

# *A Porcelain factory in Hammersmith?*

*A paper read by Nicholas Panes at Kensington Central Library on 14th December 2013*

Advertisements in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century press have long been used as a fruitful source of material concerning the sale of ceramics. Some ECC members have published extensive surveys of the press highlighting news articles and advertisements from manufacturers and dealers in china and earthenware. Nancy Valpy published six such papers between 1982 and 1994<sup>1</sup> and Martin Pulver<sup>2</sup> and Jonathan Gray<sup>3</sup> both published papers based on newspaper material, the latter concerning the possibility of a porcelain factory in the state of Georgia in America.

Given the minute sample of extant porcelain from American 18<sup>th</sup>-century factories it seems probable that the documentary history of Bonnin and Morris of Philadelphia exceeds the actual body of pots by a considerable margin, especially as the birth, short life, and death of that factory seemed to be played out in the popular press.

This paper concerns a single advertisement, placed in the *Morning Chronicle* on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1800. Although this proposition needs to be tested carefully, it appears to mark the death of a small London china manufactory for which no records exist.

When considering any advertisement from the Georgian period it is necessary always to be aware of the powers of exaggeration of contemporary advertisers, which knew no bounds. Caution should be exercised with advertisers who claimed to be manufacturing when actually they were simply decorating wares. Consequently the advertisement (1) must be scrutinised with some care.

The missing 't' in the last word of the advertisement is a portent of the unfinished nature of this story based on the research to date.

What follows is an attempt to glean what is possible from this brief advertisement to see if any conclusions can be drawn. The question already posed about whether this is really a manufacturer or simply a 'puff' is at least partly answered by the presence of saggars on the premises. The use of saggars is appropriate for a biscuit firing and for a glost firing in which glaze or under glaze decoration is applied to a biscuit piece. Whilst glost firings are used by modern studio potters to fire pots and their coloured glazes together, in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century they would be the second firing following on from the biscuit firing.

As buying-in unglazed biscuit wares seems an unlikely commercial arrangement the balance of probability does indeed point to manufacturing taking place on the Hammersmith site. An enamel kiln would not suit for a glost firing (being probably too small), so using a kiln capable of a biscuit firing only

**To China Manufacturers, Figure Makers, Preparers of Plaister of Paris, Carpenters, Brokers, Dealers in Old Iron, and others. MISCELLANEOUS ARTICLES, and a BROWN MARE, at the CHINA MANUFACTORY, West end of Hammersmith, near the White Hart.—By Mr. SCOTT, On the above Premises, on Thursday next, at twelve o'clock, THE remaining STOCK, UTENSILS in TRADE, and other EFFECTS, of a CHINA MANUFACTURER; comprising a great quantity of plaister of Paris in lumps and powder, saggars and tiles for kilns, sundry unfinished china ware in time-piece frames and glass covers, flower pots, cups, saucers, &c. sundry plaister figures, turning and work benches, presses, doors, shelves, arm chairs, garden seats, tables, mahogany desk and enclosure, a quantity of useful and old iron, lead pipes, glazed fathes, cucumber frames, hand glasses, &c. &c. To be viewed till the Sale. Catalogues had on the Premises; at the Cock and Magpie, in Hammersmith; and of Mr. Scott, Auctioneer and Appraiser, Warwick-stree.**

1. *Morning Chronicle* of 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1800

for applying a glaze would seem uneconomic. Further evidence of manufacture is supplied by the presence of plaster of Paris and turning benches, although it is possible that plaster of paris figures might have been a product in their own right. Plaster shops were popular in England at the time and these figures were often decorated to look as if they were ceramic.

On balance, it seems likely that this is a smallish manufacturer. Otherwise it is necessary to conclude that in Hammersmith various materials and tools for the manufacture of ceramics had been brought together for the purposes of the sale. Given the importance of Staffordshire by 1800 surely if such a group of objects was brought together for the purposes of a sale then why was it held in London?

The sale of contents out of the factory would have been the final act in the process of winding the business up, presumably preceded by selling some of the more marketable contents at an earlier stage. The unbalanced nature of the remaining stock hints at this. Flower pots no doubt could be sold by themselves, but cups and saucers imply the production of tea or coffee services. However, not a teapot, coffee pot, bowl, or

creamer are to be seen in the list. It seems likely that finished tea-sets and any other finished products were disposed of before the date of this sale.

More intriguing is the reference to one product that may distinguish this factory from its peers, namely 'time-piece frames and glass covers'. Such products are quite unusual. One example illustrated was advertised on eBay during 2013. (2) This appears to be of later date, around 1840, and probably continental. Although apparently English, the rococo revival piece (3) is also of a date later than our advertisement. Photographs of examples dating from around 1800 have not been identified for this paper so it is not known what they looked like. Enquiries made of clock experts did not yield any results so it appears that any hope of identifying the maker through these channels has receded.

It may also be useful to consider the location of this manufactory. The advertisement refers to it as at the 'West end of Hammersmith, near the White Hart'. Just how far West can only be determined by reference to the White Hart itself. A coaching Inn called the White Hart is first recorded in Hammersmith in the



2. A timepiece frame, continental, c 1840 Image courtesy of an eBay seller



3. An English rococo timepiece frame c 1840. Image courtesy of Andrew Dando

early 18<sup>th</sup> century in a list of Ministers working at the Congregational Chapel.<sup>4</sup>

Oct. 13, 1706, collected on the brief for Torrington, at a meeting of Protestant Dissenters, held at the White Hart, Hammersmith, thirteen shillings and sixpence. Signed, Samuel Evans, Minister

Trade directory entries exist for the inn from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century so unless the location was changed it was at 357 to 359 King Street, renumbered in 1921 to 383/5. It has been possible to find a photograph of the present building on the site which dates from late Victorian times and which remained a public house (latterly the Hart) until 2013. (4) An aerial view shows that all the land surrounding the site is intensely developed so it seems unlikely that an opportunity for any archaeology will arise. (5)

Having established a tentative location for the China Manufactory some effort was made to see if old maps provide any clues to the buildings. A 1915 map (6) of old buildings shows nothing surviving in the immediate area. Older maps of sufficient scale to show

individual buildings were not located although the Roque map of 1746 showed a few scattered buildings in the area. (7) The 1915 map confirms that the location was not, as might be expected for a pottery, adjacent to the river and perhaps it could not have been as the prestigious houses on the river would have been adversely affected. (8) Writing in 1813 Thomas Faulkner<sup>5</sup> said:

Hammersmith is of no great importance as a manufacturing place probably due to its vicinity to London, and to its principal frontage being occupied by Gentlemen's houses which constitute the Upper and Lower Malls...

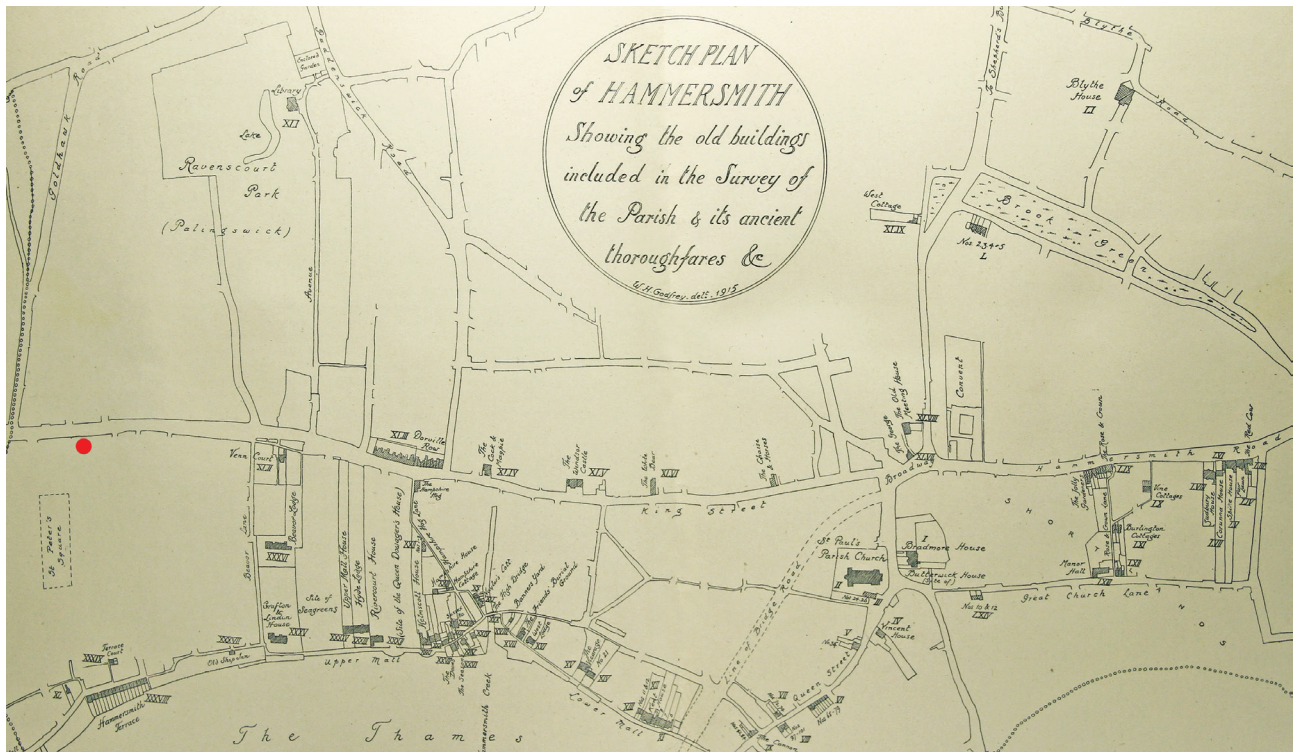
One such Gentleman was George Scott, a member of a prominent Hammersmith family who were to own much land in the south of Hammersmith. This included some of the brick making land in the area. It is interesting to speculate whether this was the Mr Scott (who would have only been aged 20 at the time) administering the auction for the sale of the pottery.



4. White Hart at 383 King St, Hammersmith

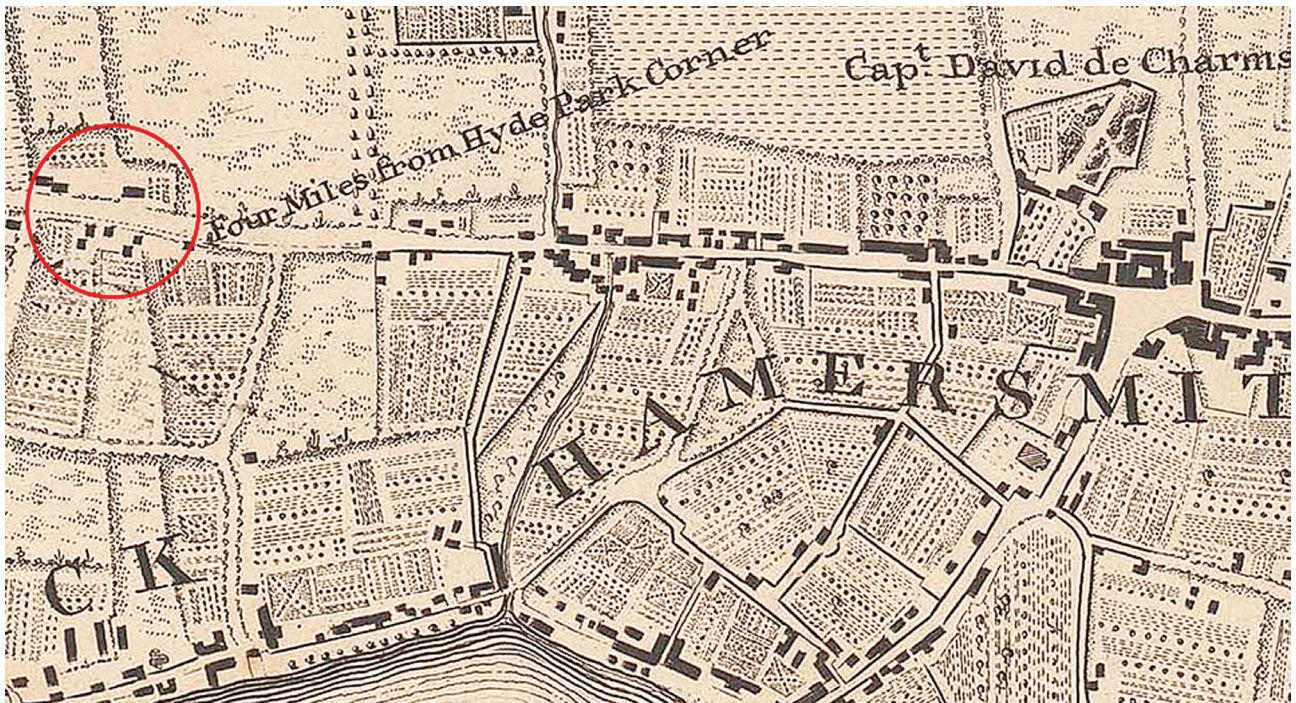


5. White Hart 383 King St Hammersmith.  
Image courtesy of Google Earth

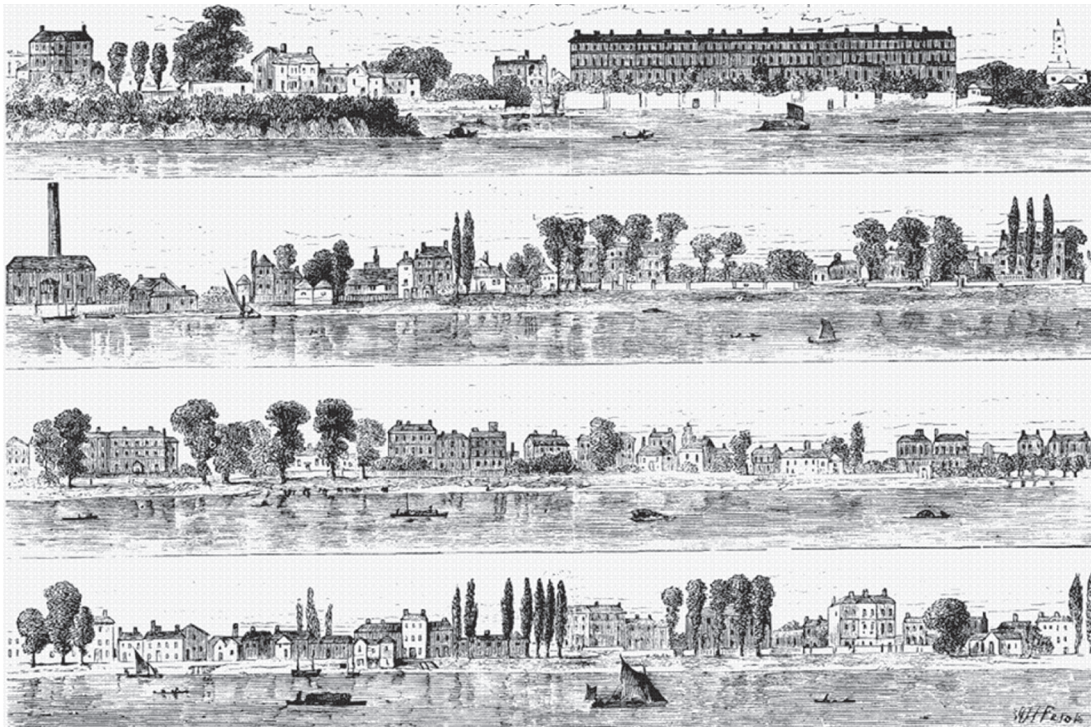


6. 1915 map of old buildings by W H Godfrey





7. The Roque map of 1746 showing a few buildings at the west end of Hammersmith



8. The river at Hammersmith c 1800. Image from Edward Walford's *Old and new London a narrative of its history, its people, and its places. The city, ancient and modern*, Volume 6



The absence of river frontage was not critical to the possible location of this pottery. Further to the East was the Hammersmith Creek (an outflow of the Stamford Brook) which cut northwards from the River Thames and ran in a brick culvert under King Street.<sup>6</sup> This is present on 18<sup>th</sup>-century maps and was still visible above ground in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. (9) It would have afforded an easy way to move raw materials and finished products to and from the river.

Further research into land ownership around the area of the White Hart yielded one interesting but perhaps coincidental piece of information. In 1842, some 42 years after these events, George Scott owned a house and land described as adjoining the White Hart. This is recorded in the following Land Tax Redemption by George Scott which is in the Hammersmith and Fulham archives:

Certificate of the contract for the  
Redemption of land tax of 8s 8d

1. Edward Saurin, esq.,  
Henry Seymour, esq., Commissioners  
for the redemption of Land Tax
2. George Scott, Ravenscourt,  
Hammersmith, esq.

Hammersmith: home and land adjoining  
the White Hart PH measuring 40 ft. x  
53 ft., lately occupied by Mr. Honor:  
2 pieces of land, formerly waste,  
(3 r. 29 p. total) opposite Ravenscourt  
House, divided by the road leading from  
Webbs Lane to Starch Green

In conclusion, this tantalising snippet from the press suggests the possibility of a 'china manufactory' in Hammersmith during the very late 18<sup>th</sup> century. This manufactory used turning benches to make its wares and saggars to fire them. Its much depleted stock included teacups and saucers and ceramic timepiece frames, but this cannot have been the full product range.



9. An old photograph of the Hammersmith Creek

Just as this paper was ready to be presented, an article by Geoffrey Godden appeared<sup>7</sup> which noted an advertisement for a sale in Lewes in July 1799 of:

a large quantity of elegant China, consisting of complete tea and coffee services, dessert services, &c. &c. All of the newest patterns of the very best burnished gold, as also various other sets of all colours, dishes, bowls, basens, mugs, cups and saucers, coffee cups with and without saucers. The whole of which are lotted suitable for families and may be viewed two days preceding the sale.

Godden speculated from the description of the sale that this appeared to be the extensive stock of a manufactory, but could not say which one. So he had found stocks of wares in the South of England in 1799 and was looking for a manufacturer. On the other hand this paper describes a manufactory in 1800 without wares. Probably a coincidence but who knows?

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Valpy, Nancy, 'Extracts from eighteenth century London newspapers, *ECC Transactions*, Vol 11, Pt 2 (1982) for the first of these

<sup>2</sup> Pulver, Martin, 'A 19th century newspaper's description of the Potteries' trade', *ECC Transactions*, Vol 13. Pt 2 (1988)

<sup>3</sup> Gray, Jonathan, 'American porcelain in 1764 English newspapers', *ECC Transactions*, Vol 22 (2011)

<sup>4</sup> Faulkner, Thomas, *The history and antiquities of the parish of Hammersmith*, London, 1839, p 256

<sup>5</sup> Faulkner, Thomas, *A historical and topographical account of Fulham including the hamlet of Hammersmith*, London, 1813

<sup>6</sup> Greater London historic environment record No. MLO74558, [www.heritagegateway.org.uk](http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk)

<sup>7</sup> Godden, Geoffrey, '*Late Again!*', Northern Ceramic Society Newsletter No 172, December 2013.