

M.40 Ware

By DAVID A. HINTON

MEDIEVAL unglazed cooking-pottery comprises such a wide range of shapes and fabrics, with so little that can be used as the basis of any typology, that the discovery at Tetsworth (M.40, Site 4) of unglazed sherds with distinctive decoration provided an unusual opportunity to search for a valid regional pattern. Similar pottery was subsequently found at Sadler's Wood (M.40, Site 13), and was irreverently christened 'M.40 Ware' to avoid giving it a name that might misleadingly indicate a known kiln source.

The pottery is in a coarse or medium grained sandy fabric, hard and rough to the touch. Typically, rims are everted and thickened at the top, with an internal bead (FIG. 1, and Site 4, Fig. 16). No complete profiles were found on

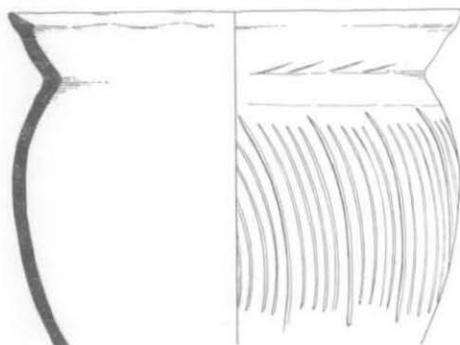


FIG. 1

Sherd of 'M.40 Ware', from Tetsworth (Water Board trench, see p. 69). (1).

the M.40 sites, but the convex base that is usual in the region can be assumed; a reconstructed pot is on display in the Bucks. County Museum, Aylesbury, from Hambleden. Surface colours range from light grey to black. The significant feature is the decoration of incised, usually oblique, lines curving up the body of the pot, from above the base to below the shoulder. Most of the lines show that an implement with square-ended teeth was used. It might be possible to work out how many teeth the implement had, from the repetition of line spacings, and then to see if the same implement was used on any of the other sherds, but I have not done this.

Places from which I have recognized pottery with this decoration are numbered on Figure 2. This is based on a search through the collections at the Ashmolean, British, Bucks. County, Oxford City and County, and Reading

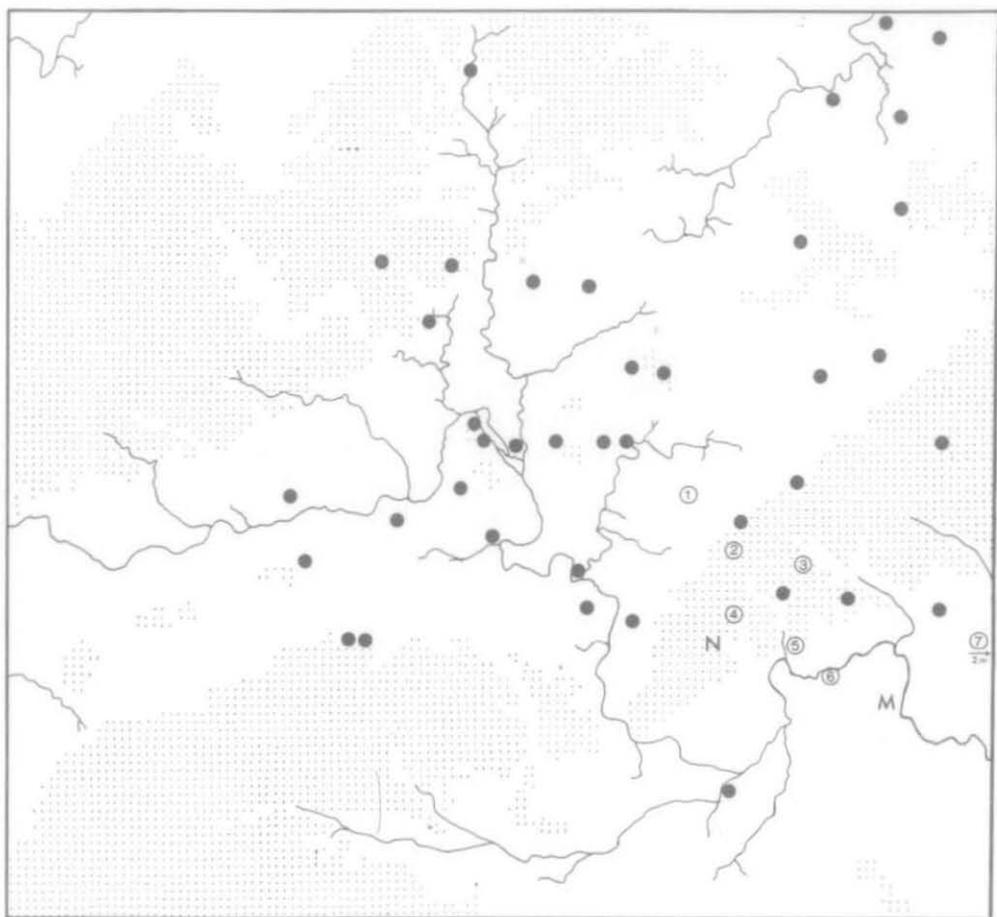


FIG. 2

'M.40 Ware' distribution map. Circles represent groups in which it has not been found. Sites: (1) Tetsworth; (2) Sadler's Wood; (3) Fillington Wood; (4) Pishill (tentative identification); (5) Hambleden; (6) Hurley; (7) Fulmer; M = Maidenhead; N = Nettlebed.

Museums.¹ The circles indicate places from which there are representative quantities of Medieval pottery, where no 'M.40 Ware' was found. The letter M indicates Maidenhead, near which the Camley Gardens kiln complex was investigated in 1964,² and N the kiln at Nettlebed, known only from documentary sources. The pottery from Camley Gardens includes sherds in a fabric that appears to be very similar to the 'M.40 Ware', and although none that I have

¹ I am grateful to the staff at these museums for their help, especially Mrs. A. Ellison, Mr. J. Cherry, and Mr. C. N. Gowing. Site 3 is the excavation at Fillington Wood directed by Mr. R. P. F. Parker, and the sherds from it were identified by him and by Mr. A. Boarder—I record with thanks their work on this and on other projects.

² G. Pike, 'A Medieval Pottery Kiln Site on the Camley Gardens Estate, Maidenhead', *Berks. Archaeol. J.*, LXII (1965/6), 22-33.

seen³ has oblique incised lines on the body, concentric grooves cut with a square-toothed implement are present on both glazed and unglazed sherds. Camley Gardens is therefore a possible source for the pottery, but Nettlebed is another, and location of this and of other kilns in the area, or geological analysis, is needed before there can be any certainty.

The distribution shows that 'M.40 Ware' is a pottery type concentrated in the southern Chilterns. It may have spread south of the River Thames also, but the site evidence, at least as known to me, is inadequate for this area. Its south-east Oxfordshire/south Buckinghamshire provenances do however suggest a peasant marketing network in this area, to contrast with the product ranges of the Brill kilns⁴ and the distribution of the Cotswold cooking pots⁵. Unfortunately 'M.40 Ware' cannot be dated very closely; at Tetsworth it occurred in the 12th century levels, and at Sadler's Wood, where it is very unlikely to have been residual, it was associated with pottery of the second half of the 13th and early 14th centuries. The Chilterns road routes, on which many goods were carted to and from Henley as entrepôt for the Upper Thames basin,⁶ may have helped to form the pottery distribution network.

³ Some of the pottery is in store at the Reading Museum.

⁴ E. M. Jope, 'The Regional Cultures of Medieval Britain', in I.L.L. Foster and L. Alcock (eds.), *Culture and Environment* (1963), 327-50, Fig. 69.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Fig. 64.

⁶ W. G. Hoskins and E. M. Jope, 'The Medieval Period', in A. F. Martin and R. W. Steel, *The Oxford Region* (1954), 112.