



THE SAXON AND MEDIEVAL POTTERY FROM WAXWELL LANE, PINNER, MIDDLESEX

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SUMMARY

The aim of this article is to examine and interpret a collection of Saxon and medieval pottery discovered at 54 Waxwell Lane, Pinner in 1973. Although the pottery was not securely stratified, it is possible to conclude that after limited early to middle Saxon activity in the 6th and 7th centuries, a more extensive phase of medieval settlement took place between c.1150 and c.1300. This is represented by collections of coarse, rough and greyware ceramics of this period which constitute 97% of the total assemblage. The Saxon and medieval pottery is put into context through comparison with other local analogous collections and with the historical evidence for early settlement at Pinner. The results indicate that there was medieval occupation in this area of Pinner by the late 12th century.

INTRODUCTION

This report was initially written under the aegis of the Harrow Archaeological Survey Project, which was set up as a Community Programme to survey and record the archaeology of the London Borough of Harrow between 1985 and 1986. The project was supported by the Inner London Archaeological Unit and was funded by the Manpower Services Commission. This project was supervised by Chris Watkins, and subsequently by the late Chris Currie. Most of the fieldwork involved earthwork and geophysical surveys, and a detailed list of the surveys supervised by Watkins is given in a report on Heriot's

Wood earthworks (Borrill forthcoming). Although formally unpublished, they were lodged at Harrow Borough Council. Currie published a number of articles about the project including a report on earthworks in the Grove, Harrow-on-the-hill (Currie 1986) and a report on medieval ridge and furrow at Pinner Village Gardens (Currie & Borrill 1986a). A sites and monuments gazetteer was also created and field-walking projects initiated. The project closed in April 1986, having run its proposed course.

This article reports on a collection of 905 sherds of Saxon and medieval pottery, which were discovered during the digging of garage footings on 3 March 1973 by Mr T E Tew of 54 Waxwell Lane, Pinner. Further digging in the garden revealed other similar ceramic material. The site is situated at the junction of Love Lane with Waxwell Lane (NGR 51200 19000) at an elevation of c.61m above Ordnance Datum.

Verulamium Museum identified the pottery as medieval and Gunnersbury Park Museum recognised two distinct chronological groups. The first group was initially dated c.AD 850–950 and the second c.1150–1325. A late post-medieval collection of modern ceramics, clay pipe fragments, bottle glass, horseshoes, tile and brick was also found.

Some colour photographs taken of the excavation show that the pottery was found at a depth of up to 1m. One photograph suggests the presence of at least one pit and a posthole, which could indicate dom-

estic occupation. Although the pottery is not securely stratified, it was considered an important assemblage since few collections of pottery of these periods have been recorded in the Borough of Harrow.

THE ASSEMBLAGE

Saxon

Fabric A: early/middle Saxon sandy wares (6th–7th century) (Fig 1, Nos 1–3)

Current ceramic research in London indicates that the Saxon pottery is likely to be earlier in date than was suggested at the time of the discovery. This is a fine sandy, almost silty, fabric with some inclusions of chalk up to 0.2mm and flint up to 0.4mm. There are a number of voids on the surface of some of the sherds suggesting that the vessels were tempered with grass or vegetable matter before firing. The colour varies from orange-brown to dark grey on all surfaces. There are a total of nine sherds in this group; two rims from jars, one rim from a bowl, and six body sherds. The two jars (Nos 1–2) and a bowl (No. 3) may be 6th- or 7th-century in date, although they could also conceivably be Iron Age (Lyn Blackmore pers comm). They are similar in form to vessels found at Enfield and Clapham (Cowie & Blackmore 2008, 17 no. p2; 24 nos p23, p26, p42). They represent only 1% of the assemblage recovered. There are no other groups of pottery in Harrow which may be used as parallels, so they may represent the first recorded early to mid-Saxon assemblage from the borough.

Number	Description	% of rim/base
1	Jar rim	6
2	Jar rim	7.5
3	Bowl rim	5.5

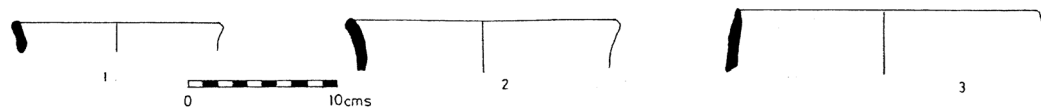


Fig 1. Jars and bowl; Fabric A

Medieval

Fabric B: hard grey fine wares (late 12th–14th century) (Fig 2, Nos 4–14)

This is a fine grey sandy fabric. The vessels are smooth and silty to the touch. There are occasional inclusions of quartz up to 1.5mm in size. The vessels are unglazed. The colour varies from light to dark grey on all surfaces. There are a total of 52 sherds. There are six examples of jars, four examples of jugs, and two bases. One of the rims contains part of the lip of a jug spout (No. 13). There are 40 body sherds.

Number	Description	% of rim/base
4	Jar rim	7.5
5	Jar rim	5
6	Jar rim	4
7	Jar rim	7
8	Jar rim	8
9	Jug rim	3
10	Jug rim	9
11	Jug rim	12.5
12	Jar rim	7
13	Lip of jug rim	4
14	Jar base	5

Fabric C: hard grey sandy wares (late 12th–early 14th century) (Fig 2, Nos 15–28)

This fabric is characterised by many small pieces of quartz up to 0.05mm in size and larger pieces of quartz up to 0.45mm in size. The pottery has a slightly gritty feel. The colour varies from light grey to greyish brown on all surfaces. There are a total of 71 sherds. There are thirteen examples of jars and four small base sherds, only one of which is illustrated (No. 28). There are no examples of jugs or bowls. There are 54 body sherds.

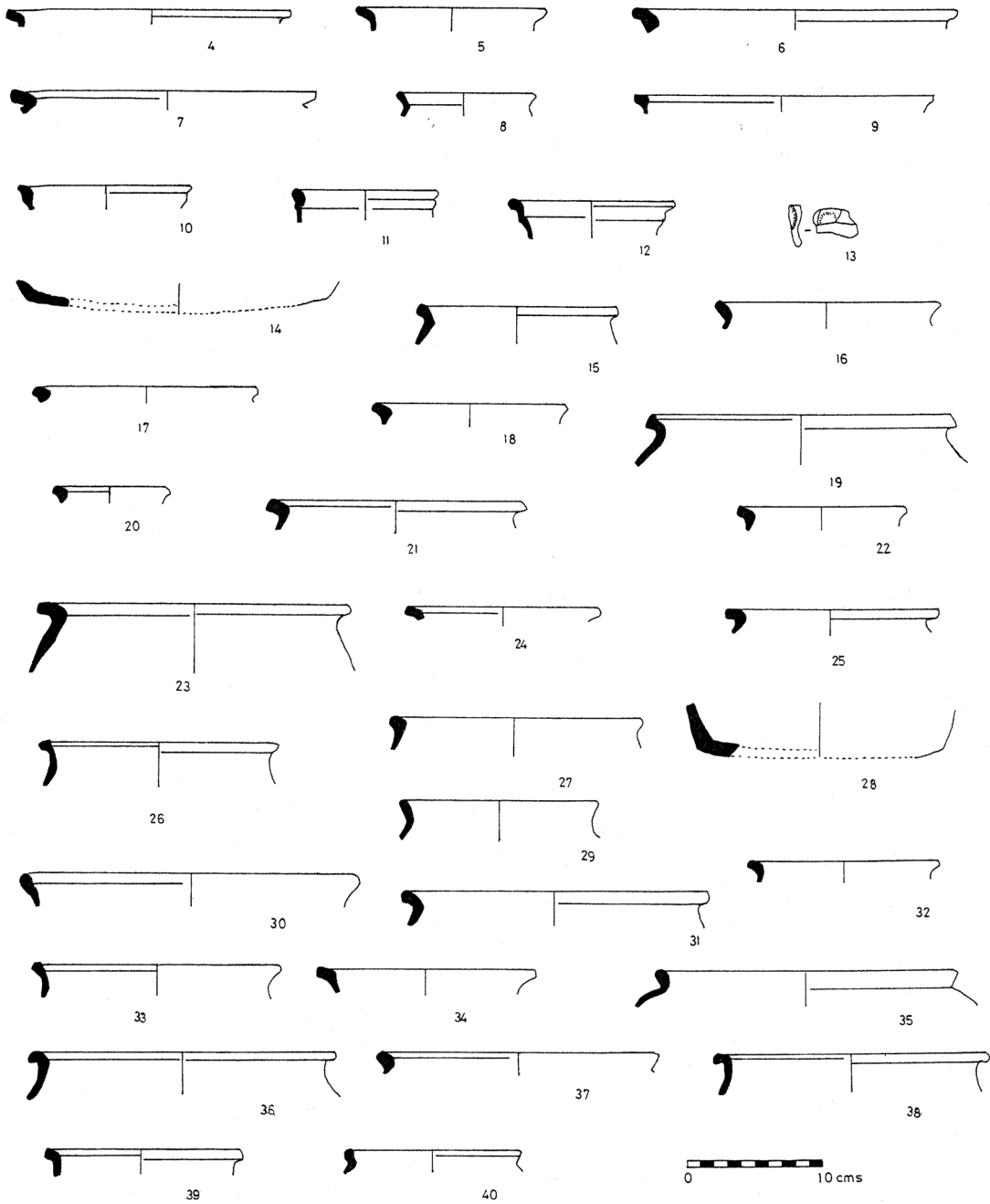


Fig 2. Jars, jugs and bases; Fabrics B, C and D

Number	Description	% of rim/base	Number	Description	% of rim/base
15	Jar rim	11	19	Jar rim	7
16	Jar rim	7	20	Jar rim	9
17	Jar rim	7	21	Jar rim	9
18	Jar rim	7	22	Jar rim	6

Number	Description	% of rim/base
23	Jar rim	4
24	Jar rim	7.5
25	Jar rim	7
26	Jar rim	4
27	Jar rim	8.5
28	Jar base	9

Fabric D: hard grey wares with flint and sand (late 12th–early 14th century) (Fig 2, Nos 29–40; Fig 3, Nos 41–46)

This fabric is characterised by many small pieces of flint and quartz with an average size of 0.5mm. This gives the pottery an overall speckled appearance and a gritty feel. There are occasional larger pieces of quartz up to 4mm in size. The colour of the pottery varies from light grey to dark grey/brown on all surfaces. There are a total of 113 sherds in this fabric group. There were fifteen examples of jars and six base sherds, two of which are illustrated (Nos 45–6). The absence of bowls is rather surprising, and there was only a single example of a jug. There are 91 body sherds.

Number	Description	% of rim/base
29	Jar rim	6
30	Jar rim	5
31	Jar rim	8
32	Jar rim	6.5
33	Jar rim	3
34	Jar rim	8
35	Jar rim	8
36	Jar rim	7
37	Jar rim	7
38	Jar rim	8
39	Jar rim	7
40	Jar rim	10
41	Jar rim	8
42	Jar rim	3
43	Jar rim	5
44	Jar rim	7
45	Jar or jug base	12
46	Jar or jug base	17

Fabric E: very sandy wares (12th–13th century) (Fig 3, Nos 47–53)

The fabric is characterised by very small grains, giving the sherds a smooth silty feel. There are occasional inclusions of quartz up to 0.2mm. The colour of the pottery varies

from light grey to buff, through to orange-brown on all surfaces. The most common colour is light grey. There are a total of 72 sherds in this fabric group. There are five jars, three base sherds, and the thumb-impressed handle from a jug (No. 53). There are 63 body sherds.

Number	Description	% of rim/base
47	Jar rim	4
48	Jar rim	4
49	Jar rim	6
50	Jar rim	7.5
51	Jar base	6
52	Jar base	3
53	Jug handle	-

Fabric F: sandy wares (12th–13th century) (Fig 3, Nos 54–61)

The fabric is characterised by many small grains, giving the sherds a slightly harsh feel. There are inclusions of quartz up to 0.25mm. The colour of the pottery varies from light grey to orange-brown. The most common colour is light grey to light brown. These colours are found on all surfaces. There are a total of 177 sherds in this fabric group. There are ten jars, seven base sherds, and a sherd with part of the opening of a 'bung hole' from a jar or pitcher (No. 61). There are 159 body sherds.

Number	Description	% of rim/base
54	Jar rim	4.5
55	Jar rim	4
56	Jar rim	4.5
57	Jar rim	5
58	Jar rim	5
59	Jar base	6
60	Jar or pitcher base	6
61	Sherd from jar or pitcher	

Fabric G: very sandy wares with flint (mid-12th–mid-13th century) (Fig 3, Nos 62–84; Fig 4, Nos 85–101)

This fabric is characterised by many small pieces of quartz and flint averaging 0.05mm in size, with larger pieces of flint and quartz up to 0.25mm in size. The pottery has a coarse gritty feel caused by the presence of many small particles of sand and flint. The colour varies from light grey/buff to orange

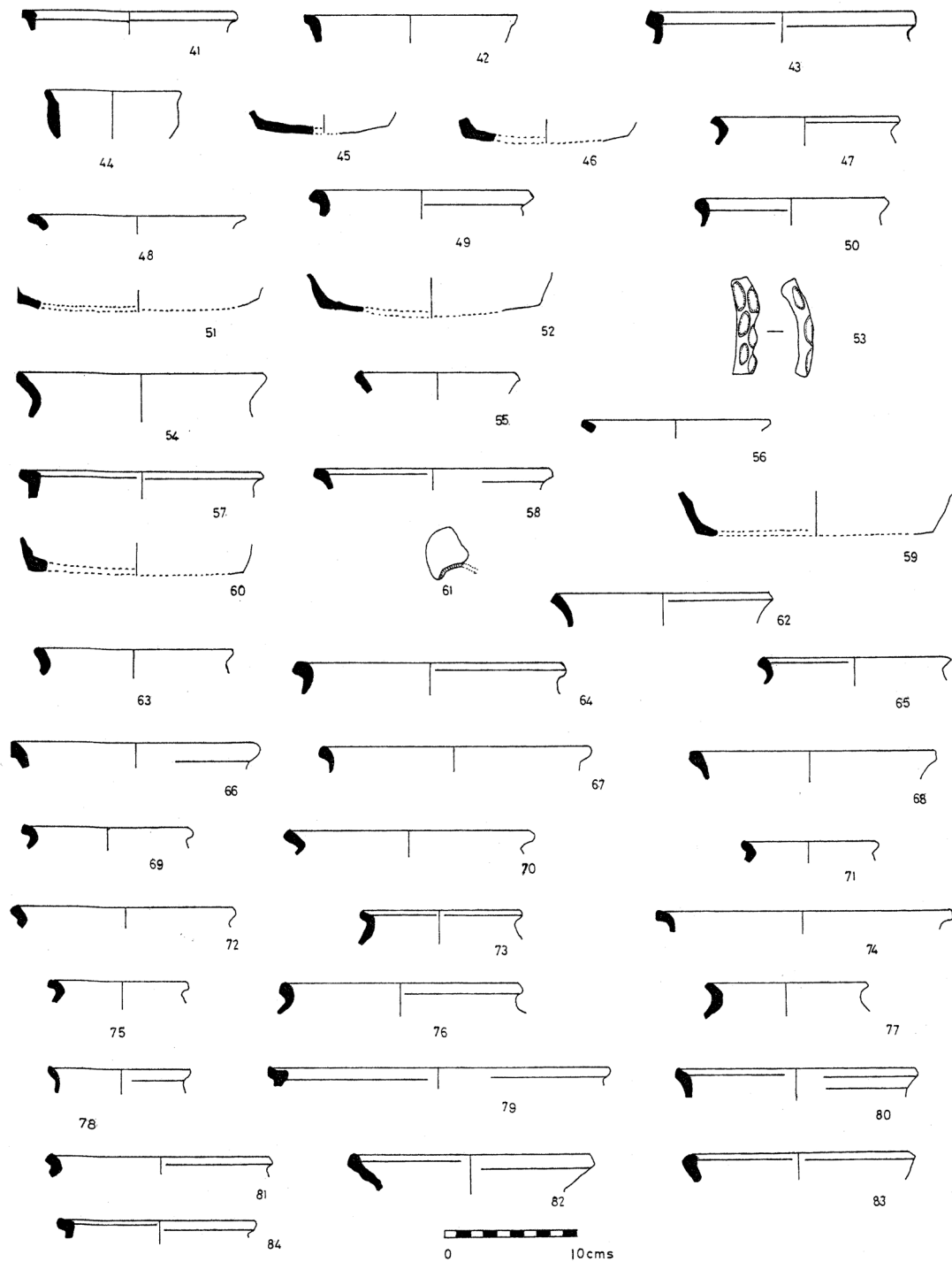


Fig 3. Jars, jugs, bases, decorated handle; Fabrics D, E, F, G

and reddish brown on all surfaces. There are a total of 373 sherds in this fabric group making it the largest single fabric group from Waxwell Lane. There are 37 examples of jars, three examples of jugs, including one with a thumb-impressed handle (No. 95). There are four body sherds decorated with thumb-pinched strips, and 33 base sherds. There are no examples of bowls.

Number	Description	% of rim/base
62	Jar rim	4
63	Jar rim	4
64	Jar rim	6
65	Jar rim	3
66	Jar rim	3.5
67	Jar rim	5
68	Jar rim	6
69	Jar rim	5
70	Jar rim	6
71	Jar rim	10
72	Jar rim	6
73	Jar rim	6
74	Jar rim	7
75	Jar rim	5
76	Jar rim	7.5
77	Jar rim	6

Number	Description	% of rim/base
78	Jar rim	10
79	Jar rim	4
80	Jar rim	5.5
81	Jar rim	2
82	Jar rim	6
83	Jar rim	7.5
84	Jar rim	8
85	Jar rim	6.5
86	Jar rim	8.5
87	Jar rim	5
88	Jar rim	6
89	Jar rim	4
90	Jar rim	3.5
91	Jar rim	7.5
92	Jar rim	4
93	Jug with flaring sides	
94	Jug rim	
95	Jug with thumb-impressed handle	
96	Jar sherd with thumb applied strip	
97	Jar sherd with thumb applied strip	
98	Jar base	5
99	Jar base	6
100	Jar base	8
101	Jar base	6
102	Jar base	7

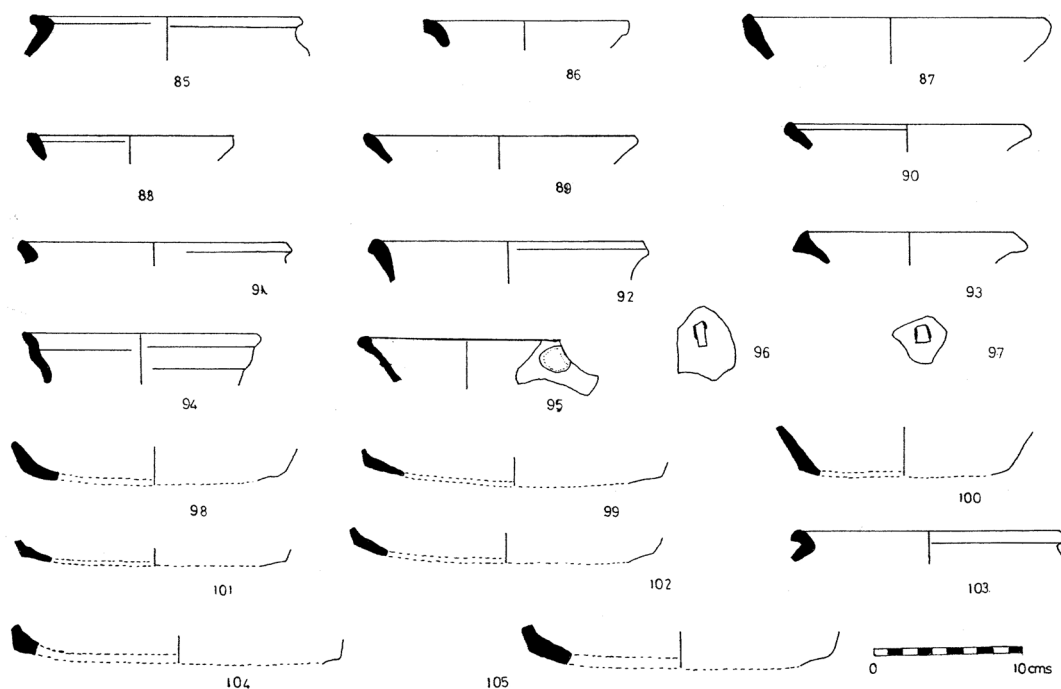


Fig 4. Jars, jugs and bases, decorated sherds; Fabrics G, H, I

Fabric H: fine sandy and flinty wares (12th–13th century) (Fig 4, No. 103)

The fabric is characterised by many small pieces of sand and inclusions of flint up to 3.5mm in size, which gives the pottery a rough uneven feel. The colour varies from light reddish brown to dark grey over all surfaces. There are a total of 23 sherds in this fabric group. There is one example of a jar and 22 body sherds.

Number	Description	% of rim/base
103	Jar rim	4

Fabric I: very flinty wares (12th century) (Fig 4, Nos 104–105)

The fabric is characterised by very many pieces of flint, which are up to 4.0mm in size. These give the pottery a rough uneven feel. The colour of this pottery varies from light grey to light brown over all surfaces. There are a total of two jar base sherds in this group.

Number	Description	% of rim/base
104	Jar base	6
105	Jar base	6

Glazed wares (not illus)

The glazed medieval pottery consists of two sherds of London slipped jugs of 13th- to 14th-century date, three 15th-century

‘Tudor green’ ware sherds, and four sherds which appear to be of a London, Kingston or Surrey origin. The three other glazed sherds are probably of London origin.

One sherd of late medieval pottery, the base of a jug in a buff pink silty fabric, was present. It has a yellow glaze on the inside over a pink slip and may be East Midlands Yellow Ware. It is therefore of 15th- to 16th-century date and must be regarded as a stray find.

DISCUSSION

The earliest pottery found here is probably early to middle Saxon (Fabric A) and of 6th- to 7th-century date (Cowie & Blackmore 2008, 17, 24). In the absence of other contextual information little further can be said. However it does indicate some degree of Saxon activity at this period.

The medieval pottery from Fabric groups B–I in general terms would fit into the remit of Hertfordshire greywares (SHERS). These are broadly dated from the late 12th century to the early 14th century (Hurst 1961, 267; Vince 1985, 44; Turner-Rugg 1993, 51; Borrill 2008, 11). The pottery has been quantified by sherd counts and EVES (after Orton *et al* 1993). Table 1 shows the number of sherds in each fabric group and Fig 5 shows the fabric distributions. The pottery was not weighed as there were no facilities to do so at the time. In this report subtle differences between the fabric groups have been ident-

Table 1. Quantities of pottery from Waxwell Lane, Pinner

Fabric	Total Sherds	Jars	Jugs	Bases	Body Sherds	Comments
A	9	2	0	0	6	1 bowl rim
B	52	6	4	2	40	
C	71	13	0	4	54	
D	113	15	1	6	91	
E	72	5	0	3	63	1 thumb-impressed handle
F	177	10	0	7	159	1 sherd of a ‘bung-hole’ jar
G	373	37	3	33	296	4 decorated body sherds
H	23	1	0	0	22	
I	2	0	0	2	0	
Other	1	0	0	0	1	
Glazed	12	0	2	0	10	
TOTAL	905	89	10	57	742	7

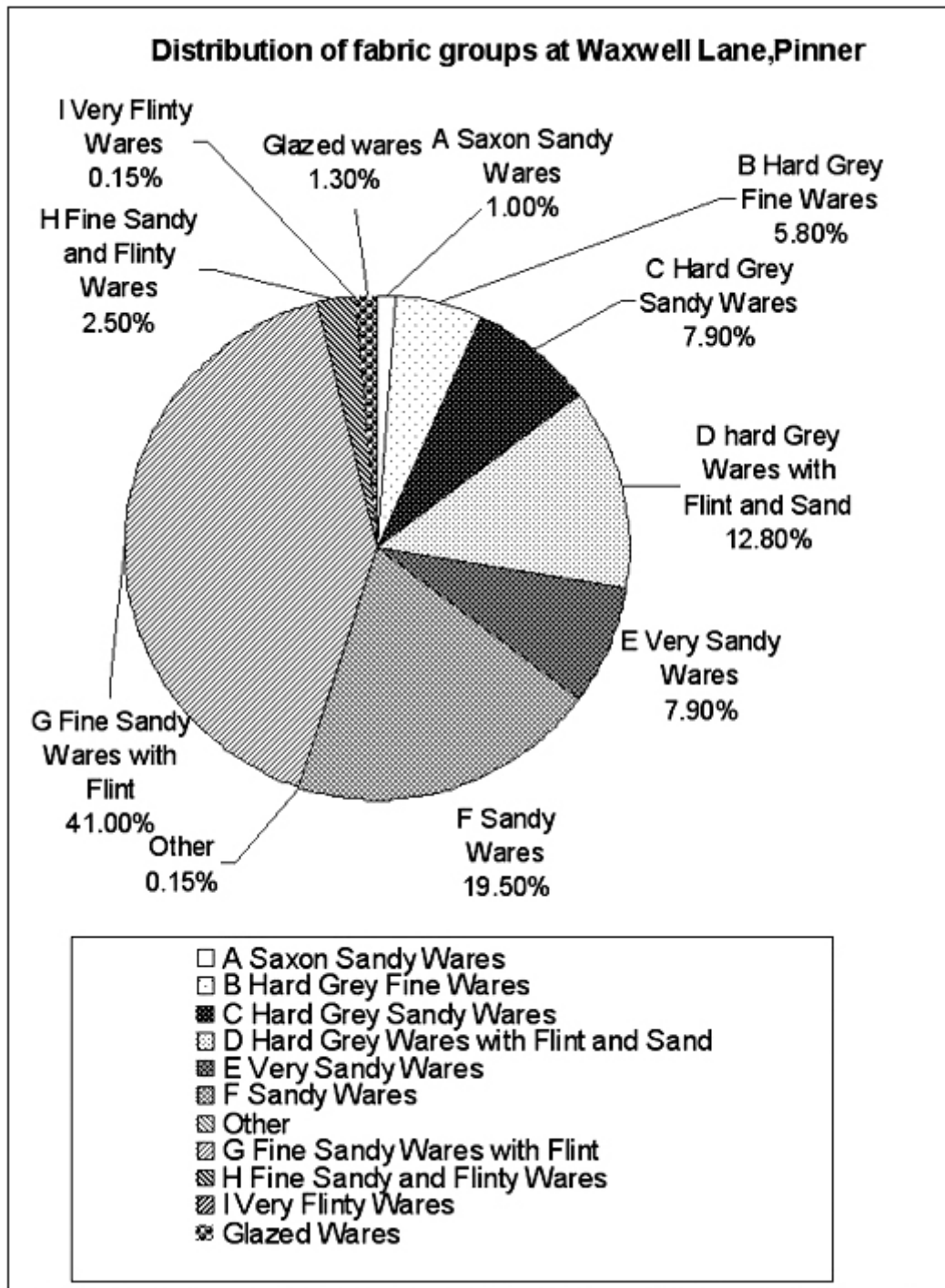


Fig 5. Distribution of fabric groups at Waxwell Lane, Pinner

ified to divide them up, though some of these differences could simply be caused by different proportions of inclusions settling when the clays were in elutriation tanks or tubs. It is, therefore, conceivable that sherds classified into separate groups could in fact be coterminous with those in other groups as they were made from the same batch of clay.

Differences were also noted in the greyware fabrics at the Ware and Hertford central sites with one distinctive 'Potter's Green' type from Little Munden being present (Borrill 2008, 11–12, 60 and fig 11, no. 4, fig 32, nos 67, 69, 74, fig 33, no. 93, fig 35, no. 134). Subtle differences were also recorded in the greyware fabrics at Chandlers Cross when compared with those from the Palace at King's Langley (Neal 2004). Thin-sectioning and petrological analysis may be a way forward in helping to define the sources of the clays from which the vessels were made. This was attempted on the greyware collection at Chandlers Cross, but the origin of the clays could not be sourced.

It is obvious from the distribution of fabric groups in Fig 5 that greywares dominate the medieval assemblage. These constitute over 97% of the pottery at Waxwell Lane. Glazed wares represent just over 1% of the total assemblage. The coarser wares were the most commonly used and popular fabrics with 89 jars and 10 jugs present.

The absence of bowls from this collection is surprising, though they also are poorly represented at the local sites of Northolt Manor (Hurst 1961) and Potter's Street Hill (Sheppard 1977). Perhaps wooden bowls or bread trenchers were used in their stead.

The collection includes eight examples of unglazed jugs, two of which have thumb impressions on the handle (Nos 53 and 95). Jugs with these thumb-impressed handles are common on sites just outside the Borough of Harrow, at Elstree (Biddle 1961, 70) and at the Manor of More, near Rickmansworth (Biddle *et al* 1959, 165, fig 9 no. 15), where they have been dated to the second half of the 13th century.

CONCLUSIONS

The earliest pottery is probably early to middle Saxon in date and may indicate limited occupation in the 6th to 7th centuries.

The place name 'Pinner' is thought to be of middle Saxon origin (language studies by Ann Cole; Clarke 2004, 1), so it is possible there was some form of Saxon occupation at this time. A settlement at Pinner was probably in existence by *c.*AD 900 (*ibid*, 1) but this site location was not reoccupied until the later 12th century.

In the medieval period Pinner was within the Manor of Harrow and is mentioned by name in 1231. Pinner became the largest village in Harrow Manor in acreage and population and had a chapel by 1240 (Clarke 2004, 21). It is recorded that in 1234–40 Archbishop Edmund Rich allocated the offerings of Pinner chapel to the vicar of Harrow (*ibid*, 33). By 1315 Pinner was established, with a core area and several hamlets. In 1336 Pinner was granted a weekly market, which still continues today, and an annual fair (*ibid*, 21).

Chalk extraction is recorded at the north end of Waxwell Lane (Clarke 2004, 24) from the medieval period; chalk was used to make mortar and limewash for buildings and possibly to lime soils. The chalk extraction continued into the Tudor period when the source became exhausted (*ibid*, 24). The find spot at 54 Waxwell Lane is south of the chalk workings. It was on a head tenement¹ focused upon Bridge Street, adjacent to the central settlement of Pinner. In 1547 this consisted of a messuage and adjoining closes of about 7½ acres, called Blackers after an earlier tenant. The pottery was found near the boundary, away from the messuage. This head tenement was almost certainly among the 21 head tenements that probably existed in Pinner in 1285 (Lambeth Palace, Estate MS. 2068, Baker *et al* 1971, 222–4). There is documentary evidence for the continued occupation of this head tenement since 1420 and Waxwell Lane is first mentioned in 1529 (Clarke 2004, 16). Messeder's map of Harrow dating to 1759 shows buildings at Waxwell.²

The archaeological evidence for the early development of Pinner village may not be as compelling as the historical evidence, but it is nevertheless important in its own right. Keyhole excavations at Pinner Village Gardens open fields by the Harrow Survey Project revealed archaeological evidence for occupation at Pinner dating back to the 13th century (Currie & Borrill 1986a). Excavations

in the High Street undertaken in 1976–77 also discovered evidence of 13th- to 15th-century date (Reeves 1980, 33). Furthermore a 13th-century pottery kiln was excavated near Potter's Street Hill in 1975 (Sheppard 1977). These investigations confirm that there was settlement at Pinner by the 13th century. However, some of the pottery from the excavations at Waxwell Lane dates from the late 12th century indicating slightly earlier medieval domestic occupation.

A large proportion of the pottery from Waxwell Lane was made up of small abraded sherds, as indicated by the low percentages of rims present, which for jars only exceed 10% in the cases of Nos 15, 40, 71 and 78. This suggests the constant redigging and redeposition of earlier ceramic material into later features, and it is more than likely that the pottery was in rubbish pits. The material was not from securely stratified contexts and for that reason it has not been possible to provide a stratigraphic sequence of forms from which to speculate about chronological change.

It has been suggested that the variation of pottery rim form may be due to the slightly different placing of the potter's fingers and may not be significant in itself (Hurst 1961, 267). Furthermore it has been argued in an article on the medieval pottery from the City of London, in a discussion of coarse sand-tempered, wheel-thrown greywares, that no apparent development in typology or form is apparent from the late 12th to mid-13th century (Vince 1985, 44). For these reasons it is difficult to date the pottery to within a quarter of a century. Even when there is a kiln group, such as at Potter's Hill (Sheppard 1977), it is difficult to date the pottery to within less than 50 years because of the conservatism of the forms over a 150-year period, and the absence of other associated datable artefacts, such as decorated tiles, coins or architectural fragments, or even more importantly historical associations. Thus, although a published collection of 350kg of greywares from Chandlers Cross near Rickmansworth has been analysed (Neal 2004), it has not been possible to closely date the assemblage as it was in a secondary context. A date 'around 1200 but no later than 1250' was suggested by the excavator (*ibid*, 85).

However, bearing in mind these difficulties, it is possible to identify certain traits in the Waxwell Lane pottery, which provide clues as to its date. The jars from the eight medieval fabric groups show differences in the form of the rim which is in keeping with pottery of the late 12th to early 14th centuries (Hurst 1961, 267; Vince 1985, 44; Turner-Rugg 1993, 51; Borrill 2008, 11). There is a wide range of jar sizes; the rim diameters vary from 10cm (4in) to 50cm (10in). There are a number of examples of simple sagging bases. The generally simple rim forms of these wheel-thrown coarse sandy wares indicate that most of the pottery may be dated between *c.*1150 and *c.*1275.

Geographically the closest analogous group of pottery was found at the kiln site off Potter's Street Hill, Pinner (Sheppard 1977) to the north-west of Waxwell Lane (NGR 51071 19121). The assemblage of hard grey reduced wares tempered with quartz sand consisted of jars, bowls and jugs, with approximately 90% of the pottery made up of jars. The forms of this pottery are generally similar to those of fabric groups B–I from Waxwell Lane, though the Potter's Street Hill jar rims are more developed, having more squared and clubbed rims. The Potter's Street Hill assemblage was dated to the 13th century (Sheppard 1977, 35) in comparison with similar finds from Northolt (Hurst 1961).

A second important collection of pottery, which is similar to that from Waxwell Lane, comes from Northolt Manor. At this site the 'Hard Medieval Grey Wares' were dated between *c.*1225 and *c.*1325 (Hurst 1961, 267–9). Hurst states that 'the ware is hard and grey with large numbers of small flint grits giving a surface harsh to touch'. This description would fit the pottery from fabric groups B–I.

In conclusion, this assemblage of pottery from 54 Waxwell Lane may be divided into two distinct chronological groups: the first suggesting early to mid-Saxon activity, followed by a phase of more intensive use of the site some five hundred years later during the period *c.* 1150–*c.*1300, or possibly slightly beyond that date. The dating of the pottery and the documentary information, in tandem, confirm that the archaeological and historical evidence are in broad agreement,

indicating occupation of this head tenement in Pinner by the late 12th century (Pat Clarke pers comm).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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NOTES

¹ The holder of a head tenement had the most important customary holding and had a hide, half hide or virgate of land, held directly from the lord and considered himself a yeoman.

² Messeder Map of Harrow, 1759, Greater London Record Office, GLRO 643/2nd deposit.

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