

Thomas Bewick: The Complete Illustrative Work

Nigel Tattersfield



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In 1767, the trade engraver Ralph Beilby of Newcastle upon Tyne took as his first apprentice a raw country lad with a passion for 'figuring' or drawing. This was the fourteen-year-old Thomas Bewick who in time was to gain national and international renown as the finest wood engraver in the kingdom. However, Bewick's celebrated histories of quadrupeds and birds of 1790, 1797 and 1804 have obscured the immense number of other books of all denominations illustrated in this modest workshop. From its inception in 1765 until its demise in 1849, the workshop provided illustrations to books, pamphlets, periodicals and newspapers. The range of illustrations encompassed natural histories, children's story-books, cookery books, religious tracts, spelling books, mathematical treatises, Bibles, agricultural manuals, local town and county histories, joke and riddle books and even a book of sermons. Generously illustrated and arranged alphabetically this book details some 750 titles, over 450 of which are unrecorded in earlier bibliographies. In addition it provides sections on newspaper mastheads, book cover designs, copy-book covers, maps and large single prints. Whether appealing to the Bewick aficionado, book historian, historian of popular art in the eighteenth century, provincial printing enthusiast or admirer of engraving on wood or on copper, this will be an indispensable work.

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