

The Glamorgan Pottery Bicentenary (1814- 2014)

By Helen Hallesy

Although first conceived and contrived by George Haynes as early as 1810, the idea of a rival pottery in Swansea to compete with the well-established Cambrian, did not take definite shape until some years later.¹ The Cambrian Pottery had enjoyed the reputation of producing excellent products of great diversity for over 40 years, with Haynes, its manager from 1789 until 1802, being instrumental in transforming the small concern into a thriving commercial business.

In 1802 the Cambrian acquired a new owner, Lewis Weston Dillwyn, but the new partnership was short lived and for many reasons came to a miserable end in 1810 with much bitterness and acrimony.

After 21 years of service at the Cambrian, Haynes terminated his agreement with Dillwyn and entered into the scandalous scheme of purchasing and erecting buildings on a site adjacent to the existing Cambrian in the Strand, the very heart of the pottery industry, for the purpose of making 'Soap'. Dillwyn instigated court proceedings against Haynes' conduct '*in setting up such an objectionable manufactory against his partner*' and rejoiced in the court's decision to have the soap works swiftly closed down. After the trial, undeterred, Haynes determined to embark on a new venture in the form of a rival establishment – The Glamorgan Pottery which took several years to reach completion. By 1814 the building of kilns, workshops, store-houses and offices was complete; the new factory now commenced trading and continued to do so successfully for the next 24 years.²

That George Haynes financed and controlled the management of his new business is well documented. The nominal head, however, was his son-in law, William Baker, who formed a new partnership with William Bevan and his 3 sons, as well as Thomas Irwin. This group gave



Impressed horseshoe and printed Opaque China marks found on Glamorgan Pottery wares.



"The Picnickers".

the pottery its distinguishing factory mark, Baker, Bevans and Irwin (BB & I), often accompanied by the term 'Opaque China' and occasionally with the name of the pattern added.

The 200th anniversary of the Glamorgan Pottery at Swansea falls this year and it is appropriate to mark the event with a review of some unrecorded transfer printed patterns and new shapes which have recently

emerged. Glamorgan pottery teapots have very distinctive shapes, two of which are illustrated with some delightful newly discovered printed rural designs

Teapots

"The Picnickers"

A rounded teapot with collar extending upwards, transfer printed in blue. The design shows a family



“Dressing up”.

group having a picnic, sitting with dog under a tree. 9 ½” length; 6” height, Mark impressed “B.B. & I.” in a horseshoe

“Dressing up”

A rounded teapot with collar extending upwards, transfer printed in blue; the design shows a mother with young girl wrapped in a shawl and a boy holding on to his hat. 9.5” length; 6” height. Mark impressed “B.B. & I.” in a horseshoe.

“Vine Pattern” pattern slippers

The Glamorgan Pottery is unique in producing moulded miniature slippers or shoes with transfer printed decoration.³ Traditionally, shoes have for centuries been associated with good luck, particularly at wedding ceremonies. It is possible that these were used as a gift for a loved one to his bride or a family member to a newly married couple. It was customary for a young man either to make, or commission a craftsman to make, a token that would express his sentiments to his bride; in Wales, for example, this was often in the form of a love spoon.

These newly discovered shoes are printed in pink with a pattern of vine leaves and tendrils with bunches of hanging grapes. They are personally inscribed on the bases with the initials ‘MR’. Length 4”. This pattern is documented on pieces of Glamorgan pottery that bear a factory mark.



“Vine Pattern” slippers. Note the “M.R.” on the sole, a personalized gift, most likely.

‘Quilted’ pattern Water or Toilet Set

Within most homes in the 19th century elaborate toilet sets were a popular necessity and became an essential part of every-day personal hygiene and grooming. This water set is printed in a green continuous sheet pattern resembling quilted stars, and over-painted with red enamel colour. It comprises a large wash bowl and jug with toothbrush box and soap dish, each piece with elaborate gadrooned moulding. Marked “Opaque China” over “B. B. & I.” in a scroll.

By 1838 the Glamorgan Pottery had closed its doors with much of the machinery, plant and moulds

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this is the case, it probably never went to the Isle of Wight and this poses an interesting question regarding its survival. One would assume that if pieces were damaged to such an extent after final firing in the kiln, they would simply be destroyed, especially since they had a retailer's mark on them. You would think that neither John Meir nor Moore would want second-rate damaged goods to leave the factory. So how is it still here today? What happened when it was taken out of the kiln for the final time? If only these pieces could talk! My own feeling is that the person who potted or printed it was still extremely proud of this piece and was either allowed to or simply took the footbath home for personal use. I think pieces such as these that pose intriguing thoughts and possibilities really change a seemingly inanimate object into one that has such social connections.

Fig. 4. Source Print for the transfer of “Lanthony Abbey, Monmouthshire,” used on the interior bottom of the Footbath.

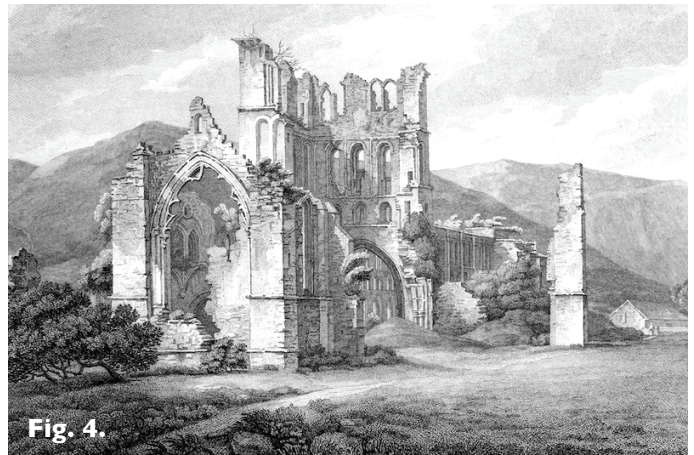


Fig. 4.

Fig. 5. Source Print for the transfer of “Slingsby Castle, Yorkshire,” used on the exterior of the Footbath. Note the absence of cattle in the Source Print: proof that engravers took liberties to enhance the images.



Fig. 5.

End Notes:

- (i) Source images for “Lanthony Abbey” and “Slingsby Castle” kindly supplied by D. K. Henrywood
- (ii) Information kindly supplied by Pat Halfpenny

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purchased by William Chambers for his new pottery works at Llanelly. William Bryant, clerk, potter and later business agent for the Glamorgan Pottery left to take the position of acting manager at the new works together with a nucleus of skilled workmen.

Examples of Glamorgan pottery can be seen at Swansea Museum, the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, Swansea and the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff. A small exhibition representing the products of the factory is planned to take place at Swansea Museum during this year of its commemoration which show the significant contribution this concern made in the cultural development of the town during the 19th century.

As the two adjacent potteries were operating in direct competition to one another, a successful Cambrian pattern or shape would be copied by the Glamorgan and perhaps vice-versa, whichever article was more commercially saleable at the time. Further work is being investigated and catalogued on this cross-over period of production between the two potteries.



‘Quilted’ pattern Water or Toilet Set.

End Notes

- 1 The account of Swansea and its environs published in the *Swansea Guide of 1813* by D. Jenkins, describes Mr Dillwyn's large Pottery (the Cambrian) and a 'large soap works', but omits any mention of the Glamorgan Pottery which would confirm that the pottery had not been completed at the time of printing of the guide book.
- 2 For a detailed, illustrated history of the works and its products, see H. Hallesy, *“The Glamorgan Pottery, Swansea 1814-38”*, Gomer Press, 1995
- 3 For a description and illustration of another pair of Glamorgan shoes printed in blue with the “Shepherd” pattern, See H. Hallesy, *“The Glamorgan Pottery Swansea and some comparisons with the Cambrian”*, in *Welsh Ceramics in Context Part 1* (Ed. J. Gray), Gomer 2003