

Notes on Scottish Medieval Pottery

by Lloyd R. Laing and W. Norman Robertson

SCARBOROUGH WARE

In 1965, in an appendix to the report on the excavations at Kildrummy Castle, Mr G C Dunning drew attention to several finds of Scarborough ware from Scotland. He also published a distribution map of known finds of this ware in Europe.¹ Subsequently, Mr H Coutts of Dundee Museum published a further note on the Scarborough ware from Overgate, Dundee.² These two notes together describe the finds from four sites in Scotland; Kildrummy Castle, Aberdeenshire, Perth, Dundee and Abbey St Bathans, near Duns, Berwickshire.

Since the publication of these finds our attention has been drawn to fragments from thirteen other sites listed below (fig 1).

1. HADDINGTON, East Lothian. Round-sectioned handle with reeding (Scarborough Types 6 and 8).
2. BRACKMOUNT FARM NEAR LEUCHARS, Fife. Body sherd.
3. TEALING, Angus. Body sherd, probably from Type 2 jug with applied strips. These three sherds are in the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland; one is registered Cat no. MEA 4 (1946, 206), the other two are unmarked examples from the Daniel Henderson Collection NMAS.
4. GLENLUCE ABBEY, Wigtownshire. Tubular spout (Scarborough Type 7). MPBW site museum. Unpublished material.
5. STIRLING, Blackfriars Cemetery. Round-sectioned handle. Among pottery collected by Mr A D S Macdonald. Now in Dick Institute, Stirling.
6. RESTENNETH PRIORY, Angus. Body sherd of Type 18 jug with applied bands and scales. Now in NMAS.
7. ARBROATH ABBEY, Angus. Round-sectioned handle and body sherd. MPBW site museum.
8. DIRLETON CASTLE, East Lothian. Round-sectioned handle and body sherd. MPBW site museum.
9. ST ANDREWS CATHEDRAL, Fife. Round-sectioned handle and body sherd. MPBW site museum.
10. NORTH BERWICK ABBEY, East Lothian. Round-sectioned handle and body sherd. Abbey Collection in North Berwick Burgh Museum.
11. DEER ABBEY, Aberdeenshire. One sherd. Melrose Abbey, MPBW site museum.
12. BROUGH OF BIRSAY, Orkney. Face mask spout (Scarborough Type 5). SMP 70 MPBW site museum.
13. COLDINGHAM PRIORY, Berwickshire. Rim of jug. In NMAS, not numbered.

There are also two sherds collected by bird-watchers on the Isle of May, one a handle and the other a body sherd. Both these fragments have the characteristic lustrous glaze and the light-

coloured, hard sandy fabric associated with the Scarborough kilns. The handle seems to be a kiln waster, the glaze having spread through a crack between the junction of the handle and the body of the pot. However, it may not be a Scarborough import but a product of a kiln on the island for which there is other evidence.



FIG 1

The fragment of an aquamanile from Skipness Castle, Argyll, is also in a ware and glaze closely related to the Scarborough products.³ Although various aquamaniles were produced by the Scarborough kilns, the example from Skipness, a West coast site, is not represented in the published series.⁴ Finally, mention may be made of a fragment of a plastic figure from a

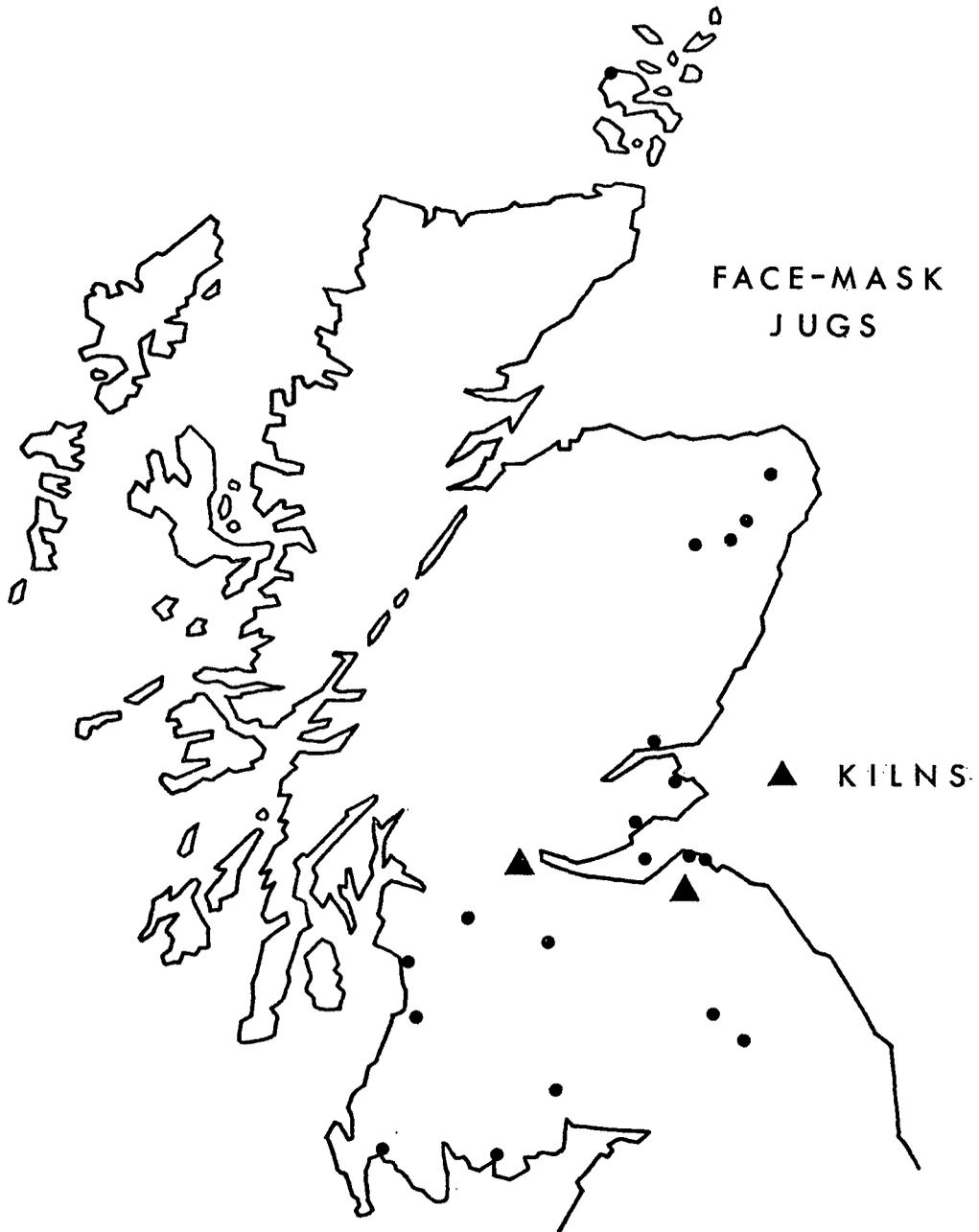


FIG 2

jug in the shape of a knight on horseback, found in the excavations at Hurly Hawkin, Angus.⁵ This is a type of figure usually associated with Nottingham where a famous jug from the Moot Hall is decorated with knights hunting hares.⁶ The fabric of the Hurly Hawkin figure together with its glaze are quite characteristic of Scarborough, though the form again is not matched in the known finds from Scarborough. The Moot Hall jug, however, is also in a 'Scarborough' fabric and there is reason to suppose that it is an import in Nottingham since in fabric and glaze it is unique among the Nottingham vessels. The connection between Nottingham and Scarborough has been noted by Rutter in a discussion of another type of 'knight' jug.⁷

FACE MASK JUGS

Anthropomorphic decoration is a characteristic feature of medieval pottery. It is as widespread in Scotland as in England, turning up in all areas where medieval pottery is found. As in England, face masks are relatively rare on individual sites, usually any site where they occur can boast no more than one or two examples at the most.

In Scotland there is no evidence as yet for the native production of free-standing figures or complete figures raised in relief. Two sherds, one from Kirkcudbright and another from Dundee (Overgate), may be parts of circular brooches worn by full length figures. There is no reason to suppose that the Kirkcudbright⁸ jugs are not English imports as also the sherd from Dundee.⁹ Small face masks on the rim or body of a vessel are also uncommon.

The bulk of the anthropomorphic pottery in Scotland belongs to the general category of vessels with bearded face masks. This group has been made the special study of a discussion by Mrs H E Jean le Patourel.¹⁰ It has been found convenient in the following analysis of Scottish material to devise a scheme not based on the classification of beard types; broadly speaking it is possible to distinguish three different classes:

Type 1 includes all face masks modelled in good relief in the neck and rim of the jug with the intention of producing an anthropomorphic vessel. These would appear to date from the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Type 2 is a related type – bridge spouts with faces modelled on them. The date of these vessels would appear to be approximately the same as Type 1.

Type 3 appears to be characteristic of fifteenth-century pottery. This type is generally merely a pad of clay applied to the neck, rim or even the body of the vessel on which a face has been incised with economy of line. A later variant, Type 3A, which probably continued into the sixteenth century, consists of a face incised directly on to the body of the pot without any attempt at relief.

Kilns producing face mask jugs are known at Stenhouse, near Falkirk, and Colstoun, East Lothian.¹¹ Both Stenhouse and Colstoun are known to have produced Type 1 jugs, while Stenhouse also appears to have produced Type 3 masks. These were in the form of a very diminutive trilobate pad on the rim with an incised face and incised cross and circles on the body. A map showing the distribution of face masks on pottery found in Scotland is given in fig 2. Examples of these three different types have been identified as follows:

Type 1

Several masks belonging to this type have been published. One fine example with a long beard comes from the Bass of Inverurie, Aberdeenshire, found in 1919.¹² This mask, in sandy buff ware with a good apple green glaze is from a jug with a flat inturned rim. It appears to have

a hand clutching the beard, the other arm forms a strut with the body. We know of no Scottish parallels for it and it would seem to be an import – belonging to the same class are the published pots with well-modelled masks from Bothwell Castle,¹³ St Andrews Cathedral,¹⁴ Inchcolm Abbey¹⁵ and Birsay;¹⁶ the latter example is probably an import from Yorkshire (see above). A notable feature of one of the Bothwell jugs¹⁷ and the St Andrews jug is the way in which the beard forms a loop with body of the vessel. In the case of the St Andrews jug the beard is of the ‘rope-twist’ type. The same feature is to be noted on a recently published face-mask from Holywood, Dumfriesshire,¹⁸ and on a mask of late thirteenth/early fourteenth-century date from Kirkcudbright Castle, first published in 1914 and recently re-published.¹⁹ This type is known to have been made at Colstoun. It is widespread in North Britain and was being produced in Yorkshire at Nottingham and at Carlisle.²⁰

Type 2

Bridge spouts were made with a separate piece of clay smoothed on to the neck of the vessel, then a hole was pierced through below the rim before firing. Spouts of this type have been published from Melrose²¹ and Bothwell,²² in the latter case the mask being not the whole spout

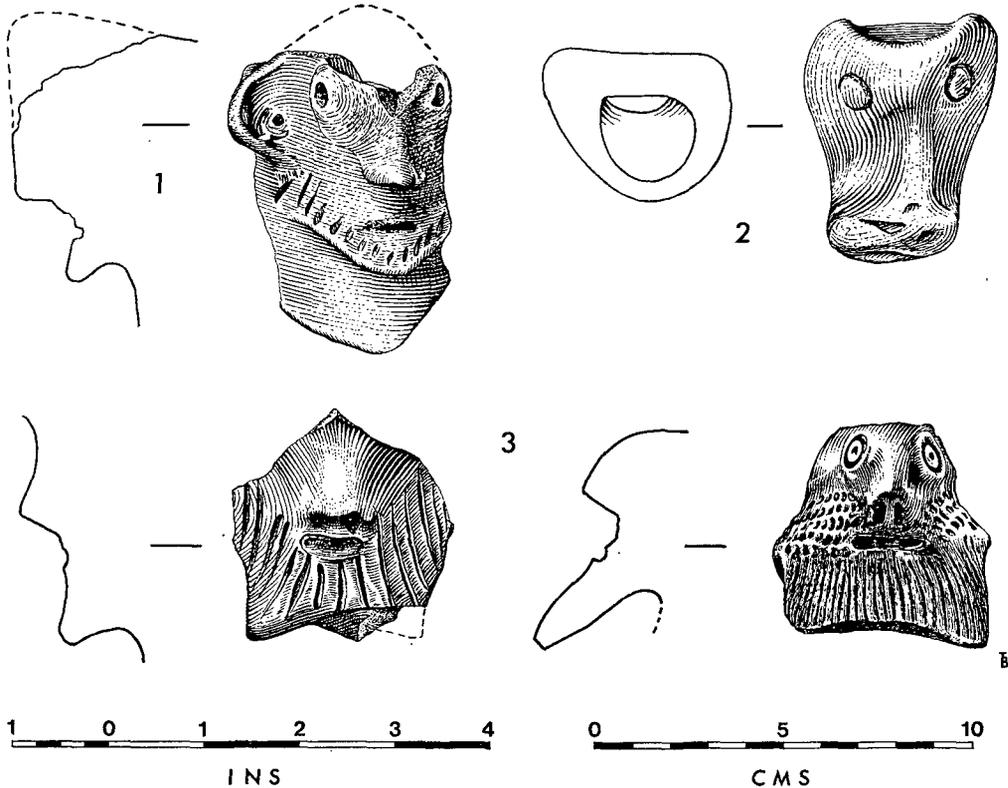


FIG 3

but forming a medallion on it. Bridge spouts are normally dated to the period 1250-1350 and are widespread from London northwards. Scottish examples of the fifteenth century are known.²³ This form of spout ornamented with a mask, however, belongs to the earlier period. In addition to those already published there is one unprovenanced example in the NMAS, without doubt

Scottish or Northern on account of its fabric, style and glaze, Cat no. MEA 259 (fig 3 no. 1). Another sherd attributed to Orkney and labelled Traill Collection belongs to the same class; the ware is grey with mottled green-brown glaze and much weathered, Cat no. MEA 257 (fig 3 no. 2). A further two masks found at Tantallon Castle almost certainly come from the Colstoun kilns; the beards are square-ended and project from the pot,²⁴ (fig 3 no. 3). A fragment of another bearded mask from North Berwick Abbey is also a probable product of Colstoun. Lastly there is a good example in the collection of pottery from Caerlaverock Castle, as yet unpublished; in this instance the bearded face is long and narrow with pendant chin. The above examples all belong to a type of bridge spout peculiar to the North of England. Similar spouts, where the upper part is level with the rim or below it, have been found at York, Nottingham and Chester. Precise parallels for the faces on the Scottish spouts, however, seem to be lacking outside Scotland. Face masks of a different sort but of the same date do appear nevertheless on bridge spouts in Northern England; there is one in the possession of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle,²⁵ and another of the same date has been published from Carlisle.²⁶

Type 3

Several jugs of this type have been published already. A typical example from Glenluce Abbey is of flattish, semi-circular form with short incised lines for the beard, mouth and nose; the eyes are impressed circles with an impressed dot in the centre of both.²⁷ It can be matched by one in the NMA not numbered but labelled 'Carron' (fig 4 no. 1). This is probably from the Stenhouse kilns which produced pottery with masks of the same character,²⁸ Cat no. HD 176-68 (fig 4 no. 2). Yet another mask of almost identical type was found at Ravenscraig Castle, Fife, in a context which must post-date 1462, the date of the building of the castle. The mask was on the body of the vessel.

Another fifteenth-century type of face mask is on a globular vessel from Tolquhon Castle, Aberdeenshire. Although there was an earlier occupation of the site, the main structure is fifteenth century and later. The ware is fine and light coloured, with a mottled green and honey coloured glaze, and on the body are comb incised swags²⁹ (fig 4 no. 3). This mask and body decoration can be paralleled by part of a similar jug from Abbey of Deer, presumably from the same kiln.³⁰ A fine jug with a mask on the body comes from Jedburgh,³¹ and another pot from Bothwell which might even be of early sixteenth-century date.³²

MISCELLANEOUS

Probably belonging to Type 1 is a face mask among the published material from Jedburgh,³³ and a sherd in the NMA from the medieval mound at Kidsneuk, Ayrshire,³⁴ Cat no. MEA 322 (fig 4 no. 4). There are also two other examples suitable for inclusion in the Type 3 list. The first is a very fine complete jug which was found at Dalrymple, Ayrshire in 1833 and now in the NMA, Cat no. MEA 376 (fig 5). In grey ware with a dark green glaze, it bears a face-mask and arms in low relief. The body of the jug is decorated with applied bovril-coloured strips. While it is late thirteenth or early fourteenth century in character, a fifteenth-century date is not improbable.³⁵ The other example is a fragmentary mask from the secondary occupation of the souterrain at Wester Yardhouses, Carnwath, Lanarkshire, Cat no. MEA 53 (fig 4 no. 5).

Finally, to round off this survey of face-masks on pottery, mention should be made of another two fragments. A fragment probably from a strainer from Kildrummy Castle bears a tiny face mask stamped on the underside of the finger-grip.³⁶ The second fragment is a miniature

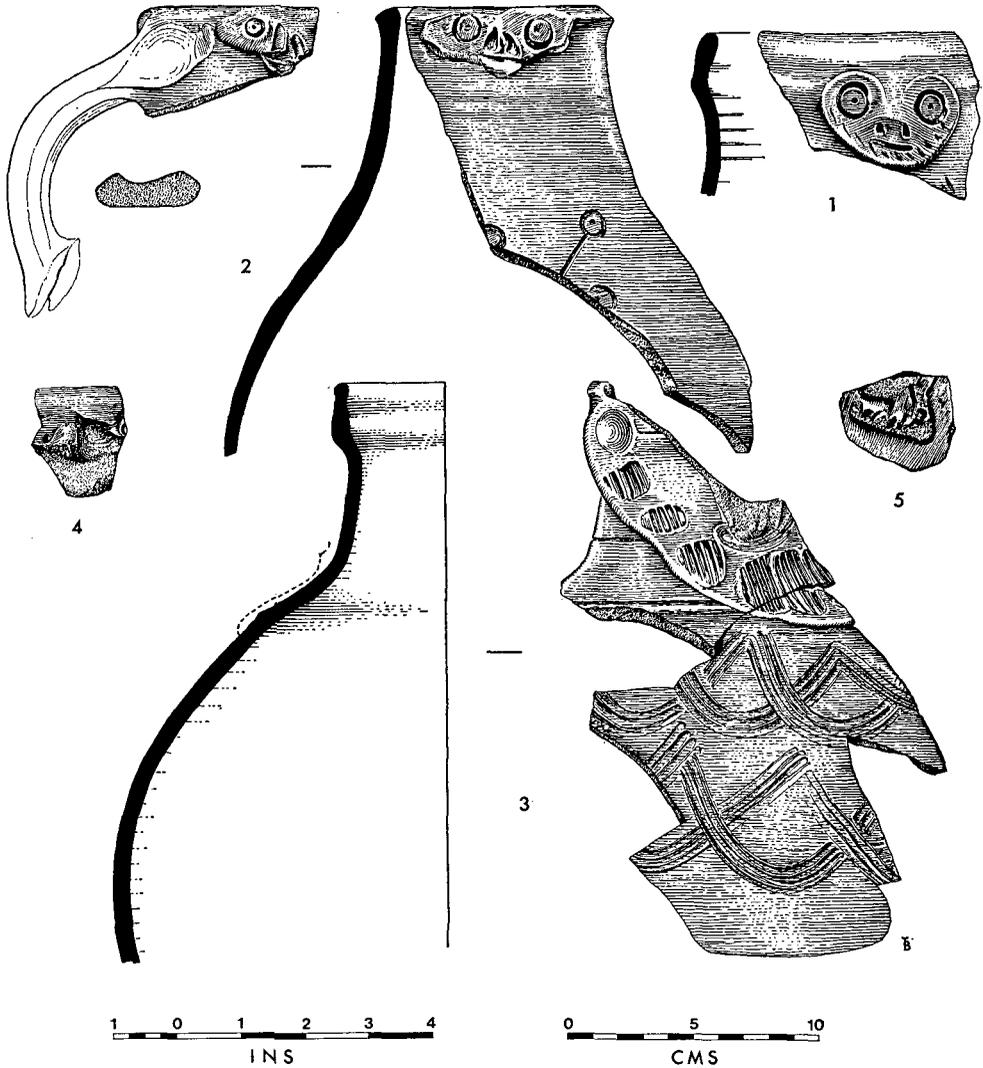


FIG 4

face-mask, unbearded, from the upper part of a vessel found at Overgate, Dundee. This latter sherd is probably from the Northumberland or Co Durham area.

Mrs le Patourel has suggested that beard jugs came to Scotland by way of Stainmoor and Carlisle. She has pointed out that these jugs have an essentially east coast distribution but that a gap on the map exists between Yorkshire and Scotland. In the counties of Northumberland and Durham, face-masks on pottery are of a simple, unbearded type. The absence of this feature west of the Pennines she sees as being the result of the popularity there of another type of anthropomorphic decoration.³⁷ Since this was written, the accumulating evidence from Scotland seems to indicate a more direct east coast pottery trade with Yorkshire during the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Most of the Scottish material referred to has been found in or near harbour towns, and it is therefore reasonable to assume that much of this pottery including beard jugs was imported into Scotland with other sea-borne goods shipped from Yorkshire ports.

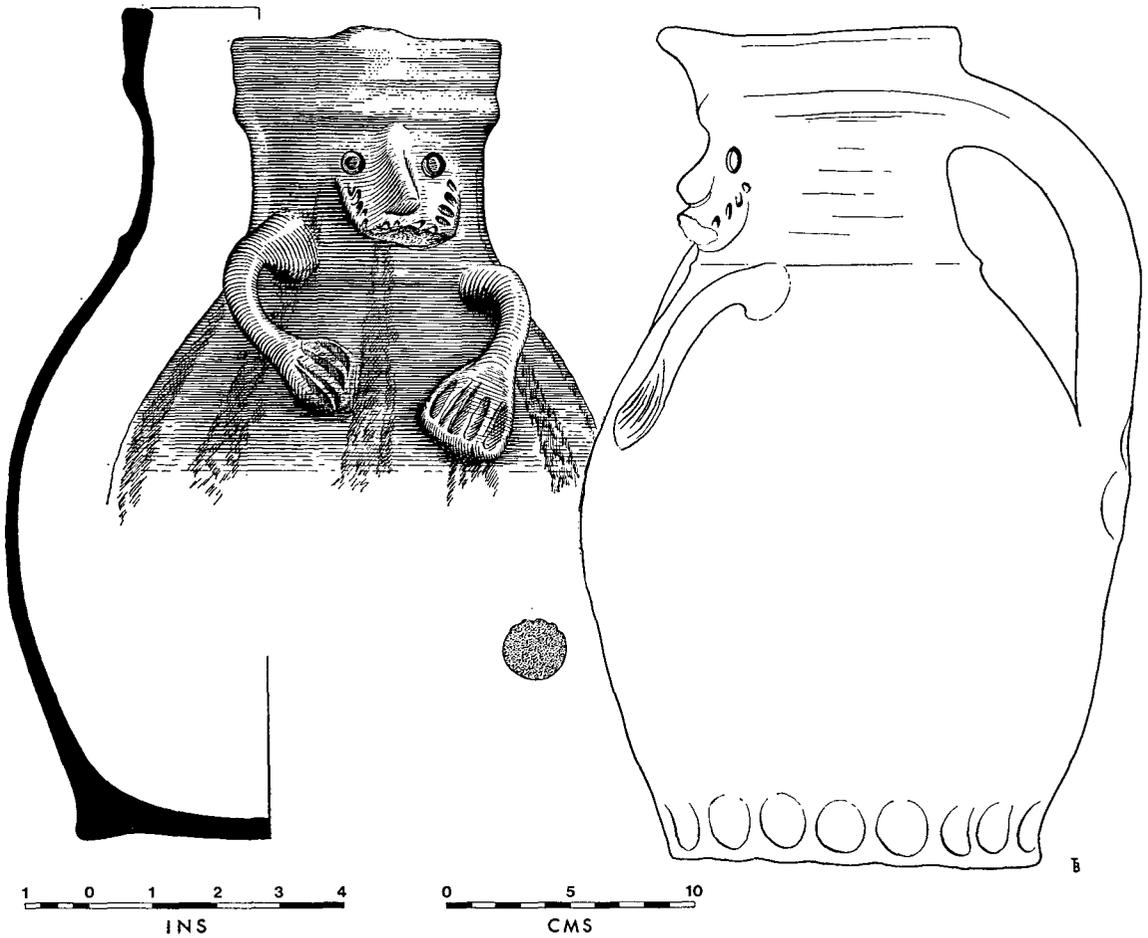


FIG 5

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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7. Rutter 1961, op cit 16.
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