

XI.

SCOTTISH MEDIAEVAL POTTERY: THE MELROSE
 ABBEY COLLECTION.

By STEWART CRUDEN, A.R.I.B.A., F.S.A., F.S.A.Scot.,
 Inspector of Ancient Monuments for Scotland.

Founded in 1136 as a daughter-house of Rievaulx in Yorkshire, Melrose Abbey was the first Cistercian establishment in Scotland. The church was dedicated in 1146. This event presumably marks the completion of the eastern end, and some, but not all, of the dependent conventual buildings which lay on the north side of the church. Low walls and foundations are all that remain of the 12th-century monastery. Although standing to no great height they are unusually instructive, inasmuch as almost the whole ground plan of the convent is revealed. Clearly the monastery was extensive, even in its early days. The later church is unusually extensive also: there is much vaulting intact, mouldings and carved details survive undamaged and unweathered. This work, which dates from the late 14th century, is quite un-Scottish. French influences are inferred in some parts, north of England influences more certainly in others. Window tracery in the east end could have been made in the York masons' yard, while the two surviving crossing piers are closely paralleled in the late 14th-century quire of Carlisle Cathedral.

These architectural parallels are not without interest in a study of the mediæval pottery which the site has yielded.

The Scottish abbeys and priories have yielded impressive quantities of mediæval pottery, in contrast to its apparent scarcity on monastic sites in England. The period of finest achievement, the 13th and early 14th century, is represented in Scotland by an abundance of first-rate material, the bulk of which comes from Melrose Abbey, Glenluce Abbey, and Bothwell Castle. Occasion has been taken by the present writer in the accounts of the Glenluce and Bothwell collections to advance some general observations and conclusions which it is unnecessary to repeat at large here.¹ One tentative conclusion is, that in the 13th and 14th centuries there was considerable contact between southern Scotland and NE. and NW. England—between, particularly, Bothwell and York and Chester. This is upheld by the Melrose architectural evidence. The ceramic evidence could not have supported it, as the Melrose pottery is far less distinctive than that

¹ Glenluce in *T. Dumf. and Gall. A.S.*, xxix (1950-1). Bothwell in *P.S.A.S.*, lxxxvi (1951-2).
 VOL. LXXXVII. 11

of Bothwell and does not permit confident conclusions about derivations or affiliations.

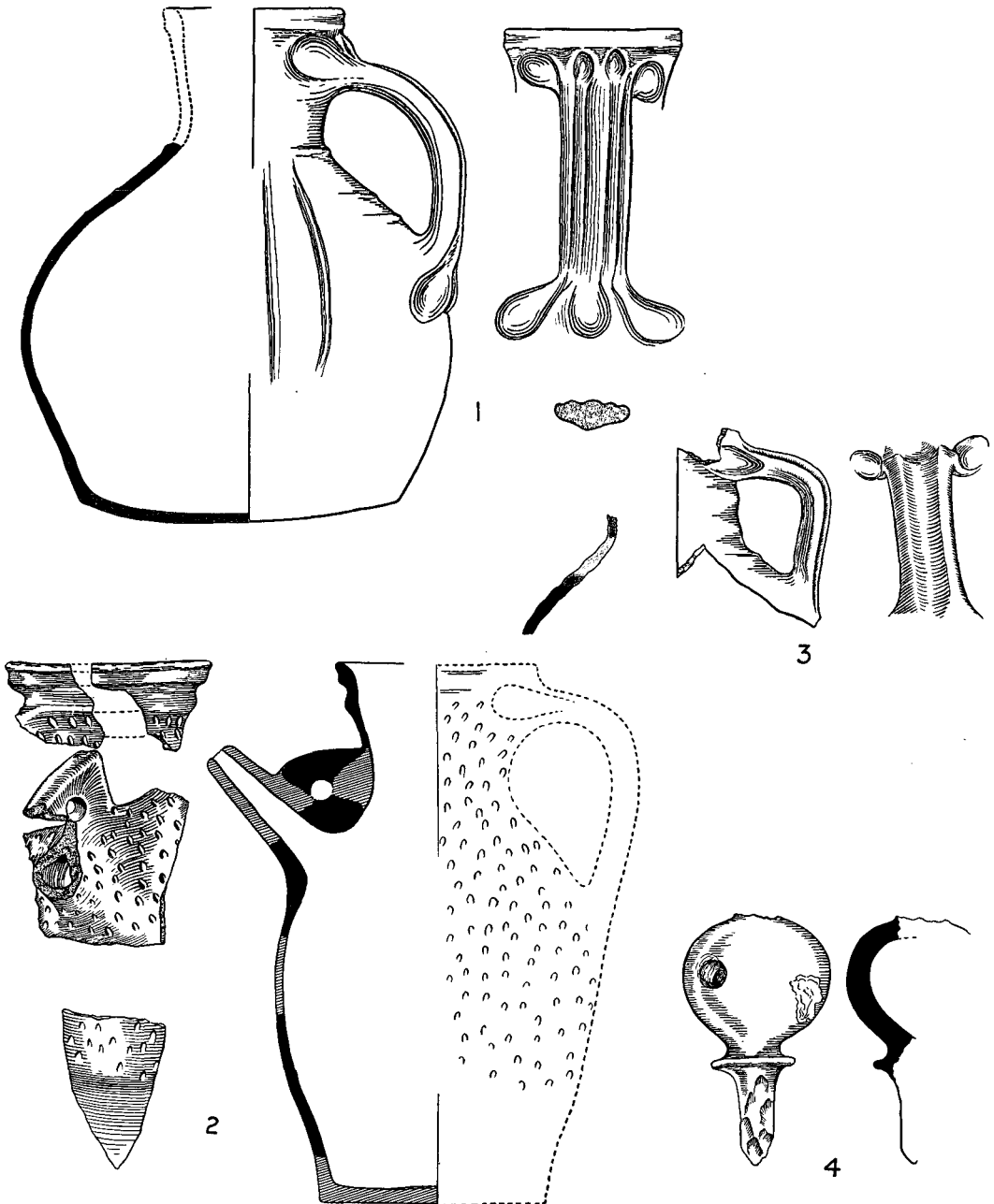
The bulk of the material was recovered between 1921 and 1923, from the latrine pit of the reredorter: no stratification was observed. Only one piece (fig. 35) is associated with a securely dated object. This was found in 1949 during the clearance of the foundations of the intended but never completed west front. Twenty-three vessels and a roof finial have been completely restored from the quantity of fragments recovered. They are displayed in the "Commendator's House" Museum, on the site. With them is an assemblage of instructive fragments, large and small, of rims, bases, handles, and sherds. By ironic chance these fragments are the most revealing part of the evidence and indicate what the completed vessels do not, namely, that good quality 13th-century ware was plentiful. The finest ware, the most accomplished technically and artistically, is almost exclusively represented by the sherds.

This 13th-century ware is superior stuff, thin and light, well fired, and distinguished by a wide range of beautiful coloured glazes of still brilliant lustre. The sherds include several with continuous thumbing round the basal angle, others have typical 13th-century decoration, such as fish-scales, applied strip-and-pellet (sometimes rouletted), face-mask spouts, and bridge-spouts. The thick "oily" glaze of olive-green hue, so characteristic of the Bothwell collection, is well represented, and with it there is a pleasing variety of speckled greens, oranges and browns, less evenly applied, but no less agreeable. The colours range from a pale apple-green to a dark greenish brown. There is pale yellow, orange and reddish brown. Many of the glazes vary in hue upon the one vessel. A single fragment is blue-glazed and is matched by a tile fragment. These are the only examples of mediæval blue glaze in Scotland, as far as the present writer is aware.

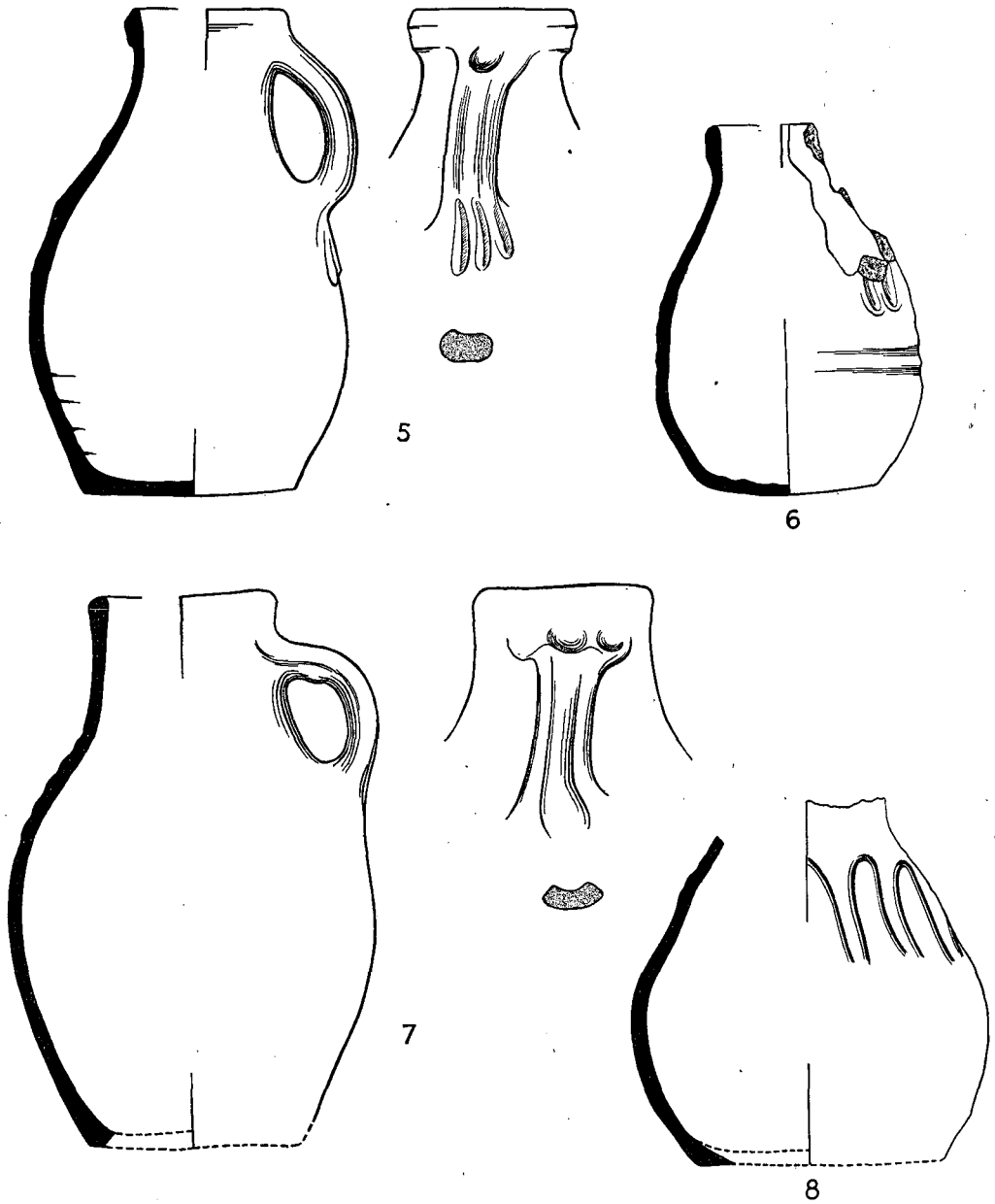
The completed vessels are of less distinction. Figs. 17-23 are straight-forward utility pieces made without embellishment of any sort save fig. 18, which has a simple bead-moulding round the neck. However these unpretentious little vessels have the not inconsiderable merit of good proportion and a pleasing line. The handles look firm and inspire confidence. By their flat base, lack of spout, ornament, and thumbing round the basal angle, and by the pronounced distinction between neck and body, in fact on general grounds, they are here attributed to the 14th century.

No less than five urinals have been restored (Pls. XXII, XXIII). Another is represented by a considerable fragment (Pl. XXIII, 4). This type of vessel is fully discussed in the accounts of the Glenluce and Bothwell material, each of which has several examples.

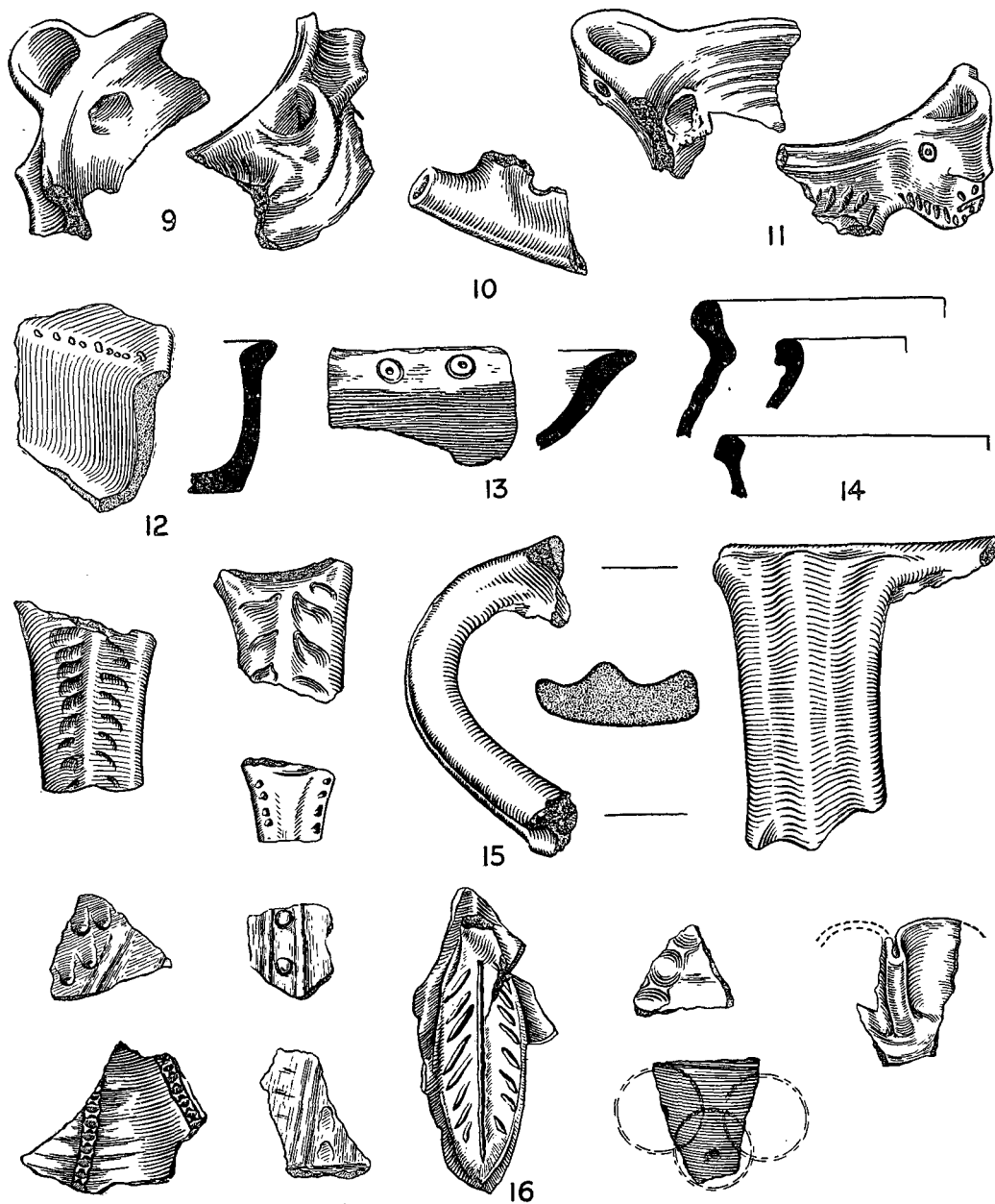
The large jug (Pl. XVIII) recalls the best Bothwell ware. This must certainly be a 13th-century product. It has a sagging base, thick olive-green glaze, swelling body, vertical neck, broad strap handle with the



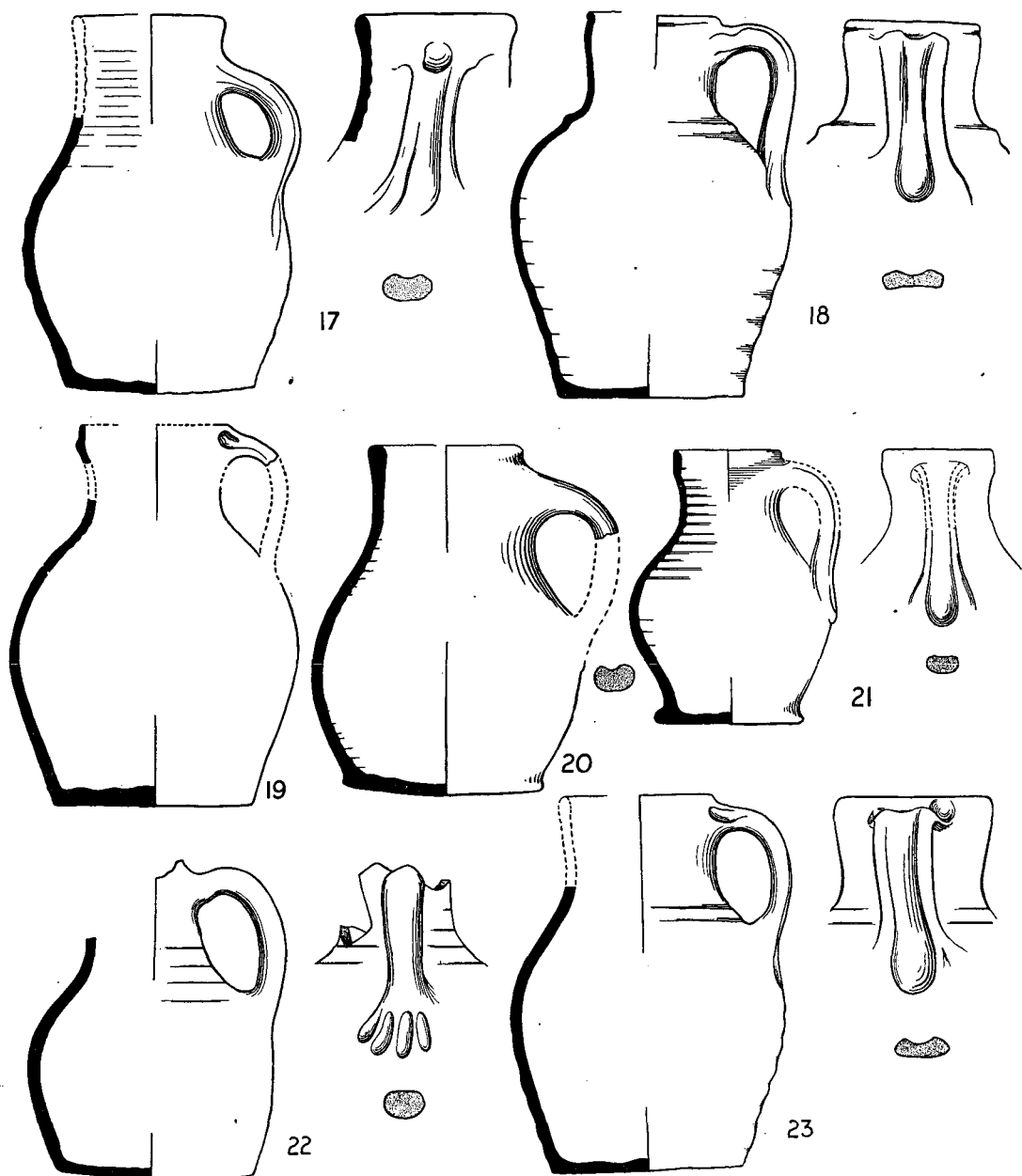
Medieval Pottery from Melrose Abbey (figs. 1-4). Scale $\frac{1}{4}$.



Mediæval Pottery from Melrose Abbey (figs. 5-8). Scale $\frac{1}{4}$.



Mediæval Pottery from Melrose Abbey (figs. 9-16). Scale $\frac{1}{4}$.



Mediaeval Pottery from Melrose Abbey (figs. 17-23). Scale $\frac{1}{2}$.

characteristic bold trefoil leaf terminals, and applied strips in groups of two and three round the upper half of the body.

Illuminated manuscripts depicting the Evangelists or monkish scribes at work, seated before their writing-desks, quill pen in hand, sometimes include a small vessel not unlike Pl. XXIV, 3. It hangs from the scribe's belt, or stands upon his desk, or hangs from it by a cord threaded through the two small holes in the projecting lugs. They could be ink-wells. In the Stavanger museum there are three, 2 ins. high, in speckled brown glaze; unlabelled, they are presumably from the Utstein Kloster, a 13th-century foundation. Two from Lerwick are in the National Museum of Antiquities, Edinburgh. Another, from Wymondham Abbey, now in the Norwich Castle Museum, is labelled "costrel or pilgrim's bottle". It is of glazed stoneware and is undated.

Each collection and site seems to have its object of special interest. Here we point with pride to the only mediæval roof finial in Scotland (Pl. XVIII, 2). The device was originally intended to function as a louvre or ventilator, as is demonstrated in the accompanying photographs of a 13th-century prototype from St Gile's Chapel, Hereford. The Hereford example is entirely hollow and sits inside the chimney on the ridge tile. At a later period of devolution, when the original strictly functional feature degenerates and becomes a decorative device, the ball is solid and sprouts knobs, as on a specimen in Salisbury Museum. Later still the solid ball becomes attached to the roof tile itself, as pure ornament, so that its functional antecedents are unsuspected: a Lincoln example is even in the form of two face-masks. This development occurred as early as the 13th and 14th centuries, yet it is hardly surprising that the expedient so quickly degenerated, its efficiency being doubtful. Our Melrose example, which has a solid neck, sprouted an excrescence and looks like a bung.¹

DESCRIPTION.

THE DRAWINGS.

1. (Pl. XVIII, 1; see p. 162.)
13th century: height 11½": max. diam. 9⅝".
2. A drawing restoration: the fragments, on the left, remain detached (see Pl. XX, 1, top left and centre left). The object of the exercise is to demonstrate a tubular spout of unusual type connected to the neck by a thick pierced lug (*cf.* fig. 10). 13th or 14th century.
3. Neck with strap-handle. Thick olive-green glaze: good 13th-century ware.

¹ The sequence is summarised in *Arch. J.*, ciii (1946), 167. This puzzling but interesting object, rare even in England, was identified by Mr G. C. Dunning, F.S.A. I have to thank him for permission to reproduce his photograph of the Hereford example, and for much else that is embodied in this paper.

4. (Pl. XVIII, 2, 3.)

Roof finial (see p. 167): dark green glaze: hollow ball, pierced by $\frac{1}{2}$ " hole: probable knob broken away from top: the mark on the right side is a glazing or firing blemish: height $5\frac{3}{4}$ " : diam. $3\frac{1}{4}$ ". 13th or 14th century.

5-8. (Pl. XIX.)

Four baggy and ill-shapen vessels of uncertain age and profile: probably 13th century, according to the glaze: No. 8 crudely decorated and shows evidence of a badly fitted and now missing handle: Nos. 6 and 8 were probably distorted in the kiln.¹

9. (Pl. XX, 1, top centre.)

Bridge-spout (showing the inside and outside); thick oily olive-green glaze: 13th century.

10. Tubular spout (*cf.* fig. 2).

11. (Pl. XX, 1, top right.)

Bridge-spout with face-mask embellishment (showing the inside and outside); thick olive-green glaze: 13th century.

12-13. Rims of flat dishes: 13th or 14th century (fig. 13 included in Pl. XX).

14. Cooking-pot rims, unglazed: 13th century.

15. (Pls. XX, 1; XXIV, 4.)

Detached and broken handles: 13th century.

16. (Pl. XX, 1.)

Sherds illustrating typical 13th-century surface treatment. The last drawing on the right shows a finger-pressed leaf of a multifoil shallow bowl: a somewhat similar vessel occurs at Arbroath Abbey. The leaf-shaped item is a handle terminal—a pendant from the lower end, as on a 15th-century jug in the Bothwell collection, illustrated fig. 56 in that paper.

17-23. (Pls. XX, 2, 3; XXI; XXII, 1.)

Seven squat little jugs which could be the work of one potter (see p. 162). There is a considerable uniformity of shape and size. The glazes vary but have suffered by immersion. The sturdy compact shape, pronounced wheeling and absence of ornamentation are noteworthy: probably 14th century.

24-26. (Pl. XXII, 2-4.)

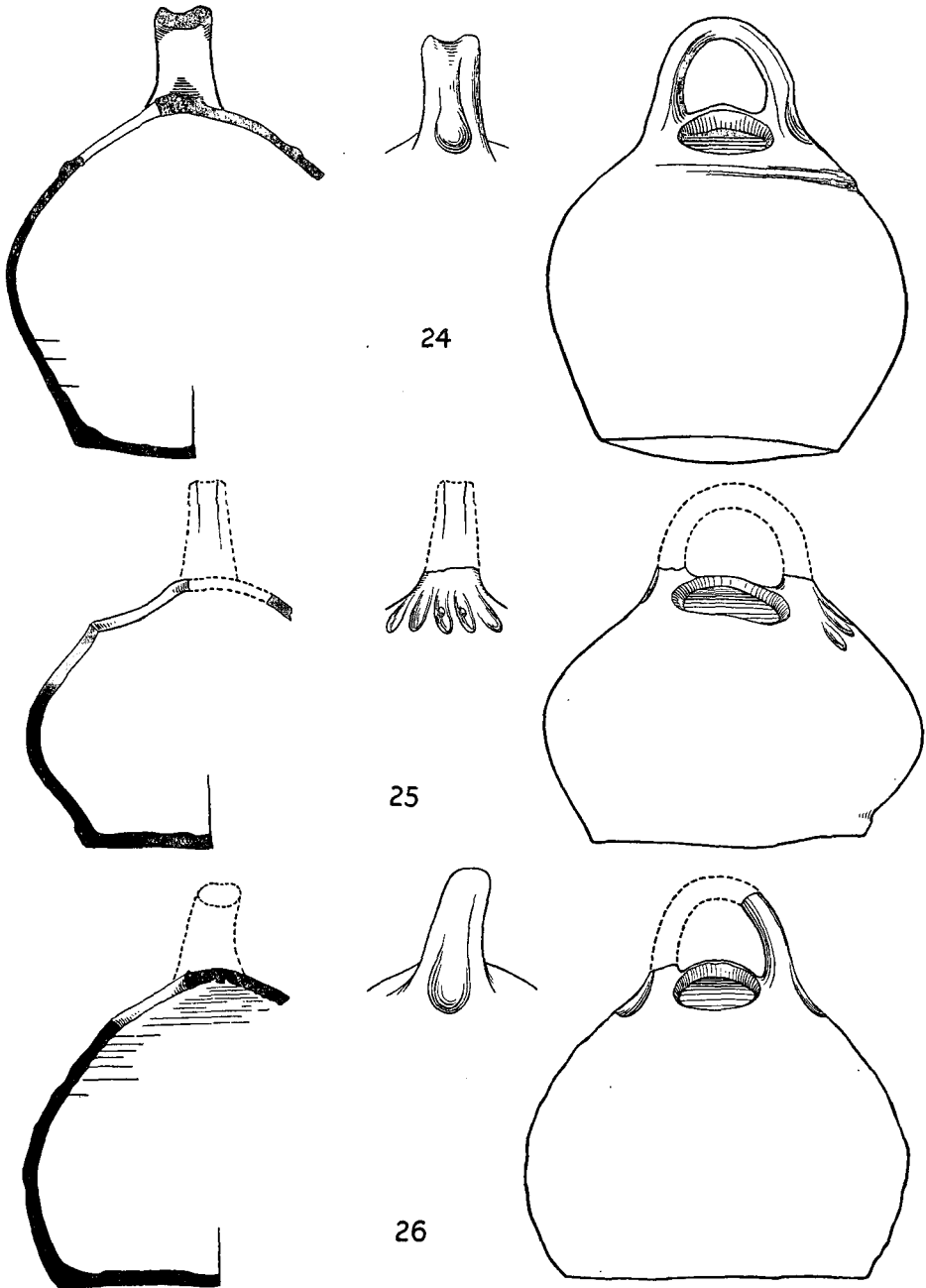
Three urinals with oblique top aperture and upright handle, about $6\frac{1}{2}$ " high, 7" diam., aperture 2" diam. Light red clay, green-brown glaze: 14th century.² (See p. 162.)

27. (Pl. XXIII, 1.)

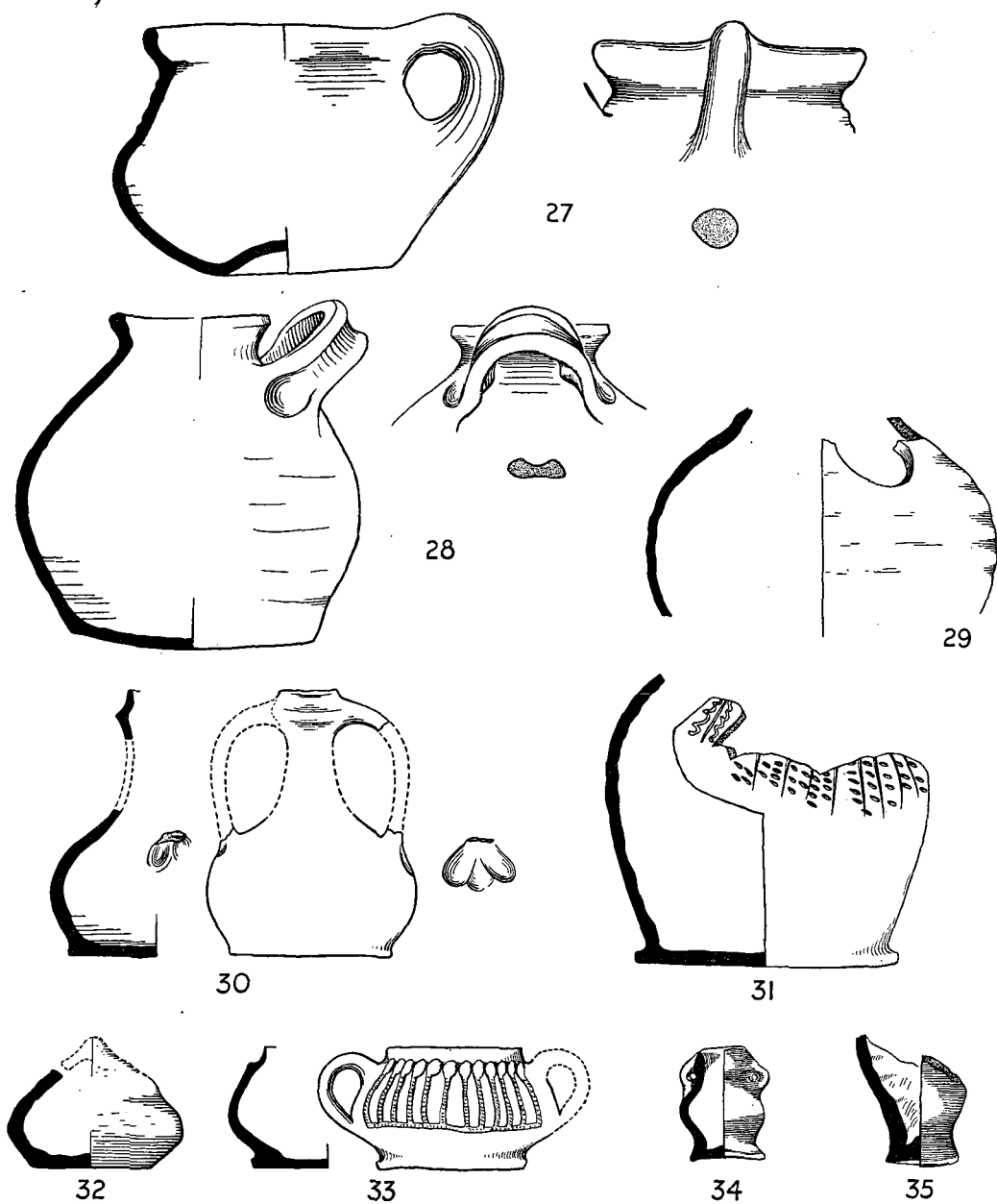
Urinal with large top horizontal aperture: upright rounded side-handle, light green glaze. Concave base: 14th century.

¹ Kiln distortion is illustrated and discussed in the paper on the Bothwell Castle pottery referred to above.

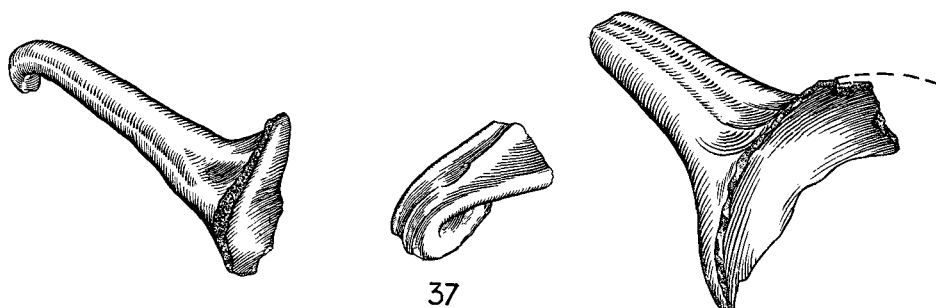
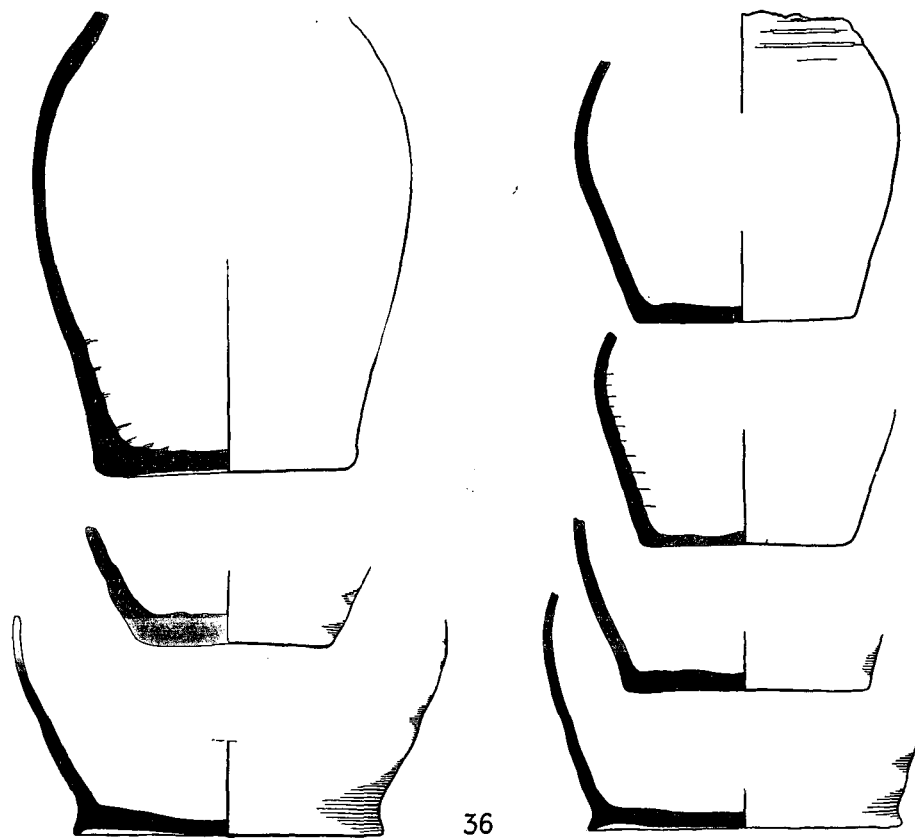
² This type of vessel is illustrated and discussed in the papers on the Glenluce and Bothwell material which include several specimens. Consequently, description and comment are minimised here.



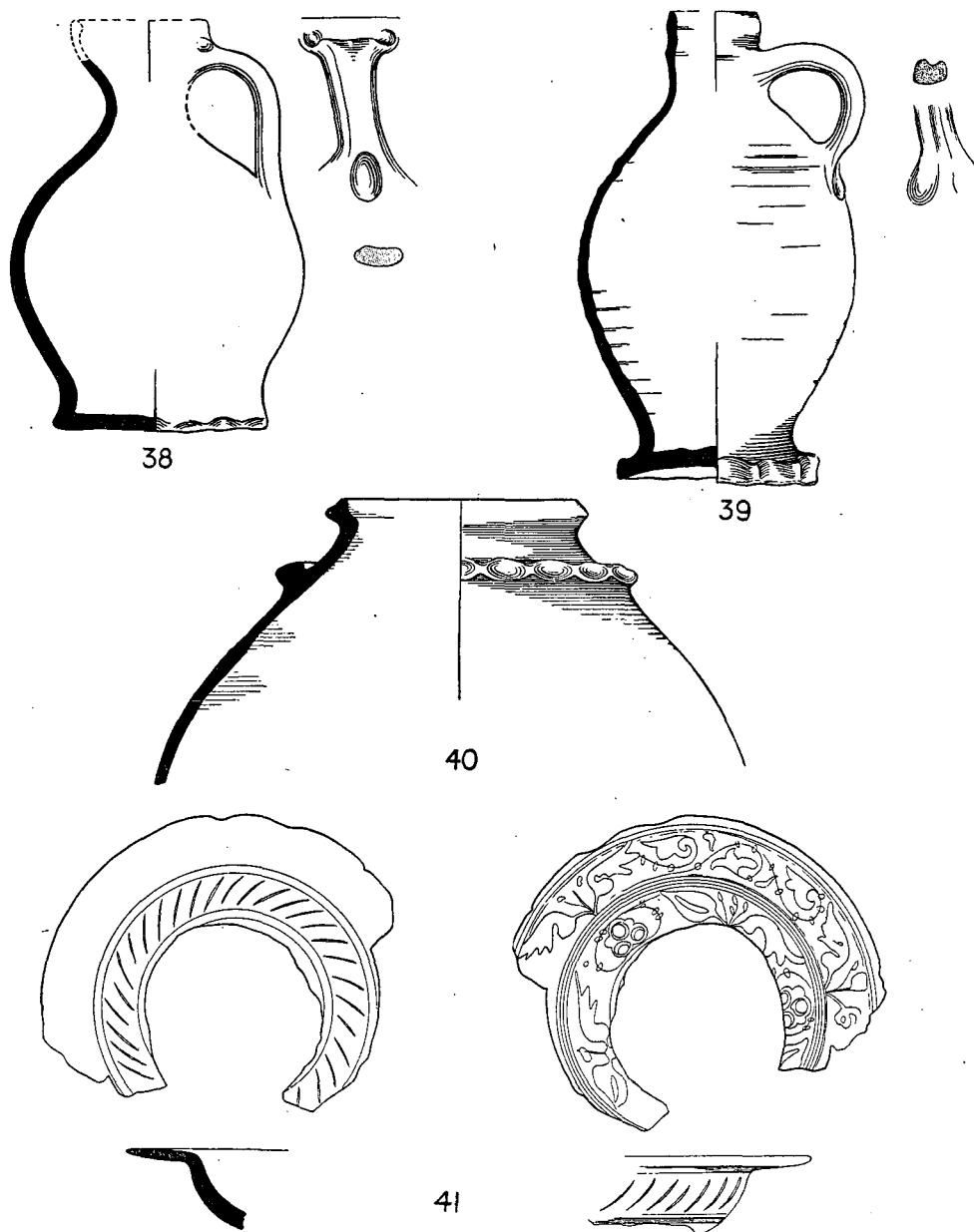
Mediæval Pottery from Melrose Abbey (figs. 24-26). Scale $\frac{1}{4}$.



Medieval Pottery from Melrose Abbey (figs. 27-35). Scale $\frac{1}{4}$.



Mediaeval Pottery from Melrose Abbey (figs. 36, 37). Scale $\frac{1}{4}$.



Mediæval Pottery from Melrose Abbey (figs. 38-41). Scale $\frac{1}{4}$.

28. (Pl. XXIII, 2.)

Urinal with small top horizontal aperture, oblique side strap-handle: 14th century.

29. (Pl. XXIII, 4.)

Part of urinal with oblique top aperture, as in figs. 24-26: 14th century.

30. (Pl. XXIII, 3.)

Small narrow-necked vessel with two rounded strap-handles, brown-green glaze. Height (conjectural) $5\frac{3}{4}$ ", max. diam. $4\frac{1}{2}$ ": probably 14th or 15th century.

31. (Pl. XXIV, 1.)

Flat-bottomed vessel with incised surface decoration. Ornament and technique recall 13th-century ware, but the flat and flanged base indicates later work: probably late 14th or 15th century.

32. (Pl. XXIV, 5.)

Pirlie pig. The earliest pottery money box is bun-shaped, from the late 13th-century kiln at Rye.¹ The typical English money box is globular with a knob at the top and a vertical slit for the savings, dating being according to the ware and its glaze; the majority appear to be of 15th- or 16th-century date.² Scottish pirlie pigs are onion-shaped and the slit is usually horizontal. Examples dated by 16th-century coins have been found at Kirkcudbright and Perth.³

33. (Pl. XXIV, 2.)

Posset pot, reddish-brown glaze with applied strips of yellow clay. A 16th-century handled mug from Kirkstall Abbey has similar decorative treatment.⁴

34. (Pl. XXIV, 3.)

Probable inkwell (see p. 167), $2\frac{1}{2}$ " high: 13th or 14th century.

35. Pedestal base of small slender vessel recovered from the foundations of the uncompleted west front. It contained a denier of Charles VIII of France (1483-1495).

36. Lower parts of thick-walled vessels with flat bases; probably 15th or 16th century.

37. (Pl. XXIV, 4.)

Fine examples of skillet-handles: probably 13th century.

38. (Pl. XXV, 1.)

Thick-walled vessel with thumbing round basal angle, flat base, height $8\frac{5}{8}$ ", diam. $6\frac{1}{8}$ ": 15th or 16th century.

39. (Pl. XXV, 4.)

Tall bottle-necked vessel, dark greenish-purple glaze with surface "fried" (probably due to over-firing): crinkly pie-crust thumbing round basal angle: 15th or 16th century: height $9\frac{7}{8}$ ", diam. $6\frac{3}{4}$ ", aperture diam. $1\frac{3}{4}$ ".

¹ *Sussex Arch. Coll.*, LXXIV, 59, pl. 11, 2.

² *British Museum Cat. of English Pottery*, p. 79, fig. 70.

³ *P.S.A.S.*, XLVI, 351.

⁴ *Publ. Thoresby Society: Kirkstall Abbey Excavation, Third Report: 1952.*

40. (Pl. XXV, 3.)

Neck and rim of large vessel with thumb-imprinted collar of thick applied clay. Body of the vessel blue-green glaze, collar yellow. Height and diameter unknown, aperture diam. $4\frac{3}{4}$ " : 13th or 14th century.

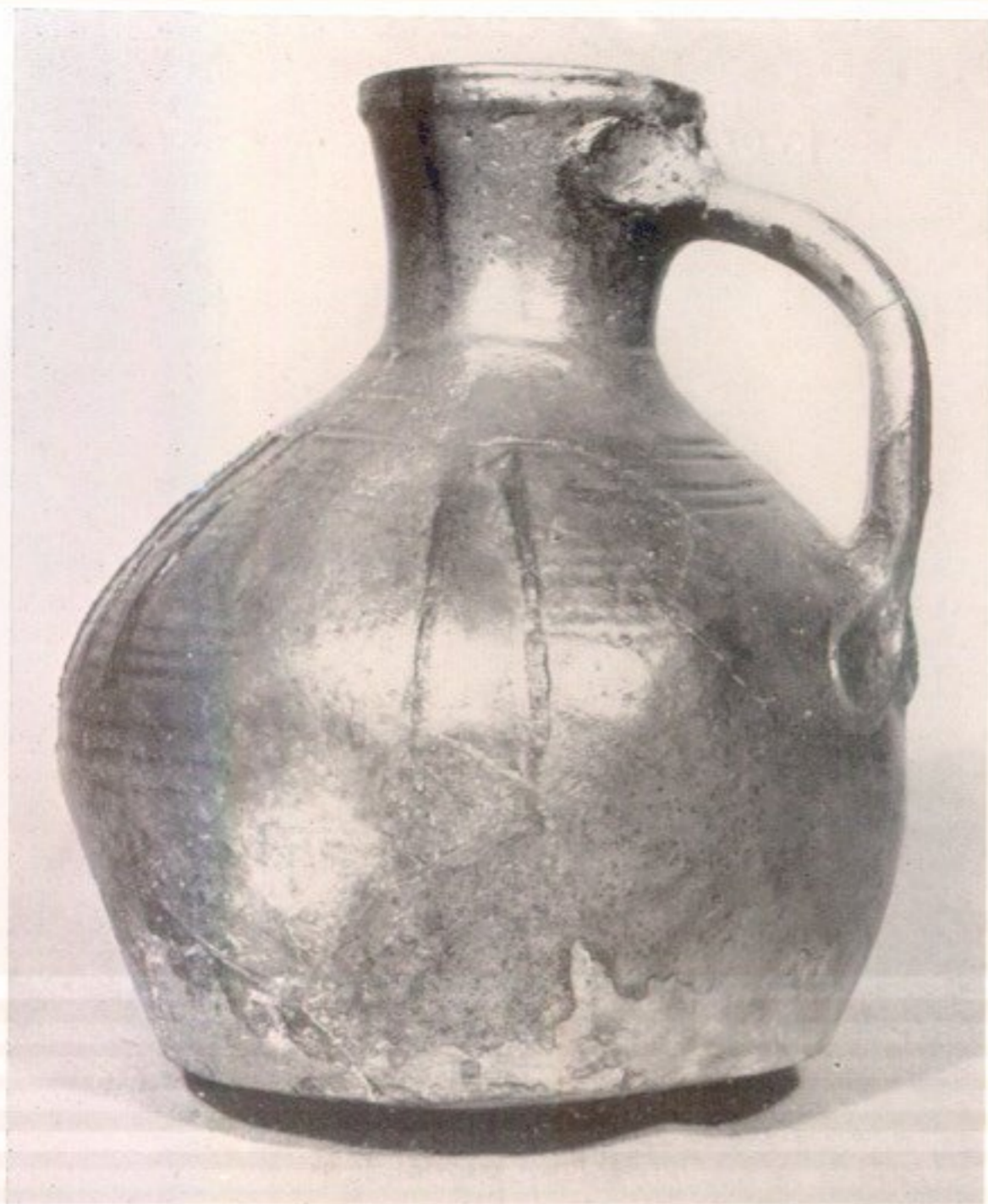
41. (Pl. XXV, 2.)

Flat shallow plate with wide flat rim: Hispano-Moresque ware: 14th or 15th century: max. diam. 8".

Acknowledgments.—My predecessor, Dr J. S. Richardson, LL.D., H.R.S.A., was solely responsible for the recovery of the pottery, and for its recording, reconstruction, and present display in the Commendator's House museum on the site.

The material reconstructions are by Mr W. N. Robertson, the drawings by Mr T. Borthwick, the photographs by Messrs Graham and Pugh.

I have elsewhere in this paper mentioned my continuing debt to Mr G. C. Dunning, F.S.A., for his generous advice in the compilation of these papers.



1. (fig. 1.)



2. (fig. 4.)



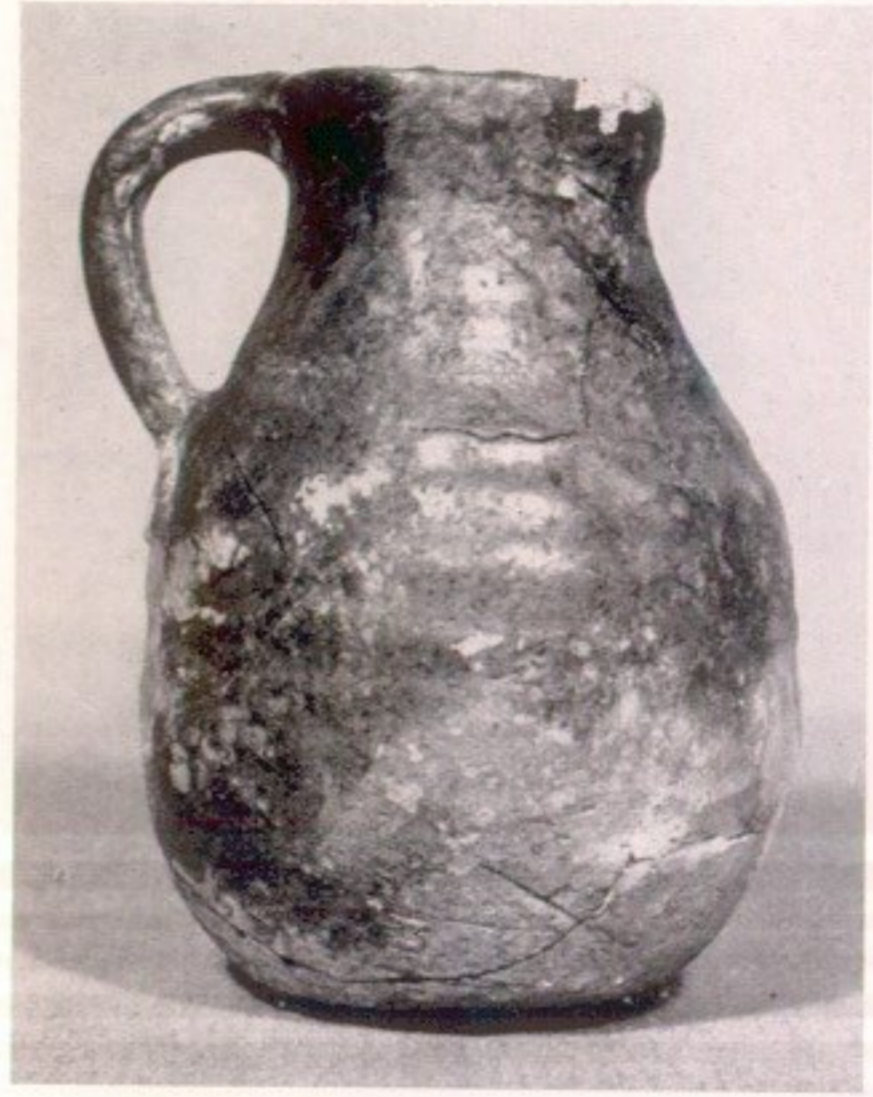
3. Chimney ventilator from Hereford: 13th cent.; for comparison with 2, above: (see p. 167).

STEWART CRUDEN.

[To face p. 174.]



1. (fig. 5.)



2. (fig. 6.)

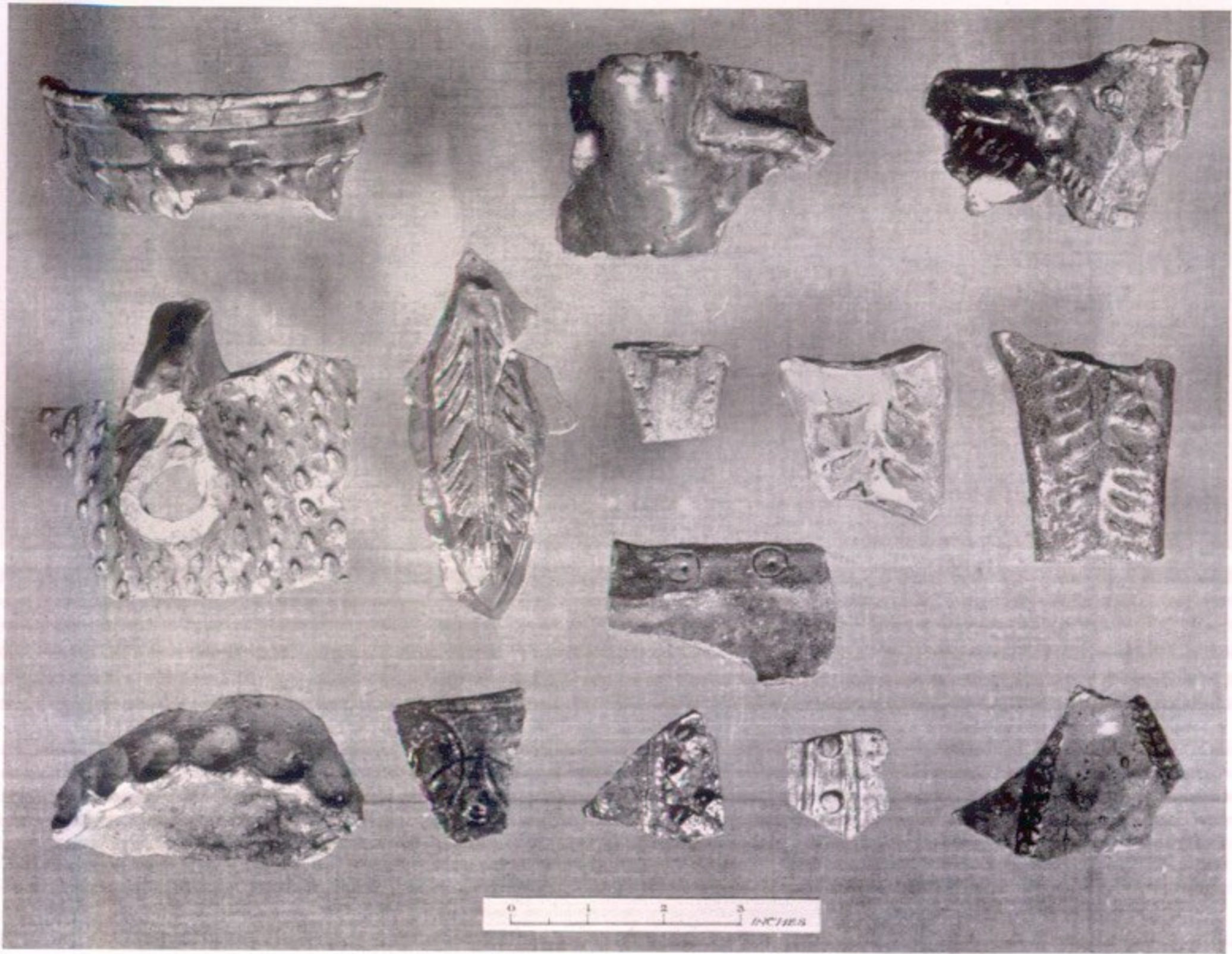


3. (fig. 7.)



4. (fig. 8.)

STEWART CRUDEN.



1. (figs. 2, 9, 11, 13, 15, 16.)

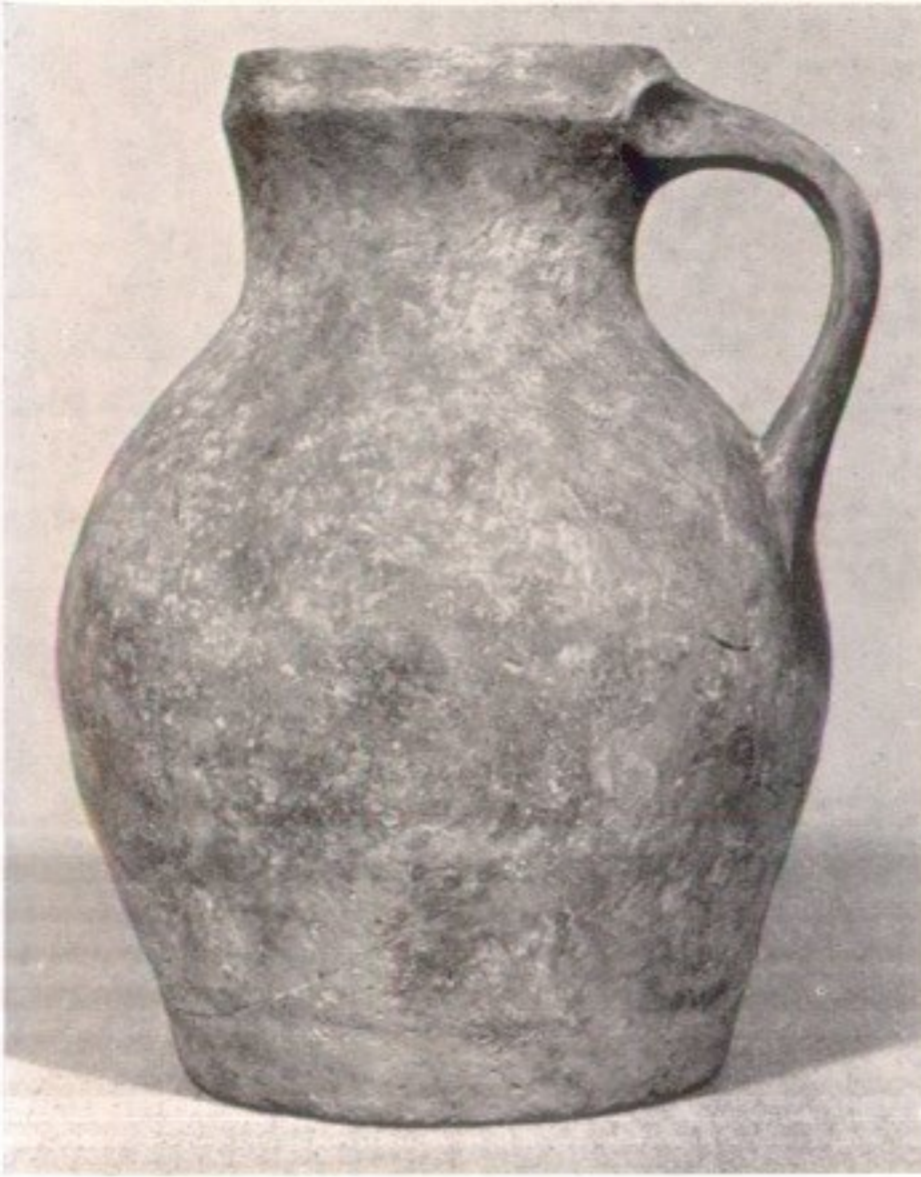


2. (fig. 17.)

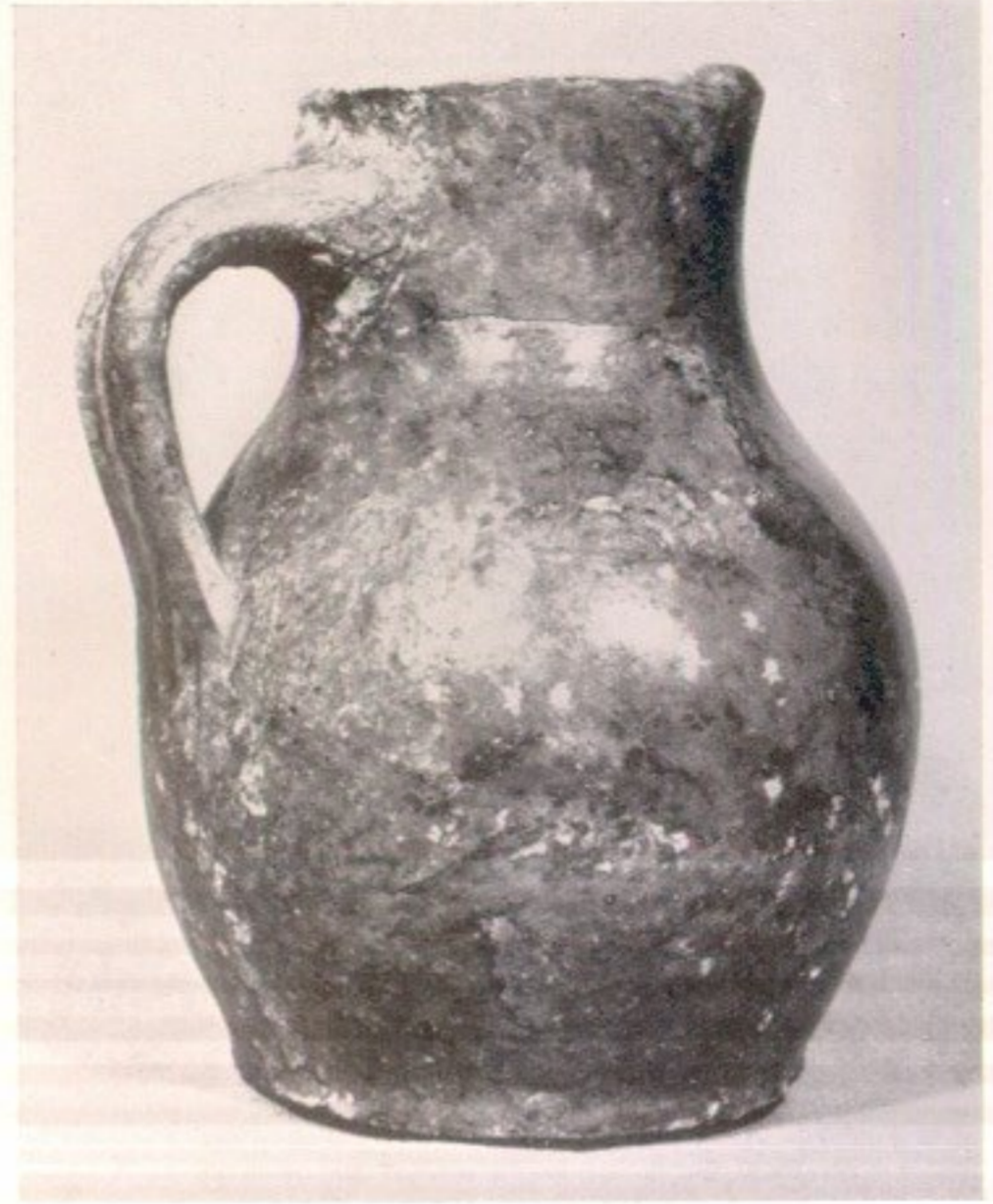


3. (fig. 18.)

STEWART CRUDEN.



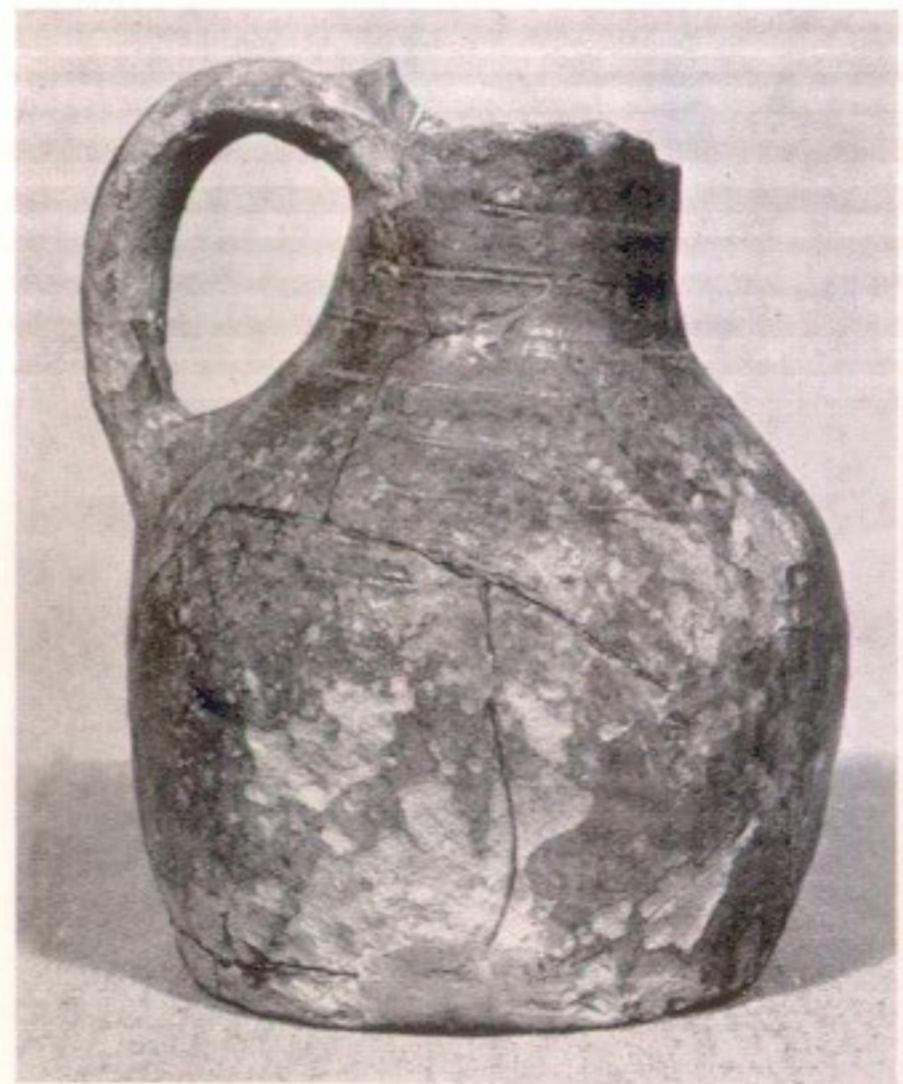
1. (fig. 19.)



2. (fig. 20.)



3. (fig. 21.)



4. (fig. 22.)

STEWART CRUDEN.



1. (fig. 23.)



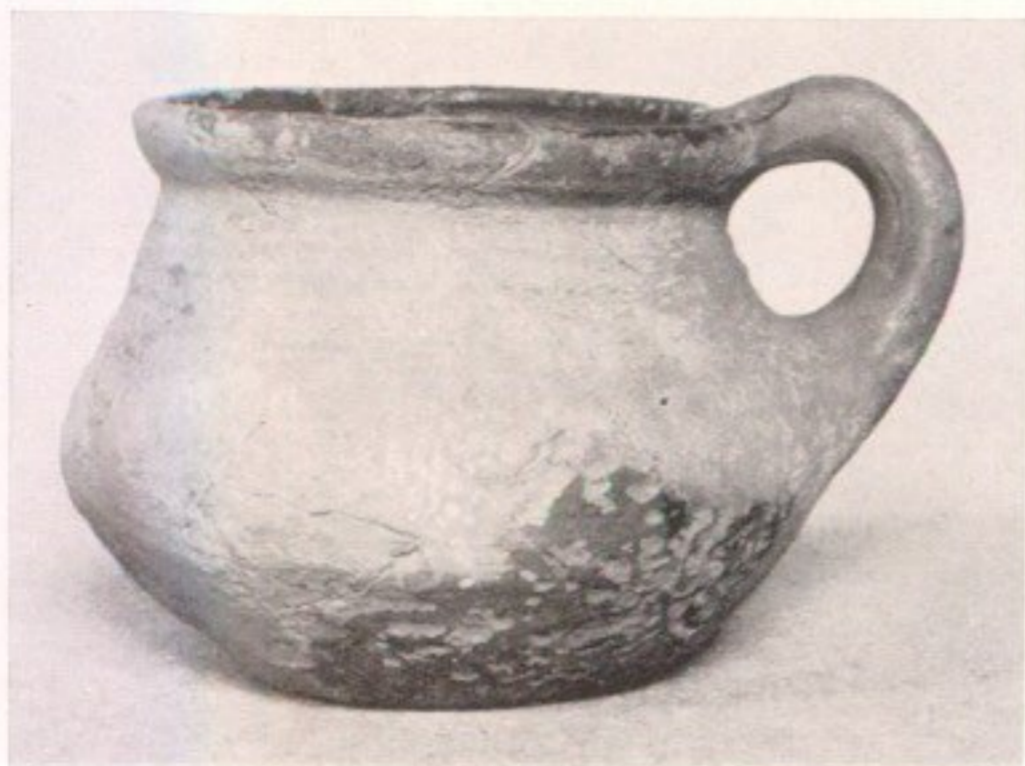
2. (fig. 24.)



3. (fig. 25.)



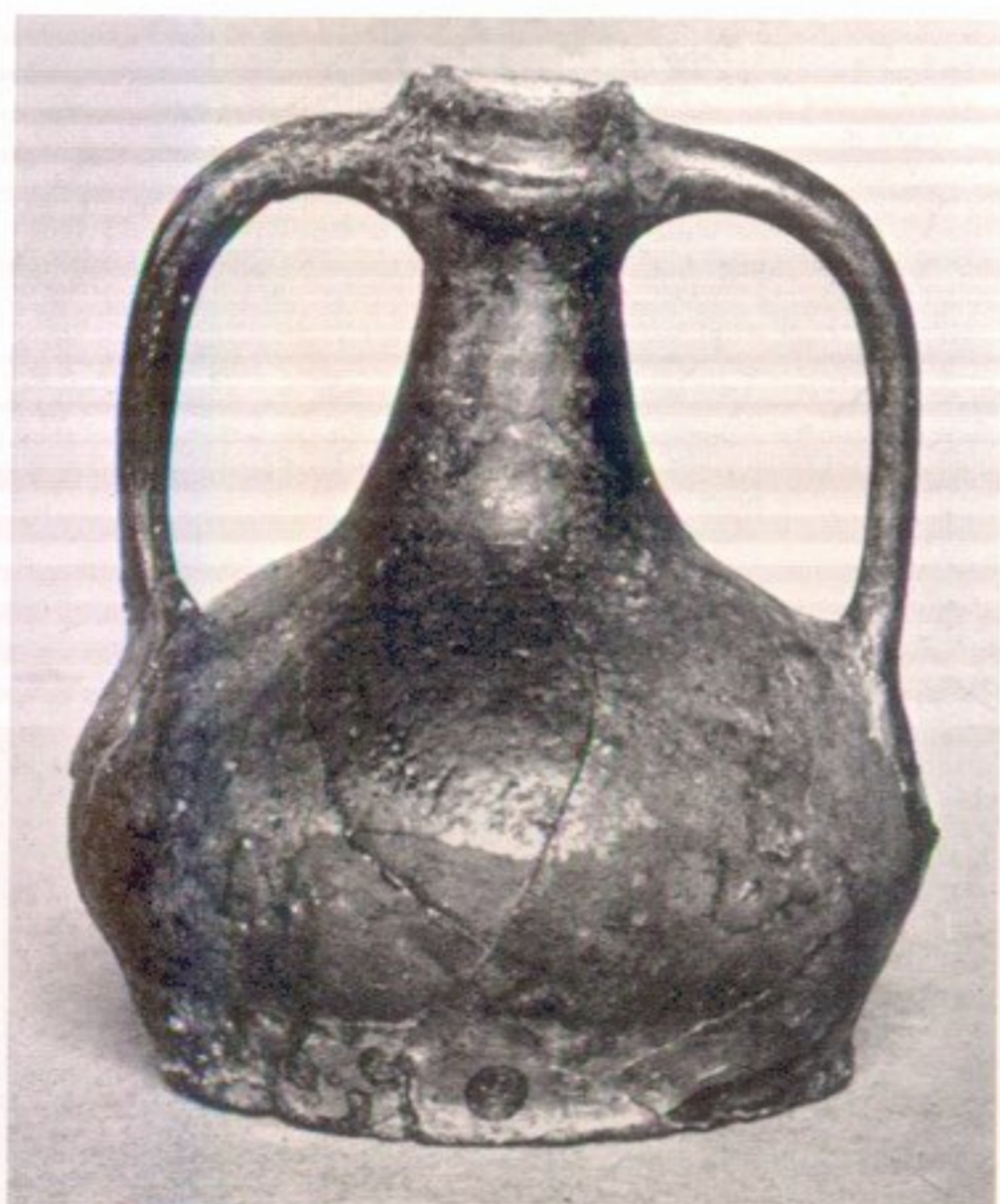
4. (fig. 26.)



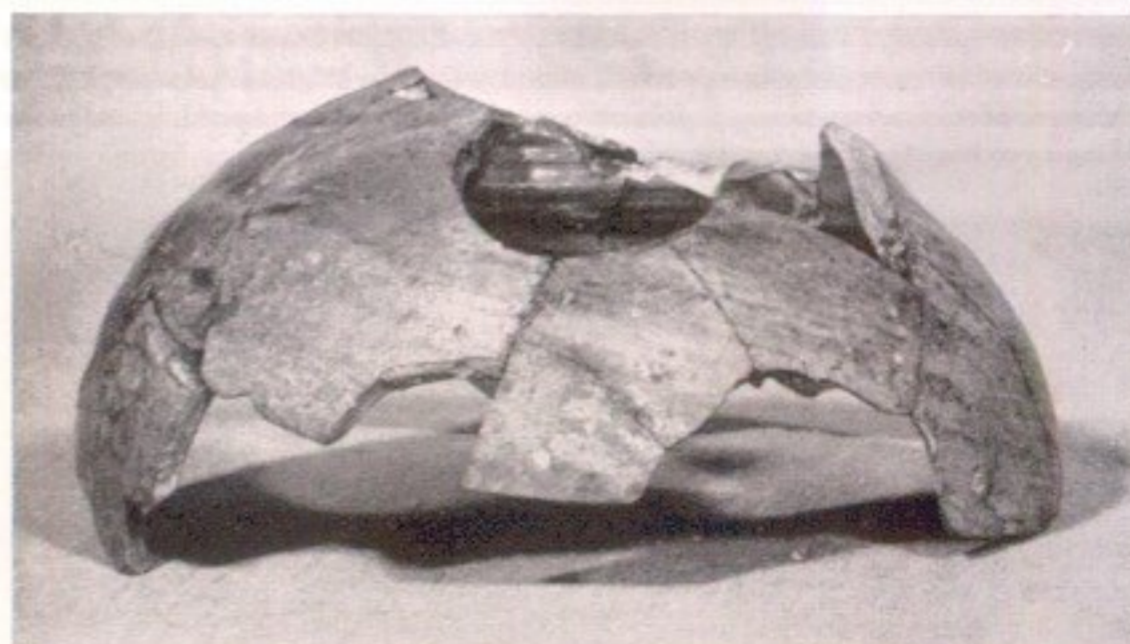
1. (fig. 27.)



2. (fig. 28.)



3. (fig. 30.)



4. (fig. 29.)



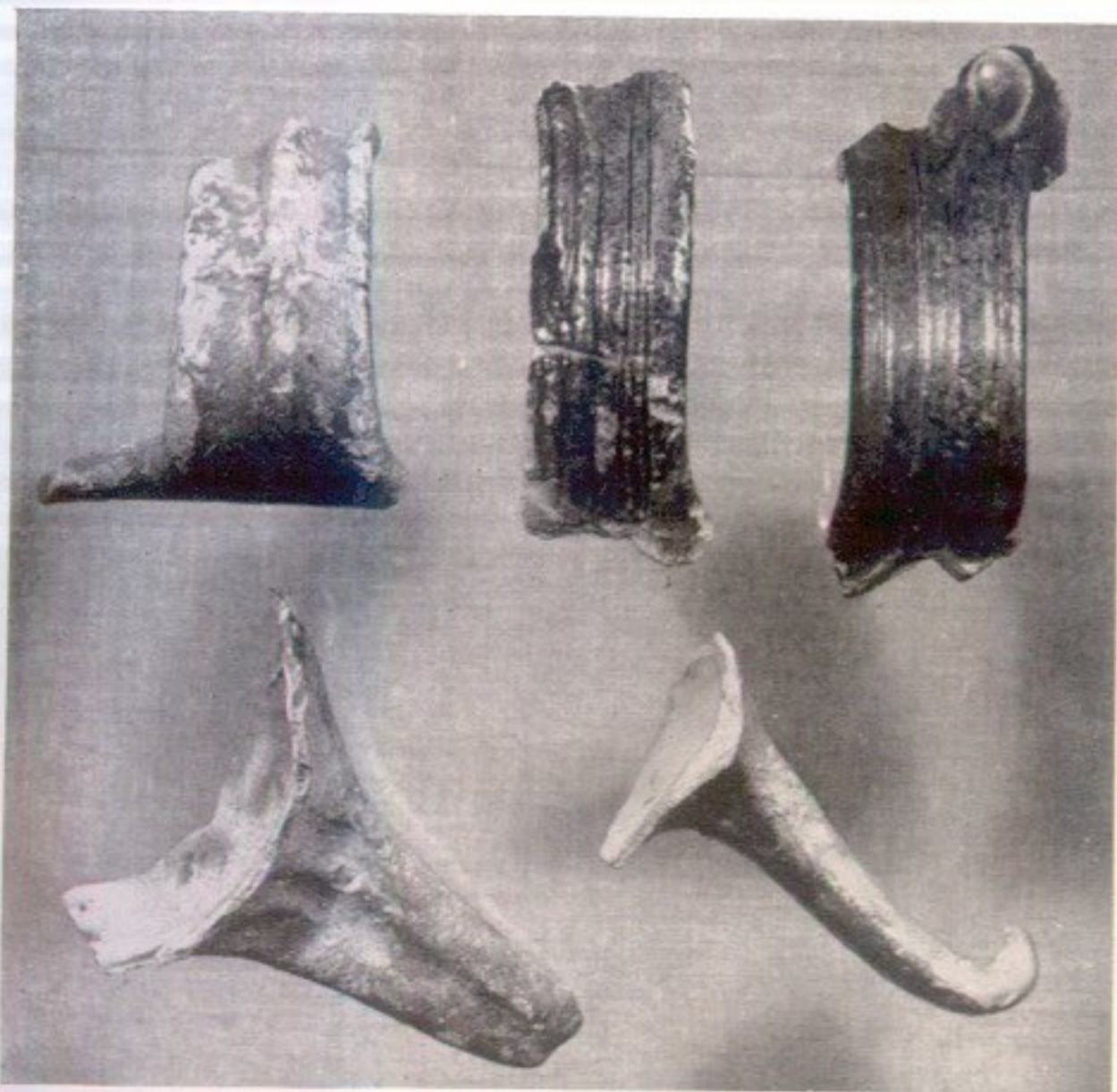
1. (fig. 31.)



2. (fig. 33.)



3. (fig. 34.)

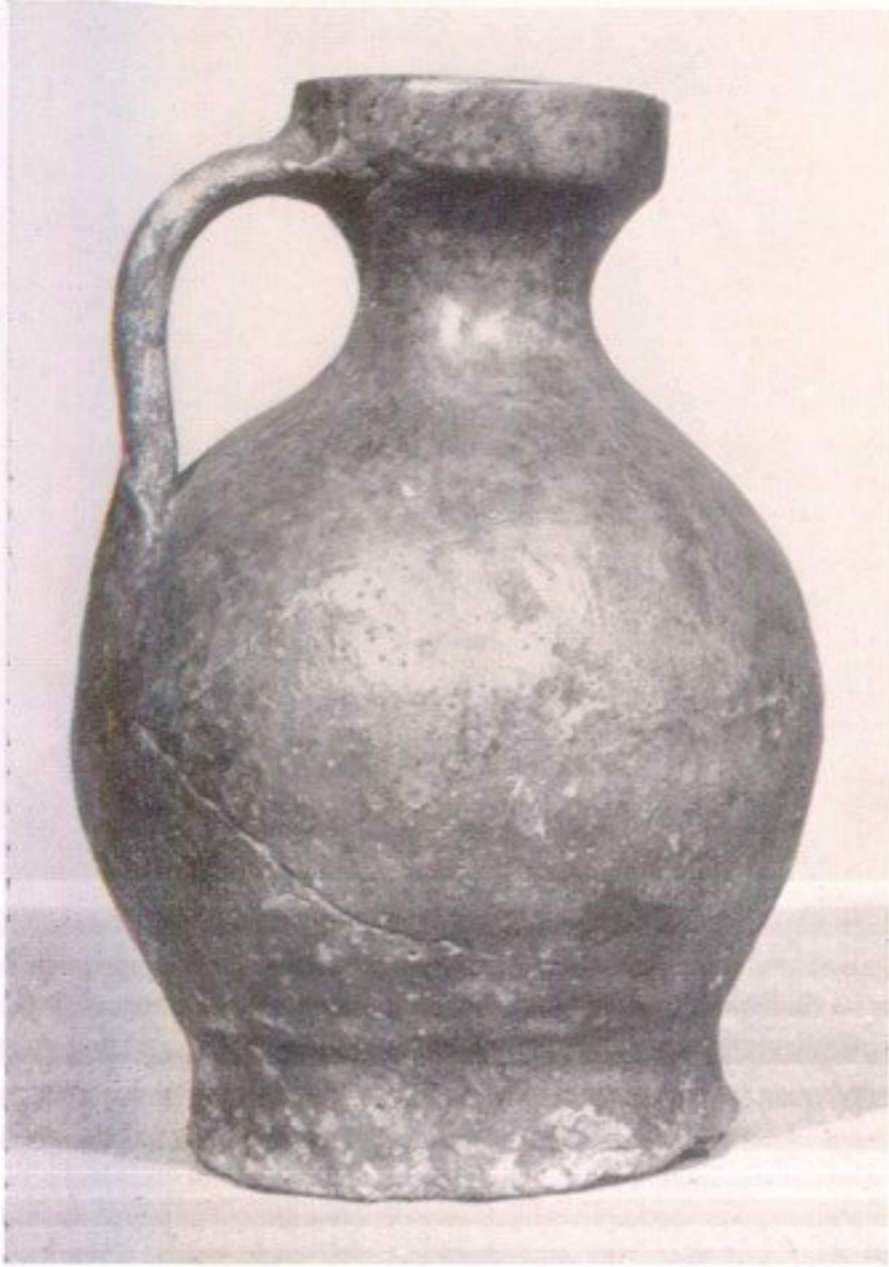


4. (Handles: figs. 15, 37.)

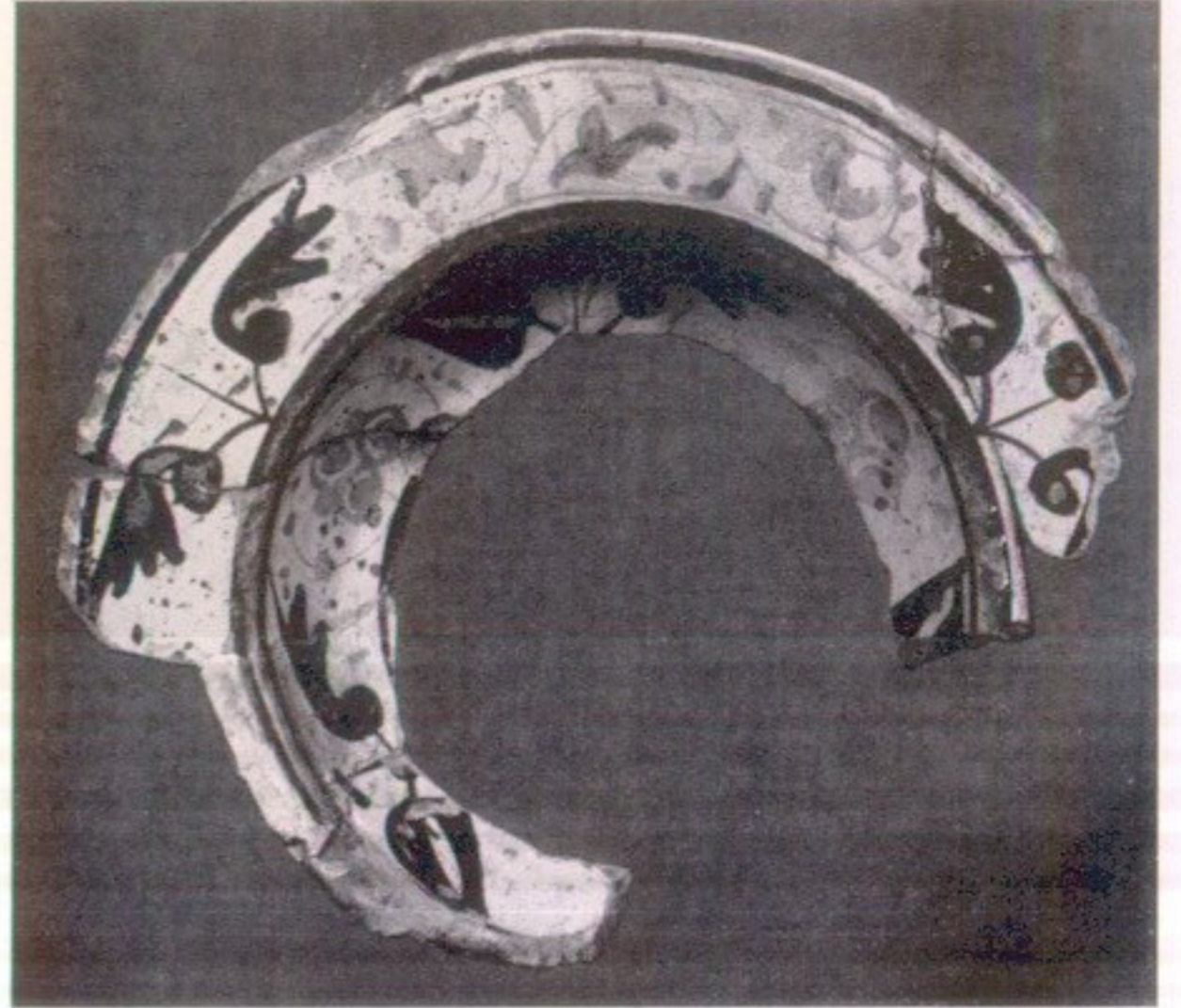


5. (fig. 32.)

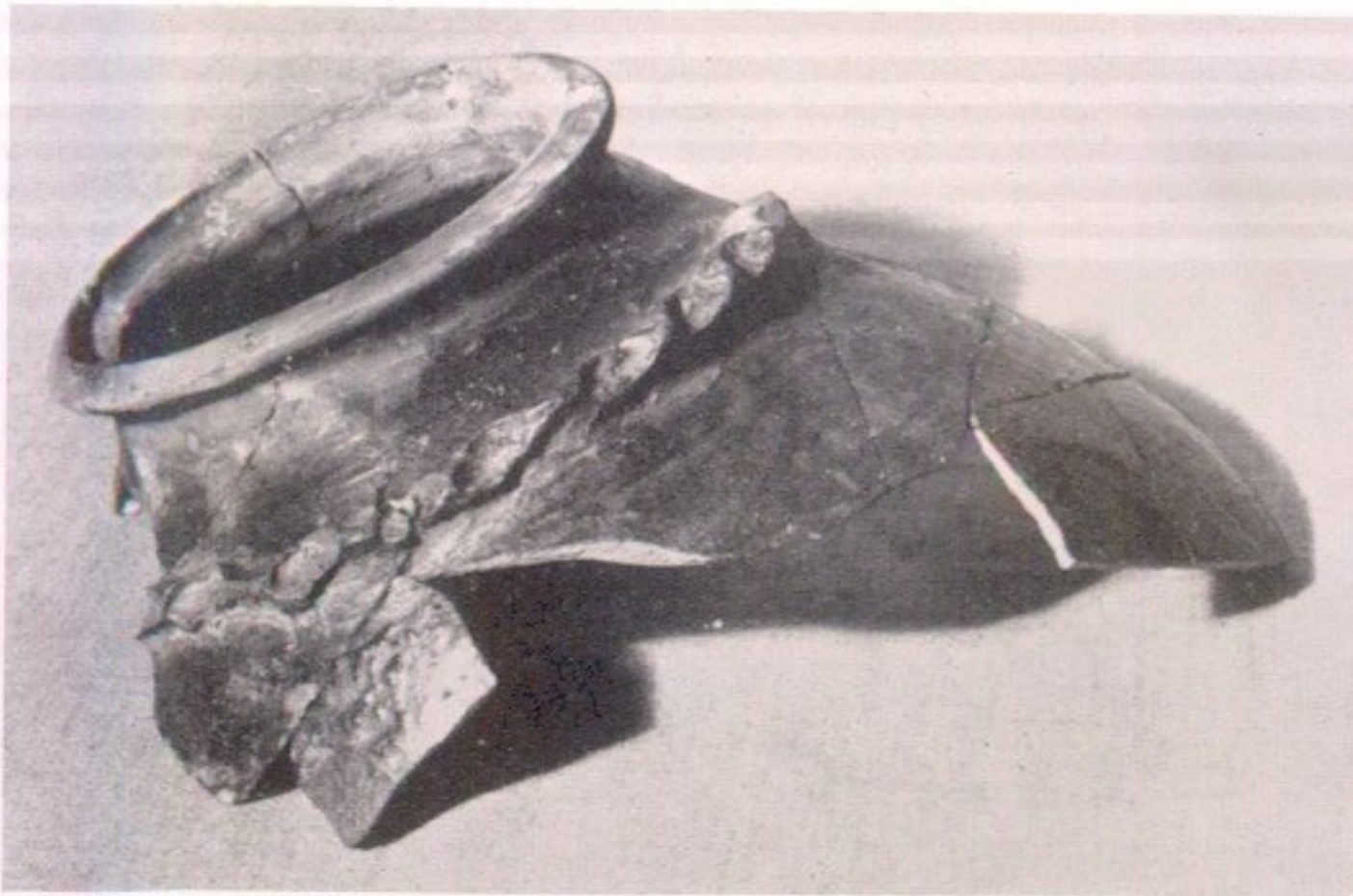
STEWART CRUDEN.



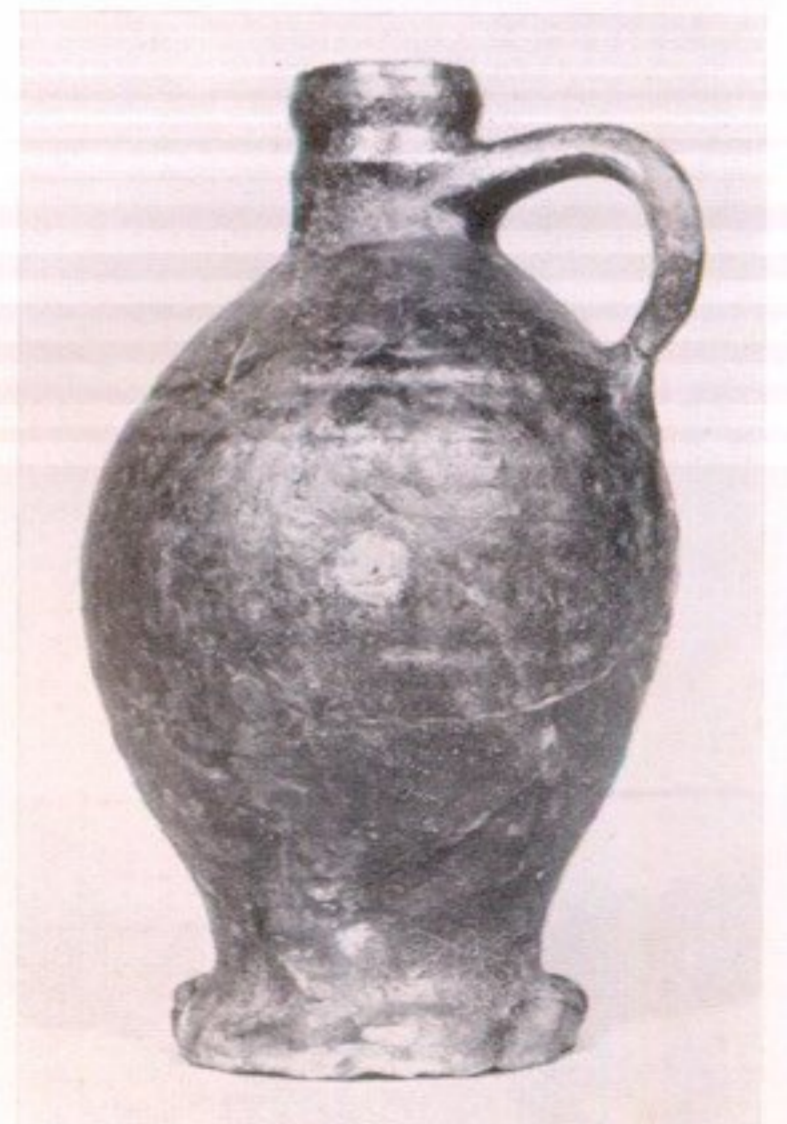
1. (fig. 38.)



2. (fig. 41.)



3. (fig. 40.)



4. (fig. 39.)

STEWART CRUDEN.