

FARNHAM POTTERY OF THE 16TH CENTURY

BY

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THE earliest written evidence of the location of a pottery in England, apart from inference based on the names of potters occurring in pipe-rolls, rent-rolls and other such lists of inhabitants, appears to be in a letter among the manuscripts preserved at Loseley, Surrey. It is dated August 19, 1594, and was written from the Inner Temple by a Bencher and, at that time, Treasurer of the Inn, Julius Cæsar (afterwards Sir Julius Cæsar, 1558–1636), Judge of the High Court of Admiralty; it is addressed to Sir William More, as one of those charged with the control of the Bishop of Winchester's park at Farnham during the vacancy of the see. It is perhaps well to transcribe the letter here in full, since it has been quoted, but always with verbal inaccuracies, in several works on the history of pottery; these quotations have been based on a printed version of the letter, that given on p. 310 of *The Loseley Manuscripts*, edited by A. J. Kempe (London, 1835), which disagrees in many points of orthography with the official version printed in the Seventh Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, Part I, Appendix, 1879, p. 652. The letter has been kindly checked for me afresh against the original MS. by Mr. R. L. Atkinson, who found it to differ in minor points from the Commission's version; it runs as follows:

“Wheras in tymes past the bearer hereof hath had out of the Parke of Farnham belonging to the Busshoppricke of Winchester certaine White Cley for the making of grene pottes vsually drunke in by the gentlemen of the Temple. And nowe understanding of some restraint thereof, and that you (amongest others) are authorized there in divers respectes during the vacancye of the said Busshoppricke. My request therefore vnto you is, and the rather for that I am a member of the said house, that you would in favour of vs all, permytt the bearer hereof to digge and carye awaie so muche of the said claye as by him shalbe thought sufficient for the furnishing of the saide howse with grene pottes as aforesaid, payinge as he hath heretofore for the same. In accomplishment wherof my self with the whole societie shall acknowledge ourselves muche beholden vnto you &c. &c.”¹

¹ The official version closes with these words; that of Kempe continues thus: “and shalbe readie to requite you at all tymes hereafter wth the like pleasure. And so I bid you moste hartelie farewell. Inn^r Temple this xixth of August 1594.

Y^r assured freind,

JUL. CAESAR.

To the right worshipful S^r W^m Moore,
knight, geve these.”



PLATE IV.—E. HORSLEY FLINT MINE. PICK-
MARKS IN EASTERN SHAFT.

See page 16.



PLATE V.—CANDLESTICK, GREEN-GLAZED, STAMPED
WITH THE BADGE OF THE INNER TEMPLE.
(VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM.)

See page 51.

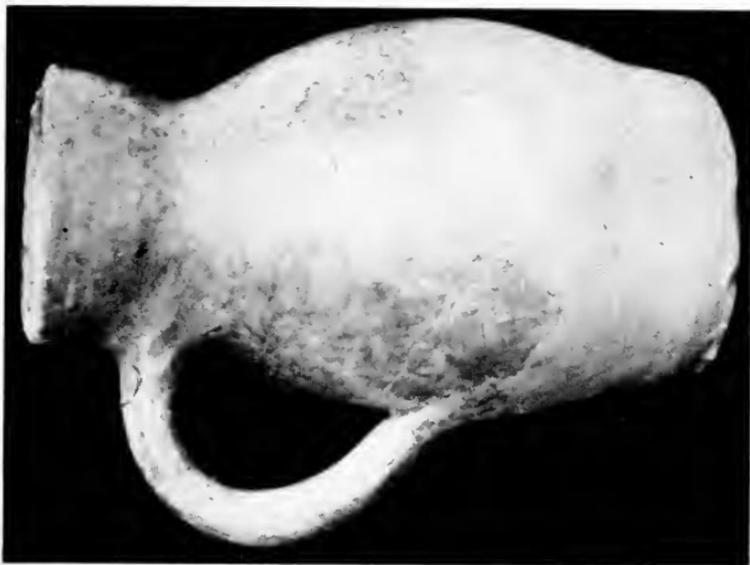


PLATE VI.—TWO GREEN-GLAZED JUGS DUG UP AND PRESERVED AT LINCOLN'S INN.
See page 52.

What purports to be a quotation from this letter is given by William Chaffers in *Marks and Monograms on Pottery and Porcelain* (1st edition), London, 1863, p. 36 (repeated *verbatim* in all subsequent editions, including the 14th, 1908). The passage reads as follows:

"We read in the Losely [*sic*] MSS. (Kempe, p. 300 [*sic*]) that in the sixteenth century 'the gentlemen of the Temple drank out of green earthen pots made from a white clay found at Farnham Park'." The words here given as if quoted from the letter of Julius Cæsar are repeated¹ by the late R. L. Hobson in his *Catalogue of the Collection of English Pottery in the Department of British and Mediæval Antiquities and Ethnography in the British Museum*, London, 1903, p. 54. On p. 8 of his *Guide to the English Pottery and Porcelain in the Department of Ceramics and Ethnography*, 2nd edition, 1923, Hobson makes a shorter allusion to these drinking-pots.

No examples of these pots have been identified with certainty, although Hobson in his *Guide* (*loc. cit.*) expresses the opinion that "it is practically certain that the neat beer mugs of light buff clay, with a brilliant green glaze covering about three-quarters of the body . . . are the 'green pots made of the white clay from Farnham Park' from which the gentlemen of the Temple drank in the middle [*sic*] of the sixteenth century"; two of these mugs, now in the British Museum, appear in Plate II of his Catalogue; one of them (B239) is mounted with a silver collar inscribed: "Found in a Vault under the Steward's Office, Lincoln's Inn, 1788." A mug closely similar, of unrecorded provenance, in the Victoria and Albert Museum (268—1903), is reproduced in colours in *Medieval English Pottery*, by Bernard Rackham, London, 1948, Plate D. That Hobson's identification may very possibly be correct is suggested by the colour of clay and glaze of some of the wares found at Farnham to which reference will be made below. There is however in the Victoria and Albert Museum a broken earthenware candlestick (4326—1901) which may with even greater probability be accepted as of the same origin as the pots mentioned in Sir Julius Cæsar's letter. The candlestick, which by the courtesy of the Director is reproduced in Plate V, was part of a large collection of pottery transferred to South Kensington from the Museum of Practical Geology, Jermyn Street, in 1901. Where it was found is not recorded, but it is likely to have been in London, in common with many other specimens of mediæval and later pottery in the same collection. The upper part of the shaft is defective and has been restored in plaster, but a small portion of the mouth remains, so that the height (5 $\frac{3}{8}$ inch) and shape of the candlestick are not in doubt. The "body" is reddish buff, deeper in tone than that of most of the potsherds found at Farnham; the glaze is yellowish moss-green flecked with brown spots. The important feature of the candlestick is the winged horse impressed from an intaglio stamp, probably of metal, on the shaft at its lower end. It seems reasonable to recognize

¹ With substitution of the word "in" for "at"

in this the heraldic badge of the Inner Temple, a flying horse or Pegasus, which would bring the object into association with the drinking-pots of Sir Julius Cæsar's letter.

It appears that none of the green pots referred to in this letter survives intact at either the Inner or the Middle Temple, although a quantity of green-glazed potsherds ("pots and cups") were found in excavations on the site of the new buildings in King's Bench Walk in 1849.¹ At Lincoln's Inn, however, in addition to the mug in the British Museum mentioned above, two green-glazed jugs were dug up which may be classed with the same group of wares; they are now preserved in the Library of the Inn and are reproduced (Plate VI) from photographs for which thanks are due to our member Mr. C. E. Sexton. One of these is interesting for its baluster form, with high conical foot and funnel-shaped neck; the shape was probably suggested by that of the Siegburg white stoneware jugs which seem to have been imported in some quantity into England from the Rhineland in the 16th century. Two jugs of the same family found at Gray's Inn and formerly kept in the Pension Room of that Society were lost in the fire which destroyed that room as well as the Hall and Library during the air-raids of 1941.²

Before passing on to discuss pottery dug up at Farnham it may perhaps be noted here that the Inner Temple mugs seem to mark a stage in the drinking habits of the nation. On p. lxxxvi of *A Calendar of the Inner Temple Records*, Vol. I, 1896, edited by F. A. Inderwick, we read that "in February 1559-60 it was ordered 'that from henceforth there shall not any ashen cups be provided, but the House to be served in green cups, both of winter and summer.' The use of green pots (as they were called) in substitution for the wooden mugs, was common to all the Inns of Court, and was probably adopted about the same time." Here we have an explanation of the relative scarcity of small drinking-vessels and plates as compared with pitchers and other large vessels among finds of mediæval pottery; wares for use at table were as a rule made in wood or pewter where silver was too costly.

It is tantalizing to record that up to the present neither kiln-site nor wasters have been found in Farnham itself, so that it would be premature to assert that the Inner Temple pots and candlestick were made not only of clay dug up in Farnham Park but also in a local pottery; it may however reasonably be assumed that this was the case. When the old Market Hall of Farnham was pulled down in 1930 for the erection of the new Town Hall, the late Mr. C. E. Borelli, to whom I am indebted for photographs and much information, found in the excavations on the site a quantity of broken pottery; this included many pieces of vessels in buff clay having a lead glaze stained green with copper which are probably of local origin; the glaze varies in tone from a lightish moss colour to a deep

¹ *Notes and Queries*, 1st Series, Vol. VIII, p. 171.

² Information kindly given by Mr. B. M. Cocks, Assistant-Librarian of Gray's Inn.

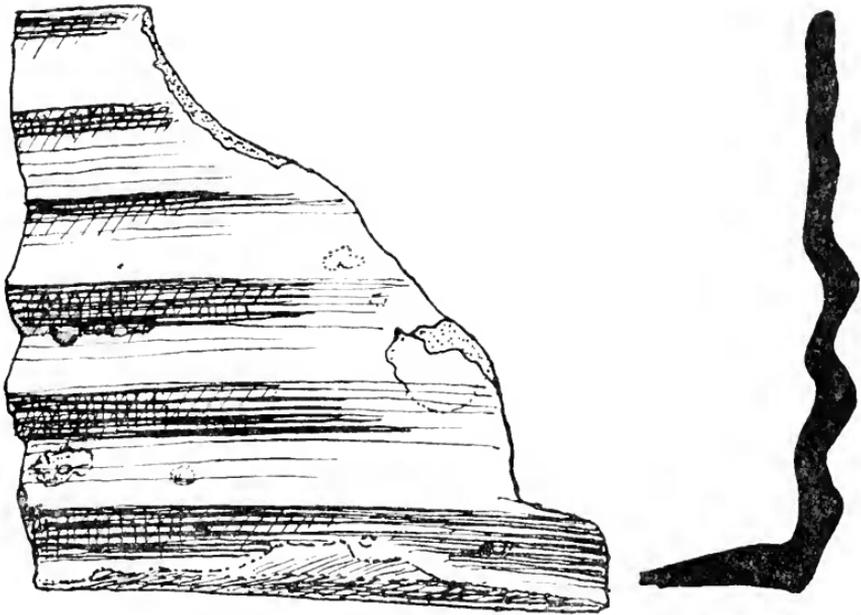


FIG. 1.—POTSHERD, GREEN-GLAZED, FOUND AT FARNHAM, 1930.

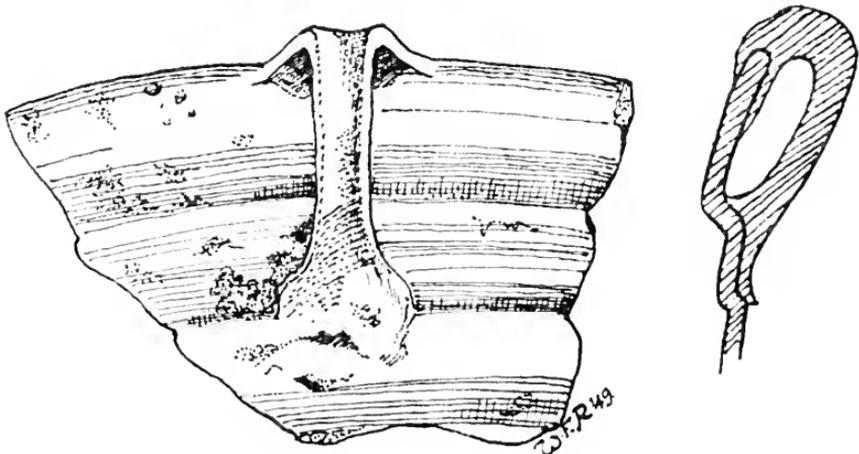


FIG. 2.—FRAGMENT OF MUG, GREEN-GLAZED, FOUND AT FARNHAM, 1930.

cucumber-green, the colour in most cases being coagulated so as to give a spotted or mottled appearance. Many fragments precisely similar in "body" and glaze have been dug up during recent years on a site on Pewley Hill, Guildford, but in surface soil probably dumped during the laying out of a new garden.

Noticeable among the Farnham finds are mugs glazed inside and out, about $3\frac{1}{2}$ to 4 inches high, with flat bottom and almost vertical walls, in some cases noticeably thin, cut horizontally in ridges which give the appearance of a clinker-built boat (Fig. 1);¹ no satisfactory explanation can be offered for the fact that one of these mugs,

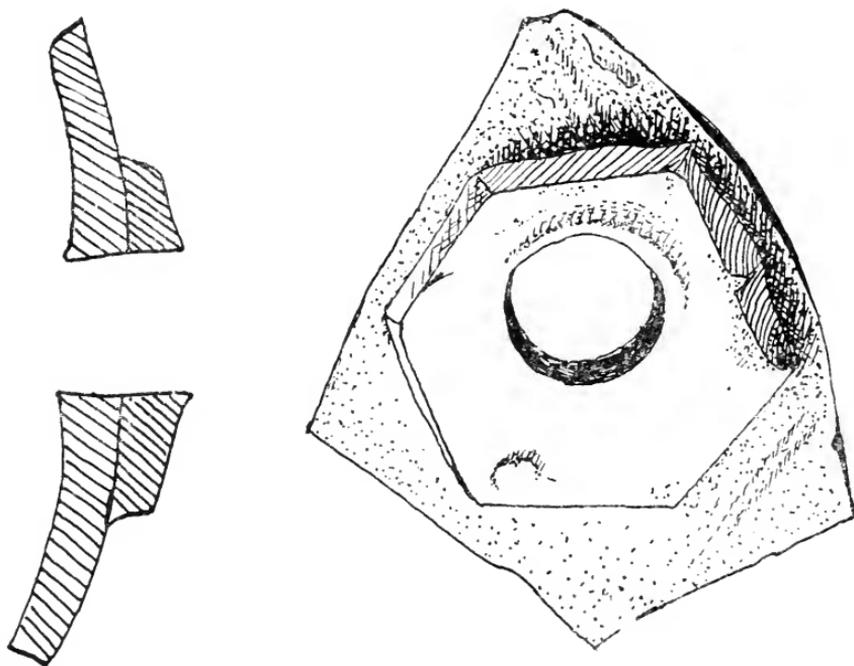


FIG. 3.—POTSHERD WITH SPIGOT-HOLE, FOUND AT FARNHAM, 1930.

almost entire, was found containing a lump of white pipe-clay (Plate VII). Where loop handles remain, they splay out at the top where they are attached to the edge of the rim and are similarly spread where they join the wall below (Fig. 2). A fragment of a bulbous bottle was also found, as well as fragments of jars with a hole in the side for the insertion of a spigot, the opening being strengthened with a collar cut in hexagonal form round its outer edge (Fig. 3).

In the collection of household and other articles from West Surrey

¹ The writer is grateful to our member Mr. W. F. Rankine for making drawings reproduced in this and the following figures by his kind permission.



PLATE VII.—GREEN-GLAZED MUG FOUND CONTAINING A LUMP OF PIPE-CLAY
AT FARNHAM IN 1930. HEIGHT $3\frac{1}{2}$ IN.

See page 54.

formed by the late Miss Gertrude Jekyll and now in the Guildford Museum, there is a large pan or shallow basin with flat bottom and slanting sides, in reddish earthenware warmer in tone than most of the Farnham finds, covered inside only with an uneven deep green glaze; it has been described as "Farnham pottery" without any statement of evidence in support of this attribution, or suggestion of a date. It has the appearance of being more recent than the 16th or 17th century, and may perhaps have been made late in the 19th century at the "Farnham Potteries" of Messrs. A. Harris and Sons at Wreclesham, founded by the grandfather of the present manager, where green-glazed wares have from time to time been produced. It may be noted that with one exception, a glaze stained green seems to have passed out of use by English potters about the end of the 16th century until it was revived, apparently by the youthful Josiah Wedgwood, in the factory of Thomas Whieldon at Fenton, Staffordshire; the exception is that of the potteries of Donyatt and its neighbourhood in South Somersetshire, where green was dabbed on the wares as a decoration before the application of the yellowish lead glaze.

It is worth while to record that Mr. Borelli's finds on the Town Hall site at Farnham included, besides the presumed local wares described above, many extraneous potsherds. Among these are part of the base of a medieval pitcher, of the 13th or perhaps the 14th century, of warm grey earthenware, with a group of three thumbled extrusions of the kind designed to give stability to the vessel, several fragments of brown-glazed German stoneware of the 16th and 17th centuries from Raeren and Frechen, and a fragment of a large 19th-century stoneware jar, made probably at Fulham or Lambeth, impressed with the name "[J]ohn Knigh[t] [Fa]rnha[m]." The German fragments include several with ornament in relief—*e.g.*, part of a good bearded mask ("greybeard"), part of a shield with the arms of Amsterdam and another with a lion passant in chief, part of an acanthus-leaf, and part of an inscription in Low German: "[WAN GO]T WIL 2[O IS MEIN ZILL]" ("My end is when God will").

For the sake of accuracy it is well to take this opportunity of correcting the note on the Cæsar letter in the printed folder issued in connection with the Society's visit to Loseley on February 14, 1942. Cæsar (there spelt Ceasor) is there spoken of as occupying the rôle of Keeper of Farnham Park, which was actually that of the recipient of his letter; he is represented as having asked Sir William More to "contract for the whole of the clay" in the park, which clay was to be "used for making the 'Wine Potts' used by the 'Gentlemen of the Temple'," whereas he desired only enough clay for the pots in question, and there is nothing to show whether these were intended to contain wine or some other beverage.