

Dorothy Doughty

1892 – 1962



Dorothy Doughty was born in San Remo, Italy in 1892. Her father was the explorer and poet, Charles Doughty. Dorothy studied at Eastbourne School of Art and became a keen naturalist and ornithologist. In 1933 the American publisher, Alex Dickens, encouraged Royal Worcester to make large, bone china models of birds to sell in limited numbers. Dorothy Doughty designed a series of birds for the American market working from the studio in Cornwall, which she shared with her sister, Freda. Dorothy had never worked in clay before, but was determined to make the birds as life-like as possible.

She wrote, “My work with the birds has been a joyful thing. In this tortured world one of the happiest ways of spending a life is to work closely with nature. Although the miraculous perfection of birds and flowers, and indeed all wild things, is beyond the power of man to portray in any medium, he or she who strives towards it, learns to see even more deeply, to glimpse something of the Infinite, and to feel a privileged and very humble person.”

In the 1930's, china models of this complexity had never been made before. Technical innovations and new skills were developed in mould-making, casting, propping and decorating to reproduce the birds. Special mat colours were developed to give the birds a life-like appearance. Flower making was supervised by Antonio Vassalo and after 1938, by Mary Leigh. Bob Bradley was in charge of casting and fitting up the first standard models, which were painted by George Evans and Harry Davis. On her visits to the Worcester factory to keep an eye on the production of her models, Dorothy made a deep impression on the staff. She was very firm about what she wanted and highly critical of anything she didn't like, but she always insisted that the birds were the result of a team effort. Dorothy was ultimately dependent on the many anonymous craftsmen and women who translated her models into permanent ceramic form and she never tired of paying tribute to their skill and patience.

During the War years production of the Doughty Birds continued (alongside resistors and spark plugs), as it was vital for Britain to earn dollars through the sale of luxury goods to the American market. After the war Dorothy and her sister moved to Falmouth to a cliff-top house with a garden studio, whose walls were lined with birdcages.

Dorothy made two visits to America, in 1953 and 1956, to study birds in their natural habitat, making sketch models in paper, wire and twigs, to spontaneously capture their character. In 1957 the Queen presented a pair of Parula



Warblers to President Eisenhower and Dorothy was greatly honoured at this Royal seal of approval.

Thirty-six pairs and three individual models of American Birds were designed between 1933 and 1960. A full account of the production of the birds is given in the book by George Savage, *The American Birds of Dorothy Doughty*, which was published by Royal Worcester as a limited edition of 1500 copies in 1962.

Towards the end of her life Dorothy also designed a series of twenty-one British birds, which were not put into production until after her death in 1962, and a set of twelve collector's plates that were modelled in relief.

1. **American Birds** Each of the American Birds was sold with a polished wooden plinth and a numbered certificate. All were made in full colour, unless otherwise stated.

| Shape number | Date designed | Name | Date issued | Edition | Size (inches) |
|--------------|---------------|---|-------------|---------|---------------|
| 3112 & 3113 | 1935 | Redstarts on gorse (pair) | 1935 | 66 | 7.75 |
| 3134 & 3135 | 1936 | Goldfinch & thistle (pair) | 1936 | 250 | 6.5 |
| 3136 & 3137 | 1936 | Bluebirds & apple blossom (pair) | 1936 | 350 | 9.5 |
| 3190 & 3191 | 1937 | Virginian Cardinal & orange blossom (pair) | 1937 | 500 | 11.5 |
| 3223 | 1937 | Indigo Bunting on plum twig (single) | 1936 | 6 | 9.5 |
| 3268 & 3269 | 1938 | Baltimore Orioles & tulip tree (250 white pairs & 250 coloured pairs) | 1938 | 500 | 9.5 |
| 3241 | 1938 | Chickadees & larch (pair) | 1938 | 325 | 9.5 |
| 3328 & 3329 | 1940 | Crab Apple sprays & butterfly (pair) | 1940 | 250 | 10.00 |
| 3326 & 3327 | 1940 | Mocking Birds & peach blossom (pair) | 1940 | 500 | 10.5 |
| 3323 & 3324 | 1940 | Bob White Quail (pair) | 1940 | 22 | 6.00 |
| 3357 & 3358 | 1941 | Apple Blossom sprays (pair) | 1941 | 250 | 6.5 |
| 3368 | 1942 | Indigo Bunting & blackberry (pair) | 1941 | 500 | 8.5 |
| 3378 & 3379 | 1942 | Orange Blossom sprays (pair) | 1947 | 175 | 7.25 |
| 3438 & 3439 | 1949 | Humming Birds & fuchsia (pair) | 1950 | 500 | 9.25 |
| 3431 & 3432 | 1947 | Mexican Feijoa & ladybirds (pair) | 1950 | 125 | 10.75 |
| 3429 & | 1947 | Magnolia Warbler & magnolia | 1950 | 150 | 14.75 |

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|-------------|------|---|------|-----|-------|
| 3430 | | | | | |
| 3467 & 3468 | 1950 | Golden Crowned Kinglets (pair) | 1952 | 500 | 7.75 |
| 3469 & 3470 | 1950 | Red-eyed Vireo & swamp azalea (pair) | 1952 | 500 | 7.75 |
| 3464 & 3465 | 1950 | Yellow-headed Blackbird & spiderwort (pair) | 1952 | 350 | 11.00 |
| 3506 & 3507 | 1953 | Blue-grey Gnatcatcher & dogweed (pair) | 1955 | 500 | 11.5 |
| 3508 & 3509 | 1954 | Myrtle Warblers & weeping cherry (pair) | 1955 | 500 | 11.5 |
| 3512 & 3513 | 1954 | Bewick Wren & yellow jasmine | 1956 | 500 | 10.0 |
| 3525 & 3526 | 1954 | Scarlet Tanagers & white oak | 1956 | 500 | 11.0 |
| 3532 & 3533 | 1954 | Oven Bird, crested iris & ladies slipper (pair) | 1957 | 250 | 11.0 |
| 3536 & 3537 | 1954 | Parula Warblers & sweet bay (pair) | 1957 | 500 | 9.0 |
| 3539 & 3540 | 1955 | Yellow-throats & water hyacinth (pair) | 1958 | 350 | 11.0 |
| 3548 & 3549 | 1955 | Phoebes & flame vine (pair) | 1958 | 500 | 9.75 |
| 3617 | 1957 | Elf owl & saguaro (single) | 1958 | 500 | 11.0 |
| 3618 & 3619 | 1957 | Cactus Wrens & prickly pear (pair) | 1959 | 500 | 10.5 |
| 3639 & 3640 | 1958 | Canyon Wrens & wild lupin (pair) | 1961 | 500 | 8.0 |
| | | Hooded Warbler & Cherokee rose (pair) | 1961 | 500 | 10.5 |
| 3627 | 1957 | Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (single - 75 white & 250 coloured) | 1962 | 325 | 24.0 |
| 3657 & 3658 | 1958 | Vermillion Flycatcher & pussy willow (pair) | 1962 | 500 | 9.25 |
| 3669 & 3670 | 1959 | Audubon Warbler & Palo Verde (pair) | 1963 | 500 | 7.5 |
| 3686 | 1959 | Lark Sparrow & Red Gila flower (single) | 1966 | 500 | 4.5 |
| 3665 & 3666 | 1958 | Mountain Bluebird & Spleenwort Niger (pair) | 1964 | 500 | 9.0 |
| 3659 & 3660 | 1958 | Cerulean Warbler & Red Maple (pair) | 1965 | 500 | 8.5 |
| 3592 & 3593 | 1958 | Lazuli Bunting & Choke Cherry (white & coloured pairs) | 1962 | 500 | 10.0 |
| 3632 | 1957 | Extinct Carolina Paroquets (single – 75 white & 250 coloured) | 1968 | 325 | 15.0 |

2. British Birds

| Shape Number | Date modelled | Name | Date issued | Edition | Size (Inches) |
|--------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|-------------|---------|---------------|
| 3690 | 1959 | Grey Wagtail & celandine (cock) | 1968 | 500 | 6.5 |
| 3692 | 1959 | Redstarts & gorse (cock) | 1968 | 500 | 11.25 |
| 3693 | 1959 | Redstarts & gorse (hen) | 1968 | 500 | 7.75 |
| 3694 | 1959 | Lesser Whitethroat & wild rose (cock) | 1966 | 500 | 10.25 |
| 3695 | 1959 | Lesser Whitethroat & wild rose (hen) | 1966 | 500 | 10.5 |
| 3696 | 1961 | Wren & Burnet rose (cock) | 1966 | 500 | 5.75 |
| 3701 | 1960 | Nightingale on honeysuckle | 1971 | 500 | 10.25 |
| 3703 | 1960 | Goldcrests on larch (cock) | 1973 | 500 | 10.25 |
| 3704 | 1960 | Goldcrests on larch (hen) | 1973 | 500 | 10.5 |
| 3707 | 1961 | Robin in the autumn woods | 1966 | 500 | 7.25 |
| 3708 | 1961 | Blue Tits & pussy willow (cock) | 1966 | 500 | 7.75 |
| 3709 | 1961 | Blue Tits & pussy willow (hen) | 1966 | 500 | 6.75 |
| 3713 | 1961 | Meadow Pipit & silverweed | 1975 | 500 | 6.00 |
| 3723 | 1961 | Chiff Chaff on hogweed | 1966 | 500 | 17.75 |
| 3726 | 1961 | Moorhen Chick & water lily | 1970 | 500 | 3.75 |
| 3727 | 1961 | Wren & Burnet rose (hen) | 1966 | 500 | 7.25 |
| 3734 | 1966 | Kingfisher & autumn beech | 1966 | 500 | 12.25 |

3. The Birds of Dorothy Doughty Dessert Plates

Dorothy Doughty designed this series of plates illustrating her American Birds in 1959, and her original hand painted plates were exhibited at the Royal Worcester showroom in Curzon Street, Mayfair in 1961.

One bas-relief dessert plate was issued each year from 1972 with production limited to that year only. The subjects illustrated were;

- 1972 Redstarts & beech
- 1973 Myrtle Warbler & cherry
- 1974 Blue-grey Gnatcatchers
- 1975 Blackburnian Warbler & Western Hemlock
- 1976 Blue-winged Sivas & bamboo
- 1977 Paradise Wydah
- 1978 Blue Tits & witch hazel
- 1979 Mountain Bluebird & pine
- 1980 Cerulean Warblers & beech
- 1981 Willow Warbler & cranes bill
- 1982 Ruby-crowned Kinglets & aubutilon
- 1983 Bewick's Wren & yellow jasmine



In the mid 1980's a set of 8 relief plates based on Dorothy Doughty's British Birds series were marketed through the mail order company, Compton & Woodhouse. The first four plates were made as a limited edition of 7,000 and included Chaffinches on May Blossom, Goldcrests on Larch, Kingfisher and Autumn Beech and Cock Robin in the Autumn Woods. The second set of four were never made.

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