CREAMWARE: ITS ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT

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Figure 1. Interior of creamware bowl with underglaze painted decoration inscribed 'W G' and '1743', possibly made to commemorate the Battle of Dettingen in June 1743, tentatively attributed to Enoch Booth, made in Staffordshire 1743, this example and the bowl in the British Museum represent the earliest recorded dated creamware. Diameter 285 mm. City Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent 117.P. 1989.

Creamware, cream coloured earthenware, Queen's ware – are all names for a species of pottery made from clays, which, when fired, burn to a white colour. The pots may be made by throwing on a wheel or by the use of moulds, they are dried and then fired to about 1100-1150°C. When removed from the oven the pots are white, brittle and porous rather like a biscuit or cookie – hence once fired, unglazed ware is known as – biscuit. At this stage the piece may be decorated or left plain, it then receives a glaze and is fired in an oven at a lower temperature of about 1050-1100°C.

The main ingredient of the glaze is lead, a well known glass forming material. During the 18th century the lead used by potters was contaminated with iron causing the glaze to be tinted in shades of cream, ranging from a deep butter colour to a pale primrose. The story of creamware is the story of the struggle to remove the iron contamination achieving a clear untinted glaze thus producing white ware.

The first published reference to creamware is that found in *A Description of the Country from Thirty to Forty Miles Round Manchester,* by Dr. J. Aikin published in 1795. The relevant passage reads, 'In 1763, Mr Josiah Wedgwood...invented a species of

Figure 2. Exterior of bowl in *figure 1*, underglaze painted figures from an unidentified source.

earthenware for the table, of a firm and durable body, and covered with a rich and brilliant glaze,...to this manufacture the queen was pleased to give her name and patronage, commanding it to be called Queen's Ware, and honouring the inventor by appointing him her majesty's potter.'

Many early writers believed that this meant that in 1763 Wedgwood invented creamware, it is now generally accepted to mean that Wedgwood, through his continuous efforts to improve the local products, developed a body and glaze to his own recipe which he believed superior to the creamwares made by his contemporaries.

If Wedgwood did not invent creamware do we know who did? What evidence can we offer to substantiate any alternative theories? 'A Brief Account of the Rise and Progress of the Staffordshire Potteries' included in William Pitt's *Topographical History of Staffordshire* published in 1817, tells us that 'CREAM-COLOURED WARE, was first made in the year 1750, by Enoch Booth, of Tunstall, near Burslem...'

We have no record of the birth or baptism of Enoch Booth, the earliest documentary reference is in the 1717 Apprentice lists of the Inland Revenue, compiled for the purpose of taxing the Masters. Here we find Enoch Booth son of Ephraim of Astbury, Cheshire apprenticed to Thomas Heath of Shelton, Staffs, Potter, fee £7.00. This master potter, Thomas Heath, is likely to be the Mr Heath of whom Josiah Wedgwood wrote to Thomas Bentley in July 1777, crediting him with the introduction of flint to ceramic recipes in the early 16th century.[1] Just over 11 years later Wedgwood retells the story naming the potter as Mr Astbury, also of Shelton.[2] Which ever version is true (if either may be relied upon) the introduction of flint and the refinement of the then current pottery bodies took place in Shelton and suggests that the young Enoch Booth served out his apprenticeship in an atmosphere of experiment and development.

In his *Chemistry of Pottery* published in 1837, Simeon Shaw attributes early improvements in the making of earthenware to various manufacturers – to Mr Aaron Wedgwood he credits the introduction of red lead, to Mr Booth white lead and to Mrs Warburton, Soda. These indicate a reasonable degree of technical competence for they are all associated with glaze improvements. Aaron Wedgwood's use of red lead would produce a yellowy gloss, Mr Booth's white lead would give a clearer glaze and soda introduced by Mrs Warburton would harden and whiten the glaze. William Pitt, in his 1817 account, suggests

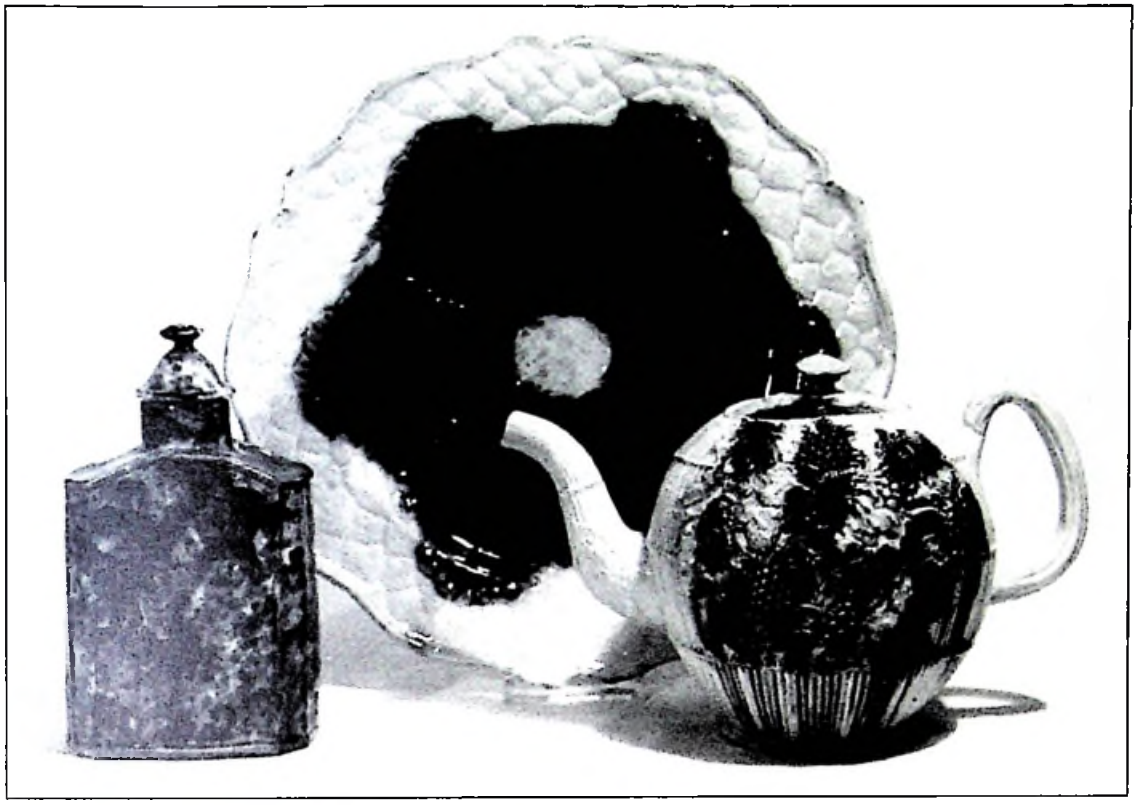

Figure 3. Group of creamwares with underglaze or coloured glaze decoration. Tea canister, with underglaze oxide sponging, made in Staffordshire c.1760, height 135 mm. Teapot, with underglaze painted decoration on moulded basket of fruit design, matching fragments excavated at Fenton Vivian, attributed to Thomas Whieldon c.1765, height 122 mm. Plate, moulded cauliflower design with coloured glaze decoration, made in Staffordshire about 1765-70, diameter 295 mm. City Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent, 3048, 434.P.1990, 1598.

that Enoch Booth also refined his glaze by adding flint with the result that the fired glaze was harder and even more transparent.

From Simeon Shaw's *History of the Staffordshire Potteries* published in 1828 we learn that Mr Booth's improvement was not just of the glaze but the combination of using his new liquid lead glaze with a double firing cycle. This meant that Booth first fired the raw earthenware body to the state known as biscuit, then applied a fluid glaze before a gloss firing at a lower temperature.

There are many advantages to using this process. First the range of decorative treatments could expand, underglaze colours and coloured glazes could be developed, secondly the pots were firm to handle during the decorating process and finally it is difficult to dip unfired ware into a liquid glaze as the body becomes saturated and unstable and applied pieces such as handles may become detached.

The only fully documented piece made by Booth is a salt glazed stoneware mug in the Glaisher collection at the FitzWilliam Museum in Cambridge, England inscribed and dated 'Enoch Booth 1742' We know from a wide range of documentary evidence that Enoch Booth conducted a large trade in salt glazed stoneware. Pitt gives the date 1750 for Booth's improvements in white earthenware production. I believe that this was a guestimate. I am prepared to believe that it was some time before 1750, say 1743 when Enoch Booth developed his creamware. A bowl in the British Museum collection initialled and dated EB 1743 is early creamware and in the absence of alternative evidence it may be considered to be the work of Enoch Booth.

The bowl has underglaze decoration with a manganese dusted ground and reserved panels painted in cobalt blue. Pitt in 1817 wrote, 'This white glaze soon attracted the enamellers from the China and Dutch-tile manufactories then established in different parts of the Kingdom', the panels on the British Museum bowl look as if a Dutch-tile painter nostalgically painted tile scenes inside the bowl. There are now recorded three teapots decorated in a similar style to the bowl and three other items, including another dated bowl *(figs.1&2)* in a related decorative style. Less than ten items can be attributed

Figure 4. Teapot with printed decoration of 'The Prodigal Son in Excess', overpainted in enamel colours, shown with matching fragments excavated from the Greatbatch site, made by William Greatbatch about 1775-82, height 156 mm. City Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent 1602.

to Enoch Booth and only one with any certainty, yet if Enoch Booth began making creamware in 1743 and his factory was in continuous production until his death in 1773 there should be 30 years worth of products waiting for attribution.

The next pioneer creamware maker of whom we have some knowledge is Thomas Whieldon. Again we have an incomplete picture, but the documentation is backed up by fragments retrieved from the site of his factory. Many of the earliest ceramic authors have suggested that Thomas Whieldon began potting in Fenton Low, however we have no evidence that Whieldon ever potted there, we know that he owned land at Fenton Low and that a pottery was erected on the site, a pottery which he rented to others. Fragments have been recovered from Fenton Low and attributed to Whieldon when they should, more correctly have been attributed to his tenants. From title deeds we find that at some time between 1742 and 1747 Whieldon had, in fact, become John Peat's tenant at a potworks in Fenton Vivian. In 1748 Whieldon began the process of buying the potworks and surrounding lands. A year later in 1749 he made further purchases including a large and imposing house called Fenton Hall and a newly built flint mill.[3]

Much of Whieldon's output included redwares, blackwares, and saltglazed stonewares all of which lie outside the scope of this paper. However on a page in his notebook which is dated to 1749, we have an entry which is pertinent to our study, the account of Mr Thomas Fletcher is debited for items including

1 Doz plates Tor	8.0 (8d each)
2 2 dish	2.0 (probably saltglazed)
1 2 dish painted	2.0 (probably saltglazed)
1 2 dish cream colr	1.8 (obviously creamware)

The entry for '2 dish' is the usual contemporary abbreviation for 2 dish teapot signifying a small teapot which held sufficient for two cups or dishes of tea. We see that both tortoiseshell and cream coloured earthenwares were available by 1749.

In 1754, when he was well established, Whieldon took the young Josiah Wedgwood as his partner, Simeon Shaw says that Whieldon and Wedgwood made agate hafts, tortoiseshell and melon table plates, green pickle leaves and other useful articles. When Wedgwood left the partnership to set up on his own account, Whieldon continued alone and when his former partner developed new wares such as jasper and basalt he did not try to emulate them but continued to make the kind of pottery which had made him an exceptionally wealthy man.

The excavations on Whieldon's site at Fenton Vivian give us a clue to the range of cream wares he produced. The site was not conveniently layered from 1740-1780, it was unstratified and disturbed and only a proportion of the recoveries can be attributed to Thomas Whieldon with any certainty. The earthenwares most commonly associated with Thomas Whieldon are the creamwares decorated with underglaze oxide sponging called tortoiseshell wares. Incomplete pieces from the site show how the coloured oxide was sponged onto the biscuit

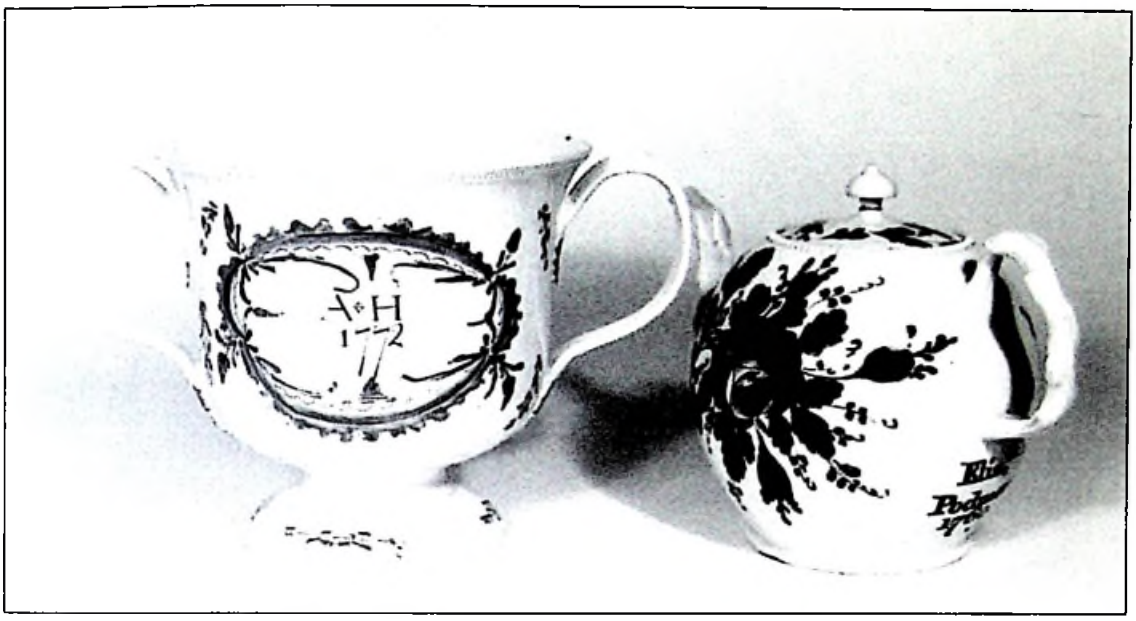

Figure 5. Creamware with enamel painted decoration typical of the 1760-80 period. Loving cup painted in iron-red and green with landscape on one side the other inscribed 'AH 1772', made in Staffordshire, height 145 mm. Teapot painted in red and black with floral bouquets on each side, inscribed beneath the handle 'Eliz[th] Podmore 1769', made in Staffordshire, height 140 mm. City Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent 2988 & 679.P.1946.

surface, finished pieces illustrate how the colour matures and bleeds into the glaze during the glost firing.

Fragments of decorative pottery recovered from the site include stylised floral sprigs and moulded patterns some of which seem to have been commonly produced by many makers and other designs appear to be unique to Whieldon. Only further excavation will enable us to more closely identify the work of individual factories.

In an attempt to achieve a more controlled decoration, the oxide colour was sometimes painted onto the surface of the pot, this was particularly common with moulded designs, such as baskets of fruit, a model popular with many makers but it appears that details differ from site to site *(fig. 3)*.

As well as sponging and painting with coloured oxides underneath a clear lead glaze, further improvements made in the mid 18th century included the development of coloured glazes, in which coloured metallic oxides were incorporated into the glaze mix *(fig. 3)*. Josiah Wedgwood particularly mentions perfecting a green glaze in his experiment book in which he kept records of his tests and trials from 1759. Wares particularly associated with this decoration are the moulded fruit and vegetable shapes of cauliflower, melon and pineapple. Wares with underglaze and coloured glaze decoration were fairly inexpensive to produce requiring only two firings, biscuit and gloss. The problem with this type of decoration is that the firing temperatures restrict the colours to a range of shades derived from metal ores; manganese brown, copper green, iron yellow and cobalt blue. To achieve brighter colours, enamels had to be used, these mature at temperatures between 800-1000°C. and therefore have to be applied to the ready glazed wares and fixed by further firings.

It is often forgotten that Thomas Whieldon went on potting to about 1780 and that his productions included some of the more sophisticated creamwares. Undecorated creamware plates with a variety of moulded edge designs were found on his site as well as overglaze painted enamel decorations. In 1780 or thereabouts Whieldon gave up potting and following his retirement he demolished the factory and turned the land into pleasure grounds around his home which was called Whieldon Grove. He died late in February 1795, surviving his former partner, Josiah Wedgwood, by a few weeks. He left a great deal of property and a very large fortune.

A contrast to Whieldon's success is the venture undertaken by William Greatbatch. It is believed that Greatbatch had worked for Thomas Whieldon during the Whieldon-Wedgwood partnership before setting up on his own account in 1762 when a three year correspondence of letters and invoices began between Greatbatch and one of his earliest customers Josiah Wedgwood.

The recently published book by my colleague

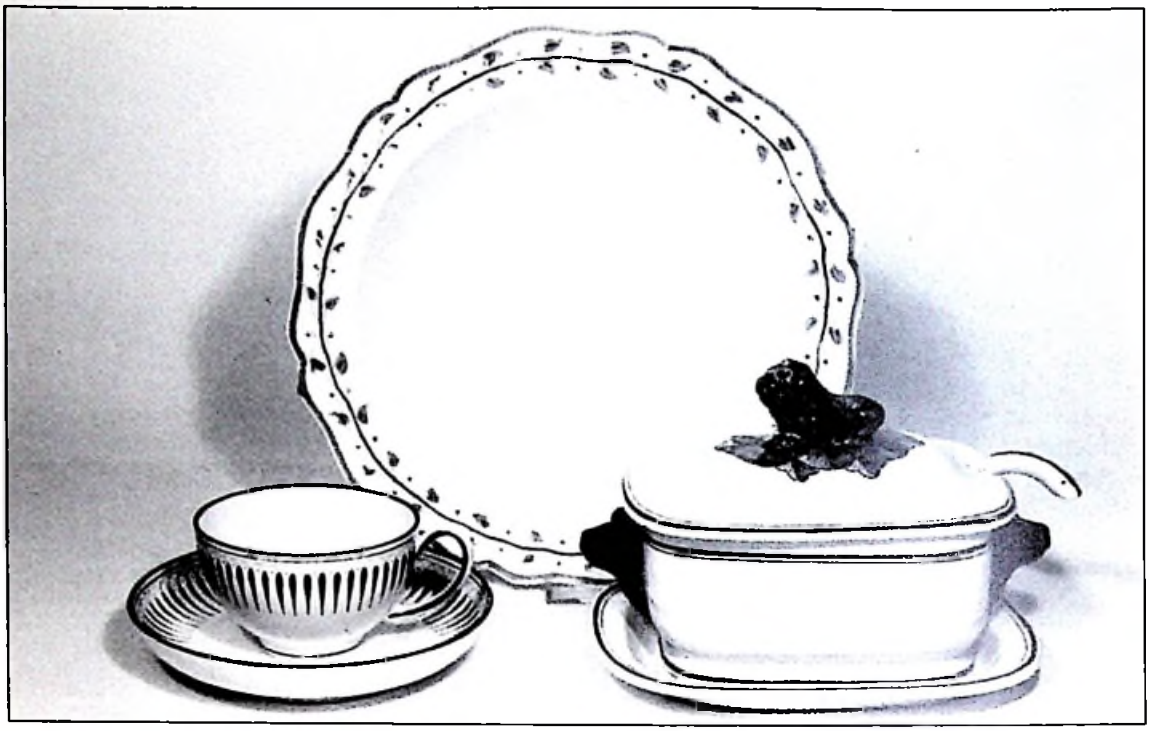

Figure 6. Creamware of the late 18th century with painted decoration in the neo-classical style. Cup & saucer with border pattern in blue enamel, impressed WEDGWOOD, diam. saucer 145 mm. Soup plate, painted border of an ivy pattern in shades of brown and green, impressed TURNER, made c.1780-1800, diam. 252 mm. Tureen, painted in brown with lines at foot and rim and with leaf design at base of lion knop, impressed 'W & B' for Whitehead & Birch, made c.1790-95, length of stand 178 mm. City Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent 324.P.1990, 51.P.1955, 3.P.1983.

David Barker details the excavation of Greatbatch's pottery site, and documents the man's life and work.[4] In brief the site was composed of three fairly distinct layers; the *WG* monogram is found on many fragments from the site and dated fragments which read 'Published as the act directs Jany 4 1778 by W Greatbatch Lane Delft Staffordshire' were found in the top most layer – phase III which was given the date range 1770-82.

We see in the site a chronological development of a potter's output, reflecting changing fashions, technical innovations and refinements of style and form. Phase I is dated to 1762-65, at this level we find fairly deep butter coloured creamwares in a variety of shapes. The proportion of different types of pottery in each phase reflect their changing popularity in the market, for example saltglazed stonewares common in phase I decline considerably by phase II. Interestingly tortoiseshell wares and moulded fruit wares which collectors normally date to about 1750 are most prolific in phase II dating 1765-70. In this phase there are large amounts of underglaze oxide decorations, coloured glaze fruit ware and a number of plain creamware fragments.

The tendency is clearly to a greater simplicity of form in the later wares of phase III. The vessels themselves are plainer, more finely potted with an increasing occurrence of printed and enamel painted decoration *(fig. 4)*. On the whole creamware became paler and more refined in shape, never the less some customer preference may have remained for the deeper colour and it was still produced until all demand had died away. We have no evidence to indicate that the paler colour was widespread through out the Potteries at this time, the various shades are not a reliable guide to dating when used alone.

Although many extant examples of enamel painted Greatbatch creamwares are known there are very few excavated pieces from phases I or II but a quantity of enamel painted wasters were retrieved from phase III. This indicates that the wares may not have been enamelled at Greatbatch's factory until the 1770s. Indeed a letter of Greatbatch's states that he is to 'Send Mr Courzen's ware to his painting shop'.[5] This would be normal practice in the mid 18th century when enamel painting was the province of specialist decorators, mainly based in London. They knew how to prepare the enamel colours, how to apply them and how to fix them. They painted enamel boxes, clock faces, porcelain and earthen-

Figure 7. Creamware with printed decoration using the glue-bat method. Tea canister, one. side with a tea-party scene the other with a Shepherd, printed in red, made c.1780-1800, height 110 mm. Plate with moulded feather edge border, black floral prints on rim and central design of shepherdess and her lover, made c.1780-1800, height 245 mm. Jug printed in black with Come Box the Compass on one side signed 'T Fletcher Shelton' the other side with 'JACK IN HIS ELEMENT' made 1796-1800, height 165 mm. City Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent 2622, 3455, 3276.

ware. Before long the Potteries of North Staffordshire attracted these specialists to set up workshops closer to the centre of pottery production and they opened up independant decorating shops or worked for the larger manufacturers *(fig.5)*.

William Greatbatch's career as an independant manufacturer ceased with his bankruptcy which was announced in the London Gazette of February 1782. Not long after this Greatbatch went to work for Wedgwood and until his death in 1813 he was employed and supported by Josiah Wedgwood and his successors.

Josiah Wedgwood had left Thomas Whieldon in 1759 to rent a pottery in Burslem from his kinsman John Wedgwood. For the next 20 years or more he occupied a variety of rented premises in Burslem even after building his own factory complex which he opened in 1769 and which gloried in the name of Etruria.

Presumably he began by making the kind of pottery he had produced in association with Whieldon, but there is little documentation to assist in our assessment of his early years as a manufacturer. The earliest reference is to an order from Sadler & Green in 1761 who wished to purchase some creamware. Presumably, as specialist printers, they intended to decorate it with printed designs before reselling. The goods were supplied by Wedgwood in 1762.

From 1763 Wedgwood and Sadler & Green worked out a new business deal, Wedgwood supplied goods for printing and paid for that process, the goods remaining his property to sell on. In the 1st year orders averaged about £30 per month, by 1771 they had risen to average about £600 per month.[6] Printed decoration was popular.

Printed decoration was again a specialist trade first set up as independent workshops and only in the 19th century were the majority employed within the manufactories. In recent years we have revised our ideas of the method of printing. Through a combination of reassessing the documentary evidence and practical demonstrations of techniques we have come to understand it more thoroughly.[7]

In the first stage of bat printing a small copper plate was engraved with a design, some times it was etched, often both techniques were used together. To transfer the design from the copper plate to the pot, and thin wafer of gelatine was used, this is known to us as a bat but in the mid 18th century it was called a paper.

Figure 8. Creamware tile with black printed decoration together with the source print, the subject 'SPRING' from a set of seasons engraved by W. Bond, printed by C. Taylor in *Temple of Taste No. II* January 1795. The print was re-engraved for the pottery trade and signed 'T. Fletcher Shelton' and dates from 1796-1800. 181 mm square. City Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent.

First of all a clear oil was rubbed into the copper plate, the surface was then cleaned leaving oil only in the cuts of the pattern. The gelatine bat was placed onto a bag filled with sand and by this means it was carefully applied and rolled over the surface of the copper plate to cover the engraving. Pressure was applied by the printer bearing down onto the sandbag pressing the bat hard onto the copper plate. The sandbag was released, the bat peeled away from the copper with the design in clear oil on its surface. The bat was then laid on the sand bag again and the glazed surface of a tile or pot was pressed onto or rolled across it transferring the pattern in clear sticky oil. The printer then dipped a cotton wool type material into powdered colour and dusted it onto the surface of the pot. The colour adhered to the oily pattern and dusted off the glazed surface elsewhere. The coloured print left behind was dried and then fired onto the surface.

Sadler & Green produced the first printed decoration on pottery that can be identified. John Sadler and Guy Green swore an affadavit on 27th July 1756 attesting to their ability to print on tiles. They employed many fine engravers and were soon decorating creamware and porcelain for many manufacturers and for resale in their own Liverpool warehouse.

It was from 1763 that Wedgwood bought wares from his fellow potters to fill orders he could not complete, a practice common amongst the potting fraternity which continued throughout the 18th century. It seems likely that in his early days Wedgwood first ordered moulded wares from Whieldon and then Greatbach, possibly he concentrated on producing the simpler thrown wares, avoiding the capital investment in blocks and moulds by sub-contracting this side of the work to others.

Josiah knew the value of producing quality wares, of self promotion and marketing. As he worked at home perfecting his bodies and glazes, he opened his first London outlet and sought noble patronage to ensure his products would be the height of fashion. When Josiah Wedgwood was satisfied that his creamware had been lightened and refined to his taste he decided to act. To brother John in London, he writes on 6th July 1765, 'I shall be very proud of the honour of sending a box of patterns to the Queen, amongst which I intend sending two setts of Vases, cream colour engine turned and printed, for which purpose nothing could be more suitable than some copper plates I have by me. I can adapt the vases so that the designs and they will appear to have been made for each other & intended for Royalty, nor must you hint to the contrary."[8]

He was rewarded with an order for a creamware dinner service; unfortunately the details are not recorded. Within the year Wedgwood was advertising in the fashionable morning newspaper the St. James's Chronicle, and telling of his Royal patron. He was now Potter to the Queen and entitled to call his cream coloured earthenware *Queensware*.

From the opening of his Etruria factory in 1769, Wedgwood's heart really lay in developing new

bodies and shapes in the revived classical style; first his basalts then his jaspers occupied most of his thoughts. Creamware, his standard earthenware body, was his staple product but it ceased to demand his attentions once perfected. As the neo-classical movement took hold so Wedgwood's shapes and patterns became more restrained conforming to current styles and as testament to Wedgwood's great taste and skill, many of the shapes and some of the designs he introduced are still made today *(fig.6)*.

Although Josiah Wedgwood may be considered to be the most gifted of Staffordshire's 18th century potters, many of his contemporaries were also eminent manufacturers. John Turner was an energetic and innovative master potter from 1762 until his untimely death at the age of 49 in 1787. With his London partner, Andrew Abbott, he was Potter to the Prince of Wales from 1781. John Turner was involved in the production of hard paste porcelain manufacture and developed his own jasper formulæ using quite a different recipe from that of his friend and fellow potter Josiah Wedgwood. On his death the business was continued by his sons into the early 19th century.[9] The creamwares produced by this family range from dinner wares with simple border patterns to expensively painted plates and crested services *(fig.6)*.

James Neale first became involved with the pottery trade as a London retailer. In 1778 he purchased the Church Works, Hanley from the potter Humphrey Palmer and he took Robert Wilson as a partner to manage the factory while he concentrated on selling. Neale demanded the highest standards and Wilson was able to supply some of the finest wares produced in North Staffordshire during the late 18th century. Their productions included a range of neo-classical stonewares and a good quality porcelain as well as a range of plain and decorated creamwares.

Whilst Liverpool dominated the pottery printing trade in the 1760s and 70s eventually the engravers moved to the source of pottery production.[10] *(fig.7)* John Robinson, formerly employed by Sadler & Green, ended up with his own business in Burslem sometime before 1784; engravings are known bearing his name as printer.

In the 1790s and into the early 19th century black printing was a popular form of decoration. Thomas Fletcher had been involved in a number of pottery making concerns before beginning his own business in 1796 as a printer. Although signed engravings by Fletcher are known and were probably applied at his premises, we cannot tell who made the wares *(figs. 7 & 8)*. Following the dissolution of his business in 1800 over 450 copper plates were auctioned as part of his stock. Thomas Baddeley, another engraver, was involved in the administration of the auction and it seems likely that he would have acquired some valuable stock from the sale of Fletcher's copper plates. Examples of Baddeley's work are sometimes signed in a ribbon at the base of the design, and a number of patterns appear to have been destined for the American market.

Many ancillary trades developed during the second half of the 18th century; painters and engravers, colour makers, brush makers, industrial machinery makers and many others grew up to accommodate the expanding pottery trades. With technological and scientific advancements, efforts to clean the lead glaze of its iron impurities were eventually successful. With the advent of white bodies and clear lead glazes products such as Wilson's chalk body and Wedgwood's white ware were available in the early 19th century. And whilst the whiter body superceeded creamware technically, bone china took its place in the middle class market and as the 19th century progressed creamcolour was reserved for only the most traditional wares.

In conclusion I must remind you that this paper only looked at those pieces produced in Staffordshire – of course creamware was produced in other potting centres including Derbyshire, Lancashire and Yorkshire. I am in the midst of researching this fascinating subject and together with Terry Lockett will be writing *Creamware and Pearlware*, to be published by Barrie & Jenkins in 1993. I am sure we won't find all the answers but I hope we will at least be able to lay down solid foundations for future generations of researchers into this fascinating subject.

NOTES

1. Wedgwood Letter 19th July 1777, E. 18772-25 Courtesy Trustees of the Wedgwood Museum.
2. Moseley Papers, MSS 1858 Courtesy Trustees of the Wedgwood Museum.
3. Mountford A.R. 'Thomas Whieldon's Manufactory at Fenton Vivian', *Transactions*, English Ceramic Circle, Vol 8 part 2, 1972.
4. Barker D. *William Greatbatch a Staffordshire Potter*, Jonathan Horne 1991.
5. Wedgwood MSS 22341-30 Courtesy Trustees of Wedgwood Museum
6. *Reilly R. & Savage G. The Dictionary of Wedgwood*, Antique Collectors Club 1980, p.340.
7. The discovery and demonstrations of black printing on creamware were made by Paul Holdway.
8. Wedgwood Letter E18080-25 Courtesy Trustees of the Wedgwood Museum
9. Hampson R. 'Longton Potters 1700-1865', *Journal of Ceramic History*, Vol 14 City Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent 1990.
10. Hampson E.M. 'Later Black Printing in Staffordshire', *Creamware & Pearlware*, NCS & City Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent 1986.