

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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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.