

Notes and News

JUGS WITH BASES THUMBED UNDERNEATH (FIG. 93)

In the Kirkcudbright report¹ E. M. Jope drew attention to a group of medieval jugs which, in addition to the usual thumbing² on the side of the base, also had the same feature underneath the base itself. He published a distribution-map showing the main concentration of sites in the Carlisle region³ and suggested that this was a regional feature of this area with outliers in southern Scotland and Ireland and parallels in Holland.⁴

The aim of this note is to point out first, that, although the north of England rather than the Carlisle area may be the main area of distribution of this type, it is also to be found sporadically over other parts of England and Wales, and second, that there are three quite different types. As will be seen below, all types are present at some sites, for example at Kirkstall abbey, Yorkshire, FIG. 93, nos. 1-3, and Bothwell castle, Lanarkshire, FIG. 93, nos. 9-10.

The examples cited below are in no way meant to form a complete list, but are those which have been noted either at different museums during the past two years or through replies to queries sent to various people working on medieval pottery. There are three examples from Kirkstall abbey, Yorkshire,⁵ and I am greatly indebted to Mrs. J. Le Patourel for drawing my attention to them.

These sherds show the main types which may be distinguished as follows:

- Group 1.* Bases firmly thumbed underneath but thumbed only lightly or not at all on the side (FIG. 93, no. 1).
- Group 2.* Bases firmly thumbed on the side but only lightly thumbed underneath (FIG. 93, no. 2).
- Group 3.* Bases firmly thumbed both underneath and on the side (FIG. 93, no. 3).

Group 1 is the most important, as here the effect was clearly intentional. In group 2 the effect could be produced by chance during the thumbing of the outside by holding the base between the finger and thumb. Group 3 seems a natural way to produce a thumbed base by firmly pressing it out between the finger and thumb and it is perhaps surprising there are not more examples of it.⁶

Examples of group 1 have been noted at Cambridge⁷ from the King's Lane excava-

¹ G. C. Dunning, H. W. M. Hodges and E. M. Jope, 'Kirkcudbright castle, its pottery and ironwork,' *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scot.*, xci (1957-8), 127.

² Although a great many of the so-called thumbed bases were sometimes impressed with the finger rather than the thumb it is preferable to retain the term thumbed base as this has a long life in the literature and it is confusing to try to change such terms. In addition, fingering has rather different connotations from thumbing used in its general sense, as in thumbing a book, where not only the thumb is used.

³ *Op. cit.* in note 1, p. 122, fig. 2.

⁴ *Berichten v.d. Rijksdienst v.h. Oudheidkundig Bodemonderzoek*, viii (1958), 133, fig. 19.

⁵ Not yet published. Group 1, a stray find possibly from the guest-house drain; group 2, ref. no. 51/23, from a 13th-century level; and group 3, ref. no. KY3, from the lowest of 3 levels outside the kitchen datable mid 13th century.

⁶ Of those illustrated from Kirkcudbright (*op. cit.* in note 1) one is group 1 (p. 128, fig. 5, no. 31) and the other group 3 (p. 128, fig. 5, no. 22). The base illustrated from Carlisle is a good example of group 1, as it is only thumbed underneath; E. M. Jope and H. W. M. Hodges, 'The medieval pottery from Castle Street,' *Trans. Cumb. & Westmor. Antiq. & Archaeol. Soc.*, lv (1955), 90, fig. 9, no. 15.

⁷ *Proc. Camb. Antiq. Soc.*, xii (1908), 133-9. In the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology; not previously illustrated.

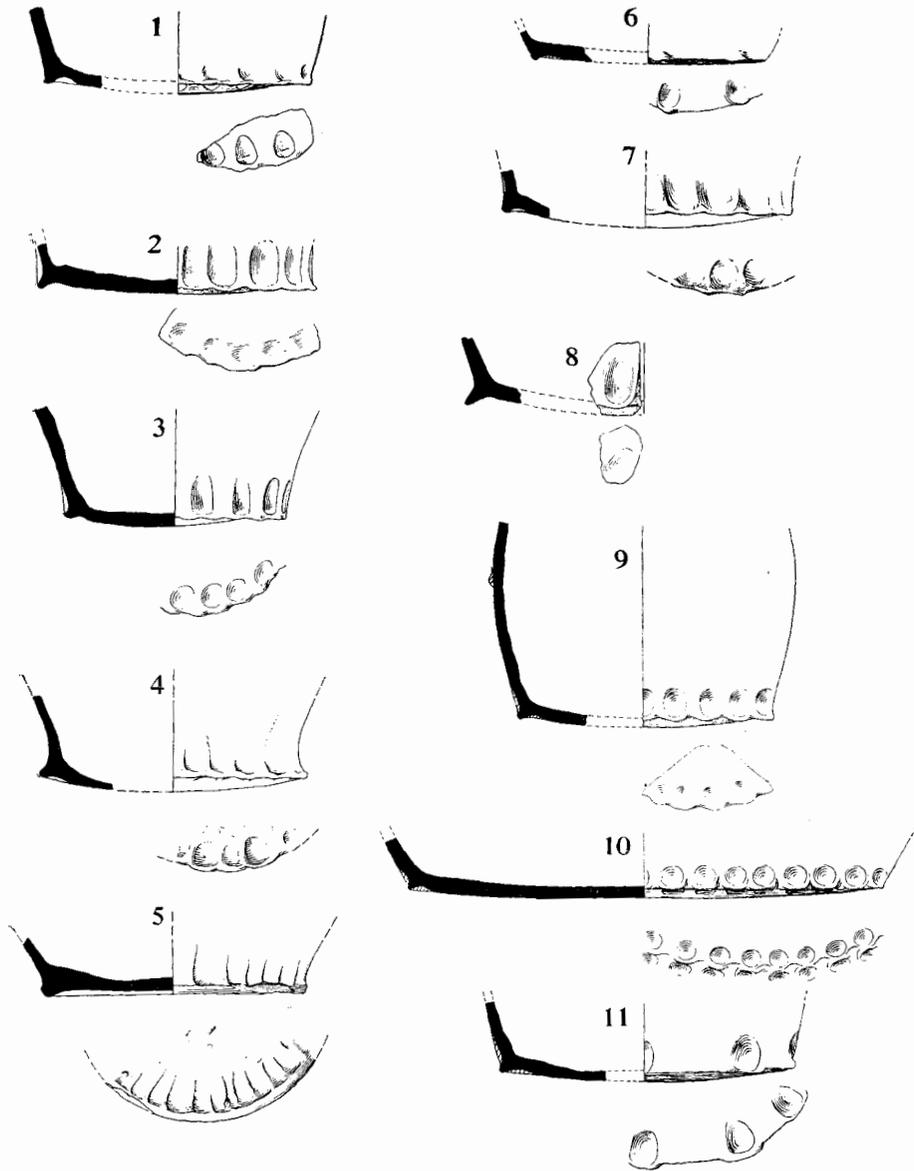


FIG. 93

JUGS WITH BASES THUMBED UNDERNEATH. Sc. $\frac{1}{4}$

1-3, Kirkstall abbey, groups 1-3; 4, Cambridge, group 1; 5, Kidwelly castle, group 1; 6, Shiel Burn, group 1; 7, Laugharne, group 3; 8, Hen Domen, group 3; 9-10, Bothwell castle, groups 2 & 3; 11, Kirkcudbright castle, group 3

tion of 1907 (FIG. 93, no. 4), and from Kidwelly castle, Carmarthenshire (FIG. 93, no. 5).⁸ There is a base of group 3 (FIG. 93, no. 7) from the Laugharne Burrows.⁹ From further north in Wales there is another example of group 3 (FIG. 93, no. 8) from Hen Domen castle, Montgomeryshire.¹⁰ This is of importance as it comes from a context in the first quarter of the 13th century, showing that the technique was developed when the use of the thumbed base began and was not a later 13th-century development. Mrs. J. Le Patourel informs me that there are other examples in Yorkshire from York (at least six) and Scarborough. Several jugs in Oxford are also thumbed underneath, for example a tripod pitcher (group 2) and a jug (group 3) from well 14 of the Bodleian extension excavation.¹¹ From the south of England there is an example of group 3 from the central car park site, Winchester.¹²

There are, therefore, bases thumbed underneath from five widely spaced parts of England and Wales (outside the north) and it is likely that a search will produce more examples. I would be very glad to hear of any that come to light. It is, therefore, premature to draw a distribution-map or to draw conclusions, but as, even in the north, examples are rare, it is possible that some examples happen by chance rather than intent, especially those in group 2.

There has not been an opportunity to study the material in the Carlisle area with these groupings in mind, but a study of the collections in the National Museum of Antiquities, Edinburgh, due to the kindness of Mr. R. B. K. Stevenson, has shown that there are examples of all three groups from Bothwell castle, Lanarkshire. The published example is group 1,¹³ and the other two examples are group 2 (FIG. 93, no. 9) and group 3 (FIG. 93, no. 10).¹⁴ There is a good example of group 1, with no thumbing at all on the outside, from a hut at Shiel Burn, Ayrshire (FIG. 93, no. 6).¹⁵ FIG. 93, no. 11, is an example of group 3 from Kirkcudbright.

To extend the continental evidence cited above an examination of the collections in all the major Danish museums shows that there are examples at only two sites.¹⁶ Unfortunately when these sherds were examined in 1960 I had not seen Jope's article, nor thought about the different groups, so they cannot be placed at present, but they are likely to be groups 2 or 3; for, if they had been group 1, this more unusual type would have been specially noted. There is, however, a good example of group 1 recently published from Naesholm.¹⁷ Bases thumbed underneath are also known in Germany.¹⁸

Since examples are as common in Yorkshire as they are around Carlisle, the really

⁸ C. Fox and C. A. R. Radford, 'Kidwelly castle, Carmarthenshire,' *Archaeologia*, LXXXIII (1933) 93-138. Not previously published. The base is marked 31-218/3, X-Y bottom of fill. The records of the excavation have not survived, but from their fabric these sherds are likely to belong to periods I-III (1275-1320). I am grateful to Dr. H. N. Savory for allowing the material in the National Museum of Wales to be studied and published.

⁹ Nat. Mus. Wales ref. 09-145 (TCC 502 and 506) collected by T. C. Cantrill, *Archaeol. Cambrensis*, 1909, p. 433.

¹⁰ Interim reports in *Med. Archaeol.*, v (1961), 322 and pp. 326 ff. of this volume. I am indebted to Mr. P. A. Barker for drawing this sherd to my attention and for allowing it to be published.

¹¹ R. L. S. Bruce-Mitford, 'The archaeology of the Bodleian extension,' *Oxoniensia*, iv (1939), 98, fig. 22, nos. c & f.

¹² In the Winchester Museum.

¹³ S. Cruden, 'Scottish medieval pottery: the Bothwell castle collection,' *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scot.*, LXXXVI (1951-2), 144, fig. 10.

¹⁴ National Museum of Antiquities, Edinburgh, ref. MEC 166 and 159.

¹⁵ *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scot.*, LXI (1926-7), 282.

¹⁶ Both sites were on Funen. No examples were seen in the museums of Jutland or Zealand. There are two examples from the Raadhustomten in Odense (Odense Museum, ref. nos. 294-1942 & 459-1942). In the Svendborg Museum there are several examples found in the town.

¹⁷ V. La Cour, *Naesholm* (Copenhagen, 1961), p. 154, fig. 62.

¹⁸ E.g. W. Bastian, 'Zur Kemladen forschung die Kemladen von Lassan bie Klochs Dorf, Kreis, Gadebusch und ihre Funde,' *Bodendenkmalpflege in Mecklenburg, Jahrb.*, 1959, p. 175, fig. 99.

significant examples of group 1 seem to have a distribution which may be regarded as a northern type. This cannot, however, be regarded as exclusive in view of the other examples as far away as Cambridge, and Kidwelly in south Wales. It is also likely that other examples will be found in the southern half of England. Complex rouletting¹⁹ and many other features such as face jugs²⁰ illustrate the general North Sea continuum²¹ for which the Danish and Dutch bases thumbed underneath provide further evidence.

It is hoped that this note will draw attention to the possibility of a wider distribution of bases thumbed underneath and that at a later date it may be possible to draw further conclusions as more evidence becomes available.

J. G. HURST

IMPORTS OF MEDIEVAL STONEWARE FROM THE RHINELAND

(PL. XXX; FIG. 94)

The imported German stonewares which are so characteristic a feature of 16th- and 17th-century pottery groups in this country had already begun to reach England in the 14th century.²² The bulk of this material was made at various centres in the neighbourhood of Cologne. This was, however, by no means the only area of pottery production in the Rhineland, although it was the only one whose products were usually exported far from the centre of manufacture. The pots from Oxford and Cambridge sites published here for the first time are some of the exceptions, for their closest parallels are to be found in the middle Rhine, in the area of Frankfurt, where they can be dated 14th century.²³

(PL. XXX, no. 1; FIG. 94, no. 1). Tall narrow beaker with waisted foot, swelling, rilled body, tall neck and upright collar-rim. The ware is dark grey-brown in fracture and is very hard-fired with a metallic ring. The surface is covered with a reddish purple-brown wash²⁴ which produces a metallic sheen over the outside of the pot and inside the neck down to the internal shoulder; in the few small patches where there is no wash the ware shows through as a dark grey surface. The rough white patches below the base and on the foot are a characteristic feature of this type of ware.²⁵ From Radcliffe Square, Oxford (Ashmolean Museum, 1951. 429).²⁶

(PL. XXX, no. 2; FIG. 94, no. 2). Beaker almost identical in form and ware with no. 1. The rim is slightly hollowed internally, and the foot rather ovoid in plan. The ware

¹⁹ J. G. Hurst, 'White castle and the dating of medieval pottery,' pp. 153 ff. of this volume.

²⁰ A. E. Herteig, 'The excavation of "Bryggen", the old Hanseatic wharf in Bergen,' *Med. Archaeol.*, III (1959), 177-186.

²¹ Lecture given by G. C. Dunning at the 1962 Spring Conference of the Society for Medieval Archaeology at King's Lynn.

²² Examples from Colchester (Essex) and Hangleton (Sussex): J. G. Hurst in *Trans. Essex Archaeol. Soc.*, 3 ser. 1, 1 (1961), 3-5, fig. 32; and from Seacourt (Berks.): M. Biddle in *Oxoniensia*, xxvi-xxvii (1961/2), 165-6, fig. 27, no. 14.

²³ I am grateful to Mr. G. C. Dunning for calling my attention to some of the relevant German publications and to Mr. J. G. N. Renaud for discussing these pots and confirming their middle Rhenish character.

²⁴ The purple-brown colour and the metallic sheen seem to be the result of dipping the pots in a slip of high iron content which fused into a kind of 'glaze' (*Lehmglasur*) at about 1300° C. See the valuable technical discussion of the comparable pottery from Limburg by A. Bruijn, 'Die mittelalterliche Topferindustrie in Brunssum,' *Berichten van de Rijksdienst voor het Oudheidkundig Bodemonderzoek*, ix (1959), 139-188, especially 159, 169, 172.

²⁵ Apparently the result of chemical processes which took place during the firing: cf. pots from Schinveld (J. G. N. Renaud, 'Middelleeuws aardewerk uit de pottenbakkersoven te Schinveld, Limburg,' *Berichten R.O.B.*, VIII (1957-8), 179-191, especially 187 and figs. 7, nos. 1, 2, and 8, nos. 2, 3) and Brunssum (Bruijn, *op. cit.* in note 24, figs. 40, 42, 47). It is very noticeable on the material from Frankfurt (*op. cit.* in note 30, pls. i-iv).

²⁶ I am indebted to Mr. R. W. Hamilton, Keeper of the Ashmolean Museum, for permission to publish the two Oxford pots.