

Fowler's Pottery: Excavation of a 19th-Century Manufacturing Site in Mid Ulster





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Front Cover: Two QUB students drawing a plan of Trench 2 during excavations of Fowler's Pottery at Derrybuoy.

Back Cover: Ortho-rectified photograph of Trench 2 produced by Siobhán McDermott using Structure-from-Motion photogrammetry. Showing Phase 1 features, the kiln footprint and drying room.

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Contents

List of Figures and Tables.....	ii
Acknowledgements	iv
Introduction	v
Background.....	1
Historical Background	1
The Coarse Earthenware Pottery Industry of the 18th and 19th Centuries	6
Geophysical Survey	15
Objectives.....	18
1. What technologies were used at Fowler's Pottery?.....	18
2. How was the pottery organised spatially?.....	18
3. What was the economic context?	18
The Excavation	19
Site Description	19
Methodology	19
Account of the Excavation	22
Trench 1.....	22
Trench 2.....	25
Trench 4.....	31
The Pottery	36
Methodology	36
Results	36
Pottery Vessels	39
Kiln Furniture.....	39
Architectural Ceramics	45
Discussion.....	46
Pottery Vessel Types	46
Kiln Furniture	46
The Kiln.....	47
The Drying Room.....	47
Conclusion	48
Bibliography	49
Appendix 1: Report on Historical Sources	51
Appendix 2: Context List.....	56
Appendix 3: Harris Matrices	60
Appendix 4: Pottery Quantities	63
Appendix 5: Pottery Weights (grams)	68
Appendix 6: Rim Form and Diameter.....	71

List of Figures and Tables

Figure 1:	Location of Derrybuoy, Corr townland, Co. Tyrone. The site is 4km south-east of Coalisland and 6km west of Lough Neagh	v
Figure 2:	Map of the Coalisland Canal, from McCutcheon 1980, 59, Figure 25 (2 miles = 3.2km). © Crown copyright, 1980. Licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0	2
Figure 3:	Map showing the 28 potteries of all types and periods listed in the Industrial Heritage Record, (IHR maintained by the Historic Environment Division, Department for Communities). There is a cluster at the south-west of Lough Neagh (circled in red).....	2
Figure 4:	Cluster of ten potteries listed in the Industrial Heritage Record close to Coalisland. Fowler's pottery is circled in red.....	3
Table 1:	Potteries listed in the Industrial Heritage Record (IHR maintained by the Historic Environment Division, Department for Communities).Table 1	3
Figure 5:	Six-inch Ordnance Survey map, first edition (1833). There are no buildings depicted at the site of the pottery	4
Figure 6:	Six-inch Ordnance Survey map, second edition (1853). The pottery is depicted.....	5
Figure 7:	Section from the Griffith Valuation relating to Fowler's pottery	5
Figure 8:	Six-inch Ordnance Survey map, third edition (1906-1907). The north-easternmost building is no longer depicted and there is no longer a 'pottery' annotation.....	6
Figure 9:	A horse-drawn pug mill from William Henry Pyne's <i>Costume of Great Britain</i> dating to 1808	7
Figure 10:	Photograph of the pottery at Carley's Bridge taken by Caoimhín Ó Danachair in 1947. 'The Photographic Collection, B091.13.00004' by Dúchas © National Folklore Collection, UCD is licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0	8
Figure 11:	Belfast News Letter description of Burn's pottery in 1931. Reproduced with permission from the Belfast News Letter.....	9
Figure 12:	Derelict Burnbrae pottery, Ballynakilly townland (IHR 5388), images from the McCutcheon archive held by the Historic Environment Division, Department for Communities. © Crown DfC Historic Environment Division	10
Figure 13:	Advert for Dublin based agent of the Coalisland Pottery in the Irish Times, 1 April, 1874, 1	11
Figure 14:	Advert for Dublin based agent of the Coalisland Pottery in the Irish Times, 4 April, 1874, 1	12
Figure 15:	Location map of 29 coarse earthenware production sites. The location of 24 (in red) were identified by Lewis in 1837 (after Lewis 1837; Orser 2004: Figure 4.1). Marked in green are the locations of other kiln sites mentioned in the report (after Sheenan, et al. 2004; Carey and Meenan 2004; Frazer 2009; Campbell 2004; Carver 2024; Hayden 2003; Rooney 2017)	13
Figure 16:	Location map of 40 coarse earthenware production sites (in purple) identified by Westropp and Delamain in 1915.....	14
Figure 17:	Results of the geophysical survey carried out at Fowler's pottery	15
Table 2:	Magnetic anomalies identified during the survey	16
Figure 18:	Magnetic anomalies layered with the georeferenced Six-inch Ordnance Survey map, second edition (1853)	16
Figure 19:	Magnetic anomalies and geophysical results.....	17
Figure 20:	Census return for the Fowler's house in 1911. Both the 1901 and 1911 Census indicate that the house had walls of 'mud, wood or other perishable material' and a roof of 'thatch, wood or other perishable material'	17
Table 3:	Trenches proposed prior to the excavation	19
Figure 21:	Trenches proposed prior to the excavation layered with georeferenced Six-inch Ordnance Survey map, second edition (1853). Trenches 3 and 5 were in a lower lying part of the field which was flooded for most of the excavation	20
Figure 22:	Trenches investigated during the course of the excavation layered with georeferenced Six-inch Ordnance Survey map, second edition (1853).....	20
Figure 23:	Trenches investigated during the course of the excavation layered with 2016 aerial photograph raster.....	21
Figure 24:	Final Trench 2 lay out. The trench was extended to the west-south-west during the excavation	21
Figure 25:	Trench 1, looking south-east, showing clay extraction pit cut (c120/c121) and field drain (cut c118, fill c119).....	23
Figure 26:	Trench 1, looking south, showing subsoil cut features (c104, c122, c106, c108, cc110, c114, c120/ c121).....	23
Figure 27:	Plan of Trench 1	24
Figure 28:	Firing chamber wall (c235).....	25
Figure 29:	Firing chamber wall (c253) and flue (c211)	25

Figure 30:	Ortho-rectified photograph of Trench 2 produced by Siobhán McDermott using Structure-from-Motion photogrammetry. Showing Phase 1 features, the kiln footprint and drying room	26
Figure 31:	Plan of Trench 2 showing Phase 1 features in black	26
Figure 32:	South-south-east facing section of Trench 2	26
Figure 33:	Brick floor of the drying room (c222) and ceramic lined channels (c255) set within	27
Figure 34:	Plan of Trench 2 showing Phase 2 features in black and ortho-rectified photograph of the pottery dump (c221) at the north-west of the trench.....	28
Figure 35:	Trench 2 overlaid with the third edition of the six-inch map (1906-1907) showing the location of the house in the trench, corresponding well with the Phase 2 features	29
Figure 36:	Phase 2 features in Trench 2, looking south.....	29
Figure 37:	Phase 4 demolition layer (c206) overlying Phase 1 drying room floor (c222)	30
Figure 38:	Phase 4 demolition layer (c217) overlying Phase 2 cobbled layer (c214)	31
Figure 39:	Plan of Trench 2 showing Phase 4 features in black	32
Figure 40:	Drip gulley cut (c412).....	33
Figure 41:	Plan of excavated features in Trench 4	33
Figure 42:	East north-east facing section of Trench 4.....	33
Figure 43:	Postholes and stakeholes in Trench 4	34
Figure 44:	Sand extraction pit (c431) cut into the subsoil and filled by silty sand (c409), looking west south-west	34
Figure 45:	Phase 4 deposit of brick, mortar and stone (c 403), looking west south-west	35
Figure 46:	Quantities of vessel forms present in the assemblage.....	37
Figure 49:	Illustration of rim forms present in the assemblage	37
Figure 48:	Weight of sherds present in the assemblage (kg).....	37
Figure 47:	Quantity of sherds present in the assemblage	37
Table 4:	Total quantities of rim forms (see Figure 49).....	38
Table 5:	Total quantities of vessels present in the assemblage, and their range of overall diameters at the rim ..	38
Figure 50:	Illustration of a black-glazed crock.....	40
Figure 51:	Illustration of a traile-slip decorated crock	40
Figure 52:	Illustration of a black-glazed pan.....	40
Figure 53:	Illustration of a traile-slip decorated basin.....	41
Figure 54:	Illustration of a small unglazed plant-pot with centrally perforated hole	41
Figure 55:	Illustration of an unglazed plant-pot	41
Figure 56:	Black-glazed coarse earthenware sherds from Fowler's Pottery	42
Figure 57:	Slip-glazed coarse earthenware sherds from Fowler's Pottery	42
Figure 58:	Traile-slip glazed coarse earthenware sherds from Fowler's Pottery	43
Figure 59:	Unglazed coarse earthenware sherds from Fowler's Pottery	43
Figure 60:	A complete example of an L-shaped piece of kiln furniture.....	44
Figure 61:	Hand-formed spacers.....	44
Figure 62:	Conical Stilts	44
Figure 63:	Fireclay bricks from the kiln floor (left) and wall (right)	45
Figure 64:	Lot 33A	52
Figure 66:	Section from the Griffith Valuation listing the lands held by Enoch Fowler, James Fowler and Deane Mann	52
Figure 65:	Lots 33A, 33B, 33C & 34	52
Table 6:	Section from the Griffith Valuation listing the lands held by Enoch Fowler, James Fowler and Deane Mann	53
Table 7:	Street directory listing for Richard and Enoch Fowler	54
Table 8:	List of contexts in Trench 1	56
Table 9:	List of contexts in Trench 2	56
Table 10:	List of contexts in Trench 4	59
Figure 67:	Harris Matrix for Trench 1	60
Figure 68:	Harris Matrix for Trench 2	61
Figure 69:	Harris Matrix for Trench 4	62
Table 11:	Quantities of pottery types in the assemblage by decoration, context and form	63
Table 12:	Quantities of kiln furniture by context and form	66
Table 13:	Quantities of other ceramic items by context and form	67
Table 14:	Weights of pottery types in the assemblage by decoration, context and form	68
Table 15:	Rim sherds in the assemblage according to context, decoration, diameter and form.....	71

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Introduction

This monograph details the results of the archaeological excavation (Licence no. AE/19/81) carried out at Derrybuoy, the site of a 19th century pottery (IHR 05404:000:00) between 3 and 28 June 2019 (Figure 1). The excavation formed part of a wider community project 'Coalisland & East Tyrone: Historical Manufacturing Base of Mid Ulster' which was delivered by the Lough Neagh Partnership with the support of Queen's University Belfast, Mid Ulster District Council, the Craic Theatre and local businesses and funded under the National Lottery Heritage Fund 'Great Place Scheme' with additional financial support from Mid Ulster District Council. The wider project explored the rich manufacturing heritage of the region and how this industrial development shaped the landscape and influenced generations of the people who live in the area. The archaeological excavation formed part of a diverse programme of activities and events such as talks, guided walks, drama, conferences, cultural events, public artwork, training courses and work placements.



Figure 1: Location of Derrybuoy, Corr townland, Co. Tyrone. The site is 4km south-east of Coalisland and 6km west of Lough Neagh.

The presence of good potting clay in the area was discovered during the excavation of the Coalisland canal and the associated re-routing of the River Torrent in the late 18th century. This led to the establishment of local potteries who took advantage of the availability of good clay, coal, turf and ready access to the canal (Walshe and Dilworth 2012: 37). The 1802 Statistical Survey of County Tyrone notes 'The best pottery in the county, and perhaps in the kingdom, is within a mile of Coalisland, on the road to Verner's ferry ... Here are manufactured all sorts of rough crockery ware, fire bricks, and tiles for malt and oat-kilns, of as good a quality as any imported' (McEvoy 1991: 25-26). Enoch Fowler rented the land at Corr townland

in 1839 to take advantage of these conditions. There are presently no upstanding remains of the pottery or associated buildings and the adjacent townland boundary has been levelled with only a shallow dip evident running north-west to south-east through the field. Historic maps and sources indicate that the pottery was operational for around 40 years until 1881, whilst the house continued in occupation into the mid-20th century.

Three trenches were opened in total during the excavation which examined the location of a kiln, a drying room, clay extraction pit and later buildings. The work facilitated the investigation of an important aspect of the manufacturing heritage of the area helping to place this in the wider context of developments in the industrial landscape of the region. In addition, the excavation programme provided the opportunity for wide participation by undergraduate students, members of the public and school children promoting understanding and engagement with the unique heritage of the region.