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GEORGIAN HOME LIFE H10/B

Delft Tile



Delftware is blue and white pottery traditionally made in the Netherlands around the town of Delft. Tiles like this one were used, for example, as skirting boards or to to line the wall around a stove. Each tile was decorated with a different image, often a scene from the Bible or, like this one, from everyday life.These tiles began to be made at Delft from about 1620. Blue and white tiles were fashionable because it reflected the colour-scheme of Chinese porcelain, which was much in demand and expensive.

Delftware was popular in England and, in fact, was also made here - from the late sixteenth century. There were three main centres of production in England - Lambeth (London), Bristol and Liverpool. Output in England flourished in the early eighteenth century, but faded away at the end of the century.

Two Blue Jars



It is possible that these jars were made for use in an apothecary's shop - a chemist's, as we would term it today. Lined up along a shelf, with cloth covers tied around the rims, the apothecary could slip his hands between the tightly stacked jars, and lift down the one needed to prepare a prescription. Such jars were used by apothecaries to store dense, syrupy substances, including fruit pulp and preserves, potions, lotions, dried medicinal drugs and herbs, as well as cosmetics and perfumes. Varnished hand-written paper labels were pasted onto the outside to identify the contents.

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Horn Ladle

From Medieval times until the advent of factory produced metal commodities, horn was widely used to make a wide variety of domestic and other utensils, for example drinking vessels, cups, spoons, ladles, flasks, knife handles and powder boxes. The method of preparing the horn varied according to its ultimate use, but for making such things as spoons, which are relatively flat, the method generally adopted was to remove the tip of the horn and cut it down on one side. It was then steamed or baked to such an extent that it could be flattened and shaped under pressure. The craftsman requires very few tools for horn work - a boiler and a press, a knife, a circular cutting saw and grinding and polishing buffs are all that he needs, apart from a great deal of skill. Good quality horn has many advantages over glass, metal and wood for domestic uses, in that it does not easily warp, bend or break. It is light and strong, and as it is a poor conductor of heat and will not absorb or retain flavours, it is excellent for such things as spoons and ladles. Horn spoons and ladles of this kind are very commonly used in northern counties, and quite often they may be sold in jeweller's shops, inlaid with silver, as souvenirs of those districts. In the north they were as common as wooden spoons are in the south.

This large ladle was probably used for preparing and/or serving food. The handle has a notch cut into it so that it can be hung on a rack or over the edge of a bucket.



Clay Pipe Fragments

Clay pipes were first made in England in the sixteenth century. These examples probably date from the eighteenth century, although without a maker's mark, which was often pressed onto the base of the bowl or on the bottom of the heel, it is difficult to be certain. In the sixteenth century pipe bowls were very small and they gradually increased in size until the end of the nineteenth century, when clay pipes were widely replaced by briar-wood pipes. Both of these examples have the bottom of the heel cut in line with the stem, so that the pipe could be stood safely on a table surface without spilling its contents.



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Brass Candlesticks

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries candlesticks were made from a variety of materials. This pair is made from brass - an alloy of copper and zinc. Brass is a less expensive metal than silver, but altogether more prestigious than wood or tin, which were the common materials for such objects.

In 1709 an Act of Parliament banned the making of candles at home unless a license was purchased and a tax was imposed on candles. For this reason many poor people preferred to use rushlights - the pith of a rush coated with waste kitchen fat - which were excluded from this legislation. Writing in the 1770s Gilbert White, who lived in Hampshire, calculated that a ha'penny candle gave about two hours of light whereas a farthing of rushlights produced five and a half hours of light! Unfortunately, rushlights depended on having regular meat in one's diet. Writing in 1821 William Cobbett suggested that agricultural labourers had to buy candles because they could not afford to buy meat.

Because of the 1709 candle tax, most candles from this date were made commercially. Candle making was a dangerous and smelly occupation. Fat was collected from slaughter houses and heated until it became liquid. Impurities were picked out. Wicks were made from several strands of cotton. The wicks were fastened on a stick and dipped in a container of molten tallow (animal fat). They were then raised and allowed to dry and then dipped again and again until a thick layer of hardened tallow was built up. During the eighteenth century various devices were created to speed up and increase the quantity of candle production. A person who made and sold candles was called a chandler.



Removing the candle stump from a socket was often difficult. Both of these examples have rods running up through the centre of the stick so that the stumps can be pushed out.

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Tea Caddy

Tea first became established in Britain because of the influence of a foreign princess - Catherine of Braganza, the Queen of Charles II. A lover of tea since her childhood in Portugal, she brought tea-drinking to the English royal court, and set a trend for the beverage among the aristocracy in the seventeenth century. The fashion soon spread beyond these elite circles to the middle classes, and it became a popular drink at the London coffee houses where wealthy men met to do business and discuss the events of the day. But the tea that was being drunk in those seventeenth century coffee houses would probably be considered undrinkable now. Between 1660 and 1689, tea sold in coffee houses was taxed in liquid form. The whole of the day's tea would be brewed in the morning, taxed by a visiting excise officer, and then kept in barrels and reheated as necessary throughout the rest of the day. So a visitor to the coffee house in the late afternoon would be drinking tea that had been made hours before in the early morning!

The quality of the drink improved after 1689, when the system of taxation was altered so that tea was taxed by the leaf rather than by the liquid.
Some coffee houses also sold tea in loose leaf form so that it could be brewed at home. This meant that it could be enjoyed by women, who did not frequent coffee houses. However, it was a relatively expensive habit and consequently was largely confined to wealthier households, where women would gather for tea parties. Such a party would be a genteel social occasion, using delicate china pots and cups, silver tea kettles and elegantly carved tea jars and tea tables. All the equipment would be set up by the servants, and then the tea would be brewed by the hostess (aided by a servant on hand to bring hot water) and served by her to her guests in dainty cups. Both green and black teas were popular, and sugar was frequently added (though like tea, this was an expensive import).



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By the nineteenth century tea drinking was common among the working classes, although the elaborate etiquette of the middle class tea ceremony continued to be practised. This fine tea caddy would have been used on such occasions. Several different exotic woods have been used in its construction, along with bone around the lock and for the handles. The interior of the two internal boxes, for holding different varieties of tea, would originally have been lined with metal. The lock testifies to the fact it was still felt necessary to keep the precious tea leaves guarded!



Wig Curler

Wigs were commonly worn by men in the eighteenth century not because they were bald (though many probably were!), but because it was fashionable. By the first quarter of the eighteenth century a great variety of wigs of different fashions were on sale - full bobs, miniature bobs, naturels, Grecian flys and curly rays. When not in use the wig was kept on a stand and the curls were maintained by using a curler such as this. The hair was damped and wound round the curler together with a layer of paper. These cylinders varied in size according to the size of curls desired. The damp, curled up hair was heated in an oven until the pattern was set. The curlers were made from fired pipe clay and were rounded at each end and were thinner in the middle to help keep the hair in place. It is thought that wig curlers were often made by pipe makers, although no proof of this has yet been found