

## CHAPTER 6

### Pots, Pins and People

*And paid to the wife of Henry Roworth for washing the linen and napery belonging to the stock of the Castle on divers occasions this year 14d ... And paid to Henry Roworth, carpenter, for working within the Castle for 4 days and a half this year, in performance of carpentry work in the stable there ... receiving 5d. a day* (Account Rolls of 1442–3, cited in Thomas 1920–24, 235)

This chapter presents the first detailed analysis of the artefacts recovered during construction work on the site of Sheffield Castle in the early and mid-20th century, incorporating new research undertaken for this book by Chris Cumberpatch (medieval and post-medieval pottery), Jane Young (shell-tempered pottery), Quita Mould (leather), and Lorraine Mephram (all other small finds).<sup>21</sup> These objects are mainly curated in the stores of Museums Sheffield, although some are currently on display in the city's Weston Park Museum (the former City Museum) and the 16th-century Bishops' House in Meersbrook Park. Despite the undeniable challenges posed by the state of the physical archive, we have been able to generate important new information about activities on the site, especially craft working, while the pottery assemblage, in particular, enables us to place Sheffield Castle in the context of local and regional economic networks and cultural preferences.

We took the decision to incorporate the results of the specialist finds reports in the main body of the book, rather than relegating them to appendices as so often happens in archaeological publications (a tendency highlighted in Bayley and Watson 2009). We read this material culture alongside the documentary record, and focus on the labourers, craftworkers and servants who built, repaired, provisioned and maintained the castle. We have been told in recent scholarship of the importance of looking 'behind the castle gate' and of exploring the 'lived experience' of the ordinary people of castles (Johnson 2002, 161–75; Johnson 2017a; Dempsey 2019, 783), but such analyses have hitherto been conducted and presented in largely abstract terms, dominated by historical sources, limited to castles with extensive surviving architecture (e.g. Gilchrist 1999; Johnson 2017b), or with a focus on acts of resistance to elite power.<sup>22</sup> Here we offer a new approach, grounded in the material remains of the most mundane activities, all of which, nevertheless, were implicated in the construction and maintenance of the household.

---

<sup>21</sup> Their archive reports and the associated data tables are deposited in the digital archive hosted by the Archaeology Data Service (<https://doi.org/10.5284/1074899>).

<sup>22</sup> We should also note that the study of castles is male-dominated. As Oliver Creighton (2002, 6) pointed out, Ella Armitage (1841–1931, in honour of whom a building at the University of Sheffield was recently named), was a 'rare female castellologist'.

---

#### How to cite this book chapter:

Moreland, J. and Hadley, D. (with A. Tuck and M. Rajic). 2020. *Sheffield Castle: archaeology, archives, regeneration, 1927–2018*, pp. 185–214. York: White Rose University Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22599/SheffieldCastle.f>  
CC BY-NC 4.0, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0>

### Living with pots

The circumstances in which Armstrong and Himsworth were working, and the documented disinterest among the construction workers in finds recovery (see Chapter 2, Section: Doing archaeology in Sheffield 1927–30), partly explain why the surviving pottery collection from 1927 to 1930 is much smaller than that deriving from Butcher's work and commensurately less informative. Only 79 sherds survive in the Armstrong assemblage, in contrast to 1812 sherds in Butcher's. At the time of our analysis, a further 21 sherds were on display in Weston Park Museum and 18 in Bishops' House, some of which had been subject to restoration. Site context information survives for 89% of the pottery in the Butcher assemblage, which is often quite detailed with respect to location and depth of recovery; in contrast, the only context we have for pottery in the Armstrong assemblage is the year it was recovered or that it was from the moat. There had been previous attempts to catalogue the pottery assemblage recovered by Butcher (see Chapter 4), but these do not conform to modern recording standards and were undertaken before the development of the current widely used fabric series. In our analysis the medieval and early post-medieval pottery was recorded using the regional medieval ceramics reference collection by Cumberpatch (2004) as a guide, while the later wares were reported on using similar principles. The shell-tempered pottery was recorded using the fabric codenames of the City of Lincoln Archaeology Unit, which pioneered the analysis of such fabrics through the work of Jane Young and the late Alan Vince (Young *et al.* 2005).

It is important to recognise that pottery production, and hence the dating that emerges from pottery assemblages, does not map directly on to the chronological brackets used by studies of other types of evidence, in particular with respect to where the divide between 'medieval' and 'post-medieval' lies. In the following discussion, the term 'late medieval' refers to pottery dating to between the mid-11th and mid-15th century, while 'early post-medieval' pottery dates to between the mid-15th century and early 18th century. The majority of the pottery in both the Butcher and Armstrong archives belongs to these periods, largely deriving from 17th-century deposits, and is the focus in this chapter; the much smaller assemblages of early modern and recent date are discussed in the digital archive (Table 6.1; see also Chapter 7 for the more extensive collections of this date from the 2018 excavations).

**Table 6.1:** Proportions of pottery according to broad date range in the Armstrong and Butcher archives.

Period	% of total
Medieval	28.5
Post-medieval	65.1
Early modern	5.8
Recent	0.45
Total	99.85

#### *The earliest pottery from Sheffield Castle*

As we have seen throughout this book, there has been speculation about Anglo-Saxon occupation on the site of Sheffield Castle since the 19th century. Armstrong (1930, 19, 22–4) claimed to have identified traces of as many as two timber structures of that date and to have recovered from the moat Anglo-Saxon pottery, which he described as being '[t]hin, dark grey ware, polished surface, one fragment shows trace of spiral ornament. Portions of body of large vessel and base of a smaller one.' Unfortunately, he provided no illustrations of this pottery and none matching this description survives in the archive, nor did it when Butcher (1972a, 8) checked c.50 years ago, and in any case it is likely, as discussed in Chapter 3, that Armstrong had been mistaken about the date of this pottery. There are, however, two sherds of different fabric that may be of late Anglo-Saxon date: a single sherd of Stamford-type ware in the Butcher assemblage (from foundation shaft E19), and a similar unstratified sherd, although its finish is atypical of Stamford ware and so is catalogued as Medieval Whiteware. The slightly sandy fabric of the identifiable sherd is similar to Stamford ware Fabric A, which dates to between the mid-10th and late 11th century (Kilmurry 1980, 130–3). However, it is not unequivocal evidence for late Saxon-period activity on the castle site, given the wide date range of the type and the fact that it was found fairly

high up in the shaft deposits (marked as P11 on the north section of E19; Butcher 1958–62e; Figure 5.29). The lack of any clearly pre-Conquest pottery should not be a surprise given that pottery of the Anglo-Saxon period is extremely rare in South Yorkshire (Cumberpatch 2016; Cumberpatch and Young n.d., 3).

Shell-tempered wares comprise the majority of the earliest fabrics from the castle, with 69 sherds, representing no more than 15 vessels. Four unprovenanced sherds were found by Armstrong, but most were recovered by Butcher from the bottom of the south moat in foundation shaft H2-4 in front of the gatehouse; one of his section drawings notes the recovery of ‘early Saxon-Norman [pottery] from x + y buckets from ditch bottom’ (Butcher 1958–62d). Two shell-tempered sherds come from handmade Lincolnshire Fine-shelled ware jars or bowls of 11th- to 12th-century date (Young *et al.* 2005, 81–8). These vessels would have been manufactured in central Lincolnshire, but the type was traded to much of the East Midlands and south, west and east Yorkshire, and 12 sherds were recovered in early excavations at Conisbrough Castle (Cumberpatch and Young n.d., 4, 6). A single sherd is from a medium-sized jar in Lincolnshire Early Medieval Shelly ware; in Lincoln, this fabric has been dated to between the mid-12th and first quarter of the 13th century (Young *et al.* 2005, 113; Cumberpatch and Young n.d., 6). As we will see in Chapter 7, these sherds may provide some indication of when this section of the moat was cut.

The remaining 66 sherds come from just 12 vessels of North Lincolnshire shell-tempered ware, mainly jars of varying size, and at least one large bowl. Most of the vessels have external soot deposits, suggesting their use for cooking over an open fire (similar deposits coated a number of the pots found at Conisbrough Castle; see Cumberpatch and Young n.d., 4, 6). This ware dates to as early as the late 12th century, but three of the vessels recovered are of 13th- to 14th-century types. The assemblage is the most westerly known occurrence of this ware, which was used throughout northern Lincolnshire and South Yorkshire, and, although no production site has yet been identified, the increasing numbers of finds in Yorkshire suggest that there may have been one (or more) in the region (Young 2018; Cumberpatch and Young n.d., 7). In sum, our analysis of the material available suggests that all of the shell-tempered wares post-date the mid-11th century, and that in the late 11th and 12th centuries the occupants of the site were sourcing their pottery either from Lincolnshire or South Yorkshire.

### *The late medieval and early post-medieval pottery*

In the only published account of late medieval pottery from Sheffield Castle, Leslie Armstrong (1930, 24) summarised the assemblage that he had recovered as follows:

Twelfth to sixteenth century levels provided a large range of wares partially glazed externally with green, yellow and purple slips. The paste is extremely hard, almost metallic, and the whole are of continental origin, believed to be German. Chiefly cooking vessels, jugs and tygs and all incomplete. I saw in 1928 exactly similar fragments of several of these wares in south Sweden amongst material excavated from an early mediaeval site, and which Scandinavian archaeologists considered were imported from north Germany.

As we will see, this view of the late medieval pottery assemblage has been completely overturned by our new work. In this section, we characterise the pottery from the castle and consider what it reveals about pottery use by the site’s inhabitants.

### COAL MEASURES WARES

It is unsurprising that the late 13th- to early 16th-century pottery is dominated by various types of Coal Measures wares, since pottery production in South Yorkshire largely involved exploitation of Coal Measures clays. Coal Measures wares have been identified elsewhere in Sheffield, showing that the town fell within the marketing zone for them, which extended to sites in West Yorkshire and north Derbyshire (Cumberpatch in prep. 1). Two potteries are known in the Don Valley in South Yorkshire: at Rawmarsh, on what is now the outskirts of Rotherham, and at Firsby Hall Farm, near Conisbrough (Hayfield and Buckland 1989; Cumberpatch 2004). Their products have been grouped in our study into two fabrics labelled Coal Measures Whiteware and Coal

Measures Fineware (Hayfield and Buckland 1989, 10–11; Cumberpatch 2004), with the latter distinguished by their harder fabrics and generally finer texture, although the inclusions in both wares are broadly similar. Whether the two types represent the products of different potteries or changes in manufacturing practice over time (or a combination of both) is unclear, although both types seem to date to the 14th to early 15th century. Coal Measures Whiteware is particularly common in foundation shafts G22, G23 and H2-4, with smaller quantities from F22, H3, H23, H32 and H2, while Coal Measures Fineware is somewhat rarer, with sherds from E19, G22, G5 and H3 (Figure 5.1 for locations of these foundation shafts). The assemblage shows greater variation in the fabrics of these two wares than has been noted on other sites, and may represent the output of an unknown pottery or potteries in the region.

Chris Cumberpatch (1997, 146) has argued that up to the mid-15th century the production and use of pottery in medieval Yorkshire and Humberside was characterised by two ceramic traditions – gritty wares and sandy wares – which embody a series of oppositions and contrasts. Thus

green glazed, decorated and brightly coloured vessels [including jugs, pitchers, pipkins (a type of cooking pot), and dripping pans] usually in a sandy fabric, are associated with the more public aspects of cooking, with the serving of food and drink and with the roasting of meat, a higher status form of cooking than stewing or boiling ... Unglazed, undecorated and often discoloured vessels [including jars, cooking pots, bowls and pancheons], normally in gritty fabrics, appear associated with the more mundane boiling and stewing of food, with the preparation of food, notably dairy products, the brewing of ale and the storing of food.

He went on to argue that the glazed, coloured, sandy-textured vessels were associated with more public and prestigious activities, while the duller, unglazed, gritty wares operated within less public, lower-status spheres (Cumberpatch 1997, 146; also 2003, 6). These ceramic forms not only elucidate some of the essential structures of late medieval society; they were the means through which those structures were lived and reproduced. It is significant, therefore, that production of Coal Measures wares seems to have changed some time in the 15th century, with the use of thick purple glaze and higher firing temperatures resulting in harder, denser, dark grey (i.e. reduced) fabrics, which continued in use through the 16th, and perhaps into the 17th, century.

The Don Valley potters were fortunate that the local clay could withstand the temperatures required to produce vessels whose physical characteristics approached the increasingly popular stoneware (Cumberpatch 2003; 2002b, 175–6 for discussion of these wares at Pontefract Castle). This transition from Coal Measures Whiteware to Coal Measures Purple ware does not seem to have been primarily a matter of functionality but was probably linked to changing perceptions of pottery, manifest in the demise of the aforementioned medieval pottery tradition and the emergence of a rather different post-medieval tradition. While these Coal Measures Purple wares can be distinguished from medieval types by their fabrics and glaze colours, they simultaneously show considerable continuity with earlier practices with respect to the kind of vessels produced and the pattern of glazing (Cumberpatch 1996, 64; 2003, 8). The potters may have been consciously adapting their techniques to the requirements of their customers, while retaining elements of their traditional manufacturing practice (Cumberpatch 2003). We recorded 149 sherds of such pottery (including Coal Measures Purple-type wares), and a number of other sherds that were variations around the basic Coal Measures-type fabric (e.g. 10 sherds of Coal Measures Gritty ware). This may reveal that the castle was drawing pottery from other, as yet unidentified, potteries in the local area using such clays, which contain varying quantities and sizes of red grit (appearing as vesicular black grains when fired to a high temperature), quartz and in some cases white rock fragments, possibly mudstone. The paucity of local parallels reflects the lack of excavated medieval sites in Sheffield, but may also reveal that the castle was being supplied by a pottery or potteries making such variants on Coal Measures wares that had few other markets.

The Coal Measures Purple wares show some degree of heterogeneity but are less diverse than the earlier whitewares. The principal distinction identified in the castle assemblage is between the typical Coal Measures Purple wares known from Firsby Hall Farm and Rawmarsh (principally in foundation shafts G22, G23 and H2-4, with smaller quantities elsewhere in the western moat, and in front of the gatehouse) and a finer-textured variant recorded as Fine Coal Measures Purple ware (with minor variants indicated by the -type qualifier; the sub-type is particularly common in foundation shaft G23 with smaller quantities in E19, F21, F22, G5, G7 and H2-4; Figures 5.26, 5.28, 5.29, 5.30).

### HALLGATE A, DONCASTER

Among the other medieval wares are 19 sherds from Doncaster, all but one of Hallgate A fabric, conventionally dated to the 13th century (Buckland *et al.* 1979), although it may have originated in the 12th century (Cumberpatch in prep. 2). Most are from the Butcher assemblage, with four sherds from foundation shafts G22, H13 and H23, but the majority are unstratified; an unprovenanced jug handle survives in the Armstrong assemblage. The scarcity of Doncaster wares from the castle is in striking contrast to the situation at Conisbrough Castle, where they dominated the earlier phases almost to the exclusion of other contemporary wares (Cumberpatch 2013; 2014a; 2016; Cumberpatch and Young n.d., 8–9).

### BRACKENFIELD WARES

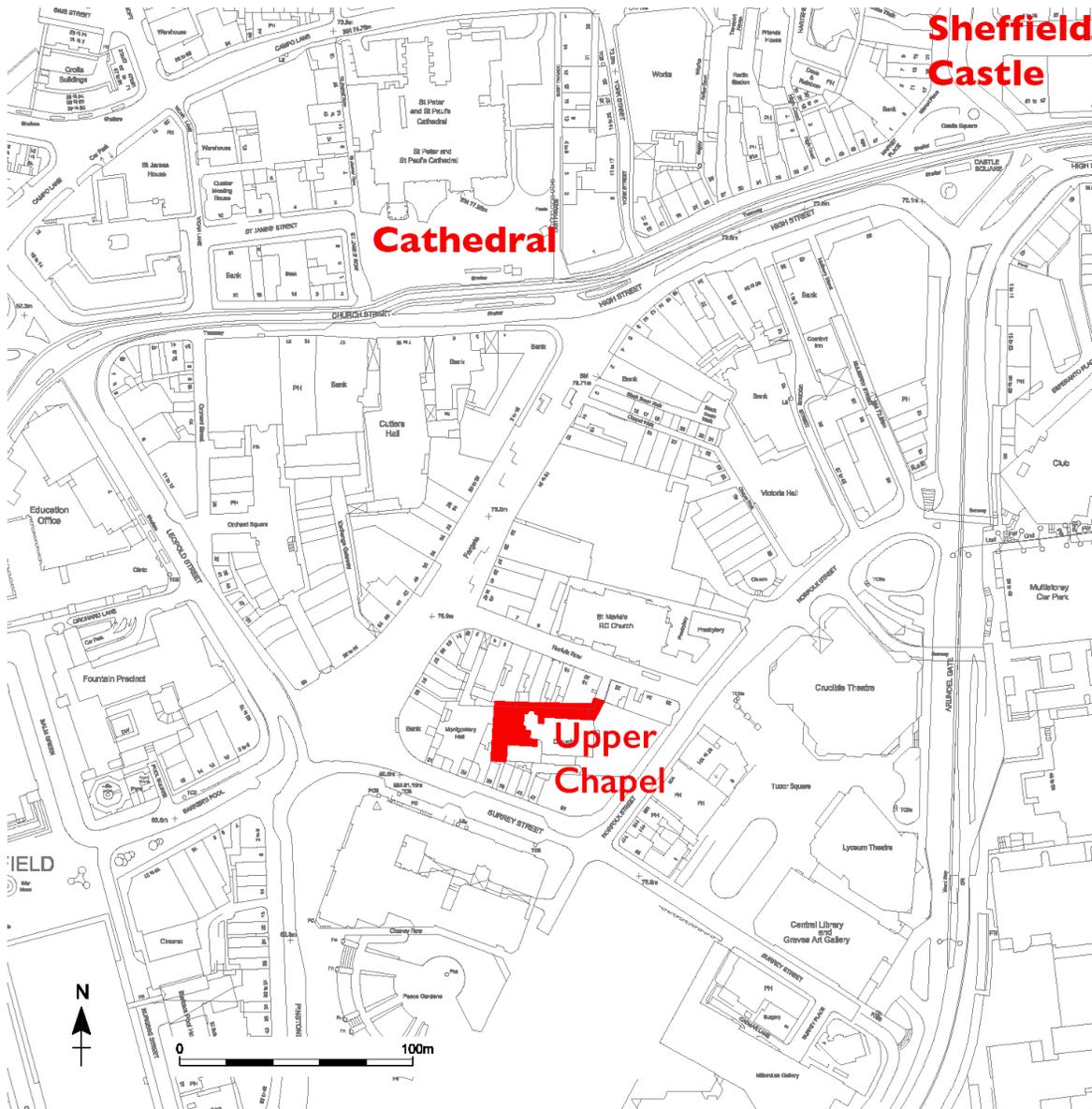
Seven sherds of pottery derive from the Brackenfield kilns near Chesterfield (Derbs). The 1972 excavations of these kilns remain unpublished, and much of the site archive has been lost (Cumberpatch 2004), so the industry cannot be dated any more precisely than to the 13th to 15th centuries (Cumberpatch and Thorpe 2002). Our analysis of the castle assemblage has identified the first such fabrics in Sheffield, but their recovery should not be surprising since Brackenfield wares have been found in some quantity at Peveril Castle (Derbs), just over 30km to the north-west of Chesterfield, revealing that vessels from the Brackenfield kilns were transported over considerable distances and rough country. Six sherds of Brackenfield ware survive in the Butcher assemblage (F9, F22, G22, H2-4), all but one of them body sherds, the exception being a rod handle from a jug (F9). In the Armstrong assemblage, but lacking any context beyond the date of recovery (1927), is the handle of a pipkin, a vessel type common in the Brackenfield kiln assemblage (Cumberpatch 2004, figs 42, 43, 46, 48, table 22).

### HUMBERWARE

From the late 13th to mid-/late 15th century, Humberware was a highly significant regional type, produced at multiple sites around the Humber, of which the kilns at Holme-on-Spalding-Moor and West Cowick (both in East Yorks) are the best known (Mayes and Hayfield 1980; Hayfield 1988). Humberware is found in very large quantities across Yorkshire and neighbouring counties (Watkins 1987; Hayfield 1992; Cumberpatch 2002b, 181) but only three sherds feature in the Sheffield Castle assemblage: two base sherds in the Butcher assemblage (foundation shafts E18 and H2-4) and an unprovenanced neck and handle from a jug, or cistern, in the Armstrong assemblage (it was similarly scarce at Conisbrough Castle; Cumberpatch and Young n.d., 11–12). Humberware continued to be manufactured into the 16th century, and three sherds of the later variants (Late Humberware (H2-4), Green Glazed Sandy ware (no context) and a reduced version of the latter (labelled NE-NW 4–4', 6")) are also present in the assemblage.

### SHEFFIELD WARE

The late medieval assemblage also includes sherds of pottery made in Sheffield, by an industry that exploited a clay source similar to that used for the Coal Measure wares (Cumberpatch 2011; Vince 2011). In this context it is notable that, in the preamble to his 1637 survey, John Harrison tells us that within 'the Mannor of Sheffield' there is 'very good clay for pots & bricks' (Ronksley 1908, 3). Excavations by ARCUS in 2006 at Norfolk Row, around 400m south-west of the castle, recovered an assemblage of medieval kiln wasters and fragments of kiln structure, suggesting that a medieval pottery kiln was located nearby (Baker *et al.* 2011, 3.2.1; Baker and Baker 2008). Although it could be dated no more closely than to the 13th to 15th century, this was the first excavated evidence for industry within the medieval core of Sheffield. The sherds found at the castle are the largest known collection of wares from this kiln. In the publication of the Norfolk Row excavations the fabric was given a variety of names describing its appearance, including Oxidised Sandy ware, Oxidised Gritty ware, Glazed Red Earthenware and Northern Gritty ware (Baker *et al.* 2011; Vince 2011), but here we refer to it as Sheffield ware, describing near-identical fabrics as Sheffield-type wares (Figure 6.1). In total there are 51 sherds of these two wares in the castle assemblage: four in the Armstrong assemblage (three body sherds and a base), all recovered from the moat, while the material in the Butcher assemblage is from foundation shafts H2-4, G5, G7, G22, G23,



**Figure 6.1:** Location map of the production site of Sheffield ware pottery at the Upper Chapel south-west of the castle. University of Sheffield.

F9, F22 and E19; Figures 5.26, 5.28, 5.29). They include rims and both rod and strap handles, probably from jugs and a body sherd which may have come from a bowl or a small pancheon (a wide shallow bowl). Decoration is largely limited to glaze (green to brown, often mottled), with just one sherd bearing decoration in the form of parallel incised grooves on the external surface.

#### SURREY WHITEWARE

The Armstrong assemblage includes one small sherd identified as either Surrey Whiteware (formerly known as Tudor Green ware) or Border ware. Dated in London to between the mid-13th and later 15th centuries (Pearce and Vince 1988), Surrey Whitewares may continue into the early 16th century, while Border ware dates to the 16th and 17th centuries. Although generally rare in northern England, Border wares were identified in

castle assemblages at Pontefract (Cumberpatch 2002b, 186), Conisbrough (Cumberpatch 2013; Cumberpatch and Young n.d., 12–13) and Sandal (Moorhouse 1983a, 93).

#### OTHER MEDIEVAL WARES

There are a variety of other late medieval fabrics among the assemblage which cannot be identified to specific known types and have, thus, been assigned generic names based on the characteristics of individual sherds or groups of sherds. The relatively large proportion of such unidentified wares is unsurprising given how few medieval and early post-medieval sites have been excavated in Sheffield; there are consequently few pottery assemblages of this date from which more information might be derived. These include 55 sherds of various types of sandy wares. Six sherds in a buff, sandy-textured fabric (Buff Sandy ware) are in the Butcher assemblage (foundation shafts G23, H2-4, and four joining sherds from H3). Buff-firing sandy and gritty wares are a feature of the wider regional medieval tradition which extends from the northern part of South Yorkshire, across West and North Yorkshire and into the North East (Cumberpatch 2002b, 176–7; Cumberpatch and Young n.d., 11 for finds from Conisbrough Castle). Subsumed under the name Reduced Sandy ware is a diverse group of wares from the Butcher foundation shafts D22-23, E19, F21, G23, H2, H2-4, and 5HY, and from the moat and a context labelled '1927' in the Armstrong assemblage. Three sherds from the Butcher assemblage are described as Fine Reduced Sandy ware; one from G23 is heavily overfired (or perhaps secondarily burnt) but the two from H2-4 bear a resemblance to Scarborough II ware (East Yorks), dated to the late 12th or 13th century.

Two sherds from the Butcher assemblage (G22 and H3) bear thin white slip coatings on pale orange bodies, a practice that has been identified regionally among Tees Valley B/C ware from north-east England, between the late 12th and early 14th centuries (Didsbury 2010) and in newly discovered late 11th- and 12th-century kilns in Pontefract (Roberts *et al.* 2013). Some potters were attempting to provide buff or white vessels, presumably in response to consumer demand, or possibly influenced by French potters, as even where the clay was iron-rich and tended towards an orange colour the slip coatings have no clear practical or functional value.

The remaining sandy wares include four sherds from the Butcher assemblage (G22, G23, H2-4, H3), classified as Local Oxidised Sandy ware. The combination of quartz and red grit, in some cases with fine white streaks, suggests the use of a Coal Measures clay but the origin of the pottery remains obscure and the later 12th- to 14th-century date range is merely indicative. One sherd from the moat in the Armstrong assemblage is classified as Oxidised Sandy ware, and may also be of local origin. Six sherds classified as Late Oxidised Sandy wares (G23) date to between the late 14th and 17th centuries. With the exception of a strap handle, all the fragments are body sherds. Four sherds from the Armstrong assemblage, all from the moat, are classified as Late Medieval Sandy ware; these comprise two body sherds and two bases, one reused as a pot disc, a common find from many periods, and considered to be gaming pieces or counters (Cumberpatch 2010, 25). Finally, there are three unstratified sherds, classified as Late Medieval Gritty ware, comprising two sherds of lid-seated rims from jars, while the third is a base in a very unusual hard, lumpy fabric containing abundant quartz and voids.

#### CISTERCIAN WARE, BLACKWARE AND YELLOW WARES

The assemblage includes 84 sherds of Cistercian ware, which is notable for being closely associated with the transformation of the pottery industry in the mid-15th century and the end of the medieval pottery tradition discussed above (Cumberpatch 2003, 8). Despite the name, the type has no specific association with the Cistercian Order, other than having been recovered from post-Dissolution contexts on a number of religious sites (Cumberpatch 2003; Boyle 2006). Six sherds are listed as Cistercian ware type as they are fabrics which do not conform to the typical characteristics, although some may have been slightly underfired Cistercian ware. Cistercian wares were particularly common in foundation shafts G22 and G23. Vessel forms include bottles or costrels, but the majority of sherds are from small cups or tygs. Applied pipe-clay decoration was noted on sherds from contexts G22 and G23 and on one of the three sherds from the Armstrong assemblage. This latter sherd bears a tripartite acanthus leaf motif, one of the symbols which, Janet Spavold (2009, 37–8, fig. 7) argues, had specifically Catholic associations (see also below, Section: Domestic and personal items).

Cistercian ware remained in use until c.1600 before being replaced by Blackware; the distinction between the two is largely typological, with Blackware vessels generally being larger and produced in a variety of different forms (Moorhouse and Slowikowski 1992). The similarity in their fabric and finish renders it difficult to distinguish the Cistercian ware from Blackware when small body sherds are involved (as was also the case at Pontefract; Cumberpatch 2002b, 186), and, for this reason, 12 sherds from Sheffield Castle are classified as Cistercian/Blackware. Blackwares are one of the commonest types of pottery in the Butcher assemblage, with 126 sherds; there are 11 sherds in the Armstrong assemblage, and a complete reconstructed Blackware jug in the Bishops' House collection. As with the Cistercian wares, a number of sherds fall into an ambiguous 'Blackware-type' category (31 sherds from the Butcher assemblage, with two further sherds in the Armstrong assemblage). Although the majority of sherds are unidentifiable to specific vessel types, those that are diagnostic included large cups (tygs), handled bowls and small jugs or jars (Figures 6.2, 6.3). The category of Coarse Blackwares (98 sherds) covers larger vessels, generally with thicker walls such as cisterns, jars, large jugs and larger handled bowls. Inevitably there is some overlap with the Blackwares and for many purposes the two sub-groups can be considered part of the same class, although some of the larger vessels may have been contemporary with late Cistercian wares.

Both Cistercian wares and Blackwares were manufactured widely across the Midlands and northern England, often in villages which in some sense specialised in pottery production, such as Wrenthorpe (West Yorks) and Ticknall (South Derbs) (Moorhouse and Roberts 1992; Spavold and Brown 2005). Yellow wares (33 sherds) were produced alongside both Cistercian ware and Blackware, although in smaller quantities, and are characterised by their fine white fabrics and bright yellow glaze, sometimes applied over a thin layer of white slip (Moorhouse and Slowikowski 1992). They appear in foundation shafts E13, E19, F22, G23, G7, H2-4, H24, H5 and unstratified in the Butcher assemblage (Figures 5.26, 5.28, 5.29). Forms include a tripod vessel, cups or mugs, dishes, bowls and small pancheons, and one unstratified sherd appears to be part of a tubular leg (Cumberpatch 2003, 9).

#### OTHER EARLY POST-MEDIEVAL WARES

A substantial proportion of the assemblage comprises a range of purple and brown glazed utilitarian wares, dating to the 16th and 17th centuries. These have not previously been the subject of detailed typological study of either their form or fabric and there is little comparative reference material. Therefore, as part of our study an attempt was made to devise a scheme that contributes towards a more comprehensive account of the pottery industry, its markets and aspects of its consumption, during a period of fundamental social and economic change. These fabrics include Midlands Purple ware (of which few vessel forms could be identified; 44 sherds) and Midlands Purple-type ware (the range of vessel forms includes cisterns, jugs, jars and a pipkin; 133 sherds), a variety of early post-medieval wares characterised by the use of purple glaze, usually on hard, dense red-to-purple bodies which are often, but not always, semi-vitrified in character. The second major category of post-medieval utilitarian wares, Early Brown Glazed Coarseware, is distinguished by its orange-to-red sandy-textured fabric usually containing quartz and black non-crystalline grit, sometimes with fine white rock fragments (408 sherds). Unlike the hard purple glaze of the types described above, its glaze tends to be flaky and brittle. The glazing pattern resembles that of Humberware, particularly on and around the handles of jugs, cisterns and handled jars, but it is unclear whether this reflects continuity in practice. Both the Midlands Purple ware and Early Brown Glazed Coarseware should be regarded as a fabric group rather than a fabric type and may have been the product of more than one pottery operating in the region (Cumberpatch 2002b, 189–90).

The assemblage also contains a few sherds of other types of early post-medieval wares including 10 sherds of Early Brown Glazed Fineware and 18 sherds of post-medieval Sandy ware. There are also small amounts of Brown Glazed Coarseware, Brown Glazed Fineware, and Mottled Coarseware. Seventeenth-century Redware and Fine Redware are common across the site, and there are also two sherds of Low Countries Redware. The latter was imported in significant quantities but is a relatively rare find on inland sites, with only a small quantity similarly identified at Pontefract Castle (Cumberpatch 2002b, 194), most vessels being consumed in ports such as Newcastle (Vaughan 2007), Hull (Watkins 1987), Bawtry (Cumberpatch 1996) and Doncaster (Cumberpatch 2007). Unglazed Redware, Yellow ware and Tin Glazed wares are also probably of this date, as are 11 sherds of various imported stonewares.



**Figure 6.2:** *Blackware jar*. Reconstructed from sherds recovered by Leslie Butcher, and now on display in Bishops' House in Meersbrook Park, Sheffield. Courtesy of Museums Sheffield; accession no. 1995.90.2.5.



inch  
cm 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

To a large extent, these purple and brown glazed wares define the early post-medieval ceramic tradition that replaced the aforementioned medieval one from the late 15th century. Detailed study of a series of assemblages from across Yorkshire and Humberside has allowed Chris Cumberpatch to elucidate the part this tradition played in structuring daily life. Broadly speaking, he argues, it seems that there was 'an association between black and brown vessels and the storage, serving and consumption of liquids', while the 'preparation and serving of food appears to be linked with lighter coloured wares (Redware, Yellow ware and Slipware)' (Cumberpatch 2002b, 222; 2003). Although, as we have noted, there was considerable continuity in vessel form between the medieval and early post-medieval traditions, some new types did appear (including single- and multi-handled cups, mugs and beakers, and some vessels associated with food preparation). This suggests that changes in cuisine and consumption accompanied the shift in perceptions of the proper relationship between the colour and texture of pottery and the symbolic qualities of food and drink. This arguably marks not just a 'ceramic revolution' but a transformation of attitudes and everyday social practices (Cumberpatch 1997; 2002b, 222; 2003, 6–7; Gaimster and Nenck 1997).

### *Supplying the castle with pottery*

When considering the supply of pottery to the castle in the late medieval and early post-medieval periods, the assemblage can be divided into three broad groups. The first consists of wares of local or regional origin, such as the Doncaster Hallgate A, shell-tempered, Sheffield and Brackenfield wares, as well as much of the Coal Measures wares. This suggests that the inhabitants of the castle drew on a number of well-established regional potteries for their everyday requirements, and reveals the supply networks relied upon by those who provisioned the castle. The relative lack of Humberware, in comparison with large quantities of contemporary Coal Measures Whiteware, suggests that Sheffield lay outside its circulation zone. This scarcity of Humberware is in marked contrast to its abundance at Pontefract Castle, where a close connection between the inhabitants of the castle and the potters is documented (Cumberpatch 2002b, 181–2, 218–19). While we have no evidence for the means by which the inhabitants of Sheffield Castle acquired pottery, it is likely that, as Cumberpatch (2002b, 218) has suggested for Pontefract Castle, they either procured much directly from potters (some of whom may have been situated on the castle's estates) or through the local market, particularly that situated just to the west of the castle (see Hey 1991, 40; also Moorhouse 1983a, 126–7 for potters on the estates of Sandal Castle). Perhaps this is where, in 1642, someone from the castle spent £1 12s. 0d. on 'a dozen earthen potts to bake venison in, to send to London ... for my Lo. Arundall' (Hunter 1819, 103).

The second group of wares forms a major element of the castle assemblage, but is more difficult to analyse because it consists of hitherto unknown or poorly documented types, such as Early Brown Glazed Coarsewares, various Midlands Purple and Purple Glazed wares, Redware and Unglazed Red Earthenwares. The Midlands Purple-type wares show some similarities with the utilitarian wares produced at Ticknall but the nature of the fabrics (very dense and in some cases semi-vitrified) means that conventional macroscopic fabric characterisation is not a particularly reliable guide to origin. The fabric of the Early Brown Glazed Coarsewares suggests that they may have been made of Coal Measures clays and their absence from sites outside Sheffield indicates a very local origin, perhaps even within Sheffield itself.

The third category, exotic material, including European pottery and wares from other parts of Britain, seems to have reached Sheffield Castle in only small quantities, perhaps connected with the movement of its peripatetic elite household and of estate officials travelling on business (Moorhouse 1978; 1983b; Cumberpatch 2002b, 170, 217). This is similar to the situation at Pontefract, although the range of wares there is broader. This may be another result of the rather different areas investigated and the nature of the investigations undertaken on the two sites. A scarcity of European wares is not uncommon on inland sites. Indeed, even given the small quantities involved, the presence of several sherds of Low Countries Redware (rarely encountered on sites in South Yorkshire other than the two principal inland ports of Bawtry, on the River Idle, and Doncaster, on the River Don; but see Cumberpatch and Young (n.d., 13) for finds at

**Figure 6.3 (page 194):** *Blackware jug*. Reconstructed from sherds recovered by Leslie Butcher. Courtesy of Museums Sheffield; accession no. 1995.90.2.4.

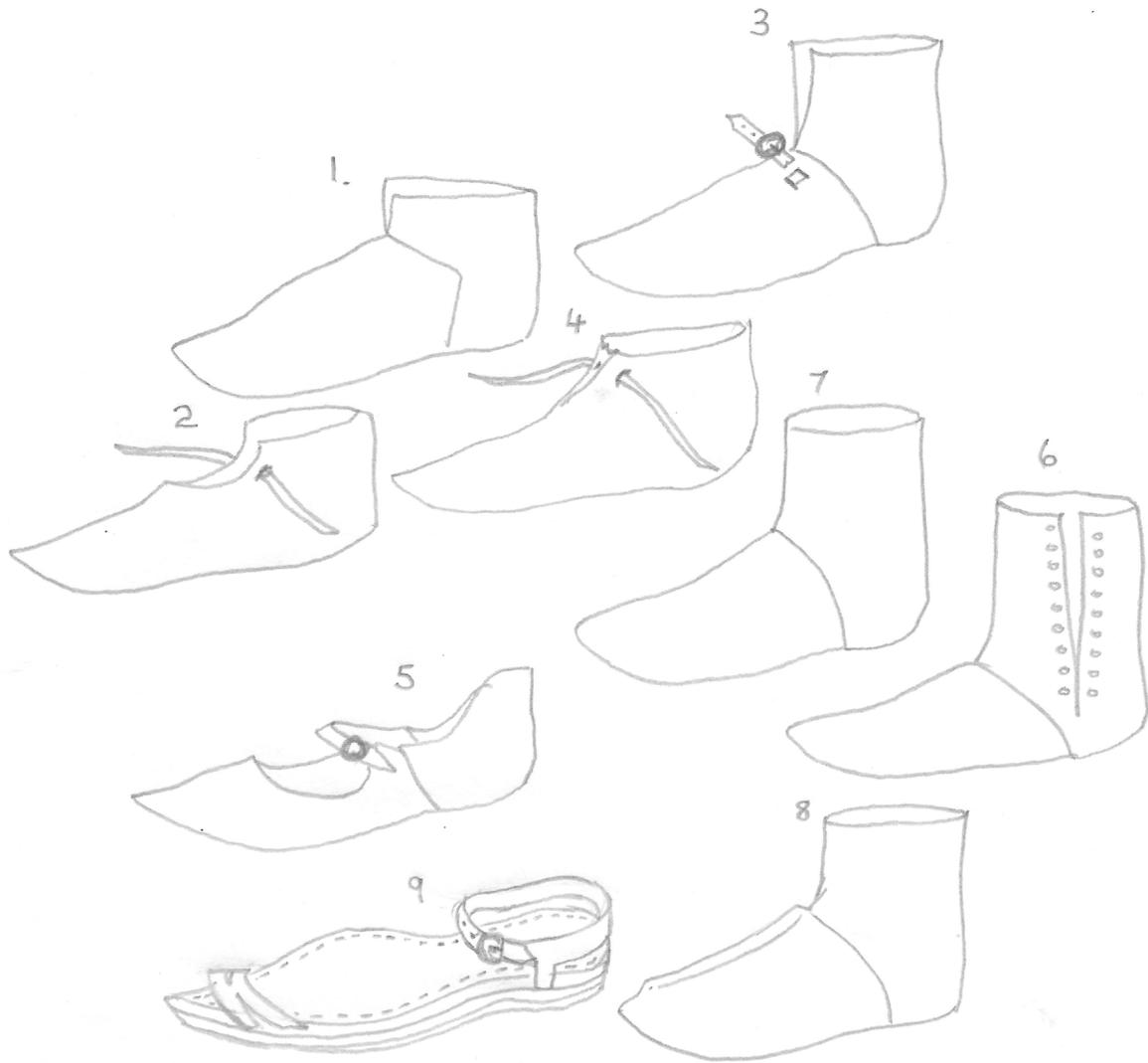
Conisbrough Castle) might imply a situation outside the norm. Among European pottery, German stoneware is not uncommon on inland sites across South Yorkshire, and in this respect the castle assemblage is not unusual. The wares represented include Frechen-Köln, Raeren and unidentified types, which are common in Hull and occur in smaller quantities in Doncaster and Bawtry and on other inland sites, such as Conisbrough (Watkins 1987; Cumberpatch and Young n.d., 13). The vessel forms, bottles and mugs, are also typical of regional imports. Other possible imports include a sherd of a Martincamp-type stoneware flask, possibly from northern France, although recent work has identified production of identical fabrics at kilns in Ticknall, and it is thought that they may also have been made at other potteries in the Midlands (Brown and Spavold 2019). A single Tin Glazed Earthenware sherd could be of Dutch origin, but may equally have been produced in Britain, as early as the mid-16th century or as late as the mid-19th century. Tin Glazed Earthenware is regularly found, albeit in small quantities, on sites with early modern pottery across Sheffield, but is scarce at the castle, reflecting the overwhelmingly utilitarian nature of its pottery assemblage (see Chapter 8 for the Tin Glazed wares at the hunting lodge).

Chris Cumberpatch has noted that the pattern of pottery procurement at Conisbrough Castle contrasts markedly with that for other Yorkshire castles. Although there were a small number of regional and European imports, the largely homogenous assemblage was heavily dominated by locally manufactured wares, suggesting 'a well-organised and regular system of pottery procurement with local potters supplying a standard range of wares to the occupants' (in Cumberpatch and Young n.d., 49–50). The assemblage from Pontefract Castle, by contrast, was more diverse, with its pottery supplied from across the region including Doncaster and East Yorkshire (Cumberpatch and Young n.d., 50). The assemblage from Sandal Castle is equally diverse, with local products supplemented by those procured from sources in Doncaster (Hallgate wares), East Yorkshire, and further afield in Norfolk, West Sussex and Oxfordshire (Moorhouse 1983a, 118–30). The evidence suggests that the pattern of procurement for Sheffield Castle was closer to this Yorkshire 'norm' than to the homogeneity of Conisbrough.

The paucity of comparable late medieval pottery assemblages from elsewhere in Sheffield makes it difficult to determine how far the material from the castle is typical of the town as a whole. Comparison with Pontefract suggests that, while the castle was a major consumer of pottery, there was no significant difference in the types of pottery reaching the town and the castle, although it is probable that large consignments of pots reached the castle direct from the manufacturers rather than via local markets. The assemblages from Pontefract and Conisbrough Castles were recovered from a variety of contexts rather than, as is the case with Sheffield Castle, mostly from the moat. This largely accounts for the much smaller quantities of medieval pottery from Sheffield Castle in comparison to Pontefract. Nevertheless, our analysis overturns Armstrong's (1930, 24) argument that much of the castle's medieval pottery was 'of continental origin', with 'the first fragments of possibly English manufacture' appearing only from the late 16th century.

### Working with leather – cobblers, saddlers and harness-makers

Of the 200 pieces of leather surviving in the archive, the majority (75%) are shoe parts, along with a small number of other items and waste leather (Figures 6.4, 6.5; Mould 2017a). The leather is now brittle, often puckered and distorted through shrinkage, and some folded items cannot be opened out or flattened. Some of it had clearly been conserved in the past, but no records of this process survive, while other parts of the assemblage had been air-dried. A shiny surface on some of the artefacts obscures the grain pattern and stitching details, and some surfaces are heavily worn, but, where the grain is visible, animal species are identifiable by hair follicle pattern using low-powered magnification. The grain patterns of sheep and goat skins are difficult to distinguish and so are grouped together when the distinction cannot be made, while the term bovine is used when uncertainty arose between mature cattle hide and calfskin. Shoe bottom components and repairs are of cattle hide unless stated otherwise. Nearly 70% of the leather records generated (101 out of 145) have no stratigraphic information directly associated with them, making it difficult to contextualise most of the pieces. This collection is, nonetheless, extremely important as the more recent excavations by ARCUS (Davies 2000; Davies and Symonds 2002) did not recover any leather, and those by Wessex Archaeology recovered leather only from post-medieval contexts (see Chapter 7).

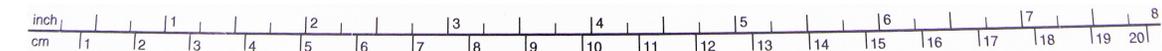


Sheffield Castle late medieval  
shoe styles found.

**Figure 6.4:** Late medieval shoe styles represented by leather fragments found in the moat at Sheffield Castle.  
Drawn by Quita Mould.

#### *Medieval shoes*

Nearly 65% of the medieval shoe parts are from types of 15th-century randed turnshoe construction; a 'rand' is a strip of leather sown between the upper and sole of a shoe, while turnshoe forms are made inside out on the last and then turned so that the seams are on the inside (Goubitz *et al.* 2001, 321, 324). At least 30 turnshoe soles are more or less complete, with additional broken soles suggesting more than 40 in total.



**Figure 6.5:** *Shoe fragments recovered during mid-20th-century excavations at Sheffield Castle.* Courtesy of Museums Sheffield; accession no. 1995.90.17.

The soles have narrow waists (the middle part of the shoe corresponding with the instep and the arch of the foot; Goubitz *et al.* 2001, 324), with 30% of the 36 soles with complete waists being less than 26mm wide, among which the narrowest measures just 16–20mm (nos 108, 141, 135, 137, 51, 146). Seven soles have long toes extending beyond the foot for 20–40mm. Long, pointed toes, often filled with hair or moss to support the points, were fashionable during the 1460s, a product, Roberta Gilchrist (2009, 249) argues, of the belief that penis size was linked to the length of the feet. A sumptuary law passed in 1463–64 in the reign of Edward IV restricted the wearing of the so-called ‘pike or poulaine’ to two inches (50.8mm), as it had been in a previous sumptuary law of 1368 (Swann 1975, 19–20; Goubitz *et al.* 2001, 321); none of the toes from Sheffield Castle exceed this limit. The pointed toes and distinctly narrow and long waists confirm a late 14th- to 15th-century date.

Several shoe styles can be recognised from the surviving parts. These include high shoes – what we would term ankle boots today – with uppers made principally from a single piece of leather that wrapped around the foot, joined with a single seam. Elements from such shoes include a dog-leg side seam (no. 140), upper fragments (nos 23, 83) and an upper insert piece (no. 41), all of bovine leathers, some being calfskin. The front areas of broken uppers with no seams surviving may well come from other such high shoes. Some of these upper fragments and vamps (the front section of the upper, covering the fore part of the foot up to the instep; Goubitz *et al.* 2001, 324) with front openings have stitching for a separate tongue (nos 15, 95), and a tongue of calfskin with a large fastening hole was one of the components of shoe no. 83 (Figure 6.4 (no. 2)). These come from high-throated, front-fastening shoes that either laced, or fastened with a tied toggle or a small metal buckle and strap, across the instep. A well-preserved calfskin vamp (no. 141) certainly fastened at the instep

with a small metal buckle and strap (Figure 6.4 (no.3)), as the angular tab of the split strap to secure the buckle, and a loop strap keeper, survive, and the latter is characteristic of high, closed shoes with buckle fastening of 15th-century date.

There are two fragments from lower throated front-lacing shoes (nos 27 and 84; Figure 6.4 (nos 4, 5)), known as 'open shoes' (Goubitz *et al.* 2001, 31). Side-lacing shoes are also represented (e.g. nos 21, 24 and 29). One (no. 54) fragment of sheep/goatskin is from footwear of uncertain height, having only two lace holes surviving, while another fragment (no. 82), of calfskin, comes from a boot at least 160mm high of which nine small lace holes survive (Figure 6.4 (no. 6)). It is consistent with early 15th-century forms popular in the City of London (Grew and de Neergaard 1988, 43, figs 69 and 70). Another calfskin boot (no. 20) has a different form of construction, comprising a vamp and a separate piece that wrapped around the leg, and was seamed to the vamp throat and at centre back (Figure 6.4 (no. 7)). Two vamps (nos 19, 142), of bovine leather, from a boot or shoe, are distinctive in having a raised rib running vertically from the throat down toward the toe, stitched on the interior (flesh side) to maintain its shape. This decorative feature occurs occasionally on 15th-century boots and shoes throughout England, apparently rather popular in Coventry (Warks) (Mould 2017b, 65, 78 and 80, no. 24, fig. 5:16).

There is a single layer (no. 52) from a sandal or patten (footwear with a sole and a foot strap, intended to be worn as overshoes; Goubitz *et al.* 2001, 249, 321) for the left foot and a piece from its ankle strap (no. 53), of cattle hide. The seat (the back part of the insole on which the heel sits) has been cut from the sole layer so that its original, equivalent shoe size is unknown. Sandals with soles made with multiple layers of leather became popular in the City of London at the beginning of the 15th century (Figure 6.4 (no. 9); Grew and de Neergaard 1988, 101), and this example from Sheffield Castle, with its long, pointed toe extending some 35mm beyond the foot, is of a highly fashionable style. However, while such an exhibition of prestige and fashionable footwear might be deemed suited to a layman, Goubitz *et al.* (2001, 267–70, fig. 3) noted that such sandals are also found in excavations at religious sites and may have been worn by members of religious orders. While the stitching of the seam suggests it comes from a sandal, since it lacks any other sole components, it is possible that this single layer (no. 52) may be the tread sole from a cork-soled patten worn over hose; highly fashionable examples, with very long toes and decorated insoles and toe straps, have been found on the continent (Goubitz *et al.* 2001, 264–6).

#### *Post-medieval shoes*

A smaller proportion of shoe parts from the castle can be dated to the 16th and 17th centuries. Those of turnshoe construction are distinguishable from late medieval forms due to their distinctive shapes, with oval or round toes (nos 39, 58, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 73). One turnshoe sole (no. 61) has a wide, almost straight-ended toe, while a clump repair and a vamp (no. 87) have very broad, round toes, both styles fashionable in the first half of the 16th century (Swann 1975, 22). Nineteen shoe parts come from shoes of welted construction, and, although some lack the elements to permit closer dating (nos 109, 101, 110, 14, 128), most date to the 17th century (nos 35, 90, 91, 92, 93, 98, 99, 100, 129). The welted shoe bottoms (soles, midsoles and insoles) are made straight – that is, for neither a left nor a right foot. The toes are square, while the tread, waist and seat are relatively wide compared with the medieval shoe soles. At least two (nos 98, 99), however, are notably narrow and may have been worn by women or adolescents. The shoe uppers comprise vamps and two quarters seamed at centre back, but all of the upper parts are incomplete and no fastenings or indication of shoe style survive. There are two examples of shoe uppers with the upper leather flesh outward, what we would term suede today (nos 98, 129), which was a popular feature of 17th-century footwear. The shoes have separate heels, and, although no complete heels were found, individual lifts from stacked leather heels are present (nos 91, 92), one of which (no. 92) has the central area cut out to lighten the weight, indicating it came from a large, high, stacked leather heel from a man's shoe or boot. A broken sole (no. 100) is moulded to continue down the breast of a separate heel, a feature seen on 17th-century footwear.

#### *Other leather items*

Two straps (nos 36, 80) of bovine leather, 3mm and 4mm thick respectively, had been cut from larger items, probably a harness. One of these (no. 80) is of good quality, approximately 58mm wide with tooled and creased edges

(impressed lines made using a heated tool known as a crease or creaser). A piece of sheep/goatskin (no. 16) with a decorative scalloped edge and a whip stitched seam running at right angles from it may have been torn from the bottom edge of a garment or glove, a horse barding or a decorative leather covering used in the home.

At least 16 fragments of leather (nos 112–126), all recovered from '5H Moat at Exchange Street', share characteristics suggesting they had been broken from the same item (or items). They are of thin leather, 1–2mm thick, mostly of calfskin, with two appearing to be of sheep/goatskin (nos 121, 123), all now being black, shiny, brittle and often curling and distorted. One (no. 112) has a small area of whip stitched edge, while others have grain/flesh stitching (nos 115, 122), and one of the largest fragments (no. 113) has five surviving grain/flesh stitches from a seam and two small groups of grain/flesh stitching, each group 10 × 10mm, spaced 20mm apart, marking where two narrow straps, perhaps a small loop handle, had been attached. However, most have broken edges, lack any features, and so may best be described as 'scrap'. These fragments are stored in a box containing an index card which states 'Parts of 2 black jacks Subsid. Moat from Exchange St'. These may have been from Butcher's 'barmkin' ditch (see Chapter 5), although, as noted in Chapter 4, '5H' is not a standard format for describing the foundation shafts, and some finds labelled as being from this context are consistent with those recorded on the section drawings for H5 near the gatehouse. Black-jacks are small drinking vessels of moulded and hardened leather (*cuir bouilli*) and made of cattle hide (Waterer 1950, 7–8, plates XIIa and XIVb) using distinctive waterproof seams. However, no black-jacks are now present among the collection and no record of them has been found, and while the leather in the box is black, shiny and brittle, some with an opaque, brown, wax-like deposit on one or both surfaces, this appears to be the result of previous conservation treatment. Further, the leather is thin, and the stitching is inappropriate for a black-jack. Many of the shoe parts are also black, shiny and slightly sticky; the wax-like material may have been mistaken for a waterproofing substance lining the interior of the vessel, but it would not be present on both surfaces if serving such a purpose. No diagnostic features remain on these fragments, so the item/s from which they have been broken cannot now be identified. They may have been from the leg of a tall boot, but it is very unlikely to have been a black-jack or any other liquid container.

### *The production and sale of leather*

Many features of the medieval and post-medieval leatherwork indicate that it was not a product of domestic rubbish disposal but rather was cobbling waste (Figure 6.5). Cobblers repaired shoes and bought old shoes for refurbishment and resale, recycling any reusable leather. Many of the later medieval shoe soles had been heavily worn: 13 have holes worn through the soles at the tread or seat, and 18 have repair stitching from the attachment of patches. Discarded repair patches, known as clumps, were also found, some of which had also been completely worn through before being thrown away. One turnshoe sole (no. 138) had been made in two pieces, as either an economy measure or a major repair. While 17 turnshoe soles and eight repair clumps are complete, only four of the shoe upper parts are complete, the remainder being broken and often highly fragmented. Several soles and upper parts display secondary cutting (e.g. nos 17, 21, 24, 28, 145) where areas have been deliberately removed, including three shoe upper parts that had clearly been cut off when their shoe soles had been removed (nos 43, 82, 84). Two turnshoe soles (nos 2, 6) and a piece cut from a third (no. 86) appear to have been used as temporary cutting platforms, while a clump repair (no. 87) had been cut and an area removed to make a smaller patch confirming they had come from a cobbler's workshop.

Some of the early post-medieval footwear had been cut up to salvage reusable leather before being discarded. Notable examples are the 17th-century shoe bottom and lasting margin, which had been cut off from the quarters (no. 98), and the left quarters (no. 129) from another 17th-century shoe similarly cut off from its lasting margin when it was removed from the shoe bottom. The larger, more shapeless clump repairs recovered (e.g. nos 102, 103) may also fall into this date range. The clump repair (no. 87) had been cut and an area removed to make a smaller patch again indicating it had come from a cobbler's workshop.

The waste leather probably also derives from cobbling activity. This includes two pieces of primary waste cut from edges of cattle hide (nos 56, 107), while the rest is secondary waste produced when cutting out pattern pieces and trimming them to size during the manufacture, refurbishment and repair of leather goods. Most of the secondary waste comprises narrow trimmings (nos 45, 46, 55, 79, 94, 106, 130); a group of seven trimmings (no. 94) from G23 represent the result of trimming around shoe soles. One piece of secondary waste had been cut from an old shoe sole (no. 86), and two others may have been cut from shoe uppers (nos 89, 105).

What very limited contextual information we have for the leather suggests that it was found across the site. For example, some of the items of post-medieval cobbler's waste (nos 102 and 103) were recovered from the south moat near the gatehouse, one from near the junction with the west moat (no. 129 in foundation shaft E19) and others from the southern end of the west moat (nos 94 and 98 in foundation shaft G23). It seems likely that this distribution resulted from the clearance (or episodic clearances) of more than one cobbler's workshop. Similar assemblages of late medieval and early post-medieval date have been found in comparable contexts elsewhere, such as in the city ditch at Coventry (Warks; Mould 2017b) and the defensive ditches at Carlisle (Cumbria; Mould 2011). Leather principally comprising cobbling waste has been found in ditches associated with Oxford Castle (Mould 2010; Jones 1976, 275–96), the barbican ditch at Norwich Castle (Norf; Mould 2009a) and the King's Ditch at Cambridge (Mould 2009b). It seems that, not surprisingly, open ditches in urban settings were a common repository for the opportunistic dumping of workshop debris.

Further evidence for leatherworking, albeit not cobbling, comes from an oval wooden object from the lowest deposits in the moat, published by Armstrong (1930, plate III (no. 2)) as a possible 'saddler's palm-board' (Figure 6.6). Palm guards used by leather-workers are usually of cast lead (Bailey 1995, 64–5), but this example, with an off-centre perforation, is reminiscent in form (see, for example, one from Staffordshire recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme: WMID-07FF87) and could have been part of a composite object, covering a lead base (palm guards were enclosed in leather or cloth for use). In addition, Armstrong (1930, 20, plate III (no. 9); Figure 2.22) suggested that three fairly crudely fashioned, hemispherical stone objects from 'the deepest portions' of the moat may have been used for dressing and softening leather.

It is noteworthy that Harrison's 1637 survey records two properties just to the south of the castle which contained tanneries: Christopher Capper held a 'Tenement with a dwelling house and a Tann office ... in Sheffield Town next the river called the Little Sheath East, and next the Quarries in part and the Pond Mill in parte South', while Edward Sanderson's 'Tenement with a dwelling house & Tan office' lay nearby and 'abuteth upon a high way leading from Sheffield Parke to Sheffield towne' (Ronksley 1908, 58). Excavations by ARCUS in 1998 just south of Broad Street West, identified the remains of 17th-century tanneries in what they argued was Sanderson's property, while a medieval pit 2m in diameter was tentatively thought to reveal an earlier tannery on the site (Belford 1999, 20, 67–8). The site lay only c.170m from the centre of the castle's inner courtyard, and if it was not incorporated within the outer bailey, it lay just beyond it (Belford 1999, figs 1 and 2). The area west of the outer bailey and north of the Ponds had long been associated with the sale and slaughter of livestock, and the preparation of their hides. A 1581 rental document records that three tanners held stalls in the nearby marketplace (Jones 2004, 31), which, according to Gosling in 1736, also contained the Shambles (Figure 1.6). The 'Beast Market' (now Haymarket) lay just to the east, while the 1771 Fairbank map shows the Swine Market and Slaughter Houses nearby (Figure 1.8; also Hey 2010, 63). Further ARCUS excavations close to the area marked 'Mill Sands' on Gosling's 1736 map, just 300m to the north-west of the castle, uncovered yet another mid-17th-century tanning complex, the animal bones from which revealed that, here at least, leather was produced from sheep/goat skins (Andrews 2015, 11–16). Significantly, at the court of 'the most noble lord George earl of Shrewsbury held on the 24th day of April' 1565, 'Thomas Greves of Waddlesley, John Holland the elder, William Mosseley and Umfrey Baite were chosen as leather searchers and sealers [*scrutatores tannatorem*]' (Hall 1928, 13–14). Their job was to examine and certify the quality of the products of tanneries. As Roy Thomson (1981, 166; also Minard 2011, 153) noted, the existence of this office, and of the associated bye-laws which determined 'when, where, how, and to whom leather could be sold', speaks volumes for the importance of leather, and leatherworking, in the economy of the period.

### Fragments of 'the most notable local building historically'

The archive contains just 40 fragments of ceramic building material, the majority comprising medieval/early post-medieval floor tile and are from foundation shafts (F11, G7, G23, H2-4, H3, H5, 5HX, 5HY) recorded by Butcher and Bartlett (Figures 5.26, 5.29). The floor tiles are all plain, in coarse sandy fabrics, mostly glazed (a few over a white slip), and probably locally produced; no traces were found of the 'three or four' imported 'Netherlandish' tiles noted in the review of the archive by Davies and Willmott (2002, 13). Two tiles recovered by Armstrong from the moat had been roughly trimmed, indicating reuse, for an unknown purpose. There are 15 fragments of plaster (five are identifiable to F21 and H23) including two with lath impressions, of uncertain



**Figure 6.6:** *Wooden palm guard recovered during the excavations.* Recorded by Leslie Armstrong in the late 1920s. He believed this dated to between the 13th and 15th centuries. Courtesy of Museums Sheffield; accession no. 1995.84.2.

date. The ‘large piece of moulded plaster ceiling rib’ found by Armstrong (1930, 20; plate IV) among demolition debris in the top of the south moat does not survive in the archive. Five mortar fragments labelled as being from a trial hole are of uncertain date and can only have formed a tiny proportion of the mortar that must have been encountered during excavation, suggesting very selective retention. One partial brick and a small fragment of what may be architectural terracotta (from G24) probably date from the post-medieval period.

Armstrong (1930, 22) noted the use of wattling to reinforce the floor of what he (wrongly) believed was an Anglo-Saxon timber building, but this could not be correlated with what is held by Museums Sheffield. There are various references in the texts and section drawings by Butcher to structural timbers including posts, and small twiggy fragments, some possibly from wattling or hurdles, some of which may have been part of a revetment of the moat (see Chapter 5), and the archive does contain numerous twigs and thin fragments or laths that are from foundation shafts (F22, G7, G8, G22, H2-4, H3, H5 (manhole 1), 5H). However, the four complete wooden stakes and part of a wooden pile recorded during the assessment of the archive by Davies and Willmott (2002, 19), which they reported as having potential for dendrochronological analysis, could not be positively identified within the wood assemblage we examined. The surviving assemblage includes two timber posts, which may have originally been squared (one from G23), and one squared timber with a rectangular slot carved out on one side labelled ‘part of pump’, along with two other fragments. All surviving pieces of wood are desiccated, but apparently by natural drying rather than freeze-drying, and their condition precludes any detailed comments on possible function, or tool marks, or any dendrochronological analysis; hence their date remains uncertain.

Fifty-nine fragments of window glass survive, 25 from the Armstrong archive and the remainder, where identified, from foundation shafts (E11, E18, E19, G7, G9, G23, H2, H2-4, H3, 5H, J2-4, J4) recorded by Butcher and Bartlett (Figures 5.26, 5.28). Where colour can be discerned, it is greenish; some fragments have been rendered opaque by heavy surface oxidation. Colour and condition indicate domestically produced potash glass.

Flat window glass is notoriously difficult to date, but this small collection could include some medieval fragments (particularly the heavily oxidised examples), although the majority probably dates to the 16th century or later. There are both grozed (shaped with pliers or a 'grozing-iron') and flame-rounded edges; three pieces preserve acute or obtuse angles (from diamond-shaped quarries (small panes)) and two have right-angled corners (square or rectangular quarries). Diamond leaded lights were used from the later 16th century and, despite the growing popularity of square or rectangular panes from c.1660, diamond panes were still commonly used into the 18th century (Hall 2005, 86). It is a relatively small collection for a castle, a product, no doubt, of the context in which much of it was deposited (remember Armstrong's (1930, 15) description of the moat fill as 'black tenacious sludge') and the difficult circumstances surrounding its recovery, including less-than-enthusiastic workmen. Nevertheless, we can very tentatively link some of this glass to the refurbishment of parts of the castle in the mid-17th century. As we saw in Chapter 1, attempts were made, following its partial demolition, to restore what was left as 'a fitting habitation'. Further, in 1649, Major Andrew Carter ordered that new windows be inserted into castle buildings, all of which faced 'towards the Towne' (see also Chapter 9, Section: Reduced to fragments – embedding the castle in the community). This would put the buildings on the south or west sides of the castle, and it might just be significant that several of the foundation shafts from which glass was retrieved lay on the south side of the site (notably E11, E18, E19, G7 and G9).

A few metal objects may have had structural functions, including undated iron nails (from H2-4) and two unprovenanced small fragments of lead window came, which could not be identified to type or date (e.g. Knight 1985). Armstrong published four keys, although he did not recognise one as such, describing it as a 'probable cheek piece from a horse's bit' (Armstrong 1930, plate III (no. 4); Figure 2.22). It is in fact a padlock slide key with an angled bit (Egan 1998, cat. no. 264). This type of slide key is the most common nationally, having a pre-Conquest origin and continuing in use into the post-medieval period (Goodall 1990, 1005–6, type A). Padlocks were used to secure items of furniture as well as doors and shutters, and sometimes human and animal limbs. Of the other three keys, Armstrong (1930, plate I (nos 1, 2)) dated two to the 14th century, one of which was the aforementioned example of block tin (see Chapter 2, Section: The finds specialists), and the third to the 16th century (plate I (no. 3); Figure 2.23). However, only one (no. 3), with a hollow stem and integral bit in line with the end of the stem, is definitely medieval (Goodall 1990, 1007, type 3). The others, which apparently have solid stems, one with the stem ending in line with the bit and the other with the stem projecting beyond the end of the bit, are of forms which began in the Middle Ages but continued into the post-medieval period (Goodall 1990, 1007, types 6 and 8, respectively).

This range of building material is clearly only a tiny fraction of what had once been on the site, providing accordingly limited insight into the appearance of the castle. However, it does bring us close to the craftworkers and estate officials whose labour provisioned and maintained the castle, which can be contextualised by the mid-15th-century Account Rolls. For example, they record that the aptly named John Plumber (one of several such in the following discussion) and his assistant received *6d.* and *5d.* a day respectively to repair the lead on the 'Great Tower' and the tower next to the bakehouse, maintain the gutters that led into the inner courtyard and those of the Exchequer Chamber in the outer courtyard, and provide a lead pipe for bringing water into the castle from an outside well (Thomas 1920–24, 68, 236). Geoffrey Botery received *10d.* a day for using his wagon and oxen to convey mud from the park to the castle to be used by the plumber, and for bringing stone and timber to repair the grangehouse and stable in the outer courtyard (Thomas 1920–24, 157). Carpenters including Henry Roworth and Robert Swyfte were paid *5d.* a day for carpentry work in the stable, and for making racks and mangers in the cowhouse and in other buildings outside the castle, while two unnamed sawyers provided timber for the cowhouse for *4d.* a day (Thomas 1920–24, 236–7, 239). The stonemason Richard Waller repaired the walls of the grange for *5d.* a day, assisted by John Mulner, who made mortar, and John Abbeney, who plastered the walls, and we are also told of repairs to the roof of the kitchen by a tiler (Thomas 1920–24, 68–9, 236). The roof of the bakehouse was repaired by the tiler Nicholas Sklatter, while 'divers windows' were repaired by carpenter Robert West and glazier John Glasier; a payment was made to John Swynok for 200 boards for repairing the chapel, nails were bought from John Smyth and Richard Greve, lead from Thomas Moldecliff, and 1000 laths from William Gotson (Thomas 1920–24, 351–5). The Account Rolls also record the reconstruction of a battlement above the hall, the rebuilding of one of the kitchen walls, and the work by two masons from Tickhill (South Yorks) to demolish and replace 'the old tower' next to the chapel (see Chapter 1, Section: Sheffield Castle and its elite occupants). One hundred and twenty people brought stone from Roche Abbey (South Yorks, c.22km to the east of Sheffield) in 60 wagons for the task, suggesting the new tower was

built of limestone, which was extensively quarried on the abbey's lands (McCoy and Stenton 2009, 16). In this context it is worth noting Himsworth's (1927–42, 2) observation that some of the window tracery recovered on 25<sup>th</sup> November 1927 was of magnesian limestone, the kind of rock quarried at Roche. We should also remember Wigfull's assessment that most of the fabric of the castle uncovered during the late 1920s was comprised of local sandstone, probably from Arbourthorne in the park (see Chapter 3, Section: Courtyard buildings). John Hanson was paid 5s. 6d. for felling 60 oak trees in the deer park to provide timber for this building work, and the path that ran from the hall to the gate was repaired at this time, for which John Michell used his wagon and oxen to bring stone and cinder from the park (Thomas 1920–24, 68, 71, 355–7).

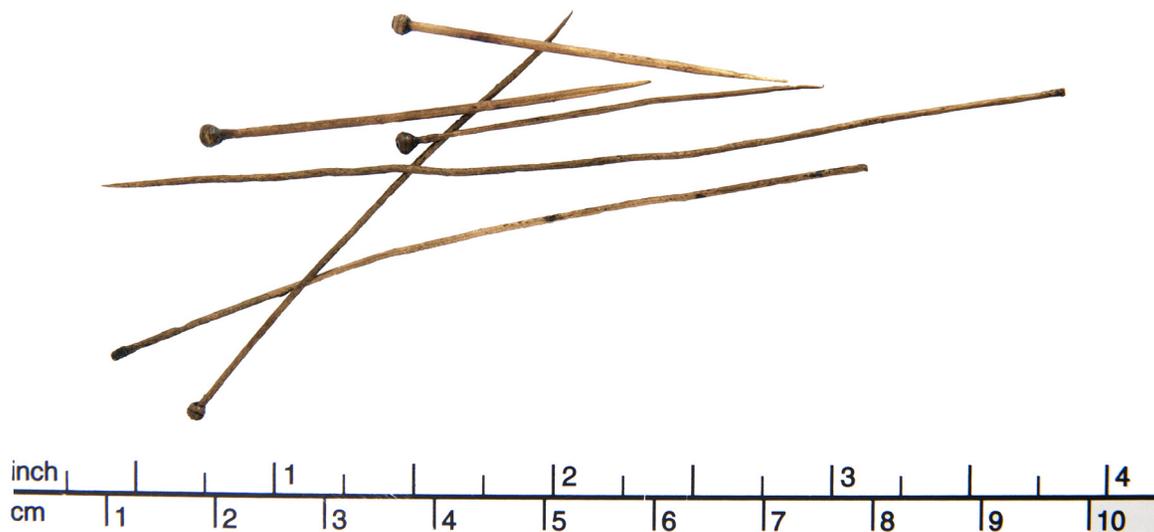
Sixteenth-century records provide further details of building work. For example, in July 1578 the 6<sup>th</sup> Earl wrote from Sheffield to his servant Thomas Baldwin about building work he was at that time carrying out on the castle, ordering him to buy pitch, tar, and other materials that could be got 'good chepe' (LPL, MS 697, fols 171). Finally, as we will see in Chapter 9, there were building works and acts of demolition in the mid-17th century, carried out by the Earl of Arundel's servants and town labourers. In sum, it is easy to disregard a small collection of plaster, mortar, glass and nails as providing any insight into as substantial a building as a castle, but if we do so we are unwittingly glossing over the activities of a multitude of people whose labour constructed and maintained this building over several centuries.

### Domestic and personal items

The few personal items recovered mainly comprise clothing accessories, and are all from the 1920s excavations. Armstrong (1930, 24) noted gold pins from what he believed to be 14th- and 15th-century levels of the moat (see Chapter 2, Section: The finds specialists). His Figure 16 shows 13 pins, of which six appear to have wire-wound heads. Five pins (with heads) and two longer objects are included in his plate III (Figure 2.22) – it is unclear whether some of the 'pins' appear in both illustrations. Our study of the material in the archive located three pins with wire-wound heads and three lengths of wire, the latter perhaps for pin manufacture, and the longest of which had a pointed end. Pins could have been used as head-dress ornaments or to secure items of clothing; they are usually of copper alloy (three further examples were found by ARCUS in 1999; Davies 2000, 58), but, as we saw in Chapter 2, Thomas Bradbury's analysis in 1930 claimed these were gold, suggesting they were high-status accessories. We cannot know where they were acquired from, but it is intriguing that among the Earl of Shrewsbury's 15th-century properties in Sheffield was a townhouse called Goldsmytheplace, whose tenant in 1442–3 was Katherine Goldesmyth (Thomas 1920–24, 235, 239). However, the pins that survive in the archive are gold-plated copper alloy (Mephram 2017; Figure 6.7). Drawn wire pins with spiral-wound heads are commonly thought to have been introduced from the continent in the 16th century, but evidence from, for example, Winchester (Hants) shows that they appeared in this country around three centuries earlier (Biddle and Barclay 1990).

A small cast single-loop form of buckle with integral forked spacers (which would have held sheet metal plates) dates to the later 14th or early 15th century (Armstrong 1930, plate I (no. 5); Figure 2.23; Egan and Pritchard 1991, 80; Whitehead 1996, 36–7). Such buckles were more suited for use with finer woven fabrics rather than leather – perhaps pointing to a slightly higher-status wearer. A second buckle (Armstrong 1930, plate III (no. 3)) is a square double-loop type of 16th- or 17th-century date (Whitehead 1996, 74). A rectangular gold object with interlaced repoussé decoration, probably originally jewelled at the centre, is described by Armstrong (1930, 26, plate II (no. 5)) as a 'brooch front' and dated to the 16th or 17th century as it came from the upper levels of the moat, but below the demolition debris. However, he offers no parallels, and none have been found, and the form could equally well have functioned as some form of mount. A lace end is of 16th- or 17th-century type, made from rolled copper-alloy sheet with both long ends bent inwards (Margeson 1993, 22, type 2). Six buttons were published by Armstrong (1930, plate II (nos 6–10), plate III (no. 6); Figure 2.22; also Chapter 2, Section: The finds specialists, and Figure 2.20 for Frederick Bradbury's analysis), five of post-medieval disc form and one of medieval domed form – it is uncertain whether it is cast or made from sheet metal (Egan and Pritchard 1991, 272–7). There is also a mother-of-pearl button from Armstrong's investigations.

Six whittle-tang knives were recovered. This form constitutes the sole type found in medieval England until c.1300 and, even after the introduction of scale-tang handles in the 14th century, remained the most common type until the early 15th century (Cowgill *et al.* 1987, 25). The knives from the castle are not closely datable on morphological grounds, although two carry cutlers' marks, one in the form of a cross (Cowgill *et al.* 1987, 20), which do not seem to have become common until the 13th century. These knives could have been used at the



**Figure 6.7:** Medieval pins from Sheffield Castle recovered during the excavations. Recorded by Leslie Armstrong in the late 1920s. Courtesy of Museums Sheffield; accession no. 1995.84.7.

table, for craft work, or, as Himsworth (1953, 48) pointed out, for defence. Two, which were not traced in the archive, were published by Armstrong (1930, plate I (nos 7, 11); Figure 2.23; also Himsworth 1930b). Two bone whittle-tang handles were also found. No longer surviving in the archive are three knives of scale-tang form published by Armstrong, including one unusual example with an elaborately decorated bolster (Armstrong 1930, plate I (nos 6–8); Himsworth 1937, 3), and a fourth, possibly a carving knife, which is of uncertain whittle-tang or scale-tang form (Armstrong 1930, plate I (no. 12)). Himsworth (1953, 49, 50) tells us that the knife with the decorative chasing on the bolster was also gold-damascened; he dated it to the 16th century, assumed it was made in Sheffield and argued, reasonably, that it demonstrated that ‘some of the early Sheffield products were of more than “provincial” quality’. A knife with a bone handle was recovered by Butcher; although it is labelled both G22 and F21 (Figure 6.8), it is likely to be from the former as two whittle-tang knives are annotated on the west section drawing of this foundation shaft (Figure 5.26). Important to the use of knives were whetstones for sharpening, and two were found: a square-sectioned stone with one pointed end, pierced for suspension (Armstrong 1930, plate III (no. 8); Figure 2.22), and one with a sub-rectangular section from foundation shaft G23 recorded by Butcher.

Medieval Sheffield was famed for its cutlery industry, and the knives from the castle site represent not just personal items but the products of local labour. Geoffrey Chaucer, who in the 1350s had spent some time at Hatfield, near Doncaster, referred in his late 14th-century *The Reeve’s Tale* to ‘A Scheffeld thwittel [knife] baar he [the miller of Trumpington] in his hose’ (l. 3933), suggesting it would have been a familiar reference to the products of the town’s metalworking industry. A 1297 list of Sheffield taxpayers includes one ‘Robertus le Cotelear’ (Brown 1894, 76), and the town was at the heart of a region renowned for its cutlery production. There are references to ‘cutlers’ in the Poll Tax returns for 1378–79 in the surrounding villages of Ecclesfield, Tinsley and Handsworth (Leader 1904b, 118–19; also Jones 2013, 69), while the antiquarian John Leland, in his *Itinerary in England and Wales, c.1535–43*, was struck by the fact that ‘ther be many good smithes and cuttelars in Halamshire’ (Smith 1909, 14). However, as Himsworth (1935, 8) proudly announced to the Sheffield Trades Technical Society in November 1935, ‘the very earliest knives of local origin that are known, are what we found in the moat of Sheffield Castle’.

Other items that probably belonged to individual craftworkers include the half pair of shears found by Armstrong (1930, plate III (no. 10)), which are more likely to have been used as fullers’ shears than sheep or cloth shears, which were larger (Cowgill *et al.* 1987, 58; also Himsworth 1930c and Chapter 2, Section: The finds specialists for Himsworth’s metallurgical analysis). Shears were also marked by Butcher (1958–62d) on the south section drawing of foundation shaft G22, but were not located in the archive during our analysis. One other possible textile-working tool was found, in the form of a short length of wood, circular in cross-



**Figure 6.8:** *Whittle-tang knife recovered in the mid-20th-century excavations.* This was probably found in foundation shaft G22. Courtesy of Museums Sheffield; accession no. 1995.90.3.

section and roughly worked to a point at each end (Armstrong 1930, plate III (no. 5); Figure 2.22), possibly a weaving tool of some kind (for use with a two-beam or horizontal loom), of a type more usually found in bone (e.g. Brown 1990, cat. no. 213).

As might be expected in a centre of cutlery manufacture, bone-working waste, apparently primarily for the manufacture of handles, is much in evidence in the assemblage (52 pieces recorded). This includes off-cuts in the form of sawn ends of cattle metapodials, the sawn metapodials ready for use, and the rectangular plates cut from them (Figure 6.9). A significant proportion of this waste came from foundation shafts recorded by Butcher (E19, F21, F22, F23, G22, H2-4, H3, 5H, H23, manhole 3; Figures 5.26, 5.28, 5.29). Armstrong (1930, 14) tells us that he found evidence, at the north-east of the site, for a 'scale-cutting establishment where ivory, bone and stag antler were worked for knife handles' in the 18th century, and so some is likely to have been post-medieval in date.

The mid-15th-century Account Rolls reveal how partial is the surviving material culture, as they record many purchases of items for use in the household including wax for making candles and tapers for the chapel, parchment, paper and red wax for the office of the Receiver, 11 yards of linen cloth of canvas for covering one feather bed and one bolster, and 'Curtaynecordez' (cords) for hangings and preparing beds, all of which were

**Figure 6.9 (page 207):** *Bone-working debris retrieved by Leslie Butcher.* Courtesy of Museums Sheffield; accession no. 1995.90.10.

delivered to Richard Wode, janitor (Thomas 1920–24, 235–6, 350–1). These are all items unlikely to survive in the archaeological record but clearly essential to the running of the household.

The documentary evidence also enables us to see something of the resonances of household items in the context of personal relationships and the demands placed on servants to sort matters out. In the late 16th century, we have records of the 6<sup>th</sup> Earl, George, asking his servant Baldwin to procure a great copper pan, feathers for beds, and four silver flagons ‘to replace gilt ones given him by his wife’. This was in response to his wife, Bess, having removed from the castle items she considered to be her own, as she had brought them to the marriage, and the Earl grumbled about how ‘grete tormoyle dothe ij houses brede’ (Folger Shakespeare Library, X.d.428 (95)). In November 1581, as Shrewsbury prepared Sheffield Castle to receive Mary, Queen of Scots again, he commanded Baldwin to send wax lights, torches and table linen for her, and complained that lack of ready money would force him to sell his ship *The Talbot* (LPL, MS 3198, fols 92, 193). In June 1583 the Earl instructed Baldwin to buy taffeta, damask for a counterpoint to furnish the castle and lodge, and plates for fruit while in London (LPL, MS 3198, fols 208). One of the most informative written sources to survive is a partial inventory of the household goods and furniture of the 6<sup>th</sup> Earl and his royal prisoner, in both Sheffield Castle and the hunting lodge (LPL, MSS 694–710, LPL, MSS 3192–3206; see Chapter 8, Section: The captivity of Mary, Queen of Scots). It is not clear what the purpose was of the inventory, undertaken on 18<sup>th</sup> June 1582 by John Dickenson and William Kettelicke, nor can we always determine in which of the households the recorded items were found, but it reveals that both the castle and the hunting lodge were furnished in a manner appropriate to one of the wealthiest peers in the realm (Leader 1874, 44–5; ICOSSE 2005, 57). The inventory lists carpets and tapestries, rich bed furnishings including counterpanes, testers, sheets and pillows, many of which were elaborated with embroidery or silk fringes, feather beds, bolsters and mattresses, altar cloths, candlesticks of brass, pewter and iron, chests, stools, bedsteads, tables, chairs covered with velvet and silk, bibles and other books, and clocks, and there were pantries and bakehouses well stocked with pans, vats and tuns (Leader 1872, 366–9). The household was reluctant to dispose of objects, as demonstrated by the listing of eight chairs, four stools, five feather beds, and two pillowcases said to be ‘past service’ (Tucker 1874, 255–6). The worn stools may have been among those for which the 6<sup>th</sup> Earl requested gilt nails and other upholstery materials in May 1583 (Lodge 1838, 242).

The written accounts reveal the castle as a place where craftworkers and labourers came to receive payments, for such activities as the pannage of the pigs, cropping of the oaks, hay crops, leases for grazing, pasture, felling wood in the park, and ‘the mine of sea-coal at the Stobbyng’ in the park, and for cinders sold to ‘divers dyers of Chesterfield’ (Thomas 1920–24, 157). However, traces of this in the archaeological record are, perhaps not sur-



prisingly, thin. Excavations have recovered just one 13th-century coin (a long-cross silver penny of Henry III), three 17th- or 18th-century coins (of James II (1686), William III (1698) and George II (date worn)), a French 14th-century 'crown' jeton, and three Nuremberg Rose/Orb tokens of mid-16th- or 17th-century date; some of the coins and counters listed by Armstrong (1930, 25) are no longer with the archive. The Account Rolls also record something of the material culture associated with financial transactions, such as the purchase of purses of white leather and canvas in which to carry the lord's money (Thomas 1920–24, 235).

The archive contains 31 clay pipe fragments, which have been studied by Susie White (2015); the limited numbers suggest selective retention. Armstrong (1930, 19–20) reported that the earliest clay pipes occurred in what he believed were the Elizabethan levels of the moat, but no pipes of this date survive in the archive. Seventeen of the clay pipe bowls were dated by White to the 17th century (the earliest from 1610–30), a period which is not well represented in Sheffield (e.g. White 2015, figs 11, 139–40), and at least seven of these could potentially belong to the Civil War period, or that of the castle's destruction soon after (see Chapter 7, Section: Clay pipes).

Two other objects published by Armstrong are of intrinsic interest: a wooden 'playing card' and a wooden/brass crucifix (Armstrong 1930, plate II (nos 1, 4); Figure 2.21). The 'card' is, in fact, a small block of wood into which a brass diamond has been inlaid, and the letter 'K' marked by brass pins (hence the King of Diamonds). No parallels can be found for this as a 'playing card' and it has been suggested that it might be a craft 'trial piece' (Mark Hall, *pers. comm.*). Thomas Ellin, a former Master Cutler, who examined the piece for Armstrong, thought it the work of a local cutler, a proposition confirmed when a local boy gave Armstrong some similar ones belonging to his grandfather (Armstrong 1930, 26; also 1930, plate II, 2 for the grandfather's Queen of Hearts; Figure 2.21). This suggests a late date, and provides valuable insights into craft activities and leisure pursuits among Sheffield's working people (Figure 6.10). There is also a small bone die (context unknown), of medieval or post-medieval date. The wooden crucifix (Armstrong 1930, 26) says ebony) is enclosed in brass, and was found in the upper levels of the moat, below the demolition debris. This makes a late 16th- to early 17th-century date very likely (Figure 6.11). Armstrong (1930, 24) also found a series of 16th-century brass 'counters' (which do not appear to have survived in the archive) inscribed 'in Tudor lettering' with 'Ave Maria Gracia [Gratia] Plena' on one side, and emblems of the apostles or a fleur-de-lys design on the reverse. Armstrong mentions the appearance of 'the abacus in the centre', which makes little sense until we realise that these 'counters' may have been jetons (see Munby *et al.* 2019, 257–9 for several examples of jetons bearing an 'Ave Maria' legend from Oxford Castle). In 1858, Albert Way (1858, 259–60), speaking of other 'elegantly designed counters' which Mary, Queen of Scots received as a gift in 1579 while in custody in Sheffield, noted that they 'were very probably used [by the Queen] with a kind of Abacus for casting accounts'. Armstrong's 'counters' are not the jetons the Queen received in 1579 (the design is different), but we can take them to stand both for a continued Catholic presence in a town in the process of Reformation (Moreland and Gorman 2019, 11–12; also above for a pottery sherd bearing a Catholic motif), and the importance of commercial transactions in the castle (even, it seems, to a captive Queen).

### Feasts and refuse

Armstrong (1930, 19) noted the plentiful occurrence of animal bone (including deer antler) and oyster shell among 'refuse' found in the area of the drawbridge, and concluded that the kitchens were located on the south side of the castle. However, he does not seem to have retained more than a very few examples. More bone was retained by Butcher, and survives from virtually every foundation shaft he recorded, but the overall quantity still seems small for this kind of site. Among the bone analysed, the major domesticates (cattle, pig and deer) were clearly predominant, but only two horse bones were noted, and just one fish vertebra, but working conditions must have precluded the recovery of fish bones. The bone probably included both butchery and consumption waste, but, given the relatively small quantity present, and the likely recovery and retention bias inherent to it, little more can be made of the assemblage. We are not in a position to assess Armstrong's suggestion about the location of the kitchens, but it is worth noting that deer bones are plentiful, which is not surprising given the ready supply of venison from the adjoining deer park (Hunter 1819, 189). It was probably the source for the 'fifty does and twenty nine red deere' killed and cooked for the 'great dinner' that followed the funeral of Francis Talbot on 21<sup>st</sup> October 1560 (Hunter 1819, 57). Frederick Bradbury (1927) made this connection while the



**Figure 6.10:** An item identified by Leslie Armstrong as a 'playing card'. This was probably the work of a 19th-century craftsman. Courtesy of Museums Sheffield; accession no. 1995.84.18.

excavations were taking place, and wrote to the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* to marvel that so many deer would be served up at one feast and, silversmith that he was, to remark that the accompanying 'display of silver plate and pewter ... must have been prodigious'. In the late 16th century, the 6<sup>th</sup> Earl's servant Robert Bradshaw wrote to him about supplies to the castle, including wine, fish, pasties, venison, and pheasants, to be laid in at Sheffield for the coming Christmas-tide (LPL, MS 705, fol. 144). Later records provide further occasional snapshots of this supply process. Stewards accounts record the delivery to the castle, 'when the surveiors and other gentlemen were there' in 1633, of 34 quarts (c.38.6 litres) of white wine, three quarts of sack, and one quart of claret (Hunter 1819, 102). This is an apposite reminder that even the humblest of remains can sit on a spectrum of social display for which only traces survive in the archaeological record.

The relative scarcity of wine bottle glass of 17th-century date or later suggests selective retention; there is only one bottle neck, and one bottle seal with the initials CP (see Chapter 8 for bottles from the hunting lodge). There are parts of up to four drinking vessels of 16th-/17th-century date, all of potash glass. Three are represented by bases only; two are rigaree-decorated (a feature which disappears in the mid-17th century; one from Armstrong's archive, the other from foundation shaft E15), and probably belong to cylindrical beakers (Willmott 2002, type 1), while the third may belong to a pedestal beaker (Willmott 2002, type 4; from foundation shaft H2-4). The example from E15 may correlate with a piece of 'Elizabethan glass, German import' marked in a deposit of dark silt on the north section drawing (Butcher 1958-62e), one of the few instances where Butcher's finds other than pottery can be related to his written records. There is also an unprovenanced small body fragment which shows traces of possibly optic-blown wrythen (twisted or coiled) decoration; this may represent a fourth drinking vessel, of unknown form but of similar 16th- or 17th-century date. None of the beakers are necessarily 'German imports'; all these forms were made at English glasshouses such as Hutton, Rosedale (both Yorks) and Haughton (Lancs) (Crossley and Aberg 1972; Hurst-Vose 1994). While the castle vessels may have belonged to the elite household, Willmott (2002, 21-2) identifies the second quarter of the 17th century as the point at which glass tablewares became available to the 'middling sort' living in urban environments.



**Figure 6.11:** *Wooden and brass crucifix of late 16th- or early 17th-century date. Recovered from the site of Sheffield Castle in the late 1920s. Courtesy of Museums Sheffield; accession no. 1995.84.12.*

The archive contains comparatively little material that can be related to eating and drinking, but this is clearly unrepresentative of the range of activities that took place at the castle. As Collinson (1987, 18–19) has observed of Mary’s household after she had been transferred to the ‘more straitened’ custody of Sir Amyas Paulet:

the sums expended in these final months, up to the very moment of execution, give some indication of the scale of the custodial operation. Mary and her people consumed, or at least had placed on their tables, 353 tuns of beer, costing £706.13.5 ... Twenty-eight tuns of white wine from Gascony cost £480.7.12. The meat bill came to a colossal £2,279.2.4., including 158 carcasses of beef, 1341 sheep, 497 calves, 398 lambs, almost a thousand pigs of different kinds, 1829 pounds of lard and £617 worth of sundry poultry, pigeons and rabbits. The fish bill, for £1,569.5.11., covered 721 codfish, 489 ling, and salmon, turbot, salt eels, white herrings, red herrings, sprats, pike, barbel, chub, tench and perch. Forty gallons of olive oil were required to dress the salads.

The remains of refuse from feasting and other aspects of daily living should also serve to remind us that elite households are very high-maintenance, also requiring much cleaning. The Account Rolls record several payments for cleaning, some of which doubtless resulted in the deposition of material in the moat from where it was recovered centuries later during archaeological investigation. For example, in 1442–43 John Mulner was

paid 4*d.* a day over a period of nine days to ‘clean the stable and other houses and chambers within the said castle’, and Henry Roworth’s unnamed wife was paid 14*d.* on several occasions for washing the castle linen and napery (Thomas 1920–24, 235–6). These are very rare insights into a domestic economy, much of it female, that underpinned elite posture and display.

### ‘The Frenchmen’s only scourge’

Unusually for a castle, we might think, very few finds have any association with military activity. A spearhead found by Armstrong (1930, plate III (no. 1); Figure 2.22) is described as of small, light type, but in form it falls within Jessop’s (1996, type M9) military category of arrowheads, an armour-piercing type dated to the 13th to 15th century. The only shot in both metal and stone was recorded by Armstrong (1930, 14), who noted ‘arquebus and musket balls of lead’ found among the demolition debris from the castle, although something similar may have been meant by the word ‘ball’ on the west section drawing of foundation shaft G7 recorded by Butcher (n.d. (k); 1958–62g). Four lead pistol or musket balls are extant, along with one iron and one stone cannonball. The diameter of the iron shot (46mm/1¾ inches) would fit it for use in a falconet, while the stone shot (diameter 120mm/4¾ inches) would have fitted a demi-culverin (Scott 2001, table 5.1). The excavated castle walls bear the imprint of cannonballs and of musket balls (Armstrong 1930, 16, figs 7 and 8; Figure 3.11), and iron cannonballs were found at various levels within the moat (Armstrong 1930, 15, 20). A prick spur was found by Butcher in foundation shaft G7. The end of the goad is missing, but the body is finely decorated with an inlaid silver design. The form would place it no later than the 13th century (when prick spurs were replaced by rowel spurs), or in the 17th century, when they enjoyed another period of popularity (Figure 6.12). A recent study of gender and medieval castles has observed that such objects



**Figure 6.12:** Silver-inlaid prick spur. Recovered from foundation shaft G7. Courtesy of Museums Sheffield.



relate to particular aspects of masculinity, typically being 'ornate and designed to be visible', with spurs often presented to lords as gifts, and sometimes 'given in "homage" to lords from people lower down the social scale' (Dempsey *et al.* 2019, 3).

While we have to be cautious about accepting any of the artefact assemblages as fully representative of the range of activities on the site, it is striking that items with any potential military significance are so sparse, despite the likelihood that they would have been preferentially sought out and retained during the excavations. This absence also appears to contrast with an inventory of the 'armour' in Sheffield Castle on 16<sup>th</sup> November 1586 (Hall and Thomas 1914, 260–1; Figure 6.13). However, a closer look at the latter reveals that, while 24 muskets are recorded, so too is 'complet armorre for my Lo. [Lord] gilded and another black gilded for my Lo. boothe for hors and foote', suggesting that much here was for display rather than for war. The inventory of arms belonging to the town of Sheffield in 1615 – '3 corslets, 8 headpieces, 4 musketts, 1 caliever, 9 swords' (Hunter 1819, 105) – also serves to contextualise the material from the castle. Military activities were a small, occasional part of the lifecycles of castles, and for this reason alone it is certainly time to move beyond militarist and masculinist approaches, which tend to emphasise them (Dempsey *et al.* 2019, 2–3; Dempsey 2019, 782–3).

## Discussion

The task of archaeologists is to write history from material remains. What survives to us from the past is a product of a range of circumstances. In this respect, Leslie Armstrong's initial account, published in a local newspaper as construction of the Co-op was bringing to light the remains of the castle, is very illuminating, for it highlights the partiality of the material record from Sheffield Castle. The task of doing archaeology on an active construction site meant that much was missed, and Armstrong (1927b) points out that the variety and number of objects recovered stand testimony to 'the extensive collection which could have been obtained had the excavated material been systematically searched'. But the castle assemblage is partial in another way too. In the same report, Armstrong refers to the key, which 'had the appearance of silver' and which he linked with Mary, Queen of Scots. As we argued in Chapter 2, this association with the captive Queen was almost certainly strategic, designed to encourage the reluctant workmen to look out for and retain objects of archaeological interest. What it highlights here is the fact, while much material was 'being carted away to the tip' (Armstrong 1930, 15), this kind of object, of precious metal, with presumed historical associations, was much more likely to be recovered and preserved in our archive. The circumstances of discovery, and decisions about what is important and should be retained, have thus affected the traces of the past available to us.

On the other hand, the particular character of certain deposits means that some objects, especially ordinary, everyday things that archaeologists would not normally expect to find (Dempsey *et al.* 2019, 3), have survived the rigours both of time and of inattentive workmen. In this same first report Armstrong (1927b) bemoaned the 'very wet and unpleasant ... sticky black sludge' through which the foundation shafts were being dug, but it was this waterlogging of moat deposits that preserved a range of organic objects which would not normally have survived and so contributed to the special character of the finds assemblage from the castle. Thus, Armstrong (1927b) described, and illustrated for the readers of the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, the discovery of a stout leather shoe 'in an astonishingly good state of preservation. The upper is cut from one piece of leather, and has been secured to the sole by stitching. The shoe was fastened by means of a leather thong, which was still in place' (Figure 2.17). It was, he suggested, 'a typical leather shoe such as the retainers of the Earl would wear'. As Armstrong recognised, the moat deposits preserved the world of the ordinary, or at least more of it than is normally the case.

So while there are exceptions, the bulk of our assemblage does not resonate with images of commanders in the Hundred Years War, of the greatest earls in the land, or of siege and warfare, and this will be a disappointment only if we fall into the trap of privileging the elite occupants of castles, if we believe that only they made history. We also need to remember that the castle would not have continuously been occupied by its lords and

**Figure 6.13 (page 212):** *An inventory of armour in the castle taken in 1586.* It is entitled 'A note takenn of all my L. Armorre by Mr Whyat wch came from Yor Lp from Aurtoun Lang-feld when Yor Lp Lyed their the xvi th of November 1586 as followethe'. With thanks to [www.picturesheffield.com](http://www.picturesheffield.com) (arc02599).

their families, who had properties across the region including the hunting lodge in the park; moreover, many of the lords were regularly engaged in affairs of state or other endeavours, which took them far from Sheffield (see Chapter 1, Section: Sheffield Castle and its elite occupants), leaving behind retainers, cooks, servants and craftworkers. These elite peripatetic households would have removed many of the high-status items when not in residence, many of which are anyway far less likely to end up discarded in the moat, from which the bulk of our finds derive. The assemblages that survive from the early and mid-20th-century excavations, therefore, largely reflect the mundane activities of all the inhabitants of this substantial building, rather than the set-piece rituals of the elite.

### Conclusion

In this chapter we have finally brought to publication all of the surviving artefacts recovered during construction work on the site of Sheffield Castle in the early and mid-20th century. Only a small selection of these had previously been discussed in print, in Armstrong's 1930 paper, and some of the identifications there required updating. The surviving material record is overwhelmingly of late medieval to 17th-century date; in this respect it is rather different from the assemblage recovered during the 2018 excavations by Wessex Archaeology, as we will see in the next chapter. What has emerged from this chapter is an alternative narrative to the popular and widely repeated accounts of Sheffield Castle that emphasise dukes, earls and the shenanigans attendant on the incarceration of Mary, Queen of Scots; here we have an archaeology of the ordinary men and women of Sheffield. We have discussed an array of mundane items in the archaeological record, such as nails, shears, timbers, twigs, and leather offcuts, which are the remnants of the work of the multitude of men and women mentioned in the written sources, and countless unnamed and undocumented others. Furthermore, even the items of more obviously elite material culture, such as dressed stone and plaster recovered from the moat fills, represent the work of a host of labourers and servants. These were the people who provided the labour for the elite displays required for the production and articulation of elite power and the concomitant subordination of the ordinary people of the town. These were also the people who made the castle and, as we will discover in Chapter 9, whose descendants probably also helped to unmake it in the 17th century.

### Bibliography

The full bibliography is available at the end of this volume, or at: <https://doi.org/10.22599/SheffieldCastle.k>.