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PROCEEDINGS OF THE CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

(INCORPORATING THE CAMBS & HUNTS ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY)



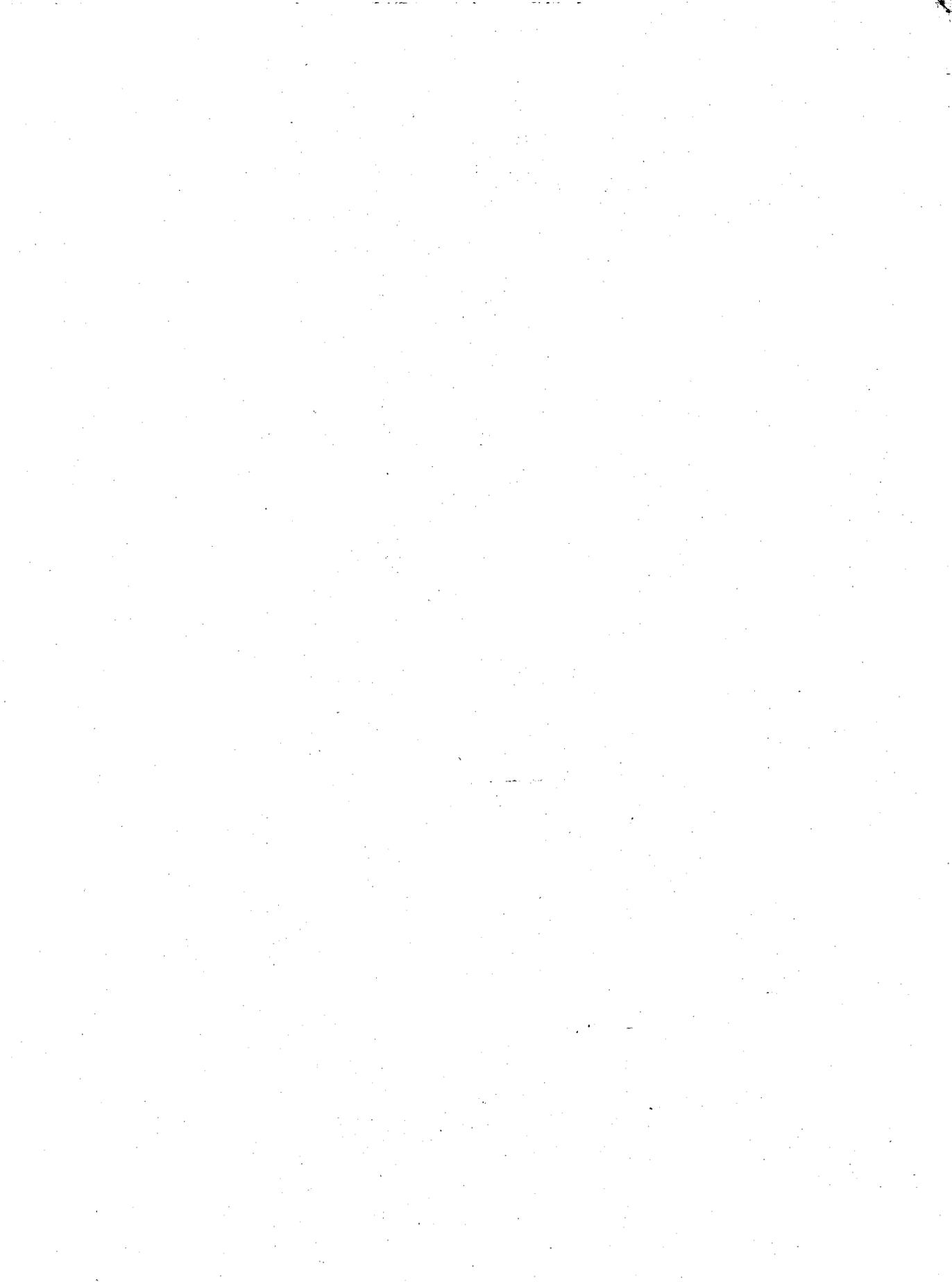
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SAXO-NORMAN POTTERY FROM GODMANCHESTER

H. J. M. GREEN

THE SITE

DURING the excavations on the site of Roman Baths at Godmanchester,¹ much Saxo-Norman pottery was found. It was derived from robber trenches along the line of the Roman walls, from areas where the hypocausts had been dug out, and from two rubbish pits.

Area 1 (first cold bath) was the earliest and the Saxo-Norman deposits lay above fourth-century rubbish from the late Roman robbing of the structure. Area 2 (the hot room) was cut by area 3 (the warm and cold rooms) and pit S 5. Pit M 3 likewise cut areas 1 and 2.

THE POTTERY

Stamford ware is well represented on the site, comprising some 13% of the total Saxo-Norman pottery range. This is a high proportion compared with most sites in East Anglia. The distribution map² of this ware shows that it was probably not exported in any quantity much further south than Godmanchester.

Stamford ware was most common in the upper levels of areas 1 and 2, and in area 3. Although several varieties of this pottery were found, none of the late twelfth-century types were represented.

Thetford ware comprised only 4% of the pottery from the site, which lies on the far western edge of this ware's range.³ The principal pottery type represented is the storage jar with applied thumb strips and multiple handles (Fig. 1, nos. 5, 28 and 29). Many of these storage jars have been found on early medieval sites in Cambridge.⁴

St Neots ware constitutes 83% of the pottery from the site and is remarkably homogeneous throughout the various deposits. In general character the St Neots pottery is comparable with that from Barton Moats⁵ which is considered to be mainly of mid-twelfth-century date. As at Barton Moats not only was there a mixture of medieval pottery in the later deposits (pit S 5 and area 3), but much of the St Neots pottery was of medieval character and vice versa. The principal type are cooking-pots with everted rims and little or no concavity in their upper surfaces. These pots are intermediate in size between pre-Conquest ones (4-6 in. in diameter) and twelfth-

¹ I.L.N., Nov. 16, 1957, p. 842.

² D. B. Harden, *Dark-Age Britain*, p. 228, fig. 52; and this volume fig. 6, p. 62.

³ *Proc. C.A.S.* vol. XLIX, p. 45, fig. 1.

⁴ *Proc. C.A.S.* vol. L, pp. 53-9, fig. 8.

⁵ *Proc. C.A.S.* vol. XLIX, pp. 50 and 58.

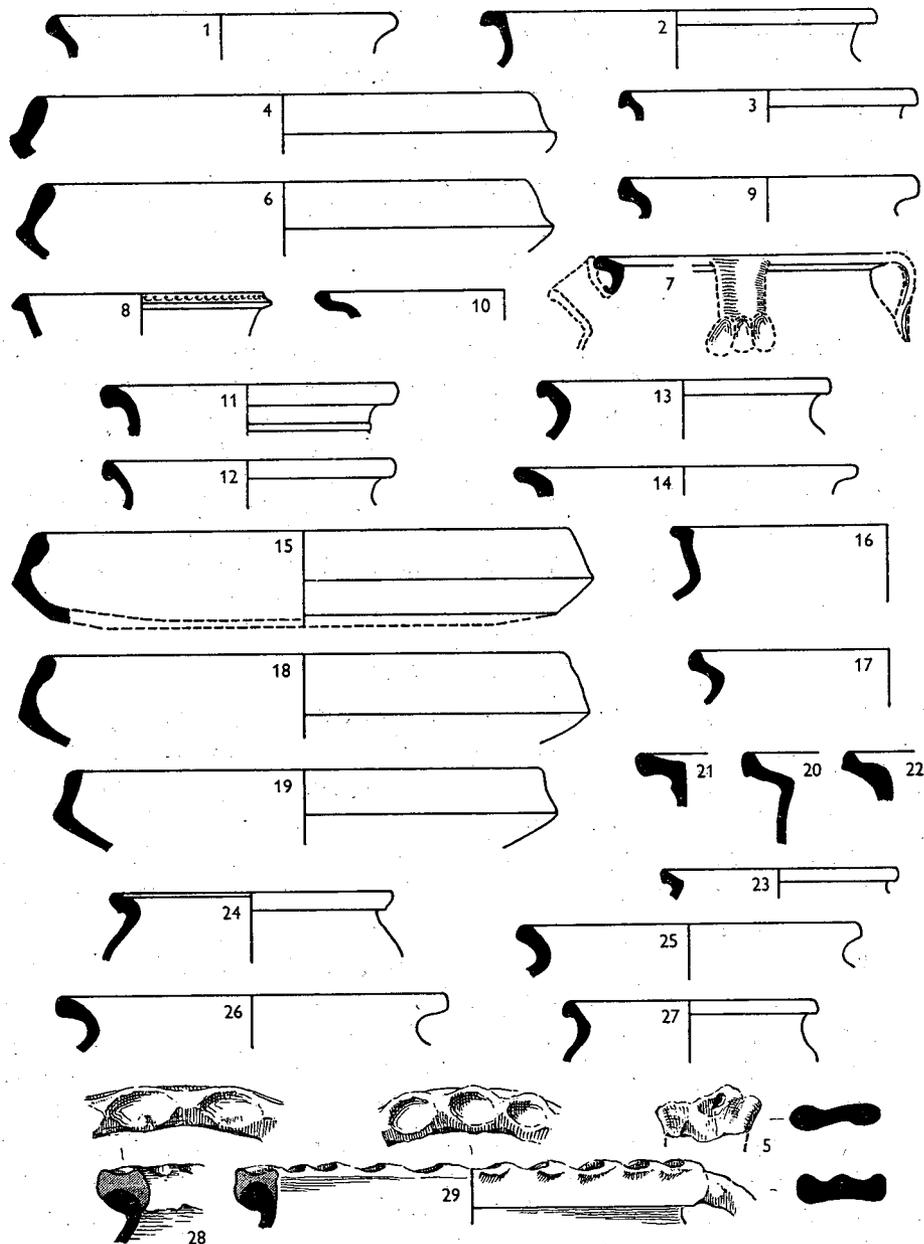


Fig. 1. Saxo-Norman pottery from Godmanchester (one-third natural size).

century examples (14 in. or more in diameter). They thus compare with examples from Cambridge, which are probably not earlier than the eleventh century.¹ Shallow dishes are another common type. They are all very similar with large, slightly in-turned rims and an angular outline.

¹ *Proc. C.A.S.* vol. XLIX, p. 53.

The principal key to the dating of the Saxo-Norman deposits from the site lies in the introduction of glazed medieval pottery in area 3. This pottery, as opposed to Stamford ware, was probably introduced at the turn of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. No medieval pottery was found in areas 1 and 2, and for this reason and others already given, the pottery from these deposits probably dates to the second half of the eleventh century. Similarly the pottery from area 3 and pit S 5 probably belongs to the twelfth century. By this time medieval wares were apparently speedily replacing Saxo-Norman pottery. In pit M 3 whose pottery is of late thirteenth-century date, Saxo-Norman and hard unglazed medieval wares have almost disappeared—to be replaced by a large number of glazed jugs.

Area 1

- (1) Jar with everted rim, St Neots ware. Compare with example from Hemingford Grey.¹
- (2) Jar with square rim, St Neots ware. The offset at the shoulder is characteristic of the twelfth century.
- (3) Jar with hollowed rim, St Neots ware.
- (4) Angular shallow dish with slightly inturned rim, St Neots ware.
- (5) Strap handle from a Thetford stone jar.
Irregular ovoid handle. St Neots ware. This example is unique, since all known jug handles in St Neots ware are of strap type. (Not illustrated.)
Stamford ware. Three fragments with dark yellow-green, light green and yellow glazes.

Area 2

- (6) Two angular shallow dishes similar to the example illustrated (unstratified), St Neots ware. Compare with example from Herrimere.²
- (7) Spouted pitcher, Stamford ware. Pink white fabric with a thin orange green glaze. The spout and handles are reconstructed from an example at Oxford.³ Three other fragments of Stamford ware with yellow-green glaze were found.
- (8) Flanged bowl, St Neots ware. Pricked round the rim. This bowl may be late Roman.
- (9-14) Jars with everted rims, St Neots ware.

Pit S 5

- (15) Angular shallow dish with slightly inturned rim. St Neots ware. Compare with example from Tempsford.⁴
- (16) Jar with offset at shoulder. St Neots ware. Characteristic of twelfth-century types from Barton Moats and Flambard's Manor.⁵ An exact parallel in buff medieval fabric was found in area 3.
- (17) Jar with everted hollowed rim, St Neots ware.

¹ *Proc. C.A.S.* vol. XLIX, p. 57, fig. 3, no. 5.

² *Proc. C.A.S.* vol. XLIX, p. 57, fig. 3, no. 14.

⁴ *Proc. C.A.S.* vol. XLIX, p. 57, fig. 3, no. 17.

³ B. Rackham, *Medieval English Pottery*, pl. 6.

⁵ *Proc. C.A.S.* vol. xxxv, p. 103, fig. 4, no. 6.

Area 3

- (18) Angular shallow dishes with slightly inturned rims.
- (19) St Neots ware. Compare no. 19 with example from Cambridge.¹
- (20) Large jar with strongly everted rim, diameter 18 in., St Neots ware. This type of cooking-pot is typical of the late twelfth century. Compare with example from Cambridge.²
- (21, 22) Large jars similar in character and size to no. 20, unstratified.
- (23) Small jar with everted rim, Thetford ware. This type of cooking-pot is usually pre-Conquest in date and is not normally found so far west.
- (24-27) Jars with everted rims, St Neots ware. Compare no. 25 with a late twelfth-century example from Comberton,³ no. 26 with an example from Cambridge,⁴ and no. 27 with no. 13. No. 24 may be late Roman.
- (28) Storage jar with applied thumb strip round the rim, Thetford ware. Diameter 10 in.
- (29) Storage jar with applied thumb strip round the rim and strap handles, Thetford ware. Unstratified.

Pit M 3

Pit M 3 contained a little residual Saxo-Norman pottery and numerous fragments of late thirteenth-century jugs. The commonest form was a jug with ovoid body, buff fabric and red slip decoration of vertical stripes reaching from the shoulder to the base. There was a patch of yellow-green glaze on the shoulder and side. Similar jugs but of inferior fabric and glaze have been found in Cambridge.

Note on pottery fabrics

Stamford ware has a hard thin fabric of a cream colour, often tinted pink. The lead glaze has been applied by dusting galena on the rim and shoulder of the vessel. Thetford ware is hard, sandy and grey. St Neots ware has a black core with pounded shell and a soapy surface. It varies in colour from a light brown to a purple black.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am indebted to Mr G. C. Dunning and Mr J. G. Hurst for examining the pottery and to Mrs A. Conington and Mr and Mrs B. Conington for permission to excavate.

¹ *Proc. C.A.S.* vol. XLIX, p. 60, fig. 5, no. 38.

² *Proc. C.A.S.* vol. XLIX, p. 59, fig. 4, no. 12.

³ *Proc. C.A.S.* vol. XLIX, p. 57, fig. 3, no. 1.

⁴ *Proc. C.A.S.* vol. XLIX, p. 59, fig. 4, no. 15.

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