

# A Late Medieval and Post-Medieval Pottery Sequence from 199 Borough High Street, Southwark

by D. J. TURNER, B.Sc., F.S.A., F.S.A.Scot.

Excavations, under the direction of Mr Peter Marsden and the writer with Mr J. Vockings as site supervisor, took place at 199 Borough High Street, Southwark, in 1962 (Turner, 1967). The full report is under preparation, but has been delayed by the problems of processing the large number of finds, ranging from Romano-British to nineteenth-century, and of obtaining the necessary specialists reports. This note describes an interesting stratified sequence of late medieval and early post-medieval pottery that was excavated from one of the trenches. While much pottery from these periods has been recovered from excavations in Southwark and the City of London, little has been published and the note is offered as a small contribution to this neglected field of study.

Associated finds from the trench will be described in the final report.

## TRENCH IV

This trench, cut from a cellar floor, exposed a sequence of late medieval and early post medieval pits that were dug into and through each other.

### Sequence and Dating

*Bedrock.* Sand and gravel.

*Level IVa.* Layers of brown sand and grey clay containing mixed Romano-British and medieval pottery down to the late fourteenth century.

*Feature IVP1.* Truncated pit with a layer of burnt straw at the bottom; possibly a flat-bottomed ditch running north-south. Pottery down to the late fourteenth century.

*Feature IVP2.* Shallow pit cut into level IVa and overlaid by level IVb. Sterile.

*Level IVb.* Brown soil containing sherds of mid fifteenth-century date.

*Feature IVP3.* A deep cylindrical pit only partially within the trench. It was cut through level IVb and contained mainly derived pottery from earlier deposits.

*Feature IVP4.* Shallow pit cut into the top of the fill of pit IVP3. This contained considerable remains of waste from a bone-working industry and a series of pipkins and jugs. Early sixteenth-century.

*Level IVc.* Layers deposited after pit IVP4 had filled. Truncated by concrete

cellar floor. Contained mixed material mainly derived from earlier deposits.

*Concrete cellar floor.*

### **The Pottery (Figs. 1-6).**

#### *Level IVa*

1. Cooking pot of fine grey ware with carefully fired, pinky-buff surface. Straight everted neck with thickened rim. Faintly smudged wave decoration inside neck.
2. Cooking pot of grey lightly shell-tempered ware. Flat flanged rim.
3. Sherd of decorated jug. Brick-red ware with raised ribs. Blobs of white slip and green glaze over all.
4. Bowl of fine grey-buff ware. Down-turned flange rim with inner beading, moulded at the outer edge possibly to provide a lid seating.
5. Jug of buff ware with slight sand temper. Spot (at least) of yellow glaze.
6. Rim, possibly from large jug or pitcher. Fine grey-buff ware.

Also from this level:

Sherds of sandy, oxidised wares, some with clear glaze.

Sherds with cream slip, probably from jugs. Pale yellow-green glaze on grey, light brown and brown-surfaced grey wares. Unglazed, bright red-pink ware.

Range of off-white to buff sherds. Patches of green glaze of varying colour and quality.

The cooking pot with the everted neck is, presumably, twelfth-century or very early thirteenth, while the shell-tempered vessel with the plain flanged rim should belong to the thirteenth. The slipped jug sherds and the decorated jug sherd can probably be dated to the century 1250-1350. The off-white to buff sherds, which resemble pottery from Kingston (Canham, 1969) and Cheam (Marshall, 1924), should be fourteenth-century. The bowl, 4 (with a more developed rim than Northolt 72—Hurst, 1962), is in a finer fabric than a similar rim, lacking only the edge moulding, found in a derived context elsewhere on the site and may, presumably, be dated late in the fourteenth century.

#### *Feature IVP1 Pit*

7. Bowl with flanged rim, flange downturned and slightly undercut with incipient squared bead internally. Pinky-brown ware with light sand temper and pale yellow-green glaze inside base.

Also from this feature:

Several sherds of off-white to buff ware and two small sherds of thin, grey-buff ware with red-brown, painted decoration.

The painted sherds resemble fourteenth-fifteenth century Cheam pottery (Marshall, 1924) and there is nothing in the pottery from this pit to date it substantially later than Level IVa into which it was cut.

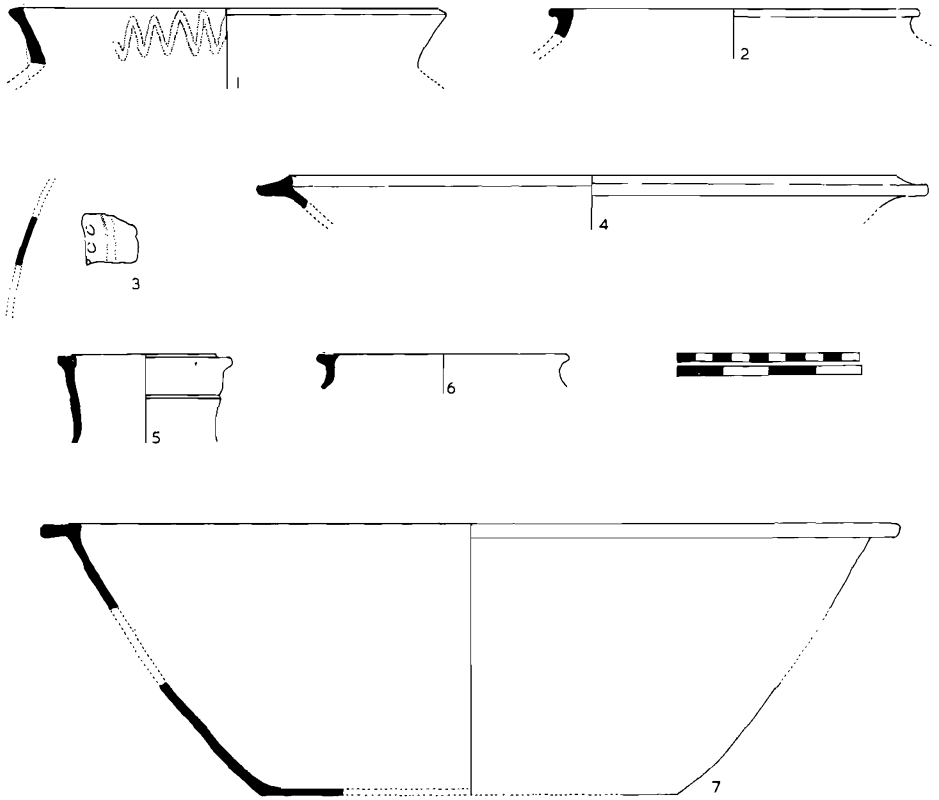


Fig. 1. Pottery from 199 Borough High Street.

*Level IVb*

8. Cooking pot with thickened rim on an everted neck. Off-white sandy ware.
9. Skillet of buff ware with orange bloom to part of exterior. Fine sand temper.
10. Bowl with broad flanged rim, no internal beading. Light brown ware with very slight fine sand temper and mottled green-orange glaze inside the base.
11. Bowl with everted flanged rim. Buff-surfaced off-white ware with fine sand temper.
12. Bowl with everted flanged rim and internal beading. Buff-surfaced off-white ware with fine sand temper.
13. Similar vessel of similar ware. Internal beading undercut.
14. Pitcher of very thin, grey-buff surfaced, pinky-buff ware with very slight fine sand temper. Bib of thin yellow glaze speckled in green.

- 15. Pitcher of thin pale buff ware with slight very fine sand temper. Bib of thin yellow glaze speckled in green. Rim of second similar vessel.
- 16. Pitcher of thin pale-buff ware with very slight very fine sand temper.

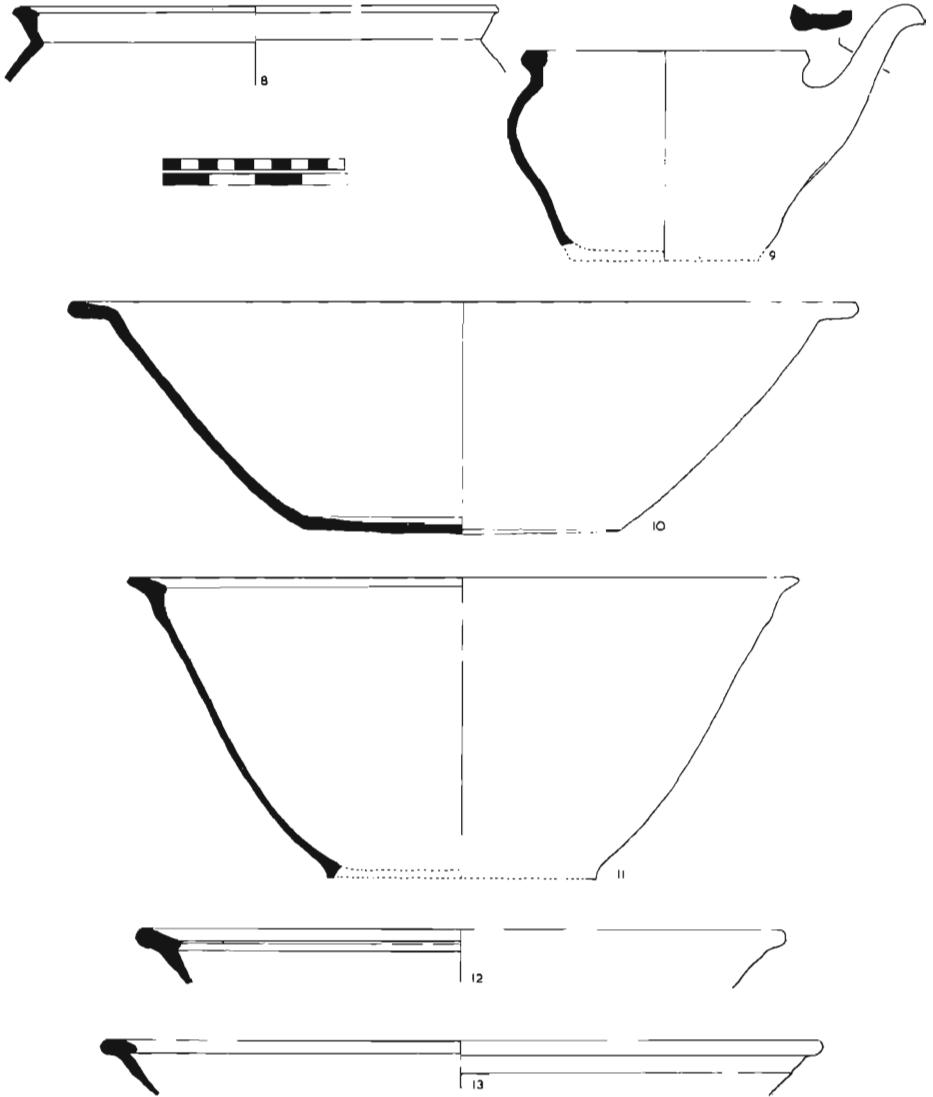


Fig. 2. Pottery from 199 Borough High Street.

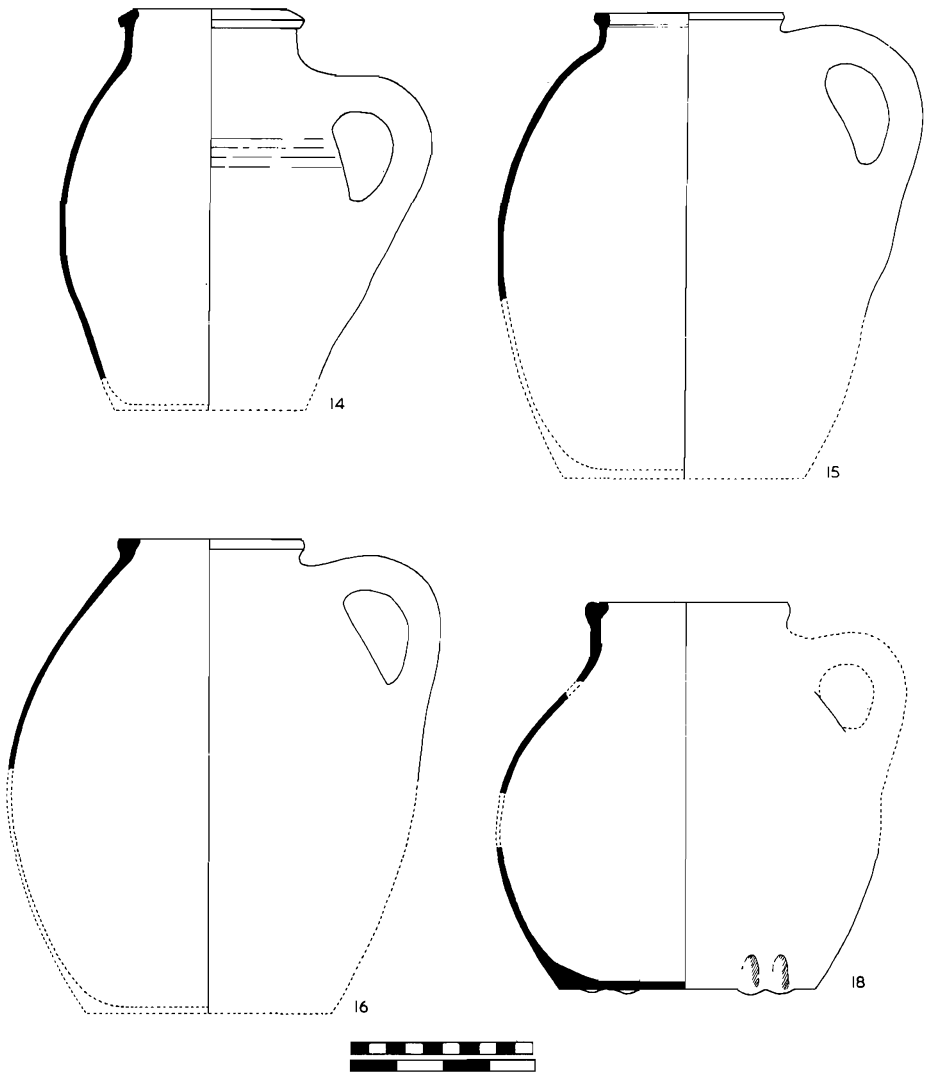


Fig. 3. Pottery from 199 Borough High Street.

17. Pitcher of thin grey ware with light sand temper, decorated by girth grooves on the shoulder and glazed over part of the upper half. Continuously thumbled base angle; base sags below thumbing.
18. Pitcher of grey-buff surfaced, grey ware with fine sand temper.

Irregular splashes of green to maroon glaze. Discontinuously thumbbed base.

The cooking pot, 8, is closely related to vessels found at the Ingledew and Davenport site, Southwark (Kenyon, 1959, Fig. 27. 7) associated with fourteenth-century (probably early fourteenth-century) jugs; at the Bank of England (Dunning, 1937a); at West Humble (Dunning, 1938); and at Guildford (Dunning, 1937b)

The slack-profiled pitchers, 14-16, can be paralleled from London (London Museum, 1954, 228, Fig. 75. 3) and Westminster (Hurst, 1960, No. 6). The London parallel has a bifid rim which is claimed by Dunning to be characteristic of the fifteenth century. Hurst describes the Westminster parallel as 'Cheam Ware' but there is no close parallel to this form amongst the published material from Cheam (Marshall, 1924). The fabric of these Southwark pitchers is, however, closely similar to much of the Cheam pottery.

The stratigraphical position of this group, between the late fourteenth century sherds of Level IVa and Pit IVP1 on the one hand and the late fifteenth or early sixteenth-century pit group of Pit IVP4 on the other implies a date within the fifteenth century. The absence of white West Surrey ware and of the red and grey wares common in Pit IVP4, suggest a date before 1475, and the bracket 1425-1450 would seem to be, in the absence of direct evidence, the most comfortable dating at present for this group. It is possible, but not certain, that the cooking pot, 8, is a derived sherd from earlier deposits: the survival or otherwise, of this vessel form has not been established.

#### *Feature IVP3 Pit*

19. Handle-rim junction of a small pitcher, possibly similar in shape to 15. Badly burnt after breaking. *Not illustrated.*

Also from this feature.

Rim of large cooking pot (10 inch diameter) of grey, lightly shell-tempered ware with brown surfaces. Squared off, flat-flanged rim. Mid-to-late thirteenth century.

Rim-handle junction of a large pitcher of light grey, sandy ware. Everted neck, slashed strap handle. 5½ inches diameter mouth. Probably Limpsfield ware thirteenth-fourteenth century.

Head and part of the body of an unbearded figure modelled in the round. Buff ware with mottled dark green glaze. From a decorated jug, probably of Midland origin. Early fourteenth century?

Fragments of buff, sandy ware pitchers with thumbbed and plain base angles. Fragment of rim of buff, sandy ware bowl, similar to 13.

*Feature IVP4 Pit*

20. Cup of thin, near-white ware with good green glaze. Fragments of others. Similar vessels published from Winchester (Cunliffe, 1964) and the Inns of Court (Mathews and Green, 1969). Probably from West Surrey or Hampshire kiln.
21. Pipkin of red-surfaced, grey ware. Splashes of glaze externally.
22. Pipkin of pink ware. Orange glaze on rim and inside base. Strap handle. (One handle only was found. The vessel may have had two handles and tripod feet.)

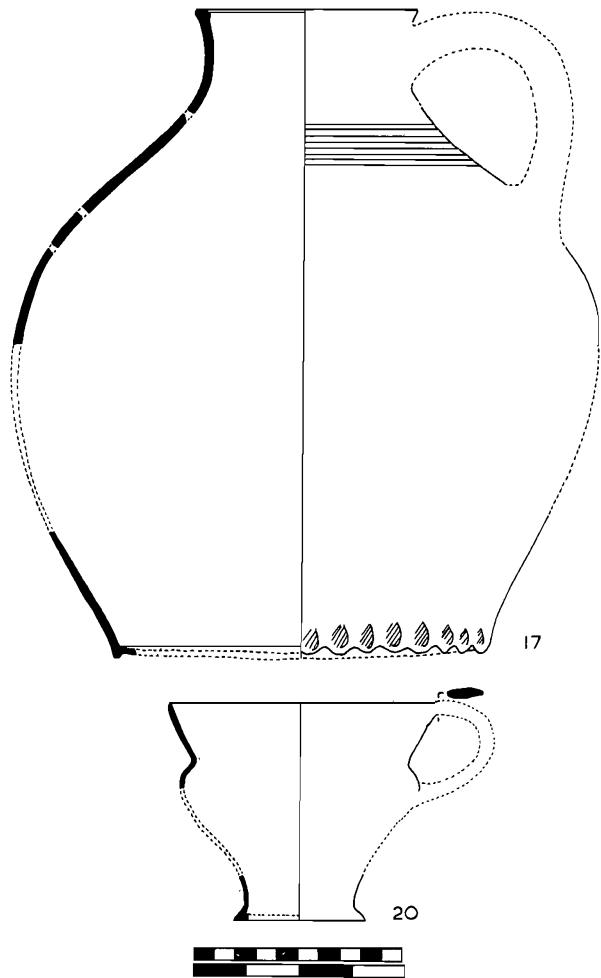


Fig. 4. Pottery from 199 Borough High Street.

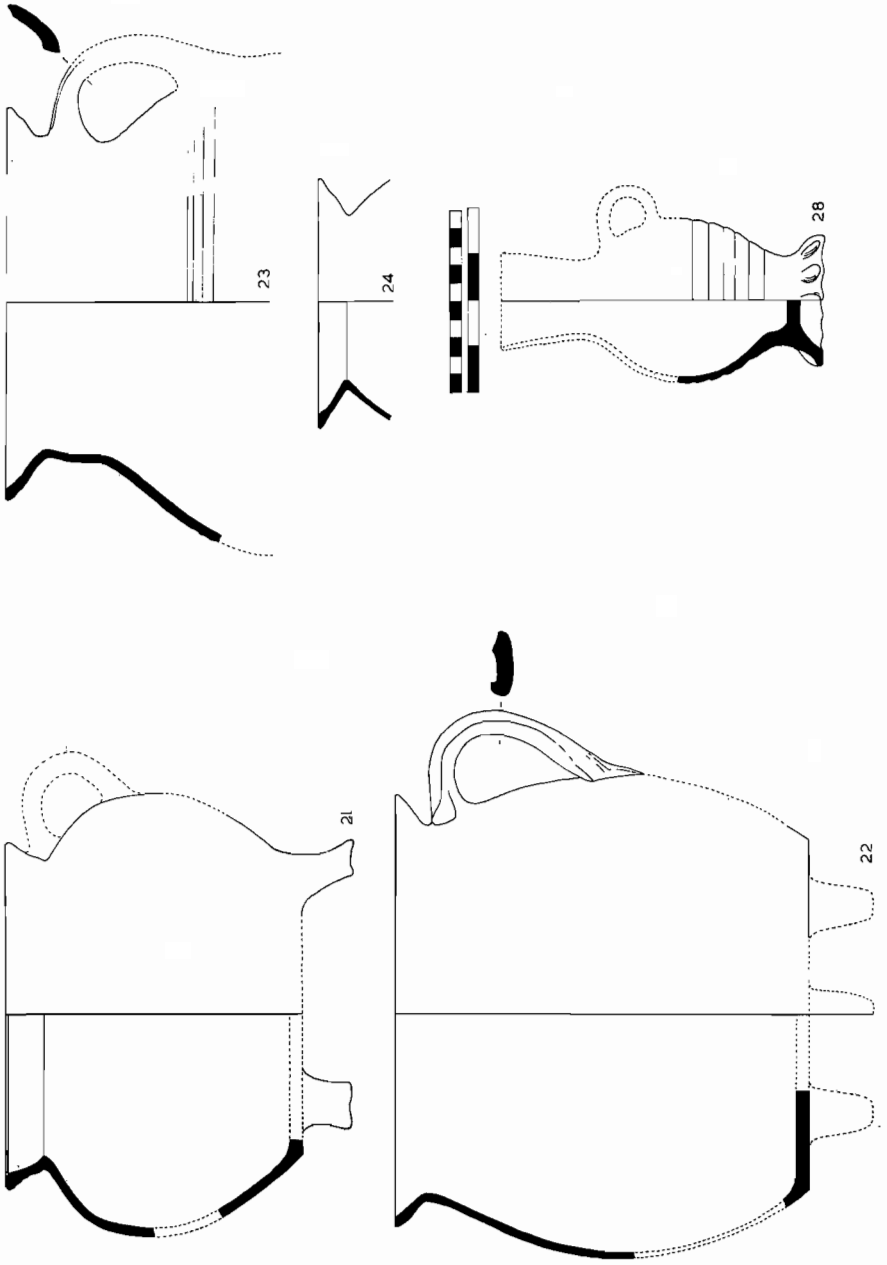


Fig. 5. Pottery from 199 Borough High Street.



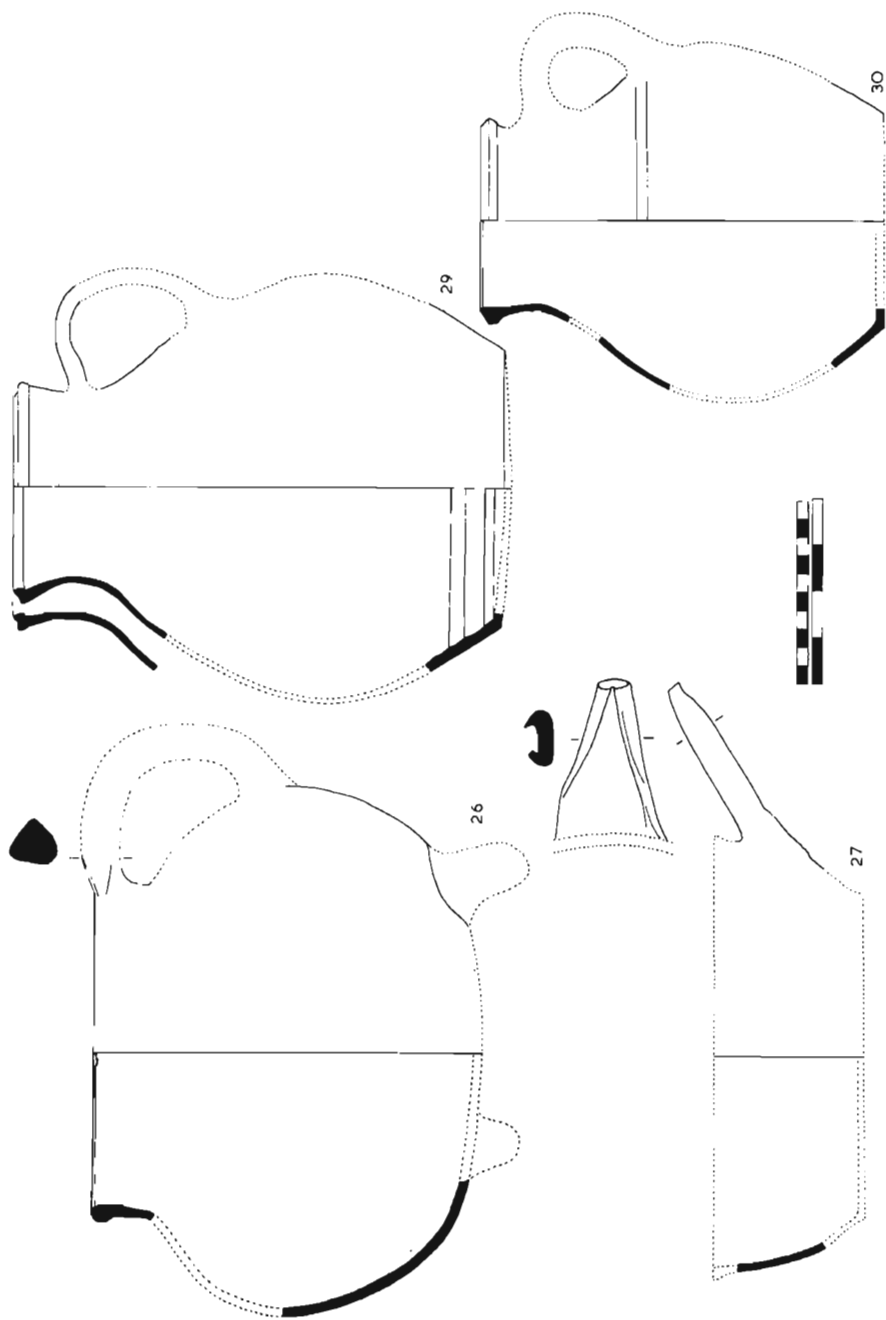


Fig. 6. Pottery from 199 Borough High Street.

23. Pipkin of orange-brown ware. Patches of brown glaze externally. Decorated by rilling on shoulder.
24. Rim of orange-brown ware. Patchy yellow glaze internally. Feet from a larger tripod pipkin of identical ware.
25. Pipkin of red-brown ware. Splashes of brown glaze inside rim. Strap handle. Too little to reconstruct satisfactorily. *Not illustrated*.
26. Pipkin of pink ware. Rod handle joining to rim (c.f. Hurst, 1960, Nos. 15 and 16).
27. Simple up-turned handle from skillet of orange-brown ware.
28. Bottom half of a drinking jug of very finely-thrown, buff stoneware. Frilled foot ring. Entirely covered externally, including under the base, with a dull, creamy, transparent glaze. Inside there is a purple-grey sediment stuck to the walls. The fragment has been burnt after being broken. It is hard to be sure of the exact shape from the fragment preserved, but it has been reconstructed as a drinking-jug with flared rim and loop handle (Klein, 1949, Pl. 4 *right*; von Bock, 1969, 43, no. 102) rather than the more normal type of Jacoba jug with an ovoid body, cylindrical neck and larger strap handle (Klein, 1949, pl. 1; von Bock 1969, 39, No. 70) because the shape of the lower part of the body would fit more easily to the former shape.

The vessel falls into the group of Seigburg drinking jugs and beakers which date to the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries. There is no full publication of these simple, utilitarian forms as opposed to the more ornate art pieces but see Klein (1949), von Bock (1969) and also Jarret and Edwards (1963). They are hard to date exactly since the vessels have a long life and few have been found in stratified context.

(The writer is grateful to John Hurst for the foregoing note on the Seigburg vessel)

29. Jug of red-brown ware, incompletely oxidised. Bib of mottled red-brown glaze. Possibly from the 1969 Cheam kiln (Morris, 1969).
30. Jug of red ware incompletely oxidised. Probably bib of brown-green glaze.
31. Three jugs of grey ware, two with zones of bright red oxidation in the body. Same general shape and rim form as 29 but too fragmentary to reconstruct the profile satisfactorily. Decorated with trailed cream slip or paint in bold curvilinear patterns which may include large letters. One jug has a bib of brown glaze. They probably had strap handles. Possibly from the 1969 Cheam kiln (Morris, 1969).
32. Jugs of incompletely oxidised red ware and of grey ware with red surfaces. Some painted white slip decoration. Strap handles. Too fragmentary to reconstruct. Possibly from the 1969 Cheam kiln (Morris, 1969).

Also from this level:

Fragments of off-white and buff Surrey wares. A very low proportion of sherds recovered from the pit and possibly, although not certainly, derived.

The pit was almost certainly rapidly filled with rubbish and the pottery group can be accepted as having a restricted date range. Its precise date is difficult to establish, however, although the presence of West Surrey white ware and the Seiburg drinking jug indicates a date later than 1475. It would be dangerous to argue from the absence of other imported vessels as the rubbish probably came from the nearby prison and exotic imports would be rare. The absence of yellow glazed brown ware (termed Guy's Hospital ware by Dawson (1970) and thought to have been made locally—possibly in Lambeth) may be more significant. A tentative date of *c.* 1500 to 1525 is the most that can be suggested at present.

## REFERENCES

- Canham, Mrs. M., 1969, *Surrey A. S. Bulletin*, 50.
- Cunliffe, B., 1964, *Winchester Excavation, 1949-60*.
- Dawson, G., 1970, *Southwark & Lambeth Arch. Soc. Newsletter*, 26.
- Dunning, G. C. 1937, *A. J.*, XVII, 414-8.
- 1937, *Surrey A. C.*, XLV, 142-5.
- 1938, *Surrey A. C.*, XLVI, 127-8.
- Hurst, J. G., 1960, *A. J.*, XL, 188-194.
- 1962, *Med. A.*, V, 211-299.
- Jarret, M. G., and Edwards, B. J. N., 1963, *Arch. Aeliana*, XLI.
- Kenyon, Miss K., 1959, *Excavations in Southwark*.
- Kleine, A., 1949, *Rheinisches Steinzeug des 15 bis 18 Jahrhunderts*.
- London Museum, 1954, *Medieval Catalogue*.
- Marshall, C. J., 1924, *Surrey A. C.*, XXXV, 79-97.
- Mathews, L. G., and Green, H. J. M., 1969, *Post-med. A.*, III, 1-17.
- Morris, M. 1969, *Surrey A. S. Bulletin*, 60.
- Turner, D. J. 1967, *London Naturalist*, 46.
- Von Bock, B., 1969, in *Volkskunst in Rheinland* (Exhibition Catalogue).