

DELFTWARE

DO YOU KNOW YOUR ENGLISH FROM YOUR DUTCH DELFTWARE? OR A PUZZLE JUG FROM A POSSET POT? SERENA FOKSCHANER REVEALS THE STORY BEHIND THIS BEAUTIFUL EARTHENWARE

You would be forgiven for confusing Dutch Delftware with English delftware. The two, after all, have a great deal in common. They are both tin-glazed earthenwares, inspired by Chinese blue and white export porcelain. In addition, English delftware was first produced in 1567 by a pair of émigré potters – Jasper Andries and Jacob Jansen – who came from Antwerp, a city close to Delft itself, the main centre of tin-glazed pottery production in Europe. Over time, the English wares also took the name of the Dutch town (although English delftware is spelt with a lower case d). English and Dutch delftware remained popular for almost the same period, too. In England, the industry declined in the late 18th century, when lead-glazed creamware became fashionable. This had an impact on production in Holland as well, which continues today – though on a much smaller scale.

So why is English delftware now more sought after than its Dutch equivalent? The answer, explains dealer Jonathan Horne, lies in the quality of decoration. 'Although the standard of painting was often higher in Holland, there's a freshness and humour to English delft. The glazes are softer; the lines less harsh. By contrast with Dutch Delft, which can sometimes look rather stiff, English wares have a naivety and charm, like folk art. There is also a rarity value;

far less delftware was produced in England than in Holland, so it is therefore more prized.'

The earliest English tin-glazed wares were known as galleyware – after the ships used to transport them. They were made in Norwich, where Andries and Jansen set up their pottery. Production spread to London in the early 17th century, and to Bristol by the middle of the century. These remained the principal centres of production, but delft was also made in Wincanton in the 1730s, and Liverpool from the early 18th century. One bankrupted potter moved to Belfast to set up a works; another factory opened in Dublin soon after. A major pottery – the Delftfield – began around 1748 in Glasgow.

Delftware was made for all classes and this is reflected in the huge diversity of shapes. 'At one point, everyone had a piece of delft. It was the standard ware of the time; for everyday and decorative use,' says Jonathan. So you might find tiles, bottles, mugs, plates, porringers or jugs – for wine, punch, slops or flowers. For flowers, there were baluster or urn-shaped vases, wall pockets and flower bricks. There were also inkstands, wash



1 SEATED CAT made in London in the late 17th century
2 POLYCHROMATIC FECUNDITY DISH a mid 17th century display piece, probably influenced by French faience
3 SET OF MERRY MAN PLATES which would have adorned a dining table
4 WILLIAM III BULB HOLDER from London, circa 1700
5 FAZACKERLEY PALETTE PUZZLE JUG with latticework and three spouts, mid 18th century





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SIGNS OF AUTHENTICITY

Attributing pieces is difficult because English delftware is rarely marked or dated. In addition, the artisans are mainly unknown and most of them moved between potteries. The only way to identify pieces is therefore through study – in books, museums, fairs, auction houses and dealers. Over time, you will recognise subtle variations in tone, colour and pattern which point to different potteries or regions.

For instance, the Lambeth pottery produced wares with a greenish tinge in the glaze from the mid 18th century, while some Bristol wares feature grounds softly tinted with sky-blue, grey-blue and lavender. There is a particular combination of colours – known as Fazackerley, named after two mugs made for a certain Thomas Fazackerley. It's usually composed of leaves and flowers in either blue, yellow, green and red; or green, manganese, blue and yellow; both combinations are embellished with touches of manganese. Fazackerley colours appear on Liverpool tiles; transfer-printed tiles were only made by Sadler and Green, also of Liverpool.

USEFUL READING

English Delftware by Anthony Ray (Jonathan Horne Publications, £11)
London Delftware by Frank Britton (Jonathan Horne Publications, £55).
 Look in secondhand bookshops or in the library for: *English Delftware* by Anthony Ray (Faber & Faber); *English Delftware* by Michael Archer and FH Garner (Faber & Faber); *English Delftware in the Bristol Collection* by Frank Britton (published for Sotheby's by Philip Wilson Publishers)

PLACES TO SEE DELFTWARE

The exhibition centre at **Southwark Cathedral** in London has the only example of an old tin-glazing kiln in Europe. **The Ashmolean Museum** in Oxford houses the extensive Warren Collection. **Bristol City Art Gallery** holds some 800 pieces of delftware. **The Fitzwilliam Museum**, Cambridge, has the Glaisher Collection of porcelain and pottery, including many pieces of delftware. You can also see examples at **The Museum of London** and the National Trust's **Cotehele**, in Cornwall.



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basins, bleeding bowls, bird feeders and the ointment pots, pill tiles and drug jars supplied to apothecaries. 'Each design is a piece of social history – you can learn so much about daily life in 17th and 18th century England by looking at delftware,' adds Jonathan.

Some of the quirkiest designs, like posset pots and puzzle jugs, are associated with drinking. Posset pots, popular in the 17th and 18th centuries, have two

handles and a spout through which you drank the posset – a medicinal brew of spices, sugar and milk curdled with wine, ale or liquors. Puzzle jugs, on the other hand, had a complex system of spouts; the challenge to the drinker was to imbibe the contents without spilling any. The jugs could be highly decorative, often in blue and white with delicate latticework.

Equally sought after are the famous 'blue-dash chargers' – large dishes made in London and Bristol from circa 1640 to 1740, standing on a 'footrim' and bordered by a flat rim adorned with simple, blue diagonal dashes – hence the name.

The potters drew on popular motifs of the day for decoration. You can see depictions of royalty, politicians and historical >





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1 MONEY BOX DOG with collar bearing the maker's mark, George Adlum – a very rare, early 18th century piece
2 TEAPOT dated circa 1755, and made in either London or Liverpool
3 LIDDED POSSET POT with drinking spout, early 18th century, Bristol or London



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figures, as well as events, such as the first balloon flight, or the capture of Portobello. Heraldic emblems made for livery companies such as the Apothecaries or the Glaziers, biblical scenes, verses, mottoes and inscriptions also appear. The commonest motifs are fruit, flowers, animals, birds, fish and landscapes. Ironically, the restraints of the Puritan era led to some very attractive wares, in which minimal decoration is offset by the milky whiteness of the glaze. By the 18th century, patterns reflected the fashions for chinoiserie, or neo-classical swags, ribands and urns.

As with French faience and Italian maiolica – two further types of tin-glazed earthenware – the palette used to decorate delftware was limited to blues, greens, yellows, oranges, purples and reds. This was because only specific mineral pigments could be mixed with the glaze and withstand the high temperatures

in the kiln. Nonetheless, the decorators managed to create many subtle variations in colour, which they applied using a range of different techniques.

Such is the variety of delftware that it can be hard to know what to buy. The answer is to go for something that captures your imagination. As you look in fairs, salerooms or dealers' shops you'll find pieces to suit most tastes – and pockets – although prices are rising as delftware becomes scarcer. Simple tiles, as well as plates, bowls and dishes, can still be found for relatively fair sums.

Interestingly, the more valuable the piece, the less its price is affected by any chips and cracks. A large, rare object, valued at £50,000, would be worth almost the same if it was cracked. 'It is better to buy a restored piece with interesting decoration than a perfect example with a more conventional pattern,' concludes Jonathan. 'What counts is the quality of the design.'

WHAT YOU MIGHT PAY

English delftware is in demand at home and in America – where there is a strong market for 'colonial' antiques. Consequently, record prices are constantly being set – a lavishly decorated charger, for instance, fetched £280,000 in a recent sale. However, a boon of collecting delftware is that new – and smaller – pieces are always turning up. So even the modestly-pocketed can still find treasures.

As a rule of thumb, early wares are worth more than 18th century pieces – although this can vary according to the shape and quality of design, glaze and colouring. Shaped hollow-ware – jugs, bottles, vases – fetch more than flatwares, like plates; although the famous 'charger' dishes are the most expensive pieces of delft. Commemorative pieces, dated pieces and those bearing initials or a family crest or company emblem are especially sought after. You can expect to pay around £100 and upwards for a

simply decorated plate or tile, drug jar or wall vase from the 17th century; transfer printed tiles – which were only made in Liverpool – fetch more. Smaller vessels, including flower vases or flower bricks, fetch between £1,000 and £2,000. In the £2,000 to £5,000 bracket you can find posset pots (from the 18th century), puzzle jugs, bleeding bowls, pill tiles or decorative shoes. From £5,000 and upwards, there are teapots, figurines, punchbowls, sauceboats and tureens. Top prices are for elaborate polychromatic dishes and 'blue dash chargers'.

SPECIALIST DEALERS, FAIRS AND SALEROOMS

Alistair Sampson Antiques, 120 Mount Street, London, W1K 3NN, 020 7409 1789
Aurea Carter, Burton's Antiques Arcade, 296 Westbourne Grove, London, W11 2PS, 020 7731 3486. Sat or by appt
Guest & Gray, 1-7 Davies Mews, London W1K 5AB, 020 7408 1252

Jonathan Horne Antiques,

66c Kensington Church Street, London, W8 4BY, 020 7221 5658

Lucy Johnson, by appointment (Burford, Oxford), 01993 823726

Paul Hopwell Antiques, 30 High Street, West Haddon, Northamptonshire NN6 7AP, 01788 510636

Richard Freeman, The Corn Exchange Building, The Ginnell, Harrogate, HG1 2RB, 01937 844486

The Harrogate Antique Fair, 28th September – 2nd October, Harrogate International Centre, King's Road, Harrogate, HG1 7LA, 01823 323363

34th Surrey Antiques Fair, featuring an exhibition of English delftware tiles, 4th – 7th October, Guildford Civic, London Road, Guildford, GU1 2AA, 01483 422562

Olympia Fine Art and Antiques Fair, 12th – 18th November, National Hall, Hammersmith Road, London, W14 8UX, 020 7370 8212

The International Ceramics Fair & Seminar,

14th – 17th June 2002, The Park Lane Hotel, Piccadilly, London, W1J 7BX, 020 7734 5491

All the major salerooms hold regular sales of pottery, some devoted to delftware.

CARE AND RESTORATION

Less is more when it comes to looking after delftware – so the obvious applies. You can clean pieces using a cloth dipped in warm – not hot – water, but never soak them, as the pottery is very porous and will take a long time to dry out. If you want to display flowers, a tip from Jonathan is to cut a plastic bottle in half, fill it with water and put it inside the jug or vase to hold the flowers. That way you'll avoid water seeping through the clay – and marking surfaces. Cracks and damage should be restored by an expert; your dealer can recommend one.