

TWO POST-MEDIEVAL POTTERY KILNS AND ASSOCIATED PRODUCTS FROM PROSSER'S YARD, BRILL, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

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A small rescue excavation in 1977 examined early eighteenth-century kilns exposed in a service trench. Red earthenwares were the principal product with a lesser quantity of whitewares. Several types of kiln furniture were present. This group fills a useful gap in the knowledge of the extensive Brill-Boarstall pottery industry.

Introduction

The longevity of pottery production in the Brill area is well known (see Jope 1953, Farley 1979, Ivens 1981, Yeoman forthcoming), and a number of kiln sites have been excavated (Fig. 1). This paper illustrates a range of pottery produced by two kilns discovered in 1977, which were in operation during the first half of the eighteenth century. The products included a small group of whitewares, which have not been previously recognised as originating from the Brill area.

The two kilns discussed below and the associated material were excavated at Prosser's Yard, Temple Street, Brill, SP 65481405 (Fig. 1). The excavation was carried out under difficult 'rescue' conditions which curtailed the extent of the work possible. The site was excavated by Peter Locke with the assistance of the Buckinghamshire County Museum Archaeological Group, (hereafter BCMAG), over a six day period in February 1977.

The location of another kiln within Prosser's Yard, along with a quantity of pottery was notified to the museum in 1974 by Mr Eric Prosser who had discovered it about sixty years earlier. No suggestion is offered as to the date of this particular kiln, but the probable location has been indicated on the plan (Fig. 1).

The finds from the 1977 site are stored at the County Museum Acc. No. 46.77, Site Reference CAS 2153.

The Kilns

Kiln 1. (Fig. 2) (Plate I).

Kiln 1 was a substantial brick-built structure, the frontage of which was orientated roughly north-east to south-west. It survived to a maximum height of 27 brick courses, 2.30 m, and was 2.70 m at its widest point. The average size of brick used in the kiln frontage was 205 × 110 × 57 mm. The highest surviving brickwork was 0.20 m below the 1977 ground level and the base of the kiln about 2.50 m below the surface. Abutting on the north-west face of the frontage was a semi-circular brick vault, which was one stretcher in thickness and extended one and a half stretchers from the wall. The supporting wall for the vault was traced back 0.50 m from the kiln frontage but certainly extended further north beyond the limit of excavation. The floor area to the north was found to be paved. No return of the kiln frontage wall was found southwards.

At the base of the frontage wall was a single flue tunnel, slightly off centre. This brick-arched flue was 0.82 m in length, 0.44 m in width and 0.74 m in height.

The floor of the tunnel was formed by three bricks laid flat across the tunnel which acted as fire bars, two of which survived. These formed the roof of a small channel beneath the floor of the tunnel, 0.21 m wide, which allowed air to circulate beneath the fire, and probably served as a grate so that ash could be raked out over