

To summarize, then, I suggest that there was a fortified hall on Dewy Hill in the 11th and 12th centuries, but that in 1220-30 a fresh site was chosen in the valley and a new hexagonal castle erected on it by Earl Randolph de Blundevill.

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13TH-CENTURY BUILDINGS AND METAL WORKINGS AT ST. NEOTS, HUNTINGDONSHIRE (PL. XIII, A, B; FIGS. 65-66)

In 1964 house-property was demolished on the SE. corner of the cross-roads at St. Neots known as The Cross, at the junction of Cambridge Street and Church Street (52/186603). Here traditionally once stood St. Neot's Cross and it was probably planned

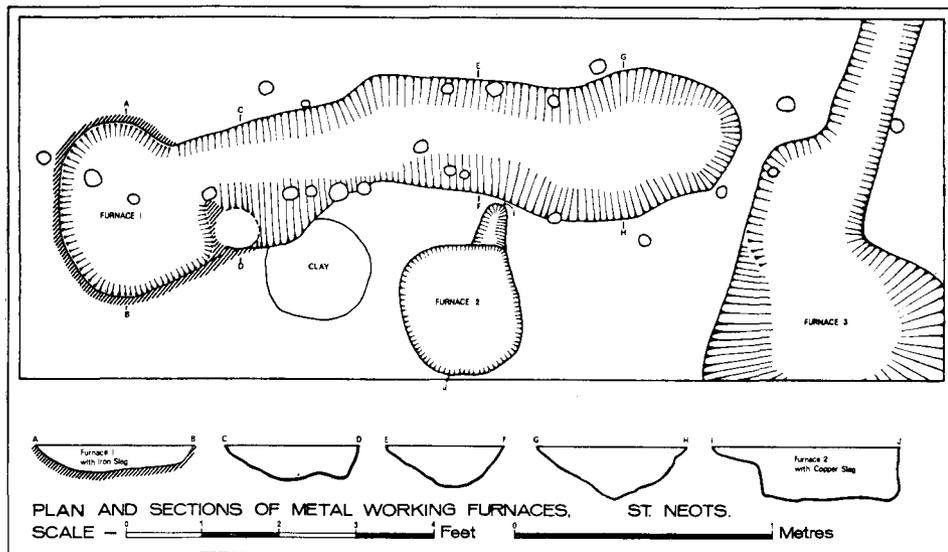


FIG. 65

to be at the centre of the medieval town. It was, therefore, decided to excavate as much of the site as possible during the short time available before rebuilding began.

A number of trenches were dug at right angles to both streets from the building line inwards, covering 42 ft. of the Church Street frontage and 50 ft. of the Cambridge Street frontage, measured from the corners. The trenches varied in length, the longest being 16 ft., as penetration far into the interior of the site was prevented by deep brick foundations, concrete floors, and filled-in cellars.

The primary feature found was a deep defensive ditch that ran roughly parallel with Cambridge Street and swept round the corner to follow Church Street. This ditch probably enclosed the pre-conquest village site and will be described when the excavations on that site are published. Suffice here to say that it had been deliberately filled in, at one operation, with soil containing pottery of which the greater part was developed St. Neots ware of the 12th century, with a small proportion also of 13th-century ware. Immediately the ditch was filled buildings were erected over it, following the building lines of the present streets. It would seem, therefore, that this was the time when the streets were laid out, as part of the ditch passed under them.

The earliest building found was represented by a low footing of cobbles 2 ft. wide set in mortar and bedded on clay, on which a wooden-framed building must have stood. This footing extended along Cambridge Street for at least 37 ft. from the corner and its foundations at one place were laid directly on the ditch filling. The return wall

along Church Street was much disturbed and could be traced for only 11 feet. Just above the clay floor of this building and sealed by the clay floor of its successor were stone slates, Cistercian ware and a bronze thimble. It seems likely that it was pulled down in either the 16th or the 17th century, for 17th-century pottery was associated with the floor above. This second building consisted of wooden-framed cottages, replaced about 1912 by the brick houses and shop recently demolished.

At the earliest building level, and indeed in the filling of the great ditch, lumps of iron slag occurred.

The source of at least some of this slag was found close to the frontage in Church Street, 40 ft. from the corner, where, at only $1\frac{1}{2}$ ft. below present pavement level, was a hard black clay floor into which were let the bases of two small 'trench' furnaces for iron-smelting (one partly destroyed) and a round bowl-shaped hole containing dross from the melting of copper.

The bowls of the iron-smelting furnaces were full of wood ash with a few lumps of slag and the small portions remaining of the walls were intensely burnt on the inside. Outside the burnt lining was a considerable backing of unburnt blue clay. The small trenches running from the furnace bowls also contained wood ash and slag, but were less burnt than the bowls. Also among the filling of the bowls and trenches were lumps of daub-like burnt clay, some with a straw content and showing finger-prints. Similar material also lay on the clay floor, together with pottery of the 12th and early 13th centuries, some of which was also found in the furnace-trenches.

As can be seen from PL. XIII, A, B, and FIG. 65 a number of stake-holes (indicated in the photographs by wooden pegs) occurred on and about the furnaces. Most of these still remained as open holes when found and some had traces of wood in them. All were contemporary or nearly contemporary, but could have been associated with a previous furnace on the same site. They would seem to have held supports for the clay walls. The basin-shaped hollow containing the green copper dross was filled with wood ash, among which was a clay object, possibly a spindle-whorl (FIG. 66).

The floor of the building containing the furnaces ended, on the west, at a crude clay footing, $1\frac{3}{4}$ ft. wide, of cobble-stones set in clay and without mortar. This wall ran parallel to Church Street and along the present building line. All other parts of the furnace building had been destroyed.

Pottery found on or just above the floor and in the furnaces was of the middle or late 13th century, with a large residue of 12th-century pottery as well. From about 6 in. above the floor came a much-worn halfpenny, London mint, of Edward III (1335-1344).

We were fortunate in having a visit from Dr. R. F. Tylecote, who reports:

'Furnace 1 seems to be a clay-lined iron-smelting furnace of a type that is proving to be fairly common in the medieval period. It has evolved from the early-iron-age bowl hearth and might be termed a "pit" or "trench" furnace, since it is a bowl furnace situated at the end of a trench. The furnace at St. Neots has affinities with those at Baysdale, N. Yorks., excavated by Alan Aberg, and at Glaisdale, N. Yorks., reported by Mrs. Stainthorpe, and with a furnace recently found by James Money at Withyham, Sussex. The last is tentatively ascribed to the Roman period, but may well prove to be later, and was supplied with air through three or four tuyères at 90° to each other and sloping downwards.

'The fuel would be charcoal and the ore probably carbonate nodules from the local gravels. The air would be provided by manually-operated bellows. The metal would be removed in one piece and the slag tapped into a hollow in front of the hearth.

'Furnace 2 appears to have been a melting furnace for copper-base alloys. A crucible would be used to contain the metal and would be placed in the hollow, surrounded by charcoal and urged with bellows. Considering the positioning it is unlikely that it was contemporary with Furnace 1.'

A chemical report on the dross from the crucible site showed that it had mostly resulted from the melting of copper with traces of zinc and lead and very slight traces of tin. It was, therefore, brass, rather than bronze, and perhaps some form of gun-metal.

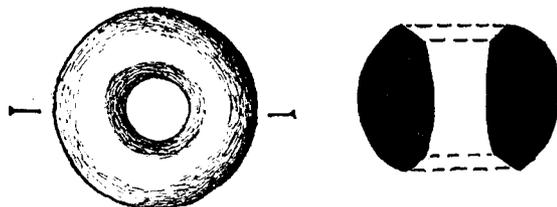


FIG. 66

ST. NEOTS, HUNTS.

Clay object, possibly a spindle-whorl, from furnace (p. 159). Sc. $\frac{1}{4}$

Dr. Tylecote suggests that the iron might come from local gravels. However, a close search of heaps of shingle from gravel-pits at Little Paxton (2 miles away) showed that ironstone was not present, or at least exceedingly rare. The nearest alternative source would probably be the Greensands at Everton or Sandy (7 miles away).

Finds from the site will be preserved in the Norris Museum, St. Ives, Huntingdon.⁴⁸

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HALLGATE, DONCASTER, AND THE INCIDENCE OF FACE-JUGS WITH BEARDS (FIGS. 67-68)

During building operations in 1965 a kiln was excavated off Hallgate, the old Great North Road through Doncaster (see p. 218). It was apparently making pots in two fabrics, south-Yorkshire gritty ware and Humber ware. Though jugs, skillets and bowls were made in similar shapes in both fabrics, the more-elaborately decorated jugs, which are the subject of this note, were made in Humber ware only.⁴⁹

Humber ware is a slightly sandy, oxidized fabric often partially glazed in brownish green, having a distribution in north Lincolnshire and south Yorkshire, following both sides of the rivers that flow into the Humber basin. The present kiln lies within this area. Three kilns making the fabric had previously been excavated, Kelk⁵⁰ and Holme-on-Spalding-Moor,⁵¹ neither of which was earlier than the 15th century, and West Cowick,⁵² spanning some two hundred years, which began some time in the first half of the 14th century. During the first half-century of its existence a proportion of its products was highly decorated, and some of these fell into the category discussed below. The Hallgate kiln may be earlier than Cowick, but since circumstances did not permit of magnetic sampling, its date must depend on that ascribed to the long- and short-beard jugs, of which a few were found among the large quantities of wasters (FIG. 67, nos. 1-6). Documentary evidence for the presence of a kiln was slight, amounting only to a name in the 1379 poll-tax return.

⁴⁸ We are greatly indebted to Dr. Tylecote for all the trouble he has taken in this matter; to Mr. J. G. Hurst for examining the pottery; and to Dr. J. P. C. Kent for dating the coin.

⁴⁹ As these are of sufficient general interest to justify immediate publication, Mr. E. F. Gilmour, Director of the Doncaster Museum and Art Gallery, has kindly given permission for them to appear before the general report on the work. The excavation was carried out by Mr. John R. Lidster, Keeper of Antiquities at the Museum, with the staff of that department, and he has supplied the details required.

⁵⁰ Material with Messrs. Grantham, Driffield.

⁵¹ P. M. Mayes, *Hull Museums Publications*, no. 216, forthcoming.

⁵² Excavated by P. M. Mayes; see *Med. Archaeol.*, VIII (1964), 297. A full report is in preparation.