

# Town and country: The production and distribution of Laverstock wares

Lorraine Mepham\*

*During the medieval period a widespread pottery industry existed across south-east Wiltshire and east Dorset. Its origins may lie as early as the mid-late Saxon period, and by the 13th century it was supplying urban and rural sites across the region, with one known production centre at Laverstock, near Salisbury, and almost certainly others. The evidence for differential consumption of the industry's products by urban and rural populations is discussed.*

## Introduction

This paper, based on that given at the MPRG conference in Taunton, 2016, focuses on the medieval pottery industry based around Salisbury, Wiltshire (Fig 1). The wares produced by this industry are often called Laverstock or Laverstock-type, and are named after the group of kilns excavated just outside the city (Musty *et al* 1969). Ten kilns have been found here, with archaeomagnetic dates in the 13th century. They are associated with workshops which were producing a range of coarse kitchenwares and fine glazed wares; there is one further kiln from the same period within the city (Algar and Saunders 2014). However, these kilns account for only part of the story of medieval pottery production in the region, both the chronological and spatial extent of which were much wider.

## The wares and nomenclature

In the Salisbury area and across south Wiltshire, both the fine- and coarsewares are referred to as 'Laverstock' or 'Laverstock-type' (see Appendix 1). However, coarsewares which are macroscopically very similar (and indistinguishable in hand specimen) are also found across east Dorset, as far south as Poole Harbour, and parts of west Hampshire as far east as Winchester (but excluding the New Forest). Moreover, it is clear that the construction of the kilns at Laverstock in the 13th century did not mark the appearance of a new industry – very similar coarsewares had been supplying the settlement at Old Sarum before the foundation of the new city of Salisbury in the 1220s (Stone and Charlton 1935).

In more recent literature an attempt has been made to group these wares as 'South-east Wiltshire/east

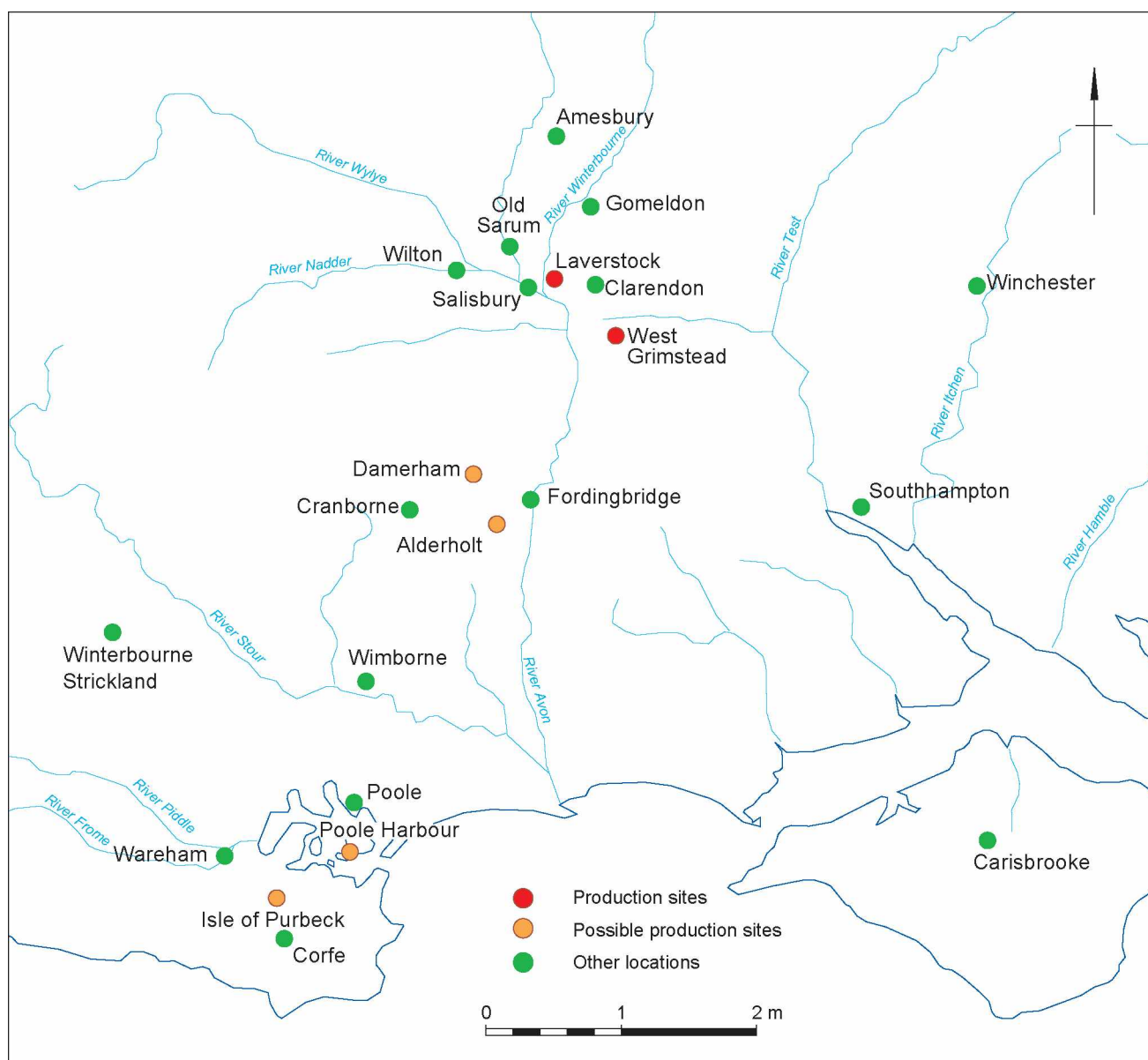
Dorset coarsewares' (eg Mepham 2000a, 104–5), but this nomenclature is by no means widely used. The term 'Wessex coarseware' is proposed here as a less cumbersome and all-inclusive term. It has previously been used to describe a smaller sub-set of these wares in west Hampshire (eg Jervis 2012a), while the term 'Anglo-Norman Wessex coarseware' defines a specific chronological group of the wares in Southampton, encompassing tripod pitchers and jars dating between the late 11th and mid 13th century (Brown 2002, 10–11). The main characteristic of this coarseware tradition is the use of a quartz-rich fabric, often pale-firing in oxidised examples, in which few other inclusions are macroscopically visible.

The finewares, on the other hand, appear to form a more chronologically limited group which can be more confidently linked to the Laverstock kilns. While superficially similar wares are found across east Dorset, there are macroscopic distinctions which can be made, and the term 'Laverstock-type fineware' is retained for these wares. Descriptions of the coarseware and fineware fabrics can be found in Appendix 1.

## Origins

At Old Sarum, Wessex coarseware was found well stratified at the base of a cess pit, associated with a coin of William I (Stone and Charlton 1935, 180, 186), but the ware could well have been used there prior to the Conquest, as the site was used as a refuge from Danish incursions in the early 11th century – citizens of Wilton may have fled there when the town was burnt in 1003 (Chandler 2001, 7). Wessex coarseware has also been found in Wilton, and in Amesbury, where, in both cases, it was associated

\* c/o Wessex Archaeology, Portway House, Old Sarum Park, Salisbury SP4 6EB.



**Figure 1.** Location map, showing the location of all sites mentioned in the text (production and consumer sites differentiated), and the extent of London Clay and Reading Beds deposits. Image: Wessex Archaeology

with 10th–11th-century Michelmersh-type (Mephram 2012; Powell *et al* 2009).

Frustratingly, the ceramic sequence from Old Sarum itself has never been fully recorded. The only major excavations of the site took place in the early 20th century, first by Lt Col William Hawley in 1910–15 (published as a series of interim reports in the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries* between 1910 and 1916; a final report was never published), then later by Stone and Charlton in the 1930s (Stone and Charlton 1935). Not much interest was shown in the pottery from Hawley’s excavations; much of it was discarded and spread over the outer bailey of the castle, and more of it, stored in an old excavation hut on site, was reputedly badly damaged in 1918 when a plane from nearby Old Sarum airfield crashed on it (Musty *et al* 2001, 133). Salisbury Museum holds a remnant

of the assemblage, as well as the pottery from the excavations by Stone and Charlton, who did at least make an attempt to understand the ceramic sequence. Most recently, limited excavation on the western flank of Old Sarum by the University of Southampton (2017–18 and still ongoing) has yielded an assemblage which appears to range from at least the 11th century through to the early-mid 13th century, and which includes small but well stratified groups which will repay further analysis (author’s observation).

Elsewhere, independent dating is scarce, and for a long time the William I coin from Old Sarum remained the earliest fixed point for Wessex coarseware. However, more recently excavated material from east Dorset has provided evidence for a significantly earlier origin. Radiocarbon dates associated with crudely-made jars (Fig 2, 1–2) place these forms in the mid-

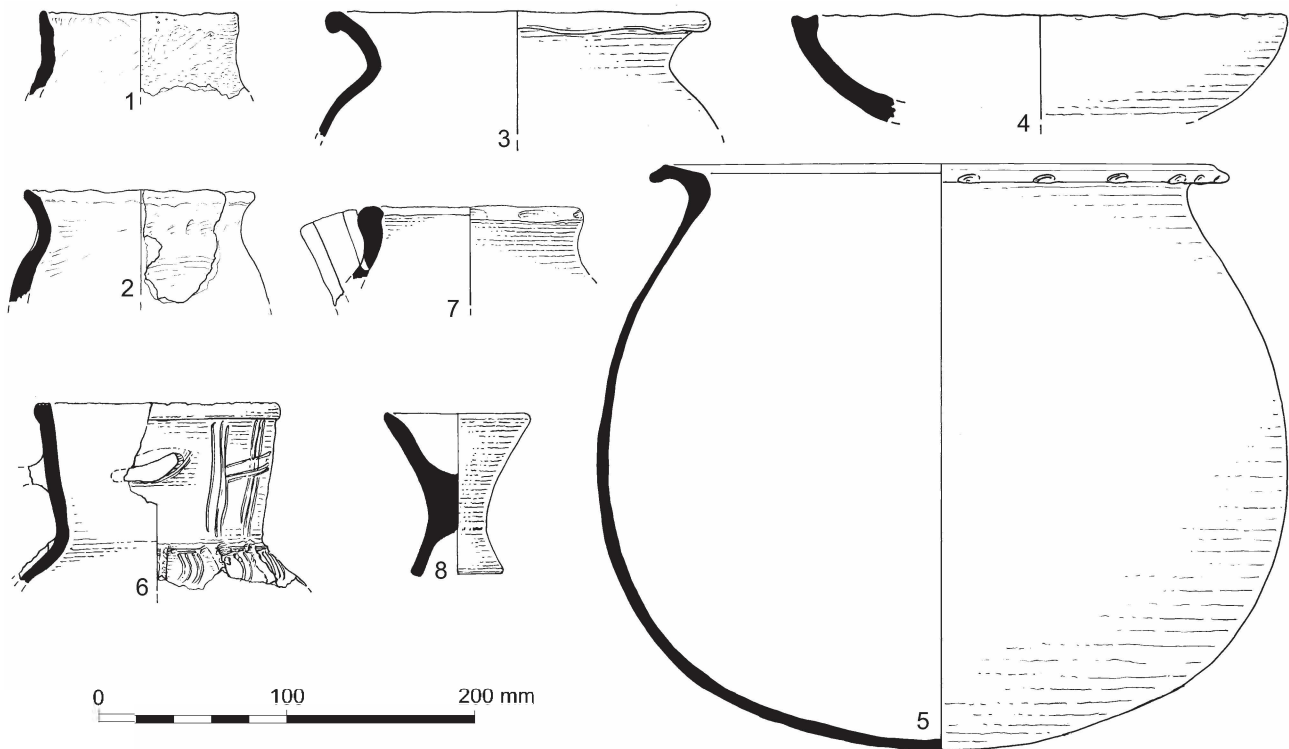


Figure 2. Vessel forms, mid-late Saxon to the Conquest period (nos 1-8). Image: Wessex Archaeology

late Saxon period (mid-7th to late 9th century AD; Mephram forthcoming). Elsewhere in east Dorset, at Winterborne Stickland, slightly better made jars and dishes, associated with flint-tempered, stamp-decorated wares (Fig 2, 3–4), lack independent dating but have been provisionally dated to the 10th/11th century (Mephram 2003a).

At this early date the term ‘ceramic tradition’ is probably more appropriate than ‘industry’ – production is more likely to have been small scale, in a very limited range of vessel forms, for very local markets, but using the same clay sources that would be exploited more extensively later. The existing evidence is as yet too patchy to draw any firm conclusions.

### Conquest period (late 11th–12th century)

By the time of the Conquest, production seems to have become more standardised, with a repertoire consisting largely of rounded jars with simple everted rims, lacking any basal angle and frequently scratch-marked and glazed and decorated tripod pitchers. Occasional bowls or dishes and lamps are also found (Fig 2, 5–8). This apparent standardisation suggests that manufacture may have coalesced around one or a small number of centres. At this period Wessex coarseware was one of several regional types in use in Wessex, including flint-tempered and calcareous wares/fabrics in south Wiltshire and neighbouring parts of Dorset and Hampshire (e.g. Powell *et al* 2009; Mephram 2011; Jervis 2012a), wheelthrown Michelmersh-type wares from west Hampshire (Mephram and Brown 2007)

and wheelthrown Cheddar-type wares, the production of which is presumed to originate from somewhere close to the royal palaces in Somerset (Rahtz 1979).

As for the possible source, Alan Vince defined the tripod pitchers as ‘South-east Wiltshire ware’, and suggested a source in the Salisbury area based on petrological analysis of 12 samples from sites in Salisbury, Devizes, Bristol and Chepstow (Vince 1981, 311; 1983, chapter 2; appendix). Given that the industry was a major supplier to Old Sarum and Wilton (Mephram 2012), this seems probable, and it may indeed be the source of the glazed and decorated tripod pitchers found so widely across the West Country, although the precise production centre(s) remain(s) unknown. Apart from Old Sarum and Wilton, tripod pitchers have been found at Amesbury and Trowbridge Castle in Wiltshire (Powell *et al* 2009, 195; Mephram 1993, fig 38, nos 31–2); Romsey, Winchester and Southampton in Hampshire (Jervis 2012a, 333; Cotter 2011, fabrics MAD and MADW in the Winchester type series; Brown 2002, 10–11, fabric AWQC in the Southampton type series), Carisbrooke Castle on the Isle of Wight (Mephram 2000a, fig 44, nos 41–2, misidentified as local wares); Corfe, Wareham and Sherborne Castles in Dorset (Renn 1960, fig 19, nos CD3 and possibly D7; RCHM 1960, fig 14, 1–2; Mephram 2015, fig 92, P12, P14); and in Bristol (Ponsford 1998, Bristol Pottery Type [BPT] 18C). The predominance of castle sites and early urban centres here is striking; there are very few sites in the rural hinterlands that have produced tripod pitchers of this type (but that might simply be because

fewer of these sites have been excavated). Given both their wide distribution, and the accessibility of clay sources along the band of Reading Beds that outcrops from south-east Wiltshire southwards along the Dorset/Hampshire border down to Poole Harbour, these wares could have been made in more than one place.

## Pottery for a new city (13th–early 14th century)

### Production

Moving forward to the 13th century, the foundation of the kiln centre at Laverstock is surely linked to the foundation of the city of Salisbury (New Sarum) in 1220. Salisbury was designed as an administrative and spiritual centre of the diocese, and the cathedral was dominant from the start, the street grid being laid out around it between 1230 and 1260. Nevertheless, before the mid-14th century, the impetus for the city's expansion was its role as a market and collecting area for the wool of Salisbury Plain prior to export. As a new city, and unlike some other planned settlements of the period, it was spectacularly successful. By 1377 its population has been estimated to have been at least 5000 and, although at this period it was not on a par with either Winchester or Southampton, it was still one of the most populous cities of medieval England. Stimulated by the wool industry, particularly from the late 14th century, by the end of the 15th century Salisbury was one of the most important cloth manufacturing centres in England. From the early 14th century there was much immigration into the city, from as far afield as Exeter, London and Hereford – the population has always been highly mobile. There were close connections with Southampton – Salisbury merchants are known to have owned property there, and vice versa for Southampton merchants. There were similar connections with Bristol and London, and trading interests with various ports in France and the Low Countries (Chandler 2001, 35–47). As a major medieval city, it would have significantly stimulated the demand for ceramics in the area.

There was, however, another stimulus in the form of the royal palace at Clarendon, just a couple of miles east of the city, during the period of extensive refurbishment by Henry III from the late 1220s. Indeed, another kiln site has been identified on the basis of wasters a few miles to the south-east of Laverstock at West Grimstead, within the bounds of Clarendon Park (Musty *et al* 2001, 138). On examination, sherds from this site appear macroscopically identical to the Laverstock kiln material, except for the addition of occasional flint inclusions (author's observation).

The ten excavated kilns at Laverstock lie on the north side of the road linking Salisbury and Clarendon Park, and there were almost certainly other kilns to the south. Both city and palace created a demand for

the Laverstock wares, although their requirements may have been slightly different, as we shall see.

The forms produced in the 13th and early 14th centuries apparently carried on the tradition of round-based jars ('archaic' forms, still scratch-marked); these were not associated directly with the kilns, but were found in pits on the same site, and associated with glazed finewares, so could still have been in use in the 13th century. New jar variants were introduced, including handled jars, cauldrons and pipkins, and a range of bowls and dishes, as well as new forms: curfews, skillets and jugs, the last in both coarse and fine fabrics (Fig 3). Common forms produced in fineware include costrels, bottles, lamps and candlesticks, aquamaniles and roof furniture (Musty *et al* 1969; Musty *et al* 2001). This was clearly a prolific, confident and vibrant industry, expanding into new markets and keen to experiment with new forms. But there are also elements of conservatism, in the retention of the archaic jar forms, the continuing use of handmade techniques alongside wheelthrowing and, as we shall see, current evidence suggests that this period of experimentation did not survive the early 14th century, a time when craftsmanship as a whole was starting to deteriorate.

It is the fineware jugs, however, that are the most characteristic and recognisable products of the industry. They were frequently decorated with polychrome slip designs, and show clear stylistic links with French jugs of the period. These pale-firing vessels did not require an extra coat of white slip to render their appearance closer to their French counterparts, as is seen elsewhere at this period.

Laverstock wares, both fine and coarse, are ubiquitous in Salisbury city, usually comprising more than 85% of any site assemblage and in some cases up to 99% (Table 1), and they are common in the surrounding area – as before, at Wilton and Amesbury, and across south-east Wiltshire. However, as in the 11th and 12th centuries, very similar coarsewares are predominant across east Dorset down to Poole Harbour, following the band of Reading Beds clay. This dominance of the market across the region may reflect a well organised industry, but could equally indicate the lack of movement of ceramics for trade. Either way it highlights the lack of competition from other industries in the region. In Dorset, Paul Spoerry noted the spatial distinction between the coarsewares found in the eastern part of the county (corresponding to Wessex coarseware), and the sandy wares and other coarsewares found to the west (Spoerry 1990).

Spoerry's chemical analysis (1990, 11–14) failed to distinguish between the coarsewares from Salisbury and those from Poole Harbour (the more refined techniques now available would probably be more successful), but suggested that there may have been a source in south-east Dorset (maybe around Poole), as well as at Laverstock, and this is supported by petrological analysis of pottery from Wareham

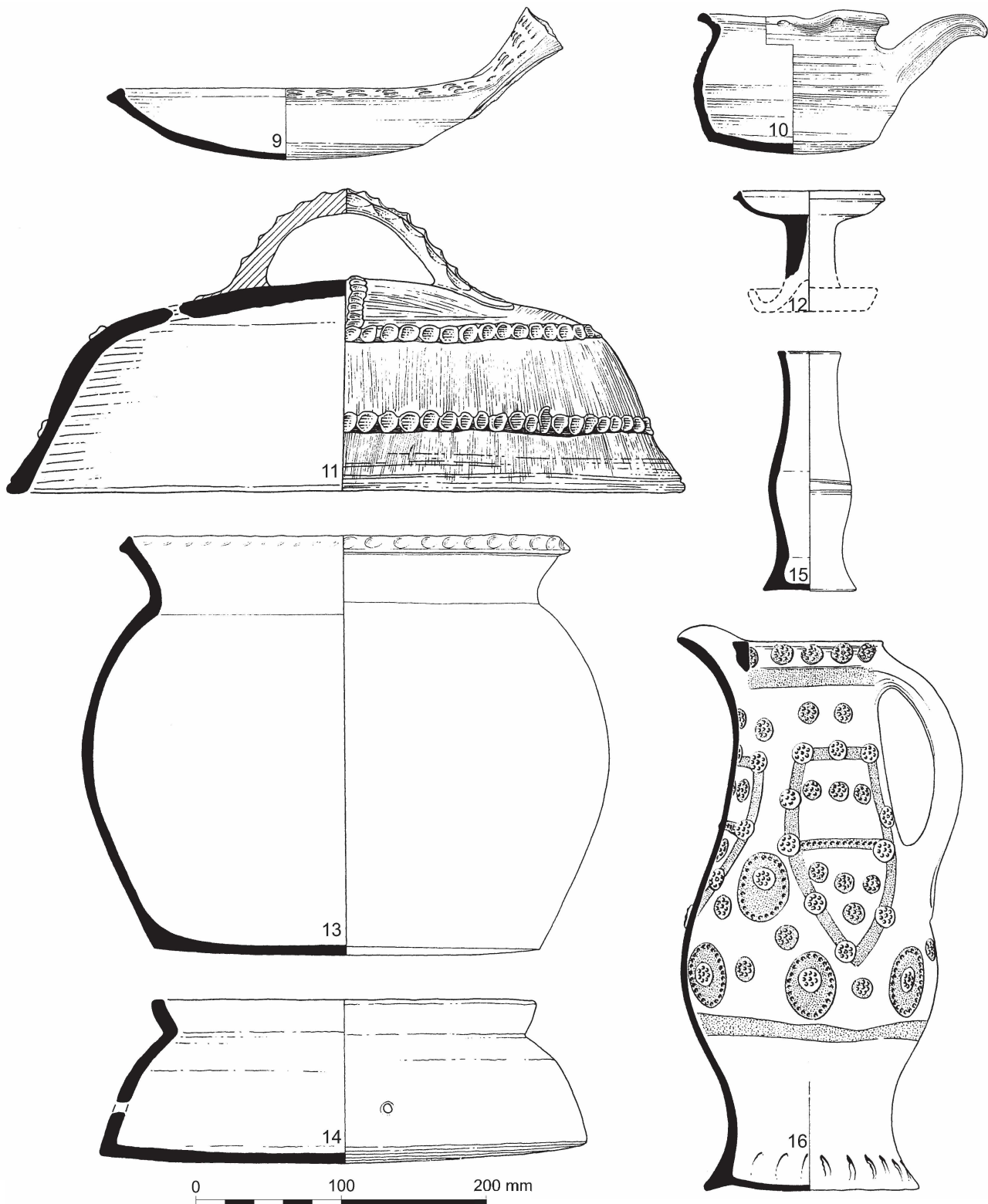


Figure 3. Typical 13th-/14th-century Laverstock wares. Image: Wessex Archaeology (after Musty et al 2001)

(Hinton and Hodges 1977, 61). While there are some subtle differences in fabric across the distribution area, as yet these have not allowed the definition of groups which might be assigned to specific sources or source areas, although there is one vessel form (a shallow dish with 'hammerhead' rim) that is seen only in assemblages from south-east Dorset (eg Barton *et*

*al* 1992, figs 66, 745), and short everted rims with a groove running around the top are also more common in that area (*ibid*, fig 31, 1–13). The position is further complicated by the fact that there are documentary references to 14th-century pottery production at Alderholt and Cranborne, between the two potential sources of Laverstock and Poole Harbour (Draper and

**Table 1.** Proportions of Laverstock-type wares by site. Note: Percentages are calculated by sherd weight, with the exception of sites asterisked (\*), for which sherd numbers only are available.

	Total no sherds	Total wt sherds (g)	Laverstock coarseware	Laverstock fineware	Total Laverstock	Other wares
SALISBURY SITES						
*Anchor Brewery <sup>1</sup>	2542		73.2%	21.5%	94.7%	5.3%
Ivy Street <sup>2</sup>	1069	13775	67.6%	30.7%	98.3%	1.7%
Salt Lane <sup>3</sup>	390	5394	67.9%	19.3%	87.2%	12.8%
Culver St <sup>4</sup>	128	1180	75.9%	14.8%	90.7%	9.3%
St Annes St <sup>4</sup>	76	1006	62.5%	7.4%	69.9%	30.1%
Gigant St car park <sup>4</sup>	150	1975	67.4%	32.5%	99.9%	0.1%
Brown St <sup>4</sup>	235	1583	71.1%	18.7%	89.8%	10.2%
Gibbs Mew <sup>4</sup>	293	3365	57.1%	35.8%	92.9%	7.1%
Trinity Chequer <sup>4</sup>	437	7676	54.4%	34.0%	88.4%	11.6%
Rollestone St <sup>4</sup>	186	3353	70.1%	28.6%	98.7%	1.3%
Bellevue <sup>4</sup>	527	3926	78.9%	15.2%	94.1%	5.9%
New Canal <sup>4</sup>	41	761	46.1%	10.2%	56.3%	43.7%
*Old George Mall <sup>5</sup>	1042		67.3%	27.9%	95.3%	4.7%
subtotal Salisbury	7116					
SITES OUTSIDE SALISBURY						
*Gomeldon <sup>6</sup>	1159		83.5%	5.0%	88.5%	11.5%
Wilton (South St) <sup>7</sup>	270	3935	68.9%	13.3%	82.2%	17.8%
Wilton (Wilton Autos) <sup>8</sup>	773	11336	79.1%	17.6%	96.7%	3.3%
Wilton (Kingsbury Sq) <sup>9</sup>	572	18152	66.2%	19.7%	85.9%	14.1%
Fordingbridge <sup>10</sup>	847	16873	95.5%	3.1%	98.6%	1.4%
*Penny's Farm <sup>11</sup>	486		99.1%	-	99.1%	0.9%
subtotal outside Salisbury	4807					
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11923</b>					

**Key to references:** <sup>1</sup>Mephram 2005; <sup>2</sup>Mephram 2000c; <sup>3</sup>Mephram 2016; <sup>4</sup>Underwood and Mephram n.d.; <sup>5</sup>Unpublished archive data; <sup>6</sup>Musty and Algar 1986; <sup>7</sup>Andrews *et al* 2000; <sup>8</sup>Mephram 2012; <sup>9</sup>Timby 2001; <sup>10</sup>Mephram 2003b; <sup>11</sup>Mephram 2000b

Copland-Griffiths 2002, 31), which is not surprising given that these parishes lie in the heartland of the post-medieval Verwood industry.

In contrast to the coarsewares, finewares from Laverstock/Salisbury are quite distinct from the Poole Harbour whitewares seen in and around Poole (Jarvis 1992, fabrics 4 and 5) and, in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, fineware production was probably confined to the areas around these two urban centres. A kiln has recently been excavated by Bournemouth University in Wareham, the products including glazed jugs comparable to those seen in Poole, some slip-decorated, dating between the 13th and 15th centuries (Paul Blinkhorn, pers comm

September 2015; author's observation). The apparently short-lived production of whitewares in Southampton, as demonstrated by the recovery of wasters, may have been linked to the Laverstock kilns, perhaps in the form of potters moving between the two centres (Brown 2002, fabric STWW; Duncan Brown, pers comm April 2018).

This industry, then, featured urban and probably also rural production, covering a large area. Spoerry observes that east Dorset features more open terrain, and nucleated villages rather than dispersed settlement; it is an area more easily traversed than west Dorset, where pottery production seems to have been more sporadic and generally on a smaller scale (Spoerry

1990, 16). All this was taking place at a time when, as Paul Courtney has pointedly put, the monetarisation of the economy was reaching new heights – money and production for the market were becoming more important in the peasant economy. In ceramic terms, this is reflected by an increased number of production sites across the county, often in rural locations and with limited market areas, as well as a markedly increased volume of ceramics on both urban and rural consumer sites (Courtney 1997, 97).

## Consumption

So how can we view the consumption of Laverstock-type wares across the region? First, it is best to point out the limitations of the evidence. In contrast to the documentary sources, which include references to large quantities of Laverstock jugs being transported from the kilns, for example to Winchester (Le Patourel 1968, 120), the archaeological evidence is patchy. The dataset from Salisbury itself is surprisingly small. The city has benefited in a historical sense by not having been subjected to major redevelopment, but this has limited the areas available for excavation. Furthermore, the city lacks deep urban stratification and as there are few large excavated pit groups the site assemblages are generally small. It has, therefore, always been assumed that much of Salisbury's refuse was disposed of outside the city. The combined assemblage of medieval pottery (ie c 1220–1500) from sites excavated by Wessex Archaeology in Salisbury

amounts to just over 7000 sherds, an astonishingly small quantity for 30 years-of excavation (there have been a few other minor forays into the city by other contractors, only one of which is published to date). The assemblage from Clarendon Palace, for which the major excavations took place in the early 20th century, suffered the same lack of interest as that from Old Sarum, and was not preserved *in toto*, the published report of 1988 including only a sample (James and Robinson 1988).

Outside Salisbury, there is a large published assemblage from Poole (an extensive catalogue but no quantification; Barton *et al* 1992), and there are assemblages from a number of other sites – castles at Wareham and Corfe around Poole Harbour (selectively published: Renn 1960; RCHME 1960), small urban centres in Wareham, Wimborne, Wilton and Fordingbridge (Hinton and Hodges 1977; Draper 1983; Poulsen 1984; Andrews *et al* 2000; Timby 2001; Mephram 2012; Mephram 2003b), and rural sites at Cranborne (Mephram 2000b) and Gomeldon, a deserted village just outside Salisbury (Musty and Algar 1986). Few of these reports contain published pottery quantification; the data from Clarendon and Gomeldon has been compiled solely from the published illustrations, and it can only be hoped that the overall proportions of vessel forms are representative of the whole.

The following discussion focuses on Salisbury itself, with a selection of other sites for comparison (mostly those excavated by Wessex Archaeology, as the data

**Table 2.** Numbers of vessel forms by site (calculated by minimum number of vessels [MNV], based on diagnostic vessel part)

	S	CL	W	CR	G	F
Jars	236	17	66	37	44	39
Handled jars	13	1		2	5	4
Pipkins	1					
Bowls/dishes	32	5	5	6	9	4
West Country dish	3		2		2	
Dripping dish			1			
Skillet	7				3	1
Curfew	18		2		1	3
Tripod pitcher	1		8		2	1
Fineware jug	95	20	6		6	6
Coarseware jug	44			4	10	19
Cistern	1					
Lamp/candlestick	4		3	1	1	1
Other	5	2	1			1
<i>total no forms</i>	455	43	93	50	83	78

**Key to sites:** S = Salisbury; CL = Clarendon; W = Wilton; CR = Cranborne; G = Gomeldon; F = Fordingbridge

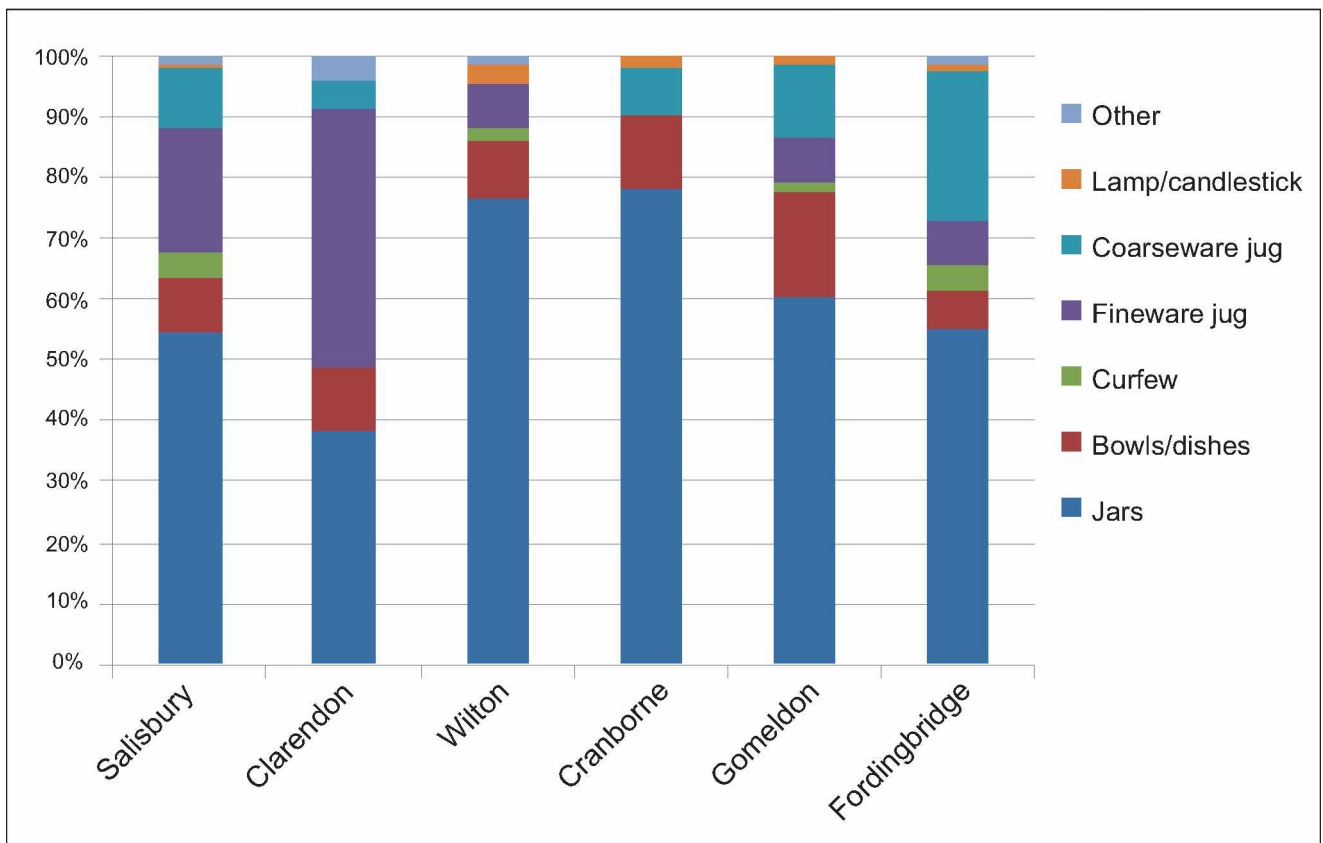


Figure 4. Bar chart showing proportion of vessel forms by site. Image: Wessex Archaeology

is more accessible). Most of the data belongs to the period from the 13th to mid-14th century, although, as we shall see, identifying the later medieval horizon is problematic. Most of the sites concerned (Salisbury, Clarendon, Wilton, Gomeldon) might be expected to have been supplied by the Laverstock kilns. Fordingbridge and Cranborne could have used the putative kilns in the Verwood area, or have been supplied by a pottery at/near Poole Harbour.

The numbers of vessel forms are given in Table 2, and these data have been summarised as proportions in Fig 4. Despite the limitations of the data, some patterns seem clear, and are not unexpected. A major concentration of Laverstock fineware is seen in Salisbury, where it forms up to 36% of any site assemblage, and rarely less than 20% (Table 1), and it is also well represented in Wilton (13–20%), and (from the evidence of the illustrated vessels) at Clarendon (Fig 4). Laverstock fineware vessels are also present in the small urban centres further from Salisbury, but seemingly in smaller proportions (as at Fordingbridge). On rural sites they range from up to 5% of the total assemblage at Gomeldon to being virtually absent at Cranborne, being substituted by patchily glazed coarseware equivalents, sometimes with simple slip decoration. Coarseware jugs are scarce on most sites in Salisbury (although there is a rare concentration at the Anchor Brewery site in the south-east of the city: Mephram 2005), but are more common than

Laverstock fineware jugs in Fordingbridge. There are patterns, too, within the Laverstock finewares. The complex decorated wares seen in the kiln assemblages from Laverstock are not as common in the city: jugs in Salisbury tend to be plain, or are decorated simply. Where, then, did the highly decorated jugs go? There was an obvious consumer at Clarendon Palace, and this assemblage does seem to contain a higher proportion of complex decorated jugs, although (given the limitations of the evidence already mentioned) this is based purely on the illustrated sample.

Turning to other vessel forms, the full range of the Laverstock output is represented in Salisbury, although jars, bowls/dishes and jugs are predominant. Outside the city, the range contracts (although this is based on a much smaller sample), and consists very largely of jugs, jars, bowls or dishes and adaptations thereof that were geared towards food preparation, such as cauldrons and skillets. Fordingbridge, however, produced a costrel and a candlestick, while single examples of lamps were found at Gomeldon and Cranborne.

What does it all mean? The dataset is slight, but what evidence there is could be taken to suggest that there is a distinction between medieval urban and rural material culture, in that urban inhabitants chose luxury items (not just pottery), relying on the local market, whereas the rural population were more likely to purchase household assets in order to generate



surplus (an argument put forwards for general consumption patterns by Jeremy Goldberg; Goldberg 2008). In this scenario, the inhabitants of rural and urban sites had differing ceramic requirements – the former needing vessels for food preparation and storage (i.e. purely functional forms), whereas the urban population also required tablewares. However, this premise is debatable, and the situation was almost certainly more complex than this. Courtney (1997, 99) suggests a number of factors that might affect an individual's acquisition of portable goods including (but not restricted to) ceramics:

- Economic factors (standard of living, purchasing power)
- Cost of item (and competing items, e.g. metalwork)
- The choice available in the marketplace (greater in larger urban centres)

A relative lack of objects could just reflect distance from markets and cultural differences rather than poverty. The village of Gomeldon, for example, could have benefited from its proximity to Salisbury to access the fine glazed wares that are virtually absent at the more isolated Cranborne settlement. One of the problems here is our lack of knowledge of the price differentials between plain and decorated ceramic products. Even highly decorated wares could have been afforded by a wide range of the population. Frans Verhaeghe, for example, has argued that the development of highly decorated medieval wares in north-west Europe from the late 11th to the 14th century represents market segmentation and competition with the lower end of the metal industries for a share of the luxury market, and that this is linked to the wider commercialisation of medieval society and the percolation of the monetary economy into the countryside (Verhaeghe 1991; 1997).

A recent survey of escheators' inventories from the 13th to 16th centuries of the goods and chattels of 'felons' (which could include suicides and those fleeing accusations of crime as well as those convicted) supports the idea of consumer choice, and a blurring of the distinction between 'urban' and 'rural' culture. The survey showed that peasants did have some spending power and that the rural population did occasionally invest their disposable income in luxury goods (eg metal vessels; Jervis *et al* 2015). A similar pattern has emerged from a recent study of pottery consumption as an indicator of food culture in medieval Hampshire, which also shows less of an urban/rural divide (Jervis 2012b).

Unfortunately, the identification of 'luxury goods' in the Salisbury area is hampered by the fact that very few imported ceramics, or vessels in metalwork or glass, have been found archaeologically. Despite the close connections between merchants in Salisbury and Southampton, and the written evidence of

the Southampton brokage books, which recorded imported ceramics travelling from the port to Salisbury (Brown 2002, 132), only a handful of imported sherds have ever been identified in the city.

### Late medieval period: contraction or continuity?

There is a problem here, which is common across much of Wessex, in that it is difficult to isolate late medieval horizons. At Clarendon, the published report states that there is little pottery that can be ascribed with any confidence to the period after 1275, and that nothing can be dated later than the early 14th century, despite the fact that documentary evidence shows much activity at the palace in the 14th and 15th centuries. An increase in the amount of metal household vessels and decline in ceramics at this period cannot solely account for this apparent scarcity, nor can disruption to the ceramic industry caused by the Black Death. This may well have been the case, but although Salisbury suffered during the Black Death, as elsewhere, recovery was rapid, and the later 14th and 15th centuries were a period of growing prosperity in the city (Chandler 2001, 85). In the surrounding rural areas, however, recovery may not have been so rapid, and small-scale rural potting enterprises may not have survived.

It should also be noted that there is a certain lack of clarity in our understanding of the sequence of pottery represented by the Laverstock kilns assemblage, and how that informs any attempt to date pottery from consumer sites from the 13th century onwards. The kilns themselves generated archaeomagnetic dates between *c* 1230–75, and a chronological sequence of kiln and pit groups on the site was proposed, based on a combination of these dates, stratigraphic relationships and typological traits, primarily based on jug form and decoration (Musty *et al* 1969, 92–3, 98). This chronological sequence was reviewed in the light of more recent evidence from excavations in Salisbury, and extended into the early 14th century (Musty *et al* 2001, 138–9). There are no recorded deep stratified archaeological deposits from Salisbury, or on other sites in the region, that might help either to confirm or to modify this chronology. Recent re-examination of the kiln material has suggested that the proposed chronology may not be sustainable, and that it may extend later than previously thought (author's observation). In other words, the ceramic sequence from the 13th century onwards, at least in the Salisbury area, remains imperfectly understood, and a review of the kiln material is urgently required in order to address this.

It is only when regional wares, mainly in the form of Surrey whitewares, appear in Salisbury from the mid 14th century onwards, that possible local products of the period can be dated by association, and their limited occurrence does suggest that late medieval

horizons are scarce in the city. The problem is that the Laverstock-type wares found in Salisbury in these late medieval contexts (later 14th and 15th centuries) look just the same as the earlier wares, and it is almost impossible sometimes to determine whether they really do date to this period, or if they are residual. Occasionally there are recognisable late medieval forms, such as bung-hole vessels or jars with lid-seated or bifid rims. On the whole, however, the industry seems to have carried on much as before, except, perhaps, with a more restricted repertoire of forms, much less evidence of decoration and an emphasis on the functional. The absence of late medieval ceramics in the region, therefore, may be at least partly due to a lack of recognition rather than a real absence.

Later still, in late 15th- and 16th-century contexts in Salisbury containing Tudor Green and Raeren stonewares, some development in the local industry can be discerned: the wares found in these contexts are clearly related to the finer end of the Wessex coarseware spectrum, but also show similarities with the Verwood wares of the 17th century and later (Underwood and Mephams nd, fabric E642; Mephams 2016, fig 4, nos 5–6). Only jars and jugs, unglazed or only very partially glazed, have so far been identified in these ‘transitional’ wares, and there appears to have been no attempt to imitate the regional wares (such as Tudor Green). Whether they were made in the Salisbury area, or around Verwood, or somewhere else, these transitional wares provide a link between the medieval and post-medieval industries, and underline the innately conservative nature of the latter, in which medieval manufacturing techniques survived even into the modern period.

## Conclusions

This paper has attempted to summarise the data relating to a ceramic tradition extending across south-east Wiltshire and east Dorset, which appears to have its origins in the mid-late Saxon period. It probably continued to be produced until the end of the medieval period, and almost certainly acted as the precursor to the post-medieval Verwood industry of east Dorset. An examination of patterns of consumption across the distribution area appears to show a difference between urban and rural sites, which may have been influenced not just by economic factors but by the available choices (of other material types as well as pottery).

The dataset is still relatively small, and evidence from rural sites in particular is limited. It is to be hoped that future research can add to the narrative, most notably by seeking further independent dating for the origins and development of the industry, and in characterising variations within the distribution area in order to highlight possible sources and their products.

## Appendix 1: Fabric descriptions

### Wessex coarseware

The typical Wessex coarseware, as found across the region, can be described as sandy, with a harsh feel and hackly fracture. The clay matrix is frequently pale-firing (pale salmon-pink to buff), although more orange-red colour variants are also found. The dominant inclusions are rounded and sub-rounded quartz grains, and these are abundant (40–50%); in general, few other inclusions are visible in hand specimen or even under a low-powered microscope, although examples seen in west Hampshire may contain occasional chalk and/or flint (eg Brown 2002, 11). The range of coarseness varies, but there is a broad chronological trend from very coarse (quartz grains <1mm) to finer variants (quartz grains <0.25mm). There was no attempt to smooth surfaces, and these are in consequence rough and ‘pimply’; in fact, in many cases there was a deliberate attempt to roughen surfaces by ‘scratch-marking’ (with a stiff brush or comb). This scratch-marking appears on both outer and inner surfaces, mainly on jars; over time (and broadly correlating with the trend towards finer fabrics), it diminishes from deeply incised to lightly brushed or wiped.

### Laverstock-type fineware

The fineware fabric differs from the coarseware in being much finer-textured (sparse quartz <0.25 mm, and some red iron oxides), with a smooth feel; the colouring is invariably pale, ranging from pale salmon-pink to off-white. Finewares nearly always have a yellow to mottled green glaze over at least part of the body.

## Bibliography

- Algar, D and Saunders, P, 2014 A medieval pottery kiln in Salisbury, Wiltshire, *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine* 107, 146–55
- Andrews, P, Mephams, L, and Seager Smith, R, 2000 Excavations in Wilton, 1995–6: St John’s Hospital and South Street, *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine*, 93, 181–204
- Barton, K J, Cartwright, L, Jarvis, K S, and Thomson, R G, 1992 Catalogue of the pottery, in I P Horsey (ed), *Excavations in Poole 1973–1983*, Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society Monograph 10, 65–128, Dorchester: Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society
- Brown, D H, 2002 *Pottery in Medieval Southampton c 1066–1510*, Southampton Archaeology Monograph 8 / Council for British Archaeology Research Report 133, York: Council for British Archaeology

- Chandler, J, 2001 *Endless Street: A History of Salisbury and its People*, Salisbury: Hobnob Press (3rd edition)
- Cotter, J, 2011 Post-Roman pottery, in B M Ford and S Teague (eds), *Winchester – A City in the Making: Archaeological Excavations between 2002 and 2007 on the Sites of Northgate House, Staple Gardens and the former Winchester Library, Jewry Street*, Oxford Archaeology Monograph 12, 261–90, Oxford: Oxford Archaeology
- Courtney, P, 1997 Ceramics and the history of consumption: pitfalls and prospects, *Medieval Ceramics* 21, 95–108
- Draper, J, 1983 The medieval and post-medieval pottery, in P J Woodward, ‘Wimborne Minster, Dorset – excavations in the town centre 1975–80’, *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society* 105, 66–9
- Draper, J, with Copland-Griffiths, P, 2002 *Dorset Country Pottery: The Kilns of the Verwood district*, Ramsbury: Crowood Press
- Goldberg, P J, 2008 The fashioning of bourgeois domesticity in later medieval England: a material culture perspective, in M Kowaleski and P J Goldberg (eds), *Medieval Domesticity. Home, Housing and Household in Medieval England*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 124–44
- Hinton, D A and Hodges, R, 1977 Excavations in Wareham, 1974–5, *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society* 99, 42–83
- James, T B, and Robinson, A M, 1988 *Clarendon Palace*, Society of Antiquaries of London Research Report 45, London
- Jarvis, K, 1992 Introduction to the pottery, in I P Horsey (ed), *Excavations in Poole 1973–1983*, Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society Monograph 10, 62–5, Dorchester: Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society
- Jervis, B, 2012a Medieval pottery from Romsey: an overview, *Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society* 67, 323–46
- Jervis, B, 2012b, Cuisine and urban identities in medieval England: objects, foodstuffs and urban life in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Hampshire, *Archaeological Journal* 169, 453–79
- Jervis, B, Briggs, C, and Tompkins, M, 2015 Exploring text and objects: escheators’ inventories and material culture in medieval English rural households, *Medieval Archaeology* 59, 168–92
- Le Patourel, J, 1968 Documentary evidence and the medieval pottery industry, *Medieval Archaeology* 12, 101–26
- Mephram, L, 1993 Pottery, in A H Graham and S M Davies, *Excavations in Trowbridge, Wiltshire 1977 and 1986–1988*, Wessex Archaeology Report 2, 101–14, Salisbury: Wessex Archaeology
- Mephram, L, 2000a, Pottery, in C J Young (ed), *Excavations at Carisbrooke Castle, Isle of Wight, 1921–1996*, Wessex Archaeology Report 18, 98–131, Salisbury: Wessex Archaeology
- Mephram, L, 2000b Pottery, in P S Bellamy, ‘Excavations at Penny’s Farm, Cranborne’, *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society* 122, 89–93
- Mephram, L, 2000c Pottery, in Rawlings, M, ‘Excavations at Ivy Street and Brown Street, Salisbury, 1994’, *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine* 93, 29–37
- Mephram, L, 2003a The pottery, in Butterworth, C, ‘Multi-period finds from Quarleston Farm, Winterbourne Stickland, 1994–5’, *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society* 125, 147–50
- Mephram, L, 2003b Pottery, in Harding, P A and Light, A, ‘Excavations in Fordingbridge, 1989 and 1997: the former Albany and Greyhound Hotel site’, *Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society* 58, 150–9
- Mephram, L, 2005 Pottery, in B Barber, ‘The development of Trinity Chequer: excavations at the Anchor Brewery site, Gigant Street, Salisbury’, *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine* 98, 183–8
- Mephram, L, 2011 Pottery, in Powell, A B, Grimm, J, Mephram, L, and Stevens, C, ‘Late Iron Age-Romano-British and Late Saxon activity east of Latimer Street, Romsey’, *Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society* 66, 136–41
- Mephram, L, 2012 Pottery, in De’Athe, R, ‘Early to middle Anglo-Saxon settlement, a lost medieval church rediscovered and an early post-medieval cemetery in Wilton’, *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine* 105, 126–9
- Mephram, L, 2015, Pottery, in P White and A Cook, *Sherborne Old Castle, Dorset: Archaeological Investigations 1930–90*, 158–85, London: Society of Antiquaries of London,
- Mephram, L, 2016 Medieval and post-medieval pottery, in Harding, P, ‘Excavations in Vanner’s and Griffin Chequers, Salisbury; a study of urban development’, *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine* 109, 153–7
- Mephram, L, forthcoming Pottery, in Orczewski, P, ‘Saxon and medieval settlement on the northern edge of Wimborne Minster, Dorset’, *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society*
- Mephram, L, and Brown, L, 2007 The Broughton to Timsbury Pipeline, part 1: A Late Saxon pottery kiln and the production centre at Michelmersh, Hampshire, *Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society* 62, 35–68
- Musty, J, and Algar, D, 1986 Pottery, in Musty, J and Algar, D, ‘Excavations at the deserted medieval

- village of Gomeldon, near Salisbury’, *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine* 80, 154–66
- Musty, J, Algar, D J, and Ewence, P F, 1969, The medieval pottery kilns at Laverstock, near Salisbury, Wiltshire, *Archaeologia* 102, 83–150
- Musty, J, Algar, D, Gerrard, C, and Hadley, J, 2001 Pottery, tile and brick, in P Saunders (ed), *Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum Medieval Catalogue Part 3*, 132–212, Salisbury: Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum
- Ponsford, M, 1998 Pottery, in R Price with M Ponsford, *St Bartholomew’s Hospital, Bristol. The excavation of a medieval hospital: 1976–8*, Council for British Archaeology Research Report 110, 136–56, York: Council for British Archaeology
- Poulsen, J. 1984 The pottery, in Graham, A H, ‘Wimborne Minster, Dorset – excavations in the town centre 1983’, *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society* 106, 81–3
- Powell, A B, Chandler, J, Godden, D, Mephram, L, Stevens, C, and Knight, S, 2009 Evidence for late Saxon and medieval occupation near Salisbury Street, Amesbury, *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine* 102, 188–201
- Rahatz, P, 1979 *The Saxon and Medieval Palaces at Cheddar*, British Archaeological Reports, British Series 65, Oxford: British Archaeological Reports
- RCHM, 1960 Excavations in the west bailey at Corfe Castle, *Medieval Archaeology* 4, 29–55
- Renn, D F, 1960, The keep of Wareham Castle, *Medieval Archaeology* 4, 56–68
- Spoerry, P S, 1990 Ceramic production in medieval Dorset and the surrounding region, *Medieval Ceramics* 14, 3–17
- Stone, J F S, and Charlton, J, 1935 Trial excavations in the east suburb of Old Sarum, *Antiquaries Journal* 15, 174–90
- Timby, J, 2001, Pottery, in Taylor, K, ‘The excavation of medieval and post-medieval features at 3 Kingsbury Square, Wilton’, *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine* 94, 70–4
- Underwood, C, and Mephram, L, nd, The pottery, in J W Hawkes, Excavations in Salisbury 1984–1990, Salisbury: unpublished Wessex Archaeology report
- Verhaeghe, F, 1991 An aquamanile and some thoughts about ceramic competition with quality medieval goods in the Middle Ages, in E Lewis (ed.), *Custom and Ceramics: Essays Presented to Kenneth Barton*, 25–61, Wickham: APE
- Verhaeghe, F, 1997 The archaeology of transition: a continental view in D R M Gaimster and P Stamper (eds), *The Age of Transition: The Archaeology of English culture 1400–1600*, 25–44, Oxford: Oxbow Books
- Vince, AG, 1981 The medieval pottery industry in southern England: 10th to 13th centuries, in H Howard and E Morris (eds), *Production and Distribution: a Ceramic Viewpoint*, 309–22, British Archaeological Reports, International Series 120, Oxford: British Archaeological Reports
- Vince, AG 1983, *The Medieval Ceramic Industry of the Severn Valley*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Southampton (accessible at <[http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/alanvince\\_eh\\_2010/downloads.cfm?archive=thesis](http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/alanvince_eh_2010/downloads.cfm?archive=thesis)>, accessed 19 July 2018)

## Résumé

Au cours de la période médiévale, une industrie de céramique très répandue existait dans le sud-est du Wiltshire et dans l’est du Dorset. Ses origines remontent peut-être à la fin de la période saxonne et, dès le XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, elle approvisionnait des sites urbains et ruraux de la région, avec un centre de production connu situé à Laverstock, près de Salisbury, et certainement d’autres toutes proches. Les données archéologiques indiquant une consommation différentielle des produits de l’industrie par les populations urbaines et rurales sont exposées.

## Zusammenfassung

Während des Mittelalters gab es im Südosten der Grafschaft Wiltshire und im Osten von Dorset eine weit verbreitete Keramikindustrie. Ihre Ursprünge reichen möglicherweise bis in das späte Frühmittelalter zurück, und spätestens seit dem 13. Jahrhundert lassen sich Lieferungen auf städtischen und ländlichen Fundplätzen in der gesamten Region nachweisen; neben dem bekannten Produktionszentrum in Laverstock nahe Salisbury gab es mit ziemlicher Sicherheit auch andere. Die Hinweise für den unterschiedlichen Konsum der Erzeugnisse dieser Industrie durch die städtische und ländliche Bevölkerung werden diskutiert.