

12. Pottery from Twist's House, Prescot (Site 28).

C. Cresswell and P.J. Davey

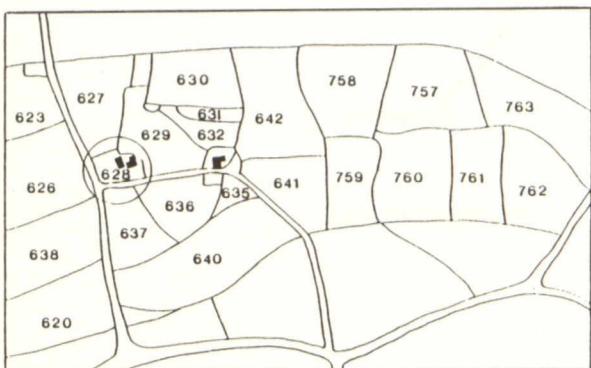
Circumstance of the Find

Twist's House is located in Knowsley Park Lane, Prescot, just to the north of the junction with Park Road (NGR SJ 462 931: Fig. 1.3). In the spring of 1980, the owner of the property, Mr John Leigh, together with his son Simon, was excavating for a car inspection pit and discovered a large number of sherds of coarse red pottery. The pottery was found under the cobbled floor of a former barn or outbuilding marked on the plan (Fig. 12.2). The sherds appeared to be packed in the ground rather than tipped and were confined to an area 90cm x 74cm at the southern end of the pit within 70cm of the surface.

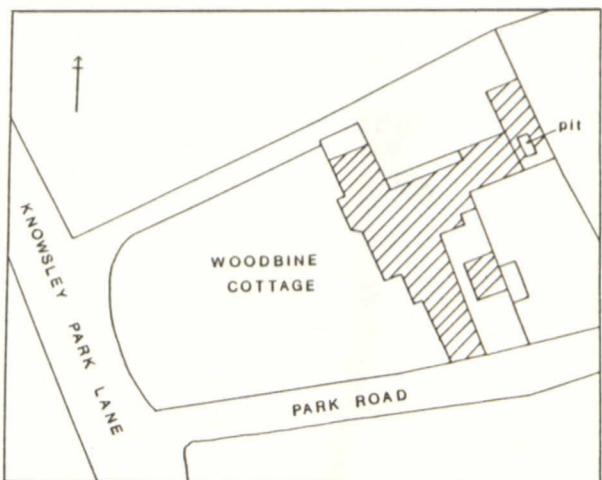
The Leights identified the potential interest their find might arouse and stored the pottery fragments in two suitcases. They subsequently very generously allowed the writers to study and reassemble the fragments and donated them to the Prescot Museum.

The Site

Twist's House is shown on the Tithe Map (Fig. 12.1) as Woodbine Cottage. The name was changed within the last 30 years by Mr and Mrs Evans, former owners of the property, to acknowledge an earlier occupancy by the Twist family. Joseph Twist was a builder who diversified, to be described in the 1861 census return as a "Builder and Earthenware Manufacturer". In 1871 the cottage had passed to his son John, who with his brother Charles are entered in the census of that year as "Earthenware Manufacturers". The Mannex Directory, 1855, bears the following entry: "Earthenware Manufactures Joseph and Edward Twist, New Road [New Road is now Warrington Road, and was the site of the Mill Pottery], while that Directory for 1871 lists "Richard and John Twist, Earthenware Manufacturers, Kemble Street".



12.1 North side of Prescot from the tithe maps of Knowsley (1848) and Eccleston (1840), Woodbine Cottage circled

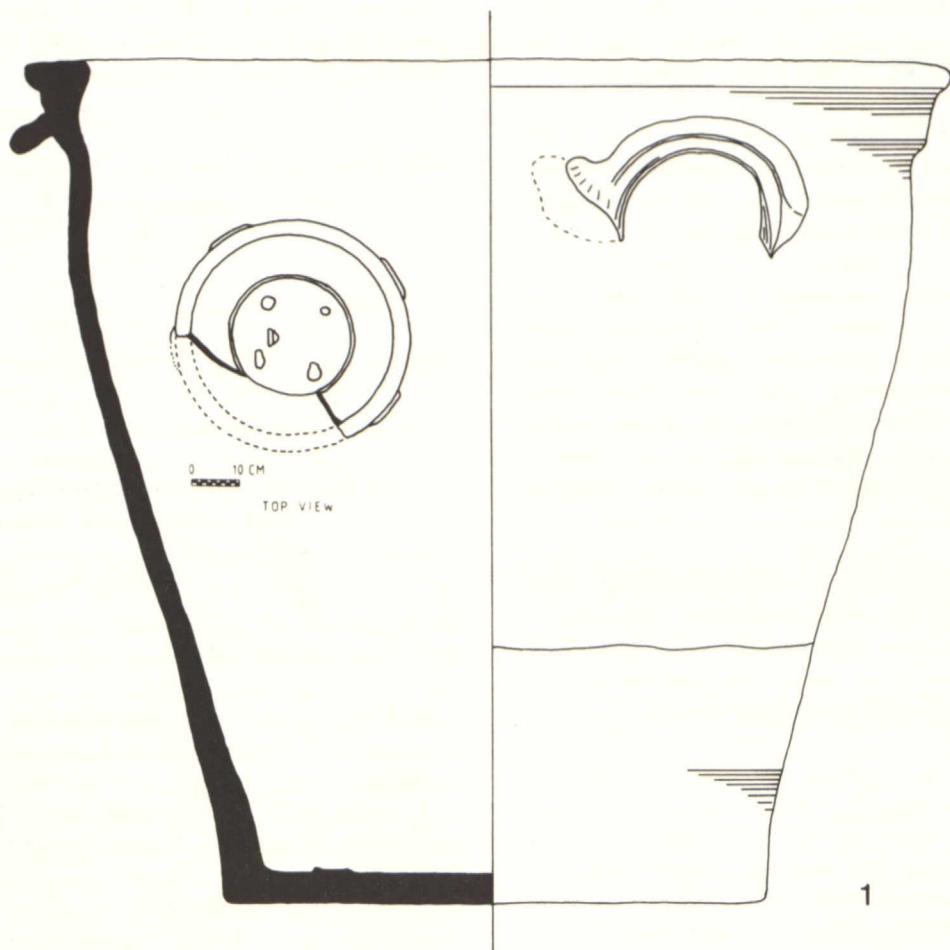


12.2 A later plan of Woodbine Cottage (Twist's House), showing location of excavated pit
Scale: 1:1,000

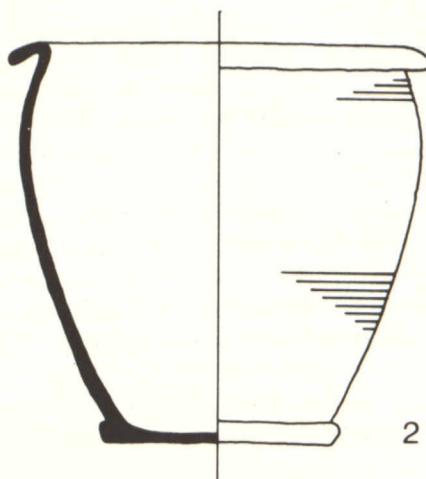
In the garden of Twist's House and on adjacent land, have been found kiln stilts and pieces of saggar. Such finds are usually identified with pottery sites rather than domestic tips, but no direct documentary evidence has yet been found to confirm the date or ownership of a pottery here. The Ordnance Survey map, 1848, marks the Mill (New Road) Pottery, Moss Pottery and Brook Pottery but no works in the area of Knowsley Park Lane. The Twist's era of pottery manufacture does not appear to relate to the Knowsley region and it is unlikely therefore that the Twist family were responsible for the excavated sherds which were probably buried before their entry into the mughouse trade.

A lease dated 1789 refers to a parcel of land at or near Parkside in Knowsley containing two "Potworks" or "Mugworks" (Lancashire County Record Office DJOS 17/5). The lease was drawn up between William Ward and Thomas Ashcroft and included the house of Thomas Spencer, Clay Potter. The boundaries of Knowsley, Prescot and Eccleston met close to Parkside and thus the "parcel of land" in the lease is defined fairly closely in the vicinity of Woodbine Cottage. The Tithe map (1848) describes a plot of land to the north of the cottage as Mughouse Field (Plot 630, Fig. 12.1) and probably refers to a pottery site.

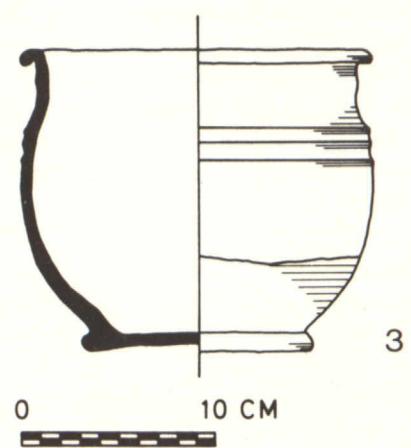
Thomas Spencer of Knowsley (Claypotter) is first mentioned in Coroners' Inquest Proceedings of 1774, but it is not until 1819/20 that a commercial directory locates the site of T.J. and W. Spencer at Drown Pitcher (Plots 641 and 759 Fig. 12.1), land to the east of Woodbine Cottage through which runs the boundary between Knowsley and Eccleston. In 1855 Spencer and Co. are at the Moss Pottery (Plot 760 Fig. 12.1) east of Drown Pitcher and now occupied by Prescot Football Club.



1



2



3

12.3 Pottery from Twist's House, Prescot. Nos. 1-3

It may be concluded that no pottery has existed near the site in question since 1850 and probably none since 1820, but two potteries were present in 1789. One may surmise that Thomas Spencer worked in Knowsley at the end of the 18th century and his pottery moved progressively to the east until its final site described in 1855. The sherds found at Twist's House may therefore date from the period of the lease, that is, the end of the 18th century, but the name of the manufacturer remains a mystery.

The Pottery

A total of 342 sherds had been recovered from the inspection pit excavation and these were examined and sorted into 64 base sherds, 38 rim sherds, 223 body sherds and 17 sherds showing evidence of handles. All the pottery was of a coarse red earthenware fabric with streaks of yellow clay intermixed, with the exception of 7 sherds of fine red body and 8 sherds of a fine grey body. Generally the pottery was either unglazed or with a lead glaze producing a black or brown finish.

By careful sorting and matching it was possible to reassemble 16 separate identifiable vessels incorporating a total of 253 sherds. Whilst not complete, several of the vessels were sufficiently

complete to allow full profiles to be recorded. The 16 separate vessels are represented by 9 distinct types and these are illustrated in Figures 12.3-5 and described below. From the remaining sherds 11 different rim forms were identified. One pouring lip, possibly from one of the large pitchers (type 8 or 9) is illustrated in Fig. 5. Altogether the recovered sherds represent a total of 20 different forms from a relatively small sample.

Discussion

Black-glazed, red-bodied earthenware was made at many centres in the British Isles, particularly in the 17th to 19th centuries. A problem for archaeologists, who frequently recover many fragments of this kind of material in the upper layers of excavations, and collectors, who can often find complete vessels in antique shops and sales, is that the ware was so ubiquitous and long-lived that it is very difficult to date or assign a source to a particular fragment or vessel.

The Twist's House finds are important because they are clearly local products and because they almost certainly date from the late 18th or early 19th century and were probably made very near to the site - yet before the pottery moved east to Drown Pitcher.

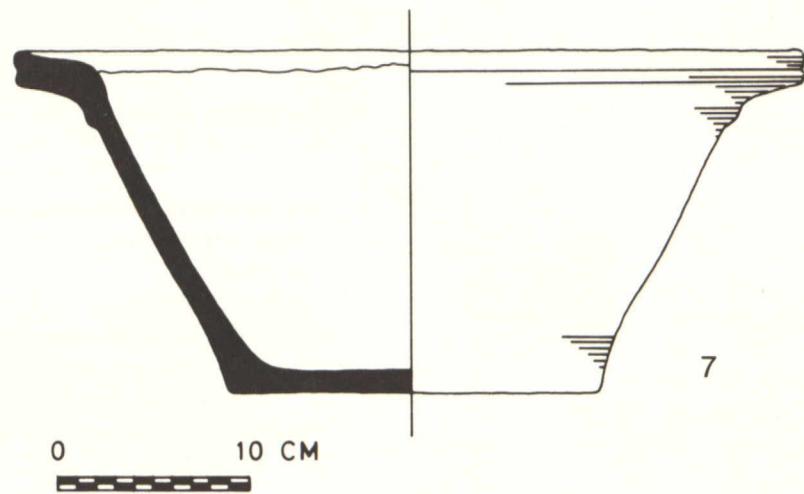
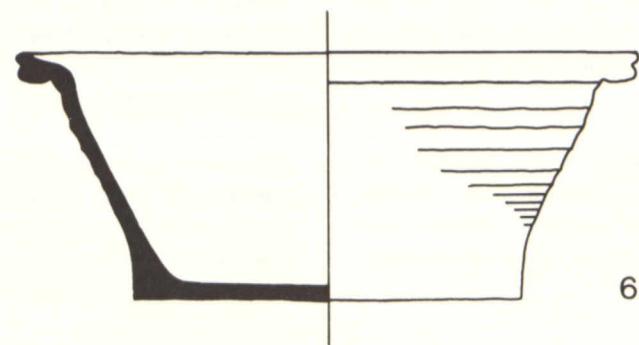
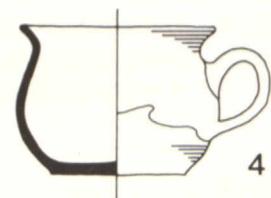
The large pitchers, pancheons and jars described here were probably made to be used as containers for bread, milk and other foodstuffs in the kitchen and dairy. They represent the cheapest vessels available at that time and were, therefore, in use in most of the houses in Prescot and the neighbouring farms.

Table showing number of sherds in each vessel

Vessel Type No	Base	Rim	Body	Handle	Total No of sherds
1/1	5	3	10	4	22
1/2	5				5
2	3	1	6		10
3	3	3	2		8
4	1	2	2	2	7
5	2				2
6	4	1	2		7
7	6	4	2		12
8	6	1	39	1	47
9/1	1		24		25
9/2	1		30		31
9/3	4		23	1	28
9/4	4		15	1	20
9/5	2				2
9/6	2		1		3
9/7	1		20	2	24
TOTAL	50	16	176	11	253

Illustrated vessels (Figures 12.3-5) Examples

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 Large open storage vessel-straight sides | 2 |
| Diameter at rim-48cm | |
| Height-43.6cm | |
| Outside-partially glazed | |
| Handles-4 horizontal strap handles run in an eccentric arrangement around the circumference | |
| Marks of 4 separators on inside base. | |
| 2 Open jar | 1 |
| Diameter at rim-22cm | |
| Height-21cm | |
| Outside-unglazed | |
| In-fully glazed | |
| Handles-nil | |



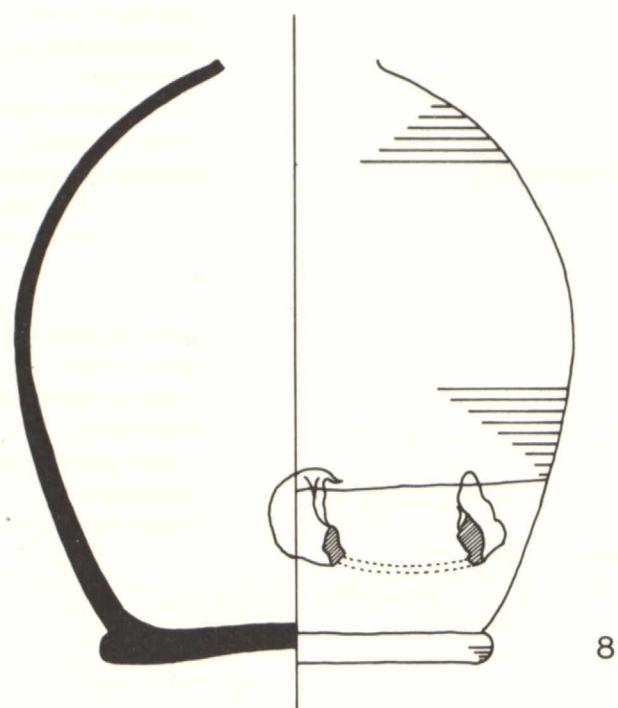
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12.4 Pottery from Twist's House, Prescot. Nos. 4-7

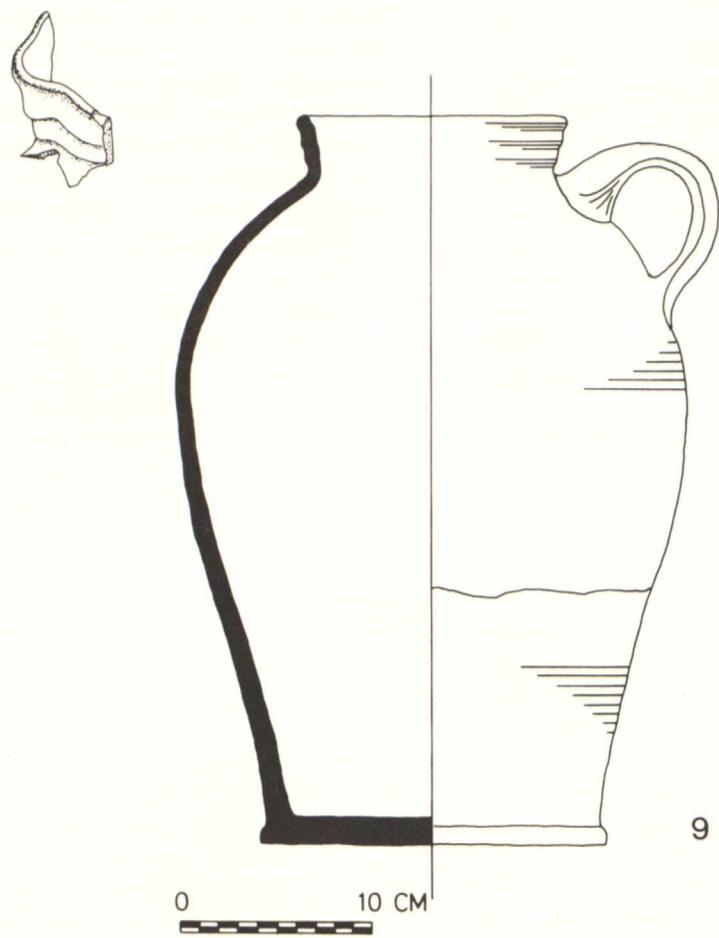
3	Open jar-fine grey fabric Diameter at rim-18cm Height-15.8cm Outside-partially glazed Inside-fully glazed Handles-nil Fragments of saggar or similar glazed onto inside of base.	1	8	Large pitcher-bulbous convex sides Rim not recovered Maximum diameter-29cm Height-31cm Outside-partially glazed Inside-fully glazed Handles-horizontal strap handles set in an inverted position near the base; evidence of one handle only	1
4	Small cup-fine red fabric Diameter at rim-10cm Height-7.6cm Outside-partially glazed Inside-fully glazed Handles-one	1	9	Larger pitcher-convex sides (drawing of lip) Maximum diameter-26.5cm Height-38cm Outside-partially glazed Inside-unglazed Handle-short vertical strap	7
5	Small hollow ware vessel-base only Diameter of base-12.5cm Height-unknown Outside-partially glazed Inside-glazed	1			
6	Small shallow pantheon-straight sides Diameter at rim-32cm Height-13cm Outside-unglazed Inside-fully glazed Handles-nil	1			
7	Shallow pantheon-straight sides Diameter at rim-41cm Height-17.9cm Outside-unglazed Inside-fully glazed Handles-nil	1			

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to Ron Dagnall for drawing the vessels and preparing the illustrations of the maps; to C.P. Downes, W. Highcock, M. Holker, M. Hollis, J. Lewis, E.G. Lumley, M. McNulty, H.B.W. Richardson, G.P. Smith, J.H. Taylor and T. Williets, the members of the pottery class held in Prescot in 1981 under the supervision of P.J. Davey, for their help in sorting and reassembling the pottery.



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0 10 CM

12.5 Pottery from Twist's House, Prescot. Nos. 8-9