The excavation of land adjacent to the Old Farmhouse, Pevensey, East Sussex, 1994

by Luke Barber

Rescue excavations undertaken during 1994 by the Field Archaeology Unit of the Institute of Archaeology, University College London, on land adjacent to the Old Farmhouse, High Street, Pevensey, revealed a dense concentration of archaeological features. The excavations and post-excavation work were funded by English Heritage.

Although some residual Romano-British material was found, no evidence of actual occupation of this period was discovered. The onset of habitation on the site appears to have been during the 12th century. The badly damaged remains of one possible building dating to this period were identified. It appears to have gone out of use by the end of the 13th century. Numerous features, predominantly pits, dating from the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries were also located, although no definite structural remains could be associated with them. Evidence for activity dating from the 16th to 18th centuries was limited. 19th-century activity had, however, been extensive, causing serious damage to the earlier remains in the street frontage area.

INTRODUCTION

The village of Pevensey clusters along a low east to west peninsula, which in the early medieval period was surrounded on its north, east and south sides by a tidal lagoon. Although most of the marshland had been reclaimed by the 13th century, the large tidal channel of Pevensey Haven, which runs past the eastern tip of the peninsula, was still navigable by small ships until the 17th century (Dulley 1967, 209). This channel was the principal element of Pevensey’s port and its navigability was closely linked with the town’s prosperity. The town and port shrank in both size and importance, therefore, as the harbour gradually silted up and access for shipping became more difficult, particularly after c. 1300.

The late 3rd-century Saxon Shore Fort (Fulford & Tyres 1995) is the first extensive evidence for occupation on the peninsula, although casual finds of prehistoric date attest to earlier utilization. The medieval town and port, however, probably originated in the later Anglo-Saxon period. Whether this settlement was confined within the Roman fort is still under debate as no evidence of Late Saxon occupation has yet been found outside the Roman walls. This, however, may be in part due to the limited amount of archaeological excavation that has been undertaken in the present village.

The settlement grew in importance after the Norman Conquest as the result of the increased use of the pre-existing port which became the feudal centre of the Rape of Pevensey. Originally under the control of Count Robert of Mortain, following the rebellion of Count William in 1102, the Rape of Pevensey was divided into two parts: the Honor of Laigle and the Honor of Leicester (Thompson 1997). Pevensey’s growth is illustrated by the increase in burgesses from 52 in 1066 to 110 by 1086. The town appears to have flourished until the end of the first half of the 14th century, when difficulties with the port’s access eventually led to its decrease in size. Close to the beginning of the 15th century arable cultivation of the marshland gave way to increased pastoral usage; accounts of 1466–67 show seven tofts lying vacant, the population of the town declined and by the mid-16th century as few as 20 houses remained.

The topography of the late 16th-century town is shown in a map of 1595 (Salzmann 1910, 57) (Fig. 1). Three main streets ran parallel along the length of the peninsula from the castle and market place in the west, to the bridge and common marsh in the east. The northern street, now the High Street,
appears to have been the principal street at the end of the 16th century. This linked the castle’s east gate with the crossing point on Pevensey Haven and is depicted lined with houses in the 1595 map. The two streets to the south no longer exist, although parts of the middle street, bordered by the church, are still apparent as a small lane.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK
Little archaeological work has been undertaken in Pevensey. Most excavation has concentrated on the Roman and medieval fortifications. The investigations by Roach Smith (Lower 1853), Salzmann (Salzmann 1908; 1909), Rigold (Wilson & Hurst 1964) and Cottrel (Cottrel 1937) earlier this century were not undertaken to modern standards and have largely remained unpublished, although attempts are now being made to rectify this (Lyne in prep.). The series of excavations directed by Professor Fulford between 1993–95 will go some way to addressing the deficiencies of the earlier castle excavations.

The only excavations at Pevensey outside the castle were undertaken by Dulley between 1962–66 (Dulley 1967). These consisted of several small-scale
Excavations on the fringe of the present village which revealed the original shore-line in three places, along with traces of quays or retaining walls. His site 3 revealed evidence for a sequence of buildings from the 12th to the 14th century. The finds from these investigations, particularly the pottery, demonstrated the port’s trading links.

The 1994 excavations were situated on disused allotments which lay between the Old Farmhouse and the Smuggler’s public house on the High Street at NGR TQ 646 049 (Fig. 2). The site fronts the High Street to the south, but slopes down toward the north, where it runs off the peninsula and merges into the low-lying Pevensey Levels. The British Geological Survey shows that the junction of the Tunbridge Wells Sand and Alluvium occurs at this point (BGS Sheet 319).

Following an application for planning permission for residential development of the land, the Field Archaeology Unit (UCL) undertook an archaeological field evaluation. Five machine-excavated evaluation trenches revealed closely-spaced medieval features within the application area as well as localized areas of horizontal stratification. Apart from some truncation by allotment cultivation, the survival of archaeological deposits seemed good (Wood & Place 1993). In the absence of feasible and reasonable measures to ensure in situ preservation of the remains, it was concluded that they should be subject to rescue excavation and record. Three of the evaluation trenches were incorporated in the main excavation while a further two, Trenches C and D, were not re-excavated as they lay outside the footprint of the proposed building (Fig. 3).

Following agreement of a research design (Place 1993), rescue excavation, fully funded by English Heritage, was undertaken during February/March 1994. The overburden was mechanically removed but all subsequent excavation was done by hand. Sixty-three environmental samples were taken during the course of the excavation: bulk samples for flotation and artefact and bone recovery, as well as laboratory samples for pollen and soil analysis. Details of all samples are housed in the site archive. A MAP 2 assessment report for post-excavation work was agreed with English Heritage after the completion of fieldwork (Place & Barber 1995). The areas of research — the medieval ceramics, the medieval environment and its exploitation, and the economic and social context of the site within Pevensey — were suitably addressed. However, the disturbed nature of the excavated structural remains precluded the fourth intended area of research: analysis of the medieval buildings. The Site Archive
has been constructed according to the standards outlined in MAP 2 Appendix 3 and is housed in Eastbourne Museum.

The flotation samples were processed using a static tank with a 2 mm residue mesh and a 500 flot retrieval mesh. The bone and artefact samples were processed using a high-pressure water jet over a 4 mm mesh. The relatively high clay content of most of the samples meant that it was necessary to use Hydrogen Peroxide (30 per cent) to disaggregate soil.
EXCAVATION RESULTS

The excavations uncovered a dense concentration of archaeological features (Fig. 4). In all, 347 individual contexts were recorded during the evaluation and main excavation phases at the site. Only the more important contexts have been selected for illustration and description in this report. Details of the remainder are housed with the archive.

The site generally fell into two sections: the street frontage area adjacent to the High Street, where most of the building remains were located, and the area to the rear which predominantly consisted of rubbish pits, presumably associated with the backyard area of the medieval tenements. The area adjacent to the High Street had been relatively badly disturbed in the post-medieval period, particularly during the 19th century, by the cutting of a number of pits and large post-holes. This area was also on a slight rise in the natural ground level and thus the archaeological deposits at this point were at their shallowest for the whole site. As a result, truncation and mixing by allotment cultivation was most evident in this area. To the rear of the street frontage, archaeological features were buried deeper, often below layers of medieval accumulation, and consequently were generally better preserved. This area had a less dense concentration of features than the street frontage, which made excavation and phasing simpler.

In general, contexts were easily definable, particularly against the orange natural clay. In some instances, however, relationships or context boundaries were less obviously distinguishable. The street-frontage area was one of the most difficult, as many thin localized layers and spreads were apparent. These were often variable in nature and did not facilitate the initial recognition of cut features. Most of these problems were overcome in the field through excavation or at the post-excavation stage during spot-dating work with the pottery. Some layers, however (notably Layers 71 & 116), are still not fully understood and it has not been possible to establish the degree of residuality/intrusiveness in these with any certainty.

Most features, particularly the larger rubbish pits, were well sealed. Intrusiveness seems to be fairly limited and predominantly associated with the street-frontage area. By contrast, many contexts, both layers and fills, exhibit residual elements. This was a major consideration for the analysis of environmental data and intrinsically undatable artefact categories such as tile.

THE PREHISTORIC AND ROMAN PERIODS

Several waste flint flakes of probable Neolithic or Bronze Age date were recovered. All were residual in later contexts. The Romano-British period is represented by a few fragments of abraded pottery and tile, and two coins. Virtually all this material is residual in medieval contexts, but the layer numbered 5, 9, and 173 in different areas, which is stratigraphically the earliest on site, may actually have dated to the Romano-British period (Figs 7 & 8, S11–13, Context 5/9/173). The few finds from this light to medium orange-grey silt clay are all heavily abraded, and the layer tended to merge gradually with the underlying natural clay. The Romano-British material is likely to have originated from the occupation of the Shore Fort rather than from occupation on, or in the vicinity of, the Old Farmhouse site.

1100–1225 AD (Fig. 5a)

Features dated to the late 11th century, together with undated features, are included in this phase and shown on the phased plan for this period because the lack of finds within them suggests they were filled at an early date, before artefacts were present on site in sufficient numbers to have been incorporated during infilling.

The densest area of 12th-century features was located along the street frontage. These differed from the features to the north in that they were generally small and contained few finds. Most are likely to have been related to a structure which faced the High Street. The plan of such a building can be tentatively suggested.

The western extent of this possible building appears to have been formed by three large post-holes 304, 306 and 309. A further post-hole 308 may also belong to the same structure (Fig. 6, S1). The three main post-holes are irregular in plan, but all have similar fills. Context 306 cut an earlier feature (307) which contained a single Romano-British sherd. It is probable, however, that this was residual, and that 307 is in fact of 12th-century date and probably represents a post-hole which was replaced by 306. It is possible that three further features which lay to the west (232, 237 & 240), as well as the undated post-holes 239, 258 and 322, which are
Fig. 4. Plan of main excavation showing all cut features.
Fig. 5. Phased plan of medieval features: 12th–13th century and 13th–16th century.
Fig. 6. Sections S1 to S8.
likely to be of this date, were also associated with the same structure. The only other large post-holes of this date were 213 and 249; the latter possibly marked the north-east corner of the building, although this had been badly truncated and little remained for examination.

To the south of 249 were two sets of small paired post-holes (242, 243, 244 & 245) which represent either part of the eastern wall of the building or an internal partition. Numerous small post-holes and stake-holes were present within the area of the possible building (310–319, excluding 316 which is Victorian). These were mainly very small features of sub-rectangular form which rarely exceeded 100 mm in depth. Although no clear pattern is apparent, it is possible that these features, along with a number of undated examples (201, 202, 206 & 211), may at different times have formed internal divisions. It is possible, however, that post-holes 201, 202, 206 and 211 were later in date as other post-holes in the vicinity (88, 162 & 210: Fig. 5b) are of 15th- to 16th-century origin.

The front wall of the building would have lain outside the excavation area to the south, closer to the High Street. The rear of the building may be represented by the badly truncated remains of an east–west wall (209) of unfaced flint nodules and cobbles (to 180 mm in length). The mortar had degraded completely but flint pebbles up to 20 mm in size still remained between the main constituents. Mixed with the pebbles was soil containing 13th-century pottery, which probably postdates the wall’s destruction, suggesting the wall is of 12th-century origin. The reason why this side of the building is represented by a wall rather than post-holes is not clear. However, the ground slopes down at this point and it may have been necessary to stabilize the back of the building by means of a sill wall. This would also have had the advantage of keeping timbers out of the wetter low-lying ground at this point. It is also possible that this sill-wall was a later insertion.

Occupation layers within the postulated building had been either totally destroyed or badly damaged by later activity making their interpretation and association with the structural remains extremely difficult. A layer containing 20 per cent crushed mussel shell (151: Fig. 6, S11) directly overlaid the ‘dirty’ natural (173). Context 151 was localized and did not extend to the southern trench edge. At its southern limit, where it was renumbered 172, it was overlain by an irregular area of black and dull red sandy clay containing 70 per cent crushed burnt sandstone pieces to 50 mm in size (Context 159: Figs 5a & 7, S10). This layer, which presumably represented the remains of a hearth, could only be partially excavated as it ran outside the trench. Unfortunately, apart from a copper-alloy ring (Fig. 14:12), no dating evidence was directly obtained from layer 159 although it seems likely to have been connected with the possible 12th- or early 13th-century building. The layers below the hearth, 172 and 173, were reddened at this point from the heat of the fire. Resting above hearth 159 were a number of irregular layers of unknown origin which contained few finds (Fig. 7, S10, 83, 86 & 89) and were in turn overlain by another area of burning (Contexts 91 & 92) of 14th- or 15th-century date.

The original hearth (159), and presumably the associated building, must have gone out of use during the 13th century as it was cut by a 13th- to 14th-century pit (182) on its eastern side. Hearth 159 had also been cut by three post-holes (162, 88, 210: Fig. 5b), two of which were dated by pottery to the 15th to 16th centuries (88; 210). The area between the hearth and wall 209 had been badly disturbed resulting in the loss of any continuous occupation layer to link the two together. Close to the southern side of 209, however, were the remains of a layer of compact, light orange-yellow silt clay (Fig. 7, S11, 149). Although this layer had no pottery, it was cut by the 13th-century pit 204. It is therefore possible this represented the last vestiges of a clay floor associated with the wall (209) and the hearth (159). A similar layer to the east (Fig. 7, S11, Context 327) may be a continuation of layer 149. If this was the case, the paired post-holes 242 to 245 are likely to have been for an internal partition rather than for a wall marking the eastern edge of the building.

To the rear of the street frontage area were a number of larger 12th-century features. Although some, such as 222 and 333, may be post-holes, most are larger and can be interpreted as rubbish pits. A number of undated features (49, 65, 102, 163, 216, 270 & 287) may also be of this early date. Most of the 12th-century pits (127, 104, 61, 275 & 289) were of a relatively small size and contained limited amounts of material: many contained only a single homogenous fill (cut 127 fill 128; cut 275 fill 276; and cut 289 fill 290). Cut 104 (fill 105) was similar in having a mid- to dark brown grey silt clay fill, but it contained two tip-lines of crushed shell. Cut 61 (Fig. 6, S4) contained three fills (57, 62 & 58),...
one of which (57) consisted of a redeposited natural orange-yellow clay.

Two larger pits were present (195 & 296); both of them were shallow considering their size. Context 195 (Fig. 6, S2) contained two fills: the lower dark brown silt clay (197) had been partially covered by a redeposited natural orange clay (196). Pit 296, located to the north, contained two fills (295 & 300: Fig. 8), one of which again consisted of redeposited natural clay (300).

Two 12th-century gullies of unknown function (cut 291 fill 292; cut 273 fill 274) were located in the drain-trench. At the extreme northern limits of the drain-trench was a large 400 mm deep cut (325). Although no datable finds were located in its fill (326) it is likely that this feature is of an early period and may represent the southern edge of either a large depression or pond. Despite the close proximity of evaluation Trench D, no trace of this feature was found to the west, suggesting that either it turned sharply toward the north or was not recognized during the evaluation.

A number of new features were formed during the later 12th to early 13th century: post-holes around the area of the building (235, 301, 264, 250, 266 & 73) suggest some modifications were made at this time. If the wall 209 had been inserted later, it probably dated to the early 13th, and could therefore be seen as part of the same phase of modifications. The beam-slot type features (343, 341 & 338) unfortunately yielded no datable materials although this in itself suggests they are of an early date. The north–south alignment of 338 is very similar to that of a possible trace of a beam-slot marked by 74 to the south. Context 74 yielded sherds of 12th- to 13th-century date and the configuration of beam-slots to the north may be of the same period. It is possible, however, that the beam-slots relate to an early 12th-century building which was replaced by the post-hole structure later in the same century. An indistinct shallow rectangular cut, measuring only 200 mm deep, was located protruding from the eastern trench section (268: Fig. 4 only). The function of this is unknown, although its fill resembled layer 173 and may be a disturbed area of it.

Several new rubbish pits to the rear of the street frontage date to this period and some of them cut existing 12th-century pits. Cutting 195 was a circular pit (52) containing three fills (53, 178 & 181: Fig. 6, S3). Its relationship to pit 54 (fill 55) could not be ascertained. Pit 129 (fill 130) had been cut through an earlier pit to the west, while to the north-east were two larger pits (59 & 253). Pit 59 cut the 12th-century pit 61, and contained two distinct fills (56 & 60: Fig. 6, S4) the lower of which (56) was derived from weathering of the edges. Pit 253, a square or rectangular pit with vertical sides and flat base, lay to the north. Its fills (220, 252 & 261: Fig. 6, S5) could only be partially excavated and the full extent of this feature could not be ascertained.

1225–1300 AD (Fig. 5b)

A number of features could be dated firmly in the 13th century, although only a few of these are in the street-frontage area. They include a small post-hole (247) and pit (204: Fig. 7, S11). Although relatively large in plan, pit 204 was shallow, and its fill (205) contained redeposited clay lumps derived from layer 149 through which it was cut. The presence of pit 204 in the vicinity of the building, along with the 13th-century material from the soil in wall 209, tends to reinforce the suggestion that the building which had been present in the preceding century was no longer standing by the end of the 13th century. Outside the area of the building to the west was a large vertically-sided rubbish pit (241) which underlay the later wall 144. The pit had three distinct fills (Fig. 6, S6, Contexts 226, 259 & 260), the upper of which (226) contained large quantities of unabraded pottery and bone. Fill 259 was of a grey silt clay with green mottles which suggested that effluent had been present. Whether this pit served the building on the site during the first three quarters of the 13th century could not be ascertained as it could equally have been associated with a neighbouring tenement.

To the rear of the street frontage area were a number of pits and gullies (47/48; 67/68; 106/107; 198/199; 277/278). The largest pit (Figs 5b & 8, Context 67) was filled with a dark brown silt clay (68) which contained quantities of domestic refuse as well as slight traces of tip-lines. It is possible that all these features were contemporary with the last phases of the building.

1275–1400 AD (Fig. 5b)

Owing to the presence of a vertically-sided cesspit (182) in the street frontage area, the building standing in the earlier 13th century is unlikely to have still been in existence during the ensuing later 13th- to 14th-century period. The cesspit had five
Fig. 7. Sections S9 to S11 and S13.
fills (Fig. 6, S7, Contexts 157, 176, 158, 183 & 185). The upper fill (157) may either represent a clay capping used to seal the pit, or, more likely, subsidence from the layers above. Context 176 may therefore be the contemporary sealing of the pit as it consisted of a very compact dull yellow clay. Below this on the east side of the pit (not on section) was a tip of dark grey to black silt clay (183) which contained large quantities of carbonized oats. This rested on a thin layer of gritty clay in which were quantities of crushed oyster shell (158). The main fill (185) was an organic dark grey to black silt clay with patches of redeposited clay. A pollen monolith (sample 5039) taken from this fill showed the former presence of quantities of sphagnum moss. The absorbant nature of this makes it an ideal ‘toilet accessory’ and reinforced the interpretation of this feature as a cesspit. The only other features in this area were three small post-holes (200, 203 & 299) and a single pit, 267 (Fig. 7, S11).

Numerous small pits (174, 167, 179, 165, 63, 285 & 297) were located to the north; all of them, with the exception of 167 (fills 168 & 171), contained only one fill. Larger pits were also present across the area. These included pits 323, 324, 45, 221, 189, 191 and 207. Pit 324 contained two distinct fills (Fig. 8). The lower (321) contained high proportions of carbonized cereal as well as bone and pottery. The upper fill (320) consisted of a sandy clay containing slate pieces, presumably from the demolition of a building. Pit 324 was cut by another of similar date (322) with a silt clay fill (44) which again contained flint pebbles and slate fragments. The colour of this fill was similar to that of layers 17 and 19 (Fig. 8 and see below) and it is possible they derived from the same demolition event.

To the south was a series of large intercutting rubbish pits (45, 191 & 221), a gully (51) and a possible well (189). The latter consisted of a circular vertically-sided cut which truncated gully 51. Its fill (188) was not fully excavated. Although the finds date this feature to the 13th or 14th century, this is the date of abandonment and the well may have been in use during the 12th century.

Pit 221 was a large steep-sided feature containing a number of fills (Fig. 6, S8; Fig. 8, Contexts 156, 177, 134, 155, 154, 133, 330, 126 & 41). These included distinct tip-lines: a white/pale yellow silt clay (155), a grey brown silt clay (154), a yellow silt clay (130/133) and a charcoal rich silt clay (126). The top fill (41) consisted virtually entirely of crushed greensand rubble and was possibly put in to level the pit.

Cutting 221 was another large pit of similar date (191). The lowest fill (223) contained occasional clay lenses and greensand pieces, presumably derived from fill 41. Above this was a clay tip (187) and a fill containing large quantities of oyster shells (186). Subsequently, a series of layers (190, 110, 111 & 112) were laid down to level up the ground during the 14th or 15th centuries. These layers were localized over the area of the pits and did not reach the main section (Fig. 8). Layer 110 contained high quantities of oyster shell and was similar in nature to fill 186 which lay below (Fig. 6, S5). During the 15th to 16th centuries (see below), further sealing layers were added, presumably into ground which was subsiding (109, 108 & 40: Figs 8 & 6, S8).

Pit 207, to the west of this complex, was of a slightly later date. This large rubbish pits or cesspit contained three fills (Fig. 7, S9, Contexts 208, 214 & 215 ) and produced a relatively good assemblage of 14th-century pottery. To the north-east was an irregular arrangement of stones running north to south (218: Figs 5b & 6, S5), which formed a possible sill wall varying in width from 400–800 mm. This feature was composed of flint nodules and cobbles, upper greensand, chalk, and shelly limestone pieces. A single piece of granite, as well as a fragment of lava quern were also present. Unfortunately, only a small portion of wall 218 was in the trench so its full nature could not be ascertained. No corner was found on the southern end and although it is possible this wall represents the eastern wall of an ancillary building, a fact reinforced by the slate-rich layer (219) contained within it, it is also possible the stones were merely infill to the subsidence of the pit below (253), as they corresponded well with the edge of this pit.

A number of layers dating to this period were also present. To the rear of the site was a mid- to dark brown silt clay (Fig. 8, Context 18), which was often difficult to distinguish from the feature fills which lay adjacent. Layer 18 presumably represented an old soil horizon. Above this horizon was a thin grey/green silt clay layer which levelled up pit 67 (22) and was in turn followed by two layers containing large quantities of West Country roofing slate (19 & 17). These layers, which undoubtedly relate to a demolition or re-roofing event which had taken place close by, are likely to be related to the similar layer noted to the west of ‘wall’ 218 (Fig. 6,
Fig. 8. Section S12.
S5, Context 219). These slate layers were confined to the north-eastern area of the trench centring on 218. The extent of this spread of slate suggests that the material was levelled out, possibly to make a surface. All the layers are dated to the 14th or 15th century. At this time no building is thought to have stood on the street-frontage and the slate was possibly either dumped on the site from an adjacent tenement, or the associated building lay to the north or west, just outside the trench.

The soil layers in the street frontage area were all disturbed to some extent by later features and allotment activity. This factor made it difficult to be certain of the date of most of these layers owing to the problem of intrusiveness and residuality. It seems likely that layer 8/269 dated to the 13th to 14th centuries (Fig. 6, S1). This layer, along with layers 116, 69, 3 and 71 (Fig. 7, S11; Fig. 8, S12), was probably formed contemporaneously, although layers 116, 69, 3 and 71 contained later intrusive material. There remains the possibility, however, that some of these layers are of a later date but contain high quantities of residual material. This is emphasized by the fact that layer 71/3 appeared to seal the 13th- to 14th-century post-hole 299 (Fig. 8).

Above layer 8/269 was a thin layer of compact light yellow-orange silt clay (Fig. 6, S1, Context 140). This was irregular in plan and did not extend to the east of cut 121 (Fig. 4). To the west the layer was badly disturbed, but a similar layer (142: Figs 4 & 6, S6) is likely to have been the continuation of 140. While the layer possibly represents a floor, it must postdate the earlier building as it sealed post-holes 304 and 306. The layer may therefore have been associated with wall 144, but as neither has any independent dating, this must remain uncertain.

1400–1600 AD (Fig. 5b)
A number of small 15th- to 16th-century features were found to the rear of the street-frontage area including small pits such as 42 and 293, as well as a gully (281) of unknown function (Figs 5b & 8). One larger feature in this area was a north–south ditch (100) that to the south appeared to turn westward at which point it was renumbered 123. Although the upper fills (101 & 124) were similar, fill 101 produced pottery of the 15th to 16th century while the four sherds in 124 were all of 12th-century date. It is therefore possible that either the east–west section (123) is of an early date and was extended to the north later, or that all the pottery in 123 was residual. The function of this feature is uncertain, although it could have been part of an enclosure or drainage ditch associated with the Old Farmhouse which stands to the west.

A number of layers were deposited to the rear of the street frontage area at this time. These consist of layers laid to level up subsidence over former pits (Fig. 6, S8, Contexts 108, 109 & 40) as well as more extensive layers, presumably former soil horizons (Fig. 7, S13, Contexts 96 & 13). Contexts 13 and 96 may have been re-worked soils of earlier periods as much residual pottery was located within them. The slate-rich demolition layers noted in the previous section (17, 19) may date from the earlier part of this period.

There were four features on the street frontage area. Three post-holes (162, 88 & 210) mark the approximate northern extent of burnt layers which may relate to this period or slightly earlier (Fig. 7, S10, Contexts 91 & 93). Unfortunately, these layers produced too little material to establish a certain date, although a 14th- to 15th-century attribution seems probable. It is possible that layers 91 and 93 are the remains of a hearth. However, as it is thought that no building was present on the street frontage at this date, the burning could have been the remains of a bonfire. A similar area of burning was noted in the main section to the rear of the frontage (Fig. 8, S12, Context 21).

The only large pit of this date was near the street (Context 193: Fig. 7, S11). Four fills were noted (194, 192, 184 & 150); all contained small quantities of domestic rubbish. The upper fill (150) contained up to 20 per cent flint cobbles, sandstone and limestone pieces and probably represents the sealing fill laid down in order to limit subsidence. Some late post-medieval pottery was found in this fill, but is likely to be intrusive. To the west pit 193 cut through layers 116 and 148 (see above). To the east, pit 193 cut an earlier pit (267), although the exact edge was difficult to see, even in section. Resting above this was a large Upper Greensand slab (115). Another similar block was found further west (146: Fig. 4) and it is likely both were deposited during the 15th or 16th centuries. They probably originated from the castle but their precise function is unknown.

At the south-western corner of the trench was a section of east–west wall (144) which consisted of large, roughly-faced Upper Greensand blocks and occasional flint nodules and cobbles set in an off-
white fine mortar. The wall terminated with a large greensand block at the east end but despite careful cleaning, no continuation or turn could be found, suggesting that the building could either have been open-ended and of possible agricultural function, or was timber-framed from this point. A further squared greensand block was found in a small foundation trench to the south (Fig. 4, Context 6) and this may have been connected with the structure. No direct dating was available for the wall. However, it overlay the 13th-century pit 241 and was partially truncated(?) by Victorian features (98, 256). The fact that the eastern end of wall 144 was roughly in line with ditch 100 to the north suggests an association. It seems possible, therefore, that this structure dates to the 16th or 17th century and was associated with the Old Farmhouse, perhaps as part of an outbuilding.

**POST-16TH CENTURY** (Fig. 4)
The majority of activity during this period was confined to the street frontage area. To the rear only a few features, such as pit 147 and drain 12 (Fig. 7, S13), along with numerous layers (1, 2, 10, 11, 97: Figs 8 & 7, S13), mainly associated with cultivation, were located.

The only feature in the street frontage area to predate the Victorian period was a large pit (121). Although not fully excavated, three fills (122, 131 & 132), produced a little pottery of late 17th- to early 18th-century date. The presence of this pit however, does emphasize the fact that the plot continued to be open land.

Numerous post-holes (including 256, 257, 136 & 120) and scoops (98 & 78) along with a brick sump (70) were dug during the Victorian period. Many of these are likely to have been related to an outbuilding known to have stood on the site earlier this century. It is possible that the structure represented by wall 144 was still standing at this time as a number of the Victorian post-holes continue the east to west line (256, 137, 120 & 78).

**THE FINDS**

**THE POTTERY**

**Introduction**
The excavations produced a total of 3757 sherds of pottery from 158 different contexts. The bulk of these contexts contained 25 or fewer sherds; however, some considerably larger assemblages were also present. Residual and intrusive pottery was a feature of the upper occupation layers, but the lower ones and most of the medieval pits contained pottery groups with relatively little contamination. All the pottery was recorded on pre-prepared spot-dating forms. These will form part of the Site Archive along with a fabric reference collection.

The medieval ceramic sequence from the present site is significant in both its potential for contributing to a dated pottery sequence for Pevensey and for determining the port’s trading links with the Continent and elsewhere in Britain. Work on the pottery from the 1936–39 castle excavations has continued the east to west line (256, 137, 120 & 78).

**Methodology**
The pottery fabrics have been arranged in the fabric groupings formulated for the report on the 1936–39 excavations within the walls of the Roman fort (Lyne in prep.), but with additions for fabric groupings and fabrics not encountered there. Unfortunately, owing to lack of space, the full report on the ceramics has had to be published on microfiche. However, the key groups from this important assemblage are described below.
Fig. 9. Pottery.
tempered fabric (Q1, 213).


4. Everted and flattened cooking-pot rim in dirty grey fabric as no. 3 (P2, 249).

5. Cooking-pot rim with slight lid-seating, in black fabric similar to no. 3 (P2B, 249).


7. Everted cooking-pot rim in grey-brown fabric similar to no. 4 (P3, 213).

8. Bowl rim in grey-black fabric as no. 3 (P2, fill 295, pit 296).

9. Pingsdorf storage jar sherd with painted reddish-brown loops (U3, fill 105, pit 104).

c. 1150–1200

Pits 61, 127, 195 and post-hole 304 produced pottery exclusively of this date. The pottery differs little from the earlier 12th-century material, and the very small amount present makes it difficult to identify any changes. The rim fragment from Pit 195 with finger-faceted edge (Cat. no. 11) is an example of a new form, and catalogue number 12, with its concave lid-seating of Hadfield’s form 4 (Hadfield 1981), is a typical Ringmer product. This would suggest that most of the Pevensey coarseware market was shared between local or Hastings and Ringmer potters during the late 12th and early 13th centuries. Foreign imports for this period comprise Normandy Gritty and Glazed Gritty ware cooking-pot and jug fragments and red-painted Beauvais white-ware sherds.

10. Deep bowl or cooking-pot with everted rim in very coarse grey fabric as no. 4, fired reddish-brown internally and black externally (P2, fill 197, pit 195).


13. Cooking-pot rim with squared-off bead, in a grey fabric as no. 12, fired patchy brown-black externally and black internally (P2, 304).


15. Fragment from spout of pitcher with stamped circle decoration. Fabric as no. 12, fired orange-brown (P2, 304).

c. 1200–1280

There were three significant early to mid-13th-century pit groups, Pits 52, 67 and 241, of which the assemblage from Pit 241 was by far the largest.


This pit also contained 20 sherds from two fine-sanded grey Normandy Glazed ware vessels with internal knife-trimming and external yellow-green glaze. Vessels of this type were imported into south-coast ports and London from an unknown source or sources in Normandy between the late 11th and early 13th centuries (Vince & Jenner 1991, 109).

Pit 52

The assemblage from this pit is very small (30 sherds, 386 g), but the presence of a coarse, unglazed jug or pitcher rim means that it is probably early 13th century in date. Barton (1979) dates sparse-glazed and unglazed jugs to 1250–1350, but evidence from the castle indicates that the manufacture of such vessels may have commenced as early as 1200, or even before.


22. Cooking-pot with beaded-and-flanged rim, in grey-brown fabric tempered with coarse calcite and ironstone grits; fired dark brown internally and has knife-trimmed soapy black exterior (P7).

23. Jug or pitcher rim with handle stub. Fabric as no. 12 (P2) fired patchy orange-grey without glaze.

Pit 67

The pottery assemblage from this pit is small, but includes three cooking-pot rims with collared beads and a Ringmer rim of Hadfield’s Form 4, which are all unlikely to be later than c. 1280. A Saintonge jug rim and fragments from a Normandy Gritty ware cooking-pot are also present. The combination of the Saintonge jug sherd and the cooking-pot rims suggests a mid-13th-century date for the assemblage.
24. One of three similar cooking-pots with collared bead rim. Fabric as no. 12 (P2) fired brown with rim top blackening.

25. Spouted pitcher rim. Fabric as no. 16 (P3), fired grey-brown with rim edge blackening.


27. Saintonge jug rim in white fabric (W1) with external bright apple-green glaze.

28. North French (?) jug body-sherd in gritty white ware with sparse 2 to 3 mm subangular grey and angular black ironstone inclusions. Glazed pale-green, with a dark-green wheel-stamped raised band. c. 1200–1250.

c. 1280–1350

A medieval pottery production site was discovered during the 1936 excavations outside the west gate of the Roman fortress. Rim-form typology and associated fineware imports date the waste vessels to the 14th century. These wasters include a number of small, shallow cooking-pots with elaborate out-turned rims, in a variety of distinctive grit-and-shell- and sand-and-shell-tempered fabrics (P4, 5, R9A & R9B), wheel-turned and fired to a high temperature.

Sherds in fabrics P4 and 5 are, however, present in latest 13th- to early 14th-century features at the Old Farmhouse site. The rim-forms are simpler than those on the wasters from outside the West Gate and suggest that the Pevensey industry was in production before the putative kiln started to operate.

The pottery assemblages from Pits 221, 191, 45, 324 and 323 can be dated to the period 1280–1350. These assemblages are larger than those of earlier date and, when combined together, have enough rim fragments for EVES quantification (Table 4). The most important vessel type is the cooking-pot, which accounts for nearly two-thirds of all the pottery present. Glazed jugs and pitchers make up nearly a quarter of the wares. These are mainly of Rye origin, but glazed Saintonge, Rouen polychrome, miscellaneous North French and Low Countries jug and pitcher fragments are also present.

Pit 221

The six fills (156, 177, 134, 154, 133 & 41) contained rim fragments from 18 vessels. Reflecting its local origin, fabric group P4/5 was by far the most significant in the assemblage. (Table 5). Squat, necked cooking-pots with triangular-sectioned rims and deeper cooking vessels with broad, horizontal rims are the most common types in this assemblage. The horizontal cooking-pot rim-form was also adopted by the Rye kilns during the mid-13th century, although the ironstone and calcite filler tends to be sparser and the surface finish smoother than that of the Pevensey products. A series of pottery groups from the Glottenham moated manor house site near Battle, dating from between 1250 and 1350, all included numbers of cooking-pots with horizontal rims. Cooking-pots with triangular-sectioned rims were, however, largely restricted to the mid-to late-13th-century groups A and C (Martin 1989, figs 13–16, M.48).

29. Cooking-pot with triangular-sectioned rim, in grey wheel-turned fabric, tempered with brown, black and white flint grits and occasional shell. Fired grey-brown (P4A).

30. Cooking-pot or bowl. Fabric as no. 29 (P4A) fired buff with external patchy black sooting from use.

31. Similar form, in hard grey quartz-sand tempering (R3B).

32. Cooking-pot with triangular-sectioned rim. Fabric as no. 29 (P4A) fired orange.

Figure 10

33. Cooking-pot with reeded rim, in fabric similar to no. 29 (P4B).

34. Cooking-pot with broad, horizontal rim. Fabric as no. 29 (P4A). Appliqué finger-impressed strapping on the body.

35. Upright cooking-pot rim with squared-off bead (Fig. 9). Fabric as no. 29 (P4A) with purple brown, pimply external surface and orange margins and interior surface.

36. Part of a spouted skillet in high-fired grey fabric as no. 29 (P4A) fired patchy brown-black. Dull green patchy internal glaze with external sooting on base.

37. Lower part of jug with finger-impressed base (Fabric P4A). Fired buff-brown with splashed apple-green glaze.

38. Small ?bowl with convex and corrugated body in orange-brown fabric (P4A variant) with profuse 1 mm red ironstone and calcite inclusions. Splashed internal colourless glaze. The neck treatment is very similar to that on footed jugs from the Haarlem (II) kiln site in the Netherlands, the products of which are dated c. 1275–1325 (Janssen 1983, fig. 9.9:5).

39. Lid-seated pitcher rim in sandy, buff-orange French fabric (Z2) with external blackening. c. 13th century (Leenhardt 1983, fig. 6:1,11).

Cut 189

The pottery from this pit was of similar date to that from pit 221. The assemblage was small, but includes an out-turned and triangulated cooking-pot rim similar to those from Pit 221 and the following piece:

40. Not illustrated. Skillet rim. Fabric as no. 33 (P4B). Form similar to a Winchelsea blackware type (Barton 1979, 121 no.5).

Pit 45

To the north of this pit complex was pit 45 which was also of similar date and contained ?Rye pitchers and a fragment of ‘Winchelsea’ black ware as well as the following:

41. Greater part of a cooking-pot (Fabric P4A) fired orange-brown with rim edge blackening.

42. Rim of skillet in handmade, hard grey fabric (P4A) fired reddish-brown with spots of internal green glaze. The exterior has been wiped and has sooting on the base.

Pit 324

This pit, at the eastern end of the site, was probably of early
Fig. 10. Pottery.
14th-century date and contained a pottery assemblage similar to that from Pit 221, except that North French imports were absent (Table 6 fiche).

Wares from the local potteries are the most important component of the pottery assemblage, but not to the same degree as in the Pit 221 assemblage. The difference seems to be due to higher numbers of glazed pitcher and jug fragments, both from the Rye and other local production centres as well as the Saintonge kilns. Pottery from sources not present in the Pit 221 assemblage include two sherds of glazed Dutch earthenware and fragments from more than one Abbotts Wood cooking-pot (Barton 1979, 182, no. 3). This industry is known to have produced chimney pots and the pit also contained a fragment from one of these. Together, they suggest a late 13th- to early 14th-century floruit for this otherwise undated industry.

The pottery assemblage from pit 324 includes a flat-rimmed cooking-pot sherd similar to Cat. no. 34; a reeded rim sherd similar to Cat. no. 33 and possibly from the same vessel, and another triangular-sectioned cooking-pot rim of the type represented by Cat. nos 29, 30, 31 and 32.

43. Pitcher or jug rim in hard, pale-grey, fine sand-tempered ware (R4A) fired hard, orange-brown with internal white slip and splashed external bottle-green glaze with dark streaks. A Rye product (Barton 1979, fig. 6:2, for rim form); fill 320.


The Saintonge jug fragments from this pit include one polychrome sherd dated c. 1280–1310 and five fragments from a plain jug with dappled apple-green glaze and finger-pressed vertical strapping on a couple of fragments and may be a barrel-shaped example of a type imported between 1280 and 1325. A jug sherd with dappled-green glaze and with triangular-sectioned vertical ribs is from another jug and there is a small fragment of Saintonge bichrome ware (R. Thomson pers. comm.).

Pit 323
Pit 323, which was cut by pit 324, contained a small pottery assemblage of broadly similar date to that from pit 324 and includes:

45. Jug rim in orange fabric (R4A) with internal white slip and external mottled orange-brown glaze. A Rye product of a type dated 1250–1400+.

46. Rim sherd from another jug, in grey fabric (R4A) fired orange with sparse coarse ironstone. The exterior below the rim is glazed apple-green. A Rye product.

47. Body sherd from a coil-built pitcher in high-fired blue-grey fabric (P4A) fired orange-brown with external pimply bottle-green glaze over a stubbed neck-cordon. Faint diagonal and vertical grooving is present on the body beneath the glaze. c. 1350–1450

There were five pottery assemblages of interest from this period: contexts 92, 110, 111, 207 and 267. As with the previous phase, none of these assemblages by itself is large enough for detailed quantification. Together, however, the combined pottery added up to an assemblage just large enough for such treatment (Table 7 fiche).

This differs from the vessel breakdown of the previous phase in that cooking-pots are less important and large flat-rimmed dishes and cisterns make their appearance. Both of these latter vessels were produced at Graffham from c. 1430 onwards and at Binsted during the period 1375 to 1425. In discussing cistern fragments from Rye, Barton came to the conclusion that this vessel-form did not appear in Sussex until c. 1400 (Barton 1979, 211). The London medieval pottery sequence shows an abrupt departure from traditional forms around 1350. It is at this time that large dishes and cisterns made their appearance as part of a much expanded ceramic repertoire (Orton 1982, 80). These vessel-forms were part of the Cheam kilns’ range during the late 14th and 15th centuries. (Orton 1982, 82).

The sinkage over the top of the 1280–1350 dated Pits 191, 221 and 45 was gradually filled in over the years by successive dumpings of rubbish (Layers 110 & 111). The character of this pottery assemblage is very similar to that from Pit 221, although somewhat smaller (Table 8 fiche). Much of this pottery consists of unabraded sherds.

The following sherd from layer 111 are of note:

48. Flat-rimmed cooking-pot with moulded rim edge (P4A) fired orange-brown.

49. Reeded and triangular-sectioned rim from cooking-pot in similar fabric. Similar to no. 33 from Pit 221.

50. Expanded rim from cooking-pot, in similar fabric to no. 49.

51. Similar rim in bricky-red fabric (P4B) fired hard, medium-grey with a splash of green glaze on a stacking scar.

This layer also included a combed bodysherd from a cistern fragment which suggests that this assemblage is unlikely to be earlier than the mid-14th century.

Layer 111 was, in turn, overlain by a further layer, context 112. The latter’s pottery has a wide date-range which makes the assemblage unsuitable for any form of quantification. It did, however, include the following sherd:

52. Elaborately moulded cooking-pot rim in high-fired grey fabric (P5A) fired orange with grey-brown exterior (Dulley 1967, fig. 62:20, where dated to the 14th century). The same form was also present at the West Gate kiln site (Lyne in prep.).

Pit 207
The most significant pottery assemblage of this phase is that from pit 207, which appears to have been deposited at the time when cooking-pots and bowls in the coarse-grit and sparse shell-tempered P group of fabrics were being replaced by others in the altogether finer R group of sandy wares. There is a tendency for the flat and horizontal rimmed and the triangular-sectioned rim cooking-pots of the previous phase to be replaced by shallow examples with downward-tilted rims, some of which have short, weak necks and have become little more than bowls. The 153 sherds in this group are shown by fabric on Table 9 (fiche).
53. Flat-rimmed cooking-pot in very coarse grey fabric (P2) fired grey-brown; of inferior quality, but similar, to no. 46 from Pit 221.


55. Cooking-pot with squared and internally-moulded rim (P4A).


57. Large dish-rim in hard blue-grey fabric (P4A) fired orange-brown with rim-top stabbing.

58. Triangular-sectioned bowl rim in hard grey fabric (P4B) with fine horizontal corrugations on the body.

59. One of two short-necked cooking-pots with triangular-sectioned rims. Fired brown with brick-orange margins and rim edge blackening (R4A). There is vertical, finger-impressed appliqué-strip decoration on the body.

60. Short-necked and flat-rimmed cooking-pot with overall surface blackening (R4B). The rim edge is moulded and there is vertical, finger-impressed appliqué-strip decoration on the body. Stabbing below rim as no. 54.

61. Bowl with drooping, flat rim. (R4A) fired buff-brown.

62. Flattened and out-turned bowl rim in grey-brown fabric (R4B) fired grey-black externally (Fig. 10).


64. Similar rim in hard blue-grey fabric (R4B) fired grey-brown.

65. Large flat-rimmed bowl in hard brown fabric (P4A) fired grey-brown.


67. Large storage-jar or cistern in fine-sanded hard grey fabric (R5B) with sparse, coarse calcite and areas of surface blackening. Decorated with vertical pinched-up and finger-impressed strips. Other fragments from this vessel came from the slate-rich layers: Contexts 13 & 219.

68. Jug neck in blue-grey fabric (R4A) fired buff-orange with internal white-slip and splashed external olive-green glaze. A Rye product dated c. 1350–1425+ (Barton 1979, fig. 7.2).


The following residual piece also came from this pit:

70. Spout from pitcher. A late 11th-/12th-century ‘blackware’ import from the Pas de Calais or Flanders (N. MacPherson-Grant pers. comm.) (V4).

The burnt layer 92 had a couple of late 14th- to early 15th-century rims.


72. Lid-seated bowl in buff-brown coarse variant of fabric R4A with internal grey surface (92).

Pit 267

This contained another small pottery assemblage of this period, although there was a considerable residual element. The following pieces are of note:

73. Jug rim in hard grey fabric (R4B) with sparse 0.50–1.00 mm black ironstone inclusions, fired grey-brown with splashed green glaze over linear, black, painted decoration. A Rye product of Barton’s second period c. 1350–1400+ (Barton 1979, fig. 12.1 for rim form).

74. Fragment from Saintonge mortar handle (W3). c. 1450–1550

There was only one significant pottery group of this phase. This came from fill 184 in Pit 193 and is probably of late 15th-century date. The assemblage is dominated by cooking-pots in sandy grey ware (fabric R5B), with true earthenware vessels, in the form of two similar cooking-pots (fabric AA1A), appearing for the first time (Table 10 fiche).

Red earthenware production at Cheam in Surrey replaced that of whitewares c. 1480 (Orton 1982, 82), but we are still lacking information as to when similar wares appeared in East Sussex. They were almost certainly present at Battle Abbey by 1500 (Streeten 1985, 118), but as yet the earliest known earthenware-producing kilns in East Sussex are the early 16th-century ones at Boreham Street in Wartling (Streeten 1985) and Lower Parrock in Hartfield (Freke 1979). The earthenware cooking-pot rim-form from Pit 193 is different to any published from Battle Abbey, but closely paralleled at Hawksden, where the form was dated to c. 1450–1550 (Martin 1991, fig. 13–19).

75. Beaded and lid-seated cooking-pot in grey fabric (R5B) fired uniformly black.

76. Lid-seated cooking-pot in rough, grey fabric (P3B). This may be a residual 13th-century piece, but the rim form has similarities with no. 78 below.

77. Not illustrated. Narrow strap-handle with stabbing from a jug or pitcher (R4B).

78. One of two squat cooking-pots with lid-seated rims, in orange fabric (AA1A) with smooth finish.
Fig. 11. Pottery.
79. Fragment from an open-work curfew or louvre in grey fabric (R4A) fired orange with splashed apple-green glaze on the upper surface and traces of both combed and rouletted decoration.

Layer/fill 150
The top of the pit contained a levelling-up layer, C150, which produced a further pottery assemblage which was primarily of 15th- to early 16th-century date, but contained some intrusive material.

80. Flattened and slightly upturned cooking-pot in rough, grey fabric (R4B) fired brown internally and grey-black externally.

81. Squared-off cooking-pot rim in grey fabric R4B.

82. Lid-seated cooking-pot rim in grey-cored orange fabric (AA1A) with patchy external greying and smooth finish.

83. Not illustrated. Rim fragment from jug in orange fabric (AA1A) with splashed orange glaze.

84. Not illustrated. Rod handle in similar fabric with orange glaze splashes; possibly from the same jug.

85. Not illustrated. Broad, unglazed strap-handle from pitcher or cistern, in blue-grey fabric (R4A) fired orange-brown.

86. Rim fragment from chafing-dish in orange fabric (AA1A) with internal greenish-brown glaze. Lower Parrock kiln Form 5, dated 1520–1540 (Freke 1979, fig. 12:53).

Fill 282 in Ditch 281
87. Jar rim in vitrified brown-grey fabric (Y4) with splashes of green glaze.

The pottery assemblages from occupation layers tend to be less well sealed and have considerably wider date-ranges than those from the cut features. They are therefore less useful for dating pottery forms and fabrics, but include a number of vessel types and imports not present in the pits. The most important of these are catalogued on fiches and shown in Figure 12 (fiche). Only one sherd from the 13th- to 14th-century layer 8/69 is illustrated in Figure 11.


The pottery from the 13th- to 14th-century layer 18 includes a Beverley type-2 jug (Nigel MacPherson-Grant pers. comm. See McCarthy & Brooks 1988, 237) and a fragment from an Aardenburg polychrome-glazed jug in fine red fabric X1. Vessels of this type were made in the coastal regions of Flanders, mainly at Bruges, between 1250 and 1350 (Verhaeghe 1983).

Discussion: the changing pattern of pottery supply

English pottery
The overwhelming bulk of the pottery used on the Old Farmhouse site between the foundation of the extra-mural port and the end of the medieval period originated in East Sussex. During the first 150 years or so of occupation, most of the pottery in use was coarse-grit tempered, with flecks of shell suggesting use of alluvial and beach sand as filler. Much of this pottery came from the Ringmer kilns near Lewes and from other less readily identifiable production centres at Hastings and possibly Pevensey itself. Similarities in fabrics make it difficult to determine the relative importance of these industries, although the distinctive nature of the black P2B wares makes them easy to isolate.

There was steady importation of glazed jugs and pitchers from the Rye kilns after the mid-13th century, continuing into the 15th century. Further glazed vessels of these types, but from the Hastings Bohemia kilns, were also present in Pevensey during the period 1250–1350, as were small numbers of poor-quality cooking-pots from the Abbott’s Wood kilns. Pottery fired at high temperature in grit-and-shell-tempered and sand-tempered fabrics were manufactured at Pevensey itself during the late 13th and 14th centuries and some ‘Wincleshea Blackwares’ and Rye coarsewares also arrived on the Old Farmhouse site after 1300.

A jug dated 1250–1350 from the Beverley kilns, probably acquired at Hull, and a fragment from a possible Mill Green jug of similar date are evidence of Pevensey’s links with the east-coast ports. This latter piece was possibly brought from London along with some Surrey Whiteware vessels and may indicate trading links.

Pottery production at Pevensey probably ended during the early 15th century and earthenwares appeared at some time after 1450. These early earthenwares are of uncertain origin, but may be products from the unpublished Boreham Street kiln on the northern edge of Pevensey Levels.

Continental pottery
Changes in the pattern of medieval pottery importation into south-coast ports have already been discussed elsewhere (Allan 1983), as has the North Sea trade along the east coast of England (Brooks & Hodges 1983). Southampton is the nearest port to have had its ceramic imports subjected to detailed examination. Most of the Saxo-Norman imports consist of North French painted wares, Normandy Gritty Ware jugs and cooking-pots. From 1200 onwards, Normandy Gritty Wares were joined by a variety of North French green-glazed white wares, and they in turn by Rouen Polychrome Jugs during the mid-13th century. The importation of all wares from Normandy went into sharp decline during the third quarter of the 13th century and was largely replaced by Saintonge imports associated with the Gascon wine trade.

When the recognized imported potsherds from the Old Farmhouse site are tabulated by type and origin (Tables 12 & 13 fiche), the pattern of importation is very similar to that at Southampton and shows a marked fall-off in imports of any description after the mid-14th century. We can probably discount the German stoneware imports, as these flooded into England in such large quantities after the 1480s that the Pevensey examples could easily have come from London or elsewhere, rather than directly from the Continent. The bulk of them are also probably of 16th-century date.

The residue of the 15th-century imports consist almost entirely of Normandy stoneware variants on a scale which could be interpreted as the acquisitions of local fishermen visiting ports on the Normandy coast and reflect the decline in the port’s fortunes, brought about by the silting-up of its harbour. There is one sherd from a turquoise tin-glazed plate of probable late 15th-century date and Spanish origin, hinting at the possible survival of some more distant trading links at this late period in Pevensey’s commercial life.
THE METALWORK (incorporating analysis by Adrian Tribe)

Iron

The excavations yielded 250 pieces of iron from 75 contexts. The condition of most of the iron is poor to fair and many pieces have extensive mineralization. Corrosion products were always thick and made identification difficult. For this reason all ironwork was x-rayed. This revealed at least four objects with a non-ferrous plating. These underwent limited investigative conservation, including energy dispersive x-ray fluorescence, to identify the non-ferrous platings. The full details of all conservation work forms part of the archive and only key points and results are included in the present report.

The majority of the ironwork consists of nails of various forms which appear in small quantities from the 12th century onwards. Owing to the small quantities present, and the fact that many are incomplete, no detailed analysis was carried out to determine nail types in different periods. All have been listed for the archive and only a summary is required at present. Most of the nails are general-purpose types with round flat, or low domed heads. Average lengths cannot be ascertained with certainty as most are broken. However, the general type appears in the 12th century and continues into the 16th century, although by this time the average size is smaller, with head diameters of around 10–14 mm compared with the 12th-century examples which average 20–32 mm. Headless nails appear in 12th- to 13th-century contexts and continue relatively unaltered into the 16th century. A few other types, such as trapezoidal-headed varieties, presumably farrier’s nails (Layer 151), are also present, but only as very occasional examples.

A few other iron objects and fragments are present besides nails: a small number of clench bolts from 12th- to 14th-century deposits (for example cut 244, pit 253, fill 220, and pit 297, fill 298) and a few knife and horseshoe fragments. Although many sealed and dated medieval contexts produced ironwork, most did so only in very small groups. The largest single group was from the 18th-century pit (121) totalling only 26 pieces. All pieces have been listed for archive and packaged accordingly for storage. Only a small selection, limited to mainly diagnostic pieces from sealed and dated medieval contexts, is catalogued below.

Catalogue (Fig. 14 fiche)

1. A rectangular-sectioned strip with a central hole and lead/tin alloy plating. Although the strip appears to taper, this is the result of heavy corrosion products, as no tapering is visible on the x-ray. Both ends appear to be broken. The exact function of this object is uncertain, but it does bear some similarities with a purse-frame bar with a hole for a swivelling loop (Margeson 1993, no. 291). Layer 8.

2. Fragment of either a staple or casket handle. 12th–13th century. Pit 59, fill 60.

3. An iron box padlock with copper-alloy (including copper, lead and zinc) plating of unusual type, having a mechanism similar to that found in barrel padlocks but with no keyhole for a conventional padlock key. Instead, a key slot and a hole for the key tip are present on opposite sides of the case, implying that the padlock was opened by a revolving key. Some scroll-work decoration is present on the case. Box padlocks are discussed elsewhere (Goodall 1979; 1981) and a comparable example is found in Goodall 1979, 268. Layer 71.

4. Remains of a scale-tanged knife which has one iron rivet through the tang remaining. Bone scale plates with brass shoulder plates attached with a lead/tin solder. 15th–16th century. Pit 193, fill 184.

5. An extensively mineralized rectangular buckle with baluster bar. A similar example from Norwich was found in a 15th- to 17th-century context (Goodall 1993, no. 203). The example from Pevensey is earlier however, coming from a sealed 13th-century pit. Pit 241, fill 226.

6. The remains of a tinned fitting which consists of a central loop with ‘arms’ extending out either side, ending with a small loop on one side, but broken along the other arm. A similar object, but in copper alloy, is described as being a binding strip, possibly from horse furniture (Goodall, A., 1981, fig. 70:6). 12th–13th century. Pit 253, fill 252.


NON-FERROUS

Fifty-four items of non-ferrous metalwork from 24 contexts were recovered during the excavations. Much of this material is unstratified, although some pieces are either from sealed, dated contexts or are diagnostic in their own right. A full list has been included with the archive, along with the x-ray plates, and only a selection are discussed below.

Lead

Nine pieces of molten lead waste were found from sealed medieval contexts. A fragment of plain rectangular sheeting was also found from Pit 52, fill 53. The surface of this showed signs of having been rolled and unrolled. Only two lead items are of particular interest:

8. A rectangular sheet fragment, turned at one corner and originally inscribed on one side with five crosses. The largest cross is centrally placed while the others, in each of the corners, are set at 45 degrees to the central cross. Ditch 100, fill 101. 15th–16th century.

9. A roughly circular sheet object pierced by a very small circular hole. On one face there appear to be several scratches or deliberate incised marks. Although very faint, these appear to consist of a roughly circular border within which are several deliberate incised marks. Although very faint, these appear to consist of a roughly circular border within which are several crosses. Pit 207, fill 208. 14th century.

Whether these objects are of religious origin or simply represent idle doodling, perhaps by roofers, cannot be ascertained at present. Pieces similar to no. 9 have been noted at Northampton where they are described as possible tokens or weights (Oakley & Spencer 1979, fig. 115:12–13).

Copper alloy

Most copper-alloy objects consist either of undiagnostic fragments, post-medieval items or unstratified pieces. A selection of only the more diagnostic medieval pieces is given in the catalogue.

10. An oval-framed buckle of a type similar to that of an example found in late 13th- to 14th-century deposits in
Norwich (Margeson 1993, no. 130). An exact parallel, dated to between c. 1270–1350, was found in London (Egan & Pritchard 1991, no. 317). The Pevensey example is missing its plate and roller. Unstratified.

11. A buckle with trapezoidal frame and central bar. The bar has no restriction for the pin, which is missing. A similar example from London is dated to c. 1330–1400 (Egan & Pritchard 1991, no. 466). Layer 112. 14th–15th century.

12. A penannular ring formed from a piece of bent tapering rod. Similar examples are present from Hastings (Barber 1993a, no.19) and Lewes (Freke 1975, no. 59), where a 12th- to 13th-century date is suggested. The Pevensey example comes from a layer of similar date. Hearth 159.

13. A number of fragments from a thin circular sheet object with central hole. The object is nearly totally mineralized but the x-ray shows at least 12 nail or rivet holes were present around the rim, some of which are still in situ. The object’s precise function is uncertain, although it could have formed part of a candlestick or vessel repair. Pit 221, fill 134. 13th–14th century.


15. The heavily mineralized and incomplete remains of a ring of round-sectioned wire. Possibly a strap junction. Pit 207, fill 208. 14th century.

16. A 6-lobed rosette/flower decorative mount or fixing stud. Two attachment rivets are still in situ. Tiny traces of mineral-preserved textile are present on the back, around the rivets, between the roves and the underside of the mount. The threads were so degraded however that little detail could be discerned, except that some s-spun threads were present. Context as no. 15.

DISCUSSION

Except for the six prehistoric flint flakes, the earliest finds from the site were from the Romano-British period. These included a few sherds of abraded pottery and two late 3rd-century coins. The stratigraphically earliest context on site (Layer 5/9/173) may actually have dated to this period, but the majority of the Roman material was residual in medieval contexts. Only one feature, a small pit/post-hole (Context 307), was possibly of Roman date, although the sherd being only residual, it was probably of medieval origin. It therefore seems likely that there was no occupation on, or in the immediate vicinity of the site during this period and that the material probably originated from occupation associated with the fort.

Occupation of the site appears to have begun in the late 11th or early 12th centuries. Precisely when is not known as too little pottery of this early date was present and the ceramics of the late 11th and early 12th centuries cannot easily be distinguished. The 12th century is represented by a dense cluster of post-holes and stake-holes in the street-frontage area, which possibly represented the badly disturbed remains of a rectangular building. To both south and east the full extent of this putative building could not be ascertained. The north wall of this structure, however, appeared to be marked by an east-to-west flint wall (209), although it is possible this could have been a later insertion to support the rear of the building on the slope. Apart from the remains of a probable clay floor and hearth, no other features associated with the building were found.

Some of the undated features, such as the possible beam-slots, may also be of this period or of a slightly earlier date. A number of rubbish pits and gullies were present to the rear, presumably once situated in the yard of the building fronting the High Street.

There is little evidence for the 12th-century town of Pevensey. Dulley, who concentrated on the southern side of the present village, thought his excavations to be peripheral to the original nucleus of the town as no finds datable earlier than the 12th century were made. This may well be the case, and similarly, finds from the Old Farmhouse site cannot be proven to predate the 12th century as distinguishing between late 11th-century and 12th-century pottery with certainty is not possible at present and will remain impossible unless large assemblages are discovered. The presence of numerous features of the 12th century at the Old Farmhouse site, however, tends to support the suggestion that the core 12th-century occupation at Pevensey lies in the vicinity of the present High Street. The site appears to have been relatively unchanged during the 12th to 13th centuries with an apparent division remaining between the street frontage area and tenement rear. It is likely that the street frontage area was still occupied by the putative building.

During the 13th and 14th centuries more rubbish pits were dug on the site, but very few definite structural features of this period were found in the street frontage area. This fact, together with the presence of two rubbish/cesspits, one of which cut hearth 159, suggest that by this period the 12th- to 13th-century building no longer existed.
this, the densest area of rubbish pits was still located to the rear of the street frontage and this in itself suggests a distinction between the two areas still existed. It is possible the earlier building was still partially standing and rubbish was buried in the more open area to the rear of the house-site by people occupying neighbouring tenements. The space available for a new building in the frontage area, if pits 241, 204 and 182 were all open during this period, would have been minimal. It is, however, possible that a building did exist but that all traces of it have since been destroyed. This would explain the presence of numerous rubbish pits to the rear of the tenement but not those in the frontage area.

Much less activity was apparent on the site at levels which date from the 15th to 16th centuries. A few more rubbish pits were dug, the largest of them, on the frontage area (193), cut wall 209. The corner of an enclosure or drainage ditch (Context 100/123) cut to the rear of the frontage also appears to be of this date. An undated length of east–west wall (144) may also belong to this period. Too little of the structure was available for examination to be certain of its function, but wall 144 may be part of an outbuilding connected with the Old Farmhouse. It seems the site was not occupied during the 16th century as, even given possible changes in the practice of rubbish disposal, little material of this period was present. Activity during the 15th century is somewhat more difficult to gauge. The majority of evidence, including the placing of pit 193, suggests the frontage area was still unoccupied by buildings. However, the presence of two burnt layers (91 & 92), interpreted as hearths, along with the slate-rich demolition layers (17 & 19) may indicate that a building possibly existed on the site as late as the 15th century.

Very little activity dating to the 17th and 18th centuries was found except for one large rubbish/cesspit (Context 121) located close to the street-frontage. This feature strongly suggests that no occupied house stood here. The 19th century was represented, particularly on the street frontage area, only by a number of large post-holes, layers/spreads and a brick drain.

Unfortunately, the small scale of Dulley’s excavations makes them difficult to interpret and compare to the results of the present excavation. Dulley’s Site 3 revealed evidence of four phases of building, but that evidence was often very slight, particularly that for buildings 1 and 2, whose presence was primarily deduced from possible clay floors and hearth remains. Whereas Dulley’s dating suggests the possibility of continuous occupation throughout the 12th to 14th centuries, the evidence from the Old Farmhouse site suggests the possible building on the site may have gone out of use by the end of the 13th century, a century earlier. As demonstrated by the disposal of later rubbish on the site, occupation was obviously continuing in the vicinity of the present excavation. However, the remains interpreted as structural by Dulley are so slight that it would have taken only limited later disturbance to remove them altogether. Since the street-frontage area at the Old Farmhouse site was extensively cultivated as allotments, it is possible that virtually all traces of 14th- and 15th-century buildings have been destroyed, leaving only meagre vestiges which defy meaningful interpretation. It is worth pointing out that no definite trace of the building known to have stood in this area this century was found. The lack of buildings on the street-frontage area of the Old Farmhouse site cannot therefore be shown by the negative evidence with any certainty but must rely more on the circumstantial evidence of the location of rubbish and cesspits of the late 13th to 14th centuries.

Too little work has been conducted in the present village to allow the issue of the town’s decline to be addressed conclusively on the basis of the archaeological remains. Decay appears at Dulley’s Site 1 from about 1300 onwards, whereas his Site 3 was probably not inhabited after a similar date: even though building 4 was present during the 14th century on Dulley’s site 3, it was interpreted as an outbuilding rather than a domestic dwelling. Evidence from the Old Farmhouse suggests a similar picture to that discovered by Dulley if the paucity of 14th- to 15th-century structures is to be believed. If domestic occupation actually ceased on the Old Farmhouse site around 1300, it certainly did not do so in the vicinity of the site as the later pits demonstrate. The density of features and quantities of finds at the present site begin to decline noticeably in the 15th and 16th centuries. It is likely this apparent decrease in activity is either the result of a change in methods of rubbish disposal or reflects the main decline of the town at this time.

Dulley points out the probable importance of fishing to the port (Dulley 1967, 219) both for sea and coarse fish, and marine molluscs. The large
quantities of oyster from the current excavations, probably harvested from a number of sources, emphasize this. Mussel, cockle, whelk and winkle are present too, but in much smaller quantities. Unfortunately fish-bones, although present in many of the environmental samples, were not in sufficient numbers to warrant detailed analysis. However, a preliminary assessment showed large fish species (conger eel, gadids) to be present in 12th- to 14th-century contexts. The absence of smaller fish bones, such as herring, is surprising but may in fact reflect post-depositional processes rather than being a reliable indicator of diet. Equally, it surprising that only one fish-hook was located during the present excavations considering the relatively large numbers which have been found from excavations in Hastings (Barber 1993a; Goodall 1976). 

Little can be said with confidence about the agricultural practices connected with the town from the present excavations. Although the main species such as cow, sheep and pig are present in all periods, without detailed study of larger samples of animal bone few comments can be made about medieval animal husbandry in and around Pevensey. Arable cultivation, however, is better represented by the current excavations. Cereal crops predominate and consist of high proportions of oats with lesser quantities of various wheats (i.e. rivet/bread-type, free-threshing) and a little barley but no rye. The presence of much wheat chaff with some cereals (Context 321) indicates at least some processing of cereals on or near the excavation site. Small quantities of other cultivars, such as field bean, flax, and hemp indicate some crop diversity: the latter two possibly being produced for rope and sail making. The majority of arable crops are likely to have been grown on the surrounding reclaimed marshland, however, some weed seeds with a preference for alkaline soils are also present and suggest some downland cultivation too. The close proximity of the marsh would account for the presence of damp-loving species such as clubrush/bulrush in the charred plant remains assemblage. Exploitation of bog/heathland environments is also indicated by the presence of sphagnum, bracken and heather spores. It is probable the local farms were situated on the surrounding marshland but exploited a wide range of environments. Their produce was probably purchased at market in various states of preparation.

The vast majority of non-consumable commodities required by the town were provided by resources local to the south-east. This is well demonstrated by the pottery from the site which consists of high proportions of wares from relatively local kilns such as Ringmer, Hastings, Rye and Pevensey itself. It is likely that even though of south-eastern origin most of the pottery would have been transported along the coast to the port. The same is likely for building stone, the majority of which came from the local area (76.6 per cent of the stone is from Wealden and Downland sources). Pottery from areas further afield attest some trading links up the east coast, notably with London, but also perhaps with Hull. Dulley noted coal in some medieval contexts and this undoubtedly also came from east-coast trade. 

Westward trade is demonstrated more by stone than by pottery from the present site, although Dulley identified some Wiltshire ceramics from his excavations (Dulley 1967, fig. 63:39). Good-quality building stone appears to have been brought in from the Dorset region, but only in limited quantities. Contact with Devon and Cornwall resulted not only in the importation of large quantities of roofing slate but also in the arrival as ship’s ballast of large pieces of south-western rocks, such as granite and Torquay limestone. 

Evidence for Pevensey’s continental trading links, as reflected by the ceramics, was noted by Dulley. Although no actual percentages are given from the early excavations, a high proportion of the pottery to at least 1300 was of continental origin, coming predominantly from Normandy, Flanders and south-west France. A similar picture has emerged from the Old Farmhouse site pottery, although the proportion of these sherds in the total assemblage is smaller than was originally anticipated. The presence of small quantities of foreign stone, notably the lava quern and green porphyry, as well as the jetons, indicate trading networks. However, it is not known if these commodities were brought direct to Pevensey from source or were dispatched from an intermediate port such as London. Whatever the case, continental imports, as indicated by the pottery, decline dramatically around the mid-14th century and it is possible this reflects the difficulties the port was experiencing at this time.

Acknowledgements
The author gratefully acknowledges English Heritage for funding the project and the assistance of all those people who have contributed to the project, both
in the field and during the post-excavation stage. Special thanks must go to all the specialists: Malcolm Lyne, Mark Gardiner, David Rudling, Adrian Tribe, Greg Priestley-Bell, David Atkinson, John Shepherd, John Cooper, Pat Wiltshire, Dale Sarjeantson, Lucy Kirk, Liz Somerville and Mark Robinson. Thanks must also go to the people who commented on some of the more exotic pottery: Nigel MacPherson-Grant, Duncan Brown, Bob Thomson, David Gaimster, Lynn Blackmore, Paul Blinkhorn. The author is also grateful to Chris Place for managing the project, as well as the excavation team who had to endure some extremely unpleasant digging conditions. A special thanks must go to Mr and Mrs Turner of the Old Farmhouse who provided much help and tea throughout the work.

The Society is grateful to English Heritage for a grant towards the costs of publication.

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Norwich: The Norwich Survey/Norfolk Museums Service.


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