



# THE RELIEF-MOULDED JUGS OF SAMUEL ALCOCK

by Dick Henrywood

I was somewhat taken aback recently when I realised that my book *Relief-Moulded Jugs 1820-1900*, published by the Antique Collectors' Club back in 1984, is fast approaching its silver jubilee. In the balmy days of the early Eighties there were endless small antique shops and weekend fairs which made a country drive worthwhile. I could almost guarantee to arrive home with a couple of new jugs to wash and add to the groaning shelves.

It was the late Bill Coysh who introduced me to the subject. We were working together on *The Dictionary of Blue and White Printed Pottery* and he had half a dozen moulded jugs on a window sill. He told me a bit about them and I soon bought my first example, a William Ridgway Tam O'Shanter jug, and I was hooked. I used to take my latest finds to Bill and we chatted about the designs but I remember him telling me that there weren't enough to justify a book. That must be one of the very few times that Bill was wrong!

Although the book turned out to be reasonably comprehensive there were some areas in which it was sadly lacking, chief amongst which were the jugs made by Samuel Alcock & Co. For some reason I didn't find many on my country forays, although I tried later to make up for

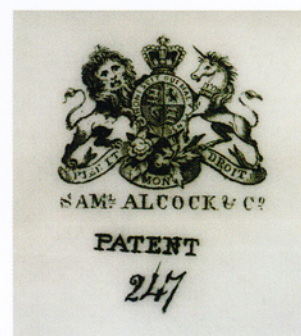
this omission by a decent selection in my more general volume *An Illustrated Guide to British Jugs* (1997).

Samuel Alcock was a potter of some importance who worked several potteries in Burslem and Cobridge between 1826 and 1859. Production of jugs was centred on the large Hill Pottery in Burslem, opened in 1840. They are mostly potted in a form of parian which is slightly translucent, although the body does seem to vary, sometimes towards dense stoneware but at the other extreme appearing quite similar to the earlier felspathic stonewares. Some examples are also found in plain stoneware.

Perhaps one of the most distinctive features of the

Above. Figure 1. A fine group of four Camel jugs with blue backgrounds, model number 240, heights 7in. to 11in.

Right. Figure 2. A typical Alcock printed mark showing the model number, in this case 247. The mark varies considerably with earlier versions having more ornate coats of arms.





Left and right.  
Figure 3. Two views  
of an Indian Groups  
jug with lavender  
ground, model  
number 102,  
height 6 1/4 in.



Figure 4. Engraving showing 'The Sonah Wallah, or Itinerant Goldsmith of India' from The Saturday Magazine, 1st November 1834.



Figure 5. Engraving showing 'Itinerant Musicians of India' from The Saturday Magazine, 13th December 1834.

Alcock jugs is the use of a lavender colouring. This is applied either as a background colour or for highlighting the moulding itself, with some variants in the amount of colouring used. The colour was probably applied using a process patented by Richard Boote in 1843, although Alcock's use appears to date from some time in 1842.

Most of the marked jugs bear a black-printed coat-of-arms mark with the word 'PATENT' (presumably referring to the Boote patent), sometimes also the firm's name, and usually also a three-figure model number (figure 2). This numbering sequence is of great interest, yielding information about the order in which the designs were introduced and also some clues as to dating.

The sequence started at 101 (or possibly 100) and I have records of 32 different designs for relief-moulded jugs which bear numbers in this sequence, most being allocated between two and six different numbers to

cover colour variations. Two other jug designs may have been included although I have no note of the model numbers used. The sequence also included a few items which are not moulded jugs.

The second jug design in the sequence was published in July 1842 and this probably gives us the year the numbering scheme was introduced. There are only two other confirmed dates: number 156 was registered in April 1847 and number 253 in January 1854. The sequence was continued further into the 1850s and the highest Alcock number I have encountered is 261, although numbers between 274 and 282 are found with marks incorporating initials for Alcock's successor J.S. Hill, thus post-dating 1859.

As far as I am aware Alcock only titled two of his jugs, one depicting 'Naomi and Her Daughters-in-Law' and the other apparently showing Rebecca at the Well, titled 'Arabic'. Two other jugs have titles amongst the moulding,



Left and right. Figure 6. Two views of a Gipsy jug with lavender ground, model number 107, height 7in.



one showing the Italian poets 'Tasso' (Torquato Tasso 1544-1595) and 'Ariosto' (Lodovico Ariosto 1474-1533), the other a rare design featuring the magazine character 'Punch'. Several designs copied by other manufacturers were titled by them, including 'Wisdom & Providence' (David Crowe of Montrose), 'Vintage' (J. & M.P. Bell & Co of Glasgow), and 'Ranger' (Edward Walley of Cobridge).

So let's have a look at some of these lavender-coloured Alcock jugs. The first design in Alcock's sequence is known as Indian Groups, although an alternative title of Arabian Nights has also been used (figure 3). The figure groups on the two sides are taken from Captain John Luard's *Sketches in India*, and show 'The Sonah Wallah, or Itinerant Goldsmith of India' on one side and 'Itinerant Musicians of India' on the reverse. The prints shown here were engraved for title pages of *The Saturday Magazine* issued in November and December 1834 (figures 4 and 5), quite probably the source used by Alcock's designer.

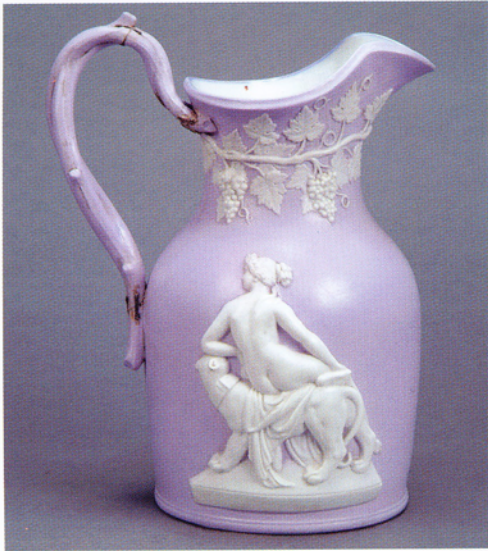
The second design in Alcock's sequence is the Gipsy jug (figure 6). This was published on 1st July 1842 jointly by Alcock and Jones & Walley of Cobridge. There seems to have been some connection between these two firms, with at least three designs in common, made by Alcock in parian and Walley in stoneware. The Walley versions of this jug bear a title 'Gipsey' [*sic*].

The next jug is decorated on each side with a relief depicting Sir Sidney Smith at the Battle of Acre in 1799 (figure 7). The scene has mistakenly been described as either the Indian mutiny or the Battle of Plassey but it is clearly based on a painting by William Hamilton (1751-1801). An engraving illustrated here (figure 8) is titled 'Sir S. Smith Defending the Breach of D'Acre against Bonaparte'. This was published by Kelly of London, possibly for an unidentified book about Napoleon's battles, but other versions are known, notably a colour engraving by Anthony Fogg, published by him in 1802 shortly after Hamilton's death. The design on the jug is a simplified but

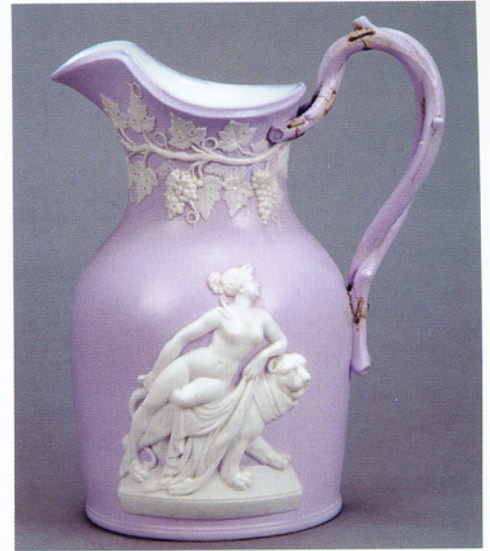


Figure 8. Coloured engraving titled 'Sir S. Smith defending the breach of D'Acre, against Bonaparte', not dated but published by Thomas Kelly of London.

Left. Figure 7. A Battle of Acre jug with lavender ground, model number 116, height 9in.



Left and right. Figure 9. Two views of an Ariadne jug with lavender ground, model number 124, height 11in.



otherwise faithful copy, with the addition on one side only of a flag featuring the French Imperial eagle. Although colour variants of the Alcock jug are relatively common, another version in plain stoneware was made in the 1840s by Henry Mills of Shelton.

The next two jugs in Alcock's sequence are a design based on the Portland Vase and another with a herd of deer encircling the body. These were both made by other potters in stoneware, the latter particularly by Stephen Hughes & Co of Cobridge, T.J. & J. Mayer of Longport, one of the Chetham partnerships, and the South Wales Pottery.

One of the jugs which I find fascinating is a design depicting the Greek goddess Ariadne, the mortal daughter of Minos, King of Crete, and later immortal wife of the wine-god Dionysius. The jug (figure 9) shows the naked Ariadne riding on one of her consort's panthers, copied from a sculpture by Heinrich Dannecker (1758-1841), now in the Liebighaus in Frankfurt. There is some humour in the jug which shows a front view of the subject on one side but a rear view on the reverse. This is one of very few cases where a jug can genuinely be considered to be right-handed!

Alcock's next jug featured groups of bucolic cupids at grape harvesting time (figure 10). This was copied by J. & M.P. Bell of Glasgow who titled it 'Vintage'. The next three designs (not illustrated here) are an undistinguished hexagonal jug decorated with scrolls and lace panels; a fine and rare jug depicting the Distin family of Saxe-horn players, 20th century reproductions of which are titled 'Music Master'; and another relatively run-of-the-mill jug decorated with Chaucerian-like knights and courtiers, sometimes known as 'Love and War'.

These were followed by another jug which was copied elsewhere, in this case by Cork & Edge of Burslem and by Bradbury, Anderson & Bettany of Longton. It is a rustic design known as the 'Babes in the Wood' (figure 11) although the source from which it was copied, a painting by J.H. Benwell and W. Westall, is actually

titled 'The Children in the Wood'. The image shown here (figure 12) is an engraving by W. Greatbach which appeared in the *Art-Union* in February 1847, probably the source used by the Alcock modellers.

The next two designs are quite a contrast. The first calls for little comment, simply an attractive jug with grapevines around the body and a mask, possibly representing Bacchus, beneath the spout (figure 13). The second, on the other hand, depicts the magazine character Mr. Punch. Unfortunately I have no good image of this jug since it turns out to be very rare, although copies were made in the 20th century by Portmeirion. The first edition of the magazine appeared in July 1841, with a subtitle 'The London Charivari', and it ran continuously until 2002.

By far the best-known of all Alcock jugs is 'Naomi and Her Daughters-in-Law' (figure 14). This design was registered in April 1847 with the figures copied from a painting by Henry Nelson O'Neill (1817-80). The same group was used for a parian figure by Minton, and it is believed that both jug and figure were designed by Hugues Protât, a highly regarded modelling instructor in the Potteries at the period. The jug is quite common, and marked examples show that it remained in production into the J.S. Hill period.

The late 1840s and early 1850s appear to have been the heyday for new jug designs. At least thirteen more were introduced in the Alcock period and three others followed with J.S. Hill marks. Two more of the lavender ground jugs are shown here, one a simple design in the form of a tree trunk, registered on 3rd April 1847 (figure 15), and the other featuring Shakespearean characters (figure 17). Neither of these is easy to find and they may have been made in relatively small numbers.

It is not clear why Alcock concentrated so strongly on the lavender colouring but it was a distinctive trademark. It was copied along with some of Alcock's jug designs at the Crown Pottery in Longton, operated by the partnerships of Bradbury, Anderson & Bettany;



Left and right. Figure 10. Two views of a Bacchanalian Cherubs or Vintage jug with lavender ground, model number 132, height 9in.

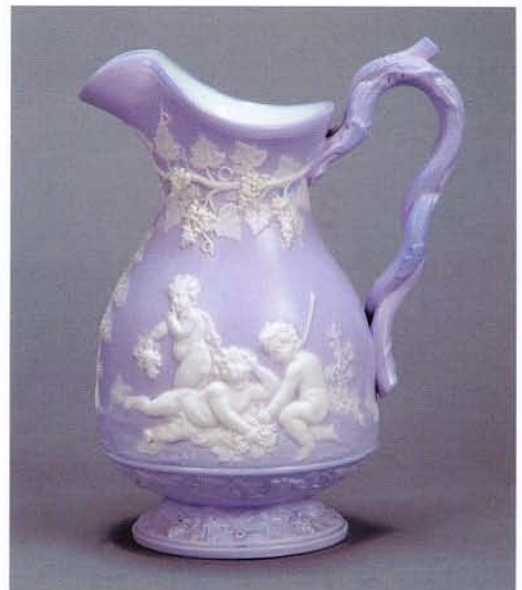


Figure 11. Two Babes in the Wood jugs, one with lavender figures, model number 142, the other with lavender ground, model number 143, heights 6½in. and 5¼in.



Figure 12. An engraving of the painting 'The Children in the Wood', the figures by J.H. Benwell, the landscape by W. Westall, taken from the Art-Union, February 1847.



Left. Figure 13. A Bacchus and Grapevines jug with lavender ground, model number 149, height 8¼in.



Right. Figure 14. Two 'Naomi and Her Daughters-in-Law' jugs with lavender figures, model number 156, heights 9¼in. and 8¼in.



Figure 15. A Tree Trunk or Rustic jug with all-over lavender colouring, model number 164, height 8 1/2 in.



Figure 16. A Camel jug with Britannia metal lid and brown ground, model number 259, height not known.

Anderson & Bettany; and Bradbury, Mason & Bradbury; but their products never achieved the Alcock quality.

For a long time Alcock seems to have been reluctant to use colours other than lavender, although one or two exceptions may have been experiments in the earlier years. This policy appears to have changed around model number 198 when blue was introduced and it soon became dominant. Many of the earlier jug designs were reissued in blue with the later model numbers reflecting this. Some new designs were issued with consecutive numbers for lavender and blue versions, one featuring a camel amongst palm trees, shown here on a fine set of four jugs (figure 1).

One other colour to be used was brown, although I am only aware of its use on two jugs, one the Camel pattern mentioned above (figure 16) and the other a design depicting Cain slaying Abel, also made in stoneware by Edward Walley. I am not aware of Alcock using green as a colour, with the single exception of green highlights on a blue ground jug decorated with poppies amongst corn.

A number of Alcock's designs can be found in plain

stoneware although not many bear the firm's mark. A fair number are known marked by other potters so attribution of unmarked stoneware jugs can be difficult.

A survey such as this can never be truly comprehensive and I would love to hear of other jugs by Alcock. I am keen to hear about five jugs in particular: the Distin Family and Punch jugs, mentioned above; a jug depicting Daniel in the Lion's Den; a jug which features a lady feeding a dog (later examples by other potters are titled 'Feeding Time'); and another showing a shepherd and shepherdess of which I have only sketchy details. Any contributions from readers would be very welcome.

*Illustrations of most of the lavender jugs courtesy of Dreweatt Neate of Newbury.*

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Left and right. Figure 17. Two views of a Shakespearean Characters jug with lavender ground, model number 197, height 9 in.

