

WEDGWOOD & BENTLEY – A UNIQUE ALLIANCE.

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THE WEDGWOOD AND BENTLEY PARTNERSHIP CAN rightly be regarded as one of the most important in ceramic history. Josiah Wedgwood (*fig.1*), wrote in February 1768, 'It is an old adage, that a Man is either a Fool, or a Physician at fifty, & considering the opportunitys I have with the Brindleys² & Bentleys of the Age if I am not a very wise mortal before that Age I must be a blockhead in grain'.

Thomas Bentley's (*fig.2*) feelings towards Wedgwood were somewhat similar, he wrote, 'I have not any Friend here by whose side I have been accustomed to engage & conquer, & who has the same energy that you constantly possess, when there is occasion for it, either to promote the public good, assist your Friends, or support your own rights. I fancy I can do anything with your help; & I have been so much used to it, that when you are not with me upon these Occasions I seem to have lost my right Arm'³ (December 18th 1778). This comment goes some way to explain the esteem in which Thomas Bentley came to regard his friend, associate and later partner Josiah Wedgwood.

The intimate friendship which was established between the two men was not difficult to understand. Josiah saw in Bentley the superior learning, sophistication and refined taste so much in contrast to his own lack of education and humble beginning. The attraction of Bentley for Wedgwood is most probably admiration for a man of ideas, inventiveness and action. Apart from their common interest, Bentley was a more scholarly, reserved man; whilst Josiah had an exuberant personality, charm, honesty, humour and courage.

It was however, Bentley whose restraining good sense and love of the classics that was to guide and mould the successful trading activities of the company, especially in London. Bentley also provided information on the changing styles and fashions that kept their wares in the forefront of popularity but it was Josiah's fierce driving ambition and energy that actually produced the constant stream of new inventions and refinements within the ceramic industry. Josiah's vision and Bentley's perceptiveness together with their friendship and mutual respect is one of the most interesting aspects of this unique 18th century partnership.

The now legendary meeting between Josiah

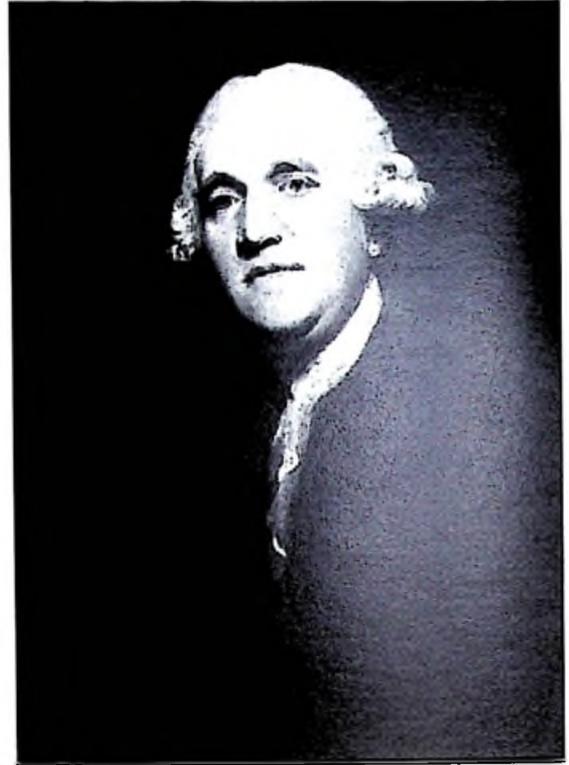


Figure 1. Portrait of Josiah Wedgwood, (1730-95), oil on canvas, by Sir Joshua Reynolds, 1782. Height 75 cm (29½ in), width 63cm (24¾ in).

Wedgwood and Thomas Bentley has been well documented. It occurred due to an accident which befell Josiah whilst riding to Liverpool during 1762, probably to visit the firm of ceramic printers, Sadler & Green, and completing other business activities. Dr. Matthew Turner attended the patient at the Golden Lion, Dale Street and suggested that to improve his lot he would introduce a fellow dissenter and friend Thomas Bentley.

From that time onward, Bentley called on Josiah daily and they discussed a wide range of subjects. Before leaving Liverpool to return to the Brickhouse Works, Josiah appointed Bentley as his sole agent in Liverpool. Within a week of arriving back in Staffordshire, Wedgwood put quill pen to paper on the 15th May 1762, and started the almost daily

correspondence which spans the next 18 years with: 'My much esteemed Friend. If you will give me leave to call you so, & will not think the address too free, I shall not care how Quakerish, or otherwise antique it may sound, as it perfectly corresponds with the sentiments I have, & wish to continue towards you'.⁴

During the late 1760's Bentley built up a solid and



Figure 2. Portrait of Thomas Bentley (1730-80), oil on canvas, attributed to Joseph Wright of Derby, 1775. Height: 89.7cm (35¼ in), Width 70.5cm (27¾ in).

expanding trade in Wedgwood's products. On the 26th June 1766, Wedgwood commented: 'I am extremely happy in the thoughts of haveing our connections increase... & as you are to be a Pot merchant. you may rest assured that in every thing I can make or purchase you shall be enabled to serve your friends to the utmost of their wishes, so take orders for anything this country produces'.⁵

In 1764 possibly due to the ever-expanding business, Bentley took into partnership Samuel Boardman. Boardman was a man of sound judgement and integrity. He was methodical and paid great attention to detail which is clearly illustrated in the enormous range of surviving manuscript orders from Bentley and Boardman at the Manchester Stocking Warehouse, King Street, Liverpool. An

'inventory of Ware' taken on 1st January 1774 indicates the entire stock appears to be useful cream coloured earthenware (fig.3), ranging through every form of tableware through to hand basins, chamber pots and closet pans. The total stock was valued at £115.15s.2d. including the empty crates and hampers for transporting the objects.

Liverpool as a port rapidly increased in size and importance partially due to the French War and particularly through the increased trade with America and Africa. The Liverpool showrooms, though extensive, did not always meet with Josiah's approval. In 1776, during a visit he commented: 'I found Mr. Boardmans new Room very poorly assorted, & the few things in it miserably put together...I shall furnish him with a better assortment for the next season'.⁷

The Liverpool trade proved to be entirely different in character to that of the capital, where London was captivated by vase madness Boardman was complaining: 'The ornamental ware is such as would not sell with us - we have kept a few sets for sale - articles moderate in size and value and not too high may sell here - others will not - therefore you should suit the market, with useful and ornamentals'.⁸ (April 21st 1775).

From the outset Josiah looked to Bentley to use his commercial and entrepreneurial skills in the marketing of his ceramic wares. The great partnership between Wedgwood and Bentley was to be confined to the production of ornamental pieces and probably would not have been considered without the manufacture of useful wares being under the guidance and control of 'Useful Thomas' (Fl.1759-1788; Josiah's cousin), who enjoyed a '1/8th share of the proffits'.⁹ Josiah outlined the concept for the ornamental works in a letter to Bentley dated 8th November 1766. It is evident that he was not looking to Bentley to provide a large investment towards the project as he states, 'the money objection is obviated to my hand',¹⁰ but he intended and hoped to persuade him to become a partner. Wedgwood's principal aim and intention was for a great new vase work which would 'Astonish the world at once'.¹¹

The proposed agreement dated November 15th 1767, is written from Warrington in Bentley's hand; 'Basis of the agreement between W. & B'.¹² The partnership was to continue for the space of 14 years. When the new Etruria manufactory designed by Joseph Pickford of Derby was almost ready for production, Josiah wrote to Bentley on 6th November 1768, 'The Partnership book should be opened on Monday 14th inst as some hands will bring there at that time'.¹³

The operational partnership must be considered

therefore to date from Bentley's arrival in Staffordshire the following week with the books being officially opened on the 14th November 1768.

The finalised partnership deed eventually followed 68 days after the official opening on 13th June 1769 of the Etruria Works (fig. 4) being signed on the 10th August 1769. Having settled initially in Burslem, Staffordshire it soon became clear that Bentley would be of far greater value to the firm in London to take charge of the showrooms and the newly acquired decorating studios in Chelsea. The arrangement caused Josiah to comment: 'That in the distribution of our employments (Wedgwood & Bentley's) between us the manufacturing has fall'n to my lot, & the sales to yours;' (20th September 1779).

Earlier in 1767, Josiah had written that he needed a showroom for vases, although they were still in a 'rude state'¹⁵ they were selling well enough. He told Bentley, 'I long to be engaged in that doubtfull employmt (vase making) which I have every day fuller assurance of making as profitable to the purse, as it must be pleasant to the mind'.¹⁶ Josiah was acquiring designs and patterns from every conceivable source including every newly published volume, such as the engravings by Comte de Caylus, d'Hancarville, James 'Athenian' Stuart, Montfaucon, Jacques de Stella, Stefano della Bella, Edme Bouchardon, Fisher von Erlach, Sir William Chambers and many others. His wife Sarah wrote to Bentley, 'my good man is upon the ramble continually and I am almost affraid he will lay out the price of his estate in Vases he makes nothing of giving 5 or 6 guineas for but you will see them soon and judge for your self, if we do lay out half the money in ribband or lace there is such an uproar as you never heard'.¹⁷

The influx of these new forms enabled Wedgwood to boast in August 1772 that he had 'upwards of 100 Good forms of Vases, for all of which we have the moulds, handles & ornaments'.¹⁸

There was some question as to how Wedgwood & Bentley vases should be described and Sir William Chambers (1726-96), the celebrated architect, was consulted and requested to arbitrate on the question.

His opinion was that there was a marked difference between Urns and Vases, 'The Character of Urns is simplicity, to have covers, but no handles, nor spouts, they are Monumental, they may be either

Figure 3. Part set in cream coloured earthenware (Queen's Ware), moulded shell edge with rose finial. Transfer printed with 'Liverpool Birds' by Sadler and Green. Unmarked. Height of coffeepot 22cm (8 7/8 in).



high or low, but shod not seem to be Vessels for culinary, or Sacred uses – Vases as such as might be used for libations, & other sacrificial, festive & culinary uses, such as Ewers, open vessels etc.'¹⁹ (February 1769). Advice which Wedgwood and Bentley followed as in their draft business card of 1769, they were careful to separate the two categories.

At the end of August 1768 three different types of vases were in production; plain creamware, in declining quantities; variegated wares (fig.5) and in the newly developed Black Basalt body. Bentley in London required adequate descriptions of the many types of variegated patterns being produced at Etruria and early in 1770 Josiah made an attempt to define some of the decorative effects: 'Pebble Vases – Suppose we call those barely sprinkled with blue & ornaments Gilt – Granite when Vein'd with black, Vein'd Granite- with Gold Lapis Lazuli-With colours & vein'd – Variegated Pebble – those with colours & Vein'd without any blue sprinkleing. Egyptian Pebble'.²⁰ However, Josiah continued to use a great many different names for the variations of decoration on his vases, but does not identify them further in the extensive surviving correspondence.

It was vases, in all their remarkable variety of shapes, colour and decoration that was to provide the foundation of his reputation as a fashionable potter. They were far more sophisticated and elegant than anything that had been produced in earthenware previously.

Variations in the colour and design of the vases and plinths caused considerable aggravation to the London Showrooms, especially when matching pairs for customers. Eventually Josiah agreed that, 'The Vases shall be made in pairs, & the plinths too, cannot those you speak of be taken off & others which are pairs supply their places pray let me know wt plinths I shall send you'.³¹ From 1771 all the plinths fixing the vases and feet were fitted at Etruria using brass screws and nuts (3rd April 1771).

Most of the early variegated vases were gilded on the ornaments, handles and finials, however by 1772 the fashion was changing and Bentley passed to Etruria severe criticism of the applied gold. Wedgwood responded, 'We are much oblig'd to our good, & very polite friend Sr Wm H. (Hamilton) for his repeated favours. I hope we shall be able to make good use of his hints respecting the Pebble Vases, by greatly reducing, if not totally banishing this offensive Gilding. For this purpose I have for some time past been mustering up my different colour'd bodys, & been contriving the shapes of the Vases, & their



Figure 4. Engraving depicting Wedgwood and Bentley's Etruria manufactory, opened on 13th June 1769.

handles for Pebbling'³² (11th April 1772).

Even by today's standards the orders received from London were enormous with vase forms being ordered by their hundreds, however, a piteous letter arrived at Etruria stating that in the capital, 'not a Vase scarcely of any sort to sell, Blue Pebble, & Marbled all gone',³³ and that 'Vases...Vases was all the cry'.³⁴

Within the Wedgwood & Bentley partnership a

serious financial problem began to arise by the end of 1769. It was caused by the expansion of their activities and the major construction work at Etruria. Within two months rumours were circulating that Wedgwood was 'brock, & ran away for no less a sum than ten Thousand Pounds!'³⁵ (2nd January 1770). He wrote to reassure Bentley that he was less concerned about the money than he was for 'a good name' which, 'when lost is scarcely redeemable'.³⁶ His debts amounted in reality to nearly £4,000 partially due to the enormous stock of pieces held in London, Staffordshire and Liverpool. The problem did cause the partners to seriously consider advertising ornamental ware for the first time, 'All trifling objections vanish before real necessity'.³⁷ This minor hiccup also prompted the starting in August 1772, of a 'Price Book of Workmanship',³⁸ the earliest surviving attempt at detailed costing of the manufacture of ornamental ware in the ceramic industry.

In the 1774 Wedgwood & Bentley Ornamental Ware catalogue, 'Fine White Terracotta' appears in a list of ceramic bodies available for the first time. By 1779 the phrasing had been replaced by 'White waxen Biscuit Ware or Terra Cotta' and 'White Porcelain Biscuit with a smooth wax-like surface', by 1787.

The re-discovery of this important group of 18th century pieces is due partially to the identification of Wedgwood's other ceramic experiments which were running simultaneously, for pearlware, porcelaneous stoneware and Jasper. By Josiah's own definition the Terracotta body was a highly vitrified, or porcelaneous, unglazed stoneware, though its actual composition remained fairly close to the traditional Queen's Ware body with additional flint and Derbyshire chert.

Terracotta could be decorated with enamel colours and gilded. It is evident that Wedgwood had discussed the new body with Bentley and by the 19th June 1770 he wrote, 'I shall go about the white bisket immediately'.³⁹ Within 12 months Terracotta was in full production with plaques and cameos the most prolifically produced pieces.

In the Christie and Ansell catalogue of the Wedgwood & Bentley stock sold in December 1781, after the death of Thomas Bentley, the Terracotta body is separately identified. Of the 1,200 pieces of Terracotta left, no less than 108 were myrtle-pans, bouquetiere or other types of flower pots (fig.6), arranged in set of three, five or seven. Bentley was not always over-familiar with some of the new shapes causing Wedgwood to write, 'Your punch bowl is a Winter flowerpot, not to be fill'd with water, & branches of flowers, but with sand, & bulbous roots'.³⁹ (31st December 1767).

Undoubtedly, one of the most important ceramic materials refined and developed during the

Wedgwood & Bentley partnership was Black Basalt (fig. 7). It was described by Josiah in 1773 as, 'A fine Black Porcelaine, having nearly the same properties as the Basaltes (referring to the natural black igneous rock), resisting the Attacks of Acids; being a Touchstone to Copper, Silver and Gold, and equal in Hardness to Agate'.³¹ Black ware had been produced in England since the Iron Age but the refined stoneware of Wedgwood was a perfect foil for the increased interest and revival in the classical style. In 1777, Josiah records the recipe in his Common Place Book as being, '80 parts of ball clay, 80 parts of Carr, calcined and ground and 9 parts of Manganese',³² adding 'the above is one blending'.

The first trials for the Basalt body were under way in the early months of 1767 and in a fairly advanced stage of production by September. He wrote to Bentley, 'I am still going on wth my tryals, & want much to shew you some of them, but I can neither send them in a letter, nor say so much about them to you as I could like, for letters are liable to Accidents'.³³ Wedgwood was continually worried about espionage, a considerable problem in the 18th century Industrial Revolution. Although he is not specific in that letter, the reference must be to Basalt which was on the market less than 12 months later.

On the 30th August 1768, Josiah informed Bentley that he had dispatched 12 crates of ware from Burslem including a 'basket containing 2 Etruscan bronze Vases'³⁴ which he asked to be delivered to a Miss Tarleton, with his best compliments and 'beg her acceptance of them as an offering of first fruits'.³⁵ The new black body was named on an invoice sent to London on 3rd September³⁶ as Etruscan, after the misapprehension that the ancient pottery excavated in Italy was made by the Etruscans. On the 14th September Wedgwood wrote to William Cox, (his London showroom clerk), 'Don't forget to call all the dark colour'd, Etruscan Vases', he added 'I shall send my good Patroness Miss Chetwynd her Etruscan T.pots this weekend'.³⁷ This note is the first reference to useful wares being manufactured in Basalt. The surface of the Basalt had a lustrous sheen which Josiah was quick to explain, 'the polish is natural to the Composition & is given in burning, they are never oil'd'.³⁸ Some months later Wedgwood was sending to the city, vases, 'not so high polish'd as usual', which, 'some good judges at Etruria thought them an improvement'.³⁹

In November 1769 Josiah took out a patent for the bronzing process at the same time as his encaustic decoration, which he had perfected. The red figures were directly painted on to the black surface and the shading and details completed after the paint had dried, the piece was then fired again. The majority

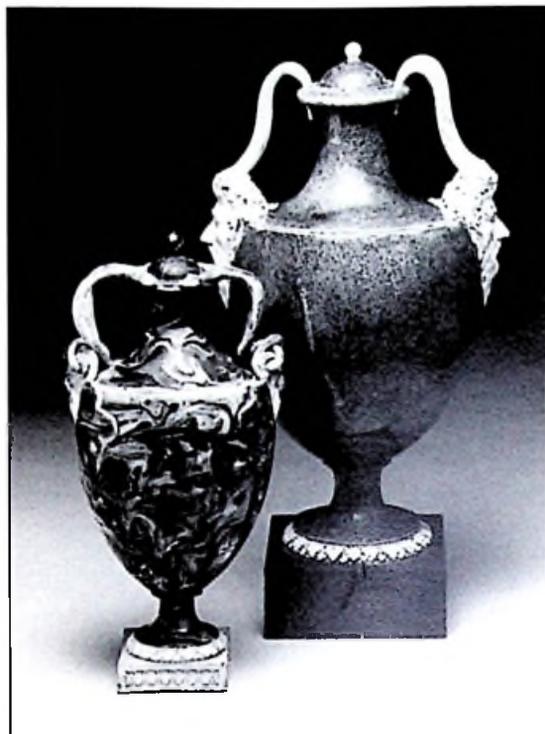


Figure 5. Left hand side: Vase with surface agate decoration, cream coloured twisted snake handles terminating in satyr.marks with traces of contemporary gilding. Mark: 'Wedgwood.& Bentley' impressed. Date c.1775. Height 30.5cm (12in).

Right-hand side: Vase with porphyry glaze. 'Shape Number One' in the contemporary records. Mark: 'WEDGWOOD & BENTLEY; ETRURIA' impressed in a circle on an applied pad of clay. Date 1770-75. Height 40.6cm (16in).

of the red-figure decoration was based on the illustrations in the seven volume publication by Comte de Caylus 'Recueil d'Antiquités egyptiennes, etrusques, grecques, romaines et gauloises; 1752-67, or the catalogue of Sir William Hamilton's collection in four volumes compiled Pierre d'Hancarville, published in 1766-67.

In the introduction to class XIX of the 1779 Catalogue Wedgwood explains the development of his encaustic Paintings, he wrote that the colours had been produced, 'not only sufficient completely to imitate the Paintings upon the Etruscan Vases; but to do much more; to give to the Beauty of Design, the Advantages of Light and Shade in various Colours; and to render Paintings durable without the Defect of a varnished or glassy Surface'. He modestly adds, 'An Object earnestly desired by Persons of critical Taste in all Ages, and in modern Times, without Success'. His intention was to commence with vases from 15cm (6in) to 51cm (20in) and then produce

architectural plaques.

Although Basalt tea wares were manufactured from a stoneware and almost impervious to liquids it sometimes would stain, consequently the insides of teapots, punch pots and rum kettles were glazed. In August 1772 Bentley reported complaints from customers of teapots breaking in use causing Wedgwood to comment, 'All Teapots, or other pots, with a body of a Porcelain Texture & Glazed on the inside only will be very liable to break with hot water...I believe we had therefore better not



Figure 6. Garden Pots: White terracotta stoneware under a Pearlware glaze.

Left: decorated with raised bands and sponged decoration.. Mark: 'WEDGWOOD' impressed. Date about 1780. Height 18cm (7 in).

Centre: decorated with green hoops. Mark: 'WEDGWOOD'. impressed. Date c.1780.

Height 16.5cm (6½ in) Diameter 20.4cm (8 in).

Right: covered with a red-brown slip, engine turned. No Mark. Date c.1772. Height 12.7cm (5 in).

Glaze them'.⁴⁰

The problems were overcome sufficiently for the black teaware to find favour with the ladies of fashion – Josiah commented in December 1772, 'I hope white hands will continue in fashion & then we may continue to make 'black Teapots'.⁴¹

Black Basalt objects, such as vases, had a tendency to warp in the intense heat of the kiln causing Josiah to, as he called it, 'tinkering' with the imperfect examples. In February 1769 he wrote, 'I have settled a plan & method with Mr. Coward to Tinker all the black Vases that are crooked, we knock off the feet & fix wood ones, black'd, to them, those with tops, or snakes wntg., are to be supply'd in the same way'.⁴² Much of the repair work was completed by John Coward, a wood carver in London. Wedgwood felt that these pieces would serve when a customer wanted a cheaper vase as they were to be sold at reduced prices. The method also helped to satisfy the ever-increasing demand and cut-down on

the kiln losses simultaneously. He wrote with satisfaction that he had 'patched up some, & bronzed others of the invalids, & sold them, & serves the old creamcolour, & Gilt ones in the same way, by which means they are gradually diminishing, & we have doctored, I wont say Tinkered, near £100 worth of what we deem'd reprobates here, & by the next weeks end I believe we shall not have a single waster left'⁴³ (23rd March 1769).

By the Spring of 1771 the problems of warped vases had been eradicated with the introduction of a new firing method by which means Wedgwood was certain they could perfect vases with straight, slender feet. The answer was to make them separately and subsequently fix the vase, foot and plinth with a brass nut and bolt.

The popularity of portrait busts in 18th century England characterised not only the neo-classical taste but also an appreciation of history and the antique, every facet was portrayed from classical Gods, illustrious moderns, poets, architects, writers, actors, statesmen and military heroes, according to your personal choice. Although a bill from the plaster maker Hoskins & Oliver survives, dated May 1770, for supplying moulds of Horace and Cicero there is not evidence of Wedgwood producing busts prior to February 1771 when he wrote to Bentley, 'I wrote to you in my last concerning Busts. I suppose those at the Academy are less hackneyd & better in General than the Plaister shops can furnish us with; besides it will sound better to say – This is from the Academy, taken from an Original in the Gallery of &c &c, than to say, we had it from Flaxman'.⁴⁴

Virtually no progress on the production of busts was made for a further 3 years, an unusually long period for the development of an idea during the Wedgwood & Bentley partnership, but by 1774 their enthusiasm for busts saw them into production and they are included in the second edition of the 1774 catalogue. Despite the successful library busts, Black Basalt figures were never really a significant or commercially successful aspect of the Wedgwood & Bentley period.

Caneware (*fig.8*) was first catalogued in 1787, as the fifth of Wedgwood's ceramic bodies. Although it is generally accepted that the ware was a refinement of the material already familiar in North Staffordshire and a development rather than innovation, no precise date for the introduction of this body can be given.

Trial pieces were being made by August 1771

when Josiah wrote to Bentley, 'We have succeeded pretty well in the Fawn colour articles'.⁴⁵ When some were sent to London, Bentley's approbation was given causing Wedgwood to comment, 'am very happy to know the Fawn colour'd articles are agreeable to your wishes, - I believe they will sell, for all who have seen them here have, fall'n in love with them'.⁴⁶ He continues by adding that he had sold at least one teapot already. No further reference to Cane colour occurs at all until August 1772 when flower pots were offered.

A further four years elapsed before references to Bamboo teapots occur in November 1776, 'I am glad the Bamboo T.pots are likely to sell. They may be afforded at the prices charg'd very well. I thought the light color'd ones too yellow, & am preparing to make them equally pale color'd, but not of such a yellow calf T—d tint'.⁴⁷ The Cane teapots were subject to considerable staining from tea causing Wedgwood to comment that he would endeavour to make the body more compact. The majority of cane ware was produced and achieved its popularity after the end of the Wedgwood and Bentley partnership in 1780.

Wedgwood's Jasper, the triumphant outcome of more than 5,000 recorded experiments, was his most important contribution to the ceramic world during his partnership with Bentley. The qualities which made it especially suited to the neo-classical ornament and appealed to the cultivated taste of the 18th century, achieved for Jasper a wide spread popularity and considerable commercial success. Wedgwood's series of experiments to make a new body was probably prompted by Bentley's constant request from 1772 for a 'Finer body for Gems'.

By the end of the year Josiah had made little or no progress in isolating the materials needed for this new body and it was not for another 18 months that he totally understood the different ingredient, and yet another six months before he was able to send samples to Bentley. Nevertheless, the bulk of experimentation was completed within two years between December 1772 and December 1774.

At the beginning of 1775 Josiah declared himself 'Absolute' in the white and blue Jasper bodies, and 'likewise a beautiful Sea Green, and several other colors, for grounds to Cameo's, Intaglios &c'.⁴⁸ and he was confident in being able to make bas-reliefs, 'from the Herculeum size (38 x 30cm - 15 x 12in) to the least Marriage of Cupid &c, to the smallest Gem for Rings'.⁴⁹ This claim proved to be over-optimistic as the colours still bled from one to another. For a further two years Josiah struggled with the intractable materials which seemed to have a will of their own. Throughout July and August 1775 he was complaining bitterly that the results

were, 'By no means alike'.⁵⁰ He continues, 'I have had too much experience of the delicacy, & unaccountable uncertainty of these fine bodies to be very sanguine in my expectations'.⁵¹ Nearly a year later in June 1776 Wedgwood wrote in frustration, 'This Jasper is certainly the most delicately whimsical of any substance I ever engaged with, & as such unavoidable losses attend it, we must endeavour to make the living pay for the dead'.⁵²

During the early months of 1776 Josiah commenced making white Jasper in two definite shades, 'bluish white' and 'ivory yellowish white' as he calls them, and by March he sent the first speci-



Figure 7. Black Basalt Vases: *Left-hand side*: Shape number 81 in the 'First Shape Book'. Mark: 'Wedgwood & Bentley' impressed. Date c.1775. Height 35.5cm (14in).

Right-hand side: Pair of vase-candlesticks, Shape number 125 in the 'First Shape Book'. The bas-relief subjects enclosed in the medallions depict 'Apollo and Marsyas' and 'Bacchanalian subject with satyr'. Mark: a circular pad with, 'WEDGWOOD & BENTLEY- ETRURIA' impressed. Date.1769-80. Height overall 26.8cm (10½in).

mens of yellow Jasper to London, with black following in September 1776. The experiments continued with the deep or dark blue being added in April and lilac in December 1777.

The choice of colours was dependent on the mineral oxides available to the partners but they bore a very close relationship to the colours of Robert Adam, the celebrated architect's new scheme of interior decor and by the end of 1777 Wedgwood and Bentley were happy to offer, 'a dead blue of any shade, or green-yellow-lalock &c. to the color of the rooms'.⁵³

Josiah consulted Bentley on everything whether business or personal and it was often Bentley who decided on the timing of introducing new products, such as Jasper, into the market place. It was Bentley

who regularly waited on the King, George III and Queen Charlotte, who sought the patronage of Ambassadors and cultivated the custom of London society visiting their showroom. Bentley was also responsible for the introduction of many of the artists to the firm such as John Flaxman whose designs so perfectly fitted the new Jasper body. The trust between the two partners was total, the confidence each had in the other was complete. In many ways it was a partnership of equals although Josiah frequently and freely acknowledged his debt to Bentley's superior education.

The sudden death of Bentley on 26th November 1780 in his fiftieth year came as a great shock to Wedgwood, to whom the loss must have been grievous – he was irreplaceable in his eyes. His death created an immediate business problem as his share of the partnership was bequeathed to his wife. It became necessary to organise a complete stock-take for all the ornamental wares made before the 26th November so that the sales could be correctly apportioned. The solution proved to be an auction of the result of their partnership held by Christie & Ansell in their Great Rooms, over 11 days and consisted of 1,200 lots. The surviving catalogue gives an indication of the range of their wares which was truly remarkable.

In ceramic history no partnership seems to have had such an impact. Their combined skills of marketing and manufacture rightly gave their



Figure 8. Pale Caneware Tankard with moulded 'Bamboo' foot and handle. The body ornamented with 'Bringing Home the Game' and decorated with opaque white glaze and blue enamel. Mark: 'Wedgwood' impressed. Date c.1780-85. Height 25.4cm (10in).

company an International reputation in the 18th century. It is perhaps significant to note that after the death of Bentley, no further major ceramic inventions were completed, it was almost as though the driving force had been removed. It is a truism that

the partners through their endeavours, had played a major part in converting a rude and inconsiderable manufactory into an elegant art and important part of national commerce and successfully united art with industry.

NOTES

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34. 30th August 1768; E25 – 18208
35. 30th August 1768; E25 – 18208
36. Invoice to William Cox; 3-395
37. 14th September 1768; L96-17668
38. 31st August 1768; L96-17667
39. 12th June 1769; L96-17672
40. 31st August 1772; E25 – 18395
41. 26th December 1772; E25 – 18430
42. 23rd February 1769; E25 – 18231
43. 23rd March 1769; E25 – 18236
44. 16th February 1771; Leith Hill Place Papers
45. 27th August 1771; Leith Hill Place Papers
46. 9th September 1771; Leith Hill Place Papers
47. 9th November 1776; E25 – 18714
48. 1st January 1775; E25 – 18578
49. 1st January 1775; E25 – 18578
50. 23rd July 1775; E25 – 18612
51. 6th August 1775; E25 – 18614
52. 6th June 1776 E25 – 18673
53. 17th December 1777; E25 – 18803.