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The post-Roman Pottery from Boarley Farm and Pilgrim's Way, Boxley, Kent

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1 INTRODUCTION

A total of 1473 sherds (16,641 g) of post-Roman pottery was recovered from two adjacent sites: Pilgrims Way (OAU excavation ARC PIL98) and Boarley Farm/West of Boarley Farm (OAU excavation ARC BFW98; OAU watching brief ARC 420/58+200). The assemblage ranges in date from middle Saxon 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), in particular utilising information on the single sherd of Ipswich ware (see below).

3 DESCRIPTION OF ASSEMBLAGE

Twelve fabric types were identified: one Middle Saxon (EMS), four early medieval (EM), five medieval (M) and one post-medieval (PM); 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 occurrence of a single sherd of residual middle Saxon Ipswich ware is of interest.

The condition of the assemblage is generally fair. Mean sherd weight overall (excluding the late post-medieval wares) is 7.4 g. The assemblage from the watching brief at Boarley Farm includes a group of almost complete vessels of various types, stratified in several contexts and probably representing largely contemporaneous deposits.

Table 1: Fabric totals

Fabric Code	Fabric Name	No. sherds	Weight (g)	Date range
MLS7	Ipswich ware	1	19	720-850
EM22	NW Kent fine sandy ware with sparse shell and sparse grits	735	7250	1125-1250
EM35	NW Kent shell-tempered ware	72	1215	1050-1225
EM36	NW Kent sandy and shell-tempered	11	150	1100-1250

Fabric Code	Fabric Name	No. sherds	Weight (g)	Date range
EM.M5	Ashford Potter's Corner sandy ware with fossil shell	165	1082	1125-1250
M1	Medieval Tyler Hill ware	3	24	1225-1375
M5	London-type wares	43	2552	1140-1375
M38A	NW Kent sandy ware (mainly reduced)	235	2674	1175-1350
M38B	NW Kent fine sandy ware (reduced)	202	1652	1175-1400
M53	Surrey/Wealden ware	2	11	1250-1450
PM1	Local post-medieval redware	1	2	1550-1700
LPM100	Miscellaneous late post-medieval wares	3	10	1780-
	TOTAL	1473	16,641	

Paul Blinkhorn writes:

The presence of the sherd of Ipswich ware (EMS6) at West of Boarley Farm is a useful addition to a small but growing number of find-spots of the ware in Kent. Most are limited to the northern half of the county, although sherds are known from Dover and *Sandtun*, West Hythe (Blackmore 2001, 205-6). The distribution of the ware appears to be an indicator of the hinterland of the emporia at Ipswich and London, and may also show the political boundaries of Wessex and Mercia at that time. The largest assemblages are usually from sites with ecclesiastical components, such as Minster-in-Sheppey and Canterbury. Most finds are of a handful of sherds, and have a generally coastal distribution in Kent (J Cotter pers. comm.). They probably represent settlements producing goods for trade, or perhaps even small-scale local markets (Blinkhorn 1999).

The overall medieval assemblage is dominated by local (north-west Kent) shelly, shelly-sandy and sandy wares (EM22, EM35, EM36, M38A and M38B). The shelly and shelly-sandy wares are used primarily for jars of rounded profile and developed rims (eg Fig. 1, No. 1), although there is a small group of jars in EM36 (confined to the Pilgrims Way excavation area) with undeveloped rims. A few bowls are also present in these fabrics, all with developed rims, one decorated (Fig. 1, Nos 2-3). A few body sherds with applied thumbled strips indicate that some of these vessels were decorated.

In contrast, the sandy grey wares (M38A and M38B) appear to occur exclusively in jug forms, with thumbled bases, slashed strap handles and simple decoration consisting of applied thumbled strips, horizontal rilling or curvilinear combing (Fig. 1, No. 4). Jugs (but not jars or bowls) were also being supplied in Ashford type (Potters Corner) sandy-shelly wares (EM.M5).

From slightly further afield, there are a few vessels in London-type wares (M5) – a large part of one large, rounded fine ware jug with white slip decoration from Boarley Farm (Fig. 1, No. 5), sherds from at least two others, one with white slip decoration and one with North French style applied scale decoration, from Pilgrims Way, and a complete small baluster bottle (Fig. 1, No. 6) in coarse London-type ware (Pearce *et al.* 1985: LCOAR) from

Boarley Farm (in the same feature as the large jug). Both the large decorated jug and the small bottle are directly paralleled in London (*ibid.*, fig. 45, 148; fig. 64, nos 298-303).

Analysis has suggested that at least some of the London-type bottles and drinking jugs (particularly the smaller examples) were deliberately made to specified capacities, and could therefore have been used as measures (*ibid.*, 41). This, combined with their generally poor quality finish, suggests that these smaller vessels functioned as measures rather than as drinking vessels. The capacity of the Boarley Farm drinking jug is approximately 225 ml, which corresponds to the wine half pint (221 ml) based on the Henry III wine gallon of 3.540 l (*ibid.*, 143).

Other types are present in very small quantities – three sherds of Tyler Hill ware (M1) and one of Surrey/Wealden ware (M53).

4 DISTRIBUTION AND CHRONOLOGY

4.1 Boarley Farm

The largest group of pottery from the White Horse Stone sites came from a small group of adjacent features revealed during the watching brief to the west of Boarley Farm (ARC 420/58+200). In this small area two pits (23 and 35), three postholes (40, 49 and 52) and an overlying demolition layer (21) produced a total of 1354 sherds (15,618 g). The homogeneity of this group in terms of fabrics and forms, and the identification of joining sherds from pit 23 and demolition layer 21, suggests a series of contemporaneous deposits dating within the mid to late 13th century.

Of the total of 1354 sherds, 838 sherds (11,906 g) came from pit 23. These included a complete small bottle or drinking jug in coarse London-type ware (Pearce *et al.* 1985. fig. 64, nos 298-303) (Fig. 1, No. 6), the lower two-thirds of a large, fine London-type ware jug with white slip decoration (*ibid.*, fig. 45, no. 148) (Fig. 1, No. 5), large parts of at least one rilled jug in fabric M38B (Fig. 1, No. 4), a flared dish in EM35 (Fig. 1, No. 2), and two rounded jars in EM22 (Fig. 1, No. 1). Rim sherds indicate the presence of at least 17 more jars and a bowl in fabric EM22 and a jug in Ashford-type (Potters Corner) sandy-shelly ware (EM.M5), and there are base sherds from at least one other jug in M38B. The London-type vessels are most useful for dating in this instance. Bottles were found at Billingsgate in early 13th century contexts and at Swan Lane in contexts dated *c* 1270-80, but are particularly common in the mid 14th century (*ibid.*, 41). White slip decorated jugs appear in the Seal House assemblage *c* 1240, and their currency extends to the end of the century at Trig Lane (*ibid.*, fig. 88).

Joining sherds, and probable same-vessel sherds, link the group of vessels within pit 24 with those within the overlying demolition layer 21 – these include a bowl and a jar in fabric EM22, and probably the large white slip decorated London-type jug. Other vessel forms

within this layer include another four jar rims in fabric EM22, a jug rim in M38A, a jug handle in M38B and a jug neck in EM.M5.

Pit 35 yielded 147 sherds (1496 g), including eight jar rims in EM22, a decorated bowl rim in EM35 (Fig. 1, No. 3), a jug rim and handle in M38B, jug rim in M38A, a jug handle in EM.M5, and a jug handle in Surrey/Wealden Ware (M53). There are also two small body sherds of fine London-type ware, both glazed over a white slip, but these do not obviously belong to the jug in pit 23.

The three postholes (40, 49 and 52), produced just 11 sherds between them, in fabrics EM22 and M38B, none diagnostic.

During the excavations at Boarley Farm (ARC BFW98), a single pit (1057) of medieval date was uncovered, containing three body sherds, one of middle Saxon Ipswich Ware (residual in this context) and two of North-West Kent sandy-shelly ware (EM36). In the absence of diagnostic sherds, this pit can be only broadly dated on fabric grounds to the 12th or early 13th century.

4.2 Pilgrims Way

A total of 116 sherds (994 g) came from various contexts during the excavation at Pilgrims Way (ARC PIL98); all were medieval apart from four post-medieval sherds. None of these contexts contained large groups of pottery – only one feature produced more than 20 sherds (gully 657: 39 sherds). The range of fabrics is similar to that from Boarley Farm – dominated by local shelly, shelly-sandy and sandy wares (EM22, EM35, M38A), with some Ashford-type (Potters Corner) sandy-shelly ware and London-type ware. One base in fabric EM22 (vessel form uncertain) has two post-firing perforations through the base, close to the base/wall junction; its function is unknown. The London-type fine ware includes two sherds with white slip decoration, and four (from the same vessel) with applied scales in imitation North French style, of early/mid 13th century date. The jars, however, include undeveloped rim forms in fabric EM36 which are not present at Boarley Farm. The date range for the Pilgrims Way assemblage may therefore be wider than for Boarley Farm, perhaps 12th to 13th century, with a handful of later sherds.

5 DISCUSSION

The assemblages from the two sites at White Horse Stone, along with that from Thurnham to the south, provide a useful ‘keyhole’ into the medieval ceramic sequence for the central part of the CTRL route. The range of wares indicates that the primary source area for White Horse Stone is within north-west Kent (although precise sources are unknown), and this local area was supplying the site with shelly and shelly-sandy kitchen wares and sandy table wares in the 12th and 13th centuries. In this respect the White Horse Stone assemblage shows strong

similarities with those from the sites further to the north-west, at Northumberland Bottom and Tollgate. Interestingly, there is more London-type ware at White Horse Stone than at either of these sites (each of which produced single sherds), but it must be noted that this maybe comprises no more than four vessels. However, one important contrast with the sites to the north-west is the presence of a significant proportion of Ashford-type wares, which links White Horse Stone with the sites to the south-east, although the fact that these wares occur apparently exclusively in table wares rather than kitchen wares indicates that the site falls outside the immediate local supply zone of the Ashford production centre.

There are also apparent chronological differences – the White Horse Stone sites have produced a greater proportion of medieval (as opposed to early medieval) wares, in particular the local sandy grey wares (M38A and M38B). However, this largely reflects the fact that the largest group of pottery from the site, deriving from the pits and overlying demolition layer at Boarley Farm, probably represents a short-lived episode of dumping of primary domestic rubbish in the second half of the 13th century. Of the other CTRL sites, only Parsonage Farm has produced significant quantities of material from the 13th century or later. The smaller group from Pilgrims Way is more disparate, and probably represents a longer period of activity within the 12th and 13th centuries, although overlapping chronologically with Boarley Farm. The small context groups are more characteristic of secondary refuse disposal.

The presence of London-type wares, albeit in relatively small quantities, is interesting and presumably gives at least some indication of status. The deposition of most of a single large jug, and a complete bottle (probably a measuring vessel), is unusual in such a rural location.

6 CATALOGUE OF ILLUSTRATED VESSELS

Figure 1

1. Jar profile, fabric EM22. Boarley Farm watching brief, context 24, pit 23.
2. Flared bowl, fabric EM35. Boarley Farm watching brief, context 24, pit 23.
3. Bowl, fabric EM35, decorated rim. West of Boarley Farm, context 34, pit 35.
4. Rilled jug with strap handle, fabric M38B. Boarley Farm watching brief, context 24, pit 23.
5. London-type fine ware jug. Boarley Farm watching brief, context 22, pit 23.
6. Coarse London-type ware baluster bottle. Boarley Farm watching brief, context 24, pit 23.

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