

The Pottery from Wolverton Secret Garden

Alan Vince and Kate Steane

Excavations at Wolverton Secret Garden, Buckinghamshire, revealed the foundations of several villas of mid 19th century and later date. Historical research indicates that they were occupied from the 1830s to the 1960s.

A number of pottery vessels were recovered from the site but cannot be provenanced to any particular part of the site and therefore have to be treated as an unstratified collection.

However, it is clear that a number of these pieces formed part of the same sets, linked by their transfer printed designs and details of the moulding. These, at least, presumably come from single deposits. Three separate sets were recognised.

Description

In total, at least 77 different vessels are represented in the collection. They were assigned to eight ware types and the number of sherds and weight were recorded (Table 1). In addition, the percentage of the vessel rim present (EVEs) and the rim diameter in mm were recorded (Appendix 1 consists of the complete record).

Table 1

Cname	Sum of Nosh	Sum of NoV	Sum of Weight
DERBS	21	2	710
ENPO	20	11	71
LONS	36	2	971
NOTS	2	1	45
PEAR	3	2	18
REFR	1	1	460
TPW	278	42	12218
WHITE	164	43	5191
Grand Total	525	104	19684

Early Modern Pottery

Refined whitewares

In the mid 18th century, potters in the Staffordshire potteries started to experiment with fine white bodies, based on the use of China Clay with a variety of other clays and other material such as crushed flint or bone added. Collectively, these wares are known as refined whitewares. No examples of the earliest refined whiteware types, of late 18th and early 19th century date, were present in the collection.

Three sherds had a refined whiteware body with a glaze with a tinge of blue, the result of adding traces of cobalt to the glaze. These are termed Pearlware and are the earliest refined whiteware in the collection (No 37, a bowl, and No 38, a vase).

The majority of the refined whitewares present have a colourless glaze and are either transfer-printed (code TPW) or plain, decorated with hand painting or with coloured slips (code WHITE). The vessels come from a wide range of forms including large water bowls, chamber pots, a jelly mould, water jugs, teapots, plates, saucers, dishes, bowls and egg cups. A number of large oval vessels were present, These include a stand, pieced with numerous holes perhaps used to protect the dining table from a hot casserole or tureen.

A number of pieces of whiteware are translucent and these have been classified as English Porcelains (Code ENPO). Most of these vessels are represented only by small sherds and little can be said about their form or date.

Refined redwares

A single vessel in a fine red fabric was present, No. 9, a black-glazed teapot with applied white enamel or clay spots and gold leaf.

Stonewares

Stonewares were first produced in England in the early 17th century but until the later part of the century were rare. From that time onwards, however, the manufacture of stoneware spread throughout England and during the 18th and 19th century stoneware was used as containers for the sale of alcoholic drinks (including spirits), oils, paints, ink and black leading (graphite). It was also used for the production of drinking vessels, especially those to be found in taverns (such as tankards and mugs). Decorative vessels were rare in stoneware, except in the Nottingham stoneware industry, whose products were mainly distributed in the east midlands and northern England.

At Wolverton, at least three different stoneware types were present. They are Nottingham Stoneware (NOTS); Derbyshire Stoneware (DERBS) and London Stoneware (LONS).

Nottingham Stoneware is represented by two sherds from a flagon with an external brown glaze and internal colourless glaze (No.26). In fact, these glazes are both produced by throwing salt into the kiln. The brown glaze forms over an iron-rich clay slip and the colourless glaze over the normal clay body).

Derbyshire Stoneware is represented by a black-leading bottle (No. 15) and a tall narrow-necked bottle, possibly an inkwell (No. 5).

London Stoneware is represented by a flagon stamped with the maker's mark for Lambeth, made for a wine and spirit warehouse at Camden Town (No 18). The style of lettering and the use of a salt glaze, as opposed to a glossy feldspathic glaze, suggests that this vessel dates to the first half of the 19th century. A second vessel, No. 14) is a jug with an external brown salt glaze and clear internal salt glaze. This vessel might possibly be a Nottingham product.

Discussion

The pottery is consistent with the documented foundation date for the four clerk's villas on the Wolverton site, of 1841. A few of the pieces found might have been in use at the time of construction of the villas. These include the Pearlware and the London stoneware vessels. The remaining vessels are mainly of types produced in the mid 19th century, although they include one jam jar (No. 16) which was made after 1873, since its transfer-printed label mentions the Vienna Exhibition of that year. However, by 1895 the manufacture was advertising his wares in a slightly different wording, suggesting perhaps that No.16 dates between 1873 and 1895.

If the excavation included properties which were in use up to the 1960s it is surprising that none of the pottery vessels present appear to be later than the 1880s. This suggests perhaps that the vessels were recovered from deposits associated with the demolition of two of the villas and the construction of the railway paint shop, or that in the late 19th century the method of rubbish disposal changed, so that most rubbish was collected from the site. This transition often took place at a similar time to the provision of a sewer system and both were linked to the increasing concern for public health in Victorian England following various epidemics which were linked to poor hygiene.

The pottery includes no examples of Country Pottery, lead-glazed red earthenwares made in the traditional 17th/18th-century manner but used throughout much of England into the early 19th century. This is probably simply an accident of survival since it is very likely that kitchens in villas such as these would have used such vessels for bread making, and other food preparation. It cannot be that vessels from the kitchens are lacking, since the collection includes jam jars and jelly moulds. A few of the whiteware bowls in the collection might, however, have fulfilled this function.

A second, related group of vessels which are conspicuously absent are unglazed red earthenware horticultural vessels. These were often made by the same works which produced drains, chimney pots and sometimes brick and tile. Again, it is unlikely that flower pots were not used on the villa sites and this too suggests that the pottery comes from one or more discrete deposits, consisting entirely of vessels used in the house.

Given the amount of detail available for the inhabitants of the site and the potential to have correlated the site stratigraphy with well-dated events, such as changes of ownership and the demolition of two of the villas, it is a great shame that the finds cannot be provenanced.

Appendix 1

REFN	O	Action	Cname	Subfabric	Form	Part	Description	Nosh	NoV	Weight	EVEs	Diam
1			WHITE		JAR	R;B;BS	GROOVE UNDER RIM	1	1	238	93	70
2			TPW		MUG	R;B;H;BS	STRONG BLUE FLORAL DEC EXT AND INT RIM	17	1	136	90	80
3			TPW		BOWL	R;B;BS	BLUE FOLIAGE DESIGN INT/EXT	4	1	197	100	142
4			TPW		JAR	R;B;BS	'HOLLOWAY'S OINTMENT FOR THE CURE OF GOUT AND RHEUMATISM INVETERATE ULCERS SORE BREASTS SORE HEADS BAD LEGS & c' THEN A LIST OF PRICES '533 OXFORD ST LONDON MANUFACTURED ONLY BY THE PROPRIETOR'	1	1	41	100	46
5			DERBS		INK BOTTLE?	R;B;BS	120 LONG; BASE 45 ACROSS	1	1	197	100	24
6			WHITE		JAR	R;B;BS	GROOVE UNDER RIM	9	1	78	100	52
7			TPW	SET 1	CUP	R;BS;B	GREY CONVOLVOLUS INT/EXT; ON BOTTOM 'G.W. Convolvulus No'; SAME SET AS CUPS 10 & 13, EGGCUPS 23 AND SAUCER 23	2	1	128	100	100
8	PH		TPW	SET 3	CUP	R;B;BS	FLORAL DEC WITH YELLOW OVERGLAZE; ON BASE 'N. 5828'	5	1	111	81	95
9	PH		REFR		TPOT	R;B;H	BLACK GLAZE WITH GOLD OVERGLAZE (FOLIAGE DEC AND LINES) AND WHITE DOT DEC	1	1	460	100	60
10	PH		TPW	SET 1	CUP	R;B;H;BS	GREY CONVOLVOLUS INT/EXT; ON BOTTOM 'G.W. Convolvulus No'; SAME SET AS CUPS 7 & 13, EGGCUPS 23 AND SAUCER 23	7	1	129	100	100
11	PH		TPW		LIDDED BOX	BS	SUB RECTANGULAR; BLUE GRAPE AND VINE DEC; 125 BY 85; WITH LID 11	6	1	271	100	0
11	PH		TPW		LID	BS	SUB RECTANGULAR HANDLED LID; BLUE GRAPE AND VINE DEC; 95 BY 55; WITH BOX 11	1	1	65	85	0
12			WHITE		MUG	R;B;BS	HORIZ INDENTED BANDS	9	1	150	62	84
13			TPW	SET 1	CUP	R;B;BS	GREY CONVOLVOLUS INT/EXT; ON BOTTOM 'G.W. Convolvulus No'; SAME SET AS CUPS 7 & 10, SAUCER 23 AND EGGCUPS 23	7	1	108	100	100
14			LONS		JUG	R;B;H;BS	POSSIBLY NOTTS	26	1	384	95	77
15			DERBS		BLACK LEADING BOTTLE	B;BS	MOULDED ON BOTTOM 'MALING, NEWCASTLE AVERAGE CONTENTS 2LB; PRINTED ON FRONT ' JOHN MOIR & SON GENUINE SCOTCH GREENGAGE JAM LONDON & ABERDEEN AWARDED AT THE VIENNA EXHIBITION 1873 THE GRAND MEDAL OF MERIT	20	1	513	0	0
16			TPW		JAR	R;B;BS	MOULDED ON BOTTOM 'MALING, NEWCASTLE AVERAGE CONTENTS 2LB; PRINTED ON FRONT ' JOHN MOIR & SON GENUINE SCOTCH GREENGAGE JAM LONDON & ABERDEEN AWARDED AT THE VIENNA EXHIBITION 1873 THE GRAND MEDAL OF MERIT	19	1	650	100	80
17			WHITE PALE		JUG	R;B;H	SLIGHT OCTAGONAL BODY; FOLIAGE HANDLE	6	1	356	100	90

REFN	O	Action	Cname	Subfabric	Form	Part	Description	Nosh	NoV	Weight	EVEs	Diam
				YELLOW GLAZE								
18			LONS		FLAGON	R;H;BS	STAMPED 'LAMBETH' ALSO 'HALEY'S Wine & Spirit Warehouse 83 HIGH ST CORNER OF PARK ST CAMDEN TOWN'	10	1	587	100	50
22			WHITE		CUP	R;B;H;BS	HAND DRAWN RED LINES UNER RIM AND ALONG HANDLE	11	1	52	67	62
23			TPW	SET 1	EGGCUP	R;B;BS	INT/EXT CONVOLVULUS IN GREY; SAME SET AS SAUCER 23, CUPS 7 & 13	8	2	111	110	57
23			TPW	SET 1	SAUCER?	R	CONVLVULUS IN GREY; SAME SET AS EGGCUPS 23 AND CUPS 7, 10 & 13	1	1	3	8	120
24			WHITE		JAR	R;B;BS	GROOVE UNDER RIM	1	1	69	100	53
26			NOTS		FLAG	BS	RSD BAND ON SHOULDER	2	1	45	0	0
27			TPW		BASIN, BATHROOM	BS	GOLD OVERGLAZE	2	1	278	0	0
28	PH		TPW		PLATE	R;B;BS	BLUE/WHITE WITH EUSTON HOTEL IN MIDDLE	3	1	609	100	255
29			TPW		DISH, CURVED OBLONG	R;B;BS	BLUE/WHITE WILLOW PATTERN; 225 BY 295	11	1	748	100	0
30	PH		TPW		PLATE	R;B	HAND PAINTED GOLD OVERGLAZE	2	1	108	33	180
31			WHITE		JELLYMOULD	R	SHL=35	1	1	20	10	240
32			TPW		SAUCER	R; B; BS	PALE BLUE/WHITE WILLOW PATTERN	5	1	138	94	145
33			TPW		BOWL, OVAL, FLANGED	R;B;BS	LIGHT BLUE FLORAL DEC INT/EXT; PRINTED ON BOTTOM 'ASIATIC PHEASANTS C&E'; 233 ACROSS	35	1	676	60	0
34	PH		TPW		OVAL STAND	PROF	BLUE RURALSCENE;PIERCED WITH LARGE AND SMALLHOLES	44	1	580	60	26
35			WHITE		JELLYMOULD	R;B;BS	SHL=31	22	1	1022	56	238
36			WHITE		CHPT	R;B;BS	GOLD OVERGLAZE HORIZ LINES	1	1	1403	80	240
37			TPW		OVAL PLATE	BS	BLACK CELTIC KNOT BAND AROUND RIM	2	1	267	33	0
37			WHITE		CUP	B		1	1	13	0	0
37			WHITE		PLATE	R;BS		8	8	47	0	0
37			PEAR		BOWL	BS		2	1	6	0	0
37			ENPO		CUP	BS		8	3	27	0	0

REFN	O	Action	Cname	Subfabric	Form	Part	Description	Nosh	NoV	Weight	EVEs	Diam
37			ENPO		CUP	BS	GOLD OVERGLAZE 20 BELOW RIM	2	1	5	0	0
37			ENPO		CUP	BS	OVERGLAZE ENAMEL	1	1	5	0	0
38			WHITE		PLATE	R;BS		2	1	11	0	0
38			TPW		PLATE	BS	PRINTED '..ERLEYS Ltd'	1	1	10	0	0
38			PEAR		VASE	B		1	1	12	0	0
38			WHITE		BOWL	B		1	1	20	0	0
38			WHITE		JUG?	R	DARK BLUE INDUSTRIAL BLUE SLIP	1	1	2	0	0
38			WHITE		PLATE	BS		10	10	67	0	0
38			WHITE		SAUCER?	BS		5	5	6	0	0
38			ENPO		JUG?	B		1	1	24	0	0
38			ENPO		?	BS		8	5	10	0	0
38			WHITE		TPOT	R		1	1	1	0	0
39	PH		TPW	SET 2	PLATE, LARGE DINNER	R;B;BS	GREY PANEL EDGED WITH DARK RED LINES; LION, PAINTED 532 ON BOTTOM	6	1	644	93	258
39			WHITE		BOWL	R;B;BS	CRAZED	18	1	266	44	150
39			TPW	SET 2	PLATE, LARGE DINNER	R;B;BS	GREY PANEL EDGED WITH DARK RED LINES; LION, SHIELD AND UNICORN STAMPED ON BOTTOM WITH PAINTED 532	4	1	486	50	258
39			TPW	SET 2	PLATE, LARGE DINNER	R;B;BS	GREY PANEL EDGED WITH DARK RED LINES; LION, SHIELD AND UNICORN STAMPED ON BOTTOM WITH PAINTED 532	5	1	631	95	258
40			TPW	SET 2	PLATE, SMALL DINNER	R;B;BS	GREY PANEL EDGED WITH DARK RED LINES; LION, SHIELD AND UNICORN STAMPED ON BOTTOM WITH PAINTED 532	3	1	432	100	230
40			TPW	SET 2	PLATE, SMALL DINNER	R;B;BS	GREY PANEL EDGED WITH DARK RED LINES; LION, SHIELD AND UNICORN STAMPED ON BOTTOM	5	1	460	100	230
40			TPW	SET 2	PLATE,	R;B;BS	GREY PANEL EDGED WITH DARK RED LINES; PAINTED 532 ON BOTTOM	9	1	400	100	230

REFN	O	Action	Cname	Subfabric	Form	Part	Description	Nosh	NoV	Weight	EVEs	Diam
					SMALL DINNER							
40			TPW	SET 2	PLATE, SMALL DINNER	R;B;BS	GREY PANEL EDGED WITH DARK RED LINES; LION, SHIELD AND UNICORN STAMPED ON BOTTOM WITH PAINTED 532	3	1	443	100	230
40			TPW	SET 2	PLATE, SMALL DINNER	R;B;BS	GREY PANEL EDGED WITH DARK RED LINES; LION, SHIELD AND UNICORN STAMPED ON BOTTOM WITH PAINTED 532	16	1	445	97	230
41	PH		TPW	SET 1	DISH	BS	GREY CONVOLOLUS	3	1	108	90	135
42			TPW	SET 1	BOWL, SHALLOW	BS	GREY CONVOLOLUS	5	1	141	78	140
43			TPW	SET 1	DISH, SAUCER?	R;B;BS	GREY CONVOLVOLUS DEC; 'G.W CONVOLVULUS' ON BASE	8	1	155	66	175
44			TPW	SET 1	CUP	R;B;H;BS	GREY CONVOLVOLUS INT/EXT; ON BOTTOM 'G.W. Convolvulus No'	9	1	103	100	100
45			TPW	SET 1	PLATE, TEA	R;B;BS	GREY CONVOLVOLUS DEC; 'G.W CONVOLVULUS' ON BASE	8	2	604	165	210
46			TPW	SET 1	PLATE, TEA	R;B;BS	GREY CONVOLVOLUS DEC; 'G.W CONVOLVULUS' ON BASE	2	1	272	99	210
47			WHITE		JAR	BS	PLAIN CYLINDRICAL WITH GROOVE BELOW RIM	5	1	56	75	55
48			WHITE		JAR	BS	PLAIN CYLINDRICAL WITH GROOVE BELOW RIM	1	1	123	100	48
49	PH		WHITE		JUG	BS	CONICAL WITH PULLED SPOUT;OVAL-SECTIONED HANDLE; BAND OF PINK BORDERED BY DARK BROWN LINES TOP AND BOTTOM;GOLD LEAF LINE AND FLORAL BAND	30	1	536	95	85
50	PH		TPW	SET 2	DISH, OVAL	R;B;BS	GREY PANEL EDGED WITH DARK RED LINES; 21.5 ACROSS; LION, SHIELD AND UNICORN STAMPED ON BOTTOM WITH PAINTED '547 3' SAME SET AS 51	9	1	389	60	0
51	PH		TPW	SET 2	DISH, OBLONG	R;B;H	GREY PANEL EDGED WITH DARK RED LINES; 21.5 ACROSS; HANDLES AT EACH END AND OBLONG PEDISTAL UNDERNEATH; STAMP OF LION, SHEILD AND UNICORN ON BOTTOM WITH PAINTED No 532; SAME SET AS 50	9	1	882	70	0
53	PH		TPW	SET 3	PLATE	R;B;BS	FLORAL DEC WITH YELLOW OVERGLAZE; ON BASE 'No 5828 M&H'	7	1	297	80	205
38a			TPW		BOWL	R;B;BS	BLUE WILLOW PATTERN DEC IN BOTTOM OF BOWL; 4 PARTS OF SCENES ROUND EXT; RIM DEC WITH RAISED BLOBS; ON BASE PRINTED LION 'STONE CHINA D&S'	1	1	571	71	268
38a			TPW		DISH	B	BLUE WILLOW PATTERN DEC	1	1	34	0	0
38a			TPW		PLATE	BS	BLUE DEC	1	1	7	0	0

REFN	O	Action	Cname	Subfabric	Form	Part	Description	Nosh	NoV	Weight	EVEs	Diam
38a			WHITE	?		BS		1	1	5	0	0
