

Public Houses and Their Place on Blue Printed Transferware

By Loren Zeller

Speaking of the public houses of old London, Frederick Hackwood wrote that “more than mere places of sojourn for travellers and traders, they became the rendezvous of politicians and publicists, the recognised meeting-places for much social intercourse, and especially for that pleasant form of sociability which is accompanied by friendly entertainment. How useful they were in the days when travelling was difficult and newspapers scarce, and all means of intercommunication were correspondingly slow, is indicated by the extraordinary number of taverns with which the main thoroughfares of old London were lined.”¹

Transferware has been—and still is today—a popular medium for the purpose of advertising or, in contemporary terms, “branding.” Examples of this form of self-promotion were frequently found in public houses that would advertise the establishment on their serving pieces. Today, early examples with establishment names printed on them are highly desired and infrequently available for purchase. My interest in collecting these rarities, beyond identifying the patterns, shapes and makers, lies in placing them in their historical context.

Documenting their place in history, however, is often easier said than done. If an address, a date or other information is also printed on the piece, it can, sometimes, help. Here are a few examples that I believe acquire more “character” when placed in their historical context.



King's Arms

The location of the King's Arms Tavern and Inn printed on this rather large seventeen inch serving dish helps us in our search for its place in history: Printed in the center are the words “King's Arms, Palace Yard.”² While there were several establishments with the same name, this “King's Arms” is quite well documented because of the role it played in public as well as in private events. A listing of the “Public Houses, Publicans and Public House Addresses” in Pigot's 1839 Directory includes no less than twelve “King's Arms” establishments in London and the surrounding area. Among them was this one, the King's Arms, New Palace Yard, whose proprietor is listed as Eliza Ann Brown. The pearlware body and pattern on the serving dish predate Pigot's publication, indicating that the inn would have been in existence prior to 1839. The pattern is “Pagoda and Palms Variation,” and is a variant of the “Pagoda and Palms” pattern (both patterns are record-



ed in the TCC Pattern Database). Alternative names for the pattern are “Gossiping Women,” and “Coffee Pot in the Window” (note the coffee pot that appears in the window of the pagoda and just under the words “King’s Arms Palace Yard”). This pattern variation, in which the palms are replaced with a tree of unidentifiable shape, is also documented in Tanner’s first book on Cambrian Pottery.³ The authors indicate a possible attribution to Swansea. An additional pattern variation found on this serving dish is the use of the same pattern for both the outer and inner borders instead of the inner cell border commonly found on both the Pagoda and Palms pattern and its variation.

Further sleuthing revealed much earlier roots for the establishment. References to the King’s Arms in the New Palace Yard indicate that the establishment was “on the west side of the Square where the Royal Somerset and Inverness Lodges met in 1771.”⁴ *Boyle’s View of London, and its Environs*⁵ includes a “List of Freemasons’ Lodges 1799” in which the King’s Arms, both a tavern and hotel, is identified as an approved meeting place for the Westminster and Keystone Lodges. Other records also document meetings of these Free Masons’ Lodges at this public house in the year 1814-1815.⁶ Given its strategic location, many official government meetings and hearings also took place in the establishment: Documents exist that describe a deputation regarding a dispute in the woolen industry that took place at the King’s Arms, Palace Yard on December 9, 1819. Letters from residents of the King’s Arms, confirm that it was also a well known hotel of the period. Other documents attest to the fact that the establishment served as a venue for political events such as the “Metropolitan Demonstration in favour of the Peoples Charter and the National Petition,”⁷ which involved the early “radical” suffrage movement.



London Tavern

Other early tavern names, at addresses perhaps not quite so famous, are also found on early printed blue and white transferware. One example is the “London Tavern,” shown here on this unmarked 9.75 inch pearlware plate printed in underglaze blue with the Standard Willow Pattern. An early report in *The Times*, April 28, 1790, London, informs us that in 1789, Americans residing in London formed a charitable organization called the “Company of Friends” which, “is proper for us to say has done already a world of quiet, practical good in dealing with American distress abroad.” The newly formed organization held its first meeting in 1789 at the London Tavern.

Unfortunately, without an address on the plate, I cannot confirm with all certainty that the London Tavern referenced in *The Times* article is, in fact, the same establishment as the one represented on this pearlware plate.

Shown here is a copy of an early print of the well-known London Tavern as it appeared in 1809, a date close to that of the plate (c. 1800-1810).⁸

Internet research uncovered additional interesting information about the London Tavern. I learned from the Worshipful Company of Bowyers’ web site that the Bowyers met at the London Tavern from at least the early 1850s, possibly earlier, until 1873. The author of the web site article states that the London Tavern “was in what was then called Bishopsgate within, and it was famous. Cast out any visions you may have of cosy, low ceilings, panelled rooms, flagstone floors, and the roaring fires of Merrie England’s coaching inns. This place was huge. Its nearest relative today would probably be the Connaught rooms. The London Tavern’s main dining room could set 355 people for dinner. It was rebuilt in 1765 after a fire and [was] elegant Regency refine-



ment. It was famous for its excellent meals. Many Livery Companies used the London Tavern including some of the biggest and best. Prominent among their patrons was the East India Company.⁹ Charles Dickens presided at a meeting there in 1841 - for the benefit of the Sanatorium for Sick Authors and Artists, and in 1851 at the annual dinner for the General Theatrical Fund. And it is in the London Tavern that, in Nicholas Nickleby, the public meeting was held 'to take into consideration the propriety of petitioning Parliament in favour of the United Metropolitan Improved Hot Muffin and Crumpet Baking and Punctual Delivery Company.' The London Tavern was demolished in 1876 and the site is now Nos 1 - 3 Bishopsgate - and is still a handsome building."¹⁰



Ship Tavern

Another tavern, whose name appears printed on the stone china dinner plate shown here, is the "Ship Tavern, Water Lane." The pattern is, again, the Standard Willow pattern, one that would be easily recognized and, perhaps, even welcomed by its patrons.



The Times, November 4, 1788, informs its readers that the "1162 BIRTH DAY SOCIETY [would be meeting] at another well-known tavern, the Ship Tavern, Water Tower Street. The article states that "THE GENTLEMEN of this SOCIETY and their FRIENDS are requested meet at the Ship Tavern_6p per box (Duty included) at the Bar of the London Coffee-Houfs, Lndgate-hill at Mr. Crutswell's." *The Times*' article helps us to establish the existence of this public house well before the manufacture of the plate.

On this plate we find both a printed and an impressed Clews mark that date the plate as c.1833.¹¹

The cartouche, which is framed with a decorative vine and leaf border and printed below the pattern within the Standard Willow border, gives us both the establishment's name and its location:

Water Lane, [Tower Street]. The plate must have been part of the service used for their clientele. In addition to including the name and location of the establishment, the proprietors used the dinnerware as a medium to promote its full line of services which are described in a second "garter" shaped cartouche placed in the border above the central pattern. Here, we find the initials "WR" and, within the band itself, the words describing of its offerings: "Dinners. Drest & Choice. Wines."¹²



Neptune Tavern

Also shown here is a slightly later example of the name of a public house on a molded and indented dinner plate. It is printed in underglaze blue in Minton's Genevieve pattern c. 1835. This pattern is one of a series of romantic landscapes "featuring alpine chalets surrounded by a characteristic floral border."¹³ The mark, also shown here, consists of a scroll and floral cartouche with the series name as well as the name that Minton gave to the body type "Opaque China" and, in the bottom center, Minton's cursive "M".

It is highly likely that there were, in all of England, numerous establishments with the name "Neptune Tavern" during this period. Without the location printed on this plate, I am unable to identify its specific geographic location. There were two Neptune Taverns listed in Pigot's Directory for London Public Houses during this period: One at 86 Fore Street, St Clements, Ipswich, and another at 31 Clarendon Street, Somers Town. Of the Neptune Tavern originally located at 86 Fore Street, Ipswich, I have learned that it

was also called the Neptune Inn" and "Ye Olde

Neptune Inne." At one time the sign on the front of the building read "86 fore st 1639." This observation, made by an unknown writer in 1838, places it within the timeframe of the plate. In 1888 Dr J.E. Taylor, provides us with a description of this same tavern; "perhaps the most notable part is the present tap room. The quay labourers sit over their beer in a carved-ceiled, oak panelled room, the mantel piece of which is good enough to lead to the sin of covetousness. Upstairs, the front room has a plastered ceiling, modelled in sections, with the Tudor rose as the chief ornament."¹⁴ Dr. Taylor's

description evokes for us a special image of the traditional public house to which these lovely blue and white service pieces would have added even more character for a place that plays, even today, a special role in British life.



For another interesting example with a name of an early public house printed on an earthenware plate produced by Davenport, see Coysh and Henrywood's discussion of the "Spaniard Inn," in the Dictionary Volume I.¹⁵ The authors do a fine job of placing this public house in its historical context.

I would welcome information concerning these and other examples of blue printed pieces that have the names of public houses and any other information printed on them. Please email me at lzeller829@aol.com. Please see the Addendum to this article by Dick Henrywood below.

Editor's Note: *All photographs in this article courtesy the author.*

See Addendum on next page

Addendum

By Dick Henrywood

Having seen a pre-publication draft of the above article, I thought members might like to know about a few other similar wares with inscriptions for inns or dining rooms which have been noted:

1. "Eyre Tavern / St. John's Wood" in a scroll-framed cartouche let into the border of a "Wild Rose" pattern soup plate. St' John's Wood is in North London.
2. "John Abraham's / Commercial Inn / Newton" on the interior of a blue-printed bowl made by Turner and decorated around the outside with the border from the Villager pattern.
3. A printed mark "Harrison's / New Hummums / Coffee House" on a blue Spode Tiber pattern dinner plate. This establishment is known to have been in the Covent Garden area of London.
4. "Watling's / Pimlico / Dining Rooms" in an octagonal panel let into the design on a flow-blue dessert plate. The printed mark was excessively flown and the pattern name could not be distinguished. Pimlico is in London.
5. "West End Dining Rooms / and Tavern / 312 Oxford Street" in a panel let into the border of a dinner plate from the Freesia Border series. This would probably be the well-known Oxford Street in central London.

These special-order wares are always of interest and news of any others would be welcomed for inclusion in future issues of the Bulletin.

¹ Inns, Ales and Drinking Customs of Old England. Frederick W. Hackwood, 1985. ISBN 1-85170-069.

² The location is the New Palace Yard, Westminster. Dickins Auctioneers, in their January 11-12, 2008 sale at their Clayton Salesroom, offered for sale a 20 inch well and tree meat dish with the identical pattern and printed words.

³ Tanner, Arleen and Grahame. Swansea's Cambrian Pottery Transferware and Other Welsh Examples. Suffolk: Polstead Press, 2005, pp. 110-111. The pattern was later used as a basis for the "Dillwyn Willow" pattern developed by Burgess & Leigh in the 1920s. See: Rogers, Connie. The Illustrated Encyclopedia of British Willow Ware. Pp.65-66. Atglen, Pennsylvania: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 2004.

⁴ From the ARS QUATUOR CORONATORUM TRANSACTIONS OF THE QUATUOR CORONATI LODGE.

⁵ 1799. London, Printed and Sold by P. BOYLE, At his Court and City Guide Printing Office, Norris Street, Haymarket

⁶ Freke Gould, Robert. The Four Old Lodges, Founders of Modern Freemasonry and their Descendents. 1879.

⁷ From: "Papers relating to the National Petition and 'The Charter'", *London Radicalism 1830-1843*. "In pursuance of a Requisition to me addressed for the purpose of convening a public meeting of the Inhabitants of the City and Liberty of Westminster to take into consideration the propriety of petitioning parliament to pass into a law the outlines of a proposed act of Parliament entitled the Peoples Charter the object of which is to extend the Right of Suffrage and to enact such other Reforms as will effectually secure good and cheap government."

⁸ Its full name was the City of London Tavern. Reproduction of this print and the one that follows of the dinning hall are authorized by the Guildhall Library, Aldermanbury, London, England. All images of the King's Arms serving dish, the London Tavern plate and the Ship Tavern plate are by the author.

⁹ The engraving shown here is of the "Hon. East India Company's Banquet at the London Tavern to Lieutenant-General Patrick Grant, C.B., The New Commander-in Chief of Madras," February, 1856.

¹⁰ For more on the meeting places for the Worshipful Company of Bowyers, go to <http://www.bowyers.com/history/meetingPlaces.html>.

¹¹ James & Ralph Clews, Cobridge Works, Cobridge, Staffordshire Potteries

¹² "Drest," in contemporary terms, means "catered." I have not been able to discover who or what the initials "WR" stand for.

¹³ Geoffrey H. Priestman, An Illustrated Guide to Minton Printed Pottery, 1796-1836, pp. 206-211. Also see A.W. Coysh and R. K. Henrywood, The Dictionary of Blue & White Printed Pottery, 1780-1880, Vol. I, p. 151.

¹⁴ MRS MATILDA R. JARRETT (KELLYS DIRECTORY 1937) Old inns of Suffolk. From the Campaign for Real Ale "CAMRA" web site: <http://www.ipswichcamra.com/>

¹⁵ Coysh and Henrywood. p. 343.