

Excavations in Reigate, 1974

by HUMPHREY WOODS

Excavations were carried out during August, 1974, in advance of the construction of the Inner Ring Road south of the High Street, on behalf of the Reigate Archaeological Co-ordinating Committee and financed by grants from Reigate and Banstead Borough Council and the Department of the Environment.

The excavations, which were carried out over a period of three weeks, were directed by the author and supervised by Ms. Esmée Webb. Two cuttings were made behind properties fronting on the High Street to see if there was any evidence for medieval occupation in this part of Reigate.

The first cutting, measuring 2.50m east-west by 6m north-south, was made immediately south of the 'Pantry' (65 High Street—TQ 250502). A second cutting of the same dimensions was made immediately south of the concreted yard behind Timothy White's (23 High Street—TQ 252502). A third cutting, 1.50m wide, was made inside the Priory Park between its northern perimeter wall and the new buildings of the Priory School (TQ 252501). The purpose of this was to establish the date of the perimeter wall and to see if any structural or other evidence of Reigate Priory survived in its immediate vicinity. (See Fig. 1.)

THE PANTRY, 65, HIGH STREET

This cutting is described in the sequence of layers and features illustrated in the section drawing (Fig. 2). Some layers which do not appear on the section but which yielded ceramic evidence are also described below.

Layer 1:

turf

Layer 2:

turf subsoil

Layer 3:

garden loam with considerable root disturbance, containing fragments of brick and flower pot. Modern.

Feature 6:

a modern drain

Layer 6/1:

the top fill of drain F. 6. Broken brick and mortar rubble mixed with soft light brown sandy loam. Finds: 18th century red wares—residual.

Layer 6/2:

Lower fill of drain F. 6. Redeposited natural sand with some broken

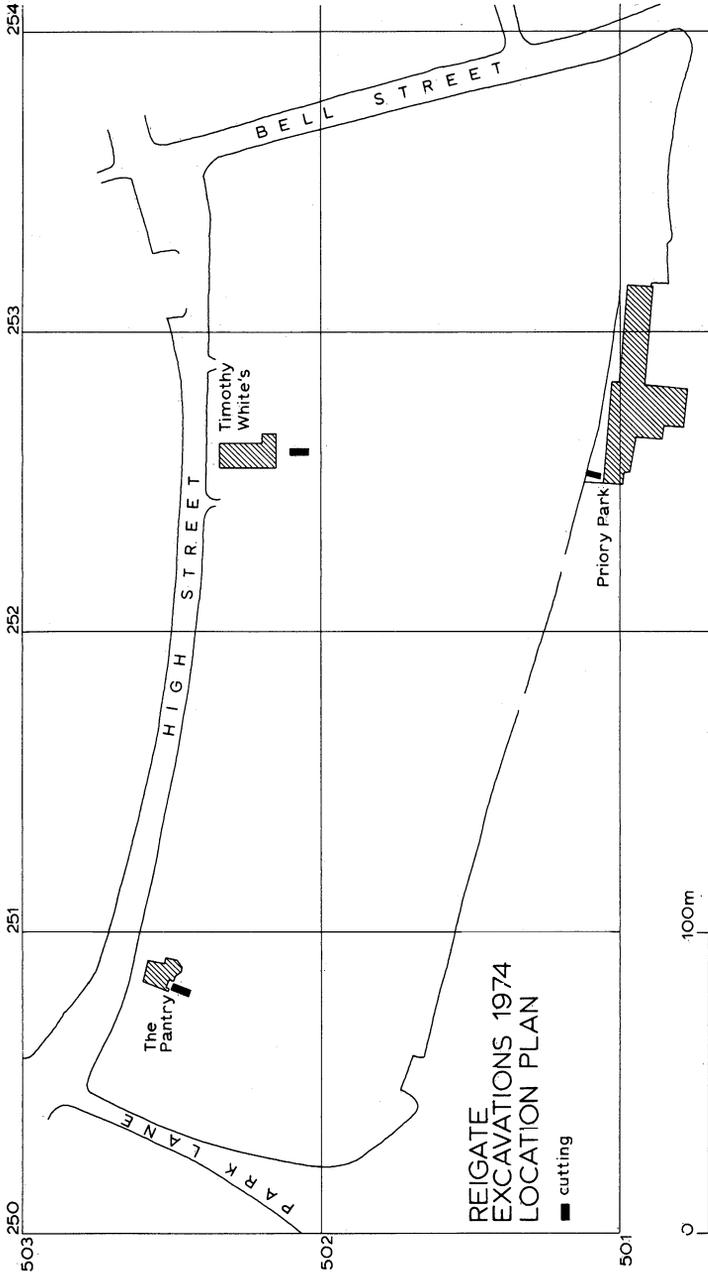


Fig. 1. Plan showing position of excavations

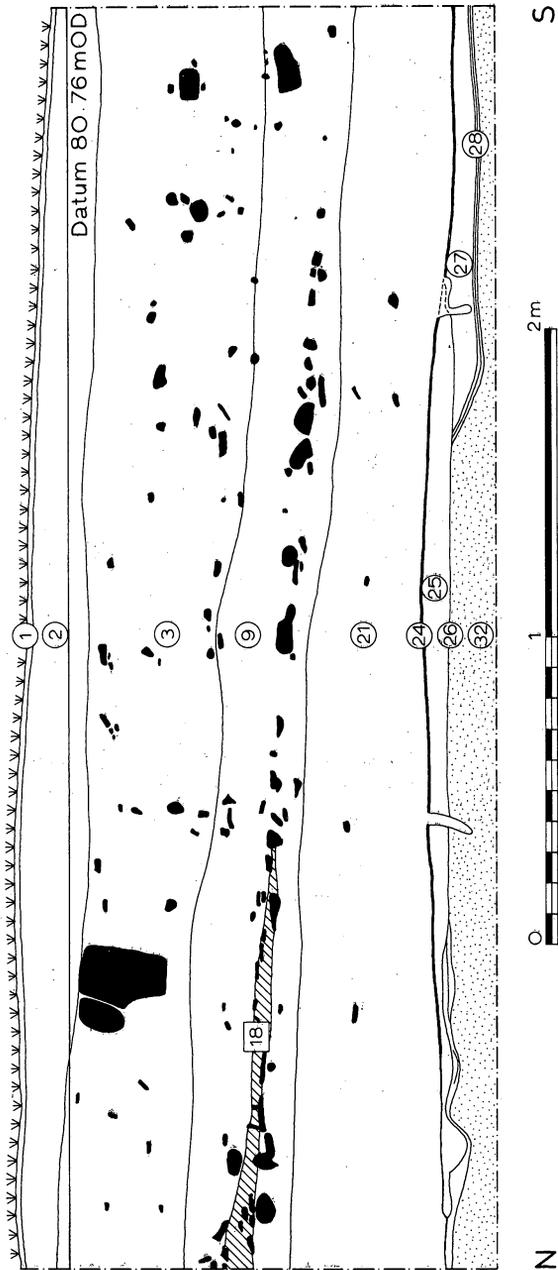


Fig. 2. The Pantry site

brick and mortar rubble. Finds: rim sherd of late thirteenth century cooking pot; West Surrey ware; early stoneware, delft—all residual.

Layer 9:

Light brown clayey sand. Finds: residual medieval sherds; sixteenth-seventeenth-century red wares; Raeren stoneware. This layer contains two lenses of demolition material, L. 17 and F. 18, and must represent a levelling up of the ground at the period of demolition.

Layer 17:

Light brown clayey sand as in L. 9, but containing a large quantity of broken up roof tiles. Finds: residual late thirteenth-century and early fourteenth-century sherds; late stoneware and eighteenth-century red wares. Demolition layer. Contained in L. 9, see above.

Feature 18:

a dump of demolition material of which an area approx. 1.40m × 1.80m was exposed. The feature continued into the eastern section of the cutting. Broken roof tiles, brick fragments and pieces of chalk mixed with light orange/brown clay of a type not native to the site and which must have been used as a bonding material. Finds: late thirteenth-century sherds; fifteenth-sixteenth-century sherds; base angle of a small Seigburg stoneware beaker. Contained in L. 9, see above.

Layer 18/1:

a thin layer of grey sand under F. 18. Disturbed soil from L. 21, see below. Finds: body sherd of glazed medieval jug—residual, probably from L. 21.

Feature 20:

a water gully in the natural sand running NE-SW through the cutting. There was no indication that this was man-made. Fill of grey sandy silt. Finds: early and late thirteenth-century sherds; one fourteenth-century sherd. Two mesolithic flint flakes lay in the bed of the gully.

Layer 21:

black sand with a small humic content, containing a few chalk fragments and some very fragmentary remains of wood charcoal. Finds: early thirteenth and some late thirteenth-century sherds. Tilled soil.

Layers 24, 26 and 28:

black lines above the natural sand indicating the percolation and occasional ponding of water. L. 24 is cut by two mole holes coming from soil L. 21. No finds.

Layers 25 and 27:

natural sand churned up and stained grey black by the action of water. No finds.

Layer 32:

natural white quartz sand with a few water rounded quartz grits up to 3mm in diameter. Sterile.

Discussion

The evidence for structures having stood near this site lies in L. 17 and

F. 18. The red wares present in L. 17 date this phase of demolition to the late eighteenth century. The latest sherds in F. 18 are of the sixteenth century. Both these lenses of demolition material, however, appeared to be closely associated when excavated and are contained in the same layer, L. 9.

Although the latest sherds from this layer are seventeenth-century red wares and Raeren stoneware, the fact that it contains L. 17 must put L. 9 into the eighteenth century. All that can safely be said, then, is that demolition material from a structure was deposited here in the eighteenth century. Where the structure stood or what was its date cannot be ascertained on the evidence of the present excavation.

L. 21, which is sealed by L. 9, is tilled soil. The pottery in it would have come with the dung from the middens and been spread and dug in with it. All the pottery recovered from this layer is of the thirteenth century, so it can be presumed that the site ceased to be tilled after that date. The inference would seem to be that occupation began here in the fourteenth century. But as has been seen the evidence is lacking.

TIMOTHY WHITE'S, 23, HIGH STREET

This cutting revealed two drains of the twentieth century, a complex of footings of the nineteenth century, a cobbled yard surface of either the eighteenth or nineteenth century, and beneath these structures a layer of sand yielding late medieval and post medieval sherds, and a layer of tilled soil of the thirteenth century identical to that in the Pantry cutting.

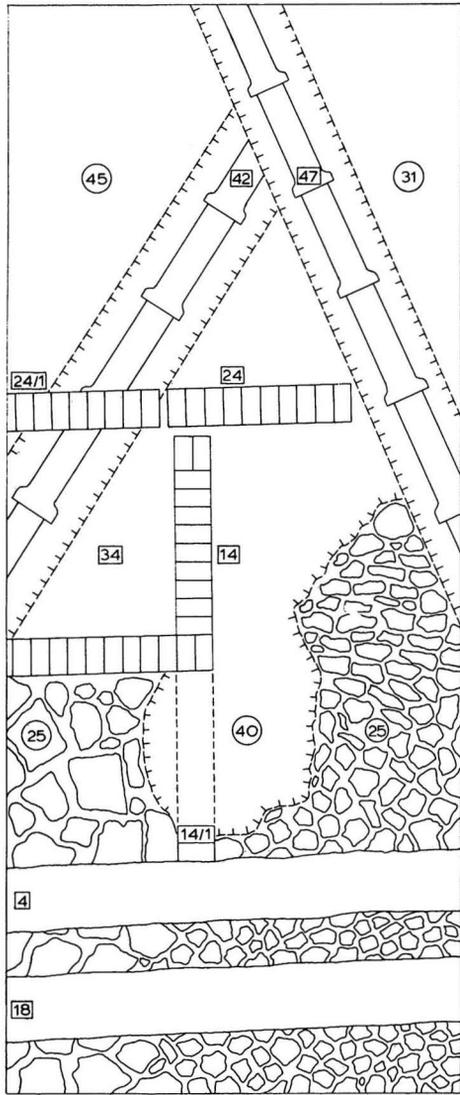
The structures are illustrated in Fig. 3. Drains F. 47 and F. 42 were found to have obliterated the archaeological deposits in the southern end of the cutting. F. 47 overlies F. 42 and F. 42 is bedded in natural sand. F. 42 had been tunnelled under soakaway F. 34 and had damaged walls F. 24/1 and F. 14 which form two sides of the soakaway. F. 47 had destroyed part of wall F. 24, which with F. 24/1 probably formed the southern boundary of the property under discussion, though the modern disturbance beyond makes it impossible to be certain of this.

Footings F. 14, F. 24 and F. 24/1 were assigned separate numbers during excavation because they were not bonded into one another at the south-west corner of F. 34. Similarly F. 14/1 was assigned a separate number because a modern intrusion had destroyed most of it and its relationship to F. 14 was not immediately apparent. After excavation, however, it was clear that all these footings formed part of the same structure, which was keyed into wall F. 4. They probably represent a backyard lavatory, of which F. 34 is the soakaway.

Walls F. 4 and F. 14 seal a layer, L. 23, of brown sandy soil mixed with rubble. This yielded a stoneware bottle neck of the mid-nineteenth century which gives a date for the structure formed by F. 4, F. 14, F. 14/1, F. 24 and F. 24/1.

Wall F. 18 also overlies L. 23, and it must have been demolished to make way for F. 4 and its adjuncts.

TIMOTHY WHITE'S, REIGATE 1974
POST MEDIEVAL STRUCTURES



DESCRIPTIONS
AND LEVELS

- [4] stone and brick wall, 78.75m OD
- [14] }
 - [14/1] } brick footings, 78.68
 - [24] }
 - [24/1] }
- [18] stone wall, 78.55
- (25) cobbles, 78.23
- (31) modern rubble } 78.09
- (47) modern sewer }
- (40) dumped sand, 78.07
- [34] bottom of soakaway } 77.18 m OD
- [42] modern sewer }
- (45) natural silver sand }

Fig. 3. Timothy White's site

A cobbled yard surface, L. 25, of Reigate stone underlies F. 4, F. 14/1 and F. 18 and has been partially destroyed by F. 34. It seals a layer of brown earth, L. 33, which yielded the base angle of a red-glazed pan of a type common to both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It can only be said, then, that the yard was constructed in either the eighteenth century or the early nineteenth.

Beneath L. 33 was a layer, L. 40, of very sandy brown loam approx 76cm thick. The pottery contained in this layer included sherds of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, a dish rim (possibly from a chafing dish) of c. 1500, and a sherd of late seventeenth-century Westerwald stoneware. Examination of a 12lb soil sample taken from this layer showed that biological remains were confined to a single battered carbonized cereal grain, a fragment of *Mystilus edulis*, the common mussel, and some bones from a small mammal the size of a vole.

Two interpretations are possible for this layer. It could represent the remains of a spread midden. But the very wide date range of the ceramic evidence argues against this. More likely the layer was dumped here to level up the ground for the construction of yard surface L. 25.

Beneath L. 40 was a layer of black sand, L. 46, with a small humic content, containing a few chalk fragments and some very fragmentary remains of wood charcoal, identical to L. 21 in the Pantry site. It yielded five sherds of the thirteenth century. Like Pantry L. 21 this is tilled soil.

Under L. 46 was natural sand. This had been cut into by drain F. 42 (see above), but was otherwise sterile.

Discussion

Evidence for medieval occupation on this site is confined to layers 40 and 46. The interpretation of L. 46 must be the same as for L. 21 in the Pantry site, i.e. that the site was tilled ground during the thirteenth century. If L. 40 does represent a spread midden, the location of the dwelling to which the midden belonged remains a matter for conjecture on the evidence of the present excavation.

PRIORY PARK

The Priory Park cutting showed that the northern perimeter wall of the park at this point is of nineteenth-century date, but that it is standing on a silted-up stream. The robber trench of an earlier wall was found above the top fill of the stream.

The layers and features illustrated in the section drawing, Fig. 4, are described in reverse chronological sequence.

Features 3 and 15 are modern. F. 3 is a gas pipe and F. 15 a cement path. F. 7 is the perimeter wall. Its two lowest courses are of Reigate stone

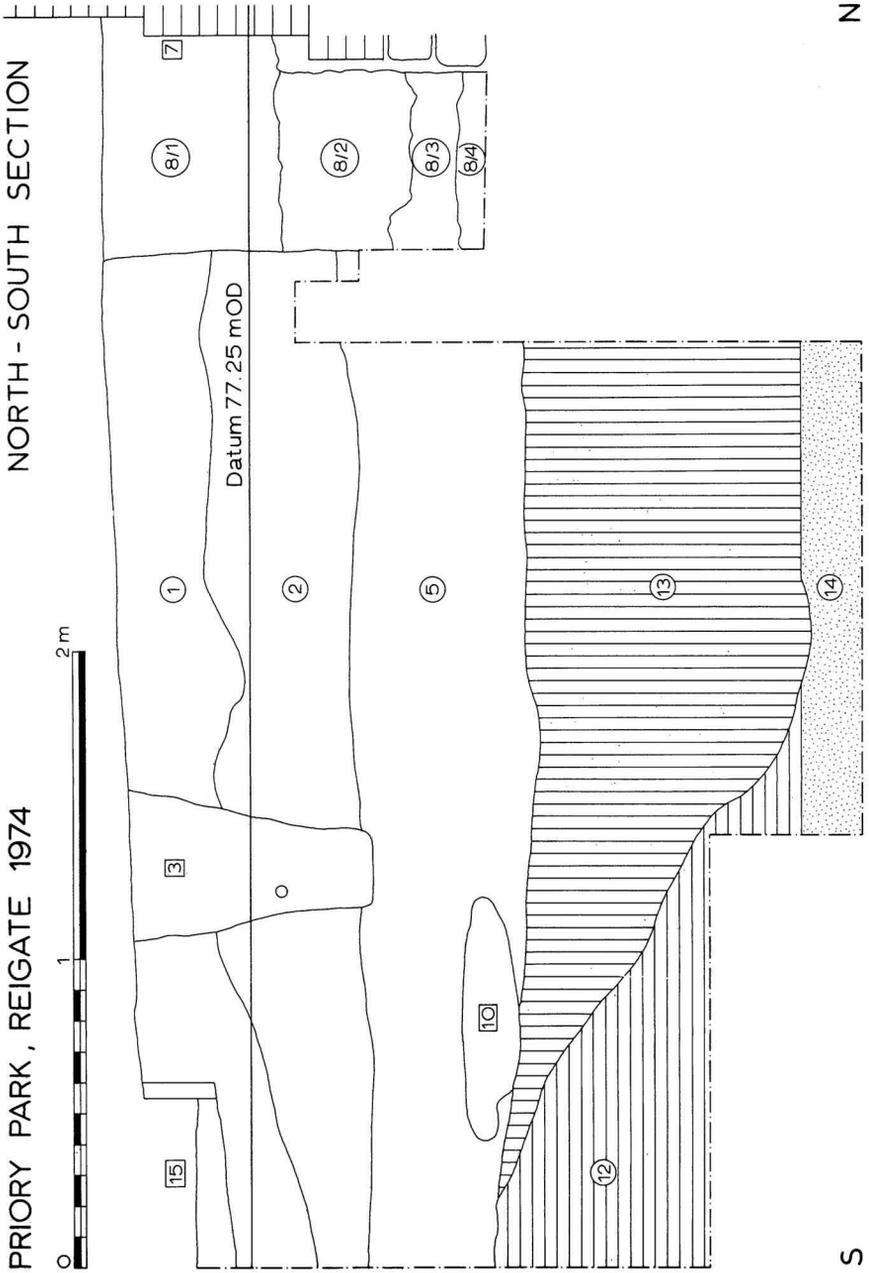


Fig. 4. Priory Park site

blocks, the remainder of brick. The Reigate stone and the bottom six courses of brick have been rendered over with mortar in addition to being bonded with it. Layers 8/1 to 8/4 are the layers of fill in the construction trench for wall F. 7. The cut for this trench comes from the present ground surface.

Layer 8/1 consists of loose light brown earth; L. 8/2 of light brown sandy clay. L. 8/3 contains nineteenth-century china and newspaper, some galvanised iron and large quantities of a material resembling linoleum. L. 8/4, the lowest fill, is again of light brown sandy clay.

Layers 1, 2 and 5 all represent modern build-up. L. 1 is loose dark brown loam heavily disturbed by roots, yielding recent china and glass. L. 2 is light brown sandy clay. Like L. 1 it is disturbed by roots, but the disturbance is less pronounced, and the layer is firmer. L. 5 is a dark yellow sandy clay, quite compact. No dating evidence was recovered from L. 2 or L. 5.

Layer 5 contains the robber trench, F. 10, which rests on the top fill of the stream, L. 13. The trench runs east-west across the cutting, parallel to wall F. 7. Its fill is of dirty white sandy mortar and fragments of brick. This also was aceramic.

Stream L. 13 runs through the cutting roughly east-west. It appears to have been slow-flowing and to have followed a meandering course. The silt consists of alternating layers of blue and yellow clay. A small quantity of animal bone was found in the upper layers and some twigs were preserved in the primary silt, but no pottery was recovered. A bank of blue/brown clay, L. 12, has built up to the south and this must have been the result of periodic flooding, perhaps assisted by artificial dredging.

L. 14 is natural sand, which was sterile.

Discussion

The buried stream is probably a continuation of the 'running stream of water' which appears on Bryant's Survey of 1785 crossing Bell Street on an east-west axis. If so it must have silted up at some time after 1785, and as robber trench F. 10 rests on the silt the wall of which it is the ghost must have been comparatively late in date. It seems likely that the stream would have connected up with the lake at the far end of Priory Park.

It also seems likely that the canons of Reigate Priory would have made use of this stream in one way or another, either as a boundary, a water supply or part of their drainage system. But in the absence of any pottery to prove this, it remains only a likelihood.

The northern bank of the stream must be either under wall F. 7 or on the other side of it, but the presence of a water pipe and the danger of collapsing the wall precluded further excavation in that direction.

RESISTIVITY SURVEY

Following the conclusion of excavations, a resistivity survey was carried out by Mr. Tom Maile over the whole of the Pantry garden. The results of this were negative.

CONCLUSION

The evidence of these excavations suggests that medieval Reigate is not to be found in this area of the present town. The absence of structures could be explained by the fact that neither of the sites excavated was directly on the High Street frontage. But the absence of pits or anything that could definitely be identified as a midden is remarkable. And as has been shown the area was tilled ground at least in the thirteenth century.

A more likely location for the medieval town would be the vicinity of the parish church, which dates from c. 1200. If the nucleus of the town was here it would be reasonable that the present High Street should, during the early history of Reigate, have been simply a trackway leading westwards from the town through farmland, with isolated farmsteads situated along or near it.

Proof or disproof of these suggestions must, however, await excavation of the High Street itself and sites fronting directly onto it, and sampling of sites in the area of St. Mary's Church.

REPORT ON THE MEDIEVAL POTTERY by D. J. Turner. Drawings by J. A. Cowie

Scratch marked ware (See Musty in Turner 1970, 32-33)

Some body sherds of this ware were found but no possibly related rim was noted. Scratch marks on the sherds were a little bolder than on sherds of this ware previously noted from Reigate (*ibid*). (From Pantry site, L. 21.)

Early reduced ware (Fig. 5, nos. 1-3)

Black or brown surfaced grey or brown ware usually with coarse sand filler. A very variable ware both in filler and colour (colour often changes from grey to brown to black across the section from core to surface). Many sherds are intermediate to the red-brown surfaced sandy ware and a few sherds have a little fragmentary shell filler as well as coarse sand. Also known from the Netherne Lane site (Alstede sub-manor, Merstham—L. Ketteringham, personal communication) [Ware most numerous in Pantry site L. 20 and 21.]

1. Thickened rim flattened on top. (Pantry L. 21).
2. Everted neck with rim of unusual type, possibly derived from

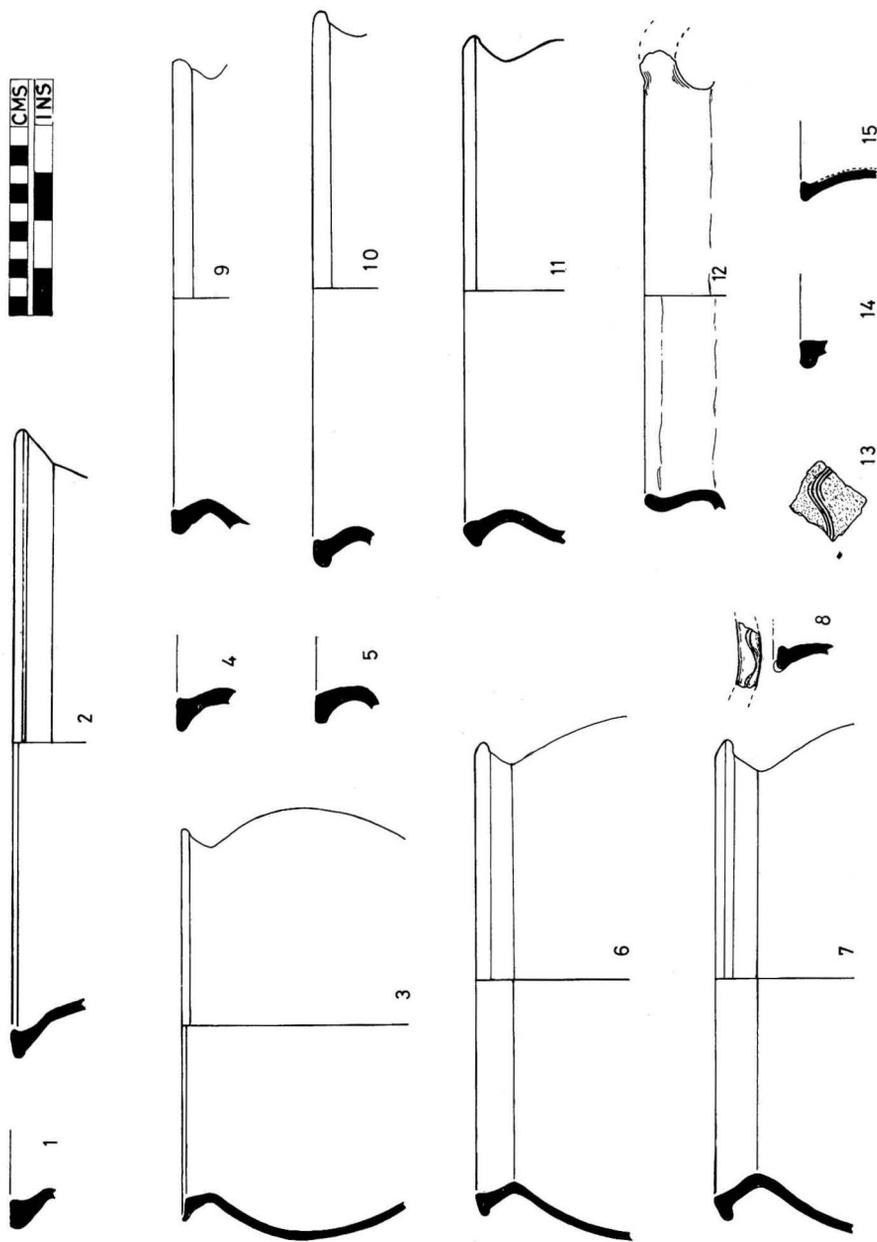


Fig. 5. Medieval pottery

Laverstock type II (Musty, 1969, 100). The everted type II 'two stepped' neck was a common thirteenth-century type at Laverstock. (Pantry L. 21.)

3. Cooking pot with everted neck and triangular rim. Finer sand filler than usual with this ware and wall thickness less. Possibly late in the series. (Timothy White's L. 40.)

Shell filled ware (Fig. 5, nos. 4-5)

Few sherds of pottery with shell filling were found but a range of filling density from medium to very slight is exhibited. Most of the sherds are grey bodied with pinky-brown surfaces but the shell-filled sherds are not numerous enough to show the graduation into red-brown surfaced sandy ware seen at Watendone (Turner 1973, 214).

Several sherds of corky ware apparently related to the shell-filled fabrics were found. Probably these are shell-filled ones from which the shell has been leached out. One corky sherd shows shell filler in section. (Pantry L. 20 and L. 21.)

4. Everted neck with triangular rim of red-brown surfaced corky ware. (Pantry L. 21.)
5. Heavy everted neck with rim flattened on top (Laverstock type III?—Musty 1969, 100) from cooking pot. Grey-brown ware with medium shell filler. (Pantry L. 21.)

Red-brown surfaced, grey sandy ware (Fig. 5, nos. 6-13)

Well made and fired ware with a distinctive margin and surface of red-brown or pinky-brown colour on a grey body. Fine to medium sand filler is present: usually appreciably more filler than in the similar fabric sometimes found in cream slipped jugs. Occasional sherds show coarse sand or water rolled grits in the filler. (Ware most numerous at Pantry site L. 20 and L. 21.)

6. Everted cooking pot neck with rim thickened to an external bead (cf. Watendone 13—Turner 1973). (Pantry L. 21.)
7. Everted cooking pot neck with coarse grit in the sand fill. Heavier version of 6. (Pantry L. 20.)
Nos. 6 and 7 have Laverstock type IV rims which were considered to be thirteenth-century in date (Musty 1969, 100).
8. Everted neck. Rim with inner bead and 'pie crust' decoration on outer edge. (Pantry L. 21.)
9. Everted cooking pot neck. Rim has flattened top. (Pantry L. 21.)
[Similar rim from L. 17: residual.]
10. Everted neck of large cooking pot. (Pantry L. 21.)
11. Rim of cooking pot. (Pantry L. 6/2: residual.)
12. Rim-handle junction of pipkin. Traces of cream slip internally. (Pantry L. 21.)
13. Sherd with pale inner surface. Exterior decorated by wave combing. (Pantry L. 21.)

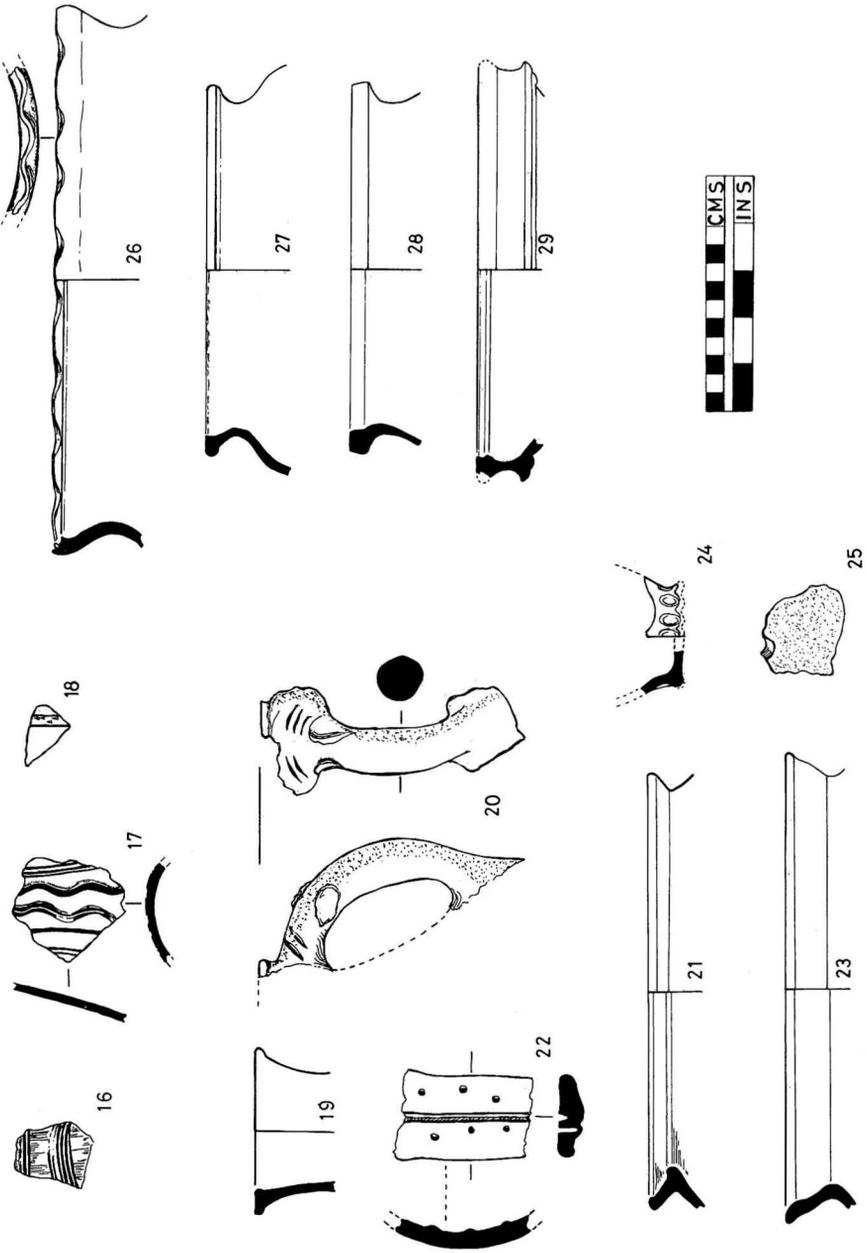


Fig. 6. Medieval pottery

Not illustrated: sherd of thick walled jug with clear glaze over decoration of short raised ribs. (Pantry L. 18/1.)

Black surfaced grey ware (See Turner 1970, 34-35)

Represented by only a few sherds from Pantry site, L. 21. (Not illustrated)

Limpsfield ware (Fig. 5, no. 14)

Well made and fired reduced sand-filled pottery with a range of colours from pinky-buff or brown to grey. Only represented by a few sherds.

14. Flanged rim of pale grey Limpsfield ware. (Pantry L. 21.)

Pale brown ware (Fig. 5, no. 15)

Grey or brown ware with smooth pale grey-brown surface. Little filler.

15. Much weathered jug rim (cf. Turner 1970, No. 16). (Pantry L. 21.)

Cream slipped jugs (Fig. 6, nos. 16-19)

16. Pale pink ware jug with cream slip and thin glaze (Merton ware (b)—Turner 1967, 56). Sgraffito decoration by combing girthwise and in horizontal wave with a 7-toothed comb. Probably an Earlswood product (Turner 1974). (Timothy White's L. 40.)
17. Partly oxidised pink ware (Merton ware (b)). Good green glaze over slip. Sgraffito decoration of vertical lines and waves. Probably an Earlswood product. (Timothy White's L. 40.)
18. Bright pink ware with good green glaze over slip. (Merton ware (b)). Sgraffito decoration of vertical lines with shallow 'tear drop' stabs between. (Timothy White's L. 40.)
19. Pink-brown surfaced, grey ware (Merton ware (a)). Thin slip and spots of clear glaze. (Timothy White's L. 40.)

Oxidised wares (Fig. 6, no. 20)

Represented by only a few sherds.

20. Handle of pinky sandy ware with crude slash and thumbing decoration. (Pantry L. 17.)

Buff surfaced sandy ware (See Turner 1970, 35) (Fig. 6, nos. 21-22)

Represented by only a few sherds.

21. Bifid rim of cooking pot with internal yellow-green glaze. (Pantry L. 9: residual.)
22. Wide strap handle of pinky buff sandy ware. Single deep groove down centre of handle and row of deep stabs each side. (Timothy White's L. 40.)

Late 15th century oxidised wares (Fig. 6, no. 23)

Represented by only a few sherds.

23. Everted rim with very little filler and no glaze. (Turner 1971, No. 22). (Pantry L. 9.)

Early stoneware (Fig. 6, no. 24)

24. Base of small Seigburg stoneware beaker. 15th century. (I am indebted to John Hurst for this information.) (Pantry L. 18.)

Unclassified medieval sherds (Fig. 6, nos. 25-28)

25. Perforated sherd of hard black ware with brown outer surface and fine sand fill. Possibly related to scratch marked ware. (Pantry L. 21.)
26. Everted neck of light grey ware with free fine sand filler. Outer edge of rim raised and thumbbed. (Pantry L. 21.)
27. Cooking pot rim of laminated grey ware with free sand filler. Everted rim thickened to small flange. (Pantry L. 21.)
28. Rim of cooking pot of unusual mauve-brown ware. Club rim. (Timothy White's L. 40.)

Not illustrated: sherd of grey ware, glazed outside with cream slip inside. From bowl or similar vessel—not from a jug—cf. vessel from Netherne Lane (Ketteringham pers. comm.) and Hookwood (Turner forthcoming). (Pantry L. 21.)

Tudor red surfaced, grey ware (Fig. 6, no. 29)

29. Dish rim of fine grey ware with bright red surfaces. Spots of glaze. (For similar ware from Southwark dated c. 1500, see Turner 1971, No. 21) (Timothy White's L. 40)

Discussion

The main point of interest lies in the date range of the medieval pottery found. By far the greater part of the medieval pottery recovered from both sites can probably be dated to the period 1150-1250. The consistent reduced wares characteristic of the late thirteenth century are poorly represented as are the decorated and cream slipped jugs of 1250-1350. Sherds of fourteenth-century oxidised ware and of 'white sandy' wares are also rare. The vessel forms recovered underline the evidence of the wares. Cooking pots found are almost all of the baggy shape with everted rims and the late thirteenth-century barrel shaped pot with upright neck and a flanged rim (e.g. Eynsford B1-10, c. 1250-60—Rigold 1971; Northolt 44-5, before 1300—Hurst 1972) is almost completely absent.

A starting point for the series may be given by the infrequency of thumbbed rims. Thumbbed rims have been found on red-brown surfaced grey ware cooking pots in Reigate (Turner 1970, 34) and their infrequency in the pottery under discussion could suggest that this feature has a limited date range.

The significance of the preponderance of pottery from 1150-1250 at these two sites cannot be assessed at present. Other sites in the town have been excavated and more work is planned. Until the results of this work are available no conclusions can be drawn.

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