

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N.T.G.B. who are converting to natural (North Sea) gas from town gas, find that the holder is obsolete and claim it is obstructing access to a new holder near by, which is nearing completion.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.

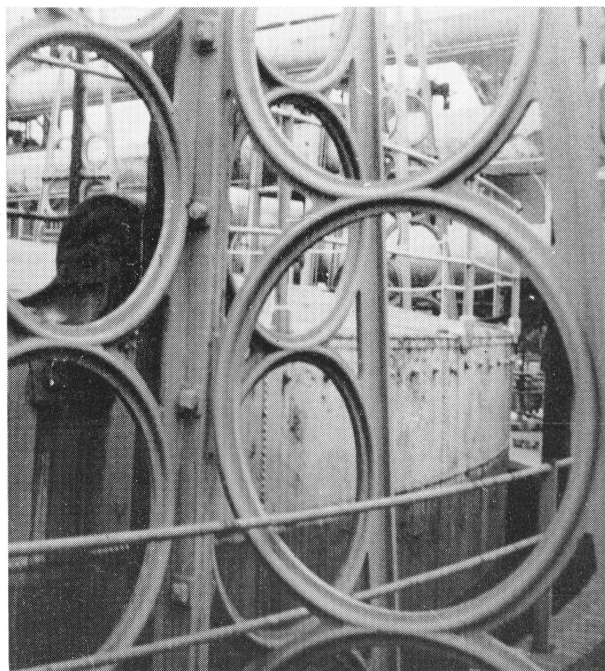
Hammersmith Borough Council has refused the initial application for listed building consent to demolish which presents a challenge to preserving such an unusual monument. If the holder is left *in situ*, it will gradually deteriorate unless it is constantly maintained. Being empty it is submerged in 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.