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Medieval Pottery from a site at Otterspool, near Watford, Herts.

BY MARTIN BIDDLE

ABOUT 1934 gravel digging on the south side of the Watford By-Pass, on the north bank of the Colne (see map, Fig. 1), near Otterspool, revealed a small medieval timber building¹ and a large amount of pottery.

The timbers were in part preserved, but the speed of the grab made it impossible for any plan to be obtained. The building may well have been a small farmhouse. In and around the building was a single layer of black occupation which contained the pottery here illustrated, together with the following objects: an iron key, a bone-handled knife, horse shoes, and an iron spade binding. The small finds and pottery have since unfortunately been lost, but owing to the kindness of Dr. Norman Davey, F.S.A., the above account can now be published, together with a selection of pottery drawings, copied from his originals.²

The pottery seems to fall in the second half of the thirteenth century and several sherds (especially Nos. 32, 44, 48, 51, 52 and 55) are closely paralleled at Moor Park³ in a context dated *c.* 1250-*c.* 1300. The jug (No. 44) occurs at Hertford⁴ with a suggested date of 1250-1300, but in a squatter form with the handle rising above the rim. Further examples of this type of jug come from a (kiln?) site at Elstree, also probably dating to the second half of the thirteenth century.⁵ The present group is interesting as giving a good cross section of the types of pot occurring in South Hertfordshire at this period.

¹ O.S. Grid Réf. TQ/124985.

² A further small house or hovel was found on the site of the Building Research Station at Garston, near Otterspool. O.S. Grid Réf. TL/126014.

³ *Arch. J.*, CXVI, forthcoming. O.S. Grid Réf. TQ/082940.

⁴ *East Herts. Arch. Soc. Trans.*, Vol. XI, 1942, iii, 225-226.

⁵ See the present volume, pp. 65-69. Jugs with handles similar to No. 44, both rising above the rim, and as in No. 44, below the rim, were found in the same group.

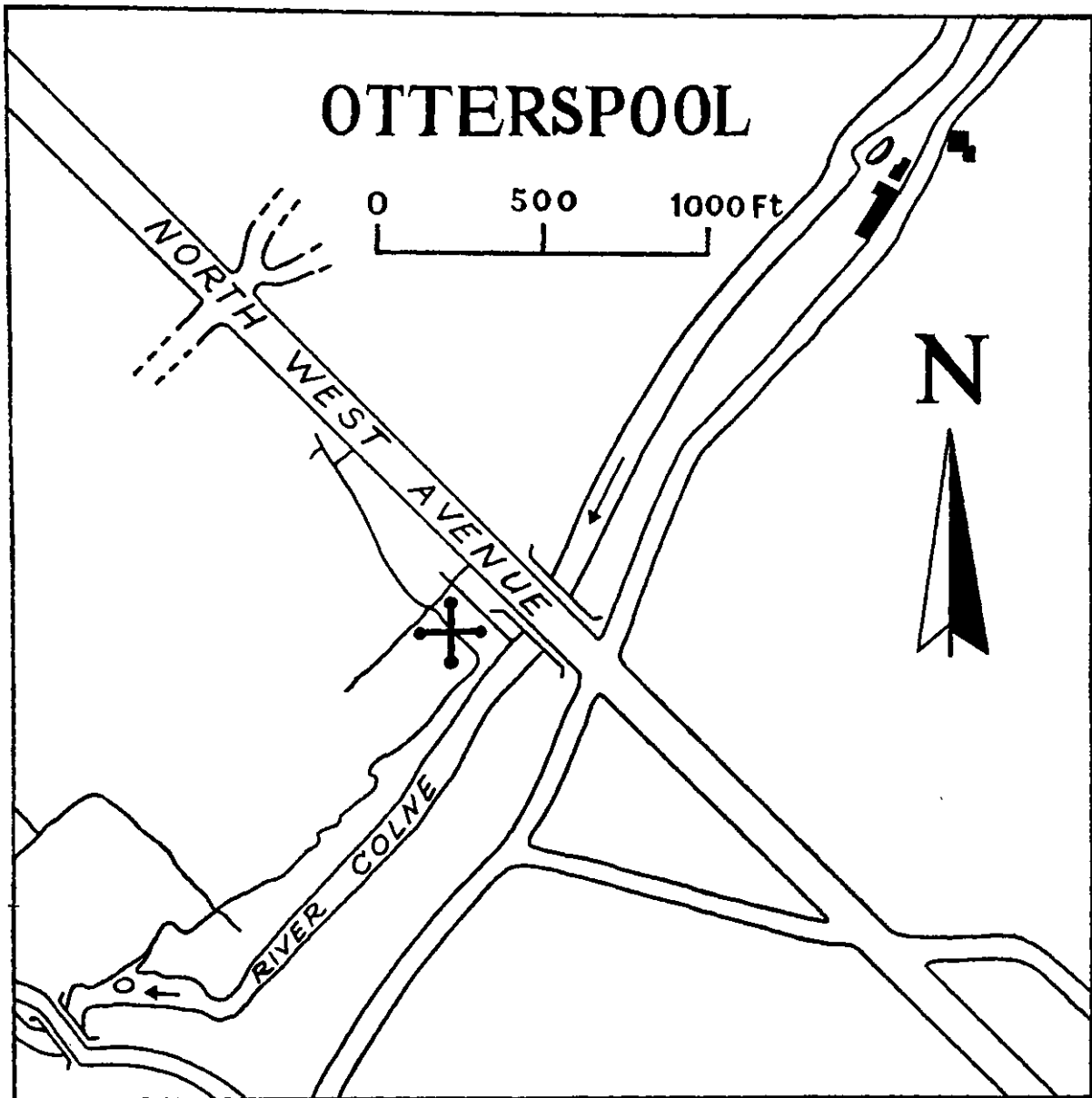


FIG. I. SKETCH MAP SHOWING THE POSITION OF THE SITE MARKED WITH A CROSS.

DESCRIPTION OF THE POTTERY⁶ (Figs. 2-5).

- 1. Small jar or cooking pot.
- 2-14. Cooking pots.
- 15-21, 23. Small jars. Nos. 19 and 21 are in grey ware and No. 23 in grey-buff ware. The folded-over rim of No. 17 is unique in this series.
- 22, 24-31. No. 22 is of buff ware and No. 24 of grey ware. Nos. 24-31 show the finger-pressed applied strip decoration well known on pots of this period.

⁶ The descriptions of wares, etc., are in most cases unfortunately lacking.

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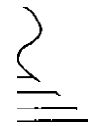


FIG. 2. OTTERSPOOL POTTERY, Nos. 1-8. (1/4.

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FIG. 3. OTTERSPOOL POTTERY, NOS. 9-26. (1/4-)

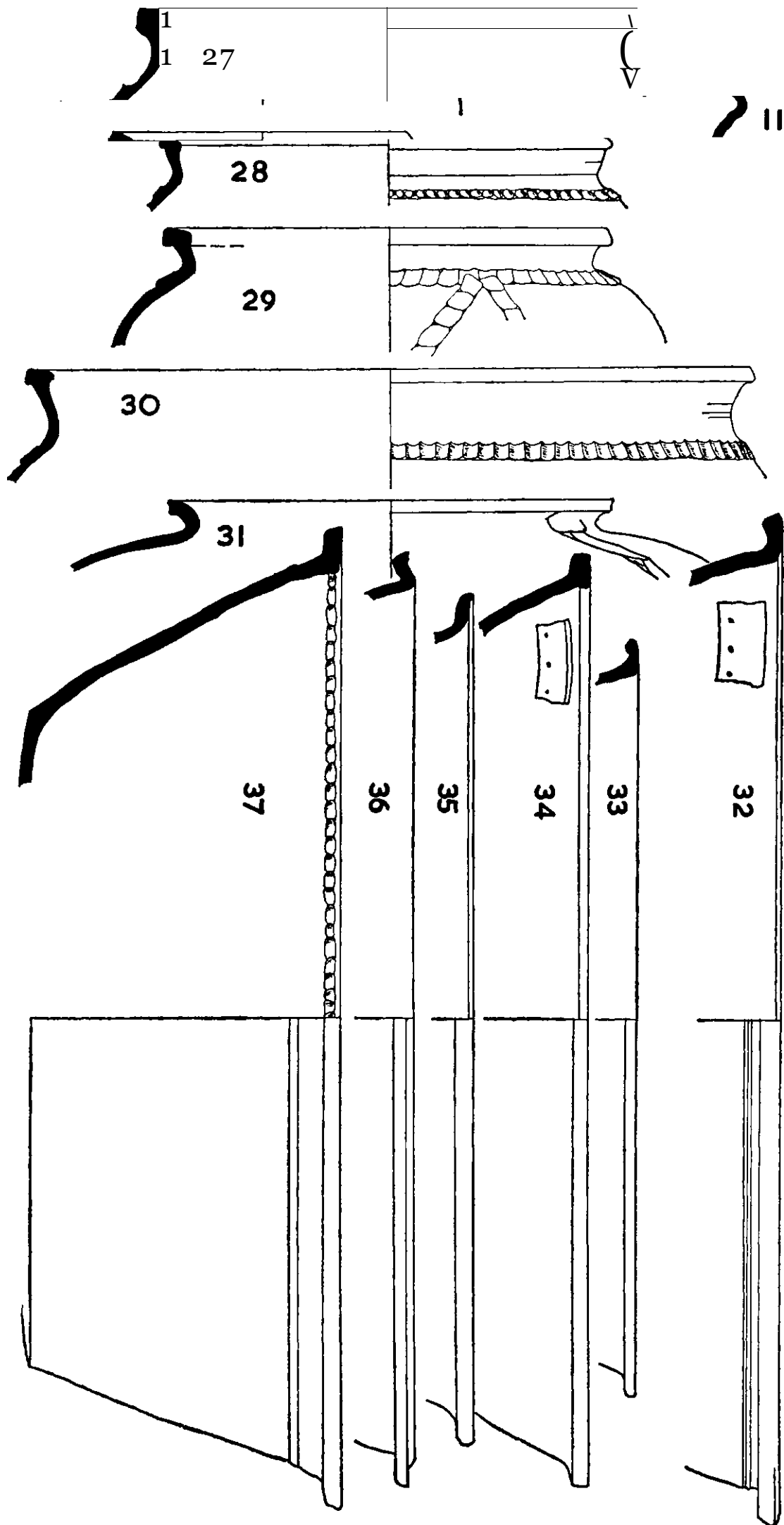


FIG. 4. OTTERSPOOL POTTERY, NOS. 27-37. (1/4.)

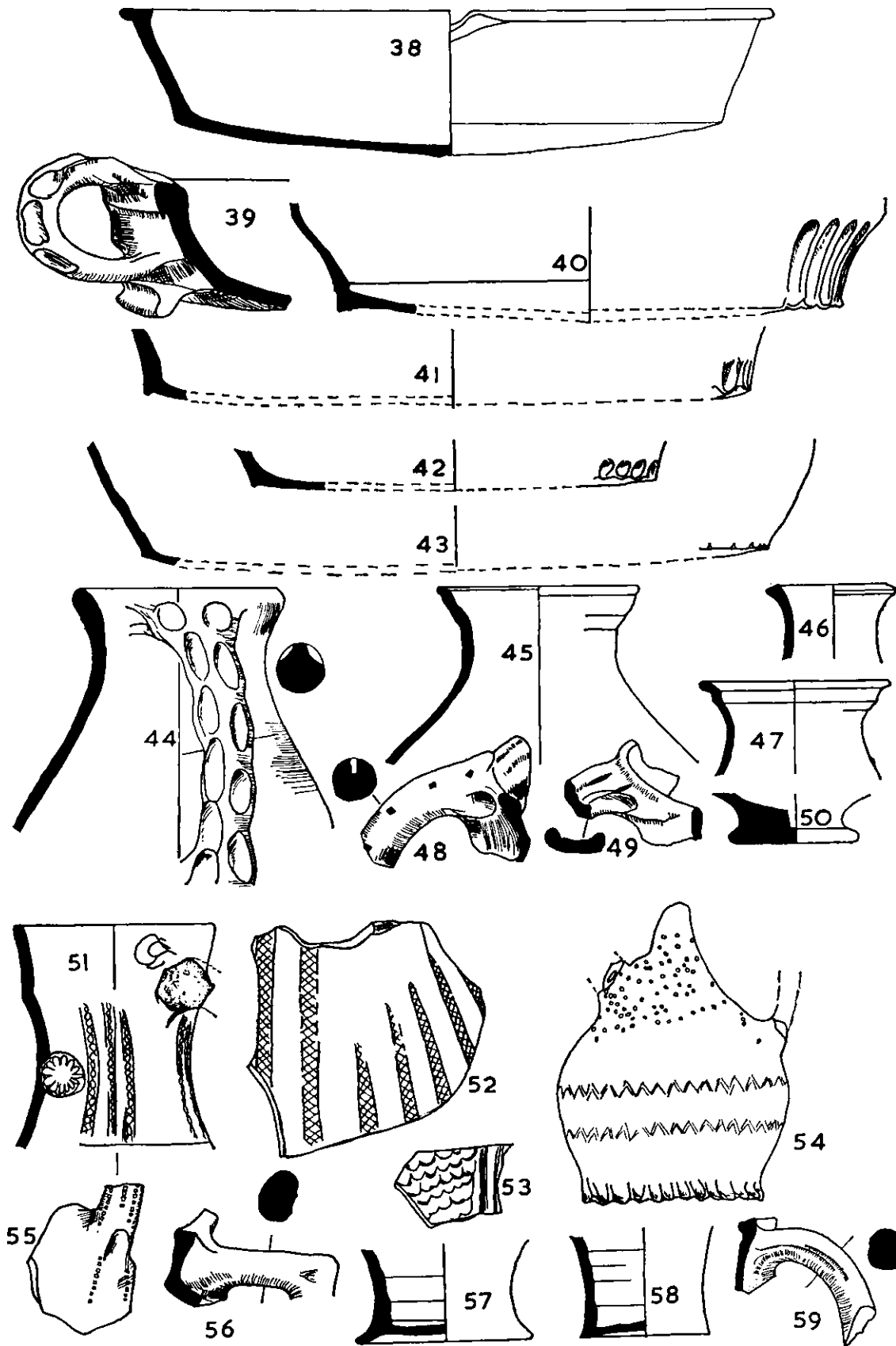


FIG. 5. OTTERSPOOL POTTERY, NOS. 38-59. (1/4-)

N.B.—Owing to the loss of the sherds during the war it has not proved practicable to redraw Nos. 39, 44, 48, 49, 51, 54, 55, 56, and 59 in a more conventional manner, without considerable loss of accuracy.

32-37. Large bowls. Nos. 32-35 are of grey ware. Nos. 32 and 34 show stabbing on the upper surface of the rim.

38. Shallow open bowl with partial glazing on the inside surface.

39. Shallow open bowl with heavily thumb-pressed handle.

40-43. Bases of jugs.

44. Neck and handle of a jug (for parallels see above).

45-49. Necks and handles of jugs. No. 46 in grey ware, No. 47 in buff.

50. Small base. Not a normal medieval type.

51, 52, 55. Sherds of green glazed jugs, No. 55 with yellow glaze. Sherds with this cable decoration and square rouletted punching occur at Moor Park, *c.* 1250-1300 and are well known in the Oxford Region 1250-1300.

53. Part of a ? jug showing scale ornament.

54. Small jar in grey ware showing spout and handle. Continuous thumb-pressing round the base.

56, 59- Jug handles.

57, 58. These may be the bases of baluster jugs.