

TOPIC : PRESTONPANS POTTERY

**TEACHER'S PAGES - IMAGE**



Fishwife Figurine

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**TEACHER'S PAGES**

**Gordon's Pottery, 1772-1842, Bankfoot** - Shortly after pottery manufacture began in Prestonpans in 1750, George Gordon moved into the Pottery at Bankfoot with his two sons. Gordon's specialised in white enameled and decorated earthenware, terracotta and jet teapots, bowls, cream ewers, salt boxes and moulded plates. Gordon's went into decline when the Prestongrange landowner began consolidating his lands and accused Gordon's of neglect of buildings, taking clay intended for bricks to make pottery and planning a pottery without permission. Litigation concluded in 1836, when the Gordon's were removed from Bankfoot but continued pottery operations in Prestonpans until evicted in 1841.

**Cadell's Pottery, 1750-1835, Kirk Street** – Local entrepreneur, William Cadell, constructed a pottery in Kirk Street to make superior, cream coloured earthenware. One of the most successful potteries, Cadell's employed 125 people in 1791 and exported to Scandinavia, Russia, North America, Spain and Italy. Pottery operations continued until 1835, however, the tradition lives on with examples of Cadell's pottery found all over the world.

**West Pans Pottery, 1746-1817, West Pans** – Clay was first allowed to be won in 1754, just shortly after William Littler arrived in Prestonpans. Littler is considered the founder of Scotland's porcelain industry. Littler's produced raised floral and leaf patterns on jugs, dishes and tureens. Littler's products had a 'novelty' and 'one-off' nature which depended heavily on aristocratic patronage, when this declined, so did production and the pottery closed in 1817.

**Belfield's Pottery, 1847-1935, Prestonpans** – Charles Belfield was familiar with both pottery and Prestonpans; his father was a Staffordshire potter and he managed Bankfoot pottery before buying the High Street pottery in 1847 and stocking it with bankrupt stock bought from Kirk Street. Belfield's range included drainpipes and sanitary ware as well as brown glazed tea and coffeepots, Majolica ware all coloured in green, yellow and brown. The pottery continued successfully until the last remaining Belfield died in 1941. Belfield's remains the most technically accomplished and longest running.

**Work & Home** – By today's standards, life at the Prestonpans Potteries was bad and poorly paid. Until the early 1920's potters had to live in squalid housing near the pottery because they worked a 60-hour, 6-day week (compared to 38-hour, 5-day week nowadays). The product range was extensive; however, the low level of mechanisation meant manual manipulation and individual craft potters were hired because of their manual dexterity and deep knowledge of technology and clay composition. These 'Craft Potters' brought their own work groups to produce 'count' of ware and supervised staff by determining wages and delegating. Craft Potters were itinerant; temporarily employed by different potteries to which they brought different designs and techniques for use by an indigenous workforce. An abundance of natural resources attracted numerous industries to Prestonpans and although potters did not dominate the area, compared to their counterparts, they were highly skilled craftsmen who were noted as independent, proud, thrift and prudent.

**Prestonpans Pottery in its Scottish Context** – Around the advent of pottery making in East Lothian, other Scottish potteries were already in artistic decline, producing a vast amount of transfer-printed ware that varied from pleasing to mundane. However, East Coast potteries followed a very different, more inventive design path, which sustained their existence longer. Eighteenth century conditions provided all resources required for pottery manufacture, namely, good quality local clay, waterpower and coal suited to firing. The central position of Prestonpans meant easy access to markets, in Edinburgh and its environs, most notably via the harbour at Morison's Haven. However, the nineteenth century brought a nationwide decline in clay and transport facilities. Increased foreign competition led to reduced demand for Scottish pottery and decline in production. However, Prestongrange continued to meet the demand for fashionable pottery by technology and innovative use of existing materials. Factory organisation was based on good designs and excellent workmanship, which meant that the manual part of the manufacturing process was maintained well beyond mechanisation. The decline of Prestonpans pottery manufacture did come however; like their counterparts, Prestonpans potteries were only part of larger entrepreneurial enterprises, which tended to be abandoned when more profitable ventures came along.

# PRESTONPANS POTTERY

## People in the Past

Prestonpans Pottery Owners  
Prestonpans Potters

## Historic Places

Prestonpans Potteries

## Historic Events

Fashion brings advance in  
Technology



## PRESTONPANS POTTERY

### OWNERS

Pottery production began in Prestonpans in the 1750s and continued until 1941. The people who owned the potteries were mostly ['entrepreneurs'](#) they had many different businesses, only one of which was pottery.

The most notable pottery owners were:-

- George Gordon of Gordon's Pottery at Bankfoot 1772-1842
- William Cadell of Cadell's Pottery at Kirk Street 1750-1835
- William Littler of Littler's Pottery at West Pans 1746-1817
- Charles Belfield of Belfield's Pottery at High Street 1847-1935



### POTTERS

Pottery owners would employ people to manufacture the pottery for them. These ['Craft Potters'](#) had experience in working with clay and designing pottery, they also knew other 'potters' whom they employed and supervised. There were very few 'Craft Potters' in Prestonpans so they were temporarily employed by different potteries. 'Craft Potters' would bring different designs and techniques to each pottery. Because pottery is so highly skilled and because there was such a demand for 'Craft Potters' they were able to ask for high prices for their services.

### POTTERIES

Prestonpans was an ideal area pottery manufacture. There was good quality local clay, waterpower was available and coal suited to firing the pottery kilns. Demand for Prestonpans pottery came from Edinburgh and abroad. These markets were accessible because of the harbour at [Morrison's Haven](#) and excellent road networks.



### FASHION BRINGS ADVANCE IN TECHNOLOGY

Up to 1740, pottery was mostly ['creamware'](#) which, except for raised patterns, is very plain and were made from simple plaster moulds. However, more ornamental pottery was in demand in the Victorian Era the average family was more affluent, had better equipped houses and ate more elaborate meals. As a result, technology in pottery had to advanced to include transfer printing, painting, gilding and colour.

## [Entrepreneurs](#)

**George Gordon** moved into Bankfoot Pottery as soon as pottery manufacture began in Prestonpans, in 1750. When the landowner began consolidating his land Gordon's were accused of neglect, stealing clay and planning potteries without permission. The legal battle concluded in 1836 when Gordon's were evicted.

**William Cadell** constructed Kirk Street Pottery in 1750 which, by 1791, employed 125 people and exported pottery to Scandinavia, Russia, North America and Southern Europe until 1835.

**William Littler** arrived in Prestonpans in 1754, shortly after clay was first won at West Pans. Littler is considered the founder of Scotland's porcelain industry and supplied the very rich with ornate, expensive pottery until 1817.

**Charles Belfield** bought the High Street pottery in 1847 from which was produced all types of affordable, domestic pottery until 1941.

# GLOSSARY

## [Craft Potters](#)

Craft Potters were hired by owners (who often had no pottery experience) to manage potteries. Craft Potters were familiar with pottery technology and clay, often bringing their own workers to produce pottery. Craft potters decided on wages and who would carry out tasks.

[Morrison's Haven](#) Prestonpans potteries imported raw materials and exported produce world-wide from this harbour at Prestongrange.

[Creamware](#) Around 1760, white enamelled earthenware was made from clay by adding lead glazes and double firing. Transfer printing, painting, gilding and staining meant that colour enhanced the appeal of this inexpensive pottery ware.

### TimeLine

- 1150s – Charter granted to the Cistercian monks of Newbattle Abbey by Seyer de Quincey, Earl of Winchester. A coalworks and quarry were established between Whytrig Burn and the boundaries of Pinkie and Inveresk.
- 1306 – Act of parliament forbade the use of coal in London. It was unpopular for domestic use as smoke and fumes were considered dangerous, so it was used to heat large monastic and noble's houses in Scotland whilst being associated with trade and industry.
- 1300s – James V allowed construction of Acheson's Haven (now Morrison's Haven) and the Abbey was granted right to transport coal from workings beside the River Esk for shipment in small boats. Packhorses made the return journey with salt from the salt pans and goods traded for salt and coal shipped at the harbour.
- 1450s – Accessible supplies of coal decreased while demand for coal increased
- 1500s – Scottish coal output was <40,000 tons but still came from small scale workings, however, 6 tons of coal were needed to produce one ton of salt (salt was v. profitable)
- 1609 – Export of coal was forbidden
- 1606 – Law reduced colliers to a form of slavery (serfdom)
- 1700 – Output of coal c4 million tons annually
- 1705 – Thomas Newcomen patented the steam engine
- 1707 – Union of Parliaments of Scotland and England saw the decline of the Prestonpans Salt industry.
- 1722 – Tranent and Cockenzie waggonway was laid.
- 1741 – Evidence of the use of Horse Gins at Prestongrange.
- 1743 – Morrison's Haven harbour ceased trading.
- 1746 – Mining temporarily ceased at Prestongrange due to flooding
- 1780 – James Watt successfully modifies Newcomen's original design
- 1800 – Total coal output for Britain was 10 million tons
- 1812 – William Murdoch perfects a method for extracting gas from coal for lighting
- 1814 – Sir John Hope' Pinkie railway, running between Pinkiehill and Fisherrow constructed
- 1815 – Tranent & Cockenzie waggonway had wooden rails replaced with cast iron
- 1830 – George Grant Suttie leases land at Prestongrange to Matthias Dunn
- 1830 – No. 1 shaft sunk, opening the mine after more than 65 years
- 1831 – Edinburgh & Dalkeith Railway ('Innocent Railway') constructed
- 1838 – Waggon road used at Prestongrange from pit bottom to working. Bearers replaced by wheeled rails.
- 1838 – Matthias Dunn gives up the lease of Prestongrange
- 1840 – No. 1 shaft flooded
- 1850s - Turnpike System introduced in Scotland
- 1850 – The Prestongrange Company took over the Prestongrange Lease
- 1850 – Opening of the mineral railway junction linking Prestongrange Colliery with the main East Coast line
- 1870 – Total coal output for Scotland 15 million tons
- 1874 – Cornish Beam Engine installed at Prestongrange
- 1878 – Mining Institute of Scotland established
- 1893 – Prestongrange Company failed
- 1895 – The Summerlee Coal & Iron Company leased Prestongrange
- 1895 – First mechanical Washer for cleaning coal in Scotland, installed at Prestongrange
- 1900 – 439 employed at Prestongrange pit; 61 above ground & 378 below
- 1905 – Cornish Beam Engine had its pumping capacity improved
- 1910 – 873 employed at Prestongrange pit; 153 above ground & 720 below (including many Irish immigrants)
- 1910 – An electric turbine pump was installed to pump water from Prestongrange
- 1913 - Total coal output for Scotland 42 million tons
- 1915 - Total coal output for Scotland 35.25 million tons
- 1945 - Total coal output for Scotland less than 20 million tons
- 1946-7 – Nationalisation; the government took over the coal mines
- 1962 – Prestoungrane pit closed

Design a Prestonpans Pottery Water Jug. Show what colours/features you would use to make your design stand out.

1. Look at this picture of a Prestonpans Ewer, dated c1860.



- How do you think the potter designed and made the ewer?

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- How do you think he worked out the pattern ?

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- Which part do you think he worked on first?

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My pottery design ...

2. Look at this picture of Prestongrange Beehive Kilns, dated c1912.



Imagine yourself as a Prestongrange Pottery and finish the sentences below.

- Inside the pottery was .....

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- To make a teapot the clay had to be ....

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- If I could choose between going to school now and working in a pottery then, I would choose....

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My Job is to ...

Draw a picture of yourself, as a potters assistant. Show what you would be wearing while you do your job in the pottery.

3. Look at this map of Prestonpans, dated c.1854.



Prestonpans was ideal for pottery manufacture because there was - - - y, w - - - - - p - - - - - and - o - - -. The harbour at - - - - - ' s - - - - - and - - - - - networks allowed pottery to be transported to E - - - - - - - - and - - - - - a - .



My Pottery shop ...

Design a 'For Sale' poster for your Pottery Shop in Victoria Street, Edinburgh. Remember to include things like pictures of the pottery you have for sale, prices and when you are open.

## PRESTOUNGRANGE 2000 PROJECT - TEACHING RESOURCE PACK

### **TOPIC : PRESTONPANS POTTERY**

#### **RELATED WEBSITES**

<a href="http://www.prestoungrange.org">Prestoungrange 2000 Project</a>	= ( <a href="http://www.prestoungrange.org">www.prestoungrange.org</a> )
<a href="http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk">Prestongrange Museum</a>	= ( <a href="http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk">www.eastlothian.gov.uk</a> )
<a href="http://www.earl.org.uk/partners/eastlothian">East Lothian Library Service</a>	= ( <a href="http://www.earl.org.uk/partners/eastlothian">www.earl.org.uk/partners/eastlothian</a> )
<a href="http://www.scran.ac.uk">SCRAN</a>	= ( <a href="http://www.scran.ac.uk">www.scran.ac.uk</a> )
<a href="http://www.ocf.berkeley.edu/stonerjw/scot-hist">Sources for Scottish History</a>	= ( <a href="http://www.ocf.berkeley.edu/stonerjw/scot-hist">www.ocf.berkeley.edu/stonerjw/scot-hist</a> )
<a href="http://www.clan.com/history/index">Scottish History Magazine</a>	= ( <a href="http://www.clan.com/history/index">www.clan.com/history/index</a> )