



Don't Believe Everything You Read on that Plate

Database Discoveries – Contribution # 11

Transferware Collectors Club

Len Kling

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It's a painful thing to have to admit, because we all love our dishes and want to be able to trust them. However, the plain truth is that for almost two centuries, some of them have been deceiving their owners. We read the pattern marks and naturally take it for granted that what is printed there is accurate, but alas, that's not always the case. Perhaps some would think this is not an issue of the greatest importance, for just as a rose by any other name would smell as sweet, so a mismarked pattern is just as pleasing to the eye. Still, lest we forget that Staffordshire potters were not always above a bit of gentle skullduggery, here we look at some examples from the database that are in fact "ringers" inserted into series of views bearing a place name. When marked, it is with the series name, but they aren't identified individually.

The Irish Scenery series was produced by Elkins & Co. and also by Thomas and John Carey. It likely would have been marketed in Ireland or to people of Irish heritage. Judging from the half dozen examples currently in the database, not one of the views in this series, which are after drawings by John Preston Neale, is actually Irish. Three are English - Brownsea Castle in Dorsetshire, Fonthill Abbey, and Cobham Hall in Kent. Stackpole Court in Pembrokeshire is Welsh. Jedburgh Abbey is in Scotland. "The Haining, Selkirkshire" is also a Scottish view. Here we see it on an 8.5 inch sauceboat (Figure 1) along with its source print (Figure 2), published in "Views of Scotland" in 1830, and the mark usually found with this series (Figure 3).



Fig. 1 - "The Haining, Selkirkshire" sauceboat



Fig. 2 – “The Haining” source print



Fig. 3 – “Irish Scenery” mark

The Clyde Scenery series is one better known to American collectors, as most of it was exported to the United States by the short lived firm of Job and John Jackson. It must be said that most of the views known actually are of places on or near the River Clyde in Scotland, after engravings from "Select Views on the River Clyde", published in 1830. But of the views currently in the database, three are English. Guy's Cliff in Warwickshire (Figure 4) is pictured on a 10.625 inch plate; Medmenham Abbey, Buckinghamshire is found on a 5.1 inch toddy plate. The latter view, as well as a view of Bisham Abbey in Berkshire, on a 4.25 inch cup plate, (Figure 5) are after engravings in Tomblison's "Picturesque Views of the Thames and Medway", published 1833-1834.



Fig. 4 – “Guy’s Cliff” plate



Fig. 5 – “Bisham Abbey, Berkshire” plate

The source print for Bisham Abbey is shown below (Figure 6).



Fig. 6 – “Bisham Abbey” source print

The British Scenery series, attributed to John and William Ridgway, slips one foreign view into its rural idyll of cottages, castles and churches. The side of a 12 inch comport is printed with a view of the Ponte Molle, an ancient bridge near Rome (Figure 7).



Fig. 7 – “Ponte Molle” comports

For the last look at a scene that is out of place, we go a little farther afield with Enoch Wood's European Scenery, the usual mark for which is pictured here (Figure 8). This is a large series, well represented in the database although there is no telling how many views there actually are. Most of them are still unidentified, but one stands out as looking distinctly non-European. It is on a 10.5 inch plate, and actually pictures Jumma Musjid, Agra (Figure 9), a mosque in India. The source print (Figure 10) is from the book "Views in the East", published in 1833 and based on drawings by Robert Eliot.



Fig. 8 – “European Scenery” mark



Fig. 9 – “Jumma Musjid, Agra” plate



Fig. 10 – “Jumma Musjid, Agra” source print

It may be this is just the tip of the iceberg. Luckily we're not on the Titanic. We are in the safety of our own homes, casting a wary eye on those innocuous pots in our collections. Are they really as straightforward as they seem?



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