

## RENTOKIL TO THE RESCUE

SOUTHWARK CATHEDRAL Chapter House in St Thomas Street was formerly the Church of St. Thomas, a parish church within St. Thomas's Hospital, which occupied a site here from 1225 to 1865. After the Church was rebuilt in 1702, the loft was used by the apothecary of St. Thomas's Hospital for drying and storing the plants from which he made the bulk of the hospital's medicines, and was therefore called the Herb Garret.

In 1821 the hospital governors decided to construct a new female operating theatre from the adjoining surgical block. Since there was not sufficient space in the existing hospital, a way had to be made through from the top ward into the Herb Garret and half of the space allocated to the new operating theatre. This theatre was in use for 40 years until the hospital buildings were sold to a railway company. The way into the theatre and Herb Garret were blocked up and eventually forgotten. In 1956 Mr. Raymond Russell rediscovered the ancient operating room and Herb Garret and restoration work began. Guy's and St. Thomas's Hospitals combined to carry out this work and other London hospitals provided contemporary operating room furniture.

The old theatre was reopened as a museum piece in 1962, and is now the only surviving example in England of an operating room of its date. It saw the advent of anaesthesia in 1846 and the foundation of the Florence Nightingale School of Nursing in 1860. In more recent times it has been the subject of television documentaries and used by the BBC for the re-enactment of surgical operations of its period.

The Herb Garret, probably the only one that can be authenticated by actual material and by documentary evidence, contains exhibits illustrative of some aspects of surgery, pharmacy and nursing, the whole being a valuable contribution to London's medical history.

Many of the ancient timbers in the Herb Garret and operating theatre were recently found to be infested by the Death Watch Beetle and the Common Furniture Beetle. Timber preservation technicians from Rentokil were consulted and recommended spray application and injection of powerful insecticides to help save the infested members. Where decay had gone too far the offending areas were amputated and new healthy treated timbers grafted on. All the treated areas are now sound.

The old theatre and Herb Garret, which are situated near London Bridge Station, are open on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 12.30-4.00 p.m. and other days and times by appointment — they are fascinating links with the past and a visit is an experience not to be missed.

## FULHAM POTTERY ON DISPLAY

WE APOLOGISE for failing to give readers notice of an exhibition, *The Fulham Pottery, 1672-1980*, which took place at Fulham Library recently, especially as the exhibition was fascinating and well worth a visit. Material from the Fulham and Hammersmith Historical Society's recent excavations was on display, with items from the Pottery's collection and the Fulham Library collection.

The pottery was established by John Dwight, who was granted a patent in 1672 for making "transparent Earthen ware or China & Persian ware" and also "the Stone ware vulgarly called Cologne ware". After his death in 1703 it was continued as a stoneware pottery by his descendants until 1859, and stoneware continued to be made

until 1929. The main business is now the supply of potters' materials and equipment, but pottery is still made commercially.

As a result of the excavations it will be possible to assess Dwight's achievement at Fulham much more clearly and to recognise him as the first English scientific potter. Almost all the material found in the excavations was what was discarded and broken up and happens to have been buried on the site, for example in making drains or foundations. Enough has been found to show the wide range of Dwight's products and the methods of work, particularly during the early phases. Evidence for the Pottery's production after his time is much more limited.

Dwight himself was primarily a trained chemist applying his scientific knowledge to the problems of the making-up and properties of ceramic bodies. In seeking to reproduce German stoneware and Chinese porcelain he needed to use firing temperatures far beyond the practice of English potters of the day, and he appears to have devised his own methods. He succeeded in imitating German stoneware, and was able to embark on large-scale production. Unfortunately, he seems not to have found a market for extensive sale of his finer products and was soon forced to depend for a living on large-scale production of ordinary stoneware.

Some of the few examples of Dwight's "porcelain" found in the excavations show problems of blackening, blistering or melting. There are also "test pieces", with colouring, as used later by Wedgwood. Fragments of statuary were also found. The fine wares which Dwight made in the middle and later phases of his career, though apparently only in small quantity, were a very fine thin white stoneware, the marbled ware and the unglazed red stoneware, imitating the Chinese Yi-Hsing ware. Particularly interesting is a wide range, previously unsuspected, of stoneware with elaborate applied decoration and colouring with cobalt and manganese, like the best German products, and also very extensive use on plain stoneware of exquisitely designed medallions in extraordinary variety, all of which appear to date from the early phases.

Both in Dwight's time and through the 18th century the main products were bottles, tankards, jugs and jars for household and commercial use, but almost none of the excavated material has any of the decoration well known on surviving examples of 18th century English stoneware, usually assigned to Fulham.

In the 19th century the use of stoneware was developed for every conceivable purpose from drainpipes to ornaments for the drawing room. John Doulton, who founded at Lambeth the largest business of all, served his apprenticeship at the Pottery. New developments confirmed in the excavations were the making of moulded products, widespread use of individual pottery marks and of printing on vessels of customers' names and addresses, and the change in mid-century from the traditional salt-glazing to the smooth "Bristol-glazing" which still characterises the appearance of modern commercial stoneware.

The exhibition, which was planned by Madeleine Barber, was first shown at Stoke-on-Trent earlier this year. It has now been dismantled so that the pottery can be drawn for publication, which is likely to take some time. When that has been done, can someone find a permanent home for this exhibition? It deserves one.