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The Beginnings and Spread of Underglaze Blue Printing

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The process was even used to decorate some large molded tureens. The use of printed decoration on such important pieces would seem to suggest that printing was regarded as a desirable decoration in its own right or that customers were unable to distinguish underglaze printing in blue from hand-painted decoration, given the tendency of cobalt blue to blur slightly under a lead glaze. Some prints used on Worcester tureens are also found on Bow porcelain about 1760 [1] and later at Derby. How Bow learned the technique of underglaze blue printing is not known but Richard Holdship, who left Worcester in 1759, may have been involved. Again, as with overglaze printing, Bow did not make extensive use of underglaze printing and examples of such decoration at Bow are much less common than Worcester examples.

By 1764 Holdship was at Derby and it is known that he entered into an agreement with the Derby Porcelain Co. to disclose the methods of ceramic printing. The Derby underglaze blue prints are not as good quality as the Worcester ones. At Worcester, after about 1765, the use of transfer printing in underglaze blue began to increase compared with blue painted decoration and by 1775 it had become the principle method of decorating in that color. Transfer printing in underglaze blue was introduced at Liverpool in the later 1760s by Philip Christian [2]. The quality was quite good, much better than at Derby. Underglaze blue transfer printing was used quite extensively by the later Liverpool factories but the quality can be variable.

About the mid 1760s underglaze blue printing on porcelain was being carried out at John Bartlam's pottery at Cane Foy, near Charleston. This is demonstrated by shards recovered from the site. It is remarkable that blue printing on porcelain should have been carried out in America at such an early date.

The Lowestoft factory adopted underglaze blue printing about 1770. Many of the designs, such as *The Three Flowers*, [3] were copied from Worcester. Others, such as the so-called *Good Cross Chapel Pattern*, were original to the factory.

However, it was the Caughley factory, more than any other, that exploited underglaze blue printing to the full. At this period only the Liverpool factories were producing a similar range of blue printed porcelain. From the founding of the Caughley factory, in 1775, printing was the main type of decoration used on the wares. A few pieces have survived that bear a printed mark with the names of the proprietors, Gallimore and Turner [4]. This was the first time that a printed name mark was used on English porcelain.

An extensive range of wares was produced at the Caughley factory, bearing a wide range of underglaze blue prints. The most commonly found is *The Fisherman*, [5] which was also widely used at other factories. Caughley produced good serviceable and inexpensive wares for the middle-class market. An important part of maintaining a competitive price was the factory's mastery of underglaze blue printing. Of course, it was possible for pearlware potters to undercut Caughley by producing copies of their blue printed patterns in the cheaper earthenware body.

This is a copy on earthenware of the Caughley *Full Nankin Pattern* [6]. To many buyers, this pearlware plate would have been just as acceptable as a Caughley porcelain one. The combination of good underglaze blue printing with a serviceable and cheap earthenware body was to create a large industry in Staffordshire and elsewhere, producing a huge variety of printed wares. **more**


1.


2.


3.



4.


5.


6.