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ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT CANTERBURY POLICE STATION

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Canterbury Archaeological Trust carried out a programme of evaluation, excavation and watching brief work in advance of various alterations that were being made to Canterbury Police Station, Old Dover Road (TR 1550 5725) over the course of several years. The evaluation took place in November 1997 under the direction of Alison Hicks and involved the cutting of five trenches (Trenches 1-5, **Fig. 1**) on land to the south and east of the station (Hicks 1997; Hicks 2002). The evaluation was followed by excavation from October to November 1999 directed by Alison Hicks, with the assistance of the author. The excavation was limited to three trenches (Trenches 6-8, **Fig. 1**) close to the street frontage with Old Dover Road (**Plate 1**) and was limited to the area of maximum disturbance

PLATE 1



General view of the site, looking east toward Old Dover Road

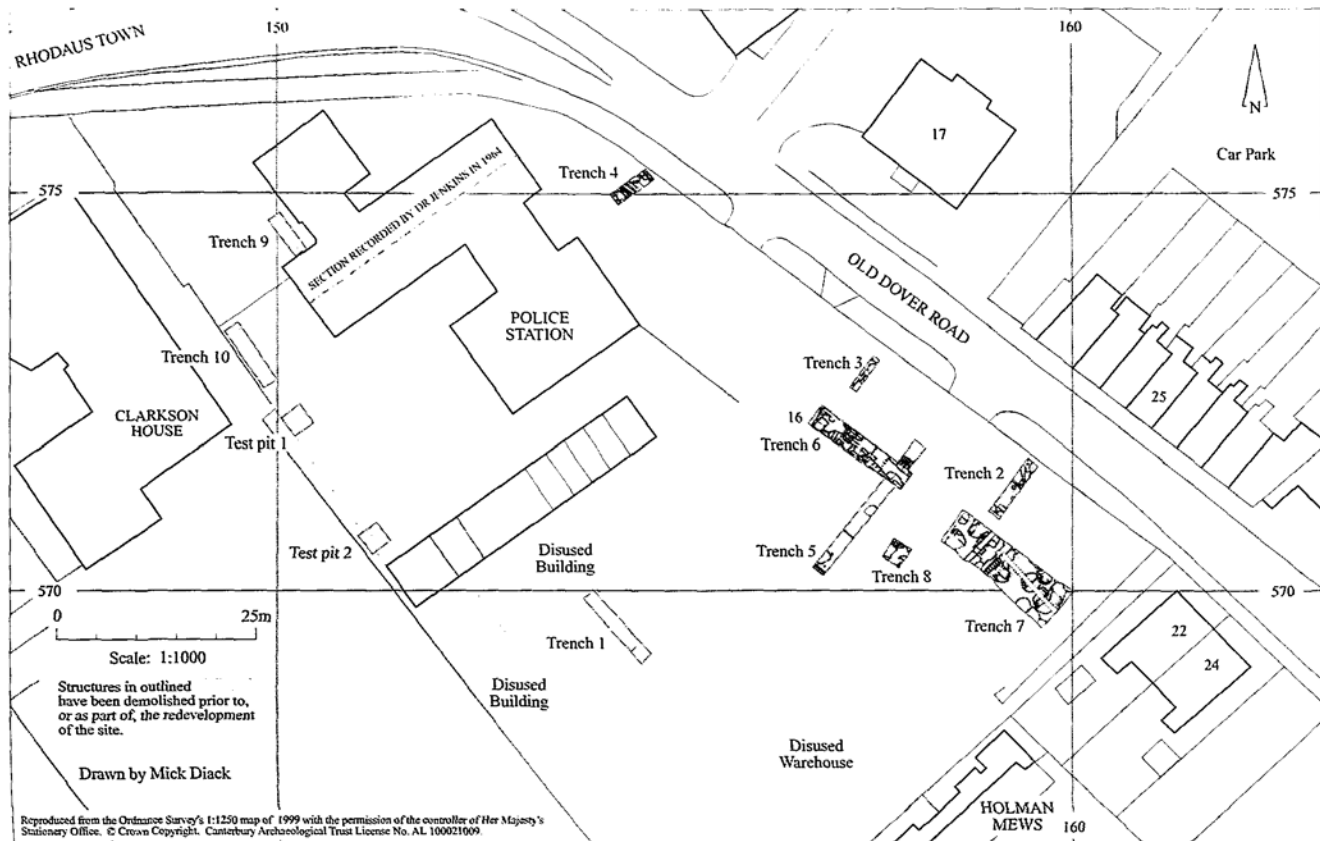


Fig. 1 Canterbury Police Station Site Plan.

created by the proposed building rather than an exposure of the entire footprint of the building. This proved to be a sound strategy as the proposed building was never built, and archaeology was not needlessly disturbed. As a result of separate proposed redevelopment of the police station, a further evaluation was carried out on land to the north-west of the current buildings in July 2002. This involved the cutting of two trenches (Trenches 9-10, Fig. 1); this phase of work was carried out under the direction of Adrian Gollop (Gollop 2002). Finally a watching brief was carried out during the demolition of buildings immediately to the south of the police station in December 2002. This work was carried out under the direction of Andy Linklater and involved the cutting of two test pits (Test pits 1-2, Fig. 1) (Linklater 2003).

This article, although principally concerned with the 1997 evaluation and the 1999 excavation, is an attempt to draw these various phases of archaeological work together into a coherent whole and also to include the unpublished observations of the late Dr Frank Jenkins, made during the construction of the police station in April 1964. This article is intended to be a summary of the findings of the various stages of archaeological works. More detailed descriptions of the individual features and their stratigraphic interpretations have been outlined in a stratigraphic report (Diack 2003). More detailed specialist reports and artefactual illustrations are held in the Canterbury Archaeological Trust archives.

The police station is located on Old Dover Road, adjacent to the roundabout between Rhodaus Town and Upper Bridge Street, just outside the city walls. It occupies a plot of land the centre of which is approximately 100m south of the Riding Gate. The local geology is Head Brickearth sealing River Terrace Gravels. This was confirmed during the archaeological work.

Archaeological and Historical Background

The area around Old Dover Road is not well understood and much of our understanding of it is based on the observations of nineteenth-century antiquarians and the work of Dr Frank Jenkins in the mid twentieth century. In more recent years, the CAT has carried out a variety of small excavations in the vicinity.

Prehistoric

Possible Mid Bronze Age (c.1500-1100 BC) activity in the vicinity has been indicated by residual finds discovered during evaluation trenching at the Hoystings Close, Old Dover Road (Helm 2001, 10). Six abraded worked flint flakes and four sherds of possible Deverel-Rimbury type pottery were recovered.

Roman

The earliest known activity in the vicinity dates from the Roman period. Watling Street, the main route from Canterbury to Dover, left the town through Riding Gate and ran due south to Dover directly past the site. The road is thought to be on approximately the same alignment as the present Old Dover Road. Observations made during the excavation of a trench through the road surface for insertion of sewer pipes near the junction between Old Dover Road and Vernon Place (approximately 200m from the Riding Gate) revealed a band of tightly packed gravel which was interpreted as Roman metalling (Jenkins 1949). The civil engineer James Pilbrow observed four flint and mortar walls running across the road at the same road junction during the laying of Canterbury's main drainage, but the interpretation of these is uncertain (Pilbrow 1871, 158).

A number of Roman burials were observed by John Brent in the burial ground associated with St Sepulchre's Nunnery (Brent 1861). Brent also noted what he believed to be an *ustrinum* or funerary pyre, though it has since been suggested that this was possibly a kiln (Andrews 1985, 56). Pilbrow also noted a cremation urn (Pilbrow 1871, 158) and Jenkins observed a number of Roman pots in the garden of *Vernon House*, though the date of this discovery is uncertain (Andrews 1985, 57). A watching brief at No. 8 Vernon Place revealed a large (5.5m square) feature with burnt sides (Houlston 1996). Whilst the interpretation of this feature was uncertain, it was considered Roman or earlier in date. Three articulated human skeletons were also observed, their proximity to the road suggesting that they were Roman in date. A Roman inhumation burial was observed, together with sherds of first- to second-century pottery during a watching brief at No. 5 Rhodaus Town in 1999 (Pratt 1999).

Dr Jenkins observed significant Roman activity in the area during the construction of the police station in April 1964. He recorded the presence of gravel extraction quarries, underneath the footprint of the new building, cut to a vertical face into the natural brickearth and approximately 4.0m deep. Pottery of first- to second-century date was recovered from the bottom layers of this infill (though the upper deposits were removed by machine and were not monitored), as well as two brooches, several bone hair pins, a bronze wire bracelet and two worn coins, one of Vespasian (AD 69-79), the other possibly Domitian (81-96). A zoomorphic Roman clasp knife was also recovered. Jenkins recorded that the infill had characteristic tip lines, and suggested that the quarries had been filled in by the late second century. In addition to the gravel quarries, a mound of earth running from the north-east of the police station was observed and Jenkins interpreted this as landscaping for a possible amphitheatre (Andrews 1985, 57).

An evaluation at 24a Old Dover Road was carried out in 1996,

consisting of five trenches cut from approximately 3.0m from the street frontage to approximately 6.0m back from the road (Hicks 1996). The plot of land being developed backs directly onto the land to the south of the police station. Features dated to the Roman period were observed in two of the trenches and possible quarries (as previously found by Jenkins) were noted in two more. This suggests that the quarrying in the area was substantial, covering an area of at least 100 x 40m. Excavation work following the evaluation revealed a chalk rubble platform, though its function is uncertain (Hicks 1999). More recent evaluation work was carried out on land at *Vernon Grange* in 2002 (Helm 2002). This revealed a clay floor, immediately over the natural brickearth, which had been cut by a later pit containing pottery of late second- and early fourth-century date. Two further features were noted but these could not be firmly dated.

Anglo-Saxon

Anglo-Saxon features were identified during the evaluation and subsequent excavation at 24a Old Dover Road. The features were mostly pits containing domestic refuse, but one containing eighth/ninth-century pottery also included daub, carbon and slag, suggesting industrial activity on the site. A single inhumation was discovered, identified as that of a young adult female accompanied by a knife dated to the seventh century (Hicks 1999, 6). Dover Street, which runs parallel to Old Dover Road, was formerly known as *Rithercheap* (also *Rethercheap* or *Hrytherceap*), thought to derive from the Anglo-Saxon for cattle market (Lefever 1980, 41).

Medieval

The Nunnery of St Sepulchre, founded c.1100 was located further south on the Old Dover Road, beyond Oaten Hill. Brent observed this had an associated cemetery, with burials over the earlier Roman ones (Brent 1861, 27). No. 24a Old Dover Road also demonstrated medieval activity including rubbish pits and possible beam slots. The majority of the pottery recovered consisted of late eleventh-century cooking pots, with smaller quantities of pottery dating from the twelfth to sixteenth centuries (Hicks 1999, 7). Dr Urry's maps of properties in Canterbury show the area of the police station as blank and Hicks therefore suggested that the area was open land (Urry 1967, Map 2b Large-scale, sheet 9; Hicks 1997, 2).

Post-Medieval

Speed's 1611 map of Canterbury as well as Doidge's of 1752 show the area as rural and undeveloped. The OS historical map and guide to Roman

and medieval Canterbury shows that a gallows stood at the junction of Oaten Hill and *Rithercheap*. Chalk quarrying took place further south on the Old Dover Road at what is now *Durovernum Court* and on the site of what is now the Kent Institute of Art and Design off New Dover Road from at least the sixteenth century. A property known as *The Hoystings* on Old Dover Road was so named as sacks of quarried chalk were hoisted onto wagons here (Helm 2001, 4). Development of the area is attested by the remains of a nineteenth-century malting house recorded during the evaluation of land at *Vernon Grange* in 2002. This had been demolished sometime after 1874 (Helm 2002, 5). Photographs of c.1880-1900 show the plot of land occupied by the police station as gardens or allotments, however (Butler 1989, 91). Immediately prior to the construction of the police station the plot was used for tennis courts and a bowling green.

Results of the Archaeological Investigations 1997-2002

Though there were no features dating to the *Iron Age*, the handle and terminal of a large iron cleaver of Manning Type 1A (Crummy 2004, 3; Manning 1985, 120) was found in a Roman pit and though residual, indicates Iron Age activity in the vicinity.

Features dating to the early *Roman* period (43-150) were noted in Trenches 1, 3 and 4. Trench 1 contained a substantial layer that extended beyond the limits of the trench. Its depth was not established, though it was more than 0.90m thick and was found to exist up to 2.60m (13.30m on) below the present ground surface. It was evident that this deposit was filling a substantial feature and, though there were no finds to confirm this, it was thought that this related to the extensive quarry backfill noted by Jenkins in 1964, and thus of early Roman date. Extensive deposits noted in Trenches 9 and 10 as well as in Test pits 1 and 2 were also considered related to this early Roman quarrying. A variety of smaller early Roman features were also noted on the site; Trench 3 was found to have contained four pits containing pottery dating from the mid first to second century. Trench 4 contained seven small pits of the same date. Small pits in Trenches 7 and 8 were dated to the mid Roman period (150-250); one of these contained faecal concretions indicative of use for refuse disposal. The bones of domestic fowl were noted from the same pit, one of these having a gross cranial deformity (Allison forthcoming).

An interface with several parallel features, ranging from 0.10-0.27m in width, interpreted as wheel ruts was noted in Trench 4. These wheel ruts ran parallel to the course of the present Old Dover Road and it is tentatively suggested that they represented an earlier road alignment. Lying above these ruts (though only seen in section) was a layer containing frequent small and medium flints as well as Roman tile, chalk and charcoal fragments. This make-up layer was sealed by a layer with

a higher flint component, interpreted as a road surface, possibly a late Roman (250-450) consolidation of the earlier trackway. Late Roman grog-tempered jar fragments, recovered from the cobbling would seem to confirm this (Lyne 2004, 2). A similar cobbled surface was noted in the northern part of the section in Trench 3 and thus on the same alignment as the surface noted in Trench 4. This layer, though not securely dated due to the absence of pottery did contain a fragment of the shaft of a bone hairpin, slightly swollen and therefore dating from the mid second century onwards (Crummy 2004, 2). Roman tile, including *imbrices* as well as *tesserae* and lumps of slag were also recovered from this context. Other late Roman deposits and small cut features were noted in Trench 6; a very worn coin of either Trajan (98-117) or Hadrian (117-138) was recovered from one of these (Anderson 2004, 1). Another Roman coin, one of Crispus (322-323) was residual within a medieval context in Trench 5. Other Roman finds residual in later contexts included an opaque green glass bead and a fragment of a late Roman bangle. Only small quantities of animal bone were recovered from Roman contexts, cattle, pig, sheep/goat, horse and red deer were all identified (Bendrey 2004, 1). A roe deer antler, attached to a fragment of cranium showed evidence for its deliberate removal from the skull (Bendrey *ibid*).

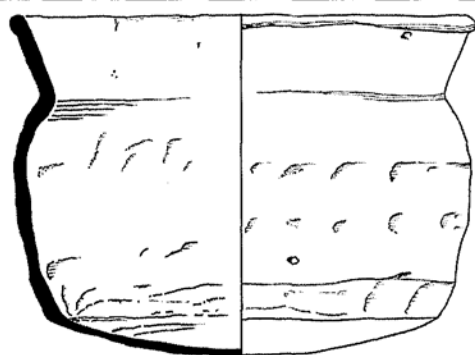
An *Anglo-Saxon* pit noted in the western part of Trench 7 contained pottery dating from 750-875 as well as animal bone, oyster shell, slag and daub. Two further pits were located in the eastern part of the trench; the larger of the two had two fills, the primary contained pottery dated 700-850 and the secondary contained pottery dating from between 850-1000. Daub, charcoal, slag, animal bone and oyster shell were also present. The smaller pit also contained charcoal, animal bone, fish bone, oyster shell and slag as well as pottery dated 875-1000. Mineralised seeds and pips were particularly abundant in a sample from this pit. Mineralised plant remains are usually formed in the phosphate rich environment provided by cess, especially in calcareous soils; this was confirmed by the presence of faecal concretions (Allison 2004, 1). Bird bone recovered from this pit indicated the utilisation of both domestic fowl and geese during this period. Mammalian bone included cattle, sheep/goat and pig as well as a single fragment of horse bone. Butchery evidence for cattle horn working was noted (Bendrey 2004, 2).

Though the quantity of *Anglo-Saxon* features was small, quantities of mid to late *Anglo-Saxon* pottery were noted in several medieval contexts. The mid *Anglo-Saxon* assemblage as a whole was noteworthy as it contained fifteen sherds of Ipswich ware (c.720-850) and the late *Anglo-Saxon* for the presence of twenty-two sherds of Thetford-type ware (c.850-1100) (Cotter in prep.). Thirty-two sherds of Late Saxon Canterbury type sandy ware (c.875-1050) were also noted. One of the medieval features in Trench 7 contained a complete highly polished double-ended pinbeater (Fig. 3/8), a

tool used in weaving on a warp-weighted loom for pushing home the weft and separating displaced warp threads between throws (Crummy 2004, 2; Wild 1970, 66). It was 140mm long, maximum diameter 7mm. This form was very widespread, the majority dating from the fifth to the eighth or ninth centuries, and that date range is implied here. Also from Trench 7 was a pair of iron tweezers with narrow blades (Fig. 3.9), the simplicity of the form suggesting that the item may be residual early Anglo-Saxon or Roman, the former being more likely as Roman iron tweezers are rarely found (Crummy 2004, 4; Myres and Green 1973, 105-8; Evison 1987, 118; Ottaway and Rogers 2002, 2932).

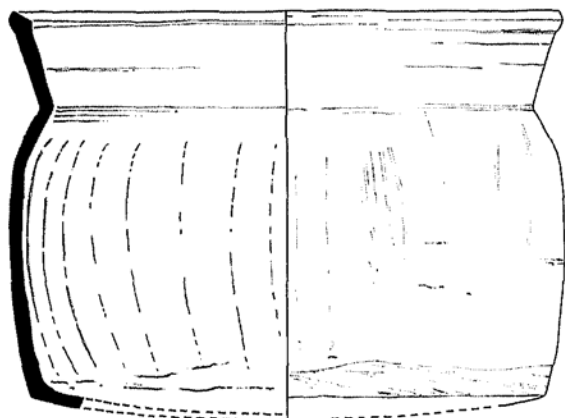
Early medieval (1066-1200) activity was noted in Trenches 3, 6 and 7. Trench 3 contained a single pit containing animal bone, daub, charcoal and pottery dated 1075-1175. Trench 6 contained at least twenty cut features, principally pits, many of which were intercutting and formed a complex stratigraphic sequence. These were found to contain animal bone, oyster shell, charcoal, daub (some with wattle impressions), medieval roof tile and large quantities of early medieval Canterbury sandy ware; many also contained residual Roman pottery and tile, a few contained residual mid to late Anglo-Saxon pottery. One of these pits contained a complete early medieval Canterbury sandy ware pot (Fig. 2.1).

Trench 7 contained fifteen cut features; all but one small linear feature being pits. The pits were very similar to those outlined above and had similar contents, including the small amounts of Roman and late Anglo-Saxon pottery. One of these pits was quite substantial, being at least 2.40 x 1.10m and more than 1.16m deep, with very steep sides. This pit was considered to represent possible clay quarrying and had been backfilled with several layers producing a multitude of finds similar to the above pits, suggesting it had been filled with rubbish. There were also three intercutting features at the eastern end of the trench; the earliest was a large pit that extended beyond the limit of excavation but was at least 2.84 x 2.16m and 1.48m deep. The primary fill of this pit contained 126 sherds of pottery, predominantly early medieval Canterbury sandy ware (1075-1175), with fourteen sherds of late Iron Age and Roman pottery and also a small amount of intrusive late medieval Tyler Hill sandy ware. The secondary fill contained 591 sherds of pottery and included what appeared to be virtually a layer of potsherds (Plate II; Figs 2.2, 2.3, 3.4-3.7), presumably representing a single episode of disposal. The fill also contained a complete pot (dated 1050-1175). The vast majority of the pottery from this fill was early medieval Canterbury sandy ware, but also included some late Iron Age and Roman pottery and a small quantity of intrusive later medieval pottery. This pit also contained a fragment of Lower Greensand with the upper surfaces polished, the lower rough and irregular, but with no original edges. This was probably an architectural detail from a door or window frame (Crummy 2004, 2).



1. Complete jar/cooking pot.
Heavily sooted externally
and partially internally.
From pit in trench 6

2. Profile jar/cooking
pot. Possible kiln
waster? Very fresh,
hard, slightly over
fired. No evidence
of use. From pit with
extensive pottery
layer in trench 7



3. Profile jar/
cooking pot.
Possibly split
in kiln and
re-fired.
From pit with
extensive
pottery
layer in trench 7

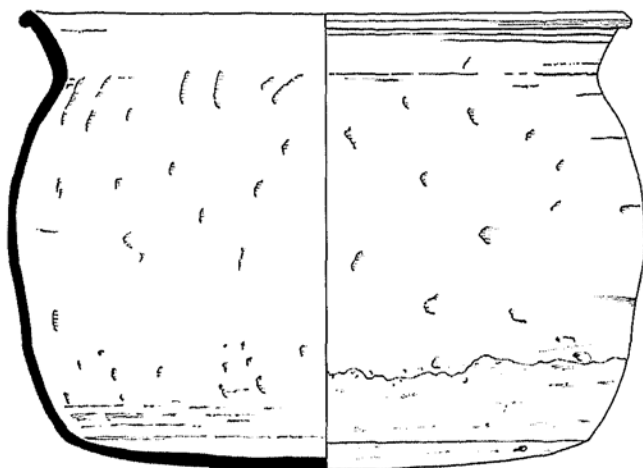


Fig. 2 Early Medieval Canterbury Sandy Ware. Scale 1:4

Pottery drawings by Dominique Bacon

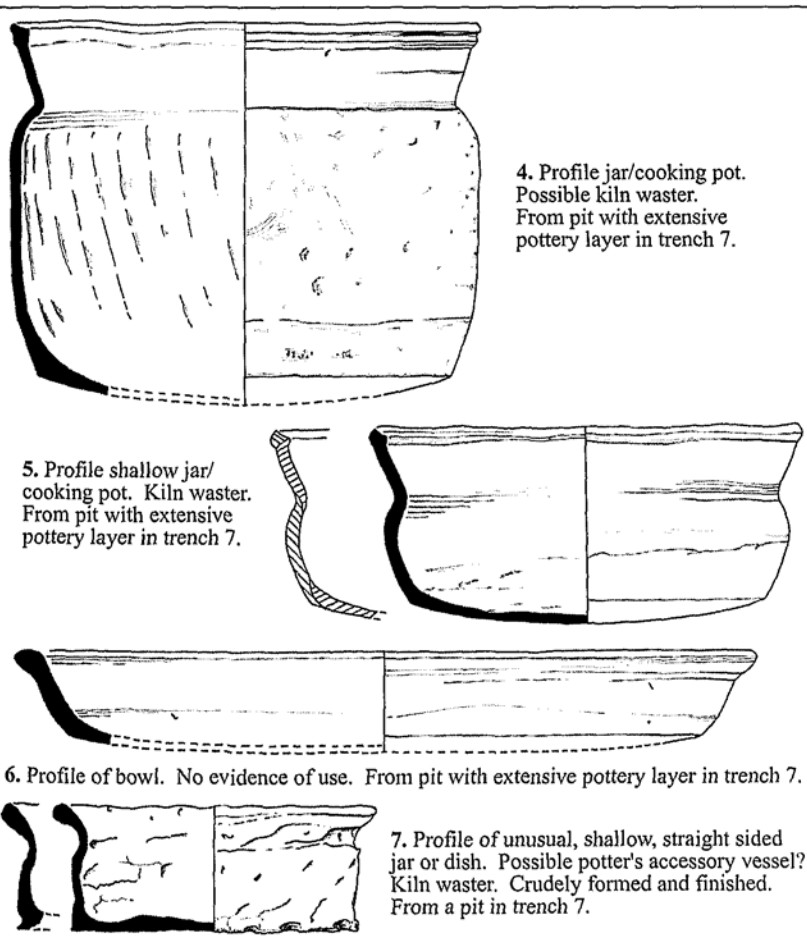


Pit containing layer of medieval Canterbury Sandy Ware under excavation

Soil samples taken from pits in both Trenches 6 and 7 were found to have faecal concretions, confirming that the area was being used for refuse disposal. Domestic fowl, small passerine, domestic geese and mallard were all represented in many of the pit fills. Cattle, sheep/goat, pig, horse, dog, cat, fallow deer were all also represented in the mammalian bone assemblage.

The early medieval Canterbury sandy ware assemblage included a quantity of wasters, and large fresh portions of unused vessels indicating that a kiln was likely to have existed nearby (Figs 2.2-2.3 and 3.4-3.7). Some of the vessel forms were unusual or unique (including wasters). A considerable amount of daub was recovered from the pits; many fragments had surfaces or retained wattle impressions (Harrison 2004, 1). Though these lacked evidence for any intense burning, it is possible that they derived from a kiln, though a domestic origin is perhaps more likely.

High medieval (1200-1375) activity included a substantial deposit within Trench 5, which contained pottery, daub, charcoal, animal bone and slag as well as a residual coin of Crispus (Anderson 2004, 1). A further mid medieval pit, as well as four small post-holes, was also noted in this trench. A single pit from Trench 6 contained animal bone,



4. Profile jar/cooking pot.
Possible kiln waster.
From pit with extensive
pottery layer in trench 7.

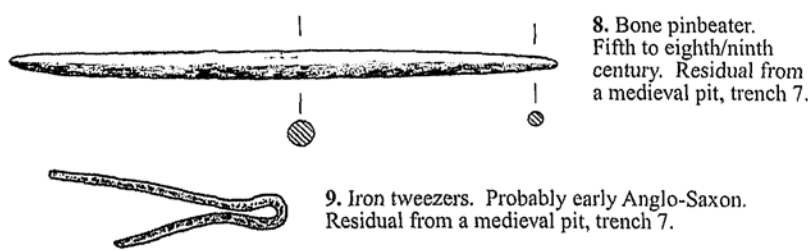
5. Profile shallow jar/
cooking pot. Kiln waster.
From pit with extensive
pottery layer in trench 7.

6. Profile of bowl. No evidence of use. From pit with extensive pottery layer in trench 7.

7. Profile of unusual, shallow, straight sided
jar or dish. Possible potter's accessory vessel?
Kiln waster. Crudely formed and finished.
From a pit in trench 7.

Fig. 3(a) Early Medieval Canterbury Sandy Ware. Scale 1:4

Pottery drawings by Dominique Bacon



8. Bone pinbeater.
Fifth to eighth/ninth
century. Residual from
a medieval pit, trench 7.

9. Iron tweezers. Probably early Anglo-Saxon.
Residual from a medieval pit, trench 7.

Fig 3(b) Small Finds. Scale 1:2

Small finds drawings by Beverley Lender

charcoal, slag and oyster shell, in addition to both glazed and unglazed medieval roof tile. Mineralised seeds and pips were also recovered from this context, indicating that it was likely to have contained some cess (Allison 2004, *op. cit.*). Half a silver penny of Henry III, cut neatly between the double lines of the long cross on the reverse, was recovered from this context and has been dated to 1248-50 (Crummy 2004, 1). Also from this phase were five pits from Trench 7 and three pits from Trench 8 that all contained similar material as well as pottery principally of an 1225-1300 date range.

Late medieval (1375-1550) deposits were noted in the base of Trench 2, but not excavated though pottery of an 1375-1525 date was recovered from one of them. Trench 5 contained an extensive deposit that was cut by a pit, the deposit contained pottery of the same date as the above. A pit at the western end of Trench 7 contained charcoal, daub and animal bone as well as pottery of 1375-1450 date range.

Documentary research has failed to ascertain who held the area in the medieval period (Sweetinburgh 2004). It does not appear to have been owned by any of the major monastic houses. There was no evidence for manufacturing taking place on the site from wills made by parishioners from either St Sepulchre's or other Canterbury parishes. The only evidence for such activity comes from Christ Church Priory and later the Dean and Chapter who leased the 'lyme pettes' or 'le lymehost', and on occasion a barn in the area, now known as *The Hoystings*, during the mid fifteenth century.

A number of early *post-medieval* (1550-1650) features were noted in Trench 2, though none of these were excavated and the date is inferred from the fact that the majority of them were intercutting and that the earliest in the sequence was seen to be later than a deposit dated by pottery to the late medieval period. Middle post-medieval activity was noted in Trench 3, which contained a layer with pottery dated 1640-1660 as well as a clay pipe bowl. This was cut by a mortared flint wall, though very little of this could be seen within the confines of the trench. Late post-medieval features included a layer in Trench 1 (which overlaid the possible Roman quarry backfill note above); this was dated by pottery to 1800-1900. Very late features, containing brick and concrete fragments, were noted in Trenches 6, 7 and 8.

Documentary research indicates that the area was apparently waste ground or gardens from at least the seventeenth century and does not seem to have been developed during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, unlike the other side of Old Dover Road (Sweetinburgh 2004, 2). This appears from photographic evidence to have remained the case until the construction of the police station (Butler 1989, 91).

Conclusions

There was virtually no evidence for occupation pre-dating the Roman period on the site, but considerable Roman activity was recorded. There was further evidence for the extensive early Roman quarrying noted by Dr Jenkins in 1964. This was recorded in Trenches 1, 9 and 10 as well as Test pits 1 and 2, indicating that it was very extensive indeed. The presence of an early Roman trackway, later resurfaced, was indicated in Trenches 3 and 4. The close proximity to the present Old Dover Road, suggests that this was either an earlier alignment of this road, or perhaps a metalled area possibly related to the quarrying or the subsequent refuse disposal that appears to have commenced during the Roman period. Though Roman period features were relatively sparse, a large quantity of pottery and other Roman finds were residual in later contexts, indicating that Roman period activity was much more extensive than at first evident. The small quantities of Roman pottery and other material from undisturbed contexts when compared to the much larger quantities residual in later contexts indicates considerable destruction of the Roman period archaeology by later activity.

Anglo-Saxon activity was also evident on this site, though limited to three securely dated pits; a corpus of pottery and other finds were residual in later contexts. The pits may have been cut for clay extraction. The backfills of these pits, together with residual finds, all appeared to be indicative of the disposal of domestic refuse.

The principal activity on the site dated to the medieval period, as demonstrated by surviving cut features, the majority being early period (1066-1200). The majority of the iron objects recovered were of medieval date, and where identifiable, many are pintles, L-shaped fittings that were used as hinge pivots for wooden shutters, windows, gates and similar items (Crummy 2004, 1). It is suggested that the site may have been used for the disposal of redundant building materials; large quantities of daub were recovered from features of this period. However the daub might derive from a nearby pottery kiln, the presence of which was indicated by the large quantities of early medieval Canterbury sandy ware pottery, including fresh sherds, unique forms and wasters found in many of the pits. Slag and hammerscale was recovered from the majority of soil samples, probably indicative of refuse disposal, rather than actual metalworking on the site. This and the probable pottery production material suggest that the area, though not the site itself, was utilised for a variety of industrial processes by the early medieval period. The cess-like nature of several of the deposits has been indicated by the presence of faecal concretions and mineralised seeds and pips. This, together with the presence of various marine molluscs, large quantities of mammalian and avian bone tends to support the picture of a medieval refuse tip still

further. The close proximity of the site to the Riding Gate and the main road to Dover does not paint a pleasant picture of medieval life, at least in this part of the city.

A small amount of early post-medieval (1550-1650) activity was indicated by a variety of features in Trench 2, but these remained largely unexcavated as did mid post-medieval (1650-1800) features in Trench 3.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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