

GLAZED REDWARE POTTERY AND KILN WASTE FROM SUTTON HEATH, SUFFOLK

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INTRODUCTION

WHILST STUDYING A small assemblage of late medieval pottery wasters from a pottery production site in Sutton, Suffolk, a small group of pottery and ceramic building material from Sutton Heath was brought to the author's attention. The small group of artefacts was collected in 1949 by a local historian and archaeologist, John Treherne, at an unspecified location, 'ploughed out' on Sutton Heath (IPSMG acc. no. 1949-63), presumably somewhere in the area of Sutton Common or Sutton Walks (Fig. 67). Examination of the finds suggested a 16th-18th-century date, based on similar material from Norwich (Jennings 1981) and Fulmodeston (Wade-Martins 1983).

In general, the area around Sutton consists of sandy heathland, but there are outcrops of London Clay which could have been exploited for pottery manufacture. Medieval pottery production sites are known in the nearby parishes of Melton (Anderson and Newman 1999) and Hollesley (West forthcoming), and the late medieval production site noted above has recently been identified at Little Haugh, in the north-east corner of Sutton parish (Anderson 2000). The proximity of the River Deben and the market town of Woodbridge were probably also factors in the siting of these potteries.

THE ASSEMBLAGE

Apart from a single base sherd of gritty medieval coarseware, all ceramic finds were of post-medieval date. They consisted of twenty sherds of pottery and two pieces of tile. Five sherds were black-glazed wares and there were three sherds of unglazed redwares. The remaining 'pottery' consisted of saggars bases and rims. The pottery forms are very similar to those from Fulmodeston in north Norfolk (Wade-Martins 1983), although the saggars are different.

Fabrics

Three fabrics, corresponding to the pottery, the saggars and the kiln tiles respectively, were identified as follows:

- Fabric 1. Fine orange fabric containing moderate to abundant white and pink quartz sand (0.2-0.4mm, sub-rounded), common soft red ferrous fragments (most less than 0.5mm but occasionally much coarser, rounded and sub-rounded), and moderate fine white mica.
- Fabric 2. Medium dark red fabric containing moderate to abundant white, clear and pink quartz sand (up to 0.5mm, sub-rounded, coarser grains more common), common coarse soft ferrous fragments, moderate fine white mica, and occasional very large quartz pieces. Well-fired to near-vitrified.
- Fabric 3. Fine sandy red fabric, less compact than the other two, and poorly mixed with large lenses of lighter clay and streaks of white-firing clay. Otherwise, same basic inclusions as Fabrics 1 and 2. Very well fired.

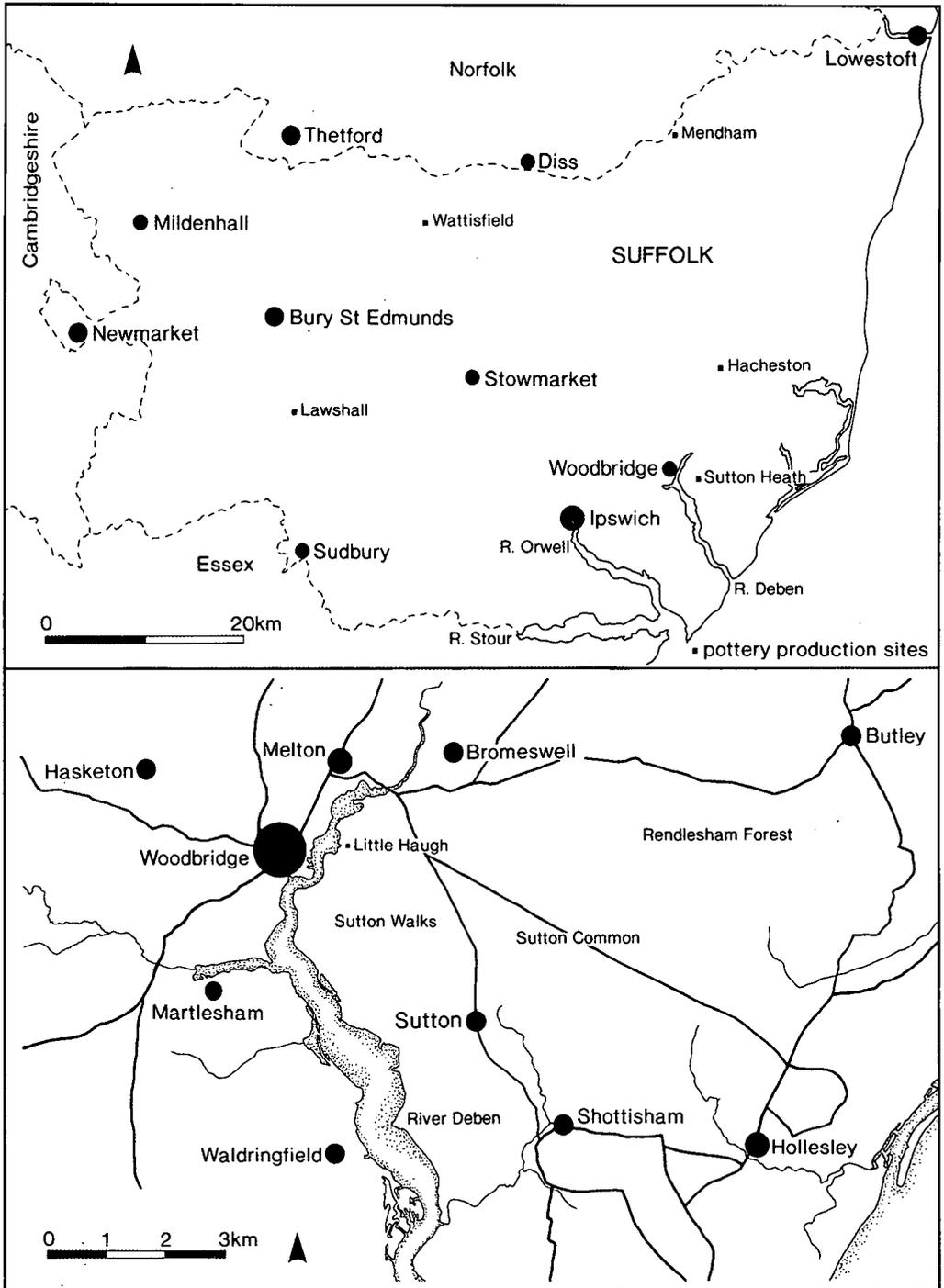


FIG. 67 – Location maps showing major towns and known blackware production sites in Suffolk. Note that Sutton Heath covers the areas now marked as Sutton Common and Sutton Walks.

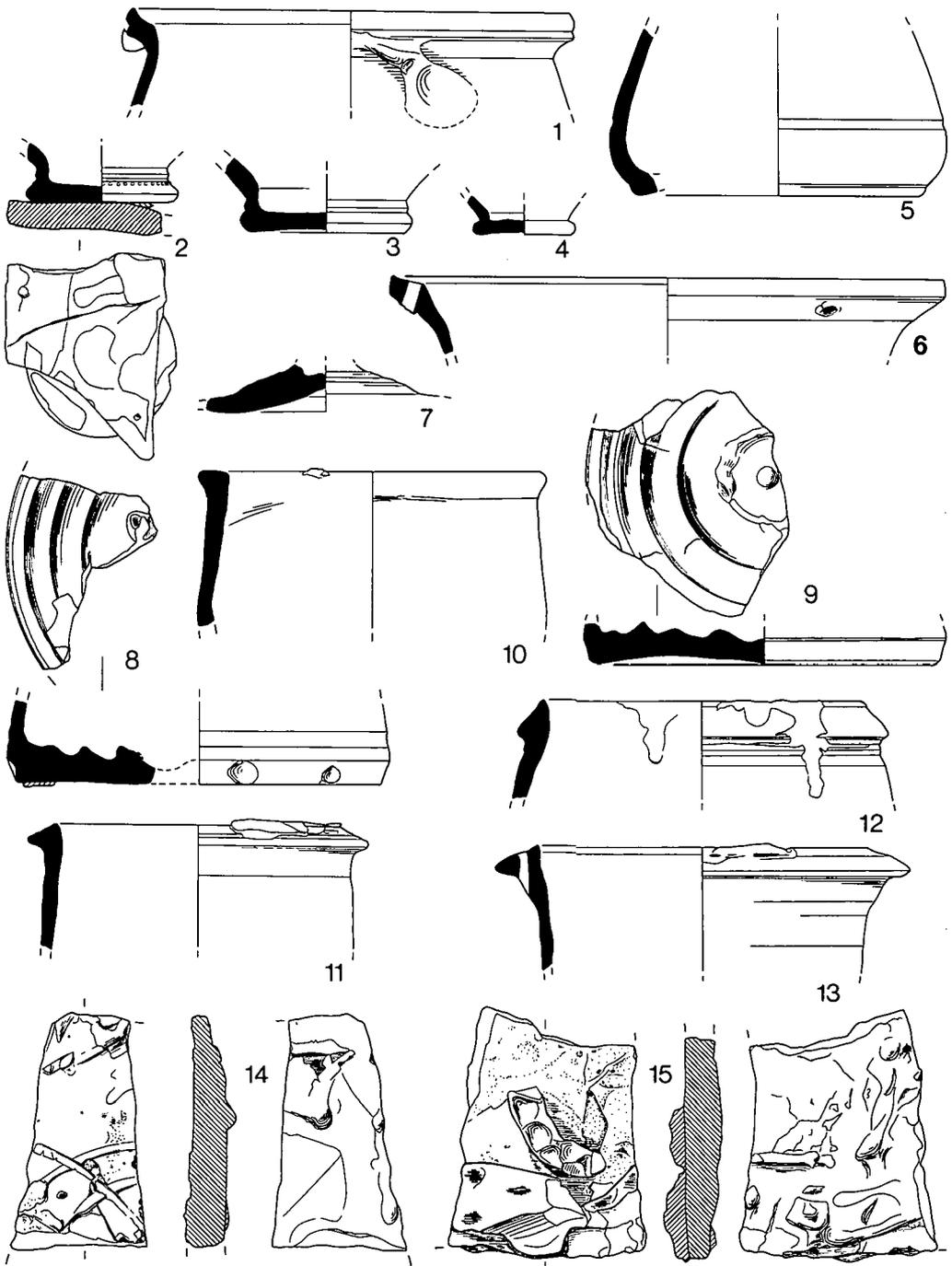


FIG. 68 - Pottery and kiln waste from Sutton Heath (scale 1:4).

Forms

The glazed pottery vessels consisted of a handled jar rim, three splayed bases of globular vessels, and the base of a 'stewpot'. The unglazed vessels were a bowl with a pierced rim, and a possible lid. The following catalogue lists their attributes in detail (Fig. 68).

1. Handled storage vessel rim, *c.*260mm diameter, 6%. Lug-type handle attached by large rounded pad on shoulder, and luted below rim. Rim type typical of transitional late medieval and post-medieval East Anglian forms. Fabric 1. Dark brown glaze all over. (cf Fulmodeston Fig. 25 no. 195).
2. Base of globular vessel attached to fragment of kiln tile, 87mm diameter, 100%. Neck above splayed foot is decorated with rouletted raised pellets. Fabric 1. Dark brown glaze all over. Tile is glazed over broken edges.
3. Base of globular vessel, 103mm diameter, 70%. Burnt glaze patches on underside. Fabric 1. Dark brown to black glaze all over.
4. Base of small globular vessel, 60mm diameter, 100%. Fabric 1. Yellowish to brown glaze externally and burnt glaze inside.
5. Globular vessel with slight footring base. Fabric 1. Not glazed externally, and only thin and burnt patches of glaze inside. Overfired. Possibly a 'stewpot' (cf Fulmodeston Fig. 14 no. 79).
6. Bowl rim, *c.*310mm diameter, 13%. Fabric 1. Unglazed, except for a small area of clear glaze near the broken surface of the rim edge. (cf Fulmodeston Fig. 28, no. 234). The rim is pierced at one end of the sherd.
7. Two sherds of a possible lid. Fabric 1. Unglazed.

The remaining eleven vessels were probably all saggars and consisted of three bases and eight rims. All were in Fabric 2. The bases had deeply corrugated interiors (Fig. 68.8). These are unusual, and are so far unparalleled. They were all covered in dark brown glaze internally, and had slight kiln scars on the underside surfaces, indicating that they were used with the open end upwards. This seems to be unusual and may explain the presence of the corrugated floor, which would not be required if the vessel were used in the 'normal' way, with the base to the top.

The rims were in three basic types, illustrated in Fig. 68. Type 1 was a simple flat-topped slightly widened rim (one example, Fig. 68.10), Type 2 was triangular (six examples, Fig. 68.11–12), and Type 3 was wedge-shaped (one example, Fig. 68.13). The type 3 rim was pierced horizontally at one broken edge. The rim sizes were not certain as the sherds were all relatively small and their curvature suggested that the saggars may have been slightly ovoid in plan. All rim sherds were partly covered in glaze and most were partially or fully vitrified, and one had patches of glaze on a broken edge. In most cases, drips of glaze had been caught on the rim, and the position of pooled glaze on these confirmed the suggestion that the open end of the sagger was to the top. Presumably the tapered shape was designed to prevent welding of vessels as much as possible, although in some cases there were pieces of other vessels adhering to the rim ends.

The three pieces of kiln tile (one adhering to the base of a globular vessel) were all covered in brown glaze and kiln scars (Figs. 68.2, 68.14–15). There was clear evidence of continued use with several intercutting scars on two tiles. A small, crudely formed kiln ring fragment was attached to the surface of one tile, adjacent to another irregular clay lump which was covered in glaze (Fig. 68.15).

DISCUSSION

Known production sites of post-medieval black-glazed redwares are rare in Norfolk and Suffolk. Only one has been published in Norfolk, the aforementioned Fulmodeston, and another is known at Wroxham (note in Jennings 1981). Sixteenth–17th-century kilns with unspecified products were excavated in Cringleford near Norwich (Cherry 1977, 98). In Suffolk, kiln waste including blackwares has been identified in the north of the county at Mendham and Wattisfield, both areas of pottery production in the late medieval period, in the east at Hacheston (Owles and Smedley 1968, 77) and centrally at Lawshall (Martin *et al.* 1990). None of these has been fully recorded by an experienced pottery specialist.

It is likely that many more post-medieval potteries await discovery in Suffolk. In Essex, there is documentary and/or archaeological evidence for at least twenty-seven potteries of this date (Cotter 2000). The small quantity of known sites in Suffolk may simply be attributable to lack of historical research, although it is possible that more were established in Essex due to its proximity to London.

The general homogeneity of East Anglian redware fabrics and vessel forms (particularly bases, which form the main part of this assemblage) in this period makes it unlikely that pottery recovered from sites in Suffolk, or further afield, will be attributable to the Sutton pottery rather than to any other regional source. This small assemblage does, however, indicate continuity of pottery production in this part of Suffolk from the medieval period onwards, and adds another pottery production site to the list of post-medieval sites in the county.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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