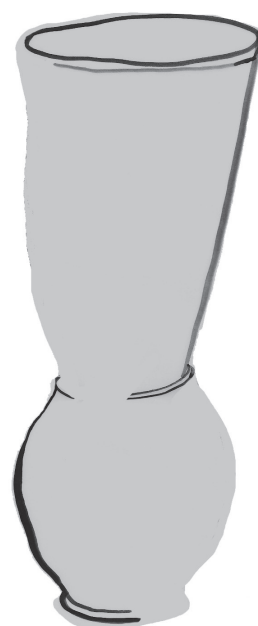


Coxside Cartographies

Object Stories

The objects and artefacts drawn here can be found in The Box Plymouth's collection and are directly related to sites in Coxside. Together they tell a story of trade that takes us from Coxside to sugar plantations on the islands of the Caribbean, tea cultivation in India, on a journey in the pursuit of porcelain by businessman William Cookworthy who discovered 'china clay' in Cornwall. Overleaf are the stories that accompany the objects, see if you can identify which is which.

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The stories...

Figurehead of the HMS Sybille, 1846.

Coxside was traditionally at the heart of Plymouth's shipbuilding industry, its location providing the perfect site for the construction of ocean-going sailing ships that powered exploration, trade and slavery. A figurehead is a carved wooden sculpture often found on the prow (very front part) of a sailing ship. It was designed to capture the spirit of the vessel and offer the crew protection from the harsh seas they might face on their long and dangerous ocean journeys. The HMS Sybille played an active role in the Second China (or Opium) War (1856-60). In 1858 she returned to the United Kingdom and was broken up in 1866 at Plymouth. The figurehead is now on display at The Box Plymouth.

Sugar mould (in use 1660s–1720s)

During a dig in the 1990s, the foundations of a sugar refinery were found in Coxside. The sugar mould pictured here would have been used in the process of refining sugar, from dark raw sugar to a white cone or sugarloaf, the usual form that sugar was bought and sold in until granulated sugar became fashionable in the late 19th century. Once the raw sugar had been through a series of boiling and filtering processes it was then poured into an inverted conical mould. These were usually made of extremely hard wearing brown earthenware and were placed on top of a collecting pot. In time any dark syrup or impurities would drain away through a small hole in the bottom of the mould leaving a white sugar loaf, ready to be wrapped in blue paper to enhance its colour.

William Cookworthy porcelain makers mark

If you turn over a piece of ceramic like a plate, mug or jug, you can often find a maker's mark – letters or a symbol – which tells you where it was made. Only a small percentage of Plymouth porcelain has marks, but the mark shown here is one that signified a piece was made in William Cookworthy's factory on Sutton Wharf, Coxside.

Cookworthy's mark was the alchemical sign for tin which probably originates from his discovery of the first UK china clay which could be used to produce white porcelain in an area known for tin mining. Cookworthy used his knowledge as a chemist and a process of trial and error to mix the china clay in the right quantities to produce a stable porcelain, he then experimented with firing and decorating it. Finally, in 1768, he was able to patent hard-paste porcelain production in Plymouth. These marks are usually in blue (underglaze) or red (enamel/overglaze). There are two special items in The Box Plymouth's collection that have the mark in gilt (gold). In total The Box Plymouth holds 483 pieces of Plymouth Porcelain.

Plymouth Porcelain teapot, 1768-1770

A teapot is a familiar item found in many of our kitchens, but this one is special as it was made in Coxside at William Cookworthy's (and the UK's first) true hard paste white porcelain factory. Although the secret of its manufacture had long been known in Germany and China, no British factory succeeded in making porcelain until 1768.

Before the invention of the tea bag in 1908, teapots were relied upon to brew and steep tea. While tea bags may be convenient many people still prefer a properly brewed pot of tea. This Plymouth Porcelain teapot in The Box's collection is painted with flowers in red, blue and green and is decorated with gilt patterns

The objects (clockwise from top left):
Figurehead of the HMS Sybille, Cookworthy
makers mark, Sugar mould, Plymouth
Porcelain teapot

Coxside Memory Mug

William Cookworthy had a porcelain factory until 1770 at the China House in Coxside. He made ceramics including a mug shaped like this.

Fill the mug outline with your memories and stories of Coxside, draw, add photographs or write them in the space below. Take a photograph of your finished mug and send it to hello@effordtakeapart.org.uk or post them on Instagram with the hashtag #mappinghistories

