

MELTING POT

MAGAZINE | SPRING 2026 | ISSUE NO. 25



*Painted & Sketched
by Geo Humbley
Leafage by Filders*

CONTENTS

THE CERAMIC HOME	04
THE 20TH CENTURY SERVED	07
MORE THAN A MUSEUM	08
A SCOOP OF HISTORY	10
THE COPPER PLATE MYSTERY	14
WINTER TALKS	15
2026 EVENTS	15

Front cover image: Vase design, George Edward Hundley, Ornamental Decorations, MoRW RW6/148

Museum of Royal Worcester
Severn Street, Worcester WR1 2ND
01905 21247
www.museumofroyalworchester.org
info@museumofroyalworchester.org

Dyson Perrins Museum Trust CIO Charity Reg. No. 1198566
The Friends of the Museum of Worcester Porcelain Charity Reg. No. 1090660
Royal Worcester' and the C51 crown device are registered by and used under kind permission from Portmeirion Group UK Ltd. to whom all rights are reserved.

Dear Friends

As we begin another exciting year, I want to extend my sincere thanks to you for your continued support. Your ongoing engagement is much appreciated.

Last year we were thrilled to receive the British Library Food Display Award for our work with Food Historian, Chef and Podcaster Dr Neil Buttery for Dr Wall's Dinner display and the 18th Century inspired social and food history education and community activities, educating young people, families, schools, and adults with learning needs. The project explored the links between the 18th Century and contemporary living, dining, poetry and catering.

With support from our community funders in 2025, we have worked with over 700 participants experiencing circumstances such as loneliness, isolation, health issues, and displacement. We have provided welcoming social and educational experiences inspired by the collections and archives. We have also seen sustained interest and attendance in our public workshop, courses and pottery studio activities including high numbers of attendance at painting pottery evening events.

Attracting visits continues to be our focus. We have seen a growth in our family and child audiences, at 16% compared to 3% in 2022. Thanks to the Arts Council Renewal Fund awarding over £200,000 in 2025 we have reinstated three months of reserves and covered our budget shortfall.

This funding has also enabled us to initiate our strategy for growth and sustainability for 2026. In our 275th anniversary year of the founding of the Factory we will celebrate with activities designed especially for our Friends. We look forward to inviting you to a programme of displays, talks, afternoon teas, workshops and studio events. We are delighted to be expanding our programme of behind-the-scenes tours led by Philip Serrell and Paul Crane, offering rare insights into our collections and factory archive.

Looking ahead, our ambitions are bold as we work on reaching new overseas and UK visitors to experience the joy of the collections. We are actively fundraising for a crucial upgrade to our digital collections system so that we can develop new exhibitions and experiences for our current audiences and to attract new and repeat visits. We are focused on broadening access, strengthening our profile, and ensuring the Museum remains a vibrant, inclusive place for learning and discovery.

Whether joining an expert-led tour, winter online talks, enjoying an afternoon tea or reading the Melting Pot, we hope you will feel even more closely connected to the work we do. At every stage, Friends are partners in this journey. Thank you for your enthusiasm and generosity. I look forward to welcoming you at our events throughout the year.

Best wishes,
Kate Travers
Museum Director



THE CERAMIC HOME

By Rebecca Walker, Collections Assistant

In an era of mass production, mainstream Victorian homes embraced a cluttered and eclectic style, with every surface adorned in a myriad of decorative objects. As incomes rose in the 19th century, more people accessed middle-class comforts, and department stores offered an expanding array of goods. From the 1870s, householders - particularly women - enthusiastically embraced interior decoration, guided by books, shopping catalogues and magazines on home management.

Ceramics played a pivotal role in decorating the home. Worcester factories produced a wide variety of wares from decorative tiles to ornate door furniture, designed in the historical revival styles of the period, including (but not limited to) Gothic, Classical, Moorish and Rococo.



Door Plate, Chamberlain & Co., 1850, MoRW 2043

Nature Indoors

During the Victorian era, a deep fascination with the natural world found expression in decorative elements within the home. The naturalistic style was inspired by botanical studies and a desire to bring nature indoors. Grainger & Co. produced a variety of decorative vases that were heavily decorated with moulded leaves, flowers and animals, as well as embossed tiles with stylised botanical sprays.

Neo-Rococo Door Furniture

From the 1830s, Chamberlain and Grainger produced ceramics in the popular Neo-Rococo style, a revival of 18th-century French Rococo. Their decorative vases drew inspiration from Sèvres porcelain, incorporating bold coloured grounds, delicately painted floral panels, and rich gilding, but the curving C- and S-shaped scrolls on handles and edges became more exaggerated and elaborate than their 18th Century counterparts. Multiple vases, alongside ceramic figures, clocks and candlestick holders, formed crowded fireplace garnitures.

This style dominated many interiors in the 19th Century and was a popular choice for grander reception rooms and bedrooms. In the 1840s and 1850s, both Worcester factories produced door furniture - such as doorknobs and roses, finger plates, signs and escutcheons - in this French style to match interior décor. For Chamberlain, this became a major part of their business, supplying Britain and America with designs graded by decorative richness and gold content.

Medieval and Classical Tiles

Although Chamberlain and Grainger were producing door furniture in similar designs, their tile production was drastically different, in both material and style.

In the 1840s Chamberlain and Co. made reproductions of 16th Century Medieval encaustic tiles found within local buildings. At first these tiles were used to restore church floors, but they quickly became a popular choice for the home. Homeowners could choose encaustic tile patterns from catalogues as well as commission specific heraldic designs or family emblems and mottos. Encaustic tiles were a practical choice for hallways and corridors as they were hardwearing and easy to clean.

Medieval flooring was an aspect of the Gothic Revival interior, one of the most influential styles of the Victorian age. Chamberlain also produced decorative ceramics that featured Christian medieval architecture and biblical references. The movement was influenced by designer and writer A.W. N. Pugin. A copy of his work *Gothic Ornaments of the 15th and 16th Centuries* (first published in 1831) can be found in the Design Library in the Museum's archives, which would have been used to influence factory artists.

By contrast, during the 1870s and 1880s Grainger & Co. produced a series of moulded glazed and unglazed wall tiles in soft greens, blues, pinks, and creams, often accented with gold. This colour palette, along with classical motifs such as oak leaves, lions and scrolls, follow the Classical Revival style of the 19th century. Later known as the Adam Revival, the style reinterpreted Neo-classical decoration produced by Robert Adam in the 18th century, of pastel colours and architectural features from ancient Greece and Rome.

However, the geometric designs found on some of the Grainger tiles also derive from Arabic designs, following the 19th century's Moorish Revival. This was very typical of the period's design reinterpretations, where inspirations from different sources were fused together. By 1870, decorative tiles such as these by Grainger became more affordable and graced all areas of the home, such as fireplaces, hallway walls, washstands and furniture.

The Victorian home became a site of artistic ambition, where ceramics were an important part of domestic decoration. *The Ceramic Home* exhibition invites visitors to rediscover this world through objects not usually on display, exploring how craftsmanship and consumer culture shaped one of the most imaginative periods in British interior design.

This temporary exhibition is open until August 2026 in the Exhibition Hall in the Museum.

Entry is free with admission.



Embossed Tiles, Grainger & Co., 1870-1889, MoRW 5977

DONATE A POT



Do you have a piece of Royal Worcester tucked away in your attic or the back of your cupboards that you can donate to the Museum? No matter how big or small, our visitors delight in buying a piece to take home and 100% of the income goes directly towards caring for our collections.

If you do then please contact us at:

Museum of Royal Worcester
Severn Street, Worcester WR1 2ND

T 01905 21247
www.museumofroyalworcester.org

THE 20TH CENTURY SERVED

By Mike Smith, Friend of the Museum

Earlier this year, while attending the Friends Lunch, I was introduced to Louise, from Collections, who invited me to visit the Museum's Archive.

My particular interest lay in a distinctive series of 1960s tableware patterns, all sharing a similar design yet which can be divided into two groups: the 'basic' patterns of Allegro, Hyde Park, and Padua, and the more 'enhanced' versions - Balmoral (green and pink), Sandringham, and Windsor. With the help of the Collections team, I learned these classical designs were the work of Ivor Williams. They even found a 1967 news release describing Padua as:

'a classical design on the new Palladian shape but in black relief, Padua will be of special appeal to the smart young set and a certain winner for the semi-formal party. A 25-piece dinner service will retail at £47 1s 6d' (equivalent to nearly £900 today!).

Encouraged by the Museum's enthusiasm for preserving these mid-century patterns, I have donated examples of each design for the Museum's permanent collection.

The Museum would be delighted to receive offers of other 20th-Century Royal Worcester patterns, especially from the 1950s to 1990s, to help fill any remaining gaps and ensure this period is fully represented for future generations to enjoy.



During my visit, I also explored the Museum Shop, where sales of donated tableware make a tangible contribution to the Museum's running costs. Seeing how attractively these donated items are displayed and how well they seem to sell, encouraged me to renew my support for this worthwhile revenue raising scheme.

If you have any Royal Worcester tableware from the mid-to-late 20th century in good condition that you no longer need, please consider donating it to the Shop. With Gift Aid, your support can go even further—all helping to secure the Museum's future. Thanks to Louise and the Collections team and the Shop team for all their interest and help.

If you are interested in contributing to our Donate a Pot scheme, please contact info@museumofroyalworcester.org



Service ware, Summerfield Pattern, Royal Worcester, c. 1988-1997, Museum Shop



Service ware, Mayfield Pattern, Royal Worcester, c. 1981-1994, Museum Shop



MORE THAN A MUSEUM

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



In 2025, the Museum continued to strengthen its role as a welcoming, creative space for everyone through a wide range of community outreach projects. During the Summer months there was a hub of family-focused activity at the Museum. Heritage and Outreach Officer Kay Mullett piloted a children's playscheme and a family workshop with great success, attracting enthusiastic participation and very positive feedback from children and families alike. These trials have given us confidence to develop future programmes that support learning, creativity and enjoyment for all ages.



From September to December, thanks to support from the Worcestershire Community Foundation, our outreach work focused on wellbeing and how meaningful engagement with the Museum can support mental health, confidence and social connection. Artist Fliss O'Neill worked with young adults with learning difficulties at Perdiswell Young People's Leisure Club and with the Evesham Welcomes group, culminating in a special day at the Museum and a creative card-making workshop with former Royal Worcester flower modeller Avril Pulley. Museum Assistant Mary Cannon led a ten-week programme with Ukrainian refugees meeting at the Museum, exploring a rich variety of activities including clay work, glazing, watercolours, transfer printing, a Chinese Tea Ceremony and a memorable session with former Royal Worcester painter Jim Skerrett.



Our wellbeing programme extended across many communities. Kay worked with ASPIE, supporting adults with autism through clay, painting and pottery-throwing sessions at the Museum, responding directly to participants' interests. She also delivered Winter Warmers self-led activities, chocolate plate painting workshops, sessions with the Worcester Warriors dementia group, and outreach workshops that combined creativity with conversation and connection. Anya Mullett, as Outreach Officer, delivered clay sessions for children on the ward at Worcester Royal Hospital, including sensitive one-to-one work, and led activities with Age UK groups across Malvern, Worcester, Upton and Droitwich for people living with dementia.

These projects reflect our commitment to using the Museum's collections, skills and creativity to support wellbeing, inclusion and community connection across Worcestershire.

A SCOOP OF HISTORY

By Rebecca Walker, Collections Assistant

As part of our continuing commitment to engage local communities through heritage, science, and hands-on creativity, the Museum of Royal Worcester collaborated with multi award-winning food historian **Dr. Neil Buttery** on an exciting new project that explored the rich history and science of 18th-Century iced desserts.

This innovative programme, funded by the Royal Society's Places of Science 2024-2025, invited participants to discover the Georgian world of luxury ices—how they were made, moulded, and served in exquisite Worcester porcelain.

A Chilling Taste of the Past

You may already know Dr Neil Buttery—host of *The British Food History Podcast* and author of numerous books on the subject—who is a familiar face at the Museum. In 2023-24, supported by an Arts Council England National Lottery Projects Grant, we worked with Neil to 'unlock' our



through new permanent displays and a series of plum pudding workshops. The striking installation *Dr Wall's Dinner* in the Georgian Galleries presents a recreated Georgian dining table laid with Worcester porcelain, glassware, candlesticks and crafted models of historic foods. This display, together with its associated programme, received the Food on Display Award at the British Library Food Season Awards in 2025.

This time we invited Neil back to the Museum to deliver hands-on workshops to explore how the Georgians made ice cream and sorbet in an age before refrigeration. In the 1700s, ice cream was a luxury reserved for the wealthy because the ice needed to make and store it had to be harvested in winter, transported long distances, and kept in expensive ice houses dug underground. Decorative porcelain wares used to serve these decadent ices were also expensive. Workshop participants had a unique chance to view Worcester Porcelain ice pails and ice cups from our collection and discover their original uses.

To keep historic ices from melting during the dessert course, servants packed a blend of ice and salt both beneath and on top of the central bowl inside the ice pail. When salt is mixed with ice, it triggers an endothermic reaction that lowers the temperature to well below 0°C, keeping the ice cream firm until being served.

Using three metal bowls with salt and ice, Neil guided participants through making their own Bergamot Sorbet and Tamarind Ice Cream, both from traditional Georgian recipes. The sorbet proved especially popular - the tamarind ice cream prompted more varied reactions! Neil then demonstrated how decorative ices were created using antique pewter moulds in all sorts of shapes. Trying to identify each mould sparked plenty of curiosity and lively debate—was it a melon, a pineapple, an asparagus?

Inclusive and Inspiring Learning

Across all sessions, the workshops were adapted to meet the needs of different age groups and abilities. The project ran sessions for schools,

home educators, and a wide range of community groups:

- *Cherry Orchard Primary School Year 6 pupils*
- *Home Educators Group (Primary to Secondary age)*
- *Cube Youth (Malvern Cube) for young people aged 12-18*
- *Worcester Community Trust Mini Youth Club (ages 8-12)*
- *The Monday Night Club for adults with learning disabilities and/or autism*

The workshops were lively and welcoming, with all groups taking part confidently and at their own pace. Participants especially appreciated the practical activity, checking for ice formation when making their own desserts, and took real pride in what they produced. It was an enjoyable, inclusive session that kept everyone engaged.

"It's been a real pleasure working with the Museum of Royal Worcester to bring Georgian ice cream to life. I hope participants came away with a better understanding of the labour, cost, and craft behind these luxurious treats—and discovered that historic food can be truly delicious!"

Dr. Neil Buttery



Make Georgian Ice Cream At Home!

Fancy making your own Georgian Ice Cream and Sorbet at home?

Visit our website to download our fun 'Historic Ices Worksheet' and recipes and watch Neil's 'How to' video. We have also made a fun 'Design Your Own Historic Ices' activity sheet for children (& adults!) to do at home.

Visit: www.museumofroyalworcester.org/discover-learn/community-collaborations/georgian-ice-cream-workshops



FROM KILN TO CLOUD: STEPS TO A DIGITAL COLLECTION

By Louise Price, Collections Officer



Examples of Chinese Ornament, Owen Jones, 1867, Plate 87, MoRW B780



Cup and saucer patterns W285-286, Pattern Book No. 10, Royal Worcester, 1881, MoRW RW1/1000

While the Museum has thousands of digital images of its china collection, our aim is to provide access to its even larger (and one might argue often *more* important) collection of artists' sketches, pattern books and the 'Design Library' used as source inspiration by the factories' many talented artists.

To do so, each volume or individual work on paper or board is carefully transported to the Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service at The Hive and then digitised by their experienced and skilled staff. Using high resolution and large sensor photographic equipment, the team produce high-quality digital copies which they can send back to us almost immediately via a secure online digital download service.

While in their care, the materials are held in an environmentally controlled strong room, and to ensure each piece is captured in its best possible condition they are cleaned and repaired by our Arts Society Volunteers first.

We have pleasure in sharing with you a 'sneak peek' of images from the most recent batch sent for digitisation. As well as the vase by George Edward Hundley on this edition's front cover, they include

a working pencil sketch of Mother and Child by renowned Worcestershire artist Thomas Bott; a jug in watercolour from one of the Grainger factory's Ornamental Pattern Books dated from 1894; plate 87 of Owen Jones' *Examples of Chinese Ornament* 1867; and a page from Royal Worcester's Pattern Book No. 10 showing full colour illustrations of patterns W285-286.

In creating a digital archive, we can both use and share these wonderful images to share the stories of Worcester's porcelain factories far and wide, while also securing the future of the original archive beyond even the natural life of the paper it was created on. This process involves significant costs, both in terms of our time and the expertise provided by the Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service. If you would like to support the expansion of our digital collections, we'd love to hear from you.

We're raising money for a Collections Management System, to manage our digitised collection and make it widely and more easily available via our website. We have raised £8,000 so far towards the £20,000 CMS cost. Please support us with a donation towards our target at www.museumofroyalworcester.org



Jug Design, H. Hundley, Ornamental Decorations, MoRW RW6/148



Mother and Child pencil sketch, Thomas Bott Sketchbook, MoRW RP4847

PHILIP
SERRELL

auctioneers & valuers

A rare Royal Worcester finely pierced shoe, by George Owen length 6ins



SOLD FOR £25,000

WE HOLD REGULAR INTERIORS AND FINE ART & ANTIQUES AUCTION SALES
VALUATIONS FOR SALE, INSURANCE & INHERITANCE TAX PURPOSES UNDERTAKEN

ALL SALE CATALOGUES ONLINE:
and seen via www.serrell.com

ENTRIES AND ENQUIRIES: THE MALVERN SALEROOM, BARNARDS GREEN ROAD
MALVERN, WORCESTERSHIRE, WR14 3LW TEL: 01684 892314
Email - auctions@serrell.co.uk