

Fig. 1: Examples of wasters

(Photo: Paul Yule)

# A medieval kiln group from Bankside, S.E.1.

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## THE SITE

IN THE AUTUMN of 1981 the Southwark & Lambeth Archaeological Excavation Committee excavated part of a large redevelopment at 5-15 Bankside, SE 1 (TQ 3236 8045), on the south bank of the Thames just downstream from Southwark Bridge (Fig. 2). Work was carried out in an area of c. 200m<sup>2</sup> (240 sq yds.) in the west of the site under particularly difficult conditions. Construction was already under way, and the presence of heavy contractors' plant and the depth of stratigraphy imposed limits on the work. Continuous flooding of the trench turned the waterlaid clays to knee-deep liquid mud, so that the work was made possible only by using a powerful pump.

The topography of north Southwark in the past

was very complex, consisting of islands of sand and gravel set in marsh and mudflats intersected by streams and tidal inlets. Deep waterlaid deposits indicate that the Bankside site was originally off the dry settlement area. The lowest level reached was a thick band of peat about 4.5m (15ft) below modern street level, and was probably formed during the late bronze age. The peat was cut by a medieval ditch, possibly a drainage dyke, filled with clean waterlaid clay. The ditch in turn was cut by a substantial line of erosion which ran north-south. The Thames flooded and washed away its southern bank several times during the medieval period.<sup>1,2</sup> However at Bankside this erosion line was at right angles to the river, and was traced c. 80m (262 ft) inland. It is probable that a large creek originally ran inland at this point, as very similar evidence was

1. R. H. Luard (ed.) *Annales Monasterii de Bermundeseia A.D. 1042-1432* (1866) 468.

2. W. Taylor, *Annals of St. Mary Overy* (1833) 37.

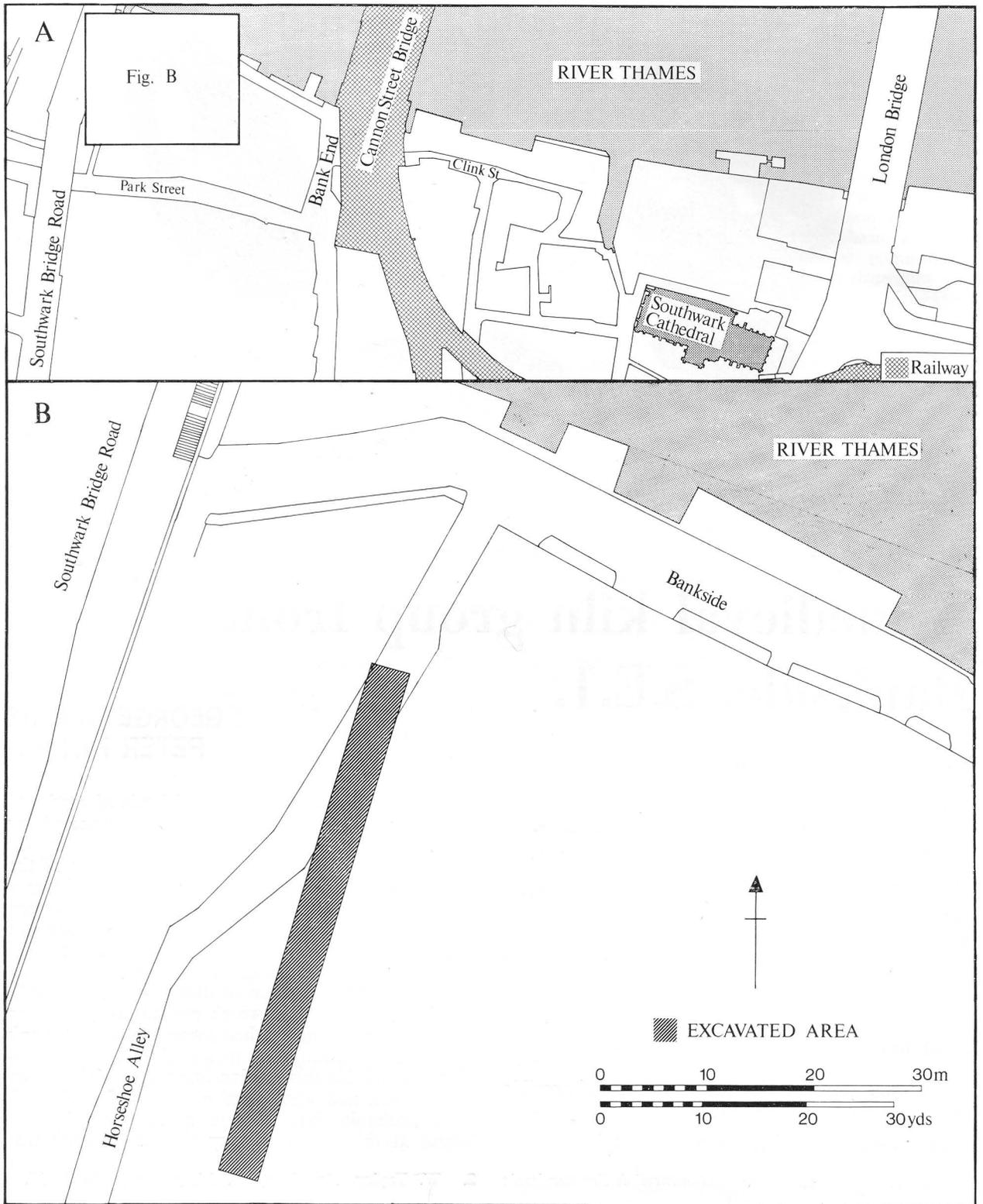


Fig. 2

recovered further south at 38-42 Southwark Bridge Road.<sup>3</sup>

A group of pottery, described below, which is probably of mid-14th century date and includes many wasters, was dumped on the foreshore of this creek. The pottery was present in a concentrated spread at the northern end of the trench, and probably represents dumping over a short period. The extent of the tip is unknown as it continued beyond the trench.

The evidence suggests that a previously unknown kiln site lies close to Bankside, and that residue from manufacture was being dumped in a marshy area on the margins of settlement. The kilns may have been situated on the dry ground which began just to the south-east on the Courage's Park Street site. This area is due to be developed soon and may provide the opportunity of locating the kilns and workshops.

The pottery with a white fabric (see below) has the appearance of "Surrey white-ware," and is virtually indistinguishable from the material excavated at Eden Street, Kingston upon Thames<sup>4</sup> (Marion Hinton, *pers. comm.*). It may well be that much of the "Surrey white-ware" found in London was supplied from local workshops rather than from those of Kingston and Cheam. The Bankside kiln would have been convenient for the London market and could have been supplied with raw materials transported along the Thames.

## THE POTTERY

Forty-two kg (93lb) of pottery was recovered. Nearly all the fabrics are white, ranging from 5Y 8/1 to 5Y 8/4, although there are a few sherds with a red fabric (2.5 YR 5/6 to 2.5 YR 4/8). All are hard to very hard, with moderate to abundant small inclusions of yellow, white, grey and black, rounded and sub-rounded quartz. The internal surfaces are smooth, apart from some of the vessels in greyer fabrics: the exteriors are often rough. The colour and extent of glaze varies, and is discussed in the description of each group of forms. Wasters were identified by blackened fabrics, glazed broken edges, sherds fused together, blistered glaze, and cracked and distorted vessels (Fig. 1).

The majority of the vessels represented are jugs, which are subdivided into the four types used for the Kingston pottery.<sup>5</sup> The other pottery forms are

presented in the same order as in the Kingston report.

### Biconical jugs (Fig. 3, 1-3)

One complete rim and 65 rim sherds (total vessel equivalent:  $1 + 12.82 = 13.82$ ), as well as 55 complete bases and 56 base sherds (total vessel equivalent:  $55 + 17.68 = 82.68$ ) were found. A minimum vessel count indicates a total of over 200 jugs (see appendix).

The biconical jugs have thickened and flattened rims, poorly finished bases and rod handles. The upper part, and sometimes the whole, of the vessel has a patchy yellow-green glaze, apart from one example with a glossy yellow-brown glaze. Whereas all the Kingston jugs have parallel incised lines at the waist, this feature is absent from the Southwark examples, although on some the profile is indented at this point. The rims range from 5.2 to 8.0 cm (2 to 3 ins) in diameter, and estimated heights vary between 14.5 and 21 cm ( $5\frac{1}{2}$  and  $8\frac{1}{2}$  in). The jugs are less bulbous than the Kingston examples and are closer to the tall, thin Cheam forms.<sup>6</sup>

### Rounded or barrel-shaped jugs (Fig. 3, 4-7)

Twenty-three sherds from flattened rims (vessel equivalent = 4.82) of rounded or barrel-shaped jugs were found, as well as 22 sherds from flattened rims (vessel equivalent = 2.85) either from this form or from conical jugs (below). Eight sherds of dropped rims (vessel equivalent = 0.90) were also recovered, along with two fragments of rounded rims.

One example of a small spout was found. The jugs have flat strap handles with stab marks and occasionally grooves. The rim, handle and upper exterior are glazed green or yellow-green, with splashes on the lower body. Some body sherds are decorated with two to eight incised horizontal lines and vertical bands of thick red slip. The rims range from 8.0 to 12.0 cm (3 to  $4\frac{1}{2}$  ins) in diameter.

### Conical jugs (Fig. 3, 8-9)

Only one rim which definitely comes from a conical jug was found, although 16 base sherds (vessel equivalent = 4.51) are recognisable.

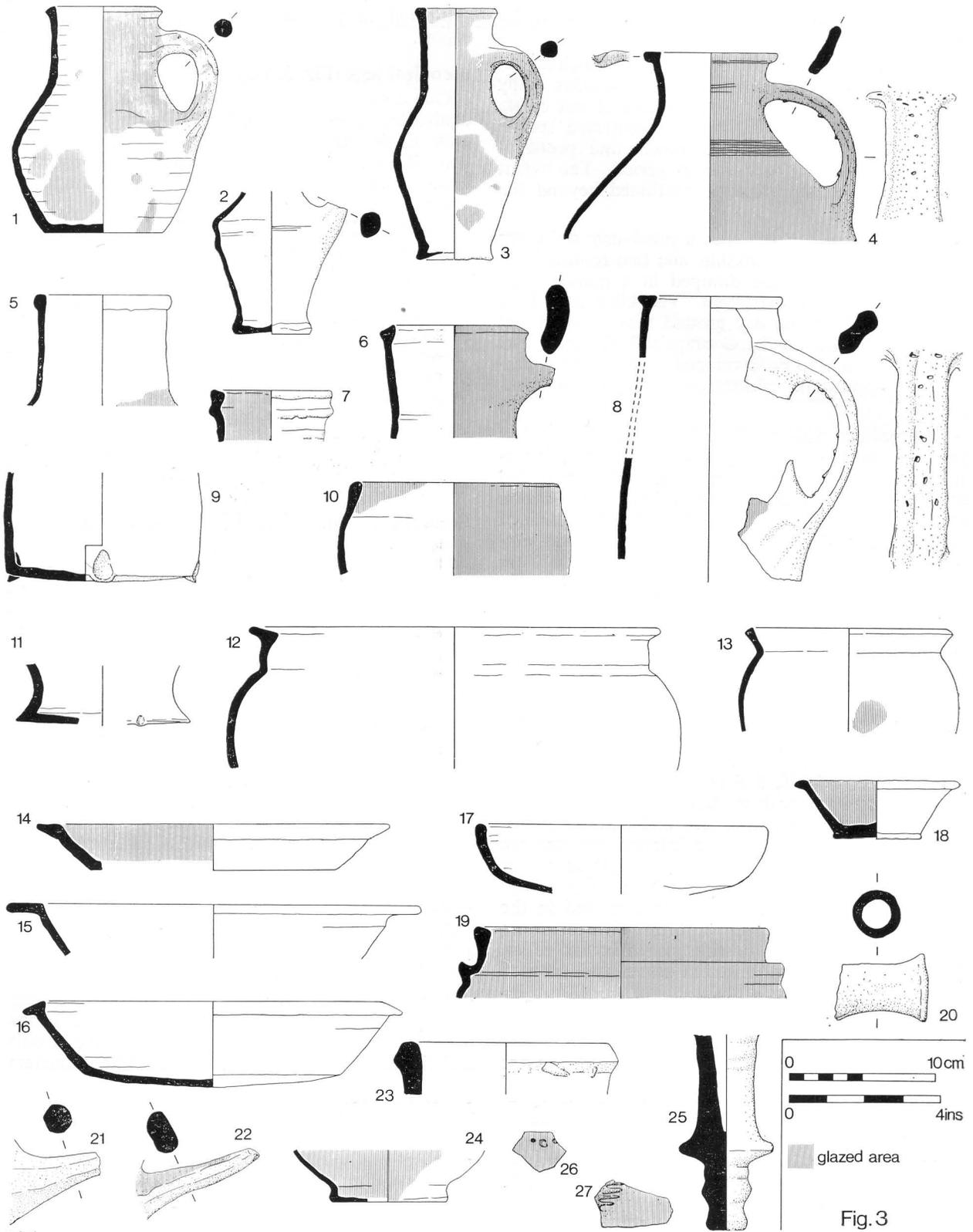
The rim is thickened and flattened: the bases sag slightly and are thumbled. The handles are straps with stab marks. Most of the exterior of the vessels and the handles have a green glaze. The diameters

3. G. Dennis, '38-42 Southwark Bridge Road' in B. Richardson (ed.), 'Excavation Round-up 1980' *London Archaeol.* 4, no. 2 (1981) 49.

4. M. Hinton, 'Medieval Pottery from a Kiln Site at Kingston upon Thames' *London Archaeol.* 3, no. 14 (1980) 377-383.

5. *Ibid* 380-381.

6. C. R. Orton, 'Medieval Pottery from a Kiln Site at Cheam: Part 1' *London Archaeol.* 3, no. 11 (1979) 301-303.



of the bases vary very little averaging c. 13.5 cm (5½ ins).

### Baluster jugs (Fig. 3, 10-11)

Baluster jugs were represented by 13 rim sherds (vessel equivalent = 1.36) and two base sherds (vessel equivalent = 0.42).

The rims, one of which shows the beginning of a small lip, are incurved and unthickened: the bases are flared. The handles and the exteriors of the vessels are covered with a splashed yellow-green glaze. Some body sherds are decorated with horizontal bands of five or more parallel incised lines. The rim diameters vary between 12 and 17 cm (4½ and 6½ ins): the base diameters are 13 and 16 cm (5 and 6½ ins).

### Cooking pots (Fig. 3, 12-13)

These have flat rims, and occur with or without necks. Eleven rim sherds (vessel equivalent = 1.35) of necked vessels and 13 rim sherds (vessel equivalent = 1.78) of neckless vessels were identified.

No handles or bases (see below) definitely attributable to cooking pots were found. Some of the vessels have a green or yellow-green glaze either all over or on the exterior only. Rim diameters range from 15 to 28 cm (6 to 11 ins).

### Dishes and bowls (Fig. 3, 14-22)

Several different forms of dishes and bowls were found, though none in any quantity. One hollow skillet handle was identified, as well as two solid handles which may be from this form.

### Crucibles (Fig. 3, 23)

Several fragments, up to 1.6 cm (3/5th in) thick in a hard grey sandy fabric were found. These include a thickened, flattened rim.

### Lobed cups (Fig. 3, 24)

Six base sherds (vessel equivalent = 1.29) and two rim sherds of lobed cups were found.

The bases are slightly flared. All have green glaze on the interior, and some are glazed on all or part of the exterior. Bases range from 6 to 8 cm (2½ to 3 ins) diameter.

### Other forms (Fig. 3, 25)

Ninety-four of the base sherds (vessel equivalent = 16.77) could not definitely be attributed to any of the above forms, and may have come from rounded or barrel-shaped jugs, cooking pots or skillets.

No. 25 is in a hard, dark grey fabric, and is probably a candle-stick.

### Stamped decoration (Fig. 3, 26-27)

Two types of stamped decoration were found: both are evident at Kingston. One sherd was found decorated with roundels, and four with the wheat-ear or fern-leaf motif.

### Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to the contractors Norwest Holst, and to the developers, European Ferries, who made a grant towards the excavation and post-excavation costs. Martin Leyland, Andrew Plint and Matthew Smith assisted on the site. Marion and Derek Hinton conducted much of the preliminary sorting and identification of the pottery and offered a great deal of useful advice. Michael Hammerson assisted with the quantification, and with Clive Orton and Laura Schaaf offered comments on the text.

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## Appendix

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### Biconical jugs: minimum vessel estimate.

This was calculated as follows:

Reconstructed and slightly damaged vessels	.....	105
Sherds of distinctive fabrics, not part of the above	.....	33 to 35
Rims and handles not part of the above	.....	66 to 72
	-----	204 to 212

## VOLUNTEERS

Experienced volunteers are required immediately to assist with several large sites in Southwark and Lambeth. Excavation and finds work available.

No accommodation is provided

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