

A BRIEF HISTORY OF GRIFFYDAM POTTERY



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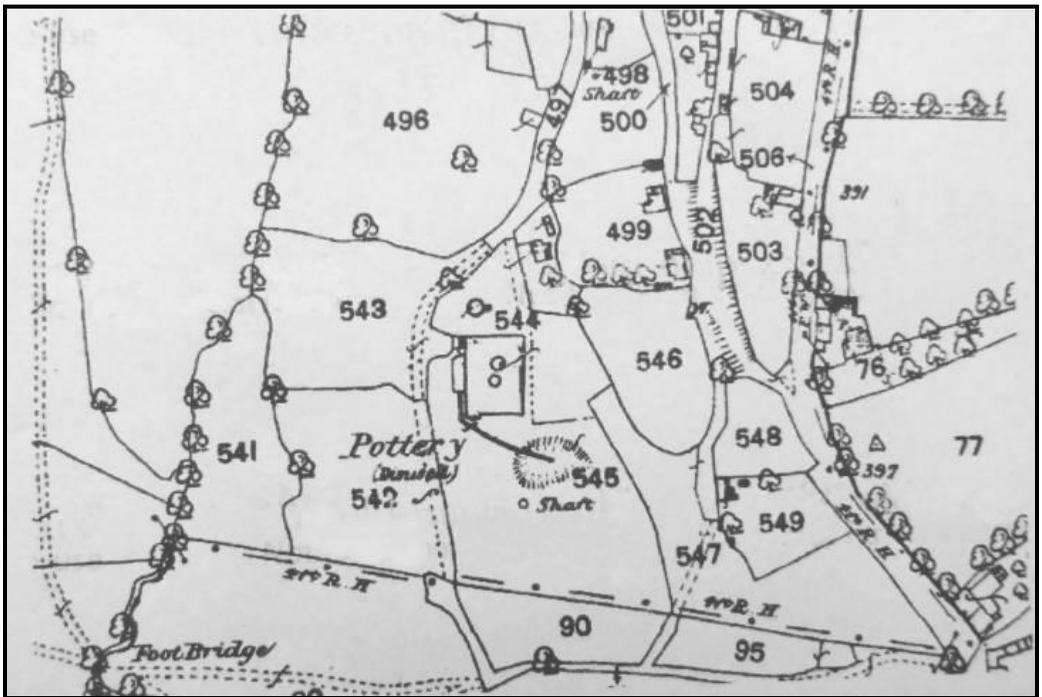
THIS SUPPLEMENTARY ARTICLE HAS BEEN WRITTEN AS AN ADDENDUM TO THE BOOK ENTITLED "A SOCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL HISTORY OF GRIFFYDAM AND PEGG'S GREEN" WHICH WAS WRITTEN PRIOR TO SOME OF THIS INFORMATION COMING TO LIGHT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to *Caroline Sheffield* for providing samples of pottery shown in the photograph on the front cover which have proved invaluable to our research on the "Griffydam Pottery"

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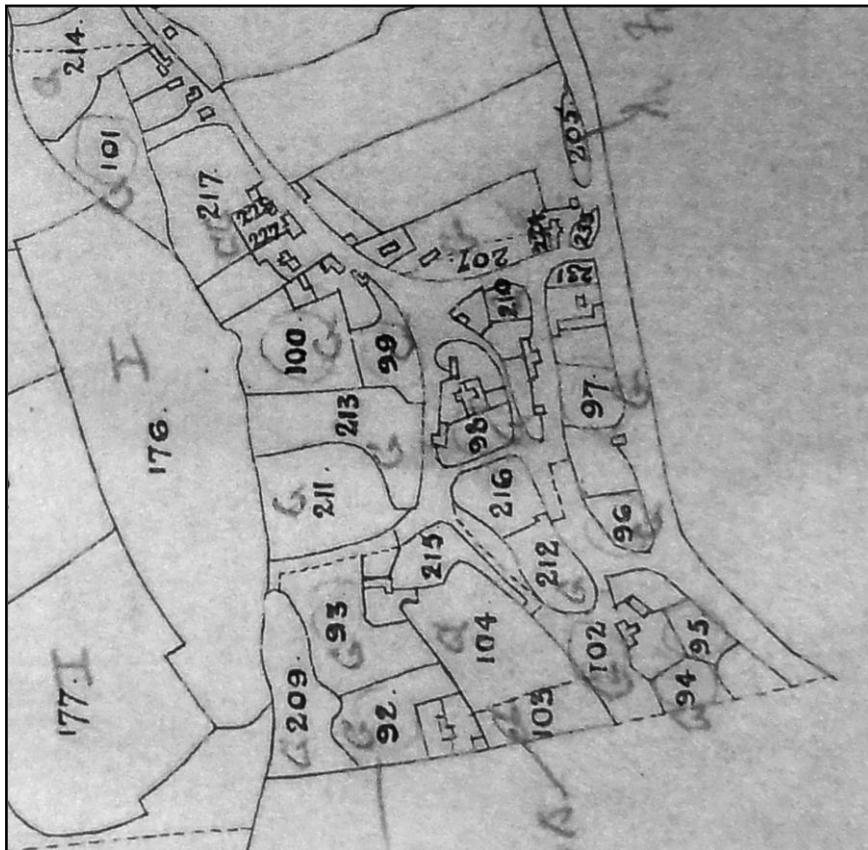
Above is an extract from the 1882 O/S 1: 2,500 O/S map which identifies a disused earthenware pottery building adjacent to 544 at the end of the road which forks off Elder Lane and is marked 497 on the map. This extension of Elder Lane was formally known as Swan Lane, for reasons described later.

The rectangular building appears to show two round kilns in the centre. Just to the north in the field, there is what may be a kiln also, although we cannot be certain of that.

The illustration next to the pottery and marked 545 was the clay pit. To the south of it, a coal pit shaft is designated, possibly sunk to obtain local coal for the firing of the kilns (see the article on Joseph Smart & Son at the end).

On the 1901 O/S map, the pottery building, the shaft and the possible stand alone field kiln have all gone, but the clay pit remained. On the 1925 O/S map, even the clay pit has gone, so it must have been filled in by this time.

Everything points to this being a small local pottery, but even so, it was / is of significant historical importance. Perhaps originally dating back to c.1830 and finally closing in the late 1800s. It would not necessarily have been in continuous operation. As far as we know, this pottery has not been written about previously.



The above is an extract from the 1806 inclosure map. Plot 213 was an intake containing 1 acre - 36 perches, and described as Swan's Meadow. It was allotted to John Haywood by the commissioners at that time. The pottery was situated on part of this land, although the boundaries changed somewhat from 1806.

The likely reason for the two kilns / ovens shown in the main building area is that one would have been a "Bisque" or "Biscuit" kiln and the other a Glost kiln.

Preliminary firing prior to glazing is carried out in a Biscuit Kiln. Glost is a term often used to describe the subsequent glaze coating firing. The kilns would most likely have been small "Bottle Kilns", narrow at the top and wide at the bottom.

Glaze is a coating that is cured in the Glost Kiln to a glassy state and is fused onto the pot. The glaze in these times would have contained a lead compound.

The following is from evidence taken in the Staffordshire Potteries at Minton and Boyle Pottery by Samuel Scrivens and refers to the dipping house conditions. Dec 1840.

No. 13: John Talbot aged 24

*I have been in this department 2 years; have 9 persons working with me male and female. My business is to dip the ware as it comes from the biscuit ware house, the process does not take a moment, but my hands and arms are always wet with the solution or mixture; I do not know what the mixture is composed of exactly; it is chiefly lead; they tell us there is no arsenic, but we have our own thoughts about that; it destroys our health. We are obliged to be very careful by keeping ourselves clean and out of the dust. We have no washing-rooms, but bring the water in a small vessel from a pump in the yard. There are boys employed with me; their ages are from 13 up to 17. We come at 7 o'clock in the morning and leave at four, on account of its being bad stuff to work in; **we work the effects off with opening medicine frequently**, or it would soon all be over with us; We get better pay here than in any other department of the bank; it is considered of greater risk. I get 27s per week; the boys 3s 6d, and 4s. Everything that is made in the factory goes through our hands. I have often observed the effects of persons working with me during my 2 years; it affects women more than men: they have not died but have been very ill, and have never returned to it again; their places have been filled up by others. Some constitutions that are strong can stand it some time; it has never made me ill. I live at Lane End about 3 or 4 miles off and can't afford time to go home for dinner, I always take it here, as you see me, upon the work-bench; we have no rooms we can all meet together to dine in; I should much better like it if we had, and places wash in. I am married and have 2 children.*

All the evidence to hand, suggests that Trivett only used leadless glazes at Coleorton Pottery from his first spell there in 1911, which demonstrated that he cared for his workers, and no dangers from lead poisoning in the dipping house would therefore be experienced by them. Lead has been an active ingredient in lead-glazed ceramic wares for centuries. However, it is not until the last 70 years that these products, along with others like paint, came under real scrutiny. Lead migration from ceramic ware was not recognised as a problem, until the time when harvest workers were poisoned by drinking cider from lead glazed pots. Indeed, famous Josiah Wedgewood, knowing that lead glazes for preserving acid fruits and pickles were improper, declared that "I will try to make glazes without lead".

POTTERY WORKERS IN GRIFFYDAM

The earliest record the author has found of a "potter" in Griffydam was a William Burton who is mentioned in a Lease and Release document dated 1830 (DE9109/50/1-2 now deposited at the L&RRO).

In the 1881 Griffydam census, a Joseph Bourne aged 40 and **born in Staffordshire** is listed as a **mould maker** living with his wife Francis aged 42 who was born in Griffydam. Living with them is her daughter Eliza Richards aged 23 (unmarried) and her children, suggesting this was Francis' second marriage. Eliza's children are a son Eli Richards (aged 15), who is given as a **potter**, and a son Thomas Richards aged 13. There is also a Grandson Joseph Richards aged 4. Following the path of the census enumerator's walk, it suggests they are living in the area of the pottery.

Thomas Coulson, aged 55 and born in *Sheepshed* (Shepshed), was listed as a fireman in the 1881 census. This could have been at the Lower Brand brickworks kiln or the pottery kilns.

Again in the 1881 census, Rosy Hodges aged 22 and her sister Mary Hodges aged 19 who were the daughters of John and Hannah Hodges, are both given as working at terra works (Earth). This can presumed to be the pottery and not the brickworks as references to people working there is clearly stated by the enumerator as working at brickworks. He would have no reason to change the description. No pottery workers are listed / described in the 1841, 1851, 61 or 71 censuses for Griffydam.

It is almost certain that the small scale Griffydam Earthenware Potworks would have been making pottery for the local pottery hawkers following the running down of the Ticknall Potworks. Coleorton Pottery, opposite the hamlet of Lount ran for 100 years from 1835 and Griffydam wouldn't have been able to compete with this sizeable pottery, except if it was making higher quality, specialised pots and there is some evidence that this could have been the case.

COMMENTS ON THE EARTHENWARE POTTERY SHARDS SHOWN ON THE FRONT PAGE

An expert in the subject has put forward the view based on photographs, that the appearance of the clay used in the manufacture of the Griffydam pots is of a different type to that which came from the North West Leicestershire and South Derbyshire coalfields.

The pots from which the shards came have been described as being well made, using plaster moulds, which suggests / confirms 19th century production. As can be seen from the photograph, there are lids with knobs, bases, part of a spout, two body shards with the some moulded decoration (**not applied sprigs**) and the rim of a vessel made to take a lid, possibly a teapot. They are all unglazed, and most likely were discarded after the first firing in the Bisque kiln / oven.

The glazed piece, possibly a teapot lid is different, and has the appearance of "Rockingham Ware" which was also widely made in South Derbyshire in the 19th century.





Teapot Spout

SPRIGGED DECORATION



This is a technique for decorating pottery with low relief shapes made separately from the main body and applied to it before firing. Usually thin press moulded shapes are applied to green ware or bisque (first firing). The resulting pottery is termed sprigged ware, and the added piece is a "sprig". The technique may also be described by terms such as "applied relief decoration", especially in non-European pottery.

The alternative way to achieve similar effects without sprigging is to mould the whole body, which was the case with the Griffydram pots as shown in the photograph above.

ROCKINGHAM WARE

Rockingham was the name acquired by a quite different lead-glazed earthenware, that began to be made in 1757. Rockingham glaze, mottled in shades of brown and buff, was originally described as a rich chocolate brown glaze. It was used first at a pottery in Swinton, Yorkshire, which was owned for a time by the Marquess of Rockingham.

Before long, many other potteries in England were using a typical Rockingham glaze on a wide variety of practical and useful earthenware. Coleorton Pottery was recorded as making Rockingham Wares in the 1860's. Rockingham is highly-fired earthenware or stoneware, generally with a buff to yellow paste and a brown mottled and streaked glaze, often characterized by patches of the vessel's body showing through. Rockingham is generally not felt to be a specific ware type; rather simply a type of glaze applied to yellow, buff or (rarely) white-bodied ceramics.

Most of the Rockingham wares produced in the 19th century were quite gaudy. Therein, lay Rockingham's down side. The glaze's over powering nature could make anything look "fancy," so much so, that by the beginning of the 1900's, Rockingham's craze had run it's course.



A typical Rockingham Ware teapot

Wilson Bros of Coleorton Pottery

Retail price list for Rockingham teapots - Feb 13th 1889.

Plain, 12's to 36's -	10s. per dozen
Pressed, 12's to 36's -	11s per dozen
Figured (large) -	no price
Black lustre, 12's to 36's -	10s. 6d. Per dozen

IRONSTONE CANE WARE OR YELLOW WARE AND BUFF

The other main type of earthenware pottery made at Coleorton Pottery and in South Derbyshire, and no doubt at Griffydam also was :-

- Ironstone Cane Ware, or Yellow Ware and Buff.

Cane ware, also known as 'yellow Ware' or 'Derbyshire Ironstone', is well known in archaeological deposits from the 1820's-1830's onwards. Yellow Ware is most commonly associated with the potteries of South Derbyshire, and especially with Thomas Sharpe and Sharpe Brothers of Swadlincote, where it was known as 'Derbyshire Ironstone Cane Ware'. The ware is characterised by a light buff-coloured fireclay body which when glazed is yellow in appearance. Typical vessel forms are related to food preparation (bowls, mixing bowls, dishes), the serving and consumption of liquids (jugs and mugs), storage (jars), and hygiene (ewers and basins), with small numbers of table wares. Decoration is common, and is most typically in trailed or banded slip, often with additional 'mocha' patterns in blue, brown or green. Moulded forms, especially jugs and mixing bowls, were also produced with the relief decoration. Yellow ware production was by no means confined to Derbyshire, with similar wares being made at other manufacturing centres.

These constituted the standard wares produced in the many potteries in surrounding areas such as Coleorton and the important South Derbyshire potteries

JOSEPH SMART & CO

Two shafts are shown on the preceding 1882 O/S map, one just to the south of the pottery clay pit and the other at the northern extremity of the map.

It is recorded that between 1874 and 1880, Joseph Smart & Son (brick and tile makers on the Lower Brand), worked a small pit at Griffydam, probably extracting coal leased by the Curzon family of Breedon. The company was

registered in Ashby de la Zouch. It would have been severely limited by the "Thringstone Fault" to the north, and the workings of the former Pegg's Green Colliery in other directions.

It is believed that these shafts were sunk to provide coal for either their brick and tile works on the Lower Breedon Brand, which was still in Breedon Parish at that time, or possibly for the pottery kilns. It is possible that one of the two shafts shown on the above map would have been the down shaft and the other an up or air shaft, but we cannot be certain of that.

We cannot, at this stage, dismiss Joseph or James Smart having an involvement with the pottery, as in White's Directory of 1877 and Wright's Directory 1880, Joseph Smart & Co, including his son James, were listed as **Earthenware Manufacturers** in Griffydam. This is a term normally associated with the manufacture of earthenware pottery or sanitary pipes and not bricks and tiles. None of the censuses for Griffydam use this terminology, and always refer to brick making.

During a recent discussion with a gentleman who lives on Elder Lane, he related a handed down tale that coal miners were excavating a roadway below Elder Lane and knew they were near to the surface as the roots of the trees were coming through!!