



**What's in a Word: Vocabulary Discoveries from
Transfer-Printed Advertising Ware**

Database Discoveries – Contribution # 6

Transferware Collectors Club

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It's amazing what one can learn from transferware and the examples included in our Database. English 19th century advertising product containers and other ware contain a wealth of vocabulary or word usage which I have never heard before. Often related to medicinal products, these words offer the 21st century observer a chance to impress friends, business associates, doctors (not surprisingly, many of the words are medical in origin), and others in our everyday life.

The containers generally consisted of glazed earthenware bases, or pots, and a lid. As shown in the image, below, a tamper or other element is sometimes included. They were made from the mid 19th through the early 20th century (some forms of containers may date from the second half of the 18th century). They contained many products, such as ointments, tooth paste, cold cream, shaving products, food pastes, hair pomade, etc. What exactly do they have to do with transferware? The manufacture or retail supplier name and product, often with an image, were transfer-printed on the lids (and occasionally on the bases). Pot lids were produced by the millions, by some of the same UK makers who produced the transferware you see elsewhere on this site, but relatively few remain, as they were generally discarded after use. Pot lids are both mono- and polychromatic (including so-called Prattware lids).



**Yarmouth Bloater Paste, 3.5 inches diameter tamper, base, lid, Norfolk, England;
pattern registered 1868 (see also Figure 3)**

Let us take a product produced by A.H. Hardy, a chemist/druggist located in Wibsey, near Bradford, Yorkshire. As you can see on **Figure 1**, “Old Doctor Hardy” produced a “Celebrated **Scorbutic** Ointment”. Scorbutic? According to my now quite tattered Webster’s New World Dictionary (1967), “scorbutic” is derived from Middle Latin *scorbutus*, or scurvy, and thus is defined as “of, like, or having scurvy”. How an ointment meant to cure scurvy would work is beyond me.

How about **scrofula**? F. Whiteley’s ointment (**Figure 2**) promised a “cure for Scurvy, *Scrofula*, Eczema, Ringworms, Dandruff, and all Skin Diseases”. Again according to my trusty Webster’s, scrofula (also known as the “Kings Evil” during the Middle Ages) is “a tuberculosis of the lymphatic glands, especially of the neck, with enlargement of the glands”. Quite a claim for an ointment, to cure tuberculosis of the lymphatic glands! You will learn more than you may want to know about scrofula in the engaging discussion in Wikipedia, which includes some rather graphic images).

Scrofula comes to the fore again in Morse’s Herbal Ointment (**image not available for reproduction**): “For the cure of kings evil, scrofulous sores, bad & broken breasts (*I can’t imagine*), sore nipples, abscessis, broken chillblains, sore heads, bad legs, &C.” Morse provides another interesting occurrence, the changes (or at least difference between 19th century English and 20th century American spelling. “Chilblains” has now lost an “l”, and “abscessis” is nowhere to be found in the manner spelled by Morse.

What is a **bloater**? A number of producers provided bloater paste to 19th century English picnickers. A bloater is a smoked ungutted herring. According to an article by Bruce Pynn (2006, publication unknown), one of the most common (English) fish paste products was Yarmouth “Bloater” paste. “Bloater” originated from the fact that salted herrings tended to swell up during smoking and were quite unlike the rather shriveled dried salted herrings. One of the most popular brands was produced by Blanchflower, of Great Yarmouth, Norfolk (**Figure 3**).

What is the **cochineal** beetle (**Figures 4A, 4B, 4C**) and what does it have to do with transfer-printed wares? Well, in the 19th century, the reddish coloring used in common retail products such as tooth paste commonly originated from the dried bodies of this Mexican insect. Did the red coloring of cherry tooth paste originate from this delicious fruit? Probably not!

Ever heard of **Mangoena**? Neither had I. This small 2.25 inch plate (**Figure 5**) by an unknown maker) features two elephants in what appears to be a state of inebriation, probably from an alcoholic drink made from mangos. Under magnification, it is clear that the small objects in the foreground are bottles, and that the elephant on the left is holding a bottle in its trunk and pouring the contents into the mouth of the second elephant. The notation “Registered Trade Mark” clearly indicates that this was a consumer product.

T.F. Bristow & Co. (“Shave Easy Shaving Soap”) offered an interesting take on **unctuous**, which can be defined as “having the nature or quality of an ointment; oily or greasy” (probably the intended meaning); or “characterized by a smug, smooth pretense of fervor

or earnestness; too suave, bland, or oily” (**Figure 6**). Would you like your shaving soap to be unctuous?

Diaphanous? That’s how Jackman’s of Balham, England, describes its leather polish. The lid shown here (**Figure 7**) dates from approximately 1900. “Diaphanous” originated in the early 17th century from Medieval Latin and Greek, and is defined as “light, delicate, translucent”. It’s a word I’ve heard before, but had totally forgotten its usage until entering this pattern into the Database.

J. Grossmith & Son produced the **Emollio** Tablet (**Figure 8**). “Emollio” originates from the Latin, meaning “to soften, or to enervate”.

F.T. Leak and J.R. Kirk were each located in Harrogate and produced **Marbrero** tooth paste (**Figures 9A and 9B**). “Marbrero” is probably derived from the French, marbre (marble), thus this tooth paste would make teeth appear white and shiny as marble.

Following are a few more items with interesting words or phrases which populated the transfer-printed advertising containers of the 19th and early 20th century. See if you can identify the source or definition of the words in italics!

- Cardinal Mfg. Co. “Radium Salve”: *Lupus Scrofula*
- “Avillia *Scurf* Pomade”
- J. Prockter “*Cornubian* Vegetable Hair Cream”
- Sharp Bros “*Pansalia* Shaving Cream”
- Knowles’ *Esauline* or Pomade D’Esau
- S.H. Plattin Mason’s Indian *Ceratum*: the description includes *Erysipelas*.
- R. Hills Transparent Anti-*Ophiasis* (image not available)

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Most of the entries in this article are included in the Database. You can learn more about transfer-printed advertising items from the Database, and from an article available as a free download posted to the TCC website at:

http://transcollectorsclub.org/bulletin_previews/articles/PotLidsTCC2002Winter.pdf

Figures on following pages



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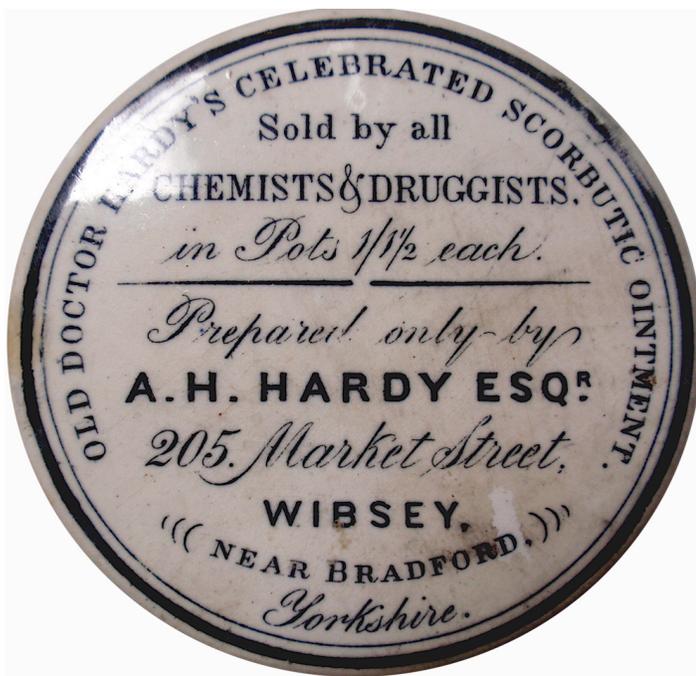


Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4A

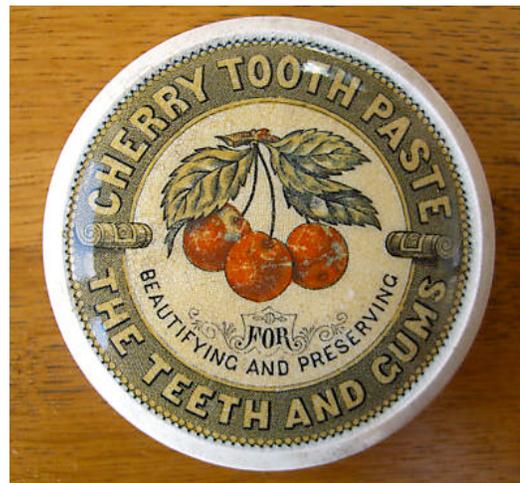


Figure 4B

Otto of roses.....	10 drops
Oil of cassia.....	1/2 drm
Oil of cloves.....	1 drm
Orris root, in powder.....	4 oz
Cuttle fish.....	4 oz
Precipitated chalk.....	4 oz
Prepared chalk, in powder.....	1 pound
Glycerine of borax.....	A sufficiency
Liquid cochineal.....	A sufficiency

Figure 4C Cherry Tooth Paste Recipe 1892



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9A



Figure 9B