge the work already done by Streeten (1982). This preliminary study has not yet been superseded, and little can be added to it in terms of known production sites within the county. Despite defining a textural profile for the Potter's Corner products, however, Streeten

did not attempt to map their distribution (presumably because insufficient excavated assemblages were at that time available for study from the area), merely noting that Ashford and Tyler Hill products could be visually distinguished (*ibid.*, 93, fig. 38B). His analysis was based on the sandy wares, rather than the sandy/shelly wares, and only on the finds published in 1952, which may not be representative.

Evidence from the CTRL sites indicates that the earlier Ashford-type products (fabric EM.M5) represent the dominant fabric type only at Parsonage Farm (76% of the total assemblage by weight) and Little Stock Farm (30%). To the east, although they form a significant component of the assemblage from Westenhanger (22%), this site and Saltwood relied more heavily on Canterbury wares and, in the case of Westenhanger, flint and shell-tempered wares from the Kent/Sussex coast (25%). On the CTRL sites to the north-west of Parsonage Farm, fabric EM.M5 is notable by its absence. Later Ashford-type wares (fabrics M40A, M40B and M40C) are also absent from the northern sites, but do not occur in appreciable quantities on any of the other sites except Bower Road (54% of the total), largely for chronological reasons.

Elsewhere it is difficult, in the absence of a larger body of published evidence, to gauge the impact of Ashford-type wares. They appear to predominate amongst the later 13th and 14th century groups from Pivington, just to the west of Parsonage Farm (Rigold 1962). To the south, Rigold mentions the identification of Ashford-type wares at New Romney (*ibid.*, 40), although not their quantity. Other assemblages from Romney Marsh (Newchurch, Isle of Oxney, Aldington) are characterised by the presence of 'Pink East Wealden wares' (Streeten 1982, 93), and the distribution of these and the Ashford-type wares suggests a relatively localised market in areas where the large-scale Tyler Hill industry could not economically penetrate (*ibid.*).

## 5.7 Other sources of supply

While the predominance of the Ashford industry is apparent throughout the occupation of the site, other sources are represented and illustrate shifting patterns of ceramic distribution during the medieval period.

Fabrics other than Ashford-type wares make up a very small proportion of the assemblage from stratigraphic levels up to and including the demolition and levelling of Building 1 (6.4% by weight: data from **Table 4**), and some of this group, particularly the shelly and shelly-sandy wares (EM3 and EM3A), on the basis of similarity of fabrics and forms, may in fact belong to the same ceramic tradition as the Ashford wares, perhaps with a source area somewhere to the north-west of Ashford (fabric EM3A is predominant at the CTRL site at Thurnham). Other sources or source areas are represented by small quantities of Canterbury-type wares (M1), North-West Kent wares (EM36, M38A, M38B) and a

shelly/sandy coarse ware possibly originating from the south Kent/Sussex coastal area (EM31). Also present here are half of the London-type wares from the site (30 sherds) and three of the six North French sherds; some at least of these types occurring later in the sequence may be residual. Other early medieval wares which could relate to this phase of activity, but which occur (probably residually) later in the stratigraphic sequence, include other miscellaneous ?south Kent coastal wares (EM28, EM33), but these add only a handful of sherds to the total.

The assemblage from stratigraphic levels relating to the reconstruction and use of Building 2 includes a higher proportion of non-local wares (27.9% by weight). Amongst this group the shelly and shelly/sandy wares (EM3 and EM3A) are still the most common (10.4%), closely followed by Canterbury-type wares (9.4%). The proportion of North-West Kent reduced wares (M38A and M38B) remains relatively constant (2.4%, compared with 2.2% from the earlier levels). Continental contacts are still apparent in the form of Saintonge ware and Spanish lustreware.

Overall, then, the main trend visible in the pattern of pottery supply to the site seems to indicate a greater incursion into the local market by the Canterbury-type wares later in the chronological sequence (from the late 13th or early 14th century). This provides an interesting contrast to the assemblages from sites to the south-east such as Mersham, Westenhamer and Saltwood, where the earlier Canterbury-type wares (EM1) in most cases outnumber the earlier Ashford-type wares (EM.M5), in some cases almost to exclusion. Unfortunately Parsonage Farm, for chronological reasons, is the only site from the southern part of the CTRL route which can provide comparative data for the later Canterbury and Ashford wares. Throughout the sequence, though, non-local wares appear to have been supplying the site primarily with table wares in the form of glazed and decorated jugs, coarse ware demand being largely satisfied by the local wares.

## 6 CATALOGUE OF ILLUSTRATED VESSELS

(Note: PRN = pottery record number)

### *Figure 2*

1. Jar rim, fabric EM.M5. PRN AE-484, context 164, pit 165, west of Phase 3 moat (Group 43514), Medieval Phase 2.
2. Jar rim, fabric EM.M5. PRN AE-494, context 164, pit 165, west of Phase 3 moat (Group 43514), Medieval Phase 2.
3. Jar rim, fabric EM.M5. PRN AE-474, context 164, pit 165, west of Phase 3 moat (Group 43514), Medieval Phase 2.
4. Jar rim, fabric EM.M5; 'dimpled' shoulder. PRN AE-537, context 166, pit 226, west of Phase 3 moat (Group 43514), Medieval Phase 2.
5. Jar rim, fabric EM3. PRN AE-617, context 166, pit 226, west of phase 3 moat (Group 43514), Medieval Phase 2.
6. Jar rim, fabric EM.M5; applied, thumbled strip and 'dimpled' shoulder. PRN AE-780, context 280, garderobe pit 127 (Group 43761), Medieval Phase 3.
7. Jar part profile (rim and base), fabric M1. PRN AE-773, context 280, garderobe pit 127 (Group 43761), Medieval Phase 3.
8. Jar rim, fabric M1; rilled decoration. PRN AE-772, context 280, garderobe pit 127 (Group 43761), Medieval Phase 3.
9. Jar profile, fabric EM3. PRN AE-1107, context 560, pit 561, disuse of Building 2, Room 3 (Group 43733), Medieval Phase 3.
10. Jar profile, fabric EM.M5; 'dimpled' shoulder. PRN AE-1088, context 589, pit 252, unstratified activity outside Phase 3 moat (Group 43519), Medieval Phase 2/3.
11. Jar rim, fabric EM.M5; stabbing on top of rim. PRN AE-1225, context 822, "number not used", unphased.
12. Jar rim, fabric M40B; applied thumbled strip(s); pre-firing perforation below rim. PRN AE-1221, context 822, "number not used", unphased.

### *Figure 3*

13. Cauldron handle, fabric EM.M5. PRN AE-884, context 382, occupation layer dumped over Building 1 (Group 43700), Medieval Phase 3.
14. Cauldron handle, fabric EM.M5. PRN AE-885, context 382, occupation layer dumped over Building 1 (Group 43700), Medieval Phase 3.
15. Dish rim, fabric EM.M5, curvilinear tooling inside rim. PRN AE-546, context 166, pit 226, west of Phase 3 moat (Group 43514), Medieval Phase 2.
16. Bowl rim, fabric EM.M5. PRN AE-779, context 280, garderobe pit 127 (Group 43761), Medieval Phase 3.
17. Dripping dish rim and hollow handle, fabric EM.M5; stabbing on top of rim. PRNs AE-547/548, context 166, pit 226, west of Phase 3 moat (Group 43514), Medieval Phase 2.
18. Curfew part profile, fabric EM.M5. PRN AE-568/569, context 166, pit 226, west of Phase 3 moat (Group 43514), Medieval Phase 2.
19. Curfew rim, fabric EM.M5. PRN AE-551, context 166, pit 226, west of Phase 3 moat (Group 43514), Medieval Phase 2.
20. Curfew rim, fabric EM.M5; curvilinear tooling on shoulder. PRN AE-728, context 253, pit 254, unstratified activity outside Phase 3 moat (Group 43519), Medieval Phase 2/3.

### *Figure 4*

21. Jug rim, collared, fabric EM.M5. PRN AE-576, context 164, pit 165, outside Phase 3 moat (Group 43514), Medieval Phase 2.

22. Jug rim and neck; fabric EM.M5; tooled decoration and degraded glaze. PRN AE-623-5, context 166, pit 226, outside Phase 3 moat (Group 43514), Medieval Phase 2.
23. Jug rim and neck, fabric M40C; combed and stamped decoration; glazed. PRNs AE-440/585, context 164/190, pit 165 (outside Phase 3 moat)/ditch 132 (primary moat fill) (Groups 43514/43515), Medieval Phases 2/3.
24. Jug with applied, pulled spout, fabric M40B; curvilinear combed dec. PRN AE-437, context 190, ditch 132, primary moat fill (Group 43515), Medieval Phase 3.
25. Jug rim and rod handle stump, fine London-type ware (M5), applied rouletted strips; white-slipped and glazed. PRN AE-611, context 166, pit 226, outside Phase 3 moat (Group 43514), Medieval Phase 2.
26. Jug body and rod handle stump, fine London-type ware (M5); complex applied decoration, rod handle stump. PRN AE-609, context 166, pit 226, outside Phase 3 moat (Group 43514), Medieval Phase 2.
27. Jug rim, fine London-type ware (M5); white slip lattice decoration. PRN AE-604, context 166, pit 226, outside Phase 3 moat (Group 43514), Medieval Phase 2.
28. Jug rim, fabric M40A; thumbled strap handle; degraded glazed. PRN AE-901, context 382, occupation layer dumped over Building 1 (Group 43700), Medieval Phase 3.
29. Unusual ?industrial vessel, fabric M40B. PRN AE-1177, context 767/769/822, unphased.
30. Inturned base/rim, fabric EM.M5. PRN AE-575, context 164, pit 165, outside Phase 3 moat (Group 43514), Medieval Phase 2.
31. Inturned base/rim, fabric EM.M5. PRN AE-563, context 166, pit 226, outside Phase 3 moat (Group 43514), Medieval Phase 2.
32. Small zoomorphic figurine, fabric M10. Context 335, posthole 336, disuse of Building 2, Room 3 (Group 43733), Medieval Phase 3.

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