

Two Groups of Anglo-Saxon Pottery in Peterborough Museum

by Carolyn Dallas

The pottery illustrated in fig. 10 represents two groups of Anglo-Saxon hand-made pottery in the storeroom of Peterborough Museum. The exact place and circumstances of their finding is unknown.

Orton Longueville

This group is labelled 'King's Pits' and two of the three boxes give additional information. One reads: 'Orton Longueville and Orton Waterville boundary. Post-holes and trench'; and the other: 'Found in hut site near post-hole about 15 inches from surface. Animal bones also found and bone pin'. (The pin in question is probably fig. 10, no. 10 which was in this box.)

An Anglo-Saxon settlement-site on the Orton Longueville-Orton Waterville parish boundary is noted on the Ordnance Survey Record Cards (Taylor (1969), 31 no.15). This is situated at about TL 15919608 and seems to have been a sizeable area of features producing pottery and small finds which was found by Mr G. Wyman Abbott before 1932. Nothing in the Wyman Abbott collections in either Peterborough Museum or the Cambridge University Museum could be the finds mentioned in this reference; but conversely there is no evidence that these sherds and bone point are those found by Abbott. It is, however, more than likely that they are from the same site.

The pottery totals almost 70 sherds, representing 14-23 vessels. There are 3 basic fabric-types, which really only vary in the amount of temper and particle-size. They are:

- a.* Fine grit and sand, sometimes with a burnished surface, comparable to Maxey Fabric B (Addyman (1964), 47); usually dark grey or black (see Peakirk Road fabric (*a*) below).
- b.* Fine sand with sparkling surface and some fine grit; variously black, grey, red or light brown.
- c.* Very gritty, including particles of mica, comparable to Maxey Fabric A; black or dark brown in colour.

Of the drawn sherds (fig. 10) no. 1 is fabric (c) (Maxey A), nos. 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 are fabric (a) (Maxey B). No. 5 is similar to (a), but some organic particles are visible, and no. 9 includes calcitic material as well as sand and grit. Nos. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 are black throughout and the rest are basically black, but have some areas of dark grey, brown or reddish brown.

Nos. 1-5 were in one box, nos. 6-7 in another and nos. 8-9 in another with the bone point no. 10 — but this may not be significant, as the material could have been muddled since finding.

The forms of these vessels are not distinctive and they are therefore difficult to date. Some differences in function covering a range of kitchen activities may be suggested by the variation in vessel-size from the basic cooking-pot (e.g. nos. 4, 6, 7, 8) to the smaller, narrow-mouthed, vessels (e.g. nos. 1, 2, 5). No. 9 is a most unusual form, but is probably a thicker, undecorated, version of the small fifth-century carinated jars; but it might also be Iron-Age, as the ceramics of that period are very similar to the Saxon types.

This group as a whole lacks distinctive early or late forms, and is probably dateable to the later Pagan period, the sixth to seventh centuries A.D.

Peakirk Road

The words 'Peakirk Road' are the only labelling attached to this box. This is most likely to be Peakirk Road at Ginton, north of Peterborough. The main road through Ginton, called High Street in the village centre, becomes Peakirk Road on the east side of the village where it runs to Peakirk as the B1443. Some 20 modern building plots and a few older houses line Peakirk Road at Ginton and the distance between the two villages is barely a mile, so that the area from which this material could have come is fairly limited. The large non-abraded pieces of the group suggest that it is not surface material, but was found in some building, ditch-digging or pipe-laying operations. Its homogeneous character argues for the presence of a Middle Saxon site somewhere west of the Car Dyke near modern Ginton at about TF 156057. The box also contains a few Romano-British sherds and about 20 Iron-Age ones.

There are 45 Anglo-Saxon sherds, representing less than 10 vessels. Other than one organic-tempered sherd, the pottery can be divided into two basic fabric-types, of which the first predominates:

- a. Fine grit (1mm or less) and quartz sand, comparable to Maxey Fabric B (Addyman (1964), 47).
- b. Mixed sand, shell and grit.

The drawn sherds nos. 14, 15, 16 are in fabric (a); nos. 11-12 are in fabric (b); no. 13 is as (a), but has occasional micaceous particles. Fabric (a) is similar to Maxey Fabric B, as is (a) at Orton above, and fabric (b) can be paralleled in basic character by some of the Middle Saxon wares found at Castor (*Durobrivae* 1, 1973, 16f.). The vessels are black, except for some red and grey patches on no. 12 and grey surfaces on no. 14. One body sherd in fabric (a) has an elongated vertical pierced boss; but otherwise all the sherds are plain.

This group of pottery is probably of Middle Saxon date (c.A.D. 650-850). Forms nos. 13 and 14 are indicative of this period; for they do not seem to occur in pagan graves and have been found in Middle Saxon contexts on sites such as Southampton, North Elmham in Norfolk and Upton in Northamptonshire, as well as on Continental sites of the period. The miniature vessel no. 15 (usually called a 'thumb pot' and probably used for small quantities of more precious substances such as spices or perfume) and the foot-stand no. 16 occur in pagan contexts and may be residual or indicative of extensive occupation. The pots in this group therefore range from the sixth to the eighth or ninth centuries and are best taken as a whole to be Middle Saxon.

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Bibliography

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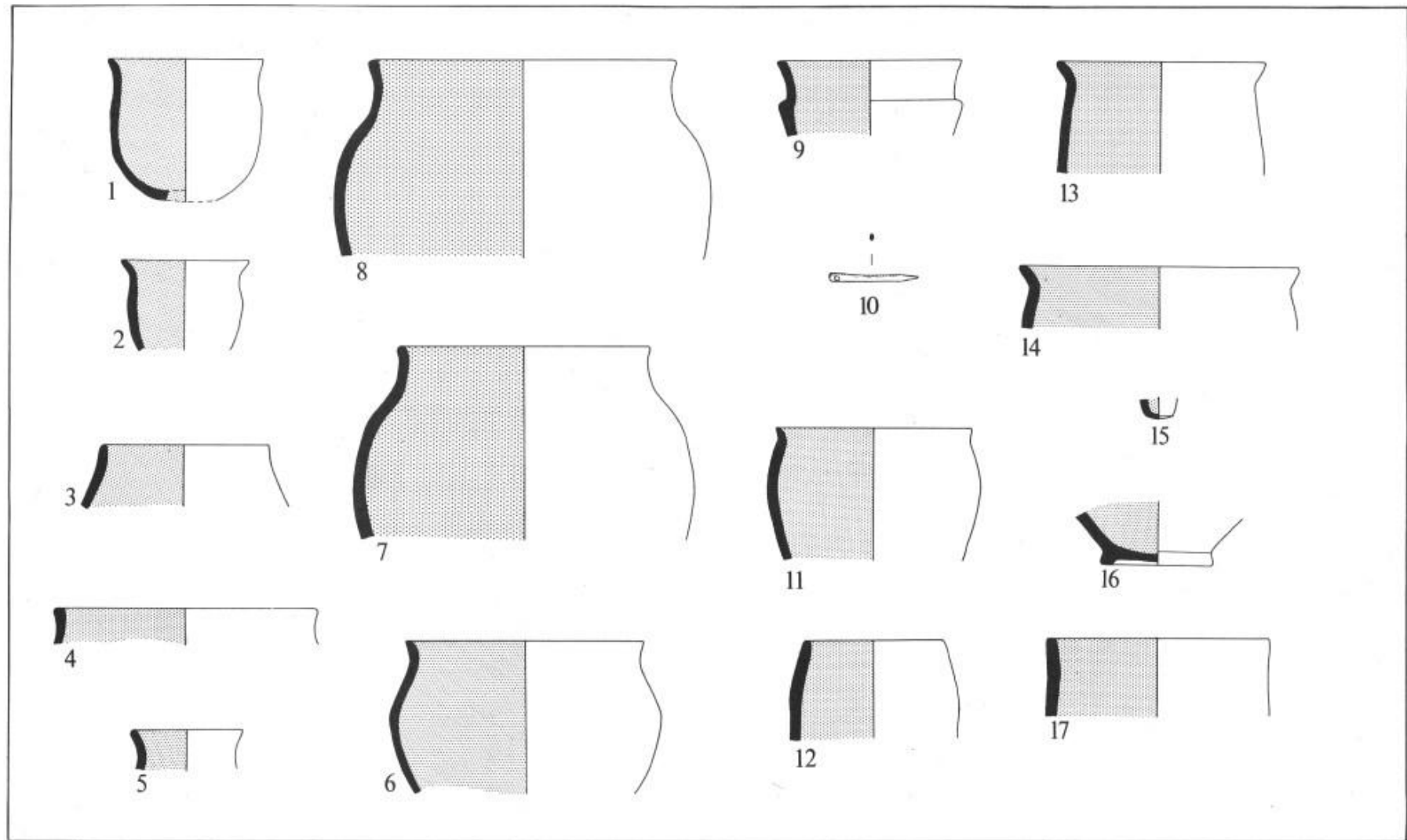


Fig 10 Anglo-Saxon pottery from Peterborough Museum: nos. 1-10 from Orton Longueville (no. 10 is bone point), nos. 11-17 from Peakirk Road