

Medieval Pottery from Reigate

by D. J. TURNER

INTRODUCTION

During 1958 the site of Nos. 22 to 40 Church Street, Reigate was redeveloped (N.G.R. TQ 254503). After the site had been cleared Mr J. Howard, a member of this Society, recovered a number of sherds of medieval pottery and, in 1967, presented the sherds to the Guildford Museum (Acquisition No. RB 1854).

THE SITE

Before the pottery was recovered the site had been cleared and levelled by bulldozers. Mr Howard considers that most of the pottery came from patches of dark sandy soil, overlaying the natural Greensand, which may have been the bottoms of rubbish pits truncated by the bulldozer. The natural surface of the ground slopes steeply downwards towards the south from approximately 270 feet O.D.

There is little evidence about the extent of Reigate in this direction in medieval times but William Bryant's *Survey of Reigate* (1786), now in the Surrey Record Office, shows no buildings on the south side of this part of Church Street at that date. It is probable that, in medieval times, the land between Bell Street and what is now Bancroft Road belonged to properties fronting the east side of Bell Street. Part of Bancroft Road is approximately in the position where one would expect to find the 'back lane' which is so often a feature of medieval villages and small towns but Bancroft Road is, in fact, a twentieth century insertion. Thus the pottery may derive from rubbish pits of premises near the corner of Bell Street and Church Street—possibly a forerunner of the *White Hart* Inn which stood near the corner in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Hooper, 1945).

THE POTTERY (Fig. 1, 2 and 3)

The medieval sherds from Church Street are, with the exception of the scratch-marked sherds and the sherd from a decorated jug, all typical of pottery found in East Surrey. Most of the pottery is likely to be comparatively local origin and appears to cover a time range from the late-twelfth to the fourteenth century. The scratch-marked sherds represent the most easterly discoveries of this class of pottery recorded.

The dating of the various classes recognised can only be tentative because dated examples of medieval pottery are virtually non-existent in East

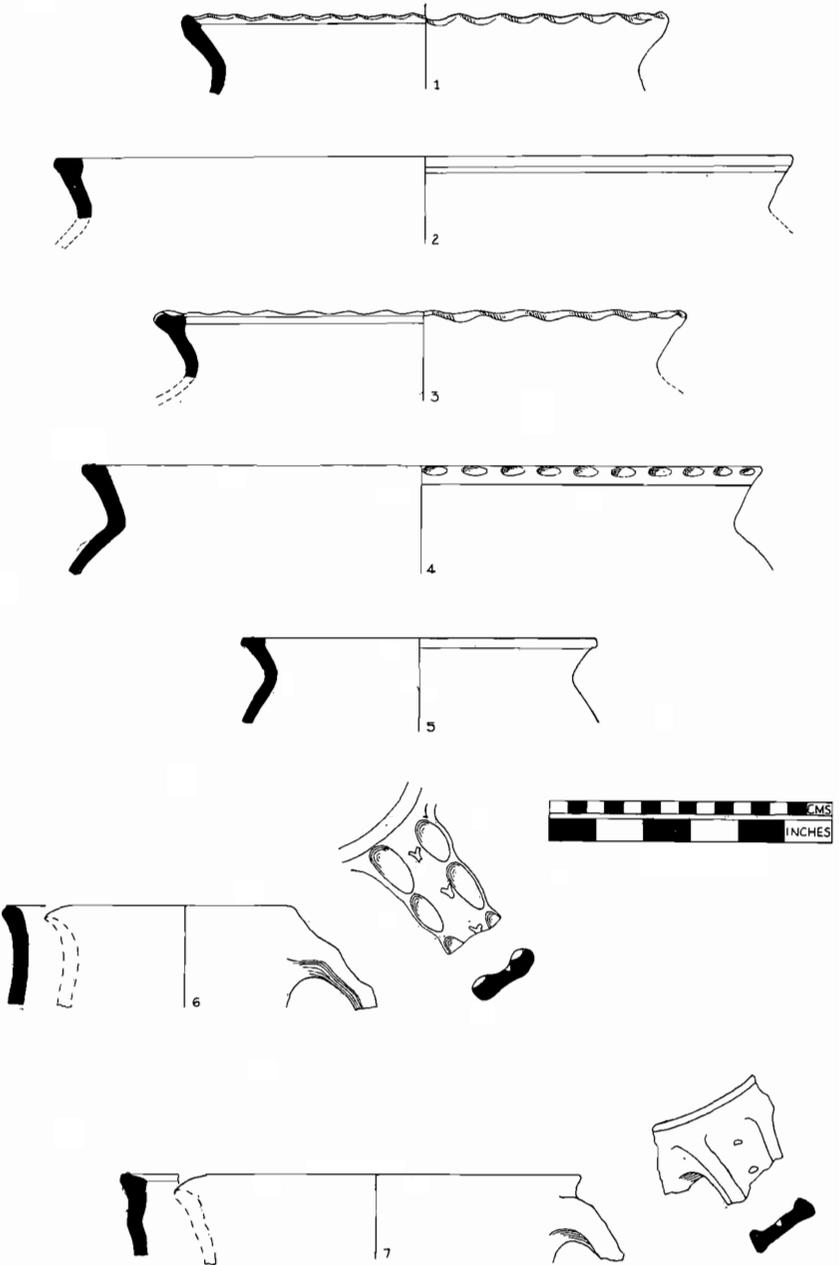


Fig. 1. Medieval Pottery from Reigate.

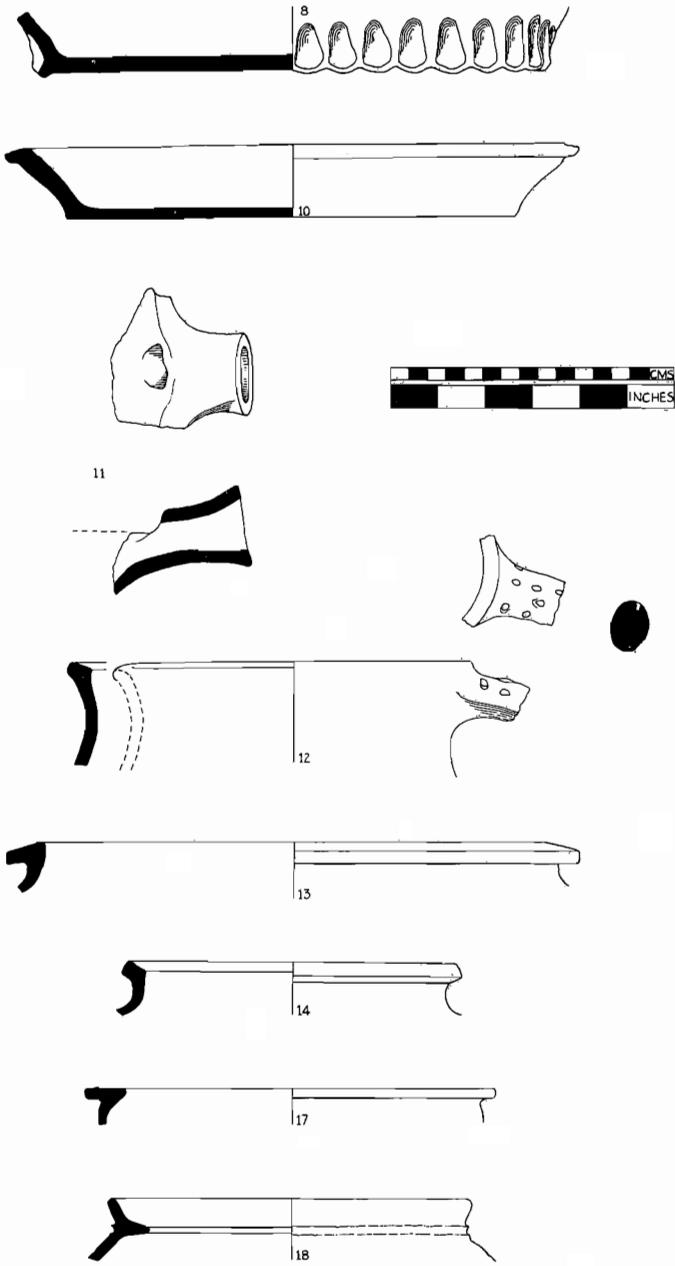


Fig. 2. Medieval Pottery from Reigate.

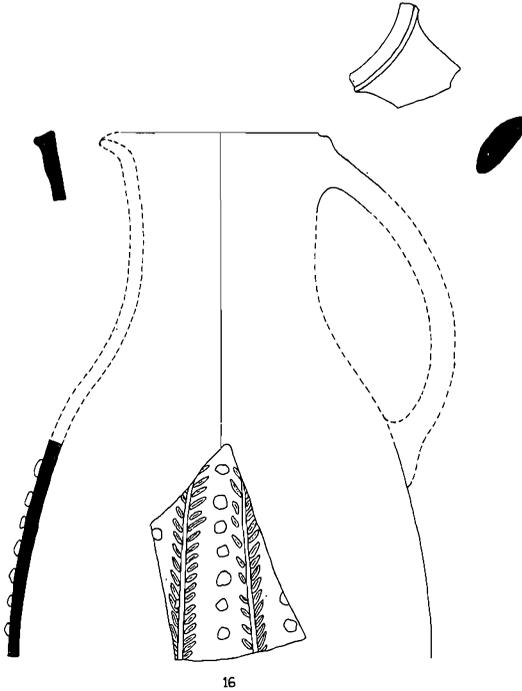


Fig. 3. Medieval Pottery from Reigate.

Surrey or West Kent. The basis of the dating of some of the classes recognised has been reviewed recently by the present writer (Turner, 1967) but new evidence is constantly accumulating and additional suggestions need to be made.

Scratch-marked ware

Three or four sherds of scratch-marked ware were identified and submitted to Mr John Musty for comment. Mr Musty writes:

Scratch-marked ware was first defined in 1935 by Dr J. F. S. Stone in his description of the pottery from excavations in the east suburbs of Old Sarum, Wiltshire, specifically from two cesspits—one dated by a silver penny of William I (Stone and Charlton, 1935). In 1952 Mr G. C. Dunning published a distribution map of the ware in his report on the

pottery from Abinger (Hope-Taylor, 1952). The Abinger pottery group contained the first examples of the ware found in Surrey, the most easterly point of its distribution. Dunning's distribution map indicated that find spots for the ware concentrated in Wiltshire, Dorset and Hampshire, but also that sporadic finds occurred as far west as Bristol and north west to the Thames Valley. A reconsideration of the distribution of the ware, now being undertaken, indicates that the determination of new sites, although adding precision to the previously published information, does not affect greatly the overall distribution. Thus the main concentration remains associated with the counties of Wiltshire, Dorset and Hampshire, and minor finds can be identified in Berkshire, Gloucestershire, Somerset and Surrey. What has been realised, however, is that the date range, far from being a short period around 1100, is a rather long one lasting at least to *c.* 1300 as the ware was being manufactured in the Laverstock, Wiltshire, kilns (Musty, 1969). The Laverstock evidence also shows that 'twelfth-century' fabrics and rim forms persisted to the end of the thirteenth century. It is therefore difficult on form, fabric, and presence of scratchmarking alone, to state whether a small group of scratch-marked sherds are twelfth or thirteenth century. The Reigate sherds are possibly of thirteenth-century rather than twelfth-century date, however, because of the fine scratch-marks as distinct from the very bold scratch-marks of twelfth-century wares. This, and the observation that the later the scratch-marked ware the greater the tendency for the scratch-marks to be on both the inner and outer surfaces, may prove not to be unequivocal as more evidence accumulates. That scratch-marking should persist over a long period of time is indicative of the persistence of a traditional method of finishing a pot during throwing. Experiments have shown that a scratch-marked finish is obtained if a piece of leather with a saw-toothed edge is used as a tool to 'thin' the pot wall (Musty, 1960). Mr G. C. Dunning has, however, drawn attention to an example of pseudo-scratch-marked ware from Leicester in which the scratch-marking is vertical.

No rim was found exhibiting scratch-marking but one rim sherd was of similar fabric and may be related.

1. Rim sherd of cooking pot of grey-brown sandy ware. Laverstock type II or IIa rim (Musty, 1969) with pie-crust decoration on the edge. At Laverstock this form is thirteenth-century but a date needs to be independently established for the form in Surrey.

Shell-tempered ware

Three sherds of brown-surfaced, grey-bodied, shell-tempered ware were found. One had applied 'interrupted-strip' decoration. One rim sherd of red corky ware was probably shell-tempered ware from which the shell had been burnt out during firing.

2. Rim sherd of necked cooking pot of red-brown corky ware. Laverstock type III rim form (Musty, 1969). This rim form is of thirteenth-century date at Laverstock but its date range needs to be independently established in Surrey.

Red-brown surfaced, grey, sandy ware

Well made and fired uniform ware with a distinctive margin and surface of bright red-brown colour on a grey body. Sand tempered. The ware is of higher quality than the shell-tempered ware, but firing conditions and clay source may have been similar.

Little dating evidence is to hand for this class but a tentative ascription to 1150-1300 seems reasonable at present.

3. Rim sherd of cooking pot. Rim thickened and heavily thumbled on the outer edge to form 'pie-crust' decoration.
4. Rim sherd of cooking pot. Laverstock type III rim thumbled to produce slight 'pie-crust' decoration on outer face.
5. Rim sherd of cooking pot. Laverstock type III rim.
6. Rim and upper handle junction from a probably globular jug. Rim bevelled; strap handle thumbled on both sides with a single row of v-shaped stabbing between. Apparently unglazed.
7. Rim and upper handle junction of a jug. Rim bevelled; strap handle ridged on either side with a single row of stabbing between. Double row of stabbing inside the neck.
8. Base angle sherd of large jug. Grey sandy ware with brown surface externally and buff internally. Heavy thumbing on angle. Sagging base. Splashes of glaze.
9. Several plain, base-angle sherds. (Not illustrated.)

Black-surfaced grey ware

It now seems possible to divide the 'hard grey' wares of East Surrey (Turner, 1967) into three groups (only two of which are represented in this assemblage). The most sharply defined is a black-surfaced ware with a medium grey body. Coarse sand may be freely present as a tempering material and visible on the surface, but often only fine sand temper is present. There is usually a thin brown margin between the black surface and the grey body and sometimes the brown tinges the surface. Normally the black surface is both internal and external. So far the ware is known to the writer from Reigate; Queen's Well, Carshalton (Turner, 1970); Hall Place and Gutteridges, Mitcham (excavated by Mr E. N. Montague, 1968 and 1969); and Cheam (unprovenanced and unpublished, Carshalton Museum collection). Two of the published vessels from Merton Priory, Nos. 89 and 91, are possibly of this class.

10. Shallow dish, or skillet. Fine sand temper.
11. Tubular socket for wooden handle from a skillet. Coarse sand temper.
12. Rim and upper handle junction of an unglazed jug. Rim bevelled; rod handle has three or four rows of stabbing. Fine sand temper.

Limpsfield ware

Well made and fired reduced pottery with a range of colours from pinky buff or brown to grey. Sand tempered.

13. Downturned flanged rim of cooking pot.
14. Club-shaped rim of small cooking pot(?). Pale grey ware, possibly Limpsfield.

Cream-slipped jug

Cream-slipped jugs are common in the London area where they are considered to be imitations of French white ware vessels. Only one sherd from Reigate is from such a jug and this has a brown surfaced grey fabric.

15. Lower handle junction of jug. Plain strap handle. (Not illustrated).

Decorated jug

There is a wide range of decorated jugs found in the South East England of which the cream-slipped jug is only one class. The majority are thought to have been made between 1250 and 1350.

16. Body sherd of decorated jug. Grey ware with grey-brown surfaces and pale olive glaze. Fine sand temper. Decoration consists of vertical ridges alternating with vertical lines of applied blobs. The narrow ridges have oblique slashing on either side. Handle and rim junction apparently from same vessel.

Buff-surfaced sandy ware

Excavations by Mrs Canham of a kiln site at Kingston in 1968 and 1969 have shown that the previous conclusions of the present writer (Turner, 1967) must be revised. Complete revision will have to await publication of the Kingston material, but it appears now that the 'off-white, sandy ware' identified at Merton closely resembles material from Kingston, the 'fine grey-buff wares' would seem to come from Cheam while the 'buff-surfaced sandy' class seems to have parallels at both Kingston and Cheam. There are, however, other known sources for off-white and buff-surfaced wares in West Surrey and there may be further kiln sites to be found in East Surrey.

17. Rim sherd of jar. Smoke blackened externally mottled green glaze internally.
18. Bifid rim of cooking pot or pipkin.

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