

White granite in Brisbane

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During analysis of artefacts excavated at the 1 William Street development site in Brisbane City two sherds of white granite were identified. These sherds represent the first white granite ever identified on a Queensland historical archaeological site. The two sherds have different patterns and both patterns differ from any previously reported in Australia and do not occur in the 23 white granite patterns illustrated in the Diagnostic Artifacts in Maryland website. The sherds come from 10-inch plates that were manufactured by Pinder, Bourne & Co between 1862 and 1882 and are from the site of a cottage that existed between 1855 and 1919 that was occupied by a number of families.

INTRODUCTION

Ever since Brookes (2005) published his guide to British ceramics in Australia identifying regional variations in the distribution of particular patterns and body materials the authors have been conscious that no white granite has ever been identified in the historical archaeological record of Queensland. White granite, also known as white ironstone china (Brookes 2005:34), is a 'semi-vitreous refined earthenware, often featuring a slight bluish to bluish-grey tint' (Brookes 2005:35) and is usually undecorated except for moulded motifs.

White granite was manufactured in the United Kingdom from the 1840s by at least 26 different companies (see Kowalsky and Kowalsky 1999: 557, 564), predominantly for the American market where its popularity was at its height from 1840–1870 (Wetherbee 1985:6). Unlike the Australian market where preference was for colourful transfer prints, Americans appeared to favour plain white vessels with relief moulding (Lawrence and Davies 2011:304).

Small quantities of white granite have been identified on Australian sites that date to the period 1845–90 and particularly on sites occupied in the 1860s but as Brookes (2005:56–60) notes no white granite has as yet been identified with backstamps that pre-date 1861. This is significant as it supports the idea that ceramics were dumped on the Australian market when the American trade outlet was interrupted by the American Civil War between 1861 and 1865 (Lawrence and Davies 2011:304).

White granite has been identified at several sites in New South Wales including Lake Innes House and Hyde Park Barracks, in Victoria at Casselden Place, Short's National Hotel, Bean's Parsonage, and Viewbank, and in South Australia at the Quebec Street site (Brooks 2005:56–57). These sites are representative of all social classes. The predominant white granite pattern identified at these sites is 'Berlin Swirl', although Hayes (2014:51) also identified the 'Girard' pattern in the Viewbank assemblage.

Advertisements for white granite table and teawares began to appear in Sydney newspapers from 1844 (e.g. *The Australian* 23 Jan. 1844:2) and in Victoria from 1854 (*The Argus* 31 Jan. 1854:7). A search of Trove indicates that advertisements for white granite did not appear in Queensland newspapers until 1872 (*Brisbane Courier* 5 Oct. 1872:2) and continued to appear until 1940 (*Daily Mercury* 14 Sept. 1940:10). The advertisements were most prevalent in the early 1900s and appeared in newspapers throughout urban and regional Queensland.

SHORT STREET, BRISBANE

Two sherds of white granite (Figure 1) have been identified from a collection of artefacts donated to The University of Queensland by Environmental Resources Management Australia Pty Ltd (ERM). ERM undertook archaeological salvage activities at 1 William Street in Brisbane City that included only a very preliminary artefact analysis. The company's report recommended more detailed analysis be conducted (ERM 2014:C1) and the donated artefacts are currently being used for the teaching of artefact analysis. It was during this process that the two sherds of white granite were identified.



Figure 1: White granite sherds from Short Street, Brisbane (C. Hughes 2015).

The sherds derive from two separate 10-inch dining plates with partial backstamps that identify the maker as Pinder Bourne & Co with manufacture dating between 1862 and 1882 (Figure 2). The marks match 'Mark 295' in Gibson (2011:120) and contain an eagle, American shield and banners with the words 'IMPERIAL' and 'WHITE GRANITE' (Figure 3). The sherds both have moulded designs on the marley but they are not 'Berlin Swirl' or 'Girard'. Nor do the patterns match any of the 23 white granite patterns illustrated in the Diagnostic Artifacts in Maryland website (Maryland Archaeological Conservation Laboratory 2012). It is possible that the two designs are part of the same pattern as the moulded lines are very similar.

The two sherds were found in a 2.2 metre diameter circular, in-filled, brick-lined, subterranean tank on a lot that was originally part of the Commandant's garden during the convict period (1825–1839). Following subdivision, this Town Lot of 36 perches (910 m²) (Allotment 4, Section 38A, county of Stanley, North Brisbane) (Figure 4) was purchased by Michael O'Neill for £100 on 11 May 1854 (Colonial Secretary

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Figure 2: Backstamp on white granite sherds (C Hughes 2015).



Figure 3: Mark 295 from Gibson (2011:120).



Figure 4: Detail of 1895 McKellar Map of Brisbane. Allotment 4, Section 38A is at the corner of Short, Alice and William Streets.

1854). The lot was bounded to the north east by William Street, to the south east by Alice Street and to the south west by an unnamed street later gazetted as Short Street. The lot became No. 26 Short Street, but was also known as 26 Alice Street.

The purchaser, Michael O'Neill was an Irishman who acquired extensive land holdings in both North and South Brisbane and suburban areas as well as in Ipswich. O'Neill was a 'land agent' (Davison 2000:19) and in an advertisement in the *Moreton Bay Courier* (9 Sept. 1854:3) he claims that he sold land 'on such liberal terms that the man with the smallest income can secure a home'. O'Neill developed the Lot by erecting a cottage, later described as a 'villa residence, with all the necessary convenience for a respectable family' having 'five rooms, kitchen, servants' room, stable etc. [and] an excellent water tank, supplied from the roof' (*Moreton Bay Courier* 7 July 1855:3; 8 Sept. 1855:4). O'Neill himself lived on a 22 acre (8.9 ha) property 'Emerald Cottage' in Fortitude Valley and he let the Short Street cottage.

Initially, the cottage was leased by Francis Roberts (Figure 5), a roads surveyor employed by the Colonial Government (Institution of Surveyors 2013:13). Roberts lived in the cottage with his growing family until it was advertised for sale in 1855. Roberts went on to be appointed 'Surveyor of Roads, Brisbane' in 1856, with a salary of £500 per annum and a travelling allowance of £100 (Institution of Surveyors 2013: 13). In 1863, he was selected to survey the Queensland–New South Wales border in conjunction with Isiah Rowlands, a New South Wales Government surveyor. Their boundaries differed in places, however it was line surveyed by Roberts' that remains the official State border (The State of Queensland 2011:5).

The property was acquired in the late 1850s by Jeremiah and Eliza Daly (*Brisbane Courier* 2 Jan 1858:4), and was known in the 1860s as Daly Cottage (*Brisbane Courier* 30 Aug. 1864:1). Daly, an Irishman from County Longford, arrived in Sydney with his wife aboard the *Sir Charles Napier* in April 1842 (State Records Authority of NSW: 1842) when he gave his occupation as agricultural labourer. In July 1846, he was appointed Crier of the Supreme Court, Sydney, at an

annual salary of £63/17/6 (State Records Authority of NSW 1846:170). He held that position until December 1852 when he was promoted to Sheriff's Bailiff for Moreton Bay at which time his remuneration increased to £195 per annum (State Records Authority of NSW 1852:180). The Daly family lived in William Street (*Brisbane Courier* 17 June 1865:6) and rented out the Short Street cottage to a series of occupants that might have included Mr S White (*Moreton Bay Courier* 25 April 1861:3), the Wright family (*Brisbane Courier* 2 July 1869:2), and the Robertson family (*The Telegraph* 12 May 1875:2). Jeremiah Daly died suddenly on 12 July 1865; the City Coroner attributed the cause to 'death by the visitation by God' (*Brisbane Courier* 14 July 1864:2). Following his death Eliza Daly continued to rent out the cottage, and although both the Short Street cottage and her residence in William Street were listed for sale in September 1875 (*Brisbane Courier* 2 Sept. 1875:4), Mrs Daly was still advertising the cottage for rental the following year (*The Telegraph* 14 June 1876:3).



Figure 5: Francis E. Roberts n.d. (State Library of Qld No. 81563).

In August 1881, the cottage was occupied by John and Catherine Kelso and their sons David, John and William (*The Week* 27 Aug. 1881:7) who lived there until early 1886 (*Brisbane Courier* 22 Jan. 1886:1). The cottage continued to be offered for rent at a cost that varied from 18 shillings to £1

per week if 'washing included' (e.g. *The Telegraph* 23 Aug. 1887:5). The next known resident was Mr William Wilcox, who died in the cottage of an aneurysm on 10 July 1899, while eating his breakfast (*Morning Bulletin* 12 July 1899:4).

The 1905 Australian Electoral Roll indicates that at that time the Kavanagh family and a charwoman, Ida Kuhnert, lived at the address. Ida was one of 14 children of German immigrant farmers, Carl and Bertha Kuhnert from Monkey Waterholes (now Blanchview) on the Darling Downs in southern Queensland (*Darling Downs Gazette* 26 Nov. 1901:2). The Kavanagh family had lived in the Short Street cottage since at least 1902, as in May of that year Martha Kavanagh was fined for 'keeping a dirty yard' (*Brisbane Courier* 27 May 1902:6). In April 1907, Martha married Charles Mason (QBDM No B005413) and they continued to reside in the cottage on the corner of Short and Alice Streets with Martha's brother Alfred and his wife Annetta until November 1912 (*Brisbane Courier* 24 June 1913:8). Two of the Kavanaghs worked as cooks and Martha, a nurse, gained some notoriety for performing illegal operations for the purpose of gaining 'a certain result' (*Daily Mercury* 23 Sept. 1910:8). She was twice committed for trial, once for causing the death of a young woman (*Brisbane Courier* 11 June 1913:11) and once for using force on two young women to procure abortion (*Brisbane Courier* 2 July 1913:6). On both accounts Martha escaped with a ruling of 'no true bill' indicating that the court considered there was insufficient evidence to convict her (*The Telegraph* 1 Sept. 1913:1).

The lot was surveyed a number of times for different purposes and the 1905 Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Board field survey plan does not include the brick lined tank although it includes all other built features (Figure 6) including a rectangular earth closet. Therefore the circular tank had almost certainly been in-filled by this time. The lot was again

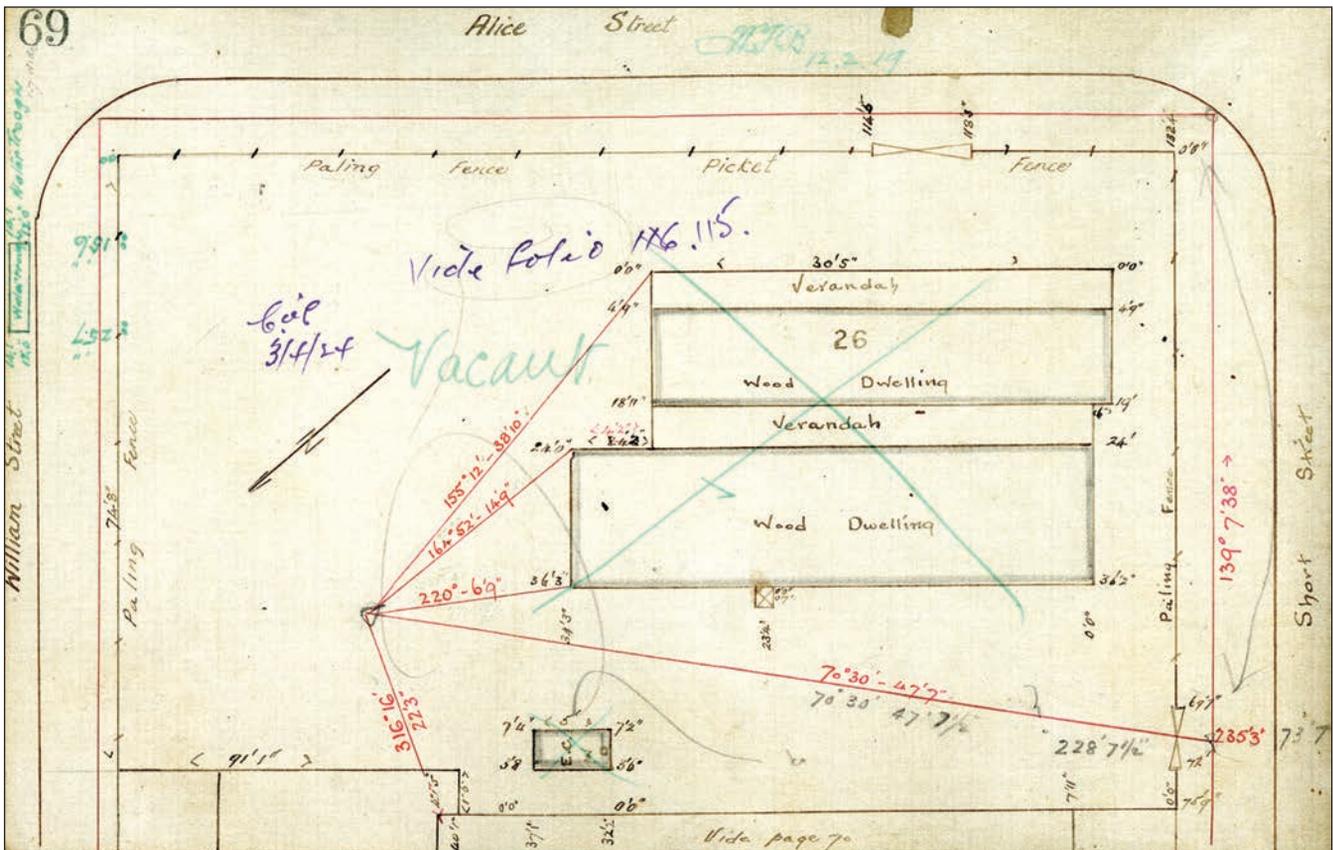


Figure 6: Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Board 1919 Field Survey Book for Detailed Survey Plan No 41.

re-surveyed in 1919 and by that time the cottage had been demolished. The next known use of the property was in 1939 when Jensen's Fuel Depot relocated their premises from Adelaide Street to the corner of Short and Alice Streets (*Courier Mail* 28 Feb. 1939:14). This depot was still operational in December 1941 (*Courier Mail* 20 Dec. 1941:11).

In 1936, The University of Queensland took over buildings on the corner of William and Alice Streets to the north east side of the Short Street lot, and established the Sir William MacGregor School of Physiology on the site (*Courier Mail* 30 Sept. 1936:14). In the 1940s the university extended its building onto Lot 4 Short Street destroying any evidence of the footings of the cottage. The entire street was acquired by the Queensland Government in the 1960s as part of a planned Government Precinct. All the buildings in the street were demolished in 1980 and the area became a carpark in 1982 (ERM 2014:30).

CONCLUSION

Unfortunately the two sherds of white granite tableware cannot be attributed to any particular occupant of the cottage but we do know that the cottage was occupied by families of various ethnicities (e.g. O'Neill and Daly were Irish and the Kelso family was from Glasgow (QSA 1848–1912:1065) for the entire period between 1855 and 1913. Therefore the plates derive from a domestic situation rather than a commercial enterprise such as a hotel or cafe. The social status of the occupants has yet to be determined but Miller (1991:12-15) attributes a higher value to white granite than almost all other forms of flatware. In fact he values white granite at more than twice the value of willow pattern. Brookes (2005:62) cautions, however, that Miller's CC Values are not 'directly transferable to the Australian archaeological record'. This seems likely given that even regional retailers were advertising 10-inch white granite plates for sale for as little as 3 pence each in 1888 (*Maryborough Chronicle* and *Wide Bay and Burnett Advertiser* 11 June 1888:3).

The two plates were manufactured between 1862 and 1882 but could have entered the archaeological record at any time before the closure of the tank. These dates support Brooke's (2005:56-60) statement that white granite did not enter the Australian archaeological record prior to 1861 even though advertisements appeared from 1844. It is also interesting to note that these plates were manufactured by Pinder, Bourne & Co the immediate successor to Pinder, Bourne & Hope as Brookes (2005:60) comments that 'tableware vessels made by the Staffordshire firm of Pinder, Bourne and Hope appear to be unusually common in Australia when compared to British and American sites'.

Further investigation is needed to identify the specific patterns on these sherds as they do not appear to have been previously identified in the Australian context. But what we have done by identifying these white granite sherds is to extend the known geographic range of white granite in Australia.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors acknowledge the efforts of the Environmental Resources Management Australia archaeological team particularly Stefani Blackmore, Holly Mclean and Tina King. We thank Hannah Craig-Ward for her efforts in the archaeology labs and Carly Hughes, Curator, Redcliffe Museum, for photographing the artefacts.

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