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**The Power of Taste: The Dispersal of the Berkeley Smith
Collection of Chinese Ceramics at Cheltenham Art Gallery &
Museum (1921-1960)**

Louise Tythacott

Abstract

In 1921, Stanley Berkeley Smith (1878-1955), a British banker based in Karachi, offered his collection of around 800 Chinese ceramics on loan to Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum. Berkeley Smith had spent the previous 21 years acquiring the objects in India - and a Chinese Porcelain Room was duly opened at the Museum in 1923. Tastes in Chinese ceramics, however, were changing. From the 1920s, Cheltenham's curator invited London specialists to inspect Berkeley Smith's ceramics. One influential dealer even recommended that some of the pieces were not 'museum worthy' and should be disposed of. So it was that between 1946 and 1960 almost 500 of Berkeley Smith's ceramics were sold at auction in Cheltenham and London. This paper examines the relationship between Berkeley Smith and Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum from 1920s to 1950s, exploring how his collection became entangled within shifting landscapes of taste in Chinese art during this time.

Introduction¹

*I take art to be not a class of objects with fixed characteristics, but a set of historically specific ideas and practices that have shifted meanings in the course of the centuries.*²

This paper examines the history of a collection of around 800 pieces of Chinese ceramics lent to Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum in 1921 by a banker, Stanley Berkeley Smith. The objects remained on loan until they were bequeathed in 1955. For 34 years, Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum looked after the collection on behalf of the collector. Berkeley Smith paid for new displays, new cases, new floors, the annual insurance. In the correspondence, he repeatedly indicates a readiness to allow the museum to decide on how the collection should be displayed, yet at the same time he transmits his own views on design. The correspondence reveals the pressure under which Berkeley Smith was placed by curators and dealers in the ensuing decades to ‘improve’ his collection by acquiring ceramics from earlier periods. The letters demonstrate too his resistance to the new tastes in ‘early’ Chinese art. Over the years Berkeley Smith added to the collection and then, in 1945, agreed with the curator that many of his pieces were not ‘museum quality’ and should be sold off. The paper discusses the role played by curators (Daniel Herdman at Cheltenham and Bernard Rackham at the Victoria and Albert Museum) and a dealer (Edgar Bluett) in determining the display, interpretation, and ultimately, disposal of the pieces.

The early twentieth century was a period which witnessed a marked shift in the idea of Chinese art in the West. When Berkeley Smith began collecting in 1900, little was known about early Chinese wares - those from the Han (206BCE-220 CE), Tang (618-907) and Song (960-1279) dynasties. In 1921, the year Berkeley Smith made his loan to the museum, the highly influential Oriental Ceramic Society (OCS) was established in London, and this was to have a formative influence on the perception of Chinese ceramics over subsequent decades. As a result, by the 1930s, the cultural

value ascribed to Berkeley Smith's collection had declined, and that attributed to pre-Ming (1368-1644) wares had increased. Indeed, by the 1940s, almost 500 of Berkeley Smith's pieces were considered not 'museum worthy' and were disposed of at auctions in Cheltenham and London.

Collecting Chinese ceramics in the late nineteenth-early twentieth century

Stanley Berkeley Smith was born in Gloucester in 1878, his father a solicitor in nearby Cheltenham.³ In 1897 he became clerk to the London and County Banking Company in Chiswick, and then in 1900 joined the Mercantile Bank of India.⁴ Two years later, he relocated with the bank to the Indian subcontinent and was to remain there until his retirement in 1928.⁵ Little is known of how or why Berkeley Smith started to collect Chinese ceramics. It is clear that he had access to specific types of Chinese things in India. It is also known that he had connections with the Muslim nobility of Murshidabad, obtaining high quality pieces made for the Indian market.⁶ From his letters, he seems to have been known to local dealers who offered him particular pieces.⁷ Berkeley Smith's move to India co-incided with an influx of Chinese material as a result of the Indian Army's relief of the legations in Peking.⁸ Berkeley Smith would have had ample opportunities – and adequate funds - to obtain Chinese ceramics from members of the Indian Army Regiments returning from China after the looting of the 'Summer Palace' (Yuanmingyuan) in Beijing, and northern China, after the Boxer Rebellion from 1899-1901.⁹

Berkeley Smith's original collection comprised over 850 pieces, not all of which went to the Museum.¹⁰ What greatly distinguishes his Chinese objects from others at this time was its formation in India. For Peter Hardie, the collection 'constitutes the principal resource for the study of non-imperial Chinese ceramics handed down in India'.¹¹ It included a range of ceramics exported from China to India made for the Moghul rulers: two blue and white late Ming, Wanli (1563-1620),

dishes found in Persia are notable, and there are other pieces Berkeley Smith refers to as ‘Persian’. His original collection included six early fifteenth century wares formerly owned by the Moghul Imperial family. He acquired a Persian-made celadon charger, possibly fifteenth century¹², and around 100 Song (960-1279) and Ming (1368-1644) dynasty celadons, including a series of large fourteenth and fifteenth century Longquan celadon chargers.¹³ He obtained fourteenth century blue and white dishes, Swatow wares and one Transitional (mid-seventeenth century) blue and white ceramic. Two vases from the ‘Summer Palace’ were also added to Berkeley Smith’s collection - taken during the relief of the Boxer siege.¹⁴ Above all, the collection included a great many examples of brightly coloured Qing (1644-1911) porcelain – especially the fashionable Kangxi (1662-1722) famille verte and famille noire pieces, alongside nineteenth century reproductions. The collections comprised Canton-decorated porcelain, Chinese Imari wares, and example after example of nineteenth century blue and white export dishes, cups, saucers, plates, teapots and vases. Berkeley Smith’s taste tended towards large, showy, brightly coloured jars, vases, beakers and chargers, mainly from the last dynasty, the Qing.

Figures 1-3: Groupings of Berkeley Smith’s ceramics, photograph taken in 1920s. Copyright Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum

Qing porcelain had been in vogue for a number of decades in the West by the time Berkeley Smith began to collect. In the 1860s, after imperial objects were brought to Europe from the looting of the ‘Summer Palace’ in Beijing, there was a resurgence of interest in oriental things.¹⁵ James Abbott McNeill Whistler, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Oscar Wilde, amongst others, were avid collectors of blue and white porcelain, and by the 1870s a ‘Chinamania’ had gripped collectors in Europe and North America.¹⁶ Most desired were the highly decorated Qing ceramics, and especially the wares of the Kangxi period.¹⁷ The businessman, William Hesketh Lever (1851-1925), for example, started to buy Chinese porcelain in 1894, his taste favouring ‘blue and whites’ (including ‘hawthorn

jars'), as well as famille verte, famille noire and other enamelled Kangxi pieces.¹⁸ Leonard Gow (1859-1936), director of various shipping companies, focused on Kangxi porcelain.¹⁹ William Giuseppe Gulland (1841-1906), a merchant in the Far East, preferred porcelain of the later Qing dynasty - Yongzheng (1722-1735) and Qianlong (1735-1796) famille rose and monochromes - donating 916 pieces to the V&A between 1905 and 1932.²⁰ The American banker, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. (1874-1960) collected, from 1908 onwards, Kangxi famille verte vases and beakers.²¹ From around 1911, the Glaswegian shipping merchant, William Burrell (1861-1958), began his large collection of Chinese art, amassing both Qing porcelains as well as earlier wares.²² The taste for Kangxi blue and white and famille verte was perhaps exemplified by the collection of George Salting (1835 –1909), on display at the V&A from 1874-1910. Salting bequeathed over 1,000 pieces in 1909, which were placed in their own gallery the following year.²³

In the late nineteenth-early twentieth century, an increasing number of temporary exhibitions demonstrated the fashion for Qing porcelain. The Burlington Fine Arts Club's pivotal exhibition, *Blue and White Oriental Porcelain*, took place in 1895, the catalogue noting that the taste for blue and white had 'risen almost to a mania'.²⁴ Hardie suggests that Berkeley Smith might have visited the exhibition before leaving for India.²⁵ This was followed by the Burlington Fine Arts Club exhibition, *Coloured Chinese Porcelain*, in 1896. In November 1905, an exhibition of Chinese porcelain was mounted by the Royal Amateur Art Society in Hove, near Berkeley Smith's sister's home, which he may well have seen.²⁶ A range of studies focusing on Chinese ceramics was also becoming available: Joseph Marryat's (1850) *Collections Towards a History of Pottery and Porcelain*, Stephen Wootton Bushell's (1886) *Chinese porcelain before the present dynasty*, and William Giuseppe Gulland's (1898) *Chinese porcelain*, for example. Many more such works were published after Berkeley Smith started collecting - Cosmo Monkhouse's (1901) *A History and description of Chinese porcelain*; Mrs Willoughby Hodgson's (1905) *How to identify old Chinese porcelain*; Bushell's *Chinese art* (1904), *Chinese Porcelain* (1908) and *Description of Chinese*

Pottery and Porcelain (1910); and Robert Lockhart Hobson's (1908) *Porcelain, Oriental, Continental and British*. The latter, penned by the leading specialist at the British Museum, regarded Kangxi wares as the 'be-all and end-all'.²⁷ In 1915 Hobson went on to publish, *Chinese pottery and porcelain*, followed by *The Later Ceramic Wares of China* (1925). Other studies of later Qing porcelain include George Williamson's (1927) *The Book of Famille Rose*, and W.B. Honey's (1927) *Guide to the later Chinese porcelain periods of Kang Hsi, Yungcheng and Ch'ien Lung* (sic). It is evident from his letters to the museum that Berkeley Smith was aware of a number of these.

Chinese porcelains were used by collectors as signifiers of wealth and taste. For Lever, the symmetry of his Chinese porcelain displays was key, and he acquired garnitures on the basis that they formed a balanced exhibition.²⁸ Indeed Oliver Impey describes Lever's early activities not so much as collecting but 'furnishing': Susan Pearce too notes Lever's passion for interior design and display.²⁹ The same could be said of Rockefeller, who collected *en masse*, for decorative effect.³⁰ Stacey Pierson argues that by the late nineteenth-early twentieth century Qing porcelain became a 'required part of any respectable interior.'³¹ Berkeley Smith's collection, although considered of lesser quality than those of the renowned collectors, fitted an established Victorian and Edwardian aesthetic. In emulating the tastes of the well known connoisseurs, Berkeley Smith was no doubt demonstrating an aspiration towards middle class respectability.

The Loan: September 1921

Berkeley Smith was on holiday in Cheltenham in the summer of 1921 when he offered his collection to the Art Gallery & Museum. After several meetings with the curator, Sydney Harrison, the museum agreed on 11 September to accept a loan of around 800 items.³² Berkeley Smith's ceramics were then in Calcutta, having been acquired over the course of the previous 20 years – and

he had spent over £5,000 on them.³³ It is not clear exactly why Berkeley Smith decided to lend his collection: perhaps the museum could not afford - or did not want - to buy it all. Maybe Berkeley Smith needed a depository for his acquisitions while he was far away on the Indian sub-continent. As we have seen, he certainly had links to Cheltenham through his father, and location of his collection in the town may have suggested to him connections to his childhood. Berkeley Smith evidently wanted to have a very public exhibition of his artefacts, for as part of the loan he agreed to fund the construction of a Chinese Porcelain Room in Cheltenham.

From early in his correspondence with the museum, Berkeley Smith demonstrated an awareness of the latest techniques of display. In a letter dated 20 November 1921, he wrote to Harrison from the Victoria Hotel in London describing a visit to the British Museum the day before to see how the 'world famous' Franks collection of Chinese Porcelain 'was displayed' [his underlining]. He was 'rather taken' with the large centre case:

I fancy a couple like these placed across the room so that the light from the long windows would fall on the long sides, would suit our purposes. The bases need not be so expensive as my stuff is not of such supreme value... You will see they are not on stands but go right down almost to the ground and so give a lot more room.³⁴

This was only a suggestion, he noted, and was off to Paris and Karlsbad the following day on a Handley Aeroplane. In January 1922, Berkeley Smith wrote again to Harrison on Hotel Victoria headed paper: 'the Chinese screen has not been cleaned for many years and the man who repairs it might be able to do this also. I fancy this would much improve it'.³⁵ In May, Harrison wrote to Berkeley Smith, then in Calcutta, to inform him he would be taking up the post of curator and secretary of the Bowes Museum and Reference Library.³⁶ Berkeley Smith did not receive Harrison's message for some time, and stated in his next letter: 'I have recently received some of my China

which I had stored in Lucknow. There are sixteen Celadon dishes (Poison plates) mostly of the larger size and with typical decoration of the Sung dynasty. I will be sending you these later on'.³⁷

After receiving Harrison's news, Berkeley Smith lamented:

This change is most inopportune...for I had left Cheltenham feeling confident I had left a man there in whose hands I could leave the receiving and gradual arrangements of my Collection with perfect safety...I hope you will write to your Successor that our idea was an artistic display which might take some considerable time to arrange and that our motto was to be 'Nulli Secundus'.³⁸

The next incumbent, Daniel Herdman, was more than up to the task. He arrived at Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum on 1 July 1922 just in time to sort Berkeley Smith's 117 packing cases³⁹, and threw himself into the task of interpreting and exhibiting the Chinese wares. By 8 July he had made contact with a design company, Sage, explaining the ideas for the porcelain display and asking for illustrations. Sketches of the new gallery were sent to him by the beginning of August. Soon after, Berkeley Smith forwarded a further £200 and informed Herdman that he would be sending the 16 celadon dishes: 'I...am much indebted to you for the great many troubles and care you have taken in the matter of my porcelain', and he was, 'very pleased that everything had arrived with so little damage'.⁴⁰ He offered more money, if needed, so that Herdman would 'be enabled to display the China to advantage'. He 'presumed' Herdman would keep all the celadons together, but wanted to leave everything 'entirely' in the curator's hands: 'Those larger jars, which are becoming rare, make a striking exhibit and I hope you will be able to evolve some scheme to display them.' He suggested putting them on circular consecutive tiers rising from a little above the ground, with more at the top: 'Do not wait to refer anything to me it takes too long. Go straight ahead. You have a fine hand'.⁴¹

Figures 4-5: Large jars, photographs taken in 1920s. Copyright Cheltenham Art Gallery &

Museum

Berkeley Smith had instructed his brother-in-law, A F Graves, of Graves & Son, auctioneers, surveyors and land agents in Brighton, to forward two boxes of Chinese pictures: 'I thought it advisable to get an expert to examine them as real originals by some of the famous ancient Chinese painters are extremely rare and valuable'. Laurence Binyon at the British Museum had looked at them, but believed they were 'copies of still older works'.⁴² Berkeley Smith also arranged for a Sotheby's representative to view them in Brighton, who offered to put them in one of their sales. Some of the paintings had black frames, the result, he said, was 'very effective' and Berkeley Smith suggested Herdman should make use of them in the China Room.⁴³

Meanwhile Herdman was liaising with Sage over the gallery, and in September had procured the services of an antique china restorer. By October, he was in correspondence regarding the parquet flooring. Berkeley Smith sent 20 more celadon plates. 'I am bearing in mind all your suggestions and will follow them wherever I possibly can', noted Herdman.⁴⁴ In the same letter, he described a recent visit to the British Museum, the V&A, the Ashmolean and Bristol Museum 'to see how the Chinese ceramics were displayed'. In November, the collector wrote again to the curator expressing his indebtedness for the 'very close attention and the great trouble' he was taking. He wanted the 'final result to be one which will compensate you for the time and trouble expended'.⁴⁵ In December, Berkeley Smith wrote to Herdman from Karachi agreeing with his suggestion of introducing two wall cases instead of one, and that Sage should be employed:

You will be wanting something to catch people's eyes and impress them as they enter the door. I expect that not one in a hundred will have much knowledge of Chinese porcelain. If they see something gorgeous they are impressed and will talk about it. Perhaps you will find assistance in this matter in the Picture on the two large famille rose vases... All your

suggestions and ideas are excellent and I consider the Committee and myself are most fortunate in having you to take charge of this matter.⁴⁶

In February 1923 Herdman met Fred Sage in London and commissioned the cases, which were delivered at the end of May. The room was being cleaned and painted. The grey distempered walls with the black screen will have ‘a most pleasing effect’, Herdman wrote to Berkeley Smith, and ‘will form a very suitable background for showing up the China in the best possible way’.⁴⁷ The display of the collection was being arranged with considerable thought both from Berkeley Smith and the curator: as the two corresponded in late 1922 and through the first half of 1923, they exchanged ideas on the best method of display, the types of cases and the most appropriate colour scheme.

In February 1923 Berkeley Smith wrote to Herdman from Karachi with information on two large covered jars which he had been aware of, but ‘the owner had an inflated idea of their value’. Unexpectedly, ‘in difficulties’ he had sold them ‘on reasonable terms.’⁴⁸ Berkeley Smith referred to these jars a few months later:

They are 'Mirror Blacks' no doubt the same as the potiches belonging to Mr Winthrop illustrated and described on page 326 of the second Volume of Gulland's *Chinese Porcelain*... They are discussed by R L Hobson on page 193 of his *Chinese Pottery & Porcelain* under 'Kang hsi [ie Kangxi] Monochromes'... I cannot recollect having seen a finer pair. You have several examples of Green Blacks [black covered with a transparent green enamel or wash] and these potiches will complete my Famille Noir section.⁴⁹

Famille noire from the Kangxi period was a particular favourite of many of the rich collectors in the early twentieth century, fetching ‘astronomical’ sums until the First World War’.⁵⁰ Rockefeller,

Lever and Salting, amongst others, acquired famille noire vases. According to Impey, it was the most 'expensive and sought after porcelain in the world after 1910'; he refers it as 'millionaire's taste'.⁵¹

On 5 June 1923, Herdman informed Berkeley Smith that he had been undertaking much of the work on the new gallery in the evenings. Sage's men were fixing the cases and Herdman was personally washing every piece. He had secured £23 worth of black wooden stands and was obtaining quotations for the linoleum: 'As a considerable portion of your collection is going to overflow the special room in the corridor, in which the decorative scheme is the same, I am continuing the floor covering into the corridor.'⁵² Herdman had ordered four mahogany chairs, 'of a very simple design, such as in use at the V&A'. He referred to Hobson's, *Chinese Pottery and Porcelain*, and *Ming porcelain*, and Bushell's two volumes on *Chinese art*, and added: 'I have recently sought the advice of Bernard Rackham of the V&A...He is as you know one of the greatest authorities upon the subject in this country'.⁵³

On 31 May 1923 Herdman had indeed written to the V&A asking for help with labeling. Rackham responded:⁵⁴

...after discussion with Sir Cecil Smith⁵⁵ ...it would not be possible for an officer at this museum to come officially to Cheltenham and give honorary advice. This would involve too great a demand on the time of our own staff...As the usefulness of the collection lent to your museum would clearly be greatly enhanced if the objects could be classified and labeled on scientific lines (general group labels would probably suffice), Mr Berkeley Smith would perhaps feel disposed to pay a suitable fee for this service, with expenses. In that case, I think one of my assistants would perhaps be prepared to undertake the work in his own time. One, or at the outside two days, would I expect suffice for such general sorting and labeling

as would meet the requirements.⁵⁶

Herdman thanked Rackham, but noted that Berkeley Smith was ‘too far away to consult quickly in this matter’ and he did not feel he could use his specialist fund without first approaching him. The visit from the assistant, he noted, was ‘a good idea’ and he would put it to Berkeley Smith, ‘at a later date, when we contemplate the issue of a small handbook...For the opening ceremony, I shall content myself with a general sorting and group labeling and shall be sparing as to labels for individual pieces’.⁵⁷ Herdman nevertheless invited Rackham to officially open the gallery, and at the end of July the V&A curator confirmed the date: ‘I should be glad to do anything I can to foster interest in the collection which has so generously been placed at the disposal of your museum.’⁵⁸

The V&A had, by this time, gained the reputation as an ‘arbiter of taste’ in the decorative arts, a place ‘to learn about the “right” objects to own’ in the 19th century.⁵⁹ Established as a key site for the study and understanding of decorative arts, by the 1920s it wielded considerable power in validating what was - and was not – perceived to be of museum quality. Strong bonds had been created in particular between Chinese art specialists at the V&A and the British Museum. Audrey Wang notes how curators at these two institutions during this period, ‘in an unspoken agreement’, assumed the duty of guiding collectors.⁶⁰ Rackham’s involvement with Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum was thus entirely in keeping with this metropolitan role.

On 2 July 1923, Herdman wrote to Berkeley Smith informing him that the black vases had arrived, and constituted ‘a very pleasing addition’. Preliminary arrangements had been completed for the opening, and he enclosed photographs of the gallery taken by his wife. Herdman was still washing every piece by hand, Sage had completed the cases, the chairs had arrived, he was busy arranging the corridor and hanging the plates (he had made the wires for this), and was even contemplating borrowing a goldfish for the large bowl in the centre of the room: ‘As you were good enough to say,

it may not be possible to satisfy everyone with my first arrangement of your collection, but I think I can promise you that the display will be a very pleasing and decorative one, and everything possible will be done to make the most of the pieces'.⁶¹ Berkeley Smith replied, referring to the photographs: 'I can see from these that you have a correct idea of how things should be done. No one knows better than I do how much trouble is involved in dealing with a collection such as this'.⁶² Berkeley Smith wanted to have all the celadons displayed together: 'How would it do to have a case across the room and the Celadon plates side by side in tiers reserving the top for the Vases Bowls etc?' The Canton china could be placed in another case, he suggested. The cups, saucers, plates and teapots might also look good together: 'You might think it well to have a case for showing a selection of the best pieces of Blue & White, dishes, plates etc (so called Willow Pattern).'⁶³ He enquired whether Herdman would be able to find a place for the Chinese silk screen and the Delhi pictures, 'thus keeping all my Oriental specimens together'. While he admired Herdman's photographs, Berkeley Smith nevertheless continued to suggest further improvements to the displays.

The Chinese Porcelain Room, September 1923: 'A *Treasure in Cheltenham*'

Figures 6-8: The Chinese Porcelain Room, photographs taken in 1923. Copyright Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum

On 27 September 1923, Bernard Rackham formally opened the 'Chinese Porcelain Room' at Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum.⁶⁴ The following month, Herdman sent a long letter to Berkeley Smith to update him. The work had involved 'considerable effort' on his part, but was 'full of interest'. He thanked Berkeley Smith for offering to pay for another case, and said he would let him

know if he planned to re-arrange the gallery. Mr Bernard Rackham, 'appeared to greatly enjoy his visit to Cheltenham', he wrote, and, 'Your Chinese paintings... attracted much favourable comment'. One gentleman, 'an expert on stained glass', was 'particularly charmed', and asked if he could come on a study visit from London with others. This gentleman considered the collection, 'one of the finest he has ever seen...' 'a treasure in Cheltenham'. Herdman said there was only one regret - that Berkeley Smith was not able to be present at the opening ceremony, to hear all the kind things said of him and his outstanding generosity.⁶⁵ Apart from his obvious diplomatic skills, Herdman reveals here his expanding network of specialists, and a developing expertise in the field of Oriental art.

A week after the exhibition had opened, Herdman wrote to Rackham to thank him for his opening speech:

'I am sure that what you have said will act as an incentive to Mr Berkeley Smith, to add other pieces to improve the collection. To have your assurance that this is quite possible at a moderate sum of money in London [Herdman's underlining] is just what I feel will help me in my communication with Mr Smith, to induce him to cease further collecting in India, and wait until he has opportunities at home'.⁶⁶

Both Herdman and Rackham, it seems, were keen to encourage Berkeley Smith to purchase ceramics in London, especially the earlier wares from the Song, Tang and Han dynasties, just becoming available. Herdman relayed Rackham's ideas to Berkeley Smith, and in December Berkeley Smith responded: 'I am grateful to Mr Bernard Rackham for his interest and advice... I cannot remember seeing a Tang specimen out here. I shall be pleased to improve my collection by including authentic specimens of the Sung and Tang dynasty.' He went on, however, to refer to remarks in the *Cheltenham Chronicle* regarding his porcelain display and its interest to visitors: 'Tang figurines would leave them quite cold I am afraid'.⁶⁷ For Berkeley Smith, it was large, showy

colourful pieces that were important for museum display, not the new ‘scholarly’ archaeological wares. The previous year, as we have seen, Berkeley Smith had remarked how his display should ‘catch people’s eyes’, showing them ‘gorgeous’ things as they entered the room: the earthy muted colours and smaller size of Tang figurines would have had a very different visual effect. Despite Berkeley Smith’s dismissal of Tang ceramics, Herdman persisted, and the following July noted that he would be seeing Rackham, and will ‘discuss your suggestion as to his being able to put some early pieces your way, which his institution, for one reason or another is unable to take. It is extremely good of you to be willing to improve your collection’.⁶⁸

After the gallery opened, Berkeley Smith continued to send what he liked most - Qing dynasty porcelain. On 4 October 1923, he wrote to Herdman from Karachi confirming that a *blanc de chine* statuette of ‘Kwan Yin’ had been sent and should be placed with other specimens in the case.⁶⁹ In 1925, in Japan, he purchased 32 pieces of Kangxi and Yongzheng porcelain, as well as Chinese paintings.⁷⁰ He wrote from Shimonoseki in June that year to inform Herdman that he had acquired 12 Kakemono (hangings) ‘painted by famous Chinese painters mostly in the Ming.’⁷¹ While experts in Japan had assured him they were original and valuable, he thought it well to submit them to expert examination in England. Smith wrote conveying the views of a Mr Nomma on a *sang du boeuf* vase: ‘It is of course Kang hsi [sic] shape but the glaze is ground off round the base.’⁷² In the Salting collection, ‘they get over the difficulty of labelling these glazes...as late seventeenth and eighteenth century’; Arthur Waley of the British Museum was also willing to help in the matter of the 12 Kakemono.⁷³ There is a handwritten document in the museum archives on Euston Hotel paper regarding the Salting collection dated 22 September 1925: ‘Note to help with labels’.

Herdman, it seems, had visited the V&A to identify or compare the ceramics.

In 1924 Berkeley Smith wrote several letters to Herdman suggesting that he need trouble himself no more.⁷⁴ The following year, he confirmed his movements were ‘very uncertain’, but hoped ‘to visit

Cheltenham again in the near future'.⁷⁵ In April 1926, Berkeley Smith moved to Kandy in Sri Lanka, indicating that he would probably be there for a year. On 8 June that year Herdman wrote to say he hoped to have had the 'pleasure of seeing' him again in Cheltenham before he left for the East, and that 'all goes well with the Porcelain Room'. He enclosed four photographs of the displays.⁷⁶

Shifting Tastes in Chinese Ceramics

*In our museums those ornate and ingenious curios which our fathers admired are being quietly relegated to the background, or buried in the cellars, and the authentic art of the East is being acquired and displayed.*⁷⁷

In the files at Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum is an undated, handwritten note from Bernard Rackham, presumably penned during his visit in 1923, stating: 'nothing earlier than the Ming dynasty in the room'. This was a significant observation for the time, a key means by which the V&A curator could assess Berkeley Smith's collection. We have already seen Rackham's recommendation to Herdman that Berkeley Smith refrain from acquiring more porcelain in India and 'improve' his collection with earlier pieces obtained in London. Indeed, by the 1920s there had been a marked shift in the taste in Chinese art, away from colourful Qing porcelains to the earlier stonewares of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) and before. The construction of the railway system in China in the early years of the twentieth century unearthed for the first time large numbers of tombs which contained ancient burial wares.⁷⁸ The discovery of previously unknown archaeological objects and their appropriation by collectors helped forge a new idea of Chinese art in the West. An emphasis on ceramics from the Han, Tang and Song dynasties developed over the following decades, forcing a 'reassessment of both previous collections of Chinese porcelain and the nature of Chinese ceramics in general'.⁷⁹ In particular, the 1910 exhibition, *Early Chinese pottery and*

porcelain, at the Burlington Fine Arts Club, was ‘ground-breaking’, ‘a pivotal event’ in the development of taste in Chinese art, exhibiting early wares in the West for the first time.⁸⁰ By the 1920s, the bright porcelain of the Qing dynasty had come to be seen as ‘decadent’ and ‘commercial’; there was a sense that Chinese art had degenerated after the end of the Qianlong (1735-96) period.

The most significant impact on the change in taste was the formation in 1921 of the Oriental Ceramics Society (OCS) in London, founded by twelve men - including Rackham, Hobson and George Eumorfopoulos.⁸¹ The group held regular meetings where they discussed objects, gave presentations, published papers in their *Transactions*, and displayed select pieces in cabinets at the V&A. The OCS provided a physical presence and ideological framework for a new connoisseurship. Firmly established by the mid-1920s, the preferences of the OCS had a major impact on tastes over the following decades. Above all, OCS connoisseurs were responsible for the reification pre-Ming ceramics.⁸² In 1923, Hobson published the first book in English to focus specifically on these ceramics, *The Wares of the Ming Dynasty*, where he urged collectors to purchase Ming pieces.⁸³ A year after opening the Porcelain Room, Rackham authored, ‘The Earliest Arrivals of Pre-Ming wares in the West’, in the *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society*, remarking, ‘Chinese art of the dynasties before Ming is so familiar to us that it needs something of an effort to cast our minds back to the not very distant time when this was not the case’. Above all, he warned: ‘No amateur of Chinese pottery nowadays considers his collection complete without representatives of Han, T’ang and Sung’⁸⁴ - an observation no doubt directed at those such as Berkeley Smith. While the core OCS members - Hobson, Rackham and Eumorfopoulos - were instrumental in shaping the new tastes in pre-Ming wares from the 1920s on, certain specialist dealers also started to attain considerable power in the field of Chinese art in the inter-war period, the most influential being the brothers Edgar and Leonard Bluett.

The Dealer: Edgar Bluett

Edgar Bluett (d1964) mounted an exhibition of around a hundred pieces of Chinese pottery, porcelain and bronzes in Cheltenham from November-December 1941, and during his visit volunteered to help Herdman with Berkeley Smith's collection. Herdman decided to purchase two objects from the dealer - a Tang horse⁸⁵ and a Yongzheng famille rose cup and saucer.⁸⁶ In December, the curator wrote to Berkeley Smith to inform him about this 'well-known expert on all matters pertaining to Chinese Porcelain and Bronzes' who had been in Cheltenham during the past fortnight. Herdman updated Berkeley Smith on the two acquisitions which had been added 'for purely educational purposes':

Mr Bluett is the most kindly and interesting man, and would very much like to meet you. If you happen to be in London, you would be well advised to make his acquaintance...

It occurs to me that the present time is as good as any if you were considering reducing your collection, and getting rid of some of the commoner pieces. Mr Bluett would not be interested in these, but he would be able to advise you concerning their disposal.⁸⁷

Edgar Bluett certainly had the expertise to make judgements about the quality of Berkeley Smith's ceramics. Along with his brother, Leonard, he had become familiar with the finest Chinese ceramic collections in the West.⁸⁸ Indeed, by the 1930s, the brothers were considered prominent proponents of Chinese art in Britain, 'actively participating in the invention of this new category of Chinese ceramics.'⁸⁹ Their premises were based at 48 Davies Street, Mayfair, close to Claridge's Hotel.⁹⁰ In the 1920s, they organized key exhibitions of early Chinese ceramics - *Exhibition of Old Chinese Pottery and Porcelain from the Han to the Ming period* (1924) and *A Collection of Old Chinese Monochrome Porcelain* (1925).⁹¹ Bluett published a catalogue to a 1931 exhibition on *Ming and Ch'ing porcelains* (1933), which included contributions from influential art connoisseurs – Percival

David, Henry Oppenheim, Charles Russell, William Winkworth: Eumorfopoulos wrote the foreword.⁹² According to Garner, the OCS even owes its inception to a discussion between A. L. Hetherington and Leonard Bluett in the early 1920s, and the brothers were closely linked to the society from the start. They became active members from 1933, and Edgar served on the council from 1936-46. The Bluetts were well known to the most influential collectors of Chinese art at this time: the key Chinese art collector and member of the OCS, Percival David was a loyal customer, buying Song and Yuan pieces from them early as 1917⁹³; Alan Barlow – another keen collector and OCS member - also purchased from them.⁹⁴ Bluetts even handled the first sale of items from Eumorfopoulos's collection in 1935.⁹⁵ By the 1940s, as senior members of the OCS, they mounted two exhibitions at Davies Street - *Exhibition of Ming Blue and White Porcelain* (1943) and *Exhibition of Two Thousand Years of Chinese Ceramic Figures* (1944), both accompanied by published catalogues.⁹⁶ By the end of the Second World War, Bluetts had even provided accommodation for the OCS in the basement of their shop. Without doubt, by the 1940s, 'Their standards of knowledge and integrity', as Harry Garner writes, 'had world-wide renown'.⁹⁷ The addition of two new pieces to Cheltenham's collection acquired from such a reputable dealer was thus an important means by which Herdman could 'improve' Berkeley Smith's collection.

Bluett wrote to Herdman regarding the Tang horse on 11 December 1941: 'It was in addition most gratifying to me to be able to take some part in the re-arrangement of your exhibits and to be instrumental in adding two worthy specimens to your collection.' There was little correspondence during the war years, but by 1945 Herdman was starting to sort selections for auction. He wrote in April 1945 to Berkeley Smith noting that the Chinese Porcelain Room had been redecorated and he was 'making some re-arrangements': 'I wonder if you have given any consideration to the question of reducing your collections and getting rid of some of the commoner pieces and duplicates? I still think that, at the present time, you would get a very good price for these.'⁹⁸ Berkeley Smith replied:

I agree with you that it would be well to sell some of the common pieces and duplicates in my Chinese porcelain collection, and will leave the matter in your capable hands to act as you get the opportunity. For instance, there are two large Canton china vases and a lot of blue and white (amongst other things) which are no use storing indefinitely...I suppose the most expeditious way would be to give them to a local firm of auctioneers to include in one of their forthcoming auction sales?⁹⁹

Herdman contacted Bluett informing him that ‘a lot of commoner pieces’ were to be disposed of and asked his advice.¹⁰⁰ Bluett noted there were ‘fewer [things] to be found nowadays and that it was a splendid time for sellers’, and that, ‘prices are even better in the provinces than they are here’.¹⁰¹ Herdman confirmed the ‘discards’ should be ‘the commoner sorts of nineteenth century reproductions and blue and white Canton China’:

I should think three to four hundred specimens, but none of any merit as museum pieces. Nevertheless, the stuff is quite nice from a decorative or furniture point of view and I am inclined to agree with you that it may sell as well locally, if doled out to various auctions sales here from time to time. There is a ton of celadon plates, but I did not intend sending any of them for disposal. The owner leaves the decision as to what is to be disposed of in my hands – rather an invidious task, but not really difficult!¹⁰²

The notion of ‘museum quality’ is referred to frequently in the letters at this time. According to Wang, this concept is particularly prominent with ceramic collectors. A ceramic item ‘good enough to be in a museum’ should be:

rare and unusual, yet an exemplary specimen of the given time period, be in good condition while sporting the necessary wear and tear typical of its age, and preferably documented in

published literature or through some sort of paper trail that provides its ownership history.¹⁰³

Objects in museums, she adds, should be at the ‘top of the hierarchy in terms of importance, and hence, by association, value’. The British Museum and V&A are, she notes, the ‘arbiters of good taste’, and a key source of reference for specialists, ‘collectors endeavour to buy and own artworks that are good enough to be in a museum collection’.¹⁰⁴ For Abigail Harrison Moore, the definition of a ‘museum piece’ is based on the idea ‘that objects in museums should be unique’. The standard of ‘museum piece’ is particularly relevant, she asserts, in the field of decorative arts’.¹⁰⁵ The idea of ‘museum quality’ is thus intimately tied to questions of taste and value, and the ‘top’ museums here play an instrumental role in defining what is, or is not, legitimate. As Berkeley Smith’s ceramics were, by the 1940s, out of step with the new tastes in Chinese art (as defined by the London-based curators and dealers), they were this considered to be not worthy of existence in a museum.

Bluett suggested a local auction, noting Herdman’s idea of ‘doling out small quantities from time to time’ was a ‘good one’: ‘I would suggest a trial run of say 20-30 lots to begin with... The better things from a collection like this and even some of the second rates would find a good outlet at the auction room of Messrs Glendining & Co, London; the really good Celadon dishes would sell well at Sotheby’s & Co.- but of the latter it would be well not to send a ton at a time!’¹⁰⁶ On 11 May 1945 Herdman informed Bluett of his recommendations and that early nineteenth century reproductions were ‘drawn out as rejects without comment’. The following day he wrote to Berkeley Smith to let him know of progress in making selections.¹⁰⁷ In February the following year, Berkeley Smith confirmed Herdman’s suggestion: ‘I wholeheartedly agree with you that it would be well to forward and still further reduce surplus and duplicate material, which is not of museums or connoisseur standard’.¹⁰⁸

The Disposals: 1946-1960

Thus it was that on 13 February 1946, 64 items in the Berkeley Smith collection were auctioned in Prestbury.¹⁰⁹ The next week, Herdman began selecting a further lot...‘among them is a Famille Noire which in the rough notes sent to me in 1922 was described as an “important piece” of the Kang shi [sic] period. It was such discussed, when we got expert opinion on it, that it was merely an early nineteenth century reproduction. I am therefore placing it among the rejects’.¹¹⁰ The next sale took place from 5-7 June 1946 at Engall, Cox & Co and consisted of 60 items.¹¹¹ In confirming receipt of the cheque for this sale, Berkeley Smith stated he was ‘much obliged’ for the ‘trouble’ Herdman was taking: he ‘fully approved’ of everything the curator did and was ‘quite satisfied with the results’. He was even pleased that Herdman was ‘weeding out’ a further selection for sale in the autumn’.¹¹² One wonders why Berkeley Smith formed his collection if he seemed so happy to see it dispersed. In January 1948, Herdman resumed his correspondence with Berkeley Smith:

...Guided by expert opinion and by my own judgement, I feel that it might be well to include in the next selection for disposal three or four pieces from the Celadon poison plates...My reason for suggesting this is that should there be at any future date, such a large collection as yours placed on the market, at one time, there would be a serious upset and reduction of values...Would you therefore agree with me to make a selection of say, 6 of the less perfect pieces for inclusion in the 3rd lots for disposal? It is difficult to find an auctioneer to deal with this matter. If I succeed, I do not propose to send out more than 70-100 pieces in the next consignment, taking care that no ‘museum pieces’ are disposed of.¹¹³

Berkeley Smith approved of everything Herdman suggested: ‘It certainly would be well to reduce the number of those celadon plates. There is a five-clawed dragon amongst them which I would keep. The others are not really needed’.¹¹⁴ Herdman promised to do his best...‘provided that I can

find an auctioneer who is prepared to put them into a sale, but not including too many celadon plates'. The material in the lockers and in the store-rooms, he noted, is 'only of nineteenth century date' and 'therefore would not be required for museum purposes'. It was a good time to sell, Herdman noted, 'particularly if it has colour', and promised to do his best in making a 'wise selection for disposal, and not to clear out anything which has antique or museum interest'.¹¹⁵ On 22 June 1948, Herdman informed Berkeley Smith that two selections had been disposed of the previous fortnight: 19 pieces at Engall, Cox & Co, Cheltenham and 63 pieces at Cavendish House, Cheltenham. A fifth sale took place from 15-16 February 1950 at Bruton, Knowles and Co, consisting of 50 ceramics. Within the space of four years Herdman had auctioned 256 pieces from Berkeley Smith's collection.

Figure 9: Base of one of Berkeley Smith's ceramics, which was not sold, with a handwritten note indicating 'Ming'. Photograph taken by the author. Copyright Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum

Herdman retired in July 1950, ending a relationship with Berkeley Smith which had spanned almost 30 years.¹¹⁶ Smith died five years later and bequeathed his collection to the Museum¹¹⁷ The next curator, Harold Fletcher, resumed the correspondence regarding Berkeley Smith's collection, writing to the Mercantile Bank of India in February 1957:

We are in the process of rehousing or re-arranging the above collection and of course we shall be putting on view only the very authentic examples of Chinese art. Before Mr. Berkeley Smith died he was aware that his collection contained many nineteenth century examples known as Export Ware and through my predecessor he disposed of many of these specimens. There are still quite a number of these late pieces which, if shown with the rest of the collection would considerably detract from the quality of the whole...I am wondering whether we carry on with the policy agreed by Berkeley Smith in his life-time – namely the

disposal of unimportant items? I would add that money obtained from such sales would be put into a fund called the Berkeley Smith Trust Fund and this would be used for the purchase of important Oriental pieces for addition to the Collection. As you are probably aware there are many plates, jars, etc. which are kept in cupboards and do not justify public display...I am sure that it would be the wish of the late Berkeley Smith to dispose of these and to build up a collection worthy of his memory.¹¹⁸

The museum informed the bank that they had consulted two experts with ‘almost identical recommendations made as to the unimportant items of the collection which it is desired to dispose of’¹¹⁹, and more selections were made. A further 234 ‘unimportant items’ were sold - at Cavendish House (84 items from 21-22 September 1959, and 83 items on 29 August 1960) and Sotheby’s (67 items on 27 October 1959). A total of 490 out of the original 800 ceramics belonging to Berkeley Smith were disposed of over a period of 14 years.¹²⁰

With the sums raised from the sale of the ceramics and grant from the Carnegie UK Trustees, the Chinese Porcelain room was re-organized in 1960, with far fewer pieces placed on display and a more minimalist, modern design. Many pieces from the Berkeley Smith collection were displayed at a key exhibition several decades later, ‘Chinese Ceramics: The Indian Connection’, at the City of Bristol Museum & Art Gallery (16 October-20 November 1982) which was organized by Peter Hardie.¹²¹ In the accompanying catalogue, Mary Greensted noted that the display in Cheltenham had been ‘improved’ that year.¹²² The next re-display of Berkeley Smith’s collection took place in 1992. Here the museum used the original black cases and created a higher density design in order to maintain the historic feel. The ceramics were re-arranged - one case was organized chronologically with themes (such as ‘Pottery made for the dead’), and another discussed cross cultural influences and the story of Berkeley Smith as a collector.¹²³ Today, the collection, though clearly much smaller than the original, retains its particular emphasis on the ceramics exported to India, and remains one

of the key collections in the UK demonstrating ‘Indian’ taste in Chinese ceramics.

Figure 10: The Chinese Porcelain Room in 1960s. Copyright Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum

Conclusion

This paper has examined the impact of a changing landscape of connoisseurship in the field of Chinese art in Britain, and how a collection in Gloucestershire was transformed through the recommendations of curators and dealers in London. When Berkeley Smith began his collection in 1900, his tastes were aligned with what was then fashionable in the West. The sudden influx of pieces from Indian regiments, combined with his relative wealth as a banker, enabled him to indulge his passion for porcelain over a period of twenty or so years. However, by the 1920s, his collection, once placed on public display, became entangled within shifting discourses of taste, and ultimately suffered by being out of line with new aesthetics. Other collectors of Chinese art reacted to these changes in different ways. While William Hesketh Lever, characterized as a conservative collector¹²⁴, continued his focus on Kangxi wares, those such as William Burrell shifted their attention in the early decades of the twentieth century and began to acquire pre-Ming pieces alongside Qing porcelain.¹²⁵ It is clear that Berkeley Smith’s collection was not of such high quality as some of the other major collections at this time, but its fate seems to have been intimately bound up with the requirements of London-based curators and dealers who deemed it to be ‘unworthy’ of life in a museum. As a result of his residence in the Indian sub-continent, Berkeley Smith, in their view, was out of touch with the new collecting practices: we have seen too how he was set in his ways, buying what he liked, and ignoring the recommendations of the specialists. The early wares – so crucial to the new connoisseurs of the OCS – were not available in India and did not appeal to him. He stubbornly continued to acquire pieces considered lower in quality, especially nineteenth century export wares, and his reluctance to embrace the new ceramics may have led to the

collections ultimate disposal. His readiness to acquiesce to the requirements of the museum tells us too about his relationship with the curator - and his perception of the status of this institution. But it seems also as if Berkeley Smith had given up on his collection by the 1940s: he had, after all, been estranged from it for decades, and he comes across in the letters towards the end of his life as almost relieved to let it disappear on to the open market. Had it somehow served its purpose of promoting and memorialising his name? Or was he simply complying once again with the suggestions of this museum? With the resurgence of interest in the biography of collections, and the re-evaluation of Chinese export ceramics over recent years, one wonders whether so many pieces from one single collection would be auctioned off in the world of museums today. Yet with the debates around disposal in museological circles, and the ever increasing cost of storage of museum collections, one simply never knows.

¹ I am extremely grateful to Helen Brown, formerly Collections Manager at Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum, for so kindly granting me access to the documentation on Berkeley Smith and for supporting this research, and to Nick Pearce, Richmond Chair of Fine Arts at the University of Glasgow, for commenting on an earlier version of the paper. The comments of an anonymous reviewer were also very useful.

² S. Errington, *The Death of Authentic Primitive Art and Other Tales of Progress* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1998).

³ P. Hardie, 'China's Ceramic Trade with India: the Cheltenham Collection', *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society*, Vol, 63, 1998-1999, p 133.

⁴ Op.cit. Hardie, p 133.

⁵ Op. cit. Hardie, p 133. The letters in the archives at Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum after his retirement in 1928 do not indicate where Berkeley Smith was then based. The address for correspondence from 1946 on is c/o The Mercantile Bank of India Ltd, London.

⁶ Letter dated 29 August 1922, where Berkeley Smith refers to a package containing a Mogul picture acquired from the 'family of an Indian Nobleman'.

⁷ For example, a letter dated 12 February 1923.

⁸ Hardie, op. cit., p 133.

⁹ Hardie, op. cit., p 133.

¹⁰ Op. cit. Hardie, p 133.

¹¹ Op.cit. Hardie, p 135: see also 1982 catalogue for further details.

¹² Hardie, 1999: 133.

¹³ Hardie, 1999: 133.

¹⁴ Hardie, 1999: 133.

¹⁵ S. Pierson, *Collectors, Collections and Museums: The Field of Chinese Ceramics in Britain, 1560-1960* (Oxford, 2007), p. 62.

¹⁶ Pierson, op. cit. p. 65.

¹⁷ Kerr, R. 2005 'Bernard Rackham: a life in ceramics', in Jörg, Christiaan, *The history of collecting Oriental ceramics in East and West* (Amsterdam, 2005), p 102; Pierson, op cit., pp108-9.

¹⁸ O. Impey, 'Lever as a collector of Chinese porcelain' in Morris, Edward (ed) *Art and Business in Edwardian England: The Making of the Lady Lever Art Gallery* (1992), p 227. See also the essays contained in the Lady Lever Chinese Collections Catalogue : <http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/ladylever/collections/chinese/>

¹⁹ Pierson, op. cit. p.150.

²⁰ See R. Kerr, *Chinese Ceramics: Porcelain of the Qing dynasty 1644-1911* (London, 1986), p 9-10.

²¹ See S.Abe 'Rockefeller Home Decoration and Objects from China' in V. Ruijivacharakul (ed) *Collecting China: The World, China and a History of Collecting* (Newark, 2011), pp 107-123.

²² R.Scott, 'Chinese Ceramics' in J J Norwich (introduction) *The Burrell Collection* (London and Glasgow, 1983), p 41-59. See also N. Pearce's text on Burrell:

<http://carp.arts.gla.ac.uk/image.php?id=SirBurrell&t=2&urltp=essay1.php%3Fenum%3D1097247776>.

²³ See Kerr, op.cit, 1986, p 9-10.

²⁴ Cited in Pierson, op. cit., p. 77.

²⁵ Hardie, op. cit., p. 133.

²⁶ Pierson, op. cit., p. 84.

²⁷ p 29, cited in Pierson, op. cit., p. 9.

²⁸ Impey, op. cit., p. 227. See also N. Pearce, 'Gorer v Lever: Edgar Gorer and William Hesketh Lever'

<http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/ladylever/collections/chinese/goreressay/>.

²⁹ op. cit., p. 228, and N. Pearce, 'Gorer v Lever: Edgar Gorer and William Hesketh Lever'

<http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/ladylever/collections/chinese/goreressay/>

³⁰ Abe, op.cit.

³¹ Pierson, op. cit., p.66.

³² Letters dated 11 and 19 September 1921.

³³ Letter dated 19 September 1921.

³⁴ Letter dated 20 November 1921.

³⁵ Letter dated 24 January 1922.

³⁶ Letter dated 22 May 1922.

³⁷ Letter dated 7 June 1922.

³⁸ Letter dated 18 June 1922.

³⁹ Letter dated 13 July 1922.

⁴⁰ Letter dated 10 August 1922.

⁴¹ Letter dated 10 August 1922.

⁴² Letter dated 24 August 1922.

⁴³ Letter dated 24 August 1922.

⁴⁴ Letter dated 26 October 1922.

⁴⁵ Letter dated 23 November 1922.

⁴⁶ Letter dated 26 December 1922. The committee refers to the Art Gallery & Museum committee.

⁴⁷ Letter dated 19 February 1923.

⁴⁸ Letter dated 12 February 1923.

⁴⁹ Letter dated 17 May 1923.

⁵⁰ Kerr, R op.cit., 2005, p 102.

⁵¹ Impey, op. cit. p 236 & p 227. See also Nick Pearce's essay, 'Gorer v Lever: Edgar Gorer and William Hesketh Lever', <http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/ladylever/collections/chinese/goreressay/>, and Konstanze Knittler's essay on Lever's collection of Famille Noire porcelain:

<http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/ladylever/collections/chinese/noireessay/>

⁵² Letter dated 5 June 1923.

⁵³ Letter dated 5 June 1923.

⁵⁴ Rackham (1876-1964) worked at the Victoria & Albert Museum from 1898 to 1938, and was Keeper of the Department of Ceramics from 1914 to 1938. Kerr notes, 'for over 40 years, he mixed with all the best-known dealers, collectors, scholars and museum officials in Britain, and played an active part in that vibrant scene' (2005: 100). For further details see Kerr (2005), pp 100-106.

⁵⁵ Sir Cecil Harcourt-Smith (1859-1944) was Director and Secretary of the Victoria & Albert Museum from 1909-24.

⁵⁶ Letter dated 11 June 1923.

⁵⁷ Letter dated 2 July 1923.

⁵⁸ Letter dated 28 July 1923.

⁵⁹ A. Harrison Moore, *Fraud, Fakery and False Business: Rethinking the Shrager v. Dighton 'Old Furniture Case'* (London, 2011), pp 132-320, 136.

⁶⁰ A. Wang, *Chinese Antiquities: an introduction to the art market* (Farnham, 2012), p. 122.

⁶¹ Letter dated 2 July 1923.

⁶² Letter dated 24 July 1923.

⁶³ Letter dated 24 July 1923.

⁶⁴ Letter dated 22 September 1923.

⁶⁵ Letter dated 24 October 1923.

⁶⁶ Letter dated 8 October 1923.

⁶⁷ Letter dated 5 December 1923.

⁶⁸ Letter dated 19 July 1924.

⁶⁹ On 31 October Herdman wrote to Berkeley Smith acknowledging the recent statue of 'Kwan Yin' and that he had washed it and put it in the case. Letter 5 December 1923.

⁷⁰ Letter dated 20 May 1925.

⁷¹ Letter dated 4 June 1925.

⁷² Letter dated 25 July 1925.

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- ⁷³ Letter dated 25 July 1925.
- ⁷⁴ Letters dated 7 and 27 August 1924.
- ⁷⁵ Letter dated 14 August 1925. He must have visited in mid-late August, for in a letter of 25 August, Herdman lamented that he had just missed him.
- ⁷⁶ Hardie mentions a letter dated 28 June 1929, where Berkeley Smith refers to museum visits in Australia, USA and Canada. The Han and Song pieces he saw there, writes Hardie, 'did not appeal to him' (1999, 133-4). Hardie also cited another letter from Berkeley Smith to Herdman on 10 December 1933 from Mombasa which details Berkeley Smith's knowledge of ceramics. Unfortunately I haven't been able to locate these letters.
- ⁷⁷ H. Read, *The Meaning of Art* (London, 1931), p 106.
- ⁷⁸ Kerr, 2005, op.cit., p.102.
- ⁷⁹ Pierson, op.cit., p 80.
- ⁸⁰ Pierson, op.cit., p. 94.
- ⁸¹ It soon expanded to 18, then membership opened up more widely.
- ⁸² Pierson, op. cit., p. 118.
- ⁸³ Pierson, op. cit., p.119.
- ⁸⁴ B. Rackham, 'The Earliest Arrivals of Pre-Ming wares in the West', in the *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society* (1924), p 10
- ⁸⁵ Accession number -1941.185.
- ⁸⁶ Accession number – 1941.186.
- ⁸⁷ Letter dated 6 December 1941.
- ⁸⁸ Kerr notes that Rackham was well acquainted with the network of dealers then operating in London (2005: 102-3).
- ⁸⁹ Pierson, op.cit., p.132 and p.144.
- ⁹⁰ Bluett & Sons had been established by their father in 1884; Leonard joined in 1907, followed by Edgar in 1909.
- ⁹¹ Pierson, op.cit., p.132.
- ⁹² Pierson, op. cit., p.151.
- ⁹³ Pierson, op.cit., p. 108, 159
- ⁹⁴ C. Clunas, *The Barlow collection of Chinese Ceramics, Bronzes and Jades: An Introduction* (Brighton, 1997).
- ⁹⁵ Pierson, op.cit., p.159.
- ⁹⁶ Pierson, op. cit., p.165.
- ⁹⁷ H. Garner, 'Obituary, Edgar Bluett' in the *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society* (1965), p xx.
- ⁹⁸ On 23 April 1945.
- ⁹⁹ Letter dated 28 April 1945.
- ¹⁰⁰ Letter dated 30 April 1945.
- ¹⁰¹ Letter dated 4 May 1945.
- ¹⁰² Letter dated 5 May 1945.
- ¹⁰³ Wang, op.cit., p.74.
- ¹⁰⁴ Wang, op.cit., p.104.
- ¹⁰⁵ Harrison Moore, op.cit., p.138.
- ¹⁰⁶ Letter dated 10 May 1945.
- ¹⁰⁷ Letter dated 12 May 1945.
- ¹⁰⁸ Letter dated 24 February 1946.
- ¹⁰⁹ For a total of £67.18.5.
- ¹¹⁰ Letter dated 28 February 1946.
- ¹¹¹ Sale total £90.15.10
- ¹¹² Letter dated 15 July 1946.
- ¹¹³ Letter dated 29 January 1948.
- ¹¹⁴ Letter dated 1 February 1948.
- ¹¹⁵ Letter dated 3 February 1948.
- ¹¹⁶ Letter 26 July 1950.
- ¹¹⁷ He died on 9 January 1955. His wife had predeceased him. Letter 12 January 1955 from Mercantile Bank of India to Fletcher. Letter 3 March 1955 from Fletcher to Bank of India.
- ¹¹⁸ Letter dated 21 February 1957.
- ¹¹⁹ Letter date 4 July 1959.
- ¹²⁰ Not surprisingly, objects from the former Berkeley Smith collection still circulate on the open market in Gloucestershire. In January 2010, for example, a pair of blue and white dishes and a blue and white baluster vase were auctioned at Mallams.
- ¹²¹ He was then Curator of Eastern Art at Bristol.
- ¹²² Though exactly what was meant by this is not clear. M. Greensted and P. Hardie (ed), *Chinese Ceramics: The Indian Connection* (Bristol, 1982), p18. The exhibition was held at the City of Bristol Museum & Art Gallery in conjunction with The Oriental Ceramic Society (16 October-20 November).
- ¹²³ I am extremely grateful to Helen Brown for supplying these details.

¹²⁴ Impey, op.cit, 236.

¹²⁵ Pearce demonstrates how Burrell adapted his taste from Kangxi to earlier wares:

<http://carp.arts.gla.ac.uk/image.php?id=SirBurrell&t=2&urltp=essay1.php%3Fenum%3D109724776>

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