Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn and Robert Adam: Commissions for Silver 1768-80

Oliver Fairclough


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Per haver bianchito e bronitio due copriuochi d’argento grandì con mascherone e fiamma sopra il tutto per mandare ad Urbino per servizio della Maestà del Re della Gran Bretagna, per detta fattura..... 3

28. 31st August 1720 (Rome, Archivio di Stato, Camerale I, Giustificazioni di Tesoreria, 456, fasc. 15)

Sacro Palazzo Apostolico suo dare [a Giovanni Giardini]
A di 31 agosto deve per haver fatto una scatolina di argento tonda tornita d’ordine di Monsignor Reverendissimo Siggrista con suo coperchio, e dorata dentro e fuori che servì per l’autentica a un pezzetto di legno della Santa Croce di Nostro Signore Gesù Cristo posto dentro ad una croce d’oro per servizio dell’Eccellentissimo Signor Cardinale Albani e pesa di argento onice 11 argento..... 40
Per fattura di detta..... 40
Per oro e doratura della medesima..... 70

29. 1st November 1720 (Rome, Archivio di Stato, Camerale I, Giustificazioni di Tesoreria, 450, fasc. 4)

[Conti di Giovanni Giardini]

Al primo novembre per haver fatto un portaleume, o bugia di argento in servizio di Nostro Signore, e detta bugia fatta con tutta pulizia, e lustrata alla francese, e pesa d’5 oncie 2 compresi un coperchio di argento con sua vite, 5 madrevie, che fabbinamento alla bacchetta di legno, dove è posta detta bugia d’argento..... 470
Per fattura di detta..... 3
Pagato al tornitore per haver fatto la suddetta bacchetta tornita con la sua pianta, o piò il tutto [.....] negro lustrato..... 60
A 6 detto per aver fatto un piede di argento ad una tazza da brodo di porcellana per servizio di Nostro Signore di getto cieellato con oculoleti tornito, dorato dentro, o fuori, et incollato sopra detta tazza e pesa d’1 oncie 15 argento..... 150
Per fattura di detto..... 1
Pagato per oro e doratura..... 120

30. 23rd November 1720 (Rome, Archivio di Stato, Camerale I, Registro dei mandati camerali, 1668, fol. 113)

Al magistrato Giovanni Giardini fonditore della Reverenda Camera scudi venticinqu tro et 22 moneta se gli fanno pagare per saldo, et intero pagamento d’un conto in haver fatto quattro billicchi di metallo per servizio del ponzione o sia edificio da spurgo del porto di Civitavecchia.

OLIVER FAIRCLough

Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn and Robert Adam: commissions for silver 1768–80*

SIR WATKIN WILLIAMS-WYNN, 4th baronet (1749–89), was one of the leading British patrons of the later eighteenth century, who began assembling his fine collection of paintings during his Grand Tour in 1768–69. He loved music and drama, and had a passion for architecture. T.F. Pritchard, James Gandon, Capability Brown and James Wyatt all worked at Wynnstall, his Denbighshire seat, and his London house, 20 St James’s Square, was built by the Adam brothers in 1771–74. Sir Watkin was one of the wealthiest commoners in Britain, having inherited the extensive Wynnstall estates in North Wales and Shropshire at the age of six months. When he came of age in 1770, he gained control of an income of about £27,000, together with capital reserves accumulated during his minority. Over the next few years he spent so lavishly that by 1776 he had incurred debts of £100,000, a sum so large that for the rest of his life he was constantly in need of ready money. Many of his purchases of paintings, silver, furniture and ceramics are recorded in a series of personal account books running from 1770 to 1781 kept by his servant Samuel Sidebotham, and by bills of the same period. These indicate munificence, if conventional, tastes. Sir Watkin patronised, among others, Batoni, Mengs, Reynolds, Dance, Wilson, Paul Sandby and Nollekens. He acquired works by Luca Giordano, Guercino, Sebastiano Ricci, Guido Reni, Murillo, Pannini, Cuyp, Dughet, and van Goyen, and he astonished his contemporaries by giving £650 for Poussin’s Landscape with a man killed by a snake, now in the National Gallery, London. He bought porcelains from William Duesbury and James Giles, was an important patron of Josiah Wedgwood, and acquired Meissen, Tournai, and Sévres services from the London china dealer Thomas Morgan. The accounts end in 1781, when Sidebotham was promoted steward at Wynnstall. By then Sir Watkin’s affairs had reached the point of crisis, with growing impatience from his creditors and his estate income in decline. Over £40,000 had been spent on the St James’s Square house, and recorded purchases of plate amount to £4,500 (the actual total was certainly higher), exceeding expenditure on works of art. Much of Sir Watkin’s silver remained in the possession of his descendants until sold in 1946. This, together with the wealth of surviving documentation, both written and visual, permits an overview of his patronage of silversmiths, and in

*1 would like to express my gratitude for the generous help I have received from Helen Clifford, Canon T.W. Pritchard, Mark Evans, James Lomax, Pamela Wood, Michael Snodin, Richard Edgecumbe, and Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn.


5. Sidebotham’s account books are Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales (cited in these notes as NLM), Wynnstall manuscripts, box 115/1–9, 103 and misc. vol. 14. The bills are Box 115/17, 18, 21 and 25. Other payments were made direct by his agent Francis Chamberle, or by Child’s Bank.

6. NLM, Wynnstall 122, fol. 239, ‘this house will cost near £40,000 . . .’ (Francis Chamberle to Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn, 17th September 1774).

7. Sotheby’s, 10th October 1946, lots 1–130.

376
particular a reconstruction of his Adam service of 1773–75, which is the largest architect-designed silver service of the eighteenth century.

Sir Watkin ran an account with Thomas Heming, Goldsmith and Jeweller to His Majesty, at the King’s Arms in Bond Street, from February 1765 until June 1773, totalling £1,925 4s. With the exception of a epergne and his traveling plate for the Grand Tour (comprising candlesticks, a stewpan, a saucepan, plates, dishes, sauceboats, a cruet, cutlery, tumblers, decanters, and tea wares in two black trunks), Sir Watkin purchased little silver until his marriage to Lady Henrietta Somerset, a daughter of the 4th Duke of Beaufort, in April 1769. He then acquired various fashionable adjuncts to the tea and dinner table, a tea urn, two coffee pots, a cream tail, together with teaspoons and tea tongs, eight waiters, six salts, a soy frame, a crust stand, two bread baskets, and much shell, fiddle and thread pattern cutlery. These were followed over the next couple of months by candlesticks, cheese plates, condiment vases, a gilt tea canister and further cutlery, costing £763 1s. He also gave his wife the spectacular twenty-nine-piece silver-gilt toilet service now in the National Museum and Gallery of Wales (Fig. 23), which bears Thomas Heming’s marks for 1768–69.* The pieces are elaborately decorated with naturalistic flowering sprays and shells in the late rococo manner. Eighteen items are almost identical to those in the service Heming had supplied to George III in 1766 as a gift for his sister, Queen Caroline Matilda of Denmark.† The toilet service is absent from Heming’s account for the period, though he charged for ‘coulering and refreshing of a set of dressing plate and Refreshing case’ in January 1772. Lady Henrietta Williams-Wynn died in July 1769, and while he was a widower Sir Watkin bought almost no plate. Eighteen months later he married Charlotte Grenville, a sister of the first Marquess of Buckingham, and returned to Heming, spending £500 during 1772.

Thomas Heming (1722/3–1801) had secured the warrant as Principal Goldsmith to the King on the accession of George III, in preference to Parker and Wakelin.‡ By 1771 he was in partnership with George Heming, probably his younger brother, though one of Sir Watkin’s bills was receipted by Thomas’s son, also named George, on his father’s behalf; before June 1773 the firm had been joined by William Chawner. The Hemings provided the range of goods and services expected of a major retailing business, including the maintenance of Sir Watkin’s plate which needed frequent repair: the ‘fine chased tea kitchen’ bought in April 1769 for £70 17s 2d was returned on five occasions. Some of the plate sold to Williams-Wynn by the Hemings can be identified in the 1946 sale, confirming that John Romer, who made two breadbaskets costing £40 16s 6d, was one of the firm’s outworkers, while other suppliers included Peter Gillois (tea caddy), Francis Crump (tumblers) and Richard Rugg (salvers). The ‘chas’d Antique Tureen’, bought as a gift for Oriel College, Oxford in March 1772, was made by Andrew Fogelburg.§ However, most of Heming’s stock appears to have been marked by him, and he must have operated a workshop of some size. On occasion the firm made up or adapted pieces to Sir Watkin’s instructions. The ‘neat chas’d

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* N.L.W., Wynnstay box 115/18/20 and 115/25/12.

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377
Vase' supplied in October 1769 for £51 15s 9d for the Holywell Hunt races was returned in April 1770 – having been won by Sir Watkin's own horse 'Brown George' – for re-engraving, gilding and the addition of a medallion of a horse and jockey, at a further £20 6s. Similarly the Wynnast Hunt cup of 1773 was a stock piece dating from 1771, billed as follows:

- An Elegant Vase cup £49 7s 6d
- and cover engraving very neat ornamental Scrolle £2 12s 6d
- Work on do. Modeling and chasing a very highly finish'd medallion of a stag in cover £2 2s
- Gilding of do. all over £13 4s

Sir Watkin acquired almost all his silver from Heming and Chawner until November 1772. Although the firm dealt in jewellery and toys, supplying, for example, a 15 guinea coral 'ornamented with festoons of husks, Water Lea's, in Various colour'd gold, finish'd in the highest taste' for Sir Watkin's baby son and a £600 pearl necklace early in 1773, Sir Watkin also patronised other jewellers, and the diamond parure supplied by Michael Shucknell in April 1769 alone cost over £5,000. As the family plate was in his mother's possession, he was able to trade in only small amounts of silver, returning in November 1771 a large chased punch bowl he had bought for £78 18s 6d in September 1770, and being allowed £51 17s 4d (6s 8d an ounce against 10s).

Heming's rococo toilet service must have been ordered before Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn left for Italy in June 1768. During his weeks in Rome he employed James Byres as his guide and antiquarian, and during a fortnight in Naples he met Sir William Hamilton, and visited Pompeii and Hercules. After his return, all his plate was firmly Neo-classical. He was already corresponding with Robert Adam, and in mid 1771 the Adam brothers secured the commission for 20 St James's Square. During the next five years, they also supplied over twenty designs for plate, commencing with the punch bowl (Fig.24) by Thomas Heming in the National Museum and Gallery of Wales, commissioned to celebrate the success of Sir Watkin's horse Fop at the Chester Races in 1769 and 1770. There are two drawings for the bowl in Sir John Soane's Museum (Adam Drawings, volume 25, 160 and 120). The first is a free-hand pencil sketch, probably by Robert Adam himself, establishing the shape and the main elements in the decoration, while the second is a ruled and inked working drawing showing the ornament in detail but omitting symmetrical elements. With minor changes in detail and in proportion, it depicts the bowl as executed, and at full size. This bears Thomas Heming's mark and was assayed

10The Wynnast and Holywell Hunt cups are described in E.A. JONES, 'The Plate at Wynnast of Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn, Bart', Connoisseur, 96 (1935), pp.12-18; sold Sotheby's 10th October 1946, lots 83 and 84.
11Augustus Lesage, Goldsmith and Jeweller at the Golden Cup, the corner of Suffolk Street, supplied a saucenpan and cover, for £4 7s 6d on 3rd November 1772 (NLW, Wynnast box 115/23/8), and Sir Watkin bought two gilt fox-head cups by Thomas Pitts from the jeweller and toymaker Thomas Jeffreys at Chevenix's toyshop in July 1770. He also acquired an inestament at Lord Thomond's sale in February 1776 (NLW, Wynnast box 115/7).
1233 fine round Pears and one drop in a necklace... billed 8th February 1773, NLW, Wynnast box 115/18/18.
14Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn, 3rd baronet, owned 7,447 ounces on his death; see An Inventory of the Plate at Wynnast taken December 28 1749 the use of which is given Lady Williams-Wynn for her life... (NLW, Wynnast misc. vols. 11).
15E. HUGHES: 'An Adam Punch Bowl', THE Burlington Magazine, CIX [1967], p.646, illustrates both drawings as figs. 54 and 55.
before 29th May 1772. It was invoiced on 21st September as follows:

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{a Superbe punch Bowl} & 13/3 \text{ [per ounce]} 195 \text{ oz} 14 \text{ dwt} \ £129 \ 13s \\
\text{very highly finish’d in an} & \\
\text{Antique Taste, and patterns} & \\
\text{modell’d for do. with} & \\
\text{festoons of fruit &c.} & \\
\text{Gilding of do. all over in} & \\
\text{the Richest manner, with a} & \\
\text{Beautiful yellow coular} & \\
\text{and Bright ground} & £35 \\
\text{2 Arms and Inscription} & 12s
\end{array}
\]

The drawings for Sir Watkin’s punch bowl are two of about a hundred designs for silver among the Adam drawings in Sir John Soane’s Museum. The significance of these drawings in the design and promotion of Neo-classical silver is the subject of a forthcoming study by Michael Snodin and is not considered here. Most however are for one-off pieces commissioned by Adam’s principal clients for architectural or decorative schemes, and they date between c.1761 and 1780. Twenty of the drawings, the largest and most varied group, are for Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn. One (SM25/119; Fig.25) is for a punch ladle, and suggests an oval gadrooned bowl lipped on either side, with an eagle and the Williams-Wynn crest, in the centre, and a curving stem. This was also executed, as we learn from Heming’s invoice of April 1773:

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{an Elegant Punch Ladle} & \\
\text{ornamented in an Antique} & \\
taste highly finish’d and & \\
modell’d for that purpose 5 oz 2 dwt & £6 16s 6d \\
Gilding the Ladle in the & \\
Richest manner & £1 16s
\end{array}
\]

The bowl and ladle are a striking contrast to the plate in an Anglicised *gout grec* manner also made by the Hemings in the early 1770s, such as the two pairs of ‘french festoon’ candlesticks given by Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn to Oriel College, Oxford. Fogelburg’s tureen, which accompanied them, is similarly Francophile, and perhaps derived from John Yenn’s well-known drawings after Chambers, to which Heming had access.18

These designs of 1771–72 were followed by drawings for an entire dinner service. There was no precedent for this, but it is in line with the extraordinary attention lavished on the dining room at 20 St James’s Square. Drawings remain for the ceiling, frieze, chimney-piece, and grate, and Adam also designed several pieces of furniture – the principal mirror, the sideboard (and almost certainly the associated wine cooler and urns), and a set of tripod stands. A first group of seven drawings for silver (SM25/110, 116, 117, 121, 123–25), dated 18th January 1773, are for a salt (Fig.31), a footed oval dish (possibly a sauce boat), a centre dish, a larger (Fig.29) and a smaller (Fig.26) tureen, as well as two alternatives for a candelabrum (Fig.33). A much revised drawing of the larger tureen (SM25/122; Fig.30), a modified design for the candelabrum (SM25/126) and three for shaped dishes (SM25/113–15) are dated 9th March, a design for a sauceboat (SM25/111; Fig.37), followed on 2nd June, while a drawing for a pickle stand (SM 25/112) is inscribed only with the year. The January drawings establish the main elements of the service, with its repertory of beaded borders, bands of guilloche, and husk festoons. Several of them show modifications in pencil, which are then taken up in the later revisions. The unusual rams’ heads which were used extensively in the room’s ornament, on the capitals of the Corinthian screen in place of volutes, and on the architrave consoles, fireplace and dado, re-appear on the tureens and candelabra. The range of vessels needed meant that Adam had to be particularly imaginative in marshalling his repertoire of vases and grotesques, and the results could be rather curious, as with the sauceboats which attempt to impose an oval plan on a traditional form.

These drawings are for the principal pieces of Sir Watkin’s ‘Great Table Service’, made between 1773 and 1775. This is

18It can be compared with a tureen of 1771 by John Rosner (ib. young: ‘Sir William Chambers and John Yenn: designs for silver’, *The Burlington Magazine*, CXXVIII [1986], pp.31–35, fig.44).

the ‘remarkably fine George III dinner service, engraved with a coat of arms [Williams-Wynn impaling Grenville] within a simple husk cartouche, the borders chased with egg and tongue ornament enclosing a narrow beaded line, by John Carter, London 1773–4', described in the sale catalogue of 1946.19 It then comprised six ‘venison’ dishes each on three feet chased with acanthus (22 to 15 inches wide), fifteen other oval dishes (between 18 and 12 inches wide), twelve circular dishes in sets of four (13 to 11 inches in diameter), seven dozen plates, four 8½ inch sauce boats, four 7¼ inch sauce boats and eight salts, weighing 3,089 ounces. Also part of the service were two pairs of tureens of 1774–75, weighing 847½ ounces including their later stands, and two candelabra (from a set of four) at 198 ounces.20 The salts, each a pierced bowl with a blue glass liner supported by three dolphins on a shaped circular plinth (Fig.32), are hallmarked 1773–74 and 1774–75, and are close to SM25/110 (Fig.31), with some changes in detail (the displayed eagles being for example removed from the bowl to the plinth). The smaller pair of oval tureens (Fig.28) is also derived from one of the first group of drawings, SM25/123 (Fig.26), which shows a vase-form comprising a pedestal foot, shallow body and flat-topped lid surmounted by sphinxes, also used by Adam in wall decoration (Fig.27).21 The unusual shape of the lid was adopted, but simplified in execution, the sphinxes and the husk and anthemion ornament being omitted. The first design for the larger tureen (Fig.29), SM25/121, has the bowl supported by four sphinxes on a moulded plateau, and a vine scrolling around the shoulders. The second drawing of 9th March (SM25/122; Fig.30), substitutes a pedestal foot below a waterleaf calyx, but retains the profile and the decorative elements of oval medallions of putti below husk swags pendant.


"Sotheby’s, 10th October 1946, lots 87–107, 45, 46 and 115.
"One of the smaller tureens, sold Sotheby’s, New York, 2nd–3rd November 1989, lot 338, is now in the National Museum and Gallery of Wales (NMW A50,509). The four smaller (¾ inch long) sauceboats were sold at Christie’s, London, 11th March 1959. A pair of larger sauceboats sold Sotheby’s 20th November 1986, lot 173, are now in the Victoria and Albert Museum (M13 + a–1987, illustrated in the Burlington Magazine, CXXXI [1989], p.389). Of the six salts, sold at Christie’s, London, 11th March 1959, lot 172, two are now in the Castle Museum, Nottingham (NCM 1968–107 & 108). Ten plates were sold at Sotheby’s 20th June 1974, lot 136. Eleven plates were sold at Christie’s South Kensington, 23rd September 1987, lot 18. Two plates are in the Castle Museum, Nottingham (NCM 1978–238ab). Sixteen dessert dishes, and twelve plates, four 1¼ inch oval dishes, and four 12 inch round dishes (Apprey’s, 1991) are now in the National Museum and Gallery of Wales (NMW A 50,609–50,614).
"I am grateful to Michael Snodin for this observation. The drawing illustrated is SM 6/91, dated 21st January 1775. The client is unidentified.


30. Design for a tureen, by Robert Adam. March 1773. Pen, pencil and wash, 32.9 by 40.6 cm. (Sir John Soane’s Museum, London).
from an acanthus border, together with the rams’ head handles and pineapple knop. The wreathe rosettes at the shoulders echo the dining room’s coffered ceiling, and the medallions of putti those on the sideboard urns. The larger tureens sold in 1946 were described as ‘somewhat similar to the proceeding... the handles formed as rams’ masks and the bodies mounted with panels of amorini between borders of leafage... the covers surmounted with fruit knops’, and evidently derived from this drawing. The sauceboats (Fig.38), originally a set of twelve, are close to a working drawing in another hand, dated 2nd June 1773 (SM25/111; Fig.37), itself based on an undated sketch by Adam (SM25/168) but omit the band of rosette, swag and tongue ornament on the body in both drawings. The candelabra, derived from another of the January drawings (SM25/125; Fig.33), are well-known.24 The drawing indicates the tripod legs terminating in sphinxes, but an alternative treatment of paw feet and a central baluster shaft is sketched by Robert Adam in pencil to the right, perhaps during a consultation. This is developed in the March drawing (SM25/126) which also reduces the width of the central vase, enlarges the rams’ heads, modifies the arms, and adds husk swags and drops. The last were omitted in execution, together with the shaft, but anthemions were added to the sconces and a large rosette applied to the base (Fig.34).

Few patrons purchased an entire dinner service at once, and to commission designs for every component was without precedent. The composition is, however, conventional, and compares with a typical service supplied by Parker and Wakelin to Hon. Charles Pelham in 1770 (23 oval dishes, 10 circular dishes, 4 pointed compote dishes, 84 plates, 2 fish plates, 12 sauceboats and stands, 12 salts, 2 larger and 2 smaller tureens and 4 ice-pails). The tureens were evidently supplied without stands, as these were added in the early nineteenth century, together with a quantity of Sheffield plate dish covers. There are no sauceboat stands or ladles, and no soup plates, but Williams-Wynn owned three dozen made by Heming in 1769–70, together with an eperguson, cruets, bread baskets, and condiment vases.25 As no itemised bill survives, the full extent of the service is uncertain. The sixteen silver-gilt dishes of 1773–74 in the National Museum and Gallery of Wales, derived from designs such as SM25/113–15 (Fig.36), were not in the 1946 sale. These are four lobed oval dishes, four lozenge-shaped dishes, four fan-shaped dishes, and four quatrefoil dishes, numbered 1 to 16, and weighing 296 ounces (Fig.35). They are probably dessert dishes, although porcelain was usual for dessert wares by 1770, and Sir Watkin owned Meissen, Derby and Worcester dessert services.26

The ‘Great Table Service’ was supplied by Joseph Creswell who was paid the balance of his bill, £98 18s on 7th July 1775, ‘the amount of his bill being £2,408 10s’.27 This almost unknown retailer is probably the Joseph Creswell christened

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24 All four candelabra now belong to Lloyds of London; see R. Rowe: Adam Silver, London [1965], pls. 12 and 13 (SM 25/126). One is hallmarked 1773–74, and the remainder 1774–75.
25 The soup plates were lot 110–112 at Sotheby’s, 10th October 1946 (these are otherwise undocumented; Heming ‘boiled and burnished’ tureens and sauceboats prior to 1773, and Sir Watkin may have bought a smaller service at the time of his first marriage). The eperguson was sold to Joseph Creswell for £68 3s 6d in 1777 (NLW, Wynnstay box 115/25/41).
26 NLW, Wynnstay box 115/18/22 (bill of Thomas Morgan), also 115/3 and 5.
27 NLW, Wynnstay box 115/7.
at St Martin’s in the Fields in 1738, the son of another Joseph Creswell, a Bond Street jeweller. There is no record of the younger Creswell’s apprenticeship, but his trade card of the early 1760s describes him as a ‘toyman, at the Unicorn in Suffolk Street From Mr Chevenix’, suggesting that he learnt his trade in this celebrated toystop.\textsuperscript{26} Creswell then moved to Golden Cross Court, Cateaton Street, where he entered a mark as a smallworker in 1767. Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn was a client of Creswell from November 1772, by which time he had moved again to ‘corner of the Adelphi, Strand’, perhaps the shop at the Strand end of Adam Street.\textsuperscript{27} As a toyman and retail goldsmith, Creswell would have contracted out the manufacture of the service to other craftsmen. All the pieces examined bear the same IC maker’s mark, generally attributed to John Carter. This cannot be definitely identified, as the register of largeworkers’ marks entered between 1758 and 1773 is missing from Goldsmiths’ Hall, though it is similar to a mark entered by Carter in the next register in September 1776. Carter had several pieces broken for short weight at the Assay Office in 1766–69, and he was supplying candlesticks and waiters to Parker and Wakelin from 1767, the account being in the name of Hammond and Co. in 1766.\textsuperscript{28} In 1770 he was in partnership with Thomas Hannam.

\textsuperscript{26} Rowes, \textit{Art and Design in Hogarth’s England}, exh.cat. Victoria and Albert Museum, London (1984) no.16, p.140. Paul Daniel Chevenix’s business passed to his widow, a granddaughter of John Deards, to whom the older Chevenix had been apprenticed in 1720 (P.R.O., Inland Revenue 1, IR 1/8 fo.15; information from Helen Clifford).


\textsuperscript{28} There is no record of Carter’s apprenticeship or freedom. For his career, see infra, \textit{op.cit.} at note 10 above, pp.459, 740. Helen Clifford has kindly supplied additional information.


or Hammond (Free 1761) at Westmoreland Buildings, Aldersgate Street, though the latter is listed in the Parliamentary Report of 1773 as a plateworker with John Crouch. Carter is described in the Report as a manufacturer of large plate at Bartholomew Close, Aldersgate Street – probably the same address as Hammond’s, since Westmoreland Buildings was an alley linking Aldersgate Street with Bartholomew Close, a jumble of little streets around St Bartholomew the Great. He is called ‘silversmith of 14 Bartholomew Close’ in a fire insurance policy of 1775, which mentions a ‘range of workshops communicating round the Yard’ behind the house and he is listed there in the land tax registers throughout the 1770s. Other IC marked silver includes sauce tureens of 1774–76 with rams’ head handles and beaded borders, reminiscent of the Williams-Wynn service. The mark is not found after 1776, and John Carter left the trade in January 1777. In the same month Richard Carter entered a mark from Bartholomew Close with the retailer Robert Makepeace. Richard Carter (again no record of apprenticeship) was in partnership at Westmoreland Buildings in 1778–80 with Robert Sharp and Daniel Smith, perhaps the principal manufacturers of high quality plate in the Adam taste.

As Joseph Creswell took a shop in the Adelphi on its completion, he must have been an associate of the Adam brothers. He also supplied ‘4 Gilt mettalic Tripods to stand upon the Scagliola Tables’ in the first withdrawing room at 20 St James’s Square in May 1776. For much of 1773, Sir Watkin was being pressed for payment by Thomas Heming, and may not have wished to employ him further. In April Sidebotham wrote to Sir Watkin’s agent, Francis Chamberl, that ‘Mr Heming cries out much for £600 at least for the Pearls’, and was demanding a bill at six weeks. His plate bill was settled in June, but he had to wait until September for £300 on account for the pearls. The balance was still outstanding on the 3rd February 1774 when ‘Mr Heming wrote Sir Watkin a very huffing letter here this day about his money. Sir Wd he be glad it was discharged as soon as you can, he has found out that Mr Creswell is making the new Service, else I think he w’d not have wrote in the manner he did…’ Creswell in contrast received a number of payments on account, £800 from Chambre in Oswestry between December 1773 and July 1774, £200 through Child’s Bank in February 1774, and £1,310 by Chamberl’s colleague Mr Harris in London between January 1774 and January 1775. He was more fortunate than many of the craftsmen who worked at 20 St James’s Square, most of whom did not have their bills paid in full until 1777 or 1778. Nevertheless he went bankrupt in July 1775, and although he cleared his bankruptcy in October, his ‘Bill of Sundrys not included in the General bill of Table Service from Nov. 26 1772 to Nov. 18th 1774… £61 16s.’ was paid to his assignees on 28th February 1776, together with another bill for £74 19s covering February to June 1775.

Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn’s expenditure on plate falls away sharply after the completion of the service, but he continued to patronise Creswell until the accounts end in 1781. The bill for February to June 1773, included ‘the Burnishing up of the Dowager Lady Wms Wynn’s table service, the new Fish Plates, Tipping and Mounting 6 leather jugs’ at a cost of £74 19s. The leather jugs were made from the hide of an ox roasted during Sir Watkin’s epic 21st birthday festivities at Wynnstay in 1770: the song composed for the occasion, sung to the tune of ‘the Roast Beef of old England’, had included the lines

The Hide of this Ox we to leather will turn
Of his Leather make Jacks, and Cups of his Horn

The following year Thomas Heming had mounted ‘6 Drinking Horns out of the Great Ox’s Horns’, and in 1776 a Mr Dobson received £34 9s for ‘making 12 Leather Jacks of the great Birth Day Ox’s hyde’. The jugs (Fig.39) are classical ewers, rather than the traditional pouch-shaped blackjack, and have pewter bodies and turned oak feet, over which the leather has been stretched and seamed. The roasting of the ox was the central event of the huge open-air celebration and came to symbolise the occasion. The ox itself was painted by Sir Watkin’s protégé William Parry, and the ewers are decorated with the head of a longhorn ox within a wreath of husks, rather than with a conventional buccanerium.

Creswell’s bill for September 1775 to October 1777 is the only one to survive, and totals £180 11s 4d. Much of this covers repairs to plate and jewellery, and the principal purchases are an argyle, a quart mug, a coffee-pot and lamp, a pickle stand, the Oswestry race cup for 1777, and a teapot. The argyle was probably that sold in 1946, which bore the mark of Charles Aldridge and Henry Green. This partnership, plateworkers in Aldersgate Street and St Martin Le Grand from 1772, re-made part of the Ruabon church plate in 1776 while Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn was churchwarden. The coffee pot and lamp, supplied in August 1776, weighed 46 oz 3 dwt and cost £25 1s 6d (10s an ounce). This does not survive, but it may have been derived from a drawing in the Soane Museum, which is inscribed ‘Sketch of a Coffee pot for / S WWW’ (SM6/94; Fig.40). This proposes a high-necked ewer with a scroll handle, monogrammed WWW, on a spreading paw-footed tripod stand. It is drawn in profile, ignoring the third leg of the tripod, and the pencilled alternatives suggest that the peculiar double-scroll supports are

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"London, Guildhall Library, 11, 936/237, Sun insurance policy no. 346711; (Land Tax Assessments, St Bartholomew the Great precinct 11,316/71–72.)
Christies, London, 17th July 1963, lot 177, and 20th May 1987, lot 341; Christie’s, New York, 19th April 1990, lot 253. Carter also made a group of baluster candlesticks (in 1767–68 after SM25/97–99; see j. lomax: British Silver, Temple Newsam and Latherton Hall, Leeds [1992], no. 175, pp.138–60. The mark used on the Williams-Wynn service is not the same punch as that on the candlesticks. However, it has been noted on a salver of 1773, which formed a pair with another of 1772 with the mark IC over TH usually attributed to Hannam and Crouch (Sotheby’s, London, 10th November 1994, lot 149.)
NLW, Wynnstay box 115r/8; the bill for £168 is 115/17/29.

NLW, Wynnstay 122, fol. 54, Sidebotham to Chambre, 23rd April 1773.
Ibid., fol. 147, Sidebotham to Chambre, 3rd February 1774.
NLW, Wynnstay R42 (rental, 1774, unpagedinated accounts of F. Chambre and J. Harris).
NLW, Wynnstay box 115/8.
NLW, Brogynn manuscripts, 1.29. The leather jugs occur several times in the accounts (Creswell mounted four more at a cost of £20 in June 1776), and two are in the National Museum and Gallery of Wales. A Mr Teakes received 14 guineas for painting ten of them and japanning four in February 1777.
NLW, Wynnstay box 115/3, 8 and 9.
NLW, Wynnstay box 115/25/41."
intended for two sizes of coffee pot. This rudimentary sketch recalls the design for a jug, lamp and stand by James Wyatt, in the Noailles album, which is copied in Boulton and Fothergill’s pattern book. The pierced pickel stand, costing £13 and supplied in January 1777, may also have been derived from an Adam drawing as SM6/107 is inscribed ‘Sketch of a Stand for Pickles for Sr WWW’ and shows two variant designs for a quatrefoil pickel stand with a central columnar handle, one on paw feet, the other supported on seated griffons. The latter is identical to SM25/112, associated with the table service drawings, and inscribed, perhaps at a later date, ‘For Sir Watkin Wynn Bart / Adelphi / 1773’. The final piece from Creswell, the Oswestry race cup, was the first in a series which Sir Watkin presented until 1785. Costing fifty guineas, it is a vase cup, chased with ribbon-tied husk festoons below a beaded rim with a husk border, and decorated with stiff leaf, vitruvian scrolls and guilloche. By this time Sir Watkin was seriously embarrassed and the bill for 1775 to 1777 was partly settled with old plate. Further payments to Creswell are modest, £25 on account in October 1778, £25 in June 1779, and £41 during 1780. At that point the accounts end, though the 1946 sale included some silver of the 1780s by John Scofield and Charles Aldridge.

Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn bought a great deal of plate, about 10,000 ounces, between 1768 and 1780, but what distinguishes him from his contemporaries is his evident interest in the design of his silver, and the large number of commissioned pieces. It is characteristic that he commissioned more designs for silver from Robert Adam than any other patron. He also required drawings for objects ranging from an inkstand to Lady Wynn’s sedan chair. Moreover he was a perfectionist, who persisted until he was satisfied. As late as 1776, Adam was still designing bookcases in Lady Wynn’s dressing room. These were made by Richard Collins, who also replaced the figures of the muses on the organ in the music room, made by Robert Ansell only a couple of years before. One suspects that Sir Watkin took pleasure in commissioning, studying and adapting designs. Those made by James Byres for Wynnstay in 1770 are among the most spectacular architectural drawings of the eighteenth century. He took up James Wyatt in 1776 and he even paid a Mr Barker six guineas for making designs for chaises and for cheese plates in March 1772. Most of the drawings for the table service have a pictorial quality, and appear calculated to appeal to this most demanding of patrons.

National Museum and Gallery of Wales