

ROYAL WORCESTER PORCELAIN

1900 - 2000

In the early 20th century, Sheraton and Hepplewhite furniture enjoyed a revival in England and Georgian style interiors became fashionable. Royal Worcester produced new versions of many old Worcester designs in Georgian style. The Chairman of Royal Worcester, Charles Dyson Perrins (1864 - 1958) collected 18th century Worcester Porcelain and probably encouraged the use of Georgian forms of shape and decoration. The favourite patterns of the early 20th century were coloured flower borders, Willow pattern, and Blue Dragon.

Rich items are created by many hands, from designer and modeller to mould maker, caster and gilder, but today often only the painter is given the credit. Around 1900 Royal Worcester allowed the painters to sign their work for the first time. (The signature usually appears on the edge of the painting, not on the bottom of a piece) The artists were encouraged to specialise and develop individual styles, they all collected cuttings, photographs and postcards, which they often worked from. The most well known painters were

Charles Baldwyn (working 1874 - 1909) Swans in flight & birds

Henry Chair (working 1872 -1911) thistles, poppies, orchids & festoons of roses

Harry Davis (working 1898-1970) fish, sheep, landscapes, architecture

George Evans (working 1914-1955) Corot style landscapes

William Hawkins (working 1874 - 1928) portraits, interiors & still life

George Johnson (working 1875-1914) game birds, flying swans & farmyard scenes

Ernest Phillips (working 1890-1932) neat flower groups & still life

William Powell (working 1900-1950) small British birds

Frank Roberts (working 1872-1920) flowers & fruit

Frank R. Rushton (working 1900-1953) landscapes, cottages & gardens

Edwin Salter (working 1876-1902) landscapes & fish

Richard Sebright (working 1882-1946) Fruit

Harry Stinton (working 1896-1963) Highland Cattle

James Stinton (working 1902-1951) Games Birds

John Stinton Jnr. (working 1902-1938) Landscapes, castles, cattle & Highland Cattle

Royal Worcester absorbed the Grainger workforce in 1902 and Hadley's employees in 1906 and understandably there was often not enough work to go round. Painters had to do alternative jobs when there were no orders for their specialist subject. As a result, many artists painted watercolours and oil paintings that they sold locally to supplement their income.

The Royal Worcester company, steeped in tradition, realised it must face the future. Life styles changed dramatically during and after the First World War and a new generation wanted modern tableware for entertaining. Under Art Director, John Wadsworth, several new styles were tried with varying degrees of success. Boxed coffee sets, bowls for floating flower heads and lampshades in geometric designs were chic new ideas. Printed linear tableware patterns, enamelled by hand were also developed. China patterns had always been given numbers by the factory, but for the first time in the mid 1920's china tableware designs were given names such as Marjorie, Lady Evelyn and Duchess.

Some of the most extravagant china was made for export. Richly gilded patterns such as Imperial designed by Harry Davis (1885 - 1970) in 1911 and Embassy designed by John Wadsworth in 1916 were especially popular in the USA. Tiffany of New York sold rich service plates that were embellished with hand gilded acid etched patterns. Prouds Ltd and the Flavelle Brothers of Sydney commissioned the Australian artist Ellis Rowan to paint a series of exotic flowers to be copied onto Royal Worcester tea services, by artists such as Walter Sedgley, Albert Shuck, Edward Phillips, and the Austin brothers. The Foreman painter, William Hawkins (1858-1930) also painted some remarkable portraits of Aborigines from the Australian market.



With high unemployment in Europe, the General strike of 1926 and the Wall Street crash of 1929, there was still little demand for luxury china on either side of the Atlantic. Royal Worcester narrowly escaped closure and was rescued by Charles Dyson Perrins who bought the company outright in the early 1930's.

All forms of earthenware and glazed Parian were discontinued in 1931 and in the same year under the guidance of Managing Director Joseph Gimson C.B.E.

(1896-1985), Royal Worcester launched a new range of bone china figures at the Beaux Arts Gallery in London. Only the models of children by Freda Doughty (c.1898 - 1972) were popular at first, the designs of the other freelance modellers failed to sell.

In 1933 an American publisher encouraged Royal Worcester to make Limited Edition bird models. Dorothy Doughty (1892 - 1962) designed birds for the American market working from the studio in Cornwall, which she shared with her sister, Freda. She had never worked in clay before, but was determined to make the birds as life-like as possible. Special mat colours were developed and new skills in mould making, casting and propping were needed to make such complex models in bone china. Dorothy made two visits to America to study the birds in their natural habitat, making sketch models to spontaneously capture their character. 36 pairs and 3 individual models were designed between 1933 and 1960. Towards the end of her life Dorothy also designed a series of 21 English birds and a set of 12 collectors' plates, which were modelled in relief.

During the Second World War, one third of the Worcester factory was turned over to the Ministry of Aircraft and from 1941 insulators were made for radio and radar equipment. A high fired, heat and shock resistant porcelain had been developed at Government request in 1914 for use in hospitals and laboratories and production continued throughout the Second World War. This hard porcelain was also used to make 'Fireproof' cookware from the 1930's onwards including gold and silver lustre wares which were introduced after the war.

In 1948 Royal Worcester opened a showroom at 30 Curzon Street, Mayfair and many successful series of small decorative figures were introduced, including British Birds by Eva Soper (1901 - 1990), Oriental Figures by Agnes Pinder Davis and Animal Studies by Doris Lindner (1896 - 1979) In 1947 Miss Lindner modelled her first limited edition, a study of Princess Elizabeth on Tommy, Trooping the colour. In the 1960's she designed an extensive series of limited edition champion horses and bulls. A half life-size bronze of Red Rum on Cheltenham racecourse is probably her best-known work.

In the 1960's Managing Director Joseph Gimson, revolutionised design at Royal Worcester by the appointment of Robert Baker (1909-1992), Professor of Ceramics at the Royal College of Art. Under his direction, shapes and patterns were co-ordinated to produce modern ranges as well as traditional style designs. Full colour floral patterns were popular until around 1980 when plainer coloured borders became more fashionable, with the introduction of Nouvelle Cuisine. The current resident team of shape and pattern designers use computer-aided design alongside traditional skills.

In 1962 Royal Worcester's most popular porcelain pattern, Evesham, was designed by Professor Baker and two of his pupils from the Royal College of Art, Ronald van Ruyckvelt (b.1928) and Peter Ewence.

The success of Dorothy Doughty and Doris Lindners designs encouraged Royal Worcester to launch further series of both limited and unlimited models from the 1960's including, Birds by James Alder, Military Commanders by Bernard Winskill, Sporting Fish, Game Birds, Tropical flowers and Queens by Ronald van Ruyckevelt, who with his wife, Ruth, also worked on series of Victorian Ladies and Nurses.

Figurine production continued into the 1980's with a series of elegantly gowned ladies by Donald Brindley, and Dogs and Impressionist figures by Ken Potts.

In the mid 80's the independent designer David Fryer produced a number of models combining bone china and bronze for Royal Worcester including birds, woodland animals, flower fairies and roses. He also designed the Golden Eagle, the largest model ever made by Royal Worcester with a wingspan of 40 inches.

Over the past 250 years, traditional skills have been maintained and developed at Royal Worcester retaining the ability to manufacture bone china of the highest quality. Individual customers still order one-off bespoke dinner and tea services and ornamental items. 20th century customers include, H.M. Queen Elizabeth II, King Farouk, The King of Siam, Queen Wilhelmina, Ranjitsinji, and The Bayan Palace, Kuwait. Royal Worcester also continues to produce porcelain and bone china for hotels and institutions such as Claridges, The Dorchester, The Savoy, The Ritz, Raffles (Singapore), The Ford Motor Company, The Houses of Parliament, The B.B.C, Aspreys, Garrards and Tiffany's (New York).

Royal Worcester also continues to produce Painted Fruit, which has evolved over the last 120 years. The style, with a mossy background and locally grown soft fruit was firmly established by the 1920's. Worcester fruit is entirely hand painted and every piece is different.

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