

# EVIDENCE FOR A MEDIEVAL POTTERY INDUSTRY AT POTTER ROW, GREAT MISSENDEN, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

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*Until recently there has been no archaeological evidence to give substance to the medieval pottery industry adumbrated by the place-name, Potter Row, in Great Missenden. This paper describes the discoveries that have now done something to supply this want.*

## *Introduction*

Work by the Buckinghamshire County Museum Archaeological Group (BCMAG) had demonstrated the existence of a seventeenth century pottery industry at Potter Row near Great Missenden (BCMAG 1978). The name Potter Row was in existence by AD 1311, so the lack of medieval material in the hamlet had been anomalous. In November 1976 Mrs. M. Hall discovered sherds of medieval pottery in a field slightly to the north of the post-medieval site (Fig. 1). Further investigation by members of the CMAG in 1978 and 1980 lead to the discovery of further medieval sherds in a restricted area of the field (SP 90240262). There has been no excavation in the area, but the number of wasters collected suggests that this is the site of the medieval pottery kilns.

Examination of the pottery fabrics and forms suggests that there are two phases of production. Phase 1, during the 13th century, produced pots in a very gritty, unglazed fabric and in phase 2, during the 14/15th centuries, jugs, bowls and jars were made in a finer glazed fabric.

Pottery from the site is stored at the County Museum, Acc. Nos. 355.76; 32.78 and 546.1980; site reference CAS 2577.

## *History*

The first mention of Potter Row by name is in 1311, as Le Pottererewe (E.P.N.S. 1925).

However, a *Peter Pottarius* appears in the Missenden Abbey cartulary in a grant, dated 1234-1257, of land to the north of Missenden village (B.R.S. 1938), and it is possible that this might relate to Potter Row, as briefly discussed in an earlier issue of *Records* (BCMAG 1978, 586). Although there is no subsequent mention of a potter or of Potter Row in the cartulary, it seems to have remained the property of Missenden Abbey, since the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of 1535 (R.C. 1821) lists *Pott' Rewe & Balenger* in its survey of the abbey lands, Ballinger being an adjacent hamlet to Potter Row. After the dissolution of Missenden Abbey in 1538, *Potterstew et Balinger* are listed in the Books of the Court of Augmentation as among the former monastic lands leased to Richard Grenewey in 1540/1541 (Dugdale 1830, 549, and L. & P. 1898). Various entries in the Patent Rolls for 1550-1553 show that *Patterstowe* or *Poterston* had been granted by Edward VI to Princess (later Queen) Elizabeth (Cal. Pat. Rolls 1925, 1926). In 1560 Queen Elizabeth granted a thirty year lease on the former monastic lands including Potterrowe and Ballynger to Richard Hampden (Cal. Pat. Rolls 1939), and in 1578 a lease for life was granted to Griffith Hampden of *Potterowe* and other former monastic lands, and Richard Grenewey's lease terminated on payment of a fine of £40 by Griffith Hampden (Cal. Pat. Rolls 1982). Finally in 1612 the Patent Rolls list Potter's Row as one of the appurtenances of the manor of Missenden

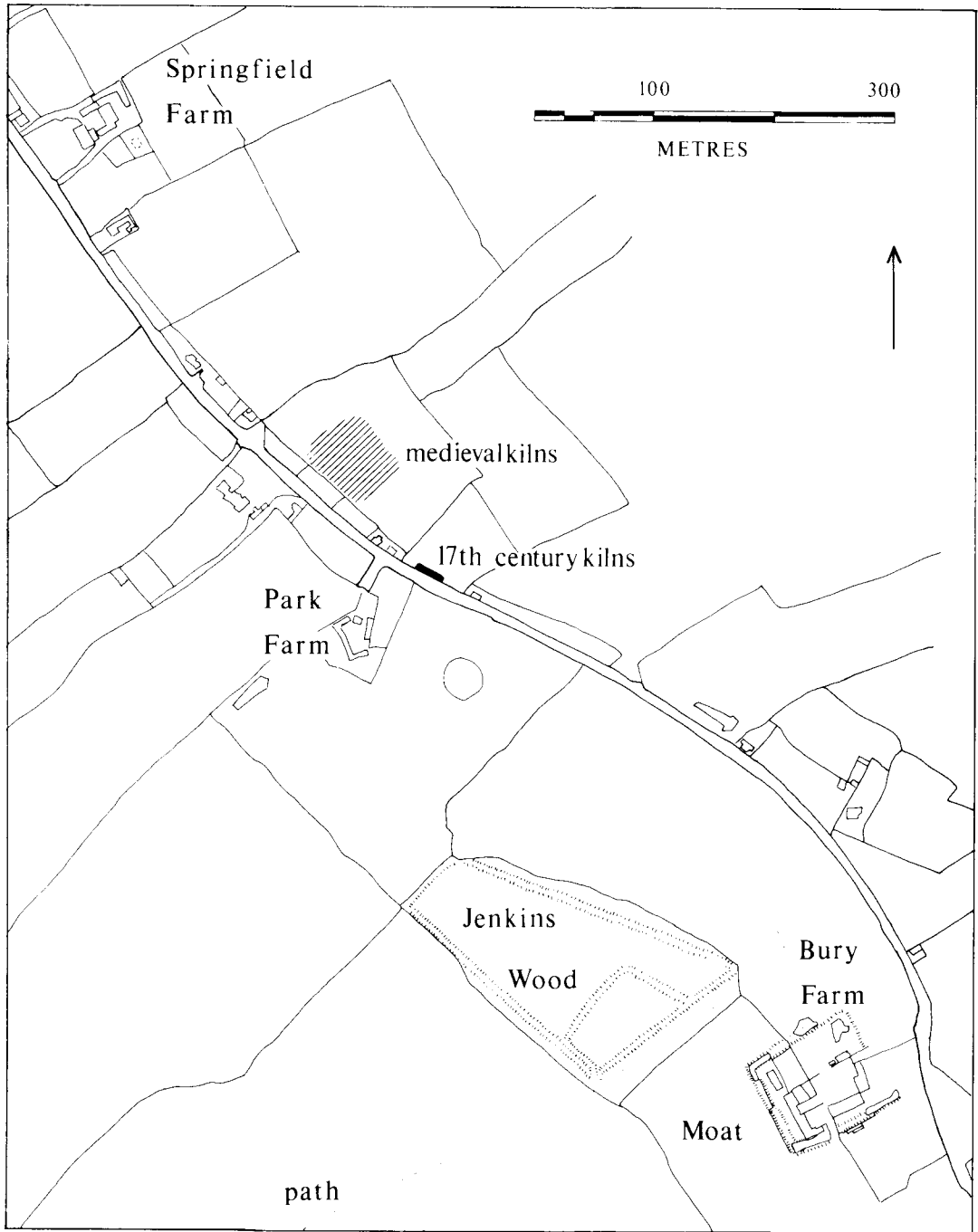


Fig. 1. Location of Medieval kilns.

granted to Sir Marmaduke Darrell by James I on payment of £847 10s. 0d. (Lipscomb 1847, 376).

### *Pottery Fabrics*

Potter Row is in the Chilterns and situated on a hill c. 200 m above sea level, overlooking the valley of the River Misbourne. This is an area of chalk rock, overlaid by clay-with-flints, a cretaceous deposit formed by the weathering of the underlying tertiary rocks. It is presumably this clay, or a variation of it, which was used by the potters. All of the pottery is made in a sandy, quartz tempered fabric. There are three distinct groupings within this one fabric and minor differences within each of these. The principal groups are:

1. Coarse, which can be subdivided into 3 distinct sub-groups (a-c).
2. Soft and fine, easily abraded.
3. Hard and fine, very similar to 2 but more highly fired.

Details of the fabrics are as follows:

1. *Coarse*: This is the most complex group; its subdivisions span the different phases of the medieval pottery industry:

(a) A soft fabric which abrades easily, with abundant quartz grains. Varying in size from 0.2 mm to 0.5 mm (approx.), but sometimes larger. There are sparse flecks of red iron ore and occasional flints >0.5 mm. The quartz varies in shape from angular to sub-rounded. The colour of the external surfaces is 2.5 YRN/3 very dark grey, and the core is 2.5 YRS/6 red. This fabric feels rough because of the abundant quartz grains on the surfaces. No glazing present.

(b) This fabric is similar to (a) above, but more compact and harder. The colour varies from buff 10 YRS/3 to grey 10 YR6/1 and rarely has a distinct internal core. There is no glazing and the fabric feels smoother than (a).

(c) Although this fabric is included in fabric 1, it bears some similarity to fabrics 2 and 3.

It is hard with a moderate to abundant distribution of sub-rounded quartz grains, varying in size from fine <0.2 mm to coarse >0.5 mm. There are occasional flecks of red iron ore. It varies in colour from grey 10 YR6/1 to pinkish white 7.5 YR8/2 and is usually evenly coloured. Green glaze is present on some of the pottery.

2. *Soft*: Very fine, occasional small, sub-rounded quartz grains and sparse flecks of red iron ore. The colour varies from 7.5 YR7/6 reddish yellow, to 10 YR7/2 light grey. It is evenly coloured with no core, feels powdery and is very abraded.

3. *Hard*: Very similar to fabric 1, but more highly fired and not abraded. The colour is predominantly grey 10 YR6/1, but varies from 7.5 YR8/2 pinkish white, to 7.5 YR7/6 reddish yellow, akin to the products of the post-medieval kilns. Where glazing is present it is red-brown on grey sherds and green on lighter colour fabrics.

### *Forms and Chronology*

It is thought that phase 1 of the Potter Row medieval pottery industry is represented by fabrics 1a and 1b on account of the coarse nature of these fabrics and absence of glaze. During phase 1, cooking pots with everted rims (Fig. 2, 1-3) were produced in fabric 1a, jugs with squared rims were made in fabric 1b (Fig. 2, 6), also bowls or jars with squared rims (Fig. 2, 5-7).

In phase 2 similar vessels were also made in fabrics 1c, 2 and 3 (Fig. 3, 34-36), which are finer, and were often glazed. During phase 2 squared rims, with seating for lids, were produced in fabrics 2 and 3 (Fig. 3, 29-31) although the actual lids were rarely found. Some of the rim forms in fabrics 2 and 3 bear a family resemblance to those of the post-medieval industry, as do the fabrics themselves, suggesting a later medieval date for these two fabric groupings.

The following table shows the overall number of sherds present in each fabric:

	Fabric 1	Fabric 2	Fabric 3	Total
<i>Body</i>	418	358	225	1,001
<i>Base</i>	46	33	25	104
<i>Handle</i>	49	41	74	164
<i>Rim</i>	92	66	53	211
<i>Lid</i>	15	1	4	20
<i>Spout</i>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>4</u>
Total:	622	501	381	1,504

The table below shows the division of fabrics 1a-1c between the two phases:

	Phase 1 (1a & 1b)	Phase 2 (1c)
<i>Body</i>	324	94
<i>Base</i>	23	23
<i>Handle</i>	17	32
<i>Rim</i>	49	43
<i>Lid</i>	14	1
<i>Spout</i>	<u>2</u>	<u>-</u>
Total:	439	193

#### *Discussion*

The presence of wasters (not included in the tables above), amongst the sherds collected from Potter Row, supports the place-name evidence for a kiln site. Wasters are clearly identifiable in the later, glazed fabrics (1c, 2 and 3), where the glaze has 'bubbled' or where glaze occurs on the broken edge of a sherd. The earliest fabrics (1a and 1b), being unglazed, contain no certain wasters; however there are a sufficient number of sherds of closely similar vessel type to suggest that vessels in these fabrics were also being produced at Potter Row.

#### *Pottery Catalogue*

The first number relates to the number on the Fig., the second to the fabric. The colour, unless otherwise stated, is uniform.

#### *Phase 1 (Fig. 2)*

##### Cooking Pots:

1. 1a Grey.
2. 1a Black surfaces with red core.
3. 1a Grey.

##### Bowls/Jars:

4. 1b Grey.
5. 1b Buff.
7. 1b Buff.
10. 1b Black surfaces, red core.

##### Jugs:

6. 1b Grey.
11. 1b Grey.

##### Lids:

8. 1a Grey.
9. 1b Buff.

##### Jug Handles:

12. 1b Grey. Thumbed strap handle.
13. 1b Grey. Slashed rod handle.
14. 1b Red. Strap handle.
15. 1b Red. Strap handle, finger impressions on top, stabbed underneath.
16. 1b Buff. Strap handle, stabbed underneath

##### Bases:

17. 1b Grey jug base.
18. 1b Red, bowl or small jar.
19. 1a Black surfaces, grey core, ?cooking pot base.

#### *Phase 2 (Fig. 3)*

##### Jugs:

20. 3 Light red 'Brill-type' undercut rim. Traces of green glaze ext.
21. 3 Pinkish white. Traces of green glaze ext.
22. 2 Pink. Traces of green glaze ext.
23. 2 Light red. Traces of green glaze ext. and int.
24. 2 White. Traces of green glaze ext.
25. 2 Light red. No visible glazing.
26. 1c Light red. Traces of green glaze ext. Slashed strap handle.
27. 1c Grey. Traces of red/brown glaze ext. Plain rod handle.

##### Bowls/Jars:

28. 2 Pinkish white. No visible glazing.
29. 3 Light red. Traces of green glaze ext. and in lid seating.
30. 3 Pink. Traces of green glaze ext. and in lid seating.

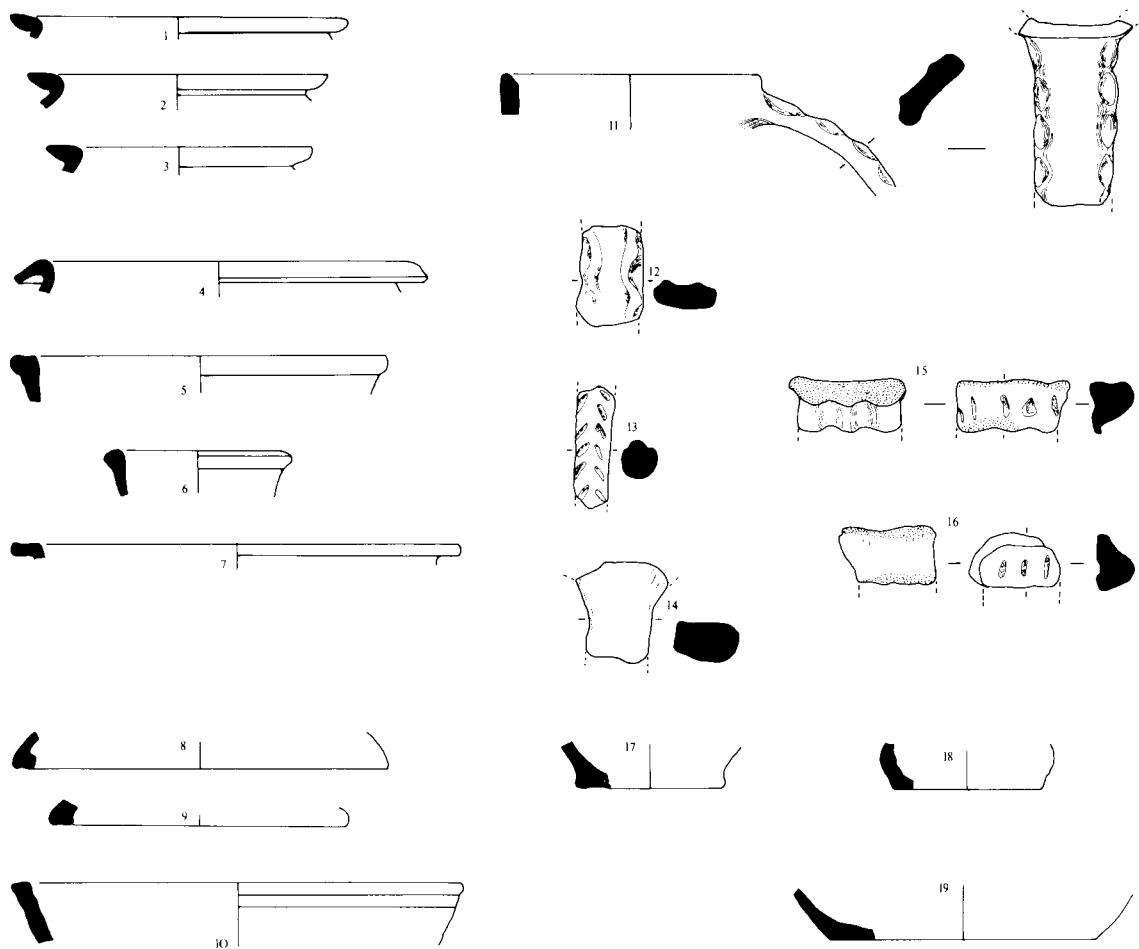


Fig. 2. Pottery from Phase 1, fabrics 1a and 1b (¼ scale).

31. 2 Pink. Traces of green glaze ext. and in lid seating.  
 32. 3 Pink. Traces of green glaze int.  
 33. 3 Pinkish white. Traces of green glaze ext. and in lid seating.  
 34. 2 Red. No visible glazing.  
 35. 3 Light grey. No visible glazing.  
 36. 2 Light red. No visible glazing.  
 37. 1c Pinkish white surfaces, red core. Traces of light green glazing on rim and int.

Jug Handles:

38. 3 Grey. Rod handle with thumb impressions at side.  
 39. 1c Light red. Slashed strap handle. Traces of green glaze.

40. 3 Light red. Strap handle.  
 41. 3 Pinkish white. Slashed strap handle. Traces of green glaze.  
 42. 2 Pink surfaces, grey core. Strap handle. No visible glazing.

Spout:

43. 2 Light red. Jug/pitcher. Traces of green/brown glaze.

Bases:

44. 1c Light red. Traces of green glaze ext. ?Jug.  
 45. 3 Light grey. Traces of glaze, indistinct colour. ?Jug.  
 46. 3 Grey. Traces of red/brown glaze. ?Jug.

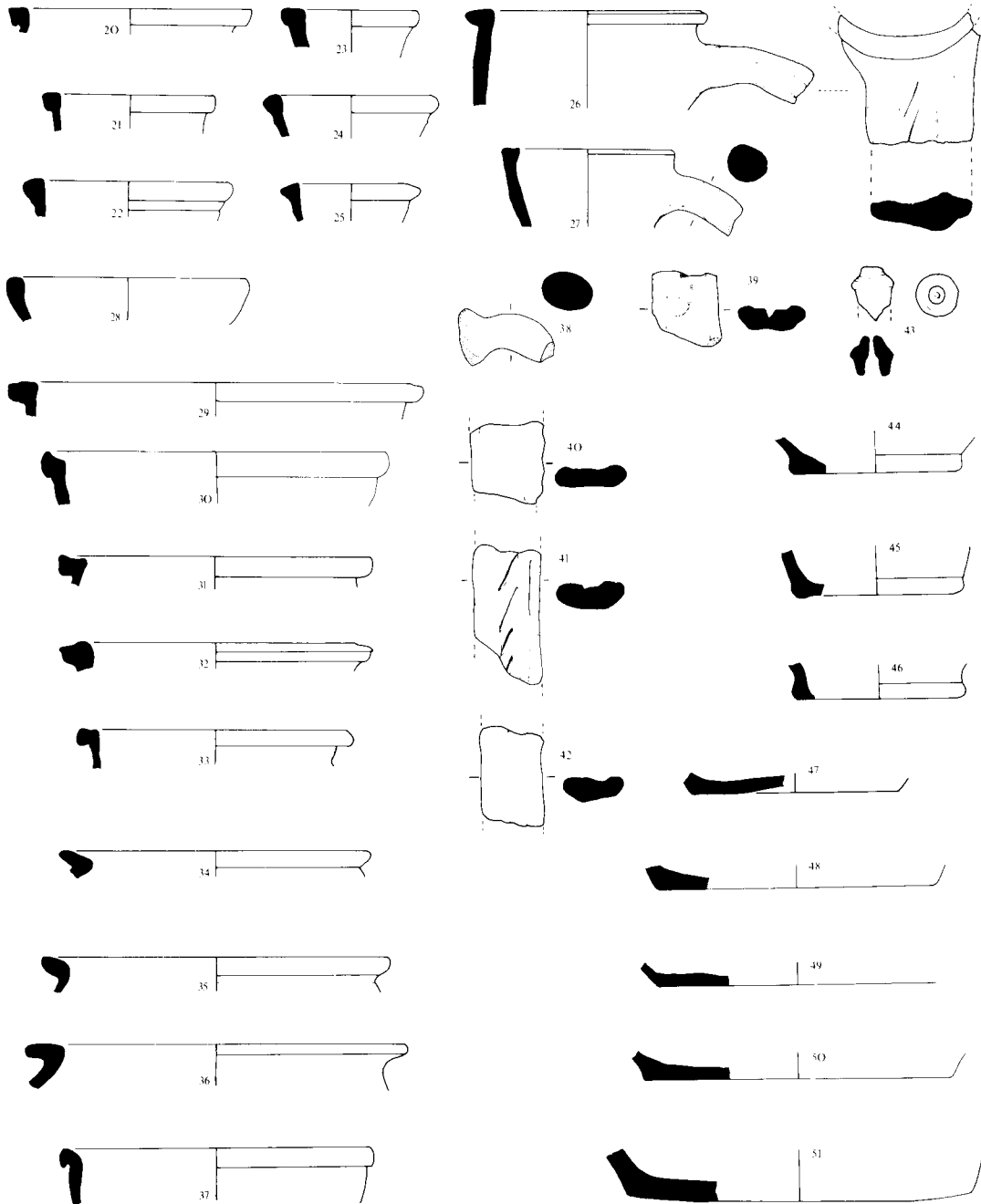


Fig. 3. Pottery from Phase 2, fabrics 1c, 2 and 3 (1/4 scale).

47. 1c Red. No visible glazing. ?Form.  
 48. 1c Red. No visible glazing. ?Form.  
 49. 1c Light red. No visible glazing. ?Form.  
 50. 2 Light yellowish red. No visible glazing.  
 ?Form.  
 51. 1c Grey. No visible glazing. ?Form.

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