

Medieval Pottery from a Kiln Site at Cheam: Part 1

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THE TYPE OF MEDIEVAL pottery known as "Cheam ware", and seen as part of the broader tradition of "Surrey white ware", has been known since 1923, when a kiln and associated pottery were discovered at Parkside, Cheam¹ (A on Fig. 1). The kiln was of double flue updraught type (Musty² type 2c), although described at the time as a through-draft kiln. The pottery was described as "of many colours and qualities, from a red-pink through yellows to black, showing that it probably came from the large ancient clay pit at the back of Cheam Church, where there are seams of many different clays"³ (see B on Fig. 1). This pit is marked on the 1896 O.S. map as "Old Gravel Pit", and appears to lie on the boundary of the Thanet Sand with the Reading and Woolwich Beds (see Fig. 1). It is generally thought that Reading Bed clay was used as a source for this pottery⁴.

In his report¹, Marshall listed the forms produced as:—

- Class A jugs (thirty-two examples)
- Class B measures (sixteen examples)
- Class C saucers (five examples)
- Class D pitchers (nine examples),

together with five "ewers" (i.e. pitchers with pouring lips), four "small jugs", three "pipkins", two "crucibles", two "flagons", one "two-handled vase" and one "curved-base" vase. These figures appear to relate only to complete or reasonably complete vessels. Particular stress was laid on the red-painted "scroll" decoration on some of the pitchers, and the slashed decoration on the strap handles. Further finds of waster pottery were made by Marshall at The Harrow in 1940⁵ and 19 High Street in 1936⁶ (C and D on Fig. 1). The latter discovery drew attention to the north side of the High Street, and in 1969 Brian and Jenny Brockwell discovered wasters while site-watching on a building development at 23 High Street (E on Fig. 1). A four-

week excavation, directed by Martin Morris on behalf of the Nonsuch Antiquarian Society, revealed substantial remains of a kiln of double flue split-pedestal type (Musty type 2d) and retrieved large quantities of pottery, of both the well-known "Cheam ware" and of a new ware, superficially similar to East Anglian red ware⁷. The pottery was washed, marked and stored, and in 1977 detailed study of it was started by the Archaeological Support Group at the Sutton College of Liberal Arts.

The purpose of this interim report is to describe the "white" Cheam pottery from this site, so that it can be identified by other workers. Since work is still in progress, no quantitative estimates of relative proportions are given here, although they will form part of the final report. A second interim report will deal with the red ware and the kiln itself, and reports on the similar white and red wares produced at Kingston⁸ have been promised.

Fabric

Most fabric colours fall into the range of pink to very pale brown (Munsell 7.5 to 10YR 8/4), often with a light grey (N7) core. Others present are reddish yellow (7.5YR 8/6) and dark grey, but vessels in the latter do not appear to be serviceable and are presumably wasters. This range of colours seems to correspond to Marshall's "red-pink through yellows to black". The clay contains moderate inclusions of clear, grey and pink/brown quartz (i.e. sand), mostly up to 0.25mm (0.01in) in size but some larger, and occasional pieces of black and red ironstone. The sand is not readily apparent without the use of a hand lens, in contrast to the sandier Kingston ware. Although hard and wheel-thrown, the vessels generally show little sign of "finishing", with often no attempt to tidy up any surplus clay left after throwing. Glaze is usually restricted to a small "bib" opposite the handle on jugs, or an area inside the base of cooking pots or bowls. Both an even,

1 C J Marshall, "A Medieval Pottery Kiln discovered at Cheam," *Surrey Archaeol. Collect.* 35 (1924) 79-94.
2 J Musty, "Medieval pottery Kilns," in *Medieval Pottery from Excavations*, eds. V I Evison, H Hodges and J G Hurst (1974) 41-65.
3 Fn. 1, 82.
4 See, e.g. F W Holling "A Preliminary Note on the Pottery Industry of the Hampshire-Surrey Borders," *Surrey Archaeol. Collect.* 68 (1971) 63.

5 C J Marshall, "The Sites of Two more Thirteenth Century Pottery Kilns at Cheam", *Surrey Archaeol. Collect.* 47 (1941) 99-100.
6 C J Marshall, *History of Cheam and Sutton*, (1937) 73.
7 J G Hurst, "The Kitchen Area of Northolt Manor, Middlesex," *Med. Arch.* 5 (1961), 275.
8 M P Canham, "Kingston: Medieval Pottery Kiln," *Surrey Archaeol. Collect.* 67 (1970), 102-3, and *pers. comm.*

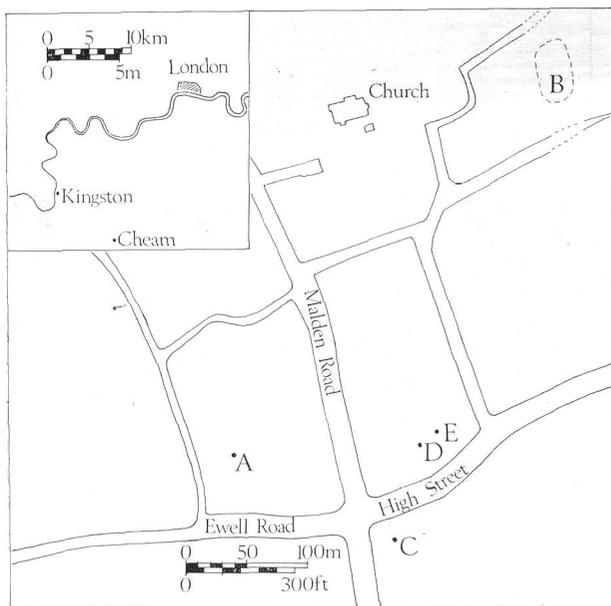


Fig. 1: Cheam: Location of sites mentioned in the text. Area of Reading and Woolwich Beds is screened.

rather yellowish, green glaze and a clear or light green glaze with darker mottling occur. Decoration is rare, and consist only of horizontal grooving on the shoulders of some cooking pots and jugs.

Forms

The "white" pottery came mainly from two deposits — (i) a yellow sandy layer cut by the stokepit for the kiln, and therefore presumably earlier than the kiln. It contained complete and nearly complete vessels, as well as a large quantity of sherds, but no red ware, (ii) layers in and over the top of the kiln structure and stokepit, containing large quantities of red and white ware in a fragmentary state. It proved impossible to reconstruct this pottery to any appreciable extent, suggesting that this is a secondary deposit of waster material, dumped over the kiln at the end of its life. Complete examples are therefore only available for forms that are both fairly common and found beneath the stokepit: the complete forms of other vessels have been reconstructed by using complete vessels of Cheam ware in the Museum of London collection, matching them to sherds from the site.

Jugs

Jugs are the most common class of vessel represented here. They can be divided into three main

groups — biconical, standard and barrel - shaped jugs⁹. Biconical jugs (Fig. 2, Nos. 1-3) are probably the most common, corresponding to Marshall's Class A jugs. Their profile falls into three distinct sections — a conical base, a conical shoulder (hence the name) and a straight, usually vertical¹⁰ neck. Rims are thickened, usually with a flat top which slopes down towards the interior of the vessel, although No. 1 has a slight "quiff" to the interior edge of the rim. This has also been noted on some Cheam biconical jugs found elsewhere¹¹. None has a pouring lip. Bases are slightly kicked. Handles have a round section and often appear rather heavy for the size of vessel. Rim diameters range from 40 to 90mm (1½-3½in), about 60-70mm (2½in) being the most frequent. The heights of the few complete vessels range from 200 to 250mm (8-10in).

Standard jugs are less common, and only one even fairly complete example was found (Fig. 2, No. 4). The form is fatter and more rounded than the biconical, but also has a straight (but shorter) neck and kicked base. The rims are similar but usually heavier (e.g. Nos. 5-7), with sometimes a "squared-off" appearance. Some lips have been found (e.g. No. 8) but it is not known whether all would have had one. Handle sections are usually slightly flattened (e.g. No. 5) and strap handles are known but rare (see No. 9). These come closest to Marshall's class D pitchers and class E ewers¹² but vary more in size: rim diameter, for example, range from 60 to 160mm (2½-6in) with a peak around 100mm (4in), against a range of 3½-4½in. None has the characteristic red-painted decoration, but some have grooving (Nos. 4, 10).

The barrel-shaped jugs seem to form a distinct group but are the most fragmentary of all. The profile (based on matching examples in the Museum of London collection) is a continuous smooth curve, symmetrical above and below the girth (Nos. 11, 12). Marshall's "small jugs"¹³ seem to come between these and the standard jugs in shape. Some rims have a simple external thickening (No. 13) while others have the internal "quiff" already noted on some biconical jugs (No. 14). In some cases this seems to have been removed, leaving a slight internal ledge (No. 15). The handles are quite distinctive, having a sub-triangular section (No. 14), less commonly with a thumb groove on the outer surfaces (No. 13). Rim diameters range from 40 to 100mm (1½-4in), with a most common size of 80mm (about 3in). Examples from 130 to 300mm (5-12in) in height are in the Museum of London collection.

9 The terminology used here is that of an unpublished glossary produced for the Medieval Pottery Research Group.

10 But see No. 1.

11 E.g. from Angel Court, Walbrook.

12 Fn. 1, Fig. 7.

13 *Ibid.* Fig. 11.

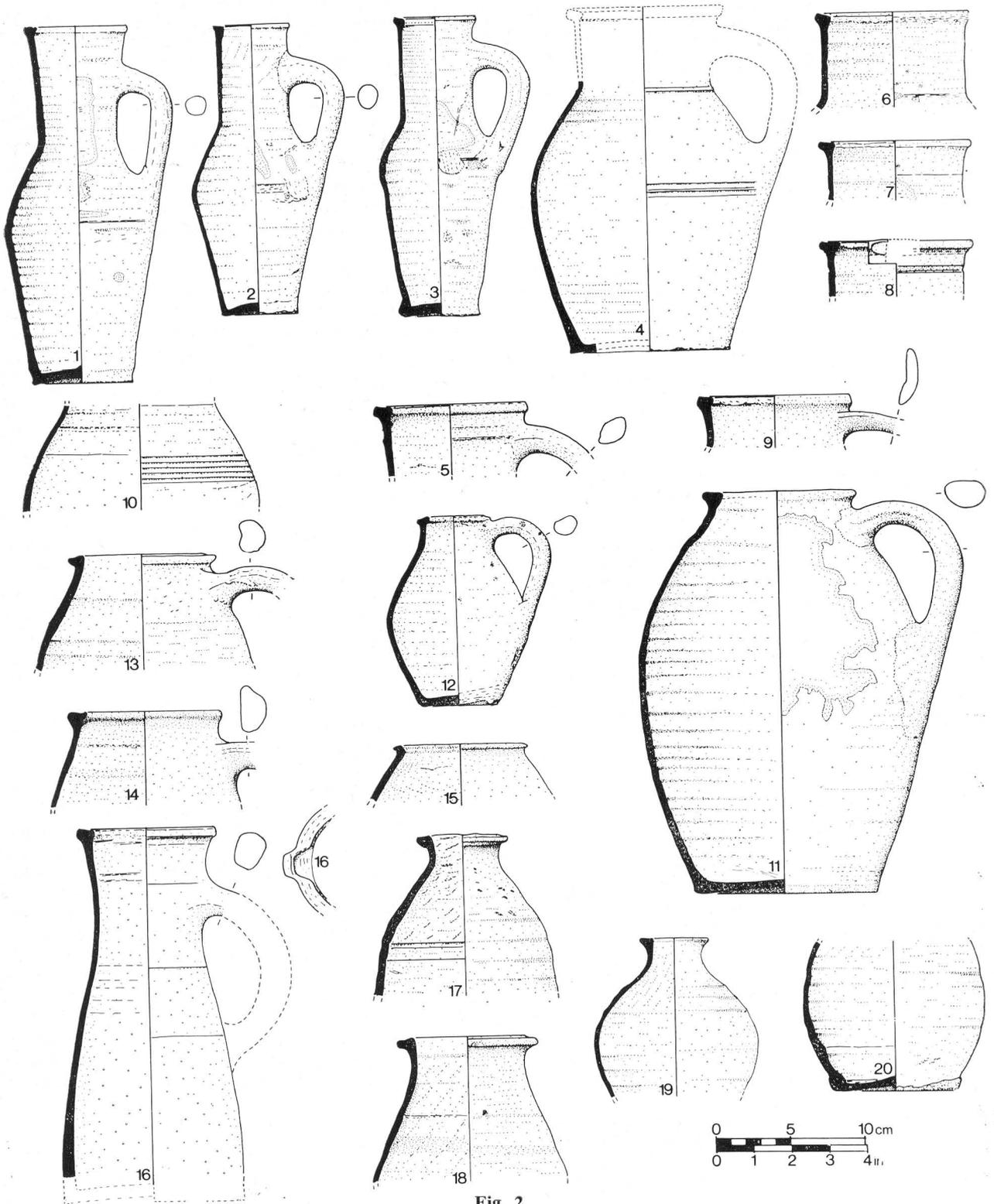


Fig. 2

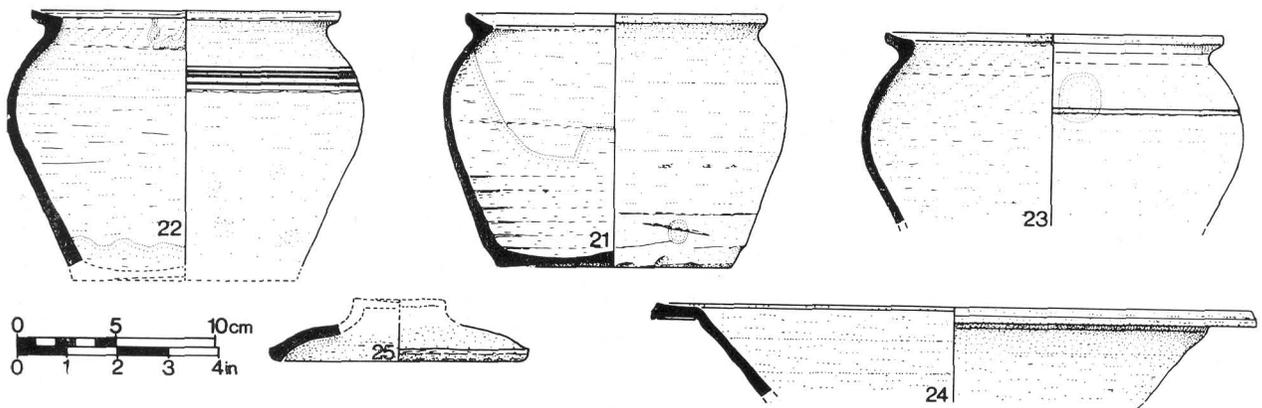


Fig. 3

There is a single example of a conical jug with pouring lip (No. 16).

Bottles

None of these vessels, which seem to correspond to Marshall's Class B measures¹⁴, was found complete. The most complete rims are shown on Nos. 17-19, while No. 20 is the most complete base believed to be of the same form, although it could come from a barrel-shaped jug. In fact, the bottles could be seen as a necked version of the barrel-shaped jug, as the rims with their external thickening (No. 19) or small flange (Nos. 17, 18) are quite similar to that of No. 13. Against that, none have the green glazed bib usual on jugs and no handles are apparent. Rim diameters range from 40 to 100mm (1½-4in).

Cooking pots

This name is given to a small homogeneous group of vessels from below the stokepit (Nos. 21-23). Their distinctive rim with its internal bevel cannot be matched in Marshall's assemblage, and they show signs of a more careful finish than the jugs, with removal of surplus clay from the base (see No. 21) and decoration on the shoulder of a few examples (Nos. 22, 23). The almost flat base with no feet is unusual in medieval cooking-pots, and these may perhaps be vessels for dry storage. There are no handles. Rim diameters range from 150 to 190mm (6-7½in).

Other forms

Other forms, often known from only one example, are large bowls with flanged rim (No. 24), more common in the red fabric, smaller and deeper bowls (not illustrated) and lids (No. 25). There is nothing to match Marshall's pans, pipkins, Class C saucers, costrels or vases¹⁵.

14 *Ibid.*, Fig. 8.

15 *Ibid.*, Figs. 5, 8 and 13.

16 G & C Milne "Waterfront Excavations at Trig Lane,

Dating

As often happens, very little dating evidence was found at the kiln site. The only recognisable non-local pottery consisted of one sherd of Siegburg stoneware, and a few sherds of intrusive post-medieval red ware from the upper layers. We must therefore look at Cheam ware from other sites. The best opportunity so far has come from a sequence of closely dated deposits at Trig Lane¹⁶, some of which contain large groups of late medieval pottery. Samples of groups dated on a combination of dendrochronological and coin and structural evidence to c 1260, 1275, 1335, 1365, 1375, 1430 and 1440 were recently studied by the author¹⁷. Surrey white ware occurred throughout the sequence, and recognisable Cheam ware in all except the earliest group. Biconical jugs first appear c 1365 and continue to c 1440, and are also found in a very large deposit at Baynards Castle, dated to c 1480¹⁸. Standard jugs, however, (not all in the Cheam fabric) have a date range c 1260-1375, while, except for an anomalous example in a c 1275 group, barrel-shaped jugs are only found in the c 1440 group. No Cheam bottles or cooking pots were recognised in the Trig Lane material. Lids (like No. 25) only occur in the c 1440 group, but Marshall's Class C saucers occur c 1335-1430. Red-painted sherds are found throughout the sequence except in the c 1260 group. The two kiln groups can thus be given a broad date range of c 1350-1500 (it would be unreasonable to suppose the dated groups at Trig Lane contain the very earliest and very latest examples of the types described above), with some evidence (the lids and the barrel-shaped jugs) that the material found in 1969 may be later than that found in 1923. However, there is evidence that the 1969 material is not homogeneous: for example, biconical jugs seem to be

London," *Med. Arch.* 22 (1978).

17 Report forthcoming.

18 P Marsden, *pers. comm.*

concentrated beneath the stokepit, while barrel-shaped jugs come mainly from the fill of kiln and stokepit. The upper fill in the kiln and stokepit may well be part of a waster heap that had accumulated over a long period, before being used as backfill. This, and other problems, will be discussed further in the final report. The purpose of this report is simply to enable excavators to identify potential Cheam white ware with reasonable confidence. Examples of complete vessels are on show at Whitehall, Cheam and Kingston Museum; the bulk of the pottery is currently stored at the Upper Mill, Ewell, and type sherds have been given to the DUA's Fab-

ric Type Series.

Acknowledgements

I should like to thank Martin Morris for allowing me to copy the site plans, sections and notebook, and the Nonsuch Antiquarian Society for making the pottery available. In particular, Dick Temple carried out the essential three-way negotiations before post-excavation work could start. Sorting and cataloguing of the pottery has been carried out by the Archaeological Support Group, an informal group associated with the Sutton College of Liberal Arts, and which exists to publish unpublished sites in the London Borough of Sutton.

Historic Mural at Charing Cross

PASSENGERS USING THE modernised Northern Line platforms at the new Charing Cross tube station will see an exciting new concept in Underground station decor—and get a bit of a history lesson. A 350-foot-long black and white mural forms the main feature on each of the 71-year-old platforms.

Each mural tells the story of the design and building of the original Eleanor Cross, erected nearly 700 years ago by King Edward I, in memory of his wife, Queen Eleanor of Castile. It was the most splendid of the twelve Eleanor Crosses erected to mark the successive places where her body rested on its way from Lincoln to Westminster Abbey, and it stood near here until it was destroyed in 1647. Richard of Crundale and Roger of Crundale were the master masons. The stone came from Corfe in Dorset and Caen in Normandy; Richard of Corfe and John of Corfe cut the English stone. Alexander of Abingdon and William of Ireland carved the statues of Queen Eleanor which stood halfway up the Cross, and Ralph of Chichester carved some of the decoration. Many others whose names are forgotten took part in the work: quarrymen, rough-hewers, masons, mortarers, layers, setters, carpenters, thatchers, scaffolders, labourers, falcon or crane-men, apprentices, hodmen, drivers, horsemen and boatmen.

The murals are the work of the designer David Gentleman, and are rather different in scale from some famous designs for which he has been responsible—British postage stamps. He carried out considerable research into the methods, materials and tools used in the 13th century before designing and engraving over 50 separate wood blocks—each no more than four inches high.

Each mural is an integral part of the complete platform design, which includes the main station name signs and small sites for London Transport information posters, in such a way that the visual story is broken only by the gaps for entrance and exit passageways.

The panels were manufactured by Perstop Ware-rate Ltd., of London, W1, who enlarged the prints of the four-inch-high originals to about six feet and impregnated the black designs into a series of eight-foot-high plastic-coated panels shaped to the curve of the wall. The upper part of the panels contains the station name and Northern Line roundel, repeated as a frieze along the platform length.

The whole mural is set in a black “frame” formed by a shallow plinth at the bottom, subway entrances at the sides and the cover of the cable duct at the top; this cover also conceals continuous lighting.

