

The Curious Case of the Deddington Jugs

Hilary Smith

After the end of WW2, Ron and Daphne Canning returned to live in Deddington.¹ During their absence the thatched roof of the family home in Horsefair had collapsed, leaving the building derelict. The house had originally been an inn, the Three Horseshoes. In 1851 when the Great Exhibition opened at Crystal Palace that name changed to Exhibition Inn. In 1915 the licence ceased and when the property was sold to Joseph Canning in 1922, the name reverted to Three Horseshoes; in 2014 it is Rothbury House.



(Above left) *Exhibition Inn, pre-WWI*; (above right) *the Three Horseshoes before the collapse of the thatched roof*; (left) *After the collapse: 'The former Exhibition Inn in Horse Fair, now a private house, was rebuilt in 1948–9 after falling into a serious state of decay.'* (Colvin, 1963)²

At the end of the 20th century

The Cannings decided to sell, so Ron searched the rubble for any items left behind. To his surprise he came across the jugs shown in this article. Later they were accidentally broken so Daphne glued the pieces together.



¹ For stories of the Cannings' wartime experiences, see Michael Allbrook and Rob Forsyth, *A Parish at War* (Oxon Publishing Ltd, 2011).

² H.M. Colvin, *A History of Deddington Oxfordshire* (London: SPCK, 1963).



Both pots are earthenware and roughly made. The taller one (left), 21.5cm, is covered in a greenish yellow glaze with a small splash of green near the base. Rough inscriptions say 'Example of Jugs dug up in Oxford 1838' and 'At present in the Ashmolean Museum'.

The smaller one (below, left and right), 18cm, inscribed '*Example of Ale Pot 1621*' is glazed in a deeper yellow with a brown inside. The etched lines encircling the neck are dark brown and there are roughly drawn plant tendrils on one side.



This discovery raised questions. Where had they come from? How old were they? What does 'example' imply? Was there a link between them and the fact that the house had once been an inn? Could these jugs have been part of a 'copy-cat' exhibition at the inn?

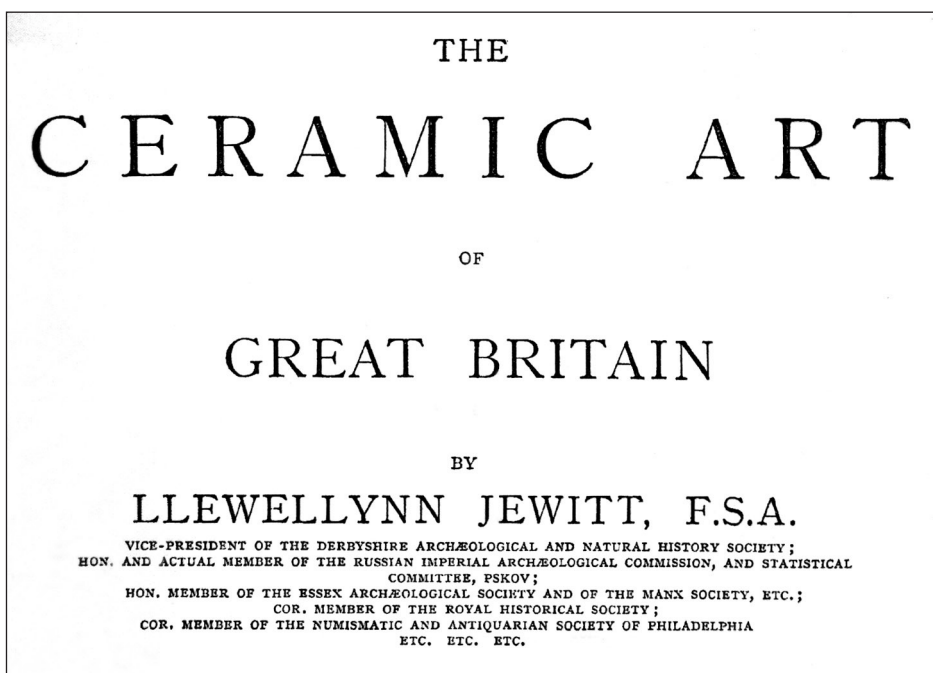
The discovery of another jug, now in the Ashmolean museum (see below), gives us pointers to help answer these questions. This third jug is in the same rough style as the two from Deddington and bears the same characteristic inscription: '*Example o [sic] Jug found in Oxford/in the year 1838*'. The glaze is the same green as the splash on the taller pot. Such similarity suggests that all three were



made by one person and the clue to who this was is 'Jones/Bridgend' scratched on the underside of the third jug. This was a potter, Evan Jones (1843–1912), who worked at Claypits Pottery in Bridgend, Wales.

How did a potter in Wales come to make these jugs? The answer is found in *The Ceramic Art of Great Britain*, published in 1878.³ The author Llewellynn Jewitt calls it 'A history of the ancient and modern pottery and porcelain works of the Kingdom and their productions of every class'. The text is accompanied by nearly 2,000 illustrations from the engravings he made on a research tour of the United Kingdom.

3



Jewitt's travels took in the old Ashmolean Museum (now the Museum of History and Science) where he made engravings of several medieval pots on display. They included a group of two small bottles and two larger baluster jugs, probably used as wine pitchers, which were discovered in 1838 buried in Oxford. This burial, close to Trinity College at the boundary with Balliol, was described as 'a purposeful placed deposit.' One had a coin found inside it.



Fig. 290.—London.

Figs. 291 to 294.—Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

Fig. 295.—London.

Evan Jones must have come across a copy of *The Ceramic Art of Great Britain* and, using Jewitt's illustrations, made his own imitation jugs. He wrote the word 'example' on his pottery with the date '1838', the year of the discovery in Oxford. The number '291' on the base of his tallest jug corresponds to the illustration in

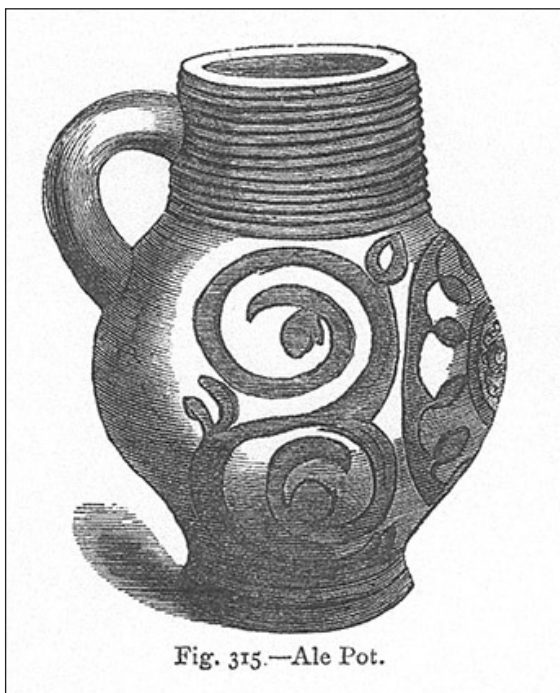


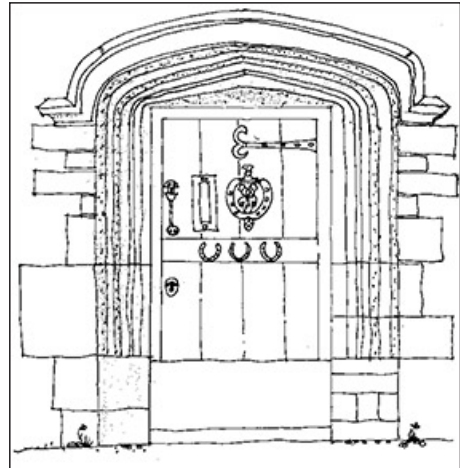
Fig. 315.—Ale Pot.

Jewitt's book. The smaller, rounded jug, bearing the date 1621, was probably based on another of Jewitt's illustrations of a typical medieval ale pot (see Fig. 315). We cannot say exactly when the jugs were made since we do not know how long it took for Jewitt's book to reach Wales, but as Jones died in 1912 it is likely they date from the late 19th century.

It is heartening to reflect that at the time of the Arts and Crafts movement a potter in Wales was working with a different focus. Using Jewitt's illustrations Jones made rough and ready pottery in

the medieval style popular at that time. We might say that he had spotted a gap in the market. The jugs discovered here and the one in the Ashmolean have, by some quirk of fate, found their way back to the area where the original pots were first discovered.

With the expansion of the railways Victorian leisure travellers, like today's tourists, might have wanted to buy souvenirs. Perhaps someone familiar with Oxford or Deddington had spotted the jugs on a visit to Wales and brought them home. Were they then put on show in the Exhibition Inn? Nothing has come to light in the inn's deeds or in the Rev Cotton Risley's diaries to indicate that there had ever been any formal exhibition. However the presence of the third jug suggests that there could have been other copies. In this case we might imagine a few jugs and a pot displayed as curiosities to entertain the customers of Exhibition Inn. Had he known about these pots and where they were discovered, Llewellynn Jewitt might have felt heartened that in a small way he had achieved his aim of raising awareness of the history of British ceramics. Claypits is now in the hands of Leonard Edger (www.leonardedger.wordpress.com).



The doorway of the Three Horseshoes house as it appeared in the Millennium publication, Discovering Deddington (Deddington Map Group, 2000)

Acknowledgements

My sincere thanks to the following for their invaluable help: Professor Timothy Wilson and Dr Standley's team from the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford; Stan and Lesley Nelson, owners of Rothbury House in 2014; Bill and Peter Mace, sons of Dr and Mrs Mace who lived in the Three Horseshoes in the 1980s; and especially Daphne Canning who started it all. Images of the Deddington jugs by John Plumbe.