The pottery at Bardon Mill is an interesting example of how adaptation and change to new markets and methods can revitalise a declining sector of the craft industry. Bardon Mill pottery, in the South Tyne Valley Northumberland, started out in the late 17thC. as a water powered woollen mill, and was worked as such until 1876 when a fire gutted the buildings. The site and the shell of the buildings were bought by the Reay family. Clay, coal and rail transport were all close to the site — clay close to the back of the factory, in a drift mine — and the old woollen mill became a salt glaze pottery, making bricks, drainage pipes (these were extruded then the spiggots were thrown on by hand), tiles and occasionally garden furniture. In 1976 however, after nearly a century in the Reay family, the company had to cease production of the pipes — the mainstay of the business — because like the rest of the salt glaze pipe industry they had been overtaken by big business, new technology and plastic pipe. Where there used to be 70 salt glaze works in the country, now only three remain. Two options were open to the Reay brothers: to close down, or to change direction.

Stephen Course (now co-director of Dart Pottery which successfully launched Janice Tchalenko designed pottery in Devon) joined the pottery at this stage and started to effect the change to different products and different markets. He was interested in putting the traditional methods and skills of the pottery to new use, and in developing techniques which could be learnt by semi skilled workmen, and used by them with some satisfaction. He was very keen to retain the special qualities of the coal fired salt glazing — one of the oldest methods of firing a kiln — and very much part of an old British tradition.

The Reay brothers running Bardon Mill were, as Stephen Course says, "essentially country business men", who wanted to make a living out of the factory which had been in the family for 100 years. They took pride in their skills, but considered them no more than part of the job. If they had been in a position to make more money out of plastic pipes, they would probably have done so as long as the rest of their country way of life remained unchanged. So any new developments had to make economic sense from the very start.

Stephen Course put forward a number of designs based on the extruded forms produced by the redundant pipe making machines, which were then shaped and finished by hand. This ingenious combination of a mechanical extruder and work by hand meant that very large pots could be produced relatively economically.
and quickly. The change over to pots from pipes was not altogether easy: the kiln—a beehive kiln built in 1932—was too large to allow for much experimentation, even though the firing cycle for pots lasted only two days as opposed to 80 hours for the pipes. Also, the firm was used to selling to farmers and builders’ merchants, and had to get used to dealing with garden centres, stores or craft shops, and to promoting its wares in a different way.

Two types of pots were produced: garden pots and storage pots. To begin with, Stephen Course’s designs were more exuberant, but they became modified for ease of production and also so that the kiln could be packed well. The resulting range of attractive, traditional-looking pots is still being produced, and together with a range of reproduction Victorian garden pots, has successfully brought Bardon Mill forward into the 1980s.
Crochendy Bardon Mill

Mae'r crochendy yn Bardon Mill yn enghraifft ddiddorol o'r modd y gali addasu a newid ar gyfer marchnadodd a dulliau newydd a ddwyio sector o'r diwydiannod crefft a oedd yn dihoeni. Melin wînn y cael ei throi gan ddâr o'r myfrynn South Tyne.

Nothumberland, oedd crochendy Bardon Mill pan godwyd hi ar ddiweddar â'r Af Ganrif ar Bymtheg, a bu'n dal i wneud y gwaith hwnnw nes i'r adeiladau gael eu dirod gan dán ym 1876. Prynywyd y safle a gweddillion yr adeiladau gan deulu Reay.

Roedd clai, glod a rhaffordd yng agos i'r ran - y clai yn dod o bwl y tu ôl i'r ffratir, a daeth yr hen felin wînn yn grochendy gwyddred halen, yn cynyrrch hu briaic, pibell traeno tir (roedd y rhain yn cael eu haffthio ac yna'r sbigots yn cael eu gorod armynt â llaw), teils ac weithiau ddogfrin gordd. Ym 1976 todd bynnag, wedi i'r gwaith fod ym meddiant y teulu Reay am bron i ganrif, bu'n rhaid i'r olygfeydd gorau i gynhryfch pibell - asgwrn cefn y busnes - oherwydd, fel y hanes gwyddeli y diwydiannodd pibell gwyddred halen, eu bod wedi cael eu goddiweddu gan fwnnesau mwy, tachnoleg newydd a phibell plastig. Lle'r oedd gynt 70 o weithfeydd gwyddred halen yn y wlad, nid oes ond tri bellach. Roedd daud ddefnydd gan y brodyr Reay: rhoi'r gorau iddi neu newid cytunad.

Yr adeg yma daeth Stephen Course (sydd erbyn hyn yn gyd-gyfarwyddwr Crochendy Dart a tu'n llwyddiannus wrth lansi crochenwaith wedi ei gynhunion gan Janice Tkehalikoyn Nîlmaen) i weithio i'r crochendy a moddoedd gychwyn ar newid yr cynyrrch ar gyfer marchnad wahaniaeth.

Roedd yn awyddeus i wneud defnydd newydd o dulliau a medrau traddodiadol y crochendy, ac i ddatblygu techrnogiau y gallai gweithwyr iled greffnes ei meistro i a chael mwy o'u defnyddio. Roedd yn awyddeus iawn i gadw nodweddiwn arbennig y gwyddred halen wedi ei dani o' r gwaith a glod - un o'r ddiolch am y ddau hynaf o dani o ddiolch am y ddau hynaf o dani o dani o dani o dani o dani.

Fel y dywed Stephen Course "yn eu hanfod wyvir busnes gwledig" oedd y brodyr Reay a oedd yn rheideg Bardon Mill, ac roedd o ystiau ennill bywoliaeth o'r ffratir o' r oed â'r oed wedi bod ym meddiant y teulu am ym mynedd. Tr'n ymata chno eu medrusnewydd, nid ystyrwyf ef ym diwm amgen na rhan o'r gwaith. Pe baent wedi bod mewn sefydlia wrthnaw o arian drwy gynhryfch pibell plastig, ma'n fwy na rhebyg y byddent wedi gymhwyso cin belled na fyddai hynny'n effeithio ar weddill eu flodd o fyw yn y wlad. Felly roedd yn rhaid i unrhyw ddatblygiadau.
newydd wneud s yn nh y economaidd 1801 y bywyd cymial.

Daith hydodd Stephen Course amryw o gynlluniau selliedig ar y flurfau estynedig a gynhyrchid gan y peiriannau gweud pibell a oedd bellach yn segur. Roedd y flurfai hyn yno ac eu llunio a'u gofyn i ni llaw. Golygai'r cefnion dehaug hwn o waeth peiriann a gwaeth llaw y gelimid cynhyrchon potiau mawr iawn yn gyflym ac yn gymharol rad. Nid oedd newid o gynhyrchydd pibell i gynhyrchu potiau yng nghanol rwydd: roedd yr oedy o dywch o flurfai iawn ym 1932 - ym 1932 y rhefawir i gyfandir o’r arbofion, er fod y cynnwys tan i ar gyfer potiau ym para’r dau ddwy Mrs Pryce yn hytrach na’r pedwar ugain earn ar gyfer pibell. Roedd y cwmni hefyd wedi affer gweithio i’r fertrywy a masnachwyr defnyddiau adaeladu, ac roedd yn fwyth i’i defnyddio disgygu delio a chanolfannau garddio, siopau a siopau crëf, a dysgu hwybu eu cynhrych mewn dull gwahanol. Cynyrchwyd dau fath o potiau gardio a photoa storio. Ar y bywyd roedd cynlluniau Stephen Course o’r fwy afelaf, ond bu’n rhaid goleddu peth amryw er mwyn gweud y broses cynhyrchun rhwyddach ac hefyd fel y gelid lwytho’r ody o ymweli. Maeth amrywiaeth o botiau deniadol, traddodiadol yr olaf, a gynhyrchu o ganlyniad, ni dail i gael eu cynhyrchu, ac ynghyd â amrywiaeth o atgynhyrchaidau o botiau garôd Fictoriaidd, maent wedi symud Bardon Mill ymlaen yr llwydianus i’r Wythdegau.