



Fig. 1: medieval pottery from the well-fill from 223-227 Borough High Street.

# A group of pottery from a medieval pit at 223-227 Borough High Street, Southwark

Richenda Goffin

EXCAVATIONS on a site on the east side of Borough High Street, on the corner of Great Dover Street, were carried out by the Southwark and Lambeth Archaeological Excavation Committee between September 1981 and May 1982 (TQ 3241 7973)<sup>1</sup>. A sequence of Roman occupation was recorded, from the mid-late 1st century to the later Roman period<sup>2</sup>. Much of the post-Roman stratigraphy was destroyed by 19th-century cellaring,

but a well and several medieval pits survived. The well contained nine complete medieval jugs, including one intact vessel (Fig. 1). The assemblage appears to have been deposited approximately contemporaneously, that is, during the late 13th century to early 14th century.

This assemblage compares well with groups of a similar date range and quality which have been

1. B Richardson 'Excavation Round-up 1981' *London Archaeol* 4, no. 6 (1982) 165.

2. P Hinton, *forthcoming*.

recovered from other sites along Borough High Street over the last twenty years<sup>3</sup>. Some of the vessels certainly appear to have been of high quality, and several were not locally made, at least one of them being a foreign import. They are all pitchers and jugs, although the other groups referred to also include cooking pots. The nature of the pottery recovered from the site is difficult to interpret. The assemblage gives no indication of representing anything other than abandoned domestic pottery, although it would be pleasant to connect it with the association of Southwark as a centre for the provision of hospitality and refreshment, which began about this time, and was to continue throughout the years through the era of the coaching inns until the arrival of the railways.

1. A Saintonge jug with parrot beak lip and foot-ring base, and pitted and mottled green glaze. The base has a device scratched into the surface of the clay before firing. The vessel is decorated with three applied and thumbled strips running vertically down the middle zone of the pot. This type of Saintonge jug, with a mottled rather than even green glaze, is dated on waterfront sites in the City and Cuckoo Lane in Southampton to the late 13th century, perhaps c 1270<sup>4</sup>.

2. A decorated baluster jug made from a red fabric, with a white slip and lustrous glossy glaze (Fig. 2, no. 1). The fabric is orange/red, and sandy with a grey inner core. The neck and main part of the body is covered with a slip which is also present on the inside of the neck. The vessel has a smooth but slightly mottled lead glaze, which becomes patchy near the base and over the rod handle. The jug is decorated with stamped bosses of a raspberry design on the neck and scallop shells on the body. Further decoration consists of vertical incised lines down the body. The jug has a parrot beak pouring lip. The diameter of the neck is fairly small by comparison with the girth of the vessel, giving it a distinctive and graceful appearance.

Further research is needed to establish the provenance of this vessel. The fabric, slip and glaze are

not dissimilar to green-glazed jugs from the Aardenburg area of South Holland. The stamped bosses of raspberries and scallop shells are also forms of decoration that are commonly used on Aardenburg-type wares<sup>5</sup>. However, the scallop shell stamps used on the Southwark jug are crudely designed by comparison, and no direct parallels for the vessel can be found in published material from this area of the Low Countries.

Aardenburg-type wares were imported to England during this period, and have been found especially on coastal sites of the south and east, such as Great Yarmouth, Kings Lynn and Dover. They have also been recovered from London sites such as the Custom House<sup>6</sup>, and Toppings Wharf on the north side of Tooley Street in north Southwark<sup>7</sup>.

It is possible that this particular vessel was made more locally, although influenced by foreign designs. The use of stamped bosses was a common form of decoration used at certain production centres of the south and east of England, such as Rye, East Sussex<sup>8</sup>. In the London area, both the raspberry and the scallop shell were used on Kingston-type whitewares<sup>9</sup>.

3. A large baluster jug with flared trumpet-shaped neck (Fig. 2, no. 2). The fabric appears to be of London type, although no parallels for it can be found. The neck and body are also covered with white slip, over which is a mottled green-yellow glaze. The vessel is decorated with a mixture of incised lines, stamped bosses and a depressed band immediately under the lower part of the handle attachment. The two type of stamps, the raspberry design and the heraldic shield, are commonly found on Kingston-type ware rather than London-type vessels<sup>10</sup>. However, there must have been movement of potters and cross-fertilisation of influences between the production centres. The shield stamp (in this case inverted) with three chevrons representing the arms of the house of Clare, was also found on a highly-decorated baluster Kingston-type jug excavated at 201-211 Borough High Street: this vessel has an anthropomorphic spout,

3. F S C Celoria and J C Thorn 'A medieval deposit from 244-246 Borough High Street' *Trans London Middlesex Archaeol Soc* 25 (1974) 264-72; J C Thorn, 'Pottery from the medieval pit and well in 201-211 Borough High Street' in *Southwark Excavations 1972-74*, London Middlesex & Surrey Archaeol Soc Joint Pub no. 1 (1978) 133.

4. C Platt and R Coleman-Smith *Excavations in medieval Southampton 1953-69*, Vol 2 (1975) 136.

5. G Dunning 'Aardenburg ware from Manningtree, Essex and finds of Aardenburg ware and other pottery imported from the Low Countries found in England and Wales' *Essex Archaeol & Hist* 8 (1976) 184-99.

6. J C Thorn 'Medieval pottery' in T Tatton-Brown 'Excavations at the Custom House site, City of London, 1973-- Part 2' *Trans London Middlesex Archaeol Soc* 26 (1975) 118-151.

7. C Orton, J Orton & P Evans 'Medieval and Tudor pottery from excavations at Toppings and Sun Wharves, Southwark, 1970-72' *Trans London Middlesex Archaeol Soc* 25 (1974) 70.

8. K J Barton *Medieval Sussex pottery* (1979).

9. J Pearce and A Vince *A dated type series of London medieval pottery. Part 4, Surrey white wares* London Middlesex Archaeol Soc Special paper no.10 (1988) 136-7.

10. *Ibid.*, 43, 101, 108.

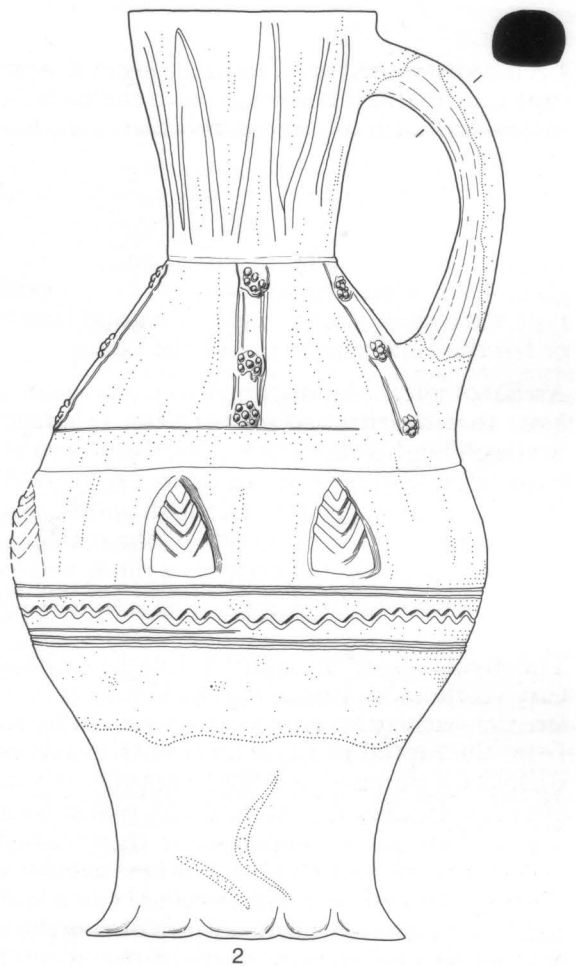
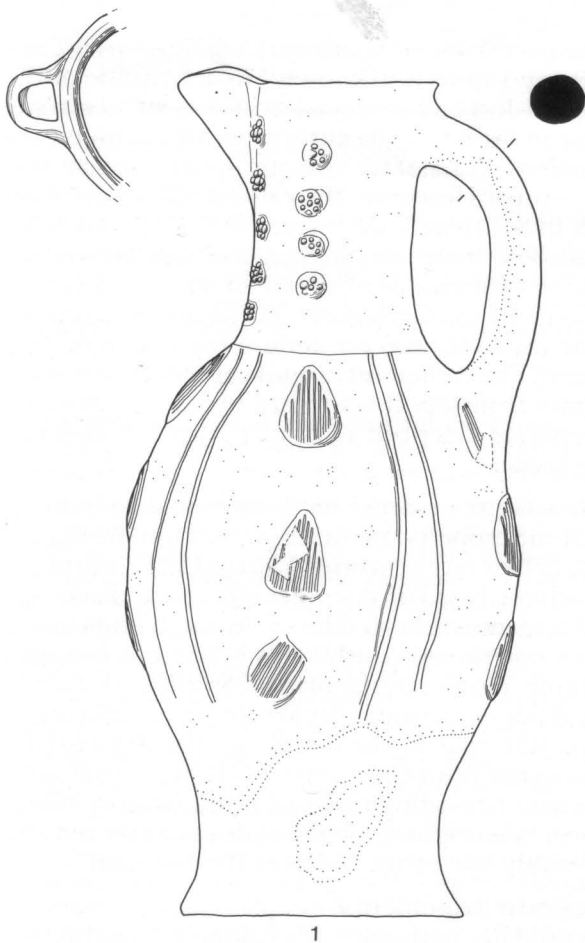


Fig. 2: baluster jugs decorated with stamped bosses. Scale 1/4.  
applied arms, and annular brooch, as well as stamped bosses of wheatears<sup>11</sup>.

4. A complete cylindrical jug made from orange fabric with a deep glossy olive-green glaze. The vessel has a bridge spout, and intermittent thumbing along the base, which is slightly sagging. It is decorated with lightly-applied strips which fall from the base of the neck, in the style of North French jugs. The handle is rod-shaped, and is heavily thumbbed at both of the attachment ends, with deep multiple grooving along the outer part. The vessel almost certainly comes from the Scarborough region of North Yorkshire<sup>12</sup>. This particular ware was widely exported to other parts of the country, especially the eastern coastal area, and also reached the Low Countries and Scandinavia. The vessel resembles the top half of a jug excavated in Kings Lynn<sup>13</sup>. Scarborough ware jugs do occur in London assemblages during the late 13th to early 14th century, but such intact vessels are extremely rare.

5. A polychrome cylindrical-necked baluster jug with applied decoration, consisting of alternating vertical strips of red and green on the body and on the neck, with cordons around the top half of the vessel. The rod handle has applied thumbing at the top. The vessel has a pinkish/orange Kingston-type fabric, with a clear lead glaze spread over most of the body. Mid to late 13th century.

6. A jug made in an orange sandy fabric, similar on form to Kingston-type 'metal copy' baluster jugs<sup>14</sup>. Flared neck with pronounced squarish pouring lip. Slipped with a mottled glaze covering most of the body. Decorated with slight rilling. Late 13th/early 14th century.

7. A London-type pear-shaped jug with thumbbed base. Undecorated apart from the single stabbing down the strap handle. Late 13th/early 14th century.

11. J C Thorn *op cit* fn 3, Fig. 51.

12. P Farmer *An introduction to Scarborough ware and a re-assessment of knight jugs* (1979).

13. H Clarke and A Carter 'The medieval pottery' in *Excavations at Kings Lynn 1963-1970* (1977) 213.

14. *Op cit* fn 9, 20.

8. A heavily-sooted small rounded jug in Kingston-type fabric. Slight cordon around the neck, with intermittent thumbing on the base. Fourteenth century<sup>15</sup>.

9. A pear-shaped drinking jug in London-type fabric. Thumbed base, poorly thrown and misshapen, with low quality pitted and matt green glaze. Like other drinking jugs made in London-type ware, there is scant regard for good finishing or for the final appearance of the vessel.

Archaeological and documentary evidences suggests that by the 13th century the frontage of Borough High Street was well on the way to being built-up, at least as far south as No. 223, beyond the church of St. George and the parish boundary into Newington. On the other side of the road at 244-246, just south of Lant Street, a ditch was excavated which contained pottery of a similar date<sup>16</sup>.

The street formed the main thoroughfare into the City via the stone bridge that had been built in the late 12th/early 13th century. Southwards it led away from the capital to significant centres and ports such as Canterbury and Southampton. It was an obvious place for travellers to stay whilst waiting for the City gates to open, or if they wished to make an early start for a journey southwards. Martha Carlin notes the evidence for a similar extra-mural concentration of inns during the 14th century in other suburbs north of the river<sup>17</sup>. This particular site had an especially desirable location, since it was almost on the corner of the High Street and Kent Street (now Tabard Street), which was on the way to the main route southeastwards.

15. *Ibid.*, 28.

16. F S C Celoria and J C Thorn, *op cit* fn 3.

17. Martha Carlin *The urban development of Southwark c 1200-1550* (1983) Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Toronto.

18. BL: Stowe MS 942, Fol 25 (Drucker no 82).

*continued from following page*

Problems of volunteering

GROMATICUS' Spring column raised the question of where the next generation of archaeological volunteers will come from. My own experience in attempting to find a volunteer slot on a dig in London may provide some insight into why this question has to be raised at all.

I have made several attempts in the last twelve months to volunteer my time to work on digs in the London area by calling selected organisations listed in the *Excavations and Post-excavation Work* column of this periodical. Each time I have been gently rebuffed. Archaeologists do not want amateurs working on digs, I am told, after being asked whether I have ever worked on a dig before. As an investment banker with an American MBA, it's hard to believe that the issue is one of intelligence or ability to learn quickly.

Even if I were able to find a slot, it is unlikely that I would be able to take it; archaeologists, I am told, generally work 9-5,

The association of Southwark with Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* is well known. His description of the Tabard Inn and its genial host was written some time in the late 14th century, perhaps as much as a hundred years after this group of pottery was deposited. However, the earliest reference to an inn in Southwark discovered by Carlin was to an unknown 'tenement herbergerie' and brewhouse on the western side of the street on what was later the site of the Cross Keys. In 1338 it was leased for nine marks (£6.00) per annum for a term of five years<sup>18</sup>. The earliest list of innkeepers in Southwark comes from a poll tax return of 1381, in which 22 people are described as 'oystler', that is hosteler or innkeeper<sup>19</sup>.

No definite evidence has been found to indicate that the property on the site was an inn during the late 13th or 14th centuries. Martha Carlin's detailed gazetteer, based on documentary and archaeological evidence on both sides of Borough High Street does not extend southwards beyond St George's church. However, the plan of Southwark dated c 1542<sup>20</sup>, shows an important building on this corner. Rocque's map of the middle of the 18th century shows the White Swan coachyard was situated on the site. According to Rendle, the Swan or White Swan 'was originally without doubt a very old inn, probably one of the oldest in the Borough'<sup>21</sup>.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Andy Chopping (DGLA) for the photograph, and Sue Hurman (DGLA) for the drawings. I would also like to thank Beverley Nenck (British Museum) and Stephen Humphries (Southwark Local Studies Library).

19. PRO: E179/184/30.

20. Reproduced in W Rendle *Old Southwark and its people* (1878).

21. W Rendle and P Norman *The inns of Old Southwark and their association* (1888) 247.

Monday to Friday. The two days that I have to offer each week are Saturday and Sunday. If archaeologists were interested in leveraging their time by using volunteer labour to any great extent, they could work Wednesday to Sunday once or twice a month.

Perhaps I display an amateur's naivete, but if an archaeological site is going to be destroyed anyway (e.g. by a new office block), isn't it better to excavate a wider area using volunteers than a considerably smaller area using only experts? Once a site is gone, it's gone forever, and the window of opportunity for archaeological excavation on a given site is usually measurable in weeks rather than months.

Is the question where future volunteers will come from, or is it whether this club is taking new members?

Peter Burrow  
19 Prince Albert Road,  
London NW1 7ST