

E1b – SOIL HILL POTTERY, Coal Lane, Keighley Road, Causeway Foot

SE 0726 3146 – Yorks. (W.R.) CCXV.12

1898-c1982

1898-1916	Isaac Button (George & Arthur Button)	domestic earthenware potters
1916-1934	Isaac Button (George, Arthur & David Button)	domestic earthenware potters
1934-1942	Isaac Button (George & Arthur Button)	domestic earthenware potters
1942-1943	Isaac Button (Arthur Button)	domestic earthenware potters
1943-1947	Isaac Button (Arthur Jnr & Isaac Button)	domestic earthenware potters
1898-1964	Isaac Button (Isaac Button)	domestic earthenware potters
1964-c1970	closed	
c1970-c1982	Donald Greenwood and others	earthenware potter

EARLY DAYS UP TO 1947

In 1897 Isaac Button of Fountain Pottery, Liversedge bought Swilling Hill Pottery in 1897 from Hannah Kitson.¹ (see **E1a – Swilling Hill Pottery**) Whilst he purchased the pottery at Swilling Hill he remained at Fountain Pottery until his death in 1905, putting in his sons to run his new acquisition.² Isaac was obviously not happy with the existing pottery because he set about building a new one, using the old pottery to make the bricks, which were clamp fired.³ Swilling Hill Pottery closed down the following year when he transferred the operation to the new pottery slightly lower down the hill at Soil Hill.⁴ (see **Figure 1 – 1892 Plan of Swilling Hill Pottery and Site of Soil Hill Pottery**) The pottery was well located for raw materials with a four feet of layer of red firing Ice Age boulder clay from which to make the earthenware pots, with 60 feet above that the Coal Measures providing six feet fireclay of the Hard Bed seam which provided white firing clay for decoration (slip and glazes) in the centre, with the outer part provided fireclay for kiln furniture beneath coal for firing the kilns, whilst a further 60 feet higher was another fireclay seam, this time four feet thick that provided refractory clay for stoneware, and between the two fireclay seams there was Elland flag sandstone for kiln shelving.⁵

The new pottery was well planned and rather innovative, incorporating steam powered machinery, and a downdraught pottery kiln whose flue was used to dry the pots, on its way to the 80ft. tall square chimney.⁶ (see **Figure 2 – View of Pottery from South West**) The layout was basically F-shaped, with the top F projection being at the highest point on the north east corner where the clay was prepared.⁷ (see **Figure 3 – Sketch Layout of the Pottery**) To the south of this was the making workshop with the potters wheels. Next came the drying room to the west, followed by the glazing area to the rear of which, projecting out to the north, was the kiln.⁸ Finally at the extreme west end was the stock room with a loading bay at the low point.⁹

The new pottery was run by two of Isaac Button's sons, George and Arthur, who by 1901 had moved to live next to the pottery on Coal Lane.¹⁰ Isaac remained in Liversedge with his other son David.¹¹ (see **Figure 4 – 1905 Plan of Soil Hill Pottery**) On 31 October 1905 Isaac Button died aged 65. Soil Hill then passed to his three sons, though it appears David remained at Fountain Pottery,¹² till it was sold to a firm of glass makers in 1916.¹³ The pottery traded as Isaac Button, rather than in the names of his sons.¹⁴ (see **Figure 5 – Button Family Tree**)

In 1912 an application for an extra kiln and drying shed was approved,¹⁵ though not built.¹⁶ (see **Figure 6 – 1914 Plan of Soil Hill Pottery**) In 1919 the Halifax Antiquarian Society had a visit there where they found –

*'the tall chimney a landmark for the district. ... The visitor is apparently at liberty to walk about the works, to see men spinning the clay into bowls on the potter's wheel, or dabbing on the pots, glazing bread-bowls or the drying and baking the earthenware.'*¹⁷

During the twenties a supply of accessible shale suitable for brick production was found on their land.¹⁸ Following this the brothers purchased a hand brick press with which to make bricks and experimentally made several batches.¹⁹ (see **Figure 7 – Photograph of 'BUTTON' Brick**)

Apparently the brothers could not agree on production levels, and the corresponding resources required, so that the whole project was dropped leaving considerable bad feeling in the family.²⁰

In the thirties, Soil Hill kept thirteen throwers and a full staff of around thirty workers fully occupied.²¹ Some idea of the products made can be seen in the accompanying post card which shows stew pots, storage pots, baking bowls and plant pots. The brown colour was caused by the iron content of the clay, whilst the insides of baking bowls were coated with a light coloured clay glaze.²² At that time most households had a variety of earthenware, which included stew pots, large bowls in which to knead bread and allow it to rise in front of the fire, and big pots to store the bread, as well as those used by hawkers in which to carry their ware from door to door.²³ In 1934 David (born 1873) retired from the business,²⁴ and died on 6 July 1940,²⁵ the first of the brothers to die despite being the youngest. (see **Figure 8 – 1934 Plan of Soil Hill Pottery**) In 1939 there were thirteen men working at the pottery which included six or seven members of the family.²⁶

On 24 January 1942 George (born c1870) died,²⁷ leaving just Arthur (born c1866) of the three brothers. He died the following year,²⁸ on 3 May 1943. The business was now in the hands of two of Arthur's sons, Arthur (born c1894) and Isaac (born 28 June 1903).²⁹ At this time Isaac was serving in the forces so was not active at the pottery.³⁰ With the return of peace Isaac was demobbed and returned to work.³¹ Unfortunately the two brothers fell out and would both walk to the pottery apart and worked in stubborn silence throughout the day.³² In 1947 Isaac became the sole owner,³³ when Arthur left at 54 years old to work elsewhere.³⁴ Subsequently Arthur went on to run the Causewayfoot Inn,³⁵ with his wife (the former Alice Nutbrown who he had married in 1919), between 1955 and 1964.³⁶ In March 1931 Isaac had married Jessie Inman from Skipton.³⁷

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- 3 Andrew McGarva, *Country Pottery: Traditional Earthenware of Britain*, A. & C. Black, London, 2000, p. 65.
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- 5 Graham Wilkinson, *History of Local Potteries*, Bradford Art Galleries and Museums, Bradford, 1981, p. 5; and Andrew McGarva, *Country Pottery: Traditional Earthenware of Britain*, A. & C. Black, London, 2000, pp. 37-38.
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- 18 Michael Wilkinson, local farmer who was a friend of Isaac Button, as told to Derek Barker in September 2013.
- 19 Thornton Antiquarian Society exhibition on quarrying, mining and pottery at South Square, Thornton, in September 2013.
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- 23 Peter C. D. Brears, *English Country Pottery: Its History and Techniques*, David and Charles, Newton Abbot, 1971, p. 226; James Walton, 'Some Decadent Local Industries part 1: Pottery', in *Transactions*, Halifax Antiquarian Society, Halifax, 1938, p. 34; and Heather Lawrence, *Yorkshire Pots and Potteries*, David and Charles, Newton Abbot, 1974, p. 187.
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- 31 Heather Lawrence, *Yorkshire Pots and Potteries*, David and Charles, Newton Abbot, 1974, p. 187.
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- 33 Information supplied by Graham Sellars, who was **Arthur Button's son-in law**.
- 34 Information supplied by Graham Sellars, who was **Arthur Button's son-in law**.
- 35 Information supplied by Peter Robinson from information he had collected from the licencing records.
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- 37 Marriage records given on <http://www.ancestry.com>.

Illustrations

- Figure 1** 1892 Plan of Swilling Hill Pottery and Site of Soil Hill Pottery – Ordnance Survey, 25 inch to 1 mile Series: Yorkshire (West Riding) Sheet CCXV.12, Southampton, 1894, surveyed in 1892.
- Figure 2** View of Pottery from South West – Photograph by R. Fournier shown in Andrew McGarva, *Country Pottery: Traditional Earthenware of Britain*, A. & C. Black, London, 2000, p. 65.
- Figure 3** Sketch Layout of the Pottery – Andrew McGarva, *Country Pottery: Traditional Earthenware of Britain*, A. & C. Black, London, 2000, p. 64.
- Figure 4** 1905 Plan of Swilling Hill Pottery – Ordnance Survey, 25 inch to 1 mile Series: Yorkshire (West Riding) Sheet CCXV.12, Southampton, 1908, surveyed in 1905.
- Figure 5** Button Family Tree – Birth, marriage, death and census records given on <http://www.ancestry.com>.
- Figure 6** 1914 Plan of Soil Hill Pottery – Ordnance Survey, 25 inch to 1 mile Series: Yorkshire (West Riding) Sheet CCXV.12, Southampton, 1919, surveyed in 1914.
- Figure 7** Photo of 'BUTTON' Brick – Derek Barker.
- Figure 8** 1934 Plan of Swilling Hill Pottery – Ordnance Survey, 25 inch to 1 mile Series: Yorkshire (West Riding) Sheet CCXV.12, Southampton, 1935, surveyed in 1934.

ISAAC BUTTON JNR. AND WORKING THE POTTERY (1947-1964)

The method of working remained the same throughout its life, all that changed was the scale of operation and the number of workers. The process of clay preparation was described as –

*'At Soil Hill pottery, Isaac Button dug a buff-coloured glacial clay and barrowed it down the hillside to the pottery buildings.'*³⁸

Other clay from higher up the hillside was brought down in an old wagon which required the clay to be shovelled on and off the flat-bed.³⁹ (see **Figure 9 – Old Flat-Bed Wagon Loaded with Clay**)

This wagon was described as having its tyres filled with clay and its petrol tank hung by string under the driver's seat. (see **Figure 10 – Old Wagon delivering Clay to Blunger, Alongside Pan**)

*'Clay improves with keeping; the action of frost and rain breaks down the clay particles to increase plasticity. Because of this property the clay was heaped into piles and allowed to weather. Weathering was typically the first stage at most potteries; usually the clay was left exposed to the elements over one or two winters, being turned occasionally.'*⁴⁰ (see **Figure 11 – Clay Left for Weathering**)

*After weathering, the clay was shovelled into a 'dry pan', where paired heavy iron wheels, rotating around a central pillar, and on their own axles, crushed the pieces of dry clay to an even size. All machinery was originally driven by belts from a steam engine, but a diesel engine was later installed. From the 'dry pan', the crushed clay was shovelled into the blunger.'*⁴¹

*In the blunger, rotating paddles mixed the clay with water to form a slurry; any large stones sank to the bottom of the mixing tank. When the slurry was thoroughly mixed, the outlet valve was opened, and the liquid was allowed to flow from the blunger, through a sieve which removed any remaining stones and coarse grit, into drying beds. The drying beds at Soil Hill were unique in this area, and were built at the end of the nineteenth century as an alternative to the old sun pans. The Soil Hill drying beds consist of a shallow, roofed trough, floored with fireclay slabs.'*⁴²

This was located outside the rear of the drying room.⁴³

*'Beneath the full length of this trough runs the main flue from the kiln to the chimney, so that waste heat from the kiln is used to dry out the clay slurry. (see **Figure 12 – Drying Bed**) This innovation meant that clay could be dried out to a usable consistency irrespective of the weather. In the older type of sun pans, the slurry was simply allowed to run into shallow square pits, where the clay settled to the bottom. A sluice allowed the clear water to be run off the clay deposit, and the residue allowed to dry in the sun. Sun pans could therefore only be used in the dryer months. An interesting advantage of the sun pan system is that clay can be graded. As the slurry from the blunger runs into the pan, the coarser particles are naturally deposited first, nearest the blunger, and the finest particles are deposited furthest away. Thus the potter can distinguish between 'cup clay', found furthest away from the entry, and coarse 'crock clay', found closest to the blunger. This particularly useful as to make large pots, an open gritty textured clay is needed.'*⁴⁴

*After drying, the clay was dug out of the drying beds, and put through a pug-mill which homogenised the clay, and removed most of the air. The clay extruded from the pug-mill was sliced off into blocks, and the blocks stacked in the clay-place or dress and left to 'sour'. Good clay has a slight 'off' smell, which is produced as the carbonaceous particles in it continue to break down. After six months or so, Mr Button put the clay back through the pug-mill for a final mixing. (see **Figure 13 – Pug Mill**) Finally, for large pots, pieces of clay had to be 'wedged' by hand, a process which involved throwing the lump of clay onto a stone slab, and then repeatedly slicing it and banging the wedges back together. Wedging ensures that all the air which could damage a pot during manufacture is finally removed from the clay. The clay was then ready for the forming process.'*⁴⁵

All this took place around the so called engine house, which originally contained the steam engine that was later replaced by an electric motor. The dry pan and blunger were located outside but still conveniently sited for easy power supply from the line shafting, as was the pug mill. The pug mill was conveniently located by the door so the clay could easily be transferred by barrow from the drying bed immediately outside.⁴⁶

The clay then has to be made into the pot or whatever. This process was little different from that used by modern studio potters except that the wheels turned quicker and the pots were thrown with the minimum of effort.⁴⁷ That way an apprentice trained potter could throw over a ton of clay in a day. To make a pot –

'balls of wedged clay of equal weight were taken to the wheel. The wheel was set spinning at high speed, the wheelhead was damped with water from the tray, and a ball of clay was thrown onto the wheelhead. By pushing downwards with the edge of one hand, and inwards with the heel of the other, the clay was forced to the centre of the wheel, an operation known as 'centring'; (see Figure 14 – Centring) for very large pots where perhaps thirty pounds of clay was being handled, centring required great strength and skill, and many potters used a substantial beam as a back support to push against. Next, the wheel was slowed down, and the thumbs were pushed into the centre of the rotating clay until they rested just above the level of the wheelhead. The forefingers were then used to draw out the clay to the final size of the pot base, leaving a thick collar of clay around a flat base. (see Figure 15 – Opening Up) At this stage, the inside base was tidied up using the crooked fingers. The walls of the pot were then raised by 'knuckling up', which involves squeezing the clay collar between wet knuckles of the two hands, whilst drawing the clay upwards and slightly inwards. This operation produced the basic cylinder from which all pot shapes could be made. (see Figure 16 – First Pull) By applying greater hand pressure to the inside than the outside, open forms such as plant pots or bread pancheons could be made; by reversing this, and pushing inwards, closed forms were produced. (see Figure 17 – Second Pull) Placing both hands around the outside of the spinning cylinder and forcing the clay inwards and upwards was known as 'collaring', and produced a narrow neck. (see Figure 18 – Swelling Out; and Figure 19 – Forming Rim) Before closed shapes were collared, the inside pot bottom was usually sponged clear of water, as any left inside would eat its way through the pot base and cause the pot to collapse. When the rough shape of the pot had been made, the final surface was smoothed off using a 'rib', usually a flat piece of wood, steel, or stone; this removed any throwing marks. ...⁴⁸ (see Fig. 20 – Final Shaping; and Fig. 21 – Potter at Work)

For simple shapes such as plant pots, all that remained was to crook the forefinger of one hand over the rim of the pot to form a lip, and the pot was complete. (see Figure 22 – Finishing Off Flower Pot) The pot could then be cut free of the still revolving wheelhead with a wire, and then lifted clear to be placed on a board with other identical pots. (see Figure 23 – Lifting Off) More complicated shapes required more work. A feature of many local slipwares is a small foot at the base of the pot. This was shaped using a rib and fingers before the pot was removed from the wheel. Jug lips were also usually pulled before the pot was removed from the wheel, ...⁴⁹

Isaac Button's wheel used a –

'small driven wheel in right angled contact with the face of a large horizontal flywheel. The small wheel could travel across the large wheel, giving high speed nearest the centre spindle, and the slowest speed when near the outside edge.'⁵⁰ (see Figure 24 – Armitage Disc Drive Wheel as Used at Soil Hill)

Latterly there were three wheels powered by an electric motor which included one Boulton cone type, whilst the Armitage wheel had been fitted with a cross-bar to enable it to be controlled when the potter was standing to make taller pots.⁵¹ (see Figure 25 – Boulton Cone Type Wheel)

*'After being removed from the wheel, the pots were placed on boards and carried to the drying rooms, (see **Figure 26 – Drying Room in 1930**; **Figure 27 – Drying Room in 1962**; **Figure 28 – Bread Crocks Drying**; and **Figure 29 – Pots Drying**) or outside in fine weather. (see **Figure 30 – Group of Potters**) Finished pots were allowed to become dry, but those requiring handles were only allowed to dry out to a state of 'leather' or 'green' hardness. Many older people in the area remember, as children, throwing stones at pots drying in the sun, much to the annoyance of the potters.'*⁵²

Within the 20ft. x 15ft. drying room there were racks for smaller items along the sides. The room was located between where pots were thrown and glazed.⁵³ After 1947 Isaac Button was on his own so the kiln was not fired as frequently and therefore there was not always heat for drying, which was overcome by moving the old steam engine into the drying room.⁵⁴

Once at the required dryness –

*'bung holes or decorative shapes were pierced as necessary, and handles and spouts added. Handles could be pulled from a piece of wet clay, cut to length, and then joined to the green ware with a little slip, or they could be pulled on the pot. The second method involved attaching a small cone of clay to the pot, then pulling the cone between the wet thumb and fingers to form the shape and length of the handle. (see **Figure 31 – Adding Handles**) The bottom end of the handle was then stuck in position with slip. Spouts were normally thrown on the wheel and then attached to the piece when both the body of the vessel and the spout were at the same stage of dryness. As clay shrinks on drying, keen judgement was needed at this time. Most potters threw pot and spout immediately after each other, from the same batch of clay. Spouts for puzzle jugs, and modelling such as frogs for frog pots were all added towards the end of potting; bowls could be made oval at this stage by slicing a lens of clay out of the bottom of a round thrown bowl, then pushing the base back together and cementing it with slip. Square bottles were also made before pots were fully hard, by tapping the sides flat with a piece of wood.'*⁵⁵

Because the pottery would only be fired to a low temperature (1000 to 1100 degrees centigrade)⁵⁶ the pot would be porous if not glazed. The glaze used would be a 'slip-glaze',⁵⁷ with the main component being local clay. This gives the advantage that the glaze 'fits' the body of the pot better,⁵⁸ so that the glaze shrinks more or less at the same rate as the pot during firing, thereby avoiding crazing, peeling or breakage. Glazing took place when the pot was at the 'leather' stage.⁵⁹ In this process –

*'Slip was mixed in the blunger, using the common white-firing clay, and water; it was then transferred to a container in the pottery. Isaac Button used a large bread pancheon to hold slip, and stirred the creamy liquid with a barrel stave. (see **Figure 32 – Slip Coating**) The simplest ... method of decoration was that of lining the inside of pots with white slip. A little slip was poured into the bottom of the pot, which was then tilted and rotated so that the slip covered the whole of the inside. Any excess liquid was then poured back into the bin. (see **Figure 33 – Glazing Pancheons**) Small wares could be filled to the brim, then inverted to remove the excess. Larger wares, like bread pancheons, required great skill. The potter crouched, legs splayed, elbows on hips, with the pancheon held between the hands. By tilting the bowl and spinning it between the hands, the small pool of liquid was spread evenly over the inside. The pancheon was then held in one hand, whilst excess slip was wiped off the deliberately undercut lip of the vessel. Considering the fragility of unfired pottery, there can be few potters today who would attempt this activity without a sinking heart.'*⁶⁰

When the exterior of a pot was to be glazed it was simply a matter of dipping the pot into a tub of glaze.⁶¹ (see **Figure 34 – Dipping Exteriors of Bread Crock**) As late as the 1940s –
'Isaac Button was still using litharge as a constituent of his glazes; lead can be 'fritted', or made insoluble by combining the lead chemically before it is put into the glaze. The

most common “safe” lead product is lead bisilicate: Mr Button was never entirely satisfied with his fritted glazes, feeling that they appeared sterile, and gave trouble in the firing.’⁶²

When fully dry the pottery would be taken to the kiln for firing. **(see Figure 35 – Inside Kiln)** ‘Firing an earthenware kiln usually took about 48 hours, with perhaps an extra three days for cooling down. After placing the wares in the kiln, and sealing up the entrance, the fires were lit, and the kiln left to warm gently. ... After the initial warming period, in which the wares were completely drying off, the fires were stoked, and the dampers opened to allow the full heat into the kiln. Over the next day or so the temperature in the kiln was gently raised to 1000 degrees centigrade. The distribution of the heat in the kiln, and the overall control of the rise in temperature relied once again on the skill of the potter. **(see Figure 36 – Firing Kiln)** Before the days of pyrometers and cones, the potter’s eye, and small test pieces removed from the kiln, determined when the firing had run its course. In 1964, when Isaac Button was firing the Soil Hill kiln ..., he used test pieces, a pyrometer which measured the temperature in the kiln, and cones which told him how far the firing had progressed. Cones are made of mixtures of glaze constituents, which melt at carefully determined temperatures. They do not measure temperature precisely, but measure the amount of work done by the heat in the kiln, which is important. Cones are set up in threes, immediately inside the spy hole of the kiln. As the first cone squats, the potter knows that he is nearing glaze maturing temperature; when the second cone drops, then the firing has achieved full heat-work; if the third cone melt, then the kiln has overfired.’⁶³

Once the experience of the potter indicated that the firing was complete, the flues were closed, the firemouths were sealed with fireclay to prevent cool air rushing into the kiln, and the kiln left to cool. After cooling, the main door was unbricked, and the wares removed to the pot loft prior to transport.’⁶⁴ **(see Figure 37 – Kiln Ready for Drawing)**

The kiln at the pottery which was 10ft. 6in. internal diameter and inside height of 10ft. 6in. with six firemouths,⁶⁵ and was –

‘unique; it was the first draught earthenware kiln in the area. Instead of the heat being drawn out of the top of the kiln, the flames from the firemouths rose to the top of the kiln, and were then drawn downwards through the stacked wares. **(see Figure 38 – Diagrammatic Section Through Kiln)** The pots were protected from the inward rush of hot air by a ‘bag wall’, which effectively stopped problems caused by localised variations in temperature. The draught which sucked the air through the kiln was provided by the chimney, the flue for which ran under the drying beds... . The draught system meant that the heat reached each part of the kiln evenly, and that saggers could be dispensed with. A number of devices were employed to separate wares in the kiln, apart from the use of bobs. Kiln shelves were made either of fireclay, or of a stone known as Elland flags, which did not split when heated, and which was available locally. If made of fireclay, the blocks were known as ‘bats’; if stone, they were called ‘quarries’. Pancheons were stacked inside each other, but separated by ‘pan rings’, which were curved, L-sectioned objects which could be piled up in segmental circles. **(see Figure 39 – Stacked Pancheons Ready for Firing)** The underside of the lip of a pancheon rested on the lower arms of the broken circle of the rings, whilst the next circle of rings rested on the vertical arm. Un glazed wares could be stacked inside each other, provided there was a free passage of hot air around the pots. Fine wares such as puzzle jugs, which were usually glazed underneath, were lifted off the kiln shelves by ‘spurs’, which left only pinpricks in the glaze beneath the pots.’⁶⁶

A complete firing of the kiln required up to five tons of coal,⁶⁷ which was –

*'originally obtained from the nearby outcrop, but as communication improved, high grade coal was brought in. This had the added advantage of reducing sulphur spotting, to which lead glazes are particularly prone.'*⁶⁸

Though latterly they were able to get away with just 2½ tons for the 48 hour full heat when high quality coal was bought in.⁶⁹ Whilst the original chimney at 80ft. provided adequate draught for the kiln, it was expensive to maintain especially the higher parts, because the site was so exposed (1,320ft. at the summit of Soil Hill). Consequently it was decided to remove the top 20ft. reducing it to just 60ft. which was inadequate to provide sufficient draught, so a fan was fitted in the flue below the throwing room floor.⁷⁰

Once fired the pots would be taken to the adjoining stockroom to await their sale.⁷¹ **(see Figure 40 – Stock in Stockroom)** Products comprised both domestic vessels – bowls, pancheons, stewpots, and garden pots – fancy wares including knife boxes, candle holders, puzzle jugs, and both thrown and slab-built cradles.⁷² **(see Figure 41 – Some Pots)** Post-war –

*'with the increasing interest in craft pottery, Isaac Button found that many people wished to decorate their own pots, and so started to sell pots dipped in slip, but otherwise undecorated. These were very popular with the Women's Institutes of the day, and with individuals who bought the unfired wares, took them home, and decorated them using the sgraffito technique.'*⁷³ *The pots were then returned to Soil Hill for a free glazing and firing. Needless to say, a few of these pots never made it back to the pottery, as unfired, dry ware is extremely brittle.'*⁷⁴

By the 1960s there was only Isaac, working on his own,⁷⁵ having to dig his own clay, prepare it, make the pottery, fire the kiln and deliver the finished wares in his old truck.⁷⁶ **(see Figure 42 – 1960s Advertisement)** After his wife, Jessie, died in 1955 aged 50,⁷⁷ he had to do all the housework as well. In 1964 Isaac retired aged 61, closing the pottery,⁷⁸ and sold up.⁷⁹ He did not want the pottery to go to the adjoining landowner, Donald Greenwood, but in 1968 it did, probably through a third party.⁸⁰ **(see Figure 43 – 1968 Plan of Soil Hill Pottery)** Isaac retired to Torbay, but soon got bored and returned to Yorkshire with the intention of setting up in a small way as a potter.⁸¹ However, before he could do this he died on 12 November 1969, aged 66.⁸²

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- Figure 35 Inside Kiln** – Photograph by J. Anderson shown in Graham Wilkinson, *History of Local Potteries*, Bradford Art Galleries and Museums, Bradford, 1981, p. 31; also shown Andrew McGarva, *Country Pottery: Traditional Earthenware of Britain*, A. & C. Black, London, 2000, p. 105.
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- Figure 41 Some Pots** – Photograph by J. Anderson shown in Andrew McGarva, *Country Pottery: Traditional Earthenware of Britain*, A. & C. Black, London, 2000, p. 69.
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GREENWOOD FAMILY INVOLVEMENT AFTER 1964

After Isaac Button's retirement the Greenwood family acquired the pottery in 1968, which they renamed Yorkshire Fine Fireclay Works.⁸³ They occupied adjoining land on Swilling Hill where they operated Keelham Hill clay workings, trading as Yorkshire Fine Fireclays. **(see E12 – Keelham Hill Clay Workings)** **(see Figure 44 – 1934 Keelham Hill Clay Workings)** The pottery was partially re-opened, possibly around 1970,⁸⁴ but certainly by 1973,⁸⁵ and a succession of potters, including Peter Strong who worked there for four years,⁸⁶ worked the pottery intermittently⁸⁷ until the late 1970s,⁸⁸ or early 1980s,⁸⁹ including Donald Greenwood⁹⁰ who made domestic ware and tried unsuccessfully to produce glass pots.⁹¹ This involved firing the kiln at 1,360°C, rather than the 1,000°C it had previously worked at, and was probably worked too quickly so that it badly warped and was in need of rebuilding.⁹²

In 1984 the condition of the old pottery was causing cause for concern,⁹³ **(see Figure 45 – 1984 View of Derelict Pottery)** which by that time had become a listed building, necessitated Donald Greenwood having to do some repairs.⁹⁴ At that time Donald Greenwood was using the pottery for processing stone from the quarry.⁹⁵ In 1986 the pottery was described **(see Figure 46 – 1986 Plan of Works)** as being –

*'the worse for wear, with broken windows, much of the roof fallen in, and doors removed. The building (the 'long room' on the plan) was filled with very old machinery, with cogs, wheels, belt-drives and gearing everywhere. ... , plus an old kiln at one end of the room,'*⁹⁶

(see Figure 47 – Derelict Rear of Pottery) Then there is a description of a second building used for cutting stone blocks.⁹⁷ In 1986 a group of enthusiasts formed Friends of Soil Hill Pottery, were looking to restore the pottery and create a museum.⁹⁸ **(see Figure 48 – Photos of Derelict Pottery)** These proposals looked to be taking form by 1988,⁹⁹ when there was an auction that raised £15,000.¹⁰⁰ **(see Figure 49 – Soil Hill Products for Auction)** At that time the brick press used to build the pottery was still on site and was thought could be recommissioned to help rebuild Soil Hill Pottery.¹⁰¹ This obviously it came to nought,¹⁰² and it is thought that the brick press was taken by Peter Strong to Wetheriggs pottery at Clifton Dykes near Penrith, along with other equipment.¹⁰³ The following year there were proposals put forward for a ski resort,¹⁰⁴ **(see Figure 50 – Soil Hill Alpine Village)** which included a pottery museum, but that too fell by the wayside. The Friends of Soil Hill Pottery was wound up in 2002.¹⁰⁵ Ten years later it was proposed to convert the site, including the pottery, to housing.¹⁰⁶ A scheme that was still being pursued in 2011.¹⁰⁷ By 2015 Donald Greenwood had died and his son Warren moved away, with the quarry having passed to new owners, who were looking to convert the old pottery into residential accommodation.¹⁰⁸

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- 97 Adrian Booth, *Soil Hill Pottery*, in *Industrial Railway Record 158*, Industrial Railway Society, Whitby, September 1999, pp. 185 and 187, which goes on to say –
'the second building" where the "roof had caved in along two thirds the length of the of the building This room contained both an overhead and a floor-mounted cutting machines," and "railway lines of two different gauges. The narrower of the two gauges was measured as 3ft.0in. It comprised a single straight track, which ran outside into the yard at both ends of the building. The line passed directly beneath the overhead cutting machine. There was a single item of rolling stock, namely a long steel flat wagon painted yellow, which had six raised cross members. It was carried on two axles and the four wheels each had six spokes with six small holes in between. There was a heavy chain coupler hanging at one end only. The flat wagon measured 17ft.3in. long by 4ft.6in. wide; with 1ft.2in. diameter wheels; a 9ft.8in. wheelbase and was 1ft.9in. from rail level to the top of the flat platform. The adjacent, and parallel, track ran outside into the yard between the two buildings. It was 5ft.10in. gauge and also had a solitary item of rolling stock. Again it was a steel flat wagon, this time measuring 7ft.2in. long by 7ft.0in. wide; 12in. wheel diameter; 6ft.2in. wheelbase; and was 1ft.3in. from rail level to top of the flat platform. The unit had Robert Hudson axleboxes and was fittedc with solid wheels, each with six small holes therein.Despite its derelict appearance the works was still in use, This venture still used the railway and cutting machine for trimming stone blocks to size.'
- Then –
'outside ... an old crushing machine. This was an amazing device with multi cogs and shafts. It was originally filled with black ash, lime and hardener. The spoked hand-wheel on the side was then turned in order to revolve the bottom plates and crush the ingredients to a paste for use in making ash blocks.'
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- Figure 46** 1986 Plan of Works – Adrian Booth, 'Soil Hill Pottery', in *Industrial Railway Record 158*, Industrial Railway Society, Whitby, September 1999, p. 186.
- Figure 47** Derelict Rear of Pottery – Adrian Booth, 'Soil Hill Pottery', in *Industrial Railway Record 158*, Industrial Railway Society, Whitby, September 1999, p. 186.
- Figure 48** Photos of Derelict Pottery – *Halifax Evening Courier*, 17 October 1987, p. 6; *Halifax Evening Courier*, 29 October 1988, p. 7; and *Halifax Evening Courier*, 21 November 1988, p. 8.
- Figure 49** Soil Hill Products for Auction – *Halifax Evening Courier*, 14 December 1988, p. 5.
- Figure 50** Soil Hill Alpine Resort – *Halifax Evening Courier*, 16 May 1989, p. 3.

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Maps

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