

A mid 18th-century kiln of the ‘pottery house in the old park’, Dunster (HER PIN MSO9466)

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Catalogue (Fig. 4)

1. Jar, fabric type WMG 106 (South Somerset ware) rather soft-fired, worn and flaked internal brown lead glaze, H. 145mm. Wells and Mendip Museum accession number 1994.14/1.
2. *Krug*, Raeren salt-glazed stoneware with frilled base and separator band round belly, H. 154 mm, Gaimster type 74 (1997, 227, 386). Acc. no. 1994.14/2.
3. *Krug*, Frechen salt-glazed stoneware, H. 135 mm, Gaimster type 49 (1997, 384). Acc. no. 1994.14/3.
4. Cup, fabric type WMG 100 (East Somerset ware), globular two-handled with two incised lines round belly, all over reduced green lead glaze, H. 105 mm. Acc. no. 1994.14/4.
5. Cup, fabric type WMG 100, two-handled with all over reduced green lead glaze, H. 120 mm. Acc. no. 1994.14/5.
6. Glass flask with wrythen neck, rim, D. 61mm. Acc. no. 1994.14/7.

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THE MID 18TH-CENTURY KILN OF THE 'POTTERY HOUSE IN THE OLD PARK', DUNSTER (HER PIN MSO9466)

DAVID DAWSON, OLIVER KENT AND BILL STEBBING

The pottery kiln surviving behind the Exmoor National Park Authority Visitor Centre at Dunster is a remarkable scheduled ancient monument (number 1020409 at SS

9924 4385). It is a simple two-firebox updraught kiln; that is, one in which the heat from the fires is distributed under the floor of the ware chamber and drawn up through the

load of pottery and out through the chimney. As argued in the report of the original archaeological investigations in 1999/2000, the kiln structure was built in 1759 as part of the 'Pottery House in the Old Park' and is probably the earliest standing pottery kiln in Britain (Dawson and Kent 2007). Its significance to our understanding of the development of pottery kiln technology has also been further explored (Dawson and Kent 2008, 217-18). In July 2018 the opportunity to create a 3D laser scan survey of the kiln arose and with the kind permission of Exmoor National Park Authority some of the detail of that survey is presented here. It supplements the published survey and excavation of 2007.



Fig. 1 Bill Stebbing surveying the kiln using a Faro Focus laser scanner

The kiln stands as an isolated structure, basically a cylinder 3m overall in diameter and about 3m high with walls 0.9m thick (Fig. 1). The drip courses of the building that once adjoined the kiln and linked it to the Pottery House to the west can be clearly seen on the east and west sides (Fig. 2). The appearance of these buildings is recorded in an oil painting of the park by William Tomkins commissioned in 1768 and still in the Dunster Castle collection (National Trust DC/P/34). The ware chamber is roofed with a shallow domed brick vault surmounted by a conical chimney (Fig. 3). The two opposed fireboxes and labyrinth of flues below the original floor survive, essentially intact though lowered and originally packed with unfired pottery when the kiln floor was removed and the sill of the ware



Fig. 2 East (a) and west (b) elevations showing the drip courses of the adjoining rooflines.

chamber door was lowered (Fig. 4). This remodelling happened in the mid-19th century in conjunction with extensive building and landscaping works including raising the external ground level, conversion of the kiln into a shed and probably the demolition of the rest of the pottery buildings. The western firebox was blocked with mortared stone after the kiln went out of production but the eastern firebox was left open and blocked with roof-tiles of a similar pattern to those used on the nearby



Fig. 3 Section east to west. Note the change from stonework to brickwork marking the position of the original floor. The eastern firebox has been blocked with stonework but the western only partially with roof-tiles and domestic rubbish.



Fig. 4 Plan of the fireboxes and labyrinth of flues beneath the original floor (north at the top). Note the meltdown of the brickwork of the westernmost flue.

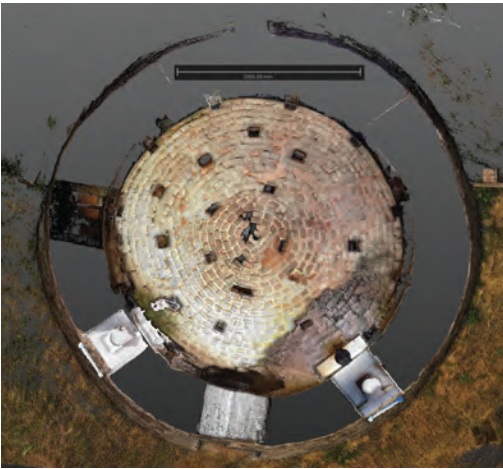


Fig. 5 Plan of the interior of the vault of the ware-chamber



Fig. 6 Tile repairs to cracks in the ware chamber wall during conservation work in 2009

range of buildings which now house the visitor centre. It can be clearly seen that the fireboxes extend under the floor of the ware chamber but that on the west has suffered a meltdown of the brickwork on the north side blocking the end of one of the flues (Fig. 4). The original level of the dismantled floor of the ware chamber is clearly marked by the change between the stonework of the substructure and the brickwork of the lining of the ware chamber walls (Fig. 3). The kiln has suffered from subsidence probably consequent on the building of the new road and outbuildings to the Luttrell Arms c. 1850. Hence the distortion of the chimney and the probable loss of its upper courses of brickwork. The pierced vault over the ware chamber has similarly distorted (Fig. 5). The tile repairs carried out to the cracks in the ware chamber wall during conservation work in 2009 can be seen in Fig. 6.

The authors have deployed the technique of 3D laser scanning for recording two other pottery kilns, the remarkable 15th-/16th-century kiln base at Newport, Pembrokeshire, and the later 18th-century bottle kiln with 20th-century modifications at Winchcombe, Gloucestershire (Dawson and Kent forthcoming). In both these cases laser scanning has facilitated recording the parts that are highly constricted and otherwise difficult to reach. The Dunster kiln does not share these characteristics in that the substructure beneath the ware chamber floor has been laid bare by its removal. However, this series of images demonstrates the advantages of the technique in recording those subtleties of construction that are difficult to convey effectively in any other medium. Dunster is special. It represents a transition between the medieval and post-medieval two-firebox kiln as at Donyatt site 13 and the ubiquitous fully developed bottle kilns of the late-18th to 20th century and it is still standing thanks to the conservation work initiated by the Exmoor National Park Authority (Coleman-Smith 2002; Dawson and Kent 2008; Dawson and Kent 2012).

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NOTE OF CLARIFICATION

There has been ambiguity and simple confusion published elsewhere, for example in Gathercole (2002, 22), in the interpretation of the documentary and archaeological data. These authors are clear that the pottery as built in 1759 on the site of what was probably a Civil War siege battery is physically and was almost certainly organisationally distinct from the estate brickworks which was located in the Warren.

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NYNEHEAD'S VICTORIAN VICARAGE

DAVID RABSON

The 19th century saw a remarkable transformation in the housing of rural clergy, in Somerset as elsewhere. The 'Buildings of England' volume for South and West Somerset records about one hundred parsonages (rectories or vicarages) built in the time of Queen Victoria, all but a few new builds (Orbach and Pevsner 2014). Among those not mentioned is the former vicarage in the small village of

Nynehead, just outside Wellington. In preparing this paper, which looks at how the house came to be built and some notable features of its construction, I have been inspired by 34 years of living in part of the former vicarage, and a childhood in a variety of clergy houses ranging from a house on the Becontree estate in East London to a listed 17th-century vicarage in an Essex village.