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# Pottery from Two Medieval Tenements in Christchurch, Dorset: their Contents and their Contexts

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## Introduction

Excavations in Christchurch, Dorset, between 1969 and 1980, recovered a large and important assemblage of post-Roman pottery. This paper discusses the medieval pottery from two tenements in Christchurch, excavated from 1974 to 1976, sites X11 and X12 (Jarvis 1983). Some of the pottery from these sites has been published previously (Thomson *et al.* 1983). At the time, few comparable assemblages had been published, meaning that it was difficult to place Christchurch into a regional context. Since 1983 important assemblages from Poole (Barton *et al.* 1992), Southampton (Brown 2002; Jervis 2009), Carisbrooke (Mephram 2000a) and smaller groups from Fordingbridge (Mephram 2003), Salisbury (Mephram 2000b), Wimborne Minster (Mephram 1993) and Wareham (Harding *et al.* 1996) have been published, meaning that it is now possible to place the Christchurch material into a regional context. Because of these advances in our understanding of medieval pottery in east Dorset, west Hampshire and southern Wiltshire it was necessary to re-examine the pottery from Christchurch. This re-examination also provided an opportunity to create a quantified record to allow detailed comparisons between assemblages and for statistical analysis to be

undertaken. The pottery will be briefly characterised, before being discussed in relation to supply, use and deposition. Before this can be undertaken it is worth summarising the history of Christchurch and outlining the methodology used in this analysis.

## Historical and archaeological background

Excavations in Christchurch between 1969 and 1983 uncovered a wealth of evidence for the development and role of the town (Jarvis 1983; Davies 1984). The town was founded as a late Saxon burh (defended town) in the ninth or tenth century (Jarvis 1983, 9; Haslam 2009). The priory was built in the late eleventh century and the castle was probably constructed in the early twelfth century, during which time the street plan of the town changed, with the castle disrupting the planned late-Saxon street grid. It is likely that lanes and backstreets grew organically as the town expanded (Jarvis 1983, 11). Documentary evidence suggests that in the twelfth century occupation was centred on High Street and Castle Street, with settlement expanding into other areas during the thirteenth–fourteenth centuries. A market is likely to have been held at the junction of Castle Street and High Street (Jarvis 1983, 14). It is likely that the town defences were built at some point in the tenth–eleventh centuries, with much of the stone having been robbed by the fourteenth century (Jarvis 1983, 19).

The archaeological and historical evidence suggests that the economy of the town was built on fishing and rural trades. Quern stones attest to the processing of foodstuffs within the town. Iron smelting occurred in the late Saxon period, and perhaps in the thirteenth century

(Jarvis 1983, 21). Evidence of a horn-working industry has also been identified, along with some evidence of non-ferrous metal working (Jarvis 1983, 21). The faunal remains suggest a fairly typical medieval urban diet of beef followed by lamb and pork and it is likely that fish also had an important role (Jarvis 1983, 21).

Only a small sample of the pottery is discussed here. The two sites being compared are site X11, which lies on the junction of Church Lane and Church Street in the south of the town and site X12 in the north east quadrant (Figure 1). These sites have been chosen as they had the largest and most coherent ceramic assemblages and the excavations were centred on tenements, rather than the town defences. Site X11 (Dolphin Development), excavated from 1974 to 1975 has a continuous sequence from the late-Saxon to post-medieval periods (Jarvis 1983, 37). A yard was excavated containing a series of tenth to fifteenth century pits along with a number of postholes, many of which could not be dated. A post-medieval cellar disturbed much of the north-east quadrant of the excavation. The pits contained mostly domestic waste, however there is some evidence for iron and horn working (Jarvis 1983, 42). Site X12 was excavated in 1976. A series of structures were identified, as well as several pits. Linear features may have been property boundaries. The central area of the excavation forms a distinct tenement unit, defined by boundaries on either side (Jarvis 1983, 45). It is possible that some of the structures relate to the site of the royal mill (Jarvis 1983, 49).

These two sites give the opportunity to compare the types of pottery used in different areas of the town, as well as allowing us to compare depositional practices in the centre of the town and in the 'backlands' closer to the periphery. It should be noted that the scope of this paper is limited to the twelfth to fourteenth centuries and therefore the important later-

medieval and post-medieval material is not considered here, however this is certainly deserving of re-examination at some point.

## Methodology

This research forms part of a larger post-graduate research project (Jervis forthcoming a) which aims to understand the use of pottery in the medieval period, focussing on Southampton and its region. The material from Christchurch was examined as an example of a small coastal town, with which Southampton could be contrasted. In the course of this analysis material from other small towns such as Romsey (Hampshire) and Alton (Hampshire) were examined, meaning that we can compare Christchurch with inland towns of similar size, as well as the larger ports of Southampton and Poole. Only the medieval pottery from medieval features at sites X11 and X12 are considered here. Residual material in later deposits has been examined and is included in the statistical analysis of deposition, but the types are not discussed in regard to supply and consumption, nor are the types discussed in the catalogue.

Duncan Brown's (1997) study demonstrated the value of quantified analysis in comparing assemblages and a similar approach has been taken here. Following the minimum standards devised by the Medieval Pottery Research Group (MPRG 2001) several quantification methods (sherd count, sherd weight, rim % and maximum vessel count) were used, with material being recorded on to a specially designed Microsoft Access Database. Fabrics were defined based on their inclusions, firing and texture, following the guidelines

outlined by Orton *et al.* (1993), whilst forms were defined following the terminology set out by the Medieval Pottery Research Group (MPRG 1998).

Given that the focus of the research from which this paper derives is Southampton, where possible wares have been referred to by the terms used there, as defined by Brown (2002). These differ somewhat from those used by Thomson *et al.* (1983) in their previous publication of the Christchurch pottery. The term Dorset Whiteware is now taken to refer to the yellow glazed whiteware produced in the Poole Harbour region, whilst the term Wessex Coarseware is used to define early-medieval quartz-tempered coarsewares (also known as Laverstock-type Coarsewares), rather than the post-medieval Verwood-type wares defined by the previous authors.

## The pottery

It is not the intention of this paper to provide a detailed fabric type series for Christchurch; fabric descriptions and type sherds have been lodged with Hampshire Museums Service, as part of a larger archive produced during the course of this research. The types of pottery present will be summarised, with the fabrics, forms and decoration being outlined, along with a consideration of their distribution.

**‘Wessex Coarsewares’ and ‘Anglo-Norman Dorset Quartz-tempered Wares’**

By far the most common wares in the assemblages are coarse quartz-tempered wares (Table 1). In Southampton, Brown (2002) has identified two varieties, termed Wessex Coarseware and Anglo-Norman Dorset Quartz-tempered Ware. Both are characterised by moderately abundant to abundant quartz temper, the key difference between them being in the sorting of the quartz grains. A study by Spoerry (1990) demonstrated that coarse quartz-tempered wares from several sites in east Hampshire, west Dorset and south Wiltshire could not be separated chemically. Therefore the decision has been taken here to consider these as a single ware (termed, for convenience, Wessex Coarseware). Spoerry demonstrated that these wares are distributed across west Dorset, occurring in Wareham, Poole and Wimborne Minster. Spoerry (1990, 14) believes that these wares have at least three sources, termed 'Poole', 'Laverstock' and 'Southampton' and it is likely that more centres existed, producing similar pottery from similar clays. Given the distinctive nature of the chemical signatures for these wares, but the general similarities in fabric and form, the term 'Wessex Coarseware' should be taken to refer to a ceramic tradition, rather than a particular fabric.

These wares have also been identified as a major component of assemblages in Romsey and the lower Test Valley (Jervis forthcoming c; Timby 2004), Salisbury (Mephram 2000b), Fordingbridge (Mephram 2003) and at Milton Manor (Hurst and Hurst 1967) in the New Forest, as well as being present in small quantities at Carisbrooke Castle (Mephram 2000a).

The most common forms in these wares are jars and tripod pitchers (Table 2). A number of sherds have been termed jug/pitcher as it is unclear to which form they belong, whilst a small quantity of bowls/dishes were present along with sherds from curfews and

pipkins. A third of the jar rims present are simple everted forms. Rounded terminals are marginally more common than straight-edged terminals (Table 3, Figure 2). A minority of these are decorated with thumb impressions. A small number of bifid rims are present, of the type known from Poole (Barton *et al.* 1992, 30), therefore it is likely that at least some of these vessels were sourced from the Poole Harbour area. The next most common type are clubbed rims, followed by thickened, everted rims, generally with a straight-edged profile. Hammerhead and lid-seated forms are present, but rare. The tripod pitchers generally have simple or slightly thickened, everted rims, although upright forms are present. Bowls are present with a range of rim forms, the most common being an inturned hammerhead form. These forms can all be paralleled in the local area (see Mephram 1993, 140; Draper 1984, 68; Harding *et al.* 1996, 85) and elsewhere in Christchurch (Davies 1984, 36–8).

Jars are rarely decorated, one example has thumb impressions on the body and another is combed, whilst four examples are scratch-marked. Scratch-marking is fairly common on pottery in the south Wiltshire and east Dorset area. It is suggested that scratch-marked sherds from Christchurch had a different source to the bulk of the pottery of this type found in the town (Spoerry 1990, 12). Six jars have a partial clear glaze. The jugs and tripod pitchers are more commonly decorated, generally with combing or painted slip, but incised, applied and impressed decoration also occur. Sherds typically have an exterior, clear or green glaze.

One reason for the high quantity of these wares is their long date range, probably being in currency from the mid twelfth to the mid fourteenth centuries (Spoerry 1990, 6) during which they are the principle coarseware used in the region.



## **Dorset Quartz-tempered Sandy Ware**

This ware is a fairly fine quartz-tempered ware dating from the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries (see Brown 2002, 16). An east Dorset source is suggested, based on its occurrence in Christchurch, Poole and Southampton (Brown 2002, 16). There are 96 sherds, representing a maximum of 20 vessels. Most of the sherds are from jugs. There are single examples of a bowl, dripping pan and tripod pitcher.

The jugs typically have simple everted or upright rims and strap handles, although there are two rod handles present in the assemblage from Christchurch Priory (site X3). A range of jar rim forms are present, with thickened and beaded forms being present. Simple and hammerhead forms are known from elsewhere in Christchurch. When glazed, jugs typically have an exterior clear or green glaze. Several vessels are unglazed however, perhaps suggesting that they were fairly utilitarian. All but one of the jars are unglazed. Vessels are typically undecorated; there are single examples of combed decoration on a jar. Single examples of jugs with combed decoration, rilling and thumb impressions were observed in the assemblage from Christchurch Priory.

## **Dorset Red-painted Ware**

This is a sub-category of the Dorset Sandy Wares, which are decorated with red painted lines. There are 25 sherds from a maximum of 23 vessels, of which two are definitely jugs. The two rims present are both clubbed forms. Vessels often have a partial, clear exterior glaze as well as the painted decoration. Like Dorset Quartz-tempered Sandy Ware, this ware is known from Poole (Jarvis 1992) and Southampton (Brown 2002), with a small number of sherds having also been identified in Romsey (Jervis forthcoming c).

### **Dorset (Poole Harbour) Whiteware**

This is a well-made, fine whiteware which is common in Poole, but only six sherds were present here, although 119 were identified by Davies (1983, 40), mostly from site W8. These jugs typically have a yellow glaze, with brown slipped lines underneath. Small quantities are also known from Fordingbridge (Mepham 2003) and Romsey to the north. The ware is also present in Southampton (Brown 2002, 16–17).

### **Laverstock-type Fine Ware**

Laverstock-type ware is a fine, sandy whiteware produced at Laverstock near Salisbury (see Musty et al. 1969). There are 35 sherds, representing a maximum of 33 vessels. One of these is probably a jar. The remaining diagnostic sherds were from jugs. These principally have simple, everted rims. There are two strap handle sherds present. The

vessels commonly have clear or green exterior glaze and sherds are present with a range of decorative forms, including applied pads and rouletted strips. One of the handles is slashed.

This is by far the most common sandy ware in Christchurch and is also common in Fordingbridge to the north (Mephram 2003). It is likely that vessels were transported to the market in Christchurch via the River Bourne/Avon. These products are also common in Salisbury (Mephram 2000b), Winchester (Holmes and Matthews forthcoming) and at sites in the Test Valley as far north as Andover (Matthews 1997), being the most common sandy ware in Romsey (Jervis forthcoming c).

### **South Hampshire Redware**

There are five sherds of South Hampshire Redware. This is an iron-rich redware, common in southern and western Hampshire, for example at Romsey (Jervis forthcoming a), Southampton (Brown 2002), Fareham (Brown unpub. 2005), Winchester (Holmes and Matthews forthcoming), Carisbrooke Castle (Mephram 2000a) and Portsmouth (Fox and Barton 1986). Vessels typically have an exterior clear or dark green glaze.

### **Southampton Wares**

There is a single sherd of Southampton Coarseware present, although 24 sherds were also identified at Christchurch Priory. This is a coarse sandy ware with chalk and flint

inclusions, common in thirteenth to fourteenth-century contexts in Southampton (Brown 2002, 12–13). It has also been identified by the author in Nursling and at Fawley, and wasters have been found at Brockenhurst in the New Forest (Duncan Brown, pers comm.). The only diagnostic sherds are from a single jar, consisting of the typical simple everted rim form with an internal bead (see Brown 2002).

There are six sherds of Southampton Sandy Ware. Like Southampton Coarseware, it is common in Southampton, but has also been identified in west Hampshire at Romsey, Wellow and Nursling. It is likely that the ware, in which vessels are sparsely decorated and of a fairly utilitarian form, had several production centres. A single sherd could be confidently assigned to a specific form, a jar.

### **Other local Sandy Wares**

A range of other local sandy wares are present in small quantities. These include iron-rich whitewares and redwares of a type found commonly in west Hampshire and sandy wares with argillaceous inclusions, also known in the Test Valley. One sherd of a fine sandy ware is similar to sherd from Milton Manor (Jervis unpub a), for which an Isle of Wight source has been suggested on the basis of similarities with kiln material from Knighton (Fennelly 1969).

### **Imported Wares**

A small number of imported sherds are present at these sites, all of French origin. These consist of ten sherds (seven vessels) of Saintonge Whiteware from south-western France, dating to the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries (see Brown 2002, 26). Three sherds of Saintonge Polychrome ware were noted in the assemblage from Christchurch Priory. A sherd of Rouen-type ware, of late twelfth to thirteenth-century date (see Brown 2002, 23), and six sherds of fine whitewares, possibly of north-French origin are also present. Sherds from similar sources were also present at site W10 (Davies 1984, 40). Most of these sherds are likely to be from jugs, but a distinctive locking lid of possible Saintonge Whiteware was recovered from site X11 (see Thomson *et al.* 1983, 55).

## **Summary**

The bulk of the pottery recovered from these sites is of local origin. Coarseware jars, tripod pitchers and bowls were supplied by the local coarseware industries, with wares from several centres likely to be present on the basis of fabric, form and decoration. A local sandy ware industry provided many of the jugs, but the majority were sourced from slightly further afield, being Laverstock and Poole Harbour products. Small quantities of Southampton wares and South Hampshire Redwares may have reached Christchurch through coastwise trade (see Brown 2002, 129 for a discussion of trade in the opposite direction), and it is possible that this is also how imports reached the town. The low quantity of imports, in comparison to Southampton and Poole, demonstrates that Christchurch did not function as a major port. Some of the north-French wares may have reached Christchurch through direct contact,

perhaps through fishing, rather than being objects of trade in the same way as in Southampton.

### The supply of pottery to Christchurch

The pottery demonstrates that Christchurch was supplied through several different exchange networks. It appears likely that there was pottery production in the vicinity of Christchurch. Brown (2002, 16) has suggested the fringes of the New Forest as a source for Dorset Quartz Tempered Ware, and local production is also likely for at least some of the Wessex Coarsewares. Although no Dorset Quartz-tempered Ware was identified at site X12, Dorset Red-painted Ware was present here, demonstrating that the products of this potential centre are present at both tenements. These wares were also identified in the priory garderobe assemblage. It can be argued then that both wares were locally produced and marketed fairly widely in the town. Dorset Red-painted Ware certainly has a very localised distribution, being found only in small quantities outside Christchurch and Poole (Jarvis 1992, 64) (Figure 3a). It occurs in small quantities at Romsey (Jervis forthcoming c) at sites with Dorset Whiteware, perhaps suggesting that these homes or the Abbey had some link with the Poole area (perhaps tenurial ties; see Moorhouse 1983, 58), rather than these wares being available on the open market this far north.

Medieval towns in this region appear to have typically been supplied with their coarsewares through a single, local industry; Romsey (Jervis forthcoming c), Fordingbridge (Mephram 2003), Wimborne Minster (Draper 1984; Mephram 1993) and Salisbury (Mephram

2000b) were all supplied with Wessex Coarsewares, present in quantities which are suggestive of localised manufacture. Southampton was supplied with Southampton Coarseware, perhaps produced in the New Forest and transported there by road or river. Petrological work has suggested that the bulk of the pottery used in Wareham was locally produced, and includes calcareous Purbeck types as well as Wessex Coarseware (Hinton and Hodges 1977). Poole was almost certainly supplied by local workshops and the presence of a small number of jars with bifid rims may be indicative of a limited supply of vessels from this area (Jarvis 1992, 63).

The most common glazed sandy ware is Laverstock-type ware, which is present at both tenements and is also abundant in the priory garderobe. The distribution of this ware, produced near Salisbury, extends down the river Avon, being found in Salisbury (Mephram 2000b) and Fordingbridge (Mephram 2003) as the major glazed sandy ware (figure 3b). It is likely that these wares reached Christchurch by means of river transport, and it should be noted that some Wessex Coarsewares produced further north may also have been transported in this way. The Laverstock industry must have been fairly large, as is attested by the ten excavated kilns (Musty *et al.* 1969) and the distribution of Laverstock-type Fine Ware. It not only supplied sites in the Avon valley, but also at Winchester (Holmes and Matthews forthcoming) and at sites in the Test Valley, such as Romsey, where it is the most common glazed sandy ware (Jervis forthcoming c), King's Somborne (Timby 2004, Jervis unpub. b) and Andover (Matthews unpub 1997; Jervis unpub. c). Only small quantities are known in Southampton (Brown 2002) and at Wimborne Minster (Mephram 1993) and these would seem to mark the fringes of the distribution of the ware. The high quantities of this ware compared to other products, as well as its clear distribution in the Avon Valley, suggest that these wares

were actively marketed in Christchurch and that they were available on the open market. It is possible that Christchurch Priory had an arrangement with the producers to provide large quantities of jugs for particular events. A similar arrangement is known to have existed between the potters and the household of Clarendon Palace (Le Patourel 1968, 120).

Site X12 has a considerably more varied assemblage than site X11. Small quantities of wares are present from Southampton and South Hampshire, with a range of unprovenanced, but probably relatively local, types also being present. Two explanations can be proposed for the wide range of types present here. The first is related to deposition. The assemblage is very fragmented (see below) and it is possible that waste from different areas of the town was mixed with that from these tenements. It is possible that in these ‘backlands’ some horticultural activity took place (Dyer 1994, 121–4) meaning that waste may have been acquired for use as fertiliser. The second is related to the proximity of site X12 to the Royal Mill (Jarvis 1983, 49). If the tenements were related to the mill it is possible that it was tied closely to other holdings in the region, meaning that small quantities of pottery could have reached the tenements through these tenurial links (see Moorhouse 1983, 58). There is a degree of coherency to the types present: they consist of Southampton types, South Hampshire Redware and iron rich wares typical of South Hampshire (including types known in Southampton, such as Local Whiteware (Southampton fabric 1118). It is tempting to favour this second explanation, with the mill perhaps being linked to farms in south-west Hampshire. Dorset Whiteware is not common. It is present in small quantities in Fordingbridge (Mephram 2003), Wimborne Minster (Mephram 1993) and Wareham (Harding *et al.* 1996), as well as in Romsey (Figure 3c). Whilst its distribution may also relate to tenurial links, its distribution around Poole harbour and along the coast could be indicative of



small-scale coastal and riverine exchange of this ware, at a different scale to the transport of the more widely traded Laverstock-type wares.

The final wares to consider are the imports. At site X11, a maximum of four Saintonge Whiteware vessels are present. These are a common type in Southampton (Brown 2002) and Poole (Jarvis 1992, 62), but the quantities present in Christchurch are more akin to those from Wareham (Harding *et al.* 1996) and Romsey (Jervis forthcoming c). These vessels are likely to have reached these towns through a redistribution mechanism, perhaps coastal or riverine trade (perhaps with the Dorset Whitewares), perhaps through tenurial links or, most likely, through visits to Southampton and Poole for some other reason. More perplexing are sherds of North French Whiteware and Rouen-type Ware, along with three sherds of Saintonge Whiteware from site X12. Like the local wares their presence could perhaps be explained through tenurial links, or trading links with Southampton. Rouen-type ware has been identified in Southampton (Brown 2002), at Carisbrooke Castle (Mephram 2000) and at Romsey Abbey, all sites of some status. Alternatively they could be illustrative of direct contact with northern France, perhaps through activities such as fishing or smaller scale trade, as has been suggested for the wide range of imports present in areas occupied by fishermen at Townwall Street, Dover (Kent) (Cotter 2006, 410–11). A further link could exist between the Priory and the Mill, with north-French wares also having been recovered from the garderobe here, along with three sherds of Saintonge Polychrome ware, not known elsewhere in the town.

The supply of pottery to Christchurch clearly occurred at different scales. Locally produced coarsewares were marketed throughout the town and the same is likely to be true of

the Laverstock-type wares found in both assemblages and at sites in the Avon valley. Other wares are likely to have reached site X12 through more complex processes of redistribution, perhaps related to tenorial links or links with the priory. Some imported wares may have also been acquired through similar means, or through visits to Southampton and Poole. A further possibility is that some wares were exchanged in small quantities along the coast.

### Pottery consumption in Christchurch

Our understanding of pottery use is fairly limited in comparison to our knowledge of production and trade (Blinkhorn 1999, 37), being less commonly studied due to the fragmented condition of many excavated assemblages. One aim of this research was to undertake a programme of usewear analysis. Whilst this was carried out on material from Southampton, this has not been undertaken on the Christchurch assemblage, largely due to the fragmented nature of the material from site X12. We can however compare the vessel forms present at these sites with other towns, as well as studying their size, to understand both how pottery was used in medieval Christchurch and how this compares with use in other settlements.

The assemblage from site X12 is very fragmented, hindering a study of vessel form. Because of this the most suitable measure with which to compare assemblages is rim% (see Orton *et al.* 1993, 168–71), as this is less affected by fragmentation and means that larger diagnostic body sherds from site X11 are not included, meaning that we are better able to create comparable datasets. At both sites the majority of vessels are jars, these account for

half of the vessels from site X11 and three-quarters from site X12 (Table 4). This pattern appears common at other sites in Christchurch too (Davies 1984, 40). The next most common are jugs and tripod pitchers, accounting for a third of the vessels from site X11 and 8% from site X12. Again this appears common elsewhere in Christchurch too (Davies 1984, 40). Bowls/dishes are more common at site X12. Other vessels present at site X11 include a lid and a pipkin. A curfew was recovered from site X12.

Usewear analysis of material from Southampton has demonstrated that jars had a range of functions, including cooking, preparation and storage. It should be noted that documentary evidence attests to other functions, for example as rat traps (see Moorhouse 1978). When we compare the sizes of these jars at these sites an interesting pattern emerges. Whilst the majority have a rim diameter between 140–219mm at both sites, at site X12 there are a small number of considerably larger jars (Figure 4). The Southampton analysis has indicated that larger jars are often likely to have been used for storage. The presence of possible storage jars here may be related to the mill. The smaller jars, present at both sites, are likely to have had a wider range of domestic functions, including cooking, food preparation and storage.

The next most common forms are jugs and tripod pitchers. Brown (1992) has argued that these two forms relate to separate ceramic traditions, with tripod pitchers being coarse, handmade vessels, which predate the finer, wheelthrown and more highly decorated medieval jugs. It is likely however that both fulfilled similar functions, for carrying, decanting, serving and storing liquids, as well as having other uses, such as urinals. Jugs are present in a wider range of fabrics than the tripod pitchers, which are only present in Wessex Coarseware (Table

5). There is a considerably higher quantity of the coarse, tripod pitchers at site X12. This is unlikely to be a chronological distinction, as at site X11 there is a complete sequence from the late Saxon period. Instead, this may relate to function or the social status of this site. In Romsey these coarser vessels are most common in similar 'backlands' sites (Jervis forthcoming a), which also had a lower quantity of glazed sandy ware jugs. In Romsey it is suggested that this relates to homes outside the town centre having assemblages more focussed on the processing of food, rather than on serving (Jervis forthcoming a). Such an interpretation does not hold here as there are also a number of glazed sandy ware jugs at site X12. What can perhaps be made is a distinction between vessels used in the context of the kitchen, and perhaps the mill, and those used in serving. Such a distinction can also be made at site X11, where there are a range of jug types present. These consist of undecorated Laverstock and Dorset Quartz-tempered Sandy ware types, as well as decorated Dorset Red-painted Ware and a Saintonge Whiteware vessel. In Southampton these latter vessels are widespread and would appear to have been used in the same way as locally produced vessels (Jervis 2009). In Christchurch, we could suggest that these may have had a different function, perhaps as serving vessels, given the absence of highly decorated jugs and the relative scarcity of this type in the town.

The jugs at site X11 would appear to fit into two functional classes; there are decorated types, possibly used for serving, and plainer, more utilitarian types, probably used for a range of functions in the kitchen. At site X12 there is a higher quantity of these utilitarian forms, but also a wider range of jug types present. These include relatively plain Laverstock-type wares and decorated French products, including Rouen and Saintonge types. Here then we see a different functional composition, three groups can be defined: the plain,

coarse utilitarian pitchers, perhaps used in the kitchen, the undecorated types perhaps used for everyday decanting, carrying and storage, and finer vessels, perhaps used for serving. The low quantity of these finer vessels may indicate that serving was not common, with serving vessels only required on particular occasions.

The higher quantity of bowls at site X12 may also relate to the mill. It has been suggested that in some contexts these were used as standard measures for grain (Blinkhorn 1999, 44), which could be one explanation for their presence here. The bowls appear to cluster into three groups based on size, one with a rim diameter of 160–180mm, one with a rim diameter of 220mm and one with a rim diameter of 240mm. There is a single particularly large vessel, with a rim diameter of 320mm. Bowls are generally rare in domestic contexts, so the relatively high quantity of these vessels here is significant. The other vessels present relate to domestic activity – the pipkin is part of a more general diversification of kitchen vessels in the fourteenth century (Brown 2002, 137), whilst curfews were used to prevent fire from spreading, particularly in urban contexts (Brown 1997, 93).

The Christchurch data compares well with that from other small towns examined as part of this study (Table 6). A similar range of vessels are present in assemblages from Romsey, Andover and Alton, and jars are generally the most common form. In order to compare vessel forms with Southampton it is necessary to use sherd weight, as rim% measures were not available for all sites (Table 7). It is clear that jug use differs greatly between Christchurch and Southampton. At site X11, where there were a significant number of diagnostic body, as well as rim fragments, jugs and tripod pitchers account for 21% of the assemblage, whilst in Southampton jugs account for 29%. The quantity does compare well

with one site in Southampton however, that of York Buildings (see Jervis 2009). Here, 20% of the vessels were jugs/pitchers. This site is at the edge of the walled town, away from the merchants' quarter, and was occupied by iron workers. Like site X11 it lacks the highly decorated serving jugs (Jervis 2009). Therefore a case can be made for jug consumption in Christchurch being similar to that at lower status households in Southampton and in households in other small towns. They are distinguished from the merchant classes who used considerably higher quantities of highly decorated jugs.

Rural sites in the study area generally have a more limited range of vessels present, from a more limited range of sources (Jervis forthcoming a). Generally, jars are the most common vessel form, followed by bowls and jugs. Such a pattern can be observed in the assemblage from the Dorset village of Holworth (Rahtz 1960). Vessel form was not systematically recorded here, but only 10% of sherds were from glazed jugs, with the majority being from coarse, unglazed wares (such as the Wessex/Dorset Coarsewares found in Christchurch (Rahtz 1960, 140). One exception is the manor site at Holbury near Fawley in the eastern New Forest (Dockerill 1971, 6; Jervis Unpublished d). Its role as a manor site is perhaps illustrated through the presence of a higher quantity of jugs, including some imported wares, and a lower quantity of jars (Table 7). Although excavated, this assemblage is now effectively unstratified due to the loss of site records and therefore must be treated with some caution. The range of jugs present however is more akin to an urban household, having a similar range of jug types to site X12. The lower quantity of jars may be indicative of the use of metal cooking pots in this higher status rural household, but may relate to excavation and retention strategies.

Several observations can be made about ceramic consumption in these two households. Firstly, the composition of the assemblages is similar to those from other small towns, and also from lower status areas of Southampton. The high number of jars is typical, as is the presence of a range of jugs used for a variety of functions. It is possible that some decorated types were used as serving vessels, but these were not used in anywhere near as high a quantity as in the merchants' quarter of Southampton. These urban households are differentiated from rural populations through their use of a wider range of jugs. This is likely to relate to two factors; the first being that a wider range of products were available in the urban market, whereas rural settlements were generally supplied only by their local industry, and secondly that jugs were used for a wider range of functions in the urban context. Some similarities can be drawn between the assemblage from Christchurch and those from higher status rural sites, such as Holbury Manor. The presence of bowls and large jars at site X12 may relate to the presence of the royal mill.

### Depositional practice

The high level of fragmentation at site X12 has already been alluded to. This is largely due to depositional practices at this site, which vary greatly from those at site X11. As is clearly demonstrated by Figure 5a, the average sherd weight is considerably lower in pits at site X12 than at site X11, demonstrating that much of this material is likely to be redeposited. This is also clear when one examines the assemblages, with joining sherds present in the pit groups at site X11, whilst at site X12 the material is much less coherent. This is demonstrated by Figure 5b, which illustrates the difference between the sherd count and the maximum

number of vessels, giving a measure of how many sherds refit. In general, a contrast can be drawn between the filling of pits at the two sites. At site X11 pits have secondary deposits, which, based on the presence of joining sherds, were deposited fairly quickly. At site X12 pits were generally filled with redeposited sherds. It is noticeable that the pottery within the postholes, particularly at site X12, are generally large and quite often join, suggesting that these are secondary deposits, perhaps used as packing.

A similar pattern has been observed in Southampton (Jarvis forthcoming b), whereby at the merchant's house at Bull Hall, in the most densely occupied area of the town, secondary deposits were present in pits, whilst at the poorer tenements at York Buildings, pottery was generally deposited in layers. Pits were used more as temporary stores for waste, leading to fragmented, residual material building up in the bases of these features. A similar explanation can perhaps be proposed here. At the larger tenement at site X12 material may have been spread over gardens, with fragmentary material building up through a process of composting. At site X11 the material represents discrete depositional events in which rubbish was used to close redundant features. Some waste from this site may have been removed, possibly to sites such as X12, where it may have been used as compost. One explanation for this is the pressure on space in the centre of medieval towns, with tenements in the area around site X11 being tightly packed. The longer tenements in the area of site X12 may have had space for (possibly seigniorial) gardens (see Dyer 1994, 122). Alternatively the fragmentation could be the result of the high level of building activity undertaken in this area during the medieval period (Jarvis 1983, 45), with this remodelling perhaps leading to the redeposition of middens into pits during site clearance. It is unclear whether, as in Southampton, this points to some socio-economic difference between the occupants of sites



X11 and X12. If anything, the pottery suggests that the royal links meant that the occupants of site X12 were more affluent. We must be cautious however, as the redeposited nature of the material means that much of the waste may have been removed from the site, meaning that the quantities may not be a representative sample of what was actually consumed at site X12.

## Conclusions

Although the assemblages considered are small, this analysis has shown that there is clearly value to the re-examination of previously published ceramic assemblages. New data from elsewhere has allowed us to take a fresh look at the material and ask new questions of it. Defining and quantifying the material in such a way that it can be compared with other sites has allowed us to examine the complex patterns of pottery supply and use in Christchurch. Quantification has also allowed a detailed study of deposition to be undertaken, with the results of the statistical analysis being integrated with the site stratigraphy and other elements of the ceramic analysis to attempt to understand the differences observed. Much effort has been spent studying the assemblages from large towns such as Southampton and Poole. This study has demonstrated that an analysis of the material from smaller towns can be equally rewarding, and provide a more rounded picture of pottery use in the medieval period.

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## **Table Captions**



**Table 1:** Quantification of wares present at sites X11 and X12 (by sherd count, sherd weight (g) and maximum number of vessels)

**Table 2:** Occurrence of vessel forms by ware (Maximum Vessel Count)

**Table 3:** Quantification of rim forms of Wessex Coarseware jars (rim %)

**Table 4:** Composition of the assemblages by vessel type (rim %)

**Table 5:** Composition of jug assemblages by ware (Maximum Vessel Count and rim%)

**Table 6:** Comparison of the forms present in assemblages from the small towns of Christchurch, Romsey, Andover and Alton (rim %). The star denotes the presence of a lid

**Table 7:** Comparison of the forms present in assemblages from Christchurch, Southampton and Holbury Manor (sherd weight)

## Figure Captions

*Figure 1: A) Location of Christchurch and sites mentioned in the text (redrawn from Jarvis 1983, fig. 1). B) Location of Sites X11 and X12*

*Figure 2: Examples of Wessex Coarseware rim forms (redrawn from Jarvis 1983, figs 17 and 18): A) Simple, everted rim. B) Simple everted rim, with squared profile. C) Thickened, everted rim. D) Thickened, everted rim, with squared profile. E) Hammerhead rim. F) Lid Seated rim. G) Bifid rim*

*Figure 3: A) Distribution of Dorset Red-painted Ware in the Christchurch Area. B) Distribution of Laverstock-type Ware in the Christchurch Area. C) Distribution of Dorset Whiteware in the Christchurch Area*

*Figure 4: Bar chart and cumulative frequency plot illustrating the rim diameters of jars from sites X11*

*Figure 5: A) Comparison of the average sherd weights of medieval pottery in pits at sites X11 and X12. B) Bar chart illustrating the difference between Sherd Count and Maximum Vessel Count at sites X11 and X12*