

THE MANUFACTURE OF GLASS HOUSE POTS

Harris and Pearson were not producing glass house pots when I joined them in 1935 and it was not until circa 1935-39 that manufacture was re-commenced.

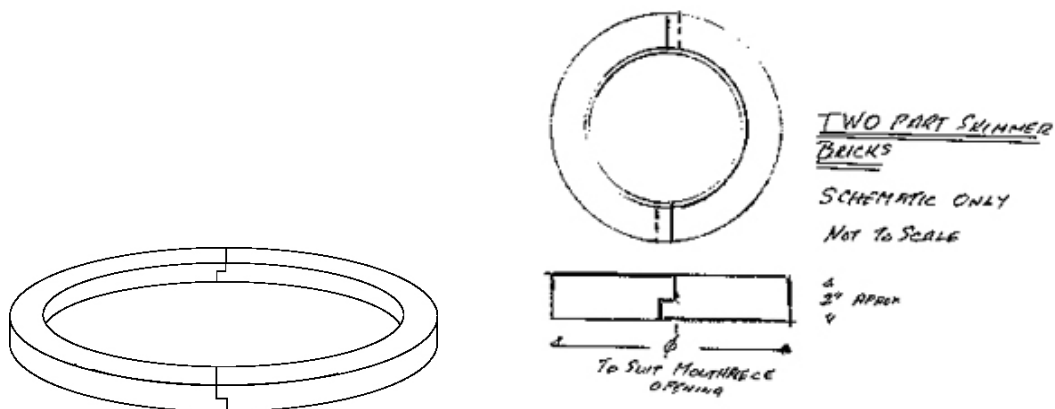
A master pot maker named Harry Tootell whose work was greatly respected by the glass industry both in U.K. and abroad, was employed to begin production.

Harry moved into the mould store, immediately adjacent to (and on the same floor as) the Carpenters shop. The old moulds were moved, and specially lined bins were erected for clay storage.

Harry was meticulous in the preparation of his material. Inspecting each batch as it was made up. It was then mixed and put into the bins to “sour” for some months, before use. I had the privilege of working with him in the preparation of mouthpieces and templates etc. It was fascinating to see a master craftsman form such large pots from small rolls of clay using very little equipment except the occasional template and a mould (ex the carpenters shop) to form the pot’s mouthpiece which, of necessity, must be accurately formed in order to seat the stopper which was used when the pot was operating. The turning of the dome was particularly difficult, since supports were unable to be used, and it was turned in stages which took a considerable time to complete, since the clay had to be just the right consistency and moisture content before succeeding layers could be rubbed on – this was where the true skill and inherent knowledge of the maker was well and truly required.

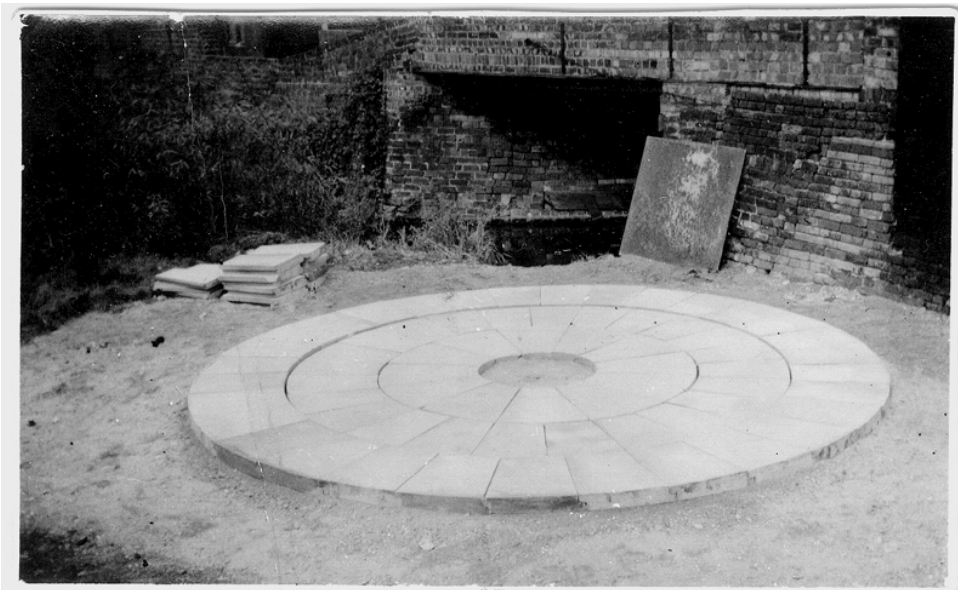
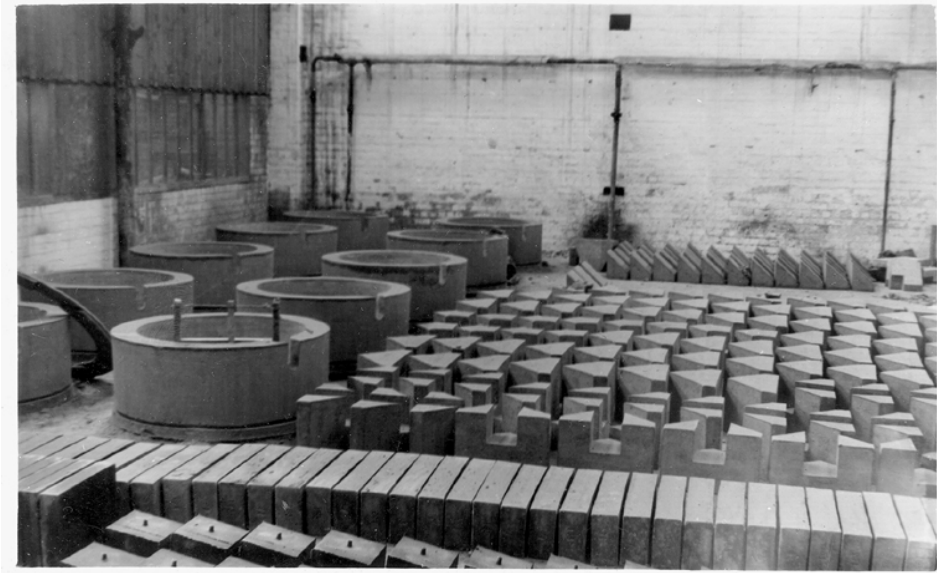
Harry made three types of pot. One was the normal type with a single mouthpiece, the second and largest pot was called an Elephant Pot, this had two mouthpieces (one at each end), and, as far as I can recall, was not in great demand. The other pot was a tapered section with no dome, the top being open, this was called a “Bale Out” type and could be used in industries other than glass making.

Also produced were skimmer bricks, these were made in two halves for ease of insertion into the pot, and were used to provide a clear area from which to draw clean glass. The blocks floated on the molten glass and kept the dross away.



Scrap clay ex pot making was used for the skimmer bricks if possible: but normal old mine mix was also used.

Retorts were made by Joe Radford in the same fashion, using clay rolls which were rubbed round a central plug, carrying a template for wiring off the external shape of the retorts; and able to move vertically. The normal horizontal gas retorts were approximately six feet high and built, and set for firings, using special scaffolding and setting carriages.



This photo was given to me as a memento when I left Harris and Pearson for the R.A.F. It shows a setting out of the bottom course of a Blast Furnace “bosh” and I was told that it is one of the last if not the last to be made at H&P from local clay. This is quite probable, since clay based blast furnace bosh brick were rapidly going out of fashion, being replaced by basics such as carbon or graphite.

Harry Smith