



Fig. 1. Kiln 3 after removal of internal floors showing kiln wall, refractory lining and firebox.

A Pottery at Vauxhall Bridgefoot

An interim report

BRIAN BLOICE

Photographs by the author

FIELDWORK BY MEMBERS of the Southwark and Lambeth Archaeological Society from January to March, 1972, on the line of a new slip road from the Vauxhall Bridge Eastern Approach to the Albert Embankment (TQ 3037 7807) led to the discovery of five probable stoneware kilns, and a feature (F1) containing a large group of waste tin-glazed earthenware (delftware). Service trenches cut by the contractors enabled the Society and the Southwark Archaeological Excavation Committee to conduct a series of emergency excavations¹, of one day's duration or less, to uncover and record the kilns, and to recover material from them. In addition several small groups of stoneware and tin-glazed earthenware waste material were found in the general area of the site. At the same time G.P.O. duct work revealed another feature (F2) containing tin-glazed earthenware.

1. Directed by John Collins, Graham Dawson and Brian Bloice.

Documentary Evidence

The five kilns and one of the features (F1) were found on the site of the Vauxhall (Bridgefoot). Pottery known to have existed from the late 17th to the middle of the 19th century. Both tin-glazed earthenware and stoneware were made at this pottery, although not necessarily at the same time². The other group of tin-glazed earthenware (F2) was found near to the Copt Hall and Glasshouse

2. In 1697 tin-glazed earthenware was made at this factory, although stoneware is not mentioned at this date.

Square factories (it is possible that they are the same factory), known to have been producing tin-glazed earthenware in the late 17th centuries. Maps of 1799 and 1819³ of the Bridgefoot area show a rectangular building apparently 216ft. long and 24ft. wide, and this is probably the factory within which the kilns were.

The Kilns

Kilns 1, 2 and 4 survived to a height of 5-10in., (2 to 4 courses of brickwork), but only small parts of kilns 2 and 4 survived. Each of these three kilns consisted of a circular external wall 3-4ft. wide with the interiors of kilns 1 and 2 filled with a compact sandy material. Kiln 1 was approximately 17ft. in external diameter (Fig. 3), while kiln 4 was calculated to be 16ft. in diameter (kiln 2 was too fragmentary to record a diameter). Four fireboxes of kiln 1 and one firebox of kiln 4 survived, constructed within and as a composite part of the 3-4ft. wide wall.

Kiln 3 (Fig. 2), the best preserved of the kilns, survived in places nearly 3ft. high (11 courses of brickwork). Basically it consisted of a well-mortared circular red brick wall (F10) 2ft. 3in. wide and 17ft. in external diameter. Internally it was lined by a 9in. wide refractory brick wall (F11), bonded with a loose clay-like mortar, which enclosed the 11ft. diameter pottery chamber. The outer red brick wall had been cut at equal distances around the circumference to allow the insertion of five rectangular brick fireboxes (F13-17), the inner short walls of which butted up against the refractory lining wall of the kiln. It is possible that a sixth firebox existed although its hypothetical position was totally destroyed by a contractor's trench. The three most complete fireboxes (F14-16) were 5ft. long and 3ft. wide externally and about 2ft. in depth, built of refractory bricks upon a stone slab floor.

In three of the fireboxes (F15-17) a second floor of heavily salt-glazed bricks survived 1ft. 7in. above the stone floor. These bricks, laid on edge with a 3-4in. layer of pinkish white sand which itself overlay narrow gap between the rows were bedded on a layer of clinker (burnt coal?) filling the rest of the firebox. The upper surviving courses of the side walls of the fireboxes were corbelled inwards—the upper floor of salt-glazed bricks was at this level. A blocked opening existed in the inner refractory wall lining the kiln, corresponding in position with the position of two of the fireboxes (F13-14) (the wall did not survive as high in front of the other fireboxes). The fragmentary remains of broken brickwork projected externally from the lining wall

alongside these blocked openings and appeared to correspond with a filled cut back of the outer red brick wall on the clockwise side of the existing firebox. It is thus probable that earlier fireboxes had been completely demolished and their replacements built on a slightly different alignment.

Three successive stone or brick and stone floors (F19-21) of the pottery chamber were found each resting on a layer of sand. The lower floor corresponded to the base of the opening in the lining wall. The upper two floors were higher than the base of the blocked opening and must therefore be contemporary and later respectively than the last observed alteration to this wall. The external face of the blocking and the lining wall were covered with a thick brown encrustation.

A possible sequence in kiln 3 could therefore be:—

- (1) Lower floor contemporary with original firebox and opening in lining wall.
- (2) Wall opening blocked, new firebox built and second floor of pottery chamber built.
- (3) Floor to firebox raised and third floor of pottery chamber laid down.

It was not possible to record kiln 5 in any great detail as the greater part of it lay beneath and outside the western boundary fence of the site. The small part revealed consisted of five courses of a circular red brick wall. Built outside this wall was a firebox at least 1ft. 5in. in depth similar in section and fill to those of kiln 3. If threatened by future building activity, it is hoped that an excavation of this structure will be possible.

Other Structures and Features

To the east of the kiln group 37 feet of a red brick wall and a tiled floor area was uncovered. The western continuation of the wall had been destroyed by the widening of the bridge approach in 1906. This structure corresponds very closely with the eastern end of the building shown on the 1799 and 1819 maps. Kiln 1 occurs within the cellar of a building and the absence of hovels around any of the kilns would suggest they are all in buildings. A working floor composed of tightly packed stoneware kiln supports (bobs) was found adjacent to the wall of kiln 3.

Feature 1, a sealed pit cut through brown sandy loam and gravel 4ft. deep and 2ft. wide was 7ft. south of kiln 1 and below the level of the projected line of the brick and tiled floor building. The group from feature 2, found 500ft. north of the kiln site filled a pit 5ft. deep and more than 5ft. wide and

3. Maps. Horwood 1799 and a later edition of 1819 after construction of Vauxhall Bridge.

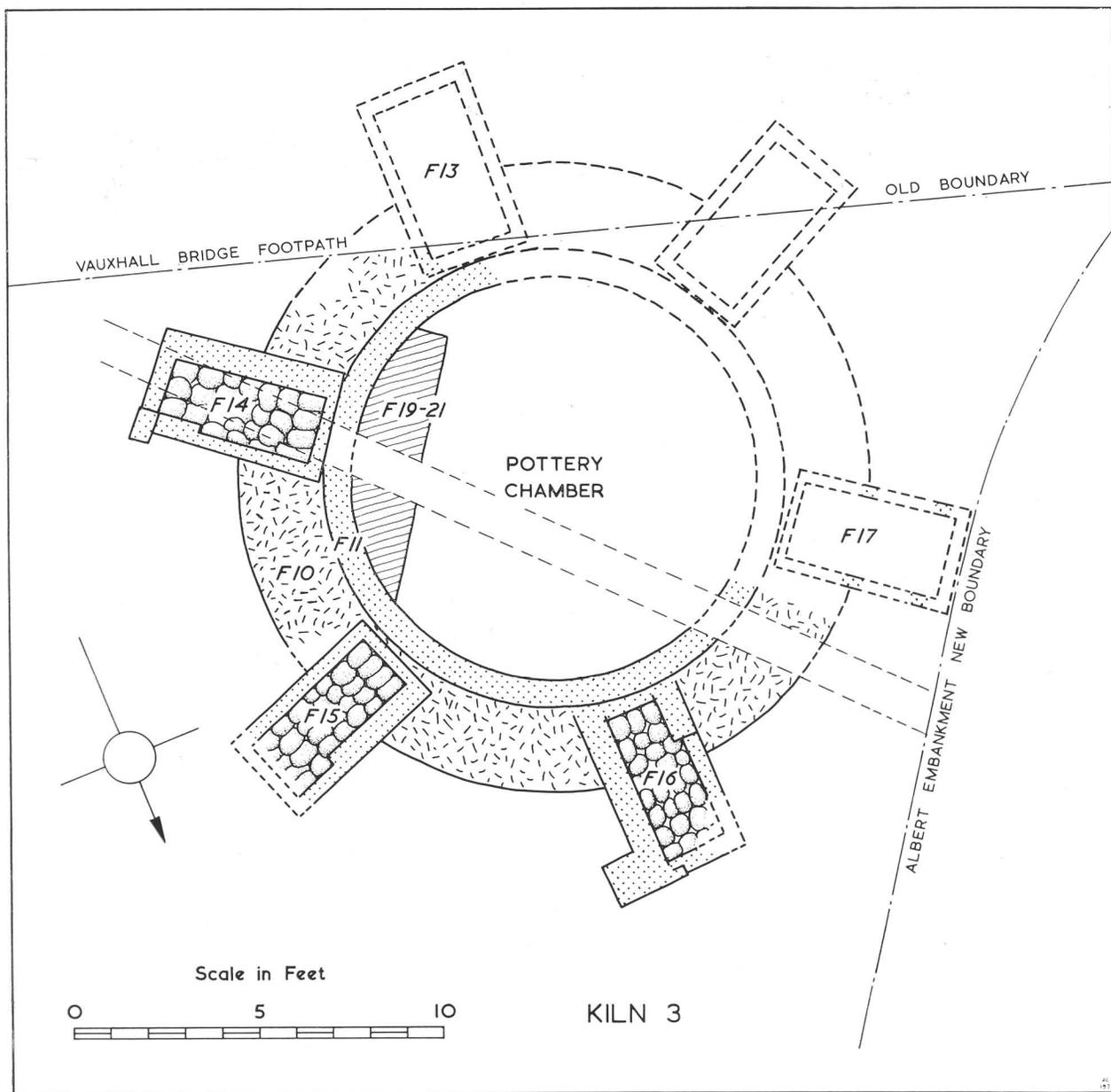


Fig. 2. Provisional plan of Kiln 3 (features outside the kiln structure are not shown).

underlay a brick structure. The difficult circumstances of collection made it impossible to investigate this feature.

The Finds

Processing of the pottery from the site is still

being carried out and only the waste material from Feature 1 has been studied in any detail. The preliminary work on this group shows that it contains nearly 3,000 fragments consisting of delftware kiln furniture, biscuit and glazed pottery, stoneware kiln furniture and pottery together with a little other

pottery. The numerical analysis showed the following:—

Ware	% (Nos)	% (Weight)
Delftware biscuit	59.5	22.4
Delftware glazed pottery	16.2	3.3
Delftware kiln furniture	23.3	71.3
Stoneware	0.2	0.2
Stoneware kiln furniture	0.5	2.4
Other (pottery, tile and pipes)	0.3	0.3

The very small amount of domestic refuse indicates that this group is a primary dump of waste material from the factory. The percentage of delftware biscuit pottery relative to kiln furniture is high when compared with two of the terminal groups at Montague Close (MC69 LIB and F2). The proportions are similar to the fill (MC70 T3 L3) of a kiln at Montague Close which although it is the end of the life of that kiln is not terminal for the factory. By comparison with Montague Close it could be suggested that F1 does not derive from the closing of the delftware factory although if the comparison with MC70 T3 L3 is significant, it might suggest a reduction in its production.

Delftware Assemblage

Feature 1 contained the following types⁴ of delftware kiln furniture and pottery:— Sagger 1, 2 and 3; Trivet; Peg 1; Girder; Kiln Tile; Setter; Tile 2; Plate 1a; Dish 1, 2a and 3; Bowl 1, 2a and 3a; Horizontal lobed handle 1; Domestic vessel; Storage vessel 2; Albarello-type container 1 and 2; and Cauldron-type containers 1, 2a1, 2a2⁵ and 2b. This assemblage is unusual in that it is the only one found to date to contain all three types of Saggars together with Trivets and Girders. Although not studied in detail its profile would seem to fall between or be a combination of assemblages ix/xiii (c.1700-30) and x-xii (c.1737) from Norfolk House and it is similar to Montague Close T3 L3⁶ which does fall between these two assemblages but there are important differences.

Thus allowing for differences between factories a date for F1, similar to that for Montague Close T3 L3, of c.1725-30 may be suggested. As the assemblage also contains evidence for stoneware production this is the earliest archaeologically established date for the production of stoneware other than at the Fulham Pottery although a superficial examination of an earlier layer from the site may indicate that stoneware production started considerably earlier at Vauxhall. The delftware group from feature 2 is provisionally dated to the late 17th century.

4. 'Norfolk House, Delftware kiln site' *Post Medieval Archaeol.* 5 (1971) 117-29.

5. G. J. Dawson and Rhoda Edwards "The Montague



Fig. 3. Kiln 1 showing firebox base as part of kiln wall.

Dating the Kilns

Kiln 1 had cut through the centre of kiln 2 and was thus later. A brick from one of the fireboxes of kiln 1, which may have belonged to a late repair was stamped WISKER. A potter, John Wisker, worked at Vauxhall between 1814 and 1838. One inscribed vessel from the demolition layer of this kiln can be dated between 1815 and 1822. Kiln 3 was built on top of kiln 4 and thus is later. Bricks from kiln 3 were stamped RAMSEY. Material from the lower sandy layer, beneath all the floors of kiln 3, would suggest an early 19th century date, while pottery from the upper sandy layer can be dated to the middle of the 19th century. Thus kiln 3 can be tentatively dated to the first half of the 19th century and possibly was in use until the factory closed about 1866.

Kiln 1 probably dates before 1822, while kilns

Close Delftware Factory prior to 1969" (forthcoming).

6. *Southwark and Lambeth Archaeol. Soc. Newsletter* No. 32 (1972) 6-7.

Fulham Gasholder Threatened

KEITH WHITEHOUSE

NO. 2 GASHOLDER at Fulham Gasworks, until recently the oldest in use in the world, is threatened with demolition by North Thames Gas Board. The holder is considered to be an important industrial monument of the pioneer days of the gas industry and as such, is a Grade II scheduled building of architectural or historic interest.

N.T.G.B. who are converting to natural (North Sea) gas from town gas, find that the holder is obsolete and claim it is obstructing access to a new holder near by, which is nearing completion. However, there is strong support for preservation from a variety of bodies including Historic Building Division, G.L.C., Hammersmith Borough Council, Greater London Industrial Archaeology Society, Fulham and Hammersmith Historical Society and the Victorian Society.

Built circa 1830, it is a single lift water-sealed holder in a below ground brick tank. Covered with wrought-iron plates and guided by wrought-iron stanchions of an unusually attractive design, its diameter is 100ft. with a lift height of 30ft. and gas storage capacity of 234,000 cu. ft.

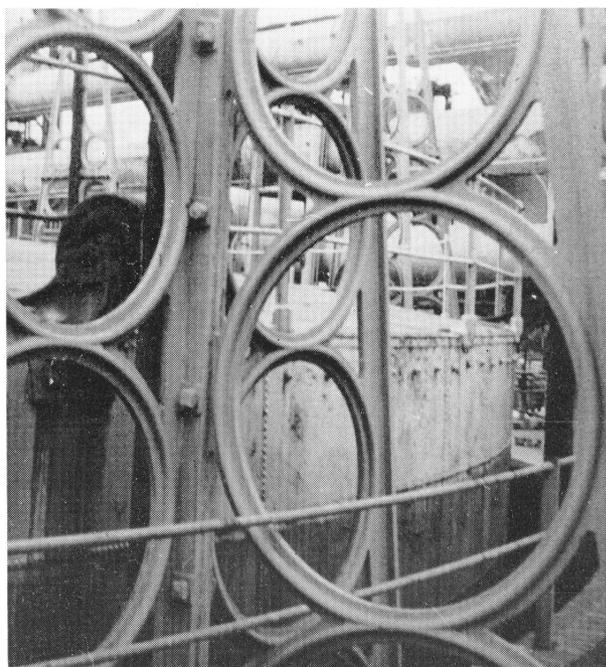
Hammersmith Borough Council has refused the initial application for listed building consent to demolish which presents a challenge to preserving such an unusual monument. If the holder is left *in situ*, it will gradually deteriorate unless it is constantly maintained. Being empty it is submerged in its water tank, the gas plant supplying it having already been demolished but it could be raised by compressed air.

A Pottery at Vauxhall Bridgefoot—continued.

2 and 4 may possibly be late 18th century or earlier. No dating evidence for kiln 5 was found. Within a brick of the building to the east of the kiln group a mid 18th century pipe stem was found. Closer dating of this building may be possible, but it was certainly built after feature 1 was deposited c.1725-30 and it appears to have continued in use at least to the end of pottery production in the factory.

Conclusion

The excavations have produced the first archaeological evidence for the size and type of stoneware kilns in South London. Parts of five circular kilns, of which two at least are multiflue, together with the kilns and waste material at Fulham seem to provide the only archaeological evidence for stoneware kilns in Britain. The tin-glazed earthenware



Detail of one of the stanchions

Public access is also difficult, the holder cannot be seen from the street and visits would be restricted because of problems of safety and security.

There are two alternatives. The holder could be dismantled and re-erected elsewhere but this would involve great cost as well as the problem of finding a suitable site. As the wrought-iron plates are bolted together, corrosion could make it difficult to separate them. The least happy solution would be to demolish entirely, just preserving representative parts, such as the stanchions and some of the plating.

waste material from features 1 and 2 provides important evidence for the products of two Vauxhall kilns, though at different dates. Both the structures and features are new pieces of valuable evidence in a continuing research programme of the pottery industry of South London.

I would like to thank the site agents and contractors for permission to carry out the work as road construction proceeded; the members of the Society who assisted in the excavations, often at short notice, and the volunteers who are assisting at the archaeological workshop with the processing of the material recovered, without whose help this interim report would not have been possible; also Rhonwen Goodman for typing; John Cresswell for the drawing and John Ashdown for allowing us access to the records of his trial trenches on the site in 1964.