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C Jane Evans, Paul Booth and Mike Hodder

with contributions from Kirsty Nichol (kiln material) and Kay Hartley (mortaria)

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SITE NARRATIVE

by Paul Booth and Mike Hodder

Introduction

In late August 1987 Mr G Wall, while excavating a hole for a pond in the back garden of his home in Sherifoot Lane, Sutton Coldfield, uncovered a black deposit and a quantity of pottery and clay fragments. These were taken into Birmingham City Museum where they were identified as Roman. As a result of this, the site was visited on 28 August by Mike Hodder (then Sandwell Borough Archaeologist), who identified it as a likely pottery production site. Mr Wall kindly agreed to allow time for more investigation of the site. At first it was thought that his excavation contained a pottery kiln. When it became clear that this was not the case he permitted the excavated area to be considerably enlarged, revealing a kiln, its stokehole and an adjacent pit, all probably of 2nd-century date.

The excavation was carried out by Mike Hodder in conjunction with David Symons and Phil Watson of the City Museum, and Paul Booth (then of Warwickshire Museum), assisted by Pamela Magrill. Owing to other commitments the work was carried out principally at weekends and was completed on 15 September. It was perforce undertaken more swiftly than was ideally desirable, to avoid excessive inconvenience to Mr and Mrs Wall.

Subsequent to the excavation, the finds were washed and marked and a draft site narrative prepared, but there were no resources for detailed analysis of the pottery and the material remained in storage. An assessment of the pottery assemblage and a study of the kiln furniture were carried out in 1997, thanks to funding from Birmingham City Council. Finally, detailed pottery analysis and preparation of this report was begun in 2012, with the support of the Sutton Coldfield Local History Research Group and grant aid from Sutton Coldfield Municipal Charities.

The site: location and sources of raw materials

The site, at SP 1163 9927, is situated at 171m above OD. It lies *c* 0.5km south of the summit of Hill, the highest point in Sutton Coldfield (*c* 174m OD) (Figs 1 and 2).

The solid geology underlying the site is Hopwas Breccia, a pebbly conglomerate, which is overlain by sandy, pebbly glacial drifts derived from it. The immediate subsoil of the site was a fairly loose, clean yellow sand, with little gravel. Where the sand appeared harder or darker, in the bottoms of excavated features, for example, this was probably the result of trampling and/or burning. The glacial drifts are not known to contain clay; the nearest clay source appears to be an outcrop of Red Marl in the valley of a small stream about 1km north-west of the site. There may, however, have been pockets of clay in local drift deposits. The nearest known water supply is the stream mentioned above, but there was presumably a spring or other source nearer the site.

The fuel for the kiln could have been obtained from historically recorded woodland in the vicinity of the former Hill Wood, about 1km to the north-east. It is first mentioned, as *Hillewode*, in 1468 (Anon 1901, 159), recorded as field-names on the Sutton Coldfield Corn Rent Map of 1824–25 (in Sutton Coldfield Reference Library) and marked schematically as a single large area of woodland on Greenwood's *Map of Warwickshire* (1822). The 'traces of charcoal burning' found at Hill Wood when Hill Common was enclosed in the 19th century (Bracken 1860, 116) were presumably burnt areas, which could possibly have been remains of pottery kilns rather than of charcoal burning. The southern edge of Hill Common, as recorded on W Yates and Sons' *Map of Warwickshire* (1793) and the Corn Rent Map, was about 500m north of the kiln site. More of the common may have been wooded in the middle ages and earlier and therefore could have provided fuel for the kiln, but the use of bracken in the kiln structure, as described below, indicates that there was heathland nearby in the Roman period.

The Romano-British context

The site lies some 2.5km south-east of Ryknield Street, the principal north–south Roman road from Metchley to Wall, with Watling Street just over 5.5km to the north at its closest point. However, Hill Village Road, only 80m west of the site, was the main route from Sutton Coldfield to Lichfield until its replacement in the 19th century by a turnpike road further west. It may follow a route that was in use in the Roman period, which might help to explain the location of the kiln (Hodder 2004, 75). Roman pottery kilns have also been found at Perry Barr 10km to the south-west of the site (Hughes 1959) and at Birmingham Road Nurseries to the north (see below) and at Mancetter-Hartshill 18km to the east. The nearest major Roman settlement was that at Wall, some 7.5km distant near the junction of Ryknield Street and Watling Street; and a farmstead site at Shenstone, excavated in the 1930s, lies only 5km distant (Hodgkinson & Chatwin 1944). Since the time of the Sherifoot Lane excavation, archaeological work as part of the construction of the M6 Toll motorway (Powell *et al* 2008; Booth 2008) has considerably enhanced our understanding of the Roman period in the vicinity of the site. To the north, at Birmingham Road Nurseries near Shenstone (M6 Toll site 15), there were a 2nd-century pottery kiln and two joined enclosures containing timber buildings, dating from the middle of the 2nd to the middle of the 3rd century. Excavations at Langley Mill Farm 4.5km to the south-east (M6 Toll Site 29, 'North of Langley Mill') revealed at least five large roughly rectilinear ditched enclosures of mainly mid-2nd- to

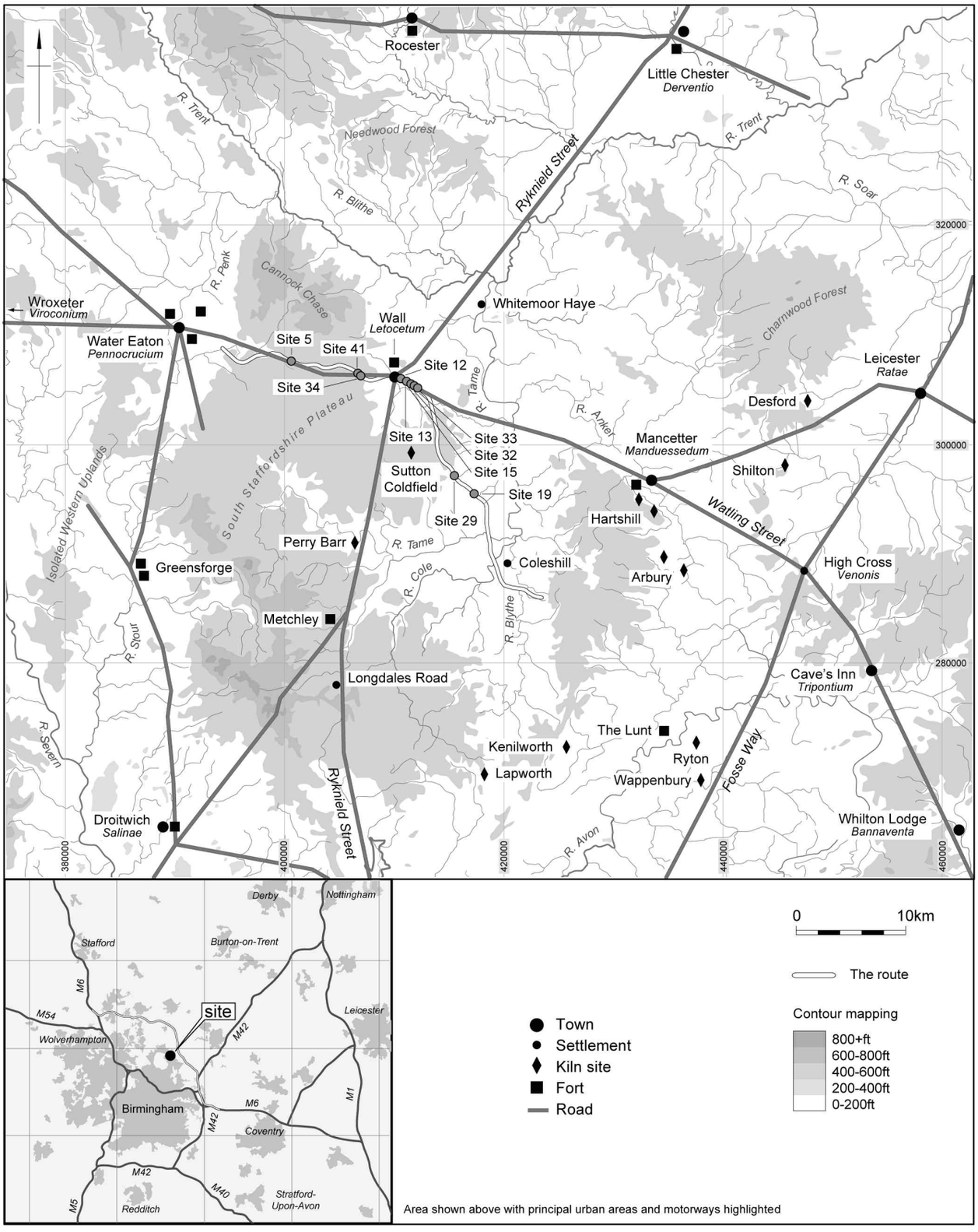

Fig 1 *Site location in relation to modern settlements and to known Romano-British sites in the region, including those examined as part of the M6 Toll motorway construction (based on Powell et al 2008, fig 218).*

Fig 2 *Location of the excavation in Sherifoot Lane*

early 3rd-century date adjacent to an Iron Age enclosed farmstead. The main dwelling in the Roman period seems to have been outside the area excavated. At Wishaw Hall Farm (M6 Toll Site 19), 7km to the south-east, there were Roman enclosures and a droveway, mainly of mid-2nd-century and later date, again succeeding Iron Age features. Fieldwalking has located small but locally significant concentrations of Roman pottery which suggest settlements at Over Green and Wiggins Hill, 8km south-east of Sherifoot Lane (Hodder 2004, 69). A Roman settlement and temple have been excavated at Coleshill to the south-east (Magilton 2006), and at Castle Bromwich, 10km to the south of Sherifoot Lane and overlooking a crossing of the River Tame, there was a Romano-British timber and clay structure with associated pits under the east bailey rampart of the motte-and-bailey castle (Ford 1971).

The excavation

The excavated area was slightly irregular, with maximum dimensions of *c* 4m north–south by 4.2m east–west. Excavation was carried out entirely by hand and was taken down to the top of the sand subsoil over most of the area. Features cutting into the subsoil were completely excavated, except for the clay lining of the oven (Fig 3; Pl I).

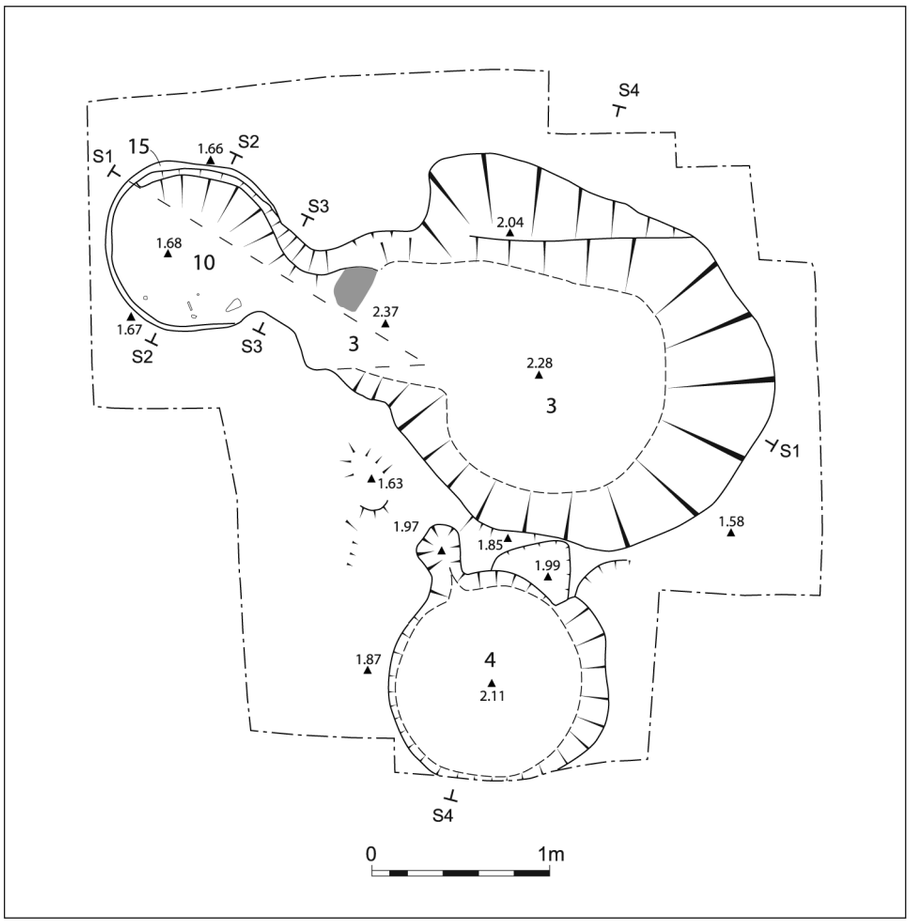

Fig 3 *Plan of features: oven, flue, stokehole (3) and pit (4). The south-west side of the oven and flue were unexcavated at this stage. Levels are below site datum.*

The first feature to be examined was pit 4, the fill of which was the dark layer initially encountered by Mr Wall. On first examination it was thought that this feature might have been part of a kiln, but this proved not to be the case. The pit was almost exactly circular in plan, *c* 1.20–1.25m in diameter and with a maximum depth of 0.6m against the north baulk of the site (elsewhere the upper fill of the pit had been removed by the excavation for Mr Wall's pond). The pit had steeply sloping, almost straight, sides and a flat bottom. Its edges were not immediately well defined as they had been subject to some weathering and slippage. This could have taken place over a fairly short period of time as the sand subsoil was very soft. Apart from a lens of redeposited subsoil round the edge of the pit, the fill was homogeneous and indeed indistinguishable from the upper fill of the adjacent stokehole proper (3). It consisted of black silty loam (Munsell 5YR 2.511) with charcoal and occasional patches of dark reddish brown silty loam (5YR 3/3), sandy loam and small lumps of clay. The most pronounced feature of the fill was the quantity of pottery which it contained (Pl II). This included several substantially complete vessels which appeared to have been placed against the edge of the pit, particularly on the northern side. There were many large sherds in addition to these vessels, including approximately half of a large mortarium.

The kiln

The kiln lay to the south of the pit, aligned approximately east–west with the firing chamber to the east. It consisted of a small, roughly circular firing chamber *c* 0.9m across, a short, narrow flue and a fairly large, irregular stokehole with maximum dimensions of *c* 2.0 x 2.5m, the bottom of which sloped up slightly to the west. The maximum surviving depth of the oven below the top of the sand subsoil was 0.8m. The oven and to a lesser extent the flue contained a fairly complex sequence of deposits which blended into the apparently much more homogeneous fill of the stokehole. The latter presumably consisted of a number of separate deposits, but these were indistinguishable from one another and the existence of different fills could only be inferred at the point at which they interleaved with the oven/flue fills.

Plate I General view after excavation, showing oven, flue, stokehole and pit. Scales 1m.

Plate II Pit 4 partly excavated, showing pottery in situ (see also Fig 5, S4).

The oven consisted of an almost vertical sided sub-circular pit, the sides of which were lined with clay (Fig 4C, Pl III). The clay was not removed in the excavation so the exact diameter of the pit as originally excavated is unknown. The bottom of the oven pit seems not to have been lined with clay and the sand subsoil forming the base of the pit was blackened and burnt. A series of five irregular piers or pilasters were roughly evenly spaced around the edge of the oven (Fig 4A, Pl IV). These features were collectively numbered 21, and were individually numbered 1–5, proceeding clockwise from the north-west corner nearest the flue. Pilaster 21/1 rested on a 'sausage-shaped' lump of unfired clay *c* 0.18m long, analogous to the primary fill layer 20 (see below), and consisted of a large, irregular, fired clay block sloping upwards with a large part of a shaped 'brick' above (see below), with a further block of fired clay, typical of a permanent floor, above that. Pilaster 21/2 was composed of fired clay and fragments of shaped 'bricks', also topped with a remnant of a possible permanent floor. Pilasters 21/3 and 21/4 were both crudely built of irregular pieces of fired clay, while 21/5 was comparable to 21/2, with the upper kiln floor fragment apparently having part of the finished edge of a vent hole. Pilaster 21/3, once the loose fired clay fragments were removed from its top, was clearly more substantial than the others (up to 0.22m long and 0.17m wide), projecting from the back of the oven. The pilasters were generally attached to the kiln wall with clay. In the case of 21/4 this was unfired, whereas the wall surface to which it was attached was partly fired. The sand floor beneath the base of pilaster 21/4 was also burnt, as appears to have been the case with 21/1 as well. Elsewhere the kiln wall behind the pilasters, and the floor beneath them, was unburnt, suggesting that they were, at least in part, original features.

Plate III [film 2 neg 1] Oven and flue showing clay lining and pilasters. Scale 1m.

The primary deposit at the rear (east end) of the oven pit was a thin layer (20) of unfired dark reddish brown clay (*c* 2.5YR 3/4) which directly overlay the burnt sand base of the oven pit (Fig 4D; Fig 5 S1). This deposit partly underlay the base of pilaster 21/4, but did not appear to underlie any of the other pilasters. Layer 20 was sealed by the principal lower fill of both the oven and the flue, layer 11. This was a very dark grey to black clay loam (*c* 7.5 YR 2/0) varying considerably in depth to a maximum of *c* 0.26m and containing numerous fired clay fragments and pottery sherds. The layer extended through the flue and into the stokehole, where it was effectively indistinguishable from the main fill (3).

Within the oven, fill 11 was sealed by layer 19, a deposit of friable clay lumps and pottery sherds in a very dark greyish brown loamy clay matrix (10YR 3/2), which sloped down steeply from the sides and rear wall of the oven. Above this was a layer of stiff red-brown (5YR 4/4) sandy clay (18), filling most of the hollow formed by the sloping profile of layer 11. Resting on 18, and partly integral with the tops of the pilasters, was an arrangement of bricks and fired clay fragments (17), roughly in the form of a double-armed cross, forming a raised oven floor. (Fig 4B, Pl V) The most coherent part of this arrangement was the cross arm linking pilasters 21/1 and 21/5 and the short length of cross stem immediately to the east, both of which were built principally of prefabricated fired clay bricks luted together with clay which had also been fired. The remainder of the cross stem, and the upper (easterly) arm were of brick and fired clay fragments, with no clear evidence that these had been joined with clay. The west end of the cross stem was not apparently attached to any other part of the kiln.

Above the oven floor 17 was a red (l0R 4/3) sandy clay layer (16) which lay across the whole of the oven, filling the back (eastern) part of this almost to the top of the pit, and extended through the flue, but not beyond. A stratigraphically equivalent deposit (14), of dark greyish brown sandy loam, extended from the flue end of 16 into the stokehole, but was only traced in section for a length of *c* 0.5m. Both 16 and 14 were sealed by 13, a blackish (5YR 2.5/1) clay loam with fired clay fragments and pot sherds, which also extended through the oven and flue, being overlaid in the latter area by a further sandy loam deposit (12), identical in character to layer 14. The uppermost fill of the oven and flue areas was a very dark brown (l0YR 2/2) clay loam (10), effectively indistinguishable from the principal stokehole fill (3), although the latter was slightly more mixed, with a silt component and occasional patches of lighter sandy clay.

INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF KILN STRUCTURE

The relatively good state of preservation of the kiln means that a number of aspects of its structure are of interest, in particular the presence of pilasters and the use of prefabricated kiln furniture elements. The evidence is not without its problems, however.

The pilasters appear to have been integral with the construction of the oven walls insofar as the clay of these walls behind the pilasters was for the most part unfired. The only explanation of this which would accommodate the suggestion that the pilasters were secondary would be to assume that the oven had been completely relined, for which there is no good evidence. The pilasters themselves were quite crudely constructed, and some at least appear to have been partly rebuilt. This is the best explanation for the evidence of occasional patches of fired oven wall behind pilaster 21/4, for example, and would also account for the use of brick fragments in pilasters 21/1, 21/2 and 21/5, although it is possible that these could have been reused from an earlier, adjacent kiln and therefore have been incorporated in their broken state in the original kiln structure.

In all cases the uppermost part of the pilasters seemed to consist of a broken fragment of fired clay perhaps indicative of a raised oven floor of permanent type. The fragments were insufficiently large for this to be

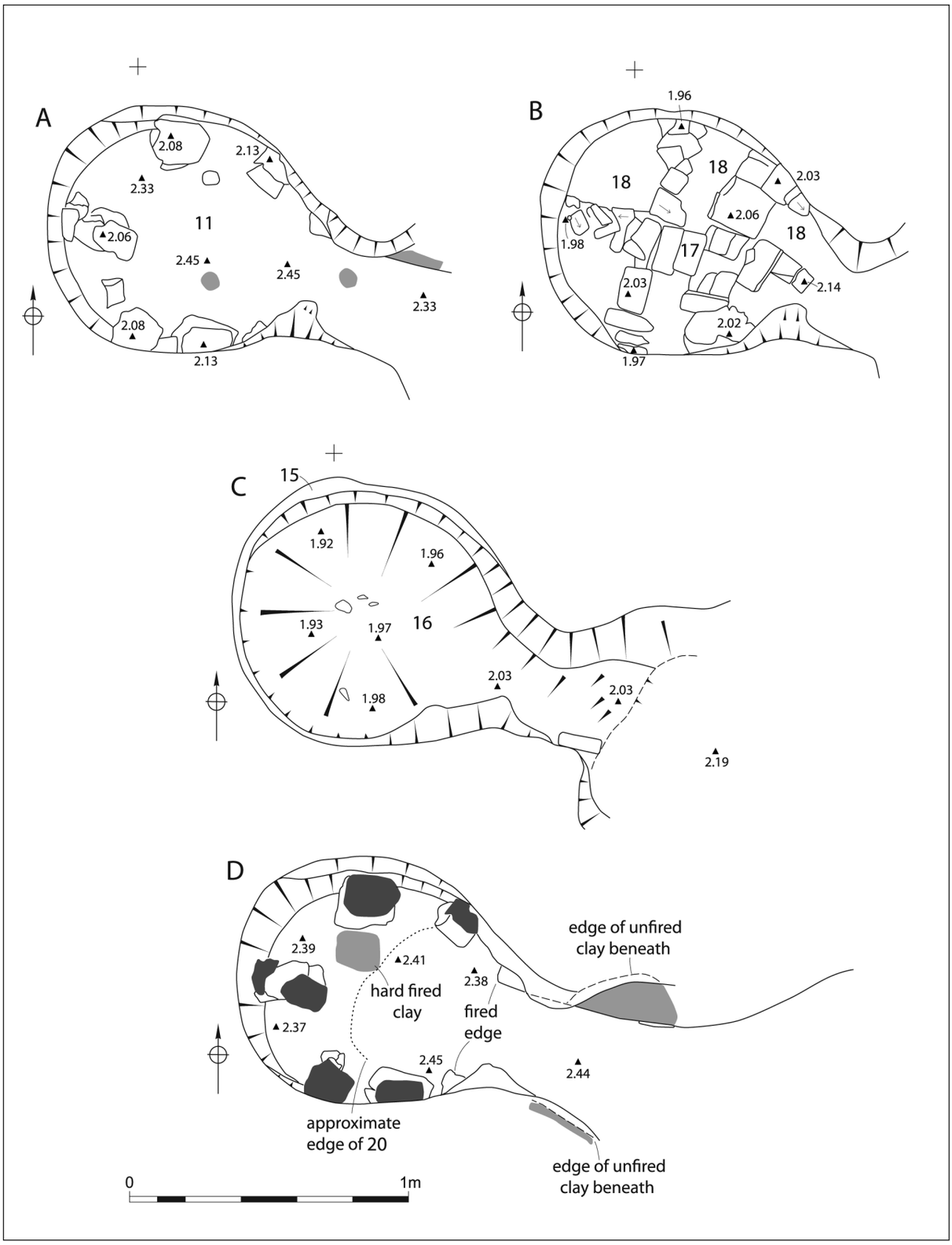

Fig 4 *Plan of the oven and flue at different stages of excavation: A, with pilasters exposed; B, bricks forming oven floor; C, base of oven and flue, with pilasters removed; D, pilasters and oven base Levels are below site datum.*

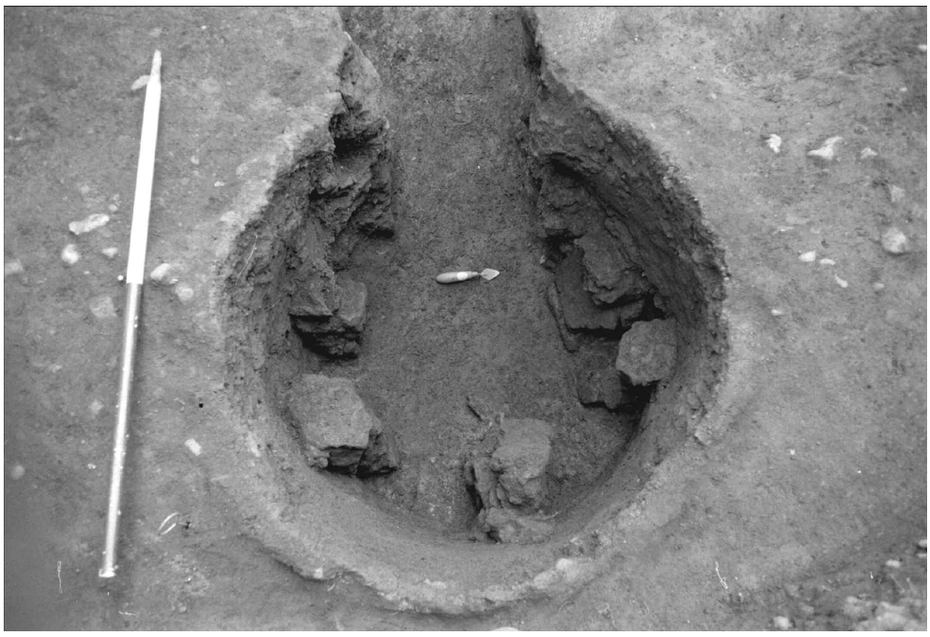

Plate IV Oven showing pilasters and clay lining. Scale 1m.

Plate V Oven showing brick floor. Scale 1m.

certain, but that at the top of pilaster 21/5 seemed to have a finished curved edge suggestive of a vent hole in a permanent floor. In addition, pilaster 21/3 at the rear of the oven was slightly larger than the others, which gave it the appearance of a short tongue pedestal, though not as long as pedestals seen on kilns elsewhere in the region, for example in the 2nd-century Kiln 2 at Tiddington. Such a feature would have been consistent with a permanent raised floor. On balance then, a permanent floor seems likely, though there was no trace of a scar on the kiln walls between the pilasters at the level where a permanent floor should have been.

There are no parallels for such a floor construction amongst the pottery kilns of the region (Booth 1996, fig 14). The only other example in the west midlands of a kiln incorporating pilasters or corbels (and a tongue-pedestal) is from Hartshill, but this is in a distinct late

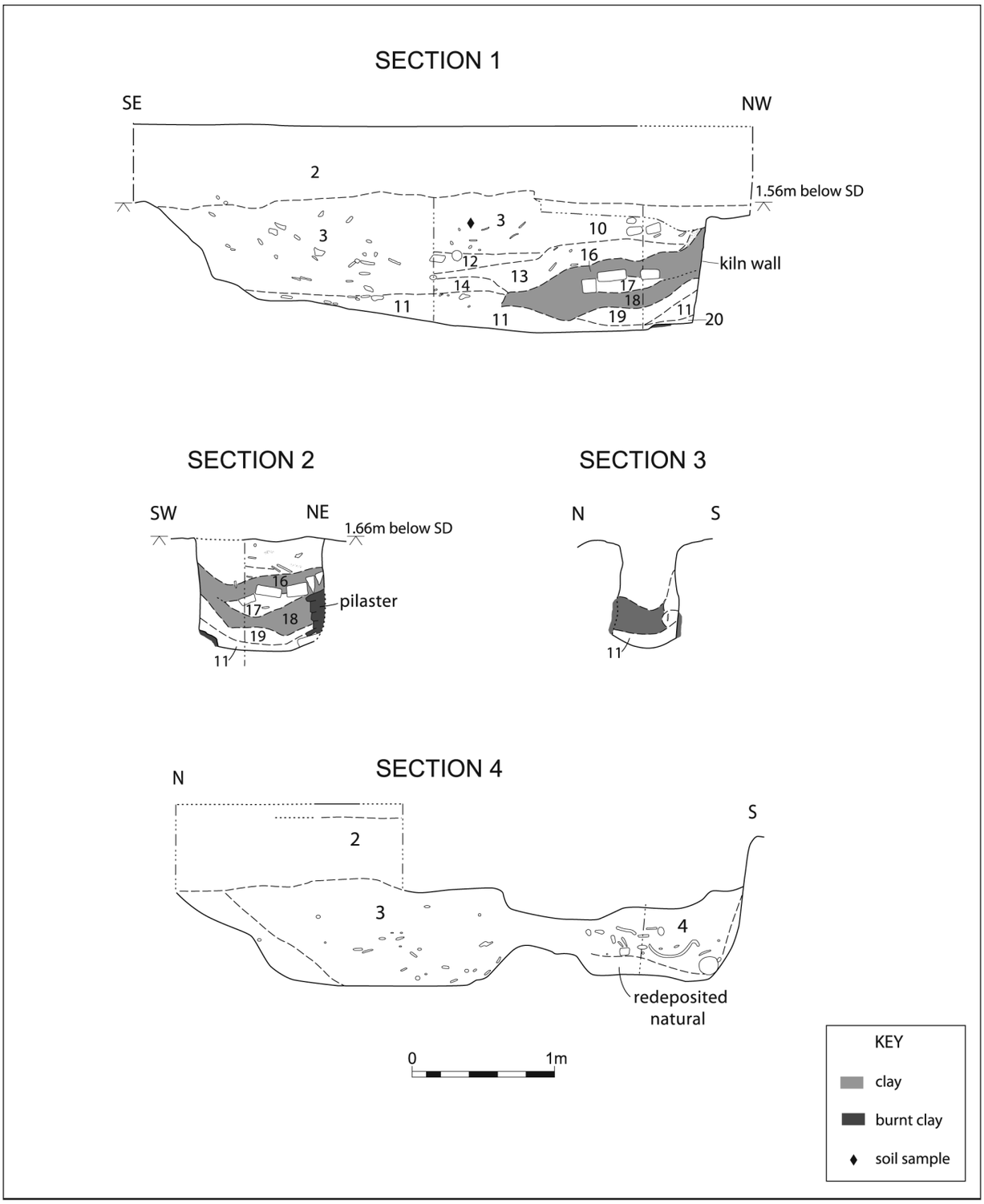

Fig 5 *Sections: S1, stokehole, oven and flue; S2, oven; S3, flue, S4, stokehole and pit.*

Roman tradition imported directly from the Oxford industry by a migrant potter (Bird & Young 1981, 306). Prefabricated elements were important in the 1st-century Kiln 1 at Tiddington, and the use of typical firebars is known at Perry Barr and Mancetter-Hartshill, but these were portable items, and none of these sites parallels either the wedge-shaped bricks or their manner of use. Closer parallels for the form of the bricks can be found in the Colchester kilns, eg in kiln 30 (cf Swan 1984, fig X) and the London, Northgate House 'red' kiln (Seeley & Drummond-Murray 2005, 19–20, fig 24). Most importantly, at both, the transverse ribs formed by slightly tapered blocks supported a solid floor with vent holes. The Colchester kilns differ in that shaped blocks were also used to construct the walls and flue arch (Hull 1963, 35). The Northgate House 'red' kiln is more similar to the Sherifoot Lane kiln; both have oven chambers constructed by digging a sub-circular pit which was then lined with clay.

At Sherifoot Lane the pilasters were presumably intended to support a cross-shaped arrangement of largely brick-built ribs, as excavated. The 'front' (western) end of the cross shaft was probably attached to the front oven wall just above the level of the roof of the flue, but since both wall and flue had collapsed, presumably after the disuse of the kiln (being represented principally by clay deposit 16), the evidence for this has been lost. At the time of the excavation it was not understood how the ribs could have been supported solely by the pilasters, given that there was no evidence for a central pedestal. The answer seems to lie in the form of the 'bricks', which were slightly wedge-shaped in section, thus allowing them to fit together in the manner of voussoirs in an arch. The joints were additionally sealed with clay which then fired hard during the operation of the kiln. It remains the case that, as excavated, the brick ribs were almost flat; was their curvature sufficient to have carried a raised floor? It was certainly substantially less than that shown in the reconstruction of the Northgate House 'red' kiln. Nevertheless, that example seems to offer the best parallel for the likely form of the Sherifoot Lane kiln.

Significantly, in terms of dating the Sherifoot Lane kiln, the Northgate House kiln produced an archaeomagnetic date of AD 100–120, dating its last firing at 68% confidence (Seeley & Drummond-Murray 2005, 20). The dating of the Colchester type kilns is less precise. They have been linked with the imported technology of the closely associated samian ware kilns; the type seems to have originated in the Flavian period, but continued in use for at least a century and a half, and is particularly associated with the second half of the 2nd century (Swan 1984, 92–4).

The evidence for the probable rebuilding of some of the pilasters of the Sherifoot Lane kiln suggests that it was in use for some time. The clay layer 18, and in particular the unfired clay deposit 16 overlying the raised floor, are likely to have resulted from weathering of the walls and flue of the kiln, particularly after it had gone out of use. Fragments of fired clay lining were found detached from the south side of the flue within layer 16, presumably indicating an ongoing process of decay. If this was the case, however, the majority of the fill, particularly of the stokehole which appears to have been stratigraphically above layer 16, may not have related to the use of the kiln at all, but may have consisted of debris derived from the continued firing of an adjacent kiln or kilns. Such debris could have been considerably later in date than the excavated kiln.

THE FINDS

The Romano-British coarse pottery *by C Jane Evans*

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

A total of 5,264 sherds weighing 101.66kg was analysed, with the aim of characterizing and illustrating the kiln products, and making this information available for future comparative studies and research. Only stratified pottery was recorded, with the exception of three unstratified sherds: an unusual rim from Mr Wall's private collection (Fig 10.61) and two mortarium fragments were selected for analysis when the unstratified pottery was scanned. It was not considered that the remaining unstratified sherds would add any significant information to the analysis. The unstratified pottery included some unlabelled bags which contained sherds with no evidence of marking (assumed to have been unstratified on site) and other unlabelled bags containing sherds that were marked but no longer legible. The soft condition of the pottery meant that most sherds were powdery and very abraded. Some bags contained labels suggesting the context, but noting that the original label had decayed in the intervening years.

Data for mean sherd weights are presented in the report below. Where possible, particularly with the near-complete vessels, modern breaks were discounted during quantification. However, the condition of the pottery meant that this was not always practical, particularly with the large number of abraded body sherds. Mean sherd weights will therefore include some modern breaks and will therefore be lowered; this should be taken into consideration when comparing these data with data from other sites. Where more complete vessels are present, vessel size will bias the data; for example a single sherd forming half a mortarium alone weighed 4.028kg.

The pottery was recorded following standard procedures used at Worcestershire Archaeology (WHEAS 2009). A site-specific fabric series was created, cross-referenced with the Warwickshire County series. With the exception of a single sherd of Central Gaulish samian ware, all the pottery was

produced on the site and is not included in the National Roman Fabric Reference Collection (Tomber & Dore 1998). Forms were recorded by broad vessel class (jar, bowl etc) and specific form type. Decoration and evidence for manufacture, use or reuse were recorded where possible. The pottery was generally very abraded, apparently a consequence of soil conditions rather than repeated redeposition, so relatively little evidence for decoration or surface treatment survived; there was enough to characterize these aspects but not for statistical analysis. More detailed information regarding firing was recorded for rims than for body sherds, so that the relationship between firing and form could be analysed. The pottery was quantified by sherd count, weight and rim EVE. Diameters and percentages were not recorded for bases; it was felt that the information to be gained from these data did not justify the additional time required to record them. Data were analysed using Microsoft Access 2000 and Microsoft Excel 2007. The forms produced are illustrated as a form-type series.

The pottery was recorded by Jane Evans and Dennis Williams.

DEPOSITION

The assemblage was recovered from sixteen stratified fills. The largest groups came from the upper fill of the stokehole (3), the associated pit (4) and the overlying garden soil (2). Several near-complete vessels were recovered from the pit (Pls VI and VII; Fig 8.4, 5, 16; Fig 14.48, 41, 46, 47, 52, 53; Fig 17.56; Fig 18.66) along with a number of substantial sherds. This is reflected in the higher mean sherd weight for this group (Table 1). Other relatively large groups came from fills of the oven chamber (8) or attributed to the oven or flue (10, 11).

KILN PRODUCTS: FABRICS AND FIRING

All the pottery was wheelmade and the majority was reduced. Seven local fabric variants were recorded (Tables 2 and 3), though five of these represent a continuum of reduced wares with varying quantities of quartz; finer, coarser, and very coarse (fabrics 1, 2 and 3 respectively). Some sherds also had fine organic inclusions, possibly accidental (recorded as fabrics 1.1 and 2.1). The firing of the reduced wares varied. Some sherds were consistently grey throughout. Others had slightly darker or partially oxidized, brown cores, while others had partially oxidized, brown-grey surfaces and grey cores. These variations presumably reflect periods of reduction interspersed with oxidization during the firing. Given that this is all pottery discarded at the production site, the sherds studied may not represent the intended firing. Many sherds showed evidence of a dark grey slip on external surfaces.

A small proportion of the assemblage was oxidized (Tables 2 and 3). Two fabrics were recorded, separated again on the basis of coarseness. Fabric 4 was a distinctly sandy fabric, while fabric 5 was a finer fabric, similar to Severn Valley ware. These could be products

Plate VI Pottery from pit 4, tankard and bowl.

Plate VII Pottery from pit 4, mortarium.

Table 1 Summary of the pottery assemblage by context

context	count	% count	weight (g)	% weight	average sherd weight	rim EVE	% rim EVE
2	858	16%	17897	18%	21	13.97	21%
3	1867	35%	29384	29%	16	22.07	33%
4	455	9%	16810	17%	37	12.02	18%
6	96	2%	1130	1%	12	0.36	1%
7	93	2%	1106	1%	12	0.97	1%
8	513	10%	8797	9%	17	4.47	7%
9	133	3%	2366	2%	18	1.42	2%
10	293	6%	4965	5%	17	1.34	2%
11	564	11%	10399	10%	18	6.77	10%
12	23	0%	348	0%	15	0	0%
13	95	2%	1351	1%	14	0.43	1%
14	44	1%	759	1%	17	0.23	0%
16	70	1%	1595	2%	23	0.68	1%
17	27	1%	506	0%	19	0.43	1%
18	8	0%	136	0%	17	0	0%
19	122	2%	3939	4%	32	0.74	1%
0	3	0%	170	0%	57	0.14	0%
Total	5264	100%	101658	100%	19	66.04	100%

of a separate, oxidizing firing in the same kiln or could be products of a neighbouring kiln.

Most of the pottery felt soft and powdery, perhaps reflecting the soil conditions (see above), but also suggesting that the pottery was underfired. Only a handful of sherds were recorded as 'overfired' and one as slightly warped. No highly overfired sherds were noted.

Warwickshire fabrics O11, O14, R11 and R18 have been identified as being or including possible Sherifoot Lane products, though the difficulty of distinguishing between fabrics from Mancetter-Hartshill, Perry Barr and Sherifoot Lane has been noted (Booth 2006, 162). Various fabrics recorded from sites on the M6 Toll were also attributed possibly to Sherifoot Lane. Where possible, correlations between fabrics are listed in Table 2 below.

KILN PRODUCTS: FORMS

Based on the evidence from this small excavation, the main products were jars, particularly narrow-mouthed jars, and bowls, though a range of other vessel types were also produced (Fig 6). These are illustrated and discussed below by vessel class. In addition to reference to regional parallels in the usual way, use has also been made of an unpublished type series of coarse ware products of the Mancetter-Hartshill industry held by Warwickshire Museum. References to Mancetter-Hartshill types without further published identification are to this type series.

The relationship between fabric and vessel class was analysed (Fig 7) to assess any correlations that might reflect deliberate choice on the part of the potter.

Flagons (Fig 8.1–3)

Only a few flagons were recovered, produced in reduced fabrics 1 and 2. The finer variant (fabric 1) was

Table 2 Fabric descriptions

fabric group	fabric name	fabric code	description	parallels
Reduced	fine	1	micaceous fabric with sparse, ill-sorted, sub-rounded, white and clear quartz <0.5mm. May have sparse, rounded soft white or brown inclusions <0.5mm.	Leary 2008, 469, fabric R7 (Warwickshire R01, R11?)
	fine & organic	1.1	similar but with moderate, ill-sorted, black organic inclusions	Leary 2008, 469, fabric R11, R15 (Warwickshire R18, R44, O14)
	coarse	2	micaceous fabric with moderate to abundant, ill-sorted, sub-rounded, white and clear quartz <0.5mm. May have sparse, rounded soft white or brown inclusions <0.5mm. The matrix can be vesicular, possibly the result of poor wedging.	Leary 2008, 470 fabric R28 (Warwickshire O14)
	coarse & organic	2.1	similar but with moderate, ill-sorted, black organic inclusions	R11
	very coarse	3	similar but with abundant quartz	
Oxidised	coarse	4	similar to fabric 2 but oxidized. The quartz can look slightly pink	Leary 2008, 468 fabric O6 (Warwickshire O11)
	fine (SV type)	5	micaceous, oxidized fabric with moderate, well sorted, silt sized quartz and sparse, sub-rounded, white and clear quartz <0.5mm. May have sparse, rounded soft white or brown inclusions <0.5mm.	Leary 2008, 468 fabric O2? (Warwickshire O11)
Imported fine ware	CG Lezoux samian	LEZ SA 2		

Table 3 Summary of the pottery assemblage by fabric

fabric type	fabric code	count	% count	weight (g)	% weight	average sherd weight	rim EVE	% rim EVE
Reduced local	1	280	5%	6779	7%	24	18.01	27%
	1.1	28	1%	739	1%	26	2.25	3%
	2	3514	67%	68843	68%	20	36.39	55%
	2.1	149	3%	3640	4%	24	3.48	5%
	3	994	19%	17274	17%	17	2.88	4%
Oxidised local	4	297	6%	4351	4%	15	2.86	4%
	5	1	0%	19	0%	19	0.14	0%
Samian	LEZ SA 2	1	0%	13	0%	13	0.03	0%
Total		5264	100%	101658	100%	19	66.04	100%

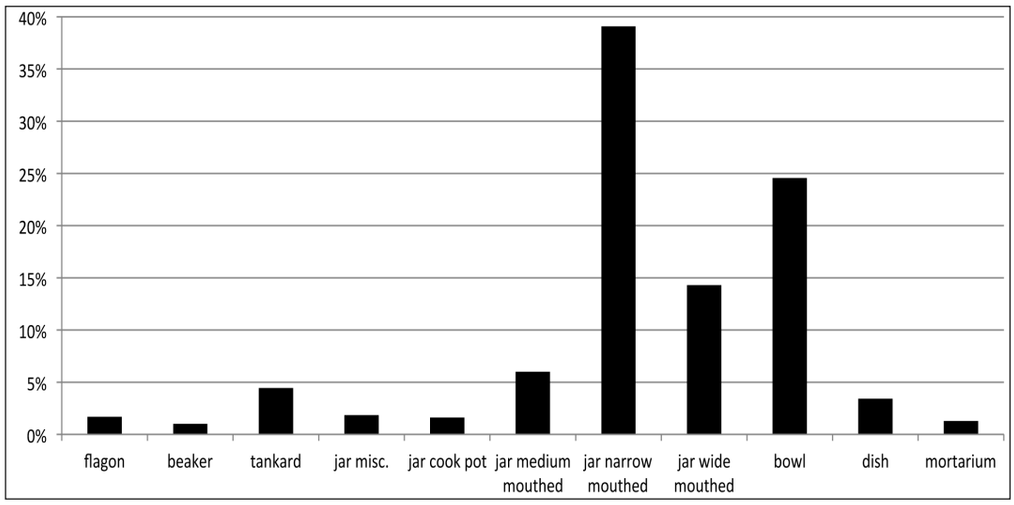

Fig 6 *Summary of the pottery by vessel class (% rim EVE)*

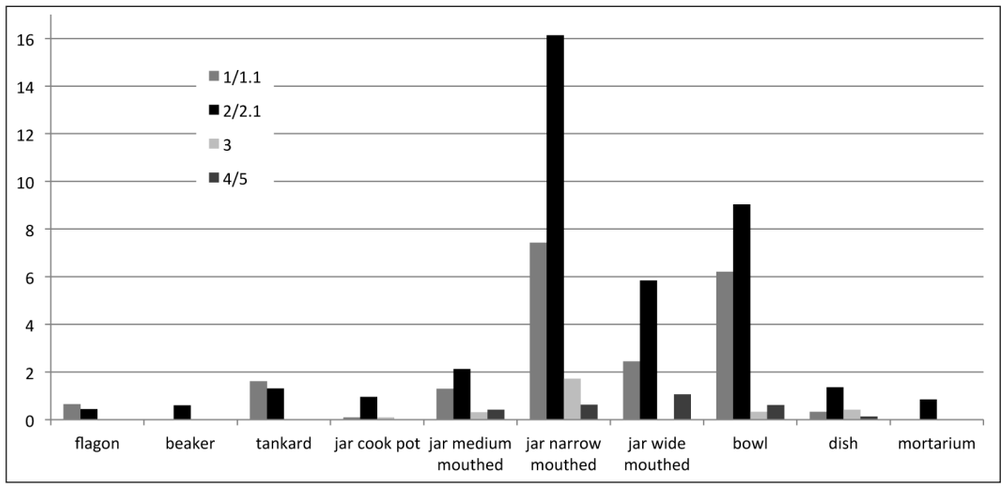

Fig 7 *Vessel classes by fabric group (rim EVE)*

slightly more common (64% of all flagons by rim EVE). A couple of examples had evidence of a dark grey or brown slip. No obvious parallels with forms from Mancetter-Hartshill have been identified by this author.

1 Grooved, collared flagon. A similar rim is illustrated from the Hadrianic/Antonine, period 2 assemblage at Wroxeter (Timby *et al* 2000, fig 4.49, F2.51). Fabric 1. Diam 12cm (18%). Upper fill of stokehole, context 3. Database Rec 99.

2 Grooved, collared flagon. Abraded, but hints of a dark grey slip survive in grooves on the rim. Fabric 1. Diam 14cm (20%). Upper fill of stokehole, context 3. Database Rec 133.

3 Flagon or jug with grooved or 'pulley' rim. A similar form, in a grey ware fabric, is illustrated from Wall (Round 1992, fig 17.107). This form was also produced in Severn Valley Ware, though it is not one of the more typical forms (eg Barfield 2006, fig 103.357). Fabric 2. Diam 12cm (18%). Upper fill of stokehole, context 3. Database Rec 188.

Tankards (Fig 8.4–6)

Tankards are a typical Severn Valley ware form (Webster 1976), but also occur amongst the products of a number of other industries, including Mancetter-Hartshill, North Wiltshire and an unsourced 'West Oxfordshire' industry. Although a fairly minor component of the overall assemblage, they were well represented in the pit group (context 4), with two near-complete examples (19% of the group by rim EVE). Even this percentage, however, is lower than at the Perry Barr kiln site where tankards made up between a quarter and half of the wasters found (Webster 1959, fig 3, 1–3). At Sherifoot Lane, tankards occurred more commonly in the finer fabrics (1 and 1.1; 64% of all

Table 4 Dimensions of near complete tankards

height (cm)	radius rim (cm)	radius base (cm)	capacity (litres)
11.8	7	5.5	1.46
13	7.5	5.5	1.74

tankards by rim EVE), and were not made in the coarsest fabric (3). It may be that the potters were emulating the finer Severn Valley fabrics in this respect, though no oxidized examples were recorded. In addition to the two examples illustrated below, there were individual examples with a groove demarcating the rim, or with a plain rim. Where decoration survived, this comprised a band of pattern burnish (Fig 8.4, 5) or hints of a dark grey slip.

Similarities were noted between the handles of tankards made at Sherifoot Lane and those made at Mancetter-Hartshill (Booth 1986, 24), these tankards having more u-shaped sections than the standard Severn Valley type. The Sherifoot Lane tankards had rim diameters of 14cm (21%), 15cm (49%), 16cm (27%) and 18 cm (4%). For comparison, at Alcester the larger tankards had diameters averaging 15.7cm (also the mean average at the Malvern, Newland Hopfields kiln) and the smaller

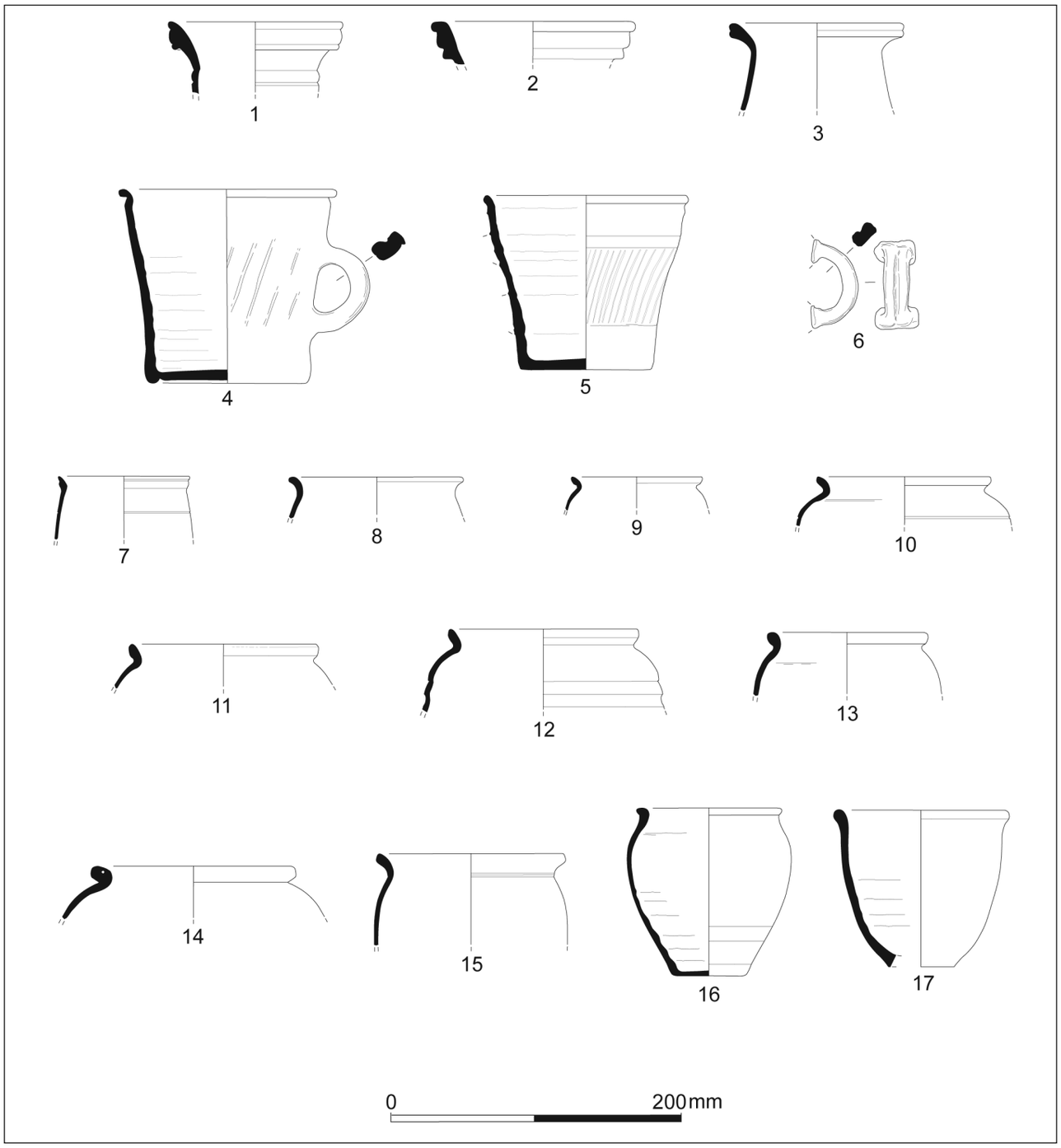

Fig 8 Flagons (1–3), tankards (4–6), beakers (7) and medium mouthed jars (8–17)

tankards 10.7cm (*et al* 1994, fiche M2:C12; Evans *et al* 2000, 24). A more meaningful measure of size, in terms of its use, is vessel capacity. It was only possible to record all the dimensions necessary to calculate this for two tankards from Sherifoot Lane, both from pit 4 (Table 4). This still provides useful comparative data. The tankards produced at Perry Barr were thought to have a capacity of a quart, or 1.14 litres (Webster 1959, 37). The tankards from Alcester ranged from a capacity of 0.28–0.62 litres to larger vessels holding 1.19–1.59 litres. These two Sherifoot Lane tankards are in the larger category, which, at Alcester, were interpreted as measures, rather than drinking vessels (Lee *et al* 1994, 10). They are not as large as some of the tankards produced at the Newlands Hopfields kiln, however, which had capacities of up to 2.56 litres (Evans *et al* 2000, table 7).

4 Tankard with near-upright walls, a type dated by Webster broadly to the 2nd to 3rd centuries (Webster 1976, fig 7, 40–41). Decorated with a band of oblique burnished lines, and with a tooled groove on the base. Fabric 2. Diam 15cm (95%). Pit, context 4. Database Rec 127. Total rim EVE 1.09.

5 Tankard with slightly splayed walls, a type broadly dated by Webster to the 2nd or later 2nd to 3rd centuries (Webster 1976, fig 7, 42–43) and similar to the vessels produced at Perry Barr, where production was dated by Webster to the second half of the 2nd century (Webster 1959, fig 3, 1–3). Decorated with a band of oblique burnished lines and with a flat base. Fabric 1. Diam 14cm (53%). Pit, context 4. Database Rec 77. Total rim EVE 1.69.

6 Strap handle from a tankard. Fabric 2. Oven chamber, context 8. Database Rec 445.

Beakers (Fig 8.7)

Only four rims were identified as coming from beakers, although some of the smaller medium-mouthed jars included below could perhaps be classified as such. All fragments came from bag-shaped beakers with cornice rims, similar to the example illustrated. A couple of sherds showed evidence of a dark brown or grey slip. The beakers came from the stokehole fill (context 3) and garden soil (context 2).

7 Beaker with cornice rim. Fabric 2. Diam 9cm (13%). Upper fill of stokehole, context 3. Database Rec 107. Total rim EVE 0.60.

Jars

Jars were the most common vessel type produced. These could be divided into medium-mouthed jars, narrow-mouthed jars and wide-mouthed jars, reflected in the range of diameters recorded (Fig 9).

Medium-mouthed jars (Fig 8.8–17)

Medium-mouthed jars, with short, everted rims, were the least common group recovered. Diameters for these ranged between 9 and 16cm. Some of the smaller examples could perhaps be classified as beakers. These jars were most commonly produced in the coarser fabric (2/2.1). Similar forms are illustrated in the unpublished archive for the Mancetter-Hartshill kilns.

8 Fabric 3. Diam 12cm (5%).Upper fill of stokehole, context 3. Database Rec 273. Total rim EVE 0.17.

9 Fabric 2. Diam 9cm (19%). Upper fill of stokehole, context 3. Database Rec 97. Total rim EVE 0.19.

10 A similar form is illustrated from the kiln site at Perry Barr (Webster 1959, fig 3.9). Fabric 2.1. Diam 12cm (18%). Upper fill of stokehole, context 3. Database Rec 103. Total rim EVE 0.80.

11 Similar forms, in fabric R11, are illustrated from nearby Coleshill (Booth 2006, fig 46.125, fig 53.309 and 310). Fabric 2. Diam 13cm (10%). Upper fill of stokehole, context 3. Database Rec 271. Total rim EVE 1.09.

12 A similar form, in fabric R11, is illustrated from Coleshill (Booth 2006, fig 45.77). Fabric 1. Diam 13cm (20%). Pit, context 4. Database Rec 115. Total rim EVE 0.20.

13 Fabric 1. Diam 11cm (24%). Upper fill of stokehole, context 3. Archive form no. JMB1.01. Database Rec 101. Total rim EVE 0.24.

14 Fabric 4. Diam 14cm (13%). Pit, context 4. Database Rec 93. Total rim EVE 0.13.

15 Fabric 1. Diam 13cm (34%). Overlying garden soil, context 2. Database Rec 87. Total rim EVE 0.34.

16 Fabric 2. Diam 10cm (53%). Pit, context 4. Database Rec 122. Total rim EVE 0.95.

17 Fabric 2.1. Diam 12cm (21%).Upper fill of stokehole, context 3. Database Rec 136. Total rim EVE 0.21.

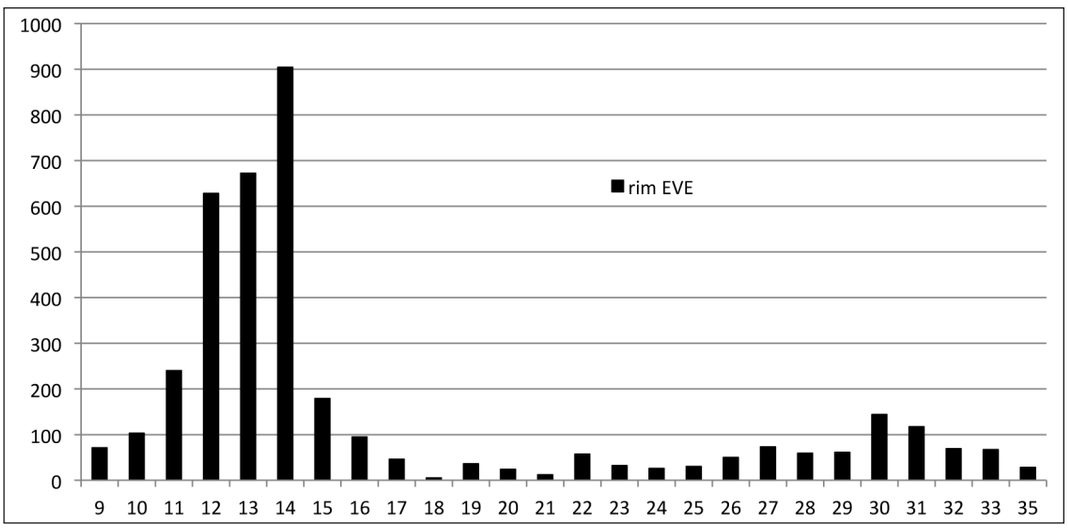

Fig 9 *Diameters (in cm) for jars (rim EVE)*

Narrow-mouthed jars (Fig 10.18–28)

Jars with narrow, constricted mouths were the single most common type found on the site (Fig 6), produced predominantly in the coarser fabrics 2/2.1 (Fig 7). Diameters ranged mainly between 9 and 15cm, with 14cm the most common size. Most had thickened, often angular, rims (Fig 10.18–24, 28; 34% of all vessels by rim EVE), though some had slightly overhanging (Fig 10.25–26; 1%) or 'pulley' rims (Fig 10.27; 4%). These are all consistent with a 2nd-century date; similar forms were common at the Newland Hopfields kiln in Worcestershire, dated to the mid- to late 2nd century (Evans *et al* 2000, fig 21, type 1; 70). Similar jars with thickened rims were made at Mancetter-Hartshill, in fabric R11, and are also illustrated from Coleshill (Booth 2006, fig 46.115) and Wall (Round 1992, fig 15.35; fig 16.94).

Very little evidence for decoration survived. One vessel (Fig 10.22) showed traces of a band of burnished decoration on the shoulder, which may originally have been present on the other, more abraded jars. Occasional sherds had shoulder cordons, and there was also evidence of a dark grey slip on a handful of sherds.

Angular thickened rims (Total rim EVE 22.12)

18 Fabric 2.1. Diam 10cm (21%).Upper fill of stokehole, context 3. Database Rec 91.
19 Fabric 1. Diam 15cm (28%).Upper fill of stokehole, context 3. Database Rec 172.
20 Fabric 2. Diam 14cm (23%). Upper fill of stokehole, context 3. Database Rec 175.
21 Fabric 1. Diam 14cm (43%). Upper fill of stokehole, context 3. Database Rec 170.
22 With a band of burnished decoration on the shoulder. A similar jar is published from Wall in 'greenish-grey' fabric with darker surfaces (Round 1992, fig 15.35). Fabric 1. Diam 15cm (28%). Upper fill of stokehole, context 3. Database Rec 172.
23 Fabric 2. Diam 13cm (41%). Sandy clay layer 16. Database Rec 435.
24 Fabric 2. Diam 13cm (9%). Upper fill of stokehole, context 3. Archive form no. JNA19.11. Database Rec 191.
25 Fabric 1. Diam 14cm (46%).Upper fill of stokehole, context 3. Database Rec 187.
26 Fabric 2. Diam 15cm (100%). Garden soil, context 2. Database Rec 338.

Overhanging rims (total rim EVE 0.99)

27 Fabric 1. Diam 14cm (28%). Lower fill of oven and flue, context 11. Database Rec 507.

Slight 'pulley' rim (total rim EVE 2.74).

28 With a slight 'pulley' rim. A similar vessel is illustrated from Ryknield Street, Wall (Leary 2008, fig 89.47). Fabric 1. Diam 14cm (31%). Upper fill of stokehole, context 3. Database Rec 184.

Wide-mouthed jars (Fig 11.29–35)

Wide-mouthed jars were fairly common (Fig 6). They mainly occurred in the coarser fabrics 2/2.1 (Fig 7), though an oxidized example (Fig 11.34) is very similar to Severn Valley ware types. All had fairly upright necks. A range of sizes was noted, with rim diameters ranging between 16 and 35cm. Most, however, had larger diameters of between 26 and 33cm, with 30cm and 31cm being the most common sizes. Very little evidence for decoration survived, though a handful showed traces of a dark grey slip. Parallels for these vessels can be seen in the late 2nd-century Shenstone kiln assemblage (Leary 2008, fig 124.29–21, fig 125.34, 36, 37–8); a kiln dated to *c* AD 160–300 at Mancetter Hartshill (Hemsley 1959, fig 7.78); and in the Severn Valley, at the Newland Hopfields kiln dated from the mid 2nd to 3rd century (Evans *et al* 2000, fig 23, type 2, 32).

Thickened rims (total rim EVE 6.44)

29 Fabric 2. Diam 17cm (20%). Oven chamber, context 8. Database Rec 108.
30 Fabric 2.1. Diam 21cm (12%). Oven chamber, context 8. Database Rec 90.
31 Fabric 2. Diam 19cm (18%). Oven chamber, context 8. Database Rec 81.
32 With a grooved rim. Similar vessels are illustrated from the late 2nd century kiln at Shenstone, in fabrics R2 and R4 (Leary 2008, fig 124.30, 31; fig 125.37; 258), but also from early–mid 2nd century deposits at Hammerwich (op cit fig 57.7). Fabric 2.1. Diam 31cm (9%). Upper fill of stokehole, context 3. Database Rec 243.
33 Fabric 2. Diam 31cm (47%). Upper fill of stokehole, context 3. Database Rec 106.

Overhanging rims (total rim EVE 1.68)

34 Fabric 4. Diam 30cm (62%). Garden soil, context 2. Database Rec 162 & 163.
35 Fabric 2. Diam 22cm (6%). Upper fill of stokehole, context 3. Database Rec 84.

Bowls

Bowls were the second most common vessel class produced (Fig 6). Most were in the coarser fabrics 2/2.1, though the proportion of bowls in the finer fabrics 1/1.1 was also relatively high (Fig 7). A range of different bowl types was represented (Fig 12) in a variety of sizes (Fig 13). Where surfaces survived, there was evidence for some rouletted decoration (eg Fig 14.41, 50) and the use of a dark grey slip. Bases were finished by being tooled.

Small bowls with beaded, everted or thickened rims (Fig 14.36–40).

These represented about 5% of the entire assemblage by rim EVE. They occurred mainly in fabric 2/2.1 (68% of all examples by rim EVE), with a small number (9%) in the coarsest fabric (3). They most commonly had diameters of between 13 and 16cm (Fig 15). The form, and size range, is reminiscent of Severn Valley ware types produced at Newlands Hopfields (Evans *et al* 2000, fig 15, bowls, dishes and platters; fig 29, type 4.1). This is not a type found in the Shenstone kiln, but similar bowls are published from Coleshill (Booth 2006, fig 49.210, fabric R18, 211, fabric R11). Some showed evidence of a dark grey slip but no other decoration was recorded. They came mainly from the fill of the stokehole and the lower fill of the oven and flue (context 3, 2.71 rim EVE; context 11, 1.06 rim EVE).

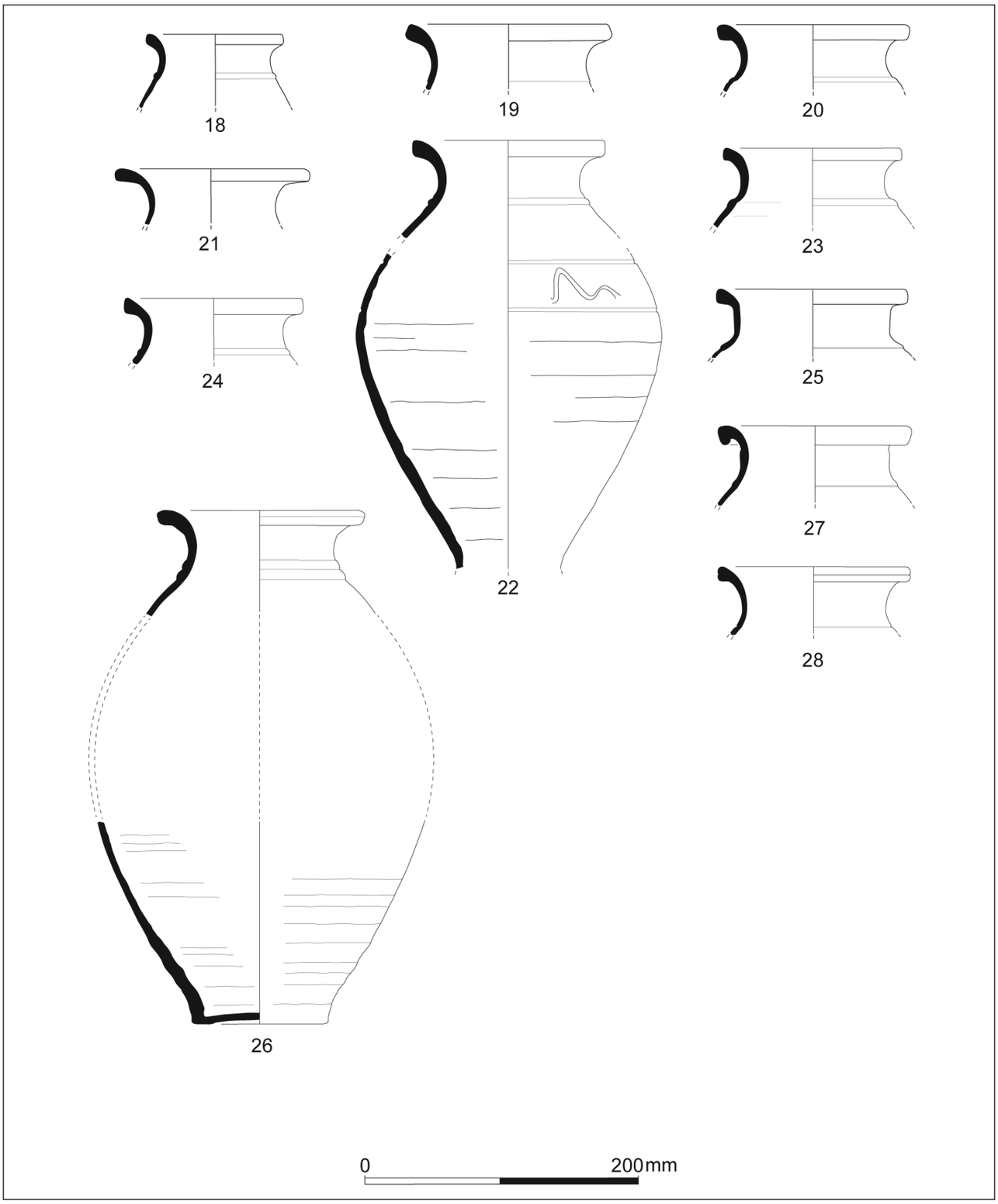

Fig 10 *Narrow-mouthed jars*

36 Bead rim. Fabric 2. Diam 14cm (10%). Upper fill of stokehole, context 3. Database Rec 104. Total rim EVE 0.12.

37 Bead rim. Fabric 2. Diam 11cm (22%). Upper fill of hole, context 3. Database Rec 135. Total rim EVE 2.99.

38 Bead rim. Fabric 1. Diam 16cm (26%). Pit, context 4. Database Rec 79. Total rim EVE 0.36.

39 Thickened, upright rim. Fabric 2.1. Diam 13cm (14%). Pit, context 4. Database Rec 80. Total rim EVE 0.27.

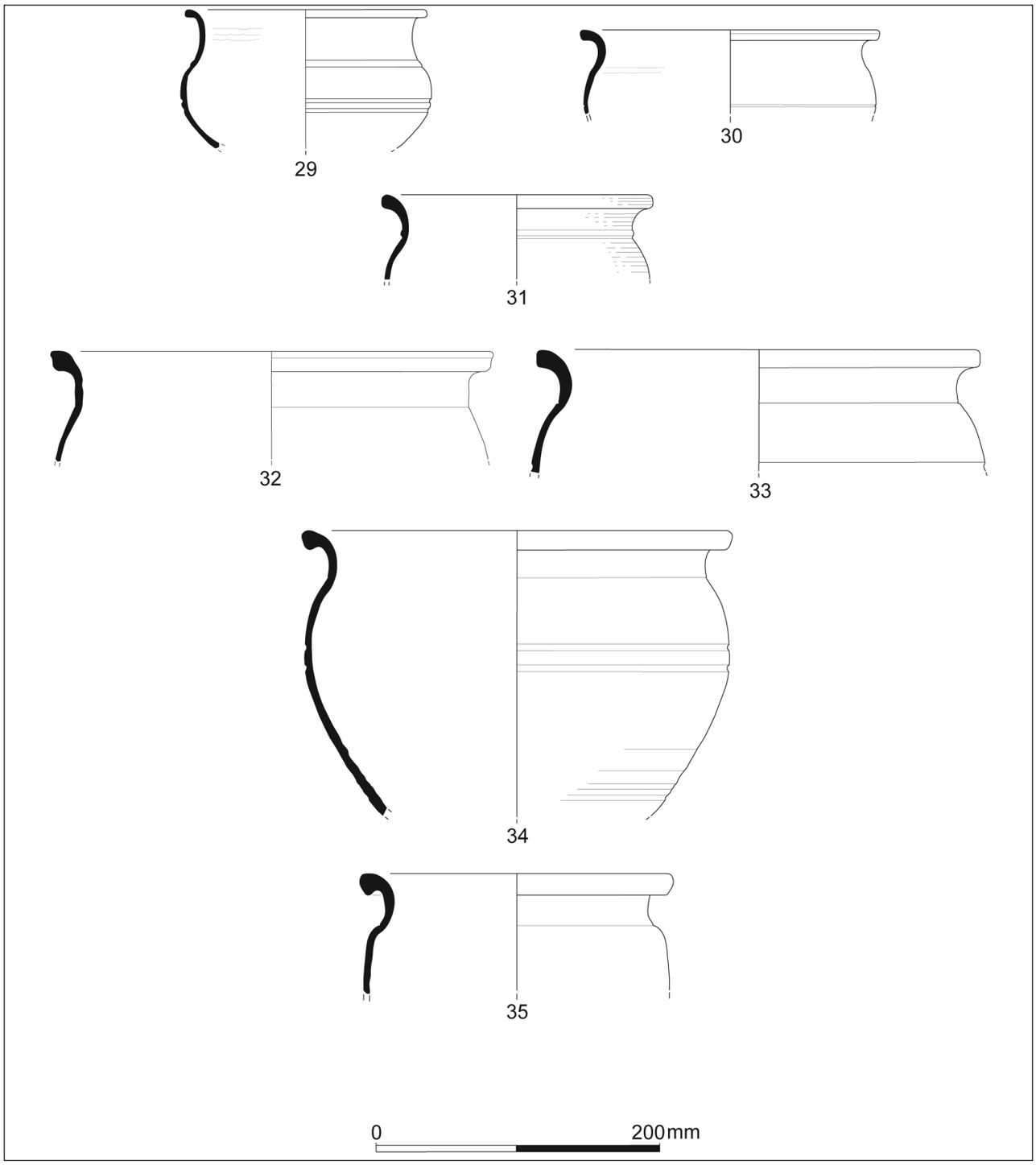

Fig 11 Wide-mouthed jars

40 Thickened, upright rim. Fabric 2. Diam 14cm (15%). Upper fill of stokehole, context 3. Database Rec 94. Total rim EVE 1.22.

Carinated bowls, possibly derived from Late Iron Age traditions (Fig 14.41–2). Total rim EVE 0.39

The overall shape of these vessels suggests they may have derived from carinated bowls with cordons in the Late Iron Age tradition, rather than from Drag 44/Wa81 samian types (Gwladys Monteil, pers comm).

Two cordoned/carinated bowls from Coleshill were attributed to the Sherifoot Lane kiln on the basis of fabric (Booth 2006, fig 49.197, 198), though these are perhaps more similar to Drag 44 types. At Sherifoot

Lane these bowls occurred in the coarser fabric (2), and diameters ranged from 14–24cm. A couple of fragments had remains of a dark grey or brown slip. They came from the stokehole fill, the associated pit and the lower fill of the oven/ flue (contexts 3, 4, and 11).

41 Bowl with an everted rim and a pushed out carination. The best parallel, with a pushed out cordon, comes from Wall (Gould 1966–7, fig 16.184), from a drainage ditch parallel to Watling Street. This is in a light grey fabric with traces of black on the exterior. A variety of bowls with cordons are published from other excavations, for example from Coleshill, in fabric R18 (Booth 2006, fig 49.197), from excavations between Shenstone and Wall (Gould 1964–5, fig 8.20), and in the unpublished assemblage from Mancetter-Hartshill. Fabric 2. Diam 20cm (23%). Pit, context 4. Database Rec 92. Total rim EVE 0.31.

42 Upper part of a bowl with an out-curving rim, which looks to be from a carinated form. Possibly related to number 41 above. Fabric 2. Diam 21cm (8%). Upper fill of stokehole, context 3. Database Rec 119. Total rim EVE 0.08 .

Carinated bowl with an out-curving or bead rim (Fig 14.43–4)

43 Bowl with a pushed out cordon, decorated with rouletting. The form has affinities with earlier 'Belgic' types found in the region, see for example at Wall (Gould 1966–7, fig 11.19). A similar vessel is illustrated from Verulamium, from a deposit dated AD 150–155/160 (Wilson 1972, fig 127.946). Fabric 1. Diam 16cm (10%). Lower fill of oven and flue, context 11. Database Rec 453. Total rim EVE 0.21.

44 Short profile from a necked bowl. A similar form produced at Holt, is dated to the late 1st to early 2nd century (Grimes 1930, fig 66.92). Examples of this form found at Coleshill are identified as Sherifoot Lane products (Booth 2006, fig 57.393–4), and similar vessels occur in early 2nd century contexts at Wroxeter (Timby *et al* 2000, fig 4.64, B3.21). Fabric 2. Diam 14cm (22%). Uppermost fill of oven and flue, context 10. Database Rec 128. Total rim EVE 0.41.

Carinated bowls derived from Dragendorff 29 (Fig 14.45–52)

These were the most common bowls, and the most characteristic product of the kiln. They had a variety of rims, but bowls with bifid or 'pulley' rims (Fig 14.45–8) were the single most common type, representing 11% of the whole assemblage by rim EVE. The different types are discussed below. Half of these carinated bowls were made in the coarser fabric (2/2.1; 50% of all examples), but examples in the finer fabrics were also well represented (1/1.1; 45%), along with a few in the oxidized fabric (4). They came in a range of sizes, centred around 20-22cm. Three near-complete examples (Fig 14.46, 47, 52) came from the pit associated with the kiln (context 4, 2.91 rim EVE), with other examples coming mainly from the fills of the stokehole, oven and flue (contexts 3 and 10; 3.0 rim EVE) and garden soil (context 2, 1.45 rim EVE).

Carinated bowl with bifid or 'pulley' rim

Similar bowls from Coleshill are identified as a characteristic Sherifoot Lane product, based on their fabric and the absence of this particular rim form on bowls from Mancetter Hartshill. They are found there in secure late Antonine contexts (Booth 2006, 162, fig 49.193–95, fig 52.275). Examples from Ryknield Street, Wall were also thought to be from the Sherifoot Lane kiln (Leary 2008, 153). Leary suggests a date for these centring on the mid-2nd century, but extending into the late 2nd, based on evidence from Coleshill, Tiddington, Derby and Wall (*op cit* 153, 155). Booth and Leary's dating corresponds with Gillam, who dates examples in the north to *c* AD 160–200 (Gillam 1970, fig 23.212). However, this form is also characteristic of Flavian to Trajanic assemblages. A similar bowl, though with a less angular profile, was produced at a Trajanic kiln complex near Little Chester (Brassington 1971, fig 5.15), and the form is found in early 2nd-century contexts at Wroxeter (Timby *et al* 2000, fig 4.64 B3.33; Faiers 1990, 82, no 76) and Wall (Ball & Ball 1983–4, fig 13.2). The type is also included amongst the late 1st- to early 2nd-century bowls produced at Holt (Grimes 1930, fig 66.94).

A number of examples had surviving patches of dark grey slip and burnishing, but there was no evidence for rouletting associated with this form. Total rim EVE 7.05.

45 Fabric 2. Diam 20cm (13%). Upper fill of stokehole, context 3. Database Rec 208.

46 Fabric 2.1. Diam 20cm (23%). Pit, context 4. Database Rec 85.

47 Fabric 1. Fabric 1. Diam 22cm (90%). Pit, context 4. Database Rec 165.

48 Slight 'pulley' rim, burnished; similar to an example from Ryknield Street, Wall (Leary 2008, fig 89.56). See above. Fabric 2. Diam 20cm (12%). Upper fill of stokehole, context 3. Database Rec 266. Total rim EVE 0.39.

Carinated bowl with an angular bead rim

49 With a dark grey slip. Fabric 1.1. Diam 18cm (8%). Pit, context 4. Database Rec 422. Total rim EVE 0.52.

Carinated bowl with a flared wall and moulded rim

The coarse ware origins of this type can be seen, for example, in the 1st-century military assemblage from Wroxeter (Darling 2002, fig 5.31, 78.1; Timby *et al* 2000, fig 4.64 B1.11). At Wroxeter, a range of carinated bowls continued to be produced into the 2nd century; a reduced ware example is illustrated from an early 2nd-century context (Timby *et al* 2000, fig 4.64, B3.32; Faiers 1990, 85, no 140). A similar form is illustrated from Coleshill, in fabric R11 (Booth 2006, fig 49.195).

50 Decorated with rouletting. Fabric 1. Diam 23cm (36%). Garden soil, context 2. Database Rec 140. Total rim EVE 0.73.

Carinated bowl with a slightly cupped, moulded rim

A similar form was produced at the Trajanic kiln complex near Little Chester (Brassington 1971, fig 6.21). Examples from the north are dated by Gillam to AD 70–100 (Gillam 1970, fig 62.193). At Wroxeter this is a 1st-century, military type (Timby *et al* 2000, fig 4.64) that continues in production into the early 2nd century (*op cit*, fig 4.64 B1.24; Faiers 1990, 85, nos 148, 152). A similar form is illustrated from Coleshill, though not identified as a Sherifoot product (Booth 2006, fig 49.196), and the form was produced at Mancetter-Hartshill in fabric R11 (unpubl type series fig 31, G12.1, G12.2). No decoration recorded. Total rim EVE 0.88.

51 Fabric 1. Diam 14cm (6%). Upper fill of stokehole, context 3. Database Rec 204. Total rim EVE 0.06.

52 Fabric 2. Diam 17cm (38%). Pit, context 4. Database Rec 130. Total rim EVE 0.49.

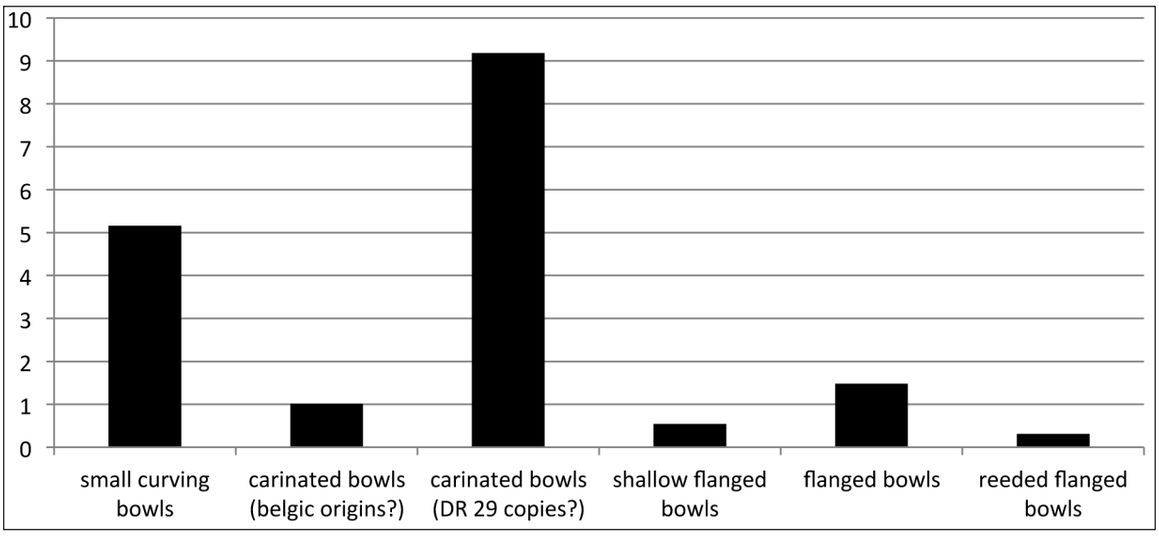

Fig 12 Bowl types (rim EVE)

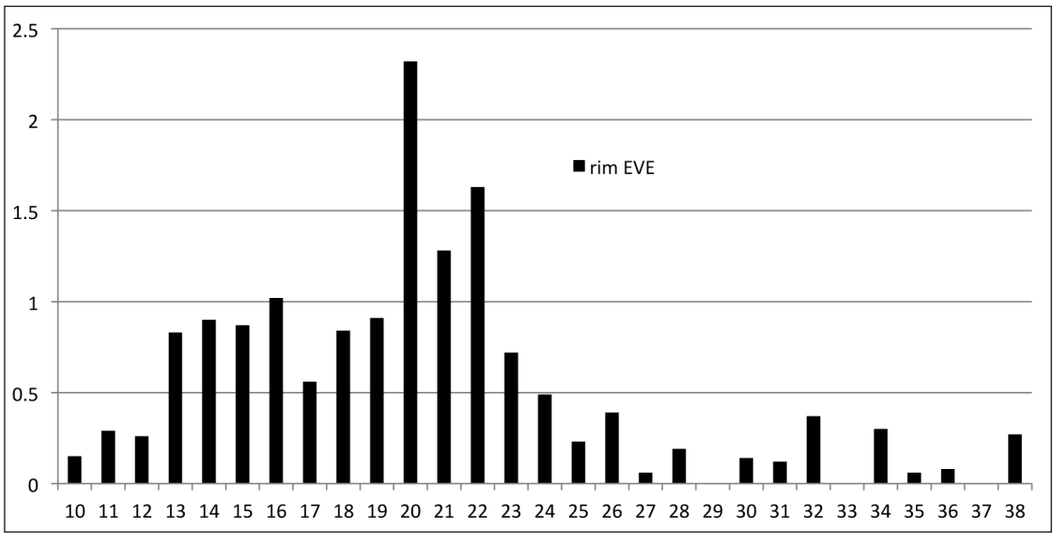

Fig 13 Diameters (in cms) of bowls (rim EVE)

Flanged bowls (Fig 14.53-4, Fig 17.55–59)

A variety of flanged bowls formed a minor component of the assemblage. Flanged bowls were slightly more common in finer fabrics 1/1.1 (54% of all examples) than the coarser fabrics 2/2.1 (41%), with one example in fabric 4. Most of the flanged bowls had larger diameters, ranging from 27 to 36cm, most commonly 32cm.

53 Small segmental bowl with a bead and flange rim. This is a typical 2nd-century form. It is produced in Severn Valley ware (Webster 1976, fig 10, 65, 66), and is found on sites in the region in a range of other fabrics. It was produced in the Trajanic kiln complex at Little Chester (Brassington 1971, fig 7.37–100), and continued to be a common find in Hadrianic-Antonine deposits there (Birss 1985, 95.36). It is one of the 2nd-century forms produced at Holt (Grimes 1930, fig 70.157), and is recorded, from Shenstone (Leary 2008, fig 124.3), Coleshill (Booth 2006, fig 52.277), Perry Barr (Webster 1959, fig 3.27), and in fabric R11 at Mancetter-Hartshill. Only two examples were recorded at Sherifoot Lane, from the stokehole and associated pit (contexts 3 and 4); one in fabric 1 and the other in fabric 2. Fabric 2. Diam 16cm (18%). Pit, context 4. Database Rec 89. Total rim EVE 0.22.

54 Shallow, flanged bowl. Fabric 2. Diam 28cm (19%). Upper fill of stokehole, context 3. Database Rec 116. Total rim EVE 0.32.

55 Carinated flanged bowl. Fabric 2. Diam 26cm (8%). Lower fill of oven and flue, context 11. Database Rec 549. Total rim EVE 0.08.

56 Large flanged bowl, with a slight internal lip. The origins of the form are in 1st-century military assemblages (Greene 1993, fig 6, 22), but it is a common type in Severn Valley ware assemblages dating to the 2nd and 3rd centuries (Webster 1976, fig 8.46–50). It was produced, for example, at the mid–late 2nd- to early 3rd-century kiln at Newlands Hopfields, Worcestershire (Evans *et al* 2000, fig 26, type 2). Similar bowls, in reduced fabric R11, are illustrated from Coleshill (Booth 2006, fig 45.86) and Mancetter Hartshill (fig 30, C71). Fabric 2. Traces of a dark grey slip survive. Diam 36cm (8%). Pit, context 4. Database Rec 78. Total rim EVE 0.46.

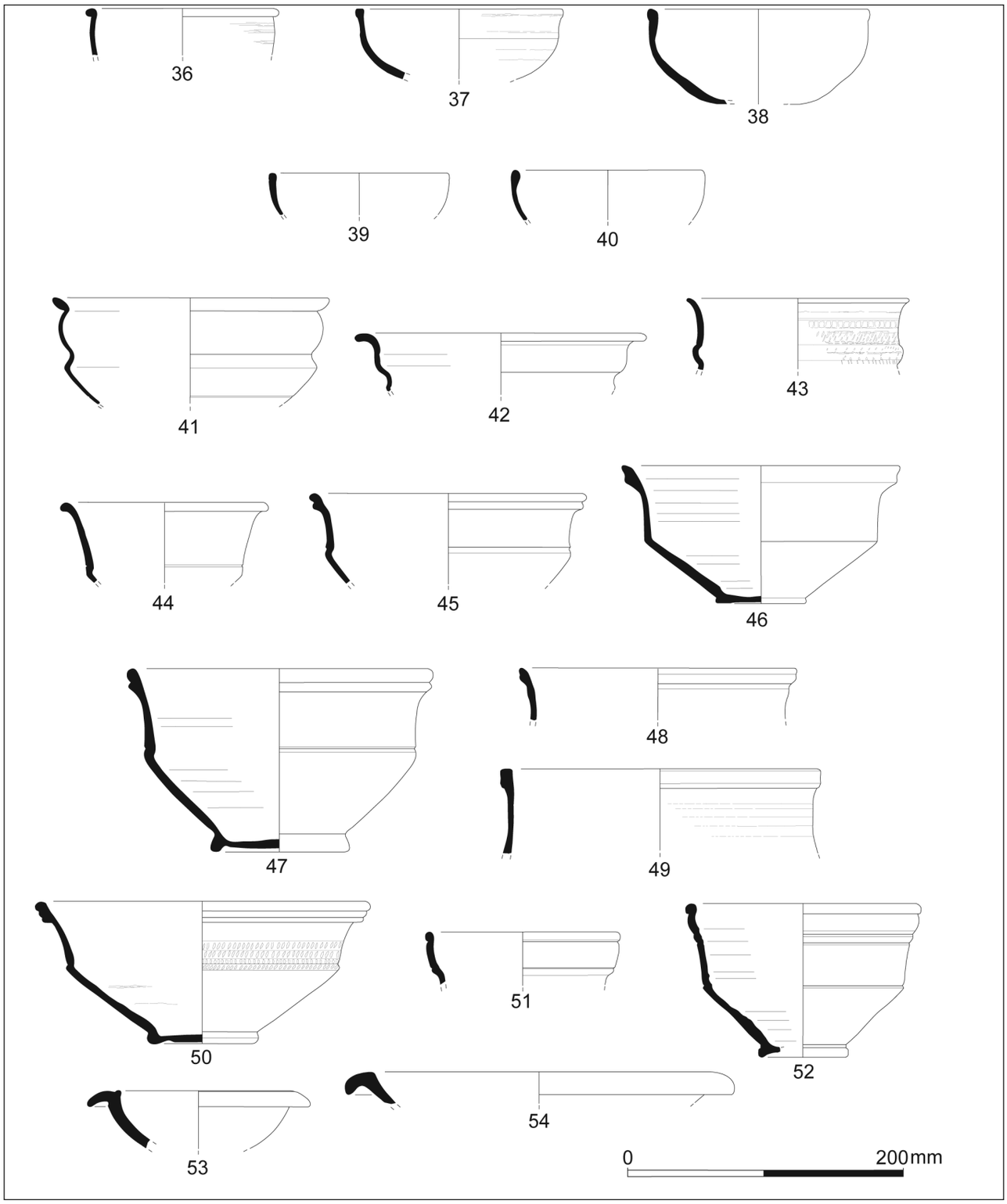

Fig 14 *Bowls, bead/thickened rims (36–40), carinated (41–52) and flanged (53–4)*
Key: small curving bowls (Fig 14.36–40); carinated bowls, Belgic origins? (Fig 14.41–44); carinated bowls, DR 29 copies? (Fig 14.45–52); shallow flanged bowls (Fig 14.53–54).

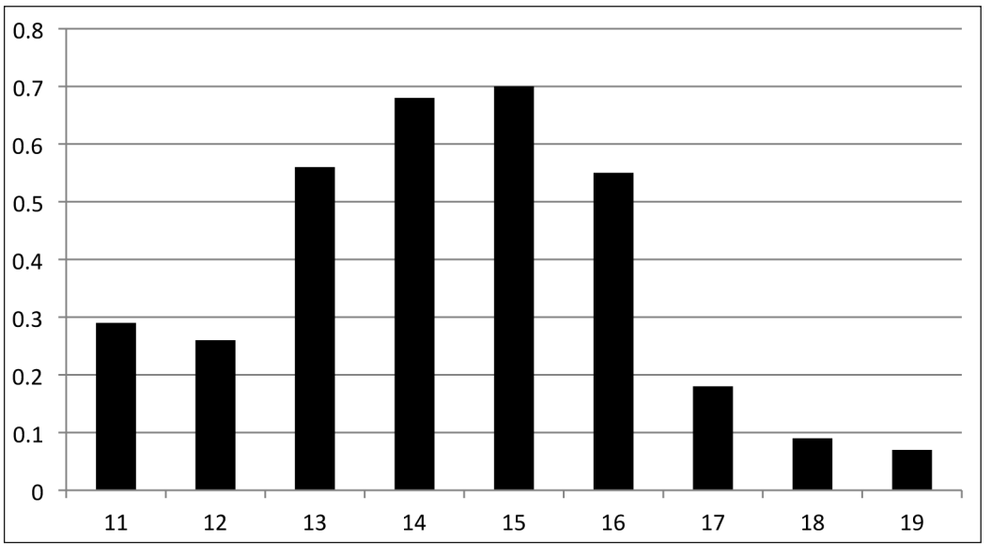

Fig 15 Diameters (in cms) for small bowls with beaded, everted or thickened rims (rim EVE)

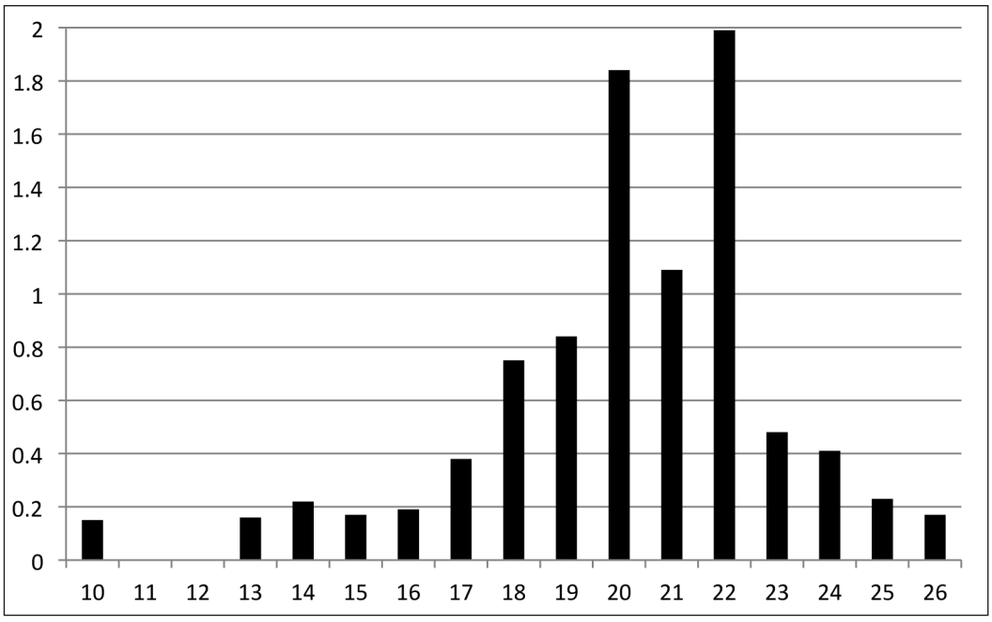

Fig 16 Diameters (in cms) for carinated bowls copying Drag 29 (rim EVE)

Bowls with a flat, angular flange (Total rim EVE 0.94)

57 Fabric 2. Diam 34cm (5%). Raised oven floor, context 17. Database Rec 110.

58 Fabric 2.1. Traces of a dark grey slip survive. Diam 32cm (7%). Upper fill of stokehole, context 3. Database Rec 255.

59 A similar form to this is illustrated from an early 2nd-century context at Wroxeter (Faiers 1990, 82, 78). Fabric 1. Diam 34cm (13%).Upper fill of stokehole, context 3. Database Rec 238.

Reeded, flanged bowls (Fig 17.60–61)

At Wroxeter, these are a 1st century military type that continues to be produced into the 2nd century (Timby *et al* 2000, fig 4.67). The rim of Fig 17.60 could easily be found on a 2nd- to 3rd-century, Severn Valley ware bowl (Webster 1976, fig 9.55–6), but Fig 17.61 is more unusual. Reeded-rim bowls were produced in the Trajanic kiln complex near Little Chester (Brassington 1971, fig 6.18–20), and at Holt they are dated to the late 1st to early 2nd century (Grimes 1930, fig 65, 80–9; fig. 66.90). At Verulamium they are present in deposits dating from AD 70–105 (fig 109) to AD 150–155/160 (Wilson 1972, fig 109, 114, 118, 127). Only a few examples were recorded; they occurred in fabrics 1 and 2.

60 Fabric 2. Diam 31cm (12%). Upper fill of stokehole, context 3. Database Rec 120. Total rim EVE 0.12.

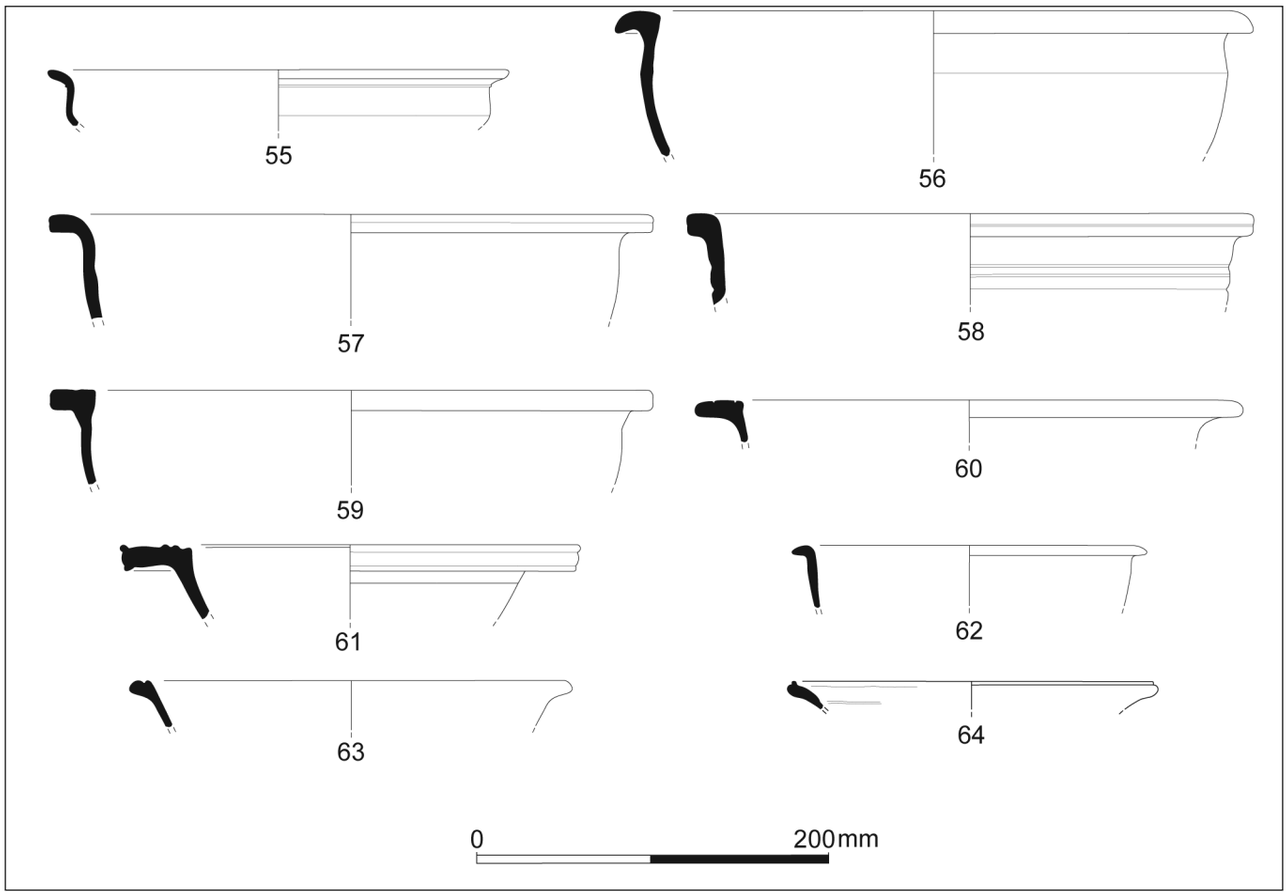

Fig 17 Flanged bowls (Fig 17.55–9), reeded-rim bowls (Fig 17.60–61) and dishes (Fig 17.62–4).

61 With a complex, thickened, reeded rim. Similar vessel illustrated from an early 2nd-century context at Wroxeter (Faiers 1990, p82, 90). Fabric 1. Diam 26cm (14%). Unstratified. Database Rec 550. Total rim EVE 0.14.

Dishes (Fig 17.62–4)

Dishes were far less common and there were no standard forms.

62 With a flat flange rim. Fabric 3. Diam 20cm (9%). Upper fill of stokehole, context 3. Database Rec 82. Total rim EVE 0.21.

63 With a bead and flange rim. Fabric 1. Diam 24cm (10%). Upper fill of stokehole, context 3. Database Rec 254. Total rim EVE 0.10.

64 With an upturned, grooved rim. Fabric 2. Diam 21cm (5%). Garden soil, context 2. Database Rec 719. Total rim EVE 0.05.

Miscellaneous forms (Fig 17.65)

In addition to the forms described above, two sherds were identified as from the base of a cheese press (not illustrated), similar to examples produced at Mancetter-Hartshill in fabrics R11 and R18, and found at Coleshill (Booth 2006, fig 51.237). Both were in the coarser fabric, 2. One came from the fill of the oven chamber (context 8) and one from the lower fill of the oven and flue (context 11).

The mortaria by Kay Hartley

65 Fabric 2. Diam 45cm (85%). Pit, context 4. Database Rec 166, 167. Total rim EVE 0.85.

Two large and one small joining piece make up about half of a very large mortarium, with a rim diameter of 45cm and a base diameter of 20cm. The self-coloured, slightly micaceous, pale grey fabric was fired to a slightly different shade at the surface; it was made slightly abrasive by the fairly high sand content, but there are a few larger, ill-sorted, small to medium, sub-rounded quartz and iron slag inclusions. The abundant trituration material is angular and stands proud of the fabric; it consists of small- to medium-sized and a few large fragments, mostly transparent and milky quartz with some orange-brown and paler sandstones, rare opaque black material and probably other constituents. Some fragments have fallen out, but there is no indication of use. One piece has a slight transverse crack, which could be a firing flaw; the other large sherd has myriad tiny transverse cracks across the flange which are unlikely to have been of any significance.

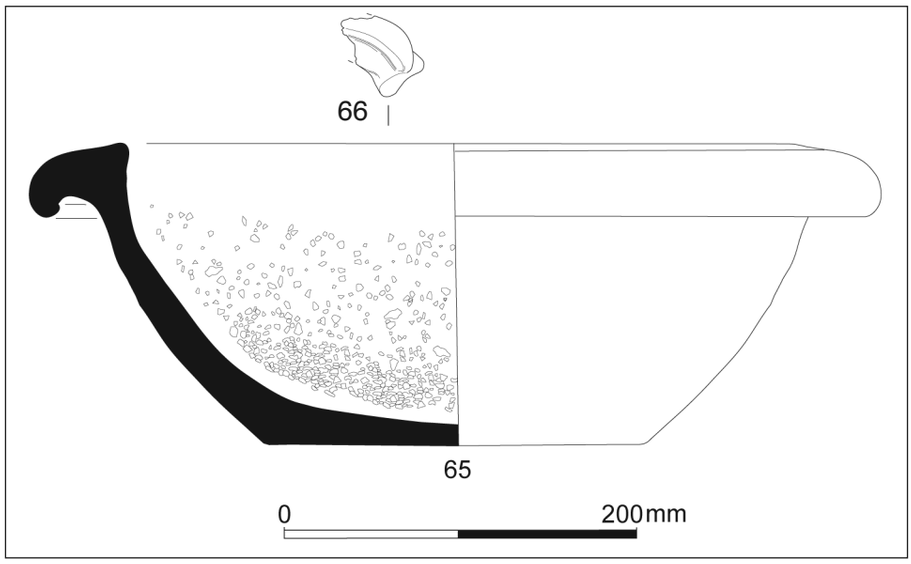

Fig 18 The mortaria

The base has been trimmed, removing all of the wire-marks made when the vessel was removed from the wheel. Only one side survives, but it is most unlikely that this mortarium was ever stamped. Apart from the spout fragment below, which may be from this vessel, no other mortaria were found. The fabric is reported to be the same colour as the other coarse pottery found so that it is possible that it has been deliberately reduced. Mortaria in deliberately reduced fabric are almost unknown anywhere in Britain before the 3rd century and there is no other example known at any period in the west midlands. There is, therefore, no parallel for this mortarium in a reduced fabric, but the homogeneity of fabric with that of the rest of the coarseware suggests that there is every reason to believe that it was made locally along with the rest of the group and it seems likely that it was fired with them in a reducing atmosphere.

Without the survival of more of the spout, dating is not easy. The thick shallow flange varies a little around the circumference and there is no distinguishable bead on much of the bowl. It cannot be matched exactly, but there is some resemblance to mortaria derived from types Gillam 238 (1970) and/or Bushe-Fox (1913) 22–30, which are certainly not earlier than Flavian-Trajanic and are more likely to be early 2nd century in date. Three mortaria in this general category are published from Exeter (Holbrook & Bidwell 1991, fig 83, C42–44, all redeposited). These prototypes were imported from northern France, but the Sherifoot mortarium is Romano-British. The lack of close parallels in British fabrics indicates a minor, local production and a purely local distribution. There is every likelihood that it was made in the same workshop as the other coarseware found with it. One would expect this type of production to be linked with a site in the immediate vicinity of the kiln. Few kiln groups have been located in this part of the west midlands and the importance of this mortarium lies primarily in providing evidence of production in this area and in this period.

66 The left-facing end of a spout which has become detached at the point where extra clay had been added to form the spout. It would not be impossible for it to belong to the above mortarium, but it does not join and the fabric though similar may be just slightly finer in texture. It is too fragmentary to be diagnostic but it is in keeping with a Flavian-Trajanic date. Fabric 2. Stokehole, context 3. Database Rec 95.

Imported pottery: the samian ware

The only pottery definitely not made at the kiln was a sherd of samian ware, found in the fill of the stokehole (context 3). This was identified by Jo Mills (pers comm) as from a Central Gaulish Drag 31 bowl from Lezoux (Tomber & Dore 1998, 32, LEZ SA 2), dating to the mid- to late 2nd century. This may have been reused as parts of the sherd were rubbed smooth.

The kiln material *by Kirsty Nichol*

The kiln structure itself is represented by four different types of material; clay capping, kiln wall lining, prefabricated bricks, and several fragments of the flue arch.

CLAY CAPPING (PL VIII)

A total of 541 pieces of clay capping were recovered. Of these, 98% had vegetation imprints, of which 7% were identifiable. A sample of the latter was shown to Angela Monckton who confirmed that they were imprints of bracken. This would suggest that the firing

took place sometime from the spring, through to the summer (Monckton, pers comm). The clay capping was mainly reduced. Only 7% showed signs of oxidization; these were likely to have come from the outer extremes of the dome. It is likely that the dome was a temporary structure, probably including branches and turves as well as bracken, built up and luted with clay before each firing and destroyed when the pots were removed.

KILN WALL LINING (PL IX)

1,150 fragments were identified as kiln lining. The majority are chunks of hard-fired clay, amorphous in form. Some show vegetation imprints; the shape of others indicates that clay was plastered around the bricks to bond them together. The bulk of the kiln lining material is reduced, although some of the larger pieces are partially oxidized.

FLUE LINING (PL X)

Twelve fragments of probable flue lining were recorded. These differ from the kiln lining in that they have two or three wiped surfaces which shows some degree of finishing. They have also been shaped into what appears to have been an arch.

THE BRICK (FIG 19.1-3)

As described above, the double-armed cross arrangement of bricks forming a raised oven floor (17) was principally composed of prefabricated, sun-dried clay bricks. The bricks, which are not common on kiln sites, provide a vital clue for reconstructing the kiln and interpreting how it functioned. There are 125 fragments of brick in the assemblage; and three different forms have been identified. The greater number of identifiable fragments belong to brick type 1, the voussoir-shaped brick (Fig 19.1). Brick type 2 (Fig 19.2) is a slightly longer more squat example which tends to be wider than the previous type and, whilst being of a similar overall shape, does not have such a great difference in measurements between its top and bottom. The last category, brick type 3, is a regular square shape (Fig 19.3).

All of the bricks have rounded corners. The dimensions of the three types were, on the whole, fairly uniform (Table 5). Some of the bricks still had some of the clay bonding material attached, and two bricks from context 21 were still attached to large chunks of kiln lining.

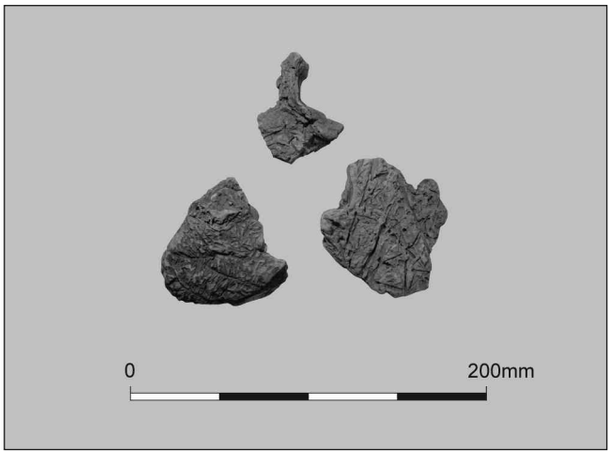

Plate VIII Clay capping

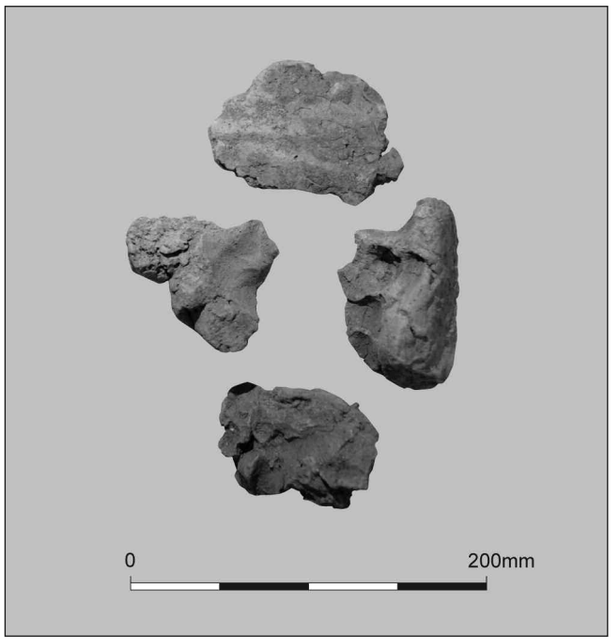

Plate IX Kiln lining

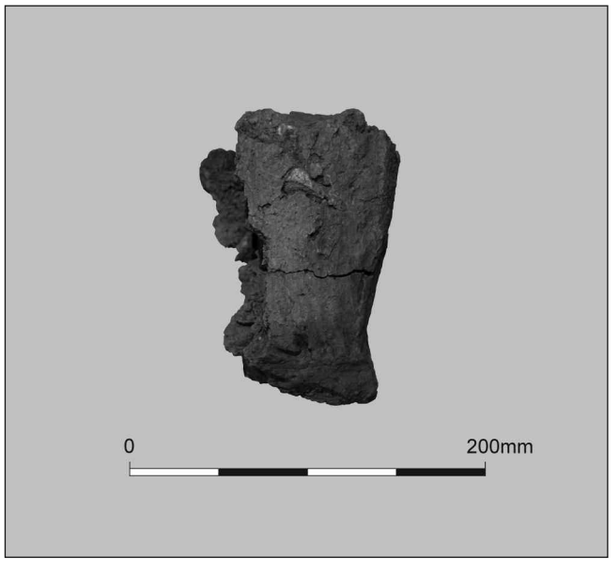

Plate X Flue lining

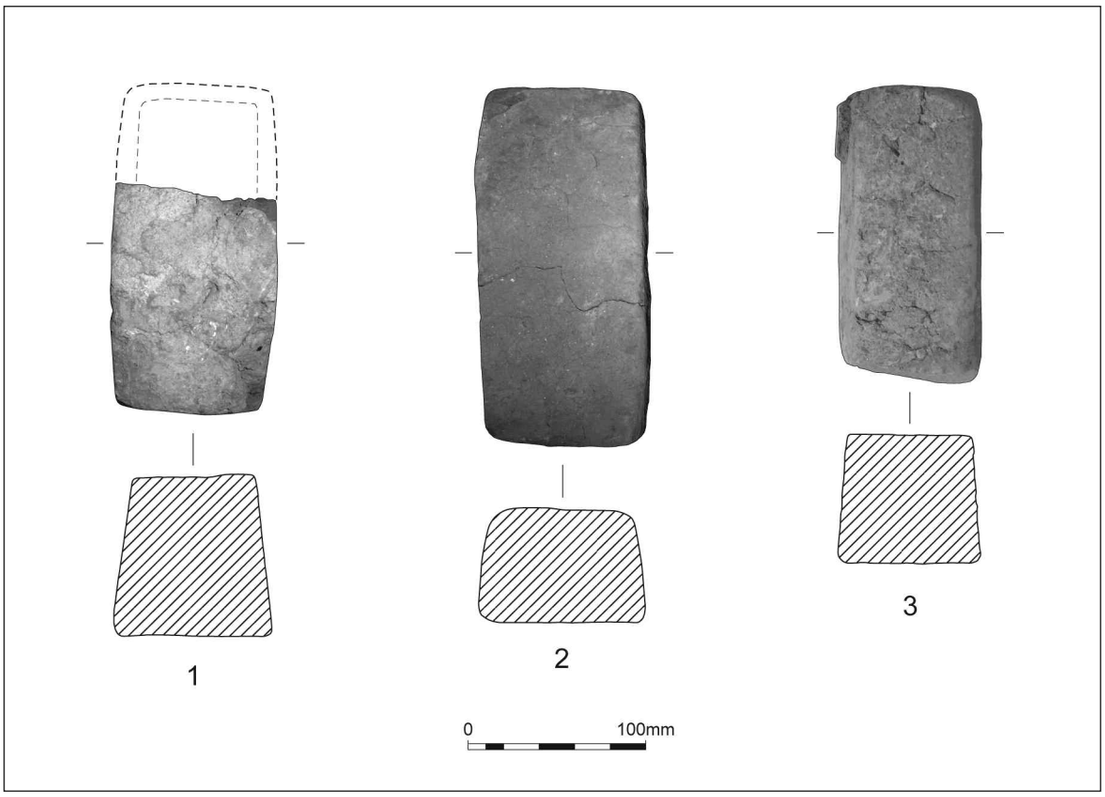

Fig 19 Prefabricated bricks from kiln structure

The bricks were not numbered during excavation, so it is not possible to position particular types within the structure. The bricks themselves, however, give some clues to their possible function within the kiln. The voussoirs (brick type 1) would originally have been arranged into shallow arches, spanning the kiln. These would have supported the permanent raised floor. The kiln, with a diameter of 0.85m, could easily have been spanned by a single arch, as in the London, Northgate House kiln which has a larger diameter of 1.85–2.0m, rather than two arches as at Colchester (cf Swan 1984, 70, fig X). Excavation revealed five 'piers' at the lowest level of the kiln. One, situated in the centre at the back of the structure, was described at the time as a 'short projecting tongue pedestal'. Again, this is similar to the Northgate House kiln. Similarly the four other piers, placed opposite each other around the sides of the kiln, may have held up the outer extremes of the brick arches. As can be seen from Table 5, the height and length of the type two bricks was highly standardized, varying by only 0.5cms. Two of these bricks had been luted back to back, their broad sides together.

There appear therefore to have been two sets of double brick arches spanning the kiln, reflected by the cross arrangement found in excavation.

Table 5 Dimensions for brick categories (to the nearest cm)

	Brick type 1	Brick type 2	Brick type 3
Top	5.5 -8.5	8 -9.5	7-8
Bottom	7 -10.5	8.5 -11	7-9
Height	7 -9.5	5.5 -6	7-9
Length	16 -19	19.5 -20	15

OVERALL DISCUSSION

Date

In terms of dating the site there are three aspects to consider: the date of the kiln structure; the date of the pottery group in pit 4, including a number of complete or near-complete vessels thought to be from the last firing of the kiln; and the date of the rest of the pottery dumped in the kiln at some point after it went out of use.

The date of the kiln is not conclusively established on the basis of its form, but its similarity with the kiln at London Northgate Street is of interest, given that this has an archaeomagnetic date of AD 100–120. This date would be consistent with that of the group of near complete vessels deliberately placed against the edge of the associated pit (4), which must represent a contemporary group, perhaps discarded vessels from

the last firing of the kiln. The best dating for this group comes from the mortarium; Kay Hartley considered an early 2nd-century date most likely. The other forms have good parallels in early 2nd-century assemblages elsewhere, though some forms may have continued in production later into the 2nd century. The rest of the pottery assemblage may well include vessels that are significantly later than the kiln itself, as indicated by the sherd of mid–late 2nd-century samian found in the stokehole (3) and the fact that some forms have later 2nd-century parallels from other sites in the region. There is certainly evidence that the Sherifoot Lane kiln was one of a sequence of kilns in this location, producing oxidized and reduced pottery. As noted above, fragments of prefabricated brick in the pilasters may have been reused from an earlier kiln. The pit (4), identical in size to the kiln's oven, may itself have been the oven of an earlier kiln. The deposit of friable clay lumps and pottery sherds (19) overlying the lower fill of the oven (11) could represent debris from an earlier kiln. It has also been suggested elsewhere (Swan 1984, 32) that the use of clay blocks in construction might have facilitated localized repairs, allowing the kiln to be kept in use for longer. Much of the pottery was found in the pit (4) and in the fill of the stokehole (3), which overlay (16), interpreted as the result of weathering of the structure after abandonment. This may therefore have been debris from a later, adjacent kiln.

Cultural influences

In aspects of its structure, the kiln does not lie in the well-established regional tradition. Regional comparanda are to hand in Warwickshire, where a substantial number of (in particular) 2nd-century kilns are known (Booth 1996, 47–50, fig 14). Despite considerable variety of structural detail amongst these, the 1st–2nd-century examples tend to be dominated by types with either a temporary floor of standard firebars or a permanent raised floor with ventholes, both being supported on one or more freestanding pedestals within the firing chamber. The elongated tongue pedestal type, as at Tiddington kiln 2, is less common (a range of 2nd-century types is shown in Booth 1996, 50). Unfortunately no kiln structure was identified at Perry Barr, although photographs of the excavation held by Handsworth Historical Society show features that may have been parts of kilns. However, fragments of fairly typical firebars and a probable permanent floor with vent holes were recovered (Hughes 1959, 35) so a broadly similar structural type may be inferred. The use of prefabricated bricks in kilns is relatively rare in Britain. There are no direct parallels between the Sherifoot Lane kiln and any other in the west midlands area, and they are not noted at any of the known Severn Valley ware kilns.

Swan (1984, 32) suggests that the use of pre-fired clay blocks is linked to specialist pottery production, with potters working in a military tradition. Analogies can be drawn with three other kilns: at Colchester (Hull 1963); Holt in Denbighshire (Grimes 1930); and Apple Tree Farm near York (Lawton 1992–3). The carinated bowls deposited in the circular pit to the north of the kiln certainly have parallels in military assemblages, even if they are not necessarily produced by military potters. Swan also linked the use of these blocks to major industries with close continental connections, such as Colchester and the Lower Nene Valley (Swan 1984, 94, 96). Structurally, the Northgate House kilns provide the best parallels to date for the Sherifoot Lane kiln; constructed in a sub-circular pit lined with clay, and using brick arches to support a vent-holed floor. The workshop at Northgate House shows close affinities with both the Verulamium region and Colchester pottery industries (Seeley & Drummond-Murray 2005, 142–4; Hartley & Tomber 2006, 96). The Verulamium connection is of particular interest for understanding the likely origins of the Sherifoot Lane potter or potters. At the beginning of the 2nd century a number of potters migrated from the Verulamium region to establish kilns in the Mancetter-Hartshill area (Hartley 1972; Hartley 1973a; Swan 1984, 98–101). Potters are also known to have moved to Mancetter-Hartshill from the Colchester industry (Hartley & Tomber 2006, 74). The Sherifoot Lane potters seem likely to have been part of this wider movement, and the site could perhaps be seen as an outlier of the industry centred on Mancetter-Hartshill; a number of the forms produced have parallels there and some of the fabrics are macroscopically undistinguishable. Comparison with the Mancetter-Hartshill kilns might also support an earlier 2nd-century date for the Sherifoot Lane kiln structure; in the early 2nd century the kiln structures at both Mancetter and Hartshill were varied, showing what Swan described as a 'sequence of developments in the interplay of Coritanian and Verulamium traditions', but from the mid-2nd century they became more standardized, characterized by 'a single, central, circular or oval pedestal and an integral clay, often bar-like, vent holed floor' (Swan 1984, 100; Hartley 1973b).

This mix of cultural influences is evident in the range of vessels produced on the site. Some vessels, in particular bowls and the mortarium, have continental origins, suggestive of potters working in a military tradition, while other forms have more local influences, for example the 'belgic'-style bowls and the Severn Valley ware type tankards. These varying cultural influences might also reflect the peripheral location of the kiln, in relation to the postulated *civitas* boundary, with the Corieltauvi to the east and the Cornovii to the west, and at the eastern margin of the main Severn Valley ware distribution area.

Layout of the workshop

The location of the site in relation to the necessary raw materials has already been discussed above. The nature of the excavation means that nothing is known about the layout of the production site, and little additional

evidence came from watching briefs undertaken as part of extensions to neighbouring houses in Sherifoot Lane; in one case a small quantity of Roman pottery was found and in the other some medieval pottery but no features. Somewhere in the vicinity, however, as at Northgate House (Seeley & Drummond-Murray 2005, 138–90) there must have been a range of pits and gullies for clay preparation, and associated buildings including a workshop, drying sheds, and possibly the potter's dwelling.

Pottery production and supply

Probable Sherifoot Lane products have been recorded on a number of sites in the region, and publication of the kiln will allow more comparative studies to be made in the future. The difficulty in distinguishing between Sherifoot Lane fabrics and wares from other known production sites does, however, make distributional studies more challenging. The 2nd-century date of the excavated kiln, and the earlier and later kilns that may have existed in close proximity to it, indicate a civilian rather than military market. The vessels produced were utilitarian kitchen and table wares. They may have been carefully chosen to appeal to a local market, with customers who were only ever going to buy a relatively small quantity of pottery and a narrow range of forms. Jars were the main vessel class produced (Evans 2001, 28) and are, typically, the most common form used on rural sites. The mortarium is unusual and is considered by Kay Hartley to represent a minor, local production for purely local distribution, though its large size might seem more suitable for military rather than domestic, civilian use. The Sherifoot Lane kiln, along with those at Perry Barr and Birmingham Road Nurseries in Shenstone, and no doubt several others as yet undiscovered, would have met (or hoped to create) the demand of nearby settlements such as Langley Mill Farm, Wishaw Hall Farm and Birmingham Road Nurseries. The first discernible Roman activity at each of these begins in the middle of the 2nd century but they all succeed Iron Age settlements and are likely to have been continuously occupied. All these sites are artefact-poor, reflecting a long-established cultural tradition rather than their distance from the major regional pottery production centres in the Severn Valley and at Mancetter-Hartshill. The market for Sherifoot Lane products may have changed over time, assuming an early 2nd-century date for the excavated kiln, and that production in the vicinity may have continued into the mid- or late 2nd century. The pit 4 assemblage, including wasters from the last firing, was different in character to the rest (Fig 6), with a higher proportion of bowls (32% by rim EVE), tankards (19%) and a mortarium (7%) and consequently a much lower proportion of narrow-mouthed jars (25%). It is the more distinctive vessels, the carinated bowls in particular, that have been noted at the urban settlement at Wall, and the temple site at Coleshill.

CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this report has been to present the evidence recorded at Sherifoot Lane, and interpret it to the best of our abilities in the context of our current understanding of the archaeology of the region. More detailed interpretation must await the much needed publication of more than 50 kilns and the associated kiln groups excavated at Mancetter and Hartshill. Publication of the kiln makes an important contribution to Romano-British studies in this region and Romano-British pottery studies nationally; kilns and their products have been identified as both regional (Willis 1997; Evans 2002) and national research priorities (Fulford & Huddleston 1991, 39; Willis 2004, 10–11; Perrin 2011, Strategy Objective 2, 41–2). Detailed analysis of the pottery provides data that will contribute to wider studies of patterns of industry, trade, consumption and cultural influences during the Roman period. The potential of this and other kilns to contribute to such studies is enhanced by the fact that the gazetteer from Vivien Swan's seminal 1984 work on kilns is now made accessible on-line (http://mapdata.thehumanjourney.net/vgswanb_index.htm). Analysis of this kiln and its products emphasizes the potential to update this valuable resource with the many kilns that have been discovered in the thirty years since its excavation, and produce a new synthesis of the evidence for pottery production in Roman Britain.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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material (Plates 8–10) by Laura Templeton, and the pottery report was edited by Derek Hurst. Jane Evans would also like to thank Laura Griffin, Ruth Leary and Gwladys Monteil, all of whom have contributed valuable discussions regarding the pottery assemblage.

MAP SOURCES

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