



Figure 32 Entrance to the Drawing Room at Newbridge House, Co. Dublin



Figure 33 Detail of stucco decoration in the Drawing Room at Newbridge House, Co. Dublin

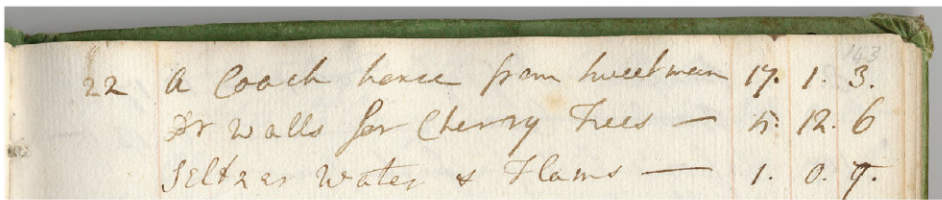


Figure 41 Purchase of 'Cherry Trees' and 'Seltzer Water & Flams', account book of Thomas and Lady Betty Cobbe, 22 November 1764, Cobbe Papers: Hugh Cobbe Division

dessert compoteers from which diners would be helped by a footman or themselves. Diagrammatic layouts were delineated in books such as Elizabeth Raffald's *The Experienced Housekeeper*, originally published in London 1764, which saw various reprints (fig. 39). Then, when finished, it was all taken away (the remove) and a fresh number of receptacles were brought containing the next course. The dessert course, for which the tablecloth was sometimes withdrawn,⁴⁰ was meant to be a visual climax. In François Massialot's *Nouvelle Instruction Pour Les Confitures, Les Liqueurs, Et Les Fruits: Où L'on Apprend À Confire Toutes Sortes De Fruits*, first published in 1691, and still being reprinted in 1740, there is an engraving of a splendid setting for a dessert course of 40 covers, served on 63 dishes (fig. 40).

Lady Moira's entertainment took place around 1770 in Moira House, Dublin, presumably in the summer. It was for 500 guests and what she describes must have presented a spectacular appearance. In an undated letter, Lady Moira wrote to her brother, the Earl of Huntingdon:

There was 197 dishes upon the side boards, including ices and fruits; and I had recruits both of meat, etc., and ices to supply the tables with, but the crowd did not admit the possibility of removes, and parties seized and carried them off to different apartments. My sideboard resembled the Pont de Garde [*sic*] doubled; upon the first platform was the savoury food, and under the arches wine, bread, clean plates, etc., on top of the second platform which diminished in breadth all kinds of pastry, jelly, creams, fruits, and ices, and under these smaller arches the glasses; the top platform, which diminishes still more, and corresponded to both sides, was covered with the ornamental desert, and the whole table illuminated with six dozen green myrtle wax candles ... They began to come at 7 o'clock on Monday evening and the house was not perfectly clear of company till 9 next morning ... about 200*l.* was my expense.⁴¹

With the expansion of Newbridge coming to completion in 1764, there would certainly have been a need for larger services of table china. Predictably, the 1764 accounts show more porcelain being purchased than in any other year; and it is possible that their haphazard accounting records only a proportion.⁴² It was in March of this year that they started paying for their dessert china.

In November 1764, the Cobbes would receive both horticultural and, apparently, medical advice from Dr Wall. In December they paid 'Dr Walls' the considerable sum of £5 12s 6d for cherry trees, perhaps nurseried in the Diglis cherry orchards, and



Figure 42 Enamelling incorporating cherry-like fruit, detail of an oval dish decorated in the Lady Betty Cobbe pattern, soft-paste Worcester porcelain, Cobbe Collection

Figure 49 Enamelling and gilding on a tea cup decorated in the Lady Betty Cobbe pattern, soft-paste Worcester porcelain, Cobbe Collection



unfortunate 18-year lacuna in the Cobbe accounts deprives us of further information about the arrival of the various components. The supply in batches is hardly surprising due to the time that the decoration of so many pieces would take; Count Brühl's enormous services each took years to complete.

The later Newbridge inventories show that the Peacock service consisted of richly decorated plates, differently shaped dishes, pierced baskets, covered baskets, vine leaf dishes, flower-encrusted cream boats, butter boats, sugar boats, tureens, ice-pails, and the unusual porcelain-handled cutlery (see below).

The pattern chosen by Lady Betty and Thomas Cobbe, from the combined evidence of historic photographs, the Christie's sale catalogue, and the recovered pieces, incorporated exotic birds, butterflies, ladybirds, beetles, dragonflies, painted within Rococo gilt cartouches (fig. 49). The colour ground of the pieces was the underglaze 'mazarine' blue-scale pattern for which Worcester became famous. Larger panels were decorated with a variety of the imagined exotic birds – depicted in flight, swooping, stooping, craning or looking backwards, or suspiciously downwards, rising from vegetation, perching on tree branches or just standing vacantly noble (fig. 50). Certain models of bird recur from piece to piece and one of these is strikingly reminiscent of a swooping bird that dominates the stucco decoration of the Dining Room at Newbridge



Figure 50 Bird on the inside of a cream 'bason' or basket, decorated in the Lady Betty Cobbe pattern, soft-paste Worcester porcelain, Cobbe Collection

House (figs 51, 52). The secondary reserves are the territory of the butterflies, insects and beetles (fig. 53). The plants often bear cherry-like fruit – perhaps a reflection of Dr Wall's involvement in cherry trees (see fig. 42, p. 29). The panels are framed with gilt Rococo flourishes employing scrolls, leaves, sprigs, petals, seaweed shapes and sun-bursts. Sometimes the paintings hint at landscape, distant trees or a tall



Figure 84 Details of insects on plates decorated in the Lady Betty Cobbe pattern, soft-paste Worcester porcelain, Cobbe Collection

