



Pl. 1. Anthropomorphic/zoomorphic jug from Aberdeen showing the face on Panel 3.

THE DEAN'S DUMP? OR THE MERCHANT OF STAFFORD?

This note takes a peek into the material culture of a well-to-do citizen or cleric and offers thoughts on some fifteenth-century Valencian lustrewares and divers other wares from the garden of a large town-centre property in Stafford.

Staffordshire is a landlocked county in the English Midlands. As might be expected, excavations of medieval sites within Staffordshire, including those deemed to be 'high-status', have produced little in the way of pottery imported from the rest of England, or abroad (Ford 1995, 19), but here we report a finding of fifteenth-century Valencian lustrewares in Stafford.

Excavations at a number of sites in the county town of Stafford between 1975 and 83 and under the directorship of Martin Carver, examined a broad sample of deposits of all dates — Roman, Saxo-Norman, medieval and post-medieval — and produced vast quantities of artefacts. The site and finds recording were excellent, but there is no synthesised, published excavation report. The artefacts and site archives are held at the City Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent, where one of the authors (DAF) is able to spend some time in research on the post-Conquest medieval pottery. The aim is to establish a dated ceramic sequence, with which other sites from the county may be compared. Stafford was founded as an Aethelflaedan *burh* in AD 913, and was a pottery production centre during this Saxo-Norman period (Ford 1995, 29–31 and 38–40).

One such Carver site is St. Mary's Grove, Stafford (Fig. 1). This small east-west lane lies in the centre of the town, to the north of St. Mary's church (SJ 9212 2327). Tenements nos. 7 and 8, on the north side of the lane, were excavated in 1979–83 under the supervision of Jon and Charlotte Cane. (The main site code is ST29; codes ST18 and ST22 were also used; see Ford 1995, 30. The group museum accession code for artefacts and archive from the site is 1993.K29).

This site was selected above all the others in Stafford for further study because:

- All periods of occupation, from Roman to post-medieval, are represented in well-stratified sequences.
- Throughout these sequences, there are sufficiently large assemblages of pottery (by box: Roman 0.5, Saxo-Norman 5, post-Conquest medieval and late medieval 85, post medieval 45), which are not swamped by the waste from Stafford/ Stafford-type ware production.
- An initial sort of the pottery showed a wide range of types to be present, from cooking pots to tableware, much of it unabraded.
- The late medieval to post-medieval transition period seemed well-represented. Dating the changes, and charting the progress seen in potting technology at the end of the Middle Ages is of particular relevance to Staffordshire, the home of the Potteries, and to other large-scale production sites in the Midlands, such as Ticknall, Derbyshire (McCarthy and Brooks 1988, 426 and 428) and Chilvers Coton, Warwickshire (Mayes and Scott 1984, 37, fig. 16).

Within the pottery assemblage from ST29, a small but important group of Valencian lustrewares was identified. There are 17 sherds, comprising 5 vessels:

Catalogue (for a discussion of the contexts see below).

Lugged bowl: (Fig. 2.1; Col.Pl.1 and 2, bottom right). Acc.no.1993.K29.5. Three fragments in good condition, recovered from site ST29 I context 1319 (larger fragment) and ST29 I 1012 G3 (finds plotted by one metre grid square). All-over tin glaze with interior and exterior gold lustre decoration. The interior decorative motifs consist of alternate bands of 'spurs' (*acicates*) and of crossed lines. On the exterior, the motifs are encircled palmettos with dots and five-pointed stars. These pottery motifs are well known from sites outside Spain, such as Corsica (Berti and Tongiorgi 1975, 18–20), Avignon (Carru 1995, 72), Delft (Hurst *et al* 1986, 50–1) and Southampton (Platt and Coleman-Smith 1975, Vol. II, fig. 205.1302). The motif is usually dated to the second half of the 15th century, because of its association with the depiction of dated shields, such as those of Queen Mary of Castile, wife of Alfonso of Aragon (1416–58) (Ainaud 1952, fig. 94) and the Boil family, lords of Manises (c. 1475; van de Put 1927, plate 9D). Similar bowls were used as ornaments on the walls of the church of St Caterina di Sisco on Corsica and appear to be contemporary with its original construction in c. 1443 (Berti and Tongiorgi 1975). Finally there is the archaeological evidence from sealed contexts at Avignon, where the pottery is dated c.1470 (Carru 1995, 22).

Jug: (Fig. 2.2; Col.Pl. 1, left). Acc.no. 1993.K29.6. Eleven body sherds from five different contexts as follows: seven sherds from ST29 I 1012 (plotted finds from grid squares B1, B2, C3, F2, F4 and F6 (2)), one sherd each from ST29 1315 N3 (plotted), 1372, 1484 and 1486. All-

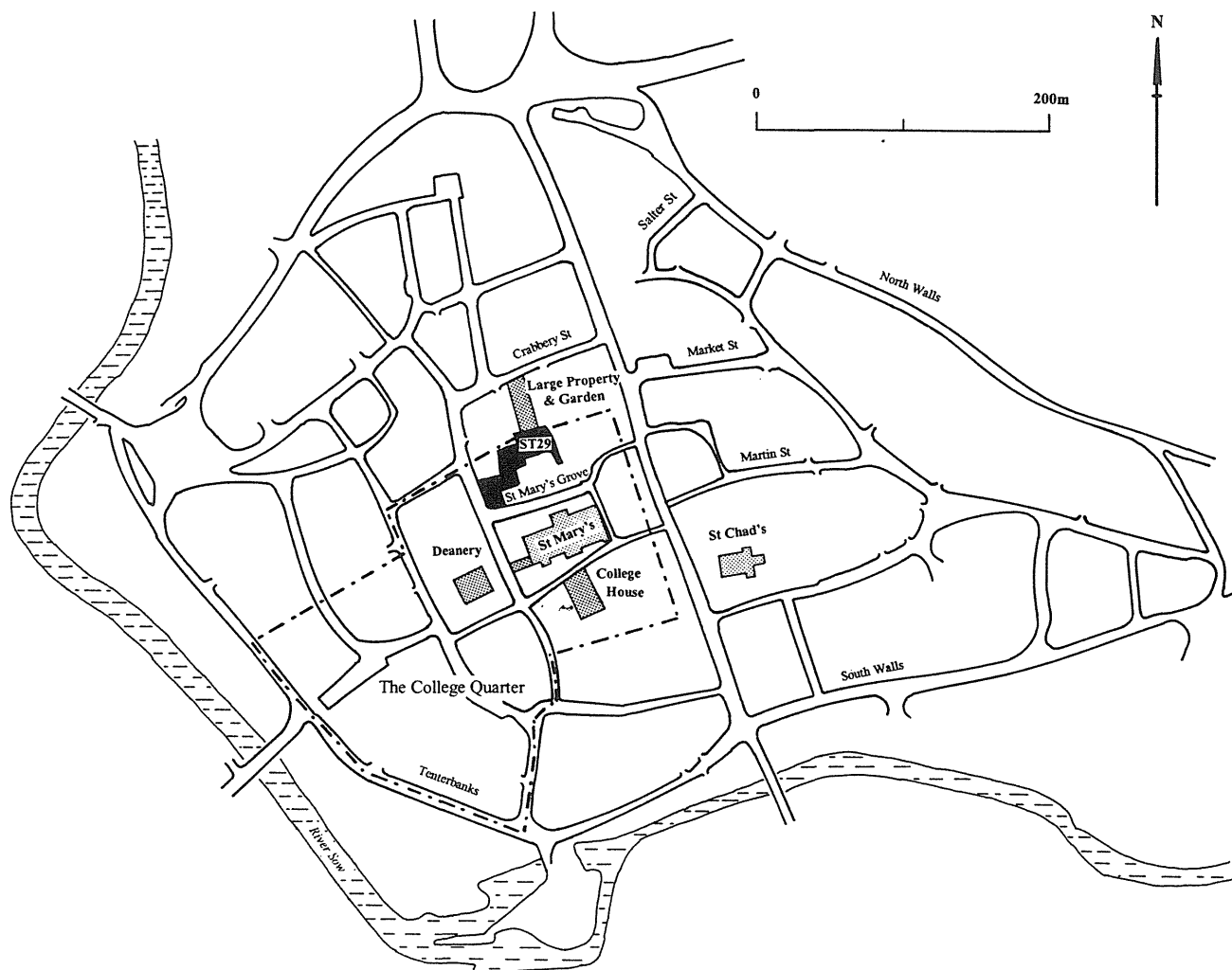


Fig. 1. Location plan for sites and streets in Stafford town (drawn by Noel Boothroyd).

over tin glaze with exterior lustre decoration. Most of the lustre has faded away, although the decoration can be seen under ultra-violet light. The motifs are alternating sets of circles, some with a solid lustre centre and others with small vegetal patterns. Small bowls decorated with circles with centres painted in lustre and marked in blue were being produced in Manises, Valencia, at the end of the 14th and beginning of the 15th centuries, and examples have been recovered from excavations at the potters' workshops (Algarra and Berrocal 1994); exported examples also appear in excavations in later contexts, as at Avignon, c. 1430–1445 (Carru 1995, 69). However, the combination of the circle pattern together with the vegetal motifs is most unusual and no exact parallel is known to the writers.

Dish or plate: (Fig. 2.3; Col.Pl.1 bottom centre, 2 left). Acc.no.1993.K29.7 from ST29 I 1309. Fragment of rim, all-over tin glaze, blue and gold lustre on the interior with lustre on the underside. The only motifs visible are the fronds of a fern on the underside, and a concentric blue and lustre band marking the join of body and rim. Below this there are indications of a band of letters of the type dated to the 16th century (Ainaud 1952, 98–9) but the profile of the dish is more often found in the first half of that century (Coll 1990, 52).

?Vase: (Fig. 2.4; Col.Pl.1 top right). Acc.no.1993.K29.8. One fragment from ST29 1461. Body sherd with all-over tin-glaze and exterior copper lustre decoration. The

fragment is too small to see the entire decorative motifs but the visible lines and knots are usually found with curved leaves (*atauriques*) and dated to the end of the 15th century (Martínez Caviro 1991, 163). The diameter of the vessel is too narrow to be an albarello or drug jar, but it could be a vase (Fig. 2.4a). Vases are rarely documented, perhaps because they are more difficult to recognise from body sherds unless diagnostic features are present, such as a pedestal foot or distinctive diameter measurement.

?Jug: (Fig. 2.5, Col.Pl.1 top centre). Acc.no.1993.K29.9. One small fragment from ST29 1492 M7. All-over tin-glaze, with blue and gold lustre concentric bands on the exterior. The fragment is too small to be identified with any certainty, the thickness of these bands is more often seen on pieces dated to the beginning of the 15th century (Martínez Caviro 1991, fig.134–8).

Other pottery

Valencian lustreware has not been recognised in Staffordshire before. All of the contexts containing it had remarkably similar pottery assemblages, typical of domestic assemblages of this date except for the presence of the rare lustreware (other artefact groups have not yet been checked). Even without the dating provided by the lustrewares, it is possible to date the other pottery to the

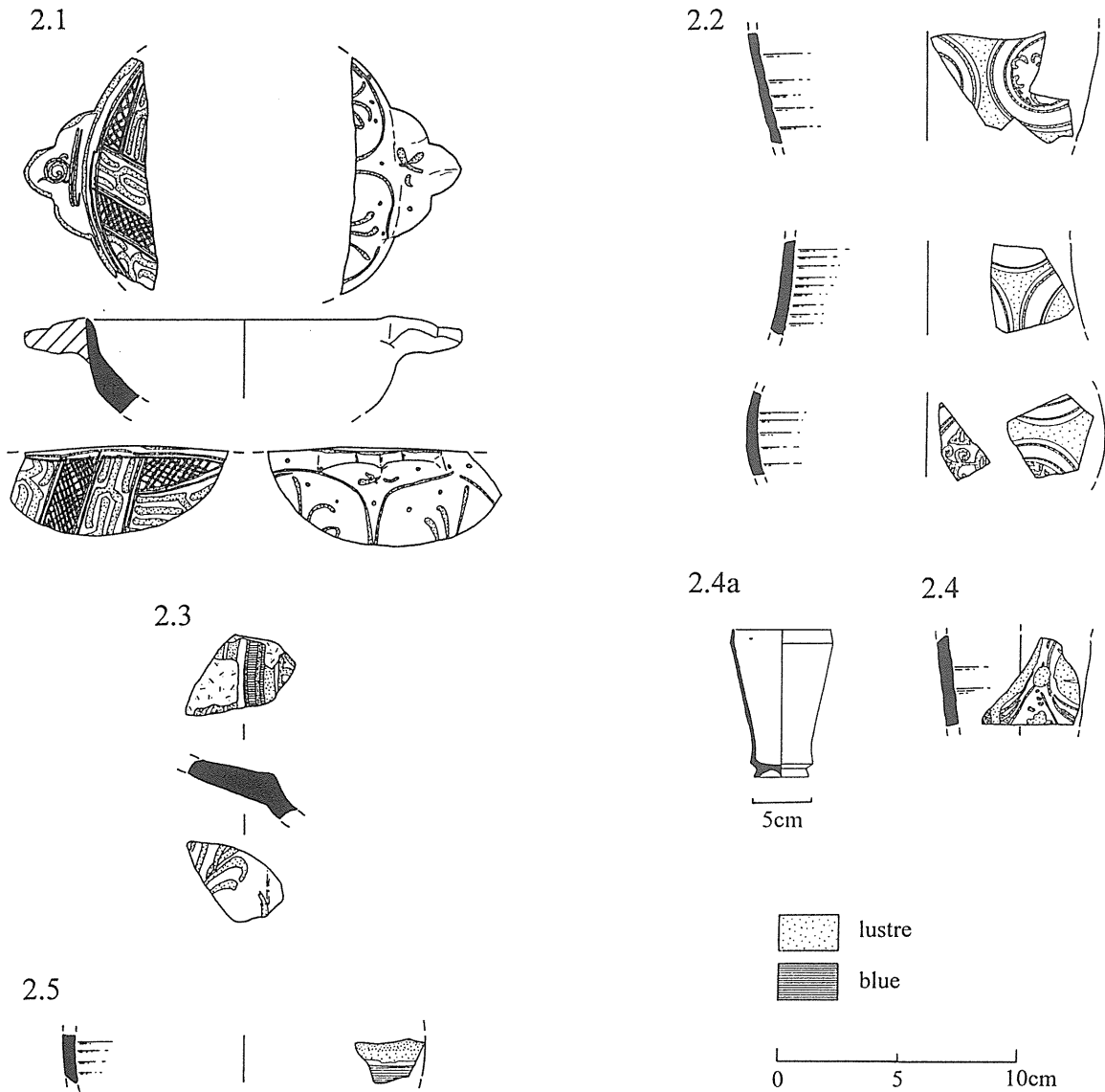


Fig. 2. Valencian lustreware (drawn by Noel Boothroyd). No. 1: lugged bowl; No. 2: jug; No. 3: dish or plate; No. 4: ?vase (reconstruction of vase (2.4a) after Lerma 1992, 40).

15th to 16th centuries. Residual medieval pottery can be clearly distinguished. The assemblages are dominated by the local late medieval coarsewares, known as late medieval orange ware or Midlands Purple (Ford 1995, 35–6 and 57–8). Forms seen in these groups are: deep bowls or small pancheons, lid-seating cooking pots or jars, broad-mouthed handled jars or jugs and a chafing dish fragment. These probably date to the late 14th to 16th centuries.

All the lustreware-bearing contexts except ST29 1492 also contain locally produced Cistercian ware which has a date range of 1480–1640 (Ford 1995, 36–7 and 59–60) in the following forms: small two-handled cups with a sinuous profile, straight-sided tankards with some rilling, thick-walled jug fragments, and one slightly unusual form — a small, flaring-walled cup on a slight pedestal. Some of the cup and jug fragments are simply decorated with applied pads of white clay (appearing yellow under the glaze). These pads are plain or stamped circles (seen on cups) or larger scored ‘oakleaves’ (seen on jugs). Similar decorative oakleaves are known from Wrenthorpe, Yorks (Moorhouse and Slowikowski 1992, 92) and Little Birches glassworks

site, South Staffs (Ford, *forthcoming*). Several of the Cistercian ware sherds have features characteristic of wasters: handle stubs coated in glaze, where the handle has pulled away during firing, glaze-run right through cracks in the body, spalling (including one piece with a hole right through the base) and shraff adhering to inner and outer faces. It should be borne in mind that earth for levelling the site may have been imported from outside the plot, but it is doubtful that this would have come from far away. A production site for Cistercian ware has not yet been identified in mid-Staffordshire.

Other wares present in very small quantities include: South Netherlands Maiolica (one fragment of altar vase, from near the lug), Tudor Green (a few tiny rim and body sherds) and German stoneware (a few plain body sherds).

The archaeological context

The Valencian lustreware vessels came from what appear to be late medieval and post-medieval dumped levelling layers (nine of the 17 sherds from contexts 1012, 1461)

over an early medieval ground surface, fills of rubbish pits (F102-context 1309, F110-1315, F177-1523) and a posthole (F118-1372) sealed by or cut into these levelling layers and fills of a garden gully (F164-1486) and a boundary ditch (F114-1319, same as F165-1484). Context 1492 was defined as 'trample', as it was the main site walkway!

Context 1012 appears to have a broad date range (16th-19th century), but the layer was extensively machined prior to hand-excavation; definition of stratigraphic relationships was difficult because of re-use and recutting of features and lenses of different soil types within the levelling layers, and it is clear that several layers, plus features and late silting layers, were excavated as one.

The position of the plotted finds within the levelling layers has not yet been checked but the features containing Valencian lustreware were close together and interlinked or intercutting: the east-west ditch F114/F165 was interpreted by the excavators as the possible remains of the northern part of St. Mary's college quarter boundary, which would have also formed the rear (southern) boundary of a large property running off Crabbery Street — the next east-west lane to the north of St. Mary's Grove. The college was attached to the church of St. Mary's until its dissolution in 1548 (Carver 1979, fig. 3). An alignment of postholes which included F118-1372 was thought to be a fence alongside the boundary ditch. The rubbish pits clustered to the north of the boundary, which would have been the bottom of the garden or yard of the Crabbery Street property. This close grouping would suggest that the Spanish vessels were not brought in with any levelling earth. Some of the nine sherds from the levelling layers may have come from unrecognised features. An examination of the finds plot may help to clarify this.

The historical context

The production of Valencian lustreware was at its peak during the 15th century. Members of the Spanish royal household had tableware sets specially made for their own use (Osma 1906), and members of the French aristocracy displayed their dishes in the principal rooms of their homes (van de Put 1904, 15-6). Even Spaniards lower on the social scale would have had at least a couple of Valencian lustreware dishes secured in cupboards for use on special occasions (Equip Broida 1984, 208). This type of pottery was regularly traded throughout the Mediterranean and exported to northern Europe where it is found on excavations. So far about one hundred findspots are known in Great Britain, mostly in the south but with a notable inland distribution (Gerrard *et al* 1995, 287).

This Spanish lustreware group is the first identified from Stafford, though a Spanish turquoise-glazed vessel is also known from the town (Gerrard *et al* 1995, 294). One sherd of Valencian lustreware was recovered during excavations in Salter Street in December 1994 (Fig. 1. Earthworks excavation: L. Dodd, pers. comm.). There are two likely candidates for the disposal of these exotic lustreware vessels: the occupants in the late 15th or 16th century of either the large property on Crabbery Street to the north of St. Mary's church, or the deanery of the college of St. Mary's. Their relative merits may be considered in terms of the known archaeological and historical evidence. It should be emphasised here that so far the documentary research has not been exhaustive and is from secondary sources.

The full history of the property north of the college quarter is not yet known. Crabbery Street is first mentioned in a deed of 1355, referring to a property of Thomas de Crowebarewe (Stafford Archive Z6b X84). The owner of a

town centre property adjoining the college quarter was likely to have been a prosperous citizen, with the contacts and disposable income to own foreign and showy tableware, which might later be discarded in rubbish pits at the bottom of the garden.

The college of St. Mary's is first mentioned at Domesday, in 1086. At this time the estate included fourteen houses in the town. The overall boundaries and layout of the college quarter are known from documentary research (Carver 1979, fig. 3). Later in the Middle Ages, the collegiate buildings included a house for the dean and, apparently, two separate houses for the canons and vicars choral. The dean's chamber in or adjoining the churchyard, perhaps on the west side, was mentioned in 1295, and by the beginning of the 15th century, the dean's house included a hall, principal chamber, chapel, pantry and buttery (VCH Staffs vol. VI 205-6; Carver 1979, fig. 3). Such a well-to-do clerical household would have been able to afford fine tableware (pewter, bronze and precious metal vessels do not usually survive in the archaeological record, probably because they would have been recycled).

Although the local coarsewares and Cistercian wares in the assemblages could be dated up to the 17th century, the Valencian lustreware vessels cluster in the second half of the 15th or beginning of the 16th century. There are two likely candidates for ownership of these vessels. The first candidate is one of Stafford's well-to-do, but unnamed, citizens, who had contacts, perhaps trading contacts, with London or Southampton; were the vessels discarded at the bottom of the garden perhaps following a house clearance, in the 16th century? The second candidate is one of the deans of St. Mary's College, who from what is known of the deanery, had a comfortable lifestyle; were the vessels discarded into the College boundary ditch and pits to the north of the boundary during the upheaval of the College's dissolution in 1548? It is important to examine the context and history of the site; these are only two of the possible interpretations of the evidence. Without interpretation, these delightful and exotic Spanish vessels are simply another findspot on a map.

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INTERIM STATEMENT ON THE EXCAVATION OF A MEDIEVAL KILN SITE AT EDEN STREET, KINGSTON UPON THAMES

A preliminary desk-top assessment from documentary sources carried out in 1993 led to an on-site archaeological evaluation taking place at 70-76 Eden Street, Kingston upon Thames. The purpose was to assess the nature, extent, survival quality and significance of archaeological deposits likely to be affected by the proposed development of the site for a retail store and associated basement, in accordance with a specification approved by English Heritage. A strategy of trial trenching was devised to achieve a representative sample of the threatened areas. The site had previously been excavated in the late 1960s by Kingston upon Thames Archaeological Society (KUTAS), when a medieval Surrey whiteware pottery kiln was identified to the rear of 70-72 Eden Street (Hinton 1980).

Six trial trenches were investigated during the initial evaluation. Machine clearance revealed a number of large pits on the northern half of the site. These were interpreted as post-medieval gravel extraction pits. Trench 6 was located in the approximate position of the medieval kiln excavated in the 1960s, and revealed the backfilled KUTAS trench and a series of deposits probably associated with the kiln.

THE EXCAVATION

As a result of the initial evaluation, more thorough archaeological excavation took place on-site from 29th March to 2nd June 1995, in accordance with a specialised research design, addressing the presence of one or more medieval kilns, associated structures and industrial activity that may have been present on site. One large excavation area was opened in two stages. A total of four 14th-century medieval Surrey whiteware kilns were exposed and excavated. All were disturbed, although one was relatively well preserved. The kilns had been dug directly into the natural brickearth and lined with a mixture of brickearth and straw. The best example, located in the south-east corner of the excavation, was a two-flued kiln with stoking pits positioned at either end. The kiln chamber housed a central pedestal. The flues of this kiln were constructed from medieval roof tiles and were extant to the point where they began to arch over. Possible kiln capping (again a mixture of brickearth and straw) and the fired clay used to seal the flue openings during firing were found within the kiln backfills, which generally consisted of redeposited waster material and kiln superstructure debris.

Substantial quantities of Kingston-type Surrey whiteware waster material were retrieved from the kiln interiors, stoking pits and waster pits, including many intact vessels. Surrey whitewares were used in London and the Lower Thames Valley from the 13th century onwards. These whitewares are generally divided into three source groups: Kingston-type ware, Cheam whiteware and Coarse Border ware (Pearce and Vince 1988), reflecting the location of known kiln sites in Kingston, Cheam and around Farnham. Kingston-type ware is currently dated in London from c. 1230-1400, and was found at this site dating to c. 1300-1400.

The majority of the pottery assemblage consisted of waster material, in the form of small and large jugs and cooking pots. Other forms, such as crucibles (although some smaller crucible forms may also have functioned as lamps), cups (lobed and plain), bowls, a dripping dish, a condiment dish and a money-box were also found, and at least two anthropomorphic vessels were identified. Many wasters