

Excavations on a medieval site at Little High Street, Worthing, West Sussex, 1997

by Julie Lovell

with contributions by

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A rare opportunity to undertake excavations within the town revealed two grain-dryers, pits and a sequence of boundary and enclosure ditches spanning possibly the 10th to early 15th centuries. These are likely to have lain behind buildings on the High Street frontage and reflect Worthing's development as a nucleated village settlement from c. 1200. The finds include a locally-important assemblage of medieval pottery.

INTRODUCTION

In September to October 1997 Wessex Archaeology conducted an archaeological excavation at the site of Homefield Annexe, Little High Street, Worthing, West Sussex (centred on TQ 5150 1031). The excavation was carried out following an archaeological evaluation (Stevens 1997) and prior to the construction of new offices for the Environment Agency (Sussex Division). The area of excavation covered 1200 m² fronting onto Little High Street to the south, and bounded to the east and west by two lanes which run from Little High Street northwards to join Sussex Road (Fig. 1).

The site is fairly level, sloping gently from c. 7 m Ordnance Datum (OD) in the east to c. 6 m OD in the west. The underlying geology is Brickearth, which was encountered at depths of between 1.10 m and 1.30 m below the modern ground surface. The foundations of a former Victorian school building truncated various parts of the site, but there were few other modern disturbances.

HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The site is situated close to the centre of the medieval village of Worthing. There are three entries for Worthing in the Domesday Survey of 1086 where it is referred to as *Mordinges* or *Ordinges*, and a total of 7 villagers and 15 smallholders were paying tax on the 14 hides of land which belonged to the vill, although not all were necessarily living in the vicinity of the present site (Morris 1976, f13, 35–7). The section on Worthing in the *Victoria County History of Sussex* (Hudson 1980, 92–129) has few

references to the medieval period, but does suggest that the markedly rectilinear street pattern is based on that of its open-field furlongs.

In the 17th century the eastern part of the site was known as the 'Play Garden', and this was bordered on the east side by a track which survives to the present as an alleyway. Little High Street is first recorded in 1603 as 'Hampers Lane' and may have provided access to the rear of properties on North Street. A map of 1814 shows no buildings on the site, but along the west side, the 1838 Tithe Map indicates what are likely to have been outbuildings associated with slaughterhouses; these lay just beyond the north and north-west of the site boundary. The Tithe Map names the land within which the site lies as 'Tanhouse Croft', adjoining land to the west known as 'Tanners Croft'. (The above information was provided by R. Kerridge and M. Standing, pers. comm., see Acknowledgements.)

An archaeological evaluation in 1997 revealed evidence of possible Middle–Late Saxon, Saxo-Norman and medieval occupation apparently concentrated in the southern part of the site (Stevens 1997). Late Bronze Age / Early Iron Age and Middle–Late Saxon features were also recorded during an earlier watching brief 80 m to the south, at the corner of North Street and High Street (Bashford 1996). Further to the south, a number of observations and finds indicate Romano-British activity, possibly agricultural in nature.

AIMS AND METHODS

As a result of the archaeological potential established by the evaluation, a more extensive programme of archaeological excavation was requested in a

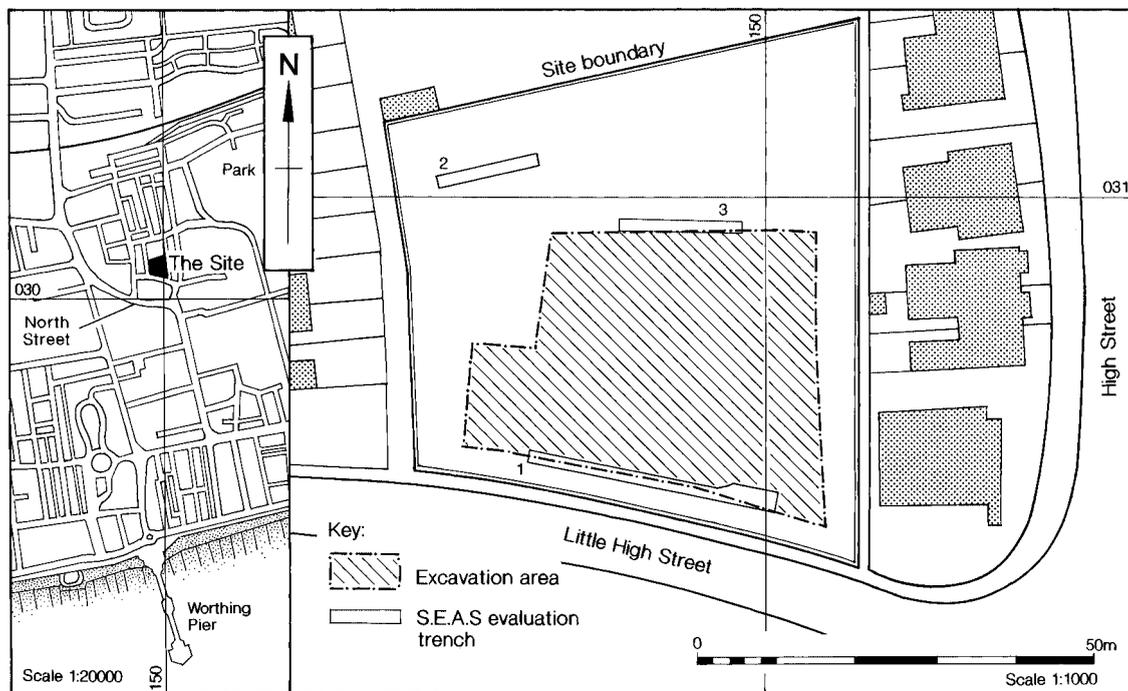


Fig. 1. Site location plan.

specification issued by the County Archaeological Officer. A subsequent method statement prepared by Wessex Archaeology identified several aims. The programme was devised to evaluate the Brickearth for the likely presence/absence of Palaeolithic flint implements; to identify any later prehistoric or Romano-British remains; to understand the spatial organization and phasing of the Middle to Late Saxon features, including any evidence for continuity of occupation; to define the density and use of the site in the medieval period and to establish how this activity relates to the wider settlement at Worthing.

The site was stripped by a tracked excavator using a toothless grading bucket and then cleaned by hand and planned. Sample excavation of all archaeological features and deposits was undertaken and all artefacts were retained. Environmental samples were taken from sealed and dated deposits for the recovery of plant macrofossils and charcoal.

RESULTS

Two hand-dug test pits (not shown on plan) revealed that the Brickearth survived to a maximum thickness

of 0.6 m and contained large, abraded flint nodules. No Palaeolithic material was identified within the small volume of excavated material.

A small quantity of undiagnostic worked flint and some burnt flint was found either on the surface of the Brickearth or as residual material in later features, and this suggests a low level of later prehistoric activity in the vicinity. No Romano-British or Middle Saxon features or finds were found and the earliest datable archaeological features have been assigned to the ?10th–12th century.

The excavation revealed three phases of Saxo-Norman–medieval activity possibly beginning as early as the 10th century and continuing into the early 15th century (Fig. 2). This activity was represented almost entirely by negative features cut into the Brickearth; virtually all of these lay in the eastern two-thirds of the site. No post-medieval features were identified, and the few later features, which predated the foundations of the Victorian school building, included a single flint and mortar wall of probable 19th-century date. Various undated features, mostly post-holes and small pits, are all likely to have been of medieval or later date. Further

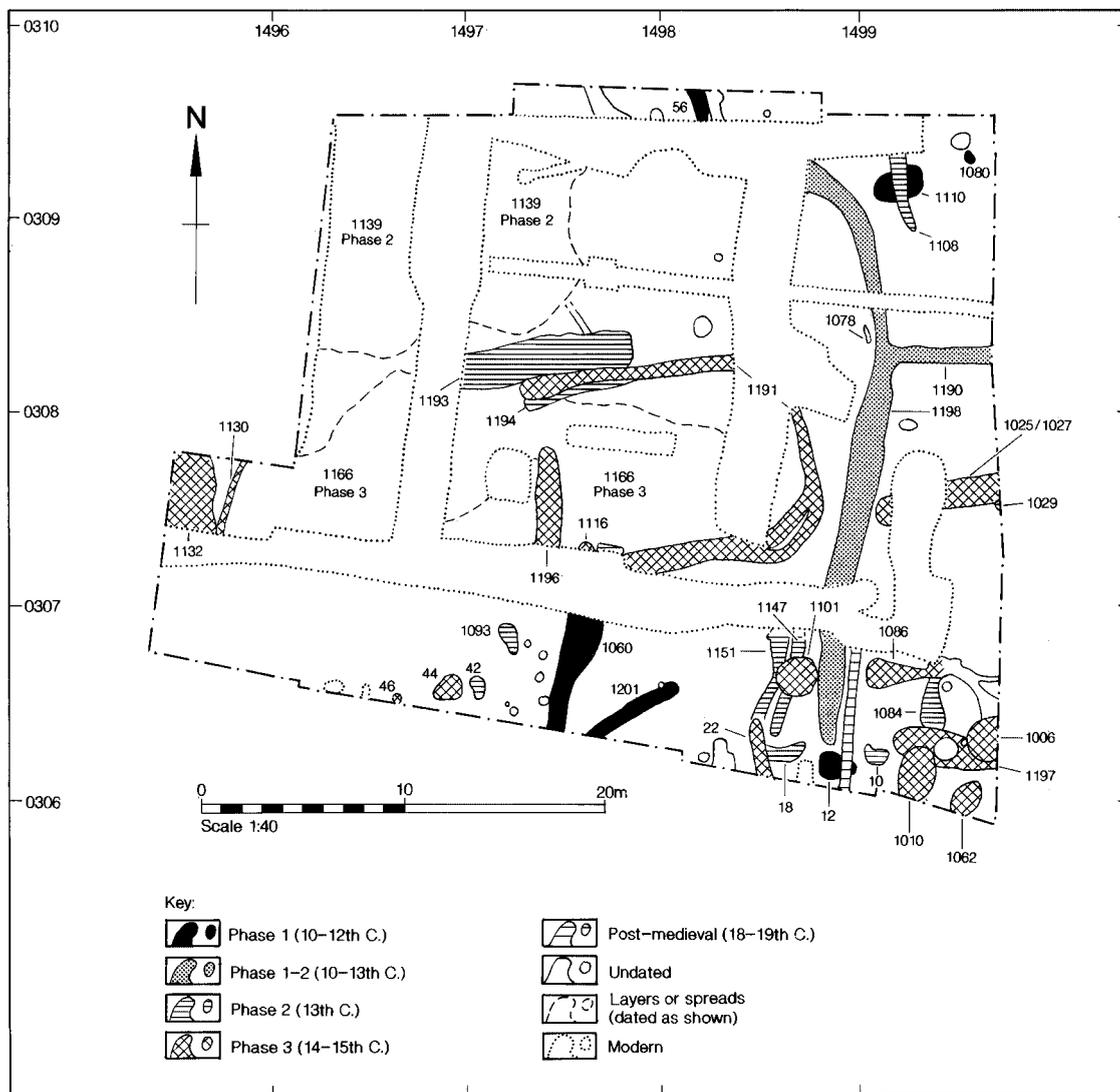


Fig. 2. Phase plan (all phases).

details of these and the other excavated features are contained in the assessment report (Wessex Archaeology 1998).

The phasing adopted below is based on the pottery recovered, sometimes in small and probably residual quantities and, where these could be determined, on stratigraphic relationships. The uncertainty concerning the earliest, possibly 10th-century date for the beginning of the Saxo-Norman sequence results from the imprecision of the ceramic

dating for this period in Sussex.

PHASE 1: ?10TH–12TH CENTURY (Fig. 2)

The earliest evidence for occupation has been assigned to the Saxo-Norman period and comprises a series of boundary ditches, pits, gullies and a possible post trench. Ditches 1190 and 1198 probably represent plot divisions, perhaps relating to two or more properties which fronted onto the High Street to the east. The ditches measured

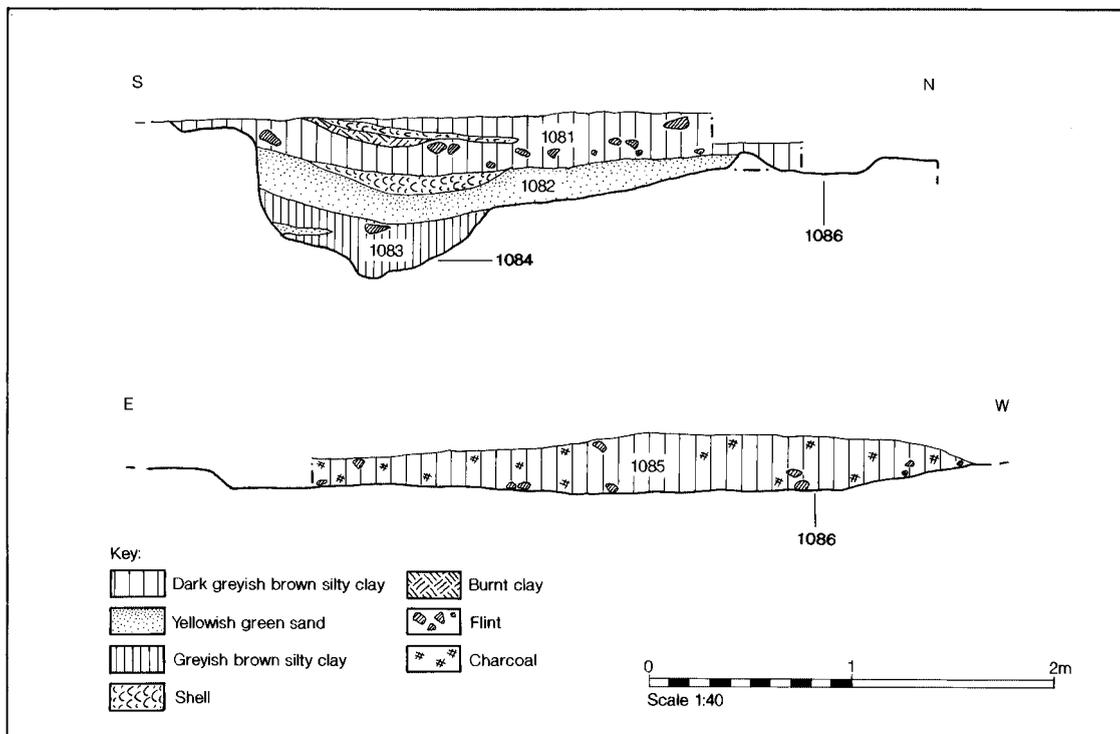


Fig. 3. Sections; grain-dryers 1084 and 1086.

between 0.7 m and 1.10 m wide, survived to depths of up to 0.8 m and may have been recut. The remains of a possible post trench (1078) were situated close to the junction of ditches 1190 and 1198. The remaining features lay around the edges of the eastern half of the site and included three shallow pits (12, 1080 & 1110), ditch 1060, and gullies 56 and 30/1201. A gully and a post-hole, the only features found in evaluation trench 2 (see Fig. 1), have also been assigned to Phase 1.

PHASE 2: 13TH CENTURY (Fig. 2)

Phase 1 boundary ditches 1190 and 1198 continued in use and were finally infilled sometime during the 13th century. In the south-east corner of the site was feature 1084, interpreted as a grain- or crop-dryer, which comprised an elongated, oval-shaped pit measuring 3.25 m long, 1.2 m wide and up to 0.3 m deep with a north-facing flue (Fig. 3). No evidence of burning survived within grain-dryer 1084. Other features to the east of ditches 1190 and 1198 included pits 10 and 1029 and a ditch or gully terminal (1108) in the north-east corner of the site.

All these features probably relate to activity at the rear of properties fronting onto the High Street.

The remaining Phase 2 features comprised several ditches, gullies and small pits that lay to the west of boundary ditch 1198, and perhaps related to agricultural use of the area. The largest of the ditches, 1193, was aligned east-west and terminated towards the centre of the site. Immediately to the south of ditch 1193, and on a parallel alignment, was ditch or gully 1194, which was partly cut away by the Phase 3 enclosure ditch 1191. Three shallow ditches or gullies (18, 20/1147 & 1151), two small pits (42 & 1093) and at least one post-hole lay further to the south, and a 'relict soil' (1139) survived towards the north-east corner of the site, filling a shallow hollow.

PHASE 3: 14TH-15TH CENTURY (Fig. 2)

There was an increase in activity in Phase 3, particularly in the south-east corner of the site. The Phase 1/2 plot divisions represented by ditches 1190 and 1198 were replaced by a new layout of east-west ditches comprising 1027 (recut as ditch 1025)

and possibly 1197 to the south. There is evidence for the grain- or crop-drying activity continuing in the south-east of the site with the construction of grain-dryer 1086 (Fig. 3) which replaced grain-dryer 1084. A series of relatively large, shallow pits (1006, 1010, 1062 & 1101) and a gully terminal (22) were also found in this area, two of which (pits 1006 & 1010) cut ditch 1197. These pits and grain-dryer 1086 together produced approximately 40% of the Saxo-Norman/medieval pottery assemblage (by sherd number and weight) and the majority of quernstone fragments recovered.

Towards the centre of the site was a small sub-rectangular enclosure which measured approximately

12 m by 9 m. It was defined by ditches 1191 and 1196, both of which had been recut, and had an entrance from the west. The small pit 1116, which lay in the south-west corner, and ditches 1025 and 1027 to the east (*see above*), may also have been related to this enclosure. A spread of darker soil (1166) up to 0.2 m thick within and extending to the west of the enclosure, may represent a 'relict soil', or possibly a trampled horizon, although it did contain occasional modern finds.

The remaining features assigned to this phase were situated in the south and south-west of the site and comprised a large, shallow possible quarry pit 1132, pit 44, gully 1130 and post-hole 46.

FINDS

POTTERY By Lorraine Mephum

A total of 803 sherds (12,008 g) of pottery, recovered from stratified contexts during the evaluation and excavation of the site, is discussed here; a small quantity of post-medieval material is not included (Table 1). The assemblage illustrates a sequence from Saxo-Norman (?10th to 12th century) to later medieval (13th to early 15th century), with one sherd possibly as early as Early/Middle Saxon, and includes a range of locally and regionally produced wares. The condition of the sherds is variable, but generally good, and the majority exhibit fresh edges and unabraded surfaces (mean sherd weight for the assemblage as a whole is 15 g), although residual material can be detected in several contexts as smaller, more abraded sherds. The pottery was analyzed following the standard Wessex Archaeology pottery recording system (Morris 1994), by which fabrics are defined and coded on the basis of macroscopic inclusions. The 18 fabrics identified fall into three groups based on the dominant inclusion type: calcareous (Group C), flint-tempered (Group F), and sandy (Group Q). The vessel forms and component parts are defined using nationally recommended nomenclature (MPRG 1998). Reference was made where possible to published fabric-type series from the area, e.g. the Adur Valley Saxon and Saxo-Norman fabrics (Gardiner 1990), and the Central Sussex Weald fabrics (Gardiner 1994; 1997), and correlation with the fabrics identified in Worthing was attempted.

The assemblage is characterized by small feature groups, of which the largest derived from grain-dryer 1086 (164 sherds). Combined with the relative lack of stratigraphic relationships and independent dating evidence, this hampered the construction of a ceramic sequence for the site. Three broad ceramic phases were, however, distinguished, and were used to inform the stratigraphic phasing of the site: Saxo-Norman (?10th to 12th century), early medieval (13th century), and later medieval (14th/early 15th century), although the medieval wares are discussed here as a single group. These phases do not include the single sherd in a coarse Early/Middle Saxon fabric, which was residual within phase 1 pit 12, and occurred together with a Saxo-Norman sherd. The fabric (F403) contained water-worn flint and calcareous inclusions (chalk and ?shell), and is paralleled amongst the Adur Valley Early/Middle Saxon fabric series (F403). This fabric is considered to

fall within the Middle Saxon period and it occurs rarely before the later 6th century (Gardiner 1990, 245–6).

Saxo-Norman wares (?10th–12th century)

Apart from the single Early/Middle Saxon sherd, the earliest pottery identified from the site comprises a small group of chalk- and flint-tempered fabrics. Correlations with the Adur Valley type series for the Saxo-Norman period (e.g. Gardiner 1990) are given in brackets.

- C400 Hard, moderately coarse, visibly micaceous matrix, with naturally occurring quartz (rare/sparse, <0.5 mm) and iron oxides; contains moderate, poorly-sorted, subangular/subrounded chalk <2 mm; sparse, poorly-sorted, irregular sandstone <2 mm; handmade, oxidized with unoxidized core (Adur Valley DB or DG).
- C401 Finer version of C400; chalk better-sorted, <1 mm (rarely 2 mm); sandstone (rare) <1 mm (Adur Valley DB).
- F400 Hard, moderately coarse matrix, containing moderate, poorly-sorted, subangular flint <2 mm; sparse subrounded quartz <0.5 mm; sparse iron oxides; very rare mica; handmade; firing variable (Adur Valley DC or DD).
- F401 Matrix as C400; containing moderate, poorly-sorted, subangular/subrounded, multi-coloured flint (patinated/unpatinated) <3 mm; handmade; firing variable (Adur Valley DD).
- F402 Hard, moderately coarse matrix, with naturally occurring quartz (rare, <0.5 mm) and prominent iron oxides, slightly micaceous; containing sparse, poorly-sorted, subangular flint <2 mm; firing variable (Adur Valley DD or DE).

Vessel forms present in these fabrics consist mainly of jars with thickened rims, often finger-impressed (Fig. 4:3, 4, 6, 7); there is one bowl, also finger-impressed (Fig. 4:5). Apart from the finger-impressed rims, decoration is markedly absent, with the exception of one applied, thumbled strip, and one sherd with stamped decoration.

These forms can be paralleled within the Late Saxon and Saxo-Norman assemblages from Chichester, where it is known that such chalk- and flint-tempered wares were produced from the 9th century onwards (Barton 1979; Down 1978, 158; Down 1981, 190–92), and gradually developed into harder-fired, more frequently oxidized wares by the late 12th century. Within this date range, certain diagnostic rims in fabric F401 from

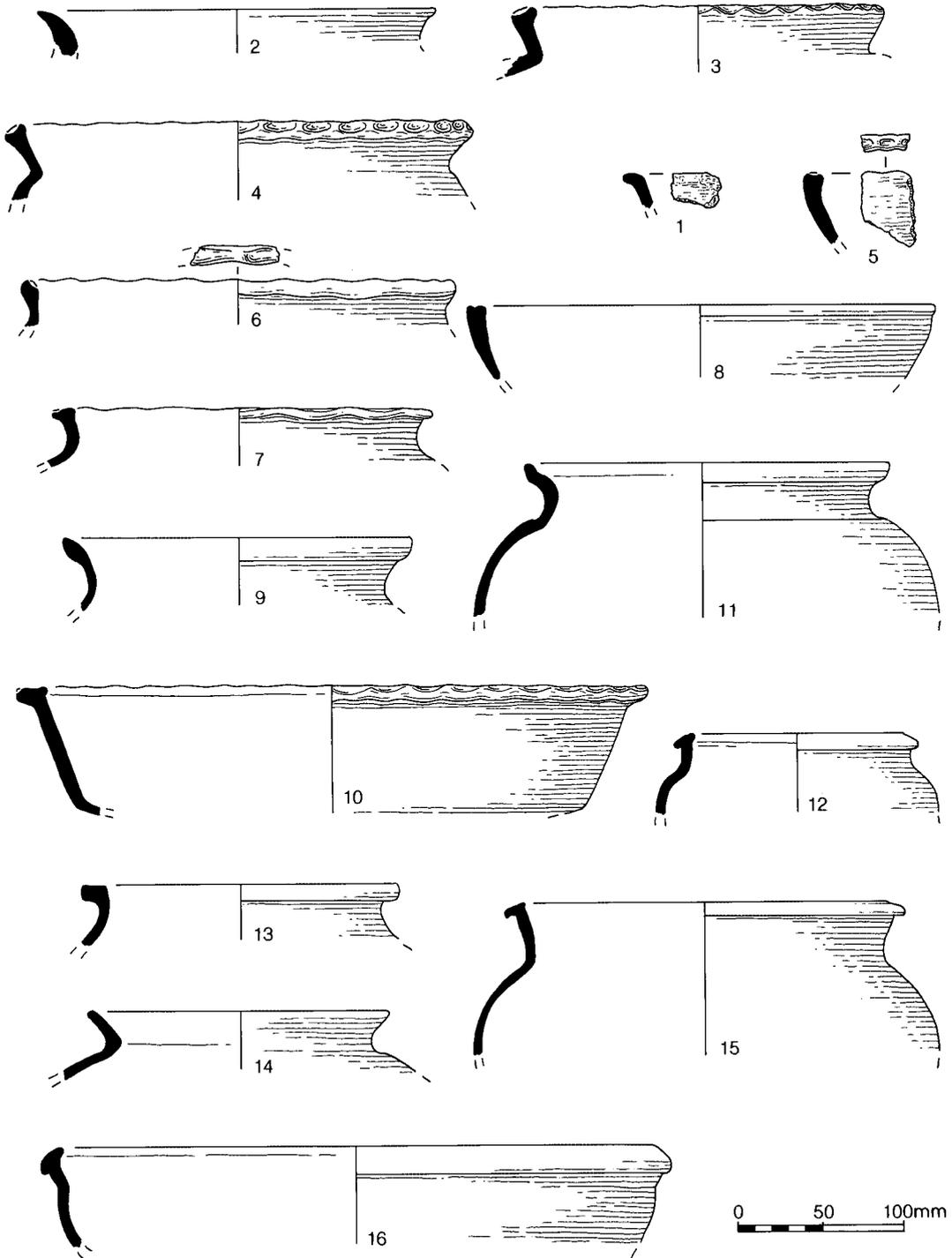


Fig. 4. Pottery.

Table 1. Pottery fabric totals.

Fabric	No. sherds	Weight (g)	% of total (by weight)
EARLY/MIDDLE SAXON			
F403	1	16	0.1
SAXO-NORMAN			
C400	36	381	3.2
C401	97	761	6.3
F400	3	39	0.3
F401	44	388	3.2
F402	14	147	1.2
<i>sub-total</i>	<i>194</i>	<i>1716</i>	<i>14.2</i>
MEDIEVAL			
Q400	264	5113	42.7
Q401	101	1469	12.2
Q402	6	37	0.3
Q403	154	2497	20.9
Q404	7	75	0.6
Q405	5	144	1.2
Q406	7	105	0.9
Q407	4	25	0.2
Q408	16	206	1.7
Q409	30	350	2.9
Q410	13	155	1.3
Q411	1	100	0.8
<i>sub-total</i>	<i>608</i>	<i>10,276</i>	<i>85.7</i>
Overall Total	803	12,008	-

the Little High Street assemblage — simple everted forms from short-necked vessels (Fig. 4:1, 2) — could be dated as early as the 9th century, while the more developed rims in both flint-tempered and calcareous fabrics are typologically later, perhaps as late as 11th/12th century. Gardiner, however, favours a later (mid- to late-10th-century) start date for comparable wares in the Adur Valley (Gardiner 1990, 251–5) and it is this area that provides the closest parallels for the Worthing fabrics; vessel forms, too, are paralleled here, for example at Steyning and Bramber (Gardiner 1988, fig. 7; 1990, fig. 20).

There are very few contexts in which these wares can be considered to be *in situ* rather than residual, but a small number of features, all in the eastern half of the site, produced only flint- or chalk-tempered sherds: pits 1080 and 1110, gully 1201, and ditches 1198 and 1190 (lower fills only). Of these features, pit 1110 contained only sherds of fabric F401. This fabric correlates with Adur Valley fabric DD, examples of which were found stratified beneath the ringwork at Old Erringham, which was probably constructed soon after 1000 (Gardiner 1990, 254). Other sherds occurred residually in a number of features, but showed no particular concentration in any part of the site.

Medieval wares (12th to early 15th century)

The bulk of the later medieval assemblage comprises a range of sandy fabric types, all with visibly micaceous clay matrices but in a range of coarseness and some with the addition of flint and/or chalk inclusions. Most of these wares are oxidized and range in colour from buff to orange-red.

Q400 Hard, moderately coarse, visibly micaceous matrix, with naturally occurring quartz (rare/sparse, <0.5 mm) and iron oxides; no other visible inclusions; handmade; generally oxidized with unoxidized core (CSW 10/ Steyning Medium Sandy ware).

Q401 Slightly coarser version of Q400; sparse/moderate

quartz <1 mm (CSW 6/Steyning Coarse Sandy micaceous ware).

Q402 Matrix as Q400; containing rare subangular flint <1 mm; rare sandstone <1 mm; otherwise as Q400.

Q403 Matrix as Q400; containing moderate, fairly well-sorted quartz <1 mm; sparse chalk <0.5 mm; very rare subangular flint <2 mm; otherwise as Q400 (Adur Valley DH).

Q404 Hard, moderately fine matrix, non-micaceous; containing moderate, well-sorted, subangular/subrounded quartz <0.125 mm; sparse iron oxides; ?handmade; oxidized with unoxidized core.

Q405 Hard, moderately fine matrix, non-micaceous; containing common, well-sorted, subrounded/subangular quartz <0.25 mm; sparse iron oxides; ?handmade; unoxidized.

Q406 Hard, moderately fine matrix with prominent iron oxides (sparse, <3 mm); containing sparse, poorly-sorted quartz <2 mm; rare mica; ?wheel-thrown; oxidized with unoxidized core (?CSW 14).

Q407 Hard, moderately fine matrix with 'speckly' appearance resulting from moderate black iron oxides (<0.125 mm); containing moderate, well-sorted, subrounded quartz <0.125 mm; ?wheel-thrown, oxidized (pale-firing).

Q408 Similar to Q401 but quartz sparse, poorly-sorted, <1 mm (CSW 6/Steyning Coarse Sandy micaceous ware).

Q409 Hard, moderately coarse matrix; containing moderate, fairly well-sorted, subangular flint <1 mm; sparse subrounded quartz <0.5 mm; rare mica and iron oxides; handmade; firing variable (Adur Valley DH/CSW 5).

Q410 Hard, moderately coarse matrix, slightly micaceous; containing sparse, poorly-sorted, subrounded quartz <1 mm, giving a 'lumpy' texture; handmade; generally unoxidized.

Q411 Hard, moderately coarse, micaceous matrix; containing sparse, poorly-sorted, subrounded quartz <0.5 mm; sparse iron oxides; wheel-thrown; pale-firing, unoxidized with oxidized (buff-grey) exterior.

The two coarser fabrics, Q403 and Q409, which equate with the Adur Valley fabric DH or Central Sussex Weald fabric 5, mark the end of the Saxo-Norman tradition — flint tempering was still used, but there was then a greater emphasis on the use of quartz sand, and the manufacturing technique also spanned the transition from handmade to wheel-thrown (or at least wheel-finished) forms. The jar rims found in fabric Q403 are mainly relatively simple forms, and include the oval-sectioned form (Fig. 4:9) which is noted as occurring commonly in the area, for example at Bramber, Steyning and Old Erringham (Gardiner 1988, fig. 7:14). More developed jar forms are represented by the complete profile of a lid-seated jar (Fig. 4:11), which appears to be wheel-finished if not wheel-thrown. Other vessel forms in fabric Q403 comprise two bowls, one simple convex form (Fig. 4:8) and one flared form with everted, finger-impressed rim (Fig. 4:10).

The remaining ten fabrics are finer sandy wares. The range of firing colours, texture and additional inclusions seen within this group of fabrics can be accommodated within the known range of wares from the Binsted kilns, dated on typological grounds from the 14th to early 15th century (Barton 1979, 170–79), although in hand specimen there is no direct match here for the Binsted kiln material.

Similar coarse wares were produced both in Chichester, at the Orchard Street and Southgate kilns, in the 13th century

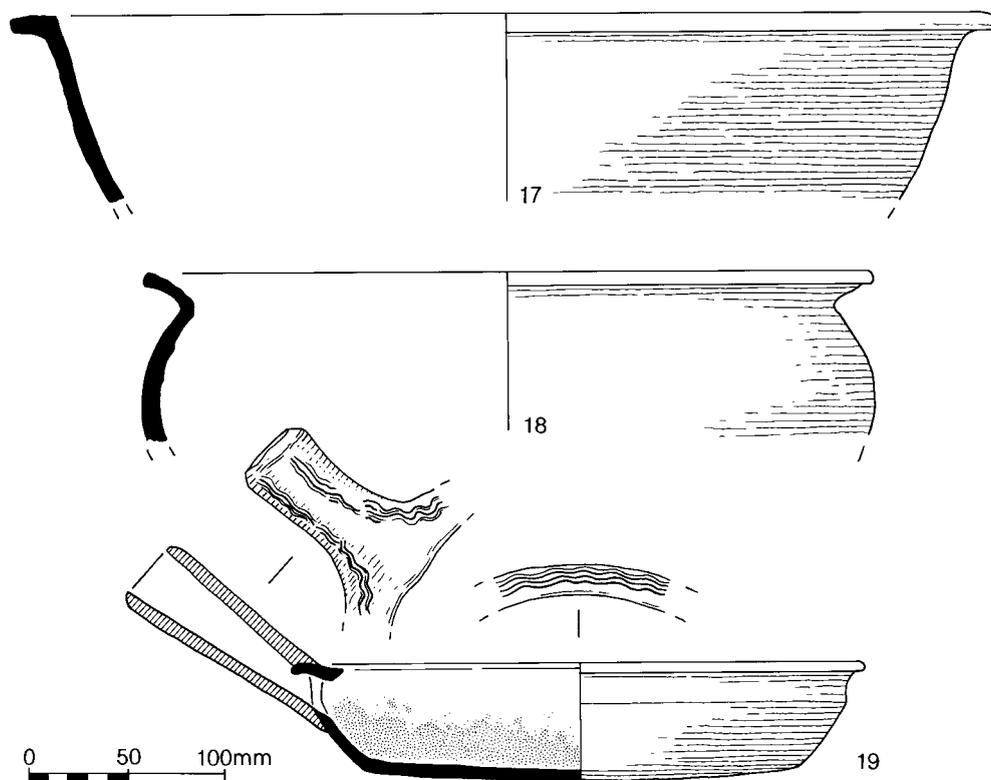


Fig. 5. Pottery.

(Down & Rule 1971, 153–64; Down 1978, 10–16), and at Graffham from the late 13th century onwards (Aldsworth & Down 1990, fig. 17). Binsted wares tend to have a paler fabric, through use of clay from the Reading Beds, although deeper colours are known, while the Chichester kilns exploited the red-firing London Clay (Streeten 1980, 180). Graffham wares are visually very similar to Binsted but tend to be coarser. Similar vessel forms were produced by all three centres. It is more than likely that other centres were also producing similar wares at the same period, possibly including a source closer to Worthing, and in fact wasters have recently been found at Steyning, in fabrics which appear to match Q400, Q401 and Q408 (Gardiner 1997, fabrics SMS/CSW 10 and SCSm/CSW 6).

Jar forms are present in all fabrics except Q402 and Q406. These jars generally have moulded rims, often grooved on the top (Fig. 4:12, 13), although simpler rims are also present (Figs 4:14, 15 & 5:18). Open forms are less common, but are represented by flared bowls (Fig. 5:17), necked, convex bowls (Fig. 4:16), and one frying pan (Fig. 5:19), partially glazed internally and with combed decoration on the rim and handle. Apart from the latter example, and one or two finger-impressed jar rims in fabric Q400, decoration, in the form of horizontal rilling, vertical tooling, and painted white slip, is limited to glazed jug forms. The latter is largely in fabric Q400, with a single example of a rod-handled jug with curvilinear combed decoration in fabric Q411, although no overall profiles can be

reconstructed. Some vessel forms, notably the flared bowls, are matched within the Steyning waster group (Gardiner 1997, figs 14 & 15).

Within the overall potential date range of 12th/13th to early 15th century, a ceramic sequence can be distinguished at Little High Street in which the latest Saxo-Norman-type wares (?12th century) and coarse oxidized wares of 13th-century type are later augmented by West Sussex-type glazed jugs and other forms in fabric Q400. Stratigraphic phases 2 and 3 are distinguished here on this basis, although it is recognized that the actual ceramic sequence may not be so clear-cut. In Chichester West Sussex-type jugs are present by at least the early 14th century. A similar sequence is demonstrated by two assemblages from nearby Steyning, in which Saxo-Norman types are replaced by sandy wares in the 13th century (Barton 1986; Gardiner 1988); in this 'transitional' phase before the appearance of West Sussex types, flint-tempering is still in evidence, as seen at Little High Street in the continued presence of fabric Q403. Forms dated as being of the 14th century at Steyning (Barton 1986, fig. 8) include close parallels for vessels from Little High Street (best illustrated by the group from grain-dryer 1086: Figs 4:14–16 & 5:17), such as the necked jars with moulded rims and necked convex bowls. An end date for the ceramic sequence of the site is indicated by the absence of white-painted wares, which appear c. 1450–1500 (Barton 1979).

List of illustrated vessels (Figs 4 & 5)

1. Simple everted jar rim, fabric F401, unoxidized. Pot Record Number (*hereafter* PRN) 238, context 1160, ditch 1193, phase 2.
2. Simple everted jar rim, fabric F401, unoxidized. PRN 91, context 1047, ditch 1190 (lower fill), phase 1.
3. Jar with slightly flared neck and thickened rim, finger-impressed, fabric C400. PRN 94, context 1059, ditch 1060, phase 1.
4. Jar with flared neck and thickened rim, finger-impressed, fabric C400. PRN 214, 'relict soil' 1139, phase 2.
5. Convex bowl/dish rim, fabric C400, finger-impressed. PRN 42, context 1016, animal burrow 1017, unphased.
6. Jar with flared neck and thickened rim, finger-impressed, fabric F401. PRN 250, context 1170, tree throw 1171, unphased.
7. Jar with flared neck and thickened rim, finger-impressed, fabric C401. PRN 7, context 1009, pit 1010, phase 3.
8. Convex bowl/dish rim, fabric Q403. PRN 23, context 1009, pit 1010, phase 3.
9. Necked jar with externally thickened rim, fabric Q403. PRN 163, context 1096, ditch 1190 (upper fill), Phase 2.
10. Flared bowl with flat, everted rim, finger-impressed, fabric Q403, unoxidized. PRN 227, context 1150, ditch 1151, phase 2.
11. Necked jar with lid-seated rim, fabric Q403, oxidized. PRN 182, context 1111, ditch 1191, phase 3.
12. Necked jar with moulded rim, fabric Q401, oxidized. PRN 17, context 1009, pit 1010, phase 3.
13. Necked jar with moulded rim, fabric Q401, oxidized. PRN 4, context 1005, pit 1006, phase 2.
14. Necked jar with externally expanded rim, fabric Q400. PRN 142, context 1085, grain-dryer 1086, phase 3.
15. Jar with flared neck and slightly thickened rim, fabric Q400. PRN 139, context 1085, grain-dryer 1086, phase 3.
16. Necked, convex bowl with moulded rim, fabric Q400. PRN 138, context 1085, grain-dryer 1086, phase 3.
17. Flared bowl with flat, everted rim, fabric Q400. PRN 141, context 1085, grain-dryer 1086, phase 3.
18. Rounded jar with flared rim, slightly thickened, fabric Q400. PRN 245, 'relict soil' 1166, phase 3.
19. Frying pan fabric Q400; combed decoration around rim, partially glazed internally, sooted exterior. PRN 171, context 1100, pit 1101, phase 3.

OTHER FINDS

By Emma Loader

Other medieval finds recovered from the site comprise metalwork (iron and copper alloy), ceramic building material and stone. The few later finds are all of modern date and are not described further here. Details are included in the archive.

METALWORK

Seven iron objects of definite or probable medieval date (on the basis of form and/or provenance) comprise a whittle tang knife with a short blade (ditch 1193), three nails (pit 1023, pit 1101, 'relict soil' 1166), a strip fragment (ditch 1196), and two further objects too fragmented or corroded to identify ('relict soil' 1139, ditch 1151). The copper-alloy objects comprise two conjoining vessel fragments, found unstratified and probably of late medieval date (14th/15th century), as well as a stud head and a disc ('relict soil' 1166).

CERAMIC BUILDING MATERIAL

A small quantity of ceramic building material (9 fragments), all from phase 2 or phase 3 contexts, was identified as medieval. It comprises predominantly small, featureless roof-tile fragments in a sandy oxidized fabric. One small fragment of brick was also noted. In addition, there are 43 fragments of fired clay from medieval contexts. The latter are all small, featureless pieces with no surviving surfaces but their fabrics match the ceramic building material, from which it is likely that they derive.

STONE

The assemblage of stone consists of 30 fragments (16,155 g), all recovered from medieval contexts.

The structural stone comprises 18 fragments (1642 g) of flat, fine micaceous sandstone which probably came from roof tile, although none of the fragments has any diagnostic features to enable positive identification.

The portable stone objects consist of 12 fragments (14,513 g) of rotary quernstones predominantly of Greensand, though single fragments of lava and quartz gritstone are present in the assemblage. The majority of the quernstone fragments are small and have only one flat surface, although several have edges, and two fragments have circular perforations. One fragment from an upper rotary quernstone has a possible 'feed channel' in its upper surface.

The Greensand is probably of fairly local origin. Greensand is known to have been quarried at Lodsworth, West Sussex, from the Iron Age through to at least the Roman period (Peacock 1987). The lava, however, is likely to have come from the Rhineland, where the export of quernstone was being carried out by the 1st century AD and continued into the medieval period (Rahtz 1981).

Such a relatively high number of quernstone fragments suggest that the site, or an area in the near vicinity, was used for milling, and it may be significant that the majority of fragments were recovered from the south-eastern part of the site, around grain-dryers 1084 and 1086.

ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE**ANIMAL BONE** By Pippa Smith

A small number (83) of identifiable animal bones were recovered from the site; full details are in the archive. These comprised a range of species including cattle, sheep or goat, pig, horse, dog, cat, rabbit and fish. All parts of the cattle and sheep skeleton are represented and these provided a broad range from young animals (younger than six months old) to older animals (older than three and a half years). This suggests that the inhabitants of the site were farming nearby as there is no evidence that only meat-bearing joints were being selected. One complete cat skeleton was recovered, most likely representing incidental disposal of a carcass.

Evidence of bone-working was identified on two bones: a sheep metatarsal with a hole drilled through the proximal end, and a cattle radius which had been heavily chopped around the proximal end and part of the surface of the bone shaft removed. The sheep bone may have been used as a bobbin and the cattle bone possibly used to provide blanks for bone-working.

CHARRED PLANT REMAINS By Pat Hinton

Ten bulk samples were processed from a range of feature types

of Saxo-Norman–medieval date (Table 2; full details in archive).

Triticum aestivum (free-threshing bread wheat) was the major cereal in all samples. Hulled barley occurred in all but one sample and in three samples was confirmed as six-row barley. Rye was present in several samples and oats, probably a weed species, appeared in all. Other cultivated plants comprising *Vicia faba* (broad bean) and *Pisum sativum* (pea) were found in only three samples. Wild plant seeds were present in all samples and include a variety of arable and grassland plants as well as sedge and hazel.

Cereals recovered from Saxo-Norman (Phase 1) contexts included wheat, barley, rye and oats. A relatively high number of rachis node fragments were recovered from ditch 1190, possibly suggesting unthreshed ears or a mixture of processing waste. In addition, broad or field bean and pea, possibly cultivated for human consumption or as fodder, were also identified. Wild plant seeds in all three samples are of common weeds, but *Aphanes arvensis* (parsley-piert), a plant of well-drained cultivated or bare ground, is in contrast to *Anthemis cotula* (stinking mayweed), an indicator of wetter loams and clay soils; both occur in ditch 1190.

The charred plant remains from later (Phase 2 & Phase 3) contexts are similar to those from Phase 1. As in the earlier samples, almost all sufficiently well-preserved wheat grains are free-threshing bread wheat, although two grains of *Triticum spelta*

(spelt) or *T. dicoccum* (emmer) were recovered from ditch 1193.

The sample from the primary fill of grain-dryer 1084 (Phase 2) included wheat with some rachis node fragments and a range of weed seeds, and may represent disposal of unwanted material. The primary fill of grain-dryer 1086 (Phase 3) contained a larger amount of wheat, with no chaff fragments, and a lesser proportion of weed seeds. In addition, there was the equivalent of at least five peas. This appears more like a sample of prepared crops, and drying for storage is a possibility.

CHARCOAL By Rowena Gale

The charcoal fragments were small and poorly-preserved. Four samples (from pits 1110 & 1029 and grain-dryers 1084 & 1086) were examined and, where appropriate, the maturity (i.e. sapwood/heartwood) of the wood was assessed (full details are in the archive).

Charcoal from pits 1110 (Phase 1) and 1029 (Phase 2) included oak, hazel and birch and is likely to be from discarded fuel. The birch charcoal showed signs of vitrification, a condition induced through charring at temperatures exceeding 800°C.

Oak, hazel and blackthorn were recovered from grain-dryer 1084 (Phase 2), and oak, willow and/or poplar, hawthorn and blackthorn from grain-dryer 1085 (Phase 3). This material can be attributed to the remains of fuel used in the drying processes.

Table 2. Charred plant remains (cereals and pulses).

	Date Feature Context	Phase 1 (?10–12C)			Phase 2 (13C)				Phase 3 (14–early 15C)		
		Pit 1110 1109	Ditch 1190 1047	Ditch 1198 1065	Pit 1029 1028	Ditch 1190 1046	Ditch 1193 1022	Dryer 1084 1083	Pit 1101 1100	Ditch 1197 1152	Dryer 1086 1085
Cereals											
<i>Triticum</i> cf. <i>spelta</i> - grains - glume bases	Spelt						2				
<i>Triticum</i> cf. <i>aestivum</i> sl. - grains - rachis node fragments	bread wheat	7 1(1)	33(3) 21	14	66 49	61 10	26	49 11	32	41 3	89
<i>Hordeum vulgare</i> L. - grains - rachis internode fragments	hulled barley		5(1) 2	2 2	13 8	18 5	3(2) 1	4(1) 1	2(1)	2	6
cf. <i>Secale cereale</i>	rye		2(1)	1		3(1)					
<i>Avena</i> sp.	oats	2	1	1	6	23	1	12	1(2)	2	3
<i>Avena/Bromus</i> sp.	oats or brome grass				4			4			
Cerealia indet. - fragmented grains	unidentified cereals	0.5 ml	6 ml	1 ml	1.8 ml	2.5 ml	0.6 ml	1.5 ml	1 ml	1.5 ml	3.5 ml
Pulses											
<i>Vicia faba</i> L.	broad/field bean		2								
<i>Pisum sativum</i> L.	pea		2								5

DISCUSSION

Very little archaeological work has been undertaken in Worthing and the excavation at Little High Street has, therefore, provided a rare opportunity to investigate the town's development from its probable Late Saxon origins.

A small quantity of undiagnostic worked flint was recovered, but little more can be deduced from this meagre prehistoric evidence. No Romano-British

features or finds were recorded and this suggests that the probable agricultural settlement hinted at by earlier observations and stray finds made 100 m or more to the south did not extend this far to the north.

The earliest pottery from the excavation may date to the 10th century, but this cannot be ascribed with certainty, and a broad Saxo-Norman date is more safely applied to the earliest period of activity (Phase 1). Similarly, pottery recovered during the

evaluation (Stevens 1997) and features recorded during an earlier watching brief to the south (Bashford 1996), to which in both cases a potential Middle Saxon date was assigned, should probably also be assigned to the 10th century or later. Only a single sherd from the evaluation is likely to be of Early/Middle Saxon date.

The place-name 'Worthing' suggests a Saxon origin (Hudson 1980) and the earliest settlement is likely to have been centred on the High Street, with the focus of occupation lying to the south of the site at Little High Street. It may be significant that a chapel, thought to have been situated to the south of North Street (*see* Fig. 1), is first recorded in 1291, and this may have lain at the centre of the settlement. This chapel was still in use in 1410, but had probably been demolished by 1635 (Hudson 1980). The fact that North Street runs diagonally, north-west–south-east, might suggest that this part of the settlement was laid out before the surrounding field system, which is reflected in the otherwise rectilinear north–south street pattern in this area.

Although Worthing was a minor settlement, the excavation has provided rare evidence for the origin of villages in Sussex, in this case indicating the existence of a nucleated settlement by at least the 10th–12th century. This stands in contrast to the village of Hangleton, for example, where occupation began only in the late 12th century at the earliest (Holden 1963). This is in part explained by Hangleton's having probably been a secondary settlement established on a peripheral site on the Downs, whereas Worthing is on the higher-grade soils of the Coastal Plain.

The site at Little High Street would have probably lain on the periphery of the village, but it demonstrates the development of a 'backland' area from at least as early as the 12th century, when expansion of the settlement probably took place. It has been noted that at least 26 new markets and fairs were established in Sussex between 1200 and 1350, although Worthing is not recorded as one of these (Freke 1978, fig. 40). It was probably overshadowed by the nearby markets at Broadwater and West Tarring, and its chapel was subordinate to the church at Broadwater.

Buildings associated with the excavated boundaries and enclosures are thought to have lain approximately 30 m to the east, along the High Street frontage. The layout and density of features

(concentrated in the eastern two-thirds of the site) and the distribution of finds, particularly the pottery, support this suggestion. The alleyway to the east of the site, which appears on maps of the early 19th century, may have had a medieval or earlier origin, perhaps separating the house plots and the associated 'backland' areas.

The backland areas seem clearly to have been given over to agriculture, with the succession of ditches representing subtle and not fully-understood changes in layout and perhaps function. Although only a small number of animal bones were recovered, the species represented and their broad age-range suggest that these were raised nearby, and it is possible that the Phase 3 enclosure was for animals. However, the two grain- or crop-dryers and the charred plant remains, including cereals and pulses, provide evidence of arable agriculture, and the number of quernstone fragments suggest that grain was being dried and ground, probably for breadmaking. There is a possibility that the two structures were malting kilns rather than grain- or crop-dryers, but this interpretation seems to be ruled out by the preponderance of bread wheat over barley. None of the barley had been sprouted, and that would be expected had these structures been for malting. Furthermore, the form of the structures more closely resembles drying kilns found elsewhere rather than malting kilns, which commonly have battered sides (e.g. Stevens & Stevens 1991, 57–9 & 77–8).

The construction of the grain-dryers might have been a response to deteriorating weather conditions at the end of the 13th and beginning of the 14th century, and to the need to dry grain before threshing and milling, or other crops before storage. Increased rainfall during this period led to disastrous crop failures, which in Sussex have been clearly demonstrated at Barnhorn (Brandon 1971).

The general paucity of finds, with the exception of pottery and quernstone fragments, is likely to reflect the 'backland' location of the site and the rural nature of the settlement as a whole. The pottery, however, has provided the only excavated assemblage of medieval ceramics from Worthing, showing close affinities with material from Steyning (less than 10 km to the north), which is likely to have been the source of at least some of the pottery found at Little High Street.

There was a complete absence from the site of any features or finds dating to between the mid-

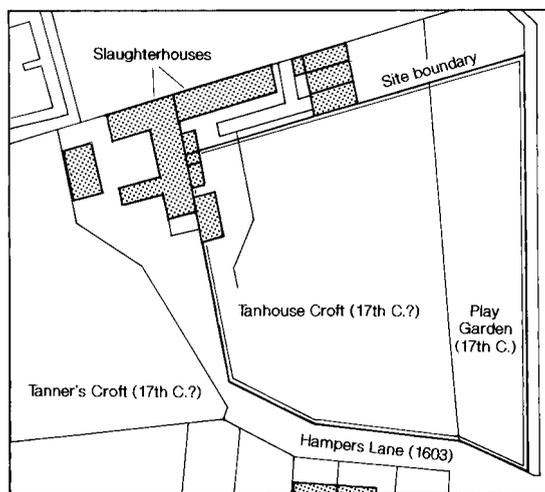


Fig. 6. Extract from 1838 Tithe Map, with additions.

15th century and the 18th to 19th century. This may be construed as representing a late medieval failure of an unrecorded market perhaps granted speculatively by a lord who wanted more revenue (Freke 1978, 90), or perhaps the result of depopulation following the Black Death. Alternatively, it may reflect an amalgamation or enlargement of the existing fields, and records do suggest that Worthing was apparently flourishing in the 16th century, when Worthing and Heene together supported 62 households (Brandon 1978, 84). Little High Street, formerly known as Hampers Lane, may have been established at this time, perhaps to provide access to the rear of properties fronting North Street to the south. The Tithe Map reference to the western part of the site as 'Tanhouse Croft' indicates post-medieval industrial activity in the vicinity, on the periphery of the village, and this is reflected in the existence of slaughterhouses and

associated ancillary buildings to the north and north-west of the site from at least as early as 1838 (Fig. 6). These survived until the earlier part of the 20th century, when the area surrounding the former school became engulfed by housing development associated with the rapid expansion of Worthing.

Acknowledgements

The programme of archaeological work was commissioned by Michael Cook Associates on behalf of the client, Protodale Limited. Wessex Archaeology would like to acknowledge the assistance of Tony Clark, of Michael Cook Associates, and would like to thank Peter Bradley, of Protodale Limited, for his continued co-operation and interest.

The collaborative role of West Sussex County Council is acknowledged, with particular thanks to John Mills, Assistant County Archaeologist, for his assistance throughout the course of the project. Luke Barber of Archaeology South-east provided additional information concerning the evaluation and advised on the pottery fabric series, and R. Kerridge and M. Standing kindly made available details of their unpublished map and documentary research relating to the site.

The fieldwork was directed by Jez Fry and supervised by Richard May. This report, edited for Wessex Archaeology by Phil Andrews, is based on an earlier assessment compiled by Jez Fry. The finds and environmental work has been co-ordinated by Lorraine Mepham (Finds Manager) and Michael. J. Allen (Environmental Manager), and the illustrations prepared by Rob Goller. Additional comments on the pottery were provided by Malcolm Lyne. The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by John Dillon.

The site records and finds have been deposited at Worthing Museum under Accession Number 1997/264.

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