

The Hearth and the Kitchen

MUSEUM BOOKLET NO 1

CAMBRIDGE & COUNTY
FOLK MUSEUM

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2 Castle Street Cambridge

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*The Hearth
and the Kitchen*

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Foreword

Before the introduction, in the early 19th century, of the kitchen range, all cooking was done over an open fire set either in the centre of the room or, from the 12th century, at the side. Because pots, pans and baking sheets had to be suspended over the flames, their design and shape changed little for well over 2,000 years. Although, therefore, the cooking utensils and tools exhibited in the Folk Museum belong, mainly, to the 18th and 19th centuries, they are identical, in most cases, to similar objects used for similar purposes from pre-historic times.

The figures in the text refer to the numbers of the illustrations.

Hearths and Fireplaces

The open hearth in *Room 2* is a typical one of the 16th century. It was reduced in width, in 1961, by the insertion of a modern flue to provide more efficient ventilation for the central heating than the 14 feet-wide chimney could give. The flue is enclosed by the plastered wall on the left; this is inset with 17th and 18th century ceramic tiles removed from the Three Tuns Inn (latterly the Central Hotel) on Market Hill, which was demolished in 1961. In the new wall a small recess has been made to replace the one in the original wall and to match a similar recess opposite. These ledges provided a convenient storage space for tinder boxes, salt, etc., which were thus kept dry by the heat of the fire.

The brick hearth is solid, so logs had to be placed on it in such a way that there was sufficient air beneath them to cause a draught. Their ends rested, therefore, either on stones or on iron FIRE-DOGS (1) which raised the fuel above the level of the hearth.

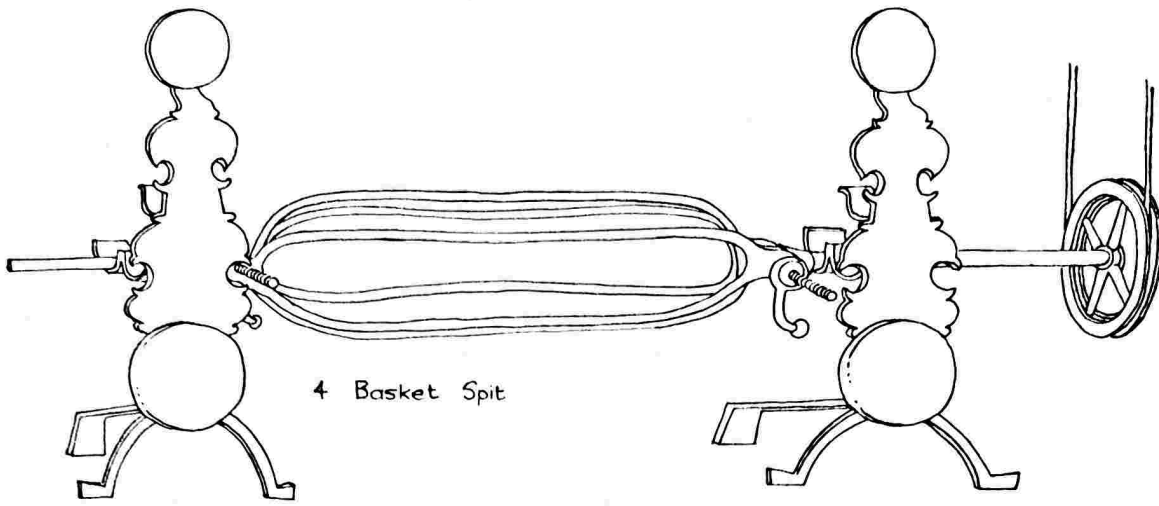
The wall at the back of the fireplace was protected against the heat of the burning fuel by a cast-iron FIRE-BACK. The one displayed in *Room 2* (2) bears a crest and the date 1635; other examples can be seen in *Rooms 5 and 10*.

The curved seat by the hearth was installed in the 19th century when this room was the bar parlour of the White Horse Inn. At that date the fireplace was enclosed by a grate.

In *Room 3* the once open fireplace, which formerly extended to the wall on the right, now contains a late 18th century KITCHEN GRATE (3) from a house in Brinkley. It has no oven, but the bars on the top can be adjusted by turning the handle on the right, so allowing pots of varying sizes to rest on them. A model of a typical 19th century KITCHEN RANGE, with two ovens, is exhibited in *Room 2*.

In addition to the open hearth in *Room 2* there is a second smaller fireplace at the end of the room. This contains a small 19th century cast-iron grate with hobs on either side on which to place pots and kettles. Another small hobbled grate, of the same date, is in *Room 8*, and a larger one of the 18th century is in *Room 4*.

A more modern cooking stove, in *Room 3*, is the cast iron Davis GAS COOKER of 1895. Large and small pots could be boiled on the top ring-burners, which vary considerably in diameter.

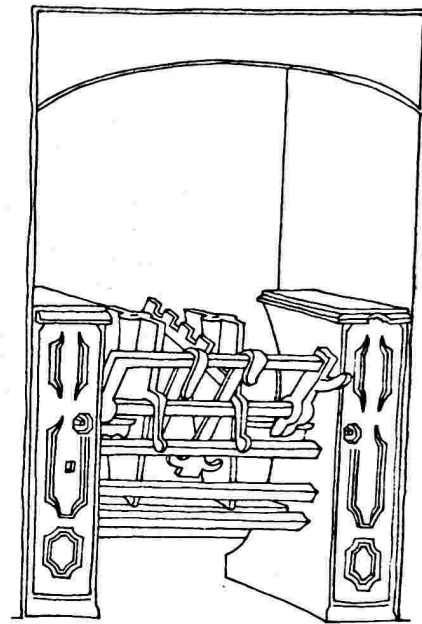


4 Basket Spit

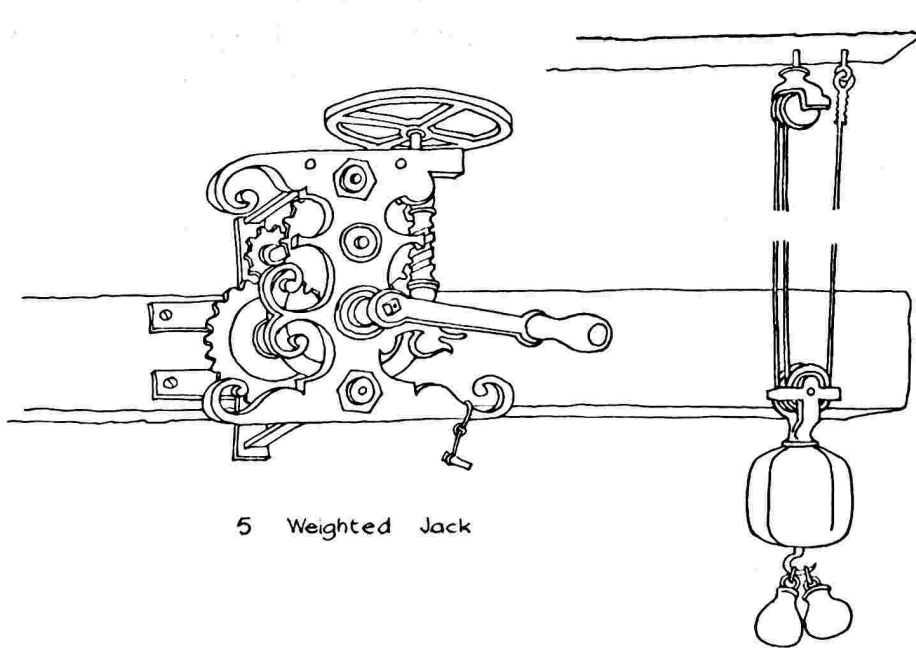
1 Fire Dog



2 Fire Back



3 Adjustable Grate



5 Weighted Jack

Implements of the Hearth

For Roasting

Resting on the fire-dogs in front of the heart in *Room 2* is an 18th century BASKET OR CRADLE SPIT (4) for roasting sucking pigs and pouktry; it has two fly nuts which, when unscrewed, allowed the steel bars to be removed so that the meat could be inserted.

The spit is connected by a rope to the wheel of the 18th century weighted JACK (5) which, when wound up, slowly rotated the spit before the fire.

For the roasting of large joints whose appearance would not, as in the case of poultry, be spoiled by piercing, the basket was replaced by the long, tapered steel SPIT (6) which hangs above the fireplace. It is fitted with adjustable prongs to hold the meat, and has a grooved wheel at one end for the rope or chain which connected it with the jack. Earlier spits had, in place of the wheel, a handle which was turned, in large households, by a boy who was known as a TURNSPIT. In some houses the spit was connected to a wheel contained in a wooden cage or drum and rotated by a short-legged dog. In other houses a smoke jack turned the spit. The upwards rush of hot air from the fire caused paddle wheels in the chimney to revolve and so turn the wooden driving wheels which projected from the wall over the fireplace.

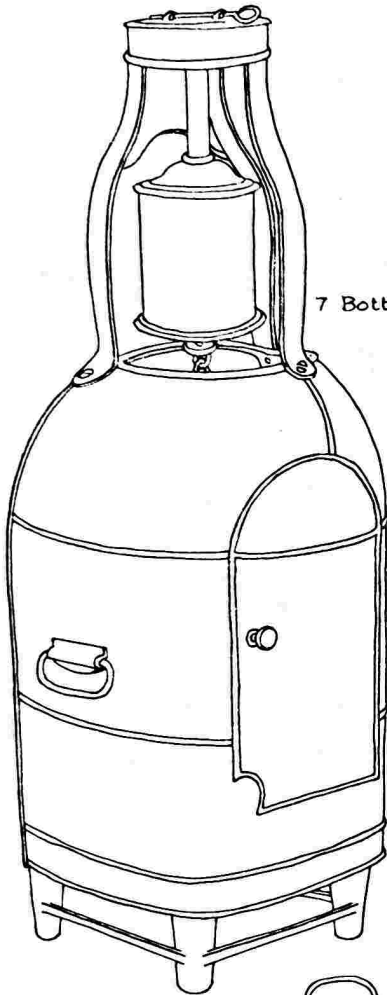
A device introduced in the 19th century for rotating meat before the fire was the clockwork BOTTLE JACK (7), of brass or japanned metal. This could hang, as does the one in *Room 3*, from a bracket fixed to the mantel shelf, with a pan below it, on a stand, to catch the dripping. Alternatively, it could be placed in a metal screen (8) similar to the one in *Room 2*. The screen, often called a HASTENER, protected the meat from draughts and so shortened the cooking time. Large wooden screens, lined with metal, were usually placed before the fire when joints were being cooked on tapered or basket spits.

For Boiling

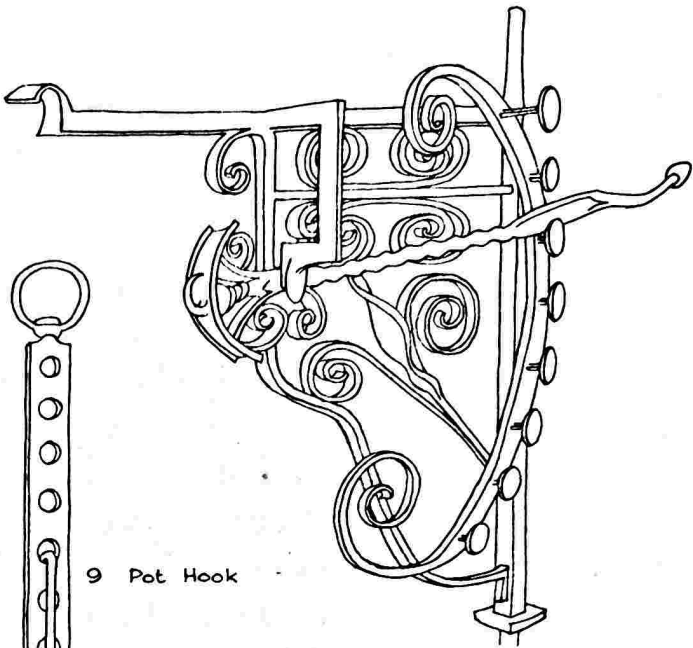
On an open hearth cooking pots, kettles and frying pans had to be suspended over the fire. The simplest device for this was the S-shaped POT-HOOK which was inserted, at the required height above the fire, into the links of a chain hung from a bar fixed horizontally in



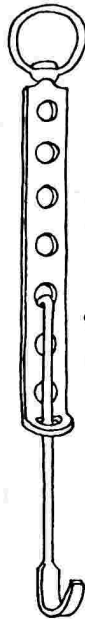
6 Pronged Spit



7 Bottle Jack

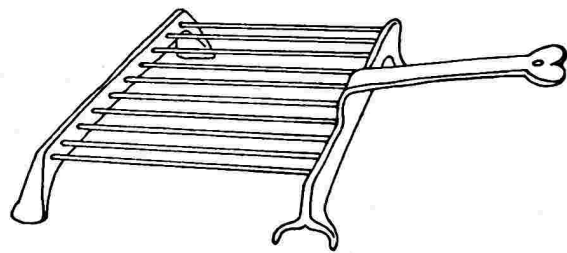


10 Chimney Crane

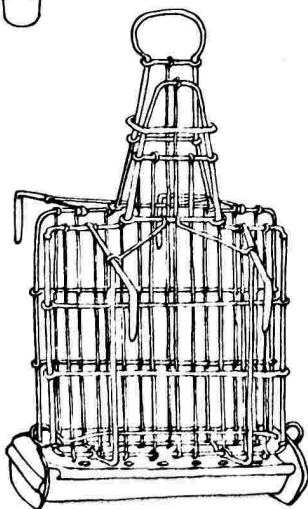


9 Pot Hook

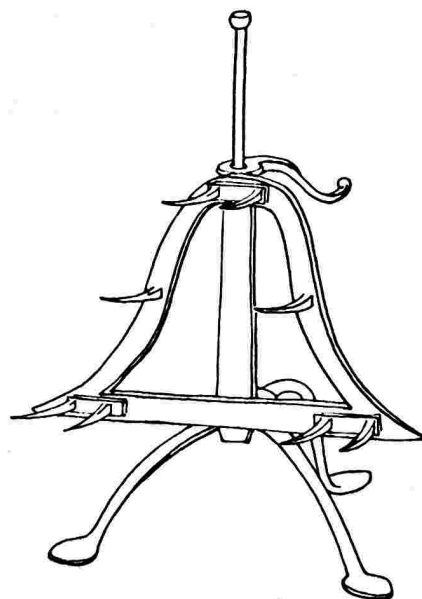
8 Hastener



11 Gridiron



12 Hanging Gridiron



13 Toaster

the chimney. More elaborate, adjustable pot-hooks (9) were also used.

At the back of many large 17th and 18th century fireplaces was fixed a wrought-iron CHIMNEY CRANE (10). This consisted, at first, of a horizontal bar forged to an upright iron attached by hooks to the back of the hearth, or inserted in a block of stone; the crane could be swung to and fro like a gate. Pots suspended on hooks on the horizontal bar could thus be placed in any position over the fire which the cook desired.

Two examples of these simple, two-movement cranes are exhibited below the small window in *Room 2*. The crane set up in the open hearth, however, is a more elaborate one, for not only does it swing to and fro but the height of the pots can be adjusted by raising or lowering the lever which is held in position by the circular studs.

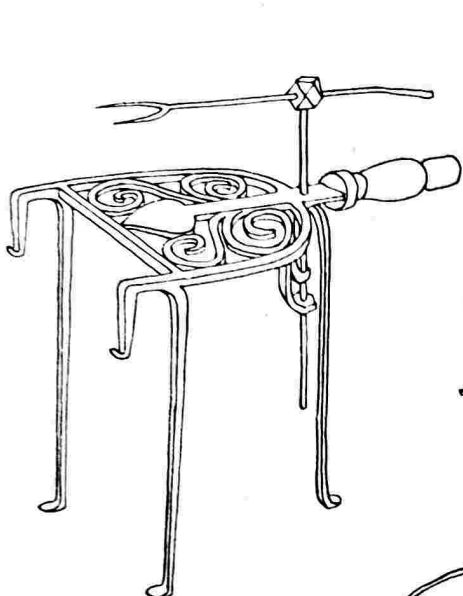
Because chimney cranes occupied a prominent position on the hearth, blacksmiths devoted a great care to their design, ornamenting them with scrolls, leaves and other devices. The housewife relied on the local blacksmith, indeed, to supply her with kitchen equipment which exactly fitted her needs.

For Broiling

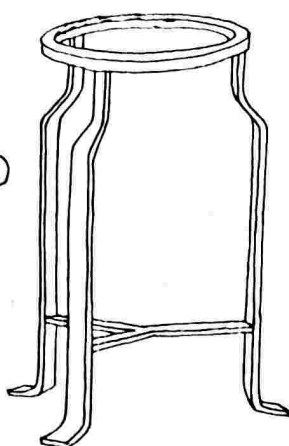
The method of cooking meat, especially chops and steak, by broiling—that is by placing it directly over the burning fuel on an open heart—was performed by means of a GRIDIRON. This consisted, in early times, of iron bars set in a frame and provided with a long handle which enabled the cook, as she held it, to stand well away from the fire. Later examples had four short legs so that the gridiron could rest on the fuel or on an iron stand. Two gridirons hang by the fireplace in *Room 2*. One of them (11) would have been held over or placed on a barred grate, tilted towards the user so that as little fat as possible dropped into the fire. The other (12) was designed for hanging on to the bars of the grate; it is provided with a trough into which the fat dripped as the meat cooked.

For Toasting

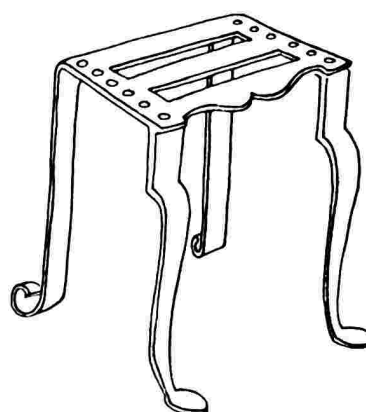
Standing TOASTERS were convenient for use before an open fire or barred grate. The iron toaster (13) in *Room 2* allows several slices of bread to be browned at once; the bar to which the prongs are forged can be raised and lowered. Nearby is a toasting fork which is attached to a trivet (14); the upright bar to which the fork is fixed is adjustable.



14 Trivet Toaster



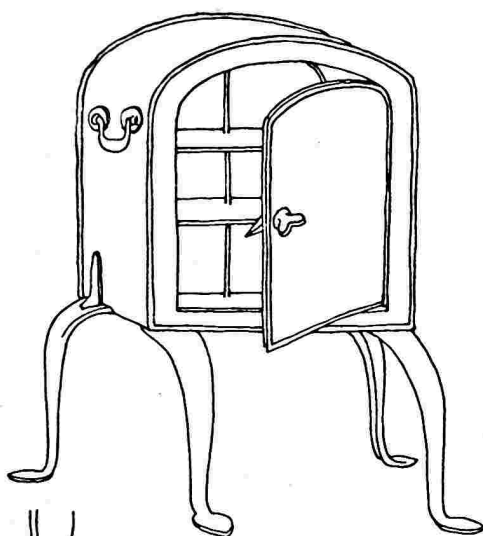
15 Iron Trivet



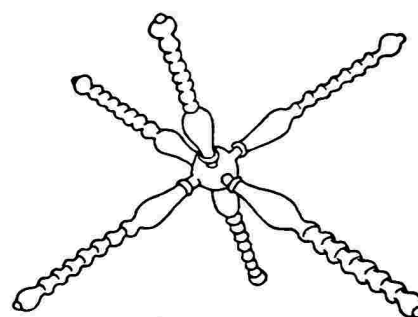
16 Pot Stand



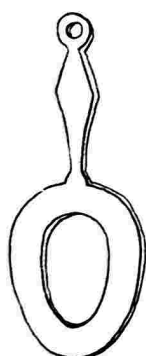
19 Hanging Frying Pan



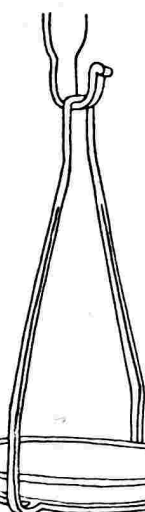
17 Plate Warmer



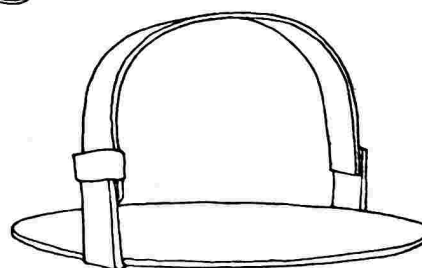
18 "Cat"



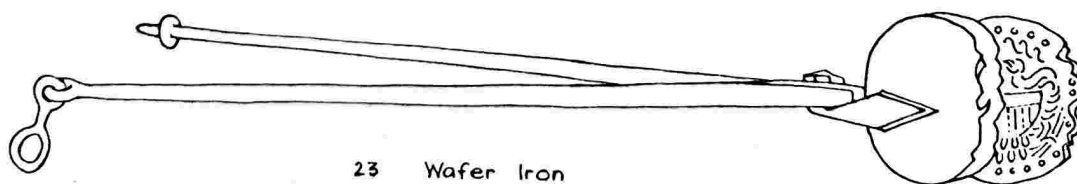
22 Baking Iron



20 Frying Pan and Frame



21 Baking Sheet



23 Wafer Iron

Two toasting forks, one with steel prongs and turned wooden handle, the other a well-polished, naturally-forked branch of a tree, hang from the mantel shelf.

For Keeping Food and Plates Hot

TRIVETS of various designs were, from Saxon times, placed in front of or partly in the fire; the contents of the vessels stood upon them were, if fully cooked, thus kept hot or, if necessary, could continue cooking at a lower heat. The simplest trivets (15) consisted of a circular iron plate or ring mounted on three feet. The plate was, in later examples, often perforated with a design and could be of brass.

FOUR-LEGGED STANDS (16) were made, from the early 18th century, to support the dripping pan under the spit or to serve as a kettle or muffin stand in the parlour; in the latter case they were often known as 'footmen'.

In the second half of the 18th century some trivets not only had legs but were also provided with hooks by which they could be hung on to the bars of the grate. Others had hooks only. Examples of various types of 18th and 19th century trivets can be seen in *Rooms 2, 3 and 4*.

A PLATE WARMER (17), mounted on four legs, stands by the open hearth in *Room 2*. It is fitted with shelves and has an iron grid at the back to prevent the contents from slipping out. A handle at the top enables the warmer to be carried straight from the fire to the table. Next to it is a similarly-shaped but smaller warmer, with no shelves or grid and not mounted on legs. This was often known as a Dutch Oven because it served not only to keep food hot but as a means of roasting small pieces of meat before the fire. The meat was suspended from a hook inserted in the slit at the top of the oven.

A third type of plate warmer is known as a 'cat' (18) because it always lands on its feet. Cats were double tripods, their legs or spokes radiating from a central ball, so arranged that three spokes always form legs and three point diagonally upwards. The plates were held firmly in position by the cross-tapered rings on the legs. Many 18th century cats were made of wood, as is the example in *Room 2*, but iron, more practicable as being more heat-resistant, was also used for their construction.

For Frying

Frying pans for use on an open hearth were provided either with very long handles, so that the user could stand well away from the

fire, or with half-hoop handles with a swivel ring at the top for suspension from a pot-hook (19). The long-handled 18th century iron pan in *Room 2* (20) has its own frame which hangs from a pot-hook, and also has two spikes at the back so that it could be wedged firmly into the logs on the hearth.

For Baking

Heavy iron BAKING SHEETS, griddles or girdles (21), with half-hoop handles for fixing to a pot-hook, were used for baking small loaves and cakes over an open fire. An 18th century BAKING IRON (22) for removing the cakes when cooked, rests on the baking sheet in *Room 2*.

For Wafer Making

In *Room 2*, near the entrance to *Room 3*, hang some WAFER IRONS (23, 24). These implements resemble large tongs with the jaws made, in one instance, of two flat discs decorated, on the inner surface, with incised ornament, and in the others of rectangular blocks with a chequered pattern on the inner side. The first dates from the 17th century, the others from the 18th century.

In pre-Reformation times such irons were employed for making wafer breads for ecclesiastical use, but they continued to be used for domestic purposes until early in the 19th century. Secular wafers were made from a batter consisting of flour and cream, sweetened and spiced. This was poured on to the iron, which had previously been greased and made red-hot, and baked over the fire. Each wafer was then rolled off the iron with a stick.

For Browning Food

Before the advent of the gas cooker with its component grill, a SALAMANDER was used to brown the tops of mashed potatoes, etc. It consisted of a long bar of wrought iron at the end of which was a square or circular iron plate. This plate was made red-hot then held above the food, which quickly became scorched by the radiated heat. Some salamanders had short legs on the handle which enabled the implement to be stood over the food; later examples had a hole in the centre of the handle which fitted on to an iron stand. The 18th century salamander (25) in *Room 2* is a simple, blacksmith-made one.

Cooking Utensils

Pots, Skillets, Saucepans and Kettles

From earliest times the bronze or iron CAULDRON was one of the most important household utensils. Two examples can be seen in *Room 2*, one of iron (26), with half-hoop handle and three short legs which enabled the vessel to be placed on as well as hung over the fire, and one of copper which is provided only with a handle.

On the grate in *Room 3* are two cast-iron cooking pots of the early 19th century, with tightly-fitting, flanged lids. The smaller of the two (27) has a valve in the lid to allow steam to escape, and is a forerunner of the modern pressure cooker. It was used for soup-making and was known as a DIGESTER, the invention of a Frenchman, named Denis Papin, in 1680. It was not, however, thought of in the 19th century as providing a speedy method of cooking because cookery books of the time recommend that the contents of a digester should be allowed to simmer for several hours.

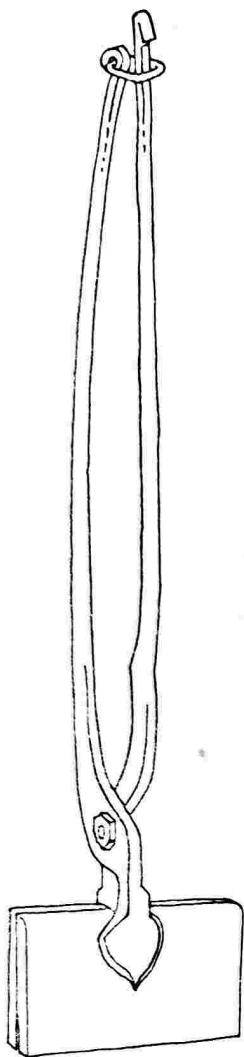
Saucepans for use on an open hearth were called SKILLETS and had three short legs so they could rest firmly on the logs. Their long, flat handles often bore the name of the maker, an inscription or some form of decoration; that of the bronze skillet in *Room 2* (28) bears the name P. Warner.

In the case by the fireplace is a small 18th century earthenware pipkin (29). This was placed on a trivet near the fire for heating milk. Flat-bottomed copper and iron saucepans, for use on grates, can be seen in *Rooms 2 and 3*; on the mantel shelf in *Room 3* are some 19th century brown-glazed stew pots for oven use.

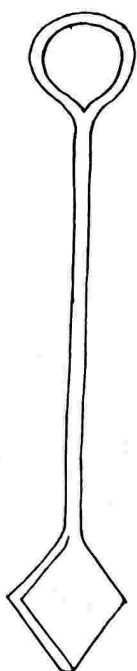
Rooms 2 and 3 also contain some copper and iron KETTLES, while on the bars of the grate in *Room 4* hangs a flat-sided copper kettle (illustrated on cover). Many of these were made, in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, in Cambridge, for tea-making in undergraduates' rooms, the shape being convenient for ensuring a constant supply of boiling water.

Ale Warmers or Mulls

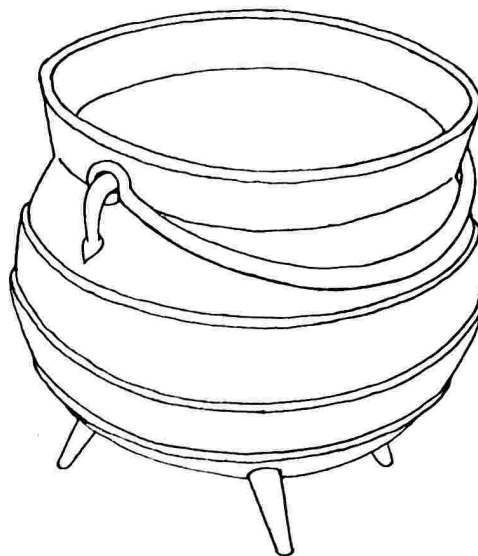
These were in general use in the 18th century, the most common type being conical in shape. A copper one hangs by the fireplace in *Room 2*; it was thrust vertically into the heart of the fire. A boot-



24 Wafer Iron



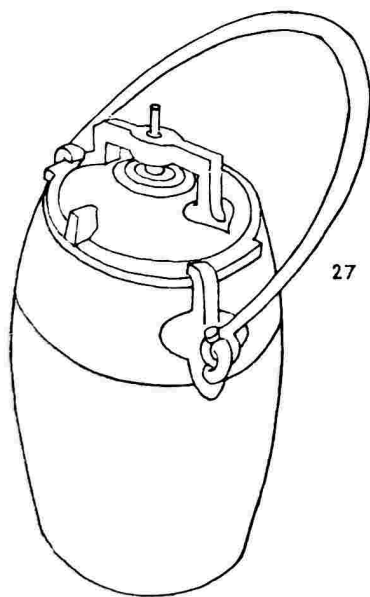
25 Salamander



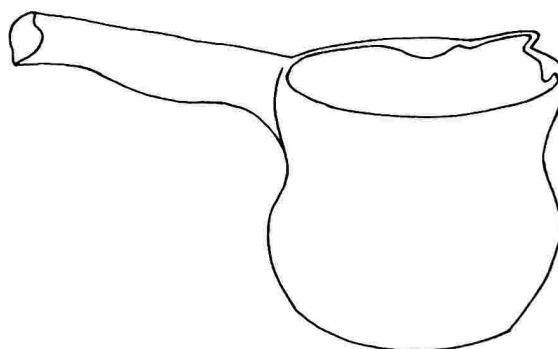
26 Cauldron



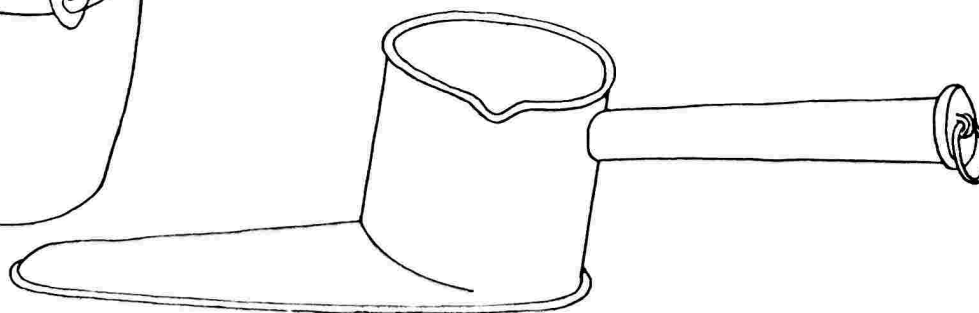
28 Skillet



27 Digester



29 Pipkin

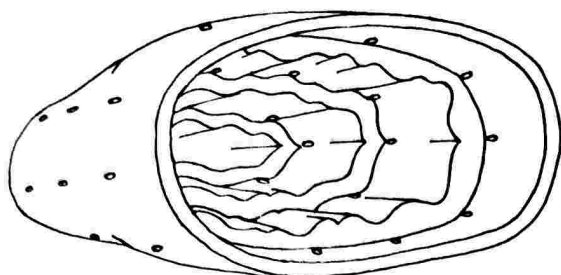


30 Beer Warmer

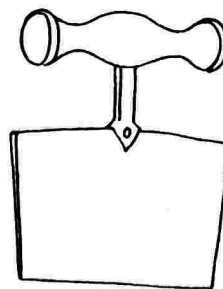
shaped beer warmer (30) is in the case by the hearth. It was formerly used in the Lion Hotel, Cambridge and is inscribed *Ye Red Lion 1753*.

Moulds

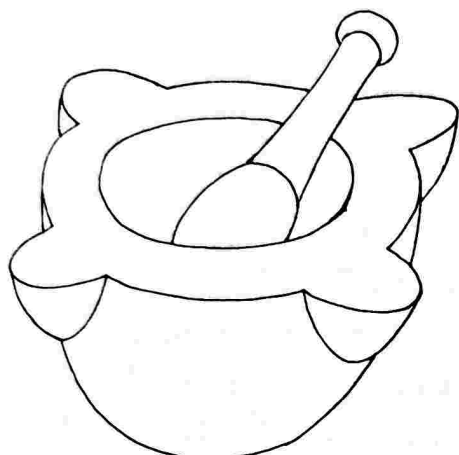
In the case by the large window in *Room 2* can be seen a perforated, earthenware mould (31) which was used for making an Italian Cream. The mould was lined with butter muslin and into it was poured stiffly-whipped cream flavoured with wine or fruit juice. The mixture was left overnight to drain and was then carefully turned out on to a dish. Other earthenware jelly and blancmange moulds (32) are in the same case, while a collection of copper moulds is displayed in the case near the small window. On the wall nearby hang a number of wooden moulds used in the making of gingerbread or ginger biscuits.



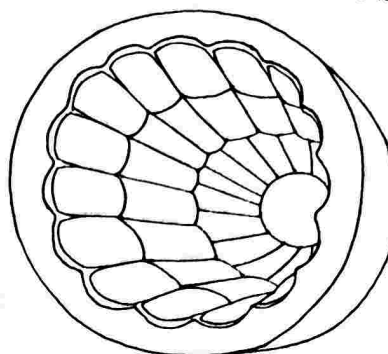
31 Italian Cream Mould



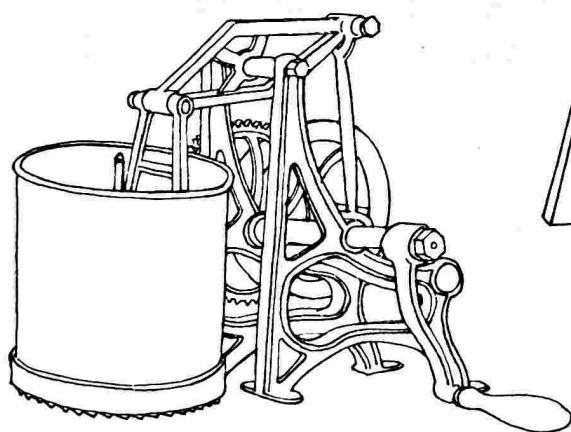
35 Food Chopper



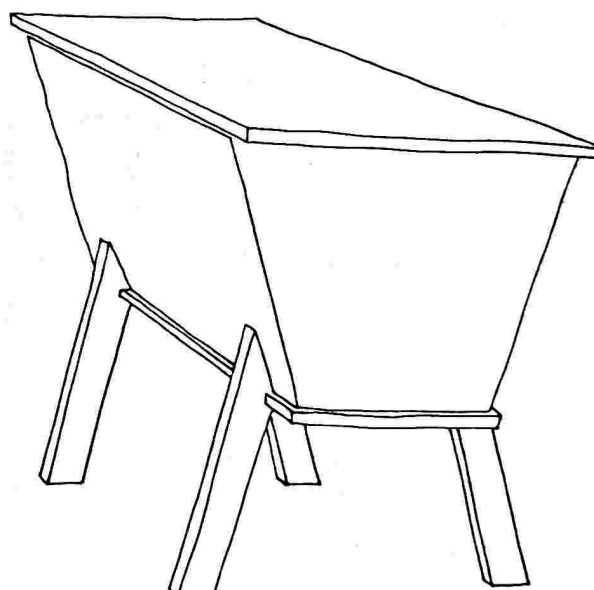
33 Mortar and Pestle



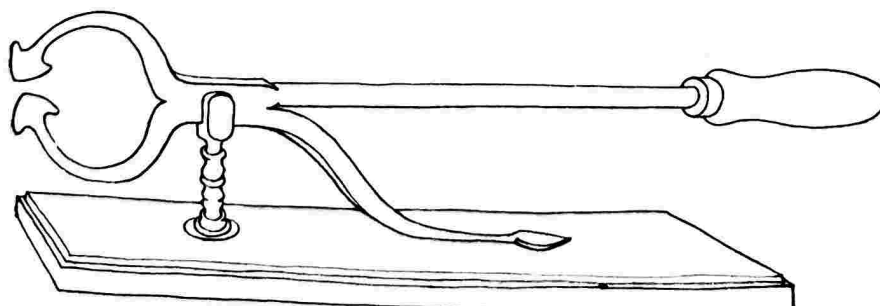
32 Jelly Mould



36 Mechanical Food Chopper



37 Dough Trough



34 Sugar Cutter

The Preparation of Food

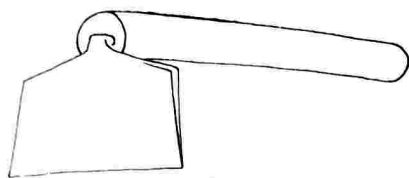
On the small window-sill in *Room 2* stand two stone MORTARS (33). In these, by means of a pestle, were pounded sugar, spices, almonds, etc. in the days before such goods were sold ready for use. Beside the mortars stands a 14 lb. SUGAR LOAF. Sugar was sold in this form until the turn of the present century; the grocer cut the loaves into blocks of the weight required by the housewife who then, with a SUGAR CUTTER (34), reduced them to pieces of convenient size for pounding in the mortar. Other mortars and pestles of bell metal and brass, the earliest dating from the 17th century, can be seen in *Room 5*.

On the wall in *Room 2* hang 18th and 19th century suet and vegetable CHOPPERS and CHEESE CUTTERS of various design (35). A more elaborate chopper (36) stands on the dresser in *Room 3*. The food was placed in the wooden-based drum which, as the handle is turned, revolves while the cutting knife alternately rises and falls.

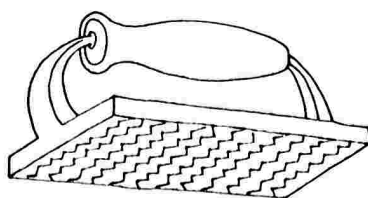
In the long case on the dresser are a number of small implements needed in the preparation of food: hand-made APPLE SCOOPS fashioned from bone, NUTMEG GRATERS, pincer and screw-type NUTCRACKERS, POTATO MASHERS, wooden and brass PASTRY CRIMPERS for decorating the rims of tarts and pies. On the mantel shelf is a patent RAISIN STONER.

In the centre of *Room 2* is a wooden DOUGH TROUGH (37) used in the last century by a Grantchester woman for her weekly breadmaking. A SCRAPER (38) for removing the dough from the sides of the trough, and a RASP (39) for scraping the tops of over-baked loaves are in the case by the fireplace together with two 19th century wooden LEMON SQUEEZERS (40).

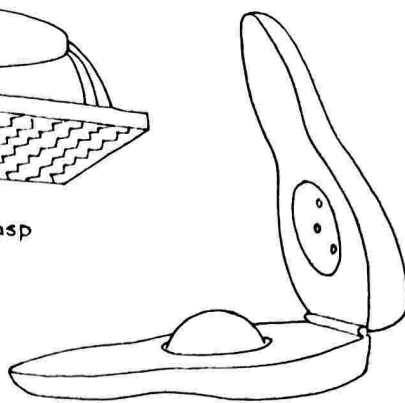
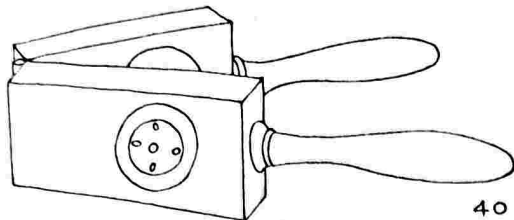
Among other domestic equipment needed by the housewife when cooking and preparing food there are, on exhibition in *Rooms 2 and 3*, brass and steel LADLES and SKIMMERS of the 17th and 18th centuries, earthenware STORAGE JARS, some of them made in Ely, wooden FLOUR BINS, SPICE BOXES, HAIR SIEVES, an EARTHENWARE COLANDER and an earthenware BRINE JAR for pickling meat.



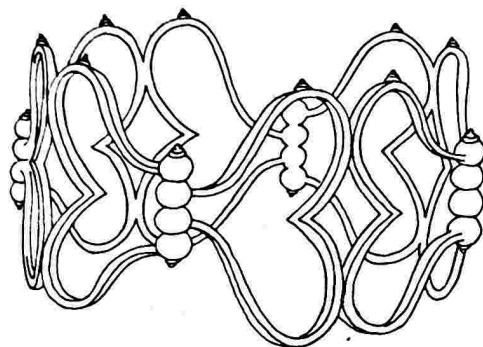
38 Dough Scraper



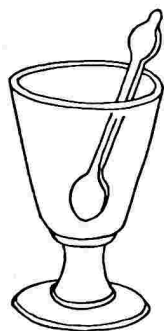
39 Bread Rasp



40 Lemon Squeezers



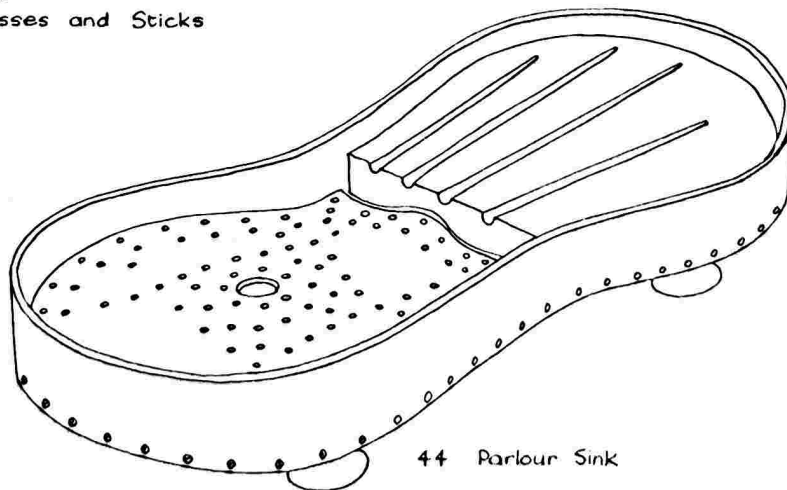
43 Custard Ring



41 Toddy Glasses and Sticks



42 Posset Pot



44 Parlour Sink

Table Ware

A number of vessels for serving food and drink can be seen in *Rooms 2 and 3*. Among them are pewter, earthenware and wooden PLATES, the last continuing to be used in many Cambridgeshire labourers' cottages until the mid-19th century. Also on exhibition are examples of 18th century trailed and combed SLIPWARE DISHES.

In the case by the fireplace in *Room 2* is a small collection of 18th and 19th century HORN MUGS; these remained in use in cottages and farmhouses for many centuries, even after the introduction of pewter and earthenware. The same case contains some early Victorian WINE GLASSES and two TODDY GLASSES (41) with their accompanying toddy sticks. Toddy, popular from the late 18th century, was a mixture of rum, hot water, sugar, lemon juice and grated nutmeg; whisky, gin or brandy could replace the rum. The toddy sticks were used to crush the sugar so that it dissolved more quickly.

In the recess near the small window are two 18th century spouted pots (42) used in the preparation of POSSET—milk heated with wine and spices.

A few knives, forks and spoons are displayed in the case on the dresser in *Room 3*. These illustrate some of the changes in the design of such TABLE WARE from the 17th to the 19th centuries. Nearby are three types of KNIFE CLEANERS. By the fireplace hangs a mahogany KNIFE BOX in which, after cleaning, the knives were kept, the warmth of the fire preventing the blades from rusting.

An interesting item of table ware in *Room 2* is the silver 'CUSTARD RING' (43), so named in the 18th century inventory of the household plate of the original Cambridgeshire owner. It was placed round a dish of baked custard, etc. to make it look more attractive on the table; being hinged it could accommodate both round and oval dishes.

China tea and dinner services were, when first introduced, expensive items, so great care was taken of them. Many precious tea sets were not only kept under lock and key in the parlour but were washed up there, after use, by the mistress of the house who dared not entrust them to her servants. A brass-bound PARLOUR SINK (44) used for this purpose can be seen in *Room 2*. The china was either washed in this, the water being poured into the lead-lined end, or

was first washed in a wooden bowl and then placed on the wooden end of the sink to drain.

The objects described and illustrated above by no means exhaust the number of hearth and kitchen exhibits to be seen in Rooms 2 and 3. The Museum is, however, always anxious to add to its collection and would welcome offers of any items which it does not already possess.