

**The Bookplates and Coats of Arms of
John Wood the Elder and John Wood the Younger of Bath.**

Mike Williams (April 2019)

An armorial bookplate (see Plate 1), prints of which are in the Bath Record Office, the British Museum and the Society of Antiquaries of London, was previously thought to have belonged to John Wood the Elder (bap. 1704, d.1754).



Plate 1: John Wood the Younger's earlier bookplate, reproduced with kind permission of Bath Record Office

A recent paper published by the History of Bath Research Group put forward the suggestion that the arms might have been those of John Wood the Younger (bap. 1728, d. 1781)¹. John Wood the Elder is known to have used a different coat of arms on his seal, which lacks the quartering in the bookplate. Following heraldic conventions, the quartered arms would be appropriate for the son of the bearer of the arms used by John Wood the Elder. In their book *John Wood: Architect of Obsession*, Tim Mowl and Brian Earnshaw believed the arms in Plate 1 to be John Wood the Elder's and speculated that Wood invented the arms himself, noting a resemblance to the coat of arms of the Woods of Harston/Hareston in Devon². The College of Arms does not hold any record of John Wood the Elder or his known family being entitled to bear arms, and to date no conclusive evidence has been found linking the Woods of Bath to the Hareston Woods.

The possibility that there might be more to be discovered concerning the arms of the Woods led to an investigation, during which two bookplates unknown to the authors of Wood's biographers were found to have been published in two articles by John Blatchly in *The Bookplate Journal* in 2008³ and 2011⁴. These contain several features of note not found on any other depictions of their arms. A further bookplate, belonging to a descendant of the Johns Wood was also discovered, along with a further depiction in an unofficial visitation of the county of Somerset.

John Wood the Elder's Bookplate and Seal

In their recent paper published by the History of Bath Research Group, David Crellin and Penny Gay noted that the correct arms for John Wood the Elder were used consistently on his seal (Plate 2) from 1739 to at least 1750, with the arms for Wood impaled with the arms of Withers⁵. A further paper by Crellin and Gay suggested that John Wood's wife was named Jenny Withers, and not Chivers as previously suggested⁶.



Plate 2: John Wood the Elder's seal from a lease document dated 1739 showing his correct arms. Reproduced with kind permission from Bath Record Office

An image of a Chippendale style armorial bookplate of John Wood the Elder (Plate 3) (National Library of Scotland, ref. JHS 23(441e.5)), was first published by John Blatchly in an article in the *Bookplate Journal* in 2008⁷. Blatchly initially identified this bookplate as being John Wood the Younger's, however in a later article in 2011 Blatchly referred to this bookplate as belonging to John Wood the Elder⁸. It was engraved in 1744 by Jacob Skinner of Bath, 1703-1754, who was responsible for dozens of bookplates during the second quarter of the eighteenth century and who also engraved bookplates for Doctor William Oliver of the General Hospital (designed by Wood) and his son William. The arms depicted are near-identical to the seal used by John Wood the Elder:

Wood: *Or* [gold] on a *mount vert* [green] an oak tree fructed

Withers: *Argent* [white] a *chevron gules* [red] between three *crescents sable* [black]

Crest: A *demi wild man all wreathed about the middle, in the dexter hand an oak slip, in the sinister a club resting over the shoulder all ppr.*

The field of the Wood arms on this bookplate is curiously *Argent* rather than *Or* used in all other depictions of the Bath Wood arms and by the Harestone Wood family, which may be a stylistic choice of the engraver. The official pedigree of the Harestone Wood family⁹ also depicts the field as *Argent*, despite their official tincture being *Or*, and therefore the colour of the field seems to vary even amongst depictions of arms recognised as legitimate by the College of Arms. In all other respects the arms are identical.



Plate 3: John Wood the Elder's bookplate. Reproduced with permission from the National Library of Scotland (ref. J.H.S 23(441e.5)). Enlarged (actual size approx. 100 x 70mm)

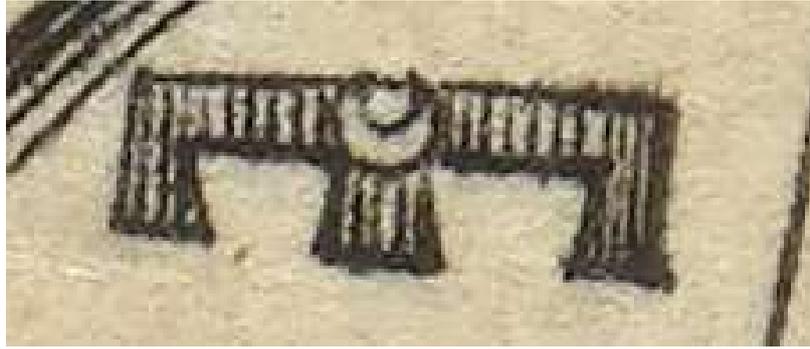


Plate 3: Close-up of the cadency on the Wood arms, a crescent over a label of three points

The arms on this bookplate differ from the arms on the seal in one significant respect – a cadency is present on the Wood arms consisting of a crescent moon over a label of three points. This indicates that the bearer was the second son of a first son¹⁰. Very little is known about the family Wood descended from and this would appear to be the only known instance of Wood directly referencing his male lineage, aside from a brief mention of his father in a letter to the Duke of Chandos. Furthermore, the cadency suggests that Wood's grandfather was entitled to the coat of arms and that both Wood's father and grandfather may have still been alive in 1744, as cadency marks are usually removed upon the death of the person to whom they relate. However, in English heraldry cadency usage is optional and left to the discretion of the bearer¹¹.

The engraver's name does not appear on the bookplate but the design of the bookplate was used later for one Benjamin Adamson in 1746 (F116; Plate 4 left), with Skinner of Bath as the engraver. Other bookplates using the same design are John Hughes of Brecon Esq., 1745 (F15644), Abbey Church (Not in Franks), and Thos Fitzherbert Esq., 1749 (F10679)¹². The design itself therefore appears to be a stock design and not one made specifically for one particular person.

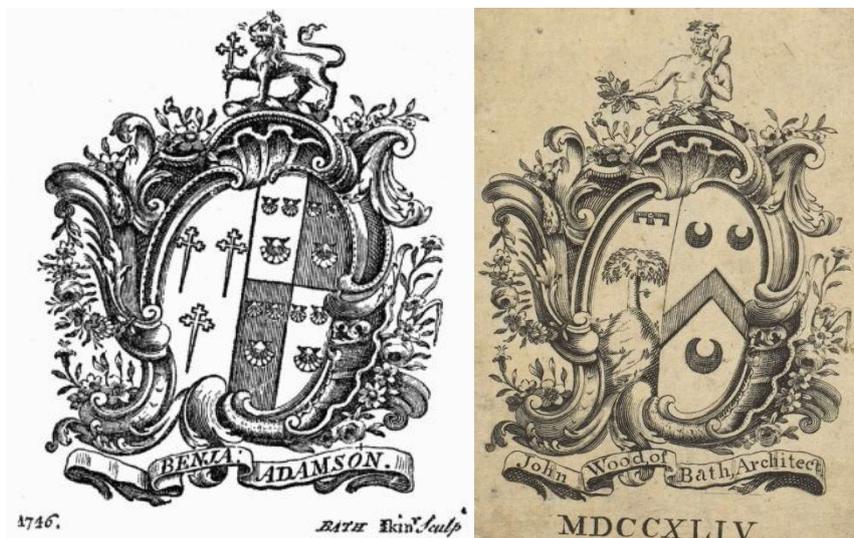


Plate 4: The arms of Benjamin Adamson (F116) (left) and John Wood the Elder (right) with identical decorative frames. Reproduced with permission from the National Library of Scotland (ref. JHS 38 (27.5) and JHS 23(441e.5))

Interestingly, this bookplate lacks the motto 'DIRUIT AEDIFICAT', included in the following bookplates and on John Wood the Younger's seals. It would seem that the usage of this motto probably began with John Wood the Younger.

John Wood the Younger's earlier bookplate

A bookplate held in the Bath Record Office was previously thought by Wood the Elder's biographers¹³ to have belonged to him (Plate 5, left), however, recent research suggests that it was the bookplate of John Wood the Younger. The arms and crest are similar to those used by John Wood the Elder, with the Wood and Withers arms quartered, which would be correct for the son of the bearer of those impaled arms.¹⁴

There is, however, a major difference between the arms in the 3rd and 4th quarters on this bookplate and the arms used by John Wood the Younger from 1754 onwards (Plate 6, left), which has the arms of Chapman and Loftus in place of the repeated Wood and Withers arms (later impaled with the Brock arms on a seal and bookplate) (Plate 6, right and Plate 7). A drawing instrument set case by made by Thomas Heath c.1745¹⁵ is inscribed with the quartered Wood/Withers arms and 'John Wood Architect' suggesting that these arms were used by one of the Bath architects called John Wood. None of John Wood the Younger's descendants are known to have been architects. It is, therefore, highly unlikely that engraving was undertaken beyond the lifetime of John Wood the Younger.

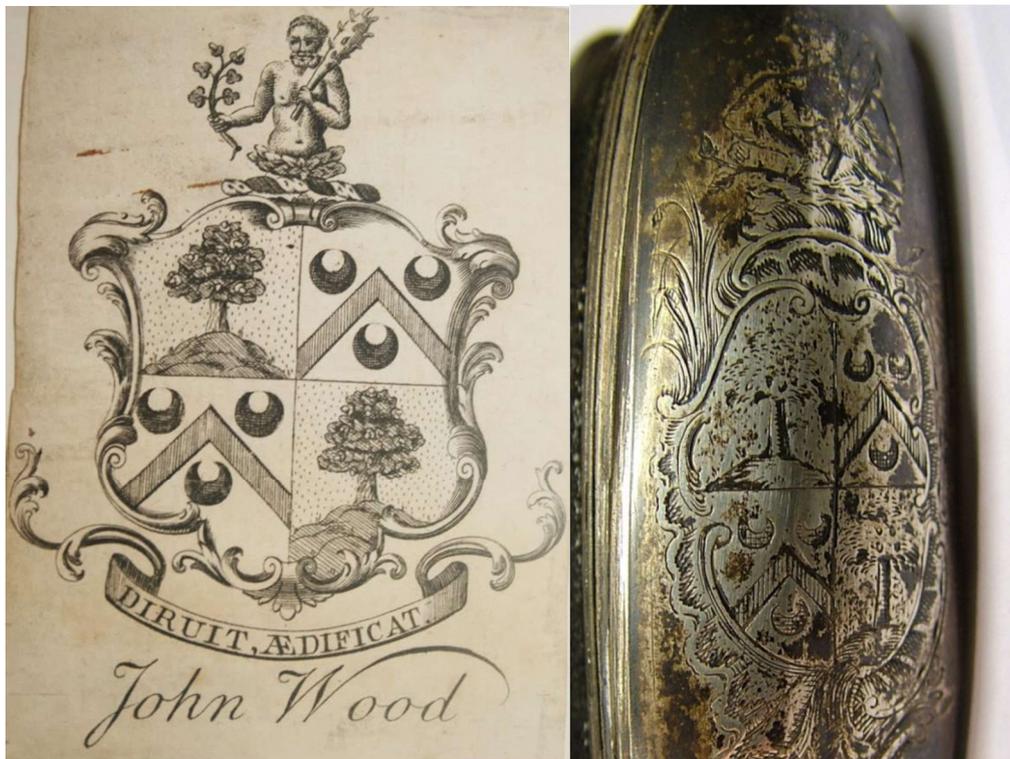


Plate 5: John Wood the Younger's earlier bookplate (left), reproduced with kind permission of Bath Record Office, and the drawing set engraving (right), reproduced courtesy of the Museum of Bath Architecture

An examination of the Plate 5 (left) bookplate held in the Bath Record Office revealed that it is printed on laid paper and not wove paper. The first book to have been (partially) printed on wove paper was John Baskerville's *Virgil* in 1757¹⁶. Wove paper came into general use from about 1800, which suggests an 18th century date for the bookplate. Furthermore, the style, Jacobean Armorial¹⁷, was most popular between 1715 and 1745, with the Chippendale style armorial style becoming popular from around c. 1740¹⁸. This suggests an early date for this bookplate, possibly predating the Chippendale style armorial engraving on the drawing instrument set (Plate 5, right) which closely resembles the work of Jacob Skinner. However, laid paper continued to be produced on a smaller scale up to the present day and Jacobean Armorial bookplates continued to be produced on a smaller scale after 1745, so it is not possible to be completely certain about an exact 18th century date – only that it is likely to have been produced in the first half of that century.

Duplicate prints of this bookplate are held by The Society of Antiquaries (Charles Hall Crouch Collection of Bookplates, Box 74, no. 72) British Museum (Franks Collection F32382) and National Library of Scotland (John Henderson Smith 4(19.4)).



Plate 6: John Wood the Younger and Jenny Wood's seal from 1754/5 (left, reproduced with kind permission of the Bath Record Office) and the post-marital seal of John Wood the Younger (right) © British Library Board (Egerton MS 3516)

John Wood the Younger's (later) bookplate

Probably the most interesting bookplate discovered in the course of this research was a later bookplate of John Wood the Younger (Plate 7). The engraver was Matthew/Matthais Darly, a renowned satirical cartoonist who also made bookplates and trade cards. The style is pictorial armorial and in addition to the arms depicts various objects relevant to the occupations and interests of John Wood the Younger. This bookplate is undated. Since it references the marriage to Elizabeth Brock it must be post-1752, and pre-1780 when Darly died.

This bookplate shows greater detail of Wood the Younger's coat of arms than appears on his seals (Plate 6). Most importantly, it shows sufficient detail to identify the arms in the 3rd and 4th quarters of the dexter half of the shield. The 3rd quarter is '*Sable a chevron engrailed ermine between three trefoils slipped argent*' and is the arms associated with Loftus. The 4th quarter shows the Chapman arms, with a canton in the top left corner, absent on the seal. The presence of this canton strongly suggests an association with the Chapman family of Bath descending from Peter Chapman, restorer of the Bath Abbey.

Another notable change is that the wild man on the crest no longer holds an oak branch and has his club over the opposite (dextral) shoulder. This is the only depiction of the arms where this crest is used. This crest resembles the Wood family of Scotland '*a savage from the loins upwards holding in his dexter hand a club erect, wreathed about the temples and loins with laurel, all ppr.*'¹⁹. However, he continued to use the family arms *Or on a mount vert an oak tree fructed*, the arms of the Wood family of Hareston Devon.

To date, the best suggestion for the discrepancy between the crests is an error – either by the engraver or in the instructions he was given. Wood the Younger's crest is also very similar to the crest used on a bookplate by Darly for a C. E. Wodehouse of Kimberley (Plate 8), about whom we know little. Curiously, Darly used an older, obsolete version of the Wodehouse crest – exactly why he did it is impossible to tell without knowing more details of the identity of his client.



Plate 7: John Wood the Younger's post-marital bookplate depicting the arms of Wood, Withers, Loftus and Chapman, impaled with those of his wife, Elizabeth Brock. Reproduced with kind permission from the National Library of Scotland (ref. J.H.S 38(28.3))



**Plate 8: Crests engraved by Darly for John Wood the Younger (left) and C.E. Wodehouse (right).
Reproduced by permission of The National Library of Scotland (ref. J.H.S 38(28.3) and JHS 38(27.5))**

The objects in the bookplate (Plate 7) are of interest as these appear to relate to the occupation and interests of John Wood the Younger. Roughly left to right, these are:

1. Urn with Greek wave pattern on top of a sarcophagus
2. Circus plan
3. Compass
4. Possibly part of an adjustable T-square
5. Books (untitled)
6. Another plan (partially obscured and unclear as to what it is)
7. Quadrangular object. Possibly a mason's mortarboard or an academic cap
8. Mallet
9. Pyramid (behind shield)



Plate 9: The Circus plan on John Wood the Younger's (later) bookplate

Perhaps the most important feature is a drawing of The Circus (Plate 9). No plan by either John Wood of one of their most famous works survives, aside from earlier versions not intended for the final location. Although lacking in much detail, this would seem to be the only known depiction of The Circus approved by either John Wood. It is unknown how much input John Wood the Younger had into the design of The Circus, but he did undertake most of the work following the death of his father. Its presence on the bookplate suggests he thought highly of this work at the time the bookplate was created.

Next to The Circus is a compass and behind it is what appears to be part of a T-square. Although the square and compass are prominent symbols of the Freemasons, (whom it has long been suspected but never proven that the Woods were members), they are also essential tools of the architect and their presence here may not symbolise anything other than the tools of his occupation. The T-square also differs greatly from the square normally used in Freemason symbology. The mallet is again used as a tool by masons and as an allegorical symbol by Freemasons. To the left of the shield is an urn on a stand with a Greek wave running across the centre. Whether this is symbolic of something, represents a physical ornament designed by Wood, or serves no purpose other than decoration, is presently unknown. The pyramid behind the shield could be related to his father's interest in Egyptian architecture, manifested in the obelisk in Queen Square and discussed in *Origin of Building*. Wood the Younger appears to have had an interest in pyramids, one of his last designs being the pyramidal Knill's Monument in St Ives, designed in 1779²⁰.

Paternal Coat and Crest by James Harris



Plate 10: John Wood's paternal coat of arms by James Harris, 1770. Reproduced with kind permission from Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society and Somerset Heritage Centre (SHC DD/SAS/C795/FA/19)

An interesting depiction of the Wood arms is found in a little-known heraldic manuscript held at the Somerset Heritage Centre entitled *'The Paternal Coats of Arms and Crests of the Nobility, Baronets, and Gentry Resident in or who have Seats in The County of Somerset collected from Authentic Manuscripts and other Authorities by James Harris Herald Painter at Bath 1770'* (SHC DD/SAS/C795/FA/19), an 'unofficial visitation' containing the arms of many local armigers²¹. It shows only the Wood arms and crest (Plate 10) with the correct colouration, as the scope of the work was simply the paternal arms. Given the date of 1770, the 'John Wood of Bath' (with a pencil note 'The Architect of Bath') refers to John Wood the Younger. The wild-man crest is a mirror-image of that used by John Wood the Elder, with the club and oak slip in opposite hands, presumably a mistake of the artist or the description he was working from. While the inclusion of John Wood in this manuscript

does not confirm that he was entitled to his arms, it does show that the Johns Wood were at the very least convincing enough to be considered armigers by a contemporary and local heraldic artist.

John Brock Wood's bookplate

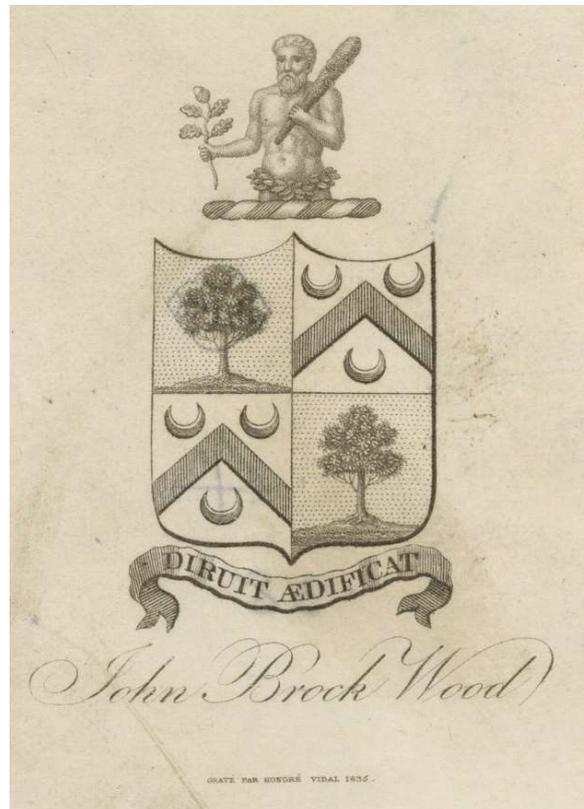


Plate 11: Bookplate of John Brock Wood the Younger © The Trustees of the British Museum.

A bookplate belonging to John Brock Wood, son of John Brock Wood (d. 1825) and grandson of John Wood the Younger was found in the Franks Collection at the British Museum (F32387), dated 1835 and engraved by Honoré Vidal (Plate 11). Curiously, the bookplate features a coat of arms almost identical to John Wood the Younger's earlier bookplate, with quartered Wood and Withers arms and the same crest and motto, and omitting the Loftus, Chapman and Brock arms. Why John Brock Wood chose to use this particular version of the arms is unknown. Perhaps he was unaware of any claim to the Loftus and Chapman arms or had other reasons to omit them, or possibly he was unaware of them and simply used the arms used by his grandfather in his younger days. In 1795 most of the books belonging to the architect Woods were sold at auction²², and maybe John Brock Wood was not aware of any other version of the arms. These arms may also have been used for simplicity. There is a small possibility that the bookplate presently thought to be John Wood the Younger's earlier bookplate may have belonged to one of the John Brock Woods, however the style, paper type and usage of those arms on a drawing set made in the 1740s makes this unlikely. What is clear is that the Wood family seems to have believed that they were entitled to bear these arms well into the 19th century.

Discussion

During the course of this research no evidence could be found that directly linked the Woods of Bath to the Hareston Woods – however, the Wood family arms and, with two later exceptions, the crests used are identical to the Hareston Woods. The cadency used by John Wood the Elder indicates that he inherited the arms from his father, who inherited them from his father. The question of whether or

not Wood was legitimately entitled to bear these arms remains open, and may not be answered unless evidence concerning the identity of his paternal grandfather comes to light. Both of the architect Woods had numerous dealings with landed gentry and many of their friends and associates were *bona fide* armigers who may well have taken issue with their architect using arms unofficially. The Elder Wood himself had a contact in the College of Arms in his engraver, John Pine, who engraved his books *The Origin of Building* (1741) and *An Essay towards a Description of Bath* (1742). Pine became Bluemantle Pursuivant at the College of Arms in 1743²³.

Wood's publisher and business partner James Leake is referred to in a humorous anecdote by the Earl of Orrery: *'He looks upon every Man, distinguished by any Title, not only as his Friend, but his companion, and he treats him accordingly: but he disposes of his Favours and Regards as methodically as Nash takes out the Ladies to dance, and therefore speaks not to a Marquiss whilst a Duke is in the Room. As yet he is ignorant that my Earldom lies in Ireland, and to keep him so, I have borrowed the only Book of Heraldry He had in his Shop: by this method I shall be served many degrees above my Place, and may have a Squeeze of his Hand in presence of an Earl of Great Britain.'*²⁴ While Lord Orrery is obviously a biased source, this does indicate that Leake took such things very seriously and probably possessed a book on heraldry. Leake therefore may have frowned on Wood using a coat of arms he was not entitled to, yet the first time Wood is known to have used those arms is on a land lease document which also features Leake's seal.

Whether or not the Woods were genuinely entitled to bear arms, the usage of the Wood arms seems to have spanned at least six generations, from John Wood the Elder's paternal grandfather (as indicated by the cadency) to his great-grandson, John Brock Wood, and they appear to have adhered to heraldic conventions for the most part. The crest used on John Wood the Younger's later bookplate is a curious anomaly. Presumably Darly worked from either a drawing of Wood's arms or a description of them, and it is entirely possible that a friend or relative commissioned the bookplate as a gift and made an error with the crest. Alternatively, the error may have been made by Darly himself. However, the near-identical obsolete crest Darly engraved on the arms of C.E. Wodehouse is interesting, as his family once used this crest. Since nothing is presently known of the ancestry of the Wood family beyond John Wood the Elder's father (thought to be George Wood), it is impossible to say if this crest relates to his ancestry. However, since John Wood the Younger's grandson reverted to the earlier crest, it is most likely that Darly, or whoever instructed him, made an error. No recorded Wood is known to have used the crest on John Wood the Younger's later bookplate in conjunction with the arms *Or on a mount vert an oak tree fructed*. The reversed crest on the paternal arms in 1770 appears to have been a simpler error.

Strong evidence linking the Woods to the Chapmans of Bath has recently been discovered by Penny Gay and David Crellin²⁵ and the canton fits perfectly with their findings. No link to the surname Loftus (or variants such as Lofthouse) has yet been found. Exactly what relationship the Woods had to these arms is presently unknown; however it is conceivable that a Loftus was an ancestor of either John Wood the Elder or his wife Jenny Withers, whose parentage is not presently known. Continuing research by the History of Bath Research Group is being undertaken to discover the purpose of the Loftus arms.

These findings provide further evidence to support Crellin and Gay's suggestion that the bookplate held in the Bath Record Office and the drawing instrument set did not belong to John Wood the Elder and most likely belonged to his son. In 1744, around the time the drawing instrument set was made, John Wood the Elder was using the impaled version of the arms. His son would have been 16 at the time and had already been working with his father for four years, since Wood notes his son's first day as his assistant in 1740 while surveying Stonehenge²⁶. Although it is possible that the arms may have been engraved at a later date, this seems unlikely - the base is engraved 'John Wood Architect' and there were only two Johns Wood who followed this profession. Neither of the John Brock Woods were architects. The Jacobean style bookplate with the quartered arms likely pre-dates the Chippendale style armorial engraving on the drawing instrument set.

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