

# Medieval Potteries at Mile End and Great Horkesley, Near Colchester

by P.J. DRURY and M. R. PETCHEY  
with contributions by  
S. Cracknell and Dr. G. C. Dunning

*SUMMARY: The excavation, during roadworks, of features connected with a medieval pottery at Mile End is described, and its products, of late twelfth—thirteenth century date, are discussed. A derivation from Thetford ware forms is postulated for some forms represented in the earlier groups. Fourteenth-century wasters, found during pipelaying at a nearby site at Great Horkesley, are also described.*

## I. THE EXCAVATIONS AT MILE END

### A. THE EXCAVATION

The site is located some two miles to the north of Colchester, on the west side of the A134, Nayland road (Fig. 1, Site 1). It lies just beyond the southern slopes of the Black Brook, on clay drift deposits incorporating sand strata, here covered by 0.5 m. of topsoil. The site was discovered during the construction of the Colchester Northern By-pass' in the spring of 1973, when a few sherds, found scattered after the initial topsoil scrape, led to the location of a pit full of wasters.

During the subsequent excavation (Fig. 2), as large an area as possible was cleared to define the extent of the site, and to attempt to locate the kilns. Only in the former was it successful; the nucleus of the site must lie in the area to the west of the realigned A134. The excavated features fall into three groups:

1. *Four Large Pits (Features 1, 3, 4 and 5).* These were all basically flat-bottomed and straight-sided, and about 2 m. in diameter, although they showed considerable variation in detail. Feature 1 was dug as three separate lobes, but it was subsequently filled as one pit. Feature 5 was 0.8 m. deep, some 0.2 m. deeper than the remainder, and had a shallower extension on one side, perhaps to make access easier. The pits all had similar fillings (Fig. 3). A layer of grey silt (3), containing only a few sherds, accumulated as the pit silted up. A mixture of a little charcoal and a great deal of pottery, clearly kiln debris (1), was then dumped into the half-filled holes, which were probably muddy at the time, since layers 1 and 3 mixed to form an intermediate layer, 2.

2. *Postholes and Gullies (Features 7—13).* Several postholes and gullies or slots were found in the northern part of the excavated area; all were filled with a leached silty clay. The depths of the excavated features were as follows:

F7	0.40 m.	F9	0.22 m.	F11	0.15 m.	F13	0.17 m.
F8	0.29 m.	F10	0.14 m.	F12	0.25 m.		

# GREAT HORKESLEY

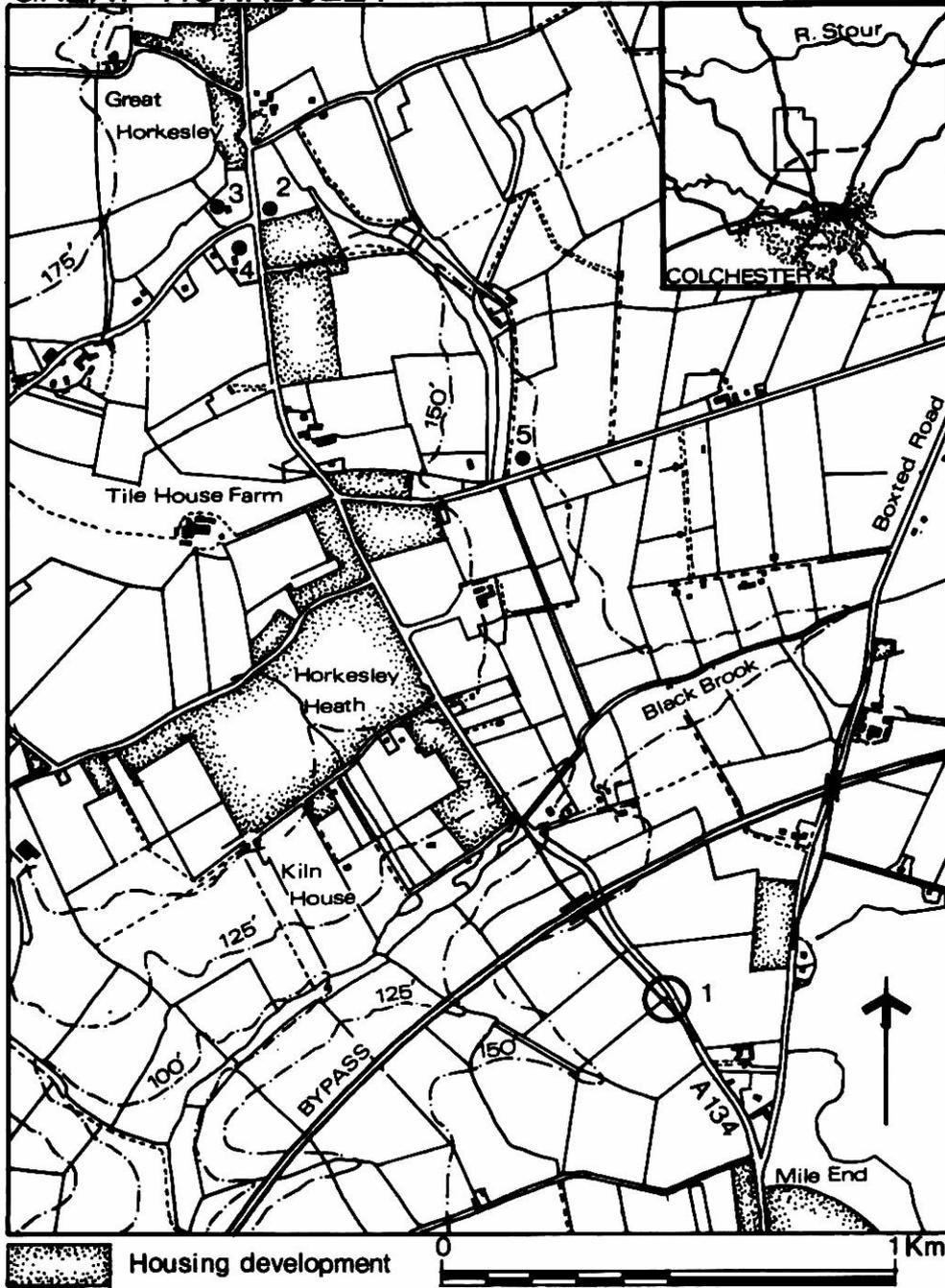


Fig. 1 Mile End and Great Horkesley, showing the location of sites 1—5, referred to in the text. Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey Map, with the consent of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office. Crown copyright reserved

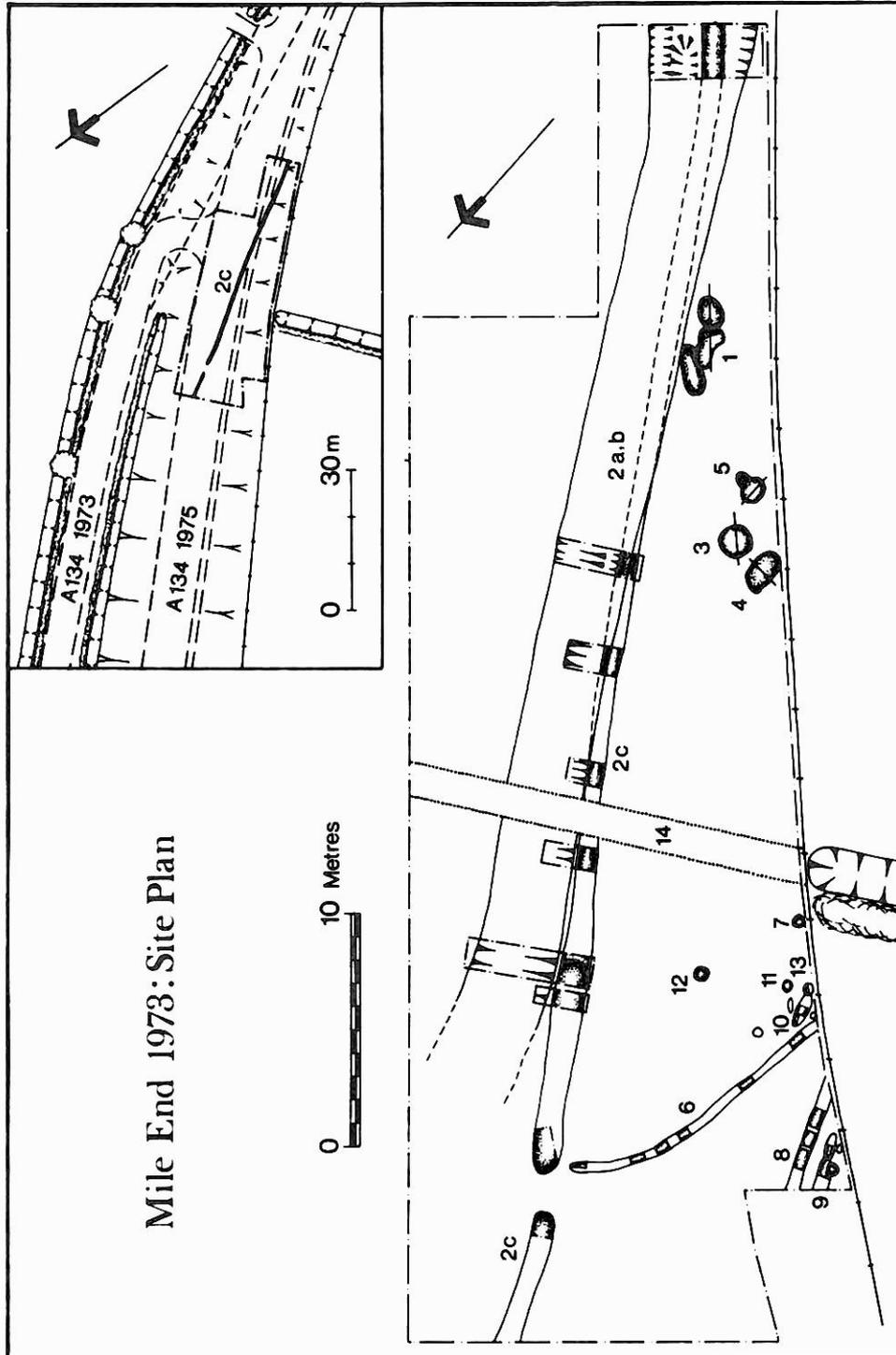


Fig. 2 General plan of the Mile End excavations, 1973; the inset shows the location of the site in relation to the A134 road.

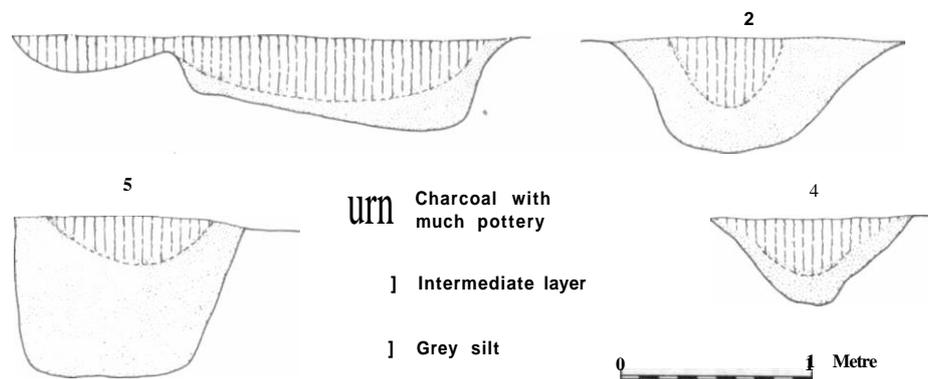


Fig. 3 Mile End excavations, 1973: Sections.

Unfortunately, the complex did not extend far enough into the excavation for structures to be defined.

3. *Boundary Ditches (Features 2, 6 and 14)*. A ditch, F2, ran parallel to the 1973 line of the road; it had undergone two major recuts, the line moving slightly to the east each time. The first cut (2C) followed a slightly different course from the others (A and B) in the north of the excavation, where there was an entrance, and a smaller ditch or gully, F6, ran off to the west. This was c. 0.25 m. deep, with a similar fill to that of the group 2 features noted above.

Regrettably, the stripping of the site destroyed the relationship between features 1 and 2; they were so close that one must originally have cut the other. It seems more likely that a ditch should be cut through a filled pit, than that a pit should be dug into the side of a ditch, and then refilled, so it may be assumed that F2 was dug after the filling of F1.

The modern field ditch, F14, can be dated to the middle of the nineteenth century as it does not appear on the Tithe Map of 1843<sup>2</sup>, but it does appear on the first edition O.S. 6 in. map of 1875.

## B. THE FINDS

### 1. Pottery by S. Cracknell

The pottery from each feature was initially sub-divided into fabrics, largely on the basis of surface colour and texture. The material in each group was reconstructed as far as possible, by examination on two separate occasions. A count of rim, handle and base sherds was made, the results of which are recorded in tables 1 and 2. It was not thought practical to reinterpret this count in terms of the number of pots represented.

With the exception of the Hedingham ware and vessels 59 and 60, three fabrics were present, presumably produced in adjacent kilns. Fabric A was the most common; it occurred in features 1—7, the majority coming from features 1, 4 and 5. Fabric B was contemporary with fabric A and occurred in features 1, 2 and 5; it may well be the result of a single, experimental firing of large bowls. All the pottery from features 8

and 9 and some from feature 2 is in fabric C. This fabric seems to represent a later improvement in firing technique. Fabrics A and B are assumed to belong to an earlier period (I) than fabric C (II).

#### *The Fabrics*

*Fabric A.* The core is usually red-brown, the surface colour varying from dark and light grey, through grey-brown and red-brown, to orange and yellow. Hardness tends to decline as the surface colour becomes lighter; orange and yellow sherds are often soft and friable, and are clearly underfired. The intended colour was probably grey. The fabric contains sand, quartz (often eroded from the surface of the softer sherds) and mica with occasional particles of haematite. Although clearly visible as red specks when oxidised, the haematite is difficult to observe in the more reduced material. Some rather underfired vessels contain untempered clay particles c. 3 mm. in diameter. These may be due to poor levigation of the clay, or perhaps are inclusions of fragments of sun-dried clay.

*Fabric B.* A red-brown or grey (often mottled) fabric limited to less than a dozen bowls (form 36a, b) and the shoulder of ajar (not illustrated). It is hard and contains a larger proportion of sand than fabric A.

*Fabric C.* This fabric appears to contain the same proportions of sand, mica and haematite as fabric A but it is consistently hard throughout the range of sherd colour. The colours seem cleaner than fabric A; they range from black, through grey and orange-brown to red-brown.

*i*

#### *The Forms*

In Period I the majority of vessels produced on the site were cooking-pots with curved, everted rims (see table 1) but jugs and bowls were also manufactured. Whereas the cooking-pots and jugs were relatively standardised, bowl rims were hardly ever repeated. Infrequent manufacture of a specialised product could produce this diversity of form. Some of the vessels were decorated with applied strips; others with finger-impressions, horizontal rilling or wavy lines on the top of the rim or shoulder. Handles were plain, ribbed, stab-marked or finger-pressed. In Period II the products seem to have been bowls and cooking-pots commonly with the flat-topped rim.

#### *CATALOGUE OF THE ILLUSTRATED VESSELS*

##### *Notes*

1. In the following entries, 'orange with a grey core' indicates that the fabric is largely orange with a grey centre. 'Grey with an orange surface', however, indicates that only the surface is orange.
2. If the centre line is dashed the diameter is approximate; if the rim line is dashed the angle is approximate.

## A. Site Products: Phase 1

*Jugs* Fabric A

1. F5, LI, F1, LI A reconstruction of a typical jug. The neck (F5, LI) is light brown, and the shoulder (F1, LI) is grey with a light orange-brown interior surface. The handle (F5, LI) has a grey-brown surface with a red-brown cortex and a light grey core. The base (F5, LI) is red-brown with a grey surface. The handle and base were adapted slightly for the purposes of reconstruction.
2. F4, LI Dark grey.
3. F4, LI, F5, LI Spout (F4, LI) and handle (F5, LI) from different vessels, both dark grey.
4. F1, L2 Red-brown with a darker surface.
5. F1, LI Dark grey.
6. F1, LI Rough, orange fabric with rounded sand particles up to 2 mm. across and a grey-brown surface; abraded.
7. Unstrat. Grey-brown.
8. F4, LI Dark grey.

*Jug Handles* Fabric A

9. F1, LI Red-brown with a grey-brown surface.
- 10a. F5, L2 Grey-brown with a dark grey surface.
- 10b. F1, LI Grey-brown surface with red-brown cortex and a light grey core; contains less sand than usual.
11. F5, L2 Stab-marked, ribbed handle, dark grey.
12. F5, LI Stab-marked handle, light grey.
13. F3, LI Rough, dark grey fabric with a dirty brown surface, containing some quartz particles up to 2 mm. across.
14. F5, LI Handle with light finger-impressions; grey-brown surface with red-brown cortex and a light grey core.
15. F5, LI Stab-marked, ribbed handle, light grey.
16. F1, LI Dark grey, plain oval handle.

*Tubular Spout* Fabric A

17. F4, LI Dark grey smoothed externally; contains less sand than normal. A scar on the surface indicates the point where the spout was luted onto another part of the vessel.

*Cooking Pots* Fabric A

- 18a. F4, LI A rough, heat-crazed pot, the fabric of which contains flint (2 fragments, 6 and 3 mm. in diameter), quartz particles up to 3 mm. in diameter and many fine clay particles. The colour varies from light orange-grey to light grey; soft and abraded.

MEDIEVAL POTTERIES AT MILE END AND GREAT HORKESLEY

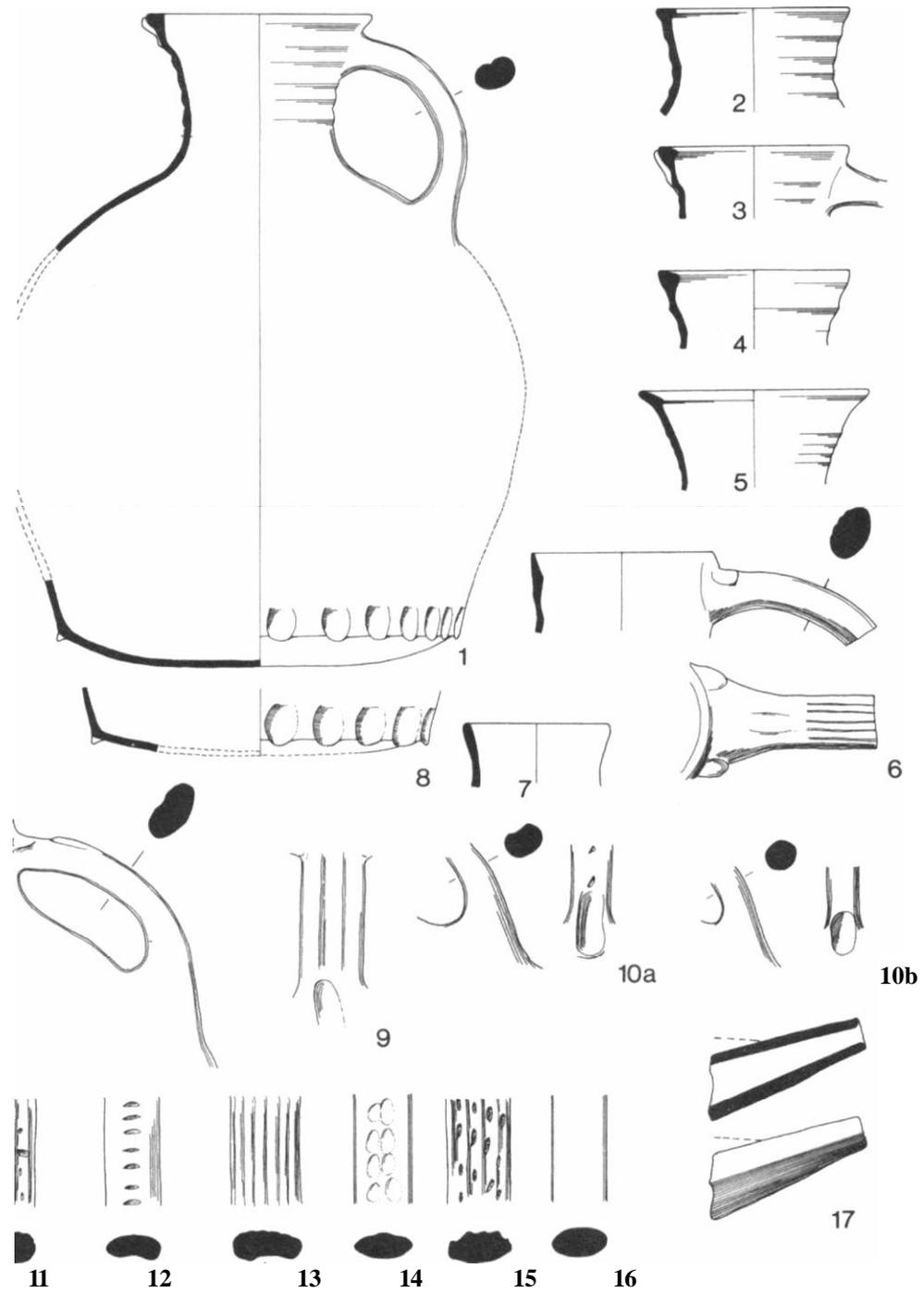


Fig. 4 Mile End: Pottery 1-17, Scale 1:4.

- 18b. F2C Grey-brown surface mottled with patches of brown; red-brown cortex with a darker core. This is in fabric A but is similar in surface coloration to fabric B.
- 18c. F1, LI Dark grey.
- 18d. F4, LI Red-orange with a rough brown surface. A soft fabric with some flint inclusions and quartz particles up to 1 mm. in diameter. Clay inclusions are numerous.
- 19a. F5, LI Soft red-orange sherd with grey core; finger-pressed applied cordon.
- 19b. F1, LI Grey with a red-brown core.
20. F3, L2 Grey-brown surface with red-brown cortex and a grey-brown core; contains less sand than usual.
21. F5, LI Light grey, slightly distorted, some sand lost from surface.
22. F5, LI Light grey, distorted sherd; waster. The form is similar to Nos. 52-55 in fabric C.
23. F1, LI Pink-grey with grey core.
24. F1, LI Very light grey, soft and abraded. Soot marks around the base may suggest use on the site. Many grits have been lost from the surface.
25. F5, LI Light grey-brown.
26. F5, L2 Dark grey.
27. F5, LI Red-brown with a grey-brown surface.
28. F1, LI Base, light grey-brown with grey core. The outer surface is hard and the inner surface is soft and abraded.

*Bowls* Fabric A except Nos. 36a, b, c, in fabric B

29. F1, LI Soft, abraded, dark grey sherd with a yellow-grey surface; contains quartz particles up to 1 mm. A wavy line has been shallowly incised on the rim.
30. F1, L1 Light red-brown with a grey core; contains quartz and sand particles up to 2 mm. in diameter. Soft, with a wavy line on the rim and inside.
31. F4, LI Red-brown with dark grey surface; contains less sand than usual.
32. F4, LI Red-brown with lighter surface; soft and abraded.
33. F4, LI Brown.
34. F5, LI Dark grey.
35. F3, L2 Unusually hard, yellow-grey fabric; contains less sand than usual.
- 36a. F1, L2 Fabric B. Grey-brown surface, mottled with patches of yellow-brown; grey core. The wavy line on the rim is shallow and continuous.
- 36b. F4, LI, 2,  
F1, LI Fabric B. Red-brown with dark grey surface. The handles are from F4, LI and F4, L2; the rim from F1, LI. Finger-impressions were lacking below the handles.
- 36c. Unstrat. Fabric B. Light yellow-brown, contains quartz, sand particles up to 2 mm. in diameter; soft and abraded.
37. Unstrat. Orange to orange-brown, soft.
38. F1, L1 Dark grey.

MEDIEVAL POTTERIES AT MILE END AND GREAT HORKESLEY

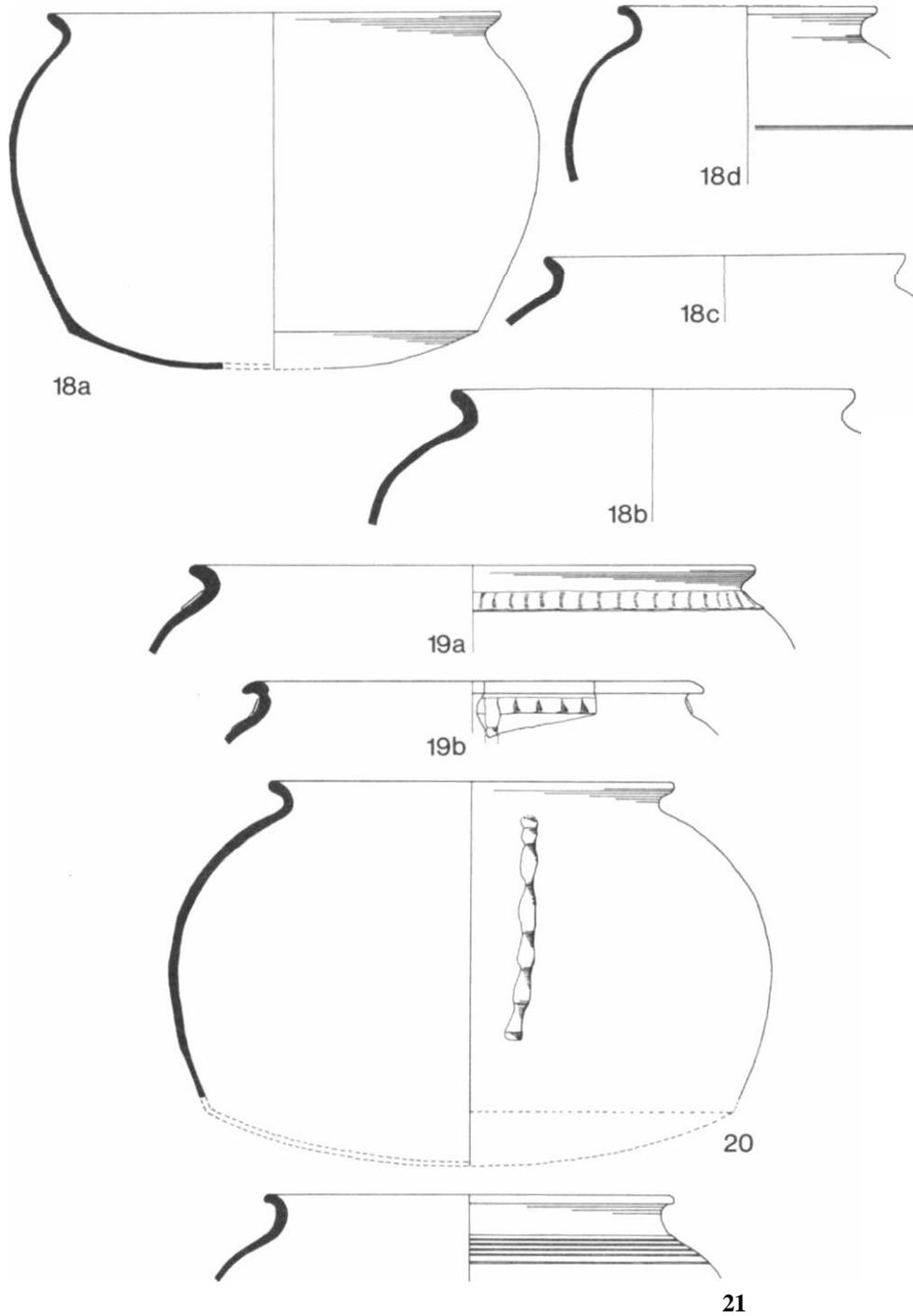


Fig. 5 Mile End: Pottery 18a-21, Scale 1:4.

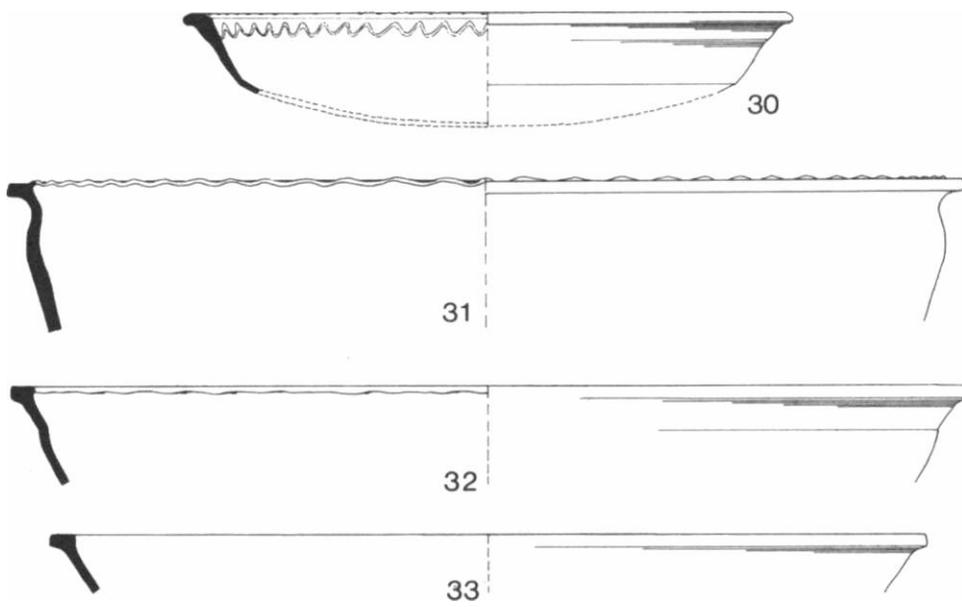


Fig. 6 Mile End: Pottery 22-33, Scale 1:4.

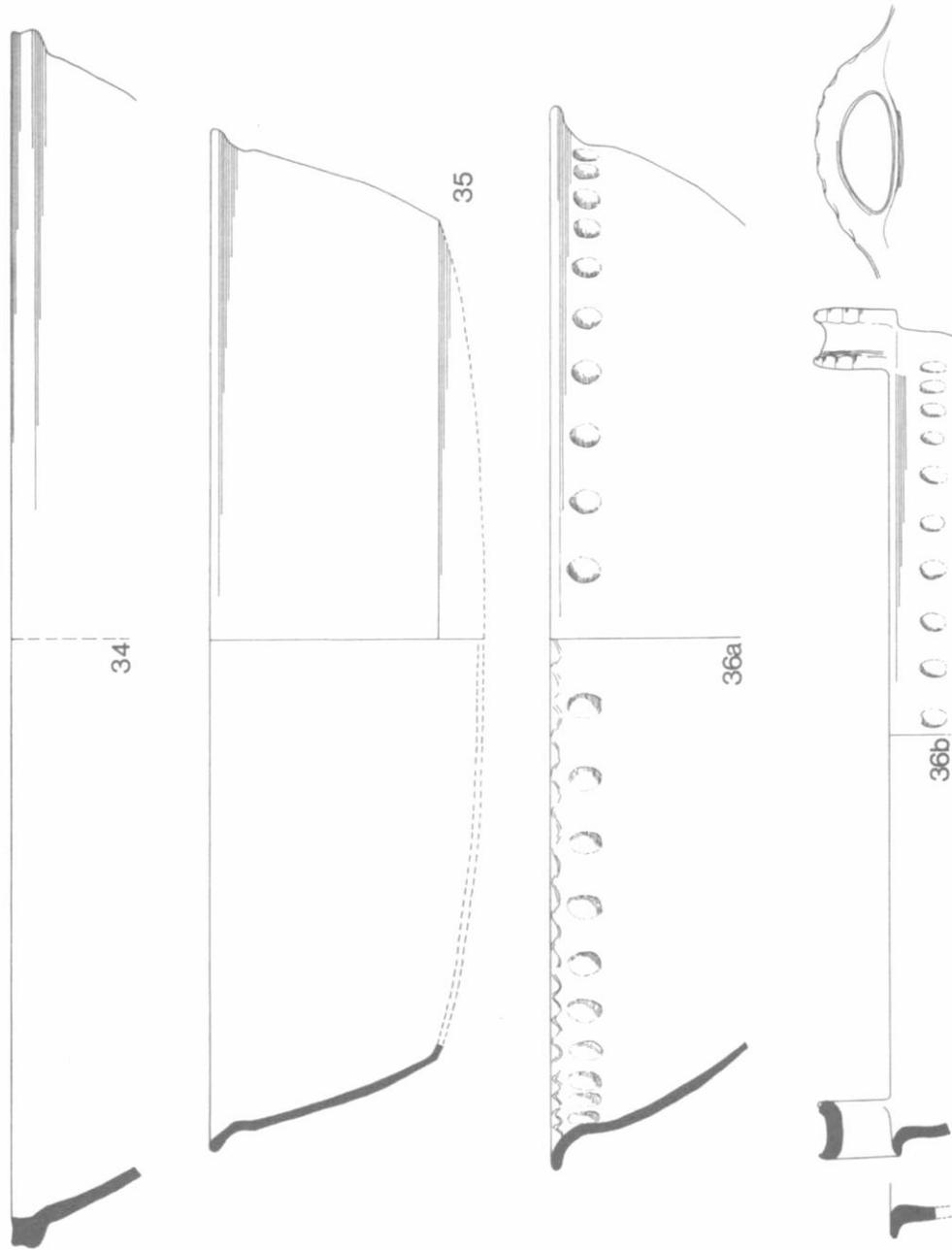


Fig. 7 Mile End: Pottery 34—36b, Scale 1:4.

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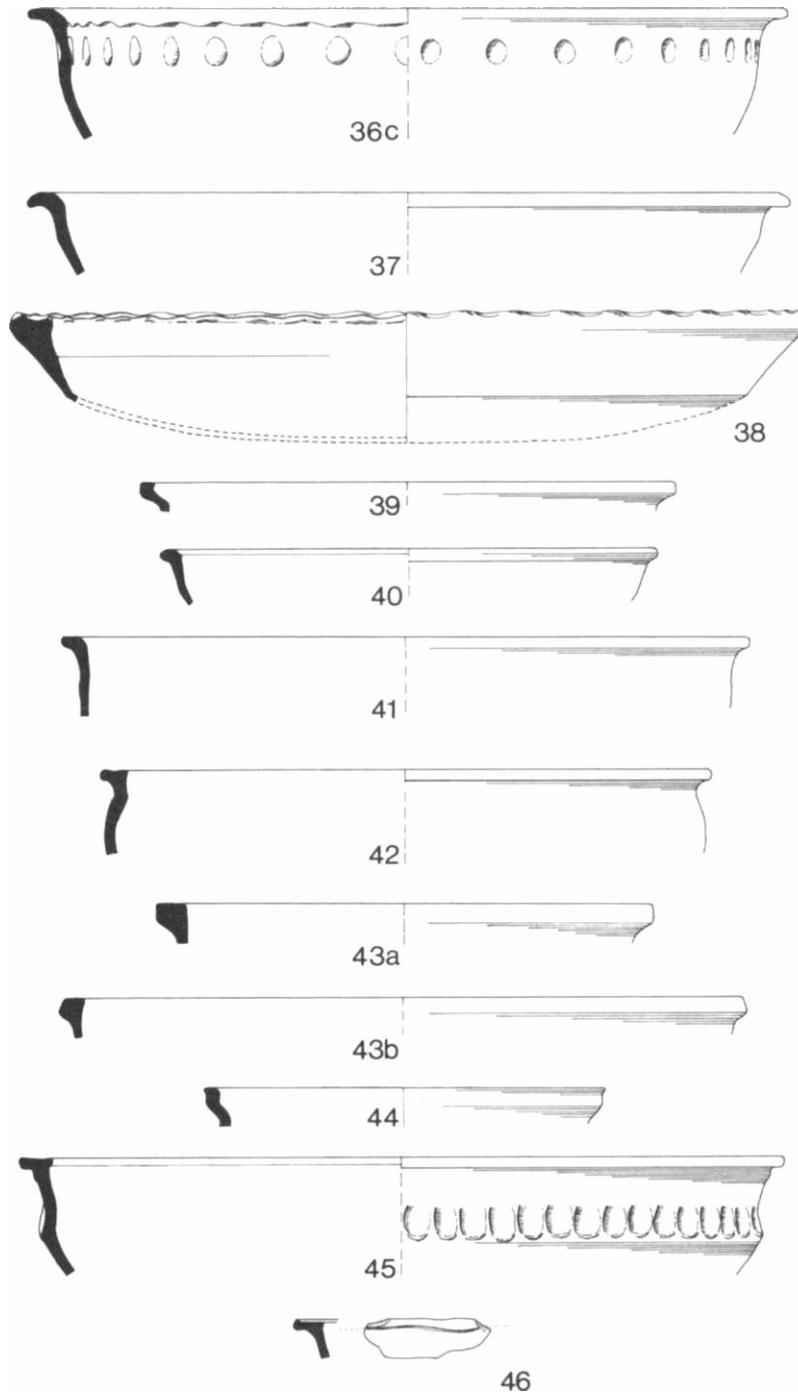


Fig. 8 Mile End: Pottery 36c-46, Scale 1:4.

- 39. F4, LI      Light grey.
- 40. F2C        Dark grey, mottled with brown patches; brown core.
- 41. F5, L2      Yellow-grey exterior, brown interior.
- 42. F4, L3      Grey with red/red-brown surface.
- 43a. F5, L3     Dark grey surface on lighter grey.
- 43b. Unstrat.   Grey with orange-brown surface, soft and abraded.
- 44. F5, LI      Dark grey with grey-brown core.
- 45. F2C        Grey-brown with dark grey surface; mottled with patches of brown.
- 46. F2C        Unusual creamy brown surface, dark grey cortex; soot-blackened externally, perhaps indicating use on the site.

*Decorated sherds* Fabric A

- 47. F1, LI      Grey-brown body sherd with gouged lines.
- 48. F5, LI      Base/body sherd, dark grey.
- 49. F5, LI      Soft yellow-grey fabric. The sherd is presumably from the point of attachment of the handle.

*Bowl?* Fabric A

- 50. F2C        Bowl, unusual form. Dark grey surface on lighter grey; contains very little sand. Alternatively this could be a lid.

*Skillet handle* Fabric A

- 51. F5, LI      Skillet handle in a hard, dark grey fabric. Two similar examples from F5, and one from F4.

*Fine Jug Sherds* Fabric C or similar

- 58. F4, LI      Pottery head, probably from a jug handle, though a close parallel is lacking. The fabric is hard and dark grey, with the face mottled yellow and brown, though probably not intentionally.

*Not illustrated*      Dark grey base/body sherd with a yellow-brown core; the tops of F5, L3 thumb-prints around the base are just visible. The sherd is thus almost certainly from a jug; it has splashes of dark green glaze, probably drips from another vessel fired with it.

The contexts of these two fragments suggest that during Period I, finer jugs than those in fabric A were being manufactured, some of which were glazed. The fact that only two recognisable sherds of such vessels were found might imply that they were not made in the immediate vicinity, but it should be remembered that plain sherds from such vessels may well have been overlooked.

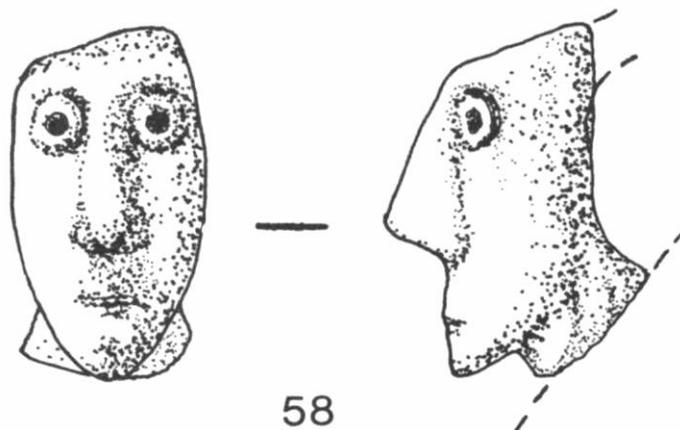


Fig. 9 Mile End: Pottery head, 58, probably from a jug. Scale 1:1.

#### B. Site Products: Phase II

##### *Cooking Pots* Fabric C

- |     |     |   |
|-----|-----|---|
| 52. | F2C | Slightly distorted sherds; grey with an orange surface. Rather soft for fabric C. |
| 53. | F8  | Hard, orange-brown with a grey core.  |
| 54. | F9  | Hard, light grey fabric, orange exterior.   |
| 55. | F8  | Distorted; grey with light orange exterior.                                       |

##### *Bowls* Fabric C

- |     |    |   |
|-----|----|---|
| 56. | F9 | Light brown with dark grey core.                      |
| 57. | F9 | Grey-brown with a red-brown surface. Slightly sooted. |

#### C. Pottery Manufactured Elsewhere

A base/body sherd of Hedingham ware (not illustrated), orange with splashes of clear glaze, was found in F2C. It probably dates to the second half of the thirteenth century. Two other abraded sherds from feature 2C may also be from Hedingham.<sup>3</sup>

Other non-site pottery was as follows:

- |     |        |  |
|-----|--------|--|
| 59. | F6, LI | Dark red-brown fabric with a dark grey core, containing sand and mica particles; fairly smooth surfaces. |
| 60. | F5, LI | Orange fabric with a light grey-brown surface; contains mica and very little sand. Soft and abraded.     |

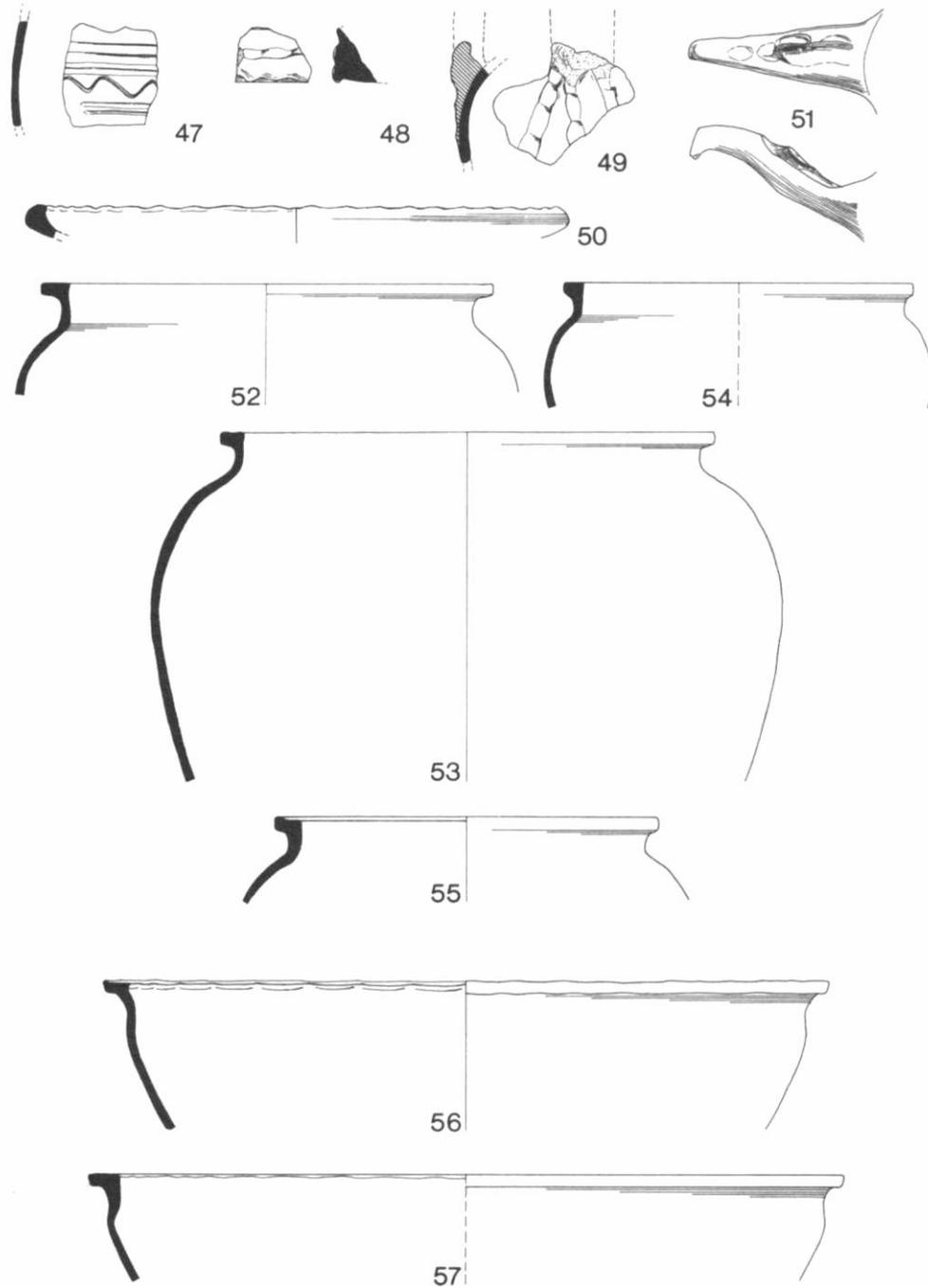


Fig. 10 Mile End: Pottery 47-57, Scale 1:4.

TABLE I. Site Distribution of Rim Sherds

NOTE. The table is based on a count of non-joining rim sherds. Some of these may come from the same vessel, but it was not thought feasible to make any estimate of the minimum number of pots represented.

	Catalogue Nos. Fabrics A & B	Cooking Pots					Bowls				Various
		Triangular rim with flat top Gp. I	Pointed rim, internally thickened below top Gp. II	Curved everted rims Gp. III	Inverted 'L' rim Gp. IV	Flat-topped triangular and related rims Gp. V	Small shallow bowls with smoothly out-turning rims Gp. VI	Inverted *L' often with frilling Gp. VII	Block rim Gp. VIII	Smoothly out-turning rim, some with finger-impressions Gp. IX	
		1, 2, 3, 4	5 & rim of 6	18-21	22	23-25	29-30	31-33	34	36a, b, c & 37	Illustrated rim sherds not otherwise classified (Cat. Nos.)
	Fabric C				52-55			56 57			
<b>Fabrics A and B — Phase I</b>	F1, LI, 2	2	28	364	17	12	2	3	2	5	7, 38
	F1, L3			8							
	F2C	6	3	52	4	7		1		2	40, 43b, 45, 46
	F3, LI, 2	8		59		2		1			35
	F3, L3			3							
	F4, LI, 2	15	2	171	9	4	1	8			39
	F4, L3										42
	F5, LI, 2	28	4	281	31	19	3	9	7	1	26, 27, 41, 44
	F5, L3	4		11	7	2				1	43a
	F7				1	1					
	Unstratified (mainly F1, LI)	1		29	2	1				2	7, 43b
Total =1,257 viz.	59	37	978	71	48	6	22	9	11	16	
Percentage Totals	4.7	2.9	77.8	5.6	3.8	0.5	1.8	0.7	0.9	1.3	
<b>Fabric C - Phase II</b>	F2C				1						
	F8				2						
	F9				4			2			

TABLE 2. Site Distribution of Handles and Oddments

	Jug Handles — all Fabric A								Other Material (not listed in Table 1)
	Near-circular with central groove A.	Plain, circular B.	Oval, stab-marked C.	Oval, ribbed D.	Oval with slight finger-impressions E.	Oval, ribbed with stab-marks F.	Oval, plain G.	Illustrated sherds not otherwise classified	
Catalogue No.	1 (Handle)	10b	12	13	14	15, 11	16		
F1, LI, 2		2	1	4			10	Cat. No. 9	Bowl handle (36b); Kiln furniture
F2C		2		3			3		Kiln furniture (61) (62); Hedingham ware Two chimney-pots (62, 64 + unillus. frag.)
F3, LI, 2				1			1		
F4, LI, 2		1	4	3		1	8		Two bowl handles (36b); Spout (17); Head (58); Skillet handle (51); Kiln furniture
F5, LI, 2	1	3	3	6	2	2	2	Cat. No. 10a	Non-site rim (60); Three skillet handles (51)
F5, L3	1			1					Chimney-pot fragment; sherd with glaze splashes
F6, LI, T1									Non-site rim (59)
Unstratified									Chimney-pots (61, 63)

## 2. The Chimney-Pots by Dr. G. C. Dunning, F.S.A.

Among the finds from the Mile End site are six fragments of objects of the same type, as follows:

- Fig. 11.61 unstratified  
 11.62 Ditch, F2C  
 11.63 unstratified  
 11.64 Ditch, F2C

*Not illustrated:* Basal fragments from F5, L3 and F2C.

The fragment from F5 indicates an association with Period I pottery, though the disproportionate number of sherds recovered from the late/post medieval ditch F2 may indicate that their production was more common in Period II. All are in a fairly soft, pinkish red or orange-red sandy fabric, sometimes with a slightly grey core. They may be described as follows:

1. The form is biconical, splayed at both ends and waisted towards the upper end at about two-thirds of the height.
2. In size the objects are comparatively small. Although none is complete, the restored drawings suggest a height of 23—25.5 cm. (9—10 in.).
3. At the narrowest part on three pieces the internal bore is only about 2.5—3.7 cm. across, with a tendency to squareness rather than circularity in section. Above this level the side splays to a diameter of 5.1—6.4 cm. inside the top, which is slightly moulded outside.
4. The only base that can be measured has a diameter of 13.5 cm. inside (Fig. 11.62). This appears to be from a larger object than the others, and more conical in profile.
5. One upper end (Fig. 11.64) is complete enough for certainty that no holes were present in the side at the level of the constriction. Another, Fig. 11.63, has part of a hole in this position; it is 1.2 cm. across, and made from the outside before firing. The opposite side is complete and not pierced. The third top, Fig. 11.61, is too broken for evidence of this feature.
6. The decoration is uniform on all the pieces, and consists solely of lines of elongated thumb-marks running vertically from top to base. Although the sides are thick (about 1.3—1.8 cm.), stab-marks or other incisions are absent.

The general analogies for these objects are with chimney-pots of the Sussex type.<sup>4</sup> In size these vary from about 25.5—30.5 cm. high, though one from Chichester is only 18.6 cm. high. In shape the pots are conical and constant features are a small hole in the top, and two holes diametrically opposite in the side at about two-thirds of the height. The waisted form is exceptional in Sussex. An example from Pevensey Castle has a splayed top with a hole 9 cm. across;<sup>5</sup> in design this comes closest to the objects from Mile End and serves as the prototype.

Although some of the chimney-pots in Sussex and Hampshire are plain, many have applied thumb-pressed strips down the side from top to base. The impressed thumb-marks at Mile End may be regarded as a local variant of this decoration.

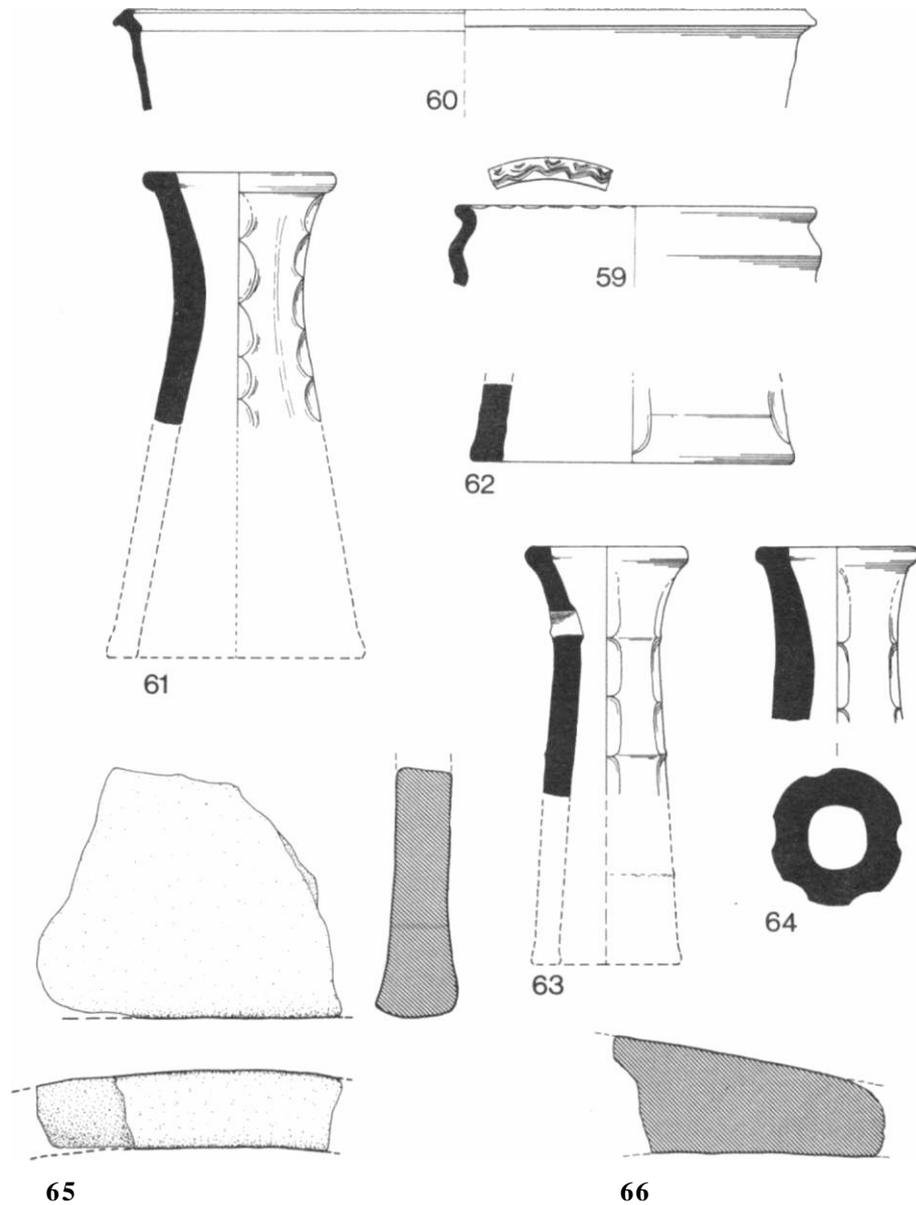


Fig. 11 Mile End: Pottery 59-60; Chimney-pots 61-64; Kiln furniture 65-66. Scale 1:4.

It is now known that the distribution of chimney-pots of the Sussex type extends as far north as Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire.<sup>6</sup> However, in this marginal region a complete chimney-pot from Blakesley, near Towcester, is only 15.5 cm. high; the hole in the top is normal in size, but no holes are present in the side.<sup>7</sup> In the last respect it thus

differs from the standard type in the southern counties, and is a parallel for the objects from Mile End.

On the basis of these comparisons the Mile End objects are identified as chimney-pots of a sub-type in Essex. Their biconical form with a small bore would promote the ascent of smoke-laden air, and thus dispense with the holes in the side.

The evidence of wasters at Mile End points to the chimney-pots as products of kilns in this vicinity. The dating of the assemblage to the end of the twelfth or early thirteenth century places the chimney-pots early in the range of these roof-fittings.

The same type of chimney-pot was also made at kiln 3, Hole Farm, Sible Hedingham, excavated in 1972.<sup>8</sup> Pieces of a small chimney-pot about 21.6 cm. high, more heavily moulded at the top and base than those from Mile End, have similar thumb-marks down the whole of the side.

In Essex the occurrence of these chimney-pots extends as far as Chelmsford, where the type is represented on the Marks and Spencer site, High Street, excavated in 1973.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand at Pleshey Castle are small chimney-pots, more sharply waisted and plain, for which a different source is to be sought.<sup>10</sup>

### 3. Kiln Furniture

Several fragments of kiln furniture were found, in a reddish-brown, very sandy fabric with roughly smoothed surfaces. The curved fragment 65 (F2C), with a thickened edge, seems to be similar to large curved tiles found at the pottery making site at Mill Green, Ingatstone, by Mrs. E. E. Sellers.<sup>11</sup> These latter had three upstanding ribs, one along each edge and one down the centre, on the outer surface. The excavator regards these as probably forming removable arches over the kilns, though none was found *in situ*. The function of the knife cut, wedge-shaped fragment, from an object at least 10 cm. wide, 66 (F2C) is unknown. Other nondescript lumps of kiln furniture were found in F1, L2 and F4, L2.

Fragments of mostly reduced, sandy, burnt clay were found in F3, LI and F4, LI, the latter showing wattle marks; these fragments may be from kiln structures.

### 4. Iron (Fig. 12)

- 1 Knife blade from F5, LI.
- 2 Small knife blade, from F5, L3.
- 3 Nail with a square head, from F5, LI.

*Not illustrated:* Part of the shank of a small nail, 35 mm. long, *c.* 5 mm. square in section, clenched over *c.* 7 mm. from the end.

### 5. Stone

Decaying fragments of Rhenish Lava, probably from a quern, were found in F2C.

### 6. Romano-British Tile

Feature 2C contained fragments of tegulae, bonding tiles (40 mm.) and box flue tiles and F6 fragments of tegulae and bonding tiles. Two lumps of burnt septaria in F6 may be of Roman origin.



Fig. 12 Mile End: Iron objects, 1-3, Scale 1:2.

### 7. Post-medieval Brick and Tile

Feature 2A contained fragments of soft red bricks, 48 mm. x 95 mm. x more than 95 mm., and another fragment 69 mm. thick; two fragments of peg tile 13 mm. thick were also present. Feature 2C contained a fragment of brick 40 mm. thick.

The finds are now deposited in Colchester and Essex Museum, Accn. no. CM 178:1975.

### C. INTERPRETATION

The pottery, discussed below, provides the only absolute dating evidence, in the absence of documentary references. The four pits, 1, 3, 4 and 5, contained only pottery of fabrics A and B. This fact, together with the fact that the forms found in fabric C are typologically later than most of those found in fabrics A and B, suggests that the pits belong to the earliest phase of activity on the site, Period I. Features 8 and 9, part of the complex of postholes and gullies (7—13) contained pottery of fabric C; they would seem, therefore, either to represent a second period of activity, II, or to have continued in use after the pits had been filled. It will be suggested below that, on the evidence of the pottery, little time elapsed between these periods, and indeed, they are probably indicative of continuous activity in the same general area during the late twelfth to mid-thirteenth century, the excavated site lying on the periphery of that area.

The close proximity of kilns may be deduced from the presence of kiln furniture, wasters and charcoal, and it is reasonable to suppose that the roadworks cut through the edge of a potter's settlement, mostly still undisturbed in the adjacent field. Few kiln workshop areas have been dug, and fewer published;<sup>12</sup> no pits full of wasters seem to appear in relevant reports. It is simplest to suppose that the pits were dug for a supply of clay, though a secondary use in its preparation cannot be ruled out. The postholes and gullies 7—13 may be connected with workshop buildings.

The gully or fence slot F6 cuts obliquely across this group of features and therefore probably postdates it; its relationship with the entrance in the earliest phase of the boundary ditch, 2C, indicates that F6 was probably contemporary with or later than that feature. It has already been noted that F2 seems to be later than F1. The date of the digging of a ditch is often very different from the date of its final filling. Feature 2C contained late/post-medieval brick, but it also contained thirteenth-century Hedingham

ware, not found in other features on the site. It is possible that the earliest ditch, which runs parallel to the pre-1973 line of the Nayland road, may represent a thirteenth-century enclosure of the land for agricultural purposes.

The potters, attracted to the site by the combination of clay, water and scrub for fuel, together with the proximity of a market in Colchester, may well have cleared the surrounding area of scrub, subsequently moving to an area with more fuel, thus leaving the initially cleared land free for agriculture. Much marginal land was cultivated in the thirteenth century, when the pressure of population on resources was increasing.

It is clear, however, that the land was not fully utilised until the establishment of the modern field system in the mid-nineteenth century, the roadside ditch of medieval origin (F2 A, B) being maintained up to that time. The A134 is of Roman origin.<sup>13</sup> The few fragments of Roman tile may reflect this, or may have been imported to the pottery for constructional purposes.

## II. THE KILN SITE AT THE ROOKERY, GREAT HORKESELEY

In 1948, Brigadier M. E. W. Franklin found pottery 'so thick as to make it difficult to drive a fork into the ground'<sup>14</sup> a few yards from the north-east corner of his house, The Rookery (formerly Rookery Farm) at Great Horkesey (site 4 on Fig. 1). Some of this material, recognised to be kiln debris, was deposited in Colchester Museum (CM OS3:1968), and a small quantity remains at the house.<sup>15</sup> The construction of the Witham—Langham gas pipeline in the summer of 1973, on a line to the north of The Rookery, produced further evidence of pottery manufacture in the vicinity. Two pits were found west of the A134 road (site 3); pit 1 was *c.* 0.60 m. deep, the filling showing signs of burning; the other was smaller, and both contained pottery wasters. Immediately to the east of the main road (site 2), medieval pottery was found concentrated in a 100 sq. m. area of the pipeline way leave.<sup>16</sup> Sites 2 and 3 lay in the roadside waste prior to the enclosure of the parish in 1823.<sup>17</sup> It seems probable from the topography indicated on the enclosure map of that date that The Rookery, which incorporates a timber building of sixteenth to seventeenth century date, was built on land which was part of the waste in the medieval period.

The material from the three sites is sufficiently similar to suggest that they are parts of a single establishment. The fabric (D) generally contains much sand tempering, including small white grains, and is usually fired to a hard pale to dark grey colour, mostly pale. Some material is underfired, resulting in a red or yellow, soft fabric; obviously distorted and fused wasters are present. The forms are as follows:

### *Jugs (Fig. 13)*

- 67 Grey core, brown surfaces; site 4.
- 68 Soft pale buff, underfired; site 2.
- 69 Hard grey fabric; site 4.
- 70 Grey fabric, red cortex, grey surfaces, cream slip decorations; site 3, pit 1.
- 71 Hard dark grey fabric; site 2.
- 72 Fairly hard, grey gritty fabric with buff/orange core: site 4.

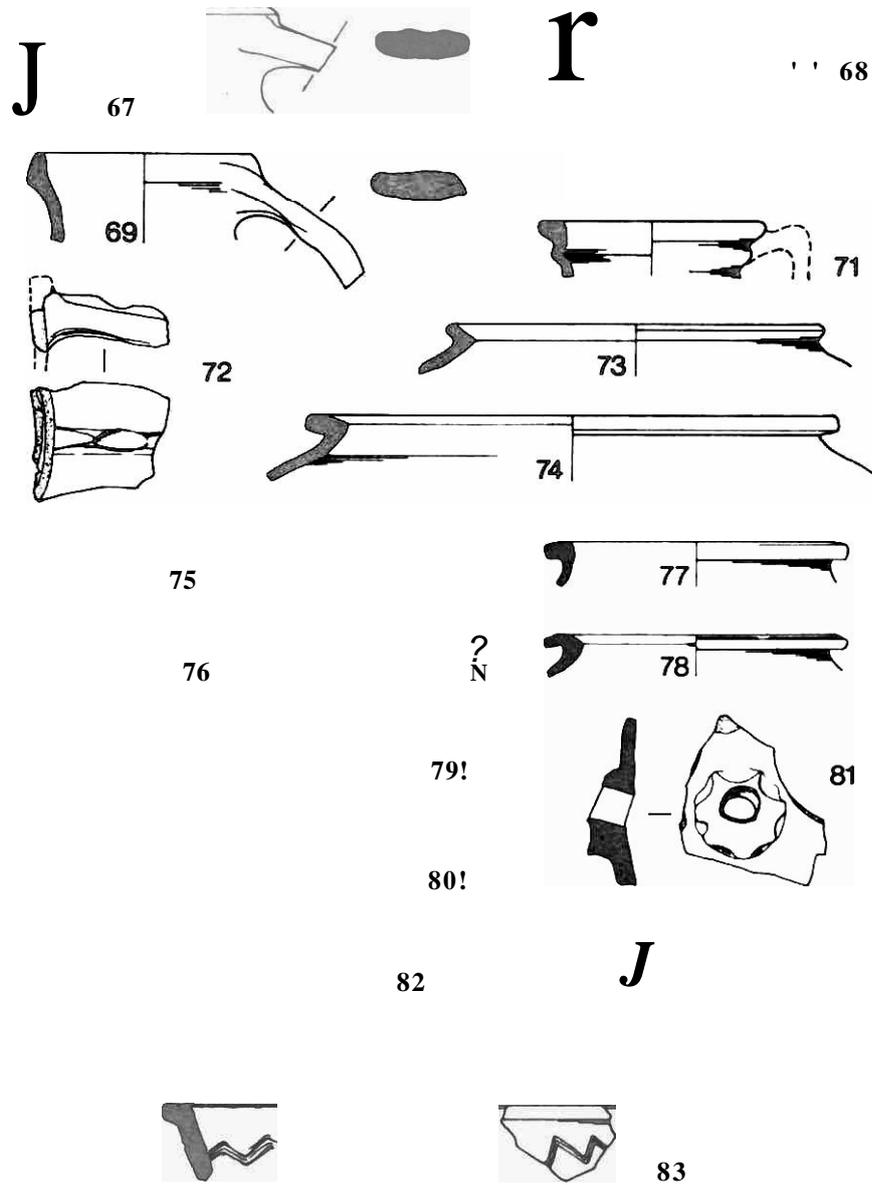


Fig. 13 Pottery: Sites 2-4, Great Horkesley, 67-82; The Laurels, Great Horkesley, 83. Scale 1:4.

Sherds with a cream slip under a green glaze (sites 2 and 4) are probably from jugs; sherds with slip decoration under a green glaze (site 2; site 3, pit 1; site 4) certainly are. These glazed and decorated jugs are, however, comparatively rare. Jug handles decorated with cream slip lines, also examples with random stab holes, occurred at site 4, in addition

to the ubiquitous plain strap handles (occasionally decorated as no. 72) and a single rod handle. Two jug rims similar to ME 2 and a base similar to ME 8 came from site 4; they may be products of that site, in fabric A.

#### *Cooking Pots*

- 73 Soft pale red gritty fabric with grey surfaces; site 2.
- 74 Hard grey fabric; site 2.
- 75 Hard grey fabric; site 4.
- 76 Soft, pale orange gritty fabric; site 2.
- 77 Hard grey fabric; site 4.
- 78 Hard dark grey fabric with coarse grits; site 3, pit 1.
- 79 Fairly hard, pale, grey/brown gritty fabric; site 2.
- 80 Soft pale yellow gritty ware with grey core; site 2.
- 81 Hard dark grey gritty ware, slightly orange cortex; site 4 (one of 5 examples).
- 82 Grey fabric, soft and gritty with red surfaces; site 2.

The size of 80 and the form of 82 are unusual.

### III. POTTERY FROM THE LAURELS, GREAT HORQUESLEY

A small group of pottery in Colchester Museum (CM 69:1966), found at The Laurels, Great Horquesley, includes rim sherds of 3 bowls similar to ME 26 (1 in fabric C, 2 in A), a rod handle (fabric as Gt. Horquesley) and a sherd of a large bowl, 83. This is decorated with three wavy lines and is in a light grey sandy fabric similar to fabric A at Mile End. The group is more likely to be domestic than kiln debris.

### IV. THE PRODUCTS: DISCUSSION AND DATING

The two kiln sites reported produced three groups of pottery: fabrics A and B (Period I) at Mile End, fabric C (Period II) at Mile End, and fabric D at Great Horquesley. These groups are clearly not contemporary, but rather seem to represent three stages in the evolution of the products of a local pottery industry. The earliest group, fabrics A and B at Mile End, consists largely of everted, almost cavetto, rim cooking pots (group III, Fig. 5, 18—21, accounting for 77.8% of the total). A connection between these and Thetford ware pots, particularly those produced at Ipswich in the Carr Street (1928) kiln,<sup>18</sup> seems likely, though there are several points of difference. The Mile End pots have sagging bases, rather than flat ones, and a few (19a, b, 20) have applied strips. The rilling on the neck of 21 is, however, reminiscent of the girth-grooves on some of the Carr Street vessels. Hurst considers that Thetford ware was made in the Carr Street area during the tenth and eleventh centuries; the form with which we are concerned developed from very similar Ipswich ware pots produced in the same area probably from the seventh century onwards. It seems probable that the Mile End pots should be seen as a late development of this tradition, particularly in view of their rather squat profile.

A single pot of this form occurred at the Marks and Spencer site, High Street, Chelmsford (13th century, definitely after 1200),<sup>19</sup> another at Writtle, Period IA (c. 1211—mid-13th century),<sup>20</sup> and another at the Danbury Tile Kilns<sup>21</sup> (c. 1275/85—1325/35). Similar vessels have been found by Mrs. E. E. Sellers in recent excavations at the kiln site at Hole Farm, Sible Hedingham, including examples with applied strip decoration, though the type does not occur in the presently known range of material from the Mill Green, Ingatestone (site C), kilns; these kiln sites are provisionally dated to the early and later thirteenth century respectively.<sup>22</sup> This might suggest that their rarity in thirteenth century groups from central Essex, including Mill Green, might be due to the form only being popular in the northern part of the county.

It is worth noting that the distribution of Thetford ware in the county is also confined, on present evidence, to the northern part. The suggestion may be supported by an earlier site at Blunts Hall, Witham, tentatively ascribed to the period of the 'Anarchy' (1135—1150), which also produced only one rim of the form under discussion.<sup>23</sup>

Cooking pots with rims of other forms occur, though in relatively small quantity (9.4% of the total). Group IV, no. 22, is an everted rim type, but distinctly angular; it might be seen as being transitional between groups III and V, the latter having flat-topped triangular rims above a vertical neck. These latter appear to be typical of the early to mid-thirteenth century in Essex, e.g. Writtle Period I, and the Marks and Spencer site, High Street, Chelmsford; they are present at the Hole Farm kilns, Sible Hedingham. In the late thirteenth century, the vertical neck under the rim tends to disappear, as at Danbury Tile Kilns (c. 1275/85-1325/35) and Writtle, Period II (c. 1306—1425). The transition may be later further north, however, for such vessels occurred in a deposit at Bungay Castle deposited not later than 1294.<sup>24</sup>

Jugs also account for a small proportion of the total output, in all 7.6%. These coarse, unglazed vessels are difficult to date; similar rim forms occur at the Mill Green kilns, probably earlier than c. 1275. The tubular spout, 17, finds a parallel at Writtle, Fig. 53.25A, 'presumably Period I' (c. 1211—1306). Jugs, as opposed to spouted pitchers, do not occur in Thetford ware, but a connection between spouts of this form and certain spouted pitchers, may be tentatively suggested on the basis of a Thetford ware example from Ipswich.<sup>25</sup> The form is not common in Essex. Jug bases could usually only be recognised by the finger-impressions, so that it is impossible to define the proportion of jugs with bases so decorated. This feature is chronologically significant, however, apparently beginning at the start of the thirteenth century.<sup>26</sup>

The larger bowls, though accounting for only 3% of the group, are of considerable interest. The wavy line decoration typical of group VI, nos. 29 and 30, occurs at the Hole Farm Kilns, but not at Mill Green; an elaborate example of similar decoration is illustrated from 'The Laurels', Great Horkesley, Fig. 13.83. Bowls of group VIII are probably to be compared with cooking-pots of group IV. The examples which form group X may be derived from Thetford ware prototypes; a vessel from Cambridge (Market Place) has upright handles similar to 36 b, and there are similar vessels from Thetford.<sup>27</sup> Comparable bowls in other fabrics have been found at Great Easton, Essex,<sup>28</sup> Sandon, Essex, and Maidstone, Kent.<sup>29</sup>

The function of these very large bowls is uncertain, but they may have been intended as cream pans, used in the production of butter.<sup>30</sup> The fact that they have not so far been

noted in Colchester may lend some support to this view.<sup>31</sup> Bowls of comparable size, *c.* 60 cm. in diameter, are common at the Hole Farm kiln site, where decoration similar to that on no. 36 often occurs on large cooking pots, but only once on a bowl.<sup>32</sup>

Among the unusual items from Mile End, nos. 48 and 49 are worthy of note, since they appear to be parts of large, elaborately decorated storage-jars, similar to those found in Thetford ware. At Hole Farm, multiple lines of strip decoration occur only on large thick-walled vessels and fire-covers. Mrs. Sellers suggests that these may date from *c.* 1200. However, an example in a mid—late-thirteenth-century group from Danbury<sup>33</sup> indicates the longevity of the form. The skillet handle, 51, finds a parallel at Writtle, Period I (Fig. 52.19), *c.* 1211-1306.

It is thus clear that the forms of the majority of vessels, though not the majority of vessel types, seem to be derived from Saxo-Norman Thetford ware prototypes. The remainder of the forms lie within the mainstream of thirteenth century pottery in the area, the bowl 22, as noted, being perhaps intermediate between the two. The numerical dominance of Saxo-Norman derivative vessels suggests an early date, but the presence of chimney-pots, jugs with finger-impressed bases and 'thirteenth century' forms suggests that Period I should be placed at the end of the twelfth century or early in the thirteenth century. This dating must, however, be regarded as tentative until stratified groups of pottery are available from sites in the vicinity, particularly Colchester.

The pottery of Period II differed from the typically thirteenth century forms present in the Period I groups only in that it was made in a better fabric, C. By comparison with central Essex sites, the Period II material seems likely to date from the early/mid-thirteenth century, probably before *c.* 1275, since all the jars have well-defined vertical necks below the rim; however, their possible later occurrence at Bungay has already been noted. As with Period I, the material should ultimately be dated by reference to stratified material from other sites.

On present evidence, therefore, the Mile End pottery seems to have been active from the end of the twelfth century to the mid/late thirteenth, though excavation might well extend this range. Though no kilns were found in the excavated area, the presence of sophisticated kiln furniture, described above, seems to indicate rectangular kilns, possibly of Musty's type 4A.<sup>34</sup>

Whether the site to the north, at Great Horkesley, represents a later development of the same industry it is impossible to say, but on chronological grounds such a suggestion is at least feasible, since its products are clearly later than those of Mile End. Indeed, there is little to suggest a date before *c.* 1275—1300, bowl and jar rims of the type represented by 73-78 (Fig. 13) being typical of Period II at Writtle, *c.* 1306-1425, and Danbury, *c.* 1275/85—1325/35; the possibility of these forms reaching North Essex and Suffolk later than central Essex has already been noted. The jugs, in contrast to Mile End, are here slipped or slip decorated and glazed; whether the bung-holes as No. 81 are from jugs or jars is not clear. These do not occur at Writtle (Fig. 55.64) or in Chelmsford before the fifteenth century, but one occurred at the kiln site at Shefford, Beds., dated by Dr. Dunning to the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries.<sup>35</sup> In view of the apparent rarity of bung-holes at an early date in Essex, it would seem reasonable to suggest that the material from Great Horkesley belongs to the fourteenth century, though perhaps earlier rather than later in that century.

Whilst there is at present no definite evidence for subsequent production of pottery in the vicinity, the names Kiln House and Tile House Farm on the map (Fig. 1) and the discovery of a post-medieval brick kiln at site 5 (Fig. 1) in 1968<sup>36</sup> at least testify to the existence of later brick and tile manufacture. Such activities tend to be attracted to agriculturally poor land near major towns, if the necessary raw materials are available; the Danbury area, close to Chelmsford, Maldon and Witham, provides a parallel.<sup>37</sup> There is a considerable need for intensive fieldwork in the area if its ceramic industries are to be clearly understood; the need is made urgent by the increasing rate of development in the vicinity.

#### Acknowledgements

The fieldwork and excavation was directed by Martin Petchey whilst in receipt of a Rescue scholarship; the Department of the Environment provided grants to meet the remaining costs of the excavation, and to enable this report to be prepared. We are grateful to the contractors, the Amey-Fairclough Consortium, and to the Eastern Road Construction Unit, for allowing the excavations to take place, and for their assistance. Our thanks are also due to Mr. S. Cracknell for his work on the Mile End pottery, and Dr. G. C. Dunning for his report on the chimney-pots. Figures 1—3 are the work of Miss T. McCormick, and Figures 4—10 of S. Cracknell. We are grateful to Dr. Dunning for commenting on a draft of this paper; any remaining errors are the responsibility of the writers.

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#### NOTES

1. M.R.P. maintained a watching brief on the by-pass works generally; no other archaeological sites were found. The predominantly Bronze Age site found during the excavation of ballast at Chitts Hill, in connection with the road, was excavated almost wholly under the direction of Phillip Crummy, and will be published by him in due course.
2. Essex Record Office, D/CT 242B.
3. The kiln site at Hole Farm has been excavated by Mrs. E. Sellers, to whom we are grateful for her comments on these sherds. Interim reports on the excavations appear in *Medieval Archaeology*, XVI, 1972, p. 205; XVII, 1973, p. 184.
4. G. C. Dunning, 'Medieval Chimney-pots', in E. M. Jope (ed.), *Studies in Building History* (1961), 78—93.
5. *ibid.*, 83, Fig. 5.6, no. 6.
6. *Bedfordshire Archaeological Journal*, 5, 1970, 86-90, Fig. 11.
7. *ibid.*, 88, Fig. 12a.
8. Information from Mrs. E. Sellers; see note 3.
9. Information from P.J. Drury; Interim notes on the excavations in *Medieval Archaeology*, XVII, 1973, p. 167.
10. Information from Mr. P. A. Rahtz.
11. Unpublished excavations; see notes in *Medieval Archaeology*.
12. J. Musty, 'Medieval Pottery Kilns', in V. I. Evison, H. Hodges, and J. G. Hurst (eds.), *Medieval Pottery from Excavations* (1974), p. 57.
13. *Victoria County History of Essex*, III (1963), p. 27 (Route 4).
14. M. R. Hull, in the topographical file at Colchester Museum.
15. We are grateful to Mrs. Pertwee, the present occupier, for making this available for study. Sherds are no longer apparent in the garden.
16. Sites 2 and 3 were observed by the Colchester Archaeological Group, and are noted in 'The Witham—Langham Gas Pipeline', *Colchester Archaeological Group Bulletin*, 17, 1974, p. 22. We are grateful to the group, and to Phillip Crummy, Director of the Colchester Archaeological Unit, for making available material and information from this site.

17. E.R.O., Q/RDc lib, Enclosure award map, Great Horkesley.
18. J. G. Hurst, 'Saxo-Norman Pottery in East Anglia', *Proc. Camb. Antiq. Soc.*, L, 1957, p. 32 and Fig. 1, p. 33.
19. See Note 9.
20. P. A. Rahtz, *Excavations at King John's Hunting Lodge, Writtle, Essex, 1955-57* (1969), Fig. 52.13.
21. P. J. Drury and G. D. Pratt, 'A Late 13th and Early 14th Century Tile Factory at Danbury, Essex', *Medieval Archaeology*, XIX (forthcoming).
22. See notes 3 and 11 respectively.
23. D. H. Trump, 'Blunts Hall, Witham', *Trans. Essex Arch. Soc. Third Series*, I (1961), p. 37.
24. *Proc. Suffolk Inst. of Arch.*, XXH (1936), 334-38. We are grateful to Dr. Dunning for this reference.
25. Hurst, 1957, op. cit. (note 18), Fig. 3.1, p. 38.
26. We are grateful to Dr. Dunning for bringing this point to our attention; he knows of no twelfth-century occurrence of such jugs.
27. Hurst, 1957, op. cit. (note 18), Fig. 7.21 and p. 52.
28. Information from the excavator, Mrs. E. E. Sellers; Interim reports in *Trans. Essex Arch. Soc.*, 3rd Series, I (1965), p. 265; II (1966), p. 97.
29. P. J. Spillett, W. P. D. Stebbing, and G. C. Dunning, 'A Pottery Kiln Site at Tyler Hill, near Canterbury', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, LV (1942), p. 64 and Fig. 3.4.
30. We owe this suggestion to Mr. B. Hope-Taylor.
31. Information from Mr. P. Crummy.
32. Or possibly a fire-cover; information from Mrs. E. Sellers.
33. To be published with the pottery from the Danbury Tile Factory; op. cit., note 20.
34. Musty, 1974, op. cit. (note 12), p. 47.
35. G. C. Dunning in W. P. Westell, 'A Medieval Kiln Site at Chicksands, Shefford, Bedfordshire', *East Herts. Arch. Society Trans.*, 9(i), 1934, Fig. 3.18, p. 36.
36. Noted on maps in Colchester and Essex Museum.
37. See P. J. Drury, 'Post-medieval Brick and Tile Kilns at Runsell Green, Danbury, Essex', *Post-Medieval Archaeology*, 9, 1975 (forthcoming).