

discover any patterns in distribution that might lead to more information regarding the early Anglo-Saxon settlers, their movements, trade patterns and perhaps even their religious beliefs. In addition, reports are made on any material which is submitted to us. Reports are also written, on stamps which have been submitted, for inclusion in excavation reports. Information has also been sent by letter to inquirers from the Continent.

The Archive is housed at present at Little Acres, Stoke Poges, Bucks SL2 4JG, England. It is available to anyone who would like to visit it or who wishes to consult it, in order to compare material or for reference. Stoke Poges is easily reached by train from Paddington to Slough, or by car. The Archive is destined to be deposited in the British Museum, which supports our work.

A number of people visit the Archive each year, and in July 1991 it hosted a meeting of the Early Anglo-Saxon Pottery Group. This was well attended, and much interest shown in what was available.

Present findings and research

It has become evident, as a result the latest acquired material, that the distribution of pot stamps has a bearing on tribal and family groups. It is hoped to be able to trace this back, ultimately, to continental sources. The material is already showing a regional bias for some of the less common motifs, some of which can be linked to continental sites. Two further articles are planned, but the pressure of work on the Archive plus the research into the material and writing of reports makes this difficult.

The task of listing stamps, drawing them for the card index and putting the data on computer continues, and it will be some time before this is completed, but we expect our current workload to be processed by mid-1993, and welcome information on any new discoveries of stamped pottery.

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AN ANGLO-SAXON MAMMIFORM POTTERY VESSEL FROM BARTON-ON-HUMBER

Introduction

The pot which is the subject of this note was found in 1990, during the excavation by the Humberside County Council Archaeology Unit of an Anglo-Saxon inhumation cemetery at Castledyke South, Barton-on-Humber, South Humberside (TA 0317 2175). The vessel (Fig. 1), which is complete, was found in the grave (No. 133) of an infant of undetermined sex. The poor condition of the skeletal remains precluded a closer determination of age. The pot was supported by a fragment of lava quern and lay towards the centre of the grave. The only

other grave goods were an iron fragment and three glass beads, all of which were found in the grave fill above the pot. The beads may be of 6th- or 7th-century date, the period to which most of the Castledyke inhumations belong. The provision of a pottery accessory vessel was not a majority rite within the cemetery; deliberately deposited pots occur in only c. 15 of the 190 graves. These are predominantly the graves of children, and the pots in question are usually plain domestic vessels showing signs of previous use.

Description

The vessel (weight 212 gm) is mammiform, with a bulbous perforated 'teat' at the base. It has a neatly defined neck above an asymmetrical body, with a short, irregularly beaded, everted rim. The upper body has a well-rounded profile. The vessel height (with rim plane horizontal) is 111 mm; the rim diameter is 63–67 mm, while the diameter of the perforation of the teat is 4–6 mm.

The fabric is dark grey with red external core margin; the external surface is dark brownish-grey except for two areas of abrasion (see below) where the smoothed surface has worn away to reveal the colour of the core-margin. The fabric is tempered with abundant, angular, dark brown magnetic inclusions in the size range c. 0.5–3.0 mm. These are presently interpreted as iron slag. They are visible on the exterior surface only in the areas noted above. Occasional quartz grains and voids of burned-out organic material also occur. There are no other vessels in this fabric from the cemetery, and no Early Saxon slag-tempered vessels from South Humberside are known to the author. This need not, of course, imply a non-local or foreign origin for the vessel.

The upper half of the inner surface presents several roughly horizontal *striae*, the longest of which occupies approximately one-third of the circumference; the cross-section varies from 'V'-shaped to irregular. These appear to have been made before firing and may result from grits being dragged along the surface by the potter's fingers during manufacture.

Patchy light-coloured residues which react with dilute hydrochloric acid occur on several parts of the vessel. They are most extensive on the upper half of the interior, but there are also slight traces over much of the outer surface. It is hoped that specialist analysis of these residues (not yet carried out) will contribute to an understanding of the use to which this vessel was put, although they may prove to have been caused by the post-depositional environment.

The teat is very heavily abraded. Both the outer surface and core margin have been completely worn away, and the original shape of this part of the vessel is uncertain. The only other signs of wear are the two abraded areas noted above. One is directly below the rim, the other on the maximum girth on the opposite, more bulbous, side of the pot (see below).

Discussion

The most obvious interpretation of this vessel is that it was a child's feeding bottle, an assumption which tends to be reinforced by the fact that it was found in an infant's grave. Vessels with this function are recorded in a variety of materials, including ceramic, from both earlier and later periods, though no other mammiform nor Anglo-Saxon examples are at present known to the author. There is at least nothing inherently improbable in the provision of such a vessel for an infant who could not, for whatever reason, be fed naturally. If this is the case then one must suppose that the vessel was intended for an unweaned infant, perhaps to administer milk expressed by the mother or a wet-nurse. The basal perforation is rather large, but it could have been packed with a scrap of cloth or other material in order to help regulate the flow. The bulbous shape of this part

SAXON AND MEDIEVAL POTTERY FROM EYNSHAM ABBEY, OXFORDSHIRE

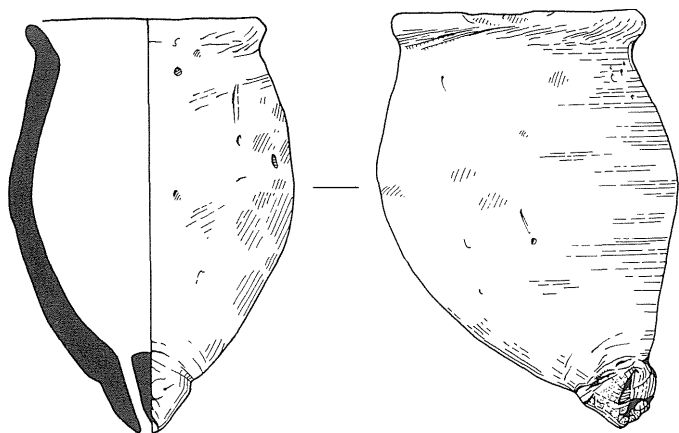


Fig. 1. An Anglo-Saxon mammiform pot from Barton on Humber. Scale 1:2.

of the vessel might also have facilitated the tying-on of an artificial teat made from leather or even tanned cow's udder, both of which are known to have been used in conjunction with feeders made of cow-horn in subsequent periods (Fildes 1986, 343–4; 348–9). In any case, unlike the later 'bubby-pot' and its descendants, the vessel is clearly not of a size or shape which would allow it to be used by a somewhat older child to self-administer semi-liquid food or 'pap'.

That the vessel was not made solely for a funerary purpose is amply indicated by the signs of wear noted above. However, these are not easy to understand if the object had only been used for feeding a child. The amount of abrasion of the teat might be thought unlikely to have resulted from either prolonged use or the most strenuous sucking by a human infant, and the possibility that the pot was originally intended to be used with an animal must at least be considered. There is still a need to hand-rear lambs in most seasons, especially those in which greater numbers of ewes than usual have perished, and it may be that the vessel under discussion was the response of an evidently skilled and imaginative potter to just such a need. In this case the vessel may have been considered an appropriate funerary deposit because of its association with infant nurture in general, rather than because it had actually been used by the dead child. It may, of course, have seen use by both children and animals, though this hardly accords with present day concepts of hygiene. It may be noted that it is possible to hold the pot snugly in the right hand in a position appropriate for feeding either an infant cradled in the left arm or an animal held at one's knee, in such a way that the areas of abrasion noted above correspond with the points of maximum contact with the thumb and the palm.

This unusual vessel is published in advance of the full excavation report as part of a search for *comparanda*, and other relevant information. The author would be pleased to hear of similar vessels or observations pertaining to its use, at the address below.

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Introduction

The small market town of Eynsham lies on a gravel terrace at the confluence of the river Thames and one of its principal tributaries, the Evenlode. It occupies a natural control point on the Saxon and medieval route from Oxford to the west (Fig. 1). Excavations at Eynsham Abbey, which lies to the south of the present town centre, were carried out by the Oxford Archaeological Unit in 1990–1992, in advance of proposed cemetery extensions. Funded by English Heritage, this work covered an area of 1800 square metres and revealed multiperiod occupation of the site.

The earliest activity dates to the Bronze Age, when a large enclosure was constructed. After a hiatus of 1500 years, an Early Saxon settlement characterised by sunken-featured buildings was established, possibly under royal influence (Blair 1987, 85–93). This settlement was superseded by the foundation of a minster church in the late 7th or early 8th century; timber halls were built during this phase. In 1005 the minster was refounded as a Benedictine abbey; the excavations revealed substantial traces of its buildings, apparently representing domestic quarters arranged around a proto-cloister.

The abbey was refounded in the early 12th century. It prospered throughout the medieval period, becoming the third richest religious house in Oxfordshire before the Dissolution. Medieval buildings excavated include the Great Cloister, frater, kitchen, dormitory and reredorter. The latter three appear to have been taken over as a private property in the post-Dissolution period.

The pottery

The pottery recovered during the above work has been assessed to ascertain the potential of the assemblage for further analysis. The pottery was divided into broad fabric groups on the basis of their main inclusions, and into known fabric groups cross-referenced to the Oxford medieval and post-medieval fabric series (Haldon and Mellor 1977). A total of 240 kg was recorded

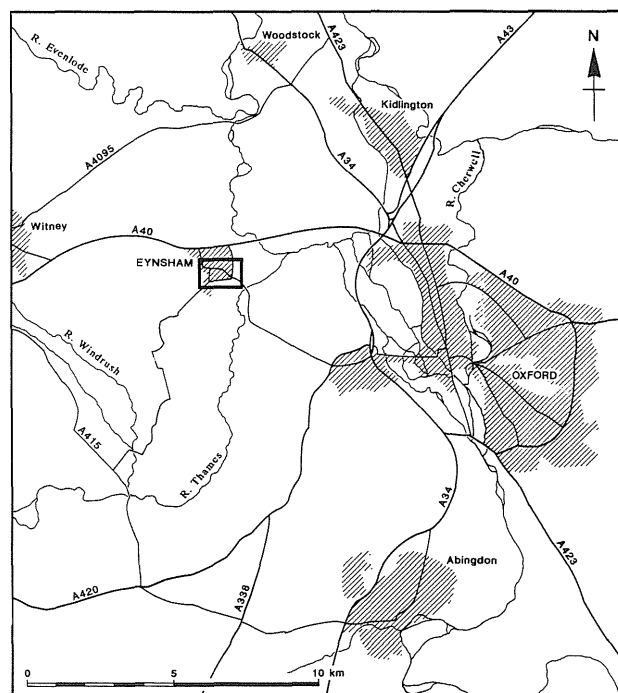


Fig. 1. Location map of Eynsham.