

Medieval Pottery and a Possible Kiln Site at Everton

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SUMMARY

Landscaping of a private garden in Everton and subsequent fieldwalking in the neighbourhood, produced large amounts of pottery of late fourteenth – early fifteenth century date. Local geological conditions would favour a kiln site and although none has been found so far, the uniform nature of the pottery and the presence of wasters indicate that one may well have existed here.

INTRODUCTION

During the winter of 1975 a quantity of pottery from Everton was brought to Bedford Museum for identification.¹ It was thought to be of Medieval date and subsequent research indicates a late-fourteenth- to early-fifteenth-century date range.² Several sherds were cracked or badly fired indicating that they may have come from a kiln site, rather than being ordinary medieval domestic debris. Consequently a site visit was made and pottery was recovered from three main areas. The chief of these was area B on the location map (fig 1) where over two kilograms of pottery were picked up, in addition to a large quantity already found by the landowner during recent building works and garden landscaping. Odd broken clay bars were amongst his collection, suggesting that the finds represented kiln debris and possibly a rake-out area.

Area A was a sand quarry pit associated with nineteenth-century brickmaking and now used for market gardening. Only 300g weight of sherds was recovered here, but there are local reports of whole pots having been found in the sides of the quarry.³

Area C was referred to as the 'burnt ground' to the north-west of area A, and stood some 4 metres higher than the bottom of the sand quarry. Over 1.500 kg of sherds were found in this field and the soil was noticeably darker here. A few more sherds were picked up in Berry Close (Enclosure Map field name) to the southwest, area D on fig 1, and again local tales report pottery occurring in large quantities here in the past.

In the spring of 1976 a drainage pipe line was dug, up to 60cm deep, alongside the drive to Story Farm and over 3kg of potsherds were recovered from it.

Everton was also once the site of Roman pottery manufacture. There are records of a large grey earthenware vessel having been found approximately ½ mile to the south-west of the Medieval pottery areas, and indications that a small Roman kiln once operated here (SMR 2002).⁴ During Post-Medieval times, brick and tile manufacture was carried out, and nineteenth century clay and sand pits today scar the landscape to the NW of Everton. Documentary references, even for comparatively recent times, are scarce or uninformative concerning this industry. But there may be a clue from field names on the Enclosure Map 1804, such as Further Burnt Ground, to the north of areas A-D.⁵

It is, however, not at all surprising that pottery, bricks and tiles were once made at Everton, from topographical and geological considerations. (see fig 1). Everton is situated just on the line where the Oxford clay meets a belt of greensand, thus the necessary raw materials were easily available. The meeting of these two geological beds also means that there are a large number of springs at Everton, and water was also a vital element in the pottery industry.

THE POTTERY

THE FABRICS

The pottery is for the most part hard and gritty, being rough to the touch, and both oxidised and reduced sherds occur. Many examples have oxidised internal surfaces, no doubt caused by inversion in the kiln. Quartz and quartzite with some mica and grog fragments are the main inclusions, and seven distinct fabric types can be defined by inclusion analysis. They are as follows:
Fabric A: a hard, rough pottery, often with grey core and brown-buff outer surfaces. Wheel made with wheel markings visible inside; some smoothing below the rim.

Composition**FABRIC A**

Inclusion Name
Frequency
Size
Shape

Quartz
Sparse
0.25mm
Sub-Angular

Quartzite
Moderate
0.25 – 0.5mm
Rounded

Mica
Sparse
—
Flat

Grog
Rare
< 0.5mm
Angular

FABRIC B

Inclusion Name
Frequency
Size
Shape

Quartz/Quartzite
Moderate
up to 0.5mm
Sub-Rounded

Quartz
Abundant
0.25 to 0.5mm
Sub-Rounded

Flint
Moderate
up to 1mm
Angular

White mica
Moderate
—
Flat

FABRIC C

Inclusion Name
Frequency
Size
Shape

Quartz
Moderate
0.5mm
Sub-Angular

Quartzite
Abundant
up to 1mm
Sub-Rounded

Quartz/Quartzite
Sparse
< 0.5mm
Sub-Rounded

FABRIC D

Inclusion Name
Frequency
Size
Shape

White Mica
Moderate
—
Flat

Grog
Abundant
0.1 – 0.5mm
Sub-Angular

Quartzite
Moderate
0.25 – 0.5mm
Sub-Rounded

FABRIC E

Inclusion Name
Frequency
Size
Shape

Limestone
Abundant
0.2 – 1.5mm
Irregular

White Mica
Moderate
—
Flat

Quartzite
Moderate
0.2 – 0.4mm
Sub-Angular

Grog
Moderate
up to 0.5mm
Angular

FABRIC F

Inclusion Name
Frequency
Size
Shape

Quartz/Quartzite
Abundant
0.3 – 1mm
Sub-rounded

Quartz
Moderate
0.4mm
Sub-rounded

Quartzite
Sparse
up to 1mm
Angular

FABRIC G

Inclusion Name
Frequency
Size
Shape

Quartz
Moderate
0.2mm
Angular

Quartzite
Abundant
0.5mm
Sub-rounded

Granite ?
One only
5mm
Irregular

Flint
Moderate
0.3mm
Angular

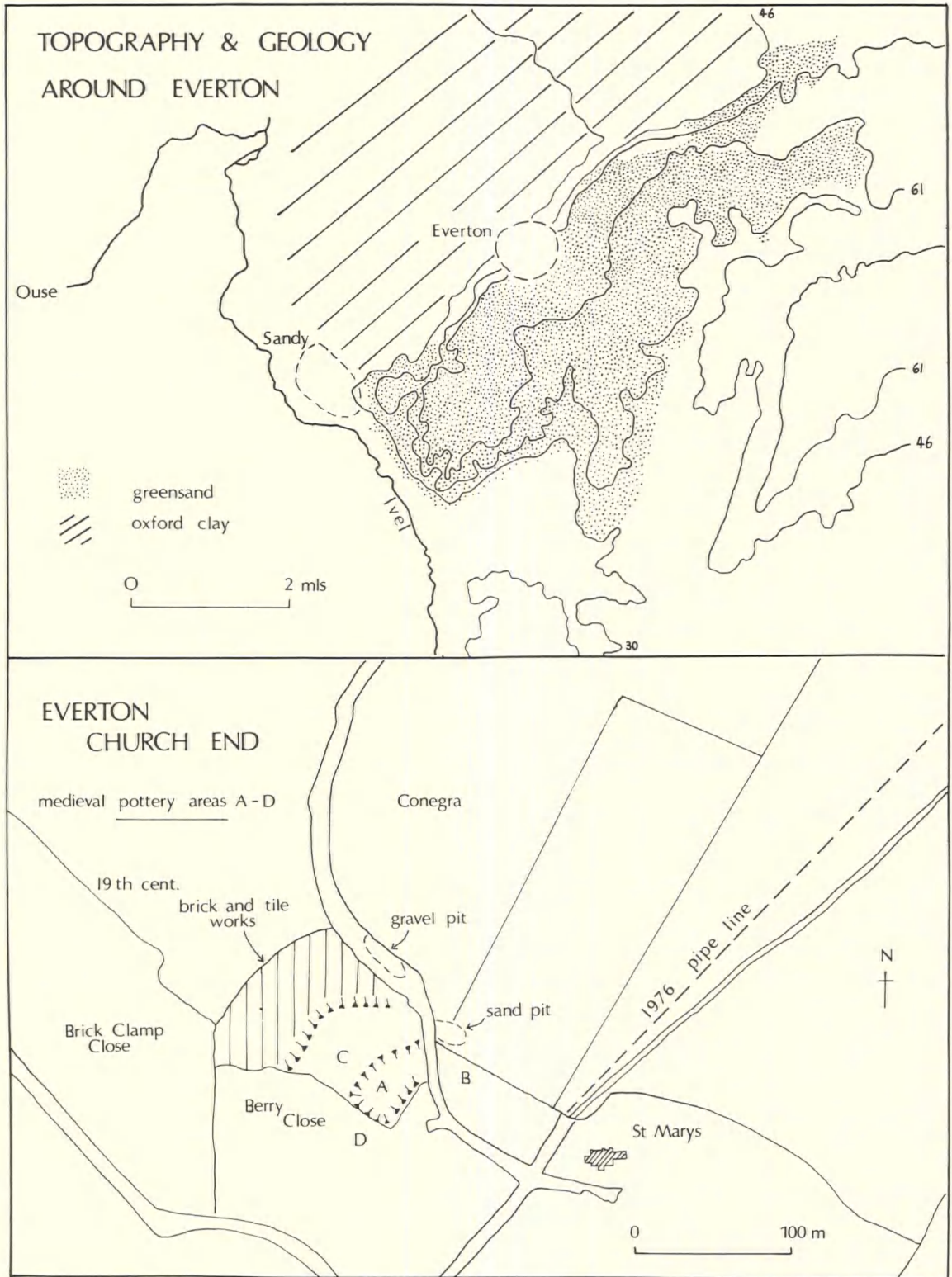


Fig 1 Location Maps : field names from 1804 Enclosure Map; pits and brick works from O.S. First and Second Editions.

Fabric B: similar feel to A, with rather more oxidised than reduced examples. Orangey core with grey-brown surfaces. Again wheel-made, with trimming below rim. Many red quartz/quartzite inclusions or voids present, which do not occur in fabric A.

Fabric C: another rough hard fabric, similar to types A and B, but all examples are reduced. Large amounts of quartzite are present and there is very little grog or mica added. Wheel made.

Fabric D: a hard fabric but smoother to the touch than A, B and C and a finer texture. Core and surfaces generally pale grey, and all examples are reduced. No clear quartz occurs, and only occasional red quartz/quartzite grains are found. Characterised by grog inclusions. Wheel made.

Fabric E: probably much the same as D, being hard and sandy-smooth to the touch, but with the addition of some limestone or calcite. Light grey core with light grey-brown surfaces. Wheel made.

Fabric F: a similar type to C, having the same inclusions but in different proportions; also fired to a bright orange colour. Hard and rough, and wheel made.

Fabric G: a hard, rough and gritty fabric with very pimply surfaces mainly reduced examples — light grey core, with grey-brown, sometimes orangey surfaces. Similar to ABC, but many more inclusions, and with flint in addition. Wheel made.

These descriptions of inclusions are based on visual examination with x 20 magnification by binocular microscope.

THE FORMS

Cooking pots, jugs and bowls are represented in the pottery from Everton and all examples are wheel-thrown. They are all fairly typical medieval forms, and there is a wide range present, particularly amongst the bowls. The jug types can be paralleled by those from the Oxford region and there is a good range of comparable material from Kings Langley, Herts., (Moorhouse, 1973, fig XVI).⁶ There is only one glazed example (fig 3, 44). There is a variety of cross-section amongst the jug handles, and fig 3, 51 and 52 display a pronounced groove on the underside, apparently a characteristic of the Everton pottery. Several handle sherds (e.g. fig 2, 34 and 35) have a small plug of clay on

the inside, showing how they were attached to the vessels. The cooking pots with squared rims have parallels with the Writtle medieval forms. (Rahtz 1969, fig 22, nos 11, 12 and 16)⁷

Pottery Catalogue

FIGURE 2

Bowls

- 1 Inturned with over-folded rim. Fabric type C.
- 2 Heavy flanged rim with slight hollowing inside. Fabric type A.
- 3 Heavy squared rim. Fabric type B.
- 4 Flanged rim with small, pronounced undercut. Fabric type C.
- 5 Simple everted rim. Fabric type D.
- 6 Upturned flanged rim, Fabric type F. Similar to Hall, 1974, fig 8, 205.⁸
- 7 Flanged thumbed rim. Fabric type G. Similarities with Addyman and Marjoram 1972 fig 36, 11.⁹
- 8 Everted rim with thickening on inside. Fabric type B.
- 9 Upright form, with over-folded, squared rim. Fabric type A.
- 10 Slightly inturned rim with heavy external thickening. Fabric type B.
- 11 Flat topped rim, out-turned and undercut. Fabric type A. Similarities with Addyman, 1973, fig 16, 12.¹⁰
- 12 Small upright flanged rim (possibly cooking pot type). Fabric type G.
- 23 Everted rim, thickened and squared. Fabric type F.
- 24 Flanged rim with thumbed top, Fabric type A. Similar to Hall, 1974, fig 9, 223.⁸
- 25 Narrow upright rim, slightly hollowed inside, over-folded. Fabric type A.
- 26 Upright thickened rim. Fabric type F.
- 27 Flat topped flanged rim. Fabric type A.
- 28 Everted rim, possibly cooking pot form. Fabric type C.

Cooking Pots

- 14 Horizontal squared rim, slightly undercut. Fabric type A.
- 15 Horizontal squared rim, slightly hollowed inside. Fabric type A.
- 16 Squared rim with slight grooving on top. Fabric type A.
- 29 Everted squared rim, sharp angles. Fabric type B. Similarities with Drury and Petchey 1975, fig 13, 74.¹¹

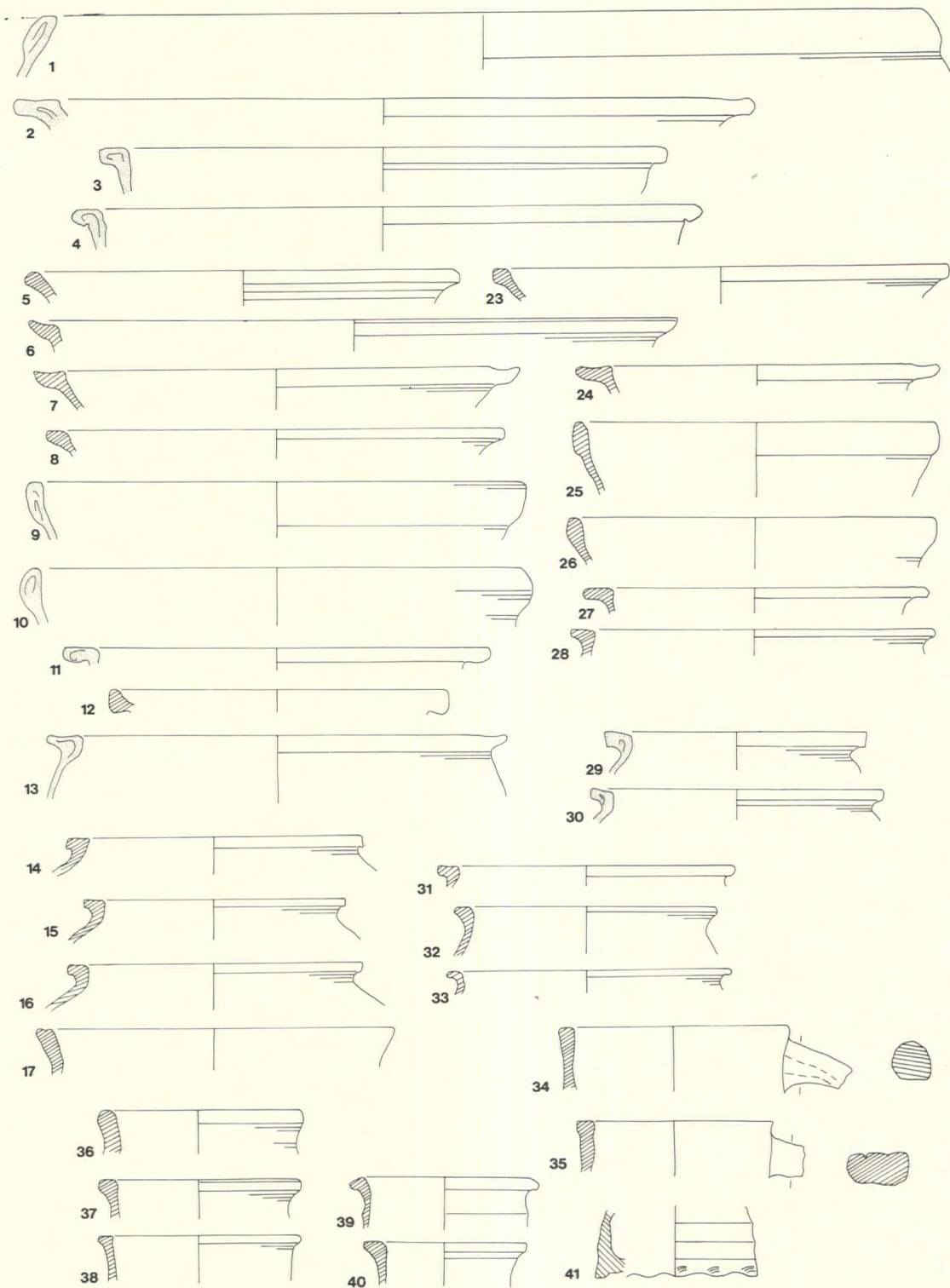


Fig 2 Everton Pottery

- 30 Everted squared rim, Fabric type B.
- 31 Simple flanged rim. Fabric type B.
- 33 Small everted rim. Fabric type C.

Jugs

- 32 Everted rim with thickening on inside. Fabric type G. Similar to Rahtz 1969, fig 55, 54.⁷
- 34 Upright rim, smooth surface and simple round-sectioned handle with flat underside. Fabric type A.
- 35 Upright rim, squared at top with pinching inside. Stabbed handle. Fabric type A. Similarities with Sutermeister 1975, fig 5, 7.¹²
- 36 Thick, slightly everted rim, uniform thickness. Fabric type G.
- 37 Everted squared rim, slight hollowing. Fabric type E.
- 38 Upright squared rim, slight hollowing. Fabric type D.
- 39 Everted flanged rim, with cordon on neck. Fabric type D. Similar to Hurst 1965-6, fig 7, 23.¹³
- 40 Everted thickened rim. Fabric type C.
- 41 Frilly base of thumbed jug with cordons on body. Fabric type B.
- 42 Jug handle with prominent raised centre to grip. Fabric type C.
- 43 Handle with deep slash running length of sherd – possible waster. Fabric type B.
- 44 Sherd with stub of oval-shaped handle, squared edges, with dark green speckled glaze. Fabric type B.
- 45 Handle with light stab marks and some thumbing. Fabric type A.
- 46 Handle with central hollow strip, irregular cross-section. Fabric type A.
- 47 Handle sherd, roughly squared, with thumbing and central slash. Fabric type B.
- 48 Rim of spout or lip of jug. Fabric type B.
- 49 Handle sherd with lateral raised ridge. Fabric type C.
- 50 Handle sherd with central hollow, underside pushed out to compensate. Fabric type G.
- 51 Handle sherd with central hollow, pronounced lateral groove underneath. Fabric type A.
- 52 Handle sherd roughly oval in section, with pronounced lateral groove underneath as no 51. Fabric type G.

(Note: Nos 18-22 are unpublished examples)

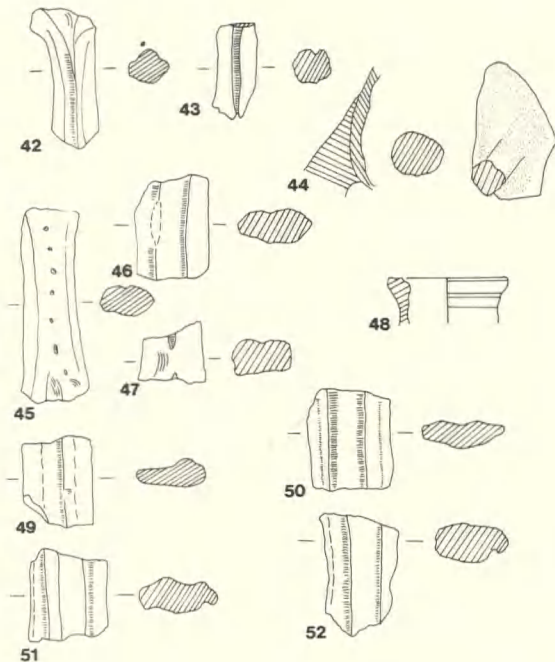


Fig 3 Everton Pottery

DISCUSSION

There are few known kiln sites of the Medieval period in Bedfordshire, consequently most comparative material has to be found outside the county. On typological grounds the Everton pottery is very similar to the Higham Ferrers material⁸ where there is good evidence for an early fifteenth century date. There are also parallels with Potterspury types¹⁴ where a mid to late fourteenth century date range has been well substantiated. How long the industry was in operation in Everton remains an unanswered question at present. There are certainly good traditional reasons for expecting it to have continued over several centuries, and documentary studies by Jean Le Patourel indicate that this was generally the case in potting communities.¹⁵ The precise location of a kiln site in Everton, and continued field walking in the area would help to clarify the picture.¹⁶

NOTES

- 1 I am grateful to Mr and Mrs Ball of Everton for bringing this material to my attention, and for their continued interest in the site.
- 2 David Hall and Dennis Mynard kindly discussed the pottery with me.

- 3 I am grateful to Mr Gurney of Everton for this information.
- 4 SMR refers to the Sites and Monuments Record, of the Planning Department, Bedfordshire County Council.
- 5 Miss A. Simco made an initial search through the relevent material in the Bedfordshire County Record Office and will be checking on details during parish survey work in Everton.
- 6 S. Moorhouse, - 'The Pottery', in D. Neal, 'Excavations at the Palace and Priory at Kings Langley, 1970, *Hertfordshire Archaeology* 3, (1973) 31-72.
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- 8 D.N. Hall, 'Medieval Pottery from the Higham Ferrers Hundred, Northants.', *Northampton Mus.*, 10 (1974), 38-58.
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- 10 P.V. Addyman, 'Late Saxon Settlement in the St Neots Area', *Proc. Camb. Ant. Soc.* 64 (1973), 45-99.
- 11 P.J. Drury and M.R. Petchey, 'Medieval Potteries at Mile End and Great Horkesley, near Colchester,' *Essex Archaeology and History*, 7 (1975), pp 33-60.
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- 13 J.G. Hurst, 'The Pottery', in C.F. Tebbutt, *St Neots Priory*, *Proc. Camb. Ant. Soc.*, 58-59 (1965-66), 55-67.
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- 15 Jean Le Patourel - 'Documentary Evidence and Medieval Pottery' *Med. Arch.*, 12 (1968), 101-126.
- 16 Paper received 31 December 1976.

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