

CPAT Report No 1297

Price's Pottery, Buckley, Flintshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS 2014

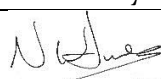
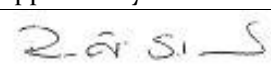


Llywodraeth Cymru
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THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

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Cover photo: School students and teachers, members of the Buckley Society and CPAT staff on the site of Price's Pottery (CPAT 3918-0272)

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SUMMARY

The area surrounding Buckley in Flintshire, has been associated with the production of pottery for at least 600 years, from the medieval period to the mid 20th century. The scale and location of pottery manufacture during the Middle Ages and through the Tudor period is poorly known, but by the early 17th century a group of cottage potters had settled around Buckley Mountain where they exploited the suitable supplies of clay, coal and, on Halkyn Mountain, lead. Potteries were often established on encroachments on common land, which can be readily identified in 18th- and 19th-century cartographic sources.

The significance of the Buckley pottery industry has been recognised for some time, attracting considerable attention, although it is only relatively recently that a comprehensive review has been conducted, employing historic cartography and the results of previous work. Currently, some 31 sites have been identified, although several are not well located.

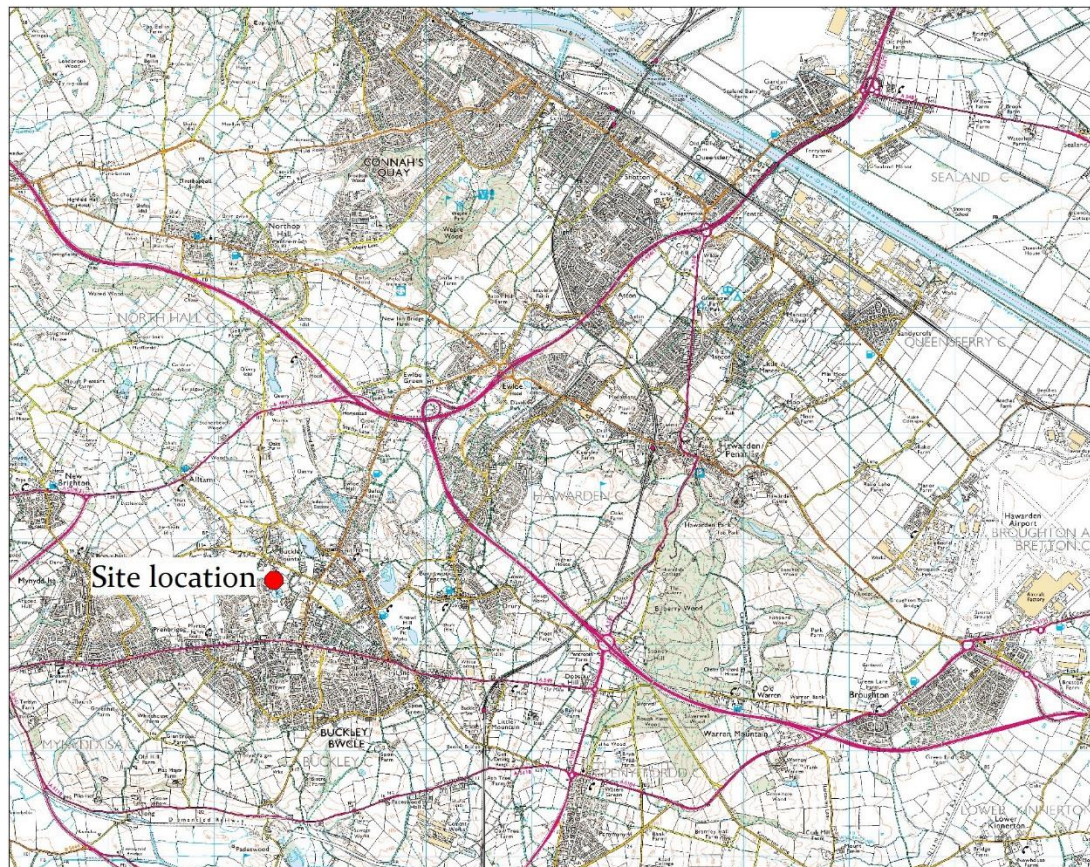
Despite the extent and significance of the industry there are now few visible surface traces. Although there have been some remarkable survivals, the Buckley area has seen considerable new development in the last 20 years, such that most significant elements of the pottery industry have already been lost. Price's Pottery, the site of which is the subject of this report, is a case in point, having been seriously affected by housing developments and the landscaping of the grounds for Elfed High School. At the start of the excavation it was not known whether any evidence for the pottery remained.

Some features related to the pottery were revealed by the excavation, though none of these were in-situ structures. There is still potential for the identification of structures by targeted investigation, however. Large quantities of pottery debris and associated material were collected and it is hoped that analysis of these finds will provide valuable information on both the products of the pottery and the period of its operation.

The project was conceived as one where the archaeological gains from the excavation would be matched by the value of involving the community in discovering its past. This included liaising with the Buckley Society, a local history group dedicated to recording and transmitting the history of the locality, but the main way in which the project aims were achieved was by involving students from Elfed High School in all aspects of the work. This included map regression, finds processing and excavation, tasks which give both themselves and the teaching staff an understanding of the nature of the industry that once provided such a major contribution to the local economy. This was highly successful, as demonstrated by the feedback from the school, but the students also transmitted information about their involvement to their parents and friends, widening the range of contact to the community as a whole; as part of this process one of the students discovered that her family were descended from the original owners of the pottery.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In May 2014 the Field Services Section of the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) carried out investigations on the site of the former Price's Pottery in Buckley, Flintshire (SJ 2755 6460). The work was carried out in that part of the pottery site which lies within the grounds of Elfed High School and was carried out with the assistance of the students. The programme was grant-aided by Cadw.
- 1.2 The work followed a programme of assessment (Jones 2014), which had identified some 31 pottery sites in the vicinity of Buckley. Price's Pottery was chosen as a suitable site for a trial excavation, although it was known that some elements of the pottery had been lost during the landscaping of the school grounds in the 1970s and when a small housing development was constructed on the adjoining land.
- 1.3 The excavation was designed to assess the survival of the pottery buildings depicted on the 1884 Ordnance Survey map (see Fig. 2) and also see whether material could be collected to ascertain both how long the pottery had been in operation and the nature of its products. An important consideration was to facilitate the involvement of the local community with the work and, in particular, allow the pupils of Elfed High School the opportunity to understand the history of Buckley and its importance as a centre of pottery manufacture.



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Fig. 1: Site location

- 1.4 The excavation involved the opening by hand of a single trench, measuring 34.4m long by about 1.2m wide, which was positioned just inside the boundary of the school

grounds, to the south of a modern housing development (see Fig. 2). The eastern end of the trench was aligned east-north-east/west-south-west, while the western section, 12m long, was on an east/west alignment.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The 1757 Lordship of Ewloe map shows two rectangular buildings which equate with those of the pottery shown on the Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25" map of 1884, although no kiln is depicted to confirm this as a pottery in 1757. A pottery is recorded here on the 1780s Ewloe Estate maps and appears to have been operational until the latter part of the 19th century, being disused by the time the 2nd edition Ordnance Survey mapping was produced in 1899.
- 2.2 The 1st edition Ordnance Survey mapping of 1884 shows a single kiln and two buildings, as well as a small pond immediately to the north. The pottery was operated by Charles Price in the later 18th century and he was succeeded by his widow Martha and later his son Charles (Messham 1956, 34).
- 2.3 The site lies on the edge of the playing field of Elfed High School and in the 1970s works here led to considerable erosion of the pottery dump on its south and west sides. A quantity of 18th- to 19th-century pottery and kiln furniture was recovered, including a number of very fine mottled ware tankards (Davey 1976a, 23).

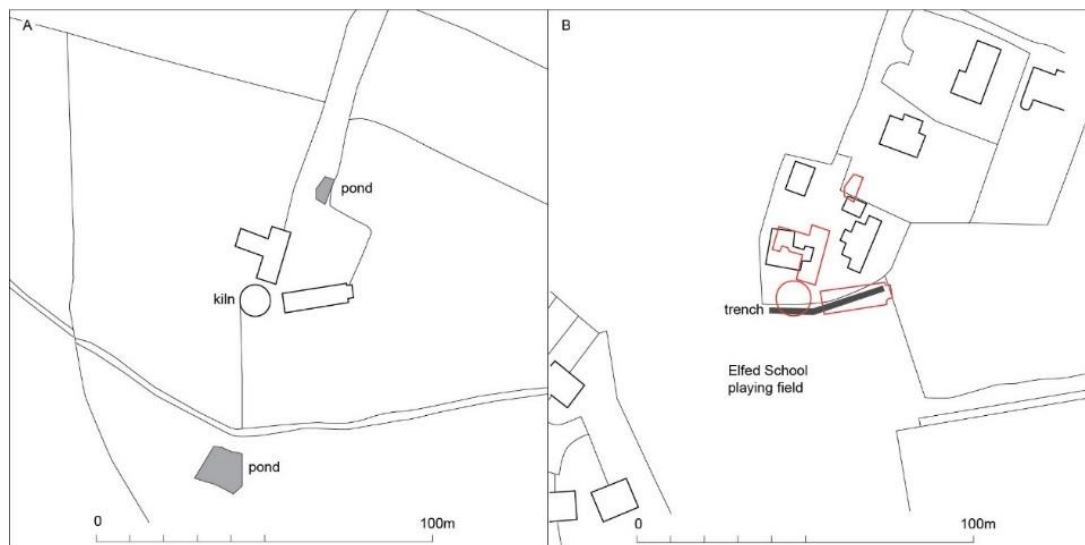


Fig. 2: Price's Pottery. A – detail from the Ordnance Survey mapping of 1884; and B – present day showing pottery structures (in red) and trench location.

3 THE 2014 INVESTIGATIONS

- 3.1 The results of the excavation are detailed in this section, while the outreach activities are described in Section 4.

- 3.2 Natural subsoil was located through the excavation of sondages and during the removal of the fill of a single feature. At the approximate centre and towards the west end of the trench, the subsoil (9) appeared as a hard yellow clay, while at the east end of the trench the natural subsoil was probably represented by a mottled grey-brown sandy clay (19); the latter is assumed to be natural on current evidence, mainly the lack of finds or any other anthropogenic material. In places the surface of layer 9 sloped to the south and bore marks indicative of machine excavation, clearly a result of the landscaping of the school playing fields in the 1970s.

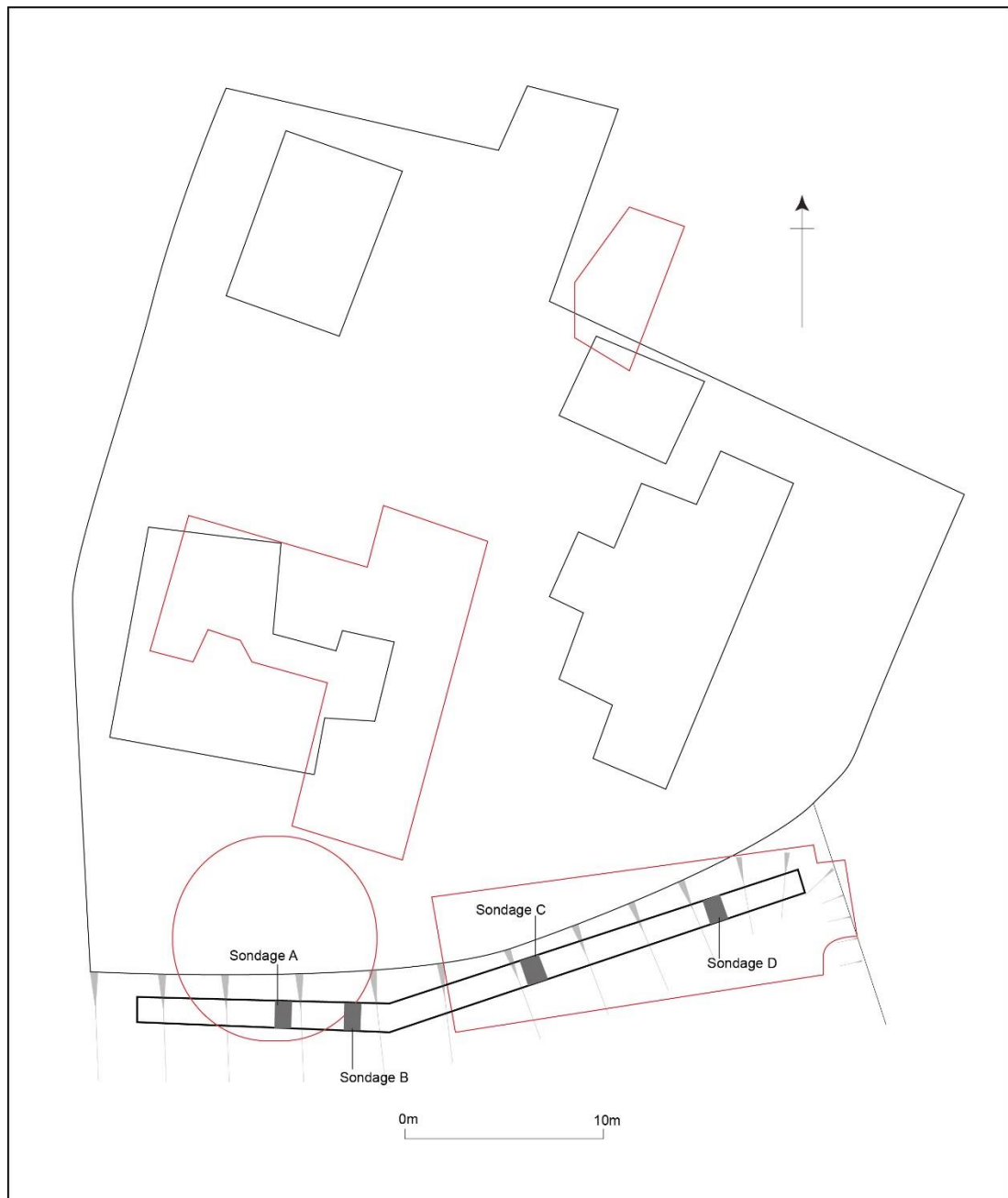


Fig. 3: Trench plan in relation to the structures depicted on the 1884 Ordnance Survey map, showing the sondages (illustrated by photographs in the text below)



Fig.4: The excavation trench, showing the location of the kiln as highlighted by coal and fired clay deposits, from the west-south-west. Photo CPAT 3853-0006

Sondage A

- 3.3 The sondage was located 7m from the west end of the excavation trench; its base was occupied by two layers which appeared to butt each other; on the north, a brown silt (16), while on the south there was a loose deposit of coal, and fired clay fragments in an orange-grey silt (18). Layer 16 had a very similar appearance to layer 6, described in para 3.5 below, and probably represented a former surface or near-surface soil horizon; these layers are likely to date to the time the pottery was in operation.
- 3.4 Layers 16 and 18 were covered by a layer of coal fragments (15), about 0.1m thick, itself covered by a thinner layer of loose and powdery orange fired clay (14), up to 0.05m thick. The fired clay had the same appearance and constituents as layer (8), for which see Fig. 7 and para 3.6, below. Above 14 was another coal layer (7), about 0.05m thick, which formed a spread of material, presumably also associated with the kiln. A further spread of coal (5), no more than 0.05m thick, lay towards the western end of the trench and also overlay the brown silt (16), suggesting that it was broadly contemporary with layer 15. On the south side of the trench there was a loose, greyish-brown, mixed deposit of coal, slag and silt (17), up to 0.18m thick, covering the slope created by the 1970s landscaping, with which it is no doubt contemporary.



Fig.5: Sondage A, showing a series of layers, most of which probably represent waste material from the kiln. Photo CPAT 3853-0053

- 3.5 A short distance to the west of Sondage A, some 5m from the end of the excavation, the trench was crossed by a narrow linear gully (3), between 0.3m and 0.4m wide and up to 0.25m deep, and on a north-north-east/south-south-west alignment. The gully was largely filled with lumps of slag within a greyish-brown sandy silt (4); the slag was relatively light in weight and had probably originated from the pottery kiln. The function of the gully could not be confirmed but it may be a drainage feature and it cut through a layer of brown silt (6), up to 0.25m thick, and possibly into the top of the natural subsoil (9).



Fig. 6: Gully (3), cutting through an old soil layer (6) and possibly into the natural subsoil (9), from the south. Photo CPAT 3853-0023

Sondage B

- 3.6 The sondage was excavated at a point 11.0m from the west end of the trench, where a layer of loose and powdery orange fired clay (8) was apparent beneath the modern surface soil, and found to be directly over a brown silt (6), probably representing an old surface or near-surface soil horizon. The upper few centimetres of layer 8 were removed to confirm its relationship to layer 6 and to allow some of the pottery waste which it contained to be recovered, but its depth was not gauged. The limited intervention ensured that the layer retained a coherent appearance should further work be contemplated here in the future. Some of the fragments of pottery from layer 8 had clearly belonged to wasters (pots which had failed in the firing).



Fig. 7: Sondage B, showing the probable kiln debris (8) overlying layer 6 (to the right), from south. Photo CPAT 3853-0058

Sondage C

- 3.7 This sondage was placed 14m from the east end of the trench and revealed little of significance. The natural clay subsoil (9) was overlain by a disturbed layer of mixed yellow clay and grey-brown silt (10), approximately 0.15m thick, probably representing activity related to the 1970s landscaping. The southern side of layer 9 sloped down markedly to the south, where it had been cut back by the landscaping.



Fig. 8: Sondage C, showing the disturbed layer (10) overlying the natural clay subsoil (9), from the south-south-east. Photo CPAT 3853-0060

Sondage D

- 3.8 The sondage was placed about 4.5m from the east end of the trench. It revealed what looked to be an early layer in the stratigraphic sequence, where the natural clay (19) was covered by a somewhat mixed layer of yellow-brown and dark grey sandy clay and silt (13), 0.10m thick. A raised lump of stiff grey-brown clay (12), up to 0.15m thick, overlay layer 13 and was itself covered by a mixed clay (11), up to 0.4m thick, of orange, yellow-brown and grey colour; the former was fairly clean and may be clay that was acquired by the pottery but went unused, while the latter contained fired ceramic material, some of which was reminiscent of kiln waste. We may speculate that the clay at this site supplied raw material for the pottery and was the impetus for the development of the pottery at this location.
- 3.9 It is assumed that layers 11-13 were contemporary with activity at the pottery, although the circumstances of their deposition remain uncertain owing to the small area investigated. The natural clay here was found at a significantly lower level than in the remainder of the trench, which implied that the ground level in this area, potentially within one of the pottery buildings, had been lowered by about 0.5m. Layers 11-13 were covered by a disturbed layer of mixed yellow clay and grey-brown silt (10), approximately 0.15m thick, which seems likely to be related to the landscaping of the school playing fields in the 1970s.



Fig. 9: Sondage D, showing layers 11-13, overlying the presumed natural clay subsoil (19), from the south-south-east. Photo CPAT 3853-0050

- 3.10 Two relatively modern soils were identified which covered the deposits described above. The surface soil was a grey-brown silt (1), from 0.1m to 0.3m thick, which was present throughout the trench. Beneath this in the eastern and central parts of the trench there was a dark grey-brown crumbly silt (2), up to 0.1m thick. Large quantities of pottery and associated material were recovered from these two layers.
- 3.11 Many of the finds from the excavation have come from secondary, disturbed, contexts, but this does not detract from their value in revealing the chronology of Price's Pottery. The landscaping of the school playing fields in the 1970s is known to have removed a dump of ceramic waste from the pottery and it is likely that much of the material recovered had its origin there. Recent work by CPAT in the vicinity has revealed a quantity of ceramics also likely to be products of Price's Pottery and one of these, a partially complete bowl with slip-trailed decoration, is depicted as Fig.10.

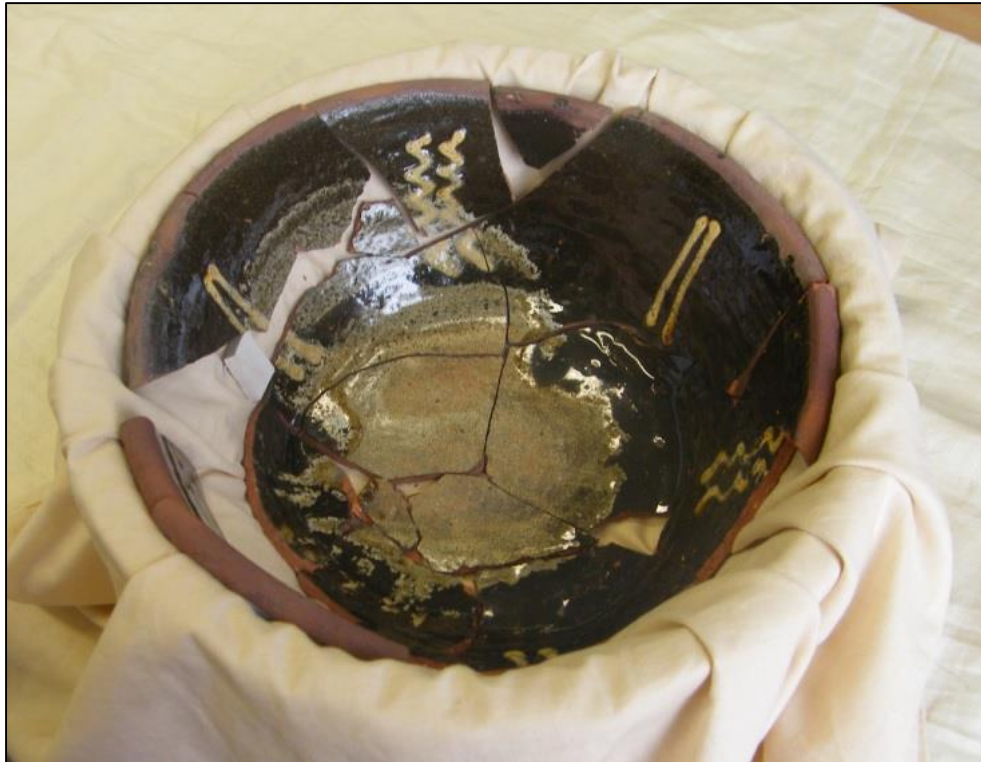


Fig. 10: Partially complete bowl with slip-trailed decoration found in the vicinity of Elfed High School playing field. Photo CPAT 3853-0063

4 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 4.1 Education is one of the core values of the Trust, reflecting CPAT's long-standing and continuing commitment to education and the engagement of the public in archaeology and heritage. A related key value is to enjoy the work that we do, and share that enjoyment with others as widely as possible in a creative, flexible and innovative way. During the time CPAT staff spent at Price's Pottery, 360 people joined in with the activities and events that were offered; these included an archaeological excavation, educational workshops, site visits and talks. A breakdown of the numbers of people involved can be found in Table 1.
- 4.2 The community excavation and educational events were undertaken both to enhance our understanding of the local pottery industry and to provide an opportunity for local people to experience and obtain training in archaeological techniques. It was also important that they gain an understanding of the nature and value of their local heritage. The archaeological and educational activities that we were able to offer with Cadw's resourcing, provided a unique experience which gave both adults and children the thrill of discovery, while engaging in work with tangible results.

Table 1: Breakdown of participants

Staff of CPAT	3
Volunteers	2
Work placement students	3
Teachers and school staff	20
High school students	258
Local primary school students	51
Members of the Buckley Society	17
Local residents	6

- 4.3 The excavations enabled over 250 students and 20 teachers to be involved with all aspects of the work, by learning about and participating in map regression exercises and other research, excavation, recording and finds processing (Fig. 12). Most of the students were from Years 7 and 9.



Fig. 11: Year 7 students excavating the site of Price's Pottery under the supervision of an archaeologist from Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust. Photo CPAT 3918-0246



Fig. 12: Year 7 and Year 9 students looking at historic maps and making pots with the local potter (top). Post-excavation (bottom).

Photos CPAT 3918-0243; 3918-0132; 3918-0093; 3918-0128

- 4.5 Educationally, excavation has been claimed to be a powerful learning and social tool which enables learning through doing, thinking, feeling and cooperating (Jameson, 1997; Simpson and Williams, 2008). This, and alternative participatory activities, offered physical and intellectual exercise, education and skills training, awareness of local heritage and identity, and brought the community together in a common effort.



Fig. 13: Members of the Buckley Society showing students examples of local pottery at Elfed High School. Photo 3918-0308, courtesy of Elfed High School

- 4.6 Their learning experience was supported and enhanced by educational equipment and material produced by the Trust. Furthermore, members from the Buckley Society (a local group dedicated to promoting historical interest in the Buckley area) supported the community archaeologist by giving an introductory talk about the industrial past of Buckley and displaying some beautiful examples of 'Buckley' pottery (Fig. 13).
- 4.7 The experience was also enhanced by a pottery-making workshop led by Emma Preece, a local potter and former student at Elfed High School. She was introduced to the art of making pottery by the realisation that there was a long-standing local tradition with its own methods and designs; some of her work has drawn attention to a unique cultural heritage aspect often forgotten, that of local dialect. The unusual dialect of Buckley evolved from the diverse combination of migrant workers who moved to the area, particularly from Staffordshire, and merged with the native Welsh speakers to produce a vocabulary that was unique to the area (Griffiths, 1969).
- 4.8 During the first week three A-level students assisted with the excavation and site recording under the supervision of CPAT archaeologists as did a student from Bradford University who was conducting a work placement experience with the Trust over the summer period. Drawing skills were not neglected and interpretation drawings of the site were also produced by the students, by using early maps and comparing these to evidence recovered from other local potteries (Fig. 14). Examples of the recovered pottery were illustrated.
- 4.9 All students who participated in the activities were encouraged to create and maintain a site journal and exhibition, to inform the rest of the school about results and discoveries. This activity allowed responsible members of the school staff and professional archaeologists to evaluate the effectiveness of the educational activities and assess the students' performance.

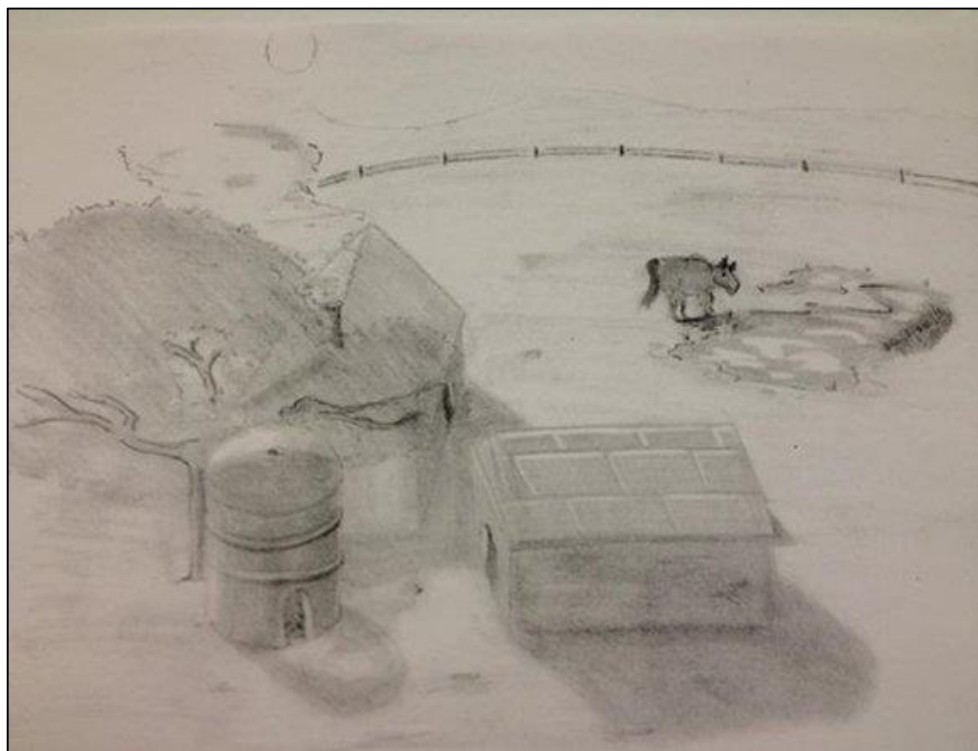


Fig. 14: Interpretation drawing produced by A-level students. Photo CPAT 3918-0204

- 4.10 The work conducted by students allowed members of the public, primary schools, local societies and businesses to visit the Price's pottery site and appreciate its connection to the lost ceramic industry of Buckley. This has proved very successful and has created a new dialogue with local residents, represented by a diverse socio-economic profile incorporating young people and retired people, as well as amateur groups, individuals and local businesses.
- 4.11 The positive feedback received from school staff, students and the public in general (for an example of which see the letter from the Head Teacher at Elfed High School in Appendix 2) has demonstrated that they valued the opportunities they were given and it was clear that this had re-awakened an appreciation of the value of their local heritage in those who took part. The level of interest generated and the positive comments that followed the activities will no doubt encourage community and educational initiatives in future years.



Fig. 15: Members of the Buckley Society visit the exhibit prepared by students and read the site journal. Photo CPAT 3918-0284

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The project has successfully included, both directly and indirectly, a large number of the local residents in work which has allowed them to gain an appreciation of the past history of their local area. The feedback from those directly involved was overwhelmingly positive.
- 5.2 Although the excavation was not successful in discovering the structural remains of the pottery buildings, some useful information has been gathered regarding the products of the pottery and its period of operation. Preliminary findings suggest that

- production started in at least the early part of the 18th century, perhaps 50 years earlier than had been previously appreciated, and this may be revised further once a detailed examination of the ceramics has been completed by specialists.
- 5.3 Sufficient clues were revealed by the excavation to suggest that the site may still retain some structural evidence, although there has clearly been significant disturbance to the remains of the pottery from the landscaping of the school grounds some 40 years ago. A more intensive examination of the area in which the kiln was located may prove fruitful. The effect of the construction of the small housing development on the pottery site cannot be established with current knowledge.
- 5.3 Post-excavation finds processing has commenced, and all of the finds have now been cleaned, sorted and appropriately packaged. At this stage, it is proposed that full quantification and reporting on the pottery will be undertaken in the Spring of 2015. As part of this process, suitable specialists will be consulted for their opinions on the identification and dating of the ceramics recovered in 2014. This information will be included in the report on the forthcoming excavations at Price's Pottery, currently scheduled for June 2015.

6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 6.1 Particular thanks are due to the staff of Elfed High School, including Rosemary Jones, the Head teacher, and Sue Woosey, the Head of Humanities, for their support throughout and permission to carry out the work, also the various students who took part, notably Connor Beattie and Chloe Jones from Elfed High School and Jacinth Kilmartin of Bradford University.
- 6.2 All of CPAT's work on the Buckley pottery industry has benefitted greatly from the knowledge, help and advice provided by Peter Davey and Christine Longworth. The writers would also like to thank them for examining the pottery recovered from the excavation. Further insights into local industry were provided by Paul Davies of the Buckley Society and Emma Preece, a local potter, whose support for the educational element of the project was invaluable.
- 6.3 The writers would also like to thank Cadw for funding the work and Sophie Watson, their colleague at CPAT, for her help with all aspects of the project and for contributions to the report.

7 REFERENCES

7.1 Published sources

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7.2 Cartographic sources

1757 Lordship of Ewloe map. Flintshire Record Office D/GW/651

1757 Lordship of Ewloe schedule (to FRO D/GW/651). Flintshire Record Office D/GW/652

1780 (circa) Ewloe Estate maps. Flintshire Record Office D/GW/671 and 674

1780 (circa) Ewloe Estate maps schedule. Flintshire Record Office MF3

1884 Ordnance Survey 1st edition 1:2500 map, Flintshire 14.5

1899 Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 1:2500 map, Flintshire 14.5

1912 Ordnance Survey 3rd edition 1:2500 map, Flintshire 14.5

APPENDIX 1**SITE ARCHIVE**

62 digital photographs, CPAT Film No 3853
 312 digital photographs, CPAT Film No 3918
 Photographic catalogue
 19 context description forms
 2 A1 site drawings, 1 A3 site drawing
 Context register
 Drawings register
 Correspondence

Digital data

Location plan of excavation - elfed.dxf.

Contexts Register

Context	Type	Comment
1	Layer of soil	Topsoil
2	Layer of soil	Post-dates 1970s landscaping
3	Gully	Drainage channel ?
4	Layer of fill	Fill of gully 3
5	Layer of coal	Contemporary with the pottery ?
6	Layer of soil	Contemporary with the pottery ?
7	Layer of coal	Contemporary with the pottery ?
8	Layer of soil and stone	Kiln debris ?
9	Natural subsoil	
10	Layer of soil	Disturbed, contemporary with 1970s landscaping
11	Layer of soil	Clay, includes possible kiln debris
12	Layer of soil	Lump of clay - intended for pottery manufacture but unused ?
13	Layer of soil	Earliest artificial deposit in the excavation
14	Layer of soil and stone	Kiln debris ?
15	Layer of coal	Contemporary with the pottery ?
16	Layer of soil	Contemporary with the pottery ?
17	Layer of soil	Post-dates 1970s landscaping
18	Layer of soil and stone	Kiln debris ?
19	Natural subsoil	

Drawings Register

No	Scale	Contexts	Comment
1	1:20		A1: Trench plan and section
2	1:20		A1: Ground profiles
3	1:20		A3: Overlay for sondages (plan)

APPENDIX 2**Feedback from the Community Outreach**

The excavation of Price's Pottery on the Elfed High School field by the Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust has been a highly valuable experience for many people on many levels:

- The excavation project has involved young people on work experience, staff and students from Elfed High School, primary school pupils and staff, members of the Buckley Historical Society and former students of the school.
- The project has strengthened links between the schools involved and their community, particularly through the link with the Buckley Historical Society.
- Young people have increased their awareness of the history of their town and, in some cases their own family history, through participating in the excavation.
- Intergenerational links have been strengthened as students have discussed their findings and the town's history with members of the community.
- Students and primary school pupils have a better understanding about the role of an archaeologist and the skills required for this work. They have developed their own practical, data handling and problem solving skills through taking part in the project.
- The involvement of a young ceramicist and former student of Elfed High School has generated interest, linking the creativity of this young designer with her town's history and illustrating to the current students the potential for them to develop the skills for which the town was so well known.

We are very conscious of the fact that there is enormous potential for this project to be extended, with a further excavation of the site and development of the aspects identified above. We very much hope that this is the beginning of a long lasting partnership with the Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust, bringing life into our past and promise into our future.

Regards



Rosemary Jones
Headteacher/Pennaeth
Elfed High School/Ysgol Uwchradd Elfed
