



20TH CENTURY BLUE-PRINTED WARES

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To some long-established collectors of blue and white printed pottery, anything made much after 1835 might be considered somewhat suspect. As to wares made in the 20th century – well really! Fortunately, attitudes like this do not afflict all collectors, and those with a more enlightened open mind can find much of interest amongst later wares.

Printed earthenwares fall fairly naturally into three periods. The early years, starting when the process was new in the 1770s through to about 1810, were dominated largely by chinoiserie patterns. The vintage years, covering the quarter century up to about 1835, were classic times, with patterns and shapes of every description and some exceptionally high quality workmanship. The romantic period, which overlapped the vintage years but ran through into the second half of the 19th century, was typified by dinner services decorated with imaginary scenes, some of really good quality but many rather more

pedestrian. Clearly the more wealthy market had been tapped in the earlier years and the wares of this later period were more downmarket. By about 1880 the mass market had been saturated and other, more colourful wares, often in the Aesthetic taste, had taken over. Blue and white was nearly dead, and apart from the ubiquitous Willow pattern and a few other popular patterns, there was little available, certainly nothing much of any quality. However, some of the major manufacturers did not give up so easily and diligent searching can unearth some really good finds made after 1900.

The name Wedgwood is synonymous with quality, and the firm continued to make some of their earlier patterns and went on to introduce new ones. Figure 3 is a covered pail in the Ferrara pattern, an Italianate scene depicting the castle of the Duke of Este in

a setting which rather inappropriately includes shipping in the foreground copied from an engraving in *Lancashire Illustrated* (1830). The pattern was introduced in 1832 but this toilet pail with original woven cane handle bears a date mark for 1930. It sold for £322.

A second Wedgwood example is a large dish or charger decorated with a scene of racing yachts (figure 2). This impressive piece bears a date mark for 1900 and could possibly be related to the America's Cup, which was then in its heyday. As far as I am aware the pattern has never been recorded elsewhere and it caused quite a bit of interest when it was offered at auction. It sold for £437, which might sound expensive compared to similar wares from much earlier times, but must surely be a good investment for the future.

Another major name is Spode, and although the factory went through name changes to Copeland & Garrett and W.T. Copeland & Sons before reverting to the Spode name, its history has been continuous, as have some of its blue-printed products. The famous Italian pattern is believed to have been introduced in 1816 but remained in production thereafter and became particularly popular as 'Spode's Italian' from the later 19th century. It is still made today. The later products have a steady following, largely because dinner and tea wares are both plentiful and usable. However, the firm also produced many less common shapes which are sought by collectors. A good example is the pilgrim flask shown here (figure 4) which sold for £81, despite some condition problems. An oval comport dated November 1913 recently made £94 even with a small chip beneath one handle.

As with Wedgwood, the Copeland factory did not rely solely on long established patterns, as can be seen by the attractive dinner plate with Hunting Scenes (figure 1). This pattern was introduced by Copeland in about 1893 and was made in various versions, one as late as 1958. The example shown here has a date mark for June 1906 and also has a London retailer's mark for Crook of Motcomb Street. Examples are known without the gilding, some are printed in brown rather than blue, and some have different glaze effects. A good

Above. Figure 1. A Copeland Hunting Scenes pattern dinner plate, with gilt rim and outlining, 10in. diameter, date code for June 1906.

plate like this would be worth around £35 but prices for these late wares are insufficiently established for any real pattern to emerge, and a diligent collector might well find some bargains.

Another big name to survive into the 20th century is that of Adams. William Adams made good quality blue and white wares from the early 19th century onwards and had a large export market in America. As William Adams & Sons the firm continued throughout the romantic period, again producing large quantities of printed wares for America, although these later wares were often in colours other than blue. One pattern which became popular in the early 20th century was called Cattle Scenery, although it can be traced back to a dinner service introduced by John & Richard Riley in the 1820s. Collectors call it the Union Border series to reflect the thistles and shamrocks which can be discerned behind the roses in the border. The copper plates appear to have passed on to John Meir & Son before finding their way into Adams' ownership. The designs must have been re-engraved but Adams did issue the



Figure 2. A Wedgwood Yacht Racing pattern large dished charger, 18in. diameter, date code for 1900.



Figure 3. A Wedgwood Ferrara pattern covered pail with original woven cane handle, 10in. high, date code for 1930.



Right. Figure 4. A Copeland Spode's Italian pattern pilgrim flask, 12in. high, printed mark.



pattern in significant quantities on a variety of wares. Shown here is a pierced dessert basket (figure 5). This sold for £63, which seems cheap for such an attractive piece. Another example of the pattern was noted recently on a small jug with a printed inscription for E.G. Wade of the Duke of Fife Hotel, dated Christmas 1925. Such special order wares are always interesting.

The Doulton firm was not involved with blue-printed wares during the early years, but did produce some printed patterns in the 20th century, partly related to their more colourful and popular series wares. Some of their patterns are of traditional type, a good example being the Watteau pattern shown here on a medium-sized meat dish (figure 6). This dish has a date mark for 1904 but the style of pattern, if not the darker blue, is typical of the mid-19th century romantic period. It sold for just £24, which reflects the lack of interest in late straightforward dinner wares. Such pieces are neglected now and I see little investment potential. Collectors want more unusual pieces.

Such a piece might be the small supper set made by Booths in their Old Blue Danube pattern (figure 7). The design has little more to offer than Doulton's Watteau pattern but the piece itself, complete with original wooden tray, is unusual, decorative and of good quality, as may be expected from a piece sold by Thomas Goode & Co, important London retailers. Supper sets, much larger and usually with five or more covered dishes, were first made in the early 19th century and when found with collectable patterns can be highly desirable. This small, late piece sold for £130, not insignificant, but again possibly a good investment for the future.

Like Booths, the Cauldon firm produced blue-printed wares in some



Top. Figure 5. An Adams Cattle Scenery series dessert basket, 13in. overall length, printed mark.

Centre. Figure 6. A Doulton Watteau pattern meat dish, 15in. long, date code for 1904.

Left. Figure 7. A Booths Old Blue Danube pattern supper or hors d'oeuvres set, in original elliptical wooden tray, 12in. overall length, printed retailer's mark for T. Goode & Co Ltd.





Figure 8. A Cauldon Arcadian Chariots pattern large planter, 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. wide, 9in. high, printed mark.



Figure 9. A Cauldon spittoon, 8in. diameter, printed mark.

quantity, notably an Arcadian Chariots pattern which had been introduced by other potters in the mid-19th century. It is shown here on a quite substantial square planter (figure 8), which would probably date from the 1905-20 period. An attractive and usable piece of pottery, admittedly, but the auction price of £259 does seem to be rather on the high side. Many decorative jardinières could be had for much less than this.

Another interesting Cauldon piece is the spittoon printed with three romantic-style Continental scenes and a border of roses in panels (figure 9). Again probably dating to the 1905-20 period, this has the advantage of being a more unusual shape, and in its way is just as decorative as the planter. It sold for £109, which seems a fair price for an unusual object.

By contrast, fairly commonly found are small rectangular dishes made by George Jones & Sons in the 1930s to serve Shredded Wheat (figure 10). They are decorated with a common Abbey pattern, which dates back to the mid-19th century and has a small band of enthusiastic, if impecunious, collectors who rarely need to pay very high prices. These Shredded Wheat dishes can quite easily be picked up for £10 or so, although some dealers might be charging significantly more. They were made in two sizes, for one or two pieces

of the cereal. Perhaps today's sportsmen might need a third size!

Generally, small items tend to sell well and this also holds for these later pieces. The mustard pot shown here (figure 11) is a good case in point. It was made for Mellor's Mustard of Mark Lane in London, and has a patented action with a close-fitting copper cover and a plunger to serve the mustard. A

fascinating little piece which sold above estimate for £81, perhaps not wholly unexpected as a conversation piece for a 21st century dinner table!

Another small piece, albeit rather a contrast, is the little Willow pattern advertising dish for Schweppes Tonic Water (figure 12). These were produced in some quantity, designed by James Green & Nephews of London and



Figure 10. A George Jones & Sons Abbey pattern Shredded Wheat dish, 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. long, date code for December 1933.



Figure 11. A Mellor's patent mustard pot, 3 1/4 in. high, printed mark.



Figure 12. A James Green & Nephews Schweppes Tonic Water small dish, 4 1/4 in. diameter, printed mark.

Hanley. Several variants are known, including other Schweppes products such as Lemon Squash, Ginger Ale and Sparkling Grape Fruit. Some have the James Green mark while others are marked simply 'Made in England'. Some bear date codes for the 1930s but they were in production for some time and relatively recent examples are also known. They can be picked up for just a few pounds. A quite similar piece was made for Tennent's Lager Beer.

Other blue-printed wares which are always of interest are special order pieces, represented here by plates made for the Waterloo Bar in Christ Church Passage, Birmingham (figure 13), sadly no longer in existence, and for Bancroft School of Woodford Green in Essex

(figure 14). The Waterloo Bar plate was made by Dunn, Bennett & Co and probably dates from the 1930s, whereas the Bancroft School plate was made by Copeland and has a date mark for 1902. The attraction of these special order pieces is the challenge of research. For example, the motto on the Bancroft School plate was also used by the Drapers' Company, which was closely associated with the school. These two plates would be worth around £20 each, not a great amount but good value in this writer's estimation.

A final contrast is another plate of similar early 20th century date but of much higher value. Naval mess plates were made for use on board ship and are

usually printed with a number for the appropriate mess. The example shown here (figure 15) is absolutely typical, with the mess number and crown in the centre, surrounded by a border of sailor scenes and portrait medallions, in this case representing Edward VII. Earlier versions have Queen Victoria although it must be noted that her portrait continued in use for some examples long after her demise in 1901. The central crown is sometimes replaced by crossed flags. Many of the plates were made at Bovey Tracey in Devon and are marked accordingly. The example shown sold for £276 back in March 2002; a huge price, reflecting the enthusiasm of naval collectors. I shall be interested to see if similar prices are



Figure 14. A Copeland Bancroft School armorial tea plate, 7 1/2 in. diameter, date code for July 1902.

Left. Figure 13. A Dunn, Bennett & Co soup plate made for the Waterloo Bar in Christ Church Passage, Birmingham, 10 1/4 in. diameter, printed mark.

achieved for a small batch of plates which are appearing at auction in June.

I hope that the selection of pieces shown here might help to dispel the myth that there is little of interest in blue-printed wares of the 20th century. I must confess that I used to dismiss them, but a few years working in an auction house has opened my eyes in this respect, as in several others. Late wares may not have the stunning quality of the best blue and white from the 1820s but certain qualities they do have. Keep an informed eye open for the unusual pieces. They may well increase in value in the years to come.

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Figure 15. A Bovey Pottery Co Ltd naval mess plate, 10in. diameter, printed mark.

