



Review Article

Chris Green, *John Dwight's Fulham Pottery. Excavations 1971–79*, English Heritage Archaeological Report 6, 1999. 380 pp. A4, 259 black and white plates and figures (many with multiple drawings), 13 colour plates. ISBN 1 85074 599 4. Price: £35 paperback.

In the years since 1931, when W. B. Honey told the English Ceramic Circle that 'it is difficult to distinguish between the Fulham greybeards and the many other brown-mottled ("Tiger Ware") bottles still obstinately called Cologne or Frechen',¹ knowledge about both early English and contemporary Frechen stonewares has advanced hugely. And if the predicted discovery of many Fulham *Bartmänner* has proved elusive, at least with the publication of Chris Green's report the reasons for their absence are fully explained, while the range of other stoneware types known to have been made at Fulham in the late 17th and 18th centuries has expanded beyond all expectation.

Interest in the Fulham Pottery had remained high since the 1860s when the Dwight Heirlooms were discovered and published,² and when some tantalising finds were made during rebuilding work. In 1929 Fulham Central Library held *An Exhibition of Fulham Pottery and Prints*, which included a good showing of London salt-glaze; and from the 1930s onwards various members of the English Ceramic Circle espoused the cause, culminating with Mavis Bimson's papers on Dwight in the 1950s and '60s, which consolidated the known facts while also breaking new ground (Bimson 1959 and 1961; new light was also cast on Dwight by Weatherill and Edwards 1971). When the opportunity arose to launch a rescue excavation at the Fulham Pottery in 1971 under Vagn Christophers, it was eagerly seized by the Archaeological Section of the Fulham and Hammersmith Historical Society. These volunteers, however, soon found themselves faced with the task of recovering rich deposits of wasters, against a background of limited time and resources. For, contrary to expectation, the area made available for excavation — a small part of the Pottery site, which had already been completely rebuilt after 1865 — was found to include drainage ditches dug around the boundaries in the earliest phase of the Pottery's existence, ditches which had been densely back-filled with the failed results of John Dwight's most innovative wares of the experimental period of 1672–5. With the aid of funding from various bodies, notably the DOE (Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments) and its successor, English Heritage, the excavation was enabled to run its course until 1979 when the Pottery owners redeveloped the site. From this point onwards, Chris Green, who had taken over from Christophers, was left with the monumental task of finding storage, processing the material with the aid of volunteers and preparing a report commensurate with the importance of the finds.

Despite setbacks (the report was originally considered as an issue of Post-Medieval Archaeology but proved too

large), the continuity provided by Chris Green's perseverance over a period of nineteen years may be seen to have reaped great rewards, not least because a grant from English Heritage enabled him to spend a year working exclusively on the drawings. In the meantime, the field of stoneware studies and knowledge of the wider context of stoneware manufacture in England and Germany continued to broaden. Pending the excavation report, in 1979 Dennis Haselgrove and John Murray produced their masterly *John Dwight's Fulham Pottery 1672–1978. A Collection of Documentary Sources*. Subsequently a small selection of finds were exhibited at Fulham Library in 1980, and after they had at last found a permanent home at the Museum of London, many of the most important were exhibited and published by the dealer Jonathan Horne in 1992.³ Further stoneware interest was stimulated by excavations at the Vauxhall Pottery under Roy Edwards (report awaited, but see Cockell 1974 and Edwards 1984); by the report on the Woolwich stoneware kiln (Pryor and Blockley 1978); by the publication of *English Brown Stoneware 1670–1900* (Oswald *et al.* 1982) and the catalogue of the V&A exhibition *Browne Mugs* in 1985. More recently, Haselgrove has identified and published the products of Dwight's rival William Killigrew, as well as detailed analyses of the stoneware bottle trade and of the development of stoneware manufacture in England (Haselgrove 1989 and 1990; for the bottle trade see Haselgrove and van Loo 1998). The recent summary of Dwight's achievements and those of his contemporaries to be found in David Gaimster's thorough and comprehensive *German Stoneware 1200–1900* (1997) in no way pre-empted or dulled hopes for the final Fulham report, the manuscript of which was completed in 1993 and accepted by English Heritage in 1996. Its publication late last year must be accounted a major victory for both author and publisher.

The report itself is divided into Sections numbered I to III, each arranged chronologically, consisting of 'The Site' (its history and development interpreted from the archaeology), 'The Pottery's Products' (an illustrated catalogue of the majority of the pottery finds), and lengthy Appendices. From the beginning, the contribution of Dennis Haselgrove, Dr. Ian Freestone and many others to the historical and scientific aspects is apparent, for this is not simply an archaeological report but a definitive history of the Fulham Pottery. The copious documentary evidence, the excavated material and surviving complete objects, though necessarily divided between the three sections, are fully discussed and integrated. Any gaps in this comprehensive story merely reflect inadequacies in the excavated material — for example, the comparatively thin 18th-century period, when improved kiln technology had much reduced the wastage rate.

Dwight's place as the father of British fine ceramics is abundantly confirmed by the finds. The excavated experimental wares made before commercial production began about 1675 included small quantities of red stoneware (at least as early as any made in Holland, and some 30 years

before Böttger at Meissen), bottles with masks and personalised medallions, globular Westerwald-type stoneware mugs with misfired cobalt-blue and manganese-purple slip-glazes, elementary scratch-blue decoration, pieces of figures by unknown modellers, and of course the important early trial pieces of soft-paste porcelain. All these were either new ceramic bodies or new to England, and even after production of brown stoneware and 'fine white' gorges was well established in the 1680s and 1690s, Dwight is shown to have continued developing new types, of which the most significant was the white-slipped stoneware with brown-dipped rim. To judge by the examples found in a deposit of tavern waste at Tunsgate in Guildford (Fryer and Selley 1997, 171, fig. 29, nos. 206–7), this highly refined material was made on a commercial scale, probably in the years immediately after Dwight's death in 1703, and pre-dates the production of white-dipped stoneware in Staffordshire by some ten or fifteen years; probably the earliest reference to Staffordshire wares is the newspaper advertisement by the dealer John Akerman at the sign of the Rose and Crown in Cornhill for 'white stone ware' in 1719, and the earliest dated example a posset pot in the Burnap Collection in Kansas City, inscribed 'Mrs Mary Sandbach her Cup anno dom 1720' (Taggart 1967, no. 182). Apart from the successful results of his ceaseless quest for perfection and of his artistic inventiveness, Dwight's use of brass sprig-moulds, lathe turning, Staffordshire haematite for red stoneware, and calcined flint as a whitening agent, were all technical advances later adopted in the Midlands. One might speculate that his contact with the Elers Brothers may have introduced him to slip-casting in Plaster-of-Paris moulds, but if so, it is equally certain that he would have dismissed a technique designed principally for mass-production at the expense of craftsmanship.

The illustrations of Section II indicate that in its early years the Fulham Pottery was small enough to have a house style. Sweeping arched handles, finely potted elegant bottles, neat and crisp foot and rim profiles, and especially the idiosyncratic curled or knife-cut handle terminals, appear to be the work of a handful of throwers and turners. These features, together with the dense, refined, fritted body, which included Dorset clay and Isle of Wight sand and was protected from kiln damage by the use of saggars, make it possible to distinguish the superior Fulham products from other contemporary rival stonewares. It might be thought that Fulham, which alone of the London stoneware potteries survived as a working pottery until its transformation into an archaeological site in 1971, would provide a useful paradigm for others long since demolished and built-over. This is, however, not so, for although it was the first serious stoneware pottery in England, the design of the Pottery itself and its early products were the brainchild of a man with no previous experience in the pottery business and with highly individualistic ideas. Other potteries in Southwark and Lambeth merely added stoneware production, from the 1690s onwards, to their existing manufacture of delftware. Thus many questions about early London stoneware remain unanswered. What were the products of the Bear Garden upon which 'diverse images and figures' were applied,⁴ and what, if anything, was distinctive about the stonewares made at Gravel Lane and Pickleherring?

As might be expected, Dwight's death, like Wedgwood's in 1795, robbed the factory of its driving force. The archaeological and documentary evidence at Fulham points to a steady decline in the quality of the products made by his heirs, which, apart from oddities such as small amounts of delftware, cobalt-blue and iron-brown painted vessels and 'double glazed' ware, gradually became indistinguishable from those of other prolific potteries in Southwark and

Lambeth. For this period, archaeologists will surely benefit from the illustrated datable 18th- to 20th-century profiles of ubiquitous vessels such as mugs, bottles and storage jars.

Section III, the Appendices, follows eight full pages of excellent colour photographs, illustrating Dwight's widely differing types and his attempts to use blue and purple decoration. Whilst the subject of kilns necessarily forms part of the archaeological discussion in Section I, the catalogue of kiln furniture has sensibly been assigned to Section III, Appendix 2, where it complements a range of disparate subjects which include fuel, sinters and slags; the complete catalogue of applied decoration, including a large repertoire of 17th-century inn-signs and owners' initials (many of which were apparently dumped after Dwight's first exclusive Agreement to supply the Glass-Sellers' Company in 1676); sprigs and seal impressions; an extensive but necessarily incomplete list of diagnostic Fulham ale measure marks; a full list of known Fulham pots in public and private collections; a slightly inconclusive analysis of vessel capacities; detailed explanations of site features and finds provenance; plans; selected documentary sources; a facsimile of Lady Charlotte Schreiber's transcript of the missing Dwight Notebooks of 1689–98, and others of the Doulton & Watts and James Stiff printed catalogues of 1873. The comprehensive bibliography appears to have been revised as late as 1997, and the index is meticulous.

It is indeed difficult to find fault with a work whose enormous scale has been rationalised with such care that its contents (with the possible exception of Appendix 7, where the bold-type locations in the list dominate the main headings in small italics) are readily accessible. The photographs and the drawings by Chris Green and the DOE are uniformly excellent, the maps and plans concise. It is, on the one hand, an invaluable reference work for Fulham products and, on the other, a dissertation on the economics and technical aspects of stoneware production in London over three centuries. Surprising facts may be gleaned from this book: for example, the scanty evidence of demolished kiln structures indicates that until as late as 1780 Fulham continued to use square, wood-fired, up-draught kilns, salted through the firebox (an archaic method which, following a sketch of an arched, up-draught 'Nottingham Ware Kiln' of 1771 in the Wedgwood Archives, I had assumed to have been peculiar to the Nottingham potteries). One might take Chris Green to task over the implication that Fulham was the only producer of tea- and coffee-vessels, in view of the publication by Frank Britton of the Pickleherring Pottery inventory of 1699 (mentioned but not reproduced in the book), which surprisingly included 'Stone Clay Ware . . . 734 Coffees, 22 Coffee Pots, 634 Capucheens, 172 Teapots . . .' (Britton 1990, 76–7; 1993, 64). One might also question whether it was proper to include a 'Factory B' hunting mug as Fig. 121, even though all these mugs have traditionally, but without any evidence, been attributed to Fulham in the past. Since the publication of *English Brown Stoneware* in 1982, the largest and most elaborate group, 'Factory A', has been attributed to the Vauxhall Pottery on the evidence of a single waster with glazed fractures found among 7 tons of material (Oswald *et al.* 1982, 49). These battered ale pots, holding as much as 6 or even 8 pints, were surely not, like the Derbyshire loving cups, intended as wedding or christening presents, but were made for taverns and drinking clubs, probably including the rival Hannoverian and Jacobite 'Mug House' clubs which flourished in the 1720s. In December 1998, a paper was given to the English Ceramic Circle by Wynne Hamilton Foyne putting forward the theory, plausible though based entirely upon the evidence of documents and of dated inscribed mugs, that this 'B' group was probably

made at Norfolk House, which was known to have had stoneware as well as delftware kilns (Hamilton Foyne forthcoming).

With Chris Green's recent editing, omissions to the list of surviving Fulham products are hard to find. The two gorges of c. 1675–80 which were shown at the dealer Garry Atkins' exhibition in March 1999 (Atkins 1999, nos. 1–2),⁵ appeared too late to be included in Appendix 7, and a white-slipped Fulham mug in the V&A, heavily disguised with later Dutch enamel decoration dated 1739, may have been omitted deliberately. Suspicions that the sprigged gorge illustrated as Fig. 228 might have been a pair to a similar piece in the Morley Hewitt Collection sold in 1959 were allayed by an exchange of faxes with the Royal Ontario Museum, which established that they were in fact the same object which had emigrated to Canada and lost its earlier provenance. With quibbles as minor as the above, it seems inconceivable that *John Dwight's Fulham Pottery* could ever be superseded as the standard work on the subject.

Footnotes

1. 'English Saltglazed Stoneware', a talk given by W. B. Honey on 15th December 1931 and published in *ECC Trans* 1, 1933, 12–22.
 2. An account by Thomas Baylis in *Art-Journal*, October 1862 and a fuller account by William Chaffers in *Art-Journal*, June 1865 give details of Dwight's patents. The collection of Dwight Heirlooms, which had been acquired by C. W. Reynolds, was sold at Christie's on 29th May 1871 and effectively divided between the British Museum and South Kensington (Victoria and Albert) Museum.
 3. A lavish catalogue of the exhibition, *John Dwight 'the Master Potter of Fulham' 1672–1703 and his contemporaries*, was produced by Jonathan Horne (the edition limited to fifteen copies).
 4. 'The Answer of Richard White and Moses Johnson to Dwight's Complaint', sworn on 27th November 1695. Extracts are included in Edwards 1974, 78, and the full text in Haselgrove and Murray 1979, 109–110. A small number of stoneware bottles with medallions and bearded masks, clearly English but not of Fulham manufacture, have been found in recent years.
 5. These pieces, complete though evidently excavated wasters, were discovered amongst a collection of German stonewares.
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