**Pottery**

**The medieval industry**

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Leafield was an important centre for the production of country pottery, but the industry was probably established here very much earlier. The raw materials for pottery manufacture were all available on the spot -clay from the deposits close to the surface round the perimeter of the village, water with which to mix it from the village pond and wood for the firing from Wychwood Forest.

The medieval evidence is all circumstantial and the site of the kiln, if there was one, is unknown, though it may have been at Potter's Hill to the south west of the village near Langley. The inhabitants of Leafield in 1272 included Richard le Potter and Nicholas le Potter, though we do not know where they lived. Later, in 1349, Thomas de Langley, the Lord of the Manor, is recorded as having dug a clay pit.

We do not know what this local pottery would have looked like but mediaeval earthenware usually has a coarse open texture and is often badly fired; broken pieces frequently look as if they have several layers, with a black, burnt layer sandwiched in the middle. Green and yellow lead glazes were particularly popular.

**Field Town Chaney**

Much more is known about the type of pottery made in Leafield from the eighteenth century until earlier this century. It was known locally as "Field Town Chaney" and was crude, everyday earthenware, mainly for use in the kitchen and dairy. The types of vessel made included jugs, dishes, pancheons and various types of pots and crocks. Some examples are on display in the Oxfordshire Museum, Woodstock and Leafield School also has an example.

Broken pieces can frequently be found in gardens in the area; they look rather like pieces of flower-pot but are generally thicker and the texture is coarser. The glaze is rich and treacly; the colour ranges from light orangey-brown to dark chocolate-brown. They have little, if any, other decoration; sometimes the edge of a dish will be pinched into a wavy pattern - in the same way as many cooks finish off pie crust edging, sometimes, particularly towards the base of a jug, there will be a series of narrow ridges, and sometimes there will be a ring of indented 'dog-tooth' decoration, but mostly Leafield ware is quite plain.

There is an iron-stand in the British Museum said to have been made in Leafield that has slip decoration showing a star in a circle. This sort of decoration does not appear on any other known piece of Field Town China, but shards with green and yellow slip decoration have been found in the village.

**The process**

The clay for the Leafield potteries was dug by hand using a clay spade, made of wood or iron with its centre removed to reduce sticking. The clay was dug from the pits in winter and stored in the open, where it was regularly turned by hand to allow wind and frost action to work on it. To bring the clay to a dough-like consistency, it was wetted and mixed using a pug-mill. The Leafield pug-mill was most unusual in that it was powered by a horse. The clay was then fashioned by hand on a wheel.

**The sites of the potteries**

There are three sites in Leafield where pottery was made at different times over the past two hundred years or so. The first of these was the Pot House at the junction of Witney Lane and Buttermilk Lane. The first potter known to have owned this property was Solomon Goffe, who died in 1753, but it was probably a pottery earlier than that. An earlier mention of this house, then known as the Potash House, was made in the 1679 will of Thomas Ashworth, though neither the will nor his related inventory contains any indication that he was a potter by trade. Solomon Goffe left the Pot House to his second son, John, though it was his elder son, also named Solomon, who carried on the pottery trade. He did not just make household pottery, however; in 1761 he advertised in Jackson's Oxford Journal his "earthen for drying malt, or Oats, for Oat-meal, or Bark for Tanners". Solomon died in 1797.

In the nineteenth century the pottery trade was carried on by the Williams family, who came from Llanelly in Wales. They started off in the Witney Lane pottery but by 1861 John Williams had moved to Chimney End, on a site behind the Fox Inn. The pottery on this site was probably first established by yet another family, the Franklins, who were also brick makers. When John Williams took over at Chimney End, the Franklins moved to the Crown Pottery, just beyond the old Baptist chapel on the south side of the Shipton Road. The Williams family continued in business until 1895, when the pottery was taken over by the Milton builders, Groves, who used the site for makings bricks, tiles and drainpipes until about 1920.

Now there is no pottery in Leafield and even the Potters Arms Public House had its name changed in the early 1980s and was called the Spindleberry.

**Present Day - Janey Petterson**

I have been making pottery in my garage at The Old Manse for about the last 3 years on and of, with the emphasis on off as I do many other things, mainly photographic.

I use mainly stoneware for my  creations, but have made a few dishes from the Oxford clay in the garden, have mixed this clay with other clays to make dishes and use the same clay as an effective glaze from time to time on the stoneware.

Visitors are welcome to come and have a look at Pots of Glory.

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