

AN EARLY MEDIEVAL RUBBISH-PIT AT CATHERINGTON, HAMPSHIRE

By J. S. PILE and K. J. BARTON

INTRODUCTION

THE SITE (fig. 21) is situated in the village of Catherington, one mile north-west of Horndean and 200 yards south-west of the parish church of All Saints' (Nat. Grid ref. SU 6949 1442). It was discovered by J.S.P. in July 1967 when fragments of pottery were found in a cable trench, and was excavated on the 3rd August, 1967, by the staff of the City of Portsmouth Museum.

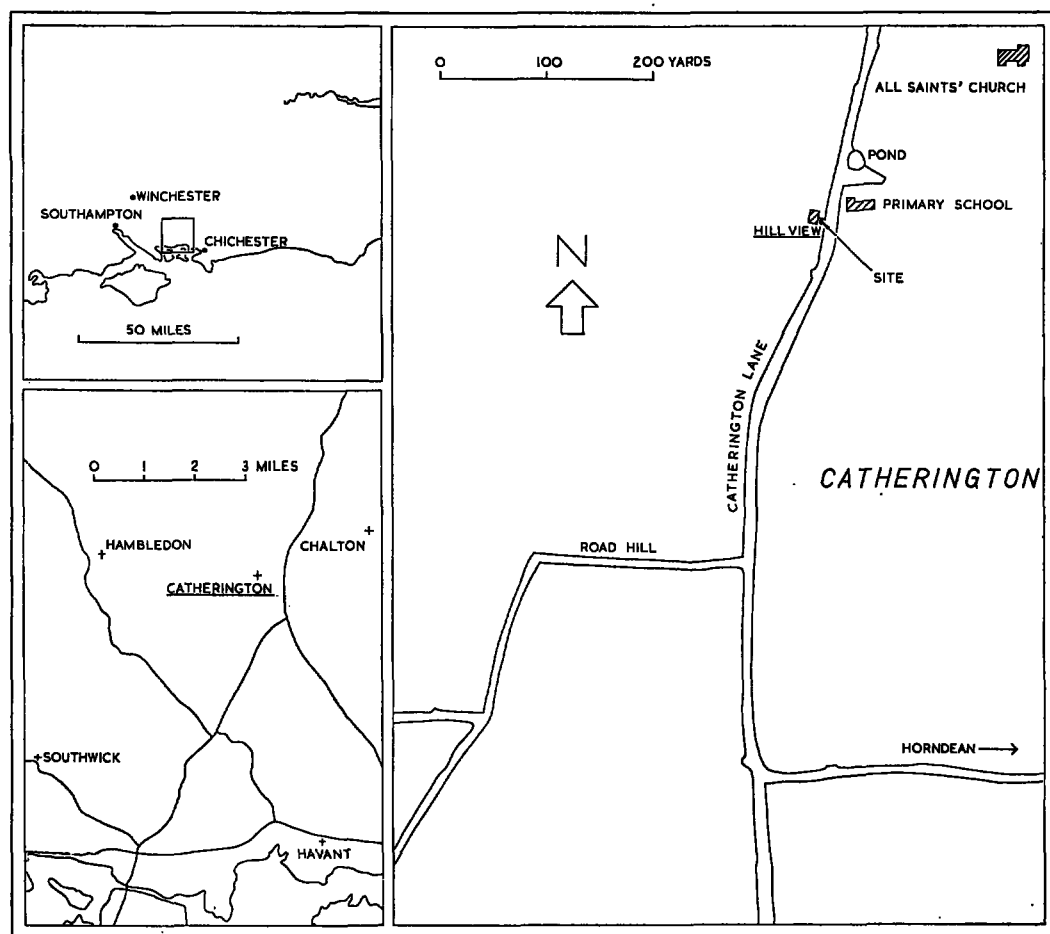
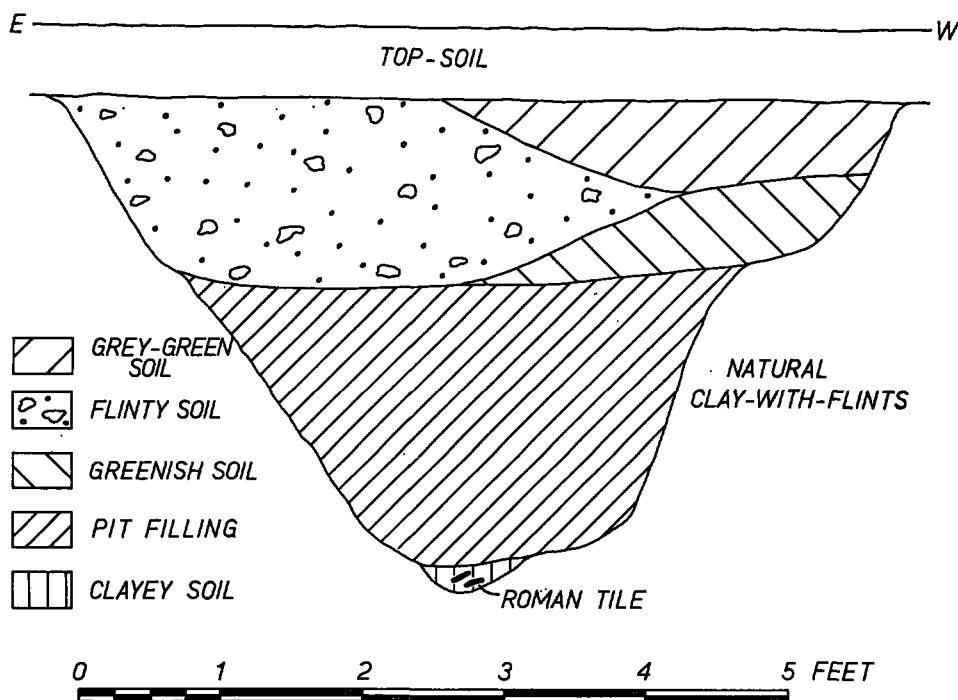


Fig. 21. Location maps.

CATHERINGTON — EARLY MEDIEVAL RUBBISH PIT



GENERALIZED SECTION THROUGH PIT E-W

J.S.P.

Fig. 22.

THE SITE

The village of Catherington occupies a hill-top between 300 and 400 ft. above sea-level on the southern edge of the South Downs. The geology of the area is clay-with-flints overlying the Upper Chalk.

A cable trench cut into the front garden of 'Hill View' in Catherington Lane revealed a quantity of pottery in a matrix of black soil. Subsequent excavation showed this to form the filling of a rubbish-pit of sub-rectangular shape about 8 ft. long north to south, 6 ft. wide and 3 ft. 6 in. deep from the original surface level of the garden (fig. 22). The southern end of the pit was covered by a concrete path and could not be excavated, but the plan and profile of the pit suggested that the unexcavated area of the pit was small.

The pit was covered by top-soil beneath which was a very flinty layer overlaid in places, particularly along its western edge, by grey-green soil. This in turn covered

another layer of greenish soil which in places extended beneath the flinty layer. These deposits contained fourteenth century material including pottery and a bronze buckle and sealed the pit.

The filling of the pit consisted of black soil and flints, containing quantities of pottery, charcoal and oyster shells. Also contained in this was a bone 'threadpicker', (fig. 24, no. 3). The depth of the filling from below the top-soil was 1 ft. 4 in. A shallow depression in the bottom of the pit contained two fragments of Roman roof-tile.

The pottery and the small finds from the excavations are in the City of Portsmouth Museum.

THE FINDS

Pottery (fig. 23)

The pottery comprises small baggy cooking pots with slightly sagging bases, narrow mouthed cooking pots, one globular cooking pot and one with a lid seating; large flat dishes, steep sided dishes, basins, and a fragment of a large rimless globular vessel. Many of the rims are decorated with thumb-pressed dimples. Four types of decoration appear to come from cooking pots.

Three different fabrics occur: 'A' is heavily charged with small selected burned and fractured flint grits, 'B' has a high chalk content with no other medium, 'C' has a coarse sandy texture sometimes including fine water-worn flint fragments. The wares appear in the main to be hand made – the large shallow dishes were certainly not thrown on a wheel, and careful examination of the rest of the vessels fails to offer any conclusions either way although it seems unlikely that they were thrown. Although some vessels appear to have been made by the same hand, the variety of forms and fabrics suggest acquisition from a marketing centre rather than domestic production.

The incidence of this group in a small village community is of interest in that it shows a distinct link with the wares of both Chichester and Winchester, although the main direction of influence appears to be from the Chichester parallels. The crimped top basins, flat dishes and small baggy bowls are similar to those from Site 'D', Chapel Street, Chichester (Dunning and Wilson, 1953, 147). The decorative symbols nos. 18, 19 and 20 are also paralleled. A similar group also comes from Chapel Street, Chichester (Down and Barton, 1971), in which small wide-mouthed cooking pots, narrow-mouthed cooking pots and flat dishes occur together with spouted cooking pots. This group is also decorated with grid pattern stamps as no. 19 and dimpled strips as no. 17. This group was found in a pit and in association with occupation levels lying on the surface of a Roman road.

The formal parallels with Winchester (Cunliffe, 1964, figs. 30-1, 33-4) are not the same as those with Chichester although crimped rims occur in two pit groups. One, Pit M₄, contains an example of 'Winchester' ware, and the other pit, M₂₃, has not only Winchester ware but a grid pattern stamped piece and dimpled applied strip decoration in association with a large spouted pitcher. At Bishop's Waltham, a pit containing similar wares was also found (material in Portsmouth City Museums).

From these groups it can be inferred that wares of this form and decoration have a widespread distribution through south Hampshire and well into West Sussex, and

that stamped motifs, simple rouletting and applied strips are the common mode of decoration.

Their dating is, however, not easily achieved, for Dunning in his study of the Chichester pottery (Dunning and Wilson, 1953) gives a twelfth century date for such wares, at the same time classifying the narrow-mouthed cooking pot as late Saxon. The combination of both narrow and wide-mouthed cooking pots with stamped decoration occurs in all the groups we have discussed and three groups contain fragments of Winchester ware, for which a late tenth century to mid-eleventh century date is given. In all these groups there is a striking similarity and the possibility of such wares being current for a considerable period should not be overlooked until the identity of both the late Saxon wares and the early medieval wares is fully established. On this premise it would appear that this group falls into the Saxo-Norman era of *c.* 950-1100 A.D.

Descriptions

1. Cooking pot with simple everted rim decorated with thumb printing. Form baggy over a moderately shallow sagging base, with marked outside edge. In a coarse open textured grey-brown fabric heavily tempered with small selected (?) heat fractured flint. Fabric 'A'.

2. Rim fragment of a cooking pot with a simple plain everted rim. There is a slight shallow shoulder leading to a globular body form. Fabric 'A'.

3. Rim fragment of a cooking pot, with a slight shallow shoulder. The top of the rim is bevelled. The fabric is tempered with chalk finely beaten up or as a natural inclusion in the clay used. The percentage of chalk is high and the vessel has a slightly greasy feel. Fabric 'B'.

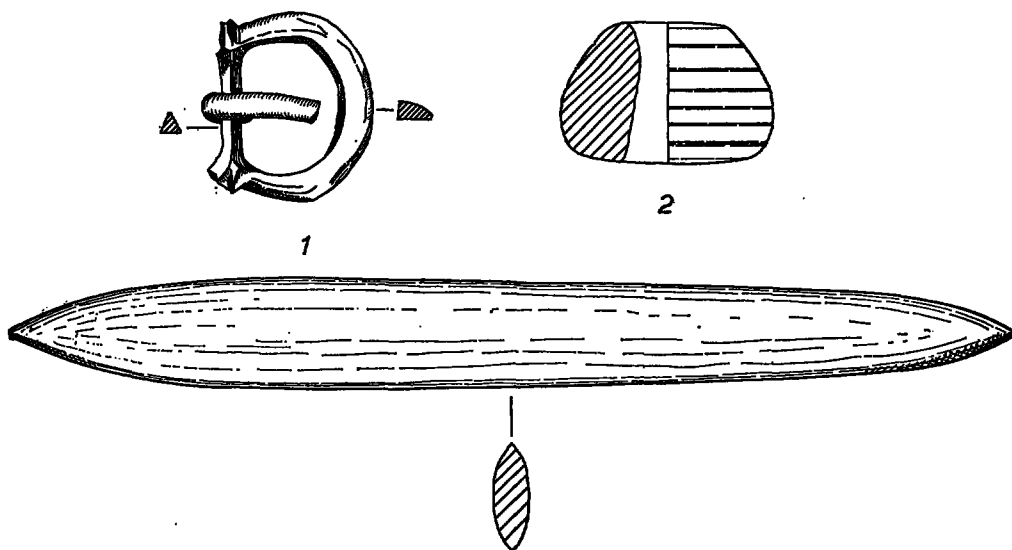


Fig. 24. Small finds from Catherington, Hampshire. (Scale $\frac{1}{2}$)

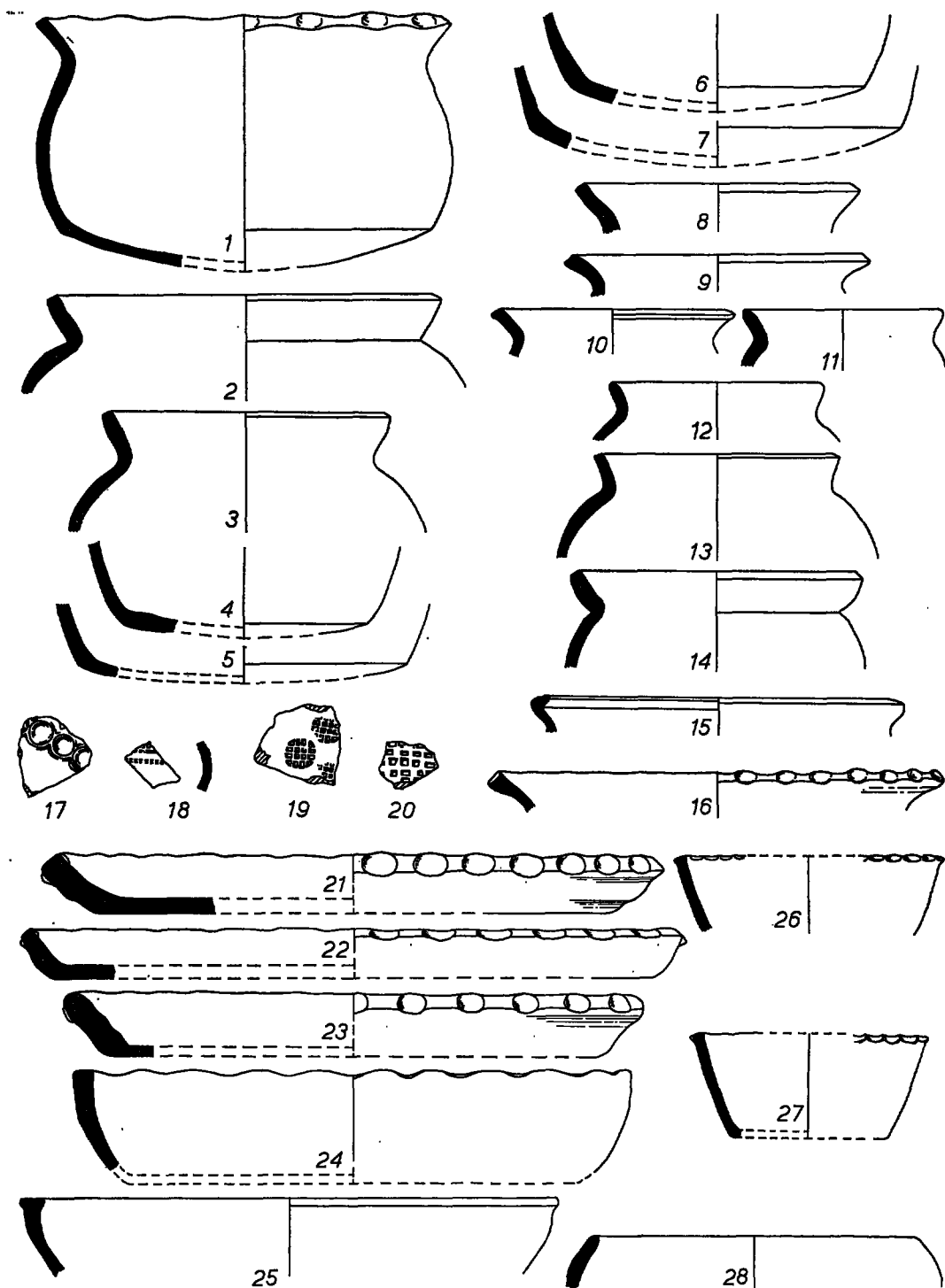


Fig. 23. Early medieval pottery from Catherington, Hampshire. (Scale $\frac{1}{4}$)

4, 5, 6 and 7. Four bases of cooking pots all illustrating the tendency to shallow sagging form under a globular body. All these fragments are in a hard version of fabric 'A'.

8-10. Simple everted square-headed cooking pot rim fragments in a hard very coarse sandy fabric. Dark grey in colour. With a ? incidental mixture of fine water-worn flint fragments. Fabric 'C'.

11, 12 and 13. Narrow-mouthed cooking pots with simple everted rims in a version of fabric 'A'.

14. Cooking pot rim fragment with a dished rim lid seating. Fabric 'A'.

15. Cooking pot rim fragment with a pronounced inturned flange in a heavily reduced version of fabric 'B'.

16. Rim fragment of a cooking pot from which the chalky inclusions have been washed out, with a crimped rim. Fabric 'C'.

17-20. Four decorated fragments probably from cooking pots. All are in 'A' type fabrics.

17. Applied strip carefully laid and dimpled with a tool or small finger in a regular and careful way.

18. Two lines of rouletting of 'cogwheel' form with triangular teeth.

19. Impressed with random stamping of discs with grills inset. The grills comprise three horizontal and three vertical lines.

20. Coarsely rouletted with a rectangular toothed tool.

21, 22 and 23. Flat dishes. All in 'A' fabric. These wide vessels are all coarsely made and decorated with heavily crimped rims on flat bases. They do not appear to have been thrown but hand built, probably rolled out as a disc with the edges raised, crimped.

24. Fragment of a steep-sided dish in 'C' fabric with crimped decoration on the upper surface of the rim.

25. Fragment of a globular bowl in 'B' fabric oxidised a purplish colour. With a flattened rim knife trimming on the outside.

26 and 27. Fragments of two very similar basins in 'C' fabric probably made by the same hand at the same time. Very reduced and hard. Decorated with crimping of the upper surface. No. 27 has been in contact with great heat which has partially fused the outer surface.

28. Fragment from the rim of another inturned bowl (?). In a fabric slightly more oxidised than reduced.

Material Sealing the Pit

In what was certainly a floor level sealing this pit were deposits of pottery and other small finds. The latter are illustrated, the pottery, which is not, comprised two fragments of Romano-British flat roof tile, a fragment of medieval flat roof tile, several fragments of medieval cooking pot of which only one example merits description: the fragment of the rim and upper shoulder of a globular cooking pot with a reduced grey interior and an oxidised red exterior in a hard but very sandy fabric. The rim is everted and terminates in a bead. Such forms as this occur in the late thirteenth century and extend into the fourteenth century.

Buckle (fig. 24, 1)

Half of a bronze 'Double Bow' buckle of a type similar to that quoted as of fourteenth century (Ward-Perkins, 1940, pl. lxxvii, no. 8).

Spindlewhorl (fig. 24, 2)

Lathe turned from Lower Chalk decorated with turning lines.

Bone (fig. 24, 3)

Polished, double-ended, bone implement (13.4 cm. by 1.5 cm. by 0.7 cm.), probably used in weaving to manipulate the threads. This implement is almost identical in form and size to an example from a late Saxon context found at Rowner near Gosport (Lewis and Martin 1973).

CONCLUSIONS

The site is of interest for two reasons: first, for the new light it sheds on the distribution of local wares in the Saxo-Norman period. Second, for the evidence it provides for the early occupation of Catherington. The first point has already been discussed in some detail, but it may not be out of place to discuss briefly the problem of the origin of permanent settlement at Catherington.

Catherington is a hill-top village undoubtedly of considerable antiquity. The early eleventh century form of the place name is *Cateringtune* (Ekwall, 1960), which, it is suggested, may mean 'the settlement of the people at a hill fort'. Although there would appear to be no archaeological evidence of pre-Roman occupation in the immediate vicinity of the present village, a large quantity of Romano-British coarse-ware fragments found in the course of a recent (unpublished) trial excavation in the field immediately to the south of the churchyard (SU 69611449), and the two pieces of roof-tile found in the bottom of the pit (see above), indicate the proximity of a permanent structure of this period. Occupation of the site has almost certainly been continuous since the early eleventh century A.D., and there is the strong suggestion of continuity of occupation at least since the Roman period which only a careful examination of sites within the village as they become available can substantiate.

Acknowledgements

Our thanks are due particularly to Mr. and Mrs. W. T. May, the occupiers of 'Hill View', for their permission to dig up their front garden; to Miss E. Lewis, then of Portsmouth City Museum, for organising and directing the excavation; to Miss A. Scanes, Mr. C. Newton and Mr. P. Bidwell for their help in the excavation.

REFERENCES

- Cunliffe, B. W., 1964. *Winchester Excavations 1949-1960*. Vol. I. Winchester: City Museums and Libraries Committee.
- Down, A., and Barton, K. J., 1971. 'A Medieval Kiln in Orchard Street' in Down, A., and Rule, M., *Chichester Excavations I*, Chichester Civic Society Excavation Committee (ed. Watson, R. A.) (ch. 9, 153-164).

PROCEEDINGS FOR THE YEAR 1971

- Dunning, G. C., and Wilson, A. E., 1953. 'Late Saxon and Early Medieval Pottery from selected sites in Chichester.' *Sussex Archaeol. Coll.*, 91, 108-147.
- Ekwall, E., 1960. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-names*, fourth ed., Oxford.
- Lewis, E. and Martin, J., 1973. 'Rescue Excavations on a Saxon Settlement Site at Rowner, 1971', *Rescue Archaeology in Hampshire*, 1, 38-51.
- Ward-Perkins, J. B., 1940. *London Museum Catalogues: No. 7, Medieval Catalogue*, London.