

# INFORMATION SHEET

## Plymouth Porcelain: Key pieces in the Museum Collection



Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery holds some rare and unique items of Plymouth Porcelain. The following gives a little more information about some of these key pieces, all of which are on display in the Atrium Gallery.

### Butter Dish

#### **2007; Atrium Gallery Case 2**

This butter dish was purchased at auction in 2007 with the help of the V&A/MLA Purchase Grant Fund. The yellow is very unusual and differs greatly to the majority of other products from the factory.

Few other pieces are known in the same yellow ground and it does not appear to be a colour that the factory favoured and produced a lot of. Perhaps this dish was part of an experimental batch?



The yellow glaze is good at covering up any abnormalities in the porcelain body such as smoke staining that other pieces suffered at the factory. Yellow glazes were popular at other factories such as Worcester; perhaps Plymouth was trying to compete to show that they could produce wares which were just as fashionable?

### Sphinxes

#### **1976.70.2; Atrium Gallery Case 2**

Sir George and Lady Radford donated a substantial collection of Plymouth Porcelain to the Museum in 1976. Lady Radford was an avid porcelain collector who contributed articles about the subject. Part of the donation included a pair of large sphinxes, one of which is on display in the Museum's Atrium Gallery. Lady Radford had always displayed them on her fireplace.

The sphinxes are unusual products from the factory because of their size. They were some of the largest single items to be produced. The cracking and tearing of the porcelain visible on the sphinxes indicate the troubles that the factory were still having during firings. They are actually very similar to those produced in basalt by Wedgwood in the same period. It has been suggested that Cookworthy used the same moulds or recast moulds of the Wedgwood pieces, showing the ambitions of the factory to produce fashionable items.



## Pair of Pheasants

**1982.I.72/1+2;**

### **Atrium Gallery Case 2**

The abundance of 'exotic' birds on decoration produced at the Plymouth factory has more often than not been put down to the hand of the painter – thought to have come from the Sèvres factory – Mons Soqui.

Models of pheasants like this pair were normally produced in white – to display the quality of the white porcelain body. These two have certainly been painted in such a way as to demonstrate the painter's skill and colour palette; the combination of colours used here are very vibrant and carefully applied.



## Putto and Dolphin

**1953.109; Atrium Gallery Case 2**

This centrepiece is very unusual and, due to the encrusted shells on the base similar to the sweetmeat dishes, has been attributed to the factory worker, Tebo.

The piece has a very thick, glassy glaze with very few impurities, indicating that it was probably produced in the latter stages of the factory when the porcelain paste and firing techniques were more advanced.

This would have been a very desirable centrepiece for any perspective buyer and certainly puts a question mark over those that have asserted the factory moved to Bristol because it was losing money through failing to make saleable items in Plymouth.



## Chocolate Pot

### ZC431; Atrium Gallery Case 2

This is the only Plymouth chocolate pot to be held at the Museum, reflecting the relative scarcity of this particular item of Plymouth Porcelain.

Drinking chocolate was a real luxury – only for the very wealthy. Accompanying pots and cups were therefore status symbols.

To produce these rare items in porcelain showed the aspirations that Cookworthy had for his factory. He wanted it to furnish the tables of the upper classes.

The naturalistic, neo-Classical decoration would have also been following a very fashionable trend.



## Sauceboat

### 1916.138; Atrium Gallery Case 1

This sauceboat is actually quite typical in shape to many others produced at the factory, moulded in the rococo style. It is decorated in polychrome enamels with exotic birds. What is remarkable about this sauceboat however, is the inscription on the bottom. It reads 'Mr Wm: Cookworthy's Factory Plymouth: 1770. It is one of only very few pieces of Plymouth which is dated in this way. It is thought to have commemorated the last firing at the factory – before it closed in 1770 and moved to Bristol.

