

A DECORATED MUG FROM HADDENHAM

The decorated mug illustrated here (Fig. 1) was found during an excavation carried out by the late Bryan Blake at Haddenham in 1979/80. It is an unusual find for Buckinghamshire. Bryan was a member of the County Museum Archaeological Group (CMAG) and very interested in the early history of the village. He made a number of finds in fields around the area and passed on details to what was subsequently to become the county's Historic Environment Record (HER); he also arranged access for several CMAG fieldwalks.

Bryan carried out two small excavations in the village. Unfortunately, he never published a full account of them, although some notes survive. The finds from his excavations subsequently became muddled and were eventually rescued from a garden shed in 2019 by members of his family, who gave them to the County Museum with the notes (some also in the HER). Subsequently, the writer,



FIGURE 1 A slip-decorated mug from Haddenham

assisted by Shirley Blomfield, sorted through the deposited material, amongst which were sherds from the mug described here.

The mug came from an excavation he called 'Behind the Walls' (HER 4572) near the churchyard. It is 92mm high and is far from complete, lacking its handle. It is in a light-coloured fabric coated in slip. At its base is a slight bevel formed whilst on the wheel, which enabled the potter to tidy up the base before cutting it from the wheel-head with a wire. The mug is decorated with horizontal lines of brown trailed slip on top of the white slip, which have been deeply 'feathered' vertically at intervals; that is to say they have had a feather quill or similar tool dragged downwards across the horizontal slip lines. Roger Little of Boscastle Pottery, Cornwall, has kindly decorated a small tile using the same technique (Fig. 2). On a round vessel the horizontal lines would be produced by using a banding wheel.

The mug is an example of a Staffordshire slipware form that is said to be common in north Staffordshire (Barker & Compton 2007), but is not common as an archaeological find in Buckinghamshire. The Staffordshire slipware products that are often found are sherds from large press-moulded circular or rectangular dishes with 'piecrust' edges. The interior of these are white-slipped, on which closely-set lines of brown slip have been trailed and then feathered, as on the Haddenham mug (Godden 1974), though the feathering on the Haddenham mug is much deeper than occurs on the Staffordshire examples.

The Staffordshire potteries have a long history. One fairly early and regularly used decorative technique used trailed slip for cross-hatching. This can be seen on the rims of a group of well-known Staffordshire-made (and highly collectable) dishes with figurative scenes. An early example dated 1671 has the name of the potter, Thomas Toft (Wondrausch 1986, 45). Many more of the genre are illustrated in Cooper (1968), including a late example dated 1728.

Feathering seems to appear a little later than



FIGURE 2 'Feathering' on tiles made by Roger Little, Boscastle Pottery

cross-hatching. Apart from its use on the dishes noted above, the style is largely confined to small semi-closed forms such as posset pots and mugs; most have bulbous lower halves with feathered slip. The feathering here is always emphasised by dragging multiple featherings vertically and close together in blocks, as on the Haddenham mug, forming a particularly distinctive pattern. The plain upper half often has inscriptions, occasionally including dates, in brown slip, emphasised by 'jewelling' or 'beading' employing dots of white slip which are also used around the upper and lower borders surrounding the text. The earliest example of feathered blocks noted is dated 1690 (website: *pinterest.com*); Barker *et al* (2007) illustrates one of 1695; the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, has one of 1698 (Lewis 1956), and Hildyard (2005) illustrates one of 1701, which is in the Victoria and Albert Museum. One dated 1704 is shown on *pinterest.com* and another of 1711 on *christies.com*. Finally, Northampton Museum has one inscribed 'GOD BLESS QVEN ANN', who reigned 1702–14 (Draper 1975).

These dated feathered vessels may have been individually commissioned, whereas the Haddenham-type mugs, which are closely paralleled by

one in the Stoke-on-Trent collection (Barker *et al* 2007), were everyday drinking vessels (usually with hollow sides) and quicker to produce than the other vessels. Although it seems likely that they could have been in production as early as 1690, they may well have remained a staple type well into the eighteenth century beyond the reign of Queen Anne, noted on one of the related vessels above. Many illustrations of this type of mug can be found on websites.

Excavations at Great Linford, Milton Keynes (Mynard & Zeepvat 1991), produced a substantial representative amount of post-medieval pottery, including decorated wares. Mid-seventeenth-century wares were dominated by Northamptonshire ware decorated with simple but attractive trailed-slip images. Another technique used on these local products was 'marbling', a decoration caused by swirling different slip colours together. This technique was also used at Brill wares, but products with any other similarity to those from Northamptonshire from here are rare. Many Staffordshire products were present at Great Linford (Fabrics PM2 and PM42): about one-third of these were from cups or mugs, though none of those illustrated are comparable to the Haddenham example.

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Barbara Hurman with Michael Farley

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