

The Alice Holt Medieval Potters

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INTRODUCTION

This report is the result of a combination of field survey, documentary research and air photography. It is hoped that it will act as encouragement to field workers in showing how much information can be acquired about an area without recourse to excavation. The latter is of course necessary to determine the fine points in regard to kiln construction and other technical aspects of potting and it is hoped to carry out an excavation of one of the sites in the near future, to be published as a final report. In the meantime the following serves as a preliminary article.

There are two known medieval potting sites on the edge of the Alice Holt: at Bentley on the north-west side and Frithend on the south. The Bentley Kiln (SU 788431) was dug by the late Major A. G. Wade and published briefly in *Country Life*, April 7 1944. The name Bentley is something of a misnomer as the site is in Binsted parish near Isington on the south side of the River Wey. It is situated between the road to Bentley station and the river, near the junction of that road with the Frithend road (see Fig. 4).

The sites at Frithend are situated at the southern end of the Alice Holt on the south-west side of the access road to Mowlands Farm (SU 808396). There are three of them running almost parallel with the road and just inside the Kingsley parish boundary (see Figs. 7 and 8). At the northwest end extending under the field fence is a large area of blackened soil, Site M I, nearly 25 metres in diameter associated with quantities of tile and medieval and post-medieval pottery. It has the appearance of a midden associated with a dwelling and indeed a cottage stood on the site until the late nineteenth century. Because of the lack of drawable material from this site it is omitted from the detailed pottery description below, the medieval material being similar to that from Site M II.

Twenty metres to the south-east is Site M II, an area 15 metres in diameter of soot and medieval pottery wasters. Sixty metres further to the south-east is another area of soot and wasters, Site M III, 10 metres in diameter, the two latter being linked by a strip of dark soil with pottery scatter.

Bounding these sites on the north-east are indications of a broad ditch on the line of the Kingsley/Binsted parish boundary. Until the beginning of the nineteenth century this boundary ditch with external bank marked the southern edge of the Alice Holt but with the Napoleonic blockades the demands for increased home food production led to the reclamation of a strip along the southern edge of the forest from Wheatley in the west to

Dockenfield in the east. There is an oral tradition in the neighbourhood that much of the laying of land drains in the new fields was carried out by French prisoners of war.

NATURAL RESOURCES AND COMMUNICATIONS

The Alice Holt is the only forest in England which lies entirely on the Gault clay. This is due to the fact that this formation is of relative thinness and normally has an outcrop of only a few hundred yards width. In the north-west corner of the Wealden Anticline however, due to local subsidiary warping in this structure, the angle of strata dip is somewhat less than elsewhere. The result has been the formation of a Gault clay outcrop 2 miles from east to west and $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles from north to south.

The Alice Holt occupies nearly all of this exposure with the Folkestone Beds of the Lower Greensand outcropping from beneath on the east and south, producing the sandy heathlands of Broxhead, Kingsley and Frensham Commons. To the west of the Alice Holt there is a steep escarpment capped by an almost vertical, discontinuous bluff of resistant Malmstone. Beneath this escarpment runs the Gault. Capping the Gault on the higher ground of Abbots Wood and Glenbervie Inclosures on the eastern side of the Alice Holt are the superficial gravel deposits of the third terrace of the old Blackwater river. Derived from these are the gravels which are found in the valleys of the Blacknest tributary of the River Slea and the feeder streams to its east.

Both the Bentley and Frithend kilns are on the clay, which provided the raw material for potting. The uppermost couple of feet of the formation are affected by weathering and periglacial activity, which has resulted in a strong iron, phosphate and calcite content derived from surrounding formations. This makes it a very unstable clay for potting and brick making. As a result the workable clay has to be derived from pits more than three feet deep or secondary deposits of alluvial clay which have been washed free of impurities.

Just south of the Bentley kiln, near Holt Hatch on the west side of the Alice Holt was a large field now cut by the Bentley/Frithend road. This was known as Clay Pits Field in 1841¹—and the name being in use as early as 1586² suggests that clay was being dug here before the advent of the brickworks at Aldwick immediately to the north (see Fig. 4).

Set into the old Alice Holt boundary just north of Mowlands Farm is a small oval field which, being very waterlogged and having a considerable depth of dark soil in it, is almost certainly the site of a large clay pit. The relationship of Roman waster dumps to it indicates that it belongs to that period but it may well have been reworked by the medieval Frithend potter (see Figs. 5 and 6).

It is noted that the pottery from Frithend is particularly powdery suggest-

ing that the clay being used was rather too wet. In Roman times the pit was drained by a massive ditch running north into a stream, but this had probably ceased to function properly. As a result our Frithend potter would have had to dig his clay in boggy conditions which perhaps explains the above phenomenon.

The sand source used by the Bentley potter is unknown but some of the vessels are tempered with a coarse rolled flint grit of alluvial origin. This suggests that he obtained his tempering material from the Wey valley terrace deposits.

The Frithend potter obtained his very fine quartz sand either from the weathered surface of the Folkestone Beds near Headley Park or the same deposit on Kingsley Common (see Fig. 4).

Both kilns are close by the then boundary of the Alice Holt, both being near 'hatches' leading into it. This would be very convenient for extracting the underwood from the Holt, which provided very useful supplies of this fuel.

The Bentley potter had a strong advantage over the other in the matter of communications and the proximity of the white clays of the Reading Beds near Farnham, which he used for superior quality pitchers. His kiln was situated near a major route from London to the south-west, with the towns of Alton and Farnham within easy reach. The Frithend potter, on the other hand, was situated in something of a backwater and was probably restricted in his market to the forest settlements and small villages around. Material from his kiln has so far been found at Kingsley, Wheatley and Binsted.

THE POTTERY FROM SITE M II

Cooking Pots (Fig. 1, nos. 1-20). Three categories of rim form are distinguishable:—

Type A. Simple flaring rims

1. Very sandy, coarse, buff-grey fabric with reddened surface. Slight flattening of rim top.
2. Very sandy soft orange-red fabric. Hand made. Dia. 10 ins.
3. Soft grey-brown vesicular fabric with sand and chaff tempering. Interior grass brushed. Dia. 10 ins.
4. Grey vesicular fabric with brown surfacing and sand and chaff tempering. Scratch marked on exterior below rim.
5. Very sandy coarse grey fabric with reddened surfacing.
6. Hard grey fabric with brown surface and a little chaff and sand. Pronounced flattening of rim.

Type B. Triangular rims

7. Grey sandy fabric with brown-grey surfacing. Some surface smoothing.

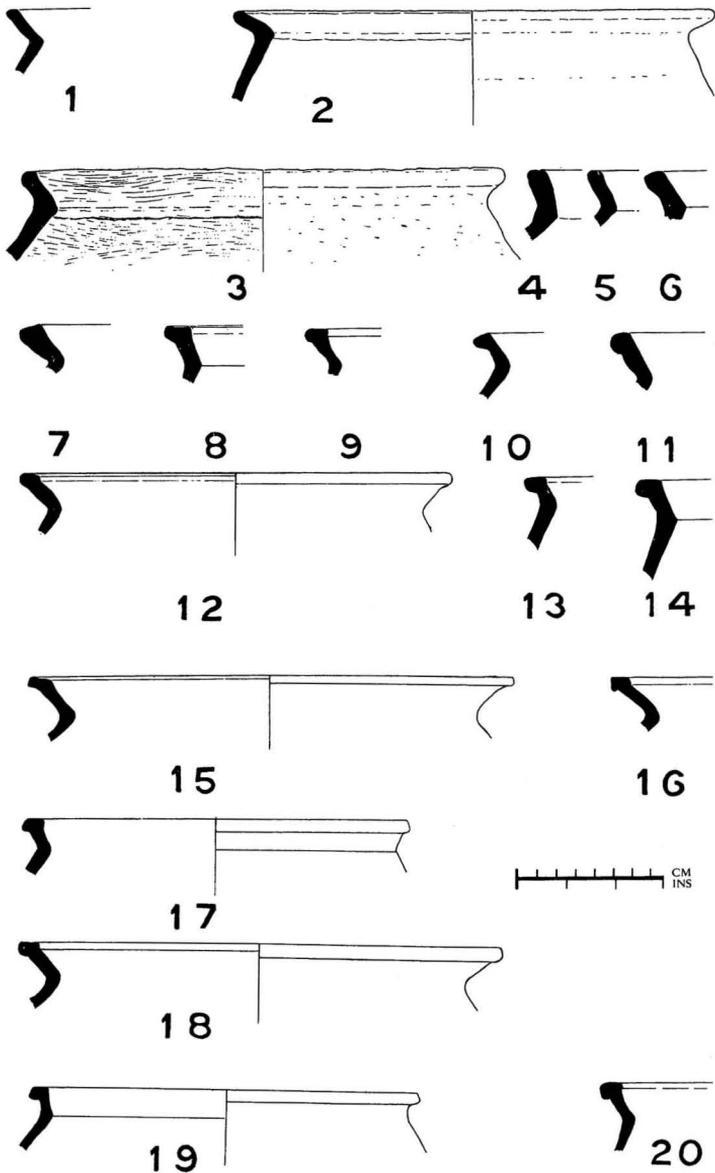


Fig. 1. Cooking Pots from Site M II at Frithend. Scale $\times \frac{1}{4}$

- 8. Very sandy orange-red fabric with some chaff impressions.
- 9. Grey-buff sandy fabric blackened in part with chaff impressions. Hand made.

10. Very sandy soft orange-red fabric.
11. Very sandy buff-orange fabric.

Type C. Square moulded rims

12. Very sandy orange-red fabric. Dia. 9 ins.
13. Sandy orange-brown fabric with some chaff tempering.
14. Buff-grey fabric with deliberately blackened exterior surface and top of rim. Chaff and sand tempered. Exterior surface smoothed.
15. Hard sandy orange fabric with grey core. Top of rim and interior smoothed. Dia. 10 ins.
16. Very sandy orange fabric with exterior smoothed.
17. Very sandy sooty grey carbonaceous fabric with orange surfacing. Dia. 8 ins.
18. Very sandy grey-buff fabric with orange exterior and carbonaceous inclusions. Dia. 10 ins.
19. Very sandy orange fabric. Dia. 8 ins.
20. Very sandy orange fabric.

Pitchers (Fig. 2, nos. 21-29)

21. Composite reconstruction based on fragments from several different vessels of similar form from this site. The combed band was executed on the neck first and the wheel stamp applied to a blob of wet clay added after. All pitcher bases from this site have the heavy simple thumbing shown here, and all handles are of the strap variety. Some pitchers have a splashed apple-green glaze over the upper portion and in particular over the handle, but many do not. The fabric is generally buff-grey with oxidised surfaces, but the degree of final oxidation varies.
- 22-28. A selection of strap handle designs. Here there are three main types:
 - Type A.* Bevel edged with knife stabbing, as 22, 23, and 28.
 - Type B.* Thumbed along one or both edges with knife stabbing, as 24, 25 and 27. No. 24 is unusual in that there is a central ridge and the stabbing was carried out vertically.
 - Type C.* Grooved and stabbed, as 26.
29. A few body sherds indicate that more lavishly decorated pitchers were made in small quantities. This glazed piece has a band of vertical finger nail impressions and small punctures separated from an applique blob cluster by a band of horizontal combing.

Bowls (Fig. 2, nos. 30-31)

30. Very sandy orange fabric. This was a large vessel of more than 1 ft. in diameter, and may possibly have been a curfew.
31. Sandy carbonaceous grey fabric with orange coating and deliberately blackened exterior surface.

Miscellaneous (Fig. 2, no. 32)

32. Hollow skillet handle in sandy orange fabric.

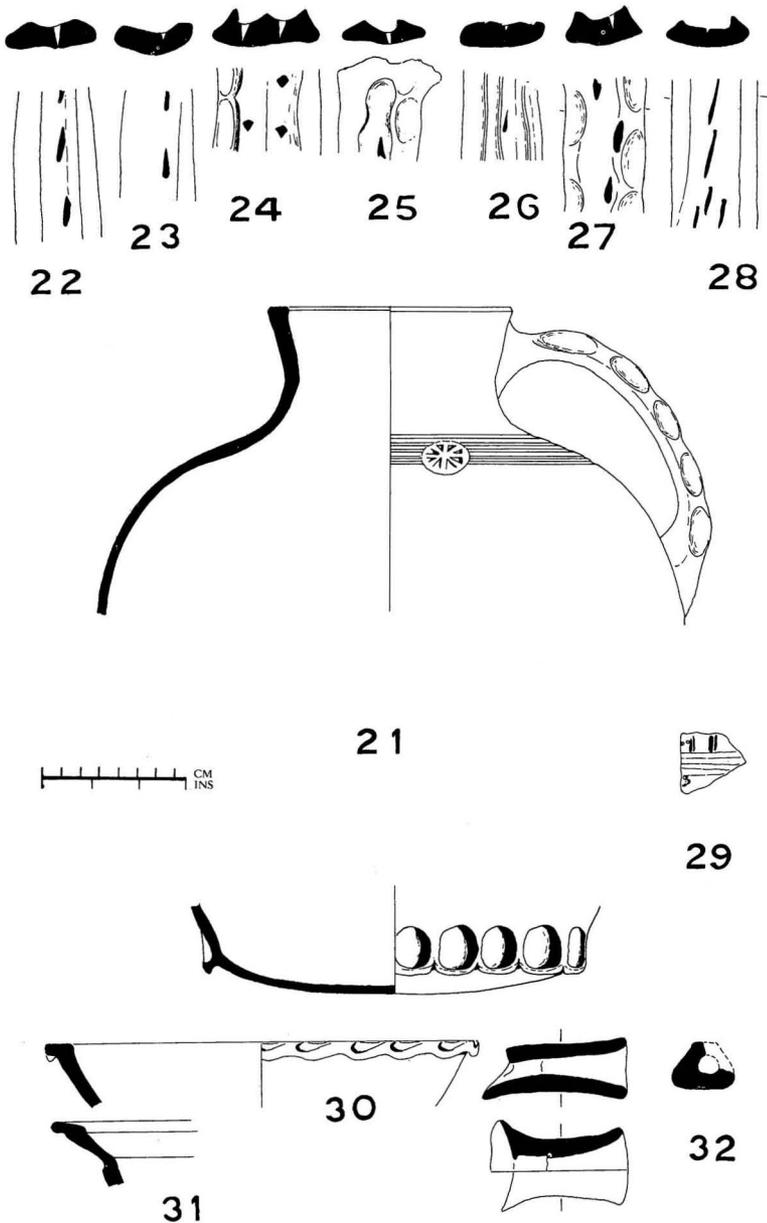


Fig. 2. Pitchers and miscellaneous vessels from Site M II at Frithend.
Scale $\times \frac{1}{4}$

DISCUSSION OF THE POTTERY FROM SITE M II

Three fabrics are distinguishable:-

1. Vesicular chaff tempered fabric with a little sand, usually grey or grey-brown with a darker brown surface.
2. Sand tempered fabric with chaff impression on the surface.
3. Very sandy oxidised fabric.

The most archaic vessels are the type A rim cooking pots, which are found in either chaff and sand tempered or very sandy fabrics. In the former fabric the vessels are usually feebly scratch-marked and combed in horizontal bands. This fabric tends to be grey or grey with a slightly browner surface, whereas the vessels in very sandy fabric are either completely or superficially oxidised red. The reason for this is that the heavy sanding of the latter opens up the fabric of the vessel and thus speeds up the chemical reaction of oxidisation of the iron compounds in the clay. The chaff and sand tempered fabric contains relatively little of these materials and is therefore much denser, slowing down the chemical processes in firing.³

Scratch-marking is an earlier medieval tradition and here, unlike Laverstock, it may not have survived into the 14th century. At Laverstock⁴ nearly all the cooking pots are of this archaic type with rims within the range of our type A. None of the fabric at that site is chaff and sand tempered, the bulk being lightly gritted with crushed ironstone. A little material in an early pit there is sanded, the rim forms associated with it being a more evolved C type and probably imported. This confirms the contemporaneity of the sandy fabric C rim cooking pot and the older scratch-marked A rim cooking pot in the early 14th century.

The evolution of medieval cooking pot rims is the story of a series of innovations designed to improve the seating of lids. Most of the type A rim forms show flattening of the rim tip. The triangular form of the type B rim is due to attempts to increase the width of this flattened zone by expanding the top of the rim. It is a more primitive approach to the problem than type C and at Frithend is associated with the same two fabrics as type A. Scratch-marking is however absent.

The vast bulk of the cooking pot material from site M II is associated with type C rims and most of the examples are in the very sandy oxidised fabric. The two rims, Fig. 1, nos. 13 and 14, are the only ones with chaff and sand tempering and here the forms are somewhat crude with short indistinct vertical necks. Fig. 1, no. 14 is indeed aberrant in that the external surface is deliberately blackened.

The bulk of the cooking pot range of all three types has an average mouth diameter of between 9 and 10 inches. The more elaborate, better executed C type rims appear to be associated with shorter, more vertical, necks and a smaller mouth diameter of 8 inches.

It is interesting to compare the pitchers produced at this kiln with those

from Laverstock and Bentley. At these two sites both strap handles and rod handles are present. Strap handles are associated with globular-bodied pitchers at Laverstock and die out early on in the sequence, being replaced by more ovoid vessels with rod handles. Bentley was not excavated scientifically but rod handles far outnumber strap handles here and there was probably a similar course of events. Stylistically there is a resemblance between the pitchers from the two centres in the use of bridge spouts, face masks and individual stamps. A characteristic of pitcher decoration found at both Bentley and Site M II, but not at Laverstock, is the wheel stamp. At Site M II there appear to be no rod handled pitchers and the strap handled globular form seems to have continued in production throughout the life of the kiln. The cooking pot tradition at Bentley is totally different from that of Laverstock, being scarcely distinguishable from that at Site M II in both form and fabric.

THE POTTERY FROM SITE M III (Fig. 3)

Cooking Pots

Two types of rim are present. Categories A and C at Site M II are absent leaving B and a new, more developed, variant of it, category D.

Type B. Triangular rims

1. Grey sandy fabric with lighter buff grey exterior surface.
2. Very sandy orange fabric .
3. Grey-brown dense fabric with little sand and blackened surfaces.

Type D. Internally beaded rims

4. Grey fabric with a little sand and oxidised buff surfaces.
5. Dense grey-brown fabric with a little sand and coarse grit. Interior surface dark grey.

Pitchers

6. Composite reconstruction based on several vessels. The heavy simple thumbing characteristic of pitcher bases from M II is absent here and instead it is lighter and overlapping with the ridges scraped over. Unlike the pitchers from M II those from M III do not have sagging bases. Glazing is virtually absent and the fabric is generally oxidised buff-orange with some examples of terminal reduction.
7. Variant of thumbled base.
- 8-9. Handle types B and C at M II are missing leaving examples of Type A and two new forms:
 - D. Thumbled and flattened, as 8 with central ridge and knife stabbing.
 - E. Simple strap with knife stabbing, as 9.
 Both these forms adopt decoration to suit a more comfortable form for handling.
- 10-12. Selection of decorated pitcher fragments. No.10 is glazed green.

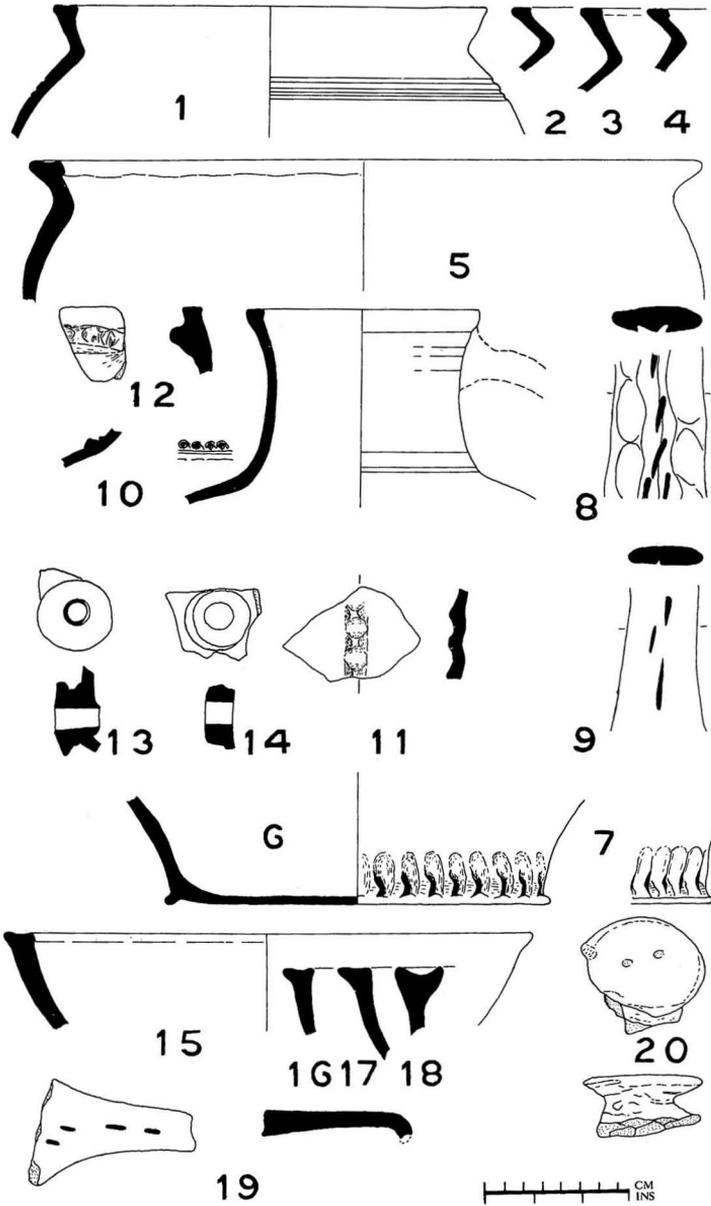


Fig. 3. Pottery from Site M III at Frithend. Scale $\times \frac{1}{4}$

Cisterns

Many of the pitcher fragments from M III may well have come from cisterns, production of which is attested by bung holes.

13-14. Two types of bung hole.

Bowls

A series of bowls from this kiln are characterised by triangular section rims with concave upper-surfaces.

15. Sooty carbonaceous fabric with some sand, oxidised buff on the surfaces.
16. Sooty carbonaceous fabric with some sand, oxidised on the surfaces.
17. Sandy oxidised brown fabric.
18. Exaggerated rim profile in grey fabric with oxidised surfaces.
19. Flat slashed skillet handle.

Miscellaneous

20. Hand made knob in grey carbonaceous fabric with very little sand, oxidised on the surfaces. This is not a type associated with medieval lids and its use is uncertain.

DISCUSSION OF THE POTTERY FROM SITE M III

Two fabrics are distinguishable:-

1. Very sandy oxidised fabric.
2. Dense heavy fabric with a little grit.

The simple flaring and square sectioned cooking pot rims are absent and instead there is the triangular type B rim and its derivation the internally beaded type D rim form.

The M III kiln had a much shorter life than M II judging by the amount of waste and the presence of cooking pots with internally beaded rims suggests that it is later. It has been postulated that the Alice Holt kilns were forced out of production during the early 14th century by competition from centres further east producing the more attractive Surrey off-white wares.⁵ The range of forms from M III suggests this to be so. The emphasis on bung hole cisterns and large bowls and cooking pots indicates that most of the fine table ware market had already been lost and that the potter was concentrating on kitchen wares where durability rather than appearance was most important. A very similar course of events took place during the 18th century in the Farnham potteries when fine white wares went out of production and were replaced by a 'kitchen crockery' industry.

THE HISTORY OF FRITHEND BEFORE THE MEDIEVAL POTTERIES

To understand fully local conditions at Frithend in the time of our medieval potters we must examine the historical background.

The portion of Kingsley parish east of the stream which flows down from Blacknest to the River Slea can be divided into two parts. The portion adjacent to the parish boundary known as Frithend is bounded on the south by an almost continuous hedge which runs east from the above mentioned stream along to the southern edge of Kites Copse. This boundary is marked for part of its length by a broad low bank. At the south east corner of Kites Copse it joins Cradle Lane which at this point bulges out to the east and carries the boundary round in a great arc. The construction of Cradle Lane is very impressive, being a great ditch utilised as a sunken lane. For the first part of the stretch south-east from Kites Copse the present lane is not exactly in the centre of this ditch and has distorted it slightly.

The ditch then passes through a low hill in a deep cutting and from then on its line and that of the lane coincide. Coming down to Baigent's Bridge over the River Slea, Cradle Lane is embanked on both sides where it crosses the river valley. The eastern bank appears to have been revetted with stone blocks internally and two at least of these remain in position.

Beyond Baigent's Bridge the lane enters Headley parish and continues down to Headley Park as a magnificent embanked boundary ditch now swinging round to the south-west. The present Trottsford Road crosses the line at this point and obliterates it for a short distance but the line of the ditch is soon visible again to the south of the road running in a more westerly direction and utilised as the northern edge of Headley Park. It is a little indistinct for some of this section but becomes much clearer beyond the north-west corner of the park. At this point the ditch swings round in an arc more north of west and assumes massive proportions once more with a broad low bank on the south side. It converges rapidly on the Trottsford road again but just before it does so there is a breach in it which may be original. Beyond this gap the ditch continues up to the road, which again obliterates it. On the other side of the road the ditch has been almost entirely filled in, but a faint hollow can be detected in the right light running across the corner of the field to the access road to Trottsford Farm (see Fig. 5).

This great oval enclosure comprising as it does parts of Kingsley and Headley parishes represents some of the farmland of Brocheseve (Broxhead) manor at the time of Domesday. Until the medieval forest clearances it was bounded on the north by the Alice Holt and was and is bounded on the south by Broxhead Common.

The title of the Fauntleroy family to Headley Estate in the 17th century describes the Common of Broxhead as extending from the corner of Old Lands along the Moore southwards. Old Lands may well be a general name given to the enclosure. If so this name was certainly deserved because there are very strong indications that the origins of it go back far beyond the time of Broxhead manor.

Almost central to the enclosure and overlooking the River Slea are two sand-hills separated by a narrow valley. The western one is known as



Fig. 4. The Alice Holt & environs showing relationship of Medieval sites. (Based upon the Ordnance Survey Map with the sanction of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office Crown copyright reserved.)

Rank's Hill and the eastern is unnamed. This latter concerns us first because on it existed a farm of Iron Age date. Material obtained from a fox earth and rabbit scrapings includes red haematite coated and highly burnished black slipped hand-made fabrics as well as much coarser wares and worked flints. The central position of the site suggests that the great enclosure may be a primary clearance from the waste and forest made by Iron Age cattle ranchers and maintained through Roman and Saxon times into the medieval period.⁶

Across the River Slea from the above-mentioned site is Rabbitfield Hill. This carries a univallate earthwork which may be defensive, the counter-scarp bank of which has yielded a body sherd of coarse Iron Age pottery. The narrow gap between the south side of this earthwork and that of the great enclosure is taken up by a series of east-west hollow ways of uncertain date. The main entrance is at the southeast corner of the earthwork and it would appear that there was a route from this along the bottom of the ditch on the east side to an embanked hollow way running down to the River Slea and pointing towards the Iron Age farmstead on the far bank (see Fig.5).

The top of Ranks Hill has been largely quarried away and this quarry has removed part of a Roman site producing 4th century pottery. Apart from the Iron Age and Roman sites on these two hills and the hill-fort the rest of the enclosure has so far proved free of Iron Age and Roman material, which is understandable if it were an open cattle ranch. The relationship of the three Roman potting centres at Alice Holt, Malthouse Farm and Mellow Farm to this enclosure further supports the idea of its early date in that they run up very close to it on west, north and east but respect the boundary.

We have no certain sites of the Saxon period, but a field just north of Ranks Hill inside the enclosure is known as the Ham and may be the site of the successor to the Roman farm. Domesday records that by the time of Edward the Confessor the manor of Broxhead had come into being and was held by Spirites. William the Conqueror gave the manor to his physician Nigel who held it as an alod. In 1087 there was stated to be land for 1 plough (team) but there were in fact 3 plough-teams. One of these was held by the demesne farm and the two others by villein farmers. The great enclosure is divided by the River Slea into two parts and contains two farms, Trottsford Farm south of the river and Grooms Farm north of it. Pottery scatter found round both of these farmsteads indicates that they go back to at least the 13th century and probably represent the farms of the two villeins with plough-teams. Two other villeins, three bordars and three serfs are also mentioned in the Domesday entry for Broxhead and it is probable that most of these lived at Broxhead village on the south side of the Common. A small settlement existed at the present Baigent's Bridge, then a ford, where Cradle Lane crosses the River Slea, with ribbon development on both sides of the crossing. A mill worth five shillings is also mentioned in Domesday and this may have been situated at the river crossing. A square embanked enclosure of about $\frac{1}{4}$ acre existed on the

north side of the river, on the west side of Cradle Lane. This is now ploughed as part of a larger field but has produced 13/14th century pottery. Indications are that the building associated with thiscroft was the most substantial in the settlement and possibly the mill (see Fig. 6).

In medieval England before the Black Death the increasing rural population led to a great expansion of the cultivated areas with a corresponding destruction of waste and forest. Numerous small woodland settlements sprang up as a result. Because of their small size many of these did not survive the Black Death and the other rural depopulationary factors of the later Middle Ages. One of the newly cultivated areas was that to the north of the great enclosure. Known today as Frithend it was adjacent to that part of the Alice Holt known as La Frith. This can be translated as either the plantation or more likely the woodland pasture.

In a Plea of Venison for 1264⁷ we find listed the villis of Clinton, Benstede, Watelegh and La Frith. Benstede and Watelegh survive today as the village of Binsted and Wheatley hamlet to the west of Straits Inclosure. The whereabouts of Clinton is unknown but it may have been a settlement which existed on the southern edge of Straits Inclosure until at least 1613⁸ and of which the sites of at least four houses and a mill-pond are known (see Fig. 4). La Frith in its original sense at the time of Domesday may have been the area of woodland referred to under Broxhead as being worth 50 swine, but by the mid 13th century had also become the name of a small forest-side settlement cleared from part of it.

At the very beginning of the 14th century there was a further spate of land reclamation from the waste and forest. In Kingsley parish alone 180^{1/2} acres were purprestured, mostly in a very short space of time. On 10 August 1302 John of Drokenesford, an important member of Edward I's household and later Bishop of Bath and Wells, was given licence to enclose 88 acres of waste⁹ but in the event he only cleared 83¹⁰ at a place in Kingsley called Foxhurst, which was probably at the western end of the parish. On 26 August 1302 permission was given to James of the Mills to enclose 22^{1/2} acres at a place called Thenputhulle in Kingsley but he managed to get away with 23 acres, 1 rood. The following year, on 23 March, Peter of Worldham was given licence to enclose 29 acres 3 roods of waste at the extreme western edge of the parish next to Binswood. This great expansion of agricultural land at the expense of the waste and forest brings us to our medieval potters.

THE MEDIEVAL POTTERS OF FRITHEND AND BENTLEY

In the Regards of the Forest of Wolvemere and Alice Holt¹¹ of the 4th year of Edward III (1331) there is a section called Old Purprestures. Under Kingsley is the entry mentioning an encroachment of three perches by Hugo the Crockere, which at the time of the scribe's writing was held by his son Peter the Crockere. Associated with these Regards is a series of

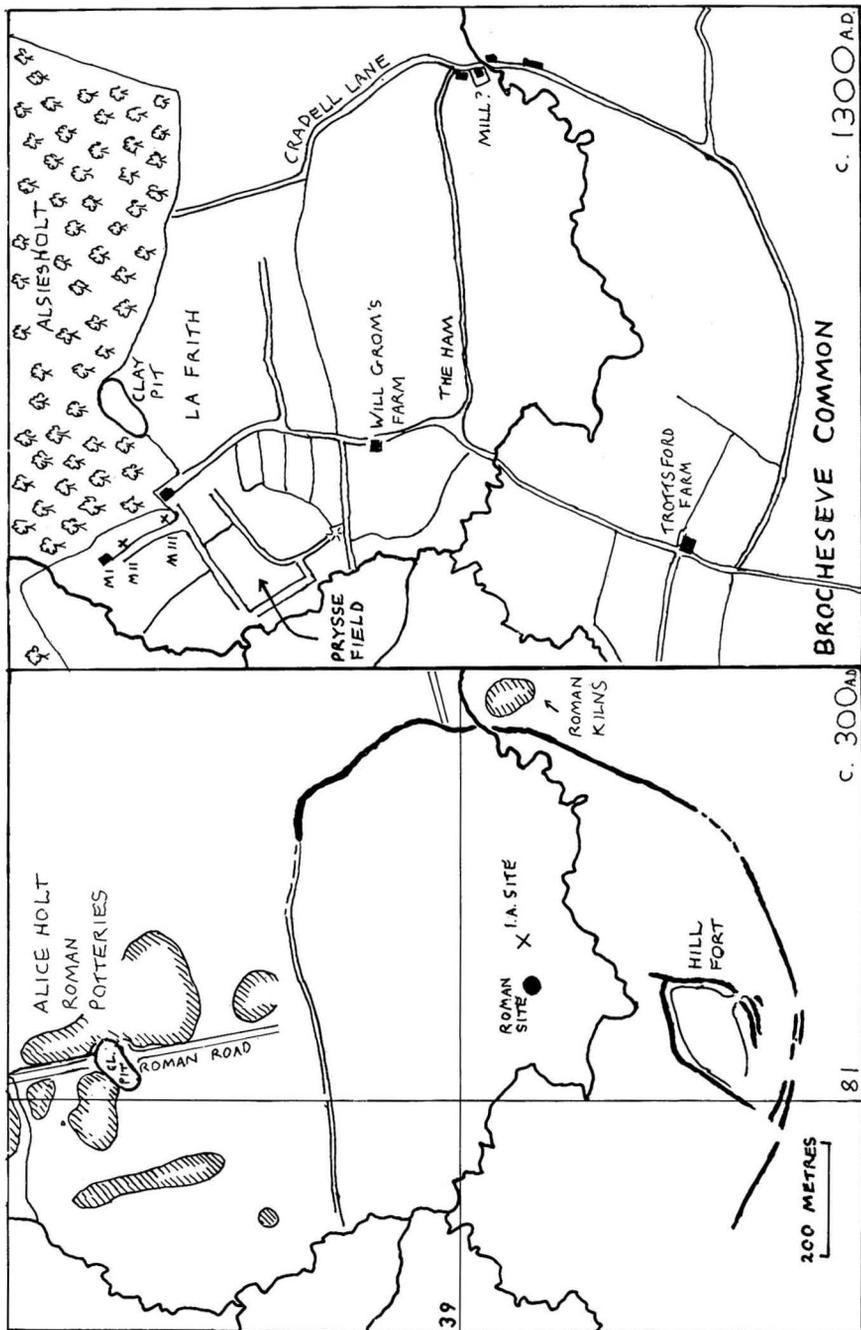


Fig. 5. Frithend during Late Roman times. Fig. 6. Frithend at the time of the Medieval potteries. (Crown copyright reserved.)

Pleas of Vert and Venison in the same hand which refer to cases of poaching and illegal removal of timber, etc. in the reigns of Edward I and Edward II. It seems likely that the Old Purprestures refer to the period between 1280 and 1300, and the previous series of Regards for the 6th year of Edward I (1280) do not mention Hugo or any other potter. We can therefore deduce that Hugo appears on the scene sometime between those years.

Three perches is not a very large area of land and might well refer to the ground cleared to construct the kiln. It may be that at this stage Hugo did not live on site. He may have moved into the area from outside and, until he could buy or rent a farm to supplement his income from the seasonal pursuit of potting, placed himself under the protection of a local lord. In an endowment of the vicarage of East Worldham church appropriated to the Prior and Convent of Selborne, dated 1290,¹² we have, listed amongst the tithes of hand-dug plots in the village, 'ye dykers croft, ye potteris crofts, ye carpenterris crofts'. The manor of East Worldham, which is only 4 miles west of the Frithend potteries, had been held by the Venuz family since the Norman Conquest and went with the bailiwick of the forest of Wolvemere and Alice Holt. In 1290 the lord of the manor, John de Venuz aged 30, was the first of his line since 1066 not to hold the forest. His father, also John, had in 1257 relinquished the post on the grounds of infirmity and impotence in favour of his son-in-law Adam Gurdon of Selborne, who retained it until his death in 1305. Young John de Venuz nevertheless was involved in the administration of the forest and many forest workers still lived on his manor, and also perhaps Hugo and his son.

By 1302 Hugo's son Peter was a farmer potter, for an entry of that year in the Pleas of Venison¹³ gives an unusual amount of topographical detail. On the Sunday after the Feast of St. Michael in the 30th year of Edward I an unknown person killed a fawn in Pryssefield¹⁴ near La Frith. After killing it the unknown person took it across the meadow and garden of Peter the Crockere and into his barn. There Peter's 'enemy' skinned the fawn and afterwards deposited it in his house.¹⁵ The Forest Attachment Court cleared Peter of any complicity and the attempt to 'frame' him failed.

On the very same day John son of William of Welegh and William the Voche were caught killing a doe at Hemingswere at the north-east end of the Alice Holt. It is understandable to find John poaching at Hemingswere as Welegh (Willey Mill) is just across the River Wey but the Voche family rented land at Broxhead near Peter the Crockere's farm. Curiously John was fined half a mark but William was discharged by the Attachment Court.

As mentioned above the Regards of the Forest show that Peter was still around in 1331 and a further series of Regards for 1344¹⁶ show the same. By medieval standards, after at least 42 years of potting and farming, Peter must have been a very old man and cannot have been active for much longer.

We now come to the problem of our third potter Stephen the Crockere. The Regards for 1331 and 1344 show Stephen holding 20½ acres but whereas we can put Hugo and Peter at Frithend we cannot place Stephen with any such certainty. Stephen's holding indicates that he was a farmer like Peter and it can be divided into two parts. Eighteen acres had originally been cleared by John of Drokenesford and 2½ acres by Joan, the daughter of Adam Gurdon.

Air photography has given us the layout of much of Peter the Crockere's farm at Frithend (see Figs. 7 and 8). It can be seen that the strip of land containing the kilns and house was separated from the fields by a trackway. This track linked the house with another lane which went from the forest in a south westerly direction. The whole farm complex was enclosed by streams on all sides save the north-east which was delimited by the Alice Holt boundary ditch with its external bank.

In 1841 the Kingsley Tithe Map showed the strip with the house and kilns surviving as a separate unit with an area of 1 acre 3 roods and 28 perches or virtually 2 acres. Compare this with the 2½ acres of Joan Gurdon's purpresture. Indeed if one were to include the width of the trackway leading to the house the area relationships would be very close indeed. The rest of the farmland between the valleys of the two streams also comes close to the 18 acres of John of Drokenesford's purpresture.

It is known that before John of Drokenesford assarted his 83 acres at Foxhurst in 1302 he had made a previous clearance. We do not know the date of this but it is possible by working out the acreages from the Forest Regards to recognise it as the above 18 acres. This earlier clearance by John met with disaster. On 14 May 1301 John de Kyrkely, Thomas de Arches, and James de Norton were empowered by King Edward to cut and sell trees and underwood in Alice Holt to the value of £50 and to have the money at the Exchequer by a fortnight after midsummer.¹⁷ The king wanted his money quickly and it would appear that his men may have been a little careless as to where they felled their trees. On 28 June we find John of Drokenesford complaining to the king that persons unknown had cut down his trees and removed them from the plot of waste, which he had enclosed and leased from the king at Kingsley. They had also grubbed up his hedge and destroyed it.¹⁸

How can we reconcile Peter's holding of 3 perches at Frithend in 1331 with Stephen's suggested holding of 20½ acres there at the same time? As stated above Peter, who had held a farm there in 1302, must have been getting old by 1331 and it is feasible that he had passed the farm to his son Stephen by then but had held on to the kiln. All of John of Drokenesford's later clearance at Foxhurst eventually went to his brother Philip, but the earlier holding having had much of its value destroyed was possibly got rid of quickly to Peter the Crockere.

There is another possible explanation as to Stephen's identity. As stated above James of the Mills enclosed waste at Thenputhulle in 1302. In the



Fig. 7. Air photograph: medieval sites and field system at Mowlands Farm Frithend. (Reproduced by permission of the National Monuments Record)

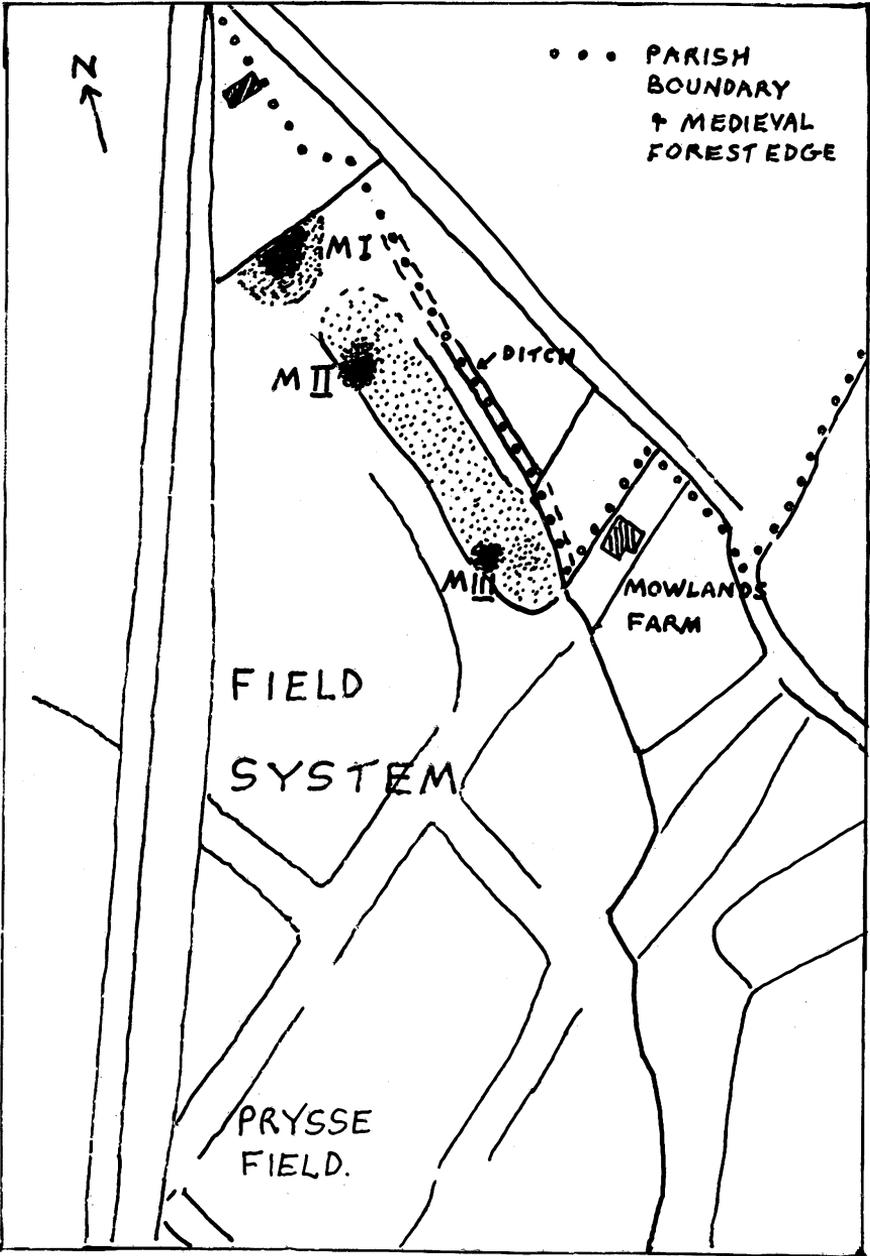


Fig. 8. Interpretation of Fig. 7 opposite

Regards of the Forest for 1331 this purpresture is listed under Kingsley but the charter issued by Edward 1 refers to Thenputhulle as being near Isington at the western end of the Alice Holt. This is quite clearly nowhere near the present parish of Kingsley and as the Regards are arranged under villis rather than parishes, the vill of Kingsley may have incorporated the Alice Holt up as far as the River Wey.

The Bentley medieval kiln, from the close similarity of its cooking pot forms and fabrics to those from Frithend, must be of similar date and Thenputhulle, from its position given above, must have been close to it. A field across the road from the latter, now cut by the Alton/Farnham railway line, was known as Bottle field in 1841 and it seems possible that Bottle could be derived from 'puthulle'.

The name Stephen is rare in the Regards for 1331, occurring only once elsewhere under Old Assarts. Roger Bannere had assarted 40 perches in Kingsley and this was held in 1331 by Stephen Thenputhulle. It may be that John of Drokenesford's earlier purpresture was at the northern end of the Alice Holt near Thenputhulle rather than at Frithend and in this case Stephen the Crockere becomes the Bentley potter. The different name Stephen the Crockere and Stephen Thenputhulle can be easily explained. Peter the Crockere is referred to in the Pleas of Venison entry as Peter the Crockere of La Frith and Stephen's full name may have been Stephen the Crockere of Thenputhulle.

CONCLUSIONS

It would appear that the two Alice Holt potting centres at Bentley and Frithend are largely contemporary, with perhaps an earlier commencement date for the latter. The very close resemblance in style and fabric of the cooking pots from the two centres suggests that the Bentley potter may have been trained by or copied the Frithend potter and there could have been a family connection.

If, however, the theory that Stephen the Crockere was the Bentley potter is correct then a whole new avenue of documentary research is opened up. The previous holder of his land, John of Drokenesford, may well have been a patron of potters as another Hampshire holding of his was at Estone Croks in Chute forest, now Crux Easton. Such a name suggests a settlement of specialist craftsmen rather like that at Potters Lyveden in Northamptonshire. A large scale potting industry could be a source of considerable income to the person running it and the following entry from the Patent Rolls of Edward I, dated 14 December 1291: 'Robert Poterel, citizen of Winchester, acknowledges that he owes to John of Drokenesford clerk 50 marks, to be levied in default of payment, of his lands and chattels in county Southampton' may be relevant.

It may be that Stephen the Crockere was brought by John from Estone Croks to the Alice Holt c. 1300 to enlarge the area of his market. Hugo

and his son Peter were operating at Frithend producing red sandy ware cooking pots and green glazed strap handled pitchers. The Bentley potter appears to have copied these for local consumption but he also manufactured a very superior line of white ware pitchers which had a much wider distribution. The style of these is probably not of local origin except perhaps in the use of wheel stamps in the decoration. Bridge spouts, face masks, and rod handles are more akin to the Laverstock tradition, as is much of the decoration, and supply the strongest evidence that the Bentley potter originated from outside the area. He seems the first to have used white clay from the Reading beds near Farnham and as described elsewhere¹⁹ can be regarded as the forerunner of the Surrey white ware potters.

The documentary evidence for the Alice Holt potters provides useful dating for various medieval pottery types. The squared cooking pot rim, type C, which has been regarded as 13th century can now be seen to belong to the latter part of that century and the first half of the 14th. It can be seen to run parallel with the triangular B rim form which eventually supersedes it in the modified internally beaded D type. At the same time in centres such as Laverstock the archaic A rim form which is directly derived from Saxo-Norman types continues throughout associated with equally archaic scratch-marking.

Pitchers of globular form with slashed and pie crusted handles were being manufactured at both Frithend and Bentley and at the latter the same pitcher form but with rod handles was also being made in a different fabric. It is generally held that strap handles are earlier than rod handles but quite clearly there is a considerable overlap in the late 13th and 14th centuries and one centre could be manufacturing pitchers with strap handles within a few miles of another centre producing them with rod handles.

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We wish to thank all those people who have helped us in our research and in particular Mr and Mrs Hicks of Mowlands Farm, on whose land the medieval kilns lie and who gave us permission to examine them and take samples of surface material. Also Mr F. W. Holling of Guildford Museum who gave us much in the way of advice and useful information and Mr J. Hampton of The National Monuments Record, whose air photographs proved so useful in elucidating the medieval field system.

Notes and References

1. P.R.O. Tithe Map for Binsted Parish
2. P.R.O. Close Rolls, 28 Elizabeth, pt. 9
3. Matson, F. R. 'Some aspects of ceramic technology'. In Brothwell, D. and Higgs, *Science in archaeology*, 1969, 592-602
4. Musty, J. Algar, and Ewence. 'The medieval pottery kilns at Laverstock, near Salisbury, Wiltshire'. *Archaeologia*, 102, 83-150
5. Verbal. F. W. Holling

6. It is probable that originally most of the circuit boundary of this enclosure was a simple embankment like the northern sector. The straight northern part of Cradle Lane is sunken like the rest of it suggesting that its whole length from the edge of Alice Holt in the north to the edge of Headley Park in the south is a later Roman or Saxon estate boundary ditch bulging to incorporate the enclosure on its west.
7. P.R.O. E32/158
8. P.R.O. LR2/203. Map of Straits Inclosure by John Norden with recommendations for encoppicing
9. *Cal. Patent Rolls*. Edward I
10. P.R.O. E32/168. Regards of Woolmer and Alice Holt
11. P.R.O. E32/168
12. *Cal. of charters and documents relating to Selborne and its Priory* [205b] Hampshire Record Society, 1891, 73-4
13. P.R.O. E32/168
14. Pryssefield survived on the Kingsley Tithe Map of 1841 as Prys Field
15. The words 'grangia' and 'camera' are used for barn and house respectively. Grangia can be used for a store house of any description including a pottery store. Camera means strictly a one-room dwelling or chamber and the text could be taken to mean that the barn and house were parts of a single structure
16. P.R.O. E32/168 m. 6
17. *Cal. Patent Rolls*. Edward I
18. *Cal. Patent Rolls* Edward I
19. Holling F. W. 'A preliminary note on the pottery industry of the Hampshire Surrey borders'. *Surrey A.C.*, 58, 1971, 57-88.

ADDENDUM

The pleas of vert for 1257 (P.R.O. E32/157) record a William the Potter of La Fryth, who may have been the father of Hugo the Crokkere, paying 12d for underwood; Roger the Potter of Hawkley paying 2s and Richard the Potter of Broxhead paying 12d for underwood.

A deed (B.M. ADD. CH. 26611) records the lease of 4 acres of land at Isington by Philip the abbot of Waverley to William of the Potte merchant of Binsted. The deed is unfortunately undated but Philip de Bedwinde was abbot from 1286 to some time after 1303 and this coupled with what is known about some of the witnesses suggests a date between 1300 and 1310 for the document. It seems more than likely that this is the lease for the land on which the Bentley kiln was constructed.

The earliest reference to Stephen the Crockere is in 1331 and the transference of the land from John of Drokenesford to him may represent the transition from the merchant-potter status of his predecessor and possible father, William, to Stephen's farmer-potter role. In an inquisition of 1334 (P.R.O. E32/278) Stephen the Crockere is recorded as having pannage for four swine in the Alice Holt; a further indication of his farming activities.