



## The “Uva” Mystery

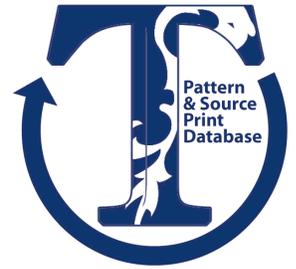
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Database Discoveries – Contribution # 21

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The talents of master detectives like Sherlock Holmes, Hercule Poirot, and Miss Marple are often needed to decipher the mysteries of transferware patterns. As the Floral and Botanical editor for the TCC database, I channel their skills whenever possible and try to emulate their thorough investigatory techniques.

Recently, one such mystery presented itself in the form of an eBay listed earthenware tankard, transfer printed in blue (Figs. 1, 2).



Fig. 1: Tankard, handle left.



Fig. 2: Tankard, handle right.

Encircling the straight-sided tankard were two wide bands elaborately printed with a plethora of motifs: flowers, leaves, and scrolls on a blue stippled ground; with a basket, additional profuse blossoms, buds and fruit on a white reserve. Although the size was not given, it was described as having a “2 pint capacity.” The underside of the tankard was printed in blue with a faint and somewhat obscure pattern name (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3: Tankard, printed mark.

Although Holmes had to rely on a magnifying glass, I was able to utilize 21<sup>st</sup> century electronic photo-enhancing tools to enlarge and try to decipher the words. Despite my best efforts, I could

not clearly make out the name. Could it be “Uxa” or possibly “Uva?” As a resident of Charlottesville, home of the University of Virginia Cavaliers, I was delighted to think that “UVA” could be a pattern name! Was this wishful thinking or an actual possibility? I sent an image of the mark and posed the question to Chief Sleuth and Database Editor Connie Rogers and she agreed that, although faintly printed, “Uva” was the likely moniker. With suspected pattern name firmly in hand, I diligently searched many volumes, but was unable to find any images or information about this lovely pattern with such an obscure name.

Deciphering the pattern name was a challenge, however determining the maker proved to be a very “elementary” and straightforward process, as the name “Hulme and Son” was clearly printed in the mark. References were abundant! Godden noted that Mark No. 2128, was used c. 1828-30 (Godden1964, p. 340). Coysh and Henrywood confirmed that the short-lived firm included “Hulme and Sons” in its printed marks (CoyshHenrywood1982, p. 182). The description of the body as “Opaque China” was another solid clue. Kowalsky indicated with Mark B1454 that the firm’s predecessor, Lockett and Hulme, used a printed mark with the words “Opaque China” (Kowalsky1999, p. 258).

With facts in hand, investigation completed, and write-up drafted, I uploaded images and information to the database, then sent my pattern entry to Connie for review. In this case, the skills of two TCC detectives proved to be better than one. While I was researching, Connie, equally intrigued by the odd name, was scouring her references as well. Fortuitously, she had discovered a vital clue to the still ambiguous pattern name! The key to solving this moniker mystery was also to be found in Kowalsky, where “Alva” was listed as one of three patterns produced by John Hulme and Sons (Kowalsky1999, p. 258). This information was corroborated by Coysh and Henrywood, citing the name “Alva” as a pattern produced by John Hulme and Sons (CoyshHenrywood1982, p.21).

Thus the mystery of the obscure pattern name was solved, and the record was greatly improved with the inclusion of these facts. However, I was bothered by a nagging thought: had I not previously entered a pattern with many of the same unusual elements? I scoured the database. This time, with state of the art photo-enhancing tools, as well as an old-fashioned magnifying glass, I closely examined images of the prominent features in many patterns. Eureka! My previous record with the pattern name “Basket” (Pattern ID#14097) proved to be the one. This pattern was printed on a 5.75 inch jug (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4: Jug, handle left.

Indeed, there were striking similarities in the “Alva” and “Basket” patterns. Both the tankard and the jug featured similar decorative elements: a wide upper border had flowers, scrolls, and shell-inspired forms strewn across a stippled ground; a white reserve below contained a band of fruit and flowers in which a long-handled, wide-rimmed, shallow flower-filled basket was suspended from a distinctive ring or “V” dangling from the upper border (Figs. 5, 6).



Fig. 5: Tankard, basket detail.



Fig. 6: Jug, basket detail.

In both patterns fruit and grapes also filled much of the white space below (Figs. 7, 8).



Fig. 7: Tankard, grapes detail.



Fig. 8: Jug, grapes detail.

Additionally, the printed marks for both patterns featured cartouches with rather simplistic scrolls and nearly identically printed words “Opaque China” (Figs. 9, 10). All of these observations prompted further queries: Could the jug also have been produced by John Hulme & Sons, or perhaps predecessor Lockett and Hulme? Could the same engraver have designed both patterns?? Clearly, something is afoot and more investigation is needed!



Fig. 9: Tankard, printed mark.



Fig. 10: Jug, printed mark.

With transferware database work, one good mystery begets another. Fortunately, the ace TCC detectives are always on the case.

### References

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Kowalsky1999: Kowalsky, Arnold A. & Dorothy E. Encyclopedia of Marks on American, English, and European Earthenware, Ironstone, and Stoneware 1780-1980. Atglen, Pennsylvania: Schiffer Publishing Ltd. 1999.

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