

◆ From medieval burgage plot to 18th-century inn

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A RYE STREET CORNER

By Andrew Margetts

Archaeology South-East carried out an archaeological watching brief and historic building survey at The George Hotel, Rye, East Sussex (now 'The George in Rye'). This was undertaken as part of the conversion of adjoining buildings to hotel storage and accommodation, as well as the remodelling of existing elements of the inn. Residual material dating to the end of the early medieval period was encountered; however, most of the archaeological features were of 13th- and 14th-century origin. These comprised pits and a well, characteristic of 'yards', as well as a fenced (and possibly ditched) boundary, relating to a burgage plot. The fieldwork produced a small but important medieval pottery assemblage that, combined with other material, allowed the creation of a town series. Further remains comprised deposits of garden soil, as well as structural features connected to post-medieval properties. This article is the result of a modern, multi-disciplinary approach, incorporating historical and archaeological evidence as well as building recording.

INTRODUCTION

Pubs, inns and drinking establishments of all kinds hold a special place in the heart of many archaeologists. The importance of these most cherished of British institutions in the national psyche, and the fact that they probably represent one of the most accessible elements of the national heritage, has made them the subject of many historical and archaeological studies (Richardson and Eberlain 1925; Pantin 1961; Brandwood *et al.* 2004) and even the subject of popular television programmes such as Channel 5's *Pub Dig 2012*. The chance to investigate the development of one such establishment came to Archaeology South-East (UCL Institute of Archaeology) between November 2010 and January 2011, when it was commissioned by SPM Ltd, on behalf of George on High Ltd, to undertake historic building recording and an archaeological watching brief at The George Hotel, High Street, Rye, East Sussex (ASE 2014; Fig. 1). The work was carried out in relation to proposals to convert adjoining buildings to storage and accommodation, as well as the remodelling of existing elements of the hotel.

The building occupies a prominent position within the town, with its principal elevation facing northwards onto the High Street and its subsidiary elevation facing east onto Lion Street. As the hotel's

importance grew, it took over and subsumed adjoining properties.

The site encompassed 96 High Street, a shop leased out by The George, associated rooms to the rear of the shop (behind 97 High Street), a covered garage area which formed the western part of the ground floor of the hotel (98 High Street, below the assembly room) and the hayloft within the yard to 98 High Street/12 Lion Street (Fig. 2). Prior to the incorporation of 96 High Street into the hotel complex the establishment included 97 and 98 High Street, as well as the hayloft, number 12 and, historically, numbers 13 and 14 Lion Street.

This article seeks to detail the historical and archaeological development of this small part of the ancient town of Rye and present the findings of the historic building recording and watching brief associated with the groundworks. The investigation succeeded in revealing evidence of medieval activity dating from the 11th to the mid/late 14th century, as well as structural and service related features which help to chart the various properties that at one time or another occupied the site.

HINTS OF THE EARLIER TOWN: 11TH TO EARLY 13TH CENTURY

Rye has its origins within the manor of *Rammesleah*, part of the Hundred of Guestling. The manor,

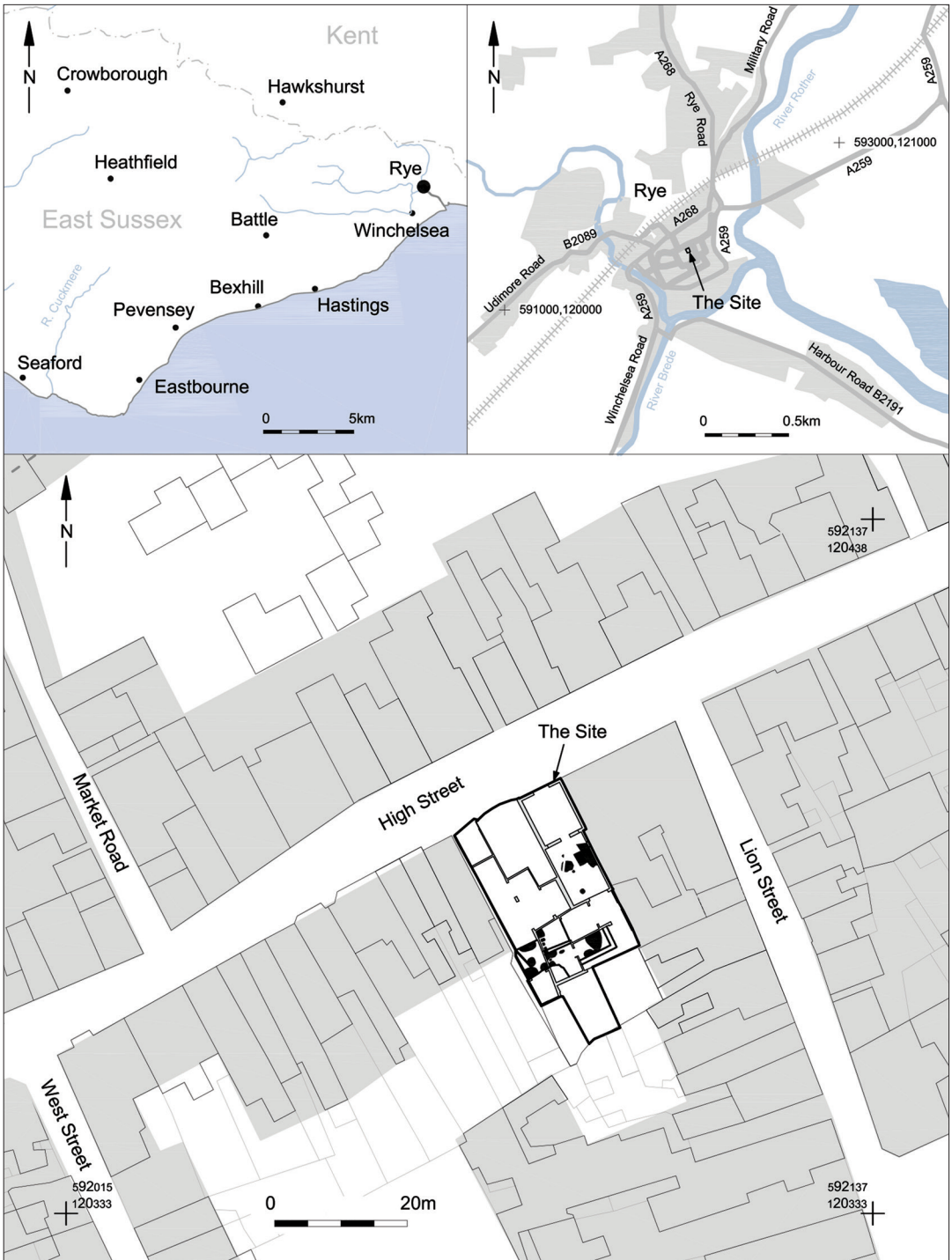


Fig. 1. Site location.

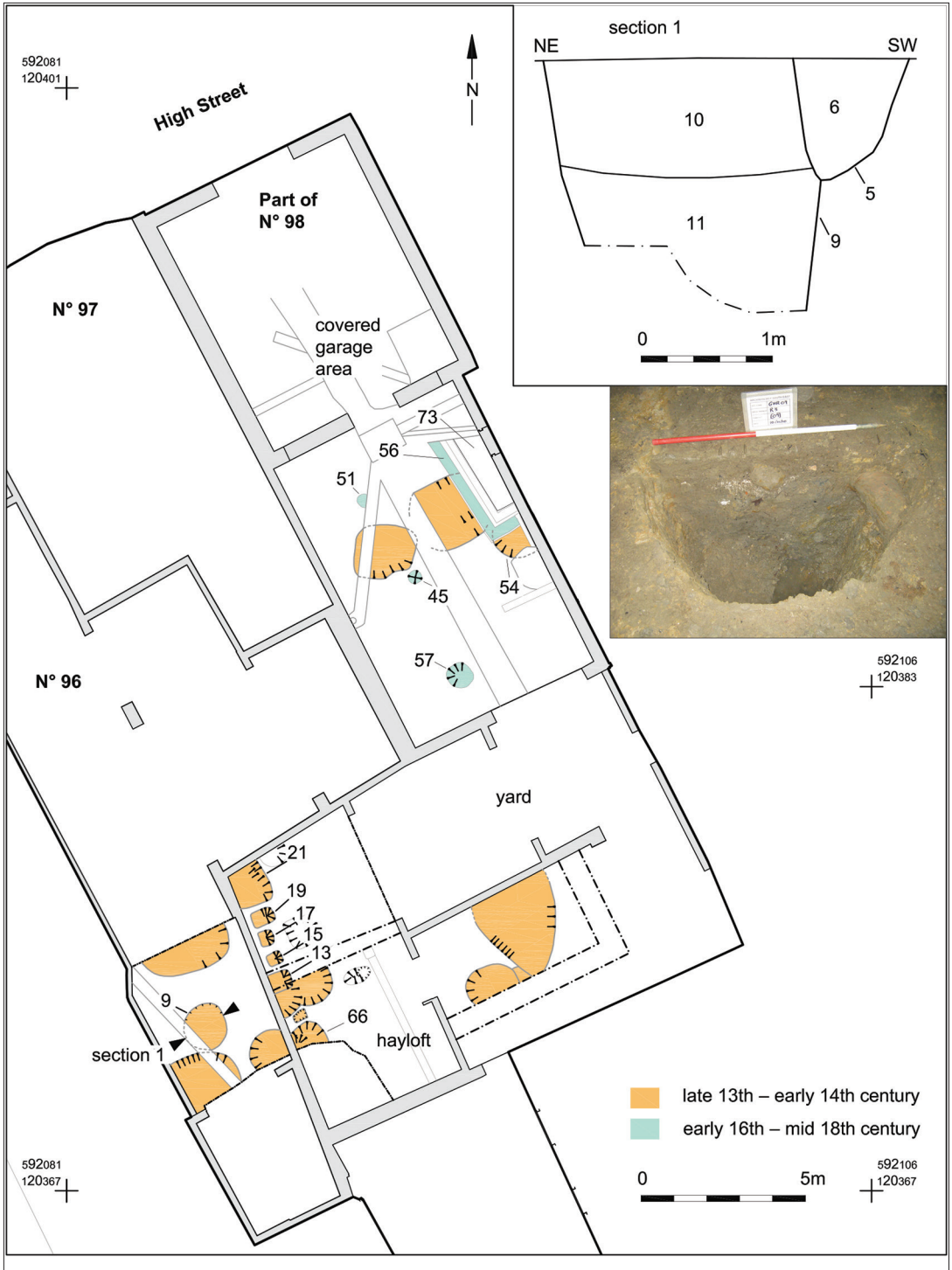


Fig. 2. Site plan and excavated features. The insert shows well [9] in section with truncation by later drain [5].

along with its ports, is known from reliable 11th-century charter evidence (S9491; Haskins 1918, 344) to have been granted by Cnut to the Norman Abbey of Fécamp. *Rammesleah* is named *Rameslie* by the time of Domesday (AD 1086), when it was listed as having land for 35 ploughs, 99 villagers, 5 churches, 100 salt houses, seven acres of meadow and woodland for two pigs (Morris 1976, 5–1). The entry also refers to *nouū burġ* (*ibid.*), the identity of which has often been debated but probably pertains to Rye. Regardless of whether it can be equated with this ‘new borough’, the town doubtless existed as a coastal settlement served by one of the five churches mentioned in Domesday (Martin and Martin 2009, 3). The location of this Domesday-era church likely corresponds to the current site of St Mary’s, the earliest surviving fabric of which dates to the 12th century (Harris 2009, 43).

Traces of the 11th-century town have so far proved elusive. Trenching to the rear of Market Street recovered Saxo-Norman pottery, in contexts which also incorporated later sherds (SEAS 1994), while investigations on Cinque Ports Street have exposed remains of medieval stone and timber buildings, as well as rubbish pits largely dating to the 12th and 13th centuries (ASE 1998; 2013). Beyond the intramural core of the town, recent excavations at a roadside location on Deadmans Lane have also yielded sherds of earlier medieval pottery (ASE 2015).

As would be expected in an urban environment with a long history of change and modification, the medieval activity described above has clearly suffered, to a great extent, from later truncation. This also proved to be the case at The George. The archaeological features showed a high degree of disturbance due to the many phases of building activity undertaken at the site, as well as the insertion of modern and post-medieval services. This resulted in a great deal of residual, and indeed intrusive, finds. The earliest activity encountered dated to the late 11th to the early/mid-13th century. Though this points to at least limited contemporary activity, the evidence comprised a very small assemblage of pottery occurring residually in later features.

BURGAGE PLOT(S): LATE 13TH TO EARLY 14TH CENTURY

Benefitting from its hilltop location, Rye was spared the more debilitating effects of the late 13th-century

storms which had such destructive results for its sister town of Old Winchelsea. During this time the town began to develop as a naval dockyard and pilgrim’s port, as well as a centre of shipping for regional commodities such as timber, salt and meat products (Martin and Martin 2009, 4–6). Documentary evidence shows that fishing, largely based on catches of herring, was of paramount importance to the burgeoning 13th-century town, and Rye’s Cinque Port status allowed ships to attend the lucrative Yarmouth Herring Fair (Dulley 1969, 38–9). Rye’s economic connections to the continent were also growing; these links were largely to the Netherlands, although documentary evidence suggests that trade could also extend as far as Gascony or Spain (Cal. Pat2; Salzman 1937, 55).

Against this backdrop of a bustling medieval harbour town, the area of the site had become densely occupied by the late 13th and early 14th centuries, forming part of the commercial heart of the settlement (Harris 2009, 46). This was reflected in the archaeological remains encountered. Activity from the early/mid-13th century to the mid/late 14th century was far more extensive than for the preceding phase, and largely related to ‘backyard’ activity. The contemporary features comprised rubbish pits, a well [9] and a group of post-holes (Fig. 2). Pit [54] was filled by mid-blue/grey clay silt, with occasional charcoal inclusions, and was dated by seven sherds of pottery to the first half of the 13th century. The feature was truncated by construction cut [73] for wall [56], as well as a post-medieval drain and modern concrete stanchion. The well [9] (Fig. 2, inserts) measured about 1.3m in diameter, with sharply sloping, nearly vertical sides. It was truncated to the west by a late post-medieval drain [5]. The feature was not fully excavated; however, it was noted that it was filled by at least two deposits ([10] and [11]) which produced 60 and 14 sherds respectively, indicating a deposition date between 1250–75 and 1350. In addition to the pottery, finds indicating contemporary building activity were also recovered. These encompassed roof tile (including curved tile and part of a louvre or other roof furniture), floor tile and ‘Flemish’ brick.

Interestingly, the post-holes associated with this period [13], [15], [17], [19] and [41], formed a line roughly on the division between 96 and 97 High Street. Two further features, [21] and [66], were also orientated on this axis. They were not fully exposed, but it may be that they did not relate to



Fig. 3. Burgage plot fragment.

pits but sections of ditch along this boundary. As such, it may be possible to suggest that this group was related to a burgage boundary. Rye was certainly of borough status by the 12th century (Harris 2009, 15) and the area of the site falls within the 'regular burgage plots' historic character type recorded for the town (*ibid.*, Map 7; Fig. 3).

A WEALDEN HALL AND CROSS-WING: MID/LATE 14TH CENTURY TO EARLY/ MID-16TH CENTURY

Rye, which during the 14th and 15th centuries was overshadowed by its larger wealthier sister town of Winchelsea, probably suffered considerably during the wider economic and climatic changes of the mid-14th century, as well as from the effects of the Black Death. The town's troubles would have been compounded by the documented shift of royal and mercantile interests away from the Cinque Ports to locations further west, such as Southampton and Bristol. In addition, the decline of the Great

Yarmouth herring fishery removed one of the primary wealth contributions previously enjoyed by the town (Sylvester 2004, 18–19). The situation had changed by the late 15th century, when the rejuvenated fortunes of the fishing industry may be inextricably linked to a wider economic recovery experienced in Rye (Harris 2009, 17). The reinvigoration of the town during this time is neatly demonstrated by certain borough accounts. These show a marked rise in revenue from around £34 in 1450 to £55 in 1480 (Vidler 1934, 35, 41; Salzman 1937, 50). This process of recovery continued, with the town witnessing its peak period of prosperity during the 16th century (Martin and Martin 2004, 21–3; Harris 2009, 19).

Evidence of surviving medieval buildings suggests that, prior to heightened demographic growth, both plots and buildings were generally large and spacious. However, the survivals on which this assumption is based are likely to belong to the wealthier end of society and are therefore represented by superior constructions. Plots and buildings occupied by those lower down the social scale are likely to have been far smaller in size and less well built (Martin and Martin 2009, 98–9). Evidence for one of the larger residences is directly relatable to the study area and the site itself. Number 12 Lion Street was the penultimate property to be assimilated into The George hotel complex (the last being 96 High Street); however, it originated as a late 15th-century, very well-finished, two-bay Wealden hall house (Martin and Martin 2009, 105 and 213–14). Remnant garden soils encountered within the courtyard at the rear of 12 Lion Street probably represent a survival of deposits related to the yard of this property. The layer was encountered beneath a deposit [23] connected to the construction of the hayloft, as well as the demolition of an earlier structure. The soil [12] contained charcoal and roof tile inclusions and was dated by pottery to the late medieval period. Clay tobacco pipe of the 17th century was also encountered within this layer, although this material is thought to be intrusive from the overlying deposit [23].

In addition to the Wealden hall, there was also a substantial, fully detached, late 15th-century house on the site of 98 High Street. This was aligned parallel to the High Street and comprised a medieval cross-wing possibly used as a shop. Though only the westernmost wall of this structure survives (retained within the party wall of the assembly rooms),

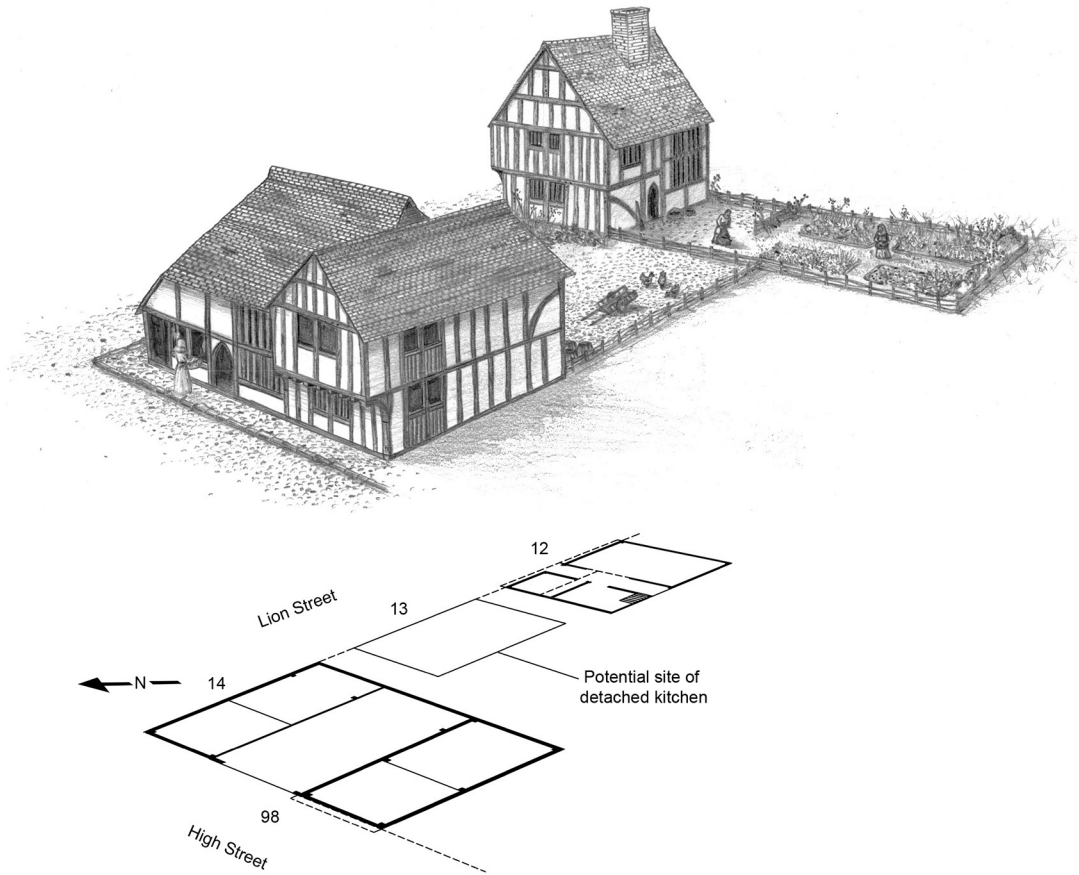


Fig. 4. Reconstruction of the corner of High Street and Lion Street in the late 15th to early 16th century (looking southeast). It is almost certain there would have been either an attached or detached kitchen to the rear of number 98 along Lion Street, although evidence for this structure was not encountered (David Martin, *pers. comm.*)

some details about the size of the main range can be recovered through the presence of ‘weathering ghosts’ (ASE 2006b; Martin and Martin 2009, 192–4). As Rye’s population grew, the building was subdivided sometime in the early/mid-16th century to form both 14 Lion Street and 98 High Street. These separate tenements would subsequently be re-amalgamated to form the core of the present hotel (*see below; ibid.*, 192, 214; Fig. 4).

RISE OF THE INNS: EARLY/MID-16TH TO MID-18TH CENTURY

Demographic changes and associated population pressures attributable to the first half of the 16th century resulted in an increase of plot division as

well as a general reduction of building size within the town (Martin and Martin 2009, 128). This process was reflected in the changes experienced at the junction between High Street and Lion Street from the mid-16th to mid-18th centuries. Part of this transformation comprised the construction of 14 Lion Street, a tall, three-and-a-half storeyed, three-cell house, originally continuously jettied on the first floor against both streets. By the latter part of the 16th century it is thought to have served as an inn called The Red Lion (*ibid.*, 146, 214). This is the first known evidence for the presence of a ‘pub’ within the study area, but this establishment should not be confused with the later inn of the same name situated further down the street. Forming another part of this phase of

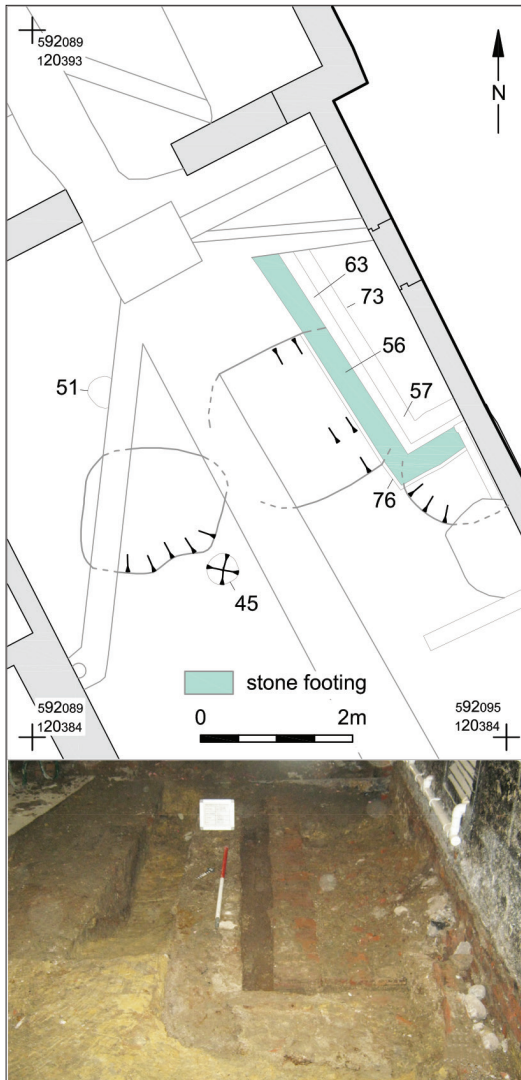


Fig. 5. Plan and photograph of wall footing [56].

redevelopment was the construction of a small, two-cell, continuously-jettied house at 13 Lion Street. This building was dominated by the much higher neighbouring properties at numbers 12 and 14 and only survives in a very fragmentary state (*ibid.*, 214).

Between roughly 1560 and 1600 the plot on the corner of High Street and Lion Street was significantly rebuilt, with the eastern part being remodelled as The Red Lion. The western dwelling (the remains of the main range and entire cross-

wing) was demolished and replaced by a substantial two and-a-half/three-storeyed building (*ibid.*, 193). Evidence of an adjacent building was encountered during the groundworks. This comprised a short length of stone footing [56], later reused as the western side of a drain (Fig. 5). This feature, mainly constructed of Wealden sandstone, but with an internal face of clunch, does not relate to any known walls from the cartographic evidence, and the plot was likely vacant in the late 15th century (ASE 2006a, 3). The cross-wing wall, retained within the fabric of 98 High Street, had evidence of soot on its western face, indicating it was internalized (ASE 2006b, fig. 1576/6). The most likely explanation is that an 8.15m-wide building, equipped with a rear range, was established here in the 16th century. It was almost certainly built parallel to the street and was squeezed into a gap, much like Monks Way on Market Street (David Martin pers. comm.; Martin and Martin 2009, 203) The south-eastern wall of the rear range, to which [56] relates, would have been demolished as part of the rebuilding in this area during the early 19th century (Fig. 6).

The building complex at number 98 appears to have been little altered until the mid/late 18th century, when the two historic parts fronting onto High Street were unified. Number 14 Lion Street is also thought to have been incorporated back into this larger plot around this time; however, the amalgamation could have alternatively occurred as early as the late 17th century. This set of buildings would form the historic core of the present hotel. Late in the 18th century, the exterior of both parts were altered so that, from the street, they give the impression of being of one date (ASE 2006a; 2009, 214).

THE GEORGE

By the middle of the 18th century The George Inn had evolved from at least five properties dating from the late medieval and early post-medieval periods. The site occupied an area that had once been given over to 13th- and 14th-century burgage plots, the surviving features of which contained rare residual finds hinting at earlier activity. The long process of changes, demolition and construction had served to create, by the later years of the 18th century, a hotchpotch of an inn, surrounding a yard known in the 1770s for its cock fights (Russell 2014, 96). Though the George was now the town's principal

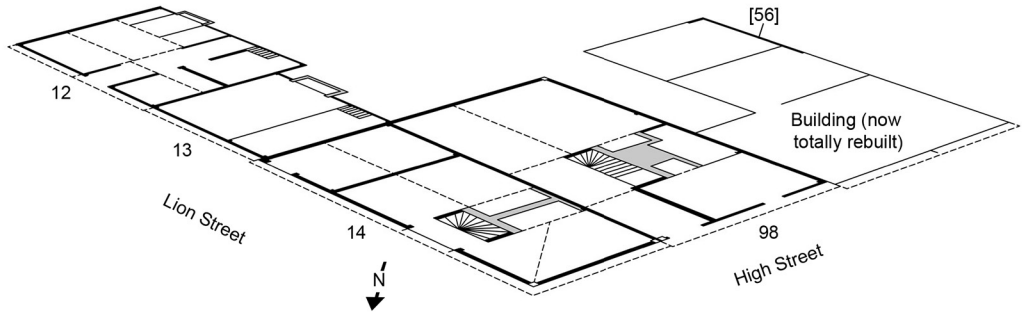
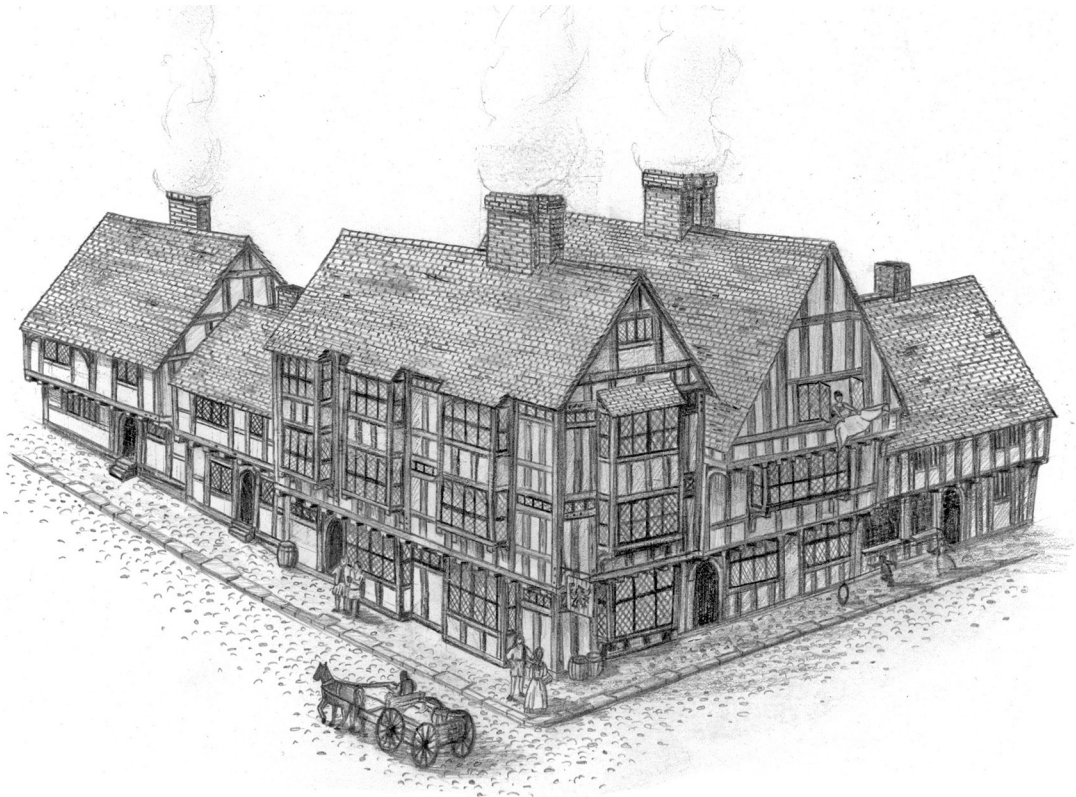


Fig. 6. Reconstruction of the corner of High Street and Lion Street in the mid- to late 16th century (looking southwest). The house to the right of number 98 is largely conjectural and is based on Monks Way in Market Street, Rye.

inn, the words of Colonel John Byng, who visited during 1778, amply described its state:

[Rye] smells of fish and punch. By a bad pavement I came to the George, a dirty seaport inn, with a wretched stable...as we were on such bad terms with our inn, the

sooner we were gone the better (Souden 1991, 70–1).

It was obviously time for change, and after the inn was re-fronted (*see above*), tenements to the west (97 High Street) were rebuilt as part of The George during 1818 (Martin and Martin 2009, 192). This redevelopment

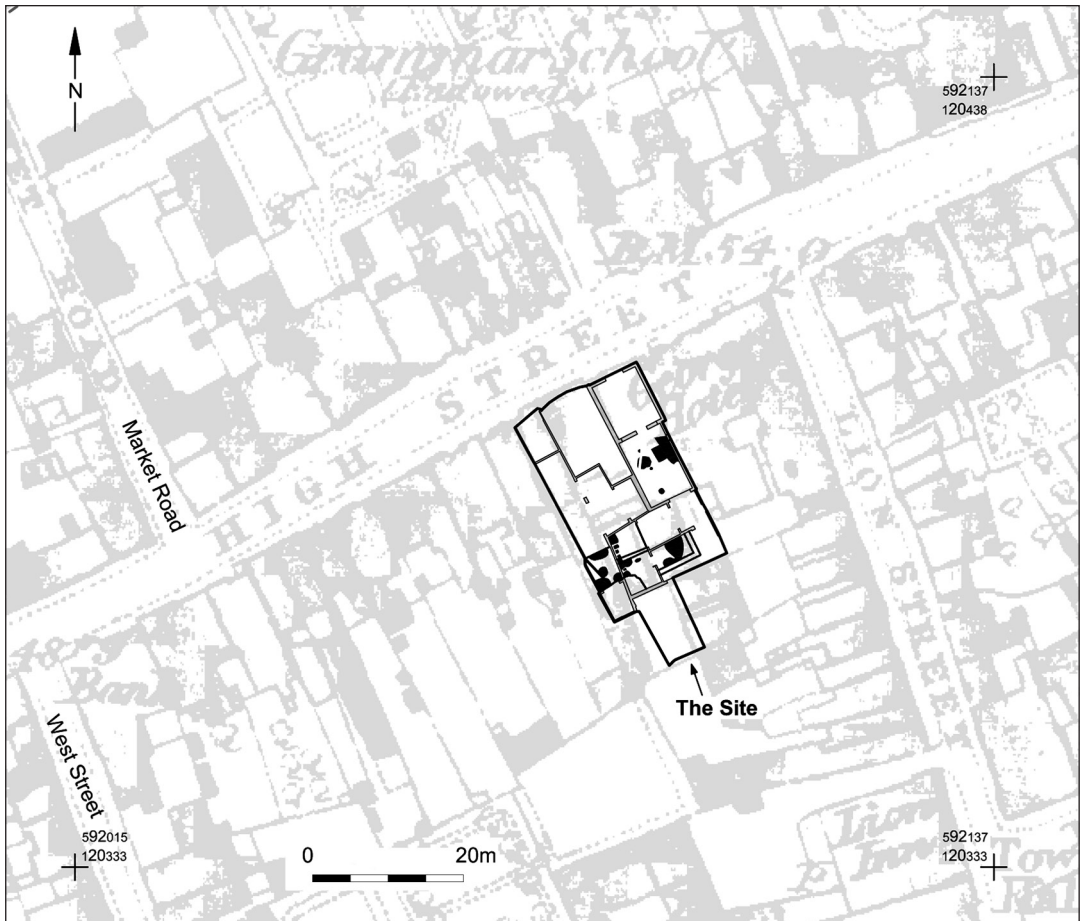


Fig. 7. The site as shown on the *Ordnance Survey map of Rye, 1st Edition County Series 1:2500, 1872, 45.7.*

included the creation of a new assembly room on the first floor, used for farmers' gatherings on market days, municipal celebrations and as the county's major auction house (Russell 2014, 96). Post-holes [45], [47] and [51] had partial timbers remaining *in situ* and probably related to stalls or partitions within this building, prior to the 1818 rebuild. The room in which they were found would have once comprised the northern stable yard access.

The hayloft within the stable yard was also built within the late 18th or early 19th century. Deposits of debris associated with its construction were encountered at the site, as were a post-housing and brick footing associated with an earlier layout. The western wall of the hayloft was also noted to incorporate a pre-existing plot boundary of 96

High Street in its construction. The latter was the building where the monitored alterations were most extensive. The street frontage appears to have been constructed in the late 18th to early 19th century, with a series of additions made to the rear in fairly quick succession, so that by 1872, when the building was represented on the Ordnance Survey town plan (Fig. 7), it largely conformed to its present footprint. A truss retained within the south wall of the northern part of the building survived from an earlier structure which pre-dated the late 18th century. Due to the extremely fragmentary nature of the evidence, it was not possible to refine the date of this previous structure satisfactorily, nor to reconstruct much detail concerning the previous building's form.

THE POTTERY by Luke Barber

INTRODUCTION

The archaeological monitoring recovered 184 sherds of pottery, weighing 4017g, from 20 individually numbered contexts. The pottery was sorted into fabric groups on the basis of tempering and finish, each being given an archive code (e.g. M1) and subsequently a common descriptive name. The opportunity was taken to merge the current fabric series with several others from the town to create a single series for use in the future. This has resulted in a town series with some 87 different fabrics/wares spanning the 10th/11th to 19th centuries, but even this is unlikely to be the full range present within the town and will be added to in the future.

Only those fabrics occurring at The George are considered in this report. The assemblage has been fully quantified on *pro forma* sheets by fabric and form, with the information being used to create an Excel database as part of the digital archive. The pottery spans a wide chronological range, but is predominantly of the High Medieval period. The assemblage is characterised in Table 1 and period overviews given below. Although there is some variability in the size and condition of the overall assemblage, the High Medieval material is generally composed of medium to large unabraded sherds, undoubtedly the result of being derived from contemporary features. Although High Medieval pottery has frequently been found during archaeological work in Rye, most consists of smaller abraded sherds from unsealed and, or, mixed deposits and the current assemblage is one of the best from the town to date.

Early Medieval (late 11th century to early/mid-13th century)

There are just three sherds in the assemblage that can confidently be placed before the early 13th century. Each is in a

different fabric. The small number of sherds suggests only very limited activity at the site before the early/mid-13th century. Interestingly, this is in notable contrast to the assemblage from Cinque Ports Street, where this period was far better represented than the ensuing High Medieval period (Barber forthcoming).

Moderate flint and iron oxides (M1)

Moderate multi-coloured flint grits and sparse/common iron oxide inclusions to 1mm. Probably later 11th to 12th century. A residual 4g sherd was recovered from pit [26].

Moderate flinty ware (M2)

Common multi-coloured flint grits to 1mm with occasional calcareous and/or iron oxide inclusions to 1mm. Probably 12th to very early 13th century. A 5g sherd was recovered from post-hole [13].

Sandy-shelly ware (M5)

Moderate fine/medium sand with sparse/common shell to 1.5mm. Probably 12th to early 13th century. The 8g cooking pot sherd is unstratified.

High Medieval (early/mid-13th century to mid/late 14th century)

The main activity at the site can probably best be placed between 1250 to 1275 and 1375. The assemblage of this period is in notably fresh condition, a point emphasised by the average sherd size of 22.6g. A fairly typical domestic range of vessel types is present, although glazed jugs are particularly well represented. This may be either the result of the current refuse coming more from table, rather than kitchen, waste, or could be a chronological consideration, jugs usually becoming proportionally more common in the 14th century. The range of fabrics is summarised in Table 2. Although the exact source of

Table 1. Characterisation of the pottery assemblage.

Period	Number/ weight	Average sherd size	Number of different fabric groups	Number of contexts spot- dated to period (excludes unstratified/ heavily mixed contexts)
Early Medieval Late c. 11th to early/ mid c. 13th	3/17g (ENV 3)	5.7g	Local - 3	1
High Medieval Early/mid c. 13th to mid/late c. 14th	145/3260g (ENV 61)	22.5g	Local - 10 Regional - 1 Imports - 3	12
Late Medieval Mid/late c. 14th to early/mid c. 16th	8/156g (ENV 8)	19.5g	Local - 3 Imports - 1	2
Early Post- medieval Early/mid c. 16th to mid c. 18th	23/481g (ENV 14)	20.9g	Local - 2 Regional - 1 Imports - 5	0
Late Post-medieval Mid c. 18th to c. 19th	5/103g (ENV 4)	20.6g	Regional - 3	1

(Number/weight in grams and estimated number of vessels). N.B. Totals include all residual/intrusive and unstratified material. Local equates to Sussex wares, regional to other English wares.

some of the local wares is uncertain, products from Rye, and to a lesser extent Winchelsea or Brede, dominate the overall group.

Non-local wares are also well represented. These are essentially composed of French imports; there is only a single English regional sherd, from the Scarborough industry.

Interestingly, another Scarborough sherd was recovered from the Cinque Ports Street assemblage (Barber forthcoming) and they are a relatively common find in High Medieval assemblages from the South Coast of England (e.g. Barber, 2011). It is probable these well-glazed jugs came down the

Table 2. Summary of the High Medieval fabrics.

Fabric	No. sherds	Weight	Comments
Sand and flint coarse ware (M3/M8)	7	194g	Cooking pots. C 13th
Fine sand with flint (M9)	2	147g	Cooking pot. Late C 12th to early/mid-13th
Medium sandy ware (general) (M11)	10	135g	Cooking pots and jugs
Rye ware medium (M14a)	43	1060g	Cooking pots, bowls and jugs
Rye sandy ware (calcareous type) (M14b)	7	169g	Cooking pots and jugs
Rye ware silty (M14c)	1	2g	Jug
Winchelsea black shelly (M7a)	10	229g	Cooking pot
Winchelsea black sparse shelly (M7b)	5	229g	Cooking pot
Sandy blackware (Winchelsea) (M13a)	1	3g	Uncertain form
Brede-type fine greyware (M13b)	1	141g	Pitcher
Scarborough ware (Scar)	1	39	Glazed jug
North French-type whiteware (M19)	1	3g	Green glazed jugs
Saintonge whiteware (M18)	55	873g	Green glazed jug
North French sandy whiteware (NFSW)	1	36g	Green glazed jug

Table 3: Quantification of the High Medieval pottery from key assemblages.

Fabric/Context	Well [9] Fill [10]	Well [9] Fill [11]	Pit [3] Fill [4]	Pit [43] Fill [44]
Sand and flint coarse ware (M3/M8)	1/45g (CP ×1)	-	2/33g (CP ×2)	-
Rye ware medium (M14a)	4/145g (J ×4)	12/72g (CP ×1)	5/362g (J ×5)	13/322g (CP ×1, B ×1, J ×3)
Rye sandy ware (calcareous type) (M14b)	1/8g (? ×1)		1/8g (J ×1)	1/104g (CP ×1)
Winchelsea black shelly (M7a)	10/229g (CP ×1)	-	-	-
Winchelsea black sparse shelly (M7b)	5/229g (CP ×2, J ×2)	-	-	-
Sandy blackware (Winchelsea) (M13a)	-	-	1/3g (? ×1)	-
Brede-type fine greyware (M13b)	-	1/141 (? ×1)	-	-
Scarborough ware (Scar)	-	-	1/39g (J ×1)	-
North French sandy whiteware (NFSW)	-	-	1/36g (J ×1)	-
North French-type whiteware (M19)	-	-	1/3g (J ×1)	-
Saintonge whiteware (M18)	39/680g (J ×3)	1/56g (J ×1)	-	-

Key. CP: cooking pot, J: jug, B: bowl, ?: uncertain form.

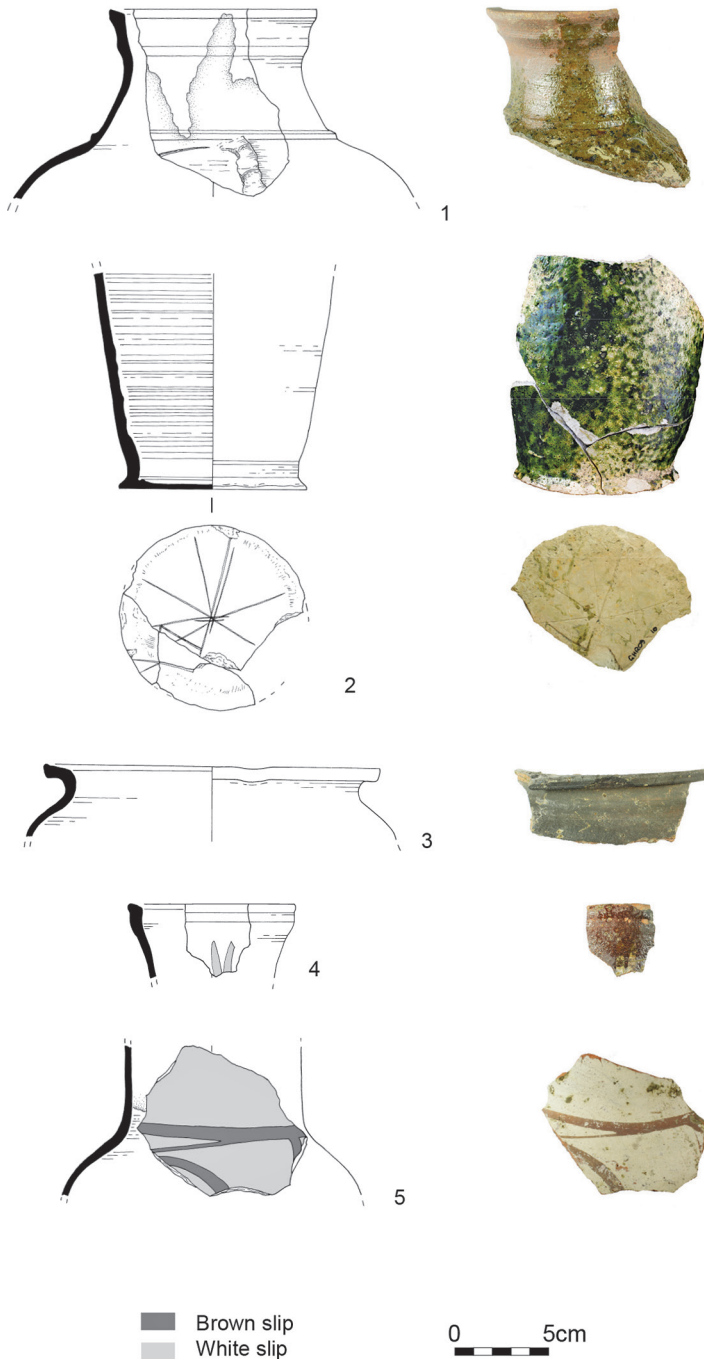


Fig. 8. Selected Pottery from well [9] and pit [43]. See catalogue.

east coast with the fishing fleet. The current High Medieval assemblage has a notably large proportion of French imports (39.3 percent by sherd count) although, admittedly, the sample is small. Most of this material consists of Saintonge products from south-west France and is undoubtedly connected to the wine trade. This proportion of French wares is even higher than the 25 percent noted in the assemblage from Blackfriars Barn in Winchelsea, possibly a building associated with the wine trade (D. Martin, pers. comm.; Orton 2004). The figure is also well above the 16 percent of French imports noted for Southampton at this time (Brown 2002) and is more in keeping with the 20–30 percent noted in Hull (Watkins 1983). However, as there is a notable number of conjoins in the current assemblage, particularly among the imported vessels, percentages based on estimated number of vessels may be a more reliable indicator of proportions. Of the 61 High Medieval vessels represented, eight (13.1 percent) are from France. This is perhaps a more reliable percentage and is very much in keeping with the 12.3 percent noted at Cinque Ports Street and 14 percent noted at Church Square (both based on sherd count in High Medieval assemblages of 220 and 43 sherds respectively (Barber forthcoming; Barber 2013). This proportion of French imports puts Rye very much in the group of well-connected south coast ports such as Southampton, although to what extent this reflects direct trade, or trade via Winchelsea, is uncertain.

Although the current assemblage has produced some notable groups, they are not large. The earliest assemblage is from pit [54], fill [55], probably dating to the first half of the 13th century. The seven sherds involved are from at least four different cooking pots in sand and flint wares (M3 ×2, M9 and M11).

Well [9] produced 60 and 14 sherds respectively from its upper and lower fills (contexts [10] and [11]). Both fills contained similar pottery, suggesting a deposition date between around 1250–75 and 1350 (Table 3). The low quantities of the earlier 13th-century wares with notable flint inclusions is interesting. However, the sherd that is present (fill [10]) is large and almost certainly contemporary with the finer Rye jugs.

The exact dating of Winchelsea blackware is still not certain, but the presence of both the M7a and M7b shelly variants in [10] clearly indicate they were

common in the late 13th to early 14th centuries. This would certainly be in keeping with the large quantities from New Winchelsea (Orton 2004), although how the fabrics changed through the 14th to 15th centuries remains to be proven. The Rye vessels from the well are dominated by well-made, glazed jugs, decorated with rilling, or applied thumbled strips, under clear or green glazes (Fig. 8, 1). One of the Saintonge jugs also has applied thumbled strips under a bright green glaze, while the other is plain, but with radial incised mark on its base (Fig. 8, 2).

The assemblage from pit [3] is very similar to that from fill [10] of well [9] in many respects, although there is a notable absence of the shelly types of Winchelsea blackware and a few earlier North French imports. The latter two observations are at odds chronologically, but, overall, a slightly earlier deposition date may be implied, perhaps between roughly 1225 and 1300. However, the assemblage is too small to be reliable.

The assemblage from pit [43] is composed entirely of medieval pottery. The group contains a higher proportion of kitchen wares and a total absence of imported jugs. Rye vessels totally dominate the group and include a slightly warped cooking pot (Fig. 8, 3) and two slipped jugs (Fig. 8, 4 and 5).

Catalogue (Fig. 8)

- Jug with thickened rim and oblique applied thumbled strips. Patchy external green glaze. Mid-grey core with dull orange internal and orange/grey external surfaces. M14a Rye. Well [9], fill [10].
- Base of jug with mottled green glaze and incised radial 'spokes' mark on base. M18 Saintonge. Well [9], fill [10].
- Cooking pot with expanded rim. Slightly warped but used/sooted. Dark grey core, brick red margins and dark grey/black surfaces. M14a Rye. Pit [43].
- Jug with bevelled rim. White slip on neck interior and painted-in lines on exterior under a patchy clear glaze. Brick red throughout. M14a Rye. Pit [43].
- Shoulder from jug with clear glazing on neck interior and all over white slip externally on which red slip lines have been painted. M14a Rye. A well-known type imitating contemporary French whitewares (Barton 1979). Pit [43].

Late Medieval (mid/late 14th century to early/mid-16th century)

Although this period is often well represented in other assemblages from the town, the current site produced just eight sherds. This strongly suggests that refuse disposal was negligible between about 1350 to 1375 and 1525 to 1550. This was a prosperous time for Rye, particularly toward the end of this chronological range, when Winchelsea's harbour was suffering. The absence of refuse could be due to the plot remaining vacant after the Black Death or, more likely, the excavated area falling within a building and therefore not being used for waste disposal. Very few contexts are of this period, with the only good contemporary groups coming from made ground and garden soils (contexts [24] and [12] respectively). The fabrics represented are fairly typical for the period, with probable Rye hard-fired sandy wares dominating, accompanied by common Dutch redwares (Table 4). The latter are well known from the area in the 15th to 16th centuries and it is clear trade contact had switched to the Low Countries by this time (Orton 2004; Whittingham 2001).

Table 4: Summary of the Late Medieval fabrics.

Fabric	No. sherds	Weight	Comments
Late Rye sandy ware (LM2a)	2	33g	No identifiable forms
Hard-fired sandy earthenware (Rye) (LM2b)	3	42g	No identifiable forms
Hard-fired earthenware (Rye) (LM2c)	1	12g	No identifiable forms
Dutch redware (LM5)	2	69g	Includes a pipkin

Early Post-medieval (early/mid-16th century to mid-18th century)

As has been the case with previous excavations in Rye, the early post-medieval period is represented by a small but interesting assemblage (Table 5). Although locally produced redwares are well represented, including an example of a probable local copy of Dutch type, most the wares are regional English or imported Continental types.

The Low Countries are still represented with increasing quantities of Rhenish stoneware, a fairly common trait for the period on most sites. However, there is some evidence to suggest a reasonable contact with France during the later 16th to 17th century in the form of fragments from a white-bodied slipware dish. All of the early post-medieval assemblage was recovered from construction debris [23].

Table 5: Summary of the Early Post-medieval fabrics.

Fabric	No. sherds	Weight	Comments
Anglo-Dutch sandy redware (EPMS)	1	7g	No form identified
Fine sandy glazed redware (EPM6)	2	58g	No form identified
English tin-glazed ware (TGW)	7	71g	Charger and plate
Martincamp-type (French) slipware (MART)	2	52g	Dish
Dutch redware (EPM3)	1	14g	No form identified
Frechen stoneware (FREC)	4	234g	Bottles
Westerwald stoneware (WEST)	1	28g	Cobalt blue decorated chamber pot, c. 17th to early 18th
Chinese porcelain (CHPO)	5	17g	Tea bowls

CONCLUSIONS

Although Rye had become a port of some significance by the 12th century (Martin and Martin 2009, 3) and had gained Cinque Ports status by AD 1154–89 (Harris 2009, 15), the excavations at the junction between High Street (a thoroughfare likely established by 1200; *ibid.*, 46) and Lion Street lacked definite archaeological features belonging to the Norman period town. The small quantity of early pottery from the site was in notable contrast to the assemblage from Cinque Ports Street, a location where this period was far better represented (Barber forthcoming), albeit again as residual finds. Nonetheless, investigations at this historic inn revealed important evidence for medieval ‘yard’ activity, as well as a fenced (and possibly ditched) boundary, likely to relate to a medieval burgage plot. Although the evidence was far too fragmentary to be definitive regarding the size of burgage plots within the town, modern plot dimensions, together with the strong correspondence between the medieval boundary and that which separates numbers 96 from 97 High Street, suggest they were laid out in increments of the medieval perch (5–6m).

Later during the site’s history, medieval and post-medieval activity could be associated with structures and building phases known to have occurred there and the development of a Rye street corner could be reconstructed in some detail. This was through a synthesis of below ground archaeology, historic evidence and building recording.

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NOTES

- ¹ Sawyer, S949, *King Cnut to Fécamp Abbey; grant of land at Rammesleah with its port, Sussex.*
- ² *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1364, Edward III, vol.13*, 16. Licence for vintners to buy wine from Gascony in exchange for money and cloth.

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