

Transfer Printed Cow Cream Jugs: A Breed All Their Own

by Loren Zeller

While useful household items designed to hold liquids have been made in the shape of animals from early civilization onward, we know that the English began to develop a viable commercial market for cow creamers in the second half of the 18th century. The vast majority of these forms produced in the latter part of the eighteenth century and in the first half of the nineteenth century were paint decorated like the example shown in Figure 1. These utilitarian items must have been produced by the hundreds of thousands, if not more, as many survive today in spite of the fact that they would have been subject to frequent use and breakage.



Fig. 1

Predecessors to these earthenware cream jugs were the silver cow creamers imported in the early 18th century from Holland and later produced in England. One example is shown in Figure 2. Probably the best known of these early silversmiths was the Dutchman, John Schuppe,



Fig. 2

who moved to London c. 1750 and registered his mark there in 1753. Helen Hallesy observed that "Staffordshire potteries copied the idea of using a cow as a container for cream around 1750, when the first saltglazed examples appeared."¹

In England, the popularity of cow cream jugs began to grow significantly in the first quarter of the 19th century. By this period, the Industrial Revolution was in full swing and every area had its local pottery, many of which may have produced cow creamers and other figures. The main centers for producing cow cream jugs outside of Stoke-on-Trent were Tyneside, Yorkshire, South Wales and South Scotland, where earthenware in the Staffordshire style was manufactured. Unfortunately, few earthenware potters were using an identifiable mark during this period. Without marks, researchers must rely on characteristics of shape and design to aid them in determining the region in which they were made. Some marked paint decorated examples are known from the St. Anthony Pottery and Thomas Fell & Co. both in Newcastle upon Tyne, and Taylor & Co. in Hanley.²

Early earthenware examples can be found in creamware with or without decoration, examples decorated in a lead glaze that was stained with metallic oxide for a decorative effect, and paint or sponge decorated pieces like this creamer from the Keiller Collection in the Potteries Museum, Stoke on Trent (Fig. 3). While Figures 1 and 3 are unmarked, these shapes were probably made by the Cambrian Pottery.

It was not until sometime between 1815 and 1830 that we begin to see transfer patterns appearing on these popular figural forms. From that period on we find examples of both painted and printed items well into



Fig. 3

the twentieth century, and for that matter, even today. However, for reasons unknown, it would appear that only a small quantity of transfer-printed examples were produced during the first half of the nineteenth century, a time in which printed earthenwares, from dinner wares to personal hygiene products, were abundant in the market. The hypothesis that few printed cow creamers were produced is supported by the fact that *early* printed cow cream jugs are seldom available for purchase in the market today while painted varieties are frequently found. Why were transfer-printed patterns used to decorate these items? Ceramics scholars whom I have queried on this subject admit that they “haven’t a clue” and, candidly, there appears to be little interest in determining why. To my knowledge, all that exists are assumptions regarding the use of printed patterns on these early forms. Was transfer printing on these objects viewed as another way to diversify a factory’s offerings or to stand out from competitors in a market dominated by paint decorated figures? While this may be a logical answer, we may never really know.

Like the earlier versions, all were made with an opening in the back into which cream or milk could be poured. A small earthenware lid would be added to cover the opening. An opening in the mouth was formed through which the liquid could be poured. The cow figure afforded two sides on which the potter could apply a transfer pattern, and they did just that. In some cases the pattern varies, while in others, the same pattern is repeated on each side. The small lid was usually covered with a scrap from the transfer tissue. These charming pieces were often damaged and it is difficult to find examples with-

out restoration and with the original lid. Collectors should examine them carefully to ensure that they are not restored and that they are in original condition before paying a premium price.

South Wales

The Glamorgan Pottery, operated by the partnership of Baker, Bevan and Irwin between 1814 and 1838, along with the Cambrian firm, Dillwyn & Co., 1802 - 1831, were some of the first to produce *print* decorated cow cream jugs. Although these South Wales potteries specialized in transfer printed jugs in black, they also produced printed examples in blue.

The Glamorgan firm favored scenes of country mansions or rustic cottages that were also used on other types of wares. The first examples included here are printed in fishing scenes from the *Rural Series* (Figures 4a and 4b). Some examples were marked *Opaque China, BB&I* (Fig. 4c).

Also included here are examples made by the Cambrian Pottery, Swansea. These vary somewhat in shape from those produced by the Glamorgan firm. The first example, shown in Figures 5a and 5b, is printed in greyish black with two views of Bude, Cornwall: The sides are printed with *Bude, Cornwall from Northern Beach at Low Tide* and the base is printed with *Bude, Cornwall from the Town*.

Figure 5c shows a slightly enlarged version of the pattern (from a mug) that appears on the base of the cow creamer. Like the scenes from the *Rural Series*, these views of Cornwall were popular and they were printed on many different types of wares.

The Cambrian Pottery also employed its popular *Shells and Flowers* patterns on their cream jugs. Included here in Figures 6a, 6b, and 6c are three examples from the Dillwyn & Co. period. Some are known to have an impressed “D” (for Dillwyn & Co.) on the underside edge. As in the case with the Cornwall views, Dillwyn used



Fig. 4a



Fig. 4b



Fig. 4c



Fig. 5a

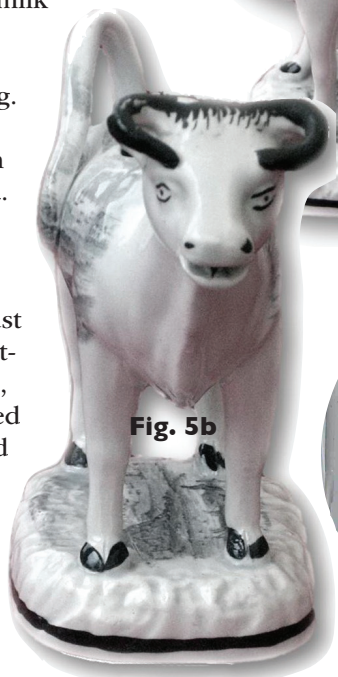


Fig. 5b

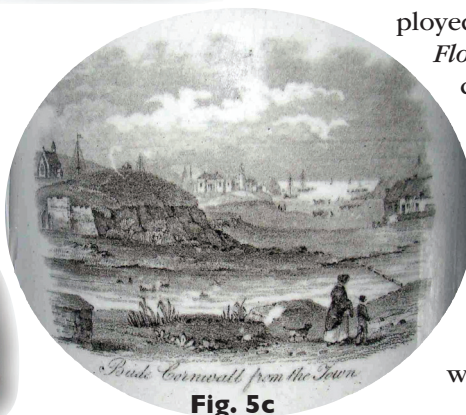


Fig. 5c



Fig. 6a



Fig. 6b

these same popular designs on other wares.³ These cream jugs are approximately 4" in height and the base is usually 3" wide and 4-5" in length.

Yet another printed form was noted in Judie Siddall's and David Hoexter's article titled "Libra Antiques," in *TCC Bulletin*.⁵ This example was printed in blue with an all-over chintz pattern. Shown here is a scanned image of the creamer from the article (Fig. 7a). Attribution to the Cambrian Pottery is probable based on its shape and the known Cambrian *Pinwheel* pattern.

Lacking a color version of this creamer, I have added an example of the pattern printed on a jug kindly provided by Helen Hallesy (Fig. 7b).

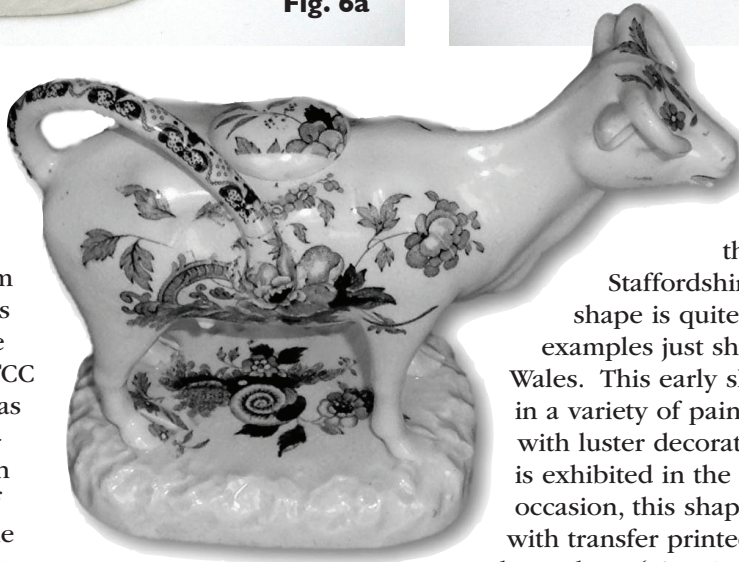


Fig. 6c



Fig. 7a



Fig. 7b

Staffordshire?

I have not been able to confirm the origin of the cow cream jugs that follow and can only suggest that they were possibly made in Staffordshire. What is clear is that their shape is quite different from that of the examples just shown that were made in South Wales. This early shape is more commonly found in a variety of paint decorated forms as well as with luster decoration as seen in Figure 8 which is exhibited in the Potteries Museum. On a rare occasion, this shape can also be found decorated with transfer printed patterns. The first example shown here (Figs. 9a, 9b, 9c, and 9d) is printed in the *Broseley* pattern, also known as *Two Temples II*, Variation *Broseley*. This particular piece is missing the small lid.

A second example of the same form is printed in the



Fig. 8

Squabbling Birds pattern (Figs. 10a, 10b, 10c, and 10d).

Both the *Broseley* and the *Squabbling Birds* pattern examples have a blue printed mark resembling the number “6”, possibly a model number or a workman’s mark (see Fig. 9d). The average size of these creamers is 5.25” high and 6.75” long. The base is 2” wide and 4” long.

The Potteries Museum houses an impressive collection of 667 cow cream jugs built up over a period of 30

years by Mrs. Gabrielle M. Keiller of Kingston Hill, Surrey. The collection was generously donated in 1962 with the condition that a minimum of two thirds of the collection be on permanent exhibition and the remainder available for study by appointment. This collection contains at least one example of these *early* printed creamers. Figure 11 shows a small portion of the collection on display. The cream jug seen on the back



Fig. 9a



Fig. 10a



Fig. 9c



Fig. 9d



Fig. 10c



Fig. 10d



Fig. 9b



Fig. 10b



Fig. 11



Fig. 12b



Fig. 12c



Fig. 12a

shelf and to the right is the same as the example shown in Figures 12a, 12b, and 12c. It is printed with a slightly different version of a pattern known as *Luscombe*. The maker of this pattern is unknown; however, other versions have been documented: *Luscombe, Devon* was produced by Enoch Wood & Sons, and *Luscombe, Devonshire* by Ralph Hall.⁴

The border is known as the *Smoke Ring Border*. The latter was also used on a pattern named *Blind Man's Buff in the Open*.

The last example of this delightful form, shown in Figures 13a, 13b, and 13c, just surfaced in a recent auction. It is printed with a genre scene of a mother and two children in a garden setting. The same pattern is used on both sides. The cover is missing. This example has a workman's mark that appears to be the number one or, perhaps, a letter "I" (Fig. 13d).

The printed versions of this early form are really quite rare. Unfortunately, the maker remains unknown and,

therefore, so does the region in which it was produced. To my knowledge, the four pattern examples included here are the only documented pieces in this form. If anyone has other printed examples of these early cow cream jugs, I would appreciate learning of them. Please contact me at lzeller829@aol.com.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, many cow creamers were produced in the popular *Willow* and *Broseley* patterns. An example of each is shown here in Figures 14 and 15.

They were made with molded bases in a floral pattern, sometimes painted green, and occasionally with the corresponding geometric border pattern printed on the base as in these two examples.

The fact that many examples are still found in the market today supports the assumption that they were produced in large quantities. While still interesting and fun to collect, the later examples lack some of the charm and quality of the earlier pieces. They tend to be more thickly

Continued on page 10



Fig. 13a



Fig. 13d



Fig. 13c



Fig. 13b

The Other Dark Blue *Continued from page 9*

shape provides evidence that it is actually a custard cup, which was part of a dinner service. It has a flared rim, and the transfer pattern has been cut down from a larger piece.

While marked floral teawares, though rare, usually display the marks of recognized potters such as Clews, Wood, or Adams, some have unattributable marks, which for some reason occur on pieces with family histories in the Connecticut River Valley area. Exam-



Fig. 5. Footed teapot with unique shape and marked "Union".

ples with an impressed "Union" mark are in the collections of both Historic Deerfield and the Memorial Association. They may have been made by a short-lived potters' cooperative in Burslem in the early 1830's. In addition to the mark, they have a distinctive shape with feet (Fig. 5), much more common in porcelain of the era.

The floral transfer patterns, unlike many historical themes, were timeless, a market staple for many decades, loved, used, but then discarded, and rarely appreciated today.

Cow Cream Jugs *Continued from page 8*

potted and often the mold lines where the two halves were joined together are apparent. One could conclude that the *Broseley* and *Willow* patterns found their way on to the later cow creamers because the patterns were popular and were deemed desirable by consumers. That is to say, potteries used these patterns because they would appeal to a broad audience, thus affording the probability of higher sales volumes and greater profits.⁵

TCC members can search for and view examples of the following patterns like the ones printed on these cow cream jugs in the *Pattern and Source Print Database*:

- *Bude, Cornwall from Northern Beach at Low Tide*
- *Bude, Cornwall from the Town.*
- *Broseley*, also see *Two Temples II, Variation Broseley*
- *Willow Pattern*
- *Shells and Flowers #01 and #02*
- *Pinwheels* (several variations are recorded)
- *Squabbling Birds*
- *Luscombe*. Also see *Luscombe, Devon* (this is a variation of the pattern printed on the creamer)
- For the border for the pattern *Luscombe*, (Figures 12a & 12b, & 12c) search for *Blind Man's Buff in the Open*.



Fig. 14



Fig. 15

End Notes

1. *The Glamorgan Pottery Swansea 1814-38*. Gomer Press, Llandysul, Dyfed, Wales, 1995, page 69.
2. One resource dealing with this subject of painted cow cream jugs is Pat Halfpenny's work titled *English Earthenware Figures 1740-1840*, Antique Collectors Club Ltd, 1992.
3. Examples of this type are included in *Swansea's Cambrian Pottery Transferware and Other Welsh Examples*, Arleen and Grahame Tanner, Polstead Press, 2005, pp. 170-171.
4. See "Luscombe," by Sheila French and Dick Henrywood in *FOB Bulletin* 131, page 5, for an example of this pattern on a cup and saucer. One characteristic that distinguishes the pattern version on the cream jug from the versions by Wood & Sons and Hall is the presence of an additional section added to the manor house. In this article, Henrywood points out that the added section was not found on the actual building recorded in an engraved print.
5. I wish to express my appreciation to Helen Hallesy, Richard Halliday, and Arleen and Grahame Tanner for their comments and/or images provided, and for images complements of The Potteries Museum, Stoke on Trent.