

DESIGN detective

TRANSFERWARE SOURCE PRINTS

It's probably fair to say that most of us approach the collecting of pottery the same way most people look at art: we know what we like and that's about it. But some individuals are blessed with a more enquiring mind, and as author Dick Henrywood writes, the presence of transfer printed blue and white pottery presents endless detecting possibilities...

One of the great attractions of antiques is the availability of such a vast range of objects just crying out to be used for furnishing a home. The 'mix 'n' match' approach often produces impressive and individual interiors, but there are some golden oldies – and for me, oak furniture and blue and white printed pottery almost seems to be a match made in heaven.

There can be few sights more impressive than a golden oak dresser gleaming with a couple of centuries of patina, laden with blue and white plates and platters. But I have to confess that however much I would love the dresser, it is the pots that really stir the soul.

I suspect that most browsers in antique shops and markets will agree that good blue and white (not the wretched Willow pattern) is both attractive and decorative, and the very best can be visually stunning. But whatever their decorative merit, transferwares have always attracted me for the possibilities of research. Who made them? Why were particular patterns chosen? What patterns made up each series (a dinner service, for example)? And very particularly, what was the source for the design? We must remember that the engravers in the potteries, however skilled, were artisans rather than artists, skilled at copying but not necessarily creative in their own right. This is where the fun starts.

It is probably fair to say that the vast majority of blue and white patterns made in the vintage years between about 1810 and 1835 are copied from prints of one form or another. Plagiarism from published prints was common practice amongst the potters, and although it was already on the decrease in the 1830s, it was not brought properly under control until the implementation of the Copyright Act of 1842.

Dominant amongst the prints to be pirated were topographical views or scenes from around the world. In my own research I have recorded more than 1600 views of the British Isles alone, and at the time of writing this article I have notes of 813 matching source prints. These prints were mostly taken from books of the period, although some were sold individually or in small sets, and other larger size



Figure 1. A selection of plates and other items from a dinner service by John & Richard Riley of Burslem. Nearly all the central views of country houses are copied from engravings in John Preston Neale's *Views of the Seats* (1818-28).



Figure 2. A wash jug with a view of Hare Hall in Essex, made by Enoch Wood & Sons of Burslem. As with many others from the firm's extensive *Grapevine Border* series, the scene is copied from an engraving in John Preston Neale's *Views of the Seats* (1818-28).

John Preston Neale's *Views of the Seats of Noblemen and Gentlemen in England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland* (1818-29) was the most widely used of all the books containing British topographical views. A multi-talented artist, Neale was an architectural draughtsman, painter, watercolourist and copperplate engraver. His plates for the topographic study of the lands of Britain – *The Beauties of England and Wales*, by John Britton – took 20 years to complete...

engravings were sold to be framed and hung as pictures.

Of all the books containing British topographical views, the most widely used was John Preston Neale's *Views of the Seats of Noblemen and Gentlemen in England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland* (1818-29). This was issued in two series, the first of six volumes between 1818 and 1823, the second of five further volumes between 1824 and 1829. Of the 800 or so source prints I have currently traced, some 263 are taken from Neale. A group of dinnerwares made by John & Richard Riley are shown here, along with their matching source prints (figure 1), as is a wash jug by Enoch Wood & Sons (figure 2). Various other potters copied the Neale prints, including William Adams, Ralph & James Clews, Elkins & Co. and Elkin, Knight & Co., Griffiths, Beardmore & Birks, John Hall & Sons, Ralph Hall, Henshall & Co., Ralph Stevenson and even Wedgwood.

A similar book of country seats was used by one of the Ridgway firms. This is William Angus's *The Seats of the Nobility and Gentry in Great Britain and Wales* (1787-1815). As was fairly common practice at the time, the prints in this book were published serially from 1787, and only subsequently collected together in two bound volumes. A good example from the Ridgway dinner service is shown here (figure 3). A total of eleven different engravings were copied for different plates, platters, tureens etc.

Another largely 18th century book to be used was Thomas Hearne and William Byrne's *Antiquities of Great Britain, Illustrated in Views of Monasteries, Castles, and Churches, Now Existing* (1786-1807). Several of the prints were copied for an *Antique Scenery* series, the maker of which has only recently been identified as Zachariah Boyle of Hanley. The soup tureen with a view of Caister Castle in Norfolk is shown here (figure 4), but nine other prints were copied by Boyle, and other potters who availed themselves of the Hearne & Byrne prints included William Adams, Ralph & James Clews and John Meir.

Books with topographical prints were published in ever-greater numbers from the early years of the 19th century, but just one more example must

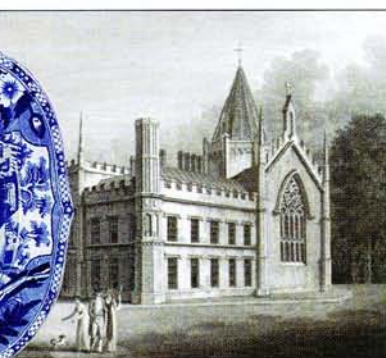


Figure 3. A well-and-tree platter from a dinner service by one of the Ridgway firms of Hanley. This view shows Lee in Kent, copied from an engraving by William Angus in his *The Seats of the Nobility and Gentry in Great Britain and Wales* (1787-1815).

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Figure 4. A soup tureen from an extensive *Antique Scenery* dinner service now known to be made by Zachariah Boyle of Hanley. This view of Caister Castle, Norfolk is copied, as with others in the service, from an engraving in Thomas Hearne and William Byrne's *Antiquities of Great Britain* (1786-1807).

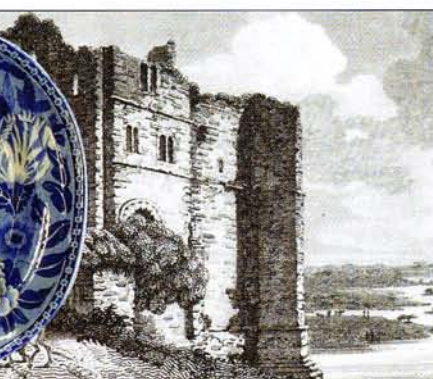


Figure 5. A platter from a dinner service by an unknown maker. This view of Newark Castle in Nottinghamshire is copied, as with others, from an engraving in *Storer and Greig's Antiquarian and Topographical Cabinet* (1807-1811).



Figure 6. A sauce tureen stand from a 'Select Scenery' series by Ralph & James Clews of Cobridge. The view is Donemark Mill on the Bantry River in Ireland, copied from a lithograph by Francis Nicholson in his *Lithographic Impressions* (1821).



Figure 7. A platter by William Adams of Stoke from a *Bluebell Border* series of views. This one shows Lyme Castle, Kent copied from a lithograph by Hullmandel after Frederick Calvert (published 1822).



Figure 8. A platter from a *Clyde Scenery* series made by Job & John Jackson of Burslem. As with most of the series, this view of Ayr is copied from an engraving by Joseph Swan in John Leighton's *Select Views on the River Clyde* (1830).



Figure 9. A platter by Ralph & James Clews of Cobridge from their *States Border or America and Independence* series. Previously, and rather hopefully, described as a view of the New York Customs House, it depicts the Town Hall and Quay at Great Yarmouth in Norfolk, copied from William Marshall's *Select Views of Great Britain* (1825 et seq).

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suffice here. This is James Storer and John Greig's *Antiquarian and Topographical Cabinet* (1807-1811). It was issued in ten small size volumes, and again the engravings were quite widely copied. The example shown here (figure 5) is a platter from an uncommon dinner service with a Tulip border, by a maker who remains unknown. Other prints were used by John Meir for a dinner service with a Pineapple border, and also by others including Elkin, Knight & Co. and Minton.

Although space precludes further illustrations, other similar books from which prints were significantly copied include Britton & Bayley's *The Beauties of England and Wales* (published in 18 volumes between 1801 and 1815); Thomas Shepherd and James Elmes's *Metropolitan Improvements or London in the Nineteenth Century* (1827); W.B. Cooke's *The Thames* (three different editions from 1811, 1814 and 1822); William Pyne's *Lancashire Illustrated* (1828-31); and Thomas Kitson Cromwell's *Excursions* series (covering Essex, Kent, Norfolk, Suffolk, Surrey and Sussex between 1818 and 1822 and a related volume on Cornwall by F.W.L. Stockdale in 1824). There are several others.

Although most of the engravings used by the potters were taken from books, a few larger engravings were also pirated. Notable amongst these were a series of lithographs by Francis Nicholson, published in small numbered sets of six under the titles of *Lithographic Impressions of Sketches from Nature* (1820-21) or *Lithographic Impressions from Sketches of British Scenery* (1821-22). Just one example must suffice, a small tureen stand by Ralph & James Clews from their *Select Scenery* series (figure 6). Clews used a significant number of Nicholson's lithographs, although some were also copied by William Adams, Elkin, Knight & Co., the Harveys of Lane End, the Herculaneum Pottery of Liverpool, Mason, Minton, Pountney & Allies of Bristol, John Rogers & Son, Ralph Stevenson and Enoch Wood & Sons. It might be worth recognising that not all of these would have copied the source prints – they may well have copied from each other's wares!

A single example must also suffice for the larger engravings that were made to be framed and hung as pictures. Here we have a fine view of Lyme Castle in Kent in the form of a lithograph printed by the important firm of Charles Hullmandel, copied by William Adams for a platter in his *Bluebell Border* dinner service (figure 7). These large engravings are much more difficult to trace



Figure 10. A teaplate by Henshall & Co. of Longport with a view titled *Vevay*. Previously thought to show Vevay in Indiana, it is actually a view of Vevay (now Vevey) in Switzerland, copied from Major James Cockburn's *Swiss Scenery* (1820).

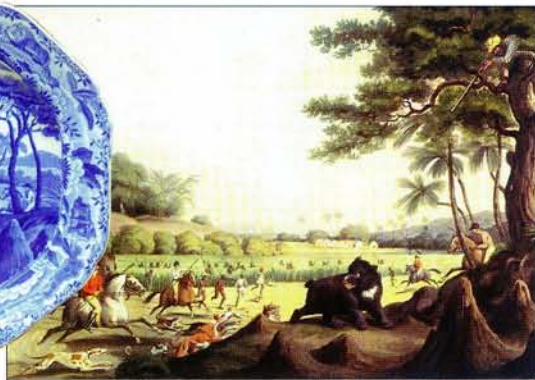


Figure 11. A soup tureen stand from Spode's famous *Indian Sporting* series depicting *Driving a Bear out of Sugar Canes*. The scenes are taken from Samuel Howitt's engravings for Captain Thomas Williamson's *Oriental Field Sports – Wild Sports of the East* (1807).

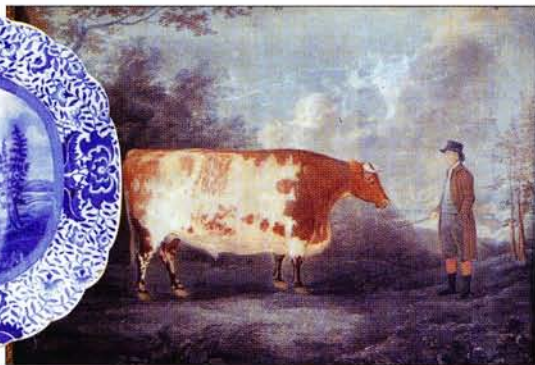


Figure 12. A well-and-tree platter depicting the famous *Durham Ox*. This particular pattern is very desirable and is copied from a large engraving by J. Whessell after a painting by J. Boulbee (published in 1802).

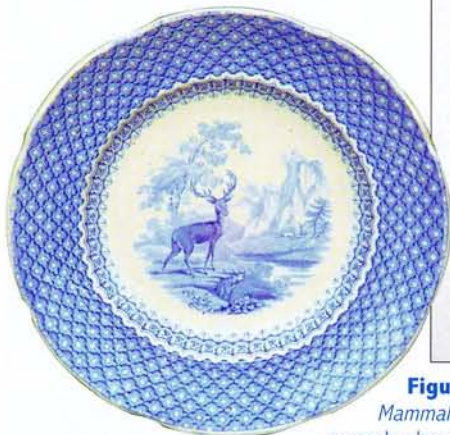


Figure 13. A tea plate from an uncommon *Mammalia* series by Elijah Jones of Cobridge. This example shows the *Red Stag*, taken from a title page engraving in the *Mammalia* section of Sir William Jardine's *The Naturalists Library* (1833-43).

Francis Nicholson – whose series of lithographs provided inspiration for many a pottery design – concentrated most of his work on landscapes, and his book, *The practice of drawing and painting landscape from nature, in water colours*, sold out within a year of its publication in 1820. A second edition was published in 1823...

than those published in books, and I only have records of about a dozen of them.

As mentioned in the introduction above, the copying of prints after the 1820s was less widespread, partly due to the emergence of more romantic imaginary scenes, but there are still a number of good examples to be found from the early 1830s. It was during this period that the dominance of blue also began to fade, with other colours proving particularly popular for export. The example shown here is a purple platter with a view of Ayr from a series titled *Clyde Scenery* by Job & John Jackson (figure 8). This series used prints from John Leighton's *Select Views on the River Clyde* (1830), which may be thought a rather strange choice since the Jacksons' market was almost entirely in America. Two other books quite widely used in the early 1830s were Henry Gastineau's *Wales Illustrated* (1830-31) and George Newenham Wright's *Ireland Illustrated* (1831). Views of Ireland were also copied from Mr. & Mrs. S.C. Hall's *Ireland: its Scenery, Character, &c.* (1841-43).

Mention of the American market leads on to a fascinating series of views made by Ralph & James Clews, known as the *States Border or America and Independence* series. The prominence of the figures emblematic of Justice and Liberty, the medallion portrait of Washington, and the 'chain of States' motif in the border leave us in no doubt that these wares were made for America, probably created to mark the fiftieth anniversary of American independence in 1826. But why, then, are the central views British? The example shown (figure 9) depicts the Town Hall and Quay at Great Yarmouth, copied – along with almost all this series – from a print in William Marshall's *Select Views of Great Britain* (1825 et seq). Incidentally, it is only recently that Marshall's books have been identified as being used by the potters, which emphasises that our research into these wares may still be in its infancy.

The *States Border* view of Yarmouth was previously thought to show the New York Customs House, now clearly incorrect, and

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another American myth can also be discounted. A small tea plate by Henshall & Co. of Longport, from a mixed series of British, European and American views, has a scene titled *Vevay* and has been eagerly sought by American collectors thinking it to show Vevay in Indiana. In fact the source print is from Major James Cockburn's *Swiss Scenery* (1820), showing that the view is Vevay (now Vevey) in Switzerland (*figure 10*). (As an aside, the Swiss town of Vevey is also the site of the world headquarters of food giant Nestle – Daniel Peter developed milk chocolate there, in 1857). Unfortunately space precludes us from listing all the books of European prints that were also copied by the potters. Another field ripe for further study.

While the bulk of this article has concentrated on topographical views, other scenes were also copied from prints. One particularly well-known example is Spode's *Indian Sporting* series, copied from Samuel Howitt's engravings for Captain Thomas Williamson's *Oriental Field Sports – Wild Sports of the East* (1807). The example shown here is *Driving a Bear out of Sugar Canes* on a soup tureen stand (*figure 11*). The complete series is illustrated in detail by Michael Sack in his recent monograph *India on Transferware* (2009), a pioneering volume that also illustrates many topographical scenes of India along with the corresponding source prints.

Possibly the most iconic of all blue and white patterns is the *Durham Ox*. This scene appears on platters from a dinner service by an unknown maker, decorated with a series of animal scenes, mostly cattle with their herdsman. The *Durham Ox* scene itself is copied from a large engraving by J. Whessell after a painting by J. Boulton, published in 1802 (*figure 12*). I have always liked the rather downtrodden stance of the proud owner John Day, depicted

with his prize beast. Incidentally, the animal itself lived for six years touring England in a special carriage, but eventually slipped and died, leaving a carcass weighing nearly 34 hundredweight.

To conclude I have chosen just one more example to represent all the other transferware patterns that are copied from prints. This is another animal pattern, although this time more zoological in nature, depicting a Red Stag (*figure 13*). The plate is from an uncommon *Mammalia* series made by Elijah Jones of Cobridge, and is based on a print, in this case on a title page, in the *Mammalia* section of Sir William Jardine's *The Naturalists Library* (1833-43). The subject of natural history source prints, while not quite as extensive as the topographical views, is equally interesting and requires just as much detective work. And if neither views nor zoology interest you greatly, why not try hunting for source prints for botanical patterns, commemorative events, classical figure groups, history, literature, drama or children's subjects. They are all out there, waiting to be discovered.

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Dick Henrywood was an aeronautical engineer with a long list of technical papers to his credit and worked for many years as a business manager. He now works as a freelance author and lecturer on antiques and related subjects. A founder member of the Friends of Blue and first Keeper of the Records, his books include *Staffordshire Potters 1781-1900* (published 1999).