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POST-MEDIEVAL POTTERY FROM CHATHAM

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INTRODUCTION

This paper is the second part of the report on the excavations at 220–250, High Street, Chatham.¹ Once more I am grateful to the landowners, Philips and Pye Pension Fund, for permission to retain the pottery for the Guildhall Museum, Rochester; also to Messrs. Deacon Construction and their representatives, Mr. B. Hesleden and Mr. P. Rooney. Our members, Beverley Williams, Paul Hayes and Percy Payne again provided invaluable assistance throughout.²

Much of the site had been levelled at various times by cutting into the slope of the valley through which Chatham High Street runs, and was mainly occupied by a large bakery. In 1978, most of the site was reduced to the level of the High Street. The eastern and western flanks, where about 4 m. of brickearth and hill-wash covered the chalk bed-rock, were left at their original levels. Unfortunately, most of the pits were exposed by mechanical diggers and many had a proportion of their contents removed and lost. There were exceptions to this however, and Pit 18 was merely scraped by the machine and recovered intact.

THE FINDS

The pits are numbered in order of excavation.

Pit 1 was situated at the rear of 218 High Street, but probably belonged to a property fronting the present-day Clover Street. It

¹ *Arch. Cant.*, xcv (1979), 231–240.

² I am grateful for help and advice from Mr. A.C. Harrison, B.A., F.S.A., Mr. D. Kelly, B.A., F.S.A. and Mr. M. Moad.

was dug from the level of Richard Street into the hill-wash deposit. Originally a cess-pit, well constructed with chalk blocks, it was about 2.3 m. deep and rectangular in shape about 2 m. by 1 m. The fill consisted mainly of bricks and rubble, containing only a small amount of pottery and only one tobacco pipe.³ Most of the coarse ware was very fragmentary but a two-handled vessel was 90 per cent complete when reconstructed (Fig. 1, no. 8). This vessel has a 'saddle-shaped' rim with a groove for a lid; two horizontal loop-handles set at the sides 2 cm. below the rim, with 'thumb-marks' at each end of both handles; rough red fabric, orange-brown glaze inside and out; two incised lines roughly level with the handles; slightly concave base, knife trimmed; height 11.5 cm., base diameter 13.5 cm., rim diameter 19.5 cm.

An interesting Staffordshire bowl was also 90 per cent complete (Fig. 3, no. 25). This has a finely turned foot-ring; fine, dark red fabric, shiny brown glaze on the exterior, and yellow, brown and green slips and a yellow glaze inside; height 9.5 cm., base diameter 10 cm., rim diameter 21 cm.

Several examples of mid-eighteenth century fine-wares were found, including Wheildon type ware, Astbury ware, fine Staffordshire salt-glaze and Chinese porcelain. The pit appears to have been disused and filled c. 1760-70.

Pit 2 was behind either 242 or 244 High Street. It was dug into the chalk, had no lining and was probably intended as a cess-pit. Rectangular in shape, about 1.7 m. by 1.3 m. and at least 2.3 m. deep. The fill was mainly a powdery green and brown soil. 129 items of pottery were recovered, together with many dateable tobacco pipes.⁴

The most important single item is a Staffordshire press-moulded slipware dish (Fig. 3, no. 23). This dish is 50 per cent complete, has a buff fabric and is decorated with a dark brown slip covered on the upper side with a yellow glaze. The motif is of a stag in harness, probably attached to a carriage, a wheel of which is just visible on the left of the animal's rear leg. Above the stag are the moulded initials: R.H. It is possible that there are two sets of initials on this dish, the patch of dark brown slip above the top antler may be part of the second set. The diameter of the dish is about 27 cm. The find was brought to the attention of Mr. R. Cooper, who kindly supplied the following notes:

³ *Arch. Cant.*, xciv (1979), 238.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 238.

'R.H. is present along with W.B. (William Bird) on the Coachman dish in Leicester Museum (No. 106. 1857).⁵ The double initials W.B./R.H. puzzle me a lot. There are quite a few puzzling features about these press-moulded dishes made presumably in the first half of the eighteenth century; Samuel Malkin is the best known of the press-moulded dish potters. In my opinion there could well have been two S.M. potters, e.g. father and son because there seem to me to be two distinct styles; I mention this because I think these press-moulded potters worked sometimes in partnership, which would explain the double set of initials of this particular dish.

There is another R.H. dish in the Fitzwilliam Museum (Glaisher Collection, no. 189). It is not illustrated in the catalogue but an illustration of it appears in the *Connoisseur*, June 1912. It has been fired vertically and upside down, judging by the illustration, there are heavy vertical glaze stains. After the dish was removed from its mould, dark brown slip was painted inside the outline of the lion and unicorn which has caused the heavy glaze stains. This of course was common practice, filling in with slip after making and before firing. It would be an indication perhaps of pieces being once fired.

Both Glaisher and Bernard Leach confuse the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries regarding slip decorated wares. In Glaisher's catalogue notes (Vol. 1, 33) he writes: 'It has been suggested that this dish (lion and unicorn) was made to commemorate the Union of England and Scotland in 1707, but its similarity to other pieces described here points to an earlier date, perhaps soon after the Restoration (1660), with which the heraldic emblems would not be incompatible.'

I am firmly convinced that press-moulded dishes were not made in England until after 1700; Arnold Mountford (Hanley Museum) agrees with me. Dishes depicting horses, horses and carriages and stags are fairly common on these press-moulded wares; e.g. horse with mounted highwayman, initialed W.A. (Glaisher, no. 191, Pl. 16a; Rackham and Read, Fig. 48).⁶ A similar dish is in the Burnap Collection, Kansas City. For examples of stag motifs see Cooper⁷ Fig. 75; Glaisher Collection, Fitzwilliam Museum, Greg Collection, Manchester and another in a private collection, the latter two both dated 1736. As to the identity of R.H. there are two known possibilities, these are: Richard Halliday of Potovens (Cooper, 45)⁸.

⁵ R.G. Cooper, *English Slipware Dishes, 1650-1850*, London (1968), 107, fig. 73.

⁶ B. Rackham and H. Read, *English Pottery*, Wakefield (1972).

⁷ R.G. Cooper, *op.cit.*, in note 5.

⁸ *Ibid.*

Ralph Hammersley: A milk-jug in Stoke-on-Trent Museum with these initials, supposed to be the name of Wheildon's milkman, dated 1757'.⁹

Two almost complete Bellarmine jugs were found in the pit. The least complete was broken just above the mouth of the mask. Covered in a strongly mottled iron wash and salt glaze with a type V111 mask¹⁰ and a heart-and-crown plaque, it is datable to c. 1675–1700. A similar type with an identical plaque is recorded at the Woolwich stoneware kiln site;¹¹ for a close comparison cf. *London and Middlesex Arch. Soc.*, xxv (1974), 207, fig. 45, no. 14. Not illustrated.

The more complete Bellarmine (Fig. 1, no. 6) is broken off just above the mask. It is covered in a rather drab orange-brown iron wash and salt glaze, the missing handle has the characteristic spur at the lower junction; there are no wire marks on the base. The mask is type V111¹² and the plaque depicts a crowned lion rampant; height (when complete) about 21 cm. Datable to c. 1675–1700.

(Fig. 1, no. 5) a two-thirds complete pipkin with a buff fabric, pale brown glaze inside; a solid, pulled rod-type handle, concave base and pulled pouring lip. This form, with variations, appears to be the common pipkin type in eighteenth-century Chatham. Height 11.5 cm., rim diameter 11 cm., base diameter 8.5 cm.

A larger pipkin, probably an earlier type, was also two-thirds complete when reconstructed (Fig. 1, no. 2). It has a red fabric with a brown glaze inside and odd splashes outside, a solid, pulled rod-handle (missing), a slightly sagging base which may have had short tripod legs attached: two incised bands encircle the shoulder of the vessel and the pouring lip is pulled at right angles to the handle. Height (uneven) 13.5 cm., rim diameter 16.5 cm., base diameter 11 cm. Similar vessels of this type occur at the seventeenth-century kiln site at Woolwich.¹³

A medium size storage jar (Fig. 1, no. 10) was 50 per cent reconstructed. Red fabric, clear lead glaze inside and out; cordon around neck of vessel just under the rim, two incised bands around body; two vertical rod-handles with 'thumb-mark' impressions at the

⁹ Thomas Whieldon, (1719–95).

¹⁰ M.R. Holmes, 'The So-Called "Bellarmine" Mask on Imported Rhenish Stoneware', *Antiq. Journ.*, xxxi (1951), 173–9.

¹¹ S. Pryor and K. Bockley, 'A Seventeenth Century Kiln Site at Woolwich', *Post-Med. Arch.*, xii (1977), 30–85.

¹² M.R. Holmes, *op. cit.*, in note 10.

¹³ Pryor and Blockley, *op. cit.*, in note 11.

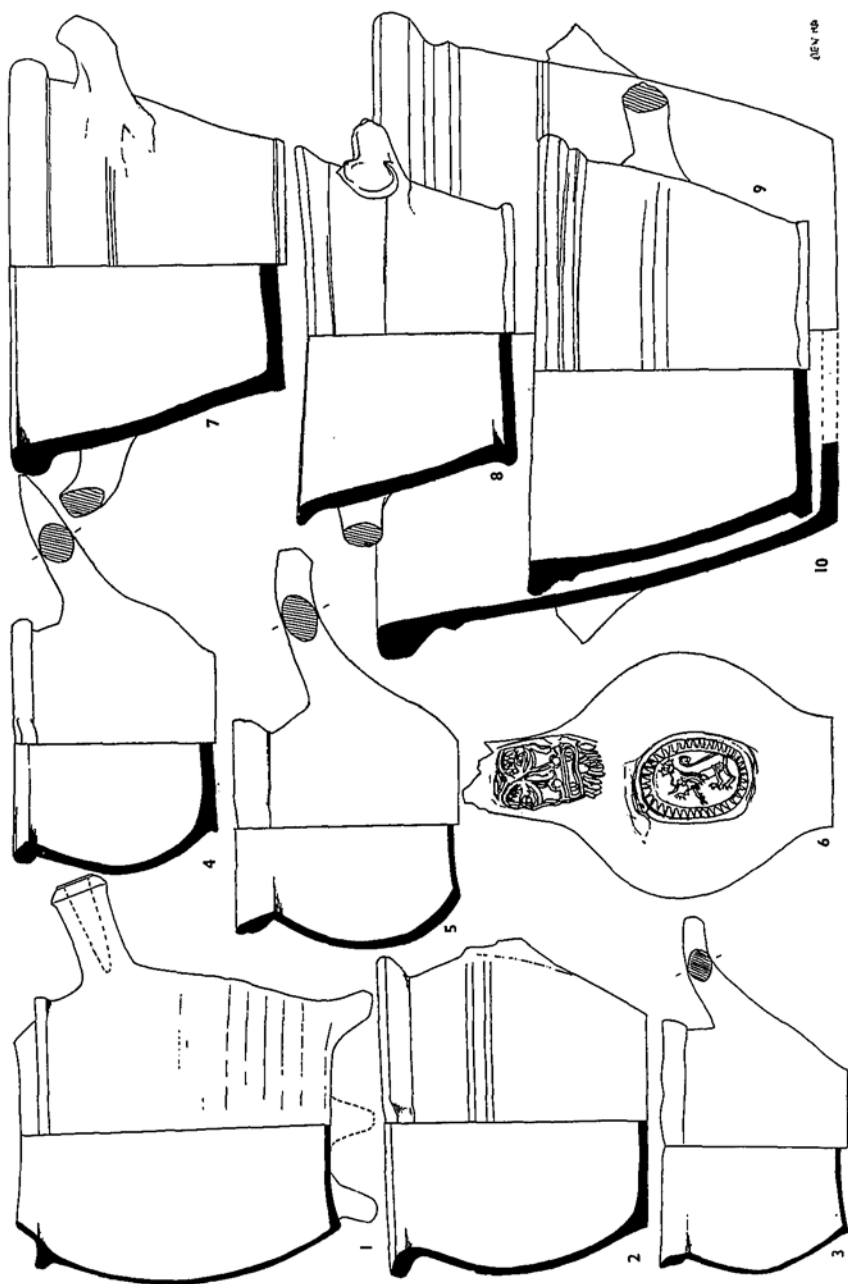


Fig. 1. Post-medieval Pottery from Chatham ($\frac{1}{4}$)

junction of the handles and body; sagging base. Height 24 cm., rim diameter 33.5 cm., base diameter 19.5 cm. Similar forms occur at Woolwich.¹⁴

A bowl, 90 per cent complete (Fig. 1, no. 9), in a red fabric and a clear lead glaze inside with large splashes on the exterior; one horizontal rod-handle 4 cm. below the rim and three thin incised lines around the body at the level of the handle; concave base, knife trimmed; the rim form is very similar to Fig. 1, no. 10. Height (extremely uneven) about 14.5 cm., rim diameter 24 cm., base diameter 15 cm. Pit 2 was probably filled by c. 1750.

Pit 3 was in the rear of 222 High Street and was probably a cess-pit, cut into the chalk and brick lined at ground level. The diameter was about 2 m. and the depth about 2 m. The pit had been cut through and only a third of its contents was recovered. The fill and pottery were similar to that of Pit 2. A complete small pipkin (Fig. 1, no. 4) was recovered intact. The pipkin has a red fabric and is glazed inside with a patchy brown glaze; it has a solid pulled rod-handle, a pulled spout at right angles to the handle and an internal lid-seating; concave base. Height 10.5 cm., base diameter 9 cm., rim diameter 12.5 cm.

Pit 4 may have been the earliest feature on the site; it was the closest pit to the road and was situated behind 244 High Street. Only a small amount of the pit could be saved. Originally a rubbish pit dug into the brickearth with a diameter of 2 m. and 1.75 m. deep. The fill consisted of a uniform black soil. The only object which was recovered *in situ* was the Surrey-ware pipkin (Fig. 1, no. 1). This pipkin has a pale buff fabric and an interior greenish-yellow glaze; it stands on three short pulled legs, has a thrown hollow handle and a wide external lid-seating. The lower part of the body is noticeably ribbed. Height 18.3 cm., body diameter 16.3 cm., base diameter 10.5 cm., rim diameter 10 cm. Fragments of similar vessels with an apple green glaze were also found in the pit. Mr. F. Holling, F.S.A. kindly contributed the following note: 'The Chatham pipkin is very close to my number E2a¹⁵ in form. Although the rim is of a different type, this is not significant because the external lid-seating comes into use in the later sixteenth century and after that time seems to have been used freely as an alternative to the internal lid-seating. Some of the sherds from the pit had an apple green glaze

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ F.W. Holling, 'A Preliminary Note on the Pottery Industry of the Hampshire-Surrey Borders', *Surrey Arch. Coll.* lxxviii (1971), 57-88.

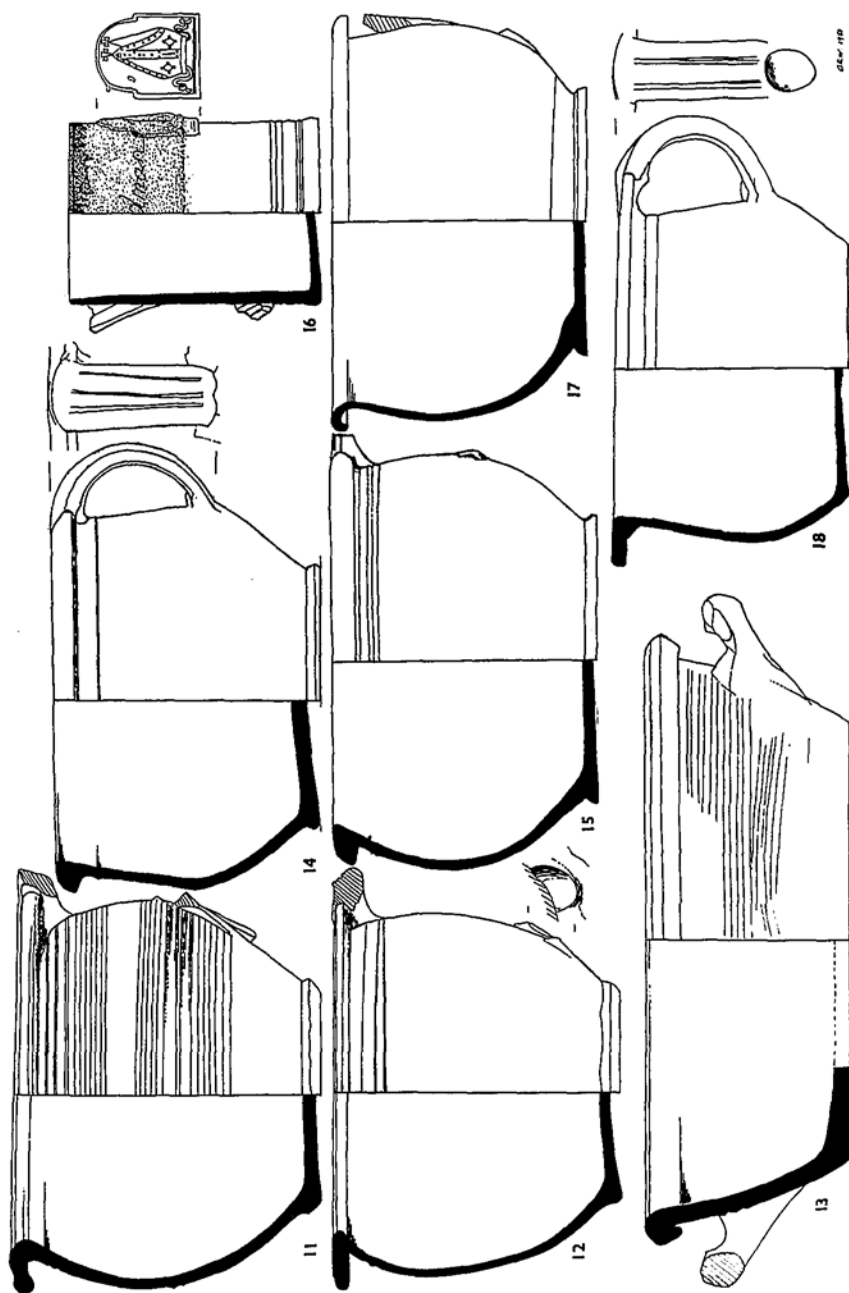


Fig. 2. Post-medieval Pottery from Chatham ($\frac{1}{4}$)

which is another characteristic of some of the pipkins before the middle of the seventeenth century which appears to die out later. I suggest a date of around 1640 for the end of the ribbed pipkins and I still do not know of any evidence which helps to amend this dating.'

Only a small part of Pit 5 remained. It was behind 220 High Street and was 1 m. square and brick lined. The potsherds recovered were similar to those in Pits 2 and 3. Worthy of mention is the two-handled bowl (Fig. 2, no. 13). The bowl is in the coarse red fabric common to the majority of the pottery from the site; it is glazed internally with an orange-brown glaze and has large patches of glaze on the rim, body and base; the bowl was fired in an inverted position, the glaze clearly runs from the bottom to the rim; the two horizontal loop-handles each have a line of 'thumb-mark' impressions along the top edge, the body of the bowl is decorated with several horizontal grooves; the base is knife trimmed. Height 10.5 cm., base diameter 22.5 cm., rim diameter 31 cm.

Pits 6 and 14 were contemporary with each other. Pit 14 contained the bulk of the finds. Both pits were dug into the yard at the rear of the 'Fountain Inn'. Pit 14 was probably intended as a stable midden, 3 m. square and 1 m. deep. The fill consisted of brown soil containing much organic material, probably straw. The most important single find was the signed and dated Wrotham Ware posset-pot (Fig. 3, no. 22). This was examined by Mr. J.H. Ashdown, who kindly contributed the following report: 'As excavated this earthenware vessel comprised a fragment 11 cm. high of the lower part of a globular posset pot, with the remains of two double loop-handles, but without the rim. It is not a slip-decorated piece but has applied pads, studs and detail in the style and manner of the well known Wrotham slipwares. The vessel has a clean red fabric, with a brown surface under the foot, but otherwise it is covered overall with a thick glossy dark brown lead glaze. It is unlikely that the vessel ever had more than the surviving pair of double-loop handles. These have the characteristic straight piping applied externally to them within a recess, with piped reversed spirals and a star stud between each loop. Two of the exterior decorative panels survive between the handles. One contains two rectangular applied pads with a date and initials, and two small shell studs. The other, which is incomplete, only retains five small shell studs round a shaped pad perhaps representing a bird or angel symbol. The base of the vessel has a single concentric prop or pot scar but does not show the diagnostic multiple concentric Wrotham prop scars. The overall finish is crude and glossy, and within the base a thick residue of glaze indicates the vessel was fired upright, but tipped to one side resting on its handles. The form of the vessel is globular, and it belongs to the

second of the two long-lived standard Wrotham types, the globular posset, which replaced the straight sided tyg in the last quarter of the seventeenth century.¹⁶ The globular forms of the decorative and commemorative Wrotham slipwares carry dates between 1675 and 1720. It is particularly fortunate that the Chatham fragment carries the panel with the date and initial pads. These read 1683 and IG. It must be stated that the date can also be read as 1689, but careful examination commends the former reading as the correct one. The initials IG indicate the maker as the little known Wrotham potter John Greene. Until the discovery of this vessel his only recorded signed works were the three preserved in the Glaisher collection at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. These carry dates 1676 (a posset), 1678 (a posset) and 1683 (a puzzle cup) and have the initials IG on them. John Greene's burial is recorded at Wrotham in 1686.¹⁷ The purpose of the decorative posset pots were probably twofold. They were fine decorative and commemorative pieces which were prized as such, but they also could be used to contain posset. The character of the Chatham vessel suggests it was more practical than decorative in intended use. Posset could be served either as a hot drink of milk and eggs flavoured with wine, ale, treacle or honey with spices, or as a thick curdled posset for eating with a spoon as prescribed for the invalid.¹⁸ While at least one hundred and ten examples of Wrotham slipware have survived above ground,¹⁹ very few pieces are recorded from excavations. In fact only two are known to me. One is a slipware jug, made by the potter George Richardson, and curiously also dated 1683, found in the City of London Wall before 1919. (Museum of London, A20231). The other is a base fragment of a candlestick dated 1657, with the initials of three potters, found in Week Street, Maidstone, in 1965 (Maidstone Museum).²⁰ Therefore the discovery of a slipless but related earthenware posset from Chatham is a welcome addition to our knowledge of the Wrotham industry, which in itself is remarkable for the production of signed and dated ceramic vessels in seventeenth century England.'

From further afield comes a complete Spanish olive jar (Fig. 3,

¹⁶ J.H. Ashdown, 'Seventeenth Century Pottery from Wrotham, Kent,' *Kent Arch. Review*, xiv (Nov. 1968), 13.

¹⁷ A.J.B. Kiddel, 'Wrotham Slipware and Wrotham Brickyard', *Trans. English Ceramic Circle*, iii (1954), 112.

¹⁸ J.K. Crellin, 'Possets', *Notes and Queries*, (Jan. 1967), 3.

¹⁹ Kiddel, *op. cit.*, in note 17, 114.

²⁰ L.R.A. Grove, *Arch. Cant.*, lxxxi (1966), 249.

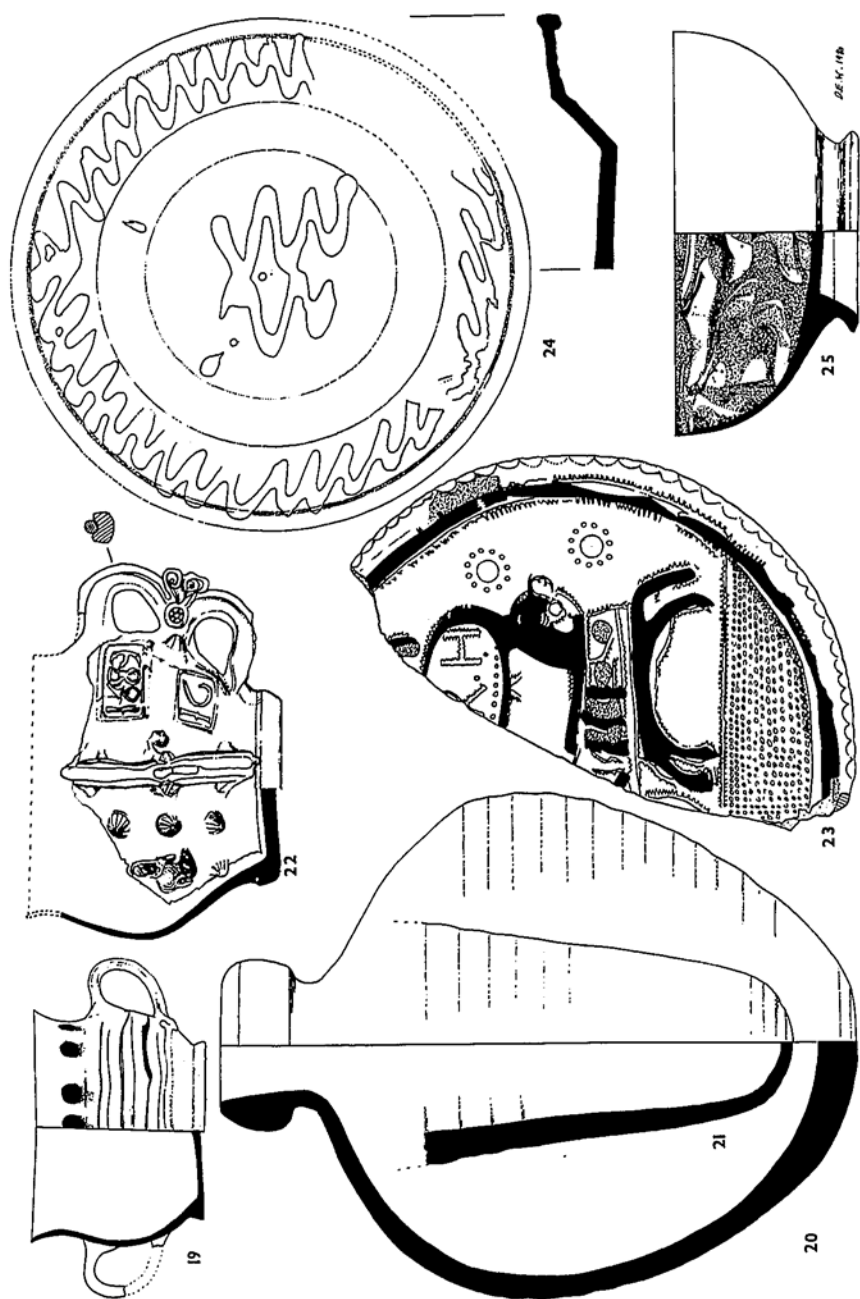


Fig. 3. Post-medieval Pottery from Chatham ($\frac{1}{4}$)

no. 20). The fabric is coarse and of a pink-buff colour with mica inclusions. The jar is covered in a dirty white slip. The form is of a late style, shape B, with a type C mouth.²¹

The base of a much narrower jar with an identical fabric and slip was found in Pit 18 (Fig. 3, no. 21).

Two almost complete chamber-pots were recovered from this pit (Fig. 2, nos. 11 and 12). No. 11 has a coarse red fabric and a lead glaze inside and out, the body is encircled by several sets of wide grooves, the base is knife-trimmed and concave; the handle joined the body above a large 'thumb mark' impression. The rim is recessed, probably for a lid-seating; height 15.5 cm., base diameter 10.5 cm., rim diameter 21 cm. No. 12 is also in a coarse red fabric and has a lead internal glaze. Two deep grooves run around the pot just below the rim which is recessed for a lid-seating; where the handle joined the body there is a small 'thumb mark' impression, and the base is very concave and knife trimmed. This vessel may have been used as a cooking-pot; it has certainly been used over a fire and blackened by soot. Height 15 cm., base diameter 11 cm., rim diameter 20 cm.

Two of the small finds from Pit 14 almost certainly relate to the landlord or landlady of the late seventeenth-century 'Fountain Inn'. A bottle seal from a gallon capacity green-glass, free-blown bottle inscribed E.H., and an identical set of initials on a silver thimble. There are three or four possible candidates in the Chatham Poor Rate books but the initials cannot be positively identified. Pit 14 was filled c. 1710.

Pit 18 was the most prolific on the site, a total of over 300 separate vessels was identified. The pit was very close to the rear of 250 High Street, and its western edge coincided with the boundary wall of the 'Fountain' at no. 248. The pit was about 2 m. wide at the top, narrowing to 1.3 m. and about 1.3 m. deep. Of the greatest local interest is the salt-glaze stoneware tankard (Fig. 2, no. 16). Decorated with a sprig-moulded medallion of a bishop's mitre and inscribed around the body *Redman Reed*. This tankard belonged to the 'Mitre Inn', which stood on the site now occupied by the British Home Stores in Chatham High Street. The inn was built on the site of the Manor House of Chatham and was the meeting place of the Court Leet until 1835. Redman Reed appears in the Chatham Poor Rate Books from 1725 to 1745. His tombstone is easy to find in St.

²¹ J.M. Goggin, 'The Spanish Olive Jar', *Yale Univ. Pub. in Anthropol.*, lxii (1960), 28-9.

Mary's churchyard, Chatham; the stone records his death on the 21st February, 1745, at the age of 56. Stoneware tankards with similar shaped medallions (but of different symbols) were found at Woolwich in 1974; these dated from the first half of the eighteenth century.²² (A recent excavation on the site of the Three Cups Inn in Chatham produced similar medallions depicting three cups (or urns).) Height 13 cm., diameter 9.5 cm.

Two pipkins were reconstructed (Fig. 1, nos. 3 and 5). No. 3 has a red fabric and internal lead glaze; a small solid rod-handle, flaring rim and concave base. Height 9.5 cm., rim diameter 12.5 cm., base diameter 8.5 cm. No. 5 is in a buff fabric and an internal lead glaze; a large solid rod-handle, large flaring rim with a pulled pouring lip at right-angles to the handle, and concave base. Height 11.5 cm., rim diameter 11 cm., base diameter 8.5 cm.

Also reconstructed were three contrasting chamber pots (Fig. 2, nos. 14, 17 and 18). No. 14 has a red fabric and internal orange-brown glaze. A single cordon encircles the neck of the pot and the handle is scored with three deep vertical grooves; very concave base, knife trimmed. Height 13.5 cm., (uneven), base diameter 13 cm., rim diameter 19.5 cm.

No. 17 is in a fine red fabric and is covered, (except for a small area near the base) with a dark brown glaze; very thin walls and a delicately curved rim. In form this pot is very similar to many of the common white Delft-ware chamber pots found on the site. The base is flat and knife trimmed. Height 13 cm., rim diameter 21.5 cm., base diameter 13.7 cm.

No. 18 was completely restored. Buff fabric and covered all over, except for the base, with a green glaze (the base is covered with a clear glaze); a wide flange rim and a handle scored with vertical grooves and a 'thumb mark' at its base; concave base. Height (uneven) 12 cm., base diameter 13 cm., rim diameter 20 cm. A close parallel for this pot was excavated at Brentford, Middlesex, and dated to the mid-eighteenth century.²³

(Fig. 3, no. 24) A plate in a red fabric, decorated with white slip around the rim and in the centre, covered with a yellow glaze. Similar types occur at Brentford.²⁴ Diameter 26 cm.

A Staffordshire posset-pot (Fig. 3, no. 19) was almost completely restored. Pale-buff fabric, covered in white slip and decorated in

²² Pryor and Blockley, *op. cit.*, 74.

²³ R. Canham (ed.), '2,000 Years of Brentford', *Museum of London*, (1978), 113, no. 13.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 96, no. 1., 113, no. 3.

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brown slip with dots and stripes, covered overall in a clear yellow glaze. Height 8.5 cm., base diameter 9 cm., rim diameter 12 cm.

(Fig. 1, no. 7). To complete the series of bowls from the site, a bowl with two horizontal handles in a coarse red fabric with a purplish surface; internal lead glaze, uneven glaze on exterior; three grooves around the body at the level of the handles; concave base, knife trimmed. Height 14 cm., rim diameter 21 cm., base diameter 13 cm.

Two more bottle seals were found in this pit and probably have local connections, respectively inscribed:

K	.H.
1736	W A
	1692

Pit 18 was filled by c. 1790.

Pit 20 was close to Pit 18 and dated to c. 1830-40. Only a small part was recovered; however, a chamber-pot was reconstructed (Fig. 2, no. 15) and has been included to complete a useful series of chamber-pot types ranging from the late-seventeenth to the early-nineteenth century. This vessel has a hard brick-red fabric and a dull brown internal glaze; two grooves encircle the pot just below the rim and the handle was deeply scored by two vertical grooves. Height 13.5 cm., base diameter 15 cm., rim diameter 21 cm.

