

**Title: The Victorian pottery from New Palace Yard, Westminster**

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# 1 Introduction and methodology

This technical report describes the Victorian pottery from New Palace Yard, Westminster (MoL sitecode NPY73) recovered from the one context ([5]), the backfill of a vaulted cellar that served one of the double row of houses built when Bridge Street was laid out in the 1740s, with this particular feature belonging to one of the southern facing buildings that faced into the yard. This material was recorded in accordance with standard practice, using the Museum of London's medieval and later type series and entered onto the Oracle database. 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 nine standard archive shoe-sized boxes and one two x box and curated in the London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre (LAARC).

*Table 1* Dating and statistical counts for the pottery from New Palace Yard

CONTEXT	TPQ	TAQ	SHERD COUNT	ENV	WEIGHT (GRAMMES)	EVES
[5]	c 1841	c 1860	164	92	20977	33.64

## 2 The pottery

As is common for pottery assemblages dating to the Victorian period, all the ceramics found here are almost exclusively British made, reflecting the dominance of Great Britain's pottery industry and its marketing on a global scale. Factory made refined earthenwares – a term describing various twice-fired refined whiteware bodies that are either plain and undecorated ('CC' or cream-coloured wares: Miller 1991, 3), 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 – dominate, providing over 50% (of vessel count) of this assemblage. Among this group, refined whitewares and pearlwares with blue transfer-printed decoration are the most frequent (total 35.4% of vessel count), with refined whitewares with blue transfer-printed decoration the most popular (22.6% of vessel count). These printed wares also include a limited assortment of other coloured transfer-prints (for example black, green, and flow blue colours: up to six vessels). Plain, undecorated, refined whitewares supply the remainder of this group (15.2% of vessel count).

The next most common source is British made stonewares (23.9% of vessel count) with the NPY73 pottery assemblage containing the largest quantity of this type of pottery when compared with the other study sites in this group, from Sydenham Brewery (SYB92) and Limehouse Causeway (LHC93). Completing this assemblage

are a largely mismatched selection of British made porcelains (9.8% of vessel count) and a series of British made earthenwares representing ‘country pottery’ traditions and London made coarse earthenwares, both produced in a variety of utilitarian kitchen forms.

*Table 2 Pottery by source from context [5] NPY73 by statistical counts*

POTTERY SOURCE	SHERD COUNT	SHERD COUNT %	ENV	ENV %	WEIGHT grammes	WEIGHT %	EVES	EVES %
British made earthenwares	19	11.6	7	7.6	4072	19.4	3.14	9.3
British made porcelain	16	9.8	9	9.8	635	3.0	3.95	11.7
British made stonewares	39	23.8	22	23.9	8499	40.5	9.30	27.6
British made refined earthenware	83	50.6	48	52.2	6909	32.9	15.69	46.6
Imported wares: Far-eastern	1	.6	1	1.1	18	.1	.14	.4
London made coarse red earthenwares	5	3.0	4	4.3	620	3.0	1.32	3.9
Surrey-Hampshire border wares	1	.6	1	1.1	224	1.1	.10	.3
Total	164	100%	92	100%	20977	100%	33.64	100%

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

## 2.1 Chronology

The *terminus post quem* of *c* 1841 for this pottery assemblage is provided by the large semi-circular impressed stamped maker’s mark on the base of three stoneware bottles, one of which reads ‘VITREOUS STONE BOTTLES / WARRANTED NOT TO ABSORB / BOURNE & SON PATENTEE / CONDOR PARK POTTERY NEAR DERBY’ with the other two ‘VITREOUS STONE BOTTLES / WARRANTED NOT TO ABSORB / J BOURNE PATENTEE / DENBY & CONDOR PARK POTTERY NEAR DERBY’. Referring to Joseph Bourne’s stoneware potteries in Derbyshire, the first stamp is dated *c* 1841–61 by the ceramic historian Derek Askey (1999, 63) after Joseph took his son into the business, with the last stamp used between *c* 1833–41 (*ibid*, 63). Unfortunately, the three transfer-printed maker’s marks also present on various refined earthenwares are from potteries that have yet to be definitively identified by Godden (2003). However, this author has suggested that the L.W mark might relate to Lewis Woolf of Yorkshire (1856–70: Godden 2003, no. 4468, 726), with the B.H & C (...O) mark from a variety of Staffordshire factories dating after 1851 (*ibid*, no. 4407, 711). The third, W.B & T mark, has yet to be established.

Further chronological refinement is provided by the J.R.G maker's mark for the Staffordshire pottery of John and Robert Godwin of Sneyd Green, Corbridge (J & R.G, 1834–66: see *ibid*, no. 1726, 277) and the ointment pot bearing the advert 'PREPARED BY BEACH & BARNICOTT SUCESSORS TO THE LATE DR ROBERTS BRIDPORT'. Dr Roberts, a cure all manufacturer and chemist, died in 1833, with his business taken over by Beach and Barnicott in 1834. In addition, the two heavier 'ironstone' bodied plates decorated with a grey transfer-printed floral border pattern and no central print represent a colour and style of printing common after the mid 1840s, as do the blue transfer-printed whitewares with the 'Asiatic Pheasants' print (Coysh and Henrywood 1984, 28), which achieved a popularity on par with the ubiquitous Willow Pattern (*ibid*, 402-3) during the latter part of the 19th century.

Whilst it has therefore been established that this assemblage cannot have been deposited any earlier than 1834, and is more likely to have been thrown away a little later during the *c* 1840s, there remains the possibility that it was discarded during the mid *c* 1850s.

## 2.2 Function

When considering the pottery by primary function, this assemblage divides almost equally between vessels used for tea drinking (saucers and teacups etc), storage (bottles and storage jars) and dining (plates and so on), which taken together comprise nearly 60% of vessel count by function (see Table 3).

The eighteen vessels used as teawares (19.6% of vessel count) included just a few matching decorative vessels. The first of these are represented by the two bone china teacups (one complete) and one saucer with 'Chelsea sprig' moulded decoration; the second by the two octagon shaped teacups (Whiter 1978, 130) with Flow Blue transfer-printed decoration; and the third a hard paste porcelain vase and saucer with the same over-glaze and under-glaze polychrome painted decoration depicting a stylised English flowers arrangement. Tea and other hot beverages were poured from a Rockingham ware teapot. The remaining vessels used for non-alcoholic drinks comprise a complete stoneware ginger beer bottle and the fragment of a seltzer bottle - that once contained mineral waters - which is additionally impressed stamped with 'num 51' and the initial 'M'.

Dining vessels (18.6% of vessel count) are limited to two relatively small services. The first is supplied by the three refined whiteware tea and dinner plates decorated with the blue Asiatic Pheasants transfer-print (Coysh and Henrywood 1984, 28-9), with this service including a tureen with the noted (2.1; above) marker's mark of B.H & C (...O?), which Godden (2003, no. 4407, 711) has identified was being used by a number of Staffordshire potteries dating after 1851. Though Asiatic Pheasants is a print normally associated with the latter half of the 19th-century, it was thought to be first used as early as 1834 by the Staffordshire pothouse of Podmore, Walker & Co. The consistency in terms of clarity and tone of these prints perhaps indicated these were brought together. The second service is a little larger and provided by up to seven fragmented refined whiteware dinner plates decorated with the ubiquitous blue

Willow Pattern transfer-print, together with a serving dish and meat plate. Unlike the plates with the Asiatic Pheasants print, the varying clarity and tones here (representing quality and wear of the copper plates) and the different bodies - as represented by printed back stamps reading 'stoneware', 'opaque china' etc - suggests these do not represent a bulk and cohesive purchase. This group is completed by the two noted (2.1 above) 'ironstone' bodied plates decorated with different grey transfer-printed floral border patterns with no central print. A particularly uncommon vessel in archaeological assemblages from London is the plain, undecorated, refined whiteware food mould found, used for *blancmange* and other jellies, with the only other example found in a privy serving a property in Fort Street in Spitalfields (Thomas, Holder and Jeffries, in prep).

Particularly well-preserved is pottery used in the kitchen (or compatible areas) with two Sunderland-type one and two handled bowls, a similarly sourced slipped trailed divided dish (Brears 1971, 63-4; 1974, 125, 184: this was for baking and roasting) and two yellow ware oval serving dishes found. These vessels, essentially produced by 'country potteries' (Brears 1971 and 1974) throughout the Midlands and north, also included a number of London made coarse red earthenwares, comprising a pancheon (for food preparation and dairying), and an unglazed jar/beaker.

Literacy is suggested by the three stoneware ink bottles - one of which is complete - of the lipped variety depicted in the two wholesale price lists from the Lambeth potteries of Doulton & Watts and James Stiff & Sons, both dated to 1873 (Green 1999, 361-8). These would have contained larger quantities of ink that could be decanted into smaller glass and stoneware inkwells. Food storage and canning also appeared important. Here, the seven well preserved stoneware bottles closely resemble the 'Annatto Bottles' presented in the Doulton & Watts 1873 price list (Green 1999, 368) and once contained annatto, a food dye and colouring derived from Latin America and the Caribbean. In addition, the complete upright bottle (*ibid*, type 403-4, 169) has the impressed stamp 'W.L Harrison, Oilman, Whitechapel Road'. The use of the term oilman during the Victorian period appeared to describe two professions, the first being the seller of lamp oils with the second referred to as a 'oil and colour man' whom were employed in the victualling trade for producing and selling pickles, herrings etc. Canning of foods is suggested by the seven plain, undecorated, refined whiteware cylindrical jars of various sizes and states of preservation. Domestic chores are hinted by the stoneware 'wide mouthed bottle' which contained 'furniture cream and disinfecting powders' (*ibid*, 368). This functional group is completed by the substantial fragments of two stoneware storage jars, one of which closely matches Green's 395 type (*ibid*, 167: possibly a bung jar).

Moralising china is again found in the pottery from this study site. Here, two refined whitewares with black transfer-printed decoration small cylindrical mugs bear the same inscriptions from the bible, with one panel reading 'Fear God and Keep the Commandments' and the second 'Hear Counsel and Receive Instruction'. The third mug, a refined whiteware with green-transfer printed decoration has a panel reading 'Early to bed early to rise the way to be healthy wealthy and wise' in reference to Benjamin Franklin's Poor Dick.

Though ceramic hygiene vessels are uncommon, this group comprises a plain, undecorated, refined whiteware chamber pot and a well-preserved washbowl, the last

of which once formed part of a Victorian wash set, with another blue-transfer printed whiteware washbowl also recovered. As noted in the chronological discussion (2.1; above), this assemblage contained the ointment pot decorated with transfer-printed advert 'PREPARED BY BEACH & BARNICOTT SUCESSORS TO THE LATE DR ROBERTS BRIDPORT', with an additional pharmaceutical vessel supplied by the plain, undecorated, refined whiteware ointment jar (for pills or cosmetics) with the J.B & CO impressed stamp maker's mark located on the underside of the base (this is a rather ambiguous mark: see Godden 2003, no. 4456-7, 723).

*Table 3 Primary function of the pottery from context [5] NPY73 by statistical counts*

POTTERY FUNCTION	SHERD COUNT	SHERD COUNT %	ENV	ENV %	WEIGHT grammes	WEIGHT %	EVES	EVES %
Display	4	2.4	1	1.1	297	1.4	.25	.7
Drink	7	4.3	4	4.3	443	2.1	2.14	6.4
Drink: serving	1	.6	1	1.1	20	.1	.00	.0
Drink: storage	1	.6	1	1.1	673	3.2	1.00	3.0
Drink: storage/serving	6	3.7	6	6.5	813	3.9	1.65	4.9
Drink: teawares	27	16.5	18	19.6	1039	5.0	5.29	15.7
Food: consumption	26	15.9	17	18.5	2199	10.5	5.08	15.1
Food: cooking	1	.6	1	1.1	70	.3	.18	.5
Food: preparation/serving	15	9.1	7	7.6	3484	16.6	2.30	6.8
Food: serving	18	10.4	8	7.6	2363	10.2	3.02	9.0
Food: storage	29	17.7	18	19.6	6233	19.8	6.99	20.8
Food: storage/transport	6	3.7	1	1.1	285	1.4	.12	.4
Horticultural	1	.6	1	1.1	19	.1	.00	.0
Hygiene	15	9.8	3	4.3	1131	6.5	.95	2.8
Pharmaceutical	2	1.2	2	2.2	111	.5	1.67	5.0
Writing	5	3.0	3	3.3	1797	8.6	3.00	8.9
Total	164	100%	92	100%	20977	100%	33.64	100%

### 2.3 Cost

The cost of 19th-century twice fired refined earthenwares has merited study from archaeologists, notably George Miller in two influential articles (1980, 1991). Here Miller looked at Staffordshire potters price fixing lists in order to determine cost of plain and decorated wares. It was shown that whilst printed decoration was the most expensive type of decoration available for Factory made refined earthenwares, Willow Pattern or "willow ware" (Miller 1991, 8) was the least expensive of all the printed wares and because of its popularity was always catalogued separately (Miller 1980, 4: colour is never defined in the price lists). It is likely that given its similar popularity, dinner services decorated with the Asiatic Pheasants transfer-print would have also represented the cheaper end of the transfer-printed market. However, the least expensive of all were the plain, undecorated, refined whitewares ('CC' or cream-coloured wares: Miller 1991, 3), which supplied around 15% of the pottery from NPY73.

As noted (2.2; above), the contemporary terms and prices for stonewares are known through the survival of the noted James Stiff & Sons (Green 1999, 363) and Doulton & Watts price lists of 1873 (*ibid*, 368). Whilst these supplied the cost of the vessels found at New Palace Yard some conversion is required to project this back to the 1830s. These stonewares represented the inexpensive end of the ceramic market, and have warranted some study by archaeologists (Green 1999; Jarrett 2003) and ceramic historians (Askey 1998).

Translating the above onto the NPY73 assemblage, then most of the pottery would have been relatively inexpensive to buy, although there are hints of matching sets (among the tea and dinner wares) and bulk purchases (the stoneware bottles from Joseph Bourne's pottery).

## 2.4 Social and domestic space

The diverse range of pottery recovered from the cellar means that the material selected for discard was derived and collected from most rooms in this property, rather than being restricted to ceramic kitchen vessels, for example. This material can best be characterised as a series of stoneware bottles and plain, undecorated, refined whiteware cylindrical jars for food storage, with two blue transfer-printed whiteware dinner services decorated with the Willow Pattern and Asiatic Pheasants print and a series of largely mismatched tea drinking vessels. Taking an standardised view of social space and the arrangement of rooms in the Georgian property this material once occupied, then one might imagine the stoneware and plain, undecorated, refined whiteware storage vessels kept in the scullery and storeroom, the dinner services presented in a dresser, with the tea drinking vessels reserved for the drawing room and parlour.

*Table 4 Simplified functional categories for the pottery from context [5] NPY73 by statistical counts*

POTTERY FUNCTION	SHERD COUNT	SHERD COUNT %	ENV	ENV %	WEIGHT grammes	WEIGHT %	EVES	EVES %
Display	4	2.4	1	1.1	297	1.4	.25	.7
Drink	42	25.7	30	32.6	2988	14.3	10.8	30
Food	95	57.4	52	54.4	14634	58.8	17.69	52.6
Hygiene/Pharmaceutical	17	11	5	6.5	1242	7	2.62	7.8
Other	6	3.6	4	4.4	1816	8.7	3.00	8.9
Total	164	100%	92	100%	20977	100%	33.64	100%

## 2.5 Gender and individuality

The pottery from NPY73 provides small insights into a number of individual and domestic activities. The moralising china found suggests a strong religious and educational pretext for any children of the house (or a particularly pious adult), with food canning and its storage also important (again a female related activity).

Individual ‘material histories’ (Hicks and Jeffries 2003) and object biographies can also be recreated through the study of the pottery here, from the retailer W.L Harrison, in addition to the ointment pot containing the ‘Poor Mans friend’ cure all as produced by Beach and Barnicott. Limited information is available on the internet including a recipe of the ingredients used in this cure all [www.westbay.co.uk/bridport/dr-roberts.html](http://www.westbay.co.uk/bridport/dr-roberts.html) though it would appear that the Bridport Museum may hold some collections. Otherwise little is apparently known about these vessels despite the fact these small pots regularly appear on internet antique auction sites.

## 2.6 Condition of material

The condition of the ceramics is generally good, although some elements were better preserved than others. This probably reflected breakage and use rates, the delicateness of different ceramic bodies, with some of the tea drinking vessels and the sanitary wares already well broken before they reached the cellar. Though the plates and tureen decorated with the Asiatic Pheasants transfer-print are relatively well-preserved, the dinner service with the Willow Pattern print applied is more fragmented. Unsurprisingly, given their durability, it is the stonewares followed by the British made coarse earthenwares that were recovered in the better condition.

*Table 5 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
[5]	127.9	228	0.35

## 2.7 Variability

Overall the NPY73 pottery demonstrates a different angle on the use of ceramics in the early Victorian household. This site yielded the largest proportion of stonewares when compared with the other two study sites in this project (Sydenham Brewery, and Limeshouse Causeway) but generally yielded a uniform selection of fabrics and forms that demonstrate little in the way of variation, from the transfer-printed patterns present to the stonewares found. When compared with the pottery from the other two sites, this material is statistically the best preserved, reflecting the presence of more durable stoneware and ‘country pottery’, and contained the largest collection of vessels used for food storage and canning (19.8% of vessel count). On another purely statistical level the pottery from NPY73 yielded the least amount of teawares, which comprised a rather mismatched selection of vessels with little overall coherence achieved.

## 2.8 Further questions

When determining the further research on the ceramics from NPY73, there are questions that pertain to individual elements of the assemblage itself and then, on another level, questions about the interpretation of this material in a broader context. The first line of enquiry is understanding the social space of the particular property the ceramics were used in during the 1830s–40s. For example, what was this building's layout? Did it have a kitchen and storeroom? The second line is determining the details of the occupants themselves during this period.

There are further questions related to particular vessels or functional groups within the assemblage with the purpose of illuminating their object and life histories. The first relates to W.L. Harrison, a retailer whose name appears on the upright bottle. It is possible that chronological refinement for the assemblage can be further achieved by searching the trade and street directories for this individual. For example, if it were found that he was operating on Whitechapel Road between 1850–3 then this would supply more definitive dating evidence for the use and discard of the pottery. In addition there are questions related to Harrison's occupation as an oilman (was he an oil lamp seller or a victualler?) and how his products might have been used in this particular property. Secondly, similar questions can be asked about the use of annatto as a food dye in Victorian cooking and what the presence of the stoneware bottles containing this product suggests about cuisine served in this property. Thirdly there are the questions that remain about the deposition of this group. Was this assemblage a snapshot of what was left behind in this property prior to the redevelopment of New Palace Yard, in anticipation of the projected northern range of Barry's great courtyard (this scheme was never completed) before the later construction of the Houses of Parliament and Big Ben? Does the cellar in which these items were found reflect the space in which they were stored and used in, or had they been collected and dumped here from elsewhere?