



An important William Reid & Co coffee pot and cover, printed by Sadler, c1760. £3,700.



A very rare Liverpool Delft mug, printed by Sadler, c1762. £8,200.



A Wedgwood Liverpool printed creamware Royal Commemorative teapot and cover, c1761. £4,000.



An important Bristol teapot and cover, c1772-76. £5,000.

Transfer printed ceramics at Phillips fetch a fortune

In the world of English ceramics, the name of Norman Stretton is synonymous with transfer printing. For fifty years, he assembled a selection of rare and varied pieces until they were offered for sale at Phillips Auctioneers on the 21st February. The auction caused a stir in the market as it represented the most comprehensive collection of transfer printed ceramics ever offered for sale.

Included in the collection were popular Liverpool creamware and Worcester porcelain, but also some very rare Staffordshire salt-gaze ware, Battersea enamels, delft tiles and porcelain from Longton Hall and William Reid.

Among the highlights was a rare Liverpool delft mug printed by John Sadler. While transfer printing on porcelain and creamware was common, on delft it was extremely unusual. The print depicts an illustration and rhyme about the 'Tythe Pig', a satire on the unpopular practice by the Church of collecting as a tax, a share of the farmer's produce. The mug was estimated to fetch £2,000-3,000 but sold for an astonishing £8,200. Also included in the sale were two Wedgwood creamware teapots, c1762-63. Both were printed in Liverpool. One, with a portrait of Queen Charlotte estimated at £1,500-2,000 fetched £4,000. Although commemorative portraits on ceramics were common in the nineteenth century, during the eighteenth century they were unusual. Wedgwood had a Royal Warrant to produce ceramics for Queen Charlotte and in return she allowed the Company to call its creamware, Queensware, a name that still remains to this day.

A Liverpool porcelain coffee pot, c1756-1760, decorated with a rural scene and exotic birds was expected to fetch £3,000-4,000 and was sold within estimate for £3,700. The maker was William Reid, whose porcelain was only correctly identified this year following the discovery of shards on his former factory site. Reid porcelain is very topical at present, as many ceramic pieces, previously ascribed to other factories, have now been attributed to him.

Norman has always made his encyclopaedic knowledge of transfer printed ceramics available to all. His interest in collecting started in the late 1930s, when he acquired a few items of Wedgwood and other pottery, while his enthusiasm for printed wares developed in the 1950s. While working in the West End for Sun Life Assurance Society, he would visit the salerooms during his lunch break. Many of the pieces were bought at Phillips at a time when rare specimens cost just a couple of pounds. Norman remains an active member of the English Ceramic Circle and the Wedgwood Society and helped Phillips prepare the catalogue of his collection.

"The sale was virtually a sell out and pieces went for prices in relation to their rarity rather than condition, typical of a connoisseur's market. As well as specialist dealers acquiring worthwhile stock there were very many private buyers. Norman is happy that he will be able to keep in touch with the pieces as so many have been acquired by friends. The top three lots were unique and bidders knew they would never get another chance to own these special pieces, as they were the only ones with those particular prints," commented John Sandon, Head of European Ceramics at Phillips London.



A very fine Worcester bowl, c1757, printed in grey with three chinoiserie subjects. £3,000.



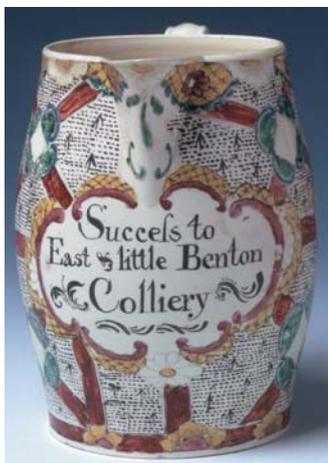
Four rare early Liverpool Delft wood block tiles, c1756-7. £4,000.



A Liverpool printed Creamware jug, c1790. £2,800.



A rare Bow plate, c1754-57, printed in red. £3,200.



A Creamware Coal Trade Commemorative jug, c1775. £3,000.



An important Worcester mug by James Ross, c1770-75. £4,100.