

Mediaeval Pottery from Merton College, Oxford

By E. M. JOPE

THE following group of pottery was found during excavations in the N.E. corner of Mob Quad., Merton College, carried out in 1922 under the direction of Mr. H. W. Garrod, to whom I am indebted for the opportunity of studying it. A small building was found antedating the Mob buildings of 1309 and most of the pottery was probably in use before that date, though there was no archaeological proof of this. There were very few fragments obviously later than 14th century, and several vessels survived in a large number of contiguous fragments, so that they were probably not introduced in later filling. The whole character of the group is similar to that from Oriel College.¹ Especially interesting are the large pans, which are becoming well recognized mediaeval types in both town and country; the pitcher (FIG. 33, no. 11) showing affinities with the Severn basin styles stronger than any found previously in the Oxford region; and the schist hone, a mediaeval import from Brittany or the Eifel district of S. Germany.²

THE POTTERY

I. LARGE PANS

FIG. 33, no. 1. Fairly coarse shell and flint filled grey fabric with surfaces varying from reddish to grey. This type combines the everted rim of the typical early mediaeval cooking-pot with the shape and purpose of large pans. Its distribution as at present known (FIG. 34) indicates that it is a west of England type with the Oxford region as its eastern limit. Large mediaeval pans are, of course, known from other regions, and often have a marked local character of their own, as for instance, those from Suffolk.³

Various methods of strengthening the rims of large pans were used by mediaeval potters. The earlier forms, late Saxon and 12th century (e.g. *Oxoniensia*, v (1940), 48, fig. 8, no. 5; *ibid.*, iv (1939), 130, fig. 27, no. 1) have a vigorous inturned flange, but by the late 12th or 13th century the out-turning of the mediaeval cooking-pot appears on these large pans (FIG. 33, no. 1). By the 14th century rims become almost universally simpler (FIG. 33, nos. 2, 3 and 4, and *Oxoniensia*, vii (1942), 75, from Seacourt); perhaps this is associated with improvements in fabric used, though the simpler-rimmed large pans are not unknown in the more heterogeneous earlier fabrics, which are subject to greater changes during firing (FIG. 33, no. 7, from

¹ *Oxoniensia*, vi (1941), 90; *ibid.*, vii (1942), 76; and *Oriel Record*, Jan. 1942, p. 175.

² *Proc. I.O.W. N.H. and A. Soc.*, ii (1937), 683.

³ Bungay: *Proc. Suffolk Arch. Inst.*, xxii, 337, no. 10. Butley Priory: *Arch. Journ.*, xc (1933), 275.

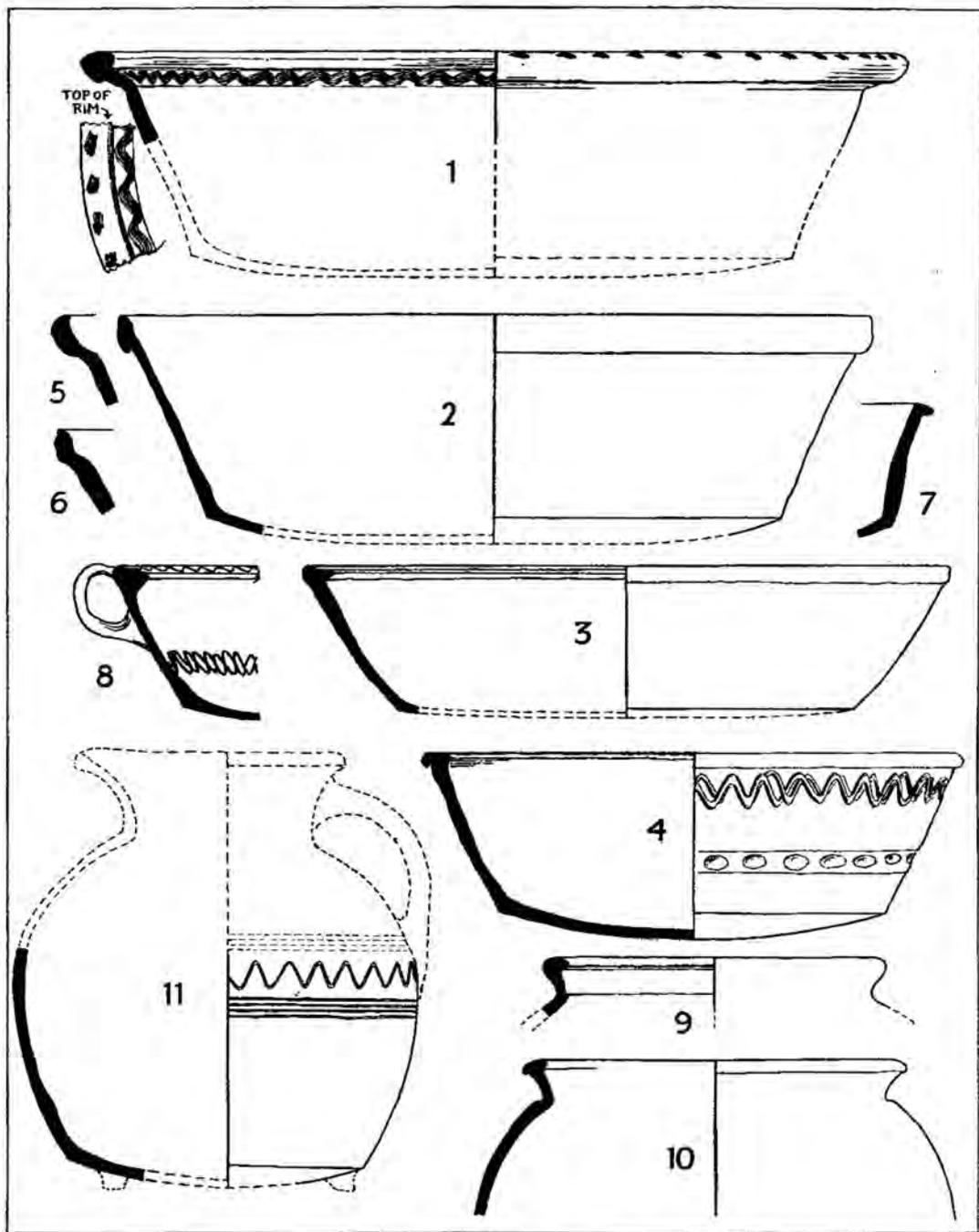


FIG. 33

MEDIAEVAL POTTERY FROM THE OXFORD DISTRICT

Nos. 5-6 from Seacourt, Berks. ; no. 7 from Combe, Oxon. ; no. 8 from Woodperry, Oxon. ; the remainder from Merton College, Oxford. Sc. $\frac{1}{4}$.

E. M. JOPE

Combe, Oxon. ; diam. 18 inches ; probably 13th century). FIG. 32, nos. 5 and 6, from Seacourt, Berks.,¹ look like interesting experiments in out-turned flanges by a potter more used to making in-turned flanges, and similar examples are also known from Combe, Oxon.

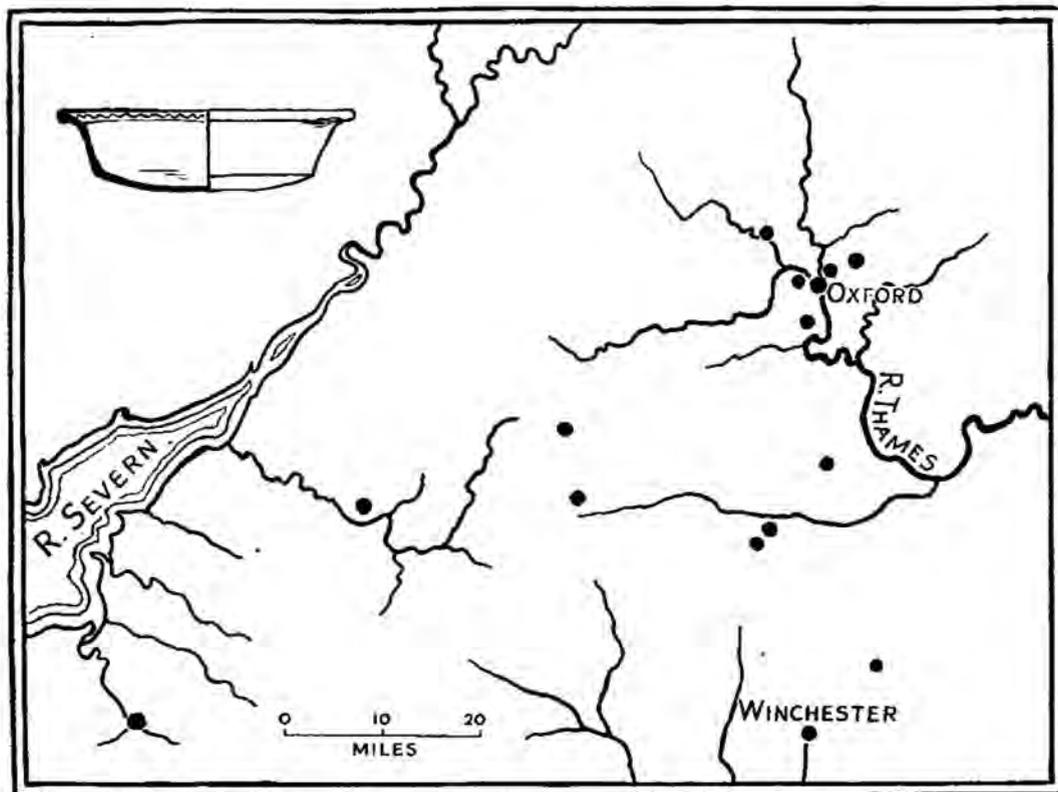


FIG. 34
MAP SHOWING DISTRIBUTION OF LATE 12TH-13TH CENTURY LARGE UNGLAZED PANS
WITH EVERTED RIMS (p. 102)

FIG. 33, no. 2. 28 fragments of large unglazed pan of fairly hard sandy buff fabric, similar to one from Seacourt.²

FIG. 33, no. 3. 8 fragments of a large pan of hard pale buff fabric with thin pale green glaze on interior. Two very similar glazed pans from Woodperry (one with handles, FIG. 33, no. 8) and an unglazed one from Little Kimble, Bucks.,³ have wavy line decoration.

¹ Mr. S. A. Opie's excavations, 1938.

² *Oxoniensia*, VII (1942), 75, and fig. 18, no. 6: probably made at Brill, Bucks.

³ In possession of Mr. P. Crossley-Holland.

MEDIAEVAL POTTERY FROM MERTON COLLEGE, OXFORD

FIG. 33, no. 4. Large unglazed pan of light grey sandy fabric from Oriol College,¹ decorated with wavy lines, and shallow finger-presses round the body.

In the Merton College group are also fragments of a large glazed shallow pan, square in plan, with rounded corners, such as also occurred in the Oriol group, and on several other sites.

2. COOKING POTS

FIG. 33, NO. 9. Cooking-pot rim of fine shell and crushed flint filled grey fabric with buff exterior and black interior surfaces; a common 12th century type.

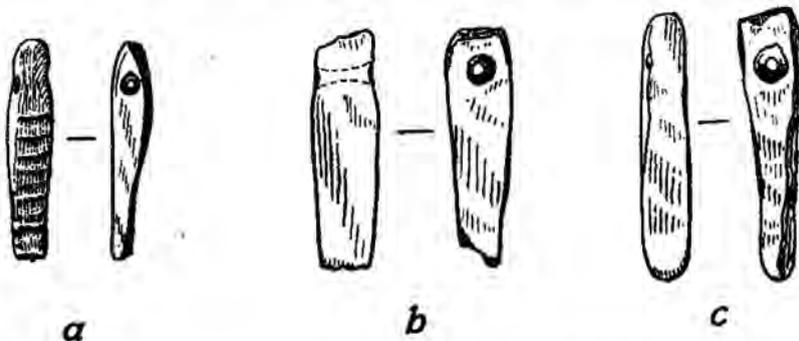


FIG. 35

IMPORTED HONES OF MICACEOUS SCHIST FOUND IN THE OXFORD REGION (p. 106)

a. From Merton College, Oxford. b. Littlemore, Oxon. c. Avebury, Wilts. Sc. $\frac{1}{2}$.

FIG. 33, no. 10. Similar fabric to above; there is also another similar rim.

There are also fragments of base and body of a cooking-pot of sandy fabric trimmed with a knife on exterior before firing (cp. *Oxoniensia*, VII (1942), 72, fig. 17, no. 9).

3. PITCHERS AND JUGS

FIG. 33, no. 11. Fragments of lower half of globular pitcher, probably tripod, though no feet were found. Light grey sandy fabric with pale green exterior glaze. Both in material and decoration this vessel is much more like the tripod pitchers of the Bristol-Gloucester region than those so far encountered in the Oxford region.²

The following jugs, not illustrated, are 13th-early 14th century. 4 fragments of jug of fine hard buff ware and thick olive green glaze, decorated with criss-cross pattern of applied rouletted strips alternately dark brown and green. (For criss-cross applied strips cp. *Oxoniensia*, VII (1942), 72, fig. 17, no. 6, from Carfax.)

¹ *Oriol Record*, Jan. 1942, p. 177; and *Oxoniensia*, VI (1941), 90.

² Gloucester: *Antiq. Journ.*, XX (1940), 104 ff., fig. 3. Bristol: Bristol Museum. Bath: Museum of the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution; bases of two tripod pitchers, omitted from list in *Antiq. Journ.*, XX (1940), 104.

E. M. JOPE

6 fragments of jug of flaky buff ware with thin pale yellow glaze, decorated with a spiral pattern of applied red strips (cp. *Oxoniensia*, VII (1942), 72, fig. 17, no. 8).

Fragments of 3 Oxford style baluster jugs, one plain (cp. *Oxoniensia*, IV (1939), 106, fig. 25G), one with painted strip decoration (cp. *Oriel Record*, Jan. 1942, p. 177, fig. 1, no. 3) and one with incised decoration round base.

Fragment of bulbous pitcher with vertical applied strip decoration (cp. *Oxoniensia*, VII (1942), 72, fig. 17, no. 1).

Fragments of 2 small jugs of very hard fired buff fabric, one with thick olive-green glaze. (For the fabric cp. *Oxoniensia*, VII (1942), 78-9.)

HONE

FIG. 35 *a*. Hone of fine grey micaceous schist. The material of this hone is found in Brittany or the Eifel district of S. Germany, and in England the type is well-recognized as a mediaeval import. For an account of the type, with a list of examples, see G. C. Dunning, *Proc. I.O.W. N.H. & A. Soc.*, II (1937), 683. As well as this Merton specimen the following additions to Mr. Dunning's list may be noted:

Littlemore, Oxon., FIG. 35 *b*, in private possession, hitherto unpublished.

Avebury, Wilts., FIG. 35 *c*, and 2 others in M.I.A.R. Museum, hitherto unpublished.

Wallingford, Berks., found with bone comb and ivory seal, c. 1000 A.D. (*Proc. Soc. Ant.*, VIII, 468; *B.M. Anglo Saxon Guide* (1923), p. 112; in Brit. Mus.).

Winchester, Hants., found near bottom of St. Giles' Hill, with 12th century pottery (Winchester Museum).

Old Sarum, Wilts., a further specimen in Salisbury Museum.

Stonar, Kent, context considered 13th cent. (*Arch. Cant.*, LI (1939), 207; *ibid.*, LV (1942), 49).

Oldbury, Kent, 'hone of micaceous schist', not stratified (*Arch. Cant.*, LI (1939), 181).

Chester, 2 specimens in Chester Museum.

In the Viking settlement at Freswick, Caithness, N. Scotland, were found 12 hones of quartzose schist of the Moine schists found locally (*Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, 6th ser., XIII (1938-9), 106). In Devon and Cornwall the harder varieties of local slatestone are used. The material of the hones found in 1884 in Clifford St., York (Elgee, *Arch. Yorks.*, p. 209) might be profitably investigated, as also might that of several others mentioned in the literature.