ISSN 0960-7870

BRITISH BRICK
SOCIETY

INFORMATION 90

BRICKLAYING ISSUE

FEBRUARY 2003

OFFICERS OF THE BRITICH BRICK SOCIETY

Chairman Terence Paul Smith BA, MA, MLitt
E-mail: tsmith@museumoflondon.org.uk
Flat 6
6 Hart Hill Drive
LUTON
Bedfordshire LU2 0AX

Honorary Secretary Michael Hammett ARIBA
Tel: 01494-520299
E-mail michael@mhammett.freeserve.co.uk
9 Bailey Close
HIGH WYCOMBE
Buckinghamshire HP13 6QA

Membership Secretary Keith Sanders
(Receives all direct subscriptions, £10-00 per annum)*
Tel: 01732-358383
E-mail lapwing@tesco.uk
24 Woodside Road
TONBRIDGE
Kent TN9 2PD

Editor of *BBS Information* David H. Kennett BA, MSc
(*Receives all articles and items for* BBS Information)
Tel: 01608-664039
E-mail: davidkennett@stratford.ac.uk (term-time only)
7 Watery Lane
SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR
Warwickshire CV36 4BE

Honorary Treasurer Mrs W. Ann Los
(For matters concerning annual accounts, expenses)
and **Bibliographer**
"Peran"
30 Plaxton Bridge
Woodmansey
BEVERLEY
East Yorkshire HU17 0RT

Publications Officer Mr John Tibbles
Barff House
5 Ash Grove
Sigglesthorne
HULL
East Yorkshire HU11 5QE

OFFICERS OF THE BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION : BRICK SECTION*

Chairman Terence Paul Smith Address as above

Honorary Secretary Michael Hammett Address as above

* *Members of the BAA may join its brick section and, as such, will be eligible for affiliation to the British Brick Society at a reduced annual subscription of £7-00 per annum; for BAA Life Members, the subscription is waivered: they should inform the BAA:BS secretary of their interest so that they can be included in the Membership List. Telephone numbers of members would be helpful for contact purposes, but will* **not** *be included in the Membership List.*

British Brick Society web site:

http://www.britishbricksoc.free-online.co.uk/index.htm

CONTENTS

Editorial: *Equivalent VIII* Revisited 2

Introit: The Noble Art of Bricklaying 5

A Brush or a Bundle of Laths? A Problem Concerning the Arms of the Worshipful Company of Tylers and Bricklayers of the City of London
Terence Paul Smith 10

"The Wittiest Fellow of a Bricklayer in England": a Note on Ben Jonson
Terence Paul Smith 12

The Duties of a Seventeenth-Century Bricklayer
James W.P. Campbell 14

Venturus Mandey: No Ordinary Bricklayer
Terence Paul Smith 16

An Unusual Brick Bond in the USA 19

Robert Tatersal: an Eighteenth-Century Bricklaying Poet
James W.P. Campbell 20

The Riddle of the Skewbacks
Roger Kennell 27

Cover illustration

Dutch tin-glazed wall tile (133 × 134 × 14 mm), blue on white, second quarter of the seventeenth century, showing a bricklayer at work. Note the mortar tub and the line attached to a stout wooden peg knocked into the ground. The apron worn by the bricklayer was a common form of protection in the days before overalls; it was probably made of sheepskin. The straight sides of the trowel are close to those of its modern equivalent rather than to the curved sides of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century examples illustrated in English manuals. The bricklayer holds the trowel in his left hand: it may be, of course, that he is intended to be depicted as left-handed, though it seems likely that the transfer (Dutch *spons*) was reversed when transferring the drawing to the biscuit-fired tile. The corner motifs are of the so-called 'ox-head' type. The nail-holes in the four corners of the tile result from the use of a wooden template which acted as a guide when trimming the freshly demoulded tile: small nails knocked into the underside of the template pressed into the tile surface and thus prevented the template from slipping as a knife was run along its edges; no attempt was made to fill the holes after removal of the template.

EDITORIAL: *EQUIVALENT VIII* REVISITED

On a visit to Tate Modern on London's Bankside, some while ago now, I stumbled – almost, but not quite, literally – on Carl Andre's *Equivalent VIII*, an oblong arrangement (2·29 × 0·69 × 0·13 m) of 120 firebricks in two courses, each of 6 × 10 bricks (fig. 1). Andre (born 1935) is one of the USA's most prominent Minimalist artists and one of the more controversial. The somewhat gnomic title of *Equivalent VIII*, first assembled in 1966, is explained by the fact that originally it was one of eight pieces, each constructed from the same number of similar bricks but in differently shaped rectangular blocks. All were thus *equivalent* whilst showing differences one from another. (For a photograph of the other seven arrangements: M. Collings, *This Is Modern Art*, London, 1999, p.154.) Whatever significance this juxtaposition may have had is, of course, lost in the single piece squatting on the floor in Tate Modern.

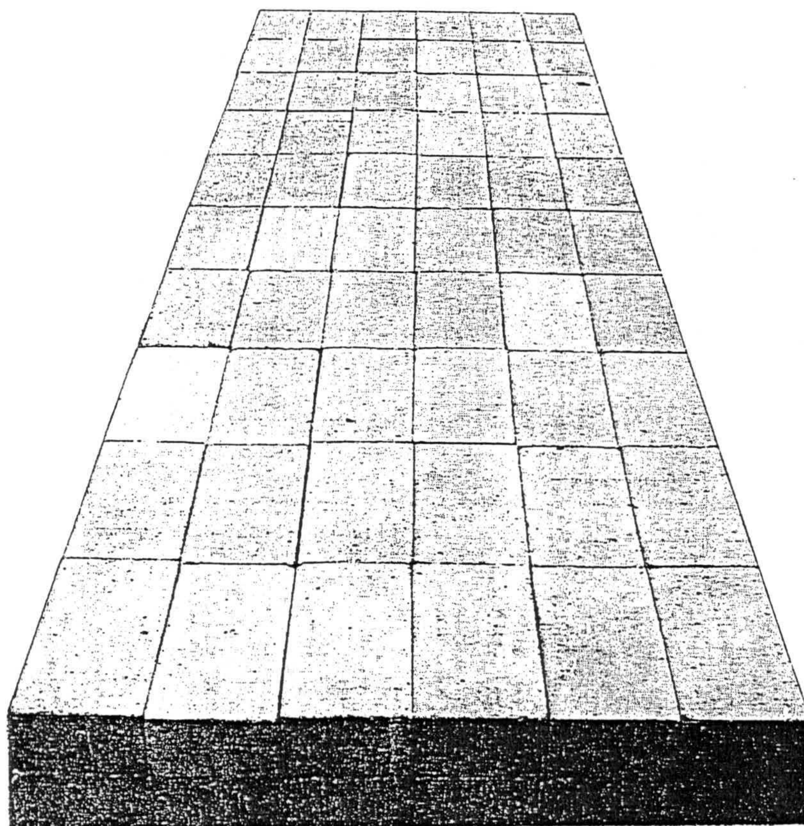


Fig. 1 Carl Andre: *Equivalent VIII*

When the work was purchased, for an unspecified sum, by what was then simply the Tate Gallery on Millbank in the 1970s, there was a furore in the British press – broadsheet and tabloid alike – and the public shared, albeit briefly, in the sense of outrage: why was public money being spent on what was, after all, merely a pile of bricks? Some journalists claimed to see in the work the meaninglessness of Modern Art in general. This, of course, was absurd: not all Modern Art is Minimalist and not all Minimalist art is as 'raw' as this.

But what of Carl Andre and of *Equivalent VIII* in particular? The Tate's own guide (*Tate Modern: the Handbook* London, 2000, p.114), defends the work on the grounds that "when the materials Andre uses [bricks in this particular case] are taken out of their normal context, we begin to look at them rather differently. Where we assume there is sameness, we

find differences." Perhaps: the presence of the work in a gallery does indeed invite us to look at it – that's why it's *there*, after all. But the claimed 'message' seems trite – scarcely worth the physical effort, some may feel, of assembling 120 bricks and certainly not worth the vast sums for which such works change hands. The *Handbook*'s remarks begin to look a little like an *ex post facto* justification of the gallery's purchase! (There is a nice irony in the present location of *Equivalent VIII*: Herzog & de Meuron's transformation into an art gallery of Sir Giles Gilbert Scott's power station really *does* make us look at the building differently.)

One of the *Handbook*'s writers, Simon Wilson, once guided Jonathan Freedland round Tate Modern's Minimalist collection ('Is Less More?', *The Guardian Saturday Review*, 1 December 2001; I am grateful to David Kennett for the cutting): "above all," he said of *Equivalent VIII*, it is "truth because it doesn't pretend to be anything else [than an arrangement of bricks, presumably]. And, like Shelley [*sic*] says, truth is beauty and beauty is truth." It was, of course, Keats in his *Ode on a Grecian Urn* who made the pronouncement, not Shelley; but, more important, it is not at all clear that the poet's words, though fine-sounding, have any real content: the familiar expression *the ugly truth* all too often seems more apposite to human experience. Freedland, beguiled by Wilson's apologetics, turns to Zen for further enlightenment. Whatever its virtues as an aid to meditation, however, the problem with Zen is that it offers logical contradiction in the guise of wisdom: despite what is often urged, the question *What is the sound of one hand clapping?*, for example, is, so I believe, neither profound nor enlightening: and for my own part – perhaps because my undergraduate and postgraduate training was in hard-nosed Anglo-Saxon linguistic philosophy – Bart Simpson's put-down of this familiar *koan* is much to be preferred. (It is difficult to describe this put-down in words – and, in any case, to do so would spoil the fun for those who have not yet seen it.)

Andre himself takes a different tack, describing his own work as *atheistic*, *materialistic*, and *communistic*. Each of us may subscribe to all, some, or none of these positions – though their application by the artist himself does somewhat undermine Simon Wilson's claim that the work "doesn't pretend to be anything else". What is more relevant here is the sheer impotence of a simple arrangement of bricks to express any of them. It is not, after all, difficult to dream up alternative and contrary 'interpretations' of *Equivalent VIII*. What, for example, is distinctively *atheistic* about this particular arrangement of bricks? Might one not see it with equal plausibility as an icon of the oneness, the simplicity of God in, say, Judaism, Christianity, or Islam? Such an understanding would, of course, immediately nullify any claim that the work is essentially *materialistic*. The *communistic* 'meaning' is perhaps a little more convincing – a whole made up of equals; even so, the work *per se* is too lacking in content to suggest such a 'meaning' unequivocally, and requires a *text* to make it clear: we need, in other words, to be *told* that that is its 'meaning'. This lack of content is, of course, a matter of policy in works as Minimalist as this one, and it is that very evisceration which makes it possible to attach to them a variety of discrepant 'meanings'.

The question remains: Is this sort of thing – a simple arrangement of 120 bricks – really *art?* In considering the question, perhaps it is instructive to look at three aspects. First, there is what we may call the *car park aspect*, or, a little more gravely perhaps, the *contextual aspect*, following discussion of this very work by that most level-headed of art historians, the Australian Robert Hughes. "A Rodin in a parking lot," he writes, "is still a misplaced Rodin; *Equivalent VIII* in the same lot is just bricks" (*The Shock of the New*, 2nd edition, London, 1991, p.369; way back in 1976, Bernard Levin writing in *The Times* – I quote from a now yellowing cutting in my possession – said much the same: "... the people at the Tate ... bought a pile of bricks and called it art: *I* call it a pile of bricks; and that is what it is."). It is not difficult to multiply examples along similar lines: a Donatello placed in the hallway as a hatstand is still a misused Donatello: *Equivalent VIII* placed in the garden as a stand for pot plants is – *a stand for pot plants!* Hughes goes on to observe how the work thus depends, for

its status as art, on its context within a gallery. In other words, such a work becomes art – *if* it does – only by being labelled as such: "The paradox of such works is that they stake ... everything on the institutional context for their effect, while claiming the density and singularity of things in the real world." This is a curious state of affairs, one which is manifestly *not* true of more canonical works of art – Hughes's Rodin, for example, or that Donatello in the hallway.

A second aspect may be termed the *DIY aspect*. If I try to reproduce, say, an Epstein sculpture or a Picasso painting, we may be sure that the result will fall far short of the original. There are, of course, a few people capable of such undertakings – the creators of forgeries or of legitimate replicas, like those produced by John Dunthorne of Constable's paintings at the artist's request. But most of us are simply incapable of such activity. It is otherwise with a piece like *Equivalent VIII:* anyone with the use of limbs and eyes – and perhaps even eyes are not *essential* – can reproduce it with ease. Indeed, presumably exactly this is done whenever *Equivalent VIII* needs to be moved – say, from the Tate Gallery (now Tate Britain) to Tate Modern: the work is disassembled and then put together again by someone, or some group, other than Andre himself. (And this raises other questions. When this is done, is care taken to place every brick in the same position relative to every other? If a brick were to go missing during transit and were replaced by a new one, would we still have the same work? Does any of this matter? And if not, does it *matter* that it doesn't matter?) Perhaps there was an awareness of this in the 1970s kerfuffle: after all, an indistinguishable work could have been produced at the cost of just a few pounds by buying ten dozen firebricks and setting them in a similar – an *equivalent!* – arrangement. To have done so would presumably have invited a charge of plagiarism – although that itself sounds odd and unconvincing when what is involved is no more than an oblong arrangement of bricks. Again, we have a curious state of affairs, different from that familiar from more canonical works of art.

A third and final aspect may be termed the *defacing aspect*. If I enter a gallery with a hammer and chip off the nose of a Michelangelo statue then I am clearly defacing it. I may claim that by so doing I am creating a new work of art. (My action, I may say, in familiar jargon, is 'making a statement'.) But it is unlikely that my claim will be taken seriously. If, on the other hand, I use my hammer to break one of the bricks of *Equivalent VIII*, the matter is not so simple: my claim to be creating a new work of art has an at least *prima facie* plausibility wholly lacking in the Michelangelo case. One feels that *if* arranging 120 firebricks can count as art, merely by labelling it as such, then my act of smashing one of the bricks can equally count as art, at least so long as I *call* it such. (In fact, just such a claim was made as a defence when Tracey Emin's notorious unmade bed, shortlisted for the 1999 Turner Prize, was 'defaced'. *Equivalent VIII* was itself 'vandalised' soon after its first appearance at the Tate.) Again, the contrast is with more canonical works of art.

Those who visit Tate Modern and view *Equivalent VIII* may perhaps care to ponder these matters. Alternatively, they may prefer to stay outside the building a little longer and look at some *real* brickwork! Either way, reflection on *Equivalent VIII* provides a not inapposite introduction to the theme of this issue – *bricklaying*.

I am grateful to our regular editor, David Kennett, for allowing me to assume the editor's chair for the issue. The arrangement, apart from giving him a well earned rest, was convenient, since the idea of a themed issue on *bricklaying* was my own and because a number of pieces on the subject – too many by me, I fear – had been submitted. Apart from an introductory essay and an inquiry concerning an unusual brick bond in the USA, the contributions appear in chronological order of subject matter.

TERENCE PAUL SMITH
Guest Editor

INTROIT: THE NOBLE ART OF BRICKLAYING

"Bricklaying is one of the oldest crafts, and brickwork one of the most enduring products of man. It therefore behoves all who follow the craft to aim at being worthy of their great heritage, and to do all in their power to emulate the fine work of their forebears." Thus wrote J.C. Seaward, a lecturer in brickwork at what was then Borough Polytechnic in London, in 1936.[1]

Exactly half a century later, in 1986, the Brick Development Association initiated its scheme of annual awards for bricklaying. Each year, the judges concentrate on the quality of the bricklayers' work in the buildings entered for the competition. The results over the years are a reminder that bricklaying is an extremely demanding skill and that its good or bad execution can help to make or mar the appearance of a building. Some of Louis Sullivan's late bank buildings in the USA, for example, are blemished by the carelessness of their bricklaying, with perpends often failing to range vertically.[2] Sutherland Lyall has drawn attention to the same disfigurement in Sir Giles Gilbert Scott's otherwise admirable Bankside Power Station – now Tate Modern: "instead of rising in neat straight lines ... the pattern of the perpends is like a child's early attempts to draw waves."[3] The new sections of brickwork in Tate Modern, erected as part of the conversion (1996–2000) by Herzog & de Meuron, are, by contrast, much better in this respect.

The last fact is a reminder that the craft of bricklaying has not been lost, although one sometimes hears complaints to the contrary. Michael Hammett has drawn attention to the outstanding work of a young bricklayer, Nick Evans, using a variety of traditional techniques.[4] The craft is greatly encouraged by the Better Brickwork Alliance, set up by the BDA in 1999, as well as by the Guild of Bricklayers and Tilers, founded as long ago as 1932 with "the aims of promoting and maintaining the highest standards of craftsmanship in Brickwork".[5] It is pleasant to reflect that in R.J. (Bob) Baldwin the British Brick Society has a Past President of the Guild – from whom, incidentally, I have filched the title of this essay! Some other members of the British Brick Society are also – and justifiably – proud of their association with the craft, and one of them, Roger Kennell, is a contributor to these pages.

In earlier times, guilds or companies of bricklayers were locally based. That at Beverley, Yorks., for example, claimed in its ordinances of 1596 that the craft – or 'mistery' as it would then have been called – had been organised in the town as far back as 1426.[6] In London, the Worshipful Company of Tylers and Bricklayers received its first charter in 1567, but traced its ancestry back to the time of Richard II, although at first it was a guild of tilers only.[7] The "good men of the mistery of tilers" are referred to in 1477, and applied for self-government of the craft in the late fifteenth and in the early sixteenth centuries. The company "sent two bowmen to keep the City Watch under King Henry VIII. At the opening of the sixteenth century an official list assigns to the Company a customary Livery of 22. In 1513 the Tylers ranked as the 38th Company, and had a place at the Mayor's feast."[8] It was during the early Tudor period – when, significantly, brick first became an important building material in the capital – that the tilers were joined by the bricklayers. In other towns the bricklayers combined with other crafts, for example at Lincoln, where "a charter was granted in 1564 to the tilers, masons, bricklayers, plasterers, pavers, tilemakers, glaziers, limeburners, millers and theckers [thatchers]" – about as heterogeneous a grouping as one could expect to find![9]

Such guilds, as well as being concerned with the quality of brickwork, also acted as a kind of combination of modern benevolent society and trade union. In earlier times there would have been religious affiliations too, and it was presumably in the medieval period that the bricklayers acquired their own patron saint – Saint Stephen.[10] The religious aspect is reflected in the motto of the London Company: 'In God is all our trust, let us never be con-

founded', which appears on a scroll beneath the arms granted in 1569.[11]

The art of bricklaying as we know it began, in Britain, in the later Middle Ages. Earlier, in the Roman period and then, using salvaged Roman bricks, in Anglo-Saxon and Norman times, the practice was different: apart from the diminutive bricks used for *opus spicatum* paving, even the smallest of Roman bricks – the *bessales*, averaging about 8 inches square – would have required both hands to lift them and to put them in place; the largest would have needed two men to lift and position them. Medieval 'great bricks' too would have required both hands. But they were not common and were soon entirely superseded by their rivals – the more conveniently sized 'statute bricks' which could comfortably be held between the fingers and the thumb of one hand, thus freeing the other to wield the trowel. Henceforth, the increased speed of brickwork depended upon this co-ordination of the two hands, each performing its separate function. This required much skill, and one should be wary of accepting the late John Harvey's dismissive remark that in the late Middle Ages, "[s]tonelayers, who had usually been at least partially qualified hewers and carvers of stone, became bricklayers *and nothing more*".[12] Bricks themselves, after all, were not infrequently cut to various, sometimes complex, shapes.

In Britain there have perhaps been two periods of particularly excellent bricklaying: first, the seventeenth and earlier eighteenth centuries, when the laying of cut and rubbed bricks in lime putty (gauged work) reached perfection; and second, the so-called Queen Anne Revival in the later nineteenth century, when brickwork of exquisite quality was once again achieved under architects such as Richard Norman Shaw (1842–1912) and Basil Champneys (1842–1935), especially in the latter's Newnham College, Cambridge (1874–1910).

But in most periods there has been bricklaying of high quality: in the earlier part of the twentieth century, for example, one need think only of the work carried out under architects as various as Sir Herbert Baker (1862–1946), Sir Edwin Lutyens (1869–1944), Charles Holden (1875–1960), Sir Giles Gilbert Scott (1880–1960), or Sir Albert Richardson (1880–1964). The Modern Movement often eschewed brick in favour of alternative materials, but when brick *was* used – more frequently, in fact, than some general histories or propagandist writings suggest – the linear nature of the style demanded, and at best received, very careful bricklaying. St Catherine's College, Oxford (1964), by the Danish architect Arne Jacobsen (1902–71), is an interesting example. It is built of 2-inch buff calcium silicate bricks in raking stretcher bond and at one time it was still possible to see on the brick faces the vertical pencil lines drawn on them to ensure precise alignment of the perpends.[13]

One could add instances from subsequent buildings, but an initial attempt to do so for this brief essay soon demonstrated that the exercise is invidious: there are simply too many to make it fair to pick out individuals. That there *are* so many reflects the fact that brick has very much come into its own again in post-Modern (including Post-Modern) architecture. A common feature is the use of diaper or other patterns in bricks of contrasting colours. Careful and sensitive bricklaying is essential for such work if it is to avoid, on the one hand, the lop-sided appearance of much late medieval and Tudor diaper work and, on the other, the often over-mechanical appearance of much Victorian and Edwardian diaper work. The latter was usually carried out using machine-made bricks in perfect black against deep red, sacrificing the subtleties of the medieval and Tudor work, although there are occasional exceptions, for example the diaper in green glazed bricks against a red background on a building of *c.*1905 at 53 Fleet Street, London. Recent work has exploited a variety of contrasting colours in such work, an approach interestingly adumbrated as early as 1960 in the (posthumous) Roman Catholic church of the Most Holy Trinity in Bermondsey by H.S. Goodhart-Rendel (1887–1959). Once again, the current work is evidence – along with much else – that the noble art of bricklaying is far from dead.

Bricklayers themselves, in previous times, were often responsible for the *design* of

buildings as well as for their erection. If we accept the late W.D. Simpson's argument, then Bawdwin Docheman (= Dutchman or German) was responsible not only for brick*making* and brick*laying* at Tattershall Castle, Lincs. in the fifteenth century but also for the building's *design*.[14] At Lincoln's Inn, London in 1567–8 William Jonson, Master Bricklayer, was paid 3s. 6d. "for thre days' worke yn settyng out of the square of the worke from tyme to tyme to the laborers".[15] It looks very much as if Jonson, who may be the "Wyllm Jonson" employed as a bricklayer at Whitehall Palace *c.*1540,[16] provided the plan of the "worke" and was perhaps responsible for its entire design.

In the succeeding Stuart and Georgian periods, bricklayers often acted as speculative builders, using pattern books – or simply the examples of others – to design houses of brick. Thomas Lucas (1662–1736), for instance, was a bricklayer of Deptford, Kent and not only manufactured some of his own materials but was responsible for a number of terraces in Deptford, one of which remains in Albury (formerly Union) Street.[17] Some bricklayers even rose to such status that they may properly be regarded as architects in their own right.[18] Most celebrated, perhaps, is Peter Mills (1598–1670), born at East Dean, Sussex and apprenticed in 1613 to John Williams, tiler and bricklayer of London. Mills became Bricklayer to the City of London in 1643 and was twice Master of the Tylers and Bricklayers Company – in 1649–50 and in 1659–60. At the Restoration he gave up direct involvement in his craft to become a surveyor and architect, and after the Great Fire of 1666 he was appointed by the City as one of the four surveyors responsible for overseeing the rebuilding, together with Sir Christopher Wren, Hugh May, and Sir Roger Pratt. Unfortunately, most of his buildings have been lost, although work of 1661–3 remains at Cobham Hall, Kent.[19]

Later, the situation would change as architects came to see themselves as professionals, concerned more with theoretical matters than with bricklaying or other manual work: "the relatively minor social movement which permitted a bricklayer to become an architect was seen as a threat by a later generation of this new professional class...".[20] Sir John Soane (1753–1837) was the son (born plain Soan) of a bricklayer from Goring-on-Thames and at fifteen was carrying bricks for his elder brother, William, who was and remained a bricklayer: there is even a story of the young boy, reminiscent of Ben Jonson, sitting on a lower rung of his brother's ladder and absorbed in a book.[21] But Soane himself nevertheless trained specifically as an *architect* – under George Dance the younger (1741–1825) – and not as a bricklayer. An interesting consequence of the new situation concerns the bricklayer Matthew Brettingham (1699–1769), who claimed that *he* rather than William Kent (*c.*1685–1748) was the true architect of Holkham Hall in Norfolk (1734 onwards). Brettingham's son, also named Matthew (1725–1803), claimed that Kent's drawings "were departed from in every shape" and that Brettingham *père* "had conducted the laying of every Brick from the foundation to the Roof" and therefore "had a better claim to the Reputation of the Fabrick than he who only gave the designs, but never once attended execution of any part of the work". In Brettingham's *The Plans, Elevations, and Sections of Holkham in Norfolk, the seat of the late Earl of Leicester* (1761) the plates attribute the designs to Brettingham himself as "Architect" and Kent's name is not even mentioned.[22]

Yet other bricklayers contributed in other ways. The inventor of Portland cement, for example, Joseph Aspdin (*c.*1779–1855), was a bricklayer in Leeds. He took out a patent for his cement in 1824 and set up his first works at Wakefield in 1825; manufacture was continued by his son William, who relocated the works at Northfleet in Kent.[23] The great Victorian engineer Sir Samuel Morton Peto (1809–89) began as an apprentice bricklayer before inheriting his uncle's building business.[24]

Of course, there have always been inferior bricklayers too – *jerry builders* or *cowboys* as we would later learn to call them. Post-Fire buildings in London sometimes collapsed during or shortly after completion, and John Evelyn complained of "Vulgar Workmen, who

for want of some more solid Directions, Faithful and easy Rules in this Nature, fill as well whole Cities as Private Dwellings with Rubbish and a thousand Infirmities."[25] Surviving examples of Georgian date typically show poor integration between the facing bricks and those behind and sometimes too walls were built only half a brick (approximately 4½ inches) thick![26] The same thing was noted by Friedrich Engels in workers' cottages in nineteenth-century Manchester, "some in process of building": their "outer walls were but one-half brick thick, the bricks lying not sidewise but lengthwise, their narrow ends touching...".[27] In the Georgian period there was a widespread belief in the virtue of horizontal bond-timbers placed in the inner faces of walls and, whatever the pros and cons of the practice, it provided further opportunity for sub-standard work. Some houses of *c.*1725 in Spitalfields, London, for example, have been found to include "bond-timbers which are simply butted together end to end and therefore exercise no restraining force to unite the walls they were intended to strengthen. Furthermore these bond-timbers are of softwood and their potential for decay constitutes a slow fuse capable of undermining the fabric that they were designed to sustain."[28] Another common fault lay in failing to ensure that internal vertical joints were filled with mortar.[29] When a water-tower at St Pancras Station, London was lifted and moved to a new location in November 2001, it was found to be heavier on one side than on the other because one bricklayer had been more careful about filling the internal vertical joints.[30] In the nineteenth century the more unscrupulous of speculative builders might use unskilled labourers for bricklaying – except when the building inspectors were on site: the labourers were "employed in throwing in the bricks, without any regard to the order of bond or any other order, except that of putting them out of sight. A good lookout is always kept for the inspector ... [and if he is seen then] the joints are flushed up, the labourers take to their hods, and things go on pretty well till the inspector goes."[31]

And there was a darker side still, in the way in which bricklayers sometimes treated their apprentices. In 1715, for example, Peter Steel, bricklayer of St James Westminster, took as apprentice John Besswick. Four years later the Middlesex Sessions heard how Besswick had been forced to make bricks in his master's cellar (*sic!*) and that the boy had been beaten, kicked in the groin, and struck with the iron part of a trowel and with the edge of a plumb rule. The apprenticeship, one is pleased to learn, was annulled.[32]

This issue of *Information*, however, is intended more as celebratory of the good than as condemnation of the bad – a tribute to the practitioners of the noble art of bricklaying. Amongst individuals considered in the issue are those with interests beyond bricklaying itself. Ben Jonson gave up the craft in order to pursue his literary career, but Venturus Mandey and Robert Tatersal continued their craft whilst, in the one case, writing and translating works on mathematics and, in the other, writing verse. From an historical point of view, it is good to have two of the latter's verses reproduced; from a literary point of view, Tatersal perhaps deserves the obscurity into which he has fallen. Others contributed in less conspicuous ways. Just to the south of St Botolph's Church, Shenley, Herts., for example, is the wooden grave-board of Joseph Rogers, parish clerk and bricklayer, who died in 1828: "none," we are told, "could excel / in laying bricks or singing well" – not a bad epitaph that, and a pleasant note on which to end this brief essay on the noble art of bricklaying.

TERENCE PAUL SMITH

Notes and References

1. J.C. Seaward, 'Craftsmanship in Brickwork', in T. Corkhill, ed., *Brickwork, Concrete and Masonry*, vol. I, London, 1936, p.169.
2. See photographs in J. Szarkowski, *The Idea of Louis Sullivan*, reissued London, 2000, pp.6, 11.
3. S. Lyall, 'Tate Meets Lyall', *Brick Bulletin*, Winter 2000, 22.

4. M. Hammett, 'Bonding with Tradition', *Brick Bulletin*, Winter 2001, 22–3.
5. Anon., 'Structure of the Guild of Bricklayers', in *Guild of Bricklayers Diamond Jubilee 1932–1992 Commemorative Handbook*, London, 1992, p.3.
6. D. Knoop and G.P. Jones, *The Mediæval Mason*, 3rd edn, Manchester and New York, 1967, p.13; Beverley had a tradition of brickmaking and brick building going back to the late fourteenth century: T.P. Smith, *The Medieval Brickmaking Industry in England 1400-1450*, British Archaeol. Reports, British Series **138**, Oxford, 1985, p.27 and references therein.
7. N. Lloyd, *A History of English Brickwork...*, London, 1925, reissued Woodbridge, 1983, p.46; The Tylers and Bricklayers Company, *The Worshipful Company of Tylers and Bricklayers: its Origins and Objectives*, leaflet, East Molesey, Surrey, 1996; the charter was granted by Elizabeth I to the "freemen of the mystery or art de le Tylers and Bricklayers of our City of London and the suburbs of the same".
8. W.G. Bell, *A Short History of the Worshipful Company of Tylers and Bricklayers of the City of London*, London, 1938, pp.13, 15, 16.
9. Knoop and Jones, 1967, p.207.
10. *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, revised I.H. Evans, London, 1970, p.952.
11. See discussion of these arms at pp.10–11, *infra*.
12. J.H. Harvey, *An Introduction to Tudor Architecture*, London, 1949, p.25 (my italics).
13. C.C. Handisyde, 'Brick in the Reign of Elizabeth II', *Brick Bulletin*, July 1977, 14.
14. W.D. Simpson, ed., *The Building Accounts of Tattershall Castle 1434–1472*, Lincs. Hist. Rec. Soc. **55**, 1960, p.xxviii.
15. J.D. Walker, ed., *The Records of the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn: the Black Books*, vol. 1, *1422–1586*, London, 1897, pp.445–6.
16. J.H. Harvey, *English Mediaeval Architects: a Biographical Dictionary down to 1550*, revised edn, Gloucester, 1984, p.163.
17. A. Quiney, 'Thomas Lucas, Bricklayer, 1662–1736', *Archaeol. J.*, **136**, 1979, 269–80.
18. H.M. Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600–1840*, revised edn, New Haven CT and London, 1995, includes several examples *passim*; see also T.P. Smith, 'Venturus Mandey: No Ordinary Bricklayer', in this issue, pp.16–19, *infra*.
19. Colvin, 1995, pp.655–8; T. Tatton-Brown, 'Cobham Hall: the House and Gardens', *Archæologia Cantiana*, **122**, 2002, 9.
20. J. Ayres, *Building the Georgian City*, New Haven CT and London, 1998, p.9.
21. G. Darley, 'Soane: The Man and his Circle', and 'Beginnings and Early Training', in M. Richardson and M.A. Stevens, *John Soane, Architect: Master of Space and Light*, London, 1999, pp.16, 78; also G. Darley, *John Soane: An Accidental Romantic*, New Haven CT and London, 1999, pp.1, 4, 6; for Jonson, see pp.12–14, *infra*.
22. Colvin, 1995, p.154.
23. J.M. Preston, *Industrial Medway: an Historical Survey*, Rochester, 1977, pp.69–70.
24. S. Halliday, *The Great Stink of London: Sir Joseph Bazalgette and the Cleansing of the Victorian Capital*, Stroud, Gloucs., 1999, p.13.
25. Quoted in E. McKellar, *The Birth of Modern London: the Development and Design of the City 1660–1720*, Manchester and New York, 1999, pp.30–31; *cf.* D. Yeomans, 'The Quality of London Bricks in the Early Eighteenth Century', *BBS Information*, **42**, May 1987, 13–15.
26. D. Cruickshank and P. Wyld, *London: the Art of Georgian Building*, London, 1975, pp.181–90; *cf.* McKellar, 1999, pp.84–5.
27. F. Engels, *The Condition of the Working-Class in England* (1845), intro. E. Hobsbawm, London, 1969, p.91; not actually *touching*, of course, but one takes the point.
28. Ayres, 1998, p.116; D. Cruickshank and N. Burton, *Life in the Georgian City*, London, 1990, p.108.
29. C.W. Pasley, *Outline of a Course of Practical Architecture...*, issued as lithographed notes, 1826, issued in book form 1862, reissued Shaftesbury, 2001, p.232.
30. BBC Television News (London), 29 November 2001 (6.00pm).
31. Letter in *The Builder*, 15 December 1849, 593, quoted in H. Hobhouse, *Thomas Cubitt: Master Builder*, London and Basingstoke, 1971, p.261.
32. D. George, *London Life in the Eighteenth Century* pbk edn, Harmondsworth, 1966, p.416, no. 5.

A BRUSH OR A BUNDLE OF LATHS?
A Problem Concerning the Arms of the Worshipful Company of Tylers and Bricklayers of the City of London

Terence Paul Smith

The Worshipful Company of Tylers and Bricklayers of the City of London, as mentioned elsewhere in this issue,[1] traces its origins – initially as the 'mistery of tilers' – to the fourteenth century. The bricklayers were admitted some time during the early Tudor period. The Society received its first charter in 1567, and on 3 February 1569 arms were granted by Sir Gilbert Dethick, Garter King or Arms, Robert Cooke, Clarenceux King of Arms, and William Flower, Norroy and Ulster King of Arms. The original patent has not survived and the blazon has to be based on later records. The precise details are not entirely certain – specifically with regard to the charge *in base*. The arms (fig. 1) are usually blazoned:[2]

> **Shield:** *Azure, a chevron Or in chief a fleur-de-lys Argent between two brick-axes palewise Or in base a brush also Or*
> **Crest:** *On a wreath Or and Azure, a dexter arm embowed vested party per pale Or and Gules cuffed Argent holding in the hand proper a brick-axe Or*
> **Mantling:** *Gules doubled Argent*
> **Motto:** *In God is all our trust, let us never be confounded*

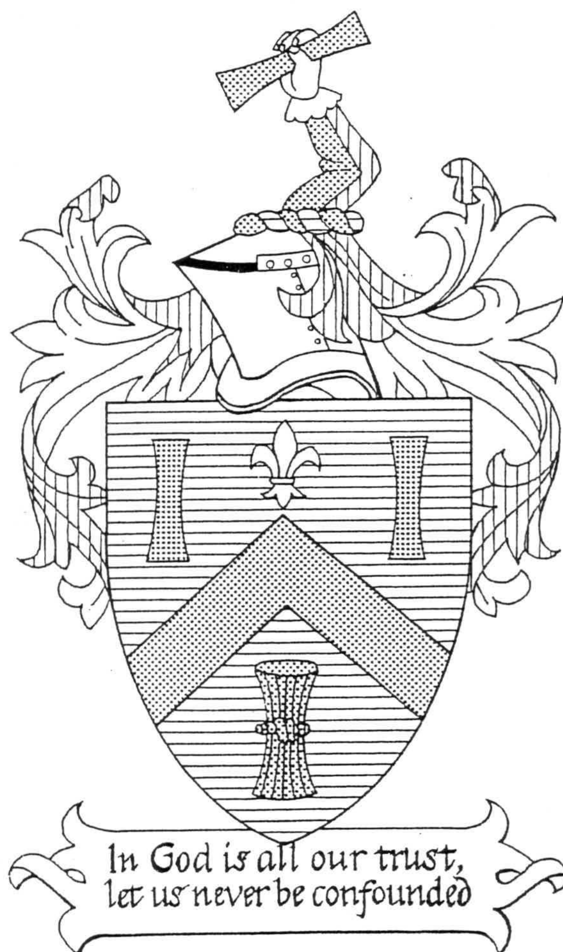


Fig. 1 The Arms of the Worshipful Company of Tylers and Bricklayers of the City of London

The brick-axes, typically shown in stylised form both on the shield and in the crest, are obvious symbols of the craft of bricklaying. Not used these days, they were once a familiar item in the bricklayer's toolkit.[3] But what of that peculiar "brush"? Something characteristic of tilers might be expected in order to match the bricklayers' axes, but a brush hardly fits the bill. The most plausible suggestion arises from the fact that, except for "the record in the College of Arms, the 'brush' is generally described ... as a bundle of laths...".[4] It is with just such a charge that Henry Gough and James Parker blazon the arms: "Azure, a chevron or; in chief a fleur-de-lis argent, between two brick axes paleways of the second, in base a bunch [*sic*] of laths of the last".[5] This is obviously more appropriate than a brush to the tilers since laths are an indispensable material in roof tiling: whether fixed with pegs or nails or by means of nibs (or a combination of these), all tile types are normally hung on wooden laths or battens nailed across the common rafters of the roof. It is likely that the "brush" results from a misinterpretation of a drawing of the laths tied in the middle: "In the trick [annotated sketch] in the College of Arms the 'brush' is drawn so that its outline resembles that of the brick-axe"[6] – that is, with its sides slightly bowed. Whether or not the misunderstanding arose from this depiction – and it does not seem essential – it would be easy enough for a drawing of a bundle of laths to be mistaken for that of a brush.

A further discrepancy lies in Gough and Parker's description of the bundle of laths as "of the last" – that is, of the last-mentioned tincture, in this case *Argent* rather than *Or*. The latter is the normal tincture in blazons and depictions of the arms and is followed (using the Petra Sancta shading conventions) in fig. 1.

No such discrepancy concerns the *fleur-de-lys*, which is consistently described and depicted *Argent*. It is a charge with various meanings, one of its commonest being as a symbol of the Virgin Mary.[7] It may be, therefore, that its inclusion in the arms reflects the religious interests of the Company, perhaps indicating a specific affiliation to the Virgin. The religious aspect is, of course, also reflected in the motto: *In God is all our trust, let us never be confounded*, a pluralised version of Psalm 31.1 and its parallel Psalm 71.1: "In thee, O Lord, have I put my trust, let me never be put to confusion...".[8]

Despite the armorial mantling of red and silver/white (*Gules doubled Argent*) and the gold/yellow and red (*Or and Gules*) parti-coloured sleeve in the crest, the livery colours of the Company of Tylers and Bricklayers are yellow and blue,[9] following the dominant tinctures (*Or* and *Azure*) of the shield.

Notes and References

1. Page 5, *supra*.
2. G. Briggs, ed., *Civic and Corporate Heraldry: a Dictionary of Impersonal Arms of England, Wales & N. Ireland*, London, 1971, p.390; J. Bromley and H. Child, *The Armorial Bearings of the Guilds of London*, London, 1960, pp.246–8.
3. See, e.g., N. Lloyd, *A History of English Brickwork...*, London, 1925, reissued in facsimile Woodbridge, 1983, pp.72–3, 389.
4. Bromley and Child, 1960, p.247.
5. H. Gough and J. Parker, *A Glossary of Terms Used in Heraldry*, Oxford and London, 1894, pp.365–6; also available on: www04.u-page.so-net.ne.jp/ta2/saitou/ie401/Jpglosl.htm.
6. Bromley and Child, 1960, p.248.
7. M. Pastoureau, *Heraldry: its Origins and Meaning*, trans. from the French by F. Garvie, London, 1997, pp.98–101, taken from the same author's 'Le roi aux fleurs de lis' in *L'Histoire* for January 1995; the *fleur-de-lys* is, of course, a stylised *lily*.
8. *Book of Common Prayer* version.
9. J.K. Melling, *Discovering London's Guilds and Liveries*, 5th edn, Princes Risborough, 1995, p.100.

"THE WITTIEST FELLOW OF A BRICKLAYER IN ENGLAND": A NOTE ON BEN JONSON

Terence Paul Smith

In his important study of the Tudor royal palaces, Simon Thurley connects the surname Jonson (or Johnson) with 'Doche' – that is, German (*Deutsch*) or Dutch – craftsmen.[1] The argument, however, requires caution. There certainly are instances, and indeed the corporation of Maidstone in Kent was seeking alien craftsmen in brick as late as 1567.[2] And yet such persons are much less in evidence in Tudor than in late medieval times.[3] Certainly, England's most celebrated Tudor bricklayer was *not* of north European origin, and the name itself was common enough in Scotland and northern England: Ben Jonson (1572/3–1637; fig. 1) – "O RARE BENN JOHNSON", as his epitaph in Westminster Abbey calls him – was of Border descent and was probably born in or near London. His father, a minister of religion, died before the boy was born.

Fig. 1 Ben Jonson (1572/3–1637)

According to John Aubrey, Jonson's "mother, after his father's death, maried a Bricklayer, and 'tis generally sayd that he wrought sometime with his father-in-lawe [that is, *stepfather*], and particularly on the Garden-wall of Lincoln's-Inn next to Chancery-lane". From Izaac Walton, Aubrey gives the further detail that the young Ben followed his stepfather's craft "much against his will".[4] Aubrey, often enough unreliable – "magotie-headed" his scholarly contemporary Anthony à Wood once called him[5] – is probably correct here, since a version of the same story is given by his older contemporary Thomas Fuller, who adds that Jonson's stepfather was a master bricklayer living "in *Harts-horn-lane*, near *Charing-cross*": whilst working, Fuller tells us, the young Ben had "a *trowell* in one hand" and "a *book* in his

pocket";[6] Aubrey himself records that a Bencher of Lincoln's Inn came upon the young apprentice reciting "some Greeke verses out of Homer", and, "discoursing with him", found him "to have a Witt extraordinary".[7] Clearly, his leanings were in a direction other than bricklaying, and in due time he would follow a very different career. His knowledge of the classics, which would eventually become formidable, began under William Camden at Westminster School, thanks to an unknown benefactor; it was in 1588, at the age of sixteen or seventeen, that he was made to leave in order to follow his step-father's craft.[8] He does not appear in the Lincoln's Inn records – the so-called *Black Books* – but he was only an apprentice, and they, and labourers, are never mentioned by name: indeed, even the principal bricklayers are not *always* named.[9] Aubrey claims that the Bencher who came across Jonson at Lincoln's Inn "gave him some Exhibition to maintaine him at Trinity College in Cambridge" and Fuller that he was at St John's College, Cambridge for a brief period, but there is no evidence for either claim: despite his vast classical learning, Jonson was almost certainly *not* university educated.[10] This deprivation of a university education and status, it has been suggested, left Jonson embittered and explains his quarrelsome nature and his frequent clashes with the authorities.[11] It may be so, but it is worth remembering that in an age of strict censorship writers' troubles with the authorities were common enough and that some of Jonson's Cambridge-educated colleagues were hardly less quarrelsome in their conduct – Christopher Marlowe (1564–93), after all, was killed during a tavern brawl![12]

Despite not pursuing the craft, Jonson continued to be referred to as a bricklayer. On 22 September 1598 he fought a duel with and killed his fellow actor Gabriel Spencer, and in a melancholy letter concerning this incident Philip Henslowe wrote to Edward Alleyn that Spencer "is slayen in Hogesdon fylddes [Hoxton Fields] by the hands of Bengemen Jonson bricklayer."[13] And in 1599–1601 a group of Cambridge students presented a play, *The Return from Parnassus*, in which Jonson is characterised as "the wittiest [= most intelligent] fellow of a Bricklayer in England".[14]

Until the early twentieth century, Jonson's continued membership of the Company of Tylers and Bricklayers of London was regarded by some as no more than a legend. But then Professor Leslie Hotson of Haverford College, Pennsylvania came across the records of a dispute, again in 1598, involving Jonson and Robert Browne – presumably, the Robert Browne who was a colleague at and part proprietor of the Globe Theatre in Southwark. Jonson owed Browne £10 but failed to pay it by the agreed date. Judgement was given in Queen's Bench against Jonson, who was ordered to pay the £10 together with £1 in damages. Throughout the hearing, Jonson is referred to as "Citizen and Bricklayer of London", a formula which implies that he was a Freeman of the Company.[15] The decision to remain such was, perhaps, a judicious one at a time when neither the profession of actor nor that of playwright was regarded as of high or even of respectable status.

The craft of bricklaying is a noble one, but in Jonson's case we may perhaps be glad that he did not pursue a course which was obviously uncongenial to him. Had he done so, we would be without his contributions to English drama – *Volpone*, *The Alchemist*, *Bartholomew Fair*, to name but the best – and possibly too the elegies on the deaths of his eldest son and eldest daughter, the first of them including the tenderly beautiful lines, which can still move after four centuries:

> Rest in soft peace, and, asked, say here doth lie
> Ben Jonson his best piece of poetry.[16]

Notes and References

1. S. Thurley, *The Royal Palaces of Tudor England: Architecture and Court Life 1460–1547*, New Haven CT and London, 1993, p.105.
2. V. Morant, 'The Settlement of Protestant Refugees in Maidstone during the Sixteenth Century,'

Econ. Hist. Rev., 4, 1, 1951, 211–14.
3. M. Howard, *The Early Tudor Country House: Architecture and Politics*, London, 1987, p.172.
4. J. Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, selected and edited J. Buchanan-Brown, London, 2000, pp.171, 174; although his step-father's occupation does not necessarily imply it, the circumstances of Jonson's boyhood seem to have been somewhat straitened.
5. A. Holden, *William Shakespeare: his Life and Work,* London, 1999, p.244.
6. T. Fuller, *The History of the Worthies of England*, London, 1662, vol. 2, p.243.
7. Aubrey, 2000, p.171.
8. M. Schmidt, *Lives of the Poets*, London, 1998, p.185.
9. The relevant volume is J.D. Walker, ed., *The Records of the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn: the Black Books*, vol. 2, *1586–1660*, London, 1898.
10. Aubrey, 2000, p.171; Fuller, 1662, p.243; for the lack of evidence: J.B. Bamborough, *Ben Jonson*, London, 1970, p.13.
11. P. Hartnoll, *The Theatre: a Concise History*, 3rd edn, revised E. Brater, London, 1998, p.83.
12. But not at Jonson's hand, as Aubrey mistakenly avers: Aubrey, 2000, p.172; for Marlowe's death: F.S. Boas, *Christopher Marlowe: a Biographical and Critical Study*, Oxford, 1953, pp.270–83.
13. W.G. Bell, *A Short History of the Worshipful Company of Tylers and Bricklayers of the City of London*, London, 1938, p.21; as a punishment Jonson was imprisoned for a time and had his left thumb branded, escaping hanging only because he was able to claim benefit of clergy; the site of the duel is now occupied by Hoxton Square, N1, laid out in the 1680s: B. Weinreb and C. Hibbert, eds, *The London Encyclopaedia*, revised edn, London and Basingstoke, 1995, p.410.
14. *The Return from Parnassus*, in J.B. Leishman, ed., *The Three Parnassus Plays*, London, 1949, part 2, II.ii.293; contemporaries also referred to Jonson as a "morter-treader" and a "whoreson poore lyme- and hayre-rascal": Bamborough, 1970, p.13; Shakespeare has the rebel Jack Cade refer to a legend about his own origins with the words: "The elder of [the two children of Edmund Mortimer] ... / Was ... stolen away; / And, ignorant of his birth and parentage, / Became a bricklayer when he came of age: / His son am I..." (*Henry VI Part Two*, IV.ii, line number varies with edition); Shakespeare and Jonson were friends and drinking partners: did Will perhaps tease Ben with these lines when both men were in their cups?
15. Bell, 1938, pp.21–2.
16. The full text is available in, e.g., Schmidt, 1998, p.185.

THE DUTIES OF A SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY BRICKLAYER

James W. P. Campbell [1]

It is not unreasonable to expect that the rôles of building craftsmen in the past differed from those of today, but finding documentary evidence for their defined duties in any given period is more difficult.[2] However, such evidence does survive for the late seventeenth century in a series of important lists drawn up for the Office of the King's Works *c.*1668.

A full history of the King's Works from 1666 to 1782 has been written by H.M. Colvin, J. Mordaunt Crook, Kerry Downes, and John Newman in 1976.[3] The Office was responsible for the maintenance and construction of all royal buildings except for the Tower of London and Windsor Castle.[4] The period saw the re-organisation of the Works after the Restoration, the Great Fire of 1666, and the arrival of Christopher Wren, who was Surveyor-General from 1669 and remained in charge until 1718, the longest Surveyorship in the history of the Works and arguably its most successful. But, since Wren (unlike Robert Hooke, for example) left no diary and very few letters, the day-to-day running of the Office can be deduced only from contract and account books. Being those of a government department, they were kept in some detail and fortunately most have survived intact and are now preserved at the Public record Office in Kew.[5]

The Office of Works documents from the period 1660–1710 are extensive and include over sixty books of accounts and a book of contracts from 1668–1724. It is the latter that concerns us here, for in its opening pages it includes "A Table for Building with the names of all sorts of Workmen". The trades listed in order are those of the "Diggers", bricklayer, carpenter, "Joyner", "Stonecutter", "Plumber", "Plaisterer", "Smith", painter, "Glasier", locksmith, carver, and ironmonger. For each trade a list is included of the tasks for which they were responsible. The complete entry for the bricklayer is as follows:

> Bricklayers Worke
>
> What foundations and thickness of Walls
> What Doores and Windowes to be double bricke
> What Demension of Chimneyes and deepness of Draught
> What Plaister for the inside of the Chimneys
> What rubbed Worke
> What moulding about Coors and Windowes
> What Shafts of Chimneys
> What Hoodes of Chimneyes
> What Syleing of Windowes
> What Tyleing and Lathing and Pinns
> What Staples and Rings in the Lewkorne Windowes
> Frames to tye for mending Roofes
> What Cellar Arches
> What Paving for Cellars[6]

Most of these entries are self-explanatory. "Rubber Worke" refers, of course, to rubbed and gauged brickwork, which was in widespread use at the time in London, although most of what survives today is from the Georgian period. "Lewkorne" (lucarne) windows were rooflights, and the "Frames to tye for mending Roofes" refers to the scaffolding required when retiling (wholly or partly – "mending") a roof.

One important point which emerges from the list is worth noting: in the seventeenth century, bricklaying and tiling were usually the same trade. As in the Middle Ages, slating and thatching were still separate trades in their own right, but the laying of clay tiles was the bricklayers' responsibility.[7] As a follow up to the present contribution, it would be interesting to know when this ceased to be the case.

Notes and References

1. The research for this paper was undertaken as part of a two-year project examining seventeenth- and eighteenth-century brickwork; it was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Board under the direction of Professor Andrew Saint at the Martin Centre, University of Cambridge.
2. For the period from 1700 definitions can be gleaned from J. Moxon, *Mechanick Exercises: or the Doctrine of Handy-Works*, London, 1700, *passim*; earlier editions of this work do not include bricklaying.
3. H.M. Colvin *et al.*, *The History of the King's Works*, vol. 5, *1666–1782*, London, 1976.
4. In this period, the Tower of London came under the Surveyor of the Ordnance whilst the works at Windsor had their own "Comptroller", who was Hugh May until his death in 1684, when Wren took over.
5. A list is included in Colvin *et al.*, 1976, pp.461–2.
6. PRO WORKS 5/145 f.6(r).
7. The two trades were, of course, associated in London, and had been since Tudor times, through the Worshipful Company of Tylers and Bricklayers: *supra*, p.5.

VENTURUS MANDEY: NO ORDINARY BRICKLAYER

Terence Paul Smith

A memorial tablet in the north aisle of the parish church at Iver, Bucks. recalls the life of Venterus Mandey, a bricklayer of rare qualities:[1]

> Beneath this place lyes interred the Body of VENTERUS MANDEY of the Parish of St. Giles in the Fields, in the County of Middlesex, Bricklayer; son of MICHAEL MANDEY, Bricklayer, & Grandson to VENTERUS MANDEY, of this parish, Bricklayer, Who had ye honour of being Bricklayer to the Honble Society of Lincoln's Inn from the year of our Lord 1667 to the day of his Death, He was studious in the Mathematicks & wrote & published three Books for Publick Good: one Entituled Mellificium Mensionis or ye Marrow of Measuring; Another of Mechanic powers or the Mystery of Nature & Art Unvayled: the third An Universal Mathematical Synopsis. He also translated into English Directorum Generale Vranometricum and Trigonometria Plana & Sphærica Linearis & Logarithimica: Auctore Fr. Bonaventura Cavalerio Mediolanesi: & some other tracts which he designed to have Printed if Death had not prevented him. He Dyed the 26th day of July *Anno Domini* 1701 aged 56 years & upwards.

Nathaniel Lloyd, who gives a modernised but slightly incorrect version of this inscription (probably due to homeoteleuton), comments laconically: "This type of bricklayer seems to have died out."[2] The late Sir John Summerson was equally impressed and wrote: "His literary accomplishments were, of course, above the average" for a bricklayer of the time.[3]

Of course, as Sir John also reminds us, 'bricklayer' had a somewhat wider signification in the seventeenth century: many 'bricklayers' would be quite capable of designing, say, a terrace of houses or a free-standing house and of supervising its construction, subcontracting as necessary for carpentry and other work.[4] And indeed, elsewhere Mandey is differently described. In the 'Epistle Dedicatory' which he wrote to his translation of *Synopsis Mathematica Universalis* (1701) Mandey himself states that he had served the Society of Lincoln's inn for thirty-three years in his trade of "bricklayer *and builder*";[5] whilst in the accounts for building work at Barn Elms, Barnes, Surrey in 1694–5 he is described as "Mr. Maundey the measurer" – that is, surveyor.[6] That he was capable of surveying work, as well as of building, is hardly surprising in view of his mathematical accomplishments. His being a builder and surveyor as well as a 'bricklayer' does not mark him out as especially unusual: it is his ability to translate mathematical texts from Latin and to write mathematical works of his own which makes him exceptional.

His date of birth is uncertain since he is described as "aged 56 years & upwards" on his memorial tablet: he cannot have been born, therefore, later than 1645. He would thus have been at least 22 when he began to work for Lincoln's Inn. If he was indeed born in 1645 and if he had served a seven-year apprenticeship with his bricklayer father, as seems not unlikely, then this may have been his first work on his own account. It is possible that he was the unnamed bricklayer who was paid £389 6s. 2d. for unspecified work at Lincoln's Inn in the period 12 February 1667 to 26 November 1668.[7] This cannot be certain, however, since during the period of his employment the society also engaged other bricklayers – for example, William Edge, who was paid £460 for work carried out during the period 4 February to 8 November 1685.[8]

Mandey's length of service, and other indications, show that he was well thought of by the Society of Lincoln's Inn. But it had not always been so. At a council meeting held on 29 April 1675 – that is, when Mandey had already been employed at Lincoln's Inn for some eight years – it was ordered that "Mr Maundy, the bricklayer, is to attend the next Council, to

answer 'for his unhandsome carriage towards one of the Masters of the Bench'."[9] From the record of the council meeting held a fortnight later (12 May 1675) we learn both the name of the man who felt insulted and the fact that Mandey had not yet made the required apology: "Mr Maundy, the bricklayer, shall not be any more employed on the work of this House, until he apologise to Mr Thomas Strode, a Bencher."[10] We do not know the nature of Mandey's alleged "unhandsome carriage"; perhaps, skilled and knowledgeable as he was, he felt that he was not being treated by the senior lawyer with the dignity due to him and that he replied in kind; this, however, can be no more than conjecture.

The matter, whatever its precise nature, was obviously cleared up satisfactorily since Mandey continued to work for Lincoln's Inn until his death. We hear little of his work, although the record of the council meeting held on 22 April 1684 notes: "The consideration of the repairs to the chapel is again referred to a Committee; they are to treat with Mr Mandy, 'upon the proposalls by him now made'."[11] The chapel at Lincoln's Inn, which still stands, was erected *c.*1619–23 and is sometimes attributed to Inigo Jones, although the evidence is firmly against this.[12] Just what work needed doing six decades or so later, and what were the nature of Mandey's "proposalls", are not known.

The last mention of Mandey in the records of Lincoln's Inn is in an account of the council meeting held on 2 June 1701, less than two months before his death, and is an acknowledgement of his gift to the Society of one of his mathematical translations: "Ordered that the summe of £8 bee given to Venterus Mandey, as an acknowledgement for the Book (entituled *Synopsis Mathematica Universalis*) [which] he lately presented and dedicated to the Masters of the Bench of this Society, and [which is] to bee deposited in the library thereof."[13]

The fact that he was buried at Iver suggests that his father, Michael, had remained there like *his* father (also named Venturus) before him and that it was Venturus *junior* who had first removed to St Giles, at that time on the edge of an expanding London. By the early seventeenth century at latest St Giles had become a brickmaking centre,[14] conveniently located to serve new building works at Covent Garden and elsewhere to the west of the City. This may have attracted him to the area. It was also conveniently close to Lincoln's Inn, where he found work – just half a mile distant. More significant, however, is the date of 1667, immediately after the Great Fire of 1666, when there was plenty of rebuilding to be done within the burned-out City and when that rebuilding was required by legislation to be in brick or, where it could be afforded, in stone.[15] The attraction of London must have been irresistible to a young bricklayer of obvious capacity. St Giles, where he settled, remained an important brickmaking centre in late-Stuart (post-Fire) London.[16]

It is unlikely that Mandey's employment at Lincoln's Inn precluded his also working elsewhere. Indeed, there is evidence to the contrary. First, the method of payment to its bricklayers in 1667–8 and in 1685, noted above, whether or not the first of these was to Mandey himself, suggests that they were employed on a contract basis for specific projects rather than being paid a regular wage; this had indeed long been the normal (though not quite the exclusive) practice at Lincoln's Inn.[17] Secondly, we know that Mandey was employed in 1694–5 on work at Barn Elms, Barnes (again, already mentioned above). This was an Elizabethan house rebuilt by Thomas Cartwright in the 1690s (and later remodelled in 1771). Unfortunately, it was demolished as late as 1954 and nothing remains apart from its ornamental pond, an ice house, and a lodge in Lower Richmond Road.[18] Moreover, it is unlikely that there was sufficient work at Lincoln's Inn itself to keep a bricklayer – even one who was also a builder in his own right – permanently employed, although from 1680 to the early 1690s there was a good deal of work available on New Square, begun by Henry Serle and completed by Nicholas Barbon; this quite large development comprised buildings along three sides of what had formerly been the Coney Garth.[19] It is an intriguing possibility that Mandey was responsible for some of the rebuilding of the City after the Great Fire.

One would like to know more about Mandey's childhood and youth. His ability to write on mensuration and mechanics and to translate works from Latin on trigonometry and logarithms suggests – indeed virtually *proves* – a grammar school education, perhaps somewhere in Buckinghamshire, and one in which he must have been a most apt pupil. The *Universal Mathematical Synopsis* – seemingly attributed to him as his own composition in the Iver epitaph – was in fact a translation of a Latin work by John James Heinlein.[20] The *Mechanick Powers...* was a joint work (published in 1696) with James Moxon – not the better known *Joseph* Moxon, as Lloyd and others have unwarily supposed.[21] Some of his works went through several editions, even after his death. His library was sold at auction on 15 March 1713/14 and a copy of the sale catalogue survives.[22] It included works in various languages – ancient and modern – together with dictionaries to aid him in reading them. A minority only of the books were directly concerned with architecture or building; other topics included mathematics (naturally enough), science, medicine, and theology.[23]

In fine, we see in Venturus Mandey a man of quite remarkable accomplishments. In his authoritative *Biographical Dictionary...* Sir Howard Colvin is willing to include him as an *architect*. Mandey may not have claimed the title for himself, although in connection with his work at Barnes he *is* described as carrying out "measuring" and is also, significantly, referred to as *Mr* Mandey, a title which was also used at Lincoln's Inn, even when he was being criticised for alleged misconduct. His professional work as a measurer would have been well paid and "explains the resources which Mandey would have needed to acquire such a lavish library."[24] Primarily he may have been a bricklayer, but he was certainly *no ordinary bricklayer*.

Notes and References

1. Quoted in full in H.M. Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600–1840*, 3rd edn, London, 1995, p.637.
2. N. Lloyd, *A History of English Brickwork...*, London, 1925, reissued Woodbridge, 1983, pp.15–16; either Lloyd, or his source in *Notes and Queries*, 9th series, 1901, 449 (which I have not been able to consult), omits part of the beginning of the epitaph.
3. J. Summerson, *Georgian London*, revised edn, Harmondsworth, 1991, p.69, n.1.
4. Summerson, 1991, pp.69–70; E. McKellar, *The Birth of Modern London: the Development and Design of the City 1660–1720*, Manchester, 1999, *passim*; and for a particular example of a bricklayer working as a builder, in Deptford: A. Quiney, 'Thomas Lucas, Bricklayer, 1662–1736', *Archaeol. J.*, 136, 1979, 269–80; see also 'Introit: the Noble Art of Bricklaying' in this issue, p.7, *supra*.
5. J.D. Walker, ed., *The Records of the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn: the Black Books*, vol. III, London, 1899 (hereinafter *Black Books*), p.209 (my italics).
6. Colvin, 1995, p.638, citing Northants. Record Office, Cartwright papers.
7. *Black Books*, p.62.
8. *Black Books*, p.154.
9. *Black Books*, p.100.
10. *Loc. cit.*
11. *Black Books*, p.147.
12. J. Summerson, *Architecture in Britain 1530–1830*, 8th revised edn, Harmondsworth, 1991, p.532, n.1 to chapter 9: "The attribution to Jones of Lincoln's Inn Chapel is due to a slip made by Dugdale, enlarged into a blunder by Vertue. A careful reading of the Black Books of the Society makes it abundantly clear that Jones had nothing to do with it. The chapel was designed and built by a mason, John Clarke." See also B. Cherry and N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: London 4: North*, Harmondsworth, 1998, p.286; for Clarke (or Clark) see Colvin, 1995, pp.248–9.
13. *Black Books*, p.209.
14. N.G. Brett-James, *The Growth of Stuart London*, 1935, p.111.
15. The regulations for rebuilding London after the Fire have been several times printed and are now

perhaps most conveniently available in G. Milne, *The Great Fire of London*, New Barnet and London, 1986, pp.116–19; see also S. Porter, *The Great Fire of London*, Stroud, 1996, pp.116ff.

16. T.F. Reddaway, *The Rebuilding of London after the Great Fire*, London, 1940, reprinted London, 1951, pp.127–8; L. Clarke, *Building Capitalism: Historical Change and the Labour Process in the Production of the Built Environment*, London and New York, 1992, p.99.
17. T.P. Smith, 'Lincoln's Inn and Brickmaking and Bricklaying in Tudor London', in prep.
18. I. Nairn and N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Surrey*, 2nd edn revised B. Cherry, Harmondsworth, 1971, p.105; entry reprinted with minor additions in B. Cherry and N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: London 3: South*, Harmondsworth, 1983, p.470.
19. Cherry and Pevsner, 1998, p.247, using information supplied by Frank Kelsall; for the Coney Garth: Smith, in prep.
20. *Black Books*, p.208; Colvin, 1978, p.638.
21. Lloyd, 1925/1983, p.77; and *cf.* Colvin, 1995, p.637; and for both James and Joseph Moxon: *DNB, sub nomine.*
22. Colvin, 1995, p.638: the sale catalogue is B.M. (S.C. 301(2)); Mandey's will is P. C. C. 99 DYER; Colvin notes that the 4th edn of *Mellificium Mensionis* (1721) includes a portrait of Mandey, aged 37.
23. J. Ayres, *Building the Georgian City*, New Haven CT and London, 1998, p.250, n.26 to chapter 1.
24. Ayres, 1998, p.250, n.25 to chapter 1; see also p.13: Mandey was "a bricklayer turned measurer".

AN UNUSUAL BRICK BOND IN THE USA

In February 2002 the British Brick Society received an inquiry from Mr David Weiser, whose house in Queens, New York City, USA, built in the 1920s, was affected by the crash of American Airlines Flight 587. The brickwork of the house is a facing to a timber-framed structure. "Each brick," writes Mr Weiser, "is different in shape and color although the basic shape is consistent." The bricks are laid in the wavy pattern shown in the accompanying photograph, with occasional pairs of vertical bricks included. The windows have flat arches of vertically-set bricks. The bricks are stamped HAMMOND. An Irish bricklayer once told Mr Weiser that such work is called *monkey brick*, whilst BBS member Gerard Lynch, an expert on bricklaying practices, refers to it as *monkey puzzle bond*. Mr Weiser would be glad to know more about this or about the Hammond bricks, which, he writes, are rumoured to have been handmade in England. Mr Weiser may be contacted by e-mail at:

DAVIDMWEISER@aol.com.

ROBERT TATERSAL: AN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BRICKLAYING POET

James W. P. Campbell [1]

Introduction

In 1734 and 1735 Robert Tatersal, a bricklayer, published two volumes of poetry which include important firsthand descriptions of the life of craftsmen of the period. Guild records show that literacy had steadily improved among bricklayers from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century, but the idea of a bricklayer poet may still seem surprising to some today. The present paper considers, for the first time, Robert Tatersal the bricklayer-poet, his life, and his work.

The Author

Although one of his poems appears in the *New Oxford book of Eighteenth-Century Verse*,[2] Robert Tatersal does not appear either in the *Dictionary of National Biography* or in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*.[3] Nor is his name on the lists of the Tylers and Bricklayers Company of London.[4] His identity can, however, be established from other sources.

Robert Tatersal was the son of William Tatersal, a writing-master at Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey, a fact that Robert reveals in an advertisement at the end of his second book. He is almost certainly the Robert Tattershal, son of William Tattershal, who was baptised at East Molsey, Surrey, only a few miles from Kingston, on 2 February 1708/9.[5] One of his poems is dedicated to a Robert Smyth of "West-Mousley" and this adds further credence to this conjecture. If this was the case, then he was 25 years old when his first volume was published and would have only recently finished his apprenticeship. The reason why the son of a writing-master should go to the expense of privately printing two volumes of poetry is explained by certain peculiar events that had led to a new literary craze in the early 1730s. Tatersal dedicated several of his poems and both his books to the poet Stephen Duck, who was at the centre of the new fashion.

Stephen Duck (1705–56; fig. 1) was a poet who had started life as a thresher. He had educated himself and published his first book of verse in 1730.[6] The book met with immediate success and went to no fewer than nine editions. The country was fascinated by the notion of a poet lacking any formal education. Duck went on to marry Queen Caroline's housekeeper, Sarah Big, in 1733. The Queen was so impressed by the self-educated thresher poet that she settled upon him an annual income of £30 a year and appointed him Yeoman of the Guard. He published a further fourteen volumes before his death in 1756. The rise of a humble craftsman to the Royal Household not surprisingly inspired a host of would-be imitators.

Robert Tatersal was probably not quite as humble in his origins as Stephen Duck. He may indeed have begun his working life as an apprentice bricklayer, as he claimed, but no doubt his father had encouraged him in every way in his education from an early age. As the son of a teacher, he would almost certainly have had access to at least a modest library throughout his childhood and in that regard too he could hardly be described as a typical building craftsman of the period. The rôle to which the most numerate craftsmen aspired was that of *measurer*, the eighteenth-century equivalent of a quantity surveyor.[7] In his second volume – or "part" as he calls it – Robert advertises his services in this capacity and also offers to teach "Writing, Arithmetick, Geometry, Dialling &c." It thus appears that, by the time of writing his poetry, Robert Tatersal hoped to earn his living from teaching and measuring rather than from laying bricks. By adopting the pretence of being a more humble

individual than he actually was, he simply hoped to exploit a literary fashion of the time.

Tatersal's Books

The Bricklayers' Miscellany or Poems on several subjects was published privately in two slim octavo volumes released consecutively in 1734 and 1735 – the title echoing Stephen Duck's *The Thresher's Miscellany or Poems on several subjects*, published in 1730. Tatersal's book was printed by John Wilford, a bookseller and printer who was active in London between 1722 and 1764 and had a shop behind the Chapter Coffee House in St Paul's Churchyard.[8] Volume One of Tatersal's work is dedicated to Richard Lord Onslow and contains seventeen poems. There are a further eleven in Volume Two, which has a longer introduction explaining Tatersal's reason for his work. The subject matter varies widely and includes biblical glosses, verses dedicated to patrons, a poem describing the beauties of Cambridge, and pieces on temperance and on bees. Several poems and the introduction to the second volume carry references to bricklaying, but only two poems are specifically devoted to it: *The Bricklayer's Labours* in Volume One and *Elegy on a Bricklayer; written by himself* in Volume Two. Both are printed below. The first is again a direct reference to Duck, whose poem *The Thresher's Labours* had first brought him to public attention.

Fig. 1 Stephen Duck (1705–56)

Tatersal never did achieve that success which was Stephen Duck's. As far as we know, he wrote no further works and I have been unable to find any other references to him. The parish registers of St Dunstan-in-the-West record the burial of one "Robert Tattershal" in January 1736/7, but he was probably *not* the bricklayer-poet. It seems more likely that he remained in Surrey, never having achieved the fame he sought, living the life he described: teaching, measuring, laying bricks, eating sprats, and drinking gin.

Appendix

(1) From: *Volume One, pp.27–30*

The Bricklayer's Labours

At length the soft Nocturnal Minutes fly
And crimson Blushes paint the orient Sky;
When by a kind of drowsy Stretch and Yawn,
I ope my Eyes, and view the scarlet Dawn;
But stealing Sleep my Vitals still surprize, 5
And with a slumb'ring Softness seal my Eyes,
Till open Light corroborates the Day,
And through the Casement darts his signal Ray;
When up I start, and view the eastern Sky,
And by my Mark find Six o'clock is nigh:[9] 10
Then hanging on my Thread-bare Coat and Hose,
My Hat, my Cap, my Breeches, and my Shoes;
With Sheep-skin Apron[10] girt about my Waste,
Down Stairs I go to visit my repast;
Which rarely doth consist of more than these, 15
A Quartern Loaf,[11] and half a Pound of Cheese;
Then in a Linnen Bag, on purpose made,
My Day's Allowance o're my Shoulder's laid,
And first, to keep the Fog from coming in,
I whet my Whistle with a Dram of Gin;[12] 20
So thus equip'd, my Trowel[13] in my Hand,
I haste to Work, and join the ragged Band:
And now each one his different Post assign'd,
And three to three in Ranks compleatly join'd;
When Bricks and Mortar eccho's from on high, 25
Mortar and Bricks, the common, constant Cry;
Each sturdy Slave their different Labours share,
Some Brickmen call'd, and some for Mortar are:[14]
With sultry Sweat and blow without Allay,
Travel the Standard up and down all Day;[15] 30
And now the Sun more exalted Ray,
With glowing Beams distributes riper Day,
When amidst Dust and Smoke, and Sweat and Noise,
A Line, a Line,[16] The Foreman crys, my Boys;
When Tuck and Pat with Flemish bound[17] they run, 35
Till the whole Course is struck,[18] compleat, and done:
Then on again, while two exalts the Quoin,[19]
And draws the midmost Men another Line.

The Course laid out, when thro' the fleeting Air,
A solemn Sound salutes the willing Ear; 40
When universal *Yo-ho's* eccho strait,
Our constant Signal to the Hour of Eight.
And now precipitant away we steer,
To eat our Viands, and to get some Beer;
Where midst the Clamour, Noise, and smoky Din 45
Of Dust, Tobacco, Chaws,[20] and drinking *Gin*,
The short Half-Hour we merrily do spin.
When for Desert some with their Sun-burnt Fists,
Cram in a Chaw of Half an Ounce at least,
And then to sweep the Passage clean within, 50
Wash down their Throats a Quartern[21] full of *Gin*,
And now again the Signal greets our Ear,
We're call'd to book, must at the Bar appear:
When the grim Host examines what we've done,
And score sometimes devoutly two for one; 55
And now refresh'd again we mount on high,
While one calls *Mortar*, other *Bricks* do cry;
And then a *Line*, a *Line's* the constant Sound,
By *Line* and *Rule* our daily Labour's crowned.
While to divert the sult'ry Hours along, 60
One tells a Tale, another sings a Song:
And now the Sun with full Meridian Ray,
With Scorching Beams confirms the perfect Day –
Full Twelve a Clock the Labourers cry *Yo-Ho*,
When some to Sleep, and some to Dinner[22] go: 65
Some that have Victuals eat; others who've none,
Supply the Place with Drink and *Gin* alone.
Mod'rate in Food, but in Beer profuse,
Which for the Heat we modestly excuse.
And now the gliding Minutes almost gone, 70
And a loud Noise proclaims the Hour of One;
Again we re-assume the dusty stage,
The Mortar chas'd again we do engage.
This the most tedious Part of all the Day,
Full five Hours Space to toil without Allay: 75
Now parch'd with Heat, and almost chok'd with Dust,
We join our Pence to satiate our Thirst:
At length the western Breezes gently play,
And *Sol* declining moderates his Ray;
Now the approaching welcome Hour draws near, 80
And now again the Signal glads our Ear;
The happy Hour we waited for all Day,
At length arrives our Labours to repay.
And now the Tools reposited with Care,
Until the morning Rays again appear; 85
Some homewards bend, some to the Alehouse steer,
Other more sober feast on better Cheer.
But when the Days contract and wint'ry Hours rise

And sable Clouds and Fogs invest the Skies,
When Frost and Cold congeals the *Atmosphere*, 90
And Trees disrob'd and hoary Fields appear;
When all the Earth in Ice and Snow is bound,
And nought but Desolation all around,
Then hapless me! I wander up and down,
With half an Apron, wond'rous greasy grown! 95
With anxious Looks my countenance is clad,
And all my Thoughts are like the Winter, sad!
This scene of Life corrodes my troubled Mind,
I seek for Work; but none, alas! can find;
Sometimes, by Chance, I have a Grate to set, 100
To hang a Copper, or a Hole repleat;
A Day or two to exercise my Skill,
But seldom more reluctant to my Will:
And thus I pass the tedious Winter on,
Sometimes Repast I have, and sometimes none;[23] 105
Till chearful *Phoebus* with a grateful Ray,
Thro' vernal Airs explores his willing Way;
Dispells all Cares, and gladdens every Vein,
And all the joyous Scene revolves again.

(2) From: *Volume Two, pp.18–19*

Elegy on a Bricklayer; written by himself

Mourn gentle Trowel, I must hence be gone,
And leave you friendless, destitute, alone;
No more these Hands shall flourish out thy Fame,
No more, in *Flemish* bond, thy Praise proclaim;
While tuck and pat from Line to Line[24] you flew, 5
And every Bricklayer's Admiration drew.
Mourn now, alas! And be consum'd with Rust,
And moulder, with thy Master, into Dust:
Thou, who in Life, wast ever dear to me,
Ah! Why, in Death, should thou forsaken be? 10
Mourn all ye Brick, and be ye dull with care,
Ye Axe, ye Stone, ye Bevel, and ye Square;
No more thy Virtues shall by me adorn
The *Dorick* Cornice, or *Corinthian* Horn;
The ruder *Tuscan* now must cover me, 15
The chiefest Relict of my Memory.
Mourn all ye Tyroes of the jovial Trade,
You've lost a Boon, a downright honest blade,
Who oft had pleas'd your Company within,
With many a Song, o'er Glass of Gin; 20
Without facetious, ever brisk and free,
Lover of Friends, and lov'd of's Company.
All Hands to work, and with a Semi-Round
Sprung o'er his Grave, protect him from the Ground;

Fix on its Crown and oblong Marble Stone, 25
Then write, at large, this Epitaph thereon.

EPITAPH

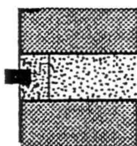
Here lies secure, full six Foot deep
A jolly Bricklayer, fast a-sleep;
Disturb him not, but let him rest, 30
Close with his Trowel on his Chest;
Who so many Winters has gone thro',
With many a Storm of Wind and Snow:
Eat many a Pound of Cheese and Bread,
And many a Sprat, both Tail and Head; 35
Drank many a Glass of Gin and Beer,
And yet he could not tarry here;
For chalk'd so much behind the Door,
The meagre Host would draw no more,
So took him hence, to pay the Score. 40

Notes and References

1. The research for this paper was undertaken as part of a two-year project examining seventeenth- and eighteenth-century brickwork; it was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Board under the direction of Professor Andrew Saint at the Martin Centre, University of Cambridge.
2. R. Lonsdale, ed., *The New Oxford Book of Eighteenth-Century Verse*, Oxford, 1984, pp.278–80.
3. *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, London, 1978–2001, vols. 1–237.
4. C. Webb, *London Apprentices*, vol.2, *Tylers and Bricklayers Company 1612–1800*, London, 1996.
5. International Genealogical Index.
6. For Duck's life see R. Southey, *Lives of the Uneducated Poets*, London, 1836, pp.88–113 and the entry in J. Sitter, ed., *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, vol. 95, *Eighteenth-Century British Poets: First Series*, London, 1990, *sub nomine*. [There is an interesting discussion of the *genre* with particular reference to Duck and with a few samples from his verse in M. Duffy, *England: The Making of the Myth from Stonehenge to Albert Square*, London, 2001, pp.139–51. TPS]
7. *Cf.* Venturus Mandey in the previous century, discussed in this issue: pp.16–19, *supra*.
8. H.R. Plomer, ed., *A Dictionary of Printers and Booksellers ... in England, Scotland and Ireland from 1726–1775*, Oxford, 1932, p.263.
9. Tatersal outlines a working day that starts at 6 am, with a half-hour break for breakfast at 8 am and an hour off from midday until 1 pm for "dinner" (see n.22, *infra*), the day ending at 6 pm. The 6 am to 6 pm working day matches that recorded in R. Campbell, *London Tradesmen*, London, 1747, p.332. The working week in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was six days long: see D. Woodward, *Men at Work: Labourers and Building Craftsmen in the Towns of Northern England, 1450–1750*, Cambridge, 1995, pp.122–31.
10. The sheepskin apron seems to have been commonly worn by building craftsmen and appears frequently in contemporary illustrations. The trade aprons were the origin of the ritual aprons worn by Freemasons. [An eighteenth-century English painted sign of *The Bricklayer* is reproduced in J. Ayres, *Building the Georgian City*, New Haven CT and London, 1998, p.111, fig. 166. The man, who is carrying a trowel in each hand, is wearing a brown, apparently leather, apron from his waist down to just above his calves. It is tied at the waist with thongs. His other clothing comprises a dark broad-brimmed hat, a white cravat-like neckerchief, a fairly tight-fitting dark jacket with wide sleeves, a shirt with full cuffs, white or grey stockings or leggings, and dark (black?) boots with metal buckles. See also the seventeenth-century tile drawing of a Dutch bricklayer on the cover of this issue. TPS]
11. A *quartern loaf* of bread weighed 4lb: C.R. Chapman, *How Heavy, How Much, and How Long?*,

Lochin, 1995, p.53.

12. *Gin*, originally a colloquial abbreviation of *genever* (Modern Dutch *jenever*), was invented in the Netherlands and first appeared in Britain in the late seventeenth century; by the eighteenth century it had become the spirit of choice of the urban poor, a fact that was both lampooned and lamented in contemporary engravings and literature.
13. The *trowel* is the only tool mentioned in this poem as being owned by the bricklayer. [Here and on subsequent occurrences the word needs to be pronounced as two syllables – *trow-ell* – if the line is to scan: TPS.]
14. That is, the men who lift the bricks up to the bricklayers are called "brickmen" and those who carry the mortar are called "mortarmen".
15. *Standards* were the vertical poles of the scaffolding; wooden ladders were used to ascend and descend and frequently appear in contemporary accounts.
16. Presumably a line for setting out the next course rather than a plumb line; such a line is shown in Joseph Moxon, *Mechanick Exercises: or the Doctrine of Handy-Works*, London, 1700, p.237; see also the cover illustration to this issue. In these respects, the process of bricklaying in the eighteenth century seems to have been very similar to that followed today.
17. *Tuck and pat (pointing)* is an early term for *tuck pointing*: 'a method of pointing in which lime putty is inserted into a pointing mortar which matches the colour of the ... brickwork, and is cut into precise lines so as to give the illusion of thin joints in fine-quality brickwork': R.W. Brunskill, *Brick Building in Britain*, new edn, London, 1997, pp.105–6:



Flemish bound is, of course, *Flemish Bond*, which by the eighteenth century was almost universally used; *Header Bond* is also occasionally found, but *English Bond*, which had been universal in late medieval, Tudor, and early Stuart times, fell from general use.
18. A *struck joint* is one with the mortar 'pressed in at the bottom' and is 'characteristic of bricks laid overhand from within a building rather than in the normal way from outside': Brunskill, 1997, p.103; in Tatersal's eighteenth-century usage, however, it may refer to no more than *finishing* the joint, with no specific method envisaged; lines 35–6 would then mean: *They apply tuck pointing to the Flemish Bond brickwork, then finish off the pointing so that the work is complete.*
19. As in current practice, the corners (*quoins*) of the building were constructed first, a few courses higher than the rest of the wall, and carefully measured; from these, a line of string is stretched to ensure that the next course of the wall in between is built level.
20. That is, *chewing tobacco* (OED).
21. That is, as applied to alcoholic beverages, a *gill*; a *gill* was one quarter of a pint except in the North of England, where it was half a pint: Chapman, 1995, p.41.
22. *Dinner* in the Middle Ages and in the eighteenth century was the main meal of the day and took place at midday. When, in the nineteenth century, the main meal was moved to the evening it retained the name 'dinner'. [This was in upper- and middle-class circles, where, at the same time, the midday meal came to be called 'lunch'. But in working-class usage 'dinner' continued to be applied to the midday meal – still the main meal of the day: this was certainly the case in my own working-class boyhood in the mid-twentieth century; 'lunch' meant a mid-morning snack, usually eaten in the school playground – a banana, it might be, or some cold buttered toast! One place where the older usage survives is in the phrase 'school dinner': TPS.]
23. Tatersal here gives a quite poignant picture of the seasonal and casual nature of a bricklayer's work; many suffered in similar ways from lack of employment during the winter months. [For the situation in mid-nineteenth-century London: H. Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (1861–2), selected by V. Neuburg, Harmondsworth, 1985, pp.78, 140. TPS]
24. For *pat and tuck* pointing and for *lines* see nn.16 and 17, *supra*.

THE RIDDLE OF THE SKEWBACKS

Roger Kennell

The term *skewback*, when related to arch construction, is used to describe the angled portion against which an arch rests above an opening in a wall, and from which the arch springs (fig. 1). The present contribution concerns the angles of the skewbacks used for the *Georgian arch*, sometimes also known as a *Flat arch* or *Straight arch*; the underside (soffit) is often slightly cambered. This type of arch was popular from the seventeenth to the early twentieth century, and was built of *rubbed and gauged work* – meaning that the fine quality and specially made arch bricks, termed *voussoirs*, were rubbed down to an exact wedge-shape and size, and were then laid using lime putty rather than mortar. This method achieved tight and precise joints, and a high quality finish to an arch. The arch style was used throughout the country wherever building with brick was practised. (In the Victorian period and after the effect was sometimes simulated – more cheaply – by using *moulded* voussoir bricks, but *genuine* rubbed and gauged work continued in use.)

Fig. 1 Skewback, angle of 54°, Aldeburgh, Suffolk

The standard angle of the skewback shown over many years in textbooks is 60°. Observation by the writer, however, has shown that although the skewbacks for many of these Georgian arches are indeed cut to this angle, many different angles are also employed. They range from a steep skewback of about 80°, which is very close to vertical, to an extremely acute angle of only 30°. The question, therefore, is: *Why was there such variation in the angles of the skewbacks used?*

In general, those skewbacks with a 60° angle occur throughout the period, whilst those with an angle greater than 60° (fig. 2) seem mostly to belong to the earlier period of this type of arch use. The lesser, more acute, angles (fig. 3) generally belong to a later period. The development of bricklayers' skills in erecting rubbed and gauged work obviously increased during the period, thus enabling arches of higher levels of quality to be constructed. For these arches, each arch-brick was a different shape and had to be rubbed down to size. Hence the

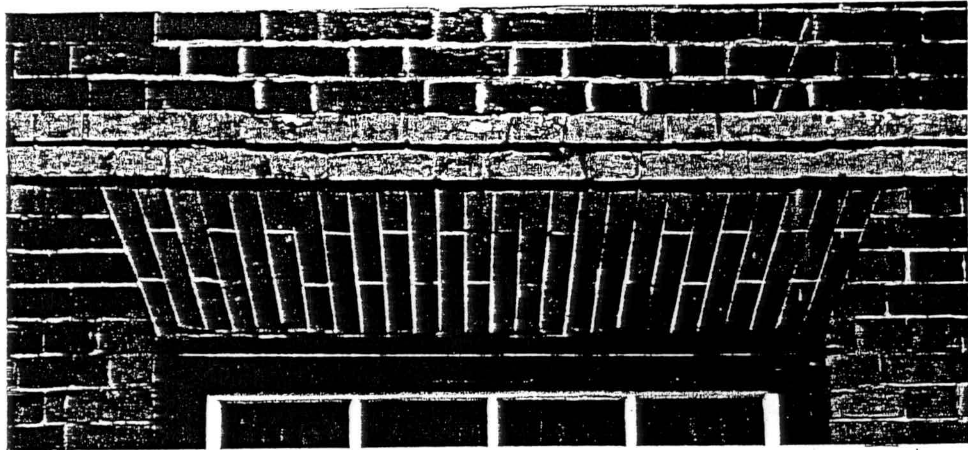


Fig. 2 Skewback with angle of 70°, Harwich, Essex

term *rubbed and gauged work.* Additionally, brickmaking skills developed for the making of the arch voussoirs themselves. The later more acute skewbacks would require much longer voussoirs, especially at the two ends of the arch, than those for an angle greater than 60°. Making and burning the longer voussoirs by overcoming the shrinkage and even burning problems could perhaps not be achieved at the earlier period. The angle of the skewback does not appear to be dictated by any structural considerations.

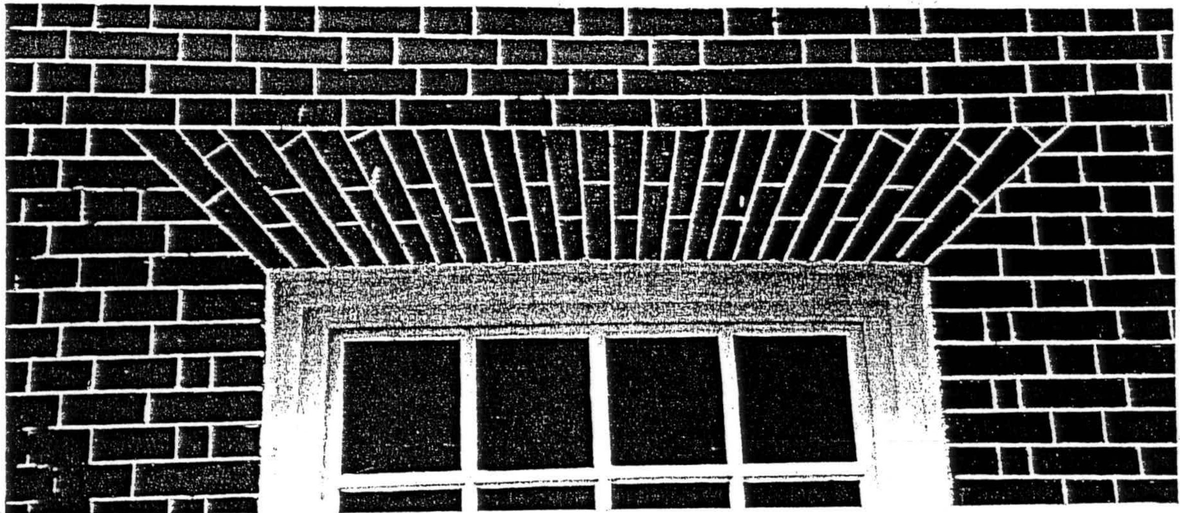


Fig. 3 An acute skewback of 45°, Harwich, Essex

The writer would like to pose the following questions:

(*i*) Has the varying angle been noted or considered previously?
(*ii*) What criteria governed the various angles of skewbacks employed?

The prestige achieved in constructing a Georgian arch with very acute skewbacks which required the extra length voussoirs and the skill required in cutting and rubbing them to acute angles may be the answer to the second of these questions. Perhaps, however, the reason is that it was just a fashion of design at the time – or was there another purpose?

BRITISH BRICK SOCIETY

MEETINGS IN 2003

The British Brick Society is in the course of arranging meetings for 2003. The provisional programme is as follows:

Saturday 5 April 2003 — *Northern Spring Meeting*
Nostell and Temple Newsam, Yorkshire
The brickworks at Nostell is part of a complex which includes an opencast coal and clay site. A guided tour has been arranged of the buildings of the Temple Newsam Estate, where the house is Tudor and Jacobean, and is now owned by Leeds City Council.

Members wishing to have a weekend in West Yorkshire will have the opportunity to visit Clarke Hall, near Wakefield, on the Sunday, when this brick E-plan house of 1542 with a wing of 1629 will be having an open day.

Saturday 10 May — *Spring Meeting*
Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire
To include tour of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre (1928-32), by Elizabeth Whitworth Scott, and a walk round Old Town to view the variety of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century brick buildings in the town. The tour will end to allow sufficient time for members to visit Shakespeare's Birthplace.

Saturday 14 June 2003 — *Annual General Meeting*
Jackfield, Salop

A Saturday in July — *July Meeting*
North Yorkshire
The society hopes to organise a July Meeting in North Yorkshire to include a visit to the mausoleum at Castle Howard.

A Saturday in late September or October — *Autumn Meeting*
Details to be announced.

The officers of the British Brick Society welcome suggestions and ideas for future meetings. Notice of brickworks who would be willing to host a visit would be particularly invited. Please contact Michael Hammett, David H. Kennett or Terence Paul Smith. Thank you.