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Medieval Pottery from Elstree

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DURING May, 1950, road widening operations in Barnet Lane (in the area of the cross on Fig. i)¹ uncovered what was apparently quite a large amount of medieval pottery. Little or no pottery was recovered *in situ*, for the first sherds were found by Mr. Peter Roffe of Elstree in earth from this widening which had been dumped on the western side of Aldenham Lane about a quarter of a mile north of the junction with the Elstree-Bushey road. When this was eventually followed up the approximate position of the original find was located on the north side of Barnet Lane at the position shown on Fig. 1, but it was by then either entirely destroyed or inaccessible below a new tarmac footpath, or behind a new fence. It appears that the pottery must originally have been in a grass-covered bank which had been removed to make way for the new footpath.

Much pottery from the dumped earth was collected by schoolchildren and most of it dispersed. It apparently included some second and third century Roman material as well as the medieval series.² The pottery illustrated here was either borrowed from the children or given to me by Mr. P. G. Suggett, who collected a dozen sherds from them.

The material appears to be homogeneous and has a general similarity to the collection from Otterspool, near Watford³ and to the material from Period I at the More, near Rickmansworth, dated 1250-1300.⁴ These three sites are linked by the jugs with deeply thumb-pressed handles (Fig. 2, 1-2) of which there seem to have been at least five found at Elstree.⁵ A date in the second half of the thirteenth-century for this material is therefore probable.

¹ O.S. Grid Réf. TQ/183951. I am greatly indebted to Mr. Dennis W. Cooke for an account of the original discovery. See *Evening News*, 19th May, 1950-

² I am grateful to Mr. K. Myers for this information.

³ See the present volume, pp. 70-76.

⁴ *Arch. J.*, CXVI, forthcoming.

⁵ The photograph in the *Evening News* (see Note 1 above) shows three handles of this type which do not appear to be those published here.

The distribution of these jugs is shown in Fig. 3, which is based on the note by G. C. Dunning in *Arch.*, XC, 1944, pp. 122-3, to which the new finds have been added. The jug is clearly a Hertfordshire-type and the Bedford and London examples will have been traded away from the centre of production which may have been at Wild Hill, Hatfield (see below), where two jugs of this type have been found. Kiln sites are recorded by potters' names at Wild Hill from 1221 until the 19th century, but only Tudor and later *wasters* have so far been found.⁶

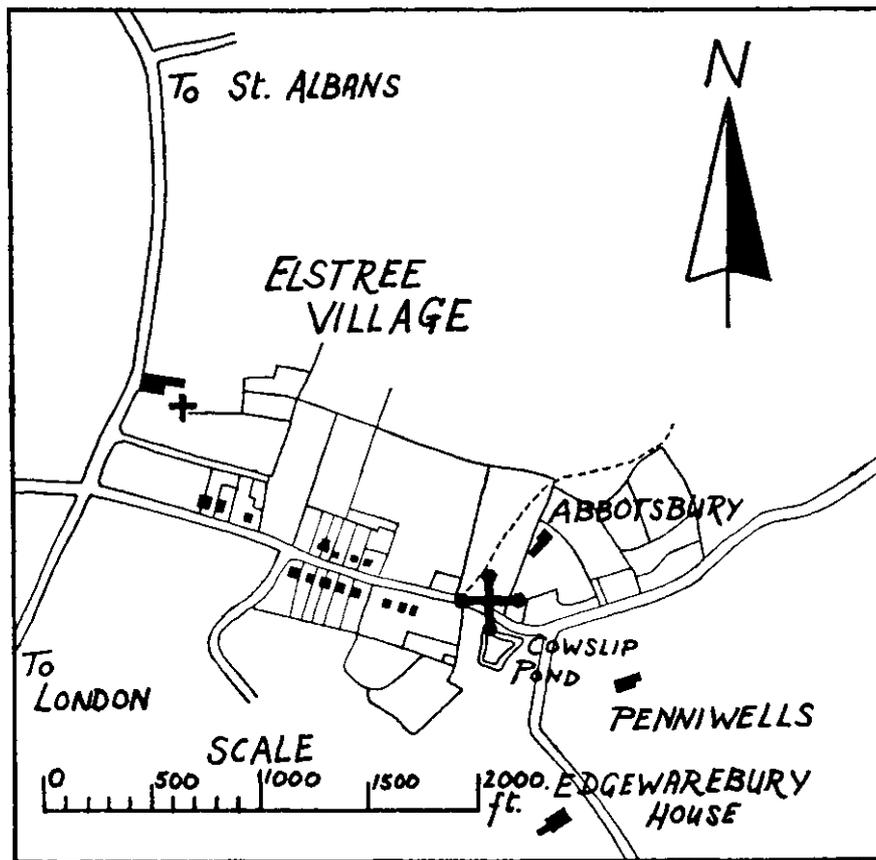


FIG. I. SKETCH PLAN OF ELSTREE SHOWING THE POSITION OF THE FIND (cross).

Several of the sherds from Elstree⁷ were in a very friable state and were badly underfired. This, and the position of the site in an area well known for Roman kiln sites, may be taken to suggest that there may have been a kiln here, or at any rate nearby.

⁶ I am much indebted to Mr. D. F. Renn for information about the Wild Hill, Newgate Street and second Hertford examples.

⁷ I am grateful to Mr. A. R. Millard for drawing some of the sherds.

THE POTTERY (Fig. 2, 1-16).

1. Part of the rim and handle of a jug of fine sandy, slightly friable grey-brown ware with a brown core. The handle rises above the rim and is decorated with

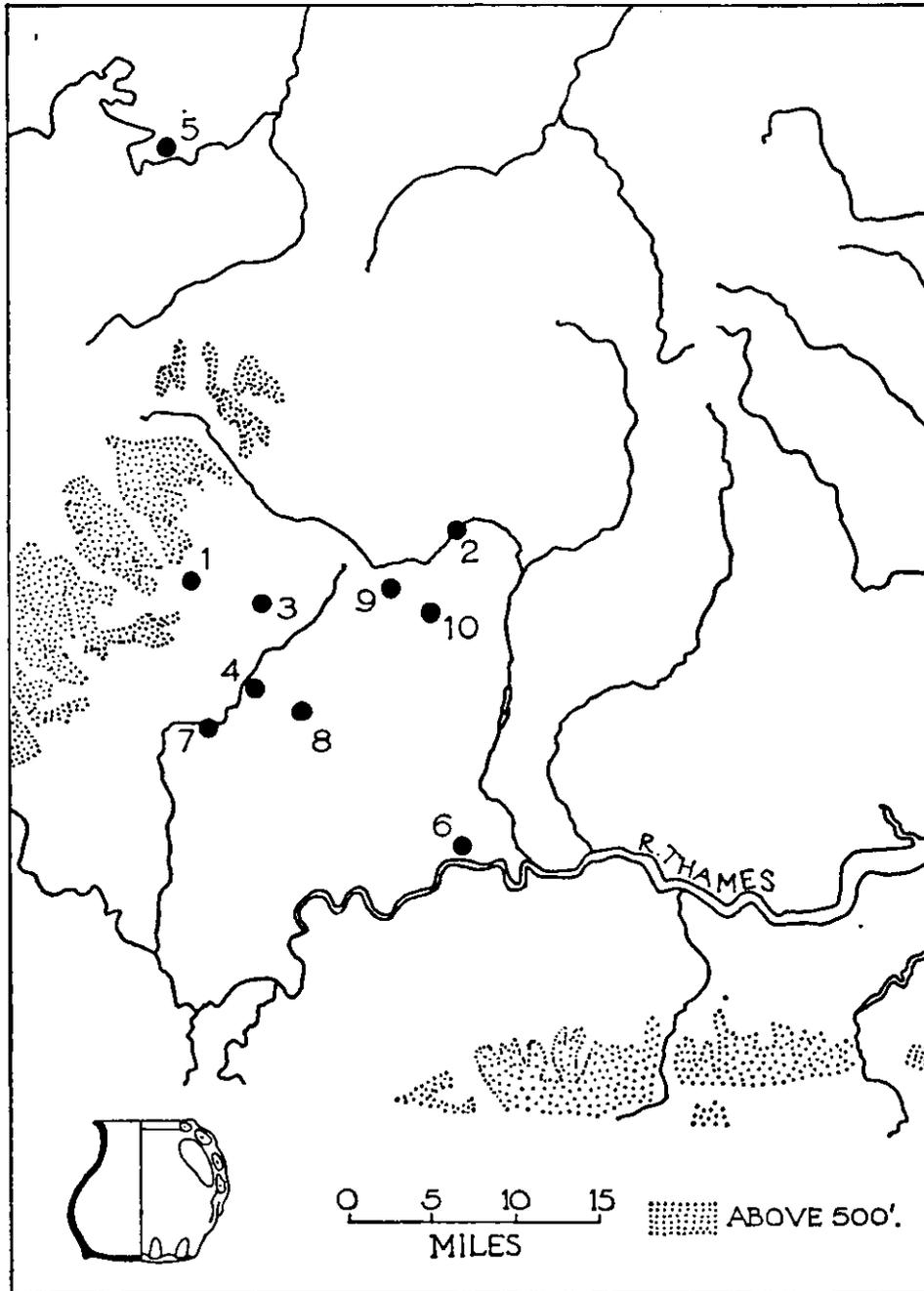


FIG. 3. DISTRIBUTION MAP OF JUGS WITH DEEPLY THUMB-PRESSED HANDLES (cf. Fig. 2, 1-2).

1, Hemel Hempstead; 2, Hertford; 3, Verulamium; 4, Otterspool; 5, Bedford; 6, London; 7, The More; 8, Elstree. For refs. to 1-6 see *Arch.*, XC, 1944, p. 123; for 4, 7 and 8 the present paper p. 65. There is a second, unpublished, example at Hertford. Since the above was written two similar handles have been found at 9, Wild Hill (about TL/260068) and a possible third at 10, Newgate Street (TL/305050).⁸

a series of thumb impressions, in the base of each of which there is a rectangular stab. Simple, upright, slightly rolled-out rim. Stabbing inside rim against the back of the junction with the handle, probably to release excess moisture in firing.

2. As No. 1, but with handle below the rim and decorated with larger thumb impressions.

3. Angular clubbed rim of a large cooking pot or storage jar. Finger impressed horizontal cordon on shoulder. Coarse, dark-grey ware with white grits.

4. Cooking pot of soft, friable, grey-brown ware with white grits and red-brown core.

5. Simple thickened cooking-pot rim. Fine light-grey ware with orange core.

6. Cooking pot similar ware to No. 4, but more brownish.

7. Very large cooking pot or possibly a bowl. Top of rim slashed. Same ware as 4 and 6.

8. Simple everted rim. Coarse brick-red paste with grits. Badly underfired.

9. Simple rolled-out rim. Dark-grey paste with small white grits. Well fired.

10. Clubbed everted rim. Underfired brown paste with different coloured grits.

11. Sharply angular rim. Ware similar to No. 6, but light grey.

12. Rather angular, sharply everted rim. Fine grey paste.

13. Large bowl decorated with vertical, applied, finger-pressed strips. Coarse grey ware with grits, reddish core.

14. Shallow open bowl with simple outward-flattened rim.

15. Large open bowl with squarish rim. Coarse soapy ware. Dark grey exterior with reddish-brown core. White grits.

16. Spout. Ware very similar to No. 15. Possibly part of the same vessel.

Nos. 1-7, 11-12 all have micaceous particles in their paste. Nos. 8-10, 14 probably belong to this group, but Nos. 13, 15, 16 are quite different from the remainder, and, if this is a kiln site, are probably not products of the kiln.