

Autumn 2014



Recent visits to Harewood House and Versailles

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

I am delighted to report on another full programme of events which have been largely masterminded by Patricia Ferguson with the very active support of an industrious and cheerful Committee. Since our last newsletter we visited the Victoria and Albert Museum for a tour of the exhibition *Deception: Ceramics and Imitation*, curated by our newsletter editor and committee member Catrin Jones. I am sure you all join me in congratulating Catrin on her appointment as Curator of Decorative Arts at the Holburne Museum, Bath.

Other activities included a visit to Longford Castle and Mompesson House, Salisbury. In America, Letitia Roberts organised a visit to the stores of the Metropolitan Museum with Jeffrey Munger and in Australia Peter Burton has organised visits to the National Gallery of Victoria and a private collection.

We joined forces with the the Amici di Doccia to celebrate their publication of their study of Doccia porcelain in the Victoria and Albert Museum. The event was most generously hosted by Bonham's in their recently refurbished premises. John Mallet introduced us to the history of the collection and this was followed by lectures from Livia Frescobaldi Malenchini, Vice President of the Amici di Doccia, and Oliva Rucellai, curator of Museo Richard-

Ginori della Manifattura di Doccia. Sadly John Winter was not able to join us. Next morning we decamped to the V&A for a handling session directed by a distinguished team from the Amici di Doccia.

Our main foreign trip this year was a long awaited tour planned by our President Dame Rosalind who, with the help of John O'Connell, took us on glorious and privileged ramble to some enchanting houses and fine collections. We were thrilled to have been able to offer five bursaries to help with the costs of this trip, the most we have so far managed.

We had two other trips, one in England to Harewood House to visit the splendid exhibition *In Pursuit of the Exquisite, Royal Sèvres: From Versailles to Harewood* curated by Dame Rosalind Savill and Anna Dewsnap, and then to Chatsworth where we were granted access to some of their rarely seen ceramic treasures through the good offices of our old friend Hannah Obee. Then to France and Versailles where Vincent Bastien and Marie-Laure de Rochebrune led us through their glorious exhibition, *La Chine à Versailles: art et diplomatie au XVIIIe siècle*. Bertrand Rondot then guided us through the newly re-installed Apartments des Mesdames with which he has been so closely involved.

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COMMITTEE MEMBERS OF THE FRENCH PORCELAIN SOCIETY 2013

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Founder	Lady Davson, <i>U.K.</i>



At Harewood House; La Chine at Versailles exhibition



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT *Continued from page one*

A particular highlight was our Study Day on the 17th June, 'Sèvres and China' held at Art Antiques London, with eight speakers including an important paper from David Peters re-examining the system of date letters at Vincennes and Sèvres which we are sending out to the membership with this Newsletter. Among the many other distinguished contributions, Tamara Préaud spoke twice, giving the traditional pre-dinner talk on the 'Surtout de Table: Sèvres biscuit porcelain and table decorations in the 18th and 19th century'. This was preceded by the annual 'Sir Geoffrey de Bellaigue Lecture' delivered by Joanna Gwilt on 'The Belvedere Collection of Vincennes and early Sèvres Porcelain'. The planning of the Study Day was spearheaded by Patricia Ferguson, Sue Newell and Sophie von der Goltz with Dame Rosalind, as ever, coming to the rescue and solving some intractable problems with panache and the generous support of an anonymous donor to whom we would like to express our gratitude.

Many of us benefited from the generosity of The Royal Collections for the hugely appreciated gift to members of what is undoubtedly the most beautiful work produced

on any ceramic subject, Sir Geoffrey de Bellaigue's catalogue of 'French Porcelain in The Collection of Her Majesty The Queen'. Once again I would like to thank Suzanne Harrison and Sotheby's for the generous donation of \$1,000 and for the support that we have received from Bonham's. We have awarded a bursary to Marlen Topp to further her research into her PhD on 20th-century Sèvres porcelain.

Plans are in hand for a Symposium to be held in 2015 which we have provisionally titled 'Céramiques sans Frontières', in which transfers of ceramic art and technology across the borders of Europe will be considered. Please bear with us for the publication the Journal V with the papers delivered at the Symposium for Dame Rosalind, it has been subject to delays but promises to be the largest yet.

All these activities have been made possible by the dedication of the committee. I would particularly like to thank Georgie McPherson, Susan Newell and Anne Leeper for the huge amount of work and tireless commitment that has tied together the necessary strands that actually make it all work. Susan is leaving the committee to pursue further studies but we hope she can be persuaded to return in due course.

Errol Manners, August 2014

IAN LOWE MEMORIAL: ASHMOLEAN APPEAL

Help the Ashmolean purchase a fantastic Sèvres tray painted by Dodin in his honour

Ian Lowe, who died in 2012, was Assistant Keeper in the Ashmolean from 1962 to 1987. Among his special interests was French eighteenth-century porcelain and he was elected the first Chairman of the French Porcelain Society in 1984. He was also a key figure in the establishment of the now-flourishing Friends of the Ashmolean.

Ian was instrumental in developing the small but interesting holdings of French porcelain in the Ashmolean, which were the subject of Aileen Dawson's *Ashmolean Handbook* (1996); his acquisitions included three pieces from the celebrated Sèvres service made for Marie Antoinette. However, the collection has only grown stutteringly since his retirement.

The Ashmolean wishes to have a permanent memorial of Ian's many and varied contributions to the Museum. Seeking something that Ian would have loved and himself wanted to add to the Ashmolean collection, we have selected an exquisite Sèvres tray of 1772 painted by Dodin after Boucher. Dodin, the greatest of all Sèvres painters, has hitherto not been represented in the Ashmolean and this beautiful object both complements and extends the collection. The price, after a generous reduction by the vendor, is £14,500.

The Museum hopes that friends and admirers of Ian will wish to subscribe to make this purchase in his memory possible.



Contributions, which can be Gift Aided, should be sent to: Matthew Winterbottom, Department of Western Art, The Ashmolean Museum, Oxford OX1 2PH or matthew.winterbottom@ashmus.ox.ac.uk

Cheques should be made out to The Ashmolean Museum and, in the case of Gift Aid, should be accompanied by the following declaration:

I pay income tax in the United Kingdom and wish the University of Oxford to reclaim tax on the donation I now make and any donations I may make hereafter.

Name:

Address:

Date:

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Tour of the New Decorative Arts Galleries at the Musée du Louvre, Paris

Friday 12th September 2014, 9.15-10.30am

Tour, introduction by Michèle Bimbenet-Privat, Conservateur en chef au département des Objets d'art, Musée du Louvre, followed a discussion of the display of French faïence, etc., by Camille Leprince.

Saturday 13th September 2014 9.15-10.30am

Tour, introduction to the galleries, followed a discussion of the display of porcelain, etc., by Guillaume Séret.

We will meet at the Musée du Louvre, which opens at 9.00 am, at the base of the escalator leading to the Sully Wing at 9.15am and members should purchase their own entrance tickets for the Permanent Collections (12 Euros).

See also:

The 7ième Parcours de la ceramique et des arts du feu (9-14 September, 11-7pm)

www.parcoursdelaceramique.com

27th Biennale des Antiquaires, Grand Palais (11-21 September 11-8pm)

www.sna-france.com/2014-edition-N=Biennale-L=EN.aspx

Visit to Bedfordshire

Tuesday October 14th 2014, 10:00-4:00

Visit to The Higgins (formerly the Cecil Higgins Art Gallery & Bedford Museum), lunch at a historic property on the River Great Ouse, followed by a visit to Wrest Park, English Heritage, home of the de Grey family along with the Baroque garden pavilions built by Thomas Archer for the Duke of Kent in 1711. Cost to be confirmed.

For details please contact Patricia Ferguson (patricia.ferguson@earthlink.net, 07708099114).

FRENCH PORCELAIN SOCIETY IN NORTH AMERICA

Leticia Roberts, Secretary-Treasurer and Liaison in North America takes us through some recent FPS activities



Figure 1: Ewer, Metropolitan Museum of Art
Acc. no. 17.190.1915, Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917

With the FPS membership in North America spread over such a vast territory from Toronto and Montreal in Canada, to Seattle, San Francisco and Los Angeles on the Pacific Coast; a sprinkling in Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, Alabama and Texas in the South; a small representation in the vast Midwest from Ohio to Wisconsin and Missouri; and the majority in the urban areas along the East Coast from Boston to Washington, DC, it is difficult to plan any activities in which a large number of members have any hope of being able to participate. But with the plurality of members living in, or within striking distance of, New York City, our events (rare as they are, which is largely due to my deficit of time as the wearer-by-default of the Program-Planner Chapeau) tend to occur in or near New York at times when other major arts and antiques events in the city would be an additional attraction.

Over the past few years there has been a dearth of FPS activities in North America, and with my antiquated radar, no doubt opportunities have been, and will continue to be, missed. But in 2014 we began to close the gap with two events that were worth waiting for. The first was the seizure of a long-standing invitation from our always generous member, Jeffrey Munger, the Curator of Ceramics in the Department of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, to visit the Met's storage area. Since the first mention of this invitation several years ago, the Met has tightened its storage-visitation policy, so to maximize the number of members the event could accommodate to 24, Jeffrey chose to conduct two "hands-on" sessions in a newly-created conference room in his department.

On the afternoon and early evening of Friday, January 31st (the museum is open till 9 PM on Friday and Saturday nights), the twelve members in each session were delivered to the new conference room, where the trio of Jeffrey, Elizabeth Sullivan (his Research Assistant and an FPS member herself) and Denny Stone (their Collections Manager) had selected and arranged on a large table a fascinating array of French porcelain. The range was broad and inclusive, from a little milk jug with the mark of Antoine Pavie, to some of the grandest Sèvres. We all were stunned momentarily by the sight of some of the Met's best-known objects available for our delectation and gentle touch. No glass barriers and no holds barred!

By the time we had breathlessly perused the panorama of porcelain, which included several of the greatest rarities among the Met's extensive ceramics collection, I had completely forgotten that I had brought along my camera to immortalize the excitement of the group at work and play. So although regrettably the photographs accompanying this report don't record the mesmerized faces at the event, they do show some of the highlights among the pieces chosen for the two "hands-on" sessions, and are 'borrowed' from the Met's website.



Figure 2: Pair of figures, Metropolitan Museum of Art
Acc. Nos. 54.147.10 & 11, Gift of R. Thornton Wilson, in memory of Florence Ellsworth Wilson, 1954

For both sessions, Jeffrey Munger presented each piece in its historical context, weaving an entrancing history of French porcelain production while encouraging questions en route. He began with the little blue and white milk jug (figure 1), circa 1710-20, with the mark of Antoine Pavie (illustrated in Bertrand Rondot, *Discovering the Secrets of Soft-Paste Porcelain at The Saint-Cloud Manufactory ca. 1690-1766*, The Bard Graduate Center for the Studies in the Decorative Arts, New York, 1999, p. 92, fig. 7-10). It certainly was the rarest of the pieces we were privileged to handle, and silently begged the question of why it lives invisibly in storage and isn't on exhibition. Too rare and obscure? Not a crowd pleaser? The Met, like every museum, has the unenviable responsibility of captivating a very varied audience (from



Figure 3: *Hercules & Omphale*, Metropolitan Museum of Art
Acc. No. 43.100.33, Gift of R. Thornton Wilson, in memory of Florence
Ellsworth Wilson, 1943

visitors to donors) with the engaging presentation of an ever-growing collection in a perpetually-shrinking space. Jeffrey then moved on to Saint-Cloud with, among other objects, the pair of chinoiserie figures of an actor and actress, circa 1730-40 (also illustrated *ibid.*, p. 227, pl. 173), which, coincidentally because of their theatrical “come-one, come-all” gestures, I had chosen to illustrate on the invitation to this event (figure 2).

We progressed chronologically through Chantilly and Mennecey and into Vincennes, handling both a figural group of ‘Hercules and Omphale’ and several wares. The mythological group (figure 3), an early model of circa 1749-52 (illustrated in the exhibition catalogue, *Porcelaines de Vincennes Les origines de Sèvres*, Grand Palais, Paris, 14 October 1977–16 January 1978, p. 165, no. 486), had slumped in the kiln, and it was interesting to see its firing problems and the thickly potted clay of its underside. Among the thrilling Vincennes wares was the green-ground tureen (terrine du roi) of circa 1756-57 [Acc. No. 50.211.182a, b], a model attributed to Jean-Claude Duplessis, and with cartouches of ‘Boucher babies’ attributed to Charles Nicolas Dodin, although not bearing Dodin’s recognizable letter k mark. The Selection Committee (Jeffrey, Elizabeth and Denny) were particularly generous with their Sèvres choices, but they had decided to sharpen our wits on a trip across the infamous minefield of ‘original vs. later-decoration’ with a 4-inch (10.2-cm.) square tray (plateau carré), circa 1757-58 (figure 5), whose pink ground and Cupid on a cloud painted to interrupt the elaborate gilding, caused merry disagreement among the participants in both sessions. As to be expected, no consensus was reached, but mindful of the vulnerable porcelain in front of us, no fisticuffs erupted either.

While we were still in the “think pink” mode, we had the rare chance to handle a rose marbré cuvette à fleurs Courteille (figure 6) with chinoiserie decoration by Charles Nicolas Dodin,

and marked with his letter k as well as date letter I, which traditionally was the letter for 1761, but according to David Peters’ new dating system, would now represent 1762. (David really keeps us on our toes!) The combination of seemingly unrelated decoration on this cuvette is aesthetically challenging and was not everyone’s taste either in its short period of production or among current collectors, but it is, nevertheless, a technological tour-de-force and has to be appreciated as one of the Sèvres factory’s more courageous experiments.

From the sublime and the challenging to the remarkable, we all marveled at another of the factory’s bursts of creative experimentation: a Sèvres déjeuner carré, circa 1765-70 (figure 7), comprising a cup and saucer with their open-galleried tray, 5 13/16-inches (14.8 cm.) square – all with extraordinary trompe-l’oeil hardstone decoration. In the museum’s online catalogue entry Jeffrey has noted, “The fascination with the decorative and artistic qualities of hardstones (pietre dure) was a strong current in European court and aristocratic taste in the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries, and the Sèvres porcelain manufactory acknowledged this taste by occasionally using imitation hardstone surfaces to decorate its products. One of its most ambitious attempts at reproducing the appearance of hardstones can be seen in this cup and saucer with matching tray, which simulate malachite and jasper on a porphyry ground.”



Figure 4: *Tureen & cover*, Metropolitan Museum of Art
Acc. No. 50.211.182a & b, Gift of R. Thornton Wilson, in memory of
Florence Ellsworth Wilson, 1950



Figure 5: *Tray*, Metropolitan Museum of Art
Acc. No. 54.147.15, Gift of R. Thornton Wilson, in memory of Florence
Ellsworth Wilson, 1954



Figure 6: Vase, Metropolitan Museum of Art
Acc. No. 54.147.24, Gift of R. Thornton Wilson, in memory of Florence Ellsworth Wilson, 1954

It wouldn't be possible to have a fully representative session on French porcelain without including a grand Sèvres blue-ground vase, and Jeffrey had chosen an appealing soft-paste 'Vase Paris enfants', circa 1778 (Acc. No. 58.75.79a, B), ascribed to the modeler Jacques François Paris, who applied to its neck the unusual feature of two biscuit portrait medallions of Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette. The painted panels on the front (a quay scene) and reverse (trophies) are attributed to Jean-Louis Morin and the gilding to Étienne-Henry Le Guay. It was the perfect piece on which to sail away.

For an hour on that cold January afternoon and evening, each group sat entranced by the offerings, the narrative and the rare opportunity to handle these and other treasures from the mighty Metropolitan Museum, where, because of the limited space designated for the European decorative arts, only a small sampling of the legendary collection of French porcelain, assembled largely from the gifts of The Samuel H. Kress Foundation, Mr. R. Thornton Wilson and Mrs. Charles R. Wrightsman, can ever be on exhibition. Jeffrey Munger has indeed done much in the past few years to fill more thoroughly and effectively the spaces available to ceramics, and French porcelain in particular, but it is the time, knowledge and enthusiasm that he devotes to this field that keeps it alive and sparkling at the Met. We were all so grateful to him (and Elizabeth and Denny) for our exceptional experience, and hope that this may become a repeatable treat at museums and private collections across the United States and Canada.

The second event for FPS members in North America was an invitation to attend the Connecticut Ceramics Study Circle's annual seminar at the Bruce Museum in Greenwich, Connecticut on Monday, April 14th. This year the seminar's distinguished speaker was our FPS President, Dame Rosalind Savill, whose trip to New York was ostensibly to accept the Bard Graduate Center's annual Iris Foundation Award ("to recognize scholars, patrons, and professionals who have made outstanding contributions to the study and appreciation of the decorative arts and thereby help to sustain the cultural heritage of our world. The awards are named for BGC Founder and Director Susan Weber's mother, Iris Weber.") But the astute CCSC and FPS member Natalie Robinson seized on the logistical opportunity to lure Ros an hour north to Greenwich to be the CCSC's Seminar Star during her trip to New York.



Figure 7: Cup, saucer & tray, Metropolitan Museum of Art
Acc. No. 2008.295a-c, Purchase, Mr. and Mrs. Sid R. Bass Gift, in honor of Mrs. Charles Wrightsman, 2008

An invitation to speak at the CCSC Seminar is neither proffered nor accepted lightly because there is only one speaker for the day and he or she is asked to give two or three lectures (the speaker's option). Ros nobly plumped for the trifecta, and as usual, she spoke brilliantly and seemingly indefatigably on three of her favorite subjects: "An Introduction to Sèvres Porcelain"; "Madame de Pompadour: A Chronology of Her Life as a Patron of the Sèvres Factory"; and "From French Royal Patrons to English Lords and American Tycoons: Sèvres Porcelain Collecting from the 18th Century to Today".

About forty members of the CCSC, joined by fifteen members of the FPS (who were able to steal away from New York City on a Monday), all of whom had come for the three lectures and a "French luncheon with tarte tatin for dessert" (the CCSC is a group who savours its sweets), left fully nourished intellectually and nutritionally. Although the FPS didn't gather any new members into the fold as a result of our jour français in Greenwich, unquestionably Ros and Sèvres expanded their coterie of admirers, and a beneficial connection was established between the two ceramics societies. It was a beautiful spring day, full of the joie de vivre of Madame de Pompadour and her version of "chinamania", which spread from mid-18th-Century France to late 18th and 19th-century Great Britain and thence to 20th-century North America.

Perhaps it goes without saying that all of the nearly one-hundred FPS members on this side of the Atlantic continue to look longingly eastward toward our fellow members in the UK and on the Continent, whose proximity to each other and to great public and private collections enables them to organize and enjoy more frequent educational events and excursions. For several years we have lived largely vicariously on the essays and reports in the FPS Newsletter – but now I hope I speak on behalf of all of us here in expressing how grateful we are to Jeffrey Munger, Elizabeth Sullivan, Denny Stone, Natalie Robinson and Ros Savill for infusing "the real thing" into our FPS memberships this year. And please be assured that I am always happy to receive imaginative suggestions from all members of the FPS for things to do and see in this part of the world.

Letitia Roberts

ROBERT IDWAL WILLIAMS

Born in Flint, Wales 30th October 1923, died Wednesday 30th July 2014

Robert 'Bob' Williams was the most remarkable dealer in antique porcelain of his generation. His motivation was not to be the richest dealer but the best; he was driven by a passion for his subject and a loyalty to the many collectors who became his friends.

Bob spent four years on National Service in India where he became a sergeant in the Rajput Regiment. He was proud of the fact that, on his return, he spent a full year travelling to study the ceramics in the museums and collections of Europe before joining the family business lead by his formidable mother Winifred in Eastbourne, Sussex. This was a well-regarded dealership but it was Bob who took it to the highest level bringing it to Bury Street in London in 1970.

At a time when the literature on ceramics was so much less comprehensive than today Bob also took the opportunity to learn from the very experienced generation of dealers who had handled the huge quantities of material thrown onto the market by the war and punitive taxation. Of these dealers Bob fondly remembered Charlie Staal of Knightsbridge, who he used to visit every week when the porcelain fresh from the country sales appeared in London; he arrived early and had the first pick, he never queried the price.

As an up-and-coming dealer and a new force to be reckoned with, Bob was under pressure to join the ring which was then dominated by the Manheims. They expected to be able to pay off the new entrant in the 'knock-out' with a small payment but Bob bid relentlessly until he got what he wanted; he only entered once or twice into the ring to see how it worked before deciding to go his own way and act totally independently. He soon earned his place at the famous 'horseshoe' table at Sotheby's where the dealers sat before the auctioneers Jim Kiddell and Tim Clarke. Between 1973 and 1978 Bob held four ground-breaking exhibitions on 'Early Derby Porcelain', 'The Kakiemon Influence on European Porcelain', 'Eighteenth Century European White porcelain' and '18th Century French Porcelain: Vincennes, Sèvres, St. Cloud, Chantilly & Mennecey'.

Bob attracted the best collectors and museums working closely with the Victoria and Albert and the J Paul Getty museums but perhaps his greatest collaboration was with George Gardiner and the Gardiner Museum, Toronto,



where he was given almost free rein to acquire in areas that he felt were neglected such as Vienna porcelain of the Du Paquier period and Hausmaler decoration as well as in areas that George Gardiner admired such as Commedia dell'Arte figures and scent bottles. He was also instrumental in acquiring a small but very fine group of early French porcelains.

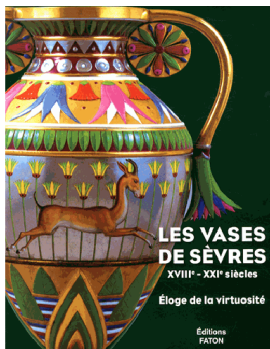
Bob was a surprise to many who only knew him by repute, he was no retiring aesthete in an ivory tower but a strong-willed and passionately opinionated lover of his subject; humorous, big-hearted and generous with a great appetite for life. Bob had many friends and admirers on the continent, one German dealer once described him as the Mozart of porcelain, there can be no higher praise from a German than that!

He is survived by his wife Patricia and children Laura, Bruce and Nigel.

Errol Manners

NEW PUBLICATION

Les vases de Sèvres XVIII^e - XXI^e siècles, éloge de la virtuosité, Antoinette Fay-Hallé - Editions Faton



Compiled under the direction of Antoinette Fay-Hallé this book features the work of many ceramics experts (Antoine d'Albis, Delphine Frotin, J. et M.A. Bastian, D. Alcouffe, M. Vandermeersch, C. Leprince, C. Trouvet, G. Séret, H. de La Verrie, J. Munger, M.L. de Rochebrune, J. Whitehead, S. Wittwer, V. Desrante, O. Nouvel-Kammerer, Tamara Préaud, A. Perrin-Khelissa, Anne Fion-Tenenbaum, L. Piccolin, Yves Carlier, C. Dumortier, P. Habets, L. Chabanne, Anne Lajoix, C. Rocchisani, I. Laurin, Donna Corbin, Jean-Roch Bouiller, Valérie Guillaume). Over the last forty years Tamara Préaud, archivist at the Sèvres manufactory, has opened up the rich archives to allow researchers to gain a major insight into their subject. The complex history of some of Sèvres' most elaborate creations are brought together here, supplemented by 350 photographs which allow fantastic detail of the range of vases shown.

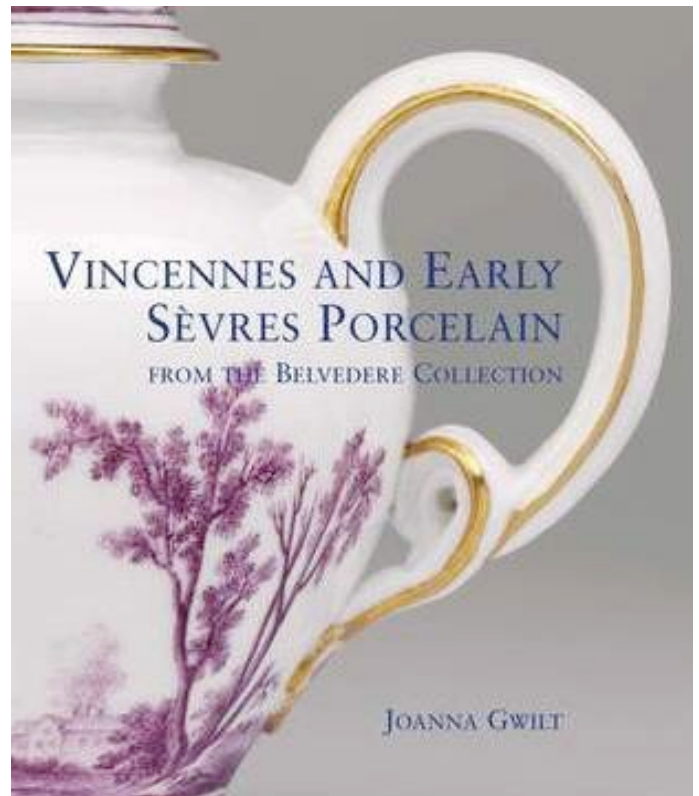
REVIEW

Vincennes and Early Sèvres Porcelain from the Belvedere Collection, Joanna Gwilt, (V&A publishing, in association with the Curtain Foundation), 2014, UK price £60.00

The story of the Vincennes porcelain factory, an anomalous meld of the dramatic and the scientific, is quite involved: imagine, if you will, the Marriage of Figaro under the baton of Sir Isaac Newton. Established in 1740 in the unpromising 'tour du diable' of the Château de Vincennes, the factory was the brainchild of the Orry brothers, financiers with a passion for Chinese and Meissen porcelain, who poached artisans from Chantilly and encouraged them to copy it. A fine white paste and delicate colours were soon developed, and in 1745 a royal privilege was granted to Orry de Fulvy (via his valet) which attracted the riches of financiers and courtiers and eventually (via his mistress), of Louis XV himself. The arrival of actual gilding (via a monk) and a goldsmith, the Torinese magician Duplessis, drew Vincennes towards the sinuous possibilities of the rococo; bold ground-colours followed, along with a sculpture that transcended caricature, and by 1756, when the factory moved to Sèvres, it had become the artistic phenomenon of the age.

Over the past forty years the score and libretto of this 'opera' have been rehearsed and re-enacted three-dimensionally through the formation of an extraordinary group of Vincennes porcelain known as the Belvedere collection, of which a catalogue by Joanna Gwilt has recently been published. This begins with a useful chronology of Vincennes, a brief history of the formation of the collection, and a longer account of the origins of the factory itself, its patrons and its artisans, many of whom were formerly fan-painters. Interesting extracts from the posthumous inventory of Orry de Fulvy (published at length for the first time here) illuminate the baroque production of the factory - just as the Madame de Pompadour inventories do its later, rococo phase. The author is especially good on scientific aspects of the production, and on the engraved sources of decoration (several previously unrecorded), and she concludes the introduction with a well-informed discussion of porcelain flowers, in which the Belvedere collection is enviably rich.

The catalogue proper is arranged chronologically, concluding with a section on sculpture and an index of incised and painted marks. It benefits from a wealth of excellent colour photographs, not only of the 178 items within the Belvedere collection, but also of comparable porcelain from around the world. The first pieces, with relief decoration, demonstrate the early influence of St Cloud and Chantilly, then the gradual emergence of graphic sources of decoration, some of which are deeply obscure. A more defined aesthetic emerges under the influence of Meissen - the collection has an abundance of the coveted, flower-decorated wares of the mid-1740's - however the exact replication of Meissen forms is of mercifully short duration. By the end of the decade a distinctively French spirit is evident - lighter, more sinuous forms, with minimal gilding and almost poetically sparse decoration after Watteau, Lancret and Boucher - enriched in turn by the astonishing sculptural innovations of Duplessis in the early 1750's.



But before giving away too much of the plot this seems a good moment for an 'interval talk' about the significance and importance of the Belvedere collection. Those hoping for a sequel to the exhaustive catalogues of the Wallace Collection or the Royal Collection (for which Joanna Gwilt was research assistant) are likely to be disappointed: as in many creative enterprises, record-keeping was not a priority for the pioneers of Vincennes, thus the hungry scholar is obliged to cull (often contradictory) material evidence, along with rare personal or commercial inventories - and extrapolate. Might there have been more extrapolation? A little, perhaps (I'm fond of it, as you'll see) - the ravishing covered cup (cat. 116) would seem to merit more effusive commentary, and the evocative functions of other objects are neither explained (cat. 6 & 22) nor explored (cat. 134) - but these quibbles miss the point of the Belvedere collection, which is its totality. No amateurs of Vincennes have ever collected so deeply, so obscurely, or (in a good way) so repetitively as this: not only does it require large resources - of patience, notably - but also the near-maternal loyalty that permits a unique but coverless teapot (cat. 16) or a formerly headless nymph (cat. 156) to share the shelf with a spectacular bleu lapis vase Duplessis (cat. 86). Of course the Belvedere collection includes several great masterpieces - of which more shortly - but it also exposes the obtuseness of our current 'masterpiece culture'. This review, which was never likely to be solemn, will now conclude with some arias.

It's a warm late-spring evening, and your mistress has finally agreed (on purely botanical grounds) to visit the little house and garden you keep (purely for the health) just a few

miles from your busy *hôtel particulier* in the Faubourg St Germain. The scent of the flowers is intoxicating, the air is alive with bees, and as it cools you draw your studious mistress inside to admire the blooms and insects so vividly painted on a small porcelain wine-glass cooler (cat. 6), that just happens to be full of crushed ice. Its glaze reflects the flames of a little fire; somewhere a door closes softly and then, from a distance, comes the dying sound of carriage wheels turning for Paris... You're awake (or you think you are) but it's always evening; the sunsets are like deep blue mists, and the still air seems heady with tobacco or opium, or both (cat. 87). You feel to be

drifting downstream: mills and churches appear and disappear, with a few oblivious cows and fishermen, until the open sea confronts you with the wholly comforting spectacle of a tall ship falling asleep...

No dreams today - you're in the forest, a gun at your arm, eager for the rush of flapping wings. And suddenly she's there - in full sun, on a nest of leaves & flowers, limbs as slim and graceful as feathers (cat. 162). She neither panics, nor flies - your gun drops - but instead rolls back on to that timely Turkish cushion, sighs, and stretches. Is she really asleep..?

Giles Ellwood

LONGFORD CASTLE & MOMPESSON HOUSE

Howard Coutts on an outing in May 2014

On Tuesday 13th May, a group of FPS members made their way to Longford Castle in the beautiful West Country that stands just outside Salisbury on the River Avon. This remarkable castle is Jacobean in origin, distinguished by its triangular plan with towers in each corner surrounding a central hall. For centuries it has been the home of the Pleydell Bouverie family, who have left it with an outstanding collection of pictures and portraits ('a Gainsborough in every room' - almost) and some quite magnificent documented Palladian furniture by Benjamin Goodison and other makers. The FPS were of course most interested in the ceramics, of which the house could supply quite a number of fine examples. First to come to our attention was quite remarkable Chinese armorial export dinner from the Barons Feversham of Duncombe Park, Yorkshire, distinguished by its completeness and variety - two kinds of sauceboat, two kinds of beer mug and numerous other items. The decoration suggested a date on the cusp of the transition between *famille verte* and *famille rose* in about 1724-5. Particularly unusual were the candlesticks, and the dish covers decorated on the underside, indicating a very special and grand commission. Further fine Oriental porcelain (and lacquer) could be found in the state rooms (the family had East India Company connections). As we left, we noted a large and complete Derby botanical dessert service, very similar to one at Castle Howard in Yorkshire.

After a convivial lunch at the military museum in the cathedral close ('are you the French?' was the first enquiry of their attendant!) we paid a fascinating visit to Mompeyson House, a National Trust property furnished in the 1950s with items of appropriate character. Some heated discussion occurred over some Sèvres plates convincingly datemarked to 1757-62, which might be from a known Pompadour or Choiseul service, but also showed evidence of blackening or 'spitout' which is often taken as a sign of redecoration. They are surplus to the number recorded in David Peters' list - could they be unfinished pieces, with gilding as a later addition? They come from the collection of Ralph Dutton at Hinton Ampner, as did a fine and extensive Paris Angoulême gilded teaset. However, members were not immune to the delights of the many Chelsea and Derby figures, or the unique collection of English wineglasses of the 18th century.



Teapot, Sèvres, 1758. Decorator's mark for Jean Pierre Le Doux. Bowes Museum X.1271

A matching cup and saucer was exhibited by Nightingale in Salisbury in 1871, and sold at Christie's December 7-8th, 1911, lot 114, a cup and saucer, painted with peacock feathers in apple green, blue and gold on rose Pompadour ground - by Ledoux, 1758. Exhibited at Salisbury, 1871.

Salisbury Museum itself was closed on the day of our visit, but it could be argued that we were one and a half centuries too late in any case, as it had been a major centre for the exhibition of ceramics in the 19th century (exhibitions in 1864 and 1870 of British porcelain, 1871 of Sèvres porcelain and 1872 of porcelain statuettes [see Tiffany Hunt, 'Some Nineteenth Century Ceramic Collectors in Salisbury', *The Hatcher Review*, vol. 2, no. 11, Spring 1981, pp.19-25; reference kindly provided by Jane Standen]). This was partly due to the proximity of the famous ceramics historian James Edward Nightingale, who lived at Wilton nearby and was responsible for republishing 18th-century sale catalogues (*Contributions towards the History of Early English Porcelain*, Salisbury, 1881). After many pleasant farewells and goodbyes in and around the cathedral, this writer went up to the church of St. Peter's at Fugglestone outside Wilton to trace Nightingale's grave, a Celtic cross which lies right at the eastern end of the site.

Our thanks to Patricia Ferguson, Karen Rudd property manager at Mompeyson and Alexandra Omerod at Longford.

Howard Coutts

DOCCIA IN ENGLAND: THE FPS, THE AMICI DI DOCCIA & THE QUADERNI

Justin Racanello describes a series of lectures and a handling session at the V&A in March 2014



During the V&A handling session on 21 March 2014

The porcelain factory founded by the Marquis Carlo Ginori in 1737, often referred to as Doccia after the villa near Florence where the original manufacture was based, has a long and illustrious history of design and innovation leading up to the present day. Carlo Ginori was a far-sighted individual with a vast range of interests that are reflected in the production of the factory, as well as the then revolutionary treatment of the workers who were cared for and educated in a manner perhaps without equal until the latter part of the 19th century. A biography of this fascinating man in English would be most welcome.

The Victoria and Albert Museum holds a small but significant collection of the production of the Ginori factory, both porcelain and earthenware, which has been hitherto uncatalogued. Thanks to the Amici di Doccia, an Italian based society devoted to the study of the history of primarily Doccia, but also the other Italian porcelain factories, an initiative was launched to catalogue all the pieces from the Ginori factory in the museum. As well as the best known pieces, others that were previously undiscovered or misattributed have been collected together and published in the 7th edition of the journal of the Amici di Doccia, known as the Quaderni. Sponsored by the British-Italian

Society and the Italian Cultural Institute as well as various private individuals, the catalogue highlights for the first time the importance of the Victoria and Albert's collection, with representative pieces from all the periods and styles of the factory from the early production to the 1960s.

Thanks to an invitation from the French Porcelain Society, in the first departure from their regular lectures on French subjects and following on from a visit to Florence and the Amici di Doccia in 2012, the launch of the 2014 Quaderni was celebrated in London by a series of lectures generously hosted by Bonhams and a handling session at the Victoria and Albert Museum the following day. Unfortunately due to reasons of ill health, the founder and chairman of the Amici di Doccia, John Winter, was unable to attend, but we were graced by the presence of both Lady Davson, founder of the French Porcelain Society and Honorary Member of the Amici, as well as Dame Ros Savill, doyenne of Sèvres porcelain and dilettante of Doccia.



Figure 1: Covered bowl & stand, Doccia Porcelain Factory, V&A 2008 to B-1855

Proceedings were initiated by the President of the French Porcelain Society, Errol Manners, whose relation of the early links between the Doccia factory and English clients was both educative and entertaining. A bowl and cover with the arms of Captain Augustus Hervey in the catalogue was a good illustration of this, Hervey having visited the Marquis in 1753 when he was governor of Livorno.

John Mallet, ex-Keeper of Ceramics at the Victoria and Albert Museum, reminisced about Arthur Lane, whose book, *Italian Porcelain*, was the first great study of the subject in English. His talk managed to be both touching and amusing at the same time and went on to cover more recent scholarship on this still under-studied subject.

Livia Frescobaldi Malenchini, Vice President of the Amici di Doccia and curator of the catalogue talked about some of the star pieces in the museum collection and their connection with Florentine culture. It was interesting to hear how, from as early as 1859, Henry Cole was buying contemporary pieces direct from Ginori, as well as earlier



During the V&A handling session



Figure 2: Snuffbox, Doccia Porcelain Factory, c.1760. V&A C.31-1962 pieces of porcelain from dealers. The reattribution of a beautiful sugar bowl, which was thought to be from the Cozzi factory in Venice, back to Doccia, is an example of the usefulness of the project.

Finally, Oliva Rucellai, Director to the Museo Ginori and one of the co-authors of the catalogue, regaled us with stories from the history of the factory and brought us through the 19th-century production up to the present day. The story of the Florentine dealer Giovanni Freppa was particularly interesting, as was the explanation of the ongoing confusion between 'Capodimonte' and Ginori, when applied to the *basso-rilievo istoriato* pieces marked with a crowned N.

After a brief presentation by Charles de Chassiron, Chairman of the British-Italian Society, we repaired to Greig's restaurant where the conversation flowed like the wine until late into the evening. But not too late or too boisterous as the following morning we had an appointment

with pieces themselves, in a handling session at the Victoria and Albert Museum!

In the presence of four of the curators of the catalogue, Livia Frescobaldi Malenchini, Oliva Rucellai, Andreina D'Agliano and Alessandro Biancalana and with the invaluable assistance of Rebecca Wallis and Susan Newell, a group of enthusiasts were given the privilege of a guided handling tour of some of the best pieces in the collection. Some quite exquisite pieces were on display, including a snuff box with the marvellously modelled head of Medusa on the lid (figure 2), as well as a teapot with a very early example of transfer-printed putti playing. But the stand-out piece for me was the covered bowl and plate, painted by Giovan Battista Fanciullacci in 1782-3 with scenes from a French edition of Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, printed between 1767-7 (figure 1). Acquired as German in 1855 and only reattributed to Ginori by Arthur Lane a hundred years later, the painting on this work is the equal of any other European factory and shows the influence of Sèvres porcelain on that of Doccia at this time. This catalogue of the collection of the Ginori pieces in the Victoria and Albert Museum is a very timely addition to scholarship on the subject and will be an essential reference in the future. Congratulations are due to all those involved in its publication and a special thanks goes to the French Porcelain Society for extending such a warm welcome to the Amici di Doccia.

Justin Raccanello

FRENCH PORCELAIN SOCIETY IN AUSTRALIA

Peter Burton with an update on our members in Australia



At the National Gallery of Victoria in May

Members of the French Porcelain Society met in Sydney on 25th March to view the French Empire collection of Ken Richards and also to meet a personal friend of Ken's, Bernard Chevallier, 'ancien directeur of Malmaison' and also a Sèvres expert who was visiting Australia at that time. Ken's collection includes paintings, textiles, silver, pewter, militaria, documents, drawings and sculpture within the context and period of the Napoleonic era. His porcelain in the collection includes some very imposing Sèvres pieces and also examples from other factories such as Dagoty, Furstenberg and Creil mostly from services related to the Bonaparte family. After Ken gave us a walk through of his collection the focus became centered on the ceramics and members were very interested in his collecting philosophy. It was also good so

see the ceramics in context with other items from the period. Bernard's experience and research also helped put the collection into the context of the Bonapartes at Malmaison. Bernard then took us through some of the highlights of his new book, *Saint-Cloud le palais retrouvé*, which traces some of the original furnishings and interiors of the chateau of Saint-Cloud obtained from 19th century photos before the fire of 1870. It was a great highlight to have Bernard to contribute to the wealth of information Ken has on his collection.

Another event was organized on Friday 9th May at the National Gallery of Victoria which coincided with the gallery's Art of the Table exhibition. Curators Amanda Dunsmore and Matthew Martin took a small group through the highlights of their continental porcelain collection including their remarkable group of white porcelain pieces culminating in the Peter Wynne Morris collection of French white figures and table wares. We were then taken to the Decorative Arts passage for a tour of the Art of the Table exhibition. The exhibition starts with a fabulous English silver Chinoiserie centre piece by Thomas Pitts of London (1762-1763) and then explores various types of table ware starting at the Renaissance and then to the 20th century tea wares. Fittingly, the final exhibit was a traveling chocolate service which contained white Mennecy table wares.

The tour ended with a very convivial afternoon tea at the gallery café. Our very grateful thanks to Amanda and Matthew for giving their time and sharing their passion and expertise with members of the FPS.

Peter Burton

VISIT TO IRELAND: THE CERAMICS COLLECTIONS OF DUBLIN & ITS ENVIRONS

An account of April's tour of the houses and porcelain of Ireland



Walking through St. Stephen's Green, Dublin

Day 1

Arriving in Dublin on the Wednesday, our group was full of expectation about the delights in store in the Irish countryside. Our visit began with a fascinating walking tour of Dublin led by Ros Savill's great friend John O'Connell, an Irishman whose architectural knowledge and passion would enhance our appreciation of the buildings we would see on our visits, whether the interiors were filled with French Porcelain or not. Before venturing into the delightful squares and streets of Georgian Dublin, our tour took us to the park of St. Stephen's Green where we sought out some of the sculptural delights. We walked by Merrion Square, Trinity College and the Bank of Ireland.

We then entered Newman House, one of the finest examples of Georgian townhouse architecture in the city, where we explored the historic interiors. It was in fact two houses: Irish MP Hugh Montgomery's 1738 home which boasts the Apollo Room, magnificently decorated with highly sculptural allegorical rococo plasterwork. This was our first sighting of the work of the Lafranchini brothers. Over the next five days we would become connoisseurs in their carving, spotting their elaborate work wherever we looked. The second part of Newman House was begun in 1765 by Richard Whaley and again featured beautiful plasterwork. We ended our tour in the church where the beautiful nineteenth-century Arts & Crafts interior was somewhat challenged by a terribly unforgiving lurid painting restoration job.

As John O'Connell's honoured guests we enjoyed drinks and dinner in the Kildare Street University Club, also located on St. Stephen's Green, where we passed a lovely evening before retiring early in preparation for the packed schedule of the following days, which would take us to many fantastic houses and collections.

Catrin Jones

Day 2

We were lucky with the weather on the morning of our first full day in Ireland when we visited the Casino, an exquisite neo-classical pleasure pavilion. To quote Séan O'Reilly, the author of the excellent guide book: 'The Casino, as a pure expression of architectural idealism may be ranked with a small number of buildings of international significance.' Now sequestered in an unremarkable Dublin suburb, the Casino was built in the gardens of Marino House for James Caulfield, 1st Earl of Charlemont (1728-99), to designs of 1758 by William Chambers. The Earl had met the young Chambers while on his Grand Tour to Italy and Greece. The architect never visited Ireland but his plans were skilfully executed by the sculptor and Master Mason Simon Vierpyl, another friend Charlemont had made in Rome. In this early work, Chambers demonstrated his masterful assimilation of French and Italian classical models while creating a building which met all the needs of his client. Although externally giving the appearance of having only one room, the building contains sixteen rooms and combines the roles of garden retreat, intimate entertaining space (with service rooms in the basement), belvedere, study, library and Temple to the Arts. Internally, plasterwork details such as trophies of agricultural implements and the signs of the zodiac, and fragments of original Chinese wallpaper conjure up past splendours - sadly none of the interior furniture has survived in situ.

John O'Connell, who was intimately involved with the restoration of the Casino (1974-84) showed us around every nook and cranny, with the added bonus of his many reminiscences. One concerned the beautiful Greek stele (no doubt brought back by Charlemont from Greece) fragments of which were discovered by John poking out of the undergrowth. He rescued it by hauling it into the boot of his long-suffering friend's car. (It now stands fully restored in the hall of the Casino, I hasten to add.) Particular thanks also to Pauline Kennedy for allowing us special access and Michael Doyle (both of Heritage Ireland) for additional guiding.



The Casino at Marino



The group enjoying the sunshine during the walking tour of Dublin, outside St. Stephen's Church

After a quick look at the surviving gates of the Marino House (demolished in the 1920s), our next stop was Collin's Barracks, the home of the National Museum of Ireland's collection of decorative arts. Here we were met by Alex Ward, the Assistant Keeper who kindly showed us around the galleries. The first gallery presented exceptional items chosen by curators for their historical importance to Irish or general history. These included Irish delftware plates with armorials printed using paper transfers, a method invented in 1751 by John Brooks of Dublin and later introduced by him at the Battersea enamels manufactory, a fine early pair of Bow theatrical figures of Kitty Clive and Henry Woodward and the famous 'Fonthill Vase'. This Yuan dynasty (c.1300) vase is probably the best documented of early Chinese imports to the West. By 1381 it was owned by King Louis the Great of Hungary. After the French Revolution it was bought by William Beckford and recorded, complete with its medieval silver-gilt mounts set with gemstones, in his collection at Fonthill. The mounts had been removed by 1882 when it was bought by the museum for £28.7s at the sale of Beckford's brother-in-law, the Duke of Hamilton. As time was short, we moved on to the 'open' stores which had, as to be expected, good collections of Irish delft, glass and Belleek porcelain, Wedgwood, Dutch and French faience also and some more surprising items such as a late 17th-century glass dolphin by Bernard Perrot. We were then privileged to have a private handling session of ceramics led by Rosalind Savill.

The first items we examined turned out not to be exactly what they seemed: Chantilly toilet pots (museum nos.1089 & 1090-1911). They bore incised StC marks in imitation of St Cloud, but were too grey and in hard paste and presumably of late 19th-century French (Samson?) origin. There was no doubting the authenticity of the next item, a rare, large covered cup and saucer made at Meissen, c.1745 of typical 'marabout' shape for the Turkish market with harbour scenes framed by 'laub und bandelwerk'. There followed: a Marseilles hard-paste porcelain teapot in Sèvres style (R monogram for Joseph-Gaspard Robert), a fine Sèvres trial plate (date letter gg for 1784 and painter's mark for Méreaud) which John Whitehead explained was from the period when certain painters would be given a dozen plates to decorate with trial designs, a few of which would be chosen for new services, the others being sold off individually. This plate

was of additional interest, as it bore a Hamilton Palace sale (lot 492) collection label. Our member Bet McCloud had kindly supplied Ros with the information about its buyer at the sale, the antiques dealer Thomas Whitehead, great uncle of our own John Whitehead! Two Sèvres *gobelets litrons*, one with chinoiserie musicians (Dieu's mark and the date letter for 1778). At first sight unremarkable, a Sèvres covered cup and saucer (*gobelaît à lait*) with floral sprays turned out to be an experimental example of hard paste. It bore the date letter T for 1772 and 'D' for Decambos (gilder and flower painter 1776-1788) in green on the cup. The enamels had not sunk into the hard-paste glaze – Ros reminded us that hard paste did not go into full production until 1773.

A Sèvres sucrier Bouret with a *rose marbré* ground and birds, was a textbook example of wares redecorated in the 19th century (probably in England), while the puce monochrome decoration of a mythological scene on a large goblet litron, though unusual was correct as others with similar decoration are known (crossed Ls, date letter bb for 1779, HP for the gilder Prévost and Lc for an unknown painter, the saucer of 1778 with a trophy by J.-M.-R. Boulanger, suggested by David Peters as possibly the painter with the mark of a treble clef). We also saw a good late 18th-century Nove cup and saucer decorated in Vienna style and a pair of Bow white sphinxes (c.1750).



Ros with the pièce de résistance, a hard paste Sèvres three-legged milk jug with chinoiserie decoration, Collin's Barracks, National Museum of Ireland

The *pièce de résistance* was a Sèvres three-legged milk jug in hard paste, with fanciful chinoiserie decoration of sailors in a boat with a chicken figurehead at the prow and tail feathers at the stern. Although undated and bearing a hard paste crowned Ls mark in red, Ros reminded us of the incident of 'La Belle Poule' documented by Geoffrey de Bellaigue in his Burlington Magazine article (Vol. 123, no. 945, Dec. 1981). The Belle Poule was a French frigate involved in a skirmish with the British ship Arethusa, in 1778. Hailed as the victor (by the French) 'La Belle Poule' was celebrated in the press, popular engravings, a board game and even in a coiffure 'à La Belle Poule'! Geoffrey de Bellaigue had traced various items in the Sèvres ledgers also described in this way and suggested a link between these and the boat-shaped *sucrier* of 1779 at Woburn Abbey which has been adapted with a chicken's body and tail feathers at either end. Could this *pot à lait* be another curious example of Sèvres making a topical allusion to the incident?

After lunch in the museum restaurant we headed for Russborough, County Wicklow where we were greeted by two delightful lady guides who gave us a private tour. A Palladian mansion, Russborough was built by Irish architect Richard Castle (1690-1751) for Joseph Leeson (1711-83) during the 1740s. Leeson, who had inherited a fortune from his father, a Dublin brewer and property speculator, pursued a political career and was ennobled in 1756 and 1760, finally becoming Earl of Milltown in 1763. The interiors of the house were created in the 1750s and include fine ceilings by the Swiss-Italian Lafranchini brothers and by an unknown Italian stuccodore known as the 'St. Peter's Stuccodore'. Leeson accumulated a great art collection and in 1902 the last Countess of Milltown bequeathed it to the National Gallery of Ireland. Some of the paintings have now been lent back to the house to hang in their original locations. In 1952 Russborough was bought by Sir Alfred Beit (1903-1994) and his wife Clementine. The Beits inherited a great art collection from Alfred's uncle, co-founder with Cecil Rhodes of De Beers Diamond Mining Company, and added considerably to the collection themselves. The house and its contents now form part of a charitable trust dedicated to their preservation.

In the dining room, we got our first glimpse of French porcelain treasures as the table was laid with some Mme du Barry service items including a *seau à glace* (lacking its liner and cover), 4 glass rinsers (*seaux à verres*, 1 later decorated) and 4 lozenge-shaped baskets (date letter R for 1770). Ros found these *corbeilles lozenges* in the original sales list of the service. The place settings all had Paris Empire plates decorated by the Neppel factory with fine views. On the grand side tables attributed to William Kent, were two large Sèvres *seaux* painted with flowers and fruits used as jardinières. In the Entrance Hall the French theme continued with a magnificent painting by Jean-Baptiste Oudry, Indian Blackbuck with Pointers and Still Life, dated 1745, a pair of marble busts by Augustin Pajou and a suite of 18th century French armchairs, commented on for us by John Whitehead as transitional Louis XV/LVI, stamped by Nicolas Quinibert Foliot, one of the best Parisian chairmakers.

In the Drawing Room are four fine marines representing different times of the day by Vernet commissioned by the first owner of the house. By some miracle these were spotted in a New York antique shop by Sir Alfred Beit in the 1950s and bought home to Russborough to hang in their original locations within their bespoke plasterwork surrounds. In the Music Room Ros showed us a magnificent Sèvres *pot-pourri Hébert*, undated but c.1760, bought at Christies in 1960. Ros considers it to be part of a grand garniture of vases; its pair is now in the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore, another pair of vases, known as *urnes à facettes* is at Dalmeny and there is a *vase Boileau rectifié* in the Royal Collection. The decoration of a *bleu lapis* ground and *caillouté* gilding, a large reserve of a harbour scene framed by extravagant and distinctive gilt scrollwork, and stunning flowers on the reverse, links this group. On the mantelpiece were a pair of neo-classical Sèvres vases à tête de lion, (c.1765-70) identical to the blue pair in the Royal Collection. The Library had a Sèvres *vase dauphin* of



Ros at Russborough

1775 with a *bleu nouveau* ground reserved with a military camp scene and a pair of a puce ground and kakiemon Meissen vases made for the Japanese Palace of Augustus the Strong in c.1735, kindly commented on for us by Alfred Ziffer.

Upstairs we found further porcelain items to feast upon in cabinets including: a Chelsea etui painted by Jefferyes Hamett O'Neale, a Meissen plaque, wine bottle cooler and some figure groups, and a Berlin jardinière. Naturally it was the good group of Vincennes and Sèvres pieces which were of special interest: a magnificent tea service tray *plateau Duplessis* with a green ground enriched with stunning peacock feather gilding. Ros has traced this in the sales records to a service bought by the courtier de la Borde. It bears the date letter for 1761 and the crescent mark for the bird painter Ledoux (cf *pot pourri Hébert* in the Wallace Collection). It was flanked by a superb pair of flower vases *hollandais* painted with cherubs with elaborate green ground border patterns (date letter F for 1758). To pick out a few of the many items we saw: two pairs of double-handled sauceboats with birds from the Sudell service; a pair of compotiers ovales with turquoise ground borders, flower sprays bordered by pearls in the centre; an ecuelle, cover and stand with a white ground 'briques d'or', blue ground borders, reserved with landscapes; a pair of vases cassollette Bachelier with a turquoise ground reserved with trophies and gilded latticework; a pair of turquoise ground *cuvettes à tombeau* reserved with Teniers scenes painted by Morin in 1760. A few items caused discussion regarding the date of their decoration, among which was a Vincennes model of the dog with the turquoise glaze and a large *cuvette Courteille* with a very pale yellow ground which appeared to be of English bone china, whereas another was Sèvres but because of a long interior firing crack had probably been sold from the seconds shop without any gilding.

We finished the day with drinks in the early evening sunshine provided courtesy of Bonhams Ireland, for which we were most grateful after our very full day. Dinner was in the visitors' restaurant, after which we all sank into the coach, sated with the cultural and culinary delights of Russborough.

Susan Newell

Day 3

After a two-hour drive from Dublin, we reached Birr Castle in Birr (formerly Parsontown), County Offaly, which is a carefully preserved estate and has been the home of the Parsons family since 1620. A warm welcome with tea and biscuits prepared us well for a sunny walk through 'Ireland's largest award-winning gardens.' We were received by the 7th Earl of Rosse, Brendan Parsons, and his wife, Alison. They had returned to Ireland in 1979 after eighteen years spent working for the United Nations in Africa, Persia, and Bangladesh.

On that bright morning, we discovered the diversity of the gardens. It would take more than two and a half hours if one tried to explore the farthest reaches of the park. We had the pleasure of being guided by Lord Rosse, an expert in dendrology. Most of the exotic plants, mainly from China and the Far East, were chosen and planted by Lord Rosse himself. The pleached hornbeam alley was created in 1935 by the Earl's mother, Anne, Countess of Rosse and mother of Lord Snowden by an earlier marriage, on the occasion of her wedding to Michael, the 6th Earl of Rosse. Later, Lady Alicia, the current Earl's daughter, became a god-daughter of Princess Margaret.



Walking in the grounds of Birr Castle

The walled garden boasts the tallest box trees in the world, already an attraction to visitors in the 18th century. It is perhaps this fame that led to much of this boxwood being felled for the war effort during World War 1, as the hard boxwood was essential for making aeroplane propellers. Another impressive attraction is the massive, sixty-foot telescope built in 1845 by William, the 3rd Earl of Rosse, which stands in the park between gothic stone buttresses. This impressive scientific instrument was in use until 1908, and underwent restoration work which was completed in 1999.

The residential areas of the castle are usually not open to the public, but the FPS had the honour of visiting the house. The neo-gothic style dominates the whole architecture including the windows, ceilings, and interiors. The great gothic parlour with its vaulted ceiling was built in 1810. The room looks across the river Camcor which picturesquely winds its way through the grounds. It is decorated with paintings from the 17th century and baroque furnishings. A Meissen musical clock from around 1860 stands on the mantelpiece. Paris Marli d'or plates with animal scenes



Emo Court

from the manufacture de Nast are presented on cabinets. Furthermore, there are Worcester, Wedgwood and Chelsea services as well as a Newcastle dessert service. Alfred Ziffer discovered two Berlin vases decorated by the Dresden hausmaler workshop of Helena Wolfsohn (19th century. The stairwell dates back to the 17th century. From there, we passed the White Landing fitted with Chinese and Persian porcelain. A China cabinet shows a Crown Derby hunting breakfast service from 1820. The drawing room is entirely hung with yellow damask.

Finally, we had the pleasure of having lunch with the Earl and Countess of Rosse in the dining room, its walls lined with rich red flock wallpaper. A magnificent chandelier hanging from the neo-gothic ceiling dominates the room. We dined from English porcelain. Every table was lovingly decorated with the Earl and his wife's favourite silversmith works. On behalf of the group, Dame Rosalind expressed our enthusiasm and appreciation of the Earl and Countess's hospitality.

After this fascinating first part of day three in Ireland, we moved on to Emo Court and Gardens in Emo, County Laois. This neo-classical mansion was designed by the architect James Gandon (1742-1823), the same architect who built the Dublin Customs House. The mansion was built for John Dawson, the 1st Earl of Portarlington. Gandon was inspired by Andrea Palladio's Villa Emo from 1564 in Italy, built for Leonardo Emo. The building took 84 years to finish. The rotunda in the centre of the mansion was designed by Lewis Vulliamy (1791-1871) under the 2nd Earl of Portarlington. Around 1860, the mansion was completed, closely resembling that which visitors can explore today. Its formal and symmetrical design and its beautifully proportioned rooms inside are typical elements of Palladianism. Between 1790 and 1920, six Earls of Portarlington lived here. In 1930, the house was acquired by the Jesuits, who set up a seminary there. In the 1970s, the house was extensively restored by its former owner, Major Cholmeley Harrison, who lived here until his death in 2008 at the age of 99. He presented Emo Court to the President of Ireland in 1994, who turned it over to the State. The mansion is surrounded by beautiful gardens and parkland.

In the library there is a collection of Wedgwood black basalt ware. The former billiard room, today a study room, contains



The 'Irish-Chinese Chippendale' stairwell at Roundwood House

more Wedgwood vases. The ballroom has exquisite columns of Irish marble. The most surprising discovery there was a group of three dishes with monochrome painted landscapes on the mantelpiece. We were given exclusive permission to turn the dishes around, one of them proved to be Sèvres, one of the first samples of hard-paste porcelain from 1772, marked with a T. The others had marks from Zurich from around 1750. The Office of Public Works (OPW) at Emo Court kindly provided some pictures of the dishes, as we were unfortunately not allowed to take any pictures during our guided tour (available on request from the editor).

On our way to Roundwood House, we passed Port Laoise, which is known for Ireland's only high-security prison – the one where members of the IRA are usually detained. But our somewhat less dangerous destination was the Roundwood House inn, owned by the Irish Georgian Society and managed by Hannah and Paddy Flynn. We were received by an Irish Folk band in the 'Irish-Chinese Chippendale' stairwell of the Georgian house. It was built by Anthony Sharp, scion of a prosperous family of clothmakers, and probably dates from 1741. A huge table awaited us in the former barn (???). While Irish music was played, mouth-watering Irish stew and a delicious rhubarb crumble were served. A final dance after dinner inspired the singing on the bus during our entertaining drive back to Dublin.

Marlen Topp

Day 4

'The Steam Museum' read the sign that greeted us at the gates to what we expected to be our first stop of the day, Killadoon House. Slightly perplexed and after a few discussions and phone calls, our map-less coach driver Louis managed to get us back on track and we continued 15 minutes further on the roads of lovely County Kildare. Down a long narrow lane, we finally arrived at the actual gates to the house. It fast became clear, however, that the coach would not fit between the gateposts. Louis let us out of the coach to walk the rest of the driveway, while he started inching the coach backwards out of the mile-long narrow road.

After our amusing and unplanned start to the day, we finally arrived at the building and were heartily welcomed by Mr and Mrs Clements, the owners of the lovely 18th century Killadoon House. The house has been in family ownership since its construction in the 1760s and 1770s by Robert

Clements, later the 1st Earl of Leitrim. Since the early 19th century refurbishment, only minimal changes have been made to the house, resulting in an incredible time capsule (with particularly notable examples of wallpaper) from centuries past. Additionally, an extraordinary number of original inventories have been carefully preserved by the owners.

Divided into two groups, we were treated to a wonderful tour of the house. From furniture to original textiles and Irish linen, the rooms included many lovely pieces of history and art. The downstairs drawing room contained the most exciting finds of the morning. Nestled between a variety of other porcelain and ceramics, such as a lovely pair of Sèvres Dolphin salts (circa 1820) and an armorial Castelli dish (first half of the 18th century), were a lovely selection of rare Sèvres biscuit figures. A group of the figures, which included



En route to Killadoon

a portrait of Mme du Barry as a singer, 'La cantatrice du Barry', were originally commissioned as part of a very rare *surtout de table*. In 1772 the marchand mercier Madame Lair commissioned a set of terracotta models to be made of the figures in the Van Loo painting 'Le Concert Espagnol', which was sold to Catherine the Great by the owner Madame Geoffrin in the same year. The terracotta pieces were delivered to Sèvres to be turned into models for the *surtout de table*, which consisted of several groups and figures. A set of these was purchased by Mme du Barry, a further one may have been planned for Russia and another was acquired by Louis XV in December 1772. Between 1772 and 1775, 23 sets were produced. The selection of biscuit figures in Killadoon House also included rare figures of Zephyr and Apollo from the late 1770s or early 1780s and an earlier classical soft-paste group from circa 1769-72.

To our delight the owners had also laid out a selection of pieces on a table for us to handle and examine. These included some red stoneware, both Chinese and Wedgwood, some *blanc-de-chine*, a bit of Beleck, a Fürstenberg vase and a selection of glass. Shortly afterwards it was time to take our leave.

Back in the coach, we made our way to Castletown House, where we were greeted by delicious plates of sandwiches and hot soup. Invigorated, we started our tour of the house in the impressive entrance hall. After an introduction by both John O'Connell, whose architectural



An enraptured FPS group

education had been greatly influenced by the house, and our lovely Castletown guides, we were divided into several smaller groups and taken through the wonderful rooms. The house was built between 1722 and 1729 for William and Katherine Conolly and was passed on to a distantly-related, young couple, Tom and Louisa Conolly, in 1759. Both couples left their stamp on the house, which is a mixture of two styles, the rococo and the neo-classical. In 1965 the descendants sold the house to a property developer, who in turn sold it to the Hon. Desmond Guinness, the founder of the Irish Georgian Society, in 1967. The house was opened to the public and eventually given to the Irish people in 1994. It is now in the care of the Office of Public Works.

In spite of the lack of exciting porcelain, we were delighted to see the beautiful rooms and a variety of other wonderful works of art, which included a lovely arrangement of original 18th century dress in Lady Louisa's boudoir and the long gallery. Castletown is also home to an original 18th-century print room, the only one in Ireland, created by Louisa in the late 1760s.

After our delightful tour, it was time to head to our next stop on the programme, a private collector's home. On arrival we were greeted by our hostess, Sonia Rogers, with tea and delicious homemade cake. She allowed us to freely wander around her house and admire her very nice collection of Irish delft, which included some rare and well-painted Castletown pieces. There were also a few bits of later Meissen, a Worcester vase and a pair of mystery pugs, that we enjoyed puzzling over.

Our next stop was Leixlip Castle, County Kildare. The Hon. Desmond Guinness and his wife Penny graciously welcomed us to their home, where we received glasses of refreshing Pimms and delicious canapés. The Norman Castle was bought by the Conollys of Castletown in 1728 and purchased by Desmond Guinness in 1958. Again, we were given great freedom to wander and were treated to some fascinating stories from Desmond Guinness' life.

After a 30-minute drive back to Dublin, our evening continued with drinks and sandwiches at John O'Connell's lovely home, where we spent a cheerful hour chatting and laughing, before ending the day at the "Hot Stove" for a delicious three-course dinner to mark our final evening in Ireland.

Sophie von der Goltz

Day 5

We woke up to another fine spring day with sunshine and a brisk wind, full of excitement and expectations for an eventful and interesting day. Our first goal was Dunsany Castle in county Meath, an impressive rectangular building situated in an open park landscape with sheep grazing on pastures in the distance. Its grey stone walls, crenelated cornices and four towers revealed the building's origin as a Norman fortress of the 12th century. It has later been transformed several times to reach its present more romanticized Neogothic state, where the beautiful arched windows on the main facade is a particular feature.

For the next two hours our charming host, Lady Dunsany, did everything she could to make us absorb the magic and special atmosphere and get acquainted with the marvellous collections of this house. An artistic vein has characterized more than one member of the Plunkett family. One was the author the 18th Lord Dunsany (1878-1957), another the owner's late husband. The 20th Lord Dunsany, Edward C. Plunkett (1939- 2011) worked both as a designer, painter and sculptor and his abstract art adorns many rooms of the castle in playful contrast to the original interiors.

After passing through the intimate entrance hall where the colour scheme was held in black and white, and black pilasters in bunches of four framed the walls and carried the elegantly adorned Georgian ceiling, the house opened up in full height in the grand staircase. Yet another impressive staircase of the cantilever type, of which we have seen so many on this trip. The walls were bright yellow and adorned at every level with spectacular paintings, landscape, genre pieces and portraits, among them a portrait by van Dyke and one by Bartholomæus van der Helst. The bottom landing contained a small sculpture collection displaying marble figures in the manner of Antiquity mixed with a series of Chippendale furniture in chinoiserie style.

Among the most exiting objects here for us were three very large vases from Pilkington's Lancastrian Pottery & Tiles, made around 1904-1908. The firm became renowned for their extraordinary glazes. In this case a bright red, a dark blue and a pale lavender blue vase with large figure decorations taken from Greek mythology and The Valkyrie made in the special Lancastrian lustre glazing illustrated the advanced level of Pilkington works. Another treasure was a Meissen service of the Marcolini period with a decoration of kakiemon-inspired humming birds, a service originally comprising more than 400 pieces.

Upstairs the *pièce de resistance* of the tour was a small soft paste Sèvres basket, described to us by Ros Savill. The open basket shape seemed to be unique and Ros identified it as a spoon tray made around 1772. It belonged to a déjeuner set comprising a covered cup and socketed saucer, a sugar bowl and the original gilded spoon. It was agreed that a silver-gilt chocolate pot probably matched it too. On the bus later John Whitehead told us about another example he had discovered. Another very interesting object was an early holder in gold containing two Meissen chocolate cups with diverse decorations, a sort of portable déjeuner. This was admired and discussed as were some Meissen candelabras.



Admiring the decoration in the stairwell at Castletown

Another high point was the selection of rectangular trays with different flower decoration made in rare Tournai soft-paste porcelain. Two semi-circular console tables with scagliola decoration and gilded frames in a William Kent style were also impressive.

In various places Japanese vases and sculptural pieces of different periods were to be found, several other Meissen services and figures, as well as a Vienna service and two rare Berlin cups, one with green, another with blue reserve, the first with a bird motif, the second with a view of a building. Birds were a theme again in a very interesting service produced in Paris for the English market, revealed by the fact that all the birds' names were written in English on the reverse. The porcelain mark was a purple A.

Rounding off the tour we entered a large room, now dominated by a billiard table where a selection of Arts & Crafts furniture caught the eye. Especially noticeable among the ceramics was a large William de Morgan lustre plate, some more Pilkington works and a Della Robbia of Birkenhead plate. Another interesting feature was a rare carpet based on an Arthur Mackmurdo thistle pattern used by him also in graphic art and furniture. After having enjoyed a fine lunch of homemade delicacies we continued by bus to the last destination on our tour, Newbridge house. On the way we had to part with most of our German colleagues, as they had earlier flights.

The experiences at Newbridge house were as much architectural as ceramic. Coming from the left side we entered by the central staircase and Palladian doorway into the entrance hall where Alec Cobbe, the nephew of the former owner, explained the history of the Cobbe family, the special features of this building and its interiors. The house was built between 1747 and 1752 following the designs of the architect James Gibbs. In this case a special fact is that Gibb's original drawings for the design have been found and are now displayed in the house. Intimate in size the building contains several unique and unusual rooms, among them the Dining Room, the Museum of Curiosities room, the Sculpture Hall and the very large red Drawing Room. Adding immensely to the understanding of this building is the fact, that practically all the original furniture is retained creating a unique atmosphere.

One of the finest rooms was the Dining Room held in a low-key cream colour, where the rectangular-shaped

ornamental borders on the walls were allowed to dominate. They were very unusual by the fact that they constituted a rhythm of more classicistic ornaments made in recess on the walls opposed to more rococo shaped themes in relief in the ceiling, a very refined contrast. The decoration was probably made in the 1760s by Richard Williams. The doors melted into the whole, subdued by being painted in the same cream colour (not, as we have frequently encountered on this trip, magnificent mahogany doors) working as a perfect background for the Irish mahogany furniture and a black fireplace. A fine match. The dominating ceramic feature of his room was a Coalport service. A very unusual room in the house was the Museum of Curiosities based on the idea of the continental *Kunstkammer*. It is one of the very few surviving in Ireland and the UK. Part of the collections of natural history and ethnographical material is retained in wall cupboards that are partly replicas of the original ones designed by David Sibyl. The walls over the cupboards are lined with an unusual hand-painted wallpaper with Chinese landscapes framed by bamboo borders.



Dunsany Castle

The Music room housed a rare piano of the type Ludwig van Beethoven used to play. The maker was William Southwell of Dublin. Our host gave us a moving demonstration, hearing Beethoven music the way it would have sounded to him.

Bird services seem to have been a recurring item every day on this trip. In this room the ceramic revelation of the visit was the story of another bird service. This time a Worcester peacock service, with bird and insect motives in medallions framed by a dark blue reserve. 150 pieces exist today; 344 existed in 1822. The family has tried to trace the history of this service and has discovered that it was probably ordered in 1759 and delivered in 1763. The motifs were presumably based on *A Natural History of Uncommon Birds* by George Edwards published 1743-47. A lively discussion arose about a possible connection to French models and Sèvres predecessors for this service.

At this point time was scarce and we unfortunately had to rush through the Sculpture Hall to get a quick look at the magnificent red Drawing Room with its fine interior and an impressive, large collection of paintings. The visit ended with a sumptuous and overwhelming Irish Tea, preparing us for the journeys ahead, and this concluded our five fantastic days in Ireland.

Ulla Houkjeaer

HAREWOOD HOUSE

Helen Jacobsen on day one of the FPS summer outing in June 2014



Ros addresses the group

One of the more remarkable collections of French porcelain assembled in Britain in the early years of the nineteenth century was that of Edward 'Beau' Lascelles, eldest son of the 1st Earl of Harewood. A man of fashion and a discerning patron of the arts, his collection of Vincennes and Sèvres porcelain was such that even the Prince of Wales went to view it after Lascelles' premature death in 1814. Two hundred years later, the French Porcelain Society was privileged to have its own tour of the porcelain at Harewood during the exhibition *In Pursuit of the Exquisite* (running at Harewood House until 2 November, not to be missed!), supremely curated by Ros Savill and Anna Dewsnap. Ros acted as our principal guide and fed us with all kinds of fascinating information as we gazed and wondered at the ravishing porcelain on view.

And ravishing it certainly was. Lascelles appears to have had an unerring eye for the very best that the manufactory could offer; he was also assisted by able dealers who had access to pieces that had only ten years earlier been in French royal or aristocratic collections. Examples with a royal provenance included the tea service (*déjeuner Paris*) recently identified as having been inventoried in the chateau of Saint-Cloud in 1793, the oval dish and lemon-juice pot from the Louis XVI service (commissioned in 1783 and never finished) and the exquisite *beau bleu* 'cuvettes à tombeau' once owned by Madame du Barry and a gift to Lascelles from his friend the Prince of Wales who had bought them in London in 1802.

Set in the context of the state rooms at Harewood, the backdrop for the spectacular array of vases could not have been more sumptuous; what was even more wonderful, however, was that the Earl and Countess of Harewood had allowed the curators to grow real plants in them. For once we were able to see something of the way in which these vases

might have been displayed originally, and it added a never-to-be-forgotten moment to this exhibition of exceptional porcelain. A room devoted to useful wares showcased cups and saucers, *écuelles*, toilet pots and even a tobacco jar; biscuit figures were also on display, as were spectacular ornamental vases (a pair of vases '*à monter Daguerre*' of c.1782-8 and a pair of vases '*Daguerre ovale*', very similar to one in the Wallace Collection, the mounts possibly by Thomire) and a remarkable musical clock decorated with gilt and patinated bronze, white marble and porcelain plaques.

As if the porcelain currently in the collection was not enough, the curators have managed to bring a few pieces back to Harewood specifically for the exhibition, a lovely tribute to Beau Lascelles' anniversary. The *bleu céleste* vase '*à dauphin*', a model first recorded in 1755 to celebrate the birth of Louis XV's second grandson in 1754, may have been intended for the dauphine herself, painted as it is with children rather than cherubs. Ros recounted the fascinating tale of how the upper and lower parts of this vase had been inadvertently swapped and not reunited again until the 1980s! Another testament to the quality of Lascelles' collecting was the pair of *vases à bandes* (c.1770), of *beau bleu* ground, with their painted pastoral figure scenes in the distinctive style reminiscent of



The FPS group outside the house

Italian comedy figures probably by Charles-Eloi Asselin, lent by a private collector. Another pair of *beau bleu* vases still in the Harewood Collection underlines the early 19th-century taste for this ground colour: two vases '*Adélaïde*' of 1776 are decorated with flowers and fruit painted by Jean-Jacques Pierre and with lavish gilding by Jean-Pierre Boulanger. Once forming part of a garniture with a central vase '*du roi*' of the same ground colour (currently in the Wallace Collection), they appear to have been sold to Madame Marie-Adélaïde herself in 1777.

While the exhibition was surely the treat of the day, we were also taken on tours of the state rooms and able to explore the gardens and grounds. With the weather smiling on us, we passed a perfect day and extend our warmest thanks to Ros and Anna for their time and patience, as well as Lord and Lady Harewood for their kind hospitality.

Helen Jacobsen

CHATSWORTH

Jody Wilkie's account of the FPS summer outing to Chatsworth in June 2014



The second day of the FPS Summer Outing dawned warm and sunny. After a good night's sleep and a hearty breakfast, the group piled onto the bus and headed south to Chatsworth House, home of the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire. We were greeted by Hannah Obie, Curator of Exhibitions, and Matthew Hirst, Head of Arts and Historic Collections who took us into the courtyard of the house for an overview of its history and recent renovations – including the controversial gold window frames – before taking us inside to start the visit proper.

What became immediately apparent was the striking juxtaposition of historic and contemporary art collections. The whole Cavendish family – the current duke and duchess, their children and the dowager duchess – are very much involved in the life of Chatsworth House and are actively adding contemporary art to the family's extensive holdings. It must be remembered that the fabulous antiquities, paintings, furniture, silver, ceramics and books that form the core of the holdings at Chatsworth were the contemporary art of their day.

The portrait of Laura Burlington by the American artist Michael Craig-Martin is arguably the best example of this. The ever-changing digital image of the duke's daughter-in-law opposes a 17th-century fountain in the ground floor gallery leading to The Grotto in which a wild array of antiquities, contemporary ceramics and paintings are displayed. An installation of Craig-Martin's work, with plinths and brackets painted in fiery magenta supporting selected sculptures displayed in this gallery and the sculpture hall drew the eye through these crowded spaces, allowed one to focus on individual objects and respond to them in a new way. This parade of pink was complimented by Craig-Martin's monumental sculptures throughout the estate grounds that read as colorful line drawings – a giant high heeled shoe, a pitch-fork, a wheel barrow and umbrellas posed in the middle of pastures or beside fountains and pools in the more formal gardens.

We planned to tour the interior before the house opened to the public. In typical FPS fashion, we ran late. With so much to see, getting us to convene on time was an exercise in herding cats! Opened in March this year,

the Sketch Gallery is itself a work of art – that of Jacob van der Beugel, whose 659 textured and handmade panels representing the DNA of the immediate Cavendish family cover the exterior wall of the room overlooking the courtyard. Opposite are two ingenious deep-glazed vitrines along the interior wall mirrored with panels that reflect the DNA patterns. With clear glass front and back and mirror on the sides, these vitrines are incorporated into the wall of the duke and duchess's private sitting rooms. When the house is open to the public, the glass on the gallery side of the vitrines is clear and that on the sitting room side opaque, allowing visitors to see at a close distance the small-scale pieces of French, English and German porcelain displayed within without impinging on the privacy of the family. When the family is at home, the process is reversed so that those in the rooms can enjoy the porcelain in privacy.

Great care has been taken with the installation itself, conceived to be seen from both sides of the vitrines. Vaguely chronological, the left-hand cabinet features porcelain from circa 1720-1800 while the right side displays primarily 19th- and 20th-century examples. Laminated cards for each vitrine identify its treasures, so no display cards mar the installation. Everyone had great fun testing themselves and guessing at the origin and date of the biscuit figures, cups and saucers, bottle coolers and plates on show. There were many surprises: Meissen that looked like Sèvres, Derby that looked like Sèvres, and Vincennes and Sèvres from both the 18th and 19th centuries that looked exactly as one would expect.

After a relaxing break with a delicious (and enormous!) picnic lunch in the gardens, we were ready for round two. Some members went directly to a secluded room where Hannah, Matthew and their staff had placed a varied selection of French porcelain treasures – and a Medici porcelain oil and vinegar cruet! The rest were free to wander at leisure through the house, returning to what was fondly referred to as 'The DNA Gallery' for a closer look at the porcelain or to the State Apartments in which late 17th-century Delft was displayed as room decoration in the manner of Daniel Marot. There was even time for a quick wander through the gardens on what remains one of the nicest days of this summer.

As I was only party to one handling session, I cannot comment on what happened in the other. But I am sure it was equally fascinating – full of the open debate and sometimes heated discussion that characterize an FPS outing. Was the ecuelle, cover and stand truly a mélange of three separate pieces – a combination of Sèvres hard and soft pastes for the ecuelle and stand and Minton porcelain for the cover? Was it simply a question of and ecuelle and cover having a replacement stand? Is the black speckling on the underside of this piece due to re-firing and redecoration, or simply caused by imperfections in the paste? Take a look at this flower painting – gorgeous! Another day that reinforces why we all enjoy the FPS and keep coming back for more!

Jody Wilkie

Please send news, contributions, reviews, and details of new acquisitions and forthcoming exhibitions to catrinjhjones@gmail.com