

2. Observations on the site of the Moss Pottery,
Prescot, 1978 (Site 1).

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During the 1978 Survey a small contractor's excavation was discovered just north of the main stand of Prescot Football Club (Fig. 1.3), dug apparently for the construction of a new changing room for the players which would form a northerly extension of the stand. It was possible to spend only one day (18th June) investigating this area as completion of the Survey was a priority.

The contractor's excavation consisted of a pair of roughly parallel construction trenches (A and B) extending from the base of the stand to a distance of 9.9m, with a third trench (C) linking them at the northern end and parallel to the present northern end of the stand. Trench A, the more easterly, was between 0.4m and 0.5m wide and up to 0.6m deep below the base of the stand. Trench B was between 2.6m and 2.9m wide and up to 3.0m deep. Trench C was 1.9m wide and sloped steeply from 0.5m deep at its eastern end to 2.7m at the west. These three trenches left a more or less rectangular island unexcavated between them.

In the time available it was found possible to record the position of the three trenches (above), to clean up the deepest section (Trench B, west face) and record it and to excavate a small amount of material from each layer visible in the section so that a representative sample of artifacts could be collected. The section was divided into 6 more or less horizontal layers as follows (from top to bottom):

6. Loose clay and artifacts on the surface deposited by contractors.
5. 0.0m-1.0m: Clay, pottery, kiln debris poorly sorted.
4. 1.0m-1.15m: Burnt, orange clay containing compacted pottery wasters.
3. 1.15m-2.15m: Fragments of shale, clay and loose stones; no artifacts.
2. 2.15m-2.6m: Loose brown clay with some sand; pottery and kiln debris.
1. 2.6m-2.9m: Loose brown clay with some sand. The upper 0.09m was much more compacted. No artifacts.

The numbers of sherds from the excavated part of the section, which was 9.2m north of the base of the stand, were as follows:

<u>Pottery</u>	<u>Context</u>				<u>Total</u>
	<u>6</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>2</u>	
Black-glazed red earthenware*	7	16	11	23	57
Self-coloured red earthenware	2	9	-	5	16
Mottled red earthenware				1	1
Brown glazed red earthenware				1	1
Yellow slipped red earthenware		2			2
Brown salt glazed stoneware*	19	38	-	-	57
Other stonewares			2		2
"China"		1			1
Clay pipe stems				1	1

N.B. * indicates the presence of wasters.

Kiln Furniture, etc.

Saggars (earthenware)	1				1
Saggars (salt glazed stoneware)		7	2		9
Separators (earthenware)	2	19	24	1	46
Separators (salt glazed stoneware)	1				1
Stilts/bars (red earthenware)	1	1	1		3
Glazed fire-bricks; fired clay lumps			4		4
Biscuit red earthenware		37	77	6	120
Moulded fire-brick	1				1
Glass		4			4

Discussion

The material and artifacts discovered in 1978 are consistent with a series of levelled waster tips which had been deposited on the moss a short distance to the north of the pottery shown on the 1848 map (Davey 1978a, 56). The finds establish the production of black-glazed red-bodied earthenware and salt glazed stoneware at the Moss Pottery at some time during the first half of the nineteenth century. Although only one sherd of a black-glazed fine ware, probably a cup, was found, the occurrence of saggars

material does establish that some of this type of vessel was being produced at the pottery alongside the ubiquitous large storage vessels. Salt glazed stoneware production consisted largely of flagons, of a type known from other centres (e.g. Buckley; cf. Davey 1975, no. 81). On the basis of analogies with other finds from Prescott and the kiln excavations in Rainford the mottled and self-coloured earthenwares found in small quantities in the Trench B section are very likely to have been local products, but there was no direct evidence of production on the site. The large quantities of biscuit earthenware recovered in the excavation shows that by the early 19th century the two stage firing process, foreign to the "country" potteries in the region, had been adopted in Prescott and suggest an industrial scale of production.

Finds and notes have been deposited in the Merseyside County Museums. The photographs remain in the possession of the writer.

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