

CHARLES WILLIAM DYSON PERRINS (1864 - 1958)



Charles William Dyson Perrins was born on May 25th 1864. He was educated at Charterhouse and Queens College Oxford. After 4 years serving in the Highland Light Infantry (1888 - 1892) and following the death of his father, Dyson Perrins entered the family business.

The family wealth had derived from a string of chemist's shops and the growing sale of Worcestershire Sauce. (Charles's grandfather William Perrins in partnership with John Wheeley Lea had developed the secret recipe for the now famous sauce in the 1830's.) He lived in Malvern with his wife, Catherine Gregory whom he married in 1889 and travelled daily to the sauce factory in Worcester. He was a most astute and successful businessman, becoming Mayor of Worcester in 1897 and High Sheriff of Worcestershire in 1899. By this date he had also begun to acquire the illuminated manuscripts and early printed books that were ultimately to form one of the most valuable and extensive private collections in Britain.

Following in his father's footsteps Dyson Perrins became a Director of Royal Worcester in 1891. He had a passion for porcelain and was a great expert and collector. Between the 1890's and 1940's he formed an extensive and unique collection of 18th century Worcester Porcelain, reflecting both his historical knowledge and his personal taste. The financial position of Royal Worcester was not stable at the turn of the century, he loaned the company £20,000 and as Chairman from 1901 Dyson Perrins was to guide the firm through many difficult years.

In 1923 Dyson Perrins married his second wife Frieda Milne and they travelled the world together, constantly on the lookout for manuscripts and Worcester Porcelain. They lived at his family home Davenham in Malvern, where a special train siding was built to take the family and staff by private train up to his Scottish estate and home, Ardoss castle.

During the 1920's the porcelain factory was struggling and Perrins made up the wages of workers from his own pocket when there were few orders coming in. It was essential for the future that highly skilled workers remained at the factory. He also recognised the importance of the company museum collection and in 1927 he purchased the entire collection for £15,000, well above its actual value, agreeing that it should remain at the works for the remainder of his life. However the financial situation at Worcester continued to worsen, in 1929 the receivers were called in, and after a few uncertain years, in 1934 Dyson Perrins bought the company outright.

In 1946 C.W.Dyson Perrins established the Perrins Trust to unite the Factory museum collection and his own private collection. The two collections were first displayed to the public in the company's old showroom, opened by Princess Elizabeth in 1951. Dyson Perrins continued as Governing Director of Royal Worcester until 1953 and in 1954 when the company became a public company he remained as honorary president.

Dyson Perrins was brought up in a generation where charity was considered one of the responsibilities of the better off, however he was no indiscriminate giver. Careful investigation had to convince him that a cause fully deserved support, but when convinced, he gave very generously. The

Malvern Hospital, Malvern Library, Dyson Perrins High School, Malvern, Winchester Cathedral, Magdalen College Oxford and The Royal Grammar School, Worcester, were all given help with projects in his lifetime. Following Dyson Perrins death in 1958, many institutions benefited from generous bequests including The British Library, The Victoria & Albert Museum and The National Gallery.

To ensure the Worcester Porcelain collections had a permanent home, Dyson Perrins' widow Frieda generously helped to purchase and convert the former St.Peters School that was opened to the public in 1967.

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**The Worcester Porcelain Museum
Severn Street, Worcester WR1 2NE
Registered Charity No.223753
Telephone +44 (0)1905 746000
E-mail: museum@royal-worcester.co.uk**