

English Ceramics in National Trust Houses

Anthony du Boulay

I have been adviser on ceramics to the National Trust since 1981, but this is a very part-time job and now Patricia Fergusson has made immense strides in improving our knowledge of the history and attributions of the objects.

There are some 84 houses which have ceramic contents, most of which include something of interest to a wide range of collectors. Put altogether we would have a collection which would rival most international museums. Three houses have great 20th century collections of English ceramics, Fenton House, Clandon Park and Upton, while Saltram and Wallington have great 18th century collections.

I will first describe those English ceramics which are in the South-West. In Cornwall Cotehele, on the west bank of the Tagus north of Plymouth, has some very important 17th century English Delft ceramics. There are three bottles, one for "Sack" dated 1643, the others for "Sack" and for "Whit" dated 1646. These appear in a lithograph of c. 1840 by Nicholas Condry and could have been in the house since they were made, but also bought by the 3rd Earl of Mount Edgcombe who was a fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and could have acquired them together with the two great London Delft chargers, one dated 1670 with the arms of the Weaver's Company, the other dated 1673 with the initials I.M. and the unusual feature of a border imitating blue and white *Kraak porselein* in polychrome. Nearer the coast, Anthony House has some good English porcelain including Chelsea gold anchor vases.

However, just east of Plymouth, Saltram has one of the two best 18th century collections of European porcelain in the



Figure 1. A Derby white sauce boat c. 1752. Morley Collection, Saltram, © National Trust Photographic Library

National Trust. The English porcelain includes some great rarities, first amongst which is a beautiful white Derby sauceboat c. 1752 (Fig. 1) modelled as a shell sitting on a mound of small shells with a crayfish handle. This is quite different to the Sprimont examples but in my opinion finer and, on the assumption that John Mallet is correct in attributing a small group of very early Derby figures and groups to the sculptor Agostino Carlini (1728-1790) this could also be by him, c. 1752. Of about the same date is a white canary which John Mallet, backed by Arthur Lane and Robert Charleston, had as triangle period Chelsea in the early 1960s. It was reattributed by Bernard Watney to Derby in 1968, but since then it has gone back to London, but more likely 'Girl in the Swing' than Chelsea. There are other beautiful English ceramics at Saltram such as the two Chelsea red anchor period fishermen based on the models by Kaendler and Reinicke, but given new life by their modeller Joseph Willems. There is also a complete Worcester tea and coffee service painted *en camaïeu verte* with landscapes in the workshops of James Giles. In 1774 a



Figure 2. A Wedgwood basalt vase painted in the Chelsea studio with putti, Morley Collection, Saltram, © N.T.P.L.



Figure 3. A Worcester octagonal teapot with chinoiserie c. 1752, Mrs. Adam Smith Collection, Mompesson House, © N.T.P.L.

Mr. Parker bought a similar 43 piece service from Giles for 15 guineas. Parker was the family name of the Earls of Morley who lived at Saltram, but they did not receive their first title of Lord Boringdon until 1784. Naturally enough for a house near Plymouth, that factory is represented in the collection, in particular with a mug painted with birds in the style associated with "M. Soqui". Soqui was described by George Harrison as follows "whose ornamental style delineation on articles manufactured was extremely beautiful". This must be Michel Socquet who is first recorded as a painter at Vincennes in 1753, then at Sèvres 1756-64. He was then absent - probably at Plymouth - but returned to Sèvres in 1773.

As well as porcelain Saltram has some very fine early Wedgwood. This was fully discussed by John Mallet in *Country Life* in June 1966. Theresa Parker was an avid collector and wrote to her brother Lord Grantham "I have just been ornamenting a Glass case you have seen in my dressing room with China. The principal shelf with the only China that deserved to be called ornament, I mean the biscuit, and the other with figures of the same material, which confirms my opinion in favour of the French, the lower shelf being the unglazed Dresden dogs hunting stags and bears etc., not bad,

and the upper row Chinese models – very bad, but not bad of their kind, I think also I may place some of the Wedgwood (sic) best unglazed Black ware, for that may bear a comparison with the French". The Saltram accounts show payments to Wedgwood of 14 guineas on 27th March 1772 for black Staffordshire ware, but do not specify the pieces concerned (Fig. 2). Among the most interesting are basalt vases with enamelled decoration done in Wedgwood's Chelsea studio described at the time "4 little figures painted on black grounds copies of the Herculaneum boys which they now paint to perfection on that ware". There are also two basalt pot-pourri vases which show, according to research done by Jennifer Montagu in 1954, that the bowls are copied from a Hellenistic bronze lamp c. 400 BC, while the figures supporting them are from a silver-gilt crucifix by Antonio Gentile da Faenza given to St. Peter's Rome in 1582. There are also three Queens' ware engine-turned vases with gilt decoration which were made between 1764 and 1770 and agate ware examples.

Further west along the Devon coast "A La Ronde" has a pair of teabowls and saucers with the arms of Parminter. Jane, who built this eccentric house was the daughter of John



Figure 4. A Lambeth Delft charger dated 1660, Sackville Collection, Knole, © N.T.P.L.

Parminter, a Lisbon merchant. North of Exeter we find Killerton which houses the collection of English and Continental 18th century porcelain left to the National Trust by Mrs. Fullerton of Tenterden, Kent. Amongst these pieces is a Vauxhall sauceboat transfer-printed in colours with flowers similar to pl. 211c in Bernard Watney's paper read to the English Ceramic Circle on the 28th January 1989 (vol. 13 part 3). There are also figures, including some Bow birds, and among the Chelsea a scolopendrium leaf teabowl.

In the Close at Salisbury, Mompesson House has much of the collection of English 18th century porcelain formed by William Bessemer Wright between the two World Wars, and left to the Trust by his daughter, Mrs. Adam Smith. This fills two large cases, one in the Drawing Room, the other in the Dining Room. The Worcester has a beautiful early octagonal teapot with chinoiserie (Fig. 3) and a handsome jug of the Scratch Cross family.

The strength of the collection is in the figures and groups, mainly from the Bow and Derby factories, but there are also vegetable tureens from Worcester; Longton Hall and others. A Longton Hall vine leaf dish with a view of a typical late 17th century manor house by the Castle painter and a pair of rare



Figure 5. Pair of Bow figures of Henry Woodward and Kitty Clive, c. 1752, Lord Bearsted Collection, Upton, © N.T.P.L.

Plymouth recumbent lions are other pieces of note. As a reminder of the state of knowledge before the second World War, all the Derby figures, the Longton Hall cauliflower tureen and the Worcester cauliflower tureen were all listed as "Old Chelsea" in the Bessemer Wright catalogue.

Stourhead, near Mere, Wiltshire, has a collection of English porcelain including some good pieces of Chelsea as well as Worcester and Derby. Henry Hoare was also a client of Wedgwood and there are several pieces, including a canopic jar, which was recorded at the time on the chimney piece.

Kingston Lacey, near Wareham in Dorset, has virtually no English porcelain but one of the most important pieces of English Delft in the National Trust. The exterior of this blue and white punch bowl is painted with a hunting scene while the interior has the Bankes arms and the date 1707. Travelling along the South coast across Hampshire is Uppark on the Sussex border. It was devastated by fire in 1989, and the family's private collection of porcelain fell two floors into the basement. The rarest pieces, two white squirrels from the Chelsea triangle period (1745-49) may however be able to be re-constructed after innumerable hours of painstaking research and sorting of fragments. Other pieces not dam-



Figure 6. A Longton Hall bust of King George II as Prince of Wales c. 1758, Mrs. Elsie Bambridge Collection, Wimpole, © N.T.P.L.



Figure 7. A Chelsea figure of a Canon of Cologne. Mrs. Sheila Pettit Collection, Wallington, © N.T.P.L.

aged include a late 17th century London Delft pill slab with the arms of the Apothecaries Company, similar to one at another National Trust house, Townend. The family still own a large Chelsea red anchor period set of Hans Sloane plates, the National Trust having similar plates at Greys Court, near Henley.

Knole, at Sevenoaks, Kent has some important early English Delftware which includes a dish of metal form similar to others illustrated by Lipski & Archer in their monumental volume of *Dated English Delftware*. It is dated 1660 and has the initials of Nicholas Rapley and Alice Gaist who married on 29th August 1658 at St. Saviour's, Southwark (Fig. 4). A similar example in the Franks Collection at the British Museum is dated 1655 and bears the arms of the Worshipful Company of Pewterers. At that time John Campion was Master of that Company. One or two scholars have put forward the theory that they are of Faenza majolica decorated in London, but I would still stick to its original attribution. There is also a fasci-

nating Worcester dessert service painted with flowers on a scale blue ground mostly decorated at the factory, but the sauce tureens are Giles decorated.

Returning North-West to Upton near Banbury in Oxfordshire, the 2nd Lord Bearsted made one of the most important collections of Chelsea gold anchor period porcelain, as well as some Bow, Derby and other factories. The Chelsea includes a set of ten figures of Apollo and the Nine Muses. Only one other complete set is recorded, though the separate bases of the Bearsted set show three slightly different patterns. The florid design and heavy use of gilding are not quite the fashion today, but they are considered amongst Joseph Willems' masterpieces. There are also five pairs of groups illustrating fable scenes and a large case with figures of famous people, including a Bow figure of the Marquis of Granby, a Chelsea figure of John Coan, English dwarf, and a Derby figure of Field-Marshal Conway. There are only two red anchor period pieces, a group symbolising Marriage which



Figure 8. The original print from which Figure 7 was taken by Bonani c. 1755. Mrs. Sheila Pettit Collection, Wallington, © N.T.P.L.

appears to be unique, and the famous figure of La Nourrice. The Music Lesson is perhaps the grandest group in this series of gold anchor Chelsea wares, while the largest of all Chelsea figures "Una and the Lion" was transferred from the Victoria & Albert Museum about ten years ago, and could be the example mentioned by J. E. Nightingale on p. 82 of *Contributions towards the History of Early English Porcelain*, 1981. Also sent from the Victoria & Albert Museum at the same time is the famous Dudley set of seven vases with crimson grounds reputedly given by George III to Lady Cope as a wedding present in 1767. These and a number of the figures and groups are discussed by Elizabeth Adams in *Chelsea Porcelain* London 1987. There are also a pair of Bow figures of Henry Woodward (1717-1777) and Kitty Clive (1711-1785) (Fig. 5). She is modelled after a drawing by Worlidge engraved by Charles Moseley in 1750 and probably modelled in the same year. He is after a mezzotint by James McArdell after Francis Hayman. They represent the "Fine Lady" and



Figure 9. A Bristol figure of a milkmaid modelled by Pierre Stephan c. 1772, Lady Binning Collection, Fenton House, © N.T.P.L.

"Fine Gentleman" in Garrick's farce "Lethe". She was probably painted in the workshop of William Duesbury, the flowers on her skirt being typically of figures of Kitty Clive mentioned in his London account books of 1751-53. Worcester and Liverpool are only represented by a few pieces and there is a Nantgarw plate from the Mackintosh service, one of very few Welsh pieces in National Trust houses.

Wimpole, in Cambridgeshire just north of Royston, has a small but very select collection of porcelain made by Rudyard Kipling's daughter Mrs. Elsie Bambridge, foremost amongst which is one of only three versions known representing the bust of King George III as Prince of Wales (Fig. 6). It has been attributed to Chelsea modelled by Roubiliac, but Bernard Watney considered it more likely to be Longton Hall. Chelsea is however represented by the group of "Dutch Dancers" as described in the 1755 sale catalogue. It is a version by Joseph Willems of the famous Meissen group modelled by Eberlein in 1735, remodelled by Kaendler in 1743,



Figure 10. A pair of Bow figures of Dismal Hounds c. 1755, Lady Binning Collection, Fenton House, © N.T.P.L.

where it is described as Harlequin dancing the mazurka with a girl. Bow has the small comedy figures of Harlequin and Scapin of c. 1750 by the Muses modeller of the same series as those at Wallington, while Longton Hall has a group of a putto riding a horse after the bronze by Fenelli.

Hanbury, South of Birmingham in Worcestershire, has a collection of Worcester made by Lady Vernon, the wife of the last private owner of the house. It represents typical examples of the Dr. Wall period. R. S. Watney also left the National Trust his collection of late 18th century English figures mainly from the Derby factory, and there is also a small collection of early 19th century armorial pieces, mostly from Worcester.

Shugborough near Stafford has only a few pieces of English porcelain and pottery, and the most interesting is a saucetreen in Queens' ware with coloured views in Shugborough Park. This is a forerunner of the famous "Frog Service" of 952 pieces sent to the Empress Catharine's palace "La Grenouillère" at a cost of £2,600. The decoration was done in Wedgwood's Chelsea studio in Cheyne Row.

Another house with a few interesting pieces is Erddig near Wrexham, just inside Wales. There they have a pair of Chelsea plaice tureens, covers and stands which were probably the ones mis-described in the 1789 inventory as "2 stands and 2 carp sauce boats – 6 pieces in all". There is also an early white Bow figure of "Liberty" as well as other Chelsea and Derby.

Up near Hadrian's Wall, about 25 miles west of Newcastle,



Figure 11. A Chelsea figure of a Scotsman, known as Bonnie Prince Charlie, c. 1758, Lady Binning Collection, Fenton House, © N.T.P.L.

Wallington has the most distinguished collection made in the 18th century. While with a few exceptions it is no longer possible to identify the exact provenance, most of the collection came as part of the dowry of Maria Wilson on her marriage to Sir John Trevelyan in 1795. Her mother, wife of Sir Thomas Spencer Wilson of Charlton Park, Greenwich, was an avid collector frequenting auctions and dealers. Charlton was just across the Thames from Bow which is represented by a number of rare and early figures made between 1750 and 1752. The Harlequin is after the engraving after Elias Bäck of Giuseppe Ferdinand Muller in that part, while Pulcinella is after the lost picture by Watteau called "Le départ des comédiens Italiens". There is also an otherwise unrecorded group of the Fortune Teller after Boucher and a pair of figures of chaffinches. Among other English porcelain of merit are several gold anchor period pieces including a claret-ground vase as well as a Longton Hall leaf-moulded deep bowl and cover. Added to the collection are a series of figures of monks and nuns left to Wallington by Sheila Pettit, the former National Trust representative for the region which I discussed in *Country Life* in June 1986 (Figs. 7 & 8). From an earlier period when the house was owned by the Blackett family are a pair of English Delft chargers, probably from Liverpool, commemorating the 1741 election inscribed "let us drink success to Blackett and Fenwick".

I will finish with two houses which have important 20th



Figure 12. A Whieldon type teapot in the Kangxi style, c. 1760, Mrs. David Gubbay Collection, Clandon Park, © N.T.P.L.

century collections of porcelain. The first is Fenton House, Hampstead, London, which has a large collection of Chinese, German and English porcelain. On the ground floor is a room devoted to this, and the left hand cabinet has the English porcelain figures. There are important examples from Chelsea, Bow and Bristol, including the Pierre Stephan Seasons, based on the original instructions of February 17th 1772, as well as a milkmaid (Fig. 9) and companion. It is interesting to compare the modelling of these with others of the same date modelled by "Tebo" which show that the latter was a skilled "repairer" but not a great sculptor. There are two hares from Plymouth after the Meissen originals, which have a note that they were modelled by a Mrs. James. Bow is among others represented by a beautiful pair of "Dismal Hounds" (Fig. 10) while Chelsea has some grand gold anchor period figures and groups modelled by Willems, not Roubilliac as the incised R marks once led scholars to believe. Possibly unique is a Chelsea figure of "Bonnie Prince Charlie" dating to c. 1758 (Fig. 11). In the upstairs drawing room there are some fine examples of Dr. Wall Worcester, including a tall blue-ground vase with chinoiserie panels in the style once associated with Donaldson and a plate with a fable scene by Jefferyes Hamnett O'Neale.

On the way to our final house, Clandon Park near Guildford, it might be worth paying a visit to Polesden Lacey which has great pictures and Chinese porcelain, but very little

English. However, a pair of putti emblematic of autumn are Vauxhall rather than their traditional attribution to Plymouth. As far as I know they are the only Vauxhall figures in the National Trust.

Clandon Park does have the most important collection of porcelain in the National Trust, left by Mrs. David Gubbay of Little Trent Park. As well as English pottery and porcelain there are wonderful Chinese 18th century figures of birds, Meissen and other German figures and wares as well as Sèvres and even a documentary pair of Nove jardinières. The 18th century Staffordshire pottery is probably the best the Trust possesses particularly in Astbury and Whieldon types. I will pick out a very few with an Astbury type double-walled teapot in the Kangxi style (Fig. 12) and a cavalry man at one time called George II at Dettingen. The Whieldon type includes a boy on a buffalo also based on a Kangxi original, while among the saltglaze pieces is a plate transfer-printed with the fable of the Bull and the Frog under a green wash.

The English porcelain is led by a coloured Derby Planché period chinoiserie group, 1750-52 emblematic of Sight, according to recent research attributed to Agostino Carlini. This is one of the most beautiful porcelain models ever made. Chelsea is represented by a pair of gold anchor marked chinoiserie figures, but there are a number of Chelsea, Bow and Derby figures and groups. Among the Bow is a particularly fine pair of figures of hawks. There are also Chelsea, Bow and Derby dishes and tureens in the form of leaves, flowers and fruits. Of early 19th century origin are a series of plaques, mainly Derby, painted with fruit and flowers.

As I mentioned at the beginning, put all together the National Trust has a collection of ceramics which would rival most international museums. Some collections, which are on view but still belong to the families of the donors, such as Anthony House in South east Cornwall, have not been mentioned. Others, like Waddesdon which has a world-class collection of Sèvres, have few pieces of English ceramics and therefore have also been left out. Many of these 84 houses will have a few pieces, and I apologise if in this short article I have omitted the favourite example of one of my readers.