



The term “Pratt Ware” is commonly given to a group of brightly coloured relief moulded useful and decorative wares in cream or pearl earthenware which were popular in the period c.1785- c.1820. Only two examples of this type of earthenware – a jug and a mug – actually bear the impressed “PRATT” mark but this has nonetheless resulted in the adoption of the generic term¹. The four jugs shown here all have some “Pratt-Type” characteristics, particularly the central piece. But the body of these jugs is neither creamware nor pearlware. All are made from a highly translucent thinly slip cast feldspathic stoneware with in-mould relief decoration.

There is convincing evidence that the two identical jugs on the left were made c.1805 -1815 by Chetham & Woolley at their Commerce Street factory in Longton (then called Lane End). In an excavation of the Commerce Street factory site in the 1980's a number of feldspathic stoneware shards were unearthed which are now in the Potteries Museum. One of these shards precisely matches a section of the relief-moulded decoration found on a larger example of the two identical jugs on the left². A photo of the triangular shard is attached to the lower part of the front jug on the left. The section of relief decoration remaining on the shard, a calf-length leather boot, exactly matches the left boot of the sportsman shown shooting a woodcock or snipe on a larger example of the jug in a private collection. Country sport scenes of shooting and hunting were popular decorative themes on jugs and mugs of the period.

The jug on the right is so similar to the two on the left in both body and form, including a factory characteristic handle, that it too can be soundly attributed to Chetham & Woolley. It bears the moulded relief of a seated female figure holding an olive branch representing “Peace”. The marginally larger jug in the middle has a slightly different handle from the jugs on its left and right but in all other respects is so similar that it too may reasonably be attributed to the same maker.

The colourful relief decoration on the middle jug presents a scene known as “Gretna Green or the Red-Hot Marriage”, taken from late 18th C. engravings. One version of the engraving and differing from that shown here only in that the groom wears a top hat carries the wording, “Drawn and Engraved by W. Mathews, Oxford “. The scene refers to the famous blacksmiths shop in Gretna which was a popular venue for English eloping couples to marry under Scottish law following the abolition of clandestine marriages in England in 1754. Blacksmiths could act as witnesses and it is said would sanctify the union by striking the anvil. The engraving's title is usually accompanied by the subscript,

“Oh Mr. Blacksmith ease our pains
And tie us fast in wedlock's chains.”

The design appears on sprig decorated stonewares of several later makers³ but although there is a sprig for the design in the collection of 18th C. Turner sprig moulds in the Spode Museum Trust it seems little known in the pre-1800 stoneware repertoire.

There is a pre-1800 conventional earthenware Pratt Ware jug with the scene in the V&A⁴ and a transfer-printed mug, attributed to the printer Richard Abbey, with the scene, title and subscript is in Museum and Art Gallery Nottingham⁵.

Notes:

1. John and Griselda Lewis, PRATT WARE, Antique Collectors' Club, 1993, P.11 & 15.
2. Colin Wyman, Chetham and Woolley Stonewares, Antique Collectors' Club, 2011, P.56
3. Alan Smith, Liverpool Herculaneum Pottery, Barrie & Jenkins, 1970, Fig.100 & P.41.
4. Ibid Lewis, P. 179
5. Ibid Smith, Fig.101.