



Fig. 1. Jugs, bowls and jars from the medieval kiln at Everton, Bedfordshire (drawn by D. Enright). Scale 1:4.

defined. Excavations in Bedford, ten miles west of Biggleswade, also produced a variety of shell-tempered pottery ranging in date from the Middle Saxon period to the 13th century (Baker and Hassall 1976). There were three types (B2-4) contemporary with St Neots-type, with varied shelly fabrics, suggesting a number of subgroups within the St Neots tradition. A comparison with the Bedford material will decide whether the Stratton pottery fits into the same pattern. Later shelly wares of 13th-century Harrold-Olney Hyde type are also present at Stratton.

Besides the shelly wares, a number of non-local products have been identified. Among these are Thetford and Stamford, Lyveden, Brill/Boarstall, Hedingham (the most easterly example identified so far), and possibly Hertfordshire glazed wares. Of the late medieval fabric types present on the site, a Late Medieval Reduced ware, as defined by Moorhouse (1974), is worth noting.

At the same time as the excavation at Stratton, some building development at Everton, five miles away, uncovered the remains of a pottery kiln. Field walking in the area (Hassall 1976) had already revealed the presence of wasters, but it was not until 1991 that the kiln producing this pottery was found. The kiln was probably of double-flue construction, although a service trench put through the centre had completely obliterated one of the flues, leaving only slight evidence for the other flue. The walls were of pitched sandstone slabs laid in herringbone fashion and surviving to a height of 0.8 m. The fill of the kiln and nearby pits produced a quantity of pottery wasters. The same pottery appeared to be turning up at Stratton, although this still needs to be confirmed. The forms are limited to rectangular-rimmed jars, bowls and jugs with deeply slashed handles (Fig. 1). This pottery is dated to the 14th-15th centuries. Contemporary kilns were working at Flitwick in South Bedfordshire as well as Higham Ferrars, Northamptonshire, and Great Brickhill, Buckinghamshire. Further work needs to be done to characterise the Everton pottery and see how it fits into

the Late Medieval Reduced ware tradition.

The assessment of the Stratton ceramics will begin in the Spring of 1993. A clearer picture should then emerge filling in at least some of the blanks in our knowledge of the ceramics of this part of Bedfordshire.

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Anna Slowikowski
Bedfordshire Archaeology Service

OIL POT OR WHAT?

In his work on pottery produced and traded in north-west Europe, John Hurst illustrates a miniature standing costrel in Raeren stoneware (Hurst *et al* 1986, 198, Fig. 94.308). These vessels are described as oil pots used in connection with spinning, and are given various dates within the 16th century. The aim of this note is to suggest an alternative use for these vessels, and to present more information on their dating.

Description

These miniature costrels, which range between 50–80 mm in height, are in a dark grey stoneware with a salt glaze which can vary from mottled brown to grey (Pl. 2). They have an ovoid body, slightly constricted neck and a plain, slightly everted rim with two opposed small pierced vertical lugs. The base is splayed and flat.

Distribution

These vessels, which are known to have been produced in Raeren-Born and Aachen, appear rarely in European archaeological literature. Apart from the vessel mentioned by Hurst, the only other reference is to a find from Bergen-op-Zoom in Holland, where fragments of four vessels were found (Vandenbulcke and Groeneweg 1988, 355). In Norway, however, this type of vessel has featured in various publications since 1926 (Mowinckel 1926, 77–80). In his 1933 publication of finds from the medieval towns of Bergen and Oslo, Sigurd Greig could list a total of 42 vessels of this type found in Norway (Greig 1933, 189–192). In 1989, Lars Andersson recorded approximately 150 vessels from Norway, but only five in the whole of Sweden and Denmark (Andersson 1989, 138). In addition to these, excavations at the Archbishop's Palace in Trondheim in 1991 and 1992 have produced a further twenty or so examples.

Function

It is obvious that vessels of this type could have had a number of different functions. As well as their suggested use as oil pots, they have been variously referred to in Norway as ointment jars and as pilgrim jars, or *relikviekrukke* (a jar used as a reliquary). It is these last two interpretations that we shall look at in more detail.

A number of these miniature costrels have been found in the vicinity of medieval churches, including most of the examples from the Library site excavations in Trondheim, which were found in the graveyard of St. Olav's church (Reed 1990, 36). One such costrel was found wedged between two stones in the base of St. Olav's well when it was being cleaned out during the restoration of the cathedral in 1885. Further examples have been found in the Bishop's residence in Oslo and in the Archbishop's fortress, Steinviksholm, to the north-east of Trondheim. Perhaps the two most significant finds, however, are the costrels found under the altar tablet in Logtu church, north Trøndelag, and in a side altar in Trondenes church, Troms (North Norway).

At the time of its discovery, the costrel from Logtu contained some small fragments of bone and wood, apparently held in a small bag of light brown silk with green stitching. This bore a wax seal, attached to which was the seal of Archbishop Gaute (1475–1510). The find from Trondenes contained a splinter of bone wrapped in linen and sealed with wax. Attached to it was a piece of parchment with a Latin inscription and a seal. The inscription reads '*Consecratum est hoc altare anno domini McdLXX sexto quarto die mensis septembris per xm (?) in Christo patrem Gautonem Archiepiscopum Nidrosiensem in honore(m) Corporis Christi: beati Andree Apostoli et sancti Olavi regis et martiris?*'. In this instance the costrel had quite clearly been deposited as a reliquary in connection with the dedication of the altar in September 1476.

Discussion

It is evident from the above that these vessels could be used for religious purposes, in addition to their other possible functions. The find from St Olav's well gave rise, at the beginning of this century, to speculation as to whether these vessels were used as

containers for holy water taken from the well, a point which has not been further developed. It cannot be certain whether the costrels were imported for this purpose, but their close ecclesiastical connection would appear to be indisputable; the question arises as to whether some examples were imported with the express intention of using them as reliquaries, and if this is the case, by whom were they imported?

In this respect, it is interesting to note that Dean Svein Eriksson of the Cathedral staff in Trondheim appears to have played a central role in the production and sale of pilgrim badges in honour of St. Olav during the mid 15th century (significantly, no pilgrim badge from Trondheim is known prior to this date). Svein Eriksson was also connected with Trondenes, where he was parish priest from 1427 until c. 1488. Was it the entrepreneurial initiative of Eriksson, or another member of the cathedral staff which was responsible for the importation of these vessels?

Further questions concern their distribution, which appears at present to be heavily concentrated on Norway. Is this merely fortuitous? Do they in fact occur in equally large numbers elsewhere, as yet unpublished?

Whatever the case may be, it is clear that these vessels occur during the second half of the 15th century, and that they are certainly in use in Norway by the last quarter of that century. These miniature costrels were clearly multi-functional, and it would be of interest to document all their functions, and to confirm whether their use as reliquaries is confined only to Norway.

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Ian Reed
Riksantikvaren, Trondheim

THE DISCOVERY OF THE SITE OF A MEDIEVAL ENCAUSTIC FLOOR TILE KILN AT MONMOUTH, GWENT

In November 1991, kiln-damaged encaustic floor tiles of the Great Malvern tradition were found during building work in the front garden of Cadogan House, Monk Street, Monmouth, Gwent (SO 50981315). The site was subsequently excavated by the Monmouth Archaeological Society; no structures were found, but it is believed that one feature discovered was the stoke pit of a tile kiln¹. Clay occurs locally and was certainly used for the production of bricks in the post-medieval period in this part of town.

This site is of importance in that it has provided the first