

16.3 Victorian and later pottery – Nigel Jeffries

Summary/Introduction

This text considers the Victorian and later pottery retrieved in four contexts ([34], [43], [131] and [149]) from the targeted watching brief at TCG09. It further evaluates the character and the date range of the assemblage, determines the research questions this material can address while identifying areas of further work. These four contexts, relating to the occupation of this site by the famous food manufacturing company Crosse & Blackwell, yielded 56753 sherds from 14576 vessels and weighed 3232 kilos (or 3.2 tonnes) with the filling of a cistern (context [149]) containing the most material.

The pottery is late Victorian and possibly Edwardian in date. Reflecting the sites usage by Crosse & Blackwell until the 1920s it is characterised by a variety of different shaped and sized whiteware preserve jars and stoneware food storage jars, all of which had been thrown away before being filled with their food preserve contents.

Methodology

During the 2009 evaluation (Bowsher 2010) of this site it was clear that within the cistern identified in Trench 3 alone remained hundreds of complete and thousands of smashed pots, in addition to the other large-sized fragments located in Trench 7. Clearly such quantities of pottery, if kept, would fill a large portion of the Museum of London's Archaeological Archive (LAARC) and take considerable resources to curate. Therefore following custom and practice established for recording and managing similarly large quantities of waste pottery derived from excavations on London's earlier stoneware and tin-glazed ware pothouses, the repetitive nature of this Victorian and later pottery lent itself to a on and off site sampling strategy. The method statement produced for this site (Dennis and Eastbury 2009) also further defines the parameters by which these sorts of deposits are dealt with:

'all material from stratified archaeological deposits is retained unless it is clearly residual or part of a large but routine assemblage, in which case samples of both typical and diagnostic items are retained' (Dennis and Eastbury 2009, 7).

A MoLA pottery specialist (Nigel Jeffries) was therefore present during some of this targeted watching brief (in particular during the excavation of contexts [34], [43] and [131]; see below) and devised a system for retention, recording and discard. All the pottery was then recorded on computer, using standard Museum of London codes for fabrics, forms and decoration. The numerical data comprises sherd count (SC), estimated number of vessels (ENV) and weight (by grammes) but because of the large volume of material was entered onto an excel spreadsheet per context (pot.xls) rather than the less flexible ORACLE database. A summary of each context and the pottery it contained is given below.

Representing a large dump of pottery of around one metre depth spread underneath the warehouse flooring, context [34] appears a response to the ground levelling and make-up required prior to this construction. The integrity of this deposit was however damaged by the two contractor's test pits required to evaluate the extent of the eastern facing footings of St Patrick's Chapel. A large quantity of plain white marmalade jars - many with paper labels relating to Crosse & Blackwell products - where observed with Bristol-glazed stoneware upright bottles and bung jars also