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Duncan H Brown

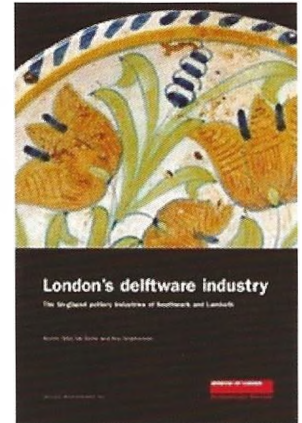
### Kieron Tyler, Ian Betts and Roy Stephenson

London's delftware industry . The tin-glazed potteries of Southwark and Lambeth

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Hardback, xv+136 pages, 174 figures (86 in colour), 28 tables, French and German summaries, bibliography, index, price £15.95

The Museum of London Archaeological Service has produced an informative and well illustrated account of the background to, and finds from, five south London delftware pothouses, excavated between 1979 and 1992. Three were in Southwark – Montague Close, Pickleherring and Rotherhithe, and two in Lambeth – Norfolk House and Glasshouse Street. They grew



up with others after London's first tin-glaze pottery at Aldgate ceased production early in the 17th century. The archaeological and historical background to each pothouse is discussed, drawing on previously published material, and then details are given of the recent findings and products.

The authors are cautious in their attributions and stress that forms and decorations alone can rarely prove the origin of wares. Seventeenth- and 18th-century pothouse staff moved freely from one pothouse to another. Consequently designs and patterns were copied, making stylistic attribution difficult. Even with chemical analysis of the clays to help them, the authors employ a grading system, from zero to three asterisks, to ascribe the likely provenance of the excavated shards. Kieron Taylor provided much archaeological information, Ian Betts the descriptions of tiles and Roy Stephenson the descriptions and discussions about vessels. The introductory chapter covers the above, including attributions and the conventions used in the text.

Chapter 2 describes the overseas origins of delftware; its arrival in England and subsequent spread elsewhere in Britain; its appeal in mimicking expensive, but highly desirable, imported Chinese porcelain; and its deficiencies in chipping easily and failing to withstand the thermal shock of boiling water. The manufacturing process of delftware is described from Piccolpasso in mid-16th century Italy, to Gerrit Paape and then to Diderot and d'Alembert in the later 18th century. Well illustrated with engravings, Chapter 2 would give a student insight into the working of tin-glaze potteries but it may seem superfluous to those with more extensive knowledge. There are descriptions of clay preparation, turning, moulding, and the methods of making tile blanks. Kiln furniture and the stacking

and firing of the kilns are detailed. Glazes and pigments are alluded to only briefly.

In Chapter 2 also, Richard Kilburn summarises the role of the Glass Sellers' Company in the distribution and sale of, not only glass, but also pottery and tiles between 1664 and the 1720's. There follows a synopsis of previously published antiquarian and archaeological research.

Each of Chapters 3–7, pp 26–110, details one of the five pothouses. The circumstances of the excavation are followed by the archaeological background, then a well referenced summary of current documentary and archaeological evidence, supported by maps and site photographs. The findings are listed next with a commentary. Drawings and colour photographs of the shards are compared with illustrations of delftware from the Museum of London.

Montague Close pottery (c 1613 – 1755) is discussed in Chapter 3. To the present finds of this previously excavated Southwark pothouse are now added three unusual bisque figurines depicting naked, seated, Afro-Caribbeans each holding a shallow salt dish.

Blue on white painted charger shards from Montague Close, decorated with a bird among foliage and surrounded by a 'Wan Li' border, are shown beside illustrations from the Museum of London collection (Figs. 44 and 45). They depict similar alternating rosettes and flowers, also described as 'Wan Li'. Noel Hume (1977, Plates 31, (41), 45, (46, 47), 48), and the London & Middlesex Archaeological Society and the Surrey Archaeological Society (1988, 324, 335) also illustrate the rosette and flower patterns as 'Wan Li'. Frank Britton (1987, 109, plate 32) interestingly, however, showed a typical blue on white 'bird on a rock' plate, but simply called the related border 'six Ming-style panels'. Terminological confusion arises when tile corners, decorated with the meander pattern, are also described as 'Wan Li' (Korf 1963, 43, 47. Riley 1987, 59). It would be better to identify these disparate decorations as 'rosettes and flowers' or, as appropriate, the 'meander' pattern, as such, and then add after each 'in the style of Wan Li'. In Chapter 4 (Fig. 76, D15/1, D15/2.) the present authors avoid confusion, describing the 'meander' design on Pickleherring tiles as 'Chinese-style mock-fret corner motifs'.

Chapter 4 concentrates on the Southwark Pickleherring pothouse (c1618–1723). It was founded by Christian Wilhelm who had moved to England from the Netherlands in 1604. The Dutch influence persisted long after the factory was taken over by English potters. Several designs on Pickleherring tile fragments closely resemble shards from Rotherhithe. Floor tile production at Pickleherring (and Rotherhithe) probably ceased about 1660. Both polychrome and blue on white decorated charger shards from Pickle-herring depict geometric designs, pomegranates and tulips. Kiln furniture and much biscuit ware were found and evidence of three brick built kilns.

Rotherhithe pothouse (c1638–84), Southwark, is described in Chapter 5. Again biscuit ware and kiln furniture was found. Glaze splashing confirms that biscuit and glazed items were fired simultaneously, the glazed being stacked above the biscuit. Poor mixing of the red and white clays caused cracking and 'marbling' whilst glazing and firing faults led to further wastage. Shards from Rotherhithe include many different forms which are illustrated and compared with wares from the Museum.

Rotherhithe floor tile shards show 15 polychrome and 13 blue on white designs. London blue on white tiles copied Dutch patterns and may have been produced in response to massive importation of tiles from the Netherlands. Figure 144 (Design 27), for example, showing a tile firmly attributed to Rotherhithe, is stylistically a close copy of a Dutch sailing boat and has Dutch inspired 'spider head' corners. Ian Betts suggests one point of differentiation between stylistically similar tiles from the Continent and from London could be their thickness; mid 17th century tiles from Holland are thinner (9–11 mm.) compared with the generally thicker Rotherhithe tiles (13–14 mm.).

Chapter 6 concentrates on Norfolk House pottery (c1680–c1772–9) in Lambeth which had connections with both the Netherlands and New Jersey in America. John Bird, who was recruited by the Dinwiddies to start the Delftfield pottery in Glasgow in 1748, was closely connected, through his uncle, Joseph Fortee, with both the Norfolk House and Lambeth High Street pothouses. Decorated Norfolk House pottery finds are illustrated *en masse* (Fig. 149) and include a dish with the motto *Success to the British Arms*, a William and Mary plate, a bowl carrying a lion motif and a dish decorated with fish.

As with Rotherhithe floor tiles, some Norfolk House blue on white floor tile shards, showing a Dutch influence, are firmly attributed here to London manufacture. Not only were they found on site, but the ICP analysis of their clay also suggests this provenance. These tiles include ones with Dutch inspired 'barred ox-head' and 'spider head' corners.

Finally, the Lambeth Glasshouse Street pothouse (c1743–84 and 1823–46) is described in Chapter 7. It manufactured porcelain briefly between 1753 and about 1760 and made stoneware, including stoneware tiles, between 1784 and 1823. Glasshouse Street was the last tin-glaze factory in London, and between 1823 and 1846, it produced some unusual coloured tin-glazed mosaic tiles. The manufacturing periods of all three types of ware – tin-glazed, porcelain and stoneware – probably overlapped chronologically.

A D-shaped, brick built kiln was exposed, measuring only 1.9 by 1.0 m., with two rectangular fireboxes radial to its curved side. When discussed at the symposium, launching the book in Mortimer Wheeler House, it was felt likely that this tiny kiln may have been used for experiments, possibly for coal firing.

Present and previous excavations uncovered some kiln furniture, but no trivets. Finds included shards of pharmaceutical and household vessels and some polychrome painted saucers depicting flowers and insects.

Chapter 8, *Conclusions: the tin-glazed pottery industries of Southwark and Lambeth*, is of wider scope than its title suggests. 17th century tin-glaze pothouses are early examples of highly organised manufacturing processes, rather than simple cottage industries. In the previous century Henry VIII had supported the importation of tin-glazed wares and he encouraged the introduction of tin-glaze techniques into England. Floors in his own palaces and other great houses were laid with imported tin-glazed mosaic tiles long before potters from the Netherlands arrived in Norwich. The London pothouses that sprang up early in the 17th century exploited a booming economic market and the desirability of tin-glazed wares for domestic use and in apothecaries' shops. The introduction of coffee, tea and chocolate during the 17th and early 18th centuries further encouraged the production of delftware drinking vessels.

Competition with cheaper delftware from the Continent and expensive porcelain imported from China encouraged London delftware manufacturers to paint tin-glazed earthenware in the Chinese style or else to use Dutch patterns which, in turn, had been copied from the Chinese. Delftfield in Glasgow was possibly the only tin-glaze pothouse purpose built on a green field site; the London potters were hampered by being obliged to use and convert pre-existing buildings. There were problems in London too with the correct mixing of clays and, perhaps more than once, a Dutch potter was brought over to give advice.

Exchange of staff between the London pothouses themselves and with Glasgow and Dublin has already been mentioned. The number of painters in London pothouses can occasionally be guessed because some identical tile designs, which were decorated in slightly different styles, suggest that several pot painters were at work. The authors comment on the varying quantities of vessel forms recovered at London pothouses, showing that some potteries made a more diverse range of products than did others.

Chapter 9 usefully lists the many known links between the staff of different pothouses. It continues by discussing laminated and un-laminated tiles with reference to the Museum's fabric reference collection.

Of particular value in Chapter 9 is the specialist appendage by Michael Hughes. Using inductively coupled plasma (ICP) spectrometry he established the chemical composition of clay samples of products from four of the five potteries, excluding Montague Close where there was insufficient material. The results were compared with analyses of shards from Hermitage Wapping and Aldgate. ICP atomic emission spectrometry (ICP-AES) and ICP mass spectrometry (ICP-MS) complement each other by analysing different aspects of the chemical composition of the clays. Both methods can be used on a single biscuit or glazed sample.

Lime poor London clays were often mixed with lime rich clays from other areas. These lime rich additions dilute the mixture but do not materially alter the relative proportions of trace elements. Using principal components analysis and discriminant analysis, Michael Hughes claims that the samples he analysed suggest that each pothouse had its own 'chemical fingerprint'. Assuming that enough samples were taken to provide statistical significance, and that the findings can be replicated, there is the exciting future possibility of assigning wares found distant from a pothouse to their exact place of manufacture. Besides, when excavated tile shards have mortar on their backs or else show signs of wear, ICP analysis, together with other evidence, could indicate an incorrect attribution to that pothouse, simply because the tiles were excavated there. Ultimately the combination of the form, style and decoration of the wares, and their place of origin, together with fabric and ICP analyses, should make the provenance of shards and complete wares more accurate.

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Jim Gray

Volunteer on the National Museum Scotland Shard Project