

Haggarty, George (c.1997) [Glasgow Delftfield Ceramic Resource Disc 18th century tin-glazed earthenware & creamware.](#) National Museums Scotland and AOC Archaeology

Introduction, History, Acknowledgements & References

AOC Archaeology Data Structure Report: Broomielaw Glasgow, Evaluation August 1997

File 1 - 38a (Box 1)

File 39 – 65 (Box 2)

File 66 – 97 (Box 3)

File 98, 100-101, 103-104, 106-108&110 (Box 4)

File 99, 102, 105, 109 & 111 (Boxes 5-7)

File 112-117 (Boxes 8-9)

File 1-9 (Boxes 10-11)

File 1-3 5-9 1A (Boxes 12-13)

<http://repository.nms.ac.uk/1183>

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## **Delftfield Introduction**

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The archaeological excavations carried out by the AOC Archaeology Group on the site of the Delftfield pottery in Glasgow produced a large ceramic assemblage which we have divided into four groups. Produced on site was 18<sup>th</sup> century tin-glazed earthenware, folder (1), and 18<sup>th</sup> century creamware folder (2). A group of 19<sup>th</sup> century pottery found on the site, almost certainly derived from the nearby 19<sup>th</sup> century Verreville pottery, folder (3), and a few shards of post medieval reduced ware folder (4). These were catalogued in a total of (117, 9, 9 and 1), word files and packed into 12 boxes.

Over the years shards recovered from the area of the Delftfield pottery have been the subject of a number of papers; one anonymous in (1981, 64-7), Quail in (1978, 19-21; 1981, 64-7 & 1982, 58), and more importantly Denholm in (1982, 39-84). A number of other papers have used this material to suggest extant examples, including Archer (1966, 16-22), Austin (1994) Kinghorn & Quail (1986).

### **Delftfield Pottery Glasgow: Historical Synopsis**

Much of the following synopsis is derived from the excellent history, 'Delftfield – A Glasgow Pottery, 1748 – 1823' by Jonathan Kinghorn and Gerard Quail, Glasgow Museums and Art Galleries, 1986.

Laurence Dinwiddie (1696-1764) was a prominent Glasgow merchant with important political positions and business enterprises. After his eldest brother Matthew, had lost the family lands through bankruptcy, Laurence retrieved them in 1748 and hoped that the local Glasgow clay might be suitable for making pottery. Laurence then brought one of his older brothers, Robert (1692-1774), into the pottery enterprise, which by then already had two other prominent businessmen, Robert Finlay, a tanner, and Patrick Nisbet as partners. Robert Dinwiddie became Collector of Customs in Bermuda, later the government's Surveyor General for the southern part of America and finally in 1751 he was appointed Governor of Virginia.

Many of the Glasgow merchants, like the Dinwiddies, had become immensely wealthy by importing tobacco, rum and sugar from the New Colonies and Caribbean. They also knew that the colonists needed manufactured goods. Laurence hoped that, if local Glasgow clay could be readily supplied for the new pottery, a lucrative export market for ceramics and other goods could open up across the Atlantic.

None of the four partners in the new enterprise knew about pottery manufacture. Two major miscalculations then contributed to a disastrous start for the Delftfield pottery. Firstly the local clay was found unsuitable and soon had to be replaced by expensive clay imported from Carrickfergus near Belfast; clay from this source was already being used by potteries in Bristol and Liverpool. Secondly, from the 1740s on, the delftware industry as a whole was in decline, largely due mainly to competition from

the new and more popular white salt glazed stoneware and creamware both first manufactured large scale in Staffordshire.

The partners engaged a pot painter from Lambeth, John Bird, to advise and oversee the planning and construction of the pottery, the recruitment of suitable workmen and the manufacture of the delftware itself. The pottery was situated to the west of the city on the right bank of the Clyde and with immediate access to the Broomielaw Quay whence the goods could be exported either direct in shallow draught vessels or via Port Glasgow or Greenock. Immediately there were problems. Bird felt he had been coerced into signing his contract and there were quibbles over his salary. Either Bird miscalculated about the planning or the partners interfered with his plans for the pottery which was built of expensive stone rather than brick. The work space was found to be cramped, notably around the kiln.

In January 1749 the first firing of biscuit ware was a disaster. Saggars made of local Germiston clay and tiles, made of Carrickfergus clay, were all ruined. The second firing, this time of glazed and decorated ware, fared no better. Part of the blame was attributed to the poor material of the grinding stones, their misalignment, and their possible contamination with sand. Correction of these defects required replacing and resetting the grinding stones with better quality stone.

Bird was now also being criticised because he had recruited the wrong ratio of turners to pot painters, having too few of the latter. The workmen objected to the number of apprentices being employed, fearing that, when they had trained them, the apprentices would compete with them for their own jobs. As his salary was in arrears and he had virtually been dismissed, Bird complained. He and the partners went for arbitration in early 1749 but were unable to find agreement. There followed a lengthy lawsuit between the two parties heard in Edinburgh. This resulted in a 100 page document, 'State of the Mutual Processes', which can still be read today. It contains much interesting information about the running of a mid-18<sup>th</sup> century delftware pottery as many of the workforce – turners, painters, labourers - as well as the managers, were called as witnesses. By December the court's findings were completed and were almost entirely in Bird's favour. He was to receive his full salary and the arrears and full compensation. As far as is known, Bird then left Glasgow and may have gone to Ireland (Delft-work Law Case).

Despite all these problems, the pottery was still able to produce delftware. As early as February 1749 'earthenware' and, by March 1749 specifically 'delftware', are recorded as being exported. Advertisements for the products appeared in newspapers in April of that year. Additions were made to the pottery buildings in the form of a manager's house and a warehouse. However, although Delftfield was originally built fit for purpose as a pothouse rather than adapted from previous buildings, the pottery became complex, cramped and inconvenient to work in.

About 1757, now in competition with the influx of Staffordshire creamware pottery, Delftfield diversified into making a new product which may have been tin-glazed stoneware. This had the advantage of resisting thermal shock from boiling water and was advertised as such. Whether the celebrated engineer, James Watt, was involved as early as this is unclear but, by the 1760s, he had invested in the company and had become a partner (Hills 2001). With his wife and family he moved into the manager's

house in Delftfield Lane. Between then and 1774, when he moved to Birmingham, Watt probably initiated and oversaw innovations in pottery manufacture with new kilns, the improved firing of stoneware and possibly the introduction of creamware. Soon, however, there was also local competition for creamware production, following the establishment of a new creamware pottery by Thomson and Anderson, in Glasgow's Gallowgate.

By 1772, the younger Robert Dinwiddie, son of Laurence and nephew of the earlier Robert Dinwiddie, Governor of Virginia, was in partnership with William Martin. They advertised stoneware and delftware 'to the greatest perfection' under the name of Dinwiddie, Martin and Company. After Martin died in 1779, an important Glasgow merchant, Gilbert Hamilton, brother in law to James Watt, was in charge of the factory. It diversified into more sophisticated wares advertising sets or pieces with coloured decoration carrying crests and coats of arms.

After the younger Robert Dinwiddie died in 1789, William Young took over the management. He had risen from apprentice in 1760 to become the clerk or manager. A new range of ceramics was introduced including 'Egyptian Black', porcelain and brown glazed wares. By 1803 the pottery was renamed William Young & Co. Six years later the active partners were recorded as Daniel McKenzie, Archibald Hamilton and William Young.

In 1809 the Delftfield Company took over the modern Caledonian Pottery at Townhead near the Monkland Canal Basin and gradually and smoothly moved its business there. In 1823, after the deaths of James Watt (1819) and William Young (1820), Robert Muirhead, one of the remaining partners, retired. The Delftfield Company was wound up and the Caledonian Pottery went up for sale, bringing to an end fifty year history of the Delftfield pottery.

Most of its early ware was exported to the Caribbean and the Americas and very little has been identified in the United Kingdom. However the excavated shard and waster material from the pottery site and its adjacent dumps, recorded here gives some idea of the wares that were produced by Delftfield. Excavations in the USA, notably at Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia, have yielded shard evidence which correlates well with some of the delftware shards and wasters dug up in Glasgow.

## **Acknowledgments**

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