

## MEDIEVAL POTTERY KILN SITE, BURLEY HILL, DUFFIELD.

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By R. G. HUGHES.

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### INTRODUCTION.

THAT there was an important medieval kiln site in the Burley Hill area has long been known through the writings of Llewellyn Jewitt in the last century. He mentioned the site and illustrated the finds both in the *Reliquary* and in his book *Ceramic Art in Great Britain*. However, Jewitt did not indicate the exact area of his find, so that by this century the location of the site had become lost. Several attempts to rediscover the site failed, probably because of its remaining under grass until World War II when it was ploughed. Its importance has long been realised because it is the only known major medieval pottery site in the south of Derbyshire, where only odd sherds of medieval pottery have been found in towns. In Derby, frequent traces of medieval occupation might be expected but, although modern building excavations have been carefully watched during the past eight years, only one sherd of a cooking pot from the site of the old Moot Hall in Irongate and the base and part of the walls of a 14th century jug with a spigot from St. Peter's Street have been found.

### THE SITE.

Burley Hill lies about three miles north of Derby on the main Derby-Duffield road in the parish of Duffield (SK. 348412). There are four distinct kiln sites in a forty-acre field enclosed on the north side by Burley Lane and on the east by Duffield Road.

The site was first discovered in January 1862 by workmen whilst draining the field. The finding of a mass of pottery was reported to Lord Scarsdale, then the owner of the land. Llewellyn Jewitt was consulted and he judged the pottery to be Norman. He observed two of the kilns

as barrow-like mounds and conducted an excavation.<sup>1</sup> In his report, Jewitt said that he intended to carry out further investigations of the site but no other report appeared.

In July 1957 the site was found separately at almost the same time by Mr. and Mrs. S. O. Kay and two small boys. The boys found pottery scattered on the ploughed field and brought samples to Derby Museum. A survey of the field, made by Mr. Kay, Mr. T. Kettle and the writer, established that there were four separate areas that needed investigating. One free from obstructions near Burley Lane was chosen for excavation.

### THE EXCAVATION.

The excavation was carried out between 26th July and 1st October, 1957, by a number of volunteer helpers mainly at week-ends. Thanks are due to the Derbyshire County Council Surveyor's Department for the use of a site caravan, to the Derby Museum Committee for a grant towards the cost of the excavation and of subsequent research on the excavated material and to the County Borough of Derby Parks Committee, the owners, for permission to excavate.

The surface soil was red clay with a yellow clay subsoil. A low mound, measuring about 20 ft. across and covered with pottery sherds, was excavated on the quadrant method. The removal of the NE. quadrant revealed a mass of pottery sherds and kiln debris, including parts of the kiln walls which had been badly disturbed probably by Jewitt's excavation. Most of what appeared to be whole or nearly whole pots fell into small pieces when handled, as though they had been badly crushed. Only later was it learned that the field had been used as a tank-testing ground during the war. The SW. quadrant was next dug and then the NW.; but these again produced only crushed pottery. It was clear that there had been a kiln on the site but no part of the structure remained *in situ*. There was ample evidence that the kiln had been fired with coal. No other finds were associated with the pottery, which offered the only dating evidence.

<sup>1</sup> *Reliquary*, XI, 1862, 216.

## THE POTTERY.

The bulk of the pottery dates from the 13th and 14th centuries. Both glazed and unglazed ware was found but the former was predominant. The main output of the kiln seems to have been jugs and pitchers of varying shapes and sizes ranging from 4 to 16 ins. in height. There were also a number of cooking pots and "pipkin" saucepans. The variety in the colour of the body of the wares, ranging from a light orange of soft paste to a dark grey of a semi-vitrified mass, resulted from different conditions of firing.

A number of kiln "wasters" were discovered but no trace of kiln furniture. Jugs and pitchers came first in importance; nearly all were flat-based with pinched spouts and the handles round or oval in section. Most had a light to dark green glaze. Many of the smaller jugs were without decoration but the larger jugs and pitchers had some form of ornament, a wide variety of methods being used to effect it. Applied decoration took the form of clay pads modelled into leaves, flowers, horseshoes, buckles and human faces, ribbons of clay with thumb "pie-crusting", stamped decoration of flowers, wheels, grilles and bird bone patterns. Another form of decoration was made by marking the soft clay surface with the sharp end of a potter's tool to form wavy lines, herring-bone patterns or flower pictures.

The finest pitcher from this site is the one recovered by Jewitt in 1862, now on view at Kedleston Hall. It is 16 ins. in height, covered with green glaze and decorated with horseshoes and buckles, the badge of the Ferrers family, who held Duffield Castle from the Norman Conquest to the reign of Henry III. Another pitcher of a different shape and unglazed was discovered in the garden of Mr. W. P. Thompson, 25, Burley Hill, about twenty years ago and until 1957 had remained under a hedge there. These pitchers were probably intended for use in the castle.

The cooking-pots vary greatly in size and rim shape. The usual decoration is an incised wavy line on the inside of the rim; all are glazed on the inside. Fragments of

"pipkins" or small saucepans, about 4 ins. across, with short pottery handles and pinched spouts and glazed on the inside were also found.

### CONCLUSION.

It is with the greatest interest that the Burley Hill site has been rediscovered for it promises to fill a major gap in the medieval archaeology of Derbyshire. The first excavation was a little disappointing for the ground had been previously disturbed and much of the pottery crushed. It had been hoped to recover enough of the kiln to establish its size, shape and the method of firing the pottery. However the pottery itself was of great interest and it has been possible to make a complete section of some pots revealing their size and character. There was an astonishing variety of techniques in the decoration of the pottery, the most important motif being the badge of the Ferrers family. This gives some help in dating the site for the Ferrers lost royal favour and their lands were confiscated in the middle of the 13th century.

Much of the pottery remains to be examined and repaired before a detailed account can be given. It is hoped to carry out further excavations at Burley Hill and to issue a more detailed report on the site.

### A MEDIEVAL EARTHWORK AT DANNAH FARM, NEAR BELPER.

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By WILLIAM MANNING.

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THE earthwork in the south-west corner of the field, called "The Mottes", at Dannah Farm, near Belper (SK. 314502), was brought to the attention of the Nottingham University Archaeological Society by Mr. S. O. Kay and was excavated in July 1957.

A square mound is surrounded by a ditch with a slight outer bank, the entrance being a causeway across the