

**Channel Tunnel Rail Link  
London and Continental Railways  
Oxford Wessex Archaeology Joint Venture**

**The post-Roman pottery from Thurnham,  
Thurnham, Kent (ARC THM 98)**

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

A total of 393 sherds (2861 g) of post-Roman pottery was recovered from Thurnham (OAU excavation ARC THM98). The assemblage ranges in date from early medieval to post-medieval.

## **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; EVEs have not been considered appropriate for use with post-Roman assemblages.

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

## **3 DESCRIPTION OF ASSEMBLAGE**

Ten fabric types were identified: four early medieval (EM) and five medieval (M); late post-medieval wares (LPM) have been grouped together under one code. Totals by fabric type are given in Table 1. All of the medieval wares are well known local or regional types with known or likely sources in Kent and the London area.

The condition of the assemblage is generally fair to poor; a significant proportion of the assemblage, particularly the shelly wares, has suffered a high degree of abrasion, including the leaching of calcareous (shell) inclusions. Mean sherd weight overall (excluding the late post-medieval wares) is 7.4 g.

*Table 1: Thurnham post-Roman pottery fabric totals*

<b>Fabric Code</b>	<b>Fabric Name</b>	<b>No. sherds</b>	<b>Weight (g)</b>	<b>Date range</b>
EM3A	East Kent shelly-sandy ware	236	1319	1075-1225
EM22	NW Kent fine sandy ware with sparse shell and grits	14	169	1125-1250
EM35	NW Kent shell-tempered	5	44	1050-1225
EM36	NW Kent sandy and shell-tempered	24	251	1100-1250
EM.M5	Ashford-type (Potter's Corner) shelly-sandy ware	75	869	1175-1300
M5	Fine London-type ware	28	222	1140-1375
M38A	NW Kent sandy ware (mainly reduced)	1	2	1175-1350
M38B	NW Kent fine sandy ware (reduced)	7	35	1175-1400
M40B	Ashford/Wealden sandy with very rare shell	1	3	1175-1400
LPM100	Miscellaneous late post-medieval wares	9	37	1780-
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>2861</b>	

Although this assemblage is similarly dominated by shelly and shelly-sandy wares, it contrasts markedly with that from White Horse Stone, some 7 km to the north-west. The most common type present at Thurnham is East Kent shelly-sandy ware (EM3A), which appears to occur exclusively in shouldered jar forms (MPRG 1998, form 4.1.8) with short necks and externally expanded and flattened rims. These vessels are predominantly plain, although one finger-impressed rim, 'dimpled' (finger-impressed) shoulder and two body sherds with applied thumbled strips were noted.

East Kent shelly-sandy ware was not identified at all within the assemblage from White Horse Stone, and the predominant wares within the latter assemblage, all from north-west Kent (EM22, EM35 and EM36) are present at Thurnham in much smaller proportions, although apparently in similar jar forms. There may be chronological factors involved here, which are discussed further below.

Ashford-type (Potter's Corner) shelly-sandy ware (EM.M5) is also present in similar jar forms (Fig. 1, No. 1), with rims mainly squared, although one or two 'undeveloped' (everted) rim forms were also noted. Decoration is restricted to two body sherds, one with an applied thumbled strip and the other combining curvilinear tooling with rosette stamps (Fig. 1, No. 2).

Nineteen sherds of fine London-type ware (M5) from ditch 10240, including a base sherd, are probably from a single jug. A further eight small body sherds came from layer 10227, and a single slip-decorated sherd from pit 10146.

Other medieval wares, both north-west Kent and later Ashford types, are present in negligible quantities, but include an example of a rouletted jug rim in fabric M38B (Fig. 1, No. 3).

#### 4 DISTRIBUTION AND CHRONOLOGY

Medieval pottery was recovered from layers and features at the south-east end of the site, immediately to the south of Corbier Hall Scheduled Ancient Monument. Within this area, pottery came from a number of postholes, pits and ditches. No medieval pottery was recovered from the presumed moat of Corbier Hall.

The largest group (98 sherds, 813 g) came from ditch 10240. Only four other contexts produced more than 30 sherds: ditch 10520 (43 sherds, 237 g), posthole 10006 (37 sherds, 503 g), pit 10170 (33 sherds, 223 g) and layer 10227 (31 sherds, 225 g). The condition of the sherds within the various feature groups indicates that these are most likely to represent primary refuse disposal, with little post-depositional movement. All these groups contained a very similar range of material (East Kent shelly-sandy and Ashford-type wares), with the addition of North-West Kent sandy-shelly and London-type ware sherds in ditch 10240, and all reflect the character of the overall assemblage, suggesting a consistent (and potentially quite restricted) date range for the site. The fabrics identified have an overall potential date range of late 11th to 13th century, but the preponderance here of 'developed' jar rims suggests a more contracted range within the latter part of this period, perhaps starting no earlier than late 12th century. An end date is not so easily fixed, but on the basis of the scarcity of later medieval wares need not be later than mid 13th century.

#### 5 DISCUSSION

This is a relatively small medieval assemblage in a very restricted range of fabric types and vessel forms, and potentially representing a relatively short-lived phase of occupation on the site. The presence of at least one fine ware jug from the London area may reflect some pretensions to status, although in an assemblage this size such conclusions cannot be substantiated. Likewise any attempted comparisons with assemblages from other moated sites in the region, such as Pivington (Rigold 1962) and, within the CTRL corridor, Parsonage Farm, Westwell, are hampered by the small quantities of pottery from Thurnham.

Some general points can, however, be made. Within the group of CTRL sites, East Kent shelly-sandy ware (EM3A) has so far been identified in quantity only at Parsonage Farm, where it occurred in similar developed jar rims to the Ashford-type (Potter's Corner) shelly-sandy ware. An association with the latter wares (in terms of source) has been postulated, but the higher proportion of EM3A at Thurnham could indicate, alternatively, a source closer to that site. In contrast, the closest CTRL site to Thurnham, at White Horse Stone (*c* 7 km to the north-west) produced no sherds of EM3A, but instead higher proportions of the North-West Kent shelly and sandy-shelly wares (EM35, EM36, EM22). The complete absence of EM3A at White Horse Stone is interesting, and would bear further investigation,

but could be explained at least in part by chronological factors. The Boarley Farm assemblage, which makes up the bulk of the overall assemblage from White Horse Stone, appears to represent short-lived activity in the second half of the 13th century, in other words later than the activity at Thurnham.

## 6 CATALOGUE OF ILLUSTRATED VESSELS

### *Figure 1*

1. Jar profile, fabric EM.M5. Context 10007, posthole 10006.
2. Decorated body sherd, fabric EM.M5; curvilinear tooling and rosette stamps. Context 10059, cut 10058.
3. Jug rim, fabric M38B, rouletted around rim. Context 10208, posthole 10207.

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