

Royal Delft Collectors' "Society" Newsletter

Issue 1

28 March 2004



Welcome to this first issue of a newsletter for what we anticipate is the beginning of an exciting new group for collectors of Royal Delft (De Porceleyne Fles). De Porceleyne Fles was founded on 28 March 1653, so this first issue brings to a close the 350th Anniversary year of this famous factory and points us towards the future. In recent years some collectors have informally met or chatted by email, confirming that we are not alone in our interest with Royal Delft. There are many hundreds, probably thousands, of collectors worldwide. A "club" can bring together the many people who share this common interest.

Editor, Email: tegel@delfthuis.com .

A Collectors' "Club" just for Royal Delft

The purpose of a collectors' group especially for Royal Delft (or to use current jargon, our "Mission Statement") is simply to expand the knowledge and appreciation of Royal Delft. Many other ceramic factories have collectors' groups, including such famous names as Royal Doulton, Moorcroft, Wedgwood, Belleek, Gouda, Pickard, Nippon, Clarice Cliff, and Susie Cooper. Some groups have over 10,000 members. A "club" like this can be an enjoyable way for collectors to be in contact with each other in whatever way they wish, sharing information and the joys of owning wonderful ceramics made at our favourite factory. People just beginning to collect are as welcome as those who have collected for some time, perhaps amassing a great number of pieces or a specialized collection of say, just plates, or a certain style. Some collectors even have rooms in their houses dedicated to pieces which have been either collected over many years or handed down from generation to generation. The general public, and even a great many of the "antiques experts" know very little about delftware, and even less about Royal Delft. A group like this can help "spread

the word" about the products from Royal Delft, serving as informal ambassadors for the factory. Such members are avid supporters of Royal Delft as a company, and we actively encourage this since generating more business ensures that she will survive for a great many years to come. The society itself is a non-profit organization.

The Factory's role

2003-2004 has been an especially exciting and busy Jubilee year for everyone at the Royal Delft factory, with many special events. These included a number of exhibitions, dance performances, a valuation day, publications of new books, and the introduction of new products. It has also been a year when the world economy and politics have put extra stress on the factory personnel. Thus a small group of keenly interested collectors has taken on the unpaid work of initially organizing this society, allowing for the factory to play a much greater role in the future. It is too early to anticipate how this might manifest itself, but ideas include special tours at the factory for members and perhaps certain discounts or special edition pieces offered exclusively to members. Tours within Holland to museums featuring Royal Delft, or of buildings with

Royal Delft architectural details may eventually be offered.

Your invitation to join

This newsletter is also your personal invitation to join our enthusiastic group of collectors worldwide and to help shape the way the society can best meet the needs of the many collectors. We don't necessarily envision anything too formal at this stage, although obviously people will be needed to help keep things running. Increasing numbers of people are interested in Royal Delft. This special "club" allows them to keep abreast of goings on at the factory and with other collectors by means of a quarterly newsletter (electronic and printed), and eventually a devoted website. Perhaps this may lead to get-togethers or meetings on a local/regional basis (Holland, America, Britain, etc.), at an antiques fair or visiting someone's collection. The number of people bidding on Porceleyne Fles items on the internet auctions is increasing, and is a good indication of the huge interest in this very special ceramics. If you would like to be a part of this "club" of Royal Delft collectors you will find more details at the end of this newsletter.

Benefits of Society Membership

The primary benefit of membership in a collectors' society is obviously interaction with other members and the sharing of information. For a small annual membership fee we are offering a quality Newsletter four times a year, packed full with news, information, photos, regular features, and articles of interest to collectors and dealers. This publication in English will be available in printed and electronic forms. All sorts of other things are possible as the club membership expands, and the number of members makes it feasible. (The fee will help pay for the society's actual expenses involved with a newsletter, and eventually a website.)

Club ideas

A few ideas for the club have already been suggested, but if you have further ideas or comments, please give us your input. Some suggestions previously made include:

1. An annual or bi-annual "convention".
 2. Membership card.
 3. Website and resources.
 4. Opportunity to purchase special limited edition pieces commissioned from factory exclusively for members
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5. A directory of members with contact details for those who wish to keep in touch with each other (voluntary).

The Newsletter will regularly contain:

1. Informative feature articles about the various styles and techniques the factory has used.
2. Up-to-date news from the factory, including the introduction of new products.
3. Articles about the many artists who have worked at the factory.
4. Question and Answer section with members raising questions (and offering answers) about pieces and marks, etc.
5. A "small adverts" section where members can advertise pieces for sale or pieces they are particularly seeking.
6. Directory of dealers who specialize in selling Royal Delft pieces.
7. Colour photographs of interesting or rare pieces.

Members' Contributions

Do **you** have photographs of any special pieces in your collection that you would like to share? Or perhaps you could write an article about your collection and how you started, or about your memorable visit to Delft. Perhaps you have questions to ask about a piece, or wish to advertise pieces you would like to sell or are looking to buy. We warmly welcome and encourage your contributions to this Newsletter. Please submit them to the editor at tegel@delfthuis.com.

News from the Factory

Some new products have been introduced in the last 12 months. The limited edition Jubilee 350 series was produced in 2003 in special polychrome colours, including a spectacular 9-piece star-shaped dish/centre piece. In the autumn of 2003 a new series of tableware was introduced consisting of plates, bowls, beakers, and jugs in various sizes. Designed especially for the young urban dwellers, the pieces are stylish and chic. The pieces have simple, contemporary shapes and are decorated with a variety of factory trademarks and painters' signatures from over the centuries.

Princess Catharina-Amalia was born 7 December 2003 to heir-apparent Prince Willem-Alexander and Princess Máxima. The factory has produced very attractive 18 and 29cm birthplates to mark the occasion. Major events in the lives of the Dutch Royal family

have been commemorated in plates since 1909. In spring 2004 new products include tiles with new designs, Christmas ornaments, wine coasters, and desk sets comprising nameplates, letter openers, and paperweights, priced individually. These are produced with traditional, Art Deco, and new stylish polychrome decorations. For more details see the factory website at www.royaldelft.com

couples, and about 10 are antiques dealers who specialize in Royal Delft. This is a brilliant beginning to our Royal Delft Collectors' Society (best not say "smashing" with all that Delft about!). If **you** are in contact with people interested in Royal Delft please pass this information and newsletter on to them, especially if you think there is a chance we may have overlooked them. Or we will contact them if you send us their details to the usual tegel@delfthuis.com.

How Many Members?

This newsletter is being sent to almost 100 addresses via email and the post. Over 80 of those are Royal Delft collectors, individuals or



It may be risky using a priceless antique Porcelain Fles dinner service if the wine readily flows! Most of the service shown here dates from 1881, with a number of the pieces signed by Leon Senf.

In Memoriam

We note with great sadness the death of HRH Princess Juliana early on the morning of 20 March 2004, seventy years to the day of the death of her grandmother Queen Emma. Juliana served as Queen of the Netherlands from 1948 to 1980 when she abdicated in favour of her daughter, the present Queen Beatrix. In accordance with Dutch custom she thereafter used the title Princess rather than Queen. She was highly revered and respected throughout the Kingdom for her sense of duty and simple humanity. Her leadership in the years after the War, and her support for many social causes was exemplary. Born 30 April 1909, the first regular commemorative plate produced by Porcelain Fles marked her birth almost 95 years ago. We offer our deepest

sympathy to Prince Bernhard, HM Queen Beatrix, the Royal Family and all of the Dutch people.

We would like to dedicate this first edition of the Newsletter to the memory of Linda Rolobessy (née Struik), who died December 2003 after a brief battle with cancer. Linda started working as a painter at the factory in 1971 and in more recent years was also assistant sales manager in the showroom. Her enthusiasm for both antique and modern Porcelain Fles products was contagious. Her warm and sincere welcome to all visitors will be deeply missed.

Research Continues about Porcelain Pieces

Seven years of research by Rick Erickson went into his book *Royal Delft: A Guide to De Porcelain Pieces* published last September. Considerable work was involved examining extant inventories, price lists, order books and other factory records, painstakingly relating documents with many thousands of actual Porcelain pieces. Rick continues his research and could use your help. In particular there are two things collectors can help him with:

1. Unidentified painters' marks (most of which are shown in his book).
2. Reproduction of landscapes, genre paintings and portraits on plates, tiles, tableaux, and appliques. It is thought that over 700 different paintings have been reproduced on Porcelain pieces in the last 125 years. Rick is carefully assembling a database, tracing as many of these as possible, noting on what kind of pieces, when and by which Royal Delft painter these were done. Rick can be reached at tegel@delfthuis.com Rick's work has been invaluable to many collectors, dealers, and of course the factory, and any new information will appear in future editions of his book and the future companion volumes he has planned.

Exhibitions in Delft

The municipal *Prinsenhof Museum* in Delft continues its outstanding exhibition through 27th June 2004. Delft, and the *Prinsenhof* are always worthy of a visit, but this exhibition in conjunction with the 350th anniversary is exceptional. Hundreds of special Porcelain pieces are displayed. The majority come from the *Prinsenhof* collection and the *Instituut Collectie Nederland*. The pieces are rarely on public display. This is probably a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see these rare pieces.

The factory's own museum also has a noteworthy exhibition for the 350th anniversary, displaying many wonderful pieces from its own collection and related materials such as photographs, design sheets, etc. Keen Royal Delft collectors planning to visit Delft in the near future would be well advised to do so before these exhibitions close.

Royal Delft Books For Sale

The 350th Jubilee Year saw the publication of three significant books about the factory and her products. Last March the factory launched *Van Plaatbakkerij tot Royal Delft/ From Pottery to Royal Delft* (a 64-page paperback in Dutch and English side-by-side, with many photos). Last September *Geschiedenis van een Nationaal Product/ History of a National Product (De Porcelain Pieces)*, Vol. 3 (248-pages, hardbound, largely an exhibition catalogue of the Delft Municipal Museums, many photos, Dutch and English editions) and Rick Erickson's *Royal Delft: A guide to De Porcelain Pieces* (300-pages hardbound, with extensive factory and painters' marks, about 1000 photos). Rick's book is widely available at antique fairs, on the internet, and at the factory. Signed copies are available (email address below). The two publications from Delft had small print-runs and supplies will soon be exhausted. Copies are still available from the factory or Rick. He also has for sale a few remaining copies of his inexpensive *Delftware: Four Centuries of Delft Ceramics* (2000, 36-page booklet with colour and black & white photos.) He can be reached at tegel@delfthuis.com or see the website at www.delfthuis.com.

Over the last 35 years a number of books have been published about Porcelain pieces, almost all of which are now long out of print. The three most important general books are Jaap Romijn, *History of a Delft Factory* (or the Dutch version *Geschiedenis van een Delftse Fabriek*) (1970 thin paperback exhibition catalogue with black & white photos, English & Dutch editions); *Herboren Orient* (1984 thin paperback exhibition catalogue with colour and black & white photos, Dutch); and Marie-Rose Bogaers and others, *De Porcelain Pieces: De wedergeboorte van een Delftse Aardewerffabriek* (1986 paperback exhibition catalogue with colour and black & white photos, Dutch). These three, along with Violette Steinke's *Original Royal Delft Christmas Plates* (1972, loose-leaf in a ring binder), can sometimes be found second-hand, but are difficult to locate, and usually expensive.

More recently Stephen Van Hook's *Discovering Dutch Delftware* (1998 thin paperback with photos) contains a chapter about Royal Delft. Though published privately it has the advantage of still being readily available, and contains information about many other Delftware manufacturers.



This photo shows an unusual *Reflet Métallique* covered *pul*, c 1910. Covered with a heavy dark brown glaze over a light green underglaze, it is 21.2cm high, 12.3cm diameter, and marked with Factory Mark 10.

Dutch Delftware and the Arts & Crafts Movement

by Rick Erickson

(Adapted from an article he wrote for the September 2003 issue of *Antique & Collector's Trader*.)

The popular conception of Delftware is usually of 17th or 18th Century tin-glazed chargers, covered pots, and tiles, or modern Dutch tourist souvenirs, decorated in "Delft blue" with windmills and flowers. But Dutch Delftware made further contributions to the development of ceramics, not least of which includes the Arts and Crafts Movement at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th Centuries.

De Porceleyne Fles (generally known as "Royal Delft") was founded in Delft in 1653, and in 2003 is celebrating its 350th Anniversary Jubilee. This one factory has survived and flourished, usually by having both innovative and contemporary products. Porceleyne Fles outlived the other 31 original small 17th Century potteries in Delft, which extinguished their kilns in the 18th and early 19th Centuries as a direct result of competition from the then new European porcelain and Wedgwood creamware.

Renaissance

Throughout the first three quarters of the 19th Century Porceleyne Fles struggled to survive, mainly by producing fire-resistant bricks for cladding steam engines. Then in 1876 a true renaissance began under the leadership of a new owner, Joost Thooft. Thooft, an engineer by training, and with a strong interest in the applied arts, was recovering from the sad death of his wife within four months of their wedding. The history that unfolded in the following years is as poignant and heart-warming as any heroic tale or legend conjured up by Victorian writers. Thooft coaxed Cornelis Tulk out of retirement, though he was already in his seventies. Having been taught the old ceramic painting techniques and patterns in his youth, Tulk was the last living link to the old Delftware tradition, and passed his knowledge on to the next generation of Delftware painters. The factory also hired Adolf Le Comte as part-time Artistic Director. Le Comte taught design at the Delft Polytechnic School (now the university), and was the most influential applied arts designer in Holland during the 19th Century. In addition to designing a vast array of new model forms, Le Comte also created new styles and decorative patterns during his association with Porceleyne Fles, which spanned more than 40 years.

Thooft also hired a young Leon Senf as a painter. Senf learned to draw at a local carpet factory, and soon would become the most famous painter at Porceleyne Fles. Following on from Le Comte, he designed new styles and decorations. These men were soon joined by a young business partner, Abel Labouchere. Interacting together in an exciting and fertile environment, they created consistently high-quality ceramics, and by the time of Thooft's early death at age 45 in 1890, Porceleyne Fles was well known, respected, and desired in Holland and around the world. At first Thooft and Labouchere concentrated on Delftware with under-glaze blue decoration, and by 1891 they were introducing new art pottery styles and techniques.

Studio Art Pottery, 1891 to 1920s

The Industrial Revolution created sufficient wealth for the middle classes to clutter their homes with a plethora of ornaments, and also fostered a reaction against the mass-produced objects, precipitating the Arts & Crafts Movement. Simple, handcrafted items were deemed superior to industrial production. The movement was based not only upon artistic

ideals, but also philosophical and social principles, as evidenced in the writings of people like William Morris. Eventually Arts & Crafts would spawn new decoration as diverse as Mission Style and Art Nouveau.



Jacoba vase, 14cm high, Factory mark 5a, with green and reddish-brown glazes.

The very end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th Centuries were an especially prolific and interesting period for ceramics in Holland. Many potteries sprang up all over the country in towns and cities such as Gouda, Utrecht, Purmerend, and the Hague. The celebrated firm of Rozenburg was established there by former employees of Porcelain Fles, who took trade secrets with them. One of the most overlooked areas of Delftware is the art pottery produced by Porcelain Fles from the end of the century to just after the First World War. Not appreciated by most collectors nor seen on the television programmes, even the ceramic experts from the major auction houses know little about these products.

In 1891 the *Berbas* style was introduced as simple, hand-thrown vases with an almost primitive Arts & Crafts feel. They were covered with running glazes as the only decoration, in colours ranging from light and dark blue, purple, turquoise, light and dark green through to beige, rose, red, brown and grey. In 1892 similar model shapes were used for *Reflét Métallique* vases, jugs and covered

pots. These were covered with new metallic glazes painted over a *Berbas* underglaze. The effect was a warm coppery-red with streaks or specks of the underglaze showing through, often green. The glazes were the work of Gerrit Offermans and were unusual in Holland at that time. They certainly are the equal of similar contemporary ceramics produced in Britain. Both styles remained in production until about 1914.

The *Jacoba* style was introduced in 1897, probably remaining in production until the First World War. *Jacoba* was designed by Le Comte, and included plates, plaques in various sizes and shapes, and a variety of highly stylized vases, often with quirky handles. Local clays were used for *Jacoba*, with abstract, figurative or floral designs incised into the air-dried object with a small pointed stick. Parts of the design were picked out in coloured, usually dark metallic glazes, before firing, resulting in a heavy, earthy look with sombre shading.

Homage to the past

Porcelain Fles also briefly used the old technique of tin-glazing, generally producing pieces between 1898 and 1900. Some of the pieces replicated traditional 17th and 18th Century Delftware forms and decoration, and would later be made with the usual modern underglaze blue decorations. Other tin-glazed pieces were decorated with designs by Leon Senf, L.E.F. Bodart, or the well known artist Th. van Hoytema. Le Comte designed a distinctive new range of Jugendstil (literally “young style”) models with multi-coloured tin-glaze decoration, stylistically more similar to German Jugendstil than French Art Nouveau. Most of these Le Comte models would also be made with underglaze blue decoration, until just after the First World War.

Le Comte also designed a range of *Porcelain-Biscuit* models with a Secessionist style of decoration, almost anticipating Art Deco with strong geometric lines and stylized foliage. The incised lines were infilled with real gold, and part of the design was picked out in coloured slip. Production was short-lived from 1900-1905, and consisted mainly of unusually shaped vases.

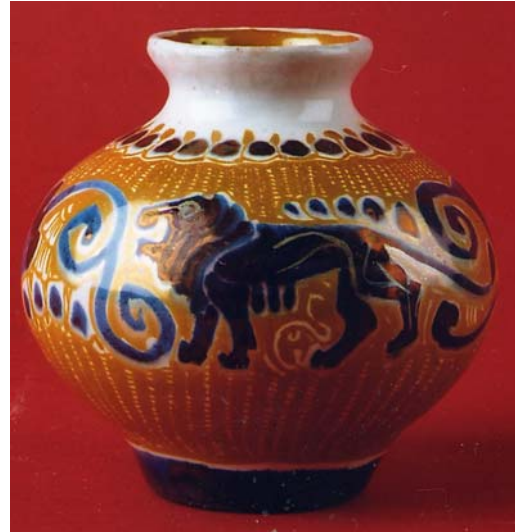


Porselein-Biscuit vase decorated with green slip and the etched lines in-filled with gold.

In 1910 and 1911 Porceleyne Fles introduced various new styles called *Nieuw Delfts*, all designed by Leon Senf. The techniques and decoration used had no historical connection to traditional Delftware, but were inspired by 12th and 13th Century Persian and Islamic ceramics, generally using bold blue and turquoise colours, but also yellow and red. Decoration was typically birds, animals, flowers and other fauna, and vases, bowls, covered pots and plates in various sizes were available until the beginning of the Second World War. Though produced a little later than the work of William De Morgan, the Porceleyne Fles products arguably are as fine, or better than De Morgan's.

Lustre pieces utilized the same model forms as *Nieuw Delfts*, and often reflected Iznik decoration in the various coloured underglazes. The iridescent sheen was produced by introducing reduction gases into the kiln during the final stages of firing, thus leaving a thin film of real gold on the surface. Porceleyne Fles *Lustre* pieces were painted by the factory's top artists such as Senf. The extremely expensive production costs, and frequent failures in the kilns, were reflected in

the high retail prices both then and now. Porceleyne Fles *Lustre* equals the finest of Pilkington's Lancastrian ceramics, and was made from 1910 to the 1920s.



Lustre vase, 12.4cm high, 12.6cm diameter, Factory mark 6. Decorated in blue, yellow, and gold, with gold lustre, depicting an Assyrian lion. Signed by Leon Senf.

There is now intense interest in the architecture, furniture, ceramics, and other applied arts of the Arts & Crafts period. Prices of Porceleyne Fles ceramics, especially from this period, have risen a good deal in recent years, and undoubtedly will continue to escalate. Interested collectors and dealers can view fine examples at Porceleyne Fles's own museum at the factory in Delft, the *Stedelijk Museum Het Prinsenhof* (municipal museum in Delft), and the Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum in Rotterdam, or visit websites at www.delfthuis.com and www.royaldelft.com.
Text and photographs © Rick Erickson

Did You Know?

Royal Delft was involved in making the massive fountain in the Public Garden at the new Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, as a tribute to Lillian Disney, who contributed \$139 Million for the construction of the hall. Mrs. Disney loved gardens, roses, and Delftware, so the fountain is in the shape of an open rose, decorated with a mosaic of Delft Blue. This stunning sculpture used 8000 tiles and 200 vases supplied by Royal Delft.

Royal Delft Collectors' Society

Membership Form

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

E-Mail: _____

Annual Membership Fees (pro-rata for 2004):

US dollars \$12.00; €10.00; or £7.50 per individual

Please contact us for further details at tegel@delfthuis.com

or

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