

EXCAVATIONS IN WINDING STREET, HASTINGS, 1975

by David R. Rudling

The excavation was undertaken to obtain further information about the medieval occupation of the site prior to redevelopment and to try to establish a medieval pottery sequence for the Hastings area.

Similar groups of pottery of types centred on the fourteenth century were found in four pits cut into the natural clay. Other features discovered included two post holes, the possible north-west corner of a late medieval/early post-medieval building, and eighteenth and nineteenth century pits and cottage foundations.

INTRODUCTION

During August 1975 the Sussex Archaeological Field Unit in conjunction with the Hastings Area Archaeological Research Group conducted a small excavation on the north side of Winding Street, Hastings (TQ825 095), on part of the area formerly occupied by the public bathhouse. The excavation was undertaken to follow up the information obtained from the site during 1974 when H.A.A.R.G., under the directorship of Mr. David Devenish, B.A., A.M.A., excavated an exploratory trench¹ and to obtain further information about the medieval occupation prior to redevelopment.

The earliest phase found in 1974 consisted of a medieval layer lying directly on the natural yellow clay into which an oval pit had been dug (Pit D). At a later phase a house platform with a line of six flat stones and a stone lined post hole along its western side was constructed (for position of stones and post hole see Fig. 2). To the east of the line of stones was a succession of floor levels. Later phases belonged to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

During 1975 two trenches were excavated parallel to Trench I of 1974 but only Trench II was taken down to the natural underlying clay. (Fig. 2). The finds and records of the 1975 excavation are deposited in the Hastings Museum.

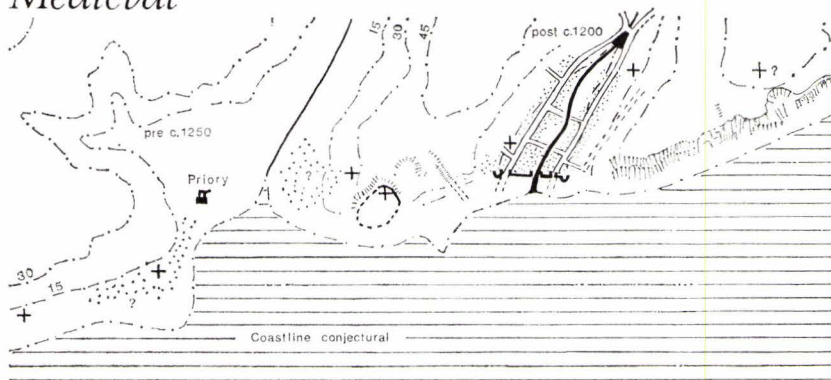
The people of Hastings are mentioned in Saxon times, but the first evidence of a town is in the tenth-century when it is mentioned in the Burghal Hidage, assessed at five hundred hides. It has no proper entry in the Domesday Book, but the town was given to the Count of Eu, and the stone castle was built soon after the conquest. The Norman town may have been in the Priory Valley, but in the twelfth century there is mention of a "new town" which may refer to settlement in the Bourne Valley, a move which may have been caused by the silting of the Priory Haven. This new site also suffered from the depredations of the sea. The fourteenth century wall may mark the boundary of a truncated town, with the original course of Winding Street cut off first by the sea and then by the wall. The last attempt to restore harbour facilities prior to the nineteenth century failed in 1598.²

¹ D. Devenish, 'Excavations in Winding Street, Hastings, 1974.' (Forthcoming).

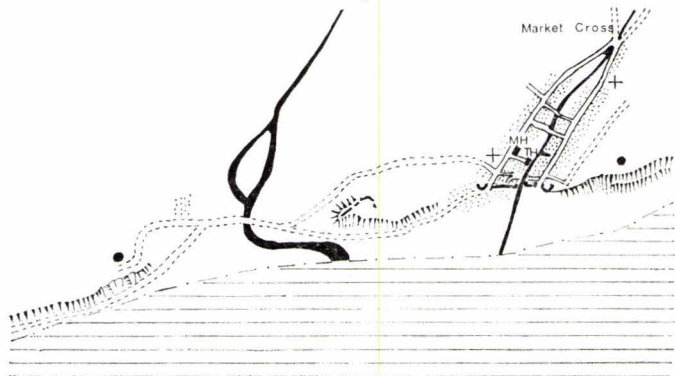
² Abstract from F. Aldsworth, and D. J. Freke, *Historic Towns in Sussex* (1976), Institute of Archaeology, London.

HASTINGS

Medieval



Seventeenth Century



1975

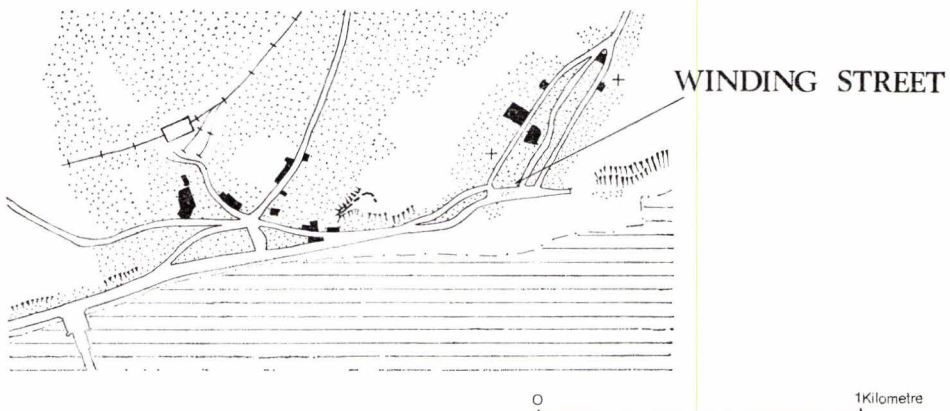


FIG. 1. The origin and development of Hastings. Stippling indicates occupied areas. *After Aldsworth and Freke (1976).*

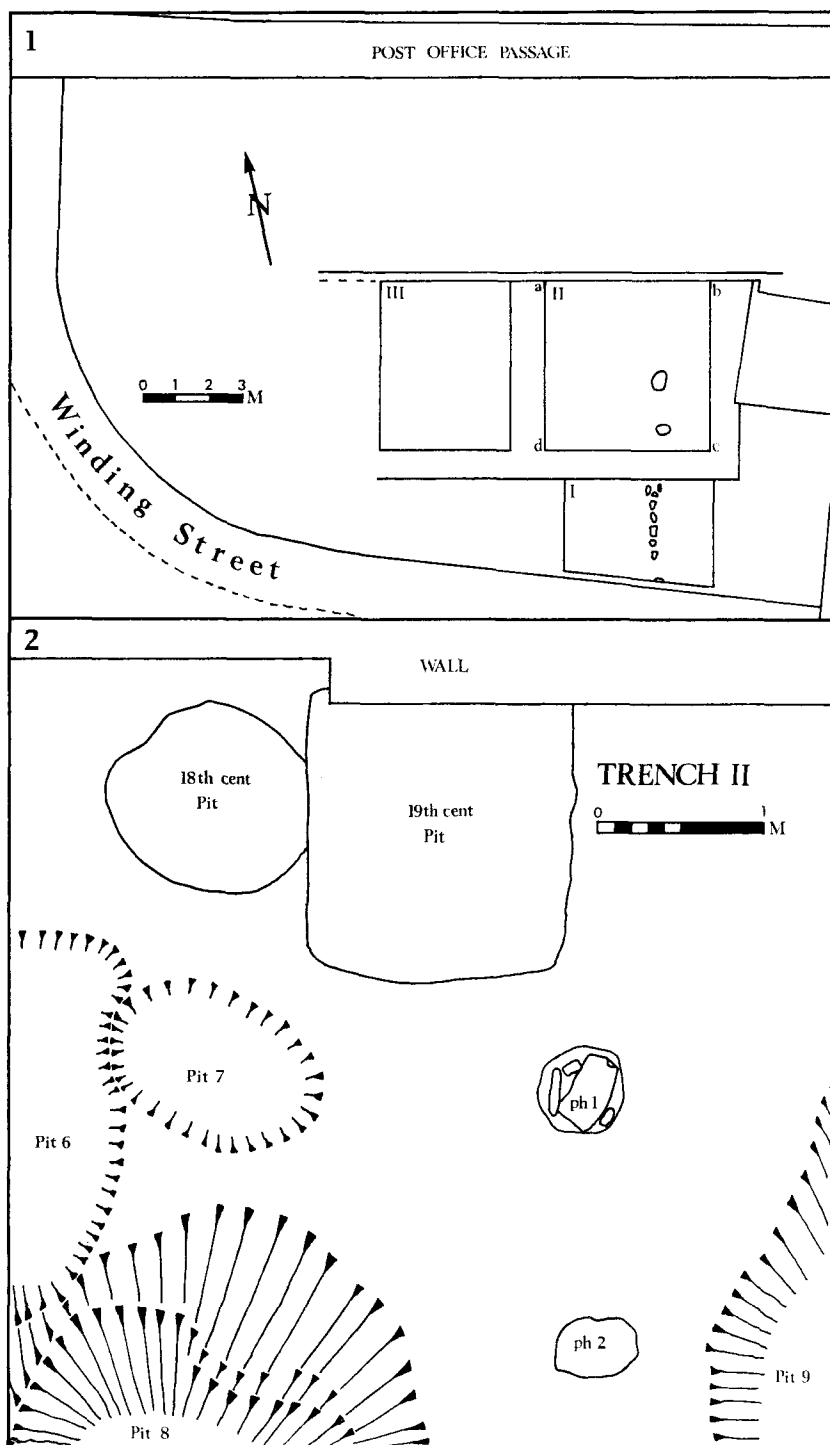


FIG. 2. Winding Street, 1975. 1. Trench plan. 2. Plan of features cut into the natural clay in Trench II.

THE EXCAVATION

Trench II

Sequence of occupation:

1. Four pits and a post hole were found cut into the natural yellow clay (Fig. 2. Pits 6, 7, 8 and 9 and Post hole 2). It has been suggested by David Devenish that these four pits and the one found in Trench I during 1974 (pit D) may have been dug to obtain clay. The fills of the pits found in Trench II contained pot sherds, bone, oyster shells, and a few metal objects, indicating their ultimate function as rubbish pits. These pits all contained pottery groups of similar types centred on the fourteenth century and therefore would appear to be contemporary with each other. Post hole 2 was found cut into the natural clay but was not observed at a higher level and its structural function is uncertain.
2. Lying above the natural clay over most of the trench were layers of grey-brown clay (Fig. 3. Layers 21 and 17). These contained a variety of finds including pot sherds, bone, shell and metal objects, representing a gradual accumulation of rubbish on the site during the late medieval and early post-medieval periods. Above layers 21 and 17 were a number of layers also containing late medieval and later material (Fig. 3. Layers 20, 15, 14 and 10). The objects found in the most extensive of these layers, layer 10, range in date from the fourteenth to the eighteenth century.
3. Post hole 1 (Fig. 2) was stone lined and had a large flat base stone resting on the natural. (The base stone and some of the packing stones are shown in Fig. 2). Post holes 1 and 2 are roughly aligned with the stones found in 1974 (Fig. 2), and it is thought possible that they may be connected with the same building. Other possible traces of the building were limited to a few clay and charcoal layers (Fig. 3. Layers 13a, b and c) which roughly correspond to the floor levels found in 1974. The extent of the layers found in Trench II suggest that post hole 1 could mark the north-west corner of the building. All other traces of the building appear to have been robbed out.
4. During the late eighteenth century a rubbish pit (Fig. 2) was cut through the medieval layers and into the natural clay.
5. During the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century cottages were built on the site and it is possible that the area was levelled at that stage. The back of a cottage found during 1974 was discovered in Trench II and this was connected to a stone lined cess pit (Fig. 2 for limits of foundation trench). The last fill from this cess pit appears to belong to the mid nineteenth century, after which period the pit was used as a soakaway.

A cobbled area (Fig. 3. Layer 5) was found in the western part of Trench II and this seems to have acted as a passage-way between the building found in Trenches I and II and that found in Trench III.

Trench III

The cottage found in Trench III had a brick cross-wall and to the south of this a structure with a brick barrel vault roof pierced by a circular hole; this is presumably a cellar but was not excavated. To the north of the cross-wall were found two large rendered pits of unknown function. The destruction in this trench due to the cellar and the two pits made further investigation unprofitable.

Finally the area covering both Trenches II and III was levelled and covered with concrete to form part of the public bathhouse complex.

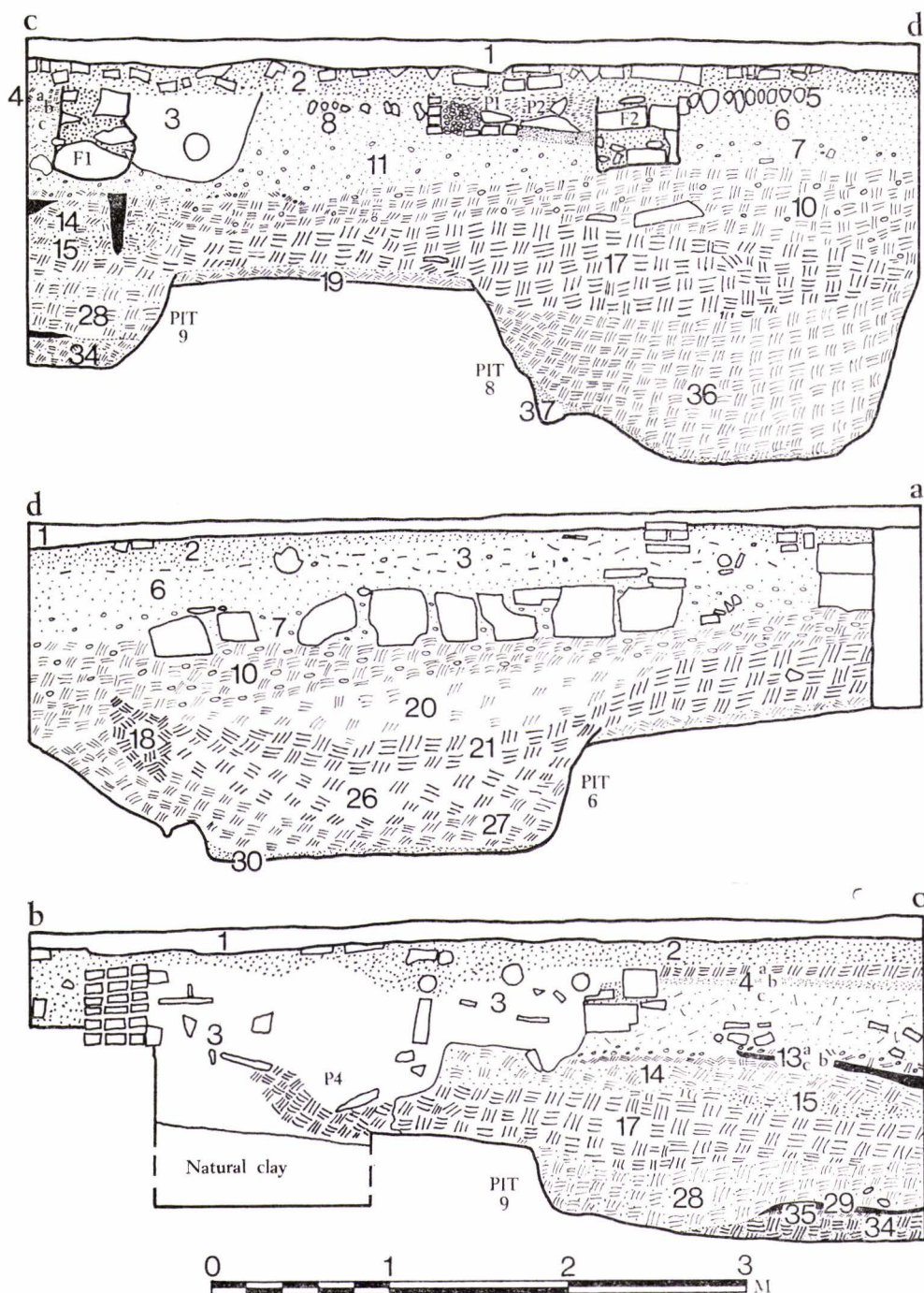


FIG. 3. Winding Street, 1975. Sections of Trench II.

Key to sections: 1. Concrete. 2. Hardcore: bricks, pebbles, mortar and soil. 3. Modern disturbance: grey soil, pebbles, bricks and tile. 4a. Yellow-grey clay. 4b. Mortar. 4c. Grey soil and some tile. 5. Cobbles. 6. Light grey soil with a few small pebbles. 7. Medium grey soil with pebbles. 8. Light grey soil with a few small pebbles. 10. Grey-brown clay with some small pebbles. 11. Medium grey soil with pebbles. 13a. Yellow-brown clay with pebbles. 13b. Charcoal. 13c. Orange-yellow clay. 14. Grey-brown clay with charcoal flecks. 15. Yellow-brown clay with charcoal flecks. 17. Grey-brown clay. 18. Wedge of yellow clay. 19. Greenish-yellow clay with charcoal flecks. 20. Yellow-brown clay. 21. Grey-brown clay. 26. Grey-brown clay. 27. Greenish-brown clay. 28. Grey-brown clay with charcoal flecks. 29. Charcoal. 30. Brown silt. 34. Dark grey-brown clay with charcoal flecks. 35. Brown clay. 36. Grey-brown clay. 37. Brown silt. P.1. 19th cent. pit with small pebble fill. P.2. 19th cent. pit with charcoal bottom. P.4. 19th cent. rubbish pit. F.1. Sandstone wall. F.2. Sandstone wall.

NOTE: Detailed plans of all the eighteenth and nineteenth century features found in Trenches II and III have been deposited with the associated finds in the Hastings Museum.

The earliest occupation of the site would appear to belong to the fourteenth century at which time four pits were dug into the natural clay. The finding of sherds dated to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Pottery Report Nos. 59 and 60) indicates, however, that there was occupation in the vicinity at an earlier period.

The possible north-west corner of the building found in Trench I of 1974 was discovered in Trench II but it is impossible on the basis of the 1975 finds to date this accurately, although a late medieval/early post-medieval date would seem likely.

THE FINDS

* indicates illustrated material.

(a) Pottery (Fig. 4)

For the purpose of this report it was necessary to describe just a selection of the pottery found. This selection was made on the basis of form and fabric and was restricted to the period before the eighteenth century. A wide range of pottery types represented the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and these have been deposited in the Hastings Museum.

As yet relatively little is really known about the medieval and early post-medieval pottery of East Sussex and the dating of much of the local wares described below must await the discovery and publication of pottery groups from datable sealed contexts.

Layer 10

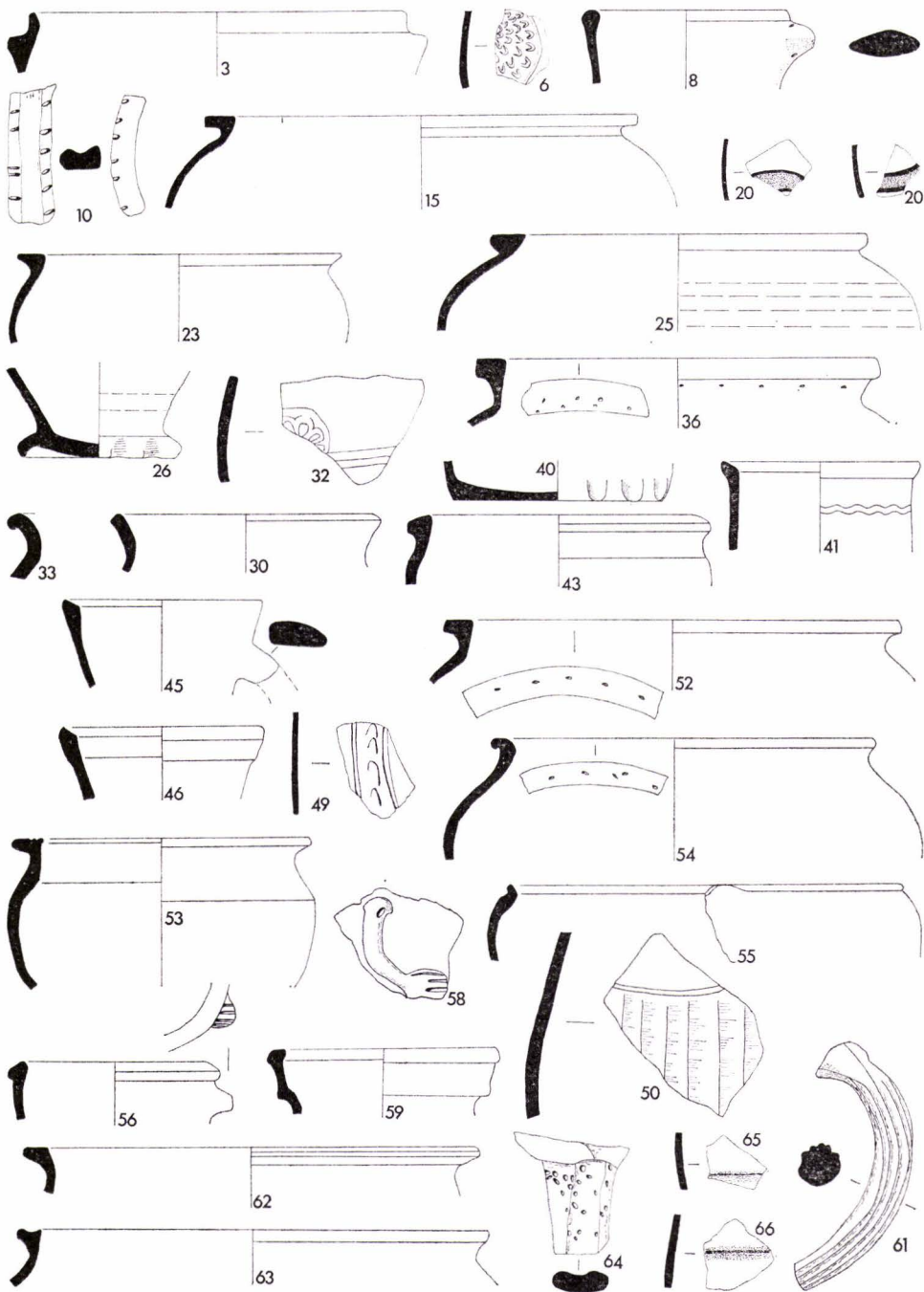
1. Rim sherd of white tin glazed earthenware bowl with two parallel lines in blue as decoration on the top of the rim. Delftware, probably made at Lambeth. Early eighteenth century.
2. Body sherd of mottled brown salt-glazed ware (Bellarmine). Seventeenth/eighteenth century.
- *3. Rim sherd of off-white ware with external flange below simple rim. Internal light-green glazing. Farnborough ware. Seventeenth century.
4. Nine body sherds of blue decorated grey Westerwald or Raeren stoneware. Late sixteenth century.
5. Two body sherds of Raeren stoneware. Early sixteenth century.
- *6. Body sherd from a drinking jug of white stoneware with external green glazing and floral decoration in relief. Beauvais ware. Early sixteenth century.
7. Foot of red ware. Internal orange glazing.
- *8. Rim and part of handle of fine red sandy ware. Stabbed at top of handle. Patches of external green glazing and internal white slip.
9. Rim and part of handle of hard red ware with black slip. Simple bead rim.
- *10. Stabbed strap handle of red ware with brown glazing. Rectangular in section with central groove.
11. Wide strap handle of fine red ware with reduced core. Stabbed.
12. Rod handle of fine red ware with green glazing.
13. Rim sherd from a jug of white ware with external dark green glazing. Flat-topped rim.
14. Rim sherd of grey ware oxidized to off-white on surface. Flat-topped rim.
- *15. Rim sherd of cooking pot of fine grey chalk tempered ware. Flat-topped rim.
16. Thumbled base sherd of red ware with reduced core.
17. Body sherd of fine grey ware decorated with vertical incised lines.
18. Body sherd of fine grey ware with thumb-impressed applied vertical cordon.
19. Rod handle of fine pink ware with light green glazing. The body of the vessel has a white internal slip.
20. Rye ware. Fourteenth century.
- *20. Two small body sherds of white polychrome ware. Decoration in the form of a green painted band bordered by black lines. Saintonge ware. c. 1275-1300.

Layer 14

21. Rim sherd of off-white sandy ware with reduced core. Everted rim.
22. Rim sherd of red ware with flanged concave topped rim.
- *23. Rim sherd of hard sand tempered grey ware. Flanged flat-topped rim.
24. Base sherd of fine red ware with internal orange glazing.

Layer 15

- *25. Rim sherd of cooking pot of red ware with reduced core. Flat-topped rim.

FIG. 4. Winding Street, 1975. Pottery ($\frac{1}{4}$)

Layer 17

- *26. Frilled base of a grey stoneware Raeren jug. Late sixteenth century.
- 27. Rim sherd of jug of white ware with external yellow glazing. Simple rim.
- 28. Rim sherd of bowl of red ware. Flanged flat-topped rim with stabbed decoration under rim.
- 29. Rim sherd from a skillet of red ware with reduced core. Shows part of spout. Traces of external green glazing.
- *30. Rim sherd of ground flint tempered grey ware.
- 31. Stabbed rod handle of red ware with dark brown slip.
- *32. Body sherd of fine pink ware with external greenish brown glazing. Shows part of a stamped floral motif. Rye. Fourteenth century.

Layer 20

- *33. Rim sherd of off-white ware with reduced core. Everted rim with patches of external light green glazing.
- 34. Wide strap handle of fine red ware with reduced core. Slashed.

Layer 21

- 35. Body sherd of white ware with external brown glazing. Probably from Beauvais or Surrey.
- *36. Rim sherd of flint tempered red ware with reduced core. Piercing on flat-topped rim and at neck of rim.
- 37. Body sherd of fine pink ware with external yellow glazing and incised lines.
- 38. Body sherd of fine white ware with external yellow glazing and two raised ridges covered in brown glazing. Rouen ware. c. 1250-1350.

Pit 6; Layer 26

- 39. Rod handle of fine grey ware. Surface oxidized to an off-white colour. Patchy green glazing. Slashed. Rye.
- *40. Thumbed base sherd of fine pink ware. Traces of external green glazing. Rye.

Pit 6; Layers 27 and 30

- *41. Rim sherd from a jug of fine grey ware with white oxidized interior surface. External dark green glazing with incised wavy line decoration on shoulder. Rye.
- 42. Rim sherd of jug of fine grey ware with surfaces oxidized to a red-buff colour. Banding on external surface which has traces of green glazing. Bead rim.
- *43. Rim sherd of cooking pot of fine grey ware with oxidized surfaces.
- 44. Rim sherd of cooking pot of fine grey ware. Soot incrustation on external surface.

Pit 7; Layer 33

Very little pottery was found in this layer. The types discovered are similar to those described from Pits 6, 8 and 9.

Pit 8; Layers 36 and 37

- *45. Rim and part of handle of a jug of fine pink ware with a reduced core. External green and red glazing. Internal white slip. Rye.
- *46. Rim sherd of fine pink ware with external orange glazing.
- 47. Rod handle of fine grey ware with external dark green glazing. Anterior ridging. Rye.
- 48. Base sherd of fine pink ware with external green glazing and internal white slip. Rye.
- *49. Body sherd of fine pink ware with external dark green glazing. Decorated with applied blobs in between two ridges. Rye.
- *50. Body sherd of fine pink ware with external dark green to clear glazing. Vertical ridging. Rye.
- 51. Body sherd of fine grey ware with internal surface oxidized to a buff colour. External dark green glazing and incised line decoration. Rye.
- *52. Rim sherd of cooking pot of fine grey ware with oxidized surface. Pierced flanged rim. Rye.
- *53. Rim sherd of fine grey ware with oxidized internal surface. Soot incrustation on exterior.
- *54. Rim sherd of cooking pot of ground flint and chalk tempered ware oxidized to a reddish-pink colour on the interior. Pierced flanged rim.
- *55. Rim sherd of skillet of ground flint and chalk tempered ware oxidized at surface. Shows part of pouring spout.
- *56. Rim sherd of fine grey ware oxidized at surface. Shows start of slashed handle. Traces of external orange glazing.
- 57. Thumbed base sherd of fine grey ware oxidized to a buff colour on exterior.
- *58. Body sherd of jug of fine pink ware with external dark green glazing. Raised anthropomorphic decoration in the form of a hand and arm. Scarborough ware. Late thirteenth or early fourteenth century. Similar in fabric and decoration to the Seaford knight jug and the Lewes Aquamanile.
- *59. High collared rim sherd of fine white Andenne ware. Twelfth/thirteenth century.
- 60. Body sherd of fine white Andenne ware. External yellow glazing with iron specks. Twelfth century.

Pit 9; Layers 28, 29 and 34

- *61. Rod handle of fine grey ware with external dark green glazing. Anterior ridging. Rye.
- *62. Rim sherd of cooking pot of fine grey ware oxidized to a buff colour at surface.
- *63. Rim sherd of cooking pot of chalk and ground flint tempered grey ware oxidized to a buff colour at surface. Flanged concave topped rim.
- *64. Rim and strap handle of cooking pot tempered with medium sized flint granules and chalk. Rough surface oxidized to a dark buff colour. Much random stabbing at junction of handle and body. Traces of internal dark green glazing. Abbotswood ware?
- *65. Body sherd of fine white ware with external yellow glazing and raised ridge covered in brown glazing. Rouen ware. c. 1250-1350.
- *66. Body sherd of fine pink ware with external orange glazing and raised ridge covered in green glazing. From Yorkshire. c. 1250-1350.

(b) *Clay Pipes*

A fairly large number of eighteenth and nineteenth century clay pipe bowls and stems were found in the most recent layers. These have been deposited in the Hastings Museum. An earlier example is described below.

Milled bowl of clay pipe with spur. c. 1610-1640. Layer 10.

(c) *Stone Objects—by D. Rudling and C. Cartwright*

- 1. Broken whetstone. Quartzite. 55 x 33 x 16mm. Layer 10.
 - 2. Broken whetstone. Siltstone. 46 x 13 x 8mm. Layer 10.
 - 3. Fishing net weight. Sandstone. Roughly circular with central piercing. Maximum diameter 85mm. Height 45mm. Layer 11.
- Geologically these three objects probably derive from beds in the Wealden Series in the vicinity of Hastings.

(d) *Coins*

- 1. George III. Copper halfpenny. 1770-1775. Condition: Very corroded. Layer 3.
- 2. Spanish Netherlands, Philip IV. AE Double-liard. 1643. Condition: Very corroded/worn. Layer 6.
- 3. George III. AR. Shilling. 1816. Condition: Worn. Layer 9 (Fill of nineteenth century cess pit).
- 4. George III. Copper halfpenny. 1770-1775. Condition: Extremely corroded. Layer 10.

(e) *Metalwork—by Ian H. Goodall (Fig. 5)*

Iron Objects

- *1-12. Fishhooks. Nos. 8 and 9 are complete, and they reflect the range from the site. No. 8 has a barbed hook, like nos. 2, 7, 8, 10 and 11, but no. 9 has a plain hook similar to no. 6. Both have thin, expanded heads, as had nos. 1, 2 and 10. Nos. 3, 5 and 12 are shank fragments, like the others of circular-sectioned iron wire. X-radiographs reveal that all fishhooks except nos. 1, 3 and 6 have non-ferrous plating, no doubt to counter the corrosive effect of sea water.

Contexts 1: layer 37; 2-5: layer 10; 6-7: layer 17; 8-12: layer 8.

- *13. Wire loop, probably from a dress fastening eye. Layer 8.

Copper Alloy Objects

- *14. Incomplete buckle plate, simple decoration on face. Layer 28.
- *15. Shaped, elaborately decorated and incomplete buckle plate. Rust around the end hole indicates a former iron rivet. Layer 17.
- *16. Strap-end buckle, frame and incomplete riveted plate cast in one. Compare with an early medieval example from Southoe Manor, Cambs. (Hunts.), and another medieval example from Upton, Glos.¹ Layer 20.
- *17. "Spectacle" buckle, shaped frame, projecting central bar, pin lost. Medieval "spectacle" buckles were generally a plain figure-eight shape,² but in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries the frames were more frequently shaped and moulded, and the central bar made to project beyond the loops. Such buckles come from a sixteenth century context at The Manor of the More, Rickmansworth, Herts., from a seventeenth century context at Basing House, Hants., and one of the eighteenth century in North America.³ Layer 10.
- *18. Hook with pierced, star-shaped plate and suspension loop attached by a rectangular link to another fragment. Probably a costume fitting. Layer 17.

¹ T. C. Lethbridge and C. F. Tebbutt, 'Southoe Manor: preliminary investigations of an early medieval moated site at Manor farm, Southoe, Hunts.', *Proc. Cambs. Antiq. Soc.*, vol. 38 (1939), 163, pl. 1b; Philip Rahtz, 'Upton, Gloucestershire, 1964-1968', *Tr. Bristol and Gloucs. Archaeol. Soc.* 88 (1969), vol. 108, fig. 11. CA25.

² London Museum Medieval Catalogue (1967 edition), 278-9.

³ M. Biddle, L. Barfield and A. Millard, 'The excavation of the Manor of the More, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire', *Archaeol. J.*, vol. 116 (1959), 184, fig. 19.17; Stephen Moorhouse, 'Finds from Basing House, Hampshire (c. 1540-1645): Part Two', *Post-Medieval Archaeol.*, vol. 5 (1971), 60, fig. 25, 169-70; Ivor Noel Hume, *A Guide to Artifacts of Colonial America* (New York, 1970), 86-7, fig. 20.4.

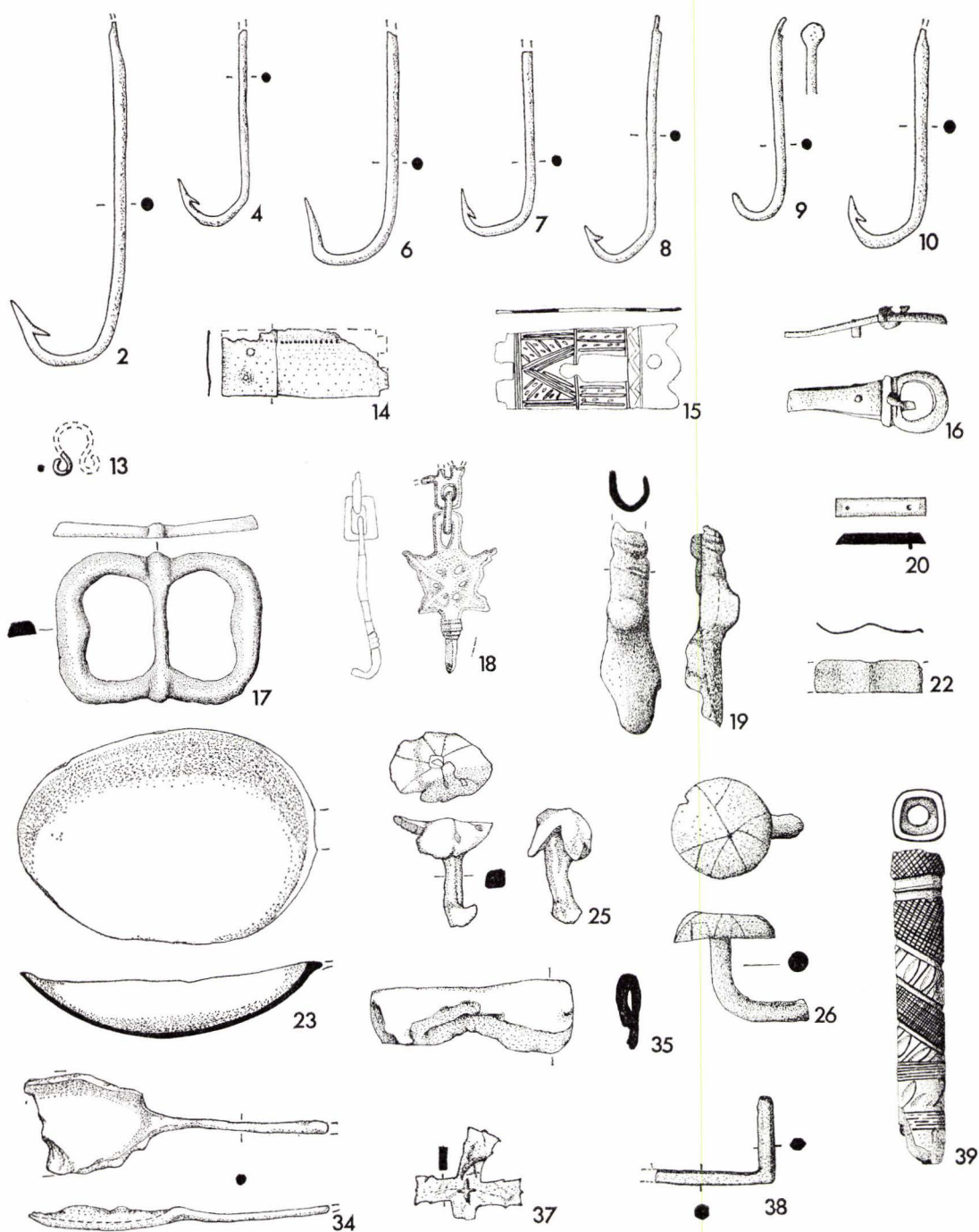


FIG. 5. Winding Street, 1975. Metalwork (3)

- *19. Terminal of U-sectioned mount. Layer 17.
- *20. Strengthening plate with end rivets. Layer 17.
- *21-2. Strip fragments from layers 14 and 20.
- *23. Spoon bowl, stem lost. Layer 7.
- 24. Roughly circular ? lid. Layer 7.
- *25-6. Studs, shanks incomplete, both with hollow domed heads with incised decorative patterns. Layers 17 and 26.
- 27. Pair of interlocked rings. Layer 10.
- 28-30. Cylindrical lace ends. All layer 10.
- 31. Possible needle. Layer 10.
- 32-3. Pin shanks. Layers 10 and 13.
- Lead Objects
- *34. Pewter spoon, bowl and stem incomplete. Layer 9.
- *35-6. Lengths of binding. Layers 17 and 36.
- *37. Cross, perhaps a mortuary cross like the plain ones from the Grey Friars, London.¹ Layer 17.
- White Metal
- *38. Fragment of buckle frame. Layer 13.
- Bone
- *39. Handle for knife or fork with whittle tang, with spiral and concentric grooves separating bands of lattice and other decoration. Layer 8.

(f) *Animal Bones*—by O. Bedwin

All the bones examined came from the following domestic animals; pig, cattle, sheep (or goat), and chicken. There were in addition a few oyster shells. A total of 71 identifiable animal bones, complete or fragmentary, were recovered from four pits. In view of these small numbers, comparisons between the material from the separate pits has little significance. However, it is worth drawing attention to the fact that all eight caprine mandibles were either deciduous or those of a young adult. The absence of fish bones is surprising from a site so close to the sea and it may be that the soil conditions were unfavourable for the preservation of very small bones.

Pit 6; Layer 26

| Caprine | Cattle | Chicken |
|--------------------------|------------------------|---------------|
| 1 mandible (young adult) | 1 radius fragment | 1 tibiotarsus |
| 1 metatarsal | 1 metatarsal (unfused) | |
| 1 incisor | 1 pelvis fragment | |
| 1 humerus | 2 rib fragments | |
| 1 radius | | |
| — | — | |
| 5 | 5 | |
| — | — | |

Pit 6; Layer 27

| Caprine | Cattle | Chicken |
|----------------------|------------------|---------------|
| 2 mandibles | 1 skull fragment | 1 tibiotarsus |
| (L + R; young adult) | 1 rib fragment | |

Pit 7; Layer 33

| Caprine | Cattle | Pig |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|----------|
| 4 mandibles | 1 tibia fragment | 1 canine |
| (2L + 2R; all deciduous) | 1 radius | |
| | (plus some oyster shells) | |

Pit 8; Layers 36 and 37

| Caprine | Cattle | Pig | Chicken |
|------------------------|--------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| 1 humerus fragment | 2 tibia fragments | 1 tibia | 1 tarsometatarsus |
| 1 metacarpal (unfused) | 1 radius fragment | 1 radius | |
| 1 mandible (deciduous) | 1 scapula fragment | 1 rib fragment | |
| 2 calcanei | 2 pelvis fragments | | |
| 1 rib fragment | 1 skull fragment | | |
| | 4 rib fragments | | |
| — | — | — | |
| 6 | 11 | 3 | |
| — | — | — | |

(plus some oyster shells)

¹ London Museum Medieval Catalogue (1967 edition), 290.

Pit 9; Layers 28 and 34

| Caprine | Cattle | Pig |
|--------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| 2 radii | 1 tibia fragment | 1 tibia shaft fragment |
| 1 ulna fragment | 1 metatarsal fragment | 1 rib fragment |
| 1 tibia fragment | 1 metacarpal | |
| 3 metatarsals | 1 1st phalange | |
| 1 metacarpal | 1 pelvis fragment | |
| 1 skull fragment | 1 scapula fragment | |
| 2 rib fragments | 1 mandible fragment | |
| 1 humerus fragment | 1 vertebra fragment | |
| | 3 rib fragments | |
| 12 | 13 | 2 |
| | (plus some oyster shells) | |

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