

◆ Medieval occupation and clay extraction at Lewes Road, Ringmer, East Sussex

By Sean Wallis

with contributions from

Luke Barber
Natasha Bennett
Lucy Cramp
Steve Ford
Matilda Holmes

Excavation at Lewes Road, Ringmer, revealed evidence from several phases. One group of post-holes may very tentatively be interpreted as prehistoric; the few prehistoric and Roman finds were mainly residual in later features. Occupation on the site dated from the late 11th to early 15th centuries. In its first phase this consisted of field boundaries, a ditched trackway and rubbish pits. Activity on the site shifted north during the mid 13th to 14th centuries. A rectangular, post-built structure was identified, along with a chalk-lined well and a hearth, which could all be contemporary. A series of large irregular pits of this date were probably clay quarries. In the late 14th or early 15th century, a large pit was floored in chalk and chalk block walls were inserted. The function of this large feature is not clear; it may have been used as a settling tank for clay for ceramic production.

INTRODUCTION

Thames Valley Archaeological Services carried out a programme of archaeological investigation in advance of a housing development on a 3.8ha plot of land at the southern end of Ringmer, East Sussex (TQ 443 122). The site was roughly rectangular, on the north-western side of Lewes Road, to the south of the historic core of the village (Fig. 1). The land rises from Lewes Road, at c. 31m above Ordnance Datum, levelling off in a broad ridge, at 36m AOD, and then slopes down steeply again to the western boundary at 25m AOD. Geological maps (BGS 1979) indicate that the underlying geology is Gault Clay with an outcrop of Lower Chalk along the southern edge of the site. However, although Gault Clay was observed in the centre of the area, the geology observed consisted of yellowish brown or greyish brown silty clay (which could also be the Gault), becoming chalky towards the south and east. A band of Greensand was also noted.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Ringmer was not recorded in Domesday Book of AD 1086. The place name is first documented from 1276 as *Ryngemere*, meaning either ‘circular pool’ or ‘pool near a circular feature’ (Mills 1998). Whilst there is little evidence of prehistoric activity in Ringmer itself, on the chalk downs about 1.5km

to the south are a neolithic long barrow (Drewett 2003), a number of early Bronze Age round barrows (Garwood 2003) and the early Iron Age settlement of the Caburn (Hamilton 1998, 2003; Curwen and Curwen 1927). Similarly, despite the presence of Roman sites on the chalk downs, and a villa some 2.5km north-west of the current site at Barcombe, no Roman sites are known in Ringmer (Rudling 2003).

A significant pottery industry developed in Ringmer during the medieval period, with a known distribution from Lewes towards the south. There is good historical evidence of potters located on the common (‘the Broyle’), to the east of the village, and within the village itself three fields adjacent to the village green are known as Potters Field, Crockendale and Delves Ground (Hadfield 1981). Archaeological evidence also indicates pottery production in the village. Two kilns excavated in Potters Field at the end of the 19th century appear, from their brick construction, to date from the late medieval period (Barton 1979). A kiln in the Broyle is probably earlier, but dating was difficult because the Ringmer pottery is not particularly chronologically distinctive in either fabric or form (Hadfield 1981).

THE EVALUATION

Geophysical survey located a small number of anomalies which could be archaeological (Stratascan 2003). Evaluation trenching investigated these

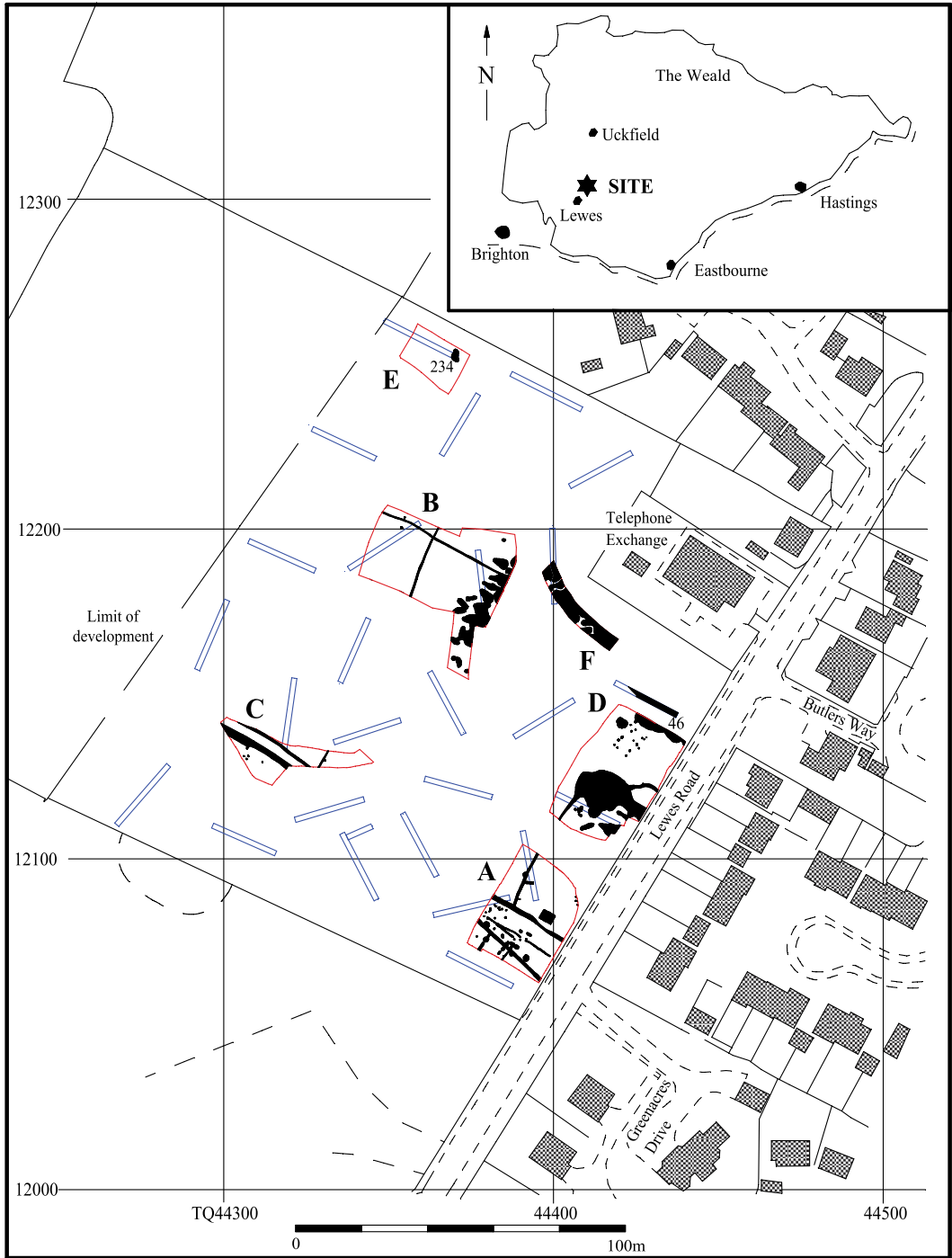


Fig. 1. Location of site within Ringmer and East Sussex, showing evaluation trenches (blue) and excavation areas (red).

anomalies and sampled the rest of the development area (Fig. 1). In all, 27 machine-excavated trenches, each 1.6m wide and averaging 20m long, revealed pits, ditches, gullies and post-holes, of prehistoric, late Saxon and particularly medieval dates (Anthony 2004). The majority of the features were in the eastern half of the development area, towards Lewes Road. Several large irregular features were planned but not excavated at this stage, as it was felt that investigation would be better conducted under conditions of full excavation. Most of the geophysical anomalies turned out to be geological, although two areas adjacent to Lewes Road proved to be archaeological.

EXCAVATION METHODOLOGY

The excavation targeted six areas (Fig. 1: A–F) which would be affected by the development. Archaeological features in other parts of the site would be preserved *in situ*. The stratigraphy consisted of topsoil on subsoil (removed mechanically), which sealed the archaeological features, all of which cut the natural geology. Enough of each feature was excavated to provide a relative date and to understand its nature. Bulk soil samples from sealed contexts were sieved for finds and environmental remains. A probable hearth, which was originally thought to be a badly disturbed kiln base, was sampled for archaeomagnetic dating. As Area F was to be preserved beneath a hardcore surface, features here were planned but not excavated; they all appeared to be either very large pits or complexes of intercutting pits, probably quarries, similar to those nearby in Area B.

PHASE SUMMARY

As there was relatively little stratification between features, many simply being below subsoil and cut into the natural clay, most of the phasing is based on the pottery. As a result, a number of features remain undated, and many more can be dated only tentatively, on the basis of one or two small pottery sherds. The dating in some cases is all the more tentative, given the amount of pottery that is clearly residual in the better-dated features. One notable exception is structure 1017, for which phasing has been based primarily on the stratigraphic sequence.

PHASE 1: PREHISTORIC AND ROMAN

A small collection of prehistoric and Roman pottery was recovered, along with a number of struck flints and a few fragments of burnt flint and fired clay. The vast majority of these finds were clearly residual in later features, and their original deposition on the site was most likely to be the result of manuring rather than occupation. Only a few features can be considered as possibly prehistoric.

Five post-holes in Area A (121, 127, 130, 131 and 135) might represent prehistoric activity on the site (Figs 2 and 3). These contained small fragments of prehistoric pottery, fired clay or burnt flint, 121 and 135 also containing one struck flint apiece, and none had any later finds. Unfortunately, the pottery sherds were too small to be closely dated, although one may be middle to late Iron Age. These all fall within a larger cluster of post-holes, most of which had no finds. Tentatively, a circular structure can be posited here, with 137 at its centre and a ring with a 6.7m diameter formed of the large posts 135, 202, 147, 123 and perhaps 148; almost any of the smaller post-holes might also be related (e.g. 201, 128, and 129). Post-holes 115, 116 and 122, which might also have formed part of this ring, were smaller than those mentioned above, and contained medieval pottery.

Two small pits (327, 328) in Area B could be prehistoric, although the only find recovered from either was a flint spall from pit 327 (Fig. 4). Both pits were sub-circular in plan, 1m long and respectively 0.24m and 0.6m wide, but very shallow, just 0.06m and 0.13m deep.

The only feature in Area E (234: Fig. 1) is interpreted as a natural hollow or tree-bole, given its irregular nature. It was 3.5m long and 1.9m wide, but only 0.12m deep. However, it did contain abraded medieval pottery, along with prehistoric pottery, burnt flint and three pieces of struck flint. It might represent prehistoric tree-clearance, with intrusive medieval pottery.

Post-hole 236 in Area A (Fig. 2) contained only a single tiny sherd of Roman pottery; it is unlikely to be a Roman feature in such isolation and the sherd is almost certainly residual.

PHASE 2: LATE 10TH /EARLY 11TH TO MID 13TH CENTURY AD (SAXO-NORMAN)

Although a moderate amount of pottery from the early part of this period was recovered, it came mostly as residual finds within 12th- to 13th-

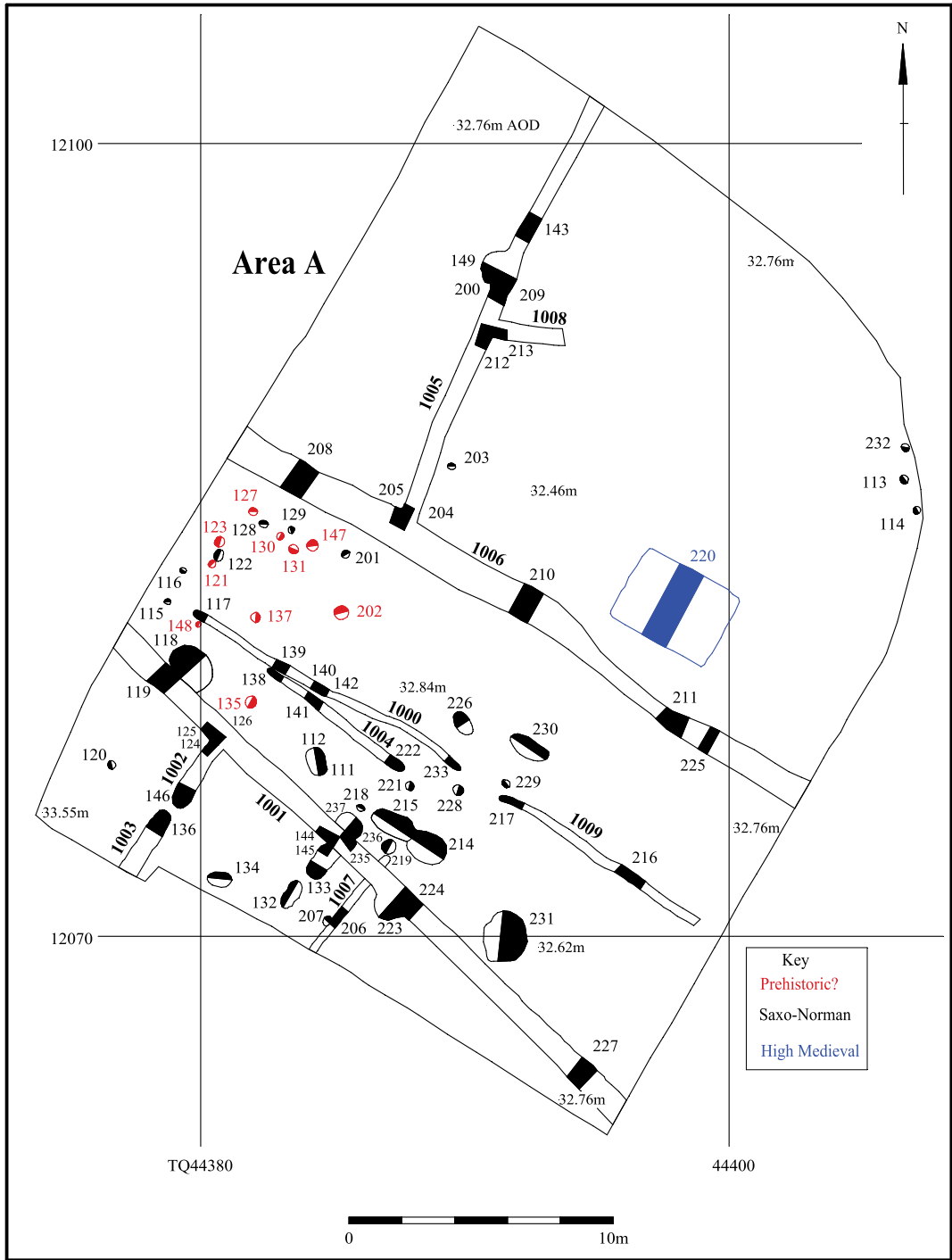


Fig. 2. Plan of Area A (all features).

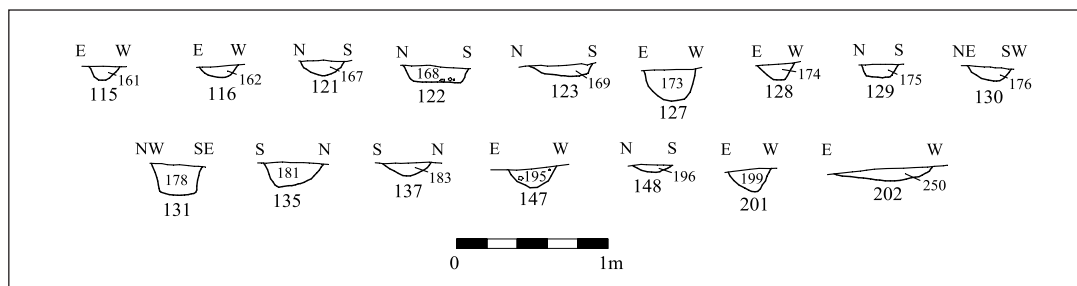


Fig. 3. Area A, Sections of possible prehistoric post holes.

century contexts, and no features can be positively dated to the pre-Conquest period. Occupation seems to date from the later 11th century onwards. In particular, there was a concentration of activity in the southern part of Area A where a number of pits were investigated, along with post-holes, ditches and gullies. However, there is no evidence of structures, and it is likely that any settlement of this period lay beyond the southern boundary of the site.

Sixteen pits of this phase were recorded in Area A (112, 118, 132–4, 145, 149, 214–15, 219–20, 223, 226, 230–1, 237) (Fig. 2). The pits were mainly oval in plan, from 1.0m to 1.9m long, and up to 0.3m deep, with some (230–1) very shallow. Varying amounts of 11th- to 13th-century pottery were recovered from them, along with oyster shell, animal bone, residual fired clay, and both struck and burnt flint. Where the pottery assemblages from individual pits numbered more than one or two small sherds, a 12th- to 13th-century date can usually be suggested.

In addition to the pits, 30 post-holes were excavated in Area A, including those mentioned in Phase 1 above. These produced finds of animal bone, fired clay, and burnt and struck flint, along with small amounts of 11th- to 13th-century pottery. The majority of the post-holes cannot be dated, and it is difficult to suggest patterns that could relate to structures or even fences. The pair of posts 115 and 116 might represent a gate at the end of gully 1000. A line of post-holes (218, 221, 228–9) between the terminals of gullies 1000 and 1009 may be related to the medieval field system detailed below. Three post-holes (113–14, 232) close to the edge of the stripped area, near Lewes Road, probably relate to a structure outside the excavation area.

Pit 329 was the only dateable feature from this phase in Area B (Fig. 4), although a few residual sherds of abraded 12th- to 13th-century pottery were recovered from two of the large irregular pits (248 and 313) which dominate the eastern part of the area (*see below*). Two pits (238 and 301) and a post-hole (241) in the southern part of Area C could be dated to this phase, based on pottery, and three undated post-holes nearby (240, 242 and 243) are probably related (Fig. 5). In Area D, a small pit, 0.5m in diameter and 0.26m deep (Fig. 6 413), produced 12th- to 13th-century pottery, along with a small piece of tile.

The remaining features in this phase appear to represent a field system, in the form of ditches and gullies. The finds from these features consisted mainly of animal bone and pottery, and a link from an iron chain from the terminus of gully 1003. Ditches 1001 and 1006 in Area A were aligned approximately NW–SE from the Lewes Road boundary of the site, not quite parallel, converging slightly towards the north-west, but then maintaining their separation all the way across to Area C and beyond to the west (Figs 1, 2, 4 and 9). These are interpreted as side ditches for a lane leading into the site from the road between fields extending north and south. A thin layer of soil in Area C between 1010 and 1011 probably represents animal trample (Fig. 9 cuts 245 and 246). A number of smaller ditches and gullies (1002, 1003, 1005, 1007 and 1012) were all laid out away from the lane at right angles, all apparently contemporary. Where any relationship could be established, the boundary ditches were invariably later than the pits.

Gullies 1000 and 1009 were on the same alignment as ditch 1006 and may represent a different phase of the lane, or just wheel ruts (Fig.

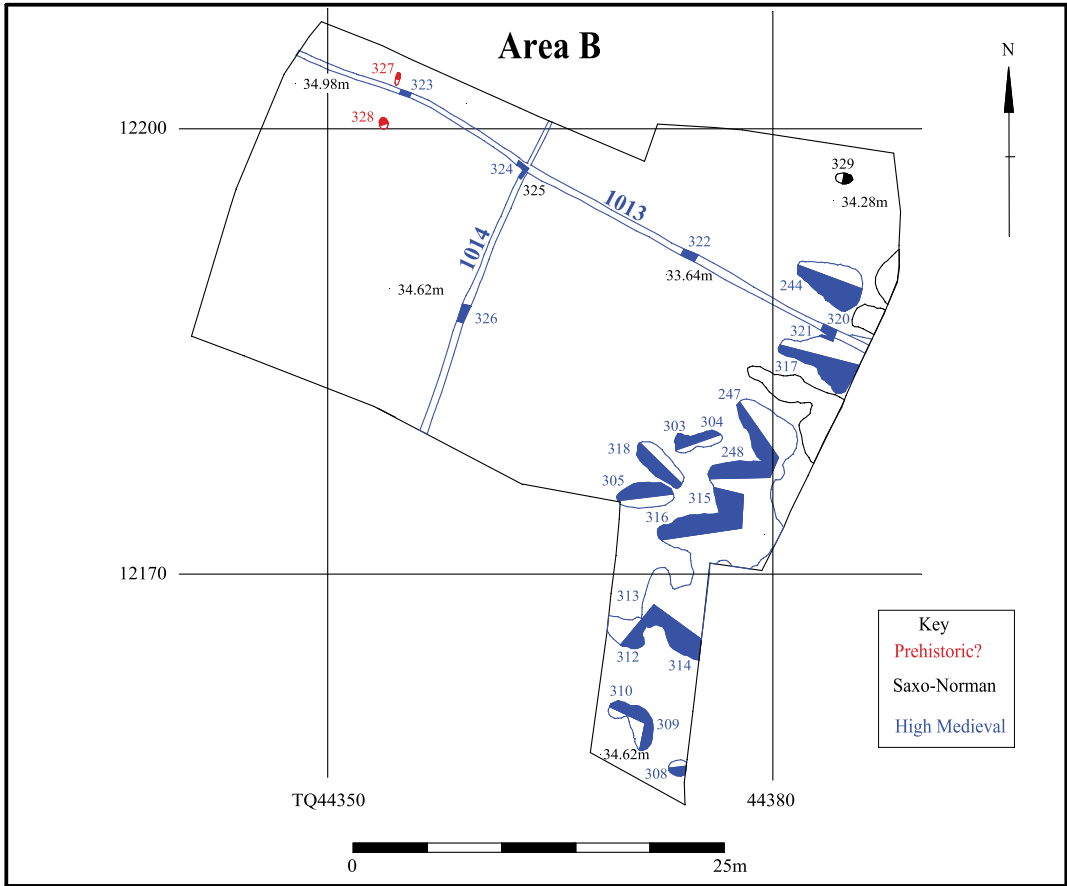


Fig. 4. Plan of Area B (all features).

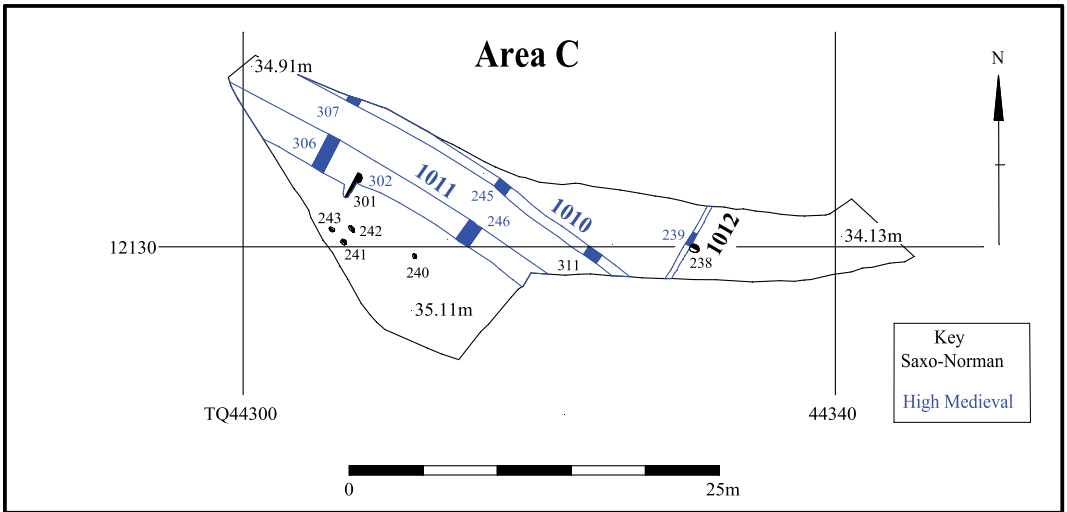


Fig. 5. Plan of Area C (all features).

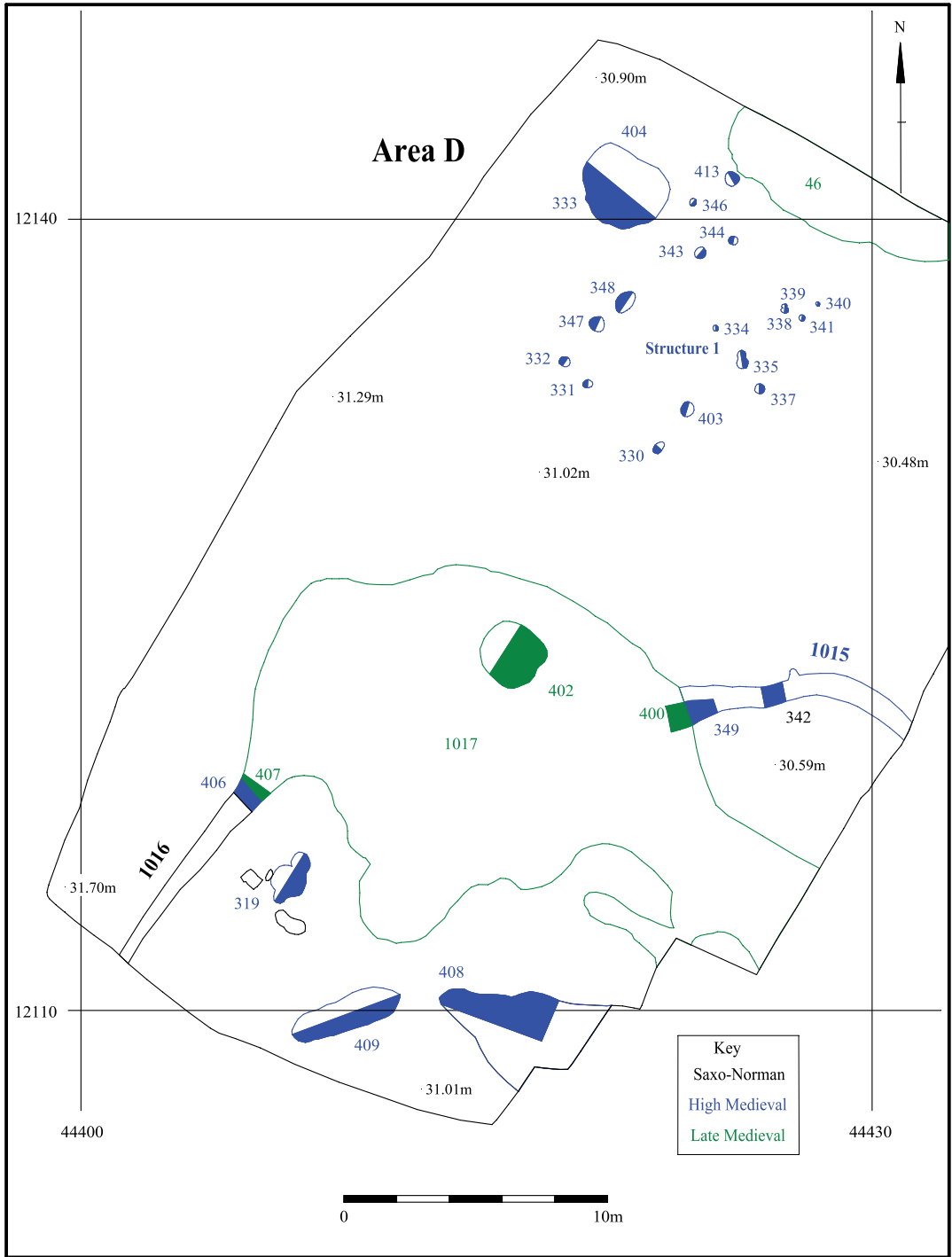


Fig. 6. Plan of Area D (all features).

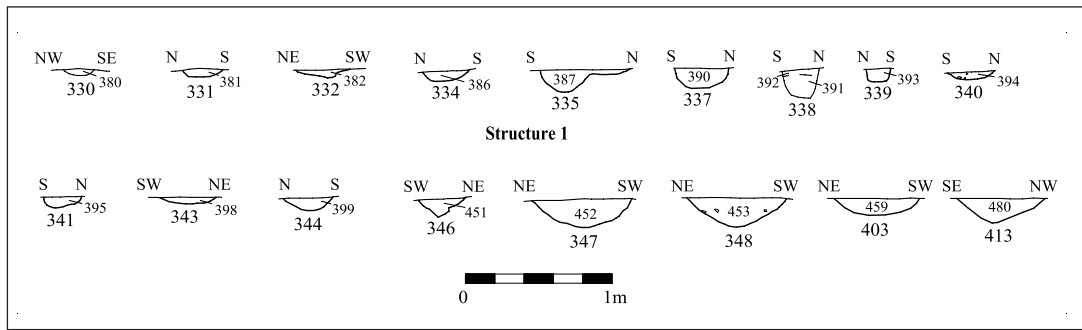


Fig. 7. Sections from Structure 1.

2). Gully 1004 was parallel to 1001 and probably represents a further wheel rut, but there is a possibility that it is associated with 1002, 1003 and 1007 instead, indicating a small rectangular enclosure and hinting at more complexity than the interpretation adopted here. It is likely that many of the post-holes in this area pre-date the lane, although this could not be proved, either by stratigraphy or by pottery. There is also the line of post-holes mentioned above (218, 221, 228 and 229) that may represent a fence line. Most of the pits in this area, with the exception of 149, 226 and 230, lie adjacent to ditch 1001; along the edge of a field is a common location for rubbish pits. This might suggest that ditch 1001 marked a boundary line that was already in place, perhaps before the lane defined by 1006.

The field system appears to continue northwards. Ditch 1005 continued into Area D, as 1016 (Fig. 6), and the pottery from 1016 and the northern part of 1005 suggests that, although created in this phase, its use continued into the 13th/14th century. Ditch 1008 runs eastwards from ditch 1005, and probably represents a subdivision within the overall field system. However, it could be traced for only approximately 3m.

The finds from the field ditches are very similar to those in the pits and post-holes, consisting of animal bone and 11th- to 13th-century pottery, along with residual pottery, burnt and struck flint, and fired clay. As discussed below, it is likely that elements of the field system continued in use during subsequent phases of occupation, although very few later finds were found in the south-east corner of the site. In contrast to phase 3, no features from this period contained brick or tile fragments.

PHASE 3: MID 13TH-MID 14TH CENTURY AD (HIGH MEDIEVAL)

This phase sees a pronounced shift northwards, away from Area A. The previous focus of occupation, towards the south-east corner of the site, seems to have been abandoned, although activity continued adjacent to Lewes Road, further north. There was, however, one large rectangular pit (220) in Area A, 4.7m long, 2.6m wide and 0.26m deep (Figs 2 and 9). This contained shell and animal bone fragments, along with a mixture of 13th- to early 14th-century pottery and earlier residual sherds. Two further pits were investigated in Area D, just to the south of structure 1017 (discussed below) (Fig. 6). The full extent of pit 408 could not be ascertained, as it went beyond the limits of excavation (Fig. 6, section not illustrated). It was at least 6.5m long and 0.7m deep, and contained tile fragments, animal bone, an iron nail and mid 13th- to early 14th-century pottery. Although pit 409 was smaller, it contained far more pottery than any other feature excavated on the site, providing a 14th-century date (Figs 6 and 9). It also contained an iron nail, oyster shell, animal bone and a circular iron object, broken at both ends, of uncertain function.

A group of post-holes at the north end of Area D (Table 1) represents a rectangular post-built building (Structure 1), at least 8.5m long and 4.5m wide (Figs 6 and 7). Several of the post-holes contained pottery, most of which indicates a 13th-century date for the structure, although some of the pottery is earlier. No trace of an internal surface was noted. Structure 1's use is unknown. Although it appears to be earlier, it may have been associated with structure 1017 (*see below*), or with an unexcavated feature (46) similar to 1017.

A well just north of structure 1, on the evidence of the pottery from the backfill of its construction cut (333), was probably sunk in the 14th century (Figs 6 and 9). Pottery from the backfill of the well (385) is earlier, but must have been dumped in from elsewhere after the well passed out of use, and contains the same largely residual content as many of the other features on the site. The well was lined with roughly hewn chalk blocks to a depth of at least 1.05m, but was not bottomed, for safety reasons. Pit 404, 3.2m in diameter, was truncated by the well. Finds from this feature included animal bone and tile fragments, along with pottery which suggests a mid 13th- to 14th-century date.

As considered above, use of the field system appears to originate in Phase 2 and continue into the 13th and 14th centuries. Pottery from this later phase was found in ditches 1005, 1006 and 1011, as well as in the subsoil ‘trample’ along the lane (Fig. 2). Gully 1014, aligned NE–SW across Area B, could be the same as gully 1012 in Area C, but an area over 50m wide remained unexcavated between the two features so this remains uncertain. Although 1014 produced no dating evidence, it was crossed by gully 1013, which contained mid 13th- to 14th-century pottery, and cut approximately NW–SE across Area B. It is likely that the two gullies (1013, 1014) formed part of the same land division.

In Area D, ditch 1016 appeared to be a continuation of ditch 1005. It was slightly curving and may originally have joined up with ditch 1015, which ran towards Lewes Road. However, any possible relationship between ditches 1015 and 1016 had been destroyed by structure 1017. Ditch 1015, which was about 1.05m wide and 0.5m deep, contained mid 13th- to 14th-century pottery, along with animal bone, oyster shell and tile fragments (Figs 6 and 9 at 342). It was truncated by Phase 4 structure 1017 and pit 400. Ditch 1016 was approximately 1.1m wide and 0.2m deep. It was not clear whether feature 407 was a deeper continuation of ditch 1016 or a separate pit. Pottery dates both these features to the early 14th century. They also contained oyster shell, animal bone and tile fragments.

The eastern part of Area B was dominated by a number of large irregular intercut pits, some of which extended downhill beyond the limit of excavation. It was decided to sample enough of them to establish their character and date. The fifteen pits investigated varied dramatically in

Table 1. Details of post-holes forming structure 1, Area D.

Cut	Deposit	Diameter (m)	Depth (m)	Pottery date
330	332	0.20	0.03	-
331	381	0.25	0.05	-
332	382	0.35	0.05	13th century
334	386	0.31	0.09	-
335	387	0.66	0.16	late 12th–mid 13th century
337	390	0.37	0.15	-
338	391, 392	0.24	0.20	late 12th–mid 13th century
339	393	0.17	0.08	11th–12th century
340	394	0.26	0.05	mid 13th–mid 14th century
341	395	0.26	0.10	mid 13th–mid 14th century
343	398	0.40	0.07	mid 13th–mid 14th century
344	399	0.35	0.10	-
346	451	0.30	0.12	-
347	452	0.70	0.18	mid 12th–early 13th century
348	453	0.66	0.17	13th century
403	459	0.57	0.12	13th century
413	480	0.52	0.16	11th to 13th century

size from about 1.5m to 6m in length and from 0.1m to 0.35m in depth. All the pits were concave in section, with relatively gently sloping sides (e.g. Fig. 9 cuts 244 and 318). Although most of the pits contained 13th- to 14th-century pottery, many also contained earlier residual material. Brick and tile fragments were also recovered from a number of the pits, along with small amounts of animal bone. All the pottery from these pits was very abraded, and it seems likely that these features were not deliberately backfilled, but were left open and allowed to silt up gradually. Most of the finds from these features are therefore probably the result of manuring activities, and the similarity between the pit fills and the surrounding subsoil was noted. The underlying geology in this central area of the site was Gault Clay, and it seems possible that all these pits were dug for extraction of clay for ceramic production nearby. Similar features were observed in Area F, where they were planned but not excavated (some were excavated in the evaluation (Fig. 1)). Pottery recovered from the surface of this stripped area dates from the 12th to 15th century, although some late Saxon material was found during the evaluation.

An area of burning in Area D, just to the south-west of structure 1017, was initially thought to be the remains of a very truncated pottery kiln (319). It consisted of a central sub-circular patch of burnt clay natural, 1.2m in diameter, along with a number of smaller patches of burnt or reddened material nearby. Careful hand-cleaning of the area did not reveal any structural remains, so it is likely that it represents the remains of an external hearth rather than a kiln. No artefactual dating evidence was recovered, so an archaeomagnetic survey was carried out to ascertain the date of last firing. The results produced an unfortunate three-fold uncertainty over the last firing date: AD 210–270, 1270–1330 or 1380–1430. The earliest date can almost certainly be discounted, given the absence of other Roman features. The second date seems more probable, as a number of late 13th- to early 14th-century features were recorded in Area D. However, as structure 1017 (see below) dates from the mid 14th to early 15th century, and if the hearth were associated with one of its phases, the third date range could apply.

PHASE 4: MID 14TH–15TH CENTURY AD (LATE MEDIEVAL)

Apart from a few sherds of 14th-century pottery, which appear as intrusive finds in earlier features, all the evidence for this phase came from Area D. Pit 400 truncated ditch 1015, which contained 13th- to 14th-century pottery. Pit 400 was 1.2m long and 0.3m deep (Figs 6, 8 and 9). Animal bone, tile fragments, an iron horseshoe and a circular copper alloy object were recovered from its fill, along with a number of 14th- to early 15th-century pottery sherds. Pit 402 was 1.6m in diameter and at least 0.3m deep, and truncated various layers associated with structure 1017, including its final subsoil layer, and is therefore probably the latest feature revealed during the excavation. This pit contained tile fragments, animal bone, oyster shell, a lead object which could possibly be part of a window decoration, and a fairly large assemblage of 14th- to 15th-century pottery.

Structure 1017 (Figs 8 and 9) was the largest and most complex feature encountered during the excavation and, although a significant proportion of the feature was sampled, its function is still not clear. It originally appeared as a large sub-circular patch of greyish brown clayey silt, with a spur heading towards the Lewes Road. Chalk rubble could also be seen around most of the edge of the feature. A 1.8m-wide slot was dug through

the feature, roughly along the central axis, using a mechanical excavator. When large chalk blocks were encountered in this slot, it was decided to excavate the feature further by hand, although the machine was used to remove some upper layers which sealed the structural deposits.

The original stage of construction involved the digging of a large oval pit, some 16m long and 12m wide, up to 1.1m deep. The cut for this pit was much steeper around the north and north-east sides of the feature, becoming gentler towards the south and south-west. Then a large number of roughly hewn chalk blocks were laid in the base of the pit, along with occasional flints, to form a surface (460). The blocks were laid directly on the natural, except in places where a thin layer of trample was observed (464). The surface was quite irregular in plan, although it would originally have been almost rectangular, 6.5m by 6m. The chalk blocks composing the surface were generally quite small, 300mm x 200mm x 100mm on average. However, two lines of larger chalk blocks (388) were aligned approximately NW–SE and appear to be associated with surface 460, representing the remains of internal divisions or even walls within the original structure which have been either robbed out or disturbed by later activity. This phase probably dates to the 14th century, although only a relatively small amount of pottery and tile fragments was recovered from surface 460 and layer 464 beneath it.

Immediately above surface 460 was a thin layer of grey silty clay (463/489), which contained a few sherds of 13th- to 14th-century pottery and several fragments of animal bone. This in turn lay beneath up to 0.2m of orange/brown silty clay (474/488), containing mid/late 13th- to 14th-century pottery, tile fragments, animal bone, oyster shells and two iron nails. These deposits were present only south of wall 388, suggesting different uses within the subdivisions. Layer 474/488 contained a fair amount of charcoal, and its reddish colour seemed to suggest an episode of burning. However, there was no clear evidence of burning *in situ*, and this layer may represent waste material from the hearth (319), which was less than 10m away.

The next event was the construction of a second chalk rubble surface (478/479/482/483), directly above layer 474/488, which respected the line of wall 388. This surface was up to 3.6m wide and extended NW–SE for at least 12.4m, rising up

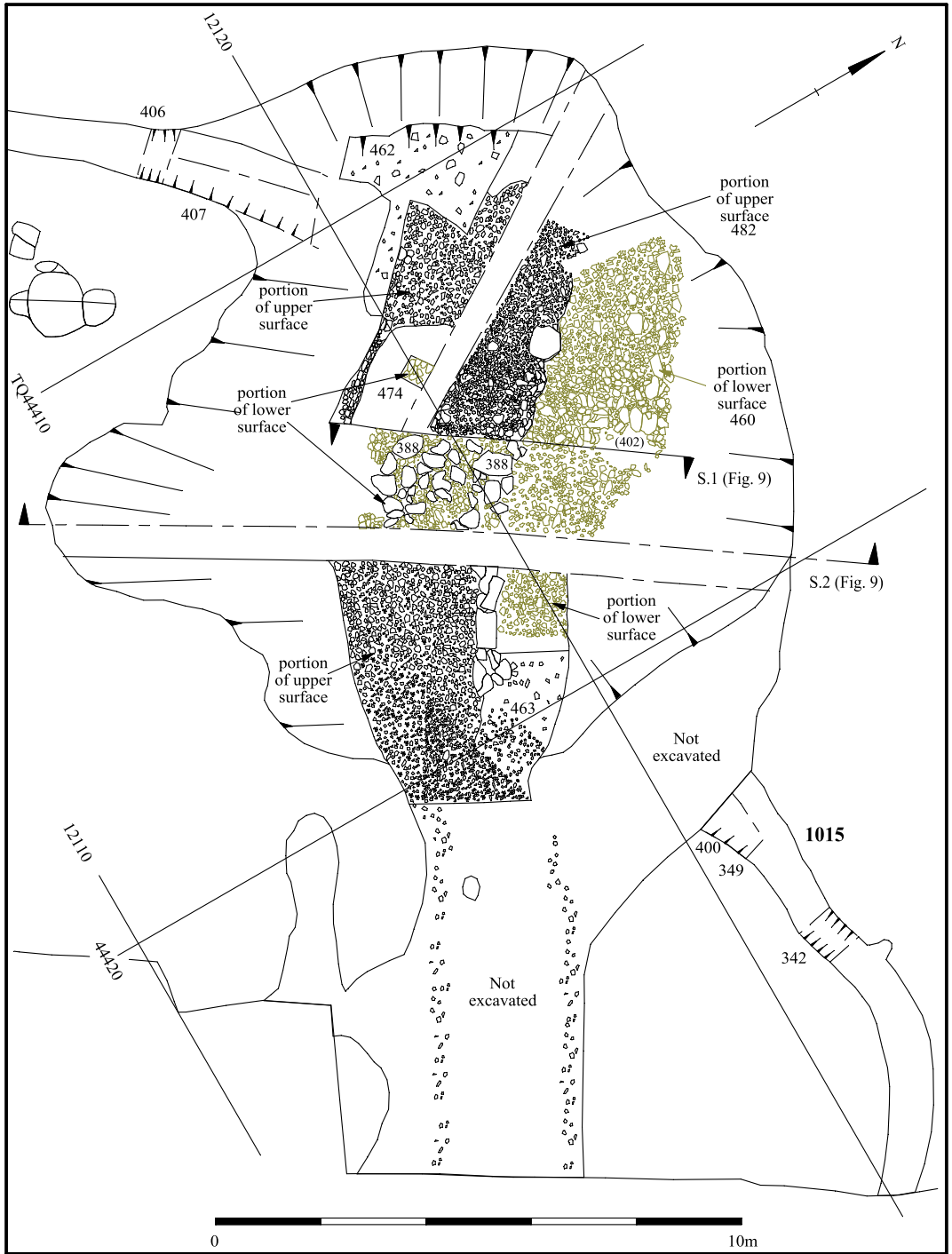


Fig. 8. Plan of feature 1017.

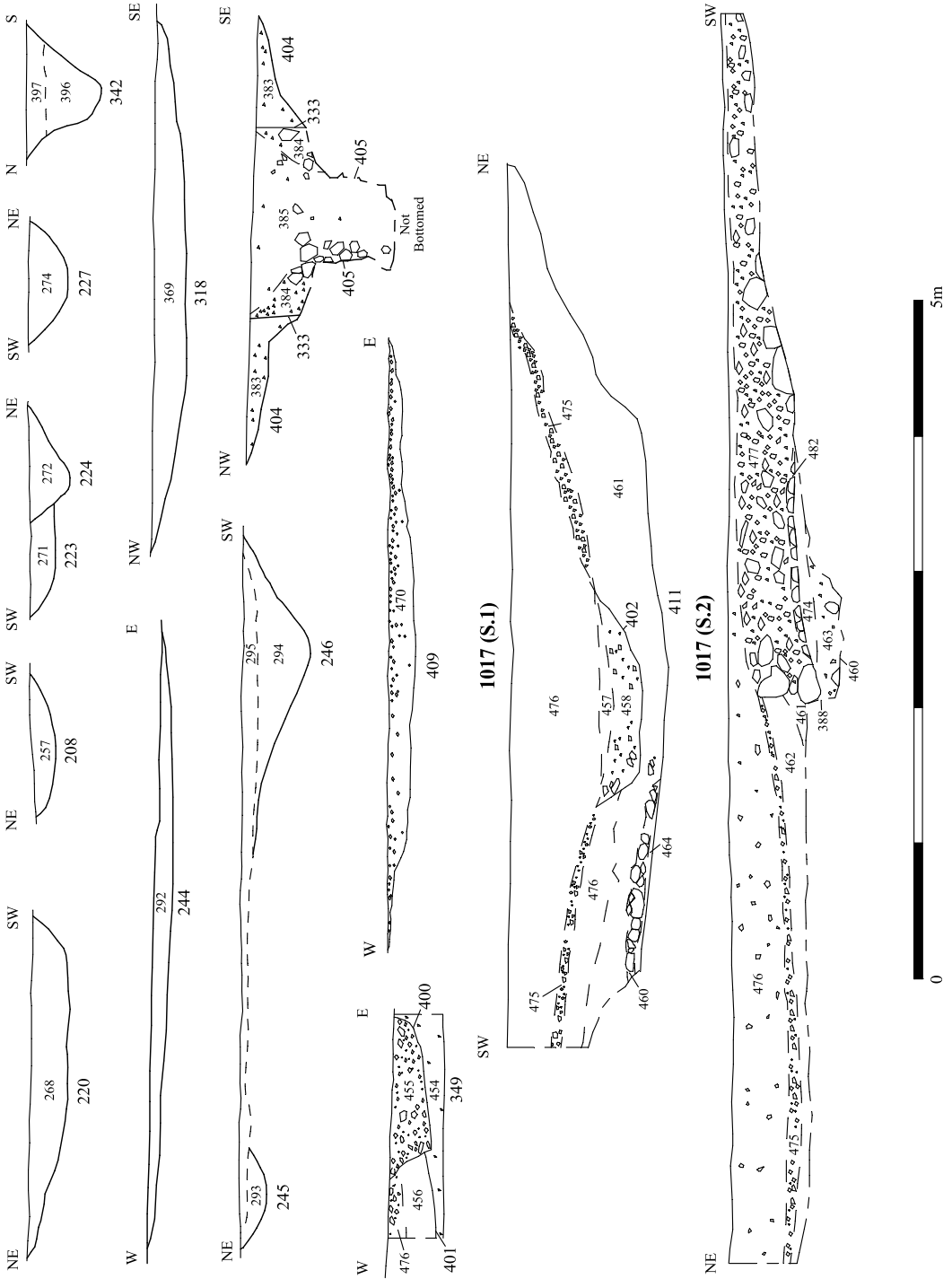


Fig. 9. Sections across feature 1017 and selected other features.

slightly towards the east, and continued south-east towards Lewes Road. This part of the feature was planned but not excavated. The chalk blocks in this surface were generally smaller than those used in surface 460, and there were more flints present, along with occasional tile fragments. It is not clear whether this surface represents a road, or relates to a structure. The presence directly above the surface of a layer of chalk rubble, up to 0.4m thick (466/477), suggests that there was a structure here, subsequently demolished. All the chalk rubble deposit appears directly above or just to the south of surface 460, indicating that, if a building was demolished, it was pushed over from the north. A small number of 13th- to 14th-century pottery sherds were recovered from the top of the surface and the chalk rubble layer, along with a gate hinge and two other iron objects.

The area then appears to have been abandoned, resulting in the silting up of the northern part of the original pit. An initial layer of grey silty clay (461/481), up to 0.3m thick, overlay the original chalk surface (460). This would suggest that part of surface 460, to the north-west of wall 388, remained in use throughout the structure's life, and may have been kept relatively clean until abandonment. Pottery from this layer dates from the 14th to early 15th century. The layer also contained animal bone, oyster shell and tile fragments. This was below a sterile deposit of orange/grey silty clay (462), up to 0.35m thick, which seems to represent further natural silting. This deposit directly overlay the chalk rubble (477) in places. A further thin layer of chalk rubble (475), about 0.1m thick, was then laid over much of the area, particularly the north-western part. It is not clear whether this is a further surface for repetition of the original use, or simply an attempt to consolidate an area which must by now have

resembled a boggy depression in the field.

Pit 402, cut into the filled hollow of 1017, was 1.7m in diameter and 0.35m deep (Figs 6 and 9, 52). It contained animal bone and oyster shell, along with fragments of tile and 14th- to 15th-century pottery. It cut through rubble layer 475 and is the latest cut feature excavated. What remained of the depression finally appears to have gradually filled with material which resembles the subsoil on site (473/476). A number of fragments of tile and 13th- to 14th-century pottery were recovered from this deposit.

The form and function of structure 1017 remain obscure. It is unlikely that the initial pit related to extraction of clay for pottery production, as the geology in this part of the site consisted of a chalky silty clay which is unlikely to have been suitable. It is possible, but again seems unlikely, that it was the base of a limekiln. Given the probable clay quarry pits not far to the north, it is suggested that structure 1017 was a settling tank.

Another large feature, resembling 1017, at the north end of Area D, lay mostly beyond the limit of excavation, and was planned but not excavated (Fig. 6). This feature (46) was also recorded by an excavation trench just to the north (Fig. 1), and corresponded with a geophysical anomaly. Three sherds of mid 13th- to mid 14th-century pottery were recovered from its surface, along with two abraded late Iron Age sherds. This part of the site was not to be significantly disturbed by the proposed development, so this structure has been largely preserved *in situ*.

PHASE 5: POST-MEDIEVAL

Very little post-medieval pottery was found during the excavation, and no post-medieval features; a single clay pipe fragment was probably intrusive in pit 314.

FINDS

THE POTTERY BY LUKE BARBER

The evaluation and excavation produced 1577 sherds of pottery, weighing 13,599g, from 150 contexts. The material spans the late Bronze Age to the 19th century, but by far the majority is of medieval date, and this report concentrates on that period. The condition of the assemblage is variable. Some sherds are quite fresh albeit small, though some contexts contain larger pieces. However, most sherds show signs of having been affected by the slightly acidic ground conditions, as well as moderate abrasion suggesting some re-working has occurred. The average medieval sherd weight is 8.6g. The assemblage is characterised in Table 2.

The medieval assemblage is predominantly of two periods: Saxo-Norman and High Medieval. Generally the assemblages for these two periods are notably different in their condition, size and spatial distribution (*see below*). Context assemblages for the Saxo-Norman period are very small, but there are a few larger groups for the High Medieval period (the largest consisting of 329 sherds from pit 409, the next largest group consisting of only 80 sherds from well 404). Although intrusive sherds (mainly post-medieval) are few, residuality in many contexts is moderate. The post-medieval material (a single sherd of Wealden-type green-glazed buff ware, mid 18th- to 19th-century local glazed redwares and a few industrialised wares) is not discussed further.

Table 2. Chronological summary of the pottery assemblage.

Period (Century AD)	Sherds	Wt (g)	Avg wt (g)
Late Bronze Age/ Early Iron Age	11	53	4.8
Middle/late Iron Age	9	29	3.2
'Belgic'/Roman	8	31	3.9
Saxo-Norman (late 10th/11th–mid 13th)	404	1960	4.9
High Medieval (mid 13th–mid 14th)	1047	10,370	9.9
Late medieval (mid 14th–15th)	83	934	11.3
Early post-medieval (mid 16th–17th)	1	7	7.0
Late post-medieval (mid 18th–19th)	14	215	15.6
Total	1577	13,599	

The site has provided some of the earliest fabrics from Ringmer to date, and has allowed the extension of the fabric series established for two sites in Hamsey to be firmly extended back from the 13th into the 11th century (Barber forthcoming a, b). Although Ringmer is well-known as a centre for medieval pottery production, most studied kiln sites/scatters have been of the 13th to 14th centuries, producing predominantly sand-tempered wares (Barton 1979; Hadfield 1981; Streeten 1985; Gregory 1993, 1995).

All the medieval pottery was divided into fabric groups based on a visual examination of tempering, inclusions and manufacturing technique, using a hand-lens where necessary. Context groups were then spot-dated. The largest context assemblages of each medieval period only were deemed appropriate to publish because they are considered representative of the assemblage as a whole.

Prehistoric

The small assemblage dating to the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age consists of a few scattered and generally abraded body sherds of low-fired flint-tempered wares. Nine abraded body sherds in better fired, middle to late Iron Age finer flint and glauconitic sand-tempered fabrics were located in later contexts. The small Belgic/Roman assemblage consists of grog-tempered East Sussex Ware and some sandy greywares. All this material is likely to be the result of manuring; its presence suggests settlement in the vicinity in all these periods.

Medieval

Most of the High Medieval pottery from the site is in fabrics that almost certainly originate from the Ringmer industry. Indeed, there is one warped cooking pot rim (Fig. 10: 8) which is certainly a 'second', though no other signs of wasters were noted in the assemblage. These wares can be difficult to classify, as they tend to overlap in their physical characteristics due to their continuous evolution. The Saxo-Norman fabrics are less well-known. Some of the latest (SN5 and SN6) were present at Great North Barn (Barber forthcoming b) as well as the Clay Hill site (R. Jones pers. comm.), the latter site possibly producing such wares in the later 12th to early 13th centuries. The fabrics are listed in roughly chronological order under

the period sub-divisions. Fabrics present at the Great North Barn excavations are highlighted.

The Saxo-Norman period

SN1: Sparse multicoloured flint to 1.5mm. A low-fired fabric fired black throughout. The few sherds present are all residual (pit 247, fill 296). No forms recognisable. Probably 9th–10th century.

SN2: Moderate chalk to 1mm with sparse shell/sand and rare flint to 2mm. A low to medium fired fabric with grey cores and dull orange/brown surfaces. Only cooking pots with slight lid-seating. Probably 11th to mid 12th century. Fig. 10: 1.

SN3: Moderate/abundant multicoloured flint to 1mm and rare chalk to 1mm. A low to medium fired fabric with grey cores and grey/black/brown patchy surfaces. Cooking pots only. Probably 11th to 12th century.

SN4: Moderate/abundant multicoloured (white/grey and occasionally brown) flint to 1mm (Fabric F2 at Great North Barn, though only one sherd there). A low to medium fired fabric ranging from black to orange throughout. Cooking pots only, and virtually all residual (pit 408, fill 468). Probably mid/late 11th to 12th century. Fig. 10: 5.

SN5: Moderate/abundant multicoloured (white/grey) flint to 1mm with sparse chalk/shell to 1 mm. Probably a development of SN3 (Fabric F1 at Great North Barn). A low to medium fired fabric either grey or dull orange. Cooking pots only. Probably 12th to early 13th century. Fig. 10: 2.

SN6: Sparse/moderate multicoloured (mainly white/grey but some red) flint to 0.75mm and sparse/moderate medium sand. Very rare/rare chalk/shell and iron oxide inclusions to 0.5 mm (Fabric F+Q1 at Great North Barn). A medium-fired fabric with grey cores and dull orange surfaces. Cooking pots with hollowed lid-seating appear the most common form. This is the start of the transition to the sand-tempered wares of the High Medieval period. Probably mid 12th to early/mid 13th. Fig. 10: 3, 4 and 6.

SN7: Moderate/abundant fine/medium sand with sparse/common white flint and iron oxides to 0.5mm. A low to medium fired fabric with grey cores and dull orange/brown surfaces. A contemporary progression from SN6. Cooking pots only. Probably early/mid 13th century.

Although some of the sherds in SN1 could be as early as the 8th /9th century, they could start as late as the 10th or early 11th century. The development of these flint-tempered wares in the area during this period is poorly understood, particularly due to a lack of secure published groups, and without feature sherds close dating is impossible. It is not until the 11th century that occupation on the site appears to have begun. There are a number of small but fresh sherds, the flint-tempered wares totally dominating. All vessels appear to consist of hand-made, low-fired reduced cooking pots, though no feature sherds are present. Most of this material is residual in 12th- to 13th- century contexts.

Activity has increased by the later 11th to 12th centuries, and a number of features are of this date. Most of the material comes from gullies and post-holes adjacent to Lewes Road in Area A, and to the west in Area C, suggesting that the main focus of settlement may be to the south. Abundant flint-tempered cooking pots predominate, which are slightly harder fired than the earlier vessels, often oxidised, and usually contain sand too. Although groups are small, and sherds are

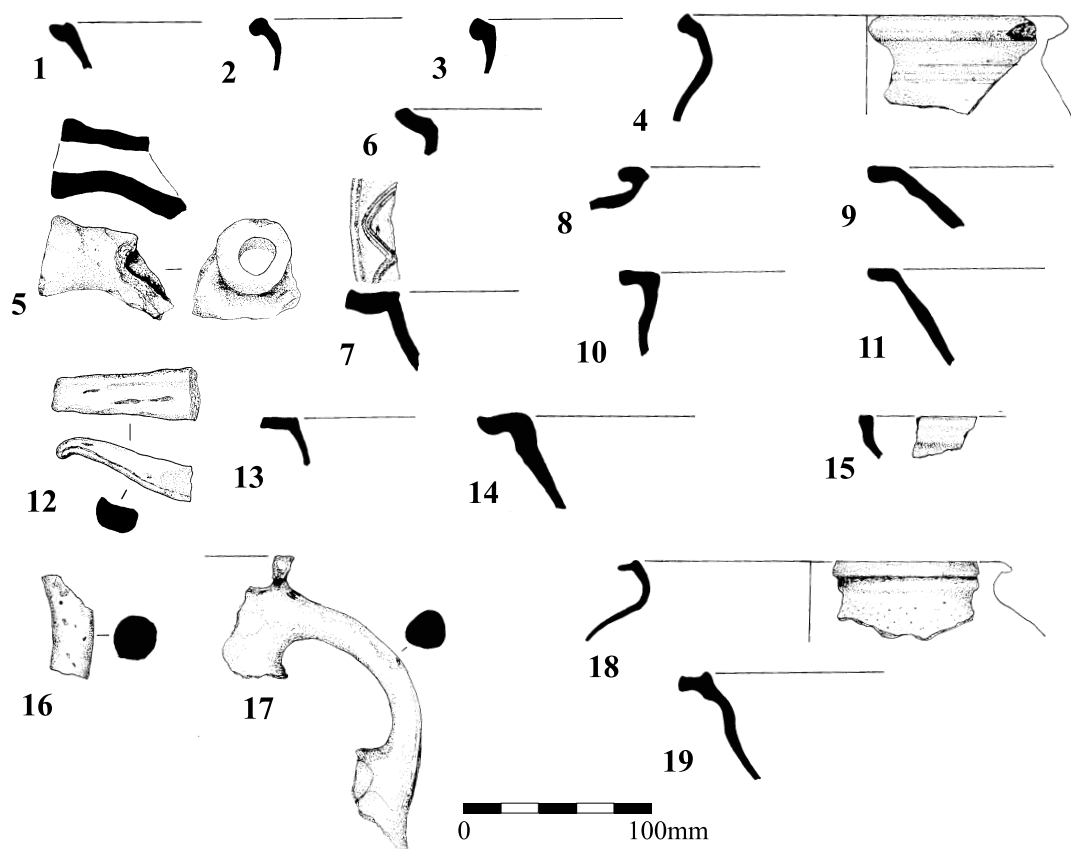


Fig. 10. Pottery (see text for catalogue).

often residual, they are often fresh. Few feature sherds are present. Towards the end of the 12th century sand increases and the flint tempering becomes finer/sparser. This trend continues into the early 13th century and the wares become truly sand-tempered, at least by the middle of the century. Cooking pots dominate, and they are now consistently medium-fired and exhibit developed rims (e.g., lid-seated) by the early 13th century. The exact transition to the sand-tempered wares is not fully understood, but it is interesting to note the small number of typical early 13th-century fabrics which were so common at Hamsey (Barber forthcoming b: Fabrics Q+F2 and Q+F3), suggesting that there might have been a slight lull in occupation between c. 1220 and 1250 on the current site.

Unfortunately, no groups of the Saxo-Norman period are large enough to study in detail. The two largest are from pit 230 and ditch 1006 (segment 211), both towards the end of the period (mid/late 12th–early 13th century). Although small, they demonstrate the main fabrics in use at this time (Tables 3 and 4). Only one other feature sherd was present in contexts of this period, a skillet handle in pit 237.

Illustrated sherds (Fig. 10)

Pit 230, fill 278

1. Cooking pot with slightly hollowed thickened rim. Grey core, dull orange/brown surfaces. Fabric SN2.
2. Cooking pot with slightly hollowed beaded rim. Grey core, grey/brown internal and black external surfaces. Fabric SN5.
3. Cooking pot with out-turned squared rim. Black throughout. Fabric SN6. Ditch 211, fill 259 (mid 12th to early/mid 13th century).
4. Cooking pot with hollowed rim. Grey core, dull orange/brown patchy surfaces. Fabric SN6. Pit 237, fill 285 (dated mid 11th–12th century).
5. Tubular skillet handle. Grey/brown core, dull orange/brown patchy surfaces. Some finger-tipping. Fabric SN4.

The High Medieval period

M1: Sparse/moderate fine/medium sand with sparse/common white flint and dull red iron oxide inclusions to 1mm (Fabric Q+F2 at Great North Barn). A medium-fired fabric with grey cores and brown/brown-orange surfaces. Cooking pots and bowls, some with incised wavy line decoration on the rim

Table 3. Pottery from pit 230, fill 278.

Fabric	No. sherds	% no.	Wt (g)	% wt
SN1	1	6.7	1	0.9
SN2	3	20.0	19	17.4
SN5	9	60.0	65	59.6
SN6	2	13.3	24	22.0
Totals	15		109	

and others with oblique slashing on the basal angle. Probably 13th century. Fig. 10: 7.

M2: Moderate/abundant sand with sparse white/grey flint to 1mm (most to 0.5mm) and dull red iron oxides to 0.5mm. A medium-fired fabric with grey cores and usually dull brown-orange/orange surfaces though occasionally grey. Similar to the 1st phase fabric from the Norlington Lane kiln (D. Gregory pers. comm.) Mainly cooking pots and bowls, but some sparsely glazed jugs too. Probably mid 13th to mid 14th century. Fig. 10: 8.

M3: As M2 but sparser sand and harder-fired (Fabric Q+F4 at Great North Barn). A development from M2 and certainly a Ringmer product. Probably later 13th to 14th century. Fig. 10: 19.

M4: Moderate medium sand with no/very rare white flint and sparse dull red/brown iron oxides to 2mm (Fabric Q1 at North End Barn). Medium-fired with grey cores and brown/grey surfaces. Cooking pots and bowls, later examples having a sparse internal glaze to the base. A Ringmer product. Probably mid 13th to mid 14th century. Fig. 10: 9–12.

M5: As M4 but finer sparser sand and finer iron oxides. Vessels tend to be finer made, thinner walled and slightly harder fired than those in M4, suggesting that this is a chronological development of that fabric. Cooking pots only. Probably late 13th to 14th/early 15th century. Fig. 10: 13–14.

M6: Sparse/moderate fine sand. A medium/well-fired fabric with black cores, brown margins and grey/black surfaces. Only cooking pots with applied thumbed strips noted. Probably mid 13th to 14th century.

M7: Moderate medium sand with sparse dull red iron oxides to 3mm. A variant of M8. Cooking pots and unglazed/sparsely glazed jugs. Probably mid 13th to mid 14th.

M8: Moderate medium sand with no/very rare white flint/chalk inclusions to 0.25mm. A fineware variant of M2 (Fabric Q2 at Great North Barn). Medium/well-fired with grey/orange cores and orange surfaces. Although some cooking pots are present (later examples with interior glazing to base), most vessels appear to be jugs with sparse glazing (dull green/brown). Some have thumbed bases but few have decoration: occasionally incised lines and crude stamping. A Ringmer product. Probably mid 13th to 14th century. Fig. 10: 15–18.

M9: Sparse fine/medium sand with occasional red iron oxides to 1mm. A medium-fired fabric with grey cores and buff surfaces. All sherds are from jugs (possibly all one vessel) with applied red clay triangular-sectioned strips under even glaze (body glazing pale/dull green and strips brown). Probably mid 13th to mid 14th century.

M10: Moderate fine/medium sand. A well-fired fabric with occasionally grey cores but usually dull orange throughout. Only jugs with a good even brown/dull green glaze, sometimes over rilling on body. A Ringmer product. Probably late 13th to 14th century.

Table 4. Pottery from ditch segment 211, fill 259.

Fabric	No. sherds	% no.	Wt (g)	% wt
SN3	2	7.4	17	6.6
SN5	13	48.1	133	51.4
SN6	12	44.4	109	42.1
Totals	27		259	

M11: Sparse fine sand with sparse dull red/black iron oxide inclusions to 0.5mm (Fabric Q(f)1 at Great North Barn). A well-fired fabric, orange throughout. Only jugs with a good even brown/dull green glaze. Although similar to Rye ware, this is a Ringmer product. Probably late 13th to 14th century.

M12: Very sparse fine sand/silty fabric with no/very rare dull red iron oxide inclusions to 0.3mm (Fabric Q(f)2 at Great North Barn). Only glazed jugs. Probably late 13th to 14th century.

M13: Moderate medium sand. A hard-fired fabric with grey cores, often orange outer margin and dull orange to grey surfaces. Both cooking pots and sparsely glazed jugs. This is perhaps the latest medieval fabric on the site, and is probably a late Ringmer product. It appears in only a few contexts, mostly in Area D: pit 400 and ditch/gully segments 406 and 407. Probably early/mid 14th to mid 15th century.

Most of the assemblage belongs to this date, and most of the material was recovered from Area D close to the Lewes Road. Much of the material is less abraded and markedly larger sherds than in the previous period (Table 2). Sand-tempered cooking pots, occasionally with flint inclusions, dominate the assemblage, although bowls and skillets are also present. The 13th-century vessels tend to be more heavily made and fired brown, those from the 14th century being thinner-walled and usually fired orange. There is a notable quantity of medium and fine sand-tempered sparsely glazed jugs, most of which are not particularly finely made. Virtually all the vessels of this period are from the Ringmer kilns. There are also a few fragments of 'chimney pots'. The utilitarian nature of the pottery suggests a fairly low-status occupation, rather confirmed by the complete absence of regional and foreign imports. By the end of this period, activity at the site takes a sharp downward turn but probably does not end. A few larger assemblages were recovered for this period.

The pottery from pit 409 (Table 5) is dominated by the sand-tempered wares, with only small quantities of residual earlier material. The small number of vessels with flint inclusions, and the notably higher proportion of bowls to cooking pots, suggest a late 13th-, or more likely, 14th-century date. The average sherd weight of 12.4g for this group suggests that the material has not been subjected to repeated redeposition.

Illustrated sherds (Fig. 10)

Pit 409, fill 470 (late 13th–14th century)

6. Cooking pot with hollowed rim. Grey core with light brown/dull orange surfaces. Residual early 13th century. Fabric SN6.

7. Bowl with stabbed horizontal rim, decorated with wavy incised lines. Grey core, orange/brown surfaces. Fabric M1.

Table 5. Pottery from pit 409, fill 470.

Fabric	No. sherds	% No.	Wt (g)	% wt
SN6	16	4.9	145	3.6
SN7	7	2.1	78	1.9
M1	23	7.0	342	8.4
M2	30	9.1	379	9.3
M3	5	1.5	36	0.9
M4	99	30.1	1661	40.9
M5	7	2.1	134	3.3
M6	5	1.5	56	1.4
M7	7	2.1	75	1.8
M8	105	32.0	1020	25.1
M9	5	1.5	32	0.8
M10	20	6.1	108	2.7
Totals	329		4066	

- 8. Cooking pot with out-turned rim (warped). Grey core, grey/orange surfaces. A second. Fabric M2.
- 9. Bowl with simple everted rim. Grey core, dull brown surfaces. Fabric M4.
- 10. Bowl with out-turned rim. Grey core, dull orange surfaces. Fabric M4.
- 11. Bowl with everted squared rim. Grey core, dull brown surfaces. Fabric M4.
- 12. Stabbed solid skillet handle. Grey core, dull orange surfaces. Some sooting. Fabric M4.
- 13. Bowl with out-turned squared rim. Grey core with grey/black surfaces. Fabric M5.
- 14. Bowl with club rim. Grey core, dull orange surfaces. Fabric M5.
- 15. Jug with even dull green glaze. Orange throughout. Fabric M8.
- 16. Stabbed rod handle from a jug with sparse/patchy dull green glaze. Fabric M8.

The transition from High Medieval to late medieval ceramics in the area is gradual, spatially erratic and not well understood. Although Ringmer is known to have had a number of kilns at this time, none has yet been excavated (Streeten 1985), though a site producing wasters of this period has been located on the eastern outskirts of the village (material shown to author by C. Butler). A number of the vessels from the present site have been harder fired. This trend probably began around the mid 14th century, and some of the groups from the site exhibit the introduction of such wares.

The pottery from pit 407 (Table 6) shows similar fabric ratios to the assemblage from pit 409, though there is notably more M2 and less M4, which suggests a slightly later date. The presence of the harder fired M13 sherds tends to confirm this. The fill of well construction cut 333 (context 384: Table 7) produced a spread of fabrics fairly similar to those of pit 409, though Fabric M2 has decreased and there are a large number of jug sherds in M8. The presence of M13 sherds again suggests a date in the second half of the 14th century, or even early 15th century. The only other diagnostic sherd of this period was from layer 461 in structure 1017.

Table 6. Pottery from pit 407, fill 471.

Fabric	No. sherds	% No.	Wt (g)	% wt
M1	1	1.5	11	1.6
M2	20	29.4	181	26.3
M3	2	2.9	18	2.6
M4	16	23.5	190	27.7
M6	1	1.5	5	0.7
M8	14	20.6	108	15.7
M9	1	1.5	2	0.3
M13	13	19.1	172	25.0
Totals	68		687	

Table 7. Pottery from well 333, fill 384.

Fabric	No. sherds	% No.	Wt (g)	% wt
M2	3	5.5	27	3.2
M5	2	3.6	18	2.1
M7	10	18.1	120	14.1
M8	32	58.1	528	61.8
M13	8	14.5	161	18.9
Totals	55		854	

Illustrated sherds (Fig. 10)

Pit 333, fill 384 (dated late 13th–14th century)

- 17. Jug with stabbed rod handle and sparse/thin dull green patchy glaze. Grey core, orange surfaces. Fabric M8.
- 18. Cooking pot with triangular rim. Dull orange throughout. Fabric M8. Structure 1017, layer 461 (dated 14th–early 15th century)
- 19. Bowl with slightly hollowed rim. Grey core, brick-red margins and grey (with orange streaks) surfaces. Externally sooted. Fabric M3.

The latest medieval vessels on the site may be of late 14th- to early/mid 15th-century date. Very few groups of this period are present. There is no evidence of activity beyond the mid 15th century.

Conclusion

The pottery assemblage has demonstrated low levels of activity on the site, probably manuring, from at least the late Bronze Age to the medieval period. Occupation appears to have started in the 11th century and increased in intensity during the 12th and early 13th centuries. At this time crude, locally made, undecorated, flint-tempered cooking pots dominated the assemblage. After a possible slight lull in activity in the first half of the 13th century, activity appears to have resumed on a larger scale, slightly to the north of the original focus. Although the sand-tempered pottery for this period is superior and competently made in one or more of the Ringmer kilns, it cannot be considered finely produced and the lack of imports suggests low-status occupation, petering out in the later 14th to early 15th centuries.

The assemblage, although small, is a useful group for Ringmer for two reasons. First, most assemblages from the area have been from 13th- to 14th-century production sites; this excavated assemblage provides one of the few

'consumer' assemblages from the village. Second, little was known about the pre-13th-century fabrics in the village and how they related to the later wares. The current assemblage has gone some way to addressing this issue, though larger groups with more feature sherds are still needed to test and refine the chronology.

THE METALWORK by Natasha Bennett

Of the 50 iron objects recovered, 43 were nails. Most of them are pre-industrial, with flattened heads and square stems. An iron horseshoe (146g) was recovered from 14th- or 15th-century pit 400. A number of iron objects came from structure 1017, particularly from demolition layer 466. They include a hinge, weighing 150g, probably from a gate, a small flattened rectangular object, weighing 6g, and a tapering cylindrical object, weighing 20g, whose function is unclear. It might have been part of a latch, or a wall hook. An almost circular object, broken at both ends, weighing 30g, came from pit 408. A link from a chain, weighing 4g, was recovered from the terminus of gully 1003.

A flattened, almost circular, copper-alloy object, weighing 14g, from pit 400, is broken and has one perforation, although it appears that it originally had two.

A fragmented lead object, weighing 4g, was found in pit 402. It is circular and flattened on one side, and may be part of a window decoration.

THE STRUCK FLINT by Steve Ford

A small collection of just 39 struck flints was recovered during the course of the excavation, and a further 36 from the evaluation trenches. Table 8 summarises the composition of the collection as a whole. The material is in variable condition, some pieces being fresh but others patinated to various degrees. There is a small but persistent element with blade-like (narrow flake) characteristics, which indicates a mesolithic or earlier neolithic origin. The excavation recovered a serrated blade and a used blade from the same subsoil context filling a probable natural hollow. The remaining items are not closely datable and could be of mesolithic through to Bronze Age date. All the flints from cut features are residual.

THE ARCHAEO-MAGNETIC DATING

Fifteen samples were taken from hearth 319 for archaeo-magnetic dating by GeoQuest Associates. Details of methodology and results are in the archive. Because of the nature of the calibration curve used, which crosses itself in places, the results indicate that the last firing occurred in one of three date ranges: AD 210–270 (which can easily be ruled out), or 1270–1330, or 1380–1430.

THE ANIMAL BONE by Matilda Holmes

Animal bones were identified using the author's reference collection and guidelines from Cohen and Serjeantson (1986). The bones were in a good to fair condition, although very fragmentary, and complete bones were uncommon. A significant number of fragments (120) that had been broken post-depositionally could be conjoined to make 13 more complete fragments. Other taphonomic factors include that 2% of the assemblage had been burnt, 3% showed canid gnawing and 5% had butchery marks.

As Table 9 shows, 240 animal bone fragments were recorded from dated contexts, of which 100 were identified to species. Phase sample sizes are too small for interpretation

Table 8. Summary of the flint collection.

Type	Number
Flakes	42
Narrow flakes	6
Cores	3
Core fragments	3
Bashed lumps	2
Spalls	18
Serrated blade	1

Table 9. Animal bone summary by phase (fragment count).

Species	Phase		
	2	3	4
Cattle	9	16	14
Sheep/goat	9	9	6
Sheep			1
Pig	13	2	*11
Dog	2		1
Horse	4		
Red deer		1	
Chicken	1		
Passeriforme	1		
Total identified	39	28	33
Unidentified mammal	41	20	6
Unidentified large mammal	15	9	8
Unidentified medium mammal	32	4	5
Total	127	61	52

* Includes 7 fragments from the partial articulated skeleton of a young pig from context 481.

beyond a basic catalogue of species. A single red deer radius fragment, heavily butchered, from a 13th- to 14th-century context was the only indicator of status on the site (Grant 1988). The few further details are in the archive.

OTHER FINDS by Sean Wallis

Other classes of find were rare, and add little information. Forty-one fragments of burnt flint, weighing 884g, were recovered from various features. The largest collection came from a natural hollow in Area E (234), with seven pieces (396g). Thirteen small pieces of slag, weighing a total of 354g, represent no more than the expected 'background noise' from a medieval settlement. Sixty fragments of shell (2974g), mostly oyster, came from various features. Pit 402, probably the latest feature on the site, yielded the largest concentration of shell with 22 pieces (1370g). A small collection of tile and brick comprising 209 fragments (4896g) was recovered from a range of features, mostly in small quantities per context. A small number of the tiles were peg tiles. None was decorated or glazed. Further details are in the archive.

THE CHARRED PLANT REMAINS by Lucy Cramp

A total of 31 bulk soil samples were taken from medieval features. Macrobotanical remains were extremely sparse, the majority of samples containing only fragmentary and

Table 10. Carbonised plant remains.

	Sample	1	7	18	19	23	26
	Group		1002		1010	1017	1017
	Cut	132	146	241	311		
	Deposit	178	193	289	361	474	488
	Type	Pit	Gully	Post-hole	Gully	Layer	Layer
	Phase	2	2	2	2	4	4
	Sample volume (l)	10	10	5	20	20	10
Cereal grains							
<i>Triticum</i> sp. (<i>aestivum</i> or <i>turgidum</i>)	free-threshing wheat (bread or rivet)	2	-	-	1	3	1
<i>Hordeum</i> sp. (hulled)	hulled barley	-	-	1	-	1	-
Cf. <i>Hordeum vulgare</i>		-	-	-	-	2	-
<i>Avena</i> sp.	oat	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cereal indet.		-	-	1	-	-	1
Weed seeds							
<i>Atriplex</i> sp.	orache	-	4	1	9	1	-
<i>Galium aparine</i>	goosegrass	-	-	3	1	-	-

unidentifiable charcoal. In six samples, a small quantity of cereal grains of typical medieval cereals and arable weed seeds was present (Table 10). Taxa included free-threshing bread or rivet wheat, barley, which included hulled specimens, and

oats, which could be wild or cultivated. No cereal chaff was present. Goosegrass and orache are common arable weeds. The crops and weed seeds are consistent with typical low background scatter from a rural medieval settlement.

CONCLUSIONS

The excavation produced a small assemblage of fired clay fragments, burnt and struck flint, and sherds of prehistoric pottery, but in most cases these were clearly residual finds in medieval features. There were a number of features, mostly post-holes, which could not be dated to any specific phase, and some of these could, in theory, be prehistoric. A group of post-holes in Area A, in particular, could be the remains of a prehistoric structure, although this is somewhat speculative. Prehistoric material was also recovered from a badly disturbed pit or tree bole in the far north of the site. There were even fewer Roman finds, all in later contexts, and no feature dated to this period. It is likely that much of the abraded pottery from these early periods reached the site through activities such as manuring.

Although a few residual sherds of earlier medieval pottery were present, occupation of the site does not seem to have started until the late 11th century, with a marked increase during the 12th and early 13th centuries. The initial focus seems to have been the south-east corner of the site, immediately adjacent to the modern road from Lewes to Ringmer. The origins of this road are

likely to be medieval, if not earlier, and it seems most likely that the features uncovered during the excavation relate to a small roadside settlement, just to the south of Ringmer village. However, although a number of rubbish pits were excavated, there was no clear evidence of buildings, and it is possible that the settlement itself lay further south. Around the same time, the beginnings of a field system can be seen developing. A lane, with flanking ditches, seems to provide access from Lewes Road into the site, which appears to have been subdivided into smaller fields, at right angles to the lane. Whereas concentrated activity in the south-east corner seems to have ceased in the early 13th century, the field system continued in use into at least the 14th century, and perhaps beyond.

Activity on the site shifted north during the mid 13th–14th centuries, although still focused on Lewes Road. A rectangular, post-built structure was identified in Area D, along with a chalk-lined well, which could be contemporary. About 20m south-west of this structure was an area of burnt clay, which has been interpreted as a hearth. The lack of finds from this feature means that dating was based on an archaeomagnetic survey, which unfortunately produced three possible dates. While the earliest date, in the 3rd century, can be fairly

confidently discounted, either of the remaining two dates is plausible, and there is no means of deciding between them. The earlier of these, AD1270–1330, would place the feature in roughly the same period as the post-built structure and well, and two large nearby pits. The later date, AD1380–1430, would associate the hearth with the large structure discussed below.

The other major area of activity in the mid 13th to 14th centuries seems to be the central part of the site (Area B), where a number of fairly large irregular pits were examined. They do not seem to have been rubbish pits, as they appear to have silted up naturally, and their location on a band of Gault Clay across the site suggests that they resulted from extraction of clay for ceramic production. A number of historical documents (not specifically related to Ringmer) attest to rents paid by potters for the right to extract clay and take fuel, and complaints made against them for not filling in the resulting holes (McCarthy and Brooks 1988, 14–15). These pits appear to extend down the hill, and it seems likely that the unexcavated features in Area F also relate to clay extraction.

The final phase of activity on the site occurs, once again, next to Lewes Road. A chalk rubble surface was laid on the base of a large shallow pit, with walls or subdivisions constructed of larger chalk blocks. Whether the structure could be considered a building as such during this phase is not clear, as subsequent events may have removed structural elements. However, after a period of use and probably abandonment, a second surface of chalk rubble was laid over part of the earlier surface, which this time extended further towards Lewes Road. Again, there were no structural elements definitely associated with this surface, although a deposit of jumbled chalk rubble directly above it could represent the collapsed remains of such

a superstructure. It seems that, throughout this secondary phase of activity, part of the original, lower, surface remained in use. The deposit of chalk rubble suggests that any building was deliberately demolished, and then the whole of the feature was allowed to silt up naturally. A final, thin layer of chalk rubble then appears to have been laid, probably in an attempt to stabilise the ground surface within the depression. It was subsequently cut by a pit, which contained 14th- to 15th-century pottery, before the last stages of infill. The function of this large feature is not clear, although a large paved clay-pit, excavated at Olney Hyde, Buckinghamshire, seems to provide parallels, at least with the initial stages of its development. It has been suggested that the Olney Hyde pit was used to store and settle potter's clay before it was taken away for final working (McCarthy and Brooks 1988, 16) and this may be a possibility here.

No later activity on the site was noted during the excavation.

Acknowledgements

The fieldwork was carried out to comply with a condition placed on a planning consent, in accordance with PPG16, and followed a specification approved by Dr Andrew Woodcock, County Archaeologist for East Sussex County Council. The project was commissioned by Mr Duncan Hawkins of CgMs Consulting Ltd, on behalf of David Wilson Homes Ltd, which funded the project throughout, including a grant towards the costs of publishing this report. The comments of an anonymous referee have helped to improve the report in a number of respects. The evaluation in June 2004 was supervised by Sian Anthony, and the excavation during April and May 2005 was supervised by the author. The TVAS site code is RLR03/61, and the finds and archive will be deposited with Barbican House Museum in Lewes in due course. The fieldwork team consisted of Niall Armstrong, Simon Cass, Danielle Colls, Pamela Jenkins, Katie Keefe, Richard Oram and Jo Pine. Jennifer Lowe provided post-excavation assistance. Steve Preston prepared the text for publication. Pottery illustrations are by Andrew Mundin, the other figures by the author.

Author: Steve Preston, Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd, 47–49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading, RG1 5NR.

Correspondence: TVAS (South), 77a Hollingdean Terrace, Brighton BN1 7HB.

REFERENCES

- Anthony, S.** 2004. Land at Lewes Road, Ringmer, East Sussex; an archaeological evaluation. Thames Valley Archaeological Services. Unpublished report 03/61, Reading.
- Barber, L.** forthcoming a. The pottery, in C. Butler, Excavations at North End Barn, Hamsey, East Sussex.
- — forthcoming b. The pottery, in C. Butler, Excavations at Great North Barn, Hamsey, East Sussex.
- Barton, K.** 1979. *Medieval Sussex Pottery*. Chichester: Phillimore.
- B. G. S.** 1979. *British Geological Survey*, 1:50,000, Sheet 319, Solid and Drift Edition. Keyworth.
- Cohen, A.** and **Serjeantson, D.** 1986. *A Manual for the Identification of Bird Bones from Archaeological Sites* (rev. edn).

London: Institute of Archaeology.

Curwen, E. and Curwen, E. C. 1927. Excavations in the Caburn near Lewes, *Sussex Archaeological Collections* (hereafter SAC) **68**, 1–56.

Drewett, P. 2003. Taming the wild: the first farming communities in Sussex, in D. Rudling (ed.), *The Archaeology of Sussex to AD 2000*, 39–46. King's Lynn: Heritage Marketing and Publication.

Garwood, P. 2003. Round barrows and funerary traditions in Late Neolithic and Bronze Age Sussex, in D. Rudling (ed.), *The Archaeology of Sussex to AD 2000*, 47–68. King's Lynn: Heritage Marketing and Publication.

Grant, A. 1988. Animal resources, in G. Astill and A. Grant (eds), *The Countryside of Medieval England*, 149–87. Oxford: Blackwell.

Gregory, D. 1993. Ringmer Pottery Dig, *Sussex Past and Present* **71**, 8.

— — 1995. Norlington earns top award, *Sussex Past and Present* **75**, 5.

Hadfield, J. 1981. The excavation of a medieval kiln at Barnett's Mead, Ringmer, East Sussex, SAC **119**, 89–106.

Hamilton, S. 1998. Using elderly data bases: Iron Age pit

deposits at The Caburn, East Sussex, and related sites, SAC **136**, 23–39.

— — 2003. Sussex not Wessex: a regional perspective on southern Britain c.1200–200 BC, in D. Rudling (ed.), *The Archaeology of Sussex to AD 2000*, 39–46. King's Lynn: Heritage Marketing and Publication.

McCarthy, M. R. and Brooks, C. R. 1988. *Medieval Pottery in Britain AD 900–1600*. Leicester: Leicester University Press.

Mills, A. D. 1998. *Dictionary of English Place-Names*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mynard, D. 1984. A medieval pottery industry at Olney Hyde, *Records of Buckinghamshire* **26**, 56–85.

Rudling, D. 2003. Roman rural settlement in Sussex: continuity and change, in D. Rudling (ed.), *The Archaeology of Sussex to AD 2000*, 111–26. King's Lynn: Heritage Marketing and Publication.

Stratascan 2003. Geophysical survey of Ringmer, East Sussex, Job No.1779, Upton on Severn.

Streeten, A. 1985. Medieval and later ceramic production and distribution in south-east England. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Southampton.

