

## LONGTON HALL: SOME THOUGHTS BY JOHN ROBSON

Longton Hall is a very interesting factory in that it operated for about 10 years only, from 1750 to 1760, the principal brainchild of William Littler who later worked in Scotland at West Pans.

After West Pans, William Littler moved back to Staffordshire and produced wares in partnership with Mr Ralph Baddeley from about 1777 to 1784.

William Littler died in October 1784, although Ralph Baddeley probably continued to make porcelain until 1790.

Littler set up a stoneware factory in about 1745 in Staffordshire and successfully applied Cobalt Blue to his wares. He was then engaged by William Jenkinson in Staffordshire to set up a new porcelain factory at Longton Hall with Littler as the manager. Littler continued with his Cobalt Blue application, now called 'Littler's Blue', very much experimenting with it.

Dr Bernard Watney was fascinated by this factory and in 1957 published his book 'Longton Hall Porcelain' but, unfortunately, some of his conclusions were incorrect which came about partly because of the lack of Longton Hall archives. For instance, he attributed many figures to Longton Hall but, as we now know, were in fact produced at Vauxhall.

This has persisted as one saw at the Doyle Auctions on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2021 in New York on the sale of the Sarah Belk Gambrill Collection of English porcelain where some of the figures offered for sale were described as 'Longton Hall/Vauxhall.'

Dr Watney was tenacious and, if he was wrong, readily accepted criticism. By careful research, however, Dr Watney traced one of the descendants of the owners of Longton Hall, Nathaniel Firmin, and found a number of original deeds. These helped considerably in locating the site of the factory and the examination of sherds. He was on the excavations carried on at the site.

At its best in the so-called 'middle period and later period' from 1755-1758, Longton Hall porcelain is thinly potted, with clear blue painting and delicate enamelling. Shapes and designs have an individual quality.

Foot-rings are usually low and the paste often has slight tears which are particularly apparent when seen through transmitted light. Handles are very often of rustic twig form and patterns tend to be an interpretation of Chinese. The blue is a pleasant tone, resembling very early Worcester wares.

The attraction to collectors of Longton Hall porcelain, such as me, is in the historical context, the short lived nature of the factory and the charm of their wares.

I therefore thought I would share some of , but far from all, my pieces with you as this factory is often overlooked by collectors, possibly because pieces are quite rare, sought after and consequently expensive.

(1) A rare LONGTON HALL teapot and cover made circa. 1756-58.

It is of barrel shape with a distinctive scroll handle with spur thumb-rest, this being typical for this factory,

The lower section of the curved spout is moulded with scrolls, the cover with an acorn finial, painted in blue with the 'Ruined Castle' pattern of a Chinese landscape with an oriental fisherman in a sampan, an oriental hut and two crenulated towers in the distance, the cover with a smaller landscape vignette.  
*Height, 10.2cm.*

For the so-called 'Ruined Castle' pattern, see Bernard Watney, Excavations at the Longton Hall Porcelain Manufactory, *Post Mediaeval Archaeology*, Vol.27 (1993), pl.3 where a teabowl and saucer of the pattern is illustrated alongside glazed fragments found on the factory site.





(2) A Longton Hall blue and white mug, circa 1755. The barrel shaped body painted with bamboo issuing from behind a low fence beside flowering branches, 9.7cm. This is a typical example in its shape, handle and style of decoration. Other less attractive mugs are taller and straight sides and most of the Long Hall patterns are Chinese scenes.







(3) A Longton Hall stand or dish in polychrome circa 1753-54. A Longton Hall stand or dish c.1753-54, the oval form painted in famille rose enamels with a figure beneath tall willow roots and beside flowering plants, within a fluted rim. 19cm.

Provenance: the collection of the late Aurea Carter.



- (4) A Longton Hall coffee cup circa 1755 with characteristic twig handle and Chinese decoration:







I hope LCC members may see these pots at Morley College soon after lockdown eases!

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