

A Mauchline retailer - Brands of Wooler

Generally much is known about the manufacture of Mauchline Ware, both through the patents for the various processes which both the Smiths and Archibald Brown lodged, and from the memories of some of the last workers in the Box Factory, which have been recorded for posterity. Much less is known about where and how such items were retailed. Almost the only clues to retailers are in transfers of their names on some of the transfer pieces, or on separate internal retail labels.

On moving to Northumberland two and a half years ago, I was delighted to find that one of the retailers known from the transfers, M Brand of Wooler, still had a shop front in Wooler High Street. Sadly the shop was no longer owned by the Brand family, but they had deposited their records in the archives at Berwick-upon-Tweed. The records which survive are day books and ledgers recording the purchases of local people who paid their bills quarterly.

Kelly's Directory for 1858 gives a bookseller and stationers in Wooler, belonging to William Brand, and this listing is still given for 1879. By 1887, the listing has become 'BRAND Mrs Mary, printer, bookseller, stationer and fancy repository (also newsagent) High Street'; by 1897 however the shop has passed to Thomas Brand.

The earliest references in the firm's ledgers which appear to refer to Mauchline Ware are from 1870 when items purchased by a local gentleman, John Riddell, are noted.

*'April 8 1 Box Fancy wood 3/-
April 14 1 Ring Stand (Fancy wood) 1/-
April 25 1 Hair Brush 5/- 1 Paper Weight 1/9 (Fancy woods)'*

By 1871 the firm appears to have been retailing items made of the wood of Flodden Field - although these items are usually associated with the firm of Robbs of Coldstream.

Robert Walker Esq. of Wooler is noted as having bought:

'2 boxes (Flodden wood) 1/8' on the 19th of March, and Mr. Riddell bought an unspecified piece on the 23rd, closely followed by a stamp box.

*'Mar 23 1 Flodden Field (Wood) 6/-
Mar 29 1 stamp box (wood) 1/-'*

In 1874 a Flodden wood blotter was sold to G P Hughes, Esq. of Middleton Hall on the 25th of January, for the considerable sum of 14/-.

1873 brings the first reference to Fern

Ware, when Robert Walker bought a 'Fern Wood Box' on the 22nd of December for 6/6d.

Items bearing the Brand name as retailers usually claim to be 'MADE OF WOOD GROWN IN CHILLINGHAM PARK *Famous for its Breed of Wild Cattle.*'

The first reference to such a piece occurs on the 10th of February 1875 when Miss Short of Wooler Mill bought a Chillingham Album for 5/-. Mr. Riddell, who clearly was a fan of Mauchline Ware, bought 29 Chillingham Wood articles for the grand sum of 14/6 on 12th May, and followed that with a box of Chillingham Wood for 1/9 on the 9th of August. 23rd September 1875 Henry Elliot of Akeld bought a Chillingham Wood Album (photo) for 14/-, and presumably a superior album was sold to Mr. T. Culley of Coupland Castle on the 16th of December '1 photo album - (Chillingham Wood) 20/-'.

Although the existence of the Chillingham Cattle had been highlighted in Sir Walter Scott's *The Bride*, published in 1818, it was not until the late 1860s that they began to become a tourist attraction. In 1867 Landseer had been commissioned to paint them, and in the autumn of 1872, the Prince of Wales arrived to see them. It seems reasonable to assume that it was in the light of the growing tourist interest that the Brands decided to commission some items themselves, rather than rely on general items and the Flodden wood pieces from Coldstream. It seems as if such items were first available in 1875, but, since the ledgers do not record cash purchases from visitors, it is possible that the introduction was slightly earlier. This date calls into question who was controlling the shop by 1875 - all



'Chillingham Wood' pieces bear the name of 'M. Brand. Wooler', although according to Kelly's William Brand still owned the shop in 1879.

By the 1890s, local sales of clearly identifiable wood ware had declined with only an occasional reference. In late 1897, 1898 there are two references to items 'with Fenton' - a local village which appears on transfer pieces - so this may indicate a further diversification. Certainly in the Red Guide of about 1904 T Brand of Wooler is still advertising souvenir wood ware.

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