

proportions of pottery fabrics within features. This is summarised, along with stratigraphic and small finds phasing, in Table 6 (pp. 103–5). The site chronology and notes on the phasing of archaeological features, which are relevant to Table 6, are on pp. 94–5. The discussion (c. 4 pages, 2 figures) summarises local distribution of wares, and the local Coventry pottery production areas.

I would agree with John Hunt that this is an important piece of work. ‘The significance of this report would have been all the more if it had appeared in print ten or twelve years earlier’ (Hunt 1995, 21). This is very true. The pottery report was written in 1983, revised in 1989, and finally published in 1996. During its long gestation, this whole monograph allegedly sat with the sponsor for about eight years (op cit, 21). A pottery specialist is given a job to do, paid for it, and subsequently asked to revise and update a work they may not have seen for some years, often with little or no further funding. This is not the most satisfactory way to produce a piece of work - but it happens too frequently — and is outside the specialist’s control. Much recent work on medieval pottery in the Midlands, for example, West Midlands work by Ford, Hodder and Nailor (see Ford 1995 for full references), could not be considered in the report because its revision was carried out seven years before eventual publication.

Hunt comments that ‘more consideration might have been expected of the economic and social significance of the pottery and the pottery industry’ (op cit, 21). This may be true, but such work requires careful and time-consuming examination of the archaeological and documentary evidence, which is probably not included in the pottery researcher’s brief — or fee. There is, in fact, a good and detailed summary by Dr. N. Alcock at the beginning of the monograph of the documentary evidence for the tenements that occupied the site from the Middle Ages to the 19th century. In the medieval period, these tenements belonged to cooks, shoemakers and fishmongers. This interesting work has not been integrated into the rest of the report, a consequence of the way that such a report is put together.

These comments should not detract from the significance of this pottery report. Its clear description of procedure, the profusely illustrated catalogue, and discussion of the assemblages are to be welcomed, and it will undoubtedly be used as a reference work for years to come.

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John C. Austin, *British Delft at Williamsburg*. The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, in association with Jonathan Horne Publications, 1994. 299 pp., 1,176 black & white illustrations, 42 colour plates. ISBN 0-87935-126-8 (C.W.), ISBN 0-9512140-6-3 (Jonathan Horne). Price £65.00.

This volume consists of an introductory overview of delft

production in Britain, with special reference to Delftfield in Glasgow and its relation to the Colonies, an essay on the archaeological context of delft from Williamsburg (by Robert Hunter), and a catalogue of 727 pieces from the Colonial Williamsburg collections, which have been acquired by the Foundation over the last sixty years.

The catalogue takes up the bulk of the volume. The objectives of the Colonial Williamsburg collections, we are told on the flyleaf, are twofold, ‘to put together a well-rounded collection of fine-quality pieces representing the forms and decorations produced throughout the period of manufacture; and to acquire objects identical to, similar to, or representative of the items owned or believed to be owned by the residents of Williamsburg and its environs in the 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries.’ The illustrated pieces from the collection have been organised according to broad functional categories, such as alcoholic beverage utensils, dinner table wares, and apothecary equipment.

The catalogue is preceded by 40 colour plates. They are of outstanding quality, the colour reproduction being quite true to life, and lacking any intrusive glare, although the final plate of stacks of overlapping tiles obscuring each other is somewhat curious, and some of the coloured backgrounds are a bit lurid. Nevertheless the photographers are to be heartily congratulated. These 40 plates are preceded by two group shots, one of reconstructed excavated vessels, and another of an 18th-century dinner service complete with food (but is it historically accurate food?). The black and white plates in the main catalogue are of a similar quality and are supplemented by useful panoramic photographs of vessels. The first two plates are of ‘Malling’ jugs, which are very unlikely ever to have been seen in Williamsburg — perhaps this is why these vessels are reproduced in sepia. Likewise, a number of the earlier 17th-century vessels would not have been seen in Williamsburg, except possibly as heirlooms.

In the catalogue, Austin has published vessels from the Williamsburg collections with excavated sherds at the bottom of the page as parallels. However, the sherds do not always seem to relate to the catalogue entries; for example, on page 116 there are three photographs of excavated sherds from covers, possibly for sugar dishes, which are coupled with photographs of milk jugs from the collections (Nos. 123–125). Despite this and other similar anomalies, the excavated sherds are generally put into context when illustrated adjacent to the intact pieces, and their publication together is a policy to be admired, although it is unfortunate that there is not the room for details of the archaeological context from which they were excavated. It is also a pity that the plates of the archaeological finds are the size of postage stamps.

To his credit John Austin uses ‘probably’ and ‘possibly’ in his attributions when there is an element of doubt. Some of these attributions may yet be refined with the benefit of recent archaeological work on some of the London kiln sites which are awaiting publication, although he does mention a small fragment of a Pallsy-type *fecundity* dish excavated at Platform Wharf, Rotherhithe (Museum of London site code PW86) in connection with an example in the collections (No. 154). This delft factory operated c. 1638–1663, although the decoration on the Platform Wharf sherd is less well executed than the Williamsburg example, dated 1661, which strongly suggests manufacture at Platform Wharf. Despite this, Austin concludes that the vessel’s manufacture coincided with William Fry’s move to Still Stairs, which took place in 1663. In addition, the posset pot with pronounced raised bosses (No. 11) is paralleled among the biscuit sherds from Platform Wharf.

Lobed dishes (Nos. 161, 162) are attributed in the

catalogue either to London or the Continent. Considering the sizeable number of lobed dish biscuit sherds from Platform Wharf and from the vicinity of the Pickleherring pottery, an attribution to London seems more likely. Recent assessment work on sites in the proximity of the Pickleherring kiln have also revealed parallels for the moulded cat jug (No. 716).

The windmill charger (No. 164) is thought by Austin to be 'apparently unique subject matter'. However, this is not so — a near-complete charger depicting a windmill, a miller and his horse, was excavated from a cess pit dating to the 1660s on a site in Tabard Street, Southwark (Museum of London site code CH75). Needless to say, Austin could not have known this, since this vessel is unpublished and forms part of an extensive Museum of London Archaeology Service back-log publication programme. However, a windmill plate in the Bristol Collection was illustrated by Frank Britton (1987, No. 150).

Within the catalogue, a number of attributions are made on the grounds of the colour or appearance of the glaze; for instance, No. 18, a posset pot attributed to London because of the 'pink runny glaze'. These are characteristics I would be unwilling to employ, on account of the degrees of variability in colour, texture and depth of glaze so often found among delft fragments on production sites.

In conclusion, this volume is an important contribution to the study of delftware, and will be of great value to curators, collectors, and archaeologists, both in Europe and North America. However, just a little more about the archaeology would not have gone amiss.

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P. Kleij, Oosterhouts Aardewerk, Assembled Articles 2, Antwerpen/Nijmegen, 1996, 101–128.

Oosterhout, situated in North Brabant near the well-known pottery-making centre of Bergen op Zoom, has also been an important centre for the production of earthenware for several centuries. Production started in Oosterhout most probably in the late middle ages, and from the seventeenth century onwards, evidence of the importance of Oosterhout can be found in written sources. In 1684, for example, Oosterhout has, after a period of decline, 30 potteries, while Bergen op Zoom, at its height in 1669, featured only 22 potteries. Although the size of the potteries in both cities can hardly be compared, it appears that the role of Oosterhout should not be underestimated. In 1813 Oosterhout had the largest number of potteries within its city limits in the Netherlands, namely 16. The nineteenth century saw a general decline in pottery production, including Oosterhout; the last pottery closed in 1935. Oosterhout's importance as a production centre is very rarely known to researchers of late- and post-medieval pottery. Until now, only a few publications have appeared, and these largely focus on the written sources and hardly on the actual products (Oomen 1982, Meulen *et al.* 1989). Van der Meulen and Smeele focus on some marked pieces of Oosterhout's ceramics preserved in private and public collections. Kleij, in his contribution, focuses for the first time on pottery wasters from a pottery in the Rulstraat in Oosterhout, dating from

the second half of the eighteenth century. This site was recorded in the written sources, and from this it can be concluded that a pottery already existed on this location prior to 1706, while the pottery was demolished in 1886. The dating, therefore, is based on the typochronology of the forms, technical aspects and the association with imported goods found near the wasters. The forms that were produced consisted mainly of plates, colanders, lids, ashpots, bowls, jugs or pitchers, cups and skillets. Other utensils were a spouted pot, a storage pot, a vase, a bird whistle, a miniature pan, a coffee-pot, and an oil lamp. This diversity corresponds to the products mentioned in nineteenth century documents about Oosterhout's ceramics. As the pottery wasters come from one or a few kiln loads by the same potter, it is not possible to characterise the Oosterhout production from this find-complex alone. Nevertheless, Kleij, although he himself points to the risks involved, makes a first attempt to specify characteristic forms and decorations from Oosterhout, or even specific products such as the "kooltjespan" (a kind of brazier). A first step towards a better understanding of Oosterhout's earthenware has been taken: Kleij's publication forms a welcome supplement to recent works concerning the production of post-medieval ceramics in the Netherlands on the basis of production waste (Mars, 1991; Groeneweg, 1992; Bitter, 1995).

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P. Bitter, Geworteld in de bodem. Archeologisch en historisch onderzoek van een pottenbakkerij bij de Wortelsteeg in Alkmaar, Publicaties over de Alkmaarse Monumentenzorg en Archeologie 1, Zwolle, 1995. 175 pp, illustrations, groundplans, a catalogue of the objects found and English summary. ISBN 90-801044, price fl. 15,- ex p&p, orders to be placed with: SPA, Lijnbaan 103, Zwolle, the Netherlands.

This book deals with the archaeological excavation of a site at the Wortelsteeg in the centre of the town of Alkmaar in the Netherlands, under the direction of the municipal archaeologist Peter Bitter, who is also the principal author of this report.

Between 1475/1500 and 1880, six periods of occupation