

[A Transferware Journey to England](#)



A Report on the Transferware Collectors Club Tour to England and the Newark Antiques Fair June 2–9, 2026

by Loren Zeller

Since our last tour in 2015, much has changed in the ceramic industry . . . a new tour was well overdue. Planning for this special journey began in the summer of 2024 when Patricia (Pat) Halfpenny and I met at her home in Stoke to develop a list of special places to visit, people to meet, and events for members to experience and learn more about British printed–ceramics. Once a list of key places to visit was finalized, we turned to our trusty tour operator Meg MacDonald, owner of Travel Muse, to build the itinerary, handle all the logistics, and facilitate registration. The tour for 20 members was announced in February of this year and, by the end of March, it was filled! Members from the US, UK, and Australia joined the tour.

Our noted transferware scholar Pat Halfpenny volunteered to lead the group of TCC members. On June 2, we embarked on an extraordinary week-long exploration of England’s ceramic heritage. From the collections of the Victoria & Albert Museum to the pottery factories and museums of Staffordshire, and from the bustling Newark Antiques Fair to private collections rarely open to visitors, the tour provided a remarkable opportunity to experience the history, artistry, and continuing traditions of transferware firsthand.



[London and the Victoria & Albert Museum](#)

The tour began in London, where members gathered at The Rembrandt Hotel in South Kensington, conveniently located across the street from the V&A. Following a welcoming supper, anticipation built for the days ahead.

Our first full day opened with a special visit to the Victoria & Albert Museum. Curator Simon Spier introduced participants to the museum’s outstanding ceramics collections through gallery tours while Pat and Curator Florence Tyler conducted handling sessions. Members enjoyed the opportunity to closely examine historic ceramics. Discussing their manufacture, decoration, and significance proved to be a memorable beginning to the tour.



Arriving at the V&A



Curator Simon Spier led the gallery tour.

Curator Florence Tyler and Pat Halfpenny conducted a handling session.

That afternoon, the group traveled north to Lincolnshire for an overnight stay. (Our hotel was near the Newark Fair grounds making for a quick early morning bus ride for our eager shoppers.) Following dinner, Pat's evening presentation, "Our Blue Journey: Notes from a Life in Blue," provided inspiration and context for the week ahead.



Pat Halfpenny presenting the first of her two lectures

Treasure Hunting at Newark

For many participants, the Newark International Antiques & Collectors Fair was one of the highlights of the tour. Widely regarded as the largest antiques fair in Europe, Newark offered endless opportunities to search for transferware, pottery, ephemera, and unexpected treasures.



The fair offered many buildings and fields to shop.

We spent the day exploring the hundreds of stalls, comparing finds, sharing discoveries, and honing our collecting instincts. We were delighted to encounter intrepid TCC dealer friends, Bob Conn and Richard Halliday. Richard surprised us by appearing at the stall of dealers Ed and Diana Gotham, which was stocked with a fabulous selection of blue and white transferware.



We found Richard Halliday at the Gothams' wonderful stall of blue and white.

At 3 pm we boarded the bus and headed for our hotel in Stoke-on-Trent. The hotel was conveniently located in the historic city center with one of the few remaining bottle ovens in view from our windows, seen here magically appearing under a rainbow in this photo captured by Scott Hanson.



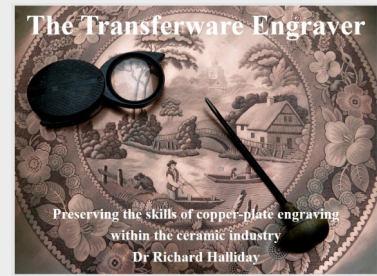
View from our Hilton Hotel window.



The evening was filled with activities: Before dinner, Dr. Richard Halliday and his wife Victoria joined us to present and sign his latest book “The Transferware Engraver.” The book was a bonus for all who participated in the tour. During dessert, Pat gave a second talk titled, “Pots, Places and People,” which served to introduce members to the people and places that we would see on the rest of our tour. The evening ended with members showing some of their favorite acquisitions at the Newark Fair.



Richard Halliday's new book on the process of engraving a copper plate.



Middleport Pottery and the Living Tradition of Burleigh

The following day brought us to Middleport Pottery, home of Burleigh ware and one of the most important surviving pottery works in Staffordshire.



We toured the working factory and explored the historic site, including the famous bottle kiln, Victorian offices, mold collections, and workshops where traditional methods continue to be practiced. Seeing transfer printing and pottery production in a working environment helped connect the historical pieces many of us admire with the processes that created them.



Bron Woff, Chrys Komis, Scott Hanson, Jo Anne Jones, Dina Zuger, and Loren Zeller share some of their special purchases.



Our guide explaining the printing process at Burleigh.



Teapots ready to be glazed.



Transferring the Burleigh mark on mugs.



Transfer printing requires a special skill and is hard work.

Duchess China and Gladstone Pottery Museum



Entering the Duchess China factory for our tour.

At Duchess China 1888, we enjoyed a rare look into a smaller-scale porcelain ceramic operation. Particularly memorable was a discussion with master hand painter Lee Price, whose skill represents a tradition that has become increasingly rare.



Learning about the important role of the modeler



Conversation with Master Painter Lee Price who often paints designs for the House of Windsor.



The adjacent Gladstone Pottery Museum provided an immersive glimpse into Staffordshire's industrial past. Original workshops, kilns, and machinery helped illustrate the scale and complexity of nineteenth-century pottery manufacture.



Dina Zuger learns how to attach a handle.



We learned that the glaze was colored pink to enable workers to ensure complete coverage. The glaze becomes clear when fired.



Entering the Gladstone Pottery Museum in Longton.



Guided tour, discovering how the kilns and steam engine worked.

The Raven Mason Collection at Keele Hall



One of the most entertaining experiences of the tour was an evening visit to Keele Hall and the Raven Mason Collection.

Hosted by Deb Skinner, Keele's Museums and Heritage Development Officer, we explored an exceptional collection of Mason's Ironstone and related Staffordshire ceramics. The handling sessions led by Pat Halfpenny and Deb Skinner allowed close examination of pieces rarely encountered outside major collections.

The setting itself, within the historic surroundings of Keele Hall, added greatly to the experience. Our day ended with a special plated dinner in Keele's historic library.



The Raven Mason Collection is housed in historic Keele Hall.



Views of Mason's Ironstone China, first printed then painted.



Deb Skinner conducts handling session at the Raven Mason Collection, Keele Hall.



Pat conducting a handling session.



The visit ended with a special dinner in Keele's beautiful library.

Spode Museum and the Art of Transfer Printing



Visit to the Spode Museum and historic buildings



Spode Museum manager, Michael Escolme, welcomes group.

Our visit to the Spode Museum offered one of the most direct connections to the history of transferware.

Museum Manager Michael Escolme welcomed our group for a behind-the-scenes exploration of the collection. A review of a selection of Spode's valuable copper plates and a printing demonstration conducted by Spode committee members Kath and Paul Holdway featured key components of the transfer-printing process and gave us good insight into the skill required to produce the wares that have captivated collectors for generations.

The afternoon included a special exhibition devoted to Willow Pattern ceramics led by Professor Neil Brownsword, a handling session led by Pat Halfpenny, and a visit to the famous Blue Room. Members also had time to shop for more treasures in the museum store which offered both vintage and contemporary wares.



Michael introduced us to Spode Museum's famous Blue Room



Paul Holdway demonstrates transfer-printing



More great treasures at the Spode Museum store.



Special Willow Pattern Exhibit

That evening, back at our hotel, Historic Ceramics Specialist Miranda Goodby's lecture, "Patterns of Fashion: Transfer Printed Designs 1850–1910," provided a fascinating look at the relationship between ceramics, design, and changing tastes.

Private Collections and Collector Fellowship

The tour concluded with visits that highlighted the passion and generosity of the collecting community.

At the home of Peter and Janis Rodwell, participants enjoyed a close look at an extensive private collection displayed in their residence. The visit demonstrated how historical ceramics can be interpreted and enjoyed beyond museums.

Back in London, members explored the newly opened V&A East Storehouse before attending a reception hosted by Jonathan Gray, President of the English Ceramic Circle. His collection of transferware and creamware with an emphasis on the Welsh potteries provided a fitting finale to a week devoted to ceramic history and scholarship. The visit ended with a celebration of spirits and delicious eats.

Reflections

Throughout the week, we encountered exceptional collections, visited working potteries and museums, and met with scholars and artisans, sharing it all with our fellow enthusiasts. The tour demonstrated not only the enduring appeal of transferware but also the vibrant community dedicated to



Our gracious hosts, Janis and Peter Rodwell.



A selection of transfer-printed and bat-printed wares from the Rodwell Collection.



Members visit V&A's state-of-the-art 21st century East Storehouse. Dina and Andrew Zuger pause for a selfie to remember the visit.



Jonathan Gray welcomes members to his home for a viewing of his extraordinary collection centered on Welsh ceramics.



A small portion of Jonathan's extensive collection.

preserving and studying ceramic history.

From the galleries of London to the potbanks of Staffordshire and the bustling fields of Newark, the journey rewarded us with an unforgettable immersion into the world of transferware.

As Pat Halfpenny reminded us throughout the tour, every piece of transferware tells a story—of pots, places, people, and the remarkable artistry that connects them all.

Acknowledgements:

We wish to express our sincere appreciation to the following individuals who contributed to the tour:

Neil Brownsword, Michael Escolme, Jonathan Gray, Miranda Goodby, Pat Halfpenny, Dr. Richard Halliday, Paul and Kath Holdway, Meg MacDonald, Peter and Janis Rodwell, Deb Skinner, Simon Spier, Florence Tyler, and our excellent factory and museum guides.

Also, a special thanks to all the tour participants and hosts who provided many of the photos for this report.



Curator Simon Spier introduces Jo Anne Jones and Bill Straus to one of the V&A's outstanding examples of transfer-printed pottery—the large, 27.5-inch jug was made by Bourne, Baker & Bourne, Fenton, Staffordshire, England, c. 1830.



What a wonderful experience! Thank you to all who made it possible.