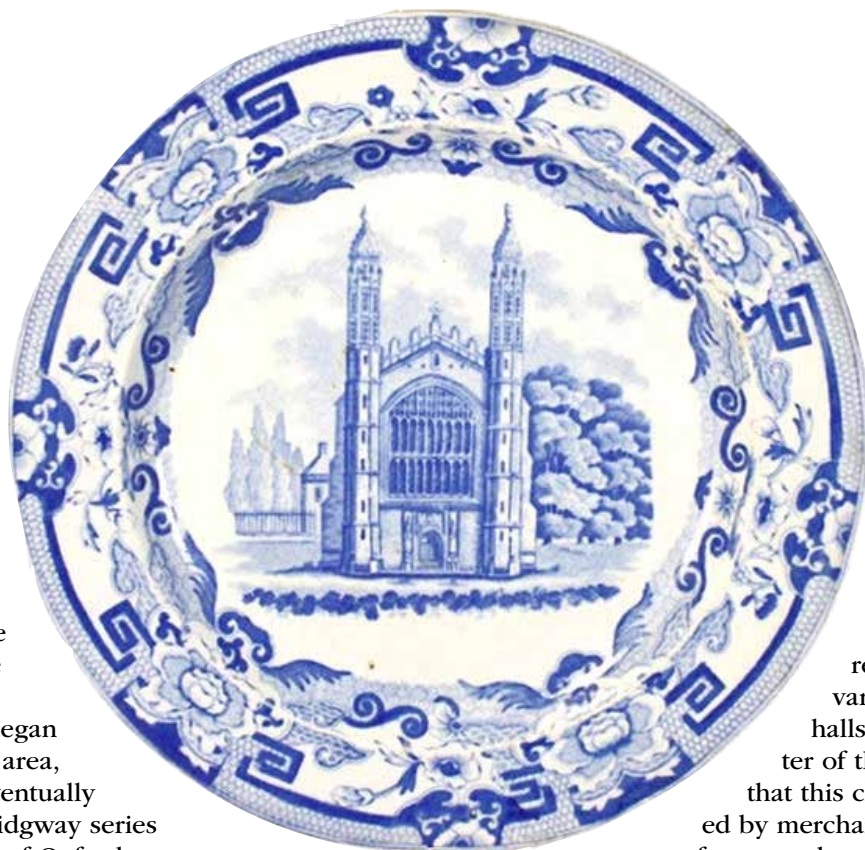


# Transferware used at Cambridge Colleges

By Len Kling

**M**y maternal grandmother's family all came from small villages near the university city of Cambridge, although her parents met here in Michigan in the 1890s. After I had some genealogical work done and knew more of our English antecedents, I began to collect images of the area, mostly in books, and eventually on transferware. The Ridgway series of views of the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge University is of course well known on this side of the pond – it was fascinating to learn at our 2016 conference in Charlottesville that shards of those patterns had even been found at Thomas Jefferson's retreat, Poplar Forest, in Western Virginia. The Mason series of Cambridge college views was less well known here but has since been well documented in Dick Henrywood's *Transferware Recorder 3*. It was exciting (for me anyway) to discover that a number of the colleges had acquired their own transfer printed dinner services for use in the dining halls. These were obviously never intended for worldwide sale, but had a very local focus. They come on the market infrequently, in fact my accumulation of these patterns is fairly tiny. Never-



**Figure 1.**



**Figure 2.**

theless, here's a look at this peculiar collecting niche.

A few of these patterns are covered in general reference books like the *Dictionaries* by Coysh and Henrywood, but a comprehensive source of information on the wares is an

article written by Peter Stovin for the *Northern Ceramic Society Journal* in 1999; "19th Century Cambridge College Ceramics, and a Comparison with Oxford Colleges". Stovin notes that "crockery" replaced pewter in the various college dining halls over the second quarter of the 19th century, also that this changeover was promoted by merchants in Cambridge who for more than a century promoted the trade in dinner services. In the early part of this period the cooks for the colleges were independent contractors who bought the dishes themselves and often had their own names or initials printed on them. Later the colleges took over the kitchens and the cooks became employees.

Some of the services adapted already well-known patterns, just adding the names of the colleges or cooks to versions of the 'Wild Rose', 'Standard Willow' and other chinoiserie designs. The Mason factory produced a more distinctive design by using its 'Blue Pheasant' border to frame an image of the splendid Neo-Gothic King's College Chapel (Figure 1), after the frontispiece of Harreden's *"Cantabrigia Depicta"*, published in 1811. My version of this



Figure 3.



Figure 5.



Figure 4.

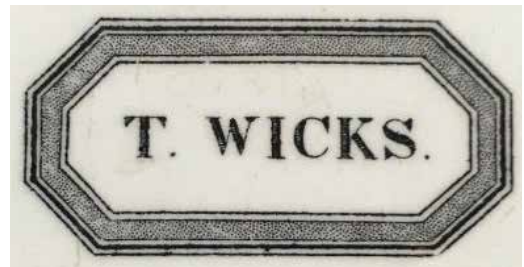


Figure 6.

plate bears only the early impressed “Mason’s Patent Ironstone China” mark, but it is often found printed with the name of college cook James Lawrance (Figure 2) who with his son Philip, served at King’s College from the 1820s through the 1860s. This pattern was also produced by Mason’s successors, Francis Morley and the Ashworth Brothers.

Another dinner plate bears a view of Clare College (Figure 3), after a William Mason print from 1819. Mason was a local engraver and print seller, no relation to the Mason family of Staffordshire. It depicts the college with the spires of King’s College Chapel beyond. The maker is unknown but this Union border of roses, thistles and shamrocks is known on services for at least two other colleges. The back is marked “B.W.” in a wreath (Figure 4)

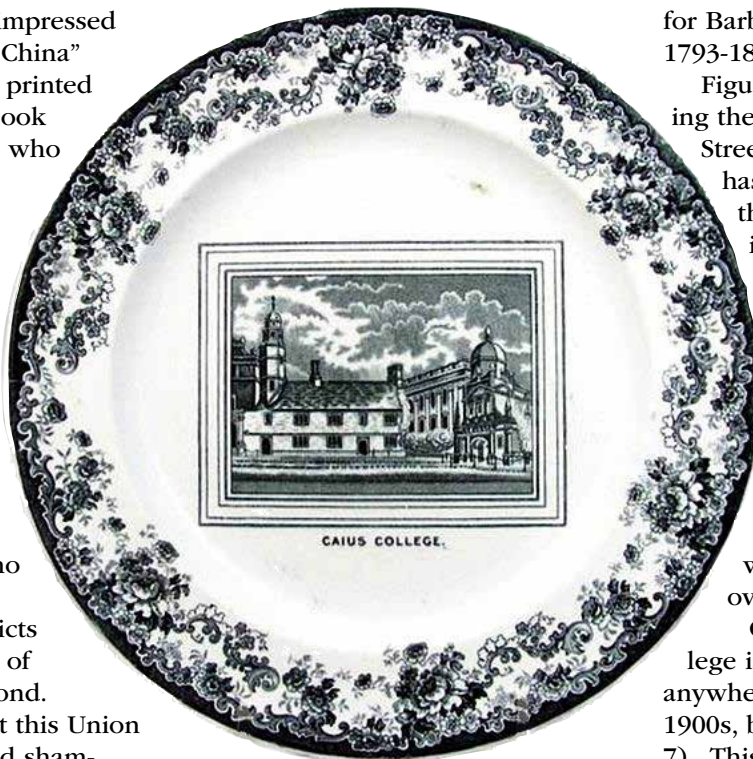


Figure 7.

for Barbara Wood, the college cook 1793-1825.

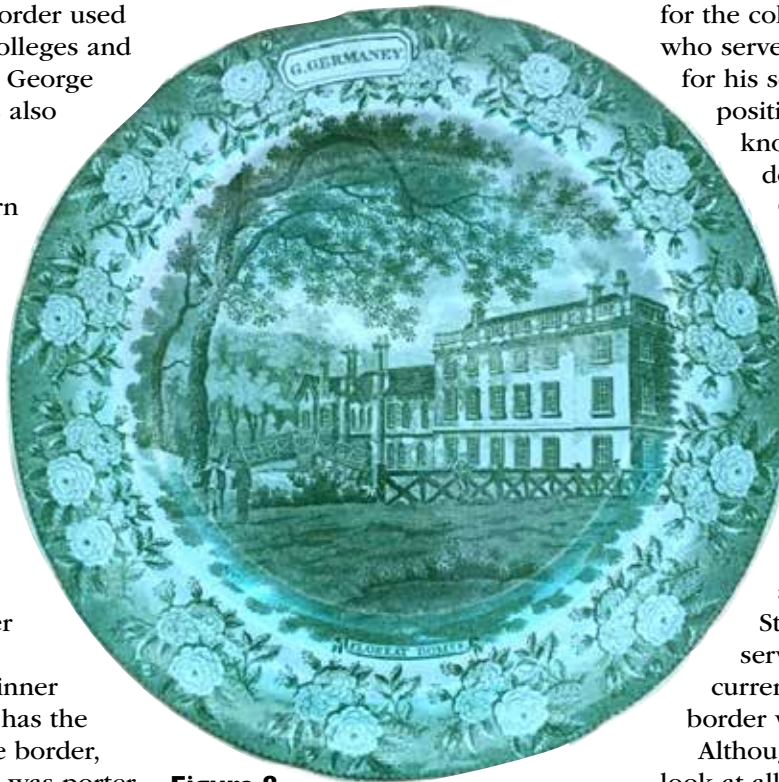
Figure 5 is a small platter showing the front entrance, on Downing Street, of Emmanuel College. It has the same Union border as the Clare College plate, and is marked “T.W.” on the back (Figure 6) for Thomas Wicks, college cook 1807-1851. Again, this is after a William Mason print, from 1820. John Harvard, founder of Harvard College in 1732, was an alumnus and modelled Harvard on Emmanuel. This is one of a few plates I was able to buy from Peter Stovin’s son Oliver Stovin in 2019.

Caius (pronounced Keys) College is shown on a later plate, made anywhere from the 1890s to early 1900s, by Bishop & Stonier (Figure 7). This version of the pattern uses the company’s Dove pattern border, but the same central image, after a William Mason print of 1820, was in-

roduced with the Union border used for Clare and Emmanuel Colleges and “G.F.” initial mark for cook George Fellowes (1818-1838). It is also known with the ‘Standard Willow’ and other borders. Stovin notes that the pattern was produced as late as the 1960s.

Another piece acquired from Oliver Stovin is an ironstone dinner plate by an unknown maker, with a view of Queens’ College (Figure 8). According to Peter Stovin, Queens’ switched to crockery rather late, not until 1842. Queens’ differed from other colleges in that the college porter had charge of the dinner services, and this example has the name “G. Germaney” in the border, for George Germaney who was porter 1825-1846. Plates marked “M. Page” for his successor, Martin Page (1846-1871) are also known. The college motto “Floreat Domus” (May this House Flourish) is also in the border. The view shows the college buildings as well as the famous “Mathematical Bridge” spanning the River Cam, first built in 1749.

The last pattern I want to look at



**Figure 8.**

has the same central scene with two different borders. These soup plates, used at Trinity College, have a central view of the 17th century fountain in the center of Trinity Great Court. The view is captioned “Hudson Trinity College”, and the plates also have the name Hudson printed on the back,

for the college cook Henry Hudson who served 1834-1845, and possibly for his son Philip who filled the position till 1871. The better-known version (Figure 9) is documented in Volume I of Coysh and Henrywood, and is framed by the border from the “British Views” series, by an unknown maker. Last year I was fortunate to get from Richard Halliday another example (Figure 10) with an ornate border typical of the 1830s. Richard had never seen this version before, nor had I, and it isn’t documented in Stovin’s article. Whether this service was used later or concurrently with the British Views border version is not known.

Although hardly a comprehensive look at all the patterns used at the Cambridge colleges this hopefully gives an idea of the variety available, and another indication, if any were needed, of the pleasure to be found even in the little visited nooks and crannies of the world of transfer printed ceramics. We would love to hear from you if you know of other examples. ■



**Figure 9.**



**Figure 10.**