

201 Years of Royal Doulton Figures

[I happened to stumble on this Royal Doulton cover in my Dated collection...and that got me started!]

201 years ago the Royal Doulton figure was born - developed by Art Director, Charles Noke. Noke's aim was to establish a collection of fine quality china figures suitable for every home. Noke had earlier developed a range of figures in parian china with a vellum finish which were exhibited at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago, USA in 1893. These figures, such as The Jester, Cardinal Wolsey and Queen Catherine, were only ever made on a limited scale, and it was not until 1913 that the now familiar collection was introduced. The first models were by talented sculptors Charles Vyse and Phoebe Stabler as well as Noke. The collection was launched during the visit of King George V and Queen Mary on April 23rd, 1913. Queen Mary paid particular attention to the new figures, especially Bedtime, to which - when she first set eyes upon it - she exclaimed "Isn't he a darling". From then on this figure was known as 'Darling'.

Harry Nixon was in charge of the figure painting department in the early years, and he quickly recognized that each figure and colorway needed a unique identifying number. Each figure was given a number prefixed by HN for Harry Nixon; thus Darling became HN1 and Elizabeth Fry HN2. This system has continued ever since. Early subjects were diverse and incorporated pretty ladies as well as models inspired by literature, the Orient, theatre and history. These themes have continued ever since and new ones have been added, such as musicians and sport.

Noke eventually persuaded Leslie Harradine to work for the company as a figure modeler. Harradine couldn't be talked into moving from Canada but agreed to work on a freelance basis, and for almost 40 years a parcel of his work would be regularly received at the Burslem factory. One of Harradine's first models was Contentment, HN395 a wonderful study of motherhood. Classic figures such as The Old Balloon Seller (HN1315) *[shown here]* and Top o'the Hill (HN1834) are still manufactured today, such is the lasting quality of his work.

Many other modelers have contributed to the Royal Doulton figure



tradition, each adding a unique style and character to the collection. For example, during the 1930s, there was Peggy Davies, and from 1953-1974, Mary Nicoll. Today, Royal Doulton figures continue to be collected around the world.

[<http://royaldoulton.com>]

