

## **Recipe for Royal Blue Dye, Dye Book from Vero and Everitt Limited, CR4855A/27**

May's Document of the Month comes from a dye book for an employee of Vero and Everitt Limited, which was a hat making firm based in Atherstone in the north of the county.

The small volume contains many recipes for different dyes and has an inscription inside the front cover:

*'T.P. Gummer had this book when he was a dyer from V & E'.<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Dye Book for Vero and Everitt Limited, Warwickshire County Record Office, CR4855A/27.

53 Royal Blue  
20 lbs Wool  
3 . Prussiate  
3 Quarts Blue Spirits  
The Wool must be entered  
cold and the liquor  
heated up to a boil as  
soon as possible and  
when boiled half an  
hour take out and  
add 2 pints of Finishing  
Spirits.  
If a darker shade is re  
quired add Logwood  
according to shade  
with the finishing spirit  
or it is preferable to  
add Logwood at the  
beginning with the

prussiate of Wools  
Royal Blues that have  
to stand Melling and  
Steaming should  
always have as much  
Ammonia as Blue  
Spirits at the beginning  
as it makes them  
much firmer and  
clearer

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54 Grain Crimson  
20 lbs Wool  
2 " Cochineal paste  
1 " Dry Cochineal  
2 pints Spirits  
2 lbs Tartar  
Boil and

Recipe for Royal Blue dye, taken from the Dye Book for Vero and Everitt Limited, Warwickshire County Record Office, CR4855A/27.

As it is the Coronation of HRH King Charles III this month, we have decided to highlight this recipe for Royal Blue dye. There are two slightly different recipes for Royal Blue in this volume, but we have chosen this slightly more detailed one. The recipe, which has been transcribed separately, includes ingredients such as Prussiate, Blue Spirits and Logwood. Some of these would probably not

be used today. Prussiate, for example, is also known as any cyanide, ferrocyanide or ferricyanide!<sup>2</sup>

### **Vero and Everitt Limited and Hat Making in Atherstone**

Vero and Everitt Limited was founded by Charles Vero and James Everitt in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Vero was a master hatter, who came from a family of hatters from Atherstone. Everitt was a tallow chandler (someone who made and sold candles). Their partnership began with a hat shop in Melbourne, Australia, but Vero returned a couple of years later, leasing land in Atherstone and beginning to make hats. Everitt followed him back to Atherstone and by 1865 Vero and Everitt had built a “Manufactory with Warehouses Offices and Other Buildings”.<sup>3</sup> They were then able to expand when their neighbour Joseph Woodroffe went bankrupt, and his property and land were put up for auction.<sup>4</sup> The purchase of this land meant they were able to begin a programme of expansion and development. The business went from strength to strength, even producing hats for the military. There is an example of one at the Imperial War Museum.<sup>5</sup>

This boom in business continued until around the end of the Second World War, as fashions changed and the industry went into decline. The infamous advertising slogan ‘If you want to get ahead, get a hat’ was coined by the industry in the fifties in an attempt to boost sales.

Vero and Everitt purchased a number of other hat making businesses in order to survive, but inevitably a shortage of skilled workers and ageing premises meant that in December 1987, the only other surviving hat making company in Atherstone, Wilson and Stafford, absorbed most of the business and many of

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<sup>2</sup> Collins English Dictionary, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/prussiate#:~:text=noun%20Chemistry-1.,of%20prussic%20acid%3B%20a%20cyanide> (accessed 12/04/2023).

<sup>3</sup> Judy Vero and Ian Beesley, *Warwickshire Hatters*, Ryburn Publishing, page 4.

<sup>4</sup> Information gathered from Judy Vero and Ian Beesley, *Warwickshire Hatters*, Ryburn Publishing, 1989.

<sup>5</sup> Imperial War Museum, <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30098025> (accessed 08/04/2023).

the workers moved from the original factory to a modern open plan property.<sup>6</sup> Our collections feature a book documenting the final weeks of the original Vero and Everitt factory in 1987, which can be found using the reference C.687.VER (P).

According to the Warwickshire Industrial Archaeological Society, hat making can be traced back to the medieval period in Coventry, but it was Atherstone that became the epicentre for the hat making industry. It appears to have developed from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, overtaking tanning as the main industry in the town. By 1900, there were 7 hat making factories in Atherstone. However, by the end of the century, they had all closed; the last remaining businesses were Vero and Everitt and the company which bought it, Wilson and Stafford.<sup>7</sup>

### Transcript

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<sup>7</sup> Warwickshire Industrial Archaeological Society, *Hatting Industry*, <https://www.warwickshireias.org/hatting> (accessed 08/04/2023).

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