

Willow Pattern Variation by Possil Pottery, Glasgow, Scotland

By Connie Rogers

In regard to the ever popular willow pattern, I have never been a person to say, "I've seen it all!" If I had been so inclined, this interesting willow pattern by the relatively unknown Scottish Possil Pottery would certainly have changed my mind. The Scottish Pottery Society, while developing a new web site, found devoted volunteers willing to search and document every known pattern produced in the country. Denis Ayers, one of the volunteers, came upon the only two examples of the willow pattern produced by Possil Pottery, and generously shared them for inclusion in the database of the Transferware Collectors Club.

The Possil Pottery has a complicated history, opening in 1875 initially, as Possil or Saracen Pottery. Production included colored bodies or glazes, mostly teapots and pitchers, with some other domestic household wares including Rockingham, cane and black basalt, jet and mazarin wares. Coarse white ware was also made but never advertised. Saracen closed in 1896, and the name switched to Possil Pottery which was the name of the building where it was housed.

MacDougall & Sons (actually brothers) purchased the closed Possil Pottery works in 1896 and began producing porcelain wares under a trade name of "Nautilus Porcelain." They produced some of the finest porcelain ever produced in Britain, let alone Scotland. However these wares were hand-painted and mainly unmarked. Later, earthenware was introduced, and a few transfer-printed patterns are known. In a booklet, printed in 2012, titled "A Handbook of Scottish Ceramic Marks and Transfer Patterns," by Jones and Leishman, p. 34, just three transfer patterns are listed – not including Willow pattern.

Possil Pottery bowl, 7.75 x 3.375 inches, printed in black. The mark on the base has the name, "Possil Pottery," the place "Glasgow" and an image of a letter M created with a coiling serpent. The M stands for the McDougall brothers who worked the pottery c. 1896-1913. See Fig. 1. The pattern is quite large – a little too large for the size of the bowl, but it has been beautifully decorated with the added cobalt bands with gilt edge at the rim and foot. The border is found inside the bowl. See Fig. 2 for a close up of the border and compare with the border inside a pedestal bowl, printed in blue by Doulton & Co. in Fig. 3. The two patterns were produced during the same time period and have a similar size willow pattern. The Doulton mark on this bowl, dated c. 1891-1902 is Fig. 4. My thanks to Jeff Siptak, editor of the *IWC News*, for the images of his lovely bowl.

The Possil Pottery willow pattern uses a linear form of the pattern in the center on the inside of the bowl with just the 2 birds added. See the center pattern in Fig. 5. Just one section of the willow pattern is there, but the image is straight forward. In Fig. 6, the center pattern inside the Doulton bowl shows the entire willow pattern as would be found on a plate. Comparing the two, the Possil Pottery center shown matches that part of the Doulton bowl. It reveals a few of the strange aspects about the standard willow pattern. The fence is placed across the white path without a gate that prohibits continuing on the path towards the tea house. In fact the white path leads directly up the stairs stopping dead in front of a post in the middle of the portico rather than leading through an open archway.

The linear pattern on the outside of the bowl begins to show some variations from the standard pattern. In Fig. 7 the teahouse is presented with a lovely combination of intricate designs on the doorways and pagoda roof tops; however, a ground swell of shaded area has moved up to blot out the



Figure 1.



Figure 2.



Figure 3.



Figure 4.



Figure 5.



Figure 6.

white path and its devious direction.

The pattern engravers must have really enjoyed playing havoc with the fence. It has been extended around the entire circumference of the bowl with different patterns on each panel as it appears in various states of disarray! The Doulton pattern in Fig. 8 shows a fence that runs straight along the bottom of the pattern with one panel of the fence slightly ajar. The full image of the lovely pedestal bowl is seen here measuring

9.5 by 6.5 with a 5-inch base.



Figure 7.



Figure 8.

In Fig. 9 we see again a shaded area that has moved up beyond the tortured fence and almost obliterated the three figures on the bridge. The Doulton image in Fig. 10 shows how the pattern was intended to fit on the bowl. And the fence does not continue around the base of the entire bowl. The Possil Pottery bowl gives us one more bit of pattern in Fig. 11 with broken fence and added motifs to fill up remaining space on the outside.



Figure 9.



Figure 10.



Figure 11.

The second willow pattern produced by Possil Pottery is the blue-printed 2.75 inch cup with ring handle pictured in Fig. 12. The standard willow tea house, white path and fence with no gate as in the standard willow pattern are restored in this view, and the willow border is seen on the inside of the cup. Fig. 13 shows the more elaborate printed mark on this small cup. Across the top are the words, "The Nautilus Porcelain Co." This is the trade mark developed by one of the short-lived companies that used the Possil Pottery building during the McDougall brothers' management. It was intended for use on porcelain; however, was seldom used.

(cont'd)

The view on the cup opposite the handle in Fig. 14 shows once more a shaded area moving up to completely cover the three figures on the bridge. They are replaced by waving narrow plants in a row. The only constant is the fence with no gate which circles the cup without changes. The final image in Fig. 15 shows more waving narrow plants emerging beneath various trees adapted from the willow pattern. The cup is too small to add birds to the linear pattern.

The Possil Pottery designers produced two very different pieces, but with both featuring linear patterns too large for the size of the vessels. Also consistent with the technique of a moving shaded area to disguise the fact that the patterns were too large for their application created interesting visual effects previously unseen in a willow pattern.



Figure 12.



Figure 13.



Figure 14.



Figure 15.



International Willow Collectors Marketplace



We're proud to announce a new group on Facebook! It's our own marketplace where collectors can buy, sell and trade willow-patterned items (old and new) year round.

Anyone with a Facebook account needs to first be a member of the International Willow Collectors private Facebook group. Those members can then request to join the marketplace.

Come join the fun! Questions? Contact Jeff Siptak. (info in membership directory)