

THE PRODUCTS OF A POST-MEDIEVAL POTTERY KILN FROM EXCAVATIONS AT EMMANUEL CHURCH, CHESHAM

STAN and PAULINE CAUVAIN

The pottery illustrated here was first brought to notice by Mr. W. Filby of the Chess Valley Archaeological and Historical Society in 1972 when work was being carried out to check the course of extant pipelines on an allotment site adjacent to Emmanuel Church, Chesham, prior to the erection of a Scout Hut (map ref. SU 96210224, see Fig. 1).¹

Sherds of glazed earthenware, including some fused together and others overfired, were found to be scattered over a wide area. The probability that the sherds represented a waster dump from a hitherto unknown and nearby kiln led to the excavation of two trial trenches by members of the C.V.A.H.S. One trench was dug at the east and the other at the west end of the site.

The eastern trench showed evidence of a mound of sherds whilst in the western trench a large pit filled with a great quantity of sherds together with brown earth was revealed. The pit was excavated to a depth of 0.8m. but no stratification was visible. Although no traces of structures were found the quantity and nature of the material found suggested that a kiln existed in the vicinity. Many of the sherds had glaze on their broken edges, some were fused together and several had rings of glaze on them.

The deaths of nine potters and of one potter's son are recorded in the Chesham parish registers between 1663 and 1728.² One of these, Timothy Bampton, was at the time of his child's death in 1702 at Ashley Green but no place is recorded at his own death in 1715. There appear to have been two Richard Fryars, one who died in 1663/4 being described as of 'Lehill', the other dying in 1709 with no place given. Martha, wife of Richard Fryar, potter, is described as of the Waterside, so the second Richard presumably worked in the town. The entries in chronological order are as follows:

William Ingram	d. 1663
Richard Fryar	c. 1663/4
John Harding	d. 1669
son of John Heward	d. 1679
James Alce	d. 1681
Abraham Bampton	d. 1687
Edward Ware	d. 1699
Richard Fryar	d. 1709
Timothy Bampton	d. 1715
Daniel Bampton	d. 1728



Fig. 1. Emmanuel Church, Chesham. Site Location.

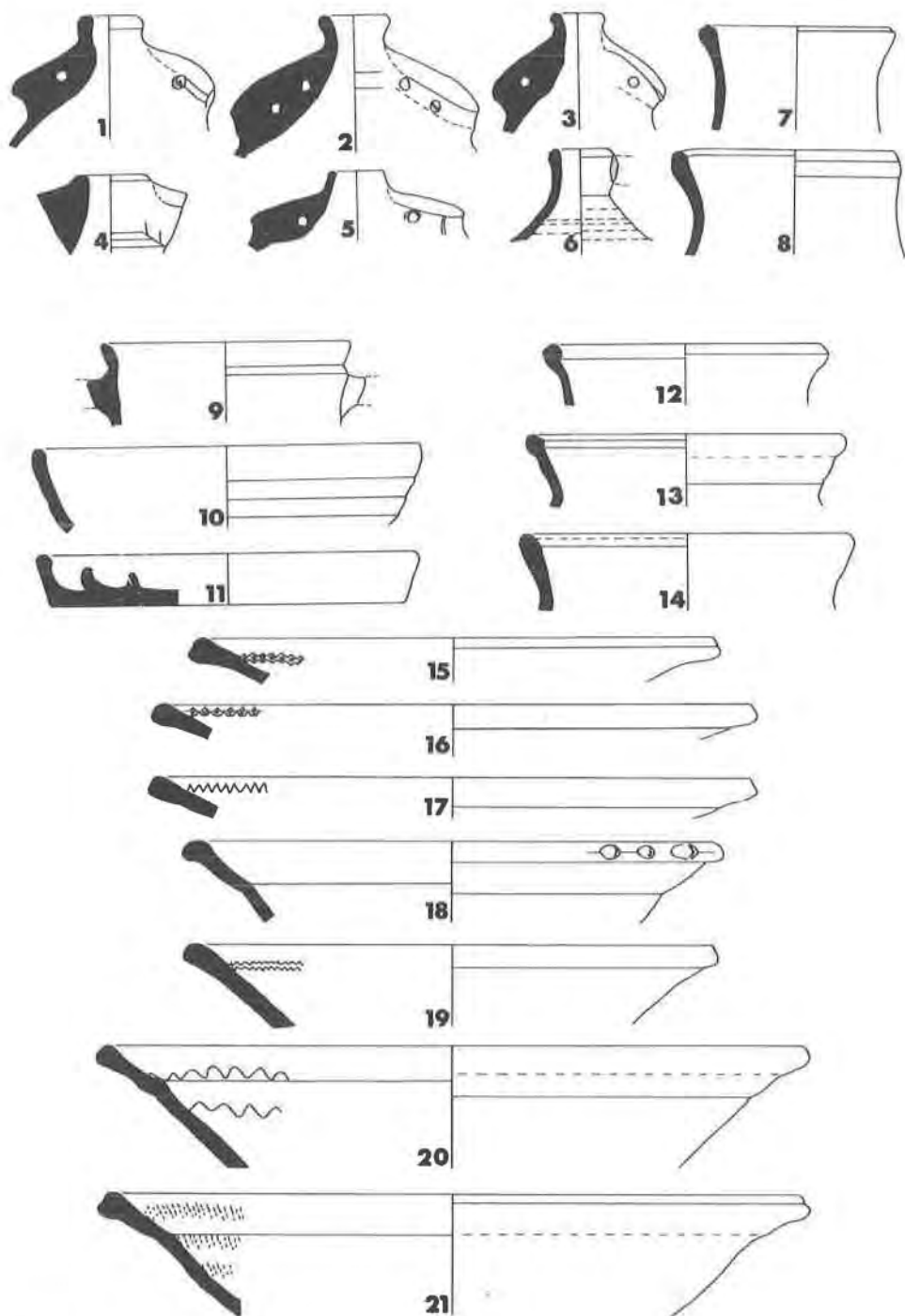


Fig. 2. Pottery (1/4 scale).

The Pottery

The pottery probably dates from the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century and appears to be entirely local in its form and fabric. Although the site is only a few miles to the east of the kilns at Potter Row, Great Missenden,³ there are few, if any, stylistic comparisons. The pipkin base, number 40 on Fig. 4, is similar to those found at Potter Row, being a light sandy fabric, creamy buff in colour with a honey-coloured glaze; an isolated sherd; it is probable that it was an imported piece.

The majority of the sherds recovered were from plates and dishes which formed about 60 to 70% of the pottery forms. The incised decoration on the plates and dishes seems to be local in its style. A distinctive product of the kiln was the group of costrels, number 1 to 6 on Fig. 2, which exhibited a wide variety of shoulder form and made up about 10 to 15% of the sherds. The remaining 15 to 20% of the sherds recovered were from a variety of bowls and cooking pots. Also found but not illustrated, were a group of rectangular, glazed fish-dishes and a few knobs from chafing dishes and from lids. The knobs were larger and more clumsily made than those from Potter Row. With only two exceptions, numbers 40 and 44 on Fig. 4, the pottery is of a fine sandy fabric, red-buff in colour; small variations in colour can be observed but this is almost certainly due to the kiln firing conditions. Glazing was used extensively on all the pottery, lead-based green-brown glaze being the most common, with some sherds having a honey-coloured glaze. Very few pots were unglazed.

Catalogue

Costrels (Fig. 2)

1. Costrel with unmatched shoulders, one hole in each. Green lead glaze.
2. Costrel with sloping shoulders, two holes in each. Green/brown lead glaze.
3. Costrel with steeply sloping shoulders, one hole in each. Red slip covered with brown/green glaze.
4. Costrel with very short neck and heavy shoulders. Red slip covered with brown/green glaze.
5. Costrel with straight shoulders, one hole in each. Dark green glaze.
6. Costrel (?) with long neck, no shoulders with handle on one side. Body rilling. Green glaze.

Pots: (Fig. 2)

7. Pot or jug with splashes of green glaze on the outside.
8. Jug with pulled lip, green glaze.
9. Pot with two lugs or handles. Buff clay, green glaze inside.
10. Dish with 3 incised lines on outside. Green/brown glaze inside.
11. Unidentified form in red clay, some examples covered in a light slip.
12. Pot with angular rim, brown glaze inside.
13. Pot with some body rilling, brown glaze inside.
14. Pot, green glaze inside.

Plates: (Fig. 2)

15. Plate in a buff clay, honey glaze inside. Single line of decoration inside consisting of small 'diamond' shapes within two zig-zag lines running roughly horizontal.
16. Plate with uneven green/brown glaze inside. Pattern running horizontally close to rim and consisting of diamond shapes joined by a straight line with a further line underneath to emphasise the pattern.
17. Plate, honey glaze inside. Simple decoration consisting of a zig-zag line running horizontally.

Dishes: (Figs. 2 – 4)

18. Pie dish with a grey wash on both inside and outside, 'thumbed' outer rim.
19. Dish with a honey glaze and two parallel lines of irregular 'zig-zag' pattern inside.
20. Brown glazed dish with two lines of decoration inside.
21. Dish with green/yellow glaze inside. Three lines of decoration consisting of tiny cuts.
22. Large dish with green glaze inside.
23. Large dish with flat, broad rim (lid seating?), brown glaze inside.
24. Dish with flat broad rim (lid seating?), green glaze inside.
25. Dish with flat broad rim, green glaze inside with traces of green glaze outside.
26. Plain rimmed dish, green glaze inside.
27. Large dish, green glaze inside. Two shallow grooves running horizontally.
28. Green glazed bowl.
29. Plate (?) with traces of green glaze outside, green glaze inside.
30. Green glazed dish.
31. Dish with traces of green glaze.
32. Large dish with flat broad rim, brown glaze inside.
33. Dish with lugs, green glaze inside.
34. Green glazed dish with 'thumbed' strip.
35. Green glazed bowl, the outside decorated with incised wavy lines.
36. Brown glazed dish with flat, ridged rim. Grooved body.
37. Bowl, green/brown glaze.
38. Dish with dark green glaze inside, traces of glaze on broken edge. Position of handle or lug noted.
39. Dish, green glaze inside. Hollowed rim with shallow finger tip decoration both inside and out. Pulled lip.

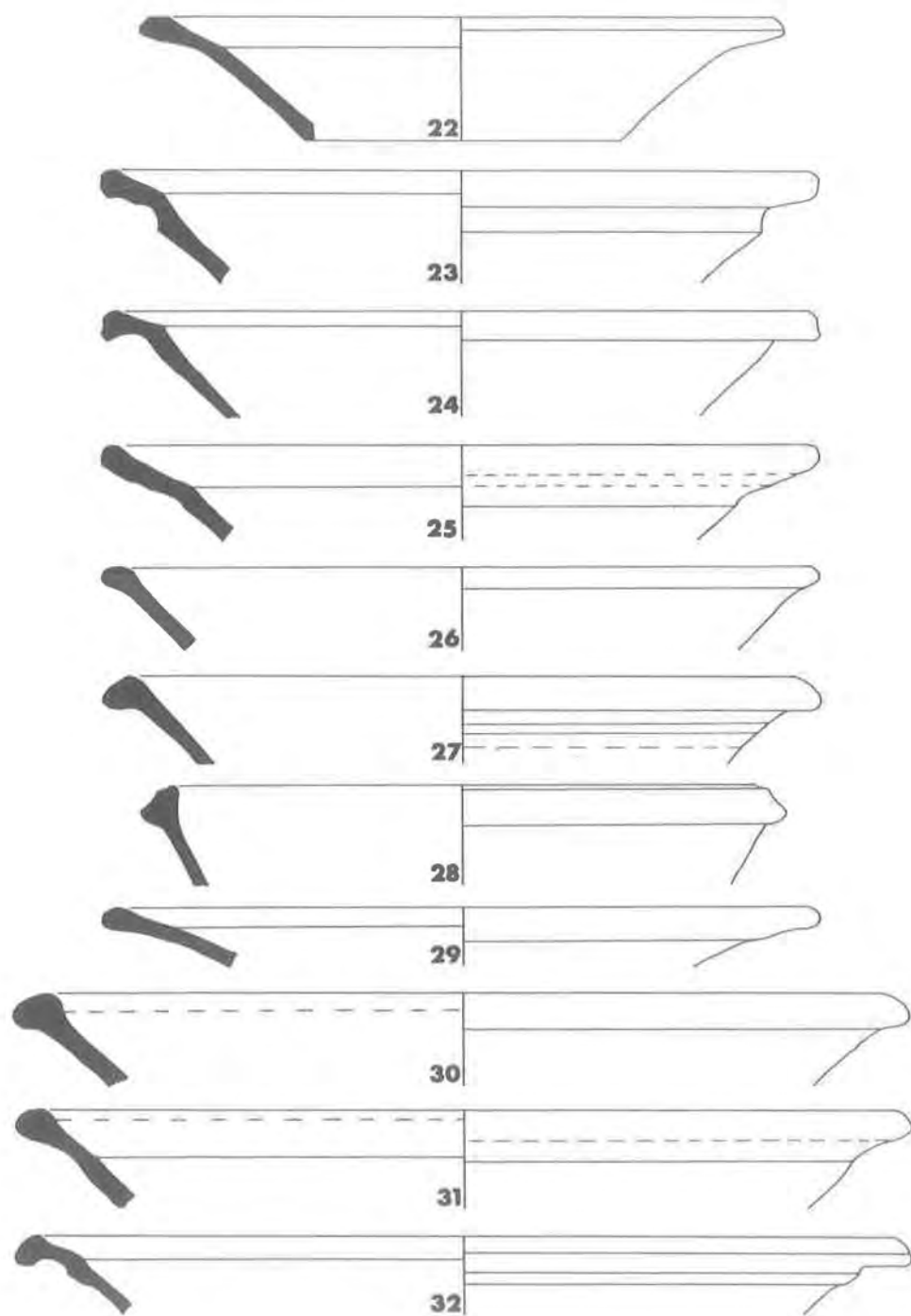


Fig. 3. Pottery (1/4 scale).

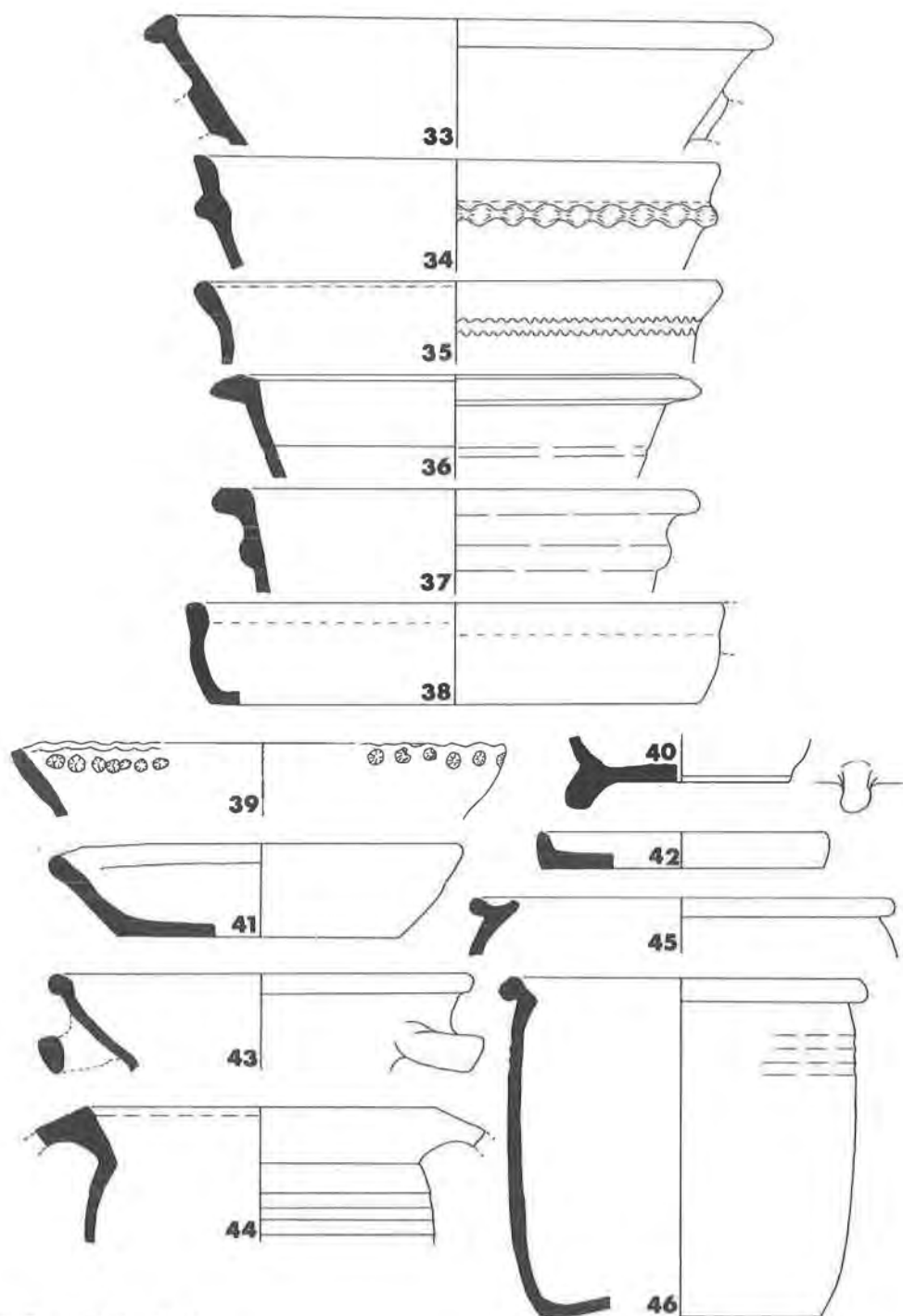


Fig. 4. Pottery (1/4 scale).

Miscellaneous (Fig. 4)

40. Base of pipkin (?). Honey glaze inside.
41. Dish with light green colour wash. Green glaze ring on base. Pulled lip.
42. Shallow dish, green/honey glaze.
43. Large dish with horizontal handles, dark green glaze.
44. Large pot with two handles. Partially brown glazed inside rim. Body rilling.
45. Colour washed, lid seated jar. Patchy brown glaze.
46. Large cooking pot, everted hollowed rim, covered with a dark grey/black wash. Body rilling.

FOOTNOTES

1. The finds were first noted in 'Archaeological Notes from the Buckinghamshire County Museum'. *Recs. Bucks.* 19 (1972), 224.
2. Mrs. S. Foxell kindly provided the information on Chesham potters.
3. 'A Seventeenth century pottery at Potter Row, Great Missenden', Bucks, County Museum Archaeological Group, *Recs. Bucks.* 20 (1978), 586 - 596.