

A LATE MEDIEVAL DOMESTIC RUBBISH DEPOSIT FROM GROVE, NEAR WANTAGE, BERKSHIRE

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During the digging and laying of new drainage pipes, Mr David Raisbeck recovered a number of pottery sherds from his garden at Redlands, The Green Grove, near Wantage, Berkshire.¹ The material rested in a layer of pea-gravel immediately below top-soil and resting on natural green-sand. Although no stratification was recorded to suggest a pit or other feature, the large size of the sherds recovered and their relative homogeneity in date, suggest a single deposit, dating to the late medieval period; a small abraded coarseware body sherd was also recovered dating to the 13th–14th century. The vessels occur in a range of fabrics and considering the scarcity of groups of this date, not only in the Oxford region but more generally, the present group is a useful addition, particularly for an area where little medieval material is known.

DISCUSSION

Little comparative material is available from the immediate region with which to either compare or date the group. A number of distinct types can be recognised typical of the later medieval period. No. 1 could be more readily identified in a much earlier context, but its association in the present group seems beyond doubt as it is represented by the largest number of fragments; it emphasises the continued use of coarser domestic fabrics into the late medieval period.² The only immediate region giving comparable material is the north-east from where kilns supplied Oxford. The fine smooth pink fabrics nos. 7 and 8 with their light watery glazes are typical of later medieval fabrics from this region; no kiln

sites are yet known but large quantities are found in Oxford and its hinterland.³ The crude handle top no. 3 is characteristic of late medieval handles over central Midlands, particularly the western Midlands; the type was produced at Brill⁴ but undoubtedly there were other production centres, yet to be located. Other useful associations are the two lobed cup bases nos. 4 and 5. Although their true form is unknown, this distinct angled bowl base is known over a wide area of central-southern England.⁵ It is unlikely that all the fabric types from the group are of Oxfordshire manufacture, particularly the fabric of the lobed cup bases, for kiln sources and types are a virtual unknown in other surrounding regions. It is likely that there were production centres to the north-west around Faringdon, to the west around Swindon⁶ and further south in the Newbury⁷ district particularly as raw materials and local markets for distribution were readily available.

It is difficult to give a precise date for the group. The lack of similar types from Seacourt D.M.V.,⁸ abandoned c. 1400, and the absence of truly 16th century Oxfordshire types implies a date in the 15th century; the absence of the now ubiquitous Raeren mugs⁹ argues for a date before the 1480's. Only further work on more local material within the region will establish a chronology of local types and their respective date ranges, into which the present group can be placed and a more precise date suggested for it. However the group not only forms an important assemblage of more local significance but provides useful information for late medieval ceramic culinary forms more generally.

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THE POTTERY

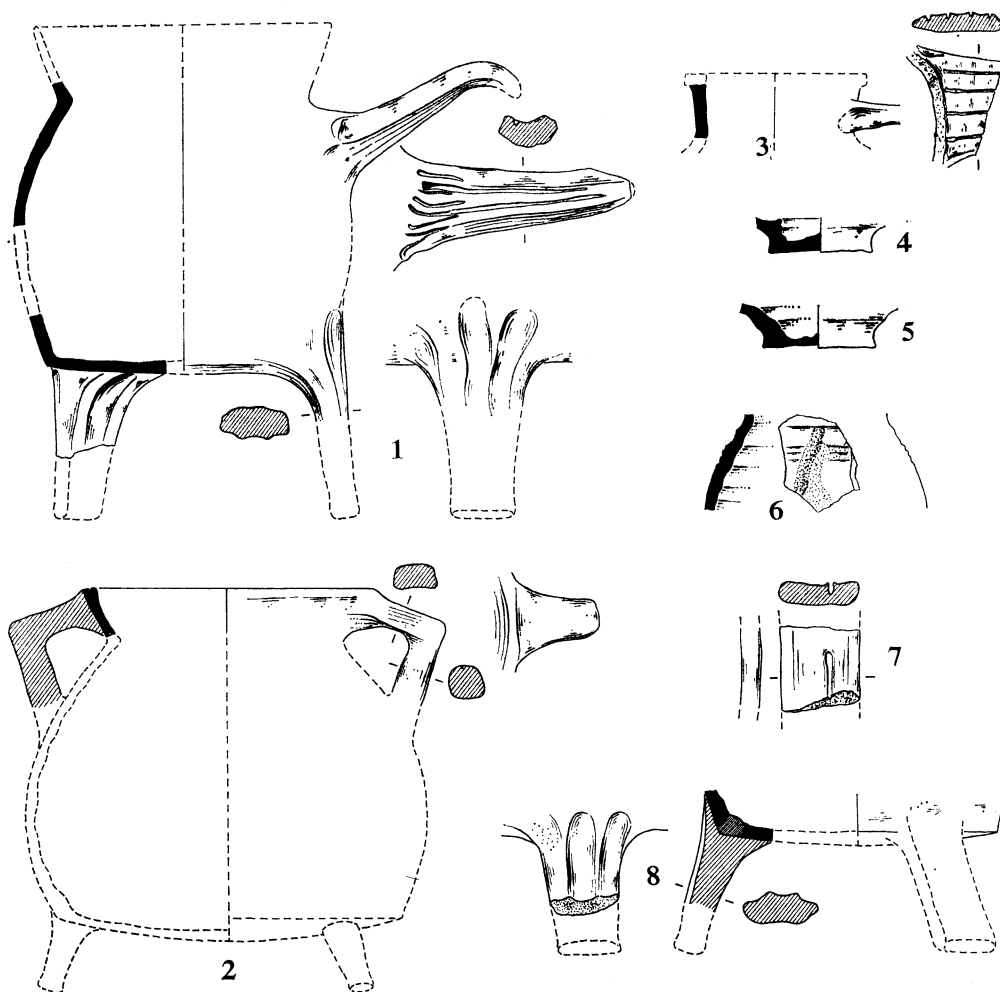
Fig. 1 Nos. 1-8

1. Three large non-joining sherds from a tripod pipkin in a hard fired lumpy fabric containing many irregularly sized natural detritus inclusions. The surfaces are a dark pinky-brown with a dark blue-grey core; glazed internally on the base only with a watery, dull, olive-green glaze. The straight handle has been applied onto the external surface of the vessel and not secured by a spigot; the top is crudely scored by two incisions along its length and five further incisions below the rim; and the end is bent over. The two remaining feet have three shallow thumb marks securing the junction to the body, with a single deep thumb impression beneath. The ceramic forms were copying metal types.¹⁰
2. Single rim sherd with attached angular handle in a hard fine grained sandy fabric with dark pinky fire blackened surfaces and a dark blue-grey core; unglazed. The form of this vessel with its characteristic angled handles, is copying the metal tripod cauldrons.¹¹
3. Jug neck with attached handle in a very hard smooth fabric with very light brown surfaces, thin brick-red core and light fawn margins. The thin, wide strap handle has four thin incisions running down its back and is secured to the jug neck by small thumb impressions. The underside of the handle has a patchy purple glaze.
4. Complete base as drawn from a lobed (?) cup in a very hard fine grained sandy light bright pink fabric with light creamy inner surface; the base is unglazed with smooth surfaces.
5. Similar rather crude base, complete as drawn, from a lobed (?) cup in a hard sandy fabric with bright pink surfaces, dark pink core and light fawn margins. The base has smooth surfaces with a very small spot of bright yellow-ochre glaze on the exterior wall.
6. Shoulder sherd from a small jug in a hard fine-grained sandy fabric, with bright pink core and uniform light creamy-buff inner margin and surface. There are three well defined annular grooves below a cordon. An unusual form of decoration is a diagonal thick streak of very deep glossy green glaze (heavily stippled on the drawing) which has spread during firing (lighter stippling); the whole exterior is covered in an otherwise uniform deep matt yellow-ochre glaze; completely unglazed internally.
7. Strap handle in a very smooth pink fabric with light blue-grey core and dark pink margins and surface. There is a single deep stab mark and the whole surface is patchily covered in a watery bright-orange glaze, with a single flaked-off concentration of bright brown glaze.
8. Large single base sherd from a tripod vessel with a single attached foot, in a very smooth fine completely oxidised brick-red fabric with slightly darker smooth surfaces. Internally glazed with a thick bright uniform orange glaze with external patches of thick bright green merging to deep yellow-ochre glaze. The foot has been secured to the base by means of a spigot, clearly seen internally, and its outer surface has three clean thumb impressions, producing a moulded section.

¹⁰ I am grateful to Mr Raisbeck for letting me examine the material and for allowing it to be published here.

¹¹ Evidence of their continued use into the 15th century is suggested from the nearby D.M.V. at Tullwick, Wantage and were still predominant in the mid 14th century in northern Hampshire although appear to be superseded there during the earlier 15th century by firm smooth sandy wares. All these wares belong to the extensive coarseware tradition covering the Oxford, Newbury, Basingstoke area; Mrs Jean Naish and Stephen Moorhouse 'Excavations at the deserted medieval village of Tullwick near Wantage, Berkshire', *Berks Arch. Journal*, forthcoming.

¹² Material in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford;



little late medieval material has been published from Oxford, see David Sturdy 'Thirteenth Century and Later Pottery from the Clarendon Hotel and other sites in Oxford', *Oxoniensia* XXIV (1959), 22-36 and E. M. Jope 'Some Recent Finds of Medieval Pottery: III. Late-Medieval Pottery from Oxford', *Oxoniensia* VII (1942) 76-79 and figs. 19 and 20.

⁴ Material in the Ashmolean Museum; earlier kilns were excavated by E. M. Jope 'Medieval Pottery Kilns at Brill, Bucks' *Records of Bucks*, XVI (1953-54), 39-42 and by M. Tite and G. Weaver, *Med. Arch.*, VI-VII (1962-3), 347.

⁵ From Sopwell Priory near St Albans, Herts,

Stephen Moorhouse 'The Pottery' in Edward Johnston 'Excavations at Sopwell Priory' *Herts Arch.*, 4 (1973), *forthcoming*, and examples from Basingstoke, Hampshire, material in Chilcomb House Museum, Winchester, formerly in the Willis Museum, Basingstoke; see also a similar base from Seacourt D.M.V. from the upper levels of the village which was deserted c. 1400, Martin Middle 'The Deserted Medieval Village of Seacourt Berkshire', *Oxoniensia* XXVI/XVII (1962-62), 146 fig. 20 no. 7 and p. 147.

⁶ Kilns are known further west at Lyneham 4 miles south-west of Wootton Bassett, *Med. Arch.*, IV (1960), 164, and from Lacock 3 miles south-west of

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Chippenham extensively excavated by M. Macarthy in 1971 *Med. Arch.*, XVI (1972).

⁷ The documentary and archaeological evidence for kilns in Berkshire is discussed in E. M. Jope 'Medieval Pottery of Berkshire' *Berks Arch. Journal*, 50 (1947), 51-52.

⁸ Biddle *op. cit.* in note 5 above p. 72-201.

⁹ The latest discussion on these vessels is in J. G. Hurst 'The Pottery' in L. Keen 'Excavations at Old Wardour Castle, Wiltshire' *Wilts Arch. Mag.*, LXII (1967), 74 with full references; for their early dating see Stephen Moorhouse 'Finds from

excavations in the Refectory of the Dominican Friary, Boston' *Lincs. Hist. and Arch.*, 7 (1972), *forthcoming*.

¹⁰ See *The London Museum Medieval Catalogue* (H.M.S.O., reprinted and revised 1967), pl. LV and p. 205.

¹¹ The form and general fabric can be seen from Seacourt, Biddle *op. cit.* in note 5 above p. 164, fig. 27, no. 11 from the latest levels of the site dating to shortly before c. 1400; bronze forms can be conveniently seen in L.M.M.C. *op. cit.* in note 10 above, pl. LVI and p. 205.