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Printing at Liverpool: 1 Delftware

Liverpool was an important center of ceramic printing. The names associated with the early printing carried out there are those of John Sadler and Guy Green.

Their initial output consisted of delftware (tin-glazed earthenware) tiles decorated with a great variety of printed designs. In August 1756, they signed an affidavit stating that they had printed 1200 tiles in 6 hours. This affidavit was in connection with a proposed patent application but, in the event, it was not proceeded with.

How Sadler and Green came to make their invention is unknown. Sadler was involved in printing books and pamphlets and later a newspaper. Green was employed in the publishing business of Sadler's father. Neither had any known ceramic interests prior to their experiments in printing delft tiles.

It is possible that the idea for this new venture may have come from Dublin. Henry Delamain, the Dublin delftware manufacturer, who was also involved with Battersea, claimed, in a petition to the Irish House of Commons in the 1st November 1753, that he had purchased *the Art of Printing Earthenware with as much Beauty, Strong Impression and Despatch as can be done on paper*. This might well have been from John Brooks. Henry Delamain was a frequent visitor to Liverpool and perhaps it was from him that Sadler got the idea.

The early examples of Sadler printed tiles are usually said to be woodblock prints **[1]**. They certainly appear to be relief prints but perhaps not necessarily from wood. A metal such as zinc could have been employed. Fairly soon, say 1757, Sadler and Green moved on to the use of engraved copper plates.

The majority of Sadler's delft tiles are printed in black, although sometimes other colors are found. Quite rarely, some prints are further embellished by the addition of painted colors **[2]**. The earlier prints, before 1761, occasionally include a Sadler signature **[3]**. Before about 1765 each tile has its own border. Later tiles have a standard border, the so-called "88" border **[4]**.

Tin glazed wares, as opposed to tiles, are only very rarely found decorated with Sadler prints. Only a few plates, a mug **[5]** and a fine punch bowl have survived. The bowl is decorated with the *King of Prussia* inside and *General Wolfe* outside, together with two battle scenes and a floral panel.

After Sadler retired in 1770, Guy Green continued to produce printed tin glaze tiles. Some of the best-known designs that he introduced are a series of actors and actresses. Tiles signed by

Green are extremely rare.

Although printing on tin glaze earthenware is often regarded as a Liverpool specialty and indeed a monopoly of the Sadler and Green workshop, there are a few exceptions.

Firstly, there is a very small group of printed delft plates produced in Ireland. Only five are known, bearing two different coats of arms. These are printed in manganese and filled in with enamel colors. Some of these plates have undecorated rims; others have three prints of flowers on the rim, again filled in with enamel colors. Two of the plates are inscribed on the back *Made by John Stritch Limerick 1761* **[6]**.

Secondly, an apprentice of Sadler called Richard Abbey opened his own ceramic printing shop in Liverpool in 1773. He seems mainly to have decorated creamware but he did print some delft tiles. A small group of theatrical tiles are attributed to him, of which a very few bear the mark *Abbey Liverpool*. Another group of delft tiles decorated with vases, within simple borders are also attributed to Abbey.



Fig. 1





Fig. 3



Fig.4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6