

Derby Porcelain: André Planche and William Duesbury

Image: Plan of the Town of Derby showing the silk mill and china works in the top right-hand portion of the map. Rev Daniel Lysons and Samuel Lysons, *Magna Britannia, being a Concise Topographical Account of the Several Counties of Great Britain, Volume the Fifth containing Derbyshire*, (London, T Cadell and W Davies, 1817)

Image from: Local Studies and History, Birmingham Central Library

Making porcelain at Derby began as early as the 1730s, but the start of the Derby factory is associated with the “china maker” André Planche (1727-1805), the son of a Huguenot immigrant. Planche established his first china workshop in 1748. Little is known about his life, but his artistic talent is to be seen in several figures and jugs which are preserved at Derby Museum and Art Gallery, and at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

In 1756, Planche entered into partnership with William Duesbury, (1725-1786), an enameller from Staffordshire, who became manager of the factory in Nottingham Road. Under his leadership the factory started to produce china of outstanding quality. Unlike other local establishments, the Derby factory made little tableware and almost entirely produced ornamental vases and figurines, which were strongly influenced by continental porcelain, mainly of Sèvres and Meissen. Duesbury even proudly claimed to have created at Derby a “second Meissen”. Special features of Derby porcelain were its intricate shapes, rich polychrome painting and sophisticated decoration, which would later be also enriched by generous gilding.

Being well aware of the competition, Duesbury purchased several potteries near London, including the famous Bow and Chelsea Works, and eventually closed them down. Craftsmen from Chelsea were brought to Derby.

In 1775, George III authorised the use of the crown in the factory mark. In 1890, Queen Victoria would confirm the prestige of the Derby factory by granting it the use of the Royal Arms and the title “Royal”.