

ENGLISH EARTHENWARES: THE CARTER COLLECTION

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The potter's craft made long strides in England from the middle of the seventeenth to the close of the eighteenth century. Its development was influenced by various circumstances, among them the advent of foreign-born craftsmen and the importation of foreign wares, especially Chinese porcelain, which set new fashions and stimulated the native potter to experiment with new techniques. The popularity of tea and coffee and a general improvement in table appointments gave a great impetus to the creation of neatly potted table wares, while increasing scientific knowledge enabled the potter to refine his materials.

Significant phases in this development are brilliantly represented in a collection of English earthenwares recently given to the Museum by Mrs. Russell S. Carter and now shown in Gallery F 17. A keen and discriminating collector, Mrs. Carter has succeeded in "bagging" a surprising number of exceptional pieces. Many of these were shown in important exhibitions in England in the past and were prized items in such well-known English collections as the Lomax, Sheldon, Clements, Griffith, Elliot, and Revelstoke. The Carter collection of one hundred and eighty pieces spans a wide range: the earliest example, a Lambeth delft wine bottle, bears the date 1651; at the other extreme are two Ralph Wood figures of rhinoceroses (ill. p. 86) probably made about 1780.

As the illustrations suggest, an interesting variety of styles and techniques is included.

The dish illustrated on this page, bearing a summary but spirited portrait of King William, is one of a large class of display dishes known as blue-dash chargers because of their border designs. These dishes were painted in a limited range of colors on a ground of white enamel that covered the deeper-toned clay beneath.



*Bristol dish with figure of William III.
Tin-enamelled earthenware, about 1700*

Before the time of Josiah Wedgwood and Ralph Wood, pottery was rarely marked with a maker's name. But the names of several earlier men who were outstanding in the discovery and promotion of new wares have now become practically syn-

onymous with them. Thus little figures of dark brown, red, and white clay, crudely put together but alert in pose and expression, are traditionally associated with Astbury and Whieldon. The rich brown costume and base and the manganese eyes of the bagpiper (ill. opposite) are typical of a period about 1745. Some five years later lighter colorings had become popular; the eyes were often not tinted at all but were indicated by simple tool marks, a change which is illustrated by the mounted dragoon.

Contemporary with these rare figures are the three "Astbury" pots of warm red and dark brown clay made brilliant by a yellow-toned glaze. By way of pleasant contrast, they are



Staffordshire wares, about 1740-1750, showing the use of warm earth colorings and simple techniques associated with Astbury and Whieldon. ABOVE: Bagpipers and a dragoon. BELOW: Coffee-pot and teapots with "sprigged," stamped, and enameled decoration



ABOVE: *Salt-glazed stoneware, Staffordshire, about 1745-1760.* BELOW: *Rhinoceroses, probably original models, made by Ralph Wood about 1780*

decorated with applied and stamped pads of white pipe clay. The teapot (right) is an exceptional piece of red earthenware because it is painted with enamel colors and represents the transition from simple clay decoration to painted designs.

Chinese porcelain with its whiteness, hardness, and translucency became a standard of excellence for all European potters. Striving to produce an inexpensive, thinly-potted table ware, the English craftsman at length succeeded in making a high-fired, partially vitrified, white stoneware which he glazed with salt. While it

did not attempt to imitate porcelain, it shared some of the latter's practical virtues. The earlier pieces were usually left white and were often cast in fantastic shapes; witness the little teapot in the form of a kneeling camel, which is molded with great delicacy (illustrated above). The bottle next to this teapot shows the popularity of Chinese styles and the restrained use of enamel colors a little later. The early salt-glaze figures, like the dog shown here, are primitive and full of racy humor. The bird is an example of the extremely rare colored salt-glaze figures.