

MEDIEVAL POTTERY FROM WISSANT (N. FRANCE)

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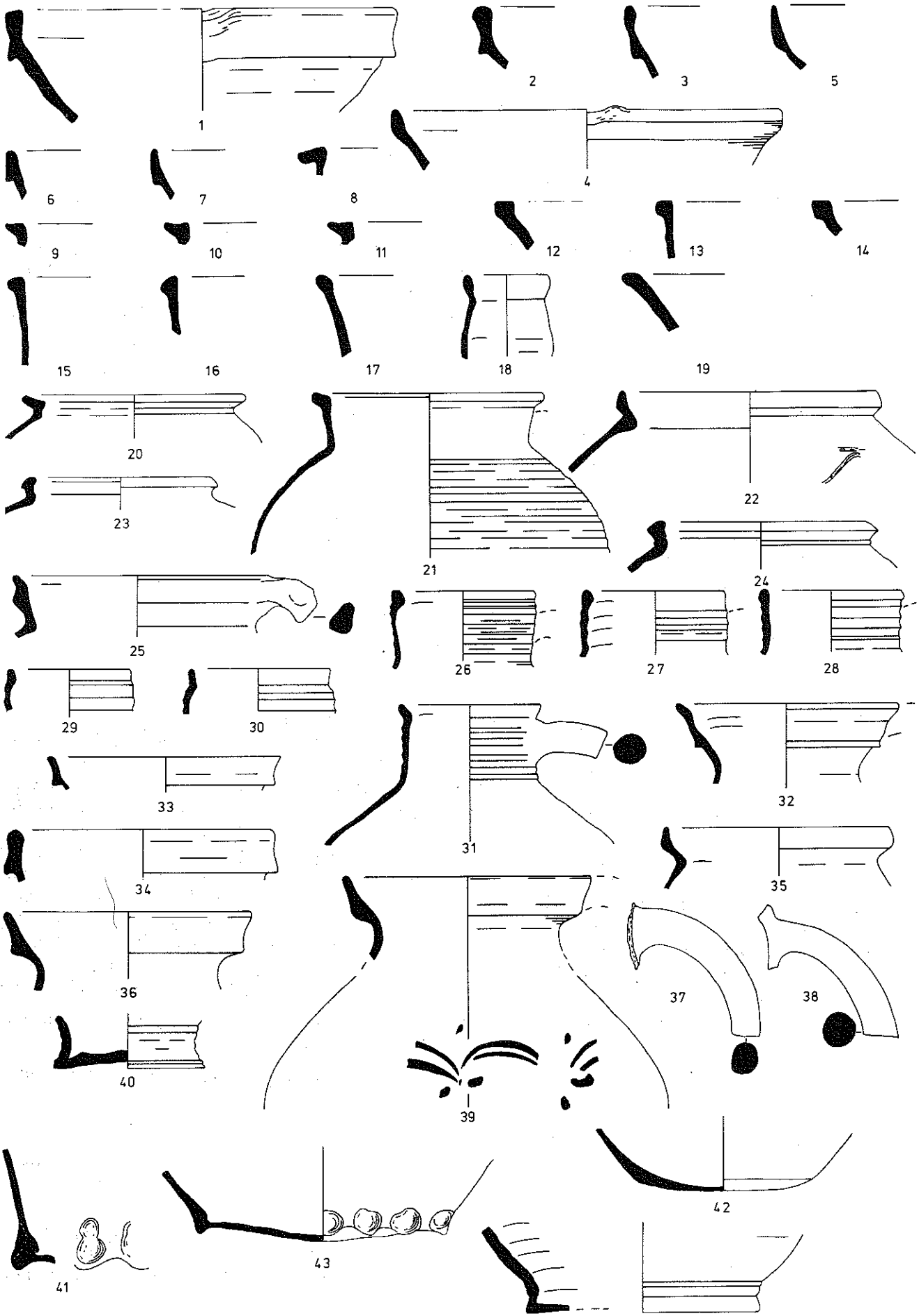
The following pottery was found in 1939 by the late Dr. H. L. Barker, M.D., L.R.C.P., F.S.A., whilst on holiday in Wissant. Wissant lies on the northern French coast, between Calais to the north east and Boulogne to the south west, the nearest places being Sangatte and Cap Gris-Nez. The pottery finds have no well-defined context and are therefore to some extent unprovenanced. Nevertheless, they appear to constitute a more or less homogeneous group and as they are comparable to a series of finds from northern France and from western Belgium, they deserve some attention, particularly as the medieval pottery from northern France is still largely unknown. All the Wissant finds have been deposited in the Department of Archaeology of the Nottingham University.

1. Bowl, with pulled pouring lip. Semi-vitrified light grey fabric with angular sand grains with a few rounded ones; also fragments of chalk, up to 3.4 x 2.7 mm.
2. Bowl; fabric as above. Diameter 35.6 cm.
3. Bowl; hard grey fabric, slightly sandy. Smoothed. Diameter 35.6 cm.
4. Bowl; hard grey fabric, slightly sandy with added chalk; smoothed. Slightly pulled pouring lip.
5. Bowl; sandy grey fabric. Diameter 27.9 cm.
6. Bowl; semi vitrified light grey fabric as no. 1. Diameter 20.3 cm.
7. Bowl; as no. 5. Diameter 20.3 cm.

Bowls or dishes with an almost semi-spherical body and a rather high, more or less upright collared rim are fairly common among the reduced and oxidized wares from late medieval Flanders and northern France, particularly from c. 1250 onwards.¹ Generally, they have a slightly sagging base with pinched or thumbed feet. The grey fabric ones appear to be somewhat less frequent after the middle of the 14th century; from the first half of the 14th century onwards, they are gradually replaced by the red ware ones with glazed inside. The latter are almost identical to the grey ware examples and would live on in the postmedieval period, when the rim gradually becomes heavier and more heavily profiled. These items are generally identified as milk-bowls or milk-dishes, and may also be connected with the preparation of cheese.² The Wissant finds may be dated in the period between c. 1250 and c. 1350. This hypothesis is consistent with the fact that the rims are not yet as fully developed as those of the later grey and red examples.

8. Bowl with flanged rim; whitish grey surface with a dark grey core; sandy with fragments of chalk; smoothed. Diameter 22.9 cm.
9. Rim; grey to buff fabric with rounded sand grains; smoothed. Diameter 15.2 cm.
10. Rim; hard grey sandy fabric; smoothed. Diameter 17.8 cm.
11. Rim; hard buff fabric with grey core; sub-angular sand grains. Diameter 17.8 cm.

Rims similar to nos. 9-11 are known from the Leenhof ter Wissche in Lampernisse (West-Flanders), where they occur in a 12th century context.³ Comparable rims were also discovered in Ukkel (near Brussels),⁴ on the Senecaberg in Vilvoorde



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cm

(near Brussels)⁵ and on the motte in Beaurainville (Pas-de-Calais);⁶ all context indications suggest a 12th-century date, without however excluding an earlier period. But cooking-pots with similar, more or less triangular rims, and without a neck, also occur in 14th-century contexts, notably on another site in Lampernisse.⁷ The Wissant examples are therefore hard to date precisely.

12. Rim; hard dark grey fabric with rounded sand grains and with fragments of chalk. Diameter 25.4 cm.

This may again be a fragment of a bowl with semi-spherical body, very small shoulder and short, everted neck, examples of which are known from different 14th-century sites in Coastal Flanders.⁸ The diameter of the Wissant example supports this identification.

13. Bowl; hard grey fabric with rounded sand grains and fragments of chalk. Diameter 16.5 cm.

14. Rim: as nos. 12 and 13. Diameter 17.9 cm.

The rim fragment no. 14 is comparable to no. 12, but the diameter suggests that it belongs to a cooking-pot rather than to a bowl. Cooking-pots with similar rims are known from Harnes (Pas-de-Calais).⁹

15. Rim; as nos. 12-14. Diameter 16.5 cm.

16. Rim; grey fabric with a lighter grey core and with rounded sand grains and red grog inclusions. Diameter 33.0 cm.

No. 16 is comparable to the rims of some bowls discovered in Harnes (Pas-de-Calais).¹⁰

17. Rim; hard buff fabric with black core; inclusions as in nos. 12-14. Diameter 30.5 cm.

18. Small, beaker-like vessel; hard dark grey fabric with rounded sand grains.

19. Rim; hard reddy buff to grey fabric; shelly ware; some of the fragments of shell have a blue hue as mussel-shells (*Mytilus*). Diameter 33.0 cm.

No. 19 is a fragment of a bowl or dish in shell-gritted ware. The shape is comparable to a number of rims found on the Leenhof ter Wissche in Lampernisse, in contexts belonging to the 11th and (early) 12th centuries. In the case of Wissant, however, there is a possibility that at least some of the inclusions are fragments of mussel-shells, while the Lampernisse finds generally appear to be tempered with cardium-shells (cockles). The Lampernisse evidence further suggests that shelly wares did not survive the 12th century in Coastal Flanders and that in the 11th and 12th centuries this type of fabric remained reserved for a number of specific vessel-types, such as bowls or dishes and fairly high, straight-sided pots with a flat base and with a fairly high, curved and everted rim. Some 25 other sites around Lampernisse also yielded (as surface finds) some fragments of shell-gritted ware, always in conjunction with red-painted pottery, early Andenne-type sherds or other fragments datable to the 11th and/or 12th centuries.¹¹ The same general dating is most probably valid for the Wissant fragment as well.

20. Cooking-pot; fabric as nos. 12-14, but with a slight degree of oxidation in the thickest part of the rim.

21. Jar; hard fabric; orange red outer surfaces with grey core; in some places, the orange red tinges go all the way through; rounded sand grains and fragments of chalk; smoothed.

No. 21 is to some extent comparable to some finds from site DPL. 35 in Lampernisse, datable to the second half of the 14th and the early 15th century. In the case of Lampernisse, the items are pipkins, with one rod handle attached to the rim and neck and with rilling and grooving on the shoulder.¹² Cooking-pots with two handles and with a more or less similar neck and rim occur as well, though they appear to be somewhat less frequent.

22. Jar or cooking-pot; fabric as with nos. 12-14, with sandwich effect of two grey tinges. Trace of combed wavy line decoration on the shoulder.

This fragment appears to be related to the grey cooking-pots with collared rim, which are found in great numbers in Coastal Flanders in the late 13th and 14th century contexts.¹³ It has, however, a somewhat less developed neck and rim, and this may point either to a local feature or—what is more probable—to a slightly earlier date. The presence of a combed wavy line decoration does not contradict the latter hypothesis, although it should be noted that such decorations generally appear to be earlier than the 13th century.

23. Jar or cooking-pot; fabric as with nos. 12-14.

24. Jar or cooking-pot; fabric buff to grey, as with nos. 12-14.

Rims of this particular type again seem to be related to the collared rims of the late medieval cooking-pots from Coastal Flanders, but here again, the rim is not yet fully developed. A general date in the late 12th, or 13th century may be suggested.¹⁴

25. Pipkin, with typical teardrop handle section; fabric similar to that of nos. 12-14, with sandwiched grey tinges; smoothed on the outside.

Cooking-pots with two handles which are pinched occur in West-Flanders and in Lille, but do not appear to be very common during the Middle Ages.¹⁵ Furthermore, they generally belong to the group of oxidized, glazed wares. Some grey pipkins are known from different sites in Flanders and northern France, but they never seem to have a pinched handle. The rim of the Wissant item also seems to belong to a more French tradition and the pipkin is therefore probably to be considered a more typically local product.

26. Neck and rim of jug, with traces of a rod handle; grey sandy fabric; smoothed.

27. Neck and rim of jug, with traces of a rod handle; creamy buff, hard sandy fabric with grey core.

28. Neck and rim of jug; grey surfaces with buff core; sandy and smoothed.

29. Neck and rim of jug; hard grey sandy fabric; smoothed.

30. Neck and rim of jug; hard grey sandy fabric; smoothed.

31. Neck, rim and shoulder of jug; brick red with buff surfaces; sandy fabric with fine bits of chalk; smoothed.

These fragments clearly belong to the group of typical 13th and early 14th century jugs. The more or less cylindrical neck with rilling on the outside and the fairly simple rim, which often is thickened to the inside, are features which clearly belong in that particular period. They are also typical for the general geographical area. Elsewhere in northern France and Coastal Flanders, comparable fragments and jugs generally belong in the period from c. 1200/1225 to c. 1350, but more often than not, the neck is slightly more funnel-shaped. The nos. 26-27 and 29-30, with the slightly inturned rim, come closer to this than the nos. 28 and 31.¹⁶

It is also to be noted that in Coastal Flanders, the middle of the 14th century sees the change from this type of jug to that with a smoothed cylindrical neck and with a small collared or cordoned rim; this evolution may well start as early as 1300.¹⁷ It is not clear, however, whether the situation is similar in northern France.

Such jugs can have different sizes and shapes, the most common one—at least in Coastal Flanders—being that of the broad-shouldered jug with funnel-shaped body, sagging base and pinched or thumbed feet. But examples of jugs with an ovoid, rounded or even squat body—sometimes even with a flat, wheel-turned base—are known from elsewhere in northern France.¹⁸ The Wissant finds give no clear indications as to the general shape of the jugs.

It is also to be noted that no. 39 is in a red fabric. This should not really surprise us if one considers that the evidence for the Brugge kilns clearly shows that the same potters made both types of products during this period¹⁹ and that the Wissant finds are to some extent comparable to those from Brugge and from Coastal Flanders.

32. Neck and rim of jug; very hard grey fabric with fine chalk and sand; smoothed.
33. Neck and rim of jug; as no. 32.
34. Neck and rim of jug; hard grey fabric with reddish brown core; sandy.
35. Neck and rim of cooking-pot(?); red to buff sandy fabric; smoothed. Outside glazed greenish brown to yellow.
36. Neck and rim of jug; pale red brick to buff fabric with rounded sand grains and some chalk. Outside covered with dark green, pitted glaze. Traces of white slip on the inside.
37. Rod handle; pale brick red to grey fabric; sandy with some chalk. Dark green glaze on top of handle and white slip on the underside.
38. Rod handle and part of rim; as no. 37, but lighter red. Spots of green glaze and white slip.
39. Jug; grey to black (burnt) fabric with reddish brown core; sandy with fine fragments of chalk; smoothed. Inside the rim, green glaze; very dark green and blistered (burnt) glaze on the outside; traces of yellowish slip decoration underneath the glaze.

No. 25 appears to be a cooking-pot rather than a jug and may be fairly early (12th or early 13th century), judging from the rim. The other fragments all belong to jugs with a fairly short, curved neck and with a typical, fairly high collared rim. Rims of this type definitely appear to be northern or western French in origin. The Andenne-type pots and pitchers which very often have such a rim are probably largely influenced by the northwestern or western French pottery traditions and such rims are found fairly frequently in the area.²⁰ In Lampernisse, grey ware cooking-pots, pitchers and jars with a high collared rim occur both in 12th century and in later contexts.²¹ From the 13th century onwards, the type will develop into the collared or cordoned rims of the cooking-pots and jugs.²² The Wissant finds suggest a (rather early?) 13th century date, if one may judge by the picture given by the Andenne production: the collared rim becomes less well developed and is clearly everted; this is particularly evident in the case of nos. 32, 36 and 39.

No. 39 deserves our attention in that it shows traces of a yellowish slip decoration, which indicates that the jug belongs to the group of highly decorated pottery. The type of decoration is difficult to analyse because of the fragmentary aspect of the item. But the simple use of slip lines, combined with the type of jug and the colour effects provided by the fabric and the glaze, suggests a

13th century date. The use of such slip lines is attested from the late 12th or early 13th century onwards in northern France²³ (not taking into account the more simple use of applied strips on the 11th and 12th century Andenne wares). It is also to be noted that some of the other fragments—e.g. nos. 36-38—also show traces of the use of whitish slip, which appears to confirm a general 13th century date.

40. Base; hard, smooth, creamy buff fabric with grey core; sandy and fine chalk. Run of green glaze down body onto base and spots of yellow glaze. Scar and fragment of pot rim on base.

This particular fragment obviously belongs to a jug. The scar on the base does not necessarily indicate a waster and hence a local pottery production: most sites yield a couple of such fragments, which can be identified as 'second choice' pieces. The fragment probably also belongs to a highly decorated jug, judging from the glaze and from the shape. In the late 13th and (early) 14th centuries, a number of jugs in red fabric have a wheel-turned foot with flat base, judging from a number of finds from Coastal Flanders.²⁴ More often than not, such fragments belong to highly decorated items. In northern France, wheel-turned feet appear to belong in the same general period.²⁵ The same general date may also be valid for no. 44.

41. Base; red, smooth, hard, sandy fabric with grey core; large double thumbing around base edge.
42. Sagging base; grey outer surfaces with grey core; sandy fabric with magnetite; smoothed.
43. Base; hard, grey, sandy fabric with fine chalk. The base sags lower than the thumbed feet on the base edge.
44. Base; hard, pale red surfaces with light grey core; semi-smooth and sandy fabric with fine fragments of chalk. Pale green glaze on base.

These base fragments belong in the general tradition of the 13th and 14th century pottery. The thumbed feet occur very often both in northern France and in Flanders, and possibly may have been first developed in northern France. No. 42 may even be earlier than the 13th century, but there is no way of proving this.

General Discussion

The Wissant finds display several interesting aspects, notwithstanding the lack of reliable context-indications. First of all, it appears that these finds constitute a more or less homogeneous group with a general date range from the (late) 12th century to the middle of the 14th century. A few fragments may possibly be somewhat later, but there is no definite proof of that. Some sherds may be earlier than the late 12th century, and this seems to be fairly certain in the case of no. 19. But on the whole, fragments which can without any doubt be dated to a pre-1150 period are absent. In view of the fact that the 13th century Flemish and northern French pottery is still not very well known, the Wissant finds become even more interesting, as they may provide some preliminary clues.

Another aspect concerns the fabrics. The finds include both reduced grey wares and oxidized reddish wares, thus presenting a picture which is directly comparable to what is known for the Flemish pottery of that period. Quite a number of the Wissant finds show chalk inclusions, apart from the sandy temper. This indicates a marked difference from the Flemish pottery, which occasionally shows the odd chalk inclusion but which is not tempered with chalk. This also suggests that the Wissant finds may come from kilns in the Boulonnais area

or at least in the western part of northern France. The Boulonnais area contains sufficient chalk layers and it is also to be noted that adequate clay seems to be available between Sangatte and Wissant.²⁶ Boulogne and Calais themselves were important enough at the time to have their own kilns. But for the moment being, no definite proof exists that the Wissant finds are local products. At the same time, it cannot be said whether or not some of these finds are imports from elsewhere in northern or western France. This is largely due to the fact that the medieval pottery studies in these regions have really started only very recently.

A final aspect of the Wissant finds concerns the fact that they demonstrate the existence of some links between the pottery of western Flanders and that of northern France. Thus, there are two major groups of jugs, one possibly slightly earlier than the other. The latter consists of the jugs with cylindrical neck and with a fairly simple, thickened rim. This type of jugs has its direct counterpart in West-Flanders as well as elsewhere in northern France, while the first type appears to belong in a more exclusively French tradition. In the case of the bowls, direct comparison with some Flemish finds again is possible. For the cooking-pots and jars, the situation is somewhat more difficult to unravel and the Wissant finds do not allow us to go very far. Nevertheless, in some cases—e.g. nos. 9-11—the comparison with some Flemish finds is indicated.

All this clearly suggests that at some stage—and particularly in the period from c. 1250 to c. 1350—(western) Flanders pottery is far more closely linked with northern French pottery than was hitherto supposed. The analysis of some of the Lille, Beaurainville and Harnes finds, not to mention other find complexes, would appear to bear this out. Northern French influences on and links with the Flemish medieval pottery are of course logical. But the importance of the Wissant finds lies not only on this level. They allow us to formulate the hypothesis that the Boulogne-Sangatte area may well be the zone where western French traditions and northern French and Flemish ones come together.

In this area lie our best hopes for future research.

FOOTNOTES

1. See for instance J. A. Trimpe Burger, 1962-1963, p. 539 (D15) (red ware, Aardenburg); F. Verhaeghe, 1970, p. 59, fig. VI, 22-39 (red ware, Lampernisse); *idem*, 1974, fig. 27, 16-37 (red ware, Sint-Margriete) and fig. 30, 13-14 (grey ware); *idem*, 1977, Bijlage I, pp. 364-365 and fig. 485-486 (grey ware, Lampernisse); *ibidem*, pp. 690 ss. and fig. 1132-1137 (red ware, Lampernisse); G. Bacquiez & M. & R. Derache, 1974, p. 321 (no. 211.01 c-i) (grey ware) and p. 325 (no. 301.01) (red ware) (Harnes, Pas-de-Calais); M. Debersee, 1967, fig. 4, no. 15 (grey ware, Lille) (= K. J. Barton, 1974, fig. 2, no. 30).
2. G. Tieghem & B. Cartier, 1976.
3. F. Verhaeghe, 1977, Bijlage I, pp. 363-364 and fig. 793.
4. R. Borremans, 1974, Bijlagen, pl. XIV (U.G. 32) and p. 37.
5. R. Borremans, 1968-1970, fig. 17, no. 4 (found in debris layer b which still contains 12th century pottery).
6. P. Leman, 1970, p. 110, fig. 3 nos. 1, 4, 6 and 8.
7. See for instance F. Verhaeghe, 1970, fig. III, nos. 2-5.
8. See for instance *ibidem*, fig. II, no. 31; J. A. Trimpe Burger, 1962-1963, pp. 536-537 (D10). For Harnes (Pas-de-Calais), see G. Bacquiez & M. & R. Derache, 1974, p. 320, nos. 211.03 a-b and e-g.

9. Ibidem, pl. IV, no. 200.02.
10. Ibidem, Pl. VIII, no. 211.03 i.
11. F. Verhaeghe, 1977, Bijlage I, pp. 214 ss.
12. Ibidem, pp. 700 ss. and fig. 1138-1171.
13. See for instance F. Verhaeghe, 1970, fig. III, 9-31 and IV, 1-23.
14. No. 23 may also be compared with a late 12th or early 13th century find from Audrieu (Calvados); A. Renoux, 1972, fig. 22, no. 70-1-166.
15. M. Debersee, 1967, fig. 5, 14-22; F. Verhaeghe, 1970, fig. VIII, 5.
16. See for instance F. Verhaeghe, 1977, Bijlage I, fig. 941-949; K. J. Barton, 1974, fig. 3, 8-13; M. Debersee, 1967, fig. 2, 5-6 and fig. 3, 7-10. Similar jugs were also produced in the Comines-Warneton area, north of Lille (see P. Leman & W. Langedock, 1977).
17. See for instance F. Verhaeghe, 1970, fig. I, 1-17 and J. A. Trimpe Burger, 1962-1963, D1 and D2.
18. See for instance K. J. Barton, 1974, loc cit in note 16 for the grey wares and idem, 1977, passim, for the red wares.
19. M. Jacobs & F. Verhaeghe, 1980.
20. R. Borremans & R. Warginaire, 1966, pp. 85 and 88; see also G. Bacquez & M. & R. Derache, 1974, pl. VII, no. 210.03 (Harnes) and P. Leman, 1970, fig. 5, 19 (Beaurainville).
21. F. Verhaeghe, 1977, Bijlage I, pp. 448 ss. and fig. 755-767.
22. In some cases, however, the link with the earlier collared rims will remain obvious; see for instance J. A. Trimpe Burger, 1962-1963, pp. 532-533(D4) (1350-1375) (jar); K. J. Barton, 1974, fig. 6 (Saint-Omer); or V. van Doorne, 1975, fig. 1248-1249 (Raversijde, near Ostend).
23. See for instance P. Demolon & J. Barbieux, 1979, p. 323 and fig. 24, 3; see also F. Verhaeghe, 1982 (forthcoming).
24. See for instance F. Verhaeghe, 1977, Bijlage I, figs. 1066-1071 and 1082-1090.
25. Cf. G. Bacquez, & M. & R. Derache, 1974, pl. XIX (Harnes) and K. J. Barton, 1977, passim.
26. C. Delattre, E. Meriaux & M. Waterlot, 1973, pp. 60-66.

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Cette étude porte sur un petit groupe de céramiques trouvé en 1939 par le feu Dr H. L. Baker, en vacances à Wissant, situé sur la côte nord de la France entre Calais et Boulogne. Quoiqu'il faut regarder ces poteries comme étant sans provenance, elles constituent un ensemble plus ou moins homogène. Etant donné la disette des connaissances de la céramique médiévale à l'origine du nord de la France, le groupe mérite d'être étudié. Les céramiques semblent dater de la fin du XII^e au milieu du XIV^e siècle.

Dieser Artikel stellt eine kleine Gruppe von Keramik vor, die 1939 von Dr. H. L. Barker, während seiner Ferien in Wissant an der nordfranzösischen Küste zwischen Calais und Boulogne, gefunden wurde. Obwohl der genaue Fundort unsicher ist, scheint es sich hier um einen homogenen Komplex zu handeln und verdient um so mehr Beachtung, wenn man bedenkt wie wenig wir über mittelalterliche Keramik aus Nordfrankreich wissen. Die Keramik kann wohl in den Zeitraum vom späten 12. Jahrhundert bis in die Mitte des 14. Jahrhundert datiert werden.