

The Origins of the Worcester Porcelain Museum



The Worcester Porcelain Museum is one of the world's leading specialist museums and is situated adjacent to the former Royal Worcester factory site in Severn Street, Worcester.

During the 1860s and 70s **Richard William Binns** F.S.A. (1819 – 1900), Managing Director, Art Director and first company historian started to buy examples of early Worcester and other works of Art to inspire his workforce. He was particularly fascinated with the Arts of the Far East and following the example of the Sevres museum in France, amassed a large collection of Japanese, Chinese and Korean ceramics and Japanese bronzes. He also built on the former Chamberlain factory design library, by acquiring a large number of books on sculpture, architecture, costume, calligraphy, botany, and the decorative arts.

The first Royal Worcester factory museum was opened to the public in November 1879 and as Mr. Binns saw it, the museum was to be:



“ At once a source of emulation and a means of advancement, for it is possible for the craftsman to examine on the one hand what has already been done at Worcester, with the inevitable result that their pride in the establishment shall be fostered and developed, so they may upon the other study and criticise the achievements of their competitors, equipping themselves for further progress and preparing for the still keener struggle through which they must inevitably pass.”

The collection was exhibited in a large room in the heart of the factory and included samples from many of the bespoke Services produced during the early 19th century and Victorian exhibition pieces produced under the direction of R.W.Binns. A catalogue of the museum collection was written and published by Binns in 1884. Unfortunately the collections of bronzes and porcelain from other countries (over 10,000 objects) were sold by Royal Worcester soon after the death of R.W.Binns in 1900.

Charles William Dyson Perrins (1864-1958) was a highly respected local benefactor. He followed in his father's footsteps and became a Director of Royal Worcester in 1891. (C.W.Dyson Perrins' family wealth was derived from his grandfather's partnership with John Wheeley Lea and the discovery of the secret recipe for Lea & Perrins Worcestershire sauce) During the early years of the 20th century he formed one of the most important private collections of 18th century Worcester Porcelain. In 1926 as a way of providing funds for the then struggling Porcelain Company, Dyson Perrins purchased the museum collection and library on the understanding that it would remain on display at the factory for his lifetime. In the 1934 he purchased the Royal Worcester factory, formed a new company and became its chairman. During the Second World War the museum collections were packed and hidden in cellars in Worcester and at Madresfield Court, Malvern.



In 1946 Dyson Perrins created the Perrins Museum Trust to administer and unite his own private collection of Worcester porcelain with the former factory museum collection.

The combined collections of Worcester Porcelain were re-displayed in the former company showrooms and were exhibited to the general public in June 1951. The new museum was opened by HRH Princess Elizabeth when she visited the factory as part of Royal Worcester's Bicentenary celebrations.

To ensure the museum had a permanent home, C.W.Dyson Perrins widow, Frieda, provided the capital to re-house the collections in the St.Peters School buildings next to the factory in 1967.

In 1995 an exceptional collection of porcelain decorated by James Giles was bequeathed to the museum by Gerald Coke that acted as a catalyst for the refurbishment of the museum. Over the next four years the museum was totally re-furbished and the display space doubled, thanks to a grant from the National Lottery and the generosity of many Charitable Trusts, Companies and individuals.



The Museum has changed its name from The Dyson Perrins Museum to The Worcester Porcelain Museum in order to make the collection more accessible through travel directories and the Internet.

The museum is a Registered Charity administered by a board of Trustees who are all volunteers. Its collection and public services are maintained by entrance charges, donations and bequests.

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The Worcester Porcelain Museum

Severn Street, Worcester WR1 2ND

Telephone +44 (0)1905 21247

e-mail: info.admin@Worcesterporcelainmuseum.org

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