

Title: The Victorian pottery from Cyril Jackson School, Limehouse Causeway

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Introduction and methodology

This technical report considers the late Regency/early Victorian pottery from Limehouse Causeway (LHC93) recovered from the three contexts ([1], [3], and [5]), each representing the backfill of a privy. A statistical summary is provided below (Table 1). The numerical data comprises sherd count, estimated number of vessels (ENV), and weight but was further quantified by measuring rim diameter and estimated vessel equivalents (EVES: placing the rim onto a rim chart to measure its completeness as a percentage of a complete vessel). Orton, Tyers and Vince (1993, 167-181) provide further information with regard to these specific methods of pottery recording. The pottery is stored in 18 standard archive shoe-sized boxes and curated in the London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre (LAARC).

Table 1 Dating and statistical counts per context from LHC93

CONTEXT	TPQ	TAQ	SHERD COUNT	ENV	WEIGHT (GRAMMES)	EVES
[1]	<i>c</i> 1836	1850	213	72	13999	36.75
[3]	<i>c</i> 1820	1840	192	62	10690	26.41
[5]	<i>c</i> 1829	1850	224	64	9421	24.14

1 The pottery

The majority of the pottery is British made, as is normal for ceramic assemblages dating to the 19th century, reflecting the dominance and popularity of British manufactured ceramics during this period. Table 2 presents the pottery by sources of supply as a whole, rather than tabulation on a context by context basis, with the variations among the pottery from these three different privies described elsewhere (1.6; below). As is common, factory made refined earthenwares – a term employed to describe various twice fired white-bodied earthenwares that are plain and undecorated, or with painted, transfer-printed, or industrial slip decoration applied, and produced by factories clustered in the Midlands and the north from the late 18th century onwards – provided the vast majority of the assemblage (61.7% of vessel count). This site also yielded a small collection of Chinese porcelain and a Spanish lid in addition to ceramic figurines from contexts [1] (accession number <125>) and [5] (accession number <139>).

Just under a quarter of this LHC93 assemblage is comprised of different British made earthenwares representing ‘country pottery’ traditions and London made coarse earthenwares, both found in a variety of kitchen forms. Yellow wares are particularly popular among the first group (16.6% of vessel count). Manufactured in the north Midlands but particularly associated with potteries in Derbyshire (for example, Sharpes Pottery in Swadlincote founded in 1821: www.sharpes.org.uk), yellow wares are often represented in pottery assemblages in London dated after the 1830s, though they appear in limited numbers in groups dated a decade or so earlier. Whilst marked examples are rare, a dish recovered from an excavation at Pages Walk (MoL sitecode PAW91: context [6]) on the Old Kent Road (Southwark) is stamped with ‘J Thompson Warranted’. Representing the mark of Joseph Thompson, of the Wooden

Box or Hartsthorpe pottery near Ashby de la Zouch in Derbyshire, this potter operated between 1818–56 (Godden 2003, no. 3839, 615). Contemporary terms for yellow ware included ‘yellow ware’, ‘yellow cane ware’ and ‘Derbyshire ironstone cane ware’ (not to be mistaken for a dry bodied stoneware also called caneware manufactured by the Staffordshire potteries during the late 18th century) and was heavily marketed and later produced in the United States and Canada (Sussman 1997).

Table 2 Pottery by source from contexts [1], [3], and [5] LHC93by statistical counts

POTTERY SOURCE	SHERD COUNT	SHERD COUNT %	ENV	ENV %	WEIGHT grammes	WEIGHT %	EVES	EVES %
British made earthenwares	156	24.8%	33	16.8%	7969	23.4	18.57	21.3
British made porcelain	12	1.9	4	2.0	172	.5	1.08	1.2
British made refined earthenwares	406	64.5	129	65.5	19335	56.7	54.66	62.6
British made stoneware	31	5	14	7.1	1808	5.3	9.40	10.8
Imported: continental	1	.2	1	.5	445	1.3	.10	.1
Imported: Far-eastern	8	1.3	5	2.5	662	1.9	1.89	2.2
London made coarse red earthenwares	15	2.4	11	5.6	3719	10.9	1.60	1.8
Total	629	100%	197	100%	34110	100%	87.30	100%

The next section discusses the pottery following the remit for the interpretive discussion as proposed in the project design.

1.1 Chronology

1.1.1 Context [1]

The *terminus post quem* (TPQ) proposed for this particular pottery assemblage is 1836 based on the numerous makers marks identified, and though the *terminus ante quem* (TAQ) remains ambiguous, it is unlikely this material was deposited much later than *c* 1850–60. There remains the possibility that the TPQ date might be after 1844, as the Corinth print present on three saucers was registered in this year (Coysh and Henrywood 1989, 62). However, though the Copyright Act of 1842 made it possible for designs and shapes to be registered at the Patent Office in London, thus giving them protection for a period of up to three years, this does not necessarily mean that the registration of a particular print reflected the first time it was used.

As noted, it is therefore the printed maker’s marks that provide the chronologies for this group, with their overall date range 1822–42. The latest maker’s mark dated to

1836 is identified as belonging to Read, Clementson & Anderson, of Shelton, Hanley (R.C & A: see Godden 2003, no 3213, 524), followed by two examples from John and Robert Godwin of Sneyd Green, Corbridge (J & R.G, 1834–66: *ibid*, no 1726, 277) from 1834. The third and earliest makers mark belonged to Elkin Knight & Co of the Foley Potteries, Fenton and is dated 1822–6 (*ibid*, no 1466, 234). However, the M.S printed mark found on two slop bowls remains unidentified.

Other definitive chronological markers are provided by the refined whiteware with industrial slip decoration bearing the Imperial Standard medallion in reference to Weights and Measures Act of 1824. Some of the pottery suggests slightly earlier purchases, for example, the few pearlware dinner plates with even-scalloped blue shell-edged decorated rims (Miller 2000, 3). In addition, the different transfer-printed scenes identified - styles of which were open to different influences and therefore dateable to within 10 to 20 year period - are very much in what Coysh and Henrywood have characterised as the ‘Vintage Years’ (1984, 10) of blue and white printing between 1815–35. The majority of the blue transfer-printed patterns identified were popular during this period, and include Chinoiserie printed patterns (Broseley and Willow Pattern) together with those depicting English and Italianate landscapes, with the former including the common Wild Rose print (*ibid*, 400–1). The frequent green transfer-printed wares also push the dating of the assemblage beyond 1825.

1.1.2 Context [3]

The overall *terminus post quem* for this pottery assemblage is *c* 1820. Determining the *terminus ante quem* date remains imprecise, with the absence of maker’s marks making chronological refinement difficult, however, much of the pottery is unlikely to have remained in use after *c* 1840–50. A few of the plain, undecorated whiteware plates (‘CC’ or cream-coloured wares: Miller 1991, 3) have an *c* 1810–20s ‘feel’ to them, with the pearlware dinner plates with either rococo or even-scalloped blue shell-edged rim decoration (Miller 2000, 3) also similarly dated. The bulk of the pottery reflects material common to *c* 1820–30s with the transfer-printed patterns present on the refined whitewares most popular during these decades (for example Broseley and the series of prints depicting idealised views of British rural pastimes, views and occupations). The composition and chronologies of this group therefore indicates a steady acquisition of mismatched material over a *c* 20 year period. However, it is the clay pipes, rather than the pottery, that has provided the most accurate and refined dating for the materials deposited here (*c* 1836–50).

1.1.3 Context [5]

Like context [3], establishing a precise *terminus post quem* and *terminus ante quem* date for this pottery assemblage is difficult given the absence of maker’s marks, though it is unlikely that the pottery is dated much beyond the *c* 1840s. Despite this, the combination of the Pembroke shaped teacup (*c* 1829), the green transfer-printed whitewares (after *c* 1825), together with the identified printed patterns, suggests this group was used and discarded during the 1830s. However, the Woodland print present on the one of the plates is attributed to the maker W Baker & Co (1839) by Coysh and Henrywood (1984) and so it remains possible that the group is dated after *c* 1839. The

close dating for the materials deposited in this privy is instead provided by the clay pipes (c 1832-40).

1.2 Function and cost

1.2.1 Context [1]

Blue (TPW2: 20.8% of vessel count) and green transfer-printed wares (TPW4: 16.7% of vessel count) are the most frequent fabrics in this assemblage, and therefore this privy contained the largest proportion of more expensive printed wares (46.3% of vessel count) if compared with the other two groups from this site. When considering the pottery by primary function, this assemblage divides almost equally between vessels used as teawares (teacups and saucers and so on: 32% of vessel count) and for dining (dinner plates and so on: 16.7% of vessel count). However, when taken together, drinking vessels provide just over 43% of vessel count.

Curation and the purchasing of matching pottery is in evidence: matching tea drinking sets occur in particular among green transfer-printed wares with two mugs with the Daisy print, three saucers with Corinth print (Coysh and Henrywood 1989, 62) and two slop bowls with the Crystal print. The bulk of blue transfer-printed wares are otherwise mismatched, individually purchased tea vessels, with the only exception provided by the two London shaped teacups with the Broseley transfer-printed pattern applied (Coysh and Henrywood 1984, 62). More expensive English made hard paste porcelain and bone china is also uncommon in the teawares. Tea was poured from a black basalt stoneware with glaze teapot, although this would have started to look old fashioned when discarded, with a milk and cream kept in a refined whiteware moulded cream jug with industrial slip decoration and classical figures (these appear to be described in Spode's 1820 catalogue as 'Low Dutch Jug Dipped for Embossed Figures. 10 sizes up to 4 quart': Whiter 1970, 114). The most noteworthy vessel is the Chinese porcelain (*famille rose*) teapot and lid heirloom dating from the mid 18th century: here the replacement of the handle with a riveted iron handle represents a rare example of mended pottery observed among archaeological assemblages from London, perhaps a reflection of the age and relatively expensive cost needed to replace this item. A Spanish lid represents the other imported vessel among this assemblage. Whilst there appears to be a lack of food preparation vessels, these are made up of two largely complete yellow ware colanders.

Table 3 Primary function of the pottery from context [1] by statistical counts

POTTERY FUNCTION	SHERD COUNT	SHERD COUNT %	ENV	ENV %	WEIGHT grammes	WEIGHT %	EVES	EVES %
Cover	2	0.9	2	2.8	613	4.4	1.05	2.9
Drink	14	6.6	3	4.2	497	3.6	2.19	6.0
Drink: serving	9	4.2	5	6.9	429	3.1	.65	1.8
Drink: tea and coffee	62	29.1	23	32.0	2651	18.9	12.21	33.2
Food: consumption	21	9.9	12	16.7	1925	13.8	4.11	11.2
Food: preparation	26	12.2	2	2.8	1282	9.2	1.31	3.6
Food: serving	6	2.8	4	5.6	858	6.1	1.75	5.2

Food: multi	21	9.9	4	5.6	795	5.7	2.63	7.2
Hygiene	37	17.4	7	9.7	3749	26.8	4.55	12.4
Leisure	4	2.1	2	3.0	201	1.8	.70	2.1
Storage	6	3.1	4	6.0	362	3.2	3.30	9.7
Writing	1	.5	1	1.4	82	.6	1.00	2.7
Tobacco	3	1.6	2	3.0	411	3.7	1.30	3.8
Total	213	100%	72	100%	13999	100%	36.75	100%

1.2.2 Context [3]

Plain, undecorated, refined whitewares are most frequently used and discarded (26.2% of vessel count), followed by blue-transfer printed whitewares (25.5%), with printed wares providing 26.2% of this assemblage. When considering the pottery by primary function, this assemblage divides almost equally between vessels used for tea drinking (28.3%: teacups and saucers and so on), closely followed by food consumption vessels (16.7%: dinner plates and so on). However, when taken together, drinking vessels provide just over 38% of vessel count.

Much of the tea drinking pottery is characterised by a discrete selection of pearlware saucers and London shaped teacups decorated with a series of similar but unidentified prints mostly depicting British rural pastimes, views and occupations (only The Gleaners print could be identified: Coysh and Henrywood 1984, 154) which can be dated c 1820s–30s. However, three matching cup and saucer sets are present: the first is the one breakfast teacup and saucer with the Broseley print, the second a London shaped teacup and saucer with a rural pastime scene and the third another London shaped teacup and saucer with the same (unidentified) stylised flowers print match. Coffee drinking is evidenced by the four yellow ware coffee cans with mocha decoration retrieved. The composition and chronologies of this group therefore indicates a steady acquisition of mismatched pottery.

Table 4 Primary function of the pottery from context [3] by statistical counts

POTTERY FUNCTION	SHERD COUNT	SHERD COUNT %	ENV	ENV %	WEIGHT grammes	WEIGHT %	EVES	EVES %
Drink: serving	26	13.6	5	8.3	633	5.9	2.75	10.4
Drink: storage/serving	2	1.0	1	1.7	167	1.6	.50	1.9
Drink: teawares	59	30.9	17	28.3	1310	12.3	10.25	40.3
Food: consumption	25	13.1	10	16.7	1139	10.7	3.59	13.6
Food: multiple	51	26.7	11	18.3	1724	17.2	4.24	16.7
Food: preparation/serving	7	3.7	3	5.0	1964	19.7	0.65	2.5
Food: serving	3	1.6	3	5.0	399	3.7	.90	3.4
Horticultural	2	1.0	2	3.3	753	7.0	.00	.0
Hygiene	8	4.2	5	8.3	2242	21.0	2.95	11.2
Leisure	3	1.6	1	1.7	50	.5	.18	.7
Storage	5	2.6	2	3.3	285	2.7	.00	.0
Pharmaceutical	1	.0	1	.0	24	.2	.40	1.5
Total	192	100%	63	100%	10690	100%	26.41	100%

1.2.3 Context [5]

The pottery used here appears the least expensive assemblage of all the privy groups from Limehouse, with a dominance of cheaper plain, undecorated refined whitewares,

together with a large group of yellow ware vessels with mocha and industrial slip decoration (10.9%) and supplemented by utilitarian coarse red earthenwares. The pottery is evenly split between plain, undecorated refined whitewares (21.9% of vessel count: however, these are mostly fragmented) followed by better preserved transfer-printed whitewares and pearlwares (26.7%).

Like the above two groups, teawares remains the most popular functional category (34.4% of vessel count) followed by rounded bowls used for a variety of food related activities (14.1% of vessel count). However, in common with the other two groups, when taken together, drinking vessels provide just over 45% of vessel count, with this group including the upper portions of a few stoneware bellied bottles (Green 1999, Type 390, 165) used for drinking storage. Matching purchases or the attainment of pottery with similar aesthetics is hinted at. Here, tea drinking vessels include a complete black basalt teapot and cream jug, with the pearlware teapot, lid and saucer set similarly decorated with painted floral motifs applied on pottery between 1795 and 1830s (for example, brown, mustard yellow and olive green: Miller 1991, 8), with this group completed by two English hard paste porcelain London shaped teacups with the same over-glazed painted floral decoration applied. The remaining teawares comprise a range of mismatched green and blue transfer-printed whitewares. These are decorated with unidentified Romantic Period (Coysh and Henrywood 1984, 10-11) prints presenting imaginary far-eastern scenes, with other images including a pair of working or hunting dogs as a central theme (probably from either the Indian Sporting Series or Sporting Series of prints: *ibid* 187-8, 344), a London shape teacup decorated with a print showing a shepherd tending his sheep against a rugged hilly backdrop (possibly the Scottish highlands), and a Pembroke shape teacup with Filled-In Transfers (*ibid*, 136). The only matching printed pieces are supplied by two blue-printed saucers with the Parroquet print (*ibid*, 275).

Much of the remaining pottery is characterised by British made ‘country pottery’ (Brears 1971 and 1974) and London made coarse red earthenwares. The reconstructable Sunderland-type slip trailed divided dish (essentially a baking and roasting dish), together with yellow wares provide much of the first group with the last including flower pots and a paint pot. Yellow wares are represented by five different shaped rounded bowls with mocha and industrial slip decoration, together with a tobacco jar.

Table 5 Primary function of the pottery from context [5] by statistical counts

POTTERY FUNCTION	SHERD COUNT	SHERD COUNT %	ENV	ENV %	WEIGHT grammes	WEIGHT %	EVES	EVES %
Drink	5	2.2%	2	3.1%	137	1.5%	0.60	2.5
Drink: serving	15	6.7%	2	3.1%	244	2.6%	0.00	.0
Drink: storage	4	3.1%	2	3.1%	469	5%	2.00	8.3
Drink: storage/serving	1	0.4%	1	1.6%	251	2.7%	1.00	4.1
Drink: teawares	86	38.4%	22	34.4%	1774	18.8%	9.94	41.2
Food: consumption	35	15.6%	8	12.5%	859	9.1%	2.70	11.2
Food: cooking	1	0.4%	1	1.6%	77	0.8%	.00	.0
Food: multiple	40	17.9%	9	14.1%	2513	26.7%	4.00	16.6
Food: preparation/serving	8	3.6%	2	3.1%	559	5.9%	1.65	6.8
Horticultural	2	0.9%	2	3.1%	210	2.2%	0.30	1.2

Hygiene	14	6.3%	7	10.9%	1471	15.6%	1.10	4.6
Other	1	0.4%	1	1.6%	487	5.2%	0.35	1.4
Storage	6	4.9%	3	6.3%	280	3.0%	0.50	2.1
Tobacco	5	2.2%	1	1.6%	66	0.7%	0.7	.0
Total	224	100%	64	100%	9421	100%	24.14	100%

1.3 Social and domestic space

1.3.1 Context [1]

Whilst the dominant teawares in this assemblage have already been described above, the appropriation of a small number of matching mugs, saucers, teabowls and London shaped teacups does suggest the acquisition and use by a small group of individuals, perhaps a family group. However, the mismatched and variably preserved dinner and dessert plates with either blue shell-edged decoration, or transfer-printed decoration applied (notably Wild Rose and Willow Pattern) does not suggest overall uniformity was achieved at the table. Instead four yellow ware rounded bowls and the two refined whitewares with mocha, banded and cat's eyes decoration applied (Sussman 1997) appear to represent the ceramics used for eating from, principally for consuming sloppy foods from. Otherwise hints of diet are provided the refined whiteware egg cup and mustard pot lid found, otherwise food serving vessels are uncommon.

Of note are the two yellow ware tobacco jars and lids which conform well to the large group of clay tobacco pipes also found. The few English stonewares present evidence of domestic chores, with a black leading and polish bottle and black paste pot found, both of which once contained polish for oven ranges and boots etc (Green 1999, 169 and 171). Much of the more complete pottery is characterised by kitchen wares, the most complete of which are two yellow ware colanders and one yellow ware oval serving dish used in food preparation and serving. The Spanish lid is of worthy of note and represents a rare find in London but, beyond its use as a cover, its remains an ambiguous object. Hygiene wares for private use in the bedroom include a largely complete yellow ware stool pan - which once slotted into a wooden commode - and two yellow ware chamber pots. A stoneware 'dwarf ink' bottle (Green type 410: *ibid*, 169 and 368) which hints at literacy, completes the pottery.

1.3.2 Context [3]

The teawares in this group have already been described above. Like context [1], dining vessels are characterised by mismatched and largely fragmented pearlware dinner plates with different blue shell-edged decoration (although this selection does include a substantially complete example) which again suggests no overall matching uniformity was achieved at the table. Seasoning of foods was achieved by the pepper caster found. Like context [1], much of this assemblage is again dominated by the large group of yellow ware and pearlware rounded bowls with mocha and other industrial slip decoration. These suggest the regularly consumption of small, probably sloppy, food portions (such as soups, pottages and porridge, for example). Stonewares again provide pottery used for domestic chores, with two black leading and polish

bottles recovered. The remaining pottery is mostly kitchen vessels with plain, undecorated refined whiterwares providing an oval serving dish, and oval plate used for presenting meat or fish, with food preparation achieved in the two substantially complete coarse red earthenware medium rounded bowls. Privately used hygiene vessels include two complete refined whiterware stool pans - which once sat in a commode - and the base of a chamber pot.

1.3.3 Context [5]

Beyond the described teawares, much of the remaining pottery is, like context [3] dominated by yellow ware and whiterware vessels with industrial slip decoration. Yellow ware rounded bowls in different sizes are again common to this assemblage, and provided the occupants of the property with the means of eating the variety of sloppy foods described above (1.3.2). Like the above two assemblages, ceramic plates are particularly uncommon. Used in the kitchen or similar space where the two refined whiterware oval serving dishes with heavy utensil marks together the Sunderland-type slipped trailed divided dish (Brears 1971, 63-4; 1974, 125, 184) used for baking and roasting. The storage and canning of foods was achieved in the two refined whiterware cylindrical jars. Storage of alcoholic and other drinks is evidenced by the upper portions of two stoneware bellied jugs with these and other drinks decanted into the two yellow ware pitchers. Further evidence of smoking is provided by the yellow ware tobacco jar.

1.4 Gender and individuality

Evidence of children toys is provided by the ceramics from this site. In context [1], there is a fragment of a black transfer-printed small cylindrical mug (probably a children's mug) with the image of beehive and the end of the rhyme present (letter 'Y') and part of a green transfer-printed ware nursery plate with a boy and girl dressed up and the partial nursery inscription reading 'Grandma'. Similarly context [3] contained a toy mug or a coffee can decorated with the print of a boy kneeling in garden in addition to the fragment of a painted pearlware plate with a partial but unrecognisable inscription.

The pearlware teacups and saucers in context [3] depicting similar idealised British rural and rural pastime views are also of interest. Despite being a relatively small collection, the concentration of pottery with these particular prints has not been observed among other Victorian pottery assemblages in London by the author. Is their collection and curation evidence of making do by the matriarch of the house? Or is this small selection merely reflecting what was available to a selection of purchaser (s) at the time and the similarities an accidental event?

1.5 Condition of material

Table 6 demonstrates that of the three groups, the pottery from contexts [1] and [3] was recovered in a better condition. Whilst some of the pottery looks as though it was discarded reasonably intact, much of this material is more fragmentary, as if redeposited from yard spaces, and floors sweepings. Riveted iron handle on the mid 18th-century Chinese porcelain teapot presents a rare example of an heirloom piece being well looked after and repaired.

Table 6 Mean fragmentation rates by sherd and vessel count and EVES

Context	Mean weight per sherd (grammes)	Mean weight per vessel (grammes)	Mean EVES per vessel
[1]	65.7	194.4	0.51
[3]	55.6	172.4	0.42
[5]	42.0	147.2	0.37

1.6 Variability

When statistically compared with the other two study sites (Sydenham Brewery and New Palace Yard) the LHC93 assemblage contained the most frequent quantity of imported wares and the most ‘country pottery’. Overall the three groups from Limehouse present some interesting trends, which are best summed up by a series of rhetorical questions. For example, does context [1] represent an assemblage derived from a more well-to-do household because of the presence of matching drinking sets and the highest proportion of transfer-printed wares? Similarly, is the lack of matching ceramics in contexts [3] and [5] reflective of the transitory population that one might expect in Limehouse? What is the symbolism of those cup and saucers from context [3] which depict idealised images of the English countryside? What does the general absence of plates among all three groups (when found these are largely older pearlwares with blue shell-edged decoration) versus the larger quantities of rounded bowls in yellow ware and refined whitewares, say about diet and mealtime habits in Limehouse? Did the individual plates perhaps belong to individual persons? How might the above differ if the property is occupied by different family groups, or lodgers, or visitors?

By way of comparison, there are a number of other privy groups from historically visible households in Victorian London that can aid a broader and contextual interpretation of the material from Limehouse, in addition to the other sites employed during this study. The first is are the dozen or so privy groups filled during the tenure of middle class silk manufacturers and their families from Spitalfields during the later Regency and early Victorian period (site code SRP98). Comparing the pottery and other materials discarded between sites will enable differences to be determined between pottery used by the ‘middle class’ households of Spitalfields and the apparently ‘lower class’ households of Limehouse. For example, it certainly appears that dining in the formal sense was not important in Limehouse, in difference to Spitalfields. Similarly there is the diverse range of material discarded in a soakaway during the late 1850s excavated nearby at Cable Street in Shadwell (site code CDW03), during occupation by two families. The other side of the social spectrum is

provided by the material used in the infilling of the privies serving the 'slum' tenements of Little Wild Court in Covent Garden in the 1850s, after these were cleared of their predominantly Irish occupants (site code KEL00).

1.7 Further questions

The analysis of the ceramics from Limehouse has raised interesting questions about the use of this material in a largely working class neighbourhood in the East End of London. For example, narratives surrounding the life cycles and curation of particular vessels can be reconstructed (through the mended Chinese porcelain teapot and lid), dining practices further understood (the dominance of rounded bowls over plates), to unpicking meaning behind the few matching sets and individual purchases, and understanding the process of discard practices. Additionally, function, and to a certain extent, cost and contemporary terms, can also be determined.

However, the key to understanding this and the other materials discarded in this part of the East End of London is locked within the central premise of reconstructing as Mayne and Lawrence put it 'the supposedly historically-inaccessible spheres of household and neighbourhood' (1999, 346-8). Consequently, how these objects were used, where they were used, and who used them, and how these were understood by different persons within the context of Limehouse, remains somewhat ambiguous, and open to conjecture. Central to this is the understanding and reconstructing property ownership and identifying the social spaces in the properties and in particular room use, thereby informing interpretation of domestic interiors in Victorian London. When British museums recreate the interiors of urban working class Victorian properties (for example, Sailor town in the Museum of Docklands), or the rural cottage or middle class townhouse with Victorian things, what premise and evidence are they using to inform them what filled these places and what things went where?