

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN
SOCIETY

(INCORPORATING THE CAMBS & HUNTS ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY)



VOLUME XLVI

JANUARY 1952 TO DECEMBER 1952

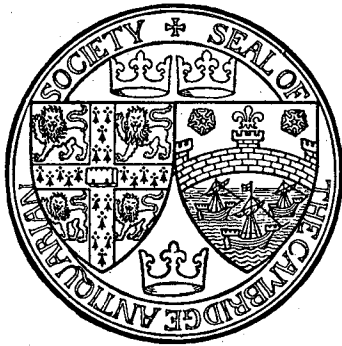
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MEDIEVAL WELLS AT CHERRY HINTON

J. G. HURST, B.A. AND C. I. FELL, M.A.

IN October 1951 a disused well-shaft about 45 feet deep was discovered during quarrying operations in the chalk pits of the Norman Cement Works at Cherry Hinton, owned by the British Portland Cement Manufacturers Ltd. The site is on the south side of Coldham's Lane close to its junction with Rosemary Lane, the map reference of which is 52/484574. At first the shaft was suspected of containing an unexploded bomb and the consequent probing caused much damage to the pottery lying at the bottom of the well. The find was reported to the Museum by Mr Bishop, the Company's welfare officer, and the site was visited by Mr T. C. Lethbridge who examined the pottery which had been recovered. Through the kindness of Mr A. L. Gray, manager of the works, this was brought to the Museum for cleaning, repair and study, and later was presented by him. One other fragmentary jug from the same well was given to the Museum by Mr S. J. Osborne on behalf of William Sindall (Contractors), Gloucester Street, Cambridge.

South and east of the well, various ditches and pits were revealed in the top of the chalk when the surface soil had been bulldozed off prior to quarrying. A few of these were examined by the Cambridge Archaeological Field Club, but yielded little datable material. They contained bones and a few sherds of pottery and appear to have been rubbish pits connected with medieval cottages probably contemporary with the well. One ditch further back from Coldham's Lane contained Romano-British pottery but no detailed examination of it was made.

Early in 1952 the discovery of further narrow well-shafts about 40 feet deep, again on the property of the Norman Cement Works, Cherry Hinton and not far from the earlier find, was reported by Mr R. C. Lambeth, who brought in the handle of a medieval jug found in one of these wells. Dr G. H. S. Bushnell and Mr J. G. Hurst went to the site, but by then no trace of the wells was visible. The site is a little to the south-east of the well first recorded.

All the pottery now in the Museum came from the first well, with the exception of one side and handle. It can be divided into the following groups:

1. *Jug characteristic of the Oxford Region*

Lower part of a brown sandy ware jug covered with green glaze, much blackened by fire. Slightly concave base. The body covered with an uneven trellis pattern of applied strips erratically decorated with one, two or three rouletted rows of square notches. There are upturned scales applied in the centre of each diamond formed by the trellis pattern and a band of rouletting $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches above the base. (Museum no. 51.1072, Fig. 1a.)

Very similar decoration can be seen on the base of a large jug from the Market Place, Cambridge (Museum no. 1903.273). Elsewhere rouletted decoration on applied strips is very common in the Oxford region.¹ The two examples from Cambridgeshire are almost certainly imports from the Oxford area where examples are dated to the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. This suggested origin is strengthened by the presence of similar sherds found in Horne Lane and on the Granada site, Bedford.² This trade route follows the general line of the Icknield Way, which from prehistoric times has been of the greatest importance in linking East Anglia with the Middle Thames area. In Late Saxon times East Anglia was exporting pottery westward towards Oxford,³ but in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries this trend seems to have been reversed.

2. *Sherds possibly of Midland origin*

(α) Sherds of the handle, neck and shoulder of a hard grey ware jug covered with green-brown glaze. Strap handle with central groove and slight double thumbing at the top. Decorated with vertical painted stripes in brown. This has been restored with a pinched spout but may have had a bridge spout. (Museum no. 52.117, Fig. 1*b*.)

(β) Six sherds of similar ware. (Museum no. 52.120C.) The ware of these jugs is very distinctive and is the same as that of some of the East Anglian face jugs with grotesque masks,⁴ especially those from Earith, Hunts.,⁵ and from the Fire Station, Norwich.⁶ It is not at present clear where these were made since face jugs have a fairly wide distribution. Examples have been found in the kilns at Nottingham,⁷ though the ware of these is not exactly comparable with the examples in question, and the East Anglian jugs may have been local copies of Midland and Northern imports. Such jugs are usually dated to the late thirteenth or early fourteenth centuries. The decoration of painted stripes is widespread and unlikely to have any local significance.

3. *Locally made jugs*

(α) Ovoid jug in rough black ware with brown surfaces and traces of shell and grit. Traces of green-brown glaze on the shoulder and neck, the latter being rilled. Simple slightly grooved rim with a pinched-out lip. Angular moulding below rim on the neck. Knife-trimmed sagging base with five spaced thumbings which do not steady the jug. Round handle thumbed at the bottom and spread at the top. (Museum no. 52.118, Fig. 1*c*.)

(β) Squat ovoid jug in rough black ware with brown surfaces, lighter in colour than no. 52.118 and tempered with large pieces of shell and grit. Slight traces of

¹ *Oxoniensia*, IV, p. 102, K, and VII, p. 72, nos. 5 and 8 and especially no. 6, which also has scales in the centre of the trellis.

² Bedford Modern School Museum, Catalogue nos. 3879 and 3938.

³ *Berks. Arch. Journ.* L (1947), pp. 52 ff.

⁴ *Arch. Journ.*, LIX (1902), p. 9, fig. 16.

⁵ In University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, no. 05.297.

⁶ In Castle Museum, Norwich, nos. 137-933.

⁷ *Trans. Thoroton Soc.* XXXVI (1932), pp. 79 ff.

glaze on the rounded neck moulding and shoulder. The front of the neck is missing and has been restored with a pinched-out lip. Plain sagging base partly restored. Round handle with a single thumbing at the bottom and double at the top. (Museum no. 52.119; Fig. 1d.)

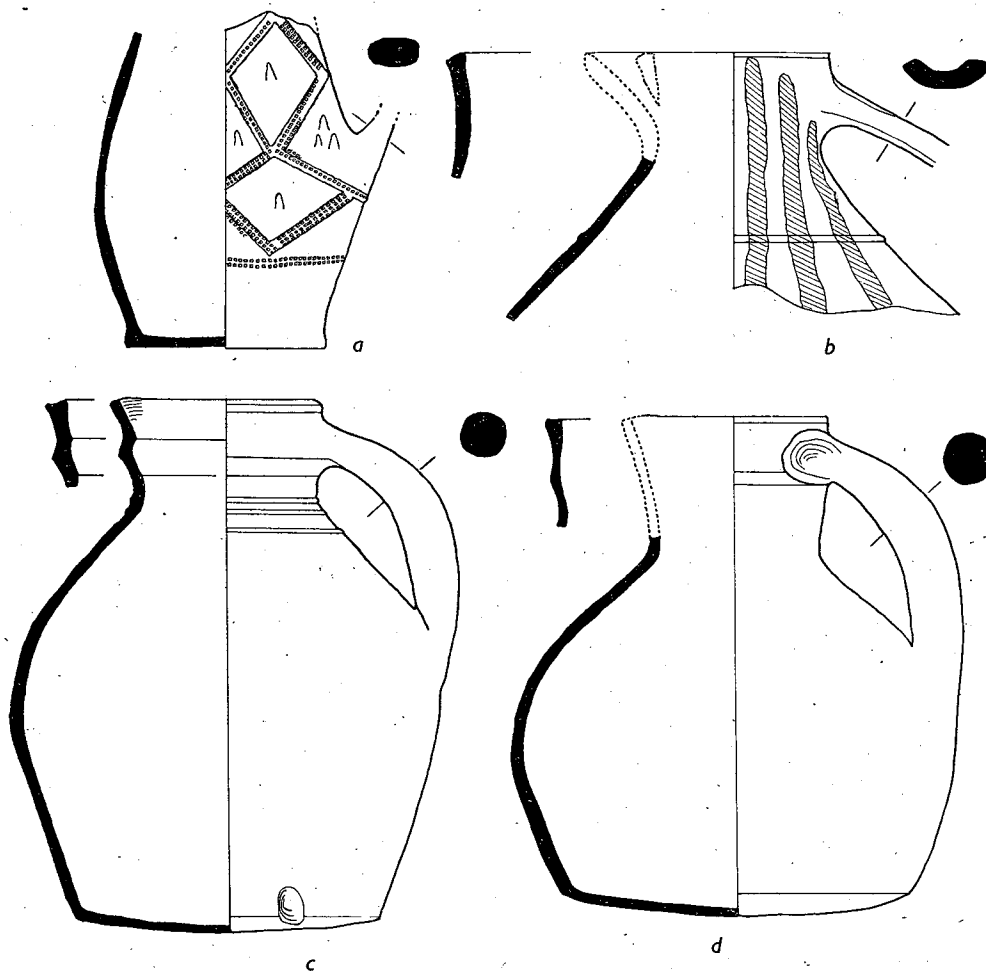


Fig. 1. Pottery from Medieval Wells at Cherry Hinton: (a) Museum No. 51.1072; (b) Museum No. 52.117; (c) Museum No. 52.118; (d) Museum No. 52.119. *One-quarter natural size.*

(γ) Bottom part of two jugs similar to (α) and (β) with green glaze on their bodies. Both have plain sagging bases and A is reeded to within 3 inches of the base. (Museum no. 52.120A and B.)

(δ) Fourteen sherds of similar jugs including two sagging bases, each thumbed in six places, and one plain sagging base. All three have a diameter of between 6 and 7 inches. A fourth plain sagging base has a diameter of 8 inches and a brown outer surface only. Two sherds of brown sandy ware with patchy green glaze. (All are Museum no. 52.120C.)

All these coarse jugs have a very similar fabric and are closely comparable with

a large number of jugs from Cambridge. They were presumably made locally and show the continued use of shell which was such a distinctive feature of Late Saxon pottery of the St Neots type in the Cambridge area.¹ The shapes are common and hard to date closely but are quite consistent with that of the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century to which the finer jugs of this group are assigned.

4. *Red-ware sherd distinctive of Cambridge*

A small sherd of smooth red ware with a mottled orange and dark green glaze. (Museum no. 52.120D.)

This is a type of ware distinctive of Cambridge. There seem to have been two main forms, an ovoid jug with vertical ribbing, sometimes with circular stamps on the neck and a twisted handle,² and a biconical type either reeded or combed.³ The first wide-bodied type is a very common late-thirteenth-century form. The other type is also well dated to the thirteenth century.⁴ The sherd under discussion belongs to the first type.

The side and handle of a jug recovered from the second group of wells found early in 1952 belong to the group of locally made jugs described in section 3 above. It has shelly brown surfaces and traces of green-brown glaze, an oval handle with a central ridge and a single thumb-mark at the bottom and a double thumb-mark at the top. (Museum no. 52.121.)

The pottery from these wells has made a valuable addition to our knowledge of medieval pottery in the Cambridge region where there have been few reliably dated or associated groups. The various jugs confirm the assumed dating and contemporaneity of the different types and point to various trade connexions with other parts of the country.

¹ *Arch. News Letter*, Feb. 1949, p. 2.

³ *Ibid.* pl. 41.

² Rackham, *English Medieval Pottery*, pl. 33.

⁴ *London Museum Medieval Catalogue*, fig. 69, i.

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