

A salt glazed railway commemorative



This two pint capacity tankard was bought from Ebay in March 2020. It was described as “Rare Victorian Salt Glazed Mug Railway Industrial Revolution Collectors” and was listed with a good set of pictures described as showing a railway station, a factory, a castle and a hunting scene.

The hunt sprigs indicated that it was by one of Joseph Bourne’s Derbyshire potteries either Belper (closed by Bourne in 1834 although continued by others until 1870) or Denby (still in operation) and the handle terminal suggested 1830-50. From the Ebay pictures I couldn’t be certain that it was that old because Denby had made a commemorative jug in 1971 for the 200th anniversary of the Cromford Mills but when I received it, I could see that it was salt glazed, a process that Denby stopped using around 1860.

What had been described as railway station, factory and castle all included railway tracks but which railway? My immediate thought was the one running through Denby. This was opened in 1856 on the Midland Railway’s Ripley branch line but the few pictures of Denby station that I could find did not match anything on the tankard. Some more searching proved without doubt that the railway is the Liverpool and Manchester railway opened in September 1825 and described (Wikipedia) as the world’s first inter-city railway.

The sprigs are almost certainly derived from three of the aqua tints by T.T. Bury, engraved by S.G. Hughes and first published by Rudolph Ackermann in February 1831.



“Railway Office, Liverpool”



“Entrance into Manchester across Water Street”



“Moorish Arch, looking from the Tunnel (Liverpool)”

Philip Mernick, 15th April 2021